



# Multilocality and the Pluralisation of Living Arrangements

How and Why has Family Life Changed  
over the Course of the Last 50 Years?

DJI Workshop: *The Everyday Life of Multi-Local Families.  
Concepts, Methods and the Example of Post-Separation Families*  
20th/21st October, 2011 in Munich, Germany

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# Content

- introductory remarks
- the changes in family life over the course of the last 50 years
  - overview
  - exemplary statistics
  - from cohabitation to multilocality
- types of multilocality and their causes
  - life course-related multilocality / new couple formation
  - job-related multilocality / job-related mobility demands
  - family-related multilocality / separation and divorce
  - lifestyle-related multilocality / individualism
- concluding remarks



## Introductory Remarks

- Main *questions*:
  - In what ways has family life in Europe and the “western world” become more “multilocal” over the course of the last 50 years?
  - Why?
- What does *multilocality* mean (in this context)?
  - A family or living arrangement is living in *more than one household* (maybe even with a large distance between these households).
- Main *theses*:
  - Reasons are complex and interrelated.
  - Reasons are routed in a broad process of (post) modernisation of societies.



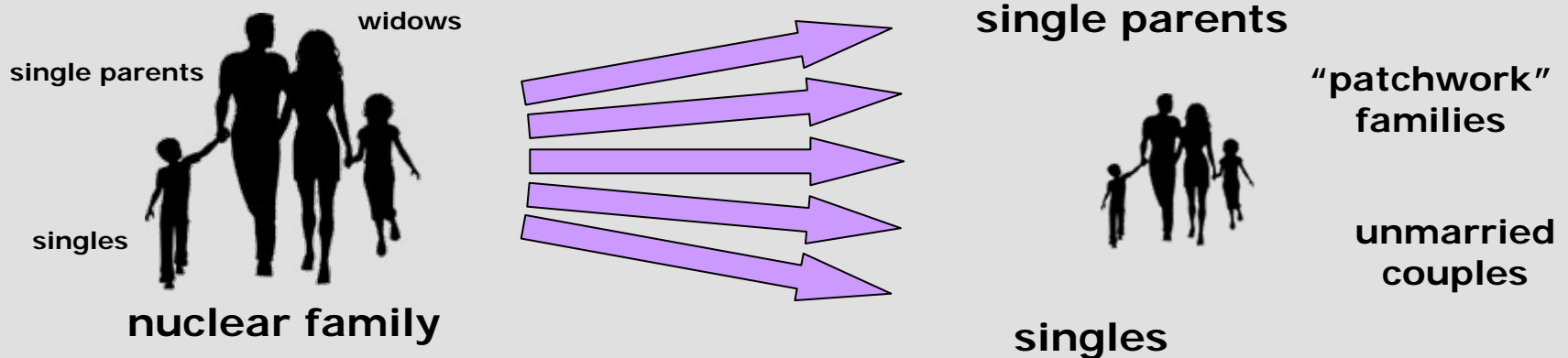
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## Main Trends in Family Life

The multiple trends in European family life can be summarised as a *pluralisation* or *de-standardisation of living arrangements*:

The strong statistical and normative dominance of one *family model* (the Talcott Parsons-type nuclear family) and one *family biography* has left more space for a plurality of forms and pathways.



## Main Trends in Family Life

Main trends regarding the *forms* of living arrangements are:

- more people living as single  
(also among young adults)
- more couples living in separate households
- more couples living together without being married /  
fewer (first) marriages
- more divorces / more post-divorce families
- declining fertility / more childlessness  
(with recent counter trends in some countries)
- legalisation of homosexual couples

## Main Trends in Family Life

Main trends regarding the *organisation* of living arrangements are:

- a higher labour market participation of women / mothers (often in part time)
- a somewhat stronger engagement of men in housework and childcare
- a higher externalisation of childcare
- a change in attitudes towards equal gender roles
- a less authoritarian relationship between parents and children
- rising demands regarding parenthood

## Main Trends in Family Life

Main trends regarding the *family biography* are:

- higher ages at leaving parents home
- higher ages at first marriage
- higher ages at first birth
- less synchronism in events marking adulthood:
  - leaving parents home, being financially independent, having a partner, cohabiting, marriage, family foundation
- longer life spans / longer “empty nest” phase

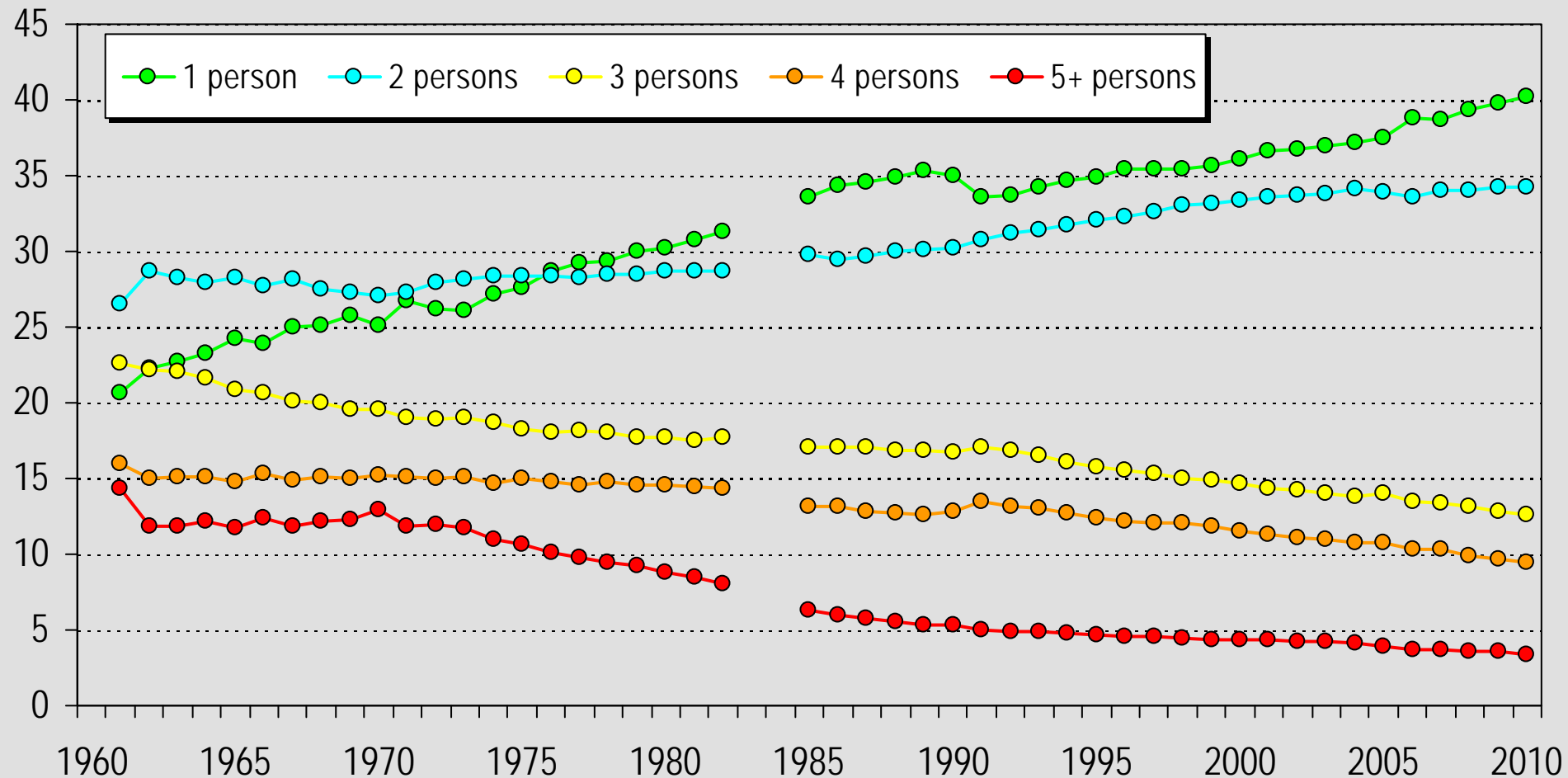




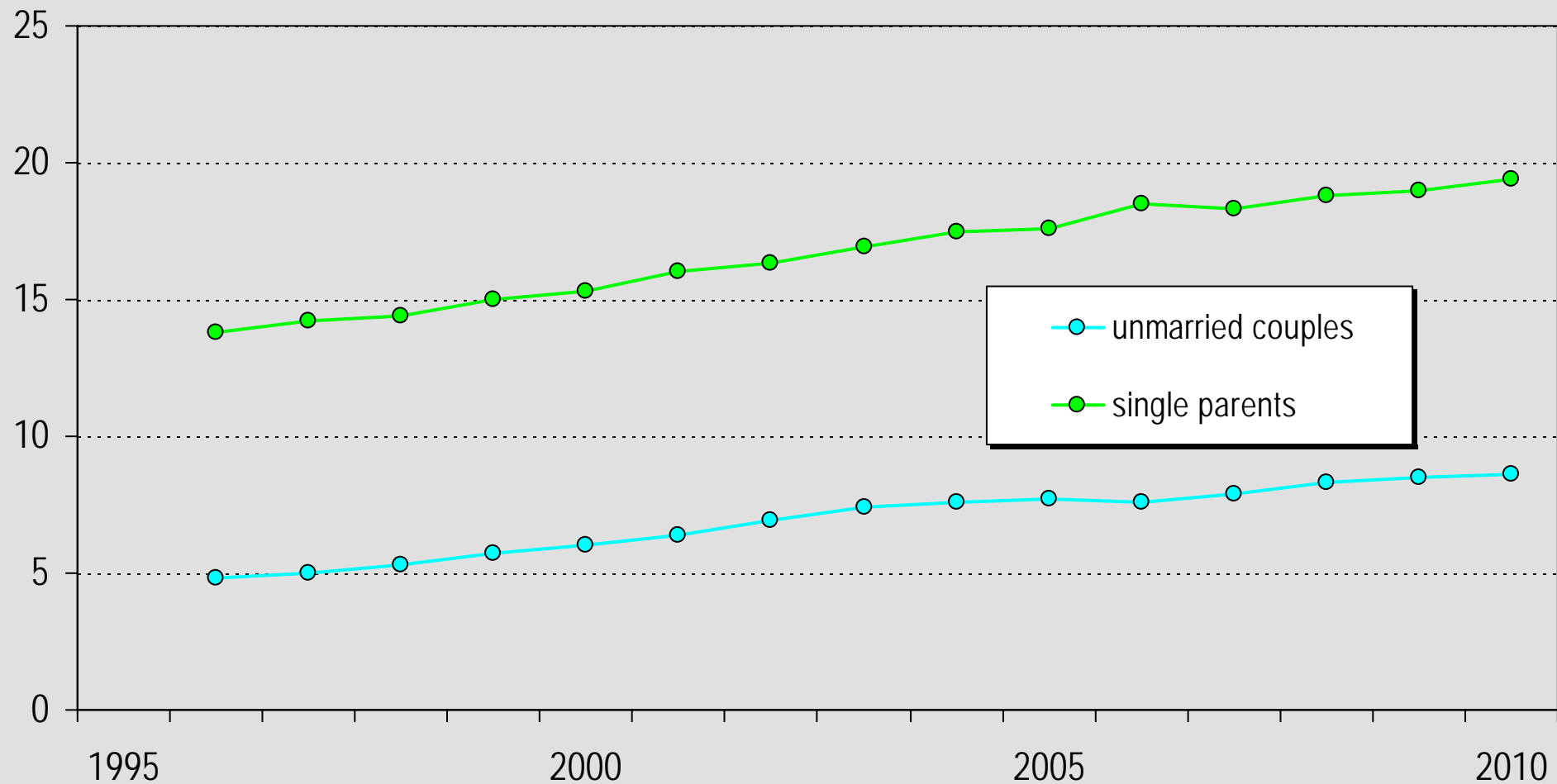
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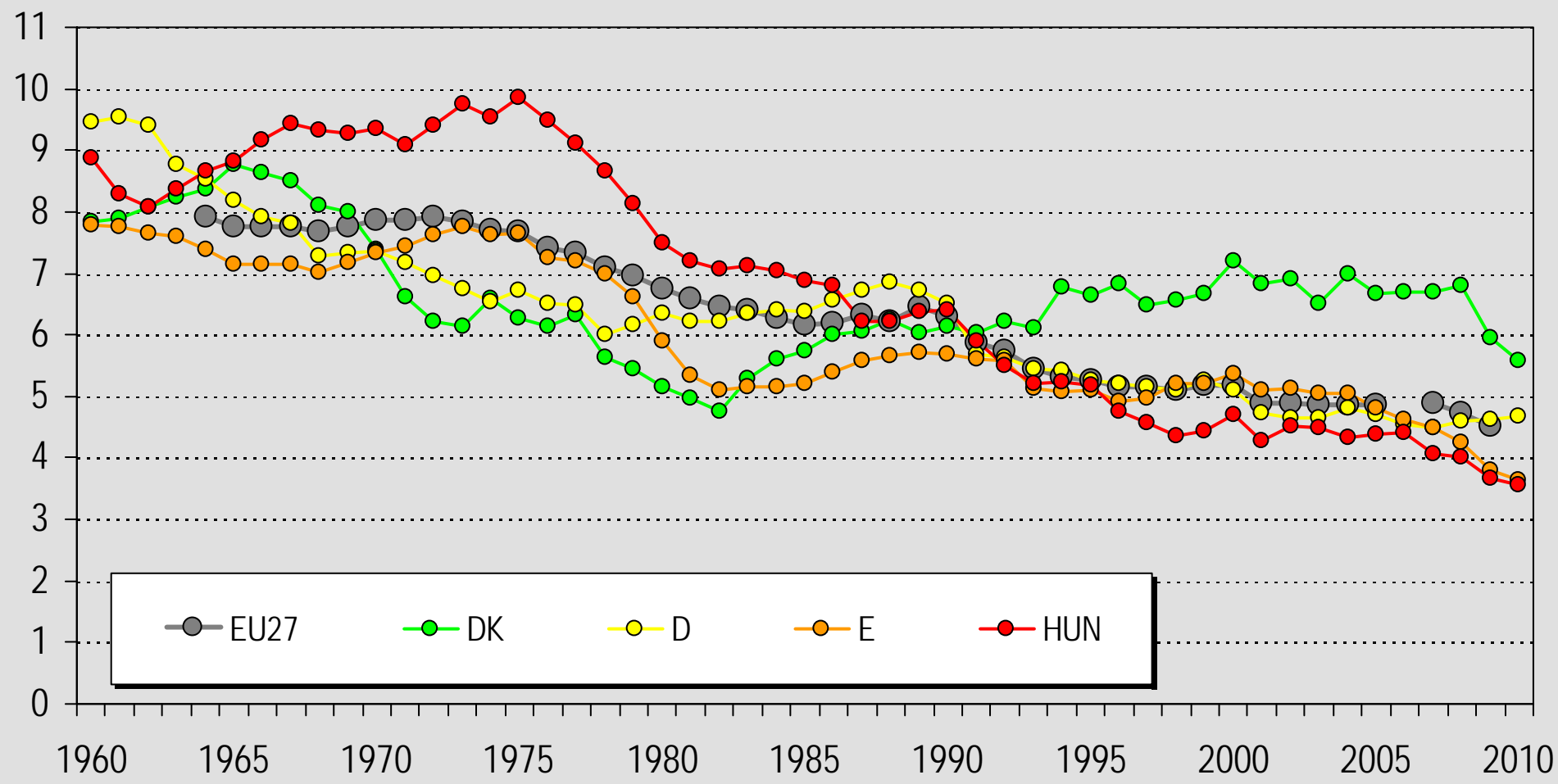
# Household Sizes in Germany



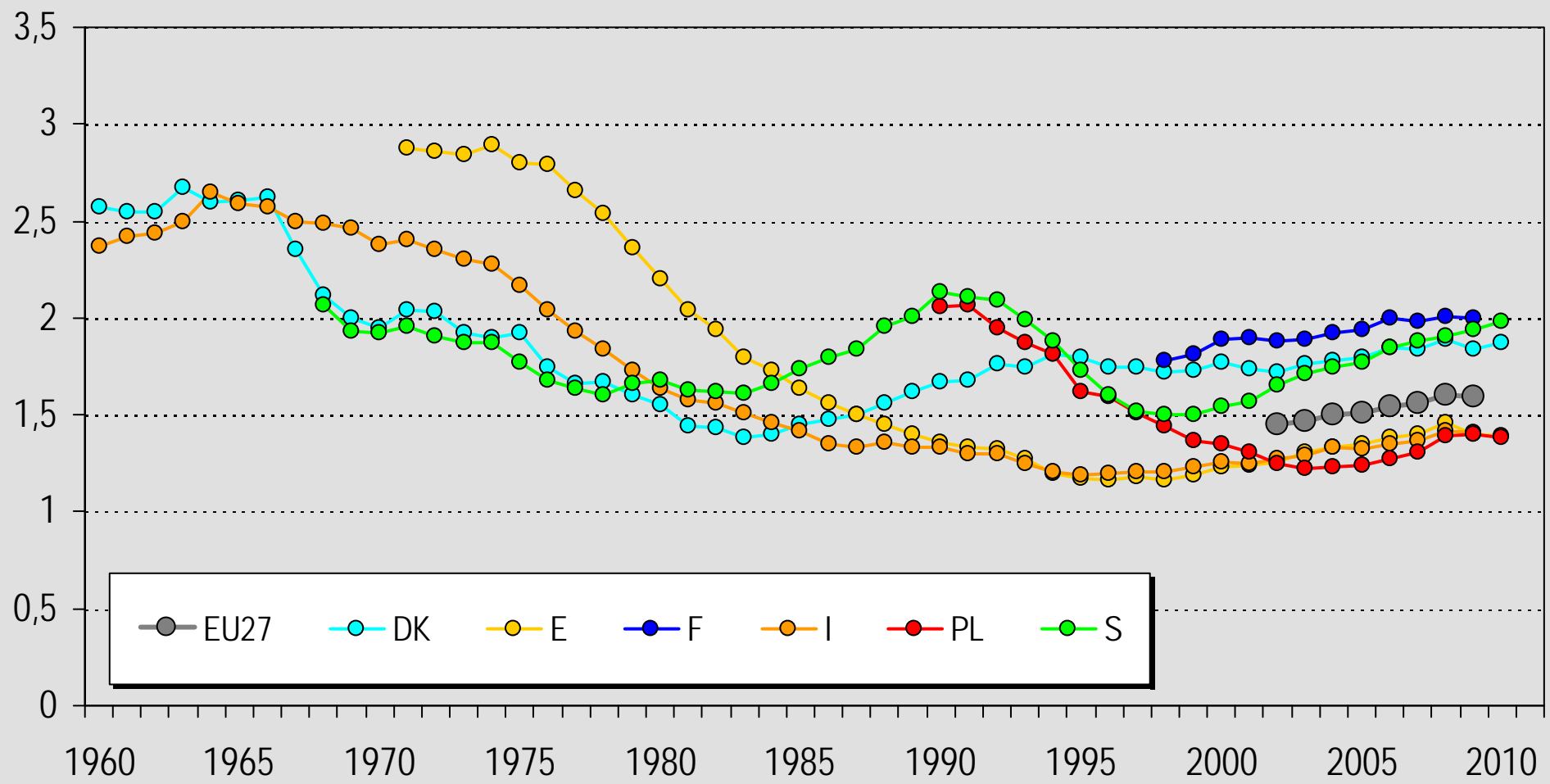
## “Deviant” Family Forms in Germany



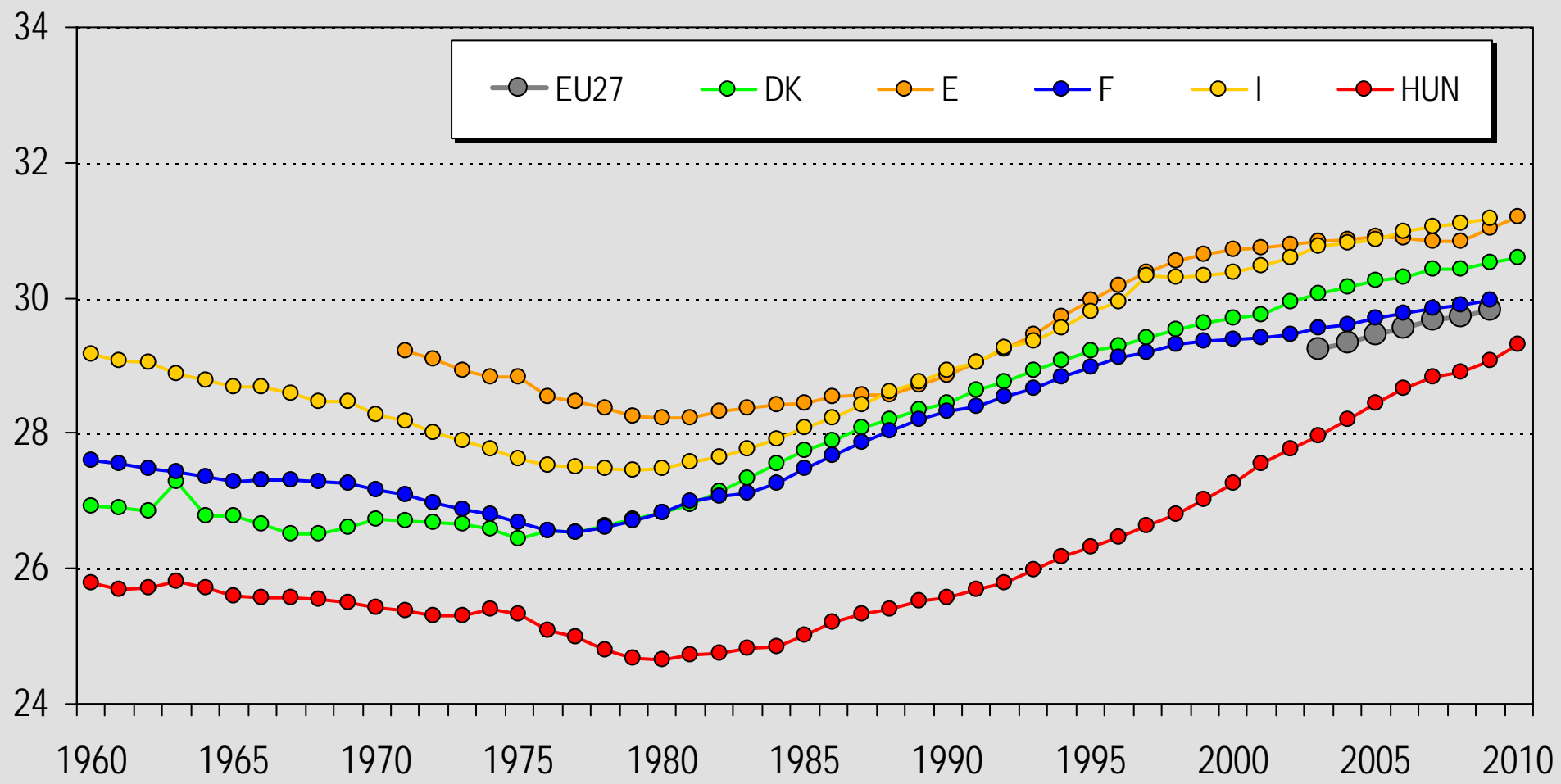
# Crude Marriage Rates in Europe



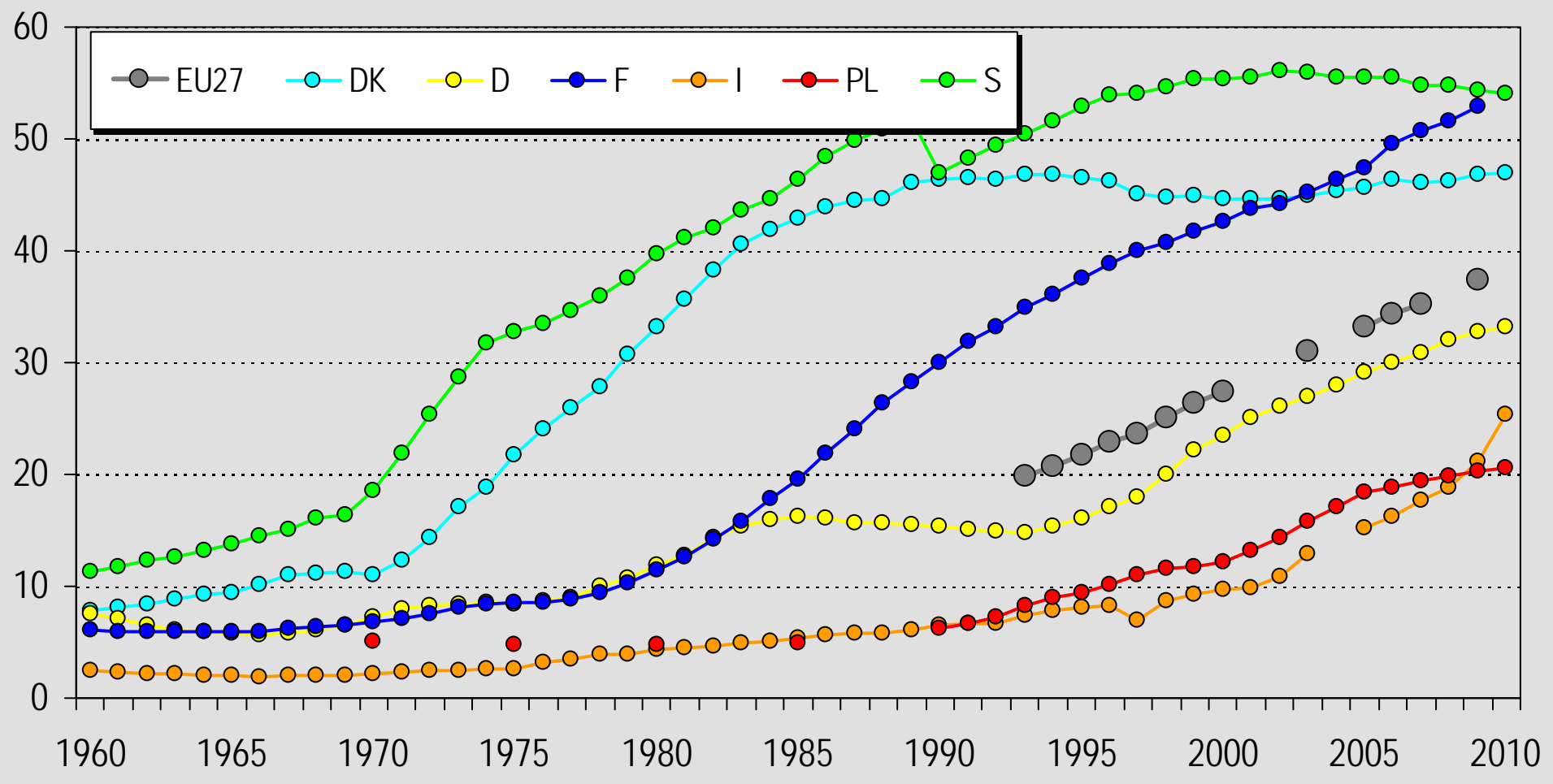
# Total Fertility Rates in Europe



# Mean Age of Mothers at Birth in Europe



# Non-Marital Births in Europe





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## A Core Aspect: From Cohabitation to Multilocality

- “Couples” and “families” used to be defined and operationalised as *household units* (with a parent-child relationship).
- Today it is emphasised that *family relations* go *beyond household boundaries*:
  - partners in a relationship may live in separate households.
  - Adult children may move out (during the week) and still maintain close relationships with their parents.
  - Also (fully) adults and their elderly parents often maintain close relationships that can be regarded as family ties.
  - Hans Bertram (2000) has established the term *multi-local multi-generation families* (“multilokale Mehrgenerationenfamilie”).



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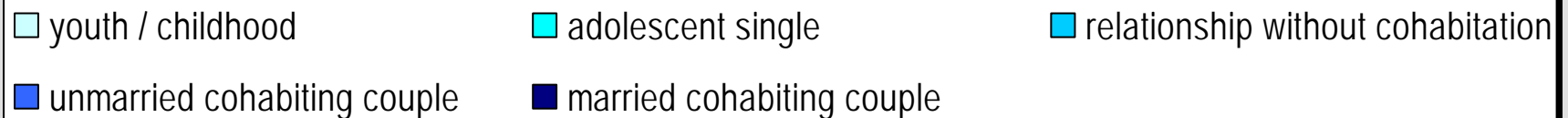
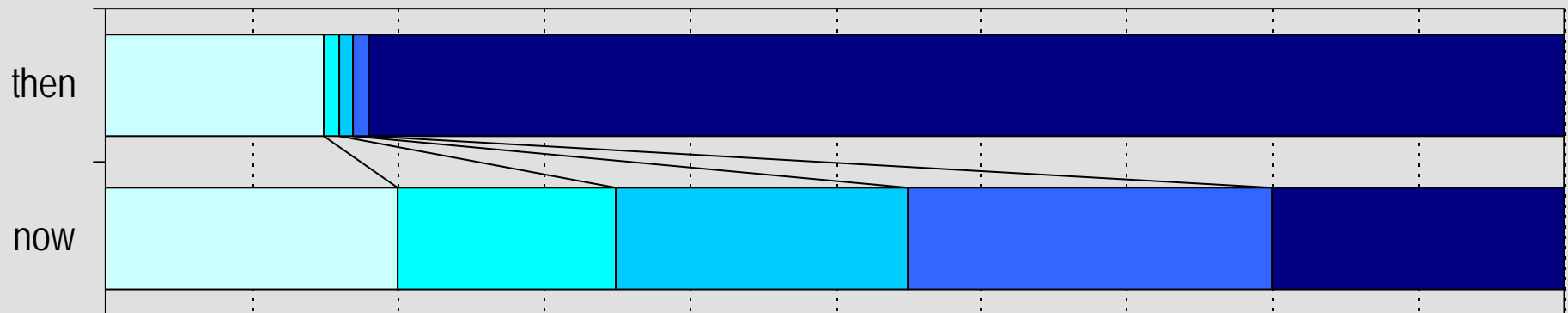


## Life Course-Related Multilocality

- Couple formation *50 years ago* ...
  - Social norms define *marriage* a pre-condition for legitimate intimacy and sexuality. Married couples are expected to *move in together* and have family of their own soon.
  - Dating partners typically live with their parents and less degrees of freedom.
  - Phases of dating are short and do not establish an own living arrangement yet.
- Couple formation *today* ...
  - Social norms expect couples to try each other out by having a phase of unmarried cohabitation before marriage and a phase of intimate dating before moving in together.
  - Educational mobility (distant universities, internships,...) may hinder a couple from moving in together.

## Life Course-Related Multilocality

- New norms regarding *couple formation* imply:
  - Instead of a clear cut between youth and adulthood there is a new phase of *post-adolescence*.
  - Living arrangements start with phases before marriage and family foundation, including a *pre-cohabitation relationship*.





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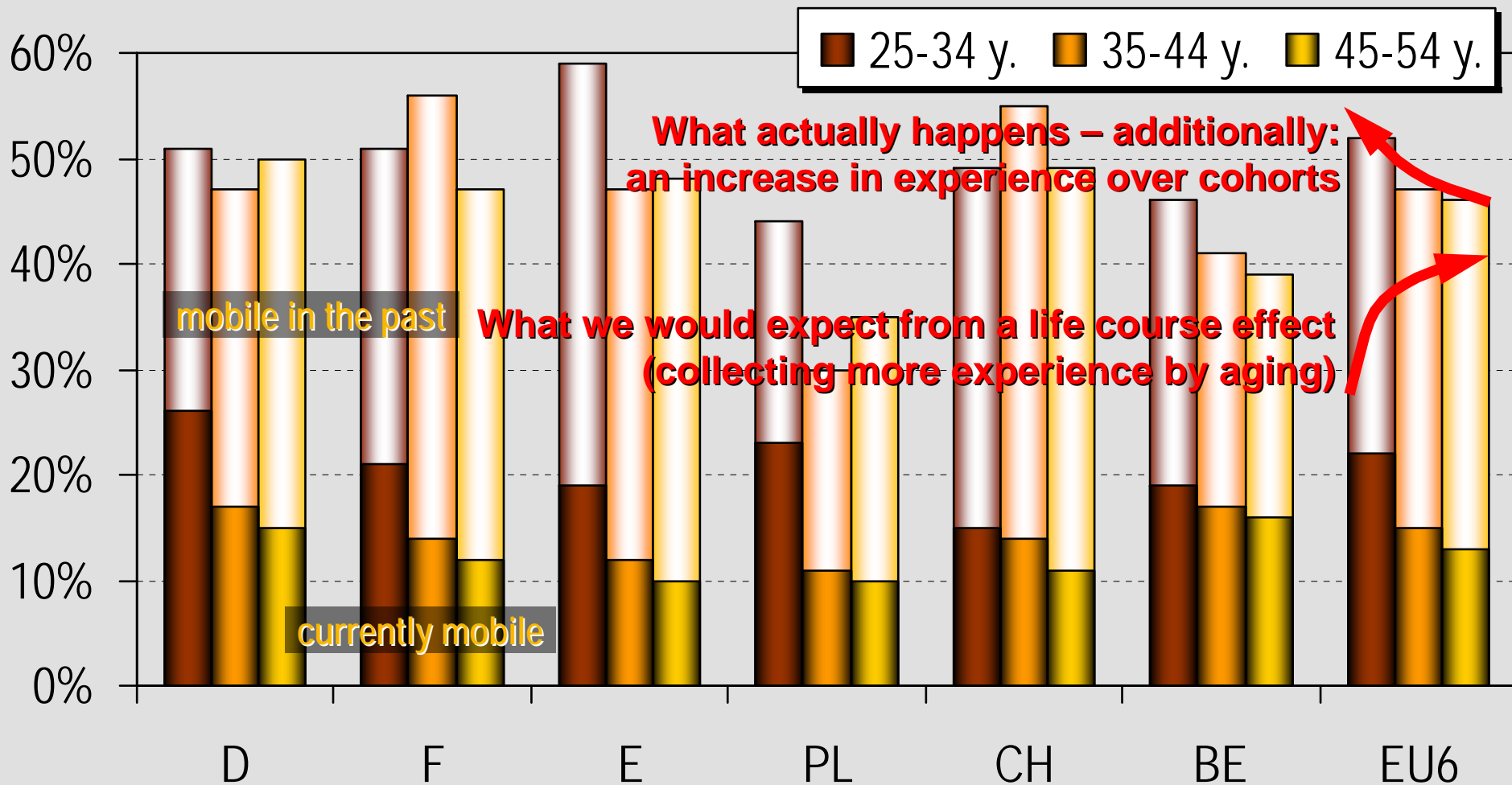
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## Job-Related Multilocality

- As recent research indicates, job-related *mobility* has increased over the course of at least 20 years:
  - Young age cohorts have collected more experience with being mobile for the job than elder ones (*JobMob* project / Schneider/Collet 2010)
  - Commutes and moves across administrative regions (in Germany) are increasing (Haas 2000).

## Experience of Job-Related Mobility by Age / Cohort



Data: JobMob 2007, people working for pay



## Job-Related Multilocality

Theoretical arguments make it plausible that *mobility requirements* should have increased:

- Globalised economic relationships require mobility.
- Knowledge-based jobs require and allow more mobility than industrial work.
- Short-term contracts imply more frequent changes of jobs and of work places.
- Dual earner couples are rather affected by mobility requirements than single earner couples.

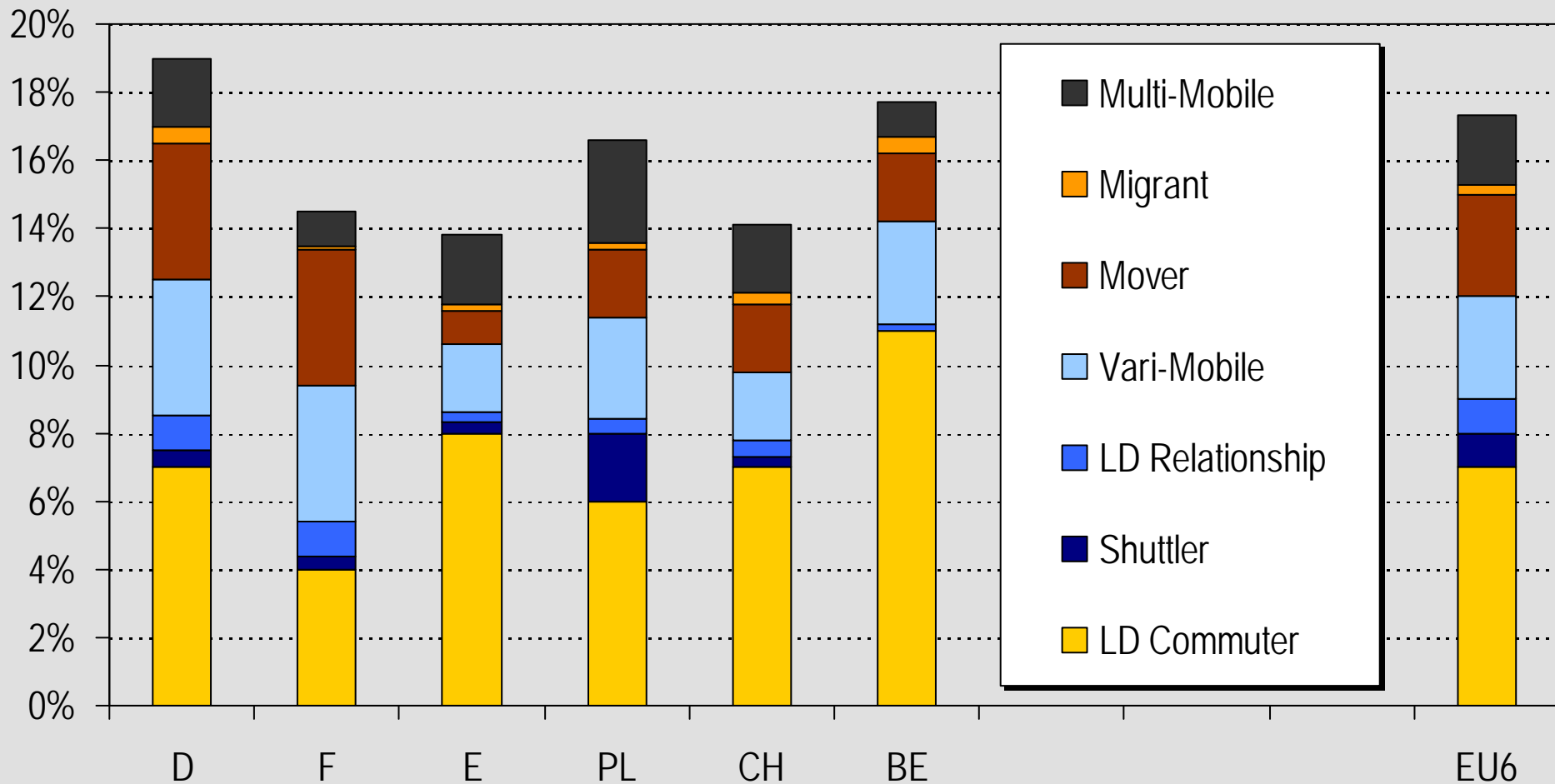




## Job-Related Multilocality

- Depending on the employees choice how to deal with these requirements this may lead to job-related *recurring mobility and/or multilocality*:
  - Employees may relocate with the partner (residential mobility without multilocality).
  - Employees may relocate without the partner (residential mobility followed by multilocality).
  - Employees may commute daily (recurring mobility without multilocality).
  - Employees may commute weekly or with overnights away from home (recurring mobility with “part-time multilocality”).

## Forms of Job-Related Mobility / Multilocality



Data: JobMob 2007, people working for pay



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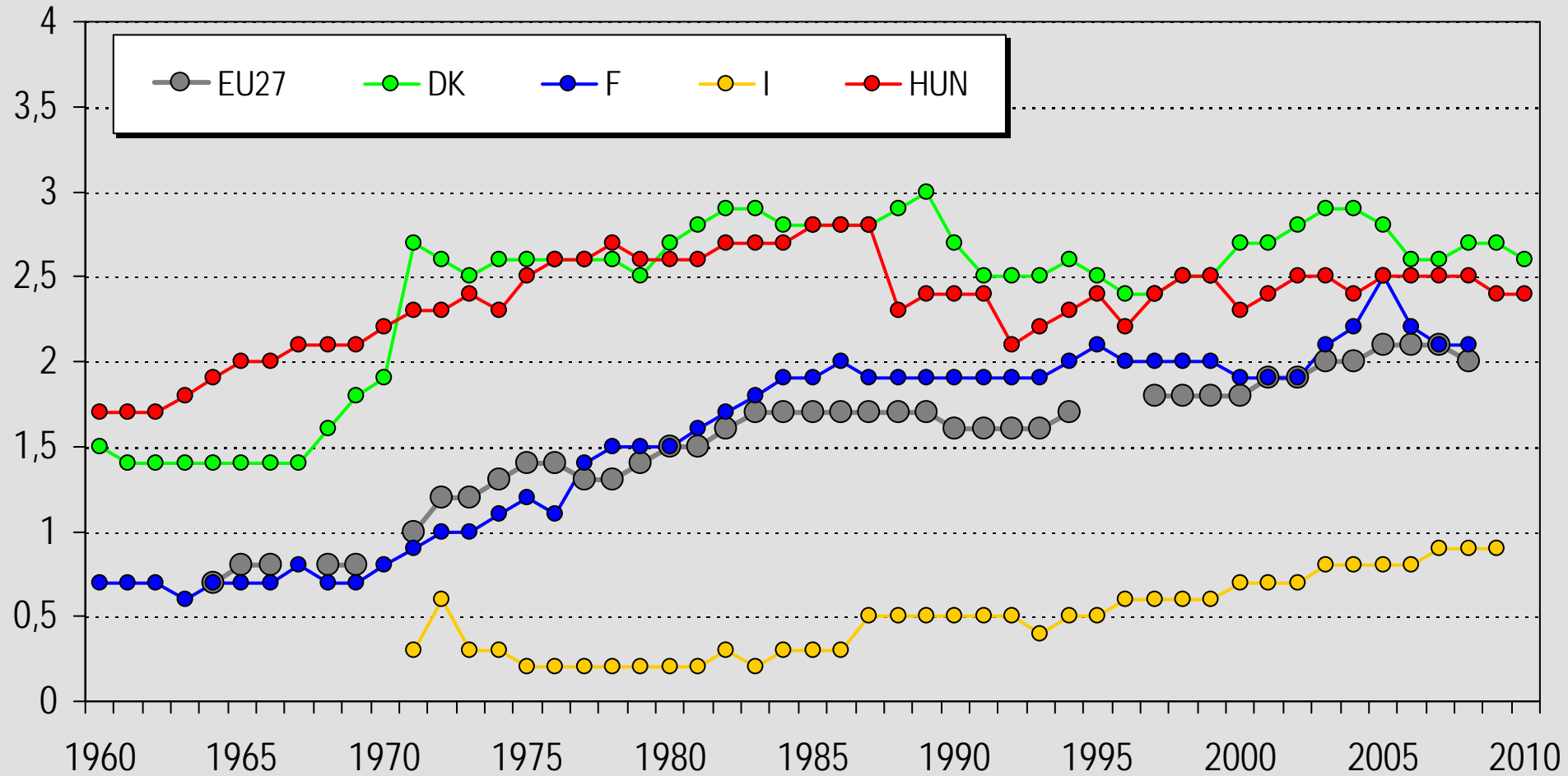


## Family-Related Multilocality

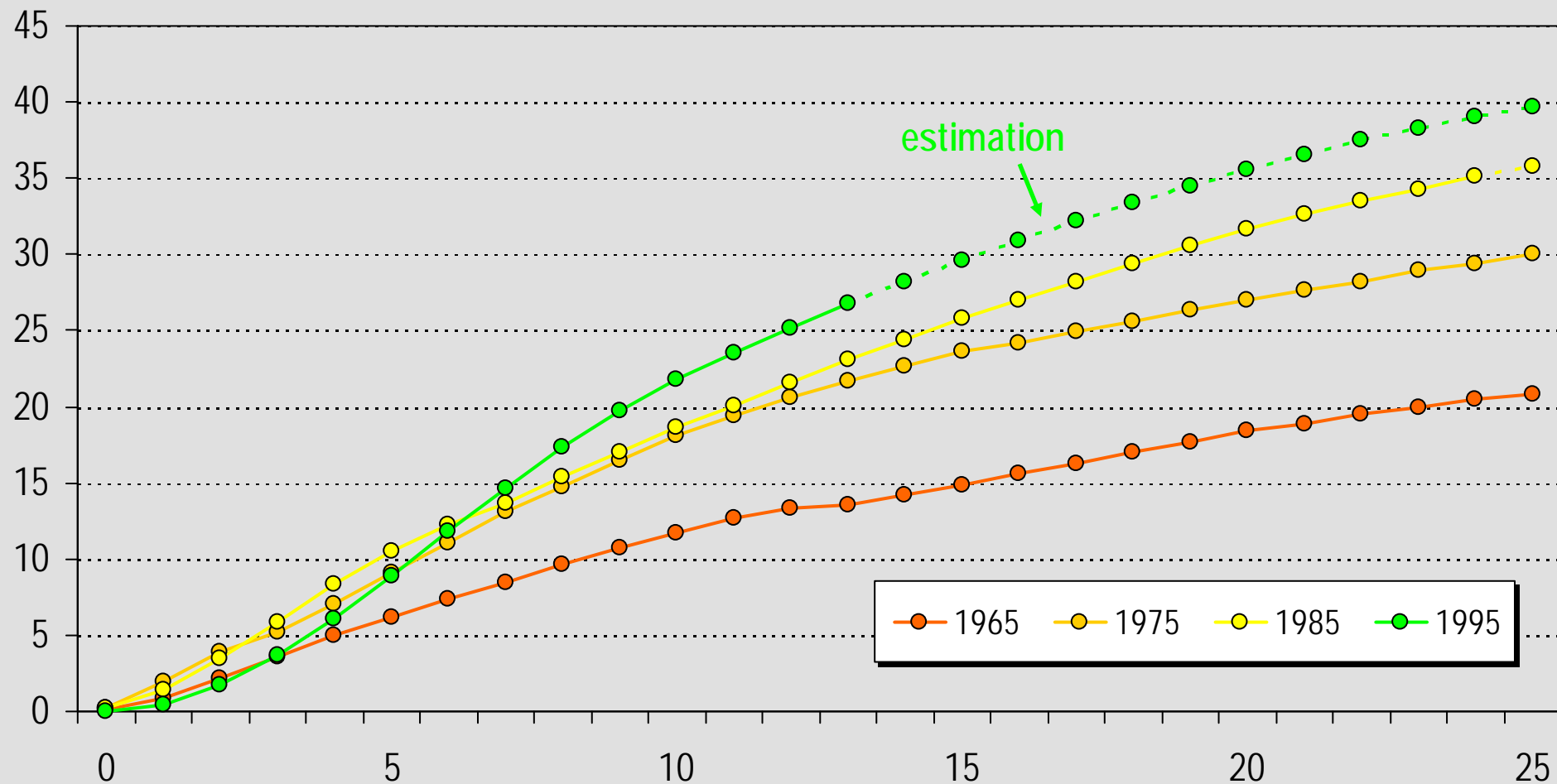
An increasing number of family arrangements includes *children and their separated or divorced parents* maintaining social ties:

- Divorce (and probably also separation) has been rising.
- Shared custody has become more common.
- Railway companies and airlines have started offering special assistance for children travelling alone (e.g. between the households of their parents).

# Crude Divorce Rates in Europe



# Divorce Rates of Marriage Cohorts by Marriage Duration in Germany



## Family-Related Multilocality

Increases in separation and divorce are rooted in *changes of gender roles and of values*:

- Women working for pay are not economically dependent on their husbands.
- Economically independent women come with more self-esteem into the relationship, claiming equal rights and benefits.
- Expectations towards a (good) relationship have increased.
- Social norms rather encourage leaving an unsatisfying relationship instead of staying together under all circumstances.

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## Lifestyle-Related Multilocality

*Value change and individualisation* reshape individual priorities and norms, provoking and allowing freely chosen multilocality:

- Desires for individual freedom, independence, autonomy, and self-fulfilment have become more important.
- These desires can be realised more easily in an own apartment – despite being in a relationship – as a “living apart together” couple (with individual styles of decorating, individual standards of cleanliness, individual routines,...).
- Social norms expect partners in a relationship to be more autonomous than spouses used to be.
- The *economic situation* of young adults (supported by their parents) often allows affording a separate household.



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## Concluding Remarks

- There are several forms of multilocal living arrangements and different reasons for them becoming more important.
- Most of these reasons are rooted in broad societal changes in late modernity, especially:
  - change from industrial to post-industrial production,
  - globalisation of economies with rising uncertainties,
  - female emancipation,
  - value change and individualisation.
- Some of these influences represent increasing degrees of freedom, some new constraints.
- Multilocal family life must be regarded as a highly diverse – and yet characteristic for late modernity.

# Thank you very much for you attention!

For further information  
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