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Thesis Title: Identifying Social Barriers in Older Adults Living in Rural Areas

Compared to exercise and healthy diet, perhaps a lesser-known factor that is critical to our health and well-being is social participation. Therefore, understanding what may prevent people from being as socially active as they would like (social barriers) is important. This study uses a mixed-methods approach to explore the social barriers reported by participants (aged 45+). The quantitative component of this study conducted secondary analysis from the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (N=51 250). The qualitative component consisted of a semi-structured telephone interview with a participant from Plumas, Manitoba and Gladstone-Municipality (N=1). Main questions of interest included whether social barriers would differ based on urban/rural-living, age group (45-64/65+), or sex. Forty-four percent of the overall quantitative sample (N=51 250) indicated that they would like to be more socially active. A slightly greater proportion of urban-living (44.7%) compared to rural-living (40.1%) indicated wanting to be more socially active. Notably, compared to older adults, younger adults were more likely to report wanting to participate in more social activities (35.3% vs. 50.1%). Overall, the top three social barriers were 'being too busy,' 'personal responsibilities,' and 'health conditions;' and results were similar regardless of rural/urban living. These results suggest that 'time' factors play an important role in whether people feel they are not participating in as many social activities as they would like to, especially for the younger age group (45-64).