

The Status of Older Adults in the North Central Mountain Region (Region 12)

Colorado Adults 60 and Older

Year/Data	Number	% of total population
Census 2000: ²	560,658	13.0%
Projected 2004: ³	619,973	13.4%
Projected 2008: ³	717,526	14.5%
Projected 2012: ³	851,946	16.0%
Projected 2020: ³	1,159,587	18.9%

Colorado is aging. And, adults 60 and older will become an **even larger share of the population** as the baby boom generation begins to turn 60 in 2006.

The increasing number and percent of older adults in Colorado present new **opportunities** and **challenges** to communities—and health and human service providers—across the state:

- A **larger number of older adults** will be available to contribute to the community as volunteers, board members, community leaders, employees, and caregivers.
- An **increasing number of frail older adults** will need services to meet significant health care, housing, transportation, and other needs.

To help communities prepare to meet the opportunities and challenges that lay ahead, the **Colorado Department of Human Services, Aging and Adult Services Division**, conducted a statewide telephone survey of 8,903 adults 60 and older to identify their strengths and needs. The results show that Colorado older adults are a diverse group—some with many **strengths**, others with multiple **needs**.⁵ This status report summarizes the key findings of the *Strengths and Needs Assessment of Older Adults in the State of Colorado—North Central Mountain Region*.

An Elder-Friendly Community

The results of Colorado's statewide strengths and needs assessment are reinforced by the *AdvantAge Initiative 2003 National Survey of Older Adults*. That survey found that, while the majority of older adults in the United States are thriving, a small, but sizeable minority—the **“Frail Fraction”**—is struggling.¹ In planning for the future, communities must address both aspects of their aging population.

A community that is prepared to both meet the needs and cultivate the strengths of its older population is considered to be **elder-friendly**.¹ This *Status of Older Adults* report presents information that identifies areas of **strength** as well as areas of **concern** of Region 12 adults 60 and older. It identifies key areas where communities can make a difference in the lives of older adults by creating an **elder-friendly community** that:

- **Addresses basic needs.**
- **Optimizes physical and mental health and well-being.**
- **Promotes social and civic engagement.**
- **Maximizes independence for frail and disabled; supports caregivers.**¹

For more information about the survey upon which this report is based, contact the Colorado Department of Human Services, Aging and Adult Services Division, at 303.866.2800; <http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/ADRS/AAS/index1.html>



The Alpine Area Agency on Aging is the Area Agency on Aging—as defined by the Older Americans Act—for the North Central Mountain Region. Our mission is to Identify Needs, Provide Programs and Services, and Increase Community Awareness to promote the Dignity, Independence, and Well Being of Region XII's Older Citizens. We serve persons sixty and older and their caregivers in Eagle, Grand, Jackson, Pitkin, and Summit counties.

Basic Needs



Housing



- ◆ Overall, 6% (659)⁶ of Region 12 adults 60 and older reported a **problem having housing suited to their needs**; 0% of older Hispanics; 5% of older adults with income less than \$15,000.⁴
- ◆ 17.9% (987) of Region 12 adults 60 and older **do not own their own home**.²
- ◆ 24.1% (1,222) of older adults in Region 12 **live alone**. Older women are much more likely to live alone than older men.⁴
- ◆ It is estimated that 4% (433)⁶ of older adults with income less than \$15,000 are **at risk of institutionalization**.⁴

- ◆ 94% of Region 12 adults 60 and older reported **no problem having housing suited to their needs**.⁴
- ◆ Overall, 82.1% of Region 12 householders 60 and older **own their own home**; 81.2% of Region 12 householders 60–64; 62.3% of those 85 and older.⁴
- ◆ 68.2% (3,455) of Region 12 adults 65 and older live in family households with a spouse or other relative.²
- ◆ 91% of adults 65 and older in the U.S. want to continue living in their own homes, in their own communities, for as long as possible.¹

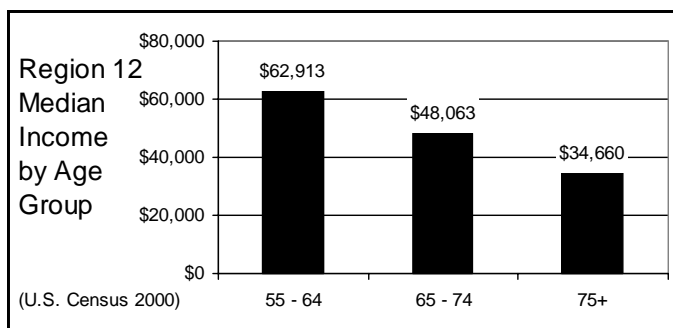


Finances



- ◆ 991 Region 12 adults 65 and older were poor or “near poor” in 1999.⁴
- ◆ 20% (2,323)⁶ of Region 12 adults 60 and older reported having **financial problems** in the last 12 months; 25% of women 60 – 74; 31% of older Hispanics.⁴
- ◆ 6.3% (320) of adults 65 and older had **income below the federal poverty level** in 1999; 19.7% had **income below 200% of the poverty level**.²
- ◆ Poverty rates were substantially higher for older women than men and the levels and differentials increased with age.⁴
- ◆ 24% (2,802)⁶ of older adults reported **problems affording needed medications**; 62% of older Hispanics; 28% of older adults with income less than \$15,000.⁴
- ◆ 2% (276)⁶ of older adults reported a **problem affording enough food to eat**. Some had problems affording needed items such as eyeglasses (5%), hearing aids (4%), or dentures (4%).⁴

- ◆ 80% of Region 12 adults 60 and older said **finances had been no problem** in the past year.⁴
- ◆ The **median household income** of Region 12 adults 65–74 was \$48,063 in 1999; for those 75 and older it was \$34,660.²
- ◆ 76% of adults 60 and older said they had **no problem affording needed medications**.⁴
- ◆ Most older adults said they could afford needed items such as eyeglasses (95%), hearing aids (96%), or dentures (96%).⁴
- ◆ 98% said they **had not had a problem affording enough food to eat**.⁴





Safety



- ◆ 1% (153)⁶ of Region 12 adults 60 and older reported that **being physically or emotionally abused** had been a problem in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 3% (380)⁶ said being a **victim of crime** had been a problem in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 13% (1,489)⁶ said being **financially exploited** had been a problem in the past year.⁴

- ◆ 99% of Region 12 adults 60 and older said that **being physically or emotionally abused had not been a problem** in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 97% said **being a victim of crime had not been a problem** in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 87% said **being financially exploited had not been a problem** in the past year.⁴



Nutrition



- ◆ 5% (574)⁶ of older adults reported **having enough food to eat was a problem** in the last year.
- ◆ 14% of adults 60 and older with income less than \$15,000 reported **needing help to get enough or the right kinds of food to eat**; 30% of men 85 and older.⁴
- ◆ 8% (934)⁶ of adults 60 and older said they **do not eat two or more complete meals** a day; 11% of older adults who live alone; 10% of older adults with income less than \$15,000.⁴

- ◆ 95% of Region 12 adults 60 and older said they had **no problem having enough food to eat** in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 98% said they **were able to afford enough food to eat**.⁴
- ◆ 92% said they **do eat two or more complete meals** a day.⁴
- ◆ 95% said they had **not needed help** in the past two months **getting enough food or the right kinds of food to eat**.⁴

Physical and Mental Health and Well-Being



Mental Health



- ◆ 17% (1,976)⁶ of Region 12 adults 60 and older said **feeling depressed had been a problem** in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 1% (152)⁶ said they have an **emotional or mental illness** that limits their daily activities.⁴
- ◆ 15% (1,780)⁶ said **feeling lonely, sad, or isolated had been a problem** in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 7% **do not feel hopeful about the future**.⁴

- ◆ 83% of Region 12 adults 60 and older said **feeling depressed had not been a problem** in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 99% agreed they are **generally happy**.⁴
- ◆ 85% said feeling **lonely, sad, or isolated had not been a problem** in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 93% agreed they **feel hopeful about the future**.⁴



Health



- ◆ 19% (2,159)⁶ said they have a **condition that substantially limits their daily activities**; 16% (1,891)⁶ have a significant hearing loss; 8% (969)⁶ are blind or have a severe vision impairment.⁴
- ◆ 9% (1,040)⁶ of Region 12 adults 60 and older said their **health is only fair or poor**.⁴
- ◆ 34% (3,889)⁶ said their **physical health was a problem** in the past year; 55% of older adults with income less than \$15,000.⁴
- ◆ 7% (809)⁶ said they had **not visited their doctor** or health care provider in the past year; 27% had **not had a dental exam**; 35% had **not had an eye exam**; 78% had **not had a hearing exam**.⁴
- ◆ 11% (1,271)⁶ reported they **had fallen and injured themselves seriously enough to need medical attention** at least once in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 22% (2,542)⁶ **spent at least one day** in a hospital in the past year; 12% spent three or more days.⁴
- ◆ 7% (809)⁶ **never engage in moderate physical activity** for at least 30 minutes a day; 9% said they do so only once or twice a week.⁴
- ◆ 3% (333)⁶ of Region 12 older adults said they **have no medical insurance**.⁴
- ◆ 67% of Region 12 adults 60 and older said their **health is excellent or very good**.⁴
- ◆ 66% said their physical health has **not been a problem** in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 93% said they **had visited their doctor** or health care provider in the past year; 73% **had a dental exam**; 65% **had an eye exam**; 22% **had a hearing exam**.⁴
- ◆ 78% said they **had not spent any days** in the hospital in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 93% **engaged in moderate physical activity** for at least 30 minutes a day, at least once a week; 38% did so seven days a week.⁴
- ◆ On average, adults 60 and older engaged in **moderate physical activity** 4.9 days a week.⁴
- ◆ 81% said they **did not have a condition that substantially limits their daily activities** such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying.⁴
- ◆ When their responses were converted to a 100-point scale (where 100 = excellent and 0 = poor), Region 12 adults 60 and older rated their overall **quality of health** at 72.⁴



Well-Being



- ◆ 2% (231)⁶ of Region 12 adults 60 and older rated their **quality of life as bad or very bad**.⁴
- ◆ 5% (578)⁶ said they generally **do not feel peaceful and calm**.⁴
- ◆ 6% (693)⁶ said they **do not feel they have control** over the things that happen to them.⁴
- ◆ 4% (462)⁶ said they **do not have a sense of purpose**.⁴
- ◆ 9% (1,040)⁶ feel their **community does not value older people**.⁴
- ◆ Overall, Region 12 adults 60 and older rated their **quality of life** at 88 on a 100-point scale (where 100 = excellent and 0 = poor).⁴
- ◆ 96% of Region 12 adults 60 and older rated their **quality of life as very good or good**.⁴
- ◆ 93% agreed their **community values their language and traditions**.⁴
- ◆ 89% agreed they were **willing to ask for and accept help from others**.⁴
- ◆ 99% agreed they were **satisfied with the relationships in their life**.⁴

Social and Civic Engagement



Participation



- ◆ 11% (1,305)⁶ of Region 12 adults 60 and older said **having too few activities or feeling bored** had been a problem in the past year.⁴
- ◆ Some older adults **do not participate** in many, if any, activities with others. In a typical week:⁴
 - 78% do not participate in senior center activities.
 - 60% do not participate in a club or civic group.
 - 47% do not volunteer or help out in the community.
 - 47% do not attend movies, sporting events, or group events.
 - 50% do not participate in religious or spiritual activities with others.
 - 8% do not visit with friends in person or over the phone.
 - 8% do not visit with family in person or over the phone.
- ◆ 78% of Region 12 adults 60 and older said they participate in at least one of the following:⁴
 - **volunteer** at least one hour per week (53%);
 - **are employed** at least part time (42%);
 - **provide care** for family or friends (18%).
- ◆ Many older adults **participate in activities with others**. In a typical week:⁴
 - 93% visit with family in person or over the phone; 92% visit with friends in person or over the phone.
 - 50% participate in religious or spiritual activities with others.
 - 40% participate in a club or civic group.
 - 21% participate in senior center activities.
- ◆ 81% spend at least one hour per week **participating in a hobby** such as art, gardening, or music.⁴



Social Support



- ◆ 11% (1,271)⁶ of Region 12 adults 60 and older said they were **not willing to ask for and accept help from others**.⁴
- ◆ 6% (693)⁶ said they **get only a little or no social support** (defined as being cared for, loved, listened to, and respected) **from family**.⁴
- ◆ 11% (1,271)⁶ said they **get only a little or no social support from friends**; 35% said they get only a little or no social support from neighbors.⁴
- ◆ 33% (3,813)⁶ said they **get only a little or no practical support** (being given a ride, having someone shop for you, etc.) **from family**.⁴
- ◆ 45% (5,200)⁶ said they **get only a little or no practical support from friends**; 62% said they get only a little or no practical support from neighbors.⁴
- ◆ 63% of Region 12 adults 60 and older said, during a typical week, they spend some time **providing help to friends or relatives**.⁴
- ◆ 87% agreed their **family and friends rely on them**.⁴
- ◆ 91% agreed their **community values older people**.⁴
- ◆ 80% said they **get a lot of social support from family**; 58% said they **get a lot of social support from friends**.⁴
- ◆ 25% said they **get a lot of social support from a church or spiritual group**; 28% **get a lot of social support from neighbors**.⁴
- ◆ 96% agreed they **could handle about anything that life throws at them**.⁴

Maximum Independence for Frail and Disabled



Assistance With Everyday Activities



- ◆ 17% (1,949)⁶ of Region 12 adults 60 and older said **performing everyday activities** such as walking, bathing, or getting in and out of a chair had been a **problem** for them in the past year.⁴
 - 24% of adults 60 and older with income less than \$15,000.
 - 11% of Hispanics 60 and older.
 - 27% of adults 60 and older who live alone.
- ◆ 9% (1,040)⁶ **cannot do heavy housework**; an additional 14% **need some help** to do heavy housework.⁴
- ◆ 10% (1,156)⁶ **cannot do interior or exterior repairs**; an additional 17% **need some help** to do interior or exterior repairs.⁴
- ◆ 12% (1,387)⁶ **cannot do yard work and snow shoveling**; an additional 11% **need some help** to do yard work and snow shoveling.⁴
- ◆ 3% (347)⁶ **cannot do light housework** like dusting or vacuuming; an additional 3% **need some help** to do light housekeeping.⁴
- ◆ 83% of Region 12 adults 60 and older had **no problem in the past year performing everyday activities** such as walking, bathing, or getting in and out of a chair; 30% of males age 85 and older and 71% of females age 85 and older reported **no problem**.⁴
- ◆ 81% **did not have a condition that substantially limits daily activities** such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying.⁴
- ◆ 78% are **able to do heavy housework** like moving furniture or washing windows without any help; 73% **can do interior or exterior repairs** without any help; 77% **can do yard work and snow shoveling** without any help.⁴
- ◆ 94% are **able to do light housework** like dusting or vacuuming without any help.⁴
- ◆ 96% are **able to prepare their meals** without any help.⁴
- ◆ 98% are **able to manage their medications** without any help.⁴



Transportation



- ◆ 6% (691)⁶ of Region 12 adults 60 and older said **having inadequate transportation had been a problem** for them in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 10% (1,106)⁶ **needed help getting or arranging transportation** in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 6% (693)⁶ said it had frequently or sometimes been difficult to arrange transportation for **medical trips** in the past year; 5% reported difficulty arranging transportation for **recreational or social trips**.⁴
- ◆ 94% of Region 12 adults 60 and older said **having inadequate transportation had not been a problem** in the past year; 90% **needed no help getting or arranging transportation**.⁴
- ◆ 94% said it had never been difficult to arrange transportation for **medical trips** in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 95% said it had never been difficult to arrange transportation for **shopping**; 94% said it had never been difficult to arrange transportation for **recreational or social trips** in the past year.⁴



Caregiver Support



- ◆ 13% (1,556)⁶ of Region 12 adults 60 and older said **providing care for another person had been a problem** in the past year.⁴
- ◆ Of the 18% (2,138)⁶ who said they **provide care for one or more family members or friends on a regular basis**:⁴
 - 35% (758)⁶ had **frequently or sometimes felt burdened** by their caregiving.
 - 32% (685)⁶ said the person they care for was **frequently or sometimes uncooperative**.
 - 20% (437)⁶ said the person they care for was **frequently or sometimes verbally aggressive**.
 - 10% (222)⁶ said the person they care for was **frequently or sometimes physically aggressive**.
 - 12% (248)⁶ said the person they care for was **frequently or sometimes sexually aggressive**.
 - 10% (214)⁶ said they could use **more services or information** about services.
 - 16% (342)⁶ said they could use **more financial support**.
 - 3% (64)⁶ said they could use **more respite** or free time for themselves.
- ◆ 18% (2,138)⁶ of Region 12 adults 60 and older said they **provide care for one or more family members or friends on a regular basis**. Of these:⁴
 - 49% provided care for a **spouse**, averaging 11.8 hours per week.
 - 12% provided care for a **parent**, averaging 15.9 hours per week.
 - 8% provided care for a **friend or neighbor**, averaging 8.5 hours per week.
 - 7% provided care for an **adult child**, averaging 3.0 hours per week.
 - 13% provided care for a **grandchild**, averaging 17.2 hours per week.
 - 6% provided care for a **child**, averaging 10.7 hours per week.
 - 2% provided care for a **partner**, averaging 30.0 hours per week.
 - 13% provided care for **another family member**, averaging 3.0 hours per week.
- ◆ 65% of caregivers 60 and older **did not feel burdened** in the past two months by their caregiving.⁴
- ◆ Of those providing care for one or more family members or friends, 13% **cared for more than one person**.

Strengths and Aging Well

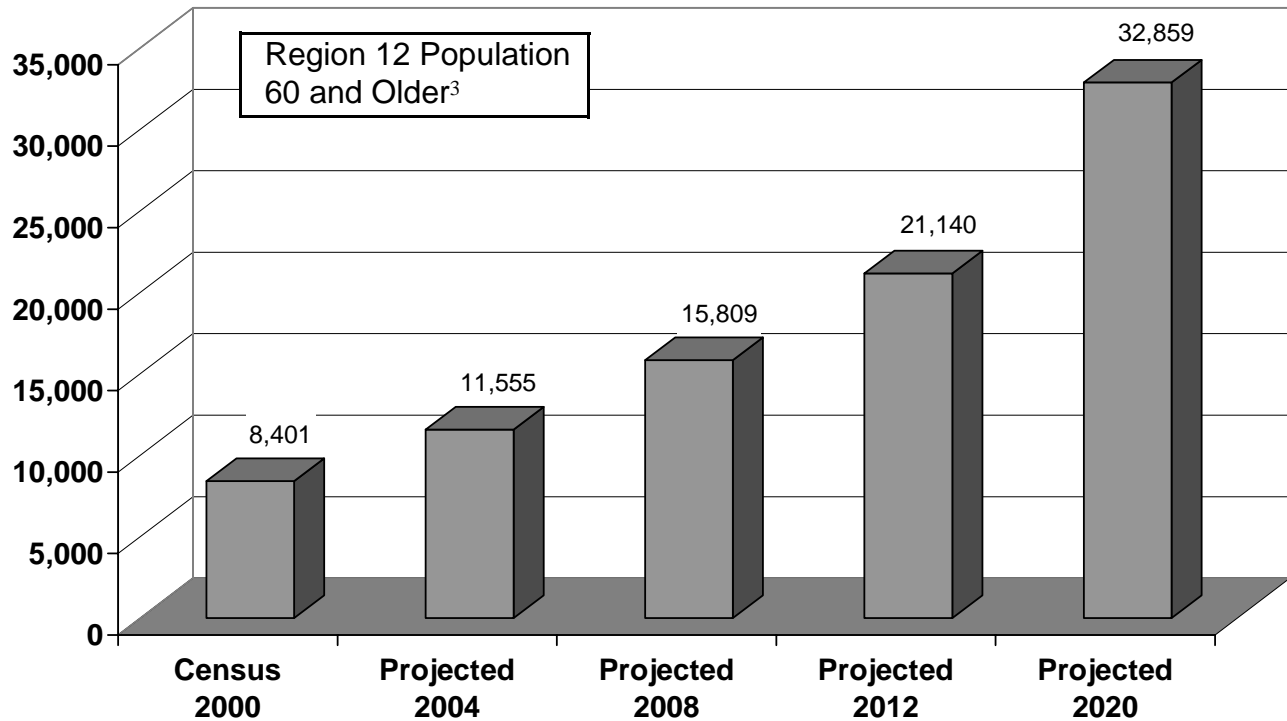
The *Strengths and Needs Assessment of Older Adults in the State of Colorado* identified twelve strengths that correlate with **aging well**. These strengths were grouped into three categories—physical health, outlook on life, and connection with others and the community. Fifty-five percent of Region 12 adults 60 and older had nine to twelve strengths; 41% had five to eight strengths; 4% had zero to four strengths.⁵

The survey found that:

- Older adults with more strengths were **less likely to report problems**.
- Older adults with more strengths reported a **higher quality of life and health**.
- Older adults with the fewest strengths were at least **twice as likely** to report certain problems.

Building and nurturing strengths provides older adults with a buffer against problems that diminish their health and well-being. Services that promote and support strengths enable older adults to **age well**. This will reduce the need for costly services in the future. This knowledge gives communities—and health and human service providers—a starting point to prepare for the changes that the aging of the population will bring.

Indeed, models for *aging well* can serve as tools for communities seeking to create **elder-friendly communities**.



Where to Turn

For more information about this report, or about services for older adults and caregivers in Eagle, Grand, Jackson, Pitkin, and Summit counties, contact:

Alpine Area Agency on Aging
 PO Box 2308
 Silverthorne, CO 80498
 970-468-0295 ext.107 / 1-800-332-3669 ext.107

website: www.nwc.cog.co.us

Endnotes

- Center for Home Care Policy and Research, *A Tale of Two Older Americas: Community Opportunities and Challenges*, AdvantAge Initiative 2003 National Survey of Older Adults Aged 65 and Older, Visiting Nurse Service of New York, 2004, [http://www.vnsny.org/advantage/AI NationalSurveyReport.pdf](http://www.vnsny.org/advantage/AI%20NationalSurveyReport.pdf).
- U.S. Census 2000.
- Colorado Department of Local Affairs.
- Strengths and Needs Assessment of Older Adults in The State of Colorado—North Central Mountain Region*, Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Aging and Adult Services, September 2004.
- Strengths and Needs Assessment of Older Adults in The State of Colorado*, Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Aging and Adult Services, September 2004. <http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/ADRS/AAS/swna.pdf>
- Numbers in parentheses are estimates based on the reported percent and a population of 11,555. Any differences between these numbers and those reported in (4) are the result of rounding of the reported percent.