

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 1981, the population aged 14 to 24 has declined significantly. Most persons in this age group were born during the "baby-bust" era of the late 1960s and 1970s when birth rates were dropping rapidly.

Between 1981 and 1986, the secondary school age population (14-18) decreased by 15%, while the youth population (18-24) experienced an 8% drop. These decreases have started, and will continue to exert a downward pull on the number of persons entering the labour market. This is in sharp contrast to the 1960s and 1970s, when the "baby-boomers" entered the labour market in record numbers.

Adult population continues to increase. There are over one million persons aged 75 or over in Canada and more than half the population is over 30 years of age.

The population aged 20 to 64 continued to increase between 1981 and 1986. This group was 66% larger in 1986 than in 1961 and grew by nearly 8% during the 1981 to 1986 period. In 1986, 56% of this general working age population were 35 years of age or older. In future years, as the "baby-boomers" move into their 40s and beyond, the working age population will become increasingly concentrated in the older age groups.

The population aged 65 and over has grown from 1.4 million in 1961 to 2.7 million in 1986, a rate of increase more than twice that of the population as a whole. The numbers of those 75 years of age and older increased at an even higher rate. In 1986, there were just over one million persons aged 75 and over, more than double the number in 1961.

The aging of the population is clearly reflected in the fact that the median age of the Canadian population is now the highest in history. In 1986, the median age of the population was 31.6 years, up from 29.6 in 1981 and 26.3 in 1961.

In 1986, nearly 11% of the population was 65 years of age and older compared to less than 8% in 1961. In contrast, in 1986, 21% of Canadians were under 15 years of age compared to 34% in 1961.

British Columbia had the highest median age (33 years) in 1986, followed by Ontario and Quebec with median ages of 32 years. At the other extreme, the Northwest Territories had by far the youngest population (median age of 24 years), followed by Newfoundland with a median age of 28 years and Alberta and the Yukon with median ages of 29 years.

Women outnumber men among seniors. In 1961, there were 106 women aged 65 and over for every 100 men in the same age group. By 1986 the ratio had jumped to 138 women for every 100 men.

The gap between the number of males and females increases with age so that for the population 85 years of age and older, women outnumbered men by more than two to one in 1986. This imbalance between females and males among seniors is due to differences in longevity, with women outliving men an average of seven years.

More single young adults. Young adults are tending to marry at a later age. As a result, the proportion of single persons aged 20 to 34 continued to increase between 1981 and 1986.

Among females 20 to 24 years of age, 60% were single in 1986, compared to 40% in 1961 and 51% in 1981. Similar patterns have been observed for women in the 25 to 34 year age groups, as well as among males.

These trends explain, in part, the lower rates of family formation, the lower fertility rates and the increase in one-person households in recent years.

2.7.2 Language

According to the 1986 Census, 15.7 million persons, or 62.1% of the population of Canada, reported English as their only mother tongue; 6.4 million or 25.1% of the population, reported French as their only mother tongue; and 3.2 million, or 12.8% of the population, reported a language other than English or French as their only mother tongue. (First language learned and still understood.) Of the 3.2 million persons who reported having a single mother tongue other than English or French, 2.1 million indicated a language of European origin, 634,000 a language of Asian or Middle Eastern origin, 138,000 an aboriginal language and 13,000 a language of another origin. (Origin means the geographical region where a language came into being. Persons who report that language may actually come from another region.)

In 1986, nine out of 10 Canadians whose only mother tongue was French lived in the province of Quebec where 82.8% of the population reported that French was their only mother tongue.