

HOUSEHOLDS - CENSUS 2013

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Households since 2006 Long term change

Household composition has remained fairly stable since 2006.

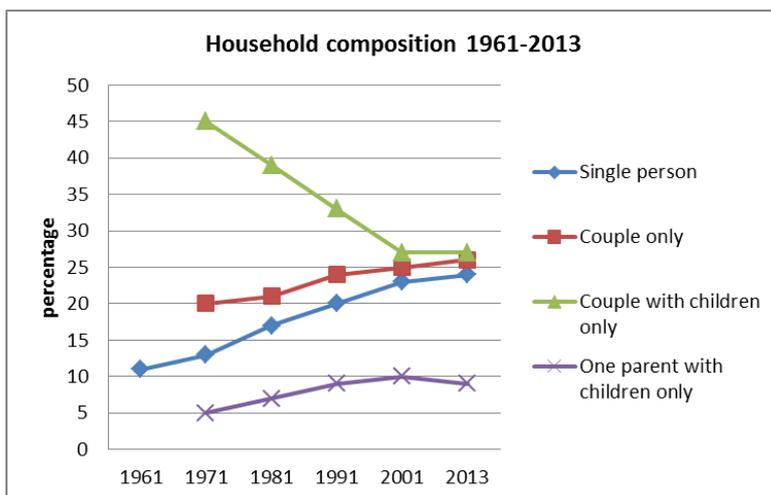
The main change has been an increase in more than one family living within one household, from 2.8% in 2006 to 3.4% in 2013. This has occurred during a lengthy global economic recession, but is still not a large increase – rounded, the percentage would be stable at 3%.

In particular, there has been a doubling of one parent families living with other people, from 1% to 2%.

Household composition is not the kind of indicator that changes suddenly, but is a rather longer term transition.

- ◆ The greatest change in the last 50 years has been the marked decline in households with a couple plus children.
- ◆ In 1971 just over half of households had children. Today just 40% have children and only one in four has two parents plus children. Thus the traditional norm of our society of households made up of two parents and their children is no longer the case (see graph).

- ◆ At the same time single person households have more than doubled from one in ten to one in four (24%).
- ◆ Couple only households have also increased, mainly between 1971 and 1991, but now levelling off at around one in four.
- ◆ There has been a decline in one parent households from a peak in 1991 (12%) to 9% now.
- ◆ This has been accompanied by a slight increase in one parent families living with other people, but there is still a declining trend overall.



Source: Statistics New Zealand, Census of Population and Dwellings, various years.

Census information is a reflection of changing social trends. Family based households have dominated in the past to the extent that published information did not distinguish one and two parent family households until the 1970s.

Other household types include families plus other people, multiple family households and groups of unrelated people, each of which is less than 5%. Two parent families plus others peaked at 4% in 1981. One parent family plus others peaked at 3% in 2001. Multiple family households and unrelated groups have been stable at around 2% and 4% respectively.

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Household size

Average household size has declined steadily through the 20th Century from 4.7 people in 1911 to 2.7 in 2006 and 2013.

Another way of looking at this is that there has been a greater increase in the number of households than in the number of

people in the population. While the population is 4.5 times what it was in 1911, there are seven times as many households (Table 1). Most of this happened in the first half of last century. Since 1971 the number of households has doubled while the population is 1.5 times greater.

Table 1 Trends in household size

	1911	1971	2013
Average household size	4.7	3.4	2.7
Number of households	210,734	801,686	1,549,890
Population	1,008,468	2,862,631	4,506,575

Source: Statistics New Zealand, Census of Population and Dwellings, various years.

Summary

The key changes that have been occurring over the past 40 years are the decline of households with children and the rise of the single person household and couples without children.

These changes have important implications for service providers, planners and policy makers, and producers and distributors of consumer goods.

Further indepth research on the rise of single person households, their specific characteristics and behaviours, and the resultant implications for society, is the topic of a forthcoming research project by Dr Mervyl McPherson at NIDEA.

NIDEA Research Fellow Dr Mervyl McPherson is a social demographer with over 30 years experience in the field.

NIDEA undertakes research at the interface of population and economics to help inform choices and responses to the demographic, social and economic interactions that are shaping New Zealand's future.

References

All data in this paper are sourced from Statistics New Zealand.

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