

Aging in Place

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Background

Research question

What innovative solutions can be applied to enable aging in place for older adults with income insecurity, disabilities, and chronic medical conditions?

Importance

Our research resonates with the urgency imposed by micro, mezzo, and macro concerns surrounding the growing percentage of the aging population struggling to find accommodations that align with their unique needs. "As more seniors are living to 85 and beyond, an increasing number of individuals will face limitations and long-term health challenges" (Statistics Canada, 2022, para 1).

Methods

Method & Methodology

Our research was descriptive and used mixed methods. We used surveys to identify suitable candidates which we contacted for interviews.

Participants

Adults aged 65 and over with a minimum of one of the following characteristics: a chronic medical condition, income insecurity, or disability. There were 24 responses to our survey, and we conducted 2 interviews.

Data analysis

Quantitative data analysis included using visualization, excel, and cross-tabulations. Qualitative data analysis included transcribing audio recordings, inductive open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Data compiled from our coding process was used in a figure, quotes, and the development of the themes of our research study

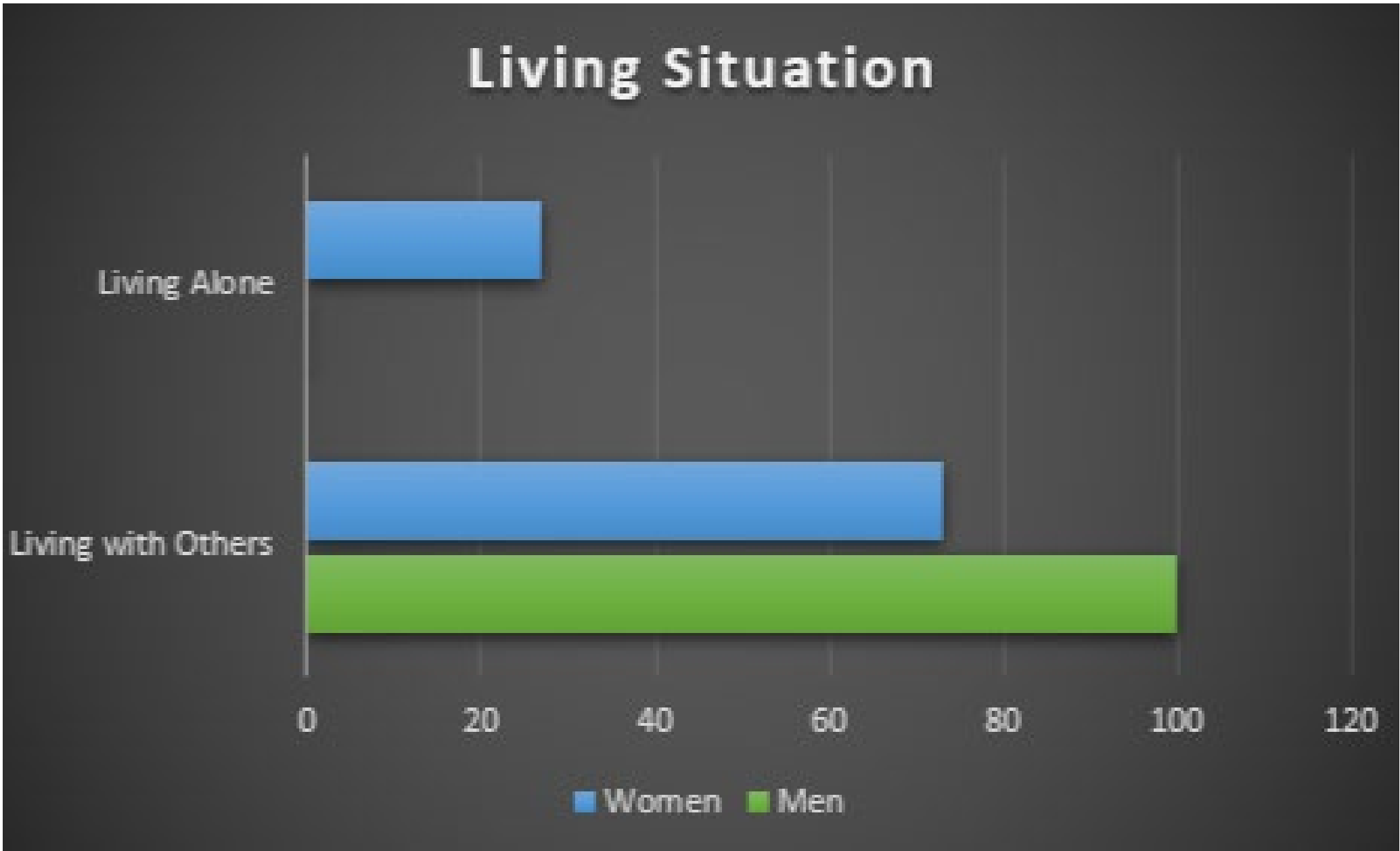
Ethical considerations

We ensured that the key ethical responsibilities, respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice were always met. We obtained informed consent, adhered to strict confidentiality standards. The data collected will be stored by the School of Community Studies for two years after which it will be deleted.

Key Findings

Quantitative Findings

Our participants were 64% women and 36% men, aged 65-94, 89% were white and 11% were a mix of other ethnicities. Incomes ranged from under \$20,000 to over \$100,000, with 69% being under \$50,000. 74% participants lived with others, 55% of which lived only with 1 other person.



Our quantitative findings revealed a 27% variation between genders among participants residing independently compared to those living with others.

Independence

A central theme that emerged in our research was autonomy and the need for environments that support and enhance independence through the design of age-friendly homes

"...my mother developed Parkinson's and so my, my husband put railings up on the stairs. And thank God because as I got older, like the railings are huge bonus."

Access to technologies *"I have an Uber app on my phone now."*

And community resources *"...last year because the snow was heavy, I found a fellow, a neighborhood fellow, who would come and my snow blower didn't work last year. So he would come and shovel the snow. But pretty much everything else I do on my own."*

Social Connection

Loneliness and social isolation can have detrimental effects on the physical and mental well-being of older individuals. Our qualitative findings underscore the importance of maintaining social ties, be it through family, friends, or community activities.

"I think it was kind of more getting used to living alone because I got married when I was 20. So, I lived with my parents until I was 20. And then I got married. So I had, I had never ever lived alone and married for almost 48 years when he died."

Discussion

Our research:

- Identified specific challenges related to safety measures, available resources, social outlets, healthcare, transportation, and physical accessibility at home. Brim et al. (2021) discovered that the need for accessibility is equally prominent inside the homes of elderly persons attempting to age in place.
- Underscores the interconnectedness of the themes of connection, independence, autonomy, and accessibility in the context of aging in place.
- Contributes advanced insights and innovative solutions that transcend conventional paradigms, addressing the complex interplay of factors influencing the ability of older adults to age in place successfully.

Implications for policy and/or practice

- Advocacy for adopting government policies to provide additional benefits at retirement and support personalized living arrangements and implement adjustments that prolong living independently.
- Creating government-funded programs in community development settings that encourage social interaction and collaboration with intergenerational activities, cultural exchanges, and shared learning experiences to decrease social isolation.
- Regular assessments of the effectiveness of these newly created and implemented programs with feedback from community members are necessary to make any needed adjustments and/or improvements.

References

Brim, B., Fromhold, S., & Blaney, S. (2021). Older adults' self-reported barriers to aging in place. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 40(12), 1678–1686.
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