

Older Adult Social Isolation and Loneliness Risk Factors and Protective Factors

Below is a list of commonly known risk factors for social isolation and loneliness in older adults. Listed examples of protective factors can help us understand how to prevent social isolation and loneliness.

Although risk factors are unique for each person, individuals facing multiple risk factors are more likely to experience social isolation and loneliness. An older adult facing a few risk factors has a higher chance of experiencing more risk factors. It is important to introduce protective factors as early as possible to help limit the impacts of some risk factors.

Risk factors are characteristics that can cause or lead to undesirable outcomes. Generally, the more risk factors an individual faces, the more likely they are to experience undesirable outcomes.

Protective factors are characteristics that can help reduce negative outcomes and support positive outcomes. Generally, the more protective factors an individual has, the less likely they are to experience undesirable outcomes.

Connection in Action supports older adults by offering opportunities to protective factors that can help increase social connections.

(905) 844-2299

Hello@ConnectionInAction.ca

www.ConnectionInAction.ca

Category	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ 80 years of age or older ☀ Living alone ☀ Being a woman, as women are more likely to live longer and live alone ☀ Being First Nations, Métis, or Inuit ☀ Being 2SLGBTQ+ (Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Non-binary and/or other sexual orientations and gender identities) ☀ Have financial limitations or barriers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ Sufficient income ☀ Adequate housing ☀ Having higher levels of education ☀ Joining groups with similar identities and experiences
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ Reduced social networks including family and friends (I do not have family or friends living close by) ☀ Being a caregiver ☀ Experience discrimination based on age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ Having personal relationships and social support networks ☀ Feeling connected to and valued by others ☀ Maintaining meaningful roles in society (for example: volunteering or being a part of a group or club.)

Category	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
Social (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ Cultural and/or religious barriers and limitations (People don't understand my culture/religion) ☀ English is not my first language ☀ Experiencing elder abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ Knowing about elder abuse prevention ☀ Participating in cultural groups and events ☀ Participating in faith-based groups
Physical Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ Vision decline or loss ☀ Hearing decline or loss ☀ Chronic conditions ☀ Compromised health status ☀ Challenges with mobility ☀ New physical challenges ☀ Incontinence ☀ Challenges leaving the home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ Good health ☀ Attending regular medical appointments ☀ Accessing in-home support services ☀ Using a medical alert device ☀ Using an assistive device (for example: hearing aids, cane, walker, wheelchair, etc.) ☀ Attending exercise classes
Psychological Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ Experiencing challenges with mental health ☀ New or existing anxiety ☀ New or existing depression ☀ Low self-esteem ☀ Sensory impairment ☀ Cognitive challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ Set up regular calls or visits with a friend ☀ Accessing mental health services (for example: one-on-one counselling, group therapy, etc.)

Category	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
Psychological Health (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ Dementia ☀ Intellectual challenges ☀ Substance use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ Knowing the phone numbers for crisis and distress hotlines ☀ Participating in programs like friendly visiting and telephone check-ins
Life Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ Retirement ☀ Death of a spouse or loved one ☀ Becoming a caregiver or no longer caring for someone ☀ Moving to a new home or change in living situation ☀ Loss of driver's license ☀ New to the country as an immigrant or refugee ☀ Other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ Having personal relationships and social support networks ☀ Participating in social programs like friendly visiting and telephone check-ins ☀ Accessing settlement services ☀ Learning about community groups and services in your area ☀ End of life planning
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ Living in a rural or remote area ☀ Not feeling safe in your home or neighbourhood ☀ Lack of affordable and/or accessible housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ Knowledge of resources and services ☀ Participating in programs like friendly visiting and telephone check-ins ☀ Access to and knowledge of using technology to stay connected

Category	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
Environment (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ Limited or no access to transportation ☀ Having limited awareness of community supports ☀ Limited or no access to internet and technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ Feeling safe in your neighbourhood ☀ Communicating your needs to family, friends, and other social support networks ☀ Access to health services ☀ Sufficient income ☀ Adequate housing ☀ Access to transportation

Prepared by Connection in Action, an initiative of Community Safety & Well-Being in Halton.

Connection in Action supports adults aged 55+ who live in Halton by providing information on opportunities to increase social connections.

Connection in Action also supports communities across Halton by raising awareness about issues impacting older adults through our LITE (Loneliness, Isolation to Empowerment) Education.