

VITAL STATISTICS

Although a record number of births were registered in Canada during 1958, birth and marriage rates (per 1,000 population) dropped, according to the preliminary annual vital statistics report issued today by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Other noteworthy features of the year's vital statistics were a record low death rate; a record 334,917 persons added to the population by natural increase (net difference between births and deaths); a record number of children born in hospital (92 out of every 100); and new record low infant (children under 1 year of age) and neonatal (infants under 4 weeks of age) mortality rates.

BIRTHS

During 1958, 470,118 infants were born alive, at the rate of almost one a minute. Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia and the Northwest Territories accounted for the increase, all other provinces having fewer births than in the previous year. The Canadian birth rate dropped from the record high of 28.3 (per 1,000 population) in 1957 to 27.6 - about the level of 1951-52. Provincial rates were all below the previous year, in some provinces reverting to pre-World War II levels. Almost one-third of Canadian births were to residents of Ontario (152,637), 30 per cent in Quebec (141,396), and almost 8.5 per cent in British Columbia (39,576), or 71 per cent in the three largest provinces. Ontario has had more births than Quebec each year since 1953, although Quebec has consistently had the higher birth rate. Among the 10 provinces Newfoundland had -- as for many years -- the highest birth rate in the country at 33.8, followed by Alberta (30.7), Quebec (29.0) and New Brunswick (28.4); rates for the other provinces ranged from a low of 24.9 in Manitoba to 26.9 in Saskatchewan.

Of the total 455,303 babies born in 1958 (excluding Newfoundland), 417,292 or 92 out of every 100 were delivered in hospital, the proportion varying from 79.3 per cent in Quebec to 99 per cent in Prince Edward Island. Before World War II less than 40 per cent of all infants were delivered in hospital as compared with over 67 per cent at the end of the War and 79 per cent in 1951.

MARRIAGES

After reaching the second highest total on record in 1957 at 133,186, the number of marriages registered during 1958 dropped to 130,523 as compared with the record high of 137,398 in 1946 and 132,713 in 1956. Following the "marriage boom" of 1946, the annual number declined gradually to 128,029 in 1955 followed by rises in 1956 and 1957, with a drop in practically all provinces in 1958. The marriage rate (per 1,000 population) dropped in 1958 to 7.7, the lowest since 1936, declining gradually each year from a high of 10.9 in 1946.

DEATHS

Canada's overall death rate of 7.9 is one of the lowest in the world and compares favourably with a rate of 9.5 for the United States and 11.7 for England and Wales, due partly to Canada's younger population. Since 1921 Canada's crude death rate has been reduced from 11.6. There were 135,201 deaths in the country in 1958 but had the 1921 rate prevailed there would have been almost 198,000; thus as an illustration of the improvement in mortality since 1921, this would have meant a saving of almost 63,000 lives annually! Provincial death rates varied in 1958 from a low of 6.9 in Alberta to highs of 9.5 in Prince Edward Island and 8.9 in British Columbia.

Of the total of 135,201 deaths in 1958, 14,178 comprised infants under one year of age, of whom 9,055 died within four weeks of their birth (neo-natal deaths). The infant death rate has declined from 100 in every 1,000 born alive, in the early 1920's to a record low of 30 in 1958, while the neo-natal death rate has declined from 44 to a record low of 19 over the same period.

CAUSES OF DEATH

There was relatively little change from the previous year in the numbers dying from the major causes. Forty-six per cent of all deaths were due to diseases of the heart and circulatory system, one-sixth to cancer and almost 7 per cent to accidents. Of the total deaths in 1958, 38,853 died of arteriosclerotic and degenerative heart disease as compared with 38,278 in the previous year; 21,795 died of cancer as compared with 21,390; 15,122 from vascular lesions affecting the central nervous system (cerebral haemorrhages, thrombosis and embolism), down slightly from the 15,151 recorded in 1957.

Mortality from tuberculosis continued its spectacular decline of recent years, claiming 1,027 lives in 1958 as compared with 1,183 in 1957 and an annual toll of over 6,000 twenty years ago. Following the 1,762 deaths from influenza in 1957 - due mainly to the "Asiatic Flu" epidemic late in that year - deaths from this cause declined to a normal level of 760 in 1958. Pneumonia claimed 5,190 lives in 1958, down slightly from the 5,398 in the previous year, while bronchitis deaths increased slightly from 772 to 854.

The uninterrupted rise (except for 1954) in recent years in fatal accidents was halted in 1958, with deaths from accidents of all kinds dropping from 9,655 in 1957 to 9,157. Since 1950 accidents have taken a toll of 78,087 lives as follows: 1950, 7568; 1951, 8043; 1952, 8,546; 1953, 8,652; 1954, 8,387; 1955, 8,808; 1956, 9,217; 1957, 9,655 and 1958, 9,157. Of these, motor vehicle accidents accounted for over one-third, or a toll of 27,693 lives as follows: 1950, 2,289; 1951, 2,662; 1952, 2,947; 1953, 3,121; 1954, 2,867; 1955, 3,037; 1956, 3,559; 1957, 3,694; and 1958, 3517.