

Supporting Social Health in Canada

A Case for Canada's First
Endowed Chair in Social Health



WHAT IS SOCIAL HEALTH?

Social Health (*noun*)

The dimension of an individual's well-being that relates to their relationships and interactions with others — encompassing the sufficiency of their social networks, the quality of their relationships, and their ability to form positive and meaningful connections with others in all areas of their life.

“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

- Constitution of World Health Organization, 1946



THE PROBLEM

Why is investment in social health necessary?

Healthy social relationships are the most important predictor of health, happiness, and wellbeing. Yet, public health programs in Canada consistently fail to prioritize our social connections.

80%

Proportion of health outcomes attributable to non-medical determinants of wellbeing.

50%

Increase in odds of premature death for individuals who have poor social health.

40%

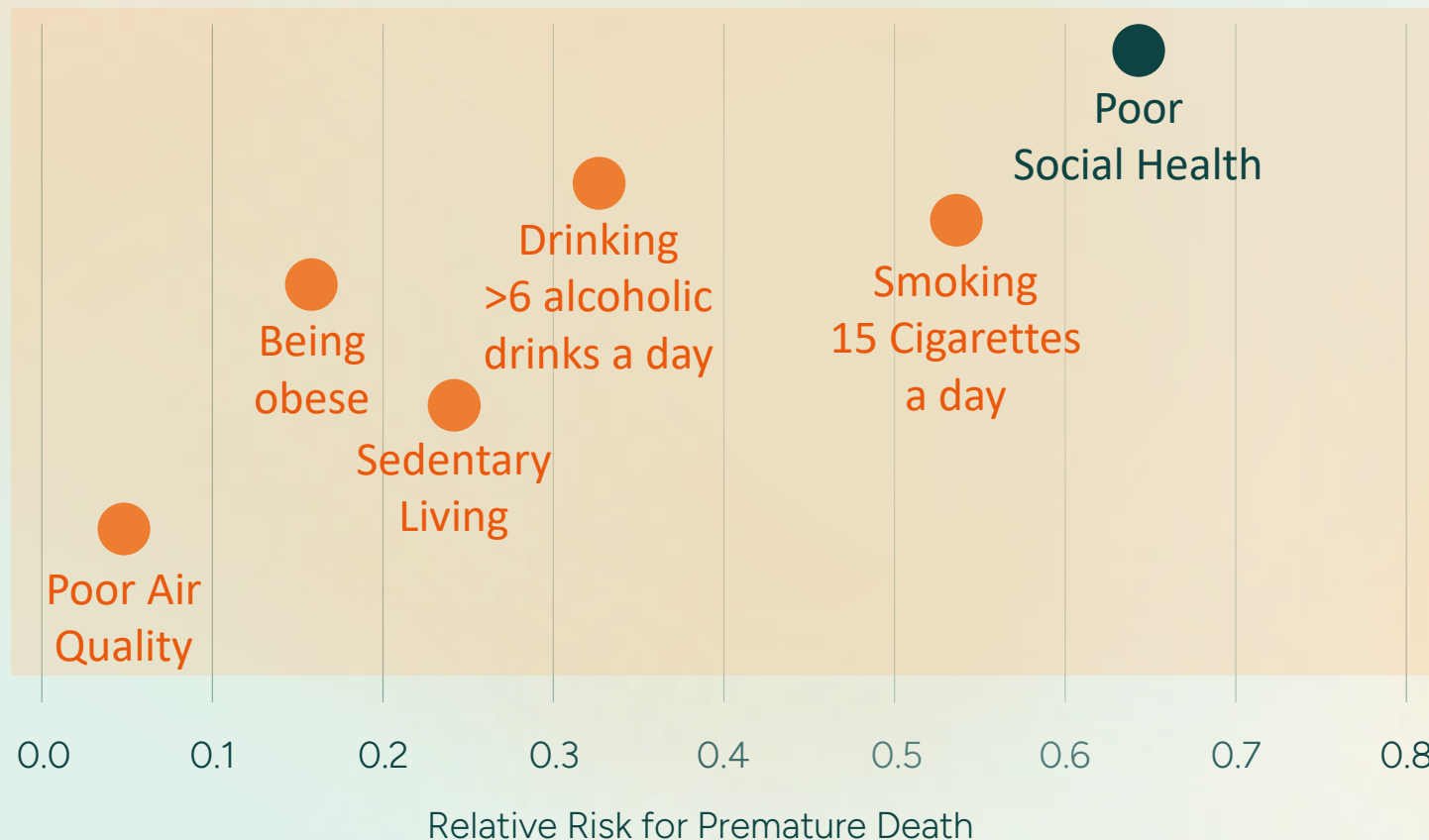
Proportion of Canadians who report that they feel lonely some or all of the time.

5%

Proportion of healthcare spending dedicated to health promotion and prevention.

Most of us under-estimate the importance of social connection and that mistake is killing us.

Poor social health is worse than obesity, smoking, binge drinking, and sedentary living.



Hundreds of studies spanning multiple decades and representing millions of patients consistently show that poor social health is one of the leading causes of premature death.

Social health isn't just about health.

Social health is the cornerstone of a functioning society.

When people are alienated from their neighbours, social trust rapidly erodes. As social trust erodes, democracies cease to function. When democracies cease to function, people break into factions. Tribalism takes hold and the downward spiral begins.

But the converse is also true. When people connect with those in their community, they build trust. Trust allows governments and communities to get things done. Getting things done builds a sense of optimism and connection. People come together, and our societies take flight.



“If the way we built our communities, designed our policies, and structured our lives was conducive to healthy social relationships, we wouldn’t have a loneliness crisis.”

- Prof. Kiffer G. Card, PhD



Research Activities Supported by The Endowed Chair In Social Health.

The overall goal of Dr. Card's program of research is to equitably promote social health and wellbeing through a whole-of-society approach that brings together theoretical rigour, empirical evidence, and lived experience to identify the most effective, feasible, and low-barrier strategies that foster inclusion, belonging, and social cohesion.

1

Uncover the key biological, psychological, and social factors that contribute to poor social health.

2

Identify, implement, and evaluate interventions that prevent loneliness and social isolation in every sector.

3

Make the case for the personal and societal benefits of taking action to build connected communities.

4

Educate policy makers, professionals, and the general public about the importance of social connection.

5

Support the knowledge-to-practice pipeline by providing expertise to organizations and communities.

6

Convene scholars, community leaders, and other practitioners to advance the field of social health.



Chair in Social Health

Kiffer G. Card, PhD

Dr. Card is an expert on the social and environmental determinants of health and wellbeing. Currently, he serves as the Scientific Director of the Canadian Alliance for Social Connection and Health, President and Chair for the Mental Health and Climate Change Alliance, President of the Island Sexual Health Community Health Centre, Director of Research for GenWell, and an Assistant Professor with the Faculty of Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University.

By the Numbers

(2016 – Present)

Dr. Card's Track Record

56

Number of staff and students supported or supervised.

9

Number of non-profit organizations supported.

\$8.4 million

Total research funding received as the lead principal investigator – in addition to the \$17.2 million dollars he has received as a collaborator or co-investigator.

63

Number of successful grants that Dr. Card has collaborated on.

9

Number of courses taught by Dr. Kiffer Card

96

Number of peer reviewed academic publications co-authored.

95

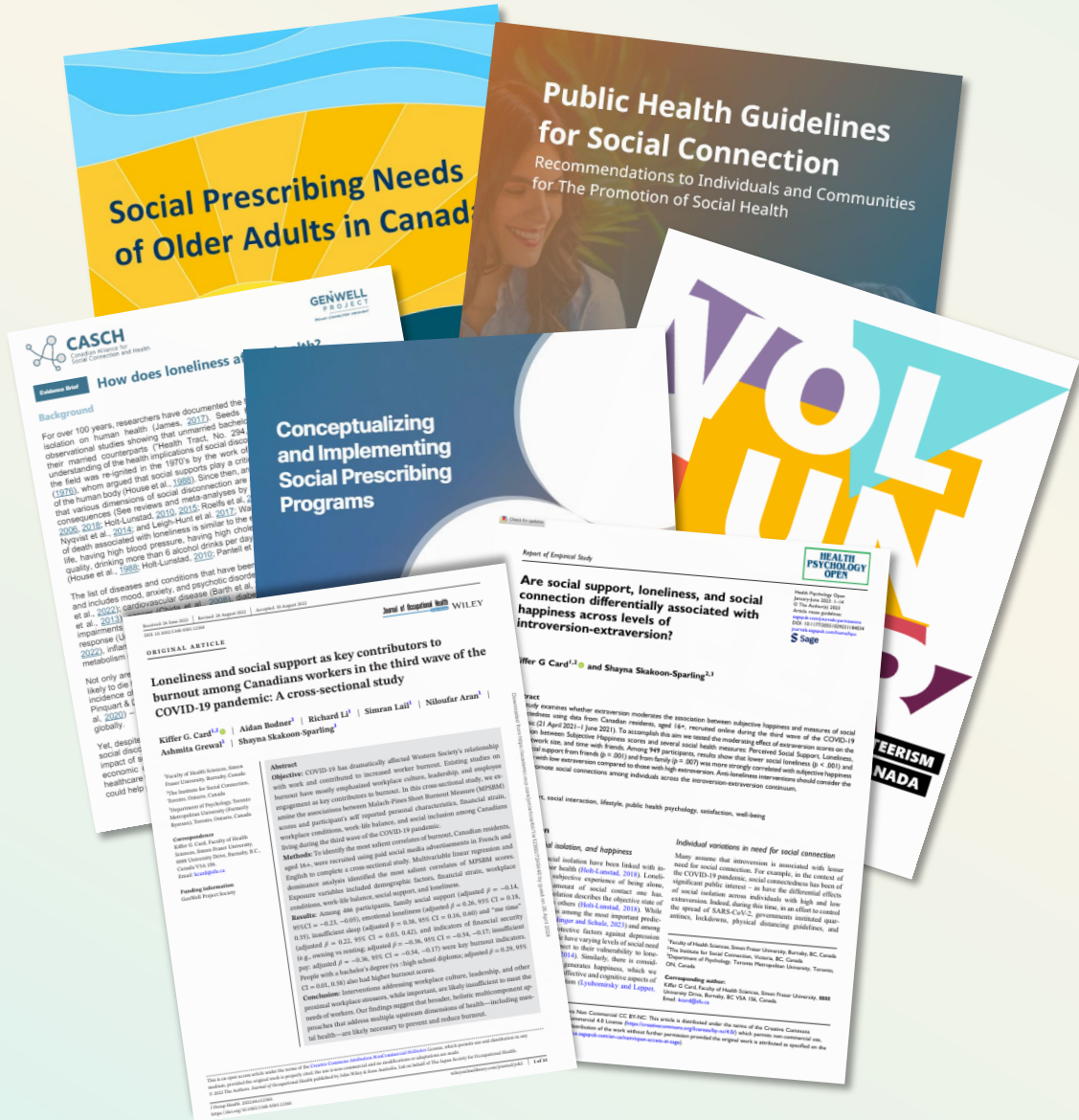
Number of lay reports, evidence briefs, and other publications co-authored

157

Number of conference presentations and posters co-presented.

84

Number of television, print, and audio interviews in news and media outlets.



More than numbers.

Dr. Card leads the Healthy Ecologies and Lifestyles (HEAL) Lab at Simon Fraser University where his community-based research program aims to conduct “science that heals.” Guided by this aim, Dr. Card focuses on applied public health challenges facing real people and communities across Canada. By working alongside them, Dr. Card is able to do research that can immediately inform policy and practice.

Thus, Dr. Card is not only an extremely productive and prolific writer, but his research is making a real difference.

Key Partnerships & Collaborations

As a community-based, interdisciplinary researcher, Dr. Card works closely with a wide range of organizations across Canada to ensure that his research meets their needs.





Cost of Supporting the Chair

Dr. Kiffer Card is a grant-tenure professor with the Faculty of Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University. Grant-tenure professors differ from traditional faculty because only 20% of their salary is supported centrally by the University. This allows Dr. Card to engage in novel forms of research and scholarship – enabling him to partner with communities and organizations to advance their unique needs and interests. Unfortunately, it also means that the remaining 80% of his salary must be secured on an annual basis.

The endowment of this chair will provide core, stable funding that will allow Dr. Card to focus his efforts on advancing the social health of individuals and communities across Canada.

\$5 million

Target endowment level for the creation of a permanently funded Chair in Social Health.

\$167,125

Projected lifetime average annual cost to maintain the Endowed Chair in Social Health.

If you are interest in sponsoring the Endowed Chair in Social Health, Please Contact Dr. Kiffer Card at kcard@sfu.ca.

