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**Session 1- Invited paper**

**DRAFT**

**CHANGES IN HOUSEHOLDS STRUCTURES AND BEHAVIOURS:  
NEW CHALLENGES FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

**Provisional paper submitted by National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), Italy\***

**1. AN APPARENT STRUCTURAL SIMPLIFICATION**

1. Households are experiencing deep transformations in all developed countries. The ageing of population, the increase of divorces and separations, low fertility rates and the growing participation of women in the labour market are major factors that led to complex changes of household structures and call for a reconsideration of the traditional representations of household and individual lives. These transformations are widespread in most developed countries, the pace and the intensity of the changes being the only across-countries differences observed.

2. It is known that, during the last decades, the number of households has increased, while the average number of persons per household has declined. Extended households keep on diminishing, while people living alone, cohabiting couples and lone-parent families are rising. What could be seen at first sight as an extreme structural simplification, it is in fact an extensive alteration of the way in which households are set up and develop through time. Indeed, for what concerns family membership, individual lives are very different and complex if compared to the past. What was considered years ago an exception, today is common: close generations live in very different ways.

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3. The traditional categories used to classify households can hide the changes that have occurred. When considering couples, for example, it is no longer sufficient to distinguish them as married or cohabiting, but it is also important to know whether they are of the same-sex or they are part of a reconstituted families with children born in previous marriages/ relationships of one or both partners.

4. The living conditions of a lone-parent family can be very different depending on its being formed after a breakdown/separation or after the death of the partner. In addition, when considering people living alone, it is fundamental to distinguish those individuals who left for the first time their parents' household from those who are living alone because of separation, divorce or widowhood. Beyond the same household type there are now completely different situations that should be identified: reconstituted families, cohabiting couples, homosexual couples, etc.

5. There are also other living arrangements that are emerging for example among elderly people who are living alone in their own dwelling, but in the proximity of their close relatives (often sons/daughters) who provide help when needed. These situations can not be defined as "cohabiting", but they can be seen as an extension of the notion of "living together" understood also as being "distant, but within the network". Households that live in separate dwellings, keeping tight relationships with each other do not affect only elderly people, but it also affects for example working lone parents assisted by their parents in raising their children.

6. Moreover, the phenomenon of commuting makes the family/household boundaries less distinct and more permeable, challenging the meaning of household membership itself. Over the course of his/her life an individual may in fact belong to different households and families at the same time and may commute, during specific life phases, between different types of families/households on a more or less permanent basis.

7. The boundaries of household/family are also not clearly defined for children in joint custody, whose parents are separated or for students living with their parents for six months and cohabiting with their peers during the rest of the year to attend university courses. Household/family boundaries are more and more flexible, thus in order to understand the new forms of households/families more flexible definitions are needed. The changes in households/families are very deep and, by linking the concept of household/family to strict definitions, there is the risk of severely distorting the picture of a complex everyday life.

8. During his/her lifetime a person can today belong to more than one household/family type and people live in more complex situations than in the past. A young person can leave the parental family, cohabiting with his/her partner and get married before or after having a baby. The experience of persons living alone and lone-parents family depend on marriage instability, and marriage breakdowns are becoming more frequent: particularly in the central part of life. Moreover, a person can commute between households during a limited period of his/her life by choice or necessity and cohabiting in some cases replaced by arrangements that can be defined a "distant, but within the network".

9. The evolution of family/household structures (and the relationships among its members) induces National Statistics Institutes to identify measurement instruments that can better fit this new challenge. In order to cope with this new challenge both methodological thoroughness and extreme flexibility must be combined.

10. As official statisticians it is our duty to review definitions, classifications and measurement frameworks in order to meet the new requirements. The definition of a family/household based on the concept of cohabiting is not erroneous in itself: nonetheless, we should also be able to measure and study different kinds of families/households with less clear boundaries.

11. Changes in family behaviours has urged in the recent past National Statistics Institutes to collect more data on emerging household's structures such as lone parent families, unmarried cohabiting couples, reconstituted families. Census and survey methodology has been modified over the years to reflect some of these changes.

In this context of rapid changes, the societal and legal acknowledgment of the new family arrangements is now generating a new challenge with the need of collecting data on three important new living arrangements: same-sex couples, commuters between households and people living apart together.

## **2. THE NEW SOCIAL VISIBILITY OF HOMOSEXUAL COUPLES**

### **2.1 More visibility, more changes in the field of family law**

12. The past twenty-five years have witnessed an increase of tolerance and respect towards homosexuality, primarily because of the growing importance of the political movements of lesbians and gays. At the same time, many changes occurred in the field of family law.

13. From a juridical point of view, marriage is a partnership between two persons linked by a formal act of registration with legal consequences (rights and obligations between the partners, as well as among partners and other juridical persons, including the State). Since the 1970s, in an increasing number of European countries the legal bounding applied to married couples has been extended totally or partially to unmarried cohabiting partners. Often the legal recognition of cohabitant partnership responded to the needs of heterosexual couples, but in some countries same-sex couples have been included as well. Since 1989, several European countries have introduced the registered partnership, a legal institution akin to marriage, yielding some or almost all the legal consequences of marriage. In some countries, registered partnership regulates only same-sex couples, while in others it applies also to heterosexual couples. More recently, from 2001, a few European countries have opened up civil marriage to same-sex partners. In Belgium, Netherlands and Spain, the regulations for same-sex marriage are now practically equivalent to those of different-sex marriage. In Belgium the main difference is that joint and second-parent adoptions are not allowed to same-sex spouses.

14. In summary, in most countries same-sex couples do not yet have full access to the legal framework of civil marriage, even though an increasing number of countries recognize informal cohabitation and/or registered partnership of homosexual couples. Also, in three countries at the moment, same-sex couples can officially get married.

15. 'Family law' (in the wide sense) has become much more complex and varied (and 'same-sex friendly') than it used to be. Over the next few years these developments may affect an increasing number of countries.

16. The changes in household behaviours go together with the normative changes. Concerning homosexual couples it is very important to understand what are the current legal and de-facto developments in order to better understand the actual situation and to develop proper methodology. In fact, if the legal recognition of homosexual couples proceeds, the data collections on their status will be easier, given the increasing social acceptance of the phenomenon

## **2.2 The problem of social acceptance**

17. Demand for statistical information on the same sex couples has risen drastically since homosexual associations and scientific communities have been asking for a new commitment from official statistics.

18. A major problem for the statistical data collection is that the declaration of the sex of a sexual partner is not neutral. Social and ethical values are entailed by individual attitudes towards sexuality. Even though diversity of sexual orientation may be widespread in human societies, the social acceptance varies markedly. In most Western societies homosexuality, while legally tolerated, is still stigmatized. This is because homosexuality has been considered sickness or sin until recently and only in the last decades it has emerged as a legitimate part of a broader spectrum of sexual expression. The scientific community has somewhat overlooked the importance of accepting sexual diversity, and the general public has shown even greater resistance. We are not yet living within a culture that tolerates sexual variety: socially acceptable sexual behaviour is still predominantly heterosexual and this is not without consequences for the measurement of homosexuality in official statistics.

19. The measurement of social behaviours can be more or less difficult for National Statistics Institutes. Socially accepted phenomena can be easily investigated, and survey methodology that satisfies scientific criteria usually exists. Difficulties arise when it comes to behaviours punished by the criminal law. Indeed, it is almost impossible to use a statistical survey to collect information on people who have committed serious crimes. Homosexual families/households survey is in the middle of these two extremes. In the past homosexuality was prosecuted even in the USA, as in most industrialized countries. Nowadays, things have changed and homosexuality is not prosecuted any longer, but it is still stigmatized. People attitude has changed and social acceptance has grown, but investigating this phenomenon through surveys is still problematic. As many studies show, a high percentage of homosexual people do not identify themselves as such in population-based data

collections. It is in fact hard to think that a person who does not reveal his/her status to his/her brother, sister or parent is willing to be open with an interviewer representing a national statistical institute. This problem arises in almost all the surveys and as official statisticians we should consider the methods used for studies on homosexuality, even if carried out outside the scope of official statistics.

20. The University of Chicago has carried out the most complete survey on homosexuality. This research defines three categories of homosexuality:

- i. self-identity as a homosexual
- ii. same gender sexual behaviour
- iii. same gender desire and sexual attraction.

The research also shows that these categories do not overlap.

One can easily think of cases where any one of these elements would be present without the others. The first category “self-reported same gender sexual identity” has the lowest prevalence among the total population. While as shown in the USA, about 1.4 percent of women and 2,8 percent of men identify themselves within it.

21. Scientific studies have shown that homosexuality is a complex multidimensional experience, where its components are related in highly contingent and diverse ways. Thus, there are no simple answers to questions about the prevalence of homosexuality in a given time interval. For some persons, homosexuality may be transitory and does not necessarily turn into a stable long-term behaviour. Moreover, exclusive same-sex preferences are relatively rare: a significant proportion of men who report to have a male sexual partner in a given period also report to have female sexual partners at the same time. Obviously, these attitudes make it difficult to define and measure homosexuality.

### **2.3 How to cope with this new challenge**

22. Homosexuality is not an unambiguous single attribute of a person, it is not stable over time, and cannot be easily defined. Moreover, given the persistent (though often unexpressed) social stigmatisation, it is also difficult to be measured using standard statistical survey methodology. Respondents may be reluctant to report their sexual behaviours and feelings when it is still commonly believed that they might induce disapproval or derision.

Estimates of socially stigmatized sexual behaviours based on traditional surveys can only show the lower bound of the true unknown figures.

23. There is the need to unambiguously define homosexuality before quantifying the phenomenon. Before asking how many lesbians/gays there are, there is the need to know exactly who is a gay or a lesbian. Even in Western societies it is unclear whether gay or lesbian refer to some behaviour, desire, self-definition, or identification or some combination of these elements.

24. Methodological and definitional issues pose a relevant problem to National Statistics Institutes. In order to obtain reliable estimates of homosexual couples, it is not enough to include a new item in

the “relationship with the reference person”. The reluctance of homosexual couples to self-declare and their high turnover make this “simple” method not completely adequate. Considering that self-declaring homosexuals are a minority, the use of unique definition such as “self-identity as homosexual” could lead to an underestimation of the phenomenon.

25. Taking also into account the outcome of the most relevant studies on sexual behaviours and sexual orientation it is necessary to design an ad hoc set of questions, in order to define two same-sex individuals as a couple. These questions could be tested on households’ or other social behaviours surveys, or, even better, on surveys on sexual behaviours.

26. We should also discuss if it is appropriated to include in the census questionnaire an item to identify same-sex partnerships. Some countries did experiment the measurement of same-sex partnership in the census. The problem is that in most countries only a minority of homosexual couples would self-declare as such. In 2001 in Italy, for example, although gay and lesbian associations advised homosexual couples to self-declare their relationship when filling out the census questionnaire, the number of those who did so was so low that data were not considered reliable. Although we have to acknowledge that the census questionnaire did not meet the requirements to assess this phenomenon properly. In the relationship with the household’s reference person the same-sex partner item was not included and gay and lesbians were identified through the cohabitant partnership (not specified if it referred to same or different sex couples) and the sex.

27. This new phenomenon requires proper methods and instruments in order to be deeply analysed. Cooperating on these issues is fundamental and it is necessary that some countries start to test together a suitable set of questions. The 1990 the US census counted homosexual couples not by including a special “same-sex partner” item, but taking the ‘same-sex’ answers to the traditional item about a cohabiting “unmarried partner”. A study issued on “Demography” in 2000 showed that the census underestimated the number of the homosexual couples, covering only a third part of couples as surveyed by the University of Chicago in a more extensive survey dedicated to study only homosexuality. This may be the result of the lack of a specific item on homosexual partnership in the relationship with the reference person’s, though it must be argued that its presence does not guarantee the reliability of estimates. New Zealand also disseminated information on same-sex partners from the census using data obtained through the indirect approach and including the item “my wife/husband/partners de facto” to the relation to reference person, without explicit reference to a same-sex partner.

28. Statistics Canada carried out several studies on the measurement of same sex couples. In the 1996 census same sex partners could identify themselves by writing their type of relationship under the item “other – specify” in the relationship to the reference person. However, many homosexual couples attempted to report themselves as common-law partners. The information was not of sufficient quality to be disseminated. In 1998 Statistics Canada tested different methodology in preparation of the 2001 census:

- the indirect method (the definition of common law partner was expanded by adding same sex partner),
- the write-in method (adding same sex partner to the list of examples for open answers),
- the explicit method (adding a new item for same-sex partner).

As result of the testing Statistics Canada adopted the last explicit method for the 2001 census.

29. The Italian National Statistical Institute is taking part in a project together with some universities (coordinated by professor Barbagli, one of the most qualified expert in this field in Italy) aiming at investigating sexual behaviours. The Institute is ready to carry out pilot studies together with other countries. It may be more efficient to test questions on sexual or household/family behaviours in sample surveys and consider different approaches for census only after the results of these testing.

30. At the moment there is no need to change the definition of family/household, but it is necessary to define new items to be included in the relationship with the reference person; we need to add an item on “same sex partner” and another one “same sex husband or wife” (according with the law of each country). We need to change the classification of the household and family type adding same sex cohabiting couples and same sex married couples. It would also be very important to test whether questions taken from international surveys can facilitate disclosure and avoid the approach based solely on the self-identity as homosexual. Finally, we need to study the proper survey technique to investigate this phenomenon (CATI, paper and pencil interview or self-completion questionnaires). Every effort must be done to avoid stigmatizing labels and to facilitate disclosure. At the same time, the existing estimates of homosexual behaviour based on survey data should be regarded as the lowest bound.

31. The experience of different countries varies according to the visibility and social acceptance of this phenomenon but since homosexuality is stigmatized, it is likely to be under rather than over-reported in all cultures. It is very important to understand what is the social climate around homosexuality in order to assess how much the estimates are close to reality. The more the social stigmatization decrease, the easier it is to analyze the phenomenon.

32. We need to recognize that even if all National Statistics Institutes used the same definitions and methods, the quality and reliability of the data would vary according to visibility and social stigmatization of each country. Till social stigmatization of homosexual couples ends, it will be very hard to obtain reliable information on them. For this reason it is important to carry out surveys on the social climate on this aspect

### **3. SHIFTING BOUNDARIES OF FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD: COMMUTING BETWEEN HOUSEHOLDS**

33. People who regularly live in a place that is different from their place of usual residence for a limited time (for instance two or more days a week, or throughout the university term, etc.) can be defined as “*commuters between households*” (C. Saraceno, 1997). These persons live at the same time

in two different households, the first is the one where they usually live and the second one is where they live temporarily.

34. Factors related to the family life cycle, and the educational and professional history of individuals have produced an increased number of persons to commute between households: The increased complexity of managing residential mobility together with the difficulties of keeping strong family ties together with different professional and educational needs have produced the new phenomenon of “*commuting between households*”.

35. Commuting between households is a quite new and not fully explored behaviour that has a great impact on the structure of the household. Commuting between households seems to be a noteworthy phenomenon from various points of view: certainly for its size, since its impact on the community is larger than the one produced from a simple estimate of commuters; for the importance that any departure or rejoining can have for the people involved, even from a personal point of view (for example divorced parents who rejoin their children only during some periods of the year).

36. Commuting is strongly associated with phases of the life cycle: education, work, personal relationships, relationships between generations. It also involves individuals at all ages but with different connotations. This phenomenon refers to a wide and heterogeneous range of situations:

- i. students living in another town most of the year for educational purposes where they set up a cohabitation, although they haven't formally left their family of origin. This is also a more general situation of some young persons, who though living alone, do not want to stop entirely their membership with their parents' households. These individuals have a non clear relationship with their parents' household;
- ii. elderly persons who alternate their living between their own household (where they live alone) and their children(s)' households;
- iii. children of divorced parents who temporarily leave their custodian parent to spend the weekend with his/her other parent; etc.;
- iv. foster children who have two families, the natural and the foster one;
- v. couples who decide not to share the same home, spending together only weekends in one of the two houses;
- vi. members of households who have a job in a different city and spend nights outside the households (for example a university professor teaching in a different city etc.).

37. In Italy commuting between households is quite significant, as revealed by the Multipurpose survey on “Households, Social Subjects and Childhood Condition”<sup>1</sup> carried out in 1998 and in 2003. In 2003 there are an estimated 2,500,000 commuters between households, accounting to 4.5% of the population. The total number of commuters did not change from 1998, but while the percentage of men remains the majority, (53.5 %), the percentage of women experiencing this phenomenon increased by 2.6 %.



38. Male and female experience different commuting trends. For men, living simultaneously in two different households/families is mainly due to work problems, while for women the main reason is linked to educational purposes or family or friend reunion. Nevertheless, between 1998 and 2003 gender differences were diminishing, leading to a standardization of men and women behaviour if other variables were taken into account (residence, length and distance of leaving, financial resources).

39. Looking at the households involved, the phenomenon of between household commuting is also quite considerable. There are approximately 1.850.000 households that have at least one member who spends some time of the year outside the household. According to the survey carried out in 1998, approximately one and a half million households declare that they regularly host someone not for profit. Of these households, 20.9 percent also have a commuter among them. In other words, these households are involved in both ways commuting can be interpreted, i.e. not only from the perspective of those who move away from home but also from the one of hosting families. These are especially households with relatives living elsewhere, who regularly host them or visit them (parents who stay for a short period of time with their children and vice versa, brothers and sisters who meet from time to time, etc.). The average length of living outside the household accounts for 180 days.

40. Given the size of the phenomenon, National Statistics Institutes should pay attention to the size and characteristics of *commuting between households*. This new type of living, which involves both individuals and families, deeply affects people life and can not be ignored by official statisticians whose duty is to provide policy makers with information on new social facts, trends and needs. In Italy, in order to understand the dimension and type of this phenomenon, a set of new questions has been included in the Multipurpose survey on households/families behaviours and informal aid network. The estimate of commuters between households depends on the answer to the following question: “during the last year do you happen to live in a house different from this one on a regular basis, for example two days a week, or the whole week except for the week end, or during the whole period of school or university lessons? (except for holidays and occasional business trip?)”.

41. The other questions included in the survey deal with the number of days per year, the main reason and place where a person lives when he/she is not living in his/her usual residence, who lives with him/her and how he/she subsists.

42. If there is the interest of National Statistics Institutes in the region, a set of indicators on commuters between households could be defined (commuting people, households involved in this phenomenon, average length of staying, reasons, etc.) based on common individual questions to be included in Multipurpose surveys. In this respect, a common module could be designed based on the definition and the experiences of the countries.

#### 4. LIVING APART TOGETHER (LAT)

43. The definition of couples that live apart together (LAT) involves one couple and two homes, where the couple does not want to share a home. Each of the two partners lives in his or her own home in which other people might also live. According to the definition provided by Levin and Trost (1999), LAT requires three conditions:

- i. the couple has to agree that they are a couple;
- ii. others have to see them as such; and
- iii. they must live in separate homes.

This definition includes homosexual as well as heterosexual couples.

44. Between late 1960s and the first half of the 1970s, in most Western countries marriage rates started to fall. In some countries, notably in Scandinavia, the change occurred suddenly. At the same time, the number of cohabitation increased. In the traditional marital system, four events were closely connected in a precise time sequence: wedding ceremony, moving in together, sexual partnership, a first child. Nowadays these elements are not necessarily connected to each other as it was in the past. Because of divorces and separations, LAT (“Living Apart Together”) relationships have increased, as have had cohabiting and re-married couples. Re-cohabitations usually imply a change of home: either one partner moves to the other’s home or both partners move to a common home. However, sometimes partners remain in separate homes, forming a LAT relationship instead of a “living-together” relationship.

45. LAT partnerships affect also elderly persons who have a relationship but decide to live apart, in order to avoid the psychological costs that the decision to move in together entails. Living in their own home connects them to memories of significant events in their life and it may make it easier to keep the relationships with children and grandchildren.

In 2001 Statistics Norway included some questions in an on-going survey to estimate LAT relationships. Approximately 1,000 people aged 18-74 were interviewed. The survey suggests that about 60,000-70,000 people (30,000-35,000 couples) were living in a LAT relationship (8 percent of those individuals were neither married/ cohabiting). The reported reasons for living apart together varied greatly. Some said they appreciated freedom, some were living apart because the relationship was still too recent and, others were living in separate dwellings for work reasons.

46. In France, a different terminology was proposed in a study by Caradec (1996) who defined two trends: *intermittent cohabitation* and *alternating cohabitation*. The first event has the same meaning as the LAT relationship – i.e. a couple living in separate homes, considered as a couple by others as well as by its two members. The second event, alternating cohabitation, refers to couples that live alternatively in two dwellings. Caradec’s study claims that nearly 6 percent of the adult population in Paris were living in LAT relationships.

47. In Germany, Schneider (1996) analyzed ‘*partners with different households*’. He included in his study only those LAT relationships that had lasted for one year or more. The study is rather special

as it contains a majority of 'young adults who are in education, mainly studying, or who are in their early period of gainful employment' (Schneider, 1996). In this study more than 10,000 people, aged 18–61, were interviewed in 1994. The results of the study showed that 9 percent of the respondents were living in LAT relationships.

48. In the USA, the discussion about LAT relationships has just begun. The term '*commuting marriage/cohabitation*' is used interchangeably with 'dual-households' or 'dual-residence living' (see Winfield, 1985). The distinction between commuting marriage/cohabitation and LAT relationships is closely dependent to the definition of home or domicile. If a couple lives in one dwelling but at least one partner has a second dwelling where he/she lives sometimes, due to work or study reasons, then the relationship is defined as commuting marital/cohabitating. In order to be a LAT relationship, each partner must have his/her home, and the partners live apart in two separate residences.

49. It is expected that LAT relationships will be more common in the future because of the increase in cohabiting couples, same sex couples, and divorces. The LAT relationship may become a more common way to deal with a difficult marriage or cohabitation. Furthermore, people will live longer and probably healthier, and thus they will look for new partners even at older age. LAT allows them to live a new relationship as a couple in the final part of their existence, without interrupting former family/household ties.

50. If we decide to measure LAT relationships, there is the need to first decide on its definition. A LAT relationship differs from commuters, which have an household in common. In fact couples living in a LAT relationship have two households and two separate homes. Some couples are married, some are not. In Nordic countries LAT have become a new "social institutions" alongside traditional marriage and cohabitation of unmarried couples. We need to clarify the definition and to study a set of questions useful to measure LAT relationships in household's surveys.

## **5. LIVING APART BUT WITHIN THE NETWORK**

51. In spite of the functionalist view, according to which families progressively separate from parents, in some developed countries modern families/households keep on preserving strong parental, friendship and neighbourhood relations. Some modern family/households can be defined as "the modified extended family", that is a set of two or more households integrated by an informal social and support network and daily visits. Communication, aid and exchange relations crossing this social network can play an important role in keeping high standards of welfare of individuals. This network can support family/household members when facing daily or unexpected problems, help them to broaden their opportunities and horizons, decrease their uncertainty, and get support and companionship.

52. Different families/households are not homogeneous due to sizes and characteristics of the network, thus they do not have the same potential. Therefore, there are basic characteristics that need to be measured in order to understand the kind of support provided by an active and substantial

network. These are Thickness, morphology and functioning of the relationship nature and the network of relations that family has with the external world.

53. The analysis of household/family relations and socializing networks are fundamental when studying household/family organization, since progressive ageing of population has deeply changed the social nature and balance of the relationship among different generations within the family. Even in this aspect, countries have different experiences due to socio-cultural factors often linked to the welfare system. The social behaviours, that in the past ruled families, have slowly changed, but their traces still remain in family relations, which are weaker in Northern European countries and deeper in Southern European countries. The main differences among countries are in the nature of relations between parents and adult children.

54. In Southern European countries elderly people living alone are often well integrated in the familial network. Children, nephews, brothers and sisters represent the solid base on which familial network remains and “*distant, but within the network*” relations between parents and children strongly marks the last part of people life. It is also a primary resource for working women who are supported by their parents or parents-in-law households in raising their children.

55. These strong relations that still remain between households can be considered as the natural consequence of interrupting cohabitation among generations. In Italy, for example, the “*distant, but within the network*” phenomenon has mainly spread in Regions where multi-generation households were more frequent; thus, this phenomenon can be considered as a contemporary way of living of extended families.

56. Recent studies highlight that not all elderly people living alone, and particularly those divorced or separated, benefit from this network. Divorces and separations deeply modify the informal network made by friends or relatives, and some of its connections are interrupted. There is therefore among divorced and separated families a common vulnerability derived from frailty, drop or lack of primary ties forming the net resulting in “relation vulnerability”. Even when this network includes children, family break-ups adversely affect parent-child relations. At the same time unmarried elderly people often do not have any network to rely on. The same is true for separate or divorced women who can account on half familial network compare to women who live in couple

57. We acknowledge that in spite of all our efforts to find classifications for every households type suitable to continuous changes, it is not possible to measure all the aspects of daily living. . However, in such complex contemporary society, ignoring familial/household evolutions means to neglect aspects useful to understand family new directions, figures, phenomena and social needs. Comparisons among countries on family changes are not useful if they are not associated to surveys on modifications of familial network and relationship in general. Problems arising from new forms of family can be solved only by using suitable indicators on informal networks.

58. Some countries have tried to address these problems: Italy and Canada, for example, have used GSS and Multipurpose surveys and Canada has also included a topic in the population census questionnaire on providing care services. It would be interesting to analyze surveys carried out by different countries and, consequently, take proper and common measures.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK**

59. Summarizing the issues highlighted before, I believe that at first we should discuss whether the above mentioned transformations of living arrangements, namely same-sex couples, are effectively relevant social changes that should be measured in official statistics. After having assessed the relevance of the issue, we should discuss the methodological challenges concerning measurement and data collection. In particular, we should focus on definitions, data collection strategies and questionnaire design. Finally, we should understand whether these new definitions and methods entail a substantial change in the definition of statistical units and, more generally, in the units of analysis.

60. I have highlighted, I believe, the relevance of considering new forms of families, households and living arrangements and the importance of measuring them. In my opinion, little should be done to change the definition of household. Instead, we should identify new statistical units in order to describe the commuters between households and the Living Apart Together couples.

61. The difficulties involved in the measurement of these new phenomena vary considerably. Same-sex couples are clearly the most difficult emerging form of living arrangement to be measured. In this framework, it may be more constructive to take a step by step approach in the scheduling of the different modules: the same sex couples module will probably require more tests and time to be completed. We need a Task Force that can address these issues, with the participation of all the countries that are ready to:

- Explore the possibility of developing standard definitions for the emerging forms of families and households such as commuters between households and Living Apart Together
- develop draft modules to be used in surveys to measure new forms of families and households (same sex couples, living apart together, commuters between households)
- develop draft modules to be used in surveys to measure the family network
- test the modules in on-going surveys
- finalize the module according to the results of the testing.

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