

Lone parent families consist of a parent, regardless of marital status, with one or more children living in the same dwelling.

Husband-wife families. Table 4.28 shows that 90.2% of Canadian families in 1976 were husband-wife families, a decrease of 1.6% from 1966. For the analysis of family data, a subdivision into husband-wife families in Table 4.29 shows the distribution by age of husbands and of wives. For statistical tabulating purposes, the husband was considered the head of the family in 1971 and earlier censuses.

Lone parent families. Lone parent families increased both in number (371,885 to 559,335) and in proportion of total families (8.2% to 9.8%) over the decade. Table 4.29 classifies such families into male lone parent families and female lone parent families. The proportion of female lone parent families increased from 6.6% to 8.1% while the proportion of male lone parent families increased only from 1.6% to 1.7%. This reflects an increase in broken families in Canada because the percentage increase of female lone parent families was 171.6% in the age group 25-34 and 68.2% in the age group 35-44, the ages at which most divorces were granted. An increase of 163.8% was recorded for the under 25 age group. The greatest proportion of male lone parent families fell in the 45-54 age group followed by the 35-44 age group.

Families by mother tongue of husband, wife and lone parent. For census purposes, mother tongue is defined as the first language learned that is still understood. The proportion of husbands, wives and lone parents reporting English, French, or other mother tongue in the 1976 Census showed a pattern fairly similar to that for the population as a whole (Table 4.30). For example, 61.4% of the Canadian population reported English as the mother tongue, as compared with 58.7% of all husbands, wives and lone parents. The corresponding proportions for French mother tongue were 25.6% and 25.4%. However, mother tongues other than English or French were reported by only 11.0% of the total population, but by 14.1% of all husbands, wives and lone parents. For the Canadian population, 1.9% did not state mother tongue while the not stated category was 1.8% for husbands, wives and lone parents.

Children in families. In 1976 the definition of children was expanded to include all persons, regardless of age, who were living with their parent(s) or guardian(s) at the time of the census. Unrelated wards or foster children, however, were designated as lodgers rather than children. Children are classified into selected age groups which roughly correspond to pre-school age (under six), elementary school age (6-14), secondary school age (15-17), college or working age (18-24) and 25 years and over (Table 4.31).

The 1976 data showed the following distribution by age group of children; under six, 23.0%; 6-14 years, 41.4%; 15-17 years, 14.9%; 18-24 years, 16.6%; and 25 years and over, 4.1%. Total children in families in private households within Canada for all age groups decreased from 9.2 million in 1971 to 8.9 million in 1976, and the average number of children per family declined from 1.8 to 1.6.

4.5 The vital components of population change

Vital statistics are an indispensable tool to the measurement and interpretation of population change. They provide information such as the rate at which population changes by natural means, men and women marry and have children, or marriages are dissolved, and population increases due to birth and decreases due to death. The statistics are derived from the records of births, deaths, marriages and divorces registered in the provinces and territories.

History of vital statistics. A 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 84-201). Estimates of birth, natural increase, and death rates back to the mid-1800s by 10-year periods are given in the following sections.

Summary of principal data. Table 4.32 provides a summary of the principal vital statistics for 1976 and 1977 for Canada, the provinces and territories, with comparative