



THE CITY OF
Edmonton



EDMONTON
SENIORS
COORDINATING
COUNCIL

2010

Edmonton Seniors: A Portrait

Table of Contents

01 Today's Seniors	
03 Demographics	
07 Home Life & Health Care	08 Housing
	11 Community support services
	12 Health services
17 Staying Active	18 Social and recreational participation
	21 Civic participation and employment
	22 Volunteerism
23 Staying Connected to Community	24 Transportation
	28 Outdoor public spaces and buildings
	30 Communication and information
31 Society's Attitude Toward Seniors	32 Respect and social inclusion
	32 In conclusion

This report was developed in collaboration between the City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council.

This portrait of seniors

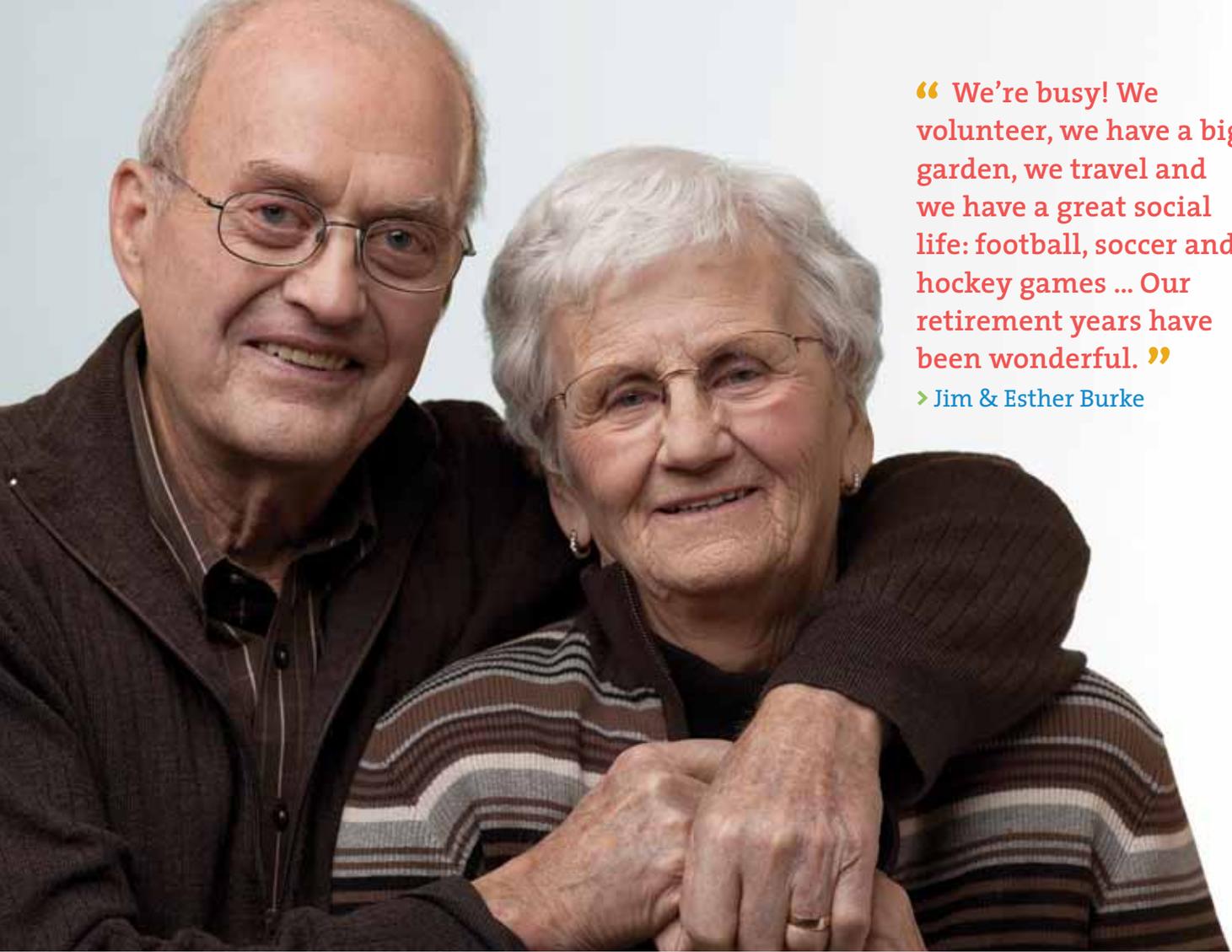
in Edmonton is one of three documents which together outline Edmonton's commitment and vision for being an age-friendly city.

This Seniors Portrait reflects the realities of life for Edmonton seniors in 2010, highlighting their contributions, needs and interests. The second document is the Vision for an Age Friendly Edmonton. The

third is Edmonton's Seniors Declaration: the call to action by Edmonton City Council. The Seniors Declaration is a guiding document which will support objectives laid out in the Vision.

The **Seniors Portrait**, the **Vision** and the **Seniors Declaration** build upon the eight key areas identified by the World Health Organization as important aspects of an age-friendly city.

In this report the terms 'seniors', 'older adults' and 'older people' are used interchangeably, each referring to Edmontonians over the age of 55. However defining seniors simply by age doesn't always work. Some categorize seniors as 'young old', 'middle old' and 'frail old'. While a 67 year old may be dealing with age-related mobility challenges, an 85 year old could be training to run a half-marathon. There is great diversity within this group of people.



“ We’re busy! We volunteer, we have a big garden, we travel and we have a great social life: football, soccer and hockey games ... Our retirement years have been wonderful. ”

> Jim & Esther Burke

Today’s Seniors

The face of Edmonton as we know it in 2010 is changing. Yes, our city is growing:

more buildings and roads, more people. But there’s another phenomenon underway. Our population is aging - quite dramatically. In 2006, one in five Edmontonians was 55+. By 2041, almost one in three of us will be a senior citizen.¹ This is a global trend: World Health Organization projections have the global population of people 60+ growing from 650 million in 2006, to more than two billion by 2050.

With this dramatic change comes great opportunity. Where old age was once viewed by some as a time to slow down, even decline, today’s seniors are dismantling myths of aging. They are active, resilient community members, engaged politically and socially. They are experienced and knowledgeable both as paid workers and volunteers. They are often depended on as caregivers for family and friends. In short, we cannot afford to underestimate the contributions seniors make to the overall well-being of our community.



“ It’s very important for me to stay in my home and in contact with my community. Being a senior, I feel more comfortable and at ease in a familiar environment. It takes a senior a lot of effort to adjust and adapt to new surroundings. ”

› Mary Fung
pictured above (right) with
her friend Liuting Hudson

Age-friendly cities

These contributions can’t happen if we don’t ensure seniors are able to stay healthy and connected to their communities with all their needs met. To do so, many cities around the world are working to become age-friendly; inclusive places where seniors can choose where and how they live. Places with access to the services which enable everyone, not just seniors, to live full, productive lives.

According to the World Health Organization: “*Making cities age-friendly is one of the most effective policy approaches for responding to demographic ageing.*”²

Aging in place

An important element of age-friendly cities is that people can age in the right place – stay living in the home and/or neighbourhood they choose for as long as comfortably possible. For Aboriginal and immigrant seniors, aging in the right place means living not only where they choose, but also with the language and culture they choose.

Alberta’s seniors have made it clear they want to live in their own homes for as long as possible.^D Research shows older people who stay independent and age in place live longer. It’s also a more cost-effective choice: in 2004, costs for community-based care per person averaged at \$8,900/year while residential care costs averaged \$30,000/year.^A



Amilda Kojok (pictured here with her daughter Victoria) and some of her children immigrated to Edmonton from Sudan in 2002. She says Edmontonians have helped her feel comfortable, safe and welcome in her new home.

Demographics

Dramatic growth in our senior population

The number of seniors living in Edmonton is on the rise.

In 1986, 17% were 55 or older.

By 2006, 21% were seniors.

By 2041, 32% will be seniors.

Within the senior population itself, the most dramatic growth will happen in the over 80 age group.

By 2041:

- The number of seniors aged 80+ is projected to increase by as much as 266%
- The number of seniors aged 55-64 is projected to increase by as much as 104%.³

This is particularly significant, as the need for services and help with daily living tasks such as meal preparation and home maintenance generally increases as people age.

Older women outnumber older men

In 2006, 46% of all seniors in Edmonton were male and 54% were female.

However, breaking down those numbers by age category clearly illustrates the gender differences in life expectancy:

- For Edmontonians ages 60-64, 48% were male and 52% were female.
- For those 85-89 years old, 33% were male, and 67% were female.

This large gender difference in later years is expected to change, as life expectancy rates are projected to start evening out between the sexes.⁴

Did you know?

In 2006:

- more than 65,000 Edmontonians were between ages 55-64,
- just over 62,000 were 65-79,
- almost 22,000 were 80+. ⁵

From 2000 – 2005, more seniors moved to Edmonton (8,708) than moved away from the city (6,803). ⁴

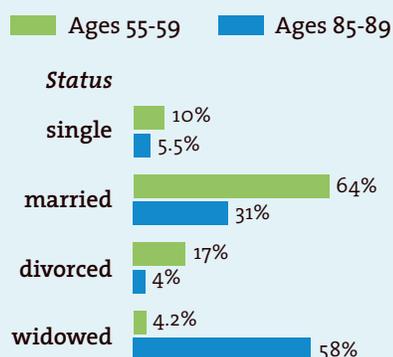
Life expectancy in Alberta:

- women: 83 years
- men: 78 years ⁶

Average age of retirement in Alberta:

- 2006: 63.9 years old
- 2008: 62.9 years old ⁷

Marital status



Statistics Canada 2006 Census, Catalogue no. 97-552-X2006009.

“ What I’m hearing, particularly from people 75+, is worry over how their needs will be met as they age and become less mobile. Who will they be able to call, without hesitation or obligation, if they have an appointment, or need a prescription filled? ”

> Sofia Yaqub

Did you know?

Mother tongues among the city's immigrant seniors:

- 28% Chinese*
- 19% Cantonese
- 16% Punjabi
- 6% Vietnamese⁸

* This includes responses of 'Chinese' as well as all Chinese languages other than Cantonese, Mandarin, Taiwanese, Chaochow (Teochow), Fukien, Hakka and Shanghainese.



Shopping for fabric in Mill Woods.

Aboriginal seniors

Elders are deeply respected in the Aboriginal community, for their knowledge and understanding of tradition and culture. Living their daily lives in accordance with their beliefs, they pass on wisdom from generation to generation. Aboriginal seniors also play crucial roles in their communities, teaching traditional ways and particularly in helping to care for children and grandchildren.

In 2006, seniors made up 9% of Edmonton's Aboriginal population. There were 3,600 Aboriginal seniors in Edmonton; that was 2% of Edmonton's total senior population and the second highest number of any city in Canada. Only Winnipeg had more Aboriginal seniors.

Our city's Aboriginal senior population is relatively young; most Aboriginal seniors are 55-65. Only 40% are 65+.⁹ While there is growth projected for this group, it won't be as dramatic as growth in the overall senior population.¹⁰

Ethnic backgrounds of Edmonton seniors are diverse and changing

Immigrant seniors contribute to our community in many ways. They pass on religious and cultural values, teach language, help with

childcare and housekeeping and help newcomers settle.

But this group faces unique challenges: language barriers, being afraid to speak out about discrimination or abuse and financial hardships because sponsored immigrant seniors don't qualify for government income supports for 10 years after they arrive in Canada. If these circumstances aren't recognized by service providers, life for immigrant seniors can be extremely difficult.

The ethnic makeup of our city's immigrant seniors population is undergoing a striking change.

Until 2001:

- 50% of immigrant seniors came to Edmonton from Europe.
- 36% came from Asia and the Middle East,
- 3% came from the U.S., 3% from Africa, 2.5% from South America, 2.4% from Bermuda, and the remaining from other places around the world.

From 2001 – 2006:

- 73% came from Asia and the Middle East.
- 12% emigrated from Europe, 4% from Africa, 3% from Oceania and other, 3% from the Caribbean and Bermuda, and 2% from Central America.¹¹

Edmonton seniors' incomes decline with age

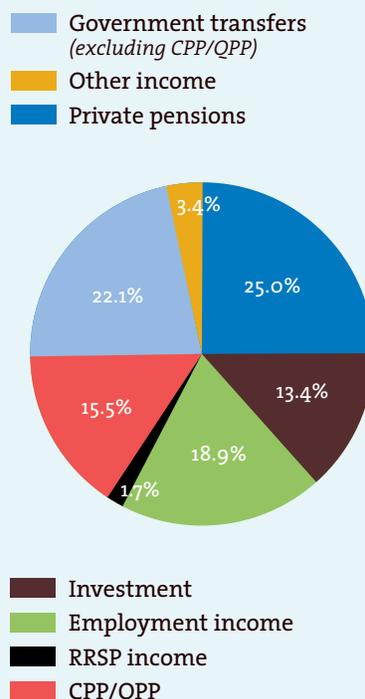
Older adults in our city have an average yearly income of \$46,000 while the average income for Canadian seniors is just over \$37,000.

Not surprisingly, as people age, their incomes decrease:

- Edmontonians aged 55 - 64 have an average income of just over \$57,000.
- Edmontonians aged 65 - 74 have an average income of close to \$40,000.
- Those aged 75+ have an average income of just over \$37,000.¹²

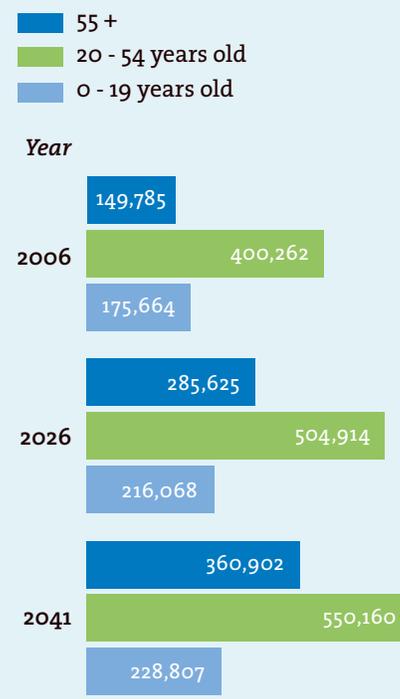
Being able to afford a decent standard of living can become particularly difficult for seniors living on limited incomes. Costs go up, but incomes don't. As financial security is threatened, so too is a person's overall well-being, including their ability to continue living independently. As the pie chart in the next column shows, for those over 65, most income sources are fixed.

Sources of income for seniors 65+



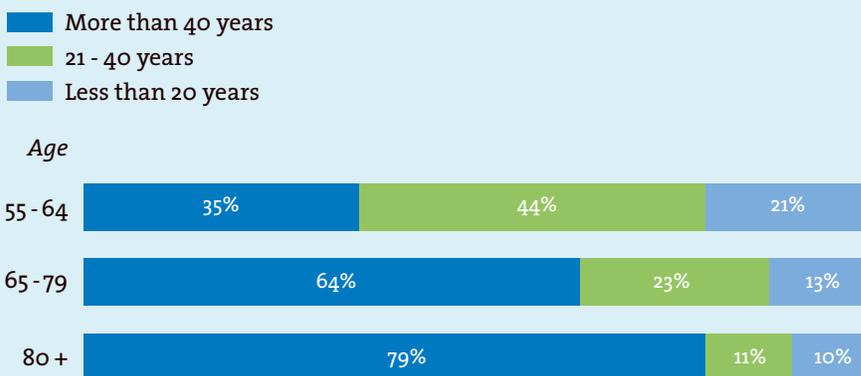
Statistics Canada. Small Area and Administrative Data Division. 2006. *Annual Estimates for Census Families and Individuals*. 89C0022.

Population projections by selected age group



Population projections prepared by Applications Management Consulting Ltd., using 2006 data.

Edmonton seniors: years lived in Edmonton



City of Edmonton, 2008 Senior Needs Assessment. December 2008.



Volunteer preparing lunch at the McCauley Seniors' Drop-In Centre.

The Drop-In is one of several programs for inner-city seniors offered by Operation Friendship Seniors Society (OFSS). The Drop-In offers free meals along with recreational and wellness activities.

The OFSS also helps seniors find housing through its housing registry, provides seniors transportation to appointments, and offers an outreach service linking people to resources and services they might need.

As well, OFSS manages 180 housing units which include a continuum of housing options.

But many seniors who live alone live below the poverty line

While the financial situation for Canadian seniors has improved significantly over the past 25 years, for many, living on a limited income just isn't enough to keep them above the poverty line. In the Edmonton region (including surrounding communities such as St. Albert, Leduc, Fort Saskatchewan, Spruce Grove), more than a third of people 65+ who live alone live with low income.*

As the graph below shows, the situation is worse for women than men, in part due to pension regulations. As well, whenever services for the elderly are privatized, costs are shifted directly to seniors. That makes it even more difficult to make ends meet.¹³

Older adults who don't live alone fare better economically. But in this category again, a disproportionate number of

women bear the burden of poverty, especially as they age.

In the 55-64 age group:

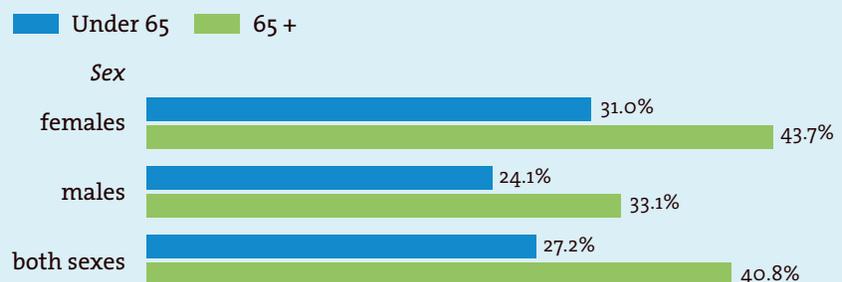
- 11.1% of women live with low incomes and
- 9.4% of men live with low incomes.

But those numbers change dramatically when we look at the 70+ age group:

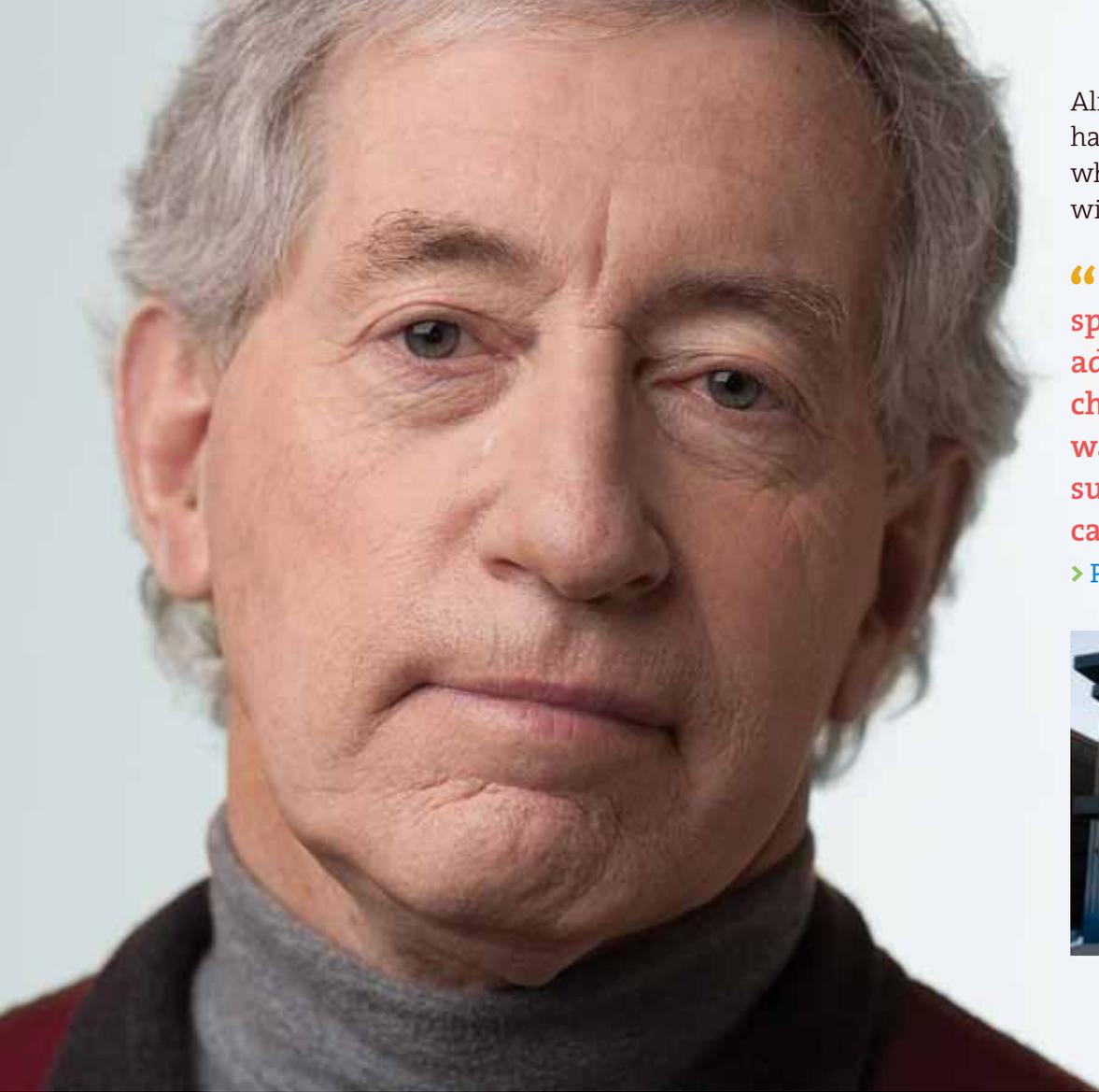
- 21.8% of women have low incomes and
- 8.4% of men have low incomes.

* Statistics Canada's low income cut-offs (LICOs) identify people who are substantially worse off than the average.¹⁴ Statistics Canada does not measure the level of 'poverty' in Canada, as there is not an accepted definition of poverty by our governments. However, many organizations use LICOs interchangeably with poverty lines, as is done in this report.

Edmonton seniors living alone, with low incomes



Statistics Canada 2006 Census Catalogue no. 97-559-XWE2006028.



Alison and Peter Faid have built a new home where they can age with ease.

“ We created spaces that could be adapted as our needs change: including a walk-out basement suitable for a live-in caregiver. ”

> Peter Faid



Home Life & Health Care

There is little doubt that living as independently as possible not only contributes to the overall well-being of seniors, it's also the most cost effective living arrangement. But aging in place only works if a continuum of supports and services is available to respond to a person's evolving needs. An older adult may receive help with her personal care, but if her house isn't maintained, she won't be able to continue living there. Aging in place is also dependent upon an adequate supply of affordable housing. In fact, the World Health Organization identifies affordable housing as a cornerstone of its Age-Friendly Cities Guide.

Older people need a variety of housing choices, including single detached homes, secondary suites, rental units, condos, town homes, assisted living and continuing care facilities. In Edmonton there is a shortage of options for those who require something between independent and institutional living.^A

Housing

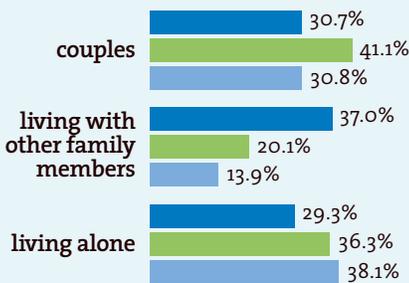
Did you know?

In Edmonton there are 3,969 subsidized apartment units for seniors.¹⁵ Rents for these units are generally capped at 30% of the combined gross monthly income of people living in the unit.

More seniors live with family, but many still live alone

- 55 - 64 years old
- 65 - 74 years old
- 75 +

Living setup



City of Edmonton. 2008 Senior Needs Assessment. December 2008.

Neighbourhoods where seniors live

Seniors live throughout the city, and as more people age in place that will likely continue to be the case. There are clusters of seniors in certain areas: close to downtown, in the northwest (Jasper Place and West Jasper Place), south (Mill Woods and Kaskitayo) and east (Londonderry). By 2041, population predictions show even more seniors will be living in the city’s northwest and south. But the highest concentration will be southeast in Mill Woods, and north in Castle Downs and the Lake District/Pilot Sound. As well, it can be expected that older seniors (85+) will live in neighbourhoods where required services are more easily accessible.

It’s important to note, however, that the projected surge in our city’s older population over the next 30 years means the actual number of seniors living in each neighbourhood will increase. In 2006, neighbourhoods with the highest concentrations of older people were home to between 10,000 and 14,570 seniors. By 2041, these communities will see their senior population double.¹⁶

Most seniors live in their own homes, with family members

Most older Edmontonians live in their own homes and many do so without much extra help. But others, particularly those who live alone, require assistance – with home maintenance, home care and personal care.

70% of people 55+ in Edmonton live in a house, with most owning their own homes.

Of the remainder:

- 17% live in a condo.
- 11% live in an apartment.
- 2% live in seniors housing.

However, as people age, fewer continue living in houses. Just under half of those 80+ live in a house, while more than 10% live in seniors housing.



“ Aging in place is great if you can look after yourself. But often we’re not prepared for the transition to a seniors’ residence if for health reasons we’re unable to cope alone. I think a lot more affordable housing and residences should be in place – not \$1,800 to \$5,000 a month places. A lot of people can’t afford much more than their pension. ”

› Edna Bohachyk
pictured above with her
granddaughter Emily

But affordability is a worry

Even if older people own their own home, the number one concern for many is whether they’ll continue to be able to afford to do so.^D Not only are costs of property taxes, utilities and rent increasing, so are costs of services older people often need in order to stay living in their own homes; services such as home maintenance or renovations to make a house barrier-free.

Low-income seniors can also have difficulty finding affordable rental housing. While both the City of Edmonton and the Alberta Government offer a variety of programs aimed at addressing these issues, there is still more to be done to ensure older adults in our city truly have choice in where they live.

Did you know?

In 2008, Meals on Wheels provided more than 3,500 hot meals, and 2,100 frozen meals. The majority of clients are seniors and people with disabilities.



One of the Greater Edmonton Foundation’s seniors housing complexes.

For more info...

Primary Healthcare Options for Seniors:

The Good Samaritan Society: a multidisciplinary health team makes housecalls to seniors. A barrier-free seniors clinic, open 5 days a week, is located close to a bus route.

The START Day Hospital: provides comprehensive geriatric assessment and rehab for the frail elderly who are experiencing functional loss.

Alberta Health Services Primary Care Networks: provide treatment, follow up and referrals. Patients are linked to services such as home care, long-term care, mental health, lab services, x-ray and ultrasound.

Housing options for those who can't live independently

For seniors who require partial or full-time care there are various options. Home-care services are available for some seniors who live in their own homes, but other options are critical. Falls and other health impairments can result in seniors having to change their living arrangements.

Supportive-living is for those who can live fairly independently, but not in their own homes because they can't meet all their own care needs. In the Edmonton region, there are 2,305 supportive living beds. In December 2009, the Alberta Government announced it will build 101 new supportive-living and lodge spaces in Edmonton and refurbish 20 existing spaces.

Long-term care is for those who require 24-hour nursing care. In 2008, there were 14,500 people in long-term care in Alberta at any one time.^c In the past 4 years, the wait list for these beds has risen:

People waiting in the community for a long-term care bed:
2006: 265⁽¹⁷⁾ | **2010:** about 1,000⁽¹⁸⁾

People waiting in acute care hospitals for a long-term care bed:
2006: 251⁽¹⁷⁾ | **2010:** about 700⁽¹⁸⁾

The Government of Alberta predicts that without more living alternatives, we will need 15,000 more long-term care beds over the next 20 years. In 2008, the provincial government froze the number of long-term care beds at 14,500, although it will refurbish 7,000 of these by 2015. The government's goal is to improve choice and availability for quality accommodations, giving seniors more living options so the demand for long-term care beds won't be as high. The Alberta government is also trying to attract more non-profit or private sector investment in this area.^c But critics worry that this strategy won't meet demand.

For some, there is no home

Homelessness has no age limits. From children to seniors, it's a reality for thousands of Edmontonians. And the number of seniors who have no place to call home just keeps growing. In March of 1999, 76 people over the age of 55 were homeless. By 2008, there were 306 homeless seniors in Edmonton.¹⁹

Community support services

Integrated and coordinated

In 2007, Edmonton seniors took part in Envision Edmonton, gathering to talk about Edmonton in the year 2040. A common theme that emerged from their sessions was the need for more collaboration and cooperation between all service providers.

“ I use the fitness centre at one of the Lions Senior Centres and this works for me, along with walking and keeping active. It’s nice to work out in a place where most people look like you, and are more interested in health than looking “hot”. Our seniors centres are hidden gems in our city. ”

› Keith Turnbull

Help inside and outside the house

Yard clean-up and snow shovelling, small repairs; it’s not always easy for seniors to find the help they need to look after their homes. And it’s this type of support that can sometimes make the difference between independent living and having to move to a seniors’ facility. This household help also addresses problems of isolation and loneliness.

People surveyed for the City of Edmonton’s 2008 Senior Needs Assessment said of all the daily living needs they had, home and yard maintenance were at the top of the list. As well, older adults need help with delivery/online services, getting to appointments and running errands, personal care and making meals. Older seniors (80+) and people living with incomes below \$30,000/year needed the most assistance. For some, this is provided by family or friends. But for many others that’s not the case.

There are four non-profit agencies in Edmonton offering help with home support services, matching seniors with the necessary workers, but they often can’t meet the demand. And for some seniors, the cost is still too high.

In winter months, the City of Edmonton’s Snow Angel program encourages neighbors and volunteers to help seniors by shovelling their driveways and walks.



“ These kids are just wonderful. They shovel for me without getting paid. I watch them from my window; they enjoy it tremendously. ”

› Max Kates

Every time it snows, a group of students from Crestwood School heads over to Max Kates’ house, to shovel his walk. Max is 93.

Health services

Many seniors worry about staying healthy

Injury and illness prevention is critical to staying healthy and, in turn, to easing future demand on Alberta's health care system. Many seniors worry about staying healthy in their older years.^D

Their suggestions for addressing this concern include:

- Make sidewalks, curbs, parks and recreation centres senior-friendly, so seniors stay active.
- Fund programming at recreation centres and seniors centres.
- Promote neighbourhood-based services such as grocery stores so seniors can make healthy food choices.
- Encourage the use of in-home aids, such as grab bars, to prevent falls.^D



Edmonton's river valley.

Falls – frequent and costly

Every hour in our province, there are two seniors' fall-related hospital emergency room visits. The daily total is 51 visits, with 19 admissions to hospital, **making seniors' falls the leading cause of injury-related emergency room visits and hospital admissions.**

In the Edmonton Region in 2006, there were 1,951 fall-related seniors' hospital admissions, and 5,869 fall-related seniors' emergency room visits. That was expensive: \$96 million was spent on seniors' fall-related hospital admissions. By 2031, these admissions are expected to cost \$228 million.²⁰

The second most common reason for injury hospital admission by seniors was motor vehicle accidents.

For those needing physical rehabilitation, the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital offers an inpatient geriatric rehabilitation program. In the year 2008-09, approximately 500 people 65+ were admitted to this program.²¹ In some cases, patients who complete their rehabilitation still can't go home because they need a more accessible home or more daily care than they required in the past. As a result they may stay in hospital for longer than medically necessary, waiting while their home is retrofitted or a new housing option is found.

Illnesses: life threatening and long-term

The leading cause of death for Edmontonians ages 65+ is circulatory diseases (35%) with:

- heart disease accounting for 26% of deaths,
- stroke for 6%,
- other circulatory disease for 3%.²²

Cancer is the second leading cause of death (26%), followed by respiratory disease (12%). In 2006, there were more than 9,000 people ages 65-74 admitted to Edmonton hospitals. There were almost 14,800 hospitalizations for people ages 75+.²³

“ Some doctors will only talk about two problems at a time and many seniors have more than two problems. Maybe we need more caregivers spending time talking to seniors, triaging their problems to determine which ones need to be seen by a doctor. ”

> Liuting Hudson

Alzheimer's and related dementia

An estimated 12,000 Edmontonians, most of whom are 65+ are affected by Alzheimer's and related dementia.²⁴ Nationwide, half a million people are living with Alzheimer's or related dementia. Given our aging population it's estimated that by 2038 more than one million Canadians will live with dementia. In 2009 the Alzheimer Society released a report warning of what it calls the looming dementia crisis facing our country.

The report contains some staggering numbers:

- In 2008, 231 million hours of informal care were provided to Canadians with dementia.
- By 2038, that will increase to 756 million hours.
- In 2008 the economic burden of dementia in Canada (in future dollars) was \$15 billion.
- By 2038 that cost will be \$153 billion.²⁵

Rising Tide: The Impact of Dementia on Canadian Society outlines the need for policies and approaches to address this situation. It discusses interventions, such as caregiver training and support and system navigation, to help reduce the impact of dementia. The report also makes five recommendations which would make up components of a comprehensive National Dementia Strategy.

“ I’ve been lucky. My physician is excellent and well-connected so referrals are quickly acted on. This isn’t the case for most seniors, who suffer long waits, much pain and care that lacks quality. I would like many more primary care networks where seniors’ health needs can be assessed and addressed appropriately. ”

> Jean Innes

Did you know?

The Regional Palliative Care Program provides end-of-life care in the Edmonton region, in people’s homes and in institutions.

In 2009:

- 1,037 people aged 55+ received home-based palliative care.
- 733 people aged 55+ received palliative care at the Grey Nuns Hospital or in a hospice (located in continuing and long-term care facilities).

In Edmonton, there are 60 hospice beds.²⁶

Did you know?

From January to August 2009, SAGE's safe house had 27 residents, 70% women, 30% men.

Average stay in the safe house: a month and a half. Most of the residents were able to subsequently find a new, safer home environment. ²⁷

Seniors who took part in Envision Edmonton said there must, over the next 30 years, be more safe housing and shelters made available to seniors.

7% of seniors suffer some form of abuse

In an age-friendly city there is a network of support for older people who are abused. Elder abuse is most often committed by somebody the older person knows well: a spouse or partner, son or daughter. Because of the complex web of emotions involved, it can be very difficult for the abused person to seek the help they need even if they recognize the abuse that is taking place. According to the Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Network, the most common forms of abuse are financial or psychological/emotional.

Several organizations in Edmonton offer support for abused elders, such as safe housing. As well, quite a few seniors centres employ outreach workers who can recognize signs of elder abuse and know which resources are available in the community.

The City is a partner in the Elder Abuse Intervention Team, a collaboration of service providers which includes the Edmonton Police Service, VON and Catholic Social Services. It aims to prevent abuse as well as intervene in abusive situations.

Healthcare options

Seniors need access to a range of health services, particularly as they age. Those with disabilities have unique needs, being at high-risk of becoming isolated.

Alberta Health Services has inpatient and outpatient clinics where interdisciplinary teams assess the health, wellness and well-being of older adults. There is also CHOICE, a day-program for seniors who live independently. Participants are transported to a clinic daily, for up to 5 days a week, where all their health requirements are assessed and managed. One CHOICE clinic focuses specifically on those with mental health needs.

Many seniors also require help with personal care. A 2003 Statistics Canada Canadian Community Survey showed of seniors who received home care in the past year:

- 6% were aged 65-74,
- 14% were aged 75-84,
- 25% were aged 85+.

Family and friends provided some of that care, but for the majority of seniors help came from a formal source.

In the Edmonton region, there has been a shortage of qualified staff to provide home care. ^A But in 2008 the Alberta Government committed to increasing funding for home care. ²⁸

Getting the care they need

This is a worry for many seniors because of:

- A shortage of healthcare professionals.
- Increasing costs of non-insured services and the fact that costs for some services are covered if people are in hospital or continuing care, but are not for those living at home.
- Not being able to get to health appointments because of transportation problems.
- Health offices which are not barrier-free.^D

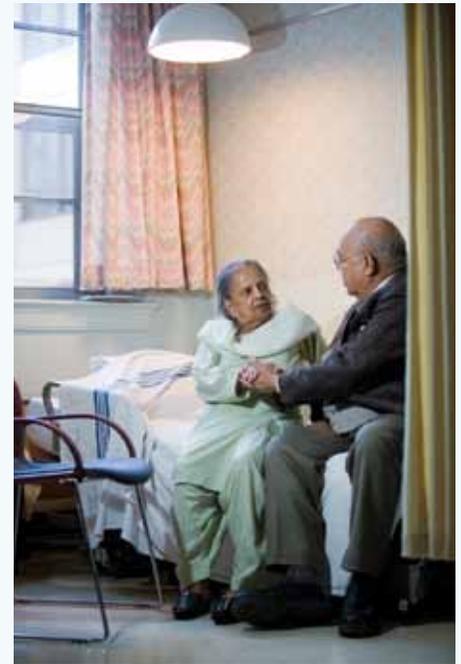
Seniors who took part in Envision Edmonton cited a need for more 'inclusive' health centres, where all the services they require are in one location. They also talked about the problem of waiting lists to get in to see healthcare professionals.

Other factors that affect the health and well-being of Edmonton seniors include:

- not knowing where to get necessary help or information,
- complicated application procedures,
- delays in follow-up by home care after being discharged from hospital,
- gaps in information transfer between care providers, and
- not being able to communicate with health providers because of language or culture.

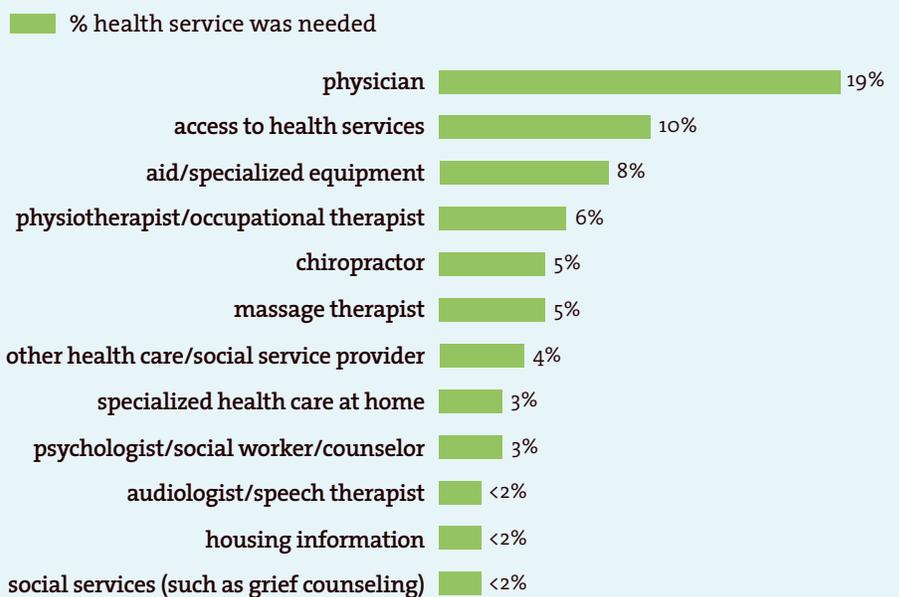
The reality in 2010 is that our healthcare system is undergoing change as it responds to demographic, staffing and financial pressures. Programs, and the way they're delivered, are being reassessed. This can make it difficult for people trying to figure out what services are available.

The Alberta government announced (in its 2008 Continuing Care Strategy) that a patient navigation system will be implemented in 2012. Trained patient care managers will provide a single point of contact, to help Albertans match their needs to available health services.



Edmonton General Hospital.

What health services are most needed for seniors?



City of Edmonton. 2008 Senior Needs Assessment. December 2008.

Did you know?

Caregiver facts:

- An estimated 3 million Canadians are unpaid caregivers.
- 62% have been giving care for at least 3 years.
- 77% are women.
- 52% say providing care disrupts their work.
- 44% pay out-of-pocket caregiving expenses.
- 40% report it costs them \$100 - \$300/month.²⁹

Recognizing the vital role of caregivers

While it may seem simply a labour of love, family and friends who help older adults are a necessity, providing as much as 80% of the care needed. It's because of these caregivers that many seniors are able to age in place. The majority (57%) of people receiving care are 65+. The majority of people providing the care are 45-64 years old. Unfortunately, caregivers' work is often unnoticed and unappreciated. And it isn't always easy. Stress from physical and emotional demands, lack of sleep, navigating service systems, dealing with financial and legal issues – these all add up.

The Alberta Caregivers Association provides caregivers with education, information, and networking opportunities. As well, Alberta's Continuing Care Strategy commits to providing education and counselling programs for caregivers, developing a mechanism to pay caregivers for out-of-pocket expenses, and providing more respite care.

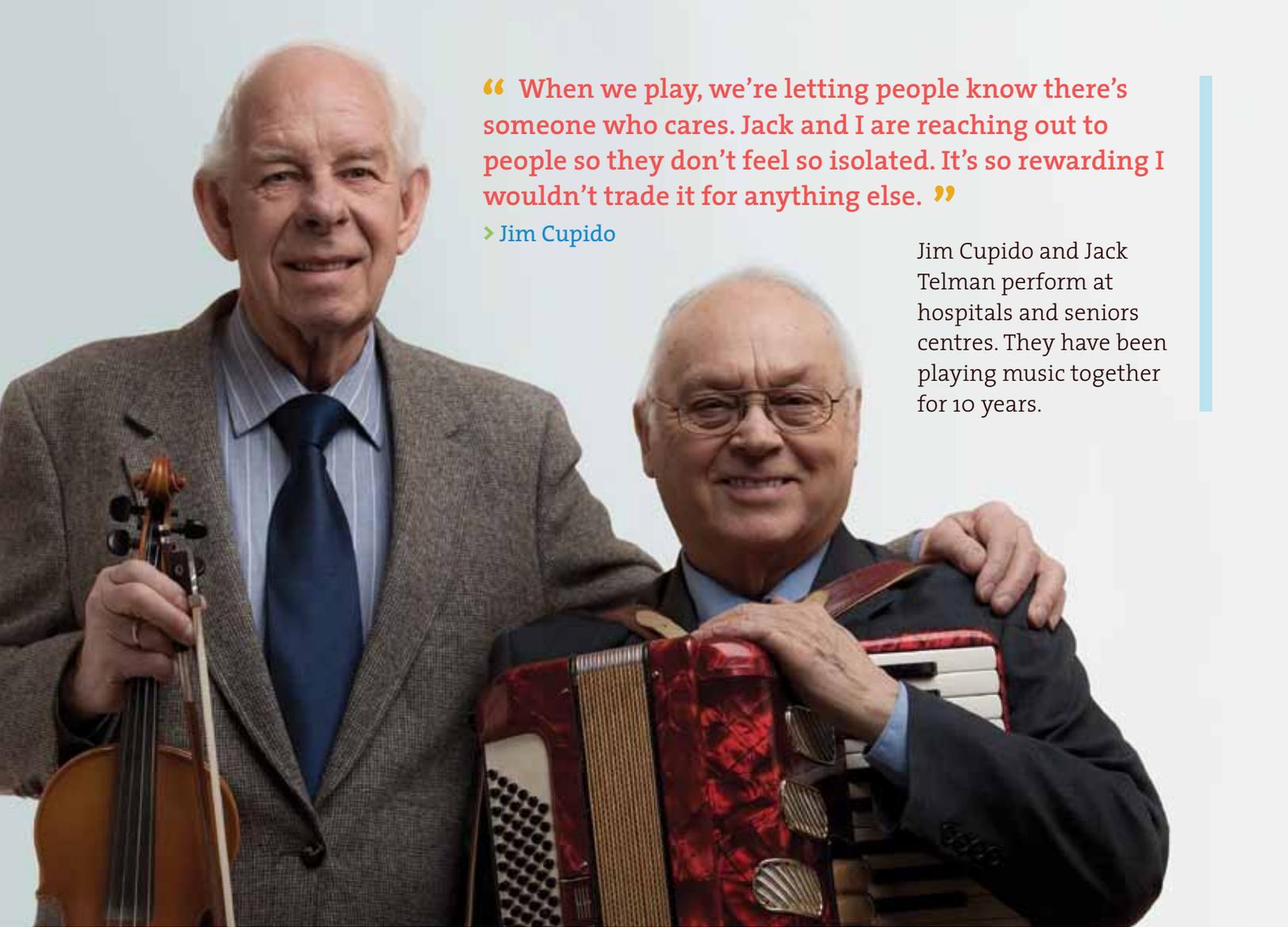
There are various respite programs in Edmonton, which provide temporary care (day or overnight) for people in need, so that caregivers can have a break. Most respite care is provided in people's homes, through home care services. But there are also 11 institution-based respite beds serving Edmonton and surrounding communities such as Leduc and St. Albert.³⁰



“ I’ve been a caregiver twice. First for my sister-in-law and brother, and then for my husband, David. Caring for David was a gift. I knew he only had a short time to live and I wanted it to be as warm, loving and comfortable as possible.

It wasn't always easy. But I would do it again. It gave me a new perspective on what's important in life and what's not. There was a new closeness that developed between David and me. I felt blessed to be there and to be able to help him. I wouldn't have had it any other way. ”

> Phyllis Johnston



“ When we play, we’re letting people know there’s someone who cares. Jack and I are reaching out to people so they don’t feel so isolated. It’s so rewarding I wouldn’t trade it for anything else. ”

> Jim Cupido

Jim Cupido and Jack Telman perform at hospitals and seniors centres. They have been playing music together for 10 years.

Staying Active

Getting out of the house, taking part in activities, connecting with other people are all essential for everyone’s mental and physical well-being. For seniors, staying active is particularly important. Older adults risk becoming increasingly isolated as they age, lose their spouse or friends, or begin to suffer health set-backs.

Age-friendly cities encourage connections between people and generations.

They provide opportunities for older adults to continue contributing to society in meaningful ways: through paid work, by being engaged in the political and civic processes, or by volunteering.

Social and recreational participation

For more info...

The Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council serves as a communication hub for the senior sector.

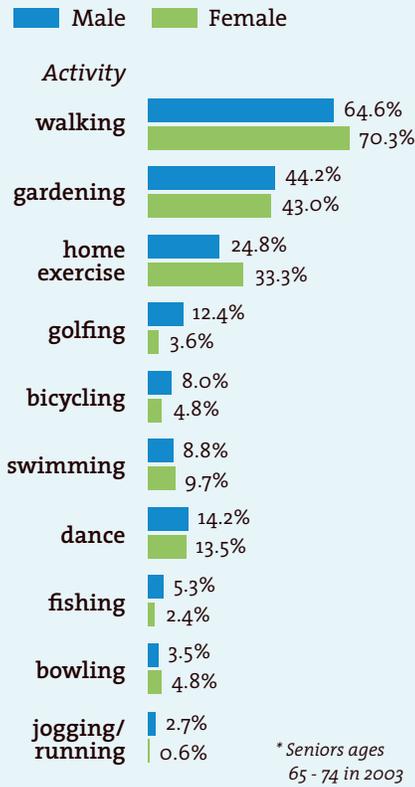
Call 780-423-5635 or go online: www.seniorscouncil.net

Top reasons for going out: visiting friends or family, shopping, physical activities

Spending time with friends and family is important to Edmonton’s seniors: they are most likely to leave the house for that reason, to shop or for physical activities. Fewer seniors take personal interest courses, pursue hobbies or attend sporting or cultural events.^B

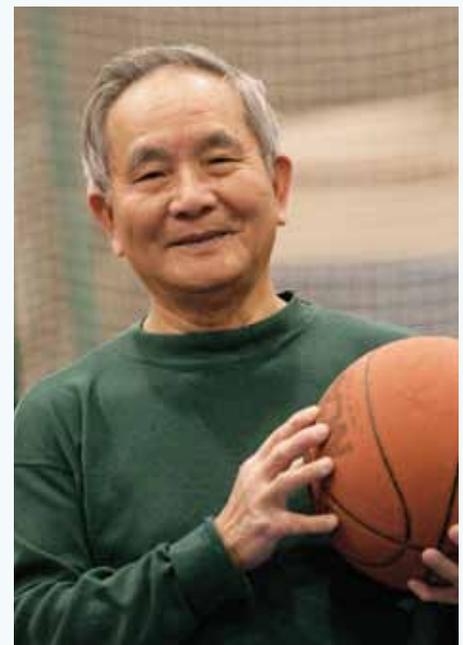
While programs specifically for seniors are attractive to some, others prefer inter-generational activities, offering the opportunity to connect with the wider community. Integration of activities is a way of combating ageism in our society: it enriches the experience for people of all ages. These could be coffee mornings for moms, their pre-schoolers and seniors at the local community league, library or place of worship. Schools, too, are the heart of the community for younger families. They can also offer seniors a place to connect as school mentors, helping children with reading and other school subjects.

Seniors engaging in physical activity



However, there are numerous recreational programs for seniors in Edmonton run by a variety of organizations: seniors’ and recreation centres, churches and community leagues, Aboriginal and multi-cultural groups, post-secondary institutions and libraries. These groups provide senior-specific programs, as well as some inter-generational programs such as aqua fitness, dance and drawing classes and sports.

Seniors with higher incomes (often younger seniors) are more likely to go out to visit and pursue physical activities. Those earning more than \$30,000 are more likely to attend cultural and sporting events and pursue hobbies than those earning less; those earning more than \$60,000 are more likely to visit museums, libraries or provincial parks than those earning less.^B



Kinsmen Sports Centre.

Statistics Canada’s Canadian Health Survey 2003: *Seniors who are physically active enjoy better health.*

Middle-years seniors tend to join organizations

Belonging to groups or organizations is important in maintaining social connections and bonds. For many, seniors centres are a popular destination. Almost half of seniors responding to a City of Edmonton survey take part in religious or spiritually-affiliated groups. A quarter of seniors belong to sports and recreation organizations, and just under a quarter (20%) belong to senior organizations. About the same number (18%) reported belonging to social clubs and 15% were members of civic or community associations.

The percentage of seniors belonging to organizations rises with age and falls with income. The majority participate enthusiastically: two thirds report being very active.^B

Most common barrier to social participation: physical condition

Not surprisingly, seniors over the age of 80 are significantly less likely to leave their homes for recreational activities. They may have difficulties getting out to go shopping, for example, because of transportation issues, because of their physical condition and because they don't have anyone to go with them.

In the City of Edmonton 2008 Senior Needs Assessment the most common reasons seniors cited for not getting out to visit or for activities were:

- concerns with one's condition
- lack of interest
- lack of time

Some people also mentioned a lack of available transportation.

In order to attract older adults, programs must be interesting and accessible. Ideally, they are within walking distance, or situated on main public transit routes. Transportation to social programs can be particularly hard for those who have difficulty getting around or who are disabled and require assisted transportation support, as well as those on limited incomes.

Once they get there, the physical location of programs should be age-friendly, easily accessible for older people. There should be proper facilities, such as accessible washrooms, available.

Did you know?
Edmonton's Creative Age Festival celebrates contributions to the arts made by senior artists, and encourages arts participation later in life.

In the words of one senior at the 2009 Festival: "Joy and laughter is freeing and contagious. It alters the experience of feeling tired. I wasn't half as tired after the play as I was before it."³¹



Edmonton's Creative Age Festival.

For more info...

A Cultural Cues Toolkit has been developed by the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council. It features community profiles of 14 local cultural groups. Visit www.seniorscouncil.net and download the “Mobilizing for Action” resource.

Did you know?

Seniors (over 65) and the City’s Recreation Facilities, 2008:

- 758 seniors took part in the Leisure Access Program (allows low-income Edmontonians to access recreation facilities).
- 4,124 seniors held memberships to the City’s Recreation Facilities and Attractions.³²

Getting the word out

Seniors need to be able to access information about the range of programs available: promotion is crucial. That information should be delivered in a variety of languages (suitable for Edmonton’s diverse senior population) and formats, electronically and in hard copy.

Most older adults want to engage with a real person on the other end of the line when they call for program details. All seniors centres have staff and volunteers whom seniors can call for information on community resources and websites. ESCC produces additional resource materials such as Physical Activity and Recreation Directory and has a comprehensive website. SAGE produces a senior services directory and has a website.

Programs that are culturally appropriate

The cultural and ethnic diversity of Edmonton’s population is reflected in our senior population, for many of whom English is a second language. They are looking for programs in their language of choice, as well as ones which are culturally appropriate. Partnerships between seniors’ centers and multi-cultural organizations aim to enhance programs.

Future seniors will want a greater choice of recreation

Seniors who took part in discussions with Alberta’s Demographic Planning Commission explained that, from their own experiences, seniors are not very realistic about what they plan to do with their time when they retire. Many dream of playing golf, travelling, or keeping themselves busy with home renovations. The reality, however, can be quite different: these activities might be attractive for a short period of time, but may become limiting after a while. As the baby boomers enter their senior years, demand will grow for a wider range of activities to suit changing physical abilities, interests and needs.^D

“ Exercise programs such as Tai Chi are more appropriate to Chinese participants than aerobic exercises. Simply because the Chinese are more familiar with the exercise and will most likely participate. ”

> Mary Fung

Civic participation and employment

Few seniors are employed

From the 1970s to 90s, the percentage of senior men who were working fell considerably. Since then, however, the numbers have begun to creep up again. On the other hand, during that same period, the ratio of senior women who are working has increased steadily. After both men and women turn 70, the small percentage of those still working has stayed consistently low.

The vast majority of seniors over the age of 65 are retired. And, according to a City of Edmonton survey, 88% of them aren't interested in working.^B

Of the small minority who would like to have a job, most are seeking part-time employment.

Employment realities are changing

The realities of Edmonton's job market translate into opportunities for older adults who do want to work. Despite the recent recession, demand for labour is expected to increasingly exceed the number of workers available. That, coupled with the recent collapse in savings and rising cost of living, could mean future seniors choose to work after the traditional retirement age.

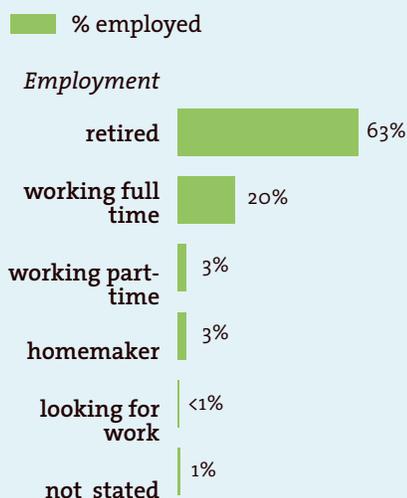
Employers demonstrating flexibility in working arrangements are most attractive to seniors, particularly if they offer high-quality jobs maximizing the potential of an older person's experience. It is also important that companies offer appropriate training to seniors looking to update their skills.

Seniors are politically aware

Some seniors' organizations have become effective political lobbyists. They raise their issues in the public arena expecting them to be addressed, confident that their members' votes count.

Older adults are more likely to vote than younger generations, and they are well-informed at the ballot box. The vast majority of seniors (89%) follow the daily news.³³

Seniors employment



Statistics Canada Census 2006.



Canadian Corps of Commissionaires Northern Alberta Division Training Centre in Edmonton.

Volunteerism

Did you know?

Overall the percentage of people over the age of 65 volunteering is lower than for any other age.

However, seniors put in the most hours.

58% of 15 to 24 year olds volunteered, compared to 36% of those 64 and over. However, those 64 and over volunteered an average of 218 hours while 15 to 24 year olds volunteered an average of only 138 hours.³⁴

Seniors volunteer more hours per person than any other age group

Volunteering is strongly associated with social connectedness, and often enhances the quality of life: it gives a sense of purpose, an occasion to socialize.

In Edmonton, 40% of older adults volunteer.^B

Of those that could volunteer, but chose not to, more than one-third said it was because they did not have time. The same survey shows that volunteerism is strongest among seniors in their middle years (65 – 79), and among those with a higher income.

Seniors' volunteer activities are wide-ranging

Seniors volunteer many hours wherever they are needed. They tend to make a long-term commitment to an organization. Many seniors centres in Edmonton began over 35 years ago and flourished with the volunteer efforts of seniors in the community.

Boomers will change volunteering

Baby Boomers entering retirement now offer a potentially large new pool of volunteers for organizations to draw from. Boomers are retiring younger than previous generations: they are healthier, better educated and wealthier, factors generally associated with volunteering.

However, Boomers are also likely to be more demanding in terms of their expectations: they will be looking for rewarding experiences that effectively use the skills they bring. Organizations will need to re-think their volunteer marketing strategies to attract Boomers, who might have other priorities. Most likely they will already be looking after their own parents, presenting both challenges and opportunities to volunteer managers. Essentially, though, Boomers will want to know that whatever they are engaged in will make a difference to the world around them.³⁵



Volunteers preparing lunch at the McCauley Seniors' Drop-In Centre.



“ I started off 10 years ago, helping Helen with her garden. She loves plants. When she needed more help, I started to shovel her walks, take her out, do her shopping. I’m giving part of me to make people’s lives better, to make the world a better place. ”

> Veronica Yeomans,
here with her friend Helen Harry

Staying Connected to Community

Seniors generally feel connected to their communities – more so than younger generations. Research shows that the more connected you feel to your community, the healthier you’re likely to be.⁴

It makes sense: if you trust your neighbours, talk to your neighbours, live in a neighbourhood where you can walk to your local shop and enjoy the social encounters along the way, inevitably your mental and physical fitness will benefit.

Transportation

Did you know?

By 2020, 1 in 4 drivers on the road will be over 65.

More senior women will be driving than previous generations.³⁶



“ I chose, just before my 85th birthday, to give up my license. I realized that every time I drove I felt fortunate to make it back home into my driveway safely. I didn't like that feeling. But giving up my license was drastic. I felt cut off. I had my car key gold plated and a ruby put in the hole at the top, because my car was red. I wear my key on my lapel now. ”

> Helen Harry

Most seniors get around by driving

Being able to get around is the key to maintaining an active, healthy lifestyle, ensuring independence and avoiding isolation. It is essential for day-to-day necessities such as shopping and doctors' appointments.

Transportation should also be an integral part of recreational program planning for seniors: there is no point in offering great programs if people have difficulty accessing them. The challenges of getting from point A to B are particularly acute for older adults with physical disabilities: their needs are unique, particularly as they age and their functional capacity is reduced further.

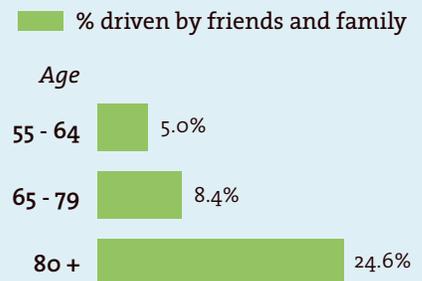
The most important factors determining transportation choices for seniors are safety and convenience. So it's not surprising that most choose

to drive (94%).^B That number decreases with age: only half of seniors over the age of 80 drive.

In the future, there will not only be more older drivers on the roads, but they will be driving longer into old age. This raises the difficult question of what to do when it's no longer safe for someone to drive. Taking away a license is complex: it's a symbol of that person's independence, and not one to be given up lightly. The decision is made easier if it's handled sensitively, and older adults are presented with a range of transportation options.

In discussing older drivers, education of the public is important: is it true that older adults are more likely to be involved in accidents?

The percentage of people relying on friends and family to drive them around increases with age



City of Edmonton Community Services.
Aging in Place Study, December 2007.

Who is most at risk of being involved in an accident?

- Not older drivers, but medically at-risk drivers.
- Most notably, those who are cognitively impaired. Cognitive impairment puts a senior at 3.3 times the crash risk (compared to seniors without cognitive impairment). Of note, alcohol impairment increases the crash risk by 2.2 times.
- Cognitive impairment happens at any age. 17% of Canadians over 65 have some kind of cognitive impairment.

A diagnosis of dementia is not sufficient reason to revoke someone's license, since many of the basic skills necessary to drive are still in place. However, people suffering from dementia may have difficulty doing several things at once, judging distance, or making decisions quickly.³⁷ It's important, therefore, that seniors' ability to drive is assessed according to their skill-level, rather than their age.

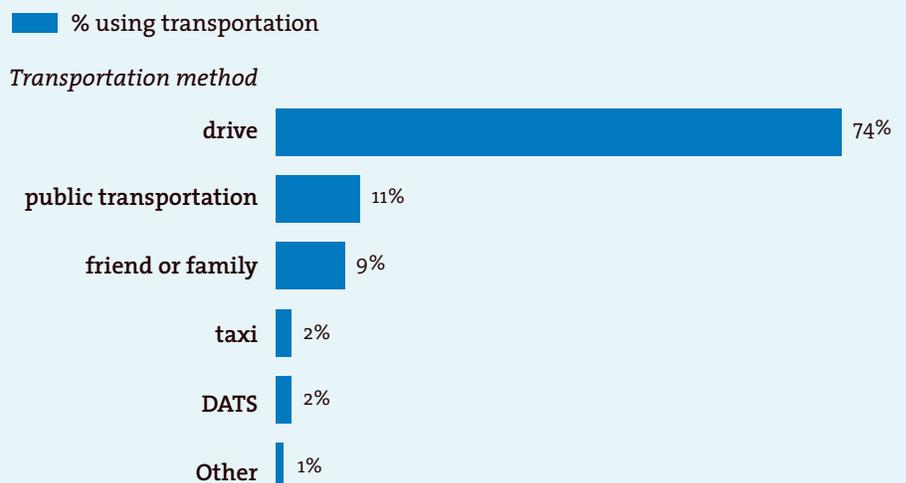
Making it easier for older adults to drive

The design of streets, road signs and other traffic-related elements improve road safety and help seniors continue to drive longer. Road signs, in particular, should incorporate age-friendly colours and letter size.



An Edmonton Driving Angel offers a helping hand to a senior. The Driving Angels program recognizes and thanks volunteers who help seniors get around town, to appointments, shopping, to activities and other important events. Driving Angels is a joint initiative of the Alberta Motor Association, the City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council.

How do you usually get around?



City of Edmonton. 2008 Senior Needs Assessment. December 2008.

Did you know?

In 2008, 13% of Edmonton's seniors bought an annual bus pass. A further 46,478 bought monthly passes.

An annual pass for seniors currently costs \$114.50, \$49.50 for low income seniors.



This ETS bus runs on a seniors route, stopping at places seniors want to go in their community.

Age-friendly cities offer a variety of public transportation options

The full range of transportation options presented to seniors includes public transit, DATS, shuttle buses into neighbourhoods with large senior populations, and other non-profit and private transportation services. The City of Edmonton's Transportation Master Plan emphasizes the importance of public transit in allowing seniors to age in place. The plan discusses low-level boarding accessibility in buses, senior-friendly information and ticketing systems, consistently high quality sidewalks, street crossing points, and low curbs at intersections as measures necessary to ensure safety and accessibility for seniors.

These are the suggested policy directions:

- Operating DATS system for those unable to use the regular transit system.
- Designing all new and, where possible, retrofitting existing public transportation vehicles and facilities to accommodate people with mobility impairments.
- Encouraging neighbourhood design that locates facilities such as high density residential or seniors housing on or near bus routes.
- Providing high-quality passenger access for those with mobility impairments.³⁸

The City is working to address public transit barriers

Older adults, indeed all public transit users, need to be able to get to and from bus stops safely. Sidewalks must be maintained and clear of snow and ice. People must be able to manoeuvre scooters and walkers over curbs and crossing lights must give enough time to get across the road.

As part of its Active Transportation Initiative the City has earmarked a portion of its budget for more curb ramp and sidewalk construction to ensure proper access to bus stops: in 2008 there were 1,700 bus stops in Edmonton that weren't adequately connected to sidewalks.³⁹ As well, just over a quarter of bus stops have shelters and lights.

Edmonton Transit System is also making improvements: all buses are wheelchair accessible, there are specific routes for seniors and special stops upon request and all bus operators take senior-friendly training.

However, there are still gaps in public transit, particularly for older adults living in suburban neighbourhoods.⁴⁰ In one survey, 28% of seniors who take public transit reported that the bus does not go where they need to get to.^B Other barriers include cost and communication for non-English speaking seniors.

Other transportation options

DATS is another public transportation option for older adults with significant mobility issues: in fact the majority of registered DATS subscribers are seniors, although working people with disabilities are the most frequent users.⁴¹ However, the service has some challenges. It can be unreliable; users have to schedule their trip well in advance, and sometimes have to wait a long time for their ride to arrive. The service needs to be expanded, and the eligibility criteria reviewed: some seniors are not eligible under the present criteria.^A

Taxis are another option, but, as with DATS, the driver does not necessarily help the senior in and out of the vehicle or from door to door. Neither are all cabs suitable for walkers and wheelchairs. It is also an expensive option for those living on a limited income.

For some seniors, door-to-door transportation is required. Several non-profit groups offer driving programs but demand often exceeds the number of drivers. There are risk management, eligibility and administrative considerations to offering this service.

In the future: moving forward

Alberta's Demographic Planning Commission heard many concerns from seniors, and soon-to-be seniors about transportation: two-thirds of people surveyed by the Commission are 'worried about getting around' in their senior years.^D

One way to address these concerns is to ensure that transit planning is coordinated with residential planning. In its 'Planning and Design Guidelines for Residential Infill in Mature Neighbourhoods' the City of Edmonton encourages developers to build new seniors' developments on public transit routes. These routes should be part of a larger continuum that connects seniors with the services and amenities they need, as pedestrians, drivers or users of public transit.

Public transit, though, can be difficult for older seniors to negotiate, particularly those with mobility problems. It is important to ensure that other affordable choices are there for them, to avoid loss of independence and social isolation.

Did you know?

Of the 1,230 taxis available in Edmonton, 45 or 3.7% are wheelchair accessible.⁴²

Fewer than 10% of Edmonton's street intersection crossing signals have pedestrian countdowns, which are age-friendly.

Fewer than 10% of intersection crossing signals are equipped with audible signals.⁴³

“ We do have ETS bus service to our centre, but it ends at 4pm. DATS is available later but the wait is quite long. Some classes run later than 4pm and it's impossible for some people to attend. ”

> Edna Bohachyk

Outdoor public spaces and buildings



Creating walkable communities facilitates aging in place

Most people prefer to live in neighbourhoods where their daily necessities are close at hand: where they can walk down the block for some milk. While it may be more challenging in a northern climate, ensuring people of all ages can walk to their destinations is particularly important in ensuring that

“ Our wonderful public libraries are there for all, but they are one of the few places, outside of the parks, that aren’t commercial. Seniors centres are great, but seniors don’t always want to be with other seniors. So public areas where all ages can mix are very important. ” > Keith Turnbull

Did you know?

Of Edmonton’s 19 River Valley Parks:

- 13 have accessible parking
- 10 have accessible washrooms
- 4 have only limited accessibility. ⁴⁴

Edmontonians feel connected to their communities as they age.

The City of Edmonton’s Municipal Development Plan encourages walkability through design: “*Good design ensures safety and security by allowing people of all age groups, especially children and the elderly and those with physical disabilities, to function more independently within their communities.*”

As mature neighbourhoods are redeveloped, and new areas built, urban planning should integrate commercial services and residential areas.

Elderly people need the right infrastructure to walk

Walking must be appealing to everyone: paths with adequate rest areas and benches; sidewalks and curbs that are wide enough to comfortably accommodate wheelchairs and walking aids. Paths should also be well lit, and properly paved, so that seniors are not concerned about tripping, with signage that is easy to read. Pedestrian crossings should also allow sufficient time for older adults to cross safely, with visual and audio signals. Countdown signals are particularly helpful, so people know how much time they have. ⁴⁵

Currently, the city has 10,000 missing curb ramps. However, Edmonton’s Transportation Department is building approximately 400 new curb ramps each year.

Walking outside in winter can be challenging, but many city malls provide indoor walking areas. Meadowlark, Bonnie Doon, Westmount and Mill Woods, are all places where seniors gather and walk, but some are not completely age friendly. Site audits with recommended improvements would help address existing barriers.

Public buildings are readily accessible to seniors

There are several factors in ensuring a building fits age-sensitive design criteria. Everyone must be able to get to and through the doors and access all services inside. Unisex washrooms are also important as caregivers may be of the opposite sex.

The City of Edmonton strives to make public spaces and buildings age-friendly. City policies and guidelines require accessibility and barrier-free design in all public buildings. All city leisure and recreation centres, arenas and attractions are accessible with accessible washrooms, except Coronation Arena and the outdoor pools.⁴⁶

Shortage of year-round public gathering spaces

With Edmonton’s climate, seniors of all ages want a variety of different spaces where they can get together – in winter as well as summer.

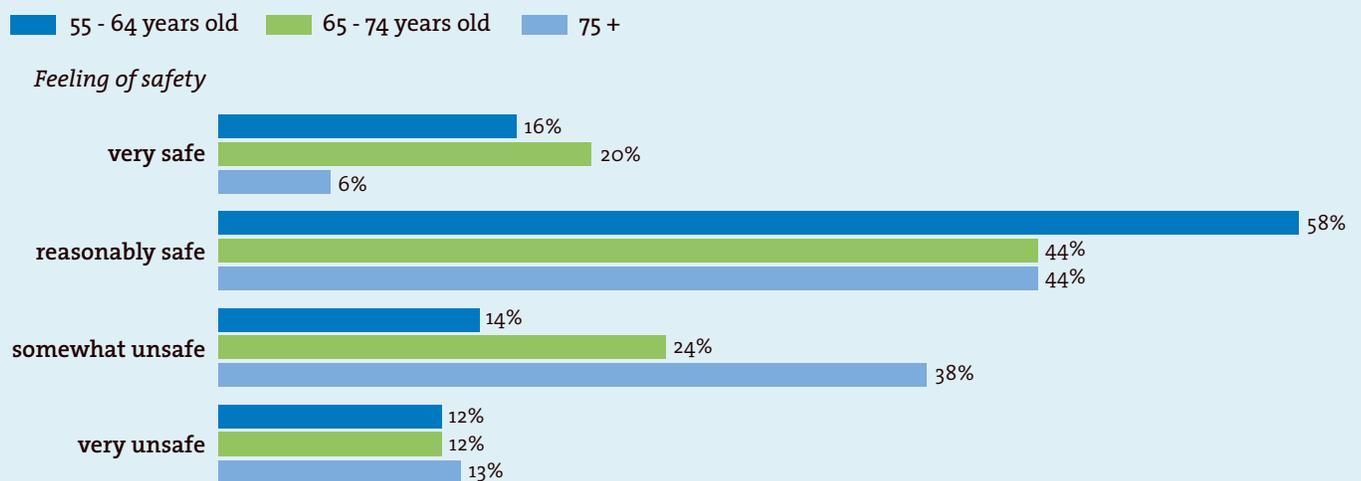
Edmonton’s parks provide those spaces in summer. The Urban Parks Management Plan aims to address the demand for parks, green spaces, formal gardens and community gardens that are alternatives to the traditional large neighbourhood parks geared towards children. The design of green spaces accessible to all ages incorporates age-friendly criteria, such as adequate paving, accessible walkways, benches, activities of interest and washrooms.

Overall seniors feel safe in their communities

To be out and about in the community, people need to feel safe. You would have thought that as seniors age, and feel more frail and vulnerable, they would feel less safe. In fact the opposite seems to be the case: 89% of seniors surveyed in 2007 reported feeling at least moderately safe and secure in their communities. That sense of safety increases with age. It also increases with income. However, older adults living in the north-east part of Edmonton feel less safe.^B

The reality is that seniors in a community enhance the overall perception of safety: they become the eyes and ears on the streets.

How safe do you feel when walking alone in your neighbourhood after dark?



Edmonton Police Service 2007 Citizens Survey.

Communication and information

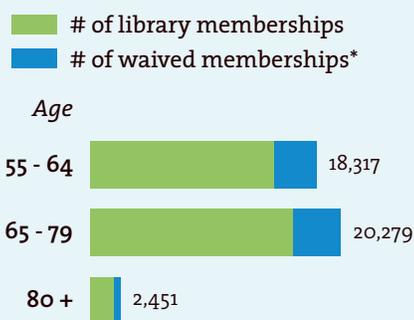
Did you know?

More than 6,000 or 7.5% of seniors in Edmonton over the age of 65 don't speak English or French.

In 2000: 32% of 55-64 year-olds and 5% of 75+ seniors reported using the internet.

In 2007: 70% of 55-64 year-olds and 21% of 75+ seniors reported using the internet.⁴⁷

Library Membership



*Edmonton Public Libraries waives memberships for anyone who has a concern with paying the \$12 annual fee.

City of Edmonton. 2008 Senior Needs Assessment. December 2008.

Accessing information can be difficult

As a diverse population, elderly people need to be able to access information in different ways. Some are comfortable with a computer and the internet. Others are not: older seniors and new immigrants in particular prefer hard copy communications, with a larger font or in their native language.

The same principals apply to verbal communication: most older adults prefer to talk to a person, rather than a machine on the other end of a phone line. Right now there is no single source of information in Edmonton for seniors. SAGE provides a directory of services and 311 provides information on city services. Seniors centres also have resource information and can connect seniors to services. However, the senior still has to call each service to find out the details, and whether or not he/she is eligible for that service. Neither the SAGE directory nor their website is available in languages other than English.

A one stop information line would address the issue, with a real person available to guide seniors through the housing and health systems. Right now there is the 211 line offered by the Support Network to link services and people, the Health Link line, and the City of Edmonton's 311 information line.

Free computer use

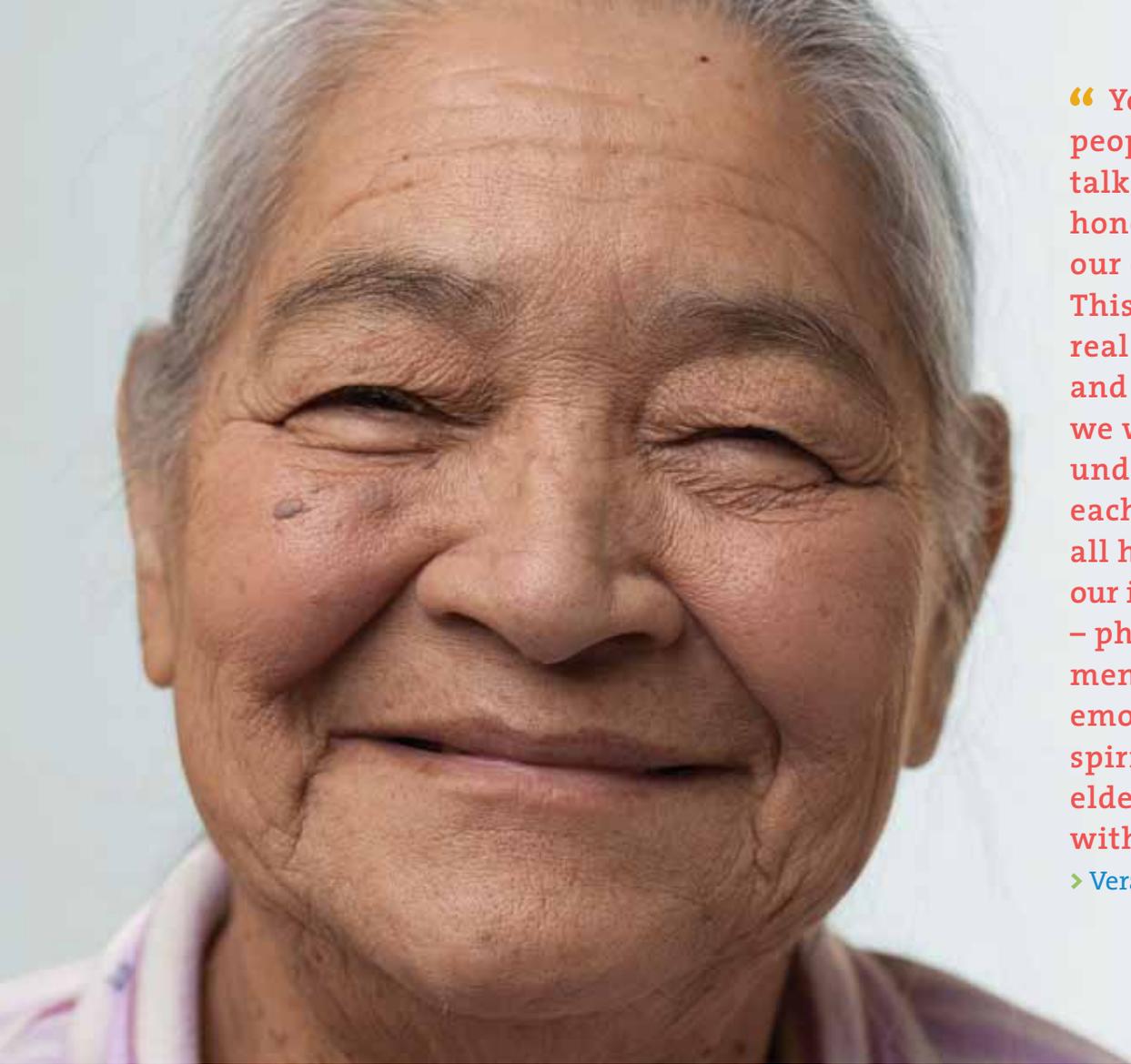
In Edmonton's Senior Needs Assessment, limited access to computers and the internet was most frequently mentioned by respondents (23%) as their main limitation to accessing information.^B Many of the city's seniors centres offer computer access, as well as computer literacy programs. Edmonton Public Libraries also have computers with access to the internet.

Time online can improve mental health

According to one study out of the United States, spending time online can reduce the incidence of depression by 20%. Essentially, the internet allows people with decreased mobility to maintain social connections. Therefore the positive health outcomes of expanded computer use are potentially considerable.⁴⁸

Edmonton's seniors are becoming more highly-educated

The trend is towards higher levels of education among Edmonton's older population. More young seniors (55 - 64) have university qualifications than older seniors. Fewer young seniors have no qualifications at all than older seniors: 19% of young seniors, compared to 39% of older seniors.⁴⁹



“ Young and old people need to talk openly and honestly about our experiences. This will lead to real friendship and respect. But we won't really understand each other if we all haven't done our inner work – physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. And elders can help with that. ”

> Vera Martin

Society's Attitude Toward Seniors

The fundamental measure of an age-friendly society is how effectively we ensure that seniors remain part of the mainstream and are connected to their communities. Seniors also need to be respected, valued, included and recognized for their contributions and skills. We know that we will have succeeded when no one is left to live out their days in isolation and poverty; when seniors are leading fulfilling lives; when every older person feels secure and confident of their ability to live life to its fullest; when nobody is forced to apologize for the physical diminishments that old age can bring. Rather older people are celebrated for their experience and accomplishments.

Respect and social inclusion



“ In the future, I would hope that there would be more of a ‘consulting’ consideration given to seniors because of the vast experience they have to offer. This would mean more respect for and understanding of the aging population. ”

› Delores Berlin

Programs to combat isolation

The supports and programs that we have discussed throughout this report are all essential for an older person’s well-being. However respect for our elders must be the foundation on which these supports and programs are built. Ageism cannot be tolerated.

Connections between seniors and other age-groups, including young people, break down stereotypes and negative attitudes. Community leadership that actively recognizes seniors as valued members of our communities can ensure those connections take place.

Seniors Centres all have outreach workers who visit seniors living alone in the community. There are several other programs in Edmonton to address this, some of which are:

- ElderCare Edmonton - this non-profit organization provides programs in public centres during the day, which help seniors foster new friendships, maintain independence and keep active. It also gives caregivers a break.
- The Lamplighter Program (Alberta Health Services) – community partners, employees such as postal workers, or volunteers are recruited to watch for seniors deemed at risk in the community. Lamplighters are

trained to know when and who to call if they see a problem.

More can be done to avoid isolation. The Lamplighters Program could be expanded, as well as mandates for outreach and community workers, in order to identify and reach more isolated seniors. Younger seniors could be trained to help shut-in or immobile seniors. Local businesses could ensure stores are age-friendly and help provide gathering places for seniors in their communities.

IN CONCLUSION Toward a more livable community

Future seniors will increasingly insist that age does not define them. They will resist stereotypes and attitudes that restrict their choices. They will insist on remaining connected to mainstream society, to their communities. Participants told the Province’s Demographic Planning Commission: *“Future seniors are likely to be more politically active, more vocal and use the power of their numbers to drive change. Communities would do well to respond now.”*

Edmonton’s Seniors Declaration challenges the City, service providers and the private sector to continue working toward an age-friendly Edmonton; one which is supportive for all and benefits everyone.

**Thank you to those
Edmontonians whose portraits
are part of this project:**

Delores Berlin
 Jim & Esther Burke
 Edna Bohachyk & Emily
 James Cupido & Jack Telman
 Peter Faid
 Mary Fung & Liuting Hudson
 Helen Harry & Veronica Yeomans
 Phyllis Johnston
 Vera L. Martin
 Amilda Kojok & Victoria Andrea
 Jalal Syed
 Keith Turnbull

References

- ^A City of Edmonton Community Services. *Aging in Place Study*. December 2007.
- ^B City of Edmonton. *2008 Senior Needs Assessment*. December 2008.
- ^C Government of Alberta. *Continuing Care Strategy Aging in the Right Place*. December 2008.
- ^D Alberta Government, Demographic Planning Commission. *Findings Report*. Dec. 2008.
- ¹ Population projections prepared by Applications Management Consulting Ltd., using 2006 data.
- ² World Health Organization. "WHO Age-Friendly Environments Programme." *Ageing and Life Course World Health Organization*. n.d. Web. Nov. 2009.
- ³ Population projections prepared by Applications Management Consulting Ltd., using 2006 data.
- ⁴ Statistics Canada 2006 Census, Catalogue no. 97-551-XWE2006011.
- ⁵ Population projections prepared by Applications Management Consulting Ltd. using 2006 data.
- ⁶ Government of Alberta. Health and Wellness. *Interactive Health Data Application*. http://www.ahw.gov.ab.ca/IHDA_Retrieval/selectSubCategoryParameters.do.
- ⁷ Statistics Canada. *Labour Force Survey 2006*. 2008.
- ⁸ Statistics Canada 2006 Census, Catalogue no. 97-555-X2006016.
- ⁹ Statistics Canada 2006 Census, Catalogue no. 97-557-XWE2006020.
- ¹⁰ Statistics Canada. *A Portrait of Seniors in Canada*. 2007.
- ¹¹ Statistics Canada 2006 Census, Catalogue no. 97-557-XWE2006020.
- ¹² Statistics Canada. Small Area and Administrative Data Division. 2006. *Annual Estimates for Census Families and Individuals*. 89C0022.
- ¹³ Public Interest Alberta and the Edmonton Social Planning Council. Jim Gurnett. *We Must Do Better: It's Time to Make Alberta Poverty Free*. November 2009.
- ¹⁴ Statistics Canada. *On Poverty and Low Income*. 1997, modified 2005. Catalogue no. 13F0027XIE.
- ¹⁵ SAGE. *Senior's Housing Guide*. 2009.
- ¹⁶ City of Edmonton. *Preliminary Population Projections 2006-2041*. 2007.
- ¹⁷ Government of Alberta. Health and Wellness. *Annual Report 2006-2007. Section 1*. Web. March 2010.
- ¹⁸ Alberta Health Services.
- ¹⁹ Homeward Trust Edmonton. *A count of homeless persons in Edmonton*. 2008. Web. Dec. 2009.
- ²⁰ Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research, *Seniors' Falls Injuries in Alberta*, and Injury Related Database. October 2008. Web. Dec. 2009.
- ²¹ Alberta Health Services.
- ²² Government of Alberta. Municipal Affairs. Vital Statistics. 2008.
- ²³ Predy GN, Fraser-Lee N, Ladd B, Brown A, Edwards J, Lightfoot P. *How healthy are we? 2007 A report of the Medical Officer of Health*. Edmonton, Alberta: Public Health Division, Capital Health; (June, 2008). Web. Dec. 2009.
- ²⁴ Alzheimer Society of Edmonton.
- ²⁵ Alzheimer Society. "Alzheimer's Disease Fact Sheet." *Alzheimer Society of Canada Media Centre*. 2010. Web. Jan. 2010.
- ²⁶ Alberta Health Services.
- ²⁷ SAGE.
- ²⁸ Government of Alberta. Health and Wellness. *Continuing Care Strategy Fact Sheet*. Dec. 2008. Web. Dec. 2009.
- ²⁹ Alberta Caregivers Association. www.albertacaregiversassociation.org/caregiving.htm. Web. Dec. 2009. (Canada. Health Canada. *National Profile of Caregivers in Canada 2002: A final Report*. 2002.)
- ³⁰ Alberta Health Services.
- ³¹ City of Edmonton.
- ³² City of Edmonton Community Services, *ESCC Creative Age Festival Evaluation Report*. 2009.
- ³³ Statistics Canada. 2008.
- ³⁴ Statistics Canada. *Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating*. 2007.
- ³⁵ The Kerby Centre, 2009.
- ³⁶ Medically At-Risk Driver Centre, University of Alberta & Statistics Canada.
- ³⁷ Medically At-Risk Driver Centre, University of Alberta.
- ³⁸ City of Edmonton. *The Way We Move*. 2008.
- ³⁹ The City of Edmonton Sidewalk Strategy, 2008.
- ⁴⁰ City of Edmonton. *Aging in Place: Promising Practices for Municipalities*. 2009.
- ⁴¹ City of Edmonton.
- ⁴² City of Edmonton, Transportation Department.
- ⁴³ City of Edmonton.
- ⁴⁴ City of Edmonton. *Recreation Facilities & River Valley Parks Accessibility Guide*. 2008.
- ⁴⁵ World Health Organization. "Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide." *Ageing and Life Course Family and Community Health WHO*. 2007. Web. Dec. 2009.
- ⁴⁶ City of Edmonton. *Recreation Facilities & River Valley Parks Accessibility Guide*. 2008.
- ⁴⁷ Statistics Canada.
- ⁴⁸ Ford, George S., Ford, Sherry G. "Internet Use and Depression Among the Elderly." *Phoenix Center*. Phoenix Center for Advanced Legal and Economic Studies. 2009. Web. Dec. 2009.
- ⁴⁹ Statistics Canada.

