

Demography of Europe

STATISTICS VISUALISED | 2021 edition



Demographic statistics are among the most popular data Eurostat produces, and they are important for almost every area of policy. This new interactive publication **Demography of Europe** produced by **Eurostat** aims to bring these statistics to a new audience, providing clear visualisations and interactive features to help non-specialist users see what official European statistics can tell us about how the population is developing, ageing, and much more.

As Vice-president of the European Commission, Dubravka Šuica, says:

“The data presented in this publication will help us analyse the reasons behind the multi-faceted demographic trends across the European Union, because not every Member State is affected in the same way. This publication is another key building block for our demography portfolio, it confirms demography as a catalyst for the development and the success of our policies.”

As Commissioner for Economy of the European Commission, Paolo Gentiloni, says:

“Demographic change in the European Union is a key policy topic for this Commission. The pandemic has reiterated how important it is that our policies resonate with people and protect them. What distinguishes this new Eurostat publication is its simple and interactive way of bringing information about European demography to our citizens.”

Data in this edition of the publication show yearly figures up until 2019 or 2020 and in some cases 1 January 2021. Where applicable, the impact of the COVID-19 crisis is commented on.

The publication is divided into four parts:

Population structure presents the trend of the total population since the start of the millennium. After that comes a section on the number of women and men, followed by a part on the population by age group, showing the evolution of both younger and older age groups.

Population change contains data on births, deaths and the natural population change. This section also presents the number of children per woman, the mean age of women at birth of their first child as well as the share of live births to women over 40. In the end, there is a part on life expectancy and the weekly deaths during the COVID-19 pandemic period.

Population diversity includes data on immigration and emigration, the mobility of EU citizens, which Member States are granting the most citizenships and to which groups of citizens a citizenship is granted. The last part concentrates on the differences in rural and urban areas for different age groups as well as for the fertility rate.

Marital status presents data on the number of marriages as well as the mean age at first marriage. It also contains statistics on the number of divorces.

Before entering the publication, why don't you start with a quiz estimating the population of your country until 2080?

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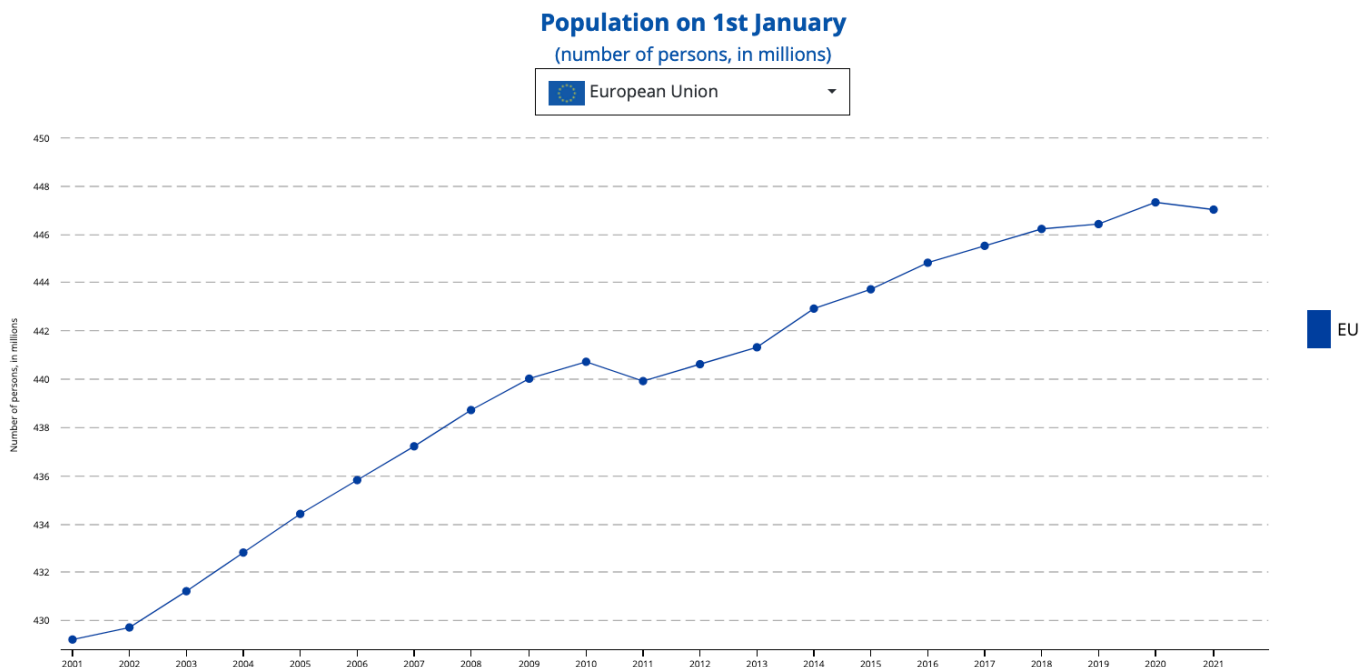
1. POPULATION STRUCTURE

1.1 A growing population except for 2020

An interruption of the EU population growth in 2020

On 1 January 2021, there were 447.0 million people living in the European Union (EU). The most populous Member State in the EU was Germany (83.2 million, 19 % of the EU total), followed by France (67.4 million, 15 %), Italy (59.3 million, 13 %), Spain (47.4 million, 11 %) and Poland (37.8 million, 9 %). In total, these five Member States accounted for two-thirds of the EU population. At the other end of the range, the least populous Member States in the EU were Malta (500 thousand people, corresponding to 0.1 % of the EU total), Luxembourg (600 thousand, 0.1 %) and Cyprus (900 thousand, 0.2 %).

During the period 2001 to 2020, the EU (EU27) population increased from 429 million to 447 million, a growth of 4 %. Seventeen Member States showed increases in their population during this period, while the remaining ten had decreases. The largest increases were recorded in Luxembourg, Malta, Ireland and Cyprus, all over 20 %, while the largest decreases were observed in Lithuania and Latvia, both with falls of around 20 %.



2011: break in series due to improvements based on the 2011 Population and housing census results.

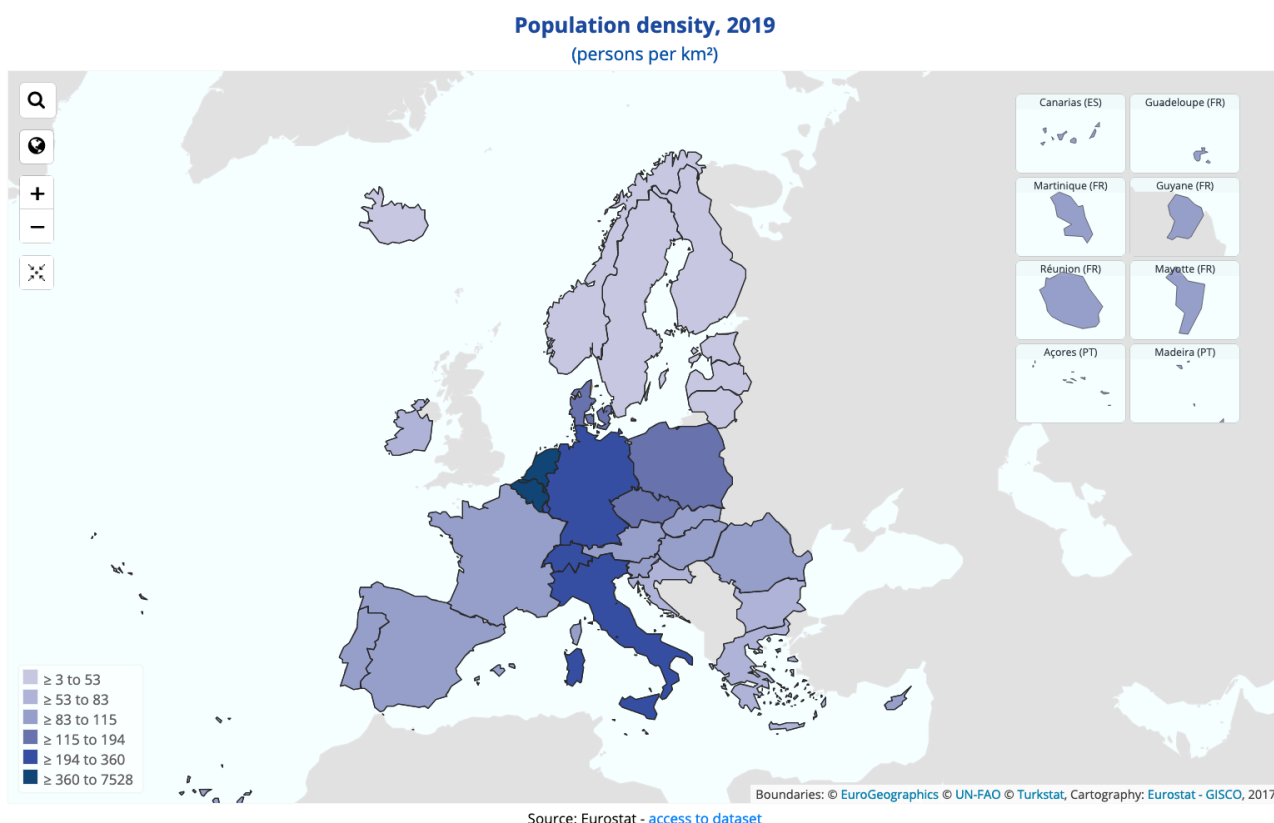
Source: Eurostat – [access to dataset](#)

Between 1 January 2020 and 1 January 2021, however, the population of the EU decreased by 312 thousand people: in absolute terms, the highest decrease could be observed in Italy (-384 thousand, corresponding to -0.6 % of its population) followed by Romania (-143 thousand, -0.7 %) and Poland (-118 thousand, -0.3 %). Overall, nine countries showed decreases in their population during the last year, while the remaining eighteen had increases. France recorded the highest increase (+119 thousand, +0.2 %).

Population density in the EU ranges from 18 to 1 595 people per km²

The population density, meaning the number of people per square kilometre (km²), was on average 109 persons per km² in the EU in 2019, a value which varied significantly between Member States. The highest population density was observed in Malta (1 595 people per km²), followed at a distance by the Netherlands (507) and Belgium (377). At the other end of the range were Finland (18 people per km²) and Sweden (25) with the lowest population densities.

Comparing 2019 with 2001, there was an increase of the population density in around two thirds of the Member States, with the largest growths in Malta (from 1 245 in 2001 to 1 595 in 2019), Luxembourg (from 171 to 240) and Belgium (339 to 377). Romania (96 to 83) and Lithuania (55 to 45) had the largest decreases. On average in the EU, the population density increased from 104 persons per km² to 109 during this period.



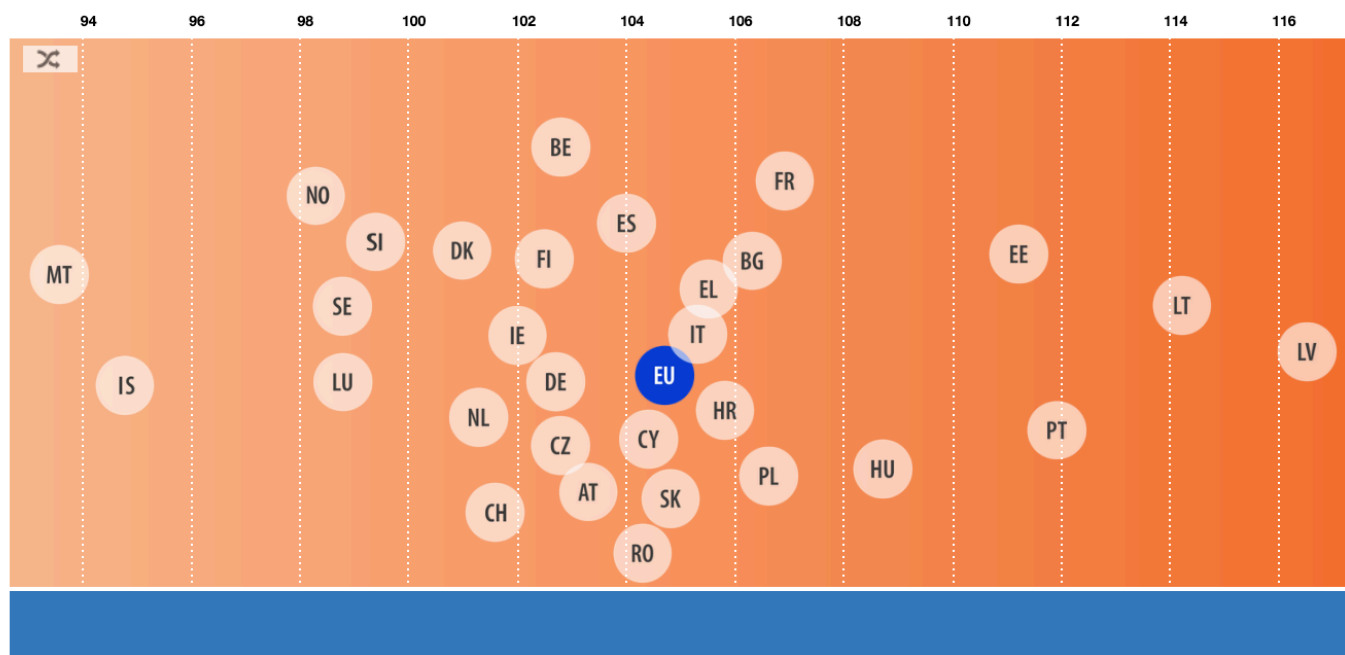
1.2 More women than men

Almost 5 % more women than men in the EU

On 1 January 2020, there were 219 million men and 229 million women in the EU. This corresponds to a ratio of 104.7 women per 100 men, which means that there were 4.7 % more women than men. There were more women than men in all Member States, except Malta, Luxembourg, Sweden and Slovenia. The highest rates were found in Latvia (17 % more women than men) and Lithuania (14 % more).

For comparison, on 1 January 2001 there were 5.5 % more women than men in the EU, with a minimum ratio of 101.1 women per 100 men in Ireland and a maximum of 117.3 in Latvia. During the period 2001-2020 the highest increase in the rate was recorded in Portugal (from 107.2 to 111.9 women per 100 men), while the highest decrease was in Malta (from 102.1 to 93.6 women per 100 men).

Women per 100 men, 2020



Source : Eurostat – [access to dataset](#)

1.3 An ageing population

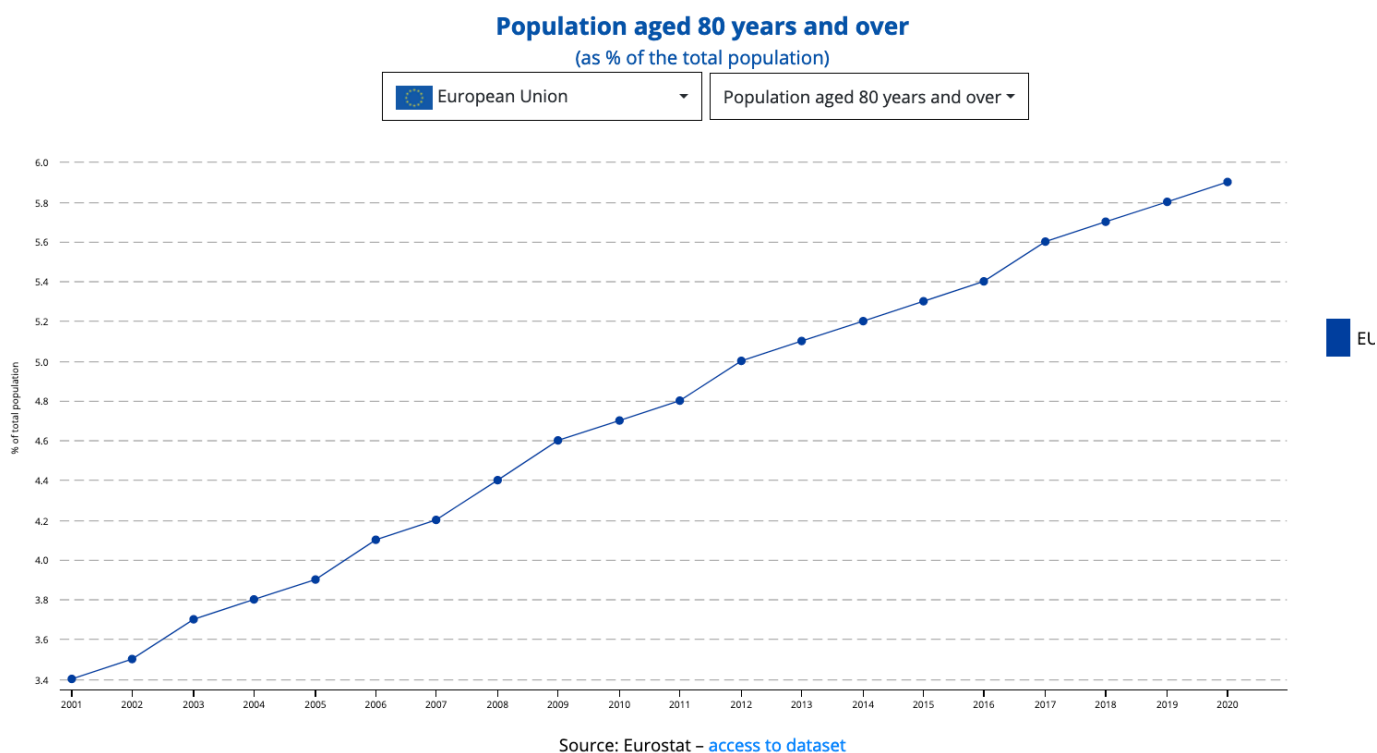
Share of those aged 80+ almost doubled between 2001 and 2020

The population in the EU is ageing and this can be seen through a number of different statistical indicators: the evolution of the share of the elderly population, the old age dependency ratio and the median age to give some examples. Looking first at the development of the share of the elderly in the population: in 2020, 21 % of the population was aged 65 and over, compared with 16 % in 2001, an increase of 5 percentage points (p.p.). Looking more specifically at the group aged 80 and over, their share was almost 6 % in 2020, while it was 3.4 % in 2001, meaning their share almost doubled during this period. On the other hand, the share of young people (aged 0 to 19 years old) in the EU was 20 % in 2020, a decrease of 3 p.p. compared with 23 % in 2001.

Looking at the share of persons aged 65 and over in the total population, Italy (23 %), Greece, Finland Portugal, Germany and Bulgaria (all 22 %) had the highest shares, while Ireland (14 %) and Luxembourg (15 %) had the lowest. Over the period 2001-2020 an increase in the share of persons aged 65 and over could be observed in all Member States, from the highest increase in Finland (+7 p.p.) to the lowest observed in Luxembourg (+1 p.p.).

The share of persons aged 80 and over increased in all Member States between 2001 and 2020, except Sweden where it remained constant (5 %). In some of the Member States, this share more than doubled: in Lithuania and Croatia from 2 % in 2001 to 6% in 2020, in Romania, Bulgaria and Slovenia from 2 % to 5 %.

Turning to young people, the highest shares of those below 20 years old in the total population were observed in Ireland (27 %), France (24 %) and Sweden (23 %), while the lowest shares were recorded in Malta, Italy and Germany (all 18 %). Over the period 2001-2020 a decrease in the share of young people could be observed in all Member States, from the highest decrease in Malta and Cyprus (-9 p.p.) to the lowest observed in Sweden (almost -1 p.p.) and Belgium (-1 p.p.).



A decrease of young people below 20

Turning to children and adolescents, their share of the EU population has decreased in the last two decades. In 2020, 15 % of the population was aged below 14, compared with 17 % in 2001, a decrease of 2 percentage points (p.p.). For those aged 15 to 19, their share was 5 % of the EU population in 2020, compared with 6 % in 2001, a decrease of 1 p.p.

In 2020, the share of children aged below 14 was highest in Ireland (20 %), France and Sweden (both 18 %), and lowest in Italy and Malta (both 13 %). Over the period 2001-2020, a decrease in the share of persons of this age group could be observed in all Member States, with the highest decreases in Cyprus and Malta (both -6 p.p.).

The share of those aged 15 to 19 in 2020 was highest in Ireland, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Cyprus, Sweden and Belgium, all with shares around 6 %. The lowest proportion was observed in Malta (4 %). Over the period 2001-2020, a decrease in the share of persons of this age group could be observed in all Member States, except in Denmark and the Netherlands, which had a small increase.

Median age of the population in the EU: 44 years

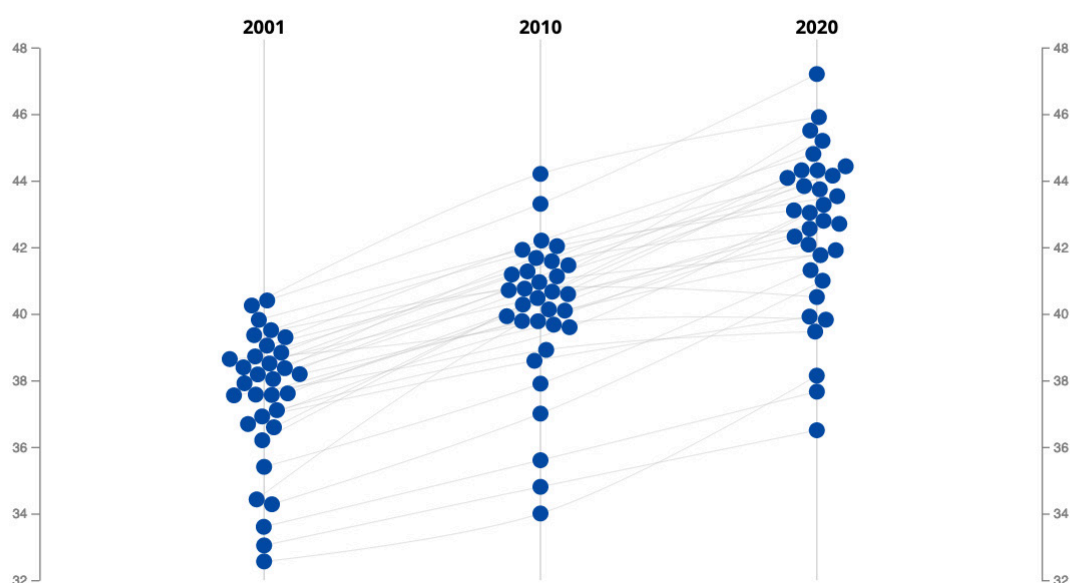
Another way of analysing the ageing of society in the EU is by looking at the median age of the population. The median age has increased in the period 2001 to 2020: it was 38 years in 2001, 41 years in 2010 and 44 years in 2020. This means an increase of 6 years in the median age in the EU during this period.

Among the EU Member States, the highest median age in 2020 was observed in Italy (47 years), Germany and Portugal (both 46 years), Bulgaria and Greece (both 45), and the lowest in Cyprus and Ireland (both 38) and Luxembourg and Malta (both 40). During the period 2001 to 2020, the median age increased by 7 years or more in Romania, Lithuania, Portugal, Italy, Slovakia, Spain and Greece.

Median age (years)

Trend 2001 - 2020

Select countries





2. POPULATION CHANGE

2.1 Fewer births

A negative natural population change in the EU

As mentioned earlier, the population in the EU has been growing from 1 January 2001 until 1 January 2020, and then declined during 2020. The different components of this development are described below.

Live births decreasing...

Over the years, the number of live births in the EU has been declining at a relatively steady pace. Since 2001, where 4.4 million live births were recorded in the EU, a modest rebound could be observed with a high of 4.7 million children born in the EU in 2008, in turn followed by further annual reductions up to 2020 (4.0 million live births). Portugal and Italy recorded between 2001 and 2020 decreases of 25 % in the number of live births, while on the other hand increases of more than 20 % could be observed in Sweden, Czechia and Cyprus.

Trends can also be measured through the crude birth rate, showing the number of live births per 1 000 persons: in the EU, this rate was 10.2 in 2001, went up to 10.6 in 2008 and has since then decreased, down to 9.1 in 2020. Among the Member States, this pattern differed, with decreases in sixteen Member States, and increases in eleven Member States during this period. In 2020, the highest crude birth rates were found in Ireland (11.2 live births per 1 000 persons), Cyprus (11.1), France and Sweden (both 10.9) and the lowest in Italy (6.8), Spain (7.1) and Greece (7.9).

... and number of deaths increasing

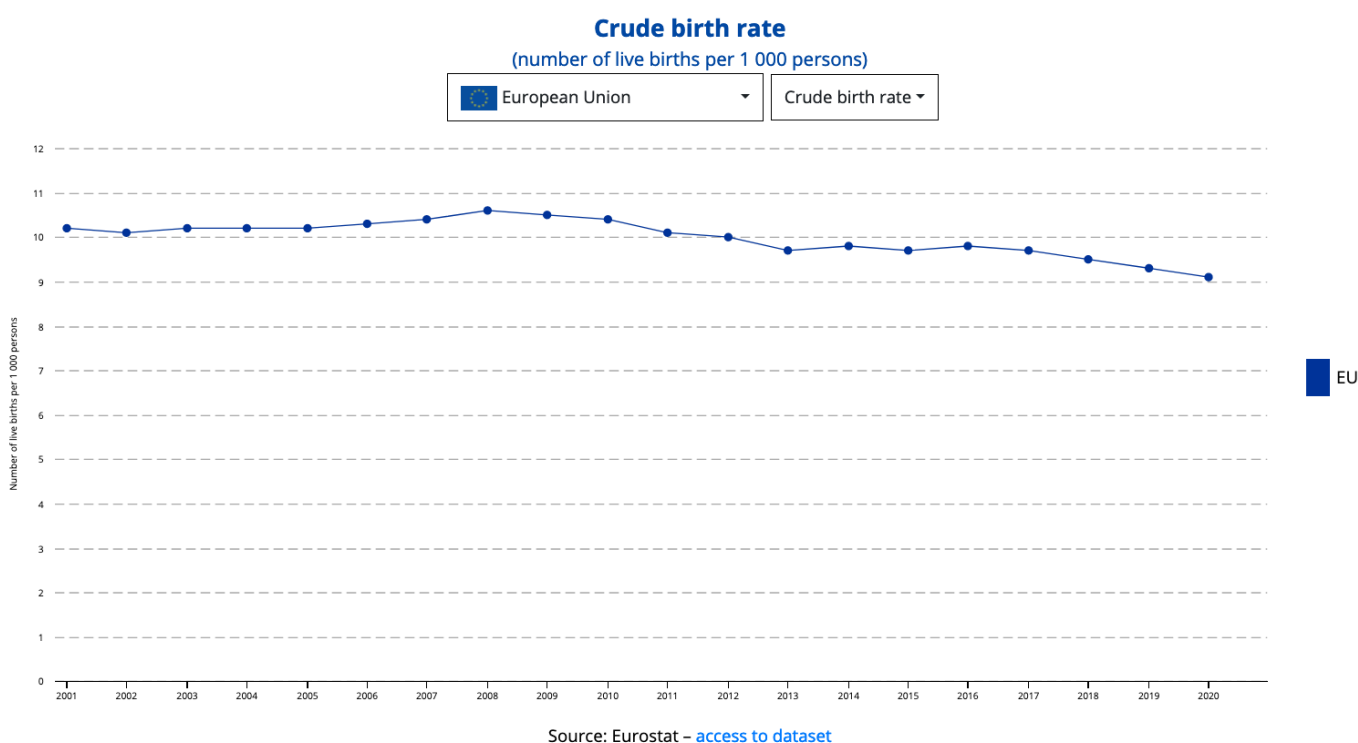
During the same period, the number of deaths has increased: there were 4.2 million deaths in the EU in 2001 and 5.2 million in 2020, the latter reflecting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and representing the highest number observed over the previous five decades. Malta, Spain, Italy, Cyprus and Poland recorded increases in the number of deaths of more than 30 % between 2001 and 2020, while on the other hand, Estonia and Latvia recorded decreases of 13 % and 15 % respectively.

Comparing 1 January 2020 with 1 January 2021, there was an increase of 534 thousand deaths in the EU (+11 %), from 4.7 million to 5.2 million, reflecting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of deaths increased in all Member States during this period, with the largest in Italy (111.7 thousand, +18 %), Spain (75.5 thousand, +18 %) and Poland (67.6 thousand, +17 %).

The crude death rate (number of deaths per 1 000 persons) was 9.9 in 2001, decreased to 9.7 in 2004 and 2006, and has since then been fluctuating to reach 10.4 in 2019 and 11.6 in 2020. In a majority of Member States, there was an increase in the rate during this period. In 2020, the highest crude death rates were observed in Bulgaria (18.0 deaths per 1 000 persons), Lithuania (15.6), Romania (15.4), Latvia (15.2), and Hungary (14.5), and the lowest in Ireland (6.4), Cyprus (7.2), Luxembourg (7.3) and Malta (7.9).

The natural population change shows the difference between live births and deaths in a year. If it is negative, there are more deaths than births within the year and if it is positive, it is the opposite. In 2001, the crude rate of natural population change was +0.4 per 1 000 persons and remained positive until 2011 (except in 2003 when it was 0.0). The rate turned negative in 2012 (except in 2014 when it was 0.0), and decreased steadily since 2016 down to -1.1 in 2019 and -2.5 in 2020. The highest negative crude rates of population change in 2020 were observed in Bulgaria (-9.5 per 1 000 persons), Lithuania (-6.6) and Romania (-6.2) and the highest positive rates were found in Ireland (+4.9), Cyprus (+3.9) and Luxembourg (+2.9).

The natural population change has been negative in the EU since 2012, which is much due to the ageing population described in the first part of this publication, and in 2020, it is also, most likely, related to the COVID-19 pandemic.



2.2 Older mothers

Number of children per women increasing

Despite the fact that the absolute number of live births is decreasing in the EU, the number of live births per woman has increased in the EU during the period 2001 to 2019. It grew from 1.43 live births per woman in 2001 to 1.57 in 2008-2010, and then slightly decreased to 1.51 in 2013, before a modest rebound up to 1.57 in 2016 to reach 1.53 in 2019. Among the Member States, France (1.86 live births per woman) has the highest fertility rate, followed at a distance by Romania (1.77), Czechia, Ireland and Sweden (all 1.71). The lowest rates were found in Malta (1.14), Spain (1.23) and Italy (1.27).

Over the period 2001-2019, the largest decreases of the total fertility rate could be observed in Finland (from 1.73 live births per woman in 2001 to 1.35 in 2019), Malta (from 1.48 to 1.14) and Luxembourg (from 1.66 to 1.34), and the highest increases could be found in Czechia (from 1.15 in 2001 to 1.71 in 2019) and Romania (from 1.27 to 1.77).

Age of women at birth of first child increasing to 29.4 years

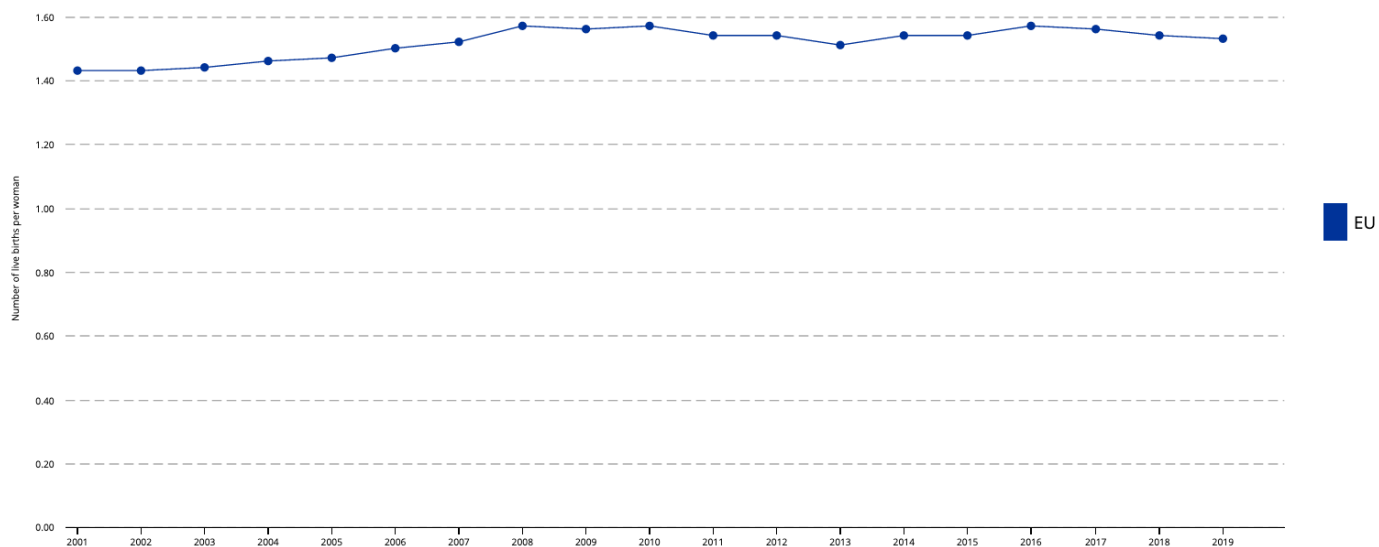
The age of first-time mothers in the EU has increased: in 2013 the mean age of women at birth of their first child was 28.8 years; this increased every year to reach 29.4 in 2019. There was an increase of this mean age in all Member States during the period 2001-2019: the highest increases of around 4 years were in Estonia and Lithuania, while the lowest increases of around 1 year were in France and Sweden. In 2019, the oldest first-time mothers (30 years old and over) were found in Italy (31.3 years), Spain and Luxembourg (both 31.1), Ireland (30.7), Greece (30.6), the Netherlands (30.1) and Cyprus (30.0). The youngest first time mothers were observed in Bulgaria (26.3 years), Romania (26.9), Slovakia (27.2), Latvia (27.3) and Poland (27.6).

Share of births to mothers over 40 more than doubled between 2001 and 2019

Another way of analysing fertility trends is to look at the share of live births to mothers over 40 in total live births in a year: in the EU, this share has more than doubled between 2001 and 2019, from 2.4 % in 2001 to 5.4 % in 2019. This share has increased in all Member States during this period. In 2019, the largest share of mothers over 40 was found in Spain (10 % of all live births), followed by Italy (8.9 %), Greece (8.4 %), Ireland (7.9 %) and Portugal (7.8 %). The lowest share of mothers over 40 was found in Romania and Slovakia (both 3.2 %).

Fertility rate (number of live births per woman)

European Union Fertility rate



Source: Eurostat - [access to dataset](#)

2.3 Women live longer

Increase in life expectancy of 3.7 years between 2002 and 2019

The population in the EU is ageing and one reason is the increasing life expectancy – the population live longer and longer. Life expectancy at birth rose rapidly during the last century due to a number of factors, including reductions in infant mortality, rising living standards, improved lifestyles and better education, as well as advances in healthcare and medicine. In 2002, the life expectancy at birth in the EU was 77.6 years, a value which increased to 81.3 in 2019, which means a growth of 3.7 years in this period. Life expectancy increased in this period in all Member States, with increases over 5 years in Estonia (from 70.9 in 2001 to 78.6 in 2020), Ireland (from 77.2 in 2001 to 82.8 in 2019) and Latvia (from 70.2 in 2002 to 75.7 in 2020).

However, following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, provisional estimates for 2020 show that life expectancy has gone down in all Member States (data not available for Ireland for 2020), except in Denmark and Finland where it slightly increased and in Cyprus and Latvia where it was stable. The largest decreases in life expectancy were observed in Spain (from 84.0 in 2019 to 82.4 in 2020) and Bulgaria (from 75.1 to 73.6).

In 2020, the highest life expectancy at birth was estimated to be in Malta (82.6 years), Spain, Italy and Sweden (all 82.4), Cyprus and France (both 82.3) and the lowest in Bulgaria (73.6 years), Romania (74.2), Lithuania (75.1), Latvia and Hungary (both 75.7).

Women live on average 5.5 years longer than men

Women live longer than men: in the EU in 2019, life expectancy at birth for women was 84.0 years and 78.5 for men, a difference of 5.5 years. This was the case in all Member States with the largest differences in 2020 in Lithuania (women: 80.0, men: 70.1, a difference of 9.9 years), Latvia (women: 80.1, men: 70.9, a difference of 9.2 years) and Estonia (women: 82.7, men: 74.2, a difference of 8.5 years).

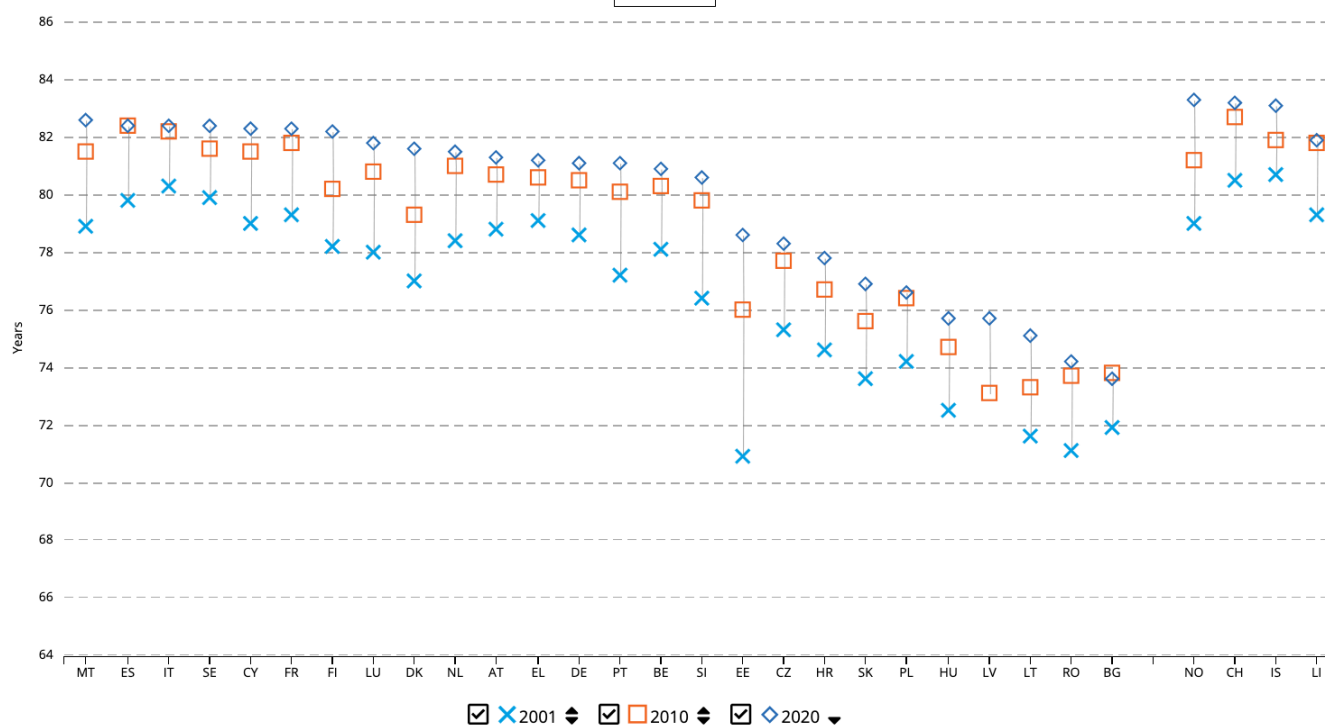
To compare with earlier years, the difference in life expectancy at birth between men and women was 6.6 years in the EU in 2002. In the Member States in 2001, the highest differences could still be found in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia (11.5 years difference in Lithuania, 11.4 years in Latvia in 2002 and 11.3 in Estonia respectively).

In 2020, the highest life expectancy at birth for women was estimated in France (85.3 years), Spain (85.1 years) and Finland (85.0), and the lowest in Bulgaria (77.5 years), Romania (78.4) and Hungary (79.1). For men, the highest life expectancy at birth was estimated in Malta (80.8 years), Sweden (80.7), Cyprus (80.3) and Italy (80.1), and the lowest in Bulgaria (69.9 years), Lithuania (70.1), Romania (70.5) and Latvia (70.9).

Life expectancy at birth - Total

(years)

Total



Data are ranked according to the year 2020. EU and Ireland: data not available for 2020.

Source: Eurostat – [access to dataset](#)

In 2020, 550 000 more deaths than the average in 2016 to 2019

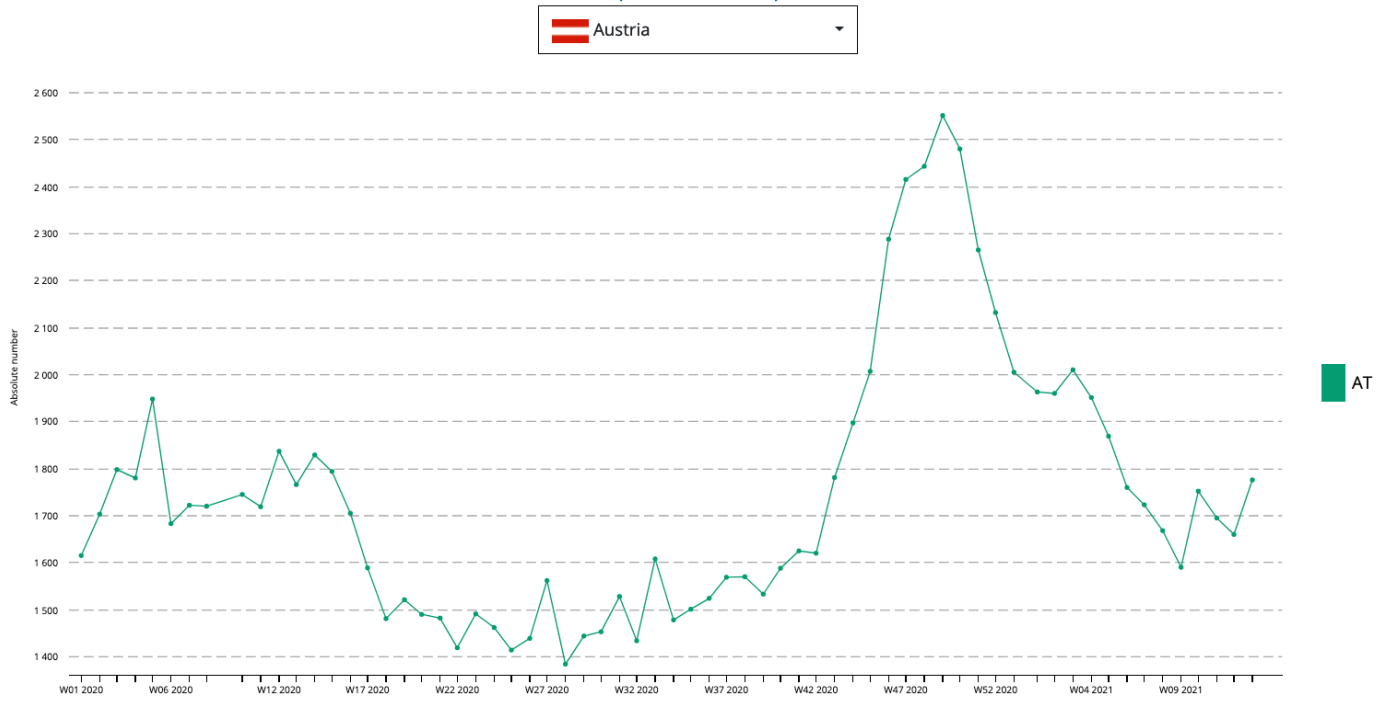
In April 2020, a new weekly European data collection on weekly death counts was launched. This main reason for this launch was to measure the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In total, in 2020, there were around 550 000 more deaths in the EU than the average during the same period from 2016 to 2019. In the visualisation below, it can be seen that, at the beginning of March 2020, the number of deaths rose rapidly in some Member States.

In the most severe period of the first wave, from mid-March to mid-May 2020, i.e. weeks 11 to 21, there were more than 175 000 additional deaths, while during the second peak period between October and December (from week 41 until the end of 2020) more than 340 000 additional deaths were registered. In 2021, the average mortality rate decreased in the first couple of months (weeks 1 to 9) and increased again in the following weeks of March and April 2021. National trends were quite varied across the EU.

Have a look at the visualisation below to see the situation in the different countries.

Number of deaths by week

(absolute number)



The available data on the total weekly deaths are transmitted by the National Statistical Institutes to Eurostat on voluntary basis.

Source: Eurostat – [access to dataset](#)



3. POPULATION DIVERSITY

3.1 Immigration growing

Immigration increased in almost all Member States

During the period 2010 to 2019, immigration of both foreign citizens (both from inside and outside the EU) and national citizens returning to their country of origin has increased in all Member States, except Italy, where immigration decreased during this period.

In 2019, the largest numbers of persons immigrating were recorded in Germany (886 000 persons, 21 % of all immigrants into EU Member States), Spain (750 000, 18 %) and France (386 000, 9 %). Immigrants into these three Member States made up almost half of all immigrants entering EU Member States in 2019. Slovakia (7 000, 0.2 % of all immigrants into EU Member States), Latvia (11 000, 0.3 %) and Estonia (18 000, 0.4 %) recorded the smallest number of immigrants.

A large majority of immigrants are foreign citizens

Immigrants can be either non-nationals or nationals returning to their country of origin. In 2019, over half of immigrants had a citizenship of a foreign country (inside or outside the EU) in 23 among the 27 Member States. The largest shares were observed in Czechia (96 %), Malta (95 %), Luxembourg (94 %) and Austria (91 %). On the other hand, in Romania, 80% of immigrants in 2019 held a national citizenship, followed by Slovakia (65 %), Bulgaria (62 %) and Lithuania (51 %).

Immigration by working age population also increasing in most Member States

Looking at immigration of the working age group of 20 to 64 years during the period 2013 and 2019, there were increases in all Member States, except Poland, where there was a decrease. The largest relative increases of immigrants aged 20 to 64 were observed in Estonia, Portugal, Croatia and Czechia.

Emigration increased in 20 Member States

On the other hand, people are also leaving the EU Member States either to a different EU Member State or to outside the EU. Emigration increased in the period 2010 to 2019 in 20 Member States and decreased in the remaining seven. The largest increases during this period were observed in Cyprus, Hungary, Croatia, Estonia and Bulgaria (for the period 2012 to 2019), and the highest decreases in Latvia, Lithuania and Spain.

In 2019, the largest numbers of persons emigrating were reported in Germany (576 000 person, 21 % of all emigrants from EU Member States), France (299 000, 11 %), Spain (296 000, 11 %) and Romania (234 000, 9 %). Emigrants from these four Member States made up just over half of all emigrants exiting EU Member States in 2019.

In half of the Member States the majority of emigrants are national citizens

Just like immigrants, emigrants can be either non-nationals or nationals leaving their country of origin. In 2019, around half of the Member States reported more national emigration than non-national emigration. The largest shares of emigrants with a foreign citizenship were observed in Czechia (93 %), Cyprus (88 %) and Malta (87 %). On the other hand, in Slovakia, 99 % of emigrants in 2019 held a national citizenship, followed by Portugal (97 %) and Bulgaria (95 %).

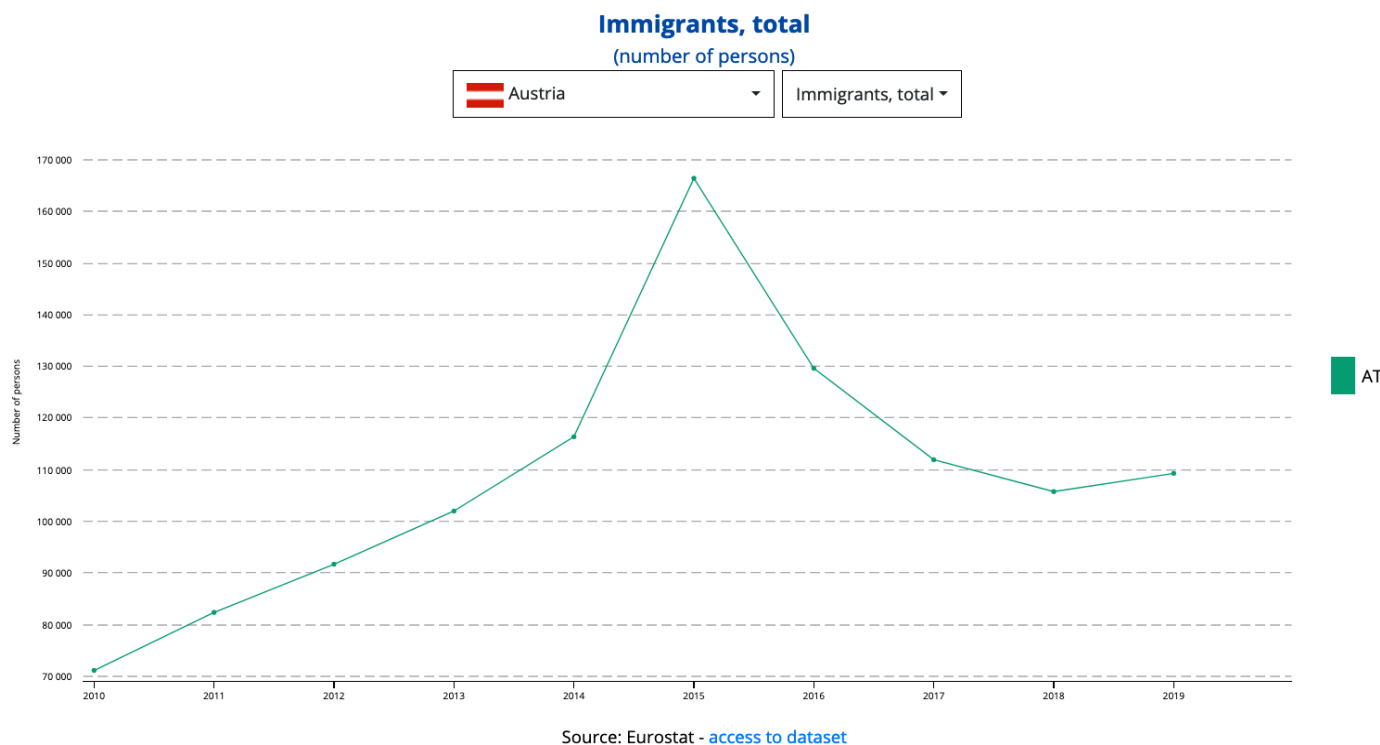
Emigration by working age population increased in 12 Member States

Looking at emigration of the working age group of 20 to 64 years during the period 2013 and 2019, the pattern is slightly different for the available Member States. There were increases in 13 Member States and decreases in eight. The largest relative increases of emigrants of the working age population were observed in Czechia, Croatia, Germany and Estonia.

Share of non-national population quite stable between 2010 and 2019

Between 2010 and 2019, the share of the non-national population was quite stable in most Member States (data for Croatia refer to 2013 to 2019). However, Malta (from 5 % in 2010 to 20 % in 2019), Austria (from 11 % to 17 %) and Germany (from 9 % to 13 %) showed more substantial increases.

In 2019, the largest share of non-nationals among the total population was found in Luxembourg (47 %), followed at a distance by Malta (20 %), Cyprus (18 %), Austria (17 %), Estonia (15 %) and Latvia (14 %). The smallest shares were observed in Poland, Romania and Slovakia (all 1 %).



3.2 EU citizens mobility increasing

EU citizens living in another EU country on the rise

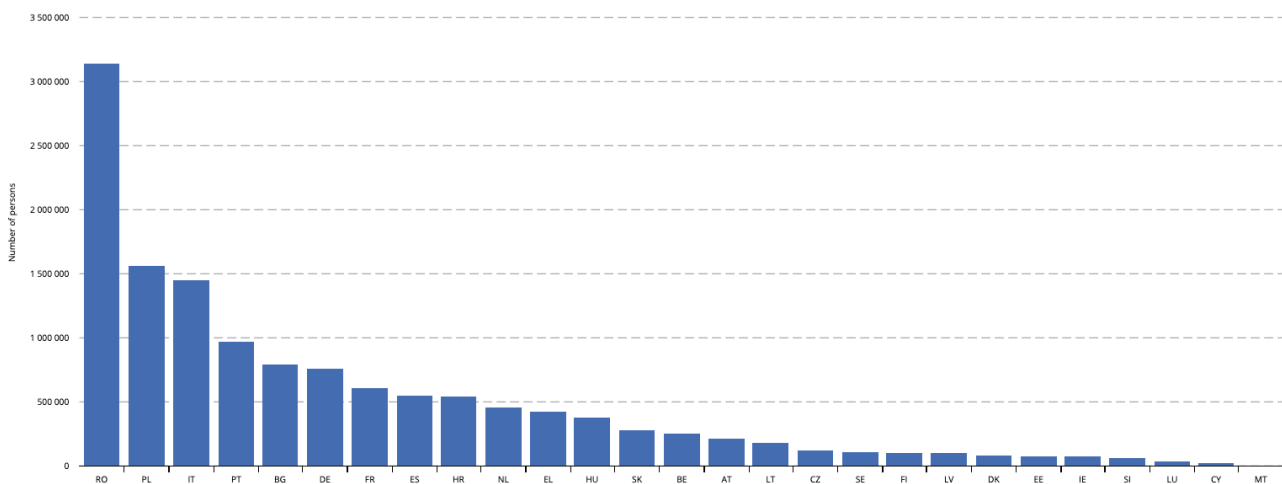
The EU population has the freedom to move and reside in the different EU Member States. The group of EU citizens who reside most in other EU Member States in 2020 was Romanian citizens (3.1 million or 23.0 % of all EU citizens living in another EU country), followed by Polish (1.6 million or 11.5 %), Italian (1.4 million or 10.7 %) and Portuguese citizens (964 000 or 7.1 %).

Looking at the period 2016 to 2020, the number of EU citizens living in another EU Member State has increased for all EU citizens, except for Danish and Finnish citizens. The largest relative increase during this period can be observed for Lithuanian (+62 %), Latvian (+61 %), Croatian (+34 %) and Maltese citizens (+32 %).

EU citizens living in another EU country, 2020

(number of persons)

2020 ▾



Data not available for other EU citizens living in Ireland (2016), Malta and Cyprus (2016-2020).

Source: Eurostat - [access to dataset](#)

3.3 New EU citizens

Moroccans and Albanians largest groups acquiring citizenship across EU Member States

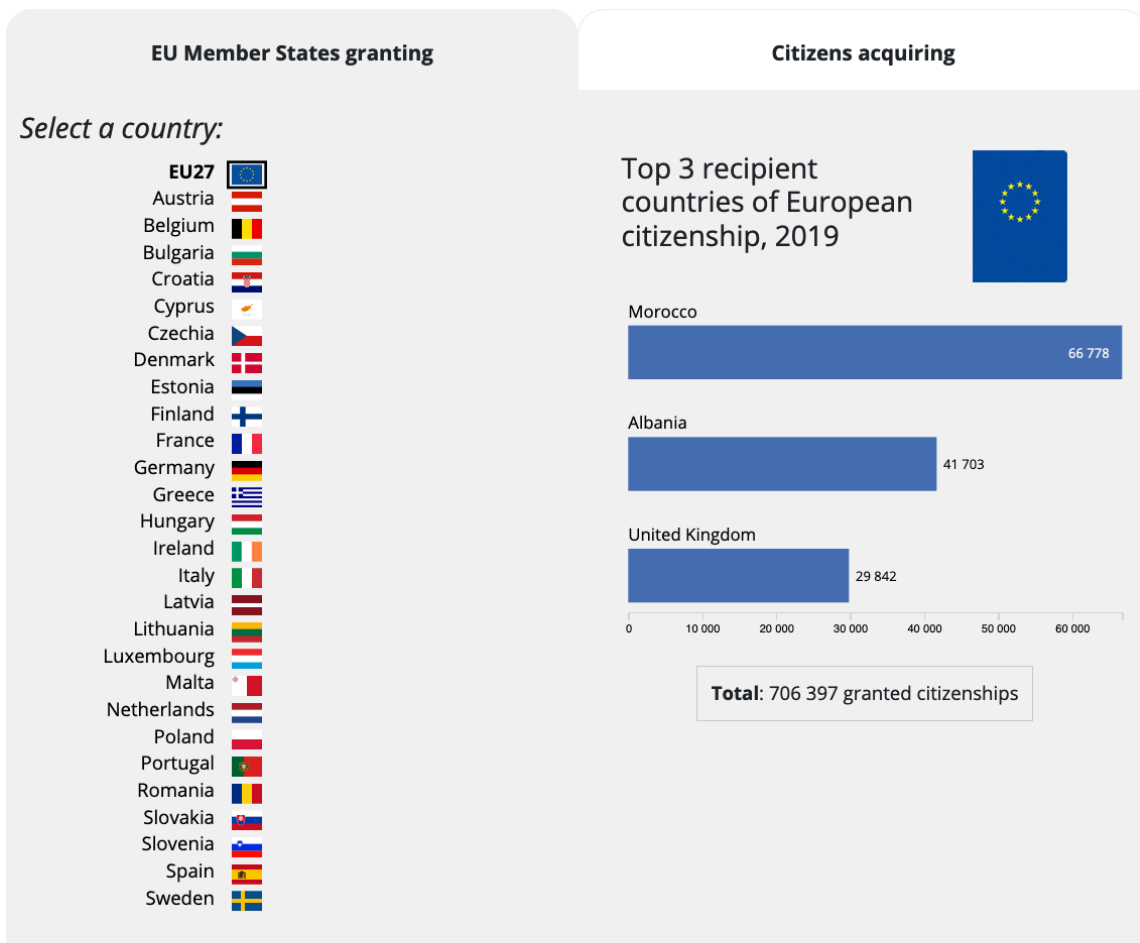
Looking at the period 2014 to 2019, the number of citizenships granted by an EU Member State has varied between 672 000 in 2018 and 844 000 in 2016. In 2019, 706 000 citizenships were granted by an EU Member State, with Moroccan (67 000 citizenships or 9 % of all citizenships granted by an EU Member State), Albanian (42 000 or 6 %) and British citizens (30 000 or 4 %) the three largest groups acquiring citizenship of an EU Member State. During the period 2014 to 2019, Moroccans and Albanians were the largest two groups acquiring citizenship of an EU Member State. From 2014 to 2018, Turkish citizens were the third group; however, in 2019 British citizens took the third place.

More children born to mothers with a foreign citizenship

Another way at looking at population diversity in the EU is through the share of children born in the EU to mothers with a foreign citizenship. In 2019, Luxembourg (61 %), Austria (31 %) and Cyprus (30 %) had the largest shares, while Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia (all 1 %) had the lowest.

Acquisition of citizenship

2019



(*) Data by individual former citizenship are not available for Romania.

Source: Eurostat – [access to dataset](#)

3.4 Rural and urban areas: differences

Higher share of people of working age in urban areas

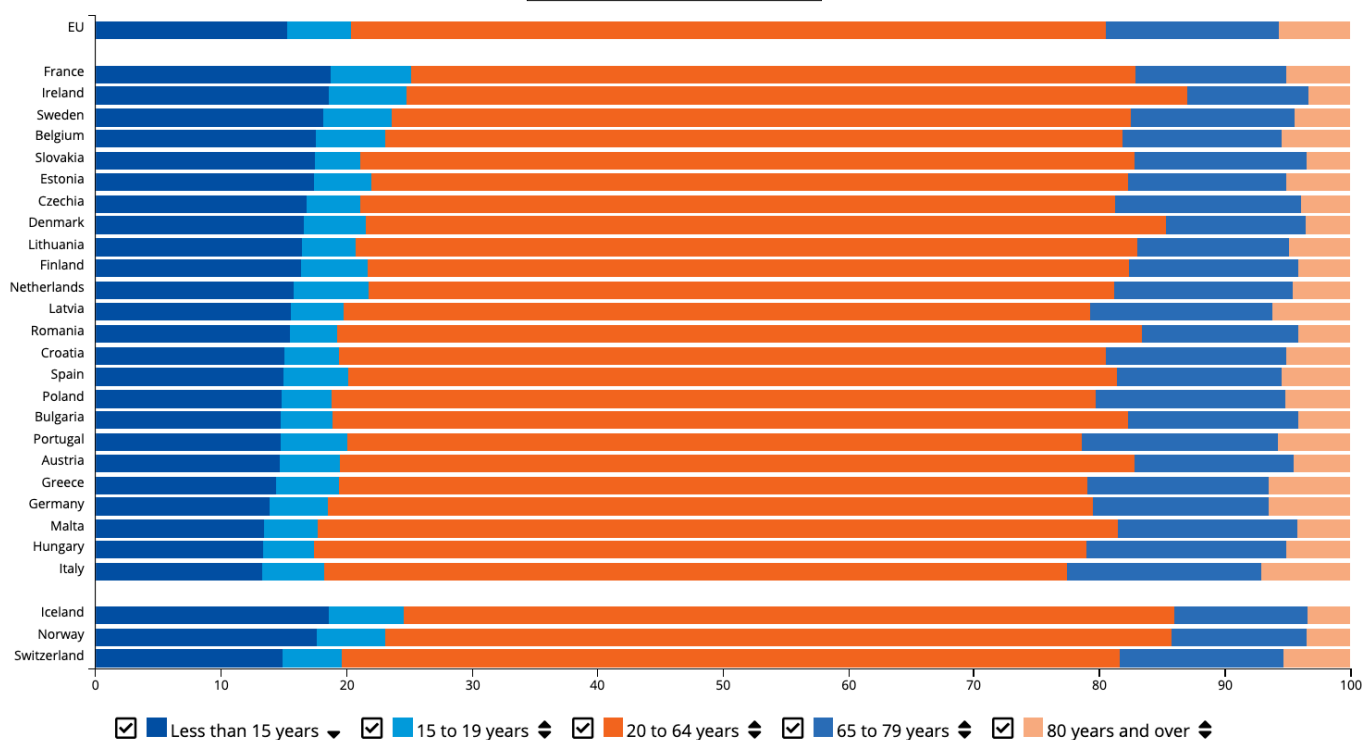
People in the EU live in different kinds of areas: rural areas, urban areas or so-called intermediate areas (towns and suburbs). Different age group shares were observed in different areas: for the working age population (aged 20-64), there was a higher share in urban areas (60 %) in 2020, than in rural areas (58 %). For those aged 65 to 79, the pattern was the opposite: there was a higher share in rural areas (16 %), than in urban areas (14 %).

Looking at the Member States the pattern mentioned above is more visible. For people in working age, the differences between rural areas and urban areas were highest in Denmark (64 % in urban areas and 55 % in rural areas), Finland (61 % and 54 %), Romania (64 % and 59 %), Sweden (59 % and 54 %), Bulgaria (63 % and 58 %), Ireland (62 % and 57 %) and France (58 % and 53%). What is also interesting to note is the share of the population in urban and rural areas for those aged over 80 in Spain: this group represented 11% in rural areas (the highest share in all Member States), while 5% of the population in urban areas in Spain were over 80.

Distribution of population in urban-rural areas by age group, 2020

(as % of the total population)

Predominantly urban regions



Data not available for Cyprus, Luxembourg and Slovenia.

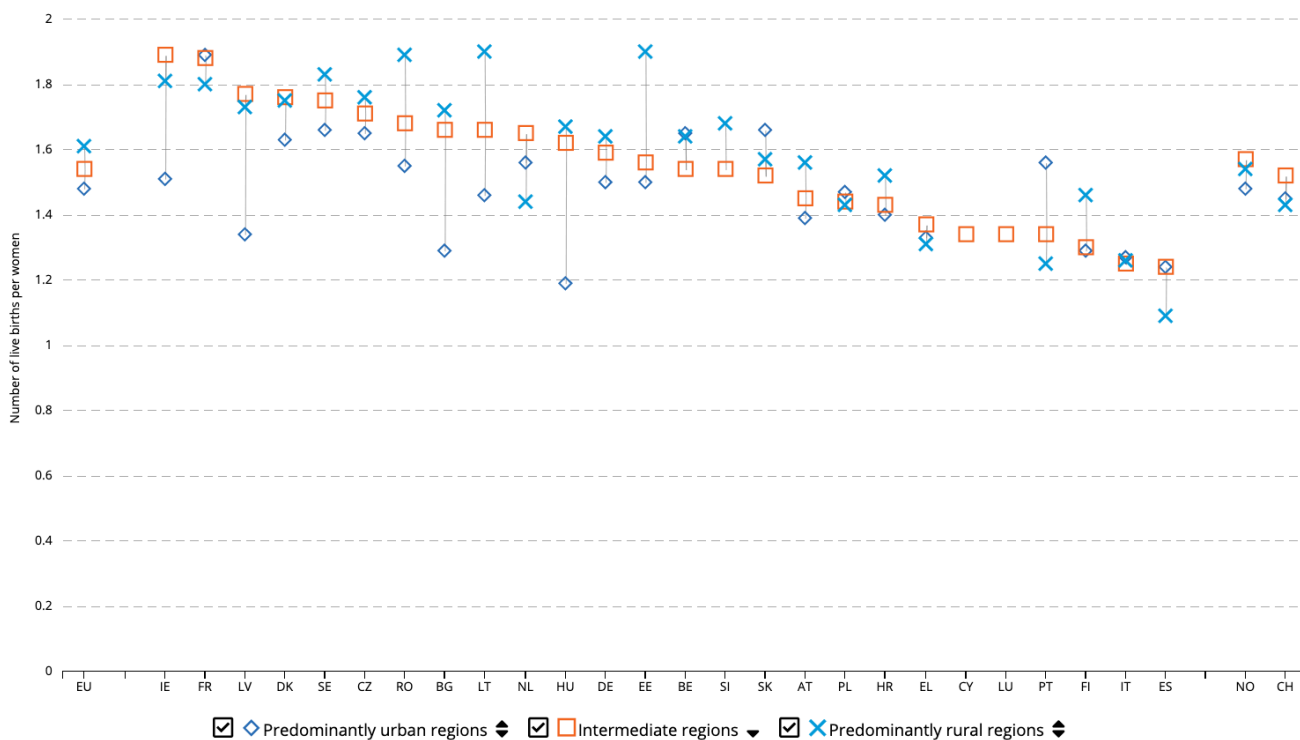
Source : Eurostat – calculations based on table [urt_pjangrp3](#)

Higher fertility rates in rural areas

The fertility rate (number of live births per woman) also differs according to which area people live in. In 2020 in the EU, the fertility rate in urban areas was 1.48, in intermediate areas 1.54 and in rural areas 1.61. Among the 23 Member States for which data are available for the three kinds of area, the fertility rate was higher in rural than in urban areas in 14 Member States. Among the Member States where the fertility rate was higher in rural areas than in urban, the largest differences were found in Hungary (1.19 in urban areas and 1.67 in rural areas), Lithuania (1.46 and 1.90), Bulgaria (1.29 and 1.72) and Estonia (1.50 and 1.90). Among the Member States which had the opposite pattern, the largest differences between areas were observed in Portugal (1.56 in urban areas and 1.25 in rural areas) and Spain (1.24 and 1.09).

Total fertility rate by urban-rural divide, 2019

(number of live births per woman)



Data are ranked according to intermediate regions. Malta: intermediate regions not applicable.

Source: Eurostat - calculations based on tables [demo_r_fagec3](#) and [demo_r_pjangrp3](#)



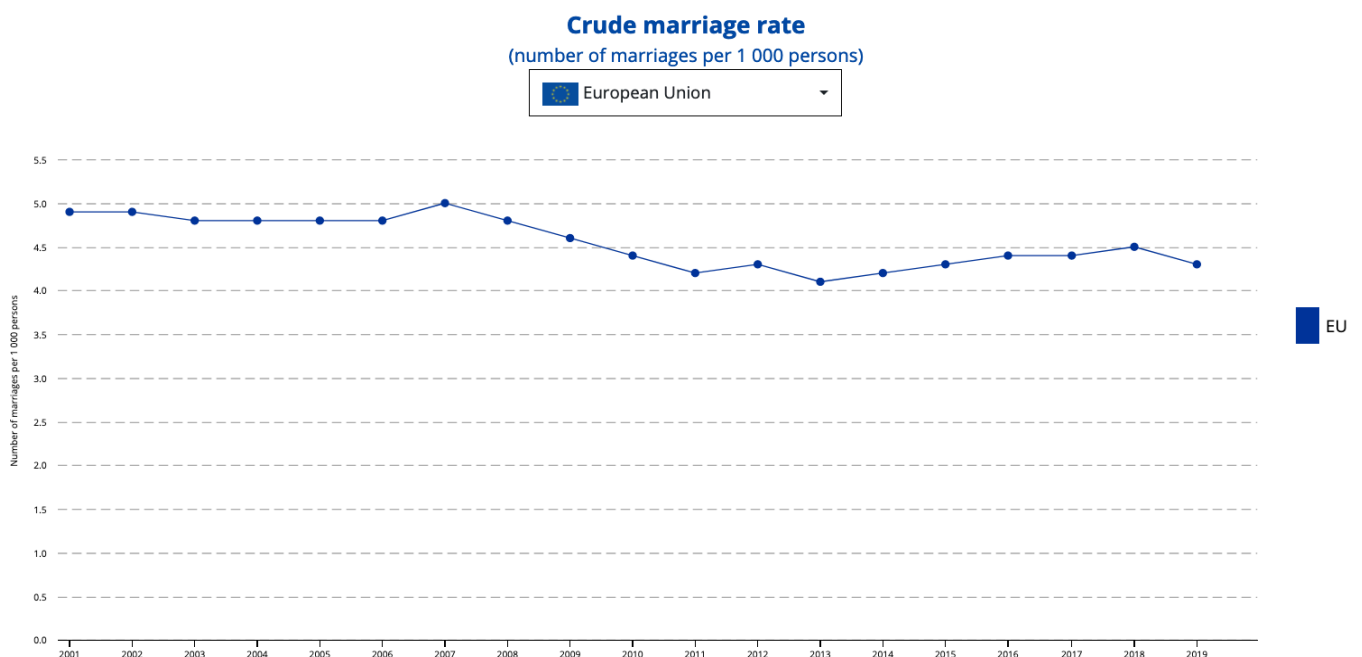
4. MARITAL STATUS

4.1 Fewer marriages

Number of marriages going down

The number of marriages varied in the period 2001 to 2019 in the EU. In 2001 to 2006, there were 4.8 to 4.9 marriages per 1 000 persons. This increased to a peak of 5.0 marriages per 1 000 persons in 2007. After that, the rate decreased continuously until 2013 when it reached its lowest level during this period: 4.1 marriages per 1 000 persons. Since then the rate increased again to reach 4.5 per 1 000 persons in 2018. However, in 2019, there was again a decrease to 4.3 marriages per 1 000 persons.

In 2019, the highest marriage rates were observed in Cyprus (8.9 marriages per 1000 persons), Lithuania (7.0), Latvia and Hungary (both 6.7), and the lowest in Italy (3.1), Portugal and Slovenia (both 3.2).



Cyprus: marriages of non-residents are included in 2001 and 2002.

Source: Eurostat – [access to dataset](#)

Older when getting married

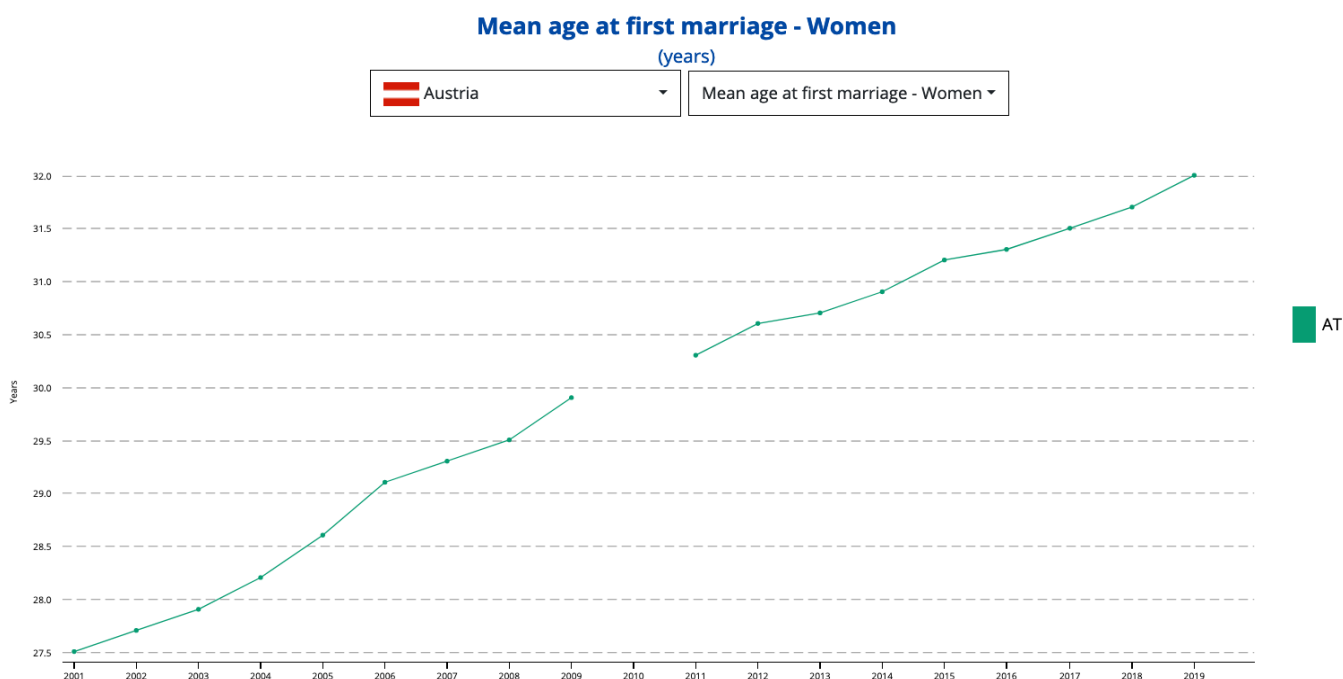
Just as the age of mothers when giving birth to their first child is increasing (see second part of this publication), people in the EU are becoming older at their first marriage. In all EU Member States for which data are available, the mean age at first marriage increased between 2001 and 2019. For both women and men, increases of over 5 years were observed in Portugal and Spain and for men in Latvia. On the other hand, increases of less than 3 years were observed in Denmark and Slovakia (for both women and men) and in Bulgaria, Greece and Croatia (only for men).

In 2019, the oldest mean age at first marriage for both women and men was observed in Sweden (34.1 years for women and 36.7 for men) and Spain (33.9 and 36.1), and the youngest in Slovakia (26.6 for women and 29.2 for men) and Poland (27.7 and 30.1).

Over half of all live births are outside marriage in nine Member States

The proportion of live births outside marriage in the EU increased steadily between 2001 and 2019. In 2001, the share was 26.8 %, while by 2019 it had increased to 42.7 %. The share of births outside marriage has increased in most Member States between 2001 and 2019, with the largest increases observed in Portugal (+33.0 percentage points (p.p.), from 23.8 % in 2001 to 56.8 % in 2019), Spain (+28.7 p.p., from 19.7 % to 48.4 %), the Netherlands (+25.2 p.p., from 27.2 % to 52.4 %), and Italy (+25.1 p.p., from 10.3 % to 35.4 %). Consequently, the share of births inside marriage decreased in most Member States. Only Latvia, Estonia and Sweden showed a decrease in the share of live births outside marriage over the same period.

In 2019, more than half of all live births were outside marriage in France (61.0 %), Bulgaria (58.4 %), Slovenia (57.7 %), Portugal (56.8 %), Sweden (54.5 %), Denmark (54.1 %), Estonia (53.7 %), Belgium (52.4 % in 2018) and the Netherlands (52.4 %). The lowest shares were observed in Greece (12.4 %), Cyprus (21.2 %) and Croatia (21.5 %).



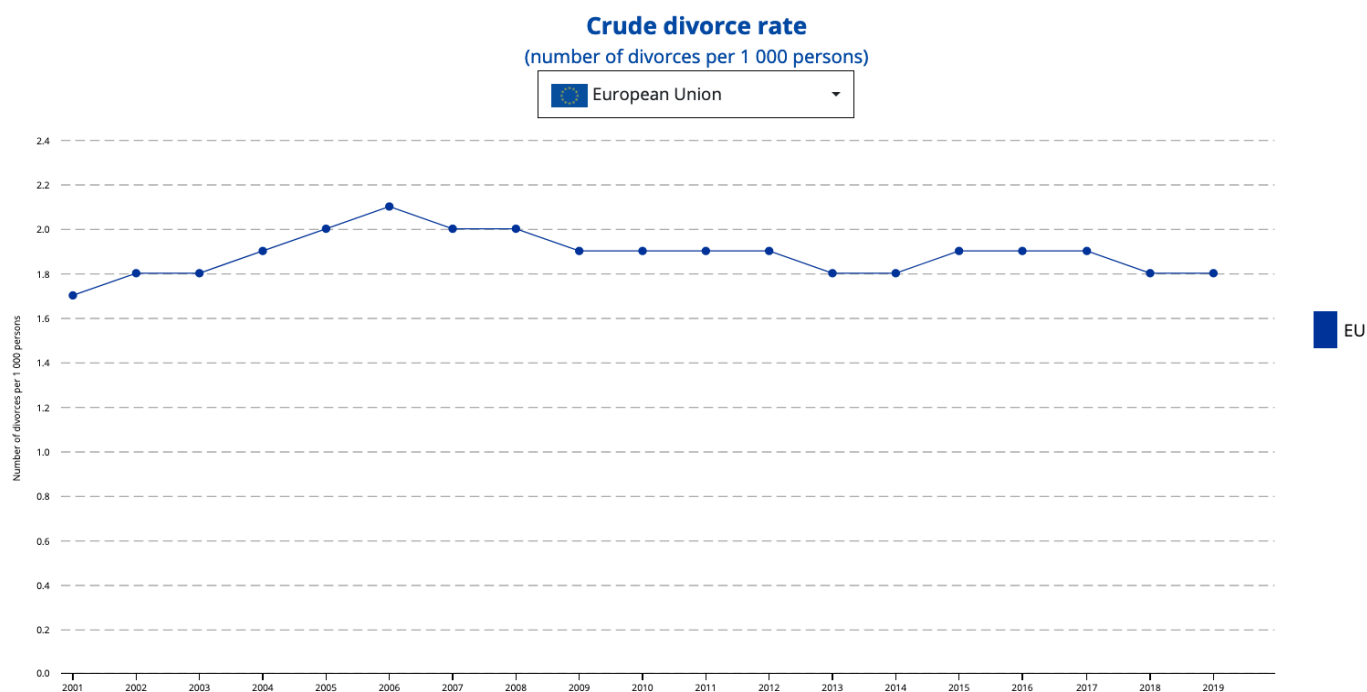
Source: Eurostat – [access to dataset](#)

4.2 More divorces

Divorce rate fluctuating

Looking at the period 2001 to 2019, the crude divorce rate, meaning the number of divorces per 1 000 persons, in the EU fluctuated. In 2001, there were 1.7 divorces per 1 000 persons. This rate increased to reach a peak of 2.1 in 2006. After that, the rate decreased and remained at 1.8 and 1.9. In 2019, the rate was 1.8 per 1 000 persons. Comparing 2001 and the latest year available (2019 in most Member States), the crude divorce rate increased in fourteen Member States and decreased or was stable in the remaining thirteen.

In 2019, the highest crude divorce rates were observed in Latvia, Lithuania and Luxembourg (all 3.1 divorces per 1000 persons), Cyprus (2.6), Sweden (2.5) and Finland (2.4). On the other hand, the lowest rates were found in Ireland (0.7 in 2017) and Malta (0.7).



Source: Eurostat – [access to dataset](#)

FURTHER INFORMATION

Demography of Europe — statistics visualised is an interactive publication released by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union.

Information on data

The European Union (EU) includes 27 EU Member States.
The text refers to data available as of May to July 2021.

Contact

If you have questions on the data, please contact the Eurostat User Support.

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