

## SF1.1: Family size and household composition

### *Definitions and methodology*

This indicator considers the composition of private households. A *private household* is either: (a) a single-person household, i.e. a person who lives alone in a separate housing unit or who occupies a separate room in a housing unit but does not form a multi-person household with other occupants of the housing unit; (b) a multi-person household, i.e. a group of two or more persons who occupy the whole or part of a housing unit and share resources to cover living expenses. The usual residence serves as the basis for the identification of household membership. Information on people living in “institutional households” such as health care institutions, military barracks, etc., is not included here.

Household types are defined with reference to the *family nucleus*. The *family nucleus* is defined as a partnered couple (married or cohabiting) with or without (adopted) children, or a sole parent with one or more (adopted) children. Parents do not necessarily concern the biological father and mother, but can also concern step-parents (for example, the partner of a biological parent). Same sex partners cohabiting in the same dwelling are usually not counted as couple families (see comparability and data issues).

Basically, household types are categorised here into:

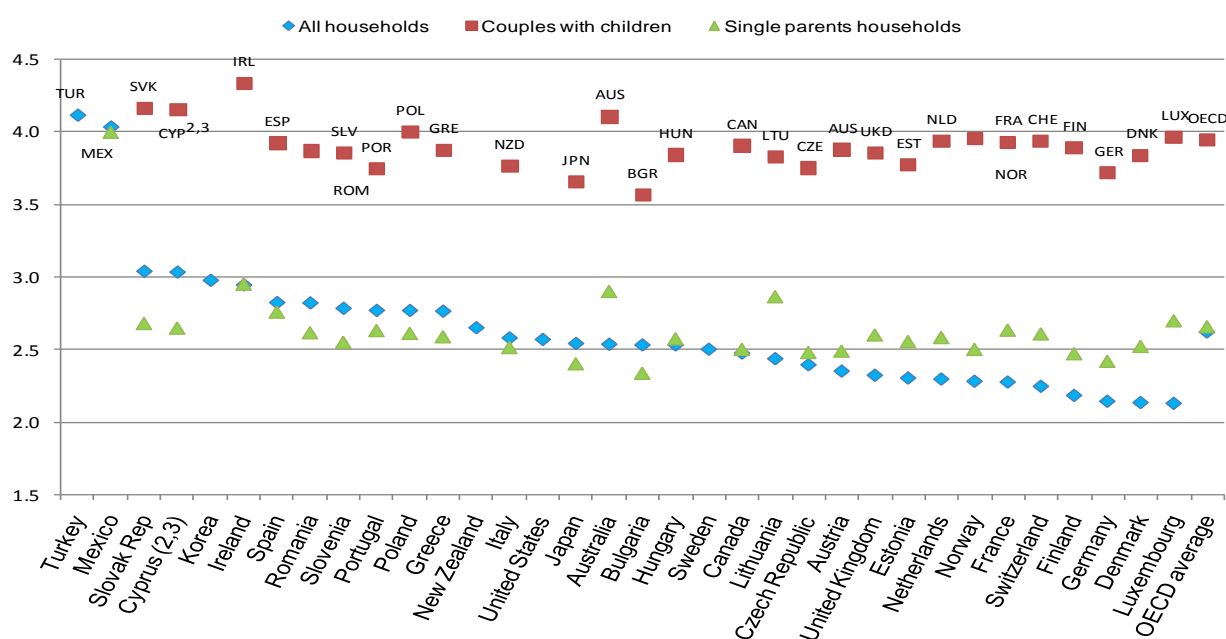
- Single-person households
- Couple families of married and cohabiting adults of the opposite sex, either with or without children.
- Sole-parent families
- Other private households, which include households with either several cohabiting members or with members of two or more families sharing the same dwelling. Households with three cohabiting generations of related people (“Extended families” of grandparents, parents and children) are included in this category.

### *Key findings*

The *Average Household Size* is calculated as the ratio between the number of people (adult and children) living in private households and the number of households of each different category. There are substantial differences in average household size across countries, ranging from 2.1 in Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway and the United Kingdom to 4 in Mexico and Turkey (Chart SF1.1). In a majority of countries, the size of sole-parent families is equal or slightly below the average size of households, but in countries with a high proportion of sole-parent families (Table SF1.1), the size of sole-parent families is often above the average for all households.

*Other relevant indicators:* Children in Families (SF2); Living arrangements of children (SF3); Share of births outside marriage (SF6); Childlessness (SF7); Marriage and divorce rates (SF8) and, Cohabitation rate and prevalence of other forms of partnership (SF9) .

Chart SF1.1: Size of households, early or late-2000s<sup>1</sup>



1 The size of households is determined by members who live in the same dwelling and include dependent children of all ages.  
 2 Footnote by Turkey: The information in this document with reference to “Cyprus” relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Turkey recognizes the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of United Nations, Turkey shall preserve its position concerning the “Cyprus issue”.  
 3 Footnote by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Commission: The Republic of Cyprus is recognized by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Turkey. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.  
 Sources: Population and housing censuses 2011 for EU countries and data from OECD questionnaire on income and redistribution for non EU countries; Australia: Family Characteristics and Transitions Survey, 2006-07; Canada: Census 2006, Statistics Canada; Japan: Population census 2005

Table SF1.1 details the distribution of the different types of households. *Couple families* (with or without children) are clearly the most frequent type of household across countries. Nevertheless, their relative proportion varies considerably across the OECD from about 50% of all households in Denmark, Finland, Japan and the Slovak Republic to almost 73% in Korea where this proportion is far higher than the OECD average (58%).

The proportion of *single-person households* is affected by both the propensity of young adults to leave the parental home and the tendency of elderly to live in with their children or enter a house for the elderly (or other institution). Single-person households constitute at least 35% of households in Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway and Switzerland. By contrast, this proportion is less than 20% in Greece, Portugal or Slovenia.

At about 10% of all households, *sole-parent families* constitute a significant minority of households. There is, however, considerable cross-national variation with sole-parent families constituting around 5% of households in Denmark but 16% of households in Canada.

*Other types of private households* are generally uncommon in the OECD except in Japan, Korea, the Slovak Republic and the United States, where they constitute at least 10% of all households.

**Table SF1.1: Types of household, latest year <sup>1</sup>**

*In % of all households*

	Couple families	Single person households	Sole-parent families	of which sole-mother households	of which sole-father households	Other private households
Australia	58.7	26.5	5.8	87	13	9
Austria	52.9	33.5	9.7	85.3	14.7	3.9
Belgium	52.3	31.6	12.1	..	..	4
Bulgaria	52.1	22.7	6.5	80.9	19.1	18.7
Canada	57.4	26.8	15.7	80.1	19.9	0.1
Czech Republic	53.6	30.3	12.9	84.3	15.7	3.2
Cyprus <sup>2,3</sup>	73.2	16	5.7	87.9	12.1	5
Denmark	50.9	36.8	5.1	85.1	14.9	7.2
Estonia	46.8	33.5	14.7	90.4	9.6	4.9
Finland	49.8	37.3	7.6	84.9	15.1	5.3
France	58.3	31	8	85.3	14.7	2.7
Germany	55.4	35.8	5.9	84.5	15.5	2.9
Greece	64.9	19.7	8.7	84	16	6.6
Hungary	57	26.2	10.7	87.4	12.6	6.1
Iceland	60.8	30.7	7.24	91.4	8.6	..
Ireland	59.2	21.6	11.7	84.8	15.2	7.6
Italy	62.3	24.9	8.9	82.5	17.5	3.9
Japan	49.5	29.5	8.4	84.9	15.1	12.1
Korea	72.6	..	9.4	..	..	18.6 <sup>5</sup>
Latvia	45.6	25	20.3	89.7	10.3	9.1
Lithuania	40.9	28.7	7.2	93.1	6.9	23.2
Luxembourg	59.6	29.3	8.4	77.7	22.3	2.7
Mexico	58.6	7.6	10.3	85.8	14.2	23.5
Netherlands	59.9	33.6	5.8	84.5	15.5	0.7
New Zealand	60.1	22.6	9.3	..	..	8.1
Norway	52.2	37.7	8.6	82	18	1.5
Poland	56.4	24.8	12.6	87.9	12.1	6.2
Portugal	69.1	17.3	8.6	86.7	13.3	5
Romania	62.8	18.9	9.3	84.4	15.6	9
Slovak Republic	50.6	19.4	9.2	86.7	13.3	20.8
Slovenia	59	21.9	12.5	85.7	14.3	6.6
Spain	62.9	20.3	9.9	81.1	18.9	6.9
Sweden	63.9	..	..	..	..	..
Switzerland	56.1	36	5.2	85.1	14.9	2.7
Turkey	..	..	..	..	..	..
United Kingdom	53.5	30.2	9.8	86.7	13.3	6.6
United States	51.7	27.3 <sup>6</sup>	9.2	77.5	22.5	11.8
OECD average	57.6	27.7	9.1	84.5	15.5	7.0

.. Not available

<sup>1</sup> Data concern 2009 for France; 2010: Estonia, Finland, Korea, Latvia, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United States; 2011: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech republic, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovak republic, Spain, and the United Kingdom, Ireland, Poland, Romania and Slovenia; 2005: Iceland, Mexico, Japan and Sweden; 2006: Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.

<sup>2</sup> and <sup>3</sup>, see notes 2 and 3 to Chart SF1.1.

<sup>4</sup> Estimates for 2008 (Statistics Iceland): refers to the proportion of sole-parent families with a child under age 18.

<sup>5</sup> This proportion includes potentially lone person households which can not be identified separately from the data.

<sup>6</sup> Estimate for 2006: US Population Reference Bureau.

*Sources:* EU countries (except Iceland and Sweden): 2011 round of Population and Housing censuses; Iceland: Hagstofa Iceland's committee survey on living conditions except see note 4; Sweden: OECD (2005), Babies and Bosses, Vol. 4, Paris; Australia: ABS 2006 census; Canada: Census 2006, Statistics Canada; Bureau of statistic; Eurostat; Other countries: UNECE Statistical Division Database except: Japan: Population Census 2005 ; Korea: Population and Housing Census Report; Mexico: Conteo de Poblacion y Vivienda, 2005 (INEGI), II Population and Housing National Count 2005; United States, US Decennial Census of Population, except as referred to under note 6.

On average, families with children account for nearly half of all households (Table SF1.2). This proportion is somewhat lower in Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United States, where childless households represent around two-thirds of all households. The majority of couple families include children; especially in Australia, Ireland, Italy, Korea, and Poland where more than two-thirds of couple families include children. Childless couples are most frequent in Denmark, Germany and the United-States. Sole-parent families account for about one fifth of all households with children on average in the OECD. This proportion is even higher in the United Kingdom (26.4%), and the United States (28.3%).

Table SF1.3 measures the proportion of households with respectively no, 1, 2, and 3 and more children. Turkey has both the lowest proportion of childless households (at 27%) and the highest proportion of households (20%) with three or more children and with a child under age 6. In all countries, childless households are most frequent. The proportion of households with one or two children averages about 20% and 17% respectively. The proportion of household with children which includes at least one child not yet 6 years of age is generally around 17% and is highest in Turkey at 35%.

#### *Comparability and data issues*

*Censuses of Population and Dwellings* are the most complete source of information on population and family composition. Censuses are generally carried out every five or ten years, providing information of population characteristics and household composition on a regular basis. In order to guarantee comparability of data, the United Nations Statistical Division (UN, 1997) and Eurostat (Eurostat, 1999) deliver a set of recommendations on definitions regarding household structure. Most OECD and EU countries completed their last census in the early 2000s but in some countries data have been collected more recently (including Australia, Canada, Japan, Mexico, and New Zealand).

Despite the harmonisation by both the United Nations Statistical division and Eurostat, comparability of census data can be hampered by different data collection methods. For example, in the absence of a Census, data for Germany and the Netherlands are on a combination of registers and sampled surveys. In order to enhance comparability, countries are recommended to use the place of usual residence as the basis of household membership. Administrative information on the place of residence is the most comparable source of data. Differences in how respondents to censuses or surveys consider their “usual” residence, or differences in the rules applied by statistical offices to define the usual residence, may also raise comparability issues. The recent increase in non-traditional living arrangements, such as the increase in cohabitation, or adults living apart together (i.e. partners spending some days and nights together but who are registered at different addresses) have increased the number of cases in which adults and/or children are recorded for more than one residence (SF9).

When accounting for children of separated parents there is a risk of double counting, as they may be counted as a member of the household of both parents. When partners continue to have their own dwellings they complete a separate form for their residency. Without any kind of other control, the number of single-person households, sole-parent families or step families can be over-estimated. For example, Toulemon (2008) estimates that between 4% and 6% of adults in France live in two dwellings and 6.4% of children have more than one dwelling. Accounting for this, the proportion of children not living with both parents falls from a biased estimate of 19.7% to 17.9%.

**Table SF1.2: Households with children<sup>1</sup>, latest year<sup>2</sup>**

	The share of households with children in all households	The share of couples with children in all couple families	The share of sole-parent families in all households with children.
<b>Australia</b>	31.7	..	16
<b>Austria</b>	44.7	58.8	23.8
<b>Belgium</b>	44.3	..	15.6
<b>Bulgaria</b>	56.3	59.7	17.3
<b>Canada</b>	38.6	54.6	23.2
<b>Czech Republic</b>	50.4	63.9	27.3
<b>Cyprus</b> <sup>3,4</sup>	60.3	67.6	10.4
<b>Denmark</b>	35.3	45.3	18.2
<b>Estonia</b>	48	60.6	34.1
<b>Finland</b>	38.3	51	23
<b>France</b>	43.2	55.8	19.7
<b>Germany</b>	35.3	47.8	18.1
<b>Greece</b>	57.6	65.1	17.1
<b>Hungary</b>	51.2	60.4	23.7
<b>Iceland</b>	40.4	52.2	22.5
<b>Ireland</b>	60.7	70	22
<b>Italy</b>	54.3	66.7	17.6
<b>Japan</b>	46.0	60.3	18.2
<b>Korea</b>	73.9	79.6	12.7
<b>Latvia</b>	59.6	66.1	40.2
<b>Lithuania</b>	54.4	58.6	23.1
<b>Luxembourg</b>	47.8	61.6	18.7
<b>Mexico</b> <sup>5</sup>	62	..	8.4
<b>Netherlands</b>	36.9	50.8	15.9
<b>New Zealand</b>	43	51.3	22
<b>Norway</b>	40.8	58.8	21.8
<b>Poland</b>	59.7	72.4	23.6
<b>Portugal</b>	59.1	65.9	15.8
<b>Romania</b>	58.8	64.5	18.7
<b>Slovak Republic</b>	58.7	56.7	24.3
<b>Slovenia</b>	62.6	73.6	22.4
<b>Spain</b>	60.2	69	18.5
<b>Sweden</b> <sup>6</sup>	36.1	..	19.6 <sup>6</sup>
<b>Switzerland</b>	36.7	51.4	15.2
<b>United Kingdom</b>	43.5	50.9	26.4
<b>United States</b> <sup>6</sup>	38.9	45.6	28.3 <sup>7</sup>
<b>OECD-29</b>	46.4	58.6	19.9

1 All children included without any age restriction, except for 5 and 6.

2 Years: the same as for Table SF1.1 except as referred to under note 6 which concerns 2005.

3, 4 See notes 2 and 3 to Chart SF1.1.

5 Households with children under age 15.

6 Households with children under age 18

7 Taken from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Sources: Same as under Table SF.1.1, except for Australia: Family Characteristics and Transitions Survey, 2006-07 and some US data referred to under note 6.

**Table SF1.3: Households by number of children<sup>1</sup>, late-2000s<sup>2</sup>**

*% of households*

	0	1	2	3 and more	Percentage of households with children under 6
<b>Australia</b>	66	..	..	..	..
<b>Austria</b>	63	18	14	5	14
<b>Belgium</b>	57	18	17	8	16
<b>Bulgaria</b>	55	26	17	2	10
<b>Canada<sup>3</sup></b>	39	27	24	10	..
<b>Cyprus<sup>4,5</sup></b>	45	22	22	11	20
<b>Czech Republic</b>	53	21	21	4	16
<b>Estonia</b>	57	24	14	5	15
<b>Finland</b>	68	13	12	6	13
<b>France</b>	58	19	16	7	18
<b>Germany</b>	67	17	13	4	12
<b>Greece</b>	56	19	20	5	15
<b>Hungary</b>	52	23	18	7	15
<b>Italy</b>	52	25	19	4	18
<b>Ireland</b>	60	17	15	8	..
<b>Japan</b>	74	12	11	4	10
<b>Latvia</b>	54	26	15	5	16
<b>Lithuania</b>	46	27	20	6	16
<b>Luxembourg</b>	55	18	19	8	16
<b>Malta</b>	44	25	23	8	18
<b>Mexico</b>	38	23	22	17	36
<b>Netherlands</b>	61	15	17	7	16
<b>New Zealand</b>	65	14	13	8	..
<b>Norway</b>	70	12	12	6	..
<b>Poland</b>	44	27	21	9	18
<b>Portugal</b>	46	31	19	4	20
<b>Romania</b>	44	29	20	6	16
<b>Slovak Republic</b>	45	24	22	8	17
<b>Slovenia</b>	50	25	20	5	16
<b>Spain</b>	51	25	20	4	20
<b>Turkey</b>	27	26	27	20	35
<b>United Kingdom</b>	58	18	17	7	19
<b>United States</b>	68	13	12	7	..
<b>OECD-24</b>	56	20	17	7	17

1 For OECD non EU countries, data refer to children aged less than 18 living within the household and still dependent with the exception of New Zealand where children are classified as dependent if not in full-time employment, and for Canada where there is no age limit. For Member States of the European Union, data include children not yet 15 years of age, or aged 15 to 24 and dependent (not employed and with at least one parent in the household).

2 Year: 2007 for all countries except Australia (2003), Canada (2006), Ireland (2002), New Zealand (2006), Norway (2001), and the United States (2005).

3 Data refer to the proportion in Census families.

4,5 see notes 2 and 3 to Chart SF1.1.

Sources: Australia: family characteristics (2003); Canada: 2011 Census; For EU countries (except Ireland): European Labour Force Surveys, 2010; Ireland: 2002 Census; Japan: Comprehensive Survey of Living Conditions of the People on Health and Welfare 2007 ; Mexico: Censo de Poblacion y Vivienda, 2005 (INEGI); New Zealand: Census 2006; Norway: Population and Housing Census, 2001; and US Census Bureau 2005.

Comparability of the share of different household types included in tables SF1.1, SF.1.2 and SF.1.3 is also hampered by the fact that all categories of age for children are not the same across data sources, and because data sources apply different rules to identify “dependent children”. For example, all dependent children living at home not yet 25 years of age are included in case of Censuses, but only non-employed children from age 14 to 24 are considered by the European Labour Force Surveys in SF1.3.

It is also unclear to what extent same-sex couples are counted in the labour force surveys or censuses. National practice differs. For example, census statistics on couple families only cover opposite sex partnership in France (Digoix *et al.*, 2004), while same-sex partnerships are included in the population registry of Nordic European countries (Andersen *et al.*, 2004). Compared to countries which do not report such couples, the inclusion of same-sex partnerships leads to a small relative increase of the number of couple households (SF9).

*Sources and further reading:* Andersson, G., T. Noack, and A. Seierstad (2004), “The Demographics of Same-Sex “Marriages” in Norway and Sweden”, in Digoix M., and P. Festy (eds.), *Same-sex Couples, Same-sex Partnerships and homosexual Marriage*. A focus on cross-national differences, Document de Travail 124, INED, [http://www.ined.fr/fichier/t\\_publication/1035/publi\\_pdf1\\_124.pdf](http://www.ined.fr/fichier/t_publication/1035/publi_pdf1_124.pdf); Digoix M., P. Festy, and B. Garnier (2004), “What if same-sex couples exist in France after all?”, in Digoix M., and P. Festy (eds.), opus cited. Eurostat (2004), *Documentation of the 2000 Round of Population and Housing Census in the EU, EFTA and Candidate Countries, Part I, II and III*, Population and social conditions 3/2004/F/01, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>; Eurostat (2005), *Household and family characteristics of population. Eurostat Metadata in SDDS format. Summary Methodology*, [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_SDDS/EN/cens\\_nhou\\_sm1.htm](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_SDDS/EN/cens_nhou_sm1.htm). UN Statistics Division (1997), *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*, United Nations Statistical Division, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/standmeth/principles/default.htm>; Eurostat (1999) *Guidelines and Table programme for the Community Programme of Population and Housing Censuses in 2001*, Eurostat Working Paper, 3/1999/E/10, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>; and, Toulemon L. (2008), “Two-home family situations of children and adults, observation and consequences for describing family patterns in France”, 35<sup>th</sup> CSEIS Seminar, *New Family Relationships and Living Arrangements-Demands for Change in Social Statistics*.