Older adults' living arrangements in Europe

Extended abstract
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Background

Persistent sub-replacement fertility and high life-expectancy, coupled with modern family dynamics, have rendered Europe a world-leading region with regard to the experience of demographic ageing (Rowland 2012). The availability of kin in older ages has become one of the main focuses in the light of these major demographic shifts (Puur et al. 2011). According to some scholars, living alone might become a more frequent form of living arrangement due to higher shares of cohabitation and higher risk of dissolution of such partnership forms as well as due to higher childlessness (Keilman & Christiansen 2010, Moustgaard & Martikainen 2009). Due to more frequent re-partnering, one of the assumptions has been that new families substitute old family networks and therefore the informal support element for elderly does not disappear, but some evidence shows that there is rather complementing than substitution occurring (Dykstra and Fokkema 2011). Living arrangements are important as they provide the closest social support networks for older people.

There is a lack of comparative research of older people's living arrangements' developments over time involving European countries, especially including eastern parts of Europe. Previously, Estonia has not fit into one of the existing living arrangements' country regime typologies (Iacovou & Skew 2011). Also, among the older population Estonia shows one of the highest proportions of people in the EU living alone (Iacovou & Skew 2011), raising questions about the potential social support resources for older people.

Data and Methods

Data about the following countries and years were selected from the IPUMS-International database: Austria (1971, 1981, 1991, 2001), France (1968, 1982, 1990, 1999, 2006), Greece (1971, 1981, 1991, 2001), Hungary (1970, 1980, 1990, 2001), Israel (1972, 1983, 1995, 2001), Portugal (1981, 1991, 2001), Spain (1991, 2001), Switzerland (1970, 1980, 1990, 2000). The selection was based on the condition that integrated information from at least two census points per country as well as relevant household composition variables would be available.

Additionally, data from the Estonian censuses (1989, 2000, 2011) will be added to place Estonia in a comparative perspective among other European countries. Digitised census records for all these census time points exist.

Descriptive data exploration methods will be used to present basic household indicators, such as (mean) household size and numbers and proportions of older people living in different household arrangements. Uniform household structure and living arrangement definitions will be constructed for all countries in the analysis, setting the older person in the household as the main reference

person. For that, the triangulation method for recoding household relationships provided by Coward, Cutler and Schmidt (1989) is explored. This method has been previously used for mapping older adults' living arrangements based on the 1980 and 1990 US census data, for example (Coward & Cutler 1991, Schmertmann et al. 2000).

Older people in this paper are defined as those that have reached their 60th birthday and above at the time of conducting the census.

Preliminary Results

Preliminary descriptive results showing information based on existing variables from the IPUMS-International database for four countries – Austria, Greece, Hungary and Portugal at four census time points are presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1. Proportion of the 60+ population by number of persons in the household

		1970/71	1980/81	1990/91	2001
Portugal	1		15,86	16,09	17,45
	2		42,61	44,66	47,84
	3		15,98	16,67	17,09
	4+		25,55	22,57	17,61
Austria	1	27,36	33,40	32,17	31,32
	2	40,19	40,61	42,03	45,70
	3	12,18	10,74	11,94	12,06
	4+	20,26	15,26	13,86	10,92
Hungary	1	12,44	22,38	26,23	27,81
	2	36,18	43,49	46,33	45,76
	3	17,01	15,31	14,43	13,36
	4+	34,38	18,82	13,02	13,07
Greece	1	9,08	13,18	14,98	16,18
	2	30,70	40,56	43,67	44,63
	3	18,64	16,61	17,92	19,06
	4+	41,58	29,65	23,42	20,13

Table 2. Proportion of the 60+ population by number of own family members in the household

		1970/71	1980/81	1990/91	2001
Portugal	1	17,83	18,87	20,54	21,68
	2	42,69	44,32	47,13	49,30
	3	15,30	15,71	16,16	16,12
	4+	24,19	21,11	16,17	12,89
Austria	1	31,02	36,11	34,28	32,78
	2	39,77	40,01	41,52	45,29
	3	11,36	10,20	11,66	11,73
	4+	17,84	13,68	12,55	10,21
Hungary	1	13,97	10,39	12,26	16,36
	2	24,02	19,81	21,66	25,85
	3	26,28	23,25	23,05	23,44
	4+	35,73	46,55	43,02	34,35
Greece	1	10,05	13,65	15,34	17,45
	2	31,02	40,46	43,60	45,17
	3	18,22	16,44	17,82	19,22
	4+	40,71	29,44	23,24	18,16

Table 3. Proportion of 60+ population by household type

		1970/71	1980/81	1990/91	2001
Portugal	One-person household	15,26	15,54	16,61	17,74
	Married/cohab couple, no children	35,96	38,06	40,92	43,00
	Married/cohab couple, with children	11,12	12,69	13,25	12,18
	Single-parent family	3,24	3,44	3,77	4,09
	Extended family, relatives only	29,56	25,26	20,45	17,23
	Composite household	2,53	2,10	1,36	0,95
	Non-family household	0,78	0,82	0,69	0,41
	Group quarters	1,22	1,99	2,93	3,36
	Unclassifiable	0,33	0,11	0,03	1,04
Austria	One-person household	24,96	30,43	29,46	28,60
	Married/cohab couple, no children	32,68	33,60	34,96	39,53
	Married/cohab couple, with children	8,57	8,29	9,82	10,08
	Single-parent family	3,23	3,07	3,65	3,35
	Extended family, relatives only	21,49	17,38	16,09	13,79
	Composite household	4,07	2,26	1,68	0,64
	Non-family household	2,03	1,46	1,03	0,70
	Group quarters	2,96	3,46	3,27	3,31
	Unclassifiable	0,00	0,05	0,03	0,01
Hungary	One-person household	11,03	2,02	24,89	27,53
	Married/cohab couple, no children	2,91	35,57	3,74	37,74
	Married/cohab couple, with children	0,71	7,87	7,46	8,28
	Single-parent family	2,63	5,20	5,84	4,94
	Extended family, relatives only	3,79	27,07	2,11	1,72
	Composite household	0,00	1,08	1,05	0,00
	Non-family household	0,00	0,41	0,71	0,00
	Unclassified subfamily	44,95	0,00	0,00	4,08
	Other	0,00	0,00	0,00	13,07
	Group quarters	1,40	2,20	1,36	2,16
	Unclassifiable	0,03	0,41	0,14	0,48
Greece	One-person household	9,08	13,18	14,98	16,18
	Married/cohab couple, no children	24,23	34,23	37,21	37,60
	Married/cohab couple, with children	15,98	13,64	16,03	17,88
	Single-parent family	3,58	3,07	3,21	3,92
	Extended family, relatives only	43,46	34,58	27,83	20,47
	Composite household	0,88	0,56	0,46	3,33
	Non-family household	0,16	0,35	0,25	0,59
	Unclassifiable	2,63	0,39	0,03	0,01

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