

# Seniors and Technology - Living in a Digital Age

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# Overview

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- The global COVID-19 pandemic has been a disruptive force in all aspects of our lives
- The pandemic has had a particular impact on older people
- It will be disruptive in the long-term
- It has also really brought home the fact that we live in a digital age

# Social Isolation

- Social isolation is a major concern for many people, but especially for older people, as it can significantly affect their wellbeing and their health
- The current COVID-19 situation brings the issue of social isolation into even sharper focus
- How can community-engaged research help address this key issue
- How can technology-based solutions help to connect and support people during a time of social distancing
- Introduction to a number of initiatives that the Canadian AGE-WELL Network have been involved in

# AGE-WELL

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Canada's AgeTech Network

## Our Mission

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To develop a community of researchers, older adults, caregivers, partners and future leaders, that accelerate the delivery of technology-based solutions that make a meaningful difference in the lives of Canadians.

## # AGE-WELL by the Numbers



AGE-WELL

**200+**  
# of Researchers

**# of Network Partners**  
Industry  
Government  
Community  
**275**

# of Research Projects  
**76**

**4,500+**

# of Older Adults and Caregivers involved with AGE-WELL projects

# of Jobs created by startups  
**100+**

# of AGE-WELL-supported Startups **19**

# of Member Universities and Research Centres across Canada

**40**

# of Innovators of Tomorrow Certificates awarded **175**

## Innovation Pipeline >>>



# Social Isolation

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- Studies show that participation in community activities positively influences health and socioeconomic outcomes for older adults
- Approximately 20% of seniors in Canada currently experience social isolation
- Social isolation can lead to stress, depression, cognitive decline and can affect physical health

# Staying Connected

- Social participation – a person's involvement in community life, the economy, and society.
- Isolation – limited connection with others may be due to factors such as living alone, health problems and disability, sensory impairment and significant life events (e.g., the death of a family member).
- Loneliness – reduced contact with family or friends may lead to various adverse physical and emotional outcomes in older adults.
- Digital exclusion – not all older adults have equitable access due to factors such as education, income, and gender.

# AGE-WELL projects 2020-24 – Staying Connected

- **Inclusive Interactive Apps to Reduce Older Adults' Social Isolation and Digital Marginalization** - Cosmin Munteanu, University of Toronto
- **Knowledge Mobilization by Social Media** - Ron Baecker, University of Toronto
- **SMART - Socially Mobile Assistive Robots for Telecare and Daily Activities of Older Adults** - François Michaud, Université de Sherbrooke; Goldie Nejat, University of Toronto
- **Precision mental health: A stakeholder-informed, Big Data approach to psychological wellbeing** - Theodore Cosco and Martin Ester, Simon Fraser University
- **Designing Innovative Social Robots through end-User ParTicipation (DISRUPT)** - Julie Robillard, University of British Columbia; Jesse Hoey, University of Waterloo

# Useful Technologies

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## FamliNet

An easy-to-use communication platform that helps older adults keep in contact with their families and friends. Great for older adults with little to no computer experience.

[www.famlinet.com](http://www.famlinet.com)

# COVID-19 and Restrictions

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- How are older adults and caregivers experiencing COVID-19?
- What technology-based solutions are being used during the pandemic?
- How can we use technology to respond to the needs of older adults and caregivers?

# AGE-WELL Survey of Technology Use by Older People July 2020

- Isolation and COVID-19
  - 20-25% of older adults experienced social isolation before COVID-19.
  - Two-thirds reported socially isolated during COVID-19 restrictions
- Many older adults are adopting technology because of the current situation
  - Two-thirds (65%) of Canadians aged 65 and older now own a smartphone, compared to 58% in 2019, and most who own one (83%) use it daily
  - During the pandemic, seniors have increased their use of video calls as a way to communicate with family and friends
  - About a quarter (23%) of Canadians 65+ now use video-calling on their smartphones, twice as many as in 2019; 6 in 10 of whom report increased use due to COVID-19.

# Implications

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- Older people say they are comfortable with using digital technologies
- COVID-19 has been a disrupter: silver linings?
- The Digital Divide remains a significant issue

# Find out more

- **SFU STAR Institute's Key Issues in Aging in the 21st Century booklet**  
<http://www.sfu.ca/starinstitute/resources/research.html>
- **AGE-WELL**  
[www.agewell-nce.ca](http://www.agewell-nce.ca)
- **AGE-WELL's EPIC (Early professionals, Inspired Careers) Training Program**  
<https://agewell-nce.ca/epic-program>
- **AGE-WELL OACAC Personas and Scenarios report - Living Under COVID-19 Restrictions: The Experiences of Older Adults and Caregivers**  
[https://agewell-nce.ca/wp-content/uploads/OACAC\\_Living\\_under\\_COVID-19\\_restrictions\\_June2020.pdf](https://agewell-nce.ca/wp-content/uploads/OACAC_Living_under_COVID-19_restrictions_June2020.pdf)
- **Summary infographic of AGE-WELL Survey of Technology Use by Older people July 2020**  
<https://agewell-nce.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/OATechSurvey-SEP2020-FINAL.pdf>



Thank you!

**STAR Institute**

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