

As is typical of pioneer populations, Canada had a high death rate in the mid-1850's when the country was still in the throes of pioneer settlement. The crude death rate during that period is estimated as between 22 and 25. Although no data are available, it is assumed that, while mortality at all ages was high, the rate among infants, children and young adults must have been particularly so since even in the 1920's mortality in these ages was still quite high. With the gradual increase in population density and in urbanization and improved sanitation and medical services, the crude rate was halved during the 80 years between 1851 and 1930, dropping from about 22 to 11. It declined steadily to slightly over 8 in the late 1950's, dropped to a low of 7.7 in 1961 and 1962, and was 7.8 in 1963. This is one of the lowest crude death rates in the world.

Table 1, pp. 243-244, shows the trends since 1941 in the provinces and territories. The generally low rates in the Prairie Provinces are partly the result of their younger average population; the uniformly higher rate in British Columbia is attributable mainly to a high proportion of people in the older age groups.

Subsection 1.—General Mortality

Age and Sex Distribution of Deaths.—During the period of national vital statistics (1921 to date), the mortality pattern at all ages has been steeply downward. Of major significance in lowering the over-all death rate were the reductions in infant mortality, in childhood death rates and in those of young adults. In 1931, over 19 p.c. of all male deaths occurred among persons of five to 45 years of age; in 1963 only a little over 10 p.c. took place in this age group. Among females in the same age group the proportion dropped from just under 22 p.c. to 7.5 p.c.

Tables 15 and 16 illustrate the very large reductions in death rates that have taken place since 1931 in each age group of the population. By far the greatest reductions have been among the young of both sexes. However, even though the rates for females at every age have always been consistently lower than those for males, female death rates have been declining faster and the differences are gradually widening. Between 1931 and 1963 the rates for all females dropped by 31 p.c. as compared with only 14 p.c. for males.

15.—Percentage Change in Death Rates for Each Age Group, 1931 to 1963

Age Group	Males	Females	Age Group	Males	Females
Under 1 year.....	-68.6	-69.2	45 - 49 years.....	-20.8	-50.0
1 - 4 years.....	-82.4	-85.2	50 - 54 ".....	-12.1	-43.3
5 - 9 ".....	-68.2	-76.5	55 - 59 ".....	- 0.0	-41.0
10 - 14 ".....	-66.7	-80.0	60 - 64 ".....	+ 5.2	-36.2
15 - 19 ".....	-56.0	-72.7	65 - 69 ".....	+ 1.4	-31.0
20 - 24 ".....	-43.8	-81.2	70 - 74 ".....	- 1.6	-30.3
25 - 29 ".....	-52.9	-81.6	75 - 79 ".....	- 5.6	-29.8
30 - 34 ".....	-54.3	-78.6	80 - 84 ".....	- 6.8	-18.7
35 - 39 ".....	-47.6	-72.9	85 years or over.....	- 7.1	- 8.0
40 - 44 ".....	-37.0	-58.0			
			All Ages.....	-14.3	-31.2

Despite the very considerable reduction that has taken place in infant mortality, more deaths still occur in the first year of life than in any other single year. Of the total deaths occurring in 1931, almost one quarter were of children under five years of age and more than three quarters of those were of children under one year of age; of the deaths occurring in 1963, almost 10 p.c. were of children under five years and of those about 86 p.c. were under one year. Most of the reduction took place among children over the age of one month but there was also a notable decrease in all childhood ages up to five years.

The reductions in the mortality rates in early and middle years of life have had the effect of increasing the number of people in the older age groups and raising the average age