

Millennials now outnumber baby boomers in Canada

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Although the country's population aging continues, it was slowed by the increase in permanent and temporary immigration observed in 2022 and 2023. As the many recent immigrants are on average younger than the rest of the Canadian population, the average age of the Canadian population fell slightly from July 1, 2022, to July 1, 2023, a first since 1958.

However, the number and proportion of people aged 65 years and older have continued to rise, driven by the aging of the large baby boomer cohorts.

The share of millennials and Generation Z is increasing, while that of baby boomers and Generation X is decreasing

On July 1, 2023, for the first time, the millennial generation (born between 1981 and 1996) comprised a greater number of people in the population than the baby boomer generation (born between 1946 and 1965).

The baby boomer generation became the largest in the population in 1958, seven years before the last baby boomer was even born. For 65 years, they remained the largest generation in the Canadian population. From the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, baby boomers accounted for around 40% of the population. By comparison, millennials' demographic weight will never reach the level of baby boomers' and is expected to peak at its current level of 23%, according to the most recent population projections.

Millennials are not the only generation to have increased their demographic weight from July 1, 2022, to July 1, 2023. Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012) has become the third-largest generation in Canada, now surpassing Generation X (born between 1966 and 1980).

Notably, Generation X, whose members were born during a period of sharply declining fertility, will never have been the largest generation in Canada.

According to the latest population projections, Generation Z could overtake millennials in numbers between 2038 and 2053.

The rise in the millennial and Generation Z populations is largely due to the [recent arrival of a record number of permanent and temporary immigrants](#), many of whom are millennials or Generation Z. From July 1, 2022, to July 1, 2023, the millennial population increased by 457,354, exclusively due to the arrival of permanent and temporary immigrants. This increase even exceeds the annual growth of the young Generation Alpha (+454,133)—the members of which have been born since 2013—which grows mainly through births.

To a lesser extent, these changes in the generational breakdown of the population are also attributable to the aging of older generations. The number of baby boomers has been declining year over year since 2006, as deaths in this generation outnumber the arrival of immigrants, most of whom are young adults aged less than 40.



Defining generations

This analysis is based on the definitions of generations as presented in the article "[A generational portrait of Canada's aging population from the 2021 Census](#)."

The generations used in this release are

Greatest generation: people born before 1928 (aged 95 years or older on July 1, 2023)

Interwar generation: people born between 1928 and 1945 (aged 77 to 95 years on July 1, 2023)

Baby boomer generation: people born between 1946 and 1965 (aged 57 to 77 years on July 1, 2023)

Generation X: people born between 1966 and 1980 (aged 42 to 57 years on July 1, 2023)

Millennials (sometimes also called **Generation Y**): people born between 1981 and 1996 (aged 26 to 42 years on July 1, 2023)

Generation Z: people born between 1997 and 2012 (aged 10 to 26 years on July 1, 2023)

Generation Alpha: people born since 2013 (aged 10 years or younger on July 1, 2023)

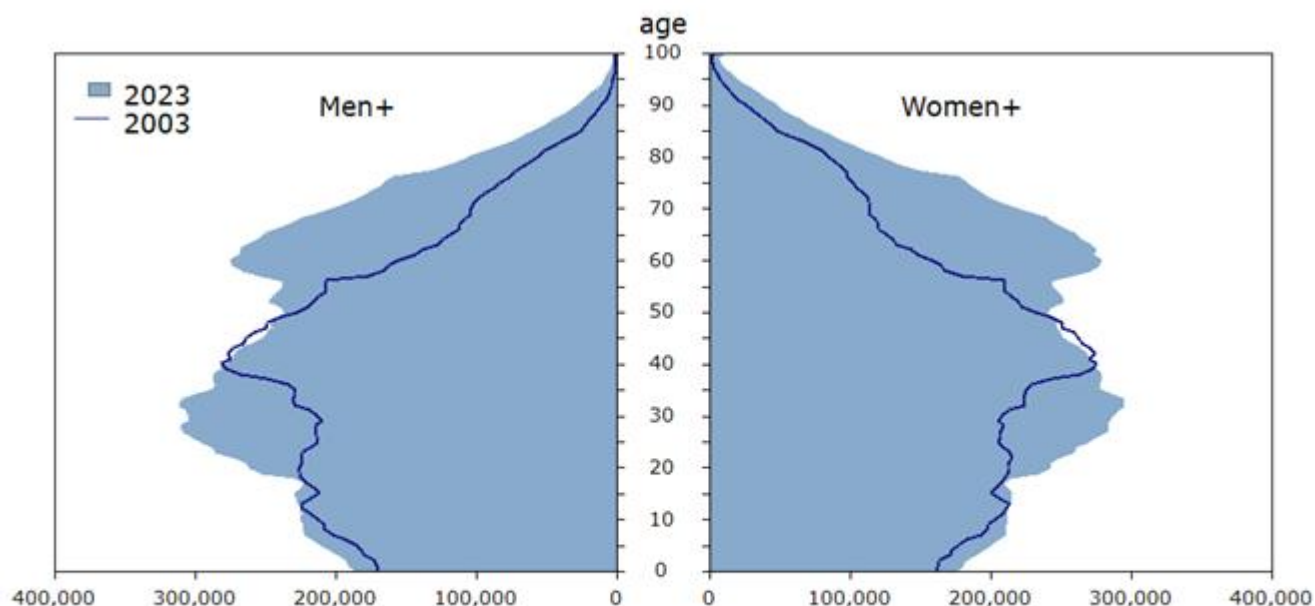
Note: Generations are based on the calendar year concept. As the reference date for demographic estimates is midyear (July 1), it is therefore normal for some ages to be listed in two generations. The population at ages overlapping two generations was evenly distributed between them.

Recent waves of large numbers of immigrants slow demographic aging

Generally speaking, the age structure of a population changes little year over year due to the inertial force of the large numbers that already make up the starting population. It is therefore rare for immigration or emigration to cause a sudden change in the indicators which measure the age structure of a population. However, from July 1, 2022, to July 1, 2023, the country welcomed a sufficiently large number of immigrants to have a significant impact.

The recent arrival of large numbers of permanent and temporary immigrants is clearly visible in the population's age pyramid (see Infographic 1). The large number of people aged 20 to 40 years is the result of several successive years of strong immigration. In particular, the recent arrival of many non-permanent residents (NPRs) increased the number of Canadians aged 20 to 24 years, so that more than one in five people (22%) in this age group was an NPR by July 1, 2023.

Infographic 1 – Age and gender pyramid, as of July 1, 2003 and 2023, Canada



Note(s): Gender refers to an individual's personal and social identity as a man, woman or non-binary person (a person who is not exclusively a man or a woman). The gender category "**Men+**" includes men (and/or boys), as well as some non-binary persons. The gender category "**Women+**" includes women (and/or girls), as well as some non-binary persons.

Source(s): Table 17-10-0005-01.

In addition, demographic aging slowed, with the average age of the population falling from 41.7 to 41.6 years from July 1, 2022, to July 1, 2023.

The median age, which divides the population into two groups of equal size, also fell, from 40.9 to 40.6 years over the same period. This is the first time in 65 years that the mean and median ages of the population have both fallen in the same year. This last happened between 1957 and 1958, driven by the birth of the large baby boomer cohorts. From July 1, 2022, to July 1, 2023, these declines were due to the arrival of over 1 million permanent and temporary immigrants, many of whom were younger than the average or median age of the population.

However, the effect of receiving a high number of immigrants in 2022 and 2023 on the decline of the average and median ages is temporary, as population aging is unavoidable.

A growing working-age population

The proportion of the population aged 15 to 64 years increased from July 1, 2022, to July 1, 2023, an uncommon event in recent years, as the large cohorts of baby boomers are now leaving this group as they reach the age of 65 years.

After peaking at 69.5% in 2007, the proportion of the population aged 15 to 64 years declined steadily until 2022, to 65.5%, before rising again to 65.7% in 2023. This change may benefit Canadian society by increasing the size of the working-age population, possibly helping to alleviate the pressures of sectoral labour shortages. However, the high number of new working age Canadians may also put pressure on the delivery of services to the population, housing, transportation and infrastructure.

Among all five-year age groups, the population grew the fastest among people aged 30 to 34 years from July 1, 2022, to July 1, 2023. This is another uncommon result, related to the arrival of many immigrants over this period.

Since the early 2000s, the fastest-growing age groups have almost always been those made up of the very old. This is the result of medical advances that have reduced mortality at all ages over the last century.

Growth of the 30 to 34 years age group (+6.4%) from 2022 to 2023 was more than twice that of the overall population (+2.9%) over the same period. Next, tied for second place, was growth in the 25 to 29 years age group (+6.1%), also linked to recent immigration, and growth in the 75 to 79 years age group (+6.1%), fuelled by the first cohorts of baby boomers reaching these ages.

Population aging continues, although at a slower pace

On July 1, 2023, for the first time in Canadian history, there were more people aged 65 years and older (7,568,308) than younger than 18 years (7,497,048). The number of people aged 65 years and older had already surpassed that of children aged 0 to 14 years from July 1, 2015, to July 1, 2016.

The proportion of people aged 65 years and older continued to rise, reaching 18.9% on July 1, 2023 (+0.1 percentage points compared with one year earlier). This is due to the fact that population growth among those aged 65 years and older (+3.6%) was higher than that of the overall population (+2.9%) during this period, despite sustained permanent and temporary immigration.

Canada's population aging is driven by the baby boomers, whose large, youngest cohorts will continue to reach the age of 65 years until 2030. On July 1, 2023, more than two-thirds (67.6%) of people aged 65 years and older were members of the baby boomer generation. The remaining third were members of the interwar generation, born between 1928 and 1945, and the greatest generation, born before 1928.

An older population in the Atlantic provinces and younger in the Prairies and the territories

Newfoundland and Labrador continued to be the province with the highest average age (45.7 years) and the highest proportion of people aged 65 years and older (24.4%). New Brunswick and Nova Scotia were the next two provinces with the oldest populations, both in terms of average age (44.4 years in New Brunswick and 43.8 years in Nova Scotia) and proportion of people aged 65 years and older (23.0% in New Brunswick and 22.1% in Nova Scotia).

Among the provinces, the Prairies had the youngest population. Alberta had the youngest average age (39.1 years) and the lowest proportion of people aged 65 years and older (15.1%). Manitoba and Saskatchewan are respectively the second- and third-youngest provinces, both in terms of average age (39.3 years in Manitoba and 39.7 years in Saskatchewan) and proportion of people aged 65 years and older (16.8% in Manitoba and 17.5% in Saskatchewan).

Nunavut was the territory with the youngest population in Canada, with an average age of 29.1 years and a proportion of people aged 65 years and older of 4.6%.

The generational portrait also differs from east to west and north to south

In the Atlantic provinces and Quebec, baby boomers remained the generation with the largest numbers. Ontario and British Columbia were the two provinces where millennials surpassed baby boomers from July 1, 2022, to July 1, 2023, as was the case for Canada as a whole.

In the Prairie provinces, this shift had occurred previously. Alberta was the first province where millennials outnumbered baby boomers, in 2014. In Yukon and the Northwest Territories, millennials have also been the largest generation for a few years. Lastly, Nunavut stands out from the other provinces and territories, as Generation Z has been the largest generation since 2011. This is mainly due to a higher fertility rate in Nunavut than in the rest of Canada, making the population particularly young.

The gap between the provinces with the youngest and oldest populations tends to widen over time. This is the result of faster population aging in provinces that are already the oldest. In particular, these provinces tend to have lower fertility rates and, in addition, have experienced repeated interprovincial migration losses of young adults from the late 1970s to the early 2010s.

Demographic estimates now use the gender concept

The demographic estimates now incorporate the concept of gender, [which was first introduced in the 2021 Census of Population](#). **Gender** refers to an individual's personal and social identity as a man, woman or non-binary person (a person who is not exclusively a man or a woman). Demographic estimates are available for the gender category "**Men+**," which includes men (and/or boys), as well as some non-binary persons, and for the gender category "**Women+**," which includes women (and/or girls), as well as some non-binary persons. For the sake of uniformity, all data products from the Demographic Estimates Program will now adopt the term "gender" for all years and periods. Prior to 2021, the demographic estimates are based on the concept of sex at birth. Although gender and sex at birth are two different concepts, this change does not cause a significant break in the trend because the two concepts produce very similar distributions. Population estimates by age and sex at birth will continue to be available upon request.

Almost as many men+ as women+

Canada's population was virtually evenly balanced between the number of women+ (20,084,054) and the number of men+ (20,013,707) on July 1, 2023. The ratio of the number of men+ to 100 women+ varied little from the late 1980s to 2016, fluctuating from 98.0 to 98.5. This ratio has risen slightly in recent years, reaching 99.6 as of July 1, 2023.

A ratio below 100 indicates more women+ than men+, due to the longer life expectancy of women+.

The recent slight increase in this ratio is due to the arrival of a significant number of NPRs since 2016. In fact, among NPRs, there were 128.9 men+ for every 100 women+ on July 1, 2023. This situation could be explained, among other things, by the nature of the jobs of work permit holders, some of which are traditionally more often held by men, for example in the agricultural sector.

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Note to readers

The demographic estimates by age and gender released today are the first to be based on 2021 Census population counts. These estimates also take into account census net undercoverage, incompletely enumerated reserves and settlements, as well as demographic adjustments. To these counts, the population growth estimates for the period from May 11, 2021, to the date of the estimate are added.

Demographic estimates for the total population based on 2021 Census counts were previously released on September 27, 2023.

The rebasing process is part of the normal procedures carried out after each census to ensure the highest possible accuracy of the demographic estimates produced by Statistics Canada. It is expected that demographic estimates by age and gender released today slightly differ from those that were published in previous releases and that were based on the 2016 Census. The size of the changes measured for the 2021 Census cycle is similar to what was noted for previous five-year census cycles.

The demographic estimates released today are considered preliminary and will be updated following the standard procedure followed by Statistics Canada for decades.

Definitions

For the purpose of calculating **rates**, the denominator is the average population during the period (the average of the start-of-period and end-of-period populations). For the sake of brevity, the terms **growth**, **population growth** and **population growth rate** have the same meaning.

The **median age** is an age "x," such that exactly one half of the population is older than "x" and the other half is younger than "x."

An **immigrant** refers to a person who is a permanent resident or a landed immigrant. Such a person has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Persons who are born abroad to a Canadian parent are not immigrants but are included in the returning emigrant component. For the Centre for Demography, the terms **immigrant**, **landed immigrant** and **permanent resident** refer to the same concept.

Non-permanent resident (NPR) refers to a person from another country with a usual place of residence in Canada and who has a work or study permit, or who has claimed refugee status (asylum claimant). Family members living with work or study permit holders are also included unless these family members are already Canadian citizens, landed immigrants (permanent residents), or NPRs themselves. For the Centre for Demography, the terms **non-permanent resident** and **temporary immigrant** refer to the same concept.

Acknowledgements

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Available tables: [17-10-0005-01](#), [17-10-0006-01](#) and [17-10-0014-01](#) to [17-10-0016-01](#) .

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3604](#).

The publication *Annual Demographic Estimates: Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2023* ([91-215-X](#)) is now available.

The product *Demographic estimates by age and gender, provinces and territories: Interactive dashboard* ([71-607-X](#)) is also available.

The product *Interprovincial migration indicators, provinces and territories: Interactive dashboard* ([71-607-X](#)) is also available.

The [Population and demography statistics](#) and [Older adults and population aging statistics](#) portals are also available.

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