

Aging and Adult Services Area Agency on Aging (AAA)

Older Adult Needs Assessment:

Executive Summary

Introduction

Persons over the age of 60 currently represent 28 percent of the Marin population¹ and it is projected that this group will account for 37 percent of the county's residents by 2030.² Through community involvement and engagement, the Area Agency on Aging (AAA), a part of HHS Aging and Adult Social Services, conducts a needs assessment every four years to inform its Area Plan, develop funding strategies, identify gaps in services and determine goals. The following is a summary of the needs assessment conducted in 2019 to inform the AAA's 2020-2024 Area Plan. This assessment represents a point-in-time portrait of older adults in Marin County. Next steps include gathering additional data from other local, state and national sources and obtaining input from community partners.

Methodology

The AAA contracted with Davis Research to conduct a needs assessment of Marin's older adult residents (60+) to better understand their current needs and concerns utilizing a randomized telephone assessment. Questions were developed by the Marin County Commission on Aging, AAA staff, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the California Department of Aging, with input from community partners and Davis Research. Four hundred, a number commonly accepted as the gold standard for research purposes, telephone surveys were completed between Aug. 14 – Sept. 5, 2019; 202 conducted via a landline and 198 conducted via mobile telephone. The average interview length was 17 minutes. Persons receiving calls were randomly selected from the older adult population (age 60+), meaning that the results of this assessment provide generalizable results of their needs and concerns. Using data from the American Community Survey for demographic baseline purposes, Davis Research sampling includes a representative sample of gender, race, ethnicity and income levels. In the cases of race and income; weighting was used in analysis when needed. Significance testing was performed at a 95 percent confidence interval.

The results of this survey use the following definitions:

- Food security: The USDA defines food insecurity as “limited access to adequate food for an active, healthy life due to a lack of money or other resources.” To determine the food insecurity of older adults, the AAA utilized the two Validated Hunger Vital Sign screening questions. A person needed to answer “some of the time” or “all of the time” at least one of the following:
 - Within the past 12 months, I was worried whether our food would run out before I got money to buy more.
 - Within the past 12 months the food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more.
- Low-income: Three hundred percent (300 percent) of the Federal Poverty Level (in 2019, \$37,470 for one person; \$50,730 for a couple). Twenty-five percent of adults 60+ fall in this category.
- Frail: Indicating needing “some” or “a lot” of help in three or more Activities of Daily Living (ADLs). ADLs include needing help with shopping, cooking, showering, housework, etc.
- People of Color (POC): Includes all races not Caucasian/ White.

¹ American Community Survey 2013-2017 Available at: <http://factfinder.census.gov/>

² California Department of Finance. Marin County Projections. 2019. Available at: <http://www.dof.ca.gov>

Data Results

Demographics of respondents matched those available in the American Community Survey (ACS 2013-2017)³ and Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMs).⁴ Other notable results found that: 6 percent of older adults are frail and 2 percent qualify for the AAA's home delivered meal program. Four percent identify as being LGBTQ+. Sixty-three percent of older adults in Marin say that their health is very good or excellent and 69 percent rate their quality of life as being very good or excellent.

Concerns: Respondents were asked their potential level of concern on 17 issues, ranging from affording housing to being isolated. The five most frequently indicated concerns were relatively consistent across age, race and income levels: 1. Climate change; 2. Disasters such as fire, flood or earthquake; 3. Affording healthcare; 4. Losing memory/ cognition; 5. Financial security. Among those 75 years or older, their third highest concern was crime, financial abuse and scams.

Transportation: Ninety-two percent reported having the transportation that they needed all of the time. Ninety-three percent of all of those surveyed still drive. This percentage decreases depending on age; 77 percent of those 85+ are driving. Six percent of older adults surveyed reported transportation as being a concern.

Falls: One-third of older adults reported falling during the past year. Of these, 7 percent called 911 as a result of their fall and 20 percent reported going to the emergency department. Nine percent of all respondents indicated that falling was a concern.

Emergency Preparedness: Disasters was the second most frequently indicated concern among older adults (25 percent). Approximately 50 percent have prepared a disaster bag for their home and 38 percent said they have prepared a kit that can be easily transported, like a go bag. The majority of older adults (59 percent) stated that they did not have a specific communication plan if they were separated from their family or caregiver during an emergency.

Nutrition: Eating alone all of the time is an indicator of potential social isolation, which can lead to depression and poor physical and emotional health outcomes. Fifteen percent of all older adults report eating alone all of the time. Ten percent of Marin's older adults report being food insecure. Twenty-five percent of Marin's older adults are at risk of food insecurity as they are low-income (below 300 percent FPL). The Elder Economic Security Index was developed to assess the threshold income for older adults to afford all aspects of daily living, including food, healthcare, housing, transportation, etc. Those who are low-income must make choices as to what they are able to purchase with their given income to be self-sufficient, including food. Making these choices daily is an indicator of being at risk for being food insecure.

Caregiving: Twenty percent of respondents reported being an unpaid caregiver to an older adult or an adult with a disability. Of these, men and women were equally likely to report being a caregiver. Older adults of mid to high income were significantly more likely to report being a caregiver (26 percent vs. 9 percent). Fifty percent reported providing daily care to a family member or friend. Thirty-five percent reported feeling physical stress associated with caregiving, 54 percent reported feeling emotional stress and 21 percent reported feeling financial stress.

³ American Community Survey 2013-2017 Available at: <http://factfinder.census.gov/>

⁴ Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, Jose Pacas and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 9.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V9.0>

Differences among populations:

Gender: Women state that they have sometimes or often felt excluded or devalued because of their age (since turning 60) significantly more than men (29 percent vs. 17 percent). While their frequently indicted concerns rank the same as men, they express a significantly higher rate of concern on most of the listed issues. Men report receiving more help for daily tasks from their spouses than women (33 percent vs. 9 percent) in Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) They receive more help from other family members and friends. Women are three times as likely to eat alone all of the time than men (21 percent vs. 7 percent).

Age: Marin County residents over the age of 75 tend to live more isolated lives. They are more likely to live alone, eat alone and have less daily social interactions. Eighty-two percent of those aged 75 and higher cite Social Security as a source of income, while only 25 percent of those 60-64 and 63 percent of those 65-74 state the same.

Race: People of color (POC) were more than twice as likely to be food insecure in comparison to white adults (21 percent vs. 8 percent). Nineteen percent felt that they were not respected as members of their community compared to three percent of white adults. Of those who are unpaid caregivers, POC are almost twice as likely to provide daily care versus their white counterparts (88 percent vs. 45 percent). Approximately half (50 percent) of POC are still employed for pay vs. 38 percent of their white counterparts and 19 percent have looked for employment in the past year without finding a job - almost five times more than older white adults at four percent.

Income: Those who are low-income reported that their quality of life and health were poorer than those who were mid to high income (health: 26 percent vs. 7 percent; quality of life 27 percent vs. 4 percent). Fourteen percent reside in low-income housing. Affording housing and affording healthcare is twice as concerning for those who are low-income compared to those mid to high income (27 percent vs 11 percent; 14 percent vs. 8 percent). Over half of low-income adults are living alone (57 percent), two times more than mid to high income adults. They have less frequent face-to-face interaction than those mid to high income adults and are more likely to report that they eat alone all of the time (33 percent vs. 7 percent). They are more likely to state that they don't feel respected as a member of the community as those mid to high income.

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