Commission on Aging
Older Adult Quality of Life Study Analysis
Work Group Report

I. Purpose

This report consolidates the analyses submitted by members of the Commission on Aging Quality of Life Study Analysis Work Group upon their review of the 2025 Austin Older Adult Quality of Life Study, its population and district summaries and recommends priorities for Commission recommendations to City Council.
Work Group members Commissioners Tran, Yee, Zeng, Ferguson and Scott all provided feedback on their analysis of portions of the study.

II. Key Points

- Older adults may know that programs exist yet still be unable to use them
    - Issues: cost, physical accessibility, transportation, language, cultural safety, or fragmented information.
- Immediate material needs warrant the strongest initial attention.
    - Housing, food, utilities, and access to essential care
- Transportation, trusted outreach, and social connection are necessary supports that should be included with immediate material needs and not treated as optional.
- Customer assistance programs (CAPs) can help older adults access essential services and reduce financial barriers, but awareness, eligibility, and enrollment processes may limit their effectiveness.

III. Ranking Methodology

Considerations were:

- Severity and immediacy of harm,
- Breadth of reported need
- Disproportionate impacts across populations and districts, and
- Plausible City or partner action.

Additional Rationale: Food insecurity and utility shutoffs may require more immediate intervention than an internet-access problem.

- Housing is first because loss of housing can be especially difficult to reverse
- Food, utilities, and essential health access are in a second urgent basic needs category.
- Communication and internet access rank fourth as standalone issues, as they are often delivery mechanisms for higher-priority assistance.

IV. Ranking of Issues

Priority 1: Housing stability, essential repairs, and aging in place.

- Highest priority because housing loss, unsafe or inaccessible homes can produce severe, lasting harm,
- 16% of study respondents unhoused,

- 56% reported housing insecurity, meaning they worried about maintaining their current housing, and
- 36% rating home accessibility fair or poor.

The study identifies home repair, accessibility improvements, and affordability as recurring needs.

> Proposed recommendation topic(s): Assess and strengthen housing preservation, emergency assistance, home repair and modification, accessible housing options, including automatic enrollment where feasible.

Priority 2. Food security, utility assistance, and access to essential health services.
Immediate threats to health and independent living merit high priority even though they may impact a smaller subgroup.

- Utility Insecurity
  - 45% utility insecurity for respondents with disabilities,
  - 16% utility insecurity for respondents without disabilities,
- Health Insecurity
  - 21% higher health insecurity for below-60%-MFI than respondents overall
- Food Insecurity
  - 4.23 average food insecurity score for respondents with functional disabilities, compared with 3.64 for those without[1]. The overall average was 3.82 (higher scores indicate greater food insecurity)
  - Older adults ages 50–64 experience greater food insecurity than age 65–74 or 75 and older.
  - Lower income associated with greater food insecurity

43% of respondents reported using a food or meal program during the previous month; while not a measure of food insecurity, it demonstrates the importance of these services across the older-adult population.

> Proposed recommendation topic(s): Preserve and strengthen meal and grocery supports, utility assistance, customer assistance programs (CAPs), and access to affordable, accessible essential health services, including simplified enrollment and automatic enrollment where feasible.

Priority 3. Transportation safety, accessibility, and actual usability.
Transportation is a gateway to food, healthcare, civic life, and social participation.

- Hispanic/Latino respondents rated transportation 6.47 out of 10, compared with the citywide average of 7

[1] This is one of the strongest disparities in the study.

- Only 58% of respondents reported feeling safe using transportation, particularly as pedestrians.
- Other issues:
    - Stops too distant or infrequent,
    - Difficult boarding,
    - Uncomfortable or lengthy rides,
    - Confusing routes, and
    - Challenges transporting groceries.

  Proposed recommendation topic(s): Complement pedestrian safety work with a joint City/CapMetro review of stop access, frequency, physical boarding conditions, route legibility, and access to essential destinations.

Priority 4. Trusted outreach, language access, and digital inclusion (including Wi-Fi access). Broad communication barriers prevent people from using programs that could address priorities 1–3.

- 20% lower internet-access ratings for Hispanic/Latino respondents than White respondents.
- Reaching homebound residents and internet access were the two lowest-rated communications measures across demographic groups, with particularly poor ratings in Districts 2 and 4.

  Proposed recommendation topic(s): Provide in-language, printed, telephone, and accessible digital information through established trusted organizations and neighborhood hubs; assess affordability of internet and devices, including access to reliable Wi-Fi.

Priority 5. Social connection and caregiver support.

- 38% of respondents were living alone [2]
- Social Isolation Factors
    - Disability,
    - lower income,
    - gender,
    - race and some
    - LGBTQIA+ experiences increase isolation risks.
- 88% of older adult caregivers are themselves age 50 or older.

[2] However, the study explicitly cautions that living alone does not automatically equal social isolation.

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Proposed recommendation topic(s): Expand accessible and culturally responsive activities, reduce participation costs, strengthen caregiver respite and support services, and support homebound participation and opt-in contact protocols.

V. Demographic and Geographic Disparities

- Citywide averages may conceal substantial differences among demographic groups and Council districts.
- Older adults with disabilities experience disproportionately high housing and utility insecurity, accessibility barriers, and social isolation risks.
- LGBTQIA+ older adults report elevated isolation risks despite relatively strong awareness of available services.
- Lower-income older adults experience greater difficulty affording essential care and participating in community activities.
- Accessibility should be considered in all City-funded programs and services.

Study findings suggest that different Council districts may require different approaches to improving older adults' quality of life.

- Districts 1 and 9: Home modifications and aging-in-place needs
- District 2: Communications and outreach
- District 3: Food insecurity
- District 4: Infrastructure and accessibility
- District 5: Housing affordability
- District 8: Transportation improvements

VI. Notes on Survey Results

- Survey results are from respondents to the survey; conditions described do not necessarily exist across all Austin older adults.
- Respondents frequently overlapped into multiple categories, meaning there aren't counts of unique people affected by every issue, and respondents can experience multiple overlapping needs.

VII. Resource Documents

2025 Austin Older Adult Quality of Life Study
Appendix and At-A-Glance Reports