ARISTOTLE NOTES

The State of Canadian Society

Living in Multigenerational Homes: Family makeup by ethnic cohort



Ven Venkatachalam | November 2026

Why does knowing about multigenerational homes matter?

The Canadian population has changed profoundly over the past 35 years. Today, Canada is an increasingly older society. The share of individuals aged 65 and older rose from 11.3 percent in the 1990s to 18.9 percent in 2023, reflecting a notable increase in the proportion of older adults in the population. This also affects how families live in Canadian society. Understanding multigenerational family households is essential to understanding family structure in society. Families play a key role in maintaining members' well-being by providing social, emotional, financial, and physical care.

According to Statistics Canada data, there are clear differences in household and family living arrangements across racial groups in Canada (see Table 1). White people are more likely to live independently, with 16.6 percent living alone, compared with 7 percent of Southeast Asians, 5 percent of South Asians, 10.7 percent of Chinese people, and 8 percent of the total visible minority population.

White people are also more likely to live in families without children (29.7%) than visible minority groups, particularly South Asians (10.1%) and Southeast Asians (12.5%). In contrast, South Asians (40.1%), Chinese people (37.2%), and Southeast Asians (36.2%) are more likely than white people (32.5%) to live in families with children.

Multigenerational households are substantially more common among South Asians (19.8%), Southeast Asians (12.9%), and Chinese people (12.0%) than among white people (3.8%), indicating stronger tendencies toward extended family living arrangements. While the proportion living in lone-parent families is relatively similar for white people (8.0%), Southeast Asians (8.7%), Chinese people (7.6%), and the total visible minority population (8.6%), South Asians have the lowest share (4.1%). Overall, the white population is more likely to live alone or in smaller family households. In contrast, visible minority groups, especially South Asians and Southeast Asians, are more likely to live in households with children and multigenerational family arrangements. People live in multigenerational households for many reasons; in some cases, out of necessity, and in others, by choice.

TABLE 1

Percentage share of the population living in multigenerational households in Canada, 2021

Census Family Household	White	Southeast Asian	South Asian	Chinese	Total visible minority population
Persons living in family without children	29.7%	12.5%	10.1%	18.4%	12.5%
Persons living in family with children	32.5%	36.2%	40.1%	37.2%	40.4%
Persons in a lone-parent family	8.0%	8.7%	4.1%	7.6%	8.6%
Persons in multigenerational households	3.8%	12.9%	19.8%	12.0%	12.6%
Persons in other family households	5.0%	14.6%	11.7%	8.5%	10.4%
Persons in two-or-more-person non-census-family households	4.5%	7.5%	9.6%	5.6%	7.1%
Persons living alone (one-person households)	16.6%	7.7%	4.6%	10.7%	8.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2024.

References

"Special Interest Profile, 2021 Census of Population," Statistics Canada, March 20, 2024, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/98260009.

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