



## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS N° 22

# GENDER DIFFERENCES IN FAMILY ARRANGEMENTS IN LATER LIFE

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Family arrangements necessarily change along the life course, not only in the first half of the family cycle, but also in later life. The family arrangement is a determining factor of life: the standard of living, financial security, health, quality of life as well as social relations depend on the family structure. Living alone is a vulnerable state in terms of welfare and well-being, especially in later life.

Many studies show that there are important differences between the life trajectories of men and women in later life. One of the main explanatory factors is that women are likely to live longer than men. Therefore, in every older cohort of men the proportion of people living in a partnership is higher than for women, while the number of men who live alone is lower. Fewer men move in with their children's family when they get old, or live in a three- or multi-generation

household. Furthermore, the oldest old men are less likely to be institutionalised during the final stage of their life than women. [Figure 1 and 2](#) illustrate these differences in Hungary. The typical old-age trajectory for men is shorter than for women, and men are more likely to spend the final stage of their life with their partner. Older men who survive their partner tend to continue to live alone, as multi-generational or institutional living is less common among them.

However, most women continue to live in a one-person household after the loss of their partner. A less common arrangement among them is living in a multigenerational household together with their offspring. Living in a multi-generational household is even less common among men. Women who live to old age are also more likely to move into an institutional setting compared to men.

**Figure 1-2.** Forms of family arrangement among the elderly, by age in Hungary, 2011

Source: Census 2011, 10% sample, own calculation.

