



YORK REGION

INCLUSIVE AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY PLAN

2021



YORK REGION
WOMEN'S
FOUNDATION



Funded by

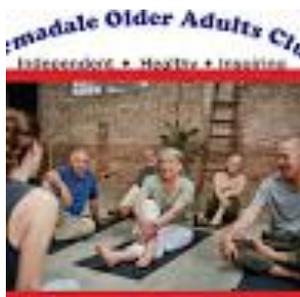
Ontario

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Acknowledgements

An acknowledgement to all of the groups that helped this project through to completion – thank you for your contribution to an inclusive, age friendly community plan.





We are grateful to the project team members for their commitment, dedication and effort towards making this project a success.

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Our sincere gratitude to the Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility for their funding support. The Seniors Community Grant allowed us to undertake this project and share our findings with the York Region community.

Thank you to our diverse senior participants for sharing their experiences, perspectives and recommendations. Each unique senior contributed valuable information to ensure York Region supports active aging for all.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



PHOTO BY WIKIPEDIA USER OWENX

“Communities designed with just one kind of person in mind isolate those of us defying our narrow definition of personhood.”

- Haben Girma

York is an incredibly diverse region; the residents form a beautiful tapestry of different backgrounds, identities, and needs. In particular, York is home to many senior women looking for support as they age within the community. While York Region’s Senior Strategy, developed in 2016, provides a general guideline toward making a more senior-friendly community, diverse needs of seniors within the region vary. This Inclusive Age-Friendly Community (AFC) project reached out to senior women living in the York Region to gain a better idea of the supports they need, the barriers to accessing support, and ways that the community might better provide accessibility, affordability, and care toward senior women seeking healthy, active, and social lives in the region. This project was particularly invested in ensuring the needs of minority senior women, such as newcomers, racialized, and LGBTQ+ women, were heard and brought to light.

To examine the needs of senior women in the community, this project utilized the Eight AFC dimensions outlined by the WHO:



1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings



2. Transportation



3. Housing



4. Social Participation



5. Respect and Social Inclusion



6. Civic Participation and Employment



7. Communication and Information



8. Community and Health Services

To understand the needs within the community, it was primarily important to reach out for the lived experience and expertise of senior women in the region. Information was gathered through two main methods from February to April, 2021: online survey completion and focus group participation. Senior women were asked to rate their community on several questions pertaining to each facet of the AFC dimensions during the surveys, and women involved in the focus groups were able to provide more in-depth information, as well as discussion on their needs.

Overall, the highest satisfaction for senior women was seen in reflection on **Outdoor Spaces**, particularly in the cleanliness of the community, and in **Social Participation**, particularly with regards to interesting and available events in the community.

Overall, the highest levels of concern were seen with regards to **Housing**, particularly the affordability and availability of sufficient housing, and in **Respect and Social Inclusion** with regards to the valuing of senior opinions.

INTRODUCTION

As awareness toward the importance of healthy aging and effective community support increases, Age Friendly Community plans have been developed across the globe to guide communities effectively. The ideal of an Age Friendly Community plan is to understand the needs of seniors within the community: to hear firsthand what barriers must be overcome and what supports must be put in place for all community members to live and age comfortably.

The York Region Senior Strategy, developed in 2016, provides a guideline for meeting the needs of an aging population. In developing plans in support of seniors, it is imperative to ensure that plans are inclusively meeting the needs of York Region's diverse population. Through this project, the York Region Women's Foundation gives voice to marginalized women at risk of isolation. By reaching out to racialized, newcomer and LGBTQ+ senior women and understanding their unique needs within their community, we can support positive aging for everyone.

When immigrant seniors arrive in Canada their lives change dramatically, and there are many difficulties in getting involved in their new communities and ways of living. Studies show that immigrating seniors may experience stress due to social or cultural isolation, language barriers, lifestyle change, and changing familial support (Aggarwal & Das Gupta, 2013; Ajrouch, 2008; Kilbride et al., 2010; Mandell, Borrás, & Phonepraseuth, 2018; Treas & Batalova, 2009; Treas & Mazumdar, 2002). They may also experience difficulty in accessing community resources, distrust of economic and social systems, and fear of stigma involved with accepting resources (Montesanti et al, 2016). It is important to ensure both that there are supports for immigrant seniors, and that they are actually accessible by the seniors they are intended for. Racialization in seniors, with high (?) correlates to senior immigration, is also correlated with negative outcomes such as lower income and employment, decreased sense of belonging to the local community, and poorer health (Um & Lightman, 2017).

LGBTQ+ seniors also experience unique difficulties in the face of aging. With experiences of discrimination, many are not comfortable expressing their identity (Robinson-Wood & Weber, 2016), and they may experience isolation through limited social networks as well as a lack of inclusion in community events and a lack of representation in community (Shippy, Cantor & Brennan, 2004; Espinoza, 2016; LGBT Movement Advancement Project, 2019).

Through listening to marginalized voices of senior women from diverse backgrounds and with diverse life experiences, the recommendations in this report seek to form a more inclusive York Region.

DEMOGRAPHICS

According to Census data from 2016, 28% of York Region's population is currently comprised of citizens age 55 and up. This comprises nearly one third of York Region, and 53% of these seniors are women. The York Region Senior Strategy anticipates that by 2031, seniors above age 65 will increase to 21% of the population, making it important now more than ever to ensure plans are in place to ensure the community ages healthily.

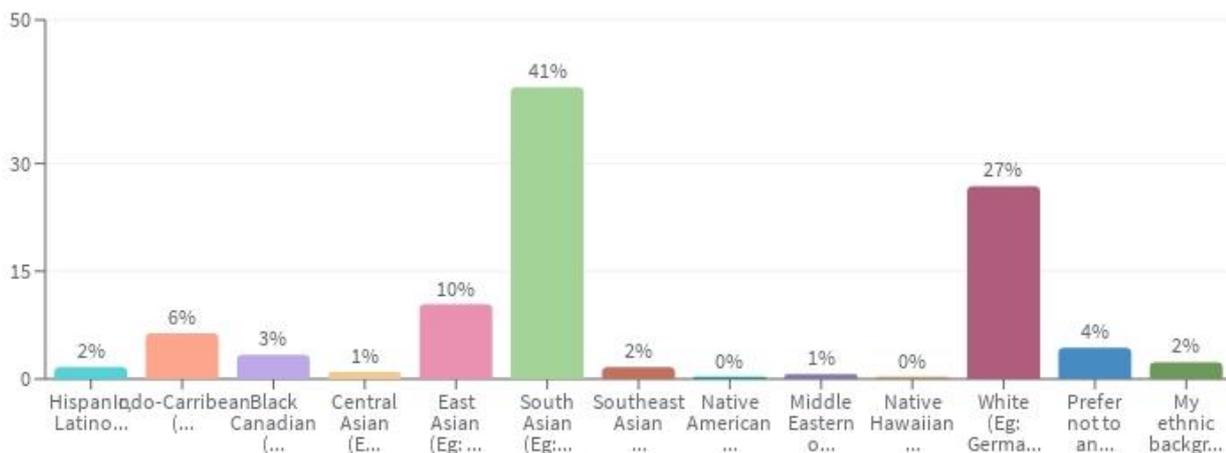


Nearly 50% of York Region's population is comprised of immigrants, 11% of whom immigrated at age 45 and over. Visible minorities make up nearly half of the population (49%), and slightly more than 5% of residents speak neither English nor French. There is currently no data on the proportion of the York Region population identifying as LGBTQ+, an issue in and of itself in reaching out to this minority group. As a non-visible minority, many LGBTQ+ seniors may choose not to express their identity to avoid stigma associated (Robinson-Wood & Weber, 2016), making reaching out to these populations difficult.

Given the diversity of York Region, it is important to make a plan that not only includes minority seniors, but actively reaches out to ensure that it is meeting their visions, needs, and addressing their individual challenges. Though bound together by similar life experiences, racialized, newcomer and LGBTQ+ seniors each lead very different lives with different struggles and difficulties, and each helps to paint a better picture of what an inclusive, Age Friendly Community really is.

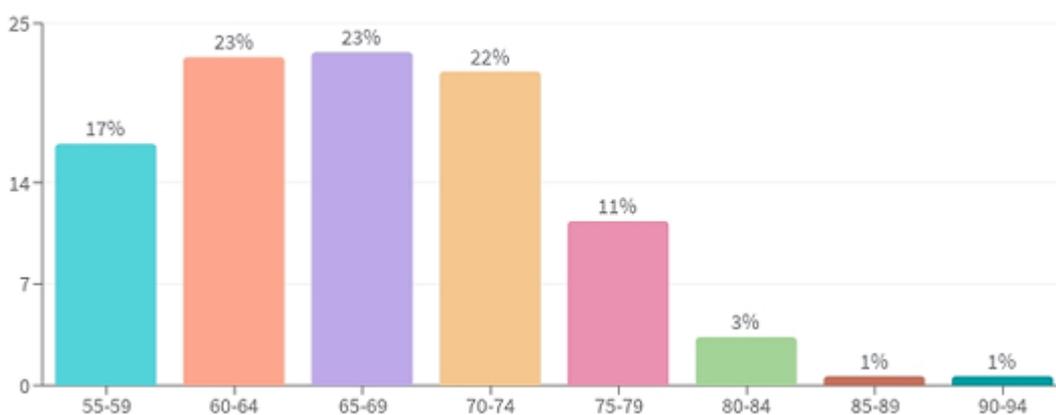
In total, 309 responses were collected. Participants from the study reflected a wide variety of cultural identities, ages, and identities. Charts below represent the demographics of respondents to the community survey. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number. An exhaustive list of all demographic options offered is contained in Appendix A.

Cultural Background:



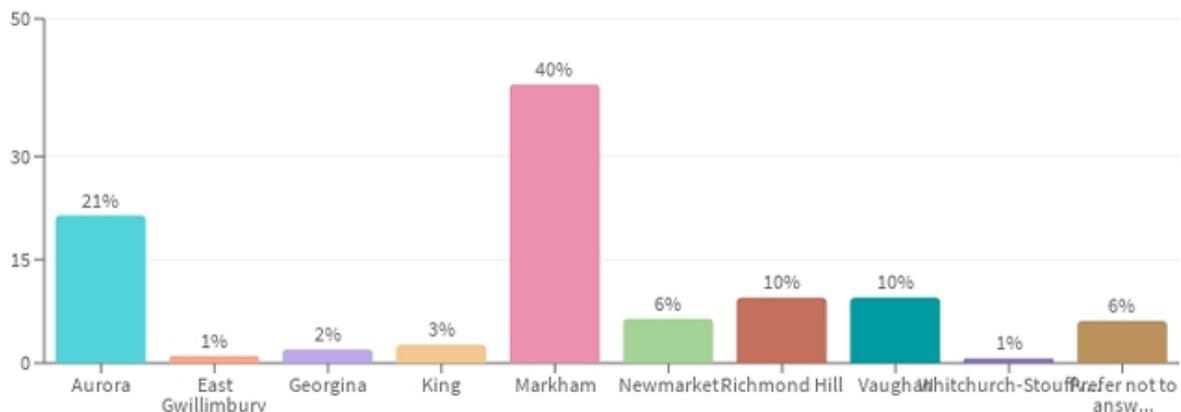
41% of participants identified as South Asian, 27% identified as White, 10% identified as East Asian, 6% identified as Indo-Caribbean, 3% identified as Black Canadian, 2% identified as Southeast Asian, 2% identified as Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin, 1% identified as Central Asian, 1% identified as Middle Eastern or North African, 1% identified as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and 1% identified as Native American. 20 participants did not enter their cultural background, and 7 participants manually input their cultural background.

Age:



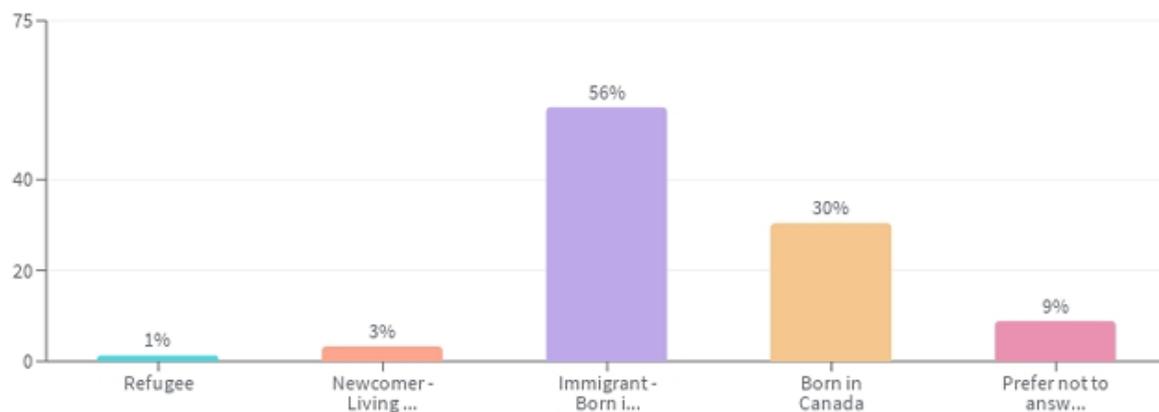
9 participants did not provide age responses.

Municipality:



40% of participants were from Markham, 21% were from Aurora, 10% were from Vaughan, 10% were from Richmond hill, 6% were from Newmarket, 3% were from King, 2% were from Georgina, 1% were from East Gwillimbury, and 1% were from Whitchurch-Stouffville. 28 participants did not provide municipality responses.

Citizenship Status:



55% of respondents immigrated to Canada, 30% were born in Canada, 2% were newcomers having lived fewer than 5 years in Canada, and 1% were refugees. 32 respondents did not provide citizenship responses.

Other Demographics:

A handful of other demographics were collected to understand how our survey was representative of the York region. 46% of respondents had a Bachelor's degree or greater in education. 14% used mobility aids. 5% identified as members of the LGBTQA+ community, and another 1% identified as questioning. 3% identified as non-cis (trans women, nonbinary, genderfluid, two-spirit and questioning).

Charts were generated by SurveySparrow.

GOALS

The York Region Women’s Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of racialized and marginalized women and girls in the York Region. Through developing this project, we hope to increase health and wellness across senior women in the York Region, helping diverse senior women reach a higher quality of life as they age.

This project seeks to achieve six main goals:

1. Determine priorities of diverse senior women in York Region



2. Connect isolated seniors to their peers and stakeholders to create inclusive spaces.

3. Isolated Seniors become more involved in community development and policy making.



4. Empower senior women from racialized, newcomer and LGBTQ+ groups to be advocates and leaders.

5. Increase senior independence.



6. Increase feelings of belonging and inclusion.

METHODS

Information and expertise were collected from the community in two main methods: online survey and focus group discussions. A breakdown of the groups and methods are shown below:



Community Survey – February 15th – April 15th, 2021

- Distributed online
- Total Responses: **309**



Senior Focus Groups – March – April, 2021

- Conducted via Zoom
- Total Groups: **3**
- Total Participants: **19**



Service Provider Focus Group – March, 2021

- Conducted via Zoom
- Total Participants: **7**

Community Survey:

Online surveys developed through SurveySparrow were distributed through emailing lists for senior-oriented groups in York Region on posters, through advertisement in the newspaper, and through snowball sampling in the community (All groups involved in the distribution of the survey are recognized in the Special Thanks on page 2). Participants were senior women (55 and above) in the York Region. The survey was provided in English.

In total, we received 309 viable responses. Responses were received from women of diverse ages and cultural background. More information about the demographic responses to the survey are provided in the demographics section. Due to an issue with survey distribution, the respect and social inclusion section of the survey was not distributed to the first 100 respondents, but we received approximately 190 responses per question.

All participants were provided with a brief survey on their community living experiences (for a copy of the survey used, see Appendix A) Once completed, they were given the option to provide their email to receive a \$10 Tim Hortons Gift Card in compensation for their time. In order to maintain confidentiality and provide the greatest comfort and flexibility to survey respondents, survey

respondents were given the option to skip any question that they may have felt unqualified to answer or uncomfortable responding to.

Community Focus Group:

3 Focus groups were conducted with senior women in the community in follow-up to the online survey, to get a more complete picture of issues and experiences. Three, two-hour sessions were completed through Zoom. All sessions conducted followed the same ten guiding questions based on the dimensions of an Age Friendly Community (included in Appendix C).

Many senior women involved were active members of the community with much passion and wisdom to share about their experiences. With consent three of four were recorded, and the main points of each are summarized throughout this report.

Service Provider Focus Group:

1 focus group was conducted with York Region service providers who work with senior women. One two-hour Zoom focus group was conducted to get a better picture of the issues service providers see seniors in the community struggling with, barriers to their abilities in providing services, and some of the more important services they would like to see implemented in the York Region. Discussions were guided by nine questions about being a senior service provider in the York Region (included in Appendix D).

Many important aspects of providing senior care and enriching the lives of seniors were brought up in this discussion; the main points of each are summarized throughout this report as they pertain to developing a healthy, actively aging community.

RESULTS

Responses provided across the surveys and focus groups painted a thorough picture of the tapestry of senior women's experiences throughout York Region. The results here highlight both survey responses and the more in-detail responses provided by women during focus groups. The average mean response across all survey responses for all sections was **3.40**, with all responses having been taken on a scale of 1-5 (1 being 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 being 'Strongly Agree'). A full list of all questions and means is provided in Appendix A.

What is an inclusive, age-friendly community?

*"An inclusive community is the one that includes **all**, regardless of their age, gender, religion, or sexual orientation. An inclusive community is the community that embraces all and gives all equal opportunities to live in dignity." – Focus Group Participant*

What does an inclusive, age-friendly community mean to you? Each focus group began with this question, and senior women had a variety of insightful thoughts about how best to reflect the idea of such a community. The main points brought up repeatedly across sessions were:

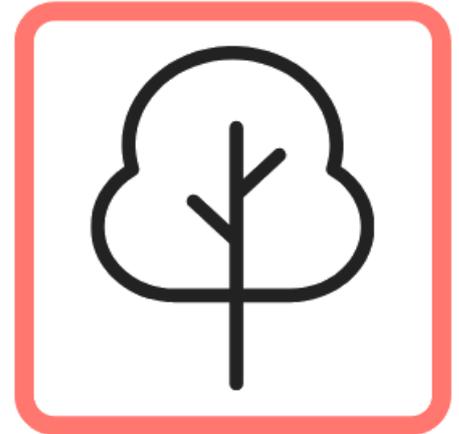
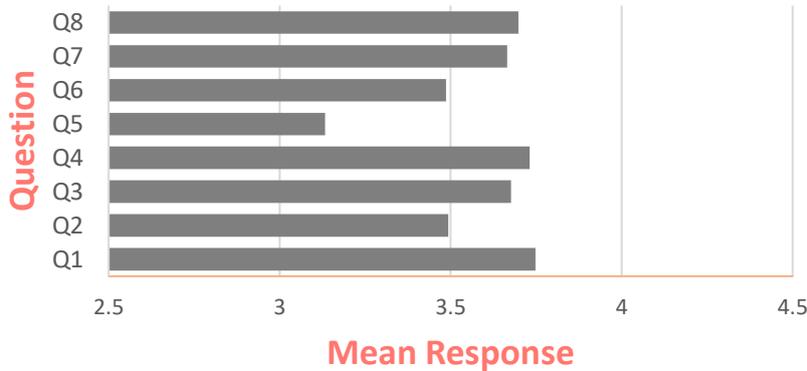
- Comfortable and safe for everyone
- Everyone is treated warmly and friendly (particularly generational respect)
- Good access to a welcoming and informative senior's center
- Multicultural and free of discrimination (for seniors and minorities) – a community of people working as one
- Inclusion beyond language barriers
- Options for aging actively
- Accessibility in all locations for wheelchairs

"I think it means accommodating the young and old alike, and to support people from all ethnic backgrounds. That's what an inclusive, aging friendly community means to me."
- Focus Group Participant



"... To live in security and continue to participate fully in the community, that's what I think."
– Focus Group Participant

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings



Overall, satisfaction with outdoor spaces and buildings was high, with an average mean response of 3.58 across all questions. The largest area of concern shown across community responses was with restroom availability, with a mean response of 3.13.

Participants in focus groups noted that these issues may differ from municipality to municipality, and there was in-depth discussion between seniors in different municipalities about their quality of experience

“We are welcomed everywhere – In a community center or a library, or even the walk-in clinic...”
– Focus Group Participant

What We Heard from Focus Groups:

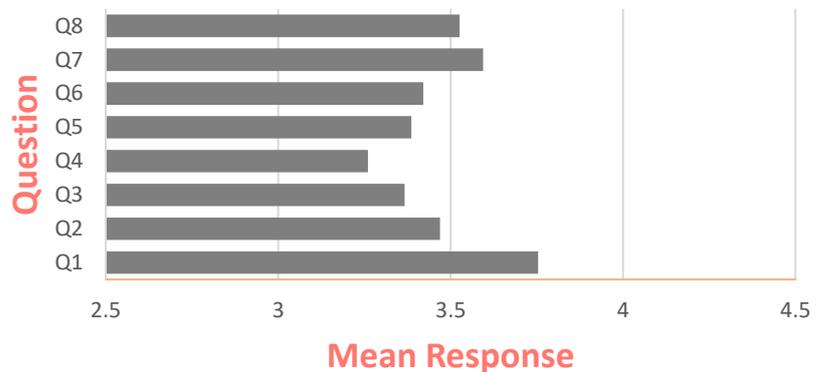
- Most areas in York region feel quite safe and welcoming
- Water fountains and washrooms are in need of greater frequency
 - By separation of municipality, **Richmond Hill, Newmarket** and **Aurora** residents had the highest concern for clean and available restroom facilities among community survey respondents
- Some seniors feel unsafe in community areas alone after dark, and have concerns regarding drug and marijuana use in the community
- Some seniors are concerned with solicitation and financial abuse

“I notice there’s never enough [washrooms]. ... Especially older people, you know, you need a washroom and there’s just nothing around... So then I tend to cut my visit short – my walk, or whatever I’m doing, because I need to go to the washroom.” – Focus Group Participant

Recommendations:

- Ensuring outdoor restroom and water fountain quantities are meeting the needs of seniors
- Evaluating security of public areas and developing appropriate safety protocols
- Educational campaigns to provide seniors with comfort regarding potential financial scams
- Ensuring that pricing for renting community center space is affordable so service providers can provide options close to seniors

Transportation



Overall, satisfaction with transportation was moderate, with an average mean response of 3.49 across all questions. The largest area of concern shown across community responses was with transit affordability, with a mean response of 3.26.

While most community survey respondents were able to find information on bus schedules and times, some had particular issue with finding information in a preferred language; the Languages chart below lists all issues community members responded with.

Participants in focus groups noted that there were large differences across municipalities with regards to transport availability. While some community members said that transit was frequent and available in most areas during peak areas, many cited extensive times required to book specialized transit and increased fees and wait times at borders between municipalities and at the cross between York Region and Toronto.

"...The only concern is the double-fare. ...I used to pay over 300 dollars a month travelling from home to downtown."
 – Focus Group Participant

What We Heard from Focus Groups:

- Wait periods for specialized transit can be far too high, and increases due to York Region to Toronto border
- Taxis are unaffordable
- Double fare at city borders makes transit unaffordable
- Need more heated bus shelters – waiting for transit is too cold during the winter
- Transit information is not available in all languages

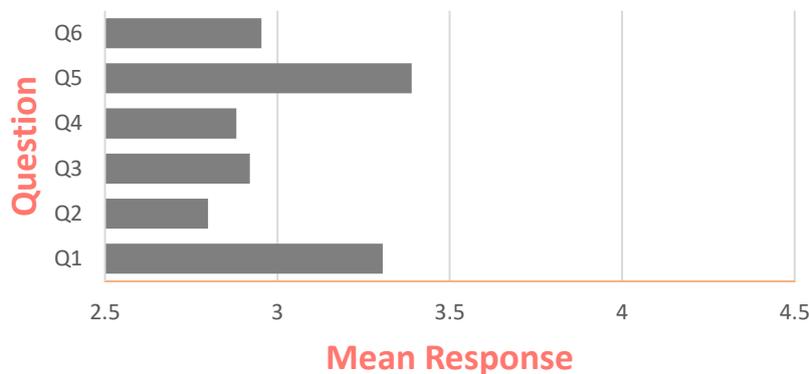
Preferred Informational Languages

Chinese/Cantonese	4
English	2
Gujarati	2
Korean	1
Tamil	2
Vietnamese	2

Recommendations

- Reduction to senior transit fees
- Installation of more heated bus shelters along major bus routes
- Investment into programs that would allow seniors to cross municipality borders without waiting for additional time or paying double fares

Housing



Overall, satisfaction with housing was low, with an average mean response of 3.05 across all questions. Respondents were concerned about the affordability and availability of independent and rented housing, the availability of specialized housing for disabled older adults, and the availability of home maintenance.

“I think all over, whether you’re in York Region or Toronto or anywhere, housing is very expensive. If you’re renting, buying, whatever. It’s out of hand; it’s gone way too high.”
– Focus Group Participant

Focus group participants echoed survey concerns over the circumstances of housing for seniors across York, with very few senior women citing satisfaction in their housing circumstances.

What We Heard from Focus Groups:

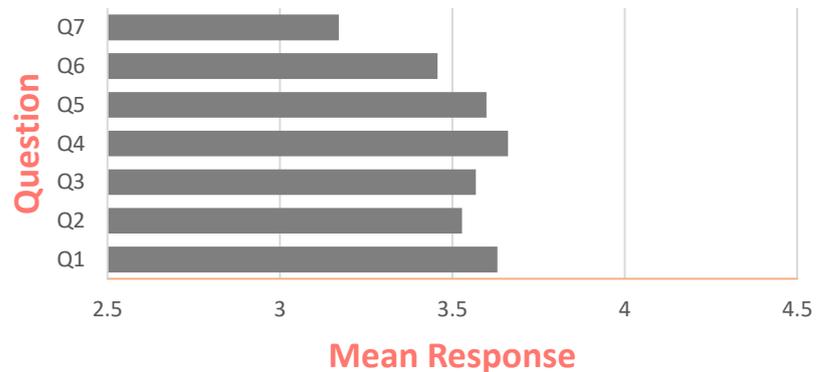
- Housing is well located with regards to shopping centers and parks
- Housing is not affordable, housing that is affordable feels unsafe or poorly maintained
- Housing for multi-generational households should be more widely available (housing with basement units, semi-detached units, et cetera)
- Seniors want more options for affordable community living

Recommendations

- Ensuring there are affordable housing options for seniors
- Developing more housing for seniors who would like to live in multi-generational households

“If they can bring some changes in the zoning... the people who are aging can stay there, downstairs [so] they don’t have to go up the stairs... the children can take care of their parents.”
– Focus Group Participant

Social Participation



Overall, satisfaction with social participation was moderate, with an average mean response of 3.52 across all questions. The largest area of concern shown across community responses was with the community reaching out to isolated seniors, with a mean response of 3.17.

Most seniors were quite happy with their senior community centers providing programming that was both interesting and accessible to them, and felt as though there was a lot going on in their communities allowing them to get involved, though some cited cost as a concern for participation.

*"It's very good! There's a lot going on in all of the centres."
– Focus Group Participant*

What We Heard from Focus Groups:

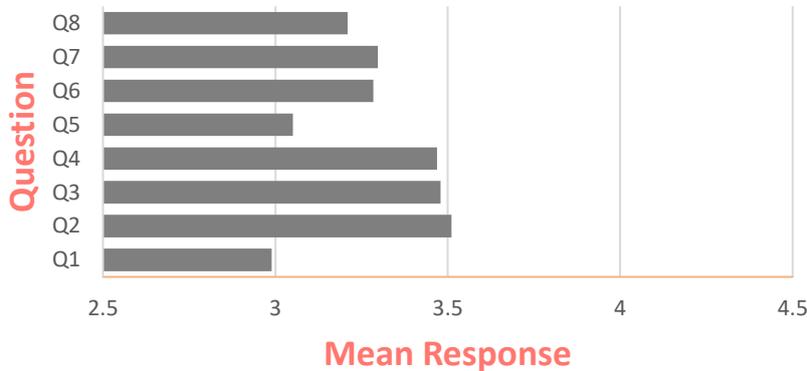
- There is plenty of programming available for the summer, and less available in the winter, when they're unable to go out
- Language can be a barrier to knowing about events and participating in them
- In some cases, families prevent seniors from being involved in the community
- Cultural festivals are good for integration, and an important means of connecting groups

*"Festivals maybe we can do more on, because we are a mixed community. ... Festivals would be nice to learn about each other. That would be really interesting, I feel."
– Focus Group Participant*

Recommendations:

- Increasing the number of cultural festivals held for cross-cultural integration
- Ensure programs are affordable for all seniors
- Implement a means of checking in with seniors at risk of isolation via phone calls, group messages, or visits where possible
- Provide seniors with more means of strengthening their neighbourhood connections (developing senior run and oriented tabloids, online messaging forums/groups)
- Provide technological education to provide seniors
- Educating families on the importance of senior activities

Respect and Social Inclusion



Overall, satisfaction with respect and social inclusion was moderate, with an average mean response of 3.29 across all questions. The largest area of concern shown across community responses was with community members being asked about their opinions, with a mean response of 2.99.

Among focus group participants, most were satisfied with initiatives such as the focus group sessions that reached out for community expertise, which helped them to feel as though their input was valued in the community.

“Yes, I feel... you guys do [value senior input], because you are here now, and I am doing this focus group survey. ... It is very important.”
– Focus Group Participant

While some seniors were satisfied with their municipality asking for input and with the community reaching out to them, they also occasionally felt as though nothing came of the consultation – senior women would like to see more policy based off the issues and concerns they have raised.

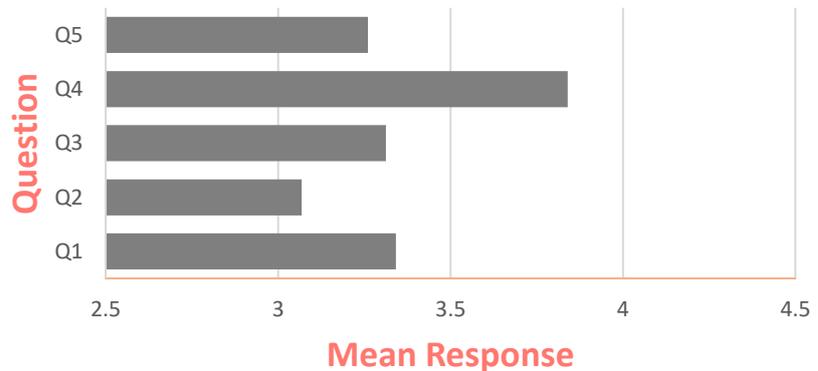
What We Heard from Focus Groups:

- Many senior groups and centers reach out to senior women for their opinions on programming and needs
- Awards to seniors for their contributions in the community show seniors that their contributions are valued
- Seniors are seeking more meaningful opportunities to get in contact with their members of parliament

Recommendations:

- Implement a means of checking in with seniors at risk of isolation via phone calls, group messages, or visits where possible
- Senior-oriented programming that allows senior women to connect with and share concerns with their local members of parliament

Civic Participation and Involvement



Overall, satisfaction with civic participation and involvement was moderate, with an average mean response of 3.37 across all questions. The largest area of concern shown across community responses was with available, flexible and well-paid work opportunities, with a mean response of 3.07.

Within focus groups, members were conflicted on the openness of volunteer and work opportunities in their areas. Some felt that many opportunities were there to those who were looking, while others suggested that neither work nor volunteer opportunities were regularly provided to them.

Across groups, all women agreed that there were issues with ageism within employment and volunteer opportunities; many women felt overlooked simply due to their age.

“I feel the elderly, they have issues getting a job. Because as you grow old, they are not welcomed. I’ve seen that. Experienced. Even volunteering, it’s very hard.” – Focus Group Participant

What We Heard from Focus Groups:

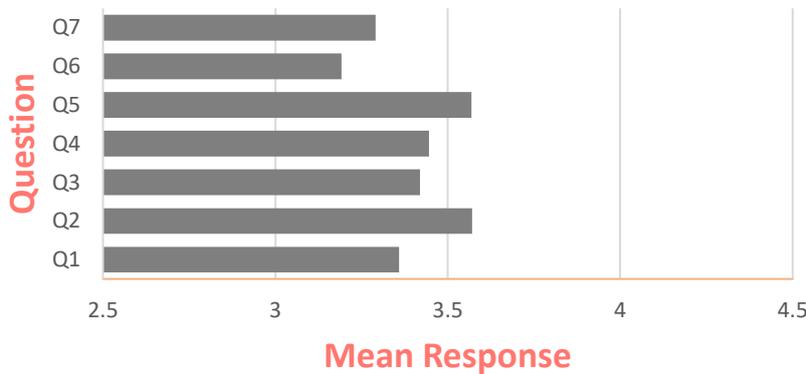
- Training is not adequate in work or volunteer opportunities for seniors
- Technology literacy means that seniors may require additional assistance in learning a position
- Volunteer positions are very helpful and fulfilling in old age where available

Recommendations:

- Increasing incentives and opportunities for seniors to get involved in both work and volunteer opportunities
- More thorough training should be provided for seniors to allow them to get used to new workplaces and positions
- Resources for seniors facing ageism in the workplace should be provided, and measures taken to evaluate ageism in the workplace

“It’s very hard for us to learn the computers... they do not understand that okay, we are an older generation; it takes us longer, because we haven’t been with all this [technology], and the changes are so drastic.” – Focus Group Participant

Communication and Information



Overall, satisfaction with communication and information was moderate, with an average mean response of 3.41 across all questions. The largest area of concern shown across community responses was with print legibility on fliers and posters, with a mean response of 3.19.

While many seniors suggested that they were able to keep up with the community events via newspapers and word of mouth, some suggested that language could be a barrier to hearing about events; the Languages chart to the right lists all issues community members responded that they struggled to find information in.

Preferred Informational Languages

Chinese/Cantonese	1
English	2
French	2
Gujarati	2
Hindi	2
Korean	1
Punjabi	1
Tamil	6
Urdu	2

Technology also played a part in the issues seniors found with regards to getting information – seniors without access to technology were limited in means of getting information, and without family members or friends nearby, risked falling into social isolation.

What We Heard from Focus Groups:

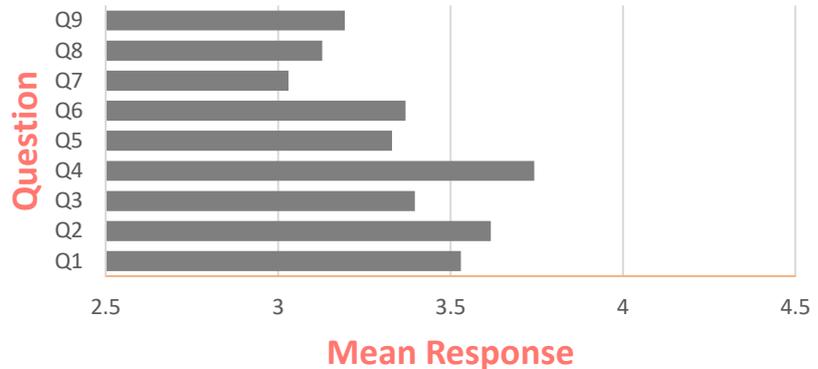
- Emails and newspapers are good means of learning about events
- Word of mouth is the best method for sharing information, and many seniors rely on it to know about events in the community
- Technology can be a large barrier in following community events
- Learning technology to get involved with communication can be very intimidating
- Seniors need reminders about events going on in the community and one-on-one outreach

Recommendations:

- Ensuring key information is provided in as many languages as possible
- Providing individualized event and news outreach to senior members of the community
- Providing technical support and resources to seniors to allow them greater access to online information sources (such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and other information sharing sites and apps)

“When I get the information, I have developed different WhatsApp groups with different people in my residential area, and I share with them. But those... again, they have to have a phone, they have to have this, and not everyone has that.
– Focus Group Participant

Community and Health Services



Overall, satisfaction with community and health was moderate, with an average mean response of 3.39 across all questions. The largest area of concern shown across community responses was with affordability of mental health options, with a mean response of 3.03.

Many focus group attendants voiced that they felt health services were not adequately meeting their needs, and that systems in their areas were overwhelmed by the increased aging population. The women expressed that it can be extremely hard to find a new family doctor as many wait lists are quite long. They also expressed concern that OHIP does not cover all services required, such as dental care.

Women in the focus group also expressed that in older age many assistive devices are required, and these are often far too expensive, leading many older women to have to live with illness and without the supports they require.

What We Heard from Focus Groups:

- OHIP does not cover as many services as are needed (Dental, optical care, assistive devices and non-generic medication)
- Finding a new family doctor as old doctors retire can be extremely difficult
- More preventative measures should be taken with seniors (working with dieticians, opportunities for active living)
- Accessing therapy can be difficult and expensive

“I had to stay on a waiting list for more than a year... it took me five years to find a new doctor. I mean, that’s not acceptable.” – Focus Group Participant

Recommendations:

- Increasing medical coverage, particularly with regards to assistive devices, mental health care, and dental care
- Putting programs in place to connect seniors with new family doctors where required

SUMMARY

This survey hoped to encapsulate the experiences of a diverse population of senior women living in the York region. With regards to racialized and newcomer populations, a large percentage of the community survey respondents and focus group participants shared their experience from these viewpoints. A small portion of survey respondents reached out from an LGBTQA+ perspective; being respectful that not all LGBTQA+ seniors may identify as such due to stigma (Robinson-Wood & Weber, 2016), we must nevertheless continue to reach out to minority communities for a more complete picture of the struggles they experience.

Through a community survey and focus group discussions, we've developed an understanding of some of the unique barriers along the road to an inclusive, age-friendly community based on the needs of diverse senior women. Here is a brief overview of the key concerns raised along each section of the age-friendly community outline.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Overall, most outdoor spaces and buildings within York Region feel quite safe, clean and pleasant to senior women. The largest areas of concern noted were restroom availability and late-night security in some communities.

Transportation

Many senior women found difficulty with some aspects of transport in York Region. The largest issue raised by senior women in focus groups was double fares on the border of York and Toronto, and longer wait times for specialized transportation services for the disabled or elderly. Overall, they noted that while staff were courteous and pleasant, delays in crossing borders between York and Toronto could cause severe delays and inability to move between regions.

Housing

Cost and availability of housing, both rented or owned, were the largest issues raised by senior women, both in the community survey and focus groups. While housing is well located with regards to amenities, they feel that it is both prohibitively expensive and unable to meet the needs of multi-generational households.

Social Participation

Senior women were generally quite pleased with options for social participation and events run in the York Region. Many women felt strongly about the activities provided by their local senior center, though some experience struggle with program costs. In some circumstances, family members prevent seniors from participating (whether from concern, lack of money, or other reasons) – family senior abuse can be a large concern in seniors integrating with the community.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Generally senior women felt that their community both respected their input and sought to include them in programs. Some women wanted to see more education toward youth regarding being mindful of generational differences (i.e., technological understanding), and wanted to see more application of community suggestions in community policy.

Civic Participation and Involvement

Senior women expressed frustration with difficulty in obtaining and maintaining work while experiencing ageism in both volunteer and work environments. While community respondents as a whole marked their experiences with work and volunteer as moderately positive, focus group respondents felt there was a lack of welcome and willingness to train older applicants.

Information and Communication

By and large, senior women expressed that the best way of learning about events and news was word of mouth. While most were able to maintain contact this way, they also suggested that a lack of technological savviness may make keeping up to date with events posted online difficult for older seniors.

Community and Healthcare

Overall, senior women were moderately satisfied with healthcare. While community response was generally positive, in focus groups, women expressed difficulty with finding appropriate health care, migrating to new doctors, and getting coverage from OHIP on important health services such as optometry and dentistry.

Technological Limitations

Throughout the understanding of these results that due to Covid-19 public health protocols this survey was distributed electronically, and focus groups were held online on Zoom meetings. Respondents were generally more technologically capable seniors. It is important to keep in mind in interpreting these results that seniors without technological access or with particular language difficulty would not have been able to provide input; therefore, the need for accommodating language and the need for technology education represented in this survey should be considered as low estimates of the need within the larger community.

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APPENDIX A

Survey Responses

Survey responses are reported as mean response values.

All questions were provided with the option to skip in the situation that participants either did not know or were uncomfortable providing a response. The total number of community members who responded to each question is listed to the right of the question.

Noteworthy values have been **bolded**.

1 - OUTDOOR SPACES AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Average Mean: 3.58

Q1	Public areas are clean and well lit.	306
	Mean: 3.75	
Q2	Public seating is available and well placed.	306
	Mean: 3.49	
Q3	Pedestrian crossings are frequent, easily accessible, and safe.	306
	Mean: 3.68	
Q4	Sidewalks are well-maintained, clean, and easy to use.	309
	Mean: 3.73	
Q5	Public restrooms clean, well located, and easy to access	293
	Mean: 3.13	
Q6	Public spaces in the community are safe from crime.	298
	Mean: 3.49	
Q7	Outdoor spaces and buildings are inclusive (welcoming to racialized groups, LGBTQ individuals, and other minorities).	290
	Mean: 3.66	
Q8	Public spaces and buildings are wheelchair accessible.	288
	Mean: 3.7	

2 – Transportation

Average Mean: 3.49

Q1	Essential services (groceries, doctor's offices) are within reasonable transportation distances.	297
	Mean: 3.75	
Q2	Public transportation routes are easy to determine and available to access in your preferred language.	275
	Mean: 3.47	
Q3	Public transportation is frequent and easy to use.	281
	Mean: 3.37	
Q4	Public transportation is affordable.	280
	Mean: 3.26	
Q5	Transit workers are available for assistance when needed.	269
	Mean: 3.39	
Q6	Specialized transportation is easily accessible for people with disabilities.	264
	Mean: 3.42	
Q7	Roads and parking spaces are well maintained.	303
	Mean: 3.59	
Q8	Snow is removed from sidewalks and paths.	304
	Mean: 3.53	

3 – Housing

Average Mean: 3.05

Q1	Housing options are clear and accessible.	285
	Mean: 3.30	
Q2	Independent housing is available, affordable, and sufficient.	283
	Mean: 2.8	
Q3	Rental housing is clean, affordable, available, and well-maintained.	262
	Mean: 2.92	
Q4	Specialized affordable housing is available for disabled older adults.	252
	Mean: 2.88	
Q5	Housing is close enough to other amenities (like parks, stores, and hospitals).	293
	Mean: 3.39	
Q6	Home maintenance and support is available and affordable.	281
	Mean: 2.95	

4 - Social Participation

Average Mean: 3.52

Q1	Activities offered in the community are inclusive of older adults.	306
	Mean: 3.63	
Q2	Venues are easy to access and conveniently located.	307
	Mean: 3.53	
Q3	Community events are held at times that are convenient.	301
	Mean: 3.57	
Q4	There are community events and activities that are interesting to you.	304
	Mean: 3.66	
Q5	Community events and activities are affordable.	302
	Mean: 3.6	
Q6	Information about events and activities is clearly shared and easy to access.	302
	Mean: 3.46	
Q7	The community reaches out to people at risk of social isolation.	275
	Mean: 3.17	

5 - Respect and Social Inclusion

Average Mean: 3.29

Q1	You are asked about your needs in the community.	189
	Mean: 2.99	
Q2	Service staff are courteous and helpful.	190
	Mean: 3.51	
Q3	Settings for activities and events are accommodating of age-specific needs and preferences.	192
	Mean: 3.48	
Q4	Older people are included in community activities for families.	190
	Mean: 3.47	
Q5	Schools provide opportunities for older people to get involved in education.	176
	Mean: 3.05	
Q6	Older people are recognized by the community for their past and present contributions.	190
	Mean: 3.28	
Q7	Your cultural heritage is supported and celebrated within your community.	185
	Mean: 3.3	
Q8	Less well-off people are still able to access services.	186
	Mean: 3.2	

6 - Civic Participation and Employment

Average Mean: 3.37

Q1	Volunteer opportunities are available with provided training.	293
	Mean: 3.34	
Q2	Work opportunities are available, flexible, and appropriately paid.	263
	Mean: 3.07	
Q3	Work and volunteer positions encourage older adults in the community to be involved.	297
	Mean: 3.31	
Q4	Voting stations are easy to identify and accessible.	300
	Mean: 3.84	
Q5	Government leaders engage the community to ensure everyone is involved in government processes, practices, and decisions.	299
	Mean: 3.26	

7 - Communication and Information

Average Mean: 3.41

Q1	Information is accessible and well-distributed to residents.	304
	Mean: 3.36	
Q2	Information is provided in your preferred language.	291
	Mean: 3.57	
Q3	Information is well shared through social networks (by word of mouth).	298
	Mean: 3.42	
Q4	Newspapers are easily accessible and informative.	303
	Mean: 3.45	
Q5	Printing on posters is large and easy to read.	299
	Mean: 3.57	
Q6	Computers are easy to access at no or minimal charge in a variety of public spaces.	271
	Mean: 3.19	
Q7	Telephone answering instructions are slow and clear.	289
	Mean: 3.29	

8 - Community Support and Health Services

Average Mean: 3.39

Q1	Health and community support services are high quality, conveniently located, and accessible.	302
	Mean: 3.75	
Q2	Health service providers are welcoming and deliver appropriate care.	295
	Mean: 3.49	
Q3	Support is readily available to address language barriers when receiving health care.	265
	Mean: 3.68	
Q4	Health and community buildings are safely constructed and accessible.	299
	Mean: 3.73	
Q5	Home care services are available, such as health or personal care and housekeeping.	269
	Mean: 3.13	
Q6	Information about health and social services are clear and accessible.	292
	Mean: 3.49	
Q7	Mental health care is affordable and available.	268
	Mean: 3.66	
Q8	There is space and support in the community for exploring sexual identity.	234
	Mean: 3.7	
Q8	There is space and support in the community for exploring gender identity.	233
	Mean: 3.7	

9 - Demographics and Follow-up

1. What is your age?

55-60	61-65	66-70	71-75	76-80	81-85	86-90
91-95	96-100	101-105	106-110	111+		

2. What is your gender?

Cis woman	Trans woman	Nonbinary
Genderfluid	Two-spirit	Questioning
Prefer not to answer	My gender is best described as: _____	

3. Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community?

Yes	No	Questioning	Prefer not to answer
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4. How do you identify yourself? (Please select one or more)

- Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin (Eg: Mexican or Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Salvadoran, Dominican, Colombian, etc)
- Indo-Caribbean (Eg: Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, etc)
- Black or African American (Eg: African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somalian, etc)
- Central Asian (Eg: Turkic, Indo-Iranian, Mongolic, etc)
- East Asian (Eg: Chinese, Japanese, Taiwanese, Korean, etc)
- South Asian (Eg: Afghan, Iranian, Indian, Sri Lankan, Nepali, Pakistani, etc.)
- Southeast Asian (Eg: Indonesian, Singaporean, Malaysian, Filipino, Thai, etc.)
- Native American (Eg: Navajo nation, Blackfeet tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village or Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc)
- Middle Eastern or North African (Eg: Lebanese, Iranian, Egyptian, Syrian, Moroccan, Algerian, etc)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Eg: Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, Tongan, Fijian, etc)
- White (Eg: German, Irish, English, Italian, Polish, French, etc)
- My ethnic background is: _____
- Prefer not to answer

5. What is your highest level of education?

- Pre-GED
- Highschool or equivalent (e.g. GED)
- Some college/university, no degree
- Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)
- Master's degree (e.g. MA, MS, MEd)
- Professional degree (e.g. MD, DDS, DVM)
- Doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD)
- Prefer not to answer

6. Do you use mobility aids (walkers, wheelchairs, etc.)?

- Yes No Sometimes Prefer not to answer

7. What is your citizenship status?

- Refugee Newcomer Born in Canada
- Immigrant- Born in a country other than Canada
- Prefer not to answer

APPENDIX B

Data Cleaning Procedure

As the survey was conducted and held online, a variety of measures were taken to ensure that responses were from senior women in the community and not from any variety of fraud response. Due to fraud concern during the survey, the following steps were taken with answers:

1. Responses were flagged as potential fraud for showing one or more of the following characteristics: Response time <4 minutes, severe response bias (100% of responses entered were identical), multiple identical or nearly identical emails provided, and repeated, identical IP responses.
2. Responses flagged as fraud were removed from the response pool, and participants were informed that their response was flagged.
3. Participants who followed up with their concern were provided the option to respond confirming that their data was true and accurate for use. In cases of more extreme fraud concern, participants were asked to confirm the municipality of the York Region they lived in (as provided in the survey).
4. Participants who confirmed that their responses were not fraud had their emails re-included in gift card distribution, and had their data re-included in the response pool.

A total of 499 responses were originally submitted; A total of 194 responses were flagged for fraud. 19 respondents returned email follow-up, and four confirmed their identity and were re-included in data analysis.

APPENDIX C

Focus Group Questions - Senior Women

Intro Question:

- 1. What does an inclusive, aging-friendly community mean to you?**
 - An introduction to the idea of age-friendly communities, and a look at the current understandings in the room
 - Consider: As a service provider, what are ways you see people struggle? What ways do you struggle to provide service? How could the community be helping?

Exploration Questions:

- 2. What outdoor spaces and buildings in your community are welcoming to you? Are there places in your community you don't feel comfortable?**
 - Consider: Parks, recreation centres, libraries, city centers, walking trails, etc.
 - Think about: Safety (Is it dangerous?), accessibility (Are there places you can't go to?), and inclusivity (Are there places that aren't socially welcoming?)
- 3. How easy is it to get around in your community? What are the best ways to get around, and what are the worst?**
 - Consider: Public transportation, specialized transportation (handy-trans, etc.), taxis, health related transportation
 - Think about: Bus wait times, shelters, benches, bus routes where they're needed
- 4. Does housing in your community meet your needs?**
 - Consider: Senior homes, independent living arrangements, etc.
 - Think about: Affordability, safety, design (do houses meet the needs of seniors? Too many stairs, no elevators, bathrooms designed with support where needed, etc)
- 5. Do you feel your community values your input? How are seniors included in the community?**
 - Consider: What kind of programming do seniors need/ask for? What would your group like to be able to do for seniors, but can't given current resources?
- 6. What social events and groups in your community interest you? Are there barriers that would stop you from participating?**

- Consider: Social events, hobby groups and activities to join
 - Think about: Affordability, accessibility, appeal (are activities held interesting to seniors?), and welcoming (are seniors encouraged to join? Are people respectful of seniors at events?)
 - If there aren't: What would you like to see in the community?
- 7. Does your community welcome seniors in work, volunteer and political positions? How so?**
- Consider: Volunteer training, Jobs advertised to/hiring seniors, political positions for seniors
 - Think about: Are there seniors involved in political groups in your community? Are volunteer and work positions shared easily with seniors?

8. How do you hear about events and important information from your community?

- Consider: Fliers, sites, email lists, newspapers, radio, tv, word of mouth
- Think about: Is important information shared? Events, groups, and opportunities? What languages are they shared in? Are they easy to understand? (writing is easy to read from a distance, important info is easy to understand (such as phone numbers or addresses in information))

9. How does healthcare in your community meet your needs? Are there challenges to getting the healthcare you need?

- Consider: Support at home, hospital stays, hospice care, service workers, and medical equipment
- Think about: Affordability, accessibility, inclusivity, understanding (do healthcare workers provide appropriate support? Do they seek to understand issues seniors are experiencing and provide appropriate support?)

Exit Question:

10. If you could change one thing about your community today to make it more aging-friendly, what would it be?

- A wrap-up after thinking about all of the different dimensions - after thinking about all of them, what stands out the most? What feels like the most urgently needed change?

APPENDIX D

Focus Group Questions – Service Providers

Intro Question:

- 1. What does an inclusive, aging-friendly community mean to you?**
 - An introduction to the idea of age-friendly communities, and a look at the current understandings in the room
 - Consider: As a service provider, what are ways you see people struggle? What ways do you struggle to provide service? How could the community be helping?

Exploration Questions:

- 2. Do community spaces accommodate events and groups for seniors? (Outdoor Spaces + Public Buildings)**
 - Consider: Parks, recreation centres, libraries, city centers, walking trails, etc.
 - Think about: When you're hosting events for seniors, what kind of planning is involved? Are community spaces easy for you to plan around?
- 3. What barriers stop seniors from being able to attend social groups and activities? (Multiple)**
 - Consider: Social events, hobby groups and activities to join
 - Think about: What concerns do you hear from seniors about participating in groups? Interest? Money? Distance? Availability?
 - Think about your own groups: What difficulties are involved in running them? How could senior groups be better supported?
- 4. How could the community better support programming for seniors? (Social Participation + Respect and Social Inclusion)**
 - Consider: costs, additional difficulties in advertising to senior women over other demographic groups
 - What support do you need from your community to make programming better/easier/more manageable for seniors? Training? Funding? Supplies?
- 5. If you could implement one new program for seniors, what would it be? (Social Participation)**
 - Consider: What kind of programming do seniors need/ask for? What would your group like to be able to do for seniors, but can't given current resources?

6. How do you share information about programs with seniors? What complications get in the way of sharing information?

- Consider: Fliers, sites, email lists, newspapers, radio, tv, word of mouth
- Think about: What languages do you provide information in? What sources do you provide for seniors? Are there ways of sharing information that you would like to provide, but have not been able to thus far?

7. Are social events for seniors welcoming to minorities? How do you foster an inclusive environment?

- Consider: Racialized, newcomer, and LGBTQ+ seniors
- Think about: Are these seniors specifically included in events? What may make minority seniors uncomfortable in joining one group over another?

8. How can we celebrate and involve seniors of diverse backgrounds in our events?

- Consider: languages things are shared in, holidays that are celebrated, times groups are run
- Think about: Not just including and accepting all seniors, but celebrating the differences and breadth of experiences

Exit Question:

9. If you could change one thing about your community today to make it more aging-friendly, what would it be?

- A wrap-up after thinking about all of the different dimensions - after thinking about all of them, what stands out the most? What feels like the most urgently needed change?