



# Renewing Our Plan for Seniors What You Said Report

Seniors Strategy  
[york.ca/PlanForSeniors](http://york.ca/PlanForSeniors)

  
**York Region**

# Land acknowledgment

We acknowledge York Region is located on the traditional territory of many Indigenous peoples such as the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat and Métis peoples and the treaty territories of the Haudenosaunee, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and Williams Treaties First Nations. This land is now home to many diverse Indigenous peoples. York Region is located within the boundaries of the Nanfan Treaty, Treaty 13 and the Williams Treaties. There are also other land claims and treaty rights involving portions of York Region that have not been resolved. The Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation is a Williams Treaty First Nation and the closest First Nation community to York Region.



# Background

York Region's population is on the rise and the seniors' population is growing faster than any other age group. By 2051, close to one in four (23%) York Region residents will be over age 65. The most significant growth is expected among older seniors, aged 75 and older, seniors who tend to be more vulnerable and have more complex and costly needs. In 2016, older seniors accounted for 38% of the total seniors' population and this is expected to increase to 62% by 2051. [York Region's Seniors Strategy](#) (the Strategy) was developed in 2016 to help the Region prepare and respond to the needs of the aging population over the next 10 to 20 years.

The Strategy focuses on:

- Actions in areas where the Region has a role
- Collaboration to bring together key players to address the needs of York Region seniors
- Advocacy where the Region can influence other levels of government for changes in areas where the Region does not have a role

After five years, it is time to review, update and refresh the original Strategy to ensure it reflects current needs and opportunities to support aging in place. The Region will review progress to date on current actions and advocacy efforts, as well as data and trends related to seniors, to identify what needs to continue and what needs to change to support seniors in York Region.

Like the original Strategy, the renewed plan will identify actions where the Region has a role and areas for advocacy where the Region does not have a mandate, but where others have responsibility to act to address an identified need.

# Engagement summary

This report summarizes thoughts and opinions gathered through The Regional Municipality of York's engagement activities to support development of the proposed 2023-2027 York Region Plan for Seniors.

**To ensure decisions were responsive to community needs, seniors, caregivers and organizations serving seniors, York Region worked with Ipsos Limited Partnership to host several engagement activities, including:**

- Nine virtual workshops with internal staff, community partners and stakeholders
- Two community open houses
- Two online surveys (one hosted by York Region and the other through the Ipsos iSay panel) targeted to pre-seniors and seniors in York Region, and caregivers who care for seniors in York Region. The surveys were available from December 17, 2021 to January 9, 2022

**Engagement opportunities were promoted through the following communication channels:**

- Public consultation page at [york.ca/PlanForSeniors](http://york.ca/PlanForSeniors)
- Newspaper ads
- Radio ads
- Google ads
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- Partner/service provider email distribution

In addition, in early 2022 written submissions were received from seniors living in York Region.

The feedback collected from these engagement initiatives will help York Region plan ahead for future programs, services and advocacy efforts for seniors in York Region. Due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions on in-person engagements, the analysis of the engagement results must consider that some voices may not have been reached due to language or technological barriers.



**Notes:**

**Rounding to the nearest whole number:**

The results for some of the survey questions were rounded to the nearest whole number, (e.g., 33.33% is rounded to 33%). As a result, the percentage total for some questions (where the values were rounded) will not add up to 100%.

**Response percentages exceed 100% :**

When questions allow survey respondents to select more than one response or answer, the total number of responses for that question may be greater than the number of survey respondents that answered the question. This may cause the total response percentages to exceed 100%.

**Proportions below 1% are not shown in the graphs**

**Comments may have been edited for clarity**



## Who we heard from Pre-seniors, seniors and caregivers

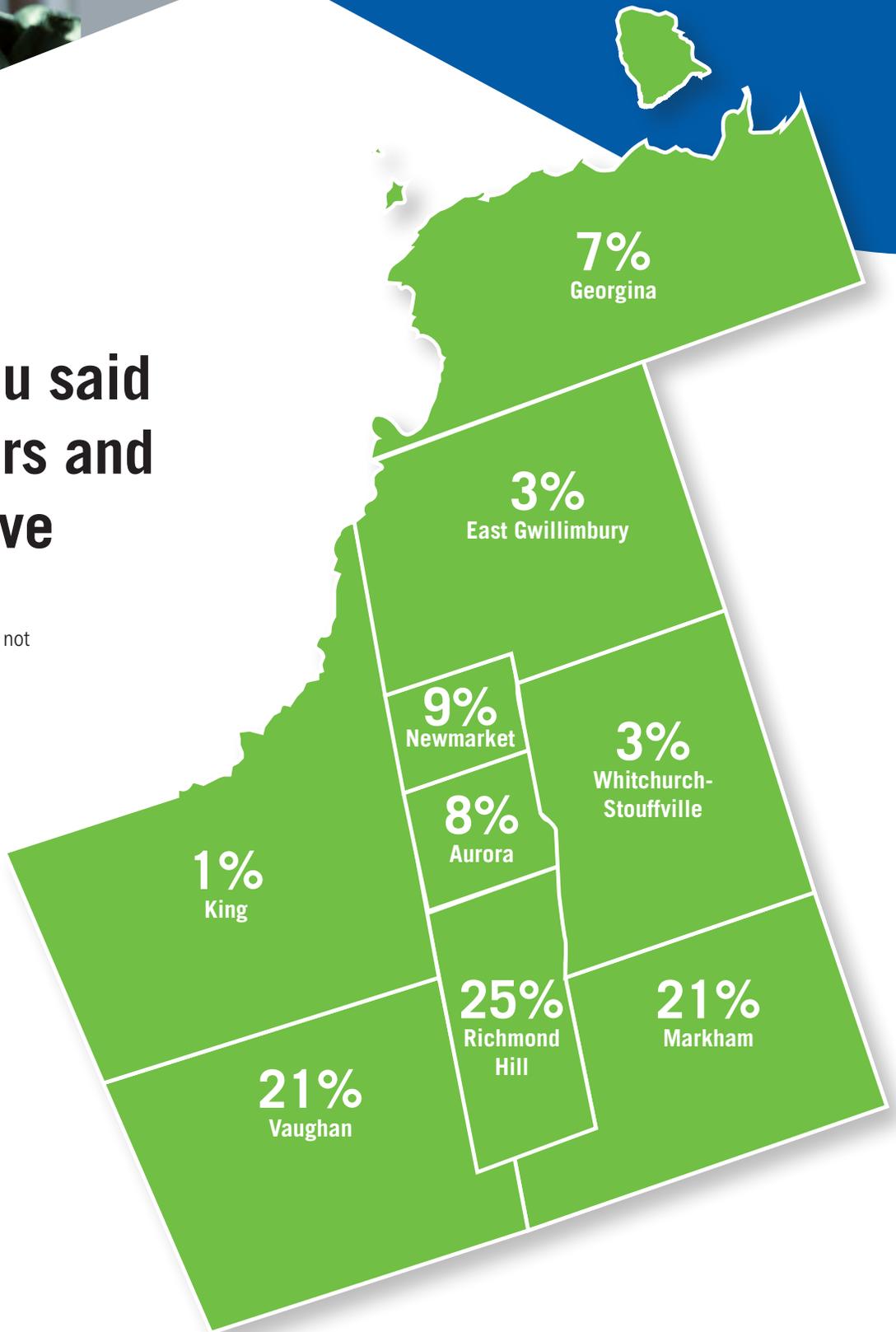
### Renewing our plan for seniors online surveys

The surveys had a total of 1,315 completed responses. 415 responses were from people identifying themselves as pre-seniors (age 55 to 64) and 900 responses were from people identifying themselves as seniors (age 65 or over) living in York Region. There were 118 completed responses from people identifying themselves as caregivers for a senior who lives in York Region.



## Where you said pre-seniors and seniors live

Note: 1% of respondents did not identify their city or town





## Pre-seniors and seniors

The pre-seniors and seniors who participated in the engagement sessions were healthy and comfortable with technology, although they still identified needing additional supports. For respondents, email is the most preferred way to receive information on programs and services. Older seniors who were not as comfortable with the internet indicated print was their preferred method to receive information. Medical professionals are the most trustworthy sources for information.

Approximately half of the survey respondents said it's easy to find the information they need on programs and services, with just over 81% saying once they find the information, it's easy to understand. Not being aware of available programs and services is the biggest barrier to accessing programs and services.

Most pre-seniors and seniors say accessing services through one place and having someone to call or email to ask for help would make information about programs and services easier to understand.

The majority of pre-senior and senior respondents have already retired and are living with family, with just over half indicating they expect to age in their current home in the future.

Large numbers of pre-seniors and seniors report good physical and mental health. Approximately three in 10 say their physical health has worsened since the pandemic and about four in 10 say their mental health is worse compared to before the pandemic.



## Caregivers

Caregivers were identified as anyone who cared for or helped a senior living in York Region with issues related to aging, in the 12 months before the survey dates. For example, caregivers may have helped with housekeeping, cooking, bathing, getting the senior dressed, getting around, paying bills, finding suitable services, or wellness checks. This assistance could have been provided in-person or remotely.

Overall, caregivers responded they need additional supports to help the senior they care for age in their current residence. Only 4% of caregivers say they have “all the supports they need” to provide for the senior they care for. According to caregivers, they are more likely than seniors to have barriers in accessing programs and services to provide care. Caregivers say not being aware of available programs and services and long wait times for services are the top barriers to accessing programs and services. Additionally, the majority of caregivers who responded (79%) reported supporting older seniors (75 years of age and older) who may have higher care needs and different experiences than the pre-seniors and seniors who responded to the survey. Only 23% of the pre-seniors and seniors indicated they were 75 years of age or older.

Caregivers identified home care and community support, financial assistance, education on how to navigate the system to find and get services, and social programs/activities for seniors as the most important supports they require to assist them in their caregiving duties. Approximately seven in 10 caregivers say respite services are important to them.

Like pre-seniors and seniors, caregivers indicated email as the most preferred way to receive information on programs and services and medical professionals are the most trustworthy sources for information.

Approximately 20% of caregivers say it’s easy to find the information they need on programs and services and about 81% say once they find the information, it’s easy to understand. When asked what would help make information about programs, services and health easier to find, caregivers said they would like to access services through one place and have someone to call or email to ask for help.

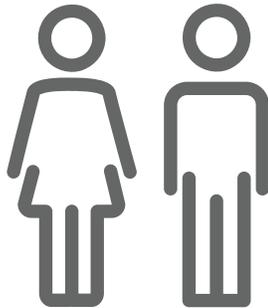
About two-thirds of caregivers see a deterioration in the physical and mental health of the senior they care for, compared to pre-pandemic times.

# Survey respondents

## Pre-seniors and seniors

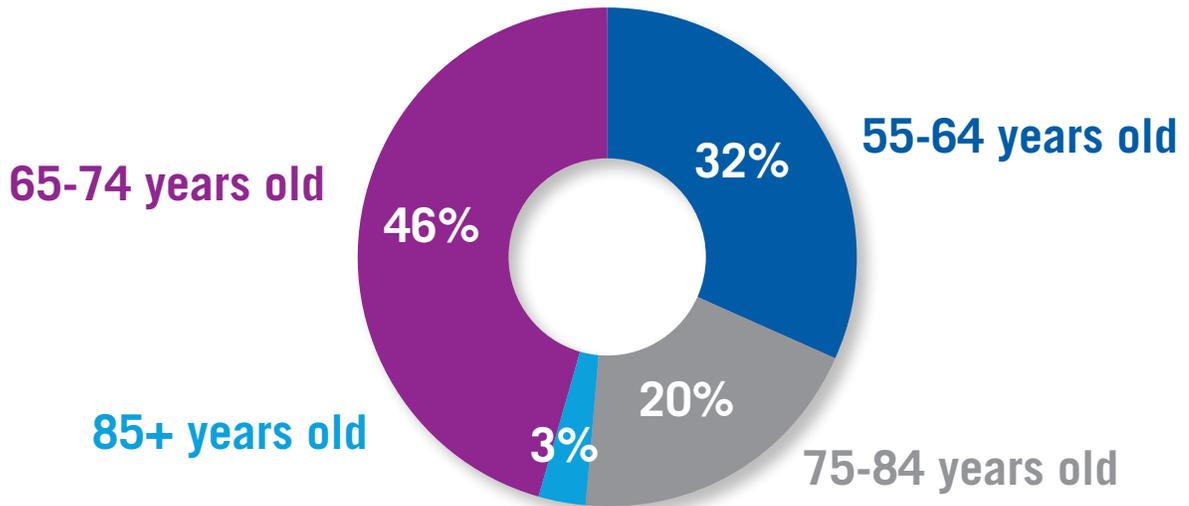
You identify as:

**65%**  
Female

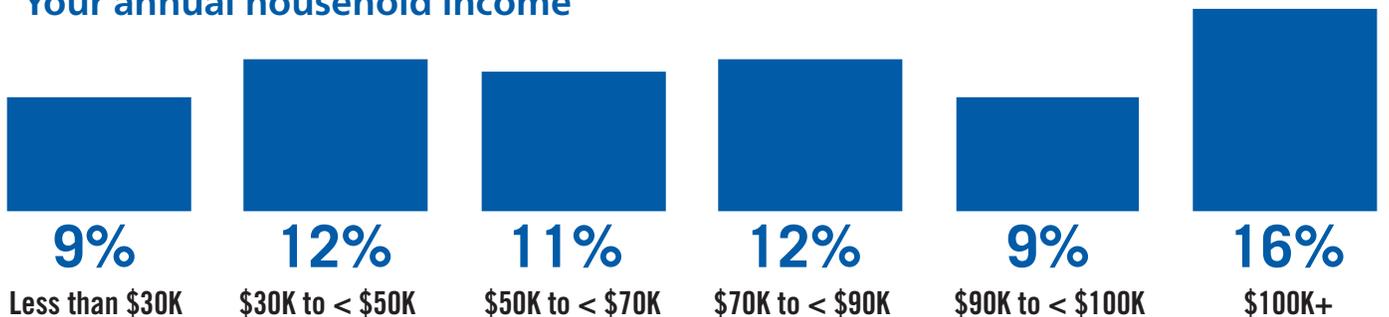


**35%**  
Male

**1%** Prefer not to say

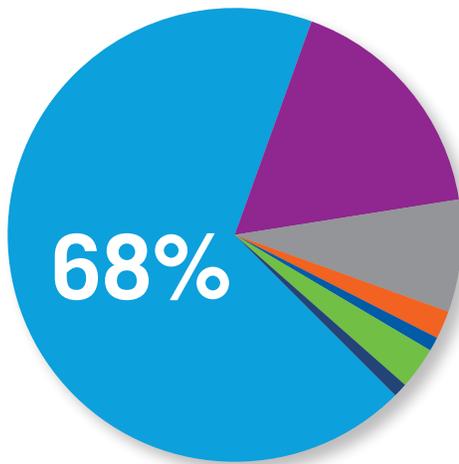


Your annual household income



**30%** Preferred not to say

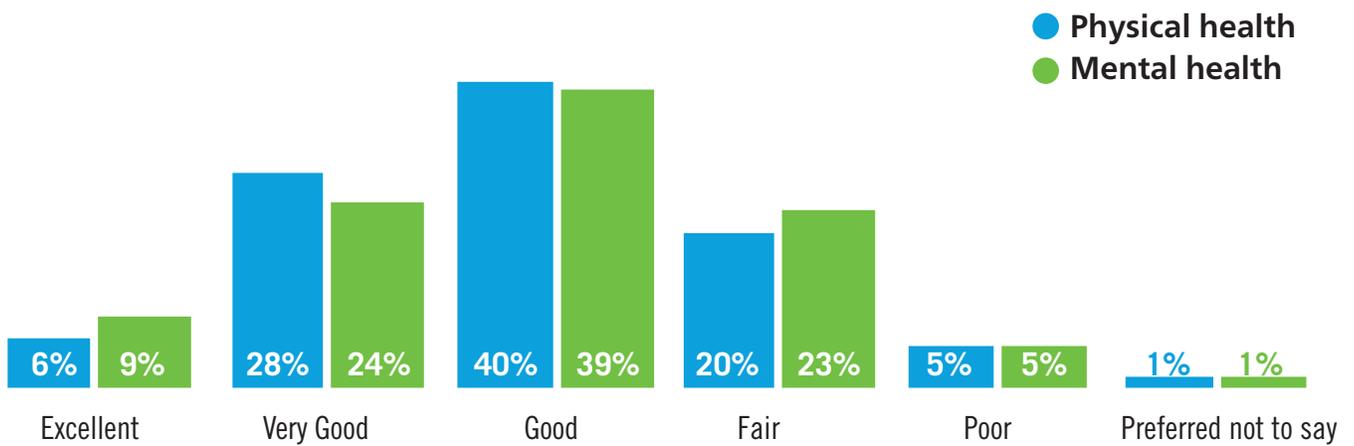
## Your employment status



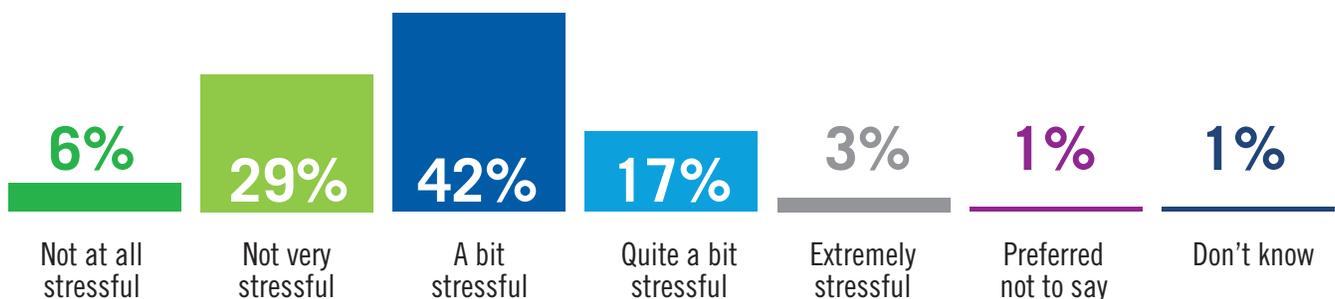
- 17%** Work full-time
- 8%** Work part-time
- 2%** Unemployed but seeking work
- 1%** Do not have a paid job
- 3%** Other
- 1%** Preferred not to say



## How you rated your current physical and mental health



## What you said about the amount of stress in your life





## Languages spoken at home

Chinese (including Cantonese and Mandarin)	51%
Urdu	11%
Russian	7%
Gujarati	5%
Spanish	5%
Punjabi	3%
Hindi	3%
Persian (Farsi)	2%
Italian	2%
Filipino	1%
French	1%
Korean	1%
Arabic	1%
Hebrew	1%
Other	5%
Preferred not to say	2%

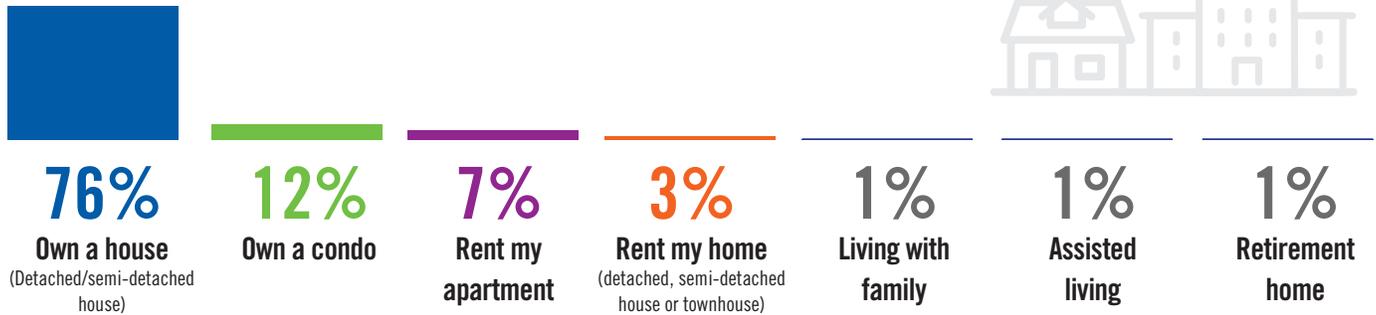
## Your ethnic or cultural origins\*

Canadian	41%
English	15%
Chinese	13%
Italian	9%
Jewish	9%
Scottish	7%
Irish	6%
East Indian	5%
German	4%
Polish	2%
Ukrainian	2%
Caribbean origins	2%
French	2%
Filipino	1%
Russian	1%
Pakistani	1%
Dutch	1%
Japanese	1%
Indian	1%
Macedonian	1%
Hungarian	1%

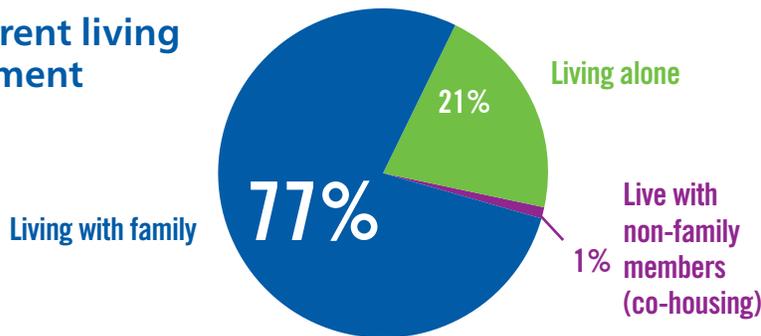
**88% of pre-seniors and seniors said English is the main language spoken at home.**

\* Respondents were invited to choose any that applied. Ethnic origin refers to the ethnic or cultural origins of one's ancestors. An ancestor is usually more distant than a grandparent.

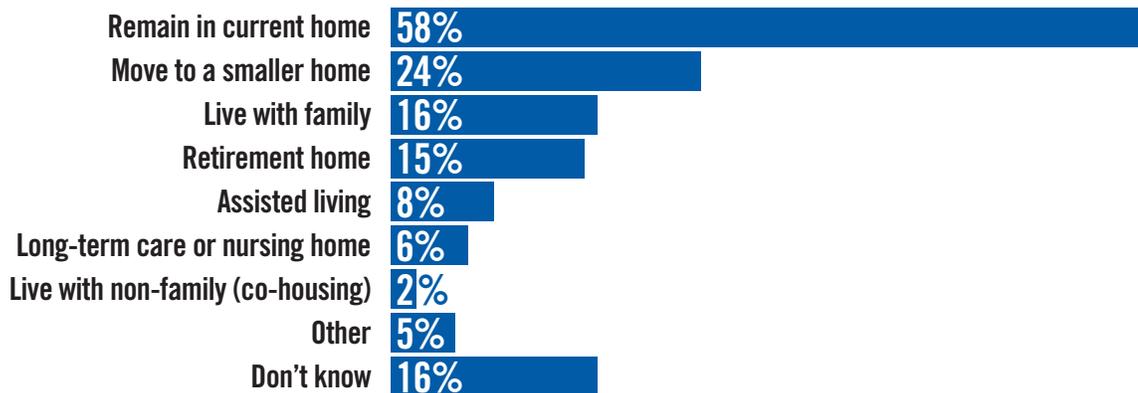
## Your current housing situation



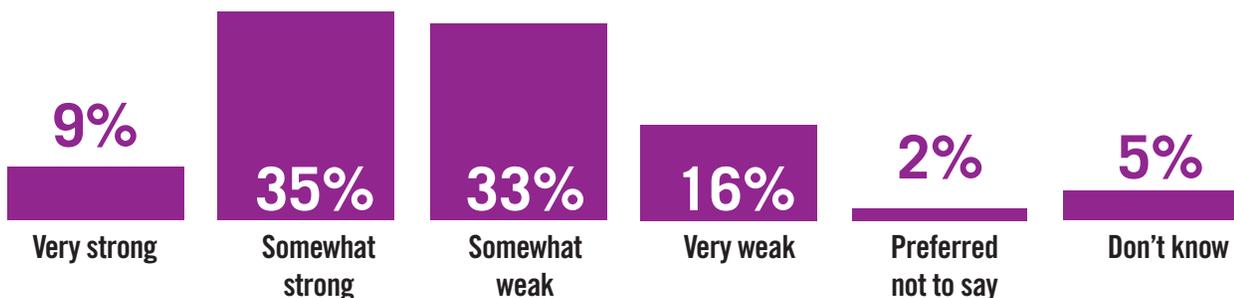
## Your current living arrangement



## Where you plan to age in the future, short and long-term



## How you described your sense of belonging in your community



# Survey respondents

## Caregivers

You identify as

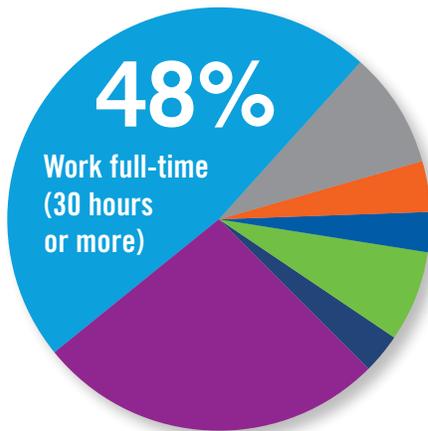
86%  
Female



12%  
Male

2% Preferred not to say

## Your employment status



27% Retired

9% Work part-time (less than 30 hours per week)

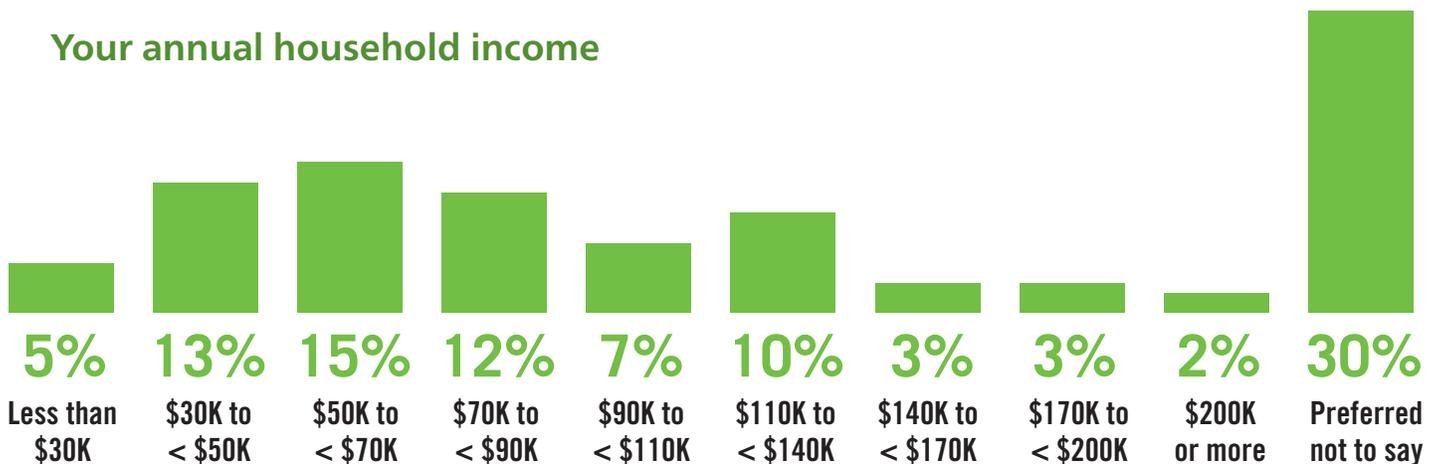
4% Unemployed but seeking work

3% Do not have a paid job but not seeking

7% Other

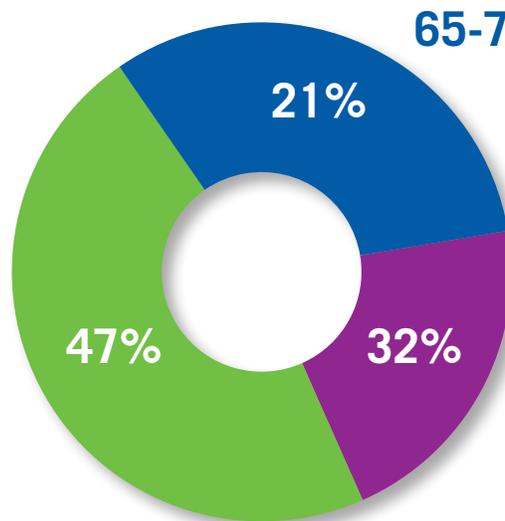
3% Preferred not to say

## Your annual household income



Age of the senior you provide support/care for

75-84 years old



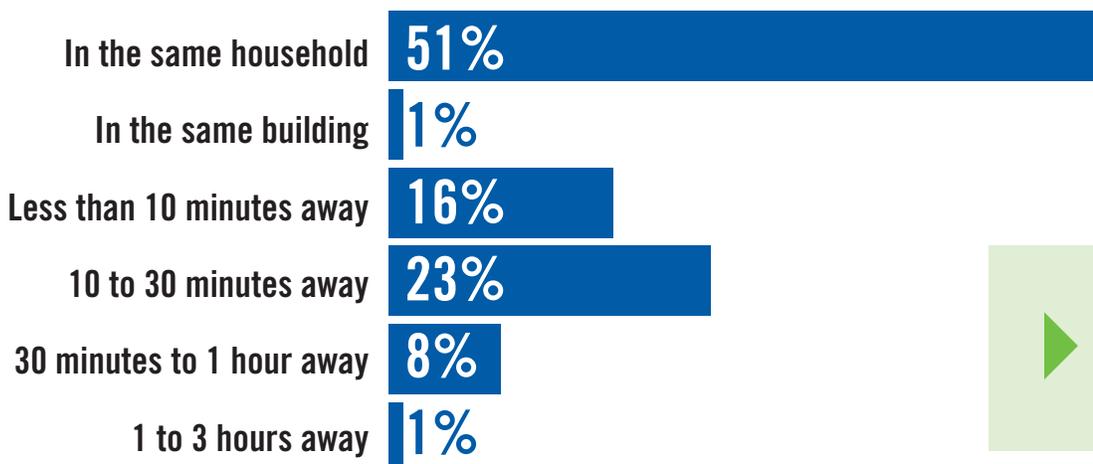
65-74 years old

85+ years old

### How much time you spend each week providing care for a senior



### How close you live to the senior you provide care for



91% of caregivers say they are the main contact for the senior's care arrangements.

# Survey respondents

## The language you speak most often with the senior in your care

Chinese (including Cantonese and Mandarin)	35%
Italian	13%
Russian	9%
Urdu	9%
Korean	4%
Punjabi	4%
Filipino	4%
Spanish	4%
Other	17%

## Your ethnic or cultural origins\*

Canadian	41%
Italian	18%
Chinese	16%
English	14%
Scottish	6%
East Indian	4%
Jewish	4%
Irish	4%
Polish	4%
German	3%
Greek	2%
French	2%
Russian	2%
Filipino	2%
Iranian	1%
Caribbean origins	1%
Sri Lankan	1%
Ukrainian	1%
Origin(s) not listed	14%

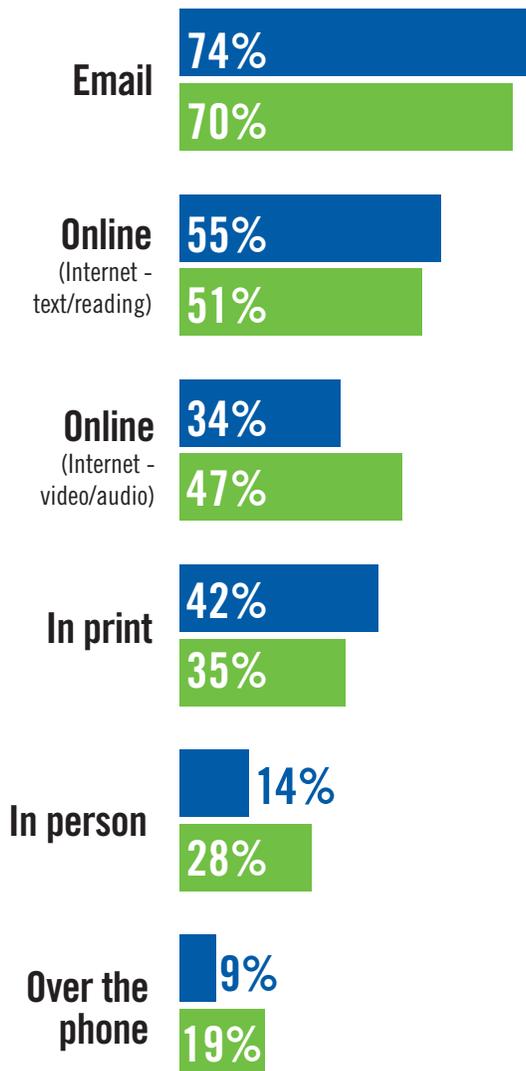
\* Respondents were invited to choose any that applied. Ethnic origin refers to the ethnic or cultural origins of one's ancestors. An ancestor is usually more distant than a grandparent.

**79% of caregivers communicate with the senior in their care in English.**

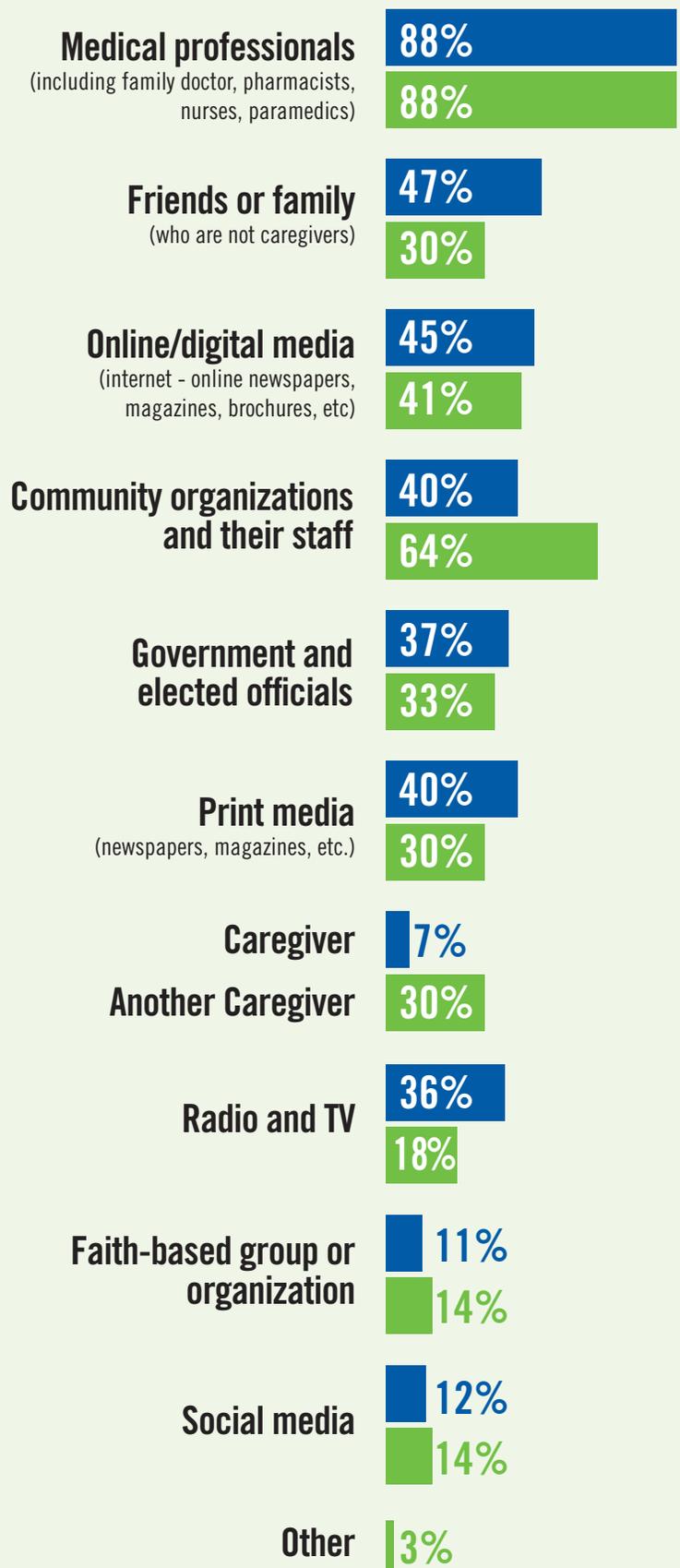
# What you said

● Pre-seniors and seniors ● Caregivers

## Your preferred way to get information on programs and services



## Your most trusted sources for information

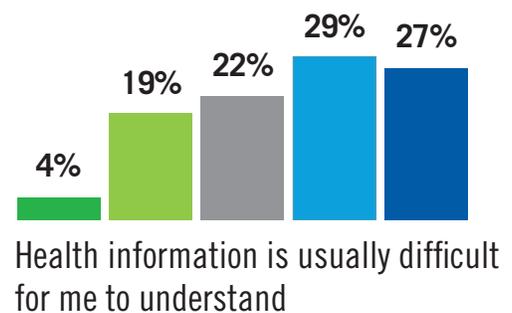
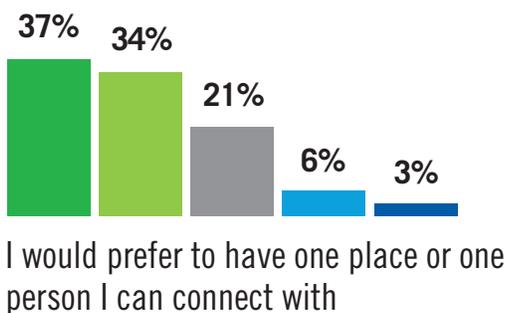
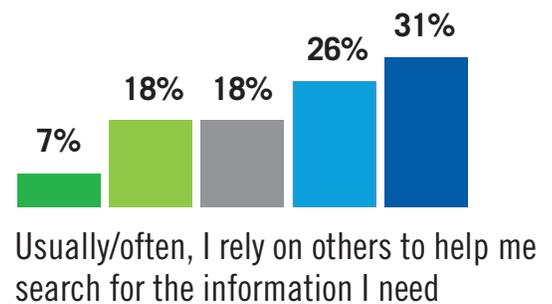
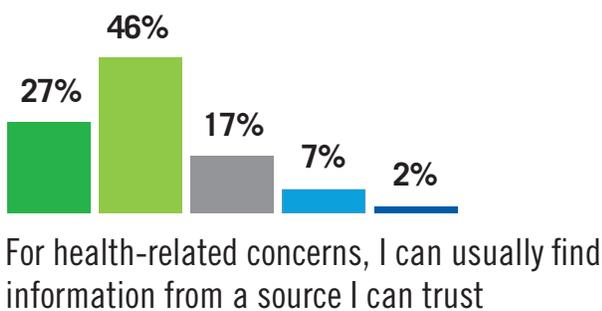
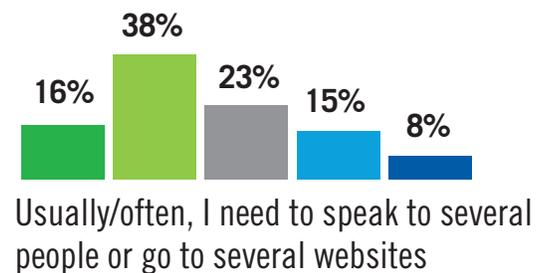
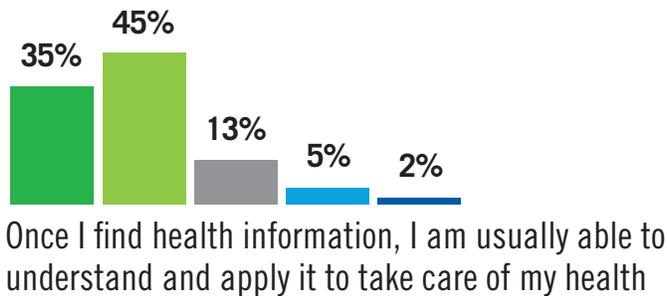
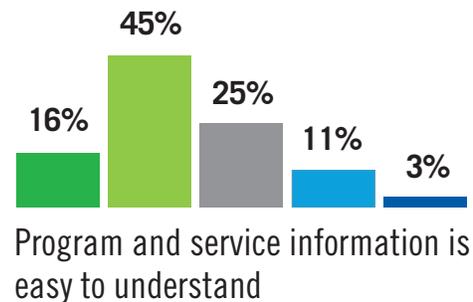
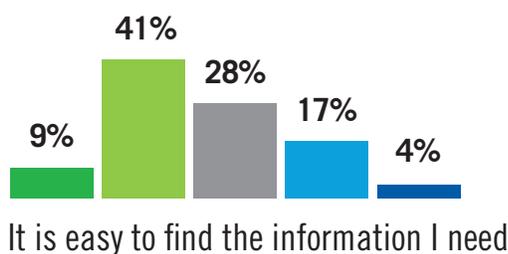


# Your experiences searching for information

## Pre-seniors and seniors

When asked about their experiences in searching for information on programs and services, 50% (657 responses) of pre-seniors and seniors say it is easy to find information they need and 61% (802 responses) say this information is easy to understand.

● Strongly agree  
 ● Somewhat agree  
 ● Neither agree or disagree  
 ● Somewhat disagree  
 ● Strongly disagree

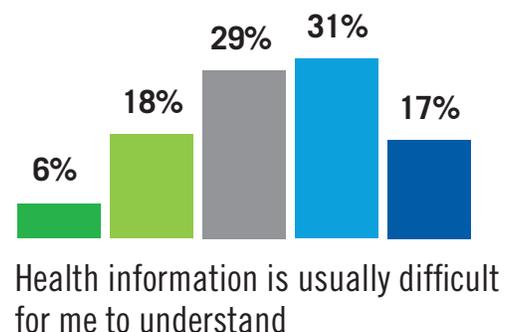
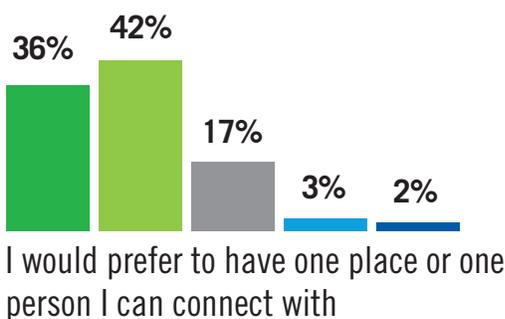
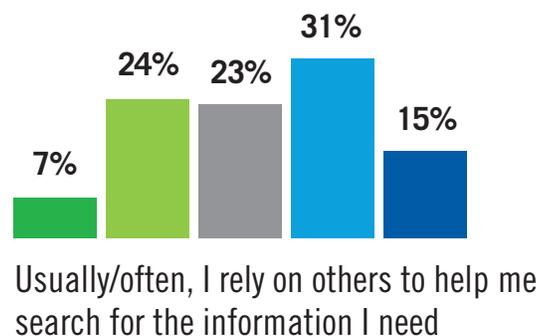
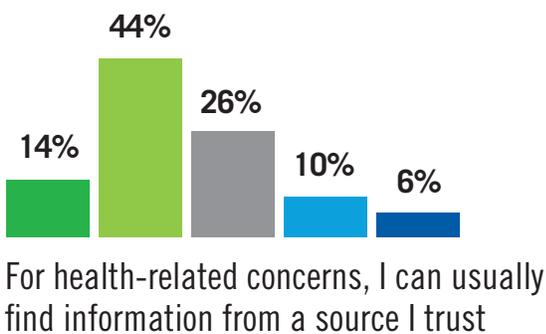
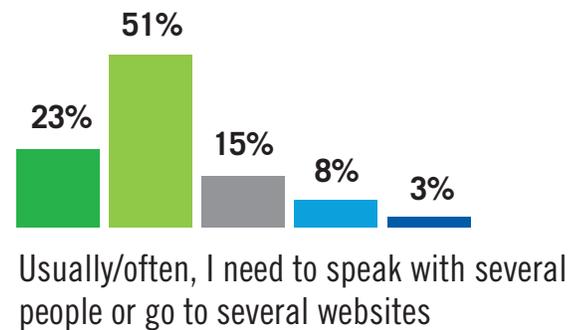
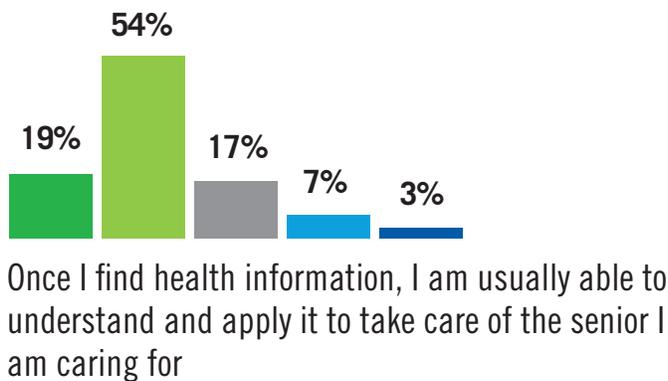
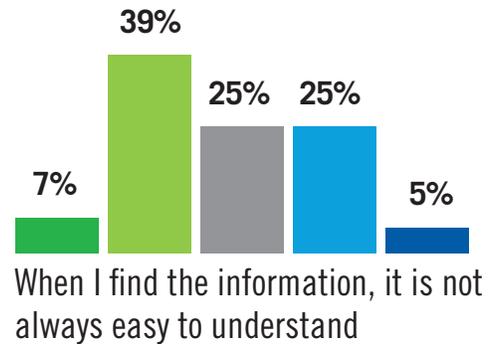
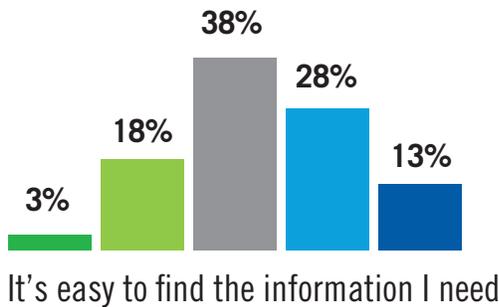


# Your experiences searching for information

## Caregivers

Only 21% of caregivers (25 responses) say it is easy to find the information they need and less than half, 46% (54 responses) say that when they find this information it is not easy to understand.

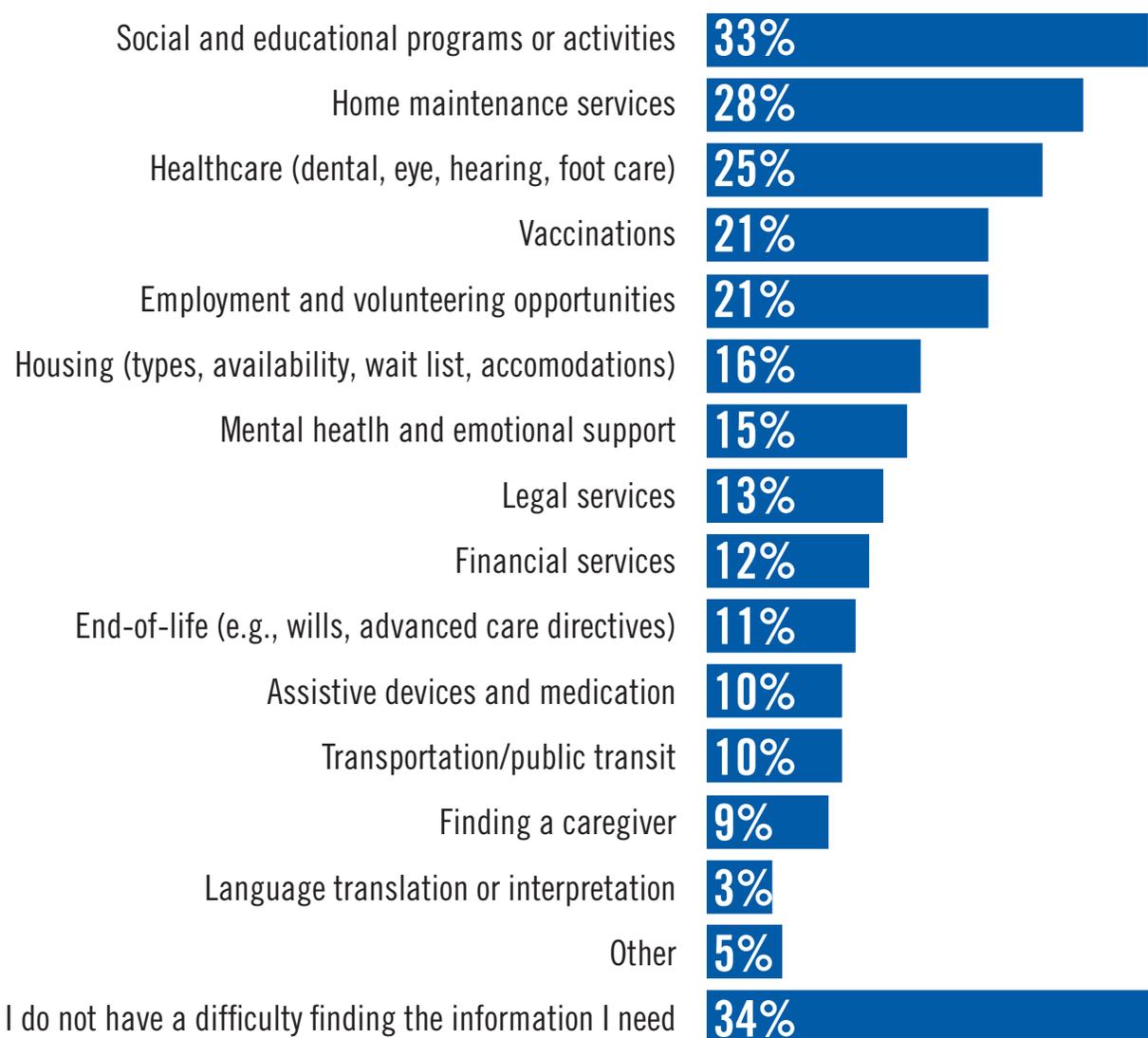
● Strongly agree  
 ● Somewhat agree  
 ● Neither agree or disagree  
 ● Somewhat disagree  
 ● Strongly disagree



# What you say is hard to find information about

## Pre-seniors and seniors

One-third of pre-seniors and seniors, or 33% (436 responses), have difficulty finding information about social and educational programs and services, followed by 28% (374 responses) for home maintenance services and 25% (323 responses) for health care.



**18% of respondents said they had no trouble finding information.**

\*Examples of "Other" include affordable housing, bereavement group therapy and more

## Reasons you had difficulty finding this information

780 comments were received from pre-seniors and seniors and categorized by theme. Sample comments from each theme have been indicated below along with the frequency of responses.

### Don't know where to start/search - 18%

- Not sure what services are available and where to find information
- Do not know where to look for information

### Difficult website/not tech savvy - 16%

- Some websites search functions are not very effective. Give too much irrelevant information
- Website is difficult to navigate

### Information not in one place/too much - 10%

- If all information cannot be found in one place you end up looking in several places and that can be frustrating
- I am not aware of a single source for "SENIORS" to access information on available services and programs

### Other - 7%

- Links to information referred you to another area that was too vague
- No live person to talk to

### Lack of information/access - 5%

- Sometimes you know what you want but it is hard to access
- Not a lot of publicly available information

### Lack of appointments/wait list - 5%

- Website had you standby for long wait just to find there actually were no vaccine appointments available
- Online it is the long wait time. Phone calls leave one on hold for very long times also

### Information hard to understand - 4%

- Information tends to be all over. Need to know specifically where to go

### Pandemic-related delays/issues - 3%

- Covid rules keep changing. I can't find any in-person fitness for seniors
- Finding a suitable Covid-19 vaccine clinic, booking appointments through York Region was very tricky

### Unsure if information is trustworthy - 3%

- Don't know how to figure out if the enormous amount of information could be trusted or not
- Hard to find reliable sources online

### Poor customer service - 2%

- Phone lines busy. Repeated information on calling but no actual person
- People I call do not return calls

### Language barriers - 2%

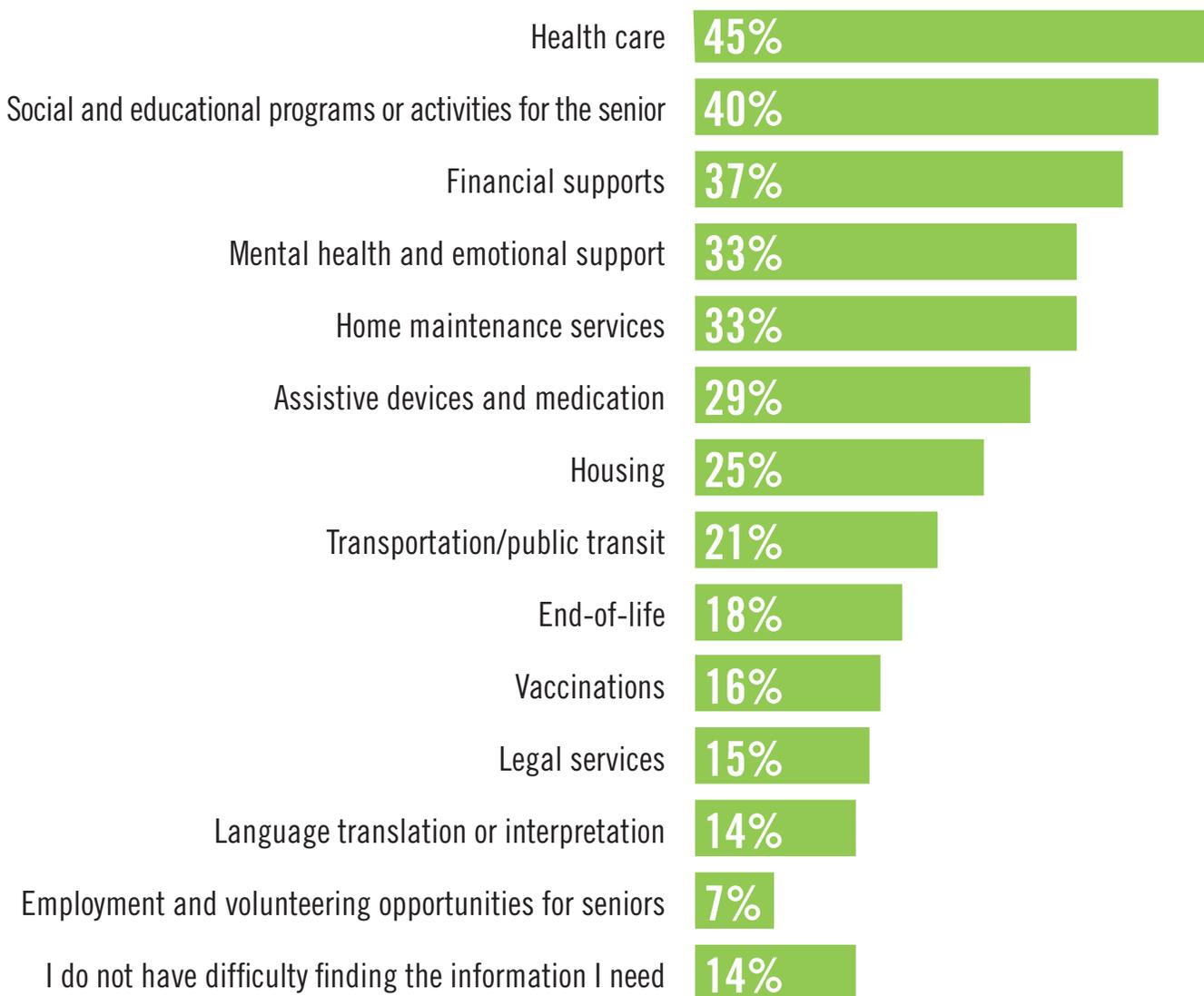
- Lack of language understanding
- Language barrier. I find it stressful for both of us

### Don't know/not stated - 8%

# What you say is hard to find information about

## Caregivers

45% (53 responses) of caregivers indicated that health care information was the most difficult to find, followed closely by social and educational programs and services at 40% (47 responses), and financial support at 37% (44 responses).



## Reasons you had difficulty finding this information

Caregivers provided 94 comments about the reasons for having difficulty in finding information on programs and services which were categorized by theme. Sample comments from each theme have been indicated below along with the frequency of responses.

### **Don't know where to look/start - 26%**

- I don't know what I don't know. What services/supports are available locally? One stop shopping would be incredibly helpful
- Much of the important info I require is not published anywhere

### **Hard to find/not in one place - 25%**

- Not sure where to go for information, there should be one centralized website for information
- There are too many different groups and not one point/source of info

### **Long wait times - 14%**

- Long telephone waits, only able to leave a message, calls not returned. Many senior challenges are urgent and need to be addressed quickly
- Takes way too long to get what I need. Often redirected to another person/dept. Immediate needs are not often met

### **Information is inconsistent/unreliable - 5%**

- Everyone you talk to has different answers to the same question
- I am given different answers to the same question

### **Too time-consuming - 3%**

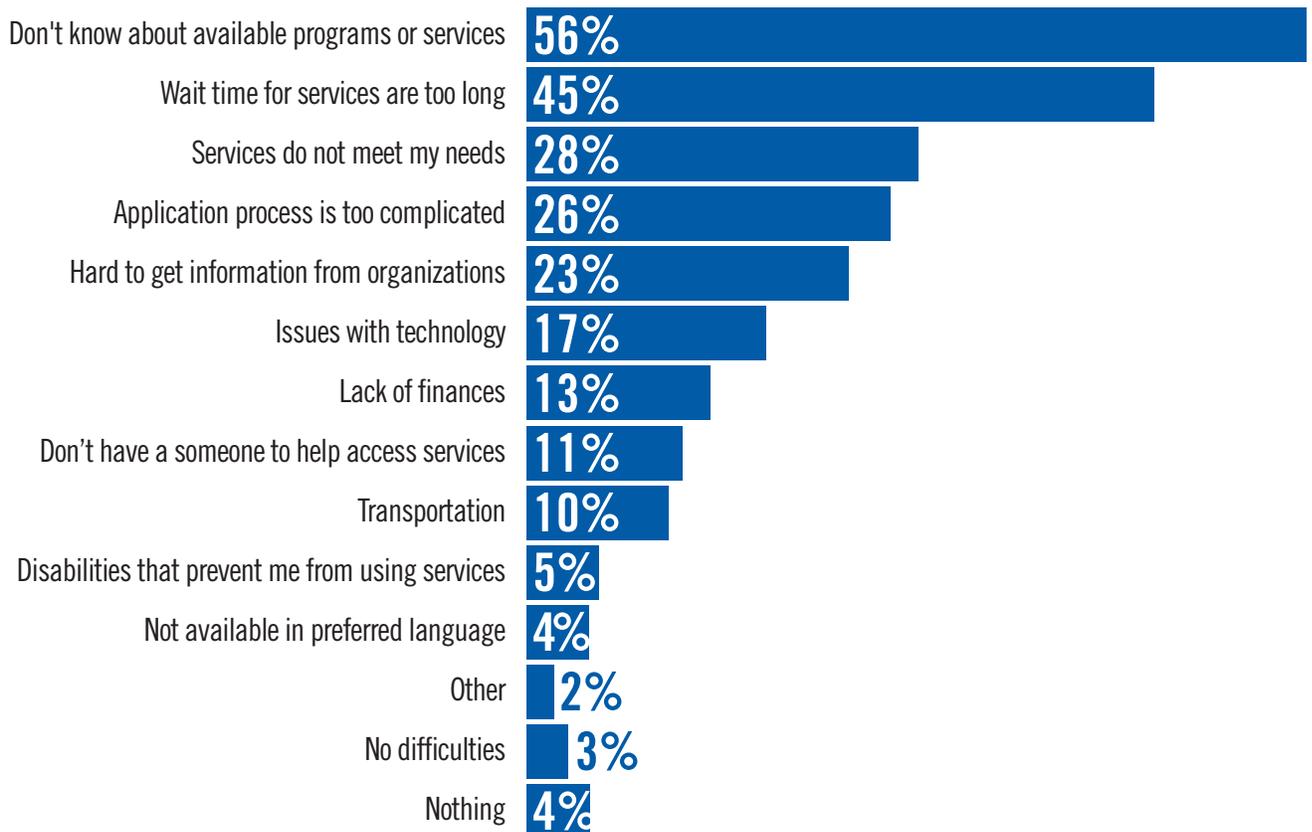
- I have a full-time job and I don't have time to find information
- Time consuming- Searches present multiple options and need to read through them to find which is applicable

### **Other - 19%**

- Assumptions that everyone has a cellphone, email and computer, a lot don't
- Human connection is important
- Knowing which programs exist and where they fit
- Language barriers

# What you feel are the barriers to accessing needed information

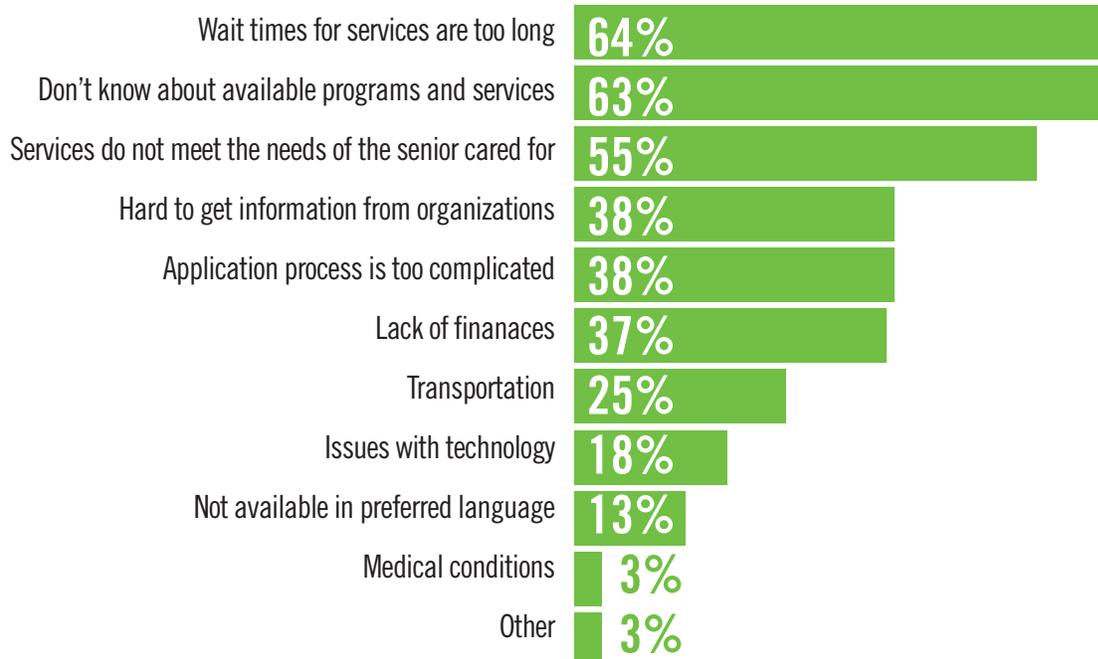
## Pre-seniors and seniors



\* Examples of "Other" include better navigation on web pages and printed documents



## Caregivers

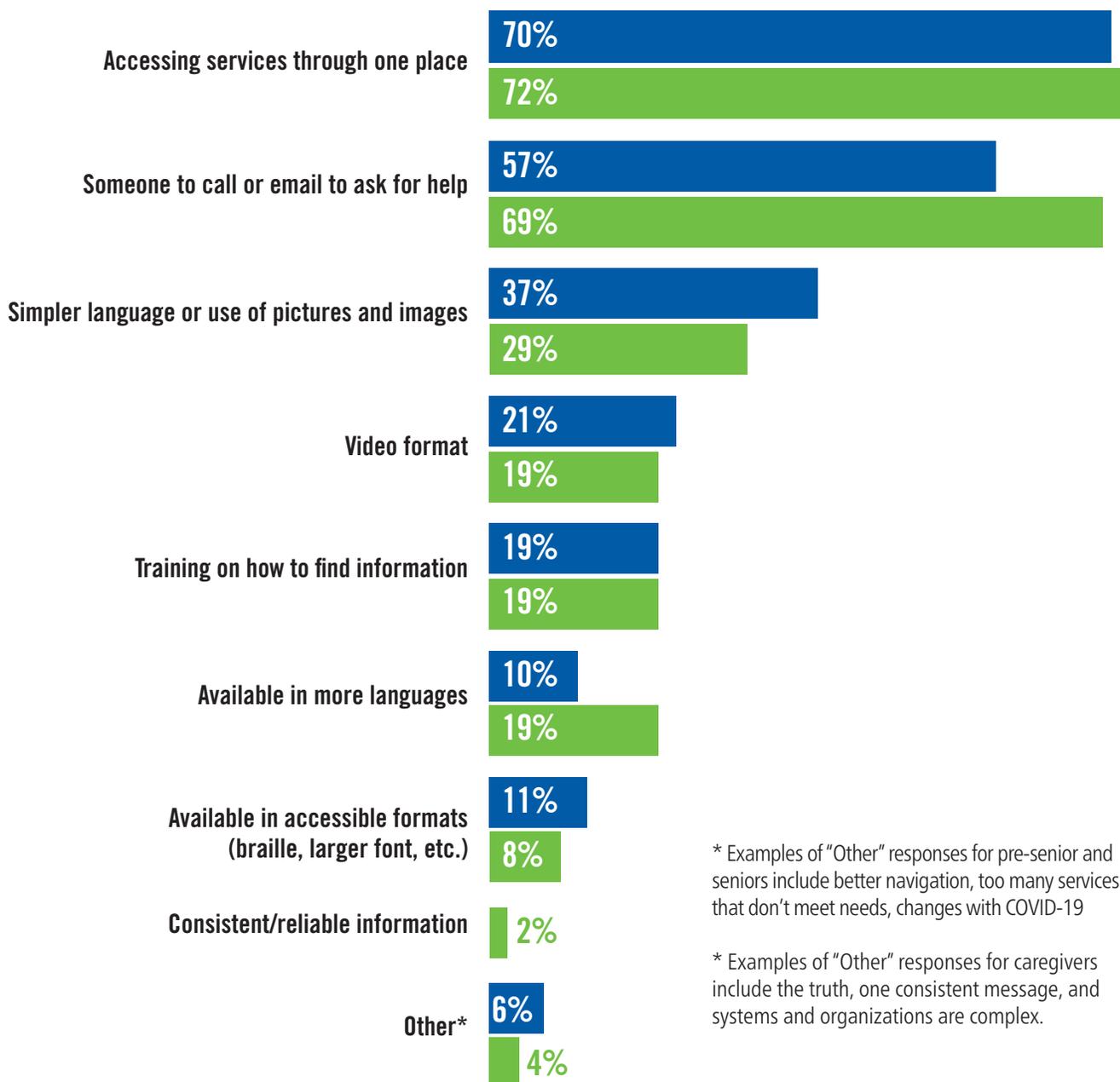


\* Examples of "Other" include avoiding use of in-person programs and devices due to the pandemic



## What would make it easier to find information on programs, services and health?

● Pre-seniors and seniors ● Caregivers



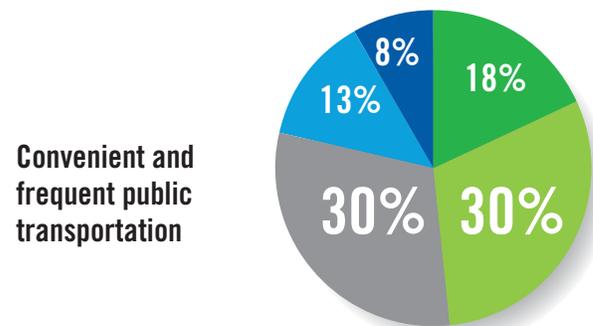
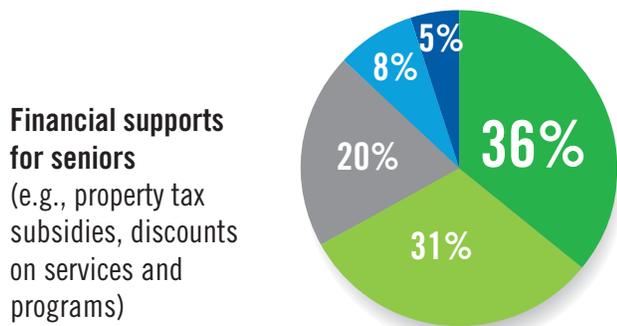
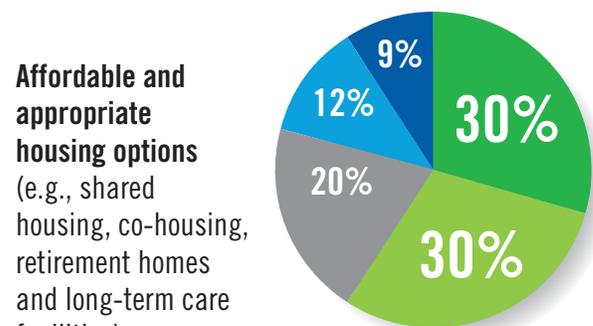
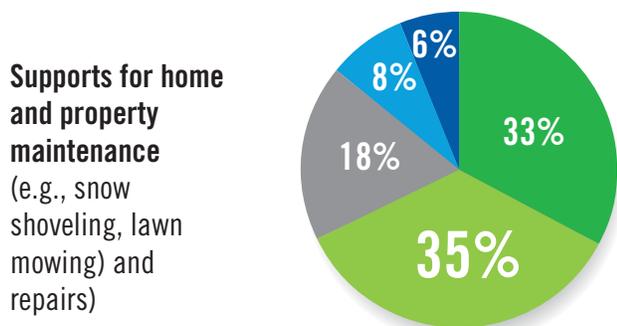
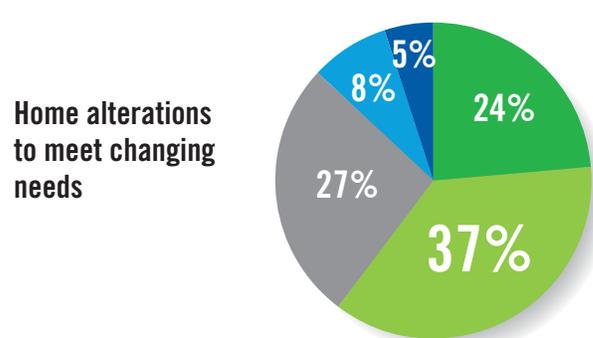
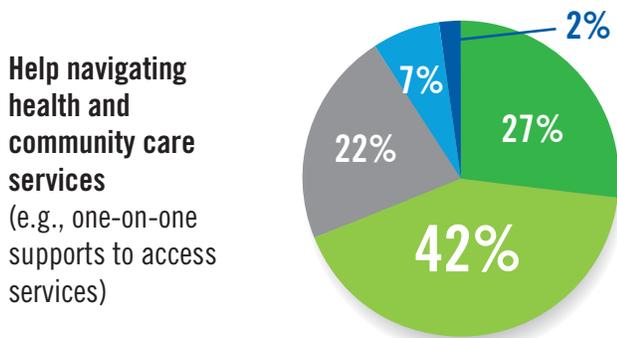
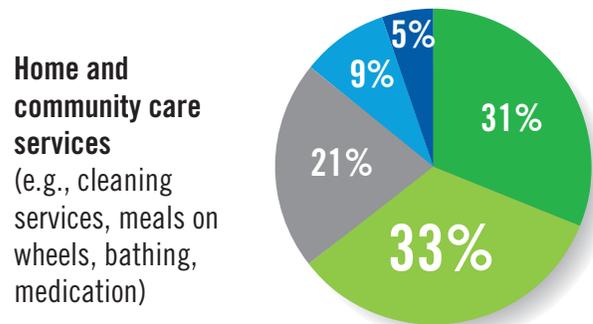
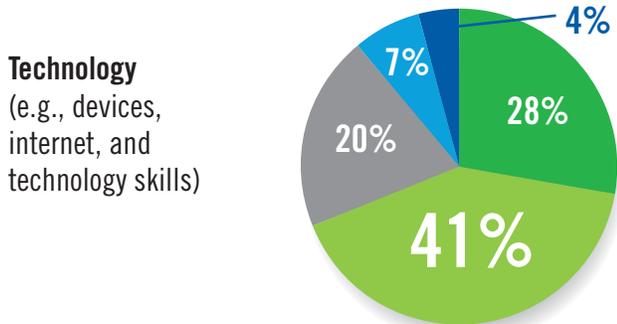
\* Examples of "Other" responses for pre-senior and seniors include better navigation, too many services that don't meet needs, changes with COVID-19

\* Examples of "Other" responses for caregivers include the truth, one consistent message, and systems and organizations are complex.

# Importance of specific supports in helping pre-seniors and seniors age in their home and community

When asked to rate the importance of specific supports to help them age in their own home or community, the majority of pre-senior and senior respondents considered nearly all supports important.

● Extremely important   
 ● Very important   
 ● Neither important or unimportant   
 ● Not important   
 ● Not important at all



# Supports pre-seniors and seniors said they need to help them age in their home and community

## Pre-seniors and seniors

367 comments were received from pre-seniors and seniors when asked about other supports they need, and are categorized by theme. Sample comments from each theme have been indicated below along with the frequency of responses.

### **In-home care/medical appointments - 8%**

- Doctor/health care worker making in-house calls. List of doctors/clinics or facilities that cater specifically to geriatric care
- Knowledge that end-of-life care at home will be available

### **Social activities/programs - 7%**

- Community activity facility available for seniors in the neighbourhood
- Drop-in centre for seniors with games for social interaction on a daily basis

### **Financial assistance/reduced taxes - 5%**

- Increase old age payments. Stop claw backs
- More financial support. OAS isn't enough. Most of my problems are due to insufficient income to keep up with the outrageous costs of living
- Financial assistance, government grants

### **Cleaning/maintenance services - 4%**

- Free or affordable help i.e., cleaning, fixing things
- Help with cooking and cleaning

### **Affordable/low-cost food services - 3%**

- Grocery delivery without premium cost, supports for fixed income over time
- Affordable food services

### **Transportation services - 2%**

- I live in the country. If I did not drive, I would not be able keep living here. There is no public transportation in the country
- Transportation for those with mobility issues
- Access to information or assistance with transportation to medical appointments etc. for seniors who can no longer drive themselves

### **Physical activity/fitness programs - 2%**

- Aqua fitness opportunity for seniors
- More access to sports and activities...gyms, skating, pickleball, etc.

### **Snow removal services - 2%**

- Faster snow removal from streets, sidewalks
- Snow removal is dismal for those with disabilities
- Snowplow windrow build-up

### **Affordable housing - 2%**

- Having somewhere in town to downsize to at a price I can afford
- Helping transition from retirement home to long-term care in the future is extremely important for low-income seniors

### **Wellness checks/visits - 2%**

- Ability to request a wellness call daily so if no response someone will come to the house. In case of falls, etc.
- People who can visit to combat loneliness

### **Other - 9%**

- Social network and activities suitable for the elderly
- Mental/emotional supports for seniors who live alone

### **Don't know - 8%**

# Supports provided to seniors by caregivers

## Caregivers

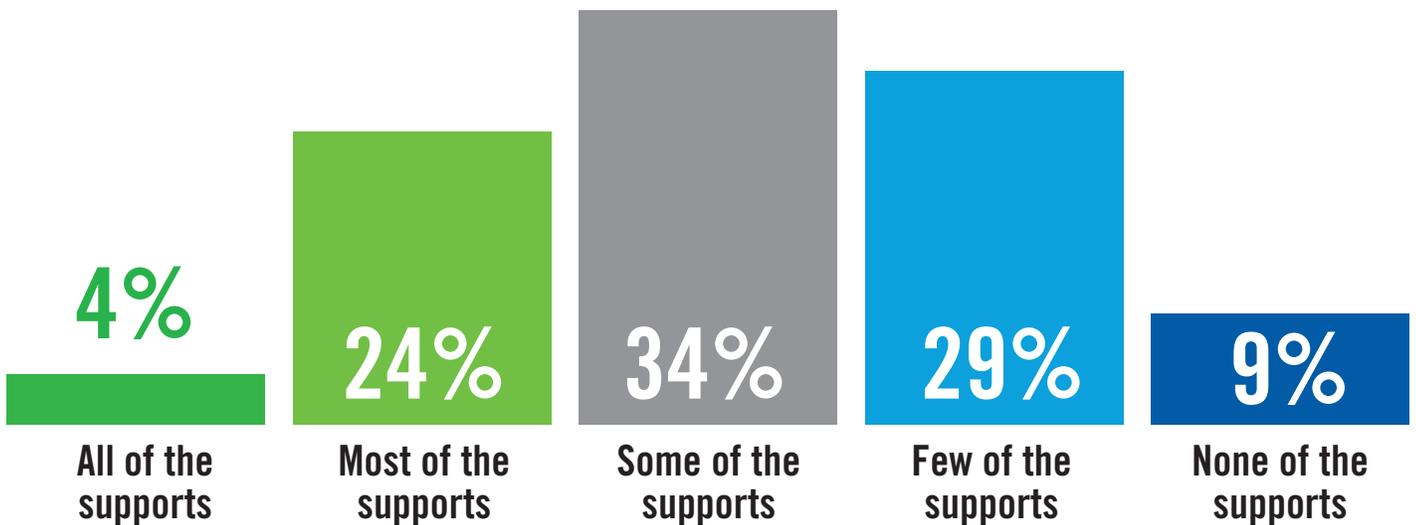
Caregivers say they provide the following supports to seniors they care for

Helping to access services	85%
Transportation	85%
Home maintenance and household work	84%
Checking on senior or providing emotional support	81%
Explaining health information	81%
Managing finances	75%
Personal care	57%
Translation	51%
End-of-life care/planning	47%
Other (assisting with future living arrangements)	3%



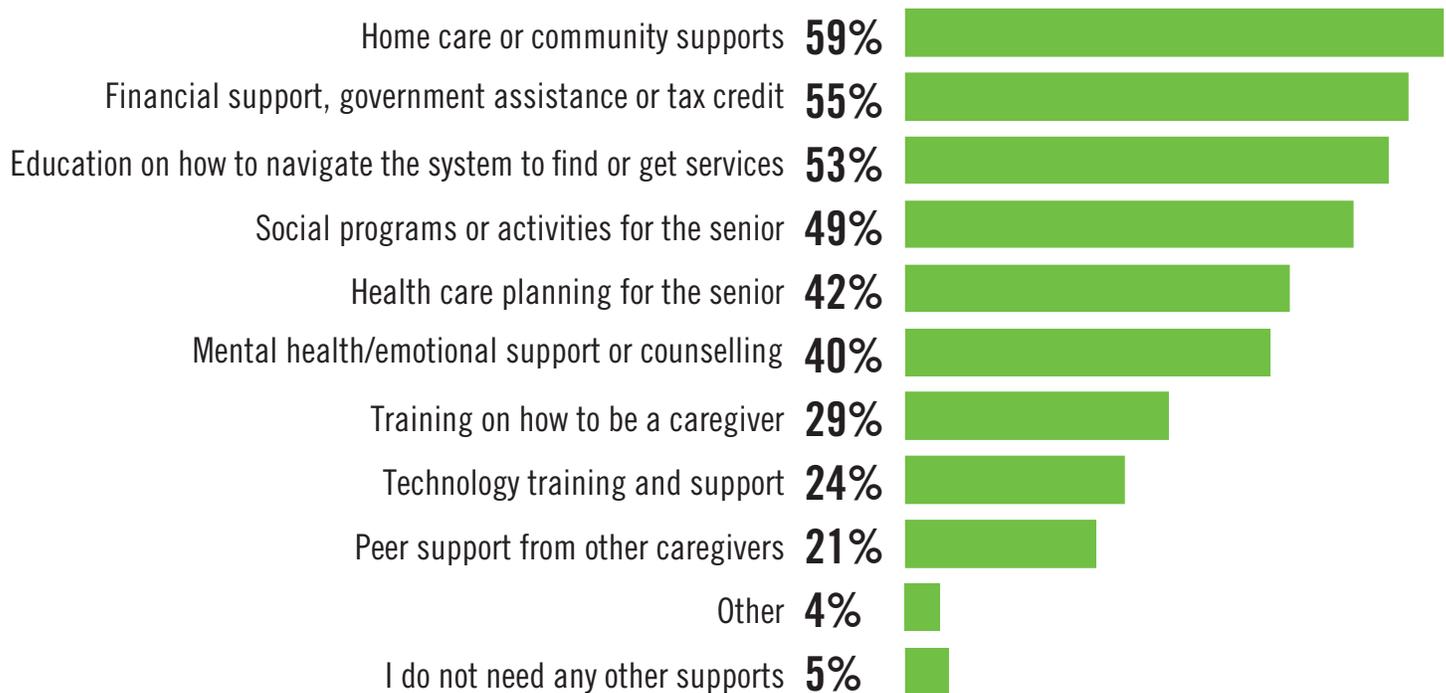
When asked if you have the supports you need to provide for the senior you assist, you said you have

### Perception of current level of supports





### What you said would help with caregiving duties



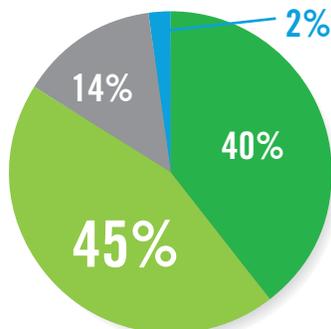
\* Examples of "Other" include access to ongoing physical therapies like aqua therapy and transportation, wheelchair accessible services

# Supporting caregivers to help seniors

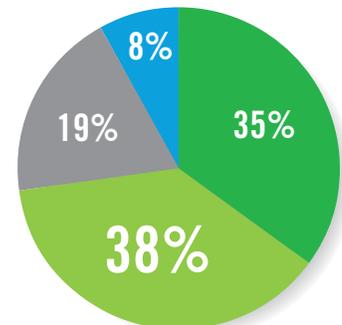
How you, as a caregiver, ranked the importance of the following supports in helping you provide care that allows the senior to age in the place of their choosing

● Extremely important   
 ● Very important   
 ● Neither important or unimportant   
 ● Not important   
 ● Not important at all

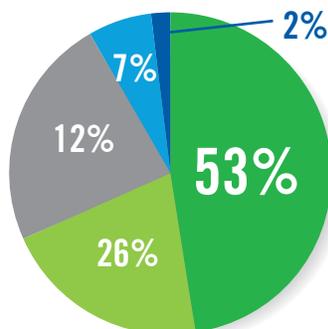
**Help navigating health and community services**  
(e.g., one-on-one supports to access services)



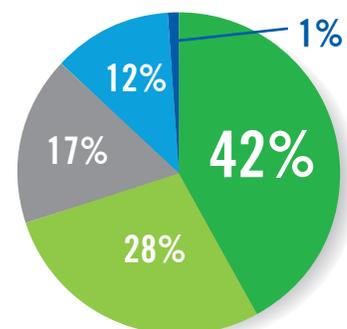
**Home alterations to meet changing needs**



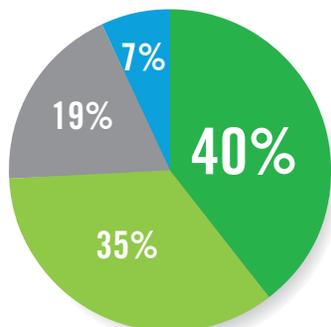
**Home and community care services**  
(e.g., cleaning services, meals on wheels, bathing, medication)



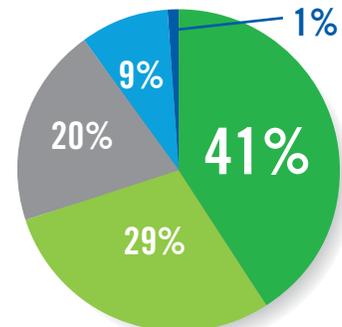
**Affordable and appropriate housing options**  
(e.g., shared housing, co-housing, retirement homes and long-term care facilities)



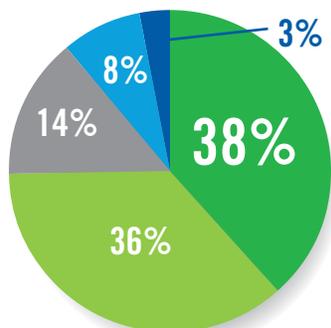
**Financial supports for caregivers**  
(e.g., tax credits)



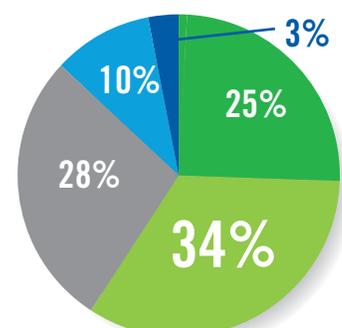
**Respite services**  
(e.g., getting a break from caregiving)



**Supports for home and property maintenance**  
(e.g., snow shoveling, lawn mowing and repairs)



**Technology**  
(e.g., including devices, internet, and technology skills)



# Other supports caregivers need to help seniors age in their home and community

## Caregivers

61 comments were received from caregivers and categorized by theme. Sample comments from each theme have been indicated below along with the frequency of responses.

### **In-home medical appointments and care - 25%**

- Companion visits and well-being checks would be a nice added bonus. Caregivers cannot always be there, especially when they have their own families to care for too
- More hours of PSW/nursing care, doctors who make house calls
- Respite care is currently not available and needs to become available as soon as possible

### **Mental and social support - 9%**

- Peer support, mental health access for caregiver and respite time
- More ethnic specific mental health and social supports for immigrant seniors
- Social activities to avoid loneliness

### **Financial support - 8%**

- Financial support for caregivers
- Funding for equipment & supplies as prescribed: i.e. mechanical lifts, incontinence products (diapers)
- Free or affordable help i.e., cleaning, fixing things



### Transportation - 7%

- Ease in finding transportation for medical appointments

### Legal support - 3%

- Legal advice on managing situations as a caregiver of someone who has Alzheimer's
- Preparing a will for free

### More information on services provided - 2%

- I would like to know about supports to assist with senior loneliness and isolation when living independently

### Physical activity and fitness programs - 2%

- Personal exercise programs at home or in home physiotherapists to improve a senior's ability to maintain their independence
- Exercise classes focusing on seniors staying at home

### Language support - 1%

- Home assistance for senior in second language

### Other - 10%

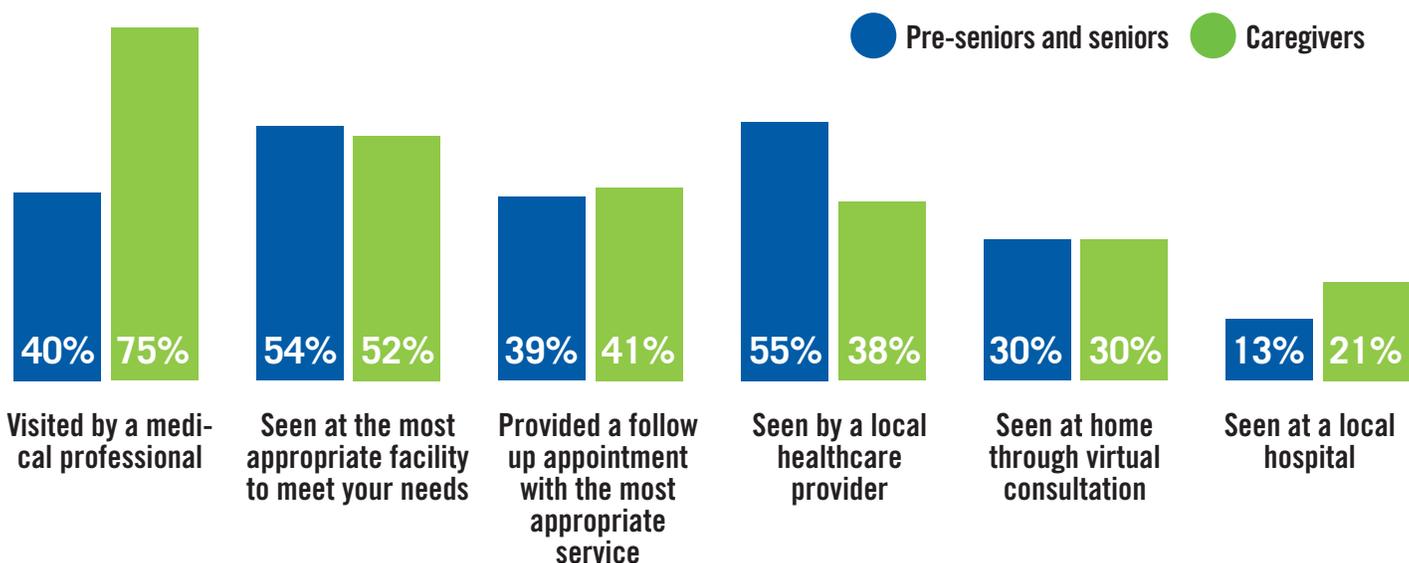
- Things to enable the senior to be more independent
- Tools and devices that keep seniors safe
- Wheelchair-accessible van

**45% of caregivers indicated they did not require additional supports.**



# Non-emergency medical preferences

In the event of a non-emergency medical need, you prefer to be



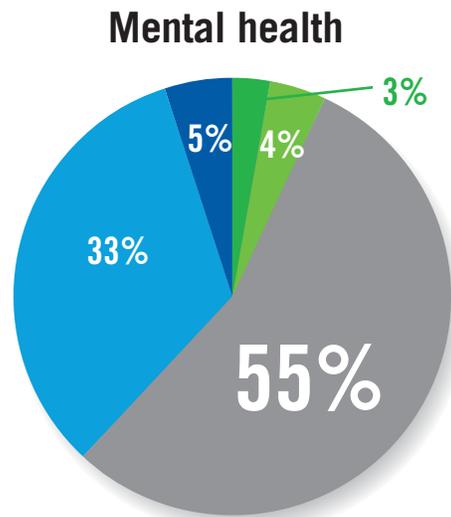
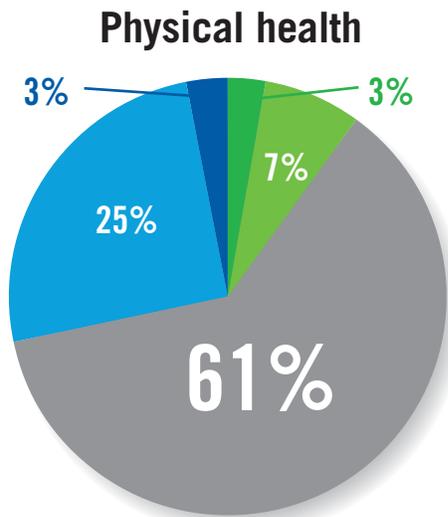
**In the 12 months preceding the survey, 13% of pre-seniors and seniors reported using emergency medical services and 9% reported being hospitalized.**

# COVID-19 impacts

## Pre-seniors and seniors

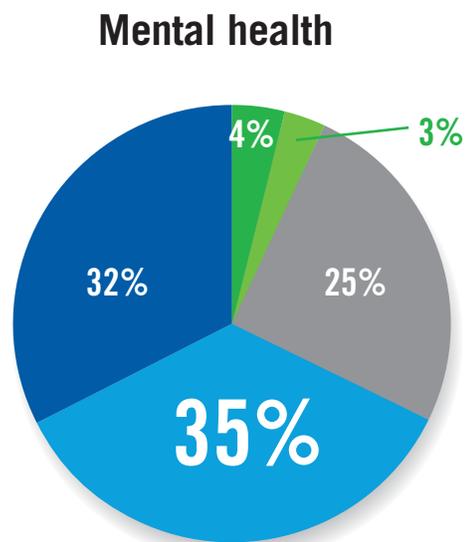
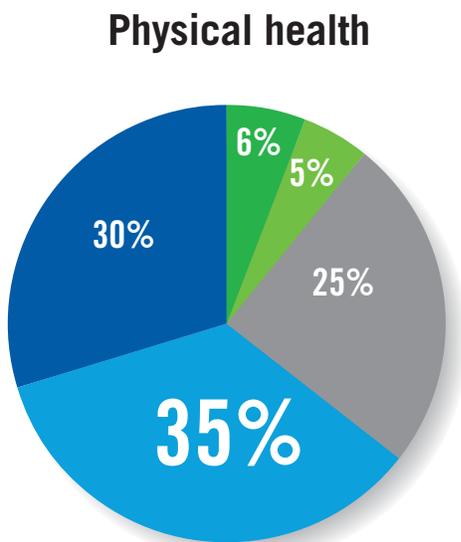
When asked to rate their physical and mental health now, compared to before the pandemic, pre-seniors and seniors said it is

● Much better   ● Somewhat better   ● About the same   ● Somewhat worse   ● Much worse



## Caregivers

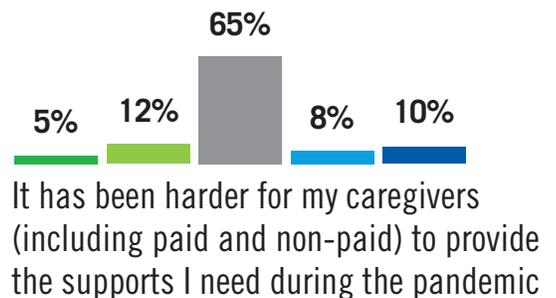
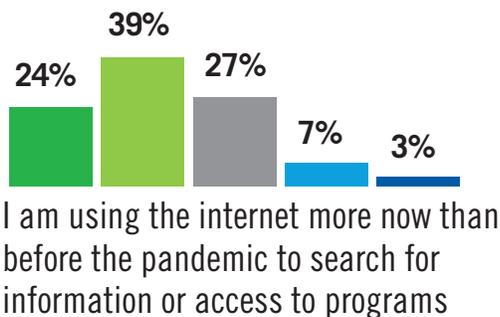
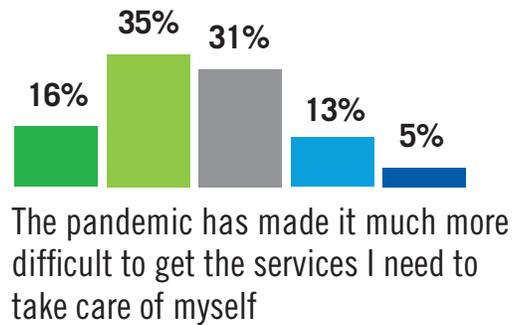
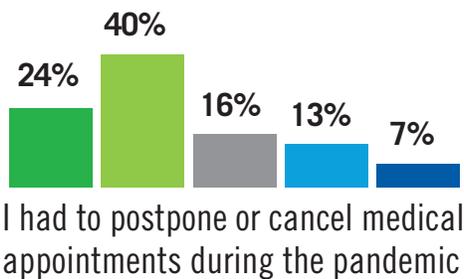
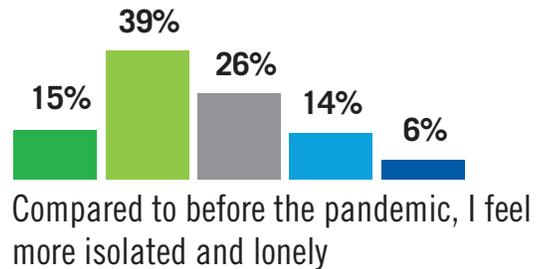
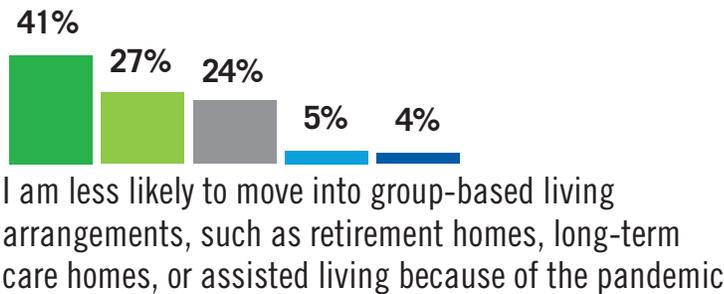
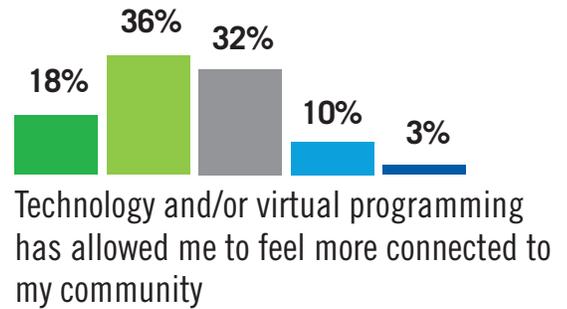
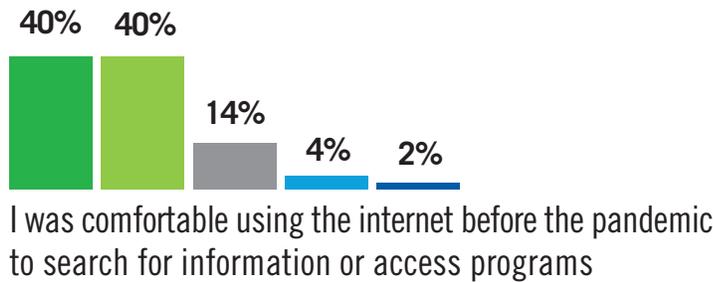
When caregivers were asked to rate the physical and mental health of the senior the care for now, compared to before the pandemic, caregivers said it is



# Pre-seniors and seniors

When asked to agree or disagree with a variety of statements about pandemic impacts, pre-seniors and seniors said

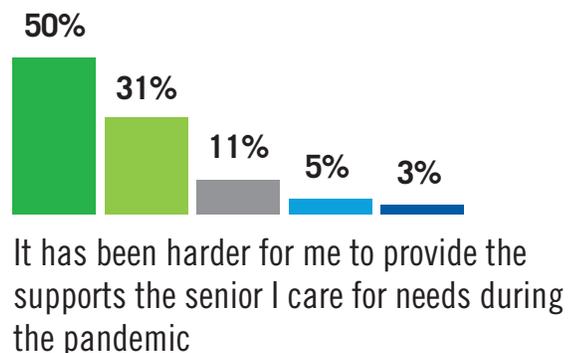
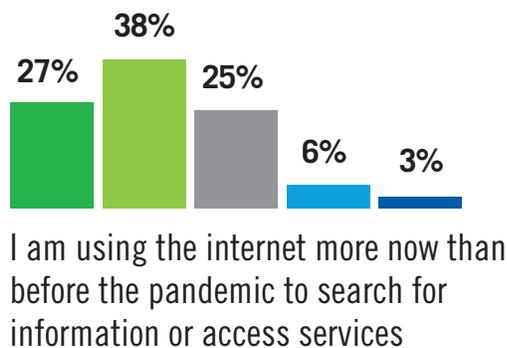
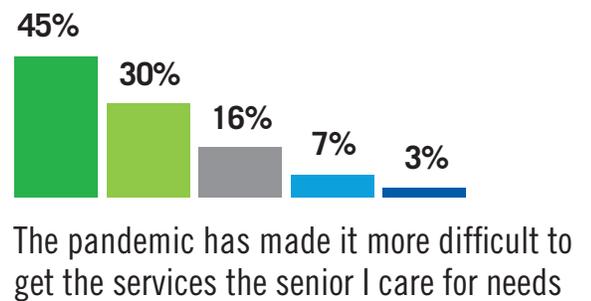
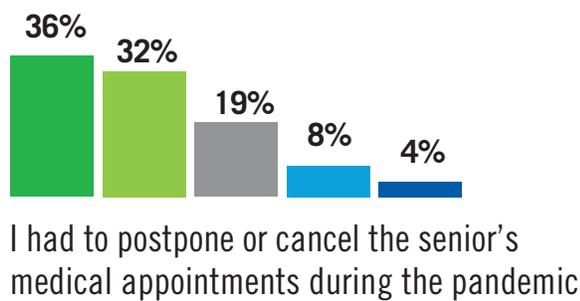
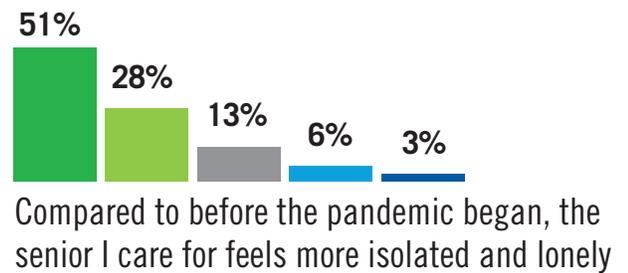
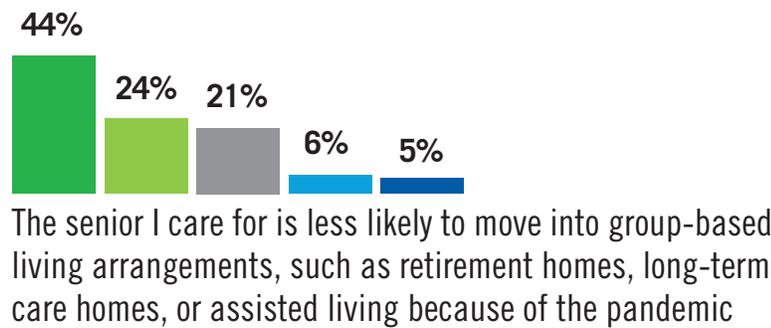
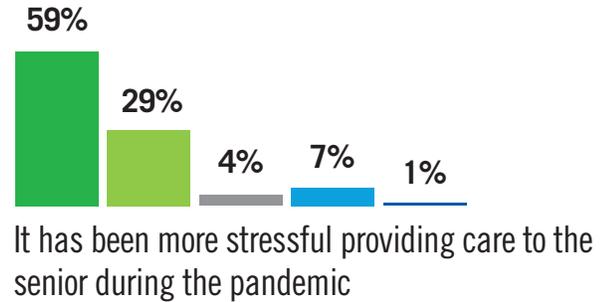
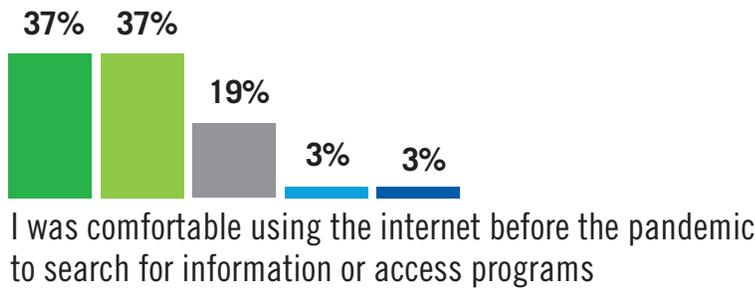
● Strongly agree  
 ● Somewhat agree  
 ● Neither agree or disagree  
 ● Somewhat disagree  
 ● Strongly disagree



# Caregivers

When asked to agree or disagree with a variety of statements about pandemic impacts, caregivers said

● Strongly agree  
 ● Somewhat agree  
 ● Neither agree or disagree  
 ● Somewhat disagree  
 ● Strongly disagree



# Based on pandemic experiences, pre-seniors and seniors shared where more supports are needed

## Pre-seniors and seniors

725 comments were received from pre-seniors and seniors when asked about other supports needed and have been categorized by theme. Sample comments from each theme have been indicated below along with the frequency of responses.

### Health - 33%

- Access to and availability of primary health care providers and GPs and mental health care providers
- Family physicians should continue to see their senior patients in-person
- In home medical services and perhaps daily check-ups from volunteers to check on seniors for those that want it
- More home care to allow seniors to age in place

### Social activities/community engagement - 18%

- Provide virtual social activities
- Have more community events online and able to access it easily
- A gathering place like community centres to meet other seniors, to socialize with friendly people, not grumpy workers
- Access to free-to-senior programs e.g., zumba, yoga, line dance, ballroom dancing, etc.
- Set up a volunteer network to call isolated seniors
- Person to person contact by community organizations

### Finance - 13%

- Negotiate senior discounts with providers of essential products and services: cable and tv; electricity; home heating; telephone, both landline and cellular
- Tax relief to allow us to continue to live in our own home. Increase in the OAS and CPP benefits
- Property tax subsidy and help hiring and paying for reputable home maintenance services
- Free access to community centres for more physical activities. Free access to golf courses, driving ranges, cart fees; Free access to outside winter activities



### **Information - 10%**

- More technical help with computer issues; difficult to complete activities when I need to ask a tech question, but no one is available to answer
- Seniors should be encouraged to learn how to use technology. They should be taught how to use a computer in order to search for the services which they need
- Easy access to information around programs, and caregivers, and how to stay at home longer

### **Help with household chores/meal deliveries - 3%**

- Aid with household chores
- Access to hot meal delivery
- Grocery delivery service. Meal delivery service

### **Easier access to services - 2%**

- Easier and timely access to services
- Understanding that socialization and access to services is not effective online

### **Transportation - 2%**

- Transportation assistance if needed
- I don't know what I can do for transportation in the future
- Reliable transportation, I don't drive

### **Increased communication - 2%**

- More communications for health issues from health practitioners
- Live communication, too many times being put on hold for long periods at a time, many times no call back

### **Other - 7%**

- More and better paid PSWs
- Central seniors office to direct to appropriate department/organizations
- More and readily available access through internet or virtual appointments

### **Nothing - 7%**

### **Don't know/not stated - 11%**

# Supports needed for seniors based on pandemic experiences

## Caregivers

109 comments were received from caregivers and categorized by theme. Sample comments from each theme have been indicated below along with the frequency of responses.

### Easier access to in-home medical appointments/home-care - 19%

- Medical in-home services for seniors during pandemic, education and lessons for caregivers to navigate a very confusing health care system
- Easier medical support for those that can't access regular appointments

### COVID-19 - 10%

- There should be access in hospital and rehab to scheduled video chats. [People living with dementia] are so disoriented in care when family cannot visit. Nurses should not have this added to their burden
- Virtual and phone appointments are ok but actually seeing your family doctor (not other doctors in the same clinic- sometimes up to 4 different doctors deal with one medical issue
- A better virtual meeting protocol to medical and government authorities
- Stop the lockdowns for every service. If the individuals are double vaxxed and have at least one booster, they should be allowed to receive services from similar professionals



### **More social programs for seniors - 9%**

- Find a way to stay connected with seniors that cannot participate virtually due to the many constraints and challenges that they may have such as no computer, not able-bodied or no caregiver help
- Social activities that are safe. Perhaps exercise programs that allow seniors to meet safely but also move. A slip/fall prevention or sitting yoga or low impact aerobics. Something to make them feel alive, well and living. A comedy or film event in their native language. Reason: Many of our elders sit and watch TV for the majority of the day, which is not healthy
- Need more programs so that the caregivers are not only source of entertainment

### **Increased access to services - 8%**

- The caregivers will be better supported if the seniors themselves are better supported. If there are good community programs and staff that can help fill the gaps, then caregivers can continue to support as needed but not stand in for what really ought to be there in the system or community
- More mental health and social supports for seniors, including virtual programming for seniors who are stroke survivors

### **Health supports - 6%**

- More contact by phone to check on the mental health of both caregiver and senior and access to mental health services virtually
- Respite care support for mental health activities for seniors

# Supports needed for seniors based on pandemic experiences cont'd

## **Financial assistance for caregivers - 6%**

- More financial support for caregiver (i.e., assistance fund or paid vacation from work)
- No available financial assistance for caregivers

## **Comprehensive list of services available to caregivers - 5%**

- Have absolutely everything online and from one trusted source. Unclutter your websites to access info easily and intuitively. Have actual seniors test your websites and all its content before launching it to reveal the problems
- A comprehensive list of York Region services available to caregivers would be really helpful

## **Increased staffing - 3%**

- Everyone in caregiving and healthcare are stretched to the limit, professional health care workers need more supports and more professional health care workers are needed in the system
- Better pay, security, hours and benefits, etc. for PSWs and related caregiving jobs so the industry isn't so desperately understaffed Have more language/ethnic specific services, programs and health care for seniors

## **More home services: meal delivery, home cleaning - 3%**

- Hot meal delivery
- Home cooked meal delivery to seniors home. Home cleaning for seniors



### **Increased transportation services - 3%**

- More available transportation, easier access for caregivers to get support and respite care, learning how to renew Presto card for transportation payment online

### **In-person care for seniors - 3%**

- In-person conversations with support people are far better than phone calls and email especially when the senior has very poor hearing and no access to a computer
- Seniors need in-person care. Virtual and telephone care they don't consider a proper care and useless in their mind. Computers will never replace humans

### **Community support - 2%**

- They need to be recognized for the hard job they are doing; also support networking program needs to be established

### **Other - 15%**

- Designated family doctors or clinic for seniors. It's so hard to get an appointment for seniors and arrange all follow-up at different places
- Ability to speak with physicians in a timely manner
- Have more language/ethnic specific services, programs and health care for seniors
- More quick assets for questions, answers and help setting up appointments

### **Nothing - 5%**

### **Don't know/not stated - 8%**



## Seniors strategy workshops and open houses

Prior to COVID-19, the Region reviewed the original Seniors Strategy and identified a Focus Area within each Result Area to concentrate future actions on. The goal of the workshops and open houses was to confirm with staff, community partners and long-term care families and residents that the Region was headed in the right direction and to determine potential actions and advocacy elements for the updated plan.

### Who we heard from

- York Region Seniors Strategy Core Team
- United Way/York Region Seniors Cluster Table expanded to include members of the Human Services Planning Board (HSPB)
- All three York Region Ontario Health Teams (OHTs)
- Residents and Resident Council members from York Region's two long-term care homes: Maple Health Centre and Newmarket Health Centre
- Families and Family Council members from York Region's two long-term care homes: Maple Health Centre and Newmarket Health Centre
- Pre-seniors, seniors and caregivers
- Community stakeholder groups

# What you said

The following actions were identified for each Result Area:

## Result Area 1



### Keeping seniors healthier, longer

- Focus on awareness or communications campaigns to share available services to seniors and caregivers. This might include increased promotion of Access York and 211 and ensuring there is consistent and up-to-date information available through these channels
- Prevention measures such as health and wellness information are key enablers to support seniors; health and wellness must consider physical health, mental health and ethno-cultural factors to support seniors
- Include regular touchpoints with seniors directly or through community channels, open houses, or other open forums where concerns and issues can be addressed, and awareness of available programs and services can be built
- Increased connection with community is a crucial component in preventing loneliness and social isolation for seniors, particularly as demonstrated during the pandemic
- Check in on seniors to see if they require any assistance or a wellness call to ensure they are okay and not feeling isolated

## Result Area 2



### Supporting seniors to live in age-friendly, complete communities

- Housing options must be affordable and accessible; seniors need housing that fits between living independently and long-term care with a focus on end-of-life care
- Facilitate the integration of services; play a role in fostering relationships to get service providers aligned to work together collaboratively in a funded and flexible model
- Create or use more place-based initiatives or services in buildings and community spaces; go to where seniors are already accessing services and engage in community and transportation services to reach seniors in need



## Result Area 3

### Connecting seniors/caregivers to the right services at the right times

- Have a targeted focus or goal and outcome in mind; identify who is the most marginalized amongst seniors and find ways to support them
- Improve system navigation for seniors:
  - Eliminate the need to access multiple organizations for various supports
  - Develop a repository for information that is updated regularly and map or link existing products and services; “no wrong door” means that no matter where the senior call, they can access what they need
  - Build and scale what has already been done, such as Access York and 211, and raise awareness with the broader public on what resources and services are available to seniors to alleviate pressure on 911
- Improve access to technology for seniors:
  - Technology is a key requirement for accessing information about programs and services for seniors and should be complimented by in-person, phone and print options to accommodate seniors who may have difficulty accessing and/or using technology
  - Technology will highly influence the inclusion of seniors in their communities as it will be one of the ways to access programs and services



## Result Area 4

### Improving the coordination, organization and planning of services for seniors

- Collaboration and cooperation among service providers is key to provide the necessary supports
- Collaborate through community action tables and work with other stakeholders in the community and health care system
- Advocate to the province to help develop a coordinated role that facilitates strategic change by bringing various parties together and integrating services
- Optimize data to determine the needs of seniors to plan and target programs to address these needs
- Address seniors’ specific equity issues in York Region
- Work to ensure that measurable progress is being made and monitor and report on progress of the Plan

# Open houses

## Your main concerns for seniors living in York Region

### Morning open house



### Evening open house



# Open houses

## What you think seniors need to stay healthy and age in place

### Morning open house



A word cloud for the morning open house. The most prominent word is "technology" in large blue font. Other words include "health support", "Social activities", "Test kits", "Social Interaction", "resources for dementia", "proper human connections", "Social", "home maintenance", "living", "living lifestyle", "meal support", "Living Spaces", "care", "Smiple Technology", "Spaces/Acc", "local shops", "appropriate recreation", and "support".

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### Evening open house



A word cloud for the evening open house. The most prominent words are "home" and "care" in large blue and green fonts respectively. Other words include "health care", "home care", "personal care", and "hub for services".



A list of questions and answers that arose during the Open Houses, along with a link to a recording of the presentation is available at [york.ca/PlanForSeniors](https://york.ca/PlanForSeniors)

# Next steps

The workshops and survey provided the opportunity for the community to contribute to the new plan. The Region reviewed the original Strategy along with actions and advocacy efforts currently underway and confirmed that three of the original four Result Areas are still relevant and determined that a new Result Area, Improving Coordination, Organization and Planning of Services for Seniors, should be added. For each Result Area, corresponding areas of focus where the Region should concentrate future actions were identified.

Result Area	Result Area Focus
 <b>Keeping Seniors Healthier, Longer</b>	To provide seniors information to help them improve physical activity and social connectedness and slow decline or prevent chronic disease
 <b>Supporting Seniors to Live in Age-Friendly Complete Communities</b>	To better integrate services for seniors
 <b>Connecting Seniors and Care-givers to the Right Programs and Services at the Right Time</b>	To improve system navigation for seniors
 <b>Improving the Coordination, Organization and Planning of Services for Seniors (new)</b>	To better collaborate on and support strategic improvements for the overall system supporting seniors

Note: Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will be considered in each Result Area.



Thank you for taking the time to provide your feedback. Engagement sessions provide important insights for determining the Region's actions and advocacy agendas. Additional engagement sessions are planned with potentially underrepresented groups, to validate feedback shared during the initial consultations and to gather insights that may have been missed. Your responses will help inform the proposed 2023-2027 York Region Plan for Seniors that will be presented to York Regional Council in spring 2023.

To learn more about programs and services available for seniors in York Region, visit [york.ca/seniors](http://york.ca/seniors) or contact Access York at 1-877-464-9675.

The Regional Municipality of York  
[york.ca/PlanForSeniors](http://york.ca/PlanForSeniors)

