

German, Italian, Ukrainian, or other languages. The 1971 Census also asked a question on the language most often spoken in the home.

Mother tongue. The proportion of the Canadian population reporting English mother tongue increased from 60.2% in 1971 to 61.4% in 1976, while those reporting French declined from 26.9% to 25.6%. Chinese and Portuguese showed significant advances, while Ukrainian, German, Dutch, Polish and Yiddish were among those registering declines.

The relative gains in English mother tongue over the 1971-76 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.

A not stated category in the 1976 data of Table 4.17 makes direct comparisons between 1971 and 1976 data problematic. In 1971, persons who did not report a mother tongue were assigned a language. Consequently, the 1976 counts are lower for any given language than they would have been if the 1971 procedure had been followed.

Official language. Table 4.18 shows census figures on the population reporting the ability to speak one or both of Canada's two official languages. In 1971 a total of 67.1% were able to speak English only, 18% French only, and 13.4% were bilingual. There was a slight increase in the proportion able to speak both English and French over 1961, when it was 12.2%.

Language spoken in the home. This question 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

A declining birth rate and a growing proportion of elderly persons had an impact on the structure of Canada's population at the beginning of the 1980s. Fewer marriages, more divorces, more lone parent families and more one-person households were other trends recorded.

they spoke most often at home. Conversely, many with a non-English mother tongue no longer used their mother tongue. Table 4.16 indicates that 67% of the population spoke English most often in their homes, but 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 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% of the total population in 1901 to 44.6% by 1971, whereas other European groups rose from 8.5% to 23%. The French ethnic group remained relatively stable, varying from 30.7% in 1901 to 28.7% by 1971.

Religious denominations. Census figures do not measure church membership or the degree of affiliation with a particular religious body. Respondents were asked to enter a specific religious denomination, sect or community, with the opportunity to report no religion if so desired. Three out of every four persons in Canada in 1971 reported one of the three numerically largest denominations — Roman Catholic, United Church or