

Fertility Rates.—The sex and age distribution of the population is an important factor in determining birth, death and marriage rates. Since more than 95 p.c. of children are born to women between the ages of 15 and 50, differences in the proportion of women of these ages to the population as a whole will cause differences in the birth rates of different countries or regions, even though the fertility of women at each age may be the same. Measures of fertility which are independent of the sex and age distribution of the population have, therefore, been devised. The best known of these are age-specific fertility rates and reproduction rates.

Further details on this subject may be found at pp. 153-154 of the 1947 edition of the Year Book or from the D.B.S. report *Gross and Net Reproduction Rates, Canada and the Provinces*.

Ages of Parents.—Ages of the parents is an important variable in any analysis of birth statistics. The numerical and percentage distribution of legitimate live births by the ages of the parents is given in Table 13, of illegitimate live births by the age of the mother in Table 14, and of stillbirths by the age of the mother in Table 15, as well as the average ages of the parents for each year shown.

In 1930-32 the average age of fathers was 33·7 years and of mothers 29·3 years. The average age of parents is now slightly lower. Besides the fertility rates at each age, two other factors help, in the main, to determine the average age of parents having children: first, the average age of potential parents, at any point in time, that is, of the population between the ages of 15 and 50, and secondly, the proportions of first and second births to the total. The average age of men between 15 and 50 was 30·9 years in 1931 and 30·7 in 1941; the average age of women was 30·4 years in 1931 and again 30·4 in 1941. Thus the changes are very small. Other things being equal, a high proportion of first and second births will result in a lower average age of parents. In 1930-32 first and second births were 43 p.c. of the total births. By the period 1945-48 first and second births together were 57 p.c. of the total. These changes are very great and account for the lower average age of parents in recent years. However, in 1949 and 1950 the proportions of first and second births had declined to 54 and 53 p.c., respectively.

Tables 13, 14 and 15 illustrate other significant facts: that the average age of fathers of legitimate children is about four years greater than the average age of mothers; that the average age of mothers of illegitimate children is four to five years less than the average age of mothers of legitimate children—in 1930-32 the difference was six years (the fact that over 70 p.c. of illegitimate children are born to mothers under 25 years of age accounts for this difference); and that the average age of mothers of stillborn children is higher than that of the live born. Further, Table 15 shows that the rate of stillbirths per 1,000 live births increases with the age of the mother. It is almost three times as high among mothers of 40-44 years as it is among mothers at the ages of 20-24, and almost four times as high among mothers of 45-49 years.