

Census in Brief

A portrait of the population aged 85 and older in 2016 in Canada

Census of Population, 2016

Release date: May 3, 2017



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- . not available for any reference period
- .. not available for a specific reference period
- ... not applicable
- 0 true zero or a value rounded to zero
- 0^s value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
- ^P preliminary
- ^r revised
- X suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
- ^E use with caution
- F too unreliable to be published
- * significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

Published by authority of the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada

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Highlights

- In 2016, there were over three-quarters of a million (770,780) people aged 85 and older living in Canada, representing 2.2% of the Canadian population overall and about 13.0% of the population aged 65 and older.
- The number of people aged 85 and older grew by 19.4% over the period from 2011 to 2016, nearly four times the rate for the overall Canadian population. The centenarian population (i.e., those aged 100 and older) grew even faster, by 41.3%, to reach 8,230 people, making it the fastest-growing age group between 2011 and 2016.
- There were nearly two women for every man aged 85 and older, which mostly reflects the differences in life expectancy between the sexes. Among centenarians, this ratio is higher, at five women for every man.
- In 2016, one-third (32.0%) of people aged 85 and older lived in collective dwellings such as nursing homes and residences for senior citizens. This proportion grew to two-thirds (66.6%) among centenarians.
- Many municipalities with a high proportion of people aged 85 and older in 2016 were located in British Columbia.

Introduction

Reaching 85 years of age is quite an accomplishment: after all, life expectancy in Canada is currently about 80 years among men and 84 years among women. As this article describes, more Canadians than ever are living to the age of 85 and beyond.

Given the reality of population aging in Canada, knowing more about the older population is important, notably because of increased needs for health care and other services. The population aged 85 and older contribute in many ways to society—for example, by sharing their wisdom, acting as role models and fostering family relationships across generations. At the same time, a significant share of the population aged 85 and older lives with activity limitations and has particular needs related to health and community care, housing, income security, and transportation.

Regions in Canada that have a larger proportion of people aged 85 and older than others will need to consider and deliver different services than regions with younger populations.

A key purpose of the census is to provide information on small population groups, both in terms of geography and in terms of demographic characteristics. This article focuses on older populations in Canada—first, the population aged 85 and older, then centenarians—and describes some of their characteristics, such as age and sex distribution, and place of residence.

People aged 85 and older: A fast-growing population

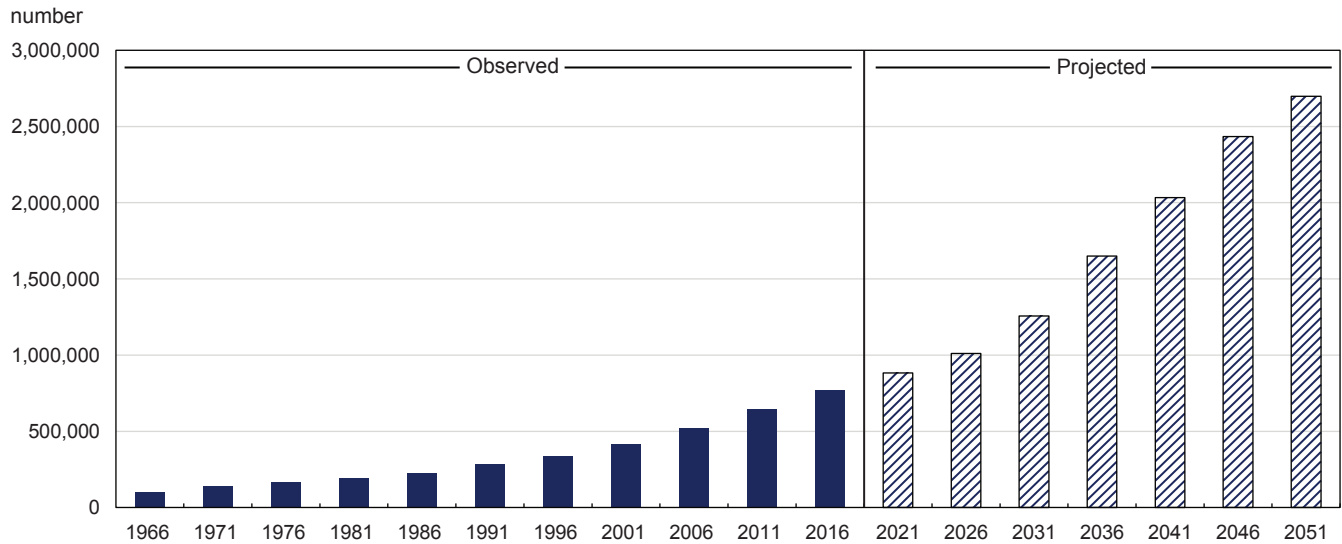
Between 2011 and 2016, the number of people aged 85 and older grew by 19.4%, nearly four times the rate for the overall Canadian population, which grew by 5.0% during this period.

As a result, over three-quarters of a million (770,780) people aged 85 and older were enumerated in the 2016 Census—a record high, and more than seven times the number enumerated in 1966. In 2016, people aged 85 and older represented 2.2% of the Canadian population. Japan is currently the country with the highest share of people aged 85 and older, with about 4.0% of its total population in this age group.

A portrait of the population aged 85 and older in 2016 in Canada

In Canada, this population will likely continue to increase rapidly in coming decades because life expectancy is increasing and because the large baby boomer cohorts (people born between 1946 and 1965) will reach age 85 starting in 2031. By 2051, when the youngest baby boomers reach age 85, slightly less than 2.7 million people, or 5.7% of the population in Canada, will likely be aged 85 and older¹ (Chart 1).

Chart 1
Population aged 85 and older, Canada, 1966 to 2051



Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1966 to 2016. Data for 2021 to 2061 are population projections from the M1 medium-growth scenario of national projections. The projection data have as a base population the population estimates based on the 2011 Census, adjusted for net undercoverage. For more information, see the report *Population Projections for Canada (2013 to 2063), Provinces and Territories (2013 to 2038)* (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 91-520-X).

1. Statistics Canada. *Population Projections for Canada (2013-2063), Provinces and Territories (2013-2038)* (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-520-x/91-520-x2014001-eng.htm>). Catalogue no. 91-520-X. Medium-growth scenario (M1). Other scenarios are available and would provide slightly different results.

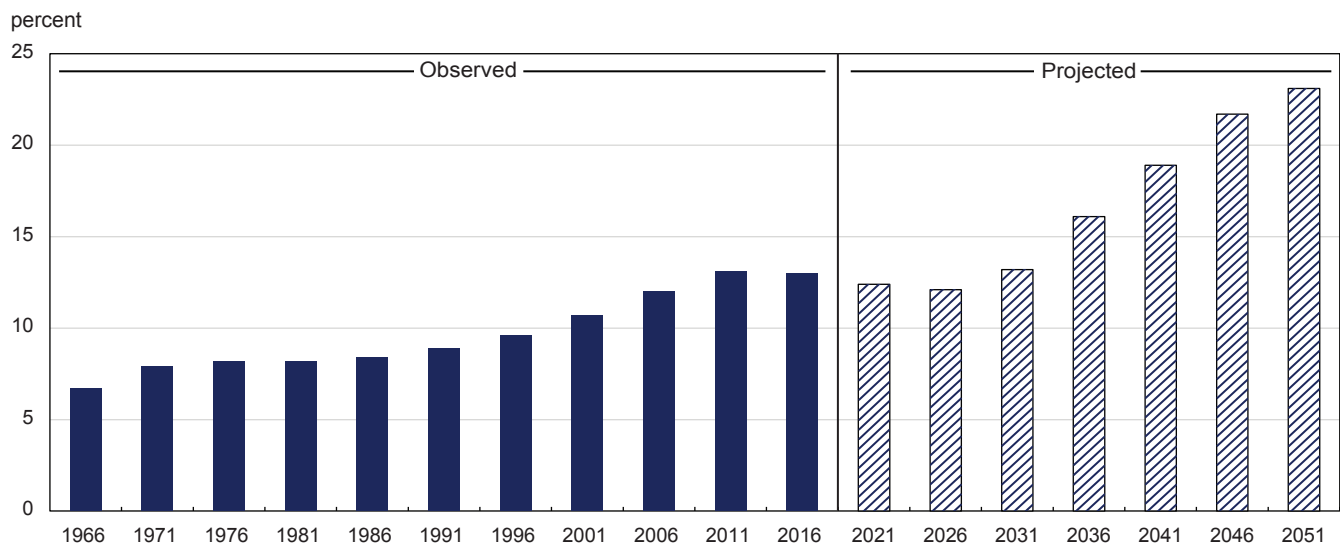
One in eight seniors is aged 85 or older

In 2016, one out of eight people aged 65 and older (13.0%) was actually aged 85 or older. By comparison, in 1966, this proportion was 6.7%, half the proportion of 2016.

The share of people aged 85 and older in the senior population has been increasing for many decades up to 2011, mostly as a result of increased life expectancy during this period. Chart 2 shows the trend between 1966 and 2016 and the projected trend to 2051.

Between 2016 and 2026, the share of those aged 85 and older in the senior population is projected to decrease slightly because of the influx of large baby boomer cohorts reaching the ages of 65 to 74. Beginning in 2031, the share of the population aged 85 and older will increase rapidly again as the boomer cohorts start to leave the 65-to-84 age group and move into the 85-and-older age group. Close to one in four seniors is likely to be aged 85 or older by 2051.

Chart 2
Proportion of the population aged 65 and older that is aged 85 and older, Canada, 1966 to 2051



Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1966 to 2016. Data for 2021 to 2061 are population projections from the M1 medium-growth scenario of national projections. The projection data have as a base population the population estimates based on the 2011 Census, adjusted for net undercoverage. For more information, see the report Population Projections for Canada (2013 to 2063), Provinces and Territories (2013 to 2038) (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 91-520-X).

The ratio of women to men among the 85-and-older age group is decreasing

In 2016, there were slightly fewer than two women for every man aged 85 and older. In 2001, this ratio was over two women for every man aged 85 and older. This decreasing trend over the last 15 years is mostly related to higher gains in life expectancy among men than women, which means that the gap in life expectancy between men and women is narrowing.

More than 8,000 centenarians counted in the census

Of all age groups, centenarians were the fastest growing between 2011 and 2016, with a growth of 41.3% during this period. According to the 2016 Census, 8,230 centenarians were living in Canada.

Among people aged 100 and older, there were five women for every man, a result of women having a longer life expectancy than men—83.6 years for women compared with 79.4 years for men in 2011.

By 2051, the number of centenarians could reach nearly 40,000, about five times the number observed in 2016.¹ The first cohorts of baby boomers, born between 1946 and 1951, will be aged 100 and older by then.

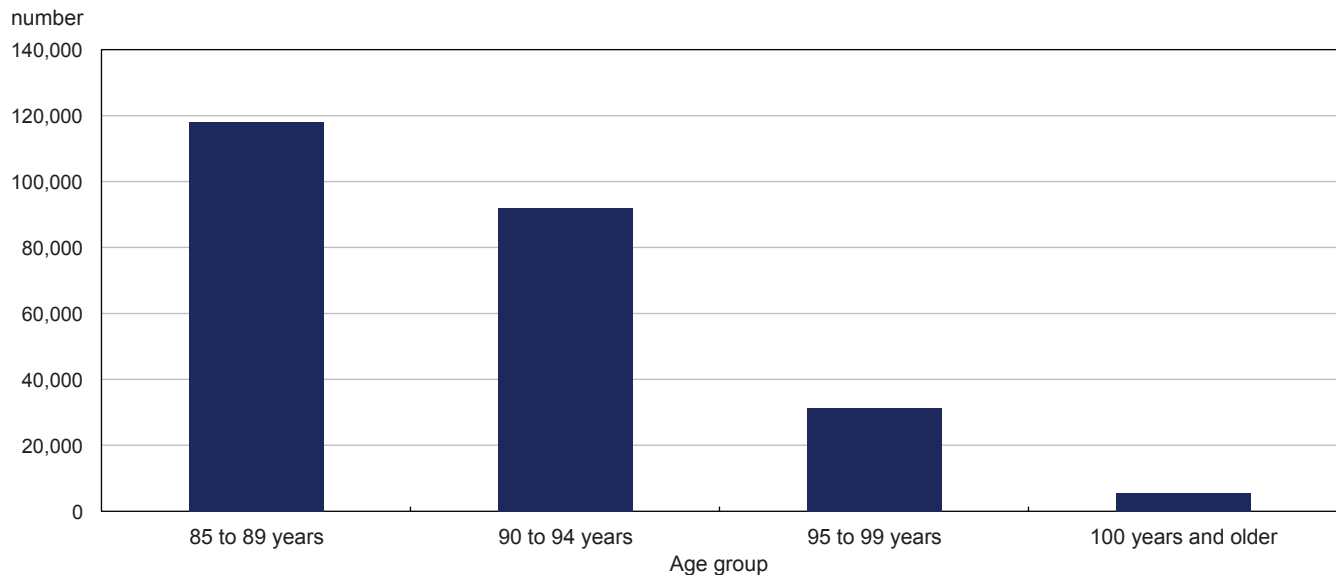
Nearly one in three people aged 85 and older lives in a collective dwelling

About 247,000 people aged 85 and older were living in collective dwellings such as nursing homes, long-term care facilities and seniors' residences in 2016. Since 2011, the population aged 85 and older living in collective dwellings has grown by 23.0%, compared with an overall growth rate of 19.4% for the total population aged 85 and older.

Also, close to half of the people aged 85 and older living in collective dwellings in 2016 were aged between 85 and 89 (Chart 3).

Chart 3

Population aged 85 and older living in collective dwellings, by age group, Canada, 2016



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

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Even though two out of three (66.6%) centenarians were living in collective dwellings (Chart 4), they represented a small number of the total number of people living in such dwellings, as there are few centenarians in Canada.

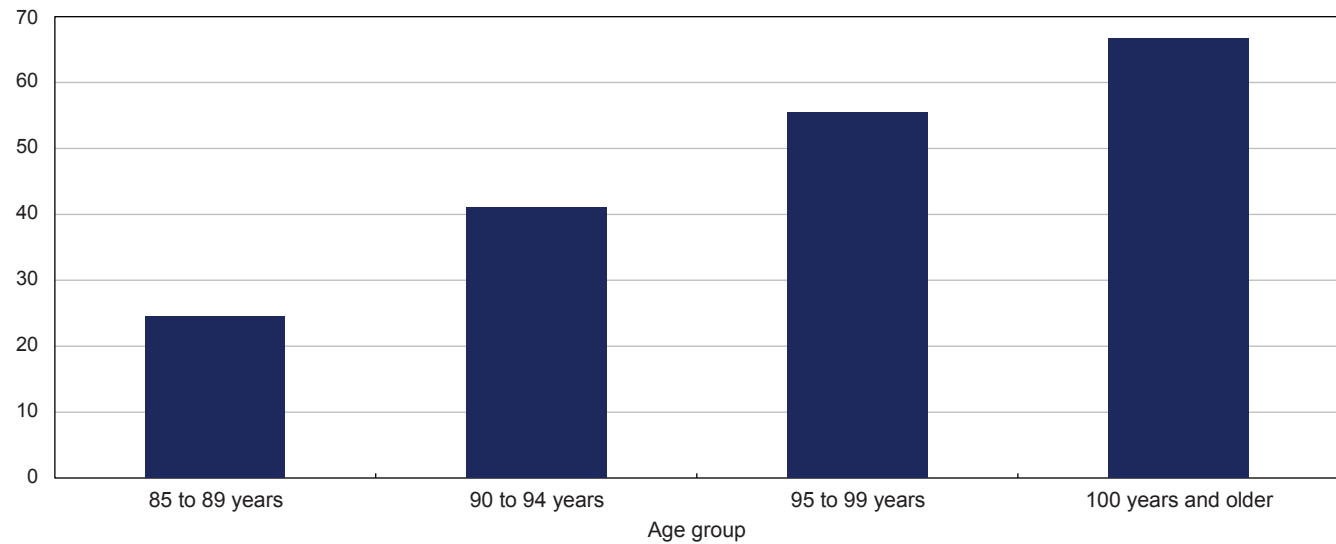
The share of people living in collective dwellings increases rapidly as age increases (Chart 4), from one in four among the 85-to-89 age group to two in three among centenarians.

Moreover, three-quarters of residents of collective dwellings aged 85 and older were women, increasing to 86.1% among centenarians.

Chart 4

Proportion of the population aged 85 and older living in collective dwellings, by age group, Canada, 2016

percent



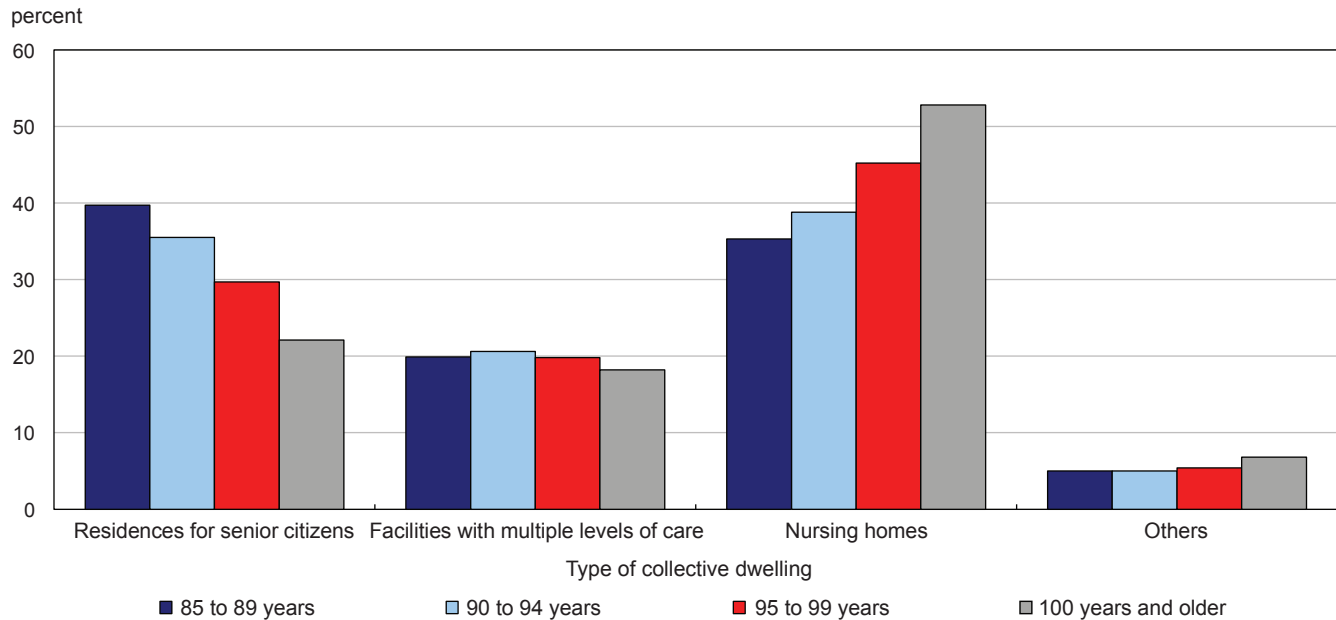
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

The share of people aged 85 and older living in nursing homes increases with age

Most people aged 85 and older living in collective dwellings, resided in one of three types of facilities: a residence for senior citizens,² a nursing home or long-term care facility,³ or a facility offering multiple levels of care.⁴ A small proportion of people aged 85 and older live in other types of collective dwellings, such as chronic and long-term care hospitals, residential care facilities for the physically handicapped or for people with psychiatric disorders or developmental disabilities, and religious establishments. For more information, please consult the Census in Brief article *Dwellings in Canada* (<http://www.statcan12.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016005/98-200-x2016005-eng.cfm>), Catalogue no. 98-200-X2016005.

The proportion of people aged 85 and older living in nursing homes increased with age from 35.3% for people aged 85 to 89 to 52.8% for centenarians (Chart 5). Conversely, the proportion of people living in seniors' residences decreased from 39.7% to 22.1% for the same age groups. The proportion living in facilities that provide multiple levels of care remained relatively stable across the different age groups, at about 20.0%.

Chart 5
Proportion of the population aged 85 and older living in collective dwellings, by type of collective dwelling and age group, Canada, 2016



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

2. Residences for senior citizens, also known as retirement homes, provide support with meals, housekeeping, laundry, medication supervision, assistance in bathing or dressing, etc., for people who are independent in most activities of daily living.
3. Nursing homes, also known as long-term care facilities, provide health care services including professional health monitoring and skilled nursing care and supervision 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for people who are not independent in most activities of daily living.
4. A facility that provides multiple levels of care offers a mix of services, which allows residents to receive the appropriate amount of support as needed. Thus, some residents may be independent in most activities of daily living, while others may not be.

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Differences between the provinces and territories: The share of people aged 85 and older is highest in Saskatchewan and New Brunswick, and lowest in the territories

The proportion of people aged 85 years and older was highest in Saskatchewan (2.5%) and New Brunswick (2.4%), closely followed by Nova Scotia, Quebec, Manitoba and British Columbia (all at 2.3%).

Saskatchewan's large share of people aged 85 and older in 2016 can be explained by its population history. In the 1920s and 1930s, after large waves of immigration, the province was the third most populous in Canada after Ontario and Quebec. In the second half of the 20th century, Saskatchewan experienced much lower rates of population growth. Manitoba's population history is similar to Saskatchewan's.

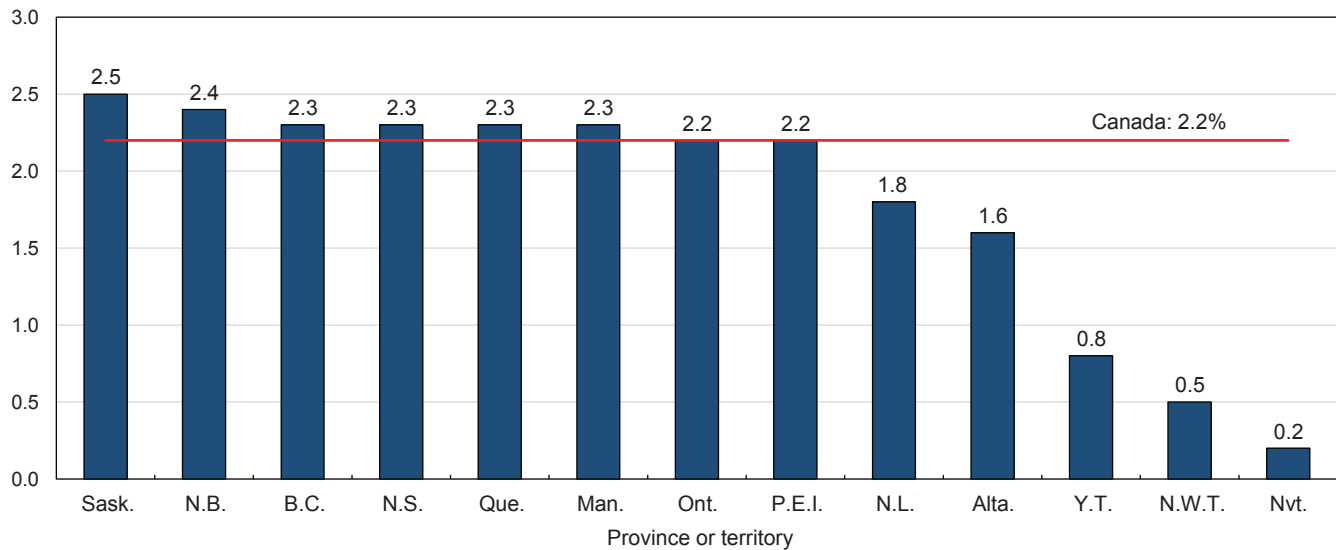
New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Quebec and British Columbia also have older populations than the national average, but for different reasons: lower levels of immigration, losses to interprovincial migration, lower fertility rates and, in the case of British Columbia in particular, higher life expectancy.

The three territories have lower shares of people aged 85 and older than the provinces because of higher fertility rates and lower life expectancy, associated with large Aboriginal populations in the territories.

In Newfoundland and Labrador and in Alberta, the share of people aged 85 and older is also lower than other provinces, but again for different reasons. Newfoundland and Labrador has registered the lowest life expectancy among provinces for years. In Alberta, strong interprovincial migration increased the share of people in their 20s and 30s and lowered the share of older people.

Chart 6
Proportion of the population aged 85 and older, Canada, provinces and territories, 2016

percent



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

Seven of the top 10 municipalities with the largest proportion of people aged 85 and older are in British Columbia

The top 10 municipalities ([census subdivisions](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/geo012-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/geo012-eng.cfm>)) of 5,000 or more inhabitants with the highest share of people aged 85 and older in 2016 are located in three provinces (Table 1).

Seven of these municipalities are located in British Columbia with four of them on Vancouver Island, a region well known for attracting many seniors, partly because of its climate.

In three municipalities, the share of people aged 85 and older was at least three times the national average, with Sidney, British Columbia, ranked first in Canada, at 9.7%. The other two are Qualicum Beach, also in British Columbia, and Côte-Saint-Luc in the Montréal census metropolitan area, a municipality with many seniors' residences.

Please refer to the [Highlight tables](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/hlt-fst/as/index-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/hlt-fst/as/index-eng.cfm>), Catalogue no. 98-402-X2016002 for the list of municipalities ([census subdivisions](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/geo012-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/geo012-eng.cfm>)) with 5,000 or more inhabitants ranked by share of seniors aged 85 and older.

Table 1
Top 10 municipalities (census subdivisions) of 5,000 residents or more with the highest proportion of people aged 85 and older, Canada, 2016

Rank	Municipality	Total population	People aged 85 and older	Proportion
		number		percent
1	Sidney, B.C.	11,670	1,130	9.7
2	Qualicum Beach, B.C.	8,945	725	8.1
3	Côte-Saint-Luc, Que.	32,450	2,345	7.2
4	Saint-Charles-Borromée, Que.	13,790	895	6.5
5	Oak Bay, B.C.	18,095	1,130	6.2
6	Parksville, B.C.	12,515	775	6.2
7	White Rock, B.C.	19,950	1,205	6.0
8	Westlock, Alta.	5,100	305	6.0
9	Osoyoos, B.C.	5,085	300	5.9
10	Creston, B.C.	5,350	315	5.9

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

Data sources, methods and definitions

Data sources

The data in this analysis are from the 2016 Census of Population. Further information on the census can be found in the [Guide to the Census of Population, 2016](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/98-304/index-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/98-304/index-eng.cfm>), Catalogue no. 98-304-X.

Methods

Random rounding and percentage distributions: To ensure the confidentiality of responses collected for the 2016 Census, a random rounding process is used to alter the values reported in individual cells. As a result, when these data are summed or grouped, the total value may not match the sum of the individual values, since the total and subtotals are independently rounded. Similarly, percentage distributions, which are calculated on rounded data, may not necessarily add up to 100%.

Because of random rounding, counts and percentages may vary slightly between different census products, such as the analytical documents, highlight tables and data tables.

Definitions

Please refer to the [Dictionary, Census of Population, 2016](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/index-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/index-eng.cfm>), Catalogue no. 98-301-X, for additional information on the census variables.

Additional information

Additional analysis on age and sex can be found in [The Daily](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/170503/dq170503a-eng.htm) (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/170503/dq170503a-eng.htm>) of May 3, 2017, and in the Census in Brief article entitled [Recent trends for the population aged 15 to 64 in Canada](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016003/98-200-x2016003-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016003/98-200-x2016003-eng.cfm>), Catalogue no. 98-200-X2016003.

Additional information allowing for a more detailed examination of Canada can be found in the [Highlight tables](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/hlt-fst/as/index-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/hlt-fst/as/index-eng.cfm>), Catalogue no. 98-402-X2016002; the [Data tables](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/dt-td/Lp-eng.cfm?LANG=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GID=0&GK=0&GRP=1&PID=0&PRID=10&PTYPE=109445&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2016&THEME=115&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF=) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/dt-td/Lp-eng.cfm?LANG=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GID=0&GK=0&GRP=1&PID=0&PRID=10&PTYPE=109445&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2016&THEME=115&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF=>), Catalogue nos. 98-400-X2016001 to 98-400-X2016008; the [Census Profile](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>), Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001; and the [Focus on Geography Series](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Index-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Index-eng.cfm>), Catalogue no. 98-404-X2016001.

A [historical age pyramid](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/pyramid/pyramid.cfm?type=1&geo1=01) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/pyramid/pyramid.cfm?type=1&geo1=01>) shows the evolution of the age structure of the Canadian population from 1851 to 2036. A [comparison age pyramid](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/pyramid/pyramid.cfm?type=2&geo1=01&geo2=01) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/pyramid/pyramid.cfm?type=2&geo1=01&geo2=01>) allows users to compare the age structure of two different geographical entities for Canada, the provinces and the territories, for either the 2016 Census or the 2011 Census.

[Thematic maps](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/geo/map-carte/ref/thematic-thematiques/as/thematic-thematiques-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/geo/map-carte/ref/thematic-thematiques/as/thematic-thematiques-eng.cfm>) for this topic are also available for various levels of geography.

A video providing a historical perspective of aging in Canada is available from the [Video centre](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/video/index-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/video/index-eng.cfm>).

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An infographic entitled *Population Trends by Age and Sex, 2016 Census of Population* (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2017016-eng.htm>) also illustrates some key findings on age and sex trends.

For details on the concepts, definitions and variables used in the 2016 Census of Population, please consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2016* (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/index-eng.cfm>), Catalogue no. 98-301-X.

In addition to response rates and other data quality information, the *Guide to the Census of Population, 2016* (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/98-304/index-eng.cfm>), Catalogue no. 98-304-X, provides an overview of the various phases of the census, including content determination, sampling design, collection, data processing, data quality assessment, confidentiality guidelines and dissemination.

Acknowledgments

This report was prepared by Laurent Martel and Janet Hagey of Statistics Canada's Demography Division, with the assistance of other staff members of that division and the collaboration of staff members of the Census Subject Matter Secretariat, Census Operations Division, and Communications and Dissemination Branch.