

dian census data: 1851-61, 45; 1861-71, 40; 1871-81, 37; 1881-91, 34; 1891-1901, 30; 1901-11, 31; 1911-21, 29.

The general trend in the national crude birth rate since 1951 is shown in Table 4.31. The annual rates declined gradually but steadily from 29.3 in 1921 to a record low of 20.1 in 1937, recovered sharply in the late 1930s and during World War II to 24.3 in 1945. Following the war the birth rate rose to a high of 28.9 in 1947. Between 1948 and 1959 the rate remained remarkably stable at between 27.1 and 28.5, but has since declined dramatically to reach a record low of 15.9 by 1972.

The rates for most provinces as shown in Table 4.31 followed trends very similar to the national trend but exhibited some regional differences in recent years. Although all provinces had record high rates immediately following World War II, during the 1951-55 period average birth rates in Ontario and the western provinces were higher than during 1946-50 and those for Quebec and the Maritime Provinces were lower. In fact, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia had record high crude birth rates during the 1956-60 period. By 1972 all provinces had record low rates.

Since these crude birth rates are based on the total population they do not reflect the true fertility of the women of reproductive ages in the different provinces. A more accurate measure of the true birth rate is one based on the number of women between the ages of 15 and 45 (see Table 4.39 and Section 4.6.2).

**Sex of live births.** With rare exceptions, wherever birth statistics have been collected they have shown an excess of male over female births. The number of males to every 1,000 females born in Canada has averaged around 1,057 since the middle 1930s. Provincial sex ratios vary much more widely because of the relatively fewer number of births involved — the smaller the total number of births, the greater the chance of wide sex-ratio variations from year to year. In 1972, 1,061 male infants were born in Canada for every 1,000 females.

**Age of parents.** The distribution of legitimate live-born infants born in 1972 by age of the parents is given in Table 4.33, as well as of illegitimate infants by age of mother. This table shows that over two thirds of the births in 1972 to married mothers were among 20-29-year-olds, another 15% to 30-34-year-olds, and only about 8.5% of births were to married mothers under 20. By contrast, 47% of the illegitimate births were to unmarried mothers under 20, and an additional 32% to 20-24-year-olds.

**Order of birth.** Table 4.34 shows the order of birth of all live-born infants in 1972 according to the age of the mother. As would be expected, 32,904 or four out of every five of the 39,640 infants born to mothers 15-19 years of age were the first live-born child, whereas about half of the children born to mothers of 20-24 years were their second or later live-born child. In 1972, 297 infants were born to mothers who had not yet reached their 15th birthday.

Table 4.35 summarizes the pattern of family formation since 1951 and shows that the percentages of first and second children have been increasing in recent years. This has been accompanied by a reduction in the proportion of third and higher birth orders.

**Illegitimacy.** Concurrent with the declining birth rate, the proportion of the live births in Canada which were "illegitimate" (i.e. births in which the parents reported themselves as not being married to each other at the time of the child's birth, and in Ontario those in which the mother was reported as "single" at the time of birth) has been rising in recent years (see Table 4.36). In 1956 illegitimate births constituted only about 4% of all live births; by 1972 the proportion had risen to 9%. In the Yukon Territory and Northwest Territories, almost one of every four births in 1972 was considered as illegitimate. Of the provinces, Saskatchewan and Manitoba had the highest percentages at 14.5 and 13.0, respectively.

**Stillbirths.** The 3,046 stillbirths of at least 28 weeks gestation that were delivered in 1972 represented a ratio of a little under nine for every 1,000 fetuses born alive. As is evident from Table 4.37, the stillbirth ratio has been decreasing steadily and has been cut by more than half over the past quarter-century. Ratios in some provinces have been reduced more than in others. The stillbirth ratio among unmarried mothers has been consistently higher than that among married mothers.

Table 4.38 illustrates the fact that the risk of having a stillborn child increases with the age of the mother. Although stillbirth rates for mothers of all ages have been declining, they continue to be much higher for older mothers than for younger ones.