

# FAMILY



FOR HIGH SCHOOL  
**STUDENTS**

**ARPA**CANADA.ca

## SUMMARY

This lesson requires students to consider God's design and plan for marriage and the family unit. Students compare the biblical version of marriage and the family with how marriages and families look in Canada today and in recent history. Students will be better equipped to respond with a Christian perspective on family in the public sphere.

For more information or to give feedback, contact [info@arpacanada.ca](mailto:info@arpacanada.ca)

# FAMILY

---

## OVERVIEW

**In the summer of 2005, Canada's Parliament passed the Civil Marriage Act which redefined marriage to include homosexual couples.**

Canada became the fourth country in the world to officially redefine marriage in this way. Parliament's decision followed numerous court decisions which found the traditional definition of marriage to be "unconstitutional" because it discriminated against some Canadians who wanted to be legally married.

But this wasn't the only effort to redefine the traditional family. Here is a brief timeline of some of the decisions impacting the disintegration of marriage and the family in Canada:

**1986:** Parliament amended the Divorce Act to allow no-fault divorce. Previously, divorce was only allowed because of adultery, sexual offences, bigamy, cruelty, or a permanent breakdown of the marriage (lasting longer than 3 years).

**1995:** An Ontario court said that it was discriminatory not to allow same-sex couples to adopt, opening up adoption to same-sex couples.

**2003:** An Ontario court legalized same-sex marriage in Ontario, making them the first province to legalize same-sex marriage.

**2005:** Parliament passed the Civil Marriage Act that legalized same-sex marriage throughout Canada.

**2007:** An Ontario court ruled that a child can legally have three parents. (The biological mother and father of the child wanted the mom's lesbian partner to legally be the boy's parent as well. The court agreed, resulting in the boy having three "parents.") In addition to these changes to the traditional family, there is a growing push to allow for polygamy in Canada.

**2016:** The "All Families are Equal Act", or Bill 28, removed the terms "mother" and "father" from Ontario law and allowed up to four different adults to become a child's parents through a so-called "pre-conception parentage agreement."

The redefinition of marriage and the family has resulted in part from the breakdown of marriages that accelerated with the introduction of "no-fault" divorce back in 1968. When maintaining marriage became a matter of preference, it did not take long for other groups to take advantage of this and redefine other parts of family according to preference.

What is going on behind each of these scenarios? Traditional marriage and the traditional family unit is being redefined according to individual preferences. Instead of marriage, biology, and adoption defining a family, family becomes whatever people want it to be. With these changes, there is no longer any objective standard of what should constitute a family. Instead, courts determine the new parameters based on what they think is "loving" and "tolerant."

The state is assuming a more direct role in children's lives. Parents are gradually being separated from their role as primary decision makers in their children's lives as public

education, public child care, and a publicly administrated child welfare system play enormous roles in the lives of most children.

This redefinition of family is a rebellion against the long-standing definition of family (a married father and mother and biological or adopted children). This traditional definition was not simply an arbitrary definition that worked in the past but should be replaced to suit our postmodern times. It was designed by God to reflect the spiritual relationship between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5: 21-33). Likewise, the relationship between fathers and children is also to reflect the way that we are obedient to our heavenly Father. Throughout the Bible, it is very

clear that God puts a divine imprint on His creation. The family is to reflect who God is to this world. It is not to be defined according to our changing preferences but according to God's eternal standard.

God also knows what is best for us. The traditional family unit is not only a spiritual reality; it is made for our good and the good of our children. When it is destroyed through divorce, redefining marriage, or any other way, there are inevitable consequences. A wealth of social research testifies to the importance of stable traditional families for the well-being of children and society in general.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How do the meanings of “marriage” and “family” guide Christians as we engage with our culture?

This essential question requires students to work with the reality that the definitions of marriage and the family unit are contested territory in Canada. Students are prompted to contemplate the changing nature of marriage and the family unit in our society and how the meaning of the terms “marriage” and “family” can guide them as they engage with Canada in the public square.

### EXPLORE WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY

Read Ephesians 5:21 through Ephesians 6:4. Distribute *Handout 1 – Paul’s instructions for families* to help the students organize their thoughts around the following main questions:

- What instructions does this chapter give for husbands? Is there a primary task?
- What instructions are there for wives? Is there a primary task?
- What are the expectations given by God for children?
- What are the expectations given by God for parents?

It should become clear after reading and studying this passage that God has a clearly designed pattern, already established with Adam and Eve, for husbands and wives, for parents, for children and for families. This pattern is beneficial for the whole family and honours God because it reflects the love He shows His Church.

The pattern of the church’s submission to Christ is presented to wives. The pattern of Christ’s love to His Church is presented to husbands.

### EXPLORE THE STATE OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY IN CANADA

Print out *Handout 2 – The Canadian Marriage Map*. Divide class into groups of 2-4 students. Give each group one of the charts from the *Canadian Marriage Map*. Have each group discuss what this chart tells us about what is happening to marriage and the family in Canada and then briefly share their findings with the rest of the class. Does Canada have strong marriages and families today?

- Suggested charts: Page 3, Page 6, Page 9, Page 13, Page 17, Page 21, Page 26, Page 35



## EVALUATE WHAT NEEDS TO BE CHANGED

Distribute *Handout 3 – Amending the Civil Marriage Act*. Have the students underline all the parts of the law that are consistent with a biblical understanding of marriage and strike out any parts of the law that are contrary to the Bible. Then ask the students if they would add any new “whereas” statements or any other “numbered sections” that would make the law more consistent with the Bible. (Note that Canada has other laws that prohibit incest and regulate divorce so those do not necessarily need to be included here.)

## ENCOURAGE THE STUDENTS TO TAKE ACTION

Distribute *Handout 4 – Alberta Family Law*. Have the students read the article, fill in the attached worksheet, and send an EasyMail to your provincial MLA or MPP. If you live outside of Alberta, you may have to adapt the activity for your province, but the main points of the article and the request to the provincial official will be similar.

Optional: Create radio ads. Ask the students, in groups of 3-4, to record a 30-second radio ad describing the problems of the bill. Encourage the students to be succinct (every second costs money!) and persuasive (make arguments that the average Canadian would sympathize with) in their messaging.

# PAUL'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR FAMILIES

The purpose of this organizer is to determine what guidelines the apostle Paul gives for families in his letter to the Ephesians. Read Ephesians 5:21 – 6:4.

---

## *Instructions for **husbands***

- 
- 
- 
- 

*Is there a primary task that emerges above others?*

- 

## *Instructions for **wives***

- 
- 
- 
- 

*Is there a primary task that emerges above others?*

- 

---

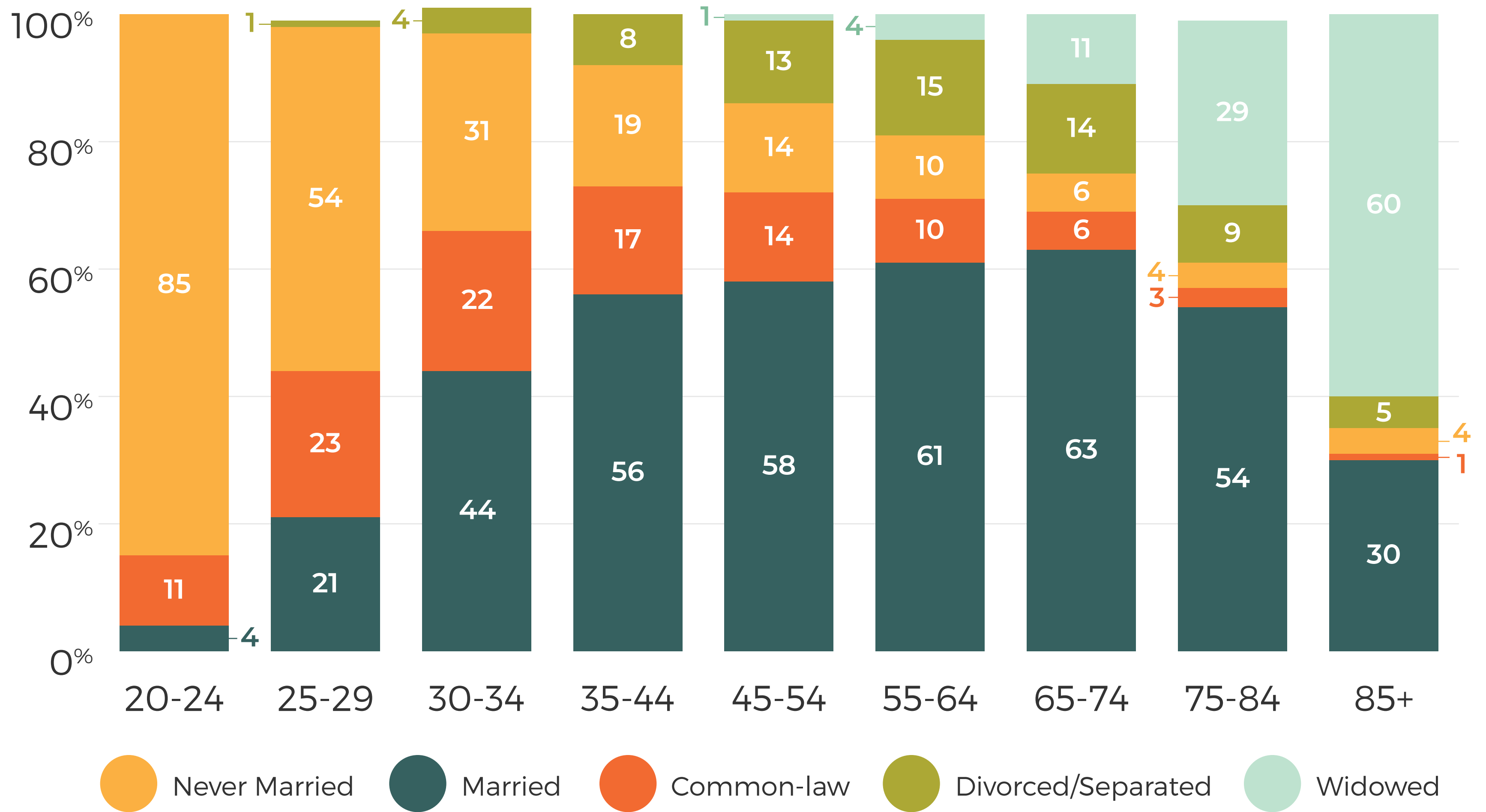
*Expectations for **children** with regards to their role in the family*

- 
- 
- 
- 

*Expectations for **parents** with regards to their role in the family*

- - 
  - 
  -
-

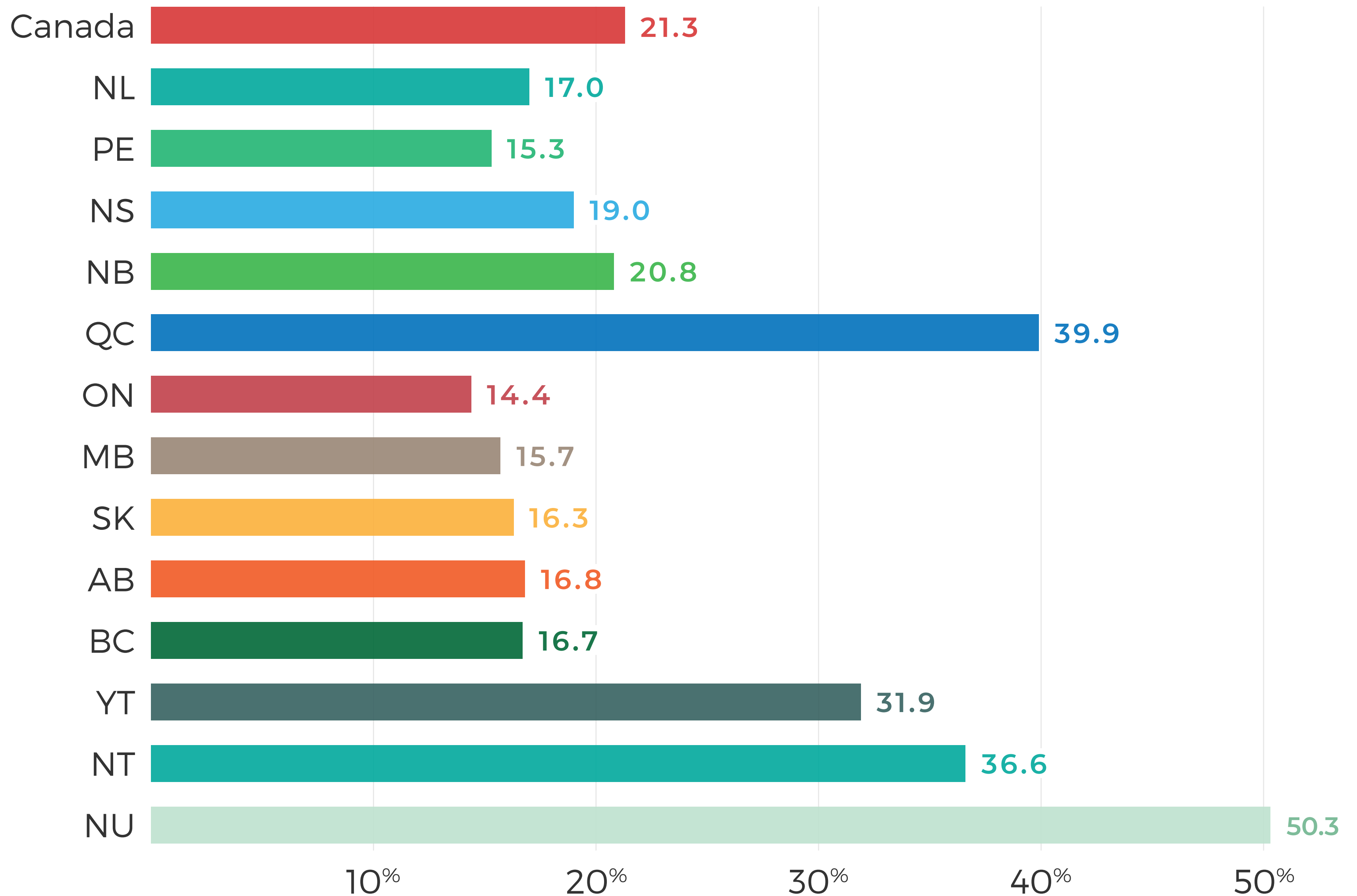
# Marital Status by Age, 2016



Some totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.  
Source: Based on Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Tables

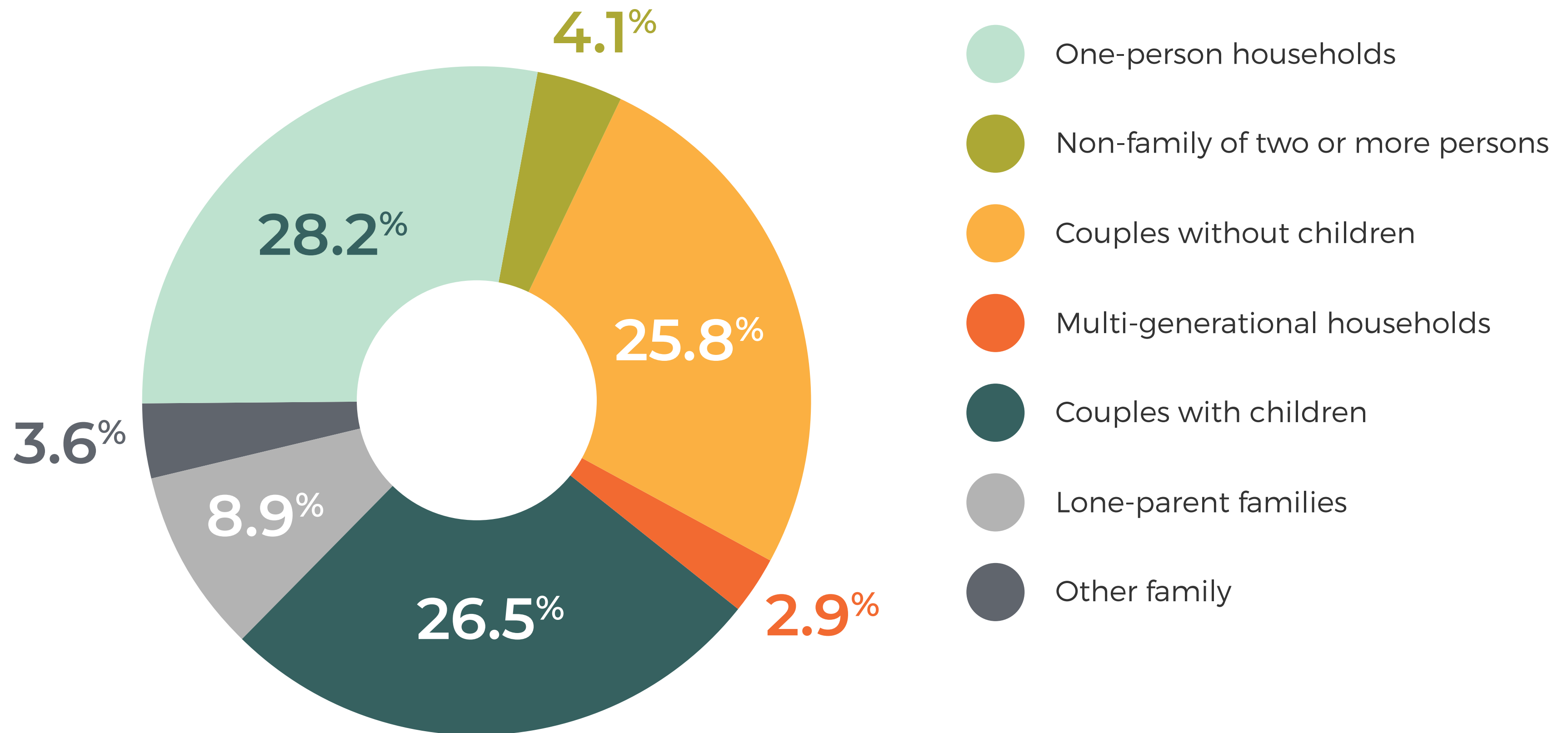


# Common-Law Unions as a Percentage of All Unions, Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2016



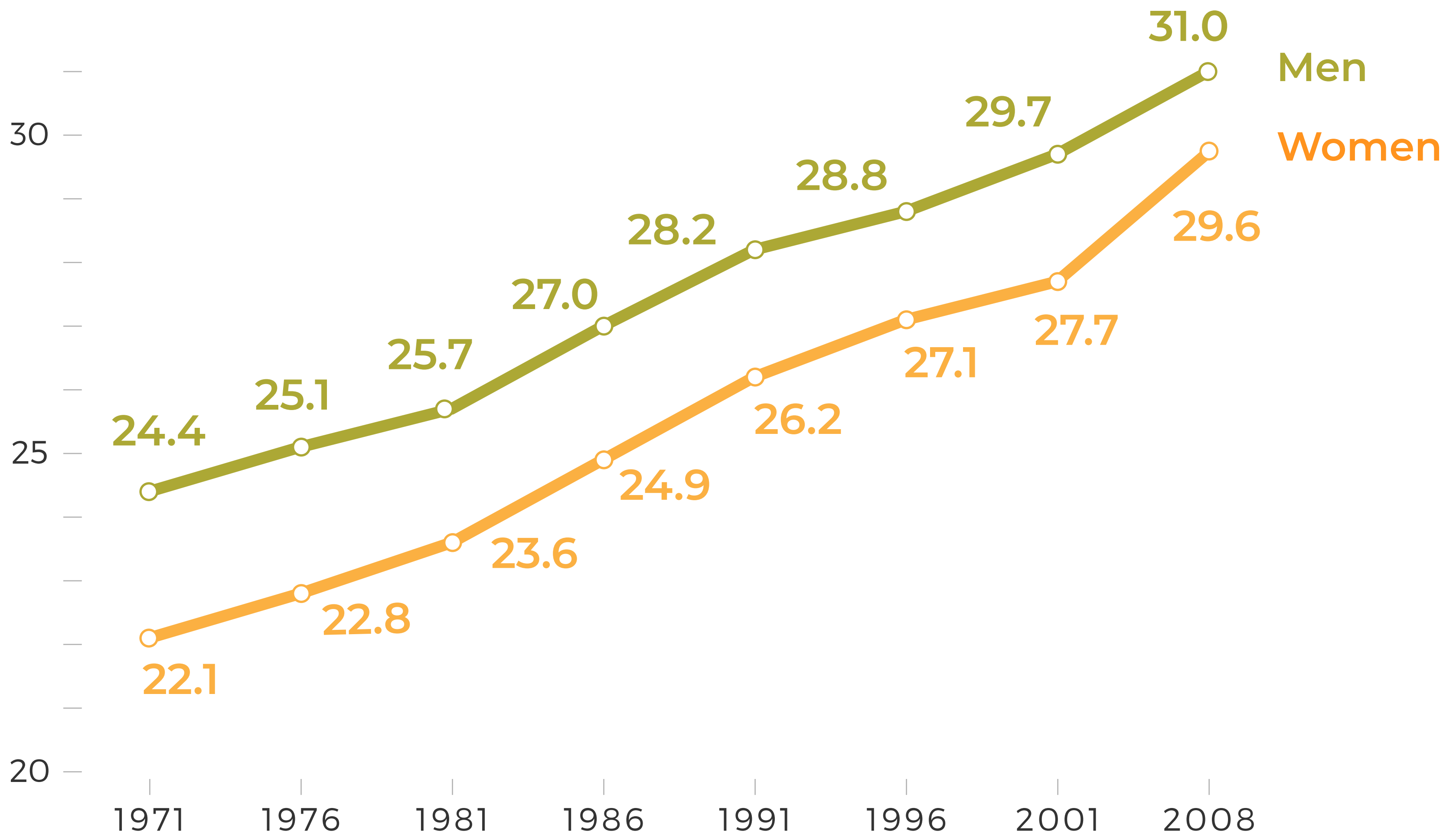
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population

# Percentage of Private Households by Type, 2016



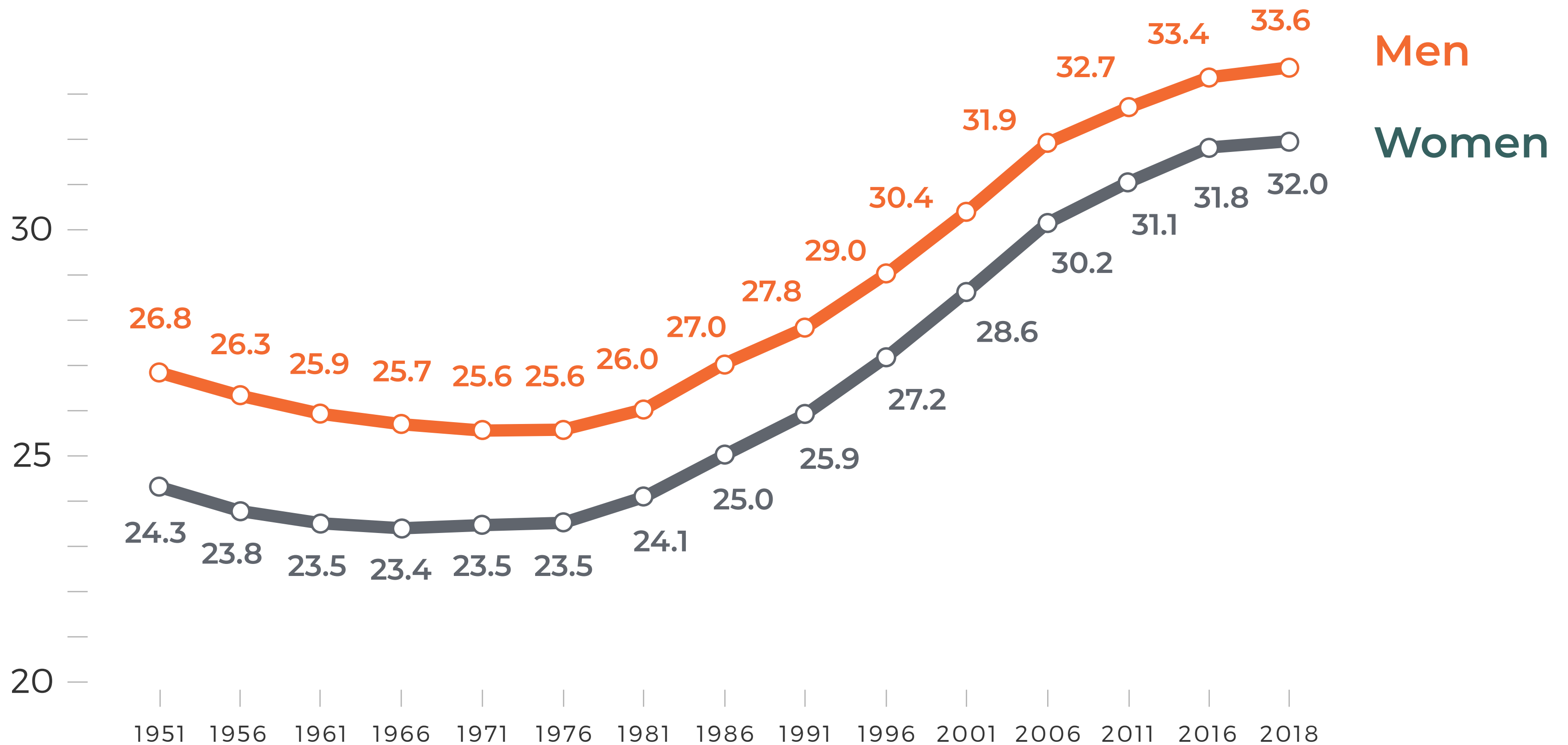
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population

# Average Age at First Marriage, Men and Women, Canada, 1971 – 2008



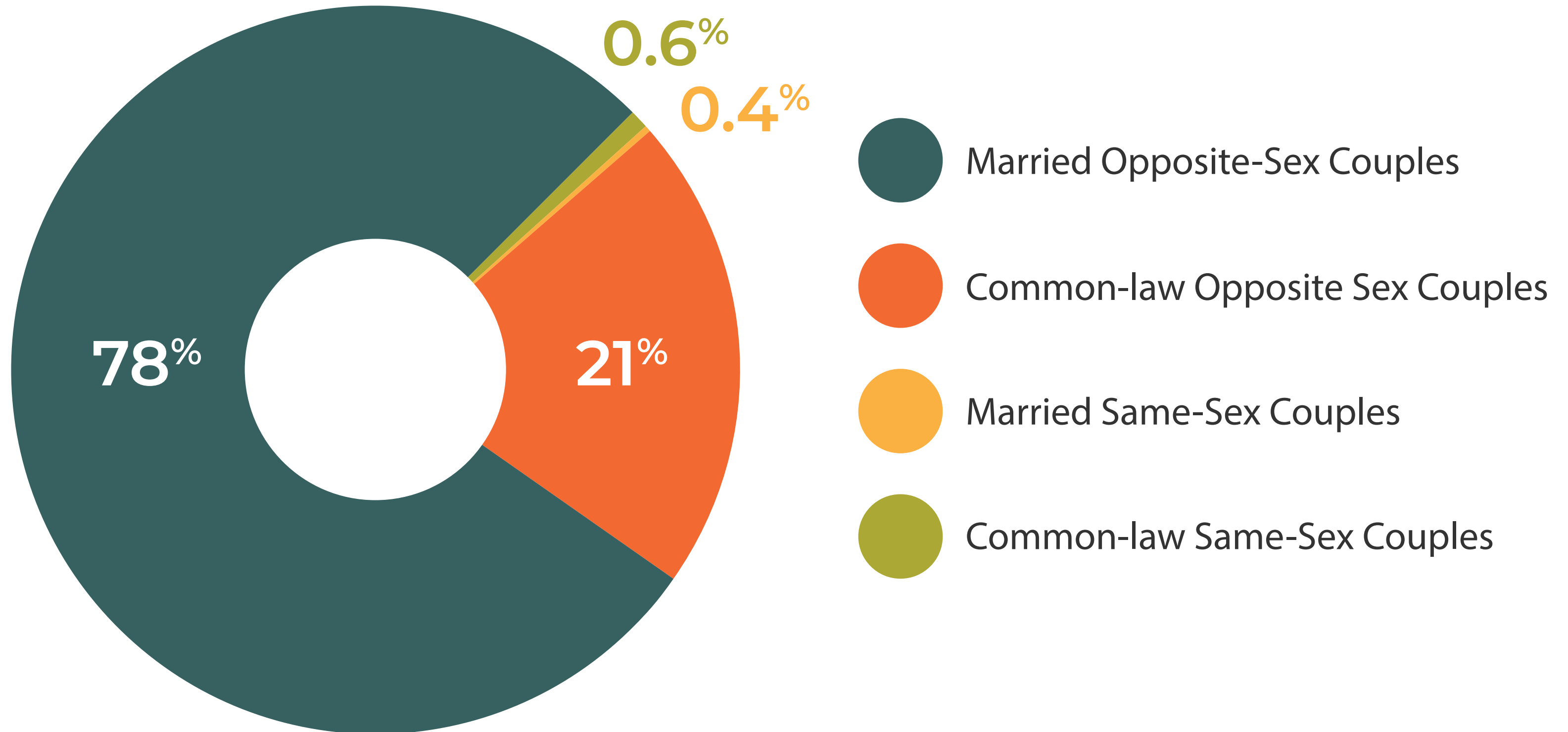
Source: Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 84-212-XPB; and Health Statistics Division.  
Statistics Canada, *Marital Overview*, 2011, 2013.

# Average Age at First Marriage, Men and Women, Quebec, 1951-2018



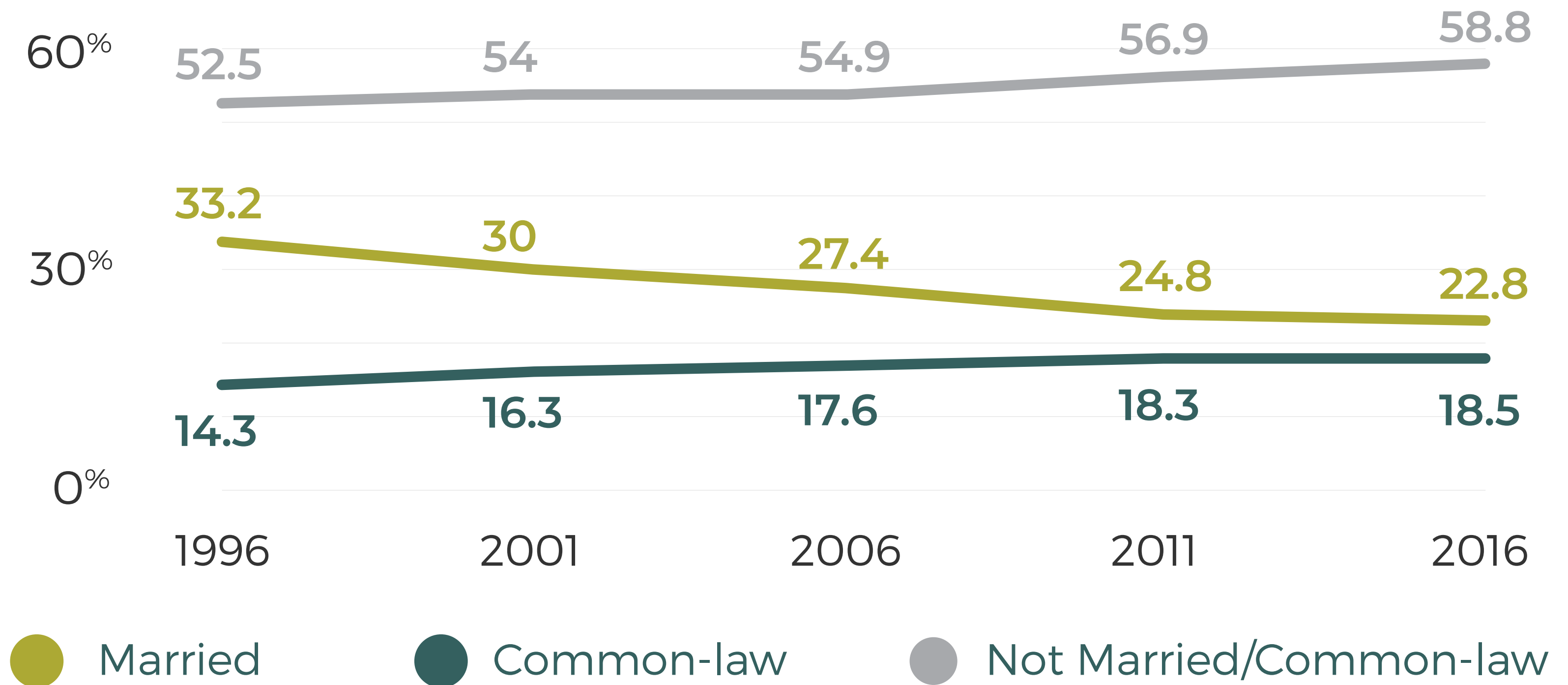
Source: Institute de la Statistique Du Quebec, 2018.

# Opposite and Same-Sex Couples as a Percent of All Couples, Canada, 2016



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population

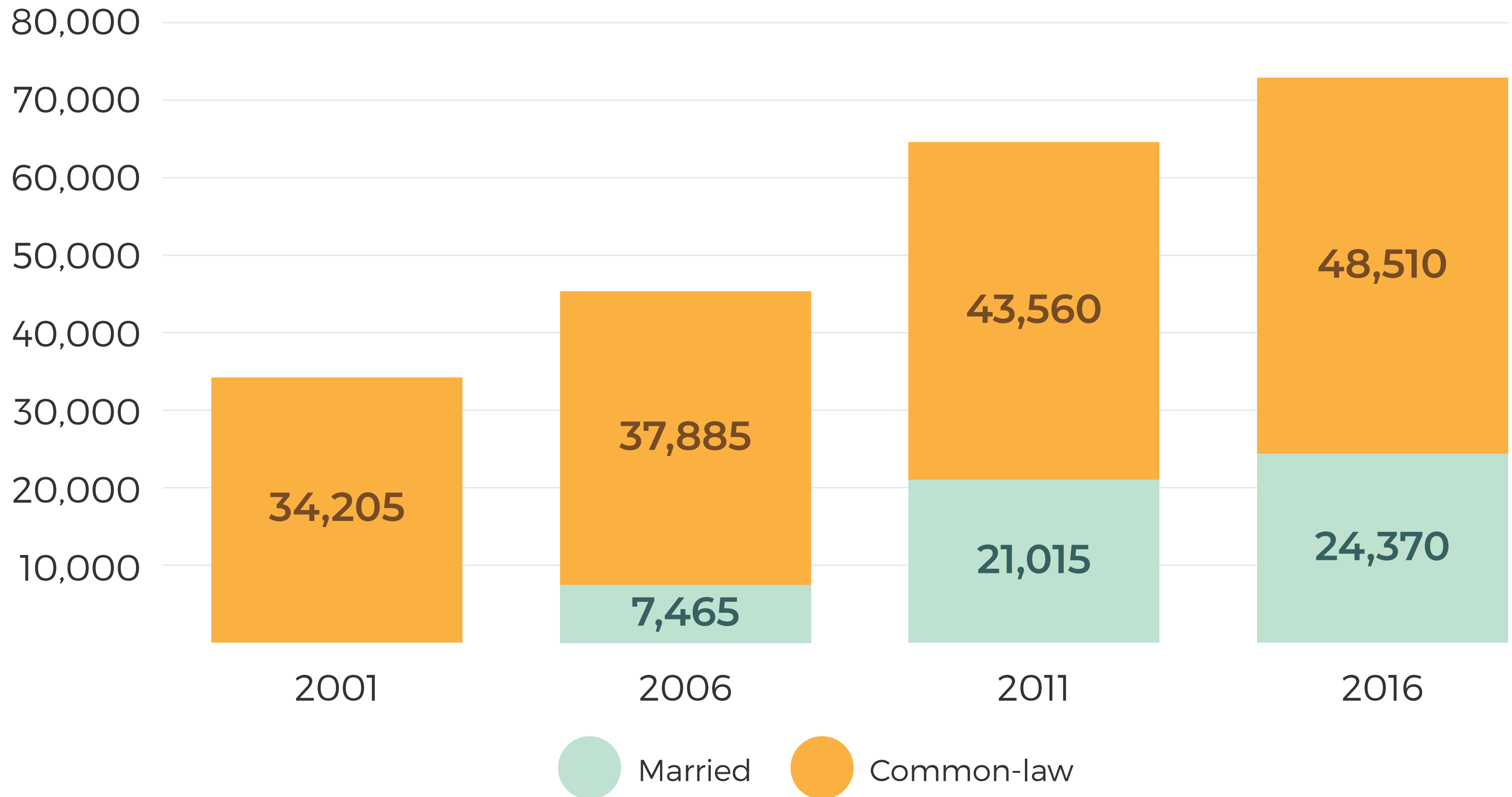
# Percentage of Canadians, Ages 20-34 Who are Married, Common-Law, or Not Married/Common-Law, 1996-2016



Some totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.  
Source: Based on Statistics Canada Census Data Tables.

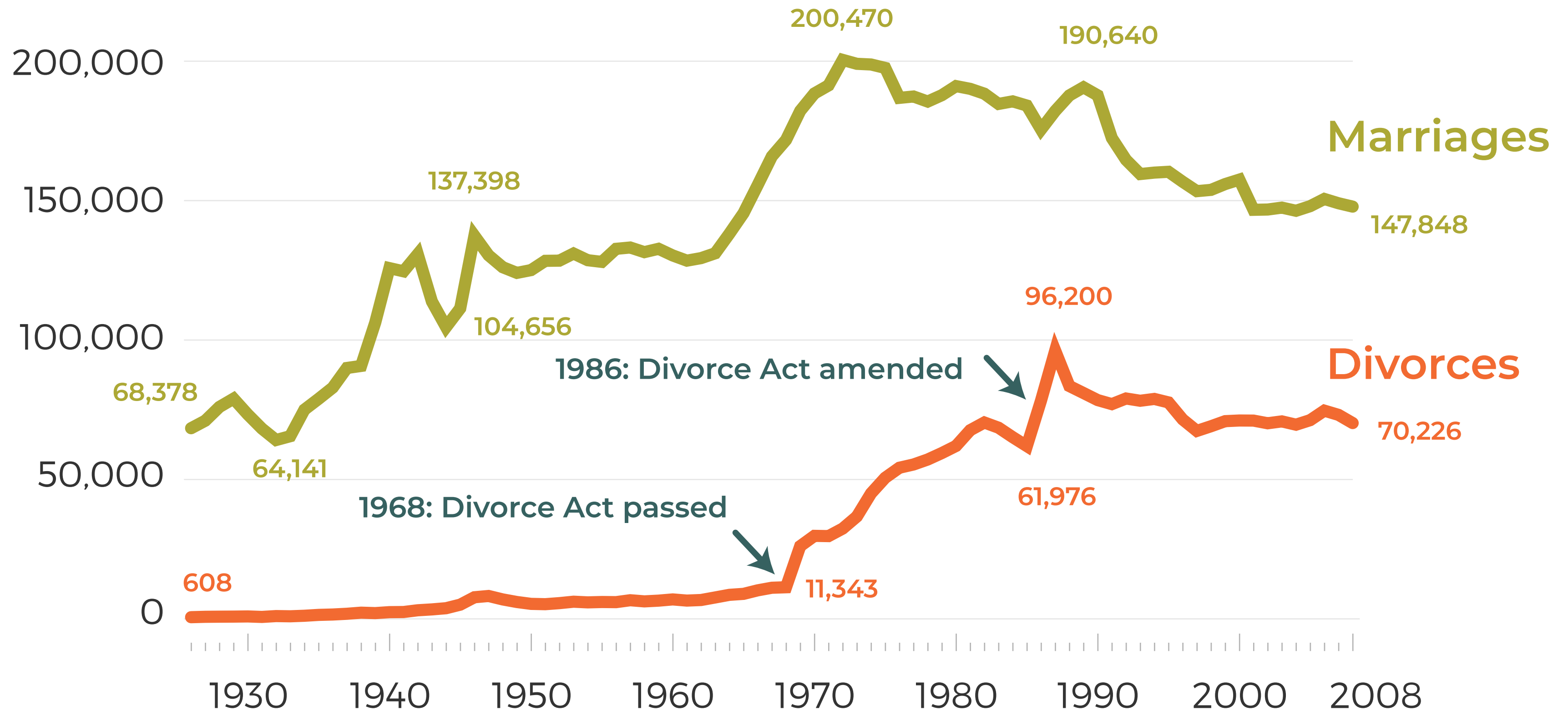


# Distribution of Same-Sex Couples, by Conjugal Status, Canada, 2001 - 2016



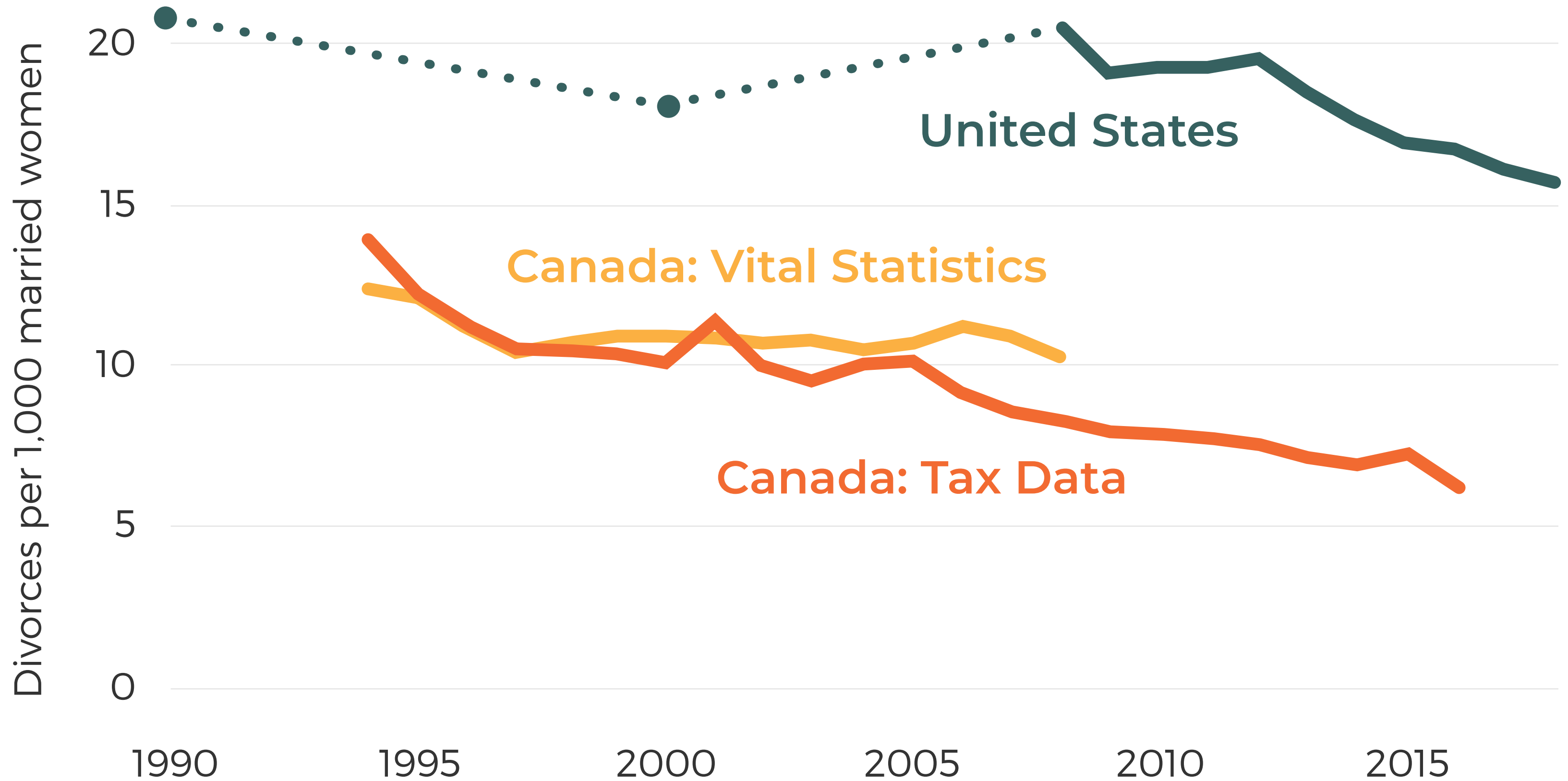
Source: Statistics Canada, *Same-Sex Couples in Canada, 2016. Census Brief, 2017.*

# Number of Marriages and Divorces, Canada, 1926 - 2008



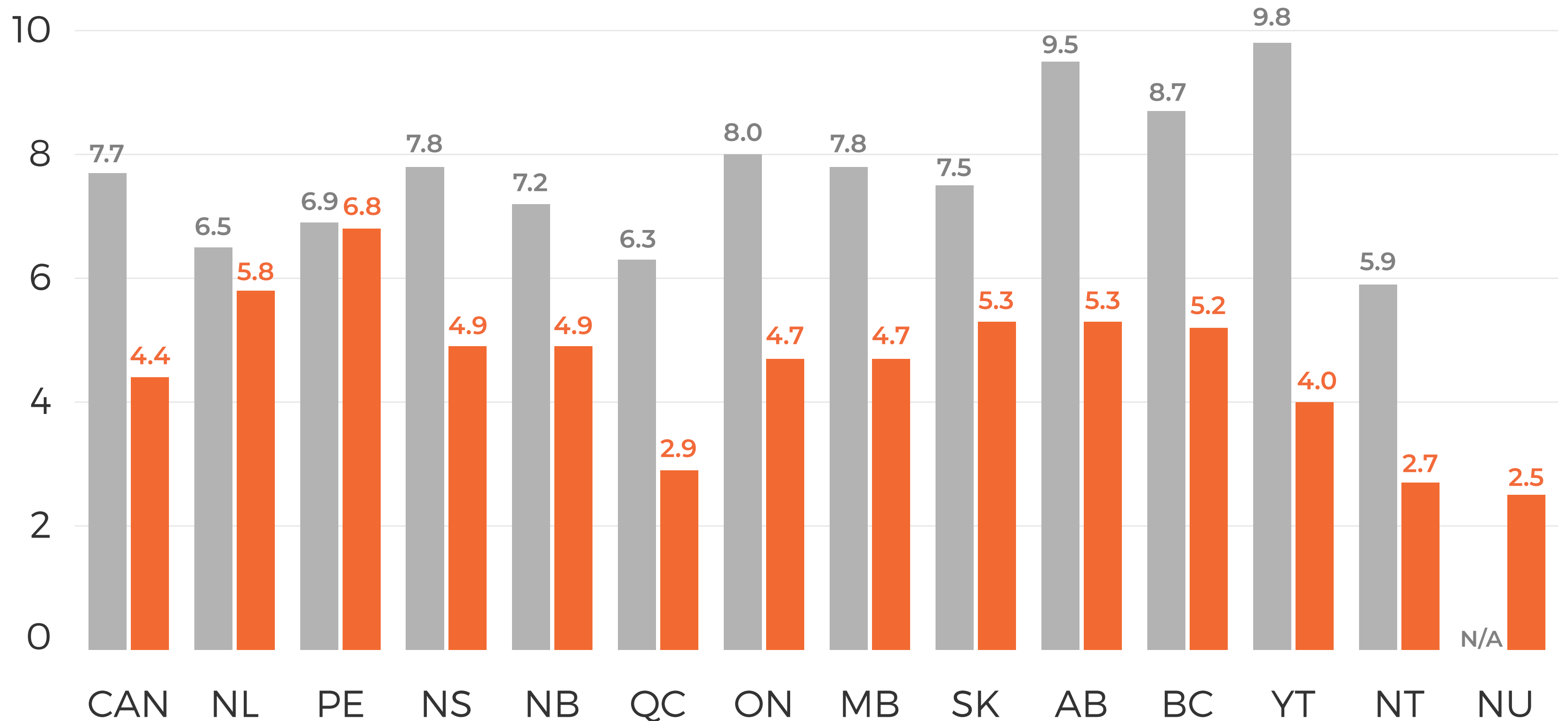
Source: Statistics Canada, *Marital Overview*, 2011, 2013.

# Divorces per 1,000 Married Women, United States, and Canada Estimated with Vital Statistics and Tax Data



Source: Rachel Margolis, Youjin Choi, Feng Hou, and Michael Haan, "Capturing Trends in Canadian Divorce in an Era Without Vital Statistics," *Demographic Research* 41, art. 52 (December 2019): 1453-78.

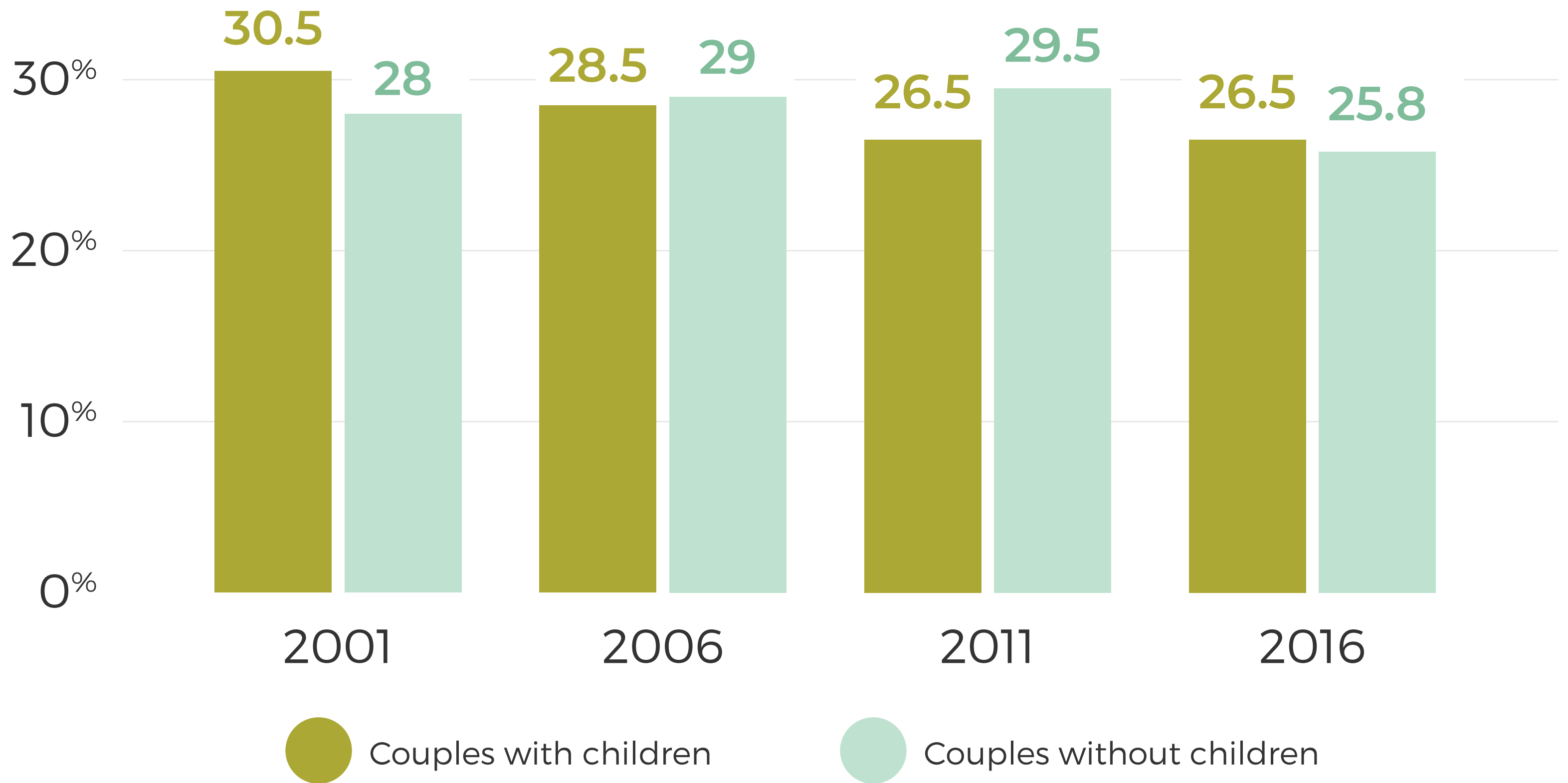
# Crude Marriage Rate Per 1000 Population, Canada, Provinces and Territories, 1981 and 2008



Note: Nunavut is included in the Northwest Territories before 2001.  
Sources: Statistics Canada, *Marital Overview*, 2011, 2013.

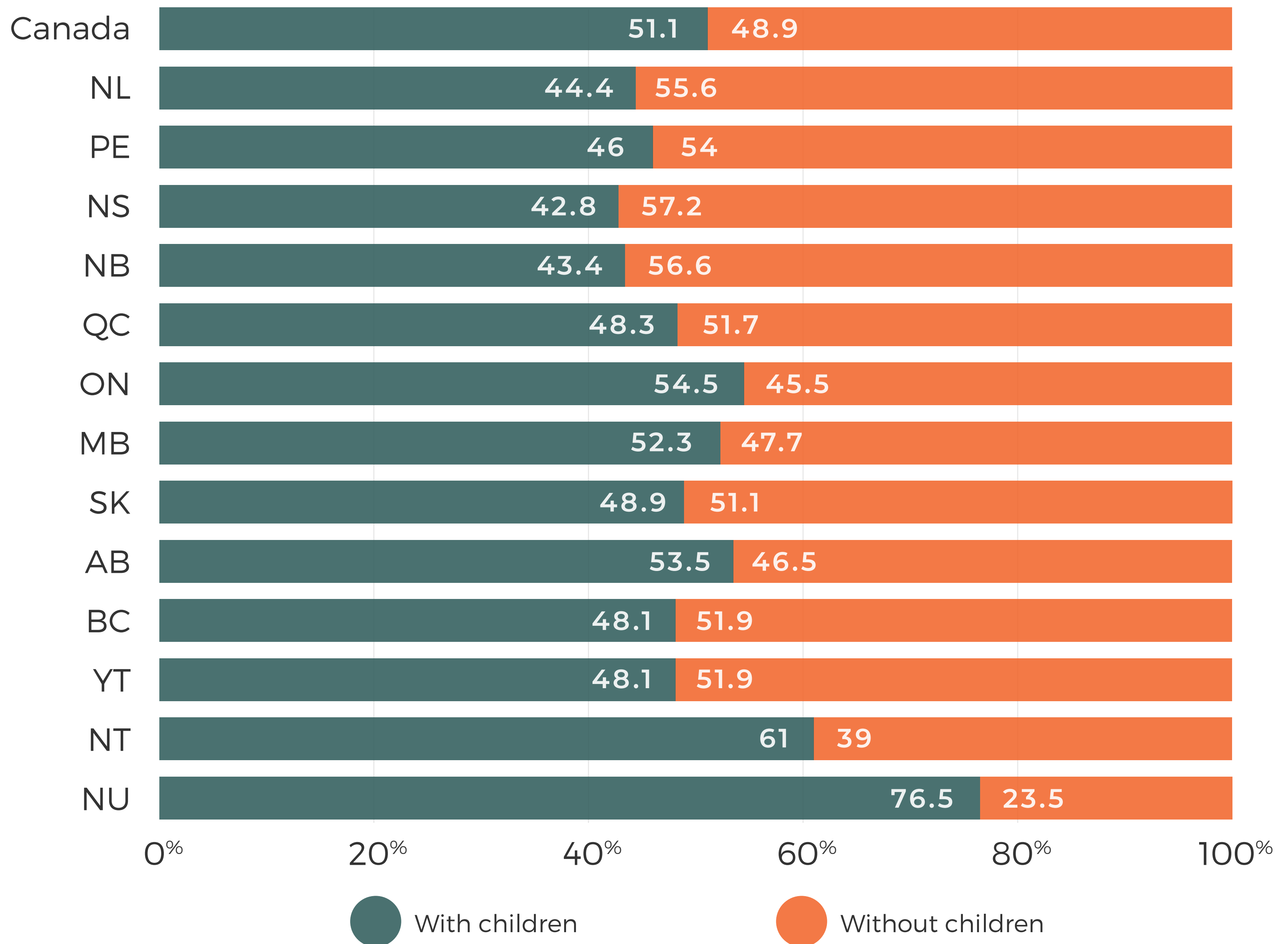
● 1981 ● 2008

# Percentage of Households Comprised of Couples With and Without Children, Canada, 2001 -2016



Source: Canadian Census Data, 2001-2016.

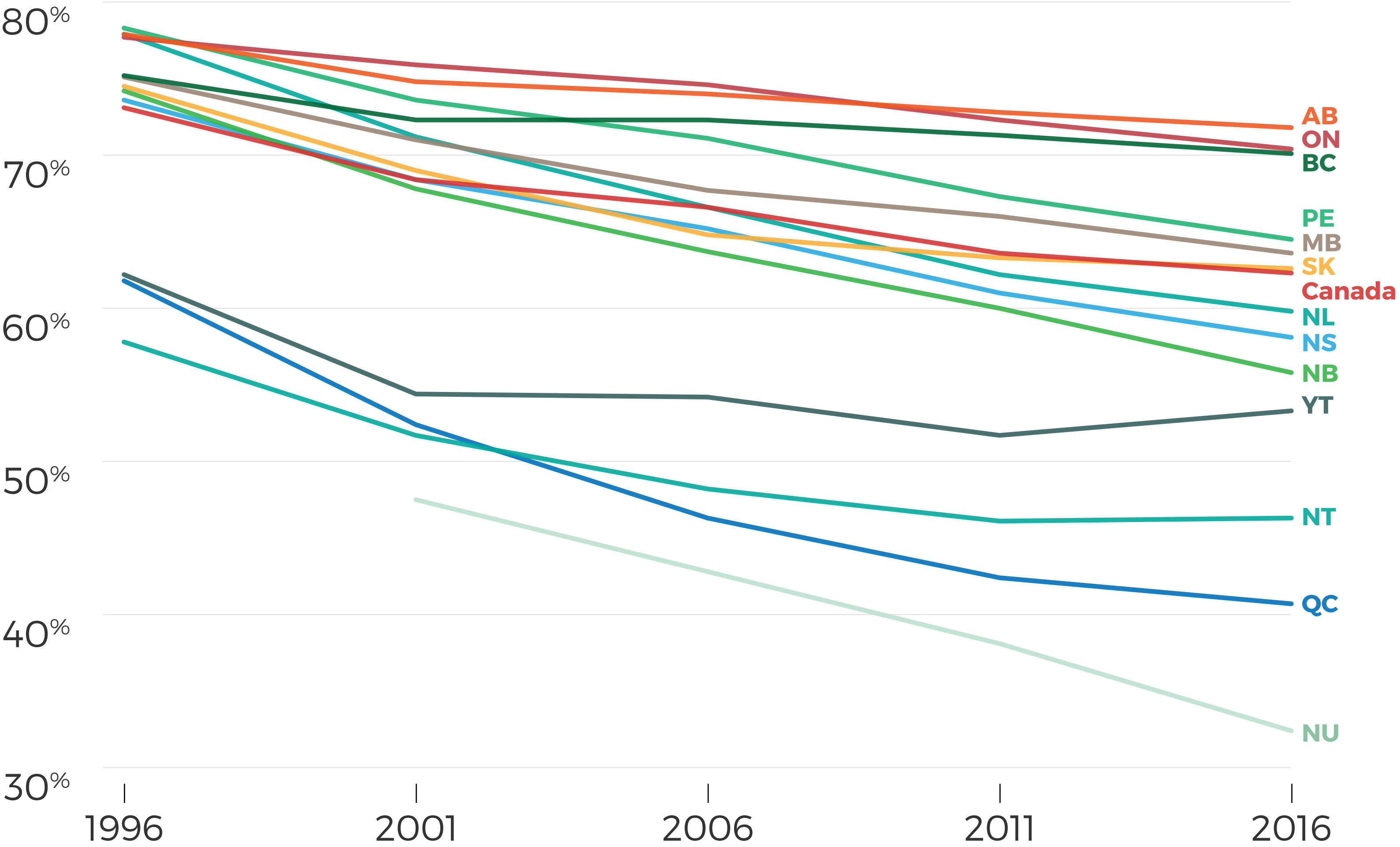
# Portion of Couples With and Without Children, Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2016



Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data, 2016.

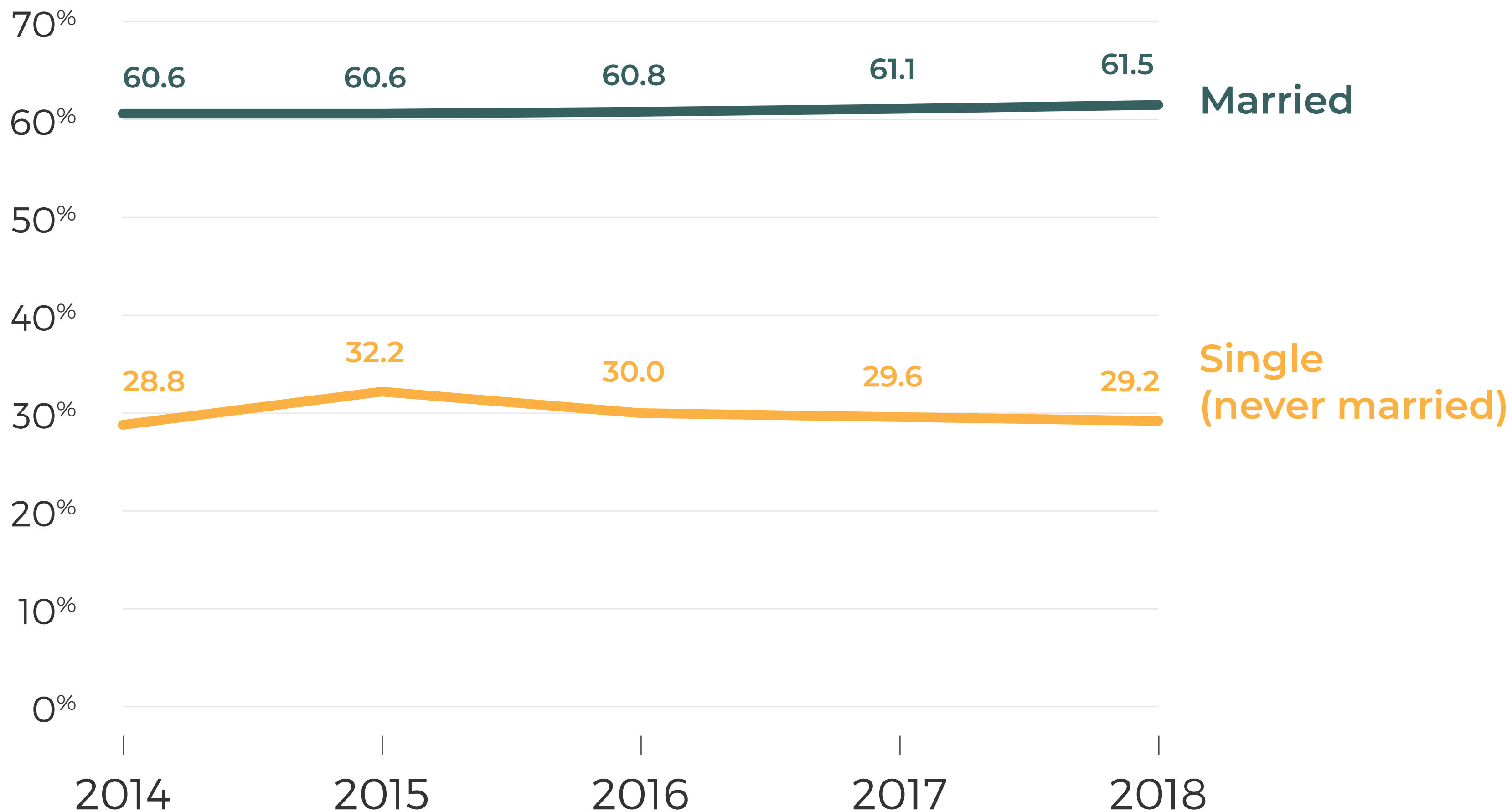


# Children 0-14 in Families with Married Parents by Region, 1996-2016



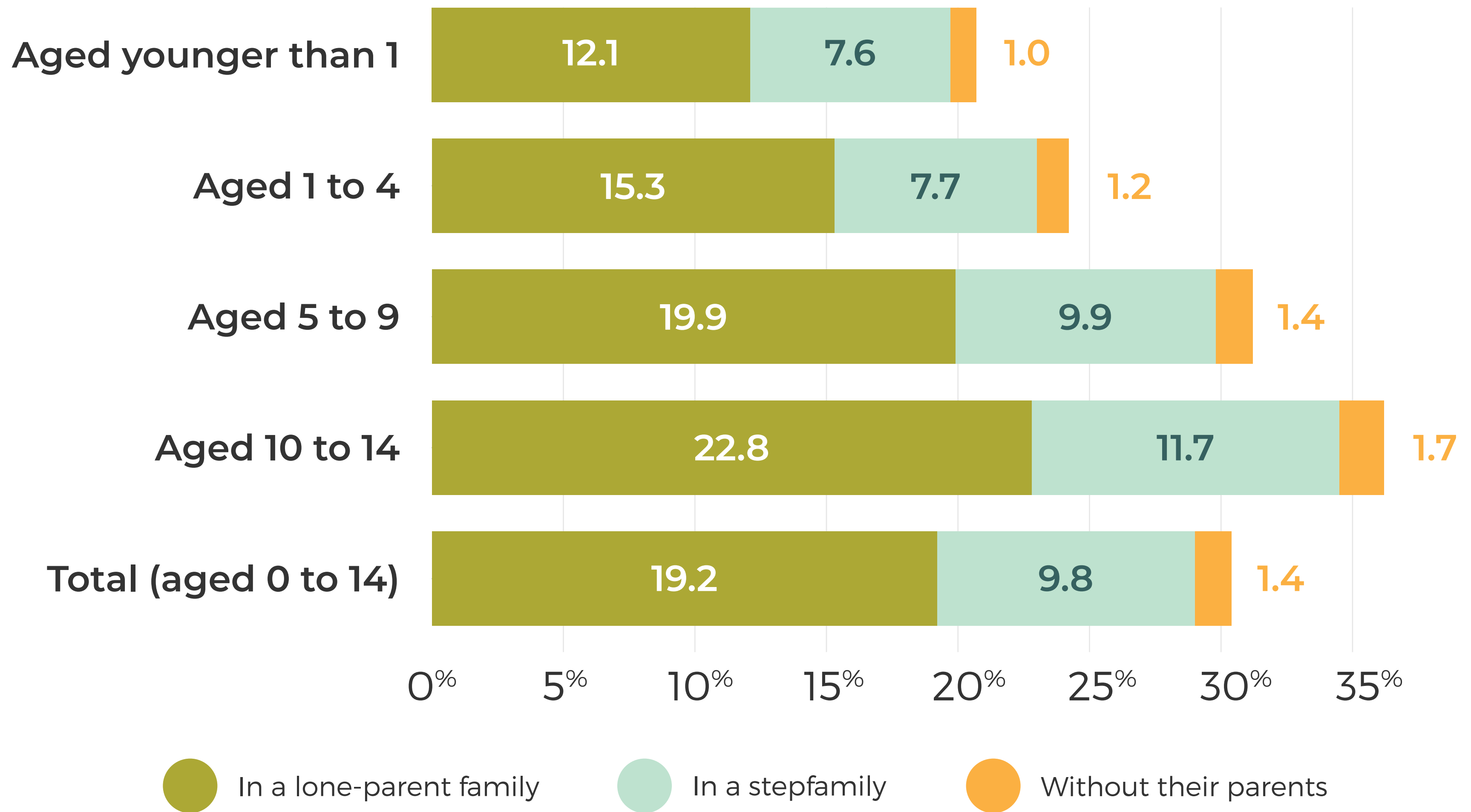
Note: Percentages may not total 100 percent due to rounding and because children aged 0-14 not living in census families are not shown.  
Source: Cardus, *Census Data Shows Fewer Children Living with Married Parents: Provincial and Territorial Breakdown*, 2018.

# Percentage of Live Births by Marital Status of Mother, 2014-2018



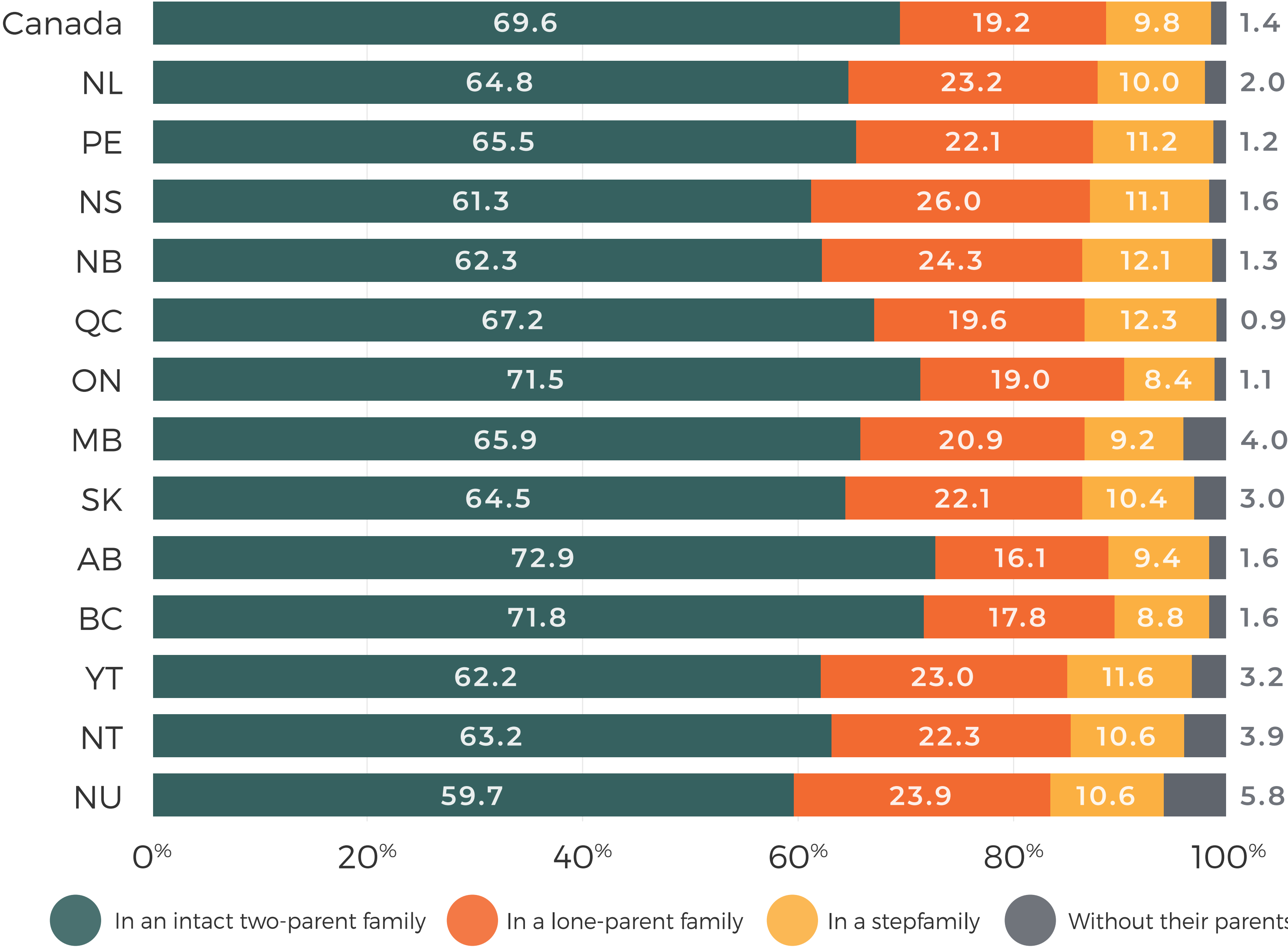
Note: Figure excludes divorced, separated, widowed, and not stated, and therefore does not round to 100  
Source: Statistics Canada. Table 13-10-0419-01 Live births, by marital status of mother.

# Proportion of Children Aged 0 - 14 Living in a Lone-Parent Family, a Stepfamily, or Without Their Parents, by Age Group, Canada, 2016



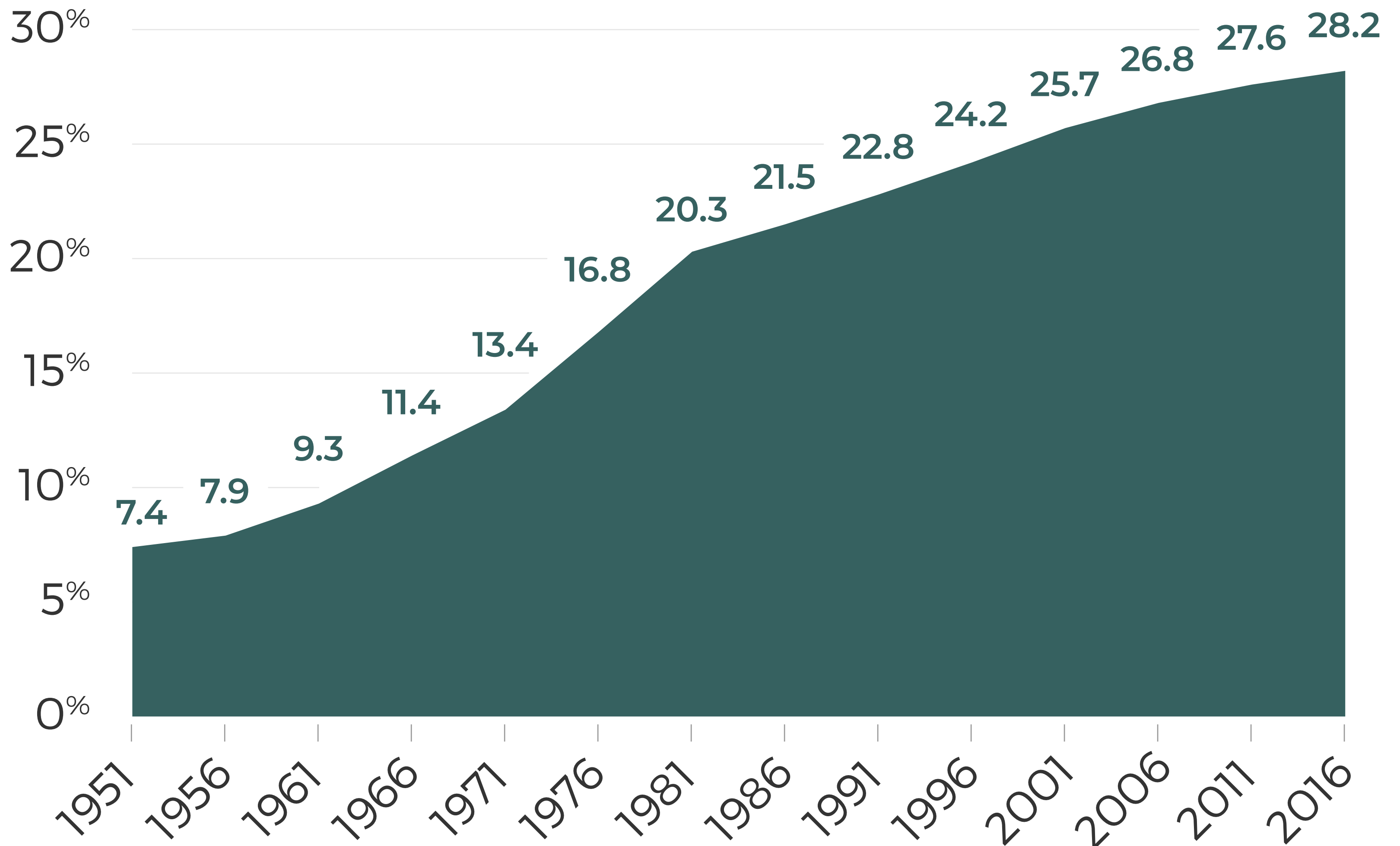
Source: Statistics Canada, *Portrait of Children's Family Life in Canada in 2016, 2017*.

# Family Structure of Children Aged 0 - 14, Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2016.



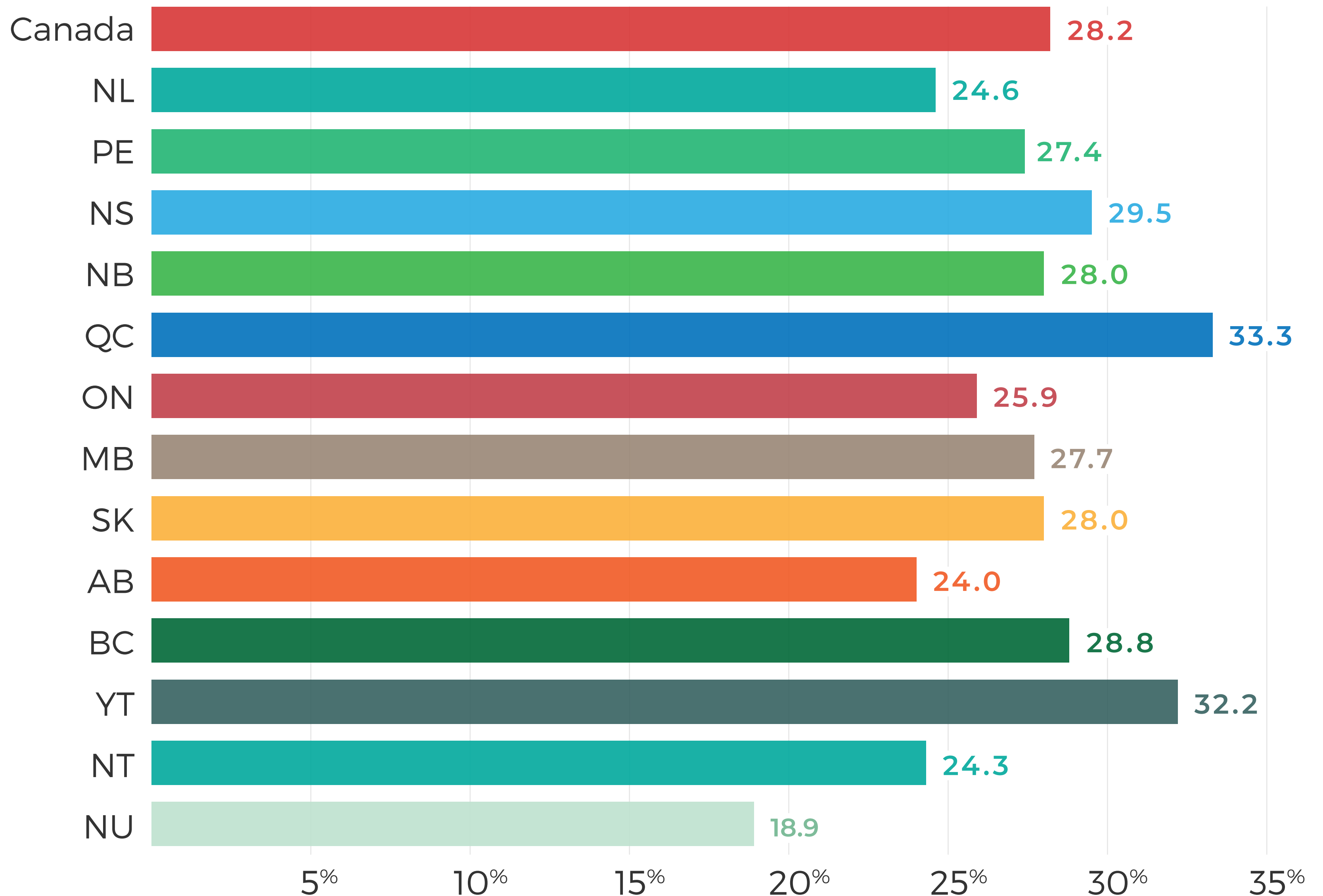
Source: Statistics Canada, *Portrait of Children's Family Life in Canada in 2016*, 2017.

# Percentage of One-Person Households, Canada, 1951 – 2016



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1951 - 2016.

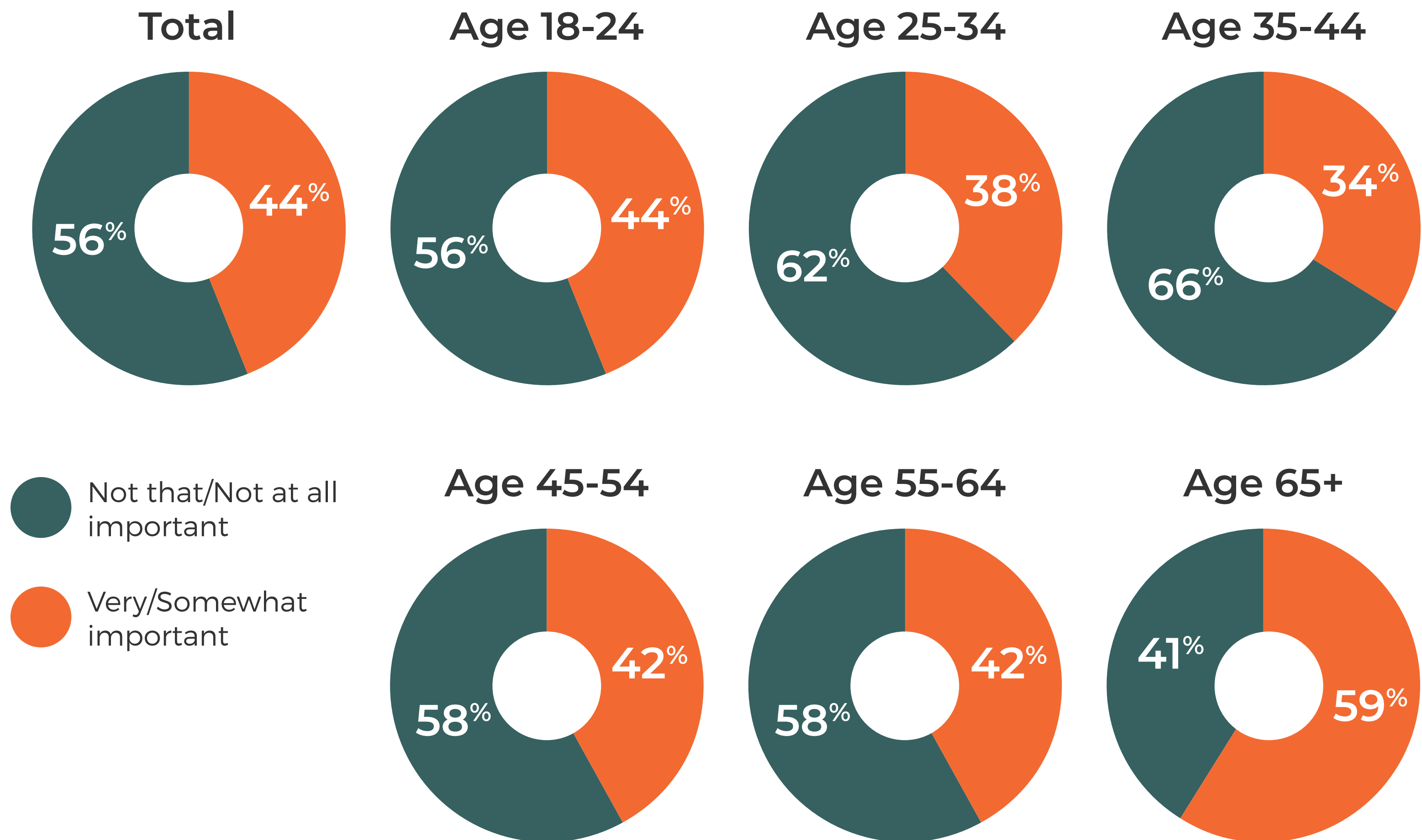
# Percentage of One-Person Households, Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2016



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population

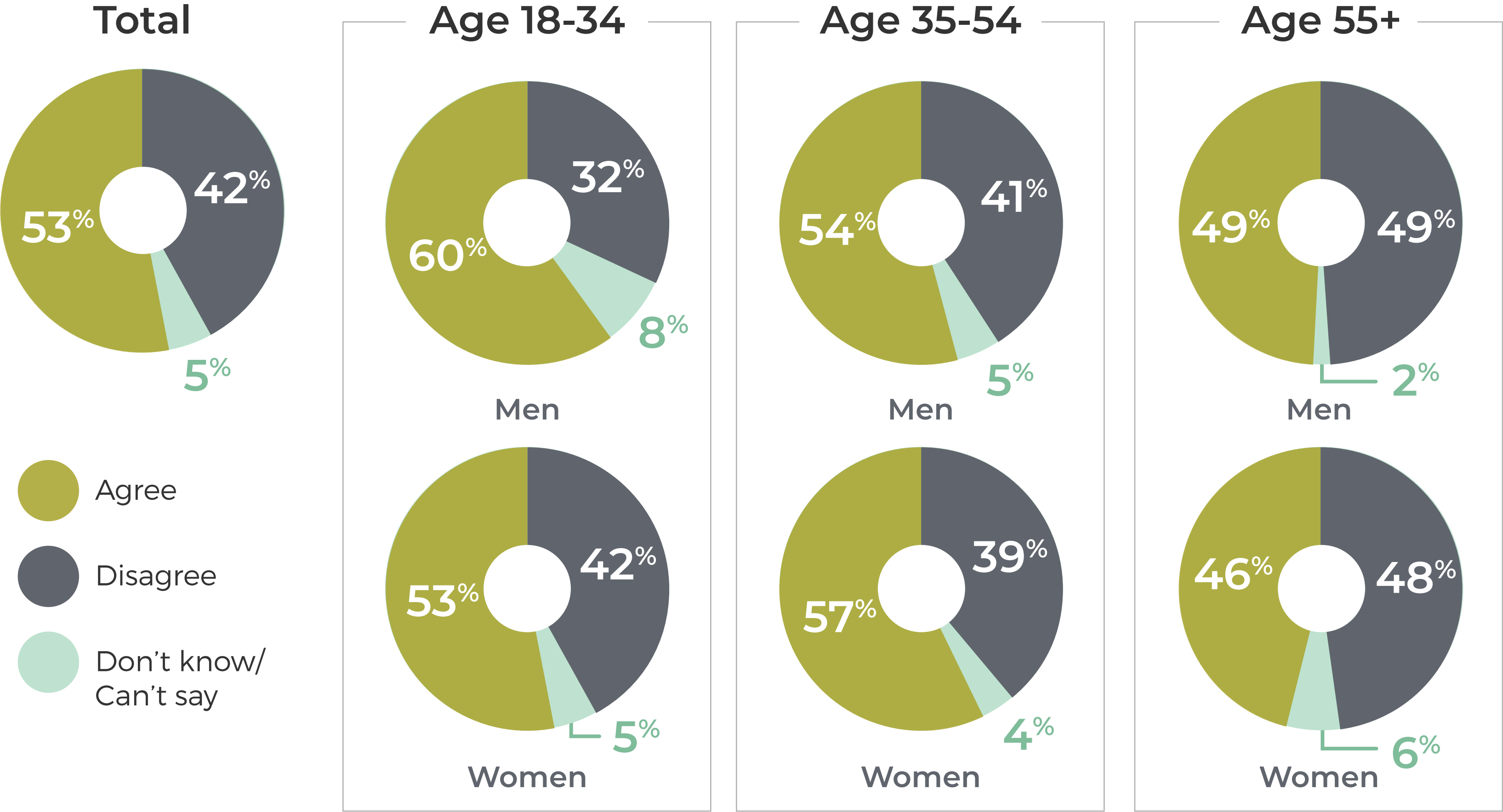


# When an Unmarried Man and Women Have a Child Together, How Important Is It to You That They Legally Marry



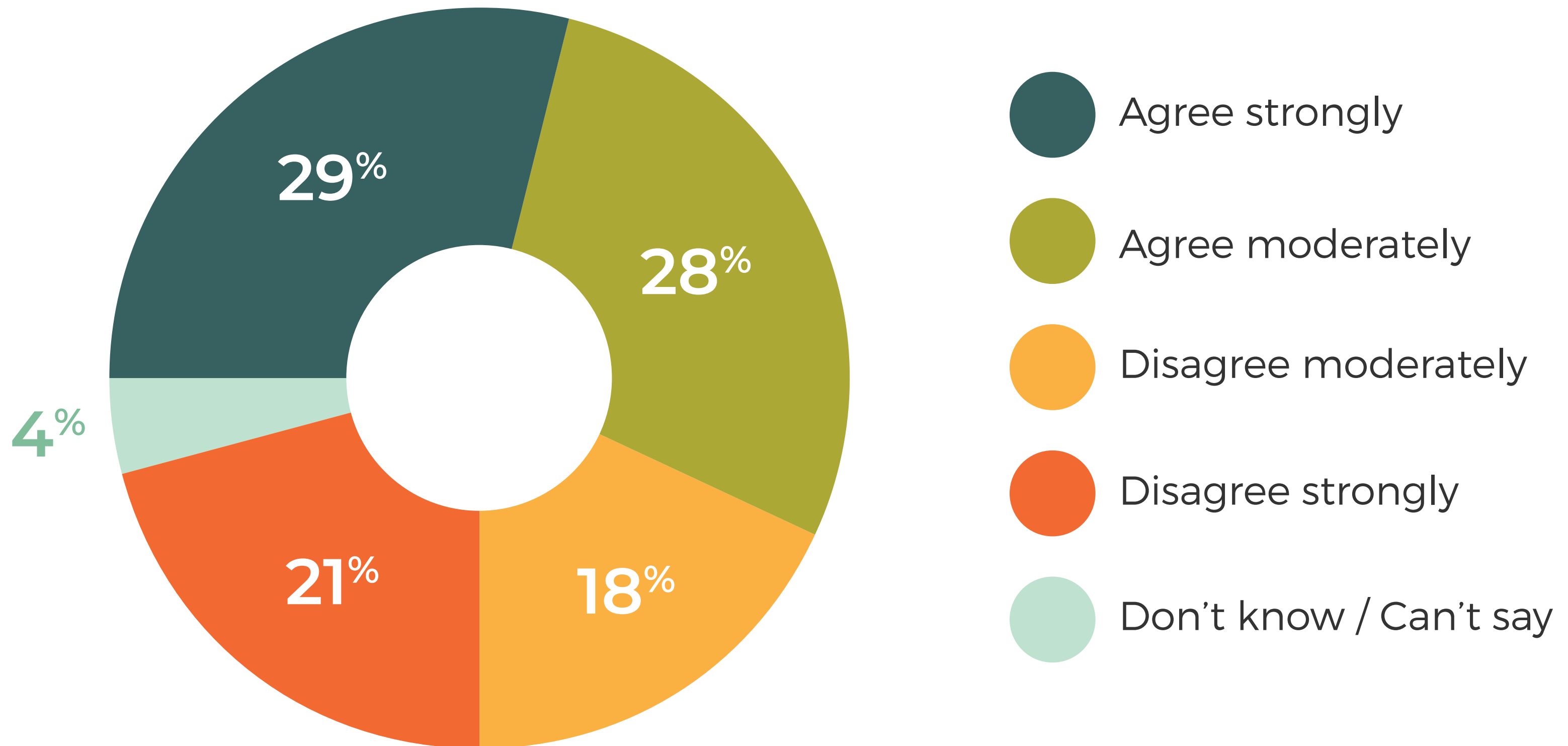
Source: Angus Reid Institute, *'I don't': Four-in-ten Canadian adults have never married, and aren't sure they want to.* 2018.

# Marriage is Simply Not Necessary



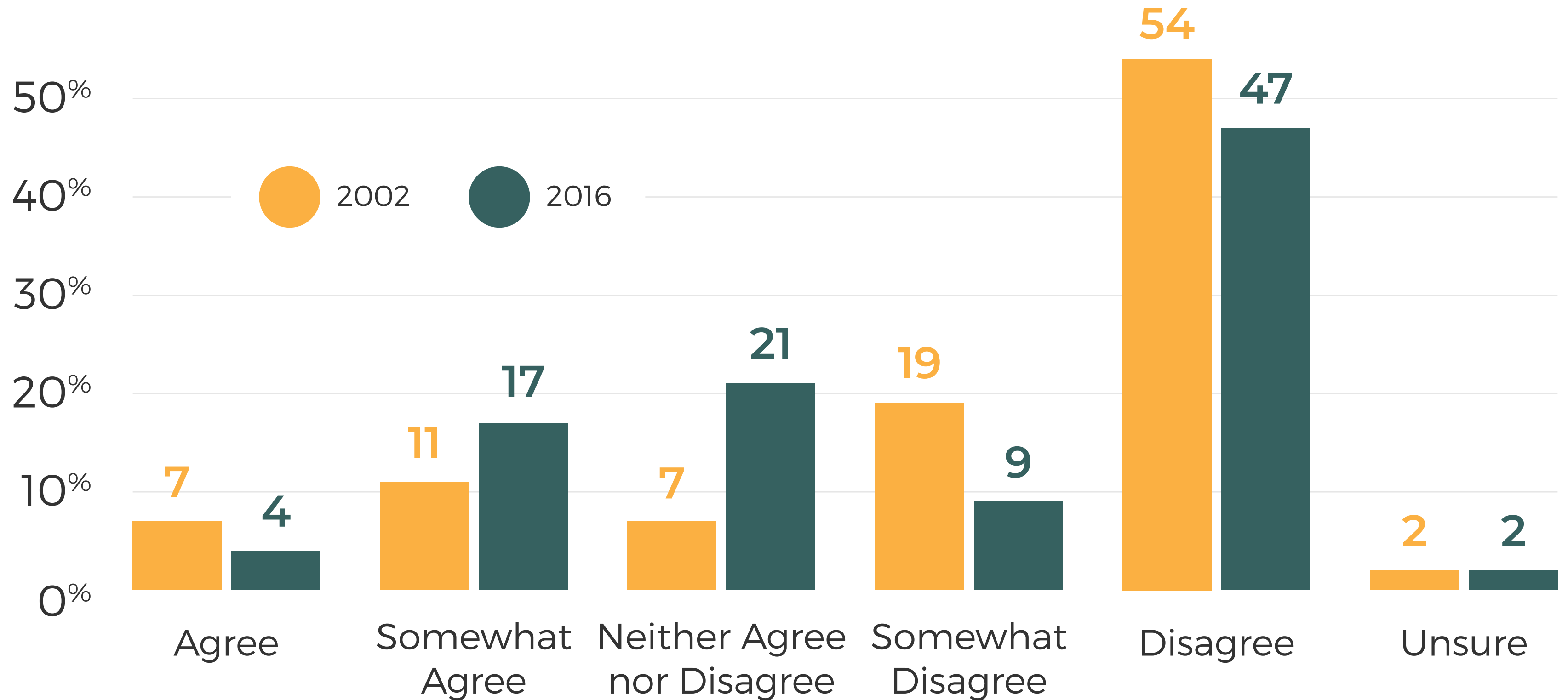
Source: Angus Reid Institute, 'I don't': Four-in-ten Canadian adults have never married, and aren't sure they want to. 2018.

# Marriage Is a More Genuine Form of Commitment than a Common-Law Relationship



Source: Angus Reid Institute, *'I don't': Four-in-ten Canadian adults have never married, and aren't sure they want to.* 2018.

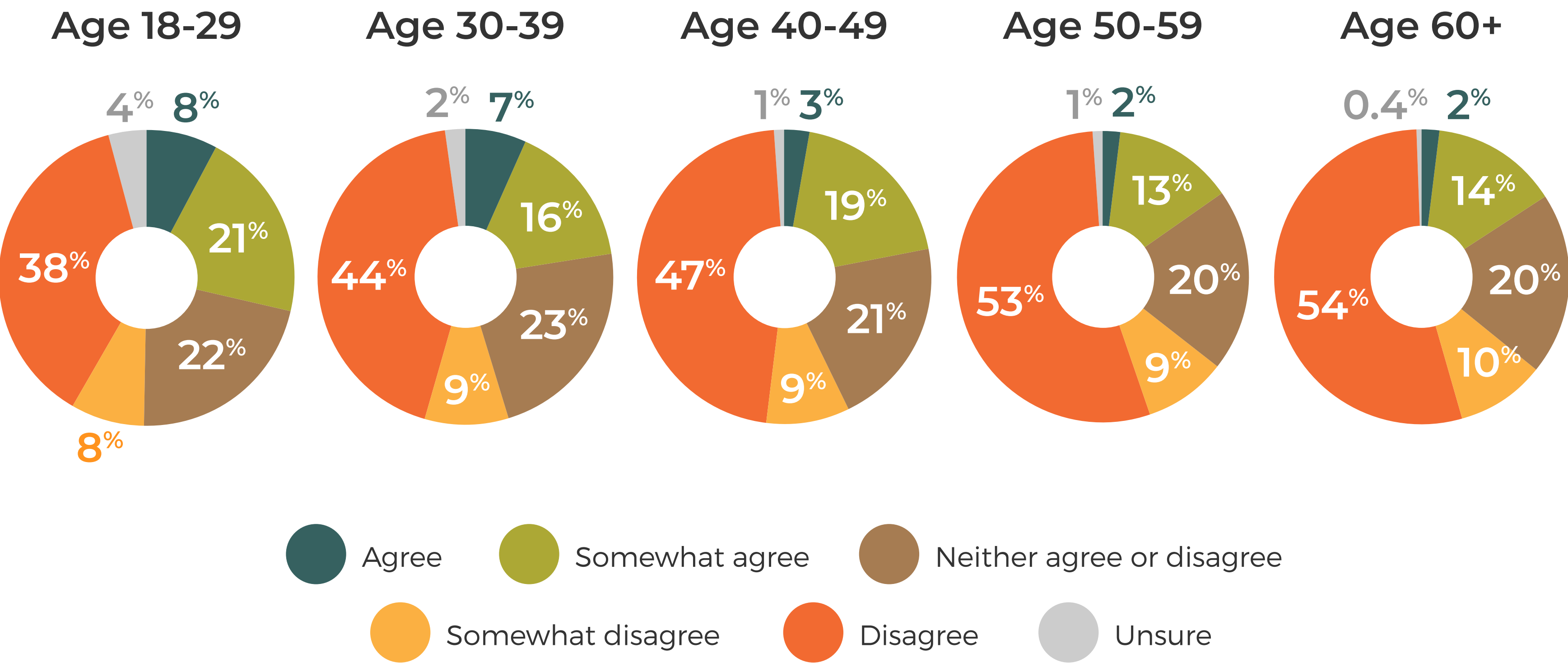
# Is Marriage an Outdated Institution in Canada, 2002 and 2016



Source: 2002 data from Wilson, *Canadian Attitudes on the Family*.

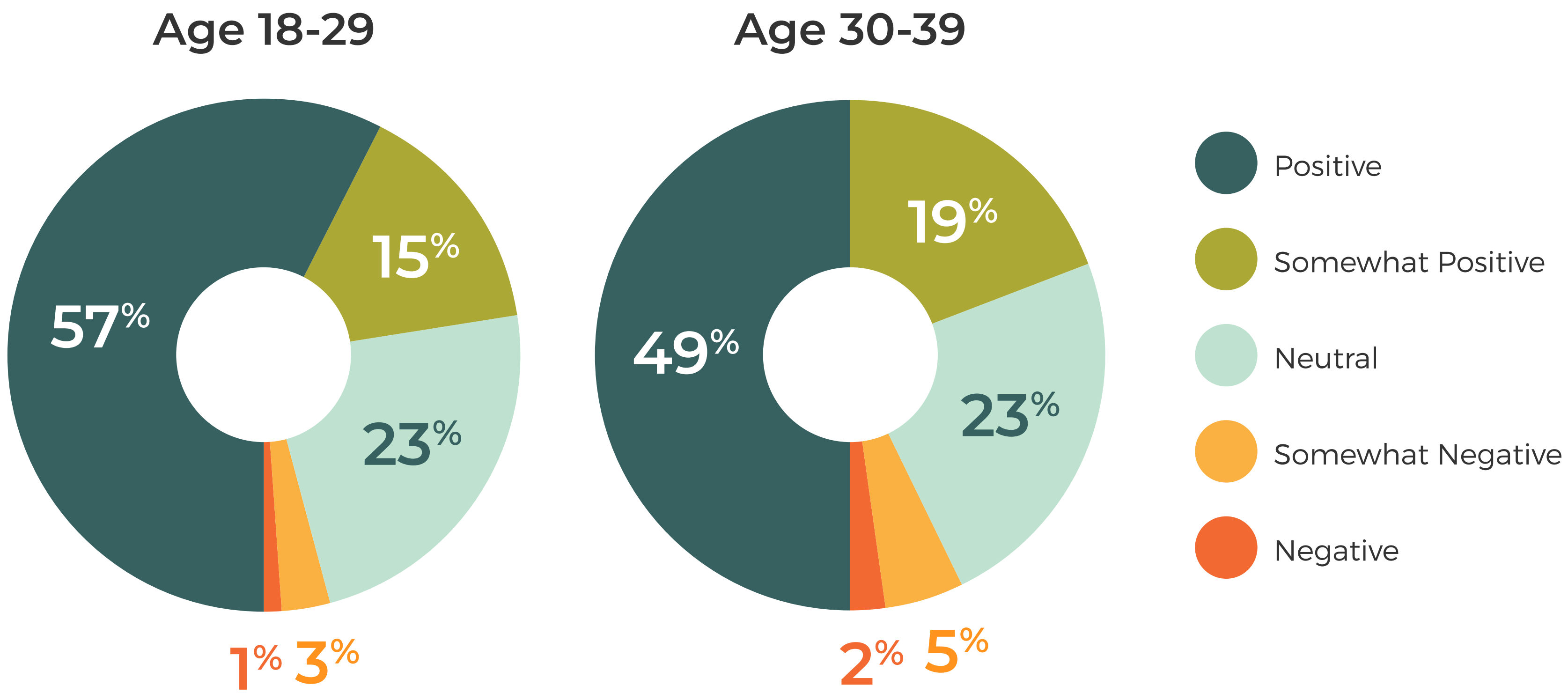
2016 data from Nanos Research, *How Canadians Feel About Family Life*, Cardus Family Life Summary.

# Is Marriage an Outdated Institution in Canada by Age Group, 2016



Note: Some totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.  
Source: 2002 data from R. Paul Wilson, *Canadian Attitudes on the Family*, Institute of Marriage and Family Canada.  
2016 data from Nanos Research, *How Canadians Feel About Family Life*, Cardus Family Life Summary.

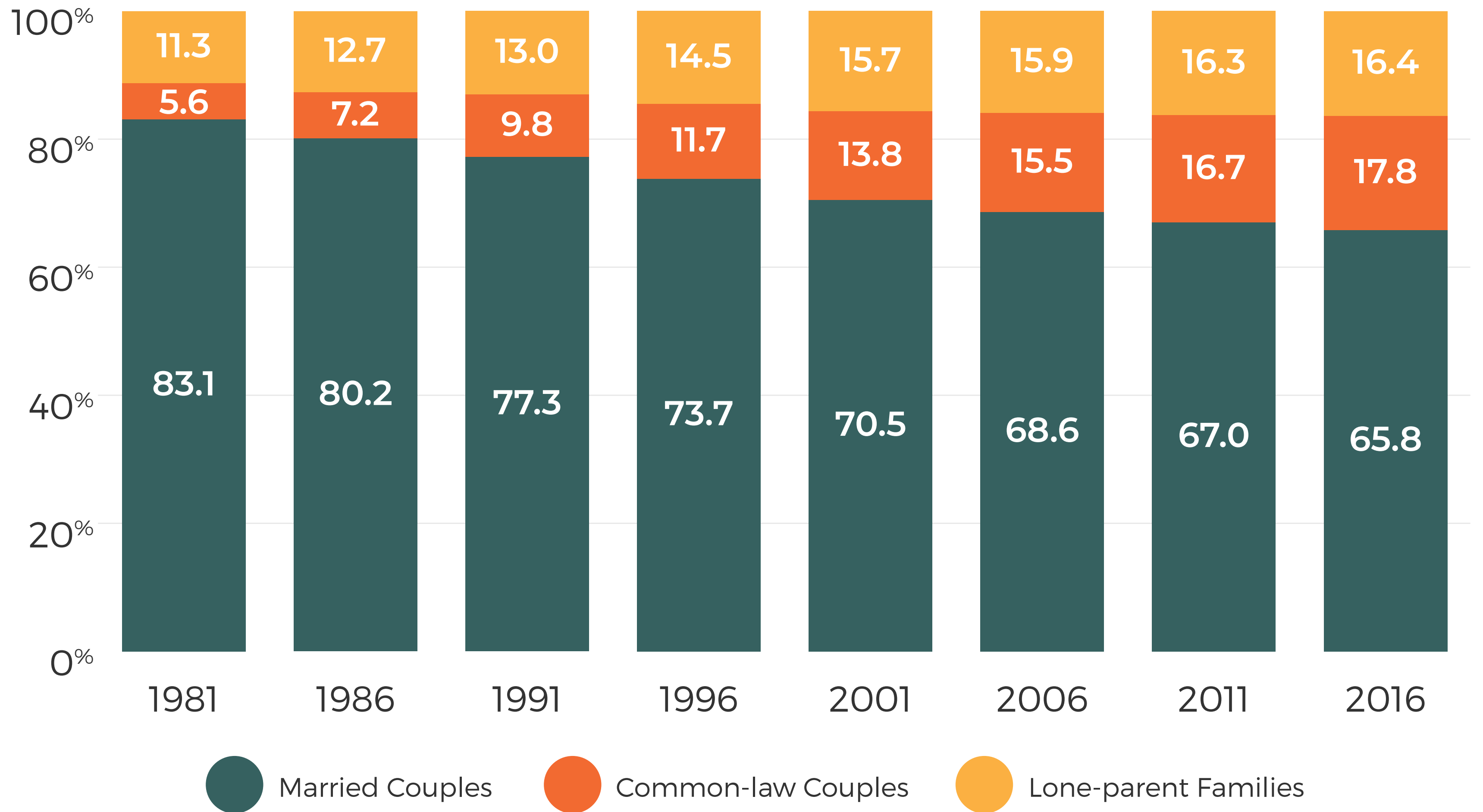
# Is the Concept of Being Married a Positive Contributor to Family Life, Ages 18-29 and 30-39, 2016



Note: Some totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.  
Source: Nanos Research, *How Canadians Feel About Family Life, Cardus Family Life Summary*, 2016.

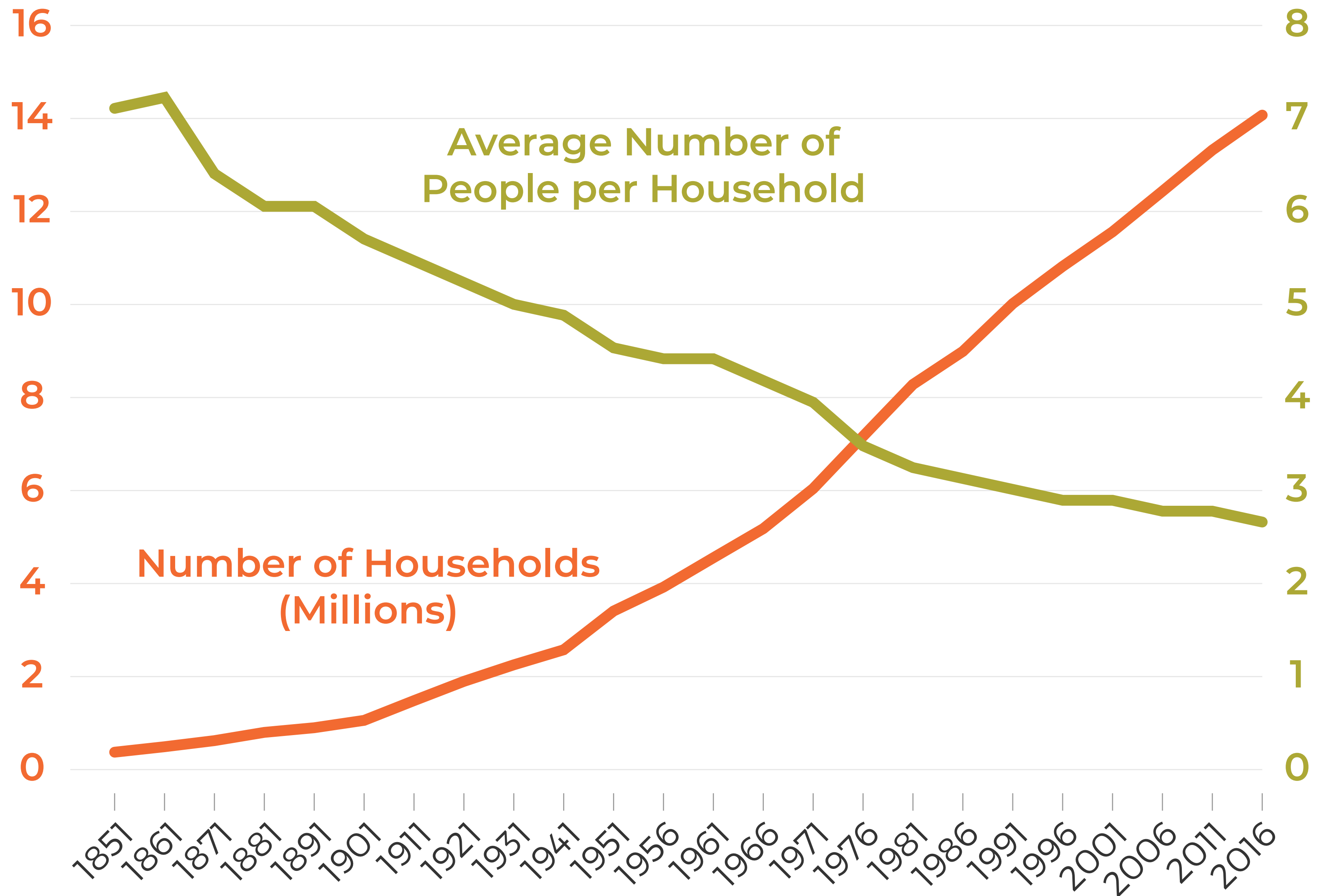


# Distribution of Census Families by Family Structure, 1981 - 2016

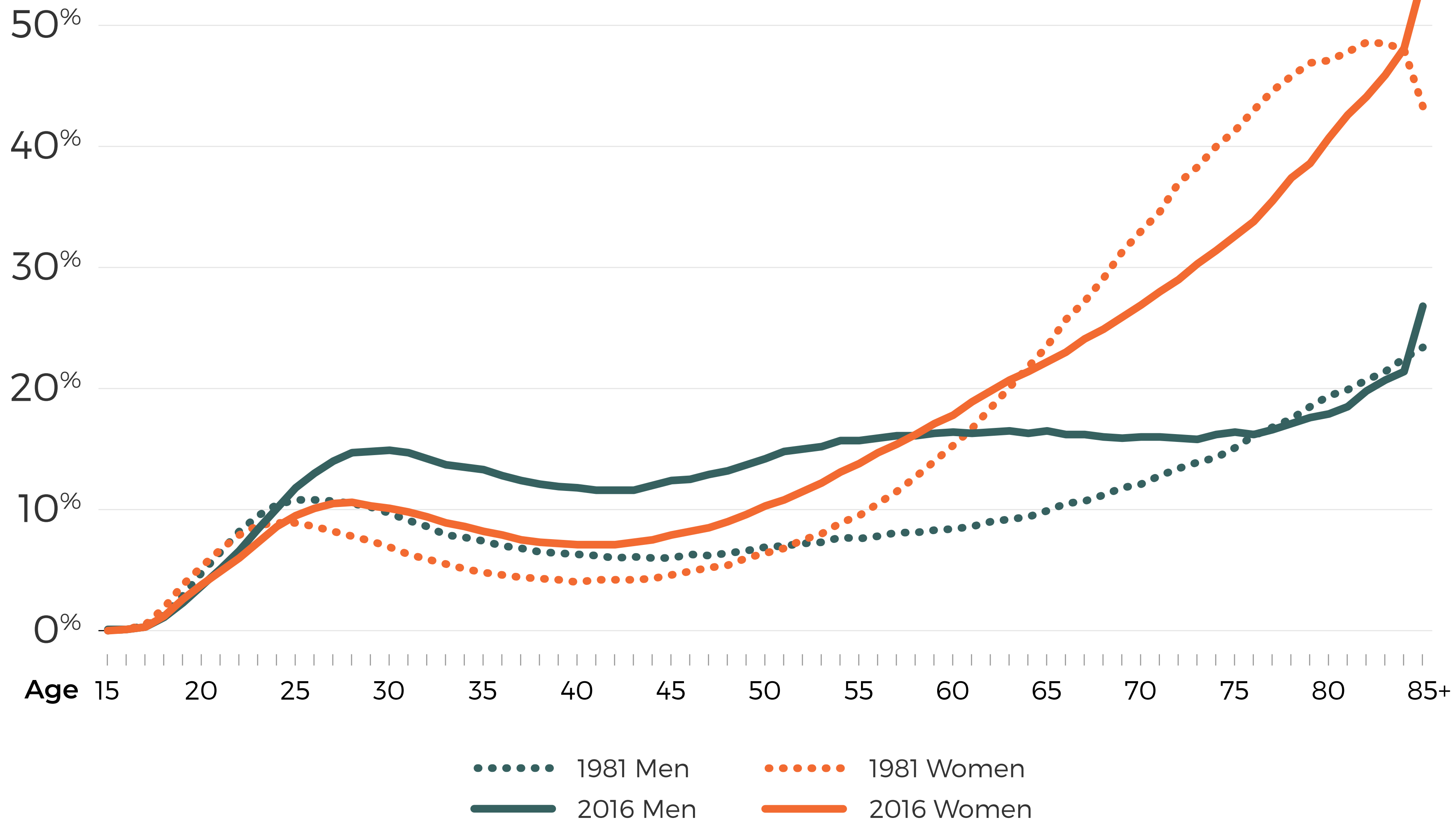


Some totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.  
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population

# Number of Households and Average Number of People Per Household, Canada, 1851 – 2016

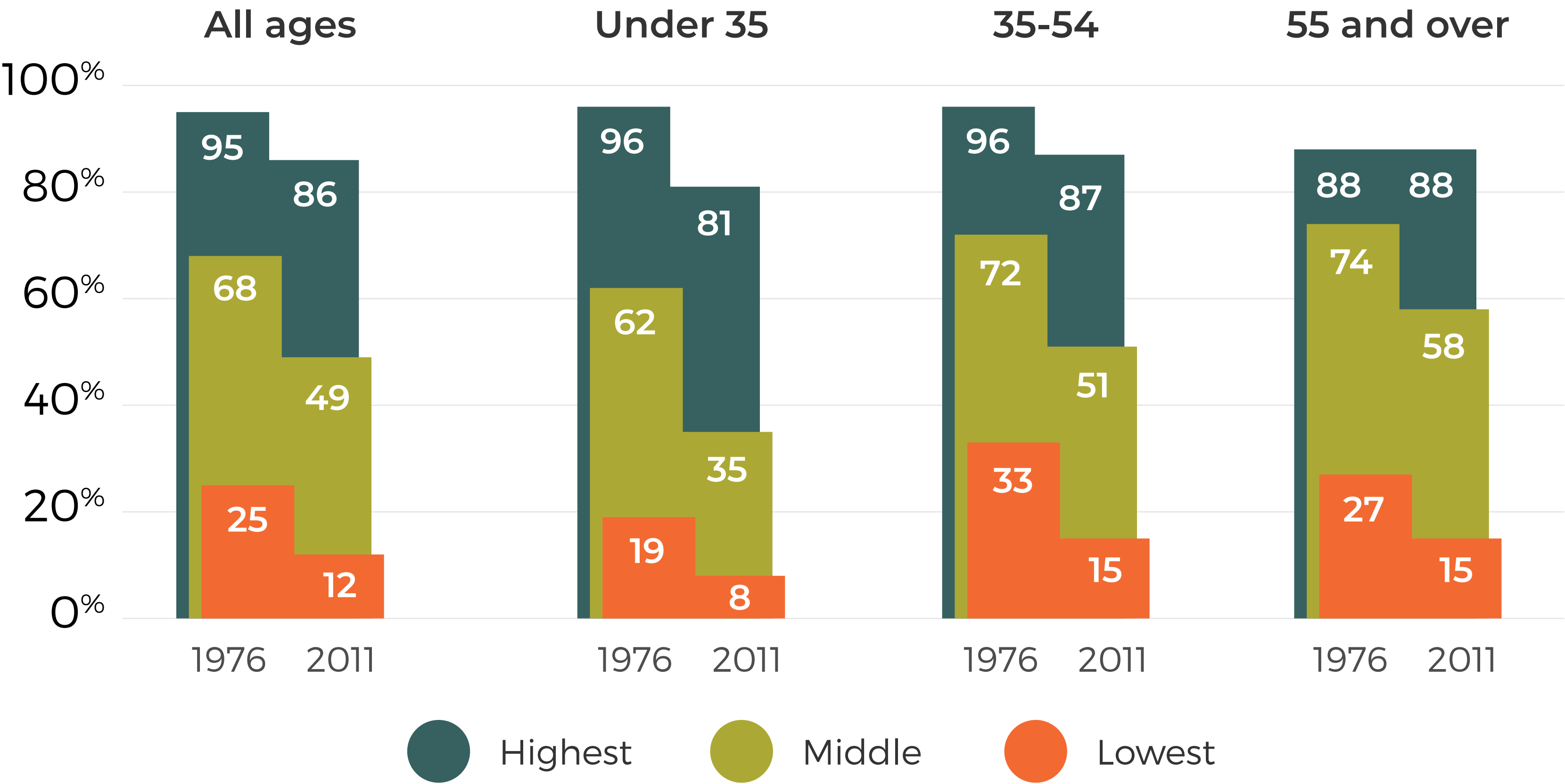


# Proportion of Men and Women Living Alone by Age, 1981 and 2016



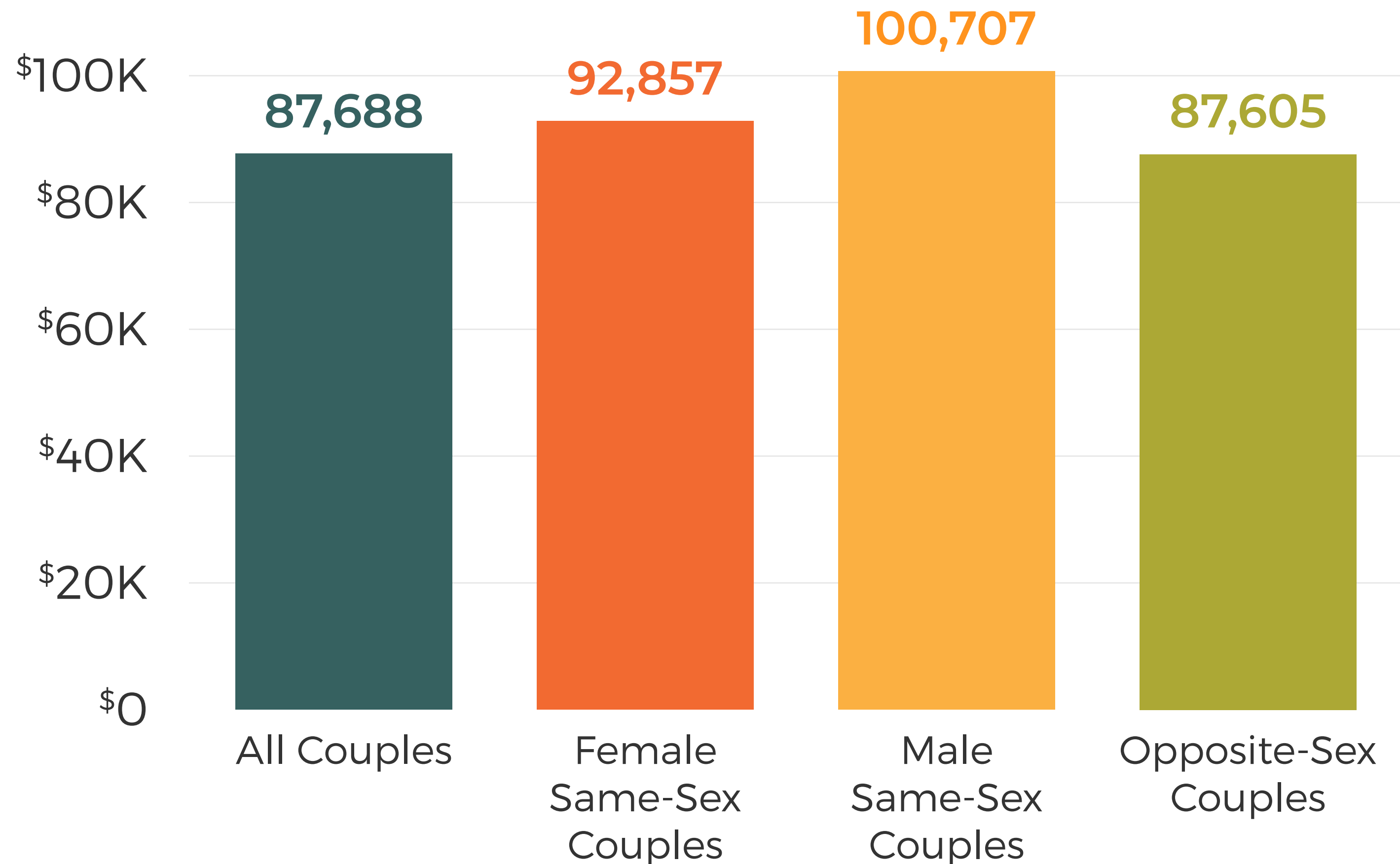
Source: Statistics Canada, Living alone in Canada, *Insights on Canadian Society*, 2019.

# Proportion of Families with a Married or Common-Law Spouse, by Income Quartile and Age, 1976 and 2011



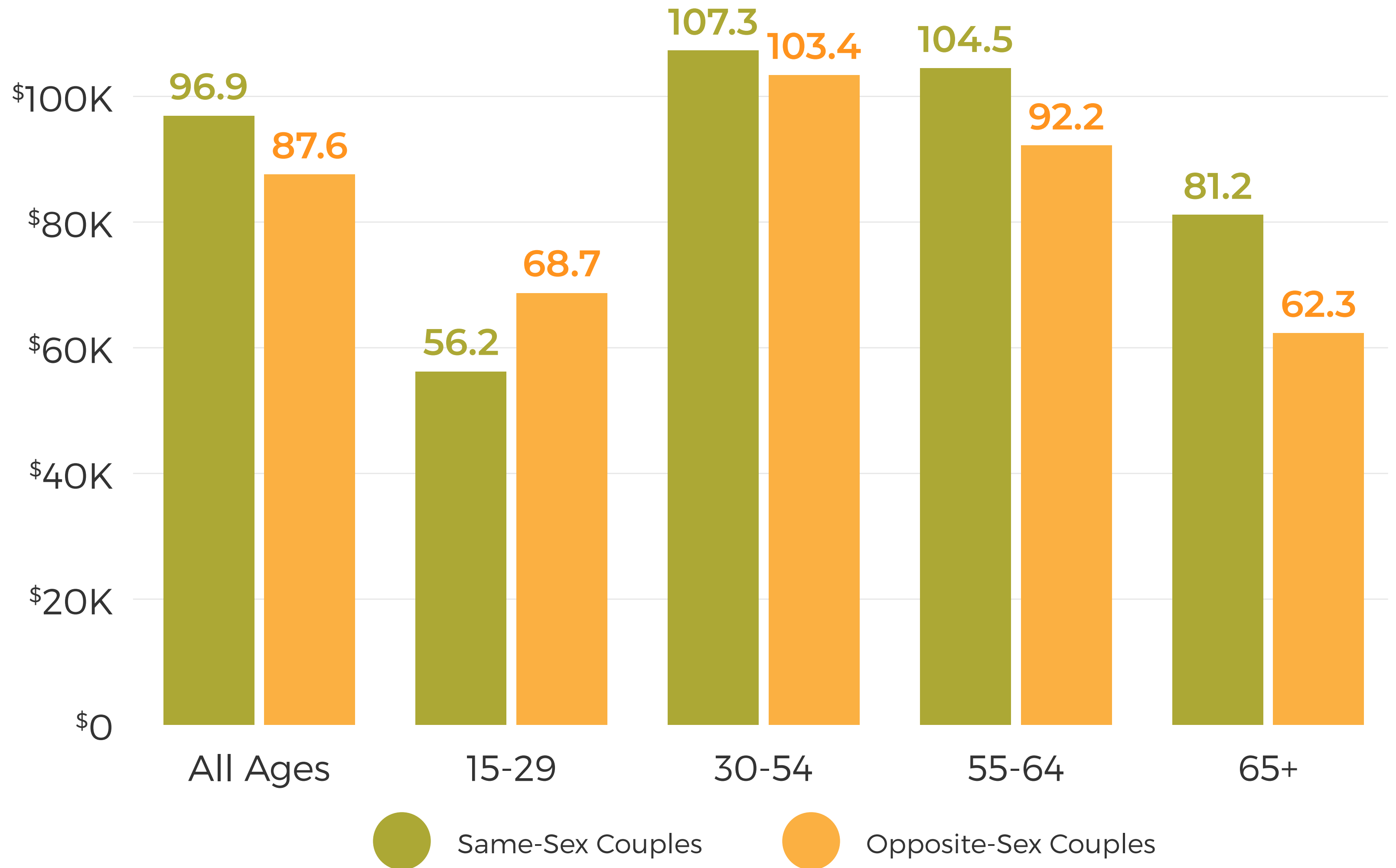
Source: Institute of Marriage and Family Canada, The Marriage Gap between Rich and Poor Canadians, 2014  
Note: Two middle quartiles are combined as a proxy for middle income.

# Median Total Income, by Couple Type, 2015



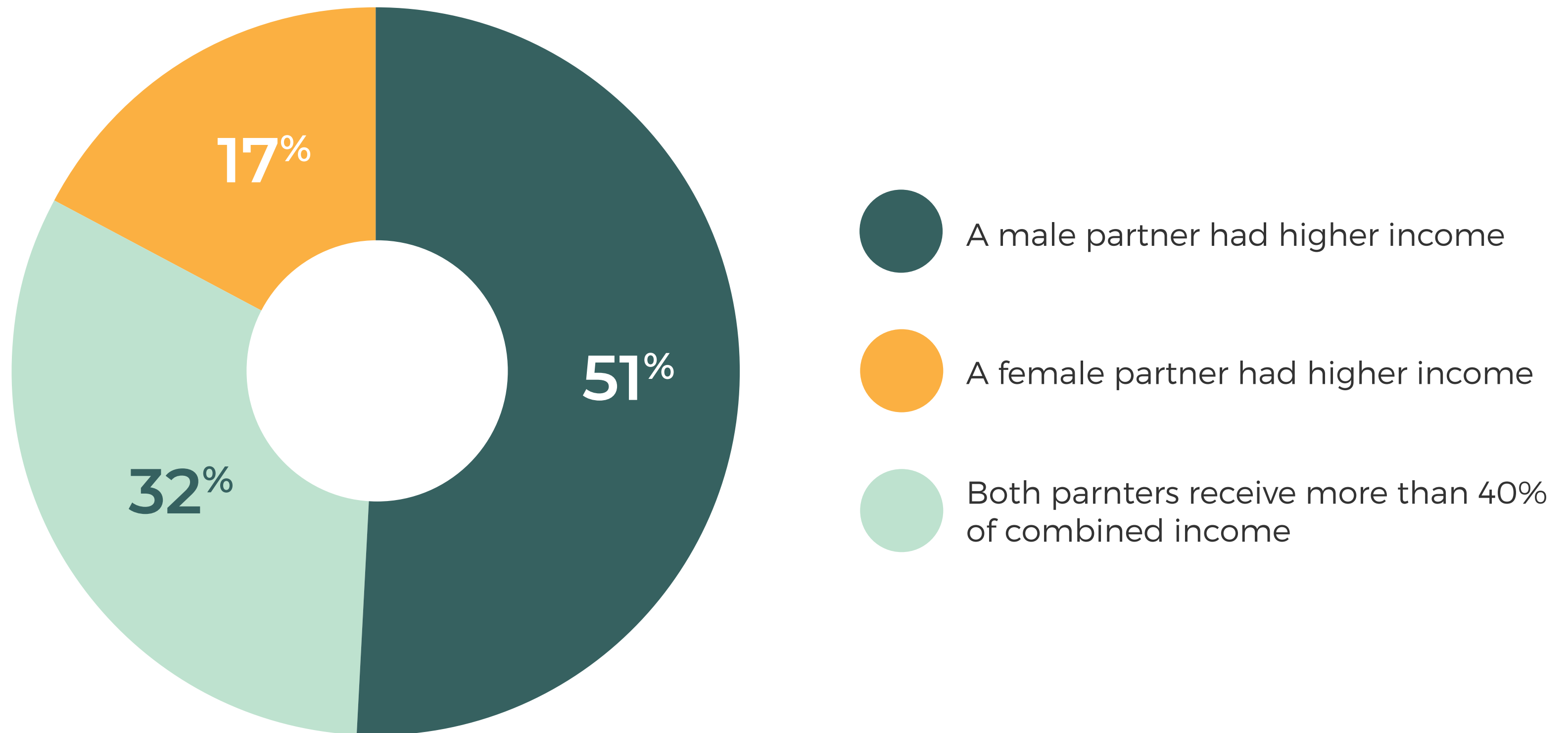
Source: Statistics Canada, *Household income in Canada: Key results from the 2016 Census*, 2017.

# Median Total Income, by Age and Couple Type, 2015



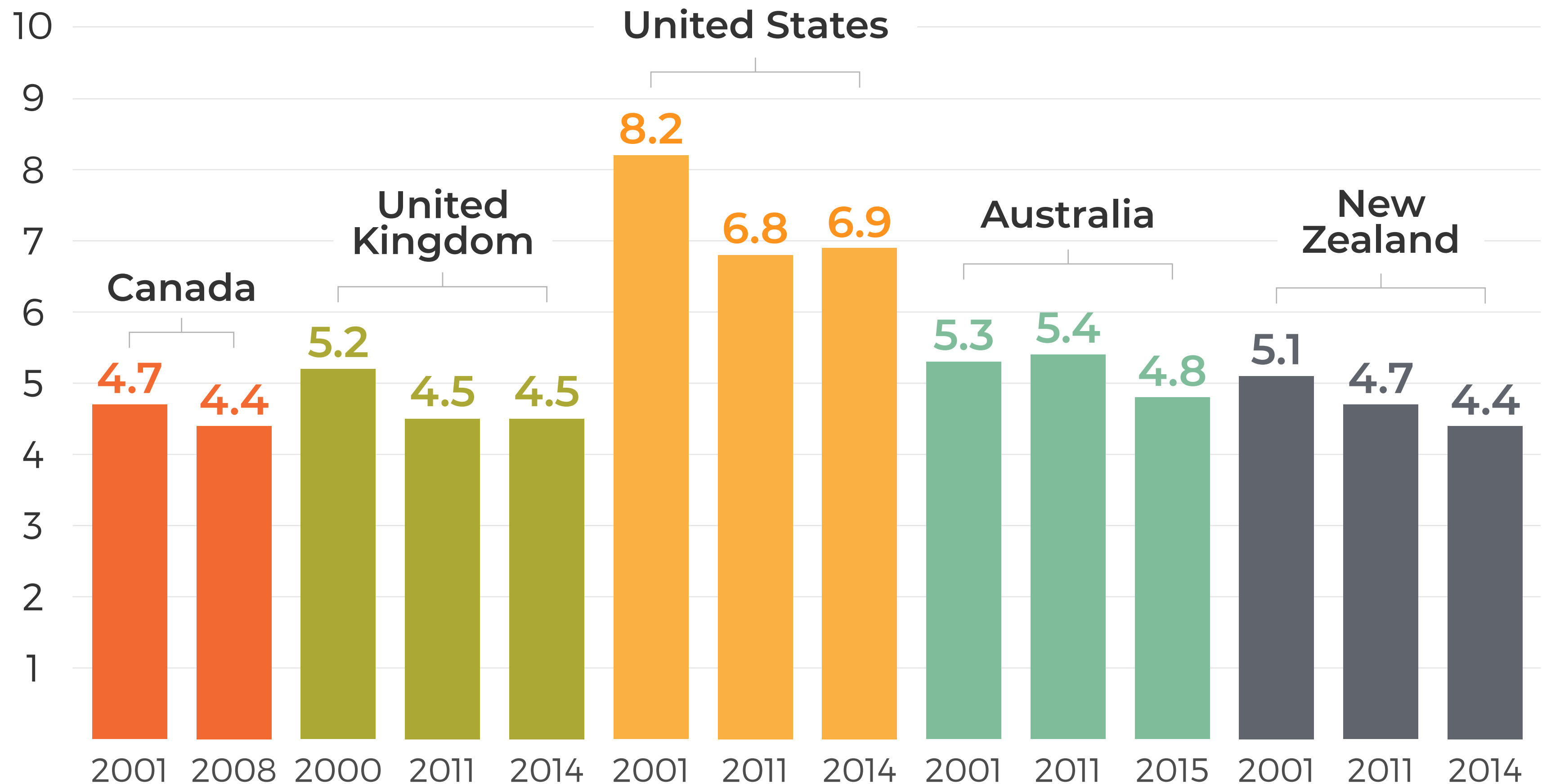
Source: Environics Analytics, 2016 Census: Release 4, Income, 2017.

# Portion of Income Among Couples in Canada, 2015



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population

# Crude Marriage Rate per 1000 Population, Selected Countries

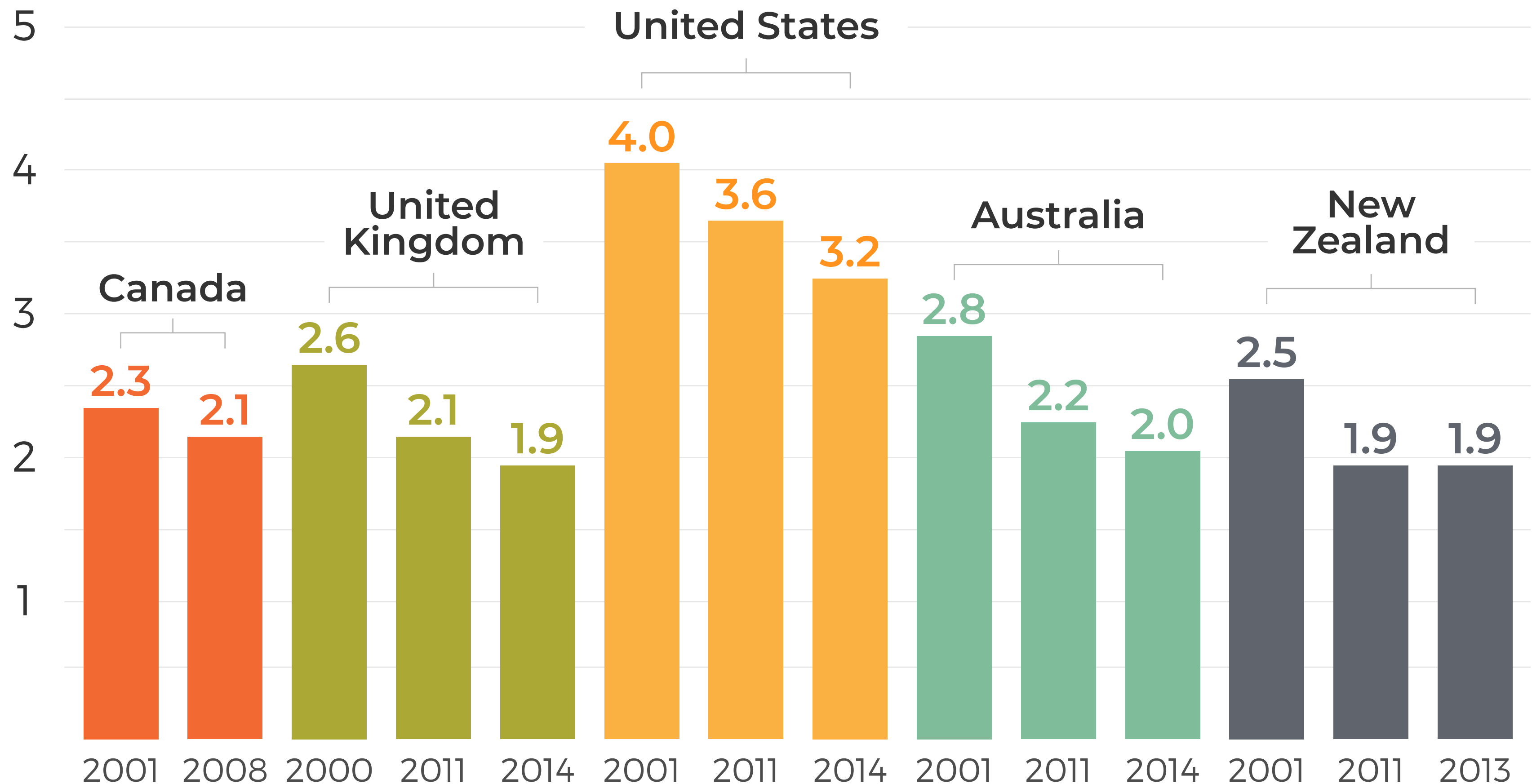


Source: Cardus, *Building Instability*, 2017.

Note: Canada no longer publishes crude marriage data after 2011.



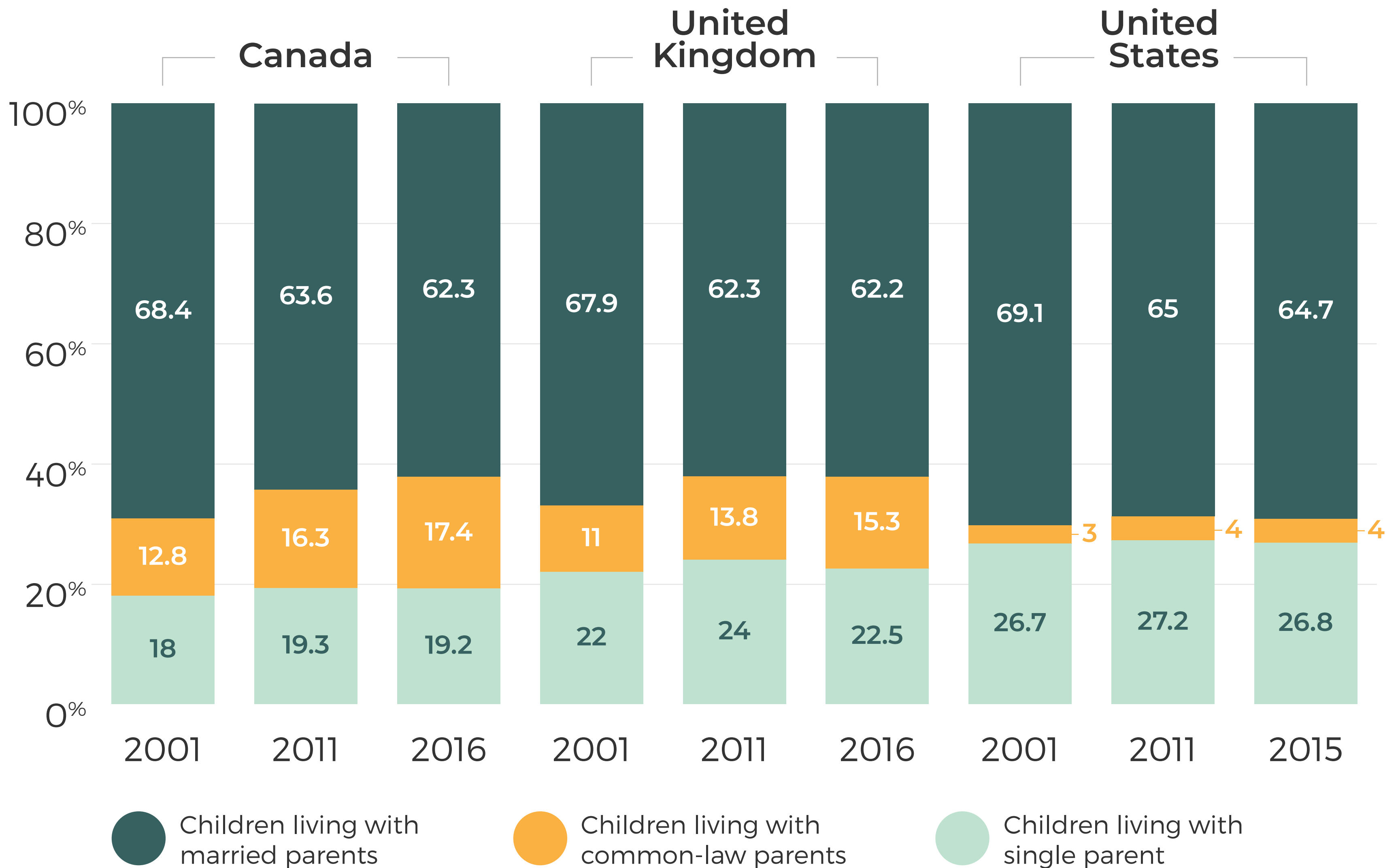
# Crude Divorce Rate per 1000 Population, Selected Countries



Source: Cardus, *Building Instability*, 2017.

Note: Canada no longer publishes crude divorce data after 2011.

# Children's Living Arrangements, Canada, United Kingdom, United States

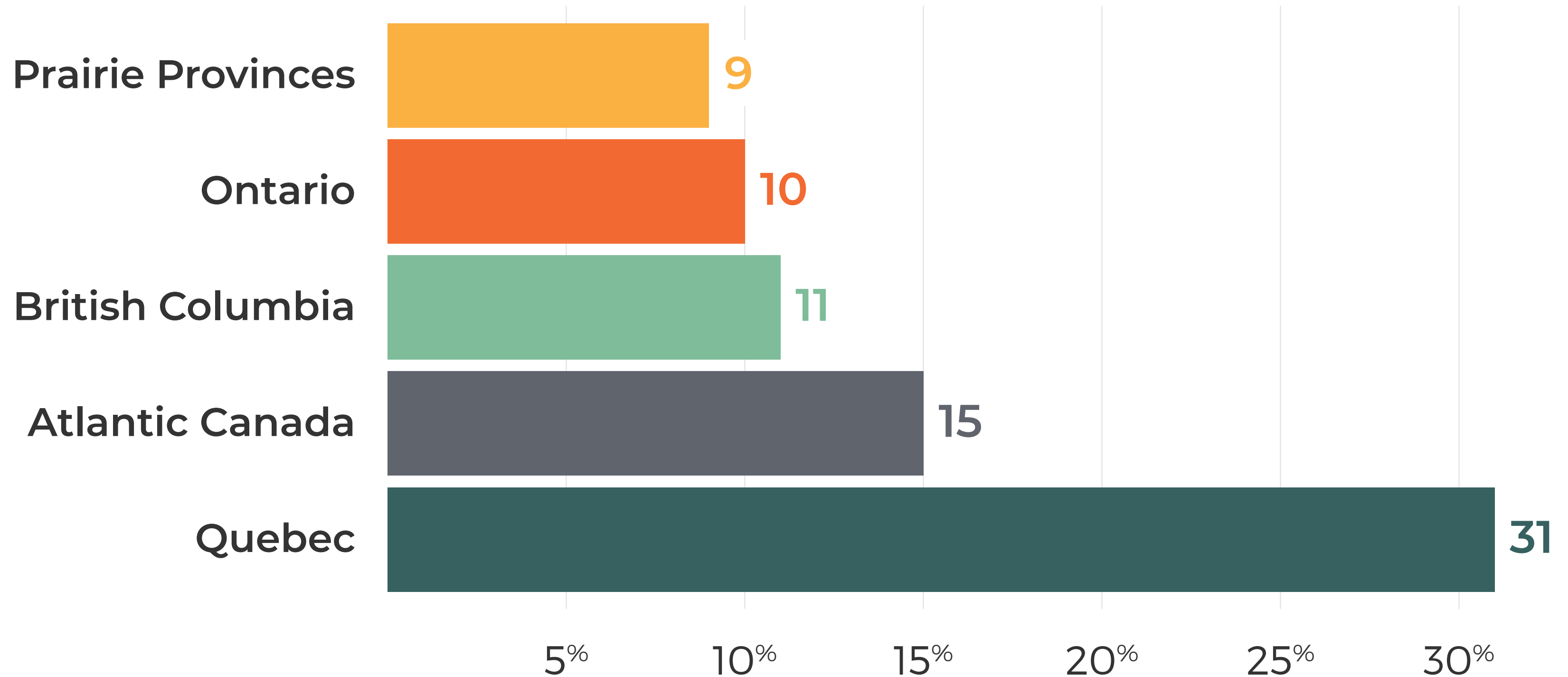


Notes: The remainder of children live in other family arrangements.

Source: Cardus, *Building Instability*, 2017.

Cardus, *New Census Data Shows Fewer Children Living with Married Parents*, 2018.

# Portion of 25 – 64-Year-Olds in a Common-Law Union by Region, 2017



Source: Statistics Canada: *Family matters: Being married or common-law in Canada*, 2019.

# CIVIL MARRIAGE ACT

---

## Civil Marriage Act

S.C. 2005, c. 33

Assented to 2005-07-20

An Act respecting certain aspects of legal capacity for marriage for civil purposes

### Preamble

WHEREAS the Parliament of Canada is committed to upholding the Constitution of Canada, and section 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees that every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination;

WHEREAS the courts in a majority of the provinces and in one territory have recognized that the right to equality without discrimination requires that couples of the same sex and couples of the opposite sex have equal access to marriage for civil purposes;

WHEREAS the Supreme Court of Canada has recognized that many Canadian couples of the same sex have married in reliance on those court decisions;

WHEREAS only equal access to marriage for civil purposes would respect the right of couples of the same sex to equality without discrimination, and civil union, as an institution other than marriage, would not offer them that equal access and would violate their human dignity, in breach of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*;

WHEREAS the Supreme Court of Canada has determined that the Parliament of Canada has legislative jurisdiction over marriage but does not have the jurisdiction to establish an institution other than marriage for couples of the same sex;

WHEREAS everyone has the freedom of conscience and religion under section 2 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*;

WHEREAS nothing in this Act affects the guarantee of freedom of conscience and religion and, in particular, the freedom of members of religious groups to hold and declare their religious beliefs and the freedom of officials of religious groups to refuse to perform marriages that are not in accordance with their religious beliefs;

WHEREAS it is not against the public interest to hold and publicly express diverse views on marriage;

WHEREAS, in light of those considerations, the Parliament of Canada's commitment to uphold the right to equality without discrimination precludes the use of section 33 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to deny the right of couples of the same sex to equal access to marriage for civil purposes;

WHEREAS marriage is a fundamental institution in Canadian society and the Parliament of Canada has a responsibility to support that institution because it strengthens commitment in relationships and represents the foundation of family life for many Canadians;

AND WHEREAS, in order to reflect values of tolerance, respect and equality consistent with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, access to marriage for civil purposes should be extended by legislation to couples of the same sex;

NOW, THEREFORE, Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and House of Commons of Canada, enacts as follows:

### **Short title**

**1** This Act may be cited as the *Civil Marriage Act*.

### **Marriage — certain aspects of capacity**

**2** Marriage, for civil purposes, is the lawful union of two persons to the exclusion of all others.

### **Consent required**

**2.1** Marriage requires the free and enlightened consent of two persons to be the spouse of each other.

### **Minimum age**

**2.2** No person who is under the age of 16 years may contract marriage.

### **Previous marriage**

**2.3** No person may contract a new marriage until every previous marriage has been dissolved by death or by divorce or declared null by a court order.

### **Religious officials**

**3** It is recognized that officials of religious groups are free to refuse to perform marriages that are not in accordance with their religious beliefs.

### **Freedom of conscience and religion and expression of beliefs**

**3.1** For greater certainty, no person or organization shall be deprived of any benefit, or be subject to any obligation or sanction, under any law of the Parliament of Canada solely by reason of their exercise, in respect of marriage between persons of the same sex, of the freedom of conscience and religion guaranteed under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* or the expression of their beliefs in respect of marriage as the union of a man and woman to the exclusion of all others based on that guaranteed freedom.

### **Marriage not void or voidable**

**4** For greater certainty, a marriage is not void or voidable by reason only that the spouses are of the same sex.

# ALBERTA FAMILY LAW

---

*Instructions: read the following article about recent changes in Alberta's family law and a campaign aimed at how to fix family law*

## BACKGROUND

The NDP government made a number of concerning changes to Alberta's family law. The revised Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act came into effect on February 28, 2019 after Bill 22 received Royal Assent on December 11, 2018. The UCP unanimously opposed Bill 22. In the 2019 throne speech the UCP promised that improvements to family law would be addressed in 2020; this has not yet been addressed.

## FOUNDATIONAL LANGUAGE

Alberta family law made a subtle yet significant change to the foundational principle of the current law. The current Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act states, as its first principle, that "the family is the basic unit of society and its well-being should be supported and preserved." The revised law deleted that and said instead, "the child's family has the primary responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child and the family's well-being should be supported and preserved."

Think carefully about this. One might argue that it does not change much. But a basic principle of interpreting a statute is that a change is not meaningless. If an amendment were meaningless, there is a presumption that it would not be made.

There is a difference between saying the family is the basic unit of society and saying merely that a family has primary responsibility for the well-being of the child.

The first says something about what the family is, reflecting what has long been understood – it is

the fundamental, natural institution that precedes the state, on which society is built. The latter says nothing about what the family is. Why does that matter? Because governments continue to radically redefine the family.

## PROTECTIVE SAFEGUARDS

Alberta's family law no longer has protective safeguards. As the law says, the family merely has primary responsibility for children. If that responsibility is not being fulfilled as the state wishes, however, the family may be in trouble. By removing protective safeguards, it is much easier for the state to intervene and interfere in the family. This is a different philosophy than the Christian philosophy that parents have an authority that the state lacks.

## GENDER IDENTITY IDEOLOGY

Adding gender identity ideology into child services legislation affects more than how child protection services deals with parents who don't respond "properly" to gender identity disorder in their child. The law also matters for foster parents and would-be foster or adoptive parents. In the worldview of the new law, every child has a "gender identity and gender expression" that may differ from the child's sex. A child's gender identity may not come to light when they are very young – a child might appear to be a boy, but come to identify as a girl later on. According to the law, child services must consider how would-be foster or adoptive parents would respond.

## TAKE ACTION

Follow these easy steps: Ready! Set! Go!

**READY!** Read the following for a quick review:

We are concerned when the government passes bad family law. The last family law passed in Alberta removed foundational language, removed important safeguards, and added gender identity ideology.

**SET!** Send an EasyMail to your MLA and share the three Rs needed to support Strong Families Building Stronger Communities:

- ✓ Reinststate the foundational language.
- ✓ Restore the protective safeguards.
- ✓ Remove the gender ideology.

**GO!** Go to [easymail.arpacanada.ca](mailto:easymail.arpacanada.ca) and follow the steps to write and send your email.

Topic	Alberta Family Law
<b>The Act</b>  Where is Alberta's family law written?	
<b>God's Word</b>  List and summarize two Bible passages that support the foundational role of the family.	
<b>Key Message</b>  List the three main concerns with Alberta's family law.	
<b>Question</b>  Which part of the new law concerns you the most? Why?	