

LAST QUESTION

Why should marketers consider—really consider—the aging consumer?

By Alicia Androich

Historically, when the issue of designing for accessibility came up in Canada, talk turned to the severely disabled. But marketers should consider accessibility for as wide a target as possible. Whether a website user has aging eyes or motor-skill issues, it's critical to make sure they can access messaging just as easily as anyone else. To ensure Ontario businesses are doing their part, the provincial government passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) in 2005. The act includes several standards that cover areas like customer service, transportation, information and communications, employment and built environment. Challenges in all of these areas become more frequent with aging consumers. So while "18 to 34" seems like the eternal target demo for brands and marketers, it's time to consider those celebrating their retirement, not their graduation.

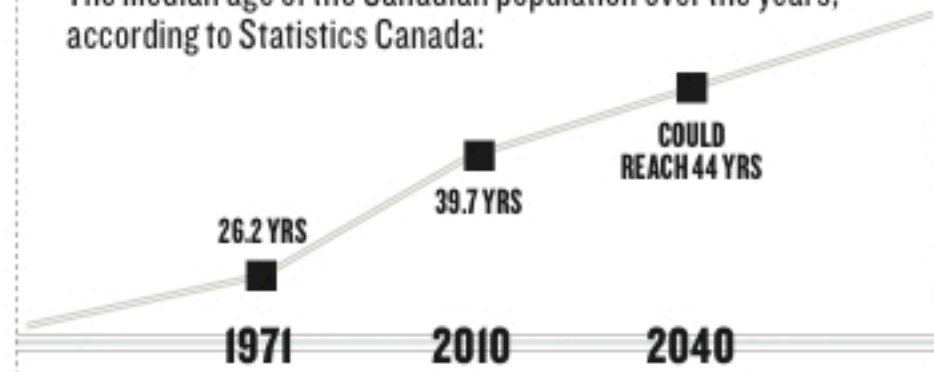
HOW THE WEB WAS WON



Last September, a blind woman in Toronto named Donna Jodhan—a special needs consultant—took the federal government to court because she was unable to apply online for a government job. Lawyers for the government argued that candidates could apply by phone, mail or in person, but within a couple of months Jodhan won the case. A Federal Court judge in Toronto ordered the government to make its websites accessible to users with visual impairments.

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

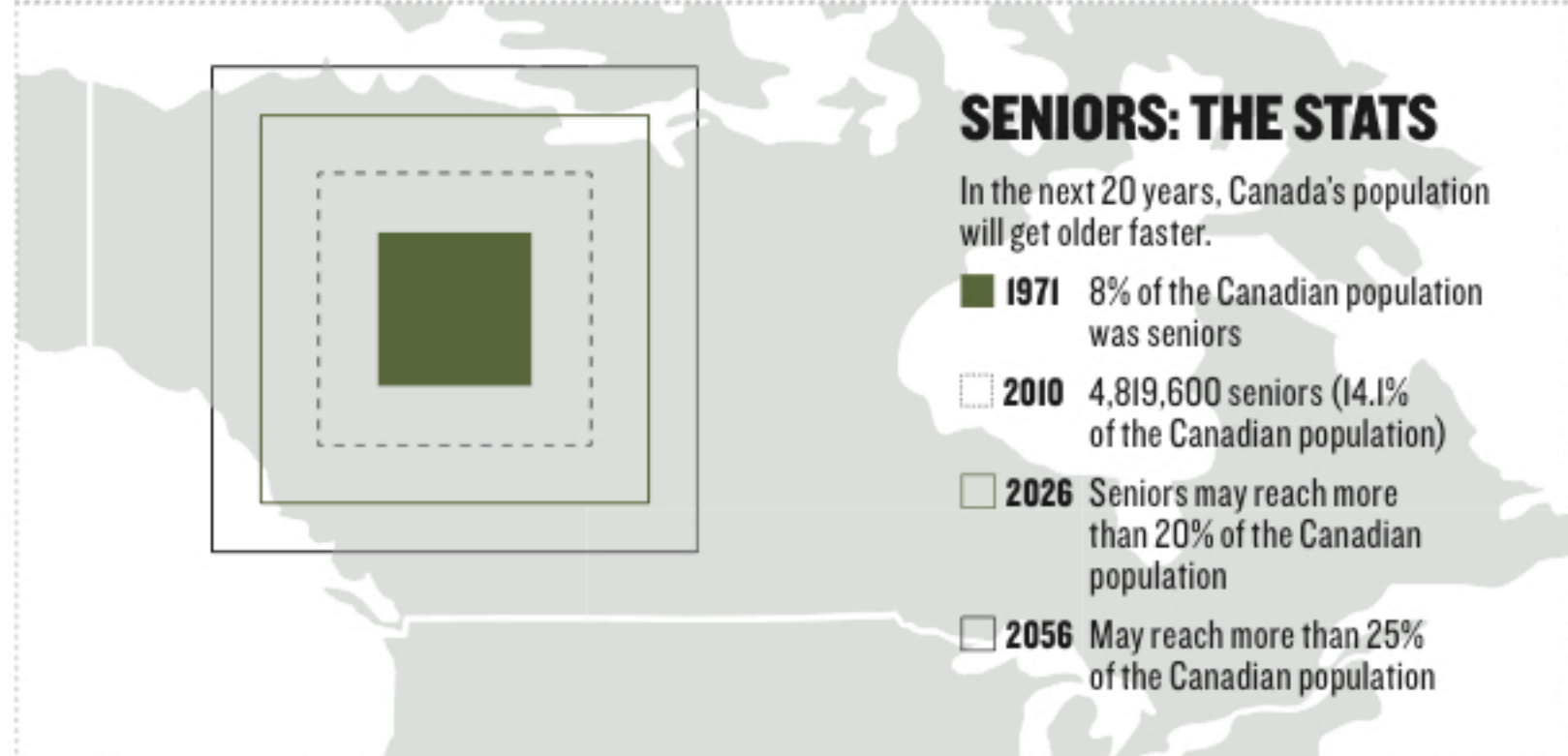
The median age of the Canadian population over the years, according to Statistics Canada:



The rise is attributed to the aging of the large baby boom group, increasing life expectancy and several decades of below-replacement fertility rates.



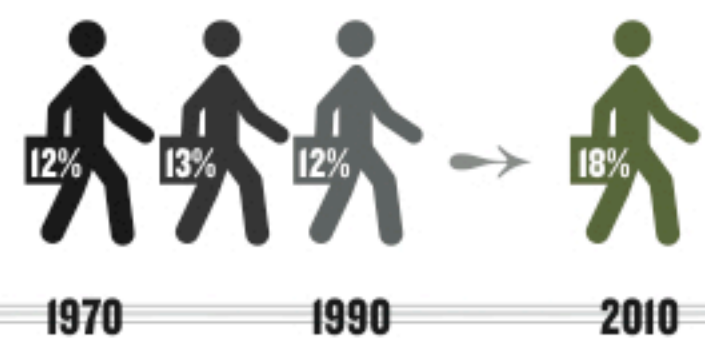
ONE IN SEVEN PEOPLE IN ONTARIO HAS A DISABILITY.



1946 ← **BABY BOOMER** → 1965

WHAT IS A BABY BOOMER, ANYWAY?

Someone born between 1946 and 1965.



THE GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO'S DEFINITION

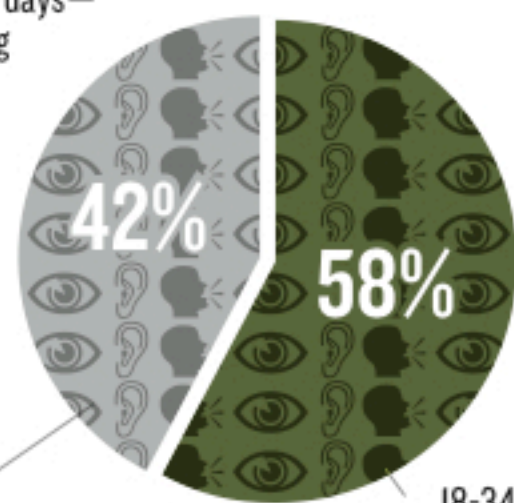


ac·ces·si·bil·i·ty [ak-ses-uh-buh lee tee] noun
1. "Helping people with disabilities take part in life's activities."

YOUR TURN

Since we've got Canada's aging population on the brain, we're curious to see which demographic you're targeting these days—or, more specifically, which one is spending the most. Sure, the 18-to-34 set has long been the industry's coveted market, but what about the older part of the population? We asked readers:

Age-specific products aside, what demo is the real shopping powerhouse?



55+ Boomers changed everything.

18-34 Always has been. Always will be.



GETTING SOCIAL

The largest drivers of social networking growth in Canada last year were Canadians 55 and older. According to comScore, Canadians 55 to 64 experienced 48% growth in total social networking visits between Q4 2009 and Q4 2010. Canadians 65 and older experienced nearly as much growth in the same kind of visits—45%—from Q4 2009 to Q4 2010.

55-64
+48%

65+
+45%

WORK IT

During the last decade in particular, the proportion of 55- to 64-year-olds in Canada's working-age population has increased. As of July 1, 2010, 55- to 64-year-olds accounted for 18% of our working-age population. Throughout the 1970s to 1990s, it was more in the range of 12.5% to 13.3%, according to Statistics Canada.

APPROACHING DEADLINES



2011

The Transportation Standard will come into effect for public transportation providers. From now on, verbal announcements will notify route and major stops and people with disabilities won't be charged more to store their wheelchairs.



2012

The Accessibility Standard for Information and Communications will come into effect for organizations that prepare emergency procedures or public safety information; they'll need to provide information in accessible formats, such as large print.