

population and over for 1975 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 84-204), *Vital statistics, volume II, marriages and divorces* (Catalogue 84-205), *Vital statistics, volume III, deaths* (Catalogue 84-206) and *Causes of death, provinces by sex and Canada by sex and age* (Catalogue 84-203). Certain unpublished data are available on request.

## Fertility

4.6

Of all the demographic factors which introduce changes in population (fertility, mortality, nuptiality, immigration, emigration), none exerts greater influence than the rate of reproduction or fertility. By comparison, the nation's death rate, which has reached low levels, could be considered far more stable; it is the birth and fertility rates that may well continue to be the dominant factor in the near future in shaping the demographic profile 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 (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.

The general trend in the national crude birth rate since 1951 is shown in Table 4.32. The annual rates declined steadily from 29.3 in 1921 to a record low of 20.1 in 1937, recovered sharply in the late 1930s and rose during World War II to 24.3 in 1945. Following the war the birth rate rose to a high of 28.9 in 1947. Between 1948 and 1959 it remained remarkably stable at between 27.1 and 28.5, but has since declined dramatically to a record low of 15.4 by 1974. The rate for 1975 shows a slight increase to 15.7. Provincial rates have followed this trend with some regional differences.

Since these crude birth rates are based on the total population they do not reflect the true fertility of the women of reproductive ages in the different provinces. A more accurate measure of the true birth rate is one based on the number of women by age between the ages of 15 and 49 (Table 4.38; Section 4.6.2).

**Age of mothers.** The distribution of infants born alive in 1975 by age of the mother is given in Table 4.34. It shows that 69.1% of the live births in 1975 to all mothers were among women 20-29, another 13.6% to women 30-34, and only about 12.8% of births were to mothers under 20.

**Order of birth.** Table 4.34 also shows the order of birth of all live-born infants in 1975 according to the age of the mother. In 1975 the first births for mothers of all ages constituted 44.1% of all live births; births of fourth or higher order constituted 8.4%.

Table 4.35 summarizes the pattern of family formation since 1951 and shows that the percentages of first and second children have been increasing in recent years. This has been accompanied generally by a reduction in the proportion of third and higher birth orders.

**Stillbirths.** The 2,627 stillbirths of at least 28 weeks gestation that were delivered in 1975 represented a ratio of about seven for every 1,000 live births. The stillbirth ratio, decreasing steadily, has been cut by more than half over the past quarter-century (Table 4.36). Ratios in some provinces have been reduced more than in others.

Table 4.37 illustrates that the risk of having a stillborn child increases with the age of the mother. Although stillbirth rates for mothers of all ages have been declining, they continue to be much higher for older than for younger mothers.

### Fertility rates

4.6.2

The sex and age composition of a population is a fundamental factor affecting its birth rates. Since almost all children are born to women between the ages of 15 and 49,