

## **What are the top concerns of community-living older adults in Cape Breton?**

Bryah Boutilier, Dalhousie University, Dr. Grace Warner, Dalhousie University, Dr. Tanya Packer, Dalhousie University, Brianna Wolfe, Dalhousie University.

**Objectives:** One in nine older adults admitted to a long-term care facility could have stayed home if sufficient supports and services were in place. Identifying older adults' concerns should inform needed community supports and services, with potential to improve their ability to age-well in place, and also reduce the burden on the health and long-term care systems. This presentation will share findings of the ACTing Collectively project which identified the top concerns of community-dwelling older adults in Cape Breton.

**Methodology:** This project used a 56-question assessment and online customizable database developed by Age Care Technologies (ACT™). The assessment was conducted either through an in-person or telephone interview with community-dwelling older adults (aged 65 and older) living in one of three municipalities in Cape Breton. Municipalities were selected using an expression of interest process. During the ACT™ Assessment older adults were asked to identify their concerns in six areas related to well-being and aging-well in place: looking after themselves, getting around, safety and relationships, accommodations and finances, mental health, and staying healthy. Assessment data was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

**Outcomes:** The project conducted interviews with 222 older adults. Participants were relatively healthy, well educated, mostly female, and half were from rural Cape Breton. The top four concerns were bodily pain (72%), loneliness (49%), sleep (47%), and bereavement (44%). Interestingly, 20%-72% of respondents identified a number of mental health and well-being concerns.

**Conclusions:** Given the relatively independent and healthy nature of this sample, concerns are likely to be higher in a sample of less independent or more vulnerable older adults. Gathering and using community-level data on concerns can support community-development and service planning in communities like Cape Breton. These findings highlight key areas of concern for older adults. Next steps may include examining the availability and suitability of existing resources to address these needs.