

**PROJECTING THE FUTURE
AMOUNT OF HOME SUPPORT
NEEDED BY OLDER CANADIANS**

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Janice Keefe, PhD

Mount Saint Vincent University

&

Jacques Légaré, PhD

Université de Montréal

Special thanks to our students:

Marc-Antoine Busque, Patrick Charbonneau,
Yann Décarie and Samuel Vézina

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

- This brochure presents selected results from the research project “Planning for Canadian human resource needs in chronic home care for the elderly: Projections to 2031”, funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).
- The goal is to estimate the number of workers needed to care for the Canadian population aged 65 and older, in their homes, up to the year 2031.
- While home support services are used by individuals of all ages, this study is restricted to recipients of chronic home support aged 65 and older, who are the major users of these services in Canada.
- Home support includes personal care, everyday housework, meal preparation and grocery shopping.
- Home support involves a range of human resources, including family and friends and formal support providers.
- “Mixed” support refers to assistance from a combination of both formal and family/friend networks.

The aging of the baby-boomer generation and an increase in life expectancy at age 65 will accelerate the growth of the number of older Canadians over the next three decades. As the population ages, the number of people with chronic disabilities will increase, resulting in greater need for assistance from both formal and family/friend support networks.

The changing structure of the family network means pressure on formal support will likely be greater in the future.

Research Methods

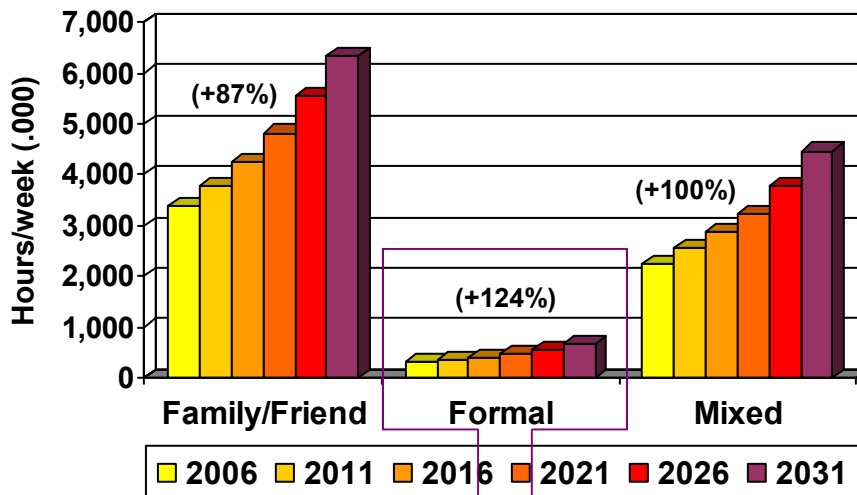
Secondary data analysis of the 2002 General Social Survey was conducted to determine the effects of socio-demographic characteristics on the probability of older persons having differing levels of disability and sources of assistance. Logistic regressions estimated the probability of an individual with specific characteristics of having a specific level of disability and those with a long term health problem using one of three types of support networks (formal, family/friend, mixed). These parameters were applied at five year intervals to the results coming from Statistics Canada's *LifePaths* microsimulation model to project future demand.

This study does not take into account changes in cultural norms and behaviour, which could alter the patterns of sources of assistance.

RESEARCH RESULTS

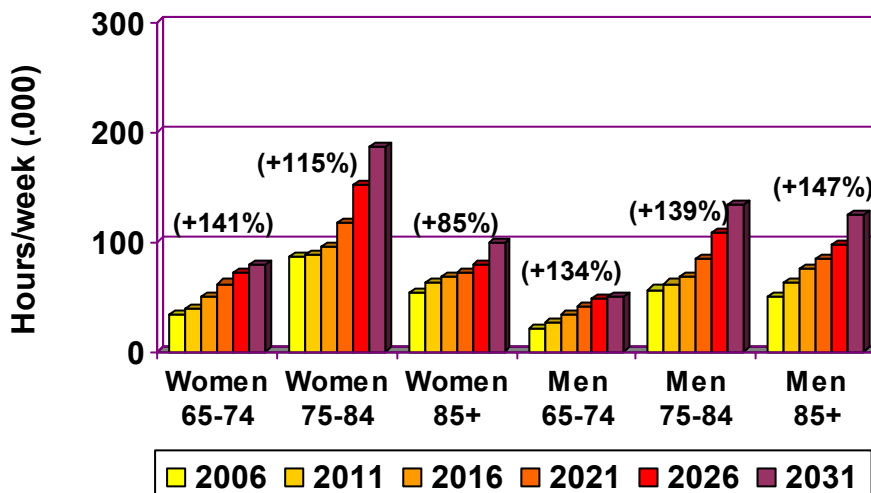
- The population aged 65 and older needing assistance will *more than double* between 2006 and 2031.
- Family/friends remain the greatest contributors to supporting older people, while the proportion of mixed and formal support is projected to grow at a much faster rate.

Figure 1. Number of hours of help received per week by *all sources*, 2006-2031 (with percentage increase shown).



- Despite the fact that the number of hours received from formal sources is relatively low compared to family/friend and mixed sources, the demand for formal support will grow at a much faster pace.
- The demand for formal support is higher than shown because many hours of formal help are also provided through mixed sources.

Figure 2. Number of hours of help received from *formal source only* per week, by age and sex, 2006-2031 (with percentage increase shown).



- Analyzing the results by gender shows that women receive more hours of formal assistance per week in all age groups but the percentage increase in formal support hours is higher for men, particularly among those 85 and older.

In general, the number of hours of help needed will increase among every age group and for all sources of assistance.

Source: Figures 1 & 2: *LifePaths* Projection (Statistics Canada), using assumptions developed by the research team.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Shortages in the human resources needed to deliver home support services are already occurring and demand for these services will continue to increase.
- In order to maintain community care policy, the absolute number of human resources, both formal and family/friend, will need to increase and a greater proportion of these helpers will need to be from the formal support network.
- Health human resources planning in Canada has focused on medical professionals, but strategies for the recruitment and retention of home support workers are required.
- Greater recognition and better working conditions are needed for home support workers.
- A range of policies to support family and friend caregivers could help ensure these supports remain available.

Home support services are key to maintaining the safety and security of individuals within their home environments, thereby reducing hospital stays and delaying institutionalization.

The projection results show an increase from approximately 750,000 older adults needing assistance in 2006, to over 1.5 million in 2031. This will translate into a need for over 11 million hours a week of home support services by 2031.

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Janice Keefe, Principal Investigator janice.keefe@msvu.ca
Jacques Légaré, Co-Principal Investigator Jacques.legare@umontreal.ca
Lucy Knight, Project Manager lucy.knight@msvu.ca

Brochure created by Lucy Knight