

## Census in Brief

# Canadian households in 2011: Type and growth



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

### Introduction

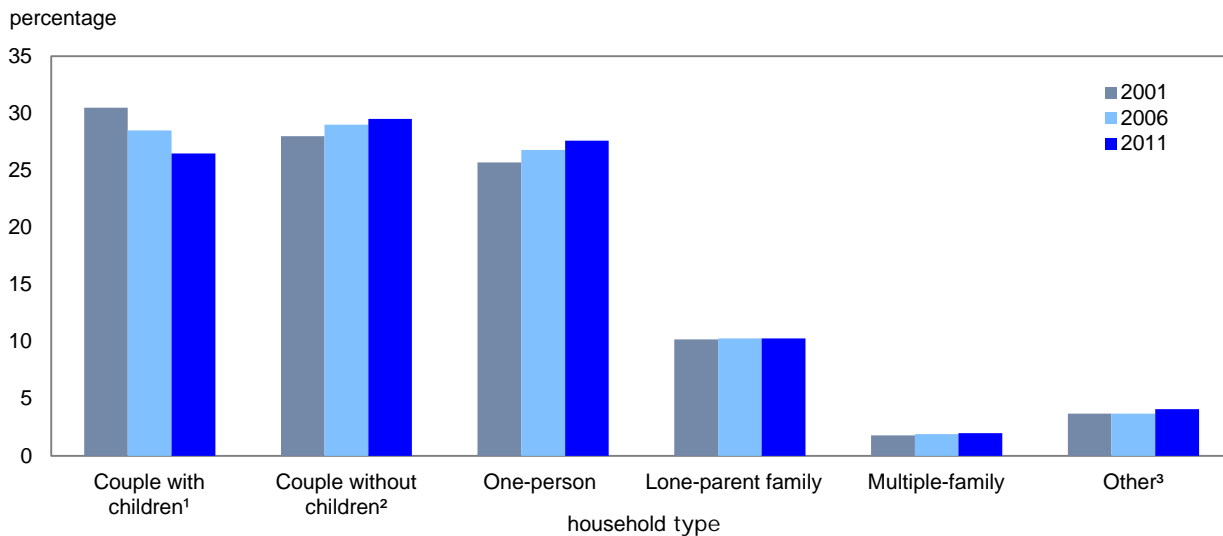
The 2011 Census of Population counted 13,320,615 private households<sup>1</sup> in Canada, an increase of 1,757,635 households from a decade earlier.

During this 10-year period, some types of households increased more rapidly than others, resulting in a shift of their relative prevalence. Across the country, there was wide variation in both type and growth patterns.

### Gap widens between households comprised of couples without children and couples with children

In 2001, the percentage of households comprised of couples with children (30.5%) exceeded those comprised of couples without children (28.0%).<sup>2</sup> For the first time in 2006, there were more households comprised of couples without children (29.0%) than households comprised of couples with children (28.5%). This gap widened in 2011, with 29.5% of households comprised of couples without children and 26.5% comprised of couples with children ([Figure 1](#)).

**Figure 1 Distribution (in percentage) of private households by household type, 2001 to 2011**



**Notes:** 'Couple' households and 'lone-parent family' households refer to one-family households.

1. Refers to one-family households with children aged 24 and under.

2. Refers to one-family households without children aged 24 and under.

3. Refers to two or more people who share a private dwelling, but who do not constitute a census family.

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

1. Private households refer to a person or a group of persons who occupy the same dwelling and do not have a usual place of residence elsewhere in Canada. It may consist of a family group (census family) with or without other persons, of two or more families sharing a dwelling, of a group of unrelated persons, or of one person living alone. Every person is a member of one and only one household. Data in this Census in Brief are based on private households and the population in private households. For more information, see the [2011 Census Dictionary](#), Catalogue no. 98-301-X.

2. In this document, households comprised of couples with children refer to children aged 24 and under in the home. Households comprised of couples without children refer to those without children aged 24 and under in the home, including those with all children aged 25 and over. For more information on young adults who live in the parental home, see the document [Living arrangements of young adults aged 20 to 29](#), Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011003, in the Census in Brief series.

In contrast to the shifting prevalence of couple households with and without children, the share of lone-parent family households has remained stable over the past decade, at just over 10%.

Across Canada, couple households with children made up the highest proportion of households in Nunavut (40.1%), the Northwest Territories (31.7%) and Alberta (29.3%), where the populations are generally younger and have higher fertility rates than the national average. In comparison, the smallest shares were found in the provinces of Quebec (23.9%), New Brunswick (23.8%) and Nova Scotia (22.7%), which are characterized by older populations, as well as in Yukon (23.1%).

### **For the first time, more one-person households than couple households with children**

The 2011 Census counted more one-person households (3,673,305) than couple households with children (3,524,915) for the first time. Between 2001 and 2011, the proportion of one-person households increased from 25.7% to 27.6% of all households, continuing an upward trend that has existed for many decades.

Some other countries had larger shares of one-person households than Canada. About 4 in 10 households in Finland (41.0% in 2010),<sup>3</sup> Norway (39.7% in 2011)<sup>4</sup> and the Netherlands (36.9% in 2011)<sup>5</sup> were one-person households. The proportions in the United States (26.7% in 2010)<sup>6</sup> and the United Kingdom (29.4% in 2011)<sup>7</sup> were similar to that in Canada.

Regionally, more than 3 in 10 households in Quebec (32.2%) and Yukon (30.7%) were one-person households. Within Quebec, shares were higher than the provincial average in most census metropolitan areas:<sup>8</sup> Trois-Rivières (36.7%), Sherbrooke (35.7%), Québec (34.6%) and Montréal (32.6%). The census metropolitan area of Victoria, British Columbia, was also high, at 33.5%, with its central municipality<sup>9</sup> having the highest proportion of one-person households among all of the municipalities of 5,000 population or more in Canada (49.0%). Many of these regions also had older populations than elsewhere in Canada.

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3. Official Statistics of Finland. Dwellings and housing conditions: Overview 2010, Appendix table 1: Household-dwelling units by number of persons 1960 - 2010.

4. Statistics Norway. Population statistics. Families and households, 1 January 2011. Table 3: Private households by type of household, 1980, 1990, 2001 and 2011.

5. Statistics Netherlands. Population, households and population dynamics.

6. U.S. Census Bureau. 2010 Census Briefs: Households and Families 2010. Table 2: Households by type: 2000 and 2010. 2010 Census Summary File 1.

7. Labour Force Survey, British Office for National Statistics 2011.

8. 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. 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.

9. A census subdivision is an area that is a municipality or an area that is deemed to be equivalent to a municipality for statistical reporting purposes (e.g., as an Indian reserve or an unorganized territory). Municipal status is defined by laws in effect in each province and territory in Canada. The central municipality (census subdivision) of a CMA or CA is the one that tends to lend its name to the CMA and the CA. For example in the Montréal census metropolitan area, the central municipality is the City of Montréal. All other municipalities within the boundaries of the CMA or CA are considered peripheral to the central municipality.

Among Canada's census agglomerations, the highest proportions of one-person households were found in Quebec; for example, Shawinigan (38.3%), Joliette and Saint-Hyacinthe (36.5% each), while these households were also relatively prominent in Hawkesbury, Ontario (36.2%)<sup>10</sup> and Elliot Lake, Ontario (36.0%).

### Shares of multiple-family households and other households up slightly

The proportion of multiple-family households<sup>11</sup> has edged up slightly over the past decade, from 1.8% in 2001 to 2.0% in 2011. Nunavut had the largest share of multiple-family households (10.6%) in the country. This could be due to housing shortages,<sup>12</sup> high cost of living, cultural preference or possibly a combination of these factors.

Multiple-family households were also prevalent in the municipalities surrounding the city of Toronto, including: Brampton (10.5%), Markham (8.1%), Vaughan (5.5%), Richmond Hill (5.4%), Richmond (5.1%), Mississauga (5.0%) and Ajax (4.8%). Additionally, in British Columbia, the municipalities of Surrey (7.6%) and Abbotsford (6.1%) had percentages of multiple-family households that were among the highest in the country. The larger share of these households may reflect higher proportions of immigrants in these areas relative to elsewhere in Canada.<sup>13</sup>

The proportion of 'other' households rose from 3.7% in 2001 to 4.1% in 2011. These households consist of two or more people who share the same private dwelling, but who do not constitute a census family, for example, room-mates or relatives such as siblings, cousins, aunts or uncles. 'Other' households were most common in the municipalities of Banff, Alberta (17.3%) and Whistler, British Columbia (15.0%) in 2011. This is possibly related to the relatively high proportion of young adult employees working in tourism industries in these areas.

### Decline in households comprised of couples with children

From 2006 to 2011, the number of private households grew 7.1% while the population in private households rose 5.7% during this same period ([Figure 2](#)). The document [Fifty years of families in Canada: 1961 to 2011](#) Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011003, in the Census in Brief series, provides additional information on historical trends related to the growth of private households and the population in private households.

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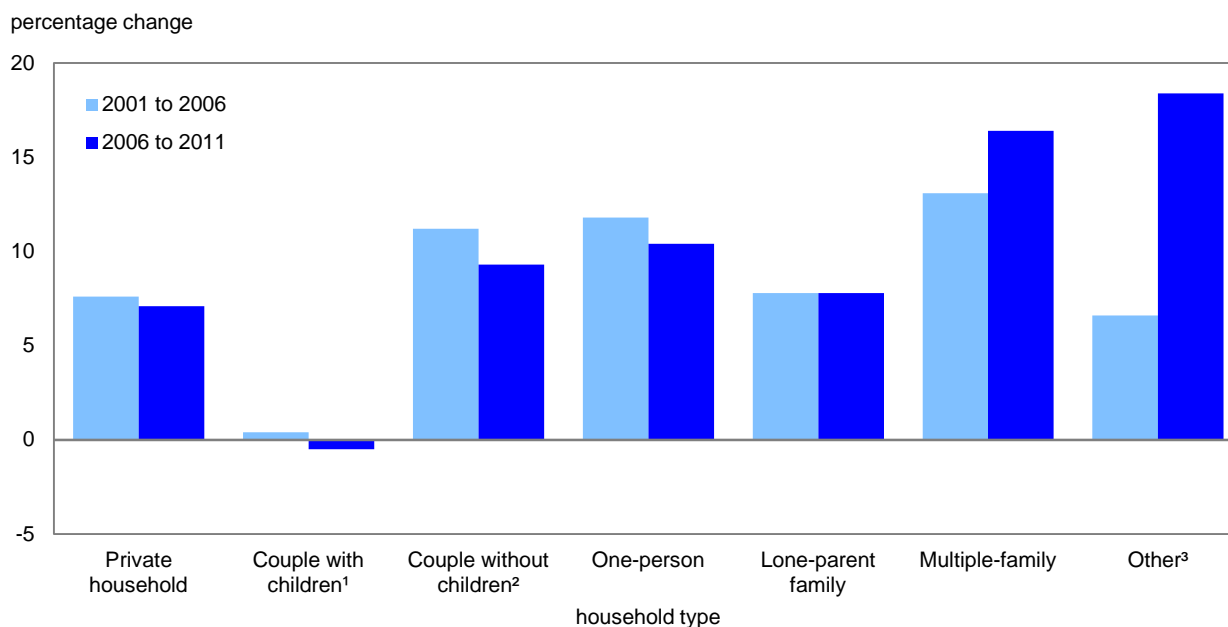
10. Refers only to the Ontario part of the Hawkesbury census agglomeration.

11. Multiple-family household refers to a household in which two or more census families (with or without additional persons) occupy the same private dwelling.

12. According to *An analysis of the housing needs in Nunavut: Nunavut Housing Needs Survey 2009/2010* (2010), about 35% of occupied dwellings were crowded in the 25 Nunavut communities included in the survey. Nunavut also had the highest share of large households in Canada in 2011. More than 3 in 10 households were comprised of 5 or more people (31.7%) in 2011, nearly 4 times the national average (8.4%).

13. 2006 Census data showed that 10.1% of immigrants in census families lived in multiple-family households as did 3.6% of non-immigrants.

**Figure 2 Percentage change in the number of private households and by household type, Canada, 2001 to 2006 and 2006 to 2011**



**Notes:** 'Couple' households and 'lone-parent family' households refer to one-family households.

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

Some household types grew more quickly than others between 2006 and 2011. The two household types that increased at the fastest pace were 'other' and multiple-family, although each represented a relatively small proportion of the total. The number of 'other' households rose 18.4% while multiple-family households increased 16.4%.

In comparison, the number of one-person households grew 10.4% between 2006 and 2011. Lone-parent households rose 7.8%, the same rate of growth as during the previous intercensal period between 2001 and 2006. Households consisting of couples without children increased 9.3%.

The only household type that decreased in number during the five years prior to the 2011 Census was couple households with children (-0.5%). This decline relates at least partly to the aging of the baby-boom generation. As this large cohort grows older, many of their children have already reached adulthood and left the parental home.

Despite the negative growth of couple households with children, there is variation across the country. The Atlantic provinces, characterized by an older population, had the largest decreases in couple households with children, particularly Newfoundland and Labrador (-10.0%) and Nova Scotia (-8.1%). Only the comparatively younger provinces of Alberta (+6.4%), Saskatchewan (+2.1%) and Manitoba (+0.8%), as well as Nunavut (+5.3%) experienced positive growth of this household type.

At the sub-provincial level, about 4 out of 5 census divisions<sup>14</sup> experienced a decline in the number of couple households with children between 2006 and 2011 (see [Map](#)). Among the census divisions that experienced growth in couples with children, increases were generally modest, with some exceptions. The census division of La Jacques Cartier, Quebec, had the highest growth at 28.5%. This census division also experienced the second-highest population growth between 2006 and 2011 as well as a high percentage of young children aged 4 and under in 2011.

The census division that had the second-highest growth since 2006 (+15.7%) in the number of couples with children was Alberta's Division number 16 (containing the census agglomeration of Wood Buffalo). This census division also had the highest population growth over the period.

For more information at various levels of geography, see the Highlight table [Private households by household type](#), Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011002.

### Planning at the local level: Couple households with children

Data on population and age structure from the 2011 Census show that some areas have younger, more rapidly growing populations than others. Consequently, certain household types, particularly couples with children, are more predominant in areas with higher population growth.

Knowledge of household types at the local level can inform decision-makers in planning the location and size of infrastructure, such as schools, public services, hospitals, housing and transportation as well as the overall allocation and nature of resources.

More than 3 in 10 households were comprised of couples with children in the Ontario census metropolitan areas of Oshawa (33.0%), Barrie (32.3%), Toronto (31.6%) and Kitchener - Cambridge - Waterloo (30.7%), as well as Calgary, Alberta (30.6%). A number of census metropolitan areas in Quebec and British Columbia had the smallest shares: Québec and Kelowna (22.2% each), Sherbrooke (21.0%), Victoria (19.5%) and Trois-Rivières (19.4%).

To obtain a copy of all the thematic maps accompanying this document, refer to the following link: [CMA map series: Percentage of private households containing couples with children aged 24 and under at home in 2011 by 2011 census tract \(CT\) \(http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-312-x/2011003/maps-cartes-eng.cfm\)](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-312-x/2011003/maps-cartes-eng.cfm)

Four of the 5 census agglomerations with the largest shares of households comprised of couples with children were found in Alberta: Okotoks (42.5%), Cold Lake (36.2%), Sylvan Lake (34.5%) and Wood Buffalo (33.9%). The proportion in Petawawa, Ontario was also high, at 34.6%.

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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.

For municipalities with populations of 5,000 population or more, households containing couples with children comprised over half of all households in 2011 in Stanley, Manitoba (64.9%), Mackenzie County, Alberta (53.6%) and Hanover, Manitoba (52.4%). In contrast, 1 in 10 households (9.8%) consisted of a couple with children in the central municipality of Victoria, British Columbia. Similar proportions were found in Qualicum Beach, British Columbia (10.9%) and Elliot Lake, Ontario (11.5%), where the populations are among the oldest in the country.

### 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.

### Additional information

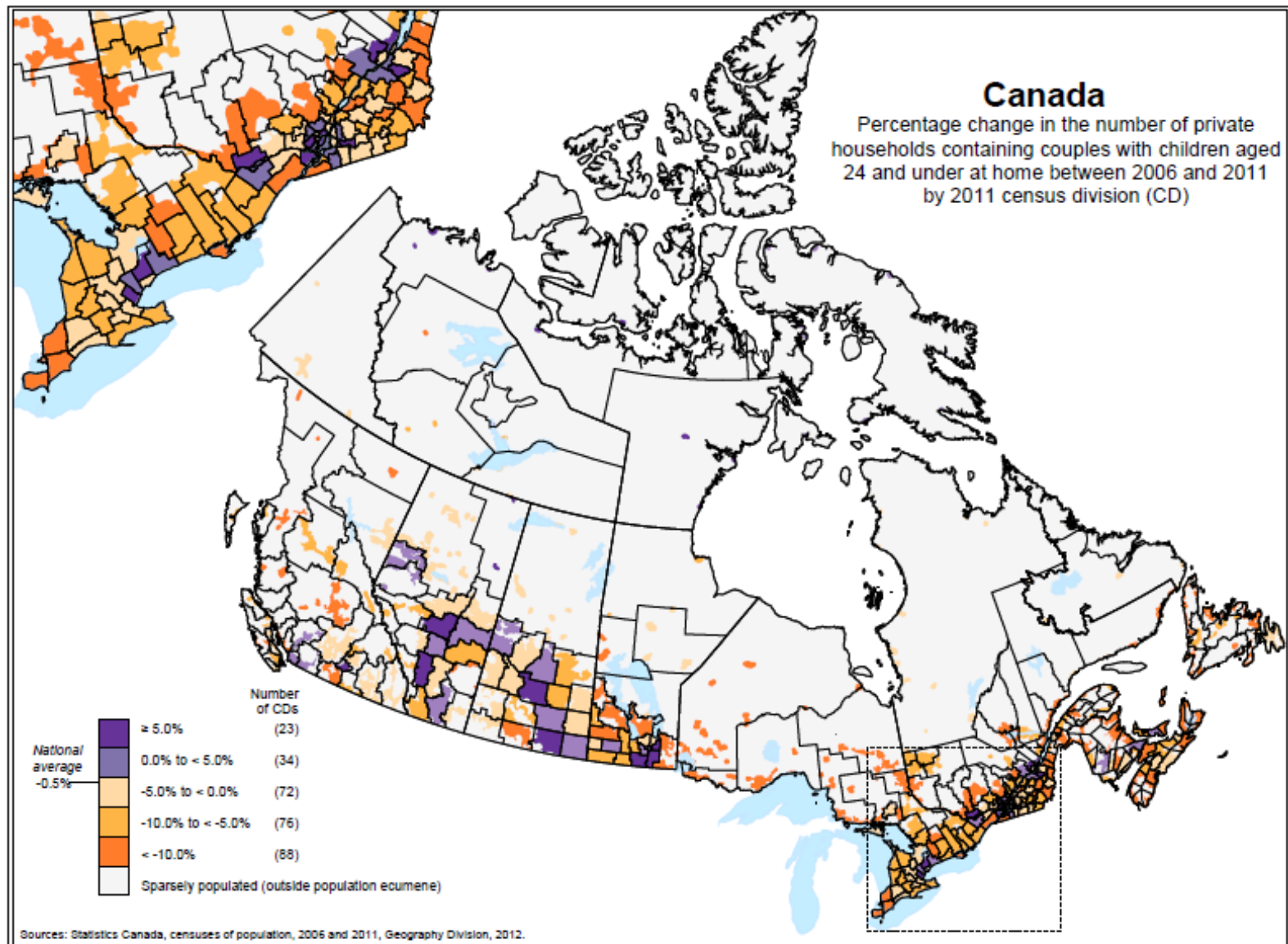
For data at a local level, refer to the [Census Profile](#), Catalogue no. 98-312-X and [Highlight tables](#), Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011002, as well as the new census product [Focus on Geography Series](#), Catalogue no. 98-310-X2011004.

### Acknowledgments

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**Map – Percentage change in the number of private households containing couples with children aged 24 and under at home between 2006 and 2011 by 2011 census division (CD)**





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