



# 4

## Canada's Human Face

### Learning Objectives

- To describe Canada's population in terms of size, growth, density and distribution
- To describe aspects of Canada's population zones, including the ecumene, census metropolitan areas, resource towns, regional service centres and Indigenous settlements
- To outline the social geography of Canada and demographic changes
- To introduce the demographic transition theory, its phases and the trend toward an increasing aging population, including the factors and implications of an older Canada
- To examine the population trends and major phases for the Indigenous population of Canada
- To distinguish between culture, ethnicity, language, religion, and multiculturalism and help weave together sense of culture, region, and place.
- To link population and cultural changes to the four faultlines

## Chapter Overview

Building on the historical background presented in the previous chapter, Chapter 4 summarizes the key features of Canada's social and cultural geographies. Two key aspects of this summary include:

1. Discussion of context of the significant trends and events of the post–World War II era.
2. Elaboration of these post war era events in terms of their implications for the four faultlines previously identified.

The net result is a profile of the nation in terms of its current social and demographic characteristics.

### Canada's Population

The chapter begins with a description of Canada's population in terms of its size, distribution, and density. Canada now has a population of 36 million and immigration continues to contribute strongly to the country's population increase. Key features of Canada's population include its concentration in pockets across the extreme south of the country along the border with the United States, and its centre of population shift to the West. Additional features of Canada's population are the aging structure and the increasing age dependency ratio. Unlike the national downward trend in the rate of natural increase, the birth rate of Indigenous peoples and immigrants is high.

### Urban Population

Canada has evolved into an urban country and there has been remarkable growth of Canadian cities, with accompanying urban challenges such as sprawl and congestion.

### Canada's Aging Population

Aging will accelerate from now until 2031 when all baby boomers will reach age 65 (Figure 4.6). Within Canada there will be a smaller proportion of children, a smaller proportion of the population in the workforce, and a much larger percentage over 64 years of age. This will lead to greater tax burden on the workforce (ages 15–64) and a sharp increase in the age dependency ratio.

## The Ups and Downs of Indigenous Population

Demographic changes of Indigenous peoples are classified into four phases (Table 4.7), with the recent past revealing a steady population increase. The distribution of Indigenous people across Canada varies widely (Table 4.8).

## Canada's Changing Culture

Canada's sense of culture and regions has changed over the past half century with economic expansion and immigration flows shifting from Europe to Asia. Within Canada there is a shift of population and economic power away from Central Canada and towards the West. Change in the places of origin of immigrants has increased the ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity of Canada's population—a development encouraged by the official government policy of multiculturalism. Canada's cultural *mélange*, described by John Ralston Saul as a “soft” country where cultural differences are readily accepted and respected (p. 133), has come with challenges.

Key cultural issues are tied with the French/English language imbalance, newcomers and Canadian culture, and Indigenous cultural diversity. Demographics have been working against Francophone attempts to preserve Quebec's culture. The percent of Canada's population represented by Francophones continues to decline.

The shifting demographic and economic power within Canada has the potential to fuel further centralist/decentralist tensions.

With respect to the newcomers, defined as foreign-born, this proportion is projected to increase to 26 per cent by 2031. Multiculturalism has fostered social expression of the cultural contributions of newcomers, and recent immigrants have shown a capacity not only to integrate into Canadian society, but also to reshape it.

Canada's Aboriginal population continues to grow and has in itself tremendous diversity. Despite the cultural diversity, other factors and events unite the people sociologically and experientially. Racism has been the experience of many Indigenous people up to the present, as have been the harms of violence directed at community members by non-Indigenous outsiders and substance abuse within communities.

## Challenge Questions

1. Between 1951 and 2011, which two geographic regions have increased their share of Canada's population and which three have seen their share of Canada's population decrease?
2. In general, why have fertility and mortality rates declined?
3. What drives the aging of Canada's population and what are the implications of this aging population?
4. What was the “Baby Boom” and what were its implications for Canadian society?
5. Where do newcomers prefer to settle in Canada and why?
6. In recent years, the natural rate of population increase for Aboriginal peoples has been significantly above the national average. Does the demographic transitional theory offer anything to suggest that the rate may slow down?
7. What is meant by the statement “We are all newcomers at some point”?

8. How does multiculturalism policy reflect both the description of Canada as a “soft” country and recognition by policy-makers and the public that we are a nation of immigrants?
9. What challenges have certain groups in Canada faced with respect to accommodation/acculturation/integration in the past few decades?

## Key Terms

**Age dependency ratio** The ratio of the economically dependent sector of the population to the productive sector; arbitrarily defined as the ratio of the elderly (those 65 years and over) plus the young (those under 15 years) to the population of working age (those 15 to 64 years). (p. 116)

**Black Lives Matter** A social movement by the African-American community against police violence towards black people in the United States; now active in some Canadian urban centres such as Toronto. (p. 133)

**Census metropolitan area** An urban area with a population of at least 100,000, together with adjacent smaller urban centres and even rural areas that have a high degree of economic and social integration with the larger urban area. (p. 125)

**Crude birth rate** The number of births per 1,000 people in a given year. (p. 117)

**Crude death rate** The number of deaths per 1,000 people in a given year (p. 117)

**Culture** The sum of attitudes, habits, knowledge, and values shared by members of a society and passed on to their children. (p. 133)

**Demographic transition theory** The historical shift of birth and death rates from high to low levels in a population. The decline in mortality precedes the decline in fertility, resulting in rapid population growth during the transition period. (p. 117)

**Ecumene** The portion of the land that is settled. (p. 121)

**Ethnic group** People who have shared awareness of a common identity and who identify themselves with a particular culture. (p. 135)

**Ethnic origin** The ethnic or cultural origins of one’s ancestors. (p. 131)

**Ethnocentricity** The viewpoint that one’s ethnic group is the centre of everything and that which all other groups are judged. Ethnocentricity assumes that one’s own group is superior. (p. 140)

**Fertility rate** The number of births per 1,000 people in a given year; also called crude birth rate (not to be confused with the “general fertility rate,” which is the number of live births per 1,000 women who are of child-bearing age—15 to 44 years—in a given year). (pp. 116–117)

**Indian residential schools** Boarding schools for Indigenous children and youth funded by the federal government and run by various churches from the 1880s to 1996 that effectively sought to acculturate Canada's First Peoples by taking away their cultural, language, and spiritual belief systems and replacing these with Euro-Canadian systems. (p. 133)

**Indigenous settlements** Small Indigenous centres, often found on reserves or in remote, northern locations. (p. 125)

**Islamophobia** Dislike of or prejudice against Islam or Muslims, especially as a political force. (p. 134)

**Mortality rate** The number of deaths per 1,000 people in a given year; also called crude death rate. (p. 118)

**Pluralistic society** A society where small groups within the larger society are permitted to maintain their unique cultural identities; multiculturalism. (p. 115)

**Population density** The total number of people in a geographic area divided by the land area; population per unit of land area. (p. 120)

**Population distribution** The dispersal of a population within a geographic area. (p. 121)

**Population growth** The rate at which a population increases or decreases in a given period due to natural increase and net migration; often expressed as a percentage of the original or base population. (p. 125)

**Population increase** The total population increase resulting from the interaction of births, deaths, and migration in a population in a given period of time. (p. 121)

**Rate of natural increase** The surplus (or deficit) of births over deaths in a population per 1,000 people in a given time period. (p. 117)

**Recent immigrants** Immigrants who arrived in Canada within five years prior to a given census. (p. 116)

**Regional service centres** Urban places where economic functions are provided to residents living within the surrounding area. (p. 125)

**Resource towns** Urban places where a single economic activity focused on resource extraction (e.g., mining, logging, oil drilling) dominates the local economy; single-industry towns. (p. 123)

**Sex ratio** The ratio of males to females in a given population; usually expressed as the number of males for every 100 females. (p. 118)