

The Oldest Old are changing Canada

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In 1971 there were 139,000 Canadians aged 85 and over. By 2013 their numbers had risen to 702,000. The Oldest Old as they have become known today represent 2% of the total Canadian population. "They are a demographic reality which has to be taken into account in formulating public policy", according to Jacques Légaré, a demographer at the University of Montreal, who is presenting a report on this phenomenon this week to more than a hundred experts meeting at the Population Change and Lifecourse Strategic Knowledge Cluster in Ottawa.

Mr. Légaré, a specialist in the study of population ageing, and his team have collated the most recent studies showing that "oldest old" Canadians are on track to occupy an increasingly important place in the population. "We need to distinguish these "over 85s" from today's 'over 65s', because they will have distinct characteristics in terms of education, socio-economic status and state of health", he says. In the years to come, this new demographic category will begin to include the baby-boomers, who will bring with them a new set of social issues. "They are more highly educated, wealthier and in better health, as a group, than those who are currently the oldest people in Canada, and they will need new kinds of services", points out Yann Décarie, searcher at the National Institute of Scientific Research, the report's second author.

The authors argue that Canada should set up a multidisciplinary panel of researchers and policy makers with a common interest in confronting the repercussions of the ageing of the population. Such a structure already exists in Britain, where the New Dynamics of Ageing programme has established Modeling Ageing Population to 2030, focused on the

consequences of [population](#) ageing. It would be highly desirable for this type of research programme to be mirrored in Canada, the authors conclude.

More information: Légaré, Jacques; Décarie, Yann; Deslandes, Kim; and Carrière, Yves (2015) "Les oldest-olds canadiens : une population en pleine croissance, mal connue et à risque de manquer de services adéquats," Population Change and Lifecourse Strategic Knowledge Cluster Discussion Paper Series/ Un Réseau stratégique de connaissances Changements de population et parcours de vie Document de travail: Vol. 3: Iss. 2, Article 1. Available at: ir.lib.uwo.ca/pclc/vol3/iss2/1

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