



**Aging Services Council
of Central Texas**

Aging and Caregiving in Central Texas

2017



The Aging Services Council of Central Texas

This fact sheet compiled by the Aging Services Council of Central Texas includes issues and statistics related to Central Texas’s aging population and outlines some of the available community resources and supports. The Aging Services Council is a strong, effective network of individuals and organizations who work together to ensure that older adults and caregivers have the information and services they need to support themselves and family members as they age. Our Vision is that Central Texas older adults have the opportunity to live healthy, safe, and meaningful lives in our communities.

Central Objectives of the Council

- Maximize resources for aging services through a formalized collaborative process
- Promote community awareness and investment around aging issues
- Develop a model system of support to guide planning in the Central Texas community

The older adult population in Central Texas is growing rapidly.

A Brookings Institution analysis of 2010 Census data showed that between 2000 and 2010 the Austin-Round Rock metro area had the fastest growing ‘pre-senior’ population (age 55-64) in the nation and ranked second in senior (age 65+) population growth over the same time period.¹ 195,856 adults age 65 years and older live in the 5-county Central Texas Austin-Round Rock Metro Area and make up nearly 10% of the total Central Texas population.²

Population 65 Years and Over Austin Round Rock MSA, 2015		
	Number 65 years and over	Percent 65 years and over
Bastrop County	10,751	13.4%
Caldwell County	5,316	13.1%
Hays County	19,939	10.2%
Travis County	102,577	8.7%
Williamson County	57,273	11.3%
Total: Austin-Round Rock Metro Area	195,856	9.8%

By 2040 more than half a million (515,040) older adults 65+ are expected to live in the 5-county Austin-Round Rock Area and comprise nearly one-fifth (18%) of the Central Texas population.³



A growing senior population brings new opportunities and challenges.

As we age, the majority of us share a common goal: to live independently and safely in our own homes and engaged in our communities for as long as possible.

Many older adults are well and active and offer the community a valuable resource in their experience, perspective, and a willingness to be of service. Older adults transitioning from full-time careers can bring a lifetime of experience to temporary jobs, training programs, part-time work and volunteer positions.

Other seniors need support to meet their needs or to address issues that come with the aging process. Low income older adults, in particular, may need assistance to meet their day-to-day needs. In 2015, 14,435 or 8% of Central Texas older adults lived in poverty and 46,358 or 24% have incomes at or below 200% of the poverty threshold and likely experience some level of economic hardship.⁴ (2015 poverty threshold: \$11,367 or less for one person or \$14,342 or less for two people).⁵

Overall, a growing aging population in Central Texas impacts all of us: individuals and families who are aging or caring for an aging family member, businesses who may employ older workers and/or cater to an older clientele, and neighborhoods or faith-based organizations that can play an important role in building a community that is a good place to grow older.



Health and Wellness

Physical and mental health both play a key role in overall health and wellness and in healthy aging. The majority of Central Texas older adults report being in good health — 79% rate their overall health as good, very good or excellent.⁶ Still, the aging process can bring some specific challenges to overall health and well-being.

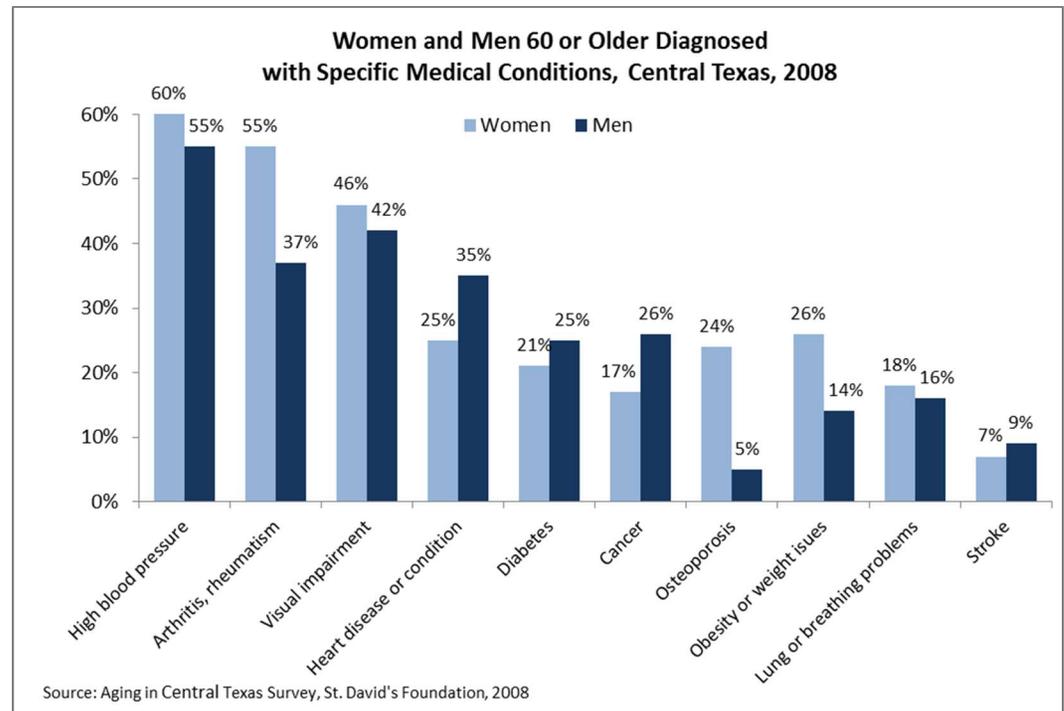
Chronic Disease

Preventing chronic diseases and reducing associated complications are crucial to healthy aging. Nationally, about 80% of older adults have multiple chronic conditions.⁷

Loneliness, Isolation and Depression

Older adults, particularly those who require home health care or who are hospitalized, are at greater risk of experiencing depression.⁸ According to a 2008 survey by St. David's Foundation, 28% of older adults 75+ reported a problem with loneliness.⁹ Regardless of its cause, depression can have alarming physical effects on older people. The mortality rate for elderly men and women suffering from both depression and feelings of loneliness is higher than for those who report satisfaction with their lives. Treatment programs for depressed elderly patients suffering from cardiovascular disease and other major illnesses usually take longer than normal, and are less successful.

According to the February 2016 Sightlines Project report, sponsored by the Stanford Center on Longevity, "...today's 55- to 64-year-olds are less likely to be socially engaged than their predecessors. This age group, part of the Baby Boom generation, are less likely to have meaningful interactions with a spouse or partner. They have weaker ties to family, friends and neighbors, and are less likely to engage in church and other community activities than those who were the same age 20 years ago." This puts them at risk for loneliness and



isolation which in turn negatively impacts health.¹⁰ Health risks associated with social isolation have been compared in magnitude to the well-known dangers of smoking cigarettes and obesity. Individuals who lack social connections or report frequent feelings of loneliness tend to suffer higher rates of morbidity and mortality as well as infection, depression, and cognitive decline.¹¹ In addition, the feelings of hopelessness and isolation that often spur thoughts of suicide are more prevalent among older adults, especially those with disabilities or confined to nursing homes.¹²

Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation

Older adults are vulnerable to abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Approximately 1 in 10 adults over age 60 have experienced abuse.¹³ In 2015, Adult Protective Services verified over 4,000 cases of abuse, neglect and exploitation of older adults in the 5-county Central Texas area. To report suspected abuse/neglect/exploitation, contact 1-800-252-5400 or make an online report at www.TxAbuseHotline.org.

Fall Risk

Falls are the leading cause of injury death among older adults. They are also the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admission for trauma.¹⁴

- According to national statistics, one out of three older adults 65+ falls each year. Twenty to thirty percent of those who fall suffer moderate to severe injuries such as hip fractures or head injuries.¹⁵
- An estimated 1,137,500 Texans age 60 and older fell in 2011. Of those 75 and older, an estimated 900-1,000 died from complications associated with the fall.¹⁶
- Fall risk can be reduced by regular exercise to build strength and improve balance; working with a doctor or pharmacist to identify and limit medications that cause dizziness or drowsiness; having regular eye checkups and using appropriate corrective lenses; and keeping homes safe by removing tripping hazards and installing grab bars and railings.¹⁷

Dementia

Dementia is a term that describes a decline in memory or other thinking skills that is severe enough to interfere with the basic tasks of daily life.¹⁸ Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia. It develops when nerve cells in the brain die or no longer function normally and causes changes in memory, behavior and ability to think clearly.



Alzheimer's disease eventually impairs an individual's ability to carry out basic functions such as walking and swallowing. Alzheimer's disease is the sixth-leading cause of death in the US, and the fifth-leading cause of death for those 65 and older.¹⁹

- Nationally, one in nine people 65 and older and nearly half of those 85 and older have Alzheimer's disease.²⁰
- An estimated 350,000 Texans lived with Alzheimer's disease in 2016; this number is projected to continue to grow to 490,000 by 2025.²¹

Health Insurance Coverage and Access to Healthcare

Because of Medicare, nearly all Central Texas residents 65+ are covered by health insurance (less than 2% are not).²² However, older adults, particularly those with lower incomes who are eligible for dual coverage through Medicare and Medicaid may have difficulty finding a doctor. According to a survey by the Texas Medical Association, the share of doctors who accept Medicare and Medicare patients has declined over the past decade, in large part due to administrative burdens and low reimbursement rates:²³

- In 2015 only 34% of Texas physicians will accept new Medicaid patients. This is an all-time low, reflecting a steady downward trend over the past decade (just over 10 years ago in 2000, 67% of Texas doctors that accepted new Medicaid patients).
- 58% of Texas physicians reported accepting new Medicare patients in 2012. This number has also been declining since 2000 when 78% of doctors accepted new Medicare patients.

In 2010 those 65 and older spent about \$18,424 per person on personal health care, "about three times more than the average working-age adult and about five times more than the average child."²⁴

Nutrition

For some older adults, eating well can be challenging because of difficulty chewing, stomach problems, lack of appetite, lack of transportation, limited money, and/or physical limitations that make grocery shopping or cooking difficult.²⁵ Malnutrition impacts quality of life and independence. It may also delay recovery from illness,



contribute to longer hospital stays and more frequent hospitalizations, and lead to increased risk for infection. Older adults on low-incomes are more likely to be hungry.²⁶

- Nationally, nearly 40% of hospitalized elderly and 50% of those in rehabilitation facilities are malnourished. Of older adults living in the community, 38% are malnourished or at risk of malnourishment. Based on these national statistics, an estimated 28,000 older adults living in Travis County could be malnourished or at risk of malnourishment.²⁷
- 15.5% of seniors face the threat of hunger. This translates into 9.6 million seniors. Those living in states in the South and Southwest, those who are racial or ethnic minorities, those with lower incomes, and those who are younger (ages 60-69) are most likely to be threatened by hunger.²⁸
- 13% of Central Texas older adults (60+) report difficulty shopping for groceries because of a health or physical problem, 6% report difficulty preparing their own meals, and 3% report not getting enough to eat on a typical day.²⁹

Aging in Place

“Aging in place” means growing older while living independently in an existing home or community for as long possible. Studies show that the vast majority of older adults prefer to age in place,³⁰ and for those who need services and supports to care for themselves and manage routine daily tasks, community-based services are more cost effective than nursing home care.³¹ Communities help older residents to age in place by creating affordable and appropriate housing, establishing supportive community features and services, and providing adequate mobility options.³²

Housing Costs

Housing in Central Texas is expensive. The Austin-Round Rock MSA has the high fair market rents (\$799-\$1948 depending on size.³³ Older adults with lower, fixed-incomes may struggle to keep up with housing costs (including taxes and utilities) and may find limited housing available at an affordable price-point. Affordable senior apartment complexes that offer independent living with or near supportive services often have waitlists. The option of assisted living, which offers a higher level of care and support while enabling an older adult to maintain independence in the community, is financially out of reach for many seniors.



- In 2015, 64% of Central Texas renters and 30% of Central Texas home owners 65 years and older experienced a housing cost burden, which is defined as spending 30% or more of household income on housing costs.³⁴

Home Repair and Modification

For older adults remaining in an existing home, repairs or modifications (i.e. installation of grab bars, ramps, and handrails) can help to create a safer living environment. For seniors with low-incomes, the inability to finance home repairs can be a significant challenge that threatens safety and well-being.

- 11% of older adults in Central Texas said they have structural, heating and cooling, electrical or plumbing systems that were in need of repair; for those with household incomes less than \$20,000, the share rose to 23%.³⁵



In-home Services and Support

The primary desire of older adults is to remain living at home rather than enter a nursing home. But some need help with personal care and/or household tasks to achieve this goal. According to a 2008 survey by St. David's Foundation:³⁶

- 11% of seniors (60+) in Central Texas had difficulty getting out of a bed or chair and 7% needed help with bathing, showering or dressing.
- While most older adults are able to manage light housework like doing dishes straightening up or light cleaning, a significant share (40%) report difficulty with heavier household tasks like scrubbing floors, mowing the grass or washing windows.

Transportation and Access

While the majority older adults continue to drive³⁷, financial or physical limitations require others to depend on transportation other than a personal vehicle. Rising life expectancies mean that at some point, many of us will find ourselves with a diminished ability to drive safely³⁸ and will need to rely on friends and family, public transportation, or other alternatives like volunteer driver programs. Without access to good, affordable transportation options, seniors who cannot drive face isolation (fewer visits to family and friends), reduced quality of life (fewer trips to shop or eat out), and may be less able to manage their health care needs (more difficult to get to the doctor).³⁹



- Of Central Texas residents 75 years and older, 20% do not own or drive a car and 18% report lacking transportation.⁴⁰
- A recent analysis conducted by the group Transportation for America estimates that in 2015, less than 50% of older adults living in Central Texas will have adequate access to public transit.⁴¹

Work

According to AARP's 2015 study, "A Business Case for Workers Age 50+: A Look at the Value of Experience," the number of Americans age 50+ who are working or looking for work has grown significantly over the past decade, and is expected to continue to increase. In fact, 35% of U.S. labor force participants will be age 50+ in 2022. This compares to just 25% in 2002.

Additionally, the 50+ segment of the workforce continues to be the most engaged age cohort across all generations. Sixty-five percent of employees age 55+ are considered engaged based on survey data, while younger employee engagement averages 58% to 60%. The level of employee engagement has implications for both retention and business results. It takes only a 5% increase in engagement to achieve 3% incremental revenue growth.



Caregiver Support



Family or informal caregivers provide unpaid assistance to family member or a friend who can no longer care for him/herself without support. The efforts of family caregivers allow many older adults (and others) who need help performing the tasks of daily life to remain in their homes and communities. Informal caregivers play an important role both for the individual who is receiving care and in reducing financial strain on the health care system. Yet caregiving can also bring many challenges; the demands that come along with caregiving responsibilities can negatively impact a caregiver's physical and mental health, strain finances, and require sacrifices in work and personal activities.⁴²

- An estimated 3.35 million family caregivers in Texas provided 3.12 billion hours of care to adults with limitations in daily activities in 2013.⁴³
- The value of the unpaid labor force of caregivers is significant, estimated at more than \$35.5 billion dollars for the State of Texas in 2013.⁴⁴

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ISSUES RELATING
TO OLDER ADULTS IN CENTRAL TEXAS OR FOR
COMMUNITY RESOURCE AND SUPPORT, GO TO**

WWW.AGINGSERVICESCOUNCIL.ORG



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- ¹¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2756979>
- ¹² <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/aging-depression.aspx>
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- ¹⁵ Ibid.
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³⁸ Transportation for America, Aging in Place, Stuck without Options: Fixing the Mobility Crisis Threatening the Baby Boom Generation, <http://t4america.org/resources/seniorsmobilitycrisis2011/>

³⁹Ibid.

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⁴¹ Specifically, the analysis found that in 2015, 56% of older adults 65 to 79 years of age (82,456 people) will have poor transit availability, defined as fewer than 1.7 bus routes and/or train stations within walking distance (¼ mile for bus, ½ mile for train). In comparison to similar sized metropolitan areas (1-3 million people), the Austin-San Marcos MSA falls right in the middle of the range, ranked 23rd out of 46 areas. Transportation for America, Aging in Place, Stuck without Options: Fixing the Mobility Crisis Threatening the Baby Boom Generation, <http://t4america.org/resources/seniorsmobilitycrisis2011/>

⁴² Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services: Informal Care in Texas, 2009, <http://www.dads.state.tx.us/services/agingtexaswell/resources/publications/informalcare-11-09.pdf>

⁴³ Susan C. Reinhard, Lynn Friss Feinberg, Rita Choula and Ari Houser, "Valuing the Invaluable: 2015 Update, Undeniable Progress, but Big Gaps Remain," AARP Public Policy Institute, July 2015,

⁴⁴ Ibid.

