

Smaller Households... in Smaller Houses

Household composition has changed in Québec in the past five years, including an increase in the number of one-person households and in the number of households comprising couples without children. This has contributed to a sustained increase in condominium sales. These trends are the result of significant social changes that have transformed household and family dynamics in recent decades, and it is unlikely that these demographic trends will be reversed in the near future.

More Households Contain Couples Without Children and Persons Living Alone

According to Statistics Canada (*Census Profile, 2011 Census*), the total number of private households¹ in Québec reached 3,395,345, a 7 per cent increase compared to 2006. Among the different types of private households, one-person households and those comprising a couple without children² showed particularly strong growth.

The number of households comprising a couple without children increased by 8 per cent between 2006 and 2011 in Québec, and its weight (29 per cent) greatly exceeded that of households comprising a couple with a child / children (24 per cent).

The number of one-person households jumped by 12 per cent between 2006 and 2011, which also increased its relative weight. Nearly 1 in 3 households in Québec (32 per cent) was composed of a person living alone in 2011, the highest percentage among all Canadian provinces and territories. Furthermore, among Canada's census metropolitan areas (CMAs) with the highest proportion of one-person households, 4 out of the top five are located in Québec: Trois-Rivières (37 per cent), Sherbrooke (36 per cent), Québec City (35 per cent) and Montréal (33 per cent). The Victoria CMA in British Columbia (34 per cent) rounds out the top five.

This increase in the number of one-person households is not a new phenomenon. The aging population, as well as a growing number of divorces and separations, have contributed to a gradual increase in the number of people living alone.

More of an Urban Phenomenon

Geographically, the highest proportion of one-person households were in CMAs and agglomerations with 50,000 or more inhabitants. Thus, in addition to the CMAs of Trois-Rivières, Sherbrooke, Québec City and Montréal, the agglomerations of Shawinigan (38 per cent), Saint-Hyacinthe (37 per cent), Rimouski (35 per cent), Drummondville (34 per cent) and Granby (33 per cent) also registered higher proportions of one-person households than the province (see table below).

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¹ A private household refers to a person or group of persons who occupy a private dwelling and do not have a usual place of residence elsewhere in Canada. For more information, consult the [2011 Census Dictionary](#).

² Consists of couples without children aged 24 and under.

Proportion of one-person households in Québec's urban centres in 2011

| Area | 2011 | | | Var. in number of one-person households |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------|---|
| | Total private households | One-person households | | |
| Agglomeration of Shawinigan | 26,230 | 10,035 | 38% | 7% |
| Trois-Rivières CMA | 70,140 | 25,740 | 37% | 15% |
| Agglomeration of Saint-Hyacinthe | 25,880 | 9,440 | 36% | 15% |
| Sherbrooke CMA | 91,095 | 32,520 | 36% | 14% |
| Québec City CMA | 345,890 | 119,640 | 35% | 15% |
| Agglomeration of Rimouski | 23,020 | 7,950 | 35% | 16% |
| Agglomeration of Drummondville | 38,815 | 13,130 | 34% | 16% |
| Agglomeration of Granby | 33,755 | 11,005 | 33% | 20% |
| Montréal CMA | 1,613,260 | 525,435 | 33% | 9% |
| Province of Québec | 3,395,345 | 1,094,410 | 32% | 12% |
| Saguenay CMA | 69,505 | 21,560 | 31% | 14% |
| Agglomeration of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu | 39,285 | 12,070 | 31% | 13% |
| Gatineau CMA | 131,465 | 38,440 | 29% | 22% |

Source: Statistics Canada

The Impact of Small Households on the Province's Real Estate Market

Although the home ownership rate is higher among couples with children, it has increased considerably since 2001 among one-person households and households comprising a couple without children. Data on home ownership rates has not yet been published for 2011, but according to data from the 2006 census, the proportion of home ownership increased from 33 per cent in 2001 to 37 per cent in 2006 for persons living alone and from 70 to 73 per cent for couples without children.

Because the size and type of household has a large influence on dwelling type³, the relatively high number of couples without children and people living alone fuel the condominium market⁴. In fact, condominium sales experienced remarkable growth in most of the province's urban centres from 2006 to 2011. In addition to the gains registered in the CMAs, the agglomerations of Granby and Saint-Hyacinthe also stood out for their significant increase in condominium sales, fuelled by an increase in the number of new units constructed. In Granby, condominium sales increased by 187 per cent, while they grew by 237 per cent in the agglomeration of Saint-Hyacinthe.

In the medium and long term, as a result of these demographic trends, there is every reason to believe that condominium sales will continue to grow in the province's large urban centres and even gain ground in some of its smaller areas as well.

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³ In real estate, it is the number of households and not the population that must be taken into account to assess housing demand.

⁴ Small household size alone does not guarantee a demand for condominiums. Other factors, such as household income, density, affordability and the state of the rental market, also play a role.

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