

Intergenerational Relations and Social Cohesion

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Intergenerational Relations

- Micro level – with families
- Among unrelated individuals or groups in public places, in communities, in workplaces
- Macro level – refers to relations between groups in society
 - reflecting social cohesion and solidarity
 - reflecting tensions between generations for resources: Intergenerational inequity

**** Policies, programs and initiatives that can promote positive intergenerational relations and social cohesion**



Intergenerational Solidarity within Families

Dimensions

- Affectual solidarity (emotional closeness)
- Associational solidarity (common activities, type and frequency of contact between IG family members)
- Consensual solidarity (agreement in opinions, values, orientations between generations)
- Functional solidarity (instrumental and social support, financial assistance, direct help and care)
- Normative solidarity (expectations regarding filial and parental obligations and norms about the importance of familistic values, and
- Structural solidarity (creation and maintenance of opportunities for interactions, including geographic proximity between family members)

Bengston & Oyama, 2007



Research Findings - IGR within Families

- Consistent, high levels of emotional closeness across generations over time
- Emotional closeness, shared activities in childhood and financial assistance are reciprocated in continuing emotional ties and the provision of support by adult children to aging parents in later life.

But:

- More recent studies illustrate more diversity, complexity, and negotiation of patterns of relationship and support
- Some general reduction in closeness of ties between generations in U.S. studies



Patterns of IG Support are influenced by:

Determinants at the individual, family and societal level

Opportunities and resources that can promote or hinder social interactions and supportive exchanges

Need structures (the need for assistance and support)

Cultural - contextual Influences (“the social, economic and tax system, the welfare state, the labor market, specific rules and norms of institutions and groups”)

Szydlik, 2012



Cross-National Comparisons of Caregiving for Aging Parents

- Individual factors (Parent's physical limitations, whether spouse/partner present, financial resources)
 - Family factors (avail. of daughters, residential proximity, adult child's employment status)
 - Cultural factors (Extent of public provision of home care, legal obligations, cultural norms)
- ... patterns of assistance and care reflect cultural norms, *familism by default*
- no evidence of “*crowding out*” family involvement

Haberkern & Szydlik, 2010



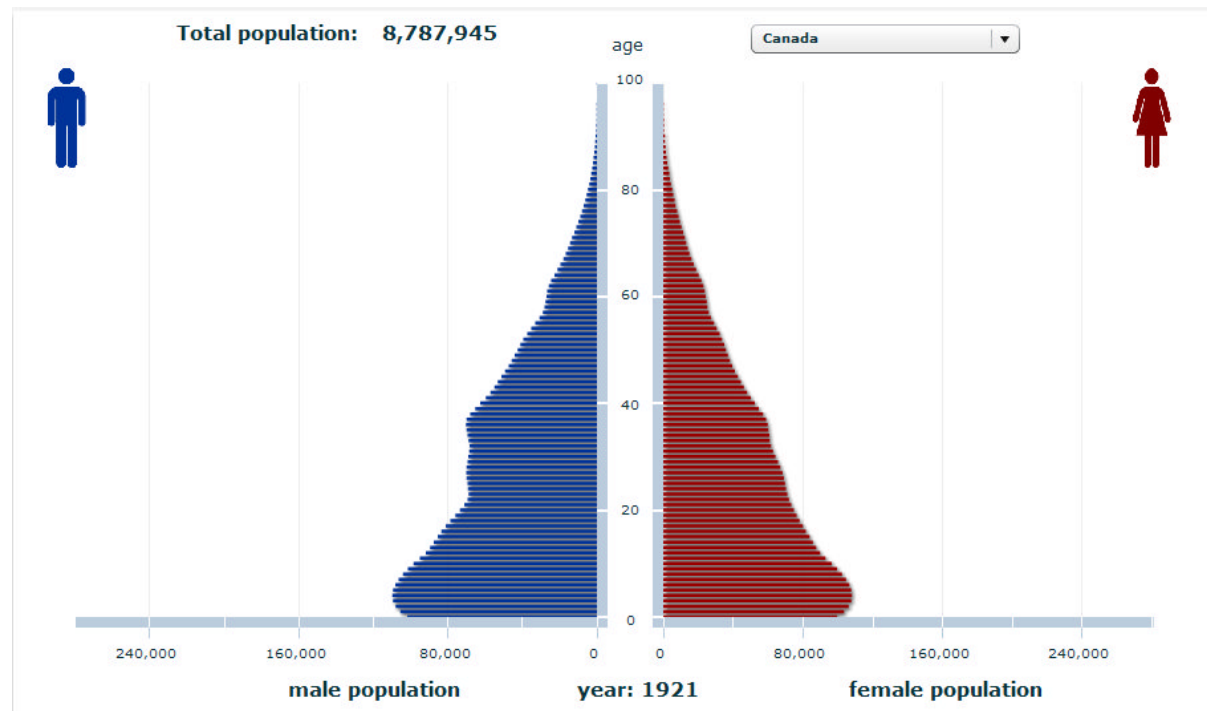
Demographic Trends and Intergenerational Relations

1. Population Aging

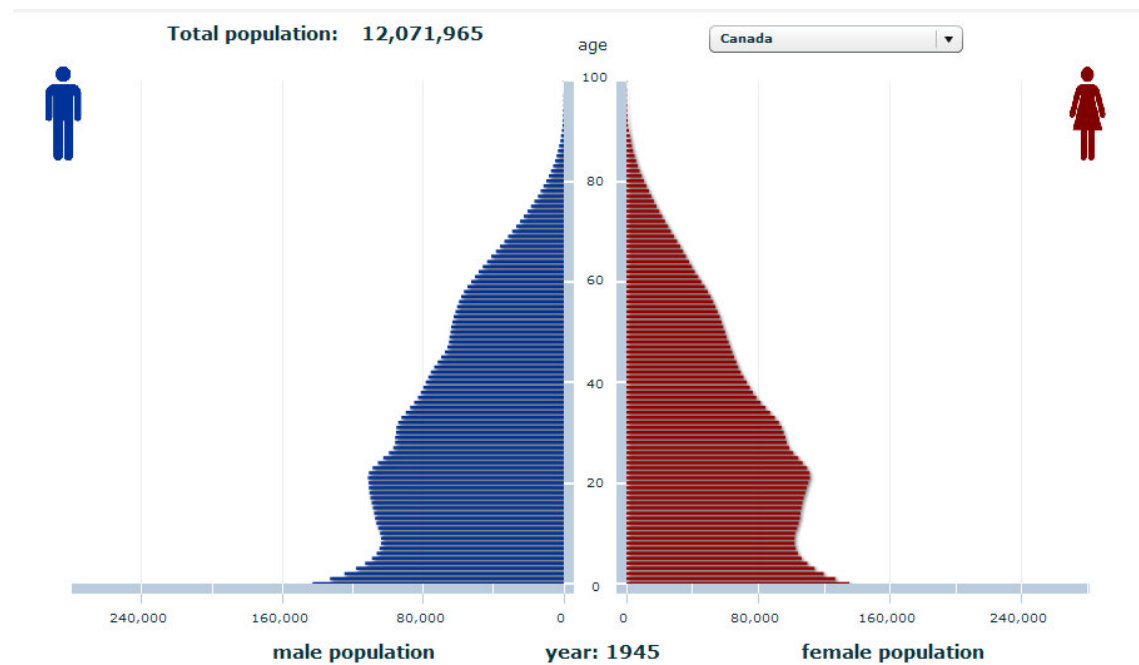
- Low fertility, people living longer
- More years of life shared with siblings, parents, grandparents (greater IG solidarity?)
- More elders with few or no children



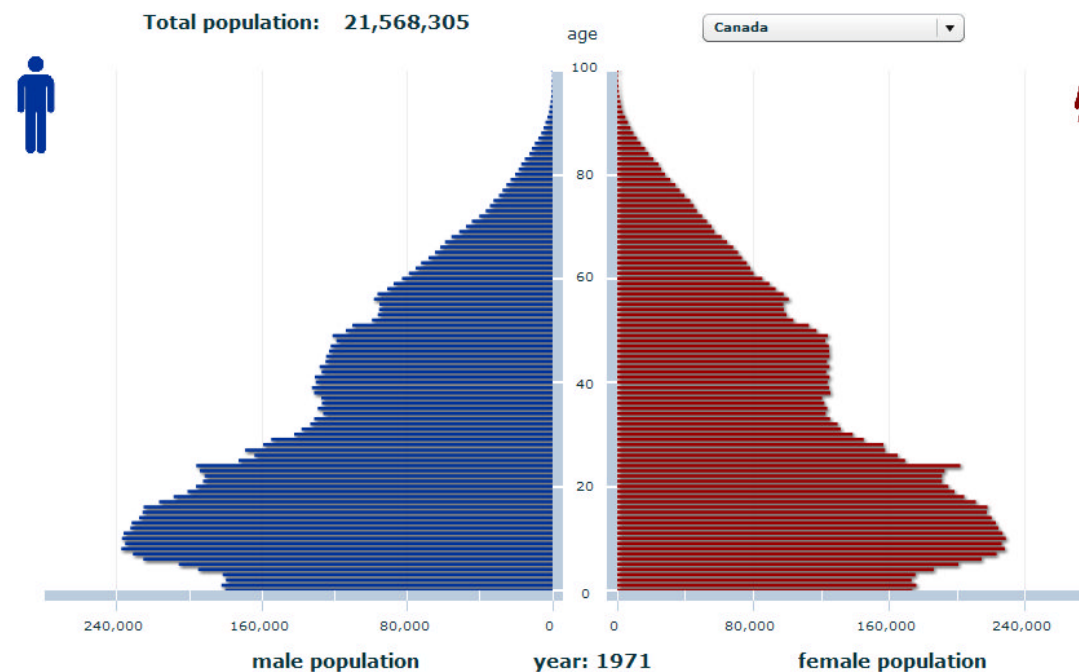
Looking back ...



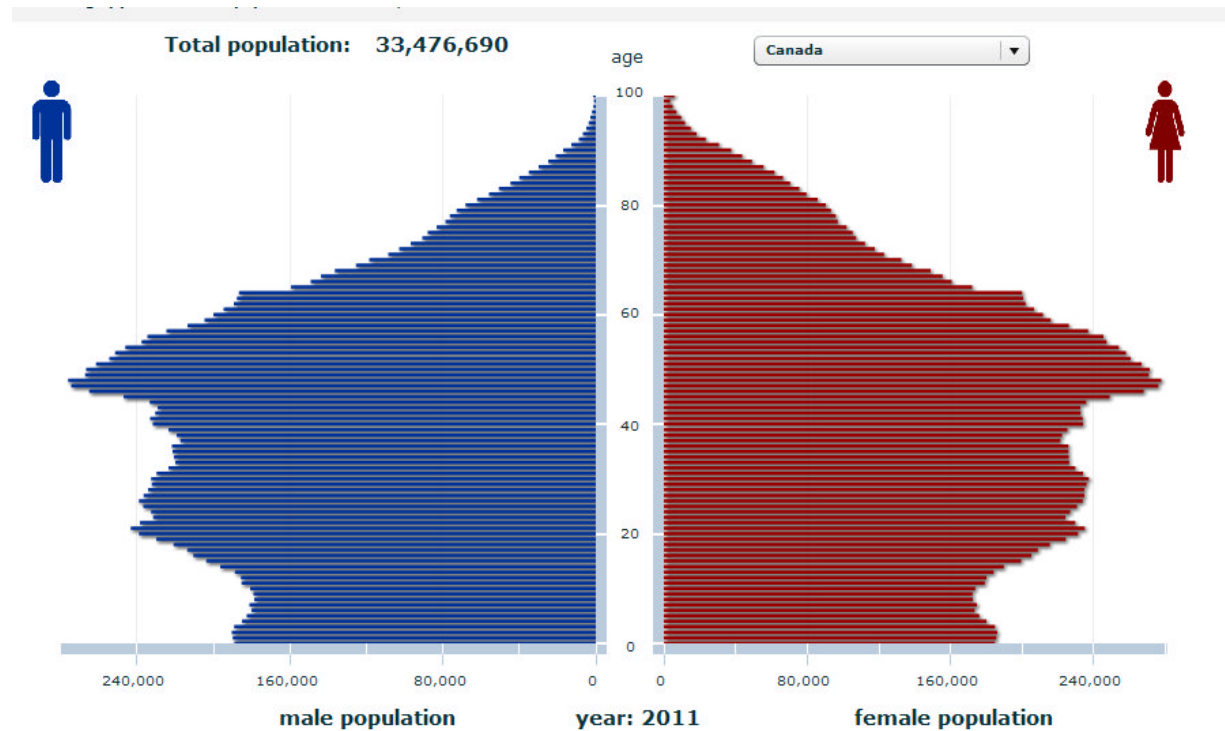
Today's 70 year olds



Boomers making their mark...



Boomers and beyond....



Demographic Trends and Intergenerational Relations

2. Greater diversity in family forms, relationship patterns

3. Dominance of Baby Boomers

- Increase in proportion of older workers, multigenerational workforce
- Increase in proportion who are caregivers
- Greater investment in public services, community resources, housing, “age-friendly cities”
- Pressure on public pensions, health care costs



Demographic Trends and Intergenerational Relations

4. Immigration, cross-national families

5. Gen X and Millennials – Longer transitions for young adults in a challenging labour market

- Extended education, increased debt
- Delayed marriage/couple relationships
- Delayed child bearing
- A labour market characterized by an increasing wage gap with older workers, earnings instability, more precarious employment

Pew Research Center, 2014; Cote & Bynner, 2008



Economic, Employment and Labour Market Trends

- The Financial Crisis and a slow recovery
- The increased prevalence of Precarious Employment – impacts on earnings, savings, job and income security; reduced access to employer-provided benefits and pension plans; capacity to qualify for EI benefits in the event of job loss; maternity/parental/compassionate leave, sickness/disability coverage
 - Precarious employment is more common among already marginalized groups
 - Potential negative impacts on family relationships
- Increased income inequality - reduced impact of govt. redistribution



Intergenerational Inequity

Income inequality within generations, but also

- “Age-based disparity of income, employment opportunities”
- “Generation Squeeze”

Reliance on a smaller workforce with less secure employment, greater debt, higher housing costs

Pressure to increase spending on pensions, home care, health care for older generation



Policy Recommendations to Support Intergenerational Relations and Promote Social Cohesion

- Comprehensive Poverty Reduction Strategies
 - Improve incomes for families with children, disabled
 - Redesign current income support programs
 - Address challenges of the working poor
- A Multipronged Approach to Improve Access to Employment and Assure Decent Jobs
- Improve Parental Leave and Benefits Policies and Access to High Quality Child Care



Policy Recommendations to Support Intergenerational Relations and Promote Social Cohesion

- Strengthen the Caregiving Infrastructure
 - Home Care Services, Long-term Care Policy
 - A national Prescription Drug Plan
 - Mental Health Services
 - Family Caregiver resources, leave, financial supports; supports for employed caregivers
- Recognition of the needs of grandparents and other kin – particularly in cases of kin foster care



Policy Recommendations to Support Intergenerational Relations and Promote Social Cohesion

- Balance priorities for accepting newcomers – economic, family reunification
- Enhance Support for intergenerational programs and initiatives
- Balance “age-friendly” initiatives directed to seniors with those that promote cross-generational participation in public spaces
- Engage in serious public discussions about policies and choices – issues of equity, justice, sustainability



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