



# What You Said

A summary of seniors needs and  
York Region's proposed plan to support them

May 2023  
Seniors Strategy  
[york.ca/PlanForSeniors](http://york.ca/PlanForSeniors)



# Overview

In late 2021 and fall 2022, engagement activities took place to inform the development of the 2023-2027 York Region Plan to Support Seniors. This document summarizes how [What You Said](#) will inform development of the Plan. The Plan to Support Seniors will be finalized in fall 2023 and it will define how we support seniors – through actions where the Region has a role to play, and an advocacy agenda where the needs of seniors are addressed through other levels of government. Learn more at [york.ca/PlanForSeniors](http://york.ca/PlanForSeniors)



# 1

## Navigation Improvements

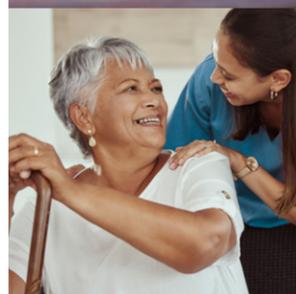
to make it easier for pre-seniors, seniors and caregivers to access information and services



# 2

## Technology Access and Training

supports to help seniors access online information, programs and services



# 3

## Home Care and Community Supports

available and accessible to help seniors stay independent, longer



# 4

## Affordable and Appropriate Housing

options to support the ability of seniors to age in the right place



# Engagements



## Online Surveys

Two online surveys available from December 17, 2021 to January 9, 2022 collected feedback to inform the proposed 2023-2027 York Region Plan to Support Seniors.

One survey was for York Region pre-seniors (55-65) and seniors (65+) and the other survey was for caregivers who provide support to seniors in York Region.



## Fall 2021 Workshops

Nine virtual workshops were hosted with internal staff, community partners, stakeholders and residents and families of our two long-term care homes. Two community virtual open houses were hosted with pre-seniors, seniors and caregivers.



## Fall 2022 Validation Sessions

In fall 2022, staff conducted additional consultations with seniors on the findings of the previous engagements and the direction of the 2023-2027 York Region Plan to Support Seniors. These consultations were held through virtual and in-person sessions, and one-on-one discussions over the phone with seniors, pre-seniors and caregivers who were not reached during our initial virtual consultations (e.g., newcomer seniors, those without access to technology, those who are precariously housed/homeless, seniors housing/housing with supports, and those identifying as having a disability).

Similar to the findings of previous engagements, participants said they often did not know how to access and navigate information and services, there is a need for more housing options that are both affordable and appropriate for age related changes, home and community care services are important to supporting independence and well-being, and there are gaps for seniors in accessing and using technology.

The following provides more details on what seniors and caregivers said about key service needs and York Region's plan to support those needs.

# 1

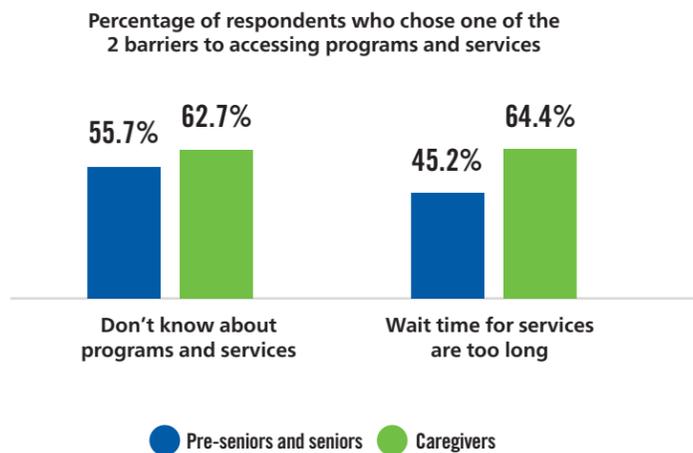
## Navigation Improvements

The complexity of how multiple health and social programs and services are arranged creates barriers to accessing information and helpful supports. The importance of simplifying access to information and services was emphasized in the survey results and also in the workshops and consultations.



When asked about barriers to accessing needed information, the top two reasons given by pre-seniors, seniors and caregivers were:

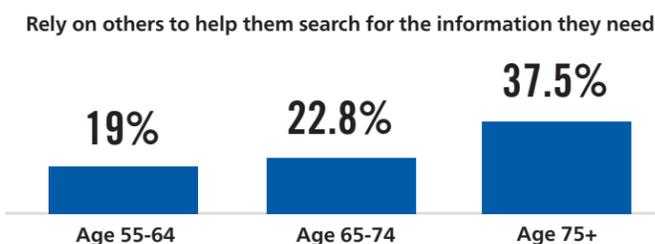
“don’t know about available programs and services”  
“wait times for services are too long”



When asked what would make it easier to find information on services, “accessing services through one place,” and “someone to call or email for help” were the top answers from both pre-seniors/seniors and caregivers:



Based on the age profile of respondents, the survey showed that as seniors age, their reliance on others to find information increases



Pre-senior and senior survey comments about the importance of navigation improvements:

“Not sure what services are available and where to find information”  
“Sometimes you know what you want but it is hard to access”



Participants in the fall 2022 engagement validation sessions affirmed the importance of navigation improvements:

“Trying to avoid the crises is so important – we need information so we can avoid crisis”  
“We don’t know what we don’t know”



**Key learnings that will be used to inform the direction and actions of the 2023-2027 York Region Plan to Support Seniors to contribute to service navigation improvements for seniors and caregivers include:**

- Providing seniors with information to improve their health and well-being and improve access to information and services

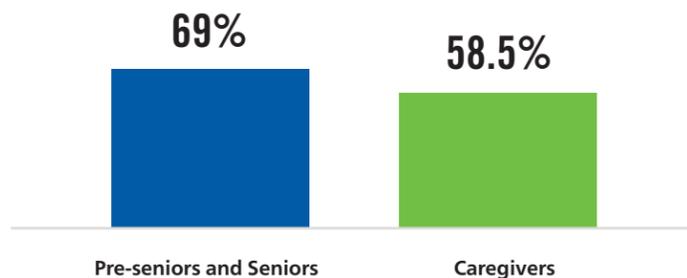
# 2

## Technology Access and Training

The importance of technology access and training to keep seniors connected was highlighted in the results from all the engagements.

69% of pre-senior and senior respondents and 59% of caregivers said that technology was either extremely or very important to supporting their ability to live where they choose:

Percentage of respondents who said that technology was important in helping to age the right place



Pre-senior and senior survey comments highlighted the importance of training:



“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”

“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”

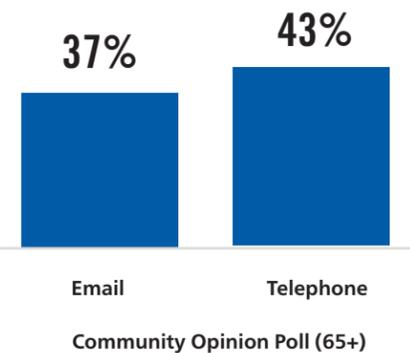
Workshop participants emphasized the importance of applying an equity lens to online services and the need to address gaps in technology access and skills amongst seniors with fewer financial resources



Pre-seniors and seniors who participated in the online survey and online open houses were comfortable with technology. However, the validation sessions conducted over the phone and some in-person engagements indicated many seniors had difficulty navigating online supports. Other York Region community polling, conducted over the phone, showed that email is the less preferred communication method compared to telephone among York Region seniors polled.

These findings indicate that offering health and service information in a variety of offline formats is also important in supporting seniors who are not comfortable with technology

Percentage of respondents who listed email and telephone as their preferred method of communication



Fall 2022 validation participant:

“I realize it is more expensive to do a paper copy but it is better because many do like to have resources to read – so a paper copy is better for seniors”



Key learnings that will be used to inform the direction and actions of the 2023-2027 York Region Plan to Support Seniors to enhance technology access and training for seniors include:

- Supporting seniors to stay connected through better access to digital information and improved connectivity
- Continuing to build partnerships and collaborations to improve access to services such as technology training

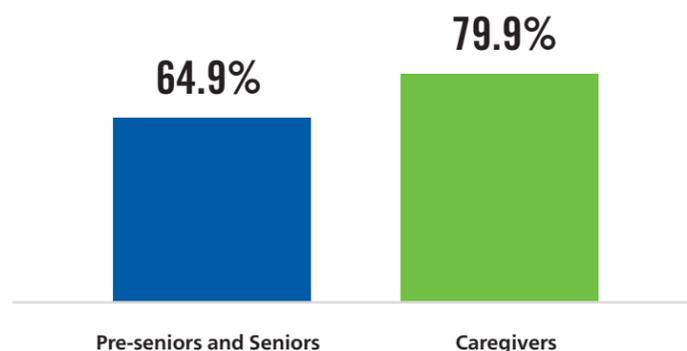
# 3

## Home Care and Community Supports

Home care and community support programs and services help seniors live independently for longer and provide additional support or respite to caregivers.

65% of pre-senior and senior respondents and 80% of caregivers said that home and community care services were very or extremely important to helping seniors age in their place of choosing

Percentage of respondents who felt that home and community care services was important in helping to age the right place



When asked what would help with caregiver duties, 59% of caregivers said home care and community supports



Caregiver survey comment about home and community care services:

“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.”



During the workshops, participants highlighted the need to have home and community services where:

- Seniors are checked-in on regularly to support ongoing wellness and prevent critical health incidents
- Seniors have regular touch points with the community through social programs to help prevent loneliness



Key learnings that will be used to inform the direction and actions of the 2023-2027 York Region Plan to Support Seniors to enhance the availability of home and community care services include:

- Ensuring that Regional services are in alignment with needs
- Advocating to other levels or government for better integration of home and community programs and services

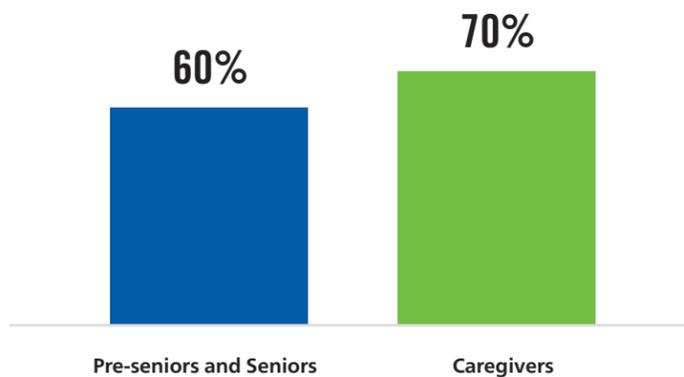
# 4

## Affordable and Appropriate Housing

Affordable and appropriate housing options help seniors age in a setting that meets their circumstances and care needs. Access to the right housing option is also an equity concern, where seniors experiencing low or fixed incomes, homelessness or housing insecurity, and mental health and wellness concerns are more likely to have challenges securing affordable and appropriate housing that meets their age-related needs.

60% of pre-seniors and seniors and 70% of caregivers said that affordable and appropriate housing is very or extremely important to helping seniors age in the right place

Percentage of respondents who ranked affordable and appropriate housing options as important

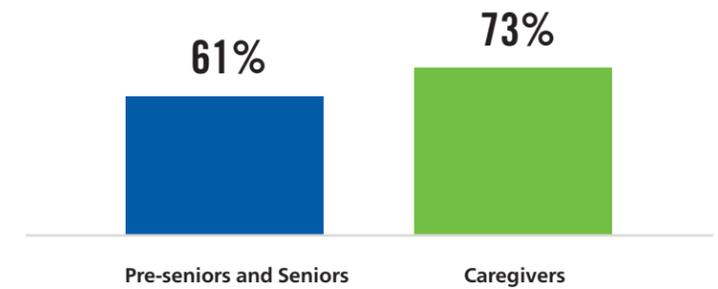


Homelessness among York Region seniors has increased in recent years. [I Count, a 2021 voluntary point-in-time survey of people experiencing homelessness](#), found an increase in participants over the age of 65, from 4% in 2018 to 8%



61% of pre-seniors and seniors and 73% of caregivers said that home alterations to meet changing needs is very or extremely important to helping seniors age in the right place

Percentage of respondents who ranked home alterations to meet changing needs as important



Pre-seniors and seniors comment about affordable and appropriate housing:

“Having somewhere in town to downsize to at a price I can afford [is important]”

Participants in the fall 2022 engagement validation sessions affirmed the importance of affordable and appropriate housing:

“We need affordable housing because I can’t afford to stay in own home without expensive supports”

Workshop participants highlighted that to support seniors to live in age-friendly, complete communities, seniors must have equitable access to:

- Housing options that fit between life stages, such as living independently and long-term care
- Community and transportation supports to enable senior well-being



Key learnings that will be used to inform the direction and actions of the 2023-2027 York Region Plan to Support Seniors to support affordable and appropriate housing options include:

- Working with partners to increase supply of affordable private market housing that seniors would have opportunity to access
- Advocating to other levels of government for improvements in access to services that support health, well-being and enable seniors to age in the right place

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