

Statistics in focus

POPULATION AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

THEME 3 – 24/2003

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Trends in households in the European Union: 1995-2025

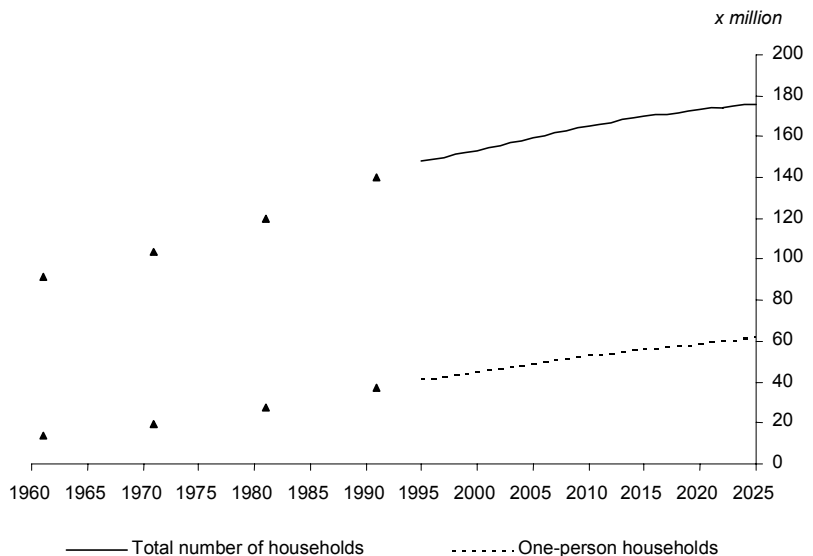
The number of one-person households is on the rise all over the European Union. This trend will continue in the next decades. As a result the total number of households will increase, while the average number of persons sharing a household will decline further.

These are the results of three long-term national household scenarios recently compiled by Eurostat. The individualisation scenario (IS) assumes ongoing trends of individualisation and secularisation and low fertility. The family scenario (FS) assumes a slowdown in the individualisation process and high fertility. The baseline scenario (BS) is the average of these scenarios.

The number of households in the fifteen Member States of the European Union (EU-15) has increased strongly in past decades. In 1961, EU-15 had 92 million households with an average of 3.3 persons per household (Figure 1). By 1995 the figure had risen to 148 million households with an average of 2.5 persons per household. The total number of households will continue to increase in all scenarios. The baseline scenario projects an increase to 176 million households in 2025. The individualisation scenario projects a modest increase to 171 million households in 2025, with an average of 2.1 persons per household. The family scenario predicts the highest number of households: 180 million in 2025 and an average size of 2.3 persons.

The main cause of the increase in the number of households is the sharp rise in the number of persons living alone. In 1961 there were 14 million one-person households in the European Community. By 1995 this number had tripled to 42 million. All three scenarios project further increases. The strongest increase is in the individualisation scenario, which predicts that the number of persons living alone in the EU-15 will grow to 71 million by 2025. The slowest growth is in the family scenario: 51 million persons will live alone in 2025. Finally, the baseline scenario expects 62 million persons to be living alone in 2025.

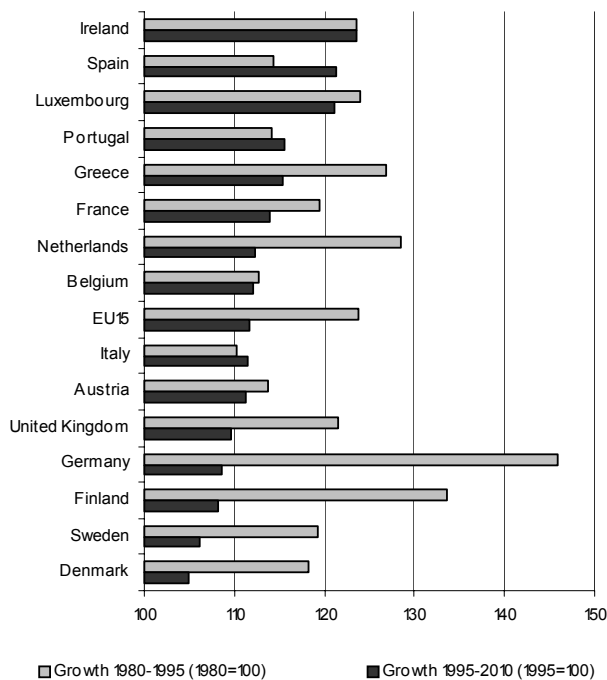
Figure 1
 Total number of households and number of one-person households, EU-15, baseline scenario



More and smaller households

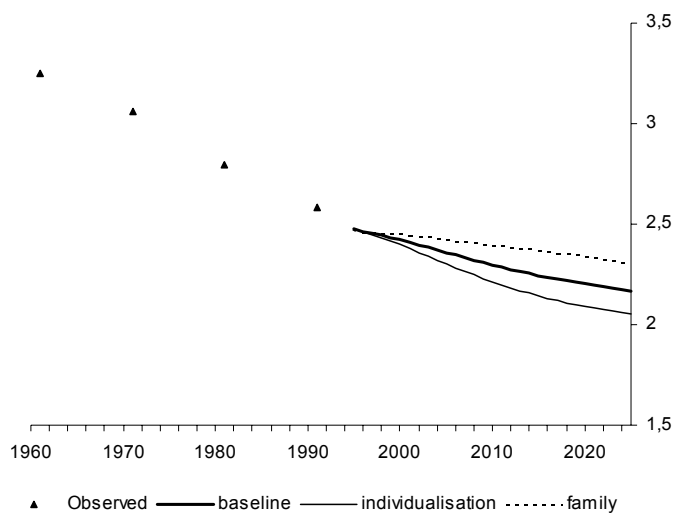
Trends in the number of households differ widely between the EU Member States. Germany showed the strongest increase in the number of households from 1980 to 1995, at about 45% (Figure 2), but is expected to show an increase of less than 10% between 1995 and 2010 (baseline scenario). Ireland will record the largest increase in the coming years, closely followed by Spain and Luxembourg.

Figure 2
Number of households (observed and baseline scenario)



Currently, the average number of persons per household is highest in the southern Member States and Ireland and lowest in the northern Member States (Table 1). The average household size will decline in almost all Member States. In Spain the average household size will drop from 3.2 persons in 1995 to 2.5 persons in 2025 (baseline scenario). Since the decrease will be limited in the northern Member States, the difference between Member States will become smaller. For the EU-15 the average household size in 2025 will be 2.2 persons in the baseline scenario

Figure 3
Average number of persons per household in EU-15



(Figure 3).

Table 1
Total number of households (millions) and average number of persons per household

	Number of households							Average number of persons per household						
	1995	2010			2025			1995	2010			2025		
		IS	BS	FS	IS	BS	FS		IS	BS	FS	IS	BS	FS
EU-15	147.9	165.5	165.2	164.7	171.4	176.0	180.3	2.48	2.21	2.30	2.40	2.05	2.17	2.30
Belgium	4.0	4.6	4.5	4.5	4.7	4.8	4.9	2.49	2.19	2.29	2.40	2.05	2.19	2.33
Denmark	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.5	2.6	2.8	2.8	2.10	1.98	2.09	2.19	1.86	1.99	2.12
Germany	36.6	39.8	39.8	39.8	39.8	41.2	42.5	2.20	2.03	2.12	2.23	1.92	2.02	2.15
Greece	3.8	4.3	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.7	4.8	2.71	2.40	2.49	2.55	2.24	2.36	2.45
Spain	12.1	14.7	14.7	14.6	15.8	16.1	16.4	3.21	2.62	2.73	2.86	2.32	2.47	2.65
France	23.4	27.0	26.7	26.3	28.7	29.0	29.3	2.43	2.17	2.26	2.37	2.01	2.14	2.29
Ireland	1.1	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.6	1.6	3.09	2.50	2.63	2.77	2.24	2.39	2.59
Italy	20.5	22.5	22.9	23.2	22.4	23.6	24.5	2.73	2.41	2.46	2.51	2.22	2.30	2.39
Luxembourg	0.16	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.21	0.23	0.24	2.53	2.29	2.42	2.55	2.09	2.25	2.42
Netherlands	6.4	7.3	7.2	7.2	7.8	8.0	8.2	2.36	2.15	2.27	2.39	1.98	2.13	2.26
Austria	3.1	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.8	3.9	2.51	2.22	2.34	2.46	2.06	2.21	2.37
Portugal	3.3	3.9	3.9	3.9	4.1	4.3	4.4	2.95	2.56	2.65	2.75	2.32	2.46	2.59
Finland	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.11	1.94	2.02	2.11	1.86	1.95	2.07
Sweden	4.2	4.5	4.4	4.4	4.7	4.8	4.9	2.10	1.96	2.06	2.17	1.85	2.00	2.14
United Kingdom	24.2	26.8	26.6	26.3	28.1	28.6	29.1	2.38	2.16	2.23	2.34	2.02	2.11	2.26

Note: IS: individualisation scenario, BS: baseline scenario, FS: family scenario

Strong increase in one-person households

The driving force behind the increase in the total number of households in EU-15 is the strong increase in one-person households (i.e. persons living alone). The number of one-person households has grown in almost linear fashion since the 1960s in almost all EU-Member States. In 1960 there were 13 million one-person households in the EU, accounting for 15% of all private households. By 1980 the number of one-person households had doubled to 27.5 million. In 1995, 41.9 million EU-15 households (28%) consisted of one person. The individualisation scenario projects 71 million one-person households in 2025 (Figure 4). Four out of ten households (41%) will consist of one person. In the family scenario the total number will rise to 51 million (28% of all households).

Although the numbers of persons living alone will continue to grow according to all three scenarios, differences will persist between the Member States (Table 2). Today, living alone is much less popular in the Mediterranean Member States and Ireland (4-8% of the total population) than in the northern Member States (18-20%). All three scenarios expect these percentages to grow. Nevertheless, living alone will be still less

common in 2025 in the southern Member States (about 10%) than in the northern Member States (more than 20%) (Figure 5).

In all Member States more women than men live alone. Women live longer and tend to marry older men, which increases their chances of outliving their husbands. However, in most Member States more younger men than younger women live on their own.

Figure 4
Number of persons living alone in EU-15

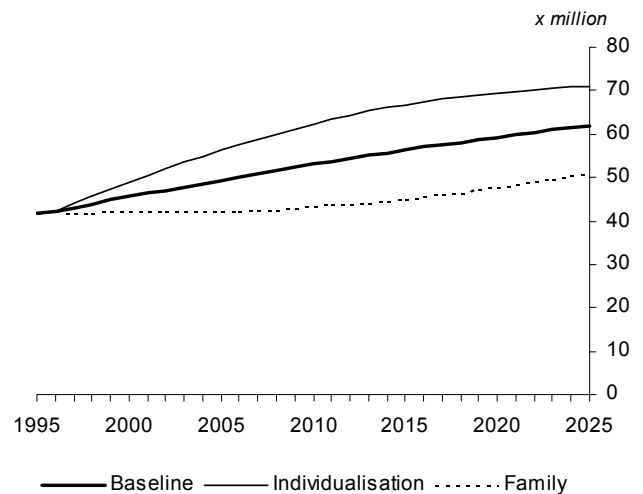
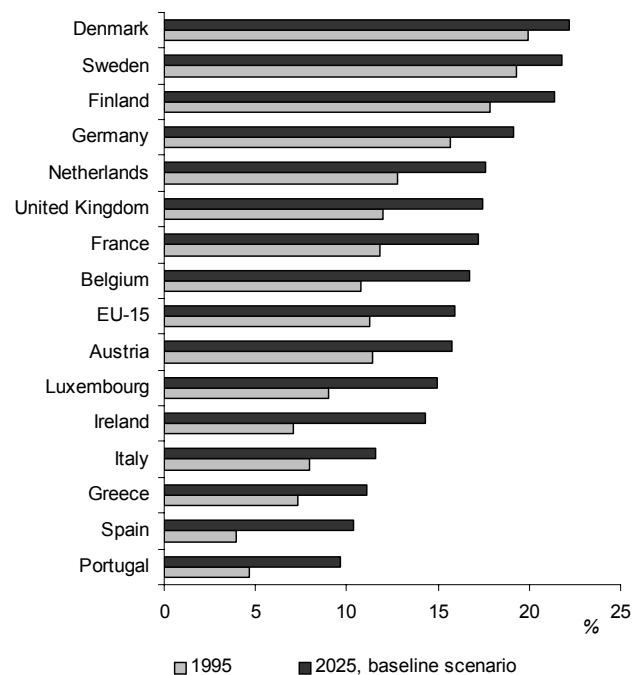


Table 2
Number of persons living alone (in millions)

	1995	2010			2025		
		IS	BS	FS	IS	BS	FS
EU-15	41.9	62.4	53.1	43.3	71.0	61.9	51.2
Belgium	1.1	1.8	1.5	1.2	2.1	1.8	1.4
Denmark	1.0	1.3	1.1	0.9	1.4	1.2	1.0
Germany	12.8	16.9	14.8	12.7	17.9	16.1	14.0
Greece	0.8	1.3	1.1	0.9	1.4	1.3	1.0
Spain	1.5	4.1	3.0	1.8	5.3	4.1	2.7
France	6.8	10.7	9.1	7.4	12.6	10.9	9.0
Ireland	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.7	0.6	0.6
Italy	4.6	6.6	5.7	4.8	7.3	6.5	5.4
Luxembourg	0.04	0.07	0.06	0.04	0.09	0.08	0.06
Netherlands	2.0	2.9	2.4	2.0	3.5	3.1	2.5
Austria	0.9	1.4	1.1	0.9	1.6	1.3	1.1
Portugal	0.5	1.0	0.7	0.5	1.3	1.0	0.7
Finland	0.9	1.2	1.0	0.9	1.3	1.1	1.0
Sweden	1.7	2.1	1.9	1.6	2.4	2.1	1.8
United Kingdom	7.0	10.6	9.0	7.4	12.3	10.7	9.0

Note: IS: individualisation scenario, BS: baseline scenario, FS: family scenario

Figure 5
Proportion of population living alone



Couples live longer

Despite the increasing popularity of living alone, a large part of the European population lives together with a spouse or with a partner without being married. In 1995 almost 180 million persons in EU-15 (almost half of the total population) were living with a partner (Figure 6). The number of persons in EU-15 living with a partner will decline to 173 million in the individualisation scenario and is expected to increase by 2025 in both the baseline and the family scenario to 201 million and 232 million respectively (Table 3).

In 1995 the proportion of the population living with a partner was highest in the Netherlands (52%) and Germany (51%) and lowest in Ireland (38%) (Figure 7). According to the baseline scenario, a higher percentage

of persons will live with a partner in 2025. This is mainly due to a continuing increase in life expectancy, meaning that more people will still be living with their partners in old age.

The proportion of individuals living with a partner generally increases rapidly between the ages of 20 and 30, when people tend to form unions. By age 40, about 80% of the population is living with a partner. This proportion declines rapidly after about age 70.

Table 3
Number of persons living with a partner (in millions)

	1995	2010			2025		
		IS	BS	FS	IS	BS	FS
EU-15	179.1	175.3	194.7	214.8	172.5	200.8	232.0
Belgium	4.6	4.2	4.7	5.3	4.2	5.1	5.9
Denmark	2.5	2.4	2.6	3.0	2.3	2.8	3.3
Germany	41.9	40.4	45.3	50.5	38.3	45.4	53.3
Greece	5.2	5.4	5.9	6.3	5.5	6.2	7.0
Spain	17.9	18.6	20.6	22.7	18.6	21.4	24.6
France	28.6	28.1	31.0	34.0	27.8	32.1	36.8
Ireland	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.7	1.4	1.7	2.0
Italy	26.0	26.2	28.4	30.7	25.9	29.2	32.8
Luxembourg	0.20	0.20	0.23	0.26	0.20	0.25	0.31
Netherlands	8.0	7.8	8.7	9.6	7.7	9.1	10.6
Austria	3.7	3.6	4.0	4.5	3.7	4.2	5.0
Portugal	4.7	4.8	5.3	5.9	4.9	5.7	6.6
Finland	2.4	2.3	2.5	2.8	2.2	2.6	3.0
Sweden	4.2	4.0	4.5	5.0	4.0	4.7	5.6
United Kingdom	27.8	26.0	29.2	32.4	25.8	30.4	35.4

Note: IS: individualisation scenario, BS: baseline scenario, FS: family scenario

Figure 6
Number of persons living with a partner in EU-15

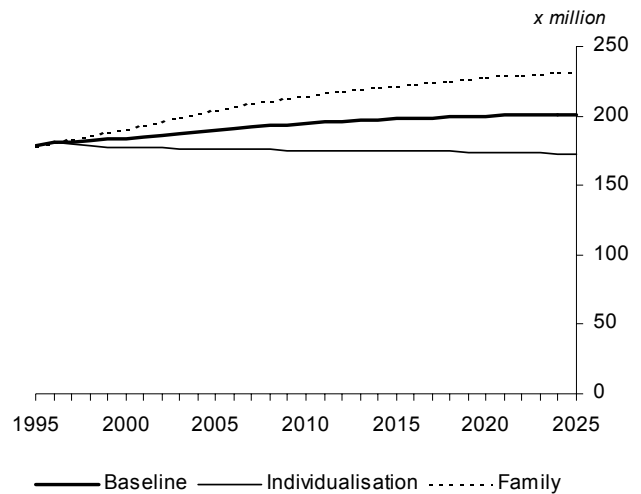
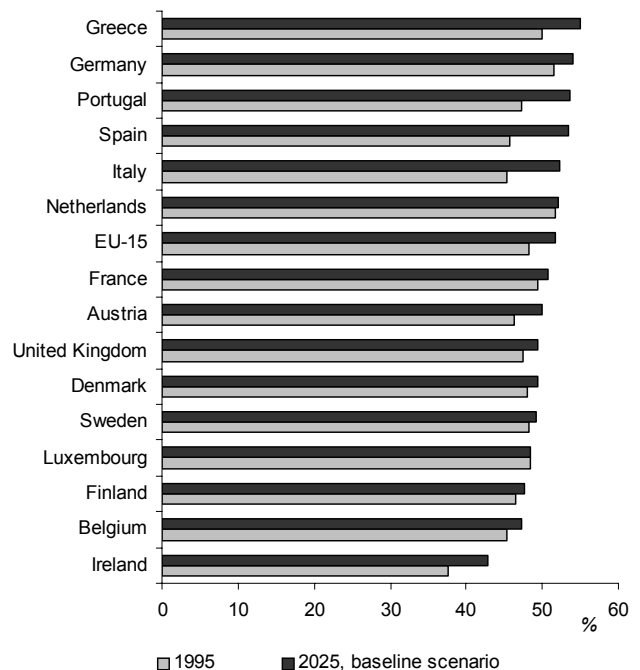


Figure 7
Proportion of population living with a partner



Fewer young people living in the parental home

The majority of the European children live at home with their parents until at least age 15. After this age, the proportion of children living at home declines in all Member States, although to a different degree. At almost every age and in every Member State, young men are more likely than young women to live in the parental home. In the individualisation scenario the number of children living with their parents falls from 118 million in 1995 to 86 million in 2025 (Figure 8).

The family and baseline scenarios predict declines in the numbers of children living at home, to 111 and 96 million respectively.

The proportions of children living at home are highest in the southern European Member States and Ireland and lowest in the Scandinavian Member States and Germany (Figure 9). Particularly in the Mediterranean Member States, leaving home has been increasingly postponed since 1985. In contrast to the central and northern Member States, where young adults tend to live alone for some time before they decide to marry or

cohabit, young adults in southern Member States tend to stay at home with their parents. The baseline scenario projects a decrease in the proportion of the population living at the parental home (Figure 9). This is partly the result of the falling proportion of young people in the total population.

Figure 8
Number of persons living at parental home in EU-15

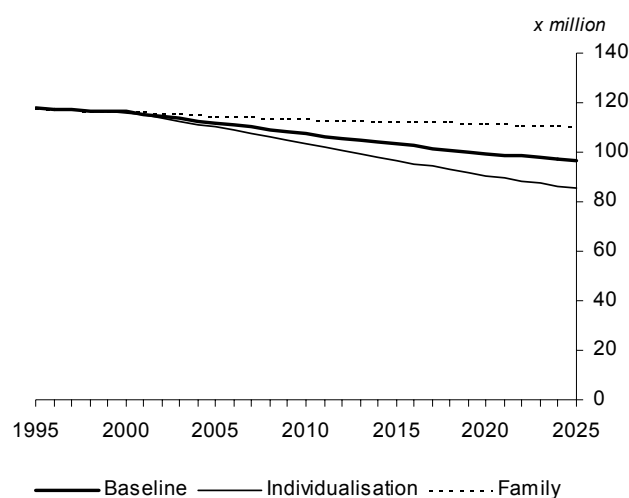
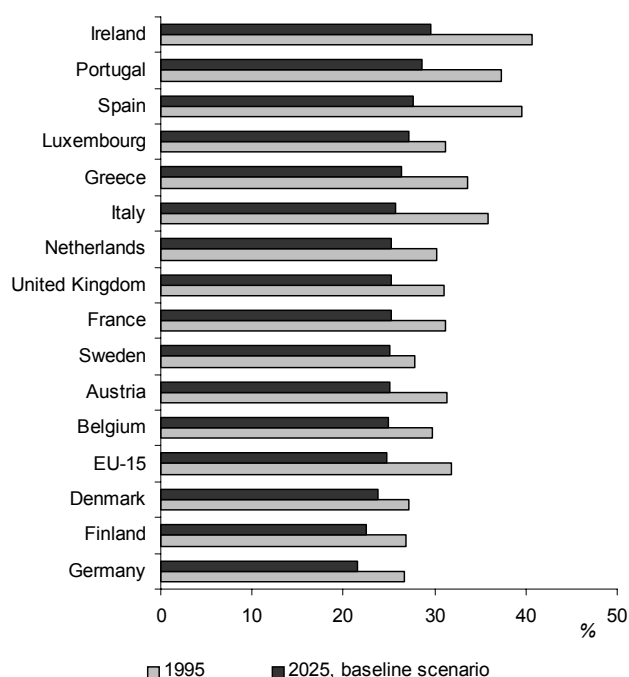


Table 4
Number of persons living at parental home (in millions)

	1995	2010			2025		
		IS	BS	FS	IS	BS	FS
EU15	118.3	103.5	107.4	113.4	85.5	96.4	110.7
Belgium	3.0	2.6	2.8	2.9	2.3	2.7	3.0
Denmark	1.4	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.1	1.3	1.5
Germany	21.8	19.6	20.4	21.9	16.1	18.1	21.3
Greece	3.5	3.1	3.3	3.3	2.6	3.0	3.2
Spain	15.5	12.6	13.0	13.7	9.8	11.0	12.8
France	18.1	16.4	17.0	18.1	14.1	15.9	18.4
Ireland	1.5	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.0	1.2	1.4
Italy	20.5	16.7	17.2	17.8	12.9	14.4	16.0
Luxembourg	0.13	0.13	0.14	0.15	0.11	0.14	0.16
Netherlands	4.6	4.3	4.7	4.9	3.7	4.4	4.9
Austria	2.5	2.1	2.3	2.5	1.8	2.1	2.5
Portugal	3.7	3.2	3.3	3.4	2.7	3.0	3.3
Finland	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.1	1.2	1.4
Sweden	2.5	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.0	2.4	2.8
United Kingdom	18.0	16.5	16.8	17.9	14.3	15.5	17.9

Note: IS: individualisation scenario, BS: baseline scenario, FS: family scenario

Figure 9
Proportion of population living at the parental home



Other types of household

All those living in a private household, but not at the parental home or alone or with a partner, belong to the category 'other'. They may be single parents with children at home, students living in a student residence, or persons living in other types of multi-person arrangement. In 1995, about 27 million persons in EU-15 were living in such types of household (Table 5). The number is expected to decline slightly in all scenarios. The baseline scenario projects 22.3 million in 2025.

Member States vary considerably in the proportions of persons living in this type of household. In some Member States, such as Portugal and Spain, very old people (mostly women) tend to live with their children; this is less common in most other Member States. In many Member States there is a peak at young ages, due partly to the phenomenon of students living together in student-related multi-person households.

Table 5
Number of persons living in other household position (in millions)

	1995	2010			2025		
		IS	BS	FS	IS	BS	FS
EU15	27,0	25,3	24,3	23,4	22,8	22,3	21,8
Belgium	1,3	1,3	1,3	1,3	1,0	1,0	1,0
Denmark	0,2	0,2	0,2	0,2	0,1	0,2	0,2
Germany	4,2	3,9	3,4	2,8	4,0	3,4	2,8
Greece	0,7	0,6	0,6	0,6	0,5	0,6	0,6
Spain	4,0	3,5	3,6	3,7	2,8	3,1	3,3
France	3,3	3,2	3,0	2,8	3,2	3,0	2,7
Ireland	0,4	0,4	0,4	0,5	0,4	0,4	0,4
Italy	4,9	4,6	4,8	5,1	3,7	4,1	4,5
Luxembourg	0,04	0,04	0,04	0,04	0,03	0,04	0,05
Netherlands	0,6	0,6	0,5	0,4	0,6	0,5	0,4
Austria	0,8	0,7	0,7	0,7	0,6	0,6	0,7
Portugal	1,0	0,9	0,9	0,9	0,7	0,8	0,9
Finland	0,4	0,4	0,4	0,4	0,3	0,4	0,4
Sweden	0,4	0,4	0,3	0,3	0,4	0,3	0,3
United Kingdom	4,8	4,7	4,3	3,9	4,3	3,9	3,5

Note: IS: individualisation scenario, BS: baseline scenario, FS: family scenario

Living in an institution

The national censuses around 1990 showed that about 1% of the EU population lived not in a private household, but in an institutional household such as a home for the elderly. All three scenarios predict an increasing institutional population for EU-15. The individualisation scenario projects an increase from 5.3 million in 1995 to 6.0 million in 2025 (Table 6). The family scenario expects the institutional population to grow to 7.5 million. These increases are a consequence of the ageing of the population.

In general, the proportions of the population living in an institution rise with age, especially at advanced ages. In many Member States a substantial number of old people (mostly women) live in homes for the elderly.

Table 6
Number of persons living in an institution (in millions)

	1995	2010			2025		
		IS	BS	FS	IS	BS	FS
EU15	5,3	5,7	6,0	6,2	6,0	6,8	7,5
Belgium	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,2	0,2
Denmark	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1
Germany	0,8	0,9	0,9	1,0	0,9	1,1	1,3
Greece	0,2	0,2	0,3	0,3	0,3	0,3	0,3
Spain	0,3	0,3	0,3	0,3	0,3	0,3	0,4
France	1,1	1,2	1,2	1,3	1,2	1,3	1,5
Ireland	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1
Italy	1,3	1,4	1,4	1,5	1,4	1,6	1,8
Luxembourg	0,01	0,01	0,01	0,01	0,01	0,01	0,01
Netherlands	0,3	0,3	0,3	0,3	0,3	0,4	0,4
Austria	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,2	0,1	0,2	0,2
Portugal	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1
Finland	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1
Sweden	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1
United Kingdom	0,8	0,8	0,8	0,9	0,8	0,9	1,0

Note: IS: individualisation scenario, BS: baseline scenario, FS: family scenario

Technical explanation

The European household scenarios cover the period 1995-2025. For each Member State they project both the number of persons in institutional households by sex and single year of age and the number of persons in four (private) household positions by sex and single year of age. These numbers are based on assumptions about the age and sex profiles for each household position (Figure 10). Four (private) household positions are distinguished: persons living alone, living as a couple, living with one or both parents and the remainder ("other household position"). This latter category covers persons without a partner who live with children or live with other persons. The scenarios also include the numbers of one-person and multi-person households and the average number of persons per household. Figures for 1996-1998 are used to improve and monitor the early trends in the scenarios.

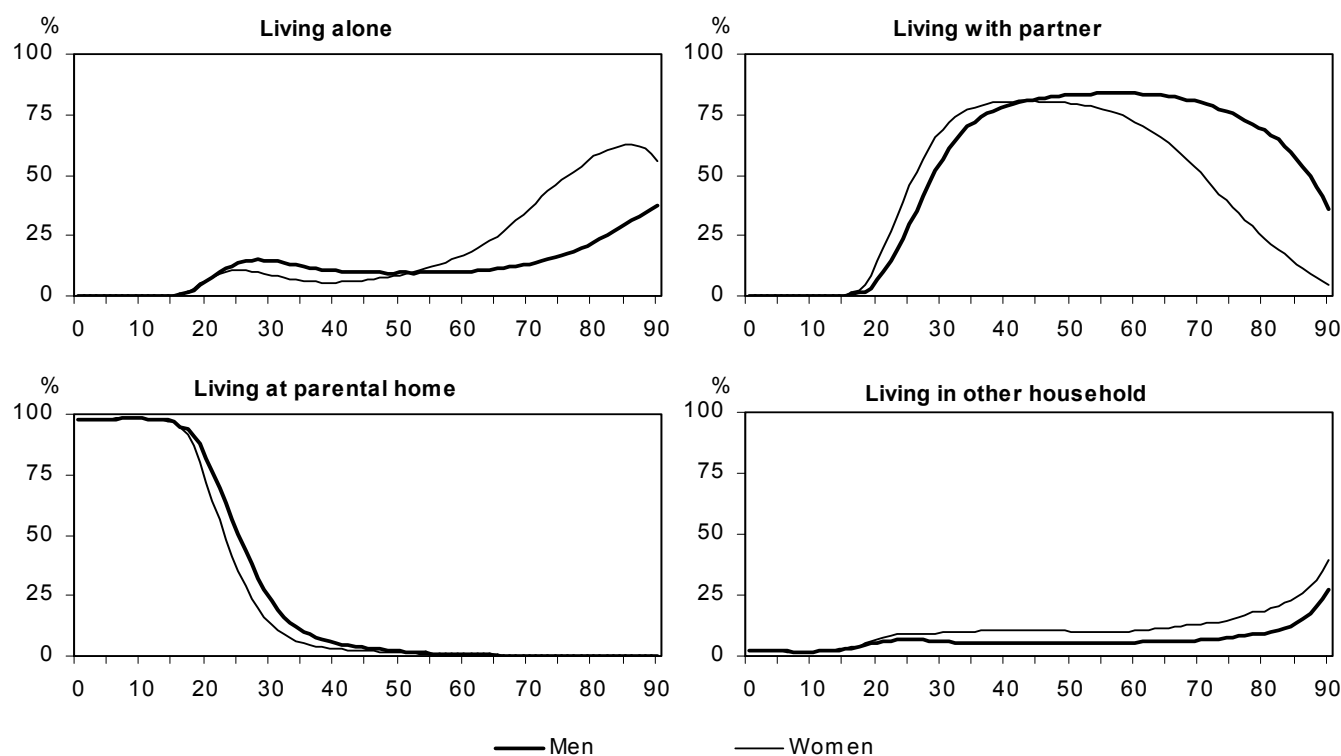
Many household scenarios are likely. To express the uncertainty of future household developments, two completely different scenarios have been drawn up: the individualisation scenario and the family scenario. A third scenario, the baseline scenario, is the average of these two. The individualisation scenario assumes that long-term trends in individualisation, emancipation and secularisation will lead to more people living alone and

fewer people living as couples. Trends in mortality and fertility are such that they will also stimulate these future trends. Moreover, this scenario assumes that differences between EU-Member States in household structures will diminish. The family scenario assumes a slowing down of secularisation, emancipation and individualisation together with relatively high fertility and life expectancy. This will lead to a growth in couples at all ages. Furthermore, differences between Member States will persist. With regard to the institutional population, it is assumed that proportions of the population living in an institution will remain constant in all scenarios.

The scenarios are consistent with 1995-based long-term European population scenarios and labour force scenarios. Trends in the numbers of persons by household position are caused not only by behavioural changes but also by changes in population size and structure. For several reasons connected with assumptions on fertility and mortality, the individualisation, family and baseline scenarios are combined with the population sizes and structures of the low, high and baseline population scenarios respectively.

Figure 10

Proportion of population in (private) households by sex, age and household position, EU-15, 1995



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➤ Databases

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