

Quiz 1. Ageism: Stereotypes About Older Adults

There are many myths and stereotypes about older adults. Learning more about this stage of life can help you better understand your own aging and your parents.

Read the following statements and decide whether you agree, disagree, or don't know:

A = Agree

D = Disagree

DK = Don't Know

Statement			
1. Most older people have a lot in common.	A	D	DK
2. Most older people are set in their ways and unable to change.	A	D	DK
3. Most seniors eventually move into a chronic care residence (i.e., nursing home, intermediate care facility).	A	D	DK
4. Many seniors are raising grandchildren in "skipped generation" families.	A	D	DK
5. Life expectancy is longer for Canadian women than for men.	A	D	DK
6. Most older adults live alone.	A	D	DK
7. Accidents are the major cause of death for older persons.	A	D	DK
8. Most older people will develop Alzheimer's disease.	A	D	DK
9. Today, Canada has more seniors than young children under 15.	A	D	DK
10. Seniors are less satisfied with their lives than younger adults.	A	D	DK

Quiz 1 Answers

1. Most older people have a lot in common. This statement is not true.

As people age, they have different life experiences which make them less like others of their own age group. Many older individuals prefer to have younger friends, rather than doing things with or living with their own age group.

“We were surprised when Mom said she did not want to move into seniors housing because she did not want to live with ‘old people.’ Now we understand that she thinks she will not have much in common with them.”

2. Most older people are set in their ways and unable to change. This statement is not true.

Research has found that personality is one of the few constants in life. That is, your personality will remain the same throughout your life.

So – if you are set in your ways when you are young – then you are likely to be the same when you are old. And if you are adaptable and flexible in your youth, you will likely keep these characteristics in your later life.

3. Most seniors eventually move into a chronic care residence (i.e., nursing home, long-term care centre, or intermediate care facility.) This statement is not true. ¹

In 2011, 92% of seniors lived in private households (with others or alone) and 7.9% lived in residences for seniors or health care facilities.

In 2016 in Canada, 6.8% of all individuals over 65 resided in chronic care facilities. The number increases with age: those over 85 are more likely to reside in long-term care (i.e., nursing home).

It is not inevitable that an older person will need to live in a chronic care facility such as a nursing home but it does become more likely with advancing age. Depending on many factors, seniors may live in the community (their own home or apartment, or seniors lodge or supported living) without ever requiring a chronic care institution.

4. Many seniors are raising grandchildren in "skipped generation" families. This statement is true.

In Canada in 2011, about 72,000 grandparents reported raising their children's children in what Statistics Canada calls skip-generation families: households where the middle generation is out of the picture. ²

For some grandparents, the relationship with their grandkids is one of fun, engaging in social activities and family get-togethers, perhaps with occasional babysitting.

For others, to their surprise, the role is much more daunting as they find themselves raising their grandchildren in what is now referred to as a “skipped generation family.” The parents are not present for their children due to distressful life events, such as death or serious injury, or chronic or long-term problems such as mental illness, addiction, and incarceration.

5. Life expectancy is longer for Canadian women than for men. This statement is true.

The life expectancy for women is longer than it is for men. In Canada, the average life expectancy was 79.9 years for males and 84 years for females in 2019. Among people 65 years of age and older, the number of women exceeded the number of men by more than 20% and there were two women for every man in the 85-and-older population. ³

Women live longer but also have more chronic health problems.

6. Most older adults live alone. This statement is not true.

The large majority of Canadian seniors live with family members such as a spouse, daughter or son, or with their extended family.

In 2006, 41% of Canadian women and 65% of men over age 65 lived with a partner, while 12% of both men and women lived with children.

In 2011, about 25% of seniors lived alone.

Among seniors in their nineties, over half (56.5%) lived in private households in 2011, including 28.7% who lived alone, 12.2% who were part of couples and 15.7% who lived with others, such as adult children. The remaining 43.5% lived in collectives such as nursing homes or residences for senior citizens. ⁴

7. Accidents are the major cause of death for older persons. This statement is not true.

The most common causes of death in later life are related to chronic health problems, such as heart disease, stroke, and respiratory diseases. Cancer and heart disease remain the main causes of death.

Although chronic illnesses are the most common health concerns for older adults, falls with resulting injury are also very significant.

8. Most older people will develop Alzheimer’s disease. This statement is not true.

Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias do increase with advanced age but they are not inevitable. In 2018 there were over half a million Canadians living with dementia - plus about 25,000 new cases diagnosed every year. By 2031, that number is expected to rise to 937,000, an increase of 66 per cent. Alzheimer Society of Canada. ⁵

Many older adults maintain a sharp mind throughout their life.

You can help to keep your mind fit by giving it “exercise” such as reading, doing crossword puzzles, playing games, and particularly by learning something new.

9. Today, Canada has more seniors than young children under 15. This statement is true.

In 2016, for the first time the share of seniors aged 65 and over just exceeds the share of children under 15 years. 16.9% over 65 and 16.6% under 15.

Societies pay greatest attention to the largest population. Canada has been youth-oriented but more recently developed greater interest in mid-life needs as the boomers reached their 50’s. Now that the boomer generation is becoming seniors, society is creating more services of interest to this population.

10. Seniors are less satisfied with their lives than younger adults. This statement is not true.

A study in 2016, showed that seniors are more satisfied with their lives than those in younger age groups. Senior women reported higher life satisfaction than men.

End Notes

1. Transitions to long-term and residential care among older Canadians

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-003-x/2018005/article/54966-eng.htm>

2. For more information, read Grandparents Raising Grandkids on the website of Healthy Child YYC.

<https://healthychildyyc.ca>

3. CIHI Available: <https://yourhealthsystem.cihi.ca/hsp/inbrief?lang=en#!/indicators/011/life-expectancy-at-birth;/mapC1;mapLevel2:/>

4. Living arrangements of seniors. Statistics Canada

https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-312-x/98-312-x2011003_4-eng.cfm

5. Alzheimer Society. Canada. <https://alzheimer.ca/en/Home/Get-involved/Advocacy/Latest-info-stats>

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Source: Maureen Osis, Judy Worrell, & Dianne McDermid. *Your Aging Parents: How to Prepare. How to Cope.* 2nd ed. 2010. ElderWise Publishing. <https://youragingparents.ca>

Questions? Contact us: info@youragingparents.ca