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Population Projections for Canada (2021 to 2068), Provinces and Territories (2021 to 2043)

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Introduction

Population projections for Canada, provinces and territories are traditionally produced every five years, closely following the availability of adjusted population estimates based on the latest five-year census. However, this edition is ahead of the production of the adjusted estimates for the 2021 Census as it is a necessary update to reflect recent developments in Canadian demographics, including rising immigration targets and the COVID-19 pandemic. Partly repeating the assumptions of the previous edition, the *Population Projections for Canada (2018 to 2068), Provinces and Territories (2018 to 2043)* (hereinafter CPPT2018) as well as the long-term targets collected in the *2018 Expert Survey of Future Demographic Trends*,[1] these projections have as their base population the 2021 population, as estimated by Statistics Canada's Population Estimates program.

This document summarizes the main results of the *Population Projections for Canada (2021 to 2068), Provinces and Territories (2021 to 2043)*. The numbers are available in two tables in the Common Exit Data Warehouse: 17-10-0057-01 (population counts) and 17-10-0058-01 (population growth components). They can also be accessed using a new interactive data visualization tool (Statistics Canada catalogue number 71-607-X-2022015). Finally, the publication *Population Projections for Canada (2021 to 2068), Provinces and Territories (2021 to 2043): Technical Report on Methodology and Assumptions* provides information on the methods and assumptions underlying the projections.

1. See Chapter 2 in: Statistics Canada. 2019. *Population Projections for Canada (2018 to 2068), Provinces and Territories (2018 to 2043): Technical Report on Methodology and Assumptions*. Statistics Canada catalogue number 91-620. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/91-620-x/91-620-x2019001-eng.htm

Cautionary note

The population projections produced by Statistics Canada's Demography Division are not intended to be interpreted as predictions about what will happen in the future. They should instead be understood as an exercise designed to investigate what the Canadian population might become in the years ahead according to various scenarios of possible future change. For this reason, Statistics Canada always publishes several scenarios and formulates several explicit assumptions regarding the main components of population growth. Accordingly, users are encouraged to consider several scenarios when they analyze the projection results. It is also worth noting that the accuracy of the projections produced depends on a number of factors. Various events—for example, economic crises, wars or natural catastrophes—are difficult (or impossible) to anticipate and can affect the growth and composition of the Canadian population. For this reason, Statistics Canada revises the population projections on a regular basis, so that the context in which they are developed is taken into account.

Assumptions and selection of scenarios

The purpose of having multiple projection scenarios is to reflect the uncertainty associated with the future. The projection scenarios are constructed by combining a number of assumptions regarding the future evolution of each of the components of population growth. The six medium-growth scenarios (M1, M2, M3, M4, M5 and M6) were developed on the basis of assumptions reflecting different internal migration patterns observed in the past. Each scenario puts forward a separate assumption to reflect the volatility of this component.

The low-growth (LG) and high-growth (HG) scenarios bring together assumptions that are consistent with either lower or higher population growth than in the medium-growth scenarios at the Canada level. For example, assumptions that entail high fertility, low mortality, high immigration, low emigration and high numbers of non-permanent residents are the foundation of the high-growth scenario.

The fast-aging (FA) and slow-aging (SA) scenarios bring together assumptions that are consistent with either faster or slower population aging than in the medium-growth scenarios. For example, assumptions that entail high fertility, high mortality, high immigration, low emigration and high numbers of non-permanent residents are the foundation of the slow-aging scenario.

The ten scenarios are intended to provide a plausible and sufficiently broad range of projected numbers to take account of the uncertainties inherent in any projection exercise. Note that the low-growth (LG), high-growth (HG), slow-aging (SA) and fast-aging (FA) scenarios all use the same interprovincial migration assumption as the one used in the M1 scenario. The migration rates of assumption M1 over the first ten years consist of a linear interpolation of the average migration rates observed between 2018/2019 and 2020/2021 towards the average rates observed between 1991/1992 and 2016/2017, rates that remain constant thereafter (after 2030/2031)

Projection assumptions and scenarios are summarized in Table 1. In-depth descriptions of the projection assumptions and their rationale are provided in the technical report accompanying these projections, entitled *Population Projections for Canada (2021 to 2068), Provinces and Territories (2021 to 2043): Technical Report on Methodology and Assumptions* (Statistics Canada catalogue number 91-620).

Table 1
Summary of long-term projection scenario assumptions

Component	Scenario									
	Low growth (LG)	Medium growth						High growth (HG)	Slow aging (SA)	Fast aging (FA)
		M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6			
Fertility (period total fertility rate) (children per woman) (2042/2043)	1.40	1.59						1.79		1.40
Immigration (rate per thousand) (2042/2043)	6.5	8.3						12.0		6.5
Life expectancy at birth for males (in years) (2042/2043)	82.6	83.7						84.8	82.6	84.8
Life expectancy at birth for females (in years) (2042/2043)	86.6	87.4						88.2	86.6	88.2
Interprovincial migration (reference period)	Recent trends (2018/2019 to 2020/2021) transitioning linearly in 10 years to long term trends (1991/1992 to 2016/2017)		1995/1996 to 2010/2011	2003/2004 to 2008/2009	2009/2010 to 2016/2017	2014/2015 to 2016/2017	2018/2019 to 2020/2021	Recent trends (2018/2019 to 2020/2021) transitioning linearly in 10 years to long term trends (1991/1992 to 2016/2017)		
Non-permanent residents (in numbers) (cumulative change from 2022 to 2043)	0	536,500	536,500	536,500	536,500	536,500	536,500	926,800	926,800	0
Emigration (gross migraproduction rate per thousand) (2042/2043)	2.3	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.1	1.1	2.3
Return emigration (gross migraproduction rate per thousand) (2042/2043)	1.3	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.6	0.6	1.3
Net temporary emigration (gross migraproduction rate per thousand) (2042/2043)	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7

Note: The scenarios M2, M3, M4, M5 and M6 were created in order to reflect distinct interprovincial migration assumptions in comparison with scenario M1. For more details, see the section on internal migration in *Population Projections for Canada (2021 to 2068), Provinces and Territories (2021 to 2043): Technical Report on Methodology and Assumptions*. Statistics Canada catalogue number 91-620.

Source: Statistics Canada, Centre for Demography.

Results at the Canada level, 2021 to 2068

Highlights - Canada

- According to the various projection scenarios, the Canadian population, estimated at 38.2 million in 2021, would continue to increase over the next decades to between 44.9 million (low-growth (LG) scenario) and 74.0 million (high-growth (HG) scenario) by 2068. Under the medium-growth (M1) scenario, the Canadian population would reach 56.5 million in 2068.
- From an average of 10.4 per thousand over the last 30 years, the annual rate of growth would slowly diminish to 7.1 per thousand by 2067/2068 according to the medium-growth (M1) scenario. In comparison, by 2067/2068, Canada's annual growth rates would increase to 14.7 per thousand under the high-growth scenario (HG) and would decrease to 1.7 per thousand under the low-growth scenario (LG).
- In all scenarios, migratory increase would be the main driver of population growth at the national level, continuing a pattern that began in the early 1990s.
- The proportion of seniors (aged 65 and over) in the population would increase from 18.5% in 2021 to between 21.6% (slow-aging (SA) scenario) and 29.8% (fast-aging (FA) scenario) in 2068. The increase in the share of seniors would be less pronounced after 2030, year after which all members of the baby boom will have reached the age of 65.
- The proportion of children (people aged between 0 and 14) in the Canadian population has greatly decreased since 1962, when it peaked at 34.0%. Estimated at 15.7% in 2021, the projected proportion of children decreases in all scenarios except in the slow aging (SA) and high-growth (HG) scenarios.
- The number of older seniors (aged 85 and over) would continue to increase rapidly in the coming years, particularly between 2031 and 2050 as the baby-boom cohort enters this age group. According to the projection scenarios, the population aged 85 and over would increase from 871,400 in 2021 to between 2.8 million (scenario LG) and 3.6 million (scenario HG) by 2068.
- The mean age of the Canadian population would fall between 42.2 years (scenario SA) and 47.9 years (scenario FA) in 2068, compared to 41.7 years in 2021.

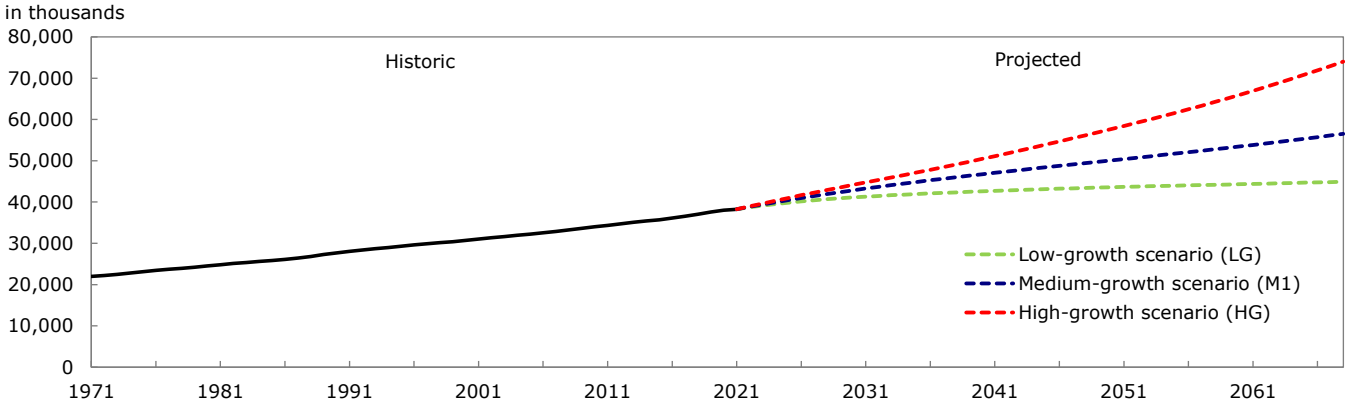
Growth of the Canadian population from 2021 to 2068

The Canadian population has grown substantially in recent years, increasing from 30.7 million in 2000 to 38.2 million in 2021. The results of the various projection scenarios show that growth would continue over the next decades, albeit at a slower pace than that recently observed. According to the medium-growth (M1) scenario, the Canadian population would grow steadily, increasing from 38.2 million in 2021 to 56.5 million in 2068 (Chart 1). The annual rate of growth would slowly diminish and then plateau to around 7.1 per thousand by 2067/2068, considerably lower than the average rate recorded over the past 30 years (10.4 per thousand for the period 1991/1992 to 2020/2021).

According to the high-growth (HG) scenario, the Canadian population would almost double to a little more than 74 million in 2068, mainly a result of rises in immigration, fertility and life expectancy. By 2067/2068, the annual growth rate would be 14.7 per thousand, higher than the average rate recorded over the past 30 years.

The low-growth (LG) scenario offers a different picture; Canada would still experience population growth, but the rate of growth would decline rapidly over the next decades. Under this scenario, the Canadian population would increase to 44.9 million in 2068, a growth of about 17.4% from its 2021 level. The pace of growth would decrease to 1.7 per thousand in 2067/2068.

Chart 1
Population, historic (1971 to 2021) and projected (2022 to 2068) according to the low-growth (LG), medium-growth (M1) and high-growth (HG) scenarios, Canada



Source: Statistics Canada, Centre for Demography.

Age structure of the Canadian population

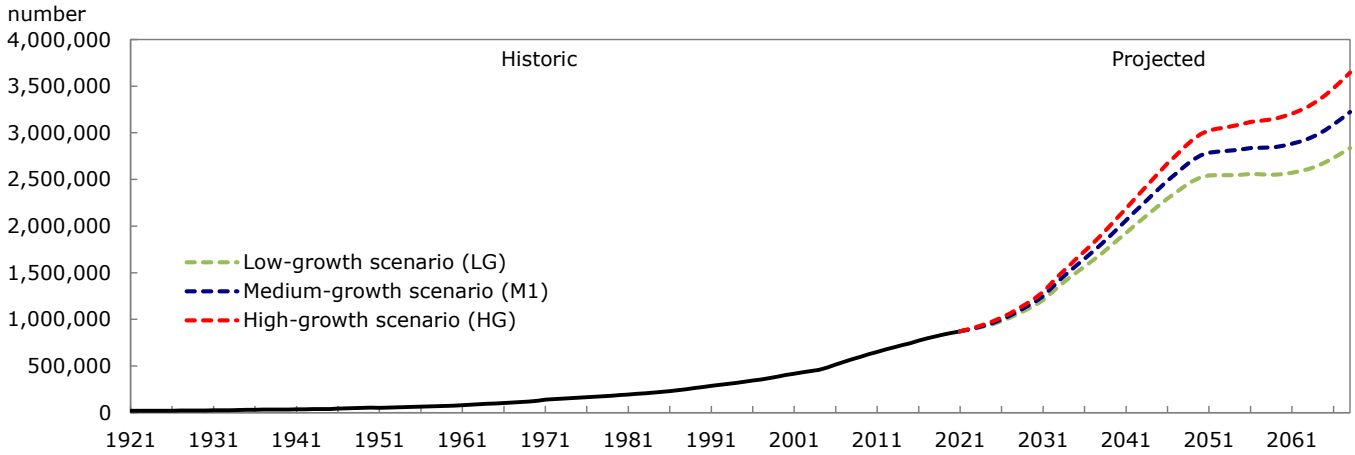
Along with the size of the population, the age structure of the population has important consequences for society. For example, a high proportion of people of working age tends to be favourable to the economy and strong GDP, while high proportions of children and the elderly tend to put strong pressures on public spending.

Population aging has emerged as a defining demographic trend in most industrialized countries including Canada. The proportion of the population aged 65 and over has been slowly increasing since the early 20th century, a result of decreases in mortality as well as fertility. Projection results show that population aging in Canada will continue over the coming decades. According to all projection scenarios, the proportion of the population aged 65 and over will continue at an accelerated pace over the next decade in particular: just as the baby-boom cohort temporarily interrupted population aging in the 1950s and 1960s, this cohort will accelerate the phenomenon over the next two decades. By 2030 (the year when the youngest baby boomers turn 65 years), the proportion of the total population aged 65 and over would increase to between 21.3% (slow-aging (SA) scenario) and 22.9% (fast-aging (FA) scenario), from 18.5% in 2021. In most projection scenarios, this proportion would continue to increase in the remaining years of the projections, but at a slower pace, reaching between 21.6% (scenario SA) and 29.8% (scenario FA) by 2068.

Under the medium growth (M1) scenario, Canada is expected to have 8.3 million children in 2068, a 37.4% increase from the estimated 6.0 million in 2021. The proportion of children reaches 14.6% in 2068, which represents a decrease from the estimated value of 15.7% in 2021. This is in fact a continuation of the historical trends observed globally since 1962, when the proportion of children in the population peaked at 34.0%. In the fast-aging (FA) scenario, the proportion of children decreases further to 12.5% in 2068. Only the slow-aging (SA) and the high-growth (HG) scenario propose an increase in the proportion of children, reaching 17.0% and 16.8% in 2068, respectively.

The number of people aged 85 and over has been steadily increasing as a share of the total Canadian population over time. In 2021, the Canadian population had 871,400 persons aged 85 and over, more than six times as many as 50 years earlier in 1971 (139,000). The members of the baby-boom cohorts will enter this age group between the years 2031 and 2050. This phenomenon, and to a lesser extent, the anticipated gradual increase in life expectancy, would cause the number of people aged 85 and over to increase rapidly during this period in all scenarios, reaching between 2.5 million (scenario LG) and 3.0 million (scenario HG) by 2050 (Chart 2). In subsequent years, the population in this age group continues to increase, but at a much slower pace: by 2068, the number of people aged 85 and over would be between 2.8 million (scenario LG) and 3.6 million (scenario HG).

Chart 2
Number of persons aged 85 years and over, historic (1921 to 2021) and projected (2022 to 2068) according to the low-growth (LG), medium-growth (M1) and high-growth (HG) scenarios, Canada

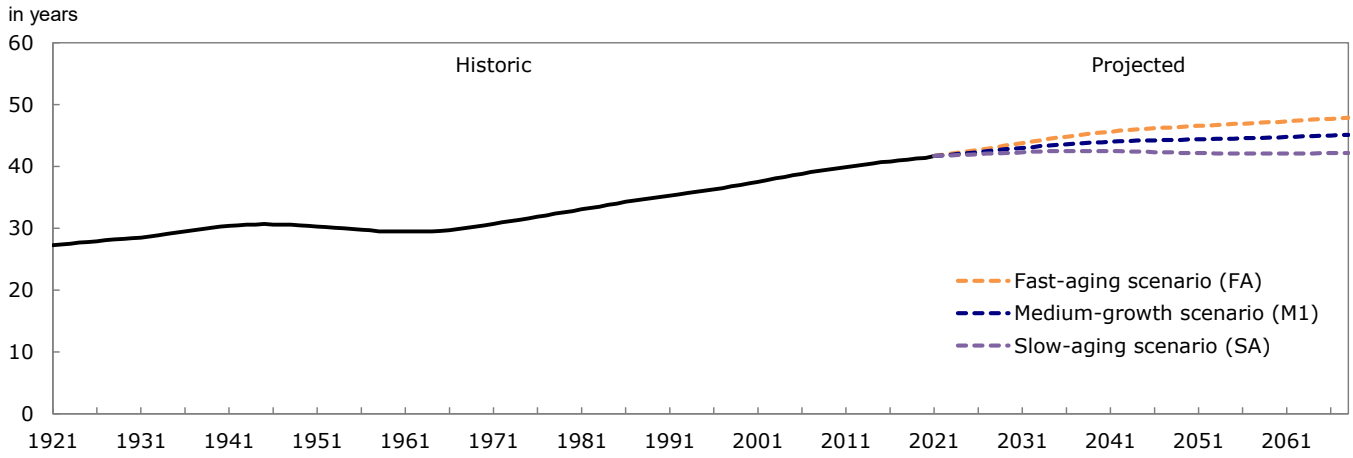


Source: Statistics Canada, Centre for Demography.

Older seniors would represent a growing share of the total population in the coming decades. From 2.3% of the total population in 2021, people aged 85 and over would represent a peak of 4.6% of the population in 2050 according to the slow-aging (SA) scenario. In contrast, under the fast-aging (FA) scenario, older seniors would continue to increase as a proportion of the total population throughout the projection, representing 7.2% of the population by 2068. People aged 85 and over would also represent a growing share of the senior population in the coming decades. From 12.3% in 2021, this share would reach a peak of 22.0% in 2050 under the slow-aging (SA) scenario and would reach a peak of 24.6% in 2051 under the fast-aging (FA) scenario.

Another indicator of the aging of Canada's population is the increase in its mean age. Between 1921 and 2021, the mean age increased about 14 years, from 27.3 years to 41.7 years. Projection scenarios indicate that the mean age would continue to increase steadily at least until 2034. Later in the projection period, the mean age of the population would continue to rise gradually in the fast-aging (FA) scenario, would decrease slightly in the slow-aging (SA) scenario and would stabilize in the medium-growth (M1) scenario, reflecting in large part the various fertility assumptions across scenarios. According to the projection scenarios, the mean age of the Canadian population would fall between 42.2 years (scenario SA) and 47.9 years (scenario FA) in 2068 (Chart 3).

Chart 3
Mean age, historic (1921 to 2021) and projected (2022 to 2068) according to the fast-aging (FA), medium-growth (M1) and slow-aging (SA) scenarios, Canada



Source: Statistics Canada, Centre for Demography.

Results at the provincial and territorial levels, 2021 to 2043

Highlights - Provinces and Territories

- Continuing long-term trends, the population east of Ontario would continue to decrease as a share of the total Canadian population, according to all projection scenarios. Specifically, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Quebec would experience a decrease in their demographic weight from 2021 to 2043. In contrast, under almost all scenarios, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta would experience an increase in their respective demographic weights.
- In all scenarios, Ontario and Quebec would continue to be the most populous provinces in Canada over the next 20 years, despite the fact that their combined demographic weight decreases.
- Average annual growth rates would vary considerably among the provinces and territories. Some provinces and territories would experience population decrease in certain scenarios.
- As population aging continues, all provinces and territories would see an increase in the proportion of the population aged 65 and over in the coming years. The number of older seniors (aged 85 and over) is expected to increase rapidly in all provinces and territories, particularly in Newfoundland and Labrador, in Alberta, in Yukon and the territories.

General results

The projections for the provinces and territories include an additional component compared to the projections for Canada as a whole: interprovincial migration. For several provinces, interprovincial migration can have a substantial impact on population growth. It is also one of the most volatile components, as it is largely influenced by many non-demographic factors such as differentials in wages and employment opportunities among the provinces and territories.

According to the projection scenarios, most provinces and territories would experience an increase in population between 2021 and 2043 (Table 2). However, some Atlantic provinces and the Northwest Territories would experience a population decrease during the period in certain projection scenarios.

Table 2
Total population, historic (2021) and projected (2043) according to ten scenarios, Canada, provinces and territories

Region	Historic (2021)	Projected (2043)									
		Low-growth scenario (LG)	Medium-growth scenarios						High-growth scenario (HG)	Slow-aging scenario (SA)	Fast-aging scenario (FA)
			M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6			
	in thousands										
Canada	38,246.1	42,916.7	47,757.0	47,767.9	47,766.2	47,769.4	47,748.4	47,741.3	52,521.0	51,709.3	43,659.5
Newfoundland and Labrador	520.6	444.2	477.9	467.8	482.7	517.1	501.0	471.7	509.5	489.6	463.7
Prince Edward Island	164.3	185.5	208.7	203.2	195.3	195.3	201.1	228.3	231.4	227.0	189.5
Nova Scotia	992.1	1,006.3	1,099.3	1,057.6	1,032.7	1,056.8	1,084.7	1,236.3	1,196.3	1,173.0	1,028.3
New Brunswick	789.2	791.1	857.0	842.1	828.9	826.2	830.1	915.1	917.8	900.5	807.5
Quebec	8,604.5	8,704.7	9,472.3	9,444.8	9,471.7	9,445.6	9,384.3	9,592.9	10,196.7	10,014.5	8,878.0
Ontario	14,826.3	16,982.3	19,065.3	19,056.5	18,694.5	19,022.5	19,269.1	19,128.9	21,147.2	20,846.2	17,252.2
Manitoba	1,383.8	1,535.0	1,730.0	1,744.1	1,724.4	1,756.7	1,744.7	1,673.7	1,944.4	1,899.1	1,576.7
Saskatchewan	1,179.8	1,348.4	1,527.4	1,548.8	1,593.7	1,635.7	1,545.9	1,412.9	1,696.7	1,653.0	1,388.9
Alberta	4,442.9	5,833.3	6,498.4	6,743.0	6,852.6	6,469.6	6,036.8	5,955.4	7,158.0	7,077.6	5,904.6
British Columbia	5,214.8	5,947.3	6,669.7	6,518.5	6,744.2	6,683.1	6,987.0	6,962.7	7,360.5	7,269.8	6,028.2
Yukon	43.0	46.9	51.3	46.3	52.2	57.4	59.8	61.1	55.6	54.7	47.8
Northwest Territories	45.5	45.7	50.4	46.5	45.5	50.9	53.2	52.8	55.3	54.0	47.0
Nunavut	39.4	46.1	49.2	48.7	47.8	52.4	50.8	49.4	51.7	50.5	47.2

Source: Statistics Canada, Centre for Demography.

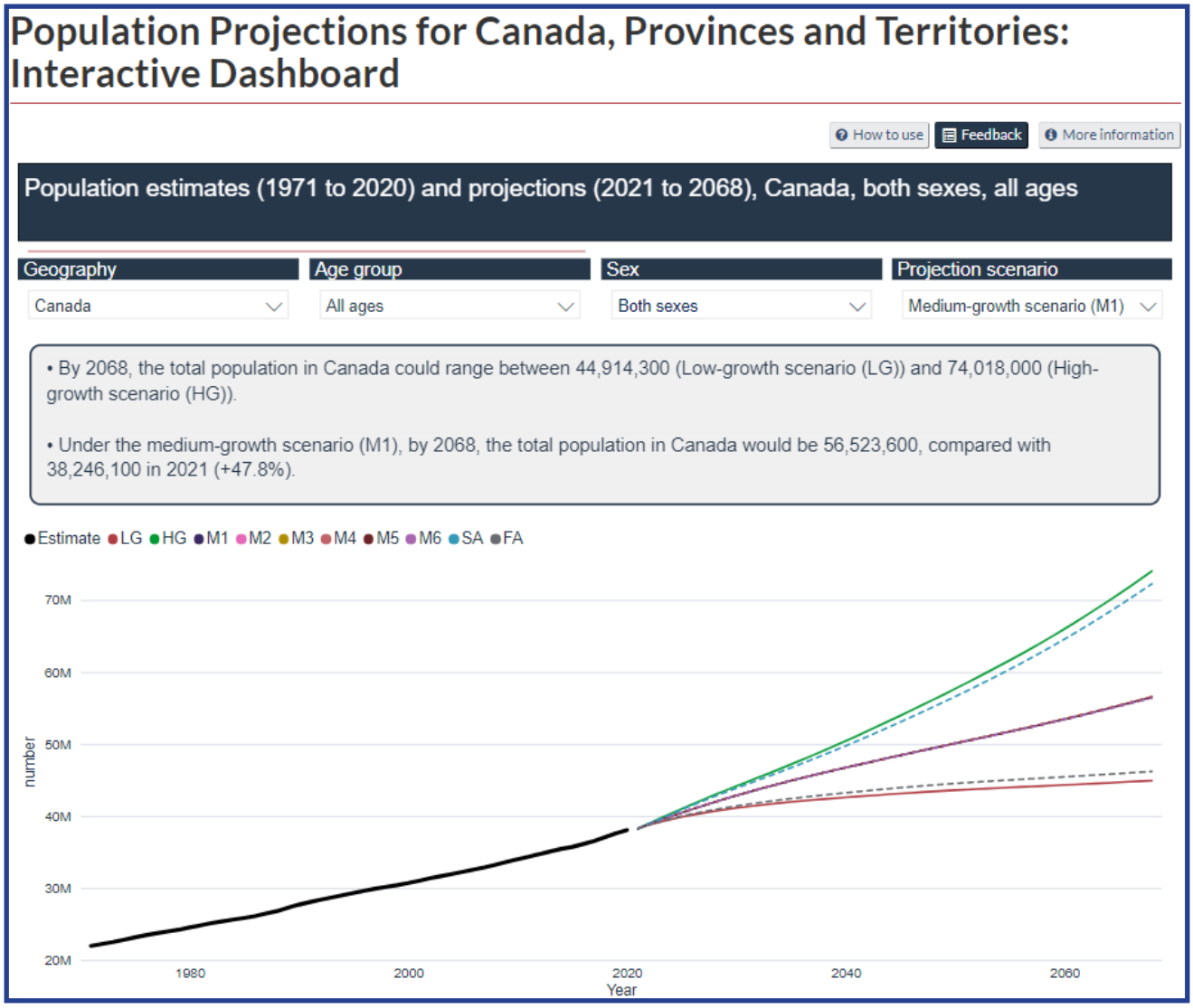
With the exception of Prince Edward Island, provinces located east of Ontario show a growth rate below the national average, while the Prairie provinces are projected to experience growth above the Canadian average in almost all scenarios. As a result, the geographic distribution of the population within Canada could change over the next 20 years. Most scenarios indicate that the population share of the Atlantic provinces and Quebec would either decrease or remain constant, while the population of the Prairie provinces would account for an increased proportion of the national population.

In the coming decades, the aging population projected at the national level would also be experienced by each of the provinces and territories, although to varying degrees. The proportion of people aged 65 and over, as well as the proportion of people aged 85 and over, would increase in all regions of Canada (Table 3). The largest increases in the population aged 85 and over would be observed in the Newfoundland and Labrador, Alberta, Yukon and the territories. The Northwest Territories and Nunavut would have the lowest proportions of people aged 85 and over in 2043, as it was the case in 2021. Conversely, the highest proportions of older seniors (aged 85 and over) in Canada are expected to be in the Atlantic provinces, particularly in Newfoundland and Labrador and New Brunswick, as well as in Quebec and British Columbia.

Table 3
Number of persons aged 85 years and over, historic (2021) and projected (2043) according to five scenarios, Canada, provinces and territories

Region	Historic (2021)	Projected (2043)				
		Low-growth scenario (LG)	Medium-growth scenario (M1)	High-growth scenario (HG)	Slow-aging scenario (SA)	Fast-aging scenario (FA)
	in thousands					
Canada	871.5	2,078.7	2,235.6	2,384.6	2,110.3	2,350.0
Newfoundland and Labrador	10.5	28.4	32.2	35.6	28.4	35.6
Prince Edward Island	3.6	8.6	9.4	10.1	8.7	10.0
Nova Scotia	23.3	56.0	60.2	64.4	56.1	64.3
New Brunswick	19.4	46.9	45.8	53.3	46.9	53.3
Quebec	216.0	486.2	523.1	559.0	489.1	556.0
Ontario	345.1	804.3	864.6	921.0	822.4	901.2
Manitoba	29.2	59.8	67.1	73.9	60.2	73.4
Saskatchewan	27.2	53.1	60.0	66.2	53.4	65.8
Alberta	73.0	218.7	233.1	246.4	221.4	243.5
British Columbia	123.5	313.9	333.2	351.4	320.9	343.9
Yukon	0.3	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.7
Northwest Territories	0.2	0.9	1.0	1.2	0.9	1.2
Nunavut	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.3

Source: Statistics Canada, Centre for Demography.

Population Projections for Canada, Provinces and Territories: interactive dashboard

For interactive insights on the most recent population projections for Canada, provinces and territories, see the interactive dashboard "Population projections for Canada, Provinces and Territories"