

Families with Children Living at Home, 1996

Abstract

There were a total of 7 837 865 families in Canada in 1996. Families include married couples or common-law couples, with or without children living at home, and single parents. Of those families, 66% were families with children. Lone parent families make up 22% of all families with children. Over the last 10 years the distribution of children among the different types of families has changed. The proportion of married-couple families with children has decreased. However, there has been an increase in both common-law families with children and lone-parent families. Most children live with their biological or adoptive parents. The highest proportion of families with children living at home is in the Northwest Territories.

Families With and Without Children Living at Home

The reference to "families" for this series of maps is based on the concept of "census family" as defined by Statistics Canada. Census families include families that are married couples or common-law couples, with or without children living at home, and those families headed by one parent. "Children" are defined as never married sons and/or daughters (including step and adopted children), living with their parents (regardless of age).

The number of families with children, as a proportion of all families in Canada, has remained consistent since 1986. Based on the 1996 Census, there were a total of 7 837 865 families in Canada. Of those families, 66% (5 108 085) were families with children. The remainder of the families (2 729 775) consisted of couples with no children at home. A number of trends in Canadian families with children have been observed:

- Canadians are having fewer children and are waiting longer to have them.
- Lone parent families have increased by 33% between 1986 and 1996.
- Lone parent families make up 22% of all families with children.
- Families headed by women continue to outnumber those headed by men by four to one.
- The increase in lone parent families places more children at risk of growing up in poverty.
- The number of children experiencing the breakdown of their parent's marriage at a younger age is on the increase.
- In 1994, the majority of children under the age of 18 living in two-parent families saw both of their parents working.

For more facts and trends, see the selected highlights of "The Progress of Canada's Children, 1996", released by the Canadian Council on Social Development (<http://www.ccsd.ca/>)

Although the proportion of families with children has remained stable over the past decade, the distribution of children among the different types of families has changed over the last 10 years. The proportion of married-couple families with children decreased from 77% in 1986 to 69% in 1996. This period has also seen an increase in both common-law families with children and lone-parent families. The 1996 Census results are illustrated in the figure below.

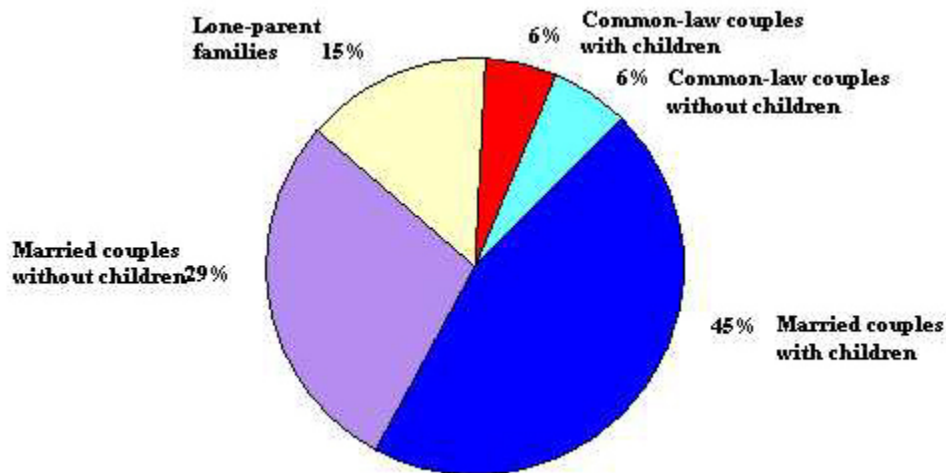


Figure 1. Family Structure, as a Proportion of all Families (1996)

Source: Canada. Statistics Canada. 1996 Census: Marital Status, Common-law Unions and Families. The Daily. Prepared by: Department of Justice Canada, Research Unit-Child Support Team, 1997

Most children in Canada live in "intact" families (74%). An intact family is one in which all children live with their biological or adoptive parents. Results of the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) show that eight out of ten children (79%) under the age of twelve years live with both biological parents. Other two-parent families such as step families, accounted for approximately 5% of the children. In a step family, at least one of the children is the biological or adoptive child of only one of the parents. Children in lone-parent families represented over 20% of all children in families. Of these lone parent families, the majority were headed by women. Less than 1% of Canadian children were reported living with a teenage mother.

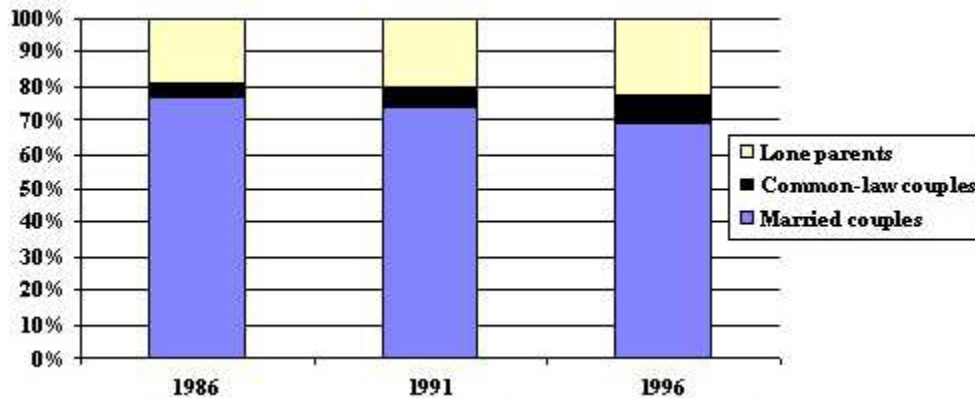


Figure 2. Families with Children by Family Structure (1986 to 1996)

Source: Canada. Statistics Canada. 1996 Census: Marital Status, Common-law Unions and Families. The Daily. Prepared by: Department of Justice Canada, Research Unit - Child Support Team, 1997

The map showing families with children as a proportion of all census families confirms that the highest proportion of families with children at home is in the Northwest Territories (75.7% of all couples). The lowest proportions are found in southwestern British Columbia, the southern Prairie Provinces, southern Ontario, southwestern Quebec and the southern regions of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. These areas indicating fewer families with children may be attributed to an increase of the number of older couples with children who have left home. The patterns in these regions indicate a strong relationship to similar patterns showing the incidence of senior population groups.

Married Couples With and Without Children Living at Home

The majority of children in 1996 were living in a married-couple family. In 1996, 73 out of 100 children were in these families as compared to 78 out of 100 in 1991. As a proportion of married couples, 29% represented families without children. The large percentage of families without children is partially attributed to the increasing number of families with children "leaving the nest". A small proportion of married couples have chosen to remain childless.

The patterns on the map "Families with Children Living at Home, as a Proportion of All Families" indicate a high proportion of families with children throughout the northern census divisions. The Northwest Territories appears to have a significant proportion of these families, as does northern Quebec and Newfoundland. In the case of the larger census divisions, the populations are relatively small compared to the geographic area therefore they appear overemphasized. The regions showing a lesser proportion may be attributed to a higher incidence of older married couples with children who have left the home.

Common-law Couple Families With and Without Children Living at Home

Since 1981, common-law unions have been steadily increasing. This is particularly true in the province of Quebec. In 1981, 8% of Quebec couples lived common-law, compared to 25% in 1996. The rest of Canada has also seen a marked, but lower, increase from 6% in 1981 to 10% in 1996. Between 1991 and 1996 the number of common-law couples with children at home increased by 47%. This rate of increase was three times as high as for common-law couple families without children. As of 1996, there were 434 950 common-law couples with at least one child living at home. This high rate may be partially attributed to the increase of "step families" where children from previous marriages or common-law relationships, are included in the new family (General Social Survey, 1995). Research has demonstrated that most of the children born to unmarried women go home to two biological parents who have chosen to live common-law rather than marry.

The map showing common-law couples with children, indicates a number of regions with higher proportions of these families: Quebec, the Northwest Territories and the Northern Prairie Provinces. In 1996 there were a total of 209 230 such families living in Quebec alone.

According to the 1996 Census results, nearly 40% of all common-law couples were between the ages of 15 and 29. In comparing the distribution of young children 6 years of age and under to the distribution of common-law families with children, the patterns are similar. This is particularly evident for the younger communities in the Northwest Territories. When making map comparisons, keep in mind that each map is generated from a unique data set and the legend classifications are defined to reflect that specific map content.

Data and Mapping Notes

Mapping Notes

The data presented on the map layers were derived from the 1996 Census and were based on either the 288 census divisions (CD) or 5984 census subdivisions (CSD) for which data are released. The choropleth mapping technique is limited in use when displaying data for the large areas in the northern and rural regions, which contain small populations and are therefore, overemphasized. To view the population figures of a specific CD or CSD on a map, press the "Get Statistics" button and select the area of interest.

When comparing information between maps, it is important to understand that each map layer is based on a unique set of data. The class intervals used have been generated to represent the unique information on each map. As a result, the maps

cannot be directly compared to each other. The individual maps, together with the supporting map text are the best sources for content comparison.

Note that in choropleth technique, areas are completely shaded and only one such layer can be viewed at a time.

At the time the census division boundaries were defined, Nunavut had not yet been designated as an official territory. It is therefore not referenced on the maps.

Definitions

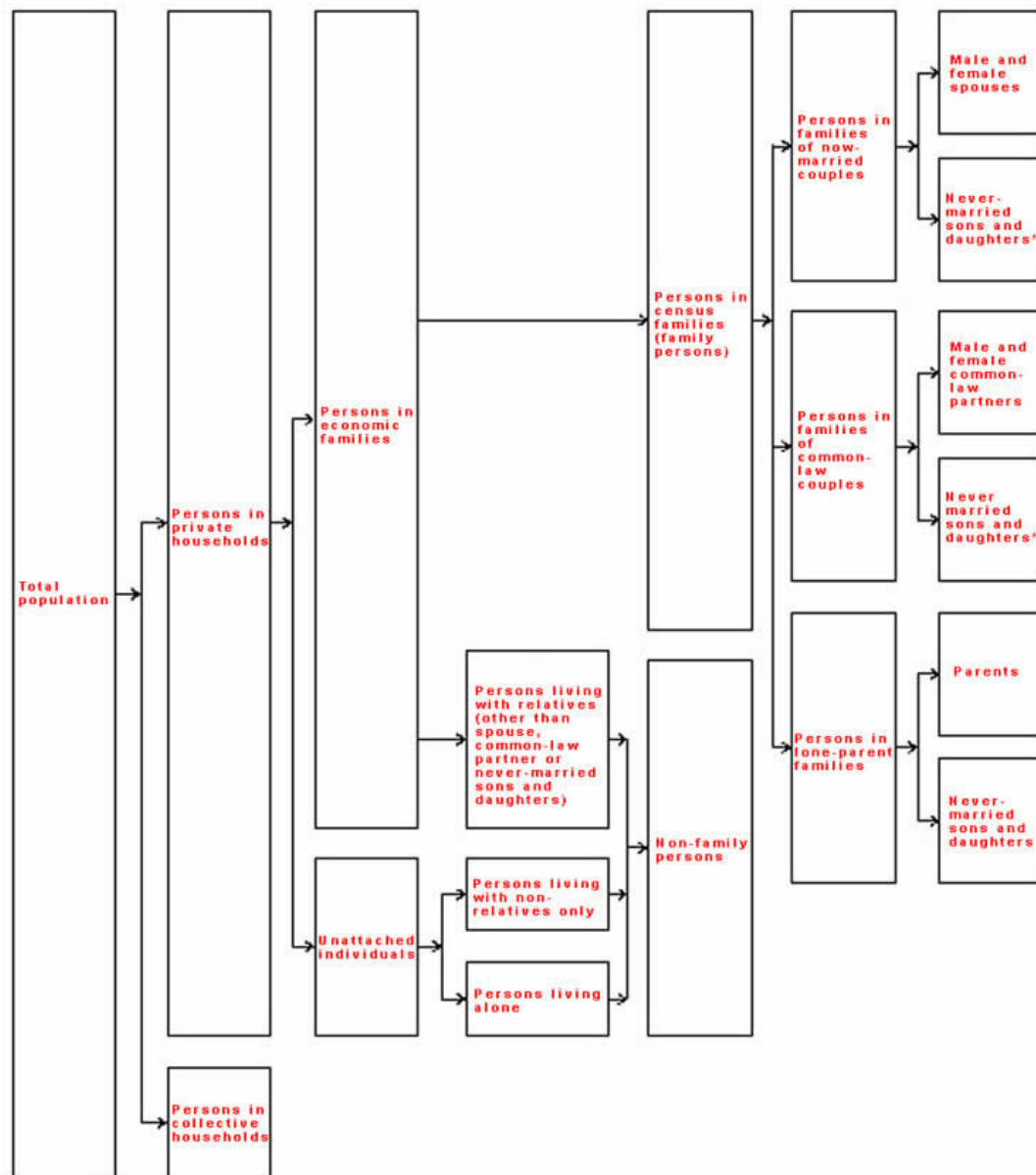
Census Family Status refers to the classification of the population according to whether or not they are members of a census family.

Family persons refer to household members who belong to a census family. They, in turn, are further classified as follows:

- **Spouses** refers to persons of the opposite sex who are legally married to each other and living in the same dwelling.
- **Common-law partners** are two persons of opposite sex who are not legally married to each other but live together as husband and wife in the same dwelling.
- **Lone parent** refers to a mother or a father, with no spouse or common-law partner present, living in a dwelling with one or more never-married sons and/or daughters.
- **Never-married sons and/or daughters** refers to blood, step or adopted sons and daughters who have never married (regardless of age) and are living in the same dwelling as their parent(s). Sons and daughters who are currently or were previously married, or who are living common-law, are not considered to be members of their parent(s)' census family even if they are living in the same dwelling. In addition, those never-married sons and daughters who do not live in the same dwelling as their parent(s) are not considered members of their parent(s)' census family.

Census Family Structure: refers to the classification of census families into **families of now-married couples** (with or without never-married sons or daughters of either or both spouses), **families of common-law couples** (with or without never-married sons or daughters of either or both partners) and **lone-parent families** by sex of parent.

Census Family Composition: "Refers to the classification of census families according to the number and/or age groups of never-married sons and/or daughters at home". The data is subdivided to include couples with and without children at home and provides age groups of children living at home.



*May or may not be present

Figure 1. Economic and Census Family Membership and Family Status

Source: Canada. Statistics Canada. 1996 Census Dictionary, Catalogue Number 92-351-XPE.

Definitions of underlined terms

Census Division: Census Division (CD) is the general term applied to areas established by provincial law which are intermediate geographic areas between the municipality and the province levels. Census divisions represent counties, regional districts, regional municipalities and other types of provincially legislated areas. In Newfoundland, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, provincial law does not provide for these administrative geographic areas. Therefore, census divisions have been created by Statistics Canada in cooperation with these provinces for the dissemination of statistical data. In the Yukon Territory, the census division is equivalent to the entire Territory. (Source: 1996 Census Dictionary, Statistics Canada)

Census Subdivision (CSD): Census subdivision is the general term applying to municipalities (as determined by provincial legislation) or their equivalent (for example, Indian reserves, Indian settlements and unorganized territories). In Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and British Columbia, the term also describes geographic areas that have been created by Statistics Canada in cooperation with the provinces as equivalents for municipalities for the dissemination of statistical data. According to the national hierarchy, census subdivisions add together to form census divisions. The CDs form provinces and territories. Two additional levels are defined in the national hierarchy to facilitate special data analysis. A special aggregation of census subdivisions called census consolidated subdivision (CCS) provides a level of geography between the CSD and CD which facilitates data analysis. In the rural context, the CCS is a grouping of smaller municipalities, usually contained within a larger municipality. For instance, a town located within a surrounding township will be grouped together with the township to form a CCS. In urban areas, CCSs are formed by contiguous groupings of CSDs. A principal user of the CCSs is the Census of Agriculture. (Source: 1996 Census Dictionary, Statistics Canada)

Choropleth map: A thematic map in which areas are coloured or shaded to create darker or lighter areas in proportion to the density or a particular characteristic of the theme subject in that area.

Map Sources

Canadian families with children living at home

Families with children living at home as a proportion of all census families based on the data derived from the 1996 Census (20% sample data). Statistics Canada. 1996 Census of Population.

Common-law couples with children living at home

Common-law couples with children living at home as a proportion of all census families based on the data derived from the 1996 Census (20% sample data).
Statistics Canada. 1996 Census of Population. .

Common-law couples with no children living at home

Common-law couples with no children living at home as a proportion of all census families based on the data derived from the 1996 Census (20% sample data).
Statistics Canada. 1996 Census of Population.

Married couples with children living at home

Husband and wife couples with children living at home as a proportion of all census families based on the data derived from the 1996 Census (20% sample data).
Statistics Canada. 1996 Census of Population.

Married couples with no children living at home

Husband and wife couples with no children living at home as a proportion of all census families based on the data derived from the 1996 Census (20% sample data).
Statistics Canada. 1996 Census of Population.

References

Lipps, Garth and Jackie Yiptong-Avila. 1999. From Home to School - How Canadian Children Cope. October 14. Catalogue No. 89F0117XIE. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. Culture, Tourism and The Centre for Education Statistics.
(<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89f0117x/4227763-eng.pdf>)

Marcil-Gratton, Nicole. 1998. Growing up with Mom and Dad? The intricate family life courses of Canadian children. July. Catalogue no. 89-566-XIE. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. Human Resources Development Canada. Minister of Industry.
(<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-566-x/4198651-eng.pdf>)

Related Web sites (1999 – 2009)

Federal Government

Health Canada. Division of Childhood and Adolescence
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dca-dea/main-eng.php>

This division serves as a centre of expertise, leadership, and coordination within the federal government and Health Canada for issues, activities, and programs concerning children and youth.

Statistics Canada. 1996 Census. Census Families in Private Households by Family Structure 1986, 1991 and 1996

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/c1996-r1996/oct14-14oct/family-famille2-eng.htm>

Statistics Canada. 1996 Census. Nation Tables. Census Families in Private Households by Family Structure

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/c1996-r1996/oct14-14oct/family-famille-eng.htm>

Canada, Provinces and Territories, 1991 and 1996 Censuses (20% Sample Data)

Statistics Canada. Canadian Statistics. Families, Households and Housing

<http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/famili-eng.htm>

Statistics Canada. The Daily. Thursday, October 14, 1999. National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth: School Component, 1996/97

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/991014/dq991014a-eng.htm>

Other

The Canadian Council on Social Development. Publications. The Progress of Canada's Children, 1996

<http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/archive/pcc96/hl.htm>

Vanier Institute of the Family

<http://www.vifamily.ca/>

Inter-agency

Child and Family Canada

<http://www.cfc-efc.ca/>

Welcome to Child & Family Canada, a unique Canadian public education website.

