

# *Portrait of Rural Aging in Canada*

Janice Keefe, Ph.D.

Director, Nova Scotia Centre on Aging

Lena Isabel Jodrey Chair in Gerontology

Professor, Department of Family Studies & Gerontology

Mount Saint Vincent University

CIHR Best Brains Exchange: Innovative approaches and pathways used to integrate home and community care with primary health care for elderly persons in rural Canada

Nov 28, 2017

# Full disclose

- Rural has been the backdrop of my academic career
- From PhD – Combining work and caregiving in rural vs urban Canada (1996)
- First CIHR grant Net population loss and its impact on health (2002)
- Farm girl from PEI
- Personal and professional



# Key messages

- ✓ Reality 1 - Rural has steadily declined
  - Provincial Differences
- ✓ Reality 2 - There are many rurals
  - Diversity Among Rural Communities
    - Growing old because other have left
    - Growing old because moving in
  - Rural issues affecting continuing care
- ✓ Reality 3 – Older Rural people are diverse
  - Diversity within rural communities

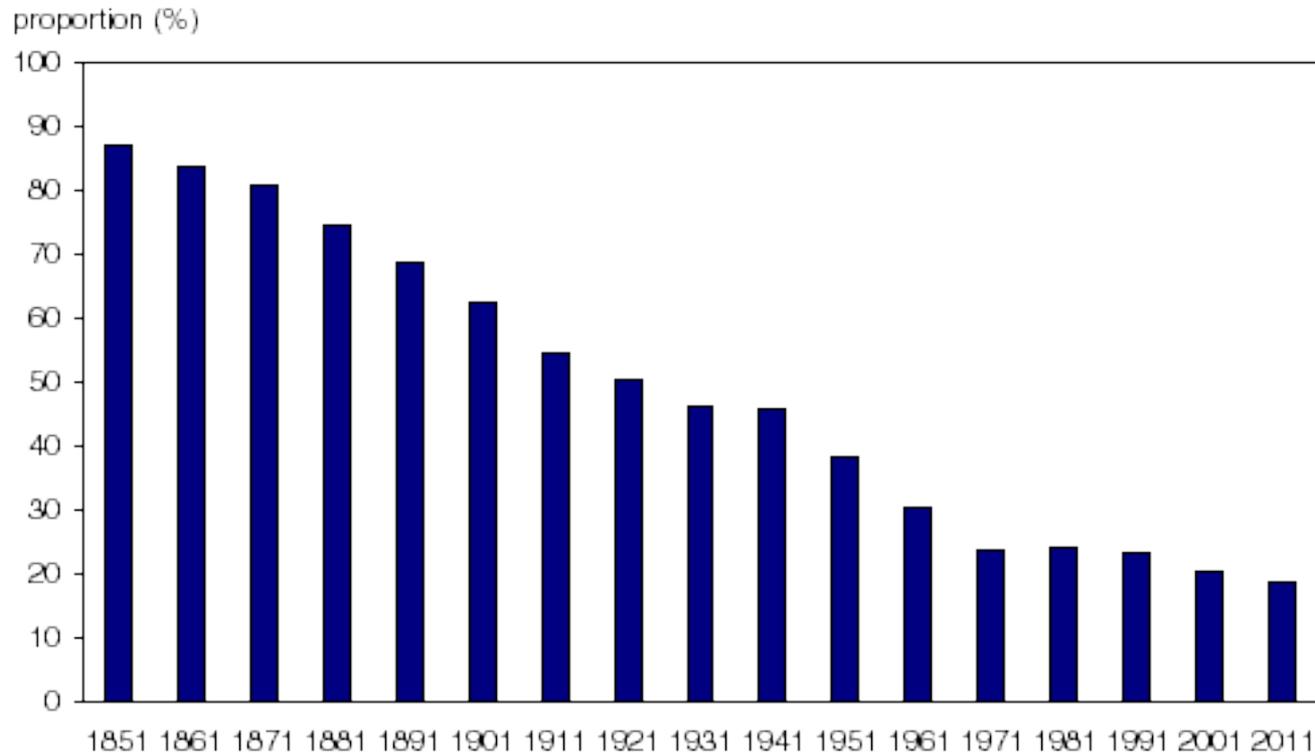


*Do rural elderly people have to move to receive good care?*

# REALITY #1

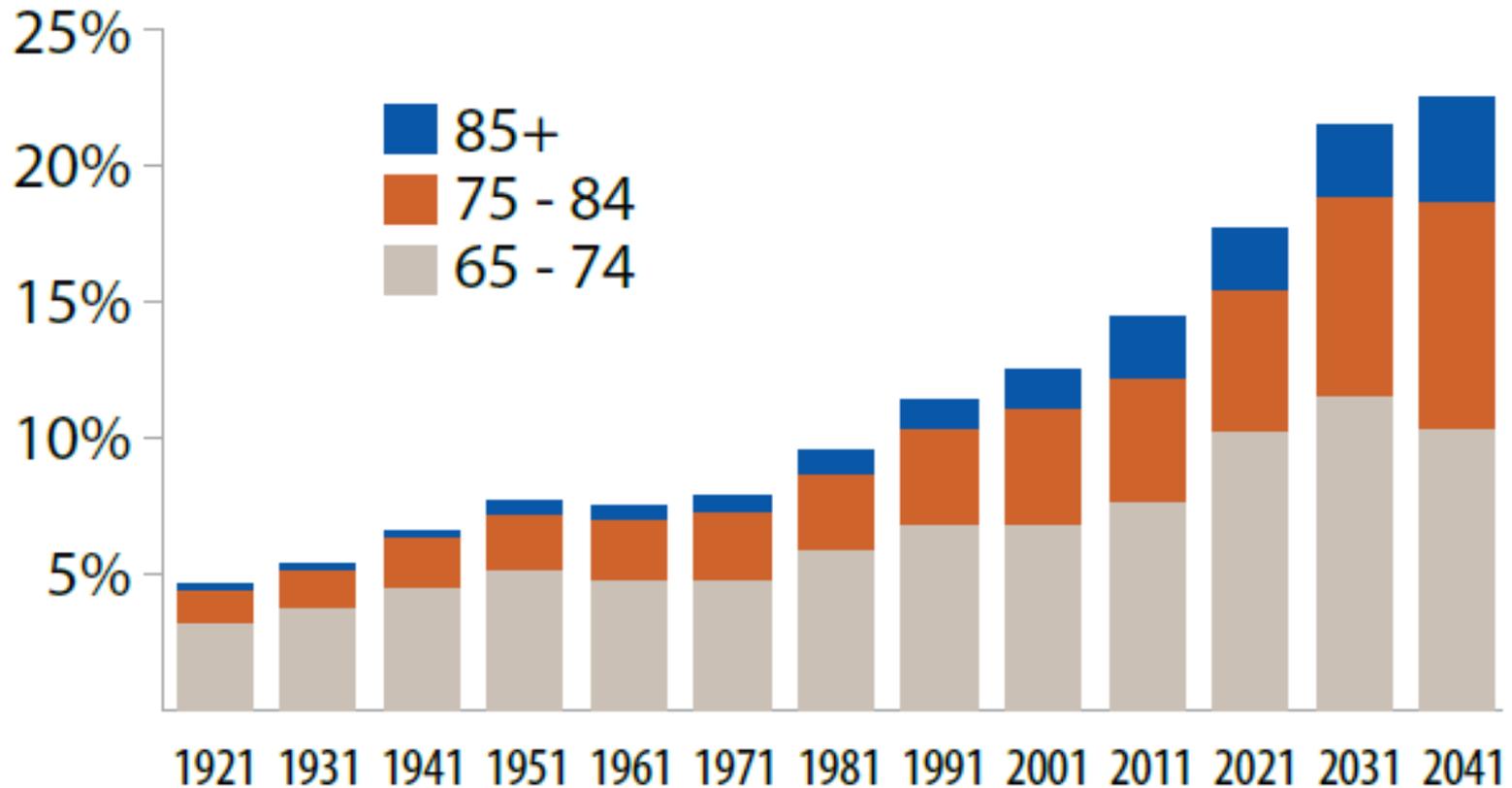
Provinces differ in Proportion of  
Rural and Aging

## Proportion of the population living in rural areas, has steadily declined between 1861-2011 ... although less rapidly since 1971



Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1851 to 2011.

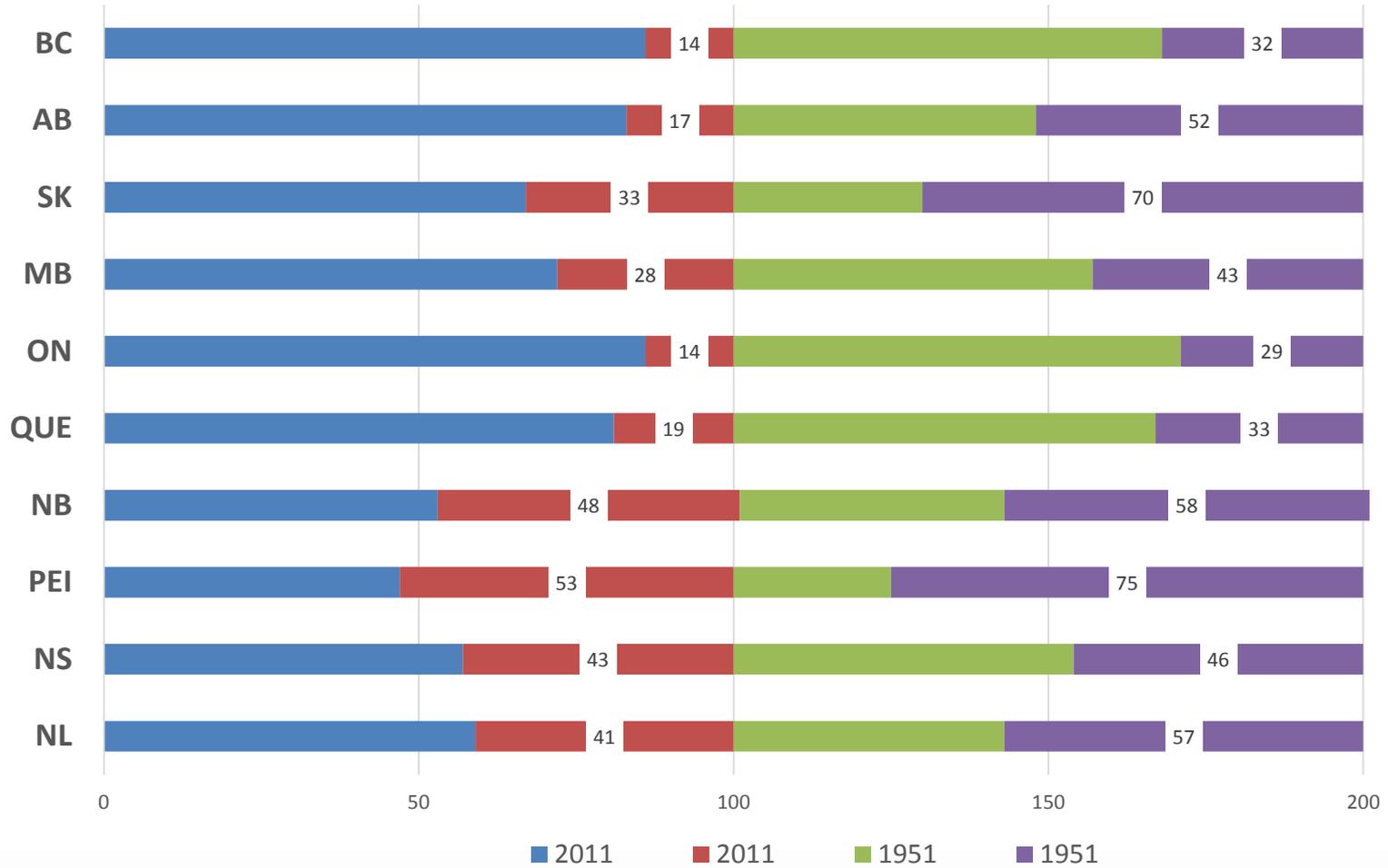
# Population Aging in Canada



Source: Statistics Canada Daily 2014

# Change greatest in SK, ON, AB, BC.. AC high rural

Changes in the distribution of rural and urban by Province 2011 and 1951



AC also oldest population – AB lowest proportion of 75+

# Proportion of Population 75+ by province <sup>1</sup>

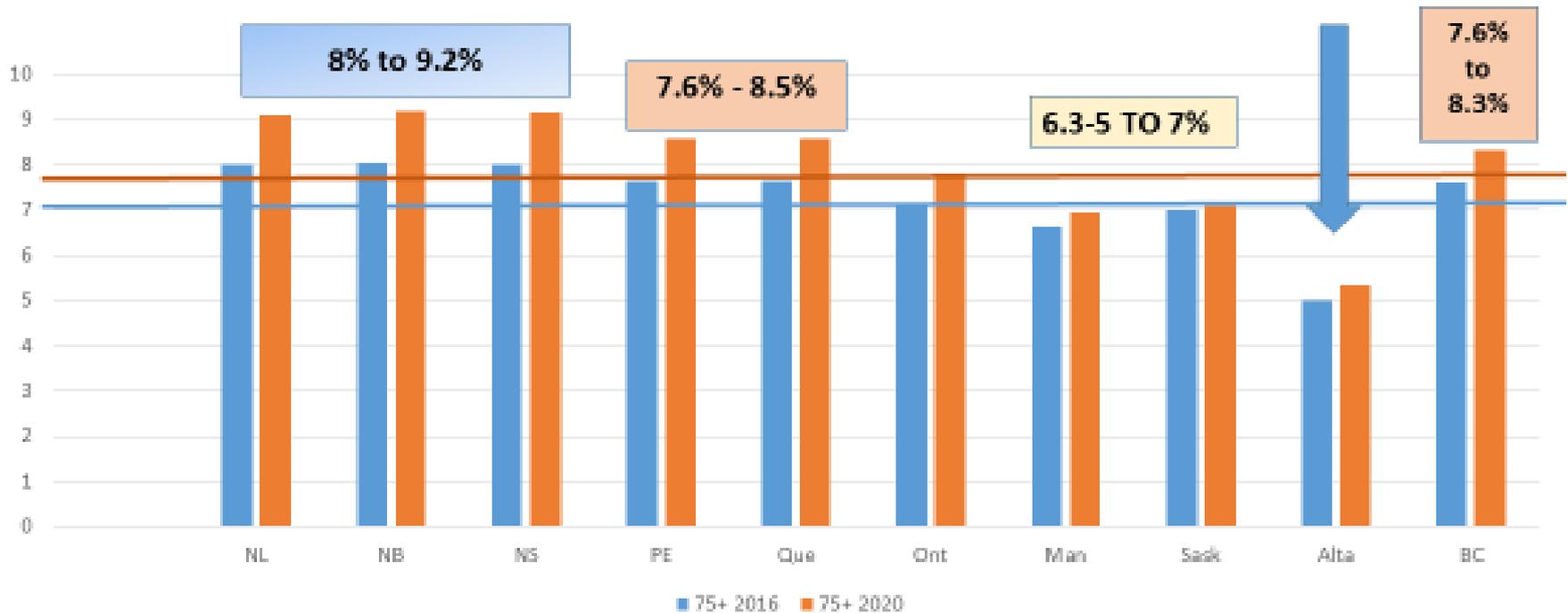
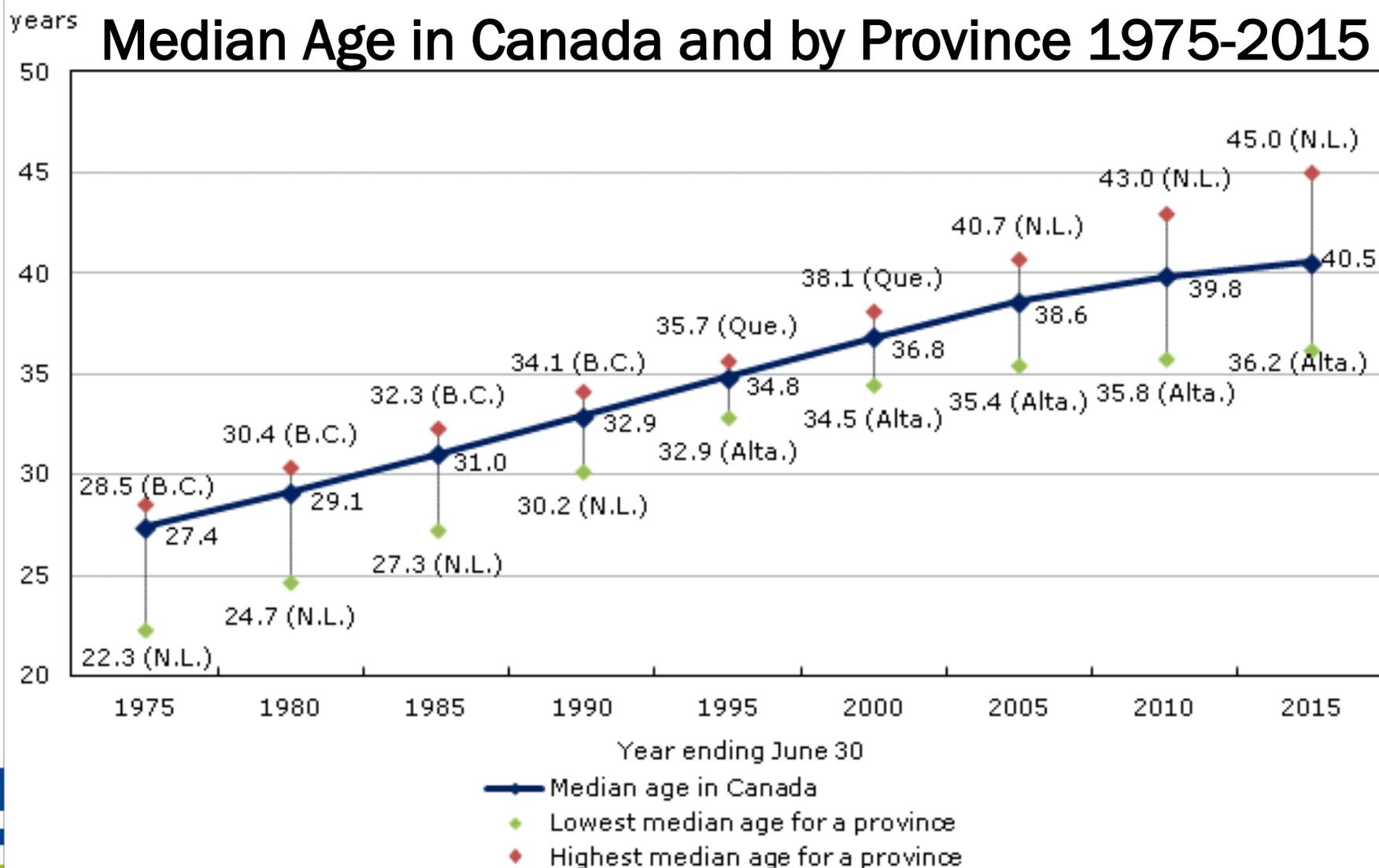
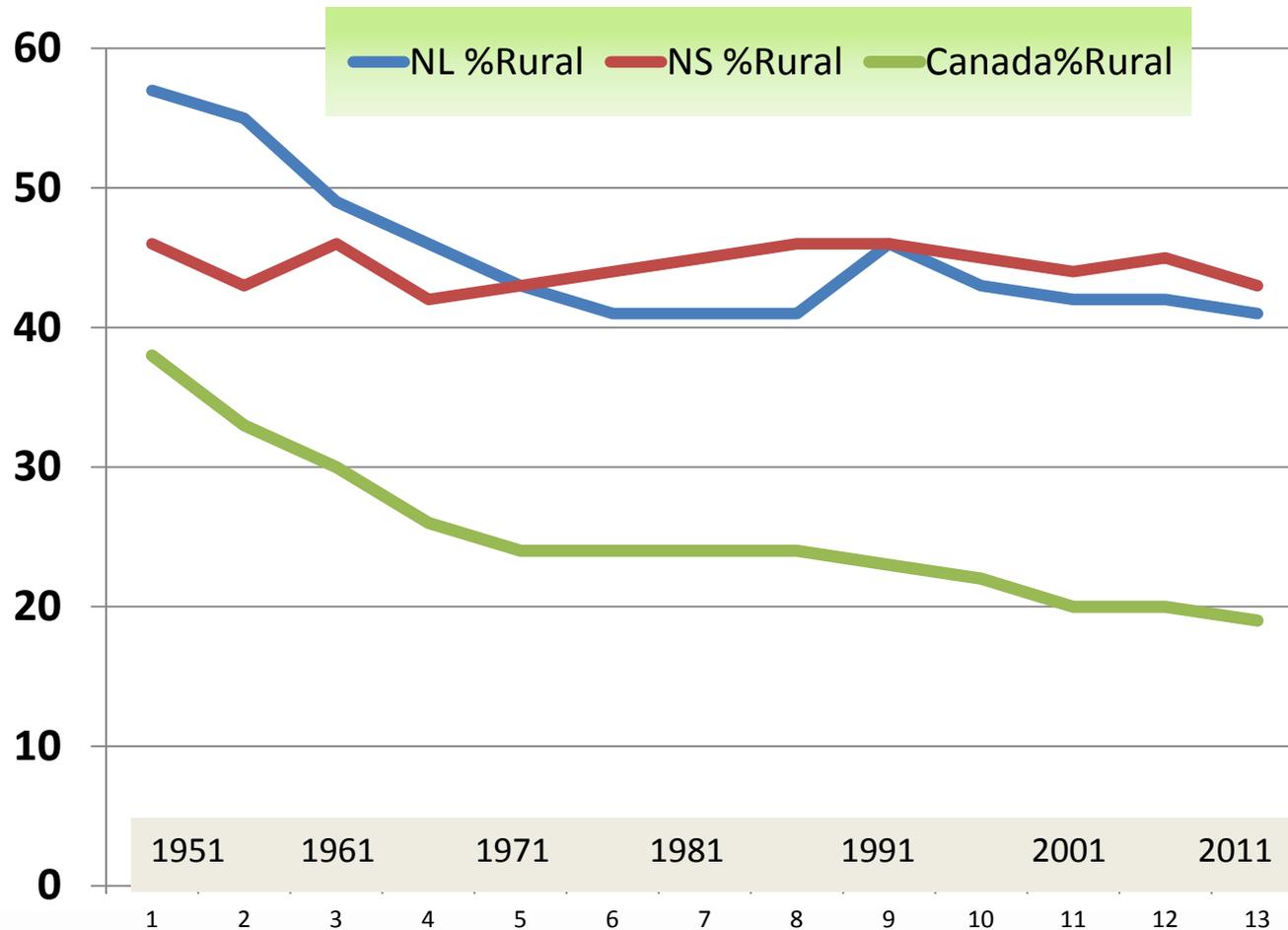


Table 052-0005 <sup>1</sup> Projected population, by projection scenario, age and sex, as of July 1, Canada, provinces and territories annual (persons x 1,000) <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26>

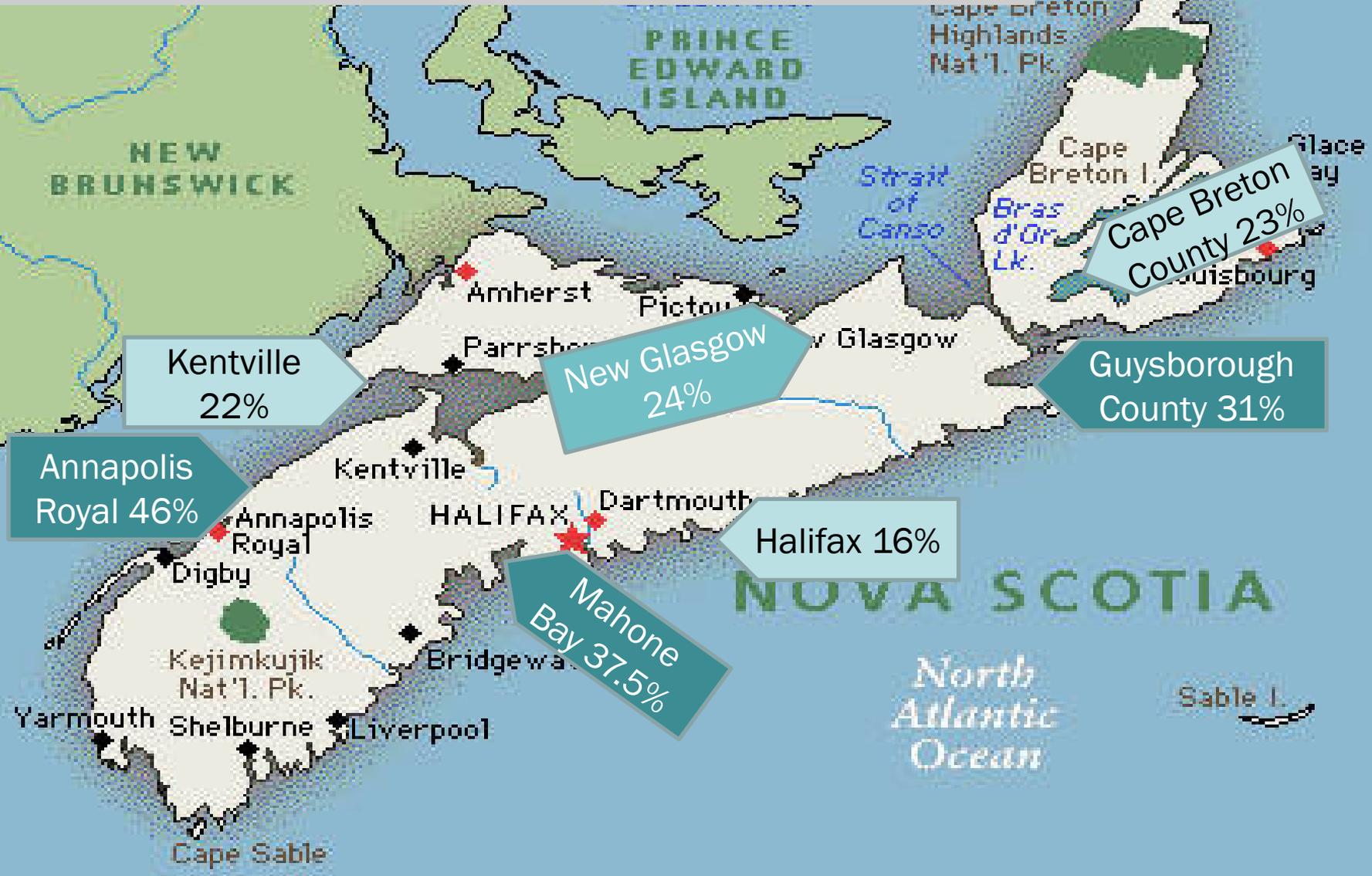
# Canada is Aging but some Provinces are aging faster than others – NL moves from youngest to oldest



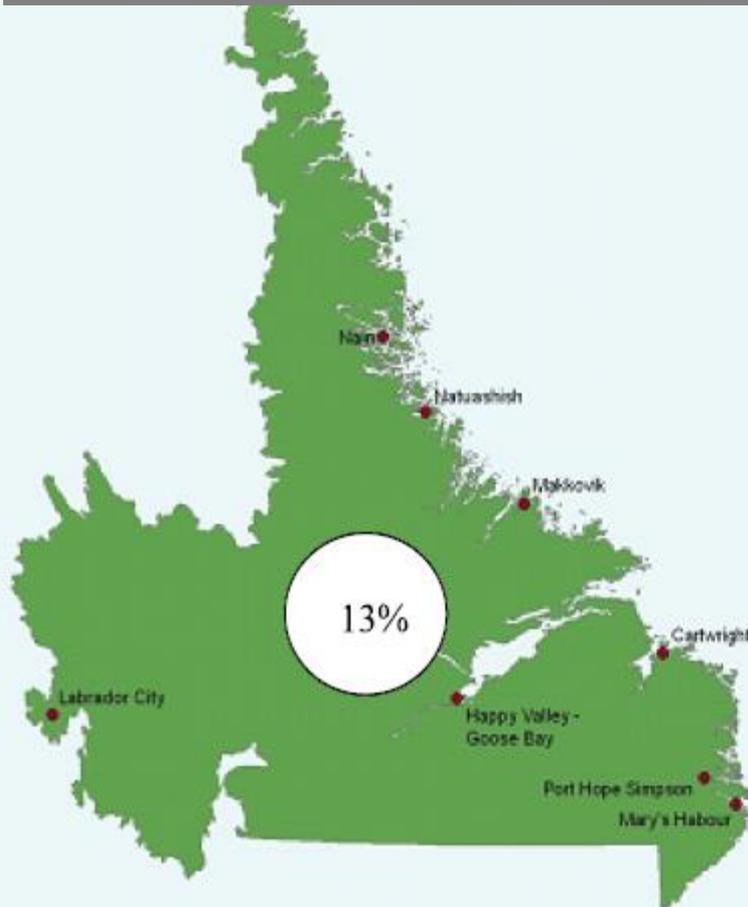
# Percent of rural - 1951-2011



# Aging by Select NS Rural areas and Halifax

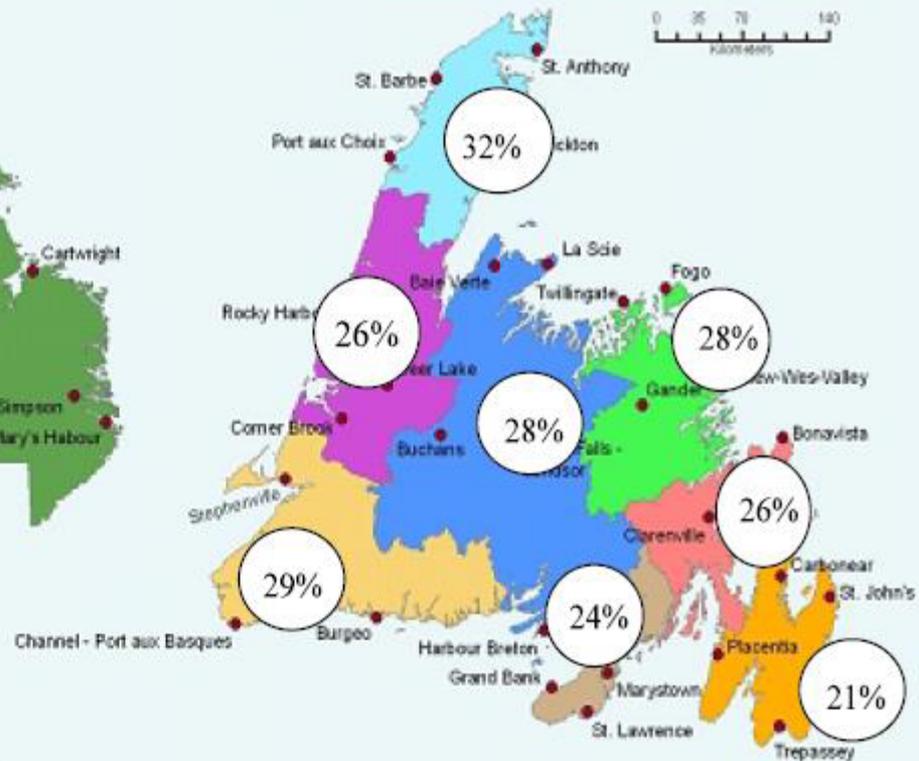


# Aging by area within NL 2021



## Percent of Population Age 65+ 2021

- Labrador
- St. Anthony - Port au Choix
- Corner Brook - Rocky Harbour
- Stephenville - Port aux Basques
- Grand Falls-Windsor - Baie Verte - Harbour Breton
- Gander - New-Wes-Valley
- Clarenville - Bonavista
- Burin Peninsula
- Avalon Peninsula



Created by the Dept. of Health and Community Services based on a map and information provided by the Dept. of Finance.

# REALITY #2

There are many rurals

# From the national perspective of rural communities across Canada



# Competing assumptions about living in Rural Canada

- Rural communities are isolated and lack formal services (bypassed)
- Rural communities are warm and friendly places to live (bucolic)

# Characteristics that differentiate community supportiveness

Population size

Proportion of long term residents

Proportion of seniors



# Community characteristics

## Physical locality

- Size of the population
- Distance from an urban centre
- Resources for continuing care services
- Climate Change

## Social aspects

- Seniors
- Female
- Household income
- Part-time/part-year employment
- Long-term residents



# Seniors' perspectives of their own rural communities

“Older”,

“Supportive”

“Established with long standing residents”

“Small enough that everybody knows each other”

“Close to all services I need”

Source: Rural Survey of Veterans , Dobb, Keefe, Keating (2006)

# REALITY #3

Older people within rural communities are diverse

# From the local perspective of key players in three diverse rural communities



# Rural Case Studies – What we learned



Seniors are diverse

Different groups of seniors have different sets of needs

Seniors' ability to fulfill their needs depends on physical, social, and economic resources as well as access to information

# Typology of older people in Rural Communities

## ACTIVE

- Backbone of the community
- Leaders of municipal gov't, service orgs  
Churches, etc
- - Long standing members



*And they put on suppers, again, that's the seniors. So they really contribute greatly to the community as well as being helped themselves. They're out there doing their bit too and they help greatly in the community. (Community active senior)*

# Typology of older people in Rural Communities

## Stoic

- Proud, private and often isolated
- independent

*They want to continue living on the farm until they can no longer manage because it's home, there's privacy, and we're used to it.*

## Vulnerable and Frail

- Limited resources
  - e.g. money, social support, services
- disconnected, may be struggling
- health issues isolated and needing support



*I am so comfortable here, really...And where would I go? To [city]? I don't know anybody there and I couldn't afford it*



Retrieved from *Women on Home Care*

# Types of Seniors in rural communities

## Frail Seniors....

- Isolated
- Needing support
- Health issues



*See now people got to know that I, that my eyes are bad and they'll see me walking along, and they'll come along... Give me a hand across the street, or anything like that. It's just, it's just like a big family. (22B\_SR\_tr Frail senior)*

# Program implications

How can programs be responsive to diversity of

- older people,
- in needs and supports and
- rural communities?



# Do rural older people have to move to get good care?

## *Challenges & opportunities*



# Care in rural communities

My sister in the city has three doctors, a chiroprapist, a physiotherapist, a home care worker and meals on wheels. Out here, all I've got is a can opener and a box of band-aids



# CHALLENGES:

Continued out- migration affecting economic well-being

- immigration and millennials as new frontiers

Attracting/ retaining Human Resources

- family/friend caregivers
- health professionals

Innovative ideas to overcome these and many other challenges

# OPPORTUNITIES: Models of Integrated Care for Rural Older People

## Flexibility

Integration across home care, nursing home and acute care; primary health etc

## Focus on Caregivers

- innovative policies to support care in rural areas

## Access to health services

- Transportation and Housing
- Improved technology and access... Telehealth
- Expanding scope of practice among health professionals

# RURAL AGING

## QUESTIONS ??



# References

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Skinner et al (2008) Services for Seniors in Small-Town Canada: The Paradox of Community. *CJNR 2008, Vol. 40 No 1, 80-101*

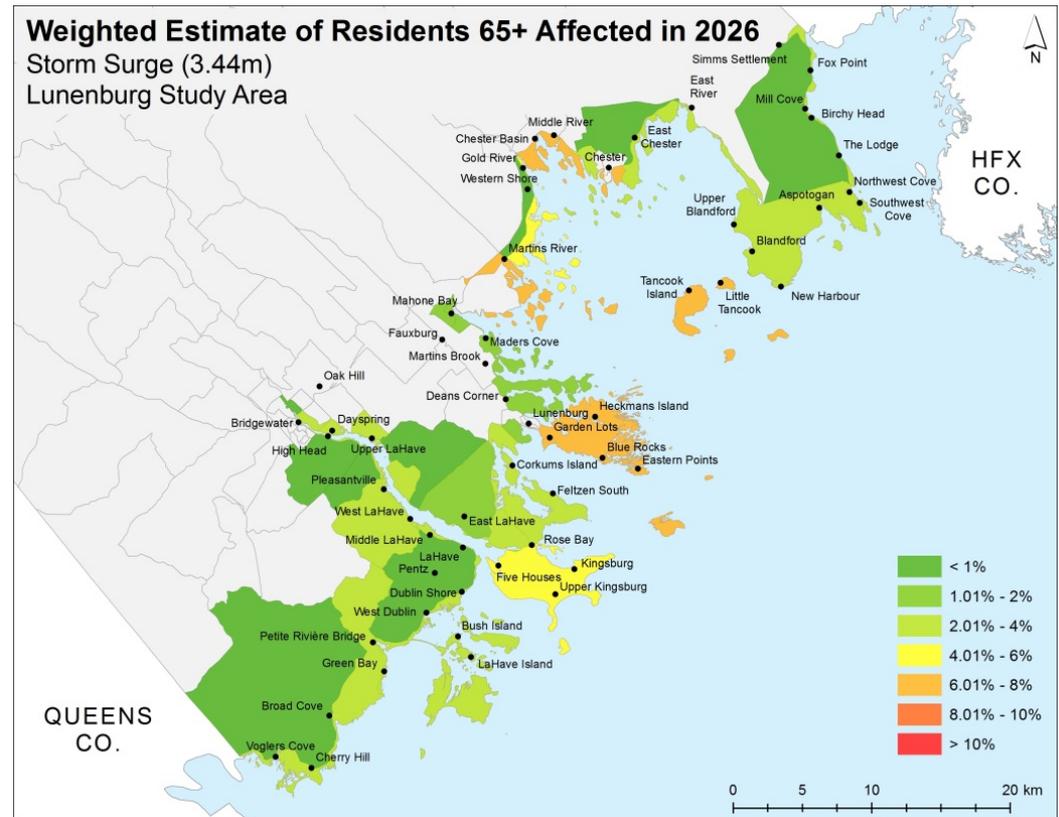
*To Be continued*

# Climate Change will have impact on Rural Vulnerable Populations

Rising sea levels and more frequent, more intense storms

Coastal flooding impact on important infrastructure

Climate change adaptation planning needs to consider the geographical placement of care environments



Rapaport, E., Manuel, P., [Krawchenko, T.](#) and Keefe, J. (2015). How can aging communities adapt to coastal climate change? Mapping community asset vulnerability for planning and adaptation. *Canadian Public Policy*, 41(2), 166-177.