

Canadian Demographics

Seniors (those age 65 and over) are a growing population group in Canada, comprising 12% of the total population in the late 1990s compared with 10% in 1981 and 5% in 1921 (Statistics Canada, 1999). They are projected to comprise 15% of the population by 2021. This paper begins with a brief introduction to ageing in Canada, providing a demographic and cultural context before proceeding to further discussion. As a Western capitalist society with an emphasis on individualism, seniors are expected to be self-reliant and to live independently. However, research during the last three decades has demonstrated that seniors desire gradually increasing physical health care and are embedded within the community. In other words, the focus on individualism does not mean that seniors are isolated or alone or that they are abandoned when their health fails.

Canadian Social Policy and Ageing

by

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The paper goes on to discuss selected issues in contemporary Canada that relate to an ageing population. One trend in our modern capitalist society is to value older people for their productive roles and/or for their wealth, so seniors tend to be valued. Their exclusion from paid labour leaves them without any socially defined contributing roles within society. There is a role of exclusion. This is becoming increasingly important as disability free years in old age increase. Governments view volunteering as one mechanism that allows them to capitalize both on the resources represented by seniors, as well as providing meaningful roles for elderly persons. The next issue discussed refers to ageing in place, the expressed preference of the vast majority of individuals including seniors. This broad topic encompasses sufficient economic means, adequate health care, adequate housing and other environmental issues. This section focuses largely on the built environment as permitting ageing in place and some programs that would allow seniors to do so, including supportive housing. Still related to ageing in place, the next section refers to a considerable expansion of community home care in Canada. There are few signs that the Canadian health care system is prepared for its ageing citizens. Indeed, there are indicators that issue deals with diversity, focusing on substantial differences. Word in many documents is not well understood and mechanical within a heterogeneous elderly population has not yet been resolved. The final of this paper is to provide an overview of ageing and existing research knowledge. Where the research community has not yet been resolved about the elderly, this information is provided. Where we do know the solutions to problems, this is made explicit. Where we know the solution of whatness to implement, this is also indicated. After describing the current situation of seniors in Canada, this paper focuses on a selected number of issues with which Canadian social policy is concerned.

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Poverty rates are affected by the definitions used. The official definition of poverty used here, contributing to the decrease.