

Representation of Hearing Loss and Hearing Aids in the Canadian Mainstream Media

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Background

Newspapers are a key source of disseminating information to the public and can have a large influence on public perceptions. Previous media analyses of various affected populations have found negative portrayals of these groups and the perpetuation of stereotypes^{1, 2, 3}. Currently, no studies to date have examined the portrayal and perception of hearing aids or age-related hearing loss in the media.

Objective

To determine how hearing loss and the use of hearing aids are portrayed in adult or senior populations in the Canadian media, and whether stereotypes exist.

Methods

Six years (2011-2016) of articles in *Canadian Newsstand Complete* were searched using terms related to the research objective. A total of 1,615 English articles were accessed and initially reviewed. After applying extensive inclusion and exclusion criteria, 581 articles were retained and coded. The primary code list included 9 topics, 4 populations, 6 tones, 12 information sources, 5 roles, 8 stereotypes, 5 contexts, 5 assistive technology devices (ATDs) and counterarguments, and 5 discourse types. Crosschecks revealed that there was 96.3% interrater reliability across all coding.

Article Coding Process

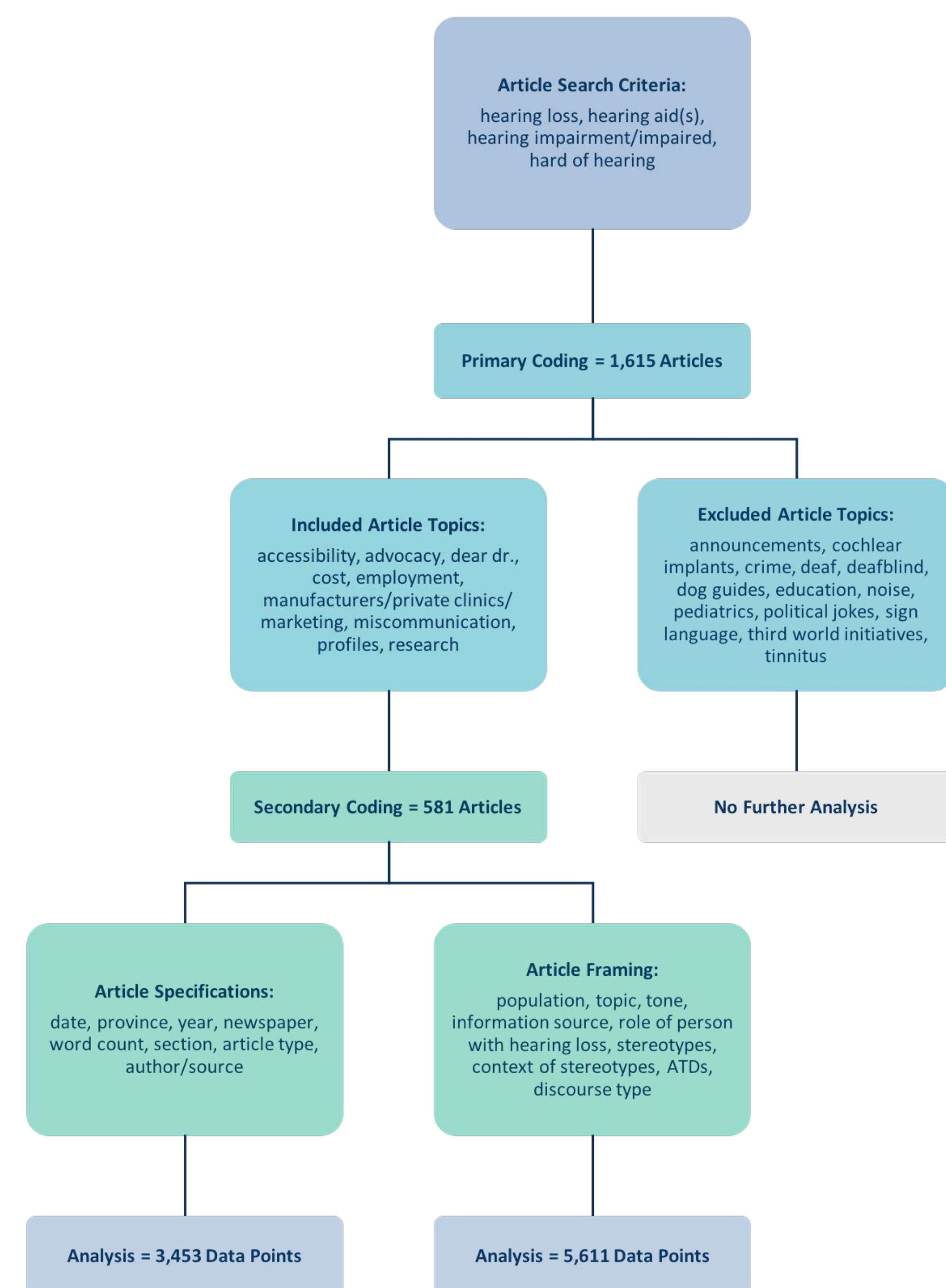


Figure 1. Article coding process.

Place of Publication

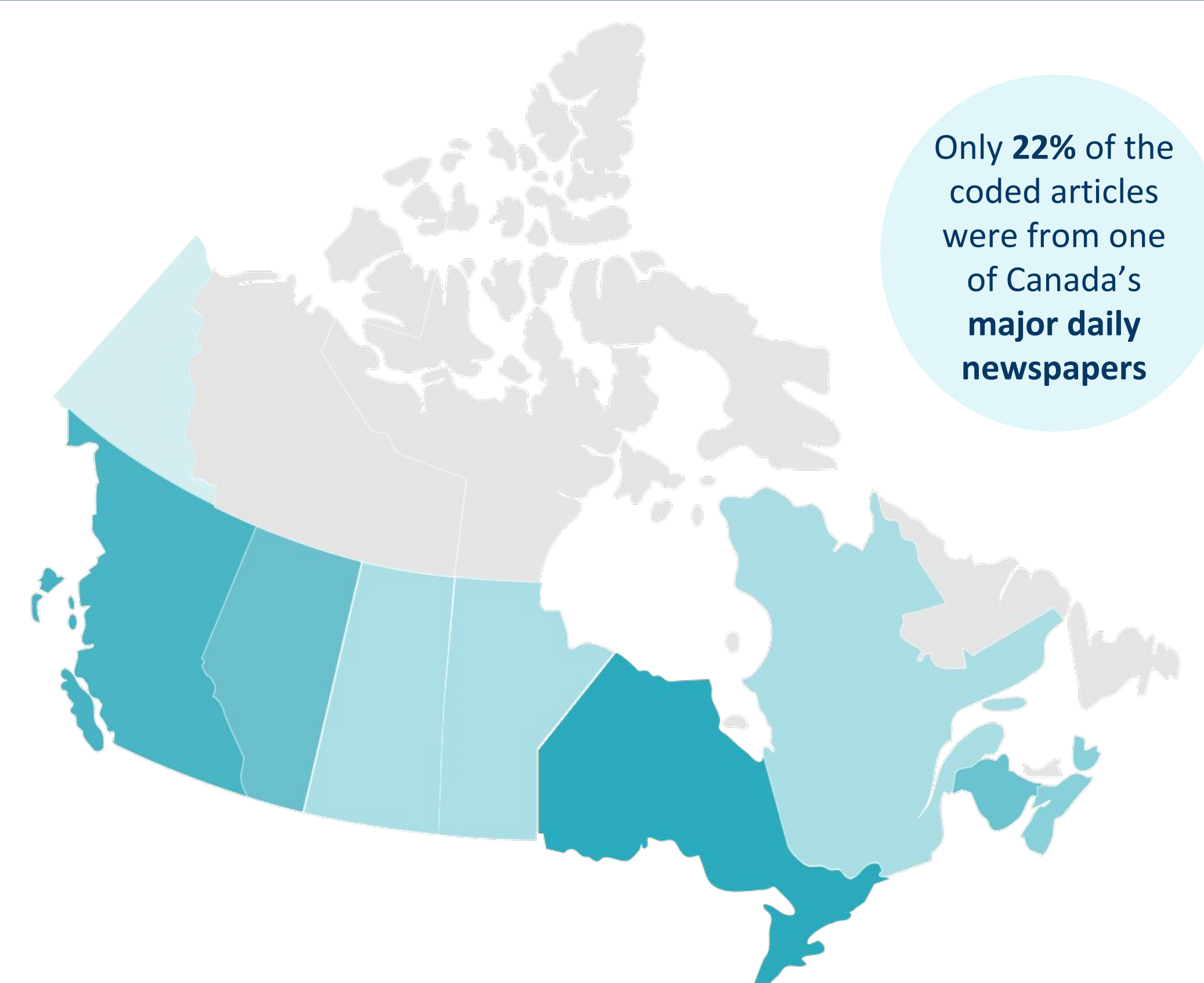


Figure 2. Distribution of articles across Canada. Provinces/territories that are darker in color indicate a greater number of articles. Articles that are grey in color indicate that no articles were analyzed from those provinces/territories.

References

- Fraser, S. A., Kenyon, V., Lagacé, M., Wittich, W., & Southall, K. E. (2015). Stereotypes associated with age-related conditions and assistive device use in Canadian media. *The Gerontologist*, 56(6), 1023-1032.
- Koerber, R., Jennings, M. B., Shaw, L., & Cheesman, M. (2017). Representations of workers with hearing loss in Canadian newspapers: A thematic analysis. *International Journal of Audiology*, 56(4), 260-266.
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Results

Our analysis revealed that 183 articles contained stereotypes, and that the stereotypes in media centre around age and suffering in the context of age and independence. The portrayal is that ATDs do work, although are expensive. The majority of articles (51%) were positive or mostly positive in overall tone, likely because most articles were promotional or marketing. Despite finding that only 16% of articles were negative or mostly negative overall, 31% still contained at least one stereotype. Our findings indicate that discourses in Canadian newspapers do involve stereotypes related to hearing loss and hearing aids.

Stereotypes



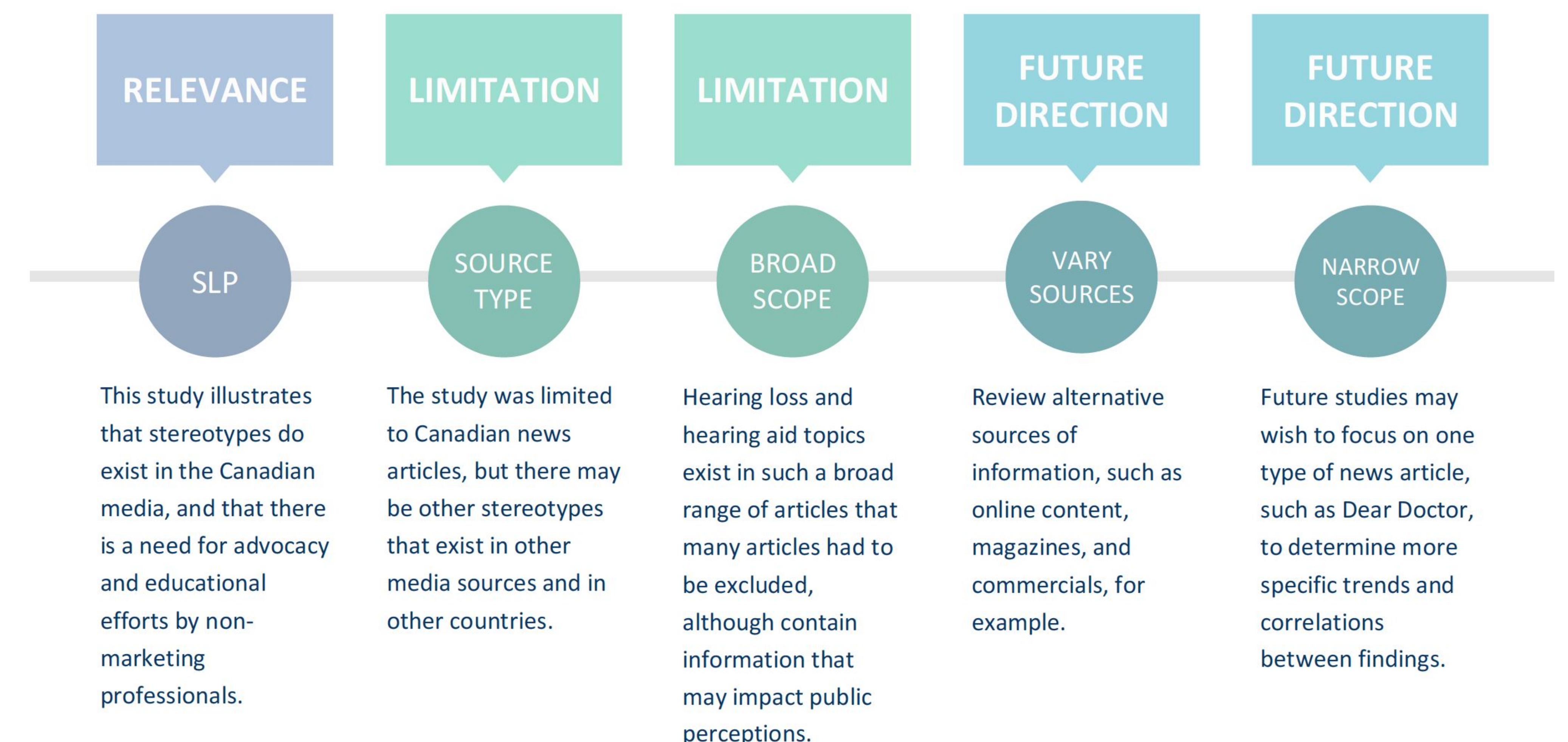
Figure 3. Proportion of stereotypes present in 31% of articles, with prevalence depicted by relative size of text.

Article Topics



Figure 4. Proportion of topics present in coded articles, with prevalence depicted by relative size of bubbles.

Limitations & Directions for Future Research



Institutional Affiliations:

