

## SF1.1: Family size and household composition

### *Definitions and methodology*

This indicator considers the size and composition of private households. A *private household* is either: (a) a single-person household, i.e. a person who lives alone in a separate housing unit or who occupies a separate room in a housing unit and does not form a multi-person household with other occupants of the housing unit; or (b) a multi-person household, i.e. a group of two or more people who occupy the whole or part of a housing unit and share resources to cover living expenses. The usual residence serves as the basis for the identification of household membership. Information on people living in “institutional households” such as health care institutions, military barracks, etc., is not included here.

Various household types are used throughout this indicator, with the different types defined with reference to the number of and relationship between adults in the household and the presence or not of children. The broad household types used here are:

- *Couple households*, that is, households with two partnered adults either married or in a civil or registered partnership, or cohabiting. Generally, in most countries, this includes adults in same-sex as well as opposite-sex relationships. Couple households may or may not also contain children.
- *Single-parent households*, that is, households with only a single adult and at least one child.
- *Single-person households*, that is, households with a single adult living alone.
- *‘Other’ household types*, that is, all other types of household. This includes households with several unrelated cohabiting members and households shared by two or more family units. ‘Extended families’ - such as those with three generations living in the same household - are included in this category.

Children are generally defined as dependent resident children under 25, and include both biological children and step- or adopted children.

### *Key findings*

The composition and structure of households differs considerably across Asia/Pacific countries (Table SF1.1.A). In Asia/Pacific countries as also in OECD countries, couple households (with or without children) are generally the most frequent type of household. However, the exact share of couple households varies substantially from one country to another. In both Viet Nam and Singapore, for example, just under 70% of households are couple households. In Korea, Japan and Thailand, this is less than 50%, though for these countries the data on ‘couple households’ includes married-couple households only.

Single-parent households are less frequent, though they still make up a considerable minority of households in many Asia/Pacific countries (Table SF1.1.A). In most of the covered countries somewhere between 10 and 13% of households are single-parent households, which is a greater share than in OECD countries, on average. However, in both China and Japan, fewer than 3% of households are single-parent households.

*Other relevant indicators:* SF2.1 Fertility rates; SF2.3 Age of mothers at childbirth and age-specific fertility; SF2.4 Share of births outside of marriage; SF3.1 Marriage and divorce rate; SF3.2 Family dissolution and children

**Table SF1.1.A. Types of household**  
 Distribution (%) of households by household type<sup>a</sup>, 2017 or latest<sup>b</sup>

	Year	Couple households:			Single parent households:			Single person households	Other household types
		Total	With children	Without children	Total	Single mother households	Single father households		
Australia (c)	2011	56.95	31.03	25.92	10.45	..	..	23.90	8.70
China	2010	56.25	..	..	2.70	..	..	13.67	27.38
Japan (e)	2015	46.77	16.62	30.15	2.63	2.36	0.27	34.45	16.16
Korea (f)	2015	47.79	32.18	15.60	10.78	7.97	2.81	27.23	14.21
New Zealand (c)	2013	57.05	28.93	28.13	11.23	..	..	23.54	8.18
Singapore	2015	69.70	..	..	13.40	..	..	11.90	5.00
Thailand (g)	2017	40.00	22.30	17.70	6.50	5.06	1.46	18.00	35.40
Viet Nam	2010	69.80	..	..	13.10	..	..	12.20	4.90
OECD-32 average (h)	2011	51.94	..	..	7.47	..	..	30.56	9.81

a) 'Children' in this instance are generally defined as resident children under 25, and include both biological children and step- or adopted children, with any resident children over aged 25 or over treated as a non-dependent 'adult' child, though exact definitions do vary across countries. 'Couple households' are households with two adults in a couple (either married or in a civil or registered partnership, or cohabiting), with 'couple households with children' defined as those that contain two adults in a couple and at least one child (under age 25), and 'couple households without children' those that contain two adults in a couple and either no children (under age 25) or 'adult' children (age 25 or over) only. 'Single parent households' are households with a single adult and at least one child (under age 25). 'Single person' households are households with a single person living alone. 'Other household types' covers all other types of households, including households with several unrelated cohabiting members and households shared by two or more family units.

b) Data for China and Viet Nam refer to 2010, for Australia and the OECD-32 average to 2011 (or nearest/latest available), for New Zealand to 2013, and for Japan, Korea and Singapore to 2015.

c) For Australia and New Zealand, 'children' are defined as someone of any age who lives with their parent(s) and as long as they do not have a partner or children of their own living in the same household.

e) For Japan, 'couple households' refers to married couple households only. 'Children' refers to unmarried children under age 20.

f) For Korea, 'children' refers to all unmarried children of any age. Data on 'Couple families' includes both married couples without children and married couples with children.

g) For Thailand, data on 'couple households' refer to married-couple households with all unmarried children.

h) The OECD-32 average refers to the unweighted average across the 32 OECD countries with available and comparable data. See OECD Family Database Indicator SF1.1 (<http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>) for more detail.

Sources: [Australia: 2011 Census of Population and Housing](#); China: Yuesheng, W. (2014), based on Census 2010; Korea: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census; [Japan: 2015 Population Census](#); [New Zealand: 2013 Census of Population and Dwellings](#); [OECD-32 average: OECD Family Database Indicator SF1.1](#); Singapore: General Household Survey 2015; Thailand: Labor Force Survey (Quarter 3) 2017; Vietnam: Census of Population, 2010.

The frequency of single-person households varies considerably between countries (Table SF1.1.A). Single-person households make up around 25% of households in Australia, Korea and New Zealand, and almost 35% in Japan, but in Singapore and Viet Nam only about 12% of households are single-person households. These differences reflect the propensity and age at which young adults leave the parental home, plus the size of the elderly population and the tendency for them to live in with their children or enter a house for the elderly (or other institution).

Differences in household structures, alongside differences in fertility (see Indicator SF2.1), mean that the likelihood of a household containing at least one child varies substantially across Asia/Pacific countries (Table SF1.1.B). Childless households are least common in Indonesia, where only roughly 21% of households contain no children and, with the exceptions of Japan and New Zealand (where the definitions of 'children' are slightly different to that used for other countries), most common in Korea, where over half of households are childless. Single-child households and two-child households are most common in Indonesia (39% and 27%), and three-or-more-child households most common in Malaysia (32%).

**Table SF1.1.B. Households by number of children**

Distribution of households by number of children<sup>a</sup> and proportion of households with at least one child under age six, 2017 or latest<sup>b</sup>

Year	Proportion of households with:				Proportion (%) of households with children under 6	
	0 children	1 child	2 children	3 or more children		
Australia	-	..	..	..	..	
China	-	..	..	..	..	
Indonesia	2015	21.40	39.41	26.51	12.68	24.88
Japan (c)	2015	76.96	10.90	9.49	2.66	8.66
Korea	2012	59.46	16.45	20.35	3.73	15.83
Malaysia	2010	28.34	19.51	19.67	32.48	25.89
New Zealand (d)	2013	66.99	13.32	12.81	6.88	..
Singapore	-	..	..	..	..	..
Thailand	2017	46.80	26.70	17.90	8.50	16.60
Viet Nam	-	..	..	..	..	..
OECD-32 average (e)	2015	67.57	14.72	12.65	5.07	..

a) 'Children' in this instance are generally defined as dependent resident children under 25, and include both biological children and step- or adopted children or any other children in the household, though exact definitions do vary across countries.

b) Data for Malaysia refer to 2010, for Korea to 2012, for New Zealand refer to 2013, and for Indonesia, Japan and OECD average to 2015.

c) For Japan, 'children' refers to all unmarried children aged under 18, only.

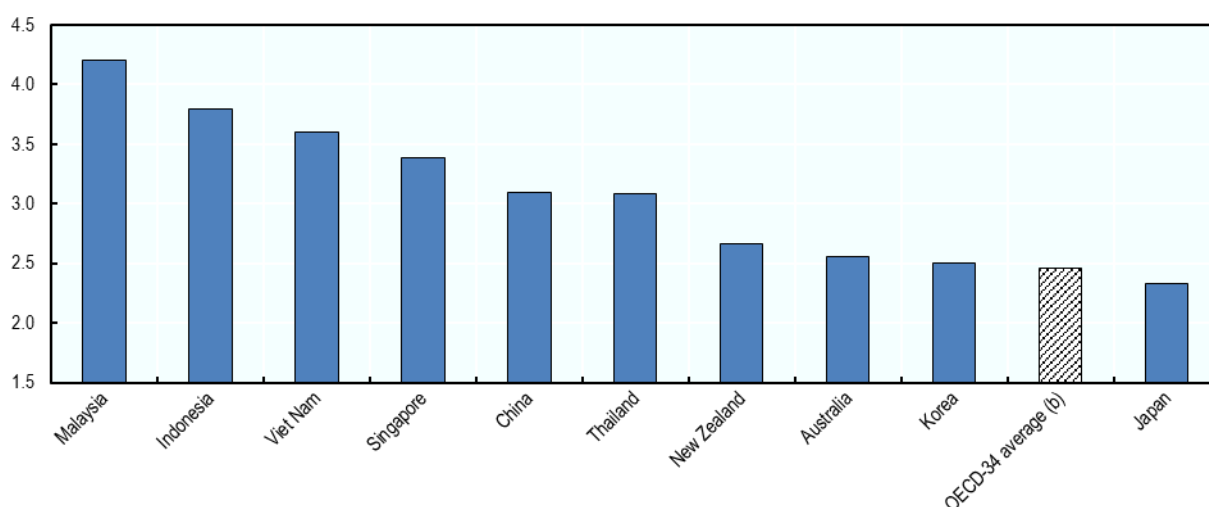
d) For New Zealand, 'children' refers to dependent children aged under 18 and not employed full-time.

e) The OECD-32 average refers to the unweighted average across the 32 OECD countries with available and comparable data. See OECD Family Database Indicator SF1.1 (<http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>) for more detail.

Sources: Indonesia: National Socio-Economic Survey, 2015; Korea: The Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs, 2012 National Survey on Fertility, Family, Health and Welfare; Japan: Comprehensive Survey of Living Conditions 2015 (Households by number of children) and 2015 Population Census (Households with children under age 6); Malaysia: Population and Housing Census, 2010 (2% Census Sample Microdata Analysis); [New Zealand: 2013 Census of Population and Dwellings](#); [OECD-32 average: OECD Family Database Indicator SF1.1](#); Thailand: Labor Force Survey (Quarter 3) 2017.

Differences in the presence and number of children, together with differences in household types and the propensity for extended families to live together in the same household, produce considerable differences in average household size (Chart SF1.1.A). Households are largest at an average of around 4 people in Malaysia and Indonesia where fertility remains high (see Indicator SF2.1), and at around 3.5 people per household in Viet Nam and in Singapore, where for many years the government has encouraged three-generation households (Quah, 2003). They are smallest, at around or less than 2.5 people per household, in Australia, Korea and Japan – all countries where single-person households are common.

**Chart SF1.1.A. Average size of households, 2015 or latest<sup>a</sup>**  
Mean average number of people per household



a) Data for China and Malaysia refer to 2010, for New Zealand and Viet Nam to 2013.

b) The OECD-34 average refers to the unweighted average across the 34 OECD countries with available and comparable data. See OECD Family Database Indicator SF1.1 (<http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>) for more detail.

Sources: [Australia: 2011 Census of Population and Housing](#); [China: 2010 Population Census](#); [Indonesia: National Socio-Economic Survey, 2015](#); [Japan: 2015 Population Census](#); [Korea: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census](#); [Malaysia: Population and Housing Census, 2010 \(DOSM, 2016\)](#); [New Zealand: 2013 Census of Population and Dwellings](#); [OECD-34 average: OECD Family Database Indicator SF1.1](#); [Singapore: Singapore Department of Statistics](#); [Thailand: Labor Force Survey \(quarter 3\) 2015](#); [Vietnam: Sample Surveys on Population Dynamics and Family Planning 2013](#)

### *Comparability and data issues*

The data used in this indicator come from a range of sources, including national population and housing censuses, national household surveys, and national labour force surveys. Efforts have been made to match definitions as closely as possible, but differences in definitions continue to hamper data comparability. For instance, while for most countries the definition of 'couple households' used for Table SF1.1.A includes households with two partnered adults regardless of legal marital status, for a few countries (e.g. Korea, Japan, and Thailand) it refers to married-couple households only. Given that this definition excludes all unmarried cohabiting-couple households, it is likely to lead to an underestimation of the number of couple households relative to other countries. Similarly, while for Table SF1.1.B the definition of a 'child' refers to all dependent resident children under 25, for Japan it refers to unmarried children aged under 18 and for New Zealand to dependent children aged under 18 and not employed full-time, only. All else equal, this is likely to lead to an underestimation of the number of households containing children and an overestimation of the number without children, relative to most other countries.

*Sources and further reading:* Quah, S.R. (2003), "Major trends affecting families in East and Southeast Asia", in U.N. (eds) *Major Trends Affecting Families: A Background Document*, United Nations, New York; Yuesheng, W. (2014) "An Analysis of changes in the Chinese family structure between urban and rural areas: on the basis of the 2010 National Census Data" *Social Sciences in China*, Vol. 35, No. 4, pp. 100-116; UN DESA (2015), "Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses: Revision 3", *Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division Statistical Papers*, Series M. No. 67/Rev.3, [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/seriesM/Series\\_M67rev3en.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/seriesM/Series_M67rev3en.pdf)