

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 showed the greatest relative increase, but the actual numbers were small compared to most older groups. However, the total number of divorced persons represented fewer than 1% of Canada's population in 1971. (See also Section 4.8.2.)

Language

4.3.2

In the 1971 Census, three questions were asked on the languages of the Canadian people. Two 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). The third question concerned the language most often spoken at home.

Mother tongue. Summary figures on mother tongue in Table 4.16 show the principal languages reported in the 1971 Census with comparative figures for 1961. The proportion of the Canadian population reporting English mother tongue increased from 58.5% in 1961 to 60.2% in 1971, while those reporting French declined from 28.1% to 26.9%. Italian, Greek, Chinese, and Portuguese showed significant advances, while Ukrainian, German, Netherlands, Polish and Yiddish were among those registering declines.

Table 4.17 shows 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 others such as Ukrainian, German and Polish, as descendants of earlier immigrants reported 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. 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 able to speak both English and French over 1961, when the percentage was 12.2.

Language spoken in the home. This new inquiry was introduced in the 1971 Census on the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism and other groups. It added insight into the languages of Canada since some persons, particularly immigrants, did not indicate either of the two official languages as the one they spoke most often in their homes. Conversely, many with a non-English mother tongue no longer used their mother tongue. Table 4.16 indicates that 67.0% of the population spoke English most often in their homes, whereas only 60.2% reported English as their mother tongue.

Ethnicity, religion, birthplace

4.3.3

Because of the varied nature of Canada's population, the measurements provided by decennial censuses on such subjects as ethnic and religious composition are of widespread interest and in continuous demand. Tables 4.19 to 4.21 show summary figures from the 1971 Census, with comparative data for earlier years.

Ethnic groups. The ethnic composition of Canada has changed considerably because of many factors, including differences in the flow and source of immigrants. Trends in recent years have been characterized by a decline in the proportions of British Isles groups and a corresponding increase in European ethnic groups other than French. For example, the former groups had dropped from 57.0% of the total population in 1901 to 44.6% by 1971, whereas other European groups rose from 8.5% to 23.0%. The French ethnic group remained relatively stable, starting at 30.7% in 1901, and moving irregularly lower to 28.7% by 1971. Table 4.19 provides 1971 figures for the larger ethnic groups, together with data from 1951 and 1961.