

The Status of Senior Entrepreneurship in Canada

A Snapshot

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Sheridan | Centre for
Elder Research



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Sheridan | Centre for Elder Research

The Centre for Elder Research conducts innovative **Lab to Life®** research that enhances the quality of life of older adults while serving as an education and research hub for Sheridan College and the broader community. The Centre was launched in 2003 at the Oakville, Ontario campus of Sheridan College and has an established track record in applied research and a reputation as a leader that challenges traditional thinking, creating possibilities that transcend historical boundaries. Underpinning all initiatives at the Centre is our commitment to promoting positive images of aging and challenging outdated stereotypes and ageist attitudes and beliefs.

The applied research conducted at the Centre has contributed to the implementation and evaluation of programming at all levels of society, from the general public and industry partners to regional and municipal policy-makers. Our applied focus, Sheridan's institutional strengths and our strong network of academic, community and industry stakeholders positions the Centre to ensure that knowledge is effectively translated into goods, services, programs and policies that directly benefit older adults and their families. The Centre is a leader in transforming research results into practical solutions.

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Executive Summary

As of July 1st, 2015, it was estimated that almost one in six Canadians (16.1 %) - a record 5,780,900 Canadians - was at least 65 years old, compared with 5,749,400 children aged 0 to 14 years (16.0%)¹. The number of Canadians 65+ now outnumbers the number of children under the age of 15.

It is projected that the proportion of persons over the age of 65 will continue to increase and can be expected to account for 20.1% of the population by July 1, 2024. Of particular relevance to the current research, as of late 2017, the number of Canadians 50+ represented 37.8% of the total Canadian population². The demographic shift that we are experiencing, its speed, its impact and implications will continue to dominate the Canadian social, political and economic landscape for the foreseeable future.

Older entrepreneurs represent an important subset within these statistics. Benjamin Tal, the Deputy Chief Economist at the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC), conducted a study released in 2012 regarding entrepreneurship in Canada at that time³. Tal found that individuals 50+ made up the fastest growing age demographic for start-up founders in Canada, accounting for approximately 30% of the total number of start-up founders in the country. Since 1990, the number of entrepreneurs 50+ more than doubled, and the trend continues to rise. As our population ages, and with the baby boom cohort accelerating that growth, there is every reason to believe that there will be exponential growth in the number of older adults who launch their own business enterprises after the age of 50.

Despite the significance and implications of Tal's 2012 statistics, there has been relatively little research, or even interest, in investigating the characteristics of older entrepreneurs in Canada or their needs, challenges and interests when it comes to career guidance and support. This dearth of information poses very real limitations for career guidance professionals, in addition to other support providers (e.g. financial advisors, small business enterprise centres) when it comes to effectively supporting their older clients.

For the past 15 years, the Sheridan Centre for Elder Research has been conducting multidisciplinary **Lab to Life**[®] research that transcends traditional boundaries and responds to gaps in research about topics that are of importance to older Canadians, their families and the community. Building on previous research, the Centre launched an eight-month, mixed-methods study in 2017 designed to address the information gap related to entrepreneurs 50+.

The Centre's researchers were able to capture the experiences of entrepreneurs 50+ from every province and territory. The results paint a vibrant picture of adults who identified themselves as new or established entrepreneurs. This report highlights common trends and themes from this project and provides rich information from which one can advocate for supports for the increasing number of older entrepreneurs.

Introduction

The current era is one of longevity; the realities about aging have changed but attitudes, in general, have not kept pace. Life expectancy for Canadians, in 1921, was approximately 57, and in 2011, 82⁴. Projected life expectancy at birth in 2030 is expected to be 83.9 for men and 87.1 for women⁵. In the most recent census, there are more centenarians (100+) in Canada than in recorded history and the fastest growing age cohort is 85+⁶. Despite the longevity revolution, prevailing attitudes remain surprisingly out-dated with respect to ideas about what older adults do, want and need.

Against this backdrop of longevity, there have also been many societal changes including the abolition of mandatory retirement, an increase in the gig economy and ever-accelerating changes in the types of jobs that could not have been imagined a few decades ago. Within the context of these societal changes, there are many reasons why adults 50+ might choose to start their own businesses.

Despite the fact that there are some current and emerging commentaries about aging and entrepreneurship in Canada and internationally (for example, the recent report titled *Seniorpreneurship: Don't Retire, Rewire*, released in June 2017 by the Canada West Foundation and the report released by the Fraser Institute in the spring of 2018 titled *Demographics and Entrepreneurship: Mitigating the Effects of an Aging Population*), this cohort has been largely ignored in entrepreneurship research and by funders, resulting in a relative lack of information about the changing face of entrepreneurship. Who are these older entrepreneurs? How can their experiences, existing networks, and perhaps different motivations and skills be leveraged to benefit the Canadian economy?

The current research study addressed gaps in knowledge about Canadian entrepreneurs 50+ by investigating the experiences, needs and interests of senior entrepreneurs. For the purposes of this study, a senior entrepreneur was defined as 'an individual 50+ who has either launched his/her own business after the age of 50 or who would like to start their own business'. There are different terms used to reference this cohort (e.g. experienced entrepreneurs, silver economy) and, in the absence of a widely agreed upon term, the research team will hereafter use the term senior entrepreneurs.

This 8-month study used a mixed-method approach that included online surveys, in-depth interviews and focus groups. There was a concerted attempt to recruit a diverse group of established and new senior entrepreneurs to ensure a comprehensive understanding of this emerging area. In addition, the research team sought the experiences of entrepreneurs 50+ living in all Canadian provinces and territories. To the extent possible, the researchers were committed to learning more about the impact of geographic and regional disparities on the experiences of older entrepreneurs.

A number of unanswered questions guided this inquiry. What are some of the unique challenges that an older entrepreneur might face – for example, obtaining financing, risk management, and overt and covert ageism? What supports are available to senior entrepreneurs, and how can existing supports be improved? How can older entrepreneurs support each other for mutual benefit? What are the lessons that new senior entrepreneurs can learn from those who have already established businesses after age 50?

Based on preliminary literature reviews, think tanks, focus groups and explicit outreach strategies, the Centre identified this significant gap in knowledge and awareness. As a result, this research study was designed to begin to address and fill this gap.

The study results will enhance knowledge about and contribute to a greater understanding of senior entrepreneurs in Canada and the factors that may help them succeed. It is, in turn, reasonable to suggest that their success will have a positive ripple effect on the Canadian economy. This study represents an important step into this burgeoning field, responding to an information gap for career development professionals, financial advisors, life coaches, regional business leaders and others by providing them with greater insight to more effectively guide senior entrepreneurs. The broader ramifications of this work could help improve and/or enhance current services and supports provided to older entrepreneurs and motivate the creation of new tools, resources and guidelines that empower older entrepreneurs to achieve success for themselves and contribute to the broader Canadian economy.

Methods

The study was designed to address gaps in knowledge about the status of senior entrepreneurship in Canada by investigating the experiences, needs and interests of senior entrepreneurs. For the purposes of the study, a senior entrepreneur was defined as ‘an individual 50+ who had either launched his/her own business after the age of 50 or who would like to start their own business’. This definition provided the only inclusion criterion for the study, namely, that any respondent identifying as an entrepreneur be over the age of 50. The Centre for Elder Research received approval from Sheridan College’s Research Ethics Board for all the methodologies and participant populations included in this project.

The study used a mixed-methods approach which included quantitative and qualitative information captured using an online survey, in-depth interviews and focus groups. In general, basic demographic information (e.g. age, gender, geographic location), details of individuals’ entrepreneurial activities (e.g. sector, nature of current business) and reflections on the process of seeking support for their entrepreneurial activities (e.g. nature of help sought, type of help sought) were captured from respondents.

Recruitment and Study Promotion

Given the national scope of this study, the research team explicitly sought broad representation in terms of gender, age, geographic location (including an urban/rural split) and cultural diversity. Prior to the commencement of data collection, the Project Coordinator (PC) identified and contacted over 150 groups, agencies and stakeholders (including regional small business centres, business associations, community agencies and government organizations across Canada that support entrepreneurship) to assist with survey dissemination and the identification of potential participants for the in-depth interviews and focus groups. As part of this process, the research team sought organizations that might be interested in hosting a focus group in their own provinces/territories/regions that the research team (which is based within the Greater Toronto Area) could facilitate virtually. In these instances, the organizations would provide the logistical, ground-level support to bring together a group for individuals to participate in a virtual focus group (i.e. support recruitment, arrange for video-calling software/equipment), while the research team managed the research content and led the discussions with the participants.

The majority of stakeholders were contacted by email and were provided with the details of the study and links to the survey, with a request to promote the survey and/or circulate through their preferred communication channels. A select group of national organizations were initially contacted by telephone in order to introduce the survey prior to an email being sent. The master contact list of stakeholders was compiled by conducting online searches to find individuals and organizations that have an interest in and/or provide services and supports to senior entrepreneurs in Canada. More general searches were also conducted related to entrepreneurship, small business, community and business development centres, with the hope that these stakeholders could assist by promoting the study to their clients/members age 50+. Government websites pertaining to economic development and small business were sourced for

potential contacts, as well as research reports and media articles relating to older workers and senior entrepreneurship. Table 1 below presents a summary of the type of organizations that were directly contacted and where within Canada they were located.

The study was also promoted through the Centre for Elder Research's business/participant database and social media channels (i.e. Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn) as well as through the personal business networks of the project team members.

Data Collection

The online survey was offered in both English and French from September-December 2017, and survey responses were securely and anonymously collected through the Survey Monkey platform. Summary data were exported into spreadsheets and pdf formats to enable further analyses. The in-depth interviews and focus group sessions were audio recorded to supplement notes taken by the facilitators and support thematic analysis. The interview and focus group facilitators jointly established coding protocols to support the thematic analysis and reviewed each other's work to ensure common interpretation of the themes. The audio files were also used to extract representative participant quotes as necessary. Participants were given the choice of being interviewed virtually (e.g. video call) or by telephone and interviews were scheduled for dates and times that were most convenient for the participants. Both the focus group and interviews were conducted in English. The online survey, interview questions and focus group questions can be found in Appendices A, B and C, respectively.

PROVINCE/TERRITORY	BUSINESS CENTRE	BUSINESS ASSOCIATION	CHARITY/NOT FOR PROFIT	GOVERNMENT OFFICES (Federal Provincial Municipal)	EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION	EMPLOYMENT CENTRE/ AGENCY	MISC	TOTAL
National	3	11	7	5	1		3	30
Alberta	9	2	4	3	1			19
British Columbia	3	4	1	1			3	12
Manitoba	2	2		1			2	7
New Brunswick	1	1						2
Newfoundland/Labrador	1	1		1				3
Northwest Territories	1	1		2	1			5
Nova Scotia	2	1			1			4
Nunavut	4	2		6	1		2	15
Ontario	9	3	5	8	4	2	14	45
Prince Edward Island	1	2		1			1	5
Quebec	2	3		2		1	1	9
Saskatchewan	3	2					1	6
Yukon	2		1	3	1			7
Total	43	35	18	33	10	3	27	169

Table 1: Stakeholders Contacted

Results

Online Survey

There were 260 respondents who opened and started the online survey (8 in French, the remainder in English). Of those 260, only 163 (2 in French) completed the survey, where completion was defined as reaching the final question and formally exiting the survey even if the respondent chose to not answer specific questions along the way (as was their right). Nearly 75% of respondents completed the survey in 15 minutes or less; 5% of those who spent longer than 15 minutes on the survey spent well over an hour, suggesting an interruption in their progress, which inflated their total response time. Given the small number of French respondents to the survey, their results have been pooled for all subsequent analyses.

Nearly half of the 163 respondents to the online survey were between 50-59 years old and there was close to equal representation of men and women (56% women and 43% men). While the largest group of respondents came from Ontario, there was at least one response from every single province and territory, and a variety of geographic areas represented (e.g. from rural vs more urban areas). Additional demographic data about the respondents have been presented in more detail in Table 2.

There were three ways respondents could identify as entrepreneurs: aspiring (actively exploring a defined business idea), new (consider themselves an entrepreneur for less than 5 years) or established (consider themselves an entrepreneur for more than 5 years). There was 29%, 27% and 44% representation for each of those categories respectively, highlighting the mix of entrepreneurs at multiple points along the business development pathway who participated in the study. Table 3 presents a breakdown by age of how the respondents identified themselves as entrepreneurs showing that, in general, the established entrepreneurs were older than the aspiring and new entrepreneurs. Approximately 70% of respondents who already had their own business started it when they were in their 50's, and while length of ownership varied, 28% of respondents had been owners for more than 10 years and 23% had been owners for 3-5 years.

The sectors and type of business represented by the respondents varied widely. A quarter of respondents described their business as 'consulting', but the other areas represented included technology, social entrepreneurship, communications, arts/design, healthcare, education, community/social services, finance/banking, manufacturing, entertainment, e-commerce, the food industry, energy/environment, agriculture, real estate, legal, marketing/branding, pet services, tourism, transportation, fitness and retail. Many respondents also indicated that their businesses crossed multiple domains and sectors, highlighting the breadth and variety of businesses started by older adults. Businesses represented in the survey also conducted their operations both online and face-to-face.

Respondents were generally very confident in their ability to succeed when they first started their business, with approximately 57% reporting that they were 'confident' and 29% reporting feeling 'somewhat confident'. Furthermore, more than half of respondents (58%) had launched, or actively explored, another business prior to their current business.

Age (n=161)	Response Percent (%)	Response Count
50-59	47	76
60-69	38	61
70-79	14	23
80+	1	1
Gender (n=161)		
Female	56	90
Male	43	70
Prefer not to say	1	1
Highest level formal education (n=161)		
Grade school	1	1
High school	18	29
Trade school	4	6
College diploma	25	40
University degree	30	49
Post-graduate degree	18	29
PhD	4	7
Province/territory of residence (n=162)		
Ontario	65	106
Newfoundland/Labrador	10	16
Alberta	6	9
British Columbia	5	8
Nova Scotia	4	7
Quebec	2	4
Yukon	2	3
Prince Edward Island	1	2
Manitoba	1	2
Northwest Territories	1	2
Nunavut	1	1
New Brunswick	1	1
Saskatchewan	1	1
Location of residence (n=162)		
Rural area (under 50,000)	35	57
Town/small city (51,000-150,000)	14	23
Medium size city (151,000-400,000)	21	34
Large city (over 400,000)	30	48
Annual household income (n=161)		
Under \$45,000	21	34
\$46,000-90,000	25	40
\$91,000-140,000	21	34
\$141,000-200,000	9	14
More than \$200,000	7	11
Prefer not to say	17	28

Table 2: Participant Demographics

(n=155)						
Age	Aspiring		New		Established	
	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
50 to 59	17	27	15	24	16	25
60 to 69	9	14	10	15	17	26
70 to 79	3	4	1	2	11	17
80+	0	0	0	0	1	1

Table 3: Stages of Entrepreneurship by Age

The top three most important reasons identified by respondents (as ‘very important’ and ‘important’) to start a business after 50 were 1) interest in continuing to use their skills, 2) needing or wanting to generate a new source of income, and 3) wanting greater ownership and control of their work and lifestyle. An interesting outcome of this particular question was that when asked to rate the importance of the statement “I had to leave my previous employer/ career (for any reason)”, 48% of respondents identified this as “not applicable”, suggesting that for nearly half of the respondents it wasn’t necessarily a push from a previous position that prompted the journey into entrepreneurship, but rather, a pull from a new opportunity or situation.

Respondents most commonly reported that the extra income generated from their entrepreneurial activities allows them to 1) pay for basic needs such as food and shelter, 2) create a financial safety net for their future, and 3) give back/support their community. Some respondents also added under the “Other” response category that they received joy or pleasure from engaging in their business pursuits and that the work kept them active, highlighting some of the more intangible benefits that older entrepreneurs may receive and find motivation from that are not captured with traditional metrics.

The top service providers that respondents engaged with to assist them were small business enterprise centres, banks, and chambers of commerce and economic development offices (tied for third most accessed provider). It should be noted though that most individuals reported accessing multiple service providers as part of their search for support. Interestingly, 10 respondents explicitly wrote in the “Other” section that they accessed no services or were completely on their own. One actually said that “they [the service providers] are mostly useless”, which may speak to the unique needs of senior entrepreneurs and their success (or failure) with locating or identifying the best source of assistance.

As a follow-up, respondents were asked which types of services they made use of. Surprisingly, the most commonly used was Internet research, which could lead them directly to service providers, or perhaps, bypass the service providers entirely. The next most commonly used services were formal courses/workshops and networking groups. When asked which areas of information/advice/training they found most helpful in starting or growing their businesses, social media was ranked the most helpful, followed by peer support and marketing advice tied for second most helpful. It is unclear from these data if the value of social media was with respect to ideation and support, or if was more about promotion and marketing, but the high ranking of peer support does highlight the value of supportive networks for older entrepreneurs.

Approximately 44% of respondents felt that it was either “very easy” or “easy” to access the supports and services that benefited their business, with only 13% saying that it was “difficult”. When asked if they encountered gaps in the support they needed or wanted, about 37% said yes, 25% said no and nearly 25% said they weren’t sure, with the remainder being too early in the entrepreneurship journey to be able to answer. This response spread perhaps harkens back to the earlier question about leveraging service providers; with such a mixed response to the evaluation of gaps in supportive services, it’s clear that older entrepreneurs take very

differentiated paths to exploring and leveraging supports which could lead to these varying responses. Of those that did report encountering gaps, the most commonly reported were with respect to finding financial support and appropriate mentors, but there were also comments that spoke to the disconnect between government supports available and their needs, and the difficulty in actually finding the kind of support they needed.

Respondents, when asked to select which factors most contributed to their success indicated that 1) their accumulated work experience and expertise, 2) their knowledge of customer needs/ service, and 3) their perseverance and determination were what helped them the most. Tied for fourth most common response was their willingness to take risks, their reputation and network of contacts, showing that it is a mix of personal characteristics and accumulated skills or resources to which older entrepreneurs credit their success.

Many respondents (40%) reported not facing any age-based discrimination along their entrepreneurial pathway, but rather, felt valued because of their experience. When they did experience discrimination, the two most common scenarios encountered were that services they would have liked to access were only available to youth entrepreneurs, and the process for navigating the 'system' as an older entrepreneur was less defined than it was for younger entrepreneurs (challenges experienced by 32% and 21% of respondents, respectively). As one participant commented, "Ageism is prevalent in Canada and many places in the World. The Government of Canada needs to be wise and add the 50+ Entrepreneurs to the entrepreneurship table as an equal partner instead of focusing on the younger under 40 demographic".

When asked how older entrepreneurs could support each other, the top response was actually that it shouldn't only be older entrepreneurs supporting each other, but rather there should be opportunities to foster intergenerational mentoring. Other top rated supports included promoting each other's businesses and acting as peer mentors.

Interviews and Focus Group

The research team conducted 11 interviews (4 males and 7 females) consisting of 5 participants between the ages of 50-59, 4 participants between the ages of 60-69 and 2 participants between the ages of 70-79. This group included 4 aspiring, 3 new and 4 established entrepreneurs. The interviewees represented a cross section of geographic locations across the country. Three of the participants resided in the rural areas of Whitehorse, YK, Orillia, ON and Souris, PEI with populations < 50,000, three participants resided in the small cities of Chilliwack, BC, Fort Smith, NWT with populations of 51,000-150,000 and five participants resided in larger urban centres from Toronto/GTA (Greater Toronto Area), Calgary and Montreal with populations over 1.2 million. Ten of the interviews were conducted on the telephone and one interview was conducted via video calling.

A community business development centre hosted, in partnership with the research team, one in-person focus group in Orillia, ON. The 11 participants (4 male, 7 female) were between the ages of 50-72 and predominantly from Orillia and the surrounding areas. They represented a diverse group of sectors and skewed slightly young in their ages, with 8 of the 11 participants being in their 50's. One of the participants was considering entrepreneurship and the remaining 10 senior entrepreneurs were new or established entrepreneurs.

Participants from the focus group and interviews operated businesses from diverse industry sectors in business and professional consulting services, landscaping and private transportation services, property management, network marketing, photography, automotive repair, security services, publishing, healthcare, marriage services, real estate investment/leasing, health and wellness. The majority of the individuals were operating their business as sole proprietors and not one was operating a business in the technology sector. As the overall themes and trends were very similar in the interviews and the focus group, the data have been pooled here for reporting purposes.

Motivations for Starting Their Business

When asked about what factors contributed to their decision to start their own business after the age of 50, some participants reported having being laid off from their previous employer and were having difficulty finding work in their industry, which they felt was mainly due to their age. One female 53-year old who had worked in an executive role at her former place of employment felt she had been forced out of work due to her age. She reported that she had been experiencing challenges finding work due to her higher salary expectations and being more qualified than the person she would be reporting to. A 52-year old male found that potential job opportunities in the rural area where he lived were very limited, if not non-existent, and was considering entrepreneurship as an alternative. Major life changes such as separation and divorce, loss of a spouse, and a previous bankruptcy in a former business also led some to pursue entrepreneurship. Some couldn't afford to retire and needed some supplementary income. Others reported they were unhappy and wanted a career change for reasons relating to the changing dynamics they had experienced in their previous workplace, the stress of the

physical demands of their job as they aged and long commute times affecting their quality of life. Other motivating factors included having a new vision due to the changing landscape, recognizing an opportunity and more freedom to pursue new interests now that their children had grown up and were financially secure.

“We used to get pensioned off at 65 but that was when people didn’t live past 68 so the government didn’t have too long to support seniors but now we are living longer and we want to keep a similar lifestyle but it’s very hard ... and even though we may not justify getting more money, it’s impossible to live off the pension. There has to be some way in which they can be of value to society in the later years and be able to boost their income so that they could survive during a difficult time.”

~ Interview Participant, Male, Age 73

“I’m not expecting this business to make millions each year. I have a pension, I do this because I really like doing it. It’s not my main source of income. It would be difficult to live without it, but I could.”

~ Interview Participant, Female, Age 60

Financing

Those who explored financing options to start-up their business reported facing significant difficulties in their attempts to obtain capital. Of those individuals who did apply for loans from traditional financial institutions, most were denied and some of those who did receive loans found the terms of the loan repayment somewhat difficult. Some had experienced financial setbacks in the past which had impacted their ability to qualify for loans and therefore looked to find financial partners, with varying levels of success. Some individuals did report successfully receiving loans/grants from banks and business enterprise centres, but the majority of individuals used their own personal assets to fund their business. One individual reported that her husband was supporting her financially, as everything she owned had been put into her business and she hadn’t paid herself in two years. Another individual who was in the process of starting a consulting business commented that there seemed to be a lack of funding opportunities for businesses selling expertise or knowledge services as opposed to a more tangible product or service.

It was also expressed that there appears to be a disconnect between the true needs of senior entrepreneurs and the perceived needs being addressed by the programs and funding currently provided by governments, both federal and provincial. The respondents felt that existing small business grants and loans are geared to younger entrepreneurs and/or minority groups and there was nothing to specifically support entrepreneurs over the age of 50. It was also expressed that the federal government is mostly focused on funding for innovation and technology development and there is a need to recognize small business owners and seniors in other types of small business endeavours.

“If you have something tangible (a product or service) or a technology that you want to sell there is lots of funding for you. But if you are a professional service provider that sells knowledge, I have not been able to find any financial supports (no grants, loans etc.).”

~ Interview Participant, Female, Age 53

Supportive Organizations

Business centres and women’s business organizations supporting entrepreneurship were recognized as being most supportive to those who accessed them. Those who received business loans from business centres experienced greater opportunities with respect to funding options and flexibility on loan repayments than they did with banks. Participants also reported that they received valuable information and resources in the key areas of starting and growing their business including the process of starting up a small business and help with creating business plans, available government supports, funding opportunities, business reporting and operations, marketing, sales and opportunities to connect with other entrepreneurs.

Participants reported value in joining their local chambers of commerce and women’s business groups in order to meet other business owners to share expertise, receive and provide peer support in addition to opportunities to promote their business. Participants also found value in joining associations within their industries to gain information, mentorship opportunities, and coaching and training specific to their industry sector.

Training/Information/Advice

Participants recognized the value of the knowledge, skills and experience they had acquired over the years but the majority realized that additional training/education was beneficial and/or necessary in order to build and grow their business and had invested in education/training courses before starting their business. This led to them accessing a variety of learning opportunities such as enrolling in online courses, webinars, tutorials, attending workshops and speaker events as well as enrolling in programs and courses at the post-secondary level. Interestingly, some participants expressed concerns as to how to verify the expertise of consultants who are selling their knowledge and how to identify those who they can trust both online and in person. Overall though, life-long learning and the need to be adaptable in a working world that is constantly changing was identified as being very important.

The participants also recognized the importance of the role of technology in operating their business. Some reported being very comfortable with learning new applications while others felt challenged and even blocked and resentful about having to use it.

“I hate technology. I hate it with a passion...The amount of time it takes is phenomenal. It seems so impersonal somehow...I don’t know what my block is. I resist and resent it so much.”

~ Interview Participant, Female, Age 60

Gaps

The participants reported a current lack of funding opportunities for senior entrepreneurs as most are geared to younger entrepreneurs and minority groups. It was reported by a participant in the focus group that existing government grants like the Canada-Ontario Job Grant help employers to train new or existing employees but the grant does not allow for entrepreneurs/ employers to train themselves. One individual was able to enroll in a Small Business Program while she was collecting Employment Insurance and felt it was invaluable in assisting her with her business start-up.

“We’re older and I do believe that people who have mature careers and who are matured have a unique approach to life, to work, and they have different values and they have a practical wisdom that comes out that I don’t think we’re tapping in to and people can’t get there because they might need to re-credential or adjust a bit and they need the money for it.”

~ Interview Participant, Female Age 53

There was a reported lack of mentorship or support to advise individuals considering entrepreneurship. Some people may be forced into entrepreneurship due to a lack of available job opportunities and not everyone has the personality, desire or necessary skills required to be a successful entrepreneur. The economic and geographic location where one resides may affect the amount of services and resources that are available or that they have access to. In rural areas some business owners may operate in more than one location or have more than one business as a single business may not generate enough revenue to support their family. Entrepreneurs who are working on their own, or live in rural or remote areas, may also experience isolation and lack of peer interaction and support.

Barriers

The biggest barrier reported was the difficulty in raising capital to finance their business. Supporting themselves financially while building the business was another challenge. One participant commented on the reality that it takes time to build a business, and that new entrepreneurs need to understand this and plan for it.

“I think time is so critical when starting a business. Information and help has to be readily available because a person living off EI or his own savings or line of credit is going down fast financially. While savings are depleting and the bills are piling up, that money could have been used to start a business.”

~ Interview Participant, Male, Age 52

Some self-imposed barriers were also reported, and these related to their own insecurities such as self-doubt, or not believing in themselves. The challenge of acquiring additional education to support their new business endeavours was also reported. Many entrepreneurs require field-specific education or re-training to succeed in their new business areas, and there is also entrepreneurship-specific education that many choose to pursue. There are typically few

programs that will subsidize these costs, and many older entrepreneurs do not want to take out loans to finance their education (or re-education) and so have to personally finance these efforts. The reliance on personal financing can also be a barrier to some older entrepreneurs accessing the educational opportunities they need or want.

Discrimination

Participants reported a variety of experiences with discrimination. Some participants felt they were being discriminated against because of their age when they applied for jobs (or were let go from jobs), although it was never explicitly stated. Another felt it was difficult to convince employers of the value of experience. A female participant felt men are not supportive of women in business and a male participant believed there are more programs available to support women in business than men. This sentiment, and the quote below, harken back to the value of the women's groups reported above, and how there may be mixed perceptions of what they can bring to those who access them. Racism was also reported by a participant who felt he was being discriminated against by potential clients because he was not the same ethnicity as them, and by an Anglophone participant who is bilingual and living in Quebec but feels discriminated against by the French-speaking business community.

"I still think there is a bit of a glass ceiling for women who are entrepreneurs. I honestly don't think there is enough true business support for women, and we have all of these women's networking groups but I don't know if they deliver anything in terms of true business support."

~ Interview Participant, Female, Age 53

Discussion

General

This project sought to capture a snapshot of senior entrepreneurship in Canada to better understand the needs, experiences and interests of senior entrepreneurs. After hearing from over 180 individuals through an online survey, interviews and a focus group, it is clear that this group is driven and motivated, seeking a wide range of supports and services to accomplish their goals of beginning and operating their own businesses. With respect to these supports though, it is evident that there is a great deal of dispersion and variability in terms of the accessibility, relevance and clarity of support (i.e. financial or education programs for these individuals). Many respondents sought support, advice and training from many different groups or agencies, with varying levels of success. Ensuring that information is consistently and equitably accessible is critical to ensuring entrepreneurs of all ages in all parts of the country can benefit. Additionally, while there are common trends to be seen, senior entrepreneurs represent a highly diverse group with diverse needs. To effectively support older entrepreneurs, it is imperative to recognize that there are several generations represented by individuals 50+ resulting in significant heterogeneity within this group. It was clear from the focus group and interviews that every single entrepreneur's story is unique even though it may include some common features (i.e. engagement with banks of small business enterprise centres) along the way.

It cannot be overemphasized that a greater understanding and recognition of this diversity can help regional, provincial and national agencies provide more customized and tailored support, training and funding opportunities. This relates to the challenges many respondents reported about navigating the 'system' that is designed for youth entrepreneurs who, at their younger age, have had less time to diverge from their peers compared to older entrepreneurs. Pairing this customization with standardization of what is provided from provincially and/or federally managed service providers will ensure that all Canadian entrepreneurs can benefit from the supports their governments have put in place for them.

The Role of Labels

While the question was never explicitly asked, and so, not formally captured as part of the surveys, interviews or focus group, there were comments made throughout the project about the value (or lack thereof) of labels, with many respondents suggesting that segregating entrepreneurs into older and younger cohorts was not a helpful distinction. The research team, and indeed, the greater discourse on this topic, often uses 'senior' entrepreneur in the absence of a more descriptive or suitable term, but respondents found that term limiting, and in some ways, discriminating. Entrepreneurs of all ages share so many of the same challenges (e.g. to obtain funding, to market their idea, etc.) that a more unified strategy to support entrepreneurs would be valuable and would inherently support intergenerational and reciprocal mentorship.

Stakeholder Engagement/Recruitment

As described in the Methods section, the PC was successfully able to make connections to over 150 organizations and groups across every province and territory as part of the recruitment and study promotion efforts. However, this process proved more challenging than expected. The initial strategy was to share the study with large national organizations, associations and government groups that support senior entrepreneurs and request they send the email with the study outline and a request to post/circulate the survey links to their member organizations on behalf of the research team. It proved difficult to navigate through some of these websites and telephone directories in order to reach the appropriate individuals who may be in a position to support the project. This was a time consuming process and required a number of follow-up attempts before appropriate connections were made.

There was also great variation in the policies and procedures that were encountered as part of this effort. Some organizations were able to easily share the recruitment notice with their constituent groups, through their social media channels or passed it on to more appropriate disseminators within their networks. Others were not able to share the notice, but did not describe why it was not possible or provide any alternative offers of assistance. Others still charged a fee for this type of promotion even though there was a pre-existing collegial relationship with the Centre, or promised assistance but never followed through with it. Even though this recruitment phase was relatively short, only lasting a few months total, the research team also encountered scenarios where the contact point left the organization and therefore the connection was lost.

With respect to hosting focus groups or conducting interviews, the research team ran into the problem of geography from a logistical standpoint. The research team, being based out of Oakville, Ontario was able to physically host interview and focus groups within the Greater Toronto Area and could virtually facilitate them if they were physically hosted by another group across the country. Some contacted organizations expressed interest in hosting focus groups but commented on the difficulty of bringing people together physically in their more remote or rural areas. This problem is exacerbated by the lack of stable broadband internet in some of these areas, which would pose additional challenges for teleconferencing or group video calls as well.

These challenges are highlighted here not to fault any of the organizations contacted as part of the study; rather, the research team was very pleased to have made so many connections and expected a wide range of responses and interest levels in the work. However, the marked differences in how information can be shared across the country and within associations deserve consideration. If different arms of a national or provincial organization follow different policies to determine what information is shared and how, then how does a given individual (or in this case, entrepreneur) know they are receiving all the information relevant to their needs? How is consistency maintained across different departments or groups that otherwise collaborate very closely?

The challenge faced by the research team was reflected in the comments and experiences of the senior entrepreneurs. They too sought guidance, support and assistance from a large range of groups and associations, but felt that information was dispersed, and had differing levels of success with their outreach efforts. We believe there is value in recognizing these inconsistencies and checking any assumptions about how uniformly information is distributed or available in this space. Therefore, a key recommendation from this work is that services, information and support for this group of entrepreneurs be more standardized in terms of access and advertisement so that all entrepreneurs have the same ability to leverage the resources to support their endeavours.

Cultural Sensitivities and Differences

Canada is a vast country and its diversity is one of its strengths. While the research team made every attempt to ensure the language used in the survey and interview questions was culturally sensitive and inclusive, there was some feedback provided from a stakeholder in Iqaluit who believed that some of the survey questions might be offensive to Inuit entrepreneurs in Nunavut and how they perceived their roles as entrepreneurs. While the survey could not be changed at the time that this feedback was received, it highlighted a very important consideration for how research is conducted nationally. It is not sufficient to ensure that all Canadians have the opportunity to participate in research, and access to the resources/materials in order to do so. There also must be a concerted effort made to include a diverse group of stakeholders, representing multiple cultural groups from across the country, as part of the initial planning of projects. While difficult to accomplish from a logistical standpoint, this inclusive approach to research planning from the ideation stage will, hopefully, prevent situations such as the one described here. The end result was that the survey was not shared with that group of Inuit entrepreneurs, and their voices were not captured, which is a loss for the project and for the research area as a whole, not only because their experiences are still unknown, but because it also underestimates the size of this particular group. Additionally, translating materials into Canada's two official languages may not be sufficient as the team also was told that Nunavut residents might expect the materials to be available in Inuktitut. Consideration of Inuktitut and the other regional dialects that exist in Canada, and including researchers fluent in all these languages and dialects, would also be valuable for future research in this area.

Relatedly, and as described above, the label of 'senior entrepreneur' may have predisposed people to ignore this work from the beginning as they were wary of assumptions made by using the word senior. This may have also been a factor in the relatively high incompleteness rate we saw with the online survey. The challenge of labels or setting age ranges is one commonly observed in other work at the Centre; there will always be someone who believes that any limits or exclusion criteria set are wrong or restrictive, even when there may be a justified reason for including them. The field as a whole will have to come to some consensus about how to refer to these individuals in a way that is perceived as inclusive and neutral in order to continue the discourse in the most engaging way possible.

Overt and Covert Ageism

There was some suggestion by respondents across the survey, interviews and focus group that age discrimination does play a role in accessing financial resources and other supports. Many entrepreneurial initiatives, at least in Ontario, are targeted at young entrepreneurs. It may be that funders have not yet embraced the changing face of entrepreneurship and are caught up in ageist attitudes that are deeply embedded in the mindset of many people. In previous research conducted by the Centre for Elder Research (*Independence and Choice as We Age*, supported by Revera Inc.), ageism was deemed by study respondents to be the most socially accepted form of prejudice in contemporary society. Combating ageism is not an easy task but it must be addressed if we are truly going to accept and acknowledge the contributions of older adults, including senior entrepreneurs. This will require particular consideration; the general consensus from respondents was that segregating groups of entrepreneurs is not the correct approach, but there were benefits to senior-specific education and content, so policies and programs will have to be inclusive and mindful of the unique needs of entrepreneurs at all ages and stages.

Limitations

As referenced throughout this report, truly capturing a national picture of senior entrepreneurs is a difficult task, and the team acknowledges the limitations with respect to the generalizability of these findings, particularly given the small scale, short-term nature of this project. In particular, there were only a few French-speaking respondents, and similarly few respondents from many of the smaller provinces and the territories. While it was significant that we did hear from every province and territory, there is still much work to be done to ensure meaningful national representation. This study also did not differentiate between self-employment and entrepreneurship and instead took a broad and inclusive look at entrepreneurial activity within this demographic group. However, there are important differences between those types of activities and further research should consider them in more detail. Additionally, in the middle of the project timeline the Ontario college system unfortunately went through a 5-week labour dispute involving college faculty; as a college-based research centre, this impacted the research team and this project. While these were unique and unavoidable circumstances, the research team acknowledges that this situation did have an impact on the total number of respondents whose insight contributed to this project.

Specific Recommendations

Based on the results of this work, the research team makes the following specific recommendations to all stakeholders engaged in supporting senior entrepreneurs. The research team, and some participants as well, hope that these may be taken up and used to support this growing group of entrepreneurs.

- Standardize programs and services available to support this group and how they are advertised across the country.
- Design, implement and evaluate innovative models of, and support for, intergenerational mentorship.
- Consider changing the label 'senior entrepreneurs' and, instead, provide supports for all entrepreneurs regardless of age.
- Enhance communication between various stakeholders who have a vested interest in supporting this group (i.e. policy makers, career development professionals, funders, etc.) to ensure consistency of messaging and easier referrals between groups.
- Advocate for funding and other supports that do not restrict access to resources based on age.
- Provide career transition services for older workers who are leaving traditional jobs and are considering entrepreneurship as a viable alternative.
- Design training materials and resources for career development professionals and other service providers who might benefit from them to enable them to more effectively support their older clients.
- Promote the skills, wisdom and experience of older individuals and senior entrepreneurs to all members of our society and work to change the negative perceptions of aging through education.

“To me, I would see it as a lobbying group. An association where the job is to raise the business issues affecting mature entrepreneurs, and I would call them mature not elder or senior, and it would be along the lines of what we discussed around financing, around business investing, around age specific barriers like education.”

~ Female Interview Participant, Age 53

“I was kind of hopeful that your organization would be a little more political or at least have some form of lobby with the government and say look it's not just millennials it's not just innovation, electronics or computers, there's more to it than that... I'm hoping your information will have some impact on the government in a positive way to utilize it.”

~ Male Interview Participant, Age 61

“I am really pleased that you are doing this research and I hope it gets beyond the written page into something concrete because there is more and more in the media now about what lies ahead for older people and getting rid of the old model of working until you are 60 to 65 and then “retiring”...it gives people hope and aspiration, so I’m just glad you are doing that.”

~ Female Interview Participant, Age 72

This study reinforced the heterogeneity of older adults, in general, and specifically older entrepreneurs. The reasons why adults 50+ engage in entrepreneurial activity are varied and there is no ‘one size fits all’ method of support that responds to them as individuals or that addresses the unique characteristics and regional disparities across Canada. It is, however, certain that the number of older adults who launch their own businesses will continue to increase in the years to come. If local communities, regional groups, provincial and national organizations and other stakeholders who contribute to entrepreneurship in Canada can effectively support men and women who choose this route, there will surely be a positive impact on the overall engagement of older Canadians in the economy and in the social fabric of society.



Appendix A - Online Survey

Canadian Entrepreneurs 50+

You have been invited to share your thoughts in a survey to help us to learn more about new and established entrepreneurs 50+ living in Canada.

This nation-wide study is being conducted by the Centre for Elder Research, based at Sheridan College in Oakville, Ontario and is funded by the Canadian Education and Research Institute for Counselling (CERIC).

PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY

Individuals 50+ represent the fastest growing age demographic for start-ups in Canada and the trend continues to rise. Despite this, we know very little about older entrepreneurs. The purpose of this study is to address gaps in knowledge by investigating the experiences, needs and interests of new and established entrepreneurs 50+

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this survey will remain confidential. You will never be identifiable based on your data. Your personal data and notes will be associated with a code, which will be stored in a secure file accessible only by the Centre staff.

PROCEDURE

Once you click 'I agree' below, you will be taken to the survey and from there you can move through the questions. The entire survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The opportunity to complete this survey is available until November 30th, 2017.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There is the possibility that you may feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions asked in the survey. You are not required to answer any question if you feel uncomfortable doing so and you may close the survey window at any time.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

The results of this survey will help the Centre for Elder Research to learn more about the experiences of Canadian entrepreneurs 50+. The results will inform a report that will be made public with the intent that supports and counselling offered to older entrepreneurs truly reflect their needs and interests. This may be of interest to you or someone you know.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You are under no pressure to participate in the survey and, if you choose to participate you are free to stop at any time, with no penalty to yourself. You may also exercise the option of removing your data from the survey. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Pat Spadafora M.S.W., Director, Sheridan Centre for Elder Research Sheridan College, Ontario
905-845-9430, extension 8615; pat.spadafora@sheridancollege.ca

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Sheridan Research Ethics Board (SREB). If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:

Dr. Kirsten Madsen, Chair, Sheridan Research Ethics Board 905-845-9430, ext. 2795
kirsten.madsen@sheridancollege.ca
1430 Trafalgar Road, Oakville, Ontario L6H 2L1

Please note that this online survey is hosted by Survey Monkey which is a web survey company located in the USA. All responses to the survey will be stored and accessed in the USA. This company is subject to US laws, in particular the US Patriot Act that allows authorities access to the records of Internet Service Providers. If you choose to participate in the survey, you understand that your responses to the questions will be stored and accessed in the USA. The security and privacy policy for Survey Monkey can be viewed at <http://www.surveymonkey.com>.

*1. By clicking "I agree", you acknowledge that you have read and understand the information above and freely consent to participate in the survey.

- I agree
- I do not agree; I do not consent to participate

Canadian Entrepreneurs 50+

Section 1: Please tell us about yourself

2. What is your age?

- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70-79
- 80+

3. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Gender non-binary
- Prefer not to say

4. What is your marital status?

- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- Living with a partner
- Widowed
- Prefer not to say

5. What is the highest level of formal education you completed?

- Grade school or equivalent
- High school or equivalent
- Trade school
- College Diploma
- University Degree
- Post-graduate degree
- PhD

6. What location best describes the area where you live?

- In a rural area (under 50,000)
- Town/small city (51,000 - 150,000)
- Medium size city (151,000 - 400,000)
- Large city (Over 400,000)

7. In what province or territory do you live?

- British Columbia
- Alberta
- Saskatchewan
- Manitoba
- Ontario
- Quebec
- New Brunswick
- Nova Scotia
- Prince Edward Island
- Newfoundland and Labrador
- Nunavut
- Yukon
- Northwest Territories

8. Which of the following best describes your current living arrangements?

- Own a house/condo
- Rent a house/condo/apartment
- Live with family
- Live with friend(s)
- Live in a retirement residence or community
- Other (Please specify below)

9. What language(s) do you speak at home?

10. If the primary language spoken at home is not English, how would you best describe your understanding of English?

- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Very poor
- Not applicable

11. Where were you born (country)?

12. If you were born outside of Canada, how many years have you lived in Canada?

- 0-4
- 5-9
- 10-14
- 15+
- Not applicable

13. What is your current annual household income?

- Under \$45,000
- \$46,000- \$90,000
- \$91,000 - \$140,000
- \$141,000 - \$200,000
- More than \$200,000
- Prefer not to say

Section 2: Your experience as an entrepreneur

There are many ways in which one can be a business entrepreneur. We recognize that many individuals may have been engaged in entrepreneurial activities throughout their lives.

For the purposes of this study, however, ***we are specifically interested in new businesses and entrepreneurial activities that were established after the age of 50.***

14. Do you think of yourself as a new or established entrepreneur?

- New (I am actively exploring a defined business idea)
- Established (I have considered myself an entrepreneur for less than 5 years)
- Established (I have considered myself an entrepreneur for more than 5 years)

15. Considering your business and entrepreneurial activity that began after the age of 50, at what age did you start your current business?

- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70-79
- 80+
- I do not have my own business and am in the process of exploring a defined business idea

16. How long have you owned your current business?

- Less than a year
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- More than 10 years
- I do not have my own business and am in the process of exploring a defined business idea

17. How confident were you in your ability to succeed when you first started your business?

- Very confident
- Confident
- Somewhat confident
- Not particularly confident
- Not at all confident
- Not applicable at this time

18. Is this the first business you have launched (or are actively exploring) at any age?

- Yes
- No, I have started 1 or more businesses prior to the age of 50

19. How important were the following factors in your decision to start a new business after the age of 50?

	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important at all	N/A
I was interested in continuing to use my skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I needed/wanted to generate an income	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I wanted to try something different from what I had done in my previous working life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have always wanted to have my own business but didn't have an opportunity until now	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I wanted to contribute to my community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I started/owned businesses in the past and wanted to start a new one	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had to leave my previous employer/career (for any reason)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I wanted greater ownership and control of my work and lifestyle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was looking for something new in retirement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A new opportunity presented itself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please describe)

Section 3: Your business

20. Which of the following sectors best describes your current business? (Please select all that apply)

- Finance/banking
- Technology
- Real estate
- Health care
- Legal
- Arts sector
- Food industry
- Communications
- Entertainment
- Consulting
- Agriculture
- Social entrepreneurship
- Community development
- Manufacturing
- Education
- Energy/environment
- E-commerce
- I do not have my own business at this time
- Other (please specify)

21. How many paid employees do you have (not including yourself)?

- 0
- 1-19
- 20-50
- 51-99
- 100-499
- 500+
- I do not currently have my own business

22. How do you operate your business?

- Online
- Face-to-face
- Both online and face-to-face
- Not applicable at this time

23. How is your current business structured? (Please select all that apply)

- Sole proprietorship
- Partnership
- Corporation
- Co-operative
- Franchise
- For profit
- Not for profit
- Not applicable at this time

24. How many hours a week does your business operate?

- As required/on a contract basis
- Under 24
- More than 24 (full time)
- Not applicable at this time

25. On average, what is the annual gross revenue of your business?

- Pre-revenue
- 0 - \$50,000
- \$50,000 - \$100,000
- \$100,000 - \$250,000
- \$250,000 - \$500,000
- \$500,000 - \$1,000,000
- Over \$1,000,000
- Not applicable at this time

26. The income from my business allows me, or would allow me, to do the following (please select all that apply):

- Pay for my basic needs (food, shelter, transportation health)
- Pay off outstanding debts (e.g. mortgage)
- Give back/support my community
- Engage in recreational and travel pursuits
- Re-invest in my business to scale up/continue to grow
- Create a financial safety net for my future
- Start another new business/venture
- Support family members
- Other (please describe)

Canadian Entrepreneurs 50+

Section 4: Starting your business

27. Did you access services (in-person, by phone or online) from any of the following organizations to assist you in starting or growing your business? (Please select all that apply)

- Banks
- Financial institutions other than banks
- Small business enterprise centres
- Career counselling organizations
- Employment centres
- Economic development offices
- Chambers of commerce
- Better business bureaus
- Libraries
- Educational institutions (colleges/universities)
- Newcomer information services
- Ethno-specific organizations
- Regional innovation centres
- Not applicable at this time
- Other (please specify)

28. Building on the previous question, which of the following services/resources did you make use of?

(Please select all that apply)

- I connected with a business mentor
- I obtained a financial advisor
- I participated in a webinar
- I took a course/workshop
- I obtained a new credential
- I used business planning tools
- I consulted with family and friends
- I looked for information on the internet
- I followed appropriate groups/people on social media (blogs, Twitter, etc.)
- I connected with networking groups
- I connected with an ethno-specific organization that assists business start-ups
- I sought legal advice
- I connected with investors
- I read books/explored other resources about entrepreneurship/building a business
- Not applicable at this time
- Other (please specify)

29. Which areas of information/advice/training did you find the most helpful in assisting you with starting or growing your business?

	Very helpful	Helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not very helpful	N/A
Financial	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Registering a new business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tax laws	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Government regulations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bookkeeping	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Legal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business model development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marketing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sales	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Raising capital/attracting investments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Human resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Peer support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coach/mentor support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E-commerce	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technical/IT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)					

30. How easy was it to access the supports/services that benefited your business?

- Very easy
- Easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Difficult
- I have not yet attempted to access supports/services

31. Were there gaps in support that you needed/wanted?

- Yes, many
- Yes, a few
- I'm not sure
- No
- Not applicable at this time
- If you responded "Yes", please describe the gaps you encountered:

32. How important were the following factors in contributing to your success to-date?

	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	N/A
My ready access to capital	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My accumulated work experience and expertise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My network of contacts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My knowledge of customer needs/customer service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My willingness to take risks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My schedule (e.g. I had more free time to devote to my business)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My reputation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My timing (e.g. my business sector is growing)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My geographic home base	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My perseverance and determination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

33. Did you experience any of the following types of discrimination in establishing/growing your business after the age of 50? (Please select all that apply)

- I was refused financing because of my age
- There were services that I would have liked to access but they were available only to youth entrepreneurs
- It was hard to establish a customer base because of my age
- People assumed that I wouldn't be competitive because of my age
- People assumed I had nothing to contribute
- I wasn't discriminated against; I was valued because of my experience
- The services I accessed didn't reflect the particular skills and concerns of older entrepreneurs
- The process for navigating the 'system' as an older entrepreneur was less defined than it was for younger entrepreneurs
- Not applicable
- Other (please specify)

34. How can older entrepreneurs support each other for mutual benefit? (Please select all that apply)

- Promoting each other's businesses
- As peer mentors
- Sharing services, space and/or resources
- Sharing learning and ideas with age peers
- It shouldn't only be older entrepreneurs supporting each other; we should foster intergenerational mentoring
- Other (please specify)

Canadian Entrepreneurs 50+

Thank you for your participation!

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete our survey. We will be analyzing the data from this survey and preparing a final report about the status of entrepreneurs 50+ in Canada.

As part of this project, we will be conducting additional focus groups and stakeholder interviews.

If you might be interesting in sharing more details of your entrepreneurship journey, and are willing to be contacted by our research team, please leave us your email address in the box below. Between now and the end of November 2017 we may reach out to invite you to participate in additional research.

(Your email will not be shared or added to any database other than for the purposes of this project.)

35. Email address:

Thank you once again!

Appendix B - Interview Questions

Thank you for taking the time to speak to us about your experience as an entrepreneur. You may notice that some of these questions mirror ones we asked you in the survey. The purpose of this interview is to get more in-depth stories and information than we can get from an online survey.

1. Tell me a little bit about your business.
2. Tell me about how your business is structured.
3. Tell me about factors you considered when you started your own business?
4. Tell me about any organizations that helped you grow or start your business.
5. Which areas of information/advice/training did you find most helpful in assisting you with starting or growing your business?
6. How easy was it to access the support/services that benefited your business?
7. Were there any gaps in support that you needed/wanted?
8. Did you encounter any barriers? Were there any factors that facilitated this process?
9. Did you experience discrimination of any type in establishing/growing your business?
10. How can older entrepreneurs support each other?
11. If you were to imagine an ideal support system for older entrepreneurs, what would that look like?
12. Based upon your experience, if you were to do this over again, is there something you would do differently? And, is there anything you wish you had known in the beginning?

Appendix C - Focus Group Questions

Thank you for taking the time to speak to us about your experience as entrepreneurs. Please introduce yourself by stating your name, business sector and number of years' experience as an entrepreneur.

1. Tell us about factors you considered when you started your own business?
2. Tell us about any organizations that helped you grow or start your business.
3. Which areas of information/advice/training did you find most helpful in assisting you with starting or growing your business?
4. How easy was it to access the support/services that benefited your business?
5. Were there any gaps in support that you needed/wanted?
6. Did you encounter any barriers? Were there any factors that facilitated this process?
7. Did you experience discrimination of any type in establishing/growing your business?
8. How can older entrepreneurs support each other?
9. If you were to imagine an ideal support system for older entrepreneurs, what would that look like?
10. Based upon your experience, if you were to do this over again, is there something you would do differently? And, is there anything you wish you had known in the beginning?

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