



# Building an Advocacy Strategy for Elder Abuse in the Region of Peel: Demographic Analysis

May 2023

Funded by the Region of Peel through the 2022 Community Investment Program  
Change Fund

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## Introduction

The objective of this report is to provide a demographic analysis of the population of seniors in the Region of Peel, particularly from the 2021 Canadian Census, with some comparisons with data from the previous census of 2016, historical data, and other secondary sources of information.

As seniors cover a specific range of age groups, the following report uses the terms seniors and older adults as well, referring to persons aged 65 years and older as it is defined by Statistics Canada.

## Summary

The population growth in the Region of Peel - mostly driven by immigration - is accompanied by a large population that is aging faster, due to a complex social dynamic that impacts the lives of seniors as well as their families and communities.

- Seniors in the Region of Peel represent 15 % of the total population but represent a faster growing segment than the overall population.
- Seniors are living longer despite the COVID-19 pandemic and other health-related problems. There is an increase in seniors aged 85 and older, who need complex continuing care.
- The proportion of women aged 65 and older is higher than the corresponding proportion of men, which means that women are living longer, but with more vulnerability and caregiving responsibilities.
- There are more seniors aged 85 and older living in urbanized areas, where there are more chances of having access to ongoing care.
- The number of households where seniors are living alone or with only a spouse is increasing.
- Based on secondary sources of information, the main needs of seniors are summarized in the areas of health, mental health, social isolation, violence against seniors, housing, and income.

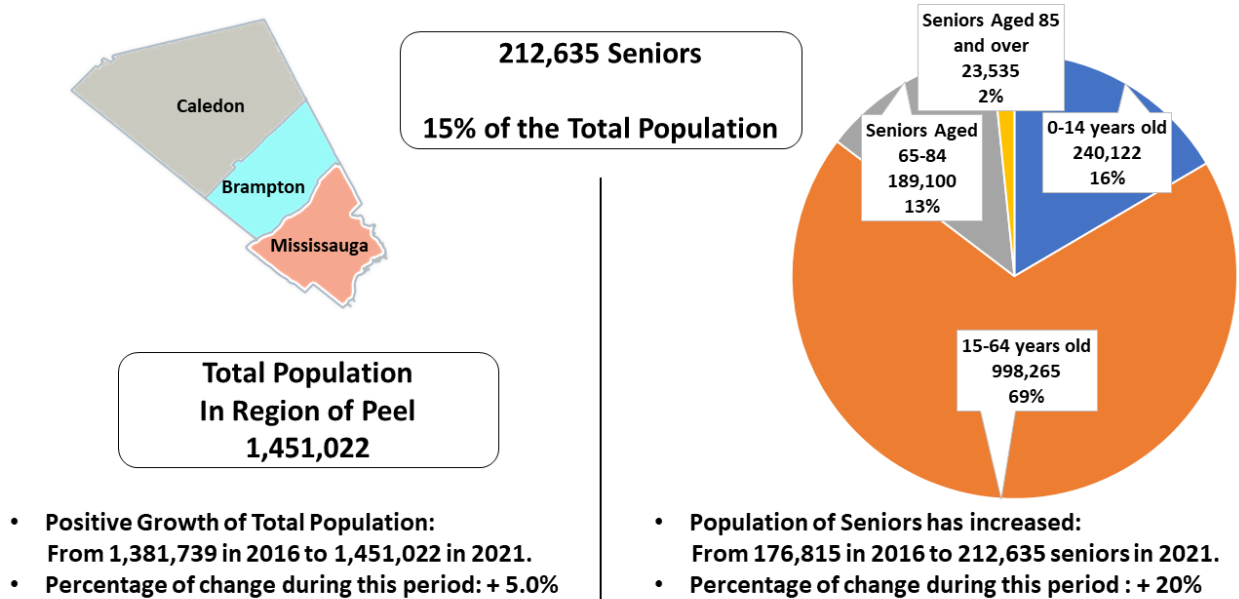
## Demographic Analysis

### Population Growth of Seniors in Peel Region

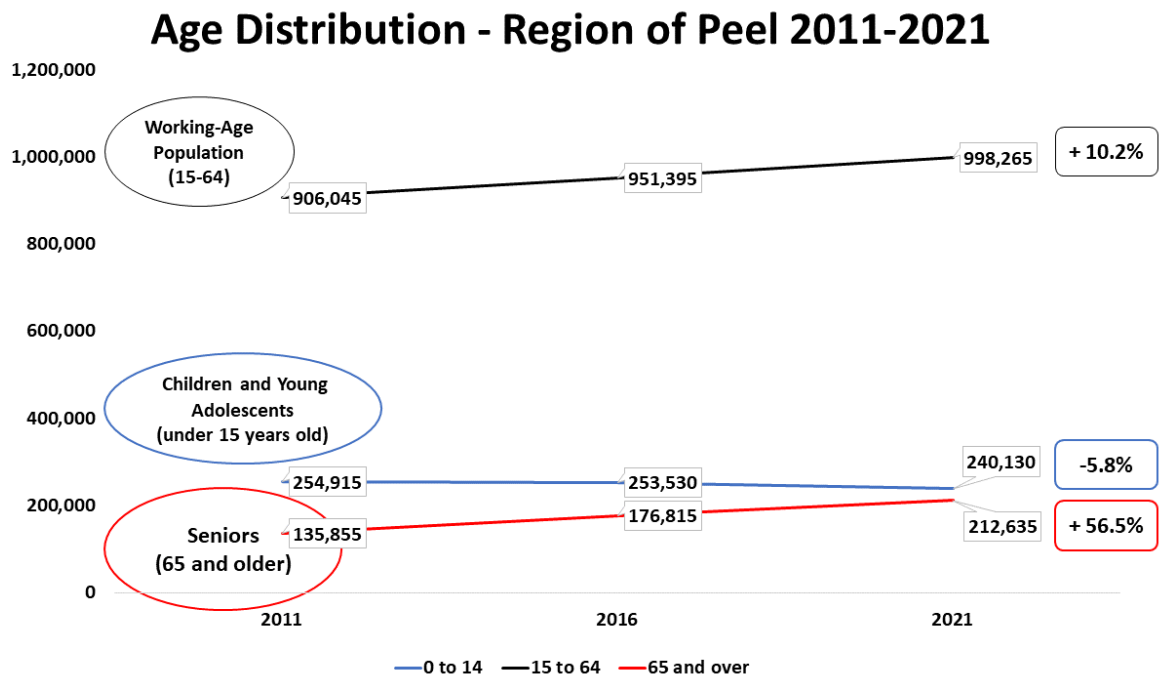
The population of seniors in the Region of Peel was 212,635 in 2021, representing 15 % of the total population (1,451,022 people). The number of seniors increased at a higher rate (+20%) than the overall population (+5%) from 2016 to 2021.

As a result, the positive population growth is accompanied by a large proportion of people who are aging, as shown in the graph below.

## Population of Seniors in the Region of Peel – Census 2021



To understand those changes in perspective, the following graph shows the population by age group over 10 years, from 2011 to 2021.

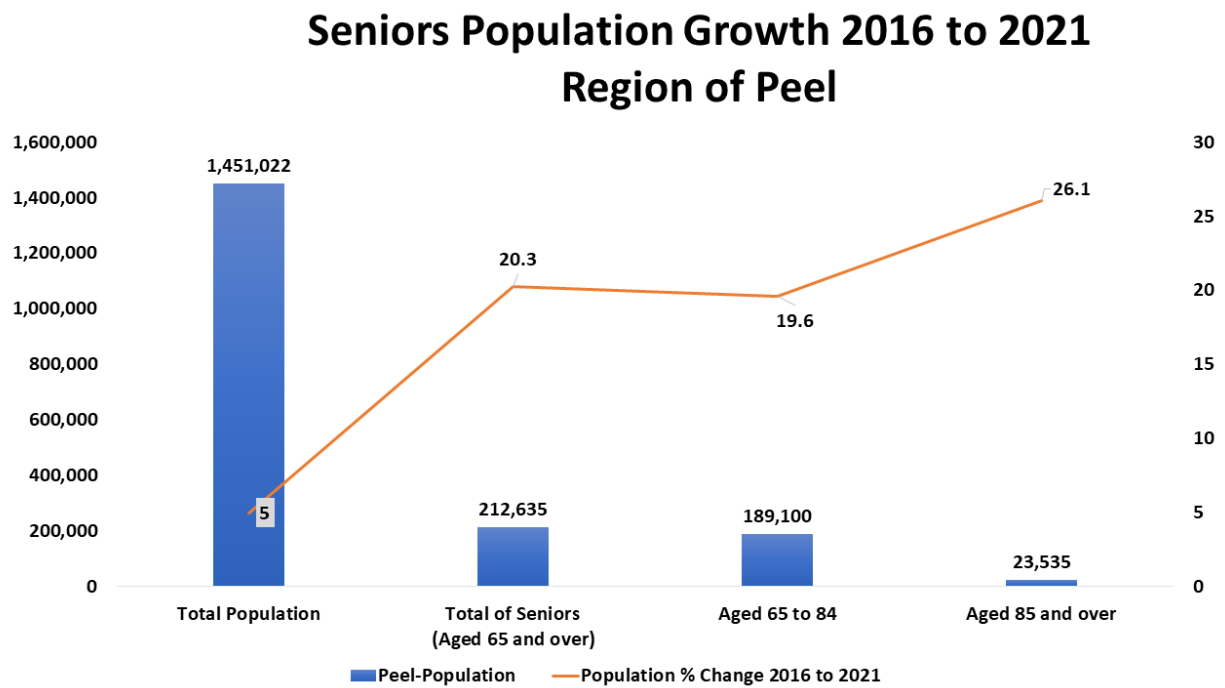


While the population of seniors has had the highest increase during this period, with a positive change of +56.5%, the population of children and young adolescents (under 15 years old) has decreased with a negative change of -5.8%. The working-age population (15-64 years old) has experienced a positive growth of + 10.2 %.

This means that the population in the Region of Peel is getting older, while the youngest population is declining in growth, and the growth in the working-age population is not enough to reverse the ageing trend of the overall population. If this trend continues, there would be more seniors than children. Based on 2021 Census data, the proportion of children and adolescents (16%) is slightly higher than seniors (15%), but the percentages are closer with a difference of 1%.

Another aspect that is relevant to analyze is subdividing the population of seniors into two groups: the group of seniors aged 65 to 84 and the group of seniors aged 85 and over. Research shows that due to a longer life expectancy, most seniors aged 65 to 84 can live independently and be active, while seniors aged 85 are more frail, vulnerable and need more complex care.

The following graph shows the population of seniors by age group in 2021 compared with the total population growth from 2016 to 2021.

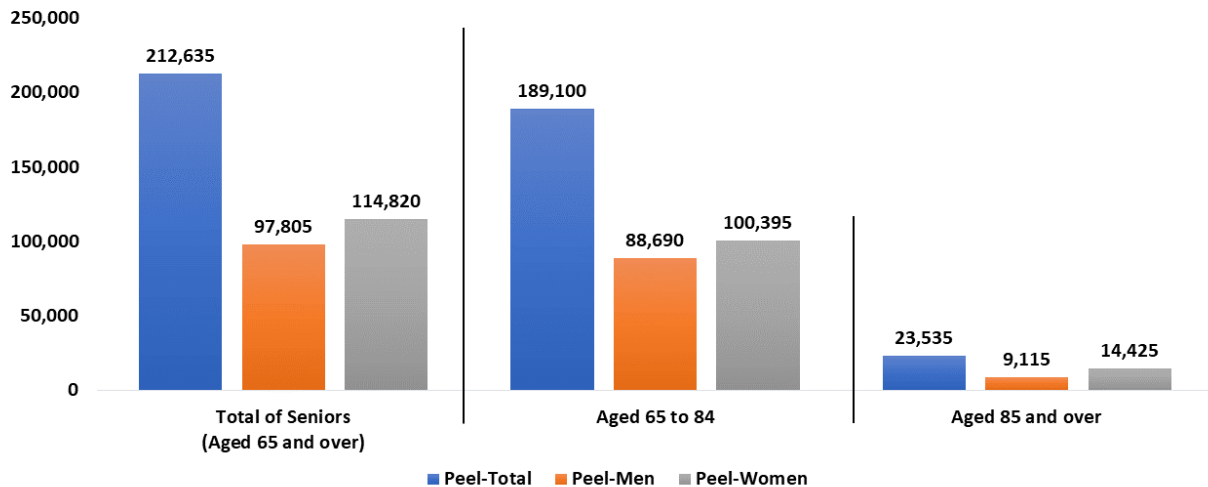


Even though the population of seniors aged 85 and over is a small portion of the total population (1.6%), it is the age group with the highest positive growth, with a change of +26.1% from 2016 to 2021. This group represents 11% of the total population of seniors in Peel region. That means that more seniors have entered the age group where they are more likely to need complex care.

## The Population of Seniors by Age and Sex at Birth

The next graph shows that there are more women (54%) than men (46%), and the proportion of women increases by age group, from 53% in seniors aged 65 to 84; to 61% in seniors aged 85 and over.

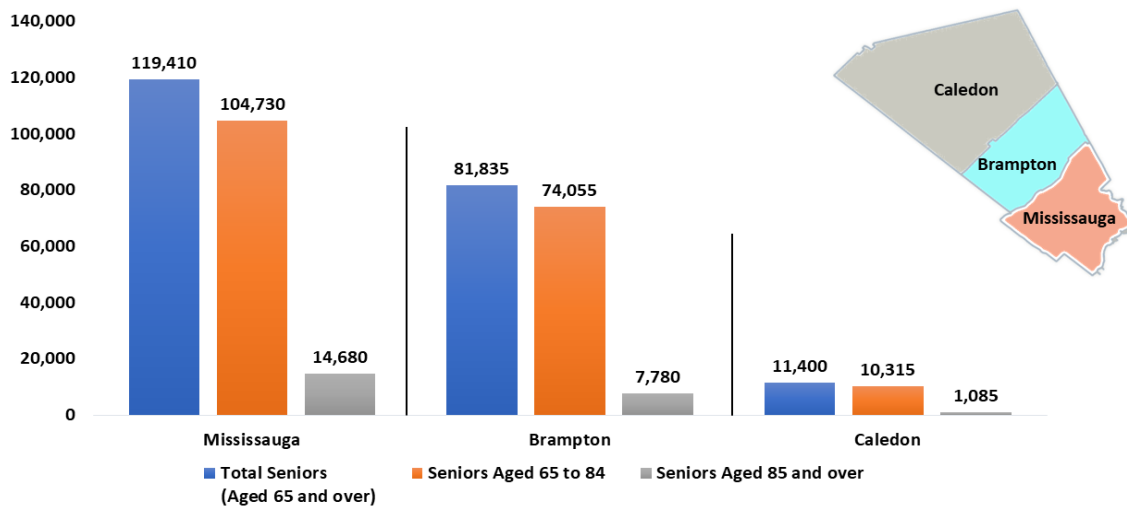
### Population of Seniors by Age and Sex at Birth Region of Peel - 2021 Census



## The Population of Seniors in Mississauga, Brampton, and Caledon

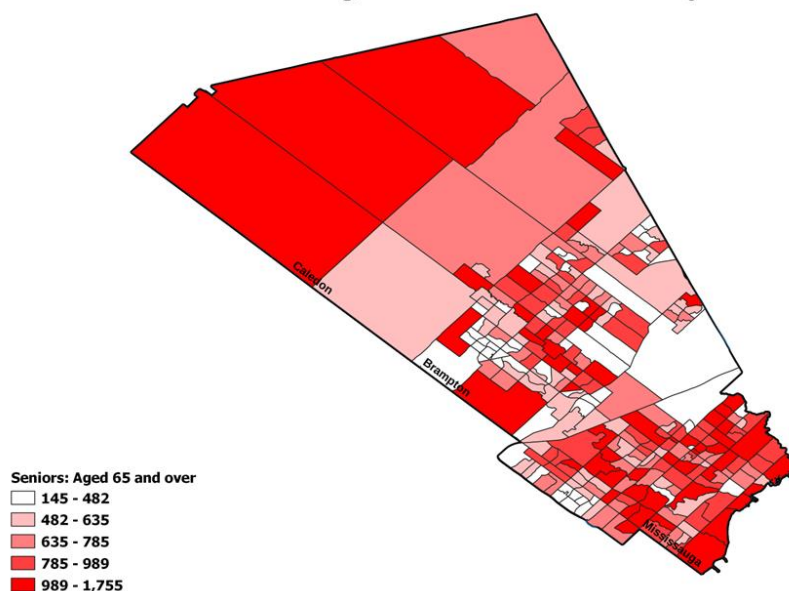
There are more seniors in Mississauga and Brampton than in Caledon as shown in the following graph.

### Seniors Population by Municipalities Region of Peel - 2021 Census



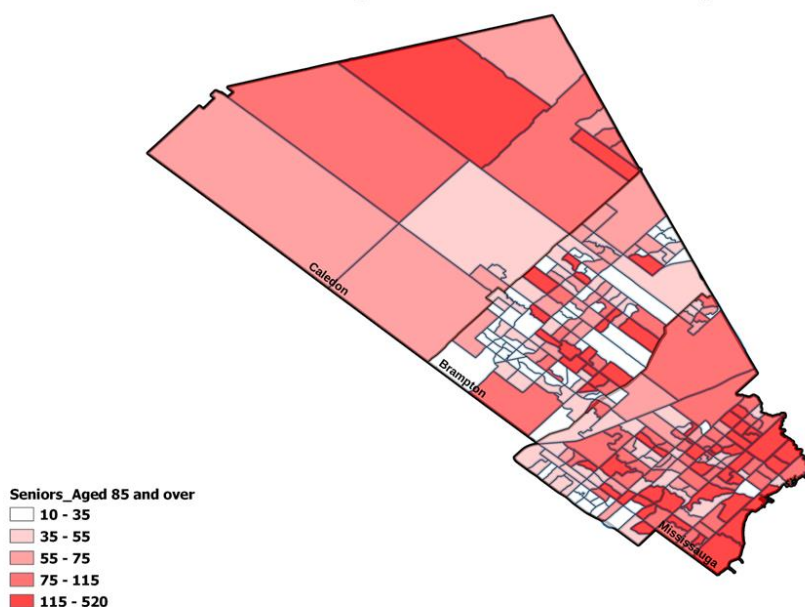
Considering the proportion of seniors in their respective total population, Mississauga and Caledon have greater proportions of seniors than Brampton. Statistics show 17 % of seniors in Mississauga, 15% in Caledon, and 13 % in Brampton That means that there are variations in the geographical distribution of seniors. The following graph shows the concentration of seniors by smaller areas (census tracts) within the municipalities of Peel Region.

## Region of Peel - Seniors Aged 65 and over by 2021 Census Tracts



The graph below presents the geographical distribution of seniors aged 85 and over in the Region of Peel by census tracts, where the eldest seniors are mostly concentrated in urbanized areas.

## Region of Peel - Seniors Aged 85 and over by 2021 Census Tracts



## Generations in the Region of Peel

Generations are cohorts of people who have grown up in a specific social, economic, and political context that can shape their view of the world. The year of birth determines which generation a person belongs to. (Pew Research Center's definition).

The following table summarizes the generations identified in the 2021 Canada Census:

Generation Name	Definition	Age in the year 2021
<b>Greatest Generation</b>	Born before 1928	People aged 94 or older
<b>Interwar Generation</b>	Born between 1928 and 1945	People aged 76 to 93
<b>Baby Boomer Generation</b>	Born between 1946 and 1965	People aged 56 to 75
<b>Generation X</b>	Born between 1966 and 1980	People aged 41 to 55
<b>Millennials (Generation Y)</b>	Born between 1981 and 1996	People aged 25 to 40
<b>Generation Z</b>	Born between 1997 and 2012	People aged 9 to 24
<b>Generation Alpha</b>	Born between 2013 and 2021	People aged 8 or younger

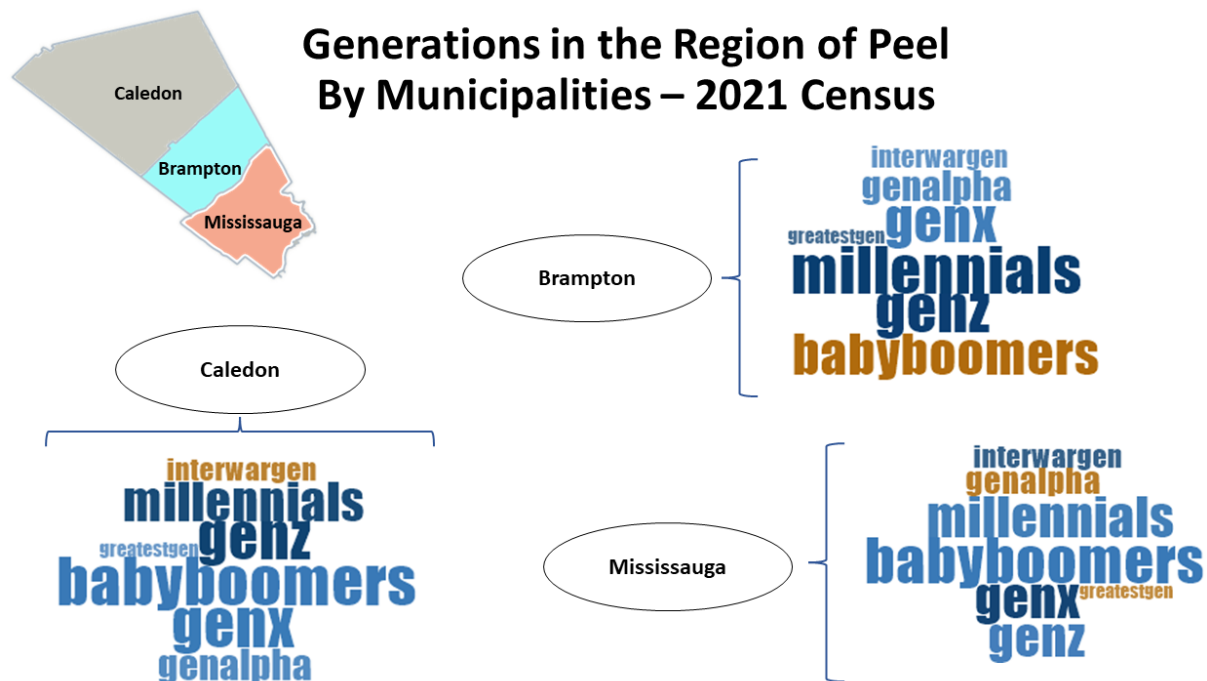
The following graph shows the different distribution of generations in Peel Region.

### Generations in the Region of Peel - 2021 Census





The distribution of different generations among the municipalities of Peel Region is shown in the following graph.



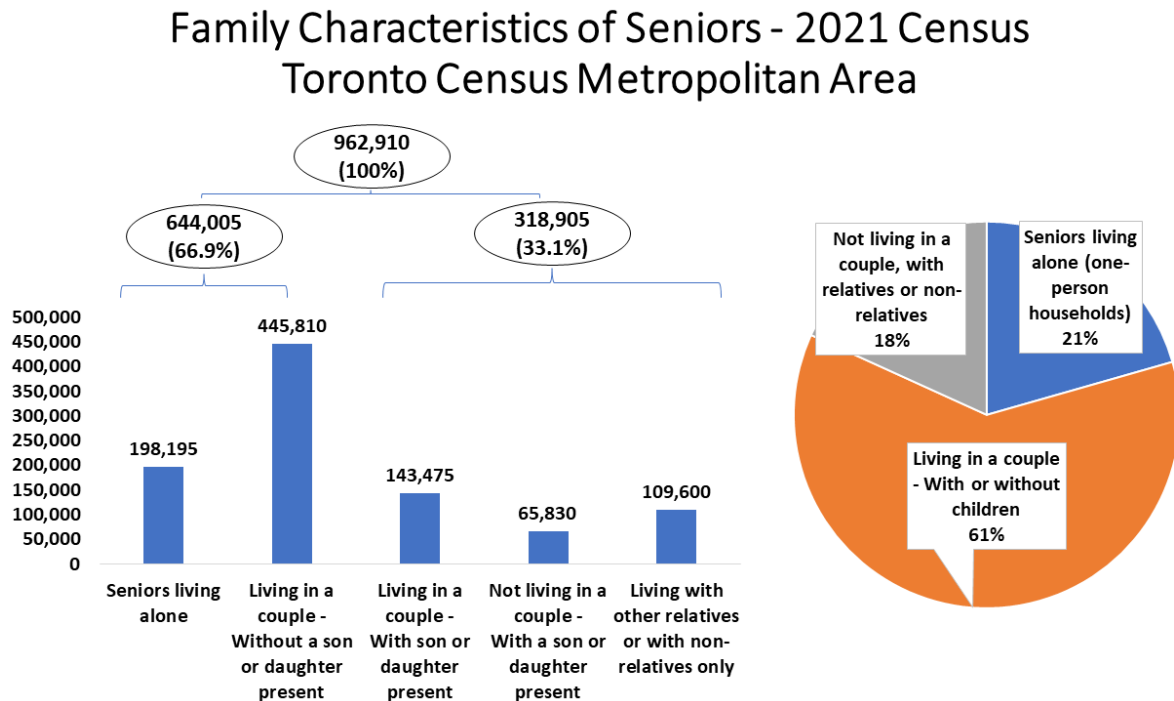
Baby Boomers are the most prevalent generation of seniors in Peel Region, followed by a small proportion of seniors belonging to the Interwar Generation, and very few seniors from the Greatest Generation.

Among municipalities, in Mississauga and Caledon, Baby Boomers prevail, while in Brampton, there is a greater proportion of Millennials than Baby Boomers.

By the year 2030, all the persons belonging to the Baby Boomer generation are going to be seniors, as the last cohort of this generation will be turning 65 years old.

## Family Characteristics of Seniors in the Greater Toronto Area – 2021 Census

In the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) - which includes the City of Toronto and the regional municipalities of Durham, Halton, Peel, and York – there are a total of 92,910 households with at least one senior. The family characteristics of these households are summarized in the following chart.



More than one-fifth (21 %) of these households are seniors living alone, and 46% of seniors are living in a couple but without a son or daughter present. This group represents 67% of the households. In contrast, in 33% of the households, seniors are living either in a couple with one of their children or with other relatives or non-relatives.

## Statistics on Seniors' Specific Needs

The following section is a summary of the main findings related to seniors in different dimensions of their lives. The findings are based on a variety of secondary sources of information that apply directly to Canada or the province of Ontario, and indirectly to the Region of Peel.

### Population Growth of Seniors and Life Expectancy in Canada

- The population in Canada is living longer. The life expectancy at 65 is 20.19 years for females and 19.49 for males, while the life expectancy at birth in 2020 is 82 years.
- The number of older seniors aged 85 and over will increase more rapidly between 2031 and 2050, as the baby boomer generation enters this age group.
- It is not only the number of years of life that matter. Living those years in optimal health is just as important. Health-adjusted life expectancy is one way we can track both the length and quality of life.
- Nearly 1 in 5 Canadians (19.0%) are aged 65 and older in 2021 which is higher than the proportion found in the 2016 Census (16.9%). Most are staying healthy and active, but the number of persons aged 85 and older – who are the ones who need more care services - has doubled since 2001. According to population projections, this number could triple by 2046.

Seniors comprise almost one-fifth of all Canadians and their proportion of the population continues to grow as baby boomers (i.e., those born between 1946 and 1965) age (Statistics Canada 2022; Statistics Canada 2021).

In 2020, Canada was home to 6.8 million persons aged 65 years and older, comprising 18% of the total population (Statistics Canada 2021). Demographic projections using a medium-growth scenario, predict that by 2030, more than one in five Canadians will be seniors, a figure that increases to one in four by 2060 (Statistics Canada 2019b).

### COVID-19 Pandemic Impact on Seniors

- The COVID-19 pandemic slowed population growth in all age groups. However, it has not had a significant impact on population aging.
- During the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, 64% of older adults aged 65 and over had excess fatalities, and 93% of those deaths were attributed to COVID-19. Seniors are more willing to be vaccinated against COVID-19 (83%) than the younger population aged 12 to 64 (76%).

### Mental Health and Social Isolation

- Before the pandemic: Based on the 2008/2009 Canadian Community Health Survey – Healthy Aging (CCHS-HA), an estimated 525,000 people (12%) age 65 or older felt isolated in that they reported feelings of loneliness and a weak or somewhat weak sense of community belonging. At 15%, women were more likely than men (10%) to report subjective isolation. Over 1 million (1,018,000) older Canadians (24%) reported low participation with no difference in the percentages for men and women. Seniors who were unmarried or living with a common-law partner were likelier than partnered individuals to report low participation and subjective isolation. Non-partnered seniors who lived with others were particularly likely to be low participators – 41% of men and 35% of women.

Lower household education was associated with low participation for women and subjective isolation for men. Age group and place of residence (urban or rural) were not associated with either measure of social isolation. An estimated 33% of men and 26% of women died during the follow-up period. Low participators in 2008/2009 were more likely than those who participated regularly to die, and the same was true for men and women who reported subjective isolation compared to those who did not feel isolated.

- **During the First Year of the Pandemic:** For Canadian seniors, the first few months of the pandemic, when little was known about the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19, were particularly stressful. For example, 46% of those aged 65 and older reported being “very” or “extremely” concerned about their health during the spring (March and April) of 2020. This was higher than the percentage reported by some younger age groups (26% among 15- to 34-year-olds and 36% among 35- to 49-year-olds). Maintaining social ties was also a concern for both seniors and non-seniors, with about one-third (32% to 36%) of each age group having reported being “very” or “extremely” concerned about doing so.
- **After One Year of the Pandemic:** In early 2021, 7 in 10 seniors reported very good or excellent mental health. Although seniors were at the greatest risk of developing severe complications from COVID-19, in addition to their being at a higher risk of death, their mental health generally remained better than that of younger Canadians. From January to April 2021, when much of the country was experiencing a third wave of COVID-19, 69% of Canadians aged 65 and older reported “very good” or “excellent” mental health. The comparable proportions for those aged 18 to 34, 35 to 49, and 50 to 64 were 51%, 59%, and 63%, respectively; this reflects the well-established pattern of older adults having greater resiliency to stress.

### Caregiving

- While older Canadians may be more likely than their younger counterparts to require help and care in their daily lives, almost one-quarter of Canadian seniors aged 65 years and older are caregivers themselves. Seniors are most likely to provide care for a spouse.
- Not only are seniors more at risk of severe illness, but they are also more affected by isolation measures. As a result, many senior caregivers who help people living outside of their households, may not have been able to provide the same level of care that they usually do. Senior caregivers providing help to their spouse may also have seen their burden of care increase, given the possible lack of other support during the pandemic.
- As people age, they are less and less likely to care primarily for their parents, and more and more likely to care for their spouses. In 2018, about one-third (34%) of all senior caregivers aged 65 and older provided care primarily for their spouses. This was followed by caring for a friend, colleague, or neighbour (20%), their parents (17%), other family members (14%), their children (9%) and parents-in-law (6%). In comparison, 8% of caregivers aged 45 to 54 provided care for a spouse, and most were providing care to a parent (53%) or a parent-in-law (11%). Caring for a spouse is also associated with more hours of care.

- Senior women are more likely to help with medical treatments and provide personal care. More than one-quarter of senior caregivers reported that their overall health had suffered because of caregiving. Senior caregivers report unmet caregiving needs. Senior men are as likely to be caregivers as senior women, but they provide fewer hours of care on average.
- More than half (56%) of senior caregivers reported they would have liked to receive financial support, government assistance, or tax credit. The next most common types of unmet support needs were home care or support (45%), information or advice (33%) or help from medical professionals (29%). These types of unmet support were similar to those in other age groups and highlight the fact that senior caregivers also require additional support.

### Retirement and Income

- By 2020, about 1 in 3 recently retired Canadians who belong to a racialized group, and less than half of those who have ever had a disability or had no postsecondary education, were receiving income from an employer pension plan or their retirement savings.
- As baby boomers pass their prime working age, they have established patterns of labour market activities different from those of preceding generations. Although male baby boomers had a lower Labour Force Participation (LFP) rate than previous generations in their 40s, they surpassed earlier generations in their 60s. At age 65, male baby boomers had an LFP rate at least 16 percentage points higher than those born before the 1940s.
- Female baby boomers achieved a much higher LFP rate than earlier generations in their prime working age and maintained this lead well into their 60s. Over half of the female baby boomers remained in the labour force by age 60, and more than one-quarter did so by age 65.
- Many late boomers have not reached age 65. If the pattern of cohort differences in LFP trajectories up to age 60 continues, late boomers would work more than earlier generations in their late 60s and early 70s. Additionally, COVID-19 might have affected the retirement decision of baby boomers, particularly late boomers. Along with the increasing possibilities of working from home and the demand for labour, many late baby boomers who are still in their late 50s and early 60s may extend their careers during the post-pandemic recovery period.

### Housing

- According to the 2018 Canadian Housing Survey (CHS), 1,079,700 seniors (18%) lived in households that spent more than 30% of their total household income on shelter. This was comparable to the 18% of the total population who lived in private households, who also spent more than 30% of their total household income on shelter.
- Seniors in owner-occupied dwellings (11%) were less likely to be in unaffordable housing than the total population in owner-occupied dwellings (15%). The opposite was true for seniors in rented dwellings (41%), where the rate of unaffordable housing was higher than the total population (26%).

- For those living in owner-occupied dwellings, the rate of unaffordable housing differed, depending on the presence of a mortgage. Seniors in households with a mortgage (29%) were more likely to be in unaffordable housing than the total population (21%), while the proportion of seniors in households without a mortgage (4%) living in unaffordable housing was comparable to that of the total population (4%). The perceived difference in housing affordability between all seniors in owner-occupied dwellings and the total population in owner-occupied dwellings can be attributed to the larger share of seniors in households without a mortgage (57%), compared with the total population (25%).
- The rate of unaffordable housing was higher for seniors in renter households with a subsidy (37% compared with 23% of the total population) and without a subsidy (42% compared with 26% of the total population).
- According to the 2018 CHS, 149,700 seniors (2%) were in unsuitable housing, meaning that there were not enough bedrooms in the dwelling to meet the needs of their household, according to the National Occupancy Standard (NOS). This is lower than the 9% of the total population living in unsuitable housing. In 2018, according to the CHS, 6% of all seniors lived in private dwellings that needed major repairs. This is lower than the 7% of the total population that reported living in dwellings in need of major repairs.

### Violence Against Seniors

The terms used—such as “elder abuse,” “abuse of older adults” or “abuse of vulnerable adults”—also vary. Regardless of the terminology used, definitions of senior abuse often detail common types of abuse. For example, the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly (ACE) defines senior abuse as harm perpetrated against an older person by someone in a special relationship to them, including:

- Physical abuse, such as slapping, pushing, beating or forced confinement;
- Financial abuse, such as stealing, fraud, extortion and misusing a power of attorney;
- Sexual abuse, such as sexual assault or any unwanted form of sexual activity;
- Neglect, such as failing to give an older person in your care food, medical attention, or other necessary care, or abandoning an older person in your care; and
- Emotional abuse, such as treating an older person like a child or humiliating, insulting, frightening, threatening, or ignoring an older person (ACE 2013).

As the above indicates, senior abuse can vary in terms of severity. While some of these acts meet the criminal threshold for prosecution in Canada (e.g., physical assault, sexual assault, extortion, and criminal negligence causing bodily harm), others do not (e.g., humiliation).

According to the General Social Survey - Canadians’ Safety (GSS), relating to victimization, there were about 128,000 senior victims of violence in Canada in 2019. Rates of violent victimization were five times lower among seniors aged 65 and older, compared to younger Canadians (20 versus 100 incidents per 1,000 population).

- Overall, three-quarters (76%) of seniors who reported experiencing violent victimization in 2019 were physically assaulted.
- A smaller proportion of seniors, compared to younger Canadians, reported experiencing abuse by an intimate partner in the five years preceding the survey: 7.1% of seniors reported

experiencing emotional or financial abuse, and 1.5% reported experiencing physical or sexual abuse by an intimate partner.

- Most seniors were somewhat or very satisfied with their safety from crime (82%), perceived their neighbourhood as having a lower amount of crime than other areas in Canada (77%), and reported a somewhat or very strong sense of community belonging (72%).

According to the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, the rate of police-reported violence against seniors increased by 22% between 2010 and 2020, with the largest increase observed in the past five years among senior men. In contrast, police-reported violence against non-seniors decreased by 9% during the same period, with increases observed beginning in 2015 (+12% between 2015 and 2020).

- In 2020, nearly two-thirds (64%) of senior victims of police-reported violence were victimized by someone other than a family member or intimate partner. Acquaintances were implicated for more than one in four (28%) senior victims of violence while one-quarter (24%) of senior victims were victimized by strangers.
- Senior women who experienced police-reported violence were twice as likely to have been victimized by an intimate partner compared with senior men (16% versus 7%).
- More than half (60%) of all police-reported violence against seniors involved the use of physical force, and an additional 19% involved the presence of a weapon. About one-third (35%) of seniors suffered a physical injury as a result of the violence they experienced.
- In 2020, the rate of police-reported violence against seniors was highest in the Territories and New Brunswick. Between 2015 and 2020, police-reported senior victimization increased in every province and territory.
- The rate of police-reported violence was higher for senior men than senior women in every province and territory in 2020 and nearly all census metropolitan areas.
- In 2020, the overall rate of police-reported senior victimization in the provinces was higher in rural areas, compared to urban areas (247 versus 214 per 100,000 population).
- Between 2000 and 2020, 944 seniors were victims of homicide in Canada, which accounted for 7% of all homicide victims during this time. The large majority (88%) of these homicides were solved by police.
- The homicide rate among seniors increased between 2010 and 2020 (+9%), driven by the homicides of senior men (+28%).
- Among senior men who were homicide victims, two-thirds (67%) were killed by a non-family member, most commonly a friend (30%) followed by a stranger (20%) or an acquaintance (17%). Among senior women who were homicide victims, two-thirds (67%) were killed by an intimate partner (32%) or family member (35%), while one in eight (13%) senior women were killed by a stranger.

Overall, older Canadians are aging better, are more active, and are engaging in fuller lifestyles than previous generations. At the same time, however, they remain at risk of experiencing violence at the hands of family members, intimate partners, friends, caregivers, and others (Miszkurka et al. 2016). Among seniors, a greater proportion (54%) are women, in large part due to women living



longer, on average, than men. The gender mortality gap, however, has diminished in recent years and is forecasted to continue shrinking in light of increased life expectancy among Canadian men (Statistics Canada 2019a). The growing proportion of seniors in Canada highlights the importance of understanding their risk of being victimized and, relatedly, their perceptions of safety and feelings of security. When seniors experience victimization, knowing where it occurs, who perpetrates it and whether it is reported to the police, are crucial to understanding and mitigating risk.

## **Conclusions**

- The population of seniors in the Region of Peel is relevant, not only for its size and rapid growth, which represents 15% of the population, with higher rates projected; they also have a great influence in shaping the current social and economic situation of Peel Region. Due to their increasing vulnerability, they are exposed to many situations that negatively impact their lives and dignity, such as isolation and abuse.
- The demographic analysis in Peel Region shows certain risk factors contributing to the isolation or abuse of seniors. Factors include characteristics of their households, where more seniors are living alone or with their spouse only; frail health conditions may decrease their independence, causing them to rely on others to address their needs physically, emotionally, and financially.
- The demographic analysis also shows that senior women and seniors aged 85 and older require special attention to protect them from different kinds of abuse, as their age makes them more fragile and exposed to risky situations.

## **Recommendations**

- Create awareness in the overall population of Peel Region, using social media, about elderly abuse, how to prevent it and what to do in case it happens.
- Use the “Train-the-Trainer Model” to create awareness and early recognition of elder abuse among leaders of the different communities of Peel Region.
- Seniors helping seniors, peer support and training for seniors to empower grassroots organizations to advocate and prevent elderly abuse.
- Create an advisory committee in each municipality to update and apply policies that advocate for seniors who are at risk or have been abused.
- Collect information about the services available to seniors to prevent and address elderly abuse, in all its forms, including emotional and financial abuse.
- Promote coordination among services providers for joint efforts to address the needs of seniors in the context of their families and neighbourhoods.
- Resources for affordable, safe senior housing communities where people can age in place.



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