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NOTE TO READERS

Aging Vignettes have been designed by the National Advisory Council on Aging (NACA) to provide a statistical portrait of seniors in Canada. They are produced as part of NACA's mandate to disseminate information and are intended for people who are interested in aging and who care about seniors.

These Vignettes were first collected in 1992 to provide background material for a panel discussion looking at the future of aging in Canada. The panel was held in honour of the International Day for the Elderly which is celebrated every October 1st. It is clear they have a wider use and thus NACA is making them available to its readership.

In these Vignettes, the word 'seniors' refers to people 65+. This is not meant to suggest that the population group 65+ represents a homogeneous group. The Council recognizes that seniors are as heterogeneous and often more so than other age groups.

As a rule the latest data available were cited. Because the sources are varied and cover a number of years, the year the data were collected is identified.

The Council welcomes your comments on these *Aging Vignettes* and suggestions for future editions.

AGING VIGNETTE #1

A Quick Portrait of Canadian Seniors

How Many? Men -vs- Women? How Old? All Married?

- In 1991,
 - 3,200,000 Canadians were aged 65+ 12% of the population
 - 94,000 Canadians were aged 90+
 - 3,700 Canadians were aged 100+
- 194,000 Canadians were aged 85+ in 1981
283,000 Canadians were aged 85+ in 1991
(a 31% increase in 10 years!)
- Between 1986 and 1991,
 - the number of persons in the 65+ age group grew by 17.5%
 - the number of persons in the 75+ age group grew by 21.7%
- In 1991, there were
 - 1.38 women for every man in the 65+ group
 - 2 women for every man in the 85+ group
- Among seniors in Canada, in 1991,
 - 74% of men and 40% of women were married
 - 13% of men and 47% of women were widowed
 - 6% of men and 5% of women were separated or divorced
 - 7% of men and 8% of women were never-married
- In 1991,
 - 28% of women aged 65 to 69 were widows
 - 82% of women aged 90+ were widows
- In 1990, the marriage rate per 1,000 was
 - 60 for males aged 60+
 - 17 for females aged 60+

Sources:

Statistics Canada. *Age, sex and marital status*. Cat. No. 93-31 0. Ottawa: 1992.

Surinder, W. and J. Strachan. *Selected marriage statistics 1921-1990*. Cat. No. 85-552. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1992.

AGING VIGNETTE #2

A Quick Portrait of Canadian Seniors

Living Where?

- In 1991, seniors' percentage of the population in each province or territory was

PROVINCE/TERRITORY	65+ age group as a % of the total population	75+ age group as a % of the 65+
Newfoundland	9.7%	39.7%
Prince Edward Island	13.2%	45.7%
Nova Scotia	12.6%	42.4%
New Brunswick	12.2%	41.8%
Québec	11.1%	38.6%
Ontario	11.7%	39.7%
Manitoba	13.4%	43.6%
Saskatchewan	14.1%	44.7%
Alberta	9.0%	40.4%
British Columbia	12.9%	40.7%
Yukon	4.0%	24.4%
Northwest Territories	3.0%	14.9%

- 75% of all seniors in 1991 lived in Ontario, Québec and British Columbia
- Victoria, in 1991, was the city with the **highest** percentage of seniors **19%**
Calgary, the **lowest** **8%**
- Almost a quarter of the 55 to 64 age group lived in a rural area in 1986, compared with 17% of seniors aged 85+

Sources:

Statistics Canada. *Age, sex and marital status*. Cat. No. 93-31 0. Ottawa: 1992.
 Statistics Canada. *A portrait of seniors in Canada*. Cat. No. 89-51 9. Ottawa: 1990.

AGING VIGNETTE #3

A Quick Portrait of Canadian Seniors

Native Elders? Ethnic Seniors?

- In 1986, while 10% of the Canadian population were aged 65+, only 4% of the aboriginal populations were that age
- 24% of all persons in Canada who speak neither English nor French are seniors. Females of all ages are more likely than males to speak neither official language. Among seniors, twice as many women as men do not speak English or French
- Canada received about 6,000 immigrant seniors per year between 1978 and 1987
- About one sixth of Canadian seniors were born outside Canada. Though currently just 20% of these have other than British or French origins, the percentage will soon increase to reflect changing immigration patterns (1981 data)
- Of 2,200,000 seniors in 1981, about 600,000 reported an ethnic origin other than British or French
- In 1981, the Jewish community had the highest proportion of seniors, with 17% over 65 (44,660 seniors)
- In 1987, the top 4 countries/regions that supplied over 40% of all immigrant seniors were Britain, the United States, India and the Philippines
- Of those countries or regions with over 1000 immigrants to Canada in 1987, those from China had the highest percentage (10%) of seniors

Source:

Secretary of State Canada (Multiculturalism). *Aging in a multicultural Canada: A graphic overview*. Ottawa: DSS, 1989.

AGING VIGNETTE #4

A Quick Portrait of Canadian Seniors

How Rich? How Poor?

- Between 1980 and 1990, the percentage of senior couples with incomes below the Low-income Cutoff (LIC) poverty line decreased from 13% to 4%
- From 1980 to 1990, the percentage of unattached senior men below the poverty line dropped from 53% to 26% for unattached senior women, the percentage dropped from 60% to 38%
- Although not classified as having low incomes, many seniors still hover on the margins of poverty and would join the ranks of the official poor if the LIC were shifted slightly upwards
- The decrease in the rate of poverty among seniors has been due to improvements in public pensions, including Old Age Security (OAS), Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), Survivor's Allowance and Canada/Québec Pension Plan (CPP/QPP). Government programs are the main and increasingly important source of income for seniors. In 1986, one third of seniors' incomes came from the OAS/GIS program
- In 1990, 39% of women and 33% of men aged 65+ received some GIS, while among women aged 90+, 70% received some GIS

Sources:

Ng, E. "Children and elderly people: Sharing public income resources." *Canadian Social Trends*, 25, (Summer 1992). Cat. No. 11-008.

National Advisory Council on Aging. *The economic situation of Canada's seniors*. Ottawa: 1991.

AGING VIGNETTE #5

A Quick Portrait of Canadian Seniors

Pension Protected?

- Benefits from the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and the Québec Pension Plan (QPP) account for 14% of seniors' income
 - men derive 16% of their income from CPP/QPP
 - women derive 11% of their income from CPP/QPP (1986 data)
- Pensions from employers account for 16% of seniors' income
 - men get 20% of their income from these pensions
 - women receive 11 % of their income from these pensions (1986 data)
- Coverage by private or employer-sponsored pension plans varies with clienteles. The figures for 1989 are:

MEN 50%	WOMEN 39%
PUBLIC SECTOR 73%	PRIVATE SECTOR 39%
FULL-TIME WORKERS 53%	PART-TIME WORKERS 24%
UNIONIZED WORKERS 75%	NON-UNIONIZED WORKERS 30%

- Between 1982 and 1990,
 - the percentage of workers covered by private (employer) plans decreased from 47% to 45%
 - the percentage of workers with minimum vesting conditions in their pension plans (imposed by provincial legislation) increased from 20% to 24%
 - the percentage of pension plan members with indexed pensions rose from 31% to 36%
- Between 1981 and 1990,
 - the percentage of the labour force contributing to a Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) rose from 16% to 28%

Sources:

- Lindsay, C. and S. Donald. "Income of Canada's seniors." *Canadian Social Trends*, 10, (Autumn 1988). Cat. No. 11-008.
- Statistics Canada. *Pension plans in Canada 1982 and Pension plans in Canada 1990*. Cat. No. 74-401. Ottawa: 1984 and 1992.
- Frenken, H. and K. Maser. 'Employer sponsored pension plans-who is covered?' *Perspectives on labour and income*, 4, 4, (Winter 1992). Cat. No. 75-001.

AGING VIGNETTE #6

A Quick Portrait of Canadian Seniors

How Healthy? For How Long?

- Between 1975-77 and 1985-87,
 life expectancy **at age 65** increased for men from 14 to 14.9 years and for women from 18 to 19.1 years
 life expectancy **at birth** increased for men from 70.2 to 73.1 years and for women from 77.5 to 79.7 years
- Among common health problems reported by seniors in 1985
 55% mentioned arthritis-rheumatism
 39% mentioned hypertension
 24% mentioned respiratory difficulties
- Persons aged 65+ in 1985 were twice as likely to report respiratory problems, arthritis or rheumatism and hypertension, and at least three times as likely to report heart trouble than the total population
- The rate of physical or mental disability was 47% for senior women and 44% for senior men in 1987 (rates increase with age, so does the presence of multiple disabilities)
- Approximately 80% of persons aged 65+ report one or more chronic conditions in Canada, but only 20% report that they have major limitations to their activities which cause them to need assistance with activities of daily living (1991 data)
- Between 1971 and 1986,
 coronary heart disease declined 30% for senior males and 35% for senior females

Sources:

Statistics Canada. *Vital statistics, 1975-77 and Vital statistics, 1985-87*. Cat. No. 84-542. Ottawa: 1978 and 1989.

Statistics Canada. *A portrait of seniors in Canada*. Cat. No. 89-519. Ottawa: 1990.

Jordan-Simpson, D.A. and J.M. Dowler. "Disabled women in Canada: Findings of the Health and Activity Limitation Survey." *Chronic Diseases in Canada*, 11, 2, (1990).

National Advisory Council on Aging. *The NACA position on Canada's oldest seniors: Maintaining the quality of their lives*. Ottawa: 1992.

Wilkins, K. et al. "Mortality and morbidity of Canada's seniors: A historical perspective." *Chronic Diseases in Canada*, 9, 5, (1988).

AGING VIGNETTE #7

A Quick Portrait of Canadian Seniors

Major Causes of Death?

- In 1986, the leading causes of death among seniors were
for men,
coronary heart disease, lung cancer, stroke and chronic bronchitis, emphysema and asthma
for women,
coronary heart disease, stroke, colorectal cancer and pneumonia
- The percentage of deaths due to cardiovascular disease starts to increase quite sharply around the age of menopause in women, and after 35 for men
- In 1987, 41% of deaths from all causes for men were due to cardiovascular disease versus 44% for women
- Cancer incidence rises steeply with age in both sexes. The incidence of all cancers combined is increasing at 1.2% per year in males and 0.3% in females. If it were not for lung cancer, mortality from cancer would be stable in males and decreasing in females. About 2/3 of cancer deaths in both sexes occur in persons aged 65+ (1991 data)
- Osteoporosis affects about 25% of postmenopausal women. Hip fractures related to osteoporosis result in death in 12% to 20% of cases and in disability in up to 75% of surviving patients (1987 data)
- In 1977, 335 seniors committed suicide (about 10% of all suicides)
In 1986, 473 seniors committed suicide (about 13% of all suicides)
(the rate is three times greater among men than among women)

Sources:

- Wilkins, K. et al. "Mortality and morbidity of Canada's seniors: A historical perspective." *Chronic Diseases in Canada*, 9, 5, (1988).
- Johansen, H. et al. "Women and cardiovascular disease." *Chronic Diseases in Canada*, 11, 3, (1990).
- National Cancer Institute of Canada. *Canadian cancer statistics 1991*. Toronto: 1991.
- Murray, T.M. "The importance of calcium in osteoporosis prevention." *Osteoporosis: Bulletin for Physicians*, 1, 1, (1988).
- Statistics Canada. *Causes of death*. Cat. No. 82-003. Supplement 11. Ottawa: 1989.
- Health and Welfare Canada. *Suicide among the aged in Canada*. Ottawa: DSS, 1982.
- Health and Welfare Canada. *Mental health problems among Canada's seniors*. Ottawa: DSS, 1991.

AGING VIGNETTE #8

A Quick Portrait of Canadian Seniors

Mentally Healthy?

- The rate of dementia among seniors was estimated at 5.6% in 1981 (132,000 seniors) at 6.0% in 1991 (190,000 seniors)
- By 2006, there may be as many as 324,000 seniors with dementia (an increase of 71% in 15 years!)
- The rate of dementia is thought to be
1.4% among persons aged 65 to 69
38.6% among seniors aged 90
(incidence increases with age) (1986 data)
- It is estimated that
30% to 40% of seniors living in long-term care facilities have a moderately severe dementing illness
there are 1 to 2 persons with dementia in the community for every institutionalized individual with dementia (1986 data)
- In 1985, 30% of seniors reported that their lives was 'fairly stressful' or 'very stressful' (in contrast to 52% of people under 55)
- Loneliness was a problem for 27% of the OAS/CPP recipients surveyed in 1990

Sources:

Health and Welfare Canada. *Mental health problems among Canada's seniors*. Ottawa: DSS, 1991.

Health and Welfare Canada. *Active health report on seniors*. Ottawa: DSS, 1989.

Health and Welfare Canada. *Survey of Old Age Security and Canada Pension Plan retirement benefit recipients*. Ottawa: 1990. Unpublished data.

AGING VIGNETTE #9

A Quick Portrait of Canadian Seniors

Healthy Lifestyle?

- 64% of seniors rate their health as good, very good or excellent for their age (1985 data)
- In 1985, 92% of seniors said that they were either pretty happy or very happy
- 51% of seniors report daily or frequent exercise
Another 36% say they never exercise (1985 data)
- Seniors are half as likely to smoke as persons under 55 (19% vs 37%)
Seniors are a third less likely to drink alcohol than persons under 55 (61% vs 87%) (1985 data)
- Studies have shown that 99% of people aged 60+ would like to have sex if a willing partner was available
- 87% of seniors said that they had not skipped breakfast in the week before being interviewed for the 1985 Health Promotion Survey. More than one out of two seniors also said that they had done something the previous year to improve their health

Sources:

Health and Welfare Canada. *Active health report on seniors*. Ottawa: DSS, 1989.
Participation. *Live it up!* Kit. Toronto: 1992.

AGING VIGNETTE #10

A Quick Portrait of Canadian Seniors

Consuming Health Services? At What Cost?

- Although the number of geriatric specialists has increased to 87 in 1993 from 5 in 1981, 550 to 700 geriatricians will be needed by year 2000
- In 1985-86,
 - nearly 90% of seniors consulted a physician, while only 33% of persons aged 65 to 74 and 22% of those aged 75+ consulted a dentist
 - Some 10% of seniors did not consult a physician, dentist or nurse
- 53% of Canadians aged 55+ reported that they would be content with a doctor's decision not to prescribe certain medications even if they requested them 37% said they would approach another physician to get the prescription (1991 data)
- Women's use of sleeping pills and tranquilizers exceeds that of men. Use also increases steadily with age
 - 23% of women aged 65+ report current sleeping pill use
 - 14% of women aged 65+ use tranquilizers .
 - Over 60% of women using these drugs reported that their lives were 'fairly stressful' or 'very stressful' (1985 data)
- 78% of the increase in health care costs in industrialized countries over the past 25 years was due to the number of physicians and to the number and level of services they provide per patient. Only 22% was due to demographic factors including population aging

Sources:

- Gordon, M. et al. "Geriatric medicine: A challenge for the present and future." *Annals of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada*, 24, 4, (June 1991): 194-196.
- Statistics Canada. Population Studies Division. "Seniors are different in the pattern of health services they receive." *Info-Age*, 2, 1, (October 1990).
- Angus Reid Group Ltd. *Medication use in Canadians aged 55 and older. Opinions and attitudes*. Ottawa: Canadian coalition on Medication Use and the Elderly, 1991.
- Andrews, F. and I. Rootman. "Psychoactive drug use among Canadian women: A discussion of some results of Canada's Health Promotion Survey." *Chronic Diseases in Canada*, 11, 2, (1990).
- Evans, R. Illusions of necessity: Evading responsibility for choice in health care. In Coburn, D. et al. (ed.). *Health and Canadian society*. Toronto: Fitzner & Whiteside, 1987.

AGING VIGNETTE #11

A Quick Portrait of Canadian Seniors

Needing Support for Daily Living? From Whom?

- The National Advisory Council on Aging estimated that 500,000 seniors require substantial support for daily living
 - 270,000 live in the community
 - 230,000 live in institutionsBy 2031, about 1.5 million seniors will require substantial support (1986, 1987 data)
- According to HomeSupport Canada,
 - the number of home support workers and services to seniors increased by at least 50% in the past decade
 - currently, 1,000 home support agencies exist in Canada
 - 300 home support agencies serving about 300,000 clients, mostly seniors, provided 13 million hours of service in 1991
- 15% of retired persons report that the lack of community services is problematic for them (1990 data)
- Family members or friends provide between 75% and 85% of the help received by seniors needing care in the community (1980, 1981 and 1985 data)
- Up to 80% of seniors received help with at least one activity, including grocery shopping, housework, meal preparation, yard work, managing money and personal care (1985 data)
Recourse to help rose sharply among seniors aged 80+

Sources:

National Advisory Council on Aging. *The NACA position on informal caregiving: Support and enhancement*. Ottawa: 1990.
Health and Welfare Canada. *Survey of Old Age Security and Canada Pension Plan retirement benefits*. Ottawa: 1990.
Unpublished data.
HomeSupport Canada
Chappell, N. *Formal programs for informal caregivers of the elderly or supporting elder care*. Prepared for the Policy, Communications and Information Branch, Health and Welfare Canada. Ottawa: 1989.
Stone, L.O. *Family and friendship ties among Canada's seniors*. Cat. No. 89-508. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1988.

AGING VIGNETTE #12

A Quick Portrait of Canadian Seniors

What About their Living Arrangements?

- In 1991,
 - 73% of men aged 65+ and 43% of women aged 65+ lived in a private household with their spouse
 - 14% of men aged 65+ and 34% of women aged 65+ lived alone
 - 40% of women aged 75+ lived alone (i.e., 318, 715 women)
- Between 1981 and 1991, although the number of seniors living in institutions increased from 153,880 to 203,695, the percentage of the senior population living in institutions actually decreased from 8% to 6.4% the proportion of institutional residents aged 75+ rose from 82% to 85%
- 72% of seniors residing in institutions in 1991 were women
- Compared with the national average (9%), more households with senior maintainers live in high-rise apartments (5 storeys or more). For households with maintainers aged 65 to 74, and 75+, these proportions are 12% and 19%, respectively
- The proportion of women aged 65+ living in non-family private households is more than double that of men

Sources:

Statistics Canada. *Families: Number, type and structure*. Cat, No. 93-312. The Nation Series. Ottawa: 1992.

Statistics Canada. A national overview, population and dwelling counts. Cat. No. 93-301. Ottawa: 1982 and 1992.

Statistics Canada. A portrait of seniors in Canada. Cat. No. 89-519. Ottawa: 1990.

AGING VIGNETTE #13

A Quick Portrait of Canadian Seniors

Living How? Housed Where? Satisfied?

- 91% of retired seniors report that they do not experience housing problems (1990 data)
- 80% of families headed by a senior own their own homes, 72% of them mortgage-free (1984 data)
- Families headed by a senior were twice as likely (80%) to own their home as unattached seniors (41%) (1984 data)
- In 1987,
 - 75% of older Canadians said they would prefer to stay in their own homes as long as possible
 - 20% indicated that they would consider cashing in home equity to pay for in-home care to eliminate or postpone the need to be institutionalized
- 29% of seniors rent their dwellings
 - Women, especially as they get older, are more likely to be renters than owners
 - Among women aged 80+, 48% are renters (1986 data)
- Canadians aged 55+ are less likely to move than the general population. In 1985, 14% of the population aged 55+ indicated that they would likely move in the next two years, compared to 31% of the total population

Sources:

- Health and Welfare Canada. *Survey of Old Age Security and Canada Pension Plan retirement benefit recipients*. Ottawa: 1990. Unpublished data.
- National Advisory Council on Aging. *The economic situation of Canada's seniors*. Ottawa: 1991.
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. *Concept evaluation of life tenancy*. Ottawa: 1987.
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. *Attitudes of seniors to special retirement housing, life tenancy and other housing options*. Ottawa: 1987.
- Statistics Canada. *Family expenditure in Canada, 1986*. Cat. No. 62-555. Ottawa: 1989.
- Gutman, G. and N. Blackie (eds). *Aging in place*. Burnaby, B.C.: Gerontology Research Centre, Simon Fraser University, 1986.

AGING VIGNETTE #14

A Quick Portrait of Canadian Seniors

Needing Social Housing?

- Seniors represent between 41% and 46% of the occupants of public housing, rent-supplement units and residential rehabilitation units, and 27% of the residents in non-profit or co-op housing or units that had been renovated for accessibility (1976, 1980 data)
- A study of seniors who relocated to age-segregated rent-subsidized apartments . in metropolitan Toronto showed neither decrease in morale nor in satisfaction with housing, the neighbourhood or the overall environment (1985, 1986 data)
- In 1990,
 - 52% of heads of subsidized households were aged 55+
 - 12% were aged 55 to 64
 - 17% were aged 65 to 74
 - 23% were aged 75+

29% of heads of subsidized households were unattached women aged 55+

- 4% were aged 55 to 64
- 9% were aged 65 to 74
- 16% were aged 75+

35% of all households headed by women aged 75+ lived in subsidized housing, as did 24% of those aged 65+ and 19% of those aged 55+

Sources:

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. *Social housing review*. Ottawa: 1984.

Rutman, D.L. and J.L. Freedman. "Anticipation relocation: Coping strategies and the meaning of home for older people." *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 7, 1, (1988).

Blakeney, M. "Canadians in subsidized housing." *Canadian Social Trends*, 27, (Winter 1992). Cat. No. 11-008.

AGING VIGNETTE #15

A Quick Portrait of Canadian Seniors

Using What Transportation?

- 87% of senior couples own a car
63% of unattached senior men own a car
33% of unattached senior women own a car (1986 data)
- The likelihood of using public transportation is 67% for senior couples, 65% for unattached senior men and 78% for unattached senior women (1986 data)
- Between 25% and 30% of small-town seniors do not drive a car and very few small towns have collective transportation services such as buses or taxis (1990 data)
- 25% of seniors report having problems with transportation (1990 data)
- Approximately 70% of Canadians aged 55+ are licensed to drive. In one year, 3% to 5% of them are involved in a motor vehicle collision (1989 report)
- Accident statistics indicate that people aged 60+ are more likely than younger drivers to be involved in collisions and to suffer serious or fatal injuries as a result
- Older drivers are more likely to be in multi-vehicle collisions and to be found guilty of failure to yield the right of way, making an error when changing lanes or directions, or backing up unsafely

Sources:

Statistics Canada. *Family expenditure in Canada* 1986. Cat. No. 62-555. Ottawa: 1989.

Hodge, G. and L. McKay. *Small town seniors and their freedom to move*. Burnaby, B.C.: Gerontology Research Centre, Simon Fraser University, 1992.

Health and Welfare Canada. *Survey of Old Age Security and Canada Pension Plan retirement benefit recipients*. Ottawa: 1990. Unpublished data.

MacDonald, A. *Transportation: Options for the future*. Writing in Gerontology No. 5. Ottawa: National Advisory Council on Aging, 1989.

AGING VIGNETTE #16

A Quick Portrait of Canadian Seniors

Working? Wanting to Work? Or to Retire?

- From 1981 to 1991, labour force participation
 - decreased from 21.9% to 17.6% among men aged 65 to 69
 - decreased from 8.9% to 7.5% among men aged 70+
 - decreased from 7.9% to 7.0% among women aged 65-69
 - decreased from 2.5% to 1.7%. among women 70+
- 10% of retirees report that lack of employment opportunities represents a problem (1990 data)
- About 1/3 of Canadians aged 15+ (7.2 million adults) supported the idea of mandatory retirement in 1989
- Of the currently employed in 1989
 - 43% intended to retire before age 65
 - 14% anticipated that they would retire at 65
 - 1 % wanted to retire after 65
 - 7% did not plan to retire
 - 34% did not know when they would retire
- From 1975 to 1987, the percentage of men aged 55 to 64 in the work force dropped from 79% to 66%, while the figure for women rose from 31% to 35%
- Every day during 1985, at least 300 Canadian men and women retired from the work force

Sources:

Statistics Canada. *Labour force annual averages*. Cat. No. 71-529. Ottawa: 1981 and 1991.

Health and Welfare Canada. *Survey of Old Age Security and Canada Pension Plan benefit recipients*. Ottawa: 1990.
Unpublished data.

Lowe, G.S. "Canadians and retirement." *Canadian Social Trends*, 26, (Autumn 1992). Cat. No. 11-008. Guppy, N. "The magic of 65: Issues and evidence in the mandatory retirement debate." *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 8, 2, (1989).

Kling, S. and J. Levy. *It's never too early*. Toronto: Stoddart, 1985.

AGING VIGNETTE #17

A Quick Portrait of Canadian Seniors

Educated? How Educated?

- In 1986, 27% of individuals aged 65+ had graduated from high school or a postsecondary educational institution
By 2006, at least 37% of seniors will have an educational accreditation at the secondary or post-secondary level
- Based on levels of educational attainment, almost 40% of Canadian seniors are handicapped by deficient literacy skills
The problem is more common in Eastern Canada, among francophones and among seniors with the lowest incomes (1987 data)
- In 1984, 4% of seniors were enrolled in some form of continuing education
Enrolment rose to about 20% among seniors with post-secondary education
- Based on the projected growth of the senior population and the increases in educational attainment from one generation to the next, it is estimated that there will be a 94% increase in adult education course enrolment by 2005, and a 141% increase by 2010
- From 1984 to 1991, participation in Elderhostel and the Séjours culturels des aînés increased from 3,000 to 15,000
From 1980 to 1991, participation in educational activities organized by Creative Retirement Manitoba increased from 200 to 3,000

Sources:

- The Creative Research Group Ltd. *Literacy in Canada: A research report*. Ottawa: Southam News, 1987.
- Devereaux, M.S. *One in every five: A survey of adult education in Canada*. Ottawa: Secretary of State, 1984.
- Denton, F.T. et al. "Participation in adult education by the elderly: A multivariate analysis and some implications for the future."
Canadian Journal on Aging, 7, 1, (1988).
- Elderhostel Canada
Creative Retirement Manitoba
Statistics Canada. *Schooling and major field of study*. 1986 Census. Cat. No. 93-110. Ottawa: 1989.

AGING VIGNETTE #18

A Quick Portrait of Canadian Seniors

Volunteering their Services?

- In 1981,
 - 17% of women and 11% of men aged 65 to 69 provided volunteer services
 - 10% of women and 7% of men aged 70+ provided volunteers services
- Seniors with post-secondary education comprise the highest proportion of volunteers (1985 data)
- A large number of persons aged 55+ provide various forms of social support:
 - 20% gave transportation assistance
 - 15% did volunteer work
 - 10% helped with housework (1985 data)
- A total of 21,311 community projects involving the overall participation of 2,784,248 seniors were funded by the New Horizons Program from 1981-82 to 1991-92
- In 1989,
 - 38% of seniors made charitable donations compared to 30% of all Canadian taxpayers
 - \$803 was contributed on average by seniors compared to \$549 on average by all Canadian taxpayers

Sources:

Government of Canada. *Fact book on aging in Canada*. Ottawa: DSS, 1983.

Stone, L.O. *Family and friendship ties among Canada's seniors*. Cat. No. 89-508. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1988.

Health and Welfare Canada, New Horizons Program.

Revenue Canada. *1991 taxation statistics: Analyzing the returns of individuals for the 1989 taxation year*. Table 4. Ottawa: DSS, 1991.

AGING VIGNETTE #19

A Quick Portrait of Canadian Seniors

Wealthy? Spending How?

- Seniors are more likely than other Canadians to hold Canada Savings Bonds (38% vs 31 %) and to invest in the stock market (16% vs 15%) (1984 data)
- 24% of the assets of families headed by a senior could be easily turned into cash if needed as opposed to 12% for other Canadians (1984 data)
- 34% of families headed by a senior, compared to 73% of all families in Canada, reported some kind of indebtedness (charge card balance, bank loan or other instalment debt) (1984 data)
- People maintain similar levels of spending in their senior years as in middle adulthood unless they experience a reduction in income (multi-year data from 1969 to 1982)
- About 40% of total assets of senior home owners is comprised of the equity they have in their homes

Sources:

Statistics Canada. *Distribution of wealth in Canada 1984*. Cat. No. 13-580. Ottawa: 1986.

National Advisory Council on Aging. *The economic situation of Canada's seniors*. Ottawa: 1991.

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AGING VIGNETTE #20

A Quick Portrait of Canadian Seniors

Entertained? Informed?

- In 1986,
2/3 of seniors aged 65 to 74 and 50% of seniors aged 75+ went to a movie or to a restaurant about once a month

Between 40% and 66% of seniors spent money on recreational equipment and associated services (including skis, golf clubs, home exercise equipment, hobby materials, computers, cameras, camping equipment), compared to 83% of other Canadians

Seniors preferred to spend money on spectator entertainment (including going to movies, the theatre, concerts or sports events), than on home entertainment equipment, although fewer seniors than other age groups spent on either form of recreation

12% of seniors spent money on package travel tours as opposed to 11% of younger Canadians

- In one month, 58% of seniors travel outside their home community (1988 report)
- Men aged 60+ watch 33 hours of television on average each week
Women aged 60+ watch 36 hours
Men aged 18+ watch 23 hours
Women aged 18+ watch 27 hours (1988 report)
- 79% of Canadians aged 65+ read at least one newspaper a week (1988 report)

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