

The 1912 Commission on Official Statistics recommended that "for the Dominion, now engaged in building up its national unity, it is important that uniform data should render possible to statisticians the institution of true interprovincial and international comparisons. By effective co-operation of the provinces with the Dominion, this object should be capable of attainment without sacrificing the liberty of each province to satisfy its own special statistical requirements." Yet, prior to 1920, it was impossible to compile any satisfactory series of vital statistics figures for Canada as a whole. Among the obstacles to such a national compilation were the inequalities of registration between the provinces, the lack of uniformity in classification and in the method of presentation, the omission in some cases of important data, the choice in some cases of the fiscal instead of the calendar year as the unit of time, and the fact that for some of the provinces within comparatively recent years the series of publications was broken, while for New Brunswick no provincial vital statistics at all were published from 1895 until 1920.

Co-operation was finally effected as a consequence of the establishment of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics under the Statistics Act of 1918, which specifically provided that the Bureau should publish an annual report on vital statistics. A scheme was first drawn up in the Bureau and submitted to the various provinces; then Dominion-Provincial conferences on vital statistics were held in June and December, 1918, when final discussions took place.

In 1919, as a result of conference, a plan was devised whereby the Bureau of Statistics and the Registrar General's office in each province would co-operate in producing national vital statistics for the Dominion. Under this national system, while registration of births, marriages, and deaths, is carried out as heretofore by the provincial authorities, the legislation of each province conforms in its essentials to a model bill, prepared by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, one of the features of which was compulsory registration. The Bureau of Statistics undertakes compilation and tabulation.

Under the scheme outlined above, the vital statistics for all the provinces except Quebec were secured and compiled on a uniform basis for the years 1921 to 1925. The annual reports for these years may be obtained on application to the Dominion Statistician.

Quebec has been included in the registration area as from Jan. 1, 1926, from which date her statistics are on a comparable basis with those of the other provinces. The final reports for 1926 to 1936, including the statistics of all the nine provinces, have appeared and may be procured from the Dominion Statistician, with the exception of the report for 1931, which is out of print.

Two important considerations should be borne in mind by the student who uses either the tables which follow or the detailed reports issued by the Bureau of Statistics for comparative purposes. First, in spite of the improvements of the past decade, registration generally, and the registration of births in particular, is not as yet universally carried out. Secondly, the very considerable differences in the age and sex distribution of the population in different provinces make comparisons of crude birth rates and crude death rates, as among the provinces, unfair and misleading. All rates in this chapter have been recalculated on the basis of the revised estimates of population given on p. 113.