5.—Age Distribution.[1]

The same causes which in the past have rendered the sex distribution of population in Canada somewhat unusual have also affected its age distribution. In the first stages of the settlement of a new colony, men in the prime of life constitute the bulk of the population, and women and children are conspicuous by their absence, so that there is a disproportionately large male population between the ages of 20 and 50, together with a low birth rate. Later on in the settlement of a new country where there is land and food for all and where the early disproportion of the sexes has been overcome, there is a very high rate of natural increase and an extraordinarily large proportion of children among the population. Thus in 1871 (see Table 16) no fewer than 287 out of every 1,000 of the population of Canada were children under 10 years of age, and over half the total population (526·76 out of every 1,000) were under 20 years of age. But with the growing urbanization of population, the average age at marriage increased and children came to be regarded as a liability rather than an asset. Thus in 1911, out of every 1,000 of the population, only 231·83 were under 10 years of age and 423·42 under 20 years of age. In 1921, however, 239·68 per 1,000 of the population were under 10 years of age and 434·82 per 1,000 under 20 years, the increase since 1911 being probably attributable to the decline in the proportion of adult immigrants to the total population.

Again, the change in the age distribution of the population of Canada since 1871 may be illustrated as follows:—taking the Canadian who in 1921 was at the median age (i.e., had exactly as many of the population younger than he as were older than he), we find that as nearly as can be estimated, this Canadian in 1921 was 23·94 years of age. Taking the males alone, their median age in 1921 was 24·73 years, while the median age for females was 23·17 years. Now, taking the population of the four original provinces as taken at the census of 1871, and securing its median age as nearly as can be estimated, we find that that age was for the total population 18·80 years, for the male population 18·78 years and for the female population 18·82 years. Thus the Canadian of median age, with exactly as many people younger as there are older, was 5·14 years older in 1921 than in 1871—a fact mainly attributable to the smaller proportion of children in the population in the more recent year, but partly to the longer average period of life. The median age in Ontario in 1921 was 26·76 years, while the median age in Quebec was only 20·79 years, a difference of nearly six years between these two provinces. (See Table 17 for the varying age distribution of the population of different provinces.) A table showing by sex the age distribution of the population at the census of 1881 and subsequent censuses was published on pp. 103-104 of the 1925 Year Book.

16.—Proportion per 1,000 of the Population by Age-Periods, 1871-1921.

Age-Periods.	1871.	1881.	1891.	1901.	1911.	1921.
Under 1 year	30·567	28·019	24·922	24·497	25·734	23·859
1— 4 years	115·649	108·508	99·963	95·211	97·413	96·486
5— 9 "	140·691	128·251	121·242	114·663	108·685	119·334
10—19 "	239·854	227·404	219·712	210·906	191·585	185·138
20—29 "	171·436	175·957	178·080	173·550	189·335	159·041
30—39 "	111·404	113·099	122·079	129·259	141·938	146·246
40—49 "	79·995	83·817	88·441	98·494	100·071	109·480
50—59 "	54·788	58·086	62·360	67·886	69·121	73·080
60 and over	55·128	63·269	70·141	76·396	71·027	74·915
Not given	0·487	13·589	13·059	9·137	5·090	2·421

[1] For more detailed information on the age distribution of the population, see pp. 1-111 of Vol. II of the Census of 1921, published by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics.