



Rigsarkivet

Danmarks
Hukommelse

BORN ONCE
+
DIE ONCE

Interdisciplinary Centre on Population Dynamics (CPop)

ERC Workshop

**A Unified Perspective on Formation and
Dissolution Processes in Demography**

SDU, Odense, 11 March 2026

Households from a historical demographic perspective: from average household sizes to the lifecourse approach.

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The challenge

“We would like to learn more about anything you may have to share about household formation and/or dissolution patterns or changes in household structures in Denmark, or your insights about challenges in how to define households, when a household could be considered “born” and when it “dies”? “

My attempt at an answer: Households from a historical demographic perspective

- Household as an analytical category in historical demography
- Challenges in studying household formation and dissolution through historical sources
- Some empirical insights into household formation from our individual level data.



1. What is a household?

Denmark

Persons resident at the same address, irrespective of family ties. Thus a household may comprise more than one family. (Statistics Denmark).

<https://www.dst.dk/en/Statistik/emner/borgere/husstande-og-familieforhold/husstande-og-familier>

UK

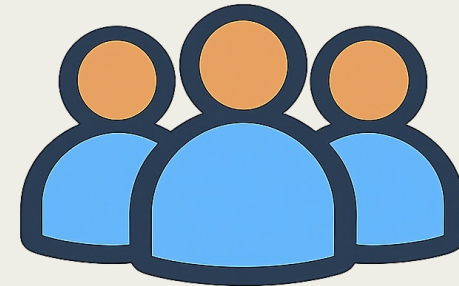
"household" is (current definition, from 2011) one person living alone, or a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address who share cooking facilities and share a living room, sitting room or dining area. A household can consist of a single family, more than one family or no families in the case of a group of unrelated people.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/articles/familiesandhouseholdsstatisticsexplained/2021-03-02#families-and-households-definitions>

UN

The household, defined as a group of persons who make common provision of food, shelter and other essentials for living, is a fundamental socio-economic unit in human societies.

https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3799696/files/household_size_and_composition_around_the_world_2017_data_booklet.pdf





Historical households

The concept

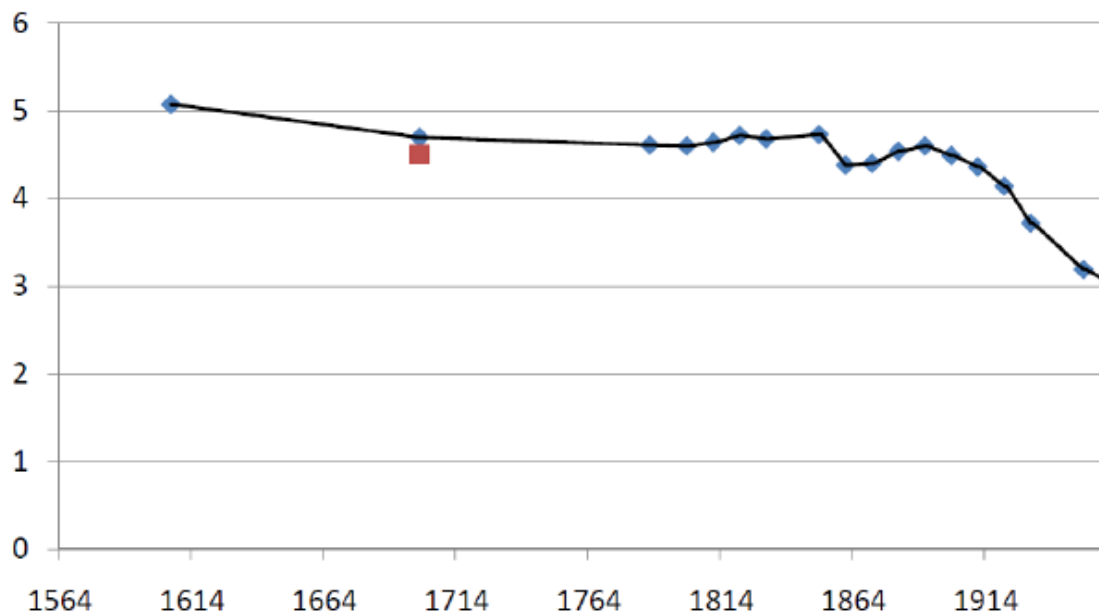
- Used but with no specific definition
- Involve co-residence
- Tied to economic activity (a farm, a house, a manor, a workshop)
- Dependent on a head of household
- More focus on families: "coresiding kin who participate in a single domestic economy" (Skinner 1997)

Analysing families and households from historical individual-level data

- Cross sectional sources: Early focus on average household size and household composition.



Mean household size in England, 1564-1921

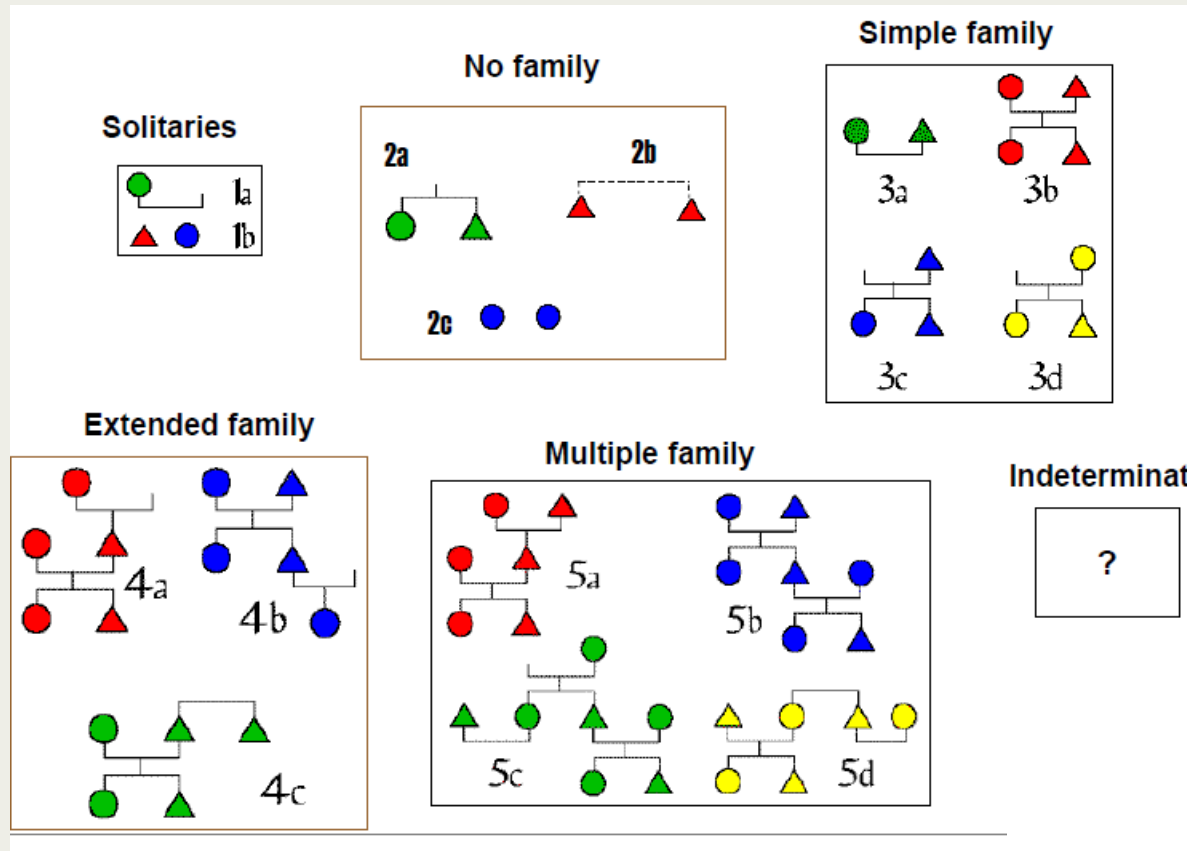


Laslett 1972, Tab. 4.4

Denmark: ~4
(Johansen 2002)



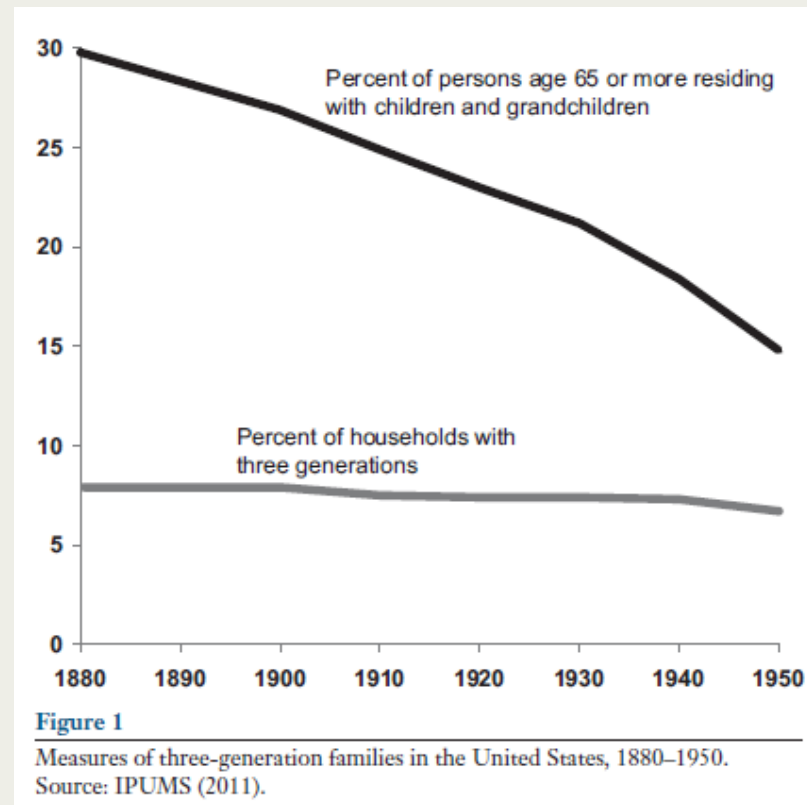
Some examples of family types



(Laslett & Hammet 1972)



Limitations of household/family approaches based on households/families



(Ruggles 2012)



Historical households

The concept

- Lack of a specific definition in many cases
- Involve co-residence
- Tied to economic activity (a farm, a house, a manor, a workshop)
- Dependent on a head of household
- More focus on families: "coresiding kin who participate in a single domestic economy" (Skinner 1997)

Analysing families and households from historical individual-level data

- Cross sectional sources: Early focus on average household size and household composition.
- Limitations of family approach to household formation
- Longitudinal individual level data: new possibilities



New large-scale historical individual level datasets

Overview and Comparison of 84 Databases with Historical Population Longitudinal Micro Data

By Kees Mandemakers

To cite this article: Mandemakers, K. (2025). Overview and Comparison of 84 Databases with Historical Population Longitudinal Micro Data. *Historical Life Course Studies*, 15, 281–321. <https://doi.org/10.52024/hlcs21660>

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL digidata.rigsarkivet.dk/afl levering/14001. The page header includes the Rigsarkivet logo and a search bar containing 'link-lives'. Below the header, the search results are displayed for 'Link-Lives release 2 (1787-1921)'. The page is categorized as 'Forskningsdata' and has a 'Download data' button. The main content area includes the following text:

Afl levering 14001

Link-Lives release 2 (1787-1921)

Skabt af [?](#)
Rigsarkivet (2019-2024), Københavns Stadsarkiv (2019-2024),
Københavns Universitet, Saxo Institutet (2019-2024),
Københavns Universitet, NN Center for Protein Research (2019-2024).

Formål [?](#)
The aim of the research project [Link-Lives](#) is to extend the range of register-research, based on Danish data, from decades to centuries. By combining historical research and data science methods, we reconstruct life-courses and family relations of almost everyone who lived in Denmark from 1787 until the introduction of the modern Danish civil registration system (CPR) in 1968. The project is funded by the Innovation Fund Denmark and the Carlsberg Foundation and runs from 2019 to 2025.

Indhold [?](#)
[Link-Lives](#) release 2 is the second data release the project launches during the course of the project. It contains 64 million person registrations from three types of sources along with links and life courses created from them. There are transcribed person registrations from: 1) Censuses (the years 1787, 1801, 1834, 1840, 1845, 1850, 1860, 1880, 1885, 1901) originally transcribed by volunteers coordinated by the National Archives



2. Historical households: challenges of indentifying and analyze them

- Families were in fact captured in the original form
- How it has been transcribed
- How it has been interpreted
- How we can follow individuals in and out of them



Historical households: challenges of indentifying and analyze them

Forhus, Sidehus, Mellembygning eller Bagbygning. Kjælderlejlighed eller Etage.	Familiernes Antal.	Personernes Løbenummer.
<i>Torshuset</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>

Main house, side-house, middle-buidling.....

Person number

Nr. of families

Stilling i Familien
 (Husfader, Husmoder, Børn, Slægtninge,
 Tjenestetyende, Logerende o. s. v.),
 samt **Titel, Embede, Forretning, Næringsvej eller af
 hvilket Erhverv de leve** som Hovedperson eller som
 Medhjælper (Handelsbetjent, Svend eller Dreng o. s. v.)
 eller om de forsorges af Fattigvæsenet.







Position in the family
(House father, house mother, children, kin, servants, lodgers) including title, official busines, occupation.....



Historical households: challenges of indentifying and analyze them



Hovedliste.						2	
Opregnske paa Folketallet den 1 ^{de} Februar 1880 i Kjøndemmen						Matrikel-Nr.	
(Her optæres ikke de Dødsede, hvis Ophold har et midlertidigt, se Tilægget A)						Stads-Nr.	
Følges, Skoles, Mellemvej eller Bulevej, Kjøbstedslyst eller Bulej.	Familiens Antal.	Personers Tal.	Sædvanlige Personers fulde Navn. (I de fleste Tilfælde med Tilføjet "Dødsdato" eller "Dødsårsag").	Kjøn.	Ålder.	Egnekategori.	Fødselsdato.
1 ^{ste} Gul.	1	1	Christian Christensen	M.	33	Gift	Søndergaard
	2	2	Anna Christensen	K.	33	Gift	Søndergaard
2 ^{de} Gul.	3	3	Christian Christian Hansen	M.	30	Gift	Søndergaard
	4	4	Anna Hansen	K.	31	Gift	Søndergaard
	5	5	Christen Christian Hansen	M.	28	Gift	Søndergaard
	6	6	Anna Hansen	K.	28	Gift	Søndergaard
	7	7	Christen Christian Hansen	M.	17	Gift	Søndergaard
	8	8	Anna Hansen	K.	17	Gift	Søndergaard
	9	9	Christen Christian Hansen	M.	16	Gift	Søndergaard
	10	10	Anna Hansen	K.	16	Gift	Søndergaard
	11	11	Christen Christian Hansen	M.	16	Gift	Søndergaard
	12	12	Anna Hansen	K.	16	Gift	Søndergaard
3 ^{de} Gul.	13	13	Christian Christian Hansen	M.	33	Gift	Søndergaard
	14	14	Anna Hansen	K.	34	Gift	Søndergaard
	15	15	Christen Christian Hansen	M.	3	Gift	Søndergaard
	16	16	Anna Hansen	K.	1	Gift	Søndergaard
	17	17	Christen Christian Hansen	M.	27	Gift	Søndergaard
	18	18	Anna Hansen	K.	15	Gift	Søndergaard

 Folketælling 1880	Eli Harald Frederik Krarup ★ 1847 Svendborg Amt	Registrering Folketælling 1880 Odense, Odense Herred, Odense Amt, Danmark
 Folketælling 1880	Kone Andrea Margrethe Krarup Født Møller ★ 1848 Kerteminde	Registrering Folketælling 1880 Odense, Odense Herred, Odense Amt, Danmark
 Folketælling 1880	Barn Anna Kathrine Krarup ★ 1877 Odense	Registrering Folketælling 1880 Odense, Odense Herred, Odense Amt, Danmark
 Folketælling 1880	Barn Peder Constantz Emil Krarup ★ 1879 Odense	Registrering Folketælling 1880 Odense, Odense Herred, Odense Amt, Danmark
 Folketælling 1880	Tjeneste Maren Christensen ★ 1853 Ullerup Sogn	Registrering Folketælling 1880 Odense, Odense Herred, Odense Amt, Danmark
 Folketælling 1880	Tjeneste Nielsine Rasmine Camilla Madsen ★ 1885 Svendborg	Registrering Folketælling 1880 Odense, Odense Herred, Odense Amt, Danmark



Coding

Recod linkage



Eli Harald Frederik Kramp

Fødselsår

Tragte til sørgemester

REGISTRER

PrøveID: 520794
Version: 30

Personregistreringer

<p>Vidne 505</p>	<p>Sørgemester</p> <p>Eli Harald Frederik Kramp 505</p>	<p>Registret</p> <p>Kirkelig 505/505</p> <p>Jørgen Rasmussenvej, Århus, Danmark</p> <p>SE DATA</p>
<p>Fødselsligning 5051</p>	<p>Eli Harald Frederik Kramp 505</p> <p>Korsbølvej, Århus</p>	<p>Registret</p> <p>Fødselsligning 5051</p> <p>Cåbenes, Cåbenes/Morsø, Cåbenes, Århus, Danmark</p> <p>SE DATA</p>
<p>Fødselsligning 5051</p>	<p>Hustru</p> <p>Eli Harald Frederik Kramp 505</p> <p>Ringsvej, Århus</p>	<p>Registret</p> <p>Fødselsligning 5051</p> <p>Cåbenes, Århus, Danmark</p> <p>SE DATA</p>
<p>Konfirmation 5051</p>	<p>For</p> <p>Eli Harald Frederik Kramp</p>	<p>Registret</p> <p>Kirkelig 505/505</p> <p>Cåbenes-Nord, Fouke, Danneberg, Cåbenes, Cåbenes, Århus, Danmark</p> <p>SE DATA</p>
<p>Konfirmation 5051</p>	<p>For</p> <p>Eli Harald Frederik Kramp</p>	<p>Registret</p> <p>Kirkelig 505/505</p> <p>Cåbenes-Nord, Fouke, Danneberg, Cåbenes, Cåbenes, Århus, Danmark</p> <p>SE DATA</p>
<p>Fødselsligning 5053</p>	<p>Hustru</p> <p>Eli Harald Frederik Kramp 505</p> <p>Skjervevej</p> <p>Tønder, Tønder</p>	<p>Registret</p> <p>Fødselsligning 5053</p> <p>Cåbenes, Cåbenes/Morsø, Cåbenes, Århus, Danmark</p> <p>SE DATA</p>
<p>Konfirmation 5053</p>	<p>For</p> <p>Eli Harald Frederik Kramp</p>	<p>Registret</p> <p>Kirkelig 505/505</p> <p>Cåbenes-Nord, Fouke, Danneberg, Cåbenes, Cåbenes, Århus, Danmark</p> <p>SE DATA</p>

Linke

Levensforløbsskema





3. Some thoughts on household formation/dissolution based on our empirical individual historical longitudinal data in Denmark

The edges:

- Northwestern marriage pattern
- Extended family over generations
- Non-kin related household
- Divorced household

What do we want to use households for?



Concluding remarks

- The continued construction of the concept "household"
- The long journey of construction of "households" from empirical data
- The new exciting opportunities that individual historical datasets provide to contemporary demography issues



Thank you for your attention



Wanna hear more about us?

- Search live data on link-lives.dk
- Download our latest release at <https://digidata.rigsarkivet.dk/aflevering/14001>
- Read about our exciting new Historical Person Register at <https://www.rigsarkivet.dk/nyheder/historisk-personregister-udpeget-som-ny-national-forskningsinfrastruktur-og-stoettes-med-naesten-16-mio/>
- Drop me an e-mail at bre@rigsarkivet.dk