

Seniors Demographic in Guelph & Wellington County

HIGHLIGHTS

People 65 and over make up nearly 13% of the population in Guelph and Wellington...

In 2006, 26,050 individuals over the age of 65 were reported to be living in Guelph-Wellington; 14,265 people in Guelph and 11,785 people in Wellington County.

We are aging...

According to the Waterloo-Wellington LHIN, in 2005, 28% of individuals that resided in this area were over the age of 50; this number is expected to increase to 34% of the population by 2015.

People in Guelph & Wellington spend time caring for older adults in our community...

In the Guelph-Wellington region, more than 29,000 individuals over the age of 15 spend some amount of their time providing unpaid care for seniors.

Every year the United Way's Social Planning Department conducts research in two categories up for review by the Fund Distribution Committee. This year, the two categories are Seniors and Health and Independent Living.

In April and May 2008, the United Way Social Planning Department held a series of three roundtable discussions for service providers, volunteers and researchers working in the areas of seniors and health and independent living in Guelph and Wellington. Through those conversations a number of broad themes emerged that were related to seniors. These themes have been incorporated into research profiles that highlight issues seniors face in our community, as well as regional, provincial, national and international trends and issues.

AGING POPULATION

The Canadian population is aging. As the baby boomer generation continues to age, the number of individuals who are over the age of 65 is increasing; this trend is expected to continue and intensify in the coming years. The 2006 census indicated that individuals aged 65 and over made up nearly 14% of the Canadian population, an increase of approximately 4% since 1981¹. This population is composed largely of females; in 2006 56% of all Canadians over the age of 65, and 70% of those over 85 were women².

In 2006, 26,050 individuals over the age of 65 were reported to be living in Guelph-Wellington; 14,265 people in Guelph and 11 785 people in Wellington County. Thus seniors 65+ years of age made up almost 13% of the entire Guelph-Wellington population. About 56% of local seniors were female, while 44% were male³.

Source: Adapted from 2006 Statistics Canada Census Data⁴

City of Guelph Wards	Number of Seniors 65+
1 (East)	2050
2 (North)	3515
3 (Centre)	2860
4 (West)	1185
5 (University)	3025
6 (South)	1620
City of Guelph	14 255

Above is a chart that lists the approximate numbers of seniors age 65 and over and the wards they live in the City of Guelph. These estimations suggest that the highest numbers of seniors live in the North and University Wards.

Projections suggest that in approximately 10 years, there will be more Canadians retiring than entering the workforce⁵. According to the Waterloo-Wellington LHIN, in 2005, 28% of individuals that resided in this area were over the age of 50; this number is expected to increase to 34% of the population by 2015. Similarly, 14% of the population is expected to be over the age of 65 by 2015, compared to 11.5% in the same age group in 2005⁶.

Service providers must be aware of the upcoming surge of people entering their senior years and the assistance that these individuals may require as they age. Ensuring that there is enough funding for programs, available and trained staff, and appropriate services and supports for seniors and their families are important considerations for government funding and organizations that develop and provide services.

significantly affected by socio-economic status and level of education¹⁰. In addition, because Aboriginal Canadians have lower life expectancy rates than non-Aboriginals; Aboriginal seniors are considered to be “elderly” at a significantly younger age, with only 1% of their total population over the age of 75¹¹. As a result of longer life expectancies, Ontario seniors express concerns about being able to financially support themselves throughout their lifetimes. This concern is further discussed in the profile: *Seniors Poverty and Economic Status*.

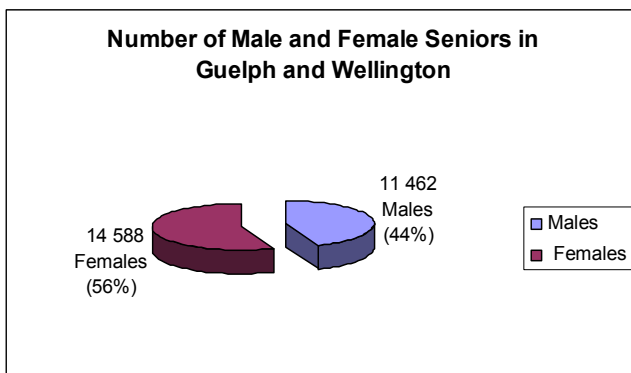
FAMILIES ARE MORE DISPERSED

Research indicates that in many areas of Canada, young individuals are migrating out of rural areas and into urban centres¹². At the same time, 23% of all Canadian seniors reside in small towns and rural areas¹³. These shifting demographics have multiple implications for communities. Firstly, as young people move to urban areas, rural regions are left with less people to provide needed services and programs. As populations decrease in rural areas, local access to service is also likely to diminish because as the population ages and the demand for services increases, there will be less people to fill the positions needed to provide local services.

When young individuals move out of rural areas, often their parents remain, causing a geographic gap between parents and their family support network. When the parents age and begin to require care, a



long-distance “carer-caree” relationship forms. This relationship can be very difficult for both parties alike, particularly in light of the fact that 70% of people between



Source: City of Guelph¹

SENIORS ARE LIVING LONGER

Not only is the population aging, but Canadians are also living longer, healthier lives than they were previously. The oldest old, defined as those 80 and over, is the fastest growing group of seniors in Ontario. Currently, 26.8% of Ontario seniors are over the age of 80; a 3.7% increase from 2001. Furthermore, 3.6% of Ontario’s total population is composed of individuals 80 years or older and there are more reported centenarians (individuals living up to and beyond their 100th birthdays) than previously recorded⁷. In 2006, there were 1,730 Ontarians over 100 years of age compared with 1,380 in 2001⁸. According to the 1997 Brasilia Declaration on Ageing, people are living longer as a result of improvements in public health and standards of living⁹. Studies show that the health of seniors is

the ages of 45-64 who provide eldercare are also employed; many full-time¹⁴. Lack of access to services in rural areas and the geographic gap between children and parents are two factors that are often exacerbated by long distances to services and a lack of access to transportation in rural communities. More about local transportation services and barriers is found in the profiles: *Seniors and Transportation* and *Seniors Access to Supports, Services and Information*.

The challenges associated with aging are not limited to rural Canada alone. Census data show that the entire Canadian population is becoming more and more urbanized. In 2006, 80% of all Canadians lived in urban areas¹⁵. The increase in urbanization is also being seen at a local level. For example, in 2006 Statistics Canada named Guelph as one of the six newest census metropolitan areas (CMA). In order to classify as a CMA, the urban area must have a population of at least 100,000, including an urban centre of at least 50,000¹⁶. In 2006, 114,943 individuals lived in Guelph and 85,482 in Wellington County¹⁷.

A 2005 study from the University of Alberta reported that many Canadian seniors in rural communities experienced a lack of comprehensive health care services¹⁸. When there is a lack of formal supports for seniors in rural areas, those requiring assistance may be left to depend on informal supports such as children, other relatives, friends, or neighbours for care. Furthermore, as individuals age and subsequently lose friends and other support networks as a result of death or relocation, some seniors may rely solely upon their families for support to remain healthy and independent. Not having their families nearby can be stressful and isolating for many older individuals. More information on socially isolated seniors, both living in rural and urban communities, can be found in the profile: *Seniors and Social Isolation*.

Additionally, with the increased rate of divorce, caregivers may find themselves providing care to parents who reside in two different communities, cities, provinces or even countries from their own¹⁹. If these individuals have new spouses, the caregiver may be left to assist those individuals as well as their own parents. Likewise, with the aging senior population, it is not uncommon to hear of seniors taking care of their own parents or of fellow seniors in need²⁰. If and when these individuals require care, their informal caregivers may feel obligated to provide care to

those other individuals who require assistance. The trends make it clear how the care giving role can be very time and energy consuming and may become a source of stress for individuals. Some individuals requiring care may also prefer that they receive care from just their daughters versus their sons or vice versa. This can put a further strain on the caregiver if they feel as though they are the preferred individual to provide care.



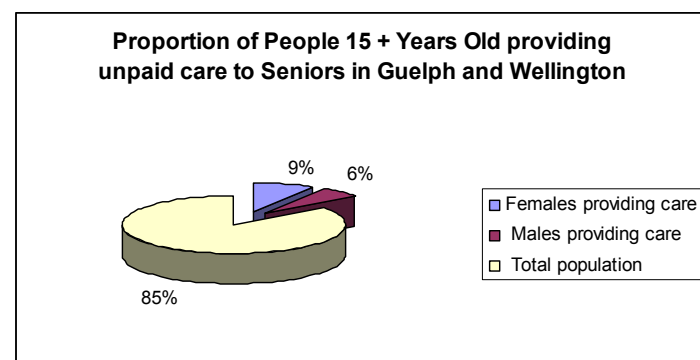
Caring for a loved one while residing in different communities, rural and urban, cities, provinces or countries can be very challenging for caregivers, particularly if they are employed. Several issues may arise for those who are unable to be physically present with their loved ones when they require assistance. For example, when providing care from a different location, communication with service providers and supports must be done over the phone during working hours which is not always possible for working caregivers. Furthermore, expenses incurred by the caregiver on behalf of the senior can result in significant financial strain. Travel and long distance phone calls can accumulate. Caregivers may feel stress and guilt around providing care and they may be concerned, in general, about the loved one's well-being when they are not present^{21,22}. Individuals who are Substitute Decision Makers or Powers of Attorney for loved ones may also have a difficult time carrying out their required duties in this role if they do not reside in the same city, province, or even country. This may be particularly challenging for those families who are separated by city or province, and particularly for immigrant families whose loved ones may live in a different country. Furthermore, a distracted and distressed employee can impact upon the production, sick time and health benefit costs for an employer as well. It is therefore crucial to have adequate services available to

seniors in both rural and urban areas to ensure that they are getting the care they need. Such services are crucial to lessen the stress on long distance care providers and their employers and to reduce the chances of social isolation.

INCREASED STRESS ON THE SANDWICH GENERATION

When services for seniors disappear from communities, it can significantly impact upon their families who must assume these responsibilities with often little or no support. This can be particularly difficult for those who are already caring for others. Individuals who are said to be in the “sandwich generation” are those who are caring for aging parents or other relatives, neighbours, or friends while simultaneously raising children²³. As more seniors are living longer and individuals are choosing to have children later in life, more and more people are caught in this dual care giving role. As a result of this double responsibility, caregivers may have to miss or quit work and lose pay in order to care for family members. Caring for an elderly loved one alone may cause, among other things, an individual to reduce the numbers of hours worked, decline a job offer, undergo a reduction in income, or lose out on employer-provided and government benefits^{24,25}.

Furthermore, along with taking on the role of caregiver for an elderly loved one, comes added expenses which may include renting medical equipment, paying for procedures not covered by medical insurance, buying groceries, making living spaces more accessible, transporting individuals to and from appointments, and potential declines in certain aspects of quality of life such as physical, social and emotional well-being^{26,27}. Few formal supports are available for these caregivers²⁸.



According to 2006 census data that was gathered by asking respondents about their care giving experiences the week prior to data collection, 4,724,325 Canadians indicated that they provided some amount of assistance to seniors; 396,715 provided 20 or more hours of care giving on that given week and 2,924,515 people provided more than 0 but less than 5 hours²⁹. In the Guelph-Wellington region, 29,635 individuals over the age of 15 report spending some amount of time providing unpaid care for seniors (of this total, 17,350 were females, 12,285 were males)³⁰. This is approximately 20% of the total population of individuals over the age of 15 who report engaging in unpaid work in general³¹. These numbers highlight that many people in our community are taking on the role of caregiver and are directly impacted by their aging loved ones. Information on the availability of local community support resources can be found in the profile: *Seniors' Housing and other Supports*.

As Canadians, including people in our local community take on the responsibility of caring for their aging loved ones, the increased amount of work it requires to provide this care while continuing to lead their normal daily lives may cause individuals to become stressed. Furthermore, those in the sandwich generation may feel as though they could perform better at their jobs if formal respite supports were available, if they had more flexible work hours, if they were able to work from home, if they were given tax breaks, if they were offered counselling, if they were given information on available community resources and if they were provided with information pertaining to long-term illnesses and/or disabilities associated with aging in general³².

When we asked representatives from local organizations about challenges their clients currently face in the community, several of them noted the lack of available resources for both individuals requiring assistance and their caregivers. Lack of respite for caregivers of seniors was specifically highlighted. This area is explored further in the profile: *Seniors' Housing and other Supports*.

Providing care to aging loved-ones can have a serious impact upon some caregivers' health and sense of well-being. It is therefore important to ensure that there are enough services available to assist caregivers with their role and to ensure that they can access respite supports if they choose to.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIALIZATION

Participants in the roundtable sessions noted the importance of many types of supports for seniors who wish to continue living in their homes. Included in their list were supports which are not always deemed to be of high priority, such as those that encourage participation in social activities and gatherings. In particular, participants noted that seniors in Guelph and Wellington may face barriers to accessing “soft supports” such as opportunities to socialize, a visit to a hairdresser etc. They commented that many transportation services are often only for “necessary” outings (such as medical appointments). They also noted that some transportation services may not train their employees or have the staff or volunteer capacity to take the time to encourage and assist seniors out of their homes. These comments speak to a need for local seniors to have access to a continuum of care that supports their physical, emotional and mental health needs.



Emotional and social changes occur with aging³³. As individuals age, they experience much loss in their lives. There is physical loss, such as that experienced when a spouse, relative or friend passes away; however, there are also other types of losses including the loss of freedom surrounding the inability to drive, to take care of oneself independently, or to feel like valuable and productive members of society. Seniors can subsequently become very isolated as they age.

All of the aforementioned types of loss can negatively impact upon a senior's quality of life. Seniors' well-being, ability to cope with health and social stresses and level of independence depend upon on the types of living

arrangements, current stress levels and connections to their communities^{34,35}. It is therefore important to ensure that community supports are available for seniors to socialize, and access the care and services that they cannot otherwise obtain independently.

SENIORS AS VOLUNTEERS

Imagine Canada published a report on Canadian volunteers based on the 2004 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating³⁶. According to this report, in 2004 32% of seniors volunteered their time. Although, his percentage is lower than the number of individuals in any other age group, seniors volunteered the greatest number of hours that year, providing, on average, 245 hours of service throughout the year³⁷. Furthermore, 14% of seniors indicated that they volunteer their time on a daily, or near daily basis, following only behind the 15-24 year old age group³⁸. Since most seniors do not have full-time jobs or school to attend, they may be able to volunteer more often and for longer periods of time than others who have such commitments.

The type of volunteer activities that seniors do also differs from the rest of the population. Younger Canadians are most likely to assist others directly (81-89% of all young volunteers give their time in this way). Seniors are less likely to assist others directly through their volunteer work; two-thirds (2/3) of seniors provide direct help³⁹. Also, due to the physical health of some seniors, perhaps it is not feasible for them to provide physical assistance to others, but rather, to engage in work that assists in a more indirect manner, such as providing information to people at a kiosk at a local hospital.

Local service providers noted that they have found it challenging to recruit volunteers for reasons including, volunteers are looking for short-term commitments or to work on specific time-limited projects. The national trends around senior volunteerism suggest that local service providers may benefit from volunteer recruitment strategies that target seniors to fill positions that require a more significant time-commitment.

CONCLUSION

Inline with Canadian trends, the local population is aging and seniors are living longer making it very important that

services are available to meet the needs of the elderly population. National trends show that families of various makeups are becoming more geographically dispersed. Similarly local families may be spread across the City of Guelph, throughout the County, the province, and across Canada and the world leading many caregivers to experience stress while providing care, yet at the same time feeling as though they have to take on this role because of the lack of access to community resources and supports. This stress may negatively impact upon their own health and well-being. Furthermore, research shows that socialization is important for seniors, as it has been linked with positive well-being and overall health. If seniors are living active lives, engaging in activities that they enjoy and being supported by community providers, a decrease on the usage of the formal health care system may be seen. Opportunities for older adults in Guelph and Wellington to be active and socialize in their own communities will help local seniors to remain healthy and happy. It is crucial that sufficient funding and appropriate services are available to ensure that seniors receive the supports and services they need to live fulfilling lives that allow for as much independence as is wanted and possible.

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² Lindsay, C. (2007). *Census snapshot of Canada: Population, age and sex*. Retrieved June 18, 2008, from <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=11-008-X200700710379>

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¹³ Turcotte, M. & Schellenberg (2006). *A Portrait of Seniors in Canada*. Minister of Industry: Ottawa. Retrieved Oct. 2008 from <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=89-519-X1E#formatdisp>.

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