

INFO SHEET 2: WHO IS AT RISK OF SOCIAL ISOLATION?



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Social isolation can affect almost anyone, although some groups of older adults appear to be at a greater risk than others. Across Canada, social isolation tends to occur in higher rates among seniors that already experience disadvantage or vulnerability in some way. For example, seniors with low income, seniors with complex physical needs, mental health concerns, and/or seniors who identify as LGBTQ+ are at an increased risk of social isolation^{1,2}. Likewise, widowhood and being 75+ have both been identified as significant risk factors for social isolation and social vulnerability^{1,3}. This connection between vulnerable groups and social isolation suggests that broader social, and individual factors are involved.

INDIVIDUAL VS. SOCIAL CAUSES

Social isolation is mistakenly thought to occur as a result of individual characteristics. For example, older people who are socially isolated are often blamed for keeping to themselves too much, or not showing an interest in social activities. Although individual characteristics can contribute to isolation, social and structural factors can also put seniors at increased risk. Social and/or community factors, such as communities that are not age-friendly, do not provide opportunities for seniors participation, or have significant barriers to participation, are also risk factors for social isolation.

Learn more about the Hamilton Seniors Isolation Impact Plan:

Website:

<http://socialisolation.ca>

Email:

socialisolation@mcmaster.ca

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¹ Buffel, T., Rémillard-Boilard, S., & Phillipson, C. (2015). Social Isolation Among Older People in Urban Areas. Manchester, UK.

² Elder, K., & Retrum, J. (2012). Framework for Isolation in Adults Over 50.

³ Keefe, J., Andrew, M., Fancey, P., & Hall, M. (2006). Final Report: A Profile of Social Isolation in Canada.