

UNECE Task Force on Mainstreaming Ageing

Country Note

CANADA

About Mainstreaming Ageing in Canada

Canada has been working to advance four primary policy objectives, namely: (a) improving seniors' access to affordable housing; (b) improving the income security of seniors; (c) promoting healthy ageing and improving access to health care; and, (d) fostering the social inclusion and engagement of seniors. While consistent with those four objectives, ageing related policies tend to be developed as specific measures that respond to specific challenges and not as part of a macro level plan to adapt to demographic change¹.

The Government of Canada began making commitments on mainstreaming sex and gender in the 1970s in its policy development. In 1995, the Government of Canada committed to using Gender Based Analysis (GBA) to advance gender equality in Canada, as part of the *United Nations' Beijing Platform for Action*. Over time, GBA has shifted from a more specific gender-mainstreaming tool to one that focuses more broadly on how programs and policies affect various groups of people differently, due to gender and other diverse identity factors, including age. In 2011, Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) was introduced to highlight this shift. While not primarily focused on mainstreaming ageing, by incorporating age, GBA+ is contributing to mainstreaming ageing. GBA+ has been mandatory in all Memoranda to Cabinet and Treasury Board submissions since 2016 and budget proposals since 2018. Guidelines also exist to apply GBA+ to a range of government activities including consultations and regulatory impact analysis.

Both nationally and internationally, Canada is committed to the protection of human rights of all persons, including older persons. Section 15 of the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which forms part of Canada's Constitution, guarantees the right to equality under the law, and to equal protection and benefit of the law without discrimination on the basis of various grounds, including age. As such, Canada has been actively engaged in a number of multilateral fora to promote the rights of older persons, including through the: 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and associated Regional Implementation Strategy; Global Strategy, Action Plan on Ageing; Decade on Healthy Ageing; Global Action Plan on the Public Health Response to Dementia; and, in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to which the Government of Canada remains fully committed.

¹ See, for example, the following specific measures : [A National Dementia Strategy for Canada: Together We Aspire](#), [Accessible Canada Act](#), [National Housing Strategy: A Place to Call Home](#), [National Strategy for Financial Literacy: Phase 1: Strengthening Seniors Financial Literacy](#) .

Structures – Institutional Setting of Ageing Policies

In Canada, jurisdiction over health and socio-economic issues faced by seniors is shared across federal, provincial/territorial (P/T), municipal and some Indigenous governments.

Governments work collaboratively—together with civil society and other stakeholders—on a number of key shared areas of responsibility with respect to seniors. For example, the health care services for seniors fall primarily under P/T jurisdiction, with a few exceptions falling under federal jurisdiction, however, the federal government has established transfers to P/T's. Local transportation, an important issue for seniors, especially those in rural areas, is largely the responsibility of P/T and municipal governments with federal infrastructure investments being one of the funding sources.

Within the federal government, Employment and Social Development Canada's (ESDC) Seniors and Pensions Policy Secretariat is a focal point for federal seniors-related efforts, to raise the profile of seniors' issues and to develop a collaborative approach to policy and program development for the rapidly increasing number of seniors as Canada's population ages.

The Seniors and Pensions Policy Secretariat plays a role in mainstreaming ageing through its support to the Minister responsible for the seniors' portfolio. The Secretariat implements a mainstreaming ageing approach by systematically reviewing Cabinet documents, identifying issues of concern to seniors for the Minister to raise at Cabinet.

The Forum of Federal, Provincial and Territorial (FPT) Ministers Responsible for Seniors (the Forum), which was created in 1992 and falls within the federal Seniors and Pensions Policy Secretariat, serves as a coordinating mechanism across provinces and territories with respect to the application of the ageing lens by governments. The Forum includes representatives from both federal and provincial/territorial governments at the Minister, Deputy Minister and Official levels. The Forum meets regularly to discuss issues of importance to seniors; share information on seniors' wellbeing; and undertake initiatives to advance issues of common concern, including, where possible, in collaboration with other FPT fora. Since 2018, the Forum has pursued a multi-year work plan approach to undertake policy research on its priority areas.

Additionally, the Secretariat leads and coordinates work related to the Interdepartmental Committee on Seniors, which is a forum on seniors' issues for all federal departments and agencies whose mandate and/or responsibilities contribute to advancing federal interests in seniors' and older adults' issues. The Secretariat also supports the National Seniors Council, which was created in 2007 to advise the Government of Canada on issues that matter to seniors. Council members are nominated based on their expertise and experience related to seniors' issues.

The Public Health Agency of Canada's (PHAC) Division of Aging, Seniors and Dementia is another key organization with respect to federal government action on healthy ageing. The Division of Aging, Seniors and Dementia supports mainstreaming of ageing by bringing a seniors' lens to the work of PHAC and its partners.

Another federal organization, Indigenous Services Canada, is responsible for delivering health services to First Nations on Reserve.

Laws, Policies, and Strategic Framework

The Government of Canada has been working to advance seniors' priorities, recognizing the growing senior population resulting in new opportunities and challenges. In 2019, the National Seniors Council started examining potential objectives and elements of a national seniors' strategy. Several provincial and territorial governments have developed comprehensive strategies that respond to seniors' needs falling under their areas of responsibility.

Methods and Tools

Research, Data Collection and Analysis

Canada's statistical agency (Statistics Canada) holds census, survey and administrative data on a number of topics including seniors' demographics, health, autonomy, independence, security, and services needed and received. Its mandate includes the production of data and analysis related to key issues and challenges in Canada, which includes population ageing. In recent years, the agency has conducted a comprehensive review of the data and analysis produced related to population ageing and seniors. This review included broad consultations with many stakeholders, including other federal departments and academics. Within Statistics Canada, divisions producing data on seniors and ageing have a governance structure including advisory committees, providing feedback and ideas on data gaps and opportunities.

On September 26, 2018, Statistics Canada launched the Centre for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistics. The Centre's Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistics data hub serves as a focal point for data produced by the Centre, which aims to address gaps in the availability of information by gender, sex, and other intersecting identity factors, such as disability status, Indigenous identity (First Nations, Métis and Inuit), and other ethno-cultural characteristics. In 2019, Statistics Canada launched a Seniors' portal on its web site, providing users a one-stop shop to find data and analysis related to population ageing and seniors². Many documents and analysis on ageing related topics are also disseminated during the year by Statistics Canada.

² The Seniors and Ageing Statistics portal can be accessed here:
https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/subjects-start/seniors_and_ageing

Canada's federal funding agency for health research, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), supports the creation of research evidence and its translation into improved health for Canadians, more effective health services and products and a strengthened Canadian health care system. Through institutional policies, CIHR promotes the integration of sex, gender and other diversity factors, such as age, into the research that it funds to ensure that research is relevant and impactful for Canada's diverse population. CIHR's dedicated Institute of Aging, created to "support research, to promote healthy ageing and to address causes, prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment, support systems, and palliation for a wide range of conditions associated with ageing", provides leadership on strategic ageing-related research funding initiatives. For example, CIHR funds the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging, a 20-year study collecting information on the changing biological, medical, psychological, social, and economic aspects of approximately 50,000 Canadians to provide the evidence needed to understand the determinants of healthy ageing.

In collaboration with all provinces and territories, PHAC conducts national chronic disease surveillance to support the development and evaluation of related policies, programs, and services. Data collection and analysis of chronic diseases also includes risk and protective factors.

Notwithstanding the current efforts supporting data collection and research on seniors, data gaps remain, particularly with respect to older Canadians living in institutions, either health-related or retirement homes. Statistics Canada is currently implementing strategies to address this data gap. Other challenges include, for example, improving data disaggregation for a better understanding of intersectionality of risk factors and improving national data sets on elder abuse and fraud, and a lack of distinctions-based (i.e., First Nations, Inuit and Métis) data for Indigenous Populations. Federal departments work together, as well as with Statistics Canada to identify and address such gaps.

Awareness raising, advocacy and education

Federal departments disseminate tools to raise awareness on various ageing-related issues that fall under their respective portfolio. For example, PHAC works closely with provinces and territories to actively promote the uptake and implementation of the Age-Friendly Communities initiative throughout Canada³. Also, CMHC conducts research and disseminates information on seniors and ageing in place and more broadly on accessible and adaptable housing⁴.

³ See the section on additional relevant links to access related guides and documentation.

⁴ See CMHC information on ageing in place at the following link <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/developing-and-renovating/accessible-adaptable-housing/ageing-in-place>. Broader

Stakeholder Engagement

The Government of Canada engages with a wide range of stakeholders to develop and implement initiatives that promote the well-being of older persons in Canada. Such initiatives include measures to improve the income security of older persons, facilitate their access to affordable housing, promote healthy ageing and improve their access to health care, and foster social inclusion and engagement of seniors. Stakeholder engagement typically targets seniors themselves, as well as academics, private sector, and civil society charitable and advocacy organizations who are reached through various engagement activities such as online consultations, surveys and roundtables.

Specific consultation efforts include, for example, the activities pursued by the Ministerial Advisory Board on Dementia, and those conducted by the National Seniors Council as well as the FPT Ministers Responsible for Seniors consultations with stakeholders on various seniors' issues. Seniors and stakeholder groups with expertise in seniors' housing were also consulted and provided feedback during the extensive National Housing Strategy consultations in 2016 and the Human Rights-based Approach to Housing consultations in 2018. The Financial Consumer Agency of Canada also engaged with multiple stakeholders as part of its consultation efforts to identify banking challenges experienced by seniors, which led to the creation of a Code of Conduct for the Delivery of Banking Services to Seniors, adopted by the banking industry in July 2019.

Mechanisms are in place at various levels of government to involve older persons in the policy making process. Several provinces and territories as well as numerous municipalities have established committees comprised of seniors, senior organizations and/or experts to advise the government on senior-related policies and programs.

Additionally, in line with Canada's commitment to building new relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis based on recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership, ESDC recognizes the distinct cultural role of Indigenous Elders and the unique context of Indigenous seniors, who make up a large portion of Residential School survivors. To help departmental officials engage with Indigenous Elders respectfully and in accordance with departmental policies, ESDC has created an Elder Protocol Guide and supports the inclusion of Indigenous Elders and seniors in engagement activities that inform policy making.

There are many examples of information campaigns to raise awareness on ageing-related issues among the general public and/or specific target groups or sectors. ESDC engages in proactive communications to inform seniors and

information and tips on accessible and adaptable housing can be found here: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/developing-and-renovating/accessible-adaptable-housing>.

seniors' stakeholders about the wide range of government supports and services—including anti-fraud supports—available to them.

PHAC is also working to prevent falls and their related injuries by raising public awareness of the risk factors that contribute to older adults' falls and how to prevent them. In June 2019, PHAC announced a Dementia Strategy for Canada which included funding for increasing awareness about dementia through national social marketing campaigns using a variety of strategies.

The Forum of FPT Ministers Responsible for Seniors has also developed numerous reports and products to raise awareness of issues related to ageing in Canada, some of which target specific groups. For example, the Forum commissioned the development of three resources, called Supplements, to address the social inclusion needs of three specific sub-populations of seniors that may be at high risk of being socially isolated, namely: recent immigrant and refugee seniors, LGBTQ2 seniors, and Indigenous seniors. These tools and guidelines assist people and organizations who want to host effective meetings to exchange ideas and respond to the social isolation of seniors of these vulnerable sub-groups. These toolkits are available on the Canada.ca website:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/seniors/forum.html>

Age-Sensitive Analysis and Policy Development

As discussed at the outset of this country note, Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) is an important tool for ensuring that age-sensitive analysis and policy development is embedded in the policy process across federal organizations.

Generation-proof / Age-sensitive / Age-responsive Budgeting

The Government of Canada uses GBA+ to assess how diverse groups of women, men and non-binary people may experience programs and initiatives. As noted earlier, the “plus” in GBA+ acknowledges that GBA goes beyond biological (sex) and socio-cultural (gender) differences to consider other identity factors such as ethnicity, age, income level, and mental or physical ability.

In Budget 2019, GBA+ was performed for every budget measure and a summary of this analysis, including information on the expected impacts of budget measures by age distribution, was published in the Budget 2019 Gender Statement and GBA+ Annex which can be access at the following links:

<https://www.budget.gc.ca/2019/docs/plan/chap-05-en.html#Gender-Statement-Equality>

<https://www.budget.gc.ca/2019/docs/gba-acs/gba-acs-chap01-en.html>

In 2017, the Government of Canada also introduced a Gender Results Framework, which is a whole-of-government tool to track how Canada is currently performing with respect to gender equality, to help define what is needed to achieve greater equality and to determine how progress will be measured going forward. While this framework is focused on the Government of Canada's priorities for gender equality, it also includes a number of equality goals that address issues and challenges experienced by people of different ages, particularly, youth: <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/grf-crrg/index-en.html>.

Best Practices Examples

1) The Canadian Institute of Health Research's Institute of Ageing Healthy and Productive Work Initiative

Link: <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/47706.html>

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research's 13 virtual Institutes all work together to co-design and/or co-fund strategic research funding activities. Through strategic, multi-Institute led activities, ageing considerations can be integrated into the design of research funding initiatives, even when their primary focus is not ageing health. For example, the CIHR Institute of Aging is a co-lead on the [Healthy and Productive Work](#) initiative that is co-funded by CIHR and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), which brings together researchers and stakeholders to develop innovative and new approaches that support the health and productivity of Canada's diverse and changing workforce. This initiative supports the development, implementation, evaluation and scaling-up of evidence-based interventions (e.g. accommodations, tools and policies) taking into consideration sex, gender, age, and physical and mental health, to ultimately foster healthy, meaningful and productive work for all workers. This integrative and collaborative approach to designing and launching health research funding initiatives encourages the inclusion of ageing considerations in interdisciplinary research activities.

2) The National Housing Strategy: A Place to Call Home

Link: <https://www.placetocallhome.ca/>

In November 2017, the Government of Canada launched Canada's first ever National Housing Strategy (NHS), a 10-year, \$55+-billion plan that will help ensure that Canadians have access to housing that meets their needs and that they can afford. Grounded in the principles of inclusion, participation, accountability and non-discrimination, the NHS prioritizes those most in need, including seniors. The NHS is expected to have a positive impact on seniors, by improving social inclusion, diverse communities and building housing that is sustainable, accessible, mixed-income, and mixed-use. The NHS set targets to create 125,000 new housing units, including at least 7,000 new affordable and accessible housing units for seniors, lifting 530,000 families out of housing need, as well as repair and renew more than 300,000 housing units and reduce chronic homelessness by 50 percent.

In June 2019, the National Housing Strategy Act became law. It recognizes that the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right affirmed in international law, and that the housing policy of the Government of Canada is to further the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural

Rights. The Act also recognizes that housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person and to building inclusive communities, including for seniors.

Additional Relevant Links

Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) tools and materials:

- Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide by the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors (2007): http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/alt-formats/pdf/publications/public/healthy-sante/age_friendly_rural/AFRRRC_en.pdf
- Age-Friendly Communities in Canada: Community Implementation Guide and Toolbox: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/age-friendly-communities-canada-community-implementation-guide.html>
- Age-Friendly Communities Evaluation Guide: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/alt-formats/pdf/indicators-indicateurs-v2-eng.pdf>
- Age-Friendly Communication: Facts, Tips and Ideas: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/ageing-seniors/publications/publications-general-public/friendly-communication-facts-tips-ideas.html>

Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) materials on GBA+:

- Description of Government's approach to GBA+: <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/gba-acs/approach-approche-en.html>
- Online GBA+ Course: <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/gba-acs/course-cours-en.html>

Employment and Social Development Canada informative campaign page on programs and services for seniors:

- Canada.ca/seniors: https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/campaigns/seniors.html?utm_campaign=not-applicable&utm_medium=vanity-url&utm_source=canada-ca_seniors

Financial Consumer Agency of Canada materials:

- Code of Conduct for Seniors and Banking: <https://cba.ca/Assets/CBA/Documents/Files/Article%20Category/PDF/vol-seniors-en.pdf>
- Seniors' financial literacy strategy: <https://www.canada.ca/en/financial-consumer-agency/programs/financial-literacy/seniors-financial-literacy.html>

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation resources on seniors housing, housing need, and aging in place

- Maintaining Seniors' Independence through Home Adaptations: A Self-Assessment Guide: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/data-and-research/publications-and-reports/maintaining-seniors-independence-through-home-adaptations-a>
- Developing a Housing Strategy for an Age-Friendly Community – Guide for Municipalities: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/housing-observer-online/2018-housing-observer/age-friendly-communities-benefit-all-residents>
- Senior Households Living in Core Housing Need in Canada: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/data-and-research/publications-and-reports/socio-economic-senior-households-living-core-housing-need>