

2011 Census of Population: Families, households, marital status, structural type of dwelling, collectives

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Families and living arrangements of Canadians underwent further change and diversification during the past five years, according to data from the 2011 Census of Population. A more detailed analysis is available in the report, [Portrait of Families and Living Arrangements in Canada](#).

Census data show that married couples declined as a proportion of all census families between 2006 and 2011. Nevertheless, they still formed the predominant family structure in Canada, accounting for two-thirds of all families.

In contrast, the proportion of common-law couples and lone-parent families both increased. For the first time, common-law couples outnumbered lone-parent families in 2011.

The number of same-sex married couples nearly tripled between 2006 and 2011, reflecting the first full five-year period for which same-sex marriage has been legal across the country.

The 2011 Census of Population counted stepfamilies for the first time. They represented about one in eight couple families with children.

Census data also show the evolving living arrangements of children within Canadian families. About two-thirds of children aged 14 and under lived with married parents in 2011, while an increasing share lived with common-law parents.

For the first time, the census counted the number of children in stepfamilies and foster children. Data showed 1 out of every 10 children aged 14 and under in private households lived in a stepfamily in 2011. Foster children aged 14 and under represented 0.5% of children in this age group in private households.

A higher share of seniors aged 65 and over lived as part of a couple in a private household in 2011 compared with 2001. During the same period, the proportion of senior women who lived alone declined, while it remained relatively stable for senior men. About 1 in every 12 seniors lived in a collective dwelling, such as a nursing home or a residence for senior citizens.

Married couples still the predominant family structure

The census counted 9,389,700 census families in 2011, up 5.5% from 2006. Of these, nearly 6,294,000 consisted of married couples, a 3.1% increase.

The number of common-law families increased 13.9% to 1,567,900 in 2011. The number of lone-parent families rose 8.0% to just over 1,527,800.

Married-couple families accounted for 67.0% of all census families in 2011, down from 70.5% in 2001. The proportion of common-law families increased from 13.8% to 16.7%, while the share of lone-parent families rose from 15.7% to 16.3%.

As a share of all census families, common-law couples were highest in Nunavut (32.7%) and in Quebec (31.5%). High shares were also found in the Northwest Territories (28.7%) and Yukon (25.1%). These proportions were at least double the average of the other provinces (12.1%).

Among lone-parent families, growth was more than twice as strong between 2006 and 2011 for male lone-parent families (+16.2%) compared with female lone-parent families (+6.0%). About 8 in 10 lone-parent families were female lone-parent families.

Additional analysis can be found in the *Census in Brief* article, "[Fifty years of families in Canada: 1961 to 2011](#)".

Number of same-sex couples continues to increase

The census counted 64,575 same-sex couple families in 2011, up 42.4% from 2006. Of these, 21,015 were same-sex married couples and 43,560 were same-sex common-law couples. Same-sex couples accounted for 0.8% of all couples in 2011.

Same-sex marriage was legalized in Canada in July 2005. Between 2006 and 2011, the number of same-sex married couples nearly tripled (+181.5%), while the number of same-sex common-law couples rose 15.0%.

As a result, married couples represented 32.5% of same-sex couples in 2011, nearly twice the share of 16.5% in 2006.

Stepfamilies: Counted for the first time in the 2011 Census of Population

The census counted 464,335 stepfamilies in 2011. They represented 12.6% of the nearly 3.7 million couple families with children.

Of these stepfamilies, 271,930 were simple stepfamilies, that is, those in which all children are the biological or adopted children of one and only one married spouse or common-law partner in the couple and whose birth or adoption preceded the current relationship. They accounted for 7.4% of couples with children.

The remaining 192,410 were complex stepfamilies, consisting of all other stepfamily types. Complex stepfamilies accounted for 5.2% of all couples with children.

For more information on stepfamilies and census families in general, see the definition of 'Census family' in the [2011 Census Dictionary](#).

Increasing share of children living with common-law parents

The share of children living in private households with married parents decreased between 2001 and 2011. Of the nearly 5.6 million children aged 14 and under, 63.6% lived with married parents in 2011 compared with 68.4% in 2001. Over the same period, the percentage living with common-law parents rose from 12.8% to 16.3%.

Nearly 1,078,600 children, 19.3% of all children in private households, lived with lone parents in 2011, up from 18.0% in 2001. More than four out of five children (82.3%) who lived with a lone parent lived with a female lone parent.

About 557,950 children aged 14 and under lived in stepfamilies in 2011, 10.0% of all children.

In 2011, 269,315 children, or 4.8% of the total lived, with at least one grandparent, up from 3.3% in 2001. Just over 30,000, or 0.5% of the total, lived in skip-generation families, that is, with one or both grandparents where no parents were present. This proportion was relatively unchanged from 2001.

The census counted 29,590 children aged 14 and under who were reported as foster children in 2011. They represented 0.5% of children in this age group in private households. Of households with at least one foster child in this age group, 45.1% included one foster child, 28.8% included two foster children and 26.2% included three or more foster children.

About 4 in 10 young adults live in the parental home

The tendency among young adults aged 20 to 29 to live with their parents appears to have levelled off. Of the 4,318,400 young adults in this age group, 42.3% lived in the parental home in 2011, either because they never left it or because they returned home after living elsewhere.

This proportion was relatively unchanged from 2006, although it was well above the share of 32.1% in 1991 and 26.9% in 1981.

The proportion of young adults living with their parents was higher for those in their early 20s compared with those in their late 20s. Young men were more likely to live at home than young women.

The share of young adults aged 20 to 29 living in couples has continued its long-term decline. In 2011, 30.8% of young adults in their 20s were in a couple, down from 32.8% in 2006. In 1981, more than half (51.8%) of young adults were part of couples.

Additional analysis can be found in the *Census in Brief* article, ["Living arrangements of young adults aged 20 to 29"](#).

Living in a couple the most common arrangement for seniors

Of the nearly 5 million seniors aged 65 and over in 2011, most (92.1%) lived in private households, including 56.4% who were part of couples, 24.6% who lived alone and 11.0% who had other arrangements such as living with relatives. The remaining 7.9% lived in collectives such as nursing homes or residences for senior citizens.

A decade earlier, in 2001, fewer seniors were living as part of a couple (54.1%) while more were living alone (26.7%).

Between 2001 and 2011, living alone declined primarily for senior women, with the largest decrease in share among women aged 80 to 84. Within this age group, 40.2% of women lived alone in 2011, down from 46.1% in 2001.

However, in 2011, women aged 65 and over were nearly twice as likely to live alone as men: 31.5% compared with 16.0% of men.

Additional analysis can be found in the *Census in Brief* article, ["Living arrangements of seniors"](#).

Decreasing share of households comprised of couples with children

The 2011 Census counted just over 13,320,600 private households, up 7.1% from 2006.

The number of one-person households increased 10.4% between 2006 and 2011 to just over 3,673,300, or 27.6% of the total. For the first time, the number of one-person households in 2011 exceeded the number of couple households with children aged 24 and under (3,524,915).

In 2006, for the first time, there were more households comprised of couples without children (29.0%) than households comprised of couples with children (28.5%). In 2011, this gap widened, as 29.5% of households were comprised of couples without children and 26.5% comprised of couples with children.

Additional analysis can be found in the *Census in Brief* article, ["Canadian households in 2011: Type and growth"](#).

Note to readers

The 2011 Census of Population introduced for the first time a specific response on household relationships to determine the number of same-sex married couples. Analysis of the data on same-sex married couples has shown that there may be an overestimation of this family type. In total, there were 64,575 same-sex couples in Canada in 2011, of which 21,015 were married. The range of overestimation of same-sex married couples at the national level is between 0 and 4,500. These data should be used with caution. This does not affect the quality of other data from this release.

Census website

Also available today on the [2011 Census](#) website are various products and services from the [Families, households and marital status](#) and [Structural type of dwelling and collectives](#) release topics. The web pages have been designed to provide easy access to census data, free of charge. Information is organized into four broad categories: Data products, Analytical products, Reference materials and Geography.

The *Data products* category offers families, households, marital status, structural type of dwelling and collectives data for a wide range of standard geographic areas, available in the [Census Profile](#), [Topic-based tabulations](#) and the [Highlight tables](#).

The *Analytical products* category presents the families and households analytical document entitled [Portrait of Families and Living Arrangements in Canada](#). Additional analysis on various topics is available in the [Census in Brief](#) series. Data and highlights on key topics found in these analytical products are also available for various levels of geography in the [Focus on Geography Series](#).

Geographic products now include [Thematic maps](#) showing data for a variety of standard geographic areas. [GeoSearch](#), an interactive mapping tool, also displays data and thematic maps for a variety of standard geographic areas.

A brief national portrait of families, children and households is presented on [video](#). Users are also invited to [Chat with an expert](#) on September 21, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Eastern daylight time.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 3901.

The report *Portrait of Families and Living Arrangements in Canada* (98-312-X2011001, free) is now available from the *Key resource* module of our website under *Publications*.

Additional analysis is also available in the [Census in Brief](#) series (98-312-X2011003, free): "Fifty years of families in Canada: 1961 to 2011", "Canadian households in 2011: Type and growth", "Living arrangements of young adults aged 20 to 29", and "Living arrangements of seniors".

This is the third of four releases. The fourth and final release will focus on language (October 24, 2012).

For more information, contact Media Relations (613-951-4636; mediahotline@statcan.gc.ca).