

### 5.4.2 Family size and composition

A family, as defined in the Canadian census, consists of a husband and wife with or without unmarried children, or a parent with one or more unmarried children, living together in the same dwelling. Adopted children and stepchildren have the same status as own children.

The number of families in Canada increased to 5.0 million in 1971 from 4.5 million in 1966 and 4.1 million in 1961, a gain of approximately one fourth over the decade. Following the patterns of provincial population growth, and particularly reflecting the factors of migration, the largest rate of increase in the number of families occurred in British Columbia (35.4% in the 1961-71 period), followed by Alberta (25.0%), and Ontario (24.5%).

**Families by size.** The total number and average size of families are given in Table 5.26 by provinces for the census years 1961, 1966 and 1971. Although the average size of the Canadian family remained the same at 3.9 persons between 1961 and 1966, it dropped to 3.7 persons between 1966 and 1971 as declines in birth rates across the nation began to be reflected in census family-size trends. Quebec and New Brunswick experienced the largest reductions in average family size, decreasing from 4.2 persons in 1961 to 3.9 in 1971 for Quebec, and from 4.3 to 4.0 for New Brunswick.

**Families maintaining own households.** Families "maintaining their own households" are those in which the head of the family is also the head of the household. Families not maintaining their own household fall into two census sub-categories: families related to the head of the household, and non-related lodging families. The few who do not fit either of these sub-categories are mostly families of employees living in their employer's household.

As can be seen from Table 5.27, 96.6% of the Canadian families in 1971 maintained their own households. These families increased over earlier censuses both in number as well as in proportion to the total number of families. The majority of the remaining families were related families, characterized by the fact that they were mostly small in size, usually two persons (e.g., the daughter and son-in-law of the household head) and the head of the family was under 25 years of age. On the other hand, lodging families, although increasing slightly in number, constituted a very low proportion of 0.8% unchanged from the 1966 Census.

**Husband-wife families.** For the analysis of family data, a useful classification is the subdivision into husband-wife families and one-parent families. Table 5.28 shows the distribution of both types of families by age of family head. In the case of one-parent families, the age of head is further classified into male and female heads. In the case of husband-wife families, this type of subdivision is not necessary, since for statistical tabulating purposes, the husband was considered to be the head of the family in 1971 and earlier censuses.

Although between 1966 and 1971 the proportion of husband-wife families dropped slightly, in actual number they increased. They still constituted a predominant proportion (90.6%) of total Canadian families. On the other hand, as can be seen from Table 5.28, the majority of one-parent families were headed by females. During the decade 1961-71, these families increased both in number and proportion from 6.6% in 1961 to 7.4% in 1971. This reflects a slight increase in the incidence of "broken" families in Canada, partially perhaps as a result of recent changes in divorce laws because the proportion of females heading such families increased in the age groups 25-34 and 35-44, and these are the ages in which divorces most frequently take place.

**Families by mother tongue of head.** Table 5.29 shows the distribution of families by the mother tongue of family head, by province. For census purposes, mother tongue is defined as "the first language learned that is still understood". As expected, the proportion of family heads reporting English, French, or other mother tongue in the 1971 Census showed a similar pattern to that for the population as a whole. For example, 58.5% of the Canadian population reported English as the mother tongue, as compared with 57.2% of all family heads. The corresponding proportions for French mother tongue were 28.1% and 25.6%, with the lower ratio for family heads being the result of the slightly larger average size of French-speaking families. Conversely, other mother tongues were reported by 13.5% of the total population, and by 17.2% of all family heads.

**Children in families.** There were 8.9 million children in families in 1971. These are limited by definition to children never married and under 25 years of age who were living with their parents or guardians at the time of the census. The above number of children are classified in