

2011 Census of Canada

Families, Households and Marital Status

September 21, 2012

Highlights of Living Arrangements and Families

Introduction

Families, households and marital status is the third data release from the 2011 Census of Canada taken on May 10, 2011. This highlight will provide an overview of the living arrangements and marital status of Alberta residents, the general structure and characteristics of Albertan families, and the living arrangements of children (under age 15) in Alberta.

The discussion of family structure uses the census family concept for the population living in private households. Census families include married couples (with or without children of either or both spouses), common-law couples (with or without children of either or both partners), and lone-parent families. For more detailed definitions of the concepts and categories included in this document refer to Appendix 1.

Living Arrangements

Most Albertans still live in families, but an increasing share of the population is living alone...

In 2011, 3.57 million Albertans were living in private households, and about 82.7% were part of a census family, either as a spouse, a common-law partner, a parent or a child (Figure 1). About one in 10 Albertans lived alone in 2011 and the remaining people lived with others who were either relatives or non-relatives. The national distribution was similar with 82.9% of 32.86 million in a census family and 11.2% living alone in 2011 (Table 1).

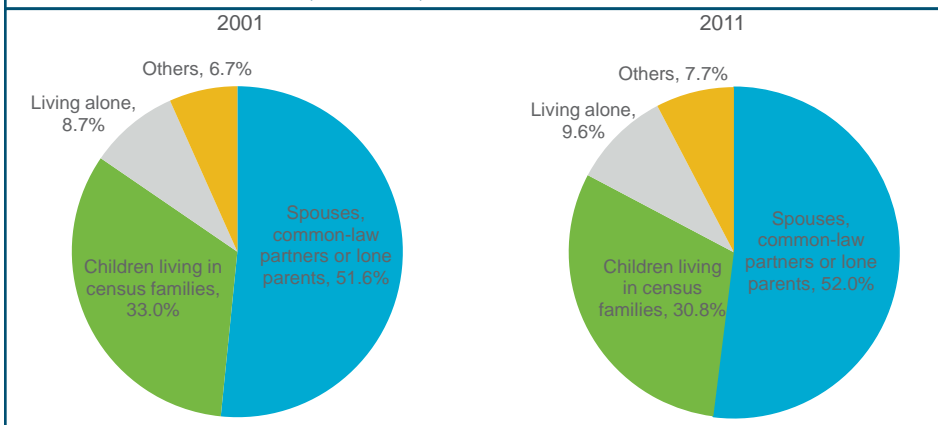
The share of Alberta's population living as children in census families dropped over the last decade, to 30.3% in 2011 from 31.5% in 2001. Over the same period, the proportion of population living alone has expanded, along with the 'other' category which includes Albertans not in a census family, but living either with relatives or non-relatives.

Marital and Conjugal Status

Almost two-thirds of adults live as a couple, and more than eight out of 10 couples are married...

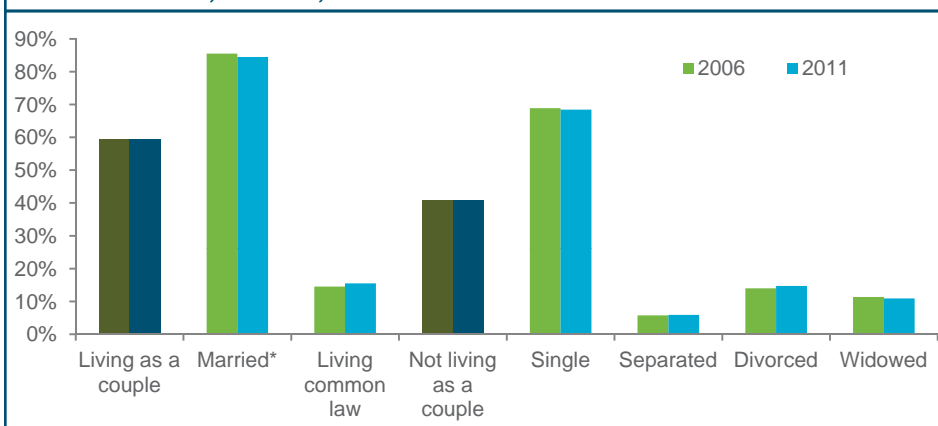
Of the 2.96 million Albertans aged 15 and older in 2011, 59.0% were living as a couple. Of these couples, the vast majority (84.5%) were legally married (and not separated) (Figure 2). While common-law couples were only 15.5% of all couples, their share increased one percentage point between 2006 and 2011, while the share of married couples dropped by the same amount. Of the Albertans not living as a couple in 2011, more than two-thirds (68.5%) were single (never married). The next highest proportion was divorced (14.7%), followed by widowed (10.9%) and separated (5.9%).

FIGURE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN PRIVATE HOUSEHOLDS BY LIVING ARRANGEMENTS, ALBERTA, 2001 AND 2011



Sources: Censuses of Canada, Statistics Canada

FIGURE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AGED 15+ BY MARITAL AND CONJUGAL STATUS, ALBERTA, 2006 AND 2011



Sources: Censuses of Canada, Statistics Canada

* and not separated

A Snapshot of Families

Alberta families getting smaller...

The 2011 census enumerated 999,530 census families in Alberta, up from 904,850 in 2006, an increase of 10.5% (Table 2). The number of census families overall grew at the same rate as the population in private households. However, the number of smaller census families, i.e. those with only two or three members, grew at a faster rate than the population (12.6% and 12.0%, respectively), while four person families expanded by only 7.4% and those with five or more members grew by only 3.9%. Smaller families also grew fastest at the national level, expanding by 9.0% and 4.6% for two and three person families, respectively.

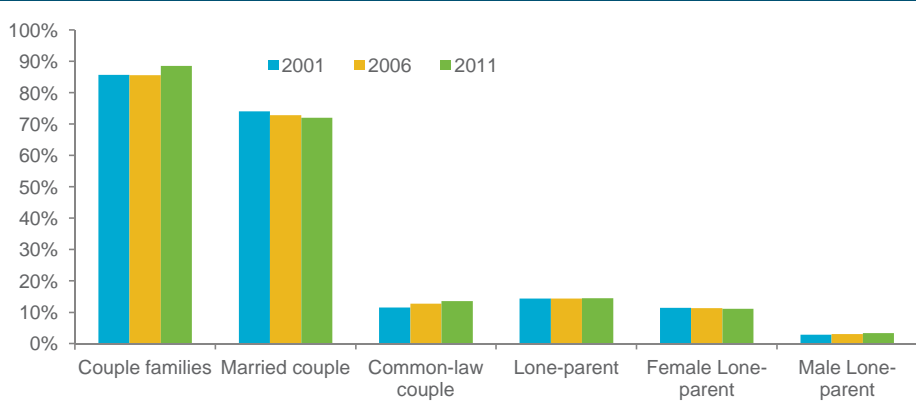
Almost three-quarters of Alberta families consist of a married couple...

The vast majority of census families in Alberta consisted of married couples (Figure 3). The census counted 719,360 married-couple families in Alberta, up 9.2% from 2006 and accounting for about 72.0% of all census families in 2011. Although this proportion has been dropping, from 72.8% in 2006 and 74.1% in 2001, (Table 2), Alberta has consistently had a higher share of married-couple families than the Canadian average. Nationally, married couples made up 67% of all census families in 2011.

Common-law couple families increasing the fastest...

Common-law-couples make up a small proportion of all census families, at only

FIGURE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF CENSUS FAMILIES, ALBERTA, 2001 TO 2011



Sources: Censuses of Canada, Statistics Canada

13.6% in 2011. Nonetheless, this type of family has been on the rise over the last decade. As Figure 4 demonstrates, common-law families are the fastest growing type of couple census family. The number of common-law-couple families in Alberta grew by 17.3% from 115,685 in 2006, to 135,660 in 2011, almost twice as fast as the rate for married-couple families (Table 2).

Share of lone-parent families holding steady...

The proportion of lone-parent families in Alberta has been stable over the last decade, at 14.5% (Figure 3). However, the number of Alberta families headed by a lone-parent increased to 144,510 in 2011, up 10.9% from the 2006 level (Figure 4). Despite this, over the last decade lone-parent families have made up a smaller share of all Alberta

families compared with Canada as a whole, at 14.5% compared with 16.3% in 2011 (Table 2).

Male lone-parent families growing...

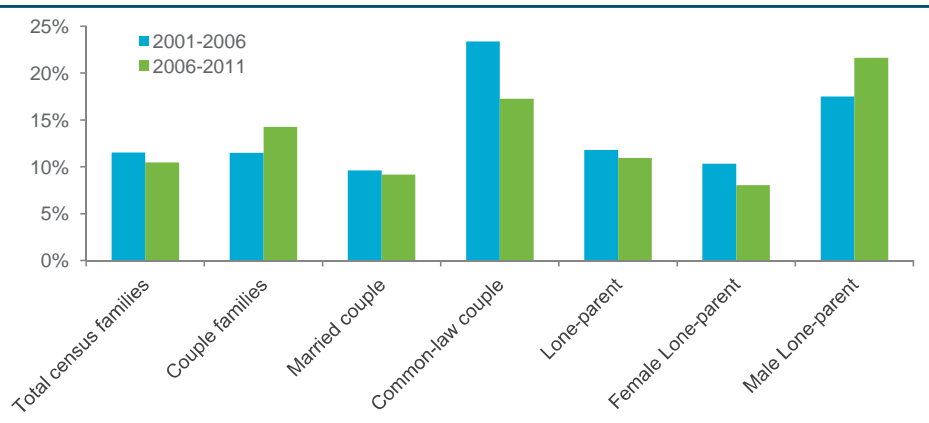
Lone-parent families headed by males are becoming more common in Alberta. In 2011, 23.3% of lone-parent families were headed by males, up from 20.2% in 2001. Male-headed lone-parent families were less common in Canada, with shares of 21.4% in 2011 and 18.7% in 2001. While families headed by males are still only a small percentage of all lone-parent families, the growth rate for male-headed families was almost three times that of female families between 2006 and 2011 (21.7% versus 8.0%) (Table 2).

Number of same-sex couples jumps...

The 2011 Census enumerated 6,360 same-sex couples in Alberta. Of these, 3,325 were married couples, and 3,035 were common-law couples. Although only 0.7% of all couple families in Alberta, the number of same-sex couples grew by 109%* between 2006 and 2011, about 2.5 times the growth observed at the national level (+42.4%). The number of same-sex couples grew much faster than opposite-sex couples both at the provincial (+10.0%) and national (+4.8%) level.

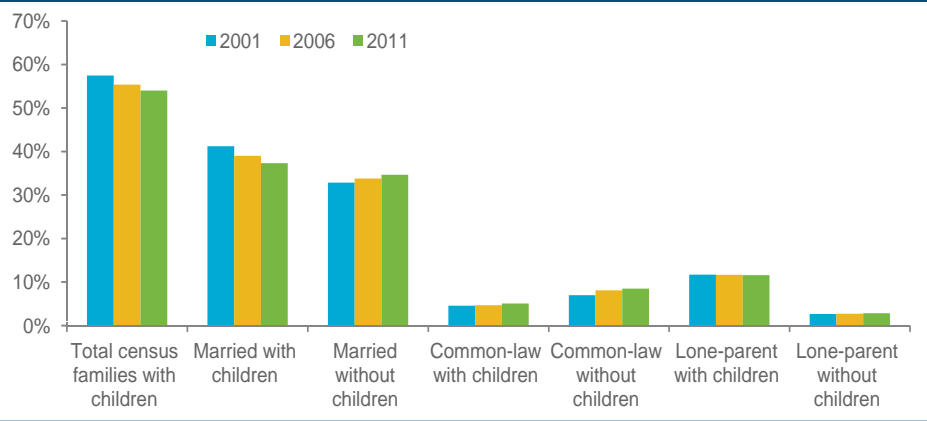
*It should be noted that data on same-sex married couples must be interpreted with caution. A possible over-estimation may have an impact on counts of same-sex married couples for Alberta.

FIGURE 4: GROWTH OF CENSUS FAMILIES, ALBERTA, 2001-2006 AND 2006-2011



Sources: Censuses of Canada, Statistics Canada

FIGURE 5: SHARE OF TOTAL CENSUS FAMILIES BY PRESENCE OF CHILDREN AGED 24 AND UNDER*, ALBERTA, 2001 TO 2011



Sources: Censuses of Canada, Statistics Canada

* Couples and lone-parents “without children” may have children aged 25 or older at home.

Married couple families more likely than common-law to have children at home...

Overall, about half (49.6%) of Alberta couples (married and common-law) had children (aged 24 and under) in the home in 2011. Children were more likely to be living with married couples (51.9%), compared with common-law couples (37.3%).

Shrinking share of census families with children present...

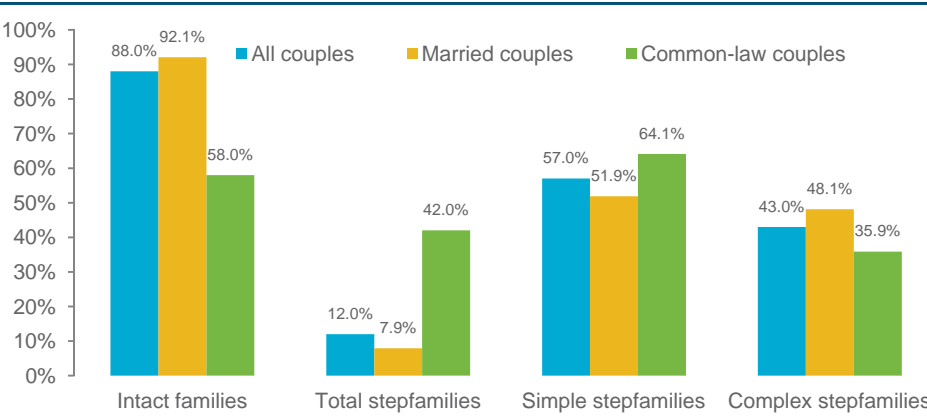
By 2011, Alberta had caught up with a national trend first noted in 2006. Only 42.4% of census families in Alberta were couples with children aged 24 and under, while 43.2% were couples without children in 2011. Overall, the proportion of census families with children under 25 in Alberta has been on the decline, dropping to 54.0% in 2011, from 57.5% in 2001 and 55.4% in 2006 (Figure 5). Married couples with children make up the largest proportion of all census families, but its share has been dropping. At the provincial level, 43.7% of couple census families in 2006 had children at home, while 41.9% did not.

Just over one in 10 Alberta couple families is a step-family...

Families are becoming more complex, and in response to this evolving complexity, the 2011 census collected information on step-families for the first time. Couple families with children are classified as intact or step-families depending on the biological/adoptive relationship of the children to the parents. Step-families are further identified as simple and complex. For detailed definitions of these concepts see Appendix 1.

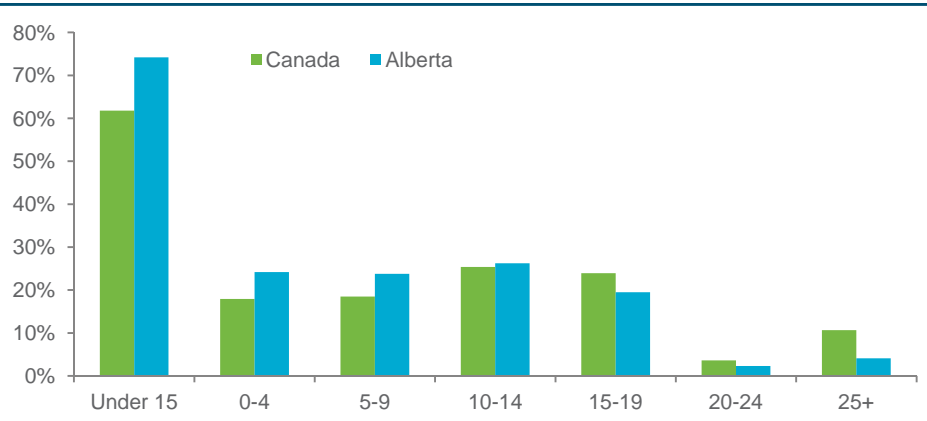
The 2011 Census enumerated 50,780 step-families in Alberta, which made up 12.0% of all couple families with children present. Compared with the national average of intact families (87.4%), a greater proportion of Alberta families were intact in 2011 (88.0%) (Figure 6). More than half (57.0%) of Alberta’s step-families are simple. Married couple families in Alberta are the most likely to be intact (92.1%), and a greater proportion of married step-families were simple step-families (51.9%) rather than complex. Common-law couple families were the least likely to be intact (58.0%). Almost two-thirds of the total common-law step-families were simple, rather than complex.

FIGURE 6: DISTRIBUTION OF COUPLE FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN BY STEP-FAMILY STATUS AND TYPE OF STEP-FAMILY, ALBERTA, 2011



Sources: Censuses of Canada, Statistics Canada

FIGURE 7: DISTRIBUTION OF FOSTER CHILDREN BY SELECTED AGE GROUPS, CANADA AND ALBERTA, 2011



Sources: Censuses of Canada, Statistics Canada

New information on foster children...

The 2011 Census enumerated 47,885 foster children in Canada, and 5,870 (12.3%) of these children were in Alberta (Figure 7). Alberta’s foster children tended to be younger than the national average, with almost three-quarters under the age of 15, compared with only 62.0% for Canada as a whole.

Living Arrangements of Children Under 15

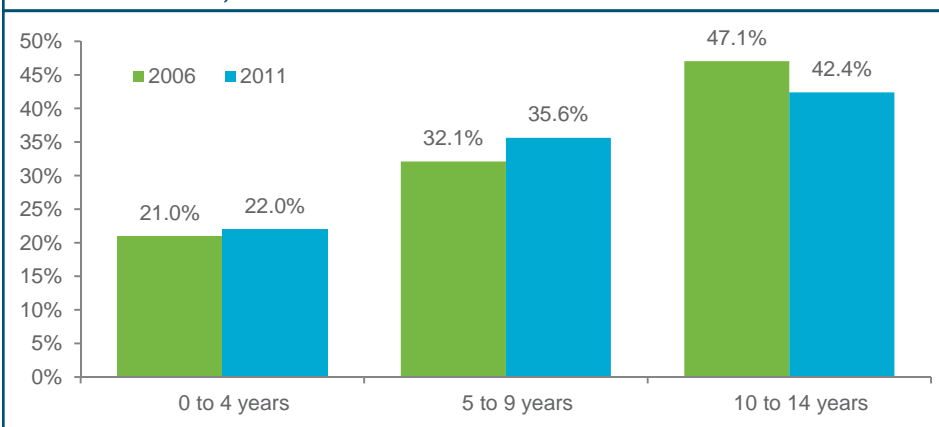
Most children live with two parents...

In 2011 99.8% of the 678,090 children in Alberta aged 14 and under lived in census families. Of these, 82.5% lived with two parents while 16.6% lived in a lone-parent family (Table 3). This distribution has been relatively stable over the last decade. Compared with the national average, a greater proportion of Albertan children in families were living with two parents in 2011 (80.0% for Canada). This was the case in 2001 and 2006 as well.

A relatively small number of children live with grandparents...

In 2011, 4,410 children under 15 in Alberta lived with at least one grandparent, up from about 3,645 in 2006. This represented 13.8% (12.9% in 2006) of the children in skip-generation homes in Canada (see Appendix 1 for detailed definition). Most (61.6%) lived with a grandparent couple rather than a single grandparent both provincially and nationally. In 2011, almost 80.0% of the children under age 15 in Alberta living with grandparents(s) were aged five to 14 years - only one in five were under the age of five.

FIGURE 8: DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN UNDER 15 YEARS LIVING WITH GRANDPARENTS, ALBERTA, 2006 AND 2011



Sources: Censuses of Canada, Statistics Canada

In Summary

The increasing complexity of living arrangements and family structure is readily apparent and this fact has necessitated some new information categories in the 2011 Census as a way to monitor the evolving trends. While these trends are apparent in Alberta, there were also signs of continuity and stability in the 2011 Census results. Married couples are still the predominant family type, and the majority of Alberta’s children still live in two-parent families.

TABLE 1: POPULATION IN PRIVATE HOUSEHOLDS BY LIVING ARRANGEMENTS, ALBERTA AND CANADA, 2001, 2006 AND 2011

	Alberta		Canada		Alberta		Canada		Alberta		Canada		Alberta	Canada
	2001		2001		2006		2006		2011		2011		Percentage Growth	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	2006-2011	
Total Population	2,918,920	100.0	29,522,305	100.0	3,228,065	100.0	31,074,405	100.0	3,567,935	100.0	32,856,980	100.0	10.5	5.7
People in family households	2,532,540	86.8	25,586,660	86.7	2,768,210	85.8	26,727,405	86.0	3,045,405	85.4	27,954,520	85.1	10.0	4.6
Spouses, common-law partners or lone parents	1,506,045	51.6	15,430,855	52.3	1,679,435	52.0	16,379,620	52.7	1,854,545	52.0	17,251,550	52.5	10.4	5.3
Children living in census families	962,445	33.0	9,582,615	32.5	1,016,850	31.5	9,733,765	31.3	1,097,320	30.8	9,971,320	30.3	7.9	2.4
Non-family people living with relatives	30,950	1.1	332,085	1.1	40,375	1.3	393,350	1.3	48,580	1.4	447,195	1.4	20.3	13.7
Non-family people living with non-relatives	33,095	1.1	241,105	0.8	31,555	1.0	220,665	0.7	44,955	1.3	284,455	0.9	42.5	28.9
People in non-family households	386,380	13.2	3,935,645	13.3	459,855	14.2	4,347,000	14.0	522,530	14.6	4,902,455	14.9	13.6	12.8
Living with relatives	23,675	0.8	222,390	0.8	33,640	1.0	250,670	0.8	37,425	1.0	288,485	0.9	11.3	15.1
Living with non-relatives only	107,325	3.7	736,375	2.5	117,525	3.6	769,285	2.5	142,370	4.0	940,660	2.9	21.1	22.3
Living alone	255,375	8.7	2,976,875	10.1	308,690	9.6	3,327,050	10.7	342,730	9.6	3,673,305	11.2	11.0	10.4

Sources: Censuses of Canada, Statistics Canada

TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION AND GROWTH OF CENSUS FAMILIES, ALBERTA AND CANADA, 2001, 2006 AND 2011

	Alberta		Canada		Alberta		Canada		Alberta		Canada		Alberta	Canada
	2001		2001		2006		2006		2011		2011		Percentage Growth	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	2006-2011	
Total	811,285	100.0	8,371,020	100.0	904,850	100.0	8,896,840	100.0	999,530	100.0	9,389,700	100.0	10.5	5.5
Couple families	694,760	85.6	7,059,830	84.3	774,580	85.6	7,482,775	84.1	885,015	88.5	7,861,855	83.7	14.3	5.1
Married	601,000	74.1	5,901,425	70.5	658,900	72.8	6,105,910	68.6	719,360	72.0	6,293,950	67.0	9.2	3.1
Opposite-sex	601,000	74.1	5,901,425	70.5	658,390	72.8	6,098,445	68.5	716,030	71.6	6,272,935	66.8	8.8	2.9
Same-sex	--	--	--	--	510	0.1	7,465	0.1	3,325	0.3	21,015	0.2	552.0	181.5
Common-law	93,765	11.6	1,158,410	13.8	115,685	12.8	1,376,870	15.5	135,660	13.6	1,567,910	16.7	17.3	13.9
Opposite-sex	91,245	11.2	1,124,210	13.4	113,145	12.5	1,338,985	15.1	132,625	13.3	1,524,350	16.2	17.2	13.8
Same-sex	2,520	0.3	34,200	0.4	2,540	0.3	37,885	0.4	3,035	0.3	43,560	0.5	19.5	15.0
Lone-parent families	116,520	14.4	1,311,190	15.7	130,265	14.4	1,414,060	15.9	144,510	14.5	1,527,845	16.3	10.9	8.0
Female parent	92,945	11.5	1,065,360	12.7	102,555	11.3	1,132,290	12.7	110,800	11.1	1,200,295	12.8	8.0	6.0
Male parent	23,580	2.9	245,825	2.9	27,710	3.1	281,775	3.2	33,710	3.4	327,545	3.5	21.7	16.2

Sources: Censuses of Canada, Statistics Canada

TABLE 3 : NUMBER AND DISTRIBUTION OF LIVING ARRANGEMENT OF CHILDREN UNDER 15 YEARS, ALBERTA AND CANADA, 2001 TO 2011

Alberta	2001		2006		2011	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Total - Persons in private households under 15 years	613,580	100.0%	625,665	100.0%	678,090	100.0%
Total persons in households with at least one census family	612,970	99.9%	624,610	99.8%	677,035	99.8%
Children in families with two parents present	508,360	82.9%	517,295	82.7%	558,760	82.4%
Children in families with one parent present	99,355	16.2%	101,635	16.2%	112,445	16.6%
Persons not in census families, living with relatives	1,435	0.2%	4,845	0.8%	5,820	0.9%
Persons not in census families, living with non-relatives only	3,815	0.6%	830	0.1%	5	0.0%
Total persons in non-census family households	615	0.1%	1,050	0.2%	1,060	0.2%
Canada	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Total - Persons in private households under 15 years	5,723,250	100.0%	5,562,525	100.0%	5,587,165	100.0%
Total persons in households with at least one census family	5,716,445	99.9%	5,554,415	99.9%	5,579,505	99.9%
Children in families with two parents present	4,649,305	81.2%	4,485,325	80.6%	4,461,655	79.9%
Children in families with one parent present	1,029,020	18.0%	1,029,220	18.5%	1,078,575	19.3%
Persons not in census families, living with relatives	11,085	0.2%	32,610	0.6%	39,210	0.7%
Persons not in census families, living with non-relatives only	27,040	0.5%	7,255	0.1%	65	0.0%
Total persons in non-census family households	6,805	0.1%	8,110	0.1%	7,660	0.1%

Sources: Censuses of Canada, Statistics Canada

Appendix 1

Census Family 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.

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

Married and common-law couples with and without children: Unless otherwise specified, in the analytical document and in the Census in Brief, married or common-law couples with children refer to census families with at least one child aged 24 and under present in the home. Married or common-law couples without children aged 24 and under also include couples with all children aged 25 and over.

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

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. Couple families with children for whom it cannot be determined if there are stepchildren present are 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:

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

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.

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.

Individuals are classified as either living in a private household or living in a collective dwelling

Private households: Private households refer to a person or a group of persons (other than foreign residents) 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.

Collective dwellings: Collective dwellings refer to a dwelling of a commercial, institutional or communal nature. Included are lodging or rooming houses, hotels, motels, tourist homes, nursing homes, hospitals, staff residences, communal quarters (military bases), work camps, jails, group homes and so on.

Marital Status Concepts and Definitions

Married (and not separated): A person who is married and has not separated or obtained a divorce, and whose spouse is living.

Common-law: A person who is living with another person as a couple but who is not legally married to that person.

Separated: A person who is married but who no longer lives with his/her spouse (for any reason other than illness, work or school) and who has not obtained a divorce. Persons living common law are not included in this category.

Divorced: A person who has obtained a legal divorce and who has not remarried. Persons living common law are not included in this category.

Widowed: A person who has lost his/her spouse through death and who has not remarried. Persons living common law are not included in this category.

Single (never legally married): A person who has never married or a person whose marriage has been annulled and who has not remarried. Persons living common law are not included in this category.