

Aging Gracefully: The Science of Living Well



A Message from the CLSA Research Team

Welcome to the 2015 issue of Aging Gracefully,

the annual newsletter for the 51,352 participants in the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA).

For about 10,000 of you, this is the first time you are receiving this newsletter, and we hope you and all of our other participants will be pleased to know about the many accomplishments from the past year.

The most exciting news is that recruitment and the first full wave of data collection have been completed! The CLSA has surpassed the original target of 50,000 participants.

We extend our sincere appreciation to each of you for contributing to the success of the CLSA, and look forward to staying

in touch with you throughout the course of this 20-year study.

The Government of Canada also formally recognized your generous contributions and the work of the CLSA team from coast to coast, at a special event held at the National Coordinating Centre in Hamilton, ON, on June 29. Minister of Labour Kellie Leitch (shown at left in bottom left photo), on behalf of Minister of Health Rona Ambrose, and Hamilton-area Member of Parliament David Sweet visited with CLSA leaders, representatives of McMaster University, and some of our participants to extend the government's appreciation and support to the many people who are contributing to the CLSA.

Two other exciting announcements of the past year include: the Canadian Institutes of Health Research has provided \$41.6

million to allow the CLSA to continue its work for the next five years, and we have begun the second wave of full data collection. By the end of September, more than 1,800 of you have already completed your first follow-up in-home interviews, and the first follow-up telephone interviews will get under way this fall.

In this newsletter we share with you some interesting statistics about you, our participants, news about how this rich source of information is already being put to use by researchers, and a story of three brothers participating in the CLSA.

We hope you enjoy finding out more about this amazing initiative that you are part of. Thank you again for your commitment, and we look forward to sharing with you the progress of the CLSA.

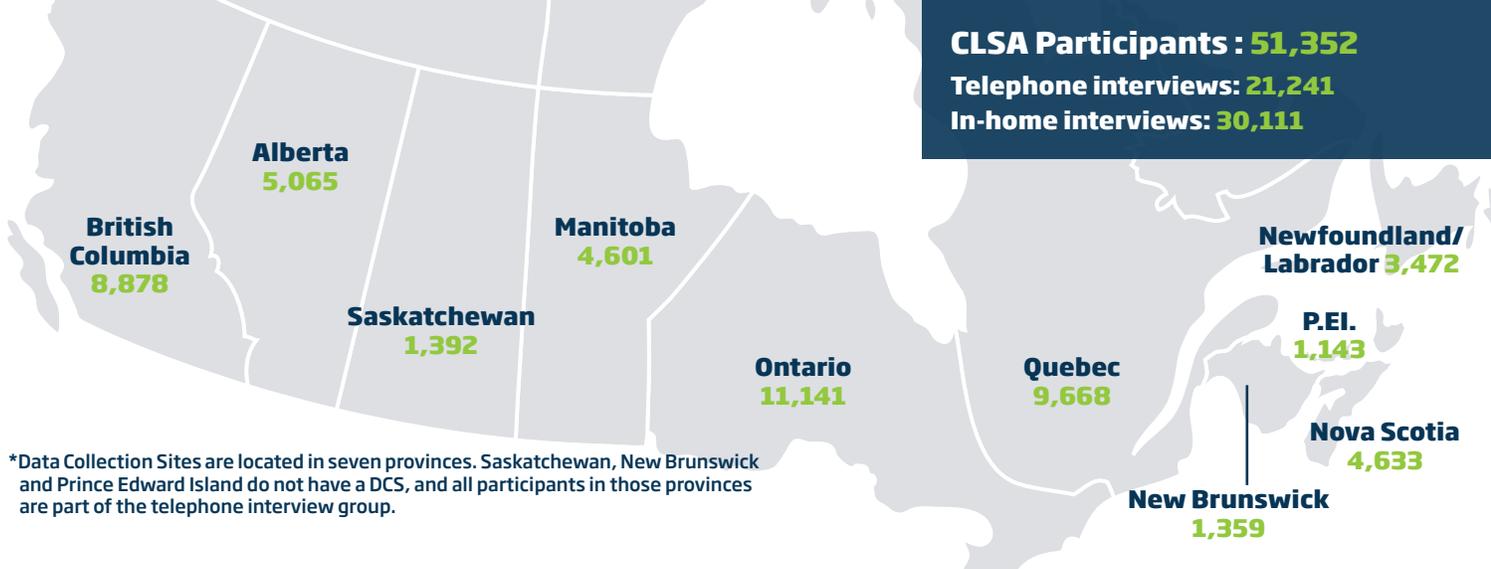


Left: A tour of the Biorepository and Bioanalysis Centre was part of the event held at the National Coordinating Centre where the government officially recognized the accomplishments of the CLSA. **Middle:** Participants from across the country have begun their follow-up visits to the data collection sites, such as this one in Sherbrooke, Que., where they undergo physical assessments. **Right:** A new Computer Assisted Telephone Interview site has opened at Simon Fraser University in B.C., where staff includes (from left) Laura Kadowaki, and supervisors Robert Hamilton and Nicole Pernat.

CLSA Participants : 51,352

Telephone interviews: 21,241

In-home interviews: 30,111



*Data Collection Sites are located in seven provinces. Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island do not have a DCS, and all participants in those provinces are part of the telephone interview group.

Who Are Our Participants?

Sex:

Female: **51%**

Male: **49%**

Age:

45-54: **26%**

55-64: **32%**

65-74: **23%**

75-85: **18%**

Country of birth:

Canada: **84%**

U.K.: **5%**

U.S.: **2%**

Other: **9%**

Language spoken at home most often:

English: **80%**

French: **19%**

Other: **1%**

What have we learned about how our participants view their general health and life satisfaction?

How do you rate your own health?

Excellent/Very Good: **59%**

Good: **30%**

Fair/Poor: **11%**

How do you rate your mental health?

Excellent/Very Good: **68%**

Good: **25%**

Fair/Poor: **6%**

I am satisfied with my life:

Agree: **86%**

Neutral: **4%**

Disagree: **10%**

In the past 12 months, did you receive formal care services at home because of a health condition or limitation that affects your daily life?

5%: Yes

In the past 12 months, did you receive informal home care assistance from family, friends or neighbours because of a health condition or limitation that affects your daily life?

12%: Yes

In the past 12 months, have you provided personal assistance of any sort (personal care, medical care, managing care, assistance with activities, transportation or meal preparation) because of a health condition or limitation?

45%: Yes

The CLSA: *One family's story*



Mike, Terry and Patrick Hourigan

Taking part in the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging is a family affair for the Hourigans of Burlington, Ontario.

Three brothers - Mike, 63, Terry, 61, and Patrick, 59 - were each randomly selected to take part in the comprehensive portion of the study, which involves both in-home interviews and visits to a data collection site (DCS). All three are impressed with the extensive information being collected through the study, and are looking forward to their first follow-up interviews.

Mike, the first to be recruited for the study just over a year ago, has “thoroughly enjoyed” his experience with both in regards to his own in-home interview and the visit to the Hamilton, Ontario DCS. “Everyone has been nice and open and thorough,” he said. He particularly liked learning about the physical assessments he underwent at the DCS, and the fact that some of the results were shared with him. “I’m looking forward to what’s going to be coming down the road,” he added, both in regards to his own experiences and what the CLSA will yield in terms of knowledge about the aging process.

Terry was the second brother to be contacted by the study, several months after Mike was recruited, and while he knew of his brother’s involvement, the CLSA

operator who called Terry was not aware of the family connection. He was assured there was no problem with two – and eventually three – people from one family being recruited.

“I was impressed by how comprehensive the whole experience was,” Terry said. “The telephone call, the home interview and the site visit – everyone was informative, friendly, and explained every step along the way. It really makes you aware of the number of aspects that go into the aging process.”

Patrick also praised the way the study is run, and agreed that being involved compels you to think about how you will age. Although his involvement has not spurred him to make any lifestyle changes just yet, he’s certainly more aware of how important it is to maintain his healthy lifestyle habits, like regular exercise. “I’m not going to fall off the wagon because I know someone’s going to be checking me out again in three years!”

All three brothers agreed that while gathering a variety of information about the biological, medical, psychological, social and economic aspects of people’s lives is an important endeavour, they also emphasized that they see the information coming out of the CLSA as key to future government decisions and policy development.

“Given the size of the study and the variety of things being looked at, the government needs to look at this information,” said Terry. “This study should help government make good policy and use tax money wisely.”

Mike is looking forward to the insights the CLSA will provide on both the social aspects of aging and the potential for innovations in biological technology that will “help people so that they can age in a better way.”

As the primary caregiver for his wife who has a chronic illness, Patrick is glad to see information on caregiving being collected, which he hopes will be among the study’s impacts on future health and social policy for Canada.

How is the information you provide being used?

As a participant in the CLSA, you are making a significant contribution to improving our knowledge about the aging process, and what we can do to stay healthy and happy throughout our later decades of life.

The data being collected from each individual will become part of the largest research platform on aging ever created in Canada. The platform includes many types of data collected so far, and several researchers are already using some of these data to study a variety of topics.

For example, what do we know about how having more than one health condition affects the everyday lives of older men and women? How do those conditions affect social participation and daily activities that we often take for granted?

On another pressing topic, how is Canada going to cope with both the social and physical needs of our aging population and the increasing number of people with dementia? CLSA data are being used to provide insights into social networks and patterns of caregiving and care receiving, as well as the supports needed by caregivers.

Other research topics that CLSA data will inform include the effects of long-term air pollution on health, mental wellbeing during menopause, retirement transitions, neurological conditions, how hearing loss affects social functioning in older adults, and the health of older Veterans.

The projects already underway using data contributed by CLSA participants mark the beginning of a huge new body of evidence and knowledge about the aging process and how to maintain health. To find out more about the research being conducted using CLSA data, visit our Approved Projects page (www.clsa-elcv.ca/approved-projects).

The First Follow-up is Underway

Participants who had their first CLSA interviews in 2012 and early 2013 are now being contacted to schedule their next telephone interview, or in-home interview and visit to a data collection site. As of the end of September, more than 1,800 participants had completed their second in-home interviews, and 1,000 of those had also been back for their second visit to a DCS.

First follow-up telephone interviews are now being scheduled. This second wave of full data collection will continue over the next three years, with participants being contacted approximately three years after they completed their first full interviews.

During this phase of the study, it's extremely important that participants provide us with any changes to their contact information. Have you moved, changed either your telephone number or email address since you were last contacted by the CLSA, or have you recently created an email address you can share with us? Or are you planning to be away for an extended period of time when we won't be able to reach you? If so, please contact us:

Web: www.clsa-elcv.ca/moving

Email: info@clsa-elcv.ca

Phone: 1-866-999-8303

Health Insurance Number Reminder

If you previously gave us consent to use your provincial health insurance number, but were unable to provide the number at the time of your last contact with us, please call the CLSA at 1-866-999-8303 so that we can update this information in your file. The provision of a health insurance number allows researchers to access information from public institutions to study patterns of health and health care in the population over time.

Thank You to Our Supporters and Staff

In addition to the 51,352 participants, the work of the CLSA would not be possible without financial and other types of support from a wide range of organizations and institutions. The CLSA is funded through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Canada Foundation for Innovation, provincial funders and partners, as well as affiliated universities and research institutes. For a full list of all of our supporters, visit our Partners page on the website (www.clsa-elcv.ca/clsa-partners).

The success of this study is also a tribute to the more than 250 dedicated frontline and behind-the-scenes staff who work in our various sites across the country. Visit the website to learn more about our Data Collection Sites and Computer Assisted Telephone Interview sites that are responsible for collecting all data, as well as the enabling units that play a key role in managing the study and processing the information collected from you.