

4.2.3 Urban and rural

The urban population was defined in the 1971 Census as all persons living in incorporated cities, towns and villages with a population of 1,000 and over, as well as in unincorporated places of 1,000 and over having a population density of at least 1,000 a sq mile. Also considered as urban were the built-up fringes of these cities, towns and villages if they met the same criteria of population and density. All the remaining population was classified as rural.

Table 4.11 indicates that over three quarters (76.1%) of Canada's population is living in an urban environment, with the degree of urbanization on a provincial basis ranging from 38.3% in Prince Edward Island to 82.4% in Ontario. In comparison with the national average, only two provinces — Ontario and Quebec — were more highly urbanized. The proportion of urban population fell below 50% in just one case — Prince Edward Island.

The rural population, which accounted for 23.9% of the Canadian total in 1971, is further classified in Table 4.11 as either non-farm or farm. The rural farm population is defined for census purposes as those persons living in rural areas on an agricultural holding of one or more acres with sales of agricultural products amounting to \$50 or more in the previous year. Under this definition, the category of rural non-farm in 1971 accounted for 17.3% of the total population, compared to 6.6% for the rural farm segment.

4.3 Demographic and social characteristics

This Section provides data on the general demographic and social characteristics of the population which were available at the end of 1973 from the most recent 1971 Census of Canada. In certain instances, comparisons with earlier census periods are included. Where they are not, such figures can generally be obtained from the relevant reports of previous censuses.

4.3.1 Sex, age and marital status

The age and sex composition represents the most fundamental of the attributes of a given population. Along with marital status, these variables are primarily a function of vital trends; births, deaths, marriages, and dissolutions of marriages. Social and economic factors, by their effects on vital events and migration, influence these characteristics as well. An unbroken series of census data is available as far back as the first Census of Canada in 1871, although only recent trends are summarized here.

Sex ratios. The relatively short demographic history of the Canadian population has been characterized by an excess of males, although this excess has nearly disappeared in recent years. Over the past century the sex ratio (i.e. number of males per 100 females) for Canada reached a peak of 113 in 1911 following a decade of heavy immigration in which males have traditionally predominated. By 1971 the sex ratio had almost evened out at 100.2 which represented only 22,425 more males than females in a total population of over 21.5 million (Table 4.12). In the older settled provinces east of Manitoba the sex ratio has varied between Nova Scotia's 104 in 1911, and Quebec's and Ontario's 1971 ratio of 99. In the western provinces, which were being rapidly settled in the early years of this century, the sex ratio has ranged between Alberta's 1911 high of 149 and Manitoba's 1971 figure of 100.

Age structure. The age composition of the Canadian population is, of course, a reflection of past trends in vital rates and immigration. The lower birth rates of the 1961-71 period compared to those of the 1950s have had a tremendous impact on the population under 15 years of age in 1971. This age group decreased by 211,000 or 3.2% between 1966 and 1971 compared with a gain of 399,800 or 6.4% in the 1961-66 period. As a result the proportion that this age group formed of the total population fell from 34.0% in 1961 to 29.5% in 1971 (Table 4.13).

The population of working age (generally regarded as those 15-64) increased substantially, with a gain in excess of 1,559,000 or 13.1% in the 1966-71 period. This age group comprised 62.3% of the total population in 1971 compared with 59.4% of the total population in 1966 and 58.4% in 1961. Of the total 1961-71 increase in the 15-64 age group, 49.8% of the gain occurred in the 15-24 age group. This young adult age group in 1971 is, of course, the cohort of children born in the high-birth-rate years following World War II. The proportion of persons 65 years of age and over was approximately the same (roughly 8%) in 1971 as in 1961 and 1966.