

AN OVERVIEW OF THE FERTILITY TRENDS IN ONTARIO AND QUEBEC

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Résumé—Des taux relatifs de fécondité en Ontario et à Québec avaient changé d'une façon remarquable pendant les 40 ans depuis 1926. Pendant la période 1939-60, l'Ontario témoigna une augmentation considérable en fécondité, alors qu'à Québec le "baby boom" ne connut qu'une courte durée et l'augmentation d'après-guerre en fécondité fut très insignifiante. Le taux total de fécondité de Québec fut 58 pour cent plus élevé que celui de l'Ontario en 1926; cependant, en 1965 le taux fut 4 pour cent plus bas à Québec. Autrement qu'en Ontario, l'augmentation en fécondité maritale fut très négligeable à Québec. Comparée à la cohorte de la période 1907-11, la dimension de la famille (à l'âge de 44 ans) de la cohorte de 1922-26 était plus grande de 30 pour cent en Ontario et de 5 pour cent à Québec. La tendance vers un âge plus jeune à la grossesse parmi les cohortes récentes en comparaison de celles d'autrefois, fut plus marquante à Québec qu'en Ontario.

Abstract—Relative levels of fertility in Ontario and Quebec changed remarkably during the 40 years since 1926. During 1939-60, Ontario had a substantial increase in fertility, while in Quebec the "baby boom" was only for a short period and the post-war increase in fertility was quite insignificant. The total fertility rate of Quebec was 58 per cent higher than that of Ontario in 1926; however, in 1965, the rate was 4 per cent lower in Quebec. Unlike in Ontario, the increase in marital fertility was quite negligible in Quebec. Compared to the 1907-11 cohort, the family size (at age 44) of the 1922-26 cohort was larger by 30 per cent in Ontario and 5 per cent in Quebec. The tendency towards a younger age at childbearing among the later cohorts compared to the earlier, was more prominent in Quebec than in Ontario.

Ontario and Quebec, two provinces in Canada, differ with respect to some socio-economic factors. About 88% of the population (1961) are Roman Catholics in Quebec and 30% in Ontario. The proportion of Protestants is much higher in Ontario. The French-speaking population is 81% in Quebec and 10% in Ontario. During 1926-65, Quebec's per capita personal real income was on an average, 23% to 33% lower than that of Ontario. Since fertility is known to respond to differences in religion, ethnicity and levels of income, it would be of interest to compare the fertility trends and the age patterns of childbearing in these two provinces.

Trends in Period Fertility Rates

During 1926-39 TFR (Total Fertility Rate) generally declined in both Ontario and Quebec. However, the decline was relatively faster and more consistent in Quebec. During 1939-60, approximately the period of the "baby boom," TFR increased in both these provinces. However, substantial increase in Quebec's fertility took place only during the short period of 1939-47. While the post-war increase in fertility was quite prominent in Ontario, it was almost negligible in Quebec. Between 1939 and 1960, TFR in Ontario rose by about 72%, while in Quebec, the extent of increase was only 17%. During 1960-65, though TFR declined in both the provinces, the process was faster in Quebec. As a result of the differential rates of change in fertility over time, the relative levels of fertility in Ontario and Quebec changed remarkably. In 1926, the TFR of Quebec was 58% higher than that of Ontario. However, this excess fertility was wiped out in 1960, and in 1965, it was 4% less.

Since annual data are available only for a short period, it is difficult to examine in

TABLE 1: TOTAL FERTILITY RATES (per 1000 women aged 15-49), 1926-65

Year	TFR		Year	Average change per annum in TFR (%)	
	Ontario	Quebec		Ontario	Quebec
1926	2730	4307			
1930	2748	4059	1926-30	0.2	-1.5
1935	2276	3369	1930-35	-3.7	-3.6
1940	2316	3287	1935-40	0.4	-0.5
1945	2469	3666	1940-45	1.3	2.2
1950	3111	3812	1945-50	5.1	0.8
1955	3732	3904	1950-55	3.7	0.5
1960	3793	3764	1955-60	0.3	-0.7
1965	3125	2996	1960-65	-3.7	-4.4

Source: Statistics Canada, *Vital Statistics* reports for relevant years.

detail the trends in marital fertility rates. However, changes over a decade or a quinquennium could be compared. In Ontario, ASMFR (Age Specific Marital Fertility Rate) declined in all the age groups, 15-19 through 40-44, in the 1931-44 period. During 1941-51 and 1951-56, all the groups, particularly the 25-39 during 1941-51 and the 15-24 during 1951-56, contributed to the increase in marital fertility. With only two exceptions, ASMFR declined in all the age groups during 1961-65. In Quebec, on the other hand, increase in marital fertility was more an exception than a rule. Instances of a rise in marital fertility could be observed only in the 15-19 age group during 1941-51 and in the 15-29 group for the following five-year period. In both cases, the rates of increase were far less than in Ontario. Further in Quebec during 1941-51, ASFR (Age Specific Fertility Rate) increased in the 15-34 age range while ASMFR declined in the 20-34 group. In other words, whatever increase in fertility occurred in Quebec could be attributed more to a greater proportion of population getting married and having children than to any significant increase in marital fertility.

In 1931, except in the 15-19 age group, Quebec's ASFR was higher. In 1965, fertility rates in the 15-29 group there were lower. In the older groups (30-44), though fertility was still higher, the difference had narrowed considerably during 1931-65. In 1931 and 1965 ASMFR in each age group was higher, except in the 15-19 group in 1965. However, the difference, as in the case of ASFR, was much less in 1965 than in 1931. Due to the lower proportion of the married, excess fertility in that province was more evident in ASMFR than in ASFR.

It is known that changes in period fertility rates are due to changes in completed family

size and/or changes in the age pattern of childbearing. Let us examine the trends in these two components.

Cohort Fertility Rates

By reconstructing the annual age specific fertility rates from 1926, to 1966 we can get cohort fertility rates and these rates can be compared, assuming no mortality or migration.

TABLE 2: COHORT FERTILITY RATES (per 1000 women)
1907-11 to 1947-51 COHORTS

Age	Cohorts born during:									
	1907-11	1912-16	1917-21	1922-26	1927-31	1932-36	1937-41	1942-46	1947-51	
ONTARIO										
15-19	152	178	158	184	202	300	334	347	287	
20-24	637	563	666	834	932	1129	1199	856		
25-29	601	686	848	909	1028	1058	801			
30-34	481	616	626	678	671	494				
35-39	350	340	366	349	264					
40-44	105	113	109	81						
QUEBEC										
15-19	121	102	80	107	128	146	162	157	127	
20-24	684	503	688	838	880	968	993	751		
25-29	875	949	1078	1086	1138	1084	806			
30-34	787	878	851	842	779	528				
35-39	626	566	563	481	311					
40-44	221	208	186	111						

Source: Adapted from Statistics Canada, *Vital Statistics*.

Fertility rates of older age groups (30-34, 35-39 and 40-44) generally declined in Quebec with the exception of the 30-34 group among the 1912-16 cohort (Table 2). In Ontario, the decline was confined to the 35-39 and the 40-44 ranges; among women born during 1912-26, fertility was on the increase in the 30-44 group. In the younger age groups (15-19, 20-24 and 25-29) fertility was on the increase in both Quebec and Ontario. However, the duration of increase in Ontario was slightly longer in the case of the 15-19 and 25-29 groups. As a result of the economic depression during the early 1930s fertility rates in the 15-19 and 20-24 groups declined between 1931 and 1936 in both the provinces. Whenever fertility increased or declined in either province, with a few exceptions, the rate of increase in Quebec was lower and the rate of decline was higher. Earlier it was mentioned that unlike in Quebec, there were instances, in Ontario, of increasing fertility in older age groups. This pattern of change led to a growing convergence in the family sizes of both these provinces.

Family Size

Completed family size (up to age 44) in Quebec was higher among all the four cohorts: 1907-11, 1912-16 . . . and 1922-26; however, the difference gradually narrowed. Among the 1907-11 cohort of women completed family size in Quebec was about 43% larger and among the 1922-26 cohort, Quebec's family size was only 14% larger. Significant increase in this province's family size was observed only among 1917-21 cohort (compared to the 1912-16 cohort). The 1912-16 cohort, compared to the 1907-11, had a smaller family size, whereas the family sizes of the 1917-21 and the 1922-26 cohorts, were more or less the same. In Ontario, on the other hand, cohorts of women born during 1912-16, 1917-21 and 1922-26 had larger family sizes than the preceding ones. The family size of the 1922-26 cohort as compared to 1907-11 was about 30% larger in Ontario and only 5% in Quebec.

Age Pattern of Childbearing

In both Ontario and Quebec there was a tendency towards early childbearing. The 1922-26 cohort completed a greater proportion of the family size at relatively younger ages in comparison with the early cohorts (Table 3). In Ontario, the 1922-26 cohort completed 86% of the family size at age 34 against the 80% of the 1907-11 cohort at comparable age. In Quebec, at the same age 74% of the family size was complete among the 1907-11 cohort and this increased to 83% among the 1922-26 cohort. The median age at childbearing (among women aged 15-44) was 28.1 among the 1907-11 cohort in Ontario, and it increased to 28.7 among the 1912-16 cohort and declined to 27.7 among the 1922-26 cohort. In Quebec, the median age increased from 29.9 among the 1907-11 cohort to 30.3 in the succeeding cohort and declined to 28.6 among the 1922-26 cohort. Though Quebec had higher age at childbearing, the decline was faster too, narrowing the differences in age at childbearing.

To sum up, during the period of the "baby boom" (1939-60) there was a substantial increase in fertility in Ontario. In Quebec, on the other hand, the increase was confined to a short period and the post-war increase in fertility, quite prominent in Ontario, was almost negligible. As a result of the differences in the rates of change in fertility, TFR in Quebec which was 58% higher in 1926, was 4% lower in 1965. Whatever increase in fertility occurred in Quebec was more due to an increasing proportion of people getting married and having children than to an increase in marital fertility. Among women aged 20-29 ASFRs were lower in Quebec in 1965 though they were higher in 1931, while in the 15-19 age group ASFR was lower in Quebec than in 1931 and this gap increased in 1965. Differences between the provinces in ASFR in older age groups and those in ASMFR considerably narrowed over time. In Ontario, women born during 1912-16 and 1922-26 had larger family size (at age 44) compared to the preceding cohorts. In Quebec, however, an increase in

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TABLE 3: CUMULATIVE COHORT FERTILITY RATES (per 1000 women)
1907-11 TO 1922-26 COHORTS

Up to age:	Cohorts born during:							
	1907-11		1912-16		1917-21		1922-26	
	Rate	%	Rate	%	Rate	%	Rate	%
<u>ONTARIO</u>								
19	152	7	178	7	158	6	184	6
24	789	34	741	30	824	30	1018	34
29	1390	60	1427	57	1672	60	1927	63
34	1871	80	2043	82	2298	83	2605	86
39	2221	95	2383	95	2664	96	2954	97
44	2326	100	2496	100	2773	100	3035	100
<u>QUEBEC</u>								
19	121	4	102	3	80	2	107	3
24	805	24	605	19	768	22	945	27
29	1680	51	1554	48	1846	54	2031	59
34	2467	74	2432	76	2697	78	2873	83
39	3093	93	2998	94	3260	95	3354	97
44	3314	100	3206	100	3446	100	3465	100

Source: Adapted from Statistics Canada, *Vital Statistics* reports.

family size could be observed only among the 1917-21 cohort as against the preceding cohort. Quebec continued to have an older age at childbearing; however, the shift towards a younger age at childbearing was far more rapid than in the neighbouring province.

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