This article presents data on household size and household types in the European Union (EU). The Labour Force Survey (LFS), a large household survey in the EU-28, is used to provide the estimates.
Household size

In 2018, the average household size in the EU-28 was 2.3 members (see Figure 1). The largest average household size was recorded in Croatia (2.8 members), while the smallest were observed in Sweden (1.8 members), Germany and Denmark (both 2.0 members). The largest decrease since 2008 was observed in Malta, with an average household size going from 3.0 members in 2008 to 2.5 members in 2018.

Figure 1: Average household size, 2008 and 2018 (average number of persons in private households)

Looking at the number of persons by household, almost two thirds of all households in the EU-28 were composed of one or two persons in 2018. The most common type of household was that composed of a single person (see Figure 2), with one third (33.9 %) of the total number of households. This group also recorded the highest increase from 2008 to 2018 (3.7 percentage points (p.p.)). Households composed of two persons corresponded to 31.8 % of the total number of households in 2018 (0.5 p.p. increase since 2008). Larger households were less common and their share decreased with the increase in number of persons: 15.5 % were composed of three persons, 13.1 % by four persons, while households with five persons or more accounted for 5.6 % of the total number of households in 2018. Over the last decade, the relative significance of the larger households fell, with the biggest reduction recorded among those households composed of three persons (a fall of 1.6 p.p.).

Figure 2: Distribution of households by size, EU-28, 2008–2018

With the average size of private households decreasing and the total population of the EU-28 continuing to
grow (albeit at a relatively slow pace), there was an increase in the overall number of households. The total number of private households within the EU-28 rose from 203 million in 2008 to almost 223 million in 2018 (see Table 1). This corresponds to an average growth of 0.9 % per year. Luxembourg and Malta were the only EU Member States with an expansion in the number of households of at least 2 % per year, followed by Cyprus with an increase of 1.8 % per year. The only EU Member States with a decrease in the number of households from 2008 to 2018 were Bulgaria (-0.64 % per year), Lithuania (-0.40 % per year), Croatia (-0.31 % per year) and Denmark (-0.9 % per year).

Table 1: Private households by household composition, 2008-2018 (number of households in 1 000 and % of household types) Source: Eurostat (lfst_hhnhtych)

### Household types

In 2018, in the EU-28, 29.2 % of private households were households with children (see Figure 3). Across the EU Member States, the highest percentages were observed in Ireland (39.0 %), Poland (36.5 %) and Cyprus (35.6 %), the lowest in Germany and Finland (both 21.8 %). The share of private households with children was particularly high in Turkey (51.1 %) and North Macedonia (49.8 %), by far exceeding the average of the EU Member States.

The most common household type in the EU-28 in 2018 was a single person living alone (33.9 %). Among households with more than one adult, the most common household type consisted of ‘couple without children’, accounting for 25.1 % of all private households (see Table 1 and Figure 3). The next most common household type was composed of ‘couple with children’, of which there were 44.0 million in 2018 (19.7 % of all private households).
Looking at developments since 2008, the share of EU-28 households with children decreased by more than 2 percentage points (from 31.5 % in 2008 to 29.2 % in 2018) and couples with children were becoming relatively less frequent (from 21.0 % in 2008 to 19.7 % in 2018). The share of single adults with children, however, increased (from 4.0 % in 2008 to 4.4 % in 2018). Over the same period, the proportion of couples without children and the proportion of single adults without children rose from 24.4 % to 25.1 % and from 29.7 % to 33.9 % respectively.

Figure 3 extends the analysis of household composition: Ireland recorded the highest share of couples with children (25.8 %), followed by Cyprus (24.5 %) and Luxembourg (24.5 %). Ireland, moreover, registered a high proportion of single-parent households (6.6 %), making it the only EU Member State to have reached the level of 39 % of households with children. Only five EU Member States, namely Estonia (8.6 %), Denmark (8.5 %), Lithuania (7.1 %), the United Kingdom and Latvia (both 6.7 %) recorded a higher proportion of households composed of single adults with children.

By contrast, the share of households with children was at its lowest level in Finland and Germany (both 21.8 %). Latvia was the EU Member State with the smallest proportion of couples with children (14.2 %). The lowest share of single adults with children was, however, recorded in Finland (1.7 %), followed by Croatia (1.9 %), the only EU Member States where households composed of single adults with children accounted for less than 2 % of the total number of households.

**Number of children**

At EU level, almost half of all households with children (47 %, or 30.7 million households) had only one child, while 40 % (25.8 million) had two children, and 13 % (8.5 million) had three children or more (see Figure 4).

The highest share of households with three or more children was registered in Ireland (26 %), followed by Finland (19 %), Belgium (18 %), France (18 %) and the Netherlands (17 %). At the opposite end of the scale, less than 10 % of households with children had at least three children in Latvia (10 %), Lithuania (9 %), Spain (8 %), Italy (8 %), Portugal (7 %) and Bulgaria (5 %).
Figure 4: Distribution of households with dependent children by number of children, 2018 (% of households with dependent children) Source: Eurostat (lfst_hhnhtych)

Source data for tables and graphs
- Household tables

Data sources

The European Union (EU) Labour Force Survey (LFS) measures the labour status and other characteristics of the population in an average week in each quarter. It covers all citizens living in private households and excludes those in collective households.

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

Definition

A child is defined as a household member aged less than 25 years and in full social and economic dependence from other household member/-s (parents/ adults).

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
- EU labour force survey

Publications
- Household composition, poverty and hardship across Europe - 2013 edition

Main tables
- Labour Force Survey, see:
LFS series - specific topic (t_lfst)

Number of persons in households (tsdpc510)

Database

• **Labour Force Survey (employ)**

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 (pop)**, see:

Census - time series of selected indicators (cens_hn)
- Housing (cens_hnhsg)
  - Households by size (number of persons) (cens_hndwsize)

Dedicated section

• **Labour Market (LFS)**

• **Income social inclusion and living conditions (EU-SILC)**

• **Population**

Methodology

• **Households statistics - LFS series** (ESMS metadata file — lfst_hh_esms)
• **Income and living conditions** (ESMS metadata file — ilc_esms)