

Families 2008

Forty-one per cent of the population belong to families with children

At the end of 2008, there were 1,444,000 families in Finland. The number had grown by 6,700 from the previous year-end. Altogether 76 per cent of the Finnish population, that is 4,051,000 persons, belonged to a family. Persons living alone numbered 1,015,000. Two-thirds of the families were married couples. Twenty-one per cent were families of cohabiting couples and 12 per cent were one-parent families. There were 1,244 families of registered same-sex couples.

Families with children (under the age of 18) numbered 585,000. Their number had fallen by 2,500 from the year before. A total of 42 per cent of the population belong to a family with children. The commonest family type, which 62 per cent of the families with children belong to, continues to be married couple with children. There were almost equal proportions of families of cohabiting couples with children and single mothers with children: 18 per cent of the former and 17 per cent of the latter among all families with children. A single carer father is still a rarity, for under three per cent of all families with children consist of just father and children. In 187 families with children the parents are a registered same-sex couple.

At the turn of the year, the average number of children still living at home in a family with children was 1.83. At present the final mean number of children in families with children is 2.4 today.

At the end of 2007, there were 54,000 reconstituted families in Finland. A reconstituted family is one where at least one child under the age of 18 is the child of one parent only. There were almost 78,000 of such children. The number of reconstituted families had gone up by approximately 200 from the year before. Roughly one-half of the parents of reconstituted families were cohabiting and the other half were married.

Families by type in 1990–2008

Type of family	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	Change 2007–2008
Families total	1 365 341	1 382 970	1 401 963	1 426 002	1 431 376	1 437 709	1 444 386	6 677
Married couple without children	364 452	395 953	436 019	481 209	488 880	496 814	504 728	7 914
Married couple with children	640 062	579 578	514 868	468 266	461 569	456 235	452 180	-4 055
Cohabiting couple no children	123 471	135 996	160 132	180 590	184 732	188 172	191 177	3 005
Cohabiting couple with children	65 896	85 309	102 581	112 847	114 671	115 860	115 966	106
Mother and children	147 297	159 063	159 432	153 024	151 475	150 251	149 631	-620
Father and children	24 161	27 071	28 931	29 238	29 101	29 288	29 460	172
Registered male couple	.	.	.	398	455	527	579	52
Registered female couple	.	.	.	430	493	562	665	103
Family population	4 101 922	4 093 038	4 053 850	4 037 753	4 039 944	4 045 561	4 051 662	6 101
Population 31.12.	4 998 478	5 116 829	5 181 115	5 255 580	5 276 955	5 300 484	5 326 314	25 830
Proportion of family population	82.1	80.0	78.2	76.8	76.6	76.3	76.1	-0.2
Average size of family	3.00	2.96	2.89	2.83	2.82	2.81	2.81	0.00

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Families by type in 1950–2008

Corrected on 19 August 2009. The corrections are indicated in red.

Year	Total	Married couple without children	Married couple with children	Cohabiting couple without children	Cohabiting couple with children	Mother and children	Father and children	Registered male couple 3)	Registered female couple 3)
1950	930,572	176,650	593,763	..	..	137,803	22,356	..	..
1960	1,036,270	207,897	678,822	..	..	129,706	19,845	..	..
1970	1,153,878	260,562	722,001	19,100	6,800	126,394	19,021	..	..
1980 1)	1,278,102	302,818	711,226	65,900	36,200	140,725	21,233	..	..
1985 2)	1,331,971	323,584	701,544	87,709	46,632	149,399	23,103	..	..
1990	1,365,341	364,452	640,062	123,471	65,896	147,297	24,161	..	..
1991	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1992	1,374,961	376,429	617,303	129,031	75,617	151,373	25,208	..	..
1993	1,377,451	380,753	607,921	129,429	79,739	153,774	25,835	..	..
1994	1,379,852	388,417	593,787	131,899	81,755	157,429	26,565	..	..
1995	1,382,970	395,953	579,578	135,996	85,309	159,063	27,071	..	..
1996	1,386,414	403,584	566,686	140,194	88,906	159,563	27,481	..	..
1997	1,389,920	410,743	553,729	144,557	93,058	159,918	27,915	..	..
1998	1,393,793	418,927	539,899	150,272	96,228	160,059	28,408	..	..
1999	1,397,660	427,138	526,257	155,476	99,922	160,157	28,710	..	..
2000	1,401,963	436,019	514,868	160,132	102,581	159,432	28,931	..	..
2001	1,407,759	446,404	501,981	166,601	105,399	158,440	28,934	..	..
2002	1,411,947	454,977	492,524	170,368	107,443	157,143	29,093	207	192
2003	1,415,104	462,561	483,140	174,144	109,672	156,235	29,352	271	275
2004	1,420,781	471,962	475,705	177,095	111,294	154,851	29,192	325	357
2005	1,426,002	481,209	468,266	180,590	112,847	153,024	29,238	398	430
2006	1,431,376	488,880	461,569	184,732	114,671	151,475	29,101	455	493
2007	1,437,709	496,814	456,235	188,172	115,860	150,251	29,288	527	562
2008	1,444,386	504,728	452,180	191,177	115,966	149,631	29,460	579	665
Percentage									
1950	100.0	19.0	63.8	..	..	14.8	2.4	..	..
1960	100.0	20.1	65.5	..	..	12.5	1.9	..	..
1970	100.0	22.6	62.6	1.7	0.6	11.0	1.6	..	..
1980 1)	100.0	23.7	55.6	5.2	2.8	11.0	1.7	..	..
1985 2)	100.0	24.3	52.7	6.6	3.5	11.2	1.7	..	..
1990	100.0	26.7	46.9	9.0	4.8	10.8	1.8	..	..
1991	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1992	100.0	27.4	44.9	9.4	5.5	11.0	1.8	..	..
1993	100.0	27.6	44.1	9.4	5.8	11.2	1.9	..	..
1994	100.0	28.1	43.0	9.6	5.9	11.4	1.9	..	..
1995	100.0	28.6	41.9	9.8	6.2	11.5	2.0	..	..
1996	100.0	29.1	40.9	10.1	6.4	11.5	2.0	..	..
1997	100.0	29.6	39.8	10.4	6.7	11.5	2.0	..	..
1998	100.0	30.1	38.7	10.8	6.9	11.5	2.0	..	..
1999	100.0	30.6	37.7	11.1	7.1	11.5	2.1	..	..
2000	100.0	31.1	36.7	11.4	7.3	11.4	2.1	..	..
2001	100.0	31.7	35.7	11.8	7.5	11.3	2.1	..	..
2002	100.0	32.2	34.9	12.1	7.6	11.1	2.1	0.0	0.0
2003	100.0	32.7	34.1	12.3	7.8	11.0	2.1	0.0	0.0
2004	100.0	33.2	33.5	12.5	7.8	10.9	2.1	0.0	0.0
2005	100.0	33.7	32.8	12.7	7.9	10.7	2.1	0.0	0.0
2006	100.0	34.2	32.2	12.9	8.0	10.6	2.0	0.0	0.0
2007	100.0	34.6	31.7	13.1	8.1	10.5	2.0	0.0	0.0
2008	100.0	34.9	31.3	13.2	8.0	10.4	2.0	0.0	0.0

Family population and average size of family in 1950–2008

Year	Families, total	Family population	Whole population	Proportion of family population, %	Average size of family
1950	930,572	3,457,474	4,029,803	85.8	3.72
1960	1,036,270	3,855,037	4,446,222	86.7	3.72
1970	1,153,878	3,986,005	4,598,336	86.7	3.45
1980	1,278,102	4,023,091	4,787,778	84.0	3.15
1985	1,331,971	4,108,856	4,910,664	83.7	3.08
1990	1,365,341	4,101,922	4,998,478	82.1	3.00
1991	..	..	..	..	..
1992	1,374,961	4,111,580	5,054,982	81.3	2.99
1993	1,377,451	4,114,603	5,077,912	81.0	2.99
1994	1,379,852	4,102,865	5,098,754	80.5	2.97
1995	1,382,970	4,093,038	5,116,829	80.0	2.96
1996	1,386,414	4,086,104	5,132,320	79.6	2.95
1997	1,389,920	4,079,391	5,147,349	79.3	2.93
1998	1,393,793	4,069,211	5,159,646	78.9	2.92
1999	1,397,660	4,059,928	5,171,302	78.5	2.90
2000	1,401,963	4,053,850	5,181,115	78.2	2.89
2001	1,407,759	4,046,205	5,194,901	77.9	2.87
2002	1,411,947	4,042,577	5,206,295	77.6	2.86
2003	1,415,104	4,037,970	5,219,732	77.4	2.85
2004	1,420,781	4,038,055	5,236,611	77.1	2.84
2005	1,426,002	4,037,753	5,255,580	76.8	2.83
2006	1,431,376	4,039,944	5,276,955	76.6	2.82
2007	1,437,709	4,045,561	5,300,484	76.3	2.81
2008	1,444,386	4,051,662	5,326,314	76.1	2.81

Families with underage children by type in 1950–2008

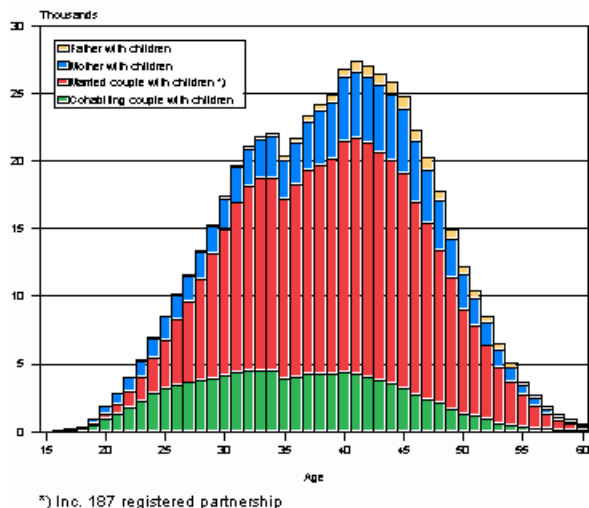
Year	Total	Married couple with children	Cohabiting couple with children	Mother and children	Father and children	Registered partnership with children	Persons in families with underage children	Families with children aged under 18	Families with children of all families, %	Population belonging to families with children, %
1950	599,329	515,115	..	74,319	9,895	..	..	1,341,330	64.4	..
1960	678,046	601,542	..	67,381	9,123	..	..	1,536,464	65.4	..
1970 1)	677,035	602,076	5,800	61,173	7,986	..	..	1,345,089	58.7	..
1980 2)	688,732	572,142	32,100	74,839	9,651	..	..	1,163,926	53.9	..
1985	659,052	533,787	41,458	74,238	9,569	..	..	1,136,027	49.5	..
1990	640,637	490,999	59,900	78,948	10,790	..	2,437,592	1,135,686	46.9	48.8
1991	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1992	647,571	479,057	69,622	86,848	12,044	..	2,461,470	1,152,689	47.1	48.7
1993	647,123	470,980	73,332	90,267	12,544	..	2,460,931	1,154,566	47.0	48.5
1994	643,799	459,978	75,233	95,426	13,162	..	2,443,563	1,152,947	46.7	47.9
1995	639,610	449,241	78,528	98,351	13,490	..	2,425,426	1,150,562	46.2	47.4
1996	635,034	438,883	82,135	100,219	13,797	..	2,407,133	1,146,986	45.8	46.9
1997	630,472	428,922	86,176	101,309	14,065	..	2,389,433	1,142,337	45.4	46.4
1998	625,392	418,883	89,315	102,767	14,427	..	2,367,472	1,135,233	44.9	45.9
1999	619,641	408,234	92,819	103,872	14,716	..	2,343,417	1,127,252	44.3	45.3
2000	612,627	398,892	95,120	103,984	14,631	..	2,317,291	1,116,687	43.7	44.7
2001	605,322	389,174	97,738	103,866	14,544	..	2,288,171	1,105,988	43.0	44.0
2002	598,917	381,340	99,625	103,286	14,634	32	2,265,406	1,096,705	42.4	43.5
2003	595,027	374,940	101,742	103,446	14,852	47	2,249,410	1,090,551	42.0	43.1
2004	592,809	371,323	103,214	103,376	14,837	59	2,239,701	1,087,510	41.7	42.8
2005	591,528	368,553	104,782	103,044	15,063	86	2,232,613	1,084,865	41.5	42.5
2006	589,448	365,326	106,422	102,469	15,111	120	2,223,718	1,080,728	41.2	42.1
2007	587,767	362,884	107,290	102,156	15,291	146	2,216,526	1,076,522	40.9	41.8
2008	585,224	360,904	107,034	101,717	15,382	187	2,206,209	1,071,800	40.5	41.4
Percentage										
1950	100.0	85.9	..	12.4	1.7	..	..	..	..	..
1960	100.0	88.7	..	9.9	1.3	..	..	..	..	..
1970	100.0	88.9	0.9	9.0	1.2	..	..	..	..	..
1980	100.0	83.1	4.7	10.9	1.4	..	..	..	..	..
1985	100.0	81.0	6.3	11.3	1.5	..	..	..	..	..
1990	100.0	76.6	9.4	12.3	1.7	..	..	..	..	..
1991	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1992	100.0	74.0	10.8	13.4	1.9	..	..	..	..	..
1993	100.0	72.8	11.3	13.9	1.9	..	..	..	..	..
1994	100.0	71.4	11.7	14.8	2.0	..	..	..	..	..
1995	100.0	70.2	12.3	15.4	2.1	..	..	..	..	..
1996	100.0	69.1	12.9	15.8	2.2	..	..	..	..	..
1997	100.0	68.0	13.7	16.1	2.2	..	..	..	..	..
1998	100.0	67.0	14.3	16.4	2.3	..	..	..	..	..
1999	100.0	65.9	15.0	16.8	2.4	..	..	..	..	..
2000	100.0	65.1	15.5	17.0	2.4	..	..	..	..	..
2001	100.0	64.3	16.1	17.2	2.4	..	..	..	..	..
2002	100.0	63.7	16.6	17.2	2.4	0.0	..	..	..	..
2003	100.0	63.0	17.1	17.4	2.5	0.0	..	..	..	..
2004	100.0	62.6	17.4	17.4	2.5	0.0	..	..	..	..
2005	100.0	62.3	17.7	17.4	2.5	0.0	..	..	..	..
2006	100.0	62.0	18.1	17.4	2.6	0.0	..	..	..	..
2007	100.0	61.7	18.3	17.4	2.6	0.0	..	..	..	..
2008	100.0	61.7	18.3	17.4	2.6	0.0	..	..	..	..

Reconstituted families 1990–2008

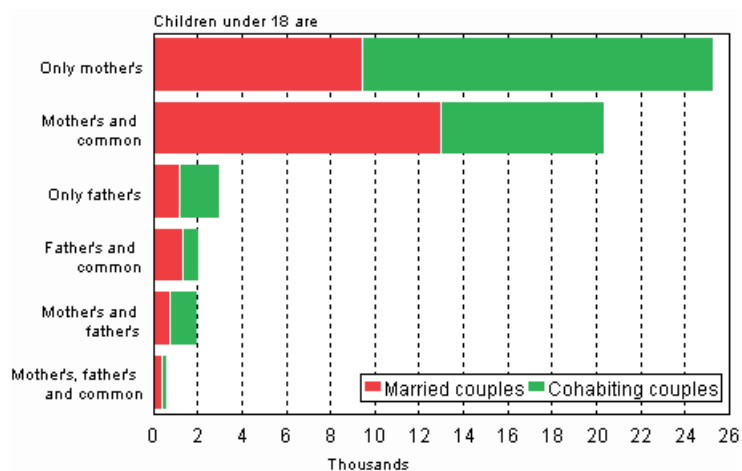
Year	Total	Married couple	Cohabiting couple	Reconstituted families as a proportion of families with children, %	Mother's children	Father's children	Common children	Children under 18 in reconstituted families	'Non-common' children as a proportion of children of all families, %	Children in reconstituted families as a proportion of children of all families, %
1990	44,426	21,808	22,618	6.9	50,713	7,443	30,089	88,245	5.1	7.8
1991	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1992	43,647	20,109	23,538	6.7	50,591	7,529	29,555	87,675	5.0	7.6
1993	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1994	42,216	19,251	22,965	6.6	49,668	7,510	28,994	86,172	5.0	7.5
1995	42,460	19,197	23,263	6.6	50,322	7,637	29,242	87,201	5.0	7.6
1996	43,100	19,368	23,732	6.8	51,567	7,710	29,476	88,753	5.2	7.7
1997	44,219	19,732	24,487	7.0	53,444	7,909	29,990	91,343	5.4	8.0
1998	45,296	20,173	25,123	7.2	55,267	8,042	30,312	93,621	5.6	8.2
1999	47,194	20,523	26,671	7.6	58,115	8,191	30,723	97,029	5.9	8.6
2000	47,288	21,315	25,973	7.7	58,550	8,541	30,931	98,022	6.0	8.8
2001	48,359	21,846	26,513	8.0	60,272	8,916	31,086	100,274	6.3	9.1
2002	49,294	22,431	26,863	8.2	61,816	9,120	31,226	102,162	6.5	9.3
2003	49,944	22,888	27,056	8.4	63,071	9,198	31,565	103,834	6.6	9.5
2004	50,867	23,872	26,995	8.6	64,503	9,366	32,040	105,909	6.8	9.7
2005	52,204	24,722	27,482	8.8	66,228	9,746	32,465	108,439	7.0	10.0
2006	52,920	25,275	27,645	9.0	67,175	10,054	32,817	110,071	7.1	10.2
2007	53,482	25,901	27,581	9.1	67,652	10,254	33,064	110,970	7.2	10.3
2008	53,674	26,415	27,259	9.2	67,463	10,378	33,227	111,068	7.3	10.4

Figures

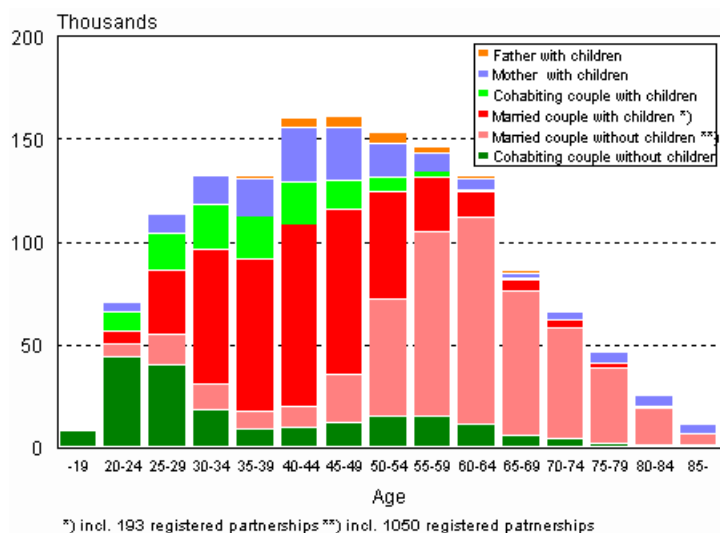
Families with underage children by type and age of wife/mother in 2008 (families with father and children by age of father)



Structure of reconstituted families 2008



Families by type and age of wife/mother in 2008 (families with father and children by age of father)



Quality description: Families

1. Relevance of statistical information

The basic data file derives from the population information system of the Central Population Register and covers the population permanently resident in Finland on 31 December 2008.

The Population Register Centre and local register offices maintain Finland's Population Information System. The last population registration was carried out in Finland on 1 January 1989. After that the Population Information System has been updated by notifications of changes. The data stored in the Population Information System are specified in the Population Information Act (11 June 1993/507). Notifications on population changes for the past year are expected by the last day of January (Act on the amendment of Section 18 of the Population Information Act on 24 November 1995). At the beginning of February the Population Register Centre supplies to Statistics Finland the population data for the turn of the year.

Statistics Finland's function is to compile statistics on conditions in society (Statistics Finland Act of 24 January 1992/48). These include also family statistics. Statistics Finland's Rules of Procedure define the Population Statistics unit as the producer of family statistics (Statistics Finland's Rules of Procedure, TK-00-1443-08).

Concepts

In the family statistics **children** comprise the following persons living with their parents:

- biological children;
- adopted children;
- biological children and adopted children of one of the spouses.

Foster children and children in the care of the family are not classified as children.

The definition of child has changed since 1990. A child is now defined as a person who lives with his or her parents irrespective of his or her marital status, unless the person has a spouse or children who live in the same household-dwelling unit. In 1990 only unmarried persons were counted as children. So while in 1990 widowed or divorced persons living with their parents were classified as not belonging to families, since 1992 they have been regarded as members of the family.

A **cohabiting couple** is defined as two spouseless adults of different sex aged 18 and over and occupying the same dwelling on a permanent basis, provided their age difference is less than 16 years and they are not siblings. In case the couple has a common child these specifications do not apply. Same-sex persons living together are not inferred as cohabiting couples. Only registered partnerships are recorded in the statistics.

A **dwelling** refers to a room or a suite of rooms which is intended for year-round habitation; is furnished with a kitchen, kitchenette or cooking area; and has a floor area of at least 7 square metres. Every dwelling must have its own entrance. A single-family house may be entered through an enclosed porch or veranda. If a dwelling is entered through the premises of another dwelling, it is not regarded as a separate dwelling but the two constitute one dwelling.

The **dwelling population** comprises those persons who, according to the Population information system of the Population Register Centre, resided permanently in dwellings at 31 December. Persons permanently institutionalised, living in residential homes and abroad and homeless people are not included in the dwelling population. Likewise, persons living in buildings classified as residential homes, whose living quarters do not meet the definition of dwelling, are not included.

The basic family population differs from the dwelling population in that it also includes those living in residential homes.

A **family** consists of a married or cohabiting couple or persons in a registered partnership and their children living together; or either of the parents and his or her children living together; or a married or cohabiting couple and persons in a registered partnership without children.

Starting from 1 March 2002, same-sex couples have been able to register their partnerships.

Persons living in the household-dwelling unit who are not members of the nuclear family are not included in the family population, even if they are related, unless they form their own family. Brothers and sisters or cousins living together are not a family and do not belong to the family population. The same applies to people who live alone or with a person of the same sex.

Families living in residential homes are included in the family population. In contrast, persons who live in institutions are not included.

A family can consist of no more than two successive generations. If the household-dwelling unit comprises more than two generations, the family is formed starting from the youngest generation. This means, for example, that a mother-in-law or father-in-law living with their child's family will not be included in the family population unless they live together with their spouse, in which case the old couple form their own family.

A family with underage children refers to a family which has at least one child aged under 18 living at home.

Family members are grouped by family status as follows:

- spouse, no children;
- spouse with children;
- cohabiting partner, no children;
- cohabiting partner with children;
- partner in a registered partnership, no children;
- partner in a registered partnership with children;
- father/mother without spouse;
- child.

In the family statistics children comprise all persons, regardless of age, who live with their parents, or the spouse's biological or adopted children, but not foster children or children in the care of the family.

A family with underage children is a family comprising at least one child aged under 18 living at home.

A household-dwelling unit consists of the permanent occupants of a dwelling. Persons who, according to the Population Information System of the Population Register Centre, are institutionalised, homeless, abroad, or registered as unknown, do not constitute household-dwelling units. Additionally, persons living in buildings classified as residential homes do not form household-dwelling units if their living quarters do not meet the definition of a dwelling.

When tabulating registered partnerships together with married or cohabiting couples, **husband** refers to the older partner of the registered couple.

The number of children refers to the number of children who are living at home and have the status of a child.

The number of children in families with underage children refers to the number of children aged under 18 living at home.

In a **reconstituted family**, a child aged under 18 is a child of only one of the spouses. Not all the children aged under 18 in the family are common children.

A **spouse** refers to either a married or cohabiting partner or one of the partners of a registered partnership, unless otherwise indicated in the context.

Families are grouped into the following **family types**:

- married couple without children;
- married couple without children; cohabiting couple without children;
- married couple with children;
- cohabiting couple with children;
- registered male couple without children;
- registered male couple with children;
- registered female couple without children;
- registered female couple with children;
- mother with children;
- father with children.

A married or cohabiting couple without children refers to a couple who has never had any children or whose children no longer live with their parents. 'Cohabiting couple with children' contains couples who have common children and also couples whose children are not common.

For reasons of data protection, those living in registered partnerships are grouped together with married persons in municipal tables.

When tabulating registered partnerships together with married or cohabiting couples, **wife** refers to the younger partner of the registered couple.

A man with a family is a married or cohabiting partner, a father with children and both partners of a registered male couple.

A woman with a family is a married or cohabiting partner, a mother with children and both partners of a registered female couple.

2. Methodological description of survey

The computer program classifies persons on the basis of their permanent place of residence code into household-dwelling units. The record of each person permanently residing in the dwelling includes the personal identification codes of his or her parents, spouse and children. By comparing them the program forms the families.

Before 1990, cohabiting couples were solely inferred with the help of common children. Since year 1992 inferences have been made using a revised program. After joining married couples in the household-dwelling units, this program identifies as cohabiting partners persons who live in the same dwelling, do not have a spouse, are aged 18 or over, and are of the opposite sex, provided that they are not siblings and their age difference is not more than 15 years. These rules do not apply to cohabiting couples with common children.

According to the former concepts, a sole-supporter mother with whom a man of suitable age is residing will be classified as a cohabiting couple. Likewise, the daughter of a family and a man of suitable age possibly residing with the family now form a cohabiting couple.

The inference of families is made difficult by the fact that the population information system is unable to distinguish between subtenants and the rest of the family. According to the reliability study of the 1990 census, there were less than 20,000 subtenants in Finland at that time. Hence, any inferences where the subtenant is identified as the cohabiting partner of the landlord/lady cannot amount to any considerable number, as the precondition is that the subtenant is of a suitable age and a different sex from the spouseless landlord/lady.

If there is more than one suitable candidate, the program selects the person closest in age. If there are more than four persons without a spouse, the program does not classify them as cohabiting couples.

Families are not formed from institutionalised persons.

3. Correctness and accuracy of data

Family statisticians in Finland are privileged in that they have access to a population information system in which each person has, besides his or her personal identification code, also a domicile code, which tells the

dwelling where he or she lives. Family statistics can be compiled from the entire population on an annual basis and quickly without burdening people with costly enquiries. Besides Finland, Denmark is the only other country where this is possible.

The inference of families from the population information system causes problems, mainly in two respects:

1. Only persons who are registered as domiciled in the same dwelling can be linked as a family.
2. Cohabiting couples (marriage-like relationship) will have to be inferred.

1. According to international concept definitions, the family can also be formed on the basis of the official place of residence, as is done in Finland. However, the families where one of the spouses is registered as domiciled in another locality, due to work, for example, will not be entered in the statistics as complete although he or she spends the weekends and vacations with the rest of the family. Likewise, a couple may reside together, although one of them is still registered as domiciled in some other place, with his or her previous spouse, for example.

In Finland the majority of people do, however, live in the place where they are registered as domiciled. In general, the Population Information System of the Population Register Centre can be considered very exhaustive as regards persons. In order that a person obtains a personal identity code, he or she has to be registered in the Population Information System. It is practically impossible to live in Finland without a personal identity code. A personal identity code is needed so that one can work legally, open a bank account, have dealings with authorities and so on. It can be safely assumed that Finland cannot have any substantial numbers of 'moonlighters' who receive their pay in cash for periods of over one year, for example. Staying in Finland for at least one year is the prerequisite for registering into the population of Finland.

After the abolishment of yearly checking of domicile registers in 1989 the Population Information System has been maintained only by notifications of changes to population information. Their correctness is determined by a reliability survey made on the addresses in the Population Information System.

The Population Register Centre charges Statistics Finland with the task of conducting an annual sample survey on correctness of address information. Around 11,000 people are asked whether their address in the Population Information System is correct. In the 2007 survey, the address was correct for 98.8 per cent of the respondents. The nonresponse rate of the survey was 11.2 per cent. The addresses of the nonrespondents were checked from other sources as far as possible. The address could be established as correct among 90.9 per cent of the nonrespondents, as incorrect among 4.6 per cent and as unverifiable among 4.4 per cent. Assuming that all the unverifiable addresses were incorrect the final proportion of the correct addresses were 97.9 per cent.

In connection with municipal elections, returned notifications of voting sent to foreigners usually reveal around 1,000 persons who have moved from the country without giving notice and are thus still included in the Finnish population. The Population Register Centre removes them from the resident population in the Population Information System before the following turn of the year.

The situation as regard Unlike before, students may now register as domiciled in the locality where they are studying. s the young has improved, thanks to the new Municipality of Residence Act.

2. Inferring a marriage-like relationship from the population information system is more problematic. One alternative is not to enter childless cohabiting couples in the statistics at all and to link cohabiting couples only with the help of common children. But since statistics are supposed to give as truthful a picture of society as possible, we will surely get closer to the truth by inferring cohabiting couples on the basis of a common address than by leaving them out of the statistics altogether. Of all the couples living together, as many as 22 per cent are today cohabiting couples.

The program is also bound to infer non-existing cohabiting couples. On the other hand, it does not classify as cohabiting couples persons aged under 18, nor does it classify those whose age difference is over 15 years as such. The number of cohabiting couples inferred with the help of the program is, however, very close to the figures obtained by interview surveys conducted before the inference was started.

In 1989 cohabiting couples were obtained by a separate interview survey. The interview focused on persons, not families. The question was only posed to persons whose marital status was 'not married'. On the basis of

the sample, it was estimated that there were 372,000 cohabiting persons aged 15-64 in Finland. In the family statistics for the following year 370,000 persons were classified on the basis of their addresses as cohabiting persons aged 18-64. However, some of these persons had the marital status 'married'. According to the samples, the number of cohabiting persons grew at an annual rate of some 20,000 at the end of the 1980s.

By taking into consideration the differences in age limits and the importance of the marital status in the inference of cohabiting couples, it may be observed that, by inference, the number of cohabiting couples is slightly smaller than the real situation measured by samples. The inference of cohabiting couples does, however, convey a good enough picture of the family structure in Finnish society. Hence it helps us to monitor the trend in families and to examine different types of families as larger groups. Certain caution should, however, be exercised in making unit-level inferences on the basis of these couples.

4. Timeliness and promptness of published data

Statistics Finland dates the population at the turn of the year as at the last day of the year. Since 1999 the regional division used has been that of the first day of the following year. Thus the municipalities that unite on the first day of the new year are already combined in the statistics on the last day of the previous year. Where necessary, statistics at the turn of year can also be produced with the municipality division before the unification.

5. Accessibility and transparency/clarity of data

The first family statistics are available from the 1950 and 1960 population censuses. From 1970 onwards population censuses have been conducted every five years. In addition, family data have been published in the years 1977, 1978, 1982, 1984 and 1987. Since 1992 family statistics have been compiled yearly. The Families publication has been produced yearly from 1994.

In the census years data have been combined for families on employment, income, housing, and so on. In other years only demographic data on families are available.

From 1980 to 1989, a yearly review based on a sample of around 10,000 persons was conducted on those living in consensual union in connection with the Labour Force Survey.

From 1870 to 1930 a population census based on person questionnaires was made in major towns every ten years. Some information about household-dwelling units is available from these censuses.

Basic family data are available in electronic form by municipality or with larger regional divisions than municipality in Statistics Finland's free Stat Fin -online service on the Internet at: http://www.stat.fi/tup/tilastotietokannat/index_en.html

General information and long time series on the families of the whole country can be obtained from the home page of Families at: http://www.stat.fi/til/perh/index_en.html

The chargeable information service contains more specified information about the families by sub-area of municipality, for example. More information about the service can be found at: http://www.stat.fi/tup/tilastotietokannat/index_en.html

The Altika statistical service also includes municipality-specific family data from 1980 onwards. More information about Statistics Finland's chargeable services is available at: http://www.stat.fi/tup/tilastotietokannat/index_en.html

6. Comparability of statistics

Family data are not fully comparable before and after 1990, when cohabiting couples were first concluded on the basis of their living together. For the Families publication, family distributions, inclusive of cohabiting couples without common children, were estimated using the sample surveys for the whole country for the years 1960 and 1970. The figures for 1980 and 1985 were extracted from the original data with the new classification. Inclusion of cohabiting couples in the statistics increases the number of families and at the same time decreases the number of single supporters, because some of the single supporters are cohabiting with their new spouses.

The fact that the marital status of the person classified with the status of a child has not been limited after 1990 also increases the number of families. Now a divorced person who comes back to live with his or her mother

forms a family with the mother, while earlier the mother and the child were recorded as being outside the family population.

7. Coherence and consistency/uniformity

The figures of demographic family statistics differ somewhat from the family figures of population censuses. In these census statistics the concept is household-dwelling population, whereby the families whose dwellings do not fulfil the criteria for a dwelling are excluded from statistic on family.

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Inquiries

*Marjut Pietiläinen, Timo
Nikander (09) 1734 2798, (09) 1734 3250
Director in charge:
Jari Tarkoma*

vaesto.tilasto@stat.fi

www.stat.fi