

Children in families. There were 8.8 million children in families in 1971. These were children never married and under 25 years of age who were living with their parents or guardians at the time of the census. They are classified in Table 4.31 into selected age groups which roughly correspond to pre-school-age (under six years), elementary school age (6-14), the secondary school level (15-18), and college or working age (19-24).

Declining birth rates were reflected dramatically in the proportionate increases of children in families during the 1966-71 period. The 19-24 age group in families increased by 20.1% over the five years, the 15-18 group by 16.9%, the 6-14 group by only 5.8%, while those under six years declined by as much as 16.2%. Children in families for all age groups increased from 7.8 million in 1961 to 8.8 million in 1971, but the average number of children per family declined from 1.9 to 1.7.

The vital components of population change

4.5

Vital statistics are an indispensable key to the interpretation of population change. They provide a measure of the pace of increase by natural means (births minus deaths) and the rate at which women marry and reproduce. These vital processes are reflected in statistics from the records of births, deaths, marriages and divorces registered in the provinces and territories of Canada.

History of vital statistics

4.5.1

An historical summary of vital statistics data for Canada and the provinces back to 1921 is contained in *Vital statistics, Preliminary annual report* (Statistics Canada Catalogue No. 84-201). Some rough estimates of birth, natural increase, and death rates back to the mid-1800s by 10-year periods are given in Sections 4.6.1, 4.6.3 and 4.7.1, which follow.

Summary of principal data

4.5.2

Table 4.32 provides a summary of the principal vital statistics for 1971, 1972, 1973 and 1974 for Canada, the provinces and territories, with comparative figures by five-year periods back to 1951-55. Table 4.33 shows similar data for urban centres of 50,000 population and over for 1974 with comparative averages for 1961-65 and 1966-70. More detailed information on vital statistics, including analyses of recent trends, is published annually in the Statistics Canada reports *Vital statistics, volume I, births* (Catalogue No. 84-204), *Vital statistics, volume II, marriages and divorces* (Catalogue No. 84-205), *Vital statistics, volume III, deaths* (Catalogue No. 84-206) and *Causes of death, provinces by sex and Canada by sex and age* (Catalogue No. 84-203). Certain unpublished data are available on request.

Fertility

4.6

Of all the demographic factors which produce population change (fertility, mortality, nuptiality, immigration, emigration), none exerts greater influence than the rate of reproduction or fertility. By comparison, the nation's death and immigration rates could be considered far more stable and it is the birth and fertility rates that may well continue to be the dominant factor in the foreseeable future in shaping the demographic structure of Canada (see Section 4.1).

Births

4.6.1

No accurate figures on Canadian crude birth rates are available prior to 1921, when the annual collection of official national figures was initiated. However, the following rough estimates of the average annual crude rates of live births (i.e. per 1,000 total population) for each 10-year intercensal period between 1851 and 1921 may be inferred from studies of early Canadian census data: 1851-61, 45; 1861-71, 40; 1871-81, 37; 1881-91, 34; 1891-1901, 30; 1901-11, 31; 1911-21, 29.