

While the growth in the pre-school population has been slow, a continuing increase in the participation of young mothers in the labour force may see the current demand for day care facilities maintained. Labour force data from the 1986 Census will enable trends in the work patterns of young mothers to be analyzed further.

Households and living arrangements. Between 1981 and 1986, the number of private households in Canada increased twice as fast as the population. In 1986, there were 8.9 million households, up 9% from 1981. In the same period, the country's population increased by only 4%. However, the rate of increase for households has actually declined significantly. Between 1976 and 1981, the number of households increased by 16%, compared to 9% between 1981 and 1986.

In Canada, an increasing number of people are living alone. In 1961, less than 10% of all private households were one-person households. By 1986, the 1.9 million people living alone made up 21% of all private households.

Factors contributing to the growth in the number of one-person households are the aging of the population and increases in marriage breakdown. In the latter case, while most divorced persons eventually remarry, they do swell the ranks of those living alone, if only temporarily. In the former case, differences in mortality rates, with wives outliving their husbands, have continued to result in a rising number of elderly widows living alone.

More and more Canadians are living as husband and wife outside the bounds of formal marriage. Between 1981 and 1986, there was a 38% increase in the number of reported common-law unions. In 1986, 8% of all couples, about 487,000 families, reported that their union was common-law. In 1981, 6% of all couples, or about 352,000, reported living in such unions.

There were fairly wide regional variations in the incidence of such unions. The highest proportions of common-law couples were to be found in the Yukon (20%) and the Northwest Territories (17%). Among the provinces, 13% of couples in Quebec were living common-law, while in Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island, less than 5% of all couples were not formally married.

Close to 2.7 million people in Canada were 65 years of age and over in 1986. Of these, 91% were living in private households while 9% lived in nursing homes, other institutions and establishments. A total of 25% of the elderly lived alone.

There are significant differences in living arrangements among the elderly in Canada. In the 65 to 74 year age group, only 3% were living

in nursing homes and other institutions. Almost two-thirds of this age group lived in families (with their spouses or perhaps with unmarried children). About 22% lived alone and 7% lived with other relatives.

The population 75 years and over, a rapidly growing group, has quite a different pattern of living arrangements. For example, 17% of those 75 years and over lived in nursing homes or other institutions. The proportion of those living alone increased to 30%; 38% lived with a spouse or unmarried children; and 12% were living with other relatives.

2.9 The vital components

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

History of vital statistics. Historically, vital statistics data for Canada and the provinces go back to 1921. These can be obtained from a variety of periodic publications as well as from the repository of unpublished tabulations at the vital statistics and health status sections of health division, Statistics Canada.

Summary of principal data. Table 2.28 provides a summary of the principal vital statistics for Canada, the provinces and territories.

2.9.1 Births

Of all the demographic factors which produce changes in population (fertility, mortality, nuptiality, immigration, emigration), none exerts greater influence than the rate of reproduction or fertility.

Birth rates. Accurate figures on Canadian crude birth rates have been available since 1921 when the annual collection of official national figures was initiated. The following estimates of the average annual crude rates of live births (per 1,000 total population) for each 10-year intercensal period between 1851 and 1921 may be inferred from studies of early Canadian Census data: 1851-61, 45; 1861-71, 40; 1871-81, 37; 1881-91, 34; 1891-1901, 30; 1901-11, 31; 1911-21, 29.

The annual crude birth rates declined steadily from 29.3 in 1921 to a low of 20.1 in 1937, recovered somewhat in the late 1930s and rose