

## HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY STRUCTURE

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### MAJOR FINDINGS

- The major change affecting the structure of households was a considerable increase in the number and rate of one-person households. Between 1990 and 2005, their rate grew from 24 to 29 per cent. In 2005, 1,163,000 households fell into this category, which meant that 12 per cent of the population lived alone. Two thirds of them were women. Every second woman above 70 lives alone and their overwhelming majority is widowed. The largest group among men living alone is unmarried men, followed by divorcees and widowers.
- The rate of couple-type families decreased from 80 per cent in 1990 to 71 per cent in 2005, while the 5 per cent of cohabiting couples gradually tripled during the period. The rate of lone-parent families increased from 15.6 to 16.8 per cent, with families consisting of mother and child growing from 80 to 87 per cent within the category.
- Childlessness is more common in cohabiting than in married unions, and the rate of couples with two children is smaller within the former group. Among families with children, married couples have the greatest number of children. They are followed by cohabiting couples, then come lone mothers with children. The number of children raised by lone fathers is the smallest.
- In the period between 2003 and 2008, 9 per cent of newborn babies arrived into lone-parent families. Until they turned 15, 27 per cent of children experienced living in a lone-parent family, spending an average of 23 months in such a household. 7 per cent of them already lived in a so-called mosaic family that includes a stepparent and possibly also half or stepsiblings. However, in the mid-2000s the majority (73 per cent) of 15-year-olds still lived with their biological parents.

## SIZE AND COMPOSITION OF HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES

In order to learn about family structure, it is inevitable to study households. A household does not necessarily consist of a single family: more families may live in it, just as there are non-family households, too, for example one-person households.

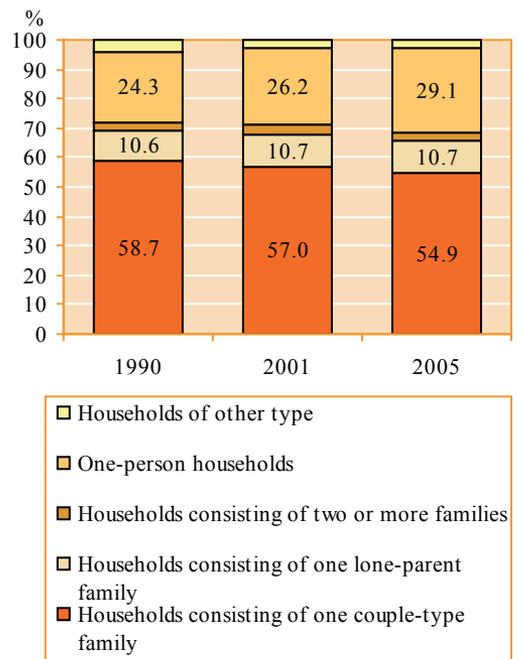
At the time of the 1990 census, there were 3,889,532 households in Hungary, in 2001 there were 3,862,702, and in 2005 there were 4,001,976. Whereas the number of households grew after the turn of the millennium, the number of family-type households and of the people living in them gradually decreased since 1990, mostly due to population ageing and decreasing fertility. The average size of families consisting of married couples was 3.18 persons in 2001 and only 3.14 four years later. The size of families where the couples lived in consensual union decreased from 2.98 to 2.87 persons in the same period. Although the number of lone-parent families increased, the average number of their members fell. This means that there are fewer children in each household.

As regards the composition of households, the rate of households with a married or cohabiting couple (with or without children) decreased, though they still constitute the majority of households. 68.9 per cent of the population lives in such households. The spreading of cohabitation is indicated by the fact that while in 2001 it represented 6.3 per cent of all households, in 2005 this rate was already 7.8 per cent. This means that in 13.2 per cent of couple-type households consisting of one family the partners lived together without being married.

The rate of households consisting of one lone-parent family stagnated after 1990, and that of one-person households increased. In 2005, 11.8 per cent of the total population

lived alone, and 29.1 per cent of all households were one-person households. The decrease in the average size of households is mainly due to the increasing rate of one-person households. One-person and single-family households amount to nearly 95 per cent of all households, which means that households consisting of more families or of persons not forming a family are becoming very rare (Fig. 1).

**Fig. 1. The changing composition of households**



Source: KSH (2004); KSH (2006).

Population ageing is reflected also in the age structure of households. The rate of households with at least one old person (60+) grew from 37.5 per cent in 1990 to 40.4 per cent in 2005. The number of households consisting of exclusively old persons increased the most, with a five percentage point growth in 15 years. At the same time, the rate of households consisting

of old, as well as middle-aged or young people decreased from 16 to 14 per cent between 1990 and 2005. As regards the age structure of their members, households with young and middle-aged persons (typically parent/s and their child/ren) constitute the majority, though their rate has decreased slightly since 1990. Different generations tend to live together to an ever smaller degree. The rate of all household types with young people under 30 has decreased, which is an obvious result of fertility decline. It is especially conspicuous that the rate of households with exclusively young people decreased, partly due to the postponement of leaving the parental home and the growing difficulties of obtaining an independent home, and partly due to the postponement of starting a new family (Fig. 2). The two factors are naturally interdependent.

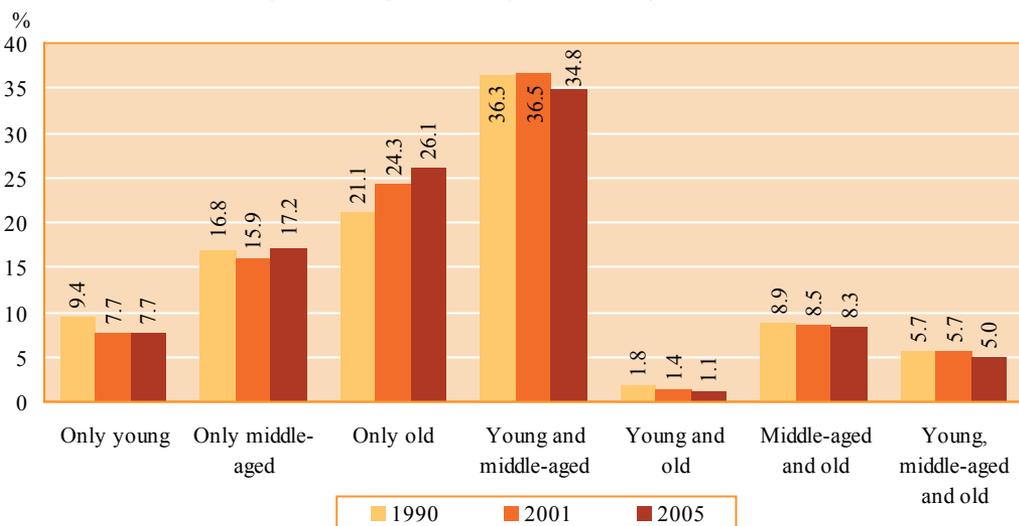
In 2005, 8,212,000 persons (81.4 per cent of the population) constituted 2,849,000 families in Hungary. The number of families decreased steadily between 1990 and 2005,

by 48,000 families. The average family size fell from 2.92 to 2.88 persons.

The composition of families underwent a considerable change as well (Fig. 3). Whereas in 1970 90 per cent of all families was couple-type, this rate fell to 83–85 per cent after 1990. Between 1990 and 2005 the rate of cohabitations grew threefold among couple-type families. Although cohabitation is getting more and more accepted and the willingness to get married is decreasing, the overwhelming majority of the population still lives in families consisting of married couples.

The high number of divorces and the tendency of cohabitations to break up gave rise to a growing rate of lone-parent families (from 15.6 per cent in 1990 to 16.8 per cent in 2005). Households of mothers living with their child/ren were the most common type within the category, with 80 per cent of all lone-parent families in 1990, 88 per cent in 2001, and 87 per cent in 2005. Father and child/ren living together is a rare phenomenon.

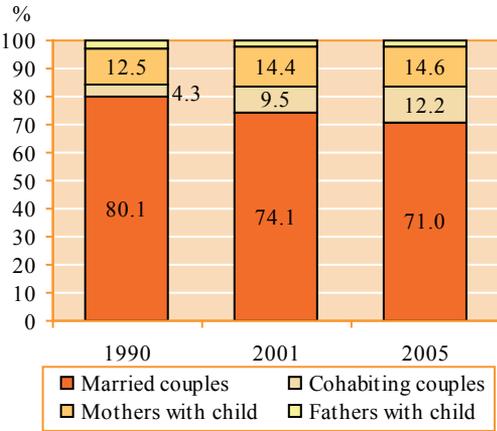
Fig. 2. Changes in the age structure of households



Source: KSH (2004); KSH (2006).

Note: Age categories: young: 0–29, middle-aged: 30–59, old: 60+.

**Fig. 3. Changes in the composition of one-family households**

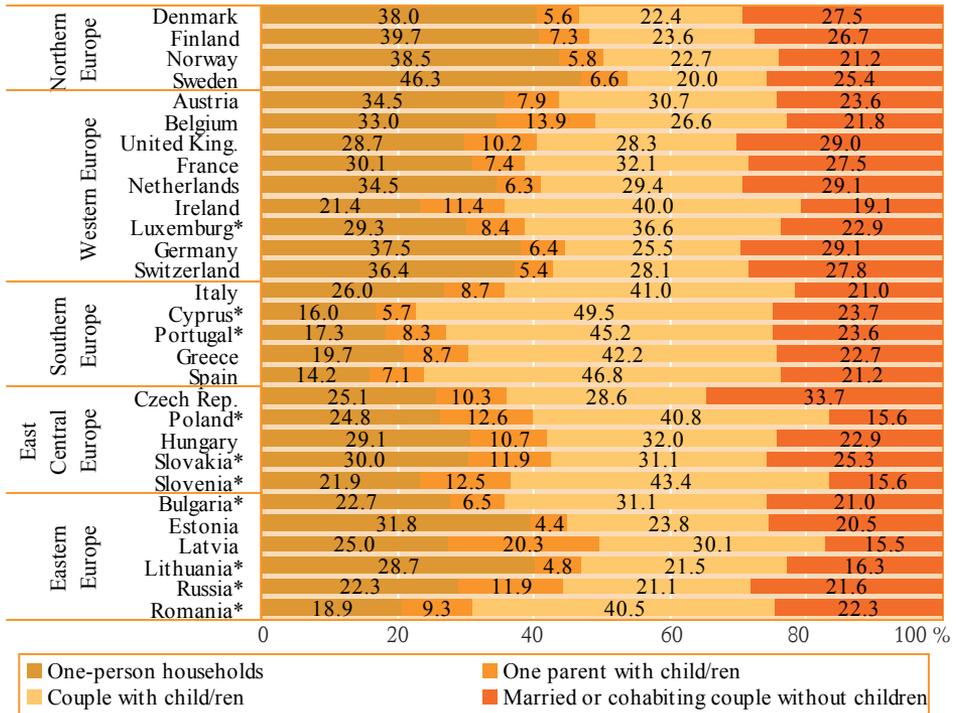


Source: KSH (2004); KSH (2006).

The distribution of household types shows remarkable differences within Europe (Fig. 4).

Almost in all countries, the majority lives in households of married or cohabiting couples. This rate is the highest in Southern Europe (64–77 per cent) and the lowest in the north (46–56 per cent). On average, parents and children live together in 44 per cent of all households. This rate is lower in the northern countries and higher in the east, and especially in the south. There are children in more than half of the households consisting of married or cohabiting couples. The rate of lone-parent households is the highest in Eastern Europe. 28 per cent of the households consist of only one person. This rate is the highest in Northern Europe in Sweden nearly every second household falls in this category. Western Europe similarly has a high rate of such households, whereas their rate is low in Eastern and especially in Southern Europe. For example, the share of one-person households is merely 14 per cent in Spain.

**Fig. 4. Distribution of household types in selected countries of Europe, 2005**



Source: UNECE Statistical Database, <http://w3.unece.org/pxweb/>.

\* Data from 2001/2002.

### ESTABLISHING THE FIRST INDEPENDENT HOUSEHOLD AND LIVING IN PARTNERSHIP IN THE PARENTAL HOME

The number and relative frequency of households consisting of a nuclear family and one or more other family members (e.g., grandparents) are relatively low and is slightly decreasing. However, such households remain important for many in certain phases of their lives. According to a survey of the Demographic Research Institute in late 2008, the median age of establishing an independent household among persons aged 20 to 40, i.e., the age when every second person has left the parental home, is 25 years. Women usually leave their parents' home 3 years earlier than men due to their earlier family formation. Among men and women aged 20 to 40 who have ever left their parental home and lived with a partner or spouse, every third still lived in their original families when their first partners moved in. This rate seems especially high if we take into consideration that one of the partners has to move away from their parents anyway in order to move in with their partners (Murinkó, 2009).

Cross-sectional results show that in 2008 44 per cent of men aged 20–40 and one third of women of the same age lived with their parents (still or anew). 2 per cent of both sexes lived with their partner's parents. The majority lived, however, in independent households.

Although the majority of men and women aged 20 to 40 living with their parents do not have a coresident partner or spouse, the rate of those living in extended family households and families with three generations is not negligible, either. Every tenth household of married couples includes one or two parents of the wife or the husband as well. It is more frequent among young cohabitating couples to live with the parents of one of them (24 per cent of men and 18 per cent of women aged 20 to 40).

Most young couples living in the parental home consider this state transitory as following from the difficulties of establishing an independent household. About three quarters of couples living in the parental home move to a home of their own sooner or later.

#### *Distribution of persons living with their own parents, with their spouse's parents, and living independently by status of partnership (age group 16–40), 2008*

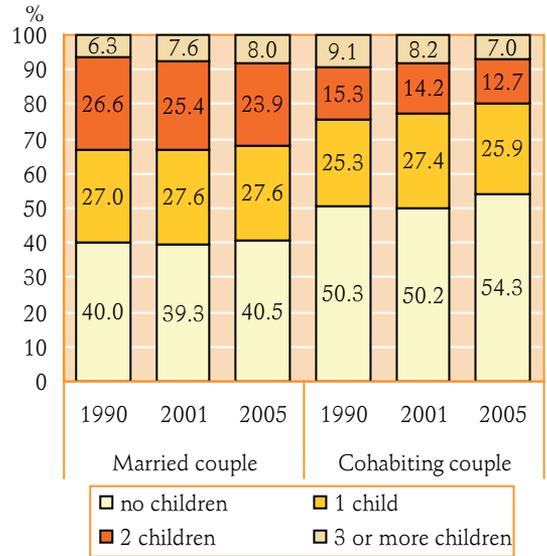
	Lives together with at least one parent	Lives together with the partner's parents	Lives independently from own or partner's parents	Total (%)
Men				
Living with spouse	6.5	3.2	90.3	100.0
Living with unmarried partner	18.1	5.9	76.0	100.0
Having partner who lives separately	79.2	0.0	20.8	100.0
Having no partner	78.0	0.0	22.0	100.0
Total	44.0	2.1	53.9	100.0
Women				
Living with spouse	6.7	3.6	89.7	100.0
Living with unmarried partner	13.3	4.3	82.4	100.0
Having partner who lives separately	74.0	0.0	26.0	100.0
Having no partner	63.9	0.0	36.1	100.0
Total	32.4	2.3	65.3	100.0

Source: Demographic panel survey of Demographic Research Institute, HCSO "Turning Points of the Life Course" 2008, own calculations.

CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY

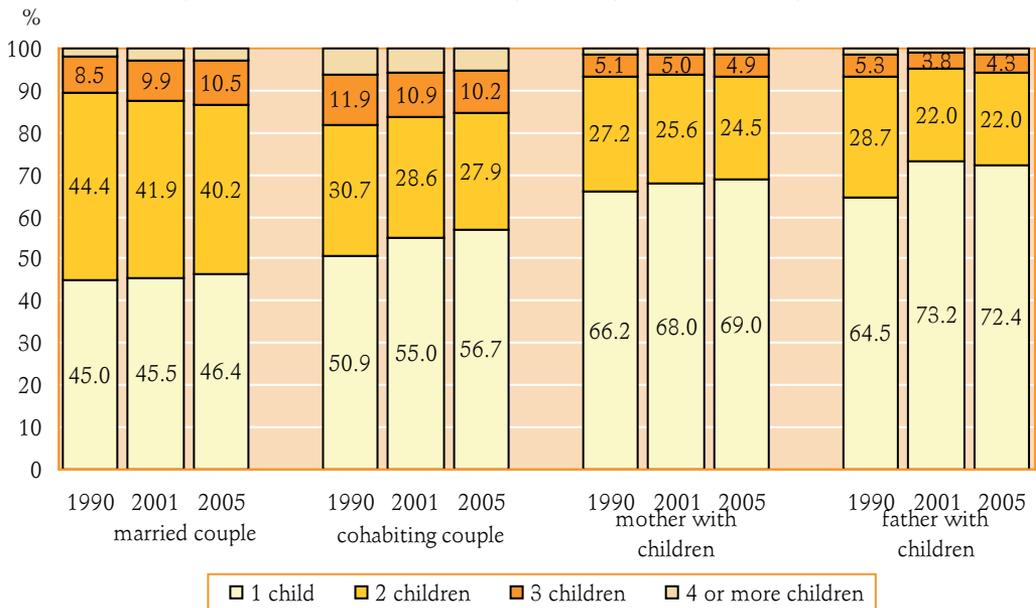
The number of children living with married and cohabiting couples shows remarkable differences. The rate of childless married couples (4 per cent) and of those with one child (slightly over 25 per cent) remained basically unchanged in the period 1990–2005. Some rearrangement can be observed among those with several children: the rate of families with two children decreased by three percentage points (from 26.6 per cent in 1990), and that of families with three or more children grew by 1.5 percentage points (from 6.4 per cent in 1990). The rate of childlessness was higher (50 per cent) among cohabiting couples at the time of the two last censuses and grew further (to 54 per cent) by 2005. The proportion of couples with one child was similar among married and cohabiting couples (25–27 per cent), while the rate of families with two or more children fell from 24.4 per cent in 1990 to 19.8 per cent in 2005 (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5. Distribution of couple-type families by family type and number of children



Source: KSH (2004); KSH (2006).

Fig. 6. Families with children by family type and number of children



Source: KSH (2004); KSH (2006).

Consequently, married couples have more children than cohabiting couples on average. The average number of children born to 100 married couples was above 100 in each of the three years concerned (101-104 children), while in the case of cohabiting couples this figure was smaller and gradually decreased between 1990 and 2005, from 89 to 76 children. The rise in the rate of childless cohabitations can be in connection with the fact that young couples prefer cohabitation in the early phase of their relationship.

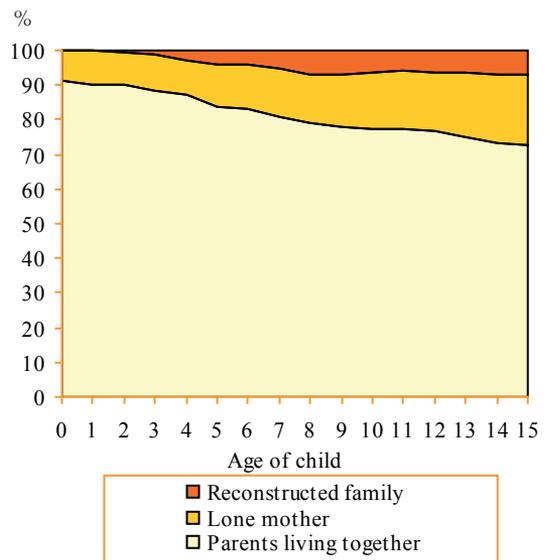
Among families with children, lone-parent families more often have only one child and less frequently have two or more children than couple-type families (Fig. 6). Cohabiting couples more often have only one child than married couples but they also tend to have three or more children to a greater degree. During one and a half decades, the proportion of families with three children became similar in the two types of families. The rate of families with four or more children was still three times as high among cohabiting couples than among married ones in the 1990s but in 2005 this difference was already only twofold.

The point of view of children is of outstanding importance during the analysis of family structure, primarily whether they live with one or two parents and in what type of family they live in a given period of their lives. Fig. 7 shows the situation of children aged 0 to 15 in the period between 2003 and 2008 by the status of their mother. In those years, 9 per cent of newborn babies had single mothers, the mother of 20 per cent lived in cohabitation, and that of 71 per cent was married. So whereas 91 per cent of all new babies lived with both biological parents, this rate was only 73 per cent for the 15-year-old. On average, children lived 12.3 years with both parents during the first 15 years of their lives.

Every fourth child experienced life in a lone-parent family before they turned 15. As the majority of couples broke up not at the time of the child's arrival but only later, the rate of

this group gradually grew with age (Fig. 7). The number of children who have experienced life in a lone-parent family in a certain period of their lives is much higher than a simple snapshot would indicate, while the period spent in such a family is shorter. Between 2003 and 2008, children aged 0-15 were raised by their mothers alone for an average of 1.9 years out of the possible 15 years.

**Fig. 7. Distribution of children of different ages by family type, 2003–2008**



Source: Demographic panel survey of Demographic Research Institute, HCSO "Turning Points of the Life Course" 2008, own calculations.

Lone parents may find new partners, making the family a two-parent one once again. Between 2003 and 2008, 7 per cent of children under 15 lived in so-called mosaic families with a step-parent and possibly also half- or stepsiblings. This situation may result in new family types in which families are faced with novel challenges. On average, children lived less than one year in such families until the age of 15.

## ONE-PERSON HOUSEHOLDS

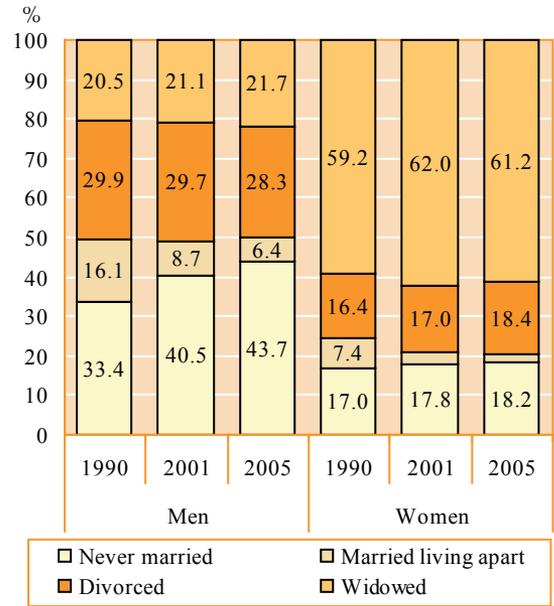
One of the most important changes in the lives of Hungarian families since the change of regimes is the considerable growth in the rate of one-person households. Between 1990 and 2005, the rate grew from 24 to 29 per cent, numbering 1,163,000 in 2005. That year, the rate of one-person and two-person households was already similar. 11.8 per cent of the total population, i.e., 1,163,000 people lived alone.

Nearly twice as many women lived in one-person households than men. The share of men among those living alone was around 35 per cent and that of women was around 65 per cent in 1990, 2001, and 2005 alike. The major cause of the difference is that – due to their higher life expectancy – women more often survive their partners and remain alone.

One-person households mostly come about when young people leave the parental home or when elderly persons lose their partners through death. In Hungary the latter is more frequent and more permanent. Young people leaving their parents' household establish lasting partnerships sooner or later. What is more, they often (though to an ever smaller degree) move in with a partner right after leaving their parents, without a period spent alone.

In 2005, the largest group of men living in one-person households was made up of bachelors (44 per cent), then come the divorced (28 per cent), the widowers (22 per cent), and married men living separated (6 per cent). Among men living solo, the rate of unmarried men gradually increased and that of married men living apart has considerably decreased since 1990. Single women are less likely to live alone than single men (18 per cent) but the rate of widows constituting one-person households is three times higher among women (61 per cent) than among men. Most women living alone are widows (Fig. 8).

**Fig. 8. Distribution of men and women living in one-person households by marital status**

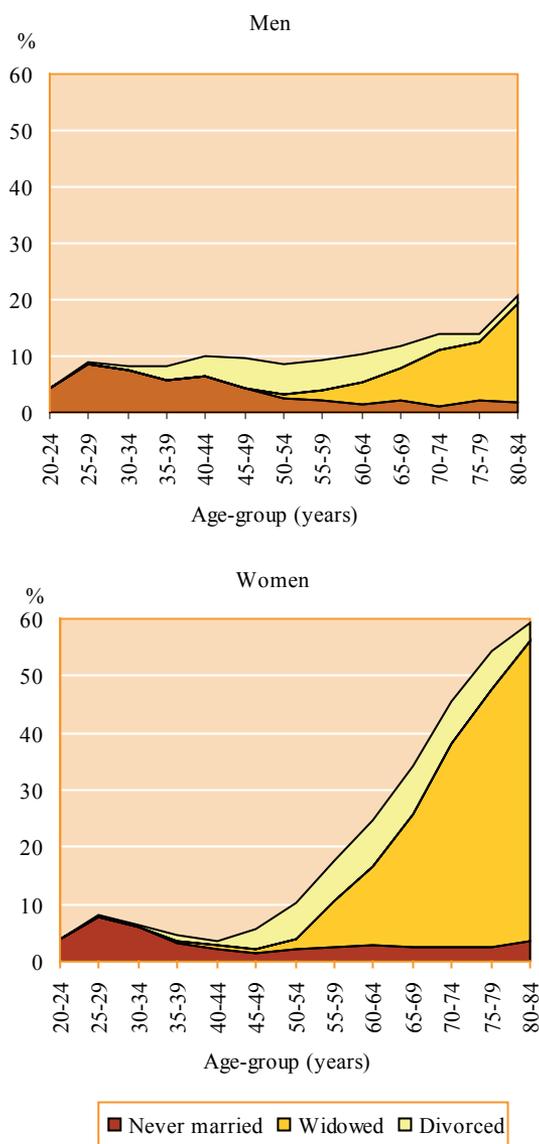


Source: KSH (2004); KSH (2006).

Men and women under 30 live alone to a similar degree. In the age group 30–49 men dominate; later the rate of women is higher. Among men in their thirties and forties more unmarried and divorced persons live alone than among women of the same age because men usually enter partnerships at a higher age than women and they are less likely to live with their children after divorce. The rate of solo-living never married women steadily decreases above 30 and does not reach 10 per cent in any of the age groups (Fig. 9).

Above 50, the impact of the higher mortality of men on household structure becomes conspicuous. As time passes, more and more women remain alone in one-person households, and the difference between the two sexes grows in this respect. Every second woman above 70 already lives alone, mostly as a widow.

**Fig. 9. Rate of men and women in one-person households by marital status and age, 2008**



Source: Demographic panel survey of Demographic Research Institute, HCSO "Turning Points of the Life Course" 2008, own calculations.

### THE HIGHEST ACCEPTED AGE OF ESTABLISHING AN INDEPENDENT HOUSEHOLD IN EUROPE

Young adults establish new households by moving away from the parental home. Countries of Europe differ not only as regards their household structure and the timing of forming new households but also in the social expectations as to when young people should become independent. Societies are more permissive in the case of men, determining a 6-12 months higher expected age of moving away.

In Northern Europe, where young people leave the parental home early and behaviour is relatively homogeneous, the age limit when a young man or woman is considered too old to live with his/her parents is the lowest. In the Scandinavian countries it is generally expected of young adults to leave their parents' household at the age of 26-27. Most countries of Western Europe rank in the middle, with the age range of 27-30 being the highest accepted age of moving away. As for the post-communist countries, expectations are the strictest in Estonia and Poland, where young people should establish independent household by the age of 27-29. Southern Europe is characterized by relatively late home-leaving and heterogeneous behaviour, and just like Hungary, they are the most permissive: young people are expected to leave their parents' home only above 30. In Hungary, the average age is 30 for women and 31 years for men. The weakness of the relevant norm is also indicated by the fact that many people think (35 per cent when asked about men and 43 per cent when asked about women) that people are never too old to still live with their parents.

*At what age are men/women too old to still live with their parents? Average expected age of moving away from parents in selected countries of Europe, 2006*



Source: European Social Survey, 3rd wave, 2006.  
Own calculations.

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