

## Analytical document

# Portrait of Families and Living Arrangements in Canada



## Families, households and marital status, 2011 Census of Population

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# Portrait of Families and Living Arrangements in Canada

## Families, households and marital status, 2011 Census of Population

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### **Note of appreciation**

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## Highlights

### Families and living arrangements

- The 2011 Census of Population counted 9,389,700 census families in Canada, up 5.5% from 8,896,840 families in 2006. Married couples remained the predominant family structure (67.0%) in 2011 but the share has decreased over time.
- Between 2006 and 2011, the number of common-law couples rose 13.9%, more than four times the 3.1% increase for married couples. Lone-parent families increased 8.0% over the same period. Growth was higher for male lone-parent families (+16.2%) than for female lone-parent families (+6.0%).
- For the first time in 2011, the number of common-law couple families (1,567,910) surpassed the number of lone-parent families (1,527,840). As a result, common-law couples accounted for 16.7% of all census families, while lone-parent families represented 16.3%.
- About 8 in 10 lone-parent families were female lone-parent families in 2011, accounting for 12.8% of all census families, while male lone-parent families represented 3.5% of all census families.
- The 2011 Census counted 64,575 same-sex couple families, up 42.4% from 2006. Of these couples, 21,015 were same-sex married couples and 43,560 were same-sex common-law couples.
- The number of same-sex married couples nearly tripled between 2006 and 2011, reflecting the first five-year period for which same-sex marriage has been legal across the country. Same-sex common-law couples rose 15.0%, slightly higher than the 13.8% increase for opposite-sex common-law couples.
- Between 2006 and 2011, couples with children living at home continued to fall as a share of all census families. In 2011, 39.2% of census families were couples with children, whereas 44.5% were couples who did not have children, a widening of the gap first observed in 2006.
- The 2011 Census counted stepfamilies for the first time. Of the 3,684,675 couples with children, 87.4% were intact families—that is, they were comprised of two parents and their biological or adopted children— and 12.6% were stepfamilies.
- In 2011, 7.4% of couples with children were simple stepfamilies, in which all children were the biological or adopted children of one and only one married spouse or common-law partner. An additional 5.2% of couples with children were complex stepfamilies, most of which were comprised of at least one child of both parents as well as at least one child of one parent only.
- In 2011, about one-fifth (20.5%) of people aged 15 and over did not live in a census family, including those who lived alone (13.5%), with non-relatives only (4.5%) or with other relatives (2.5%).

### Living arrangements of children aged 14 and under

- There were 5,587,165 children aged 14 and under who lived in private households in 2011. Most of these children lived with married (63.6%), common-law (16.3%) or lone (19.3%) parents, while 0.8% of children lived with other relatives or non-relatives.
- In total, 557,950 children aged 14 and under, or 10.0% of children in private households, lived in stepfamilies in 2011.
- Among children aged 14 and under, 269,315, or 4.8%, lived in households that contained at least one grandparent. Of these children, 30,005 (0.5%) lived in skip-generation families, that is, with grandparents and not with their parents.
- The 2011 Census also counted foster children for the first time. Among children in private households aged 14 and under, 29,590 (0.5%) were reported as foster children. 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.

## Part 1: Snapshot of families and living arrangements

### Married couples remain the predominant family structure despite declining share

Results from the 2011 Census of Population held on May 10, 2011 show a growing number of census families that are characterized by increasing diversity (see [Box Concepts and definitions](#)). In 2011, there were 9,389,700 census families, up 5.5% from 8,896,840 families 5 years earlier ([Table 1](#)).

**Table 1 Distribution (number and percentage) and percentage change of census families by family structure, Canada, 2001 to 2011**

Census family	2001		2006		2011		Percentage change 2006 to 2011
	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage	
Total census families	8,371,020	100.0	8,896,840	100.0	9,389,700	100.0	5.5
Couple families	7,059,830	84.3	7,482,775	84.1	7,861,860	83.7	5.1
Married	5,901,420	70.5	6,105,910	68.6	6,293,950	67.0	3.1
Common-law	1,158,410	13.8	1,376,865	15.5	1,567,910	16.7	13.9
Lone-parent families	1,311,190	15.7	1,414,060	15.9	1,527,840	16.3	8.0
Female parents	1,065,360	12.7	1,132,290	12.7	1,200,295	12.8	6.0
Male parents	245,825	2.9	281,775	3.2	327,545	3.5	16.2

**Sources:** Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2001 to 2011.

Among census families, those comprised of common-law couples grew the most rapidly between 2006 and 2011, increasing 13.9% compared to a growth of 3.1% for married couples and 8.0% for lone-parent families. As in the 2001 to 2006 period, growth was higher between 2006 and 2011 for male lone-parent families (+16.2%) than for female lone-parent families (+6.0%).

The predominant census family structure in 2011 was married couples, although they continued to decrease as a share of all families. In the 10-year period from 2001 to 2011, married couples dropped from 70.5% to 67.0% of all census families. In contrast, the proportion of census families that were common-law increased from 13.8% to 16.7% during the same period. For the first time in 2011, the number of common-law couples (1,567,910) surpassed the number of lone-parent families (1,527,840).

The share of lone-parent families edged up slightly during the decade from 15.7% in 2001 to 16.3% of all census families in 2011. About 8 in 10 lone-parent families were female lone-parent families, accounting for 12.8% of all census families, while male lone-parent families represented 3.5% of all census families.

The document [Fifty years of families in Canada: 1961 to 2011](#), Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011003, in the Census in Brief series, provides information on historical trends for families.

### Regional variation in growth and distribution of census families

At the provincial/territorial level, census families grew most rapidly in the five years prior to the 2011 Census in Yukon (+11.9%), Nunavut (+10.6%) and Alberta (+10.5%), coinciding with faster population growth ([Table 2](#)).

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**Table 2 Distribution (number and percentage) and percentage change of census families by family structure, Canada, provinces and territories, 2011**

Region	Total census families		Married couples		Common-law couples		Lone-parent families		Percentage change for census families 2006 to 2011
	number		number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage	
Canada	9,389,700		6,293,950	67.0	1,567,910	16.7	1,527,840	16.3	5.5
Newfoundland and Labrador	159,385		114,335	71.7	20,630	12.9	24,420	15.3	2.3
Prince Edward Island	40,850		29,695	72.7	4,570	11.2	6,580	16.1	4.2
Nova Scotia	270,065		184,870	68.5	38,460	14.2	46,730	17.3	1.0
New Brunswick	224,590		152,460	67.9	35,945	16.0	36,185	16.1	3.1
Quebec	2,203,630		1,143,365	51.9	694,750	31.5	365,510	16.6	3.9
Ontario	3,612,205		2,612,895	72.3	394,670	10.9	604,640	16.7	5.5
Manitoba	327,875		232,635	71.0	39,060	11.9	56,185	17.1	4.8
Saskatchewan	285,370		202,765	71.1	35,785	12.5	46,820	16.4	6.7
Alberta	999,530		719,360	72.0	135,660	13.6	144,510	14.5	10.5
British Columbia	1,238,155		887,990	71.7	160,360	13.0	189,805	15.3	6.6
Yukon	9,330		5,080	54.4	2,340	25.1	1,915	20.5	11.9
Northwest Territories	10,930		5,465	50.0	3,135	28.7	2,330	21.3	0.5
Nunavut	7,780		3,040	39.1	2,545	32.7	2,195	28.2	10.6

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2011.

Census families grew most slowly in the Northwest Territories (+0.5%), where there was no population growth (0.0%) between 2006 and 2011. In Nova Scotia (+1.0%) and Newfoundland and Labrador (+2.3%), census families also grew more slowly than the national average, owing to slower population growth and faster population aging in these provinces.

The proportion of census families that were married couples was highest in Prince Edward Island (72.7%), Ontario (72.3%) and Alberta (72.0%).

Among the 33 census metropolitan areas (CMAs),<sup>1</sup> the highest proportions of married couples were in Abbotsford - Mission (75.7%) and Vancouver (73.8%) in British Columbia, as well as Toronto, Ontario (74.0%). The highest shares for census agglomerations (CAs)<sup>2</sup> were found in Steinbach, Manitoba (83.0%) and Parksville, British Columbia (79.3%).

The share of census families that were common-law couples was highest in the territories and in Quebec, all of which had corresponding lower proportions of married couples. In the territories, about one-third (32.7%) of census families in Nunavut were common-law couples, with high shares also found in the Northwest Territories (28.7%) and Yukon (25.1%). In Quebec, 31.5% of census families were common-law couples, higher than the average of the other provinces (12.1%).

1. A census metropolitan area (CMA) is an area consisting of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a core. A census metropolitan area must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more live in the core.

2. A census agglomeration (CA) is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a population centre (known as the core). A CA must have a core population of at least 10,000.



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Compared to several countries where common-law couples comprise a large share of all couples, such as Sweden (29.0% in 2010),<sup>3</sup> Finland (24.7% in 2010)<sup>4</sup> and Norway (23.9% in 2011),<sup>5</sup> the proportion of all couples that were common-law in Quebec in 2011 was higher (37.8%).

The proportion of lone-parent families was higher than the national average in the territories: Nunavut (28.2%), Northwest Territories (21.3%) and Yukon (20.5%), and provincially, was highest in Nova Scotia (17.3%) and Manitoba (17.1%).

For more information on the distribution and growth of census families at various levels of geography, see the [Focus on Geography Series](#), Catalogue no. 98-310-X2011004.

### Number of same-sex couples continues to increase

A total of 64,575 same-sex couple families were reported in the 2011 Census, up 42.4% from 45,345 in 2006 (Table 3). Of these couples, 21,015 were same-sex married couples and 43,560 were same-sex common-law couples. While 16.5% of same-sex couples were married couples in 2006, this share nearly doubled to 32.5% in 2011.

**Table 3 Distribution (number and percentage) and percentage change of couple families by opposite-sex or same-sex status, Canada, 2001 to 2011**

Couple family	2001		2006		2011		Percentage change 2006 to 2011
	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage	
All couples	7,059,830	100.0	7,482,775	100.0	7,861,860	100.0	5.1
Opposite-sex couples	7,025,630	99.5	7,437,430	99.4	7,797,280	99.2	4.8
Married	5,901,425	83.6	6,098,445	81.5	6,272,935	79.8	2.9
Common-law	1,124,200	15.9	1,338,980	17.9	1,524,345	19.4	13.8
Same-sex couples	34,200	0.5	45,345	0.6	64,575	0.8	42.4
Married <sup>1</sup>	...	...	7,465	0.1	21,015	0.3	181.5
Common-law	34,200	0.5	37,885	0.5	43,560	0.6	15.0

... not applicable

**Note:**

1. Same-sex marriage became legal across Canada in 2005.

**Sources:** Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2001 to 2011.

The years from 2006 to 2011 represent the first five-year period during which same-sex couples could legally marry in this country, following the legalization for all of Canada in July, 2005.<sup>6</sup>

Canada was the third country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage following the Netherlands and Belgium. Same-sex marriage is now also legal in Spain, South Africa, Norway, Sweden, Portugal, Iceland, Argentina and Denmark. Additionally, some jurisdictions within other countries, such as parts of the United States and Mexico, have legalized same-sex marriage.

3. Society at a Glance 2011: OECD Social Indicators. OECD, 2011.

4. Official Statistics of Finland: Families [e-publication]. Appendix Table 1. Families by type in 1950 to 2010. Helsinki: Statistics Finland.

5. Statistics Norway 2012. Couples in private households, by cohabiting arrangements and number of children in the family.

6. Bill C-38, the *Civil Marriage Act*, was adopted on July 20, 2005 which legalized same-sex marriage across Canada. Some provinces and territories had already legalized same-sex marriage, beginning with Ontario in June, 2003.

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Between 2006 and 2011, the number of same-sex married couples nearly tripled (+181.5%), while opposite-sex married couples experienced more modest growth (+2.9%). The number of same-sex common-law couples increased by 15.0%, slightly higher than the 13.8% growth for opposite-sex common-law couples.

Overall, same-sex couples accounted for 0.8% of all couples in Canada in 2011, a share which is consistent with recent data from Australia (0.7% in 2011),<sup>7</sup> the United Kingdom and Ireland (0.4% for each country in 2011).<sup>8</sup> Although not directly comparable, 0.6% of households in the United States were comprised of same-sex couples in 2010.<sup>9</sup>

Same-sex couples in Canada were more likely to be male (54.5%) than female (45.5%) in 2011. This was the case for both married and common-law couples.

Same-sex married spouses and common-law partners were relatively young, with one-quarter (25.3%) aged 15 to 34 compared to 17.5% of individuals in opposite-sex couples. In addition, there were fewer same-sex spouses or partners at older ages, with 6.2% aged 65 and over, compared to 17.8% of individuals in opposite-sex couples.

More opposite-sex couples had children at home than did same-sex couples, 47.2% and 9.4%, respectively. Female same-sex couples were nearly 5 times more likely to have a child at home (16.5%) than male same-sex-couples (3.4%). Overall, more than four-fifths (80.3%) of all same-sex couples with children were female couples.

The distribution of same-sex couples by province or territory was similar to opposite-sex couples. Within the provinces and territories, however, same-sex couples were more highly concentrated in the largest census metropolitan areas than were opposite-sex couples. In 2011, 45.6% of all same-sex couples in Canada lived in Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver, compared to 33.4% of opposite-sex couples. This is slightly lower than in 2006 when 50.0% of same-sex couples lived in these three census metropolitan areas.

For more information, readers can refer to the topic-based tabulations [Conjugal Status and Opposite/Same-sex Status \(7\), Sex \(3\) and Age Groups \(7A\) for Persons Living in Couples in Private Households of Canada, Provinces, Territories and Census Metropolitan Areas, 2011 Census](#), Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011045; and [Conjugal Status \(3\), Opposite/Same-sex Status \(5\) and Presence of Children \(5\) for the Couple Census Families in Private Households of Canada, Provinces, Territories and Census Metropolitan Areas, 2011 Census](#), Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011046.

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7. Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2012. *Counts of same-sex couples in the 2011 Census*.

8. Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics. Bulletin: Families and Households, 2001 to 2011. Table 1: Families by family type in 2001 and 2011. *Ireland Central Statistics Office. 2012. This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1*.

9. U.S. Census Bureau. 2010 Census Briefs. Households and families; 2010. C2010B4-13. Table 2: Households by type: 2000 and 2010.

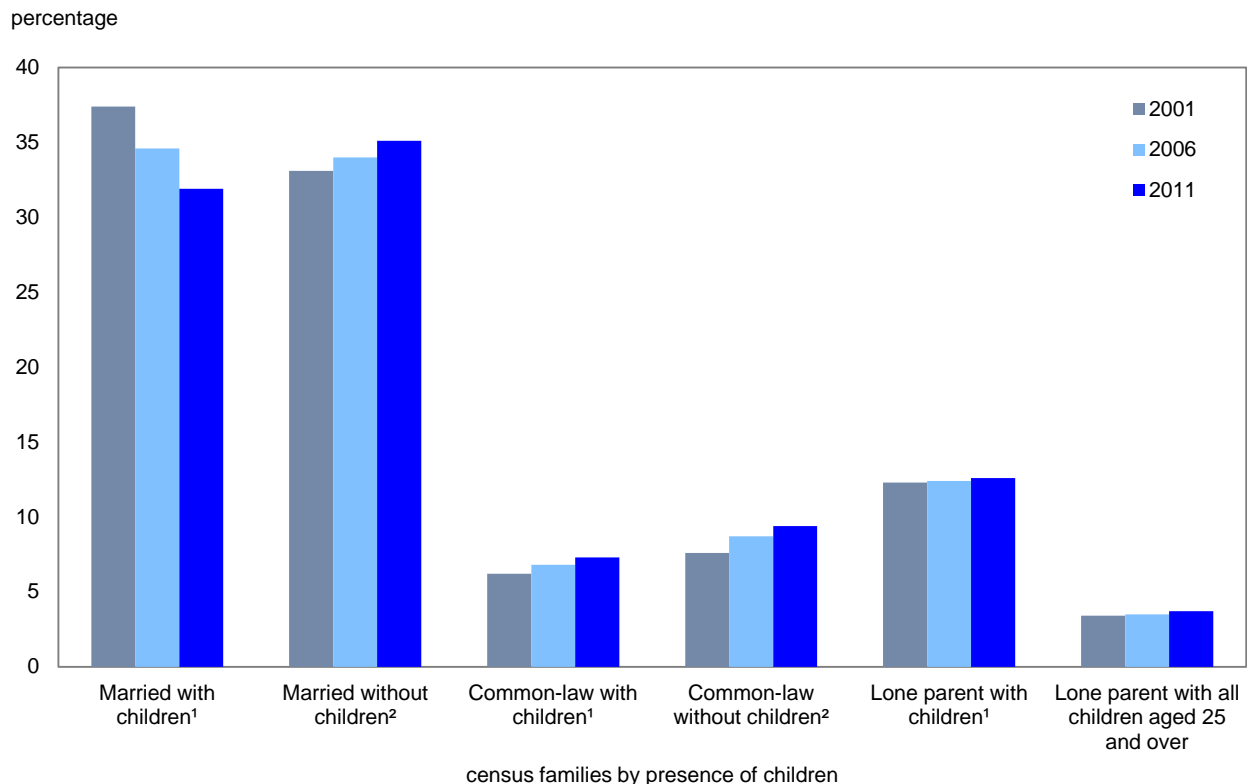
## Continuing decline in share of couples with children

Over the 10-year period from 2001 to 2011, couples with children living at home fell as a share of all census families.

In 2001, there were more couples with children (43.6% of all census families) than couples without children (40.3%). In 2006, for the first time, there were slightly more couples without children than couples with children (42.7% and 41.4% of all census families, respectively). In 2011, this pattern was sustained, with the gap between couples with children (39.2% of census families) and couples without children (44.5%) growing larger.

The largest group of couples with children was married couples with children, which decreased from 37.4% of all census families in 2001 to 31.9% in 2011 ([Figure 1](#)). There was also a decline in absolute number between 2001 and 2011, with 132,715 fewer married couples with children in 2011 compared to 10 years earlier. There was a corresponding increase of families comprised of married couples without children from 33.1% to 35.1% during this decade.

**Figure 1 Distribution (in percentage) of census families by presence of children, Canada, 2001 to 2011**



**Notes:**

1. Refers to at least one child aged 24 and under present in the home.
2. Includes families with all children aged 25 and over.

**Sources:** Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2001 to 2011.

The increase in the proportion of married-couple families without children may relate to the aging of the population. The members of the large baby-boom cohort, born between 1946 and 1965, were more likely to marry and to marry earlier, compared to more recent generations. Since they started childbearing at younger ages, on average, their children are now adults who have, for the most part, left the parental home.

Between 2001 and 2011, the share of census families that were common-law couples both with and without children increased. The increase of the relatively smaller group of common-law couples with children was not sufficient, however, to offset the decline in the much larger group of married couples with children. Common-law couples with children increased as a proportion of all census families from 6.2% in 2001 to 7.3% in 2011, while the share without children rose from 7.6% in 2001 to 9.4% in 2011.

Among census families with children, the proportion with one child at home has edged up slightly, from 37.3% in 2001 to 38.6% in 2011. More than half of lone-parent families (52.9%) had one child at home compared to 44.1% of common-law couples and 31.7% of married couples. The share of census families with three or more children dropped from 19.8% to 18.5% between 2001 and 2011, and was highest in 2011 for married couples (21.1%), followed by common-law couples (16.2%) and lone-parent families (13.3%).

### Stepfamilies: Counted for the first time in 2011

With the 2011 Census, it is possible for the first time to classify census families comprised of couples with children as either intact families or stepfamilies.

Intact families are defined in the census as couple families in which all children are the biological or adopted children of both parents. Stepfamilies are couple families where there is at least one child whose birth or adoption preceded the current relationship (see [Box Concepts and definitions](#)).<sup>10</sup> This distinction allows for a more complete portrait of the diversity of Canadian families today.

Stepfamilies can be classified as either simple or complex. In a simple stepfamily, all children are the biological or adopted children of one and only one married spouse or common-law partner. A complex stepfamily consists of any of the following:

- families in which there is at least one child of both parents and at least one child of only one parent
- families in which there is at least one child of each parent and no children of both parents
- families in which there is at least one child of both parents and at least one child of each parent.

Of the 3,684,675 couple families with children in 2011, 87.4% were intact families and 12.6% were stepfamilies ([Table 4](#)).

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10. Couples with at least one child aged 24 and under for whom it cannot be determined if there are stepchildren present are considered intact families (see the [2011 Census questionnaire](#) for response categories). There were 100,930 couples with children aged 24 and under for whom it could not be determined if they were in a stepfamily.

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**Table 4 Distribution (number and percentage) of couple families with children by stepfamily status, Canada, 2011**

Couple family with children <sup>1</sup>	Number	Percentage
All couple families with children	3,684,675	100.0
Intact families <sup>2</sup>	3,220,340	87.4
Stepfamilies	464,335	12.6
Simple stepfamilies	271,930	7.4
Complex stepfamilies	192,410	5.2
Families with child(ren) of both parents and child(ren) of one parent only	149,365	4.1
Families with child(ren) of each parent only and no children of both parents	35,765	1.0
Families with child(ren) of both parents and child(ren) of each parent only	7,275	0.2

**Notes:**

1. Refers to couples with at least one child aged 24 and under.

2. Couple families with at least one child aged 24 and under for whom it cannot be determined if there are stepchildren present are considered intact families.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2011.

In 2011, 7.4% of couples with children were simple stepfamilies while 5.2% were complex stepfamilies. Most complex stepfamilies included at least one child of both parents as well as at least one child of one parent only (4.1% of all couples with children).<sup>11</sup>

Compared to intact families, a smaller share of stepfamilies was comprised of married couples. In 2011, 49.9% of stepfamilies were married compared to 86.0% of intact families. Complex stepfamilies were more likely to be married couples (55.5%) than were simple stepfamilies (46.0%).

While 12.5% of opposite-sex couples with children were stepfamilies, close to half (49.7%) of same-sex couples with children were stepfamilies.

About 3 in 5 (60.2%) simple stepfamilies had one child at home compared to one-third (33.9%) of intact families. While 7.9% of simple stepfamilies had three or more children, this was the case for 19.1% of intact families. By definition, complex stepfamilies had at least two children. More than half (55.2%) of complex families had three or more children.

Across Canada, as a share of couples with children, stepfamilies were highest in the province of Quebec (16.1%) and lowest in Ontario (11.0%). Among the census metropolitan areas, the proportion of stepfamilies was highest for several in Quebec: Trois-Rivières (18.7%), Saguenay (18.5%), and Sherbrooke (18.4%). The proportion was lowest in the two most populous census metropolitan areas of Toronto (7.8%) and Vancouver (8.4%).

For more information, see the Highlight Table [Census family structure showing stepfamilies and conjugal status for couple census families in private households](#), Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011002.

11. From the parents' perspective, of the 7,369,350 parents who were part of couples with children in 2011, 87.4% were parents in intact families while 12.6% were parents or stepparents in stepfamilies. A stepparent is a married spouse or common-law partner in a couple with children who is not the biological or adoptive parent of at least one child in the family. Overall, there were 507,380 stepparents, accounting for 6.9% of parents who were in couples with children (9.4% of men in couples with children were stepfathers and 4.4% of women were stepmothers). About 3.7% of parents who were in couples with children (5.1% of men and 2.3% of women) were stepparents in a simple stepfamily and 3.2% were stepparents in a complex stepfamily (4.3% of men and 2.1% of women).

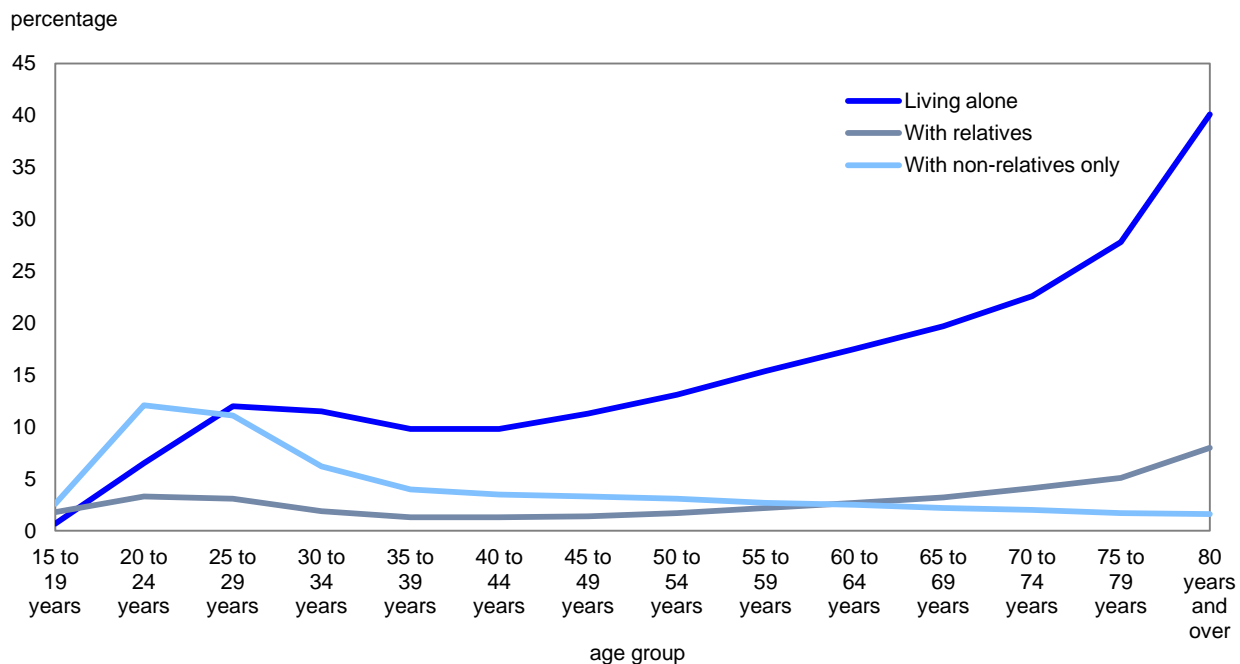
## One-fifth of the population aged 15 and over live outside of census families

In 2011, 5,587,165 people aged 15 years and over did not live in census families, representing about one-fifth (20.5%) of this age group, up slightly from a decade earlier (18.8% in 2001). The largest category of these living arrangements was living alone, which accounted for 13.5% of the population aged 15 and over, up from 12.5% in 2001.

The proportion of the population aged 15 and over that lived with non-relatives only, including room-mates, was 4.5% in 2011, a level slightly higher than that of 2001 (4.0%). An additional 2.5% of the adult population lived with relatives,<sup>12</sup> virtually unchanged from 2001.

The proportion of individuals aged 15 and over who lived alone was relatively low throughout early adulthood until about the mid-forties, then became increasingly prevalent from age 50 onward (Figure 2). By the oldest age group, age 80 years and over, more than two-fifths (40.1%) of people in private households lived alone.

**Figure 2 Percentage of the population aged 15 and over who live alone, with relatives or with non-relatives only by age group, Canada, 2011**



**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2011.

Living with relatives was also most common at the oldest ages (80 years and older), representing 8.0% of that population. For more information on the living arrangements of seniors, see the document [Living arrangements of seniors](#) Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011003, in the Census in Brief series.

12. Includes brothers or sisters living together in the absence of their parents, or an adult living with at least one aunt, uncle, niece, nephew or cousin. It also includes a person living with his or her adult son or daughter, if the son or daughter has a married spouse or common-law partner or at least one child living with them.

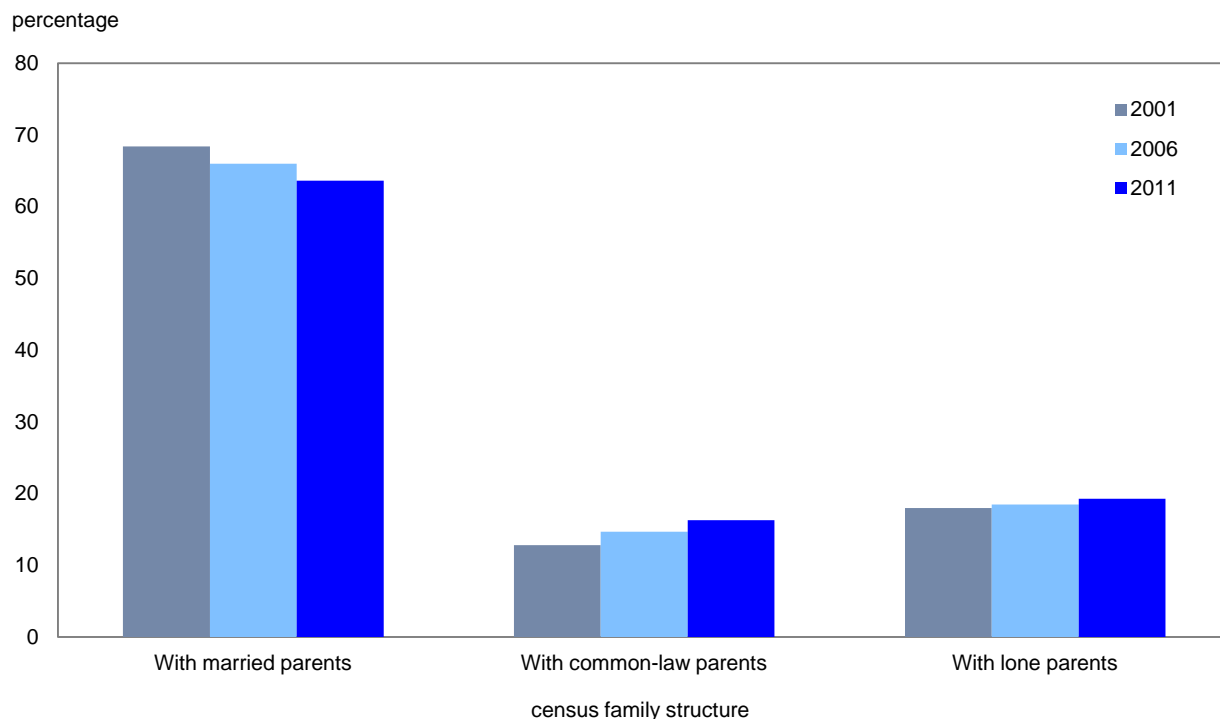
Among young adults who were not living as part of a census family, the most common living arrangement was living with non-relatives only such as a room-mate. Over 1 in 10 (11.6%) individuals aged 20 to 29 lived with non-relatives only in 2011 (12.1% for 20- to 24-year-olds, 11.1% for 25- to 29-year-olds). The document [Living arrangements of young adults aged 20 to 29](#), Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011003, in the Census in Brief series, provides additional information on the living arrangements of young adults.

## Part 2: Living arrangements of children aged 14 and under

### Increasing share of children aged 14 and under living with common-law parents

Of the 5,587,165 individuals aged 14 and under in Canada who lived in private households in 2011, 99.2% were children in census families who lived with married, common-law or lone parents. The remaining 0.8% of children in this age group lived with other relatives or non-relatives.<sup>13</sup> The share of children aged 14 and under who lived with married parents, while still highest, fell from 68.4% in 2001 to 63.6% in 2011 ([Figure 3](#)).

**Figure 3 Distribution (in percentage) of the population aged 14 and under by census family structure, Canada, 2001 to 2011**



**Note:** For each census year, an additional 0.8% to 0.9% of the population aged 14 and under were in private households and not in census families.

**Sources:** Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2001 to 2011.

13. While the census definition of 'child' refers strictly to sons and daughters living in a census family with married, common-law or lone parents, for simplicity, the population aged 14 and under is often referred to in this document as 'children.' See the [Families Reference Guide, 2011 Census](#), Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011005 for more information on the concept of children.

The proportion of children aged 14 and under who lived with common-law parents increased from 12.8% in 2001 to 16.3% in 2011.

Given the larger share of common-law families in Quebec, it follows that more children in this province lived with common-law parents in 2011 (37.8%) than in Canada overall. In several census divisions<sup>14</sup> within Quebec, over half of children aged 14 and under were living with common-law parents in 2011 (see [Map](#)). The highest proportions occurred in the census divisions of L'Islet (58.3%) and La Jacques-Cartier (58.1%).

Close to 1 in 5 (19.3%) children aged 14 and under lived with lone parents in 2011, up slightly from 18.0% in 2001. Of these 1,078,575 children, 82.3% lived with female lone parents. Children in lone-parent families may also receive emotional and/or financial support from a parent in another household, and with whom the child might live on a part-time basis.

### One in 10 children live in stepfamilies

In total, 557,950 children aged 14 and under lived in stepfamilies in 2011, or 10.0% of children in private households.<sup>15</sup> Among these children, most were stepchildren<sup>16</sup> themselves (63.1%). The remainder were children of both parents in a couple but also lived with stepsiblings.

Older children living within stepfamilies were more likely to be stepchildren compared to younger children. Among children aged 4 and under, 7.9% lived in stepfamilies in 2011 but a much smaller share (2.6%) were actually stepchildren. In contrast, of the 12.0% of children aged 10 to 14 who lived in stepfamilies, the majority were stepchildren (9.9% of all children in this age group).

Within stepfamilies, the proportion of children aged 4 and under in 2011 was higher in complex stepfamilies (31.0%) than in simple stepfamilies (17.8%). Nearly half (48.8%) of children who were common to both parents in a complex stepfamily were in this age group, while 8.8% of children with only one parent in a complex stepfamily were aged 4 and under.

### More children living with grandparents

Some children share homes with their grandparents, including living arrangements where the parent(s) may or may not be present. Overall, 269,315 children aged 14 and under in 2011, or 4.8% of all children in this age group, lived with at least one grandparent, up from 3.3% in 2001 ([Table 5](#)). Most multigenerational households consisted of children, their parents and at least one grandparent.<sup>17</sup>

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14. A census division (CD) is a group of neighbouring municipalities joined together for the purposes of regional planning and managing common services (such as police or ambulance services). These groupings are established under laws in effect in certain provinces and territories of Canada.

15. There were 127,305 children aged 14 and under in couple families for whom it could not be determined if they were in a stepfamily. They are included as children in intact families.

16. A stepchild is a child in a couple family who is the biological or adopted child of only one married spouse or common-law partner in the couple, and whose birth or adoption preceded the current relationship.

17. In 2011, of the 13,320,615 private households in Canada, 3.1% or 413,490 households were either multigenerational (2.7%) or skip-generation (0.4%). Of the 362,600 multigenerational households, the middle generation in about three-fifths (60.1%) of households consisted of a couple with children, while 36.5% were lone-parents and an additional 3.4% were comprised of other living situations, such as both a couple and lone parents or a middle generation who was not the parent(s) of the grandchild(ren).



**Table 5 Distribution (number and percentage) of population aged 14 and under in private households by selected living arrangements, Canada, 2001 to 2011**

Children in private households	2001		2006		2011	
	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage
Children in private households	5,723,245	100.0	5,562,530	100.0	5,587,165	100.0
Children in census families	5,678,320	99.2	5,514,550	99.1	5,540,230	99.2
In household with a grandparent	190,920	3.3	210,105	3.8	269,315	4.8
In skip-generation families	25,245	0.4	28,190	0.5	30,005	0.5
With other relatives or non-relatives	44,925	0.8	47,975	0.9	46,940	0.8
Foster children	...	...	...	...	29,590	0.5

... not applicable

Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2001 to 2011.

In 2011, 30,005 children aged 14 and under, or 0.5% of all children in this age group, lived in skip-generation families, that is, with one or both grandparents where no parents were present. This proportion is relatively unchanged since 2001.

About 57.8% of grandchildren in skip-generation families lived with a grandparent couple, while the remaining 42.2% lived with one grandparent only. Grandparents may assume a parental role in such families and provide a valuable emotional and/or financial resource for their grandchildren. Across Canada, the highest shares of skip-generation families in 2011 were found in Nunavut (2.2%) and the Northwest Territories (1.8%) and in the province of Saskatchewan (1.4%).

## Small share of children in other living arrangements

A small proportion (0.8%) of children aged 14 and under in 2011 who lived in private households lived with relatives or non-relatives in arrangements that did not include at least one parent or grandparent. These relatives could be extended family, such as aunts, uncles, or foster parents.

### Foster children: Counted for the first time in 2011

The 2011 Census counted foster children for the first time. This is a small population who are placed in the foster care system when, for various reasons, they do not live in their parental home. The foster system, including the establishment of age eligibility, is provincial/territorial jurisdiction.<sup>18</sup> The majority of foster children reported in the 2011 Census were aged 14 and under (29,590 or 61.8%).<sup>19</sup>

In 2011, foster children aged 14 and under were similar in number and share to children in skip-generation families, accounting for 0.5% of children in private households in this age group. Among foster children aged 14 and under, 29.0% were aged 0 to 4, 29.9% were aged 5 to 9, while 41.1% were aged 10 to 14. There was a slightly higher proportion of foster children aged 14 and under who were boys (52.5%) than girls (47.5%) in 2011.

18. Age criteria for the foster care eligibility of children, including age extensions in special circumstances such as continuation of studies, disability or for various financial and other support needs, vary by province and territory. Most commonly, eligibility for foster care was until age 17 or 18, with extension provisions continuing to age 21, and in some cases, up to 24.

19. According to the 2011 Census, an additional 11,455 foster children were aged 15 to 19, 1,730 were aged 20 to 24 and 5,115 were aged 25 and over.

## Portrait of Families and Living Arrangements in Canada

A total of 17,410 households contained at least one foster child aged 14 and under. Of these households, 45.1% included one foster child, 28.8% included two foster children and 26.2% included three or more foster children ([Table 6](#)).

**Table 6 Distribution (number and percentage) of private households with at least one foster child aged 14 and under by number of foster children and household type, Canada, 2011**

Private households with at least one foster child aged 14 and under	Number	Percentage
Total	17,410	100.0
Number of foster children		
One	7,845	45.1
Two	5,010	28.8
Three or more	4,555	26.2
Household type		
Married couple	9,910	56.9
Common-law couple	2,165	12.4
Lone-parent family	2,430	14.0
Multiple-family	990	5.7
Other	1,915	11.0

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2011.

Foster children were more likely to be found in households that contained couples, particularly married couples. In 2011, over half (56.9%) of the households with at least one foster child aged 14 and under were comprised of married couples, while 12.4% of these households were common-law couples and 14.0% were lone-parent families. An additional 5.7% were multiple-family households and 11.0% were households with persons not in census families.

Overall, 73.4% of households with at least one foster child aged 14 and under that were census family households—that is, married couples, common-law couples or lone-parent families—also contained biological or adopted children.

The proportion of the population in private households aged 14 and under who were foster children in 2011 was highest in the province of Manitoba, 1.9%, as well as in the territories: Northwest Territories (1.7%), Nunavut (1.3%) and Yukon (1.3%).

For more information on foster children at the provincial/territorial level, see the Highlight table [Age group \(8\) and Sex \(3\) for foster children](#), Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011002.

### Box Concepts and definitions

**Census family:** A census family is composed of a married or common-law couple, with or without children, or of a lone parent living with at least one child in the same dwelling. Couples can be of the opposite sex or of the same sex.

**Married and common-law couples with and without children:** Unless otherwise specified, in this document married or common-law couples with children refer to couple families with at least one child aged 24 and under present in the home. Married or common-law couples without children refer to couple families without at least one child aged 24 and under as well as couple families with all children aged 25 and over.

**Children:** Blood, step or adopted sons and daughters (regardless of age or marital status) who are living in the same dwelling as their parent(s), as well as grandchildren in households where there are no parents present. Sons and daughters who are living with their married spouse or common-law partner, or with one or more of their own children, are not considered to be members of the census family of their parent(s), even if they are living in the same dwelling. In addition, those sons and daughters who do not live in the same dwelling as their parent(s) are not considered members of the census family of their parent(s).

**Skip-generation family:** A census family that consists of grandparents and grandchildren without the presence of parents in the home.

**Intact family:** A couple family in which all children in the household are the biological and/or adopted children of both members of the couple.

**Stepfamily:** A couple family in which at least one child is the biological or adopted child of only one married spouse or common-law partner and whose birth or adoption preceded the current relationship. Couples with children for whom it cannot be determined if there are stepchildren present will be considered intact families.

**Simple stepfamily:** A stepfamily in which all children are the biological or adopted children of one and only one married spouse or common-law partner and whose birth or adoption preceded the current relationship.

**Complex stepfamily:** There are three types of complex stepfamilies. First, a couple family in which there is at least one child of both parents and at least one child of only one parent. Secondly, a couple family in which there is at least one child of each parent and no children of both parents. Third, a couple family in which there is at least one child of both parents and at least one child of each parent.

**Multigenerational household:** A household which contains three or more generations, and at least one census family.

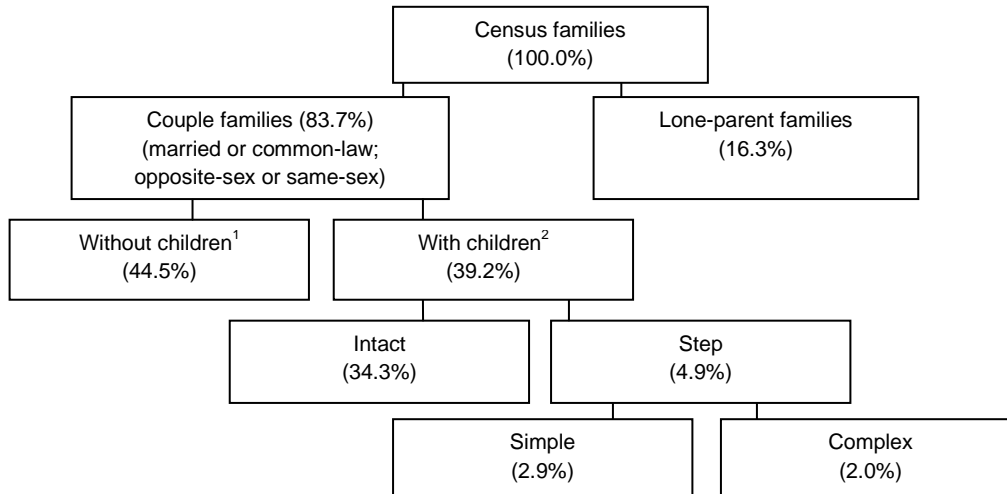
**Foster children:** The population in private households who have been reported as foster children on the census questionnaire. Foster children are considered as 'other relatives' in an economic family, that is, a group of two or more persons who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common-law, adoption or foster relationship.

**Living arrangements of individuals:** A person living in a private household can be a married spouse, a common-law partner, a lone parent, a child or a person not in a census family. Persons not in census families include persons living alone, or individuals living with other relatives or non-relatives.

**Households:** In this document, private households and the population in private households are included in the analysis and the population in collective dwellings is excluded.

# Portrait of Families and Living Arrangements in Canada

## Overview of census families



1. Without children aged 24 and under.

2. With children aged 24 and under.

For more information, see the [2011 Census Dictionary](#), Catalogue no. 98-301-X or the [Families Reference Guide, 2011 Census](#), Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011005.

## Additional information

For data at various levels of geography, refer to the [Census Profile](#), Catalogue no. 98-312-X and [Highlight tables](#), Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011002, [Topic-based tabulations](#), Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011017 through 98-312-X2011046, as well as the new census product [Focus on Geography Series](#), Catalogue no. 98-310-X2011004.

See also the Census in Brief articles:

[Fifty years of families in Canada: 1961 to 2011](#), Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011003.

[Canadian households in 2011: Type and growth](#), Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011003.

[Living arrangements of young adults aged 20 to 29](#), Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011003.

[Living arrangements of seniors](#), Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011003.

## Note to readers

Random rounding and percentage distributions: To ensure the confidentiality of responses collected for the 2011 Census while maintaining the quality of the results, a random rounding process is used to alter the values reported in individual cells. As a result, when these data are summed or grouped, the total value may not match the sum of the individual values, since the total and subtotals are independently rounded. Similarly, percentage distributions, which are calculated on rounded data, may not necessarily add up to 100%.

Due to random rounding, counts and percentages may vary slightly between different census products, such as the analytical document, highlight tables, and topic-based tabulations.

To obtain a copy of all the thematic maps accompanying this document, refer to the following link: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-312-x/98-312-x2011001-eng.cfm>

## Acknowledgments

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**Map – Percentage of population aged 14 and under living with common-law parents in 2011 by 2011 census division (CD)**

