

Cohabitation Statistics

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Cohabitation, where a couple chooses to live together before or instead of getting married, is inherently less stable than the married relationship between husbands and wives who have never lived together before becoming married.

- As of 2006, Common law couples make up 17.9% of all couples in Canada.¹
- Common-law-couple families in Quebec represented 44.4% of the national total. Within Quebec, common-law couples represented one-third (34.6%) of all couples in the province, much higher than the other provinces and territories (13.4%).²
- As of 2006, 22.6% of people age 25-29 are in a common law union.³
- Relationships which start with cohabitation are nearly twice as likely to dissolve as those which began with marriage, regardless of whether they eventually marry or not.

“In the 30- to 39-year group, for example, almost two-thirds (63%) of those whose first relationship was common-law had separated by 1995, compared with one-third (33%) of women who had married first.”⁴

- Children born into a married relationship not preceded by cohabitation are nearly three times less likely to experience family breakdown before they turn 10 than are children born into a cohabiting relationship.⁵
- After 10 years of marriage:⁶
 1. 84% of marriages not preceded by cohabitation remain intact.
 2. 75% of marriages preceded by cohabitation remain intact.
- After 20 years of marriage:⁷
 1. 68% of marriages not preceded by cohabitation remain intact.
 2. 55% of marriages preceded by cohabitation remain intact..
- Cohabiting relationships which precede marriage are characteristically unstable, while cohabiting relationships which do not move into marriage are characterized not only by “high levels of instability but also especially low levels of relationship interaction and happiness.”⁸

Endnotes

¹ Milan, A., Vézina, M. and Wells, C. (2007) *Family portrait: Continuity and change in Canadian families and households in 2006: National portrait: Census families*. Table 2. Retrieved January 7, 2009 from <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/analysis/famhouse/cenfam2.cfm>

² Ibid, p. 35

³ Ibid., See *Living as part of a common-law couple growing rapidly, especially for older age groups*.

⁴ Le Bourdais, C., Neill, G. and Turcotte P. with Vachon, N. and Archambault, J. (2000). The Changing Face of Conjugal Relationships. *Canadian Social Trends* No. 56, p. 17. Retrieved January 7, 2009 from <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/11-008-XIE/0049911-008-XIE.pdf>

⁵ Marcil-Gratton, N. (1998). *Growing up with Mom and Dad? The intricate family life courses of Canadian children*. Ottawa: Minister of Industry. Retrieved January 7, 2009 from <http://dsp-psd.tpsgc.gc.ca/Collection/Statcan/89-566-X/89-566-XIE1995001.pdf>

⁶ Weston, R., Qu, L. and de Vaus, D. (2003). *Premarital cohabitation and marital stability*. Melbourne: Australia Institute of Family Studies. p. 6. Retrieved January 7, 2009 from <http://www.melbourneinstitute.com/hilda/conf/conf2003/pdf/RWeston.pdf>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Brown, S. L. (2000). *Relationship Quality Dynamics of Cohabiting Unions*. Bowling Green State University Working Paper Series 00-15. Retrieved January 7, 2007 from <http://www.bgsu.edu/downloads/cas/file35322.pdf>

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