

The latest estimates of the population by age group and sex are shown in Table 4.14 for Canada and the provinces as at June 1, 1974. The method followed in preparing these estimates was much the same as that used in calculating the population estimates described in Section 4.2.1. These estimates are subject to revision when data from the next census in 1976 become available.

Marital status. Analyses of the trends and size of the single, married, widowed and divorced segments of the population assume their most revealing aspects when these categories are observed in relation to their distributions at different age levels and by sex. Table 4.15 shows these three fundamental demographic characteristics in relationship to each other, based on results of the 1971 Census. The figures show, for example, such imbalances as the far greater numbers of single males than single females at the younger age levels and the reverse for widows as compared to widowers in the older age groups. The former condition results from the generally earlier ages of marriage for females, and the latter is due to the longer life expectancy of females as well as the greater tendency for widowers to remarry.

Among the recent trends in the marital status structure is the steady decrease, since 1951, in the number of married females in the child-bearing ages in relation to the total married women of all ages. This is possibly one of the contributing factors to the sharply declining birth rates in recent years. In 1971, 59.7% of all married females were in the age group 15-44, compared to 61.2% in 1966, 62.9% in 1961, and 64.0% in 1951.

One of the most striking changes revealed by the 1971 Census compared to the previous one in 1966 is the large increase in the number of divorced persons over the 1966-71 period, reflecting in part recent relaxations in the divorce laws. Divorced persons of all ages in 1971 increased to almost three times the size of the 1966 figure (from 64,776 to 175,115). The age group 15-24 experienced the greatest relative increase, but the actual numbers were small compared to most older groups. Moreover, the total number of divorced persons still represented fewer than 1% of Canada's population in 1971. (See also Section 4.8.2.)

4.3.2 Language

In the 1971 Census, three questions were asked on the languages of the Canadian people. Two of these represented the more traditional census inquiries: one on mother tongue (the language first spoken in childhood and still understood) and the other on official language (the ability to speak English, French, or both languages). These were augmented in 1971 by a third question concerned with the language most often spoken at home.

Mother tongue. Summary figures on mother tongue are presented in Table 4.16 which shows the principal languages reported under this concept at the 1971 Census with comparative figures for 1961. It may be noted that the proportion of the Canadian population reporting English mother tongue increased from 58.5% in 1961 to 60.2% in 1971, while the percentage reporting French declined from 28.1 to 26.9. Italian, Greek, Chinese, and Portuguese were others showing significant advances in the 10-year period, while Ukrainian, German, Netherlands, Polish and Yiddish were among the larger groups registering declines.

In addition to providing information on the basic linguistic affiliations of the Canadian people, mother tongue data obtained at decennial censuses form the statistical basis for the creation of Bilingual Districts under the Official Languages Act. For this reason, Table 4.17 is of interest in showing the number and proportion of the population reporting English or French as their mother tongue, by province. The relative gains in English mother tongue over the 1961-71 period occurred mostly in the western provinces at the expense of other mother tongues such as Ukrainian, German and Polish, as the descendants of earlier immigrants now report English as their mother tongue to a greater extent than in previous decades.

Official language. Table 4.18 shows 1971 Census figures on the population reporting the ability to speak one or both of Canada's two official languages, with comparative data for 1961. This table indicates that in 1971 a total of 67.1% were able to speak English only, 18.0% French only, and 13.4% were bilingual. These ratios represent a slight increase in the proportion of the population able to speak both English and French over 1961, when the percentage was 12.2.

Language spoken in the home. The new inquiry on language most often spoken at home was introduced in the 1971 Census on the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism and other groups. It adds a new dimension and insight into the