

Saskatoon ranked first among Canada's Census Metropolitan Areas, with a population growth rate of 14.6% during the 1981-86 period.

In terms of growth rate, Ottawa-Hull ranked second with a growth rate of 10.1%, followed by Toronto with 9.5%.

The metropolitan areas of Calgary and Edmonton, which experienced very substantial growth rates of 33.2% and 33.7% during the 1976-81 period, grew by 7.2% and 6.0%, respectively, between 1981 and 1986.

Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver continue to be Canada's three largest metropolitan areas with populations in excess of one million. Together they comprised 7.7 million people or 30.5% of Canada's population in 1986.

A preliminary analysis of the growth in these three Census Metropolitan Areas indicates a resurgence in the growth of their central cities.

While the cities of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver continued to grow at a slower rate than the surrounding municipalities of the metropolitan areas, these three central cities continued to show the turnaround in population growth that was first observed in the 1981 Census.

For the 1981-86 period, Toronto showed an increase of just over 2%. This compares to a decrease of 5% during the 1976-81 period and an even larger decrease of 11% during the 1971-76 period.

In the case of the city of Montreal, the population showed little change between 1981 and 1986, compared to declines of about 10% in each of the periods 1976-81 and 1971-76.

Vancouver showed an increase of just over 4% for the 1981-86 period, up from about 1% during 1976-81 and a decline of 4% during the 1971-76 period.

2.6 Municipalities

Among Canada's 144 municipalities with populations in excess of 25,000, 68 experienced rates of growth above the national average, recorded in the 1986 Census, with the strongest occurring in suburban municipalities surrounding major centres.

Vaughan, Ont., near Toronto, was the fastest growing large municipality, more than doubling its population by adding over 35,000 people. Cumberland, Ont., near Ottawa, ranked a distant second with a population growth rate of 66.9%. Nine of the 10 fastest growing municipalities were located in Ontario.

Municipalities experiencing the largest rates of population decline were found primarily in resource or one-industry-based regions. Sept-Îles, Que., registered the largest percentage decline in its population, at 12.4%.

Calgary is now Canada's second largest municipality. Montreal continued to occupy top spot as Canada's largest municipality, with just over one million people. Calgary, however, switched with Toronto to occupy second position, with a population of just over 636,000.

Mississauga, Ont., ranked ninth in size, experienced the largest absolute increase of just under 59,000 people.

2.7 Demographic and social characteristics

2.7.1 Shift in age structure and trends

Data from the 1986 Census reflect the continuation of large scale changes in the age distribution of the Canadian population. While the growth rate in the total population has gradually declined over the past quarter century, the rate has varied widely for different segments of the population.

The changes in the age structure reflect the impact of varying birth rates in earlier years, in particular, the "baby boom" of the 1950s and early 1960s, followed by the "baby bust" of the late 1960s and 1970s. As persons born during these periods move through their life-cycle, they have had and will continue to have significant impact on the school system, the labour force, family formation, health care and many other aspects of society.

Another factor contributing to the shift in the age structure is the substantial gain in life expectancy since the mid-1970s. This, in part, explains the large increase in the size of the elderly population. The high growth rate of the elderly population is expected to continue well into the next century. This will have a significant impact on the demand for health and social services.

Child population stabilizing. While the decline in the birth rate has resulted in much smaller pre-school and primary school age populations in 1986 compared to 1961, the size of these groups has stabilized during the 1980s.

The pre-school population (under six years of age) has in fact increased by nearly 2% over the 1981-86 period, while the primary school age population has decreased by only 3%. These changes are small compared to the declines observed during the "baby bust" and reflect the stabilization in the birth rate during the 1980s.

The stability of this dependent population implies that there will not be additional pressure on the delivery of elementary educational services into the early 1990s.

Youth population declining. While the number of people under age 14 has not changed much since