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Regional and ethnic differences in the age composition of Canada's population

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Summary

By way of introduction, a brief description is given, for Canada only, of the principal changes in the relative importance of the broad age groups, 0-15 years, 15-64 years, and 65 years and over, between the 1901 and 1951 Censuses, some attention being devoted to the comparative rate of change in the population in these age groups between 1941 and 1951. This is followed by a comparison of regional differences in age structure of the population of Canada in 1951, with some reference to the effects of variations in birth rates, immigration and inter-provincial movements of population upon these regional differences. The next section compares the age distribution of the population of Canada by rural and urban areas, the rural being sub-divided into farm and non-farm and the urban into size categories. Changes in age composition of the population of rural and urban areas since 1941 are examined, mention being made of the influence of the rural to urban migration on the age structure of the rural-urban populations at the 1951 Census. In the final section of this paper differences in age composition of the principal ethnic origins in Canada at the 1951 Census are observed. An attempt is made to show how differential fertility and mortality, and differences in time of settlement and in age distribution of immigrants of various origins, have affected the age distribution of these origins as revealed by the 1951 Census results.

- * General distribution of this document is limited to the introductory summary. Participants who have been invited to take part in the meeting referred to above will receive also the full text of the paper. Other participants in the Conference will receive the full text upon request.

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Différences régionales et ethniques dans la composition par âge
de la population du Canada

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Résumé. A titre d'introduction, l'auteur décrit brièvement les principales modifications dans la répartition par grands groupes d'âges (0-15 ans, 15-64 ans et 65 ans et plus) de la population du Canada entre les recensements de 1901 et de 1951; quelque attention est portée à la comparaison des taux de variation de ces groupes d'âges entre 1941 et 1951. L'auteur étudie ensuite les différences régionales dans la composition par âge en 1951; il indique brièvement les effets des variations des taux de natalité, de l'immigration et des migrations interprovinciales sur ces différences. La section suivante est consacrée à l'étude comparative de la répartition par âge de la population du Canada suivant les zones rurales et urbaines; à cet effet, les zones rurales sont classées en régions agricoles et non agricoles et les zones urbaines d'après l'importance numérique de leur population. L'auteur examine ensuite la composition par âge des populations rurales et urbaines en 1941 et montre l'influence de la migration des campagnes vers les villes sur la composition par âge de ces populations, d'après le recensement de 1951. La dernière partie de cet exposé est consacrée aux différences dans la composition par âge des principaux groupements ethniques du Canada, d'après les données du recensement de 1951. L'auteur cherche à montrer, toujours d'après ce recensement, comment les différences dans la fécondité, la mortalité, les dates d'installation et la composition par âge des immigrants des diverses origines, ont influé sur la répartition par âge de ces groupes ethniques.

- Seule la présente analyse d'introduction fait l'objet d'une distribution générale. Les participants qui ont été invités à assister à la séance mentionnée ci-dessus recevront en outre le texte intégral du document. Les autres participants au Congrès recevront le texte intégral sur leur demande.

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REGIONAL AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCES IN THE AGE COMPOSITION OF CANADA'S POPULATION

Before comparing regional and ethnic differences in age composition of the Canadian population, it might be of interest to describe briefly the age structure of Canada at the 1951 Census, with some reference to the principal changes that occurred over the fifty years between the 1901 and the most recent decennial census.

The 1951 Census of Canada recorded a total population of 14,009,429, of whom 30.3 p.c. were under working age, i.e., 0-14 years; 44.2 p.c. in the age period in which most marriages occur, i.e., 15-44 years; 17.7 p.c. between 45 and 64 years, or a total of 61.9 p.c. in the working ages 15-64 years; and 7.8 p.c. in the ages of retirement from gainful occupations, or 65 years and over. In 1901, just over one-third (34.3 p.c.) of the population of Canada was under working age, 60.6 p.c. in the working age period 15-64 years, and 5.1 p.c. 65 years and over. In other words, the proportion of children under 15 years of age in the total population was 4 p.c. greater in 1901 than fifty years later, the proportion of the total population at working ages 1.3 p.c. less, and the proportion at retirement ages 2.7 p.c. less than in 1951. The increasing importance over this period of the numbers in the ages of retirement from gainful occupation has not fully offset the relatively smaller size of the dependent child group in the population, though, from the standpoint of the cost of dependency, such a change in the composition of the non-active population would be difficult to assess. Table I shows the percentage of population by age groups for Canada over the period 1901 to 1951.

Table 1. - Percentage distribution of the population by age groups, for Canada, 1901-1951

Census year	All ages	0-14	15-44	45-64	65 /
1901	100.0	34.3	46.7	13.9	5.1
1911	100.0	32.9	48.3	14.2	4.6
1921	100.0	34.4	45.8	15.0	4.8
1931	100.0	31.7	46.1	16.7	5.5
1941	100.0	27.8	46.9	18.6	6.7
1951	100.0	30.3	44.2	17.7	7.8

Regional Differences in Age Composition of Population, 1951 Census.- In

almost every province of Canada there was a noteworthy increase in the child population under 10 years of age over the decade, 1941-1951. For the country as a whole, not including Newfoundland since this province was not part of Canada in 1941, the rate of increase in this age group between 1941 and 1951 was 44 p.c., which may be compared with an increase of just under 20 p.c. for the total population over this period. Due to substantial net in-migration of population to British Columbia and Ontario during this decade, these two provinces, despite their crude birth rates having been the lowest in Canada, showed the largest increases in the child population under 10 years of age, the percentage increases, 1941-1951, being 97 for British Columbia and 53 for Ontario.

There were considerable differences by provinces in the rate of change in the number of children 10-14 years between 1941 and 1951. The Maritime Provinces showed a slight gain in children in this age group over this period, Ontario and Quebec very little change, the Prairie Provinces decreases varying from 1 p.c. in Alberta to 22 p.c. in Saskatchewan, while British Columbia recorded a 30 p.c. growth in this age group.

Due to the rising birth rates during the 1941-1951 decade, especially during the post-war period 1946-1951, when the crude rate averaged 27.4 per 1,000 of the population, the unusually large increase in the number of children under 10 years of age throughout the country more than counterbalanced the slight increases or decreases occurring in the age group 10-14 years and, thus, in every region brought about a rise in 1951, over 1941, in the proportionate importance of children under working age to the total population. Although the proportion of the population of British Columbia under 15 years of age had risen from just over one-fifth to slightly more than one-quarter between 1941 and 1951, this province still showed the smallest proportion of its population in this age group in 1951 of any part of Canada. On the other hand, the Maritime Provinces and Quebec, where higher birth rates prevail, had just over one-third of their respective populations under the age of 15 at the 1951 Census, recording the highest proportions of children in their total populations of the various provinces of Canada.

In Canada and in each region the percentage of the population in the working age period 15-64 showed some decline between 1941 and 1951, the figure for Canada dropping from two-thirds of the total population in 1941 to just over three-fifths in 1951. This decline would have been slightly greater were it not for substantial additions of immigrants to the Canadian population over this decade, especially in the five-year period following the war, since a larger proportion of these newcomers were of working age than of the population as a whole. Out of 424,000 persons in Canada's population in 1951 who had immigrated to this country between 1941 and 1951, over 75 p.c. were in the working age group 15-64.

Of the various regions, Ontario and British Columbia showed the largest proportion of their population at working ages in the 1951 Census. In the twenty years since the 1931 Census only these two provinces have shown net gains in population due to in-migration from other provinces, and since migrants are largely

concentrated in the working age period of life, this has tended to increase the relative importance of this age group in the population of these two provinces. The Maritime Provinces, which had only 57.8 p.c. of their population in the age group 15-64, in 1951, had lost a considerable number of their adult working population to the central regions of Canada over the present century. This trend continued during the period 1941-51, the result being that the number in this age group increased by only 4 p.c. in the Maritimes during the past decade as compared with a 12 p.c. increase for the country as a whole. The Prairie Provinces, which lost population to other provinces, especially during the war period, experienced a decline of 1 p.c. in the population at working ages in the ten years ended June 1, 1951.

In the ages of retirement from gainful activity, that is, 65 years and over, there was in each region a continuation over the decade 1941-1951 of what has been a long-term trend, namely, a rise in the proportionate importance of this group in the population. The range of regional differences in the proportion of older persons in the population is reflected in the percentages for British Columbia and Quebec. In the former province 10.8 p.c. of its population was over 65 years of age in 1951 as compared with 5.7 p.c. in the province of Quebec. In the ten years between the 1941 and 1951 Censuses the population in this age group in the province of British Columbia increased by 85.3 p.c. as compared with a 38.4 p.c. increase for all provinces combined. The numerical increase in the population of British Columbia, 65 years and over, between 1941 and 1951, was approximately 58,000, of which about half (46.8 p.c.) represented net in-migration from other provinces. Due to its mild climate British Columbia has tended to attract an increasing number of retired people from other parts of Canada. The low percentage 65/ in the province of Quebec is partly due to a relatively small percentage of non-Canadian born of earlier periods of immigration in this age group, and partly, of course, due to the pattern of higher than average birth and death rates in this province, thus tending to produce

over the years a "younger" population. In the Prairie Provinces, on the other hand, many of the non-Canadian born over 65 years were persons who came to Canada in the period of heavy immigration from the beginning of the present century up to the outbreak of the First World War. The percentage of the population 65 years and over in this region, who were born outside of Canada, was 66.1 in 1951 as compared with only 14.6 for Quebec. It is interesting to note that the percentage of the total population of the Prairie Provinces in 1921 who were 65 years and over was only 2.6 p.c. compared with 4.6 p.c. for Quebec, but in 1951 the percentage in this age group in the Prairie Provinces had risen to 7.8, the Quebec figure being only 5.7 p.c.

Regional differences in age composition of the population in 1941 and 1951 are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. - Percentage distribution of the population by age groups, for Canada and regions, 1941 and 1951

Region	0 - 14		15 - 44		45 - 64		65 +	
	1941	1951	1941	1951	1941	1951	1941	1951
Canada (1)	27.8	30.1	46.9	44.3	18.6	17.8	6.7	7.8
Maritime Provinces . . .	30.4	33.9	45.3	41.9	16.5	15.9	7.8	8.3
Quebec	31.9	33.7	47.6	45.0	15.2	15.6	5.3	5.7
Ontario	24.4	27.0	47.1	44.6	20.5	19.7	8.0	8.7
Prairie Provinces	28.4	30.0	46.8	44.2	19.3	18.0	5.5	7.8
British Columbia	21.4	26.1	46.0	43.0	24.3	20.1	8.3	10.8

(1) For purposes of comparison with 1941, Newfoundland is not included.

Rural-Urban Differences in Ages of Population of Canada, 1951 Census. - At

the 1951 Census the definition of rural-urban population was different from that used in earlier censuses. Up till and including the 1941 Census the urban population was defined as the population living in incorporated centres, the balance being treated as rural. In 1951 urban areas included all cities, towns and villages of 1,000 population or more, whether incorporated or not, as well as the metropolitan areas surrounding larger cities, the remainder of each province being classed as rural. As a result of this change in the definition of rural-urban areas at the 1951 Census, it is not possible to adequately compare the age composition of the population in such areas in 1951 with the data for earlier census years. However, for purposes of facilitating rural-urban comparison between 1941 and 1951, the urban figures for places under 1,000 in 1941 have been included with rural in Table 3.

Table 3. - Percentage distribution of the population, by specified age groups, for Canada, rural and urban, 1941 and 1951

	Total		0 - 14		15 - 44		45 - 64		65 +	
	1941	1951	1941	1951	1941	1951	1941	1951	1941	1951
Canada.	100.0	100.0	27.8	30.3	46.9	44.2	18.6	17.7	6.7	7.8
Rural.	100.0	100.0	31.6	35.3	44.2	40.9	17.4	16.3	6.8	7.5
Farm.	(1)	100.0	(1)	36.0	(1)	40.0	(1)	17.2	(1)	6.9
Non-farm.	(1)	100.0	(1)	34.5	(1)	41.8	(1)	15.3	(1)	8.3
Urban.	100.0	100.0	24.2	27.2	49.6	46.2	19.7	18.6	6.5	7.9
100,000 and over . .	100.0	100.0	22.0	23.0	50.2	47.5	21.3	21.0	6.5	8.5
30,000 to 99,999. .	100.0	100.0	23.4	27.0	50.5	47.2	19.9	18.2	6.2	7.5
1,000 - 29,999. .	100.0	100.0	26.9	31.1	48.4	44.8	17.9	16.7	6.8	7.5

(1) Figures not available.

Due to the lower birth rates which prevailed during the period, 1931-1941, than during the past decade the proportion of the total population in both rural and urban areas of Canada under 15 years of age was greater in 1951. About 32 p.c. of the rural population in 1941 was under this age while just under 25 p.c. of the urban population fell in this age group, as compared with 35 p.c. for the rural and 27 p.c. for the urban at the 1951 Census. With respect to the Census data by urban size it will be noted that, for the group of urban centres of 100,000 population and over, the percentage of the population in the age group, 0-14, was only 22 in 1941 and 23 in 1951. As might be expected, the proportion of the population for both rural and urban areas in the working age period, 15-64, was greater in 1941 than in 1951. In both types of areas the percentage of the population 65 years and over rose over the 1941-1951 period.

Differences as between rural and urban areas in the proportionate importance of children in the total population is associated with the higher birth rates found in the rural areas of Canada. Birth rates for rural and urban areas are only available at Census years since there are no inter-censal estimates of rural-urban population. Allowing for some difference in definition of rural and urban areas as used in the compilation of birth statistics, the crude birth rate in rural Canada in 1951 was 28.5 per 1,000 of the population as compared with a rate of 25.8 in urban Canada, the rate for cities of 100,000 population and over being slightly lower at 24.4.

The proportion of the total population in 1951 in the working age group, 15-64, varied appreciably as between rural and urban areas, the percentage for the rural being 57.2 while for the urban it was 64.8. In cities of 100,000 population and over the percentage was as high as 68.5. Since from the beginning

of the twentieth century the rural to urban movement of population in Canada has been on a considerable scale, as is evidenced by a decline of about 300,000 in farm population between 1941 and 1951, it is obvious that part of the difference in the relative size of the population at working ages in rural as compared with urban areas was due to this cause. Comparison of the expected with the actual populations found in rural and in urban areas in 1951 showed that this movement was heaviest among the age group 20-34 years of age.

The proportion of the rural and urban populations in the retirement ages, 65 years and over in 1951, was not greatly different, being 7.5 p.c. in rural as compared with 7.9 in urban areas. The lowest rate was in farm areas, at 6.9 p.c., while the highest was in the largest urban category, where it was 8.5 p.c. In both rural and urban areas the proportion of older persons in the population has risen since the 1941 Census.

Differences in Age Composition of Selected Origins in Canada at 1951 Census. - In the population Census of Canada an inquiry is made on the origin of each person enumerated. This inquiry is intended to record the ethnic origin of the individual on the male parent's side of the family. Language is the key to the determination of origin in the Canadian Census. In obtaining this information from persons of more than one generation in Canada the enumerator was instructed to inquire as to the language spoken by the paternal ancestor at the time of his immigration to Canada.

At the 1951 Census, 48 p.c. of the total population enumerated were of British Isles origins; 31 p.c. of French origin; 18 p.c. of Other European origins; 0.5 p.c. of Asiatic origins; and 1.2 p.c. of native Indian or Eskimo origin. The table which follows shows the age distribution of the principal origins in the population in 1951.

Table 4.-Percentage distribution of the population, classified according to origin, by specified age groups, Canada, 1951

Origin	Total	0-14	15-44	45-64	65 +
	No.	P.C.	P.C.	P.C.	P.C.
All origins ⁽¹⁾	14,009,429	30.3	44.2	17.7	7.8
British Isles origins ⁽²⁾ . . .	6,709,685	27.7	42.8	19.5	10.1
Other European origins ⁽³⁾ . . .	6,872,889	32.8	45.6	16.1	5.5
French	4,319,167	35.7	44.8	14.2	5.3
German	619,995	30.0	45.2	17.8	7.0
Italian	152,245	25.8	52.4	17.0	4.8
Jewish	181,670	25.2	47.7	20.5	6.7
Netherlands	264,267	32.3	45.2	16.1	6.4
Polish	219,845	25.8	50.5	19.5	4.2
Scandinavian	283,024	28.6	42.9	20.6	7.9
Ukrainian	395,043	27.9	49.6	17.8	4.8
Asiatic origins ⁽⁴⁾	72,827	21.9	41.8	25.7	10.6
Chinese	32,528	15.7	31.6	36.6	16.1
Japanese	21,663	27.4	50.4	16.8	5.4
Native Indian and Eskimo . . .	165,607	43.0	40.4	11.7	4.9

(1) Includes "Other and not stated".

(2) Includes English, Irish, Scottish, Welsh and Manx.

(3) Includes a number of European origins not listed separately.

(4) Includes a number of Asiatic origins not listed separately.

Higher fertility in families of French origin is reflected in the relatively large percentage of children under 15 years of age in this ethnic group. With 35.7 p.c. of the total population of French origin under this age in 1951 the proportion of children was greater for this origin than for any other, with the exception of the native Indian and Eskimo. High birth and death rates for this latter group are indicated by the high proportion of children and young people among the Indian and Eskimo population. A below average percentage of 27.7 p.c. for the under 14 age group is shown for the British Isles origins. Generally, origins which are found predominantly in urban areas have less than average proportions of children among their numbers.

Over half of the population of Italian, Polish and Japanese origins were between the ages of 15 and 44 years as compared with only 44 p.c. of the total population. With respect to Italian and Polish origins relatively large immigration during the post-war period of persons of working age accounted for this concentration in the age group 15-44, and thus explains the higher than average proportion of these ethnic origins in the broader working age group 15-64. There has been very little immigration of Japanese origin to Canada since the decade 1921-1931. The age group, 15-44, contains a high proportion of Canadian-born Japanese of first generation in this country. Post-war immigration among the Netherlands origin, however, has been more in family groups and thus has been more evenly distributed over the various age periods.

The British Isles and the Chinese origins are more largely represented in the older age groups 65 years and over, than other origins. In the case of the British Isles group, this is partly due to the fact that about 60 p.c. of those born outside of Canada came to Canada before the 1921 Census, many of whom were over 65 years by 1951. The Chinese age structure is unusual, due to the nature of Chinese immigration in the past having been almost entirely male. The 1951 Census showed over 25,000 males and only about 7,000 females of this origin. Two-thirds of the Chinese born outside of Canada immigrated to this country before 1921. As a result, at the 1951 Census, 16 p.c. of all Chinese were over 65 years of age, and more than half were 45 years of age and over.

Adequate examination of differences in age composition of other groups of the Canadian population, such as mother tongue, nativity, schooling, and religious denomination groups, would require fuller treatment than can be given here. Statistics on age in relation to various demographic characteristics of the Canadian people will be found in Volume II of the 1951 Census. Data on the age composition of the active population by occupation, industry, etc., and also of the various segments of the non-active population are published in Volume IV of the 1951 Census Report.
