

Gender, Race, and Immigration: Aging and Economic Security in Canada¹

VALERIE PRESTON, ANN KIM, SAMANTHA HUDYMA, NANCY
MANDELL, MEG LUXTON, JULIA HEMPHILL
York University

Abstract

A growing share of the population in Canada comprised of aging immigrants lacks the financial resources for a secure retirement. Disproportionately visible minorities, many foreign-born seniors, have limited access to income security programs, private pensions, and savings. We examine the resulting racialization of poverty among aging immigrants in Canada with particular attention to the effects of visible minority and immigrant status and gender. Our analysis of 2006 Canadian census information confirms that many aging immigrants struggle to achieve economic security, which allows for a stable and adequate standard of living. Foreign-born seniors are more likely than Canadian-born seniors to have incomes that fall below the low-income cutoff, one measure of poverty. The percentages of Canadian-born and immigrant men and women from different ethnoracial backgrounds who have low incomes also differ substantially. Immigrant women, particularly those who are visible minorities, are the most impoverished. We advocate an intersectional approach to understanding and addressing poverty among seniors. For aging immigrants, the chances of being impoverished depend on gender and ethnoracial background as well as on place of birth.

Résumé

Une part croissante de la population canadienne composée d'immigrants vieillissants ne dispose pas des ressources financières nécessaires pour s'assurer une retraite sereine. Une part disproportionnée des minorités visibles, de nombreux aînés nés à l'étranger, ont un accès limité aux programmes de sécurité du revenu, aux régimes de retraite privés et aux économies. Nous examinons ici la racialisation de la pauvreté qui en découle parmi les immigrants vieillissants du Canada, avec une attention particulière aux effets du genre et du statut de minorité visible ou d'immigrant. Notre analyse des renseignements issus du recensement canadien de 2006 confirme que de nombreux immigrants vieillissants doivent se battre pour obtenir la sécurité économique qui leur apporterait un niveau de vie stable et adéquat. Les aînés d'origine étrangère sont plus susceptibles que ceux d'origine canadienne d'avoir des revenus inférieurs au seuil de faible revenu, l'une des mesures de la pauvreté. Les pourcentages de Canadiens et de Canadiennes et

¹ We gratefully acknowledge funding from a SSHRC Standard Research Grant and York University, the research assistance of Tracy Nguyen who assisted with the graphs, and editorial comments from the reviewers and editor that improved the article. We have benefited from our collaboration with Karen Robson. All correspondence should be addressed to the first author at vpreston@yorku.ca and Geography Department, York University, 4700 Keele St., Toronto, ON M3J 1P3

d'immigrants hommes et femmes d'origines ethnoraciales différentes qui disposent de revenus faibles diffèrent aussi considérablement. Les immigrantes, et plus particulièrement celles issues des minorités visibles, sont les plus pauvres. Nous défendons une approche croisée pour comprendre le problème de la pauvreté parmi les aînés et y remédier. Pour les immigrants vieillissants, le risque de pauvreté dépend non seulement du sexe et de l'origine ethnoraciale, mais également du lieu de naissance.

Introduction

Although the economic situations of many seniors² in Canada have improved since the 1980s, a large population of seniors does not have access to the resources needed to age securely (CASW, 2007; Marier & Skinner, 2008; NACA, 2005). Very old, single women and growing numbers of visible minority and immigrant seniors lack the financial resources that ensure a secure and stable standard of living in old age (Durst, 2005). Much of the literature and many policies address the financial challenges facing each of these groups of seniors separately, as if gender, ethnoracial background, and immigrant status can be viewed in isolation from each other. To understand the economic challenges facing immigrant seniors, we adopt an intersectional approach (McCall, 2005) that recognizes how multiple dimensions of social identity, such as immigrant status, gender, and visible minority status interact to influence seniors' economic security. This analysis therefore takes account of differences in senior's incomes by considering age-related and gender differences, as well as the effects of visible minority status. In turn, by focusing on how social characteristics interact, current retirement policies, and programs that may have unequal impact on sub-groups of seniors are illuminated.

Economic security means that a person has the necessary resources to ensure a stable and secure standard of living. This paper shows how economic security is racialized³ and gendered among aging immigrants in Canada. After a brief review of current Canadian literature on seniors' economic circumstances, the 2006 census information will be used to analyze the variation in the incidences of low income between men and women, and immigrant seniors and Canadian-born seniors. Although income is only a partial measure of economic security, it is one crucial component for which information is readily available. For this study, the percentages of immigrant and Canadian-born seniors who have incomes less than the low-income cutoff (LICO) will be compared, followed by a consideration of the percentages of seniors with low incomes from Canada's largest racialized minorities.⁴ The conclusions highlight the complex patterns of poverty among immigrant seniors and some of the ensuing policy implications.

The Impacts of Gender, Immigrant Status, and Visible Minority Status

Current understanding of the effects of gender, immigrant and visible minority status on seniors' economic security is based on studies that examine the impact of each dimension of social identity separately. This research shows that seniors have unequal access to the three main

² Older adults are defined as aged 55 and over. In addition, the terms "seniors" and "older adults" will be used interchangeably in this paper.

³ The term "racialized" refers to those who are visible minorities.

⁴ Although this paper concentrates on the foreign-born, the authors recognize that Aboriginal peoples are the most disadvantaged groups in Canada. In addition, older gays and lesbians face challenges in financially securing their retirements; however, due to a paucity of literature, the situations of LGBTQI individuals are not addressed here

sources of retirement income: the Old Age Security Program (OAS) and Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), the Canada Pension Plan/ Quebec Pension Plan (CPP/QPP), and private pension plans and individual savings (CASW, 2007). Over two-thirds of seniors, particularly women, only have access to government-sponsored income security programs and government pensions (NACA, 2005). Furthermore, many immigrants who arrive to Canada in later life never even qualify for these benefits. As a result many Canadian-born and immigrant women and men have very low income in old age.

Poverty also occurs because the value of retirement benefits for many seniors is low. The minimum payments provided through OAS and GIS, sources of retirement income of last resort, are very low. For single people, the maximum OAS and GIS payments are just below the after tax low income cut-off (LICO), a widely used measure of poverty (CASW, 2007). Because benefits from the Canada Pension Plan and the Quebec Pension Plan are based on the length and value of contributions made while active in the labour force, and many women and immigrants have interrupted employment histories and/or low lifetime earnings, the CPP/QPP payments that they receive are limited.

Gender: Women's Financial Insecurity in Old Age

Economic insecurity in old age is a persistent problem for many women. The percentage of female seniors who have low incomes is more than double that of their male counterparts (3.2% of men compared to 8.4% of women in 2005) (CASW, 2007). The gender difference is due in part to women's limited entitlement to government pension benefits. On average, the CPP/QPP replaces only 25% of women's average annual lifetime incomes (CASW, 2007). Women are also more dependent than men on government income security programs. In 2003, women received 55.3% of their total income from OAS and GIS, while only 41.4% of senior men's total income came from the same sources (CASW, 2007).

For women, income security in later life is shaped by gendered life courses (Berger & Denton, 2004; McDaniel & Bernard, 2011; Moen, 2001) and gender segmentation in the labour market that systematically impedes their ability to achieve economic security through current retirement income programs. Women who withdraw from the labour market to care for their children and other family members are among the most vulnerable to economic insecurity in old age (Townson, 2006). The Canadian income retirement system does not acknowledge or compensate women for their years of unpaid care work (McDonald, 2002). The adverse effects of employment interruptions are compounded by women's participation in female-dominated occupations that are often poorly paid. Women are overrepresented in precarious, part-time, and low paid work that reduces their pension contributions (Berger & Denton, 2004; Preston & D'Addario 2009). Government and private pension plans are earnings-based, penalizing those who work discontinuously and earn low wages (CASW, 2007).

Marital status also influences women's retirement incomes. Many widows suffer economically after the death of their husbands (Bernard & Li, 2006; Li, 2004). The incomes of many widows are "clustered" just above the LICO, leaving them at serious risk of poverty. Without the benefit of a husband's lifetime earnings, single, unattached women are also overrepresented among the poorest elderly (CASW, 2007; Gaszo, 2005).

Immigrant status: The Poverty of Aging Newcomers

Immigrants also face challenges to achieving financial security in old age. Many spend some of their working lives outside Canada unable to accumulate pension credits (CASW, 2007). The

growing earnings gap disparity between immigrants and the Canadian-born means that the average pension contributions of immigrants are also lower than those of the Canadian-born (Elgersma, 2010). As the time required for immigrants to achieve the earnings of their Canadian-born counterparts has increased from five to more than ten years (Frenette & Morissette, 2003), the disparities in pension contributions have also increased. Immigrants' financial security in old age is also constrained by a 10-year residency requirement for OAS.

The International Social Security Agreements (ISSA) that allow immigrants to use pension entitlements from their countries of origin to qualify for Canadian retirement programs and thereby redress disparities in pension benefits operate mainly with European countries, e.g., Germany, Italy, and Portugal. Canada does not have agreements with some major and recent immigrant source countries such as India and Pakistan (CASW, 2007). One result is that recent immigrants to Canada are more likely than those who arrived earlier to experience financial hardships in old age (Turcotte & Schellenberg, 2007). Although many Canadians are uncertain about their retirement plans, this is particularly true for recent immigrants (Stobert, 2003). Approximately half of all recent immigrants, 47%, did not know when they would retire or planned to never retire and 45% expressed concerns about the adequacy of their financial preparations. There is a large difference between what they want in terms of financial preparation for retirement and their actual financial position (Schellenberg & Silver, 2004).

Race and Ethnicity: The Impact of Visible Minority Status

Visible minorities, both Canadian-born and immigrant, often have differential access to retirement income programs. In general, visible minorities are more likely than whites to face workplace discrimination that reduces their earnings and subsequent retirement incomes (Pendakur & Pendakur, 2002; Ray & Preston, 2009). However, the extent to which these obstacles affect the financial security of racialized immigrants in their old age varies among visible minority groups and over time (Mata, 2010). For example, Caribbean women who entered Canada as domestic workers on temporary work visas did not qualify for OAS or GIS (Hsuing & Nichols, 2010). In the 1990s, long after the temporary visa program ended, Bakan and Stasiulis (2003) found that Caribbean women who worked as domestic workers were paid lower wages and were less likely to receive benefits than other foreign domestic workers. Kaida and Boyd (2011) also uncovered important ethnocultural differences regarding intergenerational family transfers that affect financial security in old age. For example, older Filipino, East Indian, and other South Asian women often benefit from co-residence with kin. Although these women appear financially secure because their families care for them, they may have little personal access to money and they also face financial vulnerability if they ever lose family support (Mitchell, 2005).

American studies suggest that minority status may also influence expectations about retirement (Honig, 1996) and the timing and reasons for retirement (Bulanda & Zhang, 2009; Stanford & Usita, 2002). For example, poor health is a more frequent reason for retirement among racial minorities in the United States than among white seniors (Stanford & Usita, 2002). These findings suggest that variations in health status across and within ethnocultural groups in Canada (Kobayashi, Prus & Lin, 2008) may also affect seniors' financial security (Buckley, Denton, Robb & Spencer, 2006).

By building on research that shows how seniors' economic security varies by gender, immigrant status, and visible minority status, this study compares the financial circumstances of men and women of different ages and distinguishes between white and racialized immigrants and

non-immigrants. The analysis highlights the trends in financial security for aging immigrants and the Canadian-born, and identifies disparities in financial security between men and women from different ethnoracial backgrounds.

Data and Methods

There are numerous indicators and statistical measures of economic security and disadvantage; however, there is no official poverty line or rate in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2011). This analysis therefore draws on the definition of economic security proposed by the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD):

Economic security refers to an assured and stable standard of living that provides individuals and families with a level of resources and benefits necessary to participate economically, politically, socially, culturally, and with dignity in their community's activities... [S]ecurity goes beyond mere physical survival to encompass a level of resources that promotes and ensures social inclusion.

(Tsoukalas & Mackenzie, 2003, p. 3)

The CCSD applies the before-tax Low Income Cutoff (LICO) measure to operationalize this definition of economic security. LICO is a widely used indicator of poverty in Canada that will also be employed here (CASW, 2007; Kaida & Boyd, 2011; Li, 2004; NACA, 2005; Palameta, 2004). It compares the annual income of an economic family (i.e. related individuals living in the same household) or a single individual to a threshold calculated by using the percentage of income spent by an average family or individual on basic necessities plus 20%. After factoring in family size and population of the city or town of residence, all individuals who live in households with incomes below the threshold identified are classified as falling below the low income cut-off. In 2006, the before-tax LICO threshold was \$39,393 for a family of four living in a metropolitan area with a population of 500,000 or more (Statistics Canada, 2011). In short, falling below-LICO suggests that a family is spending a larger portion of its income on food, shelter, and clothing than the average family (Statistics Canada, 2011).

While Statistics Canada does not recognize LICO as a measure of poverty, it is a valid measure of the income needed to live and participate in a community, and identifies those who are living in "strained circumstances" (CCSD, 2007). Families whose incomes fall below the thresholds are spending at least 20% more of their household income on necessities, which limits their participation in everyday activities. LICO is the preferred measure as its wide usage permits comparisons with past and future studies, it is familiar to researchers, and it is a variable in readily-available datasets.

Data from the 2006 Canadian Census of Population Public-Use Microdata File (PUMF) provide detailed information about the social and economic characteristics of individuals, permitting an examination of low income rates according to gender, immigrant status, and ethnoracial background. In an examination of trends for adults aged 25 years and over at a national level,⁵ this study's weighted analysis⁶ distinguishes men and women and the Canadian-

⁵ The final dataset is weighted and contains a total of 571,367 cases.

⁶ Unweighted frequencies of each visible minority group by age, gender and immigrant status are provided in Table 1.

born and the foreign-born⁷ from each other across ten-year age categories ending with those 85 years and older. Visible minority status that is ascribed to people who are not Aboriginal, not white, not Caucasian, and not of European background, is also considered. The statistical data on visible minorities are problematic, although the best available, as they distinguish between presumed physical characteristics (skin colour), cultural affiliations, and countries of origin. The number of visible minority groups and age categories considered at each stage of the analysis varies, reflecting the sample size of each group (a minimum of 18 unweighted cases). For example, among Canadian-born seniors, the study distinguishes between whites, Blacks, Japanese, and Chinese, while for immigrants, several additional visible minority groups are reported since for each age group the number of immigrants in each visible minority group is sufficiently large. Results from tests of statistical significance are provided where relevant.

Disparities in below-LICO rates are suggestive of structural inequalities throughout the life course. In other words, social groups that are more likely to live in poverty at younger ages are also more likely to live in poverty at older ages (Berger & Denton, 2004; Denton & Boos 2007). However, the data analyzed here are cross-sectional and as such they illustrate patterns of low income across the age spectrum and do not provide a long-term perspective on the trajectories of economic security throughout the life course. Moreover, LICO data indicate only whether an individual falls above or below the cut-off, not how distant a person is from the threshold. Thus, while two groups may have similar below-LICO rates, their incomes may differ markedly. With these limitations in mind, the LICO data here are used to examine some of the gaps between gendered, racialized, and nativity groups by age as they are indicative of the patterns of inequality at a given point in time and allow us to anticipate potential disparities as people age. In much of the analysis, white Canadian-born men are used as the reference group.

Gender and Low Income

Trends in poverty across age groups reflect gender differences in labour market participation and access to retirement income. With the exception of the 45- to 54-year age group, we observe statistically significant ($p < .01$, two-tailed t-tests for proportions) differences in low income rates between men and women across the seven age categories (Figure 1). Among older Canadians, beginning at the age of 55, as people begin to retire and enter old age, the percentage of women with low incomes increases rapidly, from 14.4% for women aged 55 to 64 years to 33.8% for women over 84 years of age. In contrast, poverty declines initially for men in the older age groups, falling below 10% of all men between the ages of 75 and 84 years, the lowest percentage of all groups. When the prevalence of poverty among men rises for the small number that is 85 years of age or older, the increase is between 5.6 to 14.4 percentage points. The disparity between the percentages of older men and women with low incomes is even more striking when the fact that women tend to live longer than men is taken into account. Thus, the ratio of older women (85 years plus) living in poverty relative to men is about 4.5 to 1.

An examination of marital status indicates the persistence of gender patterns. Among those over the age of 55 years, the smallest gender gaps are for married individuals. At each age group, the below-LICO rates are less than 6% for married men and married women.⁸ The below-

⁷ This analysis only considers permanent residents. Canada's growing population of temporary residents is excluded since the complexity of their economic circumstances warrants separate analysis and there is little information about this population.

⁸ Data available upon request.

LICO rates and gender disparities among unattached men and women are noticeably higher than among married older adults. Among the seniors (55 years plus) who never married or were divorced, separated, or widowed, women have higher below-LICO rates than men at each age group, with the exception of single, never-married women 55 to 64 years old. In general, the largest gaps in below-LICO rates can be found among older seniors, between divorced or separated women and men 75 to 84 years old (42.4 and 23.9%, respectively) and between widowed women and men 85 years plus (37.6 and 21.2%, respectively).

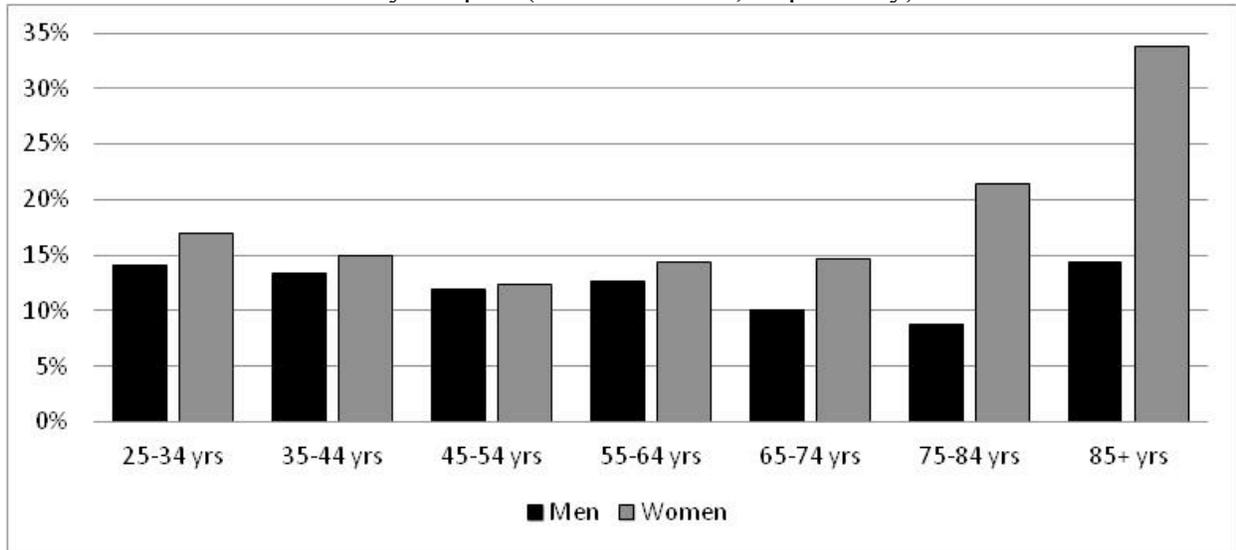


Figure 1. LICO rates for men and women by age categories⁹

Gendered Patterns of Low Income Disaggregated

Visible minority and immigrant status also influence levels of economic security across the life course. We disaggregate the below-LICO rates further by examining their association with visible minority status and immigrant background. These results are presented in Figures 2a, 2b, 3a, and 3b, and the analysis reveals that immigrant experience and racialization influence gendered inequality across the age groups, and that while it is important to examine the gendered patterns of poverty, this practice renders other inequalities invisible. Similarly, an analysis that focuses only on the immigrant experience and racialization renders gender invisible.

⁹ In each figure, the Y-axis refers to the percentage of individuals whose annual income falls below the Low Income Cutoff.

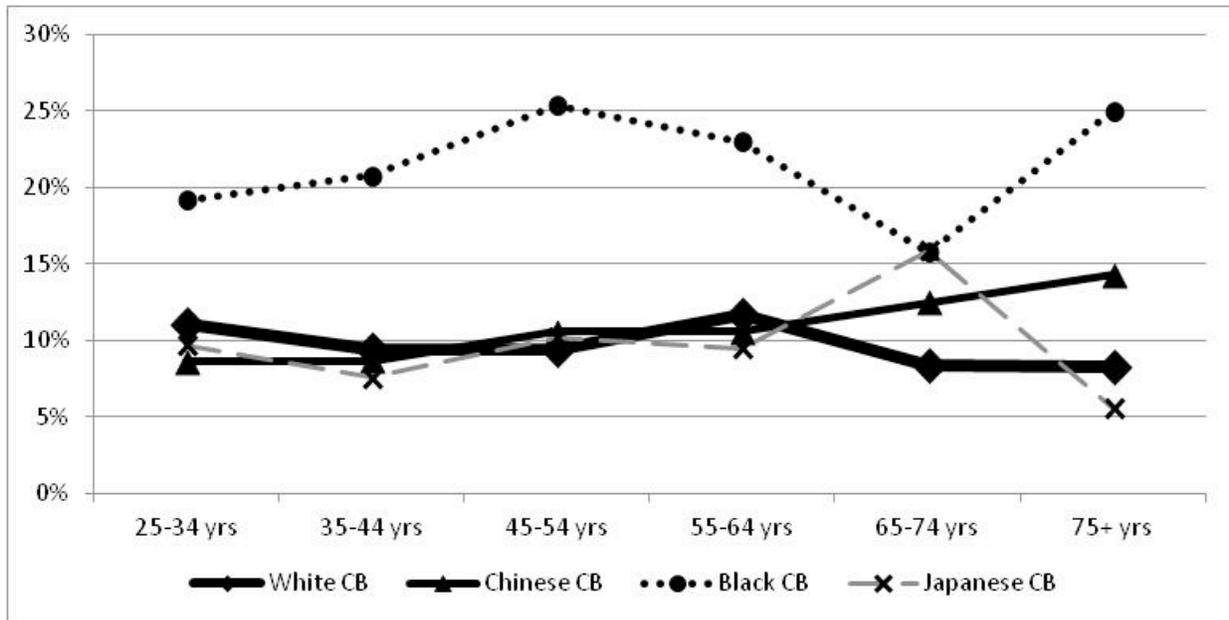


Figure 2a. Comparison of LICO rates among Canadian-born men by visible minority status

Among the visible minority men for whom there are sufficient samples, some interesting patterns emerge. White Canadian-born men tend to have the highest incomes at every age category, as might be expected. Their below-LICO rates are also relatively uniform across the different age groups, falling between 8 and 12% with the lowest rates among seniors aged 65 years and older. In comparison to white Canadian-born men, Black men born in Canada have approximately double the below-LICO rates at all ages. While these rates must be interpreted with caution due to the small sample sizes for the older age groups (see Table 1), the pattern suggests that Black men experience lifelong disadvantage (Figure 2a). Demonstrating the vulnerability of racialized seniors, the largest disparity between these two groups is found among seniors aged 75 years and older.

Table 1: Unweighted frequencies for each visible minority group by age, gender and immigrant status

	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Total
Men							
White CB	37,410	44,104	47,566	33,857	19,235	13,317	195,489
Chinese CB	546	310	160	47	24	28	1,115
Black CB	574	231	114	74	38	20	1,051
Japanese CB	62	66	49	42	44	54	317
White Imm	2,784	5,455	6,375	7,736	5,979	4,882	33,211
Chinese Imm	1,481	2,392	2,259	1,371	919	564	8,986
S.Asian Imm	1,952	2,700	2,059	1,522	827	374	9,434
Black Imm	792	1,209	932	631	318	124	4,006
Filipino Imm	455	706	591	379	163	83	2,377
L.Amer Imm	510	619	465	252	84	37	1,967
SE.Asian Imm	360	500	411	186	85	55	1,597
WA/Arab Imm	671	984	659	345	153	65	2,877
Korean Imm	135	160	228	113	72	18	726
Women							
White CB	37,602	45,464	49,501	35,024	21,746	20,056	209,393
Chinese CB	457	274	187	54	38	32	1,042
Black CB	595	280	142	81	35	34	1,167
Japanese CB	67	69	48	59	39	48	330
White Imm	3,080	5,629	6,727	7,784	6,154	6,391	35,765
Chinese Imm	1,705	2,846	2,565	1,501	1,050	794	10,461
S.Asian Imm	2,453	2,512	1,947	1,391	804	391	9,498
Black Imm	1,000	1,438	1,021	762	381	221	4,823
Filipino Imm	670	1,141	952	574	271	149	3,757
L.Amer Imm	604	678	582	247	114	83	2,308
SE.Asian Imm	459	527	450	173	110	86	1,805
WA/Arab Imm	778	801	503	284	154	74	2,594
Korean Imm	158	263	268	110	55	43	897

Different patterns of low income are evident for Canadian-born Chinese and Japanese men. In the younger age groups, between 25 and 54 years of age, their below-LICO rates are no different from those of white men. However, the oldest Chinese men appear to face higher poverty rates, likely due to earlier barriers in the labour market, but these differences are not statistically significant ($p < .05$). Among the younger Canadian-born Chinese and Japanese men, the relative parity in low income rates with white Canadian-born men in 2006 may indicate that

low income rates for men from the two visible minority groups will decline to equalize those for white Canadian-born men in the future. Various factors such as employment conditions, opportunities for career and salary advancement, spending habits, and retirement planning, among others influence the economic security of racialized groups as they age, however, a life course perspective suggests that income during one's paid working life is a good indicator of the potential for economic security in later life. Comparing the four groups of Canadian-born men, it is clear that Blacks have the lowest level of economic security.

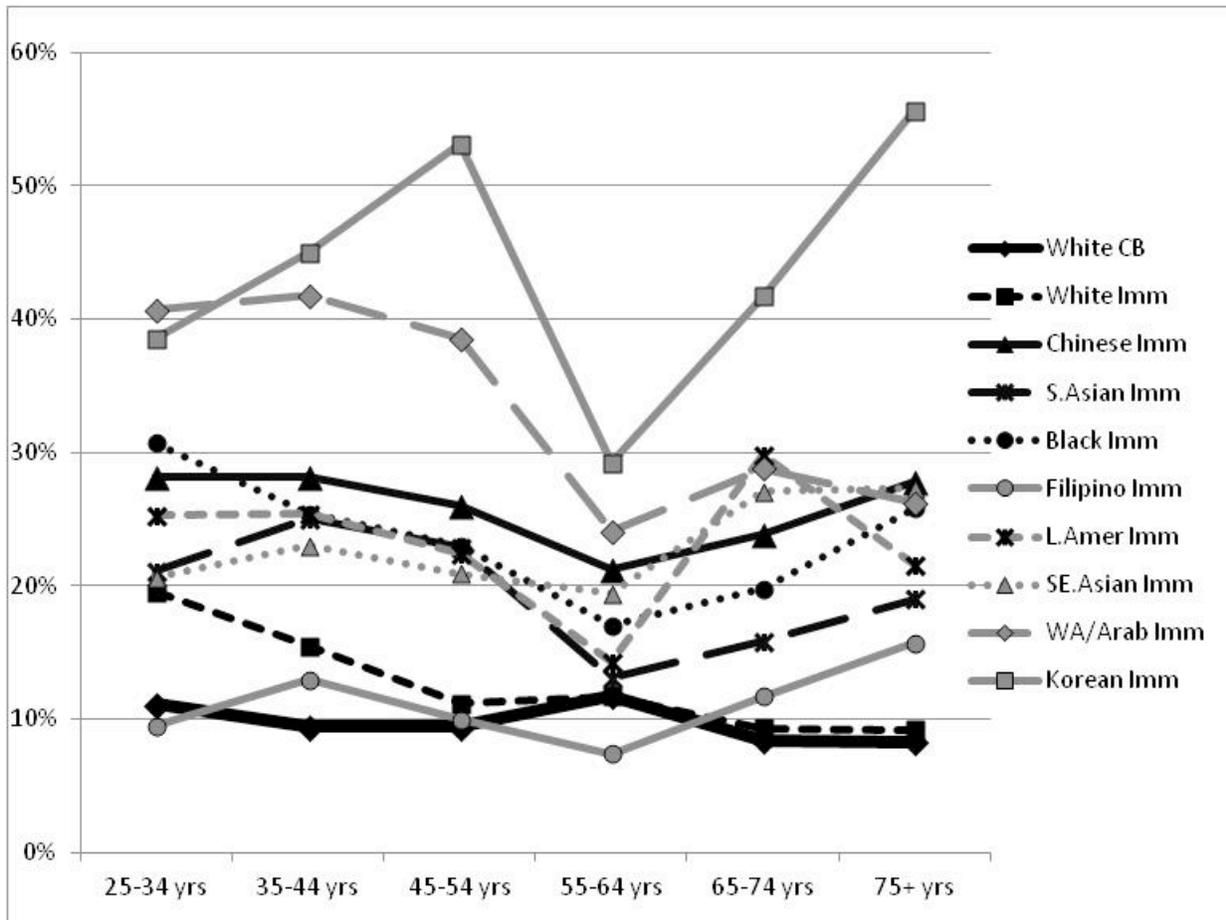


Figure 2b. Comparison of LICO rates among immigrant men by visible minority status

In an analysis of immigrant men, a different pattern emerges (Figure 2b). Greater variation and greater inequality can be observed in the low income rates of racialized immigrant groups by age, compared to the variation in rates among non-immigrant men. The graph illustrates that, for most groups, the below-LICO rates fall between 10 to 30% with two exceptions, Korean and West Asian/Arab men, who are characterized by higher levels of economic insecurity across all of the age categories. Relative to the reference category, White Canadian-born men, the largest gap falls in the oldest age category for Korean immigrant men and this difference is statistically significant ($p < .001$). Their high rates of poverty across the age groups are not surprising given their high levels of self-employment in small family businesses in the trade and service sectors. These migrant trajectories leave little opportunity for retirement

savings and pensions, including CPP/QPP, and this group tends to rely on OAS/GIS upon retirement (Kim, 2010).

Also, despite some narrowing of the “immigrant” poverty gap for those 55 to 64 years old, fairly consistent economic disparities with white Canadian-born men across the life stages are evident for all other immigrant groups, with the exception of white and Filipino immigrant men¹⁰, raising concerns about the persistent poverty of racialized immigrants. Our analysis highlights similarities and differences across racialized immigrant groups. While recognizing that we have not controlled statistically for social, demographic, and economic variables such as marital status, household composition, educational attainment, and labour force participation that affect household income, we offer some general thoughts and explanations for the similarities and differences.

First, those with higher levels falling below the LICO thresholds are racialized immigrants, groups that have experienced a wage gap in the labour market (Galabuzi, 2006; Swidinsky & Swidinsky, 2002). These racialized immigrants also include men for whom English or French is unlikely to be a first language and who would face or would have faced barriers in the primary labour market, e.g., Koreans, West Asians/Arabs, Chinese, and Southeast Asian, and Latin American. Members of such groups would have turned to self-employment or unstable working conditions, such as temporary, contract, or part-time work. However, the position of Black immigrant men, who are predominantly of Jamaican, other Caribbean, or East African origin, demonstrates that these discrepancies cannot solely be explained by language, as they also fall at the higher end of the economic insecurity spectrum with similar rates as their Canadian-born counterparts.

Second, past research has identified the earnings disadvantage of immigrant men who arrive at older ages (Swidinsky & Swidinsky, 2002). Our analysis supports this earlier finding as groups with higher poverty levels are also those whose age at migration structures tend to be older with large proportions of migrants entering Canada as older adults or sponsored older adults with shorter or no employment histories in Canada. For example, over 40% of Korean immigrant men are aged 40 years or older when they arrive in Canada and Chinese immigrant men were also older upon arrival with 27% aged 40 years or older.

Among male seniors, the lowest levels of poverty are observed for Canadian-born whites, Japanese and Chinese men, and immigrant white men. All others have noticeably higher rates of low income (over 15%). Among immigrant men there is also evidence that racialization and migration history may reduce economic security.

Larger disparities are observed between white Canadian-born men and most groups of women (Figures 3a and 3b). Gender differences in low income rates across the ages can be explained generally by the higher rates for Black women born in Canada and immigrant women. White Canadian-born women also have higher levels of low income than their male counterparts, and while they are statistically significant at all age groups ($p < .001$), the differences are small for younger and middle-aged women. Among seniors, however, the gaps increase dramatically. A large disparity between Canadian-born white men and women is clearly visible for 65 to 74 year olds, and the oldest group of 75 year olds and older (a 16 percentage point difference). The jump in low income rates for all groups of Canadian-born women relative to White Canadian-born men in the oldest age category is striking, providing further evidence of the complex ways that

¹⁰ On average, Filipinos in all age groups have higher rates of labour force participation than other immigrants that may contribute to their relatively low percentage of men with incomes below the low-income threshold (Kelly, 2006).

poverty in old age is gendered and racialized. For White Canadian-born women, inequalities are due mainly to gender while for others they arise mainly from race or from the combined effects of race and gender.

While patterns across the age categories among Canadian-born women are generally similar, Black Canadian-born women are distinctive for their higher rates of low income compared to white women born in Canada. Differences are statistically significant across all the age groups except for the oldest seniors. However, among the oldest seniors, the gap is the widest at 14 percentage points, the difference between 38% below LICO for Black Canadian-born women versus 24% for white Canadian-born women in the same age group. Like their male counterparts, Black Canadian-born women experience economic insecurity more than other visible minority women born in Canada (Swidinsky & Swidinsky, 2002). While limited economic opportunities likely contribute to the high rates of poverty, these women are also less likely to be married than white Canadian-born women. Among seniors aged 65 to 74 years, 17% of Black Canadian-born women are married while 57% of white Canadian-born women in the same age group are married. Among the oldest Black and white women born in Canada whose below-LICO differences are not statistically significant, the percentages of married women are 23.5 and 30%, respectively.

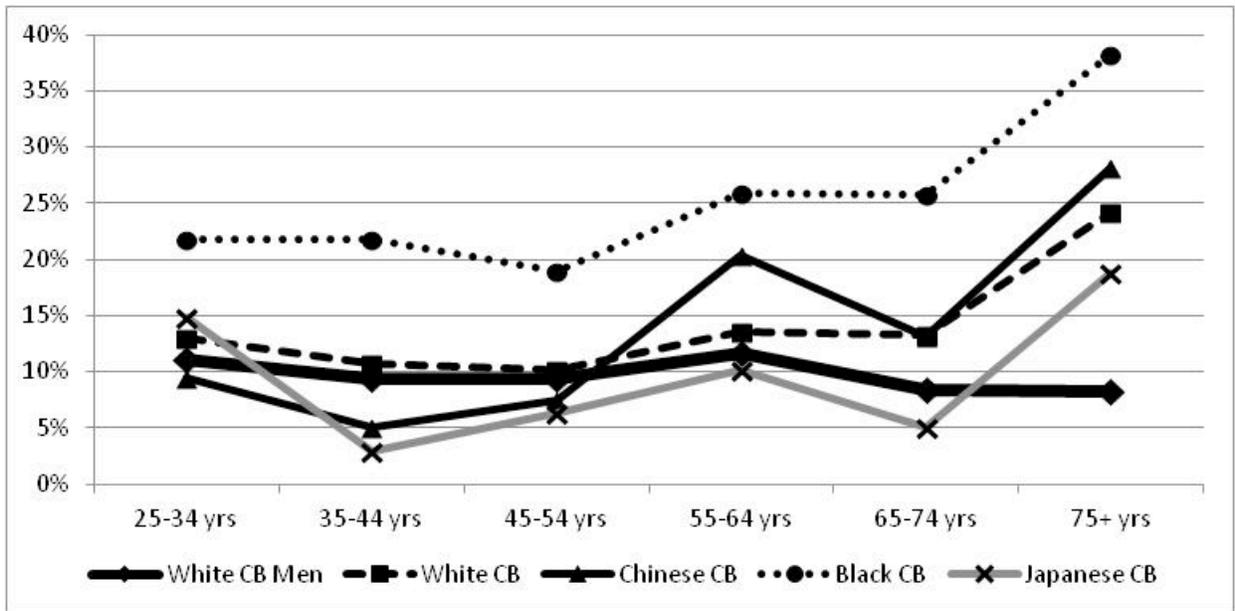


Figure 3a. Comparison of LICO rates among Canadian-born women by visible minority status

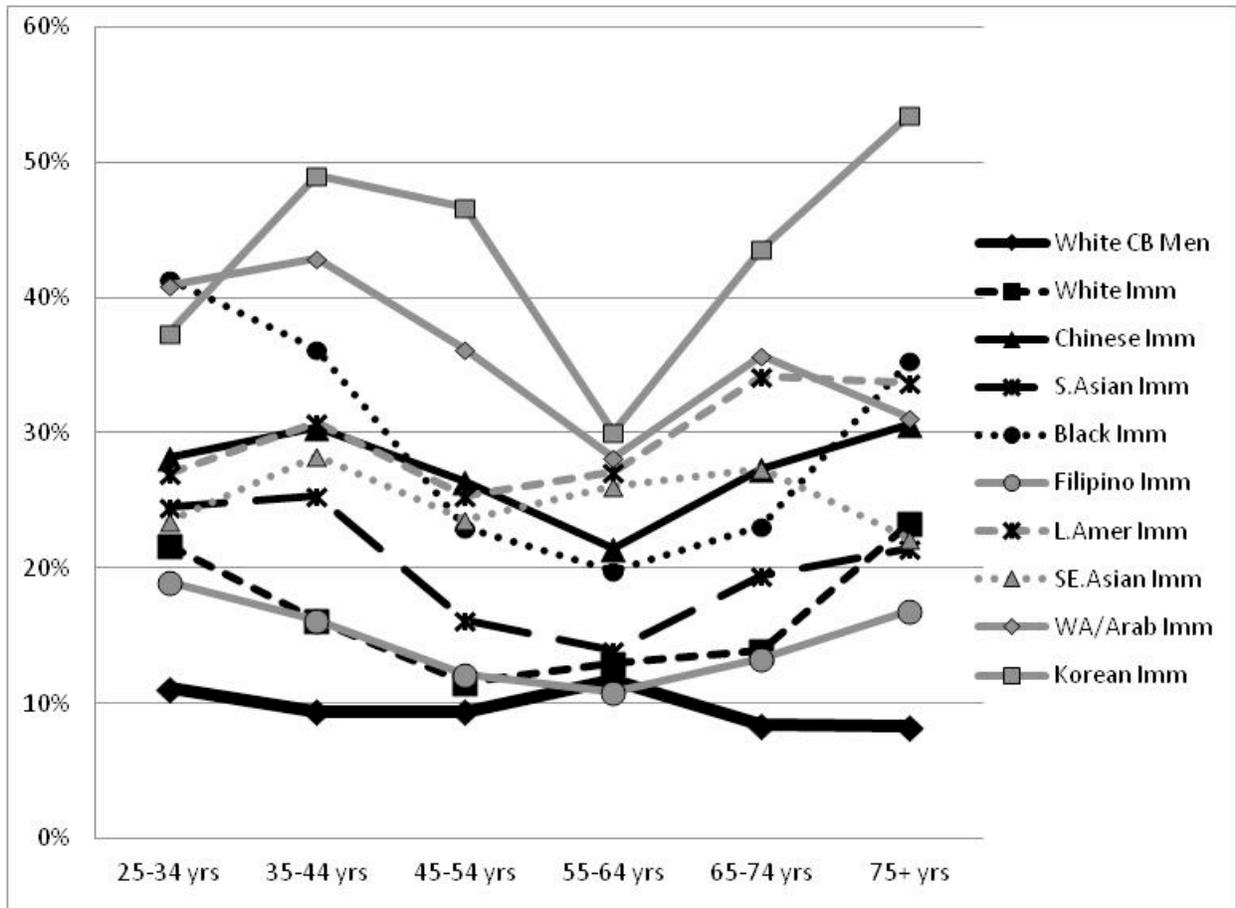


Figure 3b. Comparison of LICO rates among immigrant women by visible minority status

When compared with white Canadian-born men, the patterns of income disparity for immigrant women (Figure 3b) are somewhat similar to those of immigrant men. Immigrant women overall also experience a narrowing of the immigrant poverty gap from the youngest age group to young seniors aged 55 to 64 years, and the gap then widens again for older seniors. Other than for Filipina immigrant women aged 55 to 64 years¹¹, all other immigrant women have significantly higher rates of economic insecurity relative to white Canadian-born men ($p < .05$). The disparities generally exist across all age groups, with the below-LICO percentages rising for the oldest immigrant women in five visible minority groups: Korean, Chinese, Black, Filipina, and White. Below-LICO rates remain similar or drop in the oldest age group (i.e. 75 years plus) for immigrants from three ethnoracial groups, West Asian/Arab, Latin American, and Southeast Asian, but the gaps between all of these groups and white Canadian-born men remain. The smallest gap at this age falls for elderly Filipinas, who still have more than double the below-LICO rates of white Canadian-born older men. Therefore immigrant woman seniors, like their male counterparts, are at an economic disadvantage relative to men born in Canada. However, the findings become more mixed after a comparison between immigrant women and Canadian-born White women, perhaps a more appropriate reference group than Canadian-born White men

¹¹Like their male counterparts, Filipinas in all age groups have higher labour force participation rates than either other immigrant women or Canadian-born women. They also work more hours per week than either of the other groups (Kelly, 2006).

to illustrate this immigrant effect. A comparison of different groups of immigrant women to Canadian-born white women shows that immigrant women are still likely to have higher rates of economic insecurity at younger ages than Canadian-born White women, but that there is some convergence among older women, mainly among White, South Asian, and Filipino immigrants. Similar to their male counterparts, Korean immigrant women stand out for their unusually high levels of income insecurity at virtually all ages, but this is especially true of older women. We draw cautious conclusions based on these findings due to fairly small sample sizes, but a significance test¹² shows that the differences between white Canadian-born women and Korean immigrant women are statistically significant ($p < .001$).

The same explanations offered for immigrant men such as period of arrival, age at arrival in Canada, and labour market barriers likely contribute to the heightened rates of poverty for some immigrant women, but all women have the added disadvantage of being more likely to be unattached as seniors. For older seniors, the convergence in percentages with income below the low income threshold may be explained by the lower labour force participation rate of white Canadian-born women who are now in their 70s and 80s, and their lower likelihood of co-residence with adult children.

As mentioned earlier, some groups of women entered Canada under specific conditions that affect their eligibility for programs. Specifically, Caribbean women who entered on temporary visas as domestic workers were not eligible for income security programs (Hsuing & Nichols, 2010). More recently, women entering as live-in caregivers have temporary status for two years that reduces their eligibility for CPP/QPP payments (Bakan & Stasiulis, 2003).

Conclusions

The census analysis highlights the need for an intersectional examination of financial security in old age that takes simultaneous account of gender, race, and immigrant status. The percentages of Canadian-born and immigrant men and women from different visible minority groups who have low incomes differ substantially. The large differences between the low income rates for Filipino immigrants and all other visible minority immigrants underscores the need for detailed and disaggregated analysis of visible minority status and its impacts on immigrants' economic circumstances. There are also large differences in poverty between immigrants and the Canadian-born and across visible minority groups that need to be examined in more detail. An intersectional analysis that captures the heterogeneity of the Canadian population and their diverse experiences of financial security in old age (Basavarajappa, 2000; CASW, 2007; Strohschein, 2011) would be facilitated by accurate and reliable longitudinal data about the financial situations of seniors in Canada (CASW, 2007; Strohschein, 2011). Such data will help avoid policies that are superficially race- and gender-neutral and that benefit some seniors more than others (Green, 2005).

The consistent differences in poverty related to gender and visible minority and immigrant statuses that we have found across all age groups suggest that current policies and programs do not take sufficient account of systemic barriers faced by newcomers, racialized minorities, and women. Newcomers who work in survival jobs, racialized minorities who experience discrimination in hiring and promotion, and women who move in and out of the labour market suffer financial disadvantages later in life that current retirement programs do not mitigate. This is especially true for the OAS and GIS, universal retirement programs that underpin the

¹² As mentioned earlier on page 9, the analysis is weighted to represent the entire Canadian population.

economic security of low-income seniors. For example, current policies penalize older adults who continue to work by a dollar for dollar reduction of GIS, imposing the greatest financial loss on low-income seniors who rely on OAS and GIS as their principal income (NACA, 2005). Contribution rules for CPP/QPP also benefit those who work continuously rather than immigrants and many women who need opportunities to accumulate benefits during short periods of labour market participation (CASW, 2007). The value of immigrants' retirement benefits would also improve if there were more international agreements coordinating pension income, particularly with the countries of origin for many of Canada's current immigrants. Lack of information also contributes to older adults' low incomes. Many eligible recipients of GIS and OAS programs, particularly low-income, older adults, do not know how to enroll for these programs. Immigrants in particular need more pension information in their first languages prior to arrival in Canada. Our recommendations to address these issues run counter to recent policy changes that are moving in the other direction. The increase in the eligibility age for OAS from 65 to 67 will affect the poorest seniors who are disproportionately women and racialized minorities. They will have to rely longer on inadequate social assistance and disability programs before qualifying for OAS.

In our analysis, immigrant women, particularly those who are visible minorities, are the most impoverished seniors. Policies need to be revised so that the effects of gendered social roles and family obligations do not place immigrant women at even greater financial disadvantage than their male counterparts (CASW, 2007; Mitchell, 2005). Reconsideration of the ten-year residency requirement to qualify for OAS and GIS benefits would assist many immigrant men and women, but it would be particularly helpful for immigrant women who are often sponsored by their families to care for children and other dependents without pay. Even more radical policy changes would enable Canadian-born and immigrant women to contribute to government pensions while they are unpaid caregivers. Such policies should recognize that some men, both Canadian-born and immigrant, are taking active responsibility for the care of children, frail seniors, and other dependents; these policies should be designed to encourage more men to continue on this path (Townson, 2006).

Our findings confirm the need for policies to address inequalities throughout the life course. In old age, Canadian-born visible minority men have higher rates of low-income than White Canadian-born men; however, up to the age of 55, the low-income rates for Canadian-born Chinese and Japanese men are similar to those for White Canadian-born men. These trends suggest that some racialized inequalities may decline in the future, at least for Chinese and Japanese men born in Canada. Overall, our findings draw attention to the diverse and intersecting challenges that racialized and immigrant men and women in Canada must overcome throughout the life course to achieve economic security in old age. Effective policies must respond to inequalities earlier in the life course to reduce current high rates of low income among so many of these older men and women.

References

- Bakan, A. & Stasiulis, D. (2003). *Negotiating citizenship: Migrant women in Canada and the global system*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Basavarajappa, K. G. (2000). Distribution, inequality and concentration of income among older immigrants in Canada. *International Migration*, 38(1), 41-67.
- Berger, E.D., & Denton, M.A. (2004). The interplay between women's life course work patterns and financial planning for later life. *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 23(supplement), 81-95.

- Bernard, A., & Li, C. (2006). *Death of a spouse: The impact on income for senior men and women*. Analytical Paper, Analysis in Brief. Ottawa: Minister of Industry.
- Buckley, N.J., Denton, F.T., Robb, A.L., & Spencer, B.G. (2006). Socioeconomic influences on the health of older Canadians: Estimates based on two longitudinal surveys. *Canadian Public Policy*, 32(1), 59-83.
- Bulanda, J.R., & Zhang, Z. (2009). Racial-ethnic differences in subjective survival expectations for the retirement years. *Research on Aging*, 31(6), 688–709.
- Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD). (2007). Backgrounder: Measuring Low Income in Canada. *Urban Poverty Project 2007*. Retrieved from http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2007/upp/measuring_low_income.htm.
- Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW). (2007). *Financial security for women seniors in Canada*. Ottawa: CASW.
- Denton, M., & Boos, L. (2007). The gender wealth gap: Structural and material constraints and implications for later life. *Journal of Women and Aging*, 19(3-4), 105-120.
- Durst, D. (2005). Aging amongst immigrants in Canada: population drift. *Canadian Studies in Population*, 32(2), 257-270.
- Elgersma, S. (2010). *Immigrant seniors: Their economic security and factors affecting their access to benefits*. Ottawa: The Library of Parliament.
- Frenette, M., & Morissette, R. (2003). *Will they ever converge? Earnings of immigrant and Canadian-born workers over the last two decades* (Research Paper 11F0019MIE No.215). Ottawa, ON: Analytical Studies Branch, Statistics Canada.
- Galabuzi, G.E. 2006. *Canada's economic apartheid: The social exclusion of racialized groups in the new century*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.
- Gaszo, A. 2005. The poverty of unattached senior women and the Canadian retirement income system: a matter of blame or contradiction? *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 32(2), 41- 62.
- Green, C.A. (2005). Race, ethnicity, and social security retirement age in the US. *Feminist Economics*, 1(2), 117-143.
- Honig, M. (1996). Retirement expectations: Differences by race, ethnicity, and gender. *The Gerontologist*, 36(3), 373-382.
- Hsuing, P.C., & Nichol, K. (2010). Policies on and experiences of foreign domestic workers in Canada. *Sociology Compass*, 4(9), 766-778.
- Kaida, L., & Boyd, M. (2011). Poverty variations among the elderly: The roles of income security policies and family co-residence. *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 30(1), 83-100.
- Kelly, P. F. (2006). *Filipinos in Canada: Economic dimensions of immigration and settlement* (CERIS Working Paper No. 48). Toronto, ON: CERIS – The Ontario Metropolis Centre.
- Kim, A.H. (2010). Filial piety, financial independence and freedom: Explaining the living arrangements of older Korean immigrants. In D. Durst and M. MacLean (Eds.), *Diversity and Aging Among Seniors in Canada: Changing Faces and Greying Temples* (pp.387-408). Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprises Ltd.
- Kobayashi, K.M., Prus, S., & Lin, Z. (2008). *Ethnic differences in health: Does immigration status matter? Social and economic dimensions of an aging population* (Research Paper No 230). Hamilton, ON: McMaster University.
- Li, C. (2004). *Widowhood: Consequences on income for senior women* (Analytical Paper, Analysis in Brief.) Ottawa: Minister of Industry.

- Marier, P., & Skinner, S. (2008). The impact of gender and immigration on pension outcomes in Canada. *Canadian Public Policy*, 34(supplement), 59-78.
- Mata, F. (2010). *Economic vulnerability and ethnicity in Canada's metropolitan workforce: An exploratory analysis of census classifications. Social and economic dimensions of an aging population* (Research Paper No 10-04). Hamilton, ON: McMaster University.
- McCall, L. (2005). The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 30(3), 1771-1800.
- McDaniel, S., & Bernard, P. (2011). Life course as a policy lens: Challenges and opportunities. *Canadian Public Policy*, 37(supplement), 1-13.
- McDonald, L. (2002). *The invisible retirement of women. Social and economic dimensions of an aging population* (Research Paper No 69). Hamilton, ON: McMaster University.
- Mitchell, B.A. (2005). *Canada's growing visible minority population: Generational challenges, opportunities and federal policy considerations* (Discussion Paper commissioned by The Multicultural Program, Dept. of Canadian Heritage). Gatineau, Quebec.
- Moen, P. (2001). The gendered life course. In L. George and R. H. Binstock (eds.), *Handbook of aging and the social sciences, 5th Edition* (pp. 179-196). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- National Advisory Council on Aging (NACA). (2005). *Seniors on the margins: Aging in poverty in Canada*. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada.
- Palameta, B. (2004). Low income among immigrants and visible minorities. *Perspectives*, (April), 12-17.
- Pendakur, K., & Pendakur, R. (2002). Colour my world: Have earnings gaps for Canadian-born ethnic minorities changed over time? *Canadian Public Policy*, 28(4), 489-512.
- Preston, V., & D'Addario, S. (2009). Recent migrants in Canadian labour markets: Exploring the impacts of gender and racialization. In S. McKay (Ed.), *Refugees, recent migrants and employment, challenging barriers and exploring pathways* (pp. 139-164). New York: Routledge.
- Ray, B., & Preston, V. (2009). Geographies of discrimination: Variations in perceived discomfort and discrimination in Canada's gateway cities. *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 7(3), 228-249.
- Schellenberg, G., & Silver, C. (2004). You can't always get what you want. *Canadian Social Trends*, 75. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.
- Stanford, E.P., & Usita, P.M. (2002). Retirement: Who is at risk? *Generations*, 26 (2), 45-49.
- Statistics Canada. (2011). *Low income lines, 2009-2010* (Income Research Paper Series). Ottawa: Minister of Industry.
- Stobert, S. (2003, September 2). General social survey: Social support and aging. *The Daily*. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/030902/dq030902a-eng.htm>
- Strohschein, L. (2011). A life-course approach to studying transitions among Canadian seniors in couple-only households. *Canadian Public Policy*, 37(supplement), 57-71.
- Swidinsky, R. & Swidinsky, M. (2002). The relative earnings of visible minorities in Canada: new evidence from the 1996 census. *Industrial Relations*, 57(4), 630-659
- Townson, M. (2006). *Growing older, working longer: The new face of retirement*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.
- Tsoukalas, S., & Mackenzie, A. (2003). *The personal security index, 2003: Five years later*. Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development.
- Turcotte, M., & Schellenberg, G. (2007). *A portrait of seniors in Canada*. Ottawa: Minister of Industry.