But it is still not clear what the prevalence and the composition of stepfamilies looks like in Europe. Reliable information, which is largely based on estimates, exists only for a few countries. Therefore, the aim of this study is to find out how many European families with minor children are stepfamilies and how they are composite. Furthermore, it should to be ascertained how many stepchildren grow up in Europe.

**DATA**

The first Wave of the Generation and Gender Survey (GGS) is used, including 142,407 people from 14 different European countries (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Romania and Russia). The GGS allows to analyse complex family structures as we can find them in stepfamilies. The data set contains detailed information about the constellation and the relationship between the different household members. Nearly half of the respondents (47%) have children, but just 27% have children under the age of 18. In sum, 38,190 households are used for the analyses.

**SIMPLE AND COMPLEX STEPFAMILIES**

A stepfamily can be formed in many ways, but at least one of the adults has at least one child from a previous relationship. If this is the case, these stepfamilies are referred to as 'simple stepfamilies'. This can be a household with a mother with her biological child(ren) and her new partner or a father with his biological child(ren) and his new partner. It does not matter whether the partners are married or just cohabiting – the important fact is that they live together in one household. Characterized by at least two children with different relationship status are 'complex stepfamilies'. In total, there are slightly more simple stepfamilies (58.72%) than complex stepfamilies (41.28%). However, the opposite is to be found in France, Georgia, Italy and Norway. Here we can find more complex stepfamilies than simple ones. In Germany, only one third can be considered complex stepfamilies. This is the lowest rate, followed by Lithuania (37.27%), Bulgaria (38.93%) and the Netherlands (39.78). We can find the lowest rate of simple stepfamilies in Georgia (31.58%) and Norway (41.48%). However, the opposite is to be found in France, Georgia, Italy and Norway. Here we can find more complex stepfamilies than simple ones. In Germany, only one third can be considered complex stepfamilies. This is the lowest rate, followed by Lithuania (37.27%), Bulgaria (38.93%) and the Netherlands (39.78). We can find the lowest rate of simple stepfamilies in Georgia (31.58%) and Norway (41.48%), followed by Italy (42.11%). These findings show how complex the structure of stepfamilies is compared to nuclear families and how different the development and composition of stepfamilies is in the different countries.

**STEPFAMILIES IN EUROPE**

Looking at the prevalence of stepfamilies in Europe, the picture differs across the different countries. Displayed are the percentages of stepfamilies in all family types (nuclear family; single parents; adoptive and foster families). The lowest rates of stepfamilies can be found in Italy and Georgia with less than 1% while the highest are in Estonia and Germany with over 13%. Moreover, a north-south decline is apparent with over 10% of stepfamilies in Norway, Germany and Belgium, over 8% in France and Austria and less than 1% in Italy. Only the Netherlands with 4% seems to represent an exception. Such a pattern cannot be found in countries of the former Soviet Union, Russia and Estonia with one of the highest rates and Georgia, Bulgaria as well as Rumania with one of the lowest. Hungary and Lithuania take over a middle position.

**STEPCHILDREN IN EUROPE**

All children living with their biological mother and father in one household are considered as ‘children with both parents’. This is true for the majority in all countries, ranking from the highest in Italy (93.15%) and the lowest in Estonia (61.93%). Children who grow up with only either the biological mother or biological father in one household are referred to as ‘children with single parent’. It is possible that the parent has a partner, who is not the biological parent of the child, but he/she does not live in the same household. Most of these children live in Estonia (22.65%) and Russia (16.19%) whereas in Romania (4.13%) and Georgia (4.97%) the percentage of children living with a single parent is lowest. A ‘stepchild’ is a child who lives with the biological mother or father and his/her new partner in one household. Most stepchildren are to be found in Estonia (15.40%) and Germany (11.08%) and the least in Georgia (0.49%) and Italy (0.58%). Children who were adopted by the respondent, the partner of the respondent or who live in the household for fosterage are called ‘foster child or adopted children’. There are only few children, who are considered. None of the countries studied has a percentage higher than 1%. In conclusion, it shows that the majority of children in Europe grow up in a nuclear family. However, there is quite a considerable proportion of children that live with just one biological parent or with an additional social parent.