



Peel | Council
on Aging
Healthy aging for all

Impact of Covid-19 on adults 50+ living in the Region of Peel

Survey results – 2022

A Resource for Roundtables

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Kaleidoscope Consulting
September, 2022



Changing the way we view aging



Impact of COVID-19 on adults 50+ living in the Region of Peel

A snapshot of select regional survey results

About Us!

- **Where participants live:** Mississauga (**41.81%**), Brampton (**37.65%**), Caledon (**20.54%**)
- **Gender** – approximately **76%** female
- Responses in all age categories including 21 respondents 90+;
Largest percentage: 70-79
- **Ethnic background** – primarily Caucasian, Metis, Black, East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian
- **Almost half of the respondents** live in single family homes with others (e.g. spouse/partner, extended family) followed by 'live alone in their own homes'



Healthy Aging

45.73% report physical and wellbeing became worse in the last 2 years; 40.22% report mental health becoming worse

41.98% saying they had contact with family and friends more than **4 times a week**

More than half of respondents engaged in less exercise and physical activity



Safety

Over half (51.40%) completely agreed that frauds & scams towards older adults became more apparent during the pandemic

Good news Peel! There is always room to improve but **55.4% feel safe** or **very safe** and secure in their communities



Building Community

The 3 primary concerns during the pandemic were:

1. Personal physical health
2. The health and safety of family members
3. Worry about the virus itself

Over half of respondents agreed, somewhat agreed or completely agreed that existing or new community services met their needs



Staying Mobile

Personal cars were the most frequently used form of transportation (**80.29%**)

More than half of respondents agreed, somewhat agreed or completely agreed that their community had safe sidewalks, bicycle paths and trails for all including those who have mobility challenges



Housing

The 3 most important topics identified by respondents were:

1. Affordability (by over half – 57.60%)
2. More supports & services to age at home
3. More choice of housing options, from living independently to long-term care homes

Technology

The **3 areas** where respondents **planned to increase use** after the pandemic:

1. Banking
2. Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn)
3. Reading books and/or newspapers

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Introduction






In 2015, the Peel Elder Abuse Prevention Network (PEAPN) received funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to explore how system navigation could be improved to ensure that older adults living in the Region of Peel have better access to available programs and services. PEAPN conducted surveys and focus groups during which they heard from both individuals and service providers, that an organization was needed to facilitate a region-wide conversation. This was a five-year process that laid the groundwork for the Peel Council on Aging (PCoA).

Peel Senior Link became the lead agency for the PCoA and received Region of Peel Organizational Effectiveness funding to develop the Terms of Reference and by-laws. Best practices and governance models from the 11 Councils on Aging in Ontario were studied when considering a model that works best for Peel.

In addition, in the winter of 2020, the draft PCoA framework (i.e., mission, vision, mandate, structure) was taken back to individuals and organizations in the community for final community consultations. This community engagement phase was instrumental in helping to further shape the structure of the PCoA. In 2021, PCoA recruited an inaugural Board of Directors and became incorporated.

A foundational component underpinning the PCoA structure is 5 roundtables. The objective of the roundtables is to ‘share and build alignment and collaboration within the region senior service sector’ (PCoA Terms of Reference, page 4).

A brief summary of the goals of the roundtables, for quick reference by roundtable members, follows.

	Housing Identify and promote next step living options that support and address Peel older adult financial, social, and physical housing needs.
	Healthy Aging Support opportunities for healthy choices that enhance independence and quality of life and connect Peel older adults with services that assist them.
	Safety Raise awareness of seniors’ safety issues so Peel older adults can recognize the risks of harm and respond with appropriate actions.
	Building Community Empower Peel older adults to be engaged in their community through civic engagement and volunteerism, social and physical participation, and lifelong learning opportunities.
	Staying Mobile Establish safe, active transportation through connected communities and promote age-friendly rural and urban transportation options in Peel.

In 2021, Peel Senior Link, as the lead agency for the PCoA, received funding from the Region of Peel's Change Fund which included support for creating the survey 'Impact of COVID-19 on adults 50+ living in the Region of Peel' (Appendix A).

Since the beginning of the pandemic, many individuals have become more vulnerable and isolated. The impact has disproportionately affected older adults, in general, and particularly those with diverse backgrounds.

One objective of the current project, then, was to explore issues older adults are facing, including the impact of COVID-19, on various aspects of their lives. The impact was explored through a survey designed to be completed by adults 50+ living in the Region of Peel. One anticipated outcome of the survey is increased awareness of the impact of COVID-19 on older adults. This increased awareness may assist organizations and groups to better respond to their needs and interests, both regionally and municipally.

How to use this report

This report has been prepared with the intent of providing participants of the five roundtables with resource information to guide their planning.

There are a few things the author would like to note in preparation for the roundtable conversations.

1. This report is not a blueprint but a guide to generate conversation. The survey results presented will highlight some trends (e.g., increase in the use of social media) that groups and organizations may want to take into consideration when planning programs and services.

2. Some survey results are presented regionally and, where it made sense, some are also provided municipally. Where results have been provided only regionally, it means that there wasn't enough variation across the municipalities to warrant separate municipal information. The one caveat is that, for some results, even though there might not be significant differences between the municipalities, the author thought roundtable members might still be interested in municipally specific data.

If there are results presented only regionally for which you would like to see municipal data, please email the Peel Council on Aging at pcoa@peelseniorlink.com

3. In addition to presenting the survey results, an author's note has been added following select results. These comments/suggestions generally highlight a point that the author wants to draw to the attention of the roundtable participants. Please note that these comments reflect only the author's perspective.

4. The survey questions may be found in Appendix A. Throughout the report, the author has included the question number for readers to reference in the survey. In doing so, you may note that there are a few questions for which specific results have not been included. In those instances, it is because the answers to that particular question were, in at least a general way, answered with another question.

5. A number of survey questions had an 'other' option or a comment section. Following survey results for some questions, a sample of comments is included to provide roundtable members with comments that may be interesting to consider.

Where there was a more robust comment section (i.e., question #25), themes that emerged are included that may assist with planning.

6. The aforementioned community engagement phase (winter 2021) that contributed to the development of the Peel Council on Aging was funded by the Region of Peel Organizational Effectiveness Fund.

The author has included roundtable topics that were suggested by organizations and individuals during the winter of 2021 consultations in Appendix B.

These suggestions may be viewed as a companion resource, along with the 2022 survey results, for roundtable participants. Participants will see the alignment between suggested topics (2021) and survey results (2022).

Survey

Methodology

An online survey, titled 'Impact of COVID-19 in adults 50+ living in the Region of Peel', was created and hosted through Peel Senior Link on Survey Monkey. In addition to the online survey, print copies of the survey were also made available to individuals who preferred, for many reasons, the print version.

The survey was launched on February 1st, 2022. The online version was open for one month. The print copy version was open until March 18th, 2022, to allow extra time for distribution to various sites.

Along with other distribution methods, organizations and individuals who supported the PCoA community engagement process in early 2021 were invited to share the survey with their contacts.

Participant profile

Five hundred surveys (100 completed in print, 400 online in Survey Monkey, were completed by adults 50+ living in Mississauga (41.81%), Brampton (37.65%) and Caledon (20.54%). Of these, approximately 76% of the surveys were completed by females. There were responses from individuals in all age ranges with 60-69 and 70-79 representing the greatest numbers. Twenty-one individuals 90+ completed the survey.

In terms of ethnic background, the majority of respondents answering this question were Caucasian (59.60%). There were also respondents who identified as Metis, First Nations, Latin American, Black, East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian and West Asian.

When asked about the language most often spoke at home, 100% of respondents replied English.

From a regional perspective, the majority of respondents (48.40%) indicated that they live with others (e.g., spouse, partner, extended family) and 18.77% living in single family houses alone. The second most frequent form of housing, reported regionally, was apartments/condos (27.65%).

Results

The results are presented for each of the 5 roundtables and separately for technology. It should be noted that, while the results may have more direct implications for particular roundtables, responses and themes are cross-cutting and may have relevance for more than one roundtable.

Section A

Healthy Aging

#1. During the pandemic, how did you access healthcare? Please check all that apply.				
Options	Region	Brampton	Caledon	Mississauga
Attended medical appointments in person	60.04%	62.67%	61.45%	59.17%
Video consultations (e.g., on Zoom, Facetime, Skype) with healthcare providers	18.63%	22%	27.71%	10.06%
Phone calls with healthcare providers	83.02%	84.67%	86.75%	84.02%
Email communication with healthcare providers	15.73%	16%	21.69%	11.24%
I did not use the healthcare system during the pandemic	6.83%	4.67%	4.82%	6.51%

Other

Respondents were also invited to comment about use of the healthcare system during the pandemic under an 'other' category. Below is a sample of responses from a regional perspective.

- Visit to emergency
- Elective surgery, other hospitalization
- I do not have a doctor
- In person for bloodwork, vaccines, flu shots, chiropractor, dental appointments, cancer treatment at Princess Margaret hospital
- Not all visits are able to be handled online
- Drive through clinic for COVID test
- COVID and flu shot clinics at pharmacies
- I did not use my healthcare provider because of the pandemic
- Ambulance service
- I went to my chiropractor for treatments
- I had PSWs and physiotherapists for in-home care (following serious car accident)

#2a. Did you have a medical appointment or a medical procedure (e.g., surgery) cancelled or postponed during the past 2 years because of the pandemic?

Regionally, 34.64 % of survey respondents reported having a medical appointment or a medical procedure cancelled or postponed during the past 2 years.

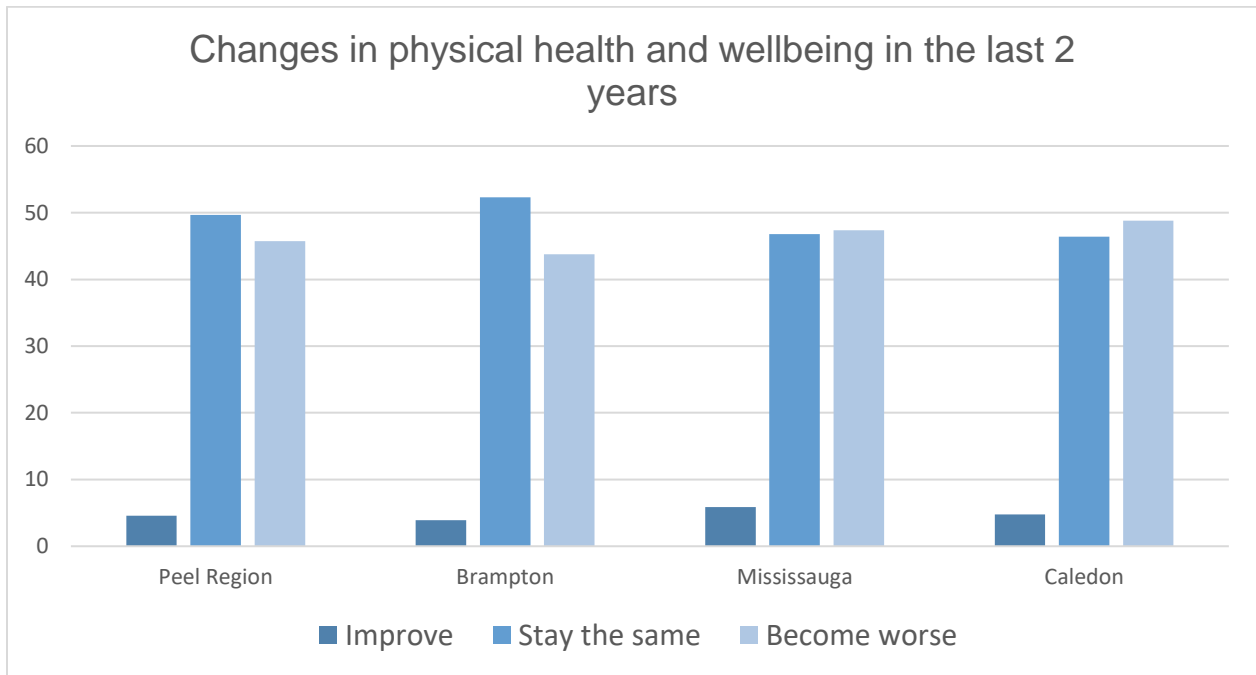
There was a significant difference between Brampton (24.67%) and Mississauga (42.69%). Caledon reported 39.02% 'yes' to this question. It is important not to over interpret these results but, for the purposes of roundtable conversations, to be aware of the differences.

Regionally (question #2b), 74.05% of respondents said that the postponements/cancellations happened 1-2 times.

Author's note:

It would be interesting to know the frequency of postponements/cancellations prior to the pandemic and as we emerge from the height of the pandemic. Do we have stats that demonstrate postponements/cancellations occurring significantly more frequently during the pandemic? Are they now decreasing?

#3. Question #3 asked survey respondents to comment on changes in their physical health and wellbeing during the last 2 years.



There were 359 comments in response to this question. In light of the consistent results across municipalities, what follows are some of the comments from the region.

The most frequently cited comments with respect to health becoming worse had to do with:

1. reduced exercise/activity (e.g., gyms, swimming pools and active living centres closed)
2. physical health conditions that were either diagnosed or became worse during the pandemic (e.g., worsened arthritic pain, vision problems, deterioration of knee condition, diabetes, cancer diagnosis, weight gain, hair loss due to extreme stress, less fit, less endurance, digestive issues, fatigue, muscle decline, increase in frequency of heart palpitations, more headaches, cognitive decline, insomnia)

While there were many comments about lack of motivation to exercise and to eat healthy, there were some respondents who reported steps they took to either maintain or improve their health. A sample of comments includes:

'My wife and I did activities together. I am in a walking group 4 days a week for exercising and socializing'

'Walked in my apartment to strengthen my legs'

'Did Zoom fitness. Took up walking'

'Committed to take care of my food and exercise. Took classes through YouTube for yoga and meditation'

'I walked more and had time to plan meals'

'I consciously tried to do 2 hours of exercise every day – stretching, weight training, crunches, exercise bike. When possible, I would go for walks of 3 or 4 km with my mask and avoiding busy areas'

'Ate healthier at home; did more walks when weather allowed; had more time for health due to reduced social commitments'

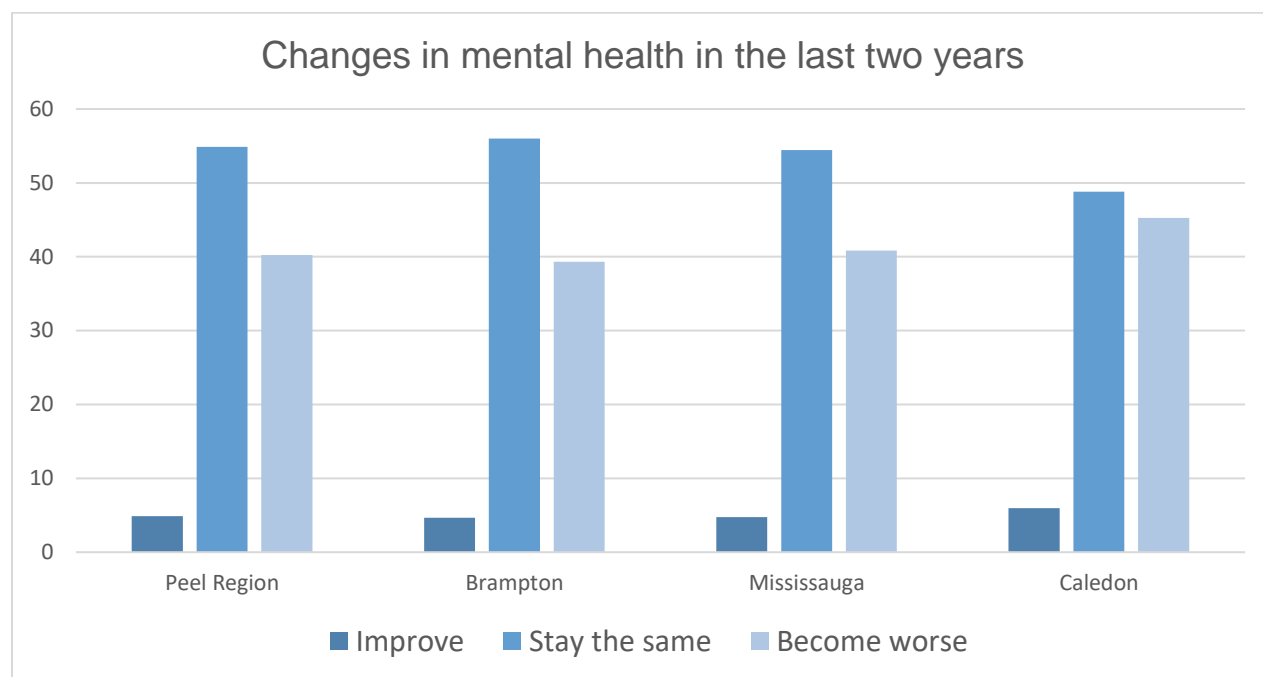
Author's note:

While responses were pretty consistent across municipalities, the Healthy Aging roundtable and perhaps other roundtables, may want to consider the relatively high percentage of individuals who reported that their physical health and wellbeing became worse.

These results may present an opportunity to plan more programs and services that could be expected to address the physical health and wellbeing needs of adults 50+ living in the Region of Peel.

In addition, one might want to explore factors that motivated some individuals to either maintain or improve their health. Understanding these factors may help to motivate and engage some individuals who reported that their health worsened during the pandemic.

#4. Question #4 invited respondents to comment on changes to their mental health in the last 2 years.



There were 349 responses to this question. The most frequently cited comments connected to mental health becoming worse during the pandemic were:

1. increased depression and anxiety
2. stress
3. feelings of loneliness and isolation
4. worry both about catching COVID-19 and about health issues in general

'My mental health was and is up and down. I try to stay positive for the sake of the kids but there were days that I felt trapped and wasn't sure if there was going to be light at the end of the tunnel'

Things that helped some respondents to navigate this time include:

1. outdoor socializing and phone calls with family and friends
2. faith/positive thinking
3. staying busy (work, walking, exercising, volunteering, exploring different parks, sewing, Zoom classes, reading, playing computer games)

Author's note:

The relatively high percentage of respondents indicating that their mental health became worse during the last two years is a red flag, something to be aware of as organizations and groups develop programs.

#5. Question #5 asked respondents whether they were able to access mental health services during the pandemic. They were invited to skip this question if it did not apply to them.

The responses were relatively consistent across the region, with 19.10% of those who answered the question replying ‘yes’ (highest in Brampton with 25.96% replying ‘yes’).

Regionally, 14.03% indicated that they were not able to access mental health services during the pandemic. That represents 47 individuals across the region. The majority of respondents, 66.86%, said the question did not apply to them.

#6a.

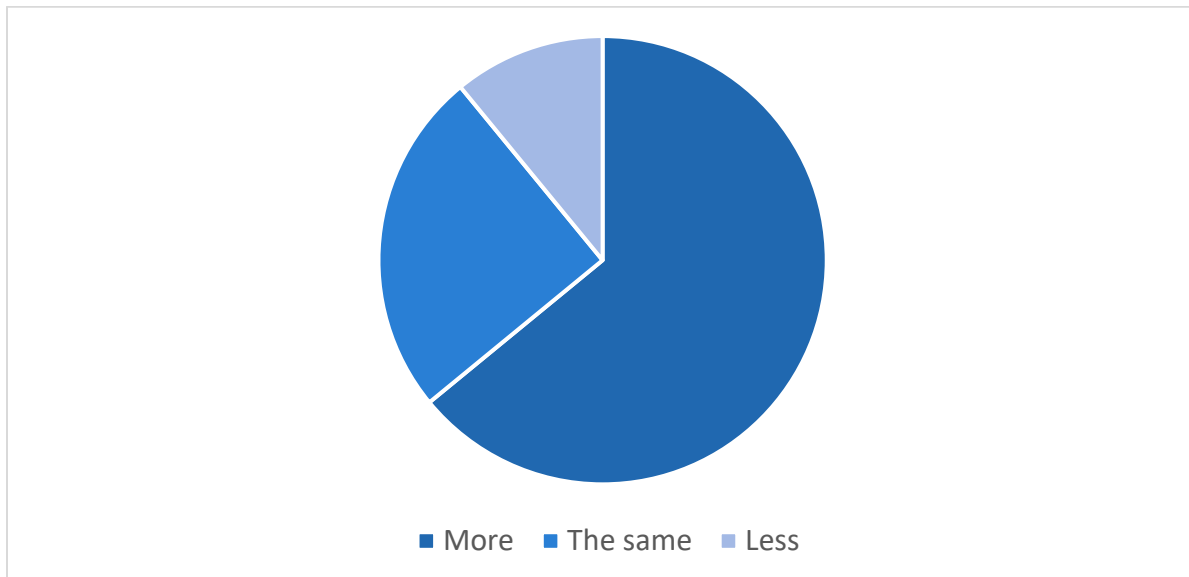
#6a Many people experienced social isolation during the pandemic. On average, in the last 6 months, how often did you have contact (phone calls, in person, video chats) with family and friends				
Options	Region	Brampton	Caledon	Mississauga
1-2 times a week	28.57%	30.52%	26.19%	27.54%
3-4 times a week	17.80%	20.13%	21.43%	14.97%
More than 4 times a week	41.98%	42.21%	44.05%	42.51%
1-3 times a month	9.67%	6.49%	8.33%	13.77%
Not at all	1.98%	0.65%	0%	1.20%

As can be seen in the above chart, a sizable percentage (average 42.68%) of respondents, both across the region and municipally, reported having contact with friends and family more than 4 times a week during the pandemic.

In response to #6b – Was the frequency of your contact with friends and family more or less than before the pandemic?

Regionally, 23.36% reported that it was more; 36.24% said it was the same and 40.39% said it was less.

#7a. Exercise and physical activity are important for healthy aging. Did you exercise more or less during the pandemic?



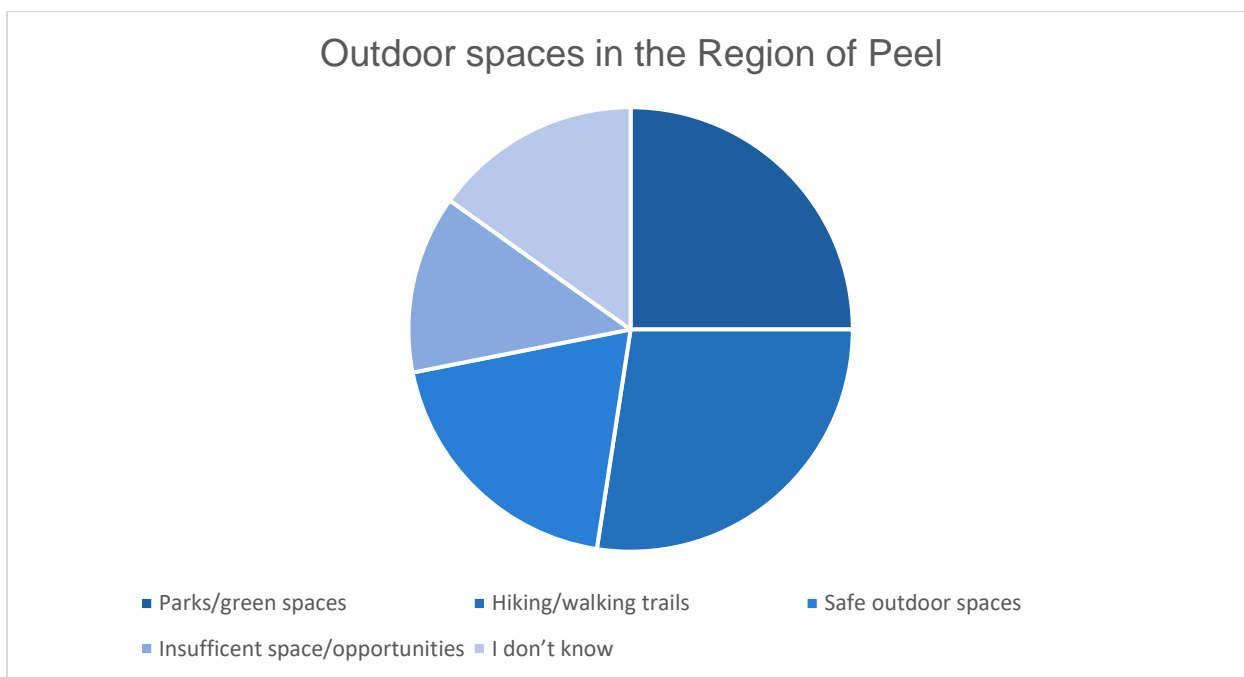
Reports about frequency of exercise were pretty consistent, with over half of respondents saying that they exercised less during the pandemic. Regionally, the reason for this reduced level of activity (73.49%) was primarily as a result of recreational centres, gyms, Seniors Active Living Centres (SALCs) being closed. An additional 53.95% said that they didn't feel safe going out for walks or for other forms of physical activity.

A sample of some of the more frequent comments included in 'other' responses included:

- Lack of motivation (most frequently mentioned comment)
- A variety of closures (golf courses, pool and gym closed in buildings where respondents live, indoor track in wellness centre)
- Less ability to be active
- Less energy due to being anxious

#8. During the pandemic, many people exercised and/or gathered with friends and family outside. The Region of Peel has:				
Options	Region	Brampton	Caledon	Mississauga
Enough parks and green spaces	44.15%	52.03%	41.98%	41.67%
Accessible trails for hiking and walking	48.45%	53.58%	58.02%	42.86%
Safe outdoor spaces to exercise and/or gather with friends and family	34.37%	39.86%	32.10%	32.14%
Insufficient space/opportunities e.g., rest stops, benches, washroom facilities	22.91%	20.27%	27.16%	22.02%
I don't know	26.73%	22.97%	19.75%	30.95%

Another way to visualize the response to the question about outdoor spaces in the region is depicted below.



Section B

Housing

#9. Question #9 invited respondents to rank the **top 3 topics** of most importance to them.

The results for this question are presented regionally and municipally.

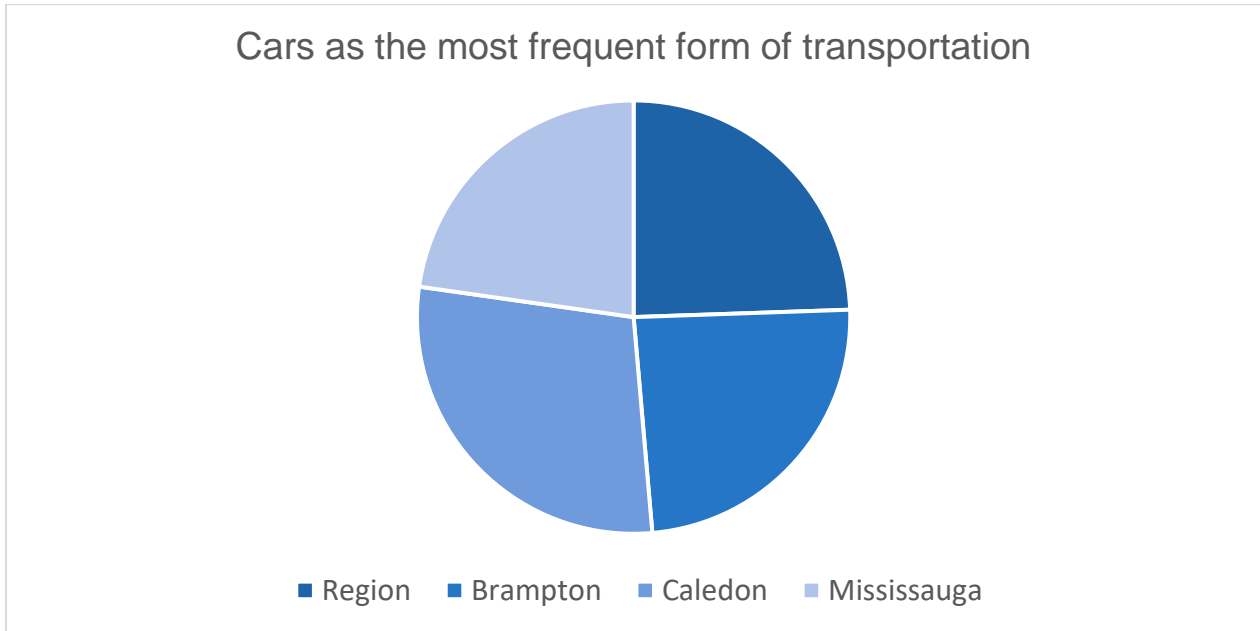
Top 3 topics of most importance to respondents				
Priority	Region	Brampton	Caledon	Mississauga
1	Affordability 57.60%	Affordability 52.03%	Affordability 62.50%	Affordability 50.91%
2	More supports and services to be able to age in one's own home 30.85%	More supports and services to be able to age in one's own home 27.47%	More supports and services to be able to age in one's own home 36.21%	More supports and services to be able to age in one's own home 32.17%
3	More choice of housing options, from living independently in the community to long-term care homes 21.17%	Safety 19.10%	More choice of housing options, from living independently in the community to long-term care homes 28.07%%	More choice of housing options, from living independently in the community to long-term care homes 25.00%

There was consistency in ranking across municipalities with affordability identifies as the most important topic across the region. The second most important topic, 'more supports and services to be able to age in one's own home' was also consistent across the region. Results were similar for the topic ranked third with the exception of Brampton where safety was the third top topic.

Section C

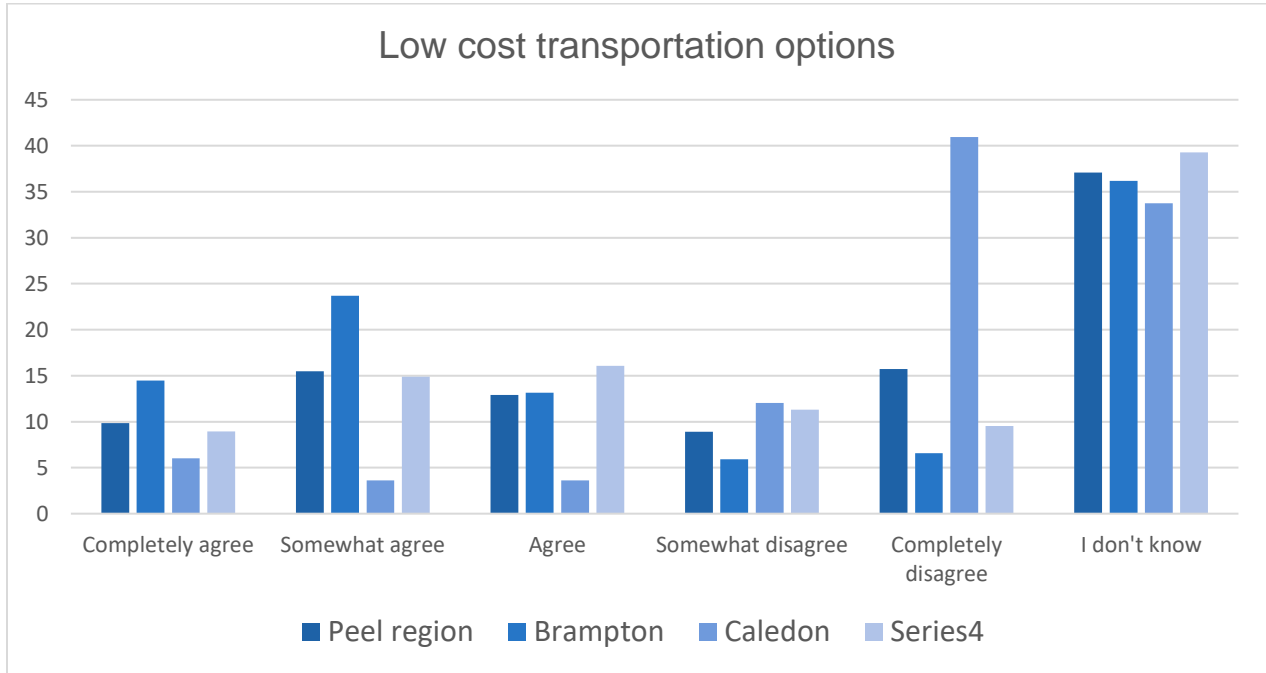
Staying Mobile

#10. Question #10 asked respondents about the form of transportation used **most often**. While there were municipal variations (seen below), 'my own car' was the most frequently used method of transportation.



The greatest difference in transportation use was with buses with 10% of Brampton respondents using the bus, 5.42 % in Mississauga and 1.20% in Caledon.

#11. Question #11 asked about whether there are enough low-cost transportation options in one's community. There was significant variation in some of the responses; as a result, this data will be presented regionally and municipally.



Author's note:

How people responded to this question was related to geography with the highest percentage (40.96%) of respondents who completely disagreed with there being enough low-cost transportation options in the community coming from individuals living in Caledon.

There were three questions that, respectively, asked about whether there are enough safe sidewalks, paths and trails for all, including individuals living with mobility challenges; the availability of non-traditional transportation options (e.g., Uber, Ride Share) in ones community and the ease or difficulty of getting around in the community during the pandemic.

Regionally, 70.56% of responded that they agreed, somewhat agreed or completely agreed with the statement that they lived in a community with safe sidewalks et cetera. The greatest variation was in Caledon with 54.21% agreeing, somewhat agreeing or completely agreeing.

In terms of non-traditional transportation options, the same pattern emerged. From a regional perspective, 56.41% of respondents indicated that non-traditional transportation options are available but that figure dipped to 20.24% in Caledon. It was highest in Brampton (70.79%) and Mississauga reported 63.31%.

The final question in this grouping focused on whether it was harder to get around in one's community during the pandemic.

Almost half (48.57%) of respondents regionally agreed, somewhat agreed or completely agreed that it was harder to get around the community during the pandemic. However, the percentage from Caledon was quite a bit less (34.57%). The lower percentage in Caledon may be correlated with Caledon respondents reporting the highest percentage of car use (93.98%)

Author's note:

Transportation continues to present challenges for some individuals living in the Region.

#16 asked respondents about the degree to which they felt safe using public transportation during the pandemic. The majority of respondents regionally (70.82%) said that they did not use public transportation during the pandemic.

Section D

Building Community

Respondents were asked about whether they felt connected and included in their community (question #17). The results were pretty similar across the region with about half of the respondents (52.36%) reporting that they felt less connected during the pandemic.

In responding to question #18, which related to feeling cut off from friends and family during the pandemic. Again, results were similar regionally with 78.45% saying that they agreed, somewhat agreed or completely agreed with feeling cut off.

Author's note:

When considering questions #17 and #18, 8.49% of respondents felt more connected and included in their community during the pandemic and, further, that 21.55% said they somewhat disagreed or completely disagreed with the statement about feeling cut off from friends and family during the pandemic.

There is anecdotal and emerging research evidence that older adults, for many reasons, have been disproportionately impacted by restrictions associated with the pandemic with many experiencing increased social isolation and loneliness.

It might be important for the roundtables to explore the factors that led some participants to feel more connected in their communities and not to feel cut off from friends and family.

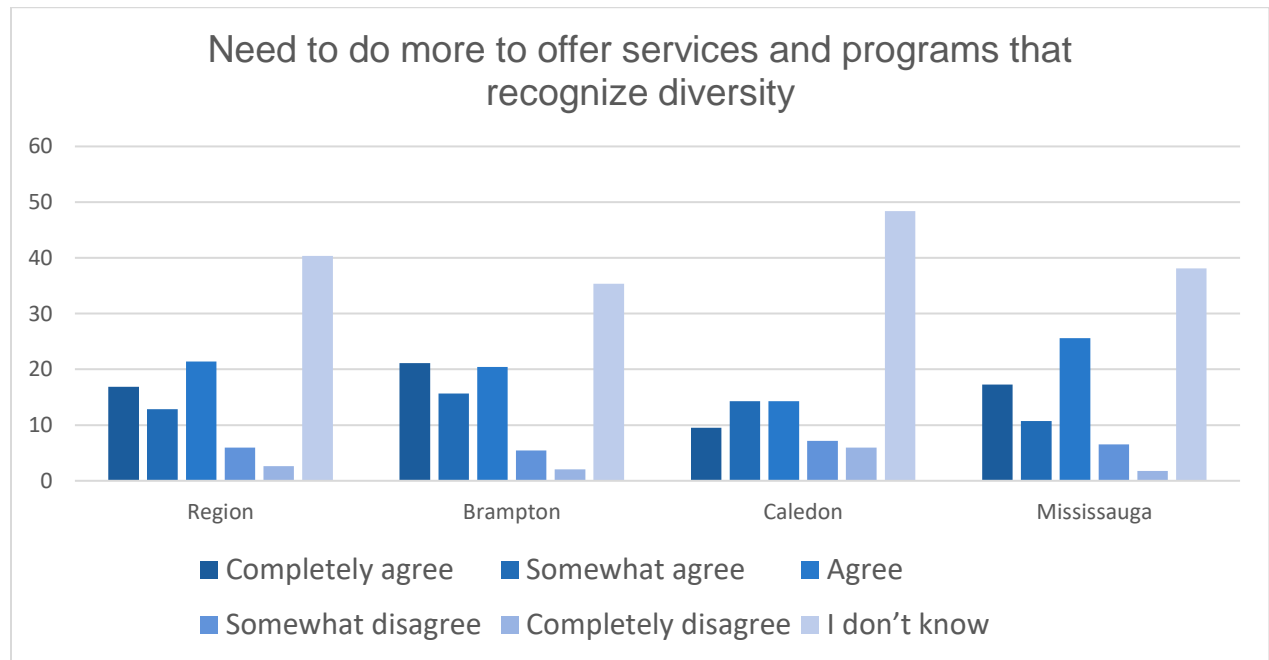
Question #24 invited respondents to rank the top three things that have concerned them most during the pandemic. While results were similar across the region, for planning purposes, the roundtable may wish to view both regional and municipal results. All municipalities selected the same top three concerns.

Top 3 topics of most concern during the pandemic				
Priority	Region	Brampton	Caledon	Mississauga
1	Physical health 52.05%	Physical health 54.00%	Physical health 43.64%	Physical health 52.94%
2	The health and safety of family members 33.66%	The health and safety of family members 36.89%	The health and safety of family members 32.81%	The health and safety of family members 34.15%
3	Worry about the virus itself 23.27%	Worry about the virus itself 18.17%	Worry about the virus itself 30.06%	Worry about the virus itself 23.91%

Regionally, just over half (55.06%) of respondents agreed, somewhat agreed or completely agreed that the ways in which existing or new community services were provided (question #20) during COVID-19 met their needs (e.g., shifting to virtual supports or providing in-person support using appropriate Personal Protective Devices).

It should be noted, however, that 31.29% said they had not used community services during the pandemic.

Question #26 asked to what extent respondents agreed with the statement that community service organizations in Peel region need to do more to offer services and programs that recognize diversity – BIPOC, LGBTQ2S+, age diversity, ethnic and racial diversity.



When asked about whether negative stereotypes towards older adults have become more apparent during the pandemic, with the media overemphasizing the vulnerability of older persons and not recognizing their strengths (question #22), 70.59% of respondents (regionally) agreed, somewhat agreed or completely agreed with the statement.

Author’s note:

Ageism is the most socially accepted form of prejudice in our society. Speaking at the International Federation on Ageing global conference in Toronto in 2018, Dr. John Beard, former Director of the Ageing and Life Course Institute, World Health Organization in Geneva, said:

“Nothing is possible unless we address ageism. It is pernicious and pervasive. It frames the way we ask questions and the way we conduct research”

All roundtables may want to embed ways to highlight the strengths and contributions of older persons into their planning.

Not only did a significant percentage of respondents report more apparent negative stereotypes, but the majority (83.72%) also agreed, somewhat agreed or completely agreed that frauds and scams towards older adults has become more apparent during

the pandemic (question #23). Despite responses to these two questions, the majority (82.40%) reported feeling safe, quite safe or very safe in their community (question #24).

Respondents (question #25) were invited to comment on whether they were some things or events that had a positive impact on them during the pandemic, opportunities **that weren't there before the pandemic**. Forty-two percent replied 'yes'. The survey provided an opportunity to list these positive things and opportunities and 154 comments were made.

The major themes that emerged are shown in the chart below. Technology, was by far, the predominant, theme.

<p>Use of online platforms for a variety of reasons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church • Book clubs • Visiting with family & friends • Classes/webinars • Watching events • Virtual exercise classes • Meeting with financial advisors • Online yoga/dance • Visited museums • Town hall phone meetings 	<p>Connected Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People reaching out with concern for others • Neighbours phoning/listening ear • Food trucks and others helping people in the community • More connected with neighbours • Community vegetable garden • People more willing to help each other • Developed closer relationships
<p>Working remotely¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to work (and teach) remotely was and, remains, important • Ability to work remotely resulted in feeling less 'trapped' by time • Developed virtual workshops • Began a part-time career as a communication coach. • No daily commute and regaining 2 hours of one's day back! • Better quality of life • Flexibility/reduced costs 	<p>Access to services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grocery services (frequently mentioned) • Other delivery services • Curbside pick up • Cashless purchasing (i.e., more use of tap) • Special shopping hours

¹ While connected to technology, the author captures this theme separately because of the implications for the future of work.

‘Through virtual interactions, I got to join in live events that were previously not available to me due to distance. Attended more webinars and learning videos. Created virtual events for my not-for-profit thus allowing for new/expanded opportunities for programs in our community’

Section E

Technology

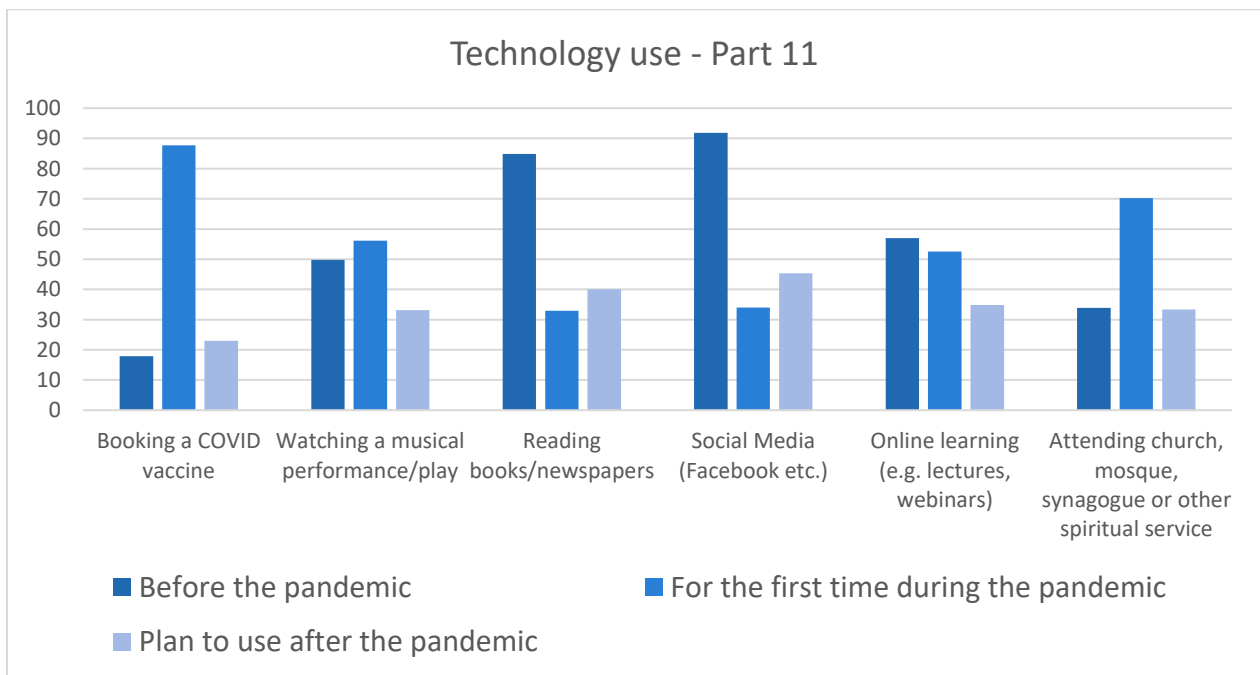
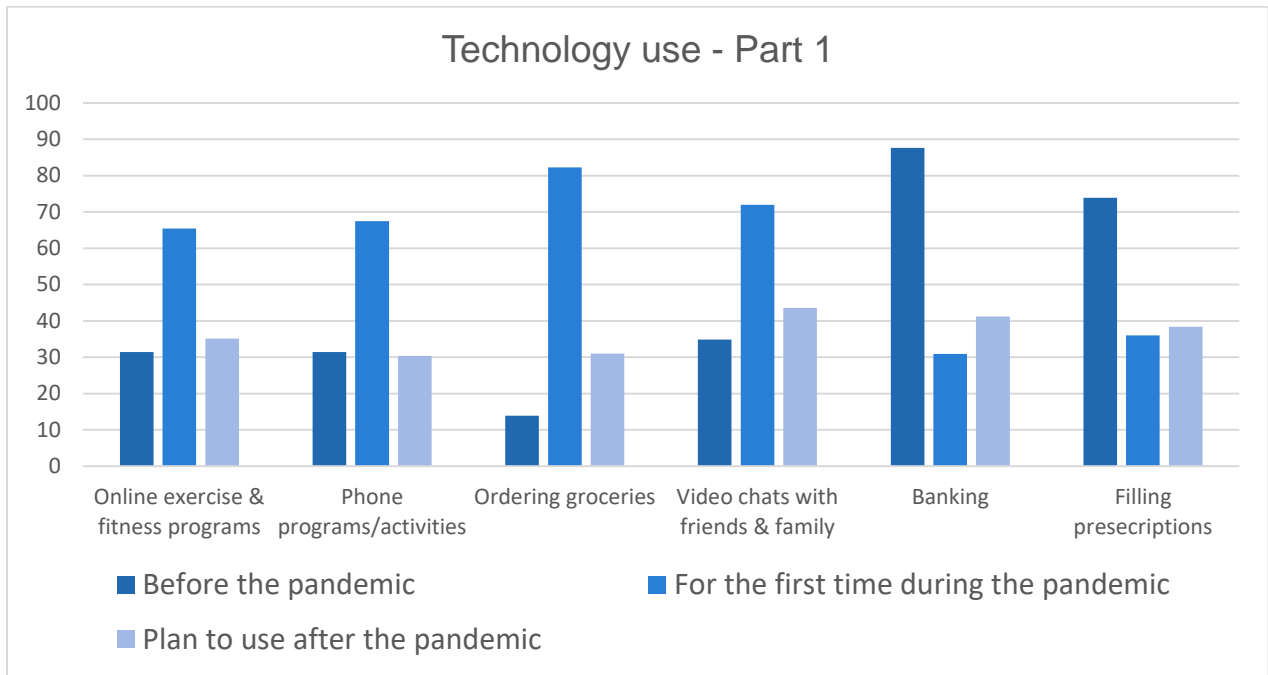
Five enablers will be incorporated in the conversations at each of the five roundtables: social inclusion, equity, **technology**, accessibility and system navigation (Source: Peel Council on Aging Terms of Reference, page 4).

While technology is considered an enabler that has planning implications for all roundtables, there is recognition that the pervasiveness and importance of the role of technology in contemporary society may result in it becoming its own roundtable in the future.

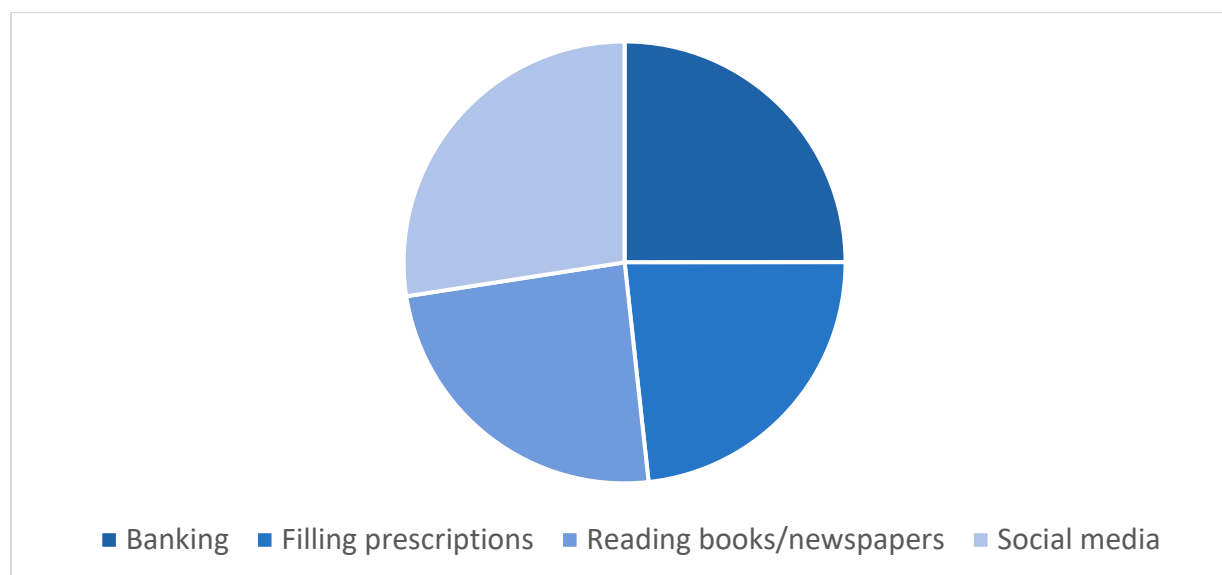
Adults 50+ who responded to the survey are technology users. When asked to check which basic devices they use at least once a week (question #26), 86.62% of respondents said they use a cell phone, 59.34% an iPad or other tablet and 71.72% a computer. These are regional stats. There wasn't a lot of variation by municipality although Caledon reported higher computer use (86.59%).

Question #27 probed the use of technology prior to the pandemic, technology used for the **first time** during the pandemic and technology that respondents planned to use after the pandemic.

The results will be shared below for the region as they were pretty consistent in the three municipalities.



There are only four uses of technology that show a planned increase in use from first time use during the pandemic.



The technology use question also offered an 'other' option. In terms of technology use before the pandemic, 39.29% of respondents checked that they had used technology for other uses before, 64.29% checked other for first time uses during the pandemic and 32.14% checked plans to use technology in other ways after the pandemic.

A sample of other uses, not grouped by before, during or after the pandemic, include:

- Family funerals and weddings
- Committee meetings, other online meetings
- Virtual day programs
- Playing games such as Sudoku and Mah-jong
- Renewal of license, health card
- Work and volunteering online
- Joined an online group for making a quilt. My first quilt ever!

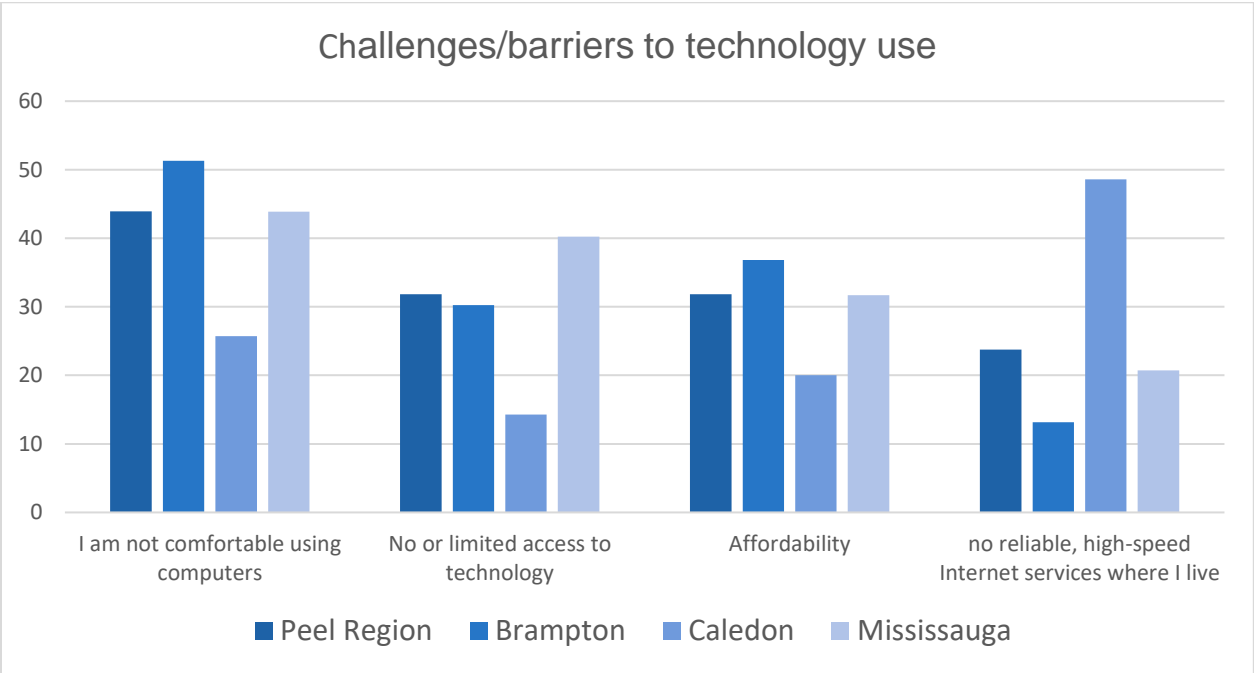
Author's note:

While the respondents in this survey made quite extensive use of technology, we must continue to find ways to support digital inclusion – access to technology, training and ongoing support for all interested older adults.

As the roundtables deliberate, they may want to note the percentage of respondents who planned to use technology to access the programs and services described above. Of particular relevance, social media was one of the four uses of technology that demonstrated increased use (45.31%) following the pandemic.

This may have implications not only for program and service delivery but may shape the ways in which organizations communicate with their clients.

The final question (#29) related to technology invited respondents to share any technology challenges/barriers they encountered during the pandemic.



Please note the variations across municipalities, particularly the significantly higher percentage (48.57%) of Caledon residents who cited the lack of reliable, high-speed Internet services where they live.

Limitations

Limitations were very similar to those encountered in the winter 2021 community engagement phase.

With a bit more time flexibility, the 2022 survey was offered for completion in hard copy as well as online and 100 surveys were completed using the print version. While this option and concerted efforts to reach adults 50+ living in the Region of Peel resulted in 500 completed surveys, the goal continues to be to strive to reach more older adults across the region. The ability to do so was constrained, in part, by available resources.

Related to resource constraints, the survey was offered in English only. In a region as diverse as Peel, it would be advantageous to be able to translate the survey and analyze the results in the dominant languages spoken in Peel. One hundred per cent of the respondents in this sample said the language spoken most often at home is English.

Despite limitations, the survey results contain solid information that provides insights that can be used for planning programs and services.

Summary

There is no question that the pandemic has taken its toll, in both small and large ways, on people of all ages. However, the focus of this survey was adults 50+ living in the Region of Peel.

One cannot generalize from this group of respondents. However, there were some encouraging signs.

The results painted a picture of older adults, many of whom:

- Leverage the benefits of technology for all kinds of reasons
- Feel safe and secure in their communities
- Acknowledge that, along with challenges, the pandemic introduced them to new opportunities
- Recognize the availability of trails, walking paths, green space in their communities, which were used by many respondents during the pandemic
- Report a high degree of satisfaction with the ways in which existing or new community services were provided during the pandemic programs
- Found ways to connect with neighbours, friends and family

Having pointed out some of the positives, we must acknowledge that they don't apply to all older adults. Moving forward, it will be important not to leave anyone behind.

Red flags to keep an eye on include:

- The percentage of respondents who said their physical health and well-being and mental health became worse during the pandemic
- Municipal disparities in Internet access and transportation options
- The perceived increase in frauds and scams
- The importance of continuing to address negative stereotypes and ageist attitudes

With the information provided in this report in hand, as well as other resources and planning documents available to them, the roundtable participants will be well positioned to begin their work.

Appendix A: Survey

Peel Council on Aging

Impact of COVID-19 on adults 50+ living in the Region of Peel

The Peel Council on Aging (PCoA) is a not-for-profit collective of organizations and individuals whose vision is to advance *'healthy aging for all in a connected and caring community'*.

COVID-19 pandemic has changed the daily lives of older persons, the support they received, the ways in which they are viewed by others and their ability to stay connected with friends and family.

Through this survey, the PCoA wants to learn more about the impact of the pandemic on **you**.

The survey results will provide important information to help organizations and groups identify gaps in programs and services, and resources needed to respond to both the challenges and opportunities resulting from the pandemic.

The survey will take between 15-20 minutes to complete. Thank you, in advance, for completing the survey and for your contribution to the work of the PCoA. Your voices are important.

The deadline to complete **paper copies** of the survey is **Friday, March 18th, 2022**.

The PCoA implementation team

SECTION A

Your responses to the **questions and statements** in this section will help the PCoA to understand the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on you.

Healthy Aging

1. During the pandemic, how did you access healthcare? Please check all that apply.

- Attended medical appointments in person
 - Video consultations (e.g., on Zoom, Facetime, Skype) with healthcare providers
 - Phone calls with healthcare providers
 - Email communication with healthcare providers
 - I did not use the healthcare system during the pandemic.
 - Other. Please describe.
-
-
-

2a. Did you have a medical appointment or a medical procedure (e.g., surgery) cancelled or postponed during the past 2 years because of the pandemic?

- Yes
- No

2b. If you answered **yes**, how often did this happen?

- 1-2 times
- 3-4 times
- More than 4 times

3. During the last two years, did your physical health and wellbeing?

- Improve
- Stay the same
- Become worse

Briefly list the ways in which your physical health and wellbeing improved, stayed the same or became worse during the pandemic.

4. In the last two years, did your mental health?

- Improve
- Stay the same
- Become worse.

Briefly list the ways in which your mental health improved, stayed the same or became worse during the pandemic.

5. If needed, were you able to access mental health services during the pandemic?
Please skip this question if it does not apply to you.

- Yes
- No

6a. Many people experienced social isolation during the pandemic. On average, in the last **6 months**, how often did you have contact (phone calls, in person, video chats) with family and friends?

- 1-2 times a week
- 3-4 times a week
- More than 4 times a week
- 1-3 times a month
- Not at all

6b. Was the frequency of your contact with family and friends more or less than **before** the pandemic?

- More
- The same
- Less

7a. Exercise and other physical activity are important for healthy aging.

Did you exercise more or less during the pandemic?

- More
- The same
- Less

7b. If you responded **less** to exercise and other physical activity, please tell us some of the reasons for that. Check all that apply. If you responded 'more' or 'the same', please skip this question.

- Recreational centres, gyms, Seniors' Active Living Centres were closed.
 - I didn't feel safe going out for walks and/or other forms of physical activity
 - Cost
 - Transportation barriers
 - Other. Please describe.
-
-

8. During the pandemic, many people exercised and/or gathered with friends and family outside. The Region of Peel has:

- Enough parks and green spaces
- Accessible trails for hiking and walking
- Safe outdoor places to exercise and/or gather with friends and family
- Insufficient space/opportunities e.g., rest stops, benches, washroom facilities)
- I don't know

Housing

9. When it comes to housing, which **three** of the following topics are the most important to you? **Please enter the numbers 1 (most important), 2 and 3 in the boxes below.**

- Affordability
- Increase in number of rental units
- Accessibility (e.g., ramps, interior hallways, bathrooms)
- Closeness to everyday services (e.g., shopping, medical services, banks)
- Financial assistance for home renovations

- Safety
- More choice of housing options, from living independently in the community to long-term care homes
- More supports and services to be able to age in one's own home

Staying Mobile

The following statements ask you about transportation and mobility in your community. Please check the box that applies.

10. Please check the form of transportation that you use **most often**.

- My own car
- Bus
- Transportation services such as Transhelp and Canes
- Taxi services
- Other services such as Uber

11. There are enough low-cost transportation options in your community.

- Completely agree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Completely disagree
- I don't know.

12. I live in a community that has safe sidewalks, bicycle paths and trails for all, including those individuals who have mobility challenges.

- Completely agree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Completely disagree
- I don't know

13. Non-traditional transportation options (e.g., Uber, Ride Share) are available in your community.

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

14. During the pandemic, it was harder to get around in your community.

- Completely agree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Completely disagree

15. Public transportation in your community is accessible for individuals with mobility challenges.

- Yes
- No
- Transportation is available but it is too far for me to walk to a bus stop
- I don't know

16. I felt safe using public transportation during the pandemic.

- Completely agree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Completely disagree
- I have not used public transportation during the pandemic.

Building Community

17. During the pandemic, I felt connected and included in my community.

- More connected than before
- The same as before
- Less connected than before

18. I felt cut off from my friends and family during the pandemic.

- Completely agree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Completely disagree

19. What **three** things have you been most concerned about during the pandemic?
Please enter the numbers 1 (most important), 2 and 3 in the boxes below.

- Your physical health
- Your mental health
- Safety
- The health and/safety of family members
- Finances
- Job security
- Secure housing
- Access to services (e.g., grocery stores, pharmacies, doctors, banks)
- Being isolated
- Worry about the virus itself
- Other. Please describe.

20. The ways in which existing or new community services were provided during COVID-19 met your needs. e.g., shifting to virtual supports or providing in-person support using appropriate Personal Protective Devices.

- Completely agree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Completely disagree
- I have not used community services during the pandemic.

21. The Region of Peel and its community service partners need to do more to offer services and programs that recognize diversity – BIPOC, LGBTQ2S+, age diversity, ethnic and racial diversity.

- Completely agree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Completely disagree
- I don't know

22. Negative stereotypes and ageist attitudes towards older adults have become more apparent during the pandemic. The media has put too much focus on older person's vulnerability and not enough on recognizing the strengths and contributions of older adults.

- Completely agree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Completely disagree
- I don't know

Safety

23. Frauds and scams towards older adults have become more apparent during the pandemic.

- Completely agree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Completely disagree
- I don't know.

24. I feel safe and secure in my community.

- Very safe
- Quite safe
- Safe
- Somewhat safe
- Not at all safe

25. Were there some things or events that had a positive impact on you during the pandemic, opportunities that weren't there for you before the pandemic?

- Yes
- No

If yes, in the space below, please list the things that were positive for you and the opportunities that you had during the pandemic.

SECTION B

Technology

It is important to ensure that technology, training and support available for all older adults.

26. Please put a check mark beside devices that you use at least once a week.

- Cell phone
- iPad or other tablet
- Computer

27. We would like to learn about your use of technology before and during the pandemic as well as your plans to use technology after the pandemic.

Services and/or programs that use technology	<u>Before the pandemic</u> Did you use technology for any of the following services and/or programs BEFORE the pandemic? If yes, please check all that apply.	<u>During the pandemic</u> Did you use technology for any of the following services and/or programs for the FIRST time during the pandemic? If yes, please put a check mark beside all that apply.	<u>After the pandemic</u> Do you plan to use technology for any of the following services and/or programs AFTER the pandemic? Please put a check mark beside all that apply.
Online exercise and other fitness programs			
Phone programs/activities such as Senior Centre Without Walls			
Ordering groceries			
Video chats (e.g., on Zoom) with friends and family			
Banking			
Filling prescriptions at the pharmacy			
Booking a COVID-19 vaccination			

Watching musical performances and/or plays			
Reading books and/or newspapers			
Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn)			
Online learning – e.g., lectures, webinars, courses			
Attending church, mosque, synagogue or other spiritual service			
Other. Please describe.			

28. Did your use of technology for services and/or programs change during the pandemic?

- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased
- I did not use technology for services and/or programs during the pandemic.

29. Did you experience any of the following technology challenges/barriers during the pandemic? Check all that apply.

- I am not comfortable using computers
- No or limited access to technology
- Affordability
- No reliable, high-speed Internet services where I live
- Other. Please describe.

SECTION C

Tell us a bit about yourself. All responses are anonymous.

30. Where you live

Please tell us where you live by placing a check mark beside your location.

- Brampton
- Caledon
- Mississauga

31. What is your age?

- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70-79
- 80-89
- 90+

32. Gender

- Male
- Female
- Identify as other than female or male. If you choose to do so, please tell us how you would like to be identified

33. What is your ethnic background? If you identify with more than one ethnic group, please check all that apply.

- Caucasian (white)
- Métis
- Inuit
- First Nations
- Latin American (e.g., Mexican, Chilean, Costa Rican, etc.)
- Arab (e.g., Lebanese, Iraqi, Jordanian, Egyptian, etc.)
- Black (e.g., African, African-Canadian, Caribbean, etc.)
- East Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese, etc.)
- South Asian (e.g., Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.)

- Southeast Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodian, Malaysian, etc.)
- West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Afghan, etc.)
- I prefer not to answer
- Other. Please describe. _____

34. What is the language that you speak **most often** in your home?

- English.
 - Other. Please identify.
-

35. Living arrangements

Do you live alone or with others?

- Alone
- With others (e.g., spouse, partner, extended family)

36. Please check the type of housing in which you live

- Single-family house alone
- Single-family house with others (e.g., spouse/partner, extended family)
- Apartment/condo
- Assisted living
- Retirement home
- Long-term care home
- Co-housing or home share

Appendix B: Community engagement, winter 2021: suggested roundtable topics

The community engagement phase (winter 2021) in the development of the Peel Council on Aging was funded by the Region of Peel Organizational Effectiveness Fund.

Much of the feedback collected during the community engagement phase focused on the PCoA mandate and roundtables.

Although not directed related to the 'Impact of COVID-19 on adults 50+' living in the Region of Peel' survey results, the author has included roundtable topics that were suggested in the winter of 2021 consultations in this appendix.

These suggestions from the community may provide a nice companion resource, along with the 2022 survey results, for roundtable participants to reference as they navigate their way forward. Readers will see significant cross over between suggested topics (2021) and survey results (2022).

Please note that Safety was not one of the original roundtables presented for feedback during the community engagement phase. Safety was created as a separate roundtable in response to feedback from the engagement participants. As a result, there isn't a list of suggested topics for Safety.

It is important to recognize that roundtable participants cannot reasonably address every suggested topic but will need to establish priorities based on multiple factors as they begin their deliberations.

Housing

- Non-traditional housing options (co-housing, home share, Abbeyfield)
- Low-cost housing (*consistent with responses in every municipality where affordability was ranked as the number one priority in question #9, 2022 survey*)
- Building naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs)
- Helping people to stay in their own homes (*ranked number two by all municipalities in response to question #9, 2022 survey*)
- Need for safe and secure housing
- Accessible housing
- Municipalities working together in zoning bylaws (e.g., with respect to co-housing)
- Increase in multigenerational living
- Sexual diversity and ensuring that the needs of the LGBTQ2S+ community are respected equally by all parties involved in retirement homes and long-term care homes in Peel; provide appropriate education and awareness training to front-line and other staff
- Focus on the range of housing options on a continuum from independent, community dwelling options to long-term care

- ‘Graduated’ living so that, if your needs increase, you can remain living in the same place, not losing your friends and maintaining your overall social network

Staying Mobile

- Low-cost transportation options
- Non-traditional transportation (Uber, Ride Share)
- Safe active transportation
- Transportation/transit training
- Walkability
- Connected communities
- Complimentary bus service for older adults
- Rural/urban disparities and needs (*reinforced in survey 2022 results*)

Healthy Aging

- Promoting healthy aging; connecting services
- Addressing mental health
- From social isolation to social inclusion
- Care for the caregivers
- Strengthen the caregiving capabilities of care partners to look after older adults 0 increased preparation/education for their role
- Nutrition, access to healthy food and access to culturally relevant food choices
- Consider the heterogeneity of older adults – several generations in the 50+ age group
- Increased access to supports (e.g., homecare) to enable aging-in-place
- Promote peer support – older adults helping and supporting other older adults
- Encourage access to and use of supportive technology
- More programs about wellness as well as age-related chronic conditions such as high blood pressure

Building Community

- Civic engagement and volunteerism
- Third age entrepreneurship
- Lifelong learning
- Active aging
- Developing safe, secure and engaged communities
- Age-friendly businesses
- Intergeneration programs
- Social inclusion
- Equity and inclusion
- System navigation
- Promote positive images of aging across all age groups – address ageism

- Poverty reduction – low-income older adults
- Fraud
- Need for more multicultural programs
- Some older adults in the South Asian community who do speak some English would like to see more ESL classes offered to older adults to help them to bridge communication gaps
- More active living centres for older adults
- Disparities in levels of service between the municipalities
- Importance of addressing diversity – BIPOC, LGBTQ2S+, Indigenous groups, age diversity etc.