

## 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 Indonesia, Singapore, and Viet Nam over 60% of households are couple households. In Korea, Mongolia, and Thailand, this is less than 50%, though for Korea and Thailand (as well as for Japan) the data on ‘couple households’ includes married-couple households only. In all countries with available data except for Thailand, there are more couple households with children than without: in Viet Nam, the vast majority of couple households have children; in Indonesia and Singapore, the share of couple households with children is more than 2.5 times the share of couple households without children; whereas in the other countries, the share of couple households with and without children is more similar.

<i>Other relevant indicators:</i> 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
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Single-parent households are less frequent, though they still make up a considerable share of households in many Asia/Pacific countries (Table SF1.1.A). In most of the countries included here somewhere between 10 and 15% of households are single-parent households. However, in China, fewer than 3% of households are single-parent households.

The share of single-person households also varies considerably across Asia/Pacific countries (Table SF1.1.A). Whereas in Australia, Japan, and Korea single-person households make up more than 25% of households (up to 32% in Korea), in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam, single-person households constitute 10% or less of all households. These differences reflect difference in the age-structure of populations, the propensity and age at which young adults leave the parental home, as well as 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).

**Table SF1.1.A. Types of household**  
 Distribution (%) of households by household type<sup>a</sup>, 2021 or latest year available

	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 (b)	2021	58.2	31.4	26.8	11.1	..	..	25.6	5.1
China	2010	56.3	..	..	2.7	..	..	13.7	27.4
Indonesia (c)	2020	61.8	49.0	12.8	6.2	4.8	1.4	7.9	24.2
Japan (d)	2021	52.0	27.5	24.5	7.1	1.2	0.1	29.5	11.4
Korea (e)	2020	45.9	29.1	16.8	9.7	..	..	31.8	12.6
Malaysia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	8.3	..
Mongolia (f)	2020	48.0	..	..	11.8	10.2	1.6	15.4	24.8
New Zealand	2018	58.1	29.9	28.2	10.6	..	..	22.7	8.6
Singapore	2021	64.0	46.3	17.8	6.1	..	..	15.6	14.2
Thailand (g)	2021	36.8	10.5	26.3	12.5	5.2	7.3	10.0	40.7
Viet Nam	2019	71.3	68.4	2.9	14.5	..	..	8.7	5.5

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 aged 25 or over treated as a non-dependent 'adult' child, though exact definitions vary across countries. 'Couple households' are households with two adults (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' are 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' cover all other types of households, including households with several unrelated cohabiting members and households shared by two or more family units.

b) For Australia, 'children' are defined as someone of any age who lives with their parent(s) as long as they do not have a partner or children of their own living in the same household. 'Children' refer to those below 15 years old and those aged 15-24 who are dependent students.

c) For Indonesia, 'children' are defined as never married children aged below 25 years old.

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

e) For Korea, data on 'Couple families' includes both married couples without children and married couples with children.

f) For Mongolia, children refer those below 18 years old.

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

Sources: [Australia: 2021 Census of Population and Housing](#); China: Yuesheng, W. (2014), based on Census 2010; Indonesia: National Socio-Economic Survey 2020; Japan: [2021 National Survey of Living Conditions](#); Korea: UN, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2022) [Database on Household Size and Composition](#); Malaysia: Population and Housing Census, 2010 (DOSM, 2016); Mongolia: Population and Housing Census, 2020; New Zealand: [2013 Census of Population and Dwellings](#); Singapore: Singapore Department of Statistics, Resident Households by Household Living Arrangement and Age Group of Youngest Child, Annual, 2022; Thailand: Labour Force Survey (Quarter 3, 2021); Viet Nam: Population and Housing Census 2019.

Differences in household structures, as well as differences in fertility rates (see Indicator SF2.1), contribute to the likelihood that a household contains at least one child varies substantially across Asia/Pacific countries (Table SF1.1.B). Childless households are least common in China and Viet Nam (NB data for Viet Nam concerns 2009), and are most common in Korea and Thailand, where over half of all households are childless (the defined age-grouping for 'children' in Japan and New Zealand is slightly different to that used for other countries, which in turn increases the share of childless households. Single-child households and two-child households are most common in China (36% and 43%), and three-or-more-child households most common in Malaysia (33%) and Singapore (35%). In China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, the proportion of households with children under 6 years old is the highest, at around 25%.

**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, 2021 or latest

Year	Proportion of households with:				Proportion (%) of households with children under 6	
	0 children	1 child	2 children	3 or more children		
Australia	-	..	..	..	..	
China	2019	2.8	35.9	43.3	17.9	26.8
Indonesia	2020	35.6	24.3	23.8	16.3	24.2
Japan (b)	2021	79.3	9.7	8.2	2.8	13.8
Korea	2020	74.0	12.4	11.5	2.2	6.6
Malaysia	2020	28.3	19.5	19.7	32.5	25.9
Mongolia (c)	2020	38.0	21.9	21.3	18.8	..
New Zealand (d)	2013	67.0	13.3	12.8	6.9	..
Singapore	2010	11.8	19.2	34.4	34.6	24.7
Thailand	2021	73.6	16.0	8.2	2.2	12.9
Viet Nam	2009	2.1	31.5	52.0	14.4	12.6
OECD-32 average (e)	2015	67.6	14.7	12.6	5.1	..

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

c) For Mongolia, children refer those below 18 years old.

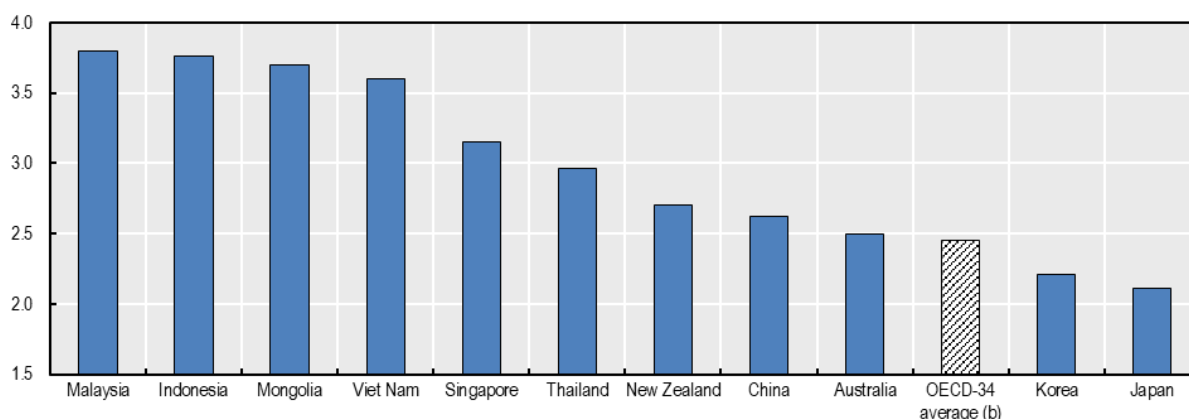
d) For New Zealand, 'children' refers to dependent children aged under 18 and not employed full-time.

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 for more detail.

Sources: China: Social Survey 2019; Indonesia: National Socio-Economic Survey, 2015; Indonesia: National Socio-Economic Survey 2020; Korea: Statistics Korea, [Population and Housing Census 2020](#); Japan: [2021 National Survey of Living Conditions](#) and [2020 Population Census](#) (for households with children under age 6); Malaysia: Population and Housing Census, 2020 (DOSM, 2022); Mongolia: Population and Housing Census, 2020; New Zealand: 2013 Census of Population and Dwellings; Singapore: Census of Population 2010, Singapore Department of Statistics; Thailand: Labour Force Survey (Quarter 3, 2021); Viet Nam: Population and Housing Census 2009; OECD-32 average: [OECD Family Database](#) Indicator SF1.1.

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 between 3.5 and 4 people in Indonesia, Malaysia Mongolia, and Viet Nam, where fertility remains high (see Indicator SF2.1), and at around 3 people per household in Thailand and Singapore. The average size of households is smallest, at around or less than 2.5 people per household, in Australia, Japan and Korea – all countries where single-person households are common (see Table SF1.1.A).

**Chart SF1.1.A. Average size of households, 2021 or latest<sup>a</sup>**  
Mean average number of people per household



a) Data for New Zealand refer to 2018; for Viet Nam to 2019; and for China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia and Malaysia to 2020.

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 for more detail.

Sources: Australia: [2021 Census of Population and Housing](#); China: Census 2020; Indonesia: National Socio-Economic Survey 2020; Japan: [2020 Population Census](#); Korea: Statistics Korea, [Population and Housing Census 2020](#); Malaysia: Population and Housing Census, 2020 (DOSM, 2022); Mongolia: All household information from Statistical Yearbook 2021, HHs with children are generated from Population and Housing Census Data; New Zealand: [National household projections, 2018-2043](#); Singapore: Singapore Department of Statistics, 2022, Resident Households By Household Size, Annual; Thailand: Labour Force Survey (Quarter 3, 2021); Viet Nam: Population and Housing Census 2019; OECD-34 average: [OECD Family Database](#) Indicator SF1.1.

### *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. Japan, Korea, 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)