

## **Social issues trends**

*Describe the past, present and future of a social issue until your partner guesses what you are talking about.*

### **Suggested topics**

Abortion

Affiliation with political parties/ Interest in politics/ Membership of political parties

Affordable housing

Age of retirement

Agriculture (e.g. as a percentage of GDP or percentage of the workforce)

Alcoholism/ Health problems due to alcohol

Allergies

Approval for a particular policy

Approval of a lifestyle choice/ Disapproval of a lifestyle choice

Awareness of social class

Bankruptcy

Belief in religion

Birth rate

Blue collar jobs

Breakup of marriages (e.g. divorce and separation)

Bullying

Bureaucracy

Car ownership/ Households with two cars

Censorship

Children in care

Community activism

Control of the internet

Corruption (e.g. bribery and nepotism)

Cost of healthcare

Crime (e.g. serious crime, white collar crime, or petty crime like graffiti and other vandalism)

Data protection problems

Day labourers

Deaths from alcohol

Discrimination (e.g. sexism, racism or ageism)

Domestic violence

Donation of blood and organs/ Shortage of blood and organs

Downsizing/ Restructuring

Drinking and driving

Drugs (e.g. hard drugs, soft drugs or prescription drugs such as anti-depressants)

Eating disorders (e.g. anorexia/ bulimia)

Economic inequality/ Income differences between the rich and poor/ The income gap

Educational standards (e.g. positions on international educational rankings)

Effects of inflation/ Effects of deflation

Emigration

Entrepreneurism

Exports

Fast food/ Pre-prepared food

Fear of crime  
Female employment rates/ The proportion of women at work/ The proportion of mothers who work/ Women in work (including women in senior positions and political positions)  
Gambling  
Giving to charities  
Health scares  
Homelessness  
House sales  
Household debt/ Personal debt  
Household income/ Income of households  
Human trafficking  
Immigration  
Imports  
Industrial decline  
Influence of the financial sector  
Influence of the technology sector  
Interest in traditional arts and crafts  
Internet addiction  
Job instability/ Job mobility/ Job stability  
Lack of health insurance  
Leaving the family home later/ Shared households (= multigenerational households, called “parasite singles” in Japan)  
Lifestyle diseases  
Local tax/ Local spending  
Long term unemployment  
M&A (= mergers and acquisitions, meaning takeovers)  
Mental illness  
Meritocracy (e.g. performance-based pay or the end of promotion due to seniority)  
Minorities in work (e.g. in senior positions)  
Missing children/ Runaway children  
Multilingual classrooms  
Number of elderly  
Obesity  
Old people’s homes  
Organised crime (e.g. mafia and gangs)  
Outsourcing  
People dropping out of the workforce (e.g. NEETs or people on disability benefits)  
Political activism (e.g. protests/ demonstrations, petitions)  
Political extremism  
Pornography/ The sex industry  
Position of the middle class/ Size of the middle class  
Poverty (e.g. the Working Poor or people living under the poverty line)  
Pre-school education  
Pressure on children to succeed  
Property prices/ Rents  
Recidivism (= Reoffending)/ People released from prison not being able to fit back in to society  
Respect for elders/ teachers/ parents/ fathers  
School absenteeism

School violence  
Self-harm  
Sex industry  
Sexual harassment (e.g. groping on trains)  
Single member households  
Stress-related illnesses  
Smoking/ Health problems due to smoking (including second hand smoke)  
Social entrepreneurship  
Social isolation  
Social liberalism  
Social mobility  
Social welfare  
Studying abroad  
Suicide  
Support for monarchy  
The lifestyle of "Millennials" (adults ages 18 to 32)  
The superrich (e.g. Internet billionaires)  
The underclass  
Trust in public institutions (banking, civil service, health service, teachers, the press and other media, the monarchy, government, political parties, politicians, etc)  
Union membership/ Union action (strikes etc)  
University entrance  
Unmarried mothers/ Single parent families  
White collar jobs  
Youth violence

## Social issues trends

### Social science vocabulary/ The language of trends

Try to guess the topics below. The gaps below are all related to the same topic (though the wording might be different).

1. According to the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, the total number of people suffering from \_\_\_\_\_ in 1980 stood at just 3,200 people. By 1998 this had leapt to 23,200 and this figure has most certainly increased over the past five years. Many Japanese medical institutions have found themselves unable to effectively treat patients suffering from \_\_\_\_\_ due to the increase in the number of cases. The first cases of \_\_\_\_\_, which can be fatal, were documented in Japan during the late sixties and early seventies. Over the last decade various regional surveys have shown that the number of recorded cases has been steadily rising. Although Japanese rates are not as high as those in Europe and the United States, the new survey indicates that the problem is rapidly growing. Professor Watanabe's previous research in conjunction with other studies conducted by medical researchers in various regions such as Niigata (published 2000), clearly indicate that the prevalence of \_\_\_\_\_ has been on the rise.
2. In the UK there is a significant delay in marriage compared to previous generations and a subsequent rise in \_\_\_\_\_. In the US, a new Pew Research Center analysis of recently released Census data suggests that most Millennials (adults ages 18 to 32) are still not setting out on their own. As of March 2013, only about one-in-three Millennials (34%) headed up their own household. This rate is unchanged from March 2012 and even lower than the level observed in the depths of the Great Recession. Thus, it is clear that the trend of \_\_\_\_\_ than in previous generations is not confined simply to Japan. This seriously questions the validity of the uniqueness claim about the so-called Japanese \_\_\_\_\_ notion.
3. More than two-thirds of British 16- to 64 year old \_\_\_\_\_, according to an analysis by the Office of National Statistics, compared with just over half – 53% – in 1971. Most of the progress in boosting \_\_\_\_\_ took place from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s, driven by anti-discrimination legislation and the shift in the economy away from male-dominated manufacturing towards services. Since 1991, the increase in \_\_\_\_\_ has levelled off. The ONS has collected data on \_\_\_\_\_ since 1996, when it was 67%. It has since risen to 72%, partly as a result of changes in the benefits regime for single parents.
4. Since 2000, \_\_\_\_\_ in the US has declined, shrinking in size, falling backward in income and wealth, and shedding some—but by no means all—of its characteristic faith in the future.
5. The (US) Census Bureau's annual report on income, poverty and health insurance shows that median \_\_\_\_\_ in 2012 not only remains below the 2007 pre-recession level, but is barely above its 1995 level. This is the longest period of stagnant median \_\_\_\_\_ since the Census Bureau began collecting such data in 1967. There are, however, significant variances across demographic groups. For example, the typical \_\_\_\_\_ headed by seniors has significantly increased.
6. 82% of the British public now think \_\_\_\_\_ is too large. Given that nearly seven in ten also believe it is the government's responsibility to reduce \_\_\_\_\_, politicians must recognise this growing discontent and prioritise policies that reduce \_\_\_\_\_.

7. Between 1970/71 and 2007/08 the proportion of three and four-year-olds in \_\_\_\_\_ in the UK tripled from 21 per cent to 64 per cent.
8. The UK was the 12th most expensive country in the EU-27 in which to buy a litre of premium unleaded petrol. Despite this, the proportion of \_\_\_\_\_ in Great Britain increased more than fourfold between 1971 and 2007, to 27 per cent.
9. The UK is still a long way off its 1980s levels of \_\_\_\_\_, when 65% said it was "very important" for Britain to continue to have one. However, there has been a fascinating turn-around in opinion – from 27% thinking this in 2006 to 45% expressing strong support in this year's latest survey.
10. In the eleven months to November 2008 there were 870,000 \_\_\_\_\_ in the UK, a large decrease from the 1.5 million recorded during the same period in 2007.

*Underline useful trends language above and put them into the three columns below. Please only include trends, not expressions that just mean "big" or "small".*

*Look at the version of the texts with trends language in italics to help with the task above.*

*Brainstorm other phrases which mean the same thing.*

*Are there any differences between the expressions which are in the same columns? Can you find any which mean exactly the same?*

*What grammatical forms are used above to talk about these time periods?*

- present (meaning right now)
- past and present
- just the past
- future

*Look at the texts again to check your answers.*

*Look at a version of the text with grammatical structures in bold to help you with the task above.*

## **Discussion**

Which trends above are most interesting/ important/ surprising?

What might the trends be for these things?

- The same things in different places
- The same things at different times
- Other social issues trends

## Hints

*These mixed up answers should go in the gaps above. Put each in the right place.*

eating disorders

economic inequality/ income differences between the rich and poor/ the income gap

female employment rates/ proportion of women at work/ the proportion of mothers who work/  
women in work/

house sales

household income/ income of households

households with two cars

pre-school education

shared households/ leaving the family home later/ "parasite singles"

support for monarchy

the position of the middle class

*Check your answers with the key below.*

## Suggested answers

1. According to the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, the total number of people suffering from eating disorders in 1980 stood at just 3,200 people. By 1998 this had leapt to 23,200 and this figure has most certainly increased over the past five years. Many Japanese medical institutions have found themselves unable to effectively treat patients suffering from eating disorders due to the increase in the number of cases. The first cases of eating disorders, which can be fatal, were documented in Japan during the late sixties and early seventies. Over the last decade various regional surveys have shown that the number of recorded cases has been steadily rising. Although Japanese rates are not as high as those in Europe and the United States, the new survey indicates that the problem is rapidly growing. Professor Watanabe's previous research in conjunction with other studies conducted by medical researchers in various regions such as Niigata (published 2000), clearly indicate that the prevalence of eating disorders has been on the rise.
2. In the UK there is a significant delay in marriage compared to previous generations and a subsequent rise in shared households. In the US, a new Pew Research Center analysis of recently released Census data suggests that most Millennials (adults ages 18 to 32) are still not setting out on their own. As of March 2013, only about one-in-three Millennials (34%) headed up their own household. This rate is unchanged from March 2012 and even lower than the level observed in the depths of the Great Recession. Thus, it is clear that the trend of leaving the family home later than in previous generations is not confined simply to Japan. This seriously questions the validity of the uniqueness claim about the so-called Japanese parasite singles notion.
3. More than two-thirds of British 16- to 64 year old women are in work, according to an analysis by the Office of National Statistics, compared with just over half – 53% – in 1971. Most of the progress in boosting female employment rates took place from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s, driven by anti-discrimination legislation and the shift in the economy away from male-dominated manufacturing towards services. Since 1991, the increase in the proportion of women at work has levelled off. The ONS has collected data on the proportion of mothers who work since 1996, when it was 67%. It has since risen to 72%, partly as a result of changes in the benefits regime for single parents.
4. Since 2000, the position of the middle class in the US has declined, shrinking in size, falling backward in income and wealth, and shedding some—but by no means all—of its characteristic faith in the future.
5. The (US) Census Bureau's annual report on income, poverty and health insurance shows that median household income in 2012 not only remains below the 2007 pre-recession level, but is barely above its 1995 level. This is the longest period of stagnant median household income since the Census Bureau began collecting such data in 1967. There are, however, significant variances across demographic groups. For example, the typical income of households headed by seniors has significantly increased.
6. 82% of the British public now think the income gap is too large. Given that nearly seven in ten also believe it is the government's responsibility to reduce income differences between the rich and poor, politicians must recognise this growing discontent and prioritise policies that reduce economic inequality.

7. Between 1970/71 and 2007/08 the proportion of three and four-year-olds in pre-school education in the UK tripled from 21 per cent to 64 per cent.
8. The UK was the 12th most expensive country in the EU-27 in which to buy a litre of premium unleaded petrol. Despite this, the proportion of households with two cars in Great Britain increased more than fourfold between 1971 and 2007, to 27 per cent.
9. The UK is still a long way off its 1980s levels of support for monarchy, when 65% said it was "very important" for Britain to continue to have one. However, there has been a fascinating turn-around in opinion – from 27% thinking this in 2006 to 45% expressing strong support in this year's latest survey.
10. In the eleven months to November 2008 there were 870,000 house sales in the UK, a large decrease from the 1.5 million recorded during the same period in 2007.

## Version with trends language highlighted

1. According to the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, the total number of people suffering from eating disorders in 1980 stood at just 3,200 people. By 1998 this had *leapt* to 23,200 and this figure has most certainly *increased* over the past five years. Many Japanese medical institutions have found themselves unable to effectively treat patients suffering from eating disorders due to *the increase* in the number of cases. The first cases of eating disorders, which can be fatal, were documented in Japan during the late sixties and early seventies. Over the last decade various regional surveys have shown that the number of recorded cases has been *steadily rising*. Although Japanese rates are not as high as those in Europe and the United States, the new survey indicates that the problem is *rapidly growing*. Professor Watanabe's previous research in conjunction with other studies conducted by medical researchers in various regions such as Niigata (published 2000), clearly indicate that the prevalence of eating disorders *has been on the rise*.
2. In the UK there is a significant delay in marriage compared to previous generations and a subsequent *rise* in shared households. In the US, a new Pew Research Center analysis of recently released Census data suggests that most Millennials (adults ages 18 to 32) are still not setting out on their own. As of March 2013, only about one-in-three Millennials (34%) headed up their own household. This rate *is unchanged* from March 2012 and *even lower than* the level observed in the depths of the Great Recession. Thus, it is clear that the trend of leaving the family home later than in previous generations is not confined simply to Japan. This seriously questions the validity of the uniqueness claim about the so-called Japanese parasite singles notion.
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4. Since 2000, the position of the middle class in the US has *declined, shrinking* in size, *falling backward* in income and wealth, and shedding some—but by no means all—of its characteristic faith in the future.
5. The (US) Census Bureau's annual report on income, poverty and health insurance shows that median household income in 2012 not only remains below the 2007 pre-recession level, but *is barely above* its 1995 level. This is the longest period of *stagnant* median household income since the Census Bureau began collecting such data in 1967. There are, however, significant variances across demographic groups. For example, the typical income of households headed by seniors has *significantly increased*.
6. 82% of the British public now think the income gap is too large. Given that nearly seven in ten also believe it is the government's responsibility to *reduce* income differences between the rich and poor, politicians must recognise this *growing* discontent and prioritise policies that *reduce* economic inequality.

7. Between 1970/71 and 2007/08 the proportion of three and four-year-olds in pre-school education in the UK *tripled* from 21 per cent to 64 per cent.
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10. In the eleven months to November 2008 there were 870,000 house sales in the UK, a *large decrease* from the 1.5 million recorded during the same period in 2007.

<b>Up</b>	<b>Flat/ Becoming flat</b>	<b>Down</b>	<b>Down and up/ Up and down</b>

Up	Flat/ Becoming flat	Down	Down and up/ Up and down
leapt increase steadily rising rapidly growing has been on the rise a rise progress boosting it has risen is barely above significantly increased tripled increased fourfold <b>accelerate</b> <b>increase exponentially</b> <b>an upward trend</b> <b>attain</b> <b>reach</b> <b>climb</b> <b>rocket</b> <b>double</b> <b>escalate</b> <b>expand</b> <b>grow</b> <b>increase at the same rate</b> <b>sustain its good progress</b> <b>shoot up</b> <b>jump</b> <b>rocket</b> <b>soar</b> <b>take off</b>	is unchanged has levelled off stagnant <b>be stable</b> <b>bottom out</b> <b>plateau</b> <b>flatten out</b> <b>remain constant</b> <b>remain steady</b> <b>stabilize</b> <b>stay flat</b>	reduce has declined shrinking a large decrease <b>decrease</b> <b>decrease rapidly</b> <b>deteriorate</b> <b>dive</b> <b>plummet</b> <b>plunge</b> <b>crash</b> <b>collapse</b> <b>drop dramatically</b> <b>fall sharply</b> <b>fall slightly</b> <b>halve</b> <b>shrink</b> <b>significant decline</b> <b>steady decline</b> <b>slump</b>	falling backward a turn-around in... <b>a blip</b> <b>a dip</b> <b>a peak</b> <b>(a new/ all-time) high</b> <b>be unstable</b> <b>fluctuate</b> <b>bounce back</b> <b>recover</b> <b>regain lost ground</b> <b>rebound</b> <b>pick up (again)</b> <b>fall back</b> <b>slip back</b>

### Homework

*Find two graphs related to social problems/ social studies and prepare to dictate them to a partner without saying the topic or any numbers by using language like that above. Your partner will listen to your description of the graph, draw it, and guess the topic.*