

acres (at least 0.4 hectares) with sales of agricultural products amounting to \$50 or more in the previous year. The rural non-farm category in 1971 accounted for 17.3% of the population, compared to 6.6% for the rural farm segment.

4.3 Demographic and social characteristics

4.3.1 Sex, age and marital status

Age, sex and marital status represent the most fundamental variables of vital trends: births, deaths, marriages, and dissolutions of marriages. Social and economic factors, by their effects on vital events and migration, also influence these characteristics. An unbroken series of census data is available as far back as the first Census of Canada in 1871; only recent trends are summarized here.

Sex ratios. The relatively short demographic history of Canada has been characterized by an excess of males until recent years. Over the past century the sex ratio (i.e. number of males per 100 females) 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 with only 22,425 more males than females in a total population of over 21.5 million (Table 4.12). In the older settled provinces 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 early in this century, the sex ratio has ranged between Alberta's 1911 high of 149 and Manitoba's 1971 figure of 100.

Age structure. Age composition is a reflection of past trends in vital rates and immigration. Lower birth rates of the 1961-71 period compared to those of the 1950s had a tremendous impact on the population under 15 years of age in 1971. This 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. The proportion of this age group in 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 15-64 years) increased substantially, with a gain in excess of 1,559,000 or 13.1% in the 1966-71 period. This group comprised 62.3% of the total population in 1971 compared with 59.4% in 1966 and 58.4% in 1961. Of the total 1961-71 increase, 49.8% of the gain occurred in the 15-24 age group. This young adult group in 1971 was, 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.

Estimates of the population by age group and sex are shown in Table 4.14 for Canada and the provinces as at June 1, 1975. These estimates are subject to revision when data from the 1976 Census become available.

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

Among recent trends 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 contributing factor in the sharply declining birth rates. 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 striking change revealed by the 1971 Census was the large increase in the number of divorced persons, reflecting in part relaxations in the divorce laws.