Unison Persons Served

From inception, in Calgary and Medicine Hat, Unison has been committed to honouring the experience of older adults by building an organization that was run by seniors for seniors. The life experience, wisdom and skills of older adults inform and lead the work of the organization. Unison is committed to building awareness, enhancing resilience and providing opportunities for success for all older individuals.

Older Adult Facts

- In Canada, seniors are the fastest growing segment of the population. (Age-Friendly Calgary)
- Seniors are as diverse as the community itself and becoming more diverse (Statistics Canada, 2022). Across our combined southern Alberta service areas, older adults identify as follows:
    - 10.5% East or Southeast Asian (primarily Chinese and Filipino communities)
    - 6.9% South Asian (primarily Punjabi and Indian communities)
    - 2.0% Black
    - 4.8% Other ethnicities (Including Latin American, Arab, and West Asian groups)
- 2.3% of seniors are indigenous. The number of indigenous older adults (60+) is expanding rapidly and is expected to continue its steep upward trajectory across regional boundaries. (Statistic Canada, 2022)
- Alberta remains a structurally unique province; Calgary maintains a younger demographic profile with roughly 14.0% seniors (The City of Calgary, 2021) whereas Medicine Hat operates as an accelerated aging centre with seniors comprising 20.0% of the local population (Statistics Canada, 2021).
- While most seniors live within urban areas like Calgary, aligning with national trends (Statistics Canada, 2022), the Unison service footprint addresses a unique regional reality, in the broader Medicine Hat area, including rural Cypress County. Older adults comprise up to 23.7% of the localized population (Statistics Canada, 2021).
- 18.2% of Alberta seniors aged 65 and older remain active participants in the workforce, notably outpacing the Canadian national senior participation average of 15.8% (Statistic Canada, 2024).
- As Canadian life expectancy increases and seniors report overall good health, the population aged (85+) is expanding rapidly. This group grew 12% during the 2016 census and currently makes up 2.3% of the total population. Over the next 25 years, they are projected to triple to almost 2.5 million people. While women still outnumber men amongst people aged (85+) the gap is steadily decreasing (Statistics Canada 2022).
- According to the Public Health Agency of Cananda, 92.1% continue to live independently at home in private dwellings; 7.9% live in residential care or nursing homes. These statistics suggest that majority of older adults are remaining at home, highlighting a continuous need for community support that helps individuals age in place safely.
- While 72.1% of older Canadians live with a partner or family, 22.0% in urban areas live entirely alone (Statistics Canada, 2022). This isolation represents a critical public health and community challenge, as the National Institute on Ageing reports that 57% of adults aged (50+) regularly experience loneliness.

Older Adult Challenges

- The risk of developing a chronic illness increases with age, with hypertension, osteoarthritis, heart disease, osteoporosis, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD) remaining the five most common conditions (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2022).
- Falls continue to be a primary cause of physical injury, long-term disability and premature death among older adults.
- Of the seniors living alone, more than half are women.
- Approximately 57% of seniors regularly experience loneliness, and 43% are at high risk for social isolation (National Institute on Ageing, 2026) Those facing the highest risk include:
    - Rural residents
    - 2SLGBTQI+ individuals
    - Ethnic minorities and immigrants
    - Indigenous peoples
    - People living with dementia
    - Caregivers
    - Low-income individuals
- Social isolation is linked to increased risk for heart disease and stroke, Type 2 diabetes, depression and anxiety, addiction, suicidality and self-harm, dementia and an earlier death. (US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).
- Only 15% of adults between the ages 66-79 are physically active.
- 5.4% of seniors live below the poverty line (Statistics Canada, 2026). Financial hardship harms senior health, as poverty leads to poor nutrition, housing insecurity, and limited access to transportation or uninsured medical services.
- The self-reported rate of suicide ideation decreases with age. The rate is 8.3% for ages 65-74 and 5.1% over age 75.
- It is estimated that 1 in 10 seniors in Alberta may be a victim of elder abuse (Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy, Government of Alberta)

NOTE: Unless otherwise indicated, data is from *Aging and Chronic Diseases, a Profile of Canadian Seniors,* Public Health Agency of Canada, 2020.

Please direct any questions to:

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