

Aging Gracefully: The Science of Living Well



A Message from the CLSA Research Team

Welcome to the 2016 issue of **Aging Gracefully**, the annual newsletter for the more than 51,000 participants enrolled in the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA).

In this newsletter, you will read about how the data collected from you are being used by researchers. To date, 32 projects have been approved and posted to the CLSA website, and there are an additional 35 in the process of accessing CLSA data. These projects focus on physical, emotional and social health and functioning, and allow the CLSA to fulfil its vision of enabling health research that benefits all Canadians.

You will also read about a CLSA participant with a very special interest in aging. Olive Bryanton returned to school in 2013 to pursue her doctorate in education. At 79, she is the oldest student at the University of Prince Edward Island to ever undertake a PhD.

By now, many of you have taken part in the latest CLSA data collection event, known as the first follow-up. This interview occurs approximately three years after your initial enrolment in the study. During this phase, you will be asked to answer many of the same questions you did during your initial interview, and to provide additional information on hearing, memory, childhood experiences and elder abuse. By expanding the scope of CLSA research, we are ensuring

researchers have access to the most comprehensive information on health and aging.

Thank you for your interest and continued participation in the study. Participants are truly our most valuable partners. Your contributions are very important to us, which is why we recognize that as people age, they face situations that have the potential to affect their ability to participate. For that reason, we offer flexible participation, meaning that we provide you with options to accommodate your personal circumstances.

Thank you again for your commitment to Canadian research on health and aging. We look forward to updating you for many years to come.



Left: CLSA staff gathered in Hamilton for annual training in October 2016. **Middle and right:** CLSA staff in St. John's (middle) and Montreal (right) participated in a National Seniors Day social media campaign on Oct. 1, 2016.

Tapping into CLSA Data: Graduate students explore the concept of “unretirement”

It used to be that retirement was expected at age 65, but now more and more seniors are choosing to return to work. This trend was the focus of a research project that used CLSA data to explore retirement transitions.



Marvi Memon



Mehreen Khan

Mehreen Khan and **Marvi Memon**, who were each pursuing a Master of Public Service degree at the University of Waterloo in 2015, collaborated on a team project that explored labour transitions in Canada. The research used data from 20,000 CLSA telephone interview participants to shed light on the factors that caused retirees to re-enter the workforce. At the time, the CLSA data were new and largely untapped, which made these data appealing to the students.

“The most interesting finding was that despite what we hear on the news about retirees returning to work because of financial obligations, our research found that the majority of retirees genuinely enjoyed working and wanted to continue doing it,” Khan explained. “The CLSA data showed that gender and

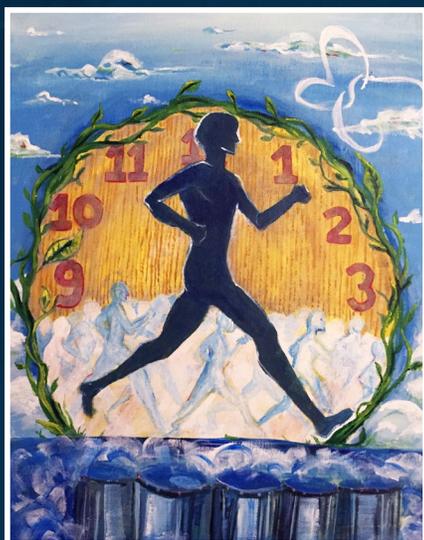
marital status were extremely important factors in labour patterns across the demographic.”

In particular, the most frequent reasons people returned to work were: 1) they liked working; 2) found an interesting opportunity; and 3) financial concerns. Statistically, men were significantly more likely to return to work due to a desire to continue working, wanting a challenge and/or financial concerns, whereas women were more likely to return to work due to an end to caregiving duties. They also found that men were more likely to return to work full-time, while women returned part-time.

Since graduating, Khan has moved into policy research and performance measurement at Employment and Social Development Canada. Memon is a senior privacy specialist for Cancer Care Ontario.

The findings from this research will soon be submitted for publication in a journal. To view a webinar showcasing preliminary findings, visit: www.clsa-elcv.ca/stay-informed/clsa-webinars/clsa-webinar-videos. Click on “**Labour Transitions: Retirees who return to work.**”

The Art and Science of Aging



How do you translate scientific research into art? The Art of Science exhibition at McMaster University attempted to answer that question in March 2016 when undergraduate students came together to create and showcase a piece of artwork related to research happening in the McMaster community. The Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA) was honoured to be the subject of a painting by Anumita Chakraborty, a third-year biochemistry student. Here’s her description of the artwork:

“Through this painting, I hope to convey the importance behind the contribution of such a large number of participants. There are several white silhouettes in the background, which signify the research participants who are taking part in the CLSA. The clock with the green vines is meant to symbolize healthy aging. The image of the cryofreezers has been painted at the bottom with a rich plume of nitrogen fog as they were incredible to see when I visited the Biorepository and Bioanalysis Centre.”

Aging with **Endless Possibility**

CLSA participant **Olive Bryanton** discovered her passion for research in later life



In her own research, Bryanton is looking at the link between gender and aging by focusing on a group of 10 women who are 85 and older living in rural P.E.I. She is interested in finding out what is supporting or limiting their ability to age in place. She plans to conduct a series of in-person interviews, as well as use a research method called photovoice, which has the research participants take digital images to capture their experiences.

Olive Bryanton knows a thing or two about what it takes to age well. At 79, she is the oldest student ever to pursue a PhD at the University of Prince Edward Island.

She's also one of the more than 51,000 participants who take part in the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging. Every three years, she participates in a telephone interview from her home in P.E.I. She said the decision to join the study – and remain in it – was easy.

“I think it’s really important to see what occurs in the long-term – how people are actually aging

and what are the realities of their lives,” said the seniors advocate. In addition to discovering what supports are needed for older adults, Bryanton believes the CLSA has the potential to give insight into what it means to age in Canada today.

“Here in Atlantic Canada, we have a high percentage of older adults. It will be interesting to see the differences between East, West and Central Canada,” she said. “It’s important to get a better understanding of what is happening in the country with older adults, and to find out if there is a difference between women and men as they age.”

“I wanted the voice of the people I’m interviewing to come through,” she said, adding the photos will give insight into their realities. “Pictures are worth a 1,000 words.”

Bryanton says that down the road she plans to apply to access the CLSA data to complement her own research, possibly when she embarks on her postgraduate studies following graduation in May 2018.

“I went back to school in later life,” she said. “I did my undergrad starting in ’80 to ’84. I guess I just got a taste of what is possible.”

Approved Projects

To date, more than 32 CLSA research projects have been approved. Full descriptions of the projects are available at www.clsa-elcv.ca/researchers/approved-project-summaries. At the time of application, researchers provide five project keywords. Here is a “word cloud” which highlights the topics according to how often the keyword is used.

To view a Google map of CLSA approved projects, visit: <http://bit.ly/CLSAprojects>



First follow-up interviews are now being scheduled and will continue until 2018. As of the end of November, more than 6,500 telephone interviews have taken place, along with 13,500 in-home interviews and 12,000 Data Collection Site visits. During this phase of the study, it's extremely important to provide us with any changes to your contact information. Have you moved, changed your telephone number or email address since you were last contacted by the CLSA, or have you recently created an email address that 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/update-your-details
- Email:** info@clsa-elcv.ca
- Phone:** 1-866-999-8303

CLSA In the News

The research of the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging was featured on CTV W5 in November.

To view the video, visit: <http://bit.ly/CTVW5>



W5: Forever Young

Designating a Proxy

With long-term research studies, there may come a time when a participant is not able to make decisions or take part in the study due to health reasons. Because of this, CLSA participants over 70 years of age are asked to provide the name of a proxy, which is a person who provides information and/or makes decisions on your behalf. All CLSA participants over 70 years of age who have not previously established a proxy will be asked to do so when they are contacted for their next interview. Please remember to let your proxy know that you have provided their contact information to the CLSA. If you wish to establish a proxy before age 70, or immediately, please contact 1-866-999-8303.

Thank You to Our Supporters

The CLSA is funded through support from 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 our supporters, please visit: www.clsa-elcv.ca/partners.

Victoria: Participants who visit the Victoria Data Collection Site will see a new face during their next visit. Dr. Jo Ann Miller has joined the study as the data collection site coordinator at the University of Victoria. She takes over for Lindsay Richier, who is now studying medicine after nearly four years with the CLSA.

Winnipeg: The Manitoba Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview site (CATI), which conducts phone interviews with CLSA participants, has recently switched to a new model that focuses on employing students. Dr. Verena Menec, Manitoba site lead, and Melina Elliott, the local CATI supervisor, embraced the new model to provide an opportunity for graduate and undergraduate students to get hands-on experience with a national research project.

Health Insurance Number Reminder

To date, more than 44,000 participants have provided consent for the CLSA to link their provincial health-care records to data collected in the study. By sharing your health insurance number, you allow researchers to access information from public institutions to study patterns of health and health care in the population over time. For example, Ministries of Health in each province keep records about your visits to doctors and hospitals, as well as what medications you fill a prescription for. If you would like to provide consent for the CLSA to use your health insurance number, or have previously provided consent but did not have the number available at the time of your last interview, please contact 1-866-999-8303.