

**Seniors Centre Without Walls  
Saskatchewan Inc.  
Phone Program**



Non-Profit Entity Number 102087113

**2024 Final Report**

## Acknowledgements

This 2024 report was prepared by Jack Hadley.

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  - **Collection of surveys**
  - **Assistance with report**
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**“I look forward to the phone calls, helps me be a part of something and not feel lonely”  
-SCWW Participant**



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## **Executive Summary**

The Seniors Centre Without Walls (SCWW) phone program has successfully hosted and facilitated over 1,000 classes, with an average of 25 participants per session. These classes, along with guest speaker events, are thoughtfully selected and scheduled by the organization, operating within a limited budget. The topics, speakers, and discussions are carefully curated to serve as interventions aimed at reducing isolation, promoting physical activity, encouraging social interaction, and enhancing cognitive function.

Each one-hour class provides ample opportunity for socialization, where participants engage in conversations, laughter, and the enjoyment of social connections that might otherwise be inaccessible. This fosters a positive impact on mood and well-being. The increased social interaction during these sessions allows seniors to meet like-minded individuals, forming regular connections that can help alleviate loneliness and isolation while supporting emotional health. Additionally, gathering with peers over the "party line" may contribute to a reduction in feelings of anxiety, depression, and stress.

## **Background**

In 2019, the non-profit Age Friendly Outreach & Resource Network Inc. was founded by Ronda Wedhorn, with the Seniors Centre Without Walls Saskatchewan Inc. program being an initiative she launched under its umbrella. In 2020, SCWW received a four-month grant from the Canadian Red Cross, enabling the organization to hire a program manager/coordinator and establish a senior's telephone program initiative. This program operates across Saskatchewan and collaborates with numerous community partners, engaging participants from 22 communities.

## **What We Do**

The SCWW program is designed to measurably reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation, while increasing socialization, a sense of belonging, and physical activity for individuals aged 55 and older in Saskatchewan. With a specific focus on rural and remote communities, the program primarily serves participants over the age of 70. To facilitate engagement, we utilize a free conference call platform. In 2021, we expanded our services to include in-home support, and by 2024, we have 140 clients actively registered for this service.

## **Method**

SCWW participants were surveyed for the period from September 2023 to May 2024 as part of a program evaluation conducted in April 2024. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess whether the program had achieved its objectives and to gather insights for future program improvement and sustainability. The program manager developed an evaluation survey, which was distributed to participants. A total of 32 completed surveys were returned and manually recorded. In June, SCWW analyzed the survey results, with key findings presented in the highlights and graph sections of this report.

## Highlights of Results

### Participation

- A total of 100% of seniors who are registered with the program have participated in at least one class
- 51% of seniors who are registered with the program participate frequently

### Calls

- 56.3% of participants are satisfied with 10:00 AM classes
- 21.9% of participants would prefer 1:00 PM classes
- 21.9% of participants are satisfied with either time for classes

### Demographics

- 91.8% of participants are female
- 8.2% of participants are male
- 34.4% of respondents experience a disability that limits their social life
- 43.8% of respondents consider themselves low income

### Phone DialPad Program

- 100% of participants are satisfied with phone only access to the program

### Class Content

- 96.9% of respondents will stay in the program if it continues
- 100% of respondents feel that the classes are something to look forward to

## Mental Health and Wellness

### Loneliness and Isolation - Before and After Programming

- 71.9% of respondents reported feeling some sense of loneliness and isolation
- 68.8% of respondents reported feeling less lonely and isolated since joining the program

### Social Connections

- 

### Mental Health

- 81.3% of respondents reported their mental health improving after joining the program

**“The variety in the programming and that I have a human connection on a regular schedule... Anonymous and inclusive. No judgement and lots of kindness.”**  
**- SCWW Participant**

### Why We Started

Research indicates that older adults are disproportionately at risk of social isolation and loneliness, both of which have significant adverse effects on their health and well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these risks, with older adults being strongly encouraged to isolate, further deepening their sense of isolation. In particular, rural older adults may experience even higher rates of isolation due to geographical dispersion and limited access to services. Similarly, individuals with disabilities face significant barriers in accessing social programs and activities.

The Seniors Centre Without Walls (SCWW) program aims to mitigate these challenges by increasing social connection, promoting physical activity, and combating isolation for older adults and adults living with disabilities throughout Saskatchewan. SCWW offers telephone-based community programming and in-home support services to vulnerable and isolated seniors. Many seniors struggle to leave their homes due to financial limitations, transportation challenges, rural or remote living conditions, or health and mobility issues. Our telephone programs are entirely delivered via conference calls, at no cost to participants, with training provided on how to use tablets, computers, and cell phones.

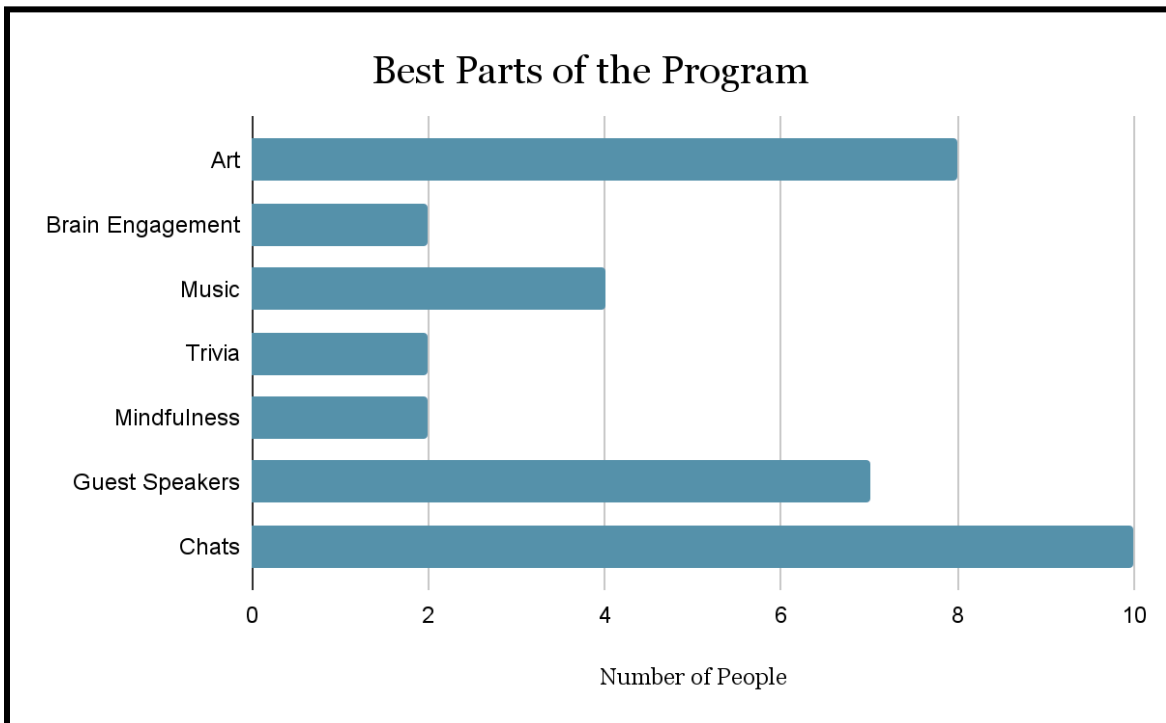
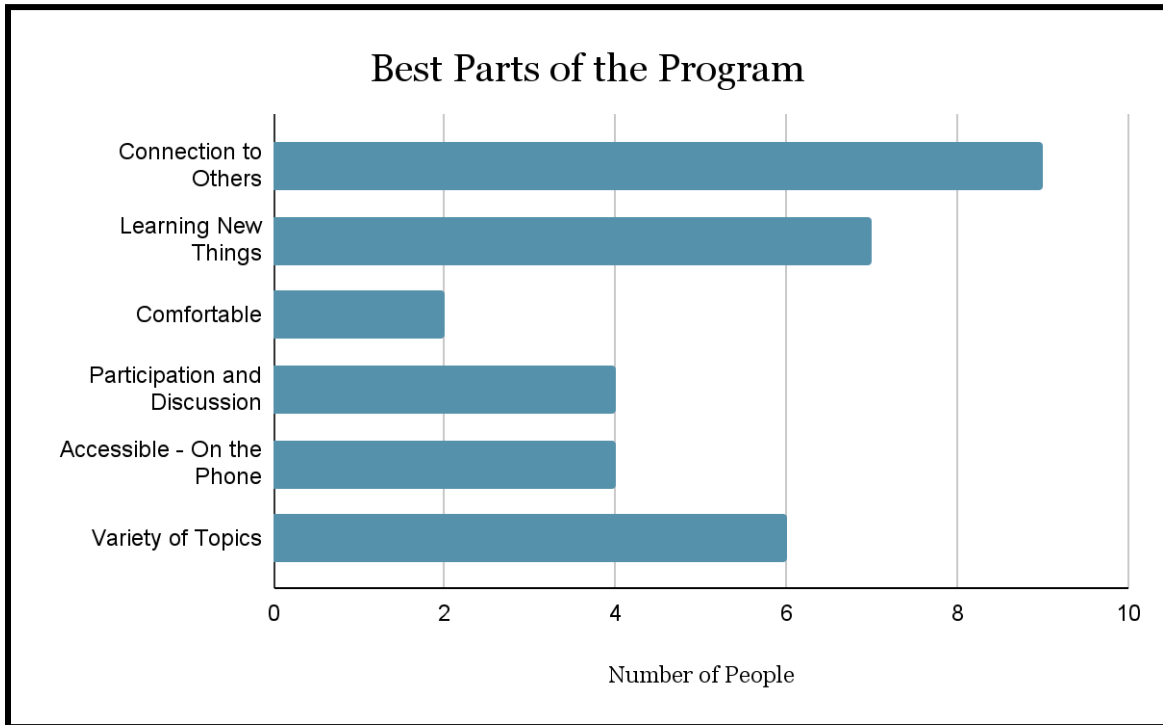
Our workshops cover a range of topics, including health and wellness, professional discussions, lifelong learning opportunities, brain teasers, and games. Participants are introduced to various social and educational topics while also having the opportunity to forge new friendships. The program follows a strengths-based approach, focusing on the capabilities of participants rather than their vulnerabilities. For example, when registering, participants are invited to host a session on a topic of personal expertise or interest. This approach encourages older adults to take on volunteer roles, providing them with a sense of purpose while recognizing and valuing their knowledge and experience.

This program ensures that seniors and individuals with disabilities who are unable to attend community events remain socially connected. It fosters healthy aging in place by providing isolated individuals with meaningful connections to others.

A study by Buck-McFadyen et al. (2019) highlighted that seniors in rural communities face additional challenges related to isolation and limited services. These include inadequate access to healthcare, a lack of community events, limited transportation and shopping options, and higher poverty rates, all of which contribute to social isolation. Between 1980 and 2014, mortality rates for individuals suffering from loneliness increased by 29%, while those suffering from social isolation saw a 25% increase. Other research has linked social isolation and loneliness to cognitive decline, high blood pressure, and an increased risk of stroke or coronary heart disease. In Saskatchewan, data from 2011 indicated that 41.8% of senior women were living alone, with this proportion rising to 56% for older seniors (Elliott, 2016).

As individuals age, they may experience the loss of a spouse, friends, and mobility, all of which can contribute to declining health and further exacerbate feelings of loneliness and isolation. These challenges can also diminish their ability to form new friendships and engage in activities that promote both mental and physical well-being.

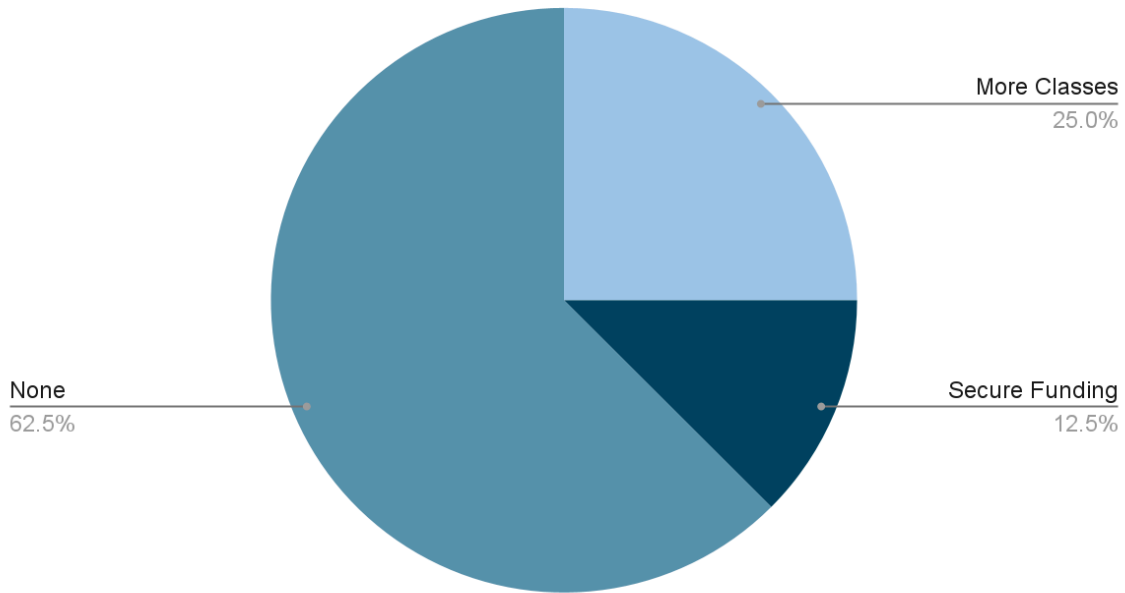
# Results of Survey 2024



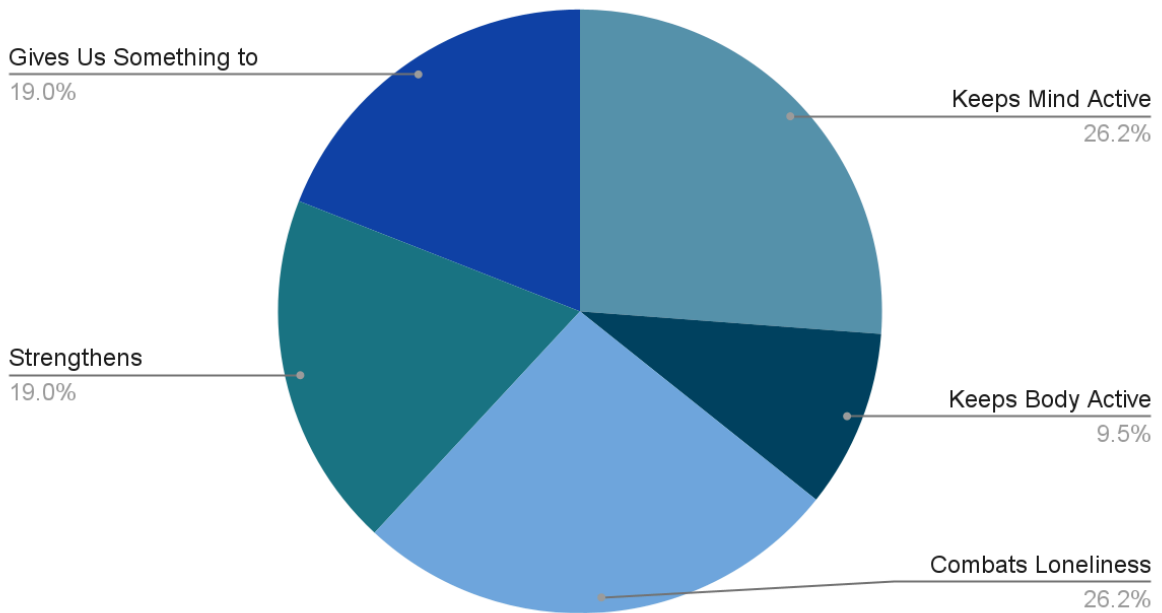
**“I especially love the art and brain engagement classes. I like that I have new phone friends, I look forward to hearing everyone’s voices”**

**-SCWW Participant**

### Areas of Improvement

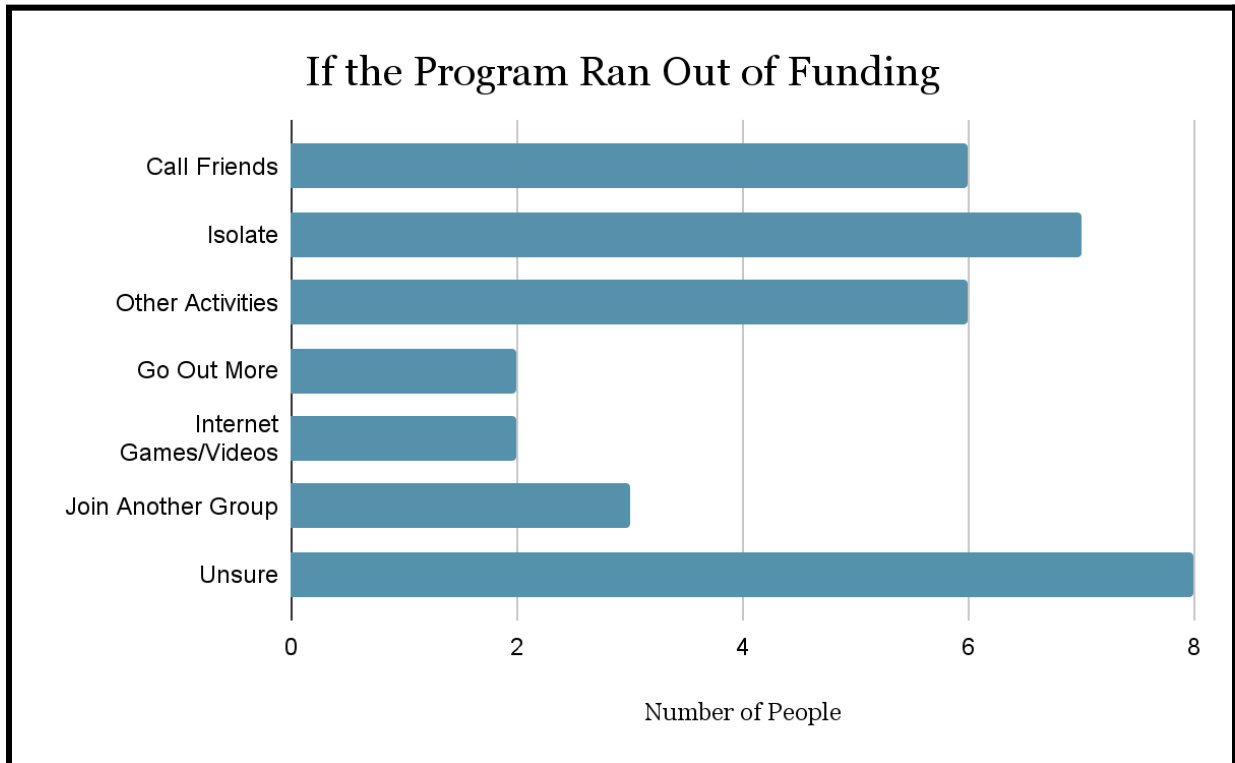


### Impact on Physical and Mental Wellbeing

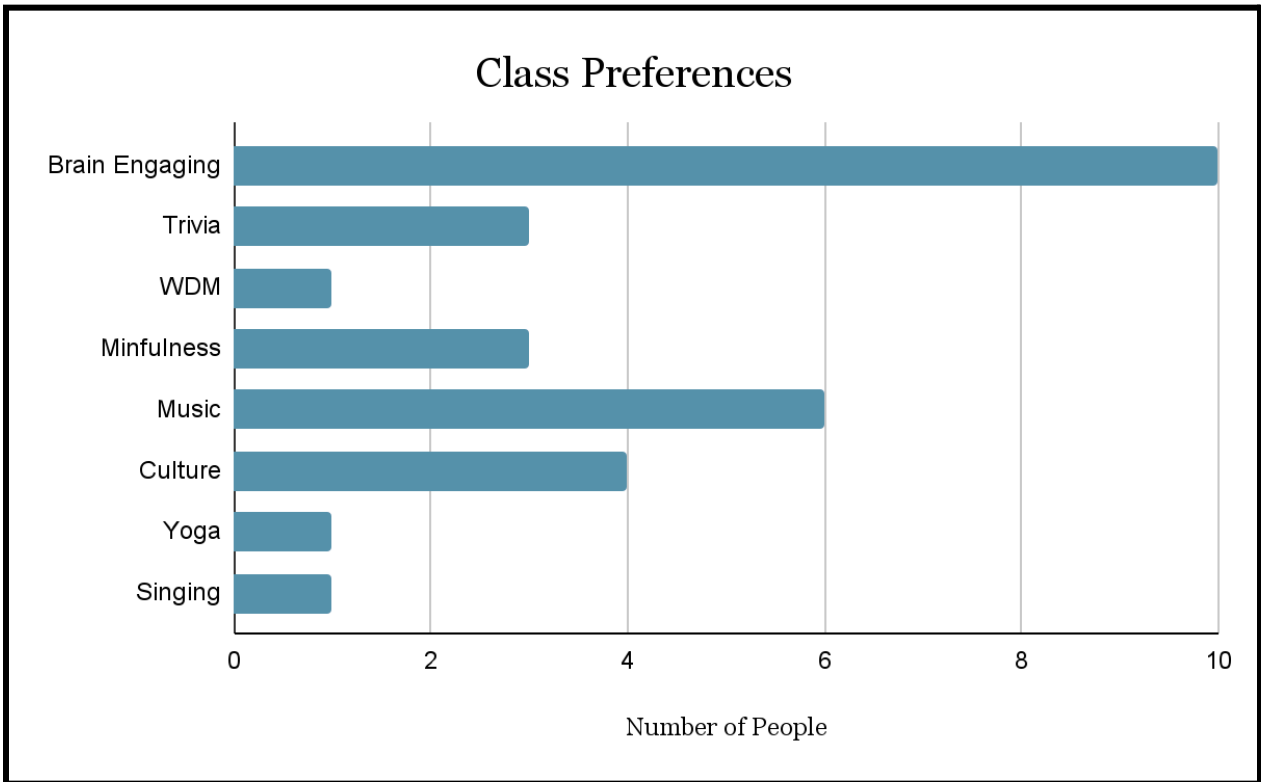
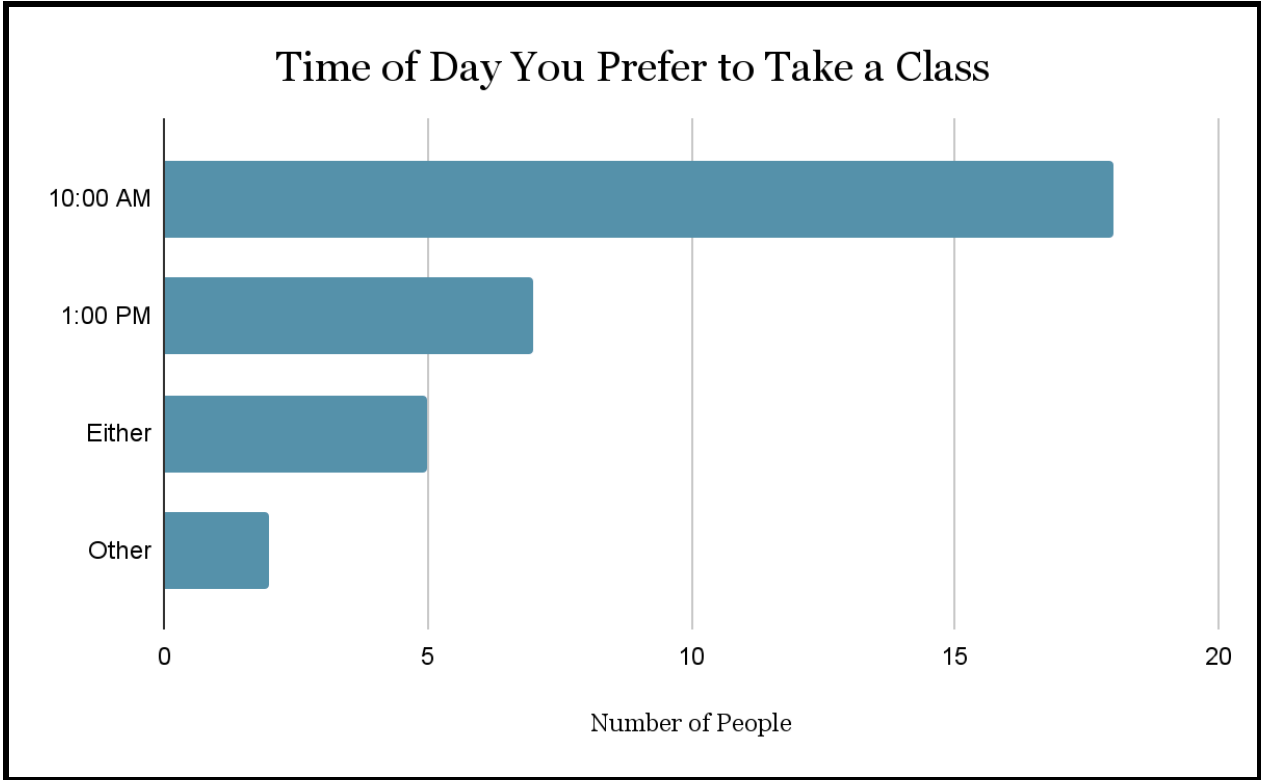


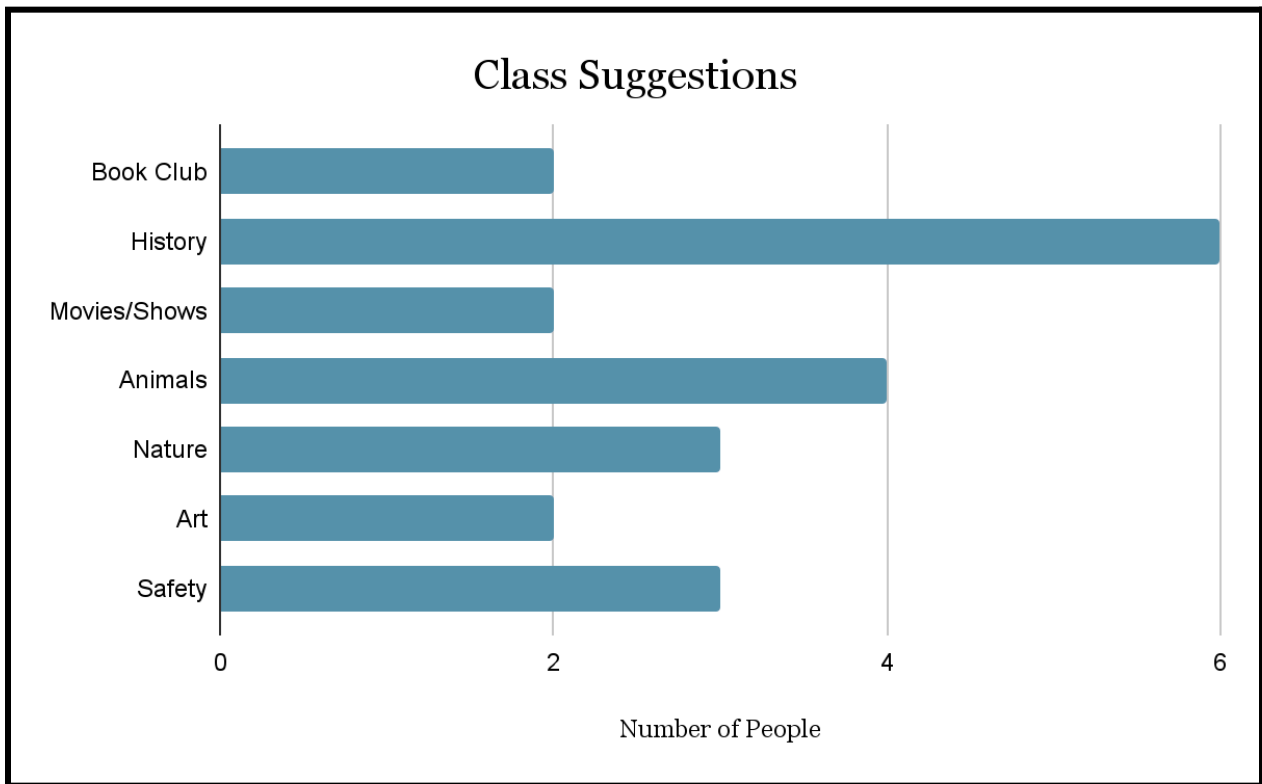
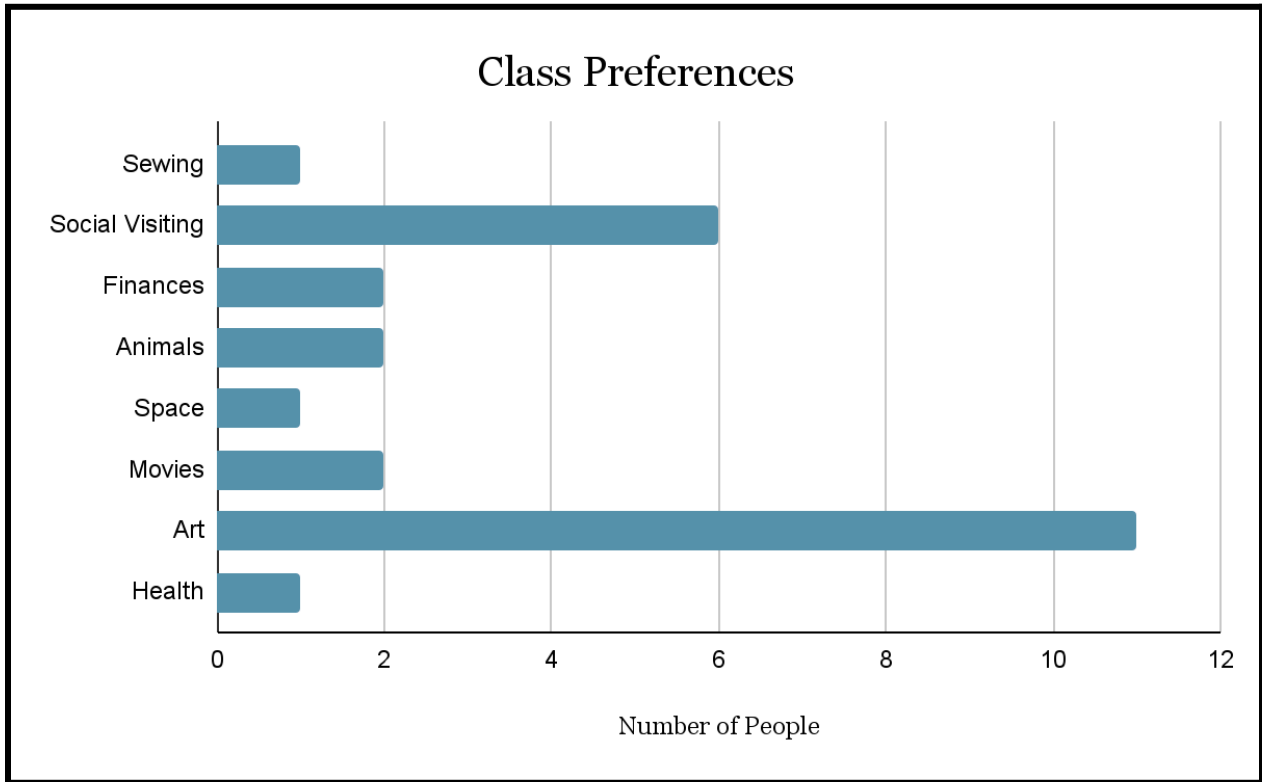


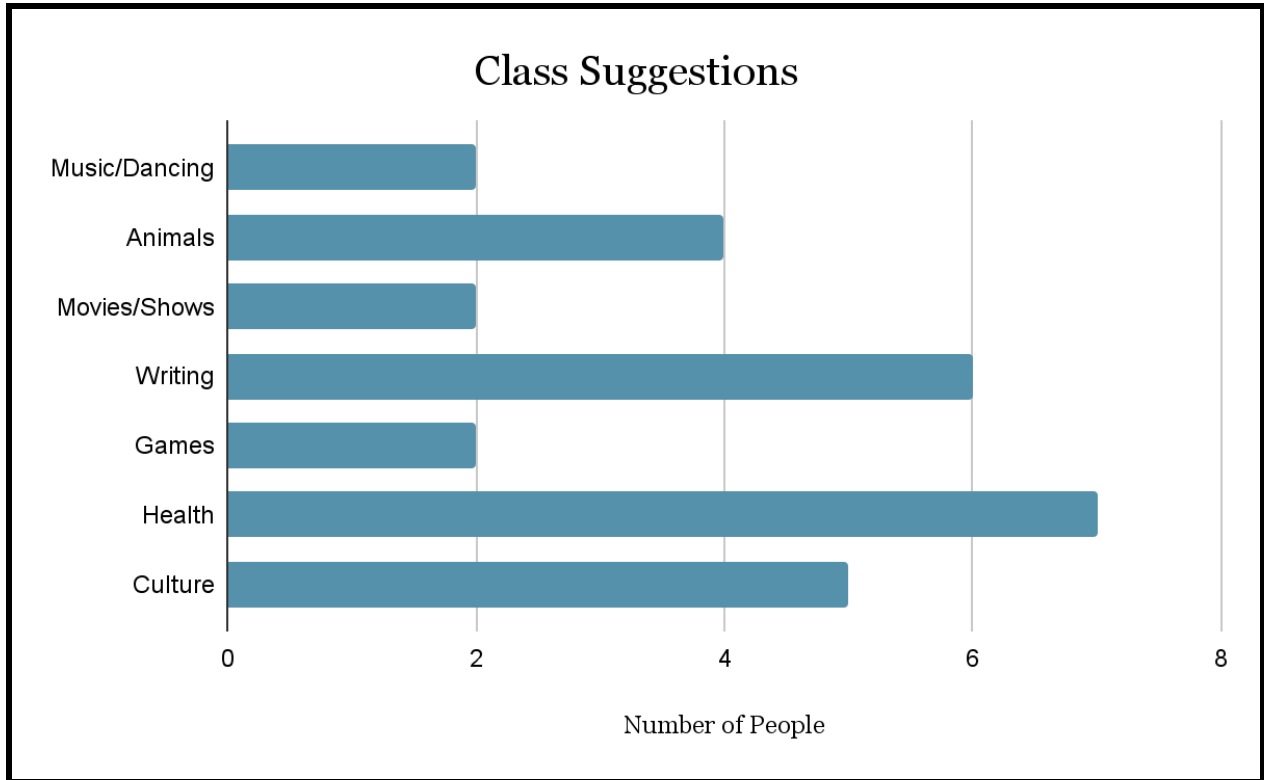
**“...A phone ringing, inviting me to an SCWW class or chat makes me happy. I realize that there are others in similar situations like my own... Thank you for making my heart have room for more good things.”**  
**-SCWW Participant**



**“Try to find stimulation and fulfillment by what I have learned communicating with others, and be thankful for this opportunity I have had.”**  
**-SCWW Participant**

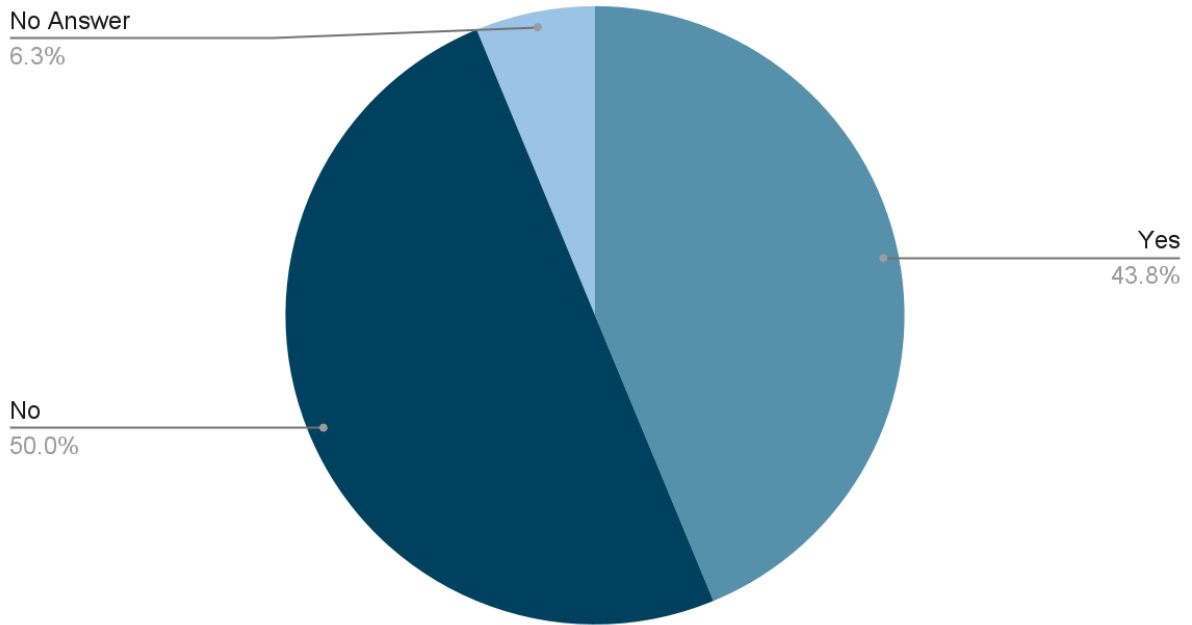




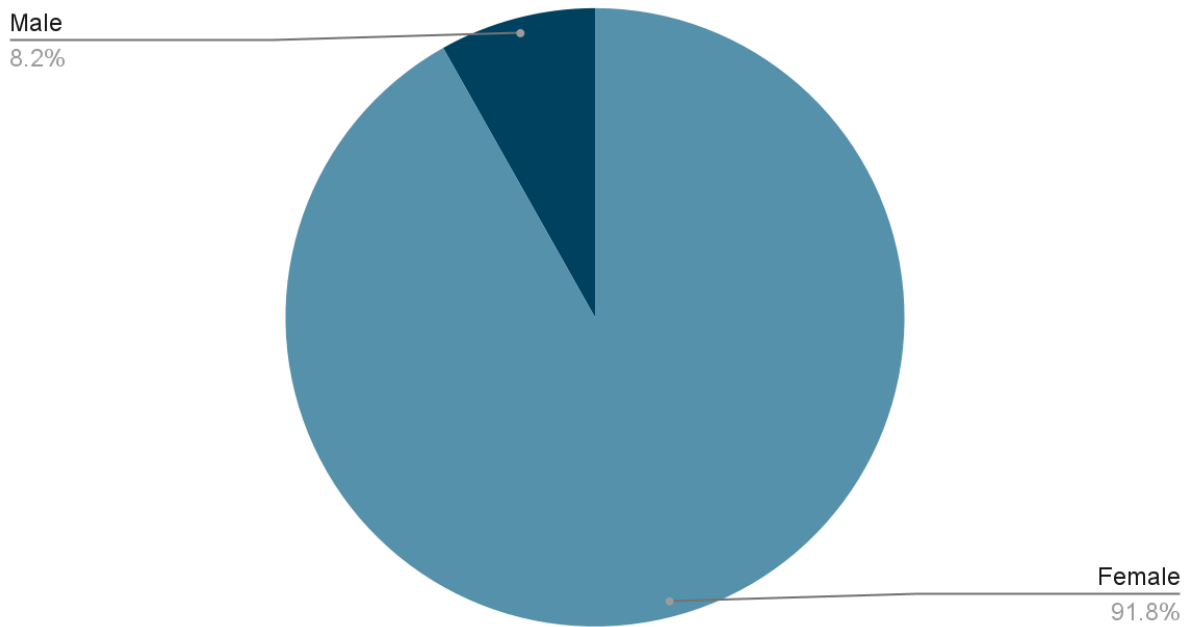


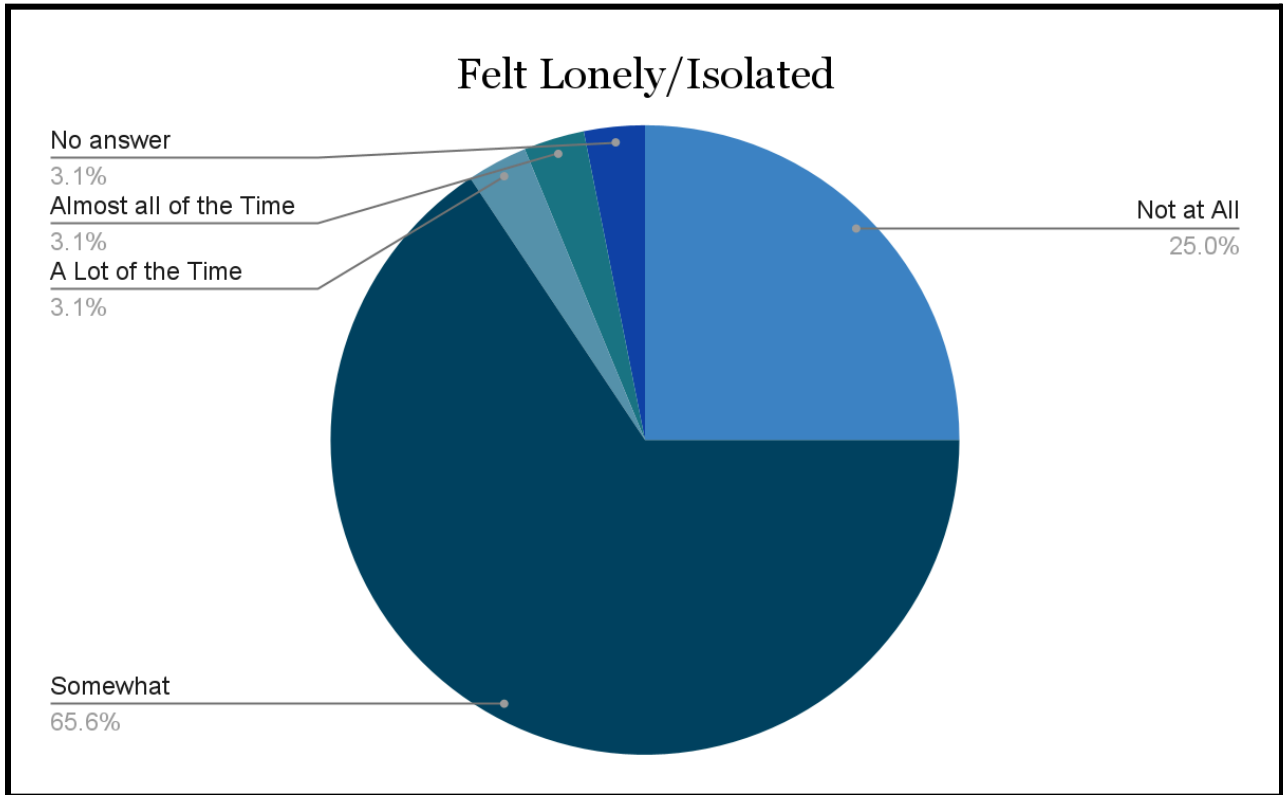
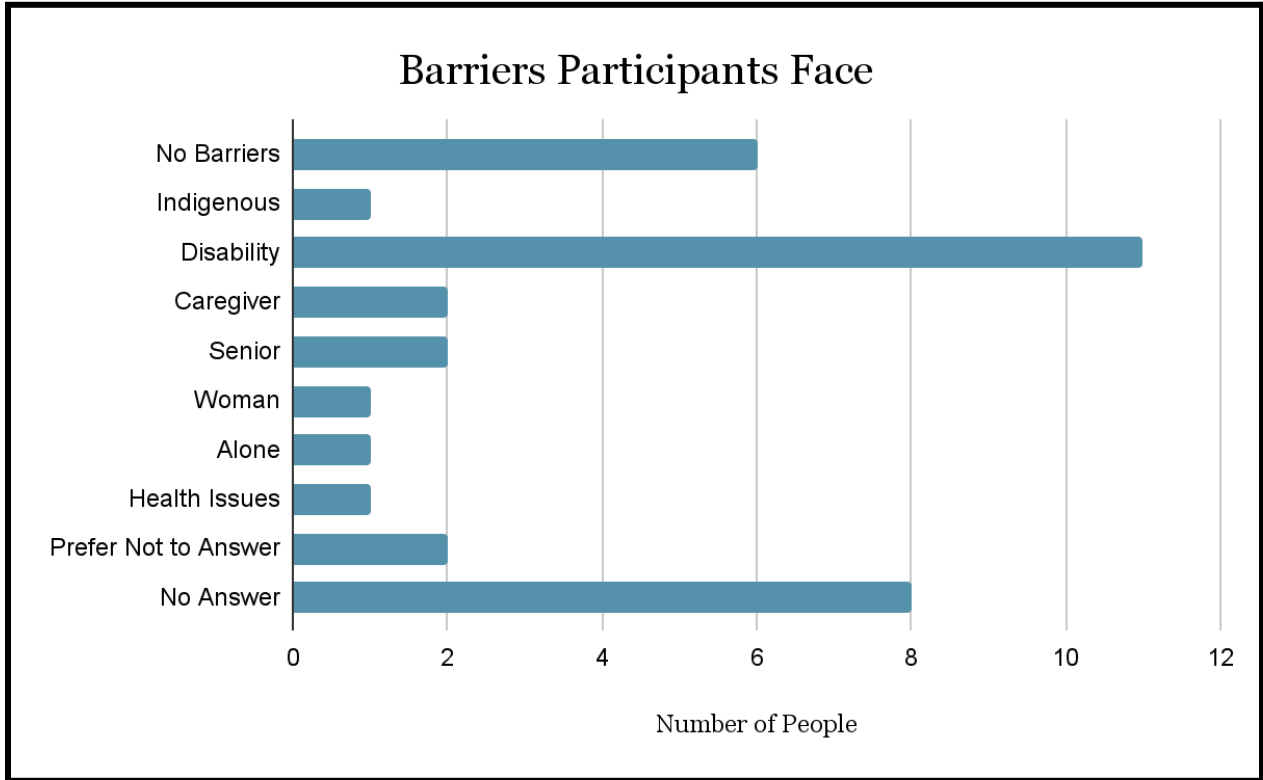
**“More info on physical health and keeping healthy, tell us about living with dementia, diabetes, fibromyalgia, etc. Give us a “user manual” for our aging minds and bodies.”**  
**SCWW Participant**

## Do You Consider Yourself Low Income?

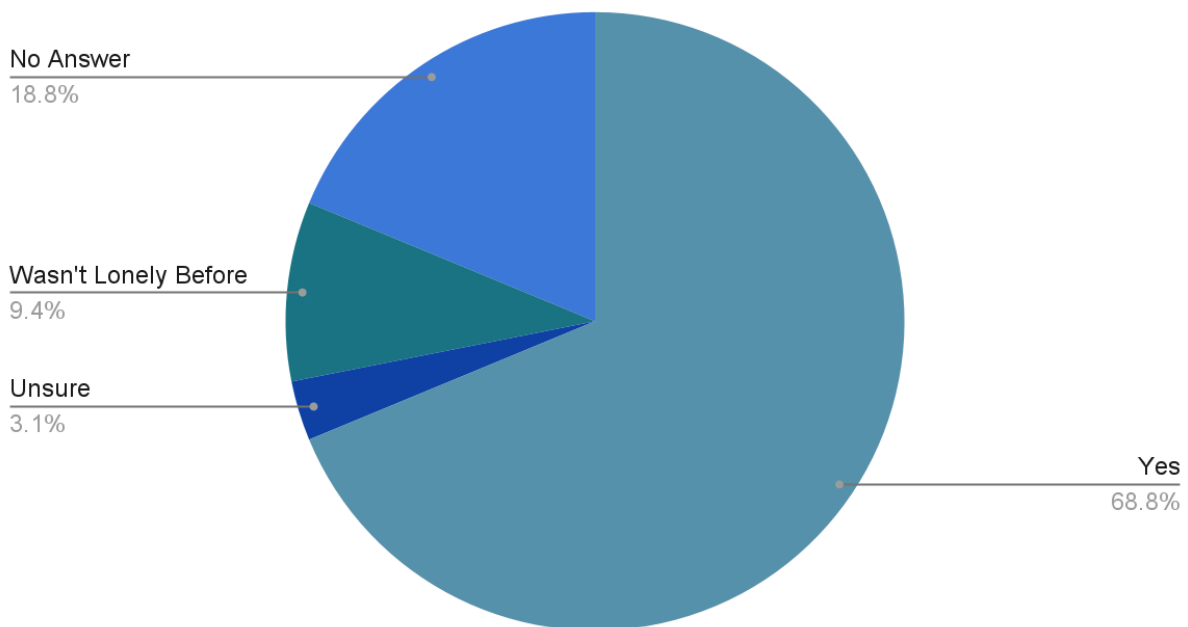


## Gender Demographic



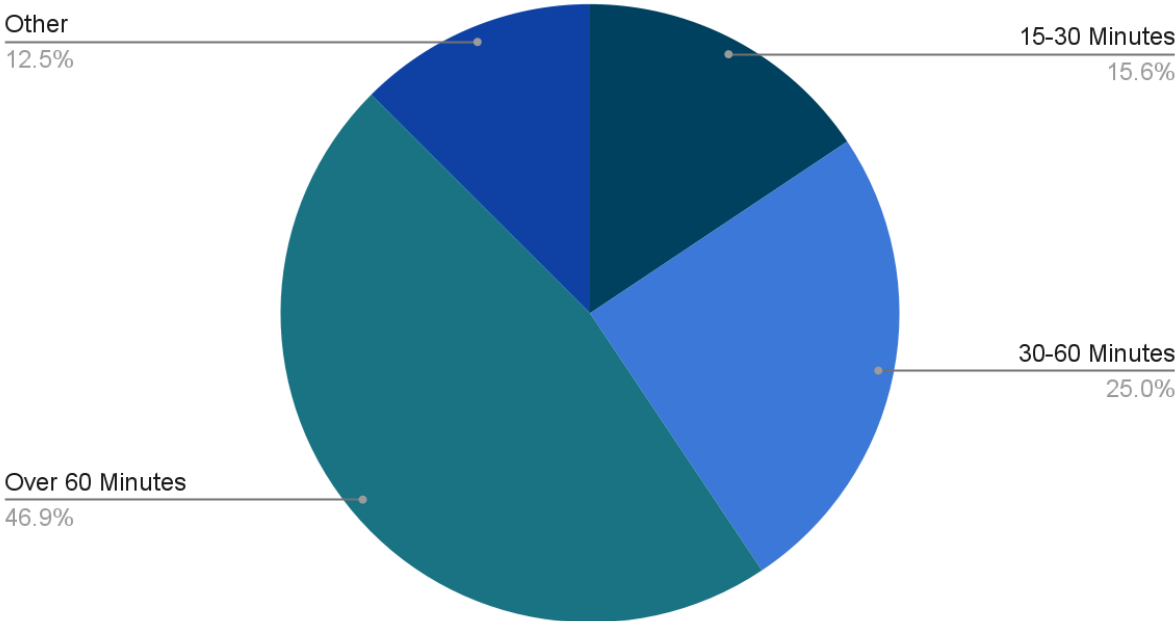


## Has the Program Decreased Your Loneliness/Isolation?

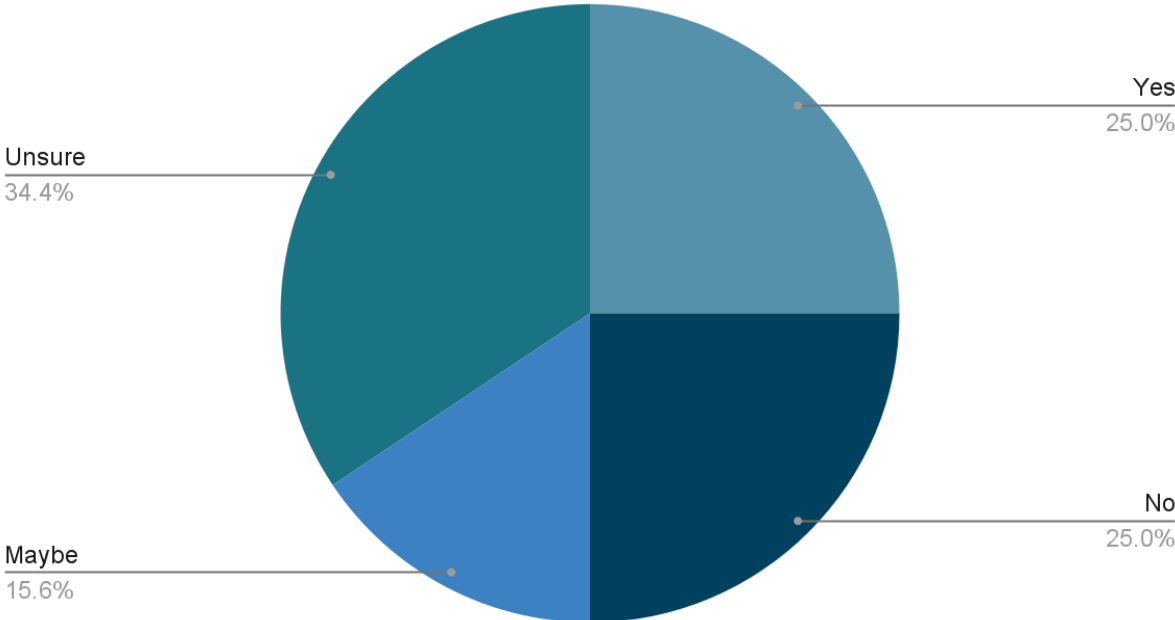


**“I just had surgery and it was the connection I needed... I often feel isolated as it’s difficult to get someone to take me out to socialize”  
-SCWW Participant**

### Physical Activity in a Week

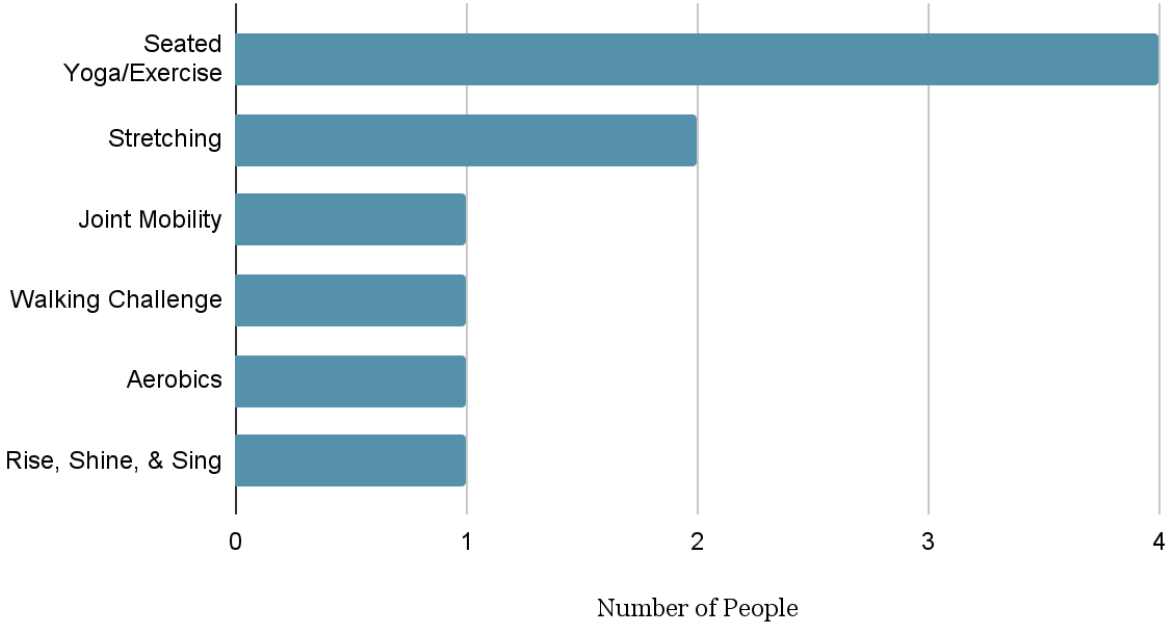


### Would You Participate in Physical Activities with the Program?

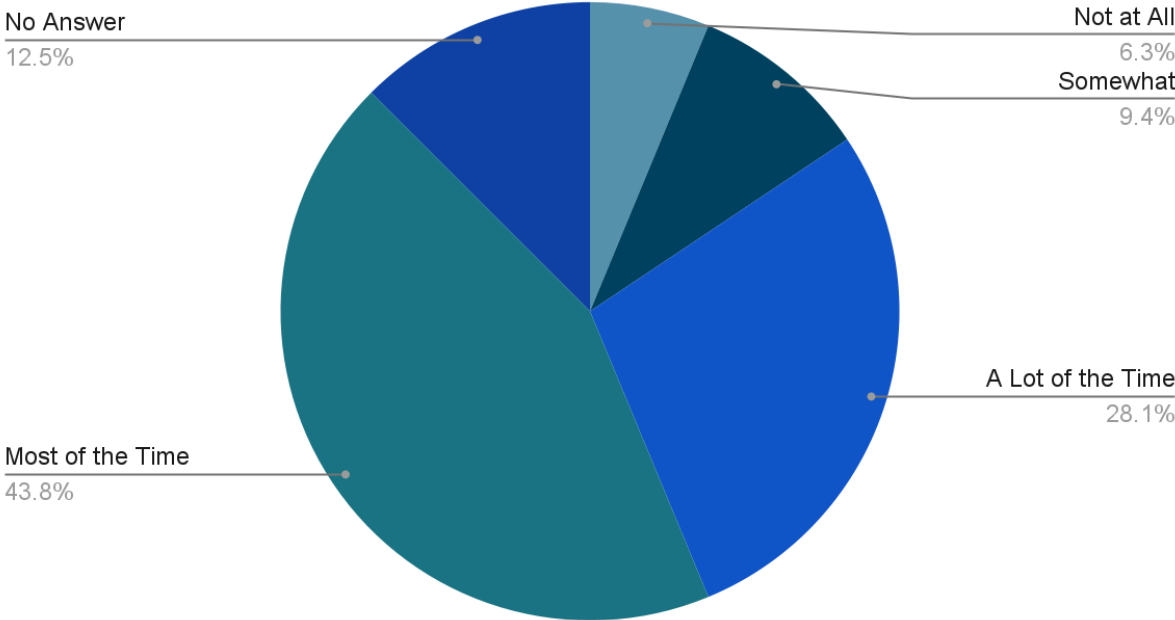




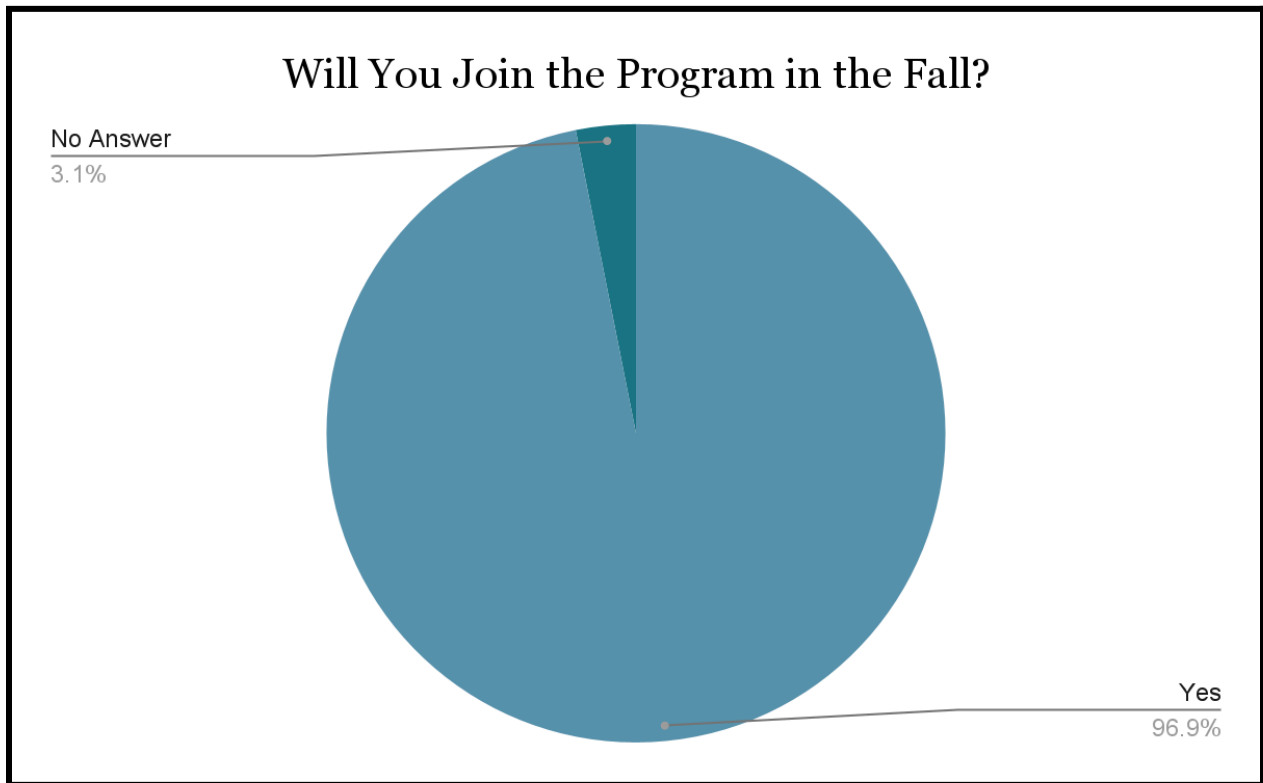
### Suggestions for Physical Activities



### Feel Connection/Community Within the Program



**“ Even though we do not know each other... It is great to hear other people talking. It gets lonely - some days I only talk to the outside cat!”  
-SCWW Participant**



## Appendix A

### Participant Comments

- This is the most amazing program and I share it with everyone - family and friends!
- I am deeply grateful that you offer this program. Lots and lots of work, plus lots and lots of postage.
- Great program, would have never tried art if it wasn't for this program.
- I really appreciate all the work done to organize and keep this program going.
- The SCWW art program is fantastic and I feel very lucky to be a part of it.
- I look forward to the Brain Engagement telephone classes.

- This is good and feels safe in sharing and not knowing names and locations.
- This program makes me think and accomplish things that I otherwise would not be exposed to. It takes me out of the rut of the same old things.
- I highly enjoy many of the varying topics and eagerly anticipate the fall program.
- I have found that I enjoy art and don't want to stop even if my results are not "gallery worthy." Sometimes I even do a picture on my own if I'm bored or feeling down. It always brightens my day.
- I really enjoy remembering my past experiences and the ability to see today in a better light.
- I love this program and the telephone friends I have made. I would miss it terribly if we didn't have it.
- I look forward to Thursday art classes. I wish they could be every week but twice a month is still fun.

\*Lots have suggested allowing participants to share their personal numbers to keep in contact with each other outside of the classes.\*

## Appendix B

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

Art  
 Piano  
 Seated Yoga  
 Mindfulness  
 Bats: A Fascinating Mammal  
 Eco Growth Centre  
 Provincial Protective Services  
 Social Visits  
 Gardening  
 Saskatchewan Archive Services  
 Chats  
 International Day of Older Persons  
 A Saskatchewan Girl in the RCAF  
 Retirement Cartoon: Lola and Pepe  
 Virtual Care Options in Sask Health Authority  
 Healing Through Humour  
 Movie History  
 RCAF Program at Western Development Museum  
 Real Film Restoration  
 Home Hardware Community Garden Program  
 John Diefenbaker Centre - Little Stone Schoolhouse  
 Role of the Nurse Practitioner - Preparing for Medical Appointments

The Survival of Newspapers  
My Dream World Museum  
Bed Bug Pest Control  
Services for the Visually Impaired  
CRA Scams  
Farming  
Brain Engagement Program  
Fort Qu'Appelle Fish Hatchery  
The Silent Soldier Poem  
Remembrance Day Chat  
Communicating Care Home Concerns  
WWII Home Front on the Prairies  
Delicious Delights Chat  
Foot Care for Seniors  
Deal Diva Radio Program  
SCWW Front Page Challenge  
Movies - Similarities and Differences  
About the Lieutenant Governor Office  
Alzheimer Society - Dementia Hotline  
Out of Old Saskatchewan Kitchens  
Care of Christmas Plants  
Stroke Recovery Program  
Carnegie Libraries  
Tips for Visiting in a Care Home  
Christmas Eve Program  
Christmas Day Program  
Repeat of Christmas Eve Program



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## Appendix C

### REFERENCES

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