

POPULATION DIVISION
Department of Economic and Social Affairs

*United Nations Database on
Household Size and Composition 2019*

ABOUT

This *Database on Household Size and Composition 2019* presents a compilation of indicators on household size and membership composition around the world, estimated using both tabulated data and household roster micro-data from censuses and household surveys. The estimates are based on 814 unique data sources from 172 countries or areas, representing approximately 97 per cent of the world's population in 2019 with reference dates ranging from 1960 to 2018.

Standard estimation procedures were used across the data sources so that estimates may be compared both across countries and over time. The present database builds on work previously carried out by the Population Division, published in: United Nations (2017), *Household Size and Composition Around the World 2017 – Data Booklet* (ST/ESA/SER.A/405) and United Nations (2019), *Patterns and trends in household size and composition: Evidence from a United Nations dataset*. (ST/ESA/SER.A/433).

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The database is accessible on the website of the Population Division:
<https://population.un.org/Household/index.html>

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United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). *Database on Household Size and Composition 2019*. Copyright © 2019 by United Nations, made available under a Creative Commons license (CC BY 3.0 IGO)
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DEFINITIONS

The *United Nations Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*¹ classifies a household in one of two categories: a) a one-person household, in which one person makes provision for his or her own food or other essentials for living without combining with any other person; or b) a multi-person household of two or more persons living together who make common provision for food or other essentials for living. Persons in a multi-person

¹ https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/seriesM/Series_M67rev3en.pdf
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household may pool their incomes and have a common budget to a greater or lesser extent; they may be related or unrelated persons or a combination of persons both related and unrelated. The principles and recommendations note that an alternative definition used in many countries exemplifies the so-called household-dwelling concept, wherein a household consists of all persons living together in a housing unit. By both definitions, households are distinguishable from families in that: a) a household may consist of only one person, but a family must contain at least two members; and b) the members of a multi-person household need not be related to each other, while the members of a family must be related. Thus, a household may contain more than one family or no families at all, as in one-person households and households comprised of unrelated members.

Where guidance is offered in the principles and recommendations, the indicators selected for the 2019 *United Nations Database on Household Size and Composition* are defined accordingly. The set of indicators used to describe household patterns for a country in a given year include:

Average household size is the average number of usual residents (household members) per household.

Distribution of households by number of members is the percentage of households of various sizes among all households, described in four size classes: 1 member, 2-3 members, 4-5 members and 6 or more members.

Distribution of households by sex of the head of household is the percentage of male or female heads of household among all households.

Distribution of households by age of the head of household is the percentage of households with a head in the given age range among all households. The broad age ranges presented are ages 0 to 19 years, ages 20 to 64 years (the “working ages,” as commonly identified), ages 60 years or over and ages 65 years and over.

Percentage of households with members of selected ages is calculated for the following age groupings:

One or more members:

- under age 15 years (i.e., ages 0-14 years)
- under age 18 years (i.e., aged 0-17 years)
- under age 20 years (i.e., ages 0-19 years)
- aged 60 years or over
- aged 65 years or over

Combination of members:

- one or more under age 15 years AND one or more aged 60 years or over
- one or more under age 15 years AND one or more aged 65 years or over
- one or more under age 18 years AND one or more aged 60 years or over
- one or more under age 18 years AND one or more aged 65 years or over
- one or more under age 20 years AND one or more aged 60 years or over
- one or more under age 20 years AND one or more aged 65 years or over

Average number of household members of selected ages is calculated for the following:

members under age 15 years (i.e., ages 0-14) among all households

members under age 15 years (i.e., ages 0-14) among households with at least one member under age 15 years

members under age 20 years (i.e., ages 0-19) among all households

members under age 20 years (i.e., ages 0-19) among households with at least one member under age 20 years

members aged 20-64 years (the “working ages,” as commonly identified) among all households

Distribution of households by type is the percentage of households in distinct household configurations, described in seven mutually exclusive categories:

one-person households comprised of only one member;

couple only households comprised of a married or in-partnership couple and no one else;

couple with children households comprised of a married or in-partnership couple and their children (biological, step, and adopted/foster children), irrespective of children’s ages, and no one else;

single parent with children households comprised of a single parent and his or her children (biological, step, and adopted/foster children), irrespective of children’s ages, and no one else;

extended family households that include one or more members outside of the nuclear family unit (see below) and no members who are not related to each other;

non-relative households that include two or members who are not related to each other;

unknown households that include one or more members whose relationship to the head is unknown or not reported.

Additional indicators describe the **percentage of households by inter-generational composition**:

nuclear households as the sum of the percentages of couple only households, couple with children households, and single parent with children households;

multigeneration households that include two or more generations of related members aged 20 years or over;

three generation households that include three or more generations of related members, irrespective of age;

skip generation households consisting of grandparents and their grandchildren, but none of the parents of the grandchildren.

DATA SOURCES

The four types of sources of data on household size and composition reflected in the database include:

1. Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) (<https://dhsprogram.com/>)

ICF. 2004-2019. Demographic and Health Surveys (various) [Datasets]. Funded by USAID. Rockville, Maryland: ICF [Distributor].

Household indicators are estimated from 274 DHS household rosters, representing 74 countries or areas and with reference years ranging from 1985 to 2018. Household members are restricted to usual residents of the household, excluding visitors.

2. IPUMS-International

Minnesota Population Center. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, International: Version 7.2 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D020.V7.2>

Household indicators are estimated from 303 IPUMS-I household rosters, representing 91 countries or areas and with reference years ranging from 1960 to 2018. As with the DHS, household members identified in IPUMS-I samples are restricted to usual residents of the household, excluding visitors. Group quarters or other non-household arrangements and their residents are not considered.

For both DHS and IPUMS-I, estimation of the prevalence of various household types relies on information about the relationship of each household member to the head of household reported on the household roster portion of censuses and surveys.² The set of relationship types recorded in DHS household roster is highly standardised across countries or areas and over time and provides sufficient detail to estimate the prevalence of each of the various household types described above. The sets of relationship codes associated with the census and survey samples from IPUMS-I are less standardised and for some countries or areas and samples, the set of relationship codes reported lacks sufficient detail to estimate the prevalence of some household types.

Specifically, for those IPUMS-I samples with relationship codes that do not distinguish children of the head from children-in-law of the head, it was not possible to estimate the prevalence of couple with children households, single parent households, nuclear households and extended family households.

Furthermore, for IPUMS-I samples that did not distinguish grandchildren of the head from other relatives, it was not possible to estimate the prevalence of multi-generation, three generation and skip generation households. Lastly, for IPUMS-I samples that used the combined relationship code “other relatives or non-relatives”, the prevalence

² See United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). Patterns and trends in household size and composition: Evidence from a United Nations dataset. (ST/ESA/SER.A/433).

of extended family households and non-relative households, respectively, could not be estimated.

3. Demographic Yearbook (DYB) of the United Nations

(https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb_Household/dyb_household.htm)

Tabulations describing households by size, sex and age of the head, and basic household type have been reported to the DYB by national statistical offices. Because the data compiled in the DYB are tabulations, as opposed to household microdata as for DHS and IPUMS-I, it is not possible to obtain estimates of extended family or non-relative households or the intergenerational household types from this source. Estimates based on DYB records for 120 countries or areas are included in the database with reference years ranging from 1995 to 2016.

4. LFS: Labour Force Surveys (LFS) of the European Union, Eurostat

(<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-labour-force-survey>)

The microdata from the collection of European Union Labour Force Surveys (LFS), were processed during the assembly of the first release of the United Nations Database on Household Size and Composition in 2017, which included fewer indicators than this extended 2018 release. The subset of household size indicators from the LFS that were published in the 2017 database are reproduced here as well, but no additional processing has yet been completed to produce estimates for the extended set of indicators. The database includes estimates from 47 LFS, representing 24 countries and with reference years 2001 and 2011.