

OLDER ADULTS NEEDS ASSESSMENT Highlight Report 2019





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Introduction

In 2018-2019, the City of Edmonton (the City) and Age Friendly Edmonton conducted an older adults needs assessment. This research project builds off of a similar study conducted in 2015.



The needs assessment captures perspectives from a diverse group of older adults. It focuses on participation in activities, volunteering, technology use, intergenerational connectedness, social isolation and loneliness, safety and financial security, aging-in-place, ageism, and accessibility, among other areas of interest.

The research involved a telephone survey with 713 older adults (55 years and older) residing within Edmonton, five focus groups and 31 in-depth-interviews with various groups of older adults. The research was conducted between October, 2018 and February, 2019.

Where applicable, comparisons between the 2015 and 2018 results are shown.

Research Methodology



Key Findings



Participation in Activities

Top Activities, more than once a week



Wish to be more active in the community or in their everyday life



Volunteering



Technology

Purpose for using a digital device



Seniors who use technology



Isolation / Intergenerational Connectedness



Feel connected to family, friends, and/or community



Feel lonely at least once a week



Are currently engaged in activities that connect with people of different ages



Safety and Security

Feel safe and secure in the community

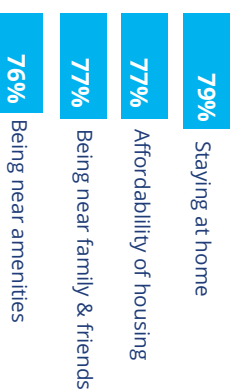


Feel financially secure



Aging in Place

Important considerations when thinking about where to live in the future



Living Arrangement

Confidence in ability to afford and continue to live in current residence



Still pay a mortgage



Seeking Assistance

Receive assistance from someone other than friends or family



16% Everyday housework

9% Getting to appointments, running errands

Ageism

Have felt discriminated against based on their age



Accessibility

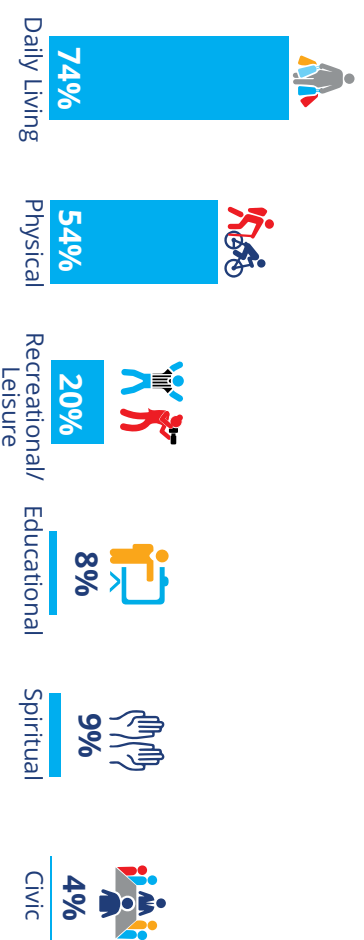
Feel satisfied with the City's facilities, programs, website, and information



Older adults in Edmonton are generally active in daily living, physical and recreational activities.

More than once a week:

- > 74 per cent engage in daily living activities;¹
- > 54 per cent engage in physical activities;² and
- > 20 per cent engage in recreational and leisure activities.³



Older adults are engaged in other activities with less frequency.

- > One-in-five older adults participate in spiritual activities⁴ once a week (19%), 12 per cent participate in educational activities⁵ several times per month and 15 per cent participate in civic activities⁶ occasionally.

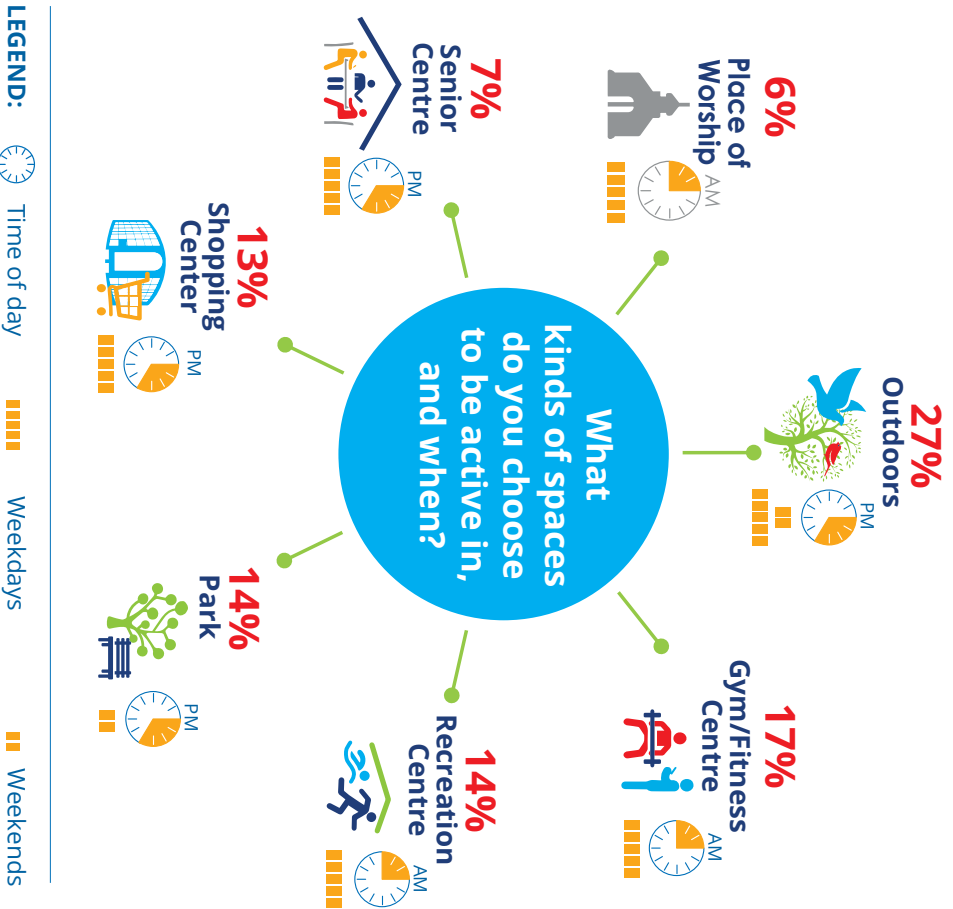
¹ Daily living activities defined as activities, such as working, grocery shopping and engaging in in-person visits with family or friends.
² Physical activities defined as activities, such as fitness and sports.
³ Recreation and leisure activities defined as activities, such as attending sports events, going to a play/theatre, volunteering, and engaging in hobbies.
⁴ Spiritual activities defined as attending a place of worship.
⁵ Educational activities defined as attending courses or workshops and/or using the library.
⁶ Civic activities defined as involvement in community leagues, boards or political associations.



Participation in Activities

Older adults are active outdoors during the day.

Over a quarter of older adults (27 per cent) prefer to be active outdoors between noon and 4 PM. The second most frequently mentioned location and time of day for older adult activities is the gym and/or fitness centre accessed between 9 AM and noon (17 per cent).



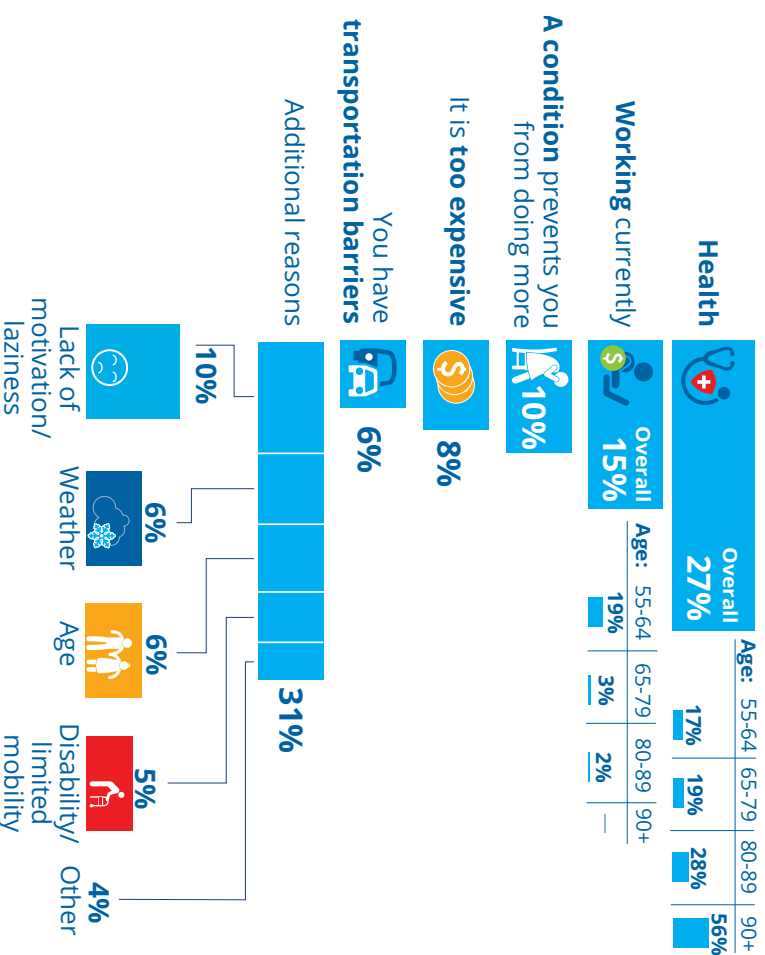
LEGEND: Time of day Weekdays Weekends

Interest in increased activity among older adults has been consistent since 2015.

Forty-four (44) per cent of older adults wish they could be more active compared to 42 per cent in 2015.

Health and work are top two barriers to increased activity.

The top barrier for not participating in activities among older adults is health (27 per cent), followed by work (15 per cent). Health is more of a barrier for those over the age of 80 while work is mostly a barrier for those between the ages of 55 and 64.



Low-income older adults⁷ are less active but interested in being more active.

Approximately 60 per cent of those with household monthly incomes of less than \$1,600 are not as likely to be active; however, 62 per cent tend to be most interested in being more active in their community or everyday life compared to other older adults. Two of the top barriers to increased activity among low-income older adults are transportation and cost of activities.



⁷ Seven per cent of survey respondents reported monthly incomes lower than \$1,600.



ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

...from Discussions with Older Adults

Older adults from the Indigenous communities are concerned with access to activities. Maintaining physical health, such as taking outdoor walks, exercising, and engaging in sports, was rarely mentioned as activities Indigenous focus group respondents currently engaged in. The perception of respondents was that access to recreation and physical activities may be constrained to certain neighbourhoods and less present in underprivileged communities.

Newcomers and older adults who speak English as a second language and have low access to technology engage less in activities, specifically social and recreational activities compared to other older adults in Edmonton. Newcomers are more engaged in educational activities, such as studying English or computer studies and attending the public library, compared to other older adults in Edmonton. Also, older adults with low access to technology are less aware of how and where to access activities geared to older adults.



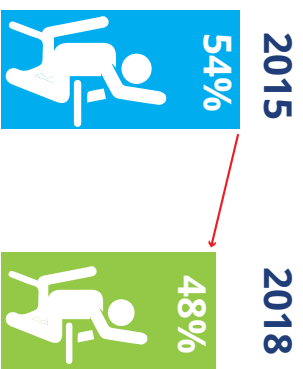
IDENTIFIED NEEDS

Several ideas may be considered to meet the needs for increased activity among older adults:

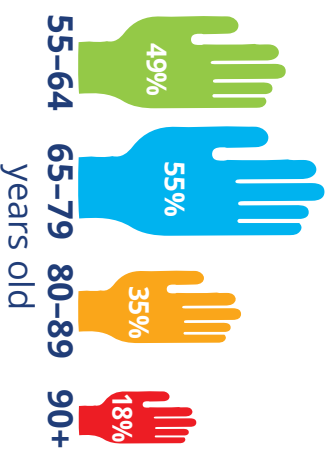
- **Develop a multi-pronged communication strategy to increase awareness** among all older adults, including tapping into traditional media sources and marketing tactics, communicating in various languages, and developing a city-wide web-based resource on all-things older adults.
- **Organize social events with a focus on increasing multicultural awareness** that provide the opportunity for newcomers and immigrant older adults to mingle with other older adults.
- **Make participation in activities affordable and accessible**, including increasing location offerings.
- **Improve public transportation service offerings for older adults** by coordinating with Transportation Services, such as offering special rates, free rides, extended routes and increased frequency of trips.



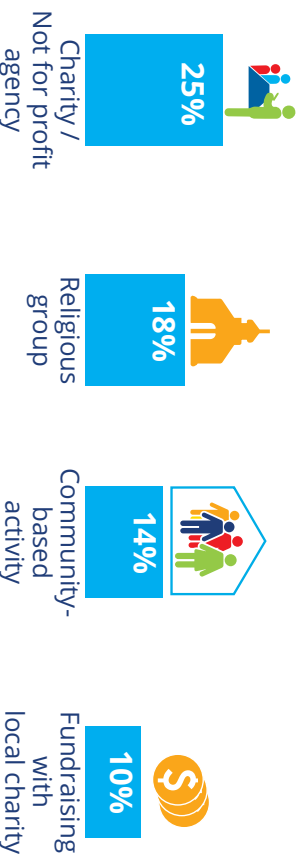
Volunteering



Fewer older adults in Edmonton are volunteering.
Volunteering rates among older adults dropped since 2015, from 54 per cent in 2015 to 48 per cent in 2018.



Volunteering peaks at ages 65-79 years (55 per cent), although 18 per cent of older adults over 90 years old still volunteer.



The top volunteering activity among older adults is at a charity and/or a not-for-profit agency (25 per cent). Other popular volunteering activities include donating time for a religious group (18 per cent), community-based activities (14 per cent), and fundraising with a local charity (10 per cent).

Health and work are barriers in volunteering activities. Two of the top barriers to volunteering is health (27 per cent) and work schedules (15 per cent).



IDENTIFIED NEEDS

To meet older adult volunteering needs, two recommended actions can be considered based on older adult feedback:

- **Encourage volunteerism early on to ensure high participation by older adults,** including providing opportunities for older adults to explore volunteering, especially for those who have no prior volunteer experience.
- **Increase multi-generational volunteer opportunities,** including (as suggested in focus groups/interviews) having seniors read and tell stories to school-age children and having youth visit senior homes to interact with older adults.



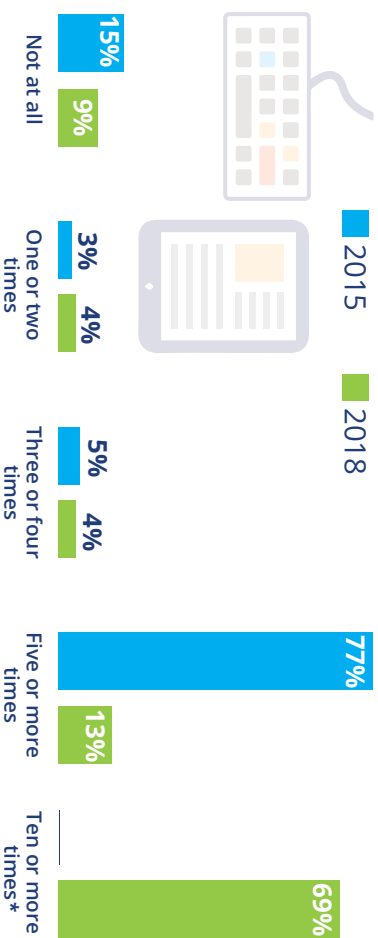
Technology Use

Technology use among older adults is increasing.
 In 2018 less than one-in-ten (9 per cent) do not use technology at all, compared with 15 per cent in 2015.

Older adults in Edmonton use technology widely.

Nine in ten older adults in Edmonton use digital devices, such as smartphones, tablets, and desktop and laptop computers. Eighty-two per cent (82%) use digital devices at least 5 times per week.

In the course of an average week, how often do you use a digital device? (Computer, eReader (eg. Kindle), Smartphone, Tablet, Fitbit)?



* In 2015, respondents were not given the option of "Ten or more times."



Older adults access technology for a variety of reasons.

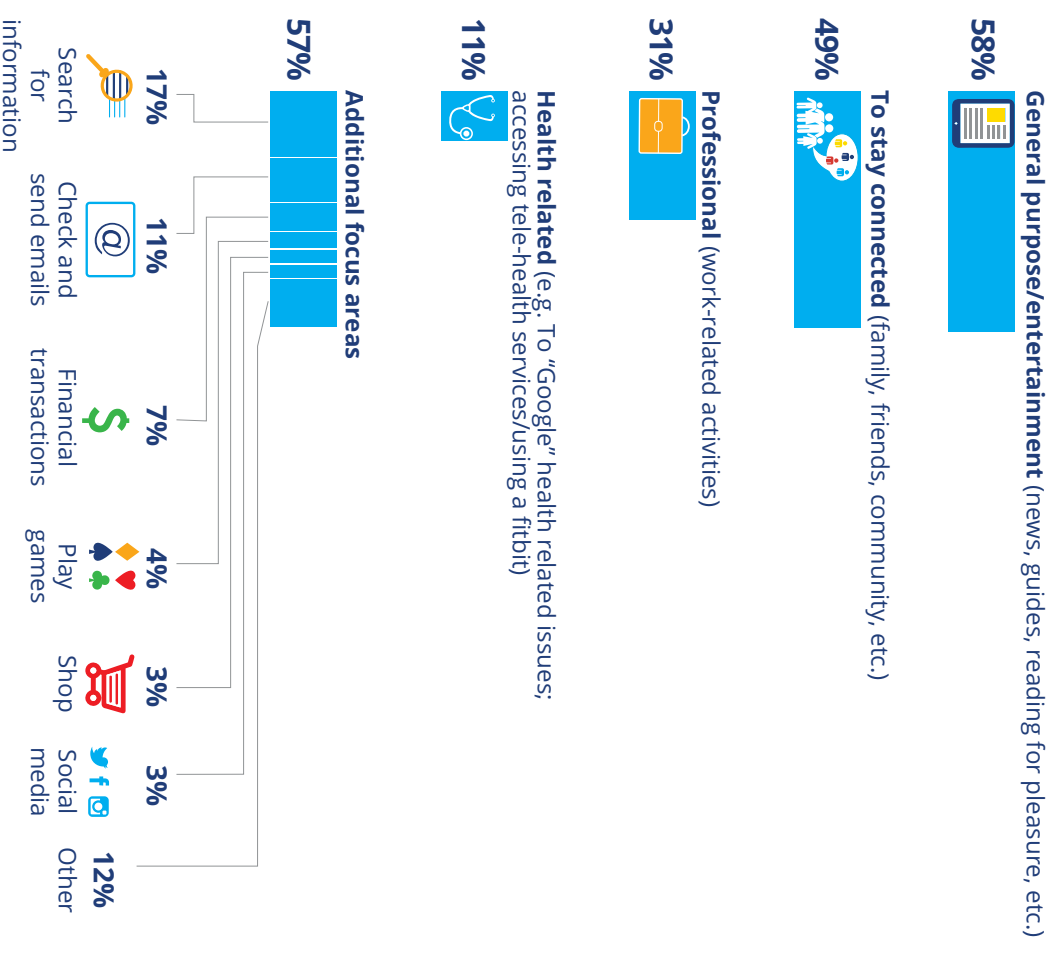
Technology devices are used regularly by older adults for entertainment, to stay connected with family and friends, search for information, check and send emails, financial transactions and shopping, among others.

Technology adoption is not the same for every older adult.

Older adults with monthly incomes of \$1,600 or less are least likely to use digital devices compared to other older adults, with almost one-in-five (21 per cent) indicating that they do not use digital devices at all. Based on focus groups and interviews, technology use is also low among older adults who are newcomers, Indigenous, and over 80 years old.⁸

⁸ Feedback from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

Focus Areas When Using Technology





ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

...from Discussions with Older Adults

Intergenerational connectedness is a motivation for technology use. Older adults who adopt technology more readily report high motivation for learning to enhance connectedness with their children and grandchildren.

Affordability, confidence, and learning supports are factors to increase uptake. Barriers to using technology include: cost/affordability; lack of confidence and patience to learn how to use new technology; lack of support to learn; and distrust towards new technology.



IDENTIFIED NEEDS

Several solutions may be considered to meet the needs for increased technology adoption by older adults in Edmonton:

- Provide a learning platform that is easily available and accessible with phone support, screen-sharing capabilities and trained staff to teach and troubleshoot.
- Offer affordable and accessible technology classes that can be co-located at public libraries or at recreation and senior centres.



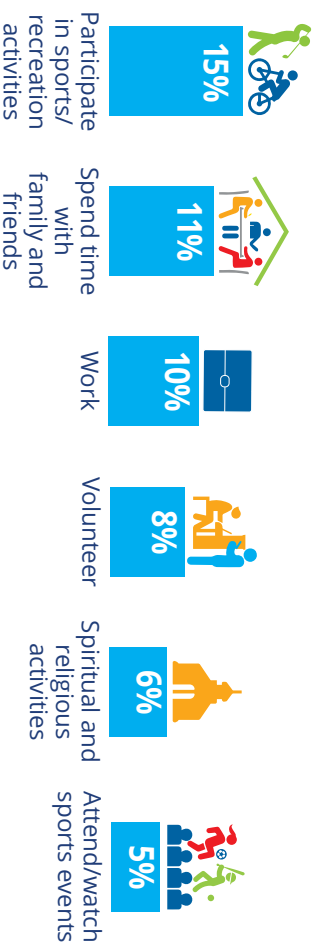
Intergenerational Connectiveness

Intergenerational connectedness is high among older adults in Edmonton.

Seventy-five (75) per cent are in agreement⁹ that they are connected to friends, family and/or their community and 61 per cent currently engage in activities or hobbies that connect older adults with people of different ages.

Sports and socializing are top activities that enhance connectedness.

Participating in sports and recreation activities (15 per cent) and spending time with family and friends (11 per cent) are the top two intergenerational activities in which older adults in Edmonton tend to engage.



⁹“Agree” or “Strongly agree”

Newcomers and older adults who have low access to technology and no family around feel less connected.

Discussions with older adults point to various barriers to intergenerational connectedness, including language especially for newcomers and immigrants, lack of familiarity and knowledge of new technology, and not having children or grandchildren living close by.

IDENTIFIED NEEDS

Intergenerational connectedness can be enhanced in the following ways:

- **Support mentorship programs between older adults and younger peers** in a variety of areas, professional and social, that would be beneficial for both the older adult and their younger counterpart. Discussions with older adults show preference to interact with younger adults in their 30s, 40s and 50s—a connection with that particular phase in life in which they were the most economically and professionally active.
- **Organize more events to promote and encourage intergenerational interaction**, such as chess tournaments and Senior Home Visit Days where youth can interact with older adults, helping uplift their moods while allowing older adults the space to transmit experience and knowledge to younger generations.

Loneliness and Social Isolation



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Older adults in Edmonton generally do not feel lonely or socially isolated.

The majority (96 per cent) of older adults socialize with more than one friend, family and/or neighbour in the course of an average week and more than a third (33 per cent) never feel lonely.

Loneliness and isolation are correlated with income and current living arrangement.

Forty six (46) per cent of older adults whose incomes are below \$1,600 per month and 45 per cent of those who live alone, often or some of the time feel lonely.



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ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

...from Discussions with Older Adults

Language and cultural barriers increase feelings of isolation for Immigrants and Newcomers. Older adults who speak English as a second language, newcomers, immigrants, and refugees indicate increased feelings of social isolation outside of their ethnic or lingual community due to language and cultural barriers and family separation. For some older adults, isolation was believed to be a “mental state” or a “personal choice” and the way to overcome it is through increased social integration for newcomers and immigrants.

LGBTQ2S+ older adults have high degree of social isolation. Discussions with older adults from the LGBTQ2S+ community show a high degree of social isolation. LGBTQ2S+ older adults came out in a generation where gender and sexual orientation discrimination were much stronger than they are for younger LGBTQ2S+ persons and as such, interaction with other older adults feels more stressful—as if they are “coming out” all over again. Having no specific gathering place for them to create contacts and decrease their sense of loneliness is another challenge the LGBTQ2S+ older adults face.

Indigenous community older adults’ unique experience amplifies feelings of loneliness. Despite cultural traditions that make loneliness and isolation less likely in the Indigenous community, in general, dysfunction within families, family separation, effects of addiction and residential schools were themes that were present in the focus group discussion leaving several participants feeling alone, without conjugal companionship, estranged from children and siblings, and distrustful of others.



IDENTIFIED NEEDS

Several solutions may be considered to address needs of older adults in Edmonton related to social isolation and loneliness:

- **Address language barriers among older adults from ethnic communities,** including offering affordable and accessible English classes focused on older adults, offering multi-language services in senior homes, enhancing health care service offerings in multiple languages, and providing mental health supports in different languages for individuals who feel lonely and who speak English as a second language.
- **Support and increase awareness of gathering spaces for older adults,** including supporting and/or increasing awareness of physical and virtual spaces for divorced, widowed, and/or single older adults to meet future life partners; for LGBTQ2S+ older adults to socialize with other peers in welcoming programs available in the city; and for Indigenous older adults to express their unique experiences.



Financial Security and Safety

In 2018, older adults in Edmonton tend to feel less safe than in 2015.

Seventy-nine (79) per cent of older adults report feeling safe in their homes and communities. This compares with 85 per cent in 2015.

Older adults in Edmonton continue to feel the same degree of financial security.

In 2018, 70 per cent of older adults agree¹⁰ that they are financially secure, similar to 2015.

Older adult females tend to feel less safe and financially secure.

Females (75 per cent) are less likely to feel safe compared to males (85 per cent) and less likely to agree that they are financially secure (65 per cent) compared to males (75 per cent).

Criminal activity is the top reason for not feeling safe in their community.

Of older adults who reported not feeling safe in their communities, close to half (46 per cent) attributed this feeling to criminal activity.

¹⁰ "Agree" or "Strongly agree"



ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

...from Discussions with Older Adults

Many immigrant older adults are financially dependent and continue to work in old age. Most respondents from immigrant communities depend on a spouse or children for financial support. Some immigrant older adults also continue to either work past retirement age to receive a pension or to make ends meet.

Newcomer and refugee older adults are optimistic despite multiple barriers. Many newcomer older adults, including refugees, have come to Canada having “lost everything” and are currently unemployed or actively searching for work, despite multiple barriers to entry into the labour market; however, they tend to be optimistic in their outlook.

Indigenous community older adults are most concerned with violent crime. Older adults from the Indigenous community shared a different facet to safety and security and voiced concerns with violent crime.



IDENTIFIED NEEDS

Any of the following strategies may be considered to address safety and financial security concerns among older adults:

- **Address in-home safety needs,** such as providing financial support for older adults who wish to adapt their homes. Promote technology use among older adults. Focus on those living alone so they could use devices to alert others of health emergencies.
- **Address safety concerns in public housing,** such as increasing surveillance cameras and security guards.
- **Address community safety needs,** including increasing the number of sidewalks, ensuring efficient sidewalk ice/snow clearing services, enforcing bike and skateboard rules, and providing good lighting in streets and alleys.
- **Increase support for financial literacy initiatives** focused on vulnerable older adults, including the Seniors Financial Empowerment Network.

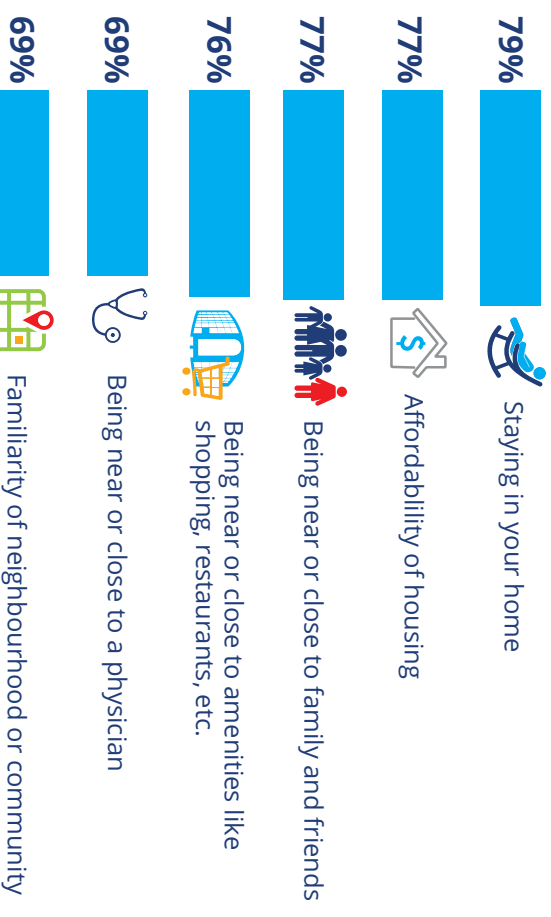
Older Edmontonians are primarily homeowners with no mortgage payments.

Eighty-six (86) per cent of older adults in Edmonton live in private homes, own their homes (91 per cent), and are able to afford to stay in their own home having paid off the mortgage on their homes (78 per cent).

Older adults in Edmonton continue to prefer to age-in-place.

Older adults' most important considerations for aging-in-place are to stay in their own home (79 per cent), afford their homes (77 per cent), and be close to their family and friends (77 per cent). Results in 2018 closely match the 2015 older adults needs assessment study.

Top Considerations for Aging-in-Place



Aging in Place

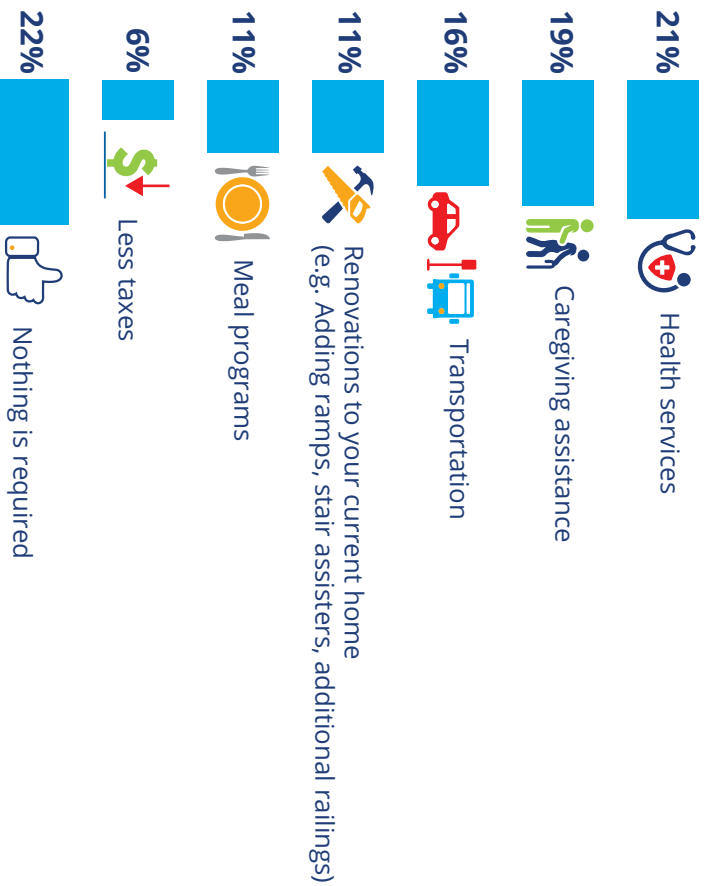


Older adults in Edmonton are confident in their aging-in-place plans.

For the next ten years, 76 per cent of older adults plan to remain in their current residence and 76 per cent are confident in being able to afford and continue to live in their current residence.

Older adults require a variety of assistance and services to stay home.

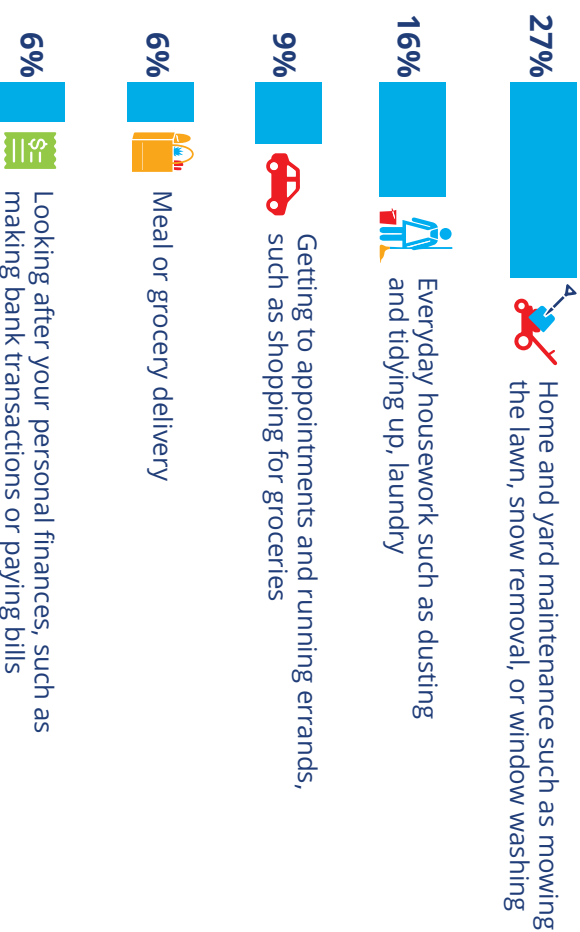
Such services include health services (21 per cent), caregiving assistance (19 per cent), transportation (16 per cent), home renovations (11 per cent), and meal programs (11 per cent).



Home and yard maintenance is top service sought by older adults.

In the past 12 months, older adults in Edmonton required home and yard maintenance services (27 per cent), followed by housework assistance (16 per cent) and getting to appointments and running errands (9 per cent).

Top Services Required



Older adults continue to have difficulties in finding where to look for help and are concerned with costs.

Older adults are having difficulty knowing where to look for help (11 per cent) and finding qualified help (10 per cent). They are also concerned with cost of assistance (10 per cent). The 2018 results closely match those from the 2015 study.



IDENTIFIED NEEDS

Various strategies and actions to encourage aging-in-place could be considered to make homes and communities attractive places for older adults to spend their aging years.

- **Offer programs to help older adults retrofit their homes,** through do-it-yourself tutorials, and financial assistance.
- **Incentivize building more assisted-living facilities in local communities** as an alternative for older adults to age in their own homes, if the costs for retrofitting homes are prohibitive or not possible.
- **Increase profile of the role of home support coordinators in community leagues** to help address challenges in obtaining or receiving assistance and knowing where to look for help.
- **Support affordable home-care services** required by older adults, such as snow removal, lawn mowing, housekeeping, caregiving, and meal preparation and delivery.
- **Support community/neighbourhood planning to include older adult-friendly design and amenities,** such as walkable and safe access to amenities and health services at close proximity to communities.



Ageism

Some Older adults in Edmonton feel they are discriminated against because of age.

Fifteen (15) per cent of older adults indicate that they have been in a situation where they felt that they were discriminated against based on their age.

Ageism comes primarily from youth and the workplace.

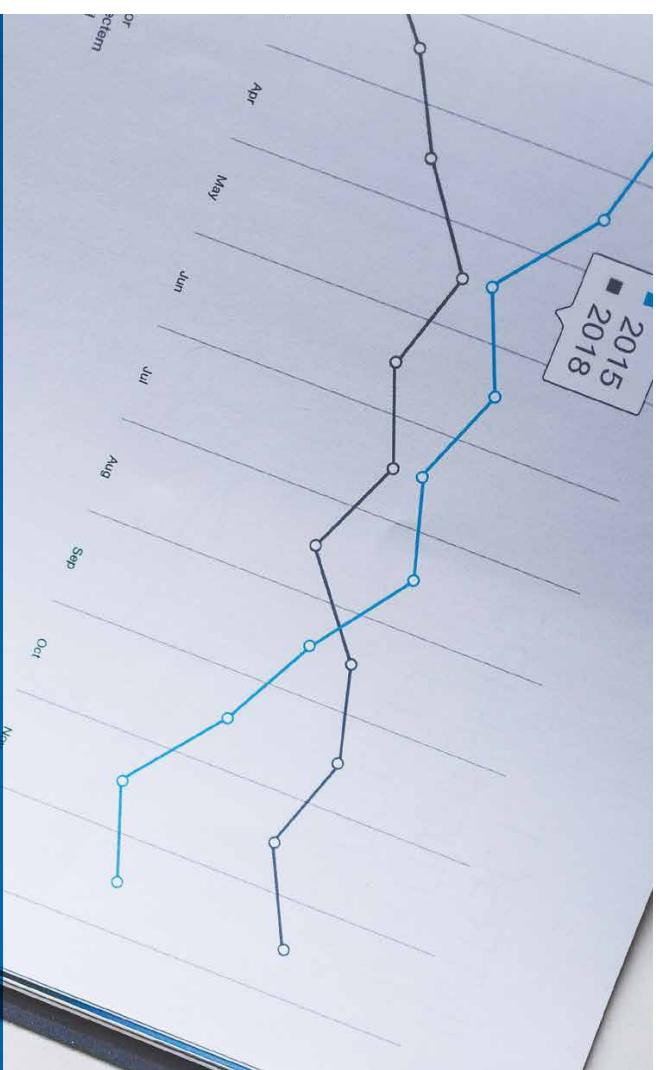
Discussions with older adults indicate that older adults experience ageism that primarily comes from youth and at the workplace.



IDENTIFIED NEEDS

To further dispel hidden prejudices about older adults, two recommended actions can be taken into consideration:

- **Increase opportunities to connect older adults with youth,** such as increasing programming that engage seniors in visiting schools and interacting with children to help them appreciate the knowledge and experience of older adults.
- **Increase awareness of value and experience older adults bring to workplace and community,** tapping into the rich diversity of older Edmontonians.



Comparison with 2015 Results

The following tables contrast the 2015 results to those in 2018. Statistics where possible.

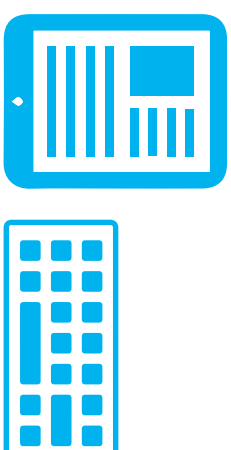




Interest in Being More Active

Do you wish you could be more active in your community life or in your everyday life?

	2015	2018
Yes	42%	44%
No	56%	54%
Don't know	2%	2%
Total		100%



Frequency of Using Digital Devices¹¹

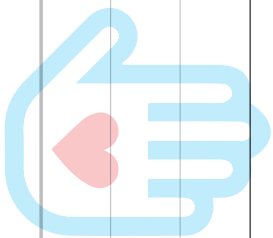
In the course of an average week, how often do you use a digital device? (Computer, eReader (eg. Kindle), Smartphone, Tablet, Fitbit)?

	2015	2018
Not at all	15%	9%
One or two times	3%	4%
Three or four times	5%	4%
Five or more times	77%	13%
10 or more times		69%
Not stated/Don't know/Refused to Answer		1%
Total		100%

¹¹ The 2018 frequency options are different from the 2015 study.

Volunteering¹²

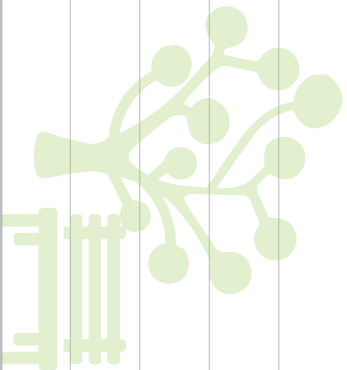
In general do you volunteer?	2015	2018
Yes	54%	48%
No	46%	52%
Don't know	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%



Feeling Safe and Secure in Community¹³

Please rate the extent to which you feel safe and secure in your community. Please use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means very safe and 5 means not at all safe.

	2015	2018
Very Safe	85%	50%
2		30%
3	10%	14%
4		4%
Not at All Safe	4%	2%
Total	100%	100%



¹² In the 2015 study, the question was worded slightly differently.

¹³ The 2018 frequency options are different from the 2015 study.



Agreement with Statement: "You are Financially Secure"¹⁴

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means strongly agree and 5 means strongly disagree, how much do you agree that you are financially secure?

	2015	2018
Strongly agree	70%	45%
Agree		25%
Neither agree nor disagree	18%	17%
Disagree		7%
Strongly disagree	11%	5%
Don't know/no answer		2%
Total	100%	100%

¹⁴ The 2018 agreement scale for this question is different from the 2015 study.

Importance of Aspects Associated with Where to Live in Future¹⁵

I am going to read you a list of topics that are associated with housing while one ages. For each of the following I would like you to indicated, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means “very important” and 5 means “not at all important”, how important each aspect is to you when considering where to live in the future.

	2015	2018
Staying in your home	82%	79%
Affordability of housing		77%
Being near or close to family and friends	76%	77%
Being near or close to amenities like shopping, restaurants, etc.	75%	76%
Being near or close to a physician	69%	69%
Familiarity of neighbourhood or community	71%	69%
The amount of upkeep required for your property		66%
Staying in your community		63%
Being near or close to public transportation	66%	56%
Food or meal services	51%	47%
Programs and/or activities offered within a seniors housing facility	51%	46%

¹⁵ Not all answer options were provided in the 2015 study compared to the 2018 study.

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Activities or Services Required to Stay in Own Home (n=375)

What activities or services would be required in your opinion for you to stay longer in your home as you get older? Multiple answer

	2015	2018
Caregiving assistance	9%	19%
Renovations to your current home (e.g. Adding ramps, stair assisters, additional railings)	27%	11%
Meal programs	8%	11%

Difficulties Obtaining or Receiving Assistance (n=713)

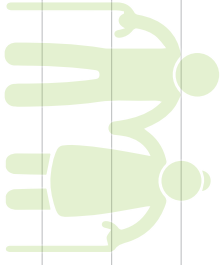
In the past 12 months, did you ever experience any difficulties with any of the following, in regards to obtaining or receiving assistance?

	2015	2018
Knowing where to look for help	16%	11%
Finding qualified help	13%	10%
The cost of help	11%	10%
Family or friends being unavailable	11%	10%
Difficulty asking for assistance	12%	9%
Not knowing where to look for financial assistance	8%	3%

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Age

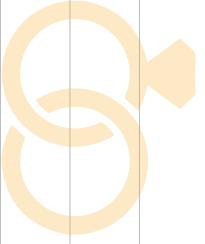
Age in Years	2015	2018
55 - 64	49%	50%
65 - 79	37%	36%
80 - 89	14% (80+)	11%
90+	-	4%



Marital Status

Which of the following best describes your marital status?

	2015	2018
Single, that is, never married	9%	9%
Married or living together as a couple	65%	66%
Widowed	14%	14%
Separated	2%	1%
Divorced	11%	9%
Refused	-	1%



Demographics





Current Living Arrangement

	2015	2018
Do you live...		
Alone	28%	28%
With others	71%	72%



Retirement Status

	2015	2018
Are you currently retired, semi-retired or working?		
Retired		57%
Semi-retired		14%
Working		29%

Monthly Income

What is your monthly income before taxes?	2018
Under \$1,600	7%
\$1,600 to less than \$2,200	11%
\$2,200 to less than \$3,500	17%
\$3,500 to \$5,000	14%
Over \$5,000	23%
Prefer not to answer	27%

Gender Identity

How do you describe your gender identity?	2015	2018
Female	53%	55%
Male	47%	42%
Non-binary	-	0%
Prefer to self-describe	-	1%
Prefer not to say	-	2%

Ethnic or Cultural Background

Please describe your ethnic or cultural background? (Multiple Answer)

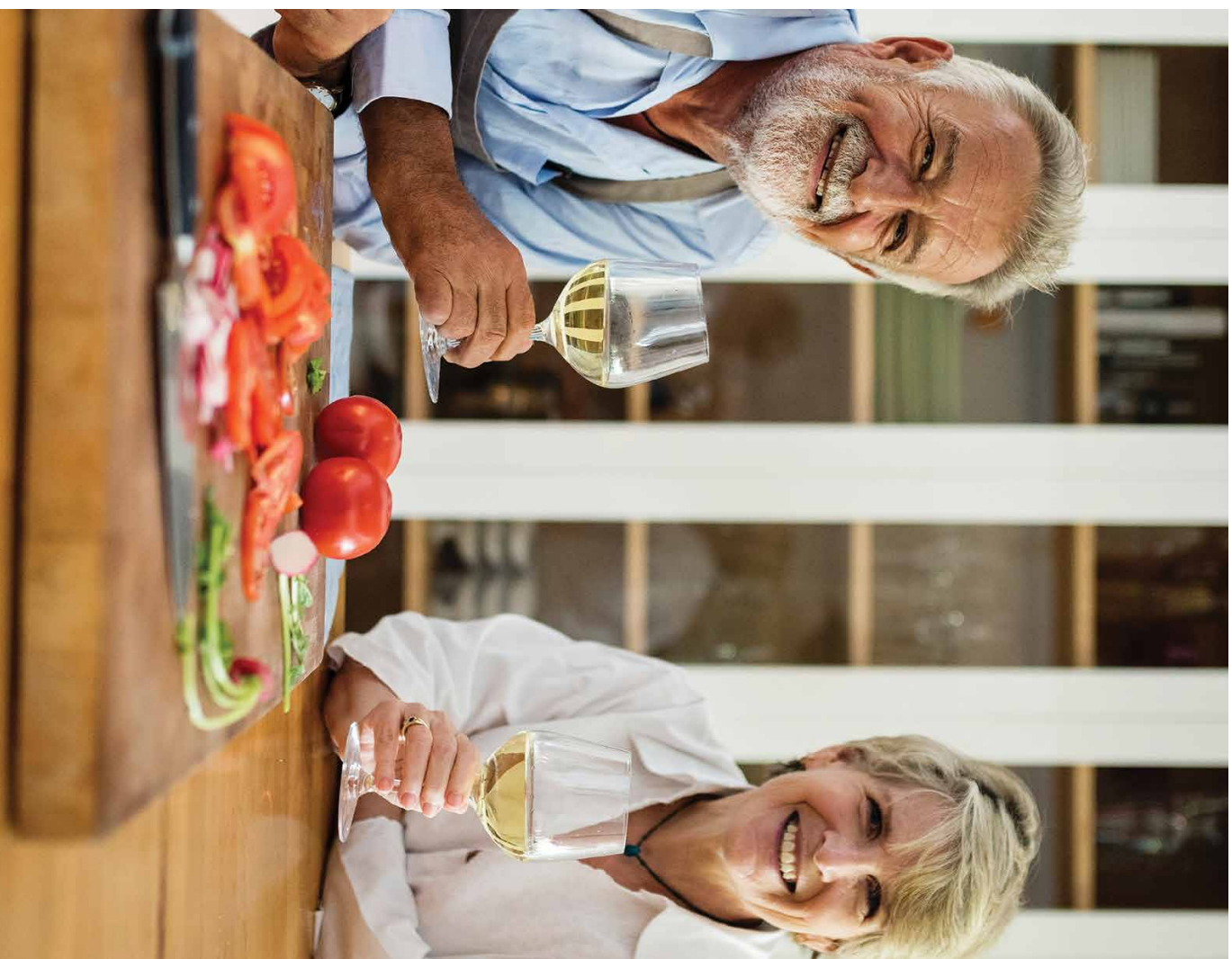
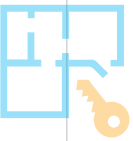
	2018
White/Caucasian	60%
Middle Eastern	2%
South-Central Asian	2%
Black/African	1%
Far-East Asian	1%
Indigenous	1%
Other/Mixed Race/Identify as Canadian	32%
Prefer not to say	3%



Own or Rent (n=713)

Do you currently own or rent your home in the City of Edmonton?

	2015	2018
Own	88%	91%
Rent	11%	9%



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