

Current Issues in Family Demography: Canadian Examples

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Abstract

This paper presents an overview of some demographic indicators, which are found useful in measuring and making projections of changes in the family in industrialized countries. Four aspects of demographic behaviour are discussed: family formation, with an emphasis on first marriage, remarriages, and common-law unions; reproduction and delayed childbearing; women's labour force participation, especially those with younger children; and mortality among older people. The study raises a number of research and policy issues, particularly in the light of Canadian data.

Résumé

Dans la présente étude, l'auteur passe en revue des indices démographiques utiles à la mesure et à la projection des changements dans la structure des familles des pays industrialisés. Quatre aspects des comportements démographiques sont examinés : la formation des familles, notamment les premiers mariages, les remariages ainsi que les unions consensuelles; le comportement reproductif et le décalage dans le calendrier des naissances; la participation des femmes à la population active, et surtout celle des femmes ayant de jeunes enfants; enfin, la mortalité chez les personnes âgées. L'étude soulève des questions liées à la recherche et aux politiques à partir de données canadiennes.

Key words: family formation, common-law union, reproduction, delayed childbearing

Introduction

The field of family studies is vast. Scholars from numerous disciplines have made important contributions over the years. Sociologists, at least in the United States and Canada, have been leaders in this field. This is clearly evidenced by the proliferation of academic journals, such as the *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, the *Journal of Family Issues*, the *Journal of Family History*, *Family Relations* (formerly, *Family Coordinator*), *Child Development*, the *Journal of Divorce*, and the *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*. Economists are relatively late comers to this field but have left a deeper imprint in the new ways of thinking. Economists have focussed primarily on the changes in the market place, especially the increased labour force participation of women, government interventions in the form of taxes and subsidies, and the laws regulating marriage and divorce. Gary Becker's attempt to address the determinants of fertility behaviour within the framework of consumer theory has become a classic among demographers. The economics of the family has become a recognized sub-field with the publication in 1973 and 1974 of two special issues of the *Journal of Political Economy*. These were reprinted in Theodore Shultz's volume *Economics of the Family: Marriage, Children and Human Capital* (Willis, 1987). As a result of their close association with sociology and economics, demographers have been front runners in this sub-field. Regardless of their disciplinary backgrounds, since the dawn of the social sciences, from

time to time, scholars have warned that the family is in danger of extinction (Fuchs, 1983; Popenoe, 1988; 1993). However, defenders of the family have challenged this view and have insisted that the family is as strong as ever. In 1988, the Federation of Canadian Demographers organized a colloquium with the provoking title: *The Family in Crisis: A Population Crisis* (Légaré, Balakrishnan, and Beaujot, 1989). Most papers presented at this conference were based on two national demographic surveys done in 1984, namely the Family History Survey undertaken by Statistics Canada, and the Canadian Fertility Survey conducted under the auspices of three academic institutions, the University of Alberta, the Université de Montréal, and the University of Western Ontario. The overall conclusion of the conference was somewhat mixed: "...the family is not particularly 'in crisis.' The family is changing, but familial and marital type relations continue to exist and to be important in most people's lives. In fact, the changing family structures could be said to be producing more individual gratification from these types of relations. While individuals may not be suffering from the changes, there may be important consequences for society" (Légaré, Balakrishnan, and Beaujot, 1989:13). It is worthwhile to re-examine the changes in the Canadian family after nearly a decade.

While I am not going to take one or the other side of the debate, I am also not going to attempt to be completely objective by presenting an exhaustive picture of every dimension of the family. In the sections that follow, I will consider a broad range of indicators which demographers find useful in measuring family change and making projections for the future. I will first focus on family formation, especially by examining the decline in first marriages and remarriages and the growth of common-law unions. I will then consider the changing patterns of reproduction, especially those concerning delayed childbearing. Next, I will move to a discussion of women's labour force participation, which has been so closely linked to family formation and reproduction. Finally, I will discuss the decline in mortality, especially among older people. While many of the trends delineated in my presentation are common knowledge, it is nonetheless useful to discuss them collectively in order to present a coherent picture. As I have just stated, my review of the four domains of demographic behaviour, is certainly not exhaustive, since I will be making overall observations which apply to the national level, but which may not be applicable to certain other segments of Canadian society. Broad generalizations based on the overall picture may say little about the family patterns of various immigrant, linguistic and other cultural groups, but when it comes to general programs and policies related to issues such as below-replacement fertility, the availability of day care facilities, the schooling of young children, and the feminization of poverty, one is indeed looking for overall patterns. I do not propose to delve into long historical details, which can be found in a number of earlier studies (Basavarajappa, 1978; Wargon, 1979a, 1979b; Romanuic, 1984; Ram 1990; Dumas and Péron, 1992). Rather, I will focus on the past 30 to 40 years because they are particularly significant for it is

in these years, that a number of marked departures from the traditional conjugal family occurred.

Triangle of Data, Theory and Policy

It is common knowledge that early demography was primarily a data-driven and methods-oriented discipline, focussing on various sophisticated measures and techniques. Family demography was no exception to this; it has played a vital role in developing new concepts and techniques, as well as objective indicators for measuring family change. Examples of these include the "husband-wife family," the 'marriage squeeze,' the 'family life cycle,' nuptiality tables, the 'Glick effect' and new estimates of various phenomena, such as divorce, common-law unions, illegitimacy, and childlessness. Even today, demographers try to distinguish themselves from other social scientists in terms of their methodological details and sophistication. Just look at the journals, such as *Canadian Studies in Population*, or *Demography*, and this distinction will be clearly evident. Theory-driven research came somewhat late. Now, I am not saying that theory did not exist in demography. In fact for quite some time, the Malthusian theory, the demographic transition theory, Davis' theory of change and response, and Easterlin's relative status theory dominated most of the demographic research. However, what I am alluding to, is the fact that demographic research has been tilted toward data and methodology rather than toward theory. Now, obviously, while there is no dearth of theories in demography, at this point there is still something of a fixation on problems surrounding data.

Researchers have always lamented about the data gap, although more and better data have become increasingly available over time. As demographers, we must keep on striving for better and more data. But just think how much data we have today. Our census is so rich in terms of both quantity and quality; microdata tapes have become available to the general public and students. The 1991 Census was a major breakthrough in terms of moving toward the collection of a number of unconventional facts about the family. For the first time a distinction was made between the *legal* and *de facto* marital statuses. Respondents were asked to provide their legal marital status. They were also asked directly about their common-law status, although in 1981 and 1986, common-law status was derived based on the relationship to the reference person in the census questionnaire. Thus the 1991 and 1996 Censuses allow us to classify the data for persons in common-law unions by their legal marital status. This contrasts with 1981 and 1986, when such persons were included among the 'married' population. However, the historical comparability of the marital status variable can still be maintained with 1991 and 1996 data by including persons in common-law unions with the 'married' population. Also, for the first time in 1991, the Canadian Census asked all women 15 years and over to answer a fertility question (the number of children ever born to them), regardless of their

marital status. In the past, this question was only asked of married women, or women who had been married.

Since the 1984 Family History Survey, data from many more surveys have become available, most notably, those coming from the 1990 and 1995 General Social Surveys, the longitudinal Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, and the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and Children. But then look at the analyses done based on these sources. How much have we done and how much impact have we made on the discipline, policy and society? In light of the amount of data collected, I would say that the answer is: 'comparatively little'. I feel that the balance between the data available and the analysis of that data is lopsided in Canada to say the least!

Having worked as a demographer for about two decades, my perception is that over the years the discipline of demography has declined in significance, especially in English Canada. It appears to me that we have not been able to convince others that we are a viable discipline and that we can make a difference. With new data, measures, and indicators, demographers have done a good deal about informing people of the facts surrounding family life and dispelling certain myths. However, we have yet to demonstrate through our work that we have something meaningful to offer. This is where policy comes into the picture. While indeed we do have a data gap to some extent; we have far more of an analysis gap; but we have an even greater policy-oriented analysis gap. Policy-oriented research is a risky business; but unless we undertake research, which makes significant impacts on programs and policies, we will remain marginalized.

Definitional Problems

Generally, I will be talking about the census definition of the family that refers to the co-residential unit based on blood, marriage, and adoption. Also, I will be referring to the conventional approach which often centres around various stages of the life cycle associated with particular events of life, such as the entry into sexual/conjugal union and family formation; the beginning of childbearing with the birth of the first child; the end of childbearing at the birth of the last child; children leaving home and the empty nest; and family dissolution upon the death of a spouse (Glick, 1977; Rodgers and Witness, 1981; Gee, 1985; Rajulton and Ravanera, 1995). I realize the limitations of these models in presenting a complete and accurate picture of contemporary families. Certain types of familial relationships outside the conventional boundaries associated with co-residence, are out of the scope of these concepts (Hohn, 1987). What happens to the constant interactions between parents, grandparents, and children, not living within a household? What about children in the joint custody of divorced couples? How can we define a lone-parent family or the family size in these situations? The definition of 'children' as used in Canadian literature does not

necessarily correspond to those used in other countries, or even in various programs and policies within Canada. Some define never-married persons under 18 as children, while others extend this age cut-off to 25, and still others include among children all never married persons, regardless of age, who are living with their parent(s).

Also, the rising multiplicity of family groups has posed numerous difficulties for demographers (Keyfitz, 1986: 10). For example, common-law unions have become a viable stage of the life cycle for a large number of people in Canada and many other industrialized countries. In a sociological sense, a common-law union is hardly distinguishable from a formal marriage as both serve similar functions. For a demographer who would like to analyze fertility data by the duration of union, it becomes essential to know the date when the cohabitation started. The date of marriage is a recorded event, but the date when a cohabitation started could suffer from numerous problems, especially for those who may have passed through several unions. A similar problem exists with the dissolution of a union. Unlike a formal marriage, the dissolution of a common-law union does not involve any legal formalities; therefore, the dissolution of a common-law union may not be a part of demographic statistics. To complicate the analytical problem further, consider a gay couple who claims to be living common-law. How to collect reliable and valid data on this segment of the population is a real challenge to demographers and census takers. Census consultation and qualitative testing have indicated an increasing need for family data for same-sex couples, given that certain government legislation and programs, including family law and entitlement to employee health and death benefits, have been changed to recognize same-sex couples as spouses (Bender, 1998). We also know little about step, or blended families in Canada. There is no doubt, however, that the number of such families has risen in recent years, creating new relationships such as stepparents, stepsiblings and half-siblings. These families are increasingly formed as a result of parents with children marrying or living common-law for the first time, or remarrying or living common law after the break up of a previous union. How many marriages and common-law unions have led to the formation of blended or step families, is not precisely known. Although information on blended and step families, has now been collected in the General Social Survey and the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, it remains a challenge for the Canadian Census (Bender, 1998). Now, let me turn to some substantive issues.

Family Formation

The Decline of Marriage.

Researchers agree that marriage generally enhances the socioeconomic well-being of individuals. In her presidential address to the Population Association of

America, Waite (1995) concluded that compared with unmarried persons, married couples have higher incomes, save and accumulate more wealth, are sexually more satisfied, are less exposed to high-risk behaviours, and live longer. Even their children do better in school and are more successful from an economic standpoint. It appears, however, that marriages are on the decline. In most cases, the entry into a sexual/conjugal union corresponds with marriage, although in recent years this has been significantly modified with the increased prevalence of premarital sex and common-law living. Most people get married at some time in their lives, but they are getting married late as is reflected in the rising age at first marriage and the increase in the proportion of males and females who have remained single.

After reaching an historic low in the 1950s and 1960s, the mean age at first marriage rebounded to the highest ever recorded level in 1995 – 29.0 years for men and 27.1 years for women (Figure 1). An increase in the mean age at first marriage, accompanied with a decline in the first marriage rate clearly points toward pronounced declines in the frequency of marriage among younger people, many of whom may have chosen to live in common-law unions or to remain single forever. In 1996, 19% of males and 13% of females aged 35 to 39 had never been married, compared with only 10% of males and 7.5% of females in 1981. For the 40-44 age group, the proportion who had never been married during the same period also increased from 8% to 13% among males and from 6% to 10% among females (Figure 2). While it is likely that some of these people may have been simply postponing their first marriage, considerable increases among older age groups seem to suggest that a growing proportion of adults may be opting to never marry, at least legally.

Family formation at older ages implies a variety of different outcomes for the people involved as well society as a whole. On the one hand, delayed marriages are more satisfying, with greater marital stability and socio-economic achievement (Glick and Norton, 1977), while on the other hand they also have a negative influence on fertility and family size (Henry and Piotrow, 1979). Today, however, age at first marriage is less important in determining how many children people will have, because common-law unions are becoming synonymous with marriages.

An interesting part of this story is the narrowing gap between the men and women's ages at first marriage. According to the 1990 General Social Survey, most women (47%) married someone who was no more than three years older, while most men (52%) married women no more than three years younger (McDaniel, 1994: 10). In 1995, the average age gap was 1.9 years, less than ever before; in the 1940s and 1950s, the corresponding gap fluctuated around 3.0 years. This is not unusual given that the age difference tends to be larger in traditional societies than in industrialized countries and that it has diminished in most industrialized countries (U.N., 1990). The marriage squeeze, which used

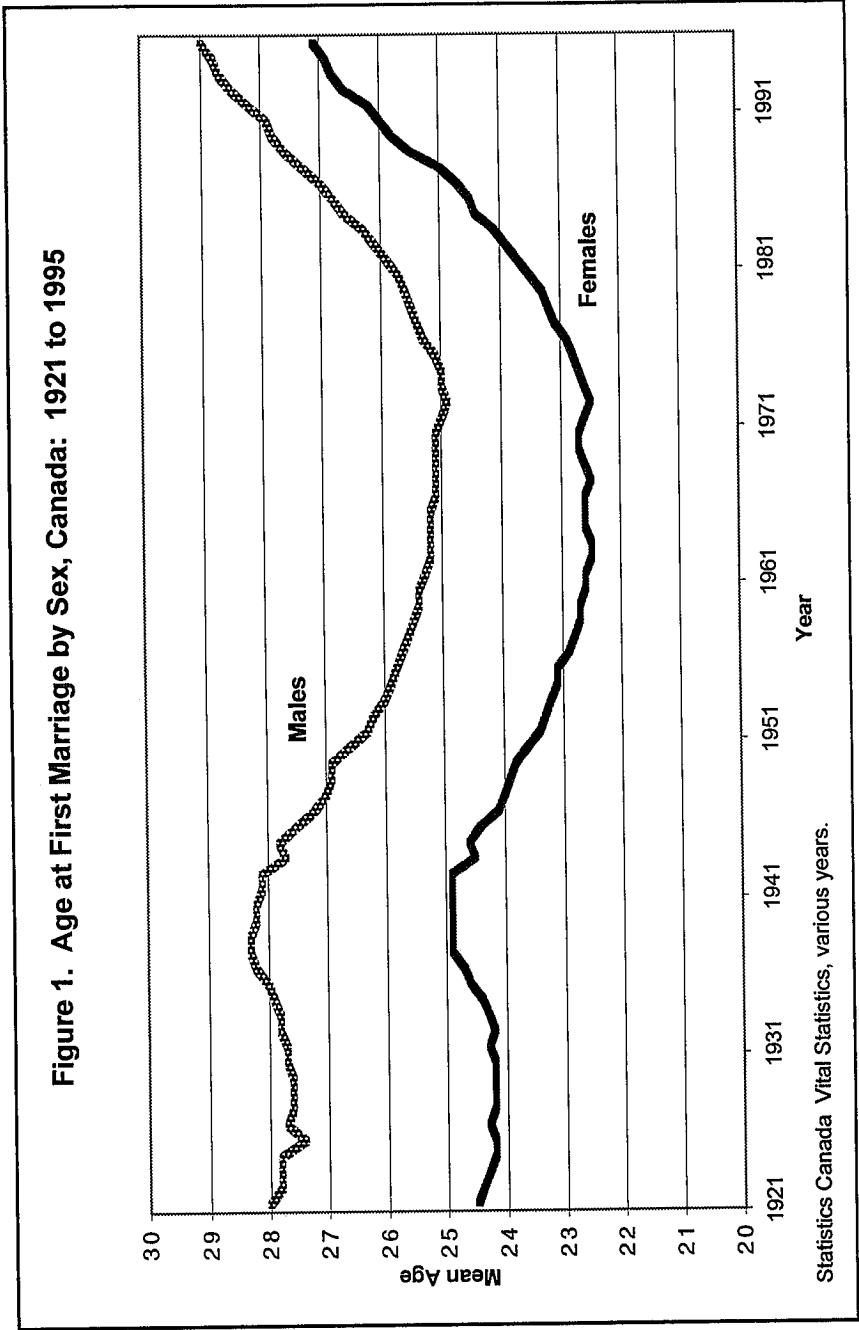
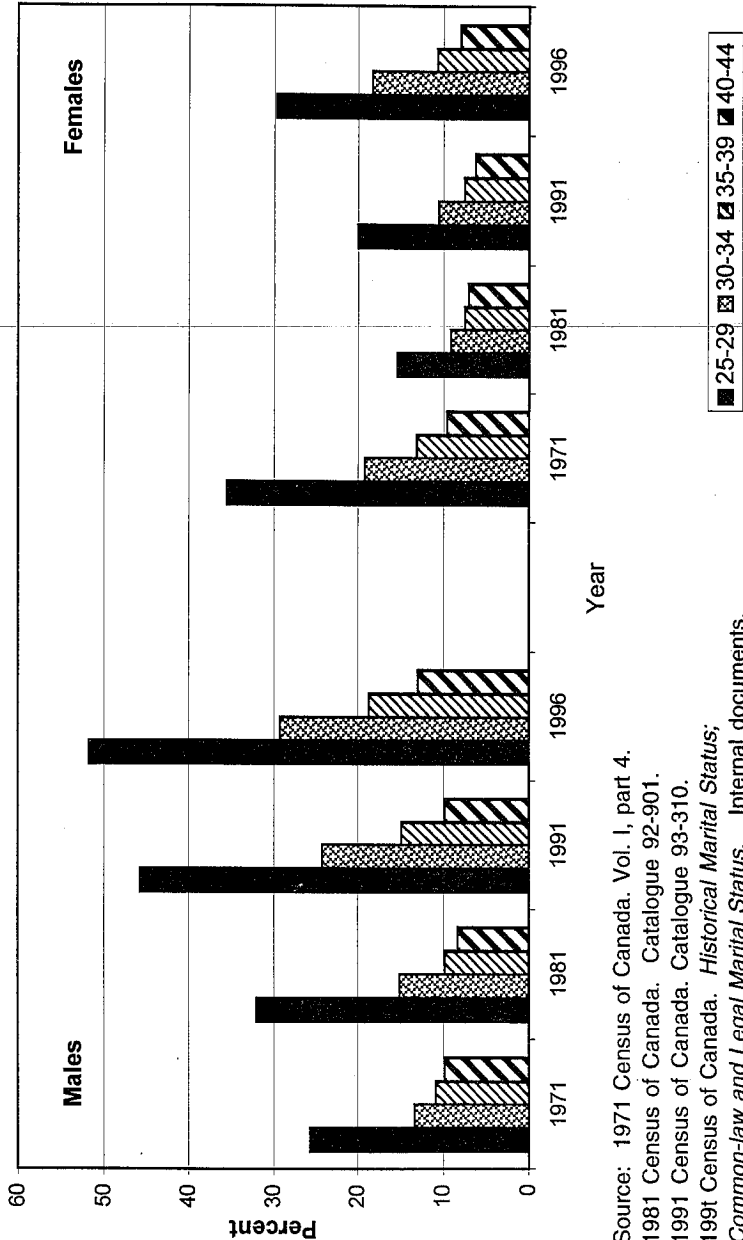


Figure 2. Percentage of Population Never Married by Sex and Selected Age Groups, Canada: 1971 to 1996



used to be the most popular explanation for this phenomenon in the 1960s and the 1970s, is not relevant any more. Now, there is no shortage of older men to force women of marriageable ages to opt for younger men. In 1971, there were 93 men aged 23 to 27 per 100 women aged 20 to 24; the corresponding ratio rose to 103 in 1996. In traditional societies, according to another explanation, women are valued as marriage partners for their ability to bear children and manage a household, while men are valued for their ability to earn money (Bergstrom and Bagnoli, 1993). The earlier women marry, the more children they will be able to produce and the more capable they will become over time in the art of household management, while on the other hand, the later men marry, the more economically successful they will have become by the time they marry. With the increase in the level of education and much wider employment opportunities, a growing number of women are increasingly becoming as economically valued as men, and therefore they are postponing marriage. This observation is supported by a greater increase in the age at first marriage among women than men. The declining gap between men and women's ages at marriage could lead to an increased compatibility between spouses, and consequently to greater marital stability (Gentleman and Park, 1994). Also, the declining gap is likely to reduce the proportion of older widows who may have to live without a spouse.

Common-law Unions.

Many people who have postponed getting married have chosen common-law unions instead. In 1996, slightly less than one million couples lived in common-law unions, up from 357,000 in 1981 and 719,000 in 1991. During this period, the proportion of persons living in these unions increased in all age groups, but the highest increase was among younger persons. As shown in Table 1, about 62% of men and 55% of women aged 15 to 24, who lived with a spouse, were in common-law unions in 1996. In the 25 to 29 age group, the corresponding percentages were much lower – 36% and 29%, and in the 30 to 34 age group, they were even lower – 22% and 19%, respectively. However, in contrast to earlier years, common-law unions are no longer concentrated among younger people; they have spread over a broader age range. In 1981, common-law unions were concentrated among persons below age 30, comprising about half of all unions among men, and about three-fifths among women. By 1996, these proportions were reduced to 28% among men and 37% among women, suggesting an upward shift among older people. This trend can be both attributed to young adults remaining longer in common-law unions and greater numbers of older people entering into common-law unions (Statistics Canada, 1997).

Table 1. Persons Living in Common-Law Unions, Canada: 1981 to 1996

Age Group	Common-law unions (in thousands)				Living in a union (married or common-law)				Percentage distribution			
	1981	1986	1991	1996	1981	1986	1991	1996	1981	1986	1991	1996
Men												
15-24	91.4	86.3	95.8	93.6	26.6	35.2	51.6	62.4	25.7	17.7	13.2	10.2
25-29	88.1	122.7	163.8	165.6	13.0	18.9	26.9	36.1	24.7	25.2	22.6	18.1
30-34	61.2	90.3	140.4	176.8	7.7	11.4	16.2	22.2	17.2	18.5	19.3	19.3
35-39	38.7	65.0	101.3	147.3	5.7	8.1	11.6	16.0	10.9	13.3	14.0	16.1
40-44	24.2	42.4	76.7	108.2	4.3	6.4	9.1	12.4	6.8	8.7	10.6	11.8
45-49	17.6	26.5	53.6	82.2	3.3	4.9	7.9	10.0	4.9	5.4	7.4	9.0
50-54	13.3	19.2	34.2	55.7	2.6	3.8	6.2	8.6	3.7	3.9	4.7	6.1
55-59	9.1	13.7	24.0	34.3	2.0	2.8	4.7	6.5	2.6	2.8	3.3	3.8
60-64	5.7	9.2	16.3	22.7	1.5	2.2	3.5	4.8	1.6	1.9	2.2	2.5
65+	7.2	11.6	19.8	28.0	1.0	1.4	2.0	2.5	2.0	2.4	2.7	3.1
Total	356.6	486.9	726.0	914.4	6.4	8.3	11.0	13.5	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Women												
15-24	109.6	145.0	164.6	163.3	17.2	30.1	44.9	55.3	39.8	29.8	24.5	17.9
25-29	77.7	116.1	169.1	177.6	9.9	14.8	21.8	29.2	21.8	23.8	23.3	19.4
30-34	47.9	76.7	130.9	170.2	6.0	9.2	13.9	19.0	13.4	15.8	18.0	18.6
35-39	29.3	52.7	92.0	138.4	4.5	6.7	10.3	14.4	8.2	10.8	12.7	15.1
40-44	18.7	34.0	65.5	99.4	3.5	5.4	8.1	11.3	5.2	7.0	9.0	10.9
45-49	13.3	21.1	42.1	70.3	2.7	4.1	6.7	8.9	3.7	4.3	5.8	7.7
50-54	10.3	14.4	24.3	42.9	2.2	3.1	4.8	7.1	2.9	3.0	3.3	4.7
55-59	7.5	10.4	14.7	23.0	1.7	2.4	3.2	4.8	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.5
60-64	4.8	7.6	9.7	12.9	1.4	1.9	2.4	3.1	1.3	1.6	1.3	1.4
65+	5.2	8.9	13.1	16.3	1.1	1.5	1.7	1.9	1.5	1.8	1.8	1.8
Total	356.6	486.9	725.9	914.3	6.4	8.3	11.1	13.5	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Census of Canada, 1981, Catalogue 92-901; Census of Canada, 1986, Catalogue 93-101; Census of Canada, 1991, Catalogue 93-310; Census of Canada, 1996, Historical Marital Status; Common-law and Legal Marital Status. Internal documents.

In spite of the increasing acceptance across all segments of the population, common-law unions remain concentrated primarily among single (never-married) persons. In 1996, about 65% of all men and women who reported that they were living in a common-law union had never been married before; divorced were the second largest category, comprising about a quarter of all unions. The remaining one-tenth of the common-law unions, involved widowed and separated people. This picture has changed very little in recent years, as is shown in Table 2. Interestingly, however, common-law unions are becoming increasingly concentrated among persons with children. In 1996, 47% of common-law unions had some children, up from 41% in 1991. The largest rise in this proportion was among never-married persons, suggesting that they are either living longer in common-law unions before getting married or accepting them as an alternative to legal marriage. It is not known how much of this increase is due to the number of children born before and how much is due to the number of children born after the formation of these common-law unions. As Wu (1996) argues, an increased level of perceived conjugal uncertainty leads to a greater likelihood of bearing a child within a cohabiting union. Common-law couples may like to have a child of their own to stabilize their union. However, it's also likely that persons living in common-law unions delay having children and do not produce as many children as legally married couples, because they are not as certain about their conjugal status (Manning, 1995). This subject needs further examination.

The increasing incidence of common-law unions may be indicative of more careful selection of partners among those marrying for the first time and a response to the demand for more personal fulfilment in marriage (Norton and Glick, 1979). But studies have repeatedly found that common-law unions are more unstable than legal marriages, and that marriages preceded by common-law unions are more likely to end in a marital break-up than those not preceded by common-law unions (Burch and Madan, 1986; Balakrishnan et al., 1987; Halli and Zimmer, 1991). According to the 1995 General Social Survey, only one-third of common-law unions remained intact five years after the formation of the union and only 15% remained intact after ten years (Bélanger and Dumas, 1998:41-48). This study also found that 18% of marriages preceded by common-law unions were dissolved within ten years, compared with only 10% of marriages which were not preceded by a common-law union. Differential selection could be at work in making this difference. It's possible that people who choose common-law unions are different from legally married couples to begin with, in terms of non-traditional family attitudes and commitment to the institution of marriage (Bumpass, 1990; Lillard, Brien and Waite, 1995). It's also possible that the experience of common-law living changes people's views of marriage and the family, making them less committed to a permanent conjugal relationship (Axinn and Thornton, 1992; Thomson and Colella, 1992) or it may create some kind of behaviour in the family, such as spousal abuse and

**Table 2. Persons in Common-law by Legal marital Status and Number of Children Living with Them,
Canada: 1991 and 1996**

Sex	Total		With No Children		With Some Children		With Some Children as % of all	
	1991	1996	1991	1996	1991	1996	1991	1996
Males								
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	41.1	47.2
Single (never married)	63.4	64.7	66.0	63.8	59.5	65.7	38.6	48.0
Separated	7.8	6.3	7.2	6.3	8.7	6.3	45.8	47.3
Widowed	2.3	2.2	2.8	3.1	1.6	1.3	27.8	26.9
Divorced	26.5	26.7	23.9	26.8	30.2	26.7	46.8	47.2
Females								
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	41.1	47.2
Single (never married)	64.7	65.5	69.7	66.8	57.5	64.0	36.5	46.2
Separated	6.1	5.4	4.8	4.5	8.0	6.3	53.9	55.6
Widowed	4.3	3.8	5.1	5.2	3.1	2.3	29.7	28.6
Divorced	24.9	25.3	20.4	23.5	31.4	27.4	51.7	51.0

Source: 1991 and 1996 Censuses of Canada. Unpublished tabulations.

family violence (Statistics Canada, 1994; Brownridge and Halli, 1996), which leads to the dissolution of the union. The issue on differential selection versus differential causation remains a less exploited subject for understanding the effects of common-law unions on marital stability.

Divorce and Remarriage.

Another well-documented change in the Canadian marriage pattern, which has directly influenced the family and society, is the steadily increasing divorce rate. However, there has been a drop in this trend in recent years, suggesting perhaps that the incidence of divorce has already reached a plateau. From 188 per 1,000 marriages in 1971, the total divorce rate climbed to 479 per 1,000 marriages in 1987, following the revised divorce law. It then started to decline, fluctuating around 380 between 1990 and 1995, and reaching a low level of 346 per 1,000 in 1996 (Bélanger and Dumas, 1998). Reasons for this pattern are not clear. Differential selection could be an explanation: people with divorce-prone characteristics are either choosing common-law unions, or are not getting married at all. There might be other explanations, including increased semblance between spouses and deteriorating economic conditions. Whatever the explanations may be, a reversal of the long-term trend toward a significantly lower divorce rate seems remote, given the fact that the factors which are known to have caused a rise in the divorce rate (such as the feminist movement, individualism, the economic independence of women, and smaller family size) remain in force. Studies exist often claiming that 30% to 40% of all marriages will end in divorce. According to an estimate, in 1991, 31% of marriages in Canada were expected to end in divorce; the risk was even higher (34% to 35%) in Quebec, Alberta, and British Columbia (Dumas and Bélanger, 1996).

Divorces may have freed many couples from unsatisfactory marriages, but they have undoubtedly brought a number of unexpected changes in the lives of people involved, especially women and children. Research consistently shows more negative social, economic, physical, psychological, and emotional problems among the divorced and separated than among the married (Bloom, Asher and White, 1978; Hetherington, Stanley-Hagan, and Anderson, 1989). Children of divorced parents are more likely to end up in poverty when they are adults; they are more likely to experience premarital cohabitation, divorce, teenage and premarital conception and fertility; and they are likely to leave home early because of conflicts with parents (McLanahan and Bumpass; McLanahan and Booth, 1989; Kiernan, 1992; Cherlin, Kiernan and Chase-Lansdale, 1995). They have to go through untold agony before the divorce when the couple struggles with the unsatisfactory marriage, as well as after the divorce when they do not receive adequate support from their parents. However, a different view has recently come out of national longitudinal studies done in Great Britain and the United States. According to these studies, a substantial portion of the observed effects of divorce on behavioural problems and the school achievement

of children – boys in particular – was visible before the parents separated, and therefore, much of the harm experienced by children could have been predicted by conditions that existed well before the separation occurred. But once the pre-divorce behaviour problems, family difficulties, and school performance were taken into account, the negative effects of divorce on children were substantially reduced, implying that divorce in fact may have alleviated many of the problems children faced before their parents divorced (Cherlin et al., 1991). This subject calls for further research.

The economic consequences of marital dissolution are enormous as reflected in the relatively low economic status of lone parents (Statistics Canada, 1998). Between 1990 and 1995, when the mean income (in 1995 constant dollars) of husband-wife families declined by about 4%, from \$61,053 to \$58,763, the income of lone-parent families declined by about 8%, from \$32,408 to \$29,962. The decline was particularly pronounced (10%) for male lone parents, from \$45,557 to \$40,974, whereas female lone parents experienced a decline of about 7%, from \$29,652 to \$27,721. In spite of a relatively modest deterioration in their economic conditions, female lone-parent families have remained substantially behind other family groups. In 1995, the average income of female lone parents was 47% of husband-wife families and 68% of male lone parents. Also, the income of female lone parents was substantially lower than the income of those husband-wife families in which the wife was the only earner (\$27,721 versus \$39,211).

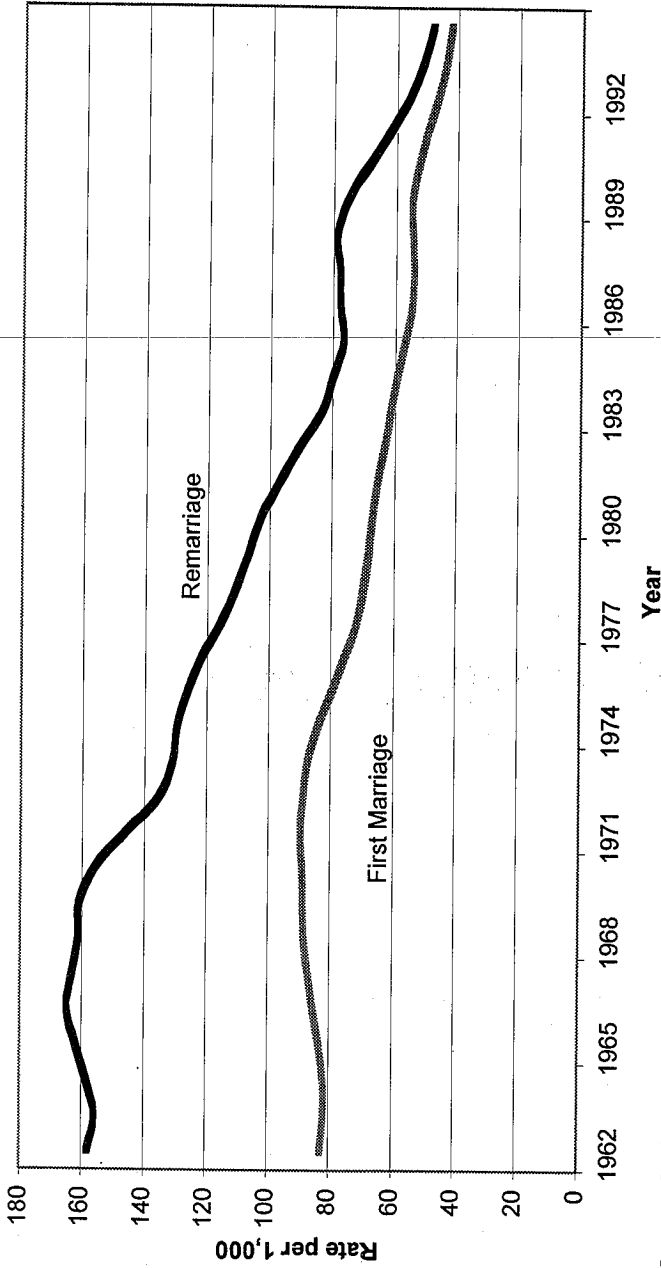
The economic deprivation of lone parents is also reflected in the high incidence of low income among them. In 1995, 48% of female lone parents, but only 24% of male lone parents and 12% of husband-wife families, had incomes below the low-income cut-off. The situation is usually worse for never-married mothers who experience severe poverty, for longer periods. This happens primarily because never-married mothers are on average younger and much less educated than other lone parents, and are less likely to receive economic support from the father of their children (Garfinkel and McLanahan, 1986). Consequently, female lone parents in general, and never-married mothers, in particular, must depend on public assistance, for housing, childcare, and the basic necessities of life. A major source of this assistance comes from social welfare, which though falling under provincial and municipal jurisdiction, is funded by the federal government.

Although welfare benefits are intended to provide economic relief to numerous hard-pressed lone-parent families, there is widespread belief that the public assistance program encourages lone parents' welfare dependency, and does not provide them with an incentive to move out of their existing situation by getting married or finding a job. However, there are numerous studies that do not find any significant impact of welfare payments resulting from the formation and perpetuation of lone-parent families. This remains a controversial public policy issue.

Studies have shown that not only do a large proportion of children have a father who lives somewhere away from the children from a previous marriage, but many of these fathers either make only partial payments, or do not pay any support (Garfinkel and McLanahan, 1986). No wonder child poverty remains a critical policy issue. Child poverty is relatively low in Canada (Smeeding and Torrey, 1988), but when compared with the overall incidence and that in other age groups, it is quite substantial. In 1995, the overall incidence of low income was 20%, up from 16% in 1990. During the same five-year period, the pattern was more pronounced among children: the proportion of all children under age six, who lived in low-income families rose from 20% to 26%, and that among children between the ages of 6 and 14, the percentage of those living in low-income families, rose from 17% to 22%. Compared with this segment of the Canadian population, the situation was more promising for the elderly. Between 1990 and 1995, for example, the incidence of low income remained somewhat unchanged, around 16% to 17% for persons in the 65 to 69 age group, and declined from 22.6% to 20.5% for those 70 years of age and over (Statistics Canada, 1998).

Most divorced persons remarry and they do so soon after divorce. But the remarriage rate has been steadily declining for the past several decades (Figure 3). The rate among divorced women, which was 158 per thousand in 1962, plunged to 48 per thousand in 1994. The remarriage rate has remained high among younger women, but has shown a steep decline with age, as is evident from Table 3. The impact of remarriage on the quality of family life remains an unexplored area of research in Canadian demography. Some experts argue that the high divorce rate coupled with the high remarriage rate signals a strong desire for a compatible marital and family life (Norton and Glick, 1979). However, several facts should be underscored. First and foremost, the propensity to divorce is higher among the remarried couples than those who have married only once (Cherlin, 1978). This opens the question as to how compatible couples are in second marriages and whether multiple divorce is healthy for the persons involved. Second, the rate of remarriage is substantially lower among women than among men, in all age groups (Ram, 1990: 17; DaVanzo and Rahman, 1993). Also compared with men, women are less likely to remarry (McDaniel, 1994: 14-15). This means that an increasing proportion of divorced women are either choosing to remain unmarried or are opting for common-law living. Third, the spousal age differences tend to be larger in remarriages than in first marriages. In 1995, a groom who had been previously divorced, was on the average 3.6 years older than a bride who had been divorced before (42.5 years versus 38.9 years); this compares with a difference of 1.9 years in the case of first marriages (29.0 years versus 27.1 years). The larger age gap between remarried couples raises the issue of spousal incompatibility.

Figure 3. First Marriage and Remarriage Rates (Three Year Moving Averages) for Women, 15 Years and Over, Canada: 1962 to 1994



Source: Statistics Canada. Vital Statistics, various years.

Table 3
Marriage Rate for Divorced Persons by Sex
and Age, Canada for Selected Periods

Age Group	1965-67	1975-77	1985-87	1993-95
Males				
20-24	818	338	171	353
25-29	884	411	182	187
30-34	638	367	143	109
35-39	421	274	108	73
40-44	275	198	85	56
45-49	225	155	71	48
50-54	158	122	56	44
55-59	97	97	44	37
Females				
20-24	597	333	209	108
25-29	417	263	159	126
30-34	293	174	103	105
35-39	188	120	66	72
40-44	136	89	49	50
45-49	101	74	40	36
50-54	63	57	29	25
55-59	42	42	19	15

Source: Basavarajappa, K.G., *Marital Status and Nuptiality in Canada*, Catalogue 99-704, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, 1978.
Dumas, Jean and Yves Péron, *Marriage and Conjugal Life in Canada*, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, 1992.
Canadian Center for Health Information. Internal documents.

Fourth, the cost of remarriage is probably greater for women. Women are likely to be in a poorer bargaining position, especially because of the children from their previous marriage, who normally stay with them. In 1995, approximately 75% of child custody awards in Canada were to the mother when she was the applicant; it was substantially higher (51%) even when the husband was the applicant. Finally, the remarriages result in step or blended families, giving rise to complex social relationships. According to the 1995 General Social Survey, there were about 430,000 stepfamilies in Canada. Of these, almost half consisted of now-married couples, while the remaining half involved common-law couples. Almost half (50.2%) of all step families involved only the mother's children) from previous union(s), 12.5% involved only the father's children) from previous union(s), and the remaining 37.3%

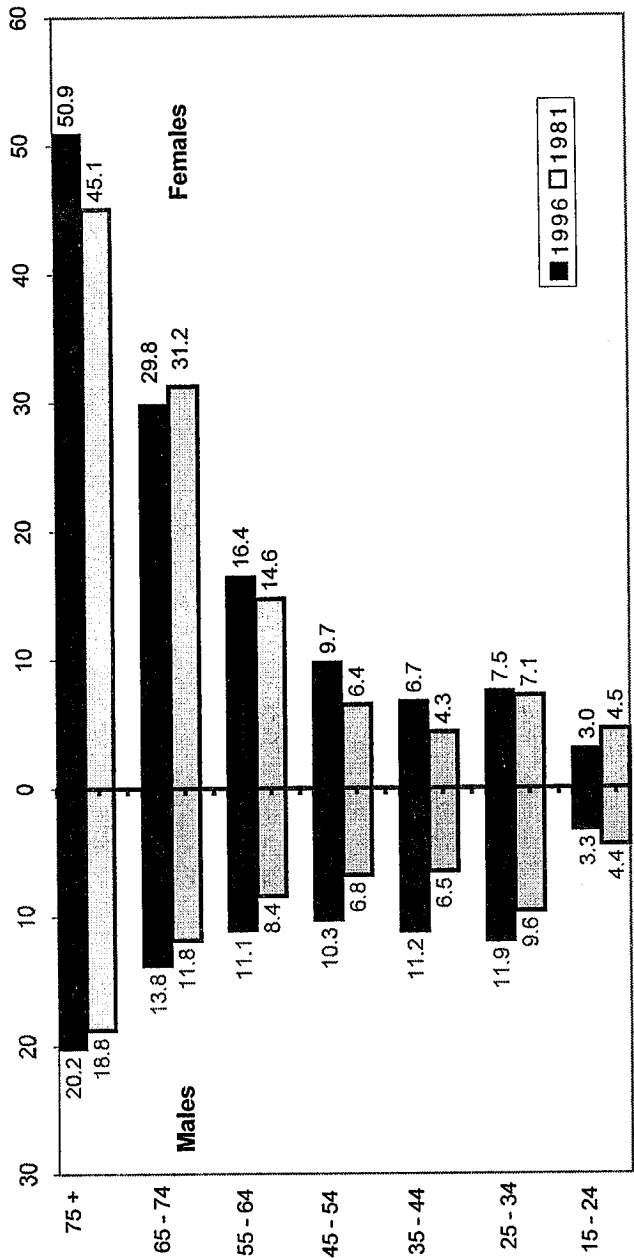
involved a mix of children from the parents' previous and current unions. That is, over one third (37.3% or 161,000) of stepfamilies were blended families. Children are likely to face certain difficulties when a biological parent, step parent, biological siblings, step siblings, half siblings, and many other relatives outside the family, come into their lives (Cherlin and Furstenberg, 1994). Also, the presence of stepchildren increases the chance that the remarried couples end up in an additional divorce (Lillard and Waite, 1993). Studies have also found that the average income of stepfamilies is lower than that of intact families (DaVanzo and Rahman, 1993).

Declining first-marriage and remarriage rates, and the tendency toward delayed marriage have been responsible for the rise of solo living among young adults. Studies have also revealed that in the 1960s, and through to the 1980s, young adults left home to live on their own for reasons other than marriage (Baranwal and Ram, 1985; Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1994). However, solo living among young adults came to a halt and even reversed itself in the 1980s (Harrison, 1981; Ram, 1990). The proportion of the population aged 15-24 in private households who lived alone declined from 4.4% to 3.3% between 1981 and 1996. Studies have shown that in the face of economic hardship in recent years, many of the youth have either prolonged their stay with, or returned to their parents (Glick and Lin, 1986; Boyd and Pryor, 1989). Solo living is becoming concentrated among middle and older ages, especially among women as shown in Figure 4.

Reproduction

Perhaps no other change has had more visible and far-reaching impact on the family lives of Canadians than the changing patterns of fertility. Although parenthood remains an essential element in the lives of most Canadians, increasing proportions of them desire, and are having, fewer children. In 1972, the total fertility rate fell below the replacement level of 2.1 births per woman, and since then it has fallen further. In 1987, it reached an historic low of 1.53. Although it increased slightly in the following years, it has been hovering around 1.65 for some time. Whether these patterns are going to be sustained in the future remains a puzzle for demographers, especially those involved in population projections. Demographers have failed so many times to predict future levels of fertility in the West, that it becomes almost presumptuous to attempt to do so. However, it appears that in making assumptions about fertility level, the practice of setting the upper bound at 2.1 children per woman – the replacement level – must now be abandoned. The completed cohort fertility rate for women born in 1951, most of whom have already completed their reproductive life, is around 1.9 children per woman (Basavarajappa and Ram, 1993). The corresponding rate for women born in 1956, who may also be thought to have completed most of their reproductive life, is likely to be around

Figure 4. Percent of Adults Living Alone by Age and Sex,
Canada: 1981 and 1996



Source: 1981 Census of Canada. Catalogue 192-905. 1996 Census of Canada. Unpublished data.

1.8 (Table 4). We do not have enough information for more recent cohorts. But even if they were to have children at the rate of the cohorts that produced the baby boom, they will not achieve a fertility level greater than 1.7 children per woman. The levels could be even lower for certain provinces, such as Quebec and Newfoundland. How low the fertility level could go remains a controversial question. Given that almost half of the countries in Europe and even certain regions of Canada have reached fertility levels as low as 1.5 or below, and that most women desire to have at least one child, it may not be unrealistic to take a total fertility rate of 1.1 children per woman as the lower bound of fertility. On the assumption that some women cannot or do not want to have any children while the remaining will have just one child, Golani (1998) expects this level to be even lower, between 0.7 and 0.8.

Delayed Childbearing and Childlessness.

Related to these patterns are the increased childlessness and the reduced childbearing phase of the family life cycle. Since the 1960s, the proportion of childless women among younger women has increased steadily as shown in Table 5. Between 1971 and 1991, the proportion of ever-married women who had not borne a child, increased from 21% to 38% in the 25 to 29 age group, and from 9% to 19% in the 30 to 34 age group, suggesting a tendency for younger women to delay having children. Interestingly, however, the proportion of childless women also increased among women aged 35 to 44, from 9% in 1971 to 12% in 1991. The sustained pattern of delayed childbearing, along with the rise of childlessness among women in their late 30s, may be an indicator of the development of new social norms (Spanier, 1989). How much of this trend is due to a desire not to have children, and how much of it is due to the successive postponement of births remains a mystery. However, it may be useful to note that this is not something that is unprecedented in the Canadian demographic history. Except for a few birth cohorts (1920s and 1930s), the incidence of childlessness was almost always greater than 12%. The incidence declined notably for the cohorts, which produced the baby boom. In this sense, a low incidence of childlessness during the baby boom period may be construed as an aberration.

Previous studies have found a substantial increase in first and second births among women in recent years, suggesting a 'catch-up' effect of earlier postponement (Ram, 1988; Loh and Ram, 1990). As shown in Figure 5a, the first-order birth rate which is generally a demographic phenomenon of women in the 20 to 24 and 25 to 29 age groups, has been increasing among women over age 30 since the late 1960s. In 1995, the first-order birth rate was 28 per thousand in the 30 to 34 age group, up from 11 per thousand in 1970 and 17 per thousand in 1980. Similar patterns can be seen in the case of the second-order birth rate: among women aged 30 to 34 (Figure 5b), it increased from 19 per thousand in 1970 to 27 per thousand in 1980, and 35 per thousand in 1995.

Table 4. Cumulative Fertility Rates for Selected Birth Cohorts for Canada and Quebec: 1906 to 1971

Cumulative Cohort Fertility			Canada						Quebec						
Women born in	Age 15 in	Cumulative fertility up to age						Cumulative fertility up to age							
		19	24	29	34	39	44	49	19	24	29	34	39	44	49
1906	1921	161	863	1666	2276	2698	2857	2870	145	885	1841	2657	3244	3479	3499
1911	1926	154	747	1445	2091	2533	2680	2693	114	677	1518	2338	2921	3134	3154
1916	1931	133	734	1575	2279	2704	2846	2856	81	635	1636	2481	3037	3231	3246
1921	1936	144	882	1888	2644	3085	3217	3224	97	839	1946	2809	3363	3531	3541
1926	1941	154	1034	2041	2761	3126	3202	3205	119	972	2057	2881	3309	3398	3401
1931	1946	215	1232	2334	3021	3258	3296	3297	146	1099	2246	2980	3231	3271	3273
1936	1951	264	1373	2388	2823	2958	2976	2977	161	1165	2165	2603	2745	2764	2765
1941	1956	303	1378	2121	2460	2555	2569	2570	177	1125	1837	2171	2270	2282	2283
1946	1961	250	993	1675	2002	2100	2115	2116	141	800	1450	1792	1879	1889	1890
1951	1966	203	790	1423	1768	1884	1897	1898	106	587	1263	1581	1675	1686	1687
1956	1971	175	691	1314	1689	1799	1812	1813	91	573	1187	1518	1608	1619	1619
1961	1976	139	590						83	481					
1966	1981	113							68						
1971	1986														

Percentage of Cumulative Fertility		Canada						Quebec							
Percentage of Cumulative Fertility		Cumulative fertility up to age						Cumulative fertility up to age							
		19	24	29	34	39	44	49	19	24	29	34	39	44	49
1906	1921	5.6	30.1	58.0	79.3	94.0	99.5	100.0	4.1	25.3	52.6	75.9	92.7	99.4	100.0
1911	1926	5.7	27.7	53.7	77.6	94.1	99.5	100.0	3.6	21.5	48.1	74.1	92.6	99.4	100.0
1916	1931	4.7	25.7	55.1	79.8	94.7	99.6	100.0	2.5	19.6	50.4	76.4	93.6	99.5	100.0
1921	1936	4.5	27.4	58.6	82.0	95.7	99.8	100.0	2.7	23.7	55.0	79.3	95.0	99.7	100.0
1926	1941	4.8	32.3	63.7	86.1	97.5	99.9	100.0	3.5	28.6	60.5	84.7	97.3	99.9	100.0
1931	1946	6.5	37.4	70.8	91.6	98.8	100.0	100.0	4.5	33.6	68.6	91.0	98.7	99.9	100.0
1936	1951	8.9	46.1	80.2	94.8	99.4	100.0	100.0	5.8	42.1	78.3	94.1	99.3	100.0	100.0
1941	1956	11.8	53.6	82.5	95.7	99.4	100.0	100.0	7.8	49.3	80.5	95.1	99.4	100.0	100.0
1946	1961	11.8	46.9	79.2	94.6	99.2	100.0	100.0	7.5	42.3	76.7	94.8	99.4	100.0	100.0
1951	1966	10.7	41.6	75.0	93.2	99.3	99.9	100.0	6.3	34.8	74.9	93.7	99.3	100.0	100.0
1956	1971	9.7	38.1	72.5	93.2	99.2	99.9	100.0	5.6	35.4	73.3	93.8	99.3	100.0	100.0

Source: Basavarajappa, K. G. and Bali Ram, 1993. Unpublished manuscript.

During the same period, the mean age at first birth rose from 23.7 to 26.4 years, and the mean age at second birth rose from 26.4 to 29.0 years.

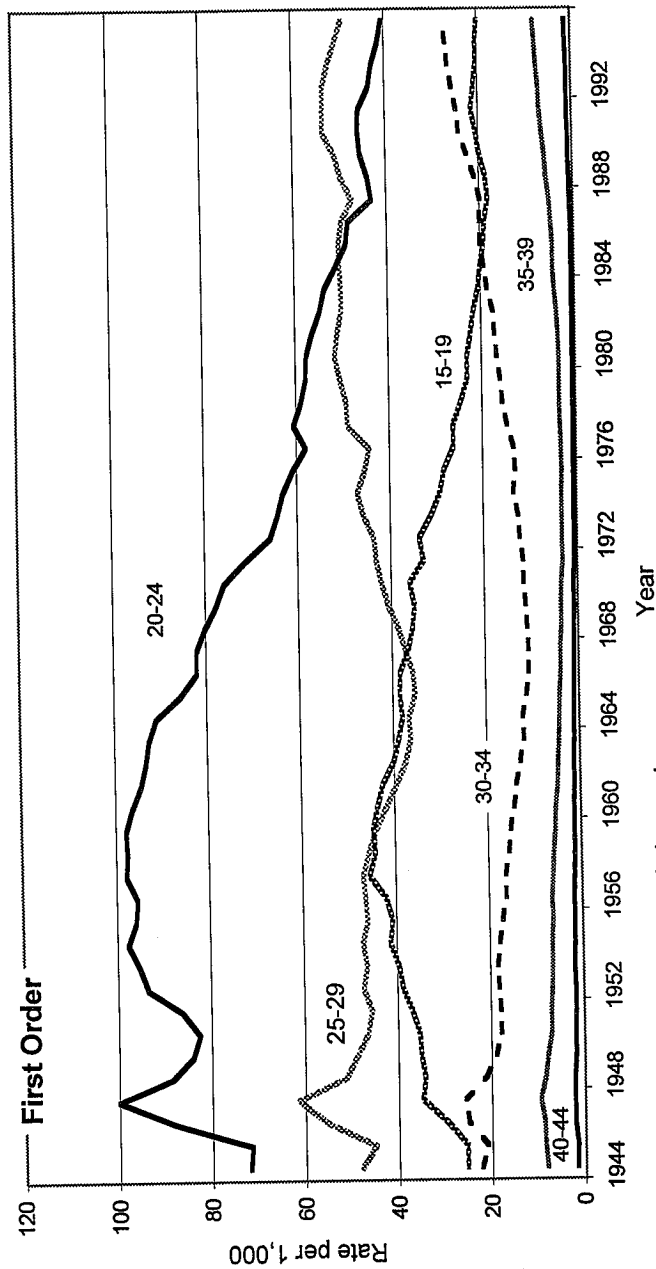
The age at which a woman bears her first child is one of the most important events in her life. It has become critical in recent years because of several reasons. First, increasing proportions of women are completing their family size by having their first child. Second, women are beginning their childbearing late but having subsequent children rather quickly (Rahim and Ram, 1993). Third, for many women, the conventional life cycle with the birth of a child following marriage has become reversed as an increasing proportion of women are marrying after having their first child, or do not marry at all. Fourth, the birth of the first child is not producing any interruption in women's careers. In developing societies, most women work as long as they are not married or do not have a child. The birth of a child brings an end to the career of most women, or produces a long interruption in their labour force activity. This is not so in today's industrialized societies, as women are returning to work after a brief

Table 5
Percentage of Ever Married Women Who
Have Borne No Children or One Child for Canada: 1941 to 1991

No Children					
Age Groups	1941	1961	1971	1981	1991
15-19	55.8	42.3	49.7	64.9	68.7
20-24	38.3	26.3	42.0	54.0	58.8
25-29	26.4	13.6	20.7	30.0	38.0
30-34	18.1	9.7	9.4	14.2	19.0
35-39	14.1	9.2	7.4	9.3	13.0
40-44	12.6	10.3	8.2	7.3	10.7
35-44	13.4	9.7	7.8	8.4	11.9
45-49	NA	13.1	9.6	7.2	7.4
One Child					
15-19	35.9	44.4	41.2	28.9	25.3
20-24	35.2	34.7	33.5	27.8	26.3
25-29	28.6	21.0	24.3	27.0	27.7
30-34	21.7	14.0	12.8	19.1	21.6
35-39	16.6	12.4	9.4	13.1	16.4
40-44	14.1	13.1	9.8	9.9	14.7
35-44	15.4	12.7	9.6	11.7	15.6
45-49	NA	15.1	11.3	9.0	10.0

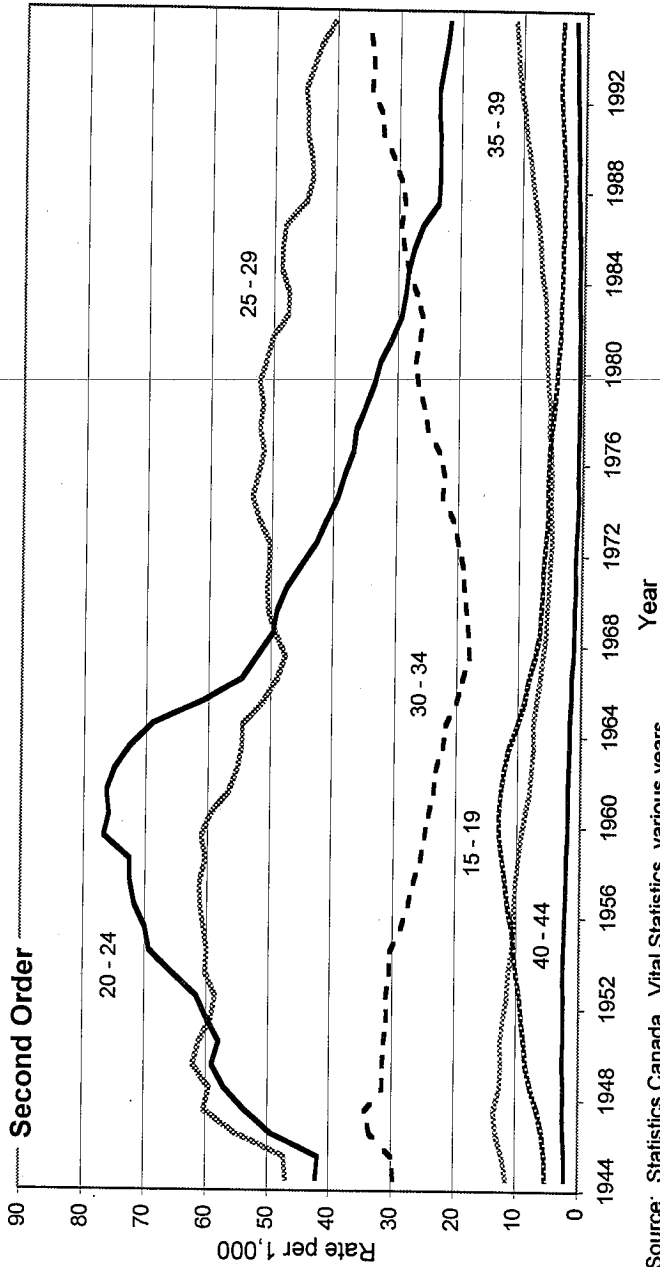
Source: 1961 Census of Canada, Catalogue 98-507.
1971 Census of Canada, Catalogue 92-718.
1981 Census of Canada, Catalogue 92-906.
1991 Census of Canada, Catalogue. 93-321.

Figure 5a. Fertility Rate per 1,000 Women by Birth Order and Age Group, Canada: 1944 - 1995



Source: Statistics Canada. Vital Statistics, various years.

Figure 5b. Fertility Rate per 1,000 Women by Birth Order and Age Group,
Canada: 1944 - 1994



Source: Statistics Canada. Vital Statistics, various years.

interruption (Ram and Rahim, 1993), probably in order to earn enough money and to provide a reasonable standard of living for their children.

Delayed childbearing has a positive impact on marital stability, women's careers, and educational attainment, the health of mothers and infants, and the accumulation of assets (Grindstaff, 1988). However, it has certain undesirable consequences too. Given that fecundity declines with age (Menken, 1985), postponing childbearing too long may result in unintended permanent childlessness (Morgan, 1991). Whether longer postponement of a first birth makes women physiologically less capable of having a child remains an unresolved question. However, it could be argued that the longer a woman postpones having a child, the less inclined she will be to have a child. An extreme example of the negative consequence of the delayed childbearing is the increased likelihood of having a baby with 'Down's syndrome' (Mongoloid mental retardation). Delayed childbearing also implies that in the future an adult child of an older person will be sandwiched between the care of a dependent child and an ageing parent.

Childlessness is found to be positively linked to an increased propensity for marital instability. Unlike couples with children, childless couples are less likely to be concerned with the financial and psychic costs which result from the break-up of marriage (Lillard and Waite, 1993). The presence of children – younger ones in particular – is usually thought to be a deterrent to divorce (Cherlin, 1977; Waite and Lillard, 1991). Having a child signals a long-term commitment to marriage, and therefore, decreases the chances of divorce. The birth of a child in common-law unions has also been found to exert a positive effect on the stability of unions (Wu, 1995).

One obvious effect of delayed childbearing and declining fertility is the decline of large families. In 1996, 22% of census families headed by persons 35 to 44, had three children, down from 54% in 1971. During the same period, the proportion of families headed by persons in the 35 to 44 age group with two children rose from 27% to 41%, and those with one child rose from 13% to 24% (Table 6). With these trends in mind, one wonders if we are moving toward a society of loners and self-centred individuals who may not be adequately taught to share family resources with their siblings, or toward a society of high achievers who by virtue of the fact that they are 'only children', may have obtained the maximum attention and resources. One also wonders if Canada is heading toward a society of neglected children of career-oriented parents who may not have spent enough time with them during their formative years, or toward a society of pampered children who have all the modern amenities that their predecessors did not have. Research originating from the so-called 'confluence model' (Zajonc, 1976; Zajonc and Markus, 1975; Zajonc and Mullally, 1997) indicates that despite greater exposure to a mature intellectual milieu and the benefits of a small family, 'only children' are of lower quality because they lack the opportunity to serve as intellectual resources and to sharpen their intellect on someone younger than themselves. Diametrically

Table 6
Percentage Distribution of Census Families by Age of Head and
Number of Children at Home, Aged 0 to 24 for Canada: 1961 to 1996

Year	Total	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
No child							
1961	29.3	36.4	15.6	9.0	19.0	51.7	86.7
1971	30.5	47.2	20.0	6.8	17.1	50.1	87.5
1981	35.6	55.6	26.5	9.1	19.6	56.0	91.4
1986	37.5	52.6	28.0	11.0	23.2	60.8	92.8
1991	39.4	50.8	29.9	13.1	26.6	68.1	94.5
1996	39.8	43.3	29.2	13.1	26.1	72.5	96.2
One Child							
1961	20.2	39.7	23.4	15.1	23.0	23.8	8.7
1971	20.5	37.3	25.8	12.6	21.8	25.0	8.3
1981	22.7	31.7	28.0	18.3	26.7	25.6	6.2
1986	23.6	33.8	28.6	21.2	29.8	25.4	5.6
1991	23.4	35.2	28.7	22.9	30.3	21.5	4.3
1996	23.2	40.4	30.0	23.8	30.1	18.8	3.0
Two Children							
1961	20.6	17.7	28.4	25.8	22.8	11.8	2.6
1971	21.3	12.7	30.7	27.0	23.8	12.8	2.5
1981	25.2	10.7	32.9	40.3	28.0	11.5	1.6
1986	25.8	11.3	31.5	43.1	29.1	9.7	1.2
1991	25.3	11.3	29.8	41.7	29.3	7.9	0.9
1996	25.2	13.1	29.4	40.8	30.3	6.6	0.6
Three Children or More							
1961	29.8	6.2	32.6	49.8	35.8	12.8	2.0
1971	27.8	2.9	23.4	53.6	37.3	11.9	1.7
1981	16.5	1.9	12.7	32.1	25.7	6.9	0.8
1986	13.1	2.3	11.9	24.8	18.0	4.1	0.4
1991	11.8	2.6	11.5	22.4	13.6	3.4	0.3
1996	11.8	3.2	11.4	22.3	13.5	2.1	0.2

Source: Wargon, Sylvia T. *Children in Canadian Families*, Catalogue No. 98-810, Ottawa, Statistics Canada, 1979.
 Ram, Bali. *New Trends in the Family. Demographic Facts and Features*, Catalogue 91-535, Ottawa, Statistics Canada, 1990.
 Special tabulations prepared at the Demography Division of Statistics Canada were used for 1991 and 1996.

opposed to this is the 'resource dilution model' which finds that 'only children' are in an advantaged position because they receive undivided social, material, and emotional resources from their parents (Blake, 1981a, 1981b, 1989). A recent analysis of the data from the first cycle of the Canadian National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (Ram and Montsion, 1998), revealed that 'only children' were unique in terms of their personality traits, with greater hyperactivity, less anxiety, less physical aggression, and more orderly conduct. It is not clear, however, if they are as smart as the children with siblings. Further research needs to be done on this subject to arrive at a definitive conclusion.

Women's Labour Force Participation

The influx of women into the labour force is one of the most important social revolutions of the late 20th century in Canada and throughout the industrialized world. It has left unalterable imprints on the family. The number of women in the labour force in Canada tripled within less than fifty years, reaching 6.8 million in 1996. The labour force participation rates for all women have increased, but the most significant change in recent years has occurred among married women with pre-school age children. As shown in Table 7, the participation rate of all ever-married women increased by 68% over the last 25 years, from 34% in 1971 to 57% in 1996, whereas the rate increased by 80% (from 35% to 63%) for women with a husband present, and by 152% (from 26% to 67%) for wives with some children under the age of six. Although mothers with very young children have not fully caught up with other women, the differences in the labour force participation rates of married women with children of different ages have minimized over the years. For example in 1996, the participation rate of married women with a husband present, who had at least one child under 2 years, was only slightly behind (68%) that of women with children 2 to 5 years (75%). Today, it appears that the presence of young children does not interfere with the entrance of mothers into the labour force or shorten their careers to the same extent as it did some 20 years ago. There are a number of possible explanations for this. A prime factor is that more recent cohorts of women are better educated, and therefore incur a higher opportunity cost if they remain out of the labour force. Moreover, childcare services are more available (Hotz, 1997).

At this point, numerous studies have found that the increased labour force participation of women is a major factor in recent trends towards delayed marriage and marital dissolution, although causation runs in both directions. This is not an unrealistic finding given the lessening economic dependence of women on marriage. Evidence supports the view that fertility rates in the West declined primarily in response to increased employment and wages (Butz and Ward, 1979). As children are intensive users of women's time, the opportunity cost of childbearing and rearing has risen with the increase in women's wages.

Table 7. Labour Force Participation Rates of Ever Married and Currently Married Women, by Age and Presence of Children for Canada: 1971 to 1996

Age Group	Ever married					Married, husband present				
	1971	1976	1981	1986	1991	1996	1971	1986	1991	1996
No children at home										
Total	34.0	40.2	46.4	51.0	56.4	57.2	35.0	42.4	49.4	55.4
15-24	44.1	57.1	68.2	73.9	75.8	71.2	48.4	57.1	68.4	74.7
25-34	39.5	49.9	62.2	70.8	76.6	76.6	37.9	48.6	60.9	71.1
35-44	41.5	52.2	63.1	71.4	79.3	79.0	39.7	50.9	61.7	70.3
45+	27.9	30.0	31.5	32.8	37.2	39.2	29.6	33.0	34.7	37.5
With children at home										
Total	34.5	34.2	38.8	39.7	42.8	43.0	39.2	41.1	44.9	47.0
15-24	71.8	37.8	85.5	87.9	87.6	83.8	73.1	76.5	86.2	89.3
25-34	73.7	78.9	88.1	90.9	91.7	89.6	75.1	78.9	88.4	91.5
35-44	60.8	66.9	76.8	81.5	85.1	83.9	59.4	65.5	75.9	81.7
45+	23.0	23.0	23.7	23.7	27.4	28.3	24.8	25.5	26.5	27.7
Children Under 6 only										
Total	36.5	45.7	53.2	60.8	68.6	69.8	35.2	44.9	53.0	61.3
15-24	30.6	36.5	44.6	53.3	56.7	53.7	29.8	36.0	44.1	53.3
25-34	32.8	42.7	54.2	63.8	70.5	71.2	31.7	41.7	53.3	63.4
35-44	39.4	50.7	61.3	69.7	78.1	77.9	38.1	49.6	60.1	68.8
45+	36.5	43.0	43.8	49.0	57.3	60.7	35.0	42.5	44.4	50.6
Under 6 as well as 6+										
Total	na	na	51.4	63.2	69.0	70.7	na	na	50.5	62.9
15-24	na	na	44.4	53.6	56.6	53.6	na	na	43.9	53.6
25-34	na	na	52.5	64.4	70.7	73.1	na	na	51.6	64.1
35-44	na	na	52.7	66.1	72.4	74.5	na	na	51.8	65.4
45+	na	na	42.0	57.7	59.7	68.7	na	na	44.1	61.2
Under 6 as well as 6+										
Total	26.9	36.7	44.9	56.1	65.0	65.8	26.4	36.3	44.6	56.1
15-24	30.3	36.0	39.2	43.3	47.7	48.5	29.6	35.5	39.0	43.5
25-34	28.0	37.8	45.4	55.4	63.5	63.7	27.4	37.3	45.1	55.4
35-44	25.8	36.1	45.0	57.7	67.5	68.9	25.4	35.8	44.7	57.6
45+	23.1	23.1	33.7	44.0	55.8	61.8	22.5	22.5	33.3	44.1

Note: Overall rates are age-adjusted using the 1996 age distribution as standard.

Source: 1971 Census of Canada. Special tabulation; 1976 Census of Canada. Catalogue 94-836; 1981 Census of Canada. Catalogue 92-917 and 92-921; 1986 Census of Canada. Catalogue 93-111; 1991 Census of Canada. Catalogue 93-325; 1996 Census of Canada. Special tabulation.

Since women are able to earn higher wages than ever before, they are likely to incur larger losses by having a child. Again, there is a reciprocal causation between these variables, and there are other factors involved. Some studies have also found that fertility has a strong negative effect on employment in the short run, but employment depresses fertility in the long run. Given the fact that the cost of rearing children has been going up and that women have to forgo their earnings while staying home, it is possible that employed women will not have many children.

Perhaps the most visible consequence of the rise in women's employment is the increased demand for childcare services. Unless there is some radical shift in delayed family formation, delayed childbearing, and childlessness, an increasing number of women will enter the labour force, and remain in it longer, thereby resulting in the growth of dual-earner families. Thus, not only will an increasing number of couples be able to afford extra-familial child-care services, but also they will be asking for higher quality services. According to some projections, the proportion of pre-school-age children needing extra-parental care is likely to increase from 50% in 1981 to 70% in 2001. Also, the proportion of children between 6 and 14 years needing some form of after-school and lunch-time care may increase from 60% to 70% (Ram, 1988). The demand for these services will probably intensify because the conventional care givers themselves will be in the labour force and also because older brothers and sisters may not be available to take care of their siblings.

The work place is also bound to be affected by this phenomenon as some women may wish to integrate their family and work commitments better, demanding part-time jobs, shorter hours of work, compressed work weeks, job sharing, flexitime, liberal maternity and paternity leaves, and family-related leave to stay home to care for children. The challenge facing business and other social institutions will be how to introduce these innovations into the work world while maintaining fairness in placement and promotion.

Young children seem to be bearing the brunt during these processes. According to a recent Carnegie publication, *Years of Promise*, ages 3 to 10 are the most sensitive periods during children's lives, when they make "great leaps in cognition, language acquisition, and reasoning, corresponding with dramatic neurological changes". The report provides references to substantial bodies of research confirming that the educational attainments of nearly all children could be greatly increased. The skill, warmth, and enthusiasm of teachers are certainly important to the intellectual development of children. However, as the report states, "schools may have the primary responsibility for children's formal education, but their educational success is influenced by far more than what happens to them in schools. Families, pre-schools, religious and other community institutions and, beyond these immediate influences, the broader array of institutions that bear on children's lives – the media, employers in all sectors, higher education, and government – have shared responsibility to contribute to children's learning and healthy development." The report finds that

parental involvement in the education of children is of utmost importance, especially for children between the ages of 3 and 5 years. These years, however, are becoming highly neglected because more younger mothers are entering the labour force, and also because a greater number of young children are getting involved in stepfamilies. No wonder, seventh and eighth grade students in Canada and the United States with relatively high public expenditure on schooling were behind in both math and science in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) – a massive project involving more than half a million students, five grade levels, 30 languages and 45 countries, whereas those in Asia and Eastern Europe as a group, lead the world (Science Vol. 274, 22 November 1996). Unless some radical changes are brought about in the educational system to deal with these formative years, a succession of generations and the future economy will suffer (Abelson, 1996: 1819).

Mortality

Declining mortality has heavily influenced family structure and living arrangements in the late 20th century. Life expectancy for both men and women has increased markedly. Although the entire population – children, adults, and the elderly – now live longer than ever before, the largest increase in the survival rates has been experienced by younger children. The probability of a child surviving to adolescence has improved steadily. Also, due to the progress in health conditions among adults, the probability of a child becoming an orphan has been reduced substantially.

At older ages, the decline in mortality, particularly since 1940, has been amazing. Now, more than ever before, growing proportions of men and women are surviving to older ages. The chances of older people surviving beyond age 70 have improved significantly. These trends have led to an increased probability that husbands and wives, will be together as elderly couples until death. A well-known consequence of the improved life expectancy of older persons is a prolonged 'empty nest' stage for couples, when all their children have left home. This clearly means that the traditional support providers, especially adult daughters, are becoming less available.

Another important development associated with the overall mortality decline is the widening gap between male and female survival rates at older ages. During 1994-96, the life expectancy of women at age 65 exceeded that of men by 3.9 years; the corresponding difference was 2.5 years in 1960-62, and less than one year before 1940 (Table 8). This trend coupled with the fact that most husbands are older than their wives and that the remarriage rate is higher among widowed men than among widowed women, has resulted in an increase in the number of widows. In 1921, widows over the age of 65 outnumbered widowers by a margin of two to one; by 1996, the gap had widened to approximately five to one.

Table 8
Expectation of Life at Birth and at Age 65
for Canada: 1920-22 to 1994-96

Period	At age 0			At age 65		
	Male	Female	Difference	Male	Female	Difference
1920-22	58.8	60.6	1.8	13.0	13.6	0.6
1940-42	63.0	66.3	3.3	13.9	12.8	-1.1
1960-62	68.4	74.3	5.9	13.6	16.1	2.5
1980-81	71.9	79.1	7.2	14.6	18.9	4.3
1985-87	73.0	79.7	6.7	14.9	19.1	4.2
1994-96	75.4	81.3	5.9	16.2	20.1	3.9

Source: 1920-1922: Canadian Abridged Life Tables, 1921. Catalogue No. 84-510.
1940-1942: Canadian Abridged Life Tables, 1941. Catalogue No. 84-510.
1960-1962: Abridged Life Tables, Canada and Provinces. Catalogue No. 84-532.
1980-1981: Abridged Life Tables, Canada and Provinces. Catalogue No. 84-532.
1985-1987: Abridged Life Tables, Canada and Provinces. Catalogue No. 84-537.
1994-1996: Unpublished data. Calculations prepared at the Demography Division,
Statistics Canada.

The widening sex differential in life expectancy in favour of older women has numerous implications for life styles. Women typically marry men who are two to three years older, but due to the shortage of older men, many widows may be forced to marry men who are younger. There are still others who may not find a suitable partner and therefore may have to live alone. In 1996, one-fifth of all men and slightly over half of all women 75 years and over lived alone. This observation calls for research on the socio-psychological and epidemiological aspects of ageing and non-family living.

There is substantial evidence to suggest that declining mortality and increasing longevity among the elderly – women in particular – have been accompanied by a worsening of health condition (Wilkins and Admas, 1983; Verbrugge, 1984; Charlton and White, 1994). It has been argued that our life-saving technology has only postponed death and consequently increased the duration of life with debilitating health conditions (Gruenberg, 1979). This so-called ‘expansion-of-morbidity’ suggests that an increased proportion of the ageing population will have to suffer from chronic illnesses and untreatable disabilities longer than ever before (Olshansky, Carnes and Cassel, 1993). By contrast, Fries (1983, 1989) has proposed an opposing view in his controversial ‘compression-of-morbidity’ hypothesis. Fries argues that because of changes in diet, exercise, and daily routines, the age of onset of chronic infirmity relative to average life duration will be postponed, while the adult life expectancy is relatively fixed. Thus, he hypothesizes that better life styles and advanced medical technology will

compress the period of mortality, morbidity, and disability into a shorter period of time. This controversy remains unresolved, particularly in the light of research which suggests that life style factors associated with the reduction of the major fatal diseases (heart disease, cancer and stroke) do not change the onset of chronic infirmity, and that the life expectancy among older people has been increasing. This subject needs further research, particularly because lower socio-economic groups tend to adopt life styles that are associated with major risks for morbidity and mortality, whereas higher socio-economic groups tend to adopt more healthy life styles (Ram, 1995).

Conclusions

Since the early days of the social sciences, most of the controversy surrounding the current and the projected state of the family has centred around the question of whether the family is as strong or weaker than before, and whether the decline in marriage and fertility rates, and the rise in divorce rates, common-law living, unmarried motherhood, lone-parent families, and labour force participation of mothers with young children, are signs of social progress or decline. The views of most analysts on these issues are heavily shaped by their ideological leanings.

The evidence that I have reviewed in this paper suggests that although the family remains central to most Canadians, its social and demographic boundaries have been shrinking over the past 30 years. This is not simply a matter of repeating the often-stated view that the modern family has shifted away from its economic function to a narrower role as the primary focus of affective ties. The changes are more complex and ambiguous than that. There are numerous deviations from the traditional family patterns, some pointing to a vast break with the past, while others show a continuation or return to the past. However, since the 1970s, these deviations have become more visible than before. What is even more important is that they have either created new needs, or intensified the old ones on the part of everyone – couples, parents, children, seniors, and non-family members – which are not being met by an increasing number of families. The forces behind these transformations are usually irreversible, either because they are beyond the control of human beings, or because they are in response to new social demands. A typical example is the increased participation of married women in the labour force. This is not likely to be reversed in the near future, nor is it desirable. It's not likely to be reversed, because of an increased demand for a specific type of labour force for which women are ideally suited and because technological advances related to the mechanization of family chores have lessened the family burden on women. It is not desirable for this trend to be reversed, because individuals, families, and society in general have found women's labour force participation beneficial for all and because it has brought about the greater equality between the sexes. Another similar trend is the increased life expectancy among older people,

which is least likely to be reversed, although it may have lengthened the period of suffering from chronic illnesses. Then rather than complaining and lamenting about the fragility of the family, Canadian society needs to adjust to these changes. However, this calls for the modification of existing programs and policies and the introduction of new ones.

Basically there are two types of public policies and programs dealing with changes in the family: preventive/interventionist and ameliorative (DaVanzo, Rahman, and Wadhwa, 1993). Preventive policies discourage the development of undesirable changes in the family. They come into play before the problem occurs. Examples of such policies include sex education and family planning programs for reducing the incidence of unmarried motherhood. Ameliorative policies on the other hand, are intended to provide cures for the problems; they come into effect after the fact. Examples of such policies include public transfers to unmarried mothers to meet their various needs. Although preventive policies are usually preferred, they are difficult to implement as the causes of certain social phenomena are unclear and controversial. Social research is often inconclusive about what needs to be prevented, and whether the prevention of certain social phenomena is going to bring about the desired results (Bumpass, 1990). Unlike preventive policies, ameliorative policies are costly but often easier to design and administer (Duncan et al. 1998). It seems advisable to look for programs and policies that help individuals and society cope with the consequences of family changes or the factors that produce those changes.

I do not wish to make any policy proposals here. In fact, I do not find myself competent enough to do so. However, I am sure there are others amongst us, who are competent, but shy away from this mode of research for various reasons. I would like the changes in the four domains of family life – family formation, reproduction, women's labour force participation, and mortality – that I discussed earlier, to be examined in light of the programs and policies they might influence or help in their development. Perhaps demographers need to join hands with experts from other disciplines, notably economics, sociology, public health, and social work, to examine whether our data, measures, and indicators make an impact on the people influencing programs and policies. Otherwise, regardless of our technically sophisticated models and detailed findings, very few other than our friends or colleagues are going to pay attention to our research.

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