Focus on Rural Ontario

RURAL ONTARIO INSTITUTE
Vision, Voice and Leadership

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Growth in number of seniors

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Highlights

- **Different regions have different patterns of aging. Some show a faster increase in the number of seniors and some show a faster increase in the senior dependency ratio (i.e. the number of seniors per person in the working age population).**
- **Only four of the 27 non-metro census divisions show growth above the provincial average in both dimensions of aging.**

Why look at the growth in number of seniors?

Growth in the number of seniors implies an increase in the demand for services for seniors. These services range from specialized medical practitioners and residences for seniors to wheelchair-friendly grocery stores.

The growth in the number of seniors needs to be separated from the growth in the senior dependency ratio. The senior dependency ratio is the number of seniors per 100 individuals of working age (20 to 64 years of age). Growth in this ratio could occur with no growth in the number of seniors if members of the working age population migrated to another community. The growth in senior dependency ratio implies an increase in demand for care of seniors (i.e. for a ride to the doctor's office) per resident in the community.

For a discussion of these two dimensions of aging, see Dandy *et al.* (2008)[1].

Findings

Between 1996 and 2012, the number of seniors in Ontario was growing at an average rate of 2.6% per year (Table 1).

Four non-metro census divisions have a growth in the number of seniors that is at or above the Ontario annual rate (Northumberland at 2.9%, Muskoka at 2.8%, Sudbury at 2.6% and Manitoulin at 2.6%). As noted in **Focus on Rural Ontario No. 5**, both Northumberland and Muskoka appear to be attracting retirees to their region.

Comparing the last two columns of Table 1 shows that regions with a higher growth in the number of seniors do not necessarily have a higher growth in the senior dependency ratio (and vice versa). These two dimensions of an aging community are different measures with different implications for policy. A growing number of seniors invites an investment in services for seniors. In contrast, a slower growth in the number of seniors but a faster growth in the senior dependency ratio invites an investment in strategies to augment volunteer services to help seniors.

Summary

There are two important dimensions of an aging community – the growth in the number of seniors and the growth in the senior dependency ratio. Many regions have a higher growth in one dimension and a lower growth in the other dimension. These different patterns have different implications on policies related to services for seniors.

Rural Ontario Institute gratefully acknowledges the work of Ray Bollman in preparing this edition of Focus on Rural Ontario. Questions on data sources can be directed to RayD.Bollman@sasktel.net. Any comments or discussions can be directed to NRagetlie@RuralOntarioInstitute.ca.

[1] Dandy, Kimberley and Ray D. Bollman. (2008) "Seniors in rural Canada." **Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin** Vol. 7, No. 8 (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 21-006-XIE). (http://www.statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=21-006-X&CHROPG=1&lang=eng)

Table 1

Population of seniors (65 years and over) by census division, Ontario, 2012

Census Divisions	Number of seniors[1], 2012	Senior dependency ratio[2], 2012	Average percent change per year, 1996 to 2012	
			Number of seniors	Senior dependency ratio[2]
Metro census divisions sorted by average annual rate of growth of number of seniors[1] from 1996 to 2012				
York	191,171	31	6.3	2.6
Peel	218,590	27	5.5	2.8
Halton	96,554	33	4.0	1.4
Ottawa	173,869	32	3.0	1.7
Brant	30,311	40	2.2	1.1
Greater Sudbury	37,057	40	2.1	2.2
Hamilton	116,128	38	1.8	0.9
Toronto	535,506	32	1.3	0.4
Partially non-metro census divisions sorted by average annual rate of growth of number of seniors[1] from 1996 to 2012				
Durham	112,913	31	4.2	2.3
Dufferin	10,707	32	3.7	2.2
Prescott & Russell	18,603	39	3.6	3.0
Simcoe	99,955	38	3.6	1.4
Waterloo	94,061	30	2.9	1.1
Wellington	43,755	35	2.9	1.4
Frontenac	36,687	41	2.5	1.8
Lennox & Addington	10,659	48	2.5	2.5
Middlesex	93,979	35	2.4	1.4
Essex	84,973	38	2.2	1.5
Elgin	19,657	41	2.1	1.4
Peterborough	37,976	51	2.0	1.1
Thunder Bay	36,175	43	1.9	2.4
Niagara	112,769	47	1.8	1.3
Non-metro census divisions sorted by average annual rate of growth of number of seniors[1] from 1996 to 2012				
Northumberland	25,613	60	2.9	2.4
Muskoka	18,280	59	2.8	1.8
Sudbury	6,030	57	2.6	4.3
Manitoulin	3,844	58	2.6	2.5
Lanark	17,223	50	2.5	2.2
Parry Sound	13,848	67	2.5	2.6
Haldimand-Norfolk	27,451	47	2.3	2.0
Prince Edward	9,027	68	2.3	2.2
Leeds & Grenville	28,226	53	2.3	2.2
Bruce	19,798	59	2.2	2.3
Kawartha Lakes	22,513	57	2.2	1.3
Grey	27,631	56	2.2	1.7
Algoma	33,490	55	2.1	3.0
Nipissing	21,229	44	2.1	2.0
Renfrew	26,305	48	2.0	1.8
Lambton	34,326	50	2.0	2.1
Haliburton	6,413	78	2.0	1.3
Kenora	11,981	33	1.9	1.9
Hastings	34,104	48	1.9	1.6
Oxford	24,491	42	1.8	1.3
Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry	29,247	49	1.8	1.9
Cochrane	18,113	40	1.7	2.7
Chatham-Kent	26,482	46	1.6	1.8
Timiskaming	9,431	56	1.4	2.6
Perth	17,214	42	1.4	1.1
Huron	15,960	53	1.2	1.3
Rainy River	4,984	45	0.7	1.5
Ontario	**2,745,309**	**36**	**2.6**	**1.4**

1. "Seniors" refers to the population 65 years of age and over.

2. The "senior dependency ratio" is the number of seniors per 100 population of working age, 20 to 64 years of age.

Source: Statistics Canada. Annual Demographic Statistics, CANSIM Table 051-0052.