

# **The elderly in 1787 and 1801: what was their situation? Did they stay in control or?**

## **An analysis of elderly and their households**

Nanna Floor Clausen  
Danish Data Archive

### **Introduction**

This paper will analyse the situation of the elderly in 1787 and 1801 by looking in depth at their households. By doing so it will be possible to get an understanding of how they managed: were they living as retired on their farms, were they supported by their children or were they still working and thus making an income?

Especially their situation in the households with children will be analysed as this has often been discussed. Special focus will be on made on the position as head of household: was it the elderly or their grown-up children who was head of household?

It will furthermore be analysed if there is a correlation between occupation on the one side and size and composition of the households of the elderly on the other side.

The analyses will be carried out with respect for the differences in life conditions for men and women as well as with respect to the different possibilities for those living in the rural areas and in the cities. The analyses in the paper are making use of the complete and standardised censuses from 1787 and 1801 and the outcome will demonstrate how much information we can get from the censuses and whether it is possible to clarify the situation of the elderly using only the censuses.

### **The data and method**

The data for the analyses is the 1787 and 1801 censuses. They have been transcribed by volunteers and are preserved by the Danish Data Archive (DDA). The data are stored in a relational database and since 2001 the data has been proof read, standardised and coded. This is an on-going work as it will always be possible to find records that can be coded in another way. Some of the codes added to a record will be a result of an interpretation of the source and a decision can always be discussed according to a specific analysis. But the result is nevertheless that we now have censuses of a very high quality and with much added information that can be used for making analyses that will increase our knowledge of the population around 1800.

Working with complete censuses is much different from working with a subset of the population which has previously been the only way to make demographic analyses. With a smaller dataset it is possible to work with each record individually and to extract all the information possible. In a large database this is not possible; here the coding will be done using a lot of sql-scripts in order to standardise and code the data. The sql-scripts are applied to those records that fulfil the specified criteria for the different fields and much effort has been put into coding as much information as possible – but it will always be possible to add more coding to the data when new analyses are made of the census. The scripts have been supplied with some manual coding when necessary and

possible for special cases.<sup>1</sup> The benefit of having total censuses is that the whole population is available for analyses and there is no mistake possible of having made a biased sample of the census. Having two complete censuses also allows for analyses on population development per se and analyses on the quality and variation of the censuses themselves.

Two subsets of the censuses were selected containing all records/persons that had the age of 60 or more. Other subsets were made from this table in order to get a table with the unique household numbers. Having these tables it was possible to make the analyses of the households.

The work on occupation has been a time consuming task over the years. There are several questions related to this task: what is an occupation? Which is the main occupation when a person has more than one? The answer to the first question has been to standardise the occupations by giving an occupation a code and use this in stead of the written text. We use two types of codes: an internal DDA code and a HISCO-code. Each occupation has been given a DDA-code in order to make detailed analyses and where possible these codes have been related to the HISCO<sup>2</sup> codes. The answer to the second question has been to divide a person's occupations equally. If a person has three occupations each of his occupations is given a weight of 0.33. It is impossible from the census to decide which of them is of most importance and whether the occupation is generating an income or is 'just' social status. Some of the occupations stated in the census are in fact social status and not an occupation that generates an income. This is the case for e.g. 'lodgers' (*inderste*) For the analyses of occupation I have differentiated between 'real occupations' and 'other occupations'. 'Real occupations' are those for which a HISCO code exists. 'Living on charity' is not regarded as an occupation in HISCO whereas 'farmer' is an occupation.

In order of clarification I have sometimes added the Danish wording in italics.

### **Definition of the elderly**

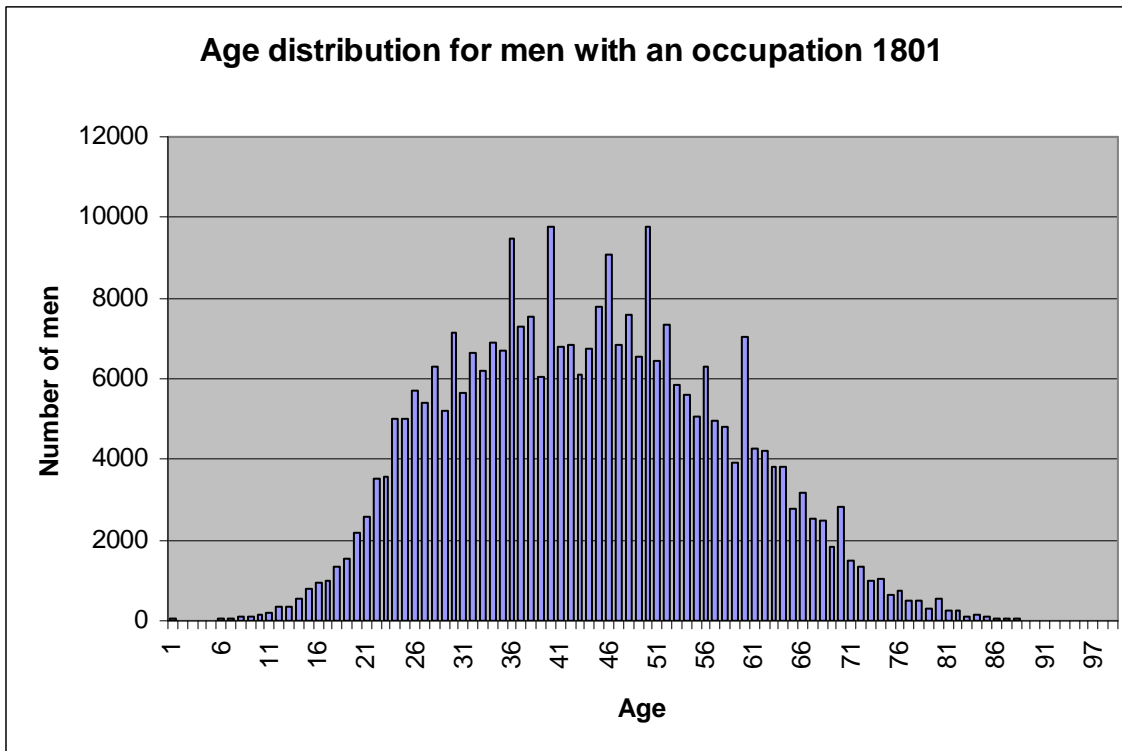
The population in this paper is persons of 60 years or more. In present days society many retire from the working market at this age and live on their pension and other savings. But when did they retire around 1800 and how did they manage? In order to see if it is meaningful to make a distinction at 60 I have made a few analyses on chosen topics. I looked at the age for retired persons and those living by own means. In 1787 1831 persons fulfil these criteria and 1541 are 60 years or more. In 1801 the figures are 3436 and 2940. For both censuses the 60+ covers app. 85% of the retired persons.

I have also looked at the distribution of occupation by age. It is illustrated in this graph:

---

<sup>1</sup> The work on this census has been presented at ESSHC in 2004 and 2006 and at SSHA in 2007 by Nanna Floor Clausen and Hans Jørgen Marker. Likewise in articles published by the Danish Data Archive: *Metode & Data*, 92 2006, 89 2003, 84 2001

<sup>2</sup> HISCO - historical international classification of occupations. See <http://hisco.antenna.nl/> for more on the project



The majority having an occupation is younger than 60 although some did have an occupation until high age – at least according to the census information.

From these few analyses I therefore find it meaningful to make a distinction at the age of 60 and analyse the group of 60+ as one group.

### ***The population in 1787 and 1801***

The Danish population had a small growth in population from 840.947 persons in 1787 to 929.416 in 1801. The elderly made up 10 % of the population with a small increase to 10.7 % in 1801.

	1787		1801		1787		1801	
Elderly	84.678	10 %	98.721	10.6 %				
Men	39.082	46 %	46.385	47 %	416539	49.5 %	457901	49.5 %
Women	45.591	53.8 %	52.326	53 %	423138	50 %	466919	50.5%

**Table 1** The table shows the male/female ratio in the group and in the total population

From the table it is evident that the proportion of elderly women is higher than the proportion of women in the total population. In spite of the fact that many women died in childbirth women also in that period survived until reaching a high age. There seems to be no variation in the distribution of elderly by gender in the two censuses.

The table also shows that there was a general increase in population. The population increase was 10.5 % from 1787 to 1801. The increase of elderly was 16.6 %. The increase in elderly was thus much higher than the general increase in population. From the census material it is not possible to say why this was so. The age heaping around whole 10-years was much more explicit in 1787 so

this is not an explanation of the growth. The larger proportion of elderly is a part of the general population growth.

### ***Analyses of households: were the elderly living in families, alone or ?***

When we want to know the living conditions for the elderly it is sine qua non to analyse their households. Before this can be done we must define what is meant by a household. This is not easy as even when taking the census it was difficult to agree on a common definition. In the rural districts the local vicar asked every head of household to give the information about each member of his household. In the towns the tax collectors went around and asked the head of households for the information concerning their household members. A general problem is whether a lodger was a member of the household or not. A lodger could have his/her own family; they could be contractual pensioner on their former farm (*aftægtsfolk*) or a parent. The definition of a household is more complex when we are dealing with large households like manors, barracks, hospitals etc. There are several examples of this kind of households where e.g. a person is specified as head of households and where other families can be identified within that household. In order to deal with this kind of households an identifier has been given to all the households in order to differentiate between them. The following kinds of households have been identified:

- Empty
- Family
- Institution
- Soldiers
- Without head

The classification is used because there is not a one to one relationship between a 'family' and a 'household'. The head of household though had an understanding of who were in his household and it is his point of view that is reflected in the census. In the census there was room for giving information on how many families were living in a building (house).<sup>3</sup>

In 1787 there were 64.647 households with one or more elderly in the household. In 1801 there were 74.204 households.

The proportion of households with elderly was:  $64.647 / 172.104 = 37.6 \%$  of all households in 1787.

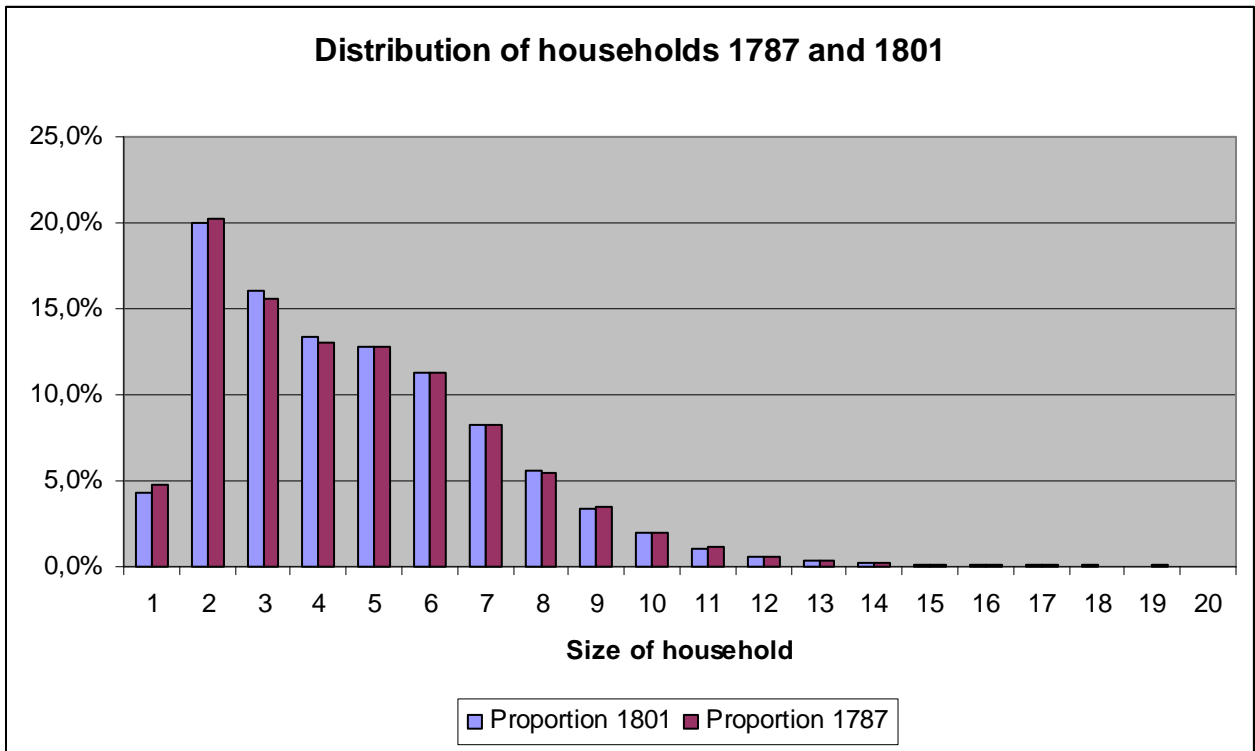
The proportion of households with elderly was:  $74.204 / 190.451 = 39 \%$  of all households in 1801.

The proportion of households with elderly was thus a little larger in 1801 and this is possibly a reflection of the larger proportion and number of elderly in 1801.

The distribution of households with elderly is shown in the graph below – institutions are not included. The graph illustrates all households with elderly members. Later the households with an elderly as head of household will be analysed separately.

---

<sup>3</sup> Ole Degn: *Alle skrives i mandtal*, 1991; H.J.Marker: *Metode & Data*, 92 2006; the work at DDA on preparing the 1801 census has lead to many discussions on how to define a 'household' and these views are reflected in this paper.



In order of clarification only households of 20 members or less are shown omitting only 222 large or very large households.

The graph demonstrates clearly that the households with 2-8 members constituted 87% of the households and the focus in this paper will be on these households.

### Households of two persons

	1787	1801
Number of households	13.036	14.690
Married couples	9.943	11.033
Parent and child	1.481	1.805
Elderly and servant	475	550

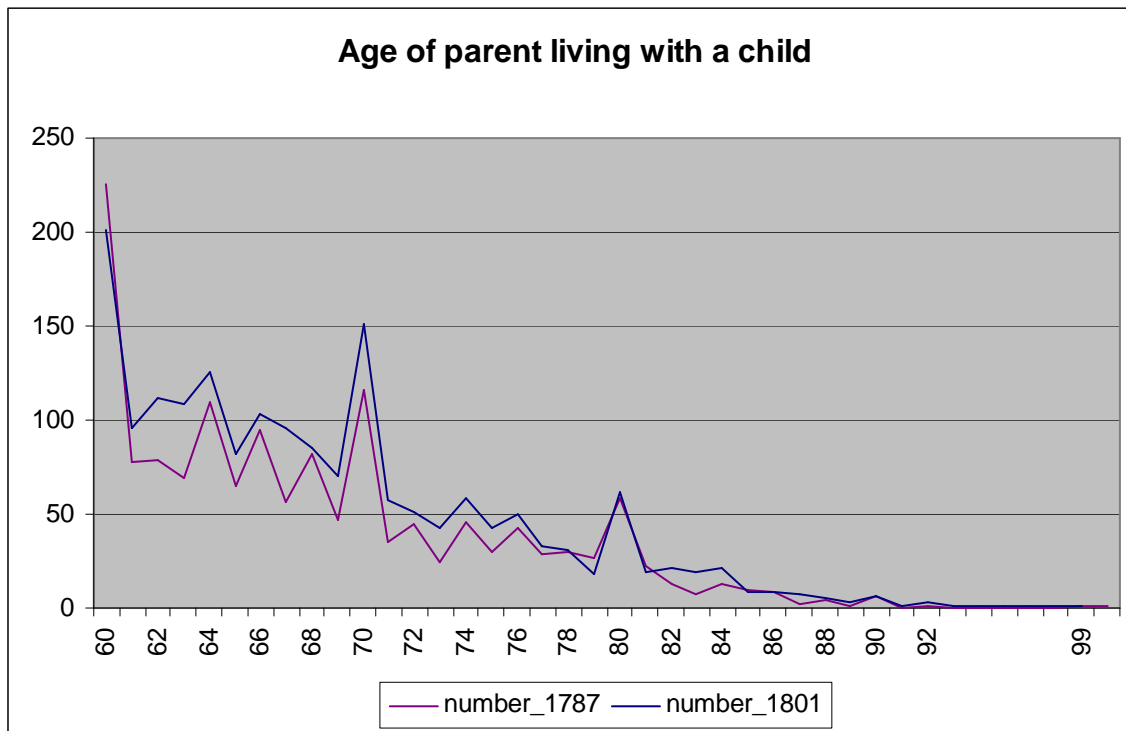
The majority of this group was a couple where at least one of the members was an elderly.

I have looked at the occupation and age of the children living with just one parent.

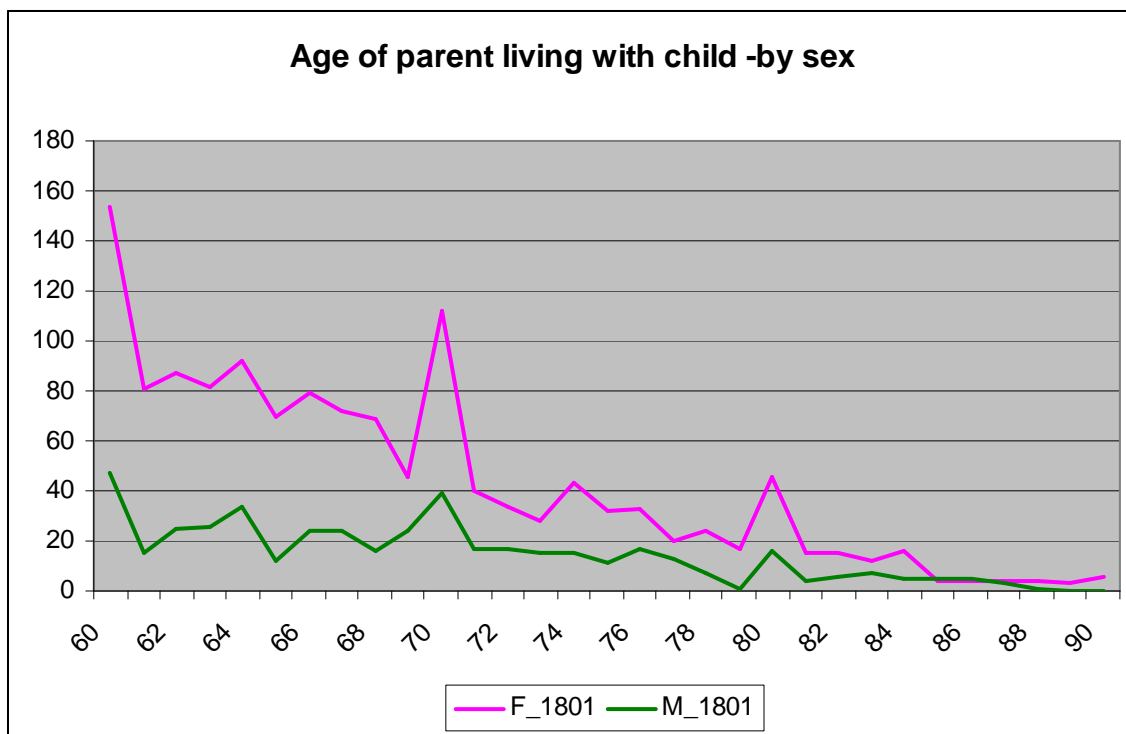
In 1787 726 women were living with a daughter and 359 with a son. Of the men 307 were living with a daughter and only 88 with a son.

In 1801 873 women were living with a daughter and 478 were living with a son. 353 men were living with a daughter and 100 were living with a son.

The age of the parent living with a child



When gender is included as part of the analysis the graph for 1801 looks like this:



This demonstrates both that more women than men were living with a child (as there were more women this might not be a surprise) but also that the age heaping was much more evident for women than men.

I have analysed the distribution according to place of living in 1801.

	Number of households	Proportion with no occupation for child
Copenhagen	139	45%
Towns	193	60%
Rural districts	1473	57%

Looking at place of living and occupation of the 'child' it turned out that except for Copenhagen more than half of the children had no information on occupation.

The distribution of the 10 most common occupations of children looks like this:

Parent	Occupation	Number	Child	Occupation	Number
Cottager	<i>Husmand</i>	232	Handicapped	<i>Handicappet</i>	65
Pauper	<i>Almisselem</i>	116	Weaver	<i>Væver</i>	53
Lodger	<i>Inderste</i>	83	Spinner	<i>Spinder</i>	29
Spinnner	<i>Spinder</i>	43	Pauper	<i>Almisselem</i>	27
Pensioner	<i>Pensionist</i>	37	Soldier	<i>Soldat</i>	24
Beggar	<i>Betler</i>	25	Day labourer	<i>Daglejer</i>	22
Weaver	<i>Væver</i>	24	Tailor	<i>Skrædder</i>	21
Poor	<i>Fattig</i>	20	Sailor	<i>Matros</i>	20
Retired agriculturalists, remaining on farm with formal contract with (usually) children	<i>Aftægtsfolk</i>	18	Seamstress	<i>Syerske</i>	9
Day labourer	<i>Daglejer</i>	18	Beggar	<i>Betler</i>	7

#### 1 Occupation of parent and child in 1787

Parent	Occupation	Number	Child	Occupation	Number
Cottager with land	<i>Husmand med Jord</i>	290	Weaver	<i>Væver</i>	84
Pauper	<i>Almisselem</i>	150	Handicapped	<i>Handicappet</i>	48
Cottager without land	<i>Husmand uden Jord</i>	149	Tailor	<i>Skrædder</i>	48
Lodger	<i>Inderste</i>	64	Day labourer	<i>Daglejer</i>	45
Spinner	<i>Spinder</i>	47	Spinner	<i>Spinder</i>	43
Pensioner	<i>Pensionist</i>	42	Pauper	<i>Almisselem</i>	32
Retired agriculturalists	<i>Aftægtsfolk</i>	27	Soldie	<i>Soldat</i>	32
Cottager	<i>Husmand</i>	27	Sailor	<i>Matros</i>	31

Weaver	<i>Væver</i>	23	Servant	<i>Tjenestefolk</i>	14
Poor	Fattig	22	Seamstress etc.	Lever af Haandarbejde	13

## 2 Occupation of parent and child in 1801

Of the elderly it was an exception not to have some statement in the occupation-field although it often was the information of the name of the child. The children living with their parents were normally not capable of taking care of themselves. The exception was probably the soldiers and sailors who had their parents' house as their home-address.

## Households of three persons

In 1801 there were 11.809 households of three with one or more elderly. I have tried to make a distribution of the structure of these households. The majority had a man and his wife and some other person in their household. They count for 9.455 households.

In 1.234 households a parent or parent-in-law was staying.

In these households app. 1.750 had one or two servants.

In 1801 there were 6.707 households with three persons where at least one was a child of the head of household. In 505 households two children were living with one parent. In 1787 there were 5.964 households with children. The child could be a common child, a foster child etc. I have not differentiated them.

I have especially analysed the occupation of the children in these households of the age 30 or more which was 1.440 persons (i.e. 20% of the children living with parents)

The occupation in 1801 was like this:

	<b>Betegnelse</b>	<b>vaegtet</b>
Weaver	<i>Væver</i>	38
Handicapped	<i>Handicappet</i>	32
Pauper	<i>Almisselem</i>	30
Day labourer	<i>Daglejer</i>	22
Spinner	<i>Spinder</i>	20
Soldier	<i>Soldat</i>	15
Tailor	<i>Skrædder</i>	14
Sailor	<i>Matros</i>	11
Seamstress	<i>Syerske</i>	10
Servants	<i>Tjenestefolk</i>	10

1787

Weaver	<i>Væver</i>	69
Handicapped	<i>Handicappet</i>	63
Pauper	<i>Almisselem</i>	56
Spinner	<i>Spinder</i>	35
Day labourer	<i>Daglejer</i>	34



Tailor	<i>Skrædder</i>	27
Soldier	<i>Soldat</i>	17
Servants	<i>Tjenestefolk</i>	17
Sailor	<i>Matros</i>	13
Pensioner	<i>Pensionist</i>	10

### 3 1801 Child's occupation

In 1801 I found that of the children in households with three persons only 413 had an occupation with a HISCO code. This is less than 1/3 of the children at the age of 30 or more. The most common occupation was to be a weaver. They had a proportion of 16.7% of weavers among the children with an occupation compared to weavers with the age of 30 or more having a proportion in the total population with an occupation of only 1.4 %.

The conclusion is that the children staying with their parents were to a great extent those who had difficulties and problems that made them incapable of taking care of them themselves. In some cases the census takes has stated that as occupation the child was taking care of the parent. This is the situation where the elderly is the head of household.

### Households with elderly not being head of household

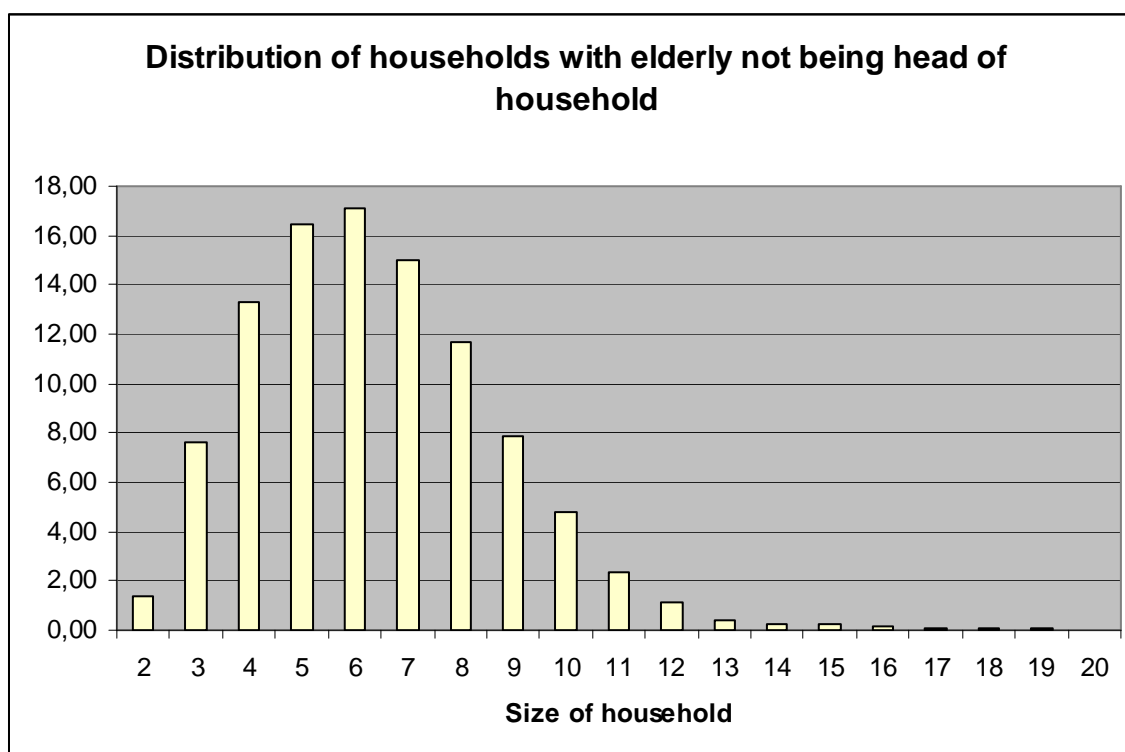
In 1801 there were app. 17.290 households where an elderly was living without being the head of household. There might be more than one elderly in these households, e.g. both parents to the head of household. An analysis of these households shows that there was a great variety of relationships between the head of household and the elderly. In fact there were 124 different kinds of relationships of which 30 each counts for just one person. We have defined the relationships in a household by looking at the relation between a member of the household and the head of household.

The most common relationships were:

Betegnelse	Relation	Number
Husstandsoverhoveds tjenestefolk	Servant of head of household	18476
Husstandsoverhoveds forældre	Parent of head of household	10567
Husstandsoverhoveds ægtefælles forældre	Parent of spouse of head of household	7684
Husstandsoverhoveds søskende	Sibling of head of household	2075
Husstandsoverhoveds ægtefælles søskende	Sibling of spouse of head of household	818
Husstandsoverhoveds forældres ægtefælle	Spouse of parent of head of household	582
Husstandsoverhoveds logerende	Lodger of head of household	550
Husstandsoverhoveds søskendes barn	Child of sibling of head of household	531
Husstandsoverhoveds forældres søskende	Sibling of parent of head of household	495
Husstandsoverhoveds ægtefælles forældres søskende	Sibling of parent of spouse of head of household	400
Husstandsoverhoveds ægtefælles forældres ægtefælle	Spouse of parent of spouse of head of household	330

To be a servant, a parent or parent-in-law to the head of household was thus very common.

A look on the size of these households demonstrate that they tend to be larger than the average as the majority had 5-7 members.



The distribution and proportion of these households are predominantly situated in the rural areas:

	Number of households	Proportion
Copenhagen	567	3,3
Towns	875	5,1
Rural districts	15.848	91,7

The general distribution of households was that 75% of the households were in the rural areas. Earlier<sup>4</sup> analyses have likewise shown that the proportion of elderly is largest in the rural areas. This result likewise correlates with the fact that the larger households were in the rural districts.

The occupation of the head of household was accordingly occupations related to the rural areas: farmer, cottager with or without land, day labourer, lodger etc. In all this group consisted of 386 different kind of occupations.

## **Occupation**

An occupation is the most important way to secure a certain level for the standard of living. When you don't have an occupation your income will diminish (or doesn't exist) and you will have to find other ways of making a living. Getting older normally means that the capacities for work are gradually being reduced making the life harder if no provisions have been made to secure an

<sup>4</sup> Paper at SSHA 2008: The elderly in 1787 and 1801, by Nanna Floor Clausen

income. On the other hand becoming 60 years of age didn't mean that the work capacity disappeared right away which will be demonstrated in the following.

The data for the analyses are those persons who had an occupation that according to HISCO has a code. For the analyses the more detailed DDA codes are being used along with the weighting of occupations and persons as described previously. According to these conditions 27,403 in 1787 and 36,750 elderly in 1801 had an occupation.

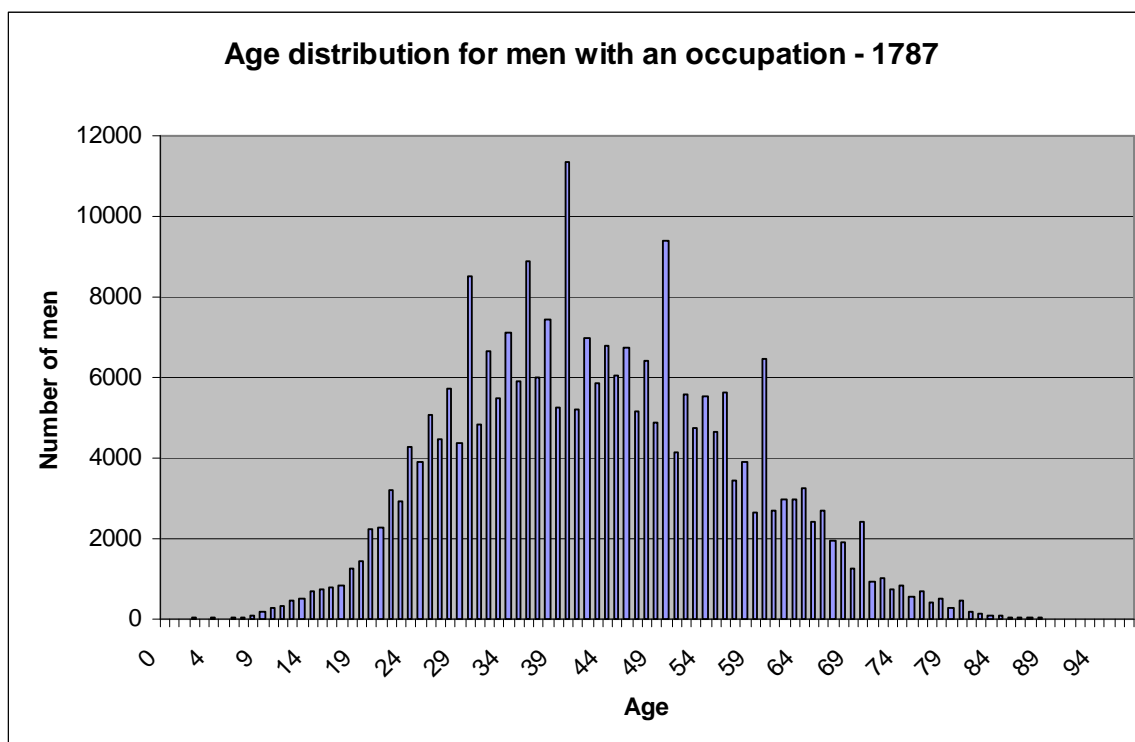
	1787	1801	Proportion of elderly with an occupation by sex	Prop. of working elderly of all elderly
Men	23446.3	30828.2	85.5 / 83.8	60 % / 66.5 %
Women	3956.7	5922.7	14.4 / 16	8.7 % / 11 %

In both censuses the proportion of men working in occupations outside the house was much higher than the proportion of women. This should be kept in mind for the following analyses on occupations.

According to the table there seems to have been more elderly stated with an occupation in 1801 than in 1787. The reason for this can be that people actually did work more until higher age or it can be more accurate information from the census takers. The proportion of working elderly women seems likewise to have gone up which is worth noticing as the total proportion of elderly women did not rise. A reason could be that the number and proportion of elderly had gone up and thus put a heavier burden on the rest of the society?

### **Age distribution and occupation**

It is to be expected that the working capacity decreases with age but when did they actually stop working? The following graph of frequency of occupation for men by age and the one at page 3 for 1801 show a decline in frequency with higher age but a surprisingly large number still have an occupation until very high age. There can be several explanations to this. One explanation is that by looking at the field 'occupation' in the census it can be difficult to tell whether a person is actively working or whether a person is listed with the occupation he had when he was younger. Another explanation is the lack of a pension which will be discussed later.



### Distribution of occupations

When we look into the range of occupations covered by the elderly several analyses can be made. The HISCO codes can be used for making analyses that can be used for international comparisons. Having the DDA codes more detailed analyses can be made. The differences will become clear below. An example:

The HISCO code 61115 is a substitute for 'Small Subsistence Farmer (Husbandman)'. This code is referred to by 39 types of occupation in the census. These 39 occupations have been grouped together into 4 DDA codes. A 'Husbeboer med Jord' is essentially the same as 'Husbruger med Jord' and 'Husmand uden hartkorn' is the same as 'Husmand uden Jord'. But it is not the same whether a cottager has some land to his house or not and therefore they are given separate DDA codes.

According to HISCO 244 different kinds of occupations were related to the elderly. It is not meaningful to list all the occupations but it can give an impression if we look at the 10 most frequent occupations:

Hisco title 1787	Hisco title 1801
General Farmer	Small Subsistence Farmer (Husbandman)
Farm-Worker, General	General Farmer
Day-Labourer	Day-Labourer
Spinner, Thread and Yarn	Spinner, Thread and Yarn
Carpenter, General	Farm-Worker, General
Tailor, Specialisation Unknown	Carpenter, General
Weaver, Specialisation Unknown	Weaver, Specialisation Unknown
Small Subsistence Farmer (Husbandman)	Tailor, Specialisation Unknown
Fisherman, Deep-Sea or Inland and Costal Water	Fisherman, Deep-Sea or Inland and Costal Water

Farm Servant	Shoemaker, General
--------------	--------------------

The proportion of the top 10 occupations is 75,8 % of all elderly with a Hisco occupation in 1801.

The DDA codes list 600 different occupations. Using these codes the list of the 10 most frequent occupations looks like this in 1801:

Number	Occupation	Occupation	Proportion
6722.6	<i>Husmand med Jord</i>	Cottager with land	18,3
5529.4	<i>Gaardbeboer</i>	Living on the farm	15,1
4057	<i>Bonde</i>	Farmer	11,0
3689.2	<i>Husmand uden Jord</i>	Cottager without land	10,0
2206.9	<i>Daglejer</i>	Day- labourer	6,0
1257.1	<i>Spinder</i>	Spinner	3,4
850.2	<i>Husmand</i>	Cottager	2,3
486.8	<i>Væver</i>	Weaver	1,3
444	<i>Skrædder</i>	Tailor	1,2
441	<i>Skomager</i>	Shoemaker	1,2
377.4	<i>Arbejdsmand</i>	Labourer	1,0

In 1787 the list looks like this:

<i>Husmand</i>	Cottager
<i>Gaardbeboer</i>	Living on the farm
<i>Bonde</i>	Farmer
<i>Daglejer</i>	Day-labourer
<i>Spinder</i>	Spinner
<i>Væver</i>	Weaver
<i>Skrædder</i>	Tailor
<i>Skomager</i>	Shoemaker
<i>Fisker</i>	Fisherman
<i>Boelsmand</i>	Cottager

The top 10 occupations account for 72 % of the occupations in 1787 and 70% of the occupations in 1801. The types of occupations demonstrate clearly that the majority of the population was living in the rural districts. The proportions also illustrate that the Danish codes are more differentiated than the Hisco codes. But the general picture is not changed. The majority of occupations are related to the rural districts.

Many of the listed occupations are probably the same but in the census quite a number of ways are used to express both the occupation and the social status. It is e.g. difficult to find the difference between a 'cottager without land' and a 'day labourer'. In general a cottager was supposed to work as a day labourer in order to manage.

The odd numbers indicate that it was not unusual to be listed with more than one occupation. This was the situation for 15.319 persons (15.5 % of the elderly) in 1801. 4 persons have reported 5 occupations and 83 persons have reported 4 occupations.

An example of a person with 5 occupations could be Jørgen Clausen, age 61, head of household and

*bonde, gaardbeboer, sognefoged, lægdsmand og brandfoged* (farmer, living on the farm / owner of the farm, parish executive officer, superintendent of a 'lægd', fire warden). Not all these occupations generated an income – in fact he was most likely living by his farm; the other occupations had been given to him due to his good reputation and he was probably better off than the average member of the parish.

In Copenhagen the conditions were much different – due to legislation<sup>5</sup> and to the size of the city. The number of occupations was very varied and the composition of the population differed from the rest of the country as shown above. Among the elderly the number of women was larger in both numbers and proportion. In 1787 the number of women surpassed the number of men by 938 and in 1801 by 1450. (This reflects the growth in population and the growth of Copenhagen on behalf of the rest of the country). Even though the participation rate of women was lower than that of men their larger number is reflected in the table below:

Copenhagen: (top 10)

1787	Occupation	Occupation	1801	Occupation	Occupation
220.5	<i>Spinder</i>	Spinner	210,1	<i>Arbejdsmand</i>	Labourer
158.0	<i>Matros</i>	Sailor	121,3	<i>Tømrer</i>	Carpenter
142.0	<i>Arbejdsmand</i>	Labourer	115	<i>Spinder</i>	Spinner
139.0	<i>Tømrer</i>	Carpenter	91,5	<i>Matros</i>	Sailor
87.3	<i>Syerske</i>	Seamstress	85,3	<i>Skomager</i>	Shoemaker
60.5	<i>Skomager</i>	Shoemaker	56	<i>Skrædder</i>	Tailor
56.0	<i>Skrædder</i>	Tailor	54,5	<i>Syerske</i>	Seamstress
42.5	<i>Kromand</i>	Innkeeper	47,5	<i>Tjenestefolk</i>	Servant
34.3	<i>Vaskekone</i>	Laundress	41	<i>Opvarningskone</i>	Companion
29.0	<i>Arbejdskarl</i>	Labourer	38	<i>Kromand</i>	Innkeeper

The elderly were distributed among 390 kinds of occupations in 1801 and among 263 types of occupations in 1787<sup>6</sup>. The 10 most frequent occupations cover 46,5 % in 1787 and 32 % of the elderly which signifies that in Copenhagen there was a larger variation than in the country in general. The occupations of spinner, seamstress and companion are typically female occupations. The proportions likewise illustrate that there had been a major development in Copenhagen in the period.

An analysis of occupations by gender and region will give an understanding of the living conditions of the two genders.

Number of types of occupations M 1787	1801	Number of types of occupations F 1787	1801	Region
233	354	69	104	Copenhagen
222	315	75	95	Towns
238	328	70	122	Rural

<sup>5</sup> Until 1857 it was forbidden to have occupations like commerce and trade organised in guilds etc. in the rural districts.

<sup>6</sup> This number may increase as app. 17.000 records still have to be standardised and coded. But a query has shown that for the elderly all proper occupations have been standardised.

				districts
--	--	--	--	-----------

The table can be interpreted in several ways:

- a) There was a big difference in the types of occupations a man or a woman could have and consequently the men had a much larger variety of occupations to choose among. Normally a woman would not have a job outside the family. In Copenhagen 552 elderly women had an occupation of 3781 women which gives a percentage of 14.5.
- b) There was a general growth in types of occupations from 1787 till 1801. In the towns ('*købstæderne*') the growth of types of occupation was relatively smaller for women. It should be kept in mind that the towns were quite small at this time.
- c) There might be differences in the way an occupation was listed in the censuses. The growth can reflect an actual growth in the society or it can reflect a more detailed way of taking the censuses. In 1787 the field for occupation was given as: 'The persons' title, office, business, handicraft or license to trade'. In 1801 it was: 'The persons' title, office, business, handicraft, occupation or what they live by'. The addition 'or what they live by' ought not to be reflected in the number of 'real' occupations but more in the area of income not deriving from an occupation – such as allowance etc.
- d) The census in 1787 was taken in July and in 1801 in February. This might likewise influence the result.

### ***Or what they live by***

The previous paragraph dealt with the elderly stated with an occupation. When we look at the total group of elderly and the information in the 'occupation' field we get the following result:

<b>1787</b>			<b>1801</b>		
6890.7	<i>Almisselem</i>	Pauper	9430.7	<i>Almisselem</i>	Pauper
6178.8	<i>Husmand</i>	Cottager	6722.6	<i>Husmand med Jord</i>	Cottager with land
5079.9	<i>Inderste</i>	Lodger	5529.4	<i>Gaardbeboer</i>	Living on the farm
4563.4	<i>Gaardbeboer</i>	Living on the farm	4616.7	<i>Aftægtsfolk</i>	Retired agriculturalists, remaining on farm with formal contract with (usually) children
4489.6	<i>Bonde</i>	Farmer	4575.7	<i>Opholdende</i>	Resident
3117.9	<i>Opholdende</i>	Resident	4528.5	<i>Inderste</i>	Lodger
2523.5	<i>Aftægtsfolk</i>	Retired agriculturalists, remaining on farm with formal contract with (usually) children	4057.0	<i>Bonde</i>	Farmer
1808.1	<i>Daglejer</i>	Day-labourer	3689.2	<i>Husmand uden Jord</i>	Cottager without land
1388.8	<i>Pensionist</i>	Pensioner	2308.7	<i>Pensionist</i>	Pensioner

1157.7	<i>Fattig</i>	Poor	2206.9	<i>Daglejer</i>	Day-labourer
--------	---------------	------	--------	-----------------	--------------

The table demonstrates that the majority of the elderly did not have an occupation. The most common ‘occupation’ was ‘pauper’ – which is the standard form for anybody receiving any kind of allowance being it large or small. Their situation will be given a more thorough analysis in a separate paragraph below. The only ‘real’ occupations are farmer, cottager and day-labourer. The list underlines that the majority of the population were living in the rural districts. The table may reflect the change in the formulation in the census as the ‘occupations’ in the table covers nearly 44% of the elderly in 1787 but 48% in 1801. The list covers thus only half of the elderly which is due to the fact that the majority of the women did not have any occupation or information about what they lived by. An analysis of the two censuses shows a dramatic change for some of the listed occupations. E.g. being a pensioner, a retired person, increased by 66% and a pauper by 37% from 1787 to 1801.

The number of all standardised occupations was in 1787 461 and in 1801 644. The development is the same as above; in the 1801 census the census takers entered more details about the population and also took more notice of adding information about a person in order to fill out the occupation-field. In 1787 5.569 men were not given any information and in 1801 this was true only for 3.590 men.

Quite a number of the elderly was not given an occupation but as occupation there mode of dwelling was stated. In these cases we cannot see how they got an income apart from the few cases where the enumerator has added a comment.

1787	1801		
5079.9	4528.5	<i>Inderste</i>	Lodger
72	176.8	<i>Logerende</i>	Lodger
3117.9	5109	<i>Opholdende</i>	Resident

## Paupers and poor

The list of occupations including all the elderly shows that the majority were stated as ‘receiving allowance’. From the census it is not possible to see how much they received (though in some cases it is reported – see below). On the census list are furthermore listed ‘poor’, ‘disabled’, ‘sick’ and ‘beggar’ which are all occupations that indicate a very low standard of living and they will be dealt with as one group.

One way of defining a welfare state is by looking at the way it provides for its weak citizens. The model for a welfare state began in Germany in 1883 and spread slowly until WW2. Since WW2 the state has taken over almost all the provisions for its weak citizens. The society in 1801 was far from being a welfare state but there was a growing feeling that something had to be done for the poor.<sup>7</sup> The public assistance was in 1801 still based on a decree on beggars from 1708. Before 1708 it had

<sup>7</sup> The description of the legislation is based on: Harald Jørgensen: Det offentlige fattigvæsenes udvikling i Danmark, 1940; Patrioter & fattigfolk. Fattigvæsenet I København, 2005; Svend Aage Hansen: Økonomisk vækst i Danmark 1720 – 1914, 1972



been legal to beg but from this moment the state tried to organise the provision for the poor. Every person who was not capable of managing should be allowed to ask the authorities in the local community for some help. The poor were classified into three or four classes depending on the local situation. The 'worthy poor' were blind, sick and disabled, orphans and those not capable of doing any kind of work – like many elderly. The money for the support was supposed to come from taxes and voluntary contributions. The vicars were in charge of the administration, i.e. they both collected the money and distributed it among the poor. This was not an easy task and from the accounts from the vicars it can be seen that every new vicar was very dedicated on helping the poor and tried hard to increase the voluntary contributions but after a period he lost his enthusiasm. The more well-to-do persons were not happy with the legislation and tried in every way to avoid the payment or at least to pay as little as possible. Consequently only little money could be given to the 'worthy poor'. The 'unworthy poor' were left to themselves or to begging even though it was forbidden and they had a hard life. All through the period numerous reports were made on the problem with beggars who wandered around in the country. The parish would only support persons from their own area – but sometimes it could be difficult to decide to which parish a person belonged and this left a person in a hopeless situation.

For the worthy poor staying in a 'hospital' or in a poor house was a way of surviving. In this period it was definitely only the very poor who stayed there.

By the end of the century the problem with the poor had grown bigger as there had been a rise in their number due to the general economic situation in the country and in Europe. The majority of the working people earned enough to get by on a low level but as soon as anything happened – like a period of illness – a person could soon be left without any means. This happened e.g. easily for cottagers, day labourers and servants. A commission was appointed that should deal with the problem and procure information for a new legislation for the poor. In 1799 a plan was decided for Copenhagen and in 1802/03 for the rest of Denmark. In Copenhagen the money for the poor came from taxes on specified objects. This plan had some serious problems: the taxes varied a great deal from year to year and the money was fixed and independent of the number of people in need. Below the situation of the poor elderly will be analysed.

The text in the census often makes it difficult to distinguish between '*aftægt*' and 'receive allowance'.<sup>8</sup> There was no standard for stating the occupation in the census which makes room for the numerous way of describing the same occupation and social status. Decisions have been made but sometimes they can be debated but in general another point of view will not greatly influence the conclusions in this paper.

The standardisation of the occupations makes it possible to distinguish between paupers, poor and sick but this may lead to results that are not totally true as the census takers often have just different wordings in order to describe the same social conditions. For the analyses of their situation they are consequently treated as one population.

The total number of elderly in the above defined group was 11,424 persons. Being 'poor' or 'disabled' cannot be defined in anyway as occupation though most of the 'poor' are listed as such in the occupation field. Some of the enumerators made a comment of a person's situation like being

---

<sup>8</sup> (*underholdes paa garden* could be interpreted as *aftægt* whereas *nyder underholdning på stedet* could be interpreted as 'receiving allowance'. But the text could interpreted the other way round or in the same way)

'poor' and did not enter anything in the occupation field. An analysis of the comments has resulted in 203 persons to be added to the above number giving in all 11,627 'poor'.

In the total population 18,486 in 1787 and 19,702 in 1801 are listed as poor. 52.7 % resp. 59 % in the group of 'poor' was elderly; among the elderly the poor had a proportion of a little more than 11 %.

In the group of paupers and poor elderly the women accounts for almost 70%. Of all the elderly 7.7% in 1787 and 8.1% in 1801 of the women were stated as being poor, pauper or sick. This is not surprising as the above analyses have shown that the number of women was higher and that it is seldom that a woman had an occupation outside the household. When she became a widower the situation became very difficult.<sup>9</sup>

The proportion of paupers receiving some allowance was 81% of the 'poor-group' but only 9.5 % of all the elderly. This proportion gives a picture of a society much different from today when many from the age of 60 and everybody from the age of 65 receives a pension.

In order to get a better understanding of the social conditions analyses were carried out among the group living on charity. What must be clarified when we look at this group is whether they lived solely by allowance or not.

In 1787 864 and in 1801 1,183 was listed as receiving allowance and having an occupation. In many cases the information was given as '*jordløs huusmand, nyder almisse af sognet*' = 'cottager without land receiving allowance from the parish'. In 1787 3,959 and in 1801 4,903 persons were listed as receiving allowance and had an additional information being it an occupation or being sick, resident, lodger...

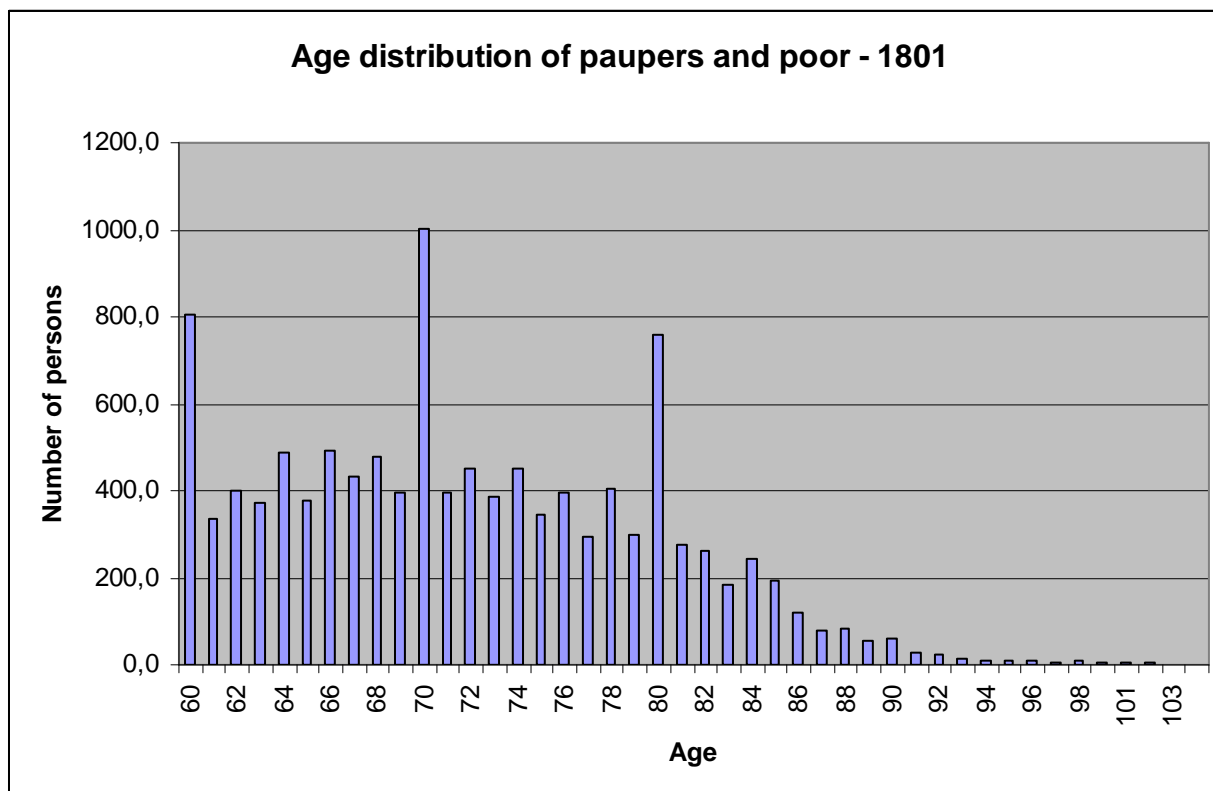
Did the number of paupers, poor etc increase with higher age as could be expected? And what are the variations among the two censuses?

The age distribution is the same for the two censuses – and with a distinct pooling around the whole 10- years. The number is not surprisingly smaller with higher age. To conclude whether or not the number of paupers were rising or falling by age their proportion of e.g. the 70 and 80 –year old persons must be compared. I will for this purpose limit the analysis to 1801 as this was more detailed about this group.

For persons at 70 14 % were paupers and at 80 it was 25.8 % who were paupers. It can thus with some certainty be concluded that there was a growing risk of becoming poor with higher age as the ability for taking on any kind of work disappeared.

---

<sup>9</sup> Paper on 'Widowhood in Denmark 1801'. Given by me at ESSHC 2006



The geographical distribution and the relative proportions in the areas:

	<b>On charity</b>	<b>% of elderly</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>% of elderly</b>
Copenhagen	1456.8 <sup>10</sup>	18.5	1633.2	20.8
Towns	1059.7	11,1	1421.9	14.9
Rural districts	6914.2	8,5	8368.8	10.3

**1801**

From the table it is obvious that the elderly were considered to be 'worthy poor' and had access to the limited means for poor relief. The table shows that their situation was worse in Copenhagen and in the towns than in the rural areas: more than twice as many paupers and poor there than in the rural districts.

Above some of the problems concerning raising contributions and taxes for the poor has been discussed. In the census there was no field for information on income but sometimes the enumerators wrote in the comments how much allowance was given to a person. The amounts varied due to the means in the parish. One person was given 40 *skilling*<sup>11</sup> a week, another 24 *skilling* a week. An allowance on 1 -2 *rigsdaler* was a very large allowance the normal being 1 – 2 *mark*.<sup>12</sup> Examples of help could be: "*Stiftelsens Almisse Læmmer som haver Frie Sæng i Stiftelsen*" ~

<sup>10</sup> In 1799 a commission listed all persons in need of help. They counted 5.795 persons and the majority were people below 50 years of age (Patrioter & Fattigfolk, p. 71)

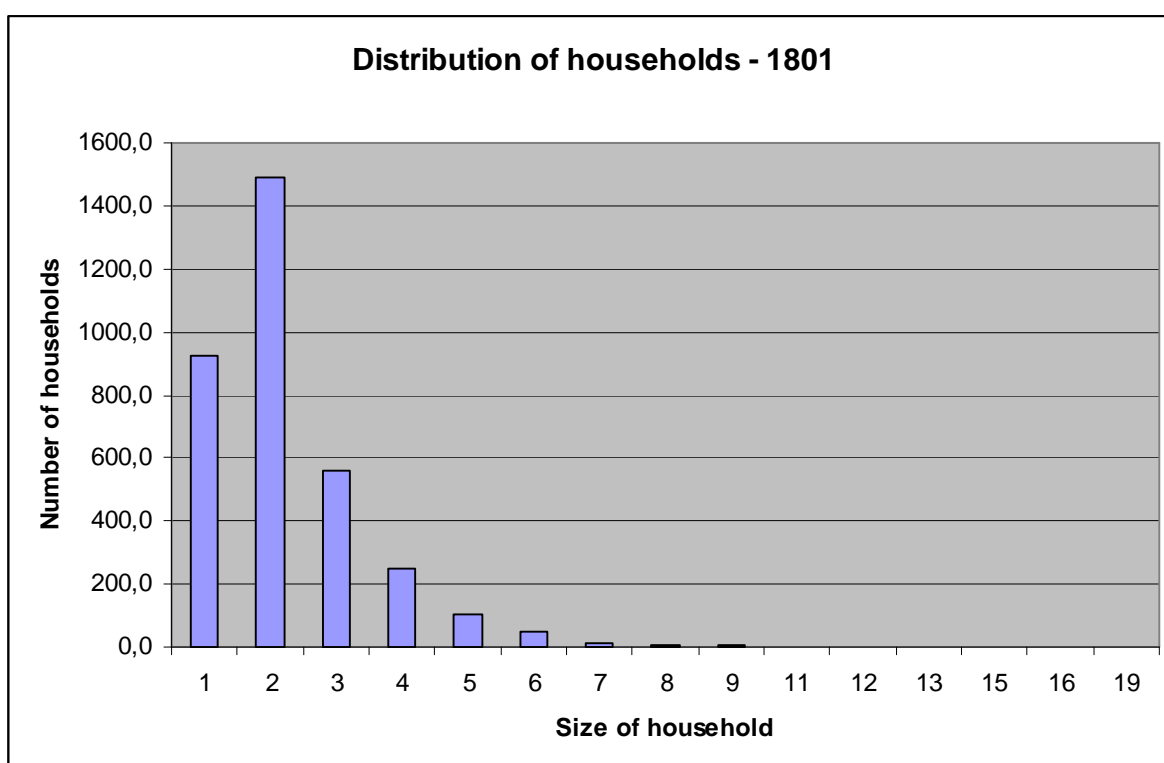
<sup>11</sup> The coins were in descending order: *Rigsdaler*, *mark* and *skilling*. 1 *rigsdaler* = 6 *mark* = 96 *skilling*; 1 *mark* = 16 *skilling*

<sup>12</sup> Harald Jørgensen, *Det offentlige fattigvæsen*: p. 13

Paupers having free bed in the hospital or :”har 2s ugentlig og 8rd Aarlig til huusleye af Fattig Væsnet” ~ 2 skilling a week and 8 rigsdaler a year for rent by the poor relief.

### The paupers: how did they manage?

The poor and the paupers had a hard life. Analyses have been carried out on the distribution of households and therefore it is of interest to see if there is somebody living with the poor that can help them in some way. The distribution of households where poor are head of households shows that for this group a household of two is likewise the standard but in this group closely followed by households of one person.



Graph of paupers as head of households

In the households with two persons 46 were a poor elderly with a servant. Sometimes they were both stated as poor but they could also be a spinner:

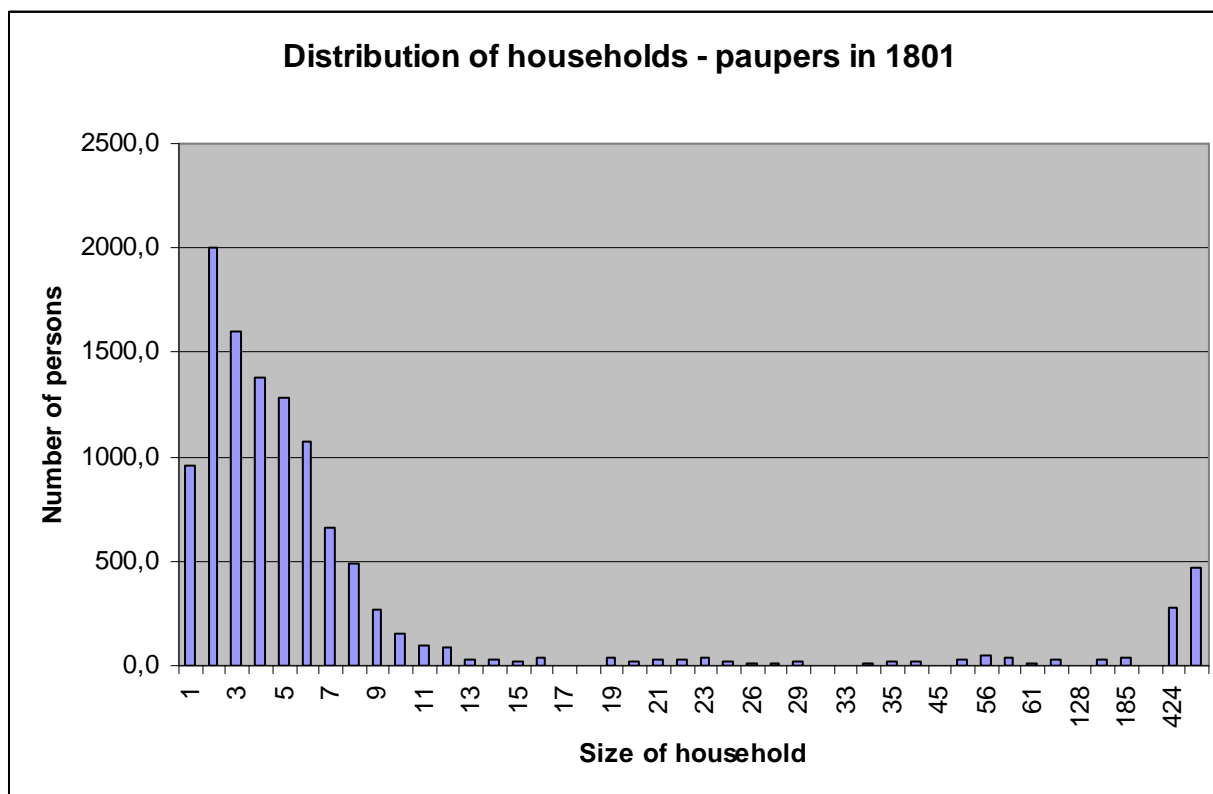
Aalborg, Slet, Løgsted, Løgstøer, , ingen, Familie 109, FT-1801

To search result		To search form	
Name:	Age:	Marital status:	Occupation in household: Occupation: Birth place:
Karen Skræder	81	Enkemand	kone nyder almisse
Margrethe -	40	Ugift	tjenestepige

The result can be found in the web-database of the censuses<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> [http://ddd.dda.dk/kiplink\\_en.htm](http://ddd.dda.dk/kiplink_en.htm)

If we look at the whole group regardless of being a head of household or not I found the same distribution as for the whole group. The largest households are all ‘institutions’: especially hospitals.



This might be interpreted as it was necessarily a help to live together in larger households. The households with one member were normally a widow – but two old people without the health for working any more had a great risk of becoming poor.

The work on linking the records from 1787 and 1801 has just started. It has been possible to link 31 persons that were poor in 1801 and find their occupations in 1787. 13 did not have any information on occupation in 1787. Two were also paupers in 1787. The one stated as ‘*Begge ere blinde og nyder Almisse*’: Both are blind and receive allowance. Another one being cottager and beggar. The rest were either farmers (*Bonde og gårdbeboer*) or cottagers. I have found the same amount of women and men in this sample. The sample is very little making it very difficult to make general conclusions. But the data show that the ones without information on occupation are women who had become poor in 1801, but also farmers had a risk of becoming poor.

### ***Microanalysis of the elderly***

**Detailed analyses of elderly exemplified by two urban and one rural area**

We have begun the linking of persons from 1787 and 1801. In order to make a detailed analysis I have linked persons from two towns and one urban district. The method was to have the elderly in 1801 as the starting point and then find this person in 1787. In this way I managed to link a good part of the elderly but almost none of the poor ones. They had so little information that it will require the use of additional sources and much time to decide who this person was in 1787. To list but a few problems: their names are almost anonymous as many have the same name or just the first name is mentioned. Or a poor widow might be called the widow after NN. To this is added the different way of telling a person's last name: it could be the same as the father in 1787 and then in 1801 the last name was taken after the father's first name. To this must be added the enormous differences in spelling. Finally the age is most often not correct - you can't be sure that there is 14 years between 1787 and 1801. It can be 5 years or 20 years. There is thus a bias in the analyses below towards the geographically more stable families and a strong tendency to leave out too many poor elderly (women).

Having linked these persons it is possible to see how their lives have developed from 1787 to 1801. I will thus look at their position in households, size of households and their occupation.

In short the data for the following analyses are:

	Elderly in 1801	Elderly linked	Proportion linked
Svendborg	213	88	41 %
Horsens	213	108	51 %
Haarby (rural)	114	75	66 %

Men: 152, Women: 119

This indicates that it is easier to find the men even though the group of elderly women is larger. The men had information on occupation which the women don't have – at least not when they were married.

Those who have been found were those who had not moved from 1787 to 1801. In time we will hopefully succeed in linking more persons between the censuses. It seems that people tended to move more around before ending in a town as the linking percentage is so much smaller in the towns selected. In Svendborg 85 of the 125 persons not linked were women of whom 40 were widows and 12 unmarried.

Horsens is a special case as the Russian court played an important role. It was in Horsens from 1780 to 1807 and accordingly this has influence on the kind of occupations and household we can see in Horsens.

### Position in household

Looking at the position of household the first step was to see if there had been any changes or not. An overall picture of those with the same position in household looks like this:

	Number	Sex
Head of household	109	M
Sibling to hh	1	M
Servants	2	M
Lodger	2	M
Quartered	1	M

Pauper	1	M
Head of household	3	F
His wife	59	F
Parent-in-law	2	F
Spouse to quartered	1	F
Pauper	5	F

Same position in household by place: Svendborg 67, Horsens 71, Haarby 48. This means that roughly 2/3 of the linked persons had kept their position in the household. It likewise demonstrates that men tended to keep their position in the household to a greater extent than women. The female paupers had remained poor.

The position as head of household is an important field to investigate. I wanted to see how many were head of household in 1787 and still head of household in 1801?

In Svendborg 45, in Horsens 42 and in Haarby 25 had remained head of households.

But some might have become head of household in this period:

In Svendborg 7, in Horsens 14 and in Haarby 5 persons had become head of household.

In Haarby the persons had all become widows. In Horsens 10 had become widows, one had changed from a servant to living alone, the last three were men: two had been poor lodgers who in 1801 lived alone, and the last one was a merchant with children who had lived with his brother but now had his own household.

In Svendborg 4 of the 7 persons had become head of household because they were now widows and the other three had moved to their own households.

But there were likewise those who changed status from head of household to other positions. The changes differ much among the three selected places.

<b>Position in household</b>	<b>Svendborg</b>	<b>Horsens</b>	<b>Haarby</b>
Parent	3	1	6
Lodger	2	6	
Sibling	1		
Widow	1		
Quartered		6	
Courtiers		1	
Receiving alms		2	
Lodger			3
Sibling to parents			1
Changed position:	7	16	10

In this period only woman changed to wife to head of household and the reason was that she had been wife to a pauper who probably now was head of his own household. (When I analyse all the linked persons I found a group of women who had all married and that to much younger men).

## Size of households

Having looked at the position in household the next step is to look at the households they were living in. Were there changes from 1787 to 1801 and what kind of changes was it? It could be expected that the elderly came to live in smaller households when the children left home and maybe servants as well. It might as well be expected that they came to live in larger households because they needed help in some way as they became elder. In order to clarify this I have looked at both situations, i.e. unchanged or changed size of households for each of the three areas.

	Number of households –new size	To larger household	To smaller household	Linked households
Svendborg	52	18	34	66
Horsens	77	30	47	87
Haarby	41	18	23	56

But there were of course also households with the same size over the years:

In Svendborg there were 14 households, in Horsens 10 and in Haarby 15 households. From these results it seems clear that changes in size did occur most often and that it was more common to move to a smaller household than to a larger one.

## Persons in the household/what kind of household

In the previous paragraph I have looked at the changes in the size of the household. But the composition of the household is more interesting. I have especially looked at the households in Svendborg and Haarby. A thorough analysis shows many variations in the life course of the linked persons. I will though try to find some general pattern.

In Svendborg it seems that in those cases where a person was now living in a smaller household the reasons could be:

- Children had left the household,
- Lodger in a new household
- Living as pensioner in child's household

In Haarby, a rural area, the reasons for smaller households in 1801 can be generalised to the same as in Svendborg. It seems that when the children became older the need for servants declined.

When the households had become larger the reasons were often:

- More children had been born, head of household often married again with a younger wife
- Children had returned
- Lodger in another household (often after death of spouse)
- Retired agriculturalist living with son/son-in-law as head of household. The son had had more children.

Generally the changes in the households reflect the growing up of the children and the death of a spouse. In the households where the size remained unchanged the persons in the household would quite often have changed: some children had left, others had returned, the number of servants making up for the 'missing' children.



The rest group with unchanged households was often a husband and his wife.

## **Conclusion**

The elderly accounted for app. 10% of the population. What is surprising is that whereas the general population was 10.5% from 1787 to 1801 the growth was 16.6% for the elderly. The numbers of elderly was higher but of the population this growth counted for 0.6%. The population distribution was a pyramid with more people in the younger ages and fewer in the high ages. The geographical distribution shows that the majority of the elderly were living in the rural areas and that the proportion of elderly in Copenhagen was smaller than could be expected making Copenhagen a city with a young population compared to the countryside. The majority of the elderly were also in this period women.

The analyses in the paper have all been carried out with 'gender' as an independent variable. The analyses have shown that there were not equal conditions for men and women and this is reflected on all the search results.

The general situation for an elderly man was to be married, be head of household and to be listed in the census with some kind of occupation.

For a woman the situation was that she was either married or a widow. When she was the head of a household she was a widow. When she was given an occupation in the censuses it was very often as a pauper or as a spinner.

The analyses on households show that the most frequent type of household was two – 8 persons living together. 20% of all households consisted of two persons - generally a married couple. Less than 5% of all the elderly were living alone and these elderly were almost always a widow. A specific analysis was carried out to clarify the situation in the households where a parent and a child were living together. The majority were a widow living with a daughter. By looking at the information on occupation for the child it seems to be children having different kinds of problems that made it difficult or impossible to establish a household with their own family: many of the children were sick or disabled and generally these households had a low living standard. Almost 40% of the households have one or more elderly as member(s) making it common to know and have contact with elderly.

The elderly men in the households were generally the head of the household – this was the case for 20% of all households. Not surprisingly this was more normal than for the younger men. The tendency of this diminished by age: the older the less the probability of being head of household: from 90% at the age of 60 to 50% at the age of 80. There seems to be a little difference between 1787 and 1801 in these proportions.

When I looked at occupation and with that the way the elderly supposedly made an income it was clear that it was the men who were stated with an occupation. From the censuses it is not clear how active an elderly was or how much income he made. But when I looked at the occupation I found that it was not unusual for the census taker to add more than occupation or to add a comment on the conditions. From this it turns out that at 60 the men were working actively with the stated

occupation but the older they get the greater the possibility of being poor or listed with an occupation and being poor or receive an allowance.

Less than half of the women were given an occupation and when they had it was often as 'pauper', 'disabled' etc. Another problem with the occupation field is that the dwelling was stated in this field. Being a 'lodger' does not help when we try to illustrate their living conditions and way of making a living.

An interesting result of the analyses of the poor is that of the poor a little more than 50% were elderly. Of the elderly only 11% were listed as poor but of these 11% 70% were women i.e. widows. Of all the elderly women around 8% were poor and consequently only 3% of the elderly men were listed as poor. Less than 10% of the elderly received a kind of allowance i.e. the rest was managing by their own or by the help of their children. In any way they were managing in such a way that the census taker did not make any special remarks about it.

The work of the detailed analysis has been very interesting. It throws light on the families and their life course. A simple analysis of size of household for a person in 1787 and again in 1801 does not tell us of the shifts of persons that might have been in this period. Even if is still e.g. 3 persons apart from 'the main character' it could be two other persons he/she is now living with. It turned out that the majority of the analysed persons tended to come to live in smaller households.

And the final conclusion I will dedicate to the women: all their lives they were depending on the situation of their husband (if they had one); when he died they very often became poor and received alms. And when this occurred there is very sparse information on them in the censuses thus making it difficult to find them in the 1787-census. So their final humiliation is their ending as anonymous women.