

The Impact of Changing Family Structure on the Needs for Home Care Services in an Aging Society: The Canadian Case.

Yves Carrière¹, Jacques Légaré^{2,3}, Janice Keefe⁴, Laurent Martel¹, Geoff Rowe⁵, Xiaofen Lin⁵

With an aging population it is expected that the number and proportion of disabled elderly will increase quite substantially. Disabilities often lead to difficulties in performing Activities of Daily Living (ADL) and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADL). For those with informal support, mainly a spouse or adult children, the assistance needed can be more readily available and recourse to the formal network (mainly public and private agencies) is not always necessary.

In Canada, there is an increased attention on expanding home care services as was underlined in different provincial and federal Commissions. This increased attention is in good part fuelled by the recognition that care in the community is more cost-effective than institutional care (Hollander & Chappell, 2001). This cost-effectiveness occurs in good part because of the increased involvement of family - spouses followed by children and then other relatives and friends - in the care of older persons with chronic illnesses or long term disabilities (Keating et al, 2001). However, population aging has been in good part the result of decreasing fertility, limiting the number of children older persons may rely on in the future as the baby boomers reach older ages. Moreover, changes in the family structure, such as increased divorce rates, may also have a negative impact on the future availability of informal support. One could also argue that an improvement in the educational level of the elderly population might increase the pressure for formal home

care services, as those with higher educational level tend, once they have disabilities, to rely more heavily on these services than those with a lower educational level. What is unknown is how all these structural changes will affect the demand for formal home care services. Using Statistics Canada's Life Paths micro-simulation model, we were able to shed some light on the future needs for these services up to 2031.

The micro-simulation model takes into account transition probabilities for different life events like getting into a marital or non marital union, getting a divorce, having children, attaining a given educational level, etc. These transition probabilities were computed using several surveys from Statistics Canada and the Canadian elderly population, together with some of its important characteristics, was projected up to 2031 using the Life Paths model. For different years between 2001 and 2031, we were able to project the number of disabled elderly persons, the number of elderly persons needing assistance and the source of their assistance. These projections take into account the changing nature of the family structure as new cohorts enter old age.

Results show that the proportion of female elderly persons without any surviving children will likely increase from 16% in 2001 to close to 24% in 2031. On the other hand, the proportion of female elderly living alone should remain fairly stable at around 40% while the proportion among elderly males should increase to around 20% in 2031. Our projections also show that the proportion of elderly having a disability will slightly decrease while their absolute numbers will increase quite substantially. When looking at

the population needing assistance, the micro-simulations show an increase from about 600000 in 2001 to over 1,2 millions in 2031. Finally, when considering both the increasing needs for home care services and the changing family structure, the micro-simulations show an increase in the proportion of disabled elderly having to rely exclusively on the formal network. From 34% in 2001, this proportion increases to 38% in 2031, while the proportion of those relying strictly on the informal network should decrease from 45% to 42%. Other scenarios accounting for a possible expansion or compression of morbidity were also analysed and these results show the importance of the changing health profile of the elderly population on the demand for home care services.

The presentation will also present number of hours of services needed as far as home care services to respond to an aging Canadian population and discuss the impact on the demand for human resources in this sector of the economy.

¹ Statistics Canada, Demography Division (yves.carriere@statcan.ca ; martlau@statcan.ca)

² Statistics Canada, Analytical Studies Branch

³ University of Montreal, Department of Demography (legarej@magellan.umontreal.ca)

⁴ Mount Saint Vincent University, Department of Family Studies and Gerontology (JKEEFE@msvu1.MSVU.Ca)

⁵ Statistics Canada, Socio-Economic Analysis and Modeling Division (rowegeo@statcan.ca ; linxiao@statcan.ca)