

Section 7.—Birthplaces

The population of Canada by broad nativity groups, Canadian born, other British born and foreign born, is shown in Table 26. This table indicates that the proportion of the Canadian born to the entire population has declined during the 70 years from 1871-1941.

The effects of the large immigration at the beginning of the century are seen in all columns of the percentage figures after 1901. Whereas in 1871, 83.30 p.c. of the total population were Canadian born, 14.06 p.c. other British born, and 2.64 p.c. foreign born, the corresponding proportions in 1941 were 82.46 p.c., 8.72 p.c. and 8.82 p.c., respectively.

The smallest element in the population, viz., the foreign born other than United States born, actually shows the greatest percentage increase. These other foreign born increased rapidly from 0.85 p.c. in 1871 to 7.50 p.c. in 1931, more than doubling in absolute numbers from 1901. The declines of the group indicated for 1921 and 1941 are attributable to restricted immigration policies. (See Chapter VI.)

Table 27 gives the distribution of the population of each province, by sex and nativity. Of the total population in 1941, 4,794,439 or 81.25 p.c. of the males and 4,693,369 or 83.72 p.c. of the females were Canadian born.

A comparison of the proportions Canadian born in 1911, 1921, 1931 and 1941, shows that with minor exceptions the provinces stand in approximately the same rank at all four census dates. In the east the proportion Canadian born was only slightly smaller in 1931 than in 1921. In Ontario it was considerably smaller. From Manitoba west, on the other hand, the Canadian born constituted larger proportions of the population of every province. The explanation of these differences seems to be threefold: (1) emigration of native Canadians during the decade was relatively heavier in the Maritimes than in the other provinces; (2) a radical change occurred in the direction of current immigration from abroad, larger proportions going to the central provinces (particularly Ontario) than formerly, and smaller numbers settling in the agricultural west; and (3) the high fertility of earlier immigrants coupled with their relatively large numbers resulted in a great increase in the Canadian-born children of the foreign stocks in that part of the Dominion lying between the Great Lakes and the Pacific Coast.

In contrast with the Canadian born, the proportion of the other British born to total population shows an increase in Western Canada between 1911 and 1921. The very high proportion of British immigration that British Columbia has received is reflected in the figures. During the decades ended 1931 and 1941, notable declines have occurred in the proportions of the British-born populations of all four western provinces due again to the cumulative effects of curtailed immigration.

As in the case of the British born, persons of foreign birth still constitute very small proportions of the population in Quebec and the Maritime Provinces but a change is now taking place in all five eastern provinces where the proportions have shown consistent increase over the past 40 years.

In Western Canada the trend is just the reverse although the percentage of foreign born is still large in the case of each province west of Ontario. One reason for this change in general trend as between the west and the east is given in the census monograph on Racial Origin (p. 622, Vol. XIII Census of 1931): "As the more accessible free agricultural land is taken up, or when for any other reason agriculture becomes less attractive, immigration tends to concentrate in the urban centres, especially of the more industrialized sections of the country".