

Highlights from the 2011 Census: Canada's Aging Populations

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SUMMARY

On May 29, 2012 Statistics Canada released the 2011 Census data on population growth in Canada. This data confirmed predictions that as life expectancies lengthen and the baby boomers age, the population of seniors would significantly outweigh younger populations. Across Canada the population of seniors, those 65 years of age and older, has risen dramatically, without corresponding significant growth in populations under 64 years of age.

Provincial and territorial data revealed that B.C. has one of the highest populations of seniors in Canada. Other data revealed that while the female population continues to outlive male ones, the longevity rate of men increased significantly since 2006. However, the most unexpected result of the Census was a recent baby boom indicated by a spike in population of infants 0-4 years old.

Canada has become a nation increasingly comprised of older adults and young infants. Implications of these population trends are far reaching. In particular, we can expect that impacts will be felt by the health sector as the need for health services increases, by families whose care-giving responsibilities expand as they provide care for their infants and older parents at the same time, by employers seeking to replace retirees with a diminishing workforce, by the seniors housing sector, and by a myriad of other seniors service providers as Canada faces the challenge of meeting the needs and expectations of an aging population.

SENIORS (65 AND OLDER)

The 2011 Census identified a record high in Canada's population of persons 65 years and older. The senior population amounted to almost 5 million people comprising 14.8% of Canada's population.¹ This trend, of an increasing senior population, was even more pronounced in B.C. with residents aged 65 and older making up 15.7% of the B.C. populace (or 688 715 people).² From 2006, the Canadian population of those 65 years and older increased by 609 810 persons at a rate of 14.1%.³ Other age groups in Canada also increased from their 2006 amounts with a 0.5% increase in children 0-14 year olds and a 5.7% increase in 15-64 year olds.⁴

However, the population of over 65 year olds grew by 14.1%, while the combined younger populations grew by less than half that amount. Centenarians (100 year olds) came second only to 60-64 year olds as the age group, with the highest growth population since 2006.⁵ Statistics Canada also identified that for the first

time there are more 55-64 year olds than 15-24 year olds, indicating that if retirement age continues to be 65 years old, the current populations will be vastly insufficient for replacing those leaving the workforce.⁶ The 2011 Census provides statistical confirmation that Canada is quickly becoming a population of older persons living much longer than their predecessors.

PROVINCIAL DISTRIBUTION OF ELDERLY POPULATION

The populations of seniors increased in all provinces since 2006, but the provinces with the highest populations of seniors were Nova Scotia at 16.6%, New Brunswick at 16.5%, P.E.I. at 16.3%, Newfoundland at 16%, Quebec at 15.9%, and B.C. at 15.7%.⁷ Since 2006, the provinces with the highest rate of senior population growth were Quebec and the Atlantic Provinces.⁸

ELDERLY WOMEN

In 2011, women over 65 comprised 16.1 % of Canadians, or 2 746 280 persons, compared with men in the same age bracket who comprised 13.4% of Canadians, or 2 198 775 persons.⁹ In BC senior women comprised 16.6% of the population amounting to 371 955 persons compared with senior men who comprised 14.7% of the population amounting to 316 760 persons.¹⁰ While the rate of population growth for senior men in 2011 was higher than the rate for senior women, with senior men in Canada increasing by 16.5% in contrast to women increasing by 12.2%, the overall population of senior women remained higher than men.¹¹

BABY BOOM

Across Canada there was a notable increase in children aged 0-4, a group that grew by 11.0% (the highest growth rate for children 0-4 since 1956-1961).¹² The provinces most responsible for this rate of growth were Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec, Nunavut, and the Yukon.¹³ BC also increased its population of 0-4 year olds from 2006 by 8.8%, but this rate of growth falls below the national average.¹⁴ Statistics Canada identified increased fertility and greater numbers of 23-34 year olds as key factors to explain the baby boom.¹⁵

¹ 2011 Census, *Population by broad age groups and sex, 2011 counts for both sexes, for Canada, provinces and territories*, Online: Statistics Canada Website <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/hltfst/as-sa/Pages/highlight.cfm?TabID=1&Lang=E&Asc=1&OrderBy=1&Sex=1&View=1&tableID=21&queryID=7&StartRow=1&MaxRows=20&PRCode=59>.

² Ibid.

³ 2011 Census, *The Canadian Population in 2011: Age and Sex*, Online: Statistics Canada Website <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-311-x/98-311-x2011001-eng.cfm>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ 2011 Census, *Centenarians in Canada*, Online: Statistics Canada Website http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-311-x/98-311-x2011003_1-eng.cfm.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ 2011 Census, "Figure 7: Proportion (in percentage) of the population aged 65 and over, Canada, provinces and territories, 2006 and 2011", *The Canadian Population in 2011: Age and Sex*, Online: Statistics Canada Website <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-311-x/2011001/fig/fig7-eng.cfm>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ 2011 Census, *Population by broad age groups and sex*, Online: Statistics Canada Website <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/hlt-fst/as-sa/Pages/highlight.cfm?TabID=1&Lang=E&Asc=1&OrderBy=1&Sex=3&View=3&tableID=21&queryID=7&StartRow=1&MaxRows=20&PRCode=59>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Supra. *The Canadian Population in 2011: Age and Sex*.

¹³ 2011 Census, "Table 1: Growth rate (in percentage) of the number of children aged 4 and under, Canada, provinces and territories, 2006 to 2011", *The Canadian Population in 2011: Age and Sex*, Online: Statistics Canada Website <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-311-x/2011001/tbl/tbl1-eng.cfm>

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Supra. *The Canadian Population in 2011: Age and Sex*.