
2A Family Structure

Description

Proportion of census families by the combination of relatives that comprise a family. Classification on this variable considers the presence or absence of: legally married spouses or common law partners; and children.¹

Specific Indicators

- Married couple with child(ren)
- Married couple without child(ren)
- Common-law couple with child(ren)
- Common-law couple without child(ren)
- Female lone-parent with child(ren)
- Male lone-parent with child(ren)

Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS)

The Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS) establish requirements for the fundamental public health programs and services carried out by boards of health, which include assessment and surveillance, health promotion and policy development, disease and injury prevention, and health protection. The OPHS consist of one Foundational Standard and 13 Program Standards that articulate broad societal goals that result from the activities undertaken by boards of health and many others, including community partners, non-governmental organizations, and governmental bodies. These results have been expressed in terms of two levels of outcomes: societal outcomes and board of health outcomes. Societal outcomes entail changes in health status, organizations, systems, norms, policies, environments, and practices and result from the work of many sectors of society, including boards of health, for the improvement of the overall health of the population. Board of health outcomes are the results of endeavours by boards of health and often focus on changes in awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills, practices, environments, and policies. Boards of health are accountable for these outcomes. The standards also outline the requirements that boards of health must implement to achieve the stated results.

Outcomes Related to this Indicator

Societal Outcome (Foundational Standard): Population health needs are anticipated, identified, addressed, and evaluated.

Assessment and/or Surveillance Requirements Related to this Indicator

- The board of health shall conduct surveillance, including the ongoing collection, collation, analysis, and periodic reporting of population health indicators, as required by the Health Protection and Promotion Act and in accordance with the Population Health Assessment and Surveillance Protocol, 2008 (or as current) (Foundational Standards).
- Consider Requirement #5: The board of health shall provide population health information including determinants of health and health inequities to the public, community partners, and health care providers, in accordance with the Population Health Assessment and Surveillance Protocol, 2008 (or as current).
- The board of health shall use population health, determinants of health and health inequities information to assess the needs of the local population, including the identification of populations at risk, to determine those groups that would benefit most from public health programs and

services (i.e., priority populations) (Foundational Standard).

Protocol Requirements Related to this Indicator

- The board of health shall collect or access the following types of population health data and information: i) Socio-demographics including population counts by age, sex, education, employment, income, housing, language, immigration, culture, ability/disability, and cost of a nutritious food basket (Population Health Assessment and Surveillance Protocol 1.b.i.).
- The board of health shall analyze population health data and interpret the information to describe the distribution of health outcomes, preventive health practices, risk factors, determinants of health, and other relevant information to assess the overall health of its population (Population Health Assessment and Surveillance Protocol 2.b.).

<http://www.ontario.ca/publichealthstandards><http://www.ontario.ca/publichealthstandards>

Corresponding Health Indicator(s) from Statistics Canada and CIHI

Family structure by age group of child(ren) & broad age group category (under 24, or 25 or older)

- o Go to: www.statcan.gc.ca<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/>
- o Go to “Browse by subject”
- o Click on “Families, households and housing”
- o Click on “Families, households and housing (general)”
- o Click on “Census tables”
- o Choose a table for “Age Groups of Children at Home (15) and Census Family Structure (7) for the Census Families in Private Households” for the desired geography level. For example, for census sub divisions choose catalogue 98-312-X2011032

OR

Family structure by number of child(ren)

- o Go to: www.statcan.gc.ca<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/>
- o Go to “Browse by subject”
- o Click on “Families, households and housing”
- o Click on “Families, households and housing (general)”
- o Click on “Census tables”
- o Choose a table for “Presence of Children (5), Number of Children at Home (8) and Census Family Structure (7) for the Census Families in Private Households” for the desired geography level. For example, for census sub divisions choose catalogue 98-312-X2011017

Data Sources (see Resources: [Data Sources](#))

Numerator & Denominator: [Canadian Census](#)

Source: Statistics Canada

Distributed by: Statistics Canada

Suggested citation (see [Data Citation Notes](#)):

[year] Census, Statistics Canada

Survey Questions

1. How many persons usually live at this address as of May 10, 2011, including yourself? Include all persons who have their main residence at this address, even if they are temporarily away.

See the instructions on page 3 (*joint custody, students, permanent residents, secondary residence, etc.*).

Number of persons _____

2. Including yourself, list below all persons who usually live here. Begin the list with an **adult** followed, if applicable, by that person's **spouse** or **common-law partner** and by their **children**. Continue with all other persons who usually live at this address.

. WHOM TO INCLUDE IN STEP B

- All persons who have their **main residence** at this address on May 10, 2011, including newborn babies, room-mates and persons who are temporarily away;
- **Canadian citizens, permanent residents** (landed immigrants), persons asking for **refugee status** (refugee claimants), persons from **another country** with a **work** or **study permit** and family members living here with them;
- Persons staying at this address temporarily on May 10, 2011 who have **no main residence elsewhere**.

2. WHERE TO INCLUDE PERSONS WITH MORE THAN ONE RESIDENCE

- **CHILDREN IN JOINT CUSTODY** should be included in the home of the parent where they live most of the time. Children who spend equal time with each parent should be included in the home of the parent with whom they are staying on May 10, 2011.
- **STUDENTS** who return to live with their parents during the year should be included at their parents' address, even if they live elsewhere while attending school or working at a summer job.
- **SPOUSES OR COMMON-LAW PARTNERS TEMPORARILY AWAY** who stay elsewhere while working or studying should be listed at the main residence of their family, if they return periodically.
- **PERSONS IN AN INSTITUTION** for **less than six months** (for example, in a home for the aged, a hospital or a prison) should be listed at their usual residence.

IF THIS ADDRESS IS:

- a **SECONDARY RESIDENCE** (such as a cottage) for **ALL PERSONS** who stayed here on May 10, 2011 (all these persons have their main residence elsewhere in Canada), mark this circle. Print your name, your telephone number and **your main residence address** at the bottom of this page. Do not answer other questions.
- a **DWELLING OCCUPIED ONLY BY RESIDENTS OF ANOTHER COUNTRY VISITING CANADA** (for example, on vacation or on a business trip), mark this circle. Print your name, your telephone number and **your country of residence** at the bottom of this page. Do not answer other questions.
- the **HOME OF A GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ANOTHER COUNTRY** (for example, embassy or high commission) and family members, mark this circle. Print your name, your telephone number and **the country that you represent** at the bottom of this page. Do not answer other questions.

4. MARITAL STATUS

Mark one circle only.

- Never legally married
- Legally married (and not separated)
- Separated, but still legally married
- Divorced
- Widowed

5. Is this person living with a common-law partner?

Common-law refers to two people who live together as a couple but who are not legally married to each other.

- Yes
- No

6. RELATIONSHIP TO PERSON 1

For **each** person usually living here, describe his or her relationship to Person 1.

Mark or specify one response only.

Adopted children should be considered sons and daughters.

Children in joint custody should be included in the home of the parent where they live most of the time.

Children who spend equal time with each parent should be included in the home of the parent with whom they are staying on May 10, 2011.

For all children, please consider the relationship to Person 1 and Person 2.

If none of the choices apply, specify this person's relationship to Person 1 under "Other".

Examples of "Other" relationships to Person 1:

- brother-in-law or sister-in-law • niece or nephew • grandfather or grandmother • room-mate's son or daughter • lodger's husband or wife • employee • etc.

Analysis Check List

- None

Method of Calculation

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Basic Categories

- Age group of children: aged 24 or under (with various sub-category age groupings e.g., all 0 to 5 years); aged 25 and over only
- Total number of children: 1 child; 2 children; 3 or more children
- Total married couple families with children, married couple families without children, common-law families with children, common-law families without children, single parents (by sex)
- Geographic areas: public health unit, census metropolitan areas, census agglomerations, census division, census sub-division, and census tract.

Indicator Comments

- Census family refers to a married couple (with or without children of either and/or both spouses), a common-law couple (with or without children of either and/or both partners) or a lone parent of any marital status, with at least one child. A couple may be of opposite sex or same sex. A couple family with children may be further classified as either an intact family in which all children are the biological and/or adopted children of both married spouses or of both common-law partners or a stepfamily with at least one biological or adopted child of only one married spouse or common-law partner and whose birth or adoption preceded the current relationship. Stepfamilies, in turn may be classified as simple or complex. A simple stepfamily is a couple family in which all children are biological or adopted children of one, and only one, married spouse or common-law partner whose birth or adoption preceded the current relationship. A complex stepfamily is a couple family which contains at least one biological or adopted child whose birth or adoption preceded the current relationship. These families contain children from:
 - o each married spouse or common-law partner and no other children
 - o one married spouse or common-law partner and at least one other biological or adopted child of the couple
 - o each married spouse or common-law partner and at least one other biological or adopted child of the couple.²
- Private household refers to a group of persons (other than foreign residents) who occupy a private dwelling and do not have a usual place of residence outside of Canada.²
- 'Children' refer to 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, the sons or 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). Sons or daughters who study or have a summer job elsewhere but return to live with their parent(s) during the year are considered members of the census family of their parent(s).²
- As of 2011, a child living with a couple family can be identified as a child in an intact family; the child of one parent in a simple stepfamily; the child of one parent in a complex stepfamily; or the child of both parents in a complex stepfamily.²
- As of 2011, all write-in responses for Question 6 (Relationship to Person 1) are captured on the census form, so that family characteristics can be available for 100% census data. In the 1996, 2001 and 2006 censuses, the write-in responses for Question 6 (Relationship to Person 1) on the short questionnaire were not coded to the appropriate detailed relationship value, but were classified as 'other' relationships. Only write-in responses from the long questionnaire (20% sample) were fully coded. As a result, family characteristics are available only for the 20% sample for those years. In censuses prior to 1991, the families of married

couples and those of opposite-sex common-law couples together constituted husband-wife families and appeared as such in most census family tables.²

- As of 2006, a married couple may be of opposite or same sex.²
- The 2001 Census introduced several changes to the census family concept:
 - Two persons living in a same-sex common-law relationship and their children residing in the same household, if any, are considered a census family.
 - Children in a census family can have been previously married (as long as they are not currently living with a married spouse or common-law partner). Prior to the 2001 Census, they had to be never-married.
 - A grandchild living in a three-generation household where the parent (middle generation) is never-married will, contrary to previous censuses, now be considered as a child in the census family of his or her parent, provided the grandchild is not living with his or her own married spouse, common-law partner, or child. Prior to the 2001 Census, the census family consisted of the two older generations.
 - A grandchild present in the household of his or her grandparent(s), where a middle-generation parent is not present, will now be considered as a child in the census family of his or her grandparent, provided the grandchild is not living with his or her own married spouse, common-law partner, or child. Prior to the 2001 Census, such a grandchild would not be considered as the member of a census family.²
- As of 2001, census families do not include Hutterite collective households, as they did prior to 2001.
- In censuses prior to 1976, published family statistics included families living in private households (including those enumerated outside Canada) and all collective households.

Married families

- The predominant census family structure in 2011 was married couples, although they continued to decrease as a share of all families.³ This may be due to a higher average age at marriage, an increase in the divorced or separated population, increasing share of common-law unions, and a large share of young, often unmarried, adults who live in the parental home.⁴
- Since the 1960s, the age of people getting married for the first time has been rising.⁴
- There is an emerging positive relationship between marriage and having a university education.⁵
- Between 2006 and 2011, the number of same-sex married couples nearly tripled, following the legalization of same-sex marriage in Canada in 2005.³
- Married couples generally enjoy reliably lower morbidity and mortality rates across a variety of acute and chronic conditions (e.g., cancer, heart attacks, etc.).^{6,7,8,9,10} The two main hypotheses for these disparities are selection (healthier individuals are more likely to marry and stay married) and protection (married couples have more material resources, less stress, more social support compared to the unmarried population). On the other hand, troubled marriages can result in more stress, and are associated with depression or depressive symptoms.^{11,12}
- Social ties influence health through a variety of avenues, including behavioural (protect the health of others and own health), psychosocial (social support, personal control, symbolic meanings and norms, mental health), and physiological mechanisms.¹³

Common-law families

- A higher proportion of people live in common-law unions than in the past – either as relatively shorter-term relationships prior to marriage or as a longer-term alternative.⁴
- Increases in persons living as common-law partners are evident both within and across cohorts for most census years between 1981 and 2011.⁴ Exceptions include those in their early twenties (20-24 years old). Common-law unions have grown most rapidly among older groups in recently

- years, specifically for people in their late forties and over.⁴
- Younger women were more likely to be in a common-law union than older women.⁵

Presence of children

- Young adult women are postponing parenthood, a trend generally linked to women's increased education and labour force participation.¹⁴ Women are having fewer children overall.¹⁵
- Between 2001 and 2011, couples with children living at home fell as a share of all census families.³ The increase in the proportion of married-couple families without children may relate to the aging of the population.³
- Beginning with the 2011 Census, census families can be classified as intact families or stepfamilies.³ 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. Stepfamilies can be further classified as simple (all children are the biological or adopted children of one and only one married spouse or common-law partner) or complex (stepfamily consists of one child of each parent, or one child by one child only one parent and one child of both parents).³
- More opposite-sex couples had children at home than did same-sex couples.³

Lone-parent families

- Lone parents are defined as mothers or fathers, with no married spouse or common-law partner present, living in a dwelling with one or more children.²
- The proportion of lone-parent families is calculated without taking care responsibilities into consideration, e.g., an 80-year old parent living with a 55-year-old son or daughter, who may be taking care of the parent.
- The proportion of children in lone-parent families is also available in the 2011 Census.
- About 8 in 10 lone-parent families were female in 2011.³ Growth for the percentage of male lone-parent families was higher between 2006 and 2011 than for female lone-parent families.³
- 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.³

Cross-references to Other Indicators

- Living Arrangements

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Acknowledgements

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Changes Made

Date	Type of	Changes made by	Changes
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	Review -Form Review or Ad Hoc?		
January 2013	Formal	Social Determinants of Health Subgroup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Updated the corresponding health indicator from Statistics Canada and CIHI ● Updated the survey questions with accompanying instructions to interviewers ● Updated the analysis checklist ● Updated the method of calculation ● Revised the indicator comments ● Updated the references ● Added a cross-reference to another indicator ● Updated acknowledgements ● Updated changes made

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