



# Isolation

## Social Factor

## Isolation

Isolation is a key determinant of health. It is different from loneliness, though they are often discussed together. In this report, isolation means either geographic, physical, and/or social isolation. It pertains to social contacts or network that can include family, friends, but also the broader environment through social activities. Isolation also means being geographically isolated (where you live is along way from other people, services). Isolation has particularly detrimental effects on low-income seniors who, in urban settings, tend to be clustered in areas with high proportions of low-income older adults.

Physical and cultural isolation were identified throughout the region as core issues, with rural community members noting the difficulty in accessing services in their communities and the need to travel long distances for services. Other communities, particularly immigrant communities, shared how social isolation from their homeland, friends, and families impacts their health.

Many community members shared their love of community spaces and organizations which bring them together with other people but wanted more spaces to share and learn together. For example, community members from across the region wanted more multi-cultural community centers and spaces.

## What's Being Done

HCWC members are addressing this core issue through:

- Elder care being provided in homes
- Addressing social cohesion as a part of programming

## Geographic Isolation and Transportation

Limited transportation options in some areas of the region were identified in town halls as a challenge to communities' access to resources and services. Town hall participants discussed

the disconnect between the location of services and where communities reside. The cost of transportation, time it takes to travel, and lack of access to transportation when community members did not own their own vehicles or reside in a population-dense transportation hub were also described as challenges by town hall participants. There is a need for services that can accommodate the limitations faced by communities, such as mobile medical units, to provide medical outreach for people experiencing houselessness or virtual appointments with providers.

Listening session participants echoed the challenges noted in the town halls of a robust public transit system in some areas of the region, but this needs improvement in rural communities. Additionally, listening session participants noted an inability to access the clinics they can afford, and that transportation is often unaffordable or unreliable, causing them to miss appointments and potentially face financial penalties.

**Participants noted health care services are not available in rural areas, and when services are available, they require a vehicle to get to them, which isolates community members who are not able to drive or do not have transportation.**

See [Access to Health Care, Transportation and Resources, page 56](#) for more about the challenges of lack of access to health care, resources, and transportation.

## Social Isolation

Social isolation can occur in rural or urban areas. As described in the [Social Determinants of Health](#) section, poor family support, minimal contact with others, and limited involvement in community life are associated with increased disease and early death.