

Connecting the Dots

The Connection Between Poverty and Social Isolation



A collaboration between Eastern Zone Community Health Boards and Mental Health and Addictions Health Promotion team.

Did You Know?

Social isolation affects health

Social isolation and exclusion contribute to poor health, chronic disease and disability, depression, lower sense of wellbeing and premature death.

Some people are at higher risk

People living in poverty are at higher risk of experiencing social isolation and loneliness than the general population. This is also true for visible minorities, Indigenous Canadians, those with mobility challenges, and 2SLGBTQI+ individuals.

There are protective factors

Having adequate income, secure housing, higher levels of education, and access to transportation are all examples of factors that reduce the risk of social isolation.

Social isolation & loneliness differ

Loneliness is the distressing feeling of being alone or separated. Social isolation is the lack of social contacts and having few people to interact with regularly. (For example, you can live alone and not feel lonely or socially isolated, and you can feel lonely while being with other people).

Substance Use and Connection

People who use substances are at risk of social isolation because drug use is stigmatized and criminalized. The famous “Rat Park” study conducted in the 70’s showed that our social environments can influence chances of developing a chronic health condition like substance use disorder. In fact the opposite of addiction may be connection, not sobriety. Learn more [here](#)



More than 1 in 10 Canadians are always or often lonely



Older Adults Particularly Vulnerable

Older people are particularly vulnerable to social isolation and loneliness owing to loss of friends and family due to death, mobility and/or transportation issues or lacking income.

Same as Smoking?

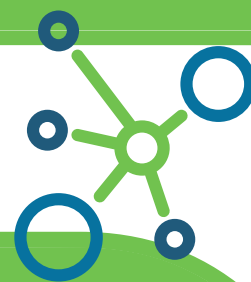
Loneliness has the same impact on mortality as smoking 15 cigarettes a day!



1 in 4 Canadians aged 65+ live alone

Everything is Connected

Poverty can mean lack of access to reliable transportation, which in turn can increase social isolation, especially among seniors in rural communities!



Time of Year Matters

Christmas can be especially lonesome for those experiencing social isolation. There are resources you can share (e.g. see Friendly Line by Red Cross). Reach out to family, friends and neighbours over the holidays.



Role of Technology

A majority of Canadians who use technology such as social media, texting, or video calling to remain connected with friends and family say that they appreciate the impact it has on their ability to stay in touch.



 **FRIENDLY CALLS**
Feeling isolated or lonely due to COVID-19?
CONTACT US
at
1-833-729-0144
Monday to Friday
8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. AST
to register

HOW COMMUNITY HEALTH BOARDS ARE HELPING

Eastern Zone Community Health Boards partner with community groups on projects addressing the social determinants of health, including projects aimed at reducing social isolation and promoting protective factors. Connections are fostered through seniors programming offered by groups such as the BOLD Centre in Victoria County and Seniors Take Action Coalition of Richmond County. Funding has also been provided by CHBs to various meal delivery programs, such as Reserve Mines Seniors and Pensioners Club in Cape Breton and Kids First Association in Antigonish County.