



# OM:NI Evaluation: Summary for participants

## What was the research about?

In 2021, La Trobe University was contracted by COTA Victoria to conduct an evaluation of the Older Men: New Ideas (OM:NI) program. To complete this evaluation, the researchers:

1. Reviewed background information about OM:NI, including documents about its history and the OM:NI manual
2. Conducted a desktop review using the Google Scholar database to search for literature about “best practice” ways of engaging men in group-based social activities and programs
3. Conducted a focus group and interviews with 6 members of the OM:NI Advisory Committee (OAC)
4. Conducted interviews with 14 OM:NI Group Contacts (GCs)
5. Conducted a survey with 80 OM:NI participants (present and past)

The research aimed to find out about what was currently working well within OM:NI (Strengths), what needed improving or changing (Weaknesses), what ideas the men had about helping OM:NI thrive in the future (Opportunities), and things the men thought might threaten the sustainability of OM:NI (Threats).

## Key insights from the OM:NI participant survey

Most of the men who participated in the survey were:

- aged in their 70s (62%)
- born in Australia (77%)
- well educated (44% of participants had university level education and 22% had a trade or business qualification)
- retired (98%)
- married or in a relationship (83%)
- living in the eastern (44%) and northern (37%) suburbs of Melbourne
- currently attending an OM:NI group (98%).

Most men heard about OM:NI from somebody they knew (34%) or from a community noticeboard/directory/newsletter (31%).

The top 3 reasons that men were attracted to OM:NI were:

- I was looking for a social activity (17%)
- The activities of the group were interesting to me (16%)
- I was looking to meet new people (16%)

The top 3 reasons that men were motivated to attend OM:NI were:

- Socialisation with other men (47%)
- Intellectual discussion and enrichment (23%)
- Interest and enjoyment (17%)

There were high levels of agreement (78-88%) that:

- participants felt happy and supported and connected to others after attending OM:NI
- OM:NI helped participants develop and maintain friendships
- OM:NI is a space where participants can discuss their needs and have their voice heard among friends

Most participants were satisfied (or strongly satisfied) with:

- OM:NI's ability to meet their needs (89%)
- the location of their OM:NI group (88%)
- the activities and discussions of their OM:NI group (83%)
- how their group is currently run (91%)
- the social connections they have made through OM:NI (84%)
- their overall experience with OM:NI (93%)



## What did we find out?

<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OM:NI is highly valued by the participants, the GCs, the OAC, and by COTA Victoria. OM:NI makes a meaningful difference in the lives of the men who participate.</li> <li>• The OM:NI structure provides a good basis for the meetings, and it can be tailored to suit each local group.</li> <li>• It's important to have a male-only format.</li> <li>• OM:NI helps the participants make friends and social connections. It helps older men become mates.</li> </ul>
<b>Weaknesses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COTA Victoria has limited capacity to financially support ongoing recruitment or growth of OM:NI.</li> <li>• Communication between COTA Victoria, the OAC, GCs, and participants needs improving. There needs to be a clearer shared vision about OM:NI.</li> <li>• Group facilitators need support to ensure groups run smoothly and the discussion topics are engaging.</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clearer and more focussed strategy is needed for marketing, promotion, and recruitment of OM:NI.</li> <li>• More socialisation activities could be offered.</li> <li>• Local organisations (like councils and community centres) might be able to partner with OM:NI groups to help with securing venues, promotion of OM:NI, and recruitment.</li> <li>• Videoconferencing could provide a platform for a new type of 'virtual' OM:NI group. This should be offered as an extra group, not as a replacement for current face-to-face groups.</li> </ul>
<b>Threats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of continuous and ongoing recruitment</li> <li>• Lack of succession planning for OM:NI leaders (OAC, GCs, facilitators)</li> <li>• Lack of OM:NI participants willing to take on leadership roles</li> </ul>

## What is the next step?

A detailed report of the evaluation has been given to COTA Victoria. They will consider the report and what actions to take next.

## Thank you

To all the men who participated in the evaluation, thank you for your time, effort, and the information you provided. Your involvement was highly valued and most appreciated.