



# **BUILDING INSTABILITY**

Putting new census data in an international  
context with key Canadian takeaways

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# *Canadian family data in context*



The new 2016 Census family data has been released. This new information will help us understand how marriage, divorce, cohabitation, and many other indicators are faring in our country. Data comparison with years gone by is more difficult this year, given the way in which Statistics Canada is presenting the data. In many instances, the disparate family forms of cohabitation and marriage are lumped together.

Understanding that marriage underpins a prosperous society, Canadians, along with their friends and neighbours in the Anglosphere, need to begin asking tough questions about what the demise of marriage—and the failure to accurately measure it—might mean for family stability and health.

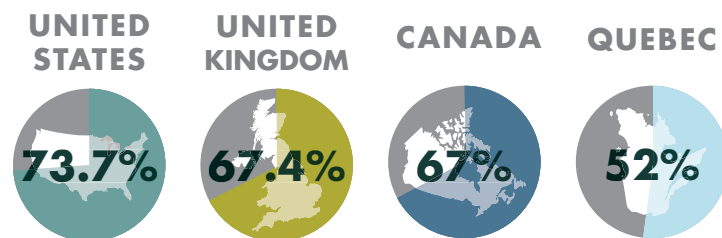
# Marriage

Marriage is far more than just a piece of paper. It is a stabilizing institution in society. Children raised by their own married parents [fare better](#) than other family forms like cohabitation and lone parenting on a host of factors, including educational attainment and prevalence of risk behaviours. Studies show that happily married adults have higher life satisfaction and [better health](#) in several key areas: heart health and cancer being just two. Robust marriage indicators point to increased family stability.

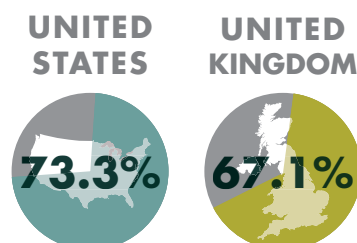
In Canada for the first time in 2016, one person families are the most common household type, at 28.2 percent of families. Most children are raised by their own biological or adopted parents, but Statistics Canada is not making the breakdown of how many of those parents are married versus common-law easily accessible. Quebec has a far lower marriage rate, resulting in a small portion of married families and a lower portion of children raised in married-parent homes.

Marriage in Canada has been trending downward for decades. Among the countries we compared, Canada had the third highest percentage of married families in 2011, after the United States and the United Kingdom. Given the importance of marriage, Canadians need to ask themselves about the effects of lower marriage rates on families and social stability.

## MARRIED COUPLES AS A PERCENTAGE OF CENSUS FAMILIES 2011

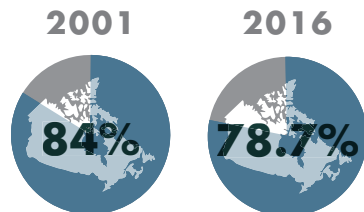


## MARRIED COUPLES AS A PERCENTAGE OF CENSUS FAMILIES 2016





## CANADA: MARRIED COUPLES AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL COUPLES



The earlier data measures married couples as a percentage of census families, while the new data measures married couples as a percentage of all couples. The share of marriage is decreasing; marriage as a percent of all couples cannot be compared with marriage as a percent of census families.

### SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

In Canada, married same-sex couples account for 0.3 percent of all couples in the 2011 census. In Quebec married same-sex couples accounted for 2.2 percent of all couples in 2011. In Canada in 2016, same-sex couples, both married and cohabiting, made up just shy of one percent of all couples at 0.9 percent.

The United Kingdom legalized same-sex marriage in 2014; New Zealand in 2013 and neither have released new census data at time of press for comparison. Australia does not have same-sex marriage.

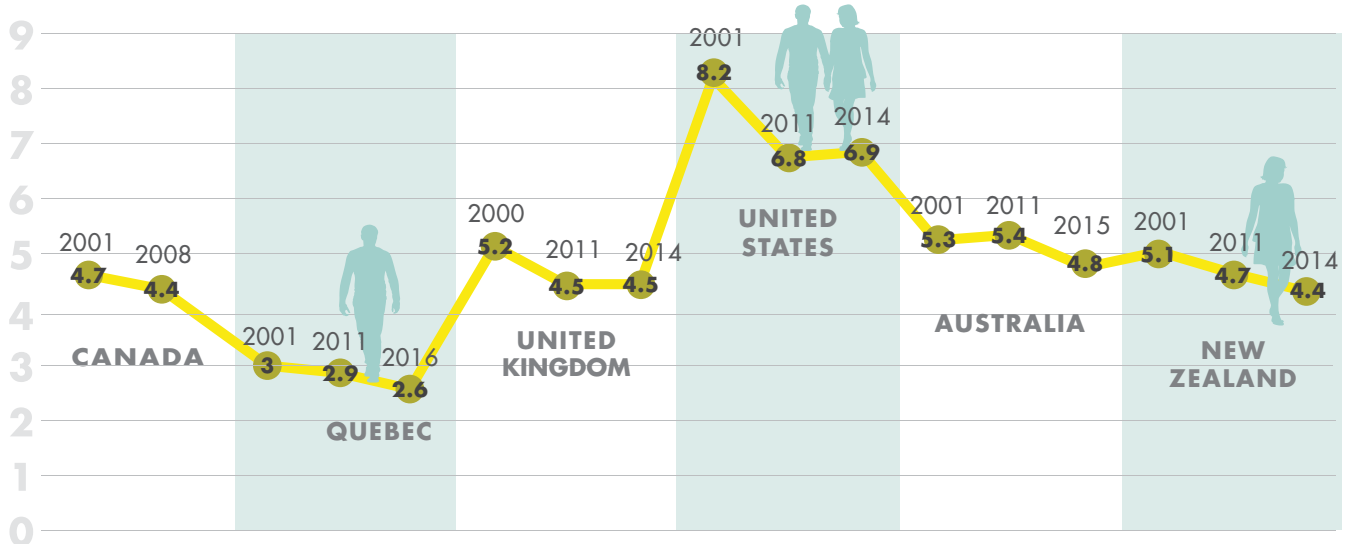
#### HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

Marriage as a percent of census families has been collected historically in Canada and internationally. This year the marriage data is presented as a percentage of couples, making historic and international comparisons slightly more difficult.

Another measure of marriage is the crude marriage rate per thousand population. This is a standard international measure. In 2011, Canada was roughly equal to the United Kingdom and New Zealand, but behind Australia and the United States. Canada ceased collecting marriage and divorce statistics at the federal level in 2011. This is unfortunate, as federal marriage and divorce statistics are important national measures of social stability, among other factors. This means we won't be able to know our own statistics federally, nor will we be able to compare ourselves internationally.

In general, across the Anglosphere, the crude marriage rate has been going in the wrong direction. Canadians should be aware that this has negative implications for social stability, child welfare and family happiness.

### CRUDE MARRIAGE RATE PER 1000 POPULATION



NB: Since Canada stopped compiling marriage and divorce statistics federally in 2011, we will not be able to do future annual international comparisons.

#### HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

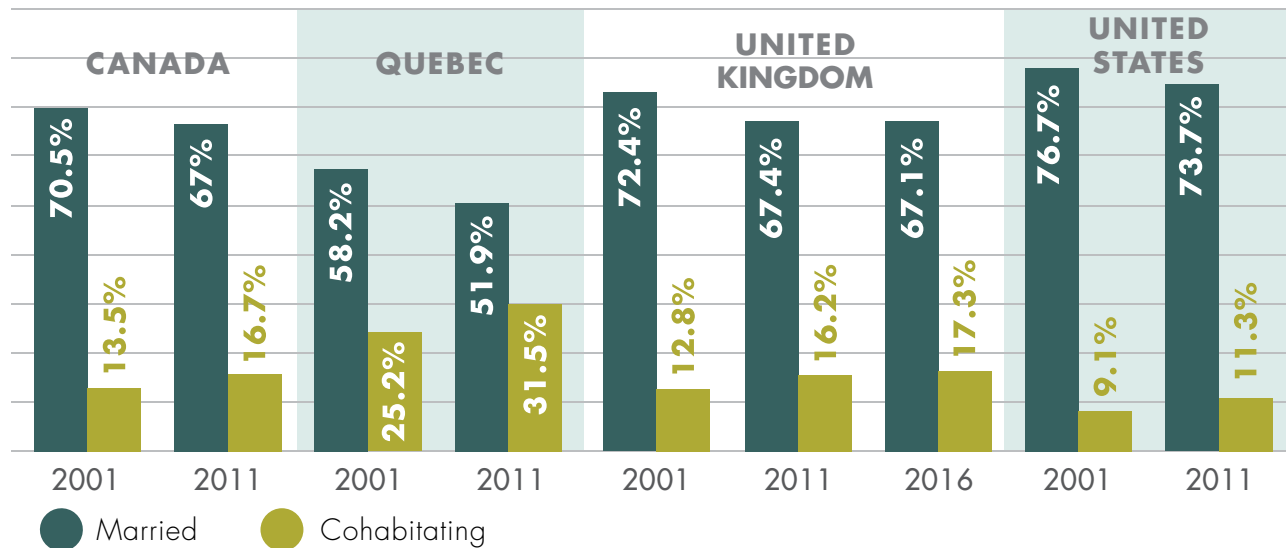
Growing up in an intact married home increases the likelihood of getting good grades and graduating from high school and college, even when accounting for socioeconomic factors. Having married parents is correlated with a lower likelihood of participating in risky behaviours like drug abuse or early sexual initiation.

# Cohabitation

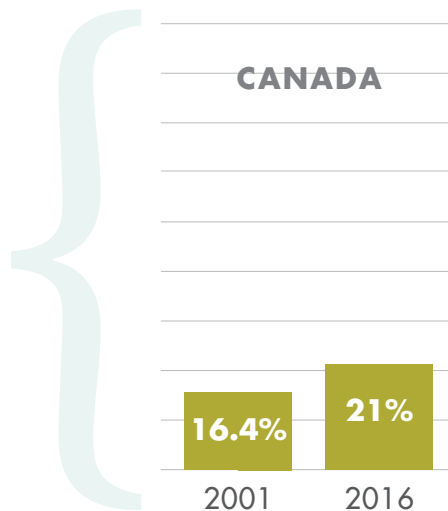
Cohabitation, [which is less stable than marriage](#), is slowly rising as marriage declines, and dissolves more often. Canadians need to ask themselves what the rise in cohabitation together with the decline of marriage means for social stability.

Did you know that the Census 2016 release mentions that cohabitation is less stable than marriage? They do so in the context of data showing that children in Quebec are more likely to experience the breakdown of their parent’s relationship. The authors write that this may be related “to high instability among common-law unions, which are more popular in Quebec than elsewhere in Canada (except in Nunavut).”

## MARRIED V. COHABITATING COUPLES AS A PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES



### COHABITATING COUPLES AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL COUPLES



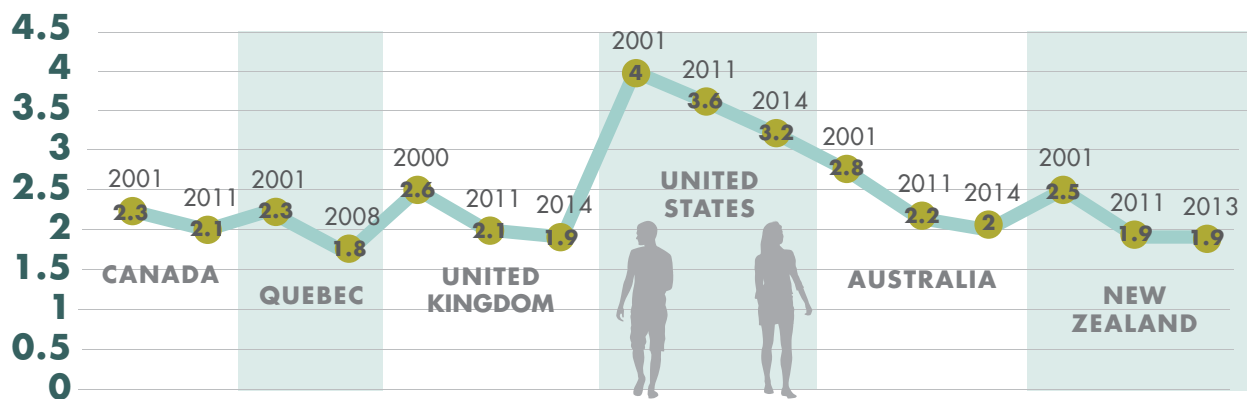
### HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

Canadians’ growing embrace of inherently less stable relationships creates social and emotional costs of which many may not be aware.

# Divorce

With marriage rates falling and cohabitation rates rising, it's not hard to understand why divorce rates are also falling. Declining divorce rates would be a success—but not if the trend simply reflects the fact that people are not getting married in the first place. Australia might be a success story; when looking at their crude marriage and divorce rates, marriage remained stable between 2001 and 2011, where the crude divorce rate fell.

## CRUDE DIVORCE RATE PER 1000 POPULATION



*NB: Since Canada stopped compiling marriage and divorce statistics federally in 2011, we will not be able to do future annual international comparisons.*

### HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

Divorce rates are declining across the Anglosphere. This would normally be a success, but likely reflects declining marriage rates.

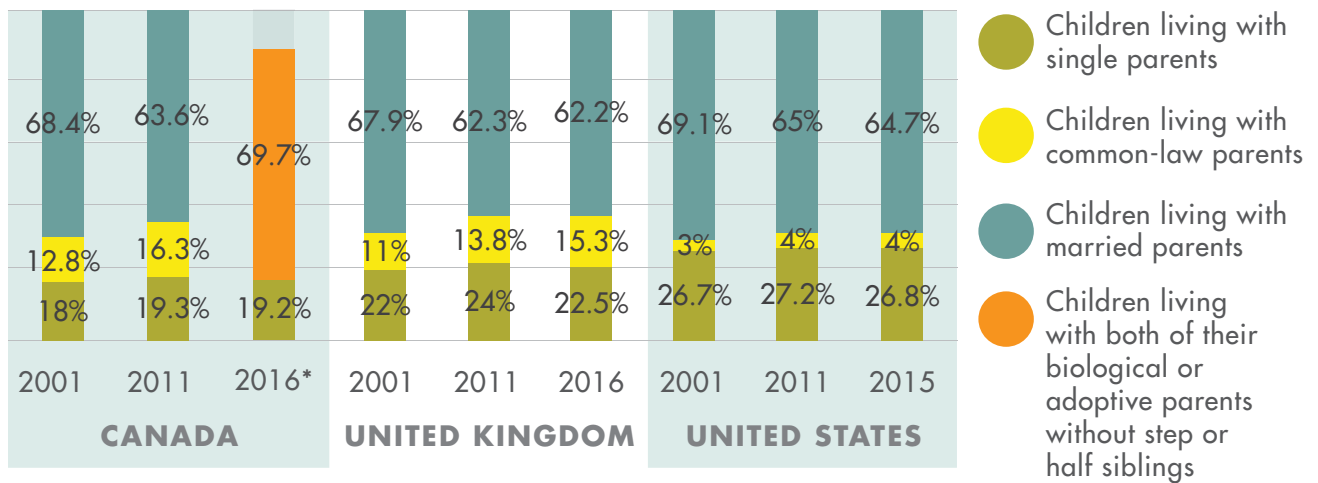


# Children's Living Arrangements

Family stability benefits children. This is why we examine the rates of children living with single parents, common-law parents, and married parents. Marriage remains the most stable family form, and the majority of children in every country for which we were able to get data are in married-parent families.

Canada had a higher percentage of children living in married-parent families than the United Kingdom, but a lower percentage compared to the United States. While cohabitation rates are rising everywhere, the number of children living with cohabiting parents is still very low in the United States, higher in the United Kingdom, and highest in Canada.

## CHILDREN'S LIVING ARRANGEMENTS



\*The remainder of children in Canada in 2016 live in other family arrangements.

NB Census 2016 does not make readily available the percentage of children living with married or common-law parents

### HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

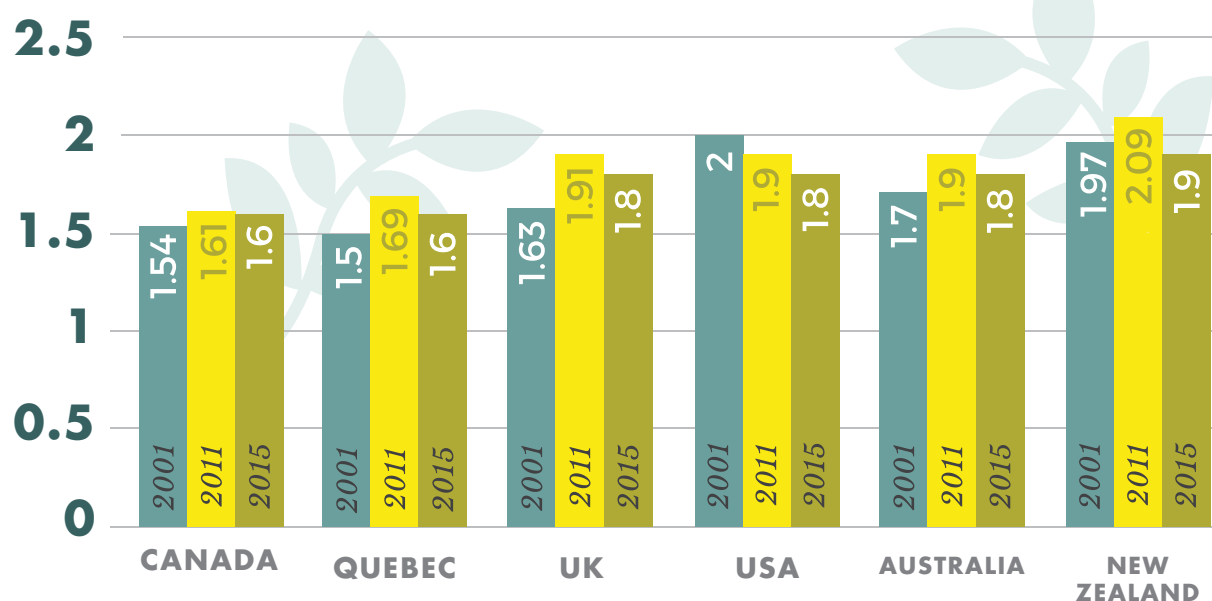
Children do best in stable families. The trend away from children living in married parent homes can mean increased poverty, lower educational outcomes and more emotional problems for children.

# Total Fertility Rate

The total fertility rate (TFR) is calculated yearly and is not dependent on the census every five years. Yet we include it because it is an important indicator of family and societal health. Many countries are experiencing dwindling fertility rates, leading to concerns about the future economic impact and the ability to continue to provide a social safety net for aging populations. We know some women are freezing their eggs in an effort to buy more time because they haven't met the right partner; we also know infertility is a growing problem for many couples. These realities are part of a larger trend today in which couples are delaying marriage, childbirth, and family formation.

No country is meeting replacement fertility rates (2.1) with the exception of New Zealand in 2011.

## FERTILITY RATES



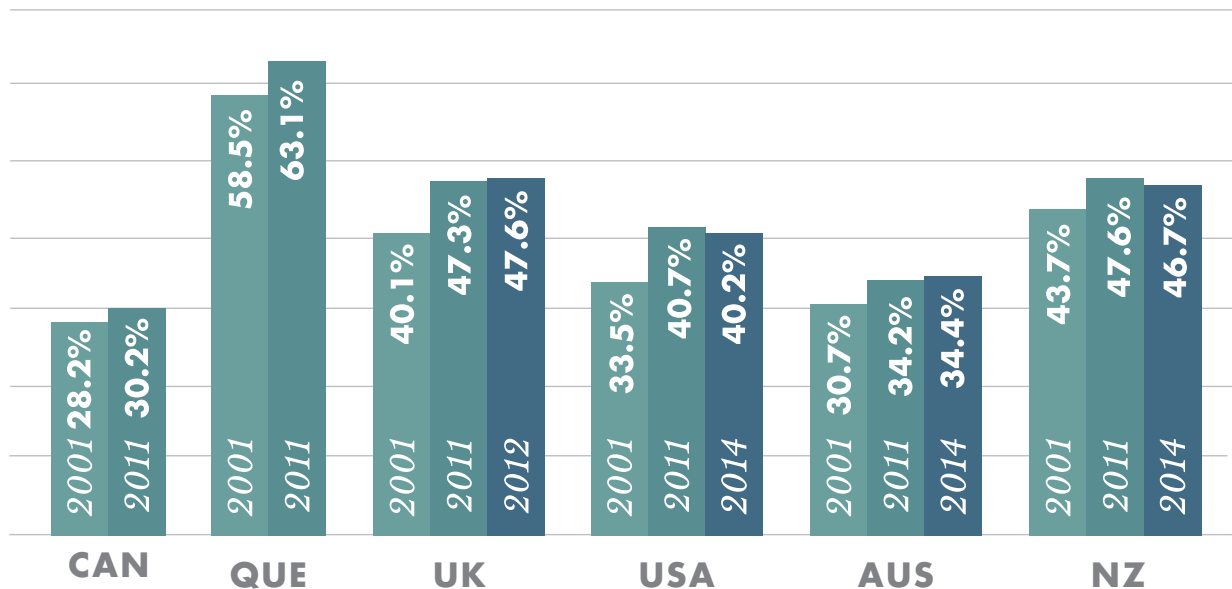
### HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

No country is meeting replacement fertility rates (2.1) with the exception of New Zealand in 2011. Canada lags slightly behind all comparison countries.

# Non-marital Childbearing

[Much research](#) shows that children born outside of marriage are subject to less stability during their lifetimes. Outside of Quebec, the highest rates of non-marital childbearing are in the United Kingdom and New Zealand. The Canadian rate of non-marital childbearing is fortunately lower than other countries in the Anglosphere, with the exception of Quebec.

## NON-MARITAL CHILDBEARING RATE



### HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

While Canada has the lowest rates of non-marital childbearing, Quebec has the highest.

# Conclusion

We examine family data—and our government gathers it—because it’s important. These statistics extend through our personal lives into the economy and culture around us. Stable families benefit their members but also create ripple effects that benefit society. Family data provides one lens through which to examine our community’s health and by extension, the health of the country. When we cease to clearly delineate marriage from common-law, for example, we are losing an important social indicator and also the ability to compare internationally.

Canada is very often “middle of the road” among Anglosphere countries, yet the question remains how waning marriage and rising cohabitation and lone parenting will affect future family stability. These trends have an impact on our social and economic well-being, which is why we measure them in the first place.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Canadians need to revive marriage as a social institution. Research shows healthy marriages are a public good that benefit both individuals and society.
2. Canadians should embrace a stable married family as the ideal situation in which to rear children.
3. Canadians need to become more aware of the social and emotional costs of growing family instability.
4. Delineating between marriage and cohabiting family forms within the data would assist in better historical and international comparisons. Research shows that marriage and common-law have different outcomes.



## APPENDIX A: FULL DATA CHART

	CANADA			QUEBEC			UNITED KINGDOM		
	2001	2011	2016	2001	2011	2016	2001	2011	2016
Crude marriage rate per 1000 population	4.7	4.4 (2008)	N/A	3	2.9	2.6	5.2 (2000)	4.5	4.5 (2014)
Crude divorce rate per 1000 population	2.3	2.1	N/A	2.3	1.8 (2008)		2.6 (2000)	2.1	1.9 (2014)
Total fertility rate	1.54	1.61	1.6 (2015)	1.5	1.69	1.6 (2015)	1.63	1.91	1.8 (2015)
Non-marital childbearing rate	28.2%	30.2%		58.5%	63.1%	62.8% (2013)	40.1%	47.3%	47.6% (2012)
Married couples as percentage of census families	70.5%	67%	78.7% (percent of all couples)	58.2%	51.9%		72.4%	67.4%	67.10%
Same-sex couples as a percentage of all couples		0.3%	0.9%		2.2%				
Cohabiting couples as a percentage of census families	13.8%	16.7%	21.3% (percent of all couples)	25.2%	31.5%	39.9% (of all couples)	12.8%	16.2%	17.3%
Children living with single parents	18%	19.3%	19.2%	23.9% (2006)	24.80%	32.9% (includes lone, step and no parents)	22%	24%	22.5 (2015)
Children living with common-law parents	12.8%	16.3%		29.0%	37.8%		11.0%	13.8%	15.3% (2015)
Children living with married parents	68.4%	63.6%		51.3% (2006)	46.3%		67.9%	62.3%	62.2% (2015)

	UNITED STATES			AUSTRALIA			NEW ZEALAND		
	2001	2011	2016	2001	2011	2016	2001	2011	2016
Crude marriage rate per 1000 population	8.2	6.8	6.9 (2014)	5.3	5.4	4.8 (2015)	5.1	4.7	4.4 (2014)
Crude divorce rate per 1000 population	4	3.6	3.2 (2014)	2.8	2.2	2.0 (2014)	2.5	1.9	1.9 (2013)
Total fertility rate	2	1.9	1.8 (2015)	1.7	1.9	1.8 (2015)	1.97	2.09	1.9 (2015)
Non-marital child-bearing rate	33.5%	40.7%	40.2% (2014)	30.7%	34.2%	34.4% (2014)	43.7%	47.6%	46.7% (2014)
Married couples as percentage of census families	76.7% (of family households)	73.7% (of family households)	73.3%						
Cohabiting couples as a percentage of census families	9.1% (of all couple households, 2000)	11.3% (of all couple households, 2012)							
Children living with single parents	26.7% (2000)	27.2	26.8% (2015)						
Children living with common-law parents	3% in cohabiting households	4% (In cohabiting households, 2012)	4% (2014)						
Children living with married parents	69.1% (2000)	65%	64.7% (2015)						

## APPENDIX B: SOURCE LIST

### CANADA

New Census 2016 data: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/170802/dq170802a-eng.htm?HPA=1>

Children living with married parents in Canada, for children under fourteen, 2001 and 2011: <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-312-x/98-312-x2011001-eng.cfm#a3>.

On married and common-law couples as a percentage of all census families in Canada, 2001 and 2011: <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-312-x/2011001/tbl/tbl1-eng.cfm>.

Canada crude marriage rate per 1,000, 2001: <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26?lang=eng&id=1011004>.

Crude marriage rate per 1,000, 2011: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-209-x/2013001/article/11788/tbl/tbl1-eng.htm>.

Quebec crude marriage rate per 1,000, 2001 and 2011: <http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/statistiques/population-demographie/bilan2016.pdf#page=99> (p. 101).

Quebec married and cohabiting families as percentage of all families, 2001: <http://www.ccsd.ca/factsheets/family/>.

Quebec married and cohabiting families as a percentage of all families, 2011: <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-312-x/2011001/tbl/tbl2-eng.cfm>.

Quebec children under fourteen living with common-law parents, 2001: <http://publications.gc.ca/Collection/Statcan/96F0030X/96F0030XIE2001003.pdf> (p. 7)

Quebec children under fourteen living with common-law parents, 2011: <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-312-x/98-312-x2011001-eng.cfm>.

Crude divorce rates per 1,000, Canada and Quebec: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-209-x/2013001/article/11788/tbl/tbl2-eng.htm>.

Quebec percentage of non-marital births, 2001 and 2011: <http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/statistiques/population-demographie/naissance-fecondite/410.htm>.

Percentage of non-marital births Canada, 2001 and 2011, with calculations, not including marital status “not stated”: <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26?lang=eng&id=1024506>.

Quebec same-sex marriage, 2011 and 2015: <http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/statistiques/population-demographie/bilan2016.pdf#page=99> (table 5.2, p. 102).

Same-sex marriage rate Canada, 2011: <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-312-x/2011001/tbl/tbl3-eng.cfm>.

Total fertility rate Canada and Quebec, 2001 and 2011: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-209-x/2013001/article/11784/tbl/tbl02-eng.htm> and [http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/statistiques/profils/profil06/societe/demographie/nais\\_deces/fecon06\\_an.htm](http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/statistiques/profils/profil06/societe/demographie/nais_deces/fecon06_an.htm).

Children living with single parents, Canada, 2001 and 2011: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-312-x/98-312-x2011001-eng.cfm#a3>.

Quebec children living with single parents, married parents: Statistics Canada, 2011 Census of Population and Statistics Canada catalogue no. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/tbt-tt/Rp-eng.cfm?LANG=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&G-C=0&GID=0&GK=0&GRP=1&PID=102074&PRID=0&PTYPE=101955&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2011&THEME=89&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF>, with calculations by authors.

Children born to married parents, Quebec, 2001 and 2011: <http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/statistiques/population-demographie/bilan2016.pdf#page=99> (table 2.7, p. 48).

## UNITED KINGDOM

UK married and common-law couples as a percentage of all census families in the United Kingdom: 2001, 2011, 2016: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/births-deathsandmarriages/families/datasets/familiesandhouseholds>.

UK percentage of dependent children (under age fifteen) living with married, common-law, and lone parents 2001, 2010, 2015. Table 4, dependent children in families by type: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/datasets/familiesandhouseholds>.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2012-11-01#dependent-children> and <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160106020638/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcM%3A77-401852>. Please note that across jurisdictions, “census families” may be defined differently, so this is a rough comparison.



UK crude marriage rate per 1,000 population 2000, 2011, 2014: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Crude\\_marriage\\_rate,\\_selected\\_years,\\_1960-2015\\_\(per\\_1\\_000\\_persons\).png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Crude_marriage_rate,_selected_years,_1960-2015_(per_1_000_persons).png).

UK crude divorce rate per 1,000 population, 2000: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Crude\\_divorce\\_rate,\\_selected\\_years,\\_1960-2014\\_\(1\)\\_\\_\(per\\_1\\_000\\_inhabitants\)\\_YB16.png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Crude_divorce_rate,_selected_years,_1960-2014_(1)__(per_1_000_inhabitants)_YB16.png).

UK fertility rates, 2001, 2011, 2015: [http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN-?name\\_desc=true](http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN-?name_desc=true).

UK crude divorce rate, 2011, 2014: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tps00013&plugin=1>.

UK percentage of births outside marriage, 2001, 2011, 2012: <http://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=68249>.

## UNITED STATES

\*In the United States, married-couple households are as a percentage of all households, not census families.

Married couples as a percentage of households, 2001, 2011, 2016: <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/families/households.html>.

Crude marriage and divorce rates, 2001, 2011 and 2014: [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/marriage\\_divorce\\_tables.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/marriage_divorce_tables.htm).

Cohabiting couples as a percentage of all census families (cohabiting couples as a percent of all co-residential couple households):

2012—11.3 percent (of all couple households) <https://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p20-570.pdf> (p. 20 with calculations)

2000—9.1 percent (of all couple households) <https://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/cen-sr-5.pdf> (p. 4).

Children living with two married parents and children living with single parents: <http://www.childtrends.org/indicators/family-structure/> (download figures, appendices, and additional data [Excel]).

Children living with “common-law” parents (cohabiting): America’s Families and Living Arrangements: 2012, US Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p20-570.pdf> (table 10, p. 25).

Children living with “common-law” parents, 2001: Living Arrangements of Children: 2001, US Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/prod/2005pubs/p70-104.pdf> (p. 2).

Non-marital childbearing, 2011: [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr62/nvsr62\\_01.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr62/nvsr62_01.pdf) (p. 3); 2014: <http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>.

Non-marital childbearing, 2001: [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db162\\_table.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db162_table.pdf). Fertility rate (per 1,000 women), births per woman: [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr64/nvsr64\\_12.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr64/nvsr64_12.pdf) (tables 4 and 8).

Children living with married parents of all families with children under eighteen: <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/families/families.html> (figure FM-1).

Children living with married parents, 2016 C3: <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2016/demo/families/cps-2016.html> (table C3).

Children living with cohabiting parents, 2014: <https://ifstudies.org/blog/more-than-60-of-u-s-kids-live-with-two-biological-parents>.

Non-marital births: <http://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=68249>.

Married couples as a percentage of all households, 2016: <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/demo/tables/families/time-series/households/hh1.xls>.

## AUSTRALIA

Crude marriage rate, 2001, 2011: <https://aifs.gov.au/facts-and-figures/marriage-australia/marriage-australia-source-data#rates> and <http://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=68249>.

Crude marriage rate, 2015: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3310.0>.

Crude divorce rate: <https://aifs.gov.au/facts-and-figures/divorce-australia/divorce-australia-source-data#rates> (2001, 2011) and <http://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=68249> (2014)

Total fertility rate: <https://aifs.gov.au/facts-and-figures/births-australia/births-australia-source-data#number> (2001 and 2011) and <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/3301.0Main%20Features42015?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prod-no=3301.0&issue=2015&num=&view> (2015).

Non-marital births (ex-nuptial): <https://aifs.gov.au/facts-and-figures/births-australia/births-australia-source-data#exnuptial> and <http://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=68249>.

## NEW ZEALAND

Crude marriage rate, 2001, 2011, 2014: <http://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=68249>.

Crude divorce rate per 1,000 marriages, 2001, 2011, 2013: <http://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=68249>.

Non-marital births, 2001, 2011, 2014: <http://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=68249>.

New Zealand fertility rates, 2001, 2011, 2015: [http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?name\\_desc=true](http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?name_desc=true).



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