

Dementia Report: Media Releases

National

Report: Canada unprepared for rising rates of dementia

Evidence shows all levels of government are ill-equipped to handle the boom of dementia patients poised to overwhelm Canadian health care in the coming years

OCTOBER 18, 2022, TORONTO ON—CanAge, Canada’s National Seniors’ Advocacy Organization, has released [a new report](#) assessing Canada’s level of preparedness to handle the massive influx of dementia patients that experts warn is set to overwhelm our health care system in the coming years. The first-of-its-kind report shows that Canada is falling behind in the global race to deal with the increasingly complex needs of a rapidly aging population—the latest census data shows people 85 and older are now one of the fastest growing demographics in the country (861,395 people in 2021). 7,021,430 Canadians are over 65. Given that the risk of dementia doubles at age 85 (to 25%), the window of opportunity to get ahead of an inevitable health care crisis is growing alarmingly slim.

“According to the two most recent Commonwealth Fund Surveys of Physicians in Canada, only two out of five Canadian doctors felt equipped to diagnose and provide care for dementia,” says Laura Tamblyn Watts, CEO of CanAge. “We’re deeply concerned that we’re not making the best investments in our healthcare systems, people and processes to improve. Canada has a golden opportunity to emerge on the global stage as a leader in seniors’ care, but having a National Dementia Strategy isn’t enough on its own. The federal government needs to enact an implementation plan with clear success measures—that means seamless collaboration and cooperation with provinces and territories.”

In 2017, the World Health Organization (WHO) published its Global Action Plan on dementia in an effort to spur a coordinated worldwide approach to addressing the projected explosive growth in people living with cognitive decline. Available data shows there are currently more than 55 million people living with dementia, costing an estimated US\$ 600 billion per year in health care spending. Since then, more inclusive

financial modeling suggests that those values are closer to a staggering US\$ 1.3 Trillion per year.

CanAge's new report, [Dementia in Canada: Cross Country Report 2022](#), benchmarks each province and territory's progress toward providing care for Canadians living with dementia.

Key findings in the report include:

1. By 2050, 1 in 6 persons *globally* will be over the age of 65
But in Canada, we're already at 1 in 6 in most provinces, and in some provinces, were closer to 1 in 4
2. In 2020 in Canada there were: 6,491,030 children, 17 or younger, and there were 2,300 paediatricians, or 1 paediatrician for every 2,822 children

In that same year there were 6,835,866 seniors, 65+, and only 327 geriatricians, or 1 geriatrician for every 20,905 seniors - an almost 10-fold difference!

3. Many provinces do not have a clear dementia strategy, action plans, or care pathways for those living with dementia.

"There's a common misconception that dementia is an "old people problem", but that's actually not true," notes Tamblyn Watts. "Dementia is not a part of aging. In fact, 3% of dementia cases occur in someone younger than 65. The truth is that the dementia boom is coming whether we're ready or not. And, judging by the current state, we're simply not ready."

The full report is available for download on the [CanAge website](#).

About CanAge

[CanAge is Canada's national seniors' advocacy organization](#), working to improve the lives of older adults through advocacy, policy, and community engagement. We are a non-partisan, non-profit organization and backed by a broad pan-Canadian membership base. [Find out more.](#)

Media Contact

Michelle Saunders

michelle@canage.ca

416.414.1872