

# Who do minors live with? Cohabitation with minor children and their father's partnership context

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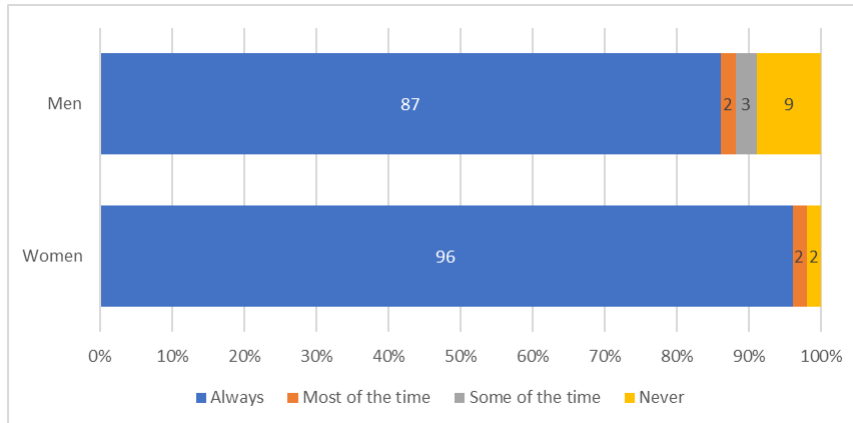
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Parental separation constitutes a profound disruption with long-lasting implications for the living arrangements of minor children. Active parental involvement is crucial for children's psychological and social development, as regular contact and sustained caregiving relationships mitigate negative consequences of parental breakup (Frimmel et al., 2024; Lamb, 2004; Menning, 2006). Flexible post-separation care arrangements such as co-parenting, including shared parenting arrangements, are increasingly important for maintaining strong bonds with both parents and supporting children's well-being (Geisler et al., 2018). Children who have a close bond with both parents suffer less from the psychological consequences of the separation and perform better socially and academically (Menning, 2006). Negative effects of paternal absence on development during childhood and adolescence, reaching into adulthood (Adamsons & Johnson, 2013; Seltzer, 2019). Parenting behavior after separation is shaped by sociodemographic characteristics, financial resources, the quality of the parental relationship after separation, and children's needs (Campbell, 2023). Despite its relevance, empirical knowledge about current living arrangements of children with separated parents remains limited, especially regarding an international comparison. This paper examines how often minor children regularly stay with their non-residential parents and how parental living situations and socio-demographic characteristics influence these arrangements.

Using data from the second round of the Generations and Gender Survey (GGG-II) (Gauthier et al., 2023; Gauthier et al., 2025), we use descriptive analyses to map family forms and caregiving patterns across Europe and beyond. Furthermore, we conduct multivariate logistic regressions to identify key determinants of frequent, infrequent or absent co-residence with mothers and fathers. The analytical sample includes 8,141 respondents aged 18-50 years who report at least one minor child with a previous partner. Data include 16 countries in Europe and beyond (Argentina, Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hongkong, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom, Uruguay).

Initial evidence for Austria suggests that the partnership context of separated parents plays a decisive role in the frequency of father-child contact, particularly when fathers live with a new partner (Buber-Ennsner & Herbst, 2023). It turns out that mothers mostly state that their minor children live with them all the time (96%) (Fig. 1). This proportion is significantly lower among men (87 %). Further, 9% of men state that a minor child never lives with them and another 5% say that it lives with them most of the time or some of the time.

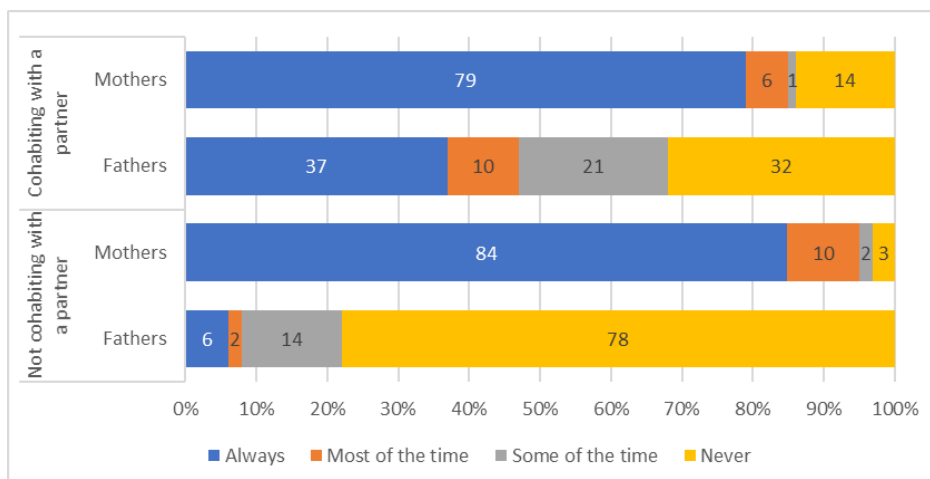
Figure 1: Parents living together with their biological minor children (in %), Austria



As living arrangement and partnership context are relevant, we distinguish three groups of parents with biological minors: (1) cohabiting with a partner and no minors from previous relationships, (2) cohabiting with a partner and at least one minor child from previous relationships, and (3) not living with a partner.

With this categorization, significant differences become apparent. As expected, almost all persons cohabiting with a partner and without pre-union children state that their minors live with them all the time. The situation is very different for people with minors from previous relationships (Fig. 2). Although the majority of mothers in this group answer that their children always live with them (around eight out of ten), 6% state that their children live with them most of the time. Contrary, substantially fewer fathers report that their children live with them all the time. Whether children live with the father at least occasionally also depends strongly on the father's partnership context: among men currently living in a partnership and with pre-union children one third said that their children never live with them. But among men who are separated from the mother of their minor child and who are currently not living in a relationship, almost 80% claim that their minors never live with them.

Figure 2: Persons with minor(s) from previous relationships. Cohabitation with biological minors by current relationship status (in %), Austria



For Austria, we conclude that for children whose parents are separated, it makes a substantial difference whether their father lives alone or in a relationship. If the father lives with a new partner, children live with him more often - at least from time to time.

We aim to extend these descriptive analyses across 16 countries and to apply multivariate analyses to provide a comprehensive and empirically robust analyses of co-parenting practices. By advancing understanding of transformations in family forms, caregiving arrangements and intergenerational relationships under changing societal conditions, it contributes to scientific debate and may inform evidence-based family policy and targeted social interventions. As legal frameworks profoundly shape co-parenting structures (Barth-Richtarz & Figdor, 2008), the findings also offer implications for future cross-national comparison and the development of supportive institutional environments.

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