

14.3.1 Recent trends

The 1971 Census recorded a total of 6 million occupied dwellings in Canada. (A dwelling, for census purposes, is a structurally separate set of living quarters with a private entrance either from outside the building or from a common hall or stairway inside.) This total represented a 32.5% increase in dwellings since the 1961 Census compared to an increase in population of 18.2%. It is apparent that, despite slower population growth resulting from declining birth rates and lower immigration, the need for dwellings has continued to increase at a rate comparable to the record growth rates of the 1950s. This is attributable largely to the increased rate of family formation as children of the postwar "baby boom" reached working and marriageable age, and to the establishment of increasing numbers of one- and two-person households in both younger and older age groups.

These trends in housing growth rates, including comparisons over the past 20 years for such characteristics as type of dwelling, tenure, and number of rooms are summarized in Table 14.3.

14.3.2 Dwelling types, tenure and size

Dwelling types. Single detached homes continued to be the predominant type of housing accommodation in Canada in 1971, although their relative numbers have gradually declined in favour of multiple-type dwellings. Twenty years earlier, at the 1951 Census, two thirds of all dwellings were single detached but this ratio gradually dropped to 59.5% by 1971. In the 1961-71 period single detached homes increased by 20.6%, whereas multiple-type units, i.e. single attached (double and row houses), apartments, flats, etc., grew at the significantly higher rate of 52.9%.

Table 14.4 shows the distribution of the two broad dwelling-type classes in 1971 by province and by metropolitan area. Saskatchewan had the largest proportion of single detached homes, 81.5% of its occupied dwellings being in this category. Almost 60% of Quebec's dwellings were multiple-type units (apartments, single attached, etc.), and only 40% were single detached, by far the lowest proportion among the provinces. The distribution within the major metropolitan centres reflected these provincial ratios in general terms, except that in most cases the proportions of multiple-unit dwelling types were considerably higher than for the province as a whole. This was particularly evident in Montreal and Toronto, where only 23.7% and 45.9%, respectively, of all occupied dwellings were single detached homes.

Tenure. The recent trend toward apartment living and higher density accommodation has resulted in a significant increase in the number of rented dwellings (from 34.0% of all dwellings in 1961 to 39.7% in 1971), reversing an earlier trend which had seen the rate of home-ownership increase steadily from 56.7% of all homes in 1941 to 66.0% in 1961.

As in the case of dwelling types, there was considerable variation among provinces in the proportions of owned dwellings in 1971, ranging from a low of 47.4% in Quebec to a high of 80.0% in Newfoundland. Table 14.5 shows that the swing toward tenant occupancy in the 1961-71 period was characteristic of all provinces, and at a fairly uniform rate. However, the trend was less marked in New Brunswick and Quebec, where the decline in the percentage of home-owners between 1961 and 1971 was not as sharp as in the other provinces.

Home-ownership is a characteristic which varies greatly between rural and urban areas and is generally in inverse ratio to the size of the community. For example, in the very large urban agglomerations of 500,000 population and over, only 46.1% of all dwellings were owner-occupied in 1971, compared with 63.2% for the urban size-groups under 100,000 population and 82.0% in rural areas. Among the various census metropolitan areas, the eastern centres of Halifax, Saint John, Montreal, Quebec and Ottawa-Hull showed the lowest percentages of home-ownership and the highest tenancy rates.

Dwelling size. Despite the high increase in apartment rental accommodation during the 1961-71 decade as compared to owner-occupied single homes, the average size of Canadian dwellings showed a slight increase from 5.3 to 5.4 rooms. Not all provinces followed this pattern, however, and, as Table 14.6 shows, there was a decline in the average number of rooms per dwelling in all provinces east of Ontario, with increases in Ontario and throughout the West. Throughout the nation as a whole, Prince Edward Island had the highest average in 1971 at 6.1 rooms per dwelling, and the Yukon Territory and Northwest Territories the lowest at 4.3. A "crowded" dwelling, for census purposes, is considered to be any dwelling in which