



**A Community
for All Ages**

Empowering Older Adults in Niagara

*A report on the results of a region wide survey and
related activities from May 2022 – October 2022*

Submitted by: Pat Spadafora

November 9th, 2022



Government
of Canada

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du Canada

Changing the way we view aging

‘The ability of a group of people to do remarkable things hinges on how well those people pull together as a team.’

Simon Sinek, Leaders Eat Last

Projects like this one don't come together without people pulling together. Great team effort Niagara!

Many thanks to the project Planning Committee for their guidance and their extraordinary dedication to building a 'community for all ages' in Niagara.

Dominic Ventresca

Jean D'Amelio Swyer

Catherine Mindorff-Facca

Mary Wiley

Thank you also to Bianca Gagnon, Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/Niagara, for support in reaching out to the Francophone community, for translating materials into French and for providing meeting space for the Age-Friendly Niagara Council community forum.

Thank you to Jaclyn Ryder and Majuriha Gnanendran, Brock University students, for their support with both the survey and the community forum.

There are too many other people to acknowledge individually but a huge thank you and note of appreciation to all groups and individuals who distributed the survey on behalf of the Age-Friendly Niagara Council and who participated in the Francophone focus group and the community forum. Your commitment to this project made all the difference!

Finally, thank you to all adults 50+ for their willingness to share their experiences by completing the survey. Your voices truly matter.

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1. Introduction

The overall goals of the Age-Friendly Niagara Council (AFNC) project, funded by the federal government's New Horizons for Seniors program, included:

- Develop, distribute and analyze a Niagara-wide survey to learn more what matters to adults 50+ in order to support planning and informed decision-making
- To engage older adults in Niagara to contribute to strengthening the AFNC and the Niagara Older Adult Alliance (NOAA)
- To support the transition of the AFNC from an Interim Board to a Founding Board
- To increase awareness about and promote use of Older Adult Infolink

The survey results are presented regionally with one exception, the inclusion of data from the Francophone community. The AFNC Planning Committee recognized the importance of hearing from the Francophone community. As that data was collected separately, it has been included in this report for future reference by the AFNC board.

It should be noted that, while this report focuses on regional results, survey results can be filtered by municipality. Fort Erie has done this and, as a result, can refer to both municipal and regional information for planning purposes.

While it is possible to filter results for other municipalities, this makes sense only where the numbers warrant it – perhaps St. Catharines, Welland and Niagara Falls, maybe Pelham and Thorold. The sample sizes in the other municipalities are too small to yield meaningful information.

This report is intended to be a guide to generate discussion and to contribute to informed decision making by the AFNC. The information builds on, updates and adds to the good work of the Niagara Aging Strategy and Action Plan.

While the survey results speak for themselves, the notes from the AFNC community forum, convened on October 28th, 2022, may be thought of as a companion piece that amplifies and reinforces information that resulted from the survey.

2. Survey

2a. Methodology

An online survey, 'Empowering Older Adults in Niagara' (Appendix A) was developed and distributed throughout Niagara region. In addition, print copies of the survey were made available for completion.

The survey launched on June 1st, 2022, with a deadline for completion (both print copies and online) of Friday, July 15th, 2022.

2b. Survey promotion

‘Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has’

Margaret Mead

When is a survey not just a survey?! Answer – when it is supported and promoted by a group of dedicated, enthusiastic volunteers and others who encouraged adults 50+ living in Niagara to share their perspectives about things that matter to them. These volunteers and, in some cases, staff, leveraged the survey opportunity to build on existing relationships and to create new ones. The result was a robust response to the survey.

Appendix B summarizes survey distribution and promotion. It includes groups such as the AFNC, NOAA, Niagara Health and the Niagara Poverty Reduction Network, all of whom were invited to share the survey with their constituents. There is a section about Media and Social Media that demonstrates the use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter for promotion as well as other media like the Niagara Connects Network, the St. Catharines Standard and the CARP Niagara newsletter. Print copies of the survey were made available at events such as the Seniors Stepping Out Spring Festival in Fort Erie and at BBQs hosted by Niagara Regional Housing in four supportive housing buildings.

A concerted effort was made to distribute the survey broadly across the region. This was to ensure that as many adults as possible who are 50+ and live in Niagara had an opportunity to complete it.

Where the author had the information, the promotion report includes the approximate number of group members or organizations who received the online survey and were invited to share it with their contacts. Appendix B also includes a ‘guesstimate’ about the approximate reach of some of those invited to distribute the survey – e.g. Seniors Services, Niagara Region shared the survey with 400+ older adults who participate in their online/virtual programs.

The intent of including Appendix B in this overall report is not to necessarily benefit the current project but to provide a resource for the AFNC to reference as they plan the roll out and promotion of future projects.

2c. Survey results

Demographics

There were **1,290** completed surveys with responses from all 12 municipalities. The total number of completed surveys includes **34** that were completed in French - Welland (17); West Lincoln (1); Pelham (2); Port Colborne (4); Grimsby (1); Niagara Falls (2); St. Catharines (5); Fort Erie (1) and Thorold (1).

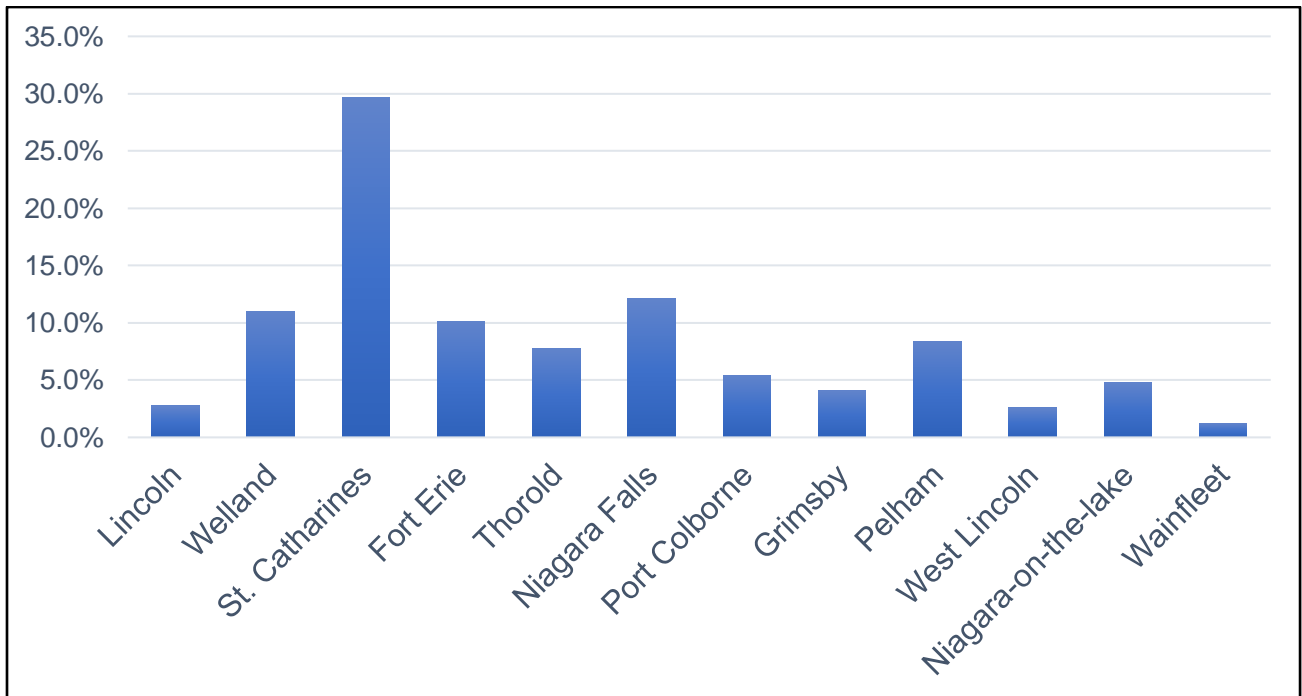
Prior to sharing responses to individual survey questions, the author has created a separate table (below) to provide the AFNC board with some sense of survey responses by municipality compared to the population of each municipality. In addition, the table shows the total number of responses for each age category.

It is important to keep in mind that survey respondents didn't necessarily answer every question. You will see in the following table that 1,120 respondents answered the question about age and 1,125 answered the question about where they live.

Survey responses by age category & number of completed surveys by municipality					
Overall population in the Region of Niagara – 477,941 as per 2021 Census					
Age characteristics		Total number of survey responses in each age category	Municipality	Number of survey responses	Municipality population (number)
50-59	67,455	109	Fort Erie	114	32,901
60-69	69,890	459	Grimsby	46	28,883
70-79	49,485	437	Lincoln	32	25,719
80-89	28,620	111	Niagara Falls	136	94,415
90+	4,910	4	Niagara-on-the-Lake	54	19,088
			Pelham	94	18,192
			Port Colborne	61	20,033
			St. Catharines	334	136,803
			Thorold	87	23,816
			Wainfleet	14	6,887
			Welland	124	55,750
			West Lincoln	29	15,454
Niagara TOTAL number old adults 50+	220,360	1,120	TOTAL population of Niagara	1,125	477,941*
		TOTAL number of completed surveys in which respondents checked age		TOTAL number of completed surveys in which respondents identified where they live in Niagara	

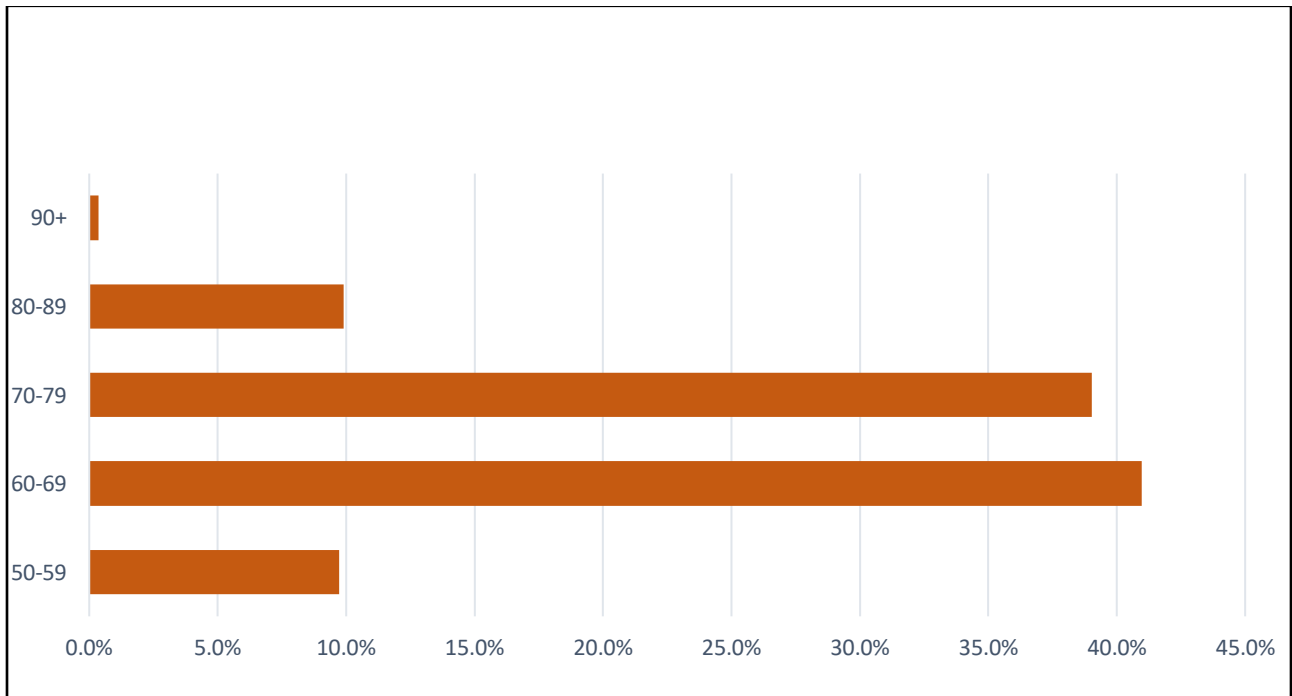
* 2021 Census Profile – Niagara Regional Municipality census division and local municipality census subdivisions. Statistics Canada.

Where respondents live



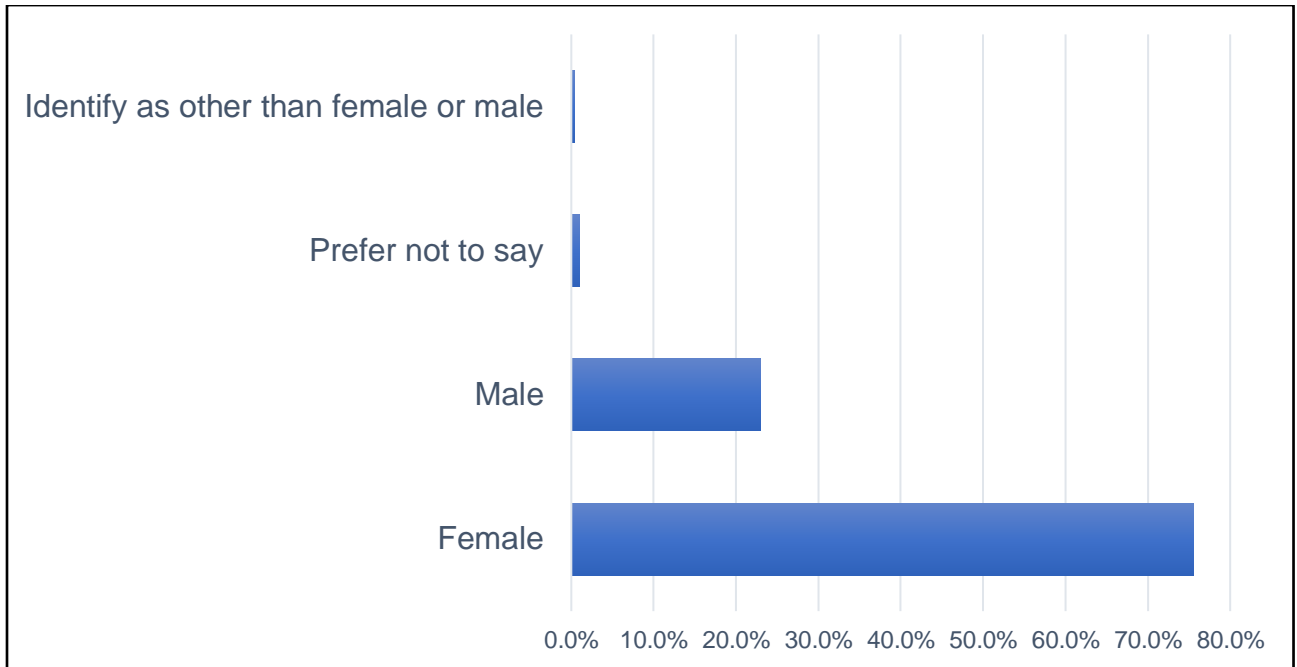
Age groups

There were responses from individuals 50 – 90+, with all age groups represented. The majority of responses were from individuals in the **60-69** and **70-79** age groups with **four people age 90+**.



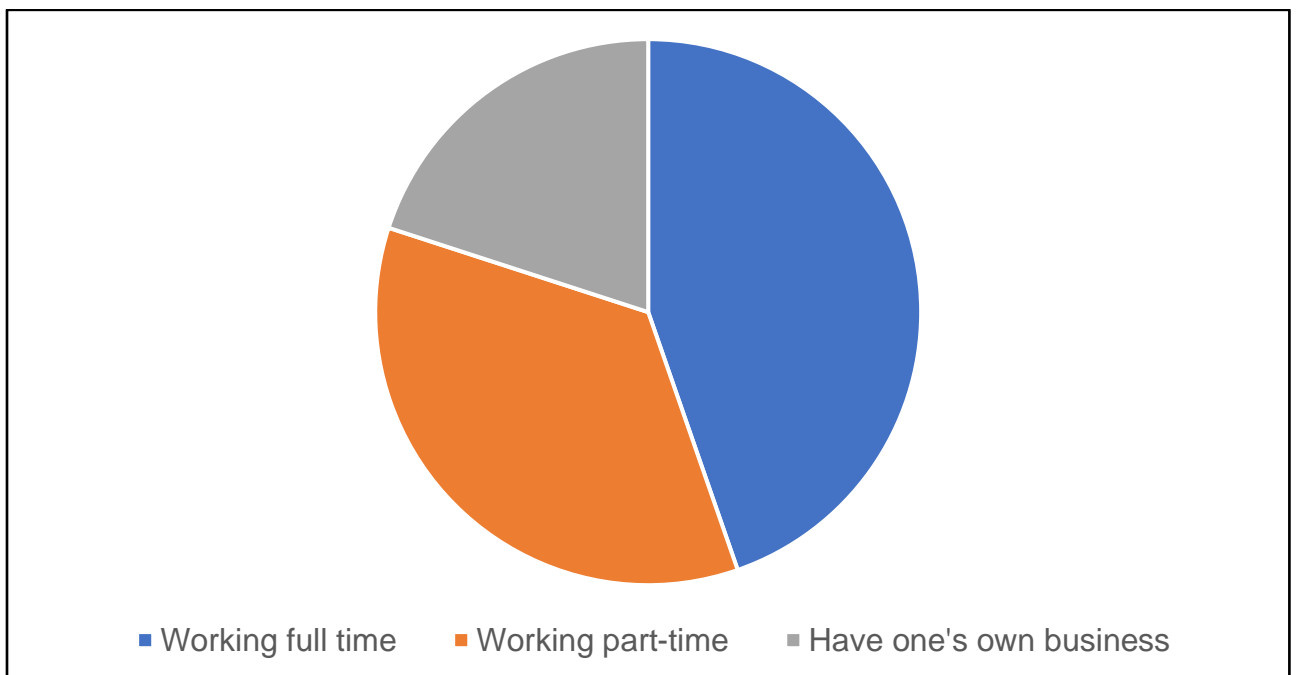
Gender

Approximately $\frac{3}{4}$'s of the surveys (75.6%) were completed by women.



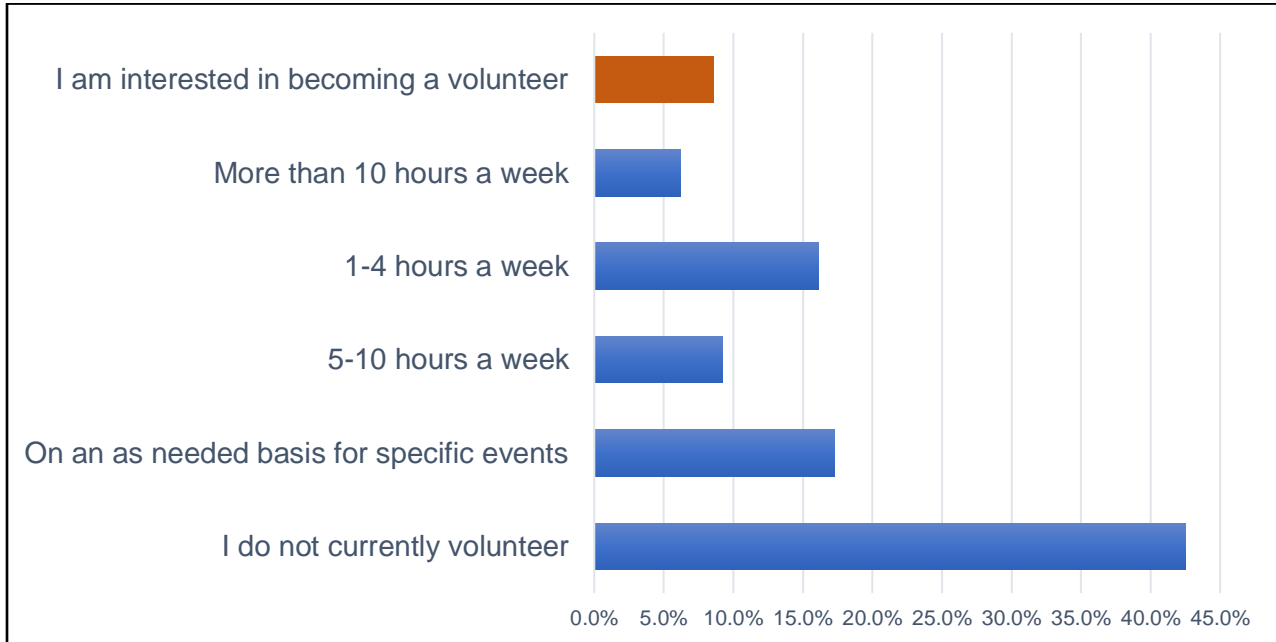
Paid Employment

Of those responding to this question (1136), approximately 77% indicated that they were not working. However, 10.5% said that they are working full time, 8.3% part-time and 4.7% said that they have their own business.



Comment: Recognizing fluctuating labour market trends and a sizable number of older adults working beyond traditional retirement age has implications for when groups and organizations offer social, educational and recreational programs.

Volunteer work



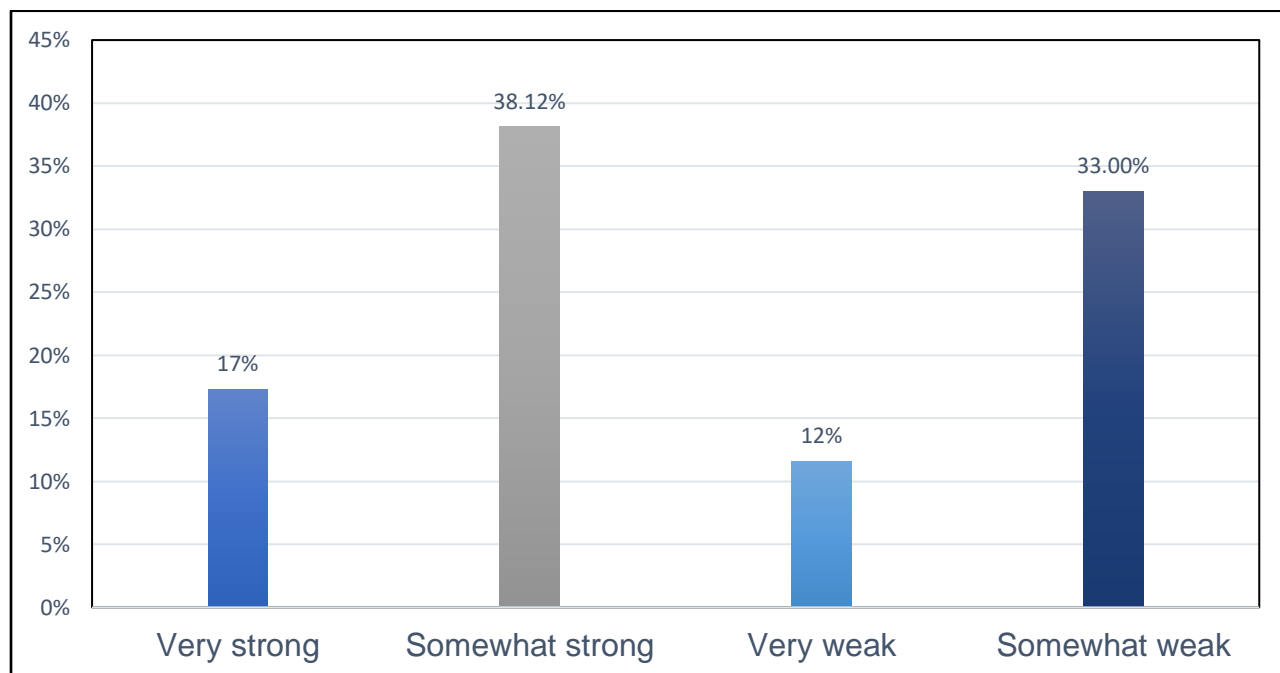
Comment: Ninety-one individuals expressed an interest in volunteering. Recognizing that one of the goals of this project is to increase volunteer opportunities for older adults, these 91 individuals are symbolic of an opportunity for the AFNC board to expand their reach when recruiting volunteers. One doesn't need to know the identity of these particular individuals to acknowledge the value of reimagining volunteer recruitment strategies!

Section A of the survey invited respondents to answer questions related to the Niagara Aging Strategy and Action Plan (NASAP) in the areas of:

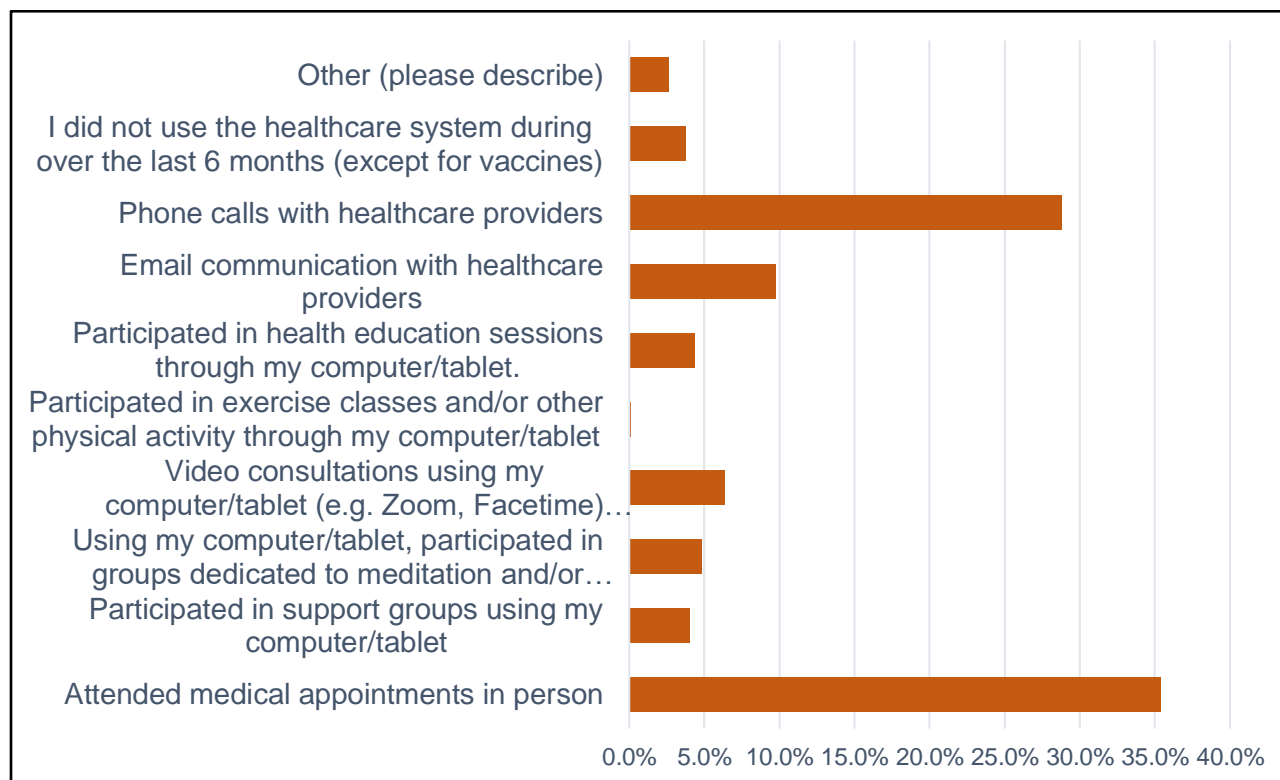
- a. Community engagement and communications
- b. Recreation, learning and leisure
- c. Improved services, systems and infrastructure

The questions and results for Section A follow.

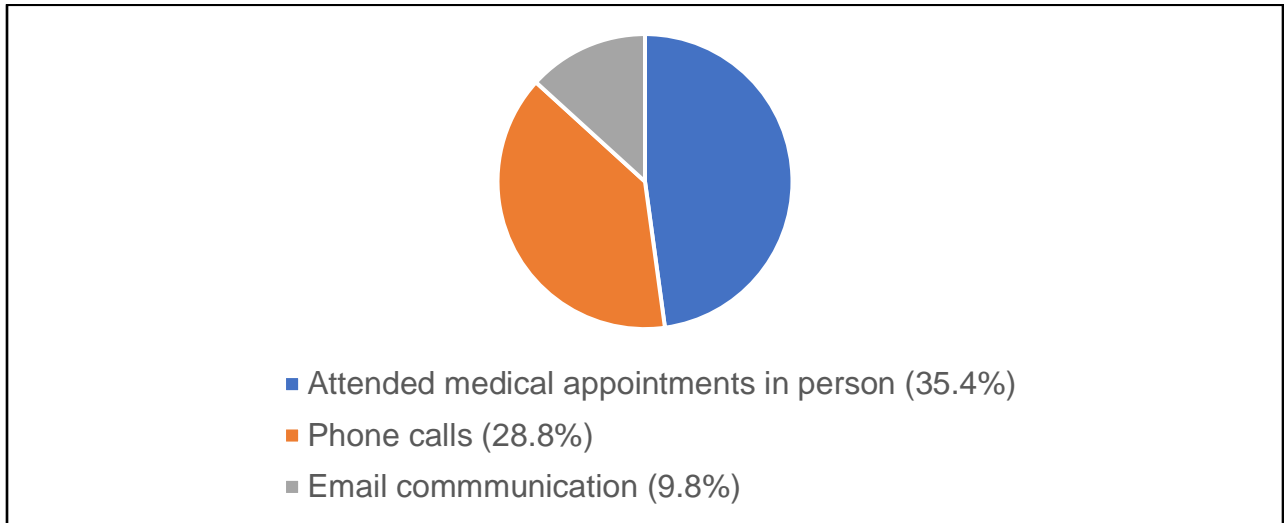
How would you describe your sense of belonging and being engaged in your community?



During the last 6 months, I used the following ways to access healthcare. Please check all that apply.

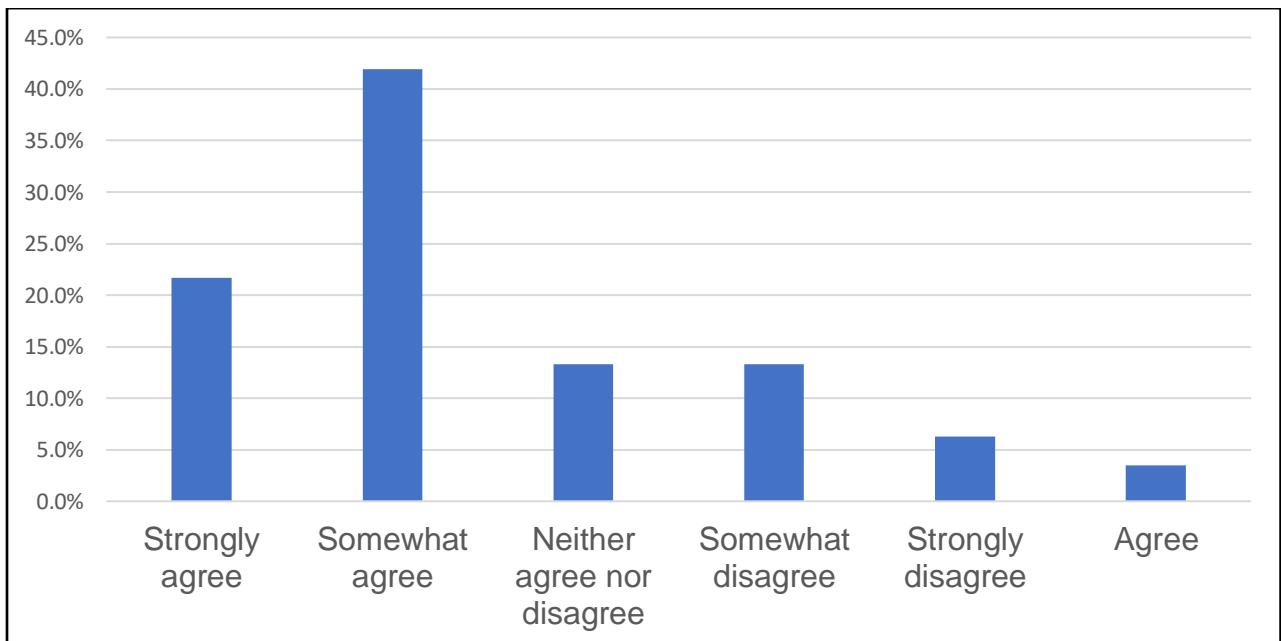


The following pie chart shows the **top 3** ways that healthcare care was accessed in the 6 months prior to survey completion.

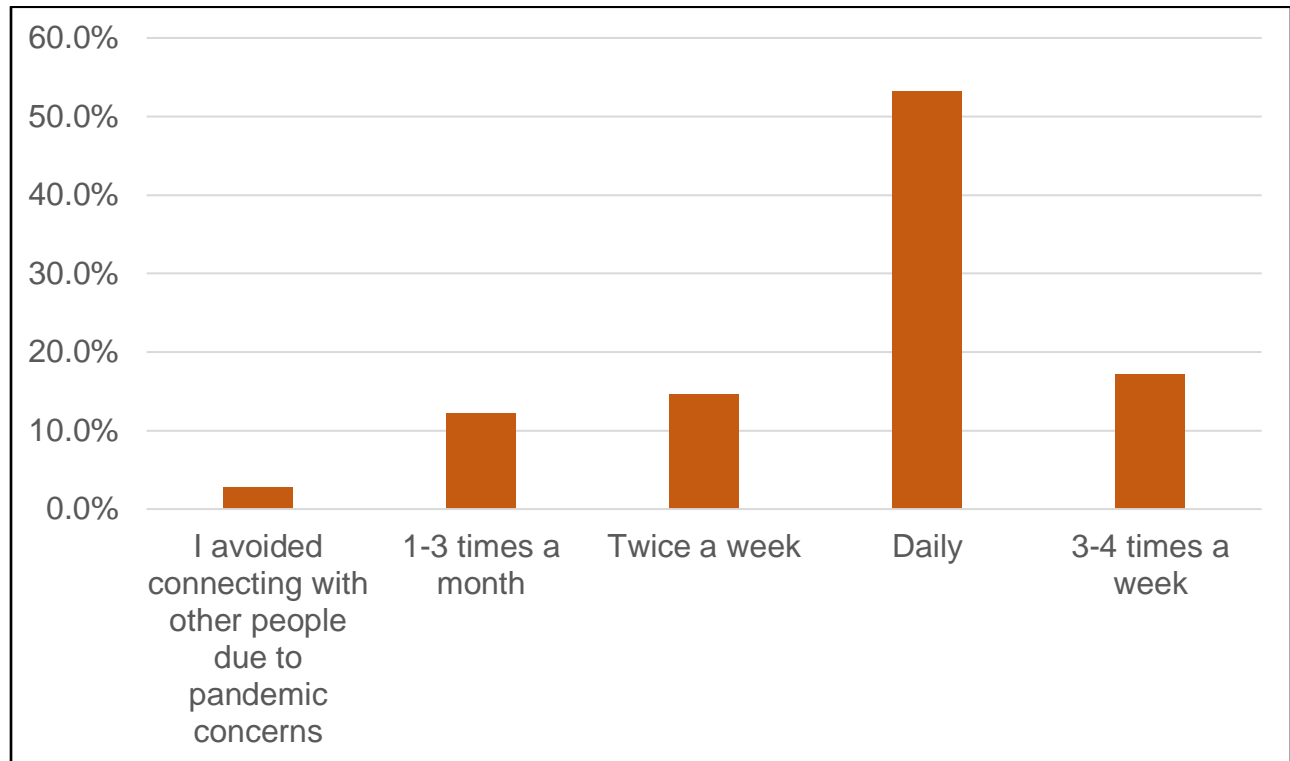


Comment: The fact that attending medical appointments in person was the top way respondents reported accessing healthcare may reflect the fact that in person healthcare was beginning to open up again in the months preceding the survey. A different picture would likely have emerged had the survey being conducted earlier in the pandemic.

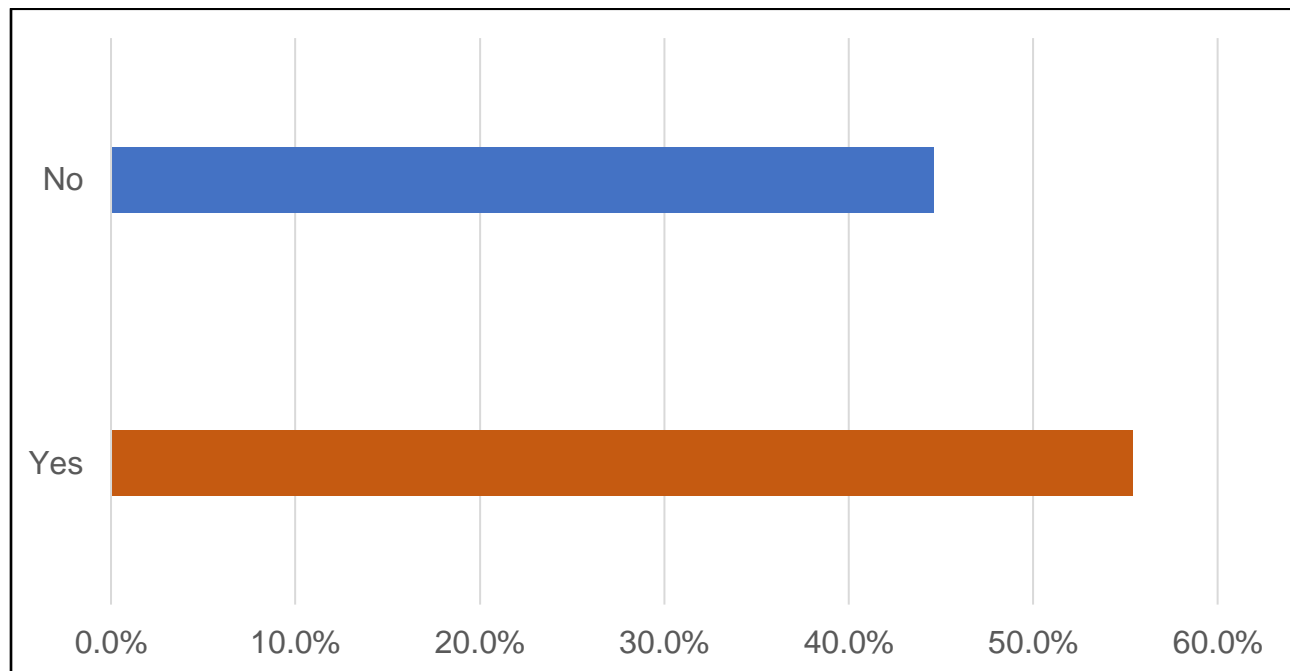
I am able to access services in my community that support both my physical and mental health.



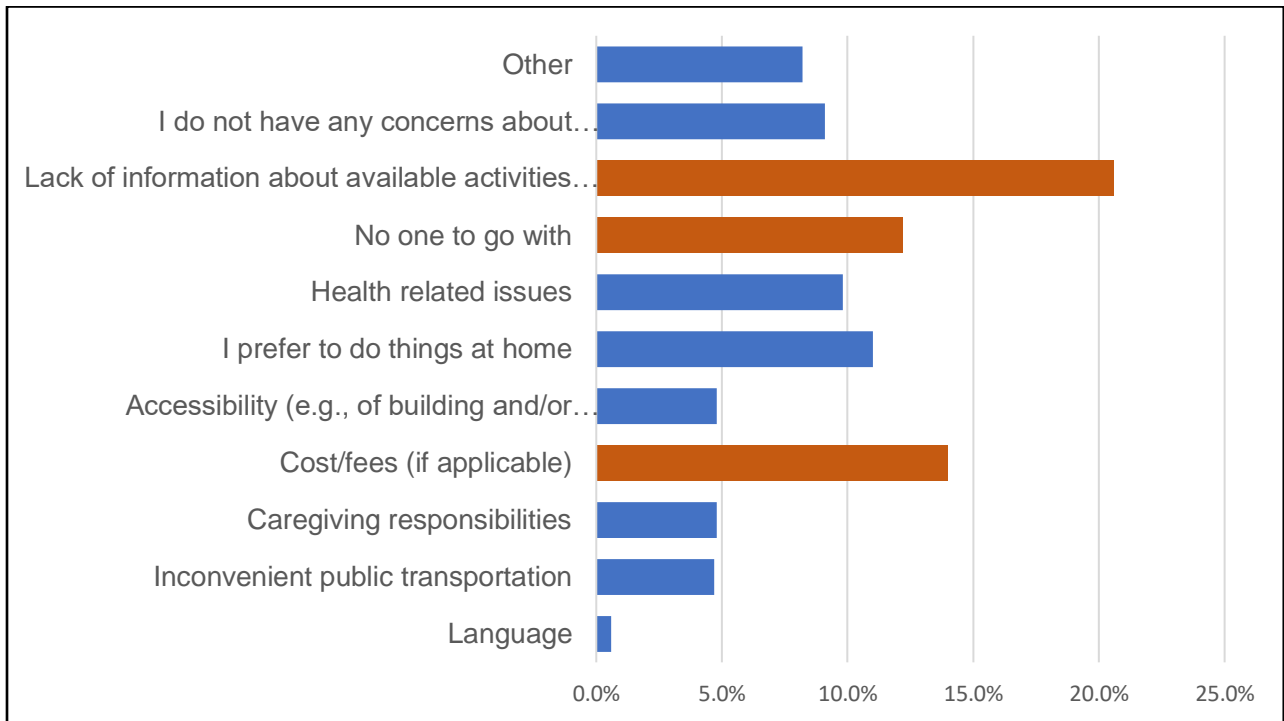
On average, during the last 6 months, how often did you connect with family, friends and neighbours (e.g. online, phone conversations, face-to-face)?



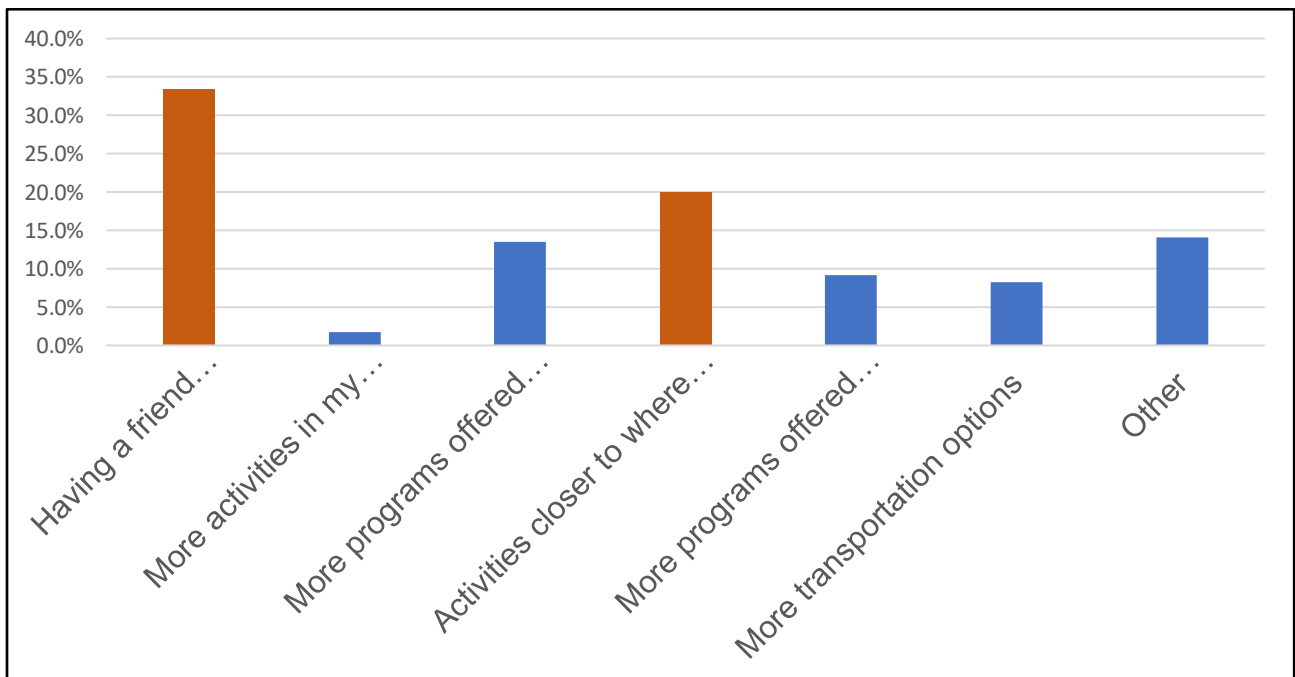
Do you currently participate in social, recreational and cultural activities in your community?



If you answered 'no. which of the following concerns might prevent you from participating in social, recreation and cultural programs and activities? Please check all that apply.

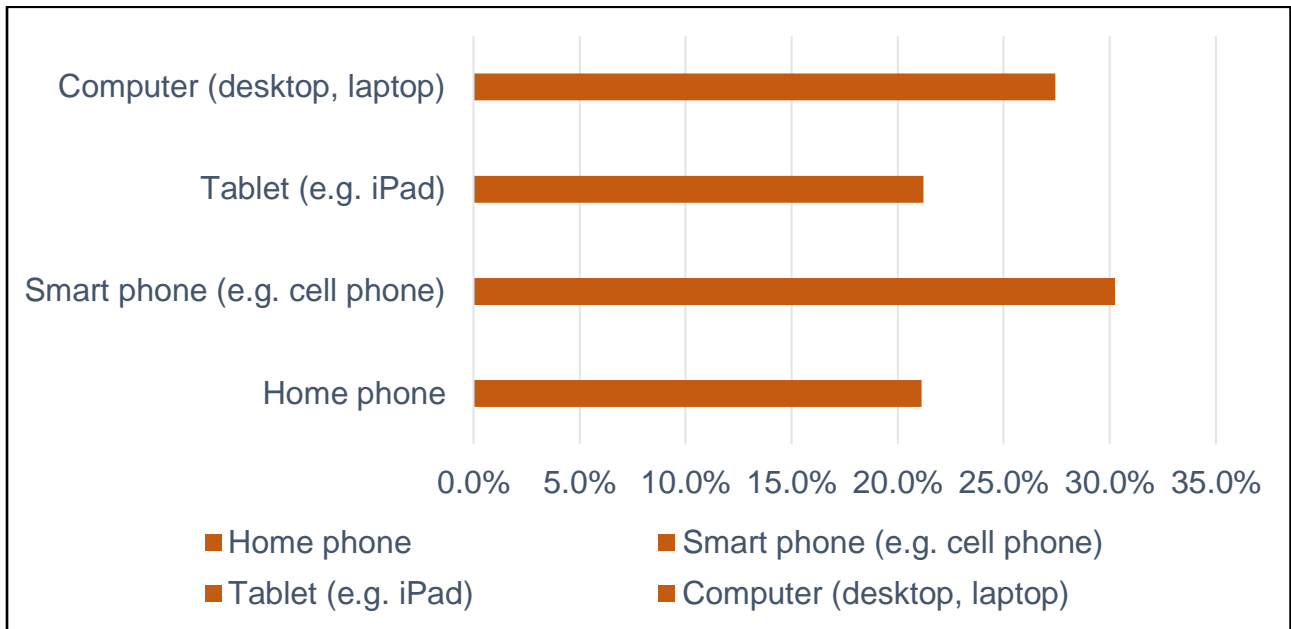


What would motivate you to participate in social and recreation activities?

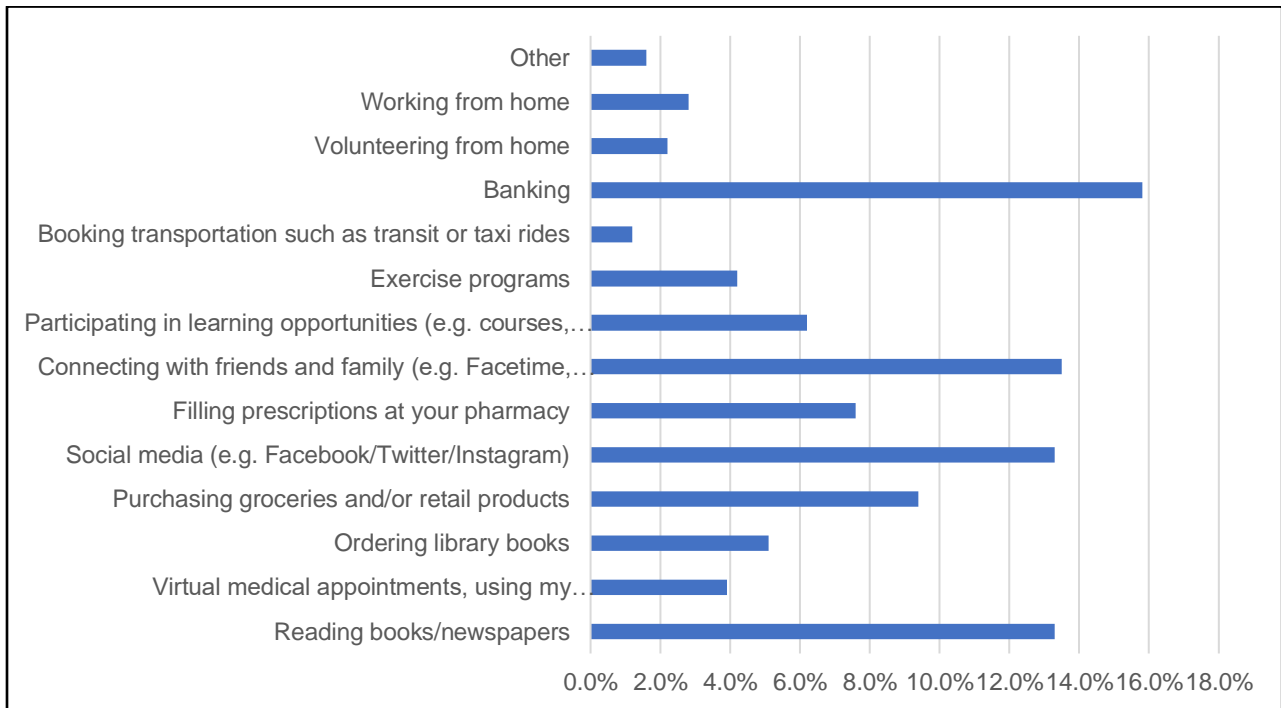


Section B of the survey invited respondents to answer questions related to technology, communication and information.

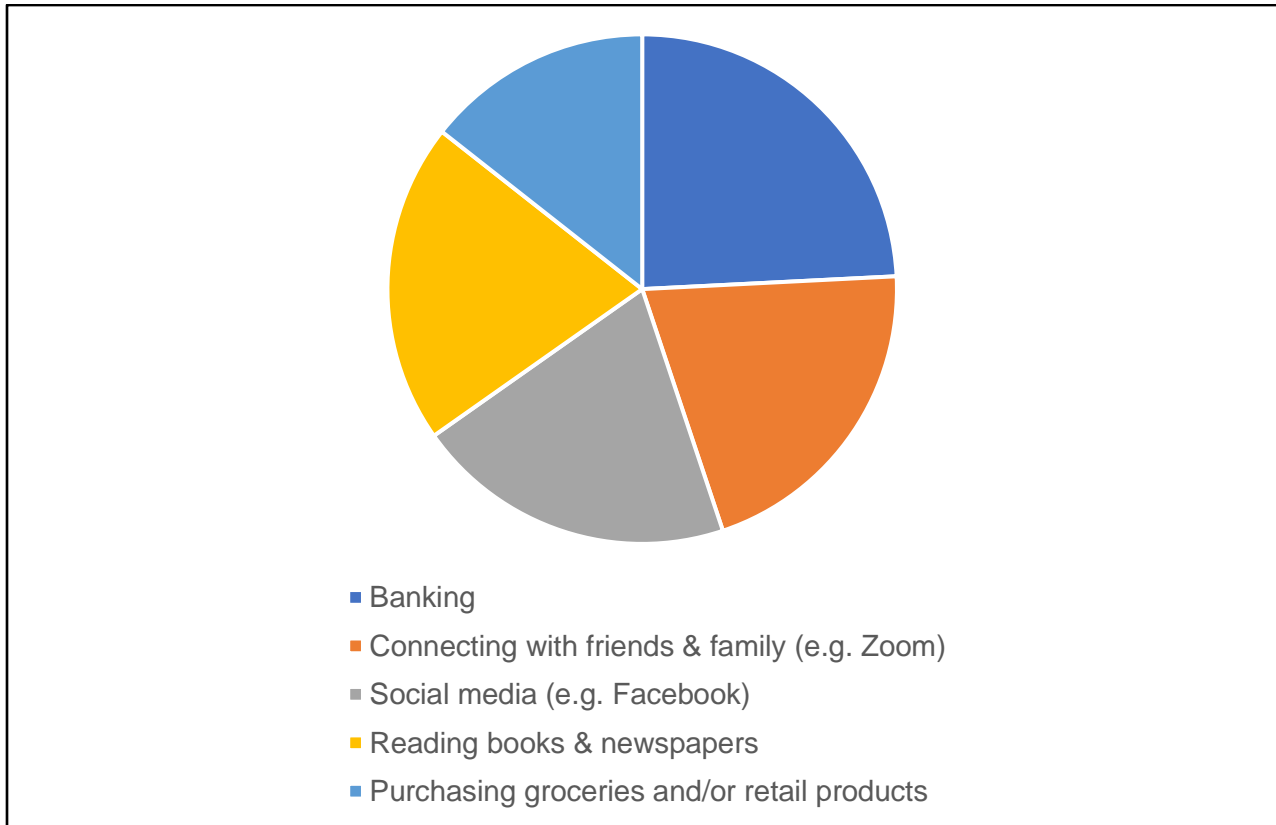
Please put a check mark beside all devices that you use at least once a week.



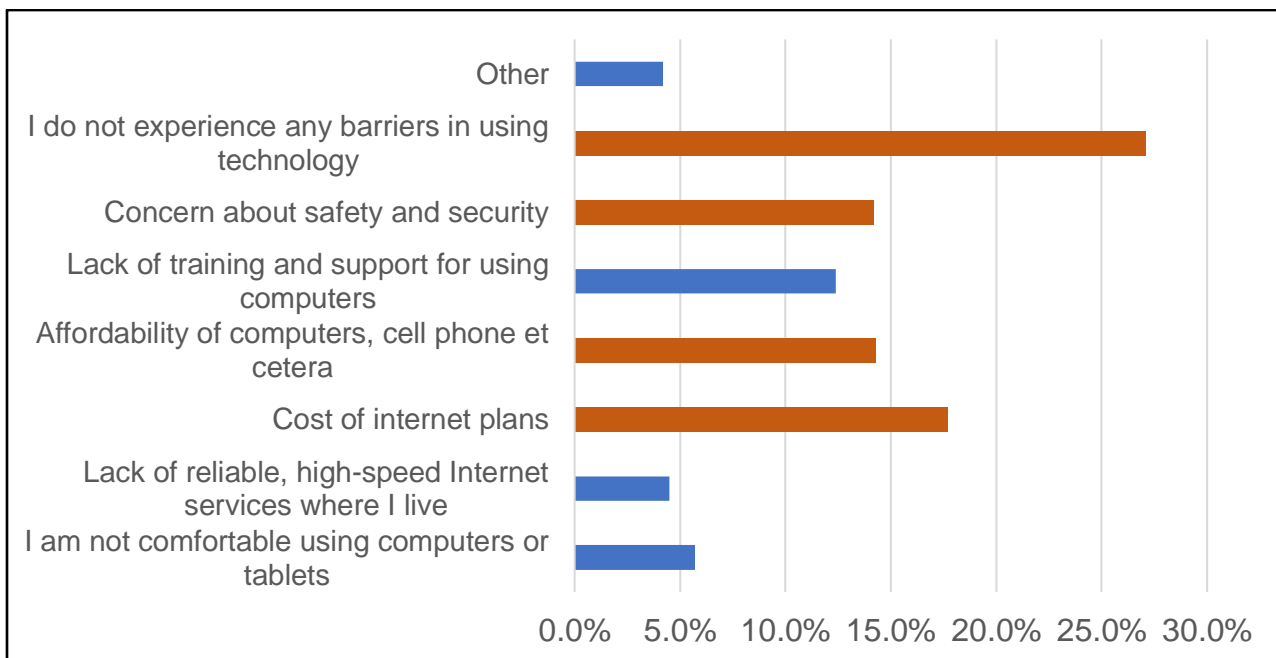
In terms of how people use these devices, this question invited respondents to put a check mark beside each program and service that they use and to check all that apply.



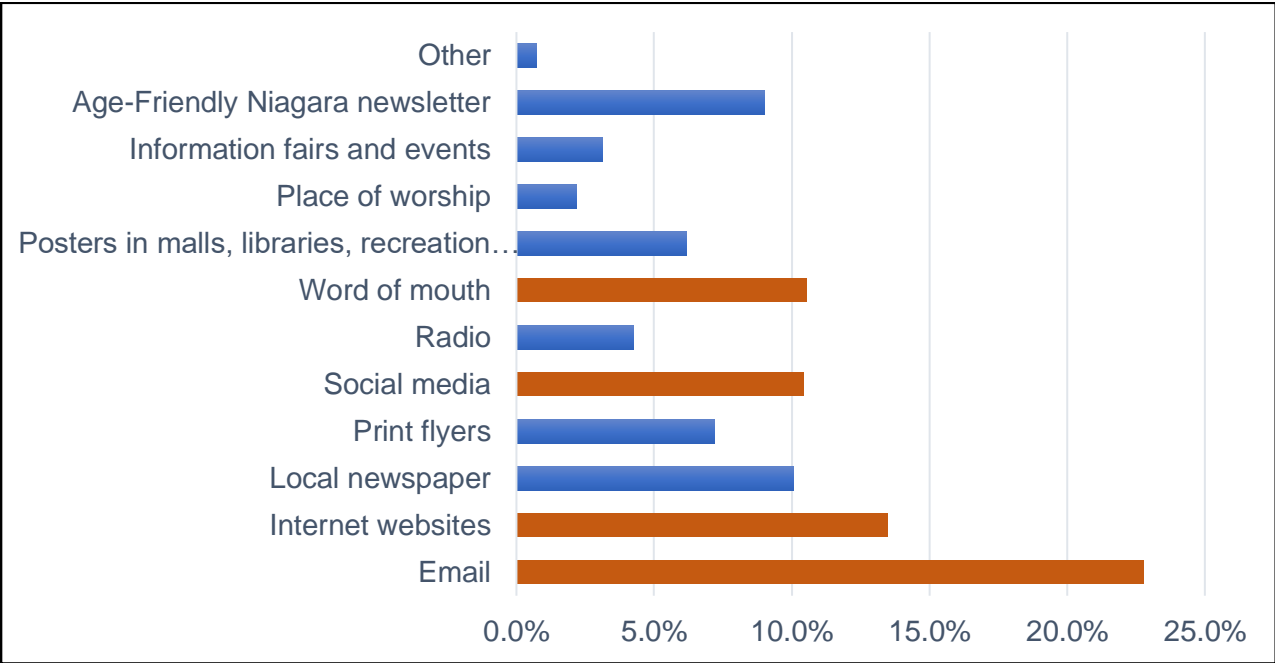
These are the **top 5** uses of technology as identified by survey respondents.



Access to technology is important. Please check any barriers that you experience. Please check all that apply.



What are your preferred ways to receive information about programs, services and activities for adults 50+ living in the Niagara region?



Using 3 or 4 bullet points, please tell us what a ‘community for all ages’ looks like to you?

Niagara has a well-established, rich and successful history of promoting age-friendly initiatives.

As a result of the AFNC commitment to Niagara being a ‘community for all ages’, the survey presented a timely opportunity to invite survey respondents to weigh in on their interpretation of and perspectives about what a ‘community for all ages’ looks like to them. The Planning Committee acknowledged that not everyone would know what was meant by this question and that concern was reflected in the responses. A number of people did indicate that they didn’t know what to say in response to this question. However, knowing that presents an opportunity for the AFNC to continue to raise awareness about age-friendly communities.

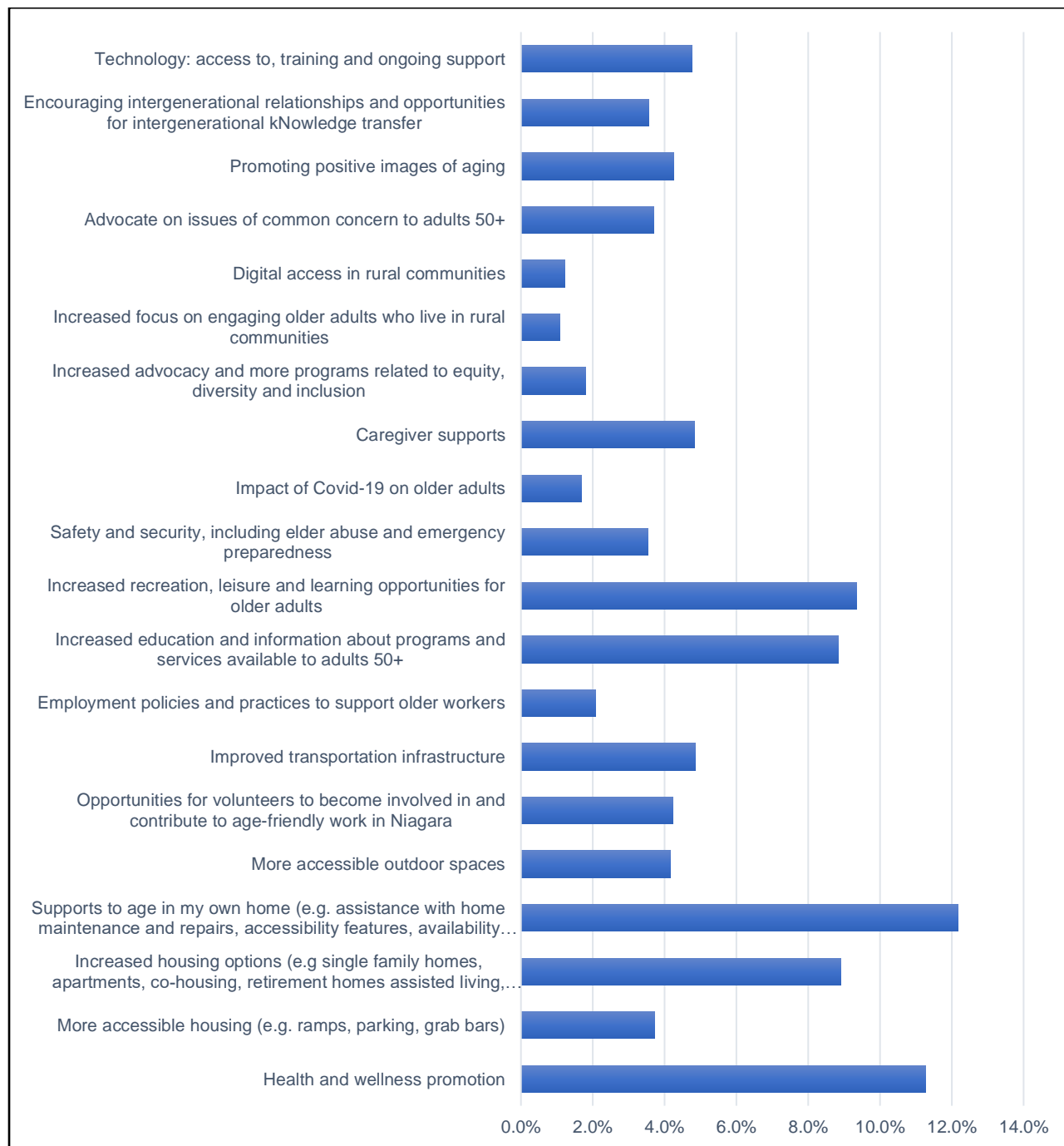
Despite some respondents not knowing how to answer, there were well over 1,000 comments to this question. They have been organized into themes that may assist the AFNC board in their deliberations as they move forward.

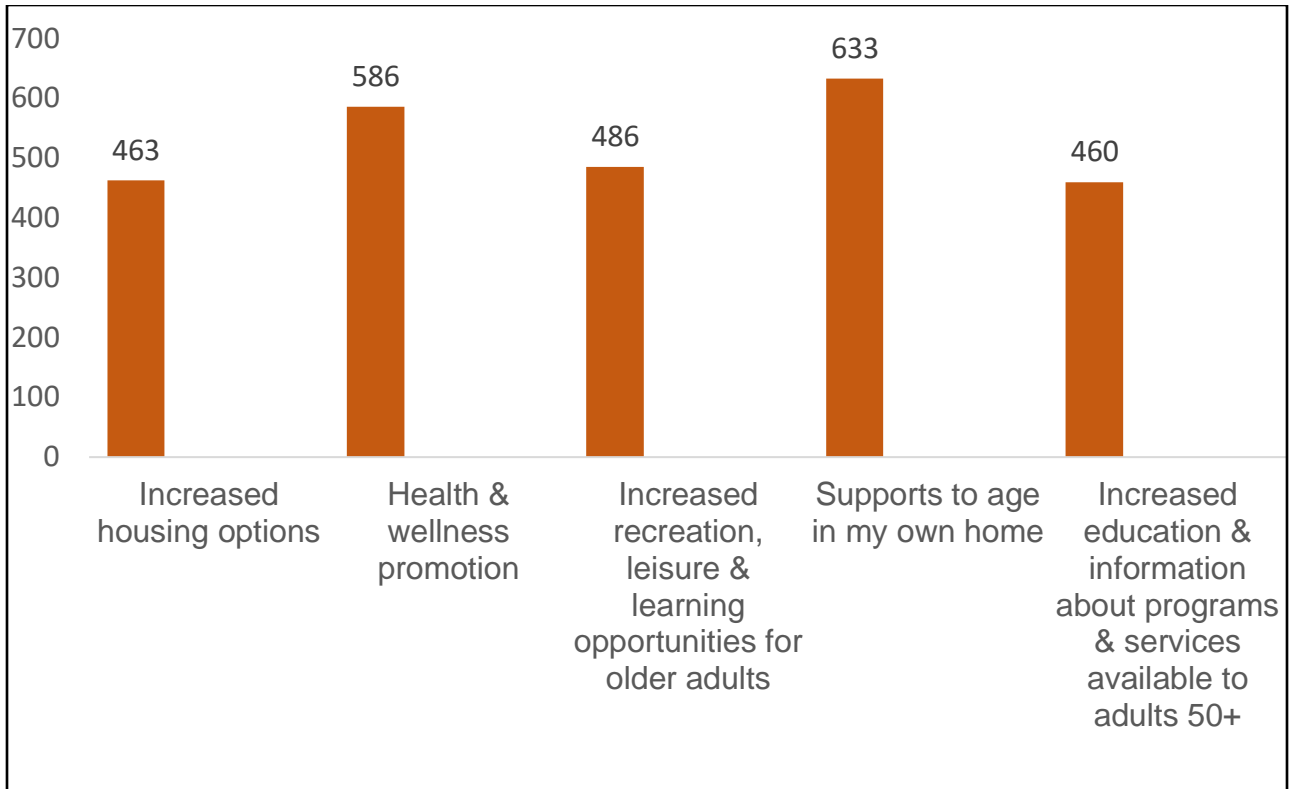
Five themes emerged in response to the question about what a ‘community for all ages’ looks like. The following table depicts those themes and provides a few examples of respondent comments relevant to each theme.

Opportunities to stay active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A place to contribute • A place to socialize • Walkable neighbourhoods • Outdoor spaces • Activities & programs • Walking & cycling paths • Flexible times for programs • Being able to attend things on evenings and weekends • Quiet, open spaces
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable information • Health services & health practitioners • Affordable technology & Internet plans • Transportation • Affordable programs • Access to services and programs for people living with mobility challenges • Access to facilities – e.g. libraries staying open late
Connected generations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intergenerational programs • Increased interaction between young and old • Mentorship • Learning from & helping one another • Social events for all ages
Inclusive communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intergenerational programs • Increased interaction between young and old • Mentorship • Learning from & helping one another • Social events for all ages
Housing options & supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased housing supports • Age-friendly housing • Increased housing options • Affordable & accessible housing • Mixed housing • Access to affordable retirement communities

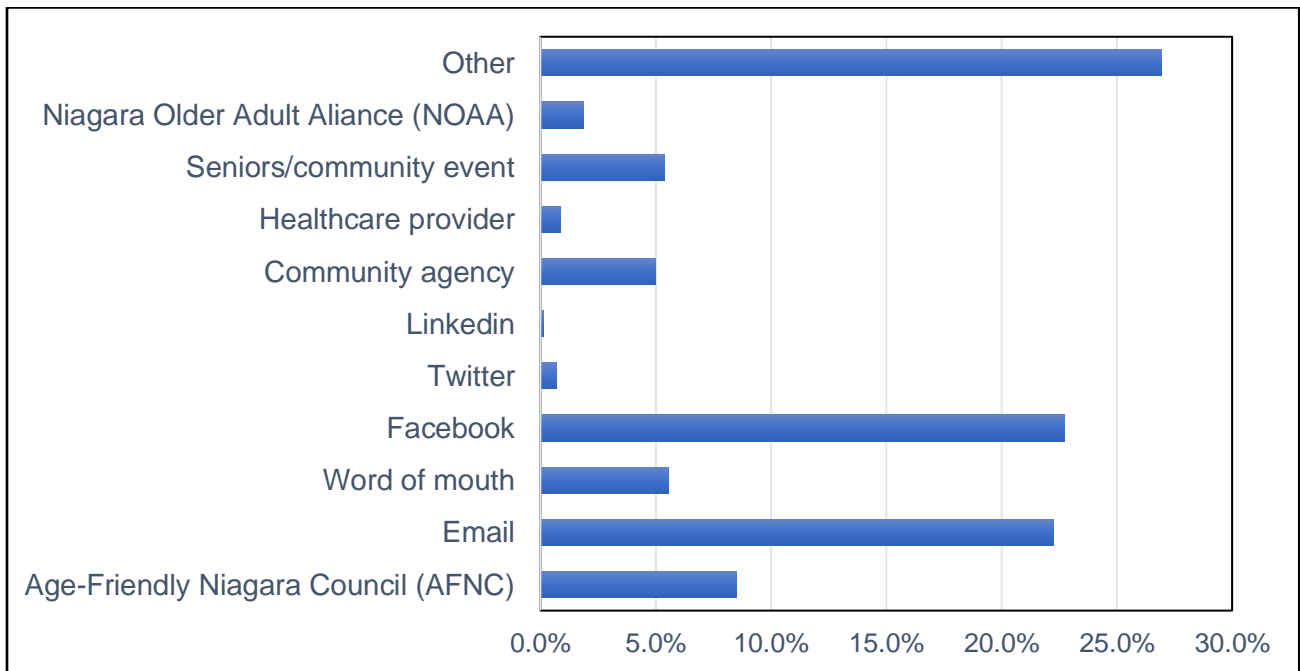
Section C of the survey invited respondents to choose up to **5** areas that they think are most important for the AFNC to address when the board establish priorities. The responses to this question will benefit the AFNC in decision making.

All responses are illustrated in the first chart, followed by a chart which highlights only the **top 5** picks.





To assist with future planning, respondents were invited to tell us how they heard about the survey and to check all that apply (1280 responses to this question). This information, complemented by the survey promotion report (Appendix B), may assist the AFNC with future planning.



3. Francophone focus group and survey

With the support of the Centre de santé communautaire, an opportunity presented itself to host a Francophone focus group in Welland on August 30th, 2022. Eighteen community members participated in the focus group. The author presented the AFNC project and goals of the focus group, speaking in English. Following the presentation, Bianca Gagnon, Coordinator, Quality Improvement at the Centre, led a discussion in French with participants.

A few participants indicated that they had previously completed the online survey in English. Those who hadn't done so were invited to complete a print copy of the survey question that invited respondents to check the **5 topics** of most importance to them. Thirteen focus group participants completed the print copy at the session.

The table below compares the responses to this question for the English survey, French survey and Francophone focus group.

Similarities are highlighted. Two of the topics were the same across the board. Complete notes from the Francophone focus group can be found in Appendix C.

Survey (English)	Survey (French)	Francophone focus group
Increased housing options	Increased housing options	Improved transportation infrastructure
Health and wellness promotion	Health and wellness promotion	Health and wellness promotion
Increased recreation, leisure & learning opportunities for older adults	Increased recreation, leisure & learning opportunities for older adults	Increased advocacy and more programs related to equity, diversity and inclusion
Supports to age in my own home	Supports to age in my own home	Encouraging intergenerational relationships and opportunities for intergenerational knowledge transfer
Increased education and information about programs & services for adults 50+ living in Niagara	Increased education and information about programs & services for adults 50+ living in Niagara	Increased education and information about programs & services for adults 50+ living in Niagara

Again, with support from Bianca Gagnon, the English survey was translated into French and distributed to the Niagara Centre de santé communautaire contacts. There were 34 completed surveys. The survey results can be found in Appendix D and are included in this report should the AFNC board wish to have access to them in the future.

4. October 28th Community Forum

On Friday, October 28th, 2022, the AFNC hosted 54 participants (older adult community members, forum organizers and representatives of organizations) from across the region in a half-day community forum held at the Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/Niagara – Welland site.

The objectives of the forum were to:

- Share information about Older Adult Infolink
- Present results of the ‘Empowering Older Adults in Niagara’ survey
- Provide an opportunity for forum participants to offer their perspectives about select survey results
- Engage in a conversation about moving towards a founding Age-Friendly Niagara Council board

With respect to the last bullet about the AFNC board and, aligned with one of the goals of the current project, forum participants were invited to 1. help to shape the Niagara strategy and action plan for the next several years and 2. To provide perspectives on how the AFNC Board can achieve the desired impact in the Niagara community in the years to come.

Complete notes from the three activities participants engaged in at the forum can be found in Appendix E.

Forum Activity #1 invited participants to engage in a conversation about what contributes to an age-friendly community, delving deeper than one can do in a survey, to discuss projects that they were aware of already taking place in Niagara, what needs to be done to implement the five themes that emerged from the survey, opportunities for collaboration, needed resources and gaps and challenges.

As with all three activities at the forum, participants enthusiastically contributed to the table discussions. Much of what was raised during the table discussions aligns with the survey responses.

As mentioned, Appendix E contains complete notes from the activities. For this section, then, the author has pulled out a few points that jumped out at her for each theme. It should be noted that what is highlighted here is only from the author’s perspective. Different points can be expected to stand out for different readers.

Opportunities to stay active

- It appears that there are many opportunities to stay active in Niagara. Some examples that were brought forward include outdoor spaces such as bike paths, trails, accessible playgrounds, community walking clubs. Facilities like community centres were cited as well – the McBain Centre and the Meridian Centre are two examples.
- Access to transportation remains a challenge, particularly in rural communities.

- Creative development of parks to include activities for all ages (walking trails, benches, fitness equipment)

Comment: One of the most important ‘take home’ messages in this section (for the author!) is not to make assumptions but to ask older adults what they need and want. This includes asking people what being active means to them.

Inclusive communities

- Engaging libraries to keep people connected.
- Developing programs with the LGBTQ2s+ community
- Transportation was a topic of discussion for this theme as well
- Help municipalities to create DE councils, committees and acting on these suggestions

Access

- Digital access

Comment: Digital access is critical – access to technology, training and ongoing support. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of digital literacy as loneliness and social isolation among older adults were exacerbated during the pandemic. Anecdotally, we know that those older adults with access to and comfort with technology appear to have fared better than those without.

- Transportation was mentioned again with respect to the access theme. There was a suggestion of a ‘travelling’ senior centre for rural communities

Connected generations

- Amsterdam example – students living with seniors

Comment: There are examples of students living with older adults in Ontario. One example is RoomEaze which operates out of Toronto but covers southern Ontario. <https://roomeaze.ca/>

- Two-way mentorship

Housing options and supports

- Multigenerational housing
- Bring community services to community residences where there is a desire to stay at home

Forum Activity #2 invited forum participants to focus on three topics that were related to the survey results.

The first of these was volunteering. As with Activity #1, the author will flag a few points that resonated with her.

- The preference for episodic volunteering. Not everyone is in a position to make an ongoing volunteer commitment.
- Retiring adults - including those who have moved to the region in retirement, looking to get involved or integrate

Comment: Might adults who have relocated to Niagara in retirement be an untapped resource? Perhaps some are seeking ways to become involved and give back to their new communities but are unsure how to go about it or where to go for information.

- Another interesting comment from the forum was the suggestion of family volunteering.
- There were several suggestions about where to post recruitment flyers – doctors' offices, pharmacies, retirement homes, libraries, community centre, grocery store
- Be where people are – piggyback on existing activities.
- Having opportunities that matter to people – ask them.

Another topic discussed during Activity #2 was **belonging and feeling engaged in the community**. Table groups were asked to list 3 or 4 actions they would take to help people to feel part of their community.

A few of their suggestions follows.

- Getting to know your neighbours, relationship building, creating opportunities to develop these relationships
- Do employers have a role in better preparing their staff for retirement to ease the transition?
- Find out why they do not feel connected
- Having multigenerational events

Forum Activity #3 was of particular importance to the AFNC interim board. As stated in this report's introduction, one goal of the New Horizons funding is to **'to support the transition of the AFNC from an Interim Board to a Founding Board'**.

Activity #3 invited participants to fast forward 5 years to consider markers of success that would tell them that the AFNC is achieving the desired impact in Niagara. Further, they were asked to do this by referring to four key elements of the AFNC: 1. intergenerational understanding and relationships, 2. diversity, equity and inclusion, 3. collaboration among partners including non-profit, for-profit organizations and government and 4. innovation and learning.

A sample of responses is listed below with the full list in Appendix E.

Intergenerational understanding and relationships

- Intergenerational housing
- Looking at an event and seeing all ages
- Evidence of mentorship – knowledge transfer
- Partnership with district school board of Niagara – health related courses could have standardized curriculum about aging

Diversity, equity and inclusion

- All ages represented on board
- Change recruitment strategies and processes to ensure all are represented – example, different cultures, economic status
- Create opportunities for engagement across groups
- Need mechanism to consistently evaluate our practice against current best practices

Collaboration among partners

- Representation from public service providers – example, libraries, government organization
- Robust partnerships with private businesses – create buy in
- Regional Council – buy in, reporting
- Different folks at the table – example, Chamber of Commerce, private businesses – involve individuals who can provide input without the commitment of being on a regularly scheduled committee

Innovation and Learning

- Collaboration leads to new ideas – example, research project with Brock
- In five years, Niagara board has an approved model for age-friendly committee to preserve and continue forward between elected municipal council terms – better plan – sharing info on a database

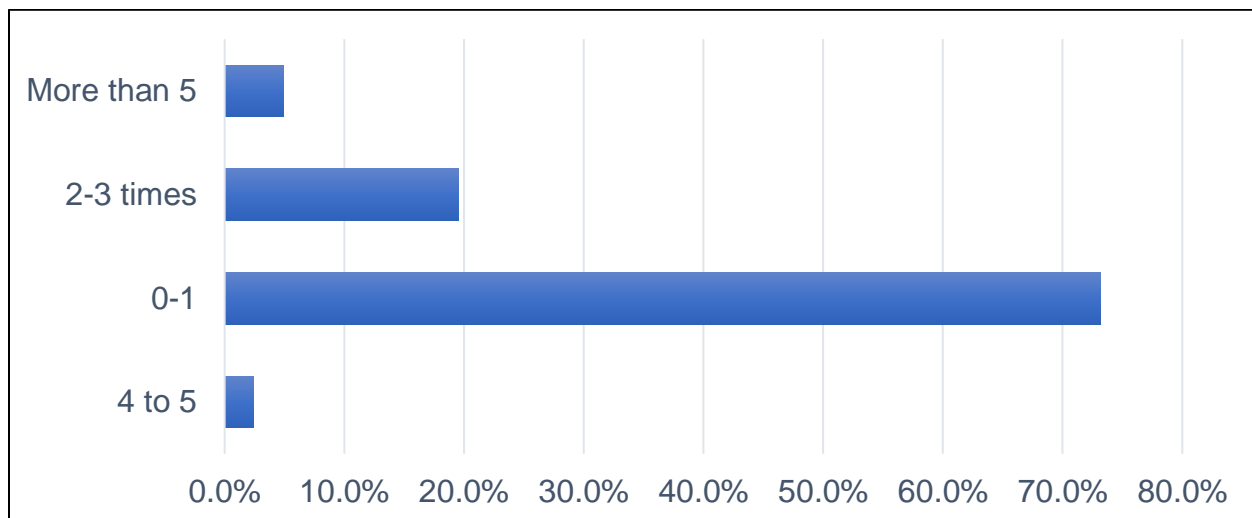
- Exploring the role of technology – incorporated to support more interaction, not the opposite – more accessible – shrinking the digital gap through education

5. Older Adult Infolink

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the project goals was to increase awareness about and promote use of Older Adult Infolink.

In the survey, respondents were asked about whether they were aware of Older Adult Infolink. A significant number of older adults (about 92% of 1,234 responses) said that they were not aware of Infolink.

If respondents were aware of Older Adult Infolink, they were then asked about how often they had used it to access information in the past 5 months (before completing the survey). Of the 82 people who responded to this follow up question, over 70% indicated that had used it 0-1 times.



Acknowledging the lack of awareness about Older Adult Infolink presents an opportunity to seek ways to increase awareness and drive traffic to the site. The AFNC community forum on October 28th presented the Council with just that opportunity. One of the topics in Activity #2 provided an opening for participants to offer their perspectives, to imagine they were in charge and to identify **3 actions** they would implement to increase awareness and drive traffic to the site.

Some of their great suggestions (more than 3!) follow. A more complete list can be found in the community forum notes (Appendix E).

- Welcome package for new community members – info bag when you pick up items like your recycle bin or setting up your account
- Connecting on community Facebook groups
- Where available – local cable channels
- Simple and clear promotional material
- Religious settings/church groups
- Find out who has digital access and create a non-digital interface between those who need the info - currently there is a lack of acknowledgement of digital connectivity.
- Don't base service delivery model on assumptions – product and recipient must match.

Comment: Among other strategies, it may be helpful for Older Adult Infolink to consider the ways in which survey respondents said they prefer to receive information. The top choice among respondents was email, followed by Internet websites.

Summary

“I dwell in possibility...”

Emily Dickinson

Two words come to mind when the author reflects on the survey results, the community forum and the Francophone focus group. These are ‘possibilities and ‘opportunity’. What follows are select survey results that resonated with the author because of both their possibility and opportunity.

1a. *Belonging and being engaged in one’s community.* While over half of the survey respondents reported feeling ‘very strong’ and ‘somewhat strong’ in terms of community engagement, almost half reported ‘very weak’ and ‘somewhat weak’. Knowing this presents an opportunity to seek ways to include people, ensuring that Niagara is a ‘community for all ages’.

1b. *Volunteering.* Ninety-one individuals responding to the survey expressed interest in volunteering. The community forum participants made a number of suggestions about volunteer opportunities, including family volunteering and reaching out to older adults who have retired to the Niagara region and may be looking for ways to become involved. Their suggestions, coupled with the Brock University research (Civic Engagement to build Sustainable Local Capacity: Perspectives of Age-Friendly Community Volunteers in the Niagara Region, August 2022), can be anticipated to benefit the AFNC with volunteer board recruitment as well as for other volunteer opportunities.

1c. Digital literacy. Knowing the ways in which survey respondents use technology provides the AFNC board with suggestions for communicating with older adults and for marketing and promotion of Board opportunities and events. For example, recognizing the use of social media and platforms such as Zoom for connecting with others provides opportunities for the Board.

It would be misleading if one didn't acknowledge the gaps in digital literacy. As our society has become increasingly dependent on technology **it is too easy to leave people behind**. Barriers to using technology range from affordability (both for devices and Internet plans); spotty Internet access, especially in rural communities; concerns about safety and security and lack of training/support for using computers.

High tech – high touch. Without losing the value of face-to-face interaction (high touch), the pervasiveness of technology use in our society is only going to increase. The AFNC board may have a role to play in advocating for opportunities to make technology more accessible to a greater number of older adults.

Comment: Is it possible for the AFNC to distribute a brief survey about digital literacy to the Age-Friendly database? If so, you might want to include a question asking respondents to rate their confidence level accessing and using technology.

2. Something that stood out for the author is the alignment between the survey results, the perspectives of participants at the October 28th community forum and the core values/principles recommended for the AFNC Terms of Reference in May of 2021. The author has included these core values/principles in the current report for ease of reference by the AFNC board.

One example of this synergy can be seen in the survey results related to what an age-friendly community looks like to respondents, the community forum notes and the AFNC core values/principles.

Inclusion is one of 5 themes emerging from the survey data; it also represents a core value for the Board. There was a wide-ranging discussion about inclusion at the community forum with the conversation including, for example, age inclusion, LGBTQ2s+, gender, transportation's role in inclusion and socio-economic status (Niagara Poverty Reduction Network). The AFNC board has an opportunity to build on and to leverage this alignment.

Core values/principles (AFNC, 2021)

Our principles are foundational to our organization's mandate, culture, and decision-making, guiding all the work that we do.

1. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Recognizes that all citizens are vital members of our Community. We champion their right to self-determination, to fully engage in life across the lifespan, to actively participate in decision making (and to be treated with dignity and respect).

2. **Liveability:** Promotes and recognizes that health and well-being includes the built environment, public spaces, community identity, choices in transportation, housing options and other social programs.
3. **Accountability:** Demonstrates that the delivery of these programs, services and the overall planning of communities respects these principles – it is effective, efficient and considers the voices of all citizens.
4. **Intergenerational:** Bringing people of different generations together promotes sharing across age groups, increases our understanding of one another, and recognizes that individuals of all ages have something valuable to contribute within their neighbourhoods as well as in the broader community.
5. **Intersectionality:** Identity factors such as gender, race, age, education, income and others are interrelated. This influences our lived experience and we take into account the impact of these interrelationships in our discussions and initiatives.
6. **Collaboration:** Alliances and partnerships with other not-for-profit, for-profit and all levels of government is integral to our projects and activities, resulting in stronger and sustainable outcomes
7. **Innovation and Learning:** We encourage individual, organizational and community growth within an environment that builds on existing knowledge and skills, values critical thinking, explores and tests innovative ways of doing business, and supports transferring that knowledge and the results of research to others.

3. The five topics identified by survey respondents as most important to them are consistent with the age-friendly themes that were identified. For example, ‘housing’ is one of five themes resulting from the survey and ‘increasing housing options’ is one of the five topics of most importance to survey respondents. In addition, housing was raised in the table groups at the October 28th community forum (e.g. intergenerational housing).

Knowing the similarities in interests and issues of concern to older adults may assist the board with strategic planning and establishing priorities.

In closing, these are a few points that were underscored for the author during this project.

- Having someone to go with emerged as an important motivator for people to participate in community activities and programs
- The importance of sustainability for the AFNC board
- The need for evidence and an evaluation plan to assess the AFNC’s impact on Niagara in five years
- The opportunity to expand and explore new opportunities for volunteer recruitment.
- Further explore opportunities for collaboration with faith communities

- 'Nothing about us without us!' Never assume - ask older adults what they want and need. Be sure they are represented in decision making
- Recruiting volunteers that reflect the make up of the community – example, diversity
- The opportunity to increase engagement from some municipalities who had a smaller response to the survey

Having such a dedicated group of volunteers in Niagara bodes well for the success of the AFNC!

Appendix A

Empowering Older Adults in Niagara¹

What matters to you?

What do we want to learn?

We want to learn from the perspectives and experiences of adults 50+ who live in the Niagara region of Ontario, so that, together, we can further strengthen Niagara as an age-friendly community.

The **Age-Friendly Niagara Council (AFNC)** and the **Niagara Older Adult Alliance (NOAA)** work closely together to advance a common vision of an inclusive '*community for all ages*' and '*one voice for older adults in Niagara*'.

The AFNC is comprised primarily of community volunteers, along with representatives from government, education, not-for-profit organizations and businesses. NOAA includes leaders who serve on local municipal older adult advisory committees in each of Niagara's 12 local municipalities.

The work of strengthening Niagara as an age-friendly community began in 2009, and much has been achieved since that time. Through this survey, the AFNC and the NOAA invite you to help build upon what we've already learned.

The survey questions are guided by the Niagara Aging Strategy and Action Plan (NASAP) implementation priorities (2018-2019); and what we've learned about COVID-19 impacts on older adults in Niagara. In addition, we want to learn more about issues of interest and/or concern to older adults in today's world.

What will we do with the survey results?

The survey results will help to inform the AFNC and NOAA in establishing priorities. The work of these two groups cannot be done in isolation.

The survey will take about 7-10 minutes to complete. **A few minutes of your time will make a difference. Your voice matters!**

The deadline for survey completion (online or paper copy) is Friday, July 15, 2022. Please note that your responses are anonymous. All survey information will be kept confidential by Niagara Connects researchers, who are administering the survey on behalf of the AFNC.

Thank you for participating in this survey.

The AFNC Interim Board of Directors

¹ This survey is being conducted in partnership with INCommunities, with funding support from the Government of Canada through the New Horizons for Seniors Program.

Section A – Building on the Niagara Aging Strategy and Action Plan (NASAP)

In this section, we invite you to answer questions related to the Niagara Aging Strategy and Action Plan (NASAP) in the areas of:

- a. Community Engagement and Communications
- b. Recreation, Learning and Leisure
- c. Improved Services, Systems and Infrastructure

1. How would you describe your sense of belonging and being engaged in your community?

- Very strong
- Somewhat strong
- Somewhat weak
- Very weak

2. During the last 6 months, I used the following ways to access healthcare. Please check all that apply.

- Attended medical appointments in person
- Participated in support groups using my computer/tablet
- Using my computer/tablet, participated in groups dedicated to meditation and/or other forms of self-care
- Video consultations using my computer/tablet (e.g. Zoom, Facetime) with healthcare providers (e.g. doctors, nurse practitioners, mental health counsellors)
- Participated in health education sessions through my computer/tablet.
- Email communication with healthcare providers
- Phone calls with healthcare providers
- I did not use the healthcare system during the pandemic.
- Other. Please describe.

3. I am able to access services in my community that support both my physical and mental health.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Comments:

4. On average, during the last 6 months, how often did you connect with family, friends and neighbours (e.g. online, phone conversations, face-to-face)?

- Daily
- Twice a week
- 3-4 times a week
- 1-3 times a month
- I avoided connecting with other people due to pandemic concerns

Comments:

5. Do you currently participate in social, recreational and cultural activities in your community?

- Yes No

If you answered 'no', which of the following concerns might prevent you from participating in social, recreation and cultural programs and activities? Please check all that apply

- Language
- Inconvenient public transportation

- Caregiving responsibilities
- Cost/fees (if applicable)
- Accessibility (e.g., of building and/or programs, mobility concerns)
- I prefer to do things at home
- Health related issues
- No one to go with
- Lack of information about available activities and programs
- I do not have any concerns about participating in social, recreation and cultural programs and activities

- Other. Please describe.

6. What would motivate you to participate in social and recreation activities?

- Having a friend participate with me
- More activities in my language or that represent my culture
- More programs offered during the evening and weekends (for those still working as well as for others who prefer these times)

- Activities closer to where I live
- More programs offered online
- More transportation options
- Other. Please describe.

Section B – Technology, communication and information

This section asks questions about your use of technology as well as your use of Older Adult Infolink.

The pandemic of the last two and a half years has highlighted the role of technology and access to information in keeping us informed and connected to our families, friends and communities.

Technology

7. Please put a check mark beside all devices that you use at least once a week.

- Home phone
- Smart phone (e.g. cell phone)
- Tablet (e.g. iPad)
- Computer (desktop, laptop)

If you do not use any of the devices listed above, please skip to question #9

8. We would like to learn more about the ways in which you use these devices. Please put a check mark beside each program or service that you use. Check all that apply.

- Reading books/newspapers
 - Virtual medical appointments, using my computer/iPad
 - Ordering library books
 - Purchasing groceries and/or retail products
 - Social media (e.g. Facebook/Twitter/Instagram)
 - Filling prescriptions at your pharmacy
 - Connecting with friends and family (e.g. Facetime, Zoom, Skype)
 - Participating in learning opportunities (e.g. courses, webinars)
 - Exercise programs
 - Booking transportation such as transit or taxi rides.
 - Banking
 - Volunteering from home
 - Working from home
 - Other. Please describe.
-

9. Access to technology is important. Please check any barriers that you experience. Please check all that apply.

- I am not comfortable using computers or tablets
 - Lack of reliable, high-speed Internet services where I live
 - Cost of Internet plans
 - Affordability of computers, cell phone et cetera
 - Lack of training and support for using computers
 - Concern about safety and security
 - I do not experience any barriers in using technology.
 - Other. Please describe.
-
-
-

Communication and information

Older Adult Infolink is a newly developed website, accessed through your computer/tablet, for older adults, caregivers and organizations that support older adults. It is a centralized source of current information about topics such as community and health care services, housing options and recreational activities.

10a. I am aware of Older Adult Infolink.

- Yes
- No

10b. If you answered 'yes', how many times have you searched Older Adult Infolink to access information in the past 5 months?

- 0-1
- 2-3
- 4-5
- More than 5

11. What are your preferred ways to receive information about programs, services and activities for adults 50+ living in the Niagara region?

- Email
- Internet websites
- Local newspapers
- Print flyers
- Social media
- Radio
- Word of mouth
- Posters in malls, libraries, recreation centres and other public places
- Places of worship
- Information fairs and events
- Age-Friendly Niagara newsletter
- Other. Please describe.

12. Using 3 or 4 bullet points, please tell us what a 'community for all ages' looks like to you.

Section C – Age-Friendly Niagara Council (AFNC)

The Age-Friendly Niagara Council (AFNC) will establish priorities that reflect dominant interests and human resource capacity. Please choose up to **5 areas that you think are most important for the AFNC to address**. Your responses will help with decision making.

13. Please put a check mark beside the 5 topics that are most important to you. Choose up to 5 topics ONLY in order to be able to proceed to the next question.

- Health and wellness promotion
- More accessible housing (e.g. ramps, parking, grab bars)
- Increased housing options (e.g. single family homes, apartments, co-housing, retirement homes, assisted living, long-term care homes)
- Supports to age in my own home (e.g. assistance with home maintenance, accessibility features, availability of home care services)
- More accessible outdoor spaces (e.g. parks and walking trails)
- Opportunities for volunteers to become involved in and contribute to age-friendly work in Niagara
- Improved transportation infrastructure
- Employment policies and practices to support older workers
- Increased education and information about programs and services available to adults 50+
- Increased recreation, leisure and learning opportunities for older adults
- Safety and security, including elder abuse and emergency preparedness
- Impact of COVID-19 on older adults
- Caregiver supports
- Increased advocacy and more programs related to equity, diversity and inclusion
- Increased focus on engaging older adults who live in rural communities
- Digital access in rural communities

- Advocate on issues of common concern to adults 50+
- Promoting positive images of aging
- Encouraging intergenerational relationships and opportunities for intergenerational knowledge transfer
- Technology: access to, training and ongoing support

Comments:

Section D – Tell us about you!

In this section, please tell us a bit about yourself. All responses are anonymous.

14. In what local area of Niagara do you live? Please check one.

- Fort Erie
- Grimsby
- Lincoln
- Niagara Falls
- Niagara-on-the-Lake
- Pelham
- Port Colborne
- St. Catharines
- Thorold
- Wainfleet
- Welland
- West Lincoln

15. Age group.

- 50-59
- 60-69

- 70-79
- 80-89
- 90+

16. Gender

- Male
- Female
- Identify as other than female or male.
- Prefer not to say

17. Paid Employment

- Working full-time
- Working part-time
- I have my own business
- Not working

18. Volunteer work

I currently volunteer:

- 1-4 hours a week
- 5-10 hours a week
- More than 10 hours a week
- On an as needed basis for specific events
- I do not currently volunteer
- I am interested in becoming a volunteer

Next Steps

Thank you for completing this survey.

20. To assist us with future planning, please tell us how you heard about the survey. Please check all that apply.

- Age-Friendly Niagara Council (AFNC)
- Niagara Older Adult Alliance (NOAA)
- Word of mouth
- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Community agency
- Healthcare provider
- Seniors/community event
- Other. Please describe.

The Age-Friendly Niagara Council (AFNC) will soon be establishing its Founding Board.

If you are interested in learning more about the Council, would like to become involved or to be added to the AFNC membership list for future mailings and updates and to learn more about the Older Adult InfoLink, please send an email message to **afn@agefriendlyniagara.com**

Appendix B Survey distribution and promotion

The survey was initially distributed to the following individuals and groups on June 1st, 2022.

Although an effort was made to count individuals who received the invitational email only once, there remains the probability of someone being counted twice as there is member overlap between organizations. That overlap does not impact survey results. The data included in this section of the report is primarily intended to provide the AFNC and NOAA with general information about who was invited to distribute the survey and to capture additional outreach efforts to assist with future planning.

Survey recipient	Where applicable, number of group members or number of similar organizations receiving the email (e.g. libraries)
Niagara Older Adult Association (NOAA) members	28
Age-Friendly Niagara Council (AFNC) members * <i>The numbers of NOAA and AFNC members who received the initial email does not match the true number of members in each group. The reason is that there is some overlap in membership and individuals were counted only once.</i>	12
Niagara libraries/librarians	12
Individual citizens 50+	7
Seniors Active Living centres/clubs/associations	14
United Way Niagara	2
Niagara Community Foundation	2
Brock University	3
YWCA Niagara Region	1
Alzheimer Society Niagara	1
Niagara Health	1
Niagara Poverty Reduction Network	2
Retirement homes	10
TOTAL (approximately)	95

Following the initial survey launch on June 1st, a number of the email invitation recipients took action to promote the survey. Some of those actions **of which we are aware** are captured below. It is important to note that, unless individuals specifically advised us about their actions, we would not be able to track where they shared the opportunity to complete the survey. It is also important to note that in the case of Facebook pages/groups, for example, not all followers/members will be 50+.

Media and social media	
Action	Reach and/or potential reach
Facebook - City of Port Colborne	7,719 followers (as of June 17 th , 2022)
Facebook group – AFNC (<i>included a modest investment in boosting the survey opportunity</i>)	131 followers (as of June 17 th , 2022)
Facebook group – Friends of Crystal Beach	785 members (as of June 17 th , 2022)
Facebook group – Fort Erie Community Watch	7,100 members (as of June 17 th , 2022)
Facebook group – Pat Spadafora’s personal page	Niagara contacts invited to share the survey
Twitter - AFNC	
Twitter – Pat Spadafora’s personal Twitter	596 followers
Twitter – Walter Sendzik, Mayor, St. Catharines, shared the link to the survey on Twitter on June 17 th , 2022	Mayor Sendzik has 11,500 followers on Twitter (<i>*again please note that not all will be adults 50+</i>)
St. Catharine’s Standard front page newspaper article (Karena Walter)	Article to run in Niagara’s dailies
Otto Penner’s cable television program	Niagara Falls
CARP Niagara newsletter	6,000 members, about 4,000 who use or have Internet access
Age-Friendly Niagara newsletter update, June 8 th , 2022	500+ subscribers
Niagara Connects network (Niagara Community Calendar on Niagara Knowledge Exchange) (Mary Wiley)	
Thorold Today news article, interviewing Jean D’Amelio Swyer, promoting the survey, June 20 th , 2022	Thorold
Town of Pelham Seniors Advisory Committee created an advertisement to promote the survey. Notified by Brittany MacLeod, Active Living Programmer, Town of Pelham, on June 27 th , 2022 Ad appeared in The Voice of Pelham and Central Niagara on July 6 th , 2022	Pelham

In addition to online survey, a pdf version of the survey was requested by the following groups for them to distribute hard copies at various events held during June which, in Ontario, is Seniors' month.

Group	Event	Reach and/or potential reach (if known)
CARP Niagara (Ursula Hudson)	Picnic on June 21 st , 2022	Approximately 45 people attended the picnic.
Thorold Seniors Centre	Sent to members	
McBain Niagara Falls Community Centre, Niagara Falls (Otto Penner request)	Open House, June 22 nd , 2022	
Jean D'Amelio-Swyer	Thorold lunch	30
Thorold Seniors Centre	To distribute at the centre	
Meridian Community Centre, Pelham	To distribute at the centre	
Seniors' event, Fort Erie, June 22 nd , 2022 Catherine Mindorff-Facca	Seniors Stepping Out Spring Festival	100
Niagara Regional Housing, the Wellness Supportive Living Collaborative (Naomi O'Brien brought this forward and spoke with Carolyn Askeland about the opportunity to promote the surveys at the BBQs)	BBQs in 4 supportive housing buildings June 22 nd , Carleton Street, St. Catharines June 24 th , King Street, Welland June 28 th , Buckley Towers, Niagara Falls June 30 th , Gale Crescent, St. Catharines	200

Additional promotion of the survey is outline below.

Group/organization	Action	Reach and/or potential reach (if known)
Seniors' Services, Niagara Region	Shared online survey with older adults who participate in their online/virtual programs	400+ older adults
Meals on Wheels (MOW) (except St. Catharines - Thorold MOW)	MOW agencies committed to sharing a flyer about the survey to their clients in late June.	610 MOW clients
St. Catharines-Thorold MOW	Committed to sharing a digital poster with their	~670 MOW clients

	clients (based on LHIN MSAA agreement)	
Health Promoters from the 10 Primary Care Family Health Teams (FHTs) and Community Health Centres (CHCs)	These groups committed to share the digital poster and social media ads with their clients and through their social media channels.	
Active Transportation Health Promoter with NRPH (Lisa Gallant)	Committed to share the survey information with her colleagues in Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention	
Grimsby Seniors Club	Email from Mary Wiley to Krista Bowie asking Krista whether she could engage the Grimsby Seniors' Club	
Niagara-on-the-Lake tennis players	Link to survey shared by Dominic Ventresca on June 17 th , 2022	45
Promotion at early June flag raisings	Promoted in Welland; no reports from other municipalities	
Niagara Board of Trade & Commerce	Sent an email and link to the survey to businesses (mostly based in Thorold) on June 20 th , 2022	
Bayshore Home Health – Niagara Private Branch	Email from Pat Spadafora to Poonam Singh, Area Director, on June 25 th , 2022	
GBF Community Services (Grimsby) Benevolent Fund	Shared the opportunity to complete the survey with their clients as requested by Mary Wiley	
Centre de Sante Communautaire (CSCHN)	Promoted by Bianca Gagnon, Coordinator, Quality Improvement, the week of July 18 th , 2022 on CSCHN's social media and with Entite2 to be included in their newsletter. Survey deadline of August 5 th .	Outreach to Niagara's Francophone community

Appendix C - Age-Friendly Niagara Council: Francophone Focus Group

Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/Niagara – Welland site

Tuesday, August 30th 1:30-3:30pm - 18 community participants, notes taken by a participant.

Topics presented included:

1. Sense of belonging and involvement in the community (the default would be to refer to the Francophone community, but it was specified that they could also speak to their implication in the larger community)
2. Participation in social, recreational and cultural activities in the community (including access to information, how to be well connected, knowing what was happening within the community, identifying what drives participation)
3. Use of technology, including potential barriers

Answers were provided as more of a conversation, with facilitated questions to help direct conversation back to the themes listed above. Below is an overview of the discussion:

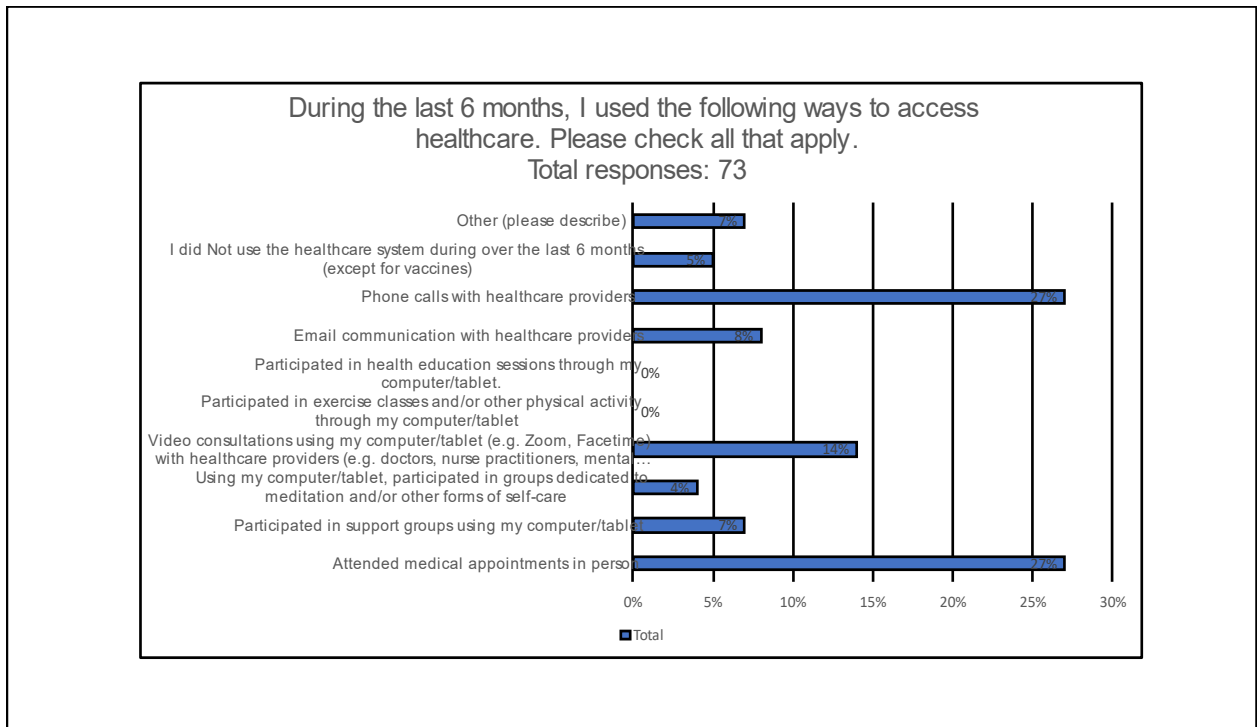
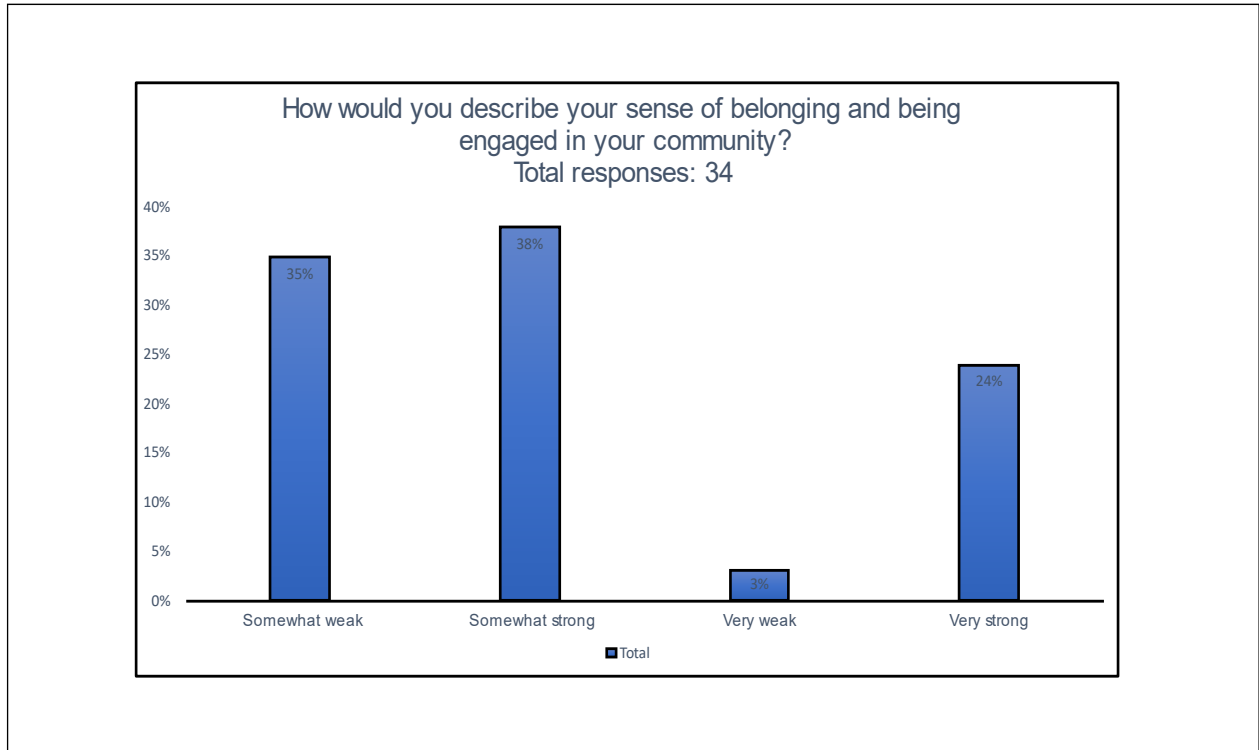
- Sense of belonging: The importance of having activities that are in French. The participants expressed concern over the loss of the language and the importance of conserving it by offering opportunities to engage with others in French in all facets (e.g. cultural activities, recreational activities, etc.)
- Intergenerational activities – this point came up often in the French surveys and the focus group was an opportunity elaborate this point a little further. While the participants liked the idea of these types of activities and some already have occurred in the past with great success (St Jean celebrations in June for example, or some church-based initiatives), they still do appreciate the low-key, slower paced seniors-focused activities.
 - a. They expressed that this speaks to the point above – if we do not offer opportunities to “live” in French, it will get lost.
- Access to information and resources.
 - a. Using in-person meetings as opportunities to get/share information
 - b. They appreciate the use of technology but communicated the importance of other means of promotion/information sharing. Places where they would like to see information includes: dentist’s office, parishes, libraries, doctor’s office, phone calls, evening news and directories (one exists for French language services and was mentioned by participants but is not Niagara specific, includes a variety of sectors that may be of less interest)
 - c. Communicated feelings of frustration when they find out that an activity occurred but weren’t made aware in time to participate.

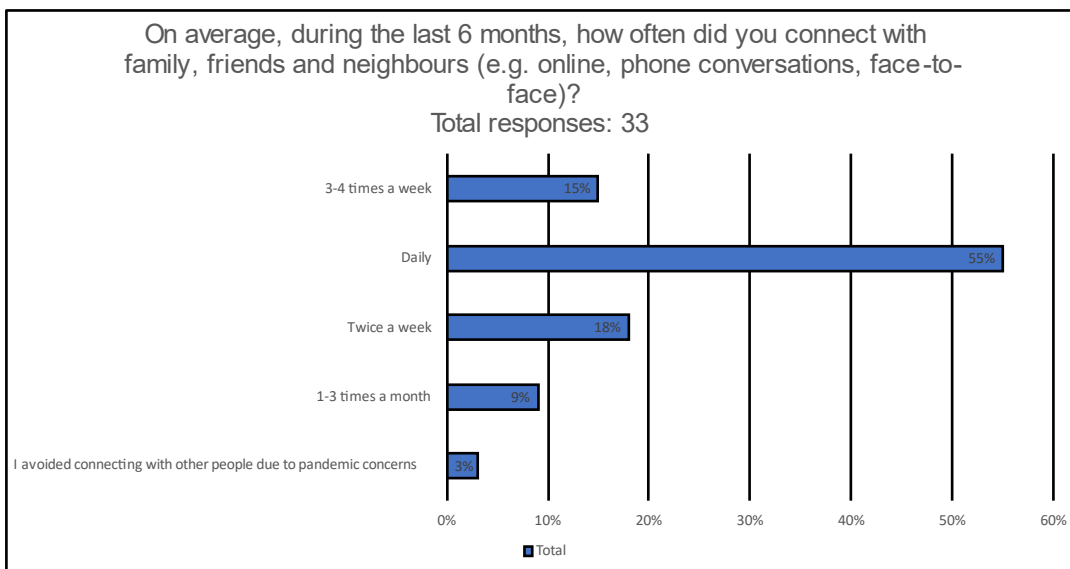
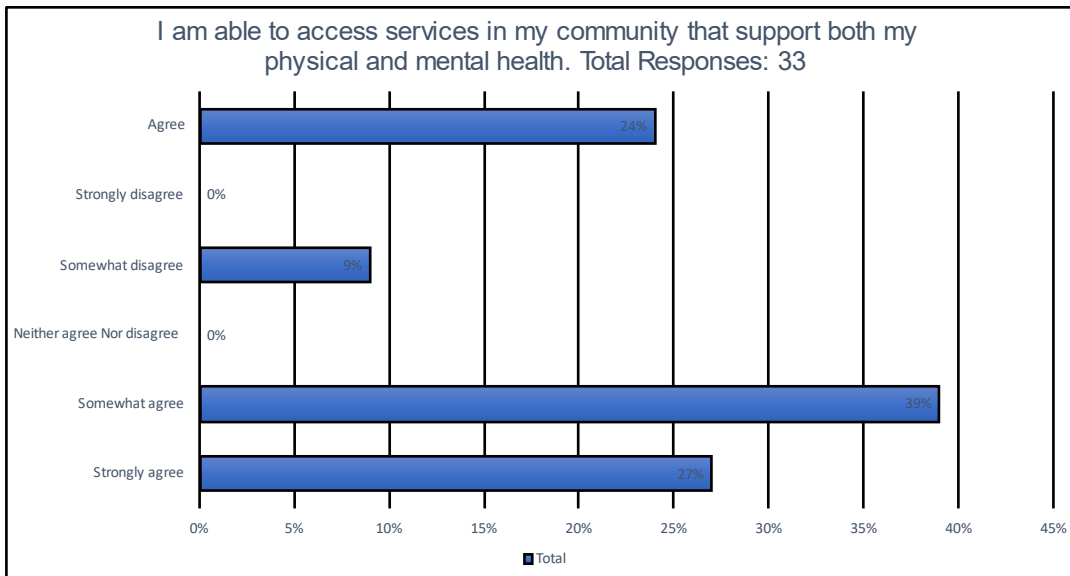
- The focus group was the perfect example of the importance of information being communicated by word of mouth from trusted sources. One well-connected person did the better part of the promotion for this consultation and yielded a good turnout.
 - a. She promoted at an existing activity the week prior, sent out an email, and made some phone calls.
 - b. When asked what incites participation, they said the person/organization that communicates the message/is organizing (i.e. pillars in the community).
- Centralizing and navigating what is available in French.
 - a. Many liked the idea of a concise one-pager that could be put on the fridge with a list of essential phone numbers for French language services.
 - b. Navigation – who is capable to help people know where to go.
 - i. System navigation is difficult in itself, in addition to the language barrier (sometimes two-fold: the information is in English (think eligibility, most appropriate provider, etc.), and the service is in English).
 - c. From an organizational perspective – the importance of collaboration and the possibility of centralizing all French language information. This raises some logistical questions around who would be best suited/who has the capacity to house such information, who is the natural “go to” within the community, etc. Some tools are already in place, but are they well supplied with pertinent information by all francophone community partners, and are they known by the community?
- When we talk about French language services, health care services will almost always come up. Mention of not being properly served in French, the anxious feelings about not being understood in an emergency (someone mentioned 911), frustration of trying to act as an interpreter for someone who is less comfortable in English than themselves, providers identifying themselves as being able to provide services in French but in reality, is not always the case, etc.
 - a. Organizations exist to help address this reality but it is a system issue so challenges remain.
 - b. Speaks to the point above regarding navigation: in other regions, French language services navigators exist to try and mitigate this challenge.

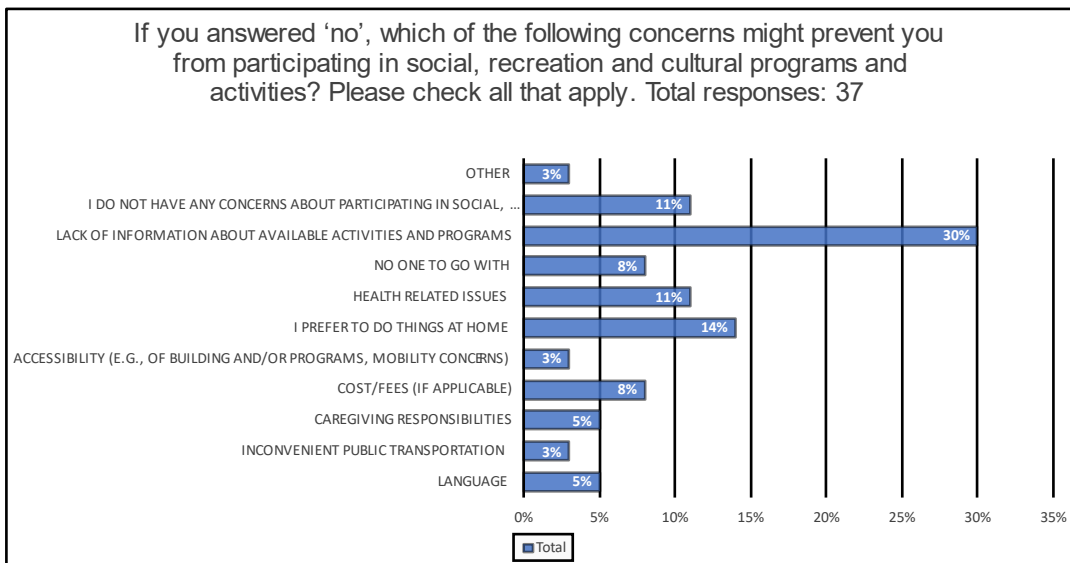
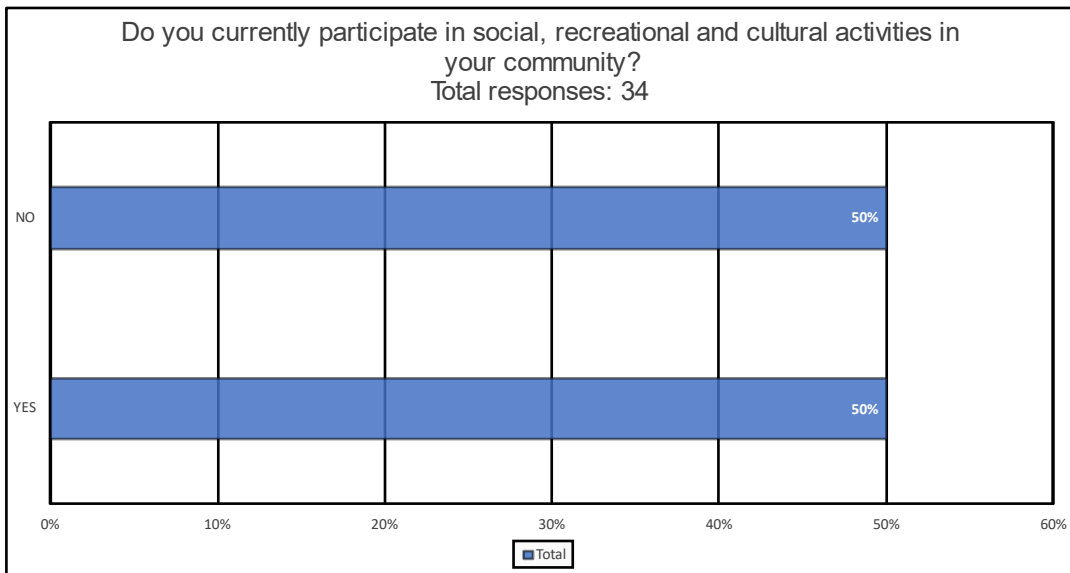
In summary:

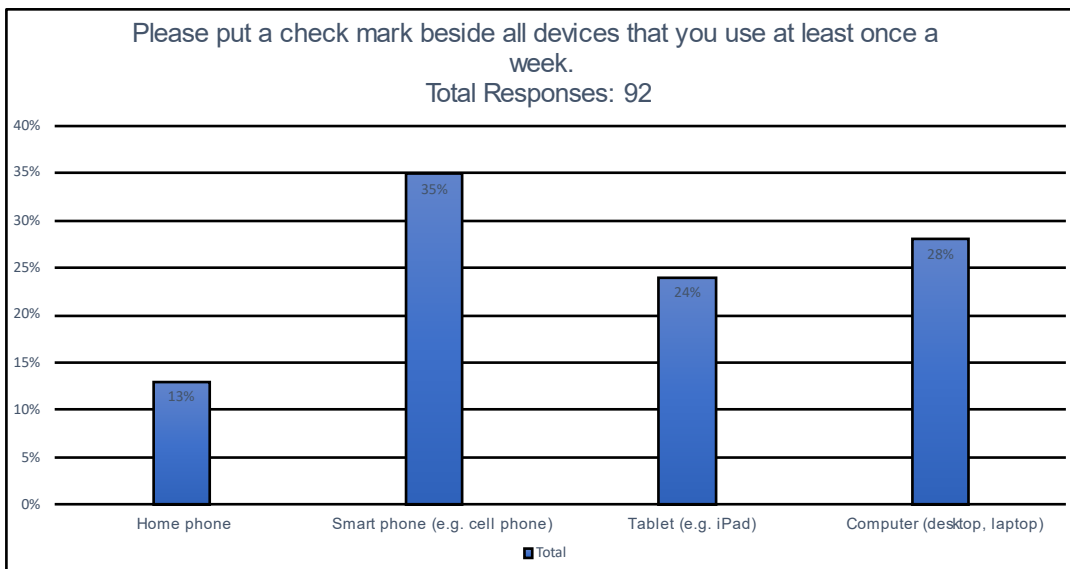
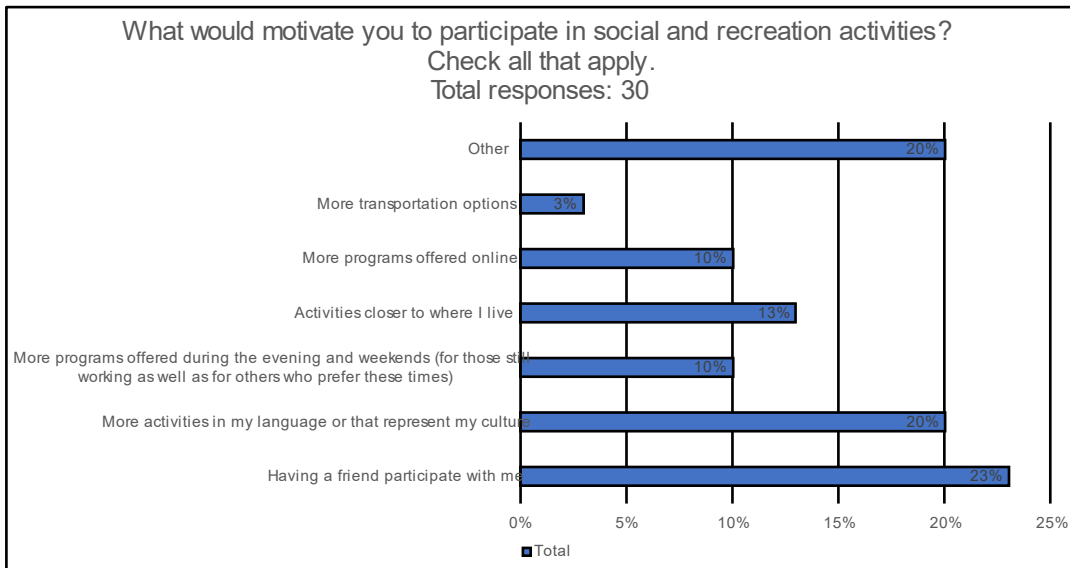
- Balance on all fronts (technology vs other means to information, intergenerational vs older adult only events or activities)
- The importance of a variety of French language activities
- What incites participation in community: in French, by a known organization
- Lots of work to do in terms of communication
- Information: centralized and support in navigation

Appendix D - Francophone survey results

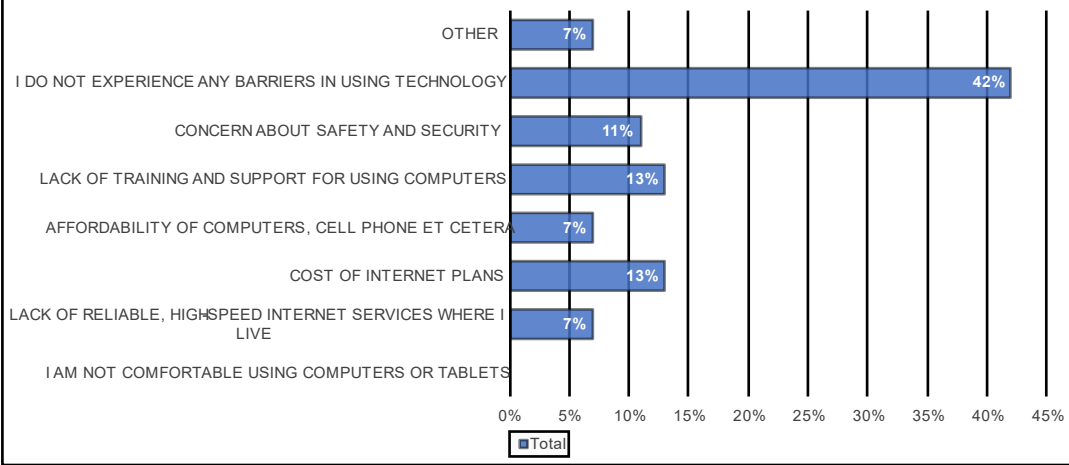






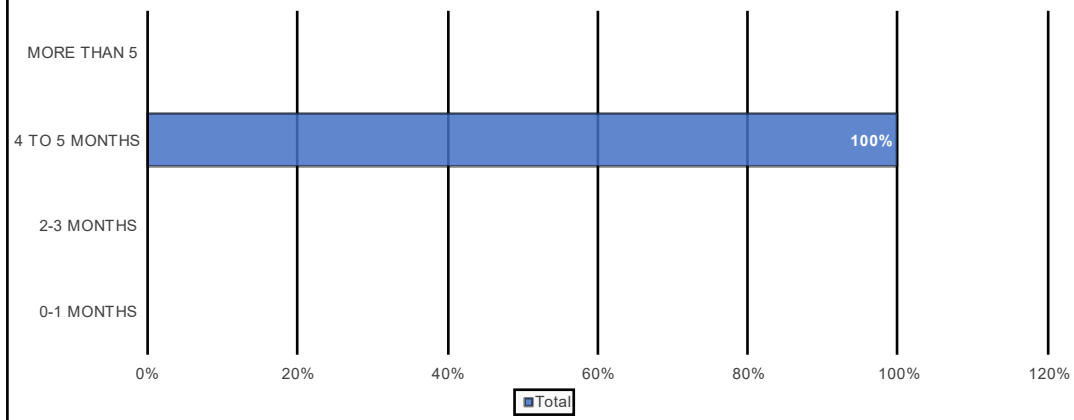


Access to technology is important. Please check any barriers that you experience. Please check all that apply. Total Responses: 45



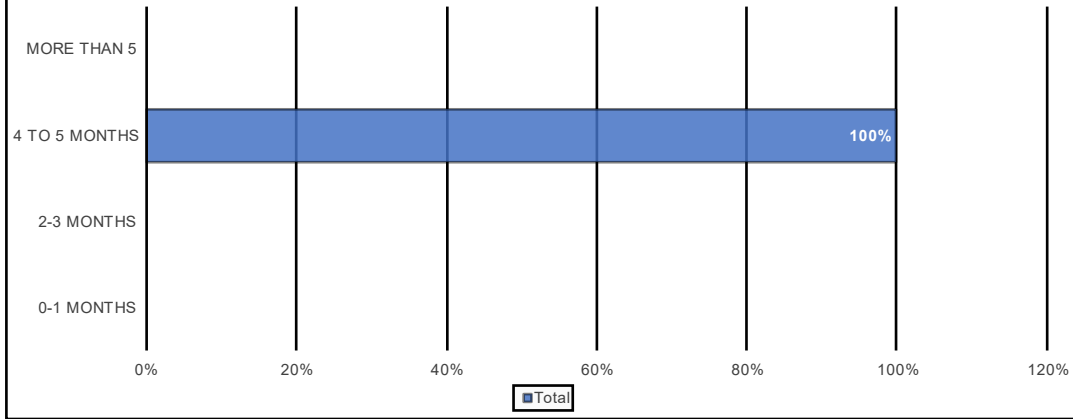
If you answered 'yes', how many times have you searched Older Adult Infolink to access information in the past 5 months?

Total responses: 1



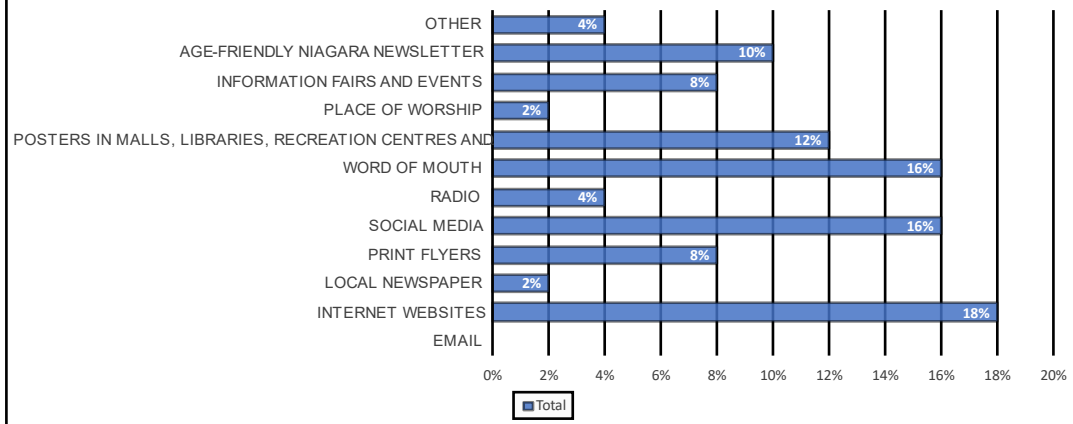
If you answered 'yes', how many times have you searched Older Adult Infolink to access information in the past 5 months?

Total responses: 1



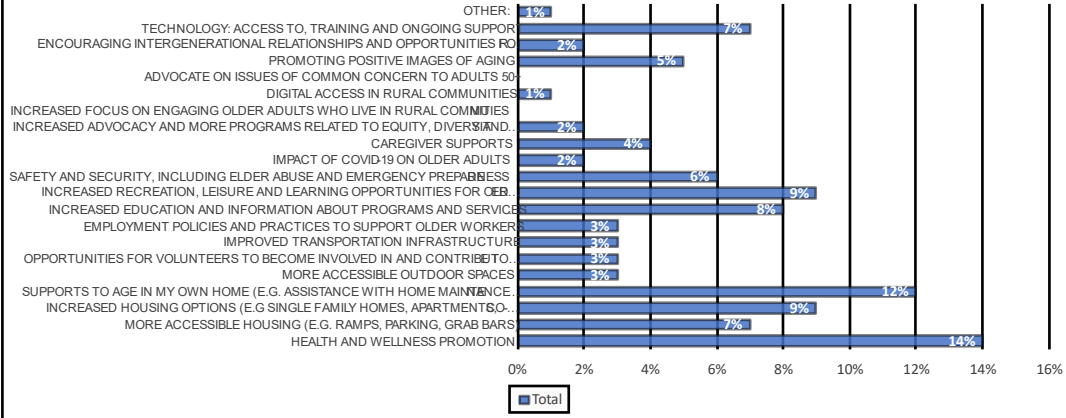
What are your preferred ways to receive information about programs, services and activities for adults 50+ living in the Niagara region? Check all that apply.

Total responses: 50



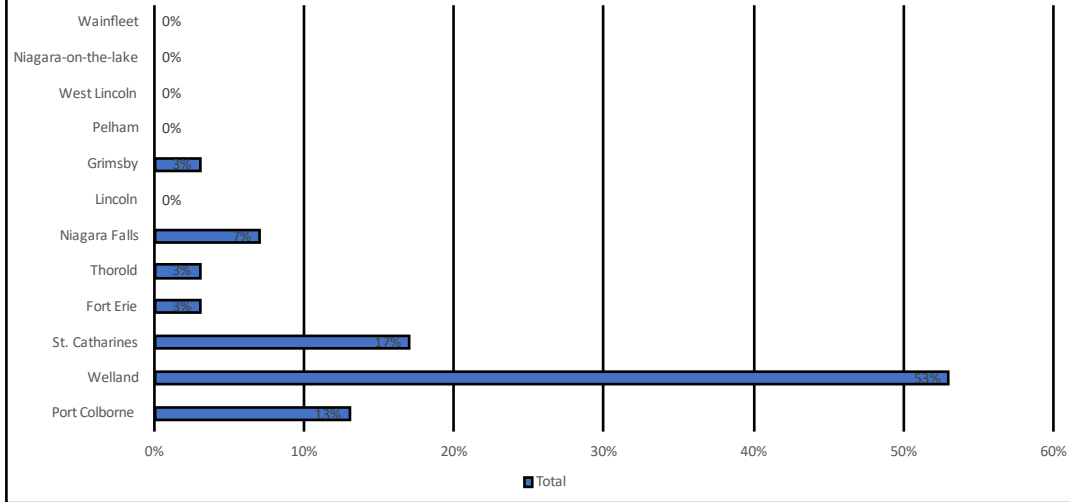
Please put a check mark beside the 5 topics that are most important to you. Choose up to 5 topics ONLY, to be able to proceed to the next question.

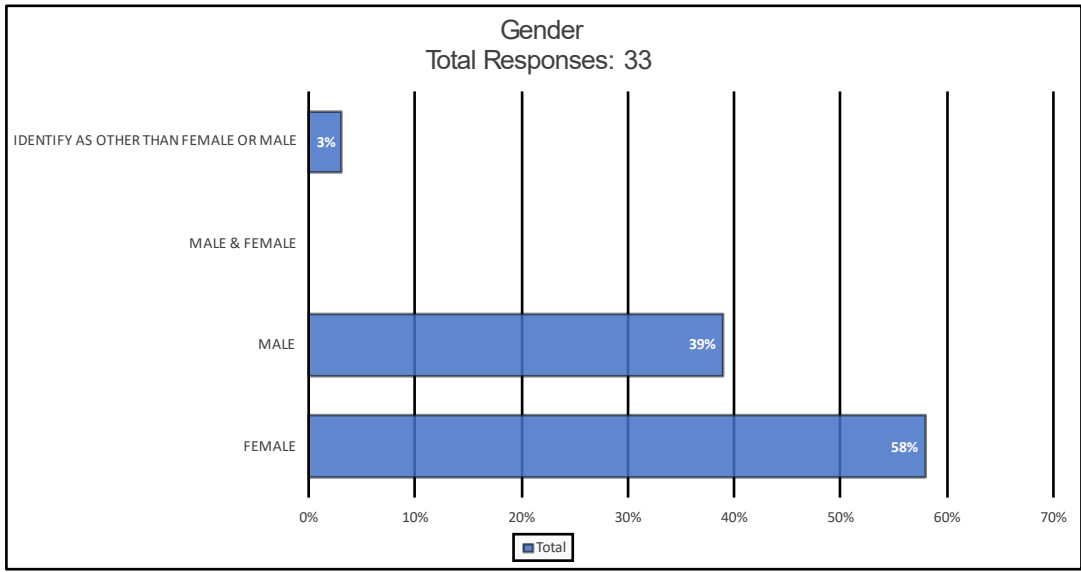
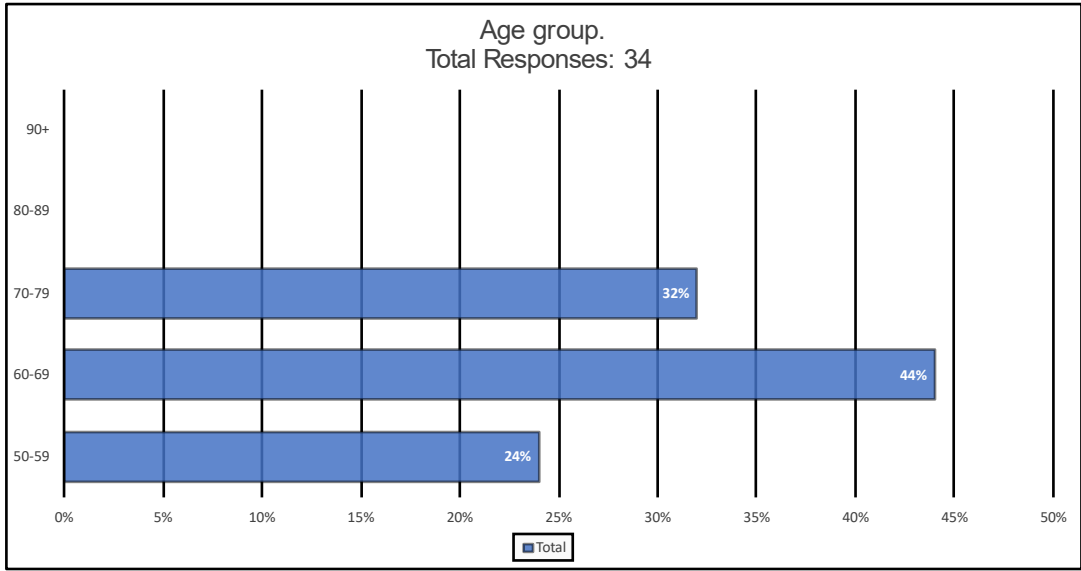
Total Responses: 169

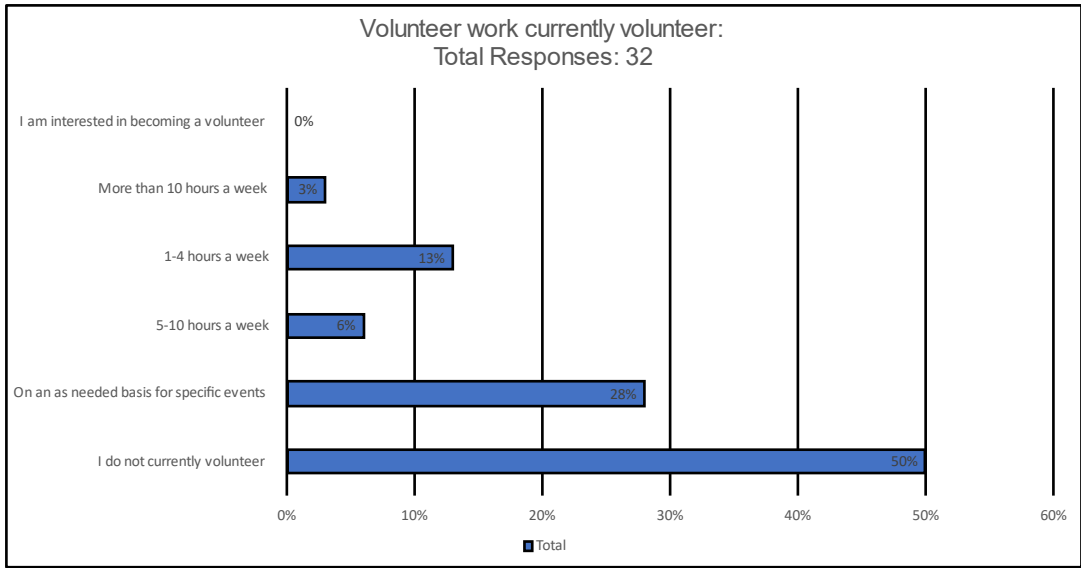
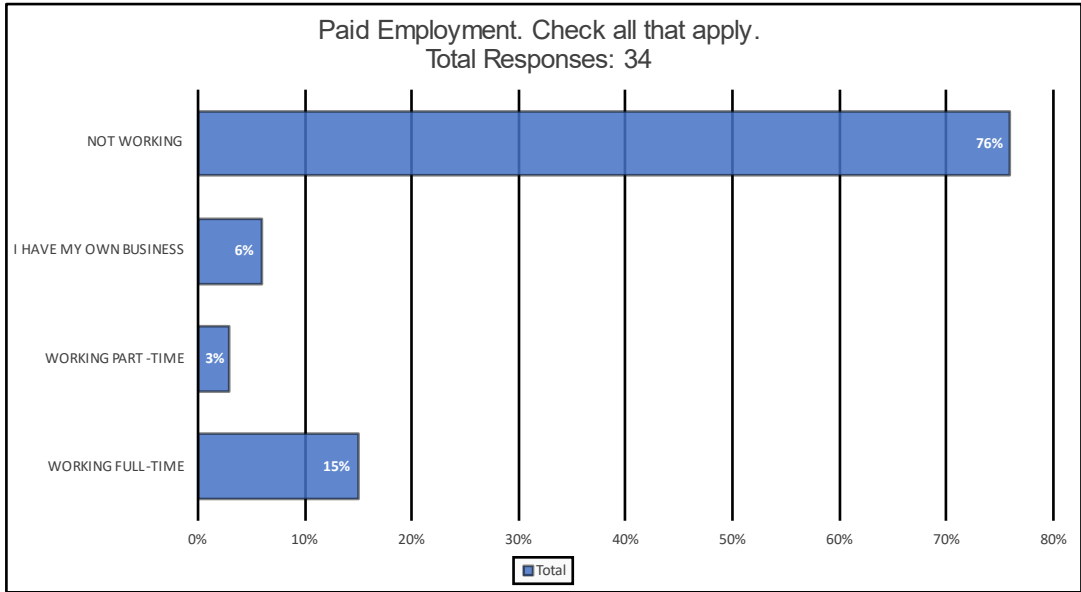


In what local area of Niagara do you live? Please check one.

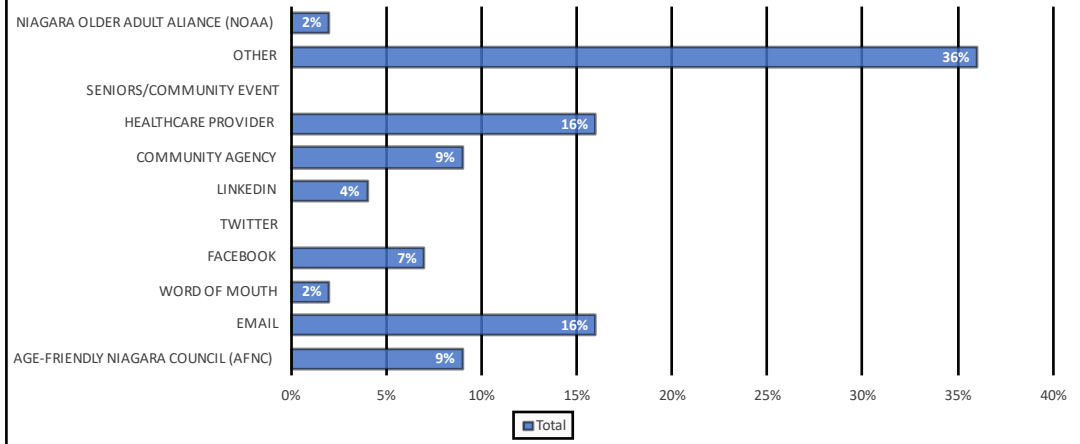
Total Responses: 30







To assist us with future planning, please tell us how you heard about the survey. Check all that apply.
Total Responses: 45



Appendix E – Notes from October 28th, 2022, community forum

Forum Activity #1: What contributes to an age-friendly community?

From ideas to action

These 5 themes emerged from the survey results.

For each theme, what projects/programs/activities are already taking place that you know about in your municipality or in the region?

What do you think needs to be done to put this theme into action?

What are the opportunities for collaboration?

What resources might be needed? (e.g. human resources, space, financial)

What are the gaps? Challenges?

Activity #1 – What contributes to an age-friendly community?²

Opportunities to stay active

- awareness of what is available (with YMCAs closing down) programs, locations, transit, cost
- ease of access – transportation
- FE – active transportation committee
 - o Bike paths, trails
 - o Accessible playgrounds
- Port Dalhousie – life lease buildings (housing model: purchase the housing - have to sell at the same price)
 - o sense of neighbourhood
 - o social interaction
 - o on bus route
 - o fitness facilities built in
 - o 55 plus
 - o good walk score (close to restaurants, shops, bowling alley, etc.)
- collaboration - planners, health providers and private sector
 - o how do we put forward value added from the older adult population?
- intergenerational disconnect – volunteerism
 - o education system (where does it fit in? teachers? Parents?)
- recreation programs in each municipality
- community walking groups
- Bruce trail club
- Niagara Falls - community centre
- Centre de sante run stay fit senior activity program in French and English
- outdoor trails, public spaces - friendship canal (concern for Lyme disease) health
- access to public spaces, washrooms? Outdoor spaces
- implement washrooms, support from council

² Many thanks to Majuriha Gnanendran, Brock university student, for participating in the community forum and for collating the activity notes. The notes have been recorded as written by the group note takers. Majuriha has supported various aspects of the New Horizons project.

- Strong Fort Erie neighbourhoods - network of seniors' providers, co-sponsor to Seniors Stepping Out
- connecting seniors' organisations in the west with seniors' organisations in east - not a competition, it's a partnership
- more collaboration between municipalities
- age restrictions on certain activities
- remove the label "senior/older" from activities and venues
- welcome all groups together rather than people being segregated
- promoting links to information on municipal websites or other organisations websites
- pole walking group
 - o Welland/McMaster Clinic offers
 - o Family Health Teams offer two members and community
- McBain centre
 - o fee for non-residents
- Meridian centre – programming
- walking tours
- would like to see yoga
- anything to promote or maintain range of motion
- challenge: lack of information
 - o delays in receiving
 - o need to know in advance
 - o still a fear of getting sick
 - o ties to other themes of lack of transportation, no one to go with
- gap – transportation (rural communities)
- creative development of parks to include activities for all ages (walking trails benches, fitness equipment)
- Seniors Active Living Centres - activities and programs
- Community Health Centres throughout the region
- where do you find the reliable information - Infolink is a common info source
- pairing physical activities with social component
 - o buddy to share info, attend together
- ask seniors - don't assume to know what people need or want
- more community nursing in home assessments
 - o pop up events
 - o free events
 - o activities where people go - grocery stores, drug stores
- ask people what it means to be active we cannot assume we know
- check in with users of services
 - o example: library calling older adults - wellness checks etc.
 - o dig deeper into what they need - example someone to go with them

Inclusive Communities

- still a need for in person having navigation services
 - o not just phone or online
- need for timely information
 - o newspapers, social media
- there is a range of programming at Merritt Park Amphitheatre
- Pelham peace park: variety of programming
- local libraries: free or reasonably priced

- volunteer program to deliver books to those with mobility or transportation concerns
- transportation plus location - difficult to get across the region
- Regions PEI plan
- hiring CAO with a background in DEI, commitment to plan and action
- community engagement in these plans and their implementation
- hello municipalities creating DE councils, committees and acting on these suggestions
- authentic genuine action plans not performative
- senior pride network - developing programs with the LGBTQ plus community
- Niagara Poverty Reduction Network
- programs are usually age divided programs
 - not a lot of intergenerational programs
- 50 to 79 age group - part time employed etc.
 - activities for those in this group with different times
- males - maybe they have the idea that they feel less “manly” if they volunteer?
 - How can we change this idea they have?
- building collaborative groups
- increase awareness = more visible information
- set up local “buddy” gathering systems (issue is loneliness)
- engage the libraries to help keep people connected

Access

- “connectors” two services - someone to go with
- digital access
 - are you connected in your neighborhood?
 - do you have the means to be connected?
 - do you know how to use it and have someone to help you?
 - are there resources to learn?
- aging at home issues
 - identify what our top three factors to help people “age at home” and take action once identified - what the neighborhood within the community can do
- going with someone “buddy”
- transportation - online access to info
 - cost
- book in advance - causes issues when circumstances change
- Niagara Falls community centre is very close to bus stop
- shuttle bus services would be very useful resource for a lot of people
- lack of transportation in rural communities (shuttle bus service is a good idea for this problem)
- delivering programs to communal places
- “traveling” senior centre this is a good idea for rural communities
- transportation
- Infrastructure
- financial, physical
- rural communities
- instead of centralized programs, have multiple locations
- shuttle service, community-based transportation
- not municipal (Ottawa has done this, Lincoln did at one point)
- educating health care providers (example physicians) about all, Older Adult Infolink
- where information can be accessed

- common info part with older adults Infolink - what is the best way to reach people - e-mail, newspaper, social media
- Niagara regional transportation- collaboration through the region to connect to appointments in other municipalities
- shared info - example learn about activities through other tasks- pick up a recycle bin and learn about programming
- regional connections- like this forum to connect municipalities
- cost is always a factor
- clubhouses in every section of town available for free

Connected Generations

- summer campers learn to play lawn bowling at local lawn bowling club which is predominantly senior members
- summer campers visiting senior homes
- local school choir coming to Seniors Active Living Centre
- Amsterdam example: students living with seniors
 - part of agreement was spending time together
- Blue Zone concept
 - intergenerational families
 - multi-generational
 - affordable necessities
- at Plymouth cottage had grade eight class visit
 - invited community to events
 - daycares in retirement homes
- everyone feeling involved and valued
- Seniors' day
- grandparents raising children
 - supports for the grandparents
 - grandparents support groups
- volunteer groups- family based volunteering
 - Arts, music programs
- two-way mentorship
 - skills exchange between age groups
 - students to older adults, older adults to students
- stigmas or judgement based on age
 - grandchildren younger not being welcomed or vice versa
- traditional knowledge
 - Respecting elders
 - Value added for community as a whole
- not a homogeneous group - lived experiences differ
- intergenerational housing - not just seniors
- helping immigrants
- programs focused on blending
- government funded programs- cohabitating incentives
- connect seniors with schools - ask seniors and kids what would work in their neighborhood

Housing Options and Supports

- low-income multi-generational housing or just multigenerational housing (support) in the same community
- community centres- where all can gather
- life lease building model
- “mini” homes idea
- mixed residence (combined age groups, students and older adults, intergenerational connections, students help older adults with errands)
- bring community services to community residences desire to stay at home- what might affect the ability to do so (example transportation - when unable to drive independently)

Forum Activity #2: Let’s talk about the following topics related to the survey results

Volunteering

42.5% of survey respondents said that they do not currently volunteer. **8.6%** (91 individuals!) indicated that they would be interested in becoming a volunteer.

Volunteer recruitment, retention and ongoing support is fundamental to the growth and success of many community initiatives.

What do you think would motivate more people to volunteer?

If you were responsible for recruitment, how would you promote volunteer opportunities?

What **top 3** factors do think contribute to a successful and meaningful volunteer experience?

Older Adult Infolink

A significant percentage of survey respondents indicated that they were unaware of Older Adult Infolink.

If you were in charge, what **top 3** actions would you implement to create awareness about and increase traffic to the Older Adult Infolink?

Belonging and feeling engaged in the community

55% of respondents report that their sense of belonging and feeling engaged in their communities is ‘somewhat strong’ or ‘very strong’.

However, **45%** described their sense of belonging as ‘somewhat weak’ or ‘very weak’.

What do you think contributes to an individual's sense of belonging in their neighbourhood and community? List some of these factors below.

Let's build on these positives! List **3 or 4 actions** that you would take to help people to feel part of their community.

Activity #2 – Let's talk about the following topics related to the survey results

Volunteering

- non committed opportunities- just a one-time volunteer opportunity often preferred
- getting to know the group of volunteers- not always a good fit
- awareness and accessing community volunteer database
- intellectually stimulating, but not physically demanding - keeping active. feeling a sense of contributing and helping others
- match their interests and capabilities so it's relevant to them and their communities
- retiring adults- including those who have moved to the region in retirement, looking to get involved or integrate
- youth
- volunteer fair
- leadership and creativity - formal and informal
- being present – visible - show people what's happening
- family volunteering- children and adults volunteering together, episodic or event volunteering, limited time commitment so more volunteers
- clear instructions for what is required and when - more people would volunteer if they knew the exact time frame, etc.
- printed flyers in doctors' offices, pharmacies, retirement homes, libraries, community centre, grocery stores
- Info where older adults are
- city or municipal websites
- rack cards in municipal mailings, volunteers needed to stuff envelopes
- billboards
- be where people are- piggyback on existing activities
- post postcard on town or municipal website and local news articles, Flyers
- newsletter to taxpayers
- social media, speaker sessions
- build a group e-mail to ensure timely info reaches group
- review what needs to be added to your registration forms
- any way to shorten link for Infolink?
- engaging newcomers to the community or groups- feeling valued and important
- enthusiastic and inclusive individuals running or supporting programs
- having opportunities that matter to individuals - ask them
- concept of "slowing down" not stopping
- find out why those 91 individuals are not volunteering- if it is transportation - carpooling?

- maybe need different volunteer opportunities - so not a full commitment- maybe a one-time special event
- partnerships – aesthetic schools or retired professionals giving back and giving no cost or low-cost services
- older adults volunteering in daycare
- successful - food, a reason to volunteer, engage socially, connection to the organization or community
- Seniors at Pelham CC- provide info on upcoming activities, events, businesses, etc.
- strengths that they have- working and people with disabilities

Older Adult Infolink

- hand out information at community centres or programs
- email signatures, rack cards
- TV programs, Facebook ads
- welcome package for new community members - info bag when you pick up items like your recycle bins or setting up your account
- ensure all arrangements and services are aware and promoting Older Adult Infolink
- connecting on community Facebook groups
- slideshow to key members of different organisations to show the info- all ages need to know about it- businesses promoted on 211 should have takeaways end info
- Use local newspapers too promote
- Info at the libraries
- put it in papers- weekly community papers
- library
- utilizing rack cards or flyers in the community - grocery stores, community centres, health care providers, health partners
- where available- local cable channels
- advertising partnerships- Internet, website banners, including on documents
- requirement to acknowledge funders in advertising resource is - confuses seniors what are they looking at
- not coming from the same perspective
- simplified and clear promotional material
- reducing the amount of information
- recognizing funders all out - confusing seniors in materials
- “Powered by” isn’t clear that means funded
- don’t bury the message- too much info and ads, too busy, what is this actually for?
- increase accessibility through communication
- having seniors have to navigate the different organizations for what they need - between these complex partnerships
- different forms of communication- text, e-mail, phone, website, etc.
- Service system navigation- whose responsibility is this?
- Adult Protective Services- dedicated to helping people navigate services who have mental, physical, etc. disabilities
- bring awareness to youth- who will pass the message on
- Niagara region and municipalities should share
- community boards- libraries, Wellness centres, etc.
- religious settings- older adults are engaged
- multisector approach
- is the community ready for this - do we know how many are digitally connected?
- is there equal access to this digital info - is it based on assumption everyone is connected digitally?

- find out who has digital access and create a non-digital interface between those who need the info - currently there is a lack of acknowledgment of digital connectivity
- and if there is access, do people know how to use and access it like is it built in a way everyone knows where to go to access it? And then use it?
- promote promote promote!
- advertise how to use it in action or radio commercial
- must be inclusive - older adults with communication or language barriers, more one-on-one service
- more focus groups with potential uses before new programs are introduced for older adults
- don't base service delivery model on assumptions - product and recipient must match!
- advertise on billboards
- word of mouth at group gatherings - having a lead to provide information to a group or community
- access to community information via the medical offices - doctor's office
- a community liaison, who is able to get a direct contact for organisations in order to use the many services available
- church groups - speaking amongst the people gathering

Belonging and feeling engaged in the community

- getting to know your neighbors, relationship building
- feeling a sense of purpose
- bringing things to your community that folks can benefit from
- neighborhood private Facebook group available
- shared experiences
- creating opportunities to develop relationships - establish common ground
- celebrate each other - what makes an individual in the neighborhood and individual
- feeling of being a burden
- when is the connection last? - do employers have a role in better preparing their staff for retirement? Ease the transition?
- personal connections - make all age groups feel like they are needed, intergenerational participation
- intergenerational - older adults teaching other age groups, Lions Club and Leos club example
- pop up events
- being amongst their peers- community centres
- having events being multi-generational
- connecting with care services, who advocates for older people - they need to be provided with the information
- connecting with doctors and nurse practitioners so they are aware of the information
- contact welcome wagon
- ask why they're not feeling connected- find the underlying reason- transportation, unaware?
- are there ways to connect - if individuals don't feel comfortable being in attendance - Wellness check calls, as CWW, etc.

Forum Activity # 3 – Looking forward 5 years, what markers of success will tell you that the AFNC is achieving the desired impact in Niagara?

Background:

A Steering Committee of community representatives identified **several key elements** of a Council on Aging for Niagara. Your perspective on these elements and your practical suggestions will help shape the Age-Friendly Niagara Council as a founding Board will soon be formed.

Vision

An age-friendly Niagara – a community for all ages

Mission

Foster a caring community that optimizes quality of life as people age.

Select key elements of the Age-Friendly Niagara Council

- Intergenerational Understanding and Relationships
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Collaboration among partners including non-profit, for-profit organizations and government
- Innovation and Learning

Looking through the lens of each of the following key elements, identify the markers of success that will tell you that the Age-Friendly Niagara Council is achieving the desired impact in Niagara.

Activity #3 – Looking forward 5 years, what markers of success will tell you that the AFNC is achieving the desired impact in Niagara?

Intergenerational Understanding and Relationships

- intergenerational housing
- community events involve monthly generational
- it has function and impact- at neighborhood services and resources are connected, not duplicated
- very clear understanding by community of services
- everybody involved in senior services needs to buy into concept - embed into language of the community
- is 25 and under sufficient?
- required to accommodate on task forces or subcommittees

- positive volunteer can connect with younger and older adults
- survey that shows board has had positive impact
- evidence of mentorship - knowledge transfer
- partnership with district school board of Niagara - health related courses could have standardized curriculum about aging
- post secondary students talking to younger students - in high schools
- looking at an event and seeing all ages
- increase awareness
- information shares in all media
- no age restrictions
- adapt to current technology
- reduction in "OK boomer" and millennials both sides judgment, respect and compassion from both ages to each other and creating this in community - understanding empathy
- competition between resources divides people
- focus on improvement in intergenerational housing
- keep in mind that daytime hours don't always work
- sharing different skill sets - example kids knitting
- Say It- seniors and youth intergenerational theatre- sharing stories from seniors to youth

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- all ages representation on board
- change recruitment strategies and processes to ensure all are represented - example different cultures, economic status
- building a group that is diverse in age and ethnicity and other groups
- teaching in all settings
- increase in understanding - more training opportunities
- what is being taught in schools? - changes? To curriculum - example Indigenous relationships and histories - especially for older adults who did not have this experience in school taking small steps, might not change someone's mind in a day
- people moving into the region- even if they have their own communities they can still network together
- how are these people involved in the community five years from now?
- seeing age friendly written in council documents
- advocacy and seeing conversations happening
- represented on board - reflected
- essentials- newcomers, different ages, LGBTQ
- need mechanism to consistently evaluate our practice against current best practices
- are we still relevant - what changes or improvements are needed - evaluate frequently
- how has our community changed - do we capture emerging qualities of inclusion?
- encouraging groups to deliberately interact
- create opportunities for engagement across groups
- better transportation
- organisations go to the community
- encourage diverse representation on committees
- real partnerships and relationship building with our Indigenous population

Collaboration among partners

- representation from public service providers - example libraries, government organization
- robust partnerships with private businesses- creates buy in
- how can organisations be certified “age friendly” - what is the mutual benefit meetings like today!
- active engagement among all groups
- all levels of government, private sectors
- link to DEI, collaboration with community partners on projects
- Regional Council-buy in, reporting
- library, art gallery boards
- reps from now councils have bought in
- youth membership
- pictures of the age friendly committees will evoke very different than older committees that is - intergenerational, equity
- increase opportunities in neighborhood
- community awareness about age friendly Niagara and resources - Infolink
- private and public working together
- age friendly committees - continuing to meet and sharing resources and events - collaborative June is seniors month activities
- different folks at the table - example Chamber of Commerce, private businesses - involved individuals that can provide input without the commitment of being on a regular scheduled committee

Innovation and Learning

- this will create additional collaboration and vice versa - collaboration leads to new ideas and showing of ideas - example research project with Brock
- 211 becomes a universal go to resource of information
- board thriving in awareness in all aspects in each municipality sharing their purpose
- in five years, Niagara board has an approved model for age friendly committee 2 preserve and continue forward between elected municipality council terms - better plan - sharing info on a database
- accessible resource is for education
- example making learning programs accessible by giving time and pay - many people won't do them if it is an extra task on top of their workload
- current technology
- message is seen everywhere- on different platforms
- reviewing work plan
- exploring the role of technology - incorporated to support more interaction, not the opposite - can something be done by technology to allow the human interaction elsewhere?
- consistent source and access to current research, information, and new ideas - mechanism needed to make sure this happens
- continuous feedback
- interactive programs to ensure we are doing what we said we're doing - Is it still relevant and impactful?
- embracing technology - more accessible
- shrinking the digital gap through education
- opportunities for continuing learning

Forum Sticky Notes/Random Notes

- Noon meeting - allowing others to participate - or at least be mindful of these barriers and tried to allow different perspectives
 - Task forces and committees - people can contribute to these and not just at the board level
 - Board should reflect on EDI - have criteria - perhaps in the questions being asked in selection
 - Private sector participation
 - Create mobile services to the appointments and retirement homes- delivery services and programs to their residents
 - Encourage and motivate more adults - especially males - to participate in community programs- ask men what motivates them
 - Need alternative transportation system - example shuttle for community centre activities - organized volunteers
 - How do you define "housing", "neighborhood" - provincial money info skill and NF
-
- Question: what will be the process for recruiting, establishing, approving the board?
-
- Education link- where fit in? - teacher/parent involvement and with DSBN- only so much time
-
- traditional knowledge and respecting elders value added for community as a whole
 - Library - parents, grandparents - more different areas in school
 - Dissect concept of older adults
 - Not a homogeneous group
 - Lived experiences the first
 - Hospice and private for profit



A Community
for All Ages

Empowering Older Adults in Niagara³

Niagara-wide survey highlights

All about us!

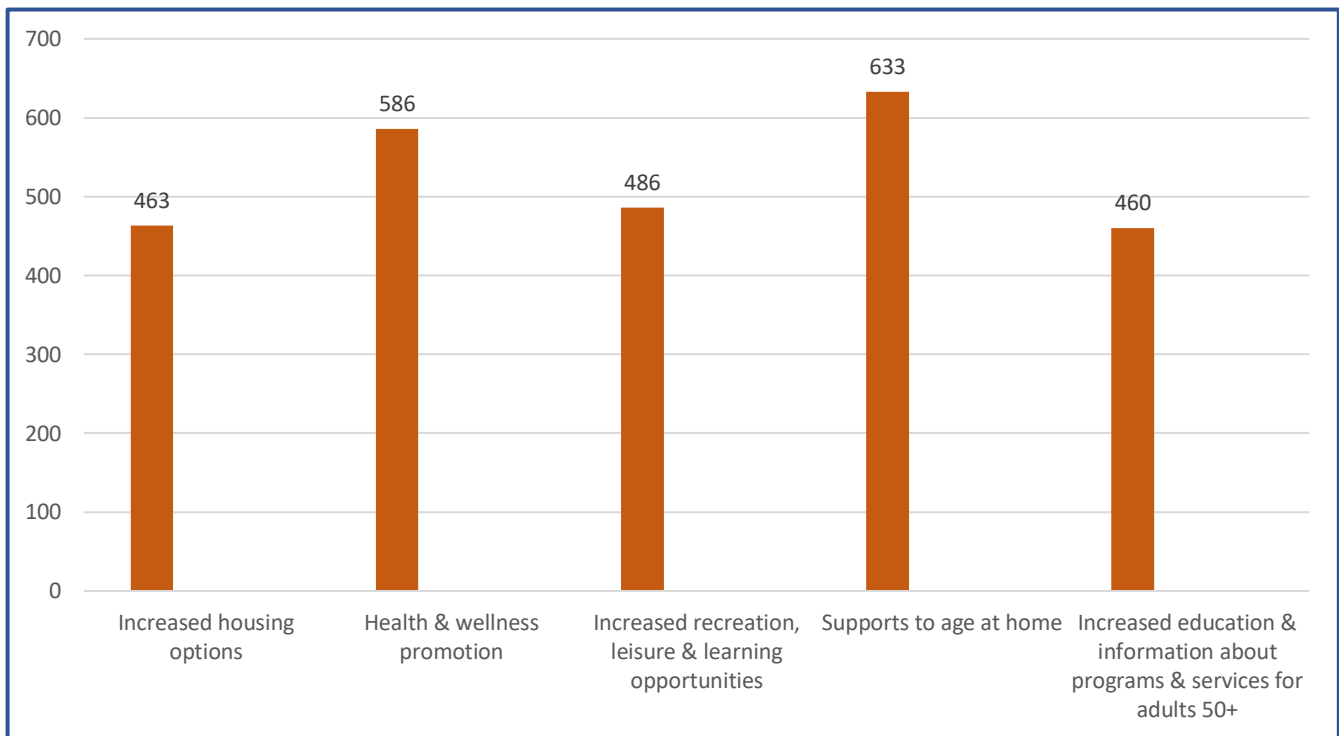
- There were responses to the survey from adults 50+ representing **all 12 municipalities** (over 1,200 completed surveys!)
- **Gender:** 75.6% of the surveys were completed by women
- **Age range:** There were responses from individuals age 50 – 90+, with all age groups represented. The majority of responses were from individuals in the 60-69 and 70-79 age groups with **four people age 90+!**
- **Paid employment:** 10.5% of survey respondents work full time, 8.3% part-time and 4.7% report having their own businesses
- **Volunteering:** Approximately 50% of respondents volunteer, ranging from volunteering on an ‘as needed’ basis to volunteering more than 10 hours/week. An additional 8.6% of respondents (91 individuals) indicated that they are interested in becoming a volunteer
- When it comes to preferred ways to receive information about programs, services and activities for adults 50+ living in Niagara, the top two preferences are **email** and **Internet websites**. Tied for third are **word of mouth** and **social media**.

Survey says.....select results by the numbers

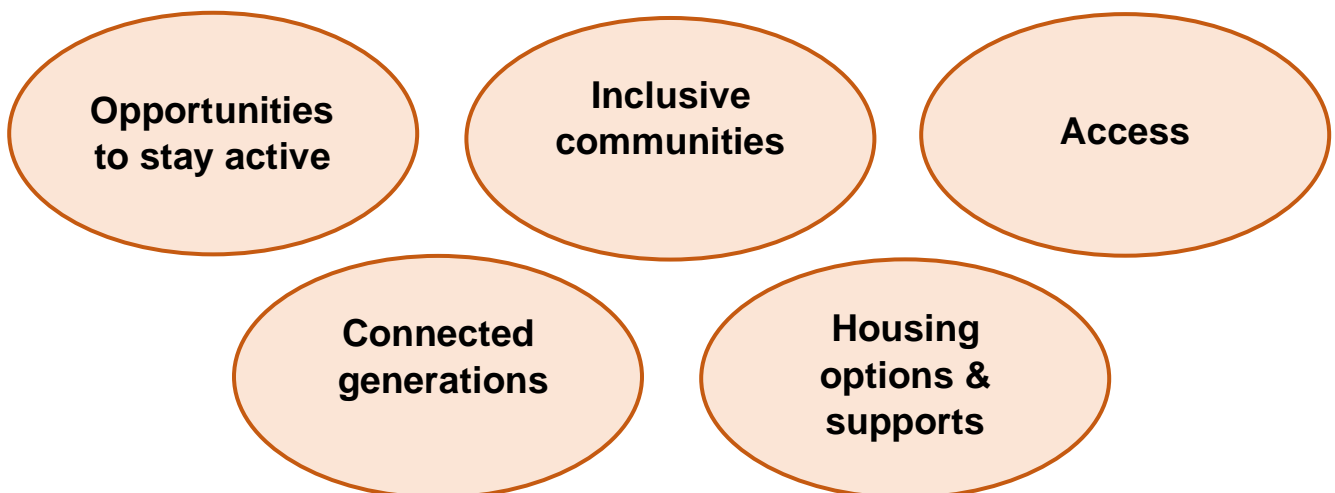
- **55%** of respondents report that their sense of belonging and feeling engaged in their communities is ‘somewhat strong’ or ‘very strong’
- **55.4%** currently participate in social, recreational and cultural activities in their communities
- The greatest barrier to participation is **‘lack of information about available activities’** (22%) followed by **‘cost/fees’** and **‘no one to go with’**
- **33%** said that ‘having a friend to participate with’ would motivate them to participate in social and recreation activities
- **Top 3 uses of technology:** **‘banking’**, **‘connecting with friends and family’** (e.g. Zoom) and tied for third are **‘social media’** and **‘reading books/newspapers’**
- The top barrier to accessing technology is **‘cost of Internet plans’** (17%)

³ A project of the Age-Friendly Niagara Council, supported by the Government of Canada New Horizons for Seniors Program. October 2022.

5 topics of most importance to survey respondents



What does an age-friendly community look like to you? *Themes that emerged from the survey results*





A Community
for All Ages

Renforcer la capacité des personnes âgées de 50 ans et plus dans la région de Niagara⁴

Points saillants du sondage régional

À propos de nous!

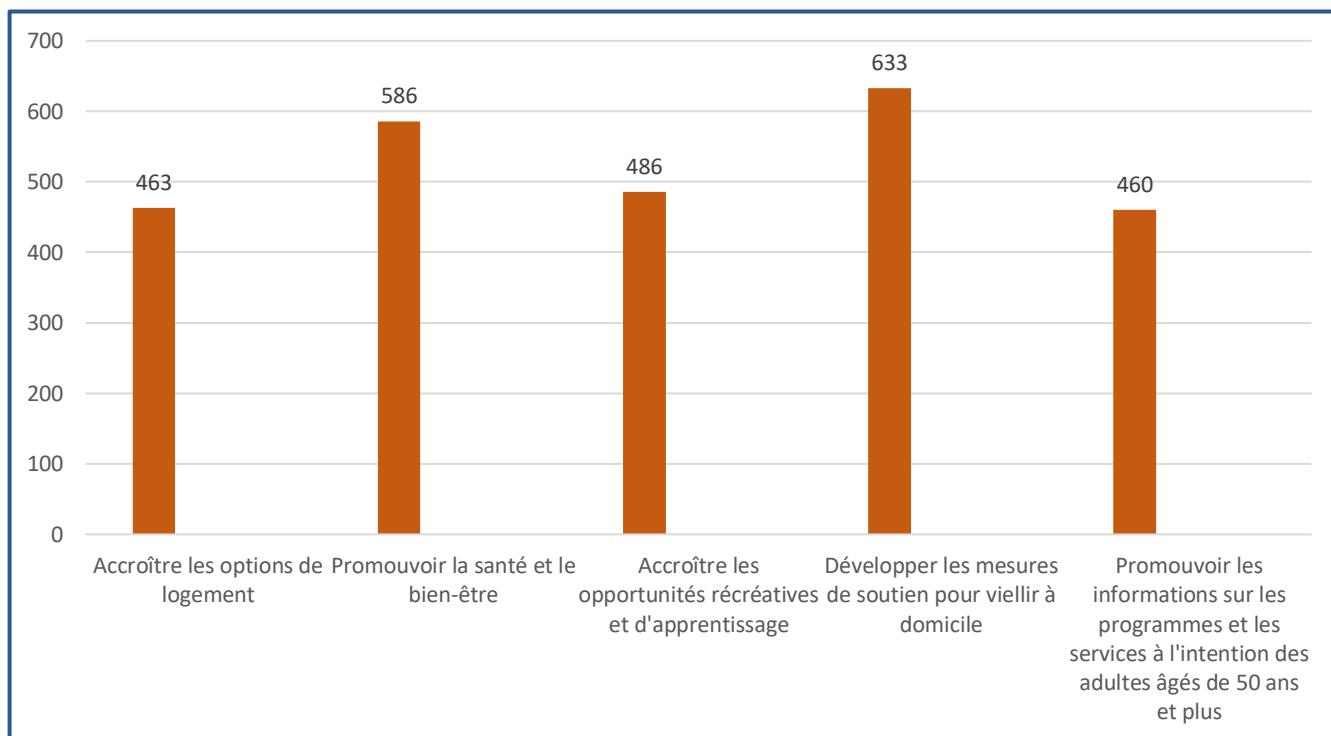
- Plus de 1200 adultes âgés de 50 ans et plus ont répondu au sondage. Les répondants étaient répartis sur l'ensemble des 12 municipalités de la région de Niagara.
- **Sexe** : 75,6 % des questionnaires ont été remplis par des femmes.
- **Âge** : Des réponses ont été reçues de personnes représentant toutes les tranches d'âge entre 50 ans et 90+ ans. La majorité des réponses provenaient de personnes âgées de 60 à 69 ans et de 70 à 79 ans, avec **quatre personnes âgées de 90 ans et plus** !
- **Emploi rémunéré** : 10,5% des répondants travaillent à temps plein, 8,3% à temps partiel et 4,7% déclarent avoir leur propre entreprise.
- **Bénévolat** : Environ 50 % des répondants font du bénévolat – le temps alloué varie entre du bénévolat "au besoin" à du bénévolat régulier de plus de 10 heures par semaine. En outre, 8,6 % des répondants (91 personnes) ont indiqué un intérêt à devenir bénévoles.
- En ce qui a trait aux préférences pour recevoir de l'information sur les programmes, les services ainsi que les activités offertes aux adultes âgés de 50 ans, les deux premières options sont **le courriel et les sites Web**. **Le bouche-à-oreille et les médias sociaux** partagent le troisième rang.

Sommaire des résultats

- **55%** des répondants déclarent que leur sentiment d'appartenance et d'engagement au sein de leur communauté est "assez fort" ou "très fort".
- **55,4%** des répondants participent actuellement à des activités sociales, récréatives et culturelles dans leur communauté.
- Le plus grand obstacle qui limite la participation est le "**manque d'information sur les activités disponibles**" (22 %), suivi par "**le coût/les frais**" et "**personne avec qui y aller**".
- **33 %** ont déclaré que le fait d'avoir un ami avec qui participer les motiverait à prendre part aux activités sociales et récréatives.
- **Les trois principales utilisations de la technologie** sont les "**services bancaires**", la "**communication avec les amis et la famille** (p. ex. Zoom)" et, ex aequo, les "**médias sociaux**" et la "**lecture de livres et de journaux**".
- Le plus grand obstacle à l'accès à la technologie est le "**coût des forfaits Internet**" (17%).

⁴ Un projet du Age-Friendly Niagara Council, avec l'appui du Gouvernement du Canada (Programme Nouveaux Horizons pour les aînés). Octobre 2022.

Les cinq sujets les plus importants pour les répondants du sondage



Selon vous, à quoi ressemble une communauté "amie des aînés"? *Principaux thèmes qui sont ressortis des résultats du sondage*

