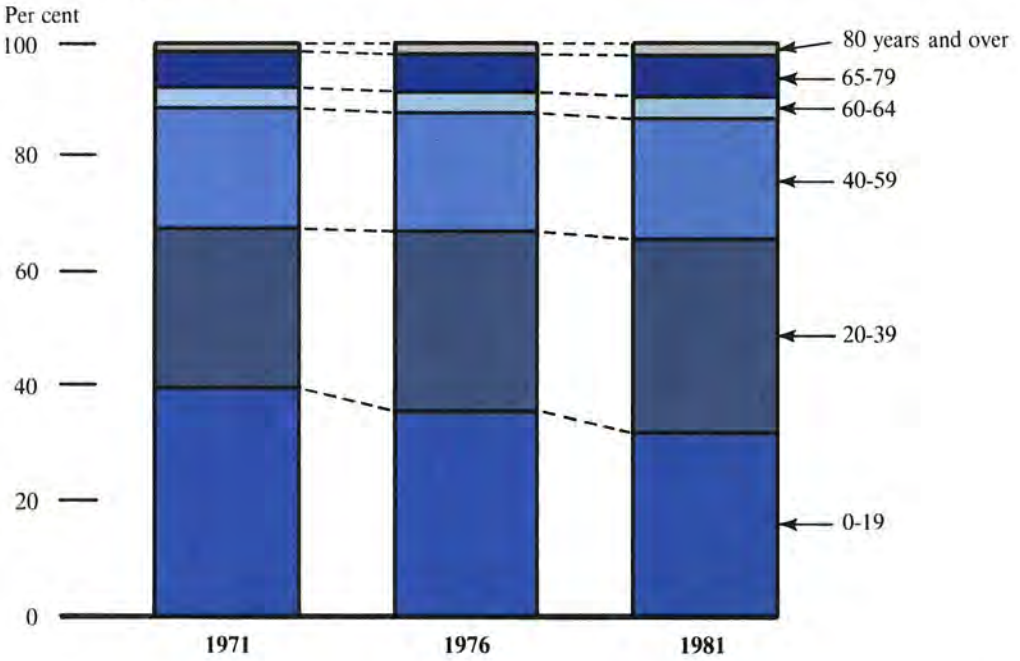


Chart 2.2
The aging population



2.5.2 Language

In the 1981 Census, a question on language was asked about mother tongue, the language first spoken in childhood and still understood. It was the first Canadian census to identify separately the various aboriginal languages spoken in Canada. Cree and Ojibway were the largest aboriginal language groups. A total of 18,840 people reported Inuktitut as their mother tongue. Asian languages were also more specifically identified. The census showed that languages such as Punjabi, Vietnamese, Filipino and Tagalog have been learned during the childhood of many Canadians.

Mother tongue. The proportion of the Canadian population reporting English mother tongue decreased slightly from 61.42% in 1976 to 61.28% in 1981, while those reporting French increased from 25.60% to 25.67%. The French mother tongue proportion increased in New Brunswick, Quebec, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon and Northwest Territories; it declined in the other provinces.

Italian was the third and German fourth among mother tongue groups and their numbers increased by 9.2% and 9.7% respectively. Both substantially exceeded the general rate of population growth, 5.9%.

People having Indo-Pakistani languages as their mother tongue doubled to 117,000 between 1976 and

1981. The population with Chinese mother tongue increased by almost 70% to reach 224,000 in 1981. Cree was the most common of the native languages, the mother tongue of over 67,000 people.

Official languages. The 1981 Census data on language showed that while English was the language that could be spoken by most Canadians, the number of people able to speak both official languages, English and French, increased by 27% between 1971 and 1981, more than double the rate of population growth over the same period.

Almost 3.7 million people considered themselves able to converse in both official languages. Of these, 1.1 million (30%) claimed English as their mother tongue and 2.2 million (61%) listed French. In the 1971 Census, 24.5% of the 2.9 million bilingual Canadians had English as their mother tongue while 68% had French. Over half of the increase in bilingual Canadians since 1971 was accounted for by people whose mother tongue was English.

2.5.3 Ethnicity, religion, birthplace

Ethnic groups. The 1981 Census was the first to recognize more than one ethnic origin for an individual. At that time, 1.8 million persons (7.6% of the population) identified their heritage as coming from more than one ethnic group. Approximately