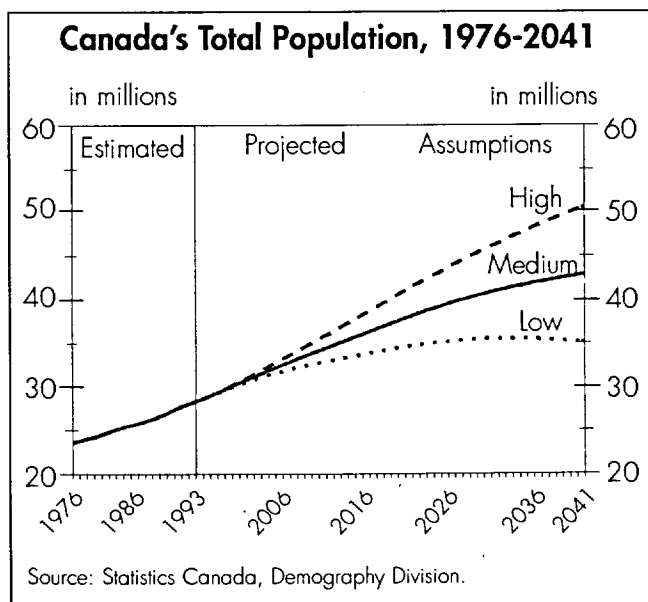




DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

Population Size and Growth

Canada's population is currently estimated at 29 million. Although historically subject to significant fluctuations, reflecting, in particular, surges in immigration flows, annual population growth in the past two decades has gradually declined relative to that registered in the "baby-boom" period of the fifties, when exceptionally high fertility rates pushed annual growth to 3 percent. At the same time, it is noteworthy that in comparison to other Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations, Canada's rate of population growth remains strong: at 1.1 percent between July 1992 and July 1993, it was one of the highest in the group.



Since reaching a peak in 1959, the fertility rate has been declining. Notwithstanding a recent modest reversal in this general trend and higher rates for groups such as aboriginal people, it continues (at about 1.7 percent) well below the replacement level. Assuming this phenomenon persists, immigration will become an increasingly important factor determining population growth in the years to come. Depending on the projection assumptions chosen, Canada's population is expected to reach the range of 32 to 35 million by the year 2011.

The loss of momentum in Canada's population growth resulting from lower fertility rates would not, even in the absence of migration, halt a slow expansion continuing until about 2006. This is attributable to the relatively high number of women of childbearing age among Canadians over the period. Thereafter, as noted, unless fertility levels increase dramatically, the size and pace of Canada's population growth will be largely a matter of immigration volume.

Quebec's population development has been different from that of Canada as a whole. At one time it was able to maintain a growth rate equal to that of the other provinces. This ceased to be the case during the 1960s. Having lost the advantage of its high birth rate, receiving proportionately fewer immigrants than the rest of Canada and with a deficit in migratory interchange among provinces, it was no longer able to maintain a growth rate equal to that of the rest of Canada, and its demographic weight was on the decline.