



Sunshine Coast
Community Services
Caring since 1974



“It is desperate out there. At age 51, I feel stranded, isolated and on the brink of having no shelter. I’ve worked my entire life but qualify for no assistance. It’s frightening.”

Abuse in relationships is still a hidden issue for many women and housing continues to be one of the biggest barriers to safety, as is ageism for older women who have become the Hidden Homeless.

Hidden Homelessness

Summary Report

From June through September 2017, Community Services collected information about the needs of women on the Sunshine Coast who are fifty years of age and older to learn about their housing and safety needs.

We learned from:

- 230 women 50+ who participated in our survey
- 8 women 50+ who participated in focus groups
- 16 service providers who work with women 50+



Women 50+

experience unique & staggering vulnerability in our community

35%

spent more than 30% on housing

40%

were mobility challenged

41%

had chronic health needs

50%

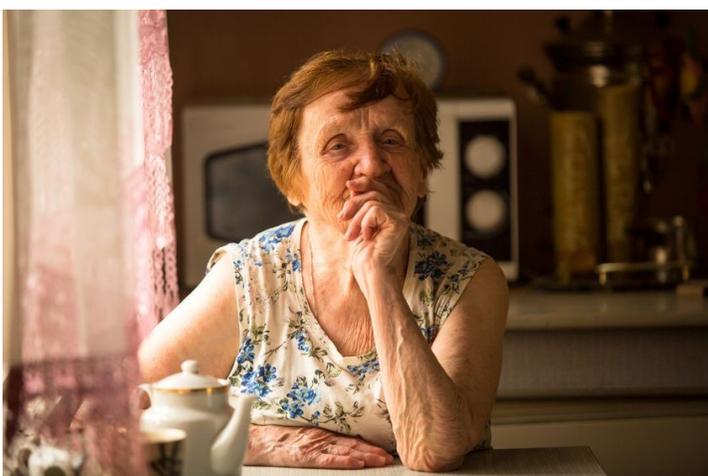
had inadequate financial resources

39%

felt isolated

40%

said they were not safely housed



“The stigma still associated with homelessness or unsafe housing & the fear of loss of independence is keeping many from seeking help.”
- Service Provider

30%

of Sunshine Coast residents are women 50 years of age or older according to Stats Canada's 2016 Census.

“Look at what does it mean to be a middle-aged woman locally and in our culture.”

-Woman



Different Needs

Services that work for younger women may not work for women 50+. Women 50+ may need living spaces and environments that support mobility and health issues for instance, or more time to process information and make decisions.

Women 50 and over often experience judgement and discrimination because of their age. They may be spoken to with condescension, or be patronized, be overlooked for employment opportunities, and their voices may not be included or heard in important discussions about themselves and their communities. In some cases, all women 50 and over are lumped together as one group rather than seeing the diversity among women 50+ of generation, race, sexuality, ethnicity, income, ability and more.

This is called

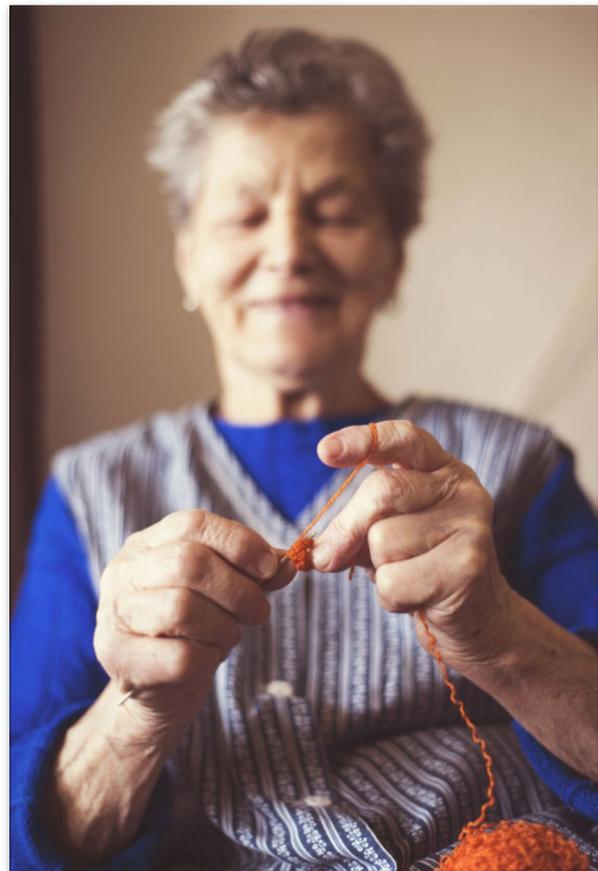
Ageism

“Make programs for divorced/widowed/single women over 60.”

-Woman

Economic Vulnerability

Woman 50 years of age and older may not have their own source of income having worked in the home caring for children, aging parents or even grandchildren while their partner pursued a career. They may find they are discriminated against based on age when applying for jobs. Should they need to leave an unsafe relationship or support themselves upon the death of their spouse, they may not have the income they need to live somewhere healthy and safe.



Same Challenges as Younger Women

They may experience sexism, (discrimination or prejudice based on gender), or disproportionate rates of experiences of violence in relationships. Women 50 years of age and older also need adequate income and safe housing, access to empowering emotional and practical supports, as well as information about resources.



“Web of support (is needed) for senior women to access housing-health wellness issues etc.”

-Woman

What Is Needed to Enhance Safety

- Safe, affordable age-friendly housing beyond what currently exists
- Temporary shelter options that allow adequate time for women to transition from unsafe living situations to safe, permanent housing
- Existing services that are robust and have adequate resources and staffing to respond effectively to safety and housing issues of women 50+, including health, women's and victim services, legal and justice services and other community resources such as the foodbank and libraries
- Well-coordinated services who are familiar with and implement Atira's Promising Practices into service delivery, as well as continue to track risk among women 50+ accessing their services
- Improved access to information for women 50+ on housing, legal, financial, benefits, and health issues.
- Raised community awareness about the vulnerability and needs of women 50+ on the Sunshine Coast.

What YOU Can Do

- Learn more about programs that are available for women 50+
- Share information from this report with a neighbor, friend or colleague
- Tell a women 50+ about a resource that might help them
- Challenge sexism and/or ageism when you see it
- Apply Atira's *Promising Practices* in my workplace; go to <https://bit.ly/1XQDGXF>
- Write a letter to the editor
- Speak to government representatives about the needs of women 50+
- Learn more about violence against women
- Learn more about age-friendly communities
- Get involved with Sunshine Coast Community Services



“We cannot use the remedies we have in these cases because women will not charge their intimate partners because there is no where for them to go.” (e.g. housing)

-Service Provider

Special Thank You's to

- the women who answered the surveys and took time to share their stories
- the people who helped us distribute the surveys on the Sunshine Coast
-  Vancouver Coastal Health

Thank You to Our Community Partners



Seniors Planning Table



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The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

