



record low of 16.8 in 1971. Part of this decline is attributable to the fact that the crude birth rate is based on total population, which now includes larger proportions of "non-reproductive" population. Even if the annual number of births were to remain stable, the net effect of an increase in population would be a declining crude birth rate.

The rates in most provinces followed trends very similar to the national trend but showed some regional differences in recent years. Although all provinces had record high rates immediately following World War II, during the 1951-55 period average birth rates in Ontario and the western provinces were higher than during 1946-50 and those for Quebec and the Maritime Provinces were lower. In fact, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia had record high crude birth rates during the 1956-60 period. In 1971, Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia had record low rates.

It is often erroneously assumed that Quebec has not only the largest number of births annually but the highest rate in Canada. Since the late 1930s or early 1940s Newfoundland, in some years New Brunswick and, since 1953, Alberta have had higher birth rates than Quebec. Table 5.31 shows that six provinces — Newfoundland, Alberta, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan, in that order — had higher crude rates than Quebec or Ontario in 1966, followed by Manitoba and British Columbia, and that, since 1968, Quebec has had the lowest crude birth rate in the country. However, since these crude rates are based on the total population they do not reflect the true fertility of the women of reproductive ages in the different provinces or the number married within these reproductive ages. A more