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**REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN CHARACTERISTICS OF  
HOUSEHOLDS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

**(Séance / Session 3)**

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### ***Abstract***

Subject of the Paper presents the existing differences regarding basic characteristics and average size of the households in the Republic of Serbia that have appeared as the result of unequal socio-economic and demographic development of certain areas in the period after the Second World War.

*Key words:* household, Serbia, regional differences, municipalities, settlements.

### ***Résumé***

Ce document décrit les différences actuelles entre les caractéristiques principales et la taille moyenne des ménages dans la République de Serbie qui ont résulté d'un développement socio-économique et démographique inégal de certaines régions s'étant déroulé après la Seconde guerre mondiale.

*Mots clé:* ménage, Serbie, différences régionales, municipalités, agglomérations.

## **Introduction**

In relation with the Western European Countries, process of industrialization in Serbia started 50-100 years later, i.e. towards the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Breakthrough of commodity monetary economy in our country gradually caused extinguishing of particular economic functions of the households, thus enabling the possibility of huge family cooperatives' transformation. However, in the following fifty-year period (until the end of the Second World War), number of active participants in industry did not significantly increase and the already started process of huge households' transformation was stopped due to turbulent socio-historical events in the Balkans in that period.

After the Second World War, more intensified process of transformation was continued. Radical state involvement in the area of property relationships (first confiscation, then expropriation and afterwards the agrar reforms in 1945 and 1953 and nationalization of the enterprises in 1946 and 1948, as well as determination of the maximal land area) strongly influenced changes in households' structure. Small land parcels and the conditions of rural overpopulation could not provide nourishment of multi-member rural households. On the other hand, quick industry development and versatile infrastructural works (renewal of devastated land after the War) demanded significant labor force and thus given the possibilities for easier employment of poor rural population and their including in non-agricultural activities. Economic role of the households is transformed and household 'is no more the place of mutual production, but the point of mutual consumption' (Weber, 1976), and community/ togetherness of the households' members is downgraded to biological relationships between parents and their children.

The process of de-agrarization after the Second World War, although desirable at the beginning because of high rural overpopulation, was getting more and more spontaneous and inevitable. Land parcels, previously reduced due to households' stratification, became even smaller. Economic power of rural households was decreasing and caused young people's migrations to the cities. However, the cities were no more able to accept the new-coming contingents of the labor force, thus provoking the problem of unemployment. In the mid-sixties, our people started leaving the country and moving to the countries of Western Europe because they were searching for employment. Additionally, as young people were leaving, rural population was quickly getting older and older. Insufficient number of economically active population was obvious and small agricultural holdings were not suitable for profitable production. Intervention of the country, which might stimulate the individual agricultural production and rural life, was missing, resulting in gradual emptying of rural settlements. On the other hand, situation in the over-crowded cities was also getting worse because of unemployment problem and housing jeopardy. Yet, besides the huge problems that existed during the process of country's development in the post-war period, it can be certainly said that Serbia, in relatively short period of time (until the 1980's), made a big step forward regarding socio-economic development.

The last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century will be, unfortunately, remembered because of vast economic and also general social crisis in Serbia, which appeared as the consequence of breakdown of the former SFRY. Vicinity of the war, inflow of refugees, political turbulences, international isolation, as well as inconceivable inflation, produced the feeling of general uncertainty and insecurity among the citizens. All mentioned unfavorable factors stopped modernization trends that were characteristic for developed European countries and they particularly negatively influenced the households, as the most sensitive cells of the society.

During the whole post – war period, simultaneously with economy development, the process of households' atomization was taking place and absolute number of households was increasing. Broad patriarchal communities completely broke down, except in Kosovo and Metohia, so that small households, i.e. family nucleuses prevailed. Nevertheless, process of demographic transition was particularly slow in Kosovo and Metohia, first of all due to numerous unfavorable factors, inherited from the previous period. Even though a number of apparent changes happened after the Second World War, mainly referring to economy, education and other aspects of living, traditional patriarchal elements in this province remained unaltered until the end of the twentieth century.

For that reason, two polarities have been created in Serbia at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On one hand, there are Central Serbia and Vojvodina, noting insufficient number of child births, swift ageing of population and average households with a few household members, while on the other hand, Kosovo and Metohia records the highest birth rate and the biggest average size of the households in Europe.

### **Changes in total number of households and number of average household members, by post-war Censuses (1948-2002)**

Increase of total population number was noted on all territories of the Republic of Serbia, but it was the most intensive in Kosovo and Metohia, where absolute number of households increased by more than 2.5 times in the period 1948-1991 (table 1). Regarding Central Serbia, number of households almost doubled up to 2002 (growth index: 197.7), while the increase in Vojvodina was somewhat more reasonable (index: 156.3).

Table 1- Index of households' number increase

	1953/ 1948	1961/ 1953	1971/ 1961	1981/ 1971	1991/ 1981	2002/ 1991	1991/ 1948	2002/ 1948
Republic of Serbia	108,8	119,4	116,5	114,3	105,4	...	182,2	...
Central Serbia	109,7	121,0	119,0	114,9	104,3	107,0	189,2	197,7
Vojvodina	106,7	115,7	109,4	110,6	101,0	105,3	150,8	156,3
Kosovo and Metohia	110,2	120,2	123,3	121,6	126,4	...	251,0	...

Source: Books of population Census "Comparative Review", 1991 and 2002

Observed by inter-census intervals, the greatest increase in number of households was recorded in Central Serbia and Vojvodina in the period 1953-1961, while in Kosovo and Metohia, the increase was almost unvarying in the whole referent period and according to available data, the increase was at its peak between 1981 and 1991<sup>1</sup>.

Increase of total number of households in the observed period was directly influenced by increased population number and decreased average size of the households.

Immediately after the Second World War, a household had 4.4 members on average, whereof households in urban settlements had 3.2 members on average, i.e. smaller than households in other settlements (5.1 members).

Until the 1990s, difference in average size of households in rural and urban areas was considerably reduced (3.3 members in urban areas to 4 members in other areas) and according to 2002 data, there was no remarkable difference in average size of the households by type of settlements.

Table 2- Average size of households by type of settlements

	1948	1953	1961	1971	1981	1991 <sup>1</sup>	2002
Republic of Serbia							
Total	4,39	4,32	3,96	3,76	3,63	3,61	...
Urban	3,15	3,22	3,14	3,18	3,19	3,28	...
Other	5,12	5,00	4,58	4,32	4,14	4,04	...
Central Serbia							
Total	4,54	4,44	3,97	3,63	3,43	3,35	3,02
Urban	2,99	3,11	3,03	3,06	3,07	3,15	2,87
Other	5,33	5,20	4,64	4,19	3,86	3,62	3,23
Vojvodina							
Total	3,61	3,50	3,31	3,18	3,00	2,94	2,86
Urban	3,19	3,17	3,07	3,03	2,90	2,87	2,80
Other	3,96	3,79	3,53	3,36	3,13	3,02	2,95
Kosovo and Metohia							
Total	6,36	6,43	6,32	6,61	6,92	6,76	...
Urban	4,56	4,74	4,74	5,15	5,54	5,38	...
Other	6,96	7,02	6,99	7,43	7,86	7,99	...

However, changes in average size of households were not equal on all territories. The most apparent changes were noted in Central Serbia, where an average household decreased by 1.5 members (from 4.5 members in 1948 to 3 members in 2002). Moreover, size of the households in urban settlements of Central Serbia in the referent period was almost the same. Changes mainly took part in non-urban settlements, where significant decrease of average household size was noted (from 5.3 to 3.2 members).

Referring to Vojvodina, average household size also decreased, but changes were less intensive (decrease by 0.7 members). Difference in household size in urban and other settlements in Vojvodina was in 1948 remarkably smaller if compared with Central Serbia, meaning that rural household had 4 members on average and urban 3.2. During the later period, there was almost no difference regarding the household size in rural and urban settlements of Vojvodina. According to 1981 Census, households in urban settlements were only by 0.2 members bigger than the rural ones. Additionally, the Census 2002 showed that average household in Vojvodina had less than 3 members, regardless of the type of settlement.

Average size of households in Kosovo and Metohia was extremely high during the entire period, amounting to over 6 members. Comparing the situation in 1948 with 1991, increase of average household size in Kosovo and Metohia was recorded, from 6.4 members to 6.8 members, contrary to the situation in Central Serbia and Vojvodina, where the average number of household members constantly decreased. Additionally, average size of the households in Kosovo and Metohia increased, including both rural and urban settlements, and rural household still remained bigger than urban one by more than 2 members.

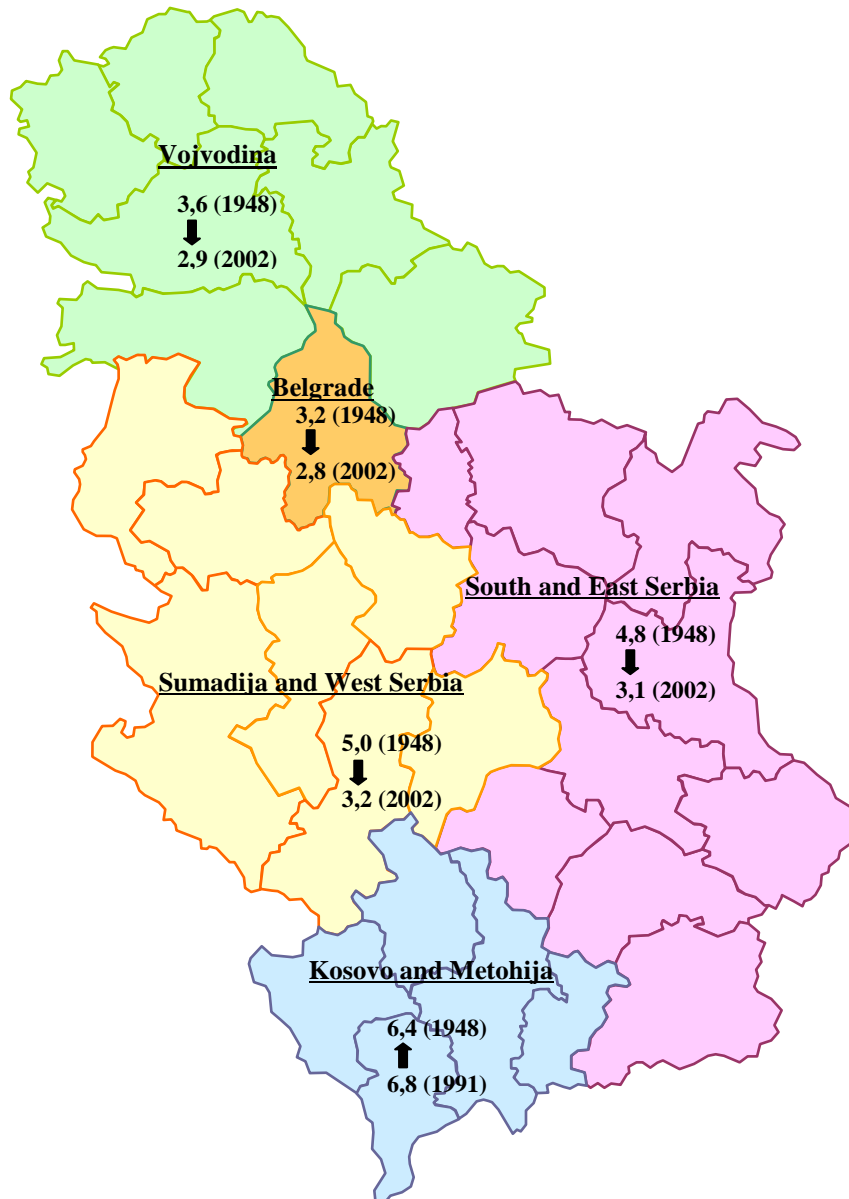
Increase of average size of the household in Kosovo and Metohia was caused by the previously existing demographic structures, as well as by high natality rates due to strong influences of the tradition regarding family life and also insufficient changes in economic functions of the households. However, it is apparent that there is the remarkable difference in households' size among the various types of settlements on this territory. According to the questionnaire surveys, conducted on the territory of Kosovo and Metohia (present population) in the recent several years by the Province Statistical Office and international statistical organizations, average size of the household is estimated to 6.4 members, i.e. average urban household is estimated to 5.5 members, while average household in "other" settlements has 6.8 members.

<sup>1</sup> Average household size by type of settlements for the Republic of Serbia and for Kosovo and Metohia was estimated.

## Dependency of the size of households in statistical regions on the type of settlements and their altitude, based on census data, 1948 - 2002<sup>2</sup>

As already described in the previous analysis, there was a trend of progressive decrease of the number of household members in Central Serbia and Vojvodina settlements, as a consequence of which minimal differences in the average size of “urban” and “non-urban” households were noticed in the last 2002 Census. Data analysis by statistical regions (NUTS 2 level) shows that the most significant changes in average size of the household took place on the territory of Central Serbia (map 1), specially in the regions “Sumadija and West Serbia” and “South and East Serbia”, where, for the period of more than half of the century, the average household have been reduced for almost two members.

Map 1. Statistical regions in Serbia according to average household size, 1948 - 2002



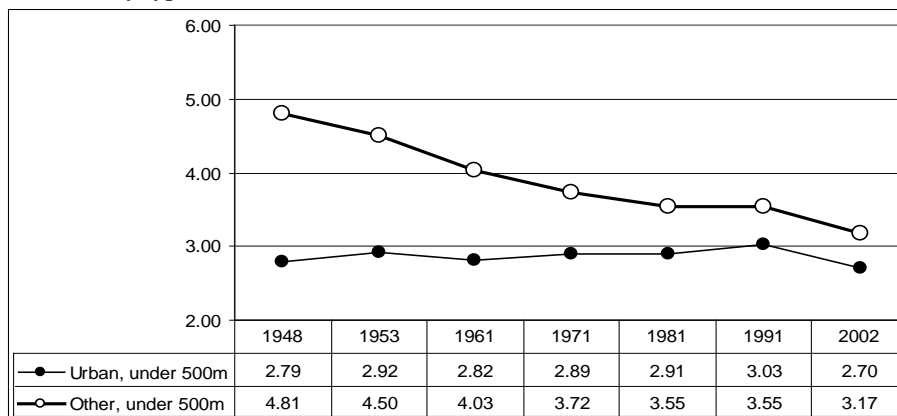
If the statistical regions (NUTS2 level) in Central Serbia and Vojvodina are observed at the same time in the context of settlement types and altitude, one can thus see significant changes in household size over the last five decades, particularly with „other“, that is, non-urban settlements located at an altitude of over 500 meters.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> 2002 Census was not carried out in AP Kosovo and Metohia.

<sup>3</sup> Contrary to the regions “South and East Serbia” and “Sumadija and West Serbia“, Belgrade and Vojvodina regions do not have settlements at an altitude of more than 500 meters.

Knowing that “Belgrade region” does not have settlements at an altitude of over 500 meters, their distribution comes practically down to their dichotomous division into “other” settlements. The average household size in urban settlements of this region does not show any significant changes over five decades (graph 1).

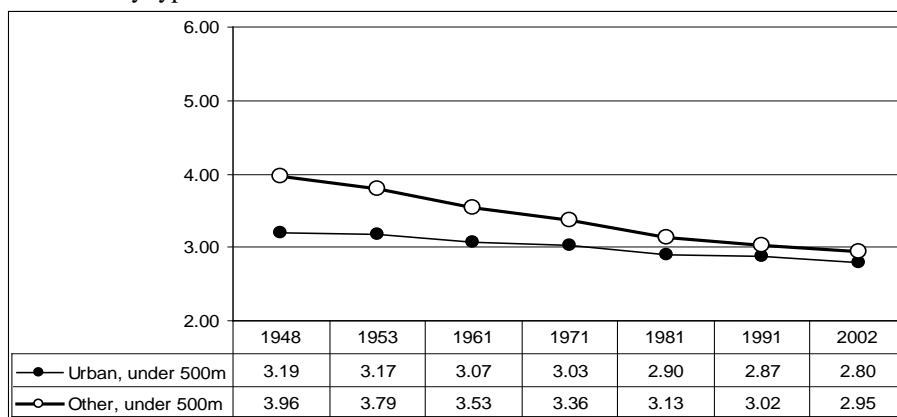
Graph 1. Belgrade region according to the average household size, by type of settlements and altitude



It is already well-known that households in urban settings have less members than those in rural settings. However, the average household size in urban settlements in this region was the lowest and mainly stagnated over 1948 – 2002 because Belgrade was part of it, as the capital and the largest urban site. Being the political, administrative, university and economic center in the country, Belgrade has always been distinguished by its outstanding educated population and its largest diversity and complexity of occupations. Extraordinary opportunities for a dynamic social mobility and social promotion, which have instigated the development of individualism, have not gone in favor of forming larger families and households. If one adds poverty and constant insufficient housing space, it is easy to understand why this region has the smallest average household size in urban settlements in the observed period.

Contrary to urban settlements, “other” settlements in Belgrade region show a serious fluctuations in the average household size. Therefore in 1948 Census, the average household size neared 5 members, and in the last 2002 Census it reached hardly more than 3 members (3.17). Compared to Belgrade region, in this first census year after World War II, one can notice, a lower average household size in “other” settlements (3.96 members) on the territory of Vojvodina region, (graph 2).

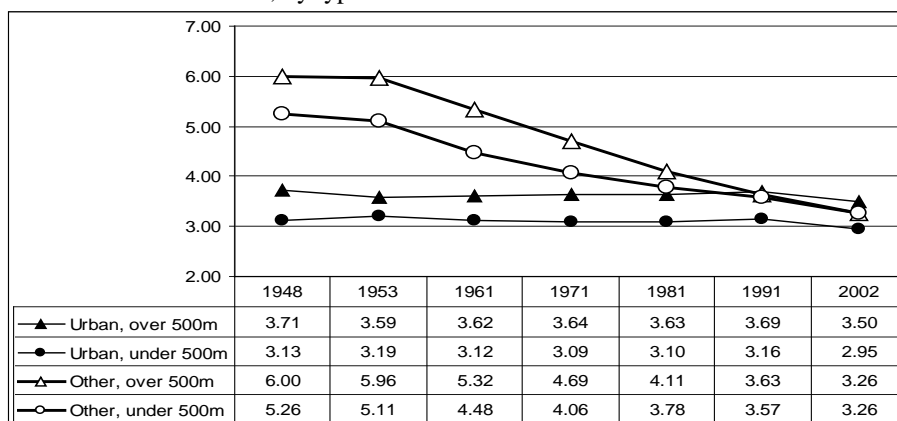
Graph 2. Region of Vojvodina according to the average household size, by type of settlements and altitude



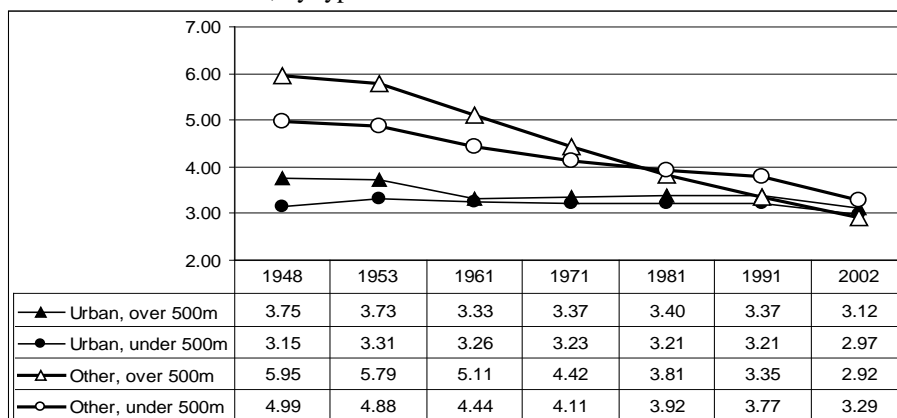
Other than that, if one observes the entire five-year period, Vojvodina region, compared to that of Belgrade, had mostly a larger average household size in urban settlements, and a smaller one in “other” settlements. Thus, the differences registered in the average household size in Vojvodina were smaller than those in Belgrade region. However, the data from 2002 Census show that this difference in the latter region became insignificant: 2.70 members in urban settlements versus 3.17 members in other settlements.

Contrary to Belgrade and Vojvodina regions, those of “Sumadija and West Serbia” and “South and East Serbia” (graphs 3 and 4) have a more various distribution of settlements by types and altitude since, on their territory, there are settlements at an altitude of over 500 meters, whether they are urban or non-urban. In both regions, it most evident that, in both regions, the average household size located at an altitude of over 500 meters did not drop during the entire observed period (1948-2002) under 3 members, the number of which ranged most likely to four members in previous census years (up to 1953 in “South and East Serbia”, and in „Sumadija and West Serbia“ up to 1991).

Graph 3. Region of Sumadija and West Serbia according to the average household size, by type of settlements and altitude



Graph 4. Region of South and East Serbia according to the average household size, by type of settlements and altitude



The impact of the altitude, as a geographical factor, to the size of the household is clearly visible in the group “other” settlements located at a height of over 500 meters in both regions. Between the first population census (1948) and the last one (2002), the average household size decreased twice as much in both regions (from approximately 6 members to about 3 members). The breaking point in the observed period was the time between two censuses 1948-1961 because afterwards the average household size in non-urban settlements at an average altitude of over 500 meters went down under the average number of 5 members.

The decrease of the average household size in non-urban settlements in mountain areas in Central Serbia has been primarily caused by massive migrations of rural population to urban settlements, and starting from the mid-sixties of the previous century, also to foreign countries. As the agricultural population has been switching excessively to non-agricultural activities, rural areas have become deserted in the sense of demography, particularly the mountain ones.

The data from 2002 Census (table 3 and graph 5) clearly show that the structure of mountain settlements (at an altitude of over 500 meters), in terms of average household size, was by far more various (at an altitude above 500 meters) than the one at a lower altitude.

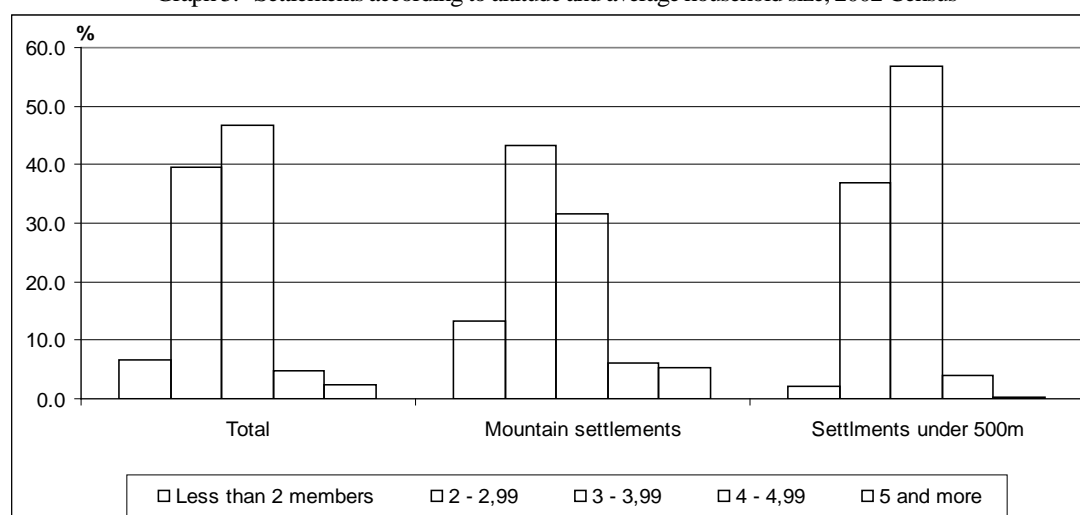


Table 3. Settlements according to average household size by altitude, 2002 Census

	Total	Mountain settlements	Settlements under 500m
Total	4715	1892	2823
Less than 2 members	310	251	59
2 - 2,99 members	1861	820	1041
3 - 3,99 members	2198	596	1602
4 - 4,99 members	228	117	111
5 members and more	109	100	9
No population	9	8	1
%			
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0
Less than 2 members	6,6	13,3	2,1
2 - 2,99 members	39,5	43,3	36,9
3 - 3,99 members	46,6	31,5	56,7
4 - 4,99 members	4,8	6,2	3,9
5 members and more	2,3	5,3	0,3
No population	0,2	0,4	0,0
%			
Total	100,0	40,1	59,9
Less than 2 members	100,0	81,0	19,0
2 - 2,99 members	100,0	44,1	55,9
3 - 3,99 members	100,0	27,1	72,9
4 - 4,99 members	100,0	51,3	48,7
5 members and more	100,0	91,7	8,3
No population	100,0	88,9	11,1

Among mountain settlements the most numerous are those in which an average household has between 2 and 2,99 members (43.3%). When settlements which average household has less than 2 members (13.3%) are added to them, it turns out that in more than a half of mountain settlements (56.6%) the average household size is smaller than the average one on the level of the Republic (3 members). However, in the contingent of settlements at an altitude of under 500 meters, less than 40% of settlements have an average household with less than 3 members, and those that absolutely and relatively prevail are settlements with an average household which number of members ranges between 3 and 3,99 members (56.6%).

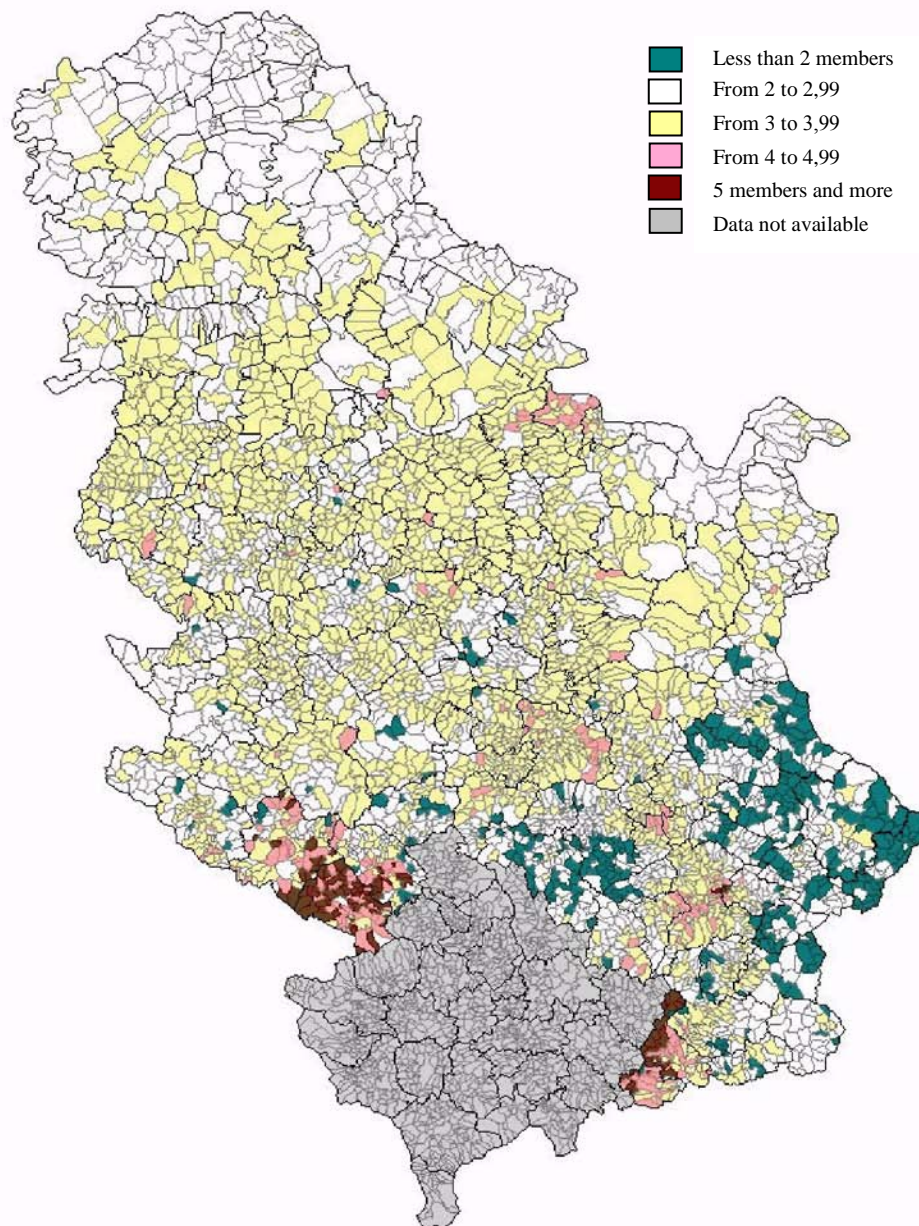
Graph 5. Settlements according to altitude and average household size, 2002 Census



Significant differences are visible also in the percentages of settlements which average household size is of 5 members and more. The share of those settlements is by far larger in mountain settlements than in those located at a lower altitude (5.3% in mountain ones versus 0.3% in settlements at an altitude under 500 meters).

Of the total of 310 settlements where an average household have less than 2 members, more than 4/5 settlements (81%) fall into the category of mountain settlements (at an altitude of over 500 meters). Most of them (87%) are situated in the region of South and East Serbia, and they are most numerous in the following municipalities: Prokuplje, Knjazevac, Dimitrovgrad, Pirot, Kursumlija, Bela Palanka, Svrlijig, Crna Trava and Gadzin Han (Map 2). They are generally settlements with a few inhabitants, which are away from municipal centers. Their population is on average older than 60 years of age, and settlements where the average age is over 70 are not rare either.

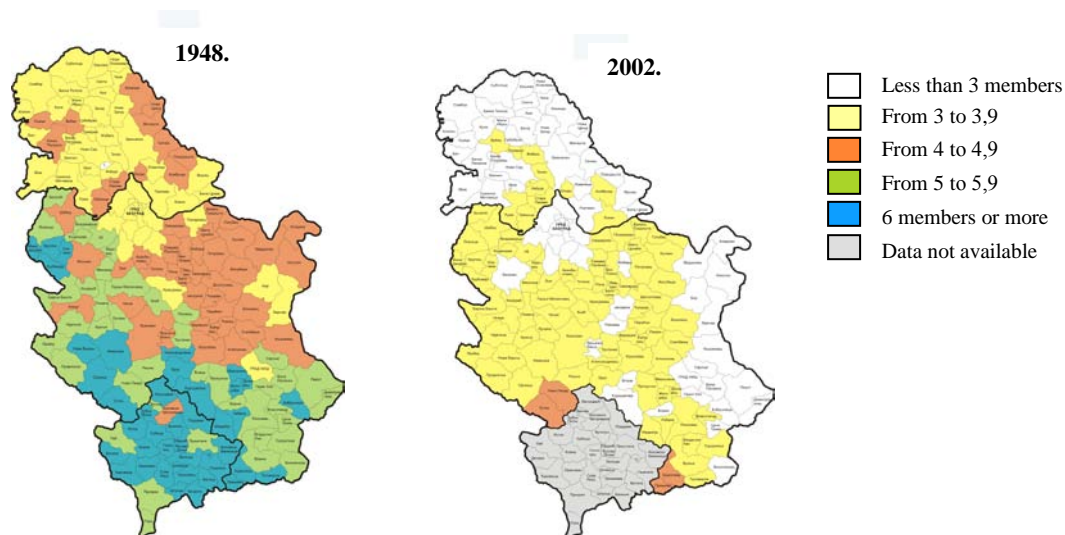
Map 2. Settlements according to average household size, 2002 Census



On the other side, of the total of 109 settlements having households of an average size of 5 members or more, 92% belong to the category of mountain settlements. Almost all of them (97%) are located in the following municipalities: Tutin (53 settlements), Novi Pazar, Sjenica, Presevo and Bujanovac. The majority population is Islamic, and the average age is approximately 30 years.

It is well-known that fertility affects considerably the size of a household (the birth rate is highly correlated to the average household size), and the differential fertility by ethnicity has given rise to regional differences in household size. Data on the total number of live births by mother's ethnicity indicate that the pattern of giving birth to three or more children is typical, in Serbia, only of Albanians, the Bosnjaks and Roma people, while mothers of other ethnicity have one or two children. Thus, in Central Serbia the following municipalities are noticeable by their household size above the average: Tutin, Novi Pazar, Bujanovac and Presevo, in which most of the population is Islamic, although one can see that the average size of households is also decreasing in these regions compared to the previous month (Map 3).

Map 3. Municipalities according to average household size, 1948 and 2002



## Conclusion

The unequal rhythm of socio-economic development, different cultural and historical past, as well as the quick demographic transition have caused the occurrence of large regional differences in the average household size in Serbia. In the context of the number of members, the size of an average household in Central Serbia and Vojvodina is similar that of an average European household (approximately 3 members). However those in Kosovo and Metohia, with more than six members on average, are by far the largest in Europe.

Current regional differences in the average size of households in the Republic of Serbia are the result of a dissimilar general social development of certain regions, which has instigated massive migrations from underdeveloped areas to developed ones, and also to those where the population is differently grouped according to national and religion affiliation.

The analysis of data on the average number of household members, according to the altitude the settlements are, is expressive of the fact that the differences in household size after World War II have mainly taken place in mountain rural settlements where the average household size has progressively decreased primarily because of the departure of the youth.

The smallest average household size (2002 Census) is typical of the areas with significant fluctuations in population age structure because of a long-lasting extreme low fertility. They are first of all rural mountain settlements in the poorest municipalities, which have lost their vital potential for reason of population outflow. On the other side, the most numerous average households have been recorded in mountain settlements which majority population is made of Albanians in the municipalities of Presevo and Bujanovac, as well as in the municipalities which majority population is composed of the Bosnjaks in the municipalities of Tutin, Sjenica and Novi Pazar. Owing to relatively high reproductive norms and traditionally outstanding value given to life in family communities consisting of several generations, which is also nowadays present among Islamic population, even at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century these settlements still have household which average size goes beyond 5 members.

In the forthcoming period, households in the Republic of Serbia will undoubtedly undergo significant changes, which, alike in developed Europe countries, will be primarily visible in greater lifestyle individualization. The number of single young households, but also the number of cohabitation communities and other forms of informal associations will increase along with the rise of the living conditions. However, for reason of large variations in the age structure in Central Serbia and Vojvodina the number of single old-age households will still be increasing. This problem will be especially obvious in small rural settlements, away from large urban centers where the number and the average size of households will go on falling. The extent of this unfavorable demographic trend is illustrated by the data from 2002 Census on the fact that approximately 50 thousands of households which members are over 65 years of age live in settlements in mountain areas. It is most likely that the forthcoming 2011 Census will render an even more negative picture about the average household size and spreading out of the phenomenon of old-age households.

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