

first time in 1971 at 9.5. It dropped still further to 8.1 in 1973. Table 4.32 gives average rates of natural increase in the provinces for five-year periods 1951-70 and for individual years 1971, 1972 and 1973.

4.7 Mortality

The Canadian crude death rate is one of the lowest in the world (7.4 per 1,000 population in 1973). After a continuous gradual decline over the past century, the rate appears to have levelled off since about 1967. In the opinion of demographers, further reductions in the crude death rate are likely to be small, and to affect primarily persons in the older age groups. Canadian mortality with special reference to infant deaths is discussed in this Section which also includes life expectancy figures compiled from recent death rates.

4.7.1 General mortality

No official crude death rates (i.e. rates per 1,000 total population) are available prior to 1921. However, studies of the early Canadian censuses have resulted in the following estimated annual crude rates for intercensal periods: 1851-61, 22; 1861-71, 21; 1871-81, 19; 1881-91, 18; 1891-1901, 16; 1901-11, 13; 1911-21, 13.

Typical of pioneer populations, Canada had high death rates in the mid-1800s when the country was still in its early stages of settlement. The crude death rate during that period is estimated as between 22 and 25. Although no data are available, it is assumed that while mortality was high at all ages, the rate among infants, children and young adults must have been particularly high. Even in 1921, for example, the Canadian infant mortality rate was still 102.1 per 1,000 live births. With increasing urbanization and improved sanitation and medical services, the crude death rate dropped by 50% from 22 to 11 between 1851 and 1930. It continued to decline to a low of 7.3 in 1970 and 1971, rising slightly to 7.4 in 1972 and 1973.

Table 4.32 shows the trends in crude death rates since 1951 in the provinces and territories. The low rates shown for Newfoundland and Quebec are mainly due to the high proportion of young people in their populations, and the relatively high rates for British Columbia to the high proportion of elderly people in that province.

Table 4.33 shows the numbers of deaths in urban centres of 50,000 population and over in 1973, and the average deaths a year for the periods 1966-70 and 1961-65.

Age and sex distribution of deaths. Since 1921 when the collection of vital statistics was first instituted, the mortality trend at all ages has been downward. However, the principal factor in lowering the general death rate has been the reduction in the mortality of infants and children.

Table 4.41 shows that between 1951 and 1973, death rates for infants and for young children under five years of age dropped by about 60%. Rates for the five-to-14 group also declined steeply. However, rates for boys and young men from 15 to 24 were actually higher than in 1951. Death rates for males over 25 were appreciably lower in 1973 than in 1951, except for men in the 65-74 interval, where there was little change. On the other hand, rates for females of all ages declined very substantially over the period between 1951 and 1973.

As shown in Table 4.42 covering the 1961-71 period, males under 40 accounted for 18.1% of all male deaths in 1961 but for only 13.6% of such deaths in 1971; in 1961, 16.4% of all female deaths were of persons under 40, a percentage that declined to 10.7 in 1971.

The sharp reductions in male infant and child mortality, and the substantial declines in the female rates for all younger age groups, have tended to raise the average age at death. Over the 1961-71 period the average age at death for males rose 3.6 years from 59.7 to 63.3, while that for females advanced 5.1 years, from 63.1 to 68.2. In the same period, the male median age at death rose only slightly, from 67.9 to 68.5, but the gain for females was 2.5 years, from 72.2 to 74.7. Thus, half the females who died in 1971 were more than 74.7 years old.

Causes of death. Table 4.43 presents details of the 1973 Canadian deaths and death rates based on 50 causes as given in the International Abbreviated List (International Classification of Diseases, 8th Revision). Of the 164,039 deaths occurring in 1973, 80,306 or nearly 49% were due to cardiovascular diseases, i.e. to ailments of the heart and circulatory system. Cancer accounted for 33,068, or 20.2%, accidents for 13,166 or 8.0%, and respiratory ailments for 10,761 or 6.6%. Combined, these four causes were responsible for 137,305 deaths, or 83.7% of the total.