

UNDER THE SAME ROOF

Living arrangements in the European Union

The first data from the European Community Household Panel (ECHP) are now becoming available. One of the most original features of the ECHP is the focus on income and living conditions. It will allow analysis of the interrelationships between many aspects of social well being.

Here we analyse different living arrangements in the European Union. The traditional one-family household is still predominant throughout Europe, comprising 72% of the population. There is also the persistence of multigenerational households, around 20% in Greece, Spain and Portugal. In addition in Spain, Italy, Portugal and Ireland the percentage of individuals living in households where at least one child over 16 is still living with his or her parents amounts to around a third of all individuals. However the 'family norm' is being eroded by other living arrangements. Living alone has become important in the European Union (10% in EUR 12). There is the growth of cohabitation, particularly among young people (70% in Denmark).

Results suggest that a different pattern is emerging between Northern countries and Southern countries and Ireland.

The Censuses of 1990/91 estimated that there were 131 million private households in Europe 12, comprising 339 million persons. As an illustration, Table 1 shows the distribution by country.

In the ECHP, a household is defined in terms of shared residence and common housekeeping arrangements. Individuals living in institutions, such as homes, boarding schools or prisons, are not included. The majority of the population lives in private households; only about 1% of the population of the European Union lives in institutions.

Living alone, living in large households

In the 1994 ECHP, the average size of private households in Europe 12 is 2.63 persons. However, there are national differences, ranging from 2 persons in Denmark to over 3 persons in southern Europe and Ireland (Figure 1). The overall size of the household hides different types of living arrangements, with important differences between countries.

Table 1: Number of households in 1990/91



	Number of households (1000s)	Population in private households (1000s)
B	3,953	9,851
DK	2,274	5,062
D	35,256	80,152
GR	3,204	10,013
E	11,836	38,620
F	21,542	55,397
IRL	1,029	3,433
I	19,909	56,322
L	145	378
NL	6,162	14,797
P	3,146	9,804
UK	22,422	55,606
EUR 12	130,878	339,437

Source: 1990/91 Community Programme of Population Censuses

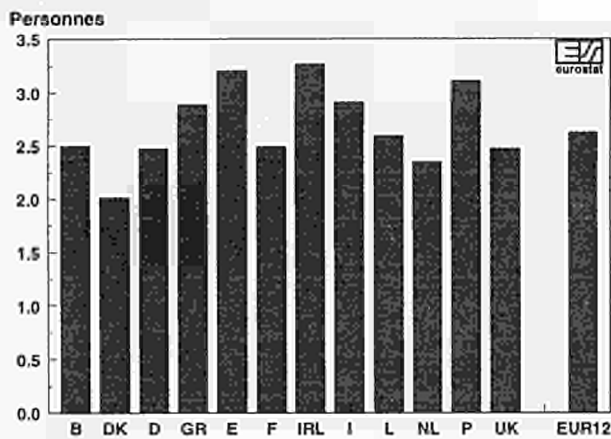
Manuscript completed on = 05.07.1996

For further information please contact: R. Paserman
Eurostat, L-2920 Luxembourg, tel. 4301-34521 Fax: 4301-34415

Price (excl. VAT) in Luxembourg: Subscription ECU 240,
single copy ECU 6

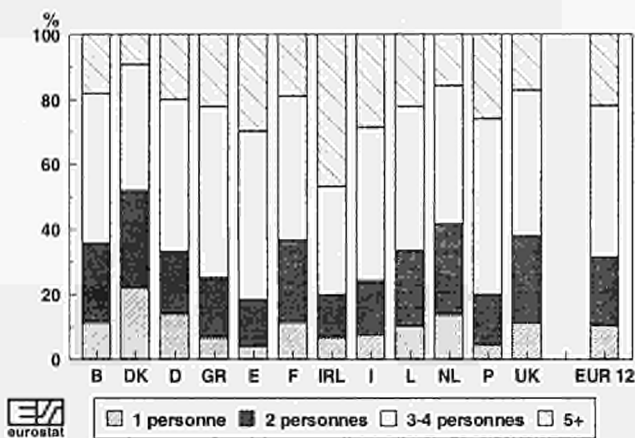
Catalogue number: CA-NK-96-005-EN-C

Figure 1: Average household size, 1994



Source: ECHP

Figure 2: Population by household size, 1994



Source: ECHP

Classifying the population by the size of the household they live in, we see that 10% of persons within Europe 12 live alone, 21% live in households of 2, 47% live in a household of between 3 and 4 persons and 22% in households containing 5 or more persons (Figure 2).

Living alone is quite common in Denmark, where more than 20% of the population lives alone. Also in other countries such as the Netherlands and Germany about 14% of the population lives alone, while it is uncommon in Spain, Greece, Portugal and Ireland, less than 7% of the population. In the Southern countries and Ireland the majority of the people living alone are over 65 years old (Table 2); they are at the end of the life cycle, when living alone to some extent is not by choice. In Denmark, the Netherlands, France and Germany relatively many younger people live by themselves. Ireland also clearly stands out as the country where proportionately more people live in households with 5 people or more: this accounts for nearly half the population.

Married, cohabiting, with or without children

Although there are changing household patterns, the typical household based on the nuclear family remains dominant. Around 70% of the population lives in this kind of household, and, except in Denmark, 50% and more lives in a household composed of a couple with children. However not all family-type households are legalised. Of the population declaring they live in couples, on average over 90% of couples in the EU are indeed married. This figure hides important cross national differences. While in the Mediterranean countries virtually all couples are legally married, in Denmark this applies only to 76% of individuals living in couple (Figure 3).

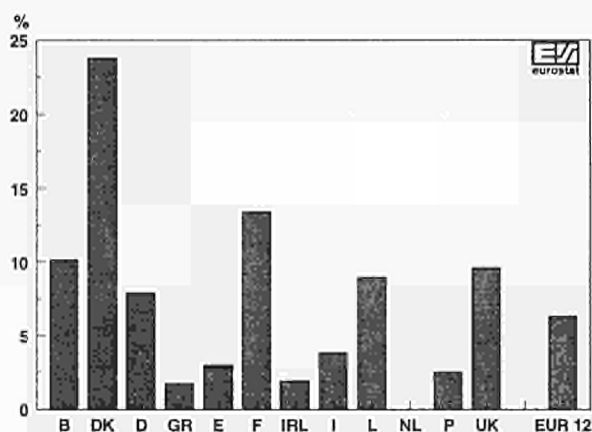
Table 2: Population living in private households by type of household in 1994 (%)

	B	DK	D	GR	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	P	UK	EUR 12
One person households	11.9	21.9	14.0	6.7	4.0	11.2	6.6	7.5	10.0	13.7	4.4	11.1	10.3
aged 65 years or more	5.2	8.3	5.9	3.3	2.4	4.8	3.5	4.2	3.7	5.2	2.8	6.0	4.8
aged 30-64 years	5.2	8.8	6.3	2.2	1.4	4.3	2.5	2.9	5.2	5.3	1.4	4.2	4.2
aged less than 30 years	0.9	4.8	1.8	1.2	0.2	2.1	0.6	0.4	1.2	3.3	0.2	1.0	1.3
Single parents	7.3	6.4	2.5	3.8	5.8	6.8	8.7	6.2	4.5	5.3	6.2	8.8	5.8
1 or more children under 16	3.1	3.9	1.2	1.0	0.7	2.8	2.7	0.9	1.2	1.9	1.2	4.7	2.1
at least one child over 16	4.1	2.5	1.3	2.9	5.1	4.1	6.0	5.3	3.3	3.4	5.0	4.0	3.7
Couples without children	20.4	25.9	16.7	14.7	10.8	20.9	8.0	14.8	19.1	25.1	11.6	21.1	17.3
at least one aged over 65	9.4	8.2	6.9	7.7	5.8	8.9	3.5	7.2	6.7	7.9	6.7	7.9	7.4
both aged under 65	10.9	17.7	10.0	7.0	5.0	12.0	4.5	6.6	12.4	17.2	4.9	13.3	9.9
Couples with children	55.7	43.8	53.7	53.9	61.8	55.8	64.1	58.0	51.4	54.0	59.0	49.8	55.2
1 child under 16	9.3	8.1	7.4	7.3	8.8	9.6	4.8	7.2	8.5	5.5	11.0	7.8	8.0
2 children under 16	13.0	14.5	12.6	17.9	14.6	14.3	10.9	11.7	13.9	17.3	12.3	14.2	13.6
3 or more children under 16	8.1	5.1	6.1	4.2	4.5	8.2	17.4	5.1	7.3	9.8	4.6	8.0	6.7
at least one child over 16	25.3	16.0	27.5	24.5	33.9	23.7	31.1	34.1	21.7	21.4	31.1	19.8	26.9
Other households	5.4	2.1	13.0	21.0	17.7	5.3	12.6	14.5	15.0	1.9	18.9	9.2	11.4
all members related	4.5	1.3	12.2	20.3	17.1	4.3	11.2	12.3	13.2	1.2	18.4	5.8	9.9
not all members are related	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.6	1.0	1.4	2.2	1.7	0.7	0.5	3.4	1.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: ECHP

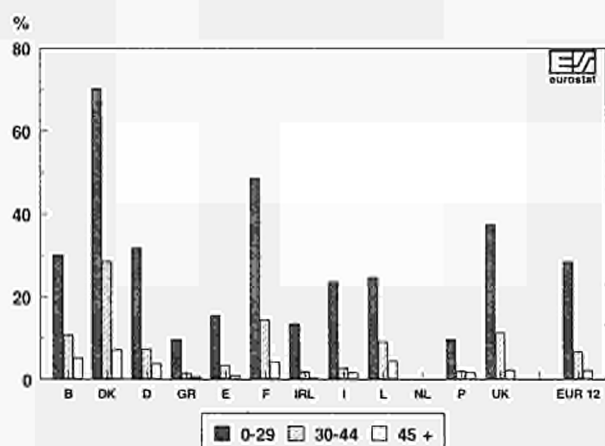
The phenomenon of cohabitation is certainly an example of changing customs, particularly widespread among the young. Indeed, the percentage of couples cohabiting falls sharply in all countries with increasing age. Regarding the young, 28% of individuals living in couple aged under 30 in the European Union are cohabiting. Patterns of cohabitation vary widely between countries, ranging from around 70%, in Denmark to less than 10% of this age group in Greece and Portugal (Figure 4).

Figure 3: Percentage of couples cohabiting¹, 1994



Source: ECHP

Figure 4: Percentage of individuals living in couples and cohabiting by age group, 1994



Source: ECHP

Although couples with children still represent the predominant family type this tradition is eroded by the greater numbers living alone and couples without children; this category comprises 17% in the Union and ranges from 8% in Ireland to around 25% in Denmark and the Netherlands. Moreover, the number of individuals living in households with three or more children all under 16 is quite low, accounting for less than 7% of individuals in the EU with the notable exception of Ireland, where 17% of the population lives in such a household (Table 2).

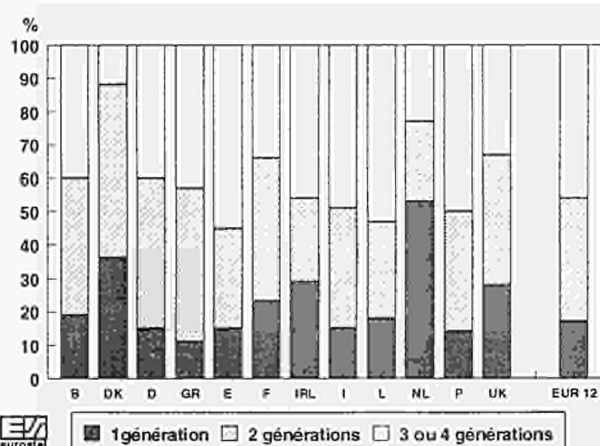
More than a quarter of the population in the European Union lives in households where at least one of the children is over 16. This is so particularly in Spain, Italy,

¹ Data on cohabitation is not available for the Netherlands

Portugal and Ireland, where it accounts for around a third of the population. However in Denmark, and the UK, less than one individual in 5 lives in this household type.

About 11% of the population in the European Union lives in so-called atypical households, i.e. households which are not nuclear family or one person households. The great majority of these are concentrated in households where all members are related. This phenomenon is especially striking in Greece, Spain and Portugal, where nearly a fifth of the population lives in this type of household. However in Denmark and the Netherlands this applies to a very small proportion of persons (table 2). Atypical households of this kind reflect a greater diffusion of more traditional households, where old people live and are cared for by their children. If we take all individuals classified in table 2 as living in 'other type of households, all members are related', and we count the number of generations in the households they live in, we find that about 50% of households are composed of three or more generations. This is true also for countries where such an arrangement is less common, such as Italy or Luxembourg (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Individuals living in atypical households where all members are related classified by the number of generations present in the household, 1994



Source: ECHP

Children living with one parent

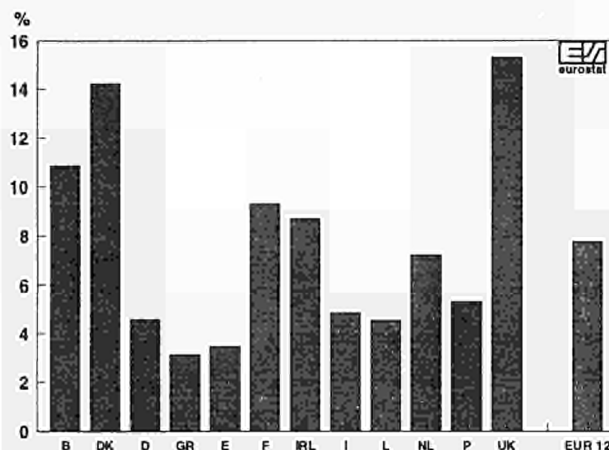
Approximately 6% of the population lives in monoparental households (Table 2). In the Southern countries and Ireland the majority of them are households where at least one child is over 16. This reflects the pattern already noted, that children leave the parental home later. However in Belgium, Denmark and especially the United Kingdom the proportion of population in single parent households where all children are under 16 is higher than the average, around 3-4%.

There are nearly 72 million children under 16 living in private households in the European Union. Of these 8% live in single parent households. While in UK and Denmark there are around 15% of children in this situation, around 10% in France and Belgium, and in Greece and Spain the proportion is 5% (Figure 6).

Two patterns

From the above discussion we can conclude that the pattern of living arrangement is different between Northern countries and Mediterranean countries and Ireland. In the latter countries children tend to live in the parental home until they are ready to form themselves into new family units, usually legalised. Also more often, more than one generation shares the same household. In Northern countries, the transition from the parental home to forming a new family is less straightforward, with independent and cohabitation spells in between.

Figure 6: Proportion of children living in single parent households, 1994



Source: ECHP

The European Community Household Panel

The data used in this report are taken from the first wave (1994) of the European Community Household Panel (ECHP). This is a multi-dimensional and multi-purpose survey which covers income, demographic and labour force characteristics, health, education, housing, migration and other topics. It is a panel survey, i.e. all individuals in the initial sample are followed up and interviewed in the subsequent years. The survey is based on a harmonised questionnaire which was designed centrally at Eurostat and was then adapted by National Data Collection Units to reflect national institutional differences. Weighted data with weights calculated out centrally at Eurostat, are used in this note.

Fieldwork for the first wave of the survey took place during 1994, although the exact fieldwork period varied between countries. The new Member States did not take part in the 1994 first wave but Austria and Finland will take part in later waves. The achieved sample was 60,528 households and 170,287 individuals for EUR 12.

Household Definition:

In the ECHP a household is defined as comprising 'either one person living alone or a group of persons, not necessarily related, living at the same address with common housekeeping - ie. sharing a meal on most days or sharing a living or sitting room'. People living in institutions are not included, unless they are considered to be still part of the household and only temporarily away. This definition may differ in some countries from the definition used in the Censuses of 1990/91.

Abbreviations used:

EUR 12: Belgium (B) Denmark (DK), Germany (D), Greece (GR), Spain (E), France (F), Ireland (IRL), Italy (I), Luxembourg (L), Netherlands (NL), Portugal (P) and United Kingdom (UK).

EUROSTAT

Directorate E: Social and Regional Statistics - Structural Plans

Note prepared by Jayne Middlemas and Ruth Paserman
manuscript ended on 5.07.1996

For further information, please contact:
Ruth Paserman, tel. (352) 4301-34521

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH