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Canada's Baby Boom Is Nothing Like the One in the U.S.

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As a retired demographer, I do indeed tire of the endless articles in the Canadian press that either just quote U.S.-based stories about the baby boom or make the incorrect assumption that the Canadian baby boom mirrored that south of the border (see, for example, [a recent news item](#) in the *Globe and Mail*).

Defining the Canadian baby boom as being parallel to that in the United States is both wrong and dangerous.

While it is fairly accurate to define the U.S. baby boom as having taken place in the period between 1946 and 1964, that is definitely not true for Canada. When one graphs the number of live births in Canada, it is quite clear that the "boom" years went from 1952 to 1965 (inclusive). Those are also the only years in Canadian history when live births in Canada exceeded 400,000. Interestingly, the number of live births in Canada has not exceeded 400,000 since 1965 despite our rapidly growing base population.

Our baby boom births peaked in 1959 versus 1957 for the U.S. The number of live births in Canada in 1946 was 343,504 -- well below our 400,000 criterion.

Why does this matter?

I was born in Canada in 1949, which means I am not a member of the baby boom. I did not experience overcrowding when I went to school. Getting into university (in 1967) was pretty easy and getting a job in 1971 was not a problem at all.

I bought my first house in 1975 just before prices sky rocketed and before mortgage rates exploded. And I started to receive my Old Age Security cheque when I turned 65, exactly as promised.

But those born several years later (1952-65- Canada's actual baby boom) did face a lot of problems because of their birth year. They went to school in shifts or in portables. The marks required to get into university rose rapidly. When they graduated from university, youth unemployment rates exceeded 25 percent. By

the time they bought their first homes, prices were already up and mortgage rates were 18 percent or more. And, if you were born in 1958 or later, you will have to wait as much as two more years for your Old Age Security benefits.

So assuming Canada's baby boom years mirrored the U.S. in this important statistical demographic is wrong. But why is it dangerous?

First, assuming that the baby boom is a post-war phenomenon means we jump to the wrong conclusion when guessing the cause. The baby boom was not the result of frisky soldiers returning to Canada. It was, instead, the result of the very good economic times in the period 1952 to 1965 allowing for at-home moms and large families.

Second, it leads to other erroneous conclusions. If you use as a single age the birth cohort of 1946 to define the baby boom, you will picture this demographic as turning 69 in 2015. That is, 'old.' But if you correctly anchor the baby boom around its peak and mid-point in 1959, then the baby boom will, in fact, turn 56 in 2015. That means the bulk of the baby boom is still in the labour force and the explosion in our dependency ratio will not peak until 2024 -- a decade from now. Further, the average age of exit from the labour force has been steadily increasing since 2001 and many Canadians now retire after age 65, which means this major shift in our labour market may actually happen post-2024.

So, the tidal wave is not upon us -- yet. We still have time to plan for its impact on the economy in terms of both lower GDP growth and in terms of rapidly rising costs for health care and social security.

And the ski hills can still look forward to a few more good years before heading downhill.

http://www.nursezone.com/nursing-news-events/more-news/The-Baby-Boomers%E2%80%99-Massive-Impact-on-Health-Care_28946.aspx

The Baby Boomers' Massive Impact on Health Care

By Christina Orlovsky, senior writer

In 2006, the first members of the baby boomer generation—those born between 1946 and 1964—turned 60 years old, edging toward their retirement years and the years in which they'll likely need increased medical care. Representing more than 75 million people, or nearly one-third of the U.S. population, the baby boomers present a number of challenges that the health care industry will soon be forced to face.

In an effort to increase awareness of these challenges and the need for changes in care delivery to meet the needs of an aging population with new health care demands, the American Hospital Association (AHA) released a report on how the baby boomer generation will impact health care for decades to come.

AHA acknowledged that the over-65 population will triple between 1980 and 2030, with the first baby boomers turning 65 in 2011. Although the health and lifestyle of people at age 65 is very different than it was in generations past—it's even been said that "60 is the new 50"—the reality remains that chronic conditions continue to plague the population. In fact, AHA reported that more than 37 million boomers will be managing more than one chronic condition by 2030, with one out of four, or 14 million, living with diabetes; almost half will be living with arthritis and more than one-third, or over 21 million, will be classified as obese and living with all the health risks associated with obesity.

"The most obvious challenge that really points to the weakest link in health care is the ability to manage chronic illness," said Rick Wade, senior vice president of communications for AHA. "In previous generations, these chronic illnesses were the ones that went undetected and eventually killed patients. Now we've got technology and medications that have permitted us to manage them and keep them functional much longer but we haven't developed the delivery system to do that."

In order to improve health care delivery to address these chronic conditions, Wade explained that hospitals need to focus on forming community-based

collaborations and strengthening outpatient services. He added that national attention must be placed on how health care is paid for, and that the boomer generation is the perfect group to advocate for change in this critical area.

“When you think of the boomers, the first part of the group coming up in the 1960s, they were a generation that was involved in social change and social issues,” he said. “Today the needs are for massive change in the way health care is paid for and delivered and we’re going to need a strong wave of activism from the grass roots. The key will be motivating the boomers, who have a strong streak of political activism and many of whom who won’t yet be on Medicare, to have another national debate about health care reform.”

Wade added that workforce changes will need to be made in order to meet the demands of the boomer generation, particularly because many of today’s health care workers are themselves part of the same generation.

“The average age of a hospital nurse is over 40—the bulk of our nurses are in the tail end of the boomer generation,” he said. “We have to figure out strategies to create new workers and find a way to replenish nurses, getting the experienced nurses to move into teaching.”

The nursing shortage will not be the only one affecting the baby boomer generation. Physicians, too, will be in short supply.

“We don’t have enough family physicians, and primary and family care will be important to this generation,” Wade continued. “Plus, we don’t reward our family physicians equally, so they avoid family practice and go into more lucrative areas of medical practice.”

Wade does see one positive trend regarding baby boomers, their expectations and the health care providers that will be at the ready to meet those expectations.

“The baby boomers will be the best-educated and most-savvy seniors this country has ever had and they will insist on power and decision making throughout the health care continuum and into the end of life,” he concluded. “However, there will be a difference in physicians as well, with more women physicians and physicians who are more informed. It’s fortuitous that the upcoming generation of patients and physicians may be better able to communicate than ever before. The same applies for nurses.”

<http://www.footwork.com/edcan.asp>

Canadian Education: Demographic Change and Future Challenges

This article appeared in the Spring 2001 edition of Education Canada, a quarterly magazine published by the [Canadian Education Association](#).

by David K. Foot

Introduction

Demographic change has had major impacts on Canadian society in the postwar period. From maternity wards through all levels of the education system, into housing markets, auto sales and the stock market, the aging of the massive 10 million-strong Boomer generation (born from 1947 to 1966) has left indelible marks. After the Boom came the Bust. Maternity wards and schools emptied, house prices crashed, and auto sales sagged as the Boom generation was replaced by the smaller Bust generation (born from 1967 to 1979) moving through these stages of their lives.

Even the return on education is affected by these demographic trends. Today twentysomethings are in short supply and increasingly command higher salaries and signing bonuses in the new economy. Consequently the return on their education will be higher than it has been for the Generation Xers from the later part of the Boom, who were in abundant supply over the 1980s and early 1990s and are now in their mid to late thirties.

Over the past twenty years, the cycle reversed as the Echo generation -- the children of the Boomers (born from 1980 to 1995) -- made their entry through the maternity wards and into elementary and secondary schools. Now tweens and teenagers, their impact can be seen in many sectors, from rising movie attendance to rising transit ridership. This growing teenage market is increasingly capturing the attention of marketing experts throughout North America.

By the 1990s the Boomers were becoming too old to start families and, once again, births declined. Not surprisingly, maternity wards emptied and by the late 1990s school closings were commonplace in many districts.

Whereas the Boom and Bust profile was widespread over the entire country, the Echo has been more selective in its geographical boundaries, located primarily in Canada's urban (including suburban) areas and western provinces (plus Ontario). This has resulted in a diversity of educational trends in the provinces

over the past two decades, trends that portend new challenges for education in the new millennium.

In summary, demographic change encompasses both the movement of generations through their life course and the movement of people across geographic boundaries. Over the postwar period, these demographic movements have presented all governments with major funding and planning challenges, resulting in a myriad of responses. What lies ahead? Are there clues to the future challenges posed by demographic change in our history? What might be some appropriate responses?

Demographics and Elementary/Secondary Education

Elementary and secondary enrolments are dominated by demographic trends since, by law, all minors between ages 6 and 16 must attend school. As the massive Boomer generation had their children over the 1980s, births increased until 1990 in Canada and thereafter declined, as the Boomers gradually became too old to have children. Consequently, for Canada as a whole, the preschool age group started to decline in numbers, while the prime school age group increased. However, these trends were not universal throughout the country. The westward drift of the Canadian population over the postwar period means that the Boomers are a somewhat bigger share of the population in Ontario and western Canada than in other regions. Moreover, fertility is also slightly higher in Ontario and western Canada than in Quebec and the East. These two forces together result in a bigger Echo in Ontario and the West, and almost no Echo in Quebec and the East, except perhaps in the largest urban areas.

The first Echo children, born in 1980, reached age 6 in 1986 and age 13 in 1993. As a result, elementary enrolments started to rise in the mid-1980s and secondary enrolments rose over the 1990s. The peak of the Canadian Echo, born in 1990, reached age 6 in 1996 and will reach age 13 in 2003. Thereafter smaller age cohorts enter the schools. So it is not surprising that some school boards in regions where the Echo is important, such as Toronto and Calgary, found themselves starting to face school closings in the late 1990s. And this is only the beginning. By the mid-2000s these jurisdictions will likely be facing both declining elementary and declining secondary enrolments much as they did in the mid-1970s when the Boomer parents of the current Echo students completed their elementary and secondary education.

Since many of the Boomers moved to the suburbs to raise their Echo children, these population trends are likely to be especially apparent in Canada's suburbs. In those jurisdictions where the Echo is less important or nonexistent

(which also includes many smaller communities), noticeable increases in enrolments did not materialize in the 1980s and 1990s. In fact, many of these jurisdictions (e.g. New Brunswick) have faced declining enrolments since the Boomers completed their education by the late-1970s.

The aging of the Echo generation over the next decade will produce considerable challenges to education planning and funding, just as the aging of their Boomer parents did over the 1970s. Nonetheless, the current age distribution provides an excellent road map for future planning and funding of Canadian education as long as local authorities use local demographic information for their planning purposes.

Demographics and Postsecondary Education

Just as elementary enrolments are a leading indicator for secondary enrolments, so secondary enrolments provide a leading indicator for postsecondary enrolments. Since not everyone enrolls in postsecondary education, the enrolment rate is an additional intervening variable. Nonetheless, demographic developments provide a solid foundation upon which to assess the impacts of alternative enrolment rates.

The first Echo children, born in 1980, reached age 20 in 2000. For the next decade, postsecondary enrolments will increase, especially in those jurisdictions with a sizable Echo generation. Rising secondary enrolments over the past decade are a leading indicator of this trend. Those provinces where secondary enrolments did not increase over the 1990s are unlikely to experience increasing postsecondary enrolments over the 2000s.

Herein lies a potential funding challenge. Will those provinces with projected growing enrolments expand to accommodate their increasing numbers, while at the same time those with projected declining enrolments retrench and close buildings? From a national perspective this is an inefficient outcome, which will likely result in higher overall taxes.

Currently, the federal fiscal transfers to the provinces for postsecondary education are locked into a predetermined formula. Moreover, since postsecondary education is a provincial responsibility under the Constitution, the federal government has no flexibility in this regard. Without a proactive approach the inefficient outcome seems assured.

Postsecondary Education in the Future

There must be a better solution to the 2000s problem than simultaneously expanding postsecondary bricks and mortar in some provinces while potentially closing it down in other provinces. Under the present system, individual postsecondary education institutions have no incentive to consider the national interest in their decisions because each is responsible only for its own well being. This also means that a collective solution from the postsecondary system is unlikely to emerge, although partnerships between postsecondary institutions in different provinces could result from these demographic pressures.

The national interest in postsecondary education expansion could also be established by the federal government acting as a "broker" with the provinces. However, images of a federal-provincial conference on postsecondary education would almost certainly be greeted by the provinces with claims of jurisdictional invasion. Even if such a conference did get "off the ground", the federal government's moral suasion would be severely weakened if it threatened to impose fiscal restraint on the national postsecondary system.

One solution that both reflects the national interest and respects current jurisdictional boundaries is the negotiation of bilateral agreements between individual provinces. Currently there is voluntary student mobility between some provinces (Ontario students studying at McGill University is one example). Building on existing arrangements, it would make sense for provincial governments facing substantial increases in postsecondary enrolments and system expansion to sign agreements with those provinces or institutions projecting excess postsecondary enrolment capacity, agreeing on a percentage of new students to be transferred at an appropriate rate per student. In this way, the nation could ameliorate the boom to bust scenario that will inevitably characterize the postsecondary system as the Echo generation moves through the system in 2000s and departs in the 2010s.

Of course this solution means that some students would have to move from, say Ontario or Alberta to New Brunswick or Nova Scotia. Some of the savings realized from abandoning the bricks and mortar approach could be used to support these students. Additional personal and economic benefits could accrue as a result from an increased understanding of the country to greater workforce mobility.

Even where provincial and local mechanisms and incentives for fiscal transfers between education levels exist in elementary and secondary education, the boom and bust cycle associated with predictable demographic trends continues to wreak havoc on the system. This havoc will likely increase where jurisdictional boundaries preclude appropriate national responses to potentially

uncommunicative provincial postsecondary "silos" making their own decisions and ignoring the national fiscal incentive.

Sharing is a good idea, especially when it saves tax dollars. But more important is a vision for the Canadian postsecondary system. Simultaneous expansion and contraction in different jurisdictions is an inefficient response to predictable demographic change. Moreover, rapid bricks and mortar expansion in provinces with a large Echo generation is likely to result in considerable excess capacity in the 2010s when the Echo generation graduates into the workforce. Canadians would be wise to contemplate sharing postsecondary education tax dollars among provinces to maximize their effectiveness and to ameliorate the boom and bust cycle that demographic change will inevitably impose on the Canadian postsecondary system in the new millennium

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/baby-boom/>

Baby Boom

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Canada's birthrate ballooned from the end of the Second World War until about 1965, thanks to improving economic conditions and a related trend over the same period toward larger families. The result was a 20-year bulge in the population known as the baby boom, a generation whose demographic influence has shaped Canada's economy and society and continues to do so as its members age and move into retirement.

The Birthrate Rises

Although an official definition of the baby boom does not exist, it generally describes a period of increased birthrates lasting from 1946 to about 1965. The [Great Depression](#) of the 1930s had prolonged the decline in Canada's birthrate (see [Population](#)), as it had in most Western countries. The low point in Canada was reached in 1937, when the gross birthrate (the annual number of live births per 1,000 inhabitants) was 20.1. Improved economic conditions caused a recovery that began to accelerate during the [Second World War](#). By 1945 the birthrate had risen to 24.3; by 1946 it had jumped to 27.2, and it remained between 27 and 28.5 per 1,000 inhabitants until 1959, after which it began to gradually decline.

More Marriages, More Children

The baby boom began with the children whose birth their parents had postponed during the Depression, but two other factors also contributed to the boom.

First, a larger proportion of adults married, and those who did had more children. Women born between 1911 and 1912 had an average of 2.9 children, whereas those born between 1929 and 1933 had an average of 3.3. These two generations are separated by 20 years. Between the older and the younger, the number of children per woman increased by 13%.

Second, more than half of baby-boom births can be attributed to what demographers call "timing phenomena." More adults began marrying at a younger age (the median age for a woman's first marriage was 23.2 years in 1940 and 21.1 years in 1965), and between the end of the Second World War and 1965, young couples tended to have their children during the first few years of married life.

The annual number of births in Canada rose from 253 000 in 1940 to 479 000 in 1960, but dropped to 419 000 in 1965. Over this period of 25 years, the baby boom produced about 1.5 million more births (there were about 8.6 million overall) than would otherwise have occurred, an increase of more than 18%.

By 1965, however, people were marrying at a later age and were waiting longer to have children, partly because more women were entering the workforce, and partly because there was general access to better methods of [birth control](#). (See [Women in the Labour Force](#).)

Aging Population

Canada's population is predicted to exceed 40 million people by 2036. In 2012 there were approximately 1.4 million people aged 80 or over, and by 2036 this could increase to 3.3 million.

"As of July 1, 2012," reported Statistics Canada in 2012, "the median age of the Canadian population was 40.0 years. That is, half of the population was older and half younger. In the past 20 years, that is between 1992 and 2012, the median age in Canada has increased by 6.4 years."

The aging of the population is projected to accelerate rapidly as more of the baby-boom generation turns 65 and as that happens, the number of senior citizens could exceed the number of children for the first time in Canada's history.

Long-Term Effects

Baby boomers caused a swelling in the demographic curve that has been constantly on the move -- likened to a rabbit swallowed by a snake and moving along the snake's body. Within 20 years after the end of the boom in 1966, the "rabbit" reached ages 20-39 and its members had moved into the [labour force](#). In 2011, the oldest members of the "rabbit" had reached 65, the traditional retirement age. Until 2031, large further additions to age groups in retirement are expected. (See [Aging](#).)

However, the changing economy, changing attitudes and expectations toward lifestyle, and longer life expectancy are redefining this generation's approach to age and retirement. Retiring baby boomers are creating a need for workers to fill vacated jobs, many of which require specialized skill sets. This may create a

need to retain older workers and delay their retirement, or to find workers from other countries.

As more members of the baby-boom generation enter their 60s, the labour force comprising older workers will increase. By 2036, the senior population in Canada (65 years and over) is expected to more than double and is estimated to then represent 23% to 25% of the total population compared to 14% in 2009.

Appearance of Generation X

The "baby-bust" generation, or Generation X (1966 to 1974) corresponds to the drop in the birthrate after the baby boom – the result of baby boomers having fewer children than their parents. Generation X, a term popularized by author [Douglas Coupland](#), started entering the labour force in the late 1980s.

Generation X-ers were greeted by high [unemployment](#) and unfavourable [income distribution](#) giving them no incentive to produce the next baby boom. Conceivably, the baby bust would have been even more severe except for the effect of the baby boom echo (babies born due to the large number of mothers, not because the average mother had many children).

In 2011, the children of baby boomers (the cohort then aged 19 to 39) comprised 27% of the total population; this group was referred to as Generation Y or the "echo of the baby boom." The drop in the fertility rate of the generations that followed the baby boomers was influenced by societal changes including increases in separation and divorce rates, female labour force participation and rapid technological change. The children of the echo generation, named Generation Z or the Internet generation, are individuals born since 1993, or after the invention of the Internet, and refers to more than 7.3 million people born between 1993 and 2011.

"War of Generations"

The baby-bust additions to the labour force beginning with the late 1980s were small and resulted in a pronounced change in the proportions of the population producing the national income, versus those consuming it. The number of pensioners or retirees could rise from 1 per 5 members of the labour force, to 1 per 2. Some analysts have suggested a potential "war of generations" as a consequence, including conflicts over how to pay for public services, and how to afford the rising social welfare costs of an increasingly older society. (See [Marxism](#) and [Keynesian Economics](#).)

Shifting Demands

The baby boom generation that was once young is aging: the historical highs in median age experienced during the 1980s and 1990s (34 in 1994) adjusted to a median age of 40 in 2012. Even if there are no further declines in the fertility rate per woman, there will be declines in the total number of births to well below the annual 400 000 number, and increases above the annual 200 000 deaths until there are more deaths than births.

In 2012, there were nearly 5.2 million Canadians over aged 65, an 11.6% increase from 1992. As baby boomers become senior citizens, economic and social demands will increasingly shift from the needs of schools, for example, to the needs of the elderly and the costs associated with an aging population, including health care and income security.