

Toronto is now Canada's largest metropolitan area with a 1981 population of 2,998,947. The Montreal metropolitan area is in second place with 2,828,349. Vancouver is third with 1,268,183, Ottawa-Hull fourth with 717,978. Edmonton is now the fifth largest metropolitan area with 657,057 people and Calgary, with 592,743 in 1981, is sixth.

These six gained a total of 570,296 between 1976 and 1981. Middle and small cities did less well. Two, Sudbury and Windsor, actually lost people and the four smallest of the ranked cities, Chicoutimi-Jonquière, Thunder Bay, Saint John and Trois-Rivières, together gained only 5,151. Some smaller towns grew too, many impressively, but often by the simple process of being unofficially absorbed into the expanding metropolitan areas.

Sectual Preference

The Canadian census of 1901 recorded only 4,181 persons who said they belonged to no religion and only 3,613 professed "agnostics," a word that included "atheists, freethinkers, infidels, sceptics and unbelievers."

When Canada began, a great many people went to a relatively small number of churches. The French church-goers were almost all Catholic and so were the southern Irish and the Highland Scots. The lowland Scots and northern Irish were likely to be Presbyterian and the English, Anglican.

These relatively even divisions produced at least an official tolerance — federal governments included high-level members from each group. The simple pattern grew even more pronounced when the United Church of Canada was formed after World War I, combining the Methodists and Congregationalists and most of the Presbyterians. The picture has grown much more diverse since

World War II.

For one thing an increasing number of Canadians no longer go to church at all, or, if they do, they do so casually and infrequently. Seven point four per cent of all Canadians, 1.8 million, told the 1981 census takers they had "no religious preference," a rise of 90 per cent in ten years. In British Columbia 21.5 per cent of the population were churchless, in the Yukon, 19.1 per cent, and in Alberta, 11.5. In Newfoundland the old allegiances remained solid: 99 per cent of the population had a specific church of choice.

The division within the traditional churches has also shifted significantly — the Catholics climbed to 47.3 per cent in 1981, and the Protestants dropped to 41.2 per cent. One point five per cent of Canadians, most of Ukrainian ancestry, go to the Eastern Orthodox church, 1.2 per cent are Jews and 1.3 per cent are divided among other small churches.

Small churches had the greatest relative growth. The Canadian Buddhists, mostly immigrants from the Orient, gained 223 per cent in membership to 51,955 between 1971 and 1981, and the Mormons grew by 36 per cent, to 89,870.

The main gainers among the Protestants were the Pentecostals, who advanced 54 per cent, from 219,300 to 338,790.

The number of Jews grew by 8 per cent to 296,425, with a high concentration in two provinces: Ontario, where 148,255, slightly more than half, resided; and Quebec, which had 102,550, approximately a third.

Among some of the more established groups, the growth was slow or negative. The United Church, Canada's largest Protestant denomination, grew by only one per cent, the number of Unitarians was down 31 per cent, the Presbyterians down by 6 per cent and the Anglicans down by 3.

The Doukhobors, the self-contained farmer descendants of Russian emigrés, lost 27 per cent of their number.

CHURCH BY CHOICE

