

Table 5.30 into selected age groups which roughly correspond to pre-school-age children (under six years), those of elementary school age (6-14), those at the secondary school level (15-18), and those of college or working age (19-24).

Declining birth rates are reflected dramatically in the proportionate increases of children in families during the 1966-71 period. The 19-24 age group of children in families increased by 20.7% over the five years, the 15-18 group by 16.7%, the 6-14 group by only 5.9%, while those under six years of age declined by as much as 16.2%. Children in families for all age groups combined advanced in numbers by 11.3% (7.8 million to 8.6 million) in the 1961-66 period, but by only 2.3% (8.6 million to 8.8 million) during 1966-71.

## 5.5 The vital components of population change

Vital statistics are an important key to the interpretation of population change. They provide a measure of the pace at which the population is increasing by natural means (births minus deaths) and the rate at which women are marrying and reproducing. As such they do much to explain the changing patterns of population growth and composition described in earlier sections of this Chapter. These vital processes of population change are reflected in records of births, deaths, marriages and divorces registered in the provinces and territories of Canada. The continuity of such data gives a constant guide to the planning, operation and evaluation of many national activities, particularly in the fields of public health, education, community planning and various types of business and industrial enterprise.

### 5.5.1 History of vital statistics

The history of the collection of vital statistics in Canada is described in the *1948-49 Canada Year Book*, pp. 185-188. Most trend tables on this subject in the present edition are for recent years back to 1951. A historical summary of vital statistics data for Canada and the provinces back to 1921 is contained in the *Vital Statistics Preliminary annual report* (Catalogue No. 84-201). Some rough estimates of birth, natural increase, and death rates back to the mid-1800s by ten-year periods are contained in Sections 5.6.1, 5.6.3, and 5.7.1, respectively.

### 5.5.2 Summary of principal data

Table 5.31 provides a summary of the principal vital statistics by individual years from 1966 to 1971 for Canada, the provinces and territories, with comparative figures by five-year periods back to 1951-55. Table 5.32 shows similar data for urban centres of 50,000 population and over for 1971 with comparative averages for 1966-70 and 1961-65. More detailed information on all aspects of current vital statistics as summarized in these tables, including analyses of recent trends, appear in the annual report *Vital statistics of Canada* (Catalogue No. 84-202), *Causes of death* (Catalogue No. 84-203), and in other regular and special reports. In addition, certain unpublished data are available on request.

## 5.6 Fertility

Of all the various interactions of the demographic components which produce population change (fertility, mortality, nuptiality, immigration, emigration), none exerts greater influence or is more crucial in its effects than the rate of reproduction or fertility. The nation's death and immigration rates have become far more stable by comparison, and it is the birth and fertility rates that will continue to be the dominant factor in the foreseeable future in shaping the demographic structure of Canada (see Section 5.1).

### 5.6.1 Births

No accurate figures on Canadian crude birth rates are available prior to 1921, when the annual collection of official national figures was initiated. However, the following rough estimates of the average annual crude rates of live births (i.e., per 1,000 total population) for each ten-year intercensal period between 1851 and 1921 may be inferred from studies of early Canadian census data: 1851-61, 45; 1861-71, 40; 1871-81, 37; 1881-91, 34; 1891-1901, 30; 1901-11, 31; 1911-21, 29.

The general trend in the national crude birth rate since 1930 is shown in the accompanying chart, and that since 1951 in Table 5.31. The annual rates declined gradually but steadily from 29.3 in 1921 to a record low of 20.1 in 1937, recovered sharply in the late 1930s and during World War II to 24.3 in 1945, and following the War rose to a high of 28.9 in 1947. Between 1948 and 1959, the rate remained remarkably stable at between 27.1 and 28.5. Between 1966 and 1970 the rate levelled off somewhat between 19.4 and 17.5 but declined to an all-time