Canada’s Oldest Old
– A fast-growing group
– Poorly apprehended
– At risk of inadequate service provision

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Structure of Presentation

- Introduction
- Demographic outline of Canada’s Oldest Old
  - Population trends
  - Lifestyle
  - Economic and social characteristics
  - Health status and use of health services
- Mortality and morbidity projections at advanced ages; impacts on Oldest Old numbers
- Overview of Oldest Old policies in Canada and elsewhere
- Conclusion
Introduction

- Definition of “Oldest Old”
  - Laslett 1989
  - Robine 2003

- Scientific research on this group is relatively recent (Robine et al., 2007a), despite Canada study by Havens and Finlayson (1999): due to relatively small numbers.

- Our report: an overview of research reports, data and policies on the Oldest Old in Canada

- Focus on present and future characteristics of the Oldest Old and on public policies to secure their well-being
Rise in numbers of persons 65 and over in Canada

- Proportion of 65 and over: from 8% in 1971 to 15% in 2013
- Proportion of 85 and over: from 0.6% in 1971 to 2% in 2013

People aged 85 and over: from 13% of 65 and over in 2013, to....?
The fastest growing population group

- Population of Canada 1971 to 2013: 50% increase
- Number of 85 and over in Canada 1971 to 2013: **400% increase**
  - Numbers of 85 and over are increasing 2 X faster than 65 and over and 8 X faster than the population as a whole

- In addition, the composition of the people 85 and over group is changing...
Changing composition of the 85 and over

- 1971 à 1986: rising proportion of women among the 85 and over
- 1986 à 2000: proportion of women remains stable at about 70%
- 2000 to now: decreasing proportion of women
- An indication of major changes to come in the composition of the 85 and over population
Disparities by province

- Proportion of people 85 and over is rising everywhere in Canada, but there are variations by province
- Québec: a special case:
  - In 1971: below the Canadian average
  - In 2011: above the Canadian average

Proportion des 85 ans et plus au Canada, par province, 1971–2011

Moyenne Canada 2011: 1,9%

Moyenne Canada 1971: 0,6%
The 85 and over are different from the 65 and over as a whole

- Example: People living in an institution
  - 2011: 8% of the 65 and over were living in collective households
  - But 31% of the 8 and over were living in collective households
  - This was over a third of all those 85 and over
  - 91% of these were in 2 categories of institution: nursing homes and senior residences
The numbers of those 85 and over will continue to rise

- Statistics Canada forecasts that those 65 and over will increase from about 6 million in 2015 to about 12 million in 2060.
- Numbers of those 85 and over are forecast to rise from 200,000 to 1,200,000 men and 500,000 to over 1,500,000 women.
- UN and IIASA forecast between 4 and 8 million in 2100.
Oldest Old Support Ratio

This indicator is used to measure numbers of potential supporters per oldest old person over time.

Defined as the ratio of those aged 50–74 to those aged 85 and over.

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>NU</th>
<th>IIASA</th>
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<tr>
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Public policy

- Canada’s National Framework on Ageing (1998) established distinct objectives: «promoting the well-being and contribution of older people in all aspects of life and eliminating ageism»
- 5 principles are found in Canadian and international policies on older people:
  - Dignity,
  - Independence,
  - Participation,
  - Fairness and
  - Security
- Here we have 2 main aims:
  - Review the various public policies in Canada’s Provinces and Territories
  - Present some policies from other countries.
Three major topics

- Canadian public policies on the oldest old: formed as part of Action Plans by Provinces and Territories to ensure well-being of older people and also the oldest old.
- 3 domains in which the 5 principles are most present:
  - Health
  - Income
  - Housing
- In addition, for obvious reasons, age is rarely a criterion for public policy making towards older people.
A comprehensive review shows that Canada is generally aware of new social issues created by Baby Boomers reaching advanced ages.

New forms of behaviour and present day health status of older people mean it is vital to develop policies to meet their desire for independence and that of future generations of older people.

- Prioritise policies designed to maintain independence, rather than simply determined by an age threshold.
The Oldest Old are a distinct group in the Canadian population. Future population studies research needs to take this fact into account.

Numbers of those 85 and over are rising rapidly and could outstrip the capacities of existing infrastructure.

The boundaries of the group are not defined by age alone but by criteria such as health status, socio-economic conditions etc.

Policies need to be able to respond to specific needs of the Oldest Old of the future. Their characteristics will be different from those of today. E.g. 67% of those 85 and over are women in 2015: in 2060 only 57% will be women.
The people 65 and over are often analysed as a homogeneous group; more allowance needs to be made for the particular characteristics of the Oldest Old.

There are 2 main reasons for this:
- Reaching the age of 85 is often considered exceptional, but this is no longer the case
- Numbers of those 85 and over are sometimes too low in research samples to enable a specific analysis to be made of them.
Conclusion (2/3)

- The 85 years of age threshold is generally accepted but needs to be treated as variable depending on individual characteristics.
- Social policy should not apply to individuals of a particular age (with some exceptions) but depending on health status and income.
- A moving threshold may be considered for the Oldest Old, related to life expectancy or healthy life expectancy.
Continued efforts are needed to develop and adapt policy to respond as fully as possible to the needs of the Oldest Old and enable them to remain independent for as long as possible.

Promotion of healthy and positive attitudes to older people will contribute to healthy relationships between generations.

Canada should set up a multidisciplinary platform of researchers and public policy decision makers with shared interests in the repercussions of population ageing for the society of today and tomorrow.