

Evaluation of Social Isolation Survey

Emma Ingraham - Kayla Curtis - Samantha Neil - Bryanna Thompson



"Thank you to the organizers of this survey and thank you for letting us participate."

In the spring of 2020, Greater Fredericton Social Innovation, in partnership with The Age-friendly Committee and St. Thomas University Social Work Students, created The Social Isolation Survey. This survey was conducted amidst the COVID-19 global pandemic. The main objective was to gather information on the services being provided by community organizations whose services in part or in full address social isolation. This will help organizations to collaborate and also to identify gaps in services provided to older adults experiencing social isolation. Additionally, given the context of the global pandemic, the survey was able to gather data surrounding how vital services were affected by the current social climate. The survey was sent to 55 people representing 44 service organizations who were given one week to respond. Thirty-two participants responded, resulting in a 73% response rate. Due to closures as a result of COVID-19, many faith-based organizations were unable to participate in the survey.

51.6% of service providers indicated that, if COVID-19 restrictions continue for an extended time, they are able to successfully carry on with delivering services. This clearly demonstrates that service providers are flexible, adaptable and can create a strong sustainable plan of service delivery given changing environmental contexts. However, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) face many barriers when providing services to the community. These barriers stem from the deficiencies in financial resources that NGOs receive to fill the gaps that government institutions fail to prioritize. For instance, 54.8% of respondents indicated that the funding they receive is not adequate to deliver services needed within the community.

Such gaps have been identified by previous data collection, such as the concern of social isolation in older adults identified from the Age Friendly Survey from 2018 and the "Understanding Senior's Isolation and Loneliness in Fredericton" meeting in 2019. While 87.1 % of respondents identified that socialization is a primary need of their service users, they do not have the financial resources to expand the services they offer to include addressing concerns surrounding social isolation among older adults. If funding was increased for organizations they would have a greater ability to effectively address the gaps that they have previously identified.

Many older adults want to be more engaged with the community but they are often devalued by the capitalist society which governs our lived experience. In this survey, the majority of organizations used social media and word-of-mouth to promote their services. Previous data identified that older adults would like to be more involved in the community but find it difficult to identify the opportunities to engage with. Furthermore, older adults that are experiencing social isolation are less likely to be exposed to opportunities prompted by other community members.

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Recommendations

We recommend that funding bodies increase funds to NGO initiatives to better attend to community needs and social problems. We recommend that other methods of promoting services be used by NGOs, in order to more effectively reach older adults who are experiencing social isolation and are lonely. These could include collaborating with existing networks to promote more opportunities in the community or using more traditional based advertising, such as newspaper, radio, etc. Lastly, we advocate for NGOs to receive the recognition that they deserve for the hard work that they contribute to the community. As evidenced by the Social Isolation Survey, if NGO's had adequate resources and support from the government they would be better equipped to address the pressing social issues that affect so much of our population.

STU Social Action placement management team:

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Student Poster

Non-Profit Engagement

Collaborating & Identifying Gaps For More Impact.

Caring Calendar

"Great that this is being done!"

Addressing Isolation

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