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Unity and Diversity in the Living Arrangements of Older Adults in Different Regions of Europe

Jenny de Jong Gierveld

Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social
Sciences & Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute

Abstract

European countries share a history of close ties. They have long been linked economically as well as through cultural ties. Cultural changes such as secularization and individualization that have taken place since the 1960s have influenced the common norms and values of both young and old. In investigating the effects of these changes on the living arrangements of older people data are used from the “Dynamics of Aging” project, of the Population Activities Unit of the UN ECE. The data show that developments directed towards independence and self-determination are affecting the daily lives of older persons: older married people in Europe live predominantly as couples in households without other persons, and over fifty percent of all widows live in one-person households. Diversity in the patterns of living arrangements of older persons in Europe is registered in that living in a two – or three-generation household is still relatively common among the oldest-old widowed persons in southern and eastern Europe, while

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being virtually absent in northern and western Europe. Differences in family values and in the financial resources of young and old people underlie this diversity.

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