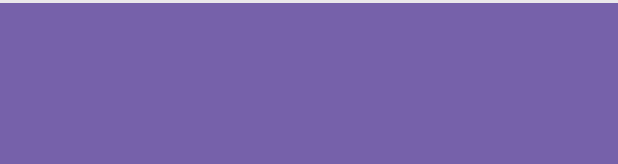


How many of us are living alone?

A visual investigation about the rising of single-person households



This visualization presents data on the share of one-person households in 24 countries over the period 2003-2018 — along with some potentially related factors. The chart shows that single-person households percentage is generally on the rise, though significant differences persist across countries.

For each country, the following information is displayed: share of one-person households from 2003 to 2018, crude rate of marriages per 1,000 people from 2003 to 2017, crude rate of divorces per 1,000 people from 2003 to 2017. Countries are ranked and arranged on the horizontal axis by population (2017 data) and on the vertical axis by GDP per capita (2017 data).

Sources: [ourworldindata.org](https://data.worldbank.org), [worldbank.org](https://data.worldbank.org)

Ideas

Being a family of one may be seen as a kind of solitude and unfinishedness—it can be imagined as a lone flower bud: still waiting to completely grow and be surrounded by its fellows. Though, a lone flower bud is one which found a way to grow far from others and may flourish and complete its life on its own. Despite the condition of being alone may be influenced by adverse life events and developments, we should make sure to trace a line to distinguish it from the sense of loneliness. What we are presenting—then—is not a proof of the “loneliness epidemic”, but an investigation of the reasons behind the spreading of one-person households.

Why do we talk about “spreading”? As you can notice by taking a look at the (flower buds) time series, all the countries (except for Poland) record an increase in the percentage of one-person

households over the total number of households, in the selected time period. This increase may be steep or slow—depending on the country we are looking at.

We can also observe that GDP per capita and the share of single-person households seem to be highly correlated. It is a reasonable consideration as, in order to live alone, you should first be able to afford it. Historically richer countries are also experiencing flatter increases with respect to the others: we may suppose that the increasing trend of single-person households percentage is fairly matched with the economic growth of a nation.

On the other hand, number of people in a country does not show a clear relation with the percentage of them living alone.

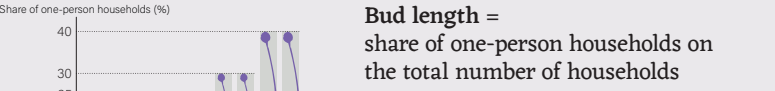
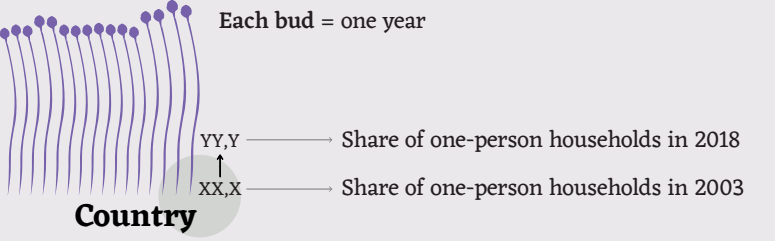
Green triangles attempt to give us some hint of two possible drivers for the choice to live alone: the frequency of marriages and divorces. One thing that may come to the eye is that—in many countries—number of marriages is decreasing. This decrease may widen the number of people living alone, but different kind of unions (e.g. cohabitation) may compensate for this decline.

Clearly, this chart does not capture the whole picture of this phenomenon: many things—like cultural contexts, working habits, infrastructures—are overlooked. We wish it to be a visual kick-off for deeper and careful investigations.

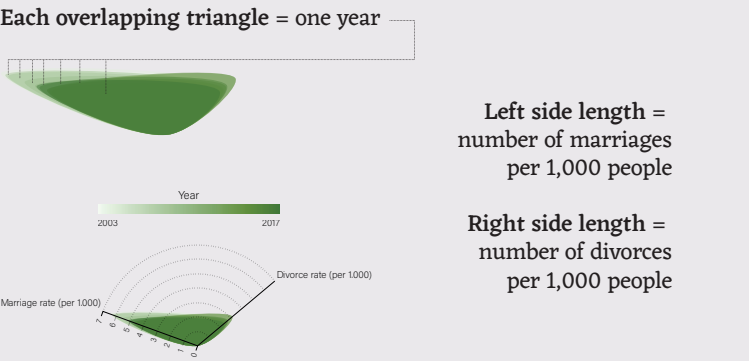


Instructions manual - how to read

Flower buds = Share of one-person households from 2003 to 2018



Triangle = Rate of marriages and divorces from 2003 to 2017



Notes

Due to availability reasons, for some countries data may be displayed starting from a different year with respect to 2003. The first year available among 2004 and 2005 is used as initial timepoint. Countries presenting no information until 2005 are excluded from the analysis. 2004 is used for: Estonia, Finland, France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Sweden. 2005 is used for: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia.