

NEWSLETTER



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SOCIAL INCLUSION & RISKS OF SOCIAL ISOLATION

IN ORDER TO ADDRESS THE PERSISTING ISSUES CAUSED BY SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS, THE UN DESIGNATED THE YEARS 2021-2030 AS THE DECADE OF HEALTHY AGING. SOCIAL INCLUSION IS A CRUCIAL ASPECT OF HEALTHY AGEING.

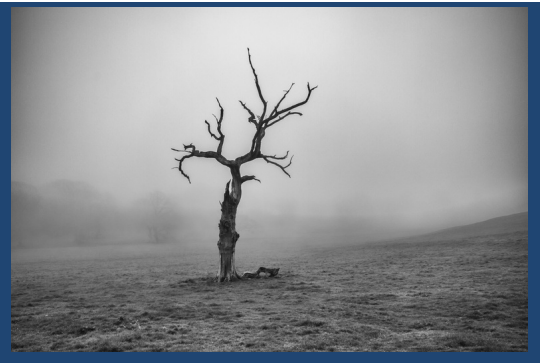
Affects/results of social isolation may be:

- profound loneliness
- depression
- financial insecurity and dependence
- declining mental & physical health
- increase conditions for abuse and neglect

KEY INFORMATION

- A recent report showed that 20% of Canadian seniors, do not have a single person to reach out to in case of emergency
- Ageism is often found as a key underlying cause of social exclusion, discrimination, and social vulnerability
- Being lonely is as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, and poses a significant risk for mortality

(SOURCE: [HTTPS://WWW.CANAGE.CA/ADVOCACY/POLICY-BOOK/SOCIAL-INCLUSION/](https://www.canage.ca/advocacy/policy-book/social-inclusion/))



Scan QR code or click link below



[HTTPS://APP.CHALENJ.COM/CTOKEN/PXALDR69CKTXP_XSN8PBGGYJXBZDRIE5XFIIIG7E7K](https://app.chalenj.com/ctoken/pxaldr69cktxp_xsn8pbggyjxbzdrie5xfiig7e7k)



TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHALENJ

- Finding purpose
- Reduce risk of social isolation
- Raising awareness of social isolation
- Technology
- Transportation & housing
- Impact & concerns of social isolation
- Situations increasing risk of social isolation
- Loneliness



After retirement, life tends to slow down, and for many seniors, it might lose its appeal in the absence of a definable purpose.

Humans have social needs, such as the desire for affection, acceptance by our peers, or a sense of community. Having one's social needs met may enhance the quality of life and serve as a defence against disease and depression.

Research shows that having a sense of purpose is associated with a higher quality of life, a stronger sense of wellbeing, and even better physical and mental health.



Click here for
research info!

<https://www.webmd.com/balance/default.htm>

FINDING PURPOSE

Seniors who have a sense of purpose enjoy life more and stay healthier longer.

1. Engage in enjoyable activities: gardening to gaming or baking to dancing
2. Create: arts, crafts, music, or writing
3. Develop a daily practice: meditation, yoga, walking, volunteering, playing an instrument, or journaling
4. Learn new things: workshops, classes, grassroots groups, and the Internet are all excellent resources
5. Join –or start–a group: readers, writers, quilters, stargazers, bird watchers, bakers, or another interest
6. Work: employment is engaging socially and mentally and brings in income
7. Volunteer: choose an organization that has meaning to you

REDUCE THE RISK OF SOCIAL ISOLATION

Social inclusion lowers the likelihood of social isolation while providing a sense of success, purpose, and belonging.

Some protective factors that can reduce the risk of social isolation:

- being in good health
- adequate income and housing
- living in a neighbourhood where one feels safe
- communication skills and resources to find and obtain needed services
- satisfying personal relationships
- having a social support network
- feeling connected to and valued by others
- having access to health services
- experiencing meaningful roles in society
- having secure housing
- having access to transportation
- having higher levels of education and social support.

Where you can, assume the reins of the factors within your control.

THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

Which of the ideas for purpose speaks to you?

Think about the risk factors for social isolation – are there any you should be addressing? If so, what might your plan look like?



RAISING AWARENESS OF SOCIAL ISOLATION

Along with the Canadian government the United Nations believes that social isolation and loneliness are gradually being identified as priorities in public health for older people. It is important to understand that it is an ongoing issue, and there is help available.

Some key initiatives have included:

1. The website, www.seniors.gc.ca: an online awareness and resource center, with specific sections on elder abuse and social isolation.
2. The New Horizons for Seniors Program (NHSP): provides funding to organizations to support projects involving older adults with the goal of encouraging social participation, mentoring, and volunteering
3. Canada HomeShare program: aims to empower older adults wishing to remain in their homes while obtaining added income, help around the home, and companionship.

“The social connections you have and the access to services in your community are often more important than anything else,” says Jessica Finlay, University of Michigan researcher who studies older adults and their neighborhoods. “You need a reason to get out of bed in the morning and to get out the front door.”



Schedule time each day to stay in touch with family, friends, and neighbours either in person, by email, social media, voice call, or text. That connection will serve you both.

AGE-WELL Environics Polling Data [2020]



66% of Canadians aged 50+ believe tech advances can help to lessen the impact of COVID-19 on daily life



76% of Canadians aged 50+ are confident using current technology



67% are willing to pay out-of-pocket for tech that allows them to stay at home as they age

Prepared for AGE-WELL by Environics Research
N = 2,026, Canadians aged 50+

TECHNOLOGY

The recent COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of using technology and being digitally literate. Older people needed to rely on technology for everything, including social interaction, medical appointments, and the ordering of groceries and supplies. It is critical to continue prioritizing and developing seniors' digital literacy and technological inclusion.

A recent survey from AARP, conducted in September and October (2021), found that older adults boosted technology purchases during the COVID-19 pandemic but 54% said they needed a better grasp of the devices they'd acquired.

There is **FREE** online help available:

[Generations Online](#)

[Cyber Seniors](#)

[Connected Canadians](#)

[Seniors Dig-It](#)

Contact your local library for information on digital supports

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is often critical to a person's independence, physical, emotional, and social health, as well as their ability to remain engaged in the outside world. It may become difficult to maintain contact with family, friends, and the community if you do not have access to proper transportation. Access to medical services, recreational programmes, and social activities may also be hindered in the absence of reliable transportation.

It is important to learn about your local options:

- Family and/or friends
- Buses
- Taxis
- Delivery services
- Community initiatives

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Go Commute - connecting rural communities in and around Northumberland

Northumberland County, Metrolinx and Hop In Technologies, is proud to deliver this pilot shuttle bus service connecting the communities of Northumberland with each other and with GO Transit service in Oshawa.



HOUSING

Adequate housing is essential to the safety and well-being of older adults. The majority of older adults prefer to age in place- in their familiar neighbourhood (City of Ottawa 2012). For many, this is possible without added supports, for others this may increase the feeling of isolation.

Aging in place is not always the best situation for everyone. Fortunately, there are alternatives.

Additional information was available in Issue [3. HOUSING NEEDS](#), if you would like to revisit.

Depending on your needs and preferences, you may want to explore some popular housing options for older people that may not only decrease the risk of social isolation, but also offer social inclusion opportunities.

- Co-housing
- Co-operative Housing (Co-ops)
- Life Lease Housing
- Supportive Housing
- Retirement Communities
- Retirement Homes
- Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities

THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

Which housing option(s) can you see for yourself, whether it be now or in the future? Choose all that apply. Find one or more in your community and set up a visit to investigate further.



IMPACT OF SOCIAL ISOLATION

Social isolation can result from a decrease in social participation or social contact, which may lead to feelings of loneliness or other emotional distress.

According to the National Seniors Council of Canada, social isolation is defined as a lack of quantity and quality of contact with others. It is the absence of social contacts and social roles, as well as the deficiency of mutually rewarding relationships. Due to the negative effects on individuals and their families, social isolation is a concern.

Research has found that social isolation and exclusion are associated with:

- increased chance of premature death
- lower general well-being
- depression
- disability from chronic diseases
- poor mental health
- increased use of health and support services
- reduced quality of life
- caregiver burden
- poor general health

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK557977/>

In addition to the personal consequences, when seniors are socially isolated it may negatively impact the entire community.

Seniors often enrich the many organizations they take part in and provide support to local businesses and events.

Losing these contributions is a significant loss to organizations and to society. Whether or not (or to what degree) social isolation occurs will likely depend on how well a senior is able to use her/his usual coping skills and on the availability of support from friends, family and community.

IMPACT OF SOCIAL ISOLATION

Older people are more likely to experience many of the risk factors that can cause or worsen social isolation. Over a life course, the severity of social isolation is dependent upon an individual's circumstances and perceptions.

There are many factors contributing to older adults spending longer periods of time alone:

- reduced mobility, have low income, or lack transportation options
- living in different cities –or even countries– than their children
- difficulty connecting to and accessing appropriate health and community services
- reduced access to services
- social and recreational programs may not be designed for people with physical or mental health issues
- language barrier

Research shows that those who stay actively engaged in life and socially connected are happier, physically, and mentally healthier, and better able to cope with life's transitions common in older age. — Older Adult Plan 2012-2014 (City of Ottawa 2012, 24)

SITUATIONS THAT INCREASE THE RISK OF SOCIAL ISOLATION

There are numerous individual, social, and environmental factors associated with late life that increase the risk of social isolation in seniors.

According to the F/P/T Working Group's literature review, the following factors may put seniors at risk of social isolation and loneliness:

- disabilities
- loss of a spouse
- living alone
- 80 years old or older
- have a low income
- have no children or limited contact with family
- reduced social networks
- transportation issues
- place of residence
- low self-esteem compromised or poor health



Generally, the more risk factors present, the greater the likelihood of experiencing social isolation.

While older adults primarily bear the negative effects of isolation, communities are also at risk of suffering. Missing the contributions of older adults can lead to, “a lack of social cohesion, higher social costs, and the loss of an unquantifiable wealth of experience that older adults bring to families, neighbourhoods and communities”.

Finding ways to minimize social isolation in communities should be a priority.

For full report – click on this link:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/national-seniors-council/programs/publications-reports/2014/social-isolation-seniors/page05.html#h2.2>



LONELINESS

It has been found that seniors experience the highest degree of loneliness of any other age group. Social isolation increases the likelihood of loneliness, but a person can perceive being lonely even when in the company of others.

Loneliness can be defined as an unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship. It happens when there is a mismatch between the quantity and quality of social relationships that occur, and those that are wanted. Loneliness is linked to social isolation, but it is not the same.

Consequences of loneliness are significant; lowered physical well-being, poor mental health, and even decreases in life expectancy may occur.

Suggestions to avoid loneliness:

- Continued flexible employment
 - offers social opportunities, social networking, increased income
- Community-based programs
 - often connect lonely or socially isolated seniors not only to others but to the community as a whole
- Public library
 - there are often senior programs available
- Local sporting league
 - whether to physically take part or to show support
- Exercise classes
 - modified classes are available for many diverse needs and there is a social aspect to many of these classes
- Volunteer in the community
 - schools, museums, art galleries, parks, and more welcome help

MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

<https://www.cfn-nce.ca/frailty-matters/avoid-frailty/interact/#1574372966904-8b9e3f46-7d6c>



Older people with limited mobility may face significant barriers that may prevent them from fully participating in their community.

However, The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) set out a process for developing and enforcing accessibility standards. The goal is to make Ontario more accessible and inclusive by 2025.

The presence of physical and cognitive limitations may contribute to a reduction in one's ability and/or willingness to interact with others.

Increased social frailty can occur, putting older people at risk of social isolation. According to the 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability, more than 20% of older adults use a cane, walker, or wheelchair as a result of ageing.

When physical mobility is limited, there are numerous challenges to remain connected to the community and accessing recreational opportunities.

Examples of some challenges

- facilities may not yet be fully accessible
- the expense of mobility aids may prohibit some from obtaining them
- public transportation can ease mobility challenges but not all
- pedestrian safety concerns
 - busy streets without sidewalks
 - skateboarders and cyclists can be startling and cause injury
 - length of time given to cross the road may not be sufficient
 - large or busy intersections may be intimidating

REDEFINING PURPOSE

We've all heard someone say it: they've decided to keep working beyond retirement age to "keep their mind sharp." Now, that widely held notion has some science behind it.

People of all ages require a sense of challenge, a reason to get out of bed in the morning – a sense of purpose, which was the focus of Irving's 2014 book, *The Upside of Aging*. According to Irving, factors such as purpose, connection, and lifelong learning, as well as exercise, are determinants of longevity. After all, meeting and engaging with new people can be motivating.

Purpose in life can be achieved in numerous ways. It depends on the individual whether it is family, community activity, or volunteering that provides the sense of purpose. People with a sense of purpose are more likely to be engaged and continue to be involved in the world. **Further details are available in Chalenj 10. LIFE'S PURPOSE.**

People who live longer, healthier lives can continue to add value to the community by sharing their wisdom, judgment, and experience.

"I think what we could say is that you need to stay cognitively engaged, like basically forever, as long as you can," says Hale, co-researcher of Irving.