

More than 10% of households in Romania, Latvia and Bulgaria were three-generation in 2008

Average household size in the EU in 2008 ranged from less than two household members in Denmark to almost three in Bulgaria. On average the largest households were found in the countries of eastern and southern Europe where in all Member States except Estonia, household size averaged over 2.5. In all other countries except Ireland, it was below 2.5.

One explanation for these differences is the higher frequency of multi-generational households across eastern, and to a lesser extent southern, Europe. Three-generation households accounted for over 5% of households in all the eastern European members in 2008, while single-adult households were the most common type in the Nordic countries, Germany and the Netherlands.

Single-child households were more frequent in Bulgaria, Latvia and Portugal than elsewhere,

with over 40% of children in these countries living in households without any sibling under 18, while households with three or more children under 18 were most common in Belgium (23%), followed by Ireland (20%), the Netherlands (19%) and Finland (18%).

There are major differences between, on the one hand, the Nordic countries and, on the other, southern and eastern European countries, in the age at which young adults leave home: in Denmark and Sweden, half of all young men have left home by age 21, while in Greece, Slovenia and Bulgaria, half of all young men still live with their parents beyond age 31.

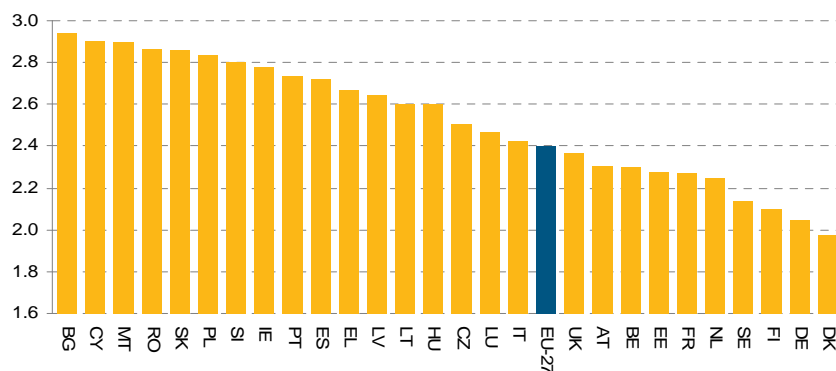
All figures are based on data from the anonymised Users' EU-SILC (Statistics on Income and Living Conditions) database.

Average household sizes

Average household size was smallest in the Nordic Member States and Germany, standing at under 2.2 household members in all these countries (see Figure 1). In Bulgaria, Cyprus and Malta, by

contrast, average household sizes stood at over 2.9 members, and in Romania, Slovakia and Poland, they were only slightly smaller, at over 2.8 members.

Figure 1: Average household size across the EU, 2008



Source: Eurostat (online data code: [ilc_lvph01](#))

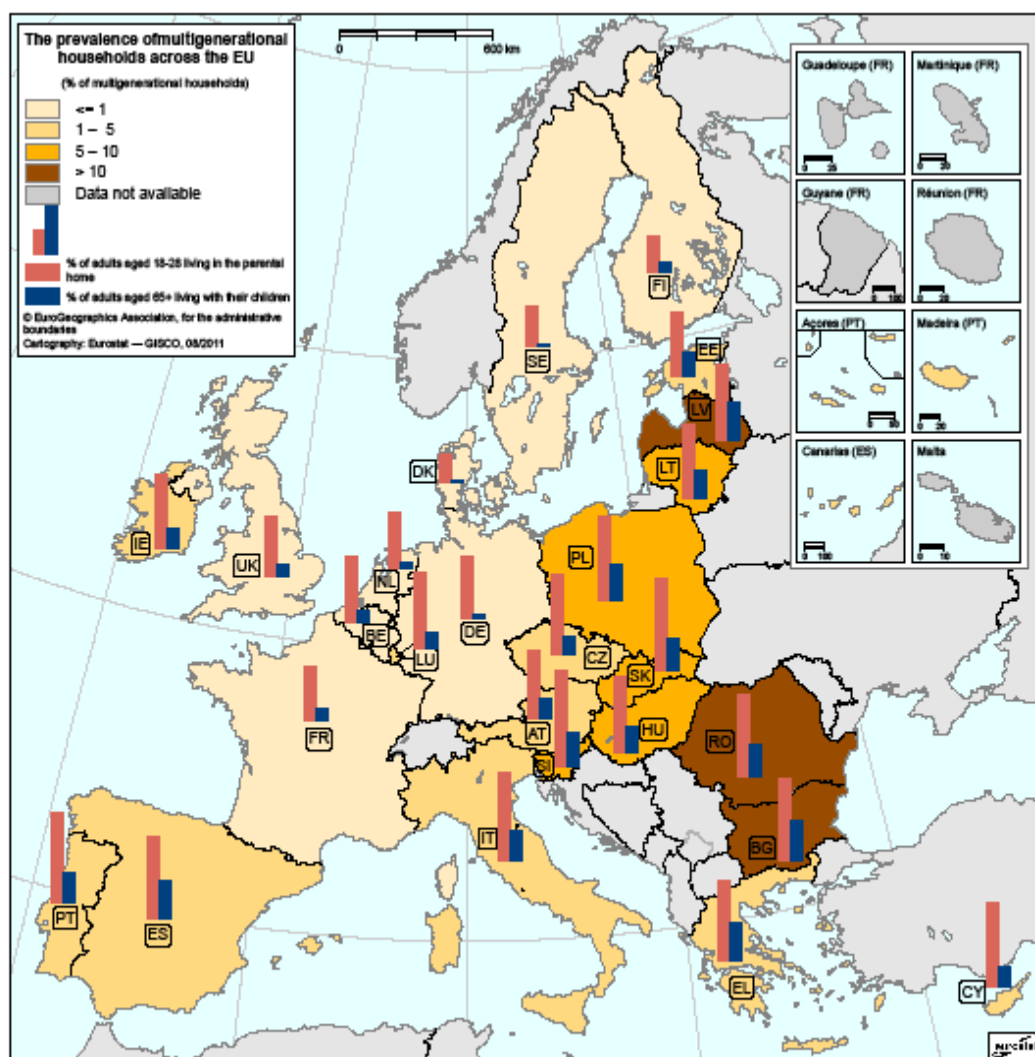
Three-generation households: most common across eastern Europe

One of the most important factors associated with large households is co-residence between the generations — typically, young adults remaining in the parental home for extended periods; older people living with their adult children; or multigenerational households, of three or more generations of the same family living together.

The extent of these three aspects of multigenerational co-residence in the countries of the EU is shown in Figure 2. In 2008, three-generation households were

least common in the Nordic and most of the other north-western European countries, where they accounted for less than 1% of households. Across southern Europe, as well as in the Czech Republic and Estonia, three-generation households accounted for between 1% and 5% of all households. In all the other eastern European countries, three-generation households accounted for over 5% of all households — and for over 10% in Romania, Latvia and Bulgaria.

Figure 2: Prevalence of multigenerational households (%), 2008



source: Eurostat, EU-SILC Users' database 2008 (France: EU-SILC 2007)

Source: EU-SILC Users' database. Note: 2008 data for all countries except France (2007)

Other aspects of inter-generational living are shown by bars on the map: the left bar shows co-residence between young adults and their parents, and the right bar shows co-residence between older people and their adult children.

As expected, the two are related. In countries with high levels of co-residence between young adults

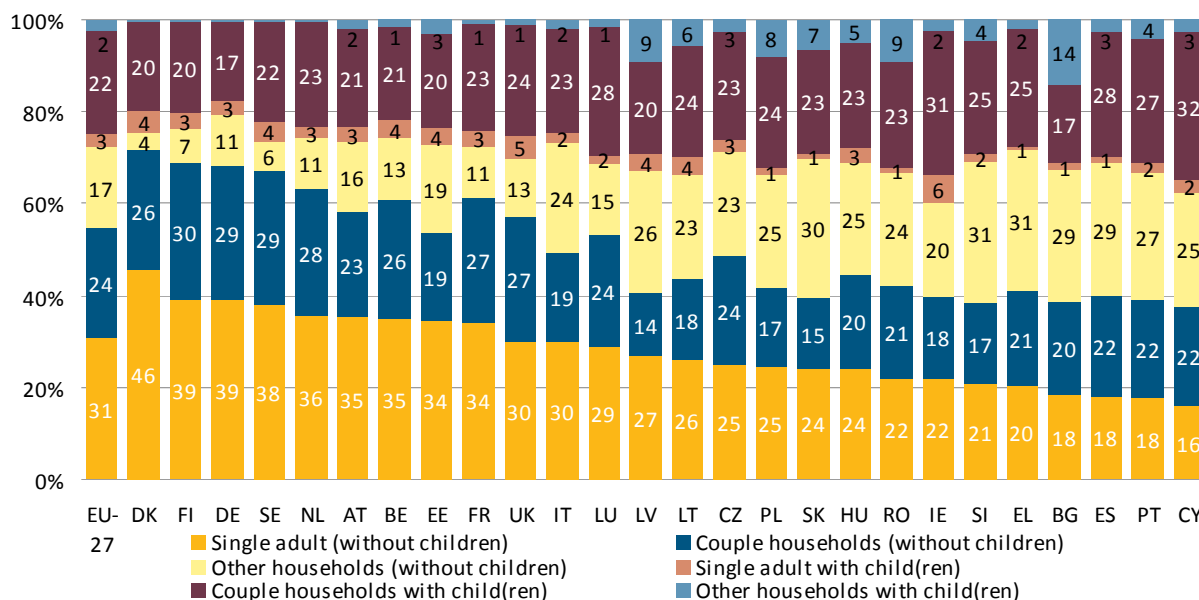
and their parents, there are also high levels of co-residence between older people and their adult children. However, there are exceptions such as Cyprus and the Czech Republic with high levels of co-residence between young adults and their parents, but only modest levels of co-residence between older people and their adult children.

Single-adult households are the most common type in the Nordic countries

Figure 3 shows variations in household type across the EU. In 2008 single-adult households were the most common type of household in all the Nordic Member States and several other north-western countries (i.e. the same countries where household

sizes were smallest). In these countries, single-adult households accounted for over 35 % of all households, as against 20 % or less in most of the southern European countries.

Figure 3: Household types in the European Union (%), 2008



Note: 2008 data for all countries except France (2007). "Children" means individuals under the age of 18.

Source: EU-SILC Users' database

The distribution of couple-only households follows a somewhat similar pattern: they were most prevalent in Finland, Germany and Sweden (over 29 % of households) but less common in the southern countries (22 % or less in all southern Member States). However, it was in some of the eastern European countries that couple-only households were the least common — in particular Latvia (14 %) and Slovakia (15 %).

'Other' households with no children under 18 were most common in the southern and eastern European countries (around 30 % of households in Greece, Slovenia, and Slovakia), and least common in the Nordic countries (only 4 % in Denmark). These households are predominantly formed by co-residence between parents and their adult children, or by adults and their elderly parents and confirm the findings presented in Figure 2.

Households consisting of a single adult with child(ren) under 18 formed only 3 % of households

across the EU-27. Proportions varied from 1 % in southern and eastern Europe to 6 % in Ireland, and were generally high across the Nordic countries and north-western Europe, and low across southern Europe. Across eastern Europe, some countries (for example the Baltic states) had high proportions of single-parent households, while others (e.g. Slovakia, Poland, Bulgaria and Romania) had very low proportions.

Households containing a nuclear family consisting of a couple and their children (including at least one child under 18) accounted for 22 % of households across the EU. The proportions were highest in Cyprus (32 %) and Ireland (31 %) and lowest in Germany and Bulgaria (17 %). Extended or complex households with children under 18 were relatively uncommon across the EU, but most common in Bulgaria (14 %), and Romania and Latvia (both 9 %).

Children's living arrangements

Table 1 presents an analysis view of living arrangements from the perspective of the child. Columns 1-4 tabulate the percentages of children

according to the total number of children living in the household. In 2008, Belgium had the largest percentage of children living in households with three

children (27%), and four or more children (13%). Other countries with a relatively high percentage living in households with three or more children were Ireland, Finland and the Netherlands. Households with larger numbers of children were least common in Greece and Spain, with less than one in ten children living in households with 3 or more children. These countries, and some other southern and eastern European countries, had large numbers of one child-only households: in Bulgaria, Latvia and Portugal, over

40% of children did not have a sibling under 18 in the same household.

Thinking back to Figure 1, which tabulated household size across Europe, it becomes clear that the large households found in eastern and southern Europe do not arise because people in these countries have particularly large numbers of children, but because of patterns of extended family living.

Table 1: The living arrangements of children under 18 (%), 2008

	Percentage of households with				Percentage of children living				
	1 child	2 children	3 children	4+ children	with 1 parent	with 2 parents, cohabiting	with 2 parents, married	without parents	in a three-generational household
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
EU-27	30.5	46.7	16.2	6.6	13.6	11.5	73.8	1.2	6.6
BE	24.6	34.8	27.4	13.2	15.3	15.1	67.2	2.4	2.5
BG	42.4	41.3	9.6	6.7	14.4	15.6	66.9	3.2	43.3
CZ	33.9	51.5	12.3	2.4	14.9	9.8	74.6	0.7	7.7
DK	23.4	49.6	21.0	6.0	17.8	14.0	66.9	1.2	0.1
DE	30.4	46.5	17.1	6.0	15.1	6.6	77.5	0.8	0.7
EE	38.0	42.3	13.7	6.0	21.4	22.9	54.0	1.7	11.0
IE	23.6	40.9	24.8	10.8	23.2	7.4	67.8	1.6	3.4
EL	27.2	63.9	6.5	2.4	4.8	2.1	91.8	1.3	5.6
ES	36.2	54.6	7.2	2.0	7.1	7.8	83.9	1.2	5.4
FR	26.1	45.9	20.1	7.9	13.5	21.0	64.5	0.9	1.8
IT	36.2	49.2	12.7	1.9	10.8	6.3	82.1	0.8	5.2
CY	27.7	55.5	13.7	3.1	9.3	0.8	89.0	1.0	2.5
LV	40.9	38.6	13.5	7.1	23.3	14.5	58.9	3.4	24.8
LT	38.7	47.8	7.6	5.9	17.6	5.2	74.1	3.1	15.5
LU	26.2	55.0	15.3	3.5	9.9	8.0	81.9	0.2	2.8
HU	34.0	42.1	14.7	9.1	15.4	12.2	71.3	1.1	14.5
NL	19.0	48.4	22.3	10.3	11.5	13.9	74.2	0.4	0.4
AT	31.2	44.5	17.3	7.0	12.9	10.6	74.4	2.1	6.3
PL	33.6	43.3	15.6	7.5	10.8	10.6	77.9	0.8	22.0
PT	40.6	47.2	9.3	3.0	12.3	11.0	74.6	2.1	10.8
RO	35.7	39.5	12.3	12.6	6.5	7.0	84.1	2.5	23.1
SI	30.1	51.2	14.4	4.2	10.0	19.8	69.6	0.6	12.8
SK	33.1	43.6	16.4	6.9	10.1	4.3	84.9	0.7	19.4
FI	24.3	42.0	21.1	12.6	13.4	16.4	69.2	1.0	0.6
SE	25.1	46.1	21.6	7.2	17.0	27.3	54.4	1.3	0.3
UK	26.8	45.7	19.0	8.5	20.8	12.8	65.1	1.3	2.9

Note: 2008 data for all countries except France (2007).

"Parents" refers to biological, foster and adoptive parents, and the spouse or partner of a biological parent.

Source: EU-SILC Users' database.

Columns 5-8 in Table 1 show the percentage of children under 18 living with one parent; with two cohabiting parents; with two married parents; and without natural or adoptive parents.

The percentage of children living with one parent was highest in Latvia and Ireland (both 23%), and also stood at above 20% in the UK and Estonia. It was lowest in Greece, where fewer than 5% of children lived with one parent, and was also low in Romania (7%), Spain (7%) and Cyprus (9%).

There were also great variations in the percentage of children living with two cohabiting parents. This figure was lowest in Cyprus and Greece (0.8% and 2.1% respectively), and highest in Sweden (27%).

The last column refers to children in three-generational households. These figures mirror the results presented in Figure 2, albeit more starkly. Their percentage was well below 1% in the Nordic countries, the Netherlands and Germany. By contrast, it stood at over 20% in Latvia, Poland and Romania, and at 43% in Bulgaria.

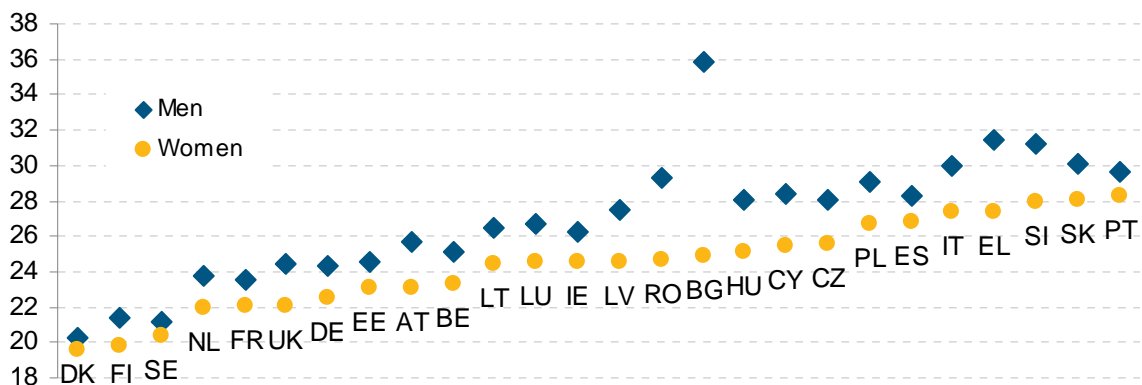
Transition to adulthood: late home-leaving in eastern Europe

Figures 4 and 5 show the ages at which people typically make two of the important transitions to adulthood: moving out of the parental home and living with a partner. In both figures, countries are ranked by the age at which women leave the parental home. In 2008 home-leaving took place earliest in the Nordic Member States, with half of all women having left home well before age 21 in Denmark, Finland and Sweden. Home-leaving is also relatively early across the other north-western countries, and later in the southern European

countries. Across eastern Europe, the average age for women leaving home ranged from 23 in Estonia to 28 in Slovakia. In most countries, men tended to leave home around two years later than women. However, in Bulgaria, men left home a full 11 years later — at a median of 36, compared to 25 for women. This reflects a practice in Bulgaria of couples living with the man's parents¹.

¹ Analysis of EU-SILC data shows that, among Bulgarian men aged 18-30 who live with a partner, over 50% also live with their parents

Figure 4: Age by which half of all individuals are living away from the parental home, 2008

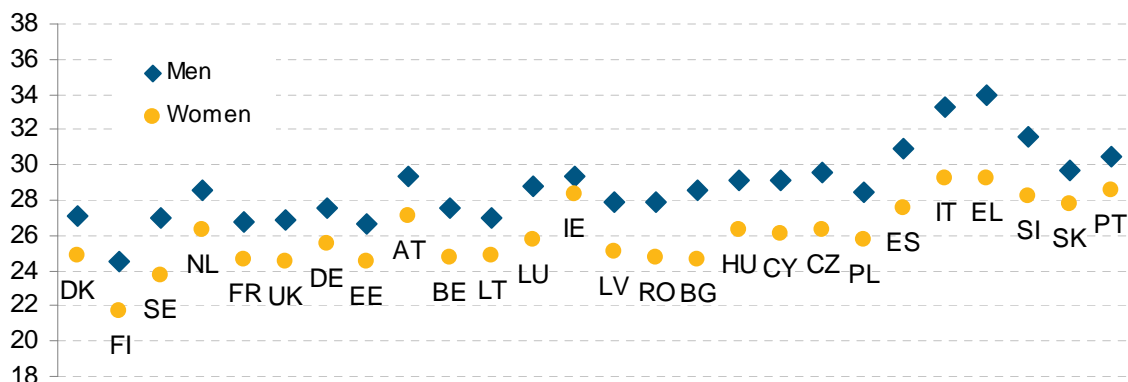


Note: 2008 data for all countries except France (2007)
Source: EU-SILC Users' database.

Figure 5 shows the age at which half of all individuals live with a partner. In most of the north-western countries, partnership tended to occur several years later than leaving home (e.g. in the Netherlands, men on average left home at the age of 24, but did not live with a partner until they were 29). This reflects a tendency for young adults to spend several years living alone before moving in with a partner. In southern Europe, the age at

partnership was much closer to the age at leaving home (e.g. in Portugal young men on average left home at 29.6 years and lived with a partner at 30.5 years). And in several of the eastern European countries, the median age for partnership was actually *lower* than the age of home-leaving, indicating that it is common for young adults to remain living in the same dwelling as their parents while they also live with a partner.

Figure 5: Age by which half are living with a partner, 2008



Note: 2008 data for all countries except France (2007)
Source: EU-SILC Users' database.

Older people: very small households in northern Europe

Table 2 summarises the living arrangements of people aged 65 and over² in 2008. Older women in all the eastern European countries are less likely to live with a partner than women in other countries, which is linked to the relatively lower life expectancy for men in many eastern European countries. For women who do not live with a partner, it was very common in most of the eastern European countries to live with one or more other people (37 % of Latvian women and 32 % of

Bulgarian women). This was also fairly common in the southern European countries, with over 20 % of older women in Portugal, Spain and Greece living without a partner but with other people. In many northern European countries, by contrast, this arrangement was virtually absent (less than 2% in Sweden and Denmark).

For women who did live with a partner, it was generally less common to live with other people besides. However, in a number of eastern and southern European countries, significant proportions of older women lived with a partner and other people with the highest share in Spain (18 %).

² These figures relate to older people in private households: older people in institutions such as nursing homes are not sampled by the EU-SILC and are not included in this analysis.

Table 2: The living arrangements of men and women aged 65 years and over (%), 2008

	Women				Men			
	Living alone	No partner, not living alone	Living just with partner	Living with partner plus other/s	Living alone	No partner, not living alone	Living just with partner	Living with partner plus other/s
EU-27	41.2	14.2	37.4	7.2	19.7	4.8	60.0	15.5
BE	45.2	8.7	41.0	5.0	23.2	3.5	62.7	10.7
BG	29.6	31.8	26.1	12.6	13.5	9.7	49.5	27.4
CZ	43.2	17.5	33.8	5.5	17.7	5.0	62.9	14.4
DK	56.6	1.7	41.3	0.4	31.3	1.2	66.6	0.9
DE	41.2	4.1	52.9	1.8	23.0	1.5	71.0	4.5
EE	47.5	23.0	23.4	6.2	22.2	5.6	55.7	16.6
IE	38.8	19.1	36.4	5.6	23.4	9.1	53.8	13.8
EL	28.3	24.4	33.6	13.7	7.4	5.0	53.4	34.1
ES	25.5	26.0	31.0	17.5	10.9	8.3	47.9	32.9
FR	48.6	7.5	40.3	3.6	21.4	3.9	64.7	10.1
IT	40.3	17.6	30.8	11.3	16.3	6.6	51.7	25.4
CY	28.6	16.7	45.3	9.5	10.5	4.6	65.0	19.9
LV	36.6	37.0	17.0	9.4	19.1	11.9	40.5	28.5
LT	41.7	24.8	25.7	7.9	16.8	7.8	55.1	20.4
LU	40.6	8.9	45.0	5.5	17.2	3.8	66.7	12.3
HU	41.2	28.4	24.9	5.5	15.8	8.3	57.4	18.5
NL	48.4	2.8	47.3	1.6	18.2	1.6	75.0	5.2
AT	44.6	12.5	34.1	8.8	18.9	4.0	58.5	18.6
PL	43.5	25.8	20.9	9.7	19.8	9.0	44.9	26.3
PT	30.7	23.1	35.9	10.3	12.2	8.7	57.8	21.4
RO	36.7	25.9	27.7	9.7	17.2	8.6	53.3	20.9
SI	36.2	23.6	28.4	11.8	9.7	6.6	56.3	27.4
SK	43.3	23.3	23.6	9.8	14.9	6.0	52.6	26.6
FI	51.8	7.2	37.7	3.4	24.1	4.1	65.1	6.7
SE	51.1	1.8	46.5	0.6	25.6	1.5	70.7	2.2
UK	46.5	7.9	41.1	4.5	27.0	3.8	60.5	8.8

Source: EU-SILC Users' database. Note: 2008 data for all countries except France (2007)

The big difference between genders relates to the fact that older men were far more likely to live with a partner than older women; this has to do with gender differentials in life expectancy. Men without a partner are most likely to live with other people in countries where extended household is common — Latvia (12 %), Bulgaria (10 %), and Poland, Romania, Ireland and Portugal (9 %). Substantial

numbers of men in many countries live with a partner and other people. This proportion is highest in Greece (34 %) and Spain (33 %). It is also over 25% in Latvia, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Slovakia, Poland and Italy. Once again, this living arrangement is almost completely absent in Denmark and Sweden, and uncommon across north-western Europe.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

This Statistics in Focus (SiF) is an output of the Network for the Analysis of EU-SILC (Net-SILC), which has brought together expertise from both national statistical institutes and academic researchers.

This SiF was written by Maria Iacovou and Alexandra Skew, working at the Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Essex (ISER), and edited by Gara Rojas González and Pascal Wolff from Eurostat.

Background

EU-SILC (EU Statistics on income and living conditions) is the reference source for statistics and indicators on income and living conditions. It is organised under a [Framework Regulation 1177/2003](#).

EU-SILC is the main source of information used in the European Union to develop indicators monitoring poverty and social exclusion.

Data source

The results presented in this paper were computed on the basis of anonymised microdata disseminated by Eurostat to researchers in a 'Users' database'. The 2008-1 version of the database was used for all countries except France (version 2007-2) and Malta (not available in the users' database) Malta is therefore not covered in this report, and the EU-27 aggregate does not include Malta (except for Figure 1 which is derived from the Eurostat website).

Definitions

Household: a person living alone or a group of people who live together in the same private dwelling and share expenditures, including the joint provision of the essentials of living. Only information regarding private households is collected in EU-SILC, in particular people living in institutions are not sampled.

Child: a person aged below 18.

Partnership formation: partnership being consensual union with or without a legal basis is measured in EU-SILC as the current situation at the time of the interview for all persons aged 16 and over.

Household grid

Relationships between individuals are usually established by means of a 'household grid' or 'relationship matrix', which records the nature of the relationships between all household members. Unfortunately, this type of information is not available from the users' database.

Instead only the personal identifiers of each individual's spouse or partner, mother and father, where these are resident in the same household, are recorded. Thus, in the harmonised output for all countries, only this more limited information identifying a spouse, mother or father is available. This means that many relationships (e.g. co-resident cousins or aunts/uncles) cannot be identified. In addition, there may be uncertainty relating to the specific nature of the parent/child relationship: most particularly, step-parents are not distinguished from natural or adoptive parents.

Abbreviations

EU-27: Belgium (BE), Bulgaria (BG), Czech Republic (CZ), Denmark (DK), Germany (DE), Estonia (EE), Ireland (IE), Greece (EL), Spain (ES), France (FR), Italy (IT), Cyprus (CY), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT), Luxembourg (LU), Hungary (HU), Malta (MT), Netherlands (NL), Austria (AT), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Romania (RO), Slovenia (SI), Slovakia (SK), Finland (FI), Sweden (SE) and United Kingdom (UK).

Regional groupings used in this publication
(adapted from the list published by the UN Statistical Division³)

Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia.

North-western Europe: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Southern Europe: Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

³ <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm#europe>

Further information

Eurostat Website: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

Data on 'Population and social conditions — Living conditions and social protection'

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/income_social_inclusion_living_conditions/data

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