

# New census reflects changing nuclear family

*Fewer married couples, people living longer, more pressing financial needs — information advisors can use to help in planning*

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**A**S AN ADVISOR, YOU know the importance of knowing your client, but your knowledge should go further than what's written on the KYC form. The 2001 census of Canadians can help you get a firm handle on your clients' families and living situations.

In May 2001, 11.8 million Canadian households received a census of population questionnaire. The census is conducted every five years to gauge the changing makeup of the Canadian population. Last year marked Canada's 19th census (the first national sounding took place in 1871) and almost 31 million people were polled.

The results show a continuation of the trends that have surfaced in the past two decades. Canadians are:

- less likely to marry than they were in the past;
- living longer but often alone;
- raising children who may need financial help with their post-secondary education.

In particular, the census shows changes to the traditional nuclear family, says John Anderson, senior economist and vice president of research for the **Canadian Council on Social Development**. "These changes have been taking place over the past 20 years," he says. "People are not marrying as frequently as past generations did. The proportion of married-couple

families is 70% of all families, down from 83% in 1981, while the number of common-law families increased to 14% from 5.6% of all families. In terms of numbers, 5,901,420 couples were married and 1,158,410 were living common-law.

For the first time, the census provides data on same-sex partnerships: a total of 34,200 couples, or 0.5% of all couples in Canada, identified themselves as being of the same sex.

Just because fewer Canadians are getting married hasn't stopped them from having children. Common-law couples with children under the age of 24 living at home accounted for 7.4% of all couples in Canada, vs 2.1% just 20 years ago. On the other hand, married couples raising children declined to 44% in 2001 from 49% in 1991 and 55% in 1981.

A more alarming number is the increase in the number of single-parent families. "We're seeing climbing levels of lone-parent families," says Anderson. "There are 1,311,200 single parents out there, representing 16% of families in Canada. The sad thing is that, statistically, more than 60% are living in poverty — mostly due to lack of social policy."

The census also indicates that seniors are staying in their homes

and many are living alone. In 2001, 35% of women aged 65 and over lived alone, as did 16% of men of the same age. Men are more likely to spend their senior years with a spouse or partner because of the lower life expectancy for males and a tendency to marry younger women. The percentage of women 85 and older who live alone increased to 38% in 2001 from 25% in 1981; men in this age group increased to 23% from 16%.

Meanwhile, the number of seniors aged 85 and over who lived in health-care institutions dropped. The number of men in these facilities decreased to 23% in 2001 from 29% in 1981. The number of women declined to 35% in 2001 from 41% in 1981.

The 2001 census findings can be useful for opening discussions with clients on how they view their futures and the futures of their

families. "These numbers are useful to advisors to illustrate to clients what their futures may look like," says Paul Shiret, a financial advisor and president of **Perfect Timing Financial** in Toronto. There are some very direct applications when it comes to estate planning, saving for a child's education and preparing for aging parents.

■ **ESTATE PLANNING.** The changing pattern of relationships means advisors should be aware of family law in their respective provinces and how those laws will be applied to clients — be they married, common-law or same-sex couples, says Sandra Foster, president of **HeadSpring Consulting Inc.**, a Toronto-based financial services consultancy. Common-law spouses have the same legal status as married couples and, therefore, have the same financial planning needs. And sooner or later an advisor will be asked to help a client sort out pension, insurance, tax and estate planning issues if his or her relationship breaks up.

"From an estate-planning perspective, there's a lot to consider, such as [whether there are] previous children, outdated wills and old insurance policies," says Shiret.

■ **EDUCATING CHILDREN.** The increase in single-parent families

Family portrait: How times have changed

Percentage of couples across Canada, 2001 vs 1981

	2001	1981
Married couples	70.0	83.0
Married with children	44.0	60.0
Common-law couples	14.0	5.6
Common-law with children	7.4	2.1
Same-sex couples	0.5	n/a
Of the same-sex couples, those with children	5.0	n/a
Single-parent families	16.0	n/a

SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA INVESTMENT EXECUTIVE CHART

For more on the 2001 census, visit the Statistics Canada Web site at [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca) under the "census" heading.