

2006 Census Fast Facts

B.C.'s Changing Family Structure

Introduction

The definition of a “typical” family has been changing over time. This article highlights interesting changes in the composition of B.C.’s family structure between 2001 and 2006 using 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. A couple may be of opposite or same sex. 'Children' as defined by Statistics Canada in a census family may include grandchildren living with their grandparent(s) but with no parents present.¹

In 2006, nearly 4.1 million British Columbian’s were living in private households, of which 82.6% belonged to a census family, only 11.4% lived alone and the balance lived with others who were either relatives or non-relatives. The national population distribution was similar – 84.0% and 10.7%, respectively, of 31.1 million.

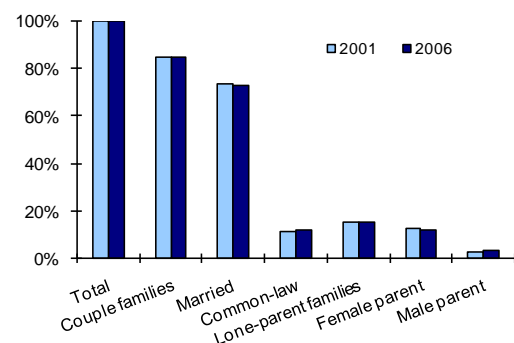
Overall Growth of Families

Between 2001 and 2006, the total number of census families in B.C. grew by 6.9% to about 1.2 million. During the same time period, the

B.C. population living in private households grew by 5.1%. Together these figures show that the number of B.C. families is growing faster than the population. The growth in the number of families may be attributed to a reconfiguration of the existing population following life events such as a young person starting out on their own and living common-law, a young couple leaving home and starting their own family, or a divorced couple establishing their own homes, among others.

The following sections will profile each type of census family, but before doing so it is important to know the composition of census families. Of the census families enumerated in 2006, 72.7% (down from 73.4% in 2001) were married couples, 12.2% (up from 11.1%) were common-law couples, and 15.1% (down from 15.5%) were lone-parent families.

Distribution of census families in B.C., 2006 and 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Census

¹ Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census Dictionary, Catalogue no. 92-566-XWE

Married and Common-law Couples

The number of married couples increased from 797,485 in 2001 to 844,430 in 2006, accounting for 62.3% of total growth in the number of B.C. families. However, the number of common-law couples grew three times as quickly – while the number of married couples increased by 5.9%, the number of common-law couples increased by 18.1% over the same period from 120,125 to 141,830. Despite the fact that the number of common-law couples is growing faster than the number of married couples, growth in the number of married couples in B.C. is still strong compared to the national average. Across Canada, the total number of families grew by 6.3%, yet the number of married couples grew by only 3.5%, while the number of common-law couples expanded by 18.9%.

The proportion of B.C.'s couples living in a household with children continued to decline – from 53.2% in 2001 to 51.4% in 2006. The drop between the most recent censuses can be entirely attributed to a reduction among married couples (54.1%, down from 55.9% in 2001), as an identical proportion of common-law couples had children in 2001 and 2006 (35.4% in both years).

If adult children (over 24 years of age) living at home are excluded from the census families with children a different situation emerges. As was the case for the 2001 census, the proportion of B.C.'s couples living in a household with children 24 years and under declined (from 48.8% in 2001 to 46.7% in 2006). However, new for 2006, fewer than half (48.8%, vs. 51.0% in 2001) of married couples had children in their household. Meanwhile, the proportion of common-law couples with children was virtually unchanged (34.3%, vs. 34.5% in 2001).

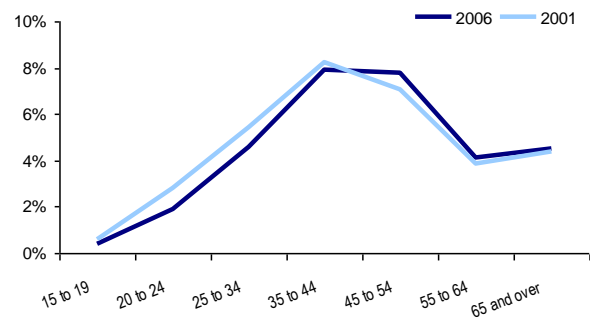
This shift in the number of couple families with children is related to the aging of the population. The larger baby boom cohort is getting to the stage where their children (baby-busters) have left or are leaving home. The baby-busters are a smaller cohort and are delaying marriage and/or having a family later in life, resulting in fewer families with children.

Lone-Parent Families

Between 2001 and 2006, the growth in number of lone-parent families in B.C. from 168,415 to 175,160 (+4.0%) was slower than the overall growth in census families (+6.9%). Compared to Canada's overall growth in lone-parent families of 7.8%, the growth in B.C. is relatively slow.

Although the proportion of the population aged 15 years and over that is a lone-parent remained stable between 2006 and 2001 (5.2% vs. 5.3%); noteworthy is the fact that there were increases consistently at the higher end of the age distribution, and a decrease for each of the age categories below 45 years of age.

Incidence of lone-parenting increased between 2001 and 2006 only for each age group 45 and over



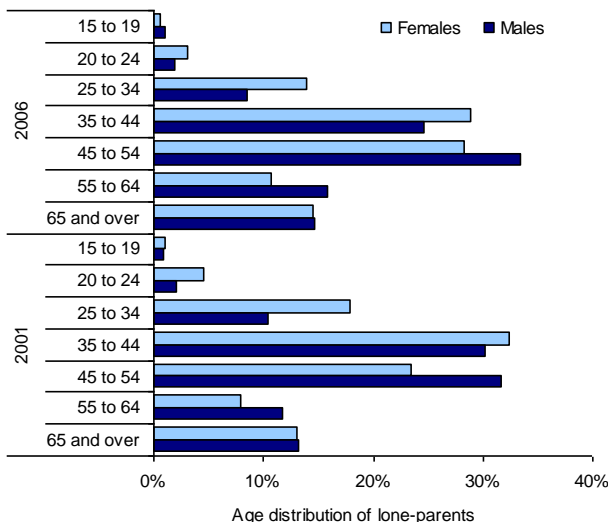
Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Census

Interestingly, while still only 1 in 5 (20.2%, up from 19.0% in 2001) lone-parents were male, the growth rate for male lone-parented families

was more than four times that of female headed families (+10.7% vs. +2.4%, respectively). This may reflect an increasing perception that lone-father families are socially acceptable and a subsequent decrease in mothers being awarded sole custody in the case of marriage dissolution as well as an increase in joint custody agreements. In 2004, half (50.4%) of all divorces involving custody orders of dependants granted joint custody, while 43.1% granted sole custody to the mother¹.

If the age distribution of lone-parents is looked at by gender it can be seen that a larger majority of male lone-parents are 45 years or over compared to women. Another fascinating fact about lone-parent families is that if adult children (over 24 years of age) are excluded from the census family, then over 1 in 5 (21.5%, up from 19.2% in 2001) do not have any children at home.

Among lone-parents male lone-parents are more often in older categories compared to females



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Census

¹ Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Divorce Database

Same-Sex Couples

In July 2003, same-sex marriage became legal in B.C. At the time, B.C. was only the second province in Canada to legalize same-sex marriages (following Ontario's lead a month earlier). Two years later, same-sex marriage became legal in all provinces across Canada and same-sex couples were included in the next census.

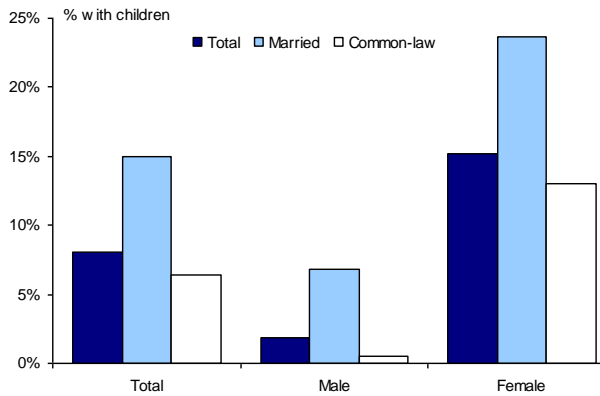
In 2006, there were approximately 7,000 census family same-sex couples in B.C., encompassing 0.7% of all couples in B.C. (similar to 0.6% for Canada). Male same-sex couples account for just over half (53.2%) of all same-sex couples in B.C. One in five (19.5%) same-sex couples were married compared to the national average of 16.5%. There was virtually no difference in the rate of marriage or common-law relationships between male and female same-sex couples in B.C., with 19.5% of male and 19.3% of female same-sex couples choosing to marry rather than maintain a common-law relationship.

Although 81.8% of same-sex couples reported there were no other members in the census family, results were quite different for common-law (85.6%) and married (66.4%) couples. This is reflected in the proportion of same-sex couples that had children living with them.

Overall, 8.0% of B.C.'s same-sex couples lived in a household with children. However, married same-sex couples had children in their household, more than twice as often compared to common-law same-sex couples (15.0% vs. 6.4%, respectively). Given the greater social acceptance of female couples having children, the wider variety of birth options for female couples, as well as the historical pattern of child custody agreements following marriage

dissolution, it is perhaps not surprising that eight times the proportion of female same-sex couples had children compared to male same-sex couples (15.2% vs. 1.9%, respectively). The prevalence of children by marital situation among female couples is therefore similar to all

As with traditional families same-sex married couples have children twice as often as common-law couples



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

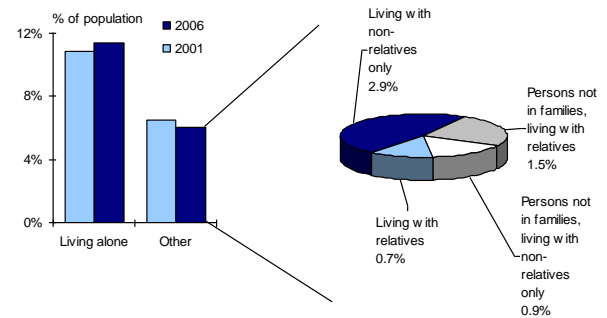
same-sex couples, with nearly one-quarter (23.6%) of married female same-sex couples having children, compared to 13.0% of same-sex female couples living in a common-law relationship.

Those Not Living in Census Families

So what about the other 17.4% (vs. 17.3% in 2001) of the population living in private households in 2006 that was not part of a census family? This segment of the population is made up of those who live alone (11.4%, vs. 10.8% in 2001), and those who live either with relatives or non-relatives in non-family or family households. It is important to realize that although some of this population is living with relatives they are not considered part of the census family. Given the changes in the definition of the census family, which may have an impact on where these individuals are

captured, only those living alone will be discussed in further detail.

Persons living alone make up most of the population living in non-family households

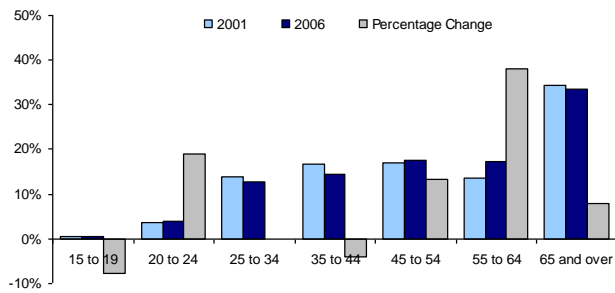


Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Census

Between 2001 and 2006, the number of one-person households increased by 10.2% to 460,580—twice the growth of the population in private households. There were no significant changes in the proportion of each age group that was living alone, indeed it is a fairly constant proportion for the age categories between 25 and 64 years of age; nevertheless, the fastest growth occurred among those between the ages of 55 and 64. This is interesting since this is also the age group that experienced the highest growth in common-law relationships during this period.¹ However, population aging again explains most of this phenomenon.

¹ BC Stats. 2008. "2006 Census Fast Facts: Marriage and Common-Law Relationships".

Age distribution and growth of one-person households in B.C., 2006 and 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Census

Longer-term Trends and Summation

Even though the changes from one census to another do not constitute a trend, there have been broader changes evident in the census family structure over the past 20 years attributable to more than modifications of census definitions. The proportion of the population living in a census family has been relatively stable; however, the number of common-law couples grew three times faster than married couples between 2001 and 2006. Hence, the proportion of families that were common-law couples was up 3 percentage points from 9.6% in 1991. As well, the proportion of married-couple families with children has been declining over the last two decades, while this statistic has remained fairly constant for common-law couples. Growth in lone-parent families has been slower than the overall growth in census families, particularly among women, with men posting an increase in the last census more than four times that of female headed families. Same-sex couples were included in the census for the first time in 2006 and approximately 1 in 5 male and female same-sex couples indicated they were married. Finally, the number of people living alone increased more than twice as fast as the population in private households between 2001 and 2006.

Notes and Definitions:

This article highlights changes only between 2001 and 2006 due to conceptual changes in 2001 that affected the definition of census families with children. The definition in 2001 was more inclusive compared to previous censuses. Historical comparisons for census families, particularly for lone-parent families, must therefore be interpreted with caution.

In terms of the census family, 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. Previously, children in a census family had to be 'never married', while in 2001 they were included provided they were not currently living with a spouse or common-law partner.

It is important to recognize that children present in the home could be from either current or previous unions.

For a three-generation household where the middle generation is never married, the third generation child is now included in the census family of their parent, provided they are not living with a spouse, common-law partner, or child. In previous censuses, the census family consisted of the first two generations.

Finally, in a two-generation household where the second generation is a grandchild, the grandchild is now considered as a child in the grandparent's census family, provided the child is not living with a spouse, common-law partner, or child.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census Dictionary,

Catalogue no. 92-566-XWE

Table 1: Household Living Arrangements of the Population in Private Households, British Columbia, 2001 and 2006**Population in Private Households**

	2001		2006		% Change
	Count	%	Count	%	%
Total - Population in Private Households	3,858,730	100.0%	4,054,605	100.0%	5.1%
Persons in census families	3,191,135	82.7%	3,349,825	82.6%	5.0%
Spouses, common-law partners or lone parents	2,003,645	51.9%	2,147,680	53.0%	7.2%
Sons and/or daughters in families	1,187,490	30.8%	1,202,145	29.6%	1.2%
Persons not in census families	667,590	17.3%	704,785	17.4%	5.6%
Persons in family households	96,210	2.5%	97,505	2.4%	1.3%
Persons not in families, living with relatives	50,170	1.3%	60,280	1.5%	20.2%
Persons not in families, living with non-relatives only	46,040	1.2%	37,225	0.9%	-19.1%
Persons in non-family households	571,380	14.8%	607,280	15.0%	6.3%
Living with relatives	26,805	0.7%	30,060	0.7%	12.1%
Living with one or more non-relatives only	126,440	3.3%	116,640	2.9%	-7.8%
Living alone	418,135	10.8%	460,580	11.4%	10.2%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Census, Tables 95F0315XCB01006BC.ivt & 97-553-XCB2006016.ivt
Prepared by: BC Stats, May 2009

Table 2: Census Family Structure, British Columbia, 2001 and 2006**Census Families in Private Households**

	2001		2006		% Change
	Count	%	Count	%	%
Total - Census family structure	1,086,030	100.0%	1,161,420	100.0%	6.9%
Total couple families	917,615	84.5%	986,255	84.9%	7.5%
Married couple families	797,485	73.4%	844,430	72.7%	5.9%
Common-law couple families	120,125	11.1%	141,830	12.2%	18.1%
Total lone-parent families	168,415	15.5%	175,160	15.1%	4.0%
Female parent families	136,455	12.6%	139,770	12.0%	2.4%
Male parent families	31,965	2.9%	35,390	3.0%	10.7%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Census, Table 97-553-XCB2006007.ivt
Prepared by: BC Stats, May 2009

Table 3: Percentage of Families with Children at Home, British Columbia, 2001 and 2006**Census Families in Private Households**

	Total couple families		Married couple families		Common-law couple families		Lone-parent families	
	2001	2006	2001	2006	2001	2006	2001	2006
Families without children at home	46.8%	48.6%	44.1%	45.9%	64.6%	64.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Families with children at home	53.2%	51.4%	55.9%	54.1%	35.4%	35.4%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Census, Table 97-553-XCB2006007.ivt
Prepared by: BC Stats, May 2009

**Table 4: Percentage of Families with Children at Home (Excluding Adult Children),
British Columbia, 2001 and 2006****Census Families in Private Households**

	Total couple families		Married couple families		Common-law couple families		Lone-parent families	
	2001	2006	2001	2006	2001	2006	2001	2006
Families without children at home	51.2%	53.3%	49.0%	51.2%	65.5%	65.7%	19.2%	22.1%
Families with children at home 24 years and under	48.8%	46.7%	51.0%	48.8%	34.5%	34.3%	80.8%	77.9%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Census, Table 97-553-XCB2006022.ivt
Prepared by: BC Stats, May 2009

**Table 5: Proportion of Population that is a Lone Parent by Age and Gender,
British Columbia, 2001 and 2006****Population Age 15+ in Private Households**

	2001			2006		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total - 15+ years	5.3%	2.1%	8.4%	5.2%	2.2%	8.0%
15 to 19 years	0.6%	0.2%	1.0%	0.4%	0.3%	0.6%
20 to 24 years	2.8%	0.5%	5.1%	1.9%	0.5%	3.4%
25 to 34 years	5.4%	1.3%	9.2%	4.5%	1.2%	7.6%
35 to 44 years	8.3%	3.1%	13.1%	7.9%	2.9%	12.6%
45 to 54 years	7.1%	3.5%	10.6%	7.8%	3.7%	11.6%
55 to 64 years	3.8%	2.0%	5.7%	4.1%	2.3%	5.9%
65+ years	4.4%	1.8%	6.5%	4.5%	2.0%	6.6%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Census, Tables 95F0314XCB01006BC.ivt & 97-553-XCB2006014.ivt
Prepared by: BC Stats, May 2009

**Table 6: Age Distribution of Lone Parents by Gender,
British Columbia, 2001 and 2006****Population Age 15+ in Private Households**

	2001			2006		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
15 to 19 years	1.0%	0.9%	1.0%	0.6%	1.1%	0.5%
20 to 24 years	4.0%	2.0%	4.5%	2.9%	2.0%	3.1%
25 to 34 years	16.5%	10.4%	17.9%	12.9%	8.4%	14.0%
35 to 44 years	31.9%	30.2%	32.3%	28.0%	24.6%	28.9%
45 to 54 years	25.0%	31.6%	23.4%	29.3%	33.4%	28.3%
55 to 64 years	8.6%	11.7%	7.9%	11.8%	15.9%	10.7%
65+ years	13.0%	13.2%	13.0%	14.5%	14.7%	14.5%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Census, Tables 95F0314XCB01006BC.ivt & 97-553-XCB2006014.ivt
Prepared by: BC Stats, May 2009

**Table 7: Same-sex Couples by Marital Status and Presence of other Household Members,
British Columbia, 2006****Same-sex Couples in Private Households**

	Total			Married			Common-law		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total - Presence of other household members	7,035	3,740	3,295	1,370	730	635	5,665	3,010	2,660
No other household members	5,755	3,270	2,490	910	525	385	4,850	2,745	2,100
Children only	485	50	440	160	35	125	325	15	310
Other household members only	710	405	305	255	160	95	455	245	210
Children and other household members	80	20	60	45	15	25	35	0	35
Percentage of same-sex couples with children	8.0%	1.9%	15.2%	15.0%	6.8%	23.6%	6.4%	0.5%	13.0%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Table 97-553-XCB2006024.ivt
Prepared by: BC Stats, May 2009

**Table 8: Proportion of Same-sex Couples Married or Common-law,
British Columbia, 2006****Same-sex Couples in Private Households**

	Total	Male	Female
Married	19.5%	19.5%	19.3%
Common-law	80.5%	80.5%	80.7%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Table 97-553-XCB2006024.ivt
Prepared by: BC Stats, May 2009

**Table 9: Age Distribution of those Living Alone,
British Columbia, 2001 and 2006****Population Living Alone in Private Households**

	2001		2006		% Change %
	Count	%	Count	%	
Total - Age groups	418,135	100.0%	460,580	100.0%	10.2%
15 to 19	2,085	0.5%	1,925	0.4%	-7.7%
20 to 24	15,315	3.7%	18,245	4.0%	19.1%
25 to 34	58,540	14.0%	58,470	12.7%	-0.1%
35 to 44	69,715	16.7%	66,825	14.5%	-4.1%
45 to 54	71,635	17.1%	81,090	17.6%	13.2%
55 to 64	57,455	13.7%	79,265	17.2%	38.0%
65 and over	143,390	34.3%	154,750	33.6%	7.9%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Census, Tables 95F0315XCB01006BC.ivt &
97-553-XCB2006016.ivt
Prepared by: BC Stats, May 2009