

57.2% of all family heads. The corresponding proportions for French mother tongue were 26.9% and 25.6%. However, mother tongues other than English or French were reported by only 13.0% of the total population, but by 17.2% of all family heads.

**Children in families.** There were 8.8 million children in families in 1971. These are limited by definition to children never married and under 25 years of age who were living with their parents or guardians at the time of the census. The above number of children are classified in Table 4.30 into selected age groups which roughly correspond to pre-school-age children (under six years), those of elementary school age (6-14), those at the secondary school level (15-18), and those of college or working age (19-24).

Declining birth rates are reflected dramatically in the proportionate increases of children in families during the 1966-71 period. The 19-24 age group of children in families increased by 20.2% over the five years, the 15-18 group by 16.9%, the 6-14 group by only 5.8%, while those under six years of age declined by as much as 16.2%. Children in families for all age groups combined advanced in numbers by 11.5% (7.8 million to 8.7 million) in the 1961-66 period, but by only 2.2% (8.7 million to 8.8 million) during 1966-71.

## 4.5 The vital components of population change

Vital statistics are an indispensable key to the interpretation of population change. They provide a measure of the pace at which the population is increasing by natural means (births minus deaths) and the rate at which women are marrying and reproducing. As such they do much to explain the changing patterns of population growth and composition described in earlier sections of this Chapter. These vital processes of population change are reflected in the statistics compiled from the records of births, deaths, marriages and divorces registered in the provinces and territories of Canada.

### 4.5.1 History of vital statistics

The history of the collection of vital statistics in Canada is described in the *1948-49 Canada Year Book* pp 185-188. Most trend tables on this subject in the present edition are for recent years back to 1951. An historical summary of vital statistics data for Canada and the provinces back to 1921 is contained in the *Vital Statistics Preliminary annual report* (Catalogue No. 84-201). Some rough estimates of birth, natural increase, and death rates back to the mid-1800s by 10-year periods are contained in Sections 4.6.1, 4.6.3 and 4.7.1, respectively.

### 4.5.2 Summary of principal data

Table 4.31 provides a summary of the principal vital statistics for 1971 and 1972 for Canada, the provinces and territories, with comparative figures by five-year periods back to 1951-55. Table 4.32 shows similar data for urban centres of 50,000 population and over for 1972 with comparative averages for 1966-70 and 1961-65. More detailed information on all aspects of current vital statistics as summarized in these tables, including analyses of recent trends, appears in the annual report *Vital statistics of Canada* (Catalogue No. 84-202), *Causes of death* (Catalogue No. 84-203), and in other regular and special reports. In addition, certain unpublished data are available on request.

## 4.6 Fertility

Of all the various interactions of the demographic factors which produce population change (fertility, mortality, nuptiality, immigration, emigration), none exerts greater influence than the rate of reproduction or fertility. By comparison, the nation's death and immigration rates have become far more stable and it is the birth and fertility rates that will continue to be the dominant factor in the foreseeable future in shaping the demographic structure of Canada (see Section 4.1).

### 4.6.1 Births

No accurate figures on Canadian crude birth rates are available prior to 1921 when the annual collection of official national figures was initiated. However, the following rough estimates of the average annual crude rates of live births (i.e. per 1,000 total population) for each 10-year intercensal period between 1851 and 1921 may be inferred from studies of early Cana-