

# Enhancing Lifelong Learning and Intergenerational Learning Among Older Adults

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## The Problem

Globally, the challenges associated with rapidly aging populations has given precedence to issues concerning older adults. Lifelong learning institutes are proliferating, especially in Europe, North America and Australia (Hansen et al., 2019). Despite the increased lifelong learning opportunities, many older adults are still uninformed or lack accessibility (Ogg, 2021). A survey of 14 European countries found that the average participation rate in education or training courses among individuals 60-69 years old was 7 percent, and for people 70 years and older only 3 percent (Narushima et al., 2017). It is important to reverse the inclination of older adults' towards non-participation in lifelong learning as they age, to the point where it is completely absent in advanced age (Narushima et al, 2017; Ogg, 2021).

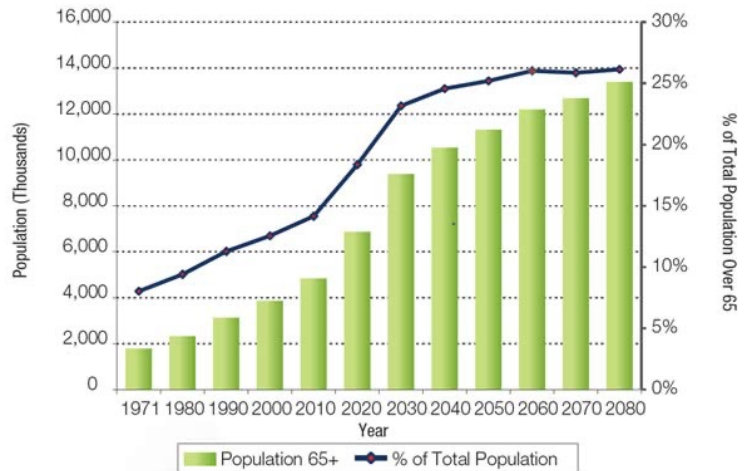
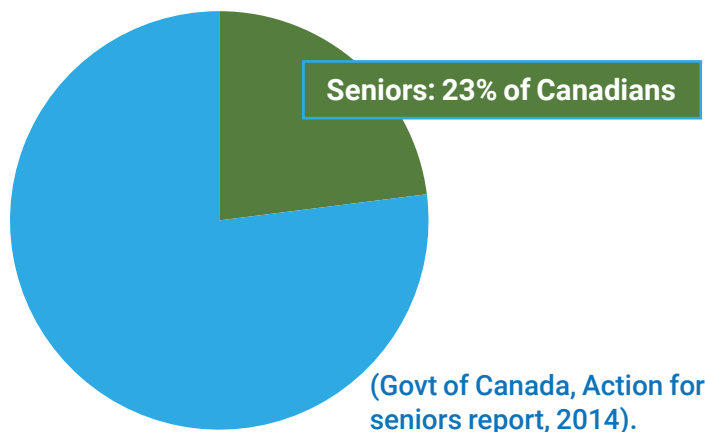
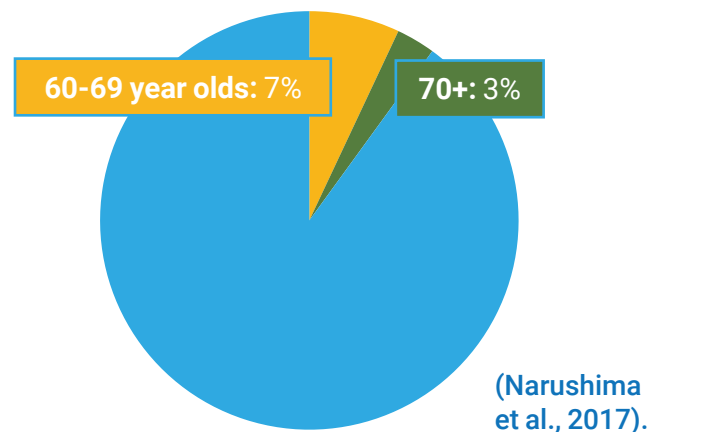


Image 1: Govt of Canada, Action for seniors report, 2014

By the year 2030, the number of seniors will exceed over 9.5 million and make up:



A survey of 14 European countries found that the average participation rate in education or training courses among:



**Research Question:** How might we actively engage older adults in the community and on campus to enhance lifelong learning and intergenerational learning?

## The Lifelong Learning Continuum

Primary    Secondary    Postsecondary

*Focus of Research: Older Adult learners in the community and campus setting (including those still in the workforce)*

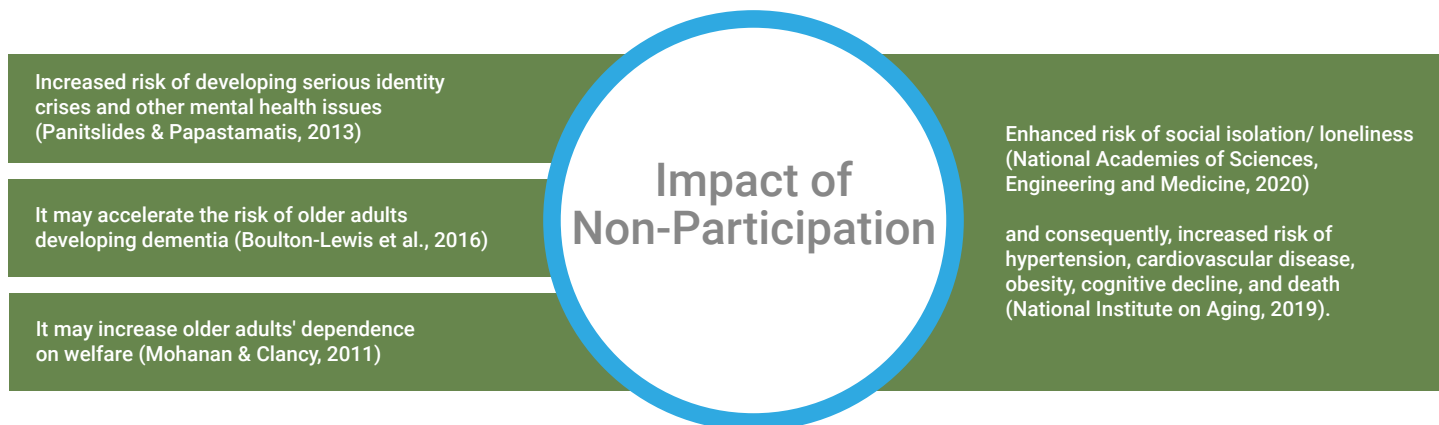
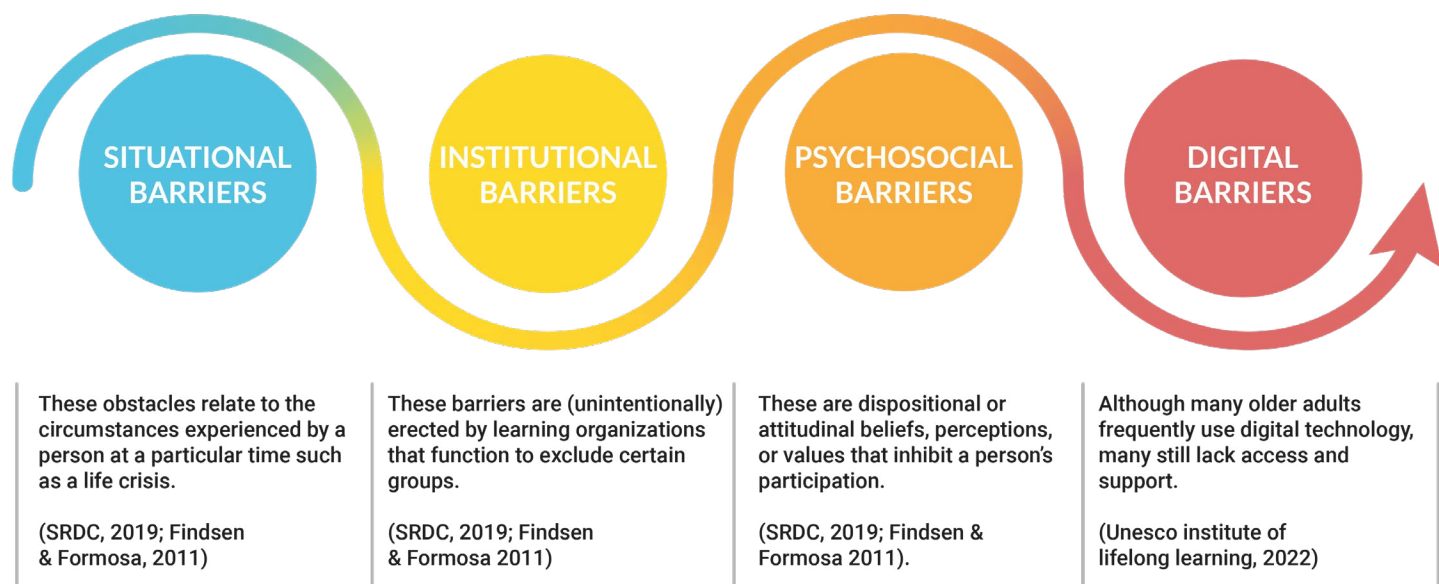
“Upfront” education prior to employment, typically formalized learning leading to a credential

Voluntary & self-motivated (usually), structured, and may be credentialed

Intentional, but not leading to a credential

Image 2: Inspired by D2L. (2021, February 12). *The Future of Lifelong Learning Whitepaper*.

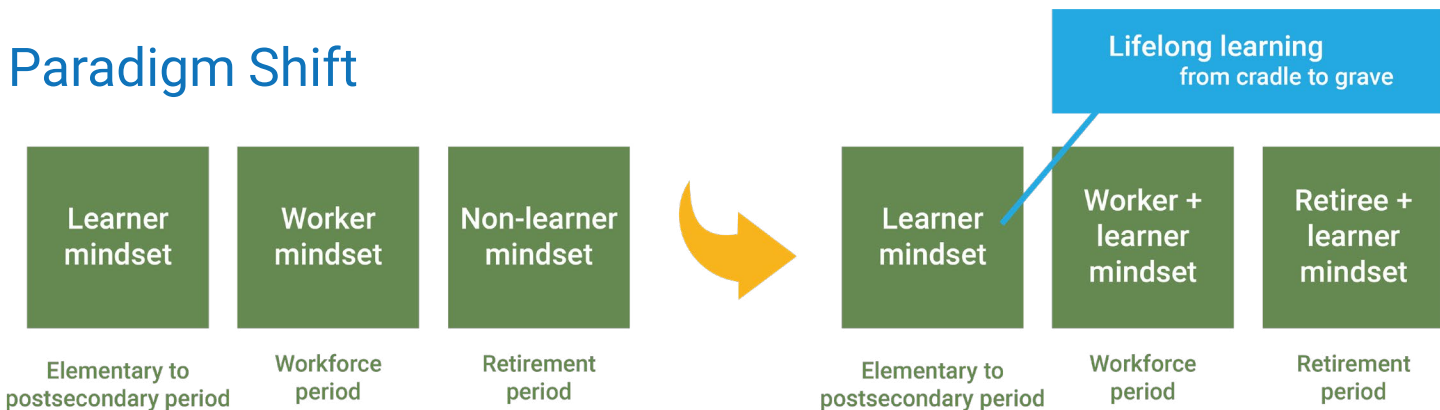
## Barriers to Lifelong Learning Among Older Adults



# Key Findings

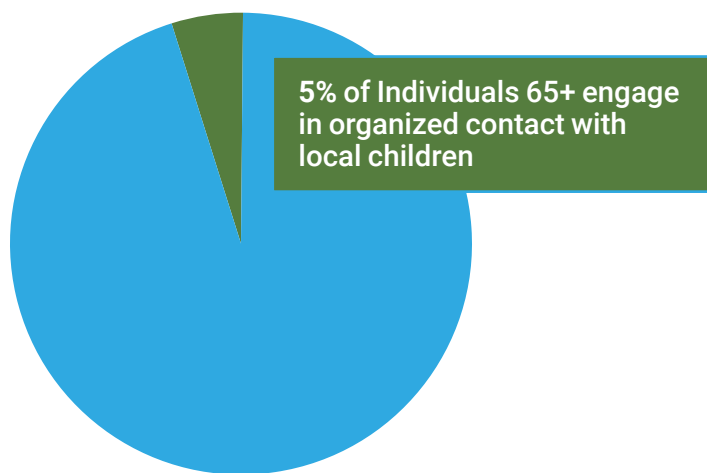
1. To remain active participants in a constantly changing society and economy, individuals must develop adaptability and resilience skills by engaging in continuous learning across the life span, from cradle to grave (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011). This cultural shift towards a lifelong learning perspective is paramount but often met with resistance. (Unesco institute of learning, 2020).

## Paradigm Shift



2. Enabling societies to reverse negative and stereotypical representations of aging as a period of decline and disengagement from society is one of the most important hurdles. (Ogg, 2021).
3. In spite of increasing global age-friendly university (AFU) initiatives, lifelong learning opportunities tend to be utilized mostly by whites, women, middle/upper class individuals, heterosexuals, former teachers/educators, or persons with prior educational background (especially in the U.S, Canada, and Western Europe). (Findsen & Formosa, 2011; Ratsoy, 2016; Hansen & Talmage, 2019).
4. Universities are well equipped to engage the burgeoning and diversified cohort of older adults in innovative ways, thereby maximizing service to their communities- (Kops, 2020).
5. In terms of access, the generational divide has reduced, but remains substantial as regards use. In comparison with younger people, older adults still use digital media less. (Ogg, 2021).
6. According to a study by Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People, only 5% of individuals 65 years and older engaged in any form of organized contact with local children. In addition, the institutionalization of older people signifies minimal contact between young children and older people (The TOY Project Consortium, 2013).

The TOY (Together Old and Young) project (2012-2014) is a European initiative that took place in seven countries: Ireland, Italy, Slovenia, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland and Portugal. It brought about the TOY program, a present day global movement that promotes young children and older adults learning together (Together Old and Young, 2016). The TOY project was developed to bridge the perceived lack of contact and lack of information about intergenerational learning involving young children and older adults, which has been and is still detrimental to both generations (The TOY Project Consortium, 2013).



# The TOY (Together Old and Young) Project



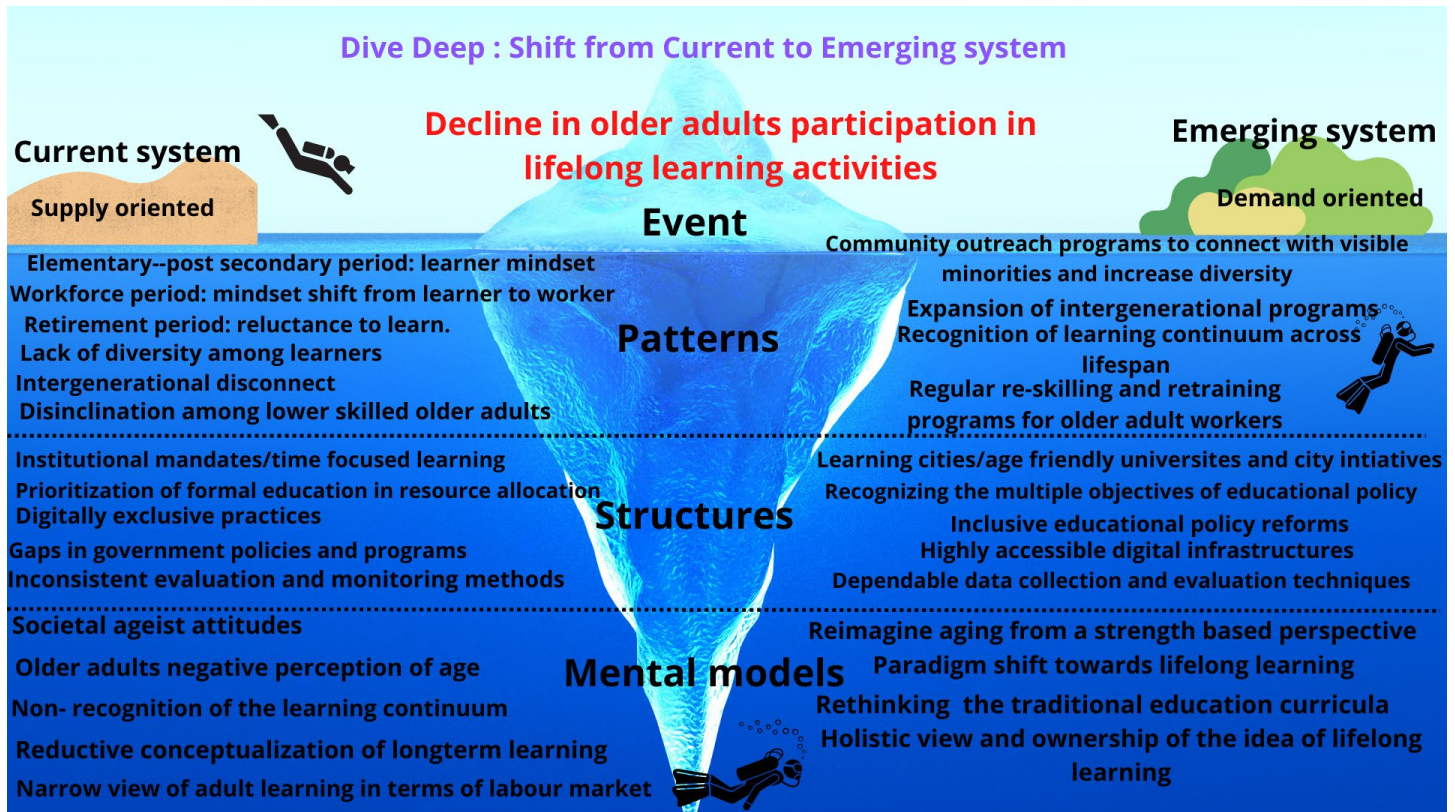
(The TOY Project Consortium, 2013).  
ECEC- Early Childhood Education and Care

## Solution Landscape- Emerging Landscape

In exploring the challenges associated with non-participation of older adults in lifelong learning using a systems perspective, certain leverage points with the potential to positively alter the current situation were identified. They include:

- Enhancing intergenerational solidarity.
- Exploring the gaps in federal policies/ programs.
- Implementing instructional strategies in digital education.
- Promoting age friendly university initiatives.
- Fostering greater diversity among older adults learner

# System Snapshot



Each level downwards provides a clearer view of the things holding the problem in place, as well as increased leverage for changemaking.

## Recommendations

This project respects the complexity of older adults' non-participation in lifelong learning and intergenerational learning. The following recommendations are not meant to be insistent, but rather as guidelines for action related to the following:

1. Build a movement to change the narrative around age and ageing (Global report on ageism, 2021)
2. Promote transdisciplinary research and intersectoral collaboration (Unesco institute of lifelong learning, 2020)
3. Position vulnerable groups at the core of policy agenda (Unesco institute of lifelong learning, 2020).
4. Support of local lifelong learning initiatives including learning cities (Unesco institute of lifelong learning, 2020).

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