

GUELPH AND WELLINGTON COUNTY

# VitalFocus®

Older adults and people managing chronic disease dealing with increased barriers and challenges due to COVID-19 pandemic.

**Two new Vital Focus reports detail how older adults and people with chronic diseases have been impacted by COVID-19, as the pandemic moves into its third year.**

Guelph, Ont., February 28, 2022—[Toward Common Ground](#) and their collaborating partners have released two new Vital Focus reports:

- [The Impact of COVID-19 on Older Adults in our Community](#)
- [The Impact of COVID-19 on Chronic Disease Prevention and Management](#)

The pandemic is not over. Even though restrictions may ease and COVID-19 numbers fluctuate, older adults, people managing chronic disease, and caregivers are continuing to feel the impacts of the pandemic.

The data and recommendations presented in the Vital Focus series are shaping strategic decision making, community measurement, and advocacy efforts.

## The impact on older adults

Older adults are individuals who are 65 years old and older.

Impacts felt by older adults include:

- An increase in loneliness and social isolation
- Impacts on [mental health](#), with potential for new or worsening experiences of anxiety and depression
- Negative impacts on those living with dementia and their caregivers
- [Digital divide](#) has been exacerbated during the pandemic

Recommendations include:

- Increase investment in programs that address the effects of loneliness and social isolation
- Provide additional education on technology to improve digital literacy
- Address older adult [food insecurity](#) and barriers to accessing food

## The impact on chronic disease prevention and management

Chronic diseases are long-term illnesses that do not get better on their own and often get worse over time.

Impacts that have implications for chronic disease prevention and management include:

- A reduction or pause in preventative screening programs
- Postponed and cancelled non-emergency procedures (especially during the initial phase of the pandemic)
- An avoidance of seeking emergency care due to possible fears of contracting COVID-19

Recommendations include:

- Reduce barriers for people unable to access health care by providing alternative methods of care
- Build capacity with and provide funding for community partners to support chronic disease prevention (for example, programs that support physical activity and access to affordable, nutritious food)
- Improve access to healthcare for chronic diseases through for example, improving public transit to health care settings and providing free online self-management programs

At a high level, the Vital Focus series of reports demonstrate several important realities:

- The secondary effects of the pandemic have been felt by many people across Guelph, Wellington County and beyond.
- The pandemic has exacerbated and made pressing issues more visible and acute.
- The pandemic has heightened pre-existing inequities. Black, Indigenous, low-income, people with disabilities and older adult communities are among those who are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.
- And secondary impacts of the pandemic layer or compound—they are not often felt in isolation; for example, impacts to employment can at times lead to mental health impacts or increased food insecurity.

## Resources

[Vital Focus on the impact of COVID-19 on Chronic Disease Prevention and Management](#)

[Vital Focus on the impact of COVID-19 on Older Adults](#)

[Vital Focus series site and previous reports](#)

## Contacts

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