

# Social Isolation and Loneliness

## and older adults



Older adults may face feelings of social isolation or loneliness that can have an impact on their mental or physical health. But this isn't an inevitable part of aging. Increasingly, staying connected is seen as vital for maintaining mental and physical health as we age. Working together, we can address the risk through building social connections.

### How Do We Define Social Isolation and Loneliness?

- **Social isolation** can be understood as a measurable lack in the number of relationships a person has.
- **Loneliness** is more subjective and can be understood as the feeling we get when our social relationships are lacking in terms of quality or quantity compared with what we expect them to be.



### Many of us feel socially isolated or lonely

In Canada, we are facing growing rates of social isolation and loneliness.

Nearly one in five Canadians 65 years and older say they lack companionship. Nearly one-third of older Canadians are at risk of being socially isolated.



**CCSMH**  
Canadian Coalition for  
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# The impact of social isolation and loneliness is real

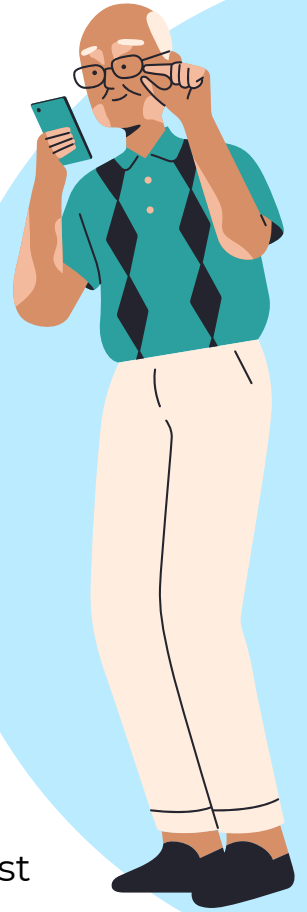
Some of the possible risks of isolation and loneliness among adults over 50 years old include:

- 32% increased risk of stroke
- 25% increased risk of cancer mortality
- 50% increased risk of developing dementia
- 45% increased risk of death

Source: Understanding Social Isolation and Loneliness  
Among Older Canadians and How to Address It

## We can thrive as we age

Staying connected may mitigate these risks and contribute to better physical and mental health. Just as we may need to pay attention to how our bodies and minds age, we can also find opportunities to renew existing or find new relationships to boost our social health. It's also important to know how the people we know - spouses, partners, friends, family, neighbours - may face these challenges.



## The Social Isolation and Loneliness Project

As part of the CCSMH's Social Isolation and Loneliness Project, we are raising awareness of the risks facing older Canadians and the opportunities for all of us to address them. We are developing guidelines for health and community practitioners working with older adults to assess and address social isolation and loneliness. We are also developing a toolkit to provide resources and information in support of the guidelines.



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