

with widowed heads and 25.6% for households with married heads (including separated).

4.4.2 Family size and composition

A family, as defined in the Canadian census, consists of a husband and wife with or without unmarried children, or a parent with one or more unmarried children, living together in the same dwelling. Adopted children and stepchildren have the same status as own children.

The number of families in Canada increased to 5.0 million in 1971 from 4.1 million in 1961, a gain of approximately one fourth over the decade. Following the patterns of provincial population growth, and reflecting the factors of migration, the largest rate of increase occurred in British Columbia (35.4% in the 1961-71 period), followed by Alberta (25.0%), and Ontario (24.5%).

Families by size. The number and average size of families are given in Table 4.27 by province for 1961, 1966 and 1971. Although the average size remained the same at 3.9 persons between 1961 and 1966, it dropped to 3.7 persons between 1966 and 1971, reflecting declining birth rates. Quebec, New Brunswick and Newfoundland had the largest reductions in average family size, decreasing from 4.2 persons in 1961 to 3.9 in 1971 for Quebec, from 4.3 to 4.0 for New Brunswick, and 4.7 to 4.4 for Newfoundland.

Families maintaining own households. In families "maintaining their own households" the head of the family is also the head of the household. Families not maintaining their own households fall into two census sub-categories: families related to the head of the household, and non-related lodging families. The few who do not fit these sub-categories are mostly families of employees living in their employer's household.

Table 4.28 shows that 96.6% of Canadian families in 1971 maintained their own households, an increase both in number and in proportion to the total number of families. The majority remaining were related families, mostly small in size, usually two persons (e.g. the daughter and son-in-law of the household head) with the head of the family under 25 years of age. Lodging families, although increasing slightly in number, constituted a low proportion of 0.8%.

Husband-wife families. For the analysis of family data, a subdivision into husband-wife families and one-parent families in Table 4.29 shows the distribution by age of family head. One-parent families are further classified into those with male and female heads. In husband-wife families, for statistical tabulating purposes the husband was considered the head of the family in 1971 and earlier censuses.

Between 1966 and 1971 the proportion of husband-wife families dropped slightly, but in actual number they increased, remaining a predominant proportion (90.6%) of total Canadian families. Most one-parent families were headed by females; these families increased both in number and proportion from 6.6% in 1961 to 7.5% in 1971. This reflects an increase in "broken" families in Canada because the proportion of females heading such families increased in the age groups 25-34 and 35-44, the ages at which most divorces were granted.

Families by mother tongue of head. For census purposes, mother tongue is defined as "the first language learned that is still understood". The proportion of family heads reporting English, French, or other mother tongue in the 1971 Census showed a pattern fairly similar to that for the population as a whole. (Table 4.30) For example, 60.2% of the Canadian population reported English as the mother tongue, as compared with 57.3% of all family heads. The corresponding proportions for French mother tongue were 26.9% and 25.6%. However, mother tongues other than English or French were reported by only 13.0% of the total population, but by 17.2% of all family heads.