Supporting family carers?
Preoccupations, beliefs and getting unstuck

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Our preoccupations shape our priorities

- Around the world, countries celebrate, worry about and sometimes ignore population aging.

- Some have national aging strategies; others take a triage approach, dealing with urgent needs as they arise.

- Regional contexts and preoccupations are powerful drivers of ‘solutions’.

- Beliefs about families, family responsibilities and family care are embedded in national psyches.
Africa

- Preoccupation: A young population with immense challenges
- Values and Beliefs: large, strong African families will care for young and old
- Solutions: Systems of chronic care and support are not needed
- The ‘care economy’
Europe

- **Preoccupation:** Later life productivity
- **Values and Beliefs:** An ageing population requires increased labour force participation
- **Contested Solutions:**
  - Higher retirement age reduces pension costs and increases wellbeing (EU) vs Higher retirement age increases inequality (Aine le Leime)
  - Encourage immigration to increase labour force (Germany) vs reduce immigration to reduce job competition (UK)

- **The ‘care crisis’**
Latin America

- Preoccupation: Economic instability
- Values and beliefs: Inequalities are widening and there is great suffering
  - *Trouble in Paradise: Chile’s Inequality Explodes*
  - *The nation of Venezuela is in a state of crisis*
  - *Argentina: A deep recession is under way.*
  - *The worst economic crisis in Brazilian history*

- Solutions: Better governance; ethical north-south relationships

- Mexico: Disrupted migration and truncated generational economic stability
Asia

- Preoccupation: Large population with millions of older people
- Values and beliefs: Filial piety remains a value; ‘one-child’ policy and migration have lead to a care gap.
- Contested solutions: Increase economic well being vs increase birth rate to ensure future carers

- Family care in rural China
Canada: Supporting family carers?
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- Preoccupation: Caring for an aging population

- Values and beliefs:
  - Aging is important; Aging is costly; Aging is complicated; Ageism
  - Family care to older persons is essential; Support can erode family obligations

- (Contested) solutions:
  - Private vs public problems
  - Silos of assistance vs a National strategy
An overview of family carers in Canada

- 20 years of documenting increasing prevalence of family care: 11% → 28% of Canadians
- Family care networks are small (1-2 people)
- Care has social/relationship costs (marriage, friends, children)
- Care has economic costs (out of pocket, employment)
- 50% of people age 65+ have provided care; some have cared for more than 35 years
- Long term carers are at high risk of isolation and loneliness
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🎯 Stuck—where beliefs collide with urgency
  - NIMB-Y?
  - FPT
  - Pilot projects vs Sustainable solutions
Getting unstuck
A groundswell from the (Alberta) trenches

- Enhancing care in the community
  - Working together to support vulnerable older adults
  - Supports family carers; reduces ED visits
- Creating a healthcare system that is responsive to needs of family carers
  - Education of the health workforce to identify carer needs
  - Homecare interventions to support family carers
- And a remarkable similarity to the proposed National Seniors Strategy: http://nationalseniorsstrategy.ca/
  - Pillar 3: Care Closer to Home
  - Pillar 4: Support for Caregivers
Moving forward

- Preoccupation: Creating age-friendly settings

- Values and beliefs: Aging is an asset

- Sustainable solutions:
  - Built on Alberta needs;
  - Supported by National structures
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