

Celebrating diversity.
Advancing family wellbeing.



Overview of Families in Canada

Laurel Sakaluk, Ph.D.
The Vanier Institute of the Family

*Manitoba Court of King's Bench Family Division:
40th Anniversary Symposium on Challenges and Innovations
June 21, 2024*

Land acknowledgement

The Vanier Institute of the Family is located on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people, who have protected this land since time immemorial. We acknowledge and appreciate the generosity of our Indigenous neighbours whose ancestral lands are where we live, work, and thrive.

We strive to support decolonization by amplifying voices and research that highlight the ongoing impacts of colonialism, displacement, and systemic racism on Indigenous family and community connections, cultures, and wellbeing. Through our efforts and commitment, may we be reconciled so that we truly experience equality, justice, and harmony.



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About the Vanier Institute

- A national, independent think tank committed to **enhancing family wellbeing** by making information about families accessible and actionable
- **Positioned at the centre of networks** of researchers, educators, policymakers, and organizations with an interest in families
- **Sharing evidence and strengthening the understanding of families in Canada**, in all their diversities, to support evidence-based decisions that promote family wellbeing
- Established in **1965**

Advancing understanding of families

POLICY BRIEF

Access to Parental Benefits in Canada
Sophie Mathieu, PhD

A review of parental benefits in Canada over the past 50 years shows that eligibility criteria have a determining effect on the uptake of benefits.

FEBRUARY 2023

Policy Briefs

research snapshot
summarize mobilize

Child Welfare, Race, and Family Reunification in Quebec

What this research is about
Research has shown that Black children are overrepresented in child welfare systems in Canada. Systemic racism and discrimination contribute to the situations that lead to entering these systems. It also influences children's experiences once inside, from decisions related to out-of-home placements (e.g., foster care) to being reunited with their families upon exiting. This reunification is service providers' primary goal.

What you need to know
This study examines the experiences of Black children exiting the child welfare system in Quebec. It used Census and longitudinal child welfare data to determine whether race played a role in time spent in care and in out-of-home placements when children left the child welfare system.

What the researchers found
The researchers found that Black children in Montreal stayed in out-of-home placement for longer amounts of time, experienced a greater number of placements, and were less likely to reunite with their families compared with those who are White or who belong to other visible minority categories. These findings align with research from the U.S. Race only influenced the likelihood of Black children to reunite with their families when paired with other factors, such as age and reason for child welfare involvement.

What the researchers did
The study used longitudinal clinical administrative data from an anonymous child welfare agency in Montreal, Quebec. Researchers looked at 1,295 children who had received ongoing child welfare services in Quebec between April 1, 2002, and March 31, 2011. Data from the 2006 Canadian Census was used to develop measures related to social and economic disadvantages.

What the researchers found
While research has shown that First Nations children face discrimination within welfare systems, their data was excluded from analysis to respect the promise of no research without collaboration from First Nations communities. With the sample removed, data on 1,318 children were included - 24% were Black, 43% were White, 17% were in other visible minority categories, and 15% were unidentified (numbers rounded to the nearest percentage point).

What the researchers found
Regardless of racial identity, most children in the study (86%) were reunited with their families. However, children in the Black and the "unidentified" categories had higher proportions of younger children in out-of-home placement compared

research snapshot

Research Snapshots

Census 2021: Generations and Population Aging in Canada

2021 Census release from Statistics Canada on a generational and population aging

May 12, 2022

Statistics Canada's 2021 Census releases on age, sex at birth, and gender bring new clarity to our understanding of families, family diversity, and Canada's evolving demographic landscape. In addition to being the world's first Census to report on transgender and non-binary people, these new data provide insights on population aging in Canada through 10 generations.

Every generation brings with them their own culture, experiences, and aspirations. They also share strengths and challenges, which shape and inform health and home care, housing, the labour market, care systems, and other systems and institutions important to family wellbeing. Understanding these dynamics is essential for the work of policy makers, decision makers, researchers, and others interested in families.

A generational portrait of Canada's young population from the 2021 Census provides a valuable "family lens" perspective on population aging. It shows that millennials now comprise a large part of the labour market in other generations compared to earlier ones.

Millennials on the rise in the workforce and in life

- In 2021, there were 7.6 million millennials in Canada, who accounted for approximately 1 in 5 Canadians (21%).
- National trends show differences between provinces and territories. Millennials accounted for a greater than average share of the total population in Alberta (25%), New Brunswick (25%), and Yukon and the Northwest Territories (approximately 25% each).
- For the first time, millennials accounted for one-third (33%) of the working age population (18 to 64), and now the largest age group.

Articles

THE RIGHTS OF COMMON-LAW PARTNERS IN CANADA

Laurence Breton and Margo Hilbrecht

Reports

A SNAPSHOT OF FAMILY DIVERSITY IN CANADA

Families are shaped by diverse identities, experiences and career environments

1.7 million
In 2016, 1.7 million people in Canada reported having an **Aboriginal identity**, accounting for 4.6% of the total population. This includes approximately 977,000 (5.6%), 588,000 (3.6%), 100,000 (0.6%), and 85,000 (0.5%) from First (First generation), Second (Second generation), and Third (Third generation) generations. This is up from 93% in 2011, and is projected to reach 39% by 2036.

20%
In 2016, approximately 20% of recent immigrants (e.g. Albanians, Cambodians, Filipinos) had been admitted since 2010 to join family already in Canada, a rate that has remained fairly stable over the past 20 years.

73,000
In 2016, there were nearly 73,000 same-sex couple households in Canada (0.3% of all couples). Up 67% from 2006.

12%
In 2016, more than 12% of recent immigrants to Canada (22% reported belonging to a visible minority group). Among this group, 19 to 30 were born in Canada.

4 in 10
In 2016, approximately one-quarter (25%) of recent immigrants (e.g. Albanians, Cambodians, Filipinos) had been admitted since 2010 to join family already in Canada, a rate that has remained fairly stable over the past 20 years.

2.6%
In 2014, 2.6% of all couples in Canada were **mixed unions**, nearly double the rate from 1991 (1.2%). Statistics Canada defines a mixed union as "a couple in which one spouse or partner belongs to a visible minority group and the other does not, as well as a couple in which the two spouses or partners belong to different visible minority groups."

4.6%
In 2014, 4.6% of all couples in Canada were **mixed unions**, nearly double the rate from 1991 (1.2%). Statistics Canada defines a mixed union as "a couple in which one spouse or partner belongs to a visible minority group and the other does not, as well as a couple in which the two spouses or partners belong to different visible minority groups."

1 in 5
In 2014, 1 in 5 Canadians aged 25 to 64 reported living with at least one **disabled** family member, who account for an estimated 1 in 3 people each year.

4 in 10
4 in 10 Canadians (38%) reported in 2012 that they have an **immediate or extended family member** living with a mental health problem. More than 1 in 5 (22%) had more than one family member with a mental health problem.

STATISTICS CANADA / FEBRUARY 2018

Infographics

Mobilizing credible and accurate information about family life and wellbeing



Social media



Collaborative publications



Sharing/promoting research with media



Events and webinars



Engaging with researchers

Evolving perspectives

- Increasing diversity in Canadian society leads to questions of what constitutes “family.”
- Some laws and policies are grounded in a definition of family that can be restrictive and exclusionary.
- Two main perspectives guide policy:
 - Family structure and the “ideal” family
 - Universal core contributions of families
- There is interest in the ways in which families in Canada differ.



“Standard North American Family”



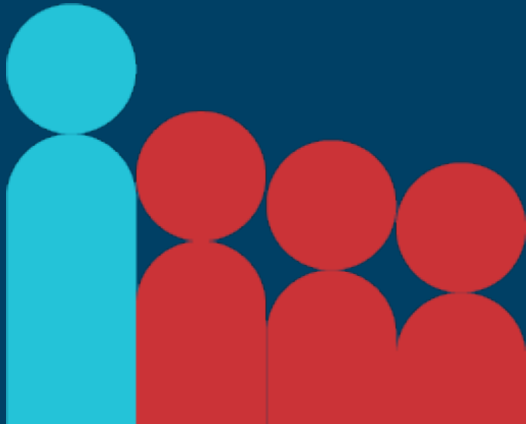
- A lens through which beliefs about ideal families were framed
- The “ideal” or “traditional” family structure = household of a married couple and their children, with a male breadwinner and female homemaker
- The influence evident from the naming of this mid-20th century family as “ideal” to laments about its decline and labelling of those who did not reflect this ideal as “deficit” families
- Still reflected in how family is conceptualized in certain government policies and programs (e.g., immigration)
- Households became interchangeable with families for national data collection in Canada

Smith, D. E. (1993, March). The standard North American family as an ideological code. *Journal of Family Issues*.

Cogswell, B. E. (1975 October). Variant family forms and life styles: Rejection of the traditional nuclear family. *The Family Coordinator*.

Zartler, U. (2014, April). How to deal with moral tales: Constructions and strategies of single-parent families. *Journal of Marriage and Family*.

Recognizing diversity in family forms



- By early 2000s, diverse family forms more widely recognized in statistics, legislation and policy.
- The Ontario Law Commission noted that the “traditional” family is only one of a variety of family types, although other family forms “such as those formed by gays, lesbians and bisexuals are sometimes not recognized as families; while adoptive and foster family relationships are considered less valuable than other family forms.”
- Passage of Bill C-38 (2005) defined (civil) marriage as “the lawful union of two persons to the exclusion of all others,” thus extending marriage to same-sex couples.
- The family status of people in common-law relationships is less clear. Rights and obligations vary across jurisdictions.

Ontario Human Rights Commission. (n.d.). *The changing face of Canadian families*.

Government of Canada. (2005, September 14). Civil Marriage Act: Chapter 33 of the Statutes of Canada for 2005.

New ways of thinking about families



- Boundaries around how children are counted as family members have also expanded.
- In the 2006 Census, foster children were named as “other relatives” and therefore part of census economic families. Foster children were formally counted starting in 2011.
- Those in the process of adopting a foster child are now eligible for parental benefits.
- A second family perspective gained international prominence with the launch of the United Nations International Year of the Family in 1994 wherein families were described as the “basic unit of society.”
- The main principle was that families have a common set of responsibilities that they are expected to assume.

Universal core contributions of families



Any combination of two or more persons who are bound together over time by ties of mutual consent, birth, and/or adoption or placement, and who, together, assume responsibilities for various combinations of some of the following:

- Physical maintenance and care of family members
- Addition of new members
- Socialization of children
- Guiding social behaviour
- Producing, consuming, and distributing goods and services
- Love and emotional nurturance

Families and social policy

- Goal is to improve the wellbeing of families, especially those experiencing vulnerability and disadvantages
- Explicit versus implicit policy impacts
- Different effects for singles or couples, with or without children

With the increased complexity of contemporary family forms, what types of families are the policies intended to serve?



Why is a framework about family diversities important?

- Interest in how families are changing
- Need for a structured, evidence-based way of understanding family diversities
- Helps us to consider the extent to which families in Canada reflect the “ideal family” normalized in many policies
- Focused on simplicity, while understanding that there is complexity
- Identifies knowledge gaps that can affect family wellbeing

Creating the Framework



- Convened a group of researchers, government representatives, and organizations that work with families
- **“What does family diversity mean to you?”**
- Explored commonalities and differences
- Created draft framework, gathered and incorporated feedback from group
- Focused on simplicity, knowing there is a lot of complexity
- Who was missing?

Guiding the Framework development

Moral compass:

“Addressing the circumstances that leave individuals, families, and whole communities behind”
(UN Sustainable Development Group, 2023)

Conceptual compass:

Environments that foster inclusion and reduce inequalities
Wellbeing based on a family’s ability to be and do what they most value

The challenge:

Creating conceptual clarity and evidence to document progress in family wellbeing

Family Diversities and Wellbeing Framework



FAMILY STRUCTURE

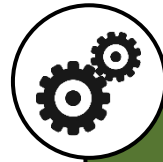
HOW PEOPLE
ARE LINKED TO
FORM FAMILIES

Intimate partner
structures

Parental
structures

Multigenerational
structures

Structurally
diverse



FAMILY WORK

HOW PAID AND
UNPAID WORK
IS DISTRIBUTED
IN FAMILIES

Care work

High-risk work

Precarious work

Work requiring
periods of
absence



FAMILY IDENTITY

HOW FAMILY
IDENTITIES ARE
CONSTRUCTED

Immigrant
families

Indigenous
families

LGBTQ2S+
families

Racialized families

FAMILY WELLBEING: Material, Relational, Subjective



How people are linked to form families

Intimate partner structures

Parental structures

Multigenerational structures

Structurally diverse

Family Structure Lens

Motivates us to look more closely at how our laws and policies shape family formation and family life

- Consequences for marriage, divorce, parenting and parenting arrangements, legal responsibilities for children, adoption, common-law unions, taxes, inheritance and so on
- Many types of relationships that fall under a family lens not always recognized in family law or family policies

Examples: one-parent families, polyamorous families, skip-generation families, chosen families

Census family households by household type, 2021

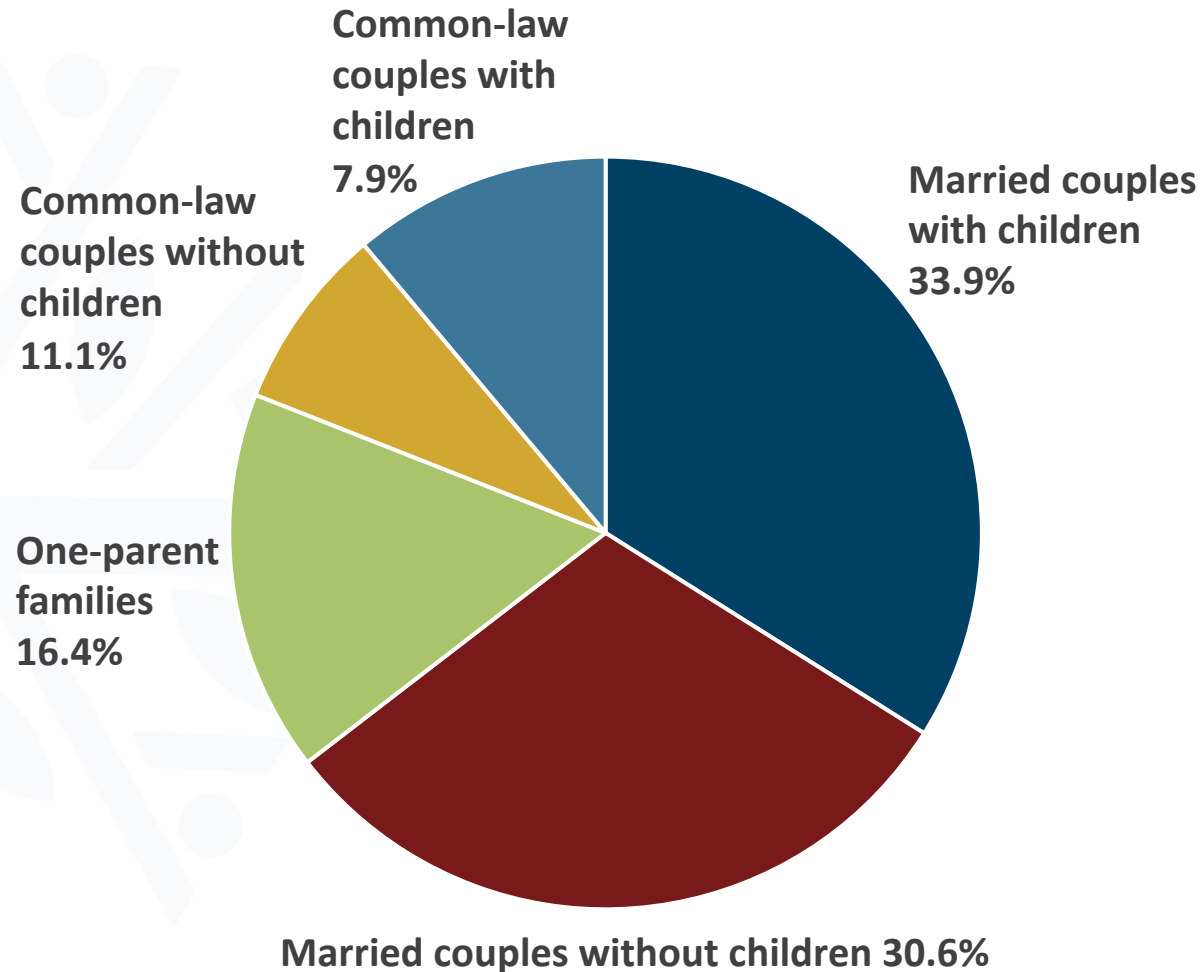
More than 8 in 10 private households (81%) were home to a “census family.”

Family household types:

- Married or common-law partners, with or without never-married children
- One-parent families with their never-married children

Other household types:

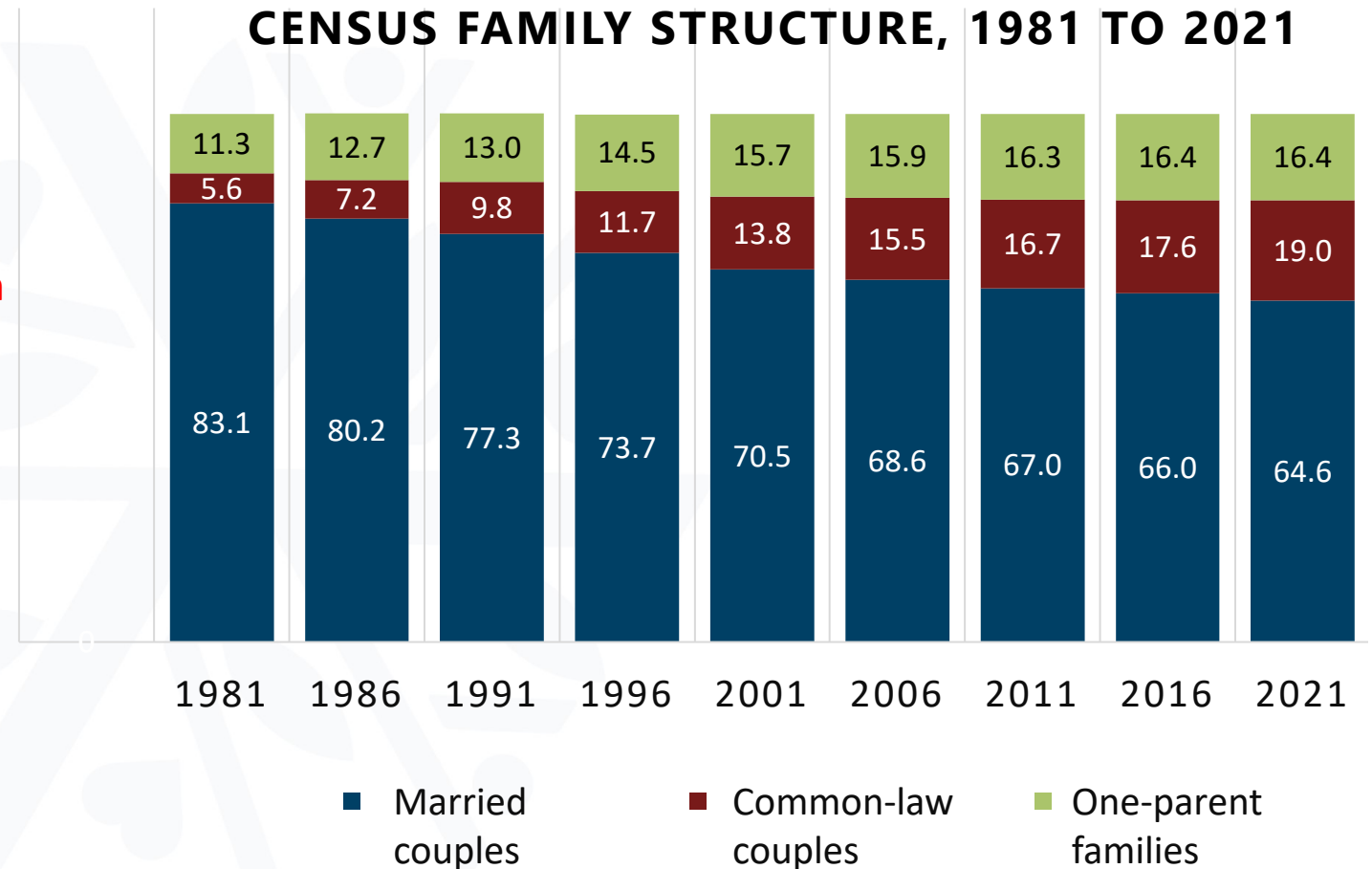
- One-person households
- Roommate households



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Marriage, common-law, and one-parent families in Canada

- In 1981, common-law couple families accounted for 6% of all census families, which increased to 19% by 2021.
 - **Manitoba had the 2nd lowest percentage in 2021 at 14%.**
- Common-law couples account for the highest share of couples in Quebec and Nunavut (43% and 52%, respectively).
 - **17% in Manitoba, 23% in Canada.**
- The percentage of one-parent families increased, then stabilized in 2011.

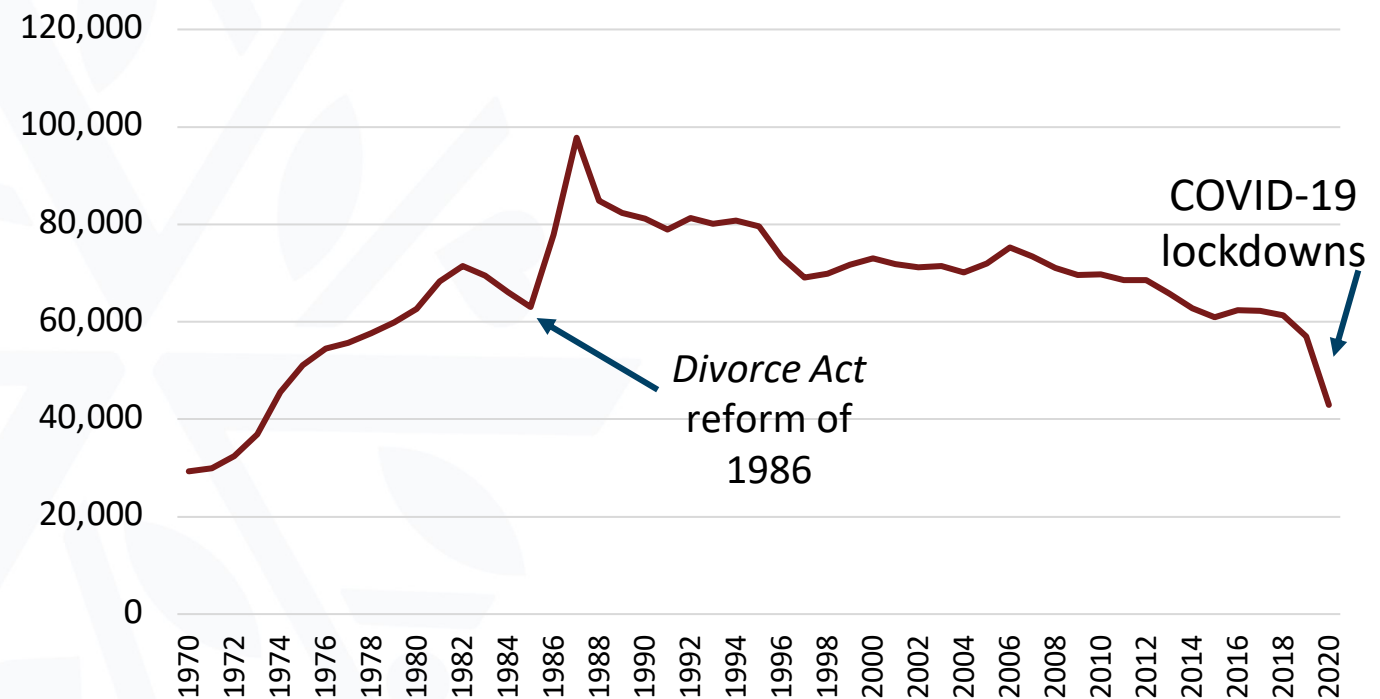


Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1981-2021.

Family structure statistics—divorce

- The number of divorces fell from a high of 96,000 in 1987 (after *Divorce Act* reform) to 57,000 in 2019 just before COVID-19.
- Divorce rates have declined over the past 20 years:
 - From 11.3 divorces per 1,000 married people in 2000 to 5.6 in 2020 (from 10.1 to 6.3 in Manitoba during this period)
- Divorce rates tend to be lower for older adults:
 - 4.2 per 1,000 for those ages 50 and older in 2020, compared with 7.7 per 1,000 among those under age 50

Number of divorces, Canada, 1970 to 2020





How paid and unpaid work is distributed in families

Care work

High-risk work

Precarious work

Work requiring periods of absence

Family Work Lens

Motivates us to consider how public and workplace policies support diverse work arrangements and how these arrangements affect family life.

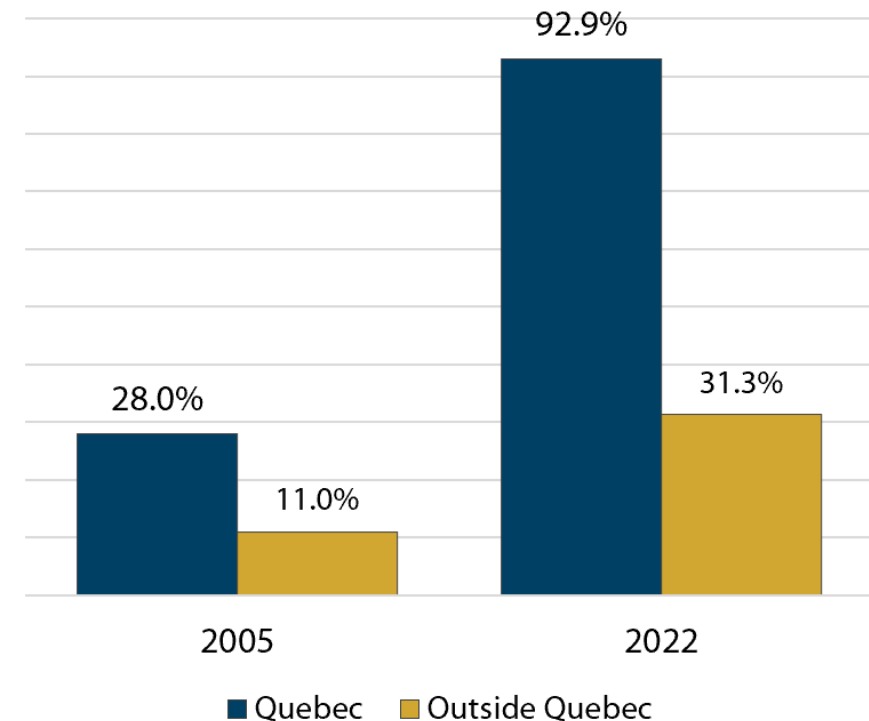
- How *paid* and *unpaid* work influences opportunities for workforce participation
- Consequences for access to employment benefits (e.g., pensions, healthcare, parental leaves)
- Forms of employment affect income stability, time with family, access to childcare, family meals, volunteer commitments

Family Work

- Labour force participation rate of mothers with a youngest child aged 5 years or younger increased from 68.0% in 2000 to 75.1% in 2020.
 - **In Manitoba, this hardly changed, increasing from 69.5% to 70.1%.**
- In 2022, women were more likely than men to have:
 - provided unpaid care to children (32% vs. 26%)
 - provided unpaid care to adults with long-term conditions or disabilities (23% vs. 19%)

Sources: Labour Force Survey, 1998, 2020; Canadian Social Survey, 2022; Employment Insurance Coverage Survey, 2005, 2022.

Parental benefits uptake among second parents before and after QPIP enacted in 2006, inside and outside Quebec





How family identities are constructed

Immigrant families

Indigenous families

LGBTQ2S+ families

Racialized families

Family Identity Lens

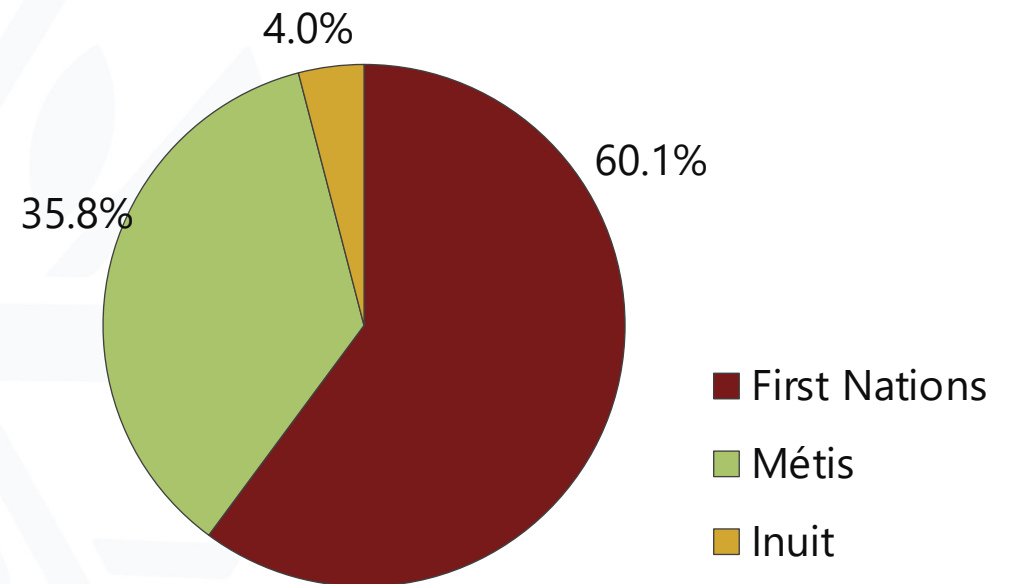
This lens allows us to see how families view themselves and how they are seen and represented by others.

- It can create a sense of belonging to a larger community.
- Identities imposed by others can create stigma
- Some groups define family differently from the dominant culture.
- Families may undergo change in who they think of as family due to government policies.

Family identity statistics

- In 2021, **23.0%** of the population were, or had ever been, a landed **immigrant or permanent resident** in Canada.
- The 2021 Census counted **1.8 million Indigenous** people:
 - 5.0% of the total population in Canada
 - 7.7% of children <15 years, but represent **53.8%** of all children in foster care
- **Indigenous people represent 18.1% of the population in Manitoba—highest share in Canada.**

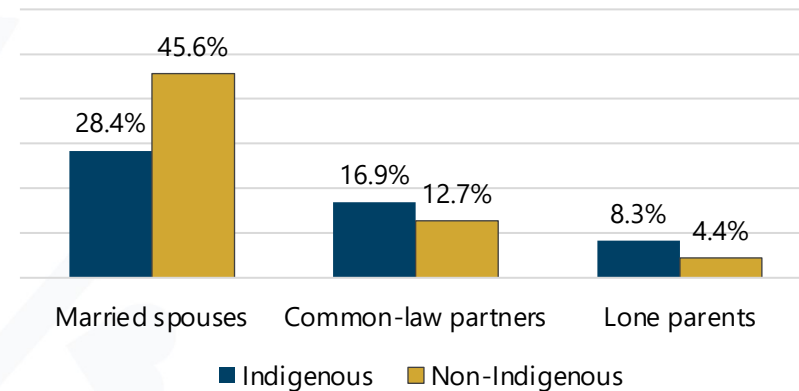
Indigenous Ancestry, Canada, 2021



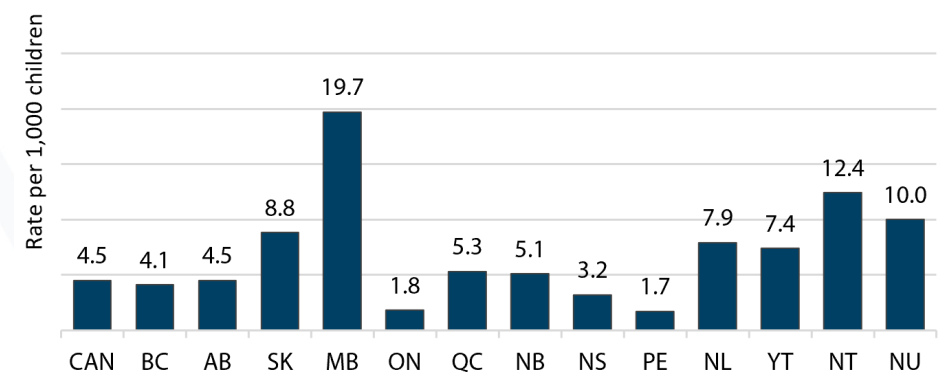
Indigenous families

- **Marriage:** Indigenous people half as likely as non-Indigenous people to be married spouses in 2021 (28.4% and 45.6%).
- **Fertility:** 2.20 children per woman in 2016, vs. 1.59 for non-Indigenous population.
- **Multigenerational households:** First Nations (19.7%) and Inuit (24.6%) children under 5 twice as likely as non-Indigenous children (9.8%) to live with a grandparent in 2021.
- **Foster children:** nearly 27,000 in 2021, most (53.8%) being Indigenous.
- **LGBTQ2S+:** A higher percentage of Status First Nations people were transgender or non-binary vs. non-Indigenous people (0.5% vs. 0.3%).

Percentage of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people aged 15+ who were married, common-law, and lone parents, 2021

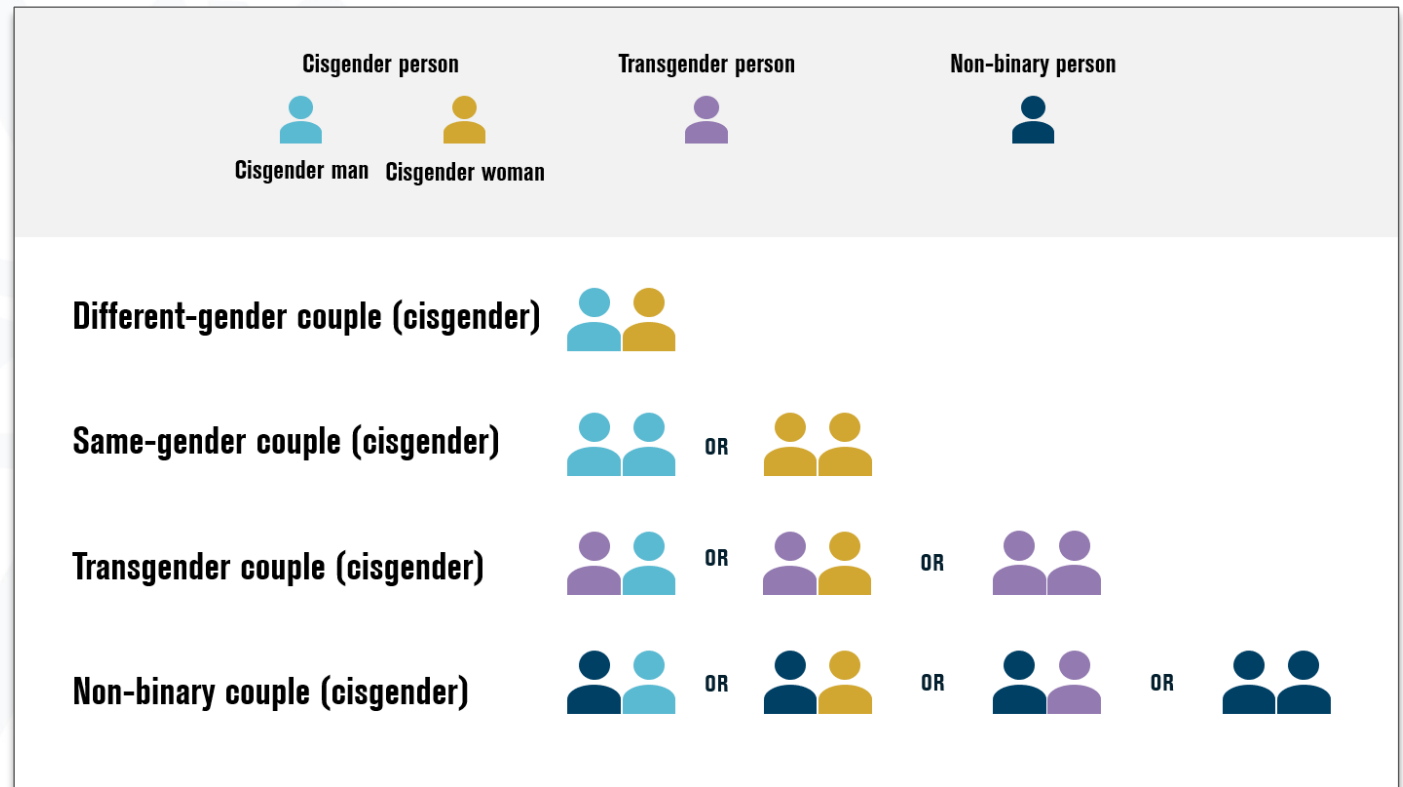


Rate of children under 15 in foster care, Canada, provinces and territories, 2021



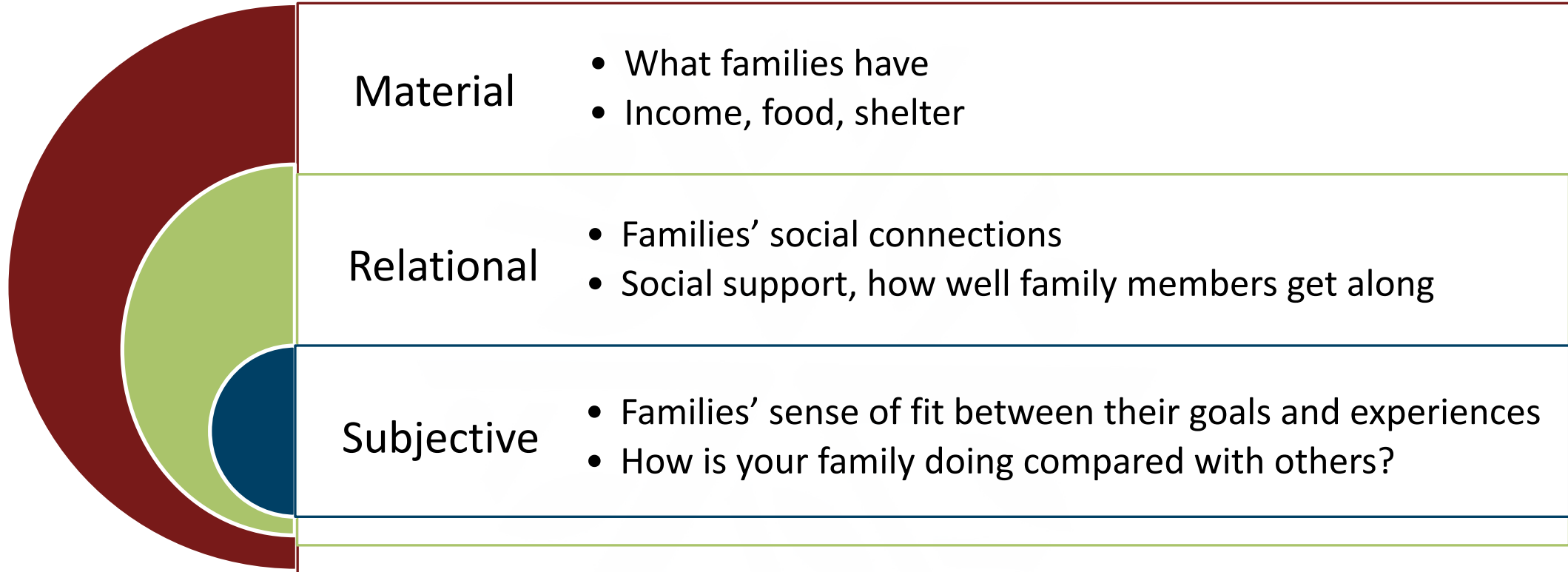
Family identity statistics

- **8.6 million** married and common-law couples.
 - Nearly **128,000** were either same-gender (cisgender) couples, transgender couples, or non-binary couples (**1.5%** of couples).
 - About **one in 250** couples included at least one transgender or non-binary person.



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

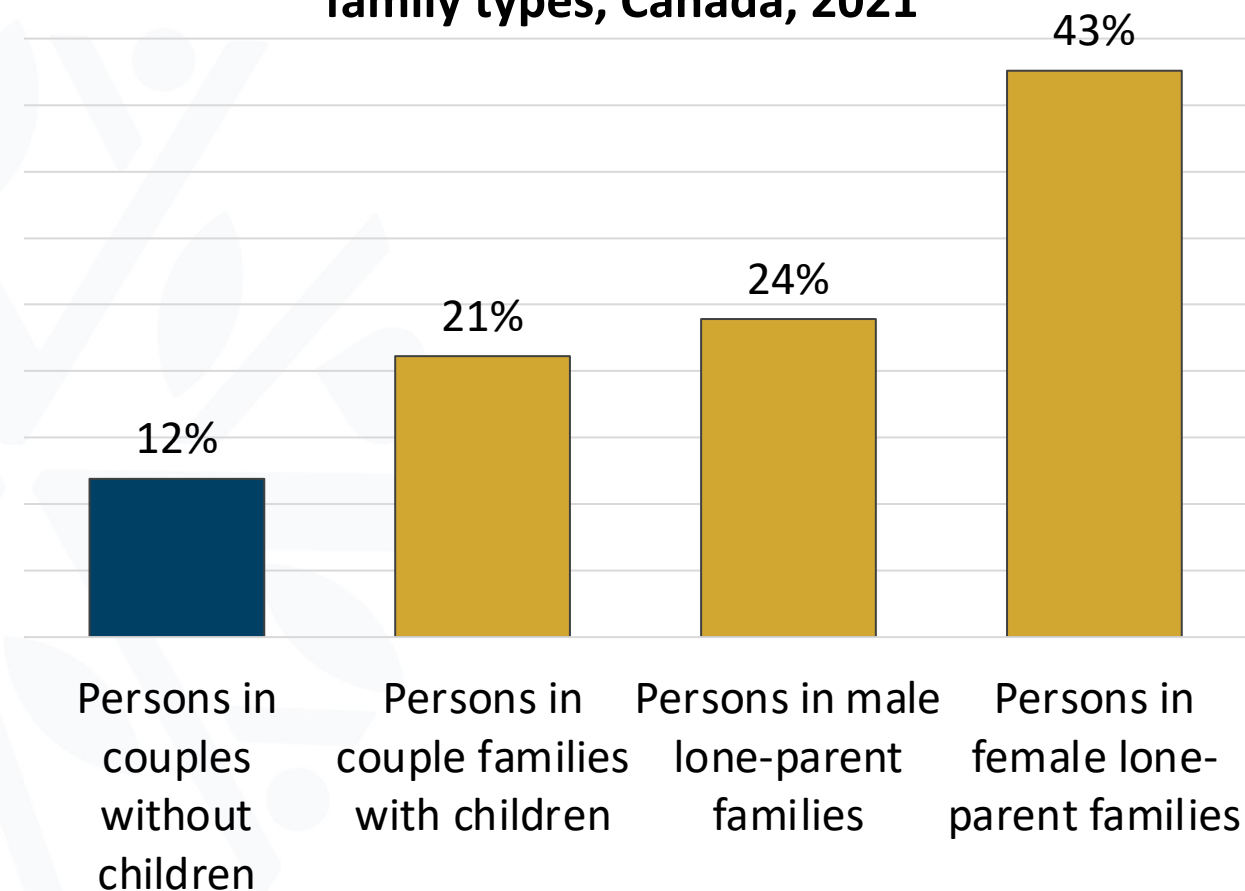
Family wellbeing



Material wellbeing

- In 2022, 9.9% of the population lived below the **poverty** line (MBM), up from 6.4% in 2020.
 - 23.8% of people in **one-parent families** lived below the poverty line, vs. 6.3% of those in couple families with children.
- In 2021, 17.9% of families experienced some level of **food insecurity** over the past 12 months (**18.8% in Manitoba**).
 - More than 4 in 10 one-parent families led by **women** (41.4%) experienced food insecurity in 2021.

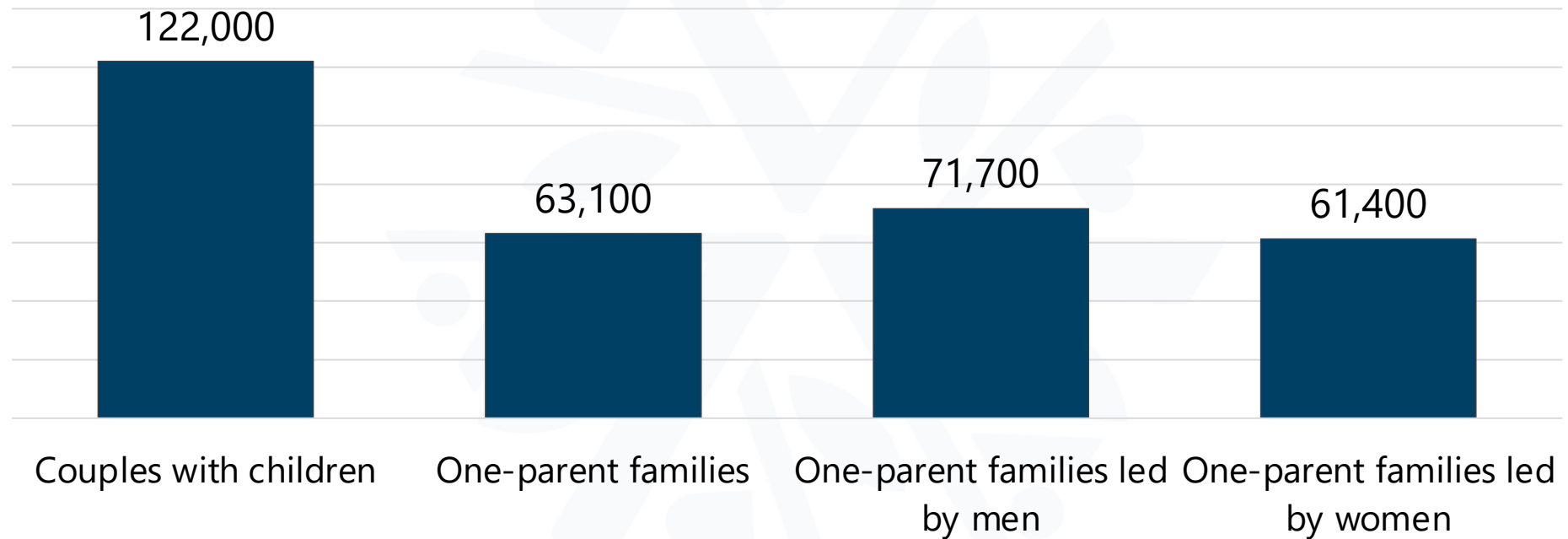
Percentage of persons in households that experienced food insecurity, by select family types, Canada, 2021



Source: Canadian Income Survey.

The influence of family structure

Median after-tax income, by selected family types, 2022
(2022 constant dollars)



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Income Survey, 2022.

Relational wellbeing

Family violence

- In 2022, a rate of 337 victims per 100,000 population—**Manitoba has 2nd highest rate (585).**
 - **Sixth consecutive year of increase**
- Girls accounted for more than 6 in 10 child and youth victims of family violence (63%).
- The rate of family violence was more than two times higher for women and girls than for men and boys (455 victims vs. 215 per 100,000 population).
- Police-reported family violence against children and youth increased by 38% between 2014 and 2022.

Source: Statistics Canada, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, 2022.

Subjective wellbeing

Measurement challenges



In general, how satisfied are you with your family life as a whole?

To what extent do your family's experiences reflect your family's goals?

What about family flourishing, family health, and/or family functioning?

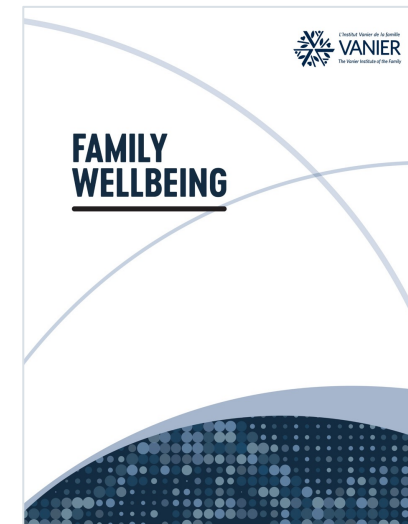
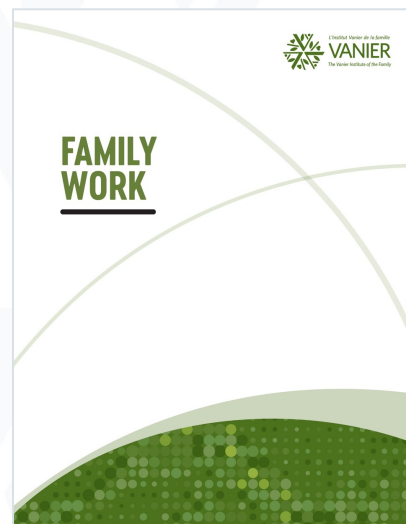
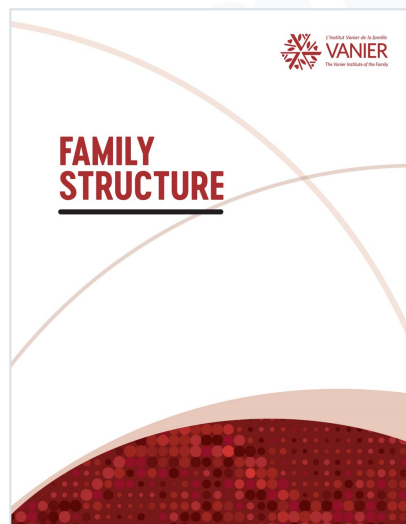
Why do the statistics matter?

- They provide evidence of current realities of family life.
- A range of diversities needs to be considered.
- It's important to note the changes to family structure.
- Which families are likely to be vulnerable or at risk?
- What are the trends in marriage, divorce, and family violence?
- What other trends do we need to monitor?
- Who is overlooked in our data? What are the implications?

Families Count publication



**FAMILIES
COUNT**
2024



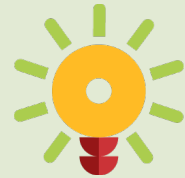
Key trends and issues of interest to media



What are the implications of:

- Declining marriage and divorce rates
- Increase in common-law relationships
- Lowest fertility rate on record
- Increasing proportion of multigenerational households
- Youth leaving home at older ages
- Fathers representing a growing share of parents in one-parent households
- Polyamorous families

How can we support the work you do?



What are your information needs?



What format is preferred?

Thank You

Learn more:



Lsakaluk@vanierinstitute.ca

<https://vanierinstitute.ca/>

