

Household composition statistics

Statistics Explained

Data extracted in June 2023.

Planned article update: 31 May 2024.

"In 2022, 198 million households resided in the EU with 2.2 members per household on average."

"The number of single-person households without children in the EU increased by 30.7 % from 2009 to 2022."

"In 2022, 5.5 % of adult women aged 25-54 years, in the EU, were single parents with children, against 1.1 % of adult men."

This article presents data on how the number and composition of [households](#) have changed in the [European Union \(EU\)](#) and in the EU Member States since 2009. It also reports on the trends for men and women living either as a couple, alone or in other type of household. Children's presence in households is also given special attention. The statistics in this article are based on the [European Union Labour Force Survey \(EU-LFS\)](#), the largest European household sample survey.

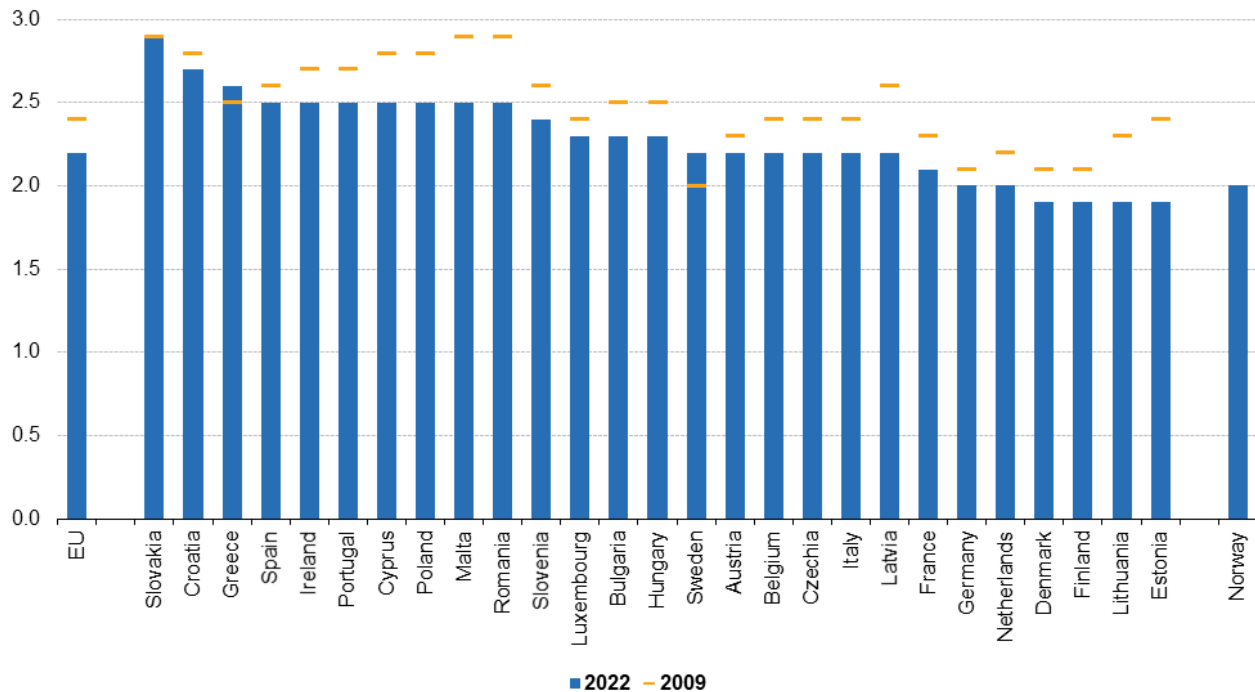
Increasing number of households composed of adults living alone

In 2022, 198 million households resided in the EU, with 2.2 members per household on average.

Figure 1 indicates that the largest average household size in 2022 was recorded in Slovakia (2.9 members), followed by Croatia (2.7) and Greece (2.6), while the smallest was recorded in Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, and Finland (each with 1.9 members).

The trend from 2009 to 2022 indicates a decline in the average number of people per household. This was observed in 24 out of the 27 EU Member States. Estonia experienced the most significant reduction of 0.5 members since 2009, followed by Malta, Romania, Latvia, and Lithuania, where the average household size dropped by 0.4 members. Only Greece and Sweden observed a slight increase of 0.1 and 0.2, respectively, in their average household size. Additionally, Slovakia shows a consistent average value of 2.9 in both 2009 and 2022.

Average number of people per household, 2009 and 2022



Norway: no data for 2009.

Break in the data series in 2021.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: lfst_hhantych)

eurostat

Figure 1: Average number of people per household, 2009 and 2022 Source: Eurostat (lfst_hhantych)

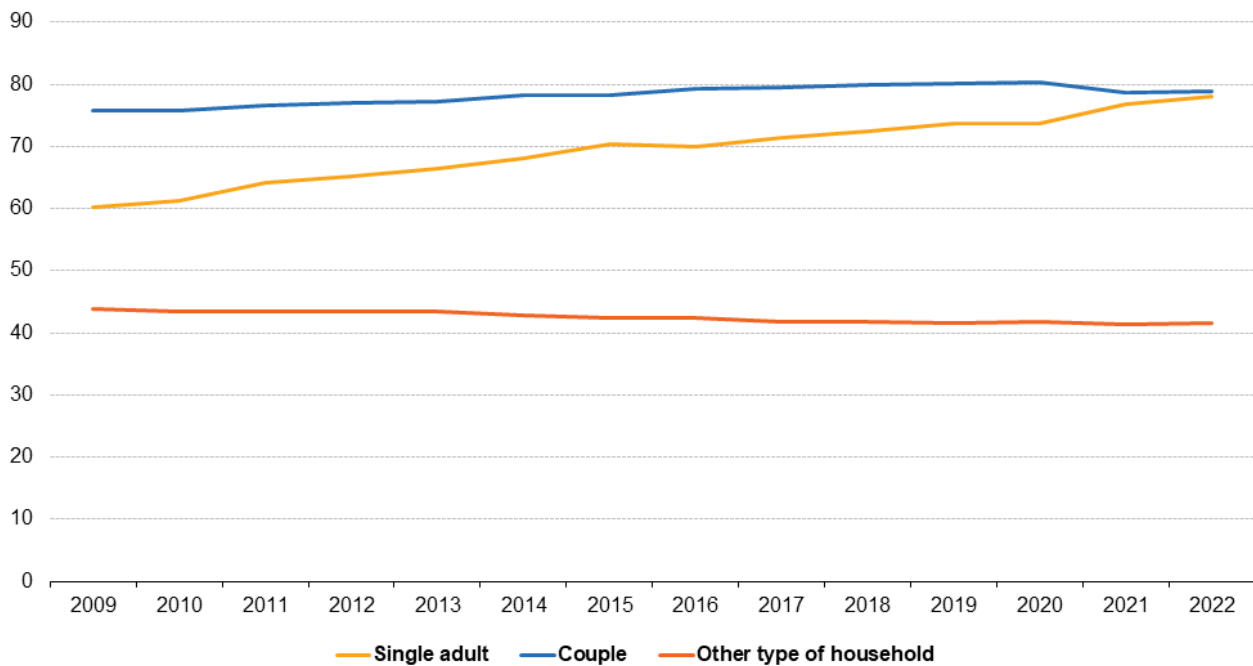
The total number of households in the EU rose by 10.3 % from 2009 to 2022. However, single adult households (i.e. households comprising only one adult, living with or without children) increased much faster, by 29.6 % in the same period (see Figure 2). This growth is even more pronounced in single adult households without children (+30.7 %). See Figure 3 to compare 2009 and 2022 data by presence of children.

Households made up of couples (according to the legal marital status or de facto relationship), with or without children, registered a slower increase of 4.0 % since 2009. This increase is driven by the higher number of couples living without children, which rose 9.3 % from 2009 to 2022. At the same time, the number of couples with children declined by 3.4 %.

Moreover, households with two adults (not a couple) or more, also referred to as 'other type' of households in this article, decreased by 5.3 % from 2009 to 2022 in the EU. The decrease in this type of household is higher for households with children (-10.3 %) than for those without children (-3.2 %).

Households by type, EU, 2009 - 2022

(in millions)



Break in the data series in 2021.

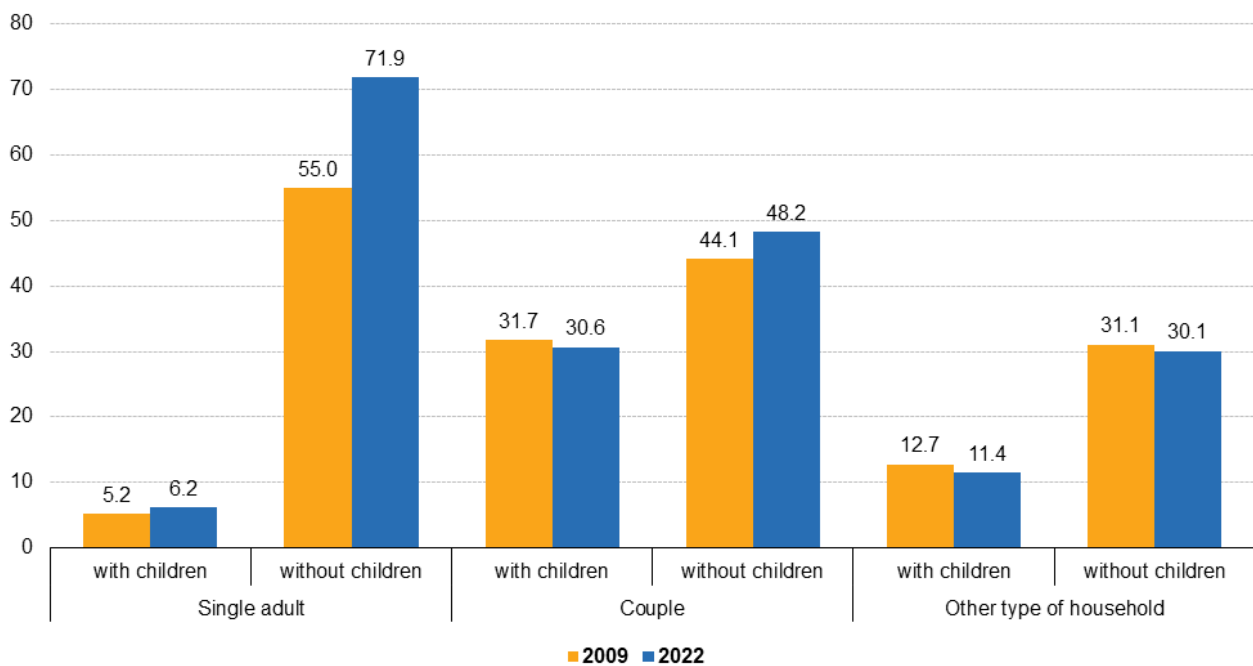
Source: Eurostat (online data code: lfst_hhnhtych)

eurostat

Figure 2: Households by type, EU, 2009 - 2022 Source: Eurostat (lfst_hhnhtych)

Households by type and presence of children, EU, 2009 and 2022

(in millions)



Break in the data series in 2021.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: lfst_hhnhtych)

eurostat

Figure 3: Households by type and presence of children, EU, 2009 and 2022 Source: Eurostat (lfst_hhnhtych)

The most numerous type of household in the EU in 2022 were single adult households without children, amounting to 71.9 million, followed by couples without children representing 48.2 million, and couples with children numbering 30.6 million.

A main conceptual issue related to household statistics is the distinction between child and adult. In line with international standards, a child is defined as a household member aged less than 18 years. Respectively, an adult is a person aged 18 years and over.

Relative differences in households for men and women, young people and older people

Regarding the change in the number of the adult population between 2009 and 2022, various trends have emerged according to age and sex (see Figure 4).

Concerning single adults, both men and women recorded a higher number of people living as single adults in the household. This finding holds for all age groups in 2022 compared with 2009. Furthermore, the growth was higher than 12 % for all categories.

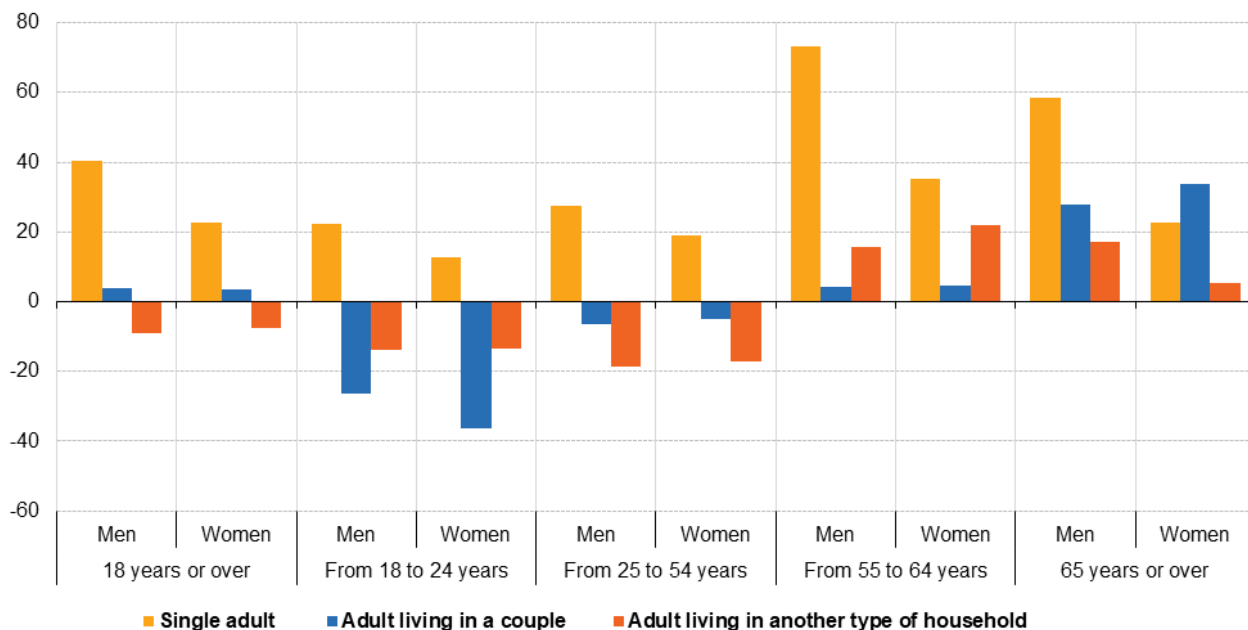
For both men and women, the proportion of single adults increased faster than that of adults living in a couple. This finding is observed for men and women of all age groups, apart from women aged 65 years and over for whom a higher increase was recorded for those living in a couple.

The number of adult men living alone (with or without children) increased more steeply than that of adult women living alone, with a significant peak of single adults in the age group 55-64 years (+73.3 % for men against +35.1 % for women). Older men aged 65 years and over living alone increased by 58.6 % in 2022 compared with 2009, while the corresponding increase for women in that age was 22.6 %.

For both men and women, the number of young adults living in a couple significantly decreased, between 2009 and 2022, especially for women: a decrease of 36.3 % was recorded for women aged 18-24 years against a decrease of 26.3 % for men of the same age group. A decrease was also recorded in the number of men and women aged 25-54 years living in a couple: by 6.4 % and 4.8 %, respectively.

Growth rate of the adult population in the EU by type of household, sex and age

(change between 2009 and 2022, in %)



Break in the data series in 2021.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: lfst_hhindws)

eurostat

Figure 4: Growth rate of the adult population in the EU by type of household, sex and age Source: Eurostat (lfst_hhindws)

In addition to these trends, 2022 data show differences at EU level regarding the share of single adults, adults living in a couple or in another type of household (i.e. adults who do not live alone but are not in a couple – living with parents or flat mates, for example), in the total adult population (see Figure 5).

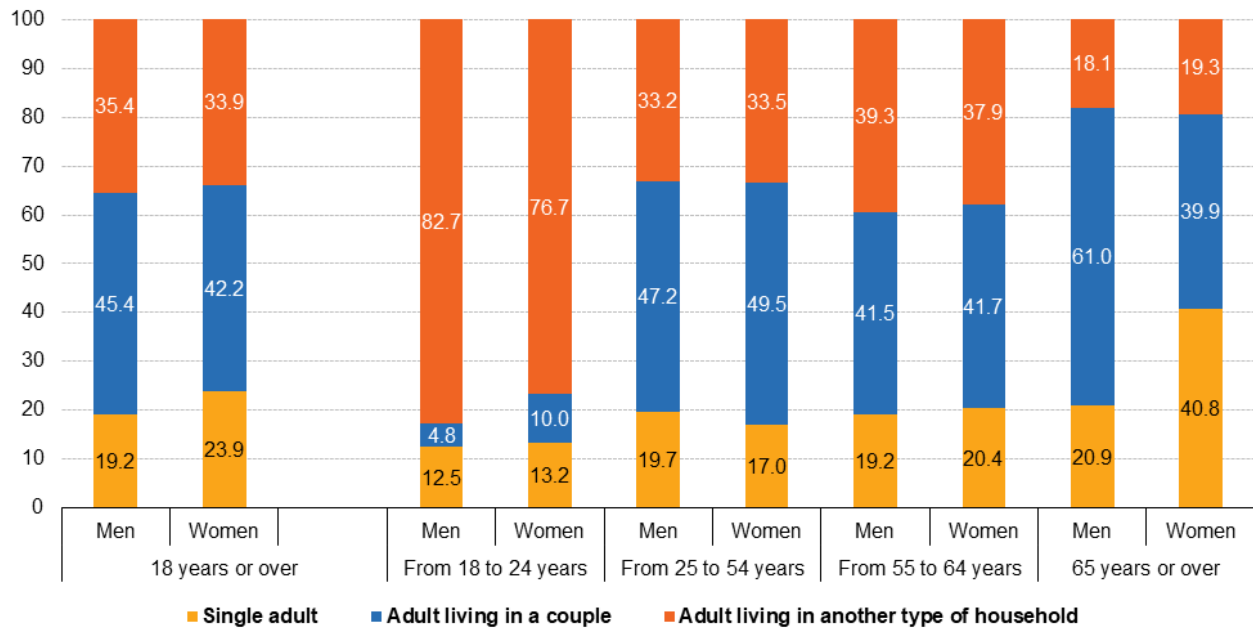
For both sexes, the most prominent difference was observed in the age group 18-24 years compared with all other ages. Young people aged 18-24 years who live in another type of household are significantly more numerous (82.7 % of men and 76.7 % of women) than adults living in another type of household across the other age groups.

In 2022, almost half of the adult population in the EU, aged 25-54 years, lived in a couple (47.2 % of men and 49.5 % of women, respectively). Compared with this age group, the proportion of adult men aged 65 years and above living in a couple is considerably higher (61 %) whilst it is much lower for women (only 39.9 % of women aged 65 years and over lived in a couple).

Compared with the other age groups, the proportion of single adult women aged 65 years and over is at least double (40.8 %). Moreover, compared with men of the same age, the percentage of women living alone is also significantly higher: 20.9 % of adult men aged 65 years and over do not live in a couple or in another type of household.

Share of the adult population in the EU by type of household, sex and age, 2022

(% of the total adult population)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: lfst_hhindws)

eurostat

Figure 5: Share of the adult population in the EU by type of household, sex and age, 2022 Source: Eurostat (lfst_hhindws)

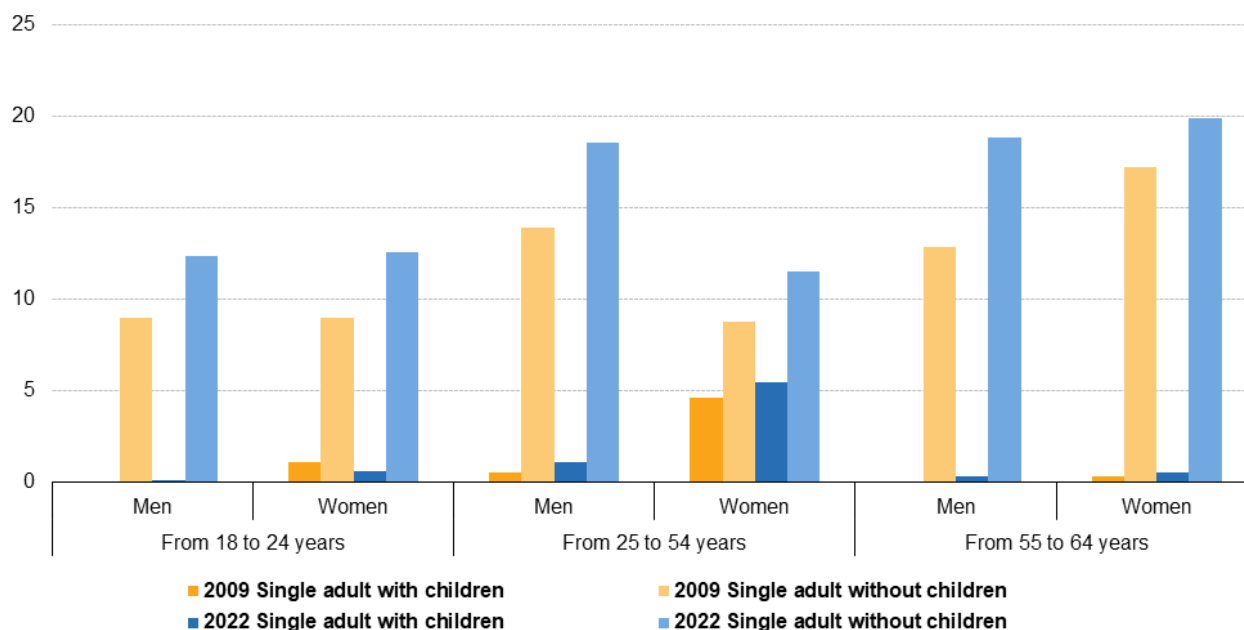
Looking at the share of the single adult population among the total adult population in the EU, by age, sex and presence of children, major differences between men and women can be highlighted, in both 2009 and 2022, especially in the 25-54 years age group (see Figure 6). In this age group, the share of single adult women with children is substantially higher than that of men in the same situation, in both 2009 and 2022. Furthermore, from 2009 to 2022, this share increased faster for women than for men.

In 2022, 5.5 % of adult women aged 25-54 years were single parents with children, against 1.1 % of adult men, probably due to the prevalence of single-parent households led by women.

Concurrently, between 2009 and 2022, in the 25-54 years age group, the share of single adult men without children remained much higher than the share of women in the same situation, and increased faster than for women over that period. In 2022, 18.6 % of adult men were single without children against 11.5 % of adult women (in 2009, 13.9 % and 8.7 %, respectively).

Share of the single adult population in the EU by age, sex, and presence of children, 2009 and 2022

(% of the total adult population by sex and age class)



2009 data for men single adults with children aged 18-24 and 55-64, are not available due to very low reliability. 2022 data for men single adults with children aged 18-24, with low reliability.

Break in the data series in 2021.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: lfst_hhindws)

eurostat

Figure 6: Share of the single adult population in the EU by age, sex, and presence of children, 2009 and 2022
Source: Eurostat (lfst_hhindws)

Presence and number of children

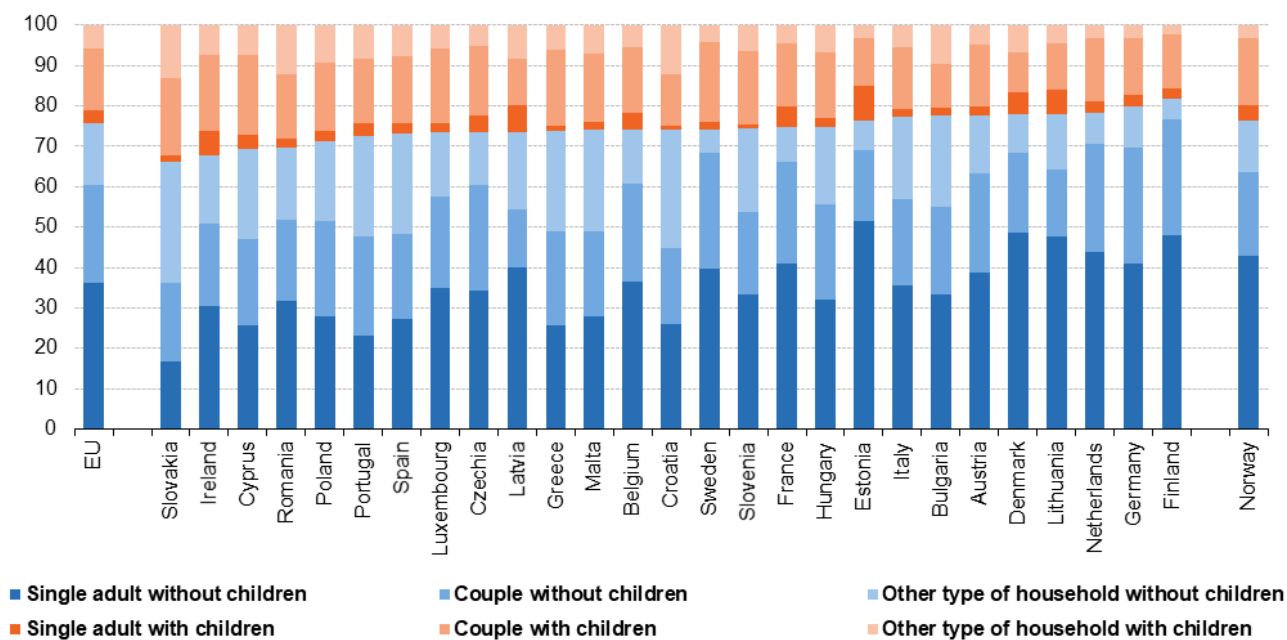
The distribution of households in 2022 reveals significant differences in the presence of children across countries (see Figure 7). In the EU as a whole, 24.3 % of households included children, while 75.7 % did not. Among EU Member States, more than 30 % of households had children in Slovakia (33.9 %), Ireland (32.4 %), Cyprus (30.6 %), and Romania (30.3 %). On the other hand, 20 % or less of households in Germany (20.0 %) and Finland (18.1 %) included children.

Couples accounted for 63.5 % of households with children in the EU, making it the most common type of household with children. Sweden, Finland, Greece, the Netherlands, and Slovenia had the highest percentages of couples among households with children, over 70 %. Croatia, Bulgaria, Denmark, and Latvia had the lowest percentages, with less than 50 % of households with children being couples.

Other types of households represented less than a quarter (23.7 %) of households with children in the EU. This proportion across Member States ranged from over 35 % in Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia to approximately 15 % or less in the Netherlands, Estonia, and Finland.

Among households with children in the EU, the highest proportions of single parents were found in Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia (all with more than 25 %). Conversely, Slovakia, Greece, Slovenia, and Croatia had the lowest proportions, all below 5 %. Single parents accounted for 12.8 % of households with children in the EU as a whole.

Households by type and presence of children, 2022 (% of total households)



Slovenia: low data reliability for single adult with children.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: lfst_hhnhtych)

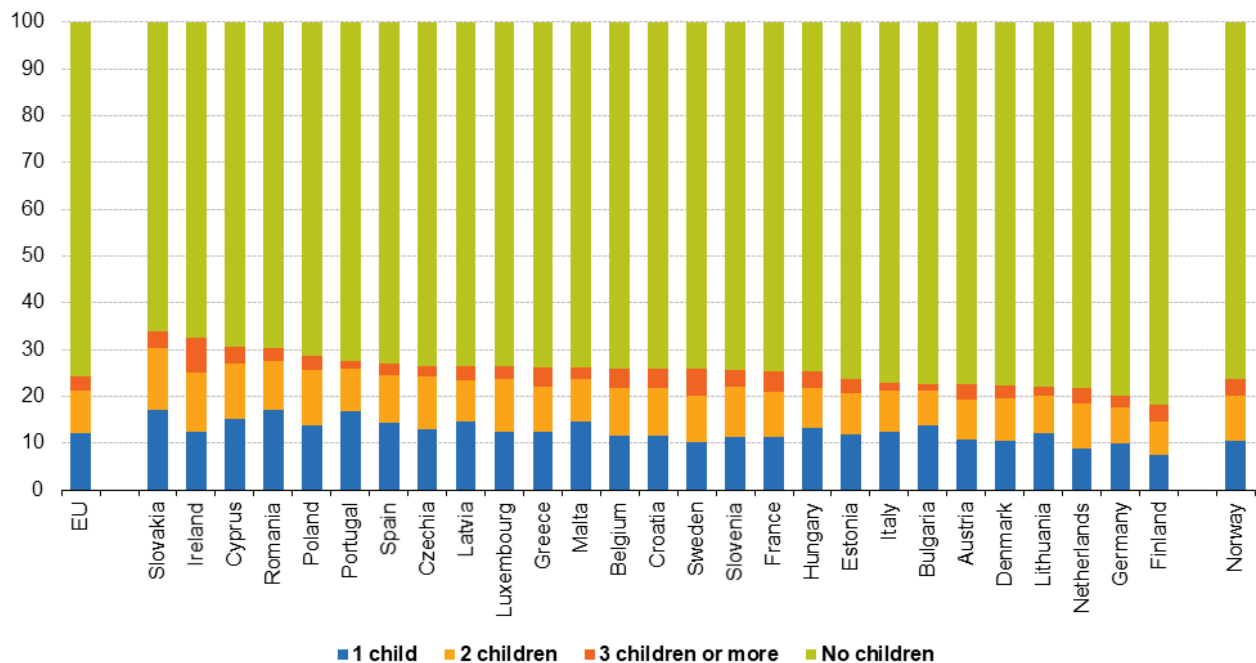
eurostat

Figure 7: Households by type and presence of children, 2022 Source: Eurostat (lfst_hhnhtych)

Considering households with children, those with 1 child are the most common. In 2022, in the EU, almost half of households with children had 1 child (49.5 %), while 38.2 % included 2 children, and 12.4 % 3 or more children. Households with 1 child were the prevalent among households with children in all EU Member States, except in Ireland and the Netherlands, where households with 2 children show a higher percentage (see Figure 8).

Households with 3 or more children were the least common across countries. Their percentage among all households ranged from 7.4 % in Ireland, 5.6 % in Sweden, and 4.3 % in France and Belgium, to less than 2 % in Lithuania, Portugal, Italy, and Bulgaria.

Households by presence and number of children, 2022 (% of total households)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ifst_hhnhtych)

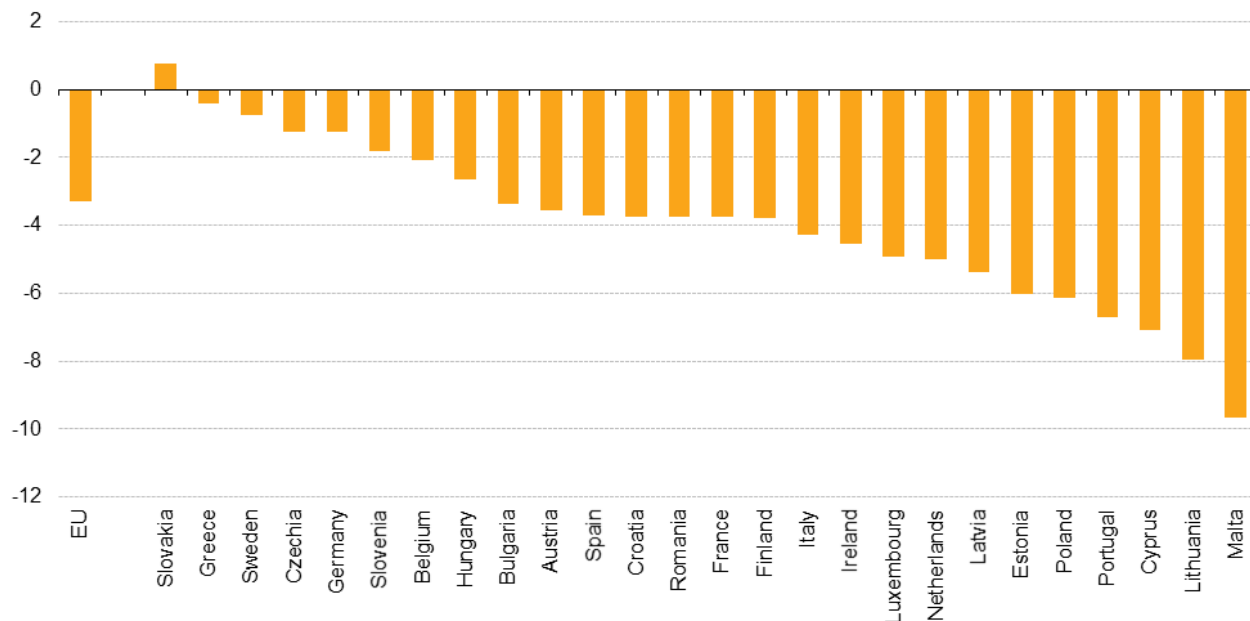
eurostat

Figure 8: Households by presence and number of children, 2022 Source: Eurostat (ifst_hhnhtych)

Figure 9 shows the change in the percentage of households with children among the total number of households from 2009 to 2022. Out of the 26 EU Member States with available data, 25 experienced a decline in this percentage over this period. Slovakia was the only exception, with a slight increase of 0.8 percentage points (pp). Among the other EU Member States, Malta recorded the largest decrease of 9.7 pp, followed by Poland, Portugal, Cyprus, and Lithuania, all of which also saw reductions exceeding 6 pp.

Change in the percentage of households with children in total households

(percentage points, 2022 compared with 2009)



No data available for 2009 for Denmark and Norway.
Break in the data series in 2021.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: lfst_hhnhtych)

eurostat

Figure 9: Change in the percentage of households with children in total households Source: Eurostat (lfst_hhnhtych)

Source data for tables and graphs

- [Download Excel file - Households 2022 data and figures](#)

Methods and definitions

Data sources All statistics presented in this article are derived from the European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS). The EU-LFS is the largest European household sample survey providing quarterly and annual results on labour participation of people aged 15 years and over. It covers residents in private households and excludes those in [collective households](#). Conscripts in military or community service are not included in the results. The EU-LFS is based on the same target populations and uses the same definitions in all countries, which means that the results are comparable between the countries.

Under the specific topic 'Households statistics', the EU-LFS currently covers statistics on household composition and number and size of households.

Reference period: Yearly results are obtained as averages of the four quarters in the year.

Coverage: The results from the EU-LFS currently cover all [European Union](#) Member States, the [EFTA](#) Member States of Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, as well as the [candidate countries](#) Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Türkiye. For Cyprus, the survey covers only the areas of Cyprus controlled by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus. Nevertheless, EU-LFS household data are not available for Iceland, Norway, Switzerland.

European aggregates: EU refers to the sum of EU Member States. If data are unavailable for a country, the calculation of the corresponding aggregates takes into account the data for the same country for the most recent period available. Such cases are indicated.

Definitions A child is defined as a household member aged less than 18 years.

Country notes **The Netherlands** collects EU-LFS data using a rolling reference week instead of a fixed reference week, i.e. interviewed persons are asked about the situation of the week before the interview rather than a pre-selected week.

Time series Regulation [Regulation \(EU\) 2019/1700](#) came into force on 1 January 2021 and induced a break in the EU-LFS time series for several EU Member States.

Additional methodological information More information on the EU-LFS can be found via the online publication [EU Labour Force Survey](#), which includes eight articles on the technical and methodological aspects of the survey. The EU-LFS methodology in force from the 2021 data collection onwards is described in [methodology from 2021 onwards](#). Detailed information on coding lists, explanatory notes and classifications used over time can be found under [documentation](#).

Context

In addition to the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the [EU-Statistics on Income and Living Conditions \(EU-SILC\)](#) is also a source of household statistics. The [EU-SILC](#) is a multi-purpose instrument which focuses mainly on income. However, information on housing conditions, social exclusion, labour and education is also collected.

Other articles

- [All articles on the labour market](#)
- [Employment - annual statistics](#)
- [Unemployment statistics and beyond](#)
- [Unemployment statistics at regional level](#)
- [Labour market statistics at regional level](#)
- [EU labour force survey](#)
- [Young people - family and society](#)

Publications

- [The life of women and men in Europe - 2021 interactive edition](#)
- [The life of women and men in Europe. A statistical portrait - 2020 edition](#)
- [EU labour force survey — online publication](#)

- [Labour force survey in the EU, EFTA and candidate countries — Main characteristics of national surveys, 2020 , 2022 edition](#)
- [Quality report of the European Union Labour Force Survey 2020 , 2022 edition](#)
- [European Union Labour force survey - selection of articles \(Statistics Explained\)](#)

Main tables

- [Labour Force Survey](#) , see:

LFS series - specific topic(t_lfst)

Number of persons in households (tsdpc510)

Database

- [Labour Force Survey \(employ\)](#) see:

LFS series -Specific topics (lfst)

Households statistics - LFS series (lfst_hh)

Population by household composition and number of children or age of youngest child (lfst_hh_p)

Employment by household composition (lfst_hh_e)

Employment by number of children and age of youngest child (lfst_hh_k)

Working status within households (lfst_hh_s)

Number and size of households (lfst_hh_n)

- [Income and living conditions \(ilc\)](#) see:

Living conditions (ilc_lv)

Private households (ilc_lvph)],

Average household size (source: SILC) (ilc_lvph01)

Distribution of households by household type from 2003 onwards (source: SILC) (ilc_lvph02)

Distribution of households by household size (source: SILC) (ilc_lvph03)

Distribution of households by household type and income level (source: SILC) (ilc_lvph04)

Distribution of households with children by number of children (source: EU-SILC) (ilc_lvph05)

- [Population and housing censuses \(cens\)](#) , see:

Census - time series of selected indicators (cens_hn)

Housing (cens_hnhsng)

Households by size (number of persons) (cens_hndwsize)

Dedicated section

- [Labour Market \(LFS\)](#)
- [Income social inclusion and living conditions \(EU-SILC\)](#)
- [Population and demography](#)

Methodology

Publications

- [EU labour force survey — online publication](#)
- [Labour force survey in the EU, EFTA and candidate countries — Main characteristics of national surveys, 2020 , 2022 edition](#)
- [Quality report of the European Union Labour Force Survey 2020 , 2022 edition](#)
- [Statistical working papers / Manuals and guidelines](#)

ESMS metadata files and EU-LFS methodology

- [Households statistics - LFS series](#) (ESMS metadata file — lfst_hh_esms)
- [Income and living conditions](#) (ESMS metadata file — ilc_esms)
- [Employment and unemployment \(Labour Force Survey\)](#) (ESMS metadata file — employ_esms)
- [LFS series - detailed annual survey results](#) (ESMS metadata file — lfsa_esms)