

Definition

Individuals who have immigrated to Canada and are over 65 years old or retired.

Why adapt your approach?

Living in a host society as an older adult may exacerbate suicide vulnerability factors associated with the social context of aging and migration.



Certain challenges are particularly present among individuals who immigrated later in life.

Migration

- **Loss** of support network and socioeconomic status constructed throughout life
- **Feelings of distance** from other family members who were able to more quickly integrate into the host society
- Difficulty making connections **late in their professional life or in retirement**
- **Financial dependence** on their children
- **Feelings of infantilization and difficulty relearning skills** acquired in the past (e.g., language, management of administrative documents, cultural codes, road signs, etc.) at a later age.



Culture and minority

- Cultural norms of the country of origin may emphasize the **feeling of being a burden** when it is no longer possible to contribute to the family
- Loss of **social status** in a new society that places less value on older people
- **Strong attachment** to the culture and country of origin
- **Intergenerational conflicts**
- Barriers to **access to health or psychosocial services** as well as social programs and community organizations for older adults due to language, lack of information, or poor health literacy.

Recommended practices

The practices recommended when working with all older adults also apply to older adults with a migration background or from ethnocultural minority and/or racialized communities. The following additional considerations should be taken into account.

Understand the intersectionality of different aspects of a person's identity (e.g., age, ethnic origin, migration status, sexual orientation, gender identity, social class, disability, etc.).

Recognize the complexity of relationships and roles within the family. Family roles and expectations may be different from those of the host society, which may cause tension or misunderstandings.

Educate the person and their family about suicide and mental health to foster mental health literacy, combat stigma, and encourage communication within the family.

Involve family members in the intervention process, strengthen communication, and work on intrafamilial dynamics. See the Horizons Toolkit's [*Explore and Highlight Strengths*](#) page (only available in French).

Seek to identify the needs and expectations of each family member. Out of a sense of filial duty, children may feel deeply uncomfortable about their parent staying in an institution, even if this solution would better meet their needs.

Pay attention to family conflicts, financial dependence, and social isolation.

Support the development of a sense of usefulness and social recognition by identifying the person's goals and reasons for living, such as cultural transmission, volunteering, learning the host society's language, etc.

Encourage leisure activities to reduce social isolation (e.g., day centre activities, walking groups, introductory technology workshops, community gardening, etc.).

Support maintaining contact with the person's culture of origin and other generations. Activities that contribute to transmitting their culture recognize older adults' knowledge, reduce social isolation, and strengthen their connection to their culture of origin. This could take the form of sharing their culinary or language skills, participating in religious activities, celebrating community events, etc. What matters most is that the older immigrant regains a sense of social usefulness.

Encourage building or maintaining a support network to reduce isolation. Communication technologies (e.g., phone, videoconference, social networks, etc.) facilitate connections with friends or family members in the country of origin.

Promote access to health and psychosocial services, social programs, and community organizations, which older adults are often unfamiliar with.

Implement measures to facilitate access to services (e.g., working with interpreters, offering personalized support, organizing paratransit services, etc.).

Address the person's social determinants of health to alleviate their stress or distress. Supporting them in meeting their financial, food, housing, transportation, or other needs may help restore hope.

To learn more:

[***Older Adults***](#) (MSSS) [Only available in French]