

ISOLATION & LONELINESS IN METRO VANCOUVER

Vancouver Foundation's 2017 Connect & Engage report showed that most Metro Vancouver residents enjoy strong social connections.

8 out of 10 residents knows at least one neighbour well enough to ask for help, and 9 out of 10 has someone they can depend on.

But some of us have been left behind.



1 in 7
METRO
RESIDENTS
IS LONELY

These are people who say they are often or always lonely.

1 in 4
METRO
RESIDENTS
IS ISOLATED

These are people who say they spend more time alone than they'd like.

What happens when people are lonely or isolated?

When people are lonely or isolated, they're less likely to connect with friends and neighbours and less likely to trust their community. But loneliness has a bigger impact: it's residents who feel lonely, not those who spend too much time alone, who are at greatest risk of feeling disconnected.

HOW LONELINESS AND ISOLATION AFFECT ENGAGEMENT



55% ISOLATED RESIDENTS

44% LONELY RESIDENTS

vs. 65% of all respondents

“I know the names of at least four neighbours”

“I trust that neighbours would return a lost wallet with money inside”

55% ISOLATED RESIDENTS

46% LONELY RESIDENTS

vs. 66% of all respondents

SOCIAL CHALLENGES FOR ISOLATED AND LONELY PEOPLE



“I find it difficult to make friends”

75% ISOLATED RESIDENTS

76% LONELY RESIDENTS

vs. 53% of all respondents

13% ISOLATED RESIDENTS

16% LONELY RESIDENTS

vs. 9% of all respondents

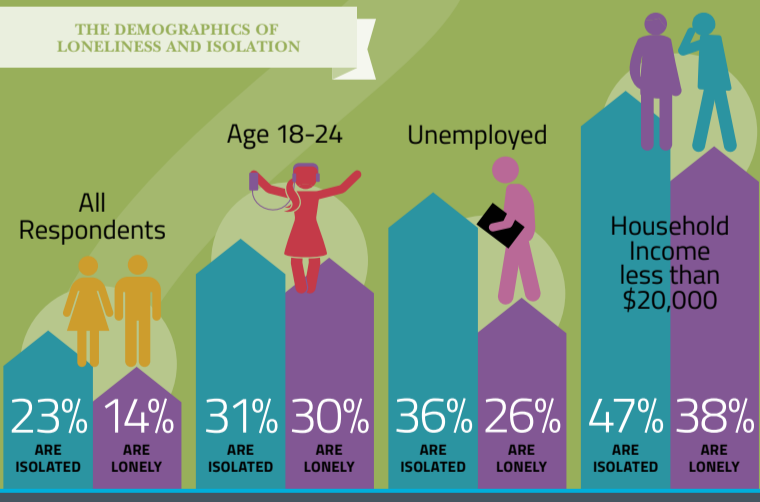
“I avoid interacting with strangers in public”

What puts people at risk for loneliness and isolation?

Loneliness and isolation are different problems, but they reinforce each other: Lonely people are three times more likely to say they spend too much time alone. Isolated people are three times as likely to feel lonely.

Being young or unemployed doubles the risk of loneliness; a low household income doubles the risk of isolation and nearly triples the risk of loneliness.

THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF LONELINESS AND ISOLATION



What reduces isolation and loneliness? Community connection.

We can reduce isolation and loneliness if we...

- **Focus on friendliness:** Both isolated and lonely people say it would be easier to make friends if people were friendlier or more approachable.
- **Talk to neighbours:** While 43% of Metro residents talk to neighbours at least once a week, less than one in three lonely or isolated people gets that much contact.
- **Support mental health:** 1 in 6 isolated people says that mental health affects their ability to make friends – which rises to 1 in 4 among lonely people.

As we continue to learn about the relationship between isolation, loneliness, and community health, we can better understand how to include all Metro Vancouver residents in the life of our community.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is based on data from Vancouver Foundation's 2017 Connect & Engage report. All data comes from a survey that was administered by Mustel Group and completed online in either English or Chinese by 3,785 Metro Vancouver residents between June 15th and July 7th, 2017. Of these, 545 said they were either often or always lonely, and 862 said they spend time alone more often than they would like; all data points for "lonely" or "isolated" residents are based on these respondents. The final sample was weighted to match Statistics Canada census data on the basis of gender, age, and region of residence.

For more see vancouverfoundation.ca/connectandengage



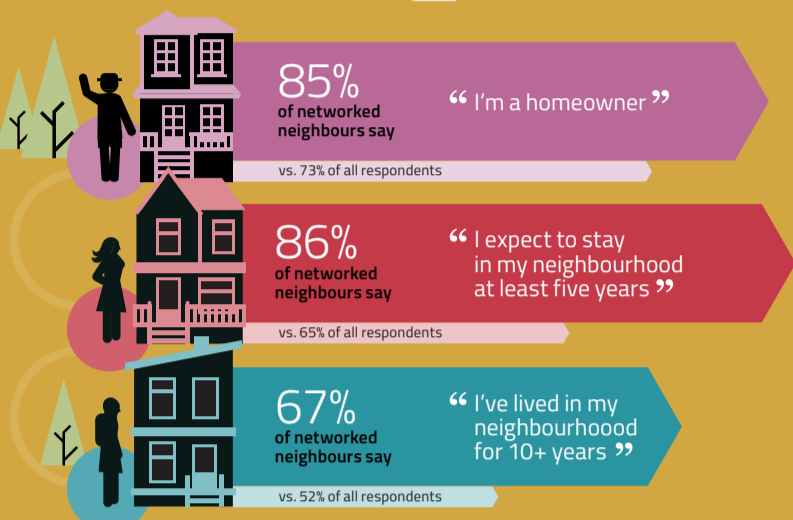
METRO VANCOUVER IS A COMMUNITY OF NETWORKED NEIGHBOURS

Vancouver Foundation's 2017 Connect & Engage report explored community engagement across Metro Vancouver. But how connected residents feel to their neighbourhoods and the larger community has a major impact on their sense of belonging and well-being. That's why we've taken a closer look at "networked neighbours": people with an exceptionally strong sense of connection to their neighbourhood.

Meet your networked neighbours

One in six Metro Vancouver residents is a networked neighbour: They report feeling welcome in their neighbourhood, along with a strong sense of belonging and high levels of trust in their neighbours. Compared with Metro residents overall, they're less likely to feel lonely and more likely to have a strong sense of personal wellbeing. And they've put down roots: Networked neighbours have been in their neighbourhoods longer and are more committed to staying put.

NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMITMENT AMONG NETWORKED NEIGHBOURS



NETWORKED NEIGHBOURS ARE OLDER

The older you get, the more likely you are to be deeply embedded in your neighbourhood: few networked neighbours are under 36 and the majority are over 55.



What makes a networked neighbour

Networked neighbours are made, not born: Their habits bring them into greater contact with their neighbours, building the connections that foster a sense of trust and belonging.

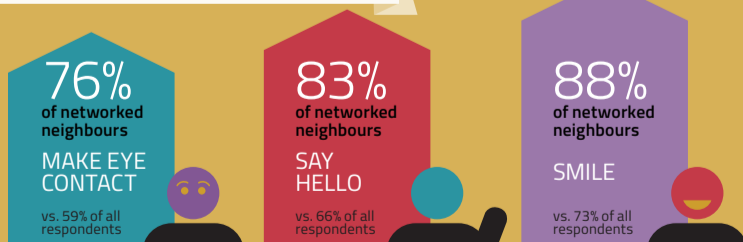
HOW NETWORKED NEIGHBOURS ENGAGE WITH THEIR COMMUNITY



Start with a smile

Neighbourhoods and communities grow stronger when they're nurtured by its members. We can all learn from the habits of networked neighbours, beginning with the most basic: interacting more with each other.

HOW NETWORKED NEIGHBOURS INTERACT WITH STRANGERS IN PUBLIC



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This report is based on data from Vancouver Foundation's 2017 Connect & Engage report. All data comes from a survey that was administered by Mustel Group and completed online in either English or Chinese by 3,785 Metro Vancouver residents between June 15th and July 7th, 2017. Of these, 620 scored neighbourhood trust high, reported feeling welcome in their neighbourhood, and reported feeling a strong sense of belonging in their neighbourhood: these are the people we term "networked neighbours". The final sample was weighted to match Statistics Canada census data on the basis of gender, age, and region of residence.

For more see vancouverfoundation.ca/connectandengage

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THE HABITS OF HIGHLY ENGAGED PEOPLE

Vancouver Foundation's 2017 Connect & Engage report showed that Metro Vancouver is a community of friendly people and vibrant neighbourhoods:

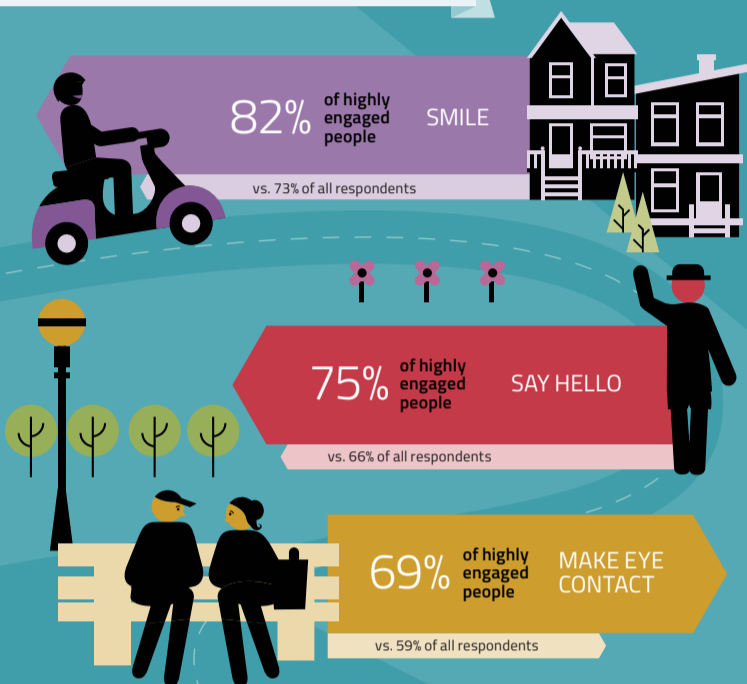


That sense of belonging is thanks in large part to the efforts of a specific group of people: those who join community organizations, show up at meetings and events, and help out their neighbours. A closer look at these highly engaged residents may help understand how to inspire more community engagement.

What it means to be highly engaged

Engagement starts with the smallest kindness: Highly engaged residents are more likely to interact with people they encounter in public, in a range of different ways.

HOW HIGHLY ENGAGED RESIDENTS INTERACT WITH STRANGERS IN PUBLIC



Connection and engagement go hand-in-hand

If it sounds like highly engaged residents are friendly people, you're right!

THE SOCIAL HABITS OF HIGHLY ENGAGED RESIDENTS



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS AMONG HIGHLY ENGAGED RESIDENTS



Community volunteering gives back

Our whole community benefits when people get involved. We see those benefits in the experience of people who actively volunteer and contribute: 74% of Metro's highly engaged residents have a strong sense of belonging, compared to 63% in the overall population. But otherwise they mostly look like the community as a whole.

That means that anyone can be a highly engaged resident. The more we contribute to our community, the more we'll all enjoy feeling connected and engaged.

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This report is based on data from Vancouver Foundation's 2017 Connect & Engage report. All data comes from a survey that was administered by Mustel Group and completed online in either English or Chinese by 3,785 Metro Vancouver residents between June 15th and July 7th 2017. Of these, 1,356 said they had volunteered in the past year, been involved with at least one group, and participated in at least one community engagement activity: these are the people we refer to as highly engaged residents. The final sample was weighted to match Statistics Canada census data on the basis of gender, age, and region of residence.

For more see vancouverfoundation.ca/connectandengage

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ENGAGING VANCOUVER YOUTH

Vancouver Foundation's 2017 Connect & Engage report explored patterns of community engagement in Metro Vancouver. When it comes to making friends, feeling welcome in the neighbourhood or feeling lonely, younger people are less connected than their elders. The older you get, the stronger your sense of social ties.

We took a close look at Vancouver's youngest adults – aged 18-24 – to understand why they tend to be less engaged.

Young and disconnected

Young people may seem highly social, but the data tells a different story. Young people in Metro Vancouver are more likely than older residents to say that they're often or always lonely, that they find it difficult to make friends, or that they avoid interacting with strangers in public.

SOCIAL DISCONNECTION AMONG YOUTH



30%
of youth say

“I am often or always lonely”

vs. 15% of all respondents

30%
of youth say

“I avoid interacting with strangers in public”

vs. 9% of all respondents

60%
of youth say

“I find it difficult to make friends”

vs. 53% of all respondents



What makes youth less connected?

That lack of connection is partly because young people are less engaged with their neighbours and community. They're much less likely to talk regularly with their neighbours, to feel welcome in their neighbourhood, or to see their current neighbourhood as a long-term commitment. Their tech usage also means they have less face-to-face interaction overall.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AMONG YOUTH



46%
of youth say

“I feel welcome in my neighbourhood”

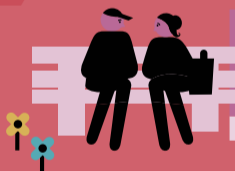
vs. 66% of all respondents



31%
of youth say

“I expect to stay in my neighbourhood for at least five years”

vs. 65% of all respondents



27%
of youth say

“Face-to-face is the most common way I interact with people”

vs. 47% of all respondents

23%
of youth say

“I talk to my neighbours at least once a week”

vs. 43% of all respondents



The path to youth engagement

If having fewer social interactions makes young people feel less connected to their community, there's a clear path forward: boost opportunities for young people to interact face-to-face with other people and to volunteer in their communities. The good news is that, like Metro Vancouver residents overall, 46% of youth already volunteer in some form. Our challenge is to address the obstacles they face to volunteering more.

OBSTACLES TO YOUTH PARTICIPATION

31%
of youth say

“Personal finances prevent me from volunteering”

vs. 22% of all respondents

33%
of youth say

“I feel like volunteering has nothing to offer”

vs. 19% of all respondents

44%
of youth say

“I'm aware of volunteer opportunities”

vs. 32% of all respondents

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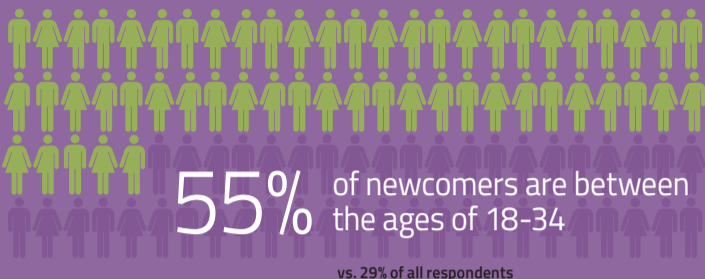
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ENGAGING METRO VANCOUVER'S NEWCOMERS

Vancouver Foundation's 2017 Connect & Engage report shows that Metro Vancouver is full of friendly people and vibrant neighbourhoods. But not everybody shares that sense of belonging. Among the people who sometimes get left out are newcomers: immigrants who have been here for less than ten years.

Meet Vancouver's newcomers

While almost a third of Metro Vancouver residents were born in another country, the vast majority of Vancouver's immigrant community have been here ten years or longer. Those who have been here for less than ten years – about 6% of the population we surveyed – face particular challenges with connecting and engaging in the community. In part, that's because they're younger and young people experience higher rates of isolation and disconnection.



New and on their own

The vast majority of immigrants have a strong sense of belonging in Canada. But Metro Vancouver's newcomers don't experience the same sense of welcome or belonging in their immediate community as their fellow immigrants or the local population at large.

FEELINGS OF BELONGING AND WELCOME AMONG NEWCOMERS



Next door but not connected

Metro Vancouver newcomers volunteer as much as other residents, but they don't enjoy the same kinds of connections with their immediate community. They're less likely to know their neighbours' names or to talk with them regularly.

NEIGHBOURHOOD ENGAGEMENT AMONG NEWCOMERS



Welcoming our newest community members

Newcomers may not be as connected to the community, but they want to be! 8 out of 10 newcomers say they want to know their neighbours better, which is even higher than the 7 out of 10 rating for Metro residents overall. A stronger sense of belonging comes with being more embedded in the community, whether that means full-time work, home ownership, or just strong neighbourly connections.

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This report is based on data from Vancouver Foundation's 2017 Connect & Engage report. All data comes from a survey that was administered by Mustel Group and completed online in either English or Chinese by 3,785 Metro Vancouver residents between June 15th and July 7th, 2017. Of these, 228 have lived in the country for less than 10 years: they are the newcomer study population. The final sample was weighted to match Statistics Canada census data on the basis of gender, age, and region of residence.

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HIGH-RISE CONNECTION

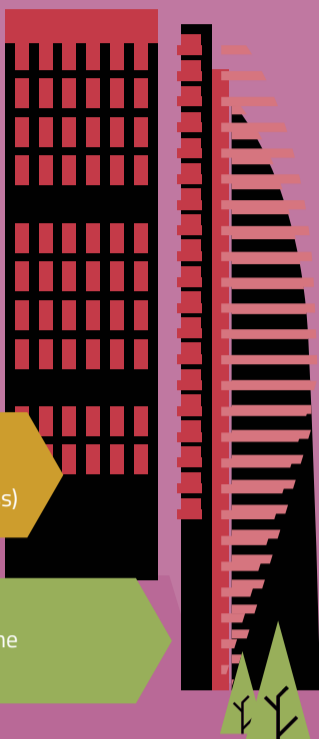
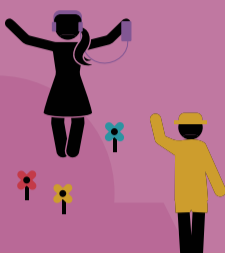
Nearly one in five Metro Vancouver homes is a high-rise dwelling — an apartment in a building more than five storeys tall. And more and more of us are living in homes like these: From 2011 to 2016, the number of high-rise apartments in Vancouver grew by 24%. Vancouver now has the third-highest proportion of high-rise dwellings in Canada, right behind Toronto and London.

That's great news for the city's housing supply, but is it good news for Metro Vancouver residents? Our 2017 Connect & Engage report took a close look at what high-rise living means for community connection and trust.

Who's living in a high-rise?

High-rise dwellers are a little younger than the overall Metro population and they're less settled. Close to half of those living in high-rise dwellings are renters. These folks are more likely to be new to their neighbourhood and living alone.

HIGH-RISE DEMOGRAPHICS



30% of high-rise dwellers are

New to the neighbourhood (two years or less)

vs. 19% of all respondents

38% of high-rise dwellers are

Living alone

vs. 23% of all respondents

39% of high-rise dwellers are

Under 35

vs. 29% of all respondents

43% of high-rise dwellers are

Renters

vs. 27% of all respondents

How connected are high-rise residents?

Age and mobility combine to make Metro Vancouver's high-rise residents somewhat less connected and trusting of their neighbours. Compared with the overall population, high-rise dwellers are more likely to get out and about in their neighbourhood on a daily basis and yet seem to trust and know their neighbours considerably less.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AMONG HIGH-RISE DWELLERS



42% of high-rise dwellers say "I walk every day in the neighbourhood"

vs. 29% of all respondents



43% of high-rise dwellers say

"I know the names of at least four neighbours"

vs. 57% of all respondents

55% of high-rise dwellers say

"I trust that neighbours would return a lost wallet"

vs. 66% of all respondents

Connecting high-rise residents

As North American cities grow – in height as well as population – we're learning more about what strengthens community for high-rise residents. We can improve the lives of high-rise residents with design choices like...

- Lobby layouts that make it easy to sit and visit with neighbours
- Comfortable furnishings that invite residents to spend time in common spaces
- Lighting that keeps neighbours comfortable in halls and open areas
- Shared outdoor space – especially kid-friendly spaces that let parents meet and connect
- Acoustic design that separates common spaces from residences

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