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The increase in older people living alone in Andalusia and Spain

Quantitative report



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The increase in older people living alone in Andalusia and Spain

Quantitative Report

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Abstract

Western societies have seen a strong increase in single-person households for decades. This work analyzes the evolution that this process has followed in Andalusia from 1991 to 2019. It also establishes comparisons with the rest of the autonomous communities and the whole of Spain. We focus our attention on the segment of the population that most contributed to its development, which is made up of people 65 years of age or older. Their forms of coexistence have been gradually transforming, following a very clear trend: intergenerational coexistence, which was so common in the past, has given way to residential independence. Hence, it is becoming more and more frequent, above all, to see older people living alone. Among them, women predominate, but men are becoming increasingly important. So far in the 21st century, in addition, the propensity to live alone is increasing, especially among people aged 85 or over, that is, we find ourselves with an increasingly aging group of the population. And it is striking, on the other hand, the expansion that cases of separation or divorce have been registering, although those of widowhood continue to constitute the majority. This work offers statistical information and a sociological description of all this, highlighting several keys to understanding the increase in the number of elderly people alone in our societies.

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1. In Western societies, including Spain and Andalusia, the average household size has been decreasing for a long time

In Spain, as in other Western countries, people's ways of living together have been undergoing a profound transformation since the mid-20th century. One of its main features is the decrease in average household size. For the purpose of this analysis, we will focus on what has happened over the last three decades. Between 1991 and 2019, the Spanish population grew by 7.5 million inhabitants: from 38,617,997 to 46,606,500, an increase of 19.27%. In the same period, the number of households

has increased by almost 6.8 million, from 11,852,075 in 1991 to 18,625,700 in the 2019 Continuous Household Survey (ECH-2019, National Statistics Institute —INE—), which is equivalent, in relative terms, to a growth of 57.15%. In Spain, households have increased at a much higher rate than the population, almost tripling. As a result, their average size has fallen significantly, from 3.26 persons per household in 1991 to 2.50 today.

The evolution of both indicators, decade by decade, is shown in Table 1. It also shows how Andalusia has shared the same trends. In fact, both the number of households and the population size have experienced relatively higher growth in the autonomous community than across Spain: the population by 21.41%, from 6,906,364 inhabitants in 1991 to 8,385,200 in 2019; households by 63.20%, from 1,979,077 to 3,229,900.

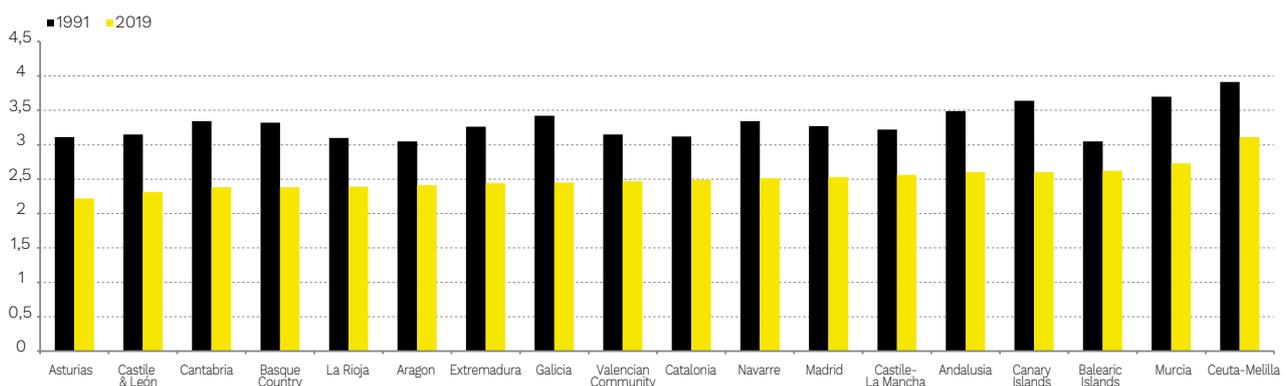
The reduction in average household size has also been more pronounced in Andalusia: it is now around 2.60 members, compared with 3.49 at the beginning of the 1990s. Even so, it is still higher than the Spanish

Table 1. The evolution of households and the population in Spain versus Andalusia between 1991 versus 2019

Year	Andalusia			Spain		
	Population of family homes	Total households		Population of family homes	Total households	
		Number	Average size		Number	Average size
1991	6,906,364	1,979,077	3.49	38,617,997	11,852,075	3.26
2001	7,325,866	2,417,179	3.03	40,595,861	14,187,169	2.86
2011	8,343,655	3,087,220	2.70	46,574,725	18,083,690	2.58
2019	8,385,200	3,229,900	2.60	46,606,500	18,625,700	2.50

Source: compiled with data from the Population Census 1991, 2001 and 2011, and the Continual Survey of Homes from 2019 (INE)

Graph 1. Average size of households in Spanish autonomous communities. Comparison between 1991 versus 2019



Source: compiled with data from the Population Census 1991 and the Continual Survey of Homes from 2019 (INE)

average; in fact, it remains among the highest in the country, after those observed in the autonomous communities of Ceuta and Melilla (3.11 members per household), Murcia (2.73), the Balearic Islands (2.73) and the Canary Islands (2.60). At the other extreme, Asturias stands out as the autonomous community with the smallest average household size (2.22 members), followed by Castile and León (2.31), Cantabria (2.38), Basque Country (2.38), La Rioja (2.39) and Aragón (2.41), i.e. almost the entire northern third of the Iberian Peninsula.

However, we must reiterate that in recent decades all territories have shown the same trend: the number of households has grown faster than the number of inhabitants, which has led to a decrease in their average size (see graph 1). Let us take a few examples. In Asturias, it has gone from 3.11 members in 1991 to 2.22 in 2019. In Extremadura, between the same dates, the decrease has been from 3.25 to 2.44 members per household, as well as in Navarre from 3.34 to 2.51, in Murcia from 3.70 to 2.73, or in the Valencian Community from 3.15 to 2.47.

2. The number of single-person households continues to increase

Average household size has been falling, albeit to different extents, in all the Spanish autonomous communities. In the development of this process, as we will now discuss, the increase in single-person households has been key. Between 1991 and 2019, the number of single person households has tripled in Spain: from 1,581,307 to 4,793,700. In Andalusia, the increase has been even greater, with a 3.3-fold increase, from 232,137 to 767,000. Despite this, Spain has a higher percentage of single-person households than Andalusia: 25.74% compared to 23.75%, respectively. This has also been the case in previous decades (Table 2).

It seems that this will continue to be the case for at least the next three decades. The projections suggest that this type of household, without abandoning their expansive tendency, will maintain a higher relative weight in the country than in the autonomous community. For example, by 2035 it is estimated that they could account for 28.86% of all households in Spain and 27.73% of those in Andalusia. In this evolution, however, the margin of difference between the two percentages will become narrower and narrower (graph 2).

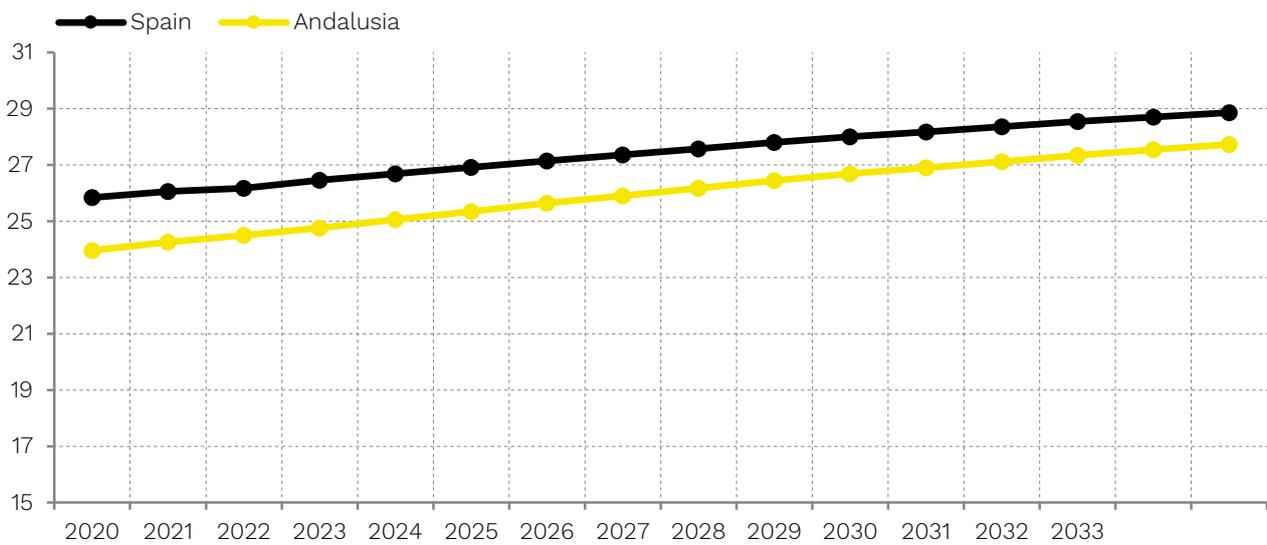
For the time being, Andalusia is one of the Spanish autonomous communities with the lowest proportion of single-person households. Only the Balearic Islands (23.73%), Murcia (21.11%) and Ceuta-Melilla (19.55%) have a comparatively lower figure. On the other hand, in Asturias the figure is 30.54%, as well as the values obtained in other territories in the north of Spain, such as Castile and León (29.63%), Rioja (28.56%), Cantabria (28.22%), Basque Country (27.88%), Aragón (27.53%) or Navarre (26.90%). It is quite indicative that all of them have a more

Table 2. Proportion of single-person households in Andalusia and Spain. Evolution from 1991 to 2019

	Andalusia			Spain		
	Total house-holds	Single-persons Number	(%)	Total house-holds	Single-persons Number	(%)
1991	1,979,077	232,137	11.73	11,852,075	1,581,307	13.34
2001	2,417,179	444,390	18.38	14,187,169	2,876,572	20.28
2011	3,087,220	645,100	20.90	18,083,690	4,193,320	23.19
2019	3,229,900	767,000	23.75	18,625,700	4,793,700	25.74

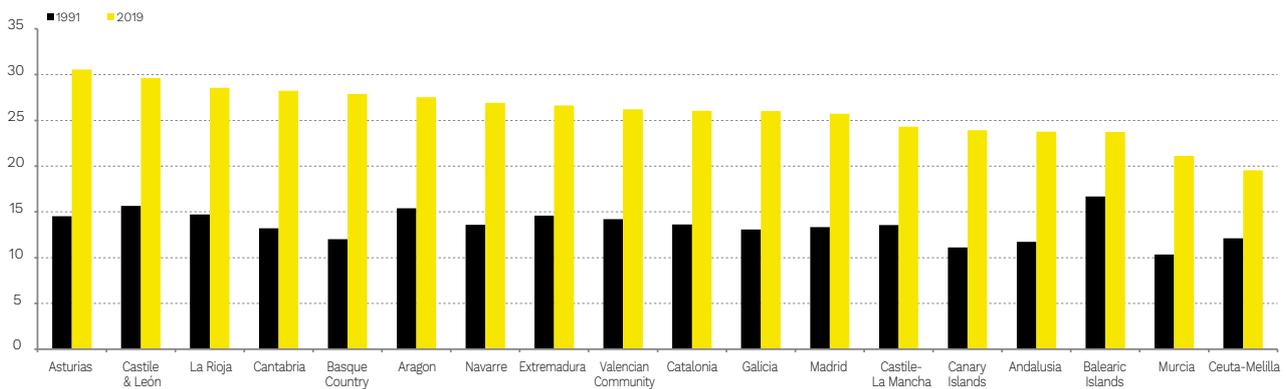
Source: compiled with data from the Population Census 1991, 2001 and 2011 and the Continuous Household Survey from 2019 (INE)

Graph 2. Projections on the percentage of single-person homes in Andalusia and Spain. 2020-2035



Source: own creation, with data from Household Projections 2020-2035

Graph 3. Percentage of single-person households in Spanish autonomous communities in 1991 vs 2019



Source: compiled with data from the Population Census 1991 and the Continual Survey of 2019 (INE)

aged demographic structure than those other autonomous communities where single-person households are not so prevalent. This is because, as we shall analyse in detail below, over 65s are more likely to live alone.

Indeed, it is in places with older populations that the highest percentages of single-person households are to be found, except for Galicia. That said, it is worth highlighting the general rise in the number of single-person households. In the period between 1991 and 2019, the proportion of single-person households has doubled in Andalusia, rising from 11.73% to 23.75%. 11.73% to 23.75%. The same has occurred in places such as

Asturias, Cantabria, the Basque Country, the Canary Islands and Murcia. In the rest of the Spanish autonomous communities, this ratio also shows a considerable increase (graph 3). The exception is the Balearic Islands, where the percentage of single-person households has grown, but not by as much (from 16.68% to 23.73%). The Balearic Islands is also where the average household size has decreased the least over this time (from 3.05 to 2.62 members).

3. People over the age of 65 are most likely to occupy single-person households

One of the factors behind the reduction in the average household size in Andalusia, in Spain and in all Western societies, is the growing residential independence that is taking place between generations. Although young people continue to take longer to become independent, those over 65 are living with their relatives to an increasingly lesser extent. They prefer to share their home exclusively with their partner, in a family situation known as the “empty nest”; and, when they are widowed, they choose to remain at home, even if they must live without a companion, rather than move in with a relative. In short, older people’s ways of living together are changing as they seek autonomy. If in the past it was common for them to share a home with their children (plus daughters-in-law, sons-in-law, grandchildren), whether out of necessity or guided by custom, nowadays the desire to remain in separate households is predominant, without this necessarily implying a lack of relationships or neglect on the part of one party over the other (López Doblas, 2018). Intergenerational contact persists, even if they do not live together, and is often a source of mutual solidarity (López Doblas, 2005).

To appreciate the leading role that older people are playing in this process, let us look at the data provided by the ECH-2019. They show that the number of people living in single-person households is particularly high in older age groups. In Andalusia, it reaches 22.36% among over 65s, a percentage that is almost halved among those aged 55-64 (11.59%) and is around 8.50% in the following age categories: 45-54 years, 35-44 years and 25-34 years; another surprising fact is how insignificant it remains among those aged under 25, at 1.57%. The same situation occurs in Spain: the tendency to live alone is much higher after the age of 65 than in the intermediate ages and is quite limited among young people. Overall, 10.29% of the Spanish population living in family dwellings live in a single-person household; in the case of the Andalusian population, the figure is somewhat lower, at 9.15% (Table 3).

Table 3. Residents in single-person households, by age group, in Andalusia and Spain

Age	Andalusia		Spain	
	Population of family homes	In single person households Number (,000) (%)	Population of family homes	In single person households Number (,000) (%)
Under 15	1,325,8	-	6,887,9	-
15-24	897,4	14.1	4,662,6	62.6
25-34	996,9	85.8	5,285,8	487.8
35-44	1,315,3	108.8	7,316,1	736.7
45-54	1,336,2	113.6	7,466,7	715.7
55-64	1,088,9	126.2	6,153,8	781.8
65+	1,424,7	318.5	8,833,6	2,009.1
Total	8,385,2	767.0	46,606,5	4,793.7

Source: Prepared by the authors with data from the 2019 Continuous Household Survey (INE)

4. Types of households in which people over 65 reside

Let us now focus on people over 65 years old. We have just indicated that around 22-23% of over-65s in Andalusia live alone: exactly 22.36% according to the ECH-2019. This percentage has been rising for decades, in 1991 it was 16.10%, in 2001 it was 19.76% and in 2011 it was 21.18%. These values are similar to those recorded in Spain as a whole, if not slightly lower. In absolute terms, the number of inhabitants aged 65 and over in single-person households has continued to increase: from 1991 to 2019, in Andalusia it has risen by 148.36%, from 128,242 to 318,500, and in Spain by 131.39%, from 868,273 to just over two million. Table 4 shows this evolution in more detail. In societies whose demographic structures are irreversibly tending towards ageing, as is generally the case in all Western societies, it is increasingly common for older people to live alone. The vast majority are widowed, although recently situations of marital breakdown, either through separation or divorce, have been increasing especially among men.

When analysing how older people live together, another circumstance worth highlighting is the rise in two-person households since the beginning of the 21st century: in 2001, 41.99% of older people in Andalusia lived in one of these households, in 2011 47.50% and in 2019 50.55%. In four out of five cases they are shared with a partner and in the remaining one with another family member, generally a younger relative (López Doblas, 2018). On

the other hand, three-member households, which tend to house cohabitation between generations, are becoming less relevant: in 2019, 15.95% of older people lived in one of these households, compared with 17.67% in 2011 and 19.05% in 2001. But it is the largest households, those with four or more members, that have experienced the greatest decline: between 1991 and 2019, the proportion of older people in these households halved, and now represents just 11.14%, a historic low. In Spain, the way in which people aged 65 and over are distributed among the various types of households is similar to that of Andalusia (Table 5). Moreover, in Spain, one or two person households are gaining in importance, while those with three and, above all, four or more members are losing ground.

Navarre is the Spanish Autonomous Community with the highest percentage of elderly people in single-person households (25.43% in 2019), followed by Castile and Leon (25.22%) and La Rioja (25.20%). On the other hand, older people in two-person households are particularly frequent in the Basque Country (54.40%), Aragon (52.86%) and Asturias (52.18%). Three-member households are larger in the Canary Islands (20.90%), Galicia (19.65%) and Cantabria (19.13%) than in the rest of Spain. Finally, although households with four or more members show a general decline in all autonomous communities, in places such as the Canary Islands and especially Ceuta-Melilla a relatively high percentage of elderly people live in one of them (19.64% and 24.50%), while in others (Asturias, Castile and Leon, the Basque Country, Madrid and Navarre) the figure is already below 8%, and in La Rioja, it is barely 5.20%.

It should be added that, although the number of elderly people in single-person households

Table 4. Persons over 65 years of age living alone in Andalusia and Spain. Evolution from 1991 to 2019

Year	Andalusia		Spain			
	Total people over 65	Living alone (No.)	(%)	Total people over 65	Living alone (No.)	(%)
1991	796,724	128,242	16.10	5,228,902	868,273	16.61
2001	1,053,981	208,278	19.76	6,796,936	1,358,937	19.99
2011	1,261,030	267,060	21.18	7,933,775	1,709,185	21.54
2019	1,424,700	318,500	22.36	8,833,500	2,009,100	22.74

Source: Prepared by the authors with data from the 1991, 2001 and 2011 Population Censuses and the 2019 Continuous Household Survey (INE)

Table 5. Distribution of people over 65 years of age in Andalusia and Spain, according to the size of their household. Evolution from 1991 to 2019

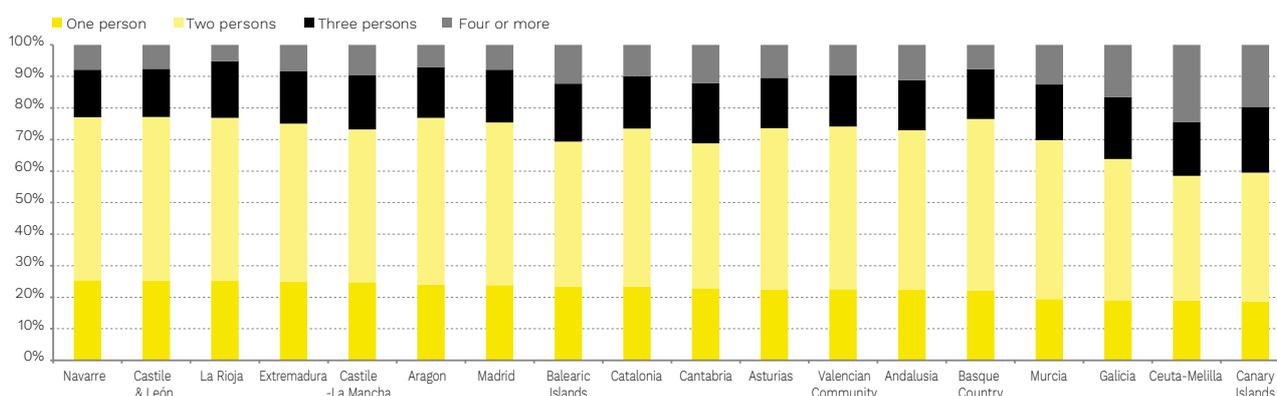
Year	Andalusia		Spain	
	(No.)	(%)	(No.)	(%)
1991				
Single person	128,242	16.10	868,273	16.61
Two persons	336,964	42.29	2,236,066	42.76
Three persons	137,720	17.29	908,655	17.38
Four or more	193,798	24.32	1,215,908	23.25
Total	796,724	100	5,228,902	100
2001				
Single person	208,278	19.76	1,358,937	19.99
Two persons	442,518	41.99	2,890,331	42.53
Three persons	200,763	19.05	1,279,401	18.82
Four or more	202,422	19.21	1,268,267	18.66
Total	1,053,981	100	6,796,936	100
2011				
Single person	267,060	21.18	1,709,185	21.54
Two persons	598,995	47.50	3,863,265	48.69
Three persons	222,890	17.67	1,373,200	17.31
Four or more	172,085	13.65	988,125	12.46
Total	1,261,030	100	7,933,775	100
2019				
Single person	318,500	22.36	2,009,100	22.74
Two persons	720,200	50.55	4,419,900	50.04
Three persons	227,300	15.95	1,482,900	16.79
Four or more	158,700	11.14	921,600	10.43
Total	1,424,700	100	8,833,500	100

Source: Prepared by the authors with data from the 1991, 2001 and 2011 Population Censuses and the 2019 Continuous Household Survey (INE)

is somewhat lower in Andalusia (22.36%) than in the country as a whole (22.74%), the same is true for two-member households (50.55% compared to 50.04%). On the other hand, fewer elderly people live in three-member households in Andalusia (15.95%) than in Spain (16.79%), and the opposite is true for

those living in households with four or more members (11.14% compared with 10.43%). Graph 4 illustrates how people aged 65 and over in each autonomous community are distributed according to the type of household in which they live.

Graph 4. Elderly people, according to the size of their household. Comparison between autonomous communities



Source: Prepared by the authors with data from the 2019 Continuous Household Survey (INE)

5. At the age of 65 and over, a much higher percentage of women than men live alone

So far, we have referred to people over 65 years of age in a generalised way. However, they are a rather diverse population group, as their attitudes and behaviour differ significantly depending on variables such as gender, age, marital status, level of education, income, health, etc. In this section, we will highlight how the tendency of older people to live alone differs greatly according to gender. For any territory and date that we establish as a framework for analysis, the same trend is repeated: at 65 years of age or over, the percentage of women in single-person households is much higher than that of men. In Andalusia, according to the ECH-2019, we are talking about 29.73% compared to 13.04%; and in Spain, the ratio of women, 29.31%, is also double that of men, 14.36%. The key factor explaining the disparity is the higher incidence of widowhood in the female population.

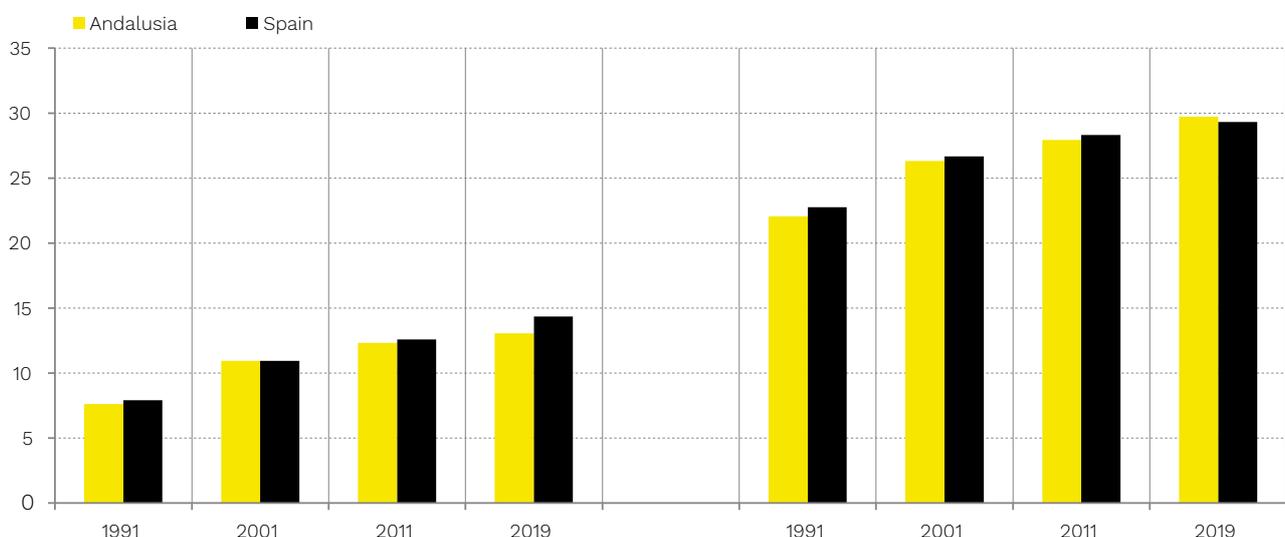
But this data reveals another noteworthy fact. Currently, the percentage of elderly women in single-person households is higher in

Andalusia than in Spain, which that had not been the case in recent decades. The reason for this is that between 2011 and 2019, the number of women aged 65 and over living in a single household has increased more in the autonomous community (by 18.27%, from 199,885 to 236,400) than in the country (by 13.51%, from 1,279,485 to 1,452,300). And, if we look at a longer period, between 1991 and 2019, we are talking about a 128.96% increase in Andalusia versus 108.39% in Spain. As shown in graph 5, the increase in the number of older women in single-person households is occurring at a faster rate in Andalusia than in Spain as a whole.

The is not the case for men. In recent years, from 2011 to 2019, the number of men in single-person households has increased comparatively more in Spain (29.58%, from 429,700 to 556,800) than in Andalusia (22.22%, from 67,175 to 82,100). Over a longer timeframe, between 1991 and 2019, the increase has been similar in the two territories: 224.92% and 228.52% respectively.

In any case, these values allow us to draw another conclusion: both in the country and in the autonomous community, the number of elderly people living alone is rising at a much faster rate in the case of men than the figure for women. As shown below, this trend is largely due to the increase in instances of separation or divorce among older people.

Graph 5. Evolution of the percentage of men (left) and women (right) aged 65 and over in single-person households between 1991 and 2019. Comparison between Andalusia and Spain



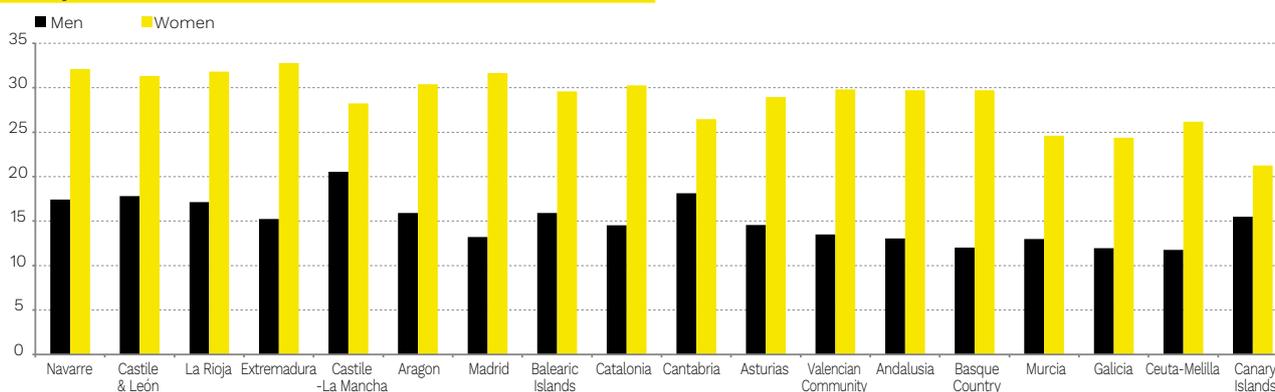
Source: Prepared by the authors, with data from INE

Table 6 provides detailed information on how the numbers of men and women aged 65 and over in single-person households have evolved in recent decades in Andalusia and Spain.

The comparison between Autonomous Communities (see graph 6) shows that Castile-La Mancha currently has by far the highest percentage of men over 65 years of age in single-person households, 20.56%. of men over 65 years of age in single-person households, 20.56%. The following, in order are Cantabria (18.13%), Castile and León (17.80%), Navarre (17.42%) and La Rioja (17.13%). At the other end of the scale are Ceuta-Melilla, Galicia and the Basque Country, with figures of around 12%. This means that Andalusia is among the territories with the relatively

lowest proportion of men living alone, at 13.04%. The situation changes with regard to women over 65 years of age: the percentage of women living alone in Andalusia, 29.4%, represents a mid-range value in a ranking led by Extremadura (32.76%), Navarre (32.10%) and Madrid (31.66%) and closed by the Canary Islands (21.25%), Galicia (24.37%) and Murcia (24.61%).

Graph 6. Percentage of men and women over 65 years of age in single-person households. Comparison between Autonomous Communities



Source: Prepared by the authors with data from the 2019 Continuous Household Survey (INE)

Table 6. Men and women over 65 years of age in single-person households. Evolution from 1991 to 2019 and comparison between Andalusia and Spain

Gender	Andalusia		Spain	
	Total people aged 65+	In single person households (No.) (%)	Total people aged 65+	In single person households (No.) (%)
Men				
1991	328,757	24,991 (7.60)	2,167,434	171,363 (7.91)
2001	449,065	49,065 (10.93)	2,884,590	315,466 (10.94)
2011	545,170	67,175 (12.32)	3,414,655	429,700 (12.58)
2019	629,600	82,100 (13.04)	3,878,400	556,800 (14.36)
Women				
1991	467,967	103,251 (22.06)	3,061,468	696,910 (22.76)
2001	604,916	159,213 (26.32)	3,912,346	1,043,471 (26.67)
2011	715,860	199,885 (27.92)	4,519,120	1,279,485 (28.31)
2019	795,100	236,400 (29.73)	4,955,100	1,452,300 (29.31)

Source: Prepared by the authors with data from the 1991, 2001 and 2011 Population Censuses and the 2019 Continuous Household Survey (INE)

6. The increase in people living alone is particularly prevalent among people over 80 years of age

The proportion of older people in single-person households also differs according to their specific age. In Andalusia, 13.96% of those aged 65-69 live in a single person household, but this percentage tends to increase with age: 18.76% of those aged 70-74, 22.49% of those aged 75-79, 33.43% of those aged 80-84 and, as a maximum value, 34.64% of those aged 85 or older. This data

is from the ECH-2019. If we compare with previous decades, the conclusion is clear: the rise in the number of elderly people living alone is mainly sustained by the older age groups. Between 1991 and 2019, the number of residents in single-person households has doubled in the 70-74 age group (from 33,665 to 69,800), tripled in the 80-84 age group (from 20,875 to 68,600) and, strikingly, increased six-fold in the 85+ age group (from 10,196 to 65,500). Among 75-79-year-olds, on the other hand, the percentage of people living in such households has declined slightly since the beginning of the 21st century, reflecting the decline in mortality and the consequent lengthening of married life. Among those aged 65-69, it should be added that there is an increase in the number of people living alone, mainly due to separations and divorces. Table 7 confirms that these trends are also developing in Spain.

Table 7. Propensity of people over 65 years of age to live alone, by age group, in Andalusia and Spain. Evolution from 1991 to 2019

	Andalusia			Spain		
	Total People	Living Alone (No.)	(%)	Total People	Living Alone (No.)	(%)
1991						
Ages 65-69	284,265	31,975	11.25	1,812,726	212,035	11.70
Ages 70-74	204,232	33,665	16.48	1,312,906	221,009	16.83
Ages 75-79	153,704	31,531	20.51	1,022,361	213,114	20.85
Ages 80-84	96,942	20,875	21.53	664,267	145,425	21.89
Ages 85+	57,581	10,196	17.71	416,642	76,690	18.41
Total	796,724	128,242	16.10	5,228,902	868,273	16.61
2001						
Ages 65-69	341,214	41,791	12.25	2,071,821	256,643	12.39
Ages 70-74	292,027	51,585	17.66	1,823,131	319,585	17.53
Ages 75-79	213,166	51,521	24.17	1,410,131	335,084	23.76
Ages 80-84	121,822	36,458	29.93	841,808	248,263	29.49
Ages 85+	85,272	26,923	31.57	650,045	199,362	30.67
Total	1,053,981	208,278	19.76	6,796,936	1,358,937	20.91
2011						
Ages 65-69	362,710	50,085	13.81	2,166,180	313,115	14.45
Ages 70-74	287,885	50,735	17.62	1,709,945	305,890	17.89
Ages 75-79	285,905	66,660	23.32	1,784,955	409,310	22.93
Ages 80-84	192,725	57,830	30.01	1,276,145	366,450	28.72
Ages 85+	131,805	41,750	31.68	996,550	314,420	31.55
Total	1,261,030	267,060	21.18	7,933,775	1,709,185	21.54
2019						
Ages 65-69	392,500	54,800	13.96	2,387,100	371,100	15.55
Ages 70-74	372,000	69,800	18.76	2,193,100	412,600	18.81
Ages 75-79	265,900	59,800	22.49	1,667,200	370,500	22.22
Ages 80-84	205,200	68,600	33.43	1,269,300	393,800	31.03
Ages 85+	189,100	65,500	34.64	1,316,800	461,100	35.02
Total	1,424,700	318,500	22.36	8,833,500	2,009,100	22.74

Source: Prepared by the authors with data from the 1991, 2001 and 2011 Population Censuses and the 2019 Continuous Household Survey (INE)

Table 8. Distribution of persons over 65 years of age in Andalusia, by large age groups, according to the size of their household. Evolution from 1991 to 2019

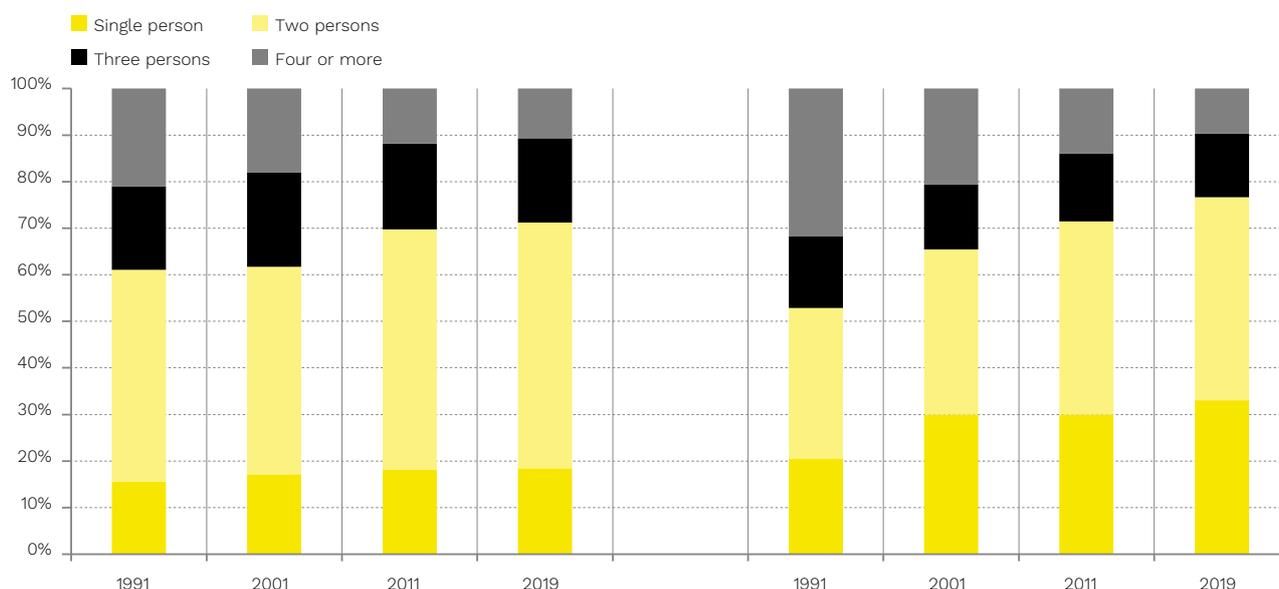
Year	65 to 75 years old		80+ years old	
	(No.)	(%)	(No.)	(%)
1991				
Single person	97,171	15.13	31,071	20.11
Two persons	287,787	44.81	49,177	31.83
Three persons	115,215	17.94	22,505	14.56
Four or more	142,028	22.12	51,770	33.50
Total	642,201	100	154,523	100
2001				
Single person	144,897	17.12	63,381	30.53
Two persons	369,539	43.66	72,979	35.16
Three persons	172,802	20.42	27,961	13.47
Four or more	159,169	18.80	43,253	20.84
Total	846,407	100	207,574	100
2011				
Single person	167,480	17.88	99,580	30.68
Two persons	471,865	50.39	127,130	39.17
Three persons	175,195	18.71	47,695	14.70
Four or more	121,960	13.02	50,125	15.45
Total	936,500	100	324,530	100
2019				
Single person	184,400	17.90	134,100	34.01
Two persons	545,300	52.92	174,900	44.36
Three persons	177,900	17.26	49,300	12.50
Four or more	122,800	11.92	36,000	9.13
Total	1,030,400	100	394,300	100

Source: Prepared by the authors with data from the 1991, 2001 and 2011 Population Censuses and the 2019 Continuous Household Survey (INE)

If we group the elderly into two broad age categories, those over 80 years of age and those aged 65 to 79 years, we can observe another very revealing fact: the forms of cohabitation are changing, fundamentally, among the oldest individuals (Table 8). In the period from 1991 to 2019, the percentage of residents in single-person households has grown substantially among those aged 80 and over (from 20.1% to 34.0%), but not so much among those aged 65-79 (from 15.13% to 17.90%). The number of those living in two-person households (four out of five of which are shared with a partner) has also increased significantly more in the 80+ age group (from 31.83% to 44.36%) than in the 65-79 age group (from 44.81% to 52.92%). In addition, the proportion of those living in households with four or more members has fallen much more among those aged 80 and over (from 33.50% to 9.13%) than among those aged 65-79 (from 22.12% to 11.92%).

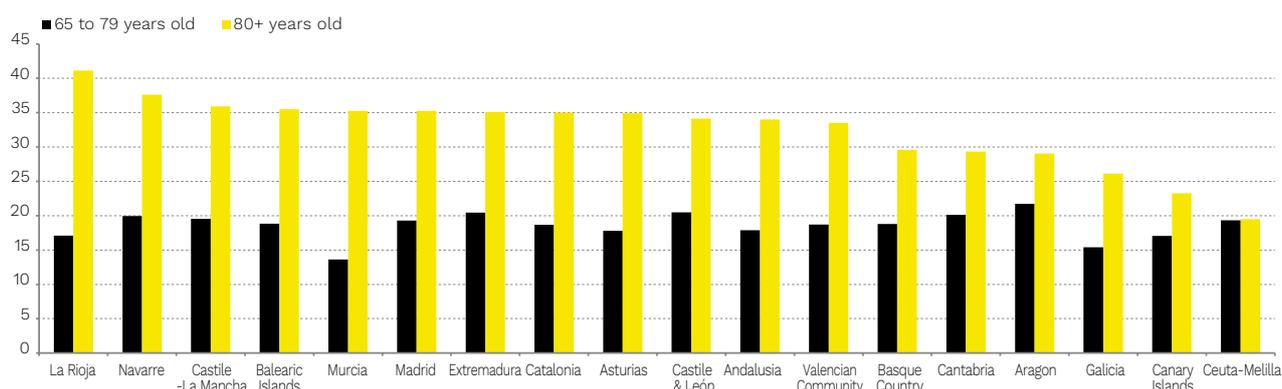
Consequently, the trend we have emphasised in this study, regarding the expansion of residential independence to the detriment of cohabitation between generations, is being driven mainly by older people. This is also the case in Spain (graph 7).

Graph 7. Distributions of persons aged 65-79 (left) and over 80 (right), according to their household. Spain, 1991 to 2019



Source: Prepared by the authors, with data from INE.

Graph 8. Persons aged 65-79 years and over 80 years resident in single-person households. Comparison between Autonomous Communities



Source: Prepared by the authors with data from the 2019 Continuous Household Survey (INE)

Let us focus again on single-person households. La Rioja is the Spanish autonomous community with the highest percentage of people aged 80 or over residing in a single person household. According to the ECH-2019, this rises to 41.12%. It is followed by Navarre, with 37.63%, as well as various territories with rates between 35-36% (Castile-La Mancha, the Balearic Islands, Murcia, Madrid, Extremadura and Catalonia). On the other hand, Galicia (26.11%), the Canary Islands (23.25%) and Ceuta-Melilla (19.51%) stand out as having the lowest levels of people aged 80 and over in single-person households. Andalusia is therefore in an intermediate position in this ranking. As for the percentage of persons aged 65-79 in this type of household, it is relatively high in Aragon (21.75%), Castile and Leon (20.48%) and Extremadura (20.43%) but is lower in Murcia (13.64%), Galicia (15.41%) and the Canary Islands (17.04%), with Andalusia again in an intermediate position (graph 8).

7. More than 40% of women over 80 years old live alone

The analysis provided both by gender and age-groups will allow us to establish, with even greater precision, what kinds of older people are more likely to live alone. As might be expected this tends to be women: in Andalusia 45.38% of women between 80-84 years old live in a single-person household, as well as 42.58% of those over 85. These figures have been increasing for the last few decades and are currently the highest to date. To give us an idea, in 1991, they were 26.95% and 19.87% respectively. The rise in these kinds of households is mostly relevant to these age-groups, and not so much for women who are less than 80 years old. Moreover, the percentage of women between 65-69 living alone has even fallen in recent times (from 16.63% in 2011 to 17.20% in 2019); and the same has occurred for those between 75-79 years old (from 31.30% to 30.12%). Above all, this is consistent with the fall in mortality rates and increasing durations of marriages. People are widowed and thus live alone at increasingly older ages.

Since men are less likely to be widowed, the proportion of men in single-person households is lower than that of women, regardless of their age. In the age group of 85 and above, the figure for men is 21.45%, which is half of the figure for women; and in the age group of 80-84, the figure for men is 16.19%, little more than a third of the figure for women. It so happens that, so far this century, the percentage of men living alone has stabilised for those above 75 years old: both in 2011 and 2019, with the 75-79 age group around 12%, 16% for 80-84, and 21% for those above 85. However, the figure has not stopped rising for those who are under 75 years old: in 1991, for instance, 5.62% of men between 65-59 lived alone, 8.15% in 2001, 9.62% in 2011, and 10.19% in 2019. And the same trend is found for those between 70-74 years old. These are consistent increases, mostly for cases of divorce or separation which have both seen a

steady rise in the last few decades. Even so, it would be appropriate to bear in mind that the proportion of men older than 85 who live alone is double that of recently retired men also living alone (Table 9)

Unlike the situation in Andalusia, the ratio of Spanish women older than 85 living alone (42.17%) is greater than the figure for women between than 80-84 (40.76%). Never before have such high numbers been recorded: in 2011, neither of these age groups reached 38%, and if we go back to 1991, these figures were 21.02% and 27.87% respectively. On the contrary, the proportion of women up to 75 years old who live alone has stayed stable during this entire period: in the category of 65-69 years old it has wavered around 16-17%, and in the category of 70-74 year olds it has remained between 23-24%. What is also interesting is that the figure for women

Table 9. Tendency of elderly people to reside in single-person households, by sex and age group. Andalusia, evolution from 1991 to 2019

	Men			Women		
	Total men	In single person households (No.)	(%)	Total Women	In single person households (No.)	(%)
1991						
65-69 years	131,568	7,348	5.62	152,697	24,577	16.10
70-74 years	86,075	6,051	7.03	118,157	27,614	23.37
75-79 years	59,429	5,354	9.01	94,275	26,177	27.77
80-84 years	34,129	3,945	11.56	62,813	16,930	26.95
85 and over	17,556	2,243	12.78	40,025	7,953	19.87
Total	328,757	24,991	7.60	467,967	103,251	21.53
2001						
65-69 years	159,026	12,964	8.15	182,188	28,827	15.82
70-74 years	130,531	12,618	9.67	161,496	38,967	24.13
75-79 years	88,696	10,824	12.20	124,470	40,697	32.70
80-84 years	44,871	7,008	15.62	76,951	29,450	38.27
85 and over	25,941	5,651	21.78	59,811	21,272	35.57
Total	449,065	49,065	10.93	604,916	159,213	26.32
2011						
65-69 years	173,170	16,665	9.62	189,540	33,420	17.63
70-74 years	131,240	14,235	10.85	156,645	36,500	23.30
75-79 years	120,110	14,765	12.29	165,795	51,895	31.30
80-84 years	76,795	12,505	16.28	115,930	45,325	39.10
85 and over	43,855	9,005	20.53	87,950	32,745	37.23
Total	545,170	67,175	12.32	715,860	199,885	27.92
2019						
65-69 years	181,500	18,500	10.19	211,000	36,300	17.20
70-74 years	180,400	21,200	11.75	191,600	48,600	25.37
75-79 years	113,300	13,700	12.09	152,700	46,000	30.12
80-84 years	84,000	13,600	16.19	121,200	55,000	45.38
85 and over	70,400	15,100	21.45	118,600	50,500	42.58
Total	629,600	82,100	13.04	795,100	236,400	29.74

Source: Prepared by the authors with data from the 1991, 2001 and 2011 Population Censuses and the 2019 Continuous Household Survey (INE)

between 75-79 living alone has even been falling since the start of the 21st century: it fell from 32.51% in 2001, to 30.92% in 2011, to 28.74% in 2019. It is a fact that this must be associated with the progression of married life at these ages, or, in other words, that people are widowed and tend to live alone much later in life.

As for men, it is above all surprising that single life is increasingly frequent not just among the recently retired, but in all other age groups. While we have seen stability in these levels for those in Andalusia who are older than 75, generalised advances have been recorded for Spain overall. In the period between 1991-2019, the percentage of people living in a single-person household has doubled for men between 65-69 (from 5.94%-11.71%); something which is on track to happen for

those over 85 (a figure which has increased from 12.74% to 21.78%). Taking into account the entire country, the increasing duration of marriages is not managing to reverse the steady tendency among men to live alone. In spite of everything we must emphasise that, at whatever age, the figures for those living in a single-person household continue to be higher for women than men; the differential margin has become even narrower, decade after decade (Table 10).

Table 10. Tendency of older persons to reside in single-person households, by sex and age group. Spain, evolution from 1991 to 2019

	Men			Women		
	Total men	In Single person households (No.)	(%)	Total women	In single person households (No.)	(%)
1991						
65-69 years	836,760	49,664	5.94	975,966	162,371	16.64
70-74 years	554,172	40,081	7.23	758,734	180,928	23.85
75-79 years	401,194	36,838	9.16	620,367	176,276	28.41
80-84 years	242,992	28,020	11.53	421,275	117,405	27.87
85 and over	131,516	16,760	12.74	285,126	59,930	21.02
Total	2,167,434	171,363	7.91	3,061,468	696,910	22.76
2001						
65-69 years	967,324	82,761	8.56	1,104,497	173,882	15.74
70-74 years	816,247	79,100	9.69	1,006,884	240,485	23.88
75-79 years	589,125	68,203	11.58	821,006	266,881	32.51
80-84 years	310,830	45,521	14.64	530,978	202,742	38.18
85 and over	201,064	39,881	19.83	448,984	159,481	35.52
Total	2,884,590	315,466	10.94	3,912,346	1,043,471	26.67
2011						
65-69 years	1,030,090	110,130	10.69	1,136,090	202,985	17.87
70-74 years	783,975	89,730	11.45	925,970	216,160	23.34
75-79 years	761,090	92,690	12.18	1,023,865	316,620	30.92
80-84 years	506,245	74,650	14.75	769,900	291,800	37.90
85 and over	333,255	62,500	18.75	663,295	251,920	37.98
Total	3,414,655	429,700	12.58	4,519,120	1,279,485	28.31
2019						
65-69 years	1,117,700	130,900	11.71	1,269,400	204,200	16.09
70-74 years	1,034,300	131,200	12.68	1,158,900	281,400	24.28
75-79 years	736,200	102,800	13.96	931,000	267,600	28.74
80-84 years	525,200	90,600	17.25	744,100	303,300	40.76
85 and over	465,100	101,300	21.78	851,600	359,800	42.17
Total	3,878,500	556,800	14.36	4,955,000	1,452,300	29.31

Source: Prepared by the authors with data from the 1991, 2001 and 2011 Population Censuses and the 2019 Continuous Household Survey (INE)

8. The tendency to live alone increases for older people without a partner, regardless of their marital status

In Andalusia, according to the Continuous Household Survey of 2019 (ECH-2019), there are almost 63,000 people older than 65 years old, who are divorced or separated from a partner: three in five of them live in a single-person household, or to be more precise, 60.51% of them. On the other hand, over 400,000 are widows, 55.72% of whom also live alone. Lastly, some 83,000 of them are single, and 54.56% of them live in single-person households. These results show that

the tendency to live alone is at a similar level for all three of these population groups. The same trend occurs for all of Spain, where 58.20% of all older people who are divorced or separated live in single-person households, 56.93% of single people and 55.67% of widows.

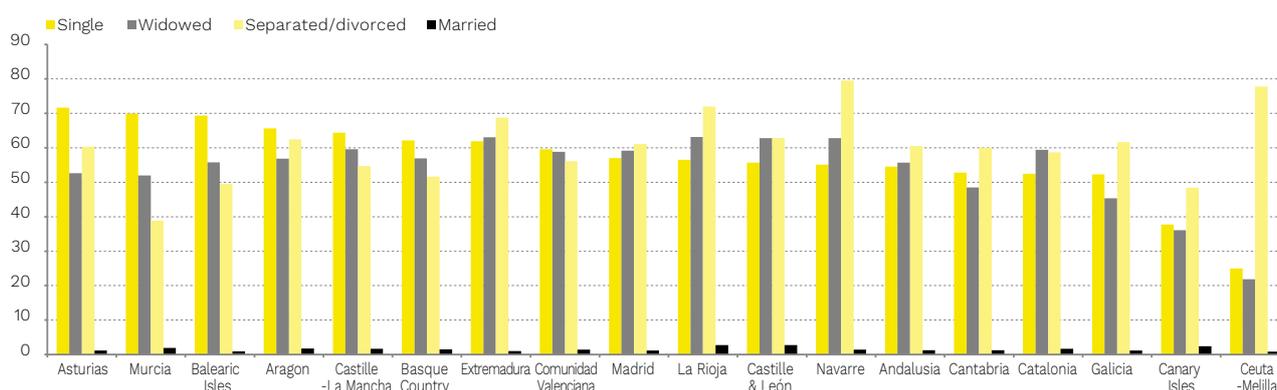
In all cases, these are all-time highs, which have been steadily increasing for the past 30 years. Older, single people are those whose inclination to live alone has increased the most (in 1991, 31.62% of them lived alone in Andalusia, and 33.01% of them in Spain), followed by widows and those who are separated or divorced (Table 11). We must add to this that in Spain there are 82,600 older, married people who are living alone, 10,900 of whom are in Andalusia. The vast majority of cases such as these correspond to situations of marriage breakdowns which occur de facto but not de jure; and these people constitute a negligible percentage within the entire group of married elderly people, both in the entire country (1.53% of cases), and in the autonomous region (1.24%).

Table 11. People older than 65 in single-person households, according to marital status. Evolution from 1991 to 2019 in Andalusia and Spain

	Andalusia			Spain		
	People who are 65 or older	In a single-person household (N)	(%)	People who are 65 or older	In a single-person household (N)	(%)
1991						
Single	70,206	22,198	31.62	478,836	158,057	33.01
Married	449,271	4,091	0.91	2,984,290	24,445	0.82
Separated/divorced	3,389	1,540	45.44	29,897	13,501	45.16
Widowed	273,858	100,413	36.67	1,735,879	672,270	38.73
Total	796,724	128,242	16.10	5,228,902	868,273	16.61
2001						
Single	78,903	35,828	45.41	546,351	244,864	44.82
Married	626,877	5,762	0.92	4,058,367	48,356	1.19
Separated/divorced	12,741	6,672	52.37	92,931	46,935	50.51
Widowed	335,460	160,016	47.70	2,099,287	1,018,782	48.53
Total	1,053,981	208,278	19.76	6,796,936	1,358,937	19.99
2011						
Single	85,025	38,655	45.46	589,195	275,070	46.69
Married	761,575	14,165	1.86	4,796,030	92,625	1.93
Separated/divorced	37,440	20,100	53.69	251,910	132,930	52.77
Widowed	376,995	194,140	51.50	2,296,640	1,208,560	52.62
Total	1,261,035	267,060	21.18	7,933,775	1,709,185	21.54
2019						
Single	83,400	45,500	54.56	574,200	326,900	56.93
Married	876,400	10,900	1.24	5,406,500	82,600	1.53
Separated/divorced	62,800	38,000	60.51	448,100	260,800	58.20
Widowed	402,100	224,100	55.72	2,404,700	1,338,800	55.67
Total	1,424,700	318,500	22.36	8,833,500	2,009,100	22.74

Sources: own creation with data from the Population Censuses from 1991, 2001, and 2011, and the Continuous Household Survey of 2019 (INE)

Graph 9. People older than 65 in single-person households, according to marital status. Comparisons between autonomous communities



Source: Prepared by the authors with data from the 2019 Continuous Household Survey (INE)

Asturias is the autonomous Spanish community with the highest ratio of older, single people living alone: 71.63% of them, followed by Murcia (69.90%) and then the Balearic Islands (69.34%). With respect to elderly widows, they are more likely

to be living alone if they live in La Rioja, Extremadura, Castile and León and Navarre: around 63% for each of these regions. Finally, the extremely high percentage (80%) of older, separated and divorced people living alone in Navarre is striking, as well as in Ceuta-Melilla

Table 12. Men and women older than 65 living in single-person households in Andalusia, according to marital status. Evolution from 1991-2019

	Men			Women		
	Men who are 65 or older	In a single-person household (N)	(%)	Women who are 65 or older	In a single-person household (N)	(%)
1991						
Single	20,167	6,260	30.94	50,039	15,938	31.85
Married	257,918	1,744	0.68	191,353	2,347	1.23
Separated/divorced	1,611	803	49.84	1,778	737	41.45
Widowed	49,061	16,184	32.99	224,797	84,229	37.47
Total	328,757	24,991	7.60	467,967	103,251	22.06
2001						
Single	28,686	13,858	48.31	50,217	21,970	43.75
Married	354,437	3,367	0.95	272,440	2,395	0.88
Separated/divorced	6,369	3,660	57.47	6,372	3,012	47.27
Widowed	59,573	28,180	47.30	275,887	131,836	47.79
Total	449,065	49,065	10.93	604,916	159,213	26.32
2011						
Single	33,805	15,130	44.76	51,220	23,525	45.93
Married	427,125	8,480	1.99	334,450	5,685	1.70
Separated/divorced	18,025	10,090	55.98	19,415	10,010	51.56
Widowed	66,215	33,475	50.51	310,780	160,665	51.70
Total	545,170	67,175	12.32	715,865	199,885	27.92
2019						
Single	36,300	18,900	52.07	47,100	26,500	56.26
Married	490,200	6,500	1.33	386,200	4,400	1.14
Separated/divorced	25,300	16,700	66.01	37,600	21,400	56.91
Widowed	77,900	40,000	51.35	324,200	184,100	56.79
Total	629,600	82,100	13.04	795,100	236,400	29.74

Sources: own creation with data from the Population Censuses from 1991, 2001, and 2011, and the Continuous Household Survey of 2019 (NE)

(77.78%), La Rioja (7%), and Extremadura (68.75%). Andalusia, as we can see in Graph 9, occupies middling positions in each of the three classifications.

As for men in Andalusia, the percentage of separated or divorced individuals living in single-person households (66.01%) is greater than the figures for single people (52.07%) and widows (51.35%). And for women, the percentage of people living in these households is around 57%, be they separated, divorced, widowed or single. In any case, these are the highest figures to date, which confirm the growing tendency of people without a partner to live alone, regardless of their gender. It matters not whether they remain single, are widowed, or have suffered a marriage breakdown through separation or divorce: the percentage of those who choose to live alone has not stopped growing in the last few decades (Table 12). Let us take, for example, the case of single women. In 1991, 31.85% of all these single women in Andalusia lived in a single-person household. In 2011, this percentage rose to 43.75%, and then to 45.93% in 2011. In 2019, this figure was 56.26%. We can even see how the ratio of widowed men in single households has been steadily increasing: it went from 32.99% in 1991, to 47.30% in 2001, to 50.51% in 2011 and then to 51.35% in 2019.

9. Out of all elderly single people, women are dominating but the figures for men are starting to rise steadily

Let us now turn to the analysis of who these 138,000 people over 65 living in Andalusia are, as shown in the ECH-2019 (Continuous Household Survey, 2019). Or, to put it more precisely, what socio-demographic features they have, how they are distributed by sex, age and marital status; and, above all, how this distribution has been evolving during the last few decades. It is convenient to begin by pointing out that, for every four people, three of them are women and one is a man. In absolute terms, we are talking about 236,500 and 82,100 of them, respectively. However, there is a clear tendency: the presence of men within this population group has been increasing at a greater pace than that of women. In 1991, 19.49% of all elderly people living alone in Andalusia were men, a percentage which has increased to 23.56% in 2001, 25.15% in 2011, and 25.78% in 2019, achieving a record level. In Spain overall, this tendency is also visible, even more so than in Andalusia, and especially in recent times: in 2019, the number of older single individuals reached 2 million, and 27.71% of them were men; in 1991, the proportion of men did not even reach 20% of the total 868,000 single older people (Table 13).

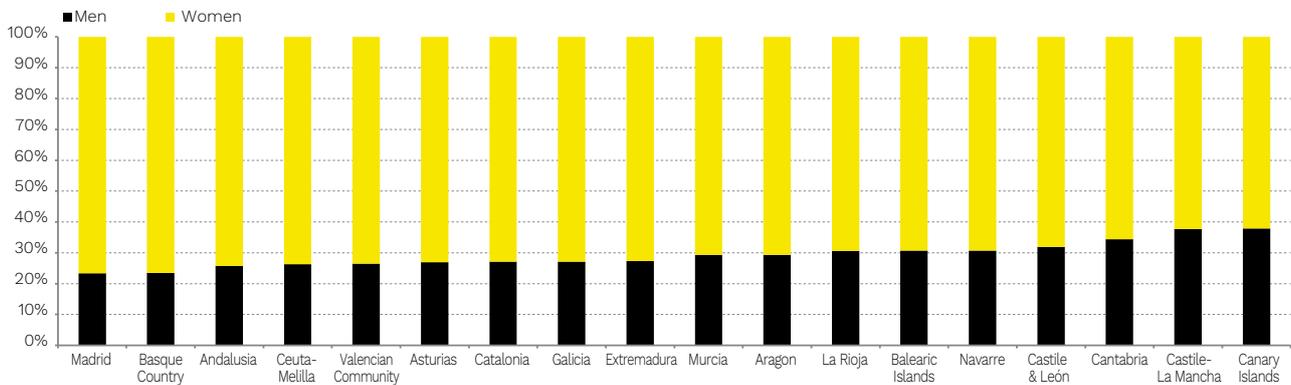
The results for autonomous communities reveal that in some of them, the number of older men living alone is much higher. We're referring in particular to the Canary Islands and Castile-La Mancha, with a rate of 38%, as well as in Cantabria and Castile and León, whose figures are 34.40% and 31.96% respectively. Andalusia is not found in this group of autonomous communities, but it stands out for the following reason: only Madrid (23.37%) and the Basque

Table 13. Distribution of older people who live alone in Andalusia and Spain, by sex. Evolution from 1991 to 2019

Year	No. of elderly, single people	Men		Women	
		(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)
Andalusia					
1991	128,242	24,991	19.49	103,251	80.51
2001	208,278	49,065	23.56	159,213	76.44
2011	267,060	67,175	25.15	199,885	74.85
2019	318,500	82,100	25.78	236,400	74.22
Spain					
1991	868,273	171,363	19.74	696,910	80.26
2001	1,358,937	315,466	23.21	1,043,471	76.79
2011	1,709,185	429,700	25.14	1,279,485	74.86
2019	2,009,100	556,800	27.71	1,452,300	72.29

Sources: own creation with data from the Population Censuses from 1991, 2001, and 2011, and the Continuous Household Survey (INE)

Graph 10. Distribution of older people who live alone by sex. Comparison between autonomous communities



Source: Prepared by the authors with data from the 2019 Continuous Household Survey (INE)

Country (23.50%) have a percentage of single, older men that is less than the figure of Andalusia. Or in other words, in Andalusia the group of older people who live alone is one of the most female-heavy in the country (graph 10).

10. An increasingly ageing population: over 85s are gaining statistical importance among older people living alone

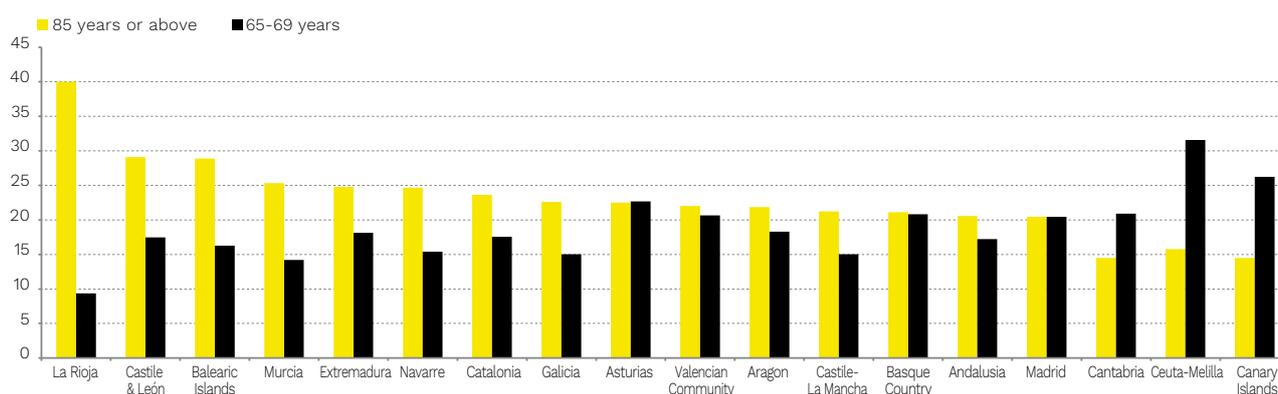
Another trend is developing steadily: the progressive ageing of this demographic group. Currently, one-fifth of over 65s living alone in Andalusia are older than 85 (20.56%). This

the highest figure ever recorded: in 1991 barely 8% of older people living alone were over 85, in 2001 around 13% and in 2011 it was 15.63%. This considerable and constant growth has taken place as the proportion of recently retired people (65-69 years old) has reduced: this figure was around 25% in 1991, but has since fallen to 20.07% in 2001, 18.75% in 2011 and 17.21% in 2019. In general, younger age groups (up to 80 years old) have been losing ground to older age groups (over 80). This change is sociologically important because the two age groups have very different basic needs which must be met by different resources. Above all, we are referring to their health requirements, the prevalence of loneliness and support networks to tackle these and any other problems they may face. This process of demographic ageing is taking place throughout Spain (table 14): previously over 85s were of little statistical relevance to the wider demographic of older people living

Table 14. Distribution of older people living alone in Andalusia and Spain by age group. Evolution from 1991 to 2019

Year	Andalusia		Spain	
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)
1991				
65-69 years	31,975	24.93	212,035	24.42
70-74 years	33,665	26.25	221,009	25.45
75-79 years	31,531	24.59	213,114	24.55
80-84 years	20,875	16.28	145,425	16.75
85 and above	10,196	7.95	76,690	8.83
Total	128,242	100	868,273	100
2001				
65-69 years	41,791	20.07	256,643	18.89
70-74 years	51,585	24.77	319,585	23.52
75-79 years	51,521	24.74	335,084	24.66
80-84 years	36,458	17.50	248,263	18.27
85 and above	26,923	12.92	199,362	14.66
Total	208,278	100	1,358,937	100
2011				
65-69 years	50,085	18.75	313,115	18.32
70-74 years	50,735	19.00	305,890	17.90
75-79 years	66,660	24.96	409,310	23.95
80-84 years	57,830	21.66	366,450	21.44
85 and above	41,750	15.63	314,420	18.39
Total	267,060	100	1,709,185	100
2019				
65-69 years	54,800	17.21	371,100	18.47
70-74 years	69,800	21.92	412,600	20.54
75-79 years	59,800	18.77	370,500	18.44
80-84 years	68,600	21.54	393,600	19.60
85+ years	65,500	20.56	461,100	22.95
Total	318,500	100	2,009,100	100

Source: Prepared by the authors with data from the 1991, 2001 and 2011 Population Censuses and the 2019 Continuous Household Survey (INE)

Graph 11. Demographic weighting of people aged 65-69 and over 85s in the elderly population living alone, by autonomous community

Source: Prepared by the authors with data from the 2019 Continuous Household Survey (INE)

Table 15. Distribution of elderly men and women living alone in Andalusia, by age group. Evolution from 1991 to 2019

Year	Men		Women	
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)
1991				
65-69 years	7,348	29.60	24,577	23.80
70-74 years	6,051	24.21	27,614	26.75
75-79 years	5,354	21.42	26,177	25.35
80-84 years	3,945	15.79	16,930	16.40
85+ years	2,243	8.98	7,953	7.70
Total	24,991	100	103,251	100
2001				
65-69 years	12,964	26.42	28,827	18.11
70-74 years	12,618	25.72	38,967	24.47
75-79 years	10,824	22.06	40,697	25.56
80-84 years	7,008	14.28	29,450	18.50
85+ years	5,651	11.52	21,272	13.26
Total	49,065	100	159,213	100
2011				
65-69 years	16,665	24.81	33,420	16.72
70-74 years	14,235	21.19	36,500	18.26
75-79 years	14,765	21.98	51,895	25.96
80-84 years	12,505	18.62	45,325	22.68
85+ years	9,005	13.40	32,745	16.38
Total	67,175	100	199,885	100
2019				
65-69 years	18,500	22.53	36,300	15.35
70-74 years	21,200	25.82	48,600	20.55
75-79 years	13,700	16.69	46,000	19.45
80-84 years	13,600	16.57	55,100	23.30
85+ years	15,100	18.39	50,500	21.35
Total	82,100	100	236,500	100

Source: Prepared by the authors with data from the 1991, 2001 and 2011 Population Censuses and the 2019 Continuous Household Survey (INE)

alone (8.83% in 1991), but now they are the largest group in the demographic (22.95%).

The extent of this phenomenon across Spain, the ageing of the older population living alone, is very uneven between the autonomous communities. One statistic is quite striking: in La Rioja, 40% of elderly people who live alone are over 85. In Castile and León and the Balearic Islands, they account for 29%. By contrast, Andalusia (20.56%, as mentioned above) is among the regions where the phenomenon is less prevalent: only Madrid (20.45%), Cantabria (19.86%) and Ceuta-Melilla (15.79%) have lower percentages of over 85s among the older population living alone (as shown in chart 11). Meanwhile, recently retired people (65-69 years old) are particularly relevant in Ceuta-Melilla (31.58%), the Canary Islands (26.24%) and Asturias (22.68%). The figure is much lower in Castile-La Mancha (15.02%), Galicia (15.01%), Murcia (14.22%) and above all La Rioja (9.38%).

This ageing population is more prevalent among women living alone than men. For example, over 85s accounted for a record 21.35% of all women over 65 living alone in Andalusia in 2019. Considering that in 1991 over 85s accounted for only 7.70%, their value has almost tripled during this period. In raw numbers, there are currently over 50,000 lone women over 85 years old compared to less than 8,000 in 1991. For comparison, in 2019 there were 36,300 women aged 65-69 living alone; yet in 1991 there were already about 24,500. This further proof of how much this section of the population has aged in recent decades. The male section of society has also aged; albeit to a lesser extent. In 1991, men over 85 made up 9% of over 65s living alone; by 2019 the figure had more than doubled to 18.39%. In absolute terms, there are now over 15,000 compared to 2,243 previously (table 15).

11. Growth in instances of separation or divorce among older people living alone, although the majority continue to be widowed

Another noteworthy trend concerns marital status. The proportion of separated or divorced people is increasing among over 65s living alone in Andalusia; whilst that of widow(er)s is decreasing. Instances of separation have increased dramatically in the last three decades: there were only 1,540 in 1991, compared to around 38,000 in 2019. In relative terms, the proportion of separated or divorced people within the population of older people living alone has multiplied tenfold during this period; from 1.2% to 11.96%. This is a huge increase, which exceeds that seen in Spain; where the proportion of separated or divorced people among all older people living alone has risen from 2.55% to 12.98%. However, the number of widowed older people faces a downward turn. In Andalusia they accounted for 78.30% in 1991 compared to 70.35% in 2019. Meanwhile, in Spain, their relevance has fallen even further from 74.97% to 66.64%. As you can see, the situations of older people living alone in Andalusia is relatively more a result of widowhood than separation or divorce compared to Spain as a whole. This has been the case in recent decades (table 16).

The distribution of older people living alone owing to their marital status varies significantly according to the area in which they live. In Ceuta-Melilla and the Canary Islands, separation or divorce are responsible for over 20% of cases; compared with 6.3% in Extremadura or 7.78% in Aragon. The differences are noteworthy. However, the most striking aspect is the huge proportion of widow(er)s among the population of older people living

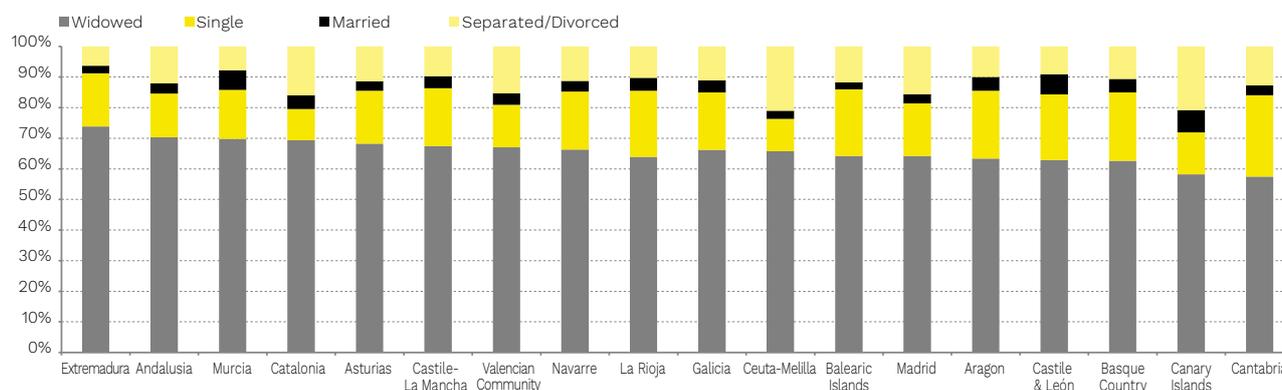
Table 16. Distribution of older people living alone in Andalusia and in Spain, by marital status. Evolution from 1991 to 2019

Year	Andalusia		Spain	
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)
1991				
Single	22,198	17.31	158,057	18.20
Married	4,091	3.19	24,445	2.82
Separated/Divorced	1,540	1.20	13,501	2.55
Widowed	100,413	78.30	672,270	77.43
Total	128,242	100	868,273	100
2001				
Single	35,828	17.20	244,864	18.02
Married	5,762	2.77	48,356	3.56
Separated/Divorced	6,672	3.20	46,935	3.45
Widowed	160,016	76.83	1,018,782	74.97
Total	208,278	100	1,358,937	100
2011				
Single	38,655	14.47	275,070	16.09
Married	14,165	5.30	92,625	5.42
Separated/Divorced	20,100	7.53	132,930	7.78
Widowed	194,140	72.70	1,208,560	70.71
Total	267,060	100	1,709,185	100
2019				
Single	45,500	14.28	326,900	16.27
Married	10,900	3.41	82,600	4.11
Separated/Divorced	38,000	11.96	260,800	12.98
Widowed	224,100	70.35	1,338,800	66.64
Total	318,500	100	2,009,100	100

Source: Prepared by the authors with data from the 1991, 2001 and 2011 Population Censuses and the 2019 Continuous Household Survey

alone in Andalusia: the aforementioned 70.35% from 2019 is the second-highest in the country after Extremadura (73.85%). These figures are quite different when compared to autonomous communities such as the Canary Islands (58.22%) or Cantabria (57.44%). As for the rest, Aragon (22.15%), Basque Country (22.35%) and especially Cantabria (26.60%) have particularly high proportions of people

living alone. Catalonia (10.25%) and Ceuta-Melilla (10.53%) are at the other end of the spectrum. Finally, the percentage of married people in the population of older people living alone is 7% in the Canary Islands and exceeds 6% in Castile and León, Murcia and La Rioja. Meanwhile, the figure is only around 2.5% in the Balearic Islands, Extremadura and Ceuta-Melilla (graph 12).

Graph 12. Marital status of over 65s living alone. Compared by autonomous communities

Source: Prepared by the authors with data from the 2019 Continuous Household Survey (INE)

Table 17. Marital status of elderly men and women living alone in Andalusia. Evolution from 1991 to 2019

Year	Men		Women	
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)
1991				
Single	6,260	25.05	15,938	15.44
Married	1,744	6.98	2,347	2.27
Separated/Divorced	803	3.21	737	0.71
Widowed	16,184	64.76	84,229	81.58
Total	24,991	100	103,251	100
2001				
Single	13,858	28.24	21,970	13.80
Married	3,367	6.86	2,395	1.50
Separated/Divorced	3,660	7.47	3,012	1.90
Widowed	28,180	57.43	131,836	82.80
Total	49,065	100	159,213	100
2011				
Single	15,130	22.52	23,525	11.77
Married	8,480	12.63	5,685	2.84
Separated/Divorced	10,090	15.02	10,010	5.01
Widowed	33,475	49.83	160,665	80.38
Total	67,175	100	199,885	100
2019				
Single	18,900	23.02	26,500	11.21
Married	6,500	7.92	4,400	1.86
Separated/Divorced	16,700	20.34	21,400	9.05
Widowed	40,000	48.72	184,100	77.84
Total	82,100	100	236,400	100

Source: Prepared by the authors with data from the 1991, 2001 and 2011 Population Censuses and the 2019 Continuous Household Survey (INE)

The marital status of older people living alone varies significantly between men and women. Among women, the proportion of widows is very high: 77.84% in Andalusia according to the ECH-2019. As for the rest, 11.21% are single, 9.05% separated or divorced and 1.86% married (legally married but it is highly likely that they are actually separated). However, less than half of men living alone are widowers (48.72%). This means that many more are single (20.02%), separated or divorced (20.34%) and married (7.92%). In any case, both data

sets have shown significant variation in recent decades. Single and widowed women are losing prominence; meanwhile the proportion of separated or divorced women is increasing sharply. The percentage of widowed men is falling too, as that of separated or divorced men rises rapidly. As shown by table 17, the decrease in widowhood is more pronounced among men than women, whereas the boom in separation or divorce is greater among women.

12. Conclusions

Both the populations of Andalusia and Spain are approaching practically irreversible demographic ageing; given that life expectancy continues to rise and there are no short or medium-term plans to address the current low fertility levels. The number of over 65s is increasing constantly; a growing percentage of whom live exclusively with their partner or alone once their partner dies. It is becoming less common for over 65s to live with their family in multi-generational households. Current studies, based on quantitative data from various population censuses and the ECH 2019 (INE), show that older people are key players in processes underway in Spain and Andalusia, such as the reduction of average household size or the boom in single-person households. This has major social implications which should be investigated in depth. As for those living alone, it will be necessary to focus on their social reality, the most common problems they face and the resources available to them. We are dealing with a particularly vulnerable group of the population, as the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed.

Women are more susceptible to living alone than men because widowhood affects them more. This has always been the case because the elderly population is always made up of more women than men. However, in recent decades the proportion of men has increased: in 1991 they accounted for 19.49% of cases in Andalusia, compared to around 26% now. Another trend which should be highlighted is the demographic ageing of this group, given that the very elderly continue to gain statistical significance. For example, over 85s now make up around 21% of the population compared to less than 8% in 1991. Likewise, our study confirms that living alone is becoming more common among all partner-less older people, regardless of their marital status. Whilst widowed people are still the dominant group among older people living alone (seven out of ten cases), separated or divorced people are quickly gaining prominence (their percentage has multiplied tenfold between 1991 and 2019, from 1.20% to 11.96%). Everything seems to indicate that these trends will continue to develop in the future so that men, the

very elderly and instances of separation or divorce will be more commonplace within the population of older people living alone. Internal diversity will undoubtedly increase and should lead to different treatment of each subgroup; given that each has its own living conditions, needs and demands. This is an issue that future sociological studies should address.

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