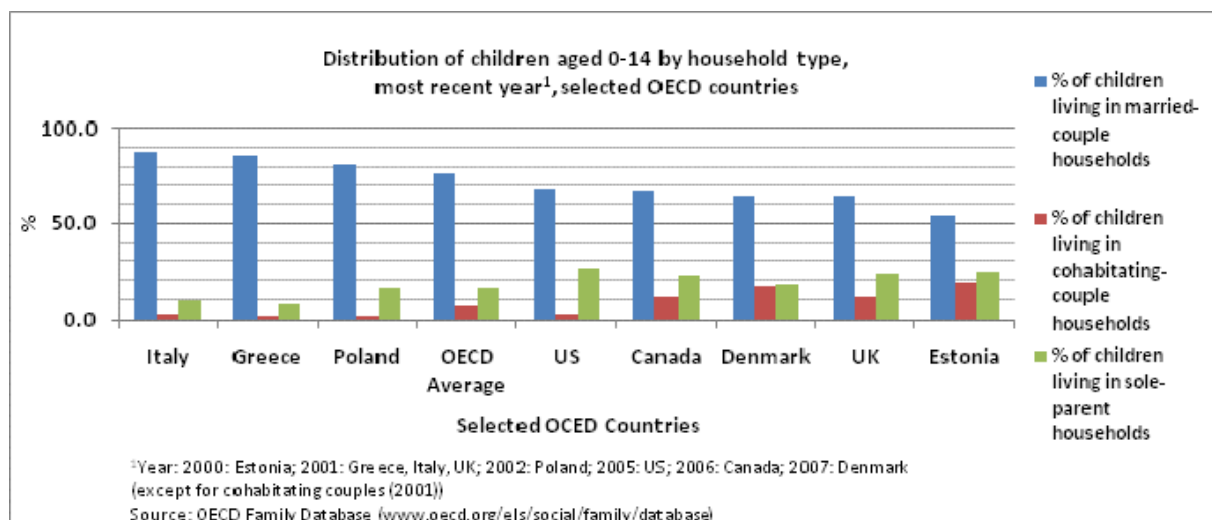


May 15 - International Day of Families

During the past century, countries around the world have seen remarkable changes in family structure and family dynamics. Whether it is fertility rates, trends in marriage and divorce, or new forms of co-habitation and household living arrangements, international comparisons help illuminate our similarities and differences.

Consider the example of children, and the types of households in which they reside. In Canada, the percentage of children living in married-couple households has declined since 1986, while the percentage living with a cohabitating-couple or a sole-parent (primary-care parent) has increased ([Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Family Portrait](#)). Similar trends have occurred elsewhere and Canada's figures are not unlike those of several other OECD countries ([Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development](#)).



In Canada, 67% of children 0-14 years old live in a married-couple household, somewhat below the average for OECD countries, but essentially the same as in countries like the United States, Denmark and the United Kingdom. On the other hand, the increasing percentage of children in cohabitating-couple households, now at 11%, has made Canada less like the United States, but more like the United Kingdom. Finally, the percentage of children residing with one parent – at 22% - is higher in Canada than in Italy or Greece for example, but similar again to the U.S. and other European countries.

FAMILY LENS

May 15th marks the United Nations' International Day of Families. The annual observance "reflects the importance that the international community attaches to families as basic units of societies as well as its concern regarding their situation around the world". This day also "provides an opportunity to increase knowledge of the economic, cultural, social and demographic processes affecting families" ([United Nations](#)).

Each year since 1994, a different theme is highlighted; this year's theme is "[Mothers and Families: Challenges in a Changing World](#)".

See also *Transition*, [A Motherhood Issue](#) & *Fascinating Families*, [Becoming a "Lone-mother"](#)