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Building Connected Communities: Reducing Loneliness and Social Isolation in Immigrants 65+ – September 2017 – Research Update

Sheridan Centre for Elder Research

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Sheridan Centre for Elder Research, "Building Connected Communities: Reducing Loneliness and Social Isolation in Immigrants 65+ – September 2017 – Research Update" (2017). *Centre Publications and Scholarship*. 34.
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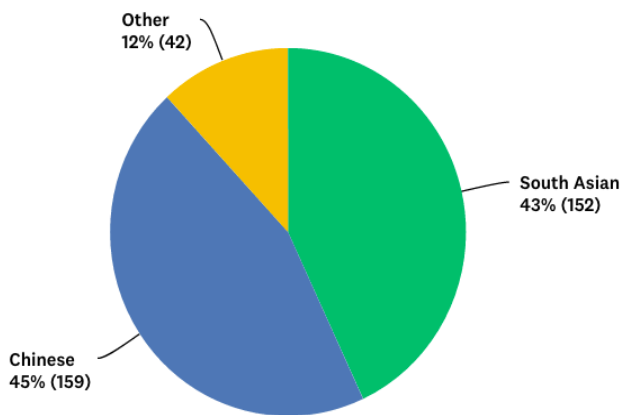
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The results are in!

Thanks to the support of our community partners and many community organizations, we have had a busy and successful summer of data collection. In this issue of the newsletter, we will share some of the results with you and tell you more about what we will be doing with them.

Who did we speak to?

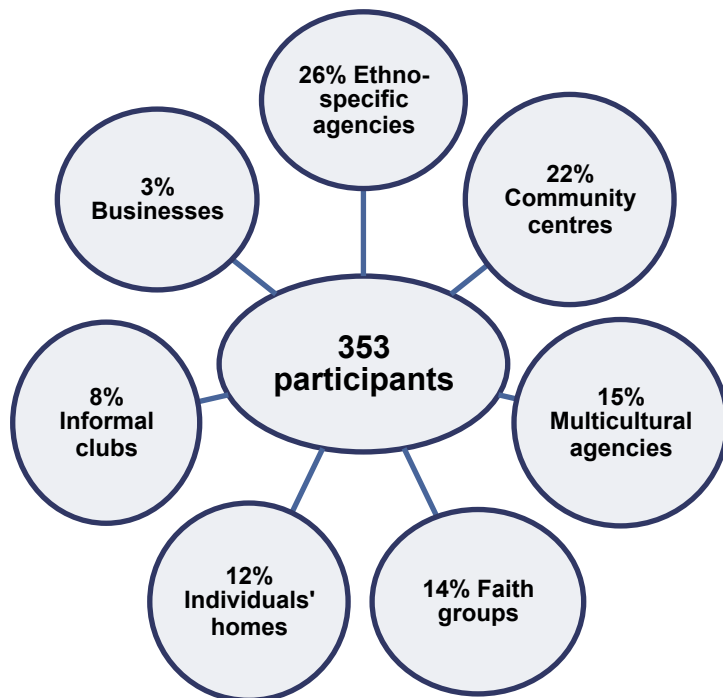


Most participants were:

- Age 65-74 (63%)
- Settled immigrants (living in Canada for more than 15 years) (51%)
- Spoke at least one language other than English everyday (92%)
- Lived with family members (84%)
- Relied on forms of transportation other than their own car (63%)
- Had trouble accessing services because of language barriers (78%)
- Recently experienced a life transition (i.e. change in health, loss of loved one, retirement) (62%)

How did we reach them?

With the help of our student Research Assistants and many, many flyers distributed in the community we successfully connected with participants through the following types of groups/organizations.



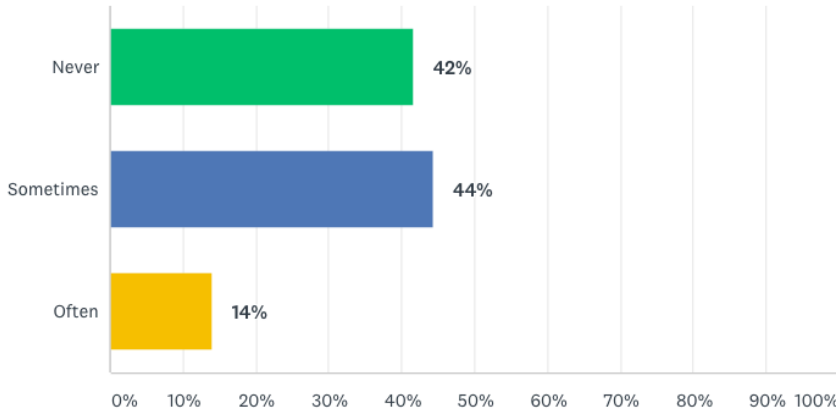
A big thank you to all the participating sites!

Pak Pioneers Club
Heartland Creditview Group
Gujarati Seniors Mandal
Mississauga Ram Mandir
Datta Yoga Centre
Indus Brampton
Halton Multicultural Council
Indian International Seniors Club
Square One Mall
Shoppers World Mall
Panna Hill Seniors Club
Vaishno Devi Mandir
Bengali Seniors Corner
Sahara Senior Services
Guruvayurappan Temple
Shirdi Saibaba Mandir
Yarl Co-operative Homes
Summerville Pines

Feng Hua Seniors Association
Erin Meadows Community Centre
Yuan Ming Supermarket
Golden Square Centre
Frank McKechnie Community Centre
Mississauga Valley Community Center
Meadowvale Community Centre
River Grove Community Centre
Red Leaf Society
Milton Missionary Baptist Church
Iroquois Ridge Community Centre
Halton Multicultural Council
Square One Older Adults Centre
Peel Senior Link
Dixie-Bloor Neighbourhood Centre
MIAG
Peel Multicultural Council
Afghan Women's Organization

Social isolation results

Q: How often do you feel isolated from others?



58% of participants 'sometimes' or 'often' felt isolated from others. Many felt this way, even if they left their home almost everyday

Participant quotes:

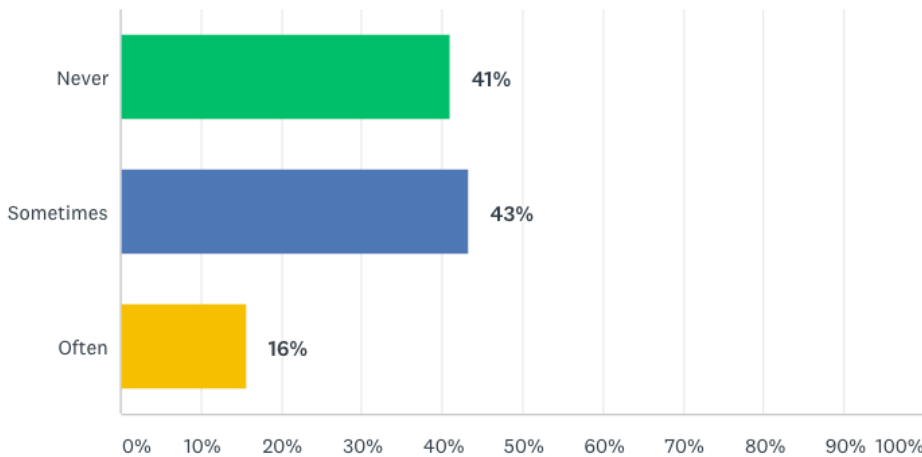
“I feel isolated when I am restricted by my language barrier in my interaction with people” -Participant 1

“Life is very different here from [back home], I have very limited interaction with the social environment. Even though Canadians are nice, I can’t interact with them” -Participant 2

“Before I found the library and the other seniors [of my background] who go there, I stayed home all day cooking and doing housework” -Participant 3

Loneliness results

Q: How often do you feel that you don't have friends?



59% of participants 'sometimes' or 'often' felt a lack of companionship even if, they had family and friends living close by

Participant quotes:

“Even though I have some friends in Canada, I do not feel very close to them. They are not the same as my long-term friends back home” -Participant 4

“My husband passed away 2 years ago. Since then I feel very lonely” -Participant 5

“I came to Canada to help my children with their tasks around the house. It’s okay if I don’t have many friends of my own” -Participant 6

What's next?

As we enter into the third year of this grant our focus will shift from data collection to knowledge translation. The goal of this phase of the research project is to share the results in a meaningful way with those individuals in the community who can use them to better identify and support older immigrants who are lonely or isolated.

Part of our knowledge translation plan is to create a toolkit (a collection of resources), which can be used to educate frontline staff about loneliness and social isolation and to help them identify and support individuals in need. One thing that we have learned already, is that it is not only traditional agency staff who are in a position to identify people who are potentially lonely or isolated. Faith leaders, library staff, club organizers, medical professionals and volunteers might also come in contact with older immigrants who may be lonely and/or isolated. With that knowledge, we will develop a toolkit comprehensive enough that any one of these community members can feel a little better equipped to reach out to older immigrants about whom they may be concerned.

November 9th, 2017 – Hold the Date

To start, we are bringing together a group of interested stakeholders, for a knowledge dissemination and brainstorming session at Sheridan College on NOVEMBER 9th, 2017.

During this event we will share, in more detail than could be done here, the results we have collected and will engage in some group discussion to learn more from you about your learning needs and interests in this area, how you already support older immigrants, and what types of tools you would like to help you:

1. Learn more about social isolation and loneliness and the risk factors for older immigrants
2. Identify older immigrants who are or are at risk of social isolation/loneliness
3. Better support those individuals

You know your communities best; we would really value your input to help us transform our research results into practical tools that can be used to support this population.

If you are interested in attending this event and participating in the creation of the toolkit please hold the date, an invitation will follow.

We are currently in the process of updating our database of agencies, faith communities and other groups in Peel and Halton serving older adults and this will form the invitation list for November 9th. If there have been any changes to your address and/or contact information in the last two years, please send these changes to:

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Email: sharm176@sheridancollege.ca

Research supported by:



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

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