



**STRATHCONA
COUNTY**

2020 Seniors Community Involvement Survey



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I. Introduction and Purpose of the Survey

In August 2020, the Strathcona County Seniors Advisory Committee conducted the third of a series of online survey of seniors in order to obtain perceptions toward a variety of topics that potentially could impact seniors either now or in the future. The purpose of this survey was to look at the “connectedness” of seniors in the County and to understand how they stay engaged within the community. Staying engaged with others is one of the positive ways to prevent social isolation which is prevalent within many senior groups.

The purpose of the Seniors Advisory committee is to provide advice and recommendations to Council on issues and opportunities related to the physical, emotional and social wellbeing of seniors in Strathcona County.

Obtaining data directly from residents provides the Seniors Advisory Committee with information to make recommendations to Council of what seniors require from the County based on the perspectives and attitudes of residents. It should be noted that a number of participants and valuable input were not represented in the survey, with no input provided by seniors in assisted living or long-term care facilities. Access and familiarity with technology is a barrier for many seniors and with COVID-19 protocols in place at the time, providing paper surveys and collecting them was not a viable option. While the survey only represents a fraction of all seniors living within the County the participation level was consistent with other SCOOP surveys. This report provides a comprehensive review of all steps undertaken in the development and implementation of the survey, as well as a detailed summary of the results.

A review of the methodology associated in the development and implementation of the survey can be found in the next section of this report.

II. Methodology

A. The questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study was newly created specifically for this study. In addition to demographics, a series of questions were asked in this survey pertaining to:

- Extent of involvement in the community;
- Awareness and involvement with Volunteer Strathcona;
- Things that are done to keep connected with others;
- Volunteer organizations that seniors are involved with in the County (if any);
- Knowledge of programs offered to Strathcona County Seniors; and
- Interest in a drop-in center in Sherwood Park offering senior specific information, services, speakers and programs.

B. Sampling design and data collection procedure

The survey was made available through the Strathcona County Online Opinion Panel (SCOOP). It was tailored specifically to be answered by residents aged 55 or older (age 55 was established as the benchmark for identifying seniors in Strathcona County).

The online survey ran between August 19 and September 15, 2020, during which 347 people took part in the survey. Although poll-based data is based on people who decide to participate and were not randomly selected, and have access to the online poll, the margin of error for a comparable probability-based random sample of the same size is $\pm 5.3\%$, 19 times out of 20. The data was analyzed by Strathcona County's Communications using SPSS for Windows and reviewed by the Seniors Advisory Committee.

III. RESULTS

This section of the report presents a summary of the results associated with the perceptions and awareness of residents. Socio-demographic comparisons, where significant, will also be highlighted.

A. Demographic overview

This section of the report presents an overview of the type of seniors who completed the survey. In terms of gender, 42.9% were male (♂) and 57.1% were female (♀).¹

A breakdown by age is as follows:

- 33.1% were in the 55 – 64 age group;
- 49.9% were in the 65-74 age group; and
- 17.1% were 75 or older.

The final urban/rural split was fairly close to the actual proportions, with 76.7% of the respondents being from Sherwood Park and 23.3% living in rural Strathcona County.

With respect to how long respondents have lived in the County, the breakdown is as follows:

- 0.3% have lived in the County for less than one year;
- 2.9% have lived in the County for 1-4 years;
- 7.2% have lived in the County for 5-10 years;
- 12.4% have lived in the County for 11-20 years; and
- 77.2% have lived in the County for more than 20 years.

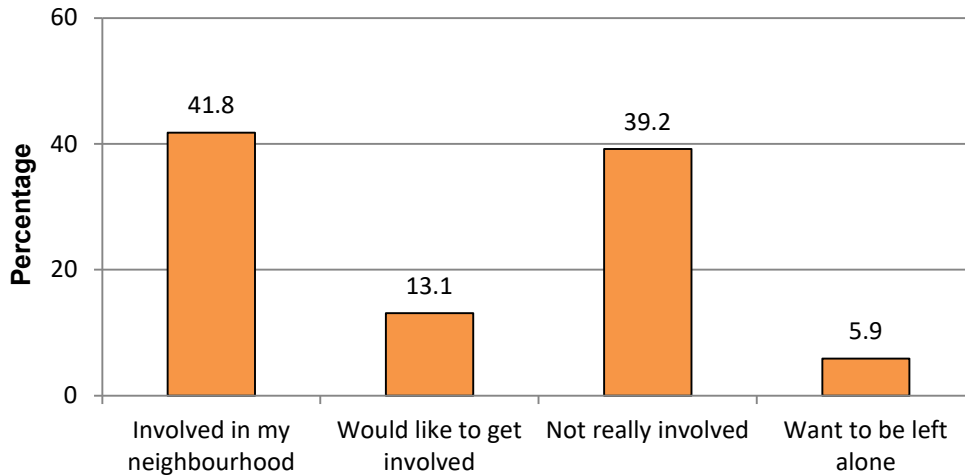
B. Involvement in the Community

Initially, respondents were asked a series of questions about their Pre-COVID involvement in aspects of the Strathcona County community. Overall, it can be seen in Figure 1 that almost 42% of respondents make a point to be involved in the community to different extents, while an additional 13.1% would like to get involved, but don't know how to do that. The remaining

¹ This excludes 2% of respondents who preferred not to indicate their gender.

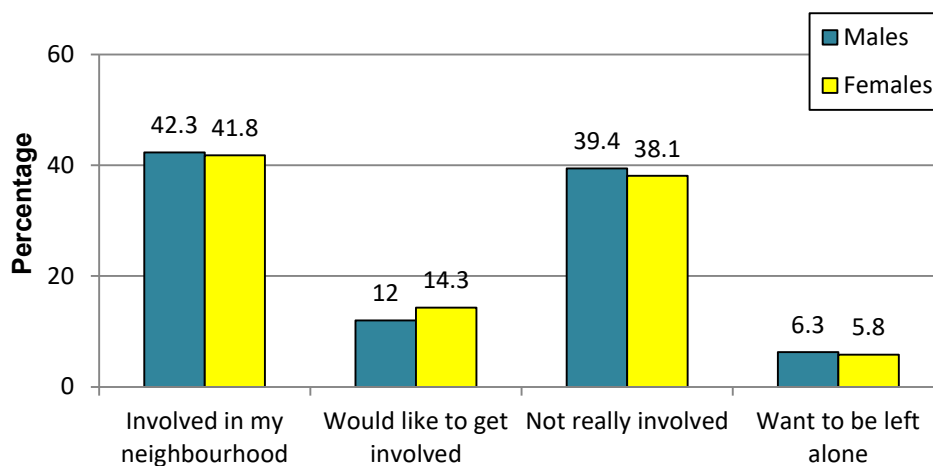
40% were not really involved with the community, while 5.9% were not involved in the community and preferred to be left alone. The data in Figure 1 shows an almost equal split between those who were (or would like to get involved in the community compared to those who would not.

**FIGURE 1
Involvement in the Community**



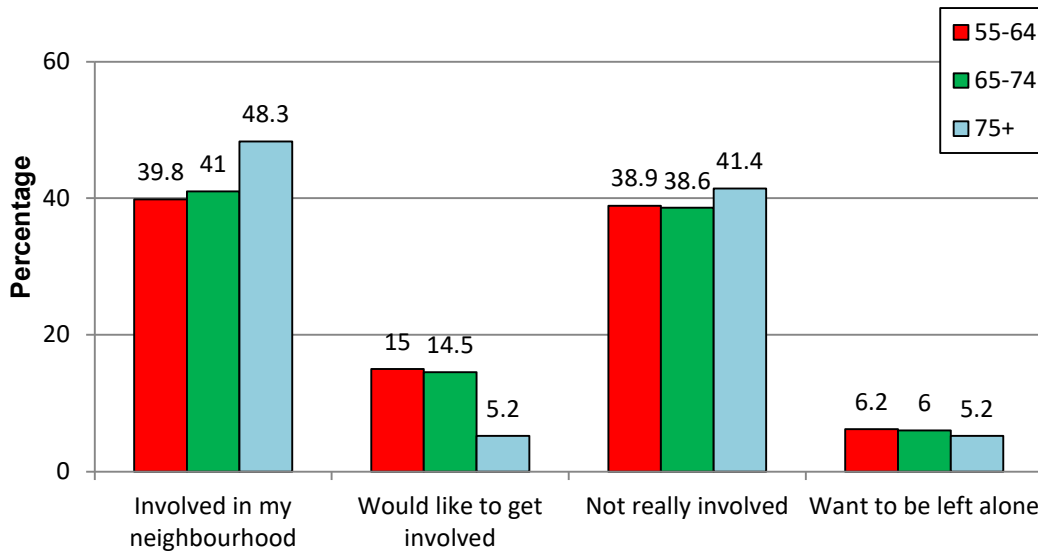
With respect to further analysis pertaining to involvement, gender was not a factor influencing involvement. Figure 2 shows that males and females are very similar in the extent of their community involvement.

**FIGURE 2
Involvement in the Community (Gender)**



One’s age, however, might be a contributor to community involvement. Figure 3 shows that involvement in the community grows as the age of the individual increases.

**FIGURE 3
Involvement in the Community (Age Group)**



Overall, 63.7% of respondents were aware of Volunteer Strathcona (formerly the Information and Volunteer Centre) prior to the pandemic. Of these people, 42.1% indicated that they had contacted Volunteer Strathcona in the past, while 57% had not, and 0.9% would like to, but didn’t know how to go about doing this.

C. Ways of Keeping Connected to People in the Community

Respondents were asked how they kept connected to people in their community (if at all). This question investigates the social engagement of the respondent and how they connect with others in their community. Staying engaged has been shown to be a great way to reduce or eliminate isolation which in turn can reduce overall stress, depression and other triggers. A number of options were provided, and respondents could check all ways that

applied to them. A majority answered to more multiple options. A summary is listed below.

Overall, it was found that:

- 81.6% talk with or meet up with friends, family or neighbours;
- 42.7% connect with others via social media;
- 40.1% attend community events;
- 32% meet people through their hobbies;
- 31.1% take classes or programs in the community;
- 30.3% indicated that they volunteer;
- 10.7% do not do much of anything to stay connected;
- 2.0% live in a seniors complex that has a lot of activities that they engage in regularly;
- 1.4% feel isolated and would like to connect with people but do not know where to start; and
- 12.4% connected in other ways though specific organizations such as their church or through work (of those who are still working). Other people mentioned specific types of recreation activities that were also noted in the more general categories. There were a couple of respondents who indicated that COVID-19 has become a stumbling block preventing more involvement.

Respondents were then asked which organizations they were currently involved with. Overall, 43.2% of respondents were not involved with any formal organization. Only a small percentage of seniors were involved with any of the Seniors Clubs located in various parts of Strathcona County (Antler Lake - none, Ardrossan – 1.7%; Josephburg – 1.2%; Sherwood Park – 3.5%; and South Cooking Lake – 1.2%; Seniors United Now - 5.2%; and Linking Generations – 0.9%). Of the other options listed, it was found that:

- 19.9% were involved with their faith organization (church, mosque, etc.);
- 14.7% were involved with a local sport/activity organization (e.g. masters swimming, pickleball association, etc.);
- 14.7% were involved in another recreation/sport/theatre organization;

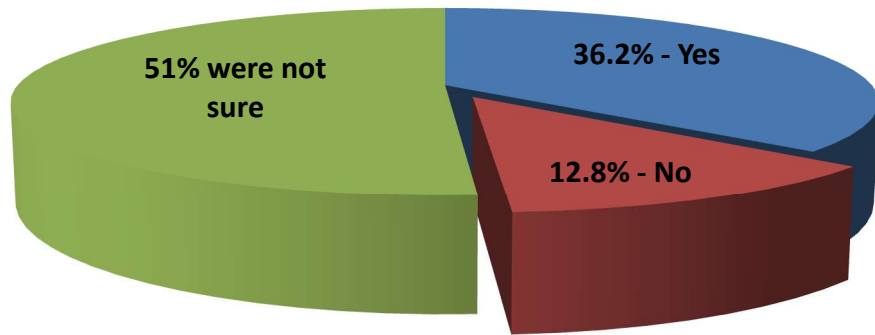
- 14.4% were involved a local charity/non-profit organization (such as the Food Bank, library, a museum, their church);
- 7.8% were involved with a neighbourhood association/community hall/agricultural association;
- 2.9% were involved with a cultural association;

Respondents were then presented with a list of programs specifically offered for Strathcona County seniors and asked to indicate which ones they had heard about. Overall, 17.9% of respondents were not aware of any programs offered to Strathcona County seniors. Of the programs that people were aware of, it was found that:

- 66.9% were aware of the Primary Care Network;
- 51.0% were aware of *Snow Busters* and *Lawn Busters*;
- 45.5% were aware of one or more counselling service in Strathcona County;
- 41.8% were aware of one or more home support service in Strathcona County;
- 36.0% were aware of the Seniors' property tax rebate;
- 22.8% were aware of the Strathcona County Elder Abuse Response Network;
- 14.4% were aware of the Seniors' Outreach Program; and
- 9.8% were aware of *Make Tax Time Pay*.

The last question asked in the survey was whether respondents would make use of a Drop-in Seniors' Centre that offered senior specific information, services, speakers and programs if one were available in Sherwood Park. Of those indicating a clear choice, it can be seen in Figure 4 that roughly 3 times as many (36.2%) said yes, while 12.8% (or just 1 in 8 of all respondents) said no. It can also be seen that overall, 51% of residents were not sure about whether they would make use of a drop-in seniors' centre. With that number, it's possible that the respondents weren't clear about what the scope of the drop in Seniors Center would be, any costs, and the offerings that would be made available to them as no such facility currently exists in Sherwood Park.

FIGURE 4
**Would People make use of a Drop-In Seniors' Centre
in Sherwood Park (Overall Results)**



These numbers were also influenced by the urban and rural responses. It can be seen in Figure 5 that Sherwood Park/urban residents were even more supportive of a facility (40.8%) than rural residents (20.5%). With respect to those who were unsure, it can also be seen that the percentages were higher in rural Strathcona compared to Sherwood Park residents. With such a large unknown we recommend a future survey or study to be conducted specifically with a Seniors Centre as the focus, with more definition provided on what the facility would look like.

FIGURE 5
Would you go to a Drop-In Seniors' Centre located in Sherwood Park (Urban and Rural Comparisons)

