

Study: Examining the effect of public pension benefits on the low income of senior immigrants

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At the time of the 2016 Census, immigrants accounted for just under one-third (31%) of the total population over the age of 65 in Canada. Of these, over 200,000 seniors had immigrated within the two decades preceding the census.

Immigrating to Canada later in life can have implications on financial well-being, particularly for recent immigrants. Typically, seniors aged 65 and older who have lived in Canada for less than a decade are not eligible for Old Age Security (OAS) and Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) pension benefits.

A new study released today in *Insights on Canadian Society* entitled "[Results from the 2016 Census: Examining the effect of public pension benefits on the low income of senior immigrants](#)" looks at the factors associated with low income among immigrant seniors using data from the 2016 Census, with a particular focus on the role played by OAS and GIS benefits.

Immigrant seniors who landed recently were more likely to live in low-income households than those who came to Canada a longer time ago. In 2016, 24% of senior immigrants who arrived within the decade before the census lived in a low-income household, compared with 11% of senior immigrants who had been in Canada for over 40 years.

The study finds that among senior immigrants, access to OAS and GIS benefits is associated with a lower probability of living in a low-income household. However, access to OAS and GIS was not the only factor associated with the low income of senior immigrants.

Other factors, such as owning a home and household living arrangements, were also important. For instance, senior immigrants living with other middle-aged adults were less likely to have a low income than those who were not.

Furthermore, senior immigrants who were from a country that had a social security agreement with Canada were also less likely to have a low income than those who were from a country without such an agreement. A social security agreement allows the period of contributions and residence in Canada to be added together with those in a signatory country, which means that immigrants from signatory countries can access some public pension benefits.

Note to readers

In this release, data from the 2016 Census are used to examine the low-income situation of senior immigrants over the age of 65. Low-income rates are based on the [low-income measure, after tax \(LIM-AT\)](#), which represents the proportion of individuals whose adjusted after-tax household income is less than one-half of the median Canadian after-tax household income. This measure excludes individuals living in the territories, on reserves and in collective households.

The OAS pension is the Government of Canada's largest pension program. It is a monthly benefit paid to seniors aged 65 and older who have Canadian citizenship or permanent residency status. There are three possible scenarios to meet the residency requirement. First, seniors who live in Canada at the time of application must have lived in Canada for at least 10 years since the age of 18. Second, applicants who live overseas at the time of application must present proof of residence that their duration of stay in Canada since the age of 18 exceeds 20 years. Third, if neither of the above scenarios applies, applicants could meet the residency requirement through an international social security agreement with Canada, which would allow the period of contributions and residence in Canada to be combined with that in an agreement country for eligibility for OAS benefits.



Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 3901.

The study "Results from the 2016 Census: Examining the effect of public pension benefits on the low income of senior immigrants" is now available in *Insights on Canadian Society* (75-006-X).

For more information, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca).

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