



Back to Census 2011: Canada having a baby boomlet

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May 29, 2012

Bruce Campion-Smith

OTTAWA—Canada has a new baby boomlet, according to the latest census figures.

The number of children aged 4 and under jumped 11 per cent between 2006 and 2011, the biggest increase in 50 years.

It's a stark contrast to the rest of the story from Tuesday's release from the 2011 census, which says Canada is turning grey.

Seniors now account for a record proportion of the country's population.

Statistics Canada attributes the rise in children to a slightly higher fertility rate and an increase in the number of women — themselves the children of baby boomers — who are in their child-bearing years, between 20 and 34. The biggest increases in children occurred in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec and Nunavut.

Ontario was a laggard, notching just a 5 per cent increase in this age bracket.

It's too early to say whether this spike in birth rates marks the start of another baby boom generation, said Jane Badets, director general of social and demographics statistics with Statistics Canada.

"We have to wait and see how this unfolds. Demographic trends do take a while to play out, especially at the beginning in terms of birth rates," she said.

Meanwhile, the number of seniors aged 65 and over increased 14 per cent between 2006 and 2011 to nearly 5 million.

And in a sign of the times, centenarians — those aged 100 and older — are now the second-fastest growing age group after those aged 60 to 64. There were 5,825 Canadians who had lived a century or more in 2011, up 25 per cent since 2006.

"We see the growing increase of the older population, those 65 and older. They're increasing faster than the working age population, increasing faster than children," said Jane Badets, director general of social and demographics statistics with Statistics Canada.

The first release of data in February from the 2011 census showed that Canada had 33,476,688 people, a 5.9 per cent increase over the 2006 census.

Now, new census numbers released Tuesday by Statistics Canada on the age and sex of Canadians reveal more about the changing face of the population, which is roughly split between men (49 per cent) and women (51 per cent).

The story of Canada's aging face promises to play out in the coming years as a wave of workers hits retirement age, presenting challenges for politicians to ready the country and its finances.

Currently, 68.5 per cent of Canadians — almost 23 million — are of working age (15 to 64). That's higher than any other G8 country except Russia. But the numbers show that will change rapidly in the coming years. For the first time, there were more people aged 55 to 64, the age when people typically quit the work force, than aged 15 to 24, when people join the work force.

The population group aged 60 to 64 is growing most rapidly, suggesting that the aging of the country will accelerate in the coming years as baby boomers hit 65, Statistics Canada says.



Miles Nicholas Mendoza was born at Markham Stouffville Hospital on Monday. For the first time in 50 years, Statistics Canada has recorded an increase for the number of children aged four and under in every province and territory.

CARLOS OSORIO/TORONTO STAR

"Within the working age population, here is the cohort of baby boomers, aged 45 to 64. Still a big part of the labour market but when you look to the future, we know they're going to start to retire," Badets said.

While the ranks of Canadians aged 65 and older increased by just over 609,810 between 2006 and 2011, the number of children aged 14 and under grew by just 27,505, a rise of just 0.5 per cent.

The number of Canadians aged 65 and older has risen steadily over the decades and now stands at almost 5 million, just 660,000 shy of the 5.6 million people aged 14 and under.

The numbers reveal where Canadians are working — and retiring. Parksville, on Vancouver Island, and Elliott Lake, Ont., had the highest proportion of seniors, topping 35 per cent — twice the national average. In a nod to the climate, seven of the 10 municipalities with the highest proportion of seniors were in British Columbia.

But the numbers also reveal retirement communities taking shape in Ontario with Cobourg, Tillsonburg and Collingwood all counting a high number of seniors.

The proportion of seniors increased faster in the Atlantic provinces and Quebec. Ontario ranks just under the national average with 14.6 per cent of its population aged 65 and older.

Among the provinces, Alberta had the lowest proportion of seniors at 11 per cent. Overall, Nunavut had the lowest proportion of seniors at 3.3 per cent. Alberta's younger population is attributed to the influx of young adults seeking jobs from other parts of the country and the impact of immigration on the province's make-up.

Banff and Whistler ranked as the two cities with the highest share of working-age population. Wood Buffalo, Alta., was third, thanks to oil sands activity.

Canada's big urban areas tend to be younger, with 13.7 per cent of their residents aged 65 and older. In the Greater Toronto Area, many municipalities adjacent to Toronto, such as Ajax, Brampton, Milton and Vaughan, had more children and fewer seniors than the national average. Within the core of Toronto, both the proportion of children and seniors were below the national average with a high proportion of working age residents, a fact attributed to the financial, government, health and educational institutions.

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OTTAWA—Canada will look in the mirror Tuesday and see an aging face staring back.

New numbers from the 2011 Census are expected to confirm Canada's population is getting older.

Indeed, some provinces could for the first time have more people over the age of 65 than young people under 15, said Doug Norris, senior vice president and chief demographer at Environics Analytics.

"I suspect . . . for some of the eastern provinces, you could actually have more seniors than kids for the first time ever," said Norris, who previously worked with Statistics Canada.

Norris expects wide variations across the country with a much younger population in Alberta and the northern territories.

The first release of data in February from the 2011 Census showed that Canada had 33,476,688 people, a 5.9 per cent increase over the 2006 census.

Tuesday's release of data is expected to reveal more about the changing face of Canada's population with new numbers on age and sex of Canadians.

"Every census we get older and older," Norris said.

"It's a slow changing thing. Sometimes it doesn't get the attention that I think we're going to see over the next decade when that aging is really going to kick up," he said.

The aging trend promises to have profound impacts on government services, like pensions and health care. But the numbers will also play out in local decisions, such as building new schools and municipal programs for seniors.

"Few kids, more seniors, the pension plan comes into play, the cost of health care which is higher . . . certainly comes into play," Norris said.

"But it also affects many other things. Certainly at the low end, the number of schools that are needed and where they are needed," he said.

Already the trend is influencing government policy. Citing the fact that there will be fewer workers to support a growing pool of seniors, the Conservative government has unveiled plans to push back the eligibility age for Old Age Security benefits to 67 from 65. While the changes won't take effect for several years yet, the Conservative government said the aging population made it imperative to act.

But Norris cautioned against overreacting, saying that the aging trend is sometimes used by governments as an excuse for action.

Further releases of 2011 Census data this fall will reveal trends in families, households and marital status and language.



The latest 2011 Census numbers released show that the population of Canada is aging, which will have an impact on the health care system.

Peter Power/Toronto Star



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OTTAWA—More Canadians than ever are hitting the century-mark.

The 2011 census counted 5,825 centenarians in Canada and in a symbol of Canada's aging population, those aged 100 and older are now the second-fastest growing age group. Their ranks are forecast to swell in the coming decades as the baby boom generation enjoys the benefits of longer life spans.

By 2021, Statistics Canada predicts there will be 11,100 Canadians aged 100 or older, rising to 14,800 by 2026.

"Life expectancy is likely to continue to rise in Canada over the next decades, increasing the chance for individuals to reach 100 years," Statistics Canada notes in a release.

In 2011, about 40 per cent of all centenarians were exactly 100, while 6 per cent were 105 and older. Of those who marked their 100th birthday in 2011, just 60 per cent were expected to reach 101.

As Statistics Canada notes, these are Canadians who were young children during the First World War, entered the labour force and started a family during the depression of the 1930s and retired in the 1970s.

Those who had reached the century-mark were overwhelmingly women — 4,870 women compared to just 955 men.

"More women than men reach the age of 100 because women experience lower probabilities of dying at all ages than men," Statistics Canada.

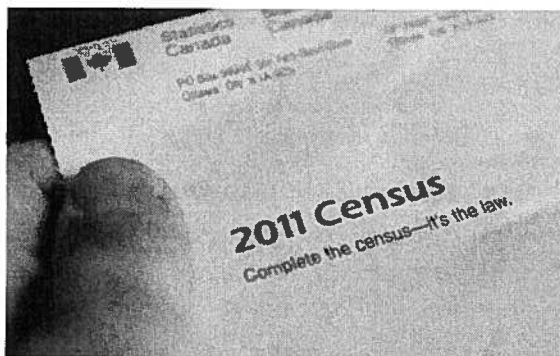
Most centenarians lived in the three most populous provinces — Ontario (2,030), Quebec (1,345) and British Columbia (875) but Saskatchewan has the highest proportion of those aged 100 and older.

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