

Seniors Centre Without Walls Saskatchewan Inc.



SCWW

Non-Profit Entity Number 102087113

2021 – 2022 Final Report

Acknowledgments

This report was prepared by Ronda Wedhorn with compilation and coding assistance from Georgette Gregoire.

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- ✚ Myrna Pitzel Bazylewski
 - collecting of surveys
- ✚ Georgette Gregoire
 - compilation and coding of surveys
 - assistance with report
- ✚ Amber Montgomery
 - administration and mailing
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- ✚ A very special thank you to all of the many volunteer hours that our guest speakers and presenters contribute to this program; especially our reoccurring presenters. We could not do this without you.
- ✚ Special thank you to Georgette for your countless volunteer hours. You are appreciated!

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The class made me feel like I was a functional member of a community or a family.”
-SCWW participant

Executive Summary

The Seniors Centre Without Walls (SCWW) program has hosted and facilitated over 567 classes. These classes had on average 21 participants per class. Classes and guest speakers are selected and scheduled by the organization's sole staff member and one volunteer, on a very limited budget. Topics, speakers and discussions are curated as interventions to reduce isolation, improve physical movement, foster socialization and help with cognitive abilities.

There is a lot of socialization that comes along with each one-hour class. The participants visit, laugh and enjoy the social aspect that they may not get without this class. This leads to an improved mood. With increased social interaction during sessions, seniors have an opportunity to meet like-minded people to interact and connect with on a regular basis. These connections can combat loneliness and isolation while improving emotional health. Getting together with friends over the "party line" may help to reduce the feelings of anxiety, depression, and stress in seniors.

"Connection. Purpose. Motivation.

Seniors Centre Without Walls works to connect people with themselves, others, and

[build] coping strategies for life's challenges"

Background

In 2019, the non-profit Age Friendly Outreach & Resource Network Inc. was founded by Ronda Wedhorn and Seniors Centre Without Walls Saskatchewan Inc. was a program initiated by Ronda, under that umbrella. In 2020, SCWW received four months grant from the Canadian Red Cross which allowed us to hire a program manager/coordinator and implement a senior's telephone program initiative. This program runs across Saskatchewan and has collaborations with a number of community partnerships and has participants from 22 communities.

What We Do

The SCWW program aims to measurably reduce the feelings of loneliness and social isolation; increase socialization, sense of belonging, and physical movement, for those 55+ in Saskatchewan. We have a particular focus on rural and remote communities. The majority of participants are over age 70. To do this we use a free conference call type platform to engage participants. In 2021, we introduced at home supports.

Method

The SCWW participants responded to a survey, for the period of September, 2021 – May, 2022. An evaluation of the program was conducted, in April, 2022; to determine if the program had met its objectives and in order to obtain constructive program improvement, for future sustainability. The program manager developed an evaluation survey which was

mailed out to 36 to participants in the program. Survey data from 17 returned surveys was collected and recorded by hand. In June, SCWW analyzed the survey results. Findings from the data analyzing can be found in the highlights and graph sections of this report.

Highlights of Results

Participation

-  A total of 100% of seniors registered with the program have participated in at least one class.
-  89% of participants attend every class session

Calls

-  46% percent of participants were satisfied with 10:00 am class times, while 8% prefer 10:30 am.
-  29% were satisfied with 1:00 pm class times and 17% preferred 1:30 class times.

Demographics

-  62% members live in the northern part of Saskatchewan
-  15% live in the western area
-  23% live in the central area
-  And no one reported in the eastern area

-  85% of the members live in an urban area
-  15% live in a rural area

Of the Urban responses:

-  42% live in a city with a population of 10,000 to 50,000
-  26% live in a community of 1,000 to 10,000 people
-  16% live in a community of over 100,000 people
-  8% live in a community of under 1,000 people
-  8% live in a community between 50,000 and 100,000

Home

-  55% of respondents live in a house
-  23% live in an apartment
-  15% live in a condominium
-  7% live in other places
-  0 live in long term care or assisted living
-  69% of respondents live alone
-  31% of respondents live with others

Age Range

-  55% of respondents are age 66 – 75 years
-  24% of respondents are over age 86
-  13% of respondents are age 55- 65 years
-  8% are 76 – 85 years

Phone DialPad program

-  85% of respondents are satisfied with phone only access to the program

- + 15% would prefer some virtual access to programs
- + 75 % of respondents access the programs on a land line
- + 25% use a cell phone
- + 23% do not have a hands-free phone
- + 62% would like to take computer training classes
- + 15% maybe would take computer training classes

Class Content

- + 99% of the participants are satisfied with the class content
- + 93% of participants will stay in the program if it continues
- + 99% of the participants felt that the classes were something to look forward to

+ Mental Health and Wellness

Physical Movement

- + 66% of respondents increased their physical movement after being in the program
- + 67% or participants increased their flexibility after being in the program

Sense of Belonging and community

- 99% of the participants felt a sense of belonging after being in the program

Loneliness - Before and After Programming

- Before joining the program 92% of the participants felt lonely
 - 15% of them felt extremely lonely before joining
- After being in the program only 8% felt lonely

Isolation – Before and After Programming

- 63% of respondents find it difficult to attend community events
- Before joining SCWW 77% of participants felt isolated
 - With 31% of them feeling extremely isolated
- After being in the program only 16% felt isolated
 - No one felt extremely isolated

Social Connections

- Before joining SCWW 93% of participants had no social connections
- After being in the program only 31% had not social connections

Mental Health

- Since starting the program 85% or participants feel their mental health has improved
- Since being in the program 69% feel they are more mentally active

+ Why We Started

Research shows that older adults are at disproportionate risk of social isolation and loneliness, which has significant impacts on their health and wellbeing. In the context of COVID-19, older adults have been strongly encouraged to isolate, thus exacerbating these risks. Evidence also suggests that rural older adults in particular may experience higher rates of social isolation due to geographical dispersion and lack of access to services. People with disabilities face similar challenges accessing social programs and activities.

The Seniors Centre Without Walls (SCWW) program is designed to mitigate isolation, increase physical movement, and enhance social connection for older adults, and adults living with a disability, throughout the province of Saskatchewan. SCWW provides telephone-based community programming, as well as in home supports; to support vulnerable and isolated seniors. Many seniors find it difficult to leave home due to financial constraints, lack of access to transportation, rural or remote location, or health and mobility issues. Telephone programs are delivered entirely through conference calls, which are free of charge to participants (we offer training on tablets, computers, cell phone). Workshops cover such topics as health and wellness, conversations with professionals, learning opportunities in later life, brain teasers, and games. Participants learn about a variety of social and educational topics and have an opportunity to create new friendships.

The program is guided by a strengths-based approach rather than a focus on vulnerability; for example, as participants register for the program, they will be asked if they wish to host a session on an area of knowledge or interest to them. This method will encourage older adults to volunteer in a helping role to provide a sense of purpose, in addition to valuing the knowledge and expertise participants have to offer. Through this program, seniors and those with disabilities who cannot attend community functions will be able to remain socially included. The program supports healthy aging in place, ensuring that isolated and lonely individuals have a connection to others.

Buck-McFadyen et al. 2019, found that seniors in rural communities face additional challenges associated with isolation and lack of services. Inadequate access to health care, a lack of community events or activities for the aged, limited transportation and shopping options, and higher rates of poverty all contribute to social isolation for older people in rural areas. Between the years of 1980 and 2014 there was a 29 percent increase in mortality for those suffering from loneliness and a 25 percent increase for those who are socially isolated. Other studies have linked social isolation and loneliness to cognitive decline and high blood pressure which may lead to stroke or coronary heart disease. Even if we exclude those in institutional dwellings such as nursing homes, four out of ten Saskatchewan senior women (41.8%) were living alone in 2011. And for those over that are older the proportion is much higher at 56. % (Elliott, 2016).

+ Our SCWW survey found that over 70% of the senior women in this program live alone.

The elderly may lose their spouse, their friends, and their ability to be mobile, leading to poor health conditions which only exacerbate their loneliness and isolation. These challenges may also decrease their ability to seek new friendships and to participate in activities that could enhance their mental and physical health.

+ Eighty six percent of our respondents find it difficult to leave home to attend community events with the largest barriers being no transportation and physical disabilities.

+ 31% of total respondents leave their home only once every two weeks.

“This program was a “life saver” for me during the cold winter and Covid.”
-SCWW participant

“I feel love and respect here with all of these people. I am very grateful to be part of this program. Thank you to each of you!”
-SCWW participant

+ Mental Health and Wellness

MEASURABLE OUTCOME GOALS

Our outcome goals were to:

- ✚ Measure and evaluate if the program could be successful to decrease feelings of isolation and loneliness
- ✚ Measure if the program could increase feelings of social connections and feelings of belonging
- ✚ Measure if the program could increase physical movement.

Seniors Centre Without Walls successfully met and achieved all outcome goals.

The overarching objective of this project was to reduce social isolation amongst older adults and adults living with disabilities. To increase social connection and physical movement to support and strengthen mental health; through telephone-based program delivery.

Results also show a marked improvement in feelings of mental health and wellness and that the telephone program is a safe and valuable program that should be continued in Saskatchewan. We highly recommend the continuation of this program and it's work to support senior citizens across Saskatchewan.

Results of Outcome Goals

Reduce loneliness

Before joining the program:

- 92% of respondents felt lonely
 - 15% of them feeling extremely lonely.

After being in the program:

- 8% felt lonely
 - No one felt extremely lonely

✚ The program achieved a measured decrease in loneliness of over 84%

Reduce isolation

Before joining the program:

- 78% felt some form of isolation
 - 31% felt extremely isolated

After being in the program:

- 16% felt isolated

✚ The program achieved a measured decrease in the feelings of isolation over 62%

Increase Social Connections

Before being in the program:

- 93% of participants had limited social connections

- 30% had no social connections at all

After Being in the program:

- 31% of participants had no social connections

✚ The program achieved a measured increase in being socially connected of over 62%

Sense of Belonging and Community

✚ 99% of participants felt a sense of belonging and felt that they were part of a community after being in the program.

Physical movement

After Being in the program:

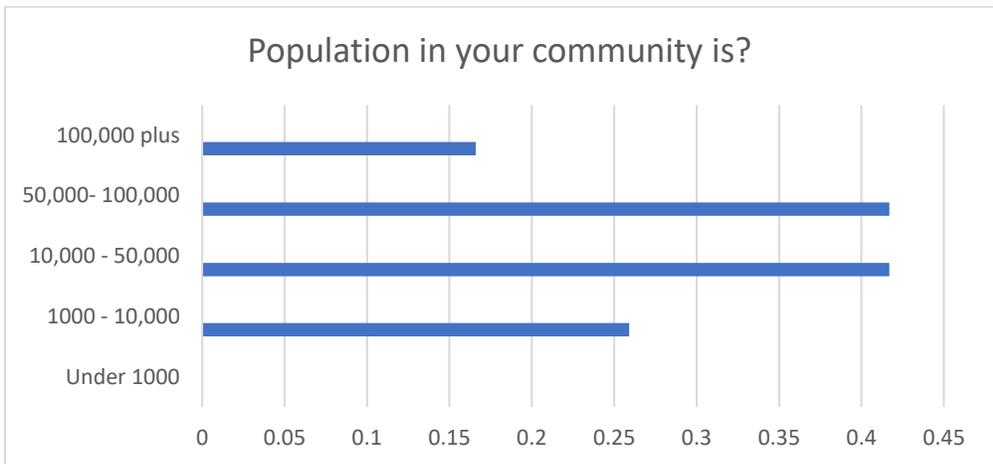
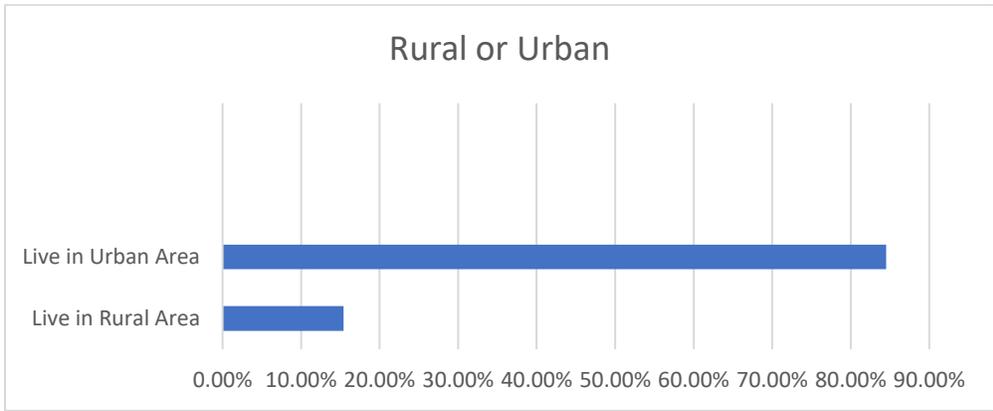
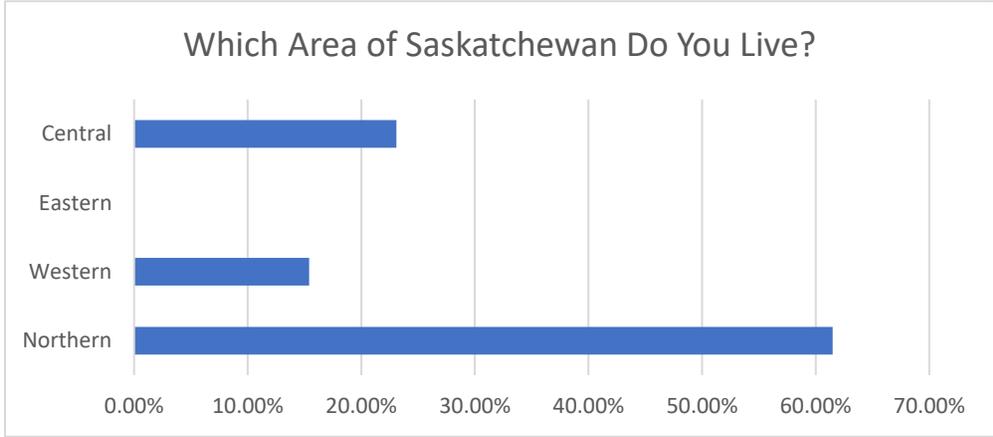
- 60% of participants increased their physical movement since being in the program
- 67% increased their flexibility because of classes in the program

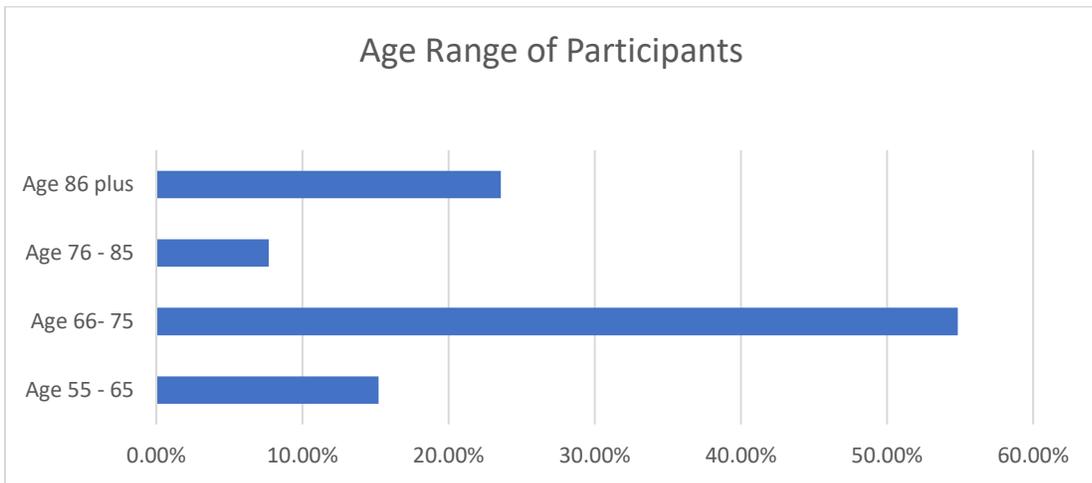
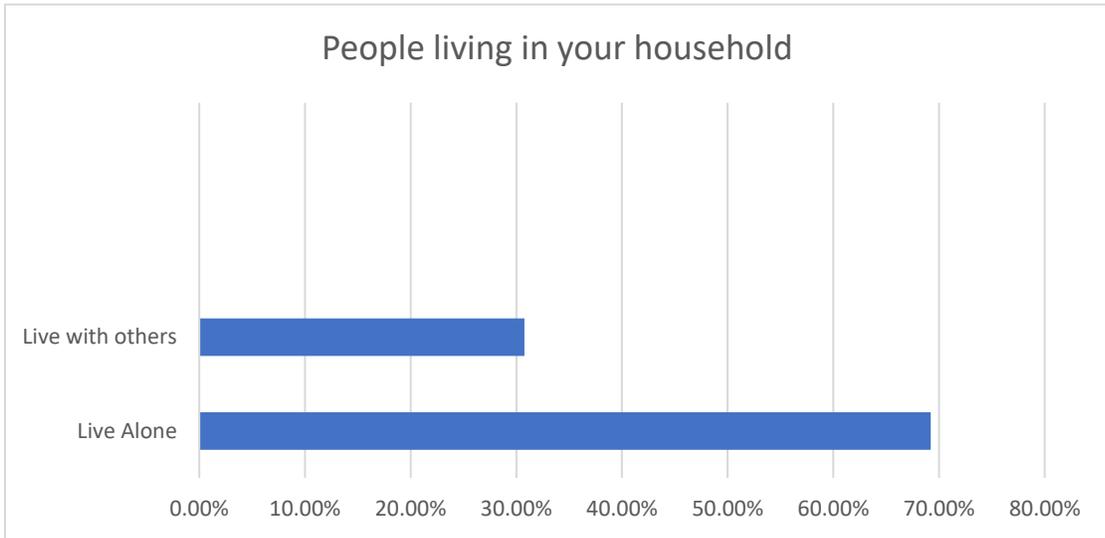
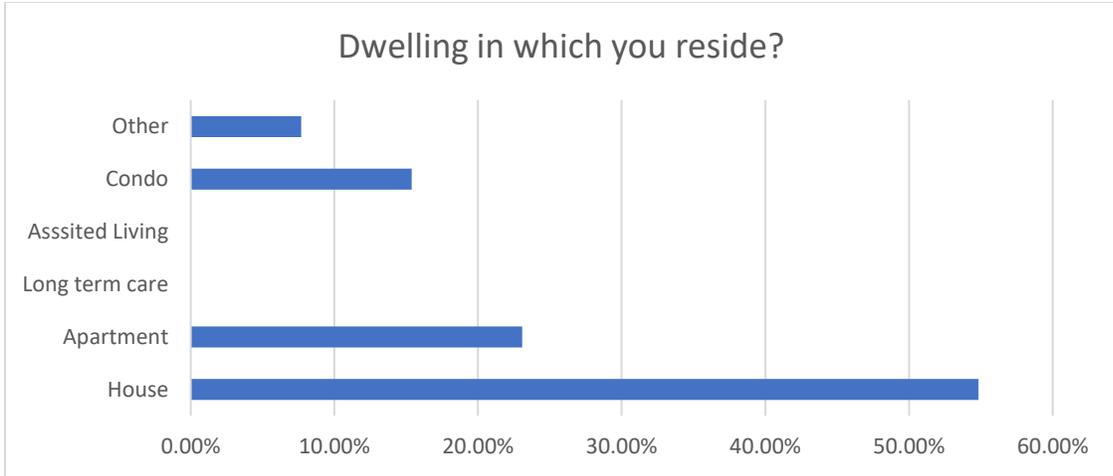
Mental Health

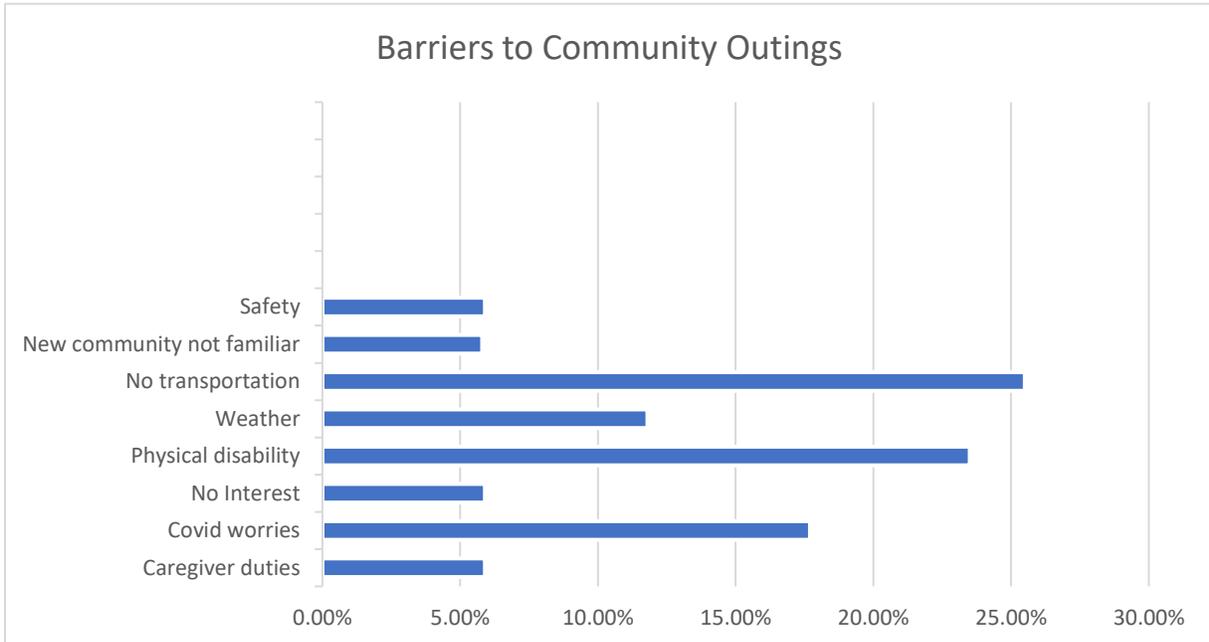
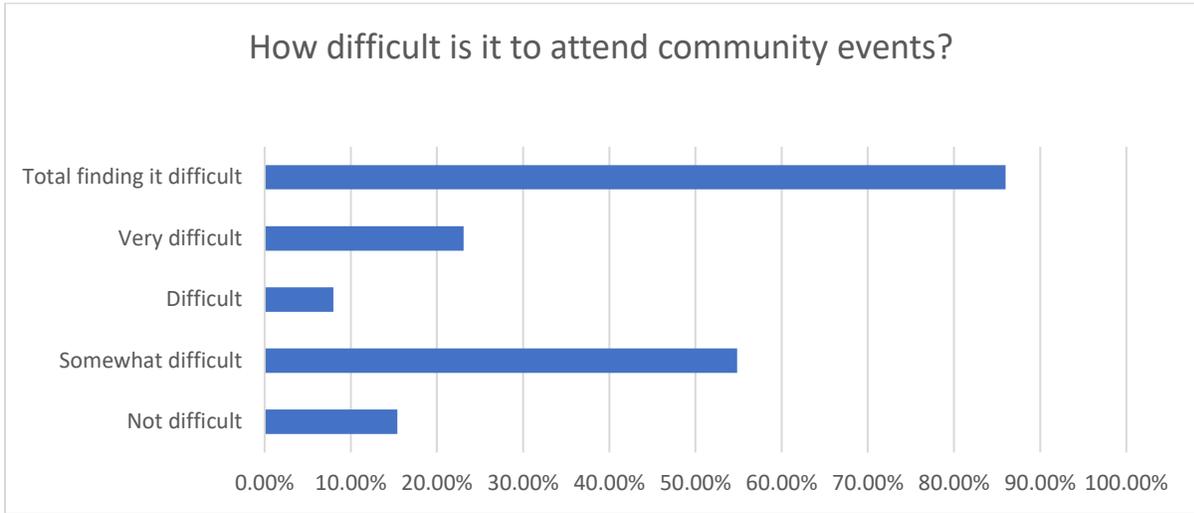
✚ 85% of participants said their mental health has improved after being in the program

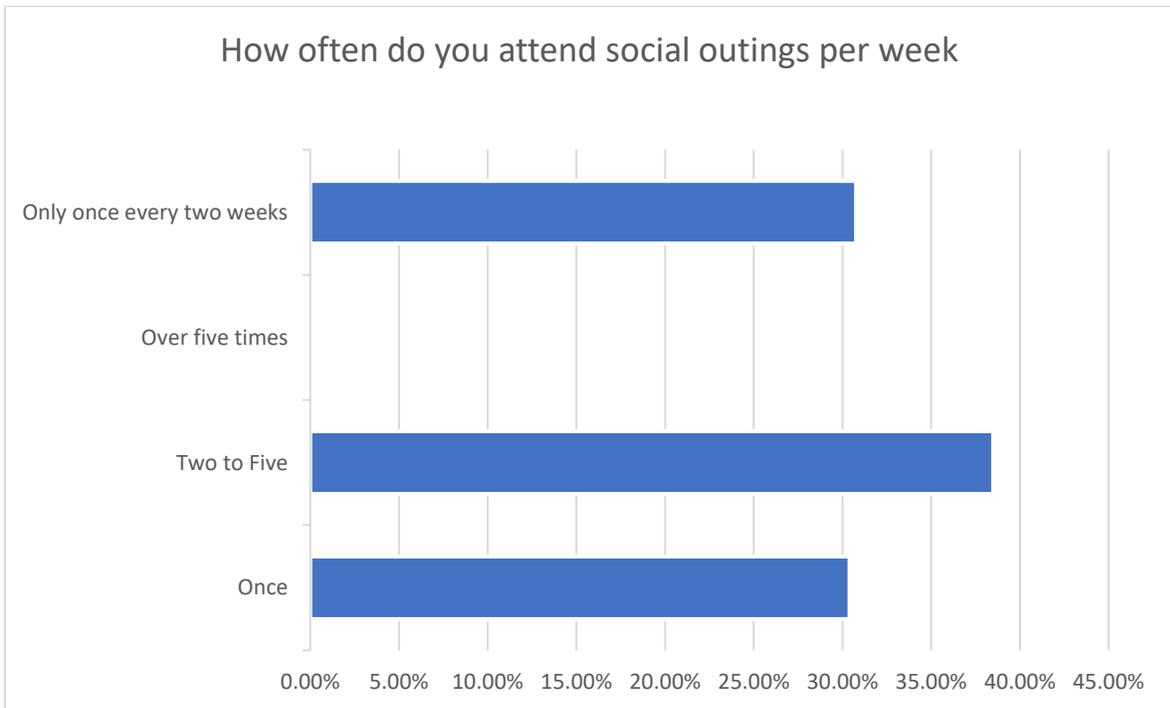
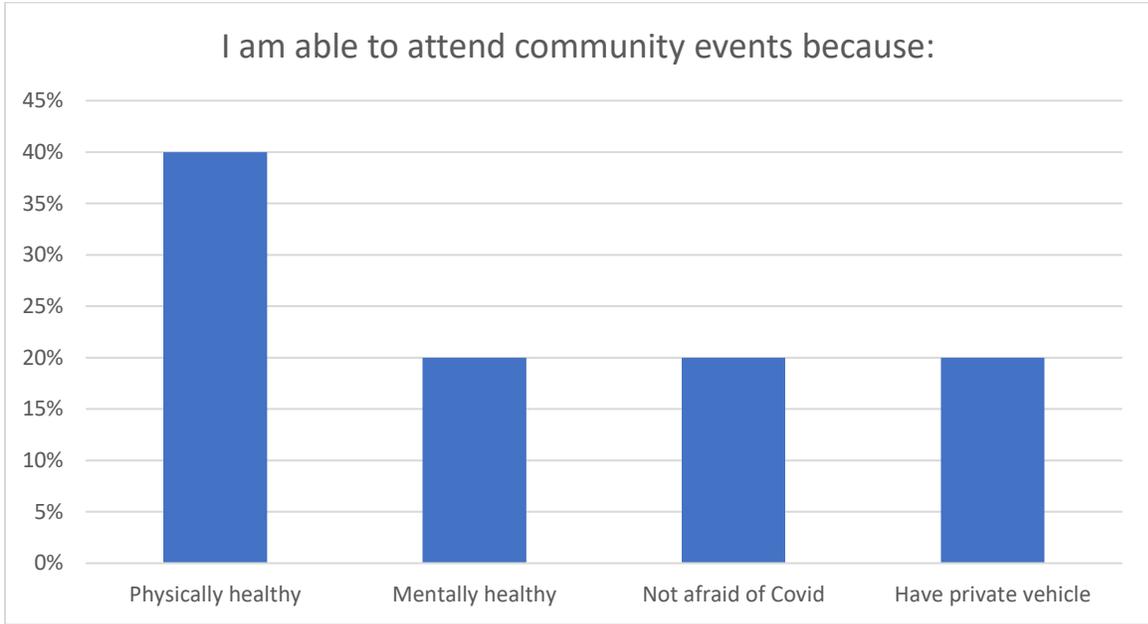
✚ 69% feel they are more mentally active after being in the program

“As the Friday morning Pianist, I would not have missed this for the World!”
-Lorne



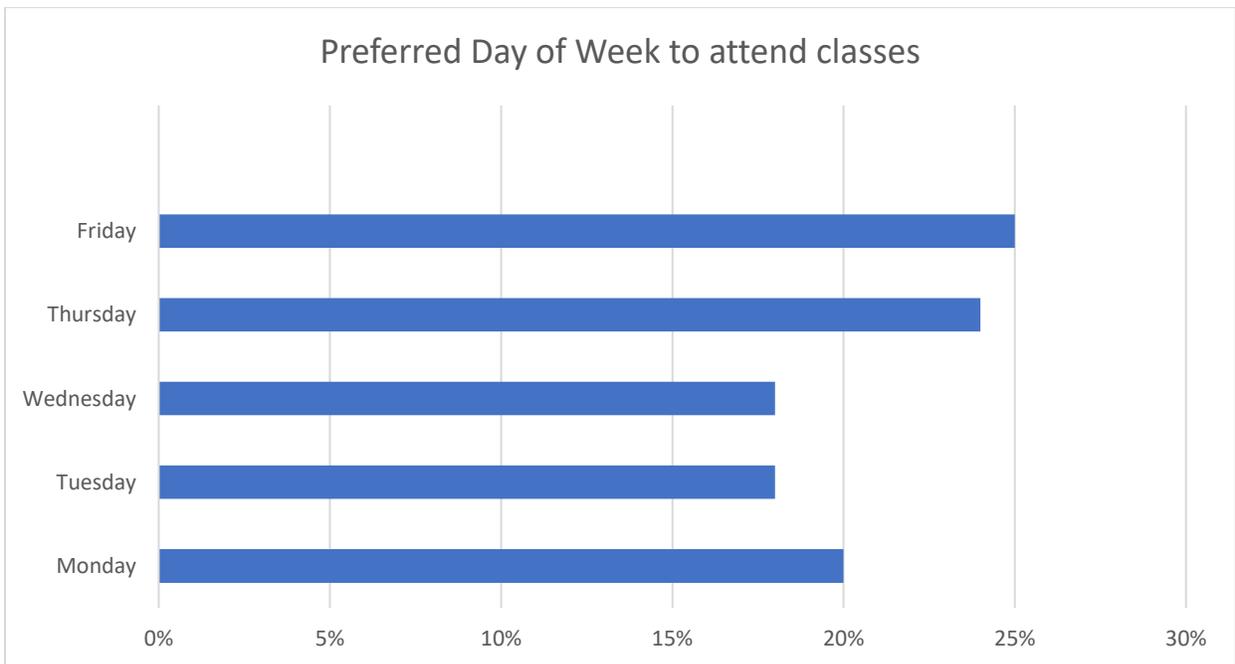
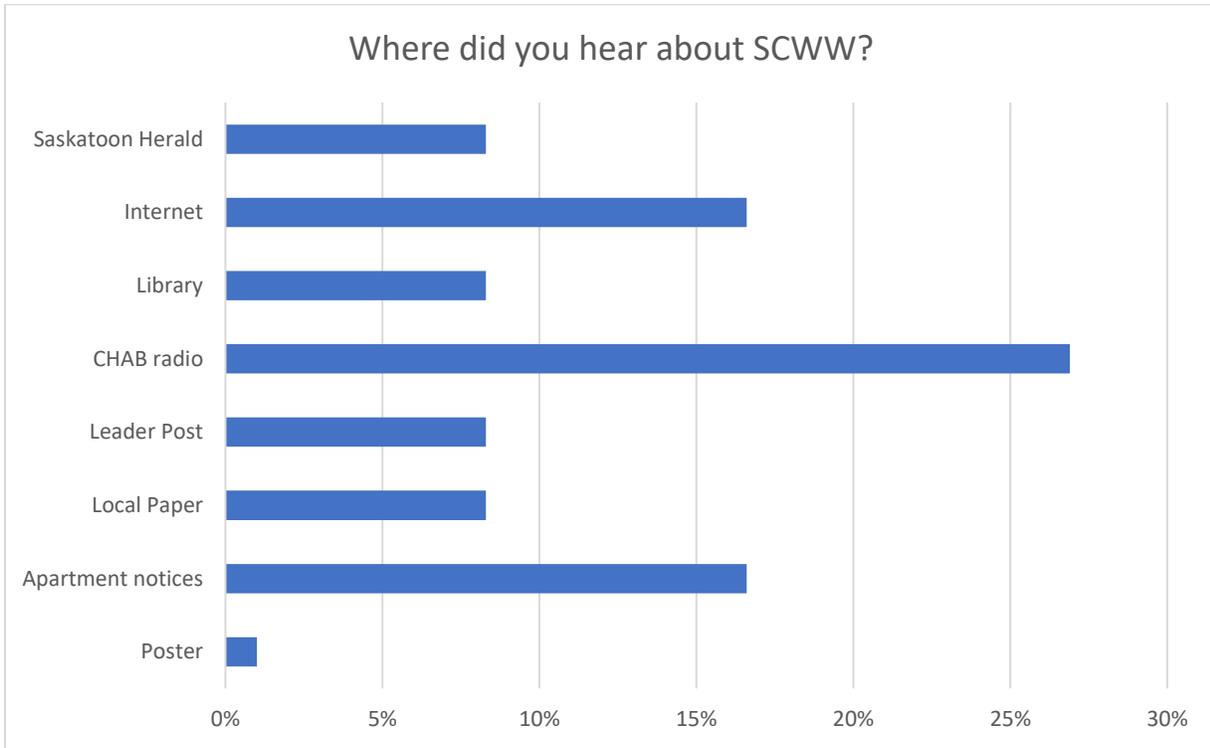


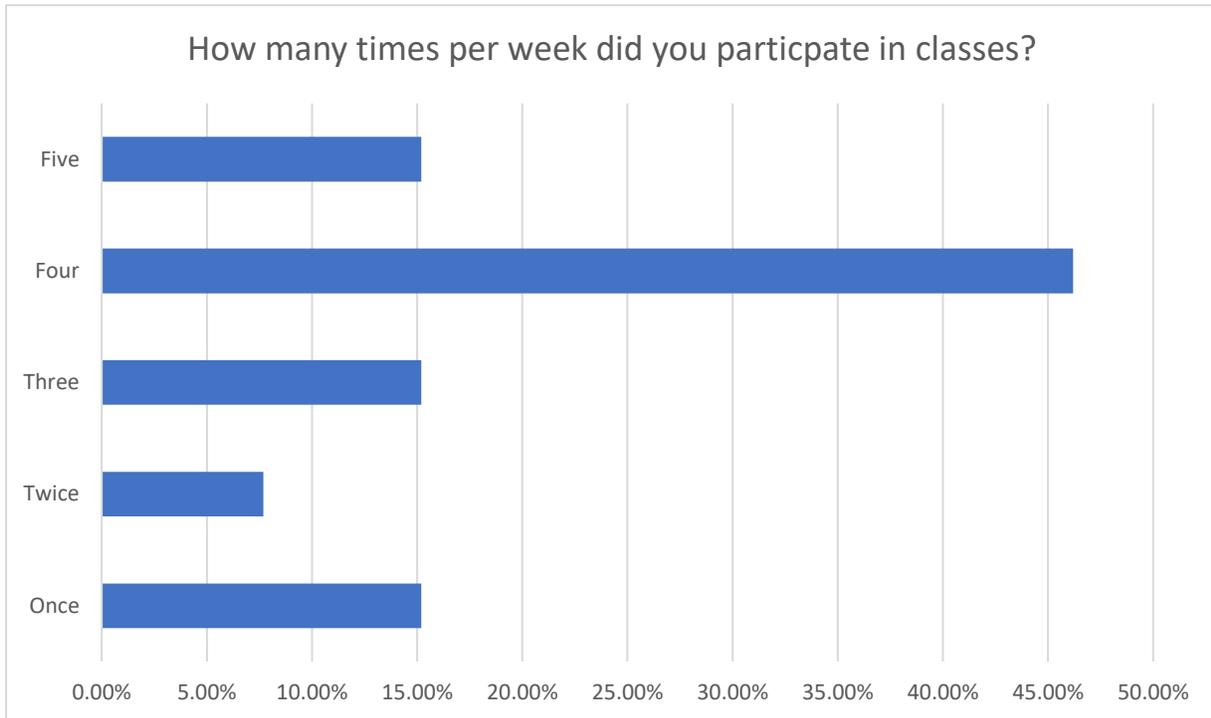


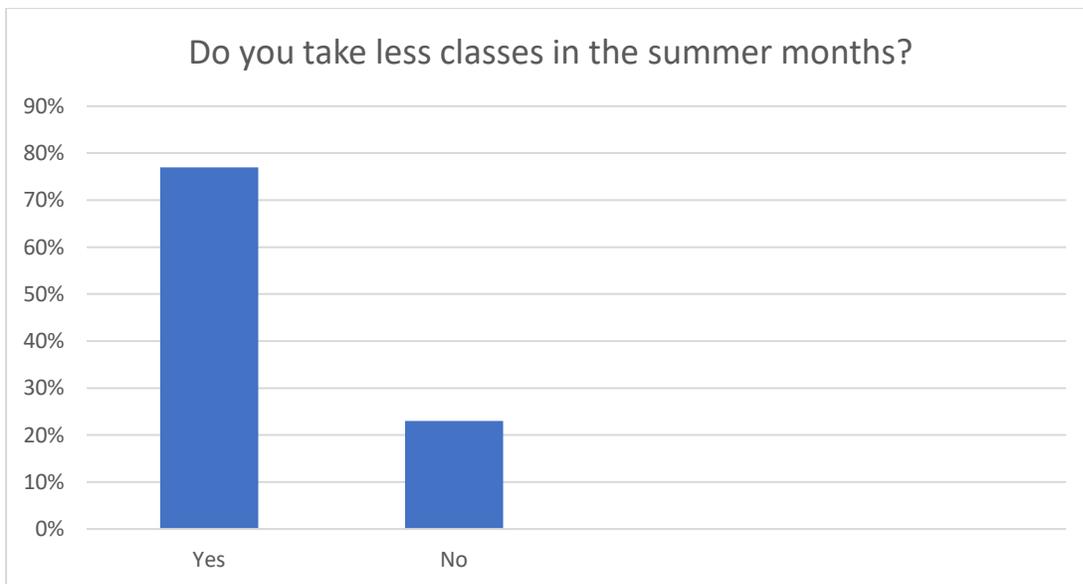
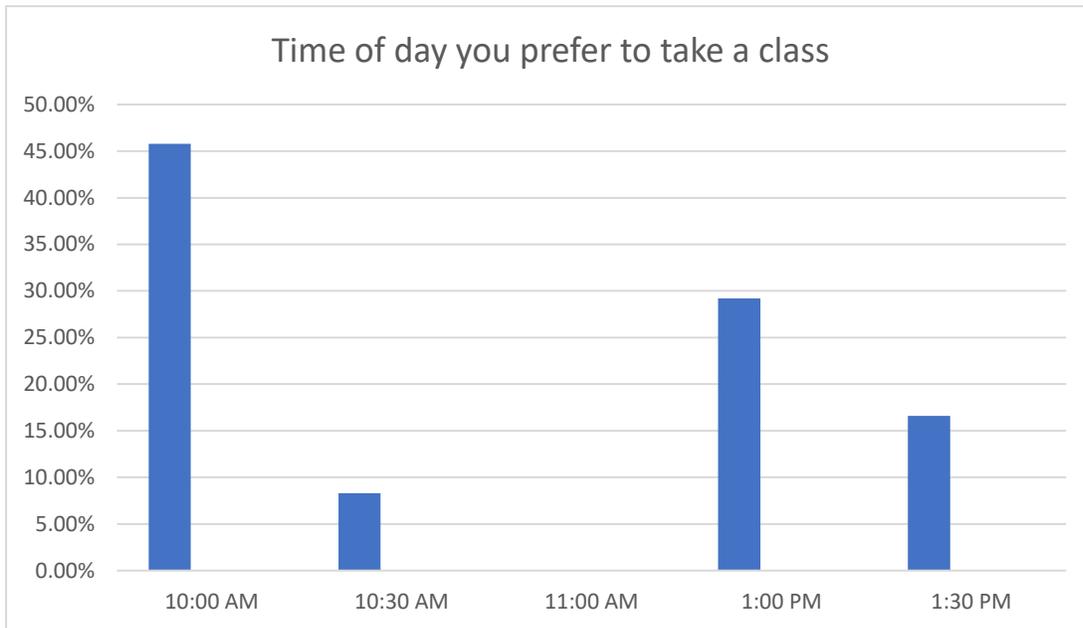


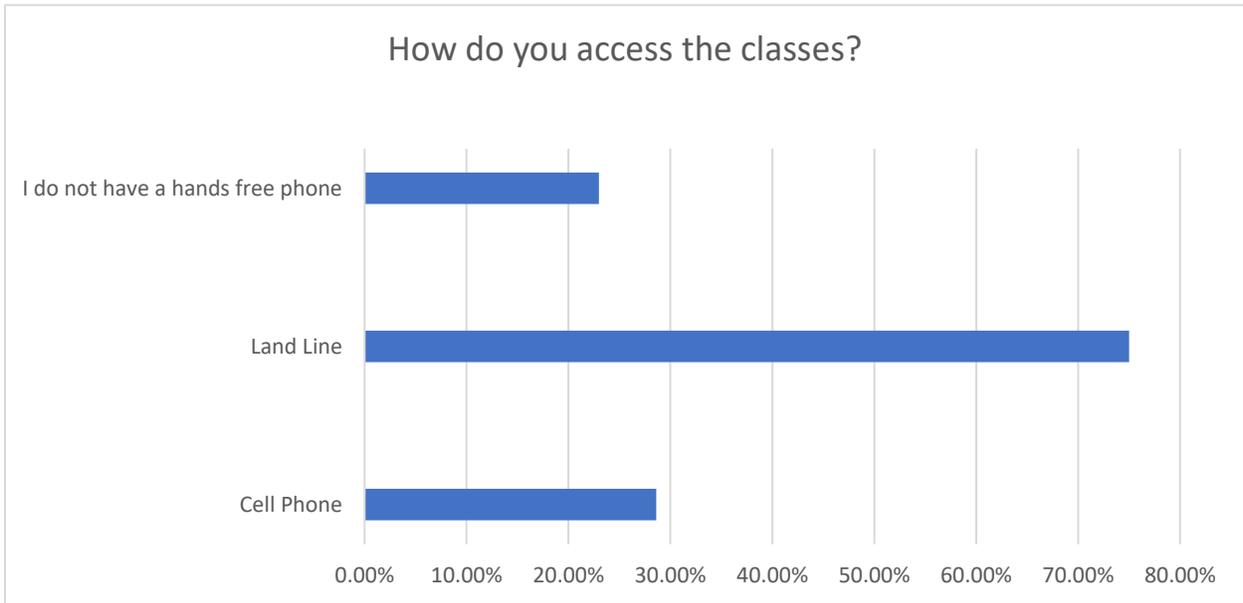
30.77% of participants only leave their home once every two weeks

- 30.4% attend community outings once a week
- 38.5% attend community outings two to five times a week

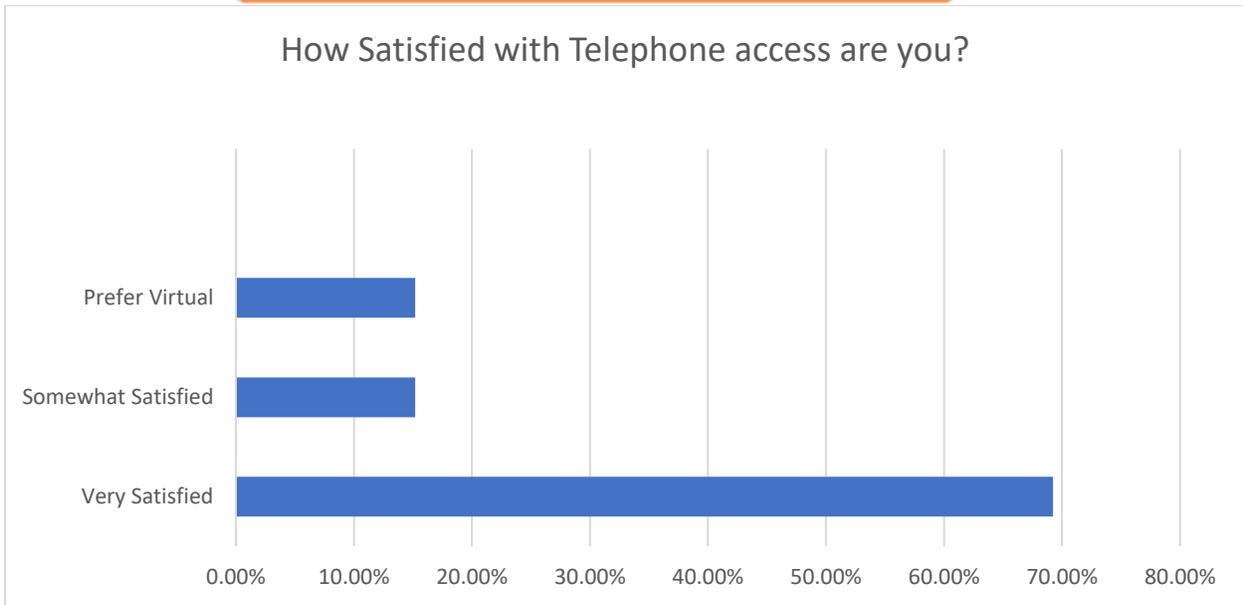


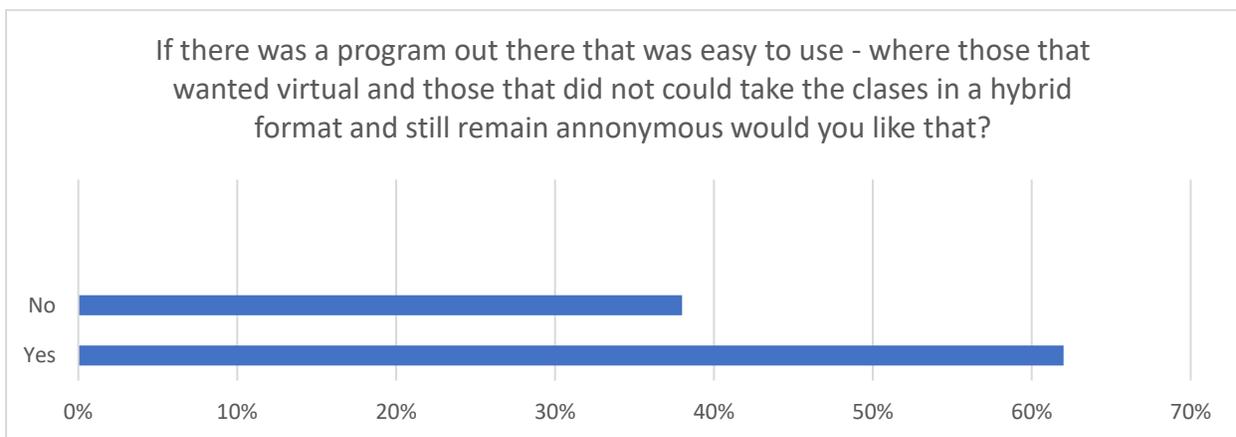
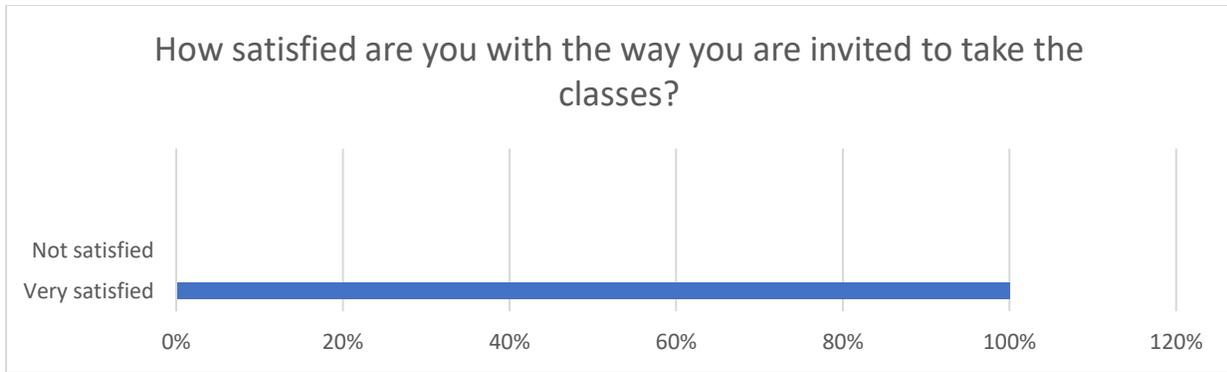




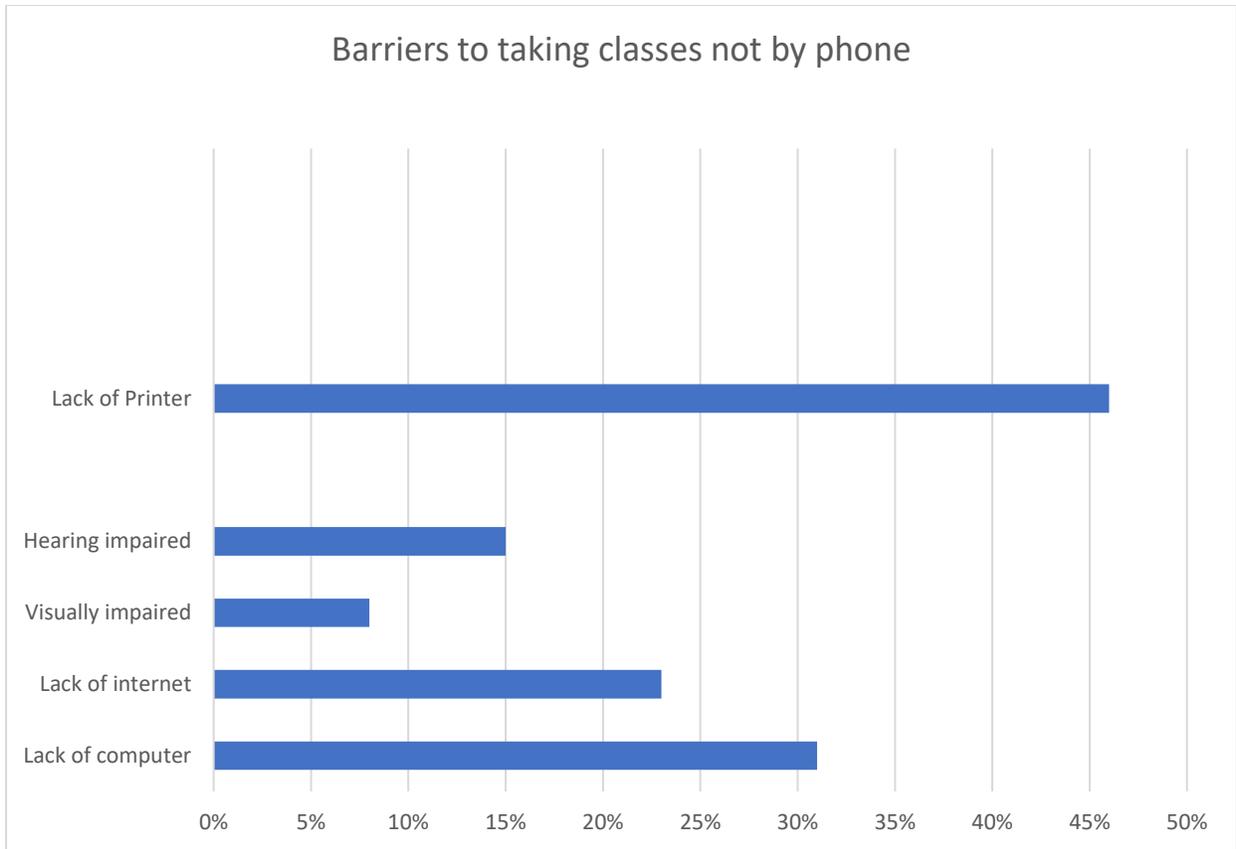


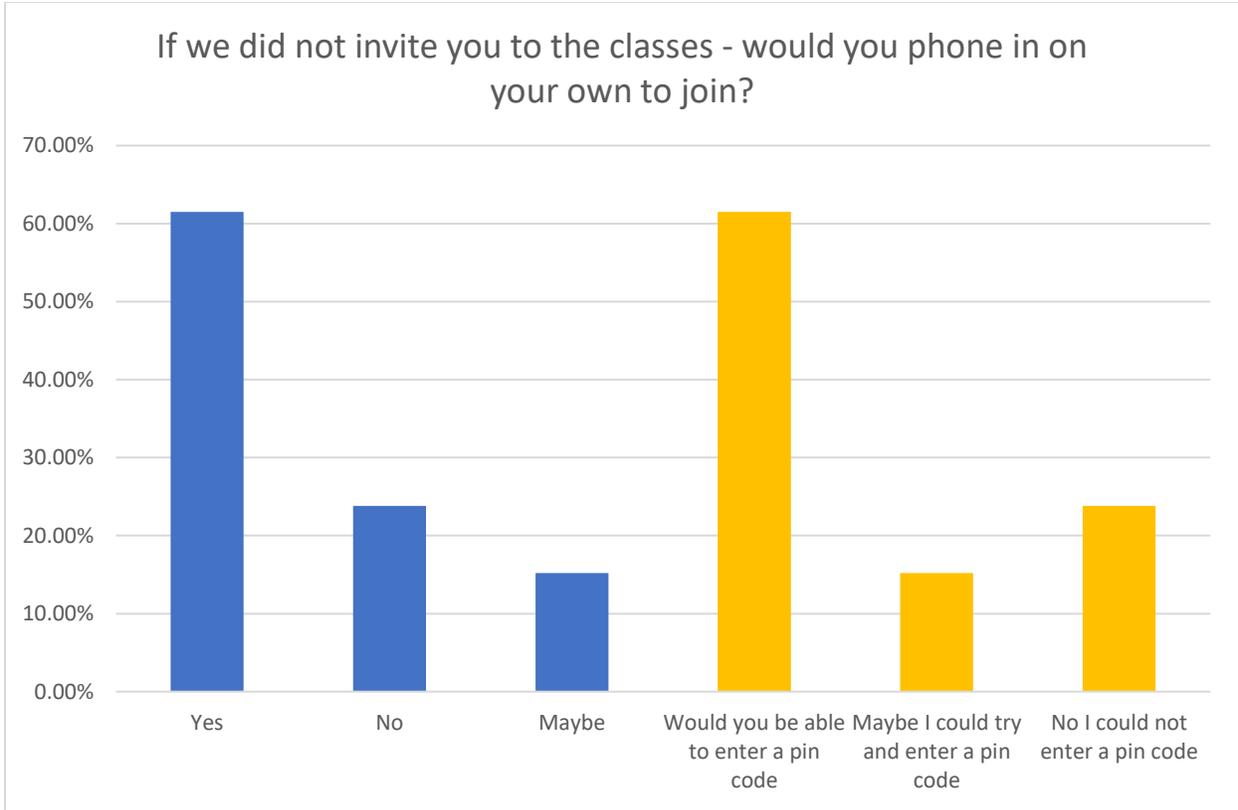
**“How wonderful it is to hear familiar voices and be and feel so very comfortable to talk to and laugh with.”
-SCWW participant**





61% of respondents would like to see the other person in the class. Reasons listed for not wanting to see the other person were: to awkward for the pianist, cost to the program, extra work and cost to the facilitator, some people with computers do not have internet, some people with computers do no have a camera, would take extra time to set up classes.





The majority of respondents commented that they would prefer to have a phone invite and that they might forget to phone in. Eight people said they would take computer training classes.

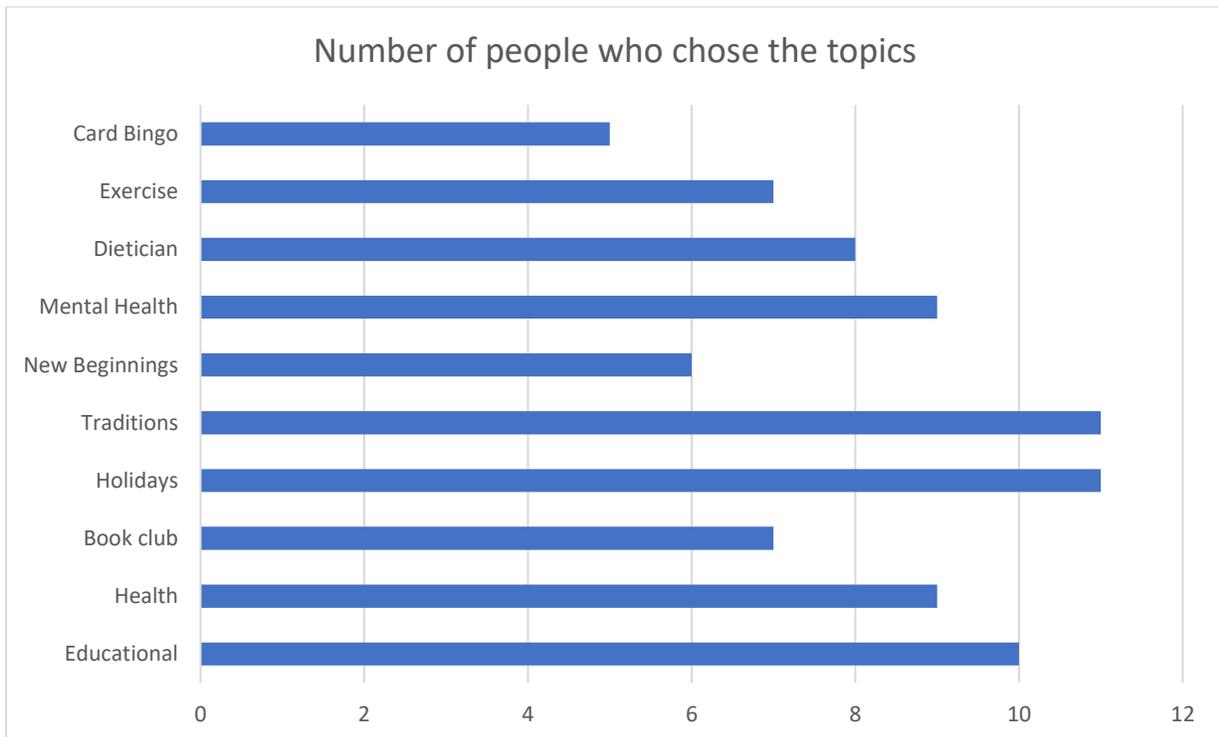


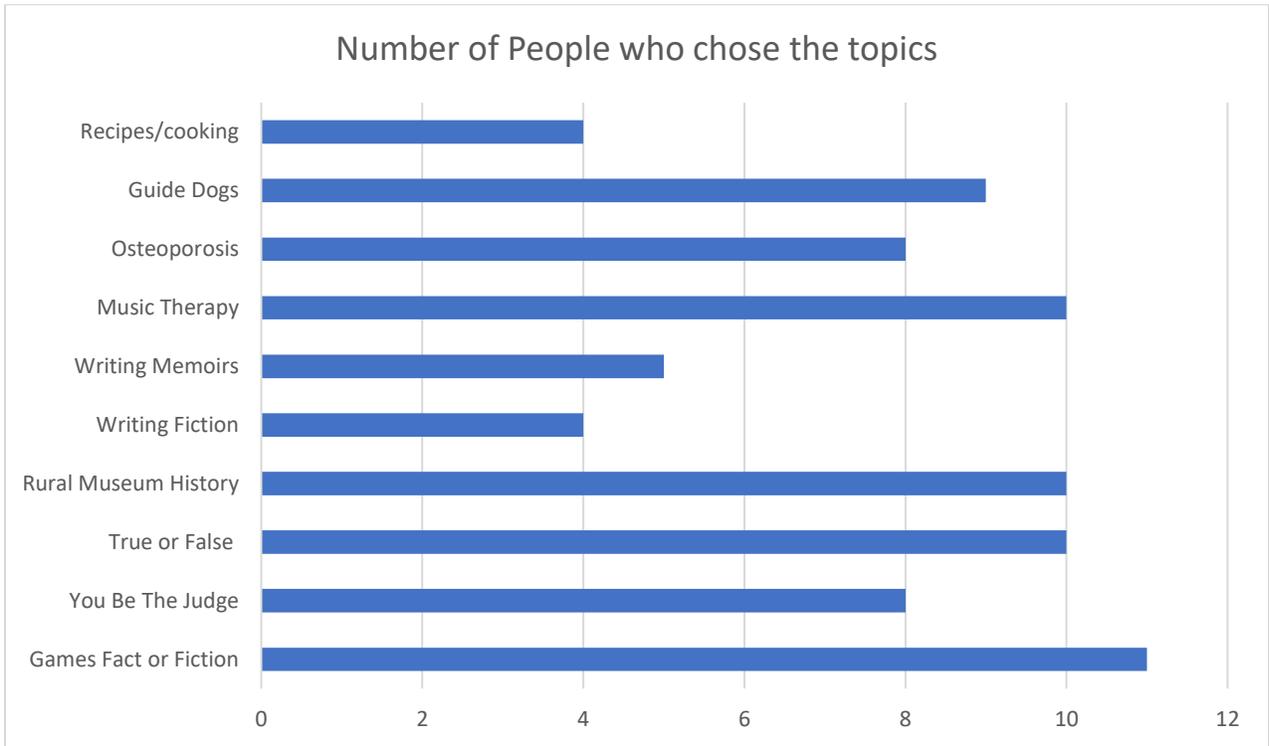
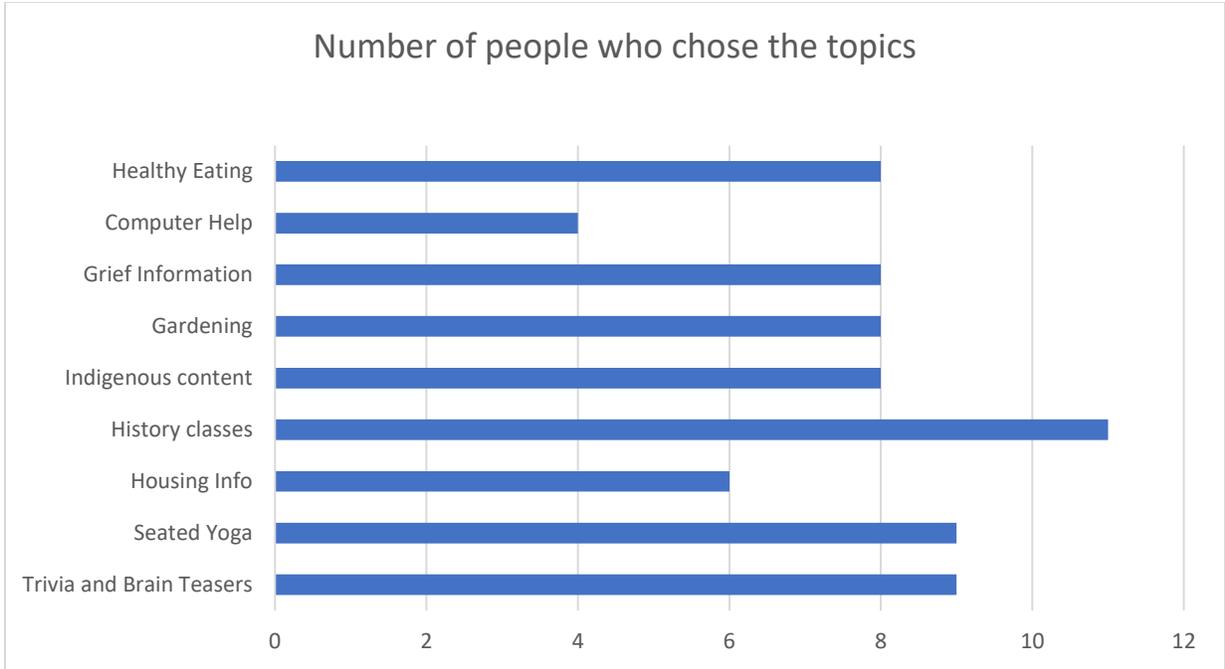
Class Topics

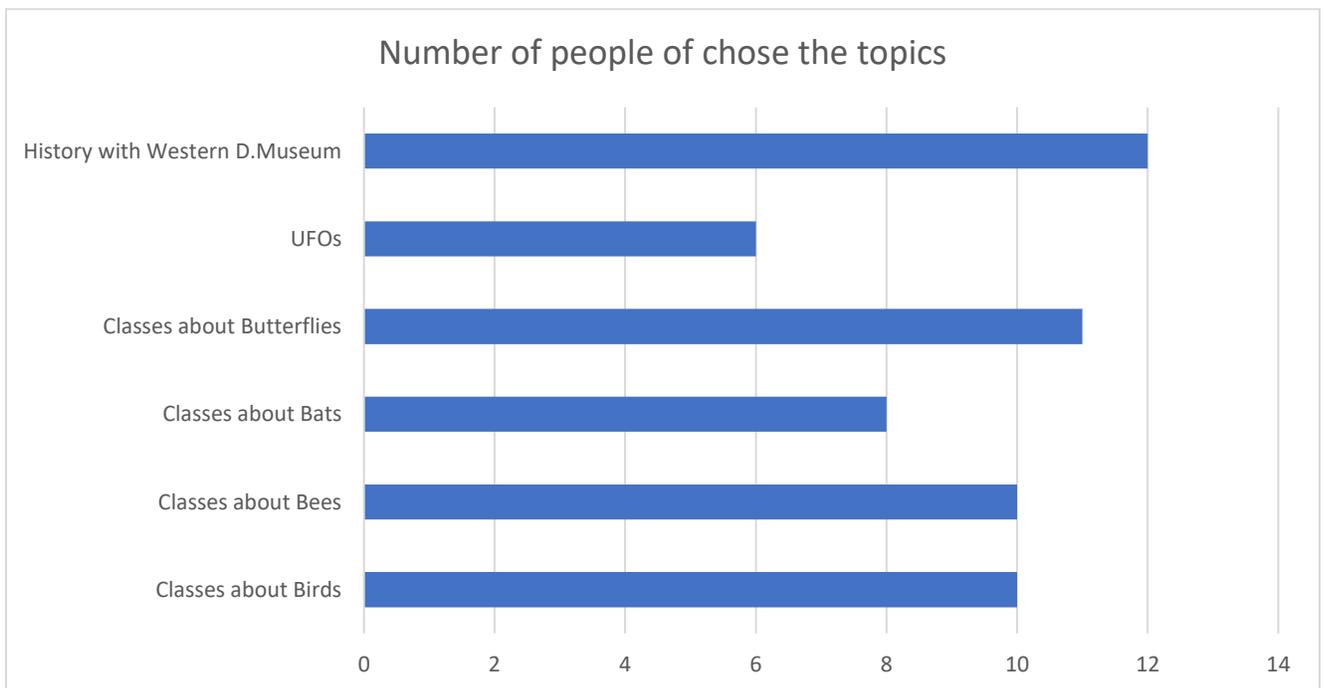
Participants were asked to comment on what classes they had enjoyed the most. There were 14 respondents who chose the classes that they preferred (over the year) which are listed in the chart below:

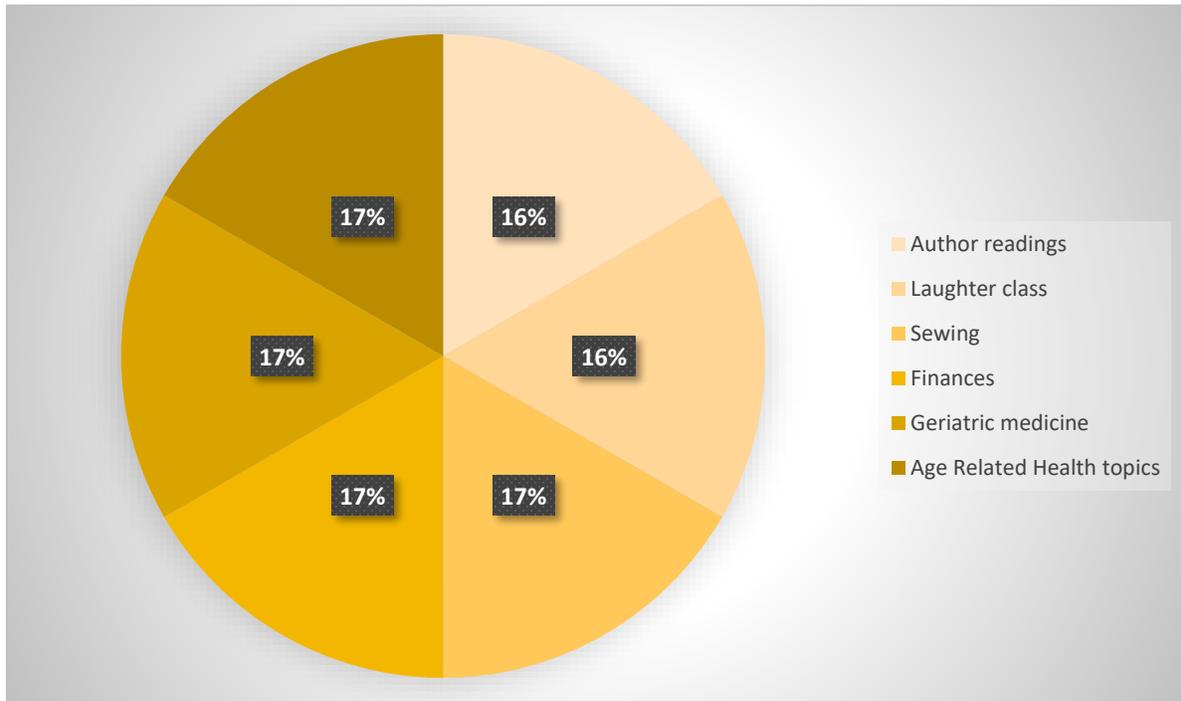
I enjoyed every program even the ones I thought might not be as good. They made me laugh, think, cry, and try my hardest, as well as learn from and try to understand the point of view of others.

-SCWW Participant









Reasons you enjoyed the Classes:

Fun!

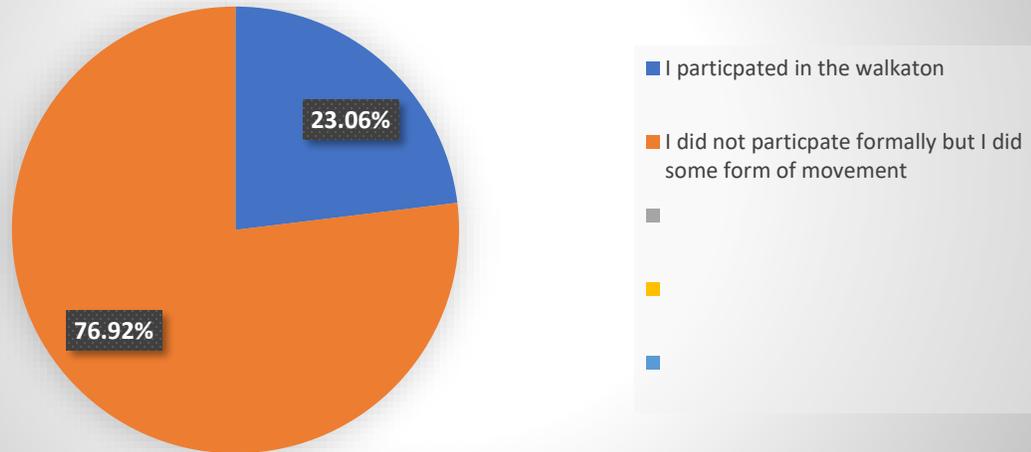
- ✚ Educational
- ✚ Love Animals
- ✚ Stimulate brain
- ✚ Feel good about self
- ✚ Get to use our brains
- ✚ I like plants and nature
- ✚ I need to learn new things
- ✚ Interesting and Educational
- ✚ Informative and interesting
- ✚ Could connect with everyday life
- ✚ Doing something – not just listening
- ✚ I can learn how to take better care of myself
- ✚ I like to develop creative skills, art appreciation, and cognitive skills
- ✚ The class made me feel like I was a functional member of a community or a family

I can't remember ever not liking any of the programs!

-SCWW participant

The majority of respondents noted that they enjoyed every program, even ones that had thought they might not like, and there was a good selection of classes. The type of classes chosen most often were: educational topics, trivia and brain engaging classes, history, animals and the social visit classes. The classes chosen least often were: writing, cooking, Bingo, and computer classes.

Walk a Thon and Exercise



I liked:

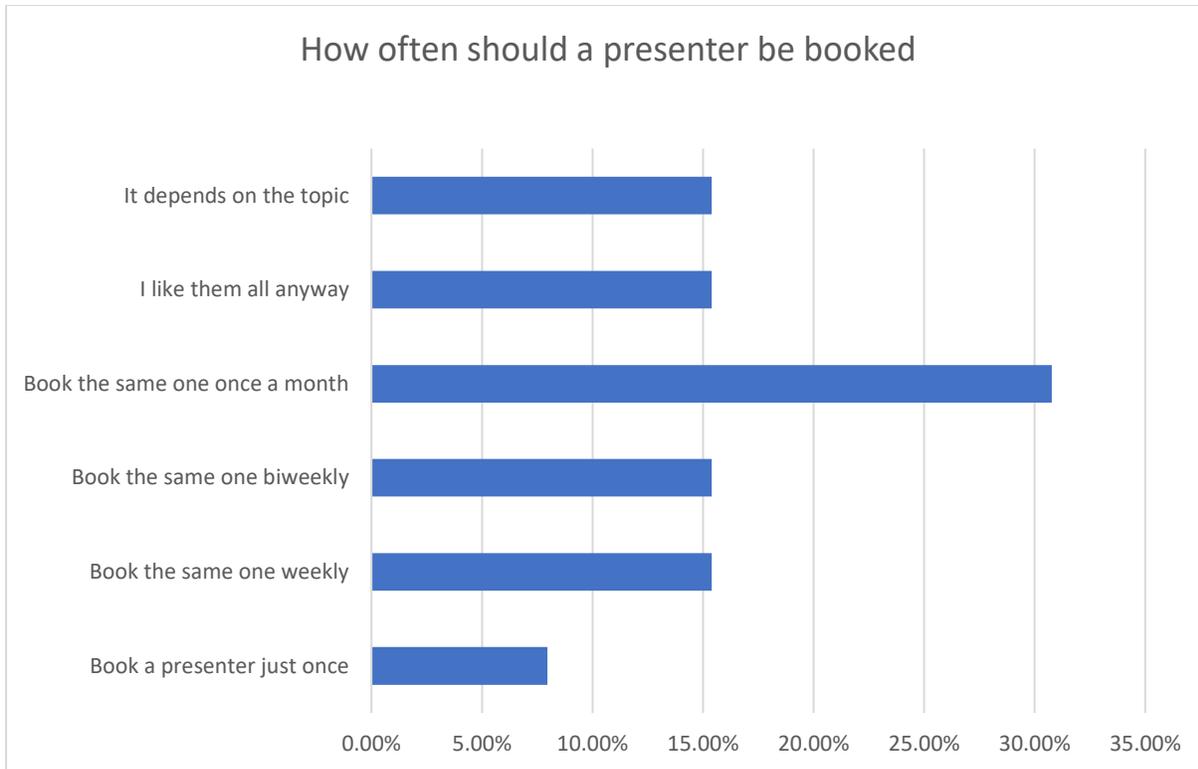
- ✚ Motivation to move
- ✚ I liked the first walkathon but not the second one
- ✚ Encouraged me to walk.

I did not like:

- ✚ Very time consuming for the facilitator
- ✚ Weather affected it
- ✚ Pressure to do it
- ✚ Took too much time out of the class
- ✚ Physical ability
- ✚ My location affected it.

Cognitive Challenge – Critical Thinking
 Emotional Support – Determination
 Expansion of Horizons

-SCWW participants comments



Participant Suggestions:

Have a writing class once a month, music therapy once or twice a month, an art class once a week, the history class from the museum once a month, an educational topic once a week, a trivia or brain game twice a month.

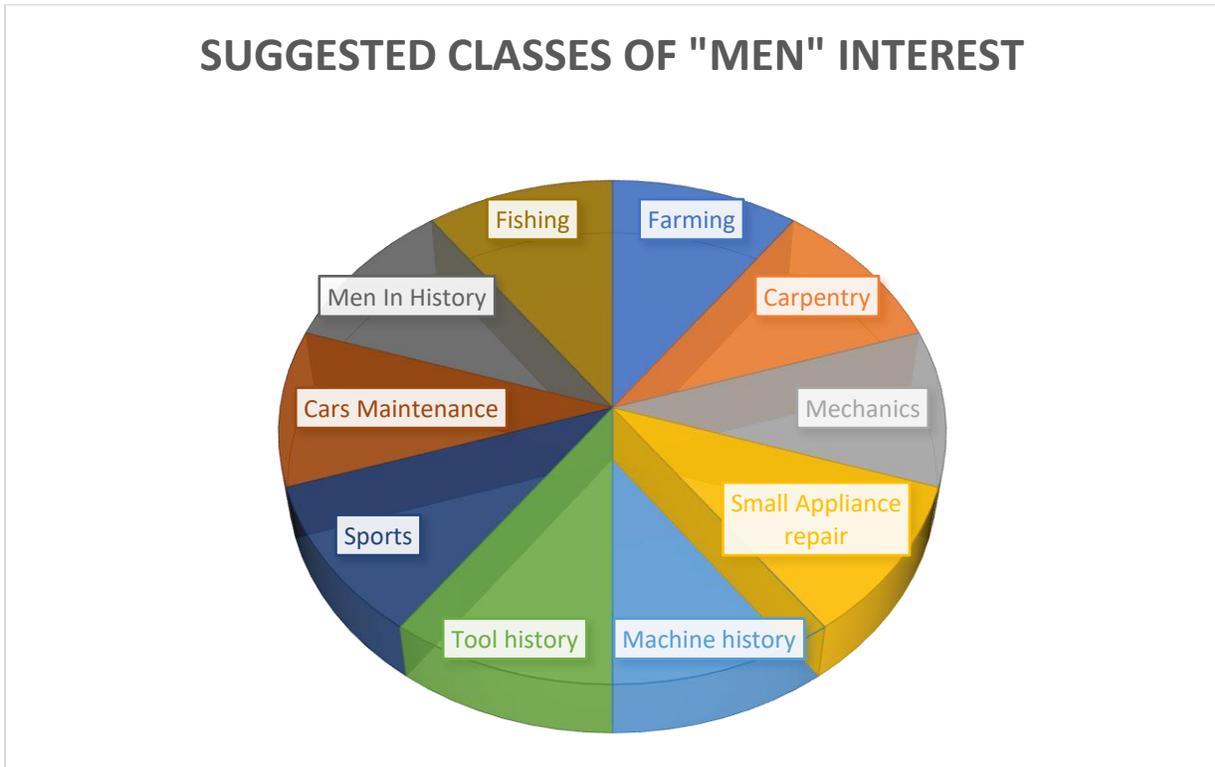
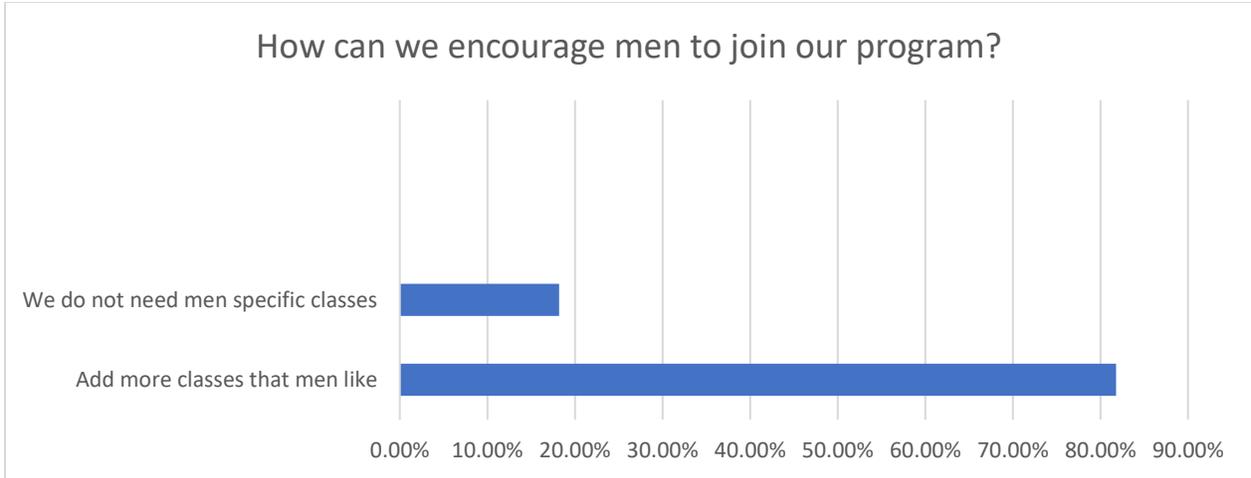
Continue:

- ✚ Seated yoga
- ✚ The time and the days
- ✚ Using the phone only for classes
- ✚ The variety of topics
- ✚ Western Development Museum classes
- ✚ Brain Games

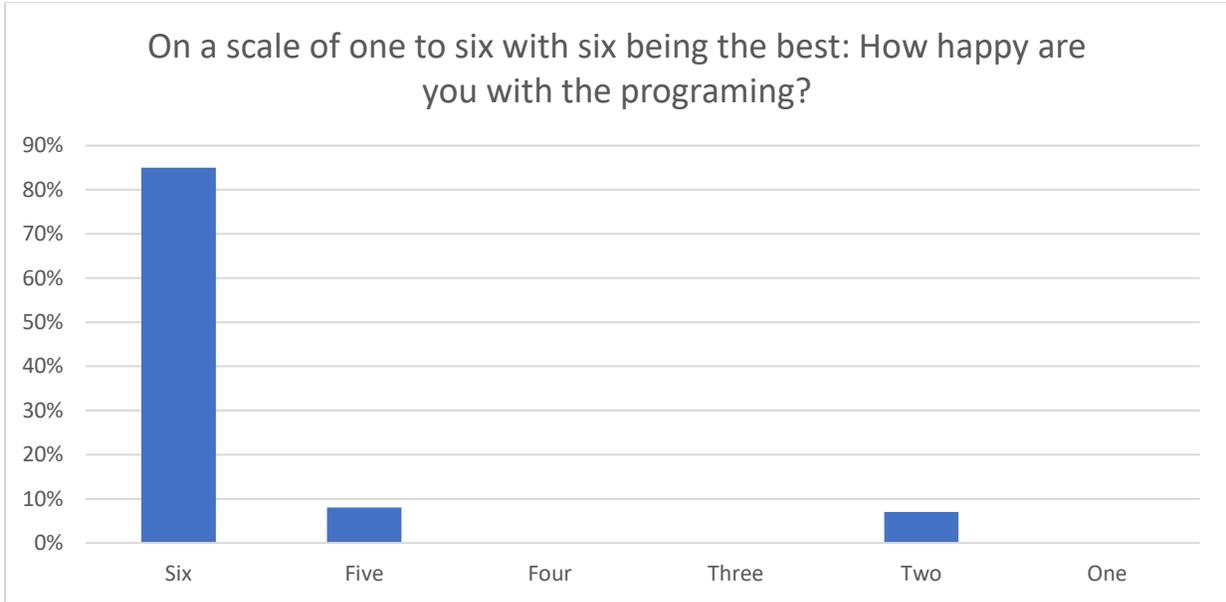
Should We limit the Number of people in a Class – 92% said no

Should we offer the same class more than once - No

Participant comments: Provide same opportunity by a repeat option or a previously recorded option – Have two groups – call people by name to respond – You learn by listening

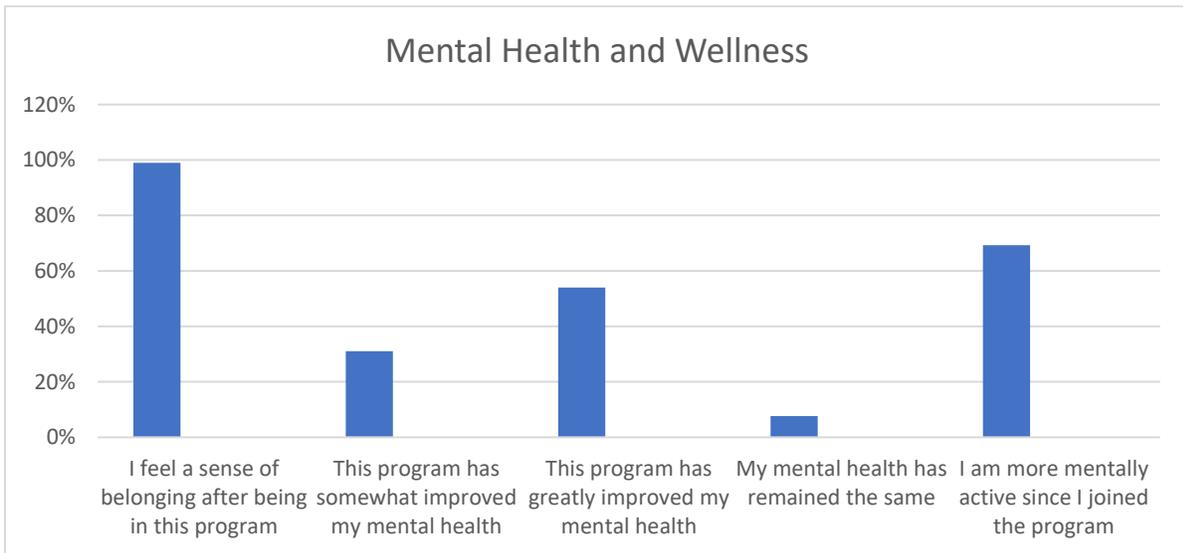


Participant comments: Keep sessions a mixture of regular high interest topics and other one-time topics. Variety is very important. Every three months ask for suggestions but don't promise to use all suggestions. Get our participants to provide information for the grant applications.



Would you stay in the program if it continued: 99% said Yes

Mental Health and Wellness



Participant Comments:

- + I got to know the voices
- + Everyone is respected
- + I was there from the beginning
- + Sharing was always available
- + This is very important for mental health
- + The listeners comments helped me
- + We shared, we laughed and we listened!
- + The group was comfortable and friendly
- + Chatting at the beginning of class is encouraged
- + Very much so, everyone is so friendly, helpful, and kind
- + Leaders made certain that everyone was heard personally
- + I learned just enough about the people to feel connected, in a very disconnected world

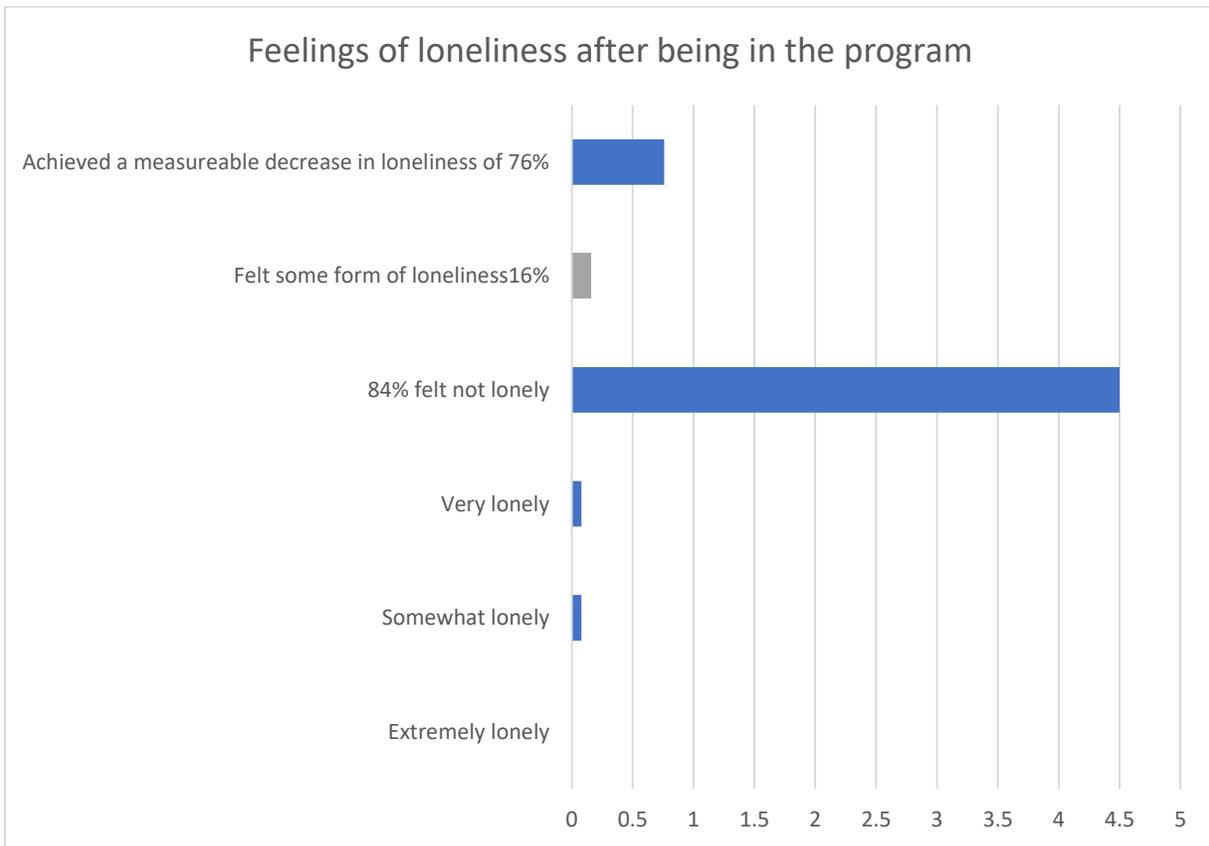
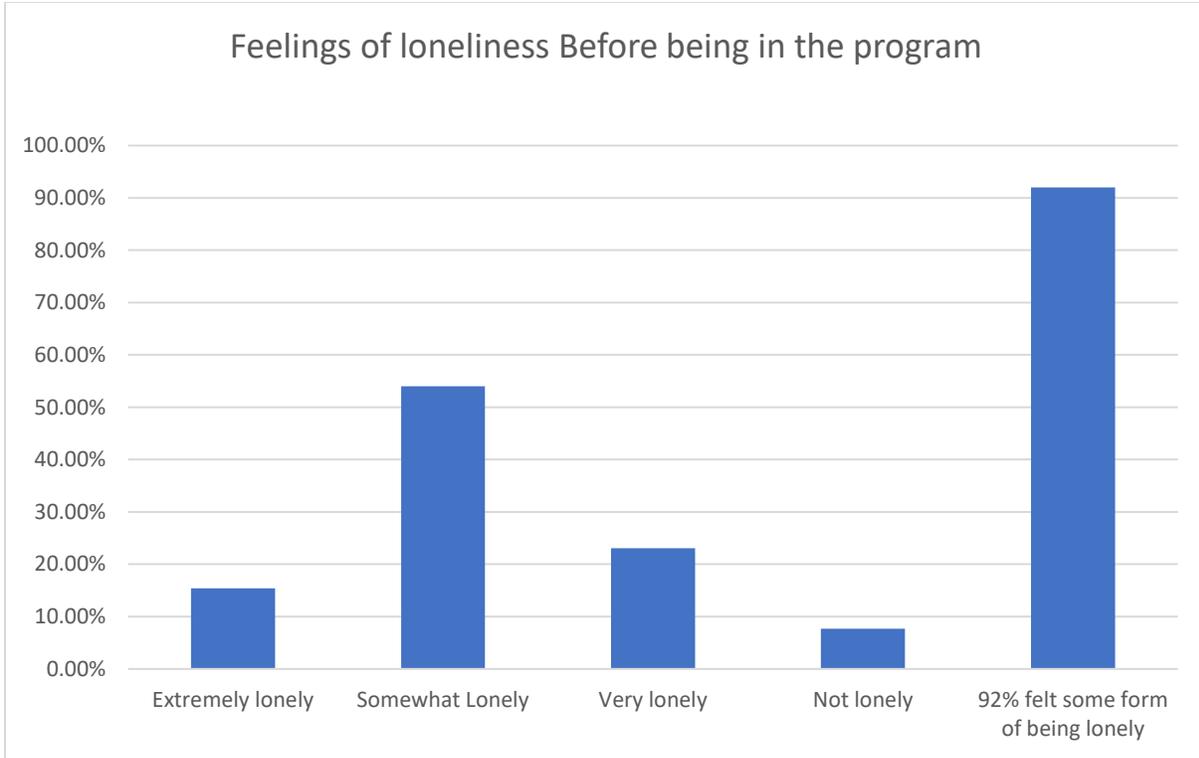
Do You feel the classes are something to look forward to: 99% said yes

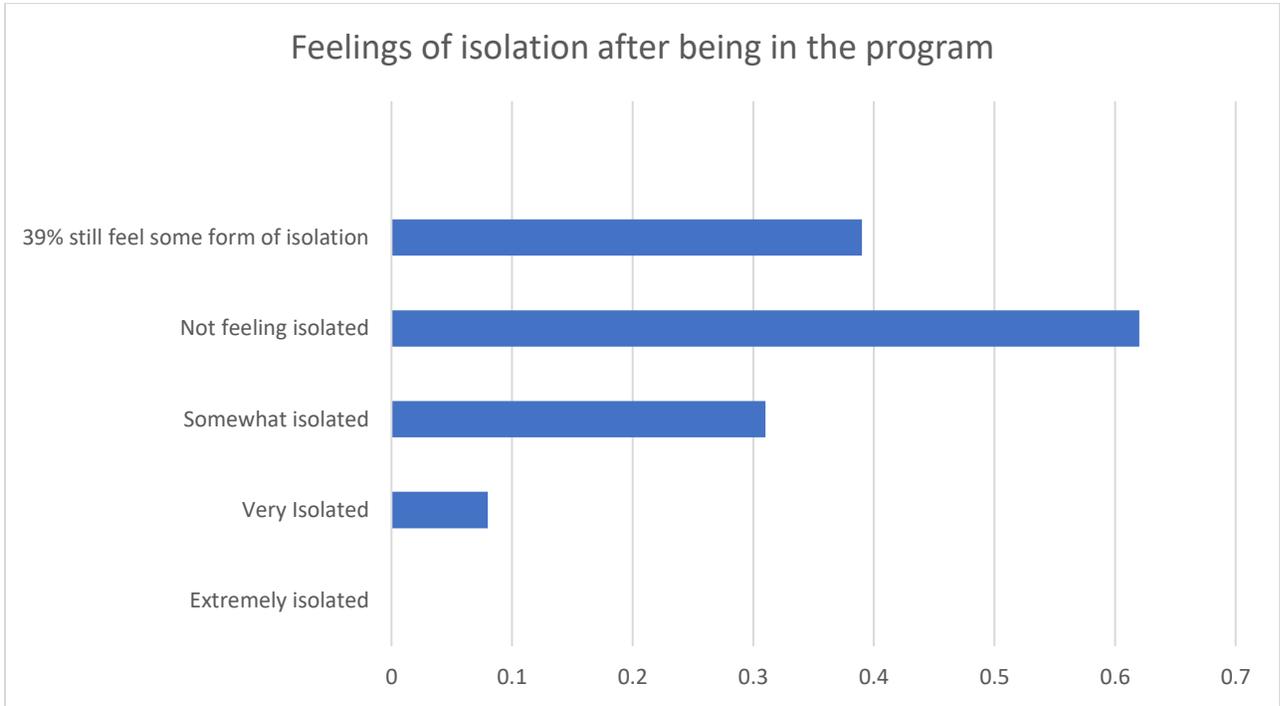
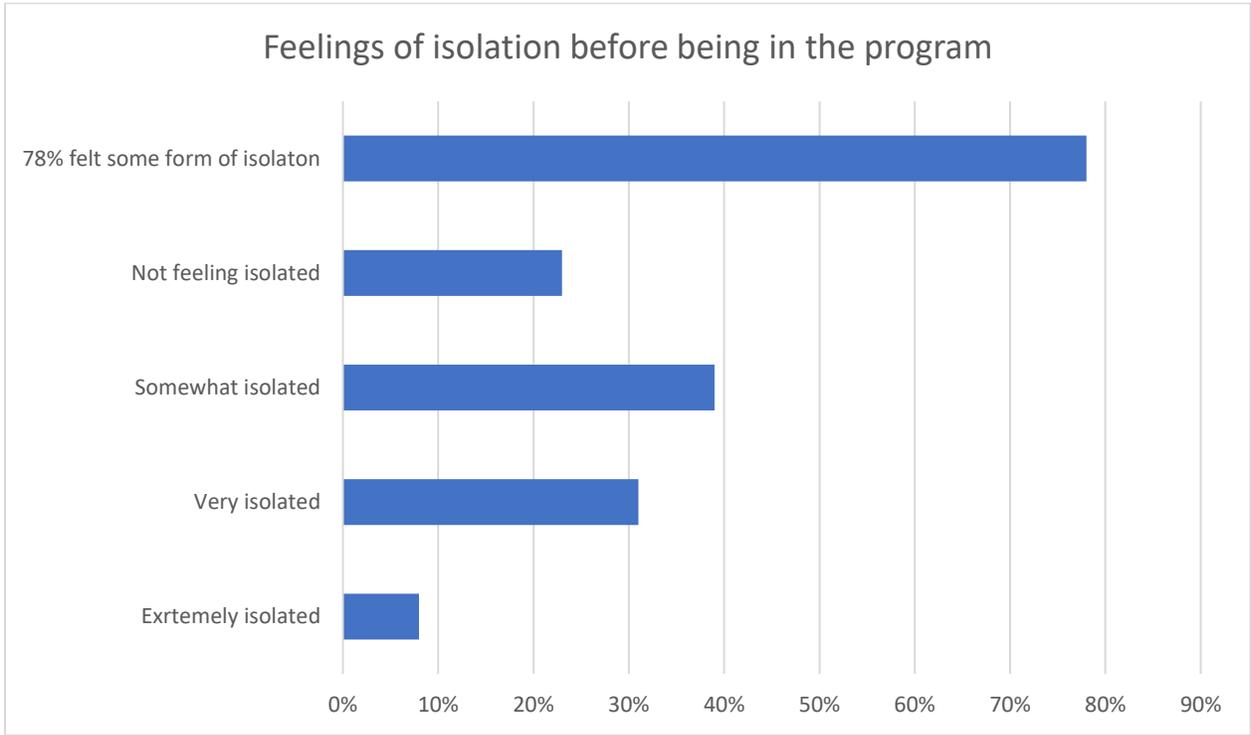
Participant Comments:

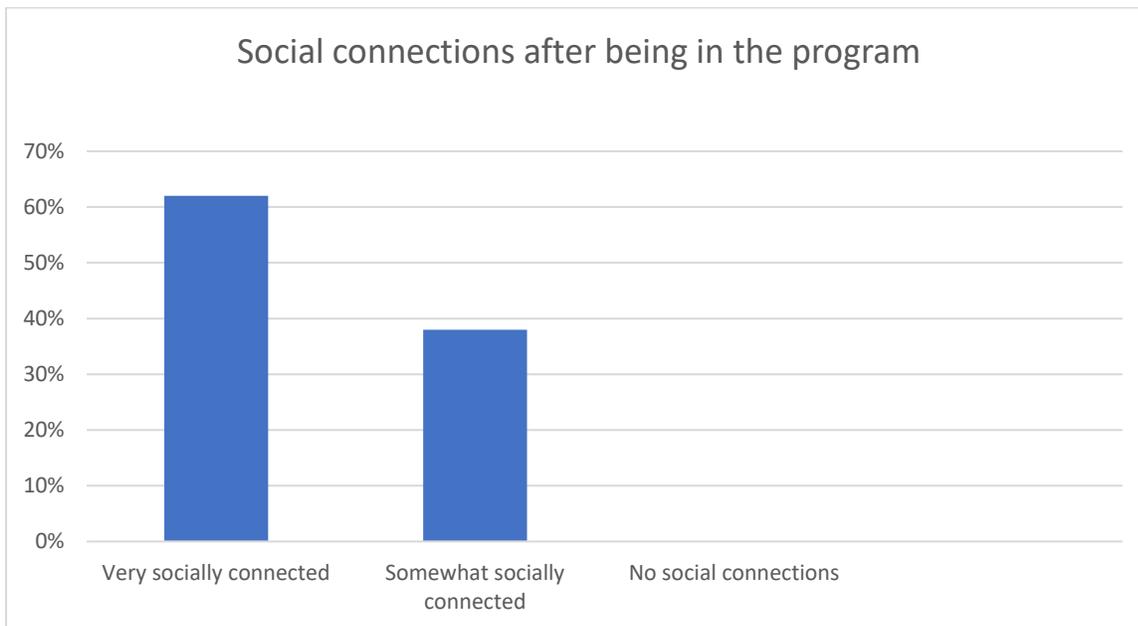
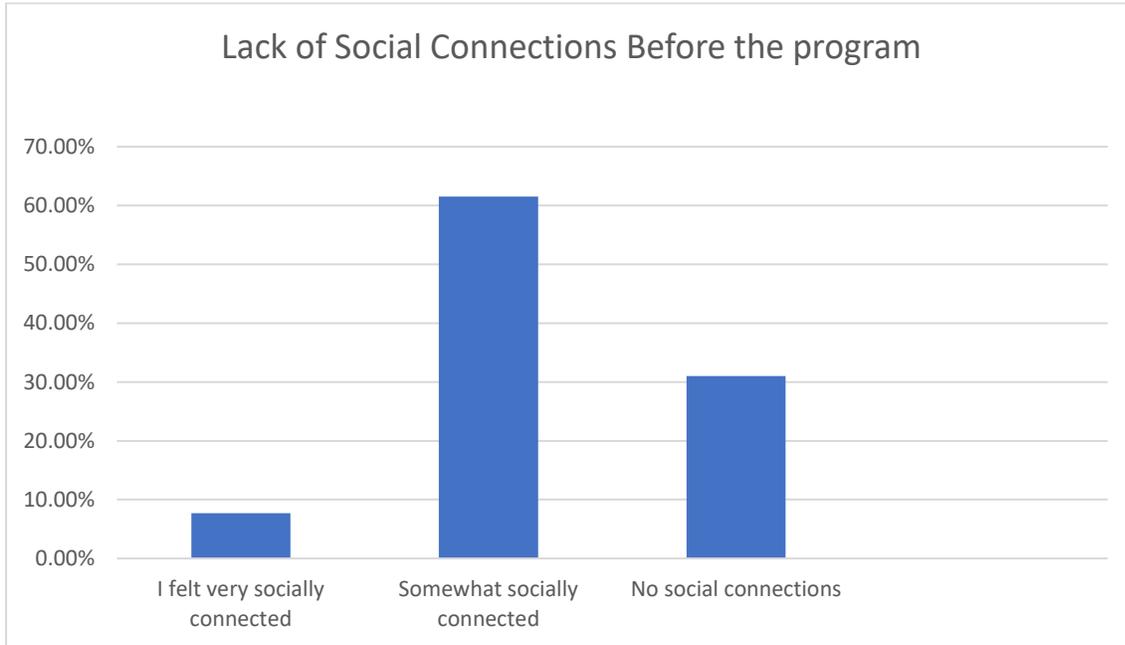
- + Interesting
- + Great Social contact
- + I enjoy being entertained
- + I live alone and look forward to the topics
- + It becomes my clock; I look forward to it.
- + I feel I have new friends or family
- + I enjoy listening, interacting and thinking
- + They were often the only motivation I had to get up and be a functional human.

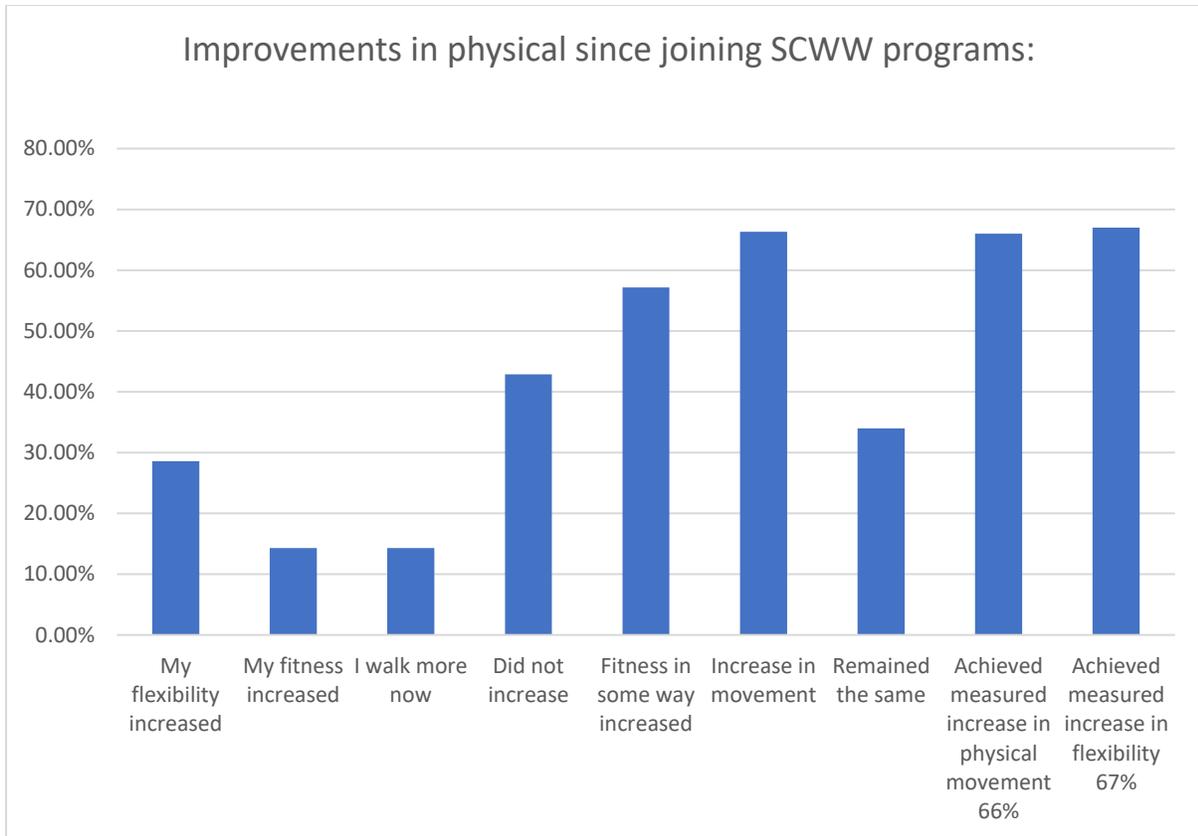
Community Interaction
Self Expression
Listening – Sharing
Phone Friends

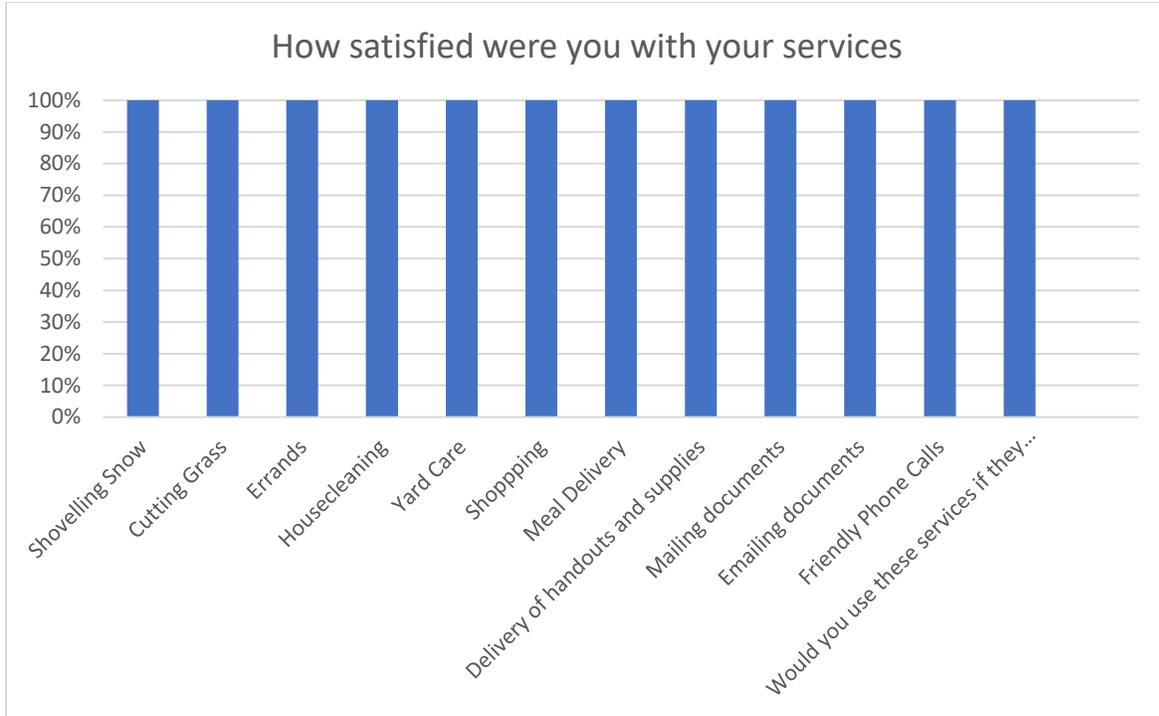
-Words from SCWW participants











APPENDIX A Participant Comments

- ✚ The pandemic crested a sudden shift in the way people interacted with the community and the world. Mandates forced many into isolation. There were restrictions on in person communications. For many seniors it became a time of radical and sudden isolation. We became an invisible minority. All but forgotten. Many did not use technology like computers, or cell phones. The impact of physical and mental health was sudden as the province locked down and seniors were locked away. This was the crisis that SCWW found a way to soften the harm to shut in seniors. Two years later we celebrate with words like 'Life Saving'. For those of us who lived alone with families and friends suddenly not available. The Ringing of the phone: One - truly was Life Saving, Life Enhancing. We were no longer invisible, we were seen, heard, valued and assisted.
- ✚ Thank you SCWW and every person this made that made this program a functioning reality
- ✚ This program was a "life Saver" for me during the cold Winter and Covid.
- ✚ I appreciate all of you so much who put so much time and work into this program. Thanks to all of You!
- ✚ What a great program this is for all of us. It is not easy to get old and often left alone to face this uncertain world, especially in our cold winter months. How wonderful it is to

- ✚ hear familiar voices and be and feel so very comfortable to talk to and laugh with. We are all in the same situation and really appreciated everyone/each others input.
- ✚ I feel love and respect here with all of these people. I am very grateful to be part of this program, Thank you to each of you!
- ✚ As the Friday morning Pianist,
"I would not have missed this "for the world! Lorne
- ✚ Great senior program when are isolated, disabled, in winter Sask and live alone. Free...especially low income! Wonderful group of people & facilitators. Very positive. Real up lift to my day. Something to look forward to. Many thanks!!
- ✚ I was always active – I do classes on Zoom – The program made me realize that I needed to add more physical activity – circumstances and depression kept me from doing it – More aware of fitness as separate from my daily tasks – Neck exercise really helped me – I have improved my ability to play the piano.



APPENDIX B Future Growth Pros and Cons

- ✚ When looking for funding grant committees like to get the “most bang for their buck” and more members in the SCWW, would align with that. The telephone program is interactive allowing everyone to have a turn to speak. Some classes are more ‘listening” such as the music therapy and participants in the class can be unlimited. Other educational classes rely on sharing between the members and if we have 20 people in a class (which is our average class size) and the quest speaker talks for 20 minutes that only leaves about two minutes for each person to participate in the conversation. This has been working well to date.
- ✚ The question comes up should we limit class size and increase recruitment of more membership? Of course, the SCWW wants to be a support for as many vulnerable older adults across Saskatchewan and have no limitation on that. One answer to that would be more obtain more funding to: hire more facilitators, an assistant for the program manager, program outreach coordinator. This would allow us to have several classes every day of the week, similar to the SCWW programs in the United States; some of which have 5 classes per day and seven days per week. If we had more staff and more funding, then the offerings of class topics could be increased and members would pick and choose topics of interest to attend. This would keep the number of people down per class as you would only attend classes of interest to you, but still allow an increase in membership. As almost all of our members now join every class, future growth in this way may interrupt the close “family” connections that our members have, when all joining the same classes.

The majority of our members are female. Over 80% of our participants suggested we offer more “men” orientated classes and gave some good suggestions for topics which we will follow up on.

Suggestion: Do not increase the number of classes per day. Increase and recruit 20 new members in 2022. Have focus groups with other SCWW in other provinces to see how they have increase membership and class size.

Suggestion: Do a pilot program in 2023. Try to obtain enough funding to hire the staff needed to increase the number of classes to four per day and five days a week. Recruit more members to our program and evaluate the program in December 2023. Encourage members to only attend classes that interest them.

- ✚ We did limited at home services as we did not have the funding. We look forward to expanding these services in the future as our participants all responded that they would use these services.

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Canada 



**Community
Initiatives Fund**

Appendix C Some of the topics and information provided to vulnerable low-income seniors in their own homes:

Brain Engaging Activities. A series of sessions on a weekly and biweekly basis at times

Long term care insurance

Asbestos removal

Tax services

Computer care

Computer scams

What is Hanukkah

Share some moments of your life

Financial advice

H.O.P.E. Learning Canadian Mental Health

Healthy homes for seniors

Ageless grace

History series from Western Development Museum. Includes aviation, homes, trains, boats, Traditions, agriculture, the dirty thirties, etc.

Music Therapy series. Once a week

Brain games on a biweekly basis

Creative writing. Life stories

Postage experiences

Grief therapy. A series on monthly basis at times

Brain food

Canadian guide dogs for the blind

Germs and safety during Covid 19

Saskatchewan history.

Dorothy Holtby Bar Colony – Anne Patton

Mental health and peer support

Butterflies and plants in Saskatchewan

Education and public programming

Transcending Trauma

Mental health and self harming

Information on Saskatchewan law

All about bats

Chemical engineering and your environment

Living with dignity and respect

How to cope with stress

Seniors benefits

Slam the scam

Regina's anti poverty ministry

Antiques

Provincial programming for seniors

Seated stretching.. A weekly series at times

Saskatchewan author Dianne Young. A series of two sessions

Sewing. A series of sessions on a monthly basis at times

Social visits. A series of sessions on monthly basis at times

Kitchen art

Estates, wills and seniors

Laughter therapy

Writer in residence A series on a monthly basis at times

Oven art
Cabinet of curiosity A series on a monthly basis
Fire safety
Seasonal farm activities a series of sessions at times
Across the miles a series of sessions
Candle art
Saskatchewan library information
Heritage buildings
Creative art
Valentine's Day special
Word of the week
Outdoor gardening
Cell phone tips
Celebrate your angels. An approach to grief
Black history in Saskatchewan
Let's talk birds A monthly series at times
Banking
Credit cards
Open mic
Citizen scientists. Bird count
Perception of art
Computer basics
Debit cards
Sky painting
UFO
Gambling 101 for seniors
Aboriginal teachings. a series on a weekly basis at times
Identity theft
Fraud
Bird mosaic art
Addictions
Coffee chat
Cooking and baking
Bingo
Earth exploration art
Nutrition
Métis history in Saskatchewan
Museum artifacts
Art with nature
Critical thinking
Prairie trivia
Question and answer session
Night jars in Saskatchewan
Cannabis and seniors
Clay art
Senior gardening
Printmaking
Dutch history in Saskatchewan
Saskatchewan petroglyphs
Monarch butterfly release program
Camping in Saskatchewan

EMS

Taste of art

Zoom access information

Series on Grief with Grief Counsellor

Saskatchewan author. Anne Patton

Chalk art

Watercolour art

Loss and life

Saskatchewan pension program

Remembrance Day session

Computer trouble shooting

Christmas card creations

Wartime memories

Pioneer skills butter making

Anti poverty session

Estranged Family members

Pioneer barns in Saskatchewan

Good times stories

Holiday traditions

Embracing the 80s

Embracing your to do list

Critical thinking.

You be the Judge

Christmas concerts of long ago

Holiday memories

Fact or fiction

Living with intention

Embracing the new year

Agricultural awareness sessions. A series of monthly sessions

Mother's Day memories

Rubbings and art

Farm and ranch art series. A monthly series

Overcoming depression

When it's next year country

Fireworks collage

Stained glass art

Understanding anxiety

Post Covid concerns

APPENDIX D

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