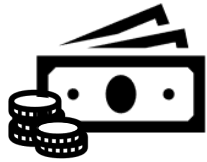


Knoxville-Knox County Council on Aging

2022 Senior Needs Assessment Report



Acknowledgements

Many individuals contributed their experiences and vital suggestions to this senior needs assessment report. The May 12, 2022 meeting at the John T. O'Connor Senior Center brought together seniors, caregivers, senior service providers, community leaders and others to discuss and prioritize senior needs and possible solutions to these issues.

Special recognition and thanks are extended to the following facilitators and recorders who led participants through the extensive senior needs assessment process:

<i>Doug Burton</i>	<i>Vivian Shipe</i>
<i>Lisa Bush</i>	<i>Florence Sweat</i>
<i>Caroline Combs-Young</i>	<i>Bill Tapp</i>
<i>Yvette Dupree</i>	<i>Calie Terry</i>
<i>Deisha Finley</i>	<i>April Tomlin</i>
<i>Rachel Frazier</i>	<i>Tracy Van de Vate</i>
<i>Sasha Hammett</i>	<i>Sara Mary Wallace</i>
<i>Lisa Higginbotham</i>	<i>Nancy Welch</i>
<i>Sara Keel</i>	<i>Gina Whitfield</i>
<i>Kim Olen</i>	<i>Mary Woody</i>
<i>Andrew Scruggs</i>	

A special thanks to Angela Bartlett, Dottie Lyvers, and Gina Whitfield for conducting three smaller needs assessments at the Corryton Senior Center, South Senior Center and the West Senior Center; Lisa Bush, Florence Sweat, Marnie Brennan, Deisha Finley, and Gina Whitfield for conducting multiple smaller needs assessments with fifty-three individuals consisting of Foster Grandparent Volunteers and Senior Companion Volunteers; Marnie Brennan, who quantified the data and contributed to this report; Brian Vieser who helped assemble this report; O'Connor staff for setting up our space at O'Connor Senior Center; AARP Tennessee for providing refreshments; and Bill Schall for the framework of this report.

Introduction

Periodically, the Knoxville-Knox County Council on Aging (KCOA) sponsors a senior needs assessment process. The process aims to ferret out fresh insight into unmet and under-supported senior services. It helps guide the CAC Office on Aging and others in allocating resources effectively.

KCOA encourages, advocates on behalf of, and promotes issues of interest for all seniors in the community. An independent 501(c)3 entity, it is an advisory council to the Office on Aging. One key purpose of KCOA is identifying the needs of older persons in Knox County and the resources necessary to address those needs. The needs assessment process helps meet this intention. If you are interested in becoming involved with KCOA, please call 865-524-2786 and ask for Angela Bartlett (angela.bartlett@knoxseniors.org).

The last needs assessment occurred in May 2017. 137 people contributed to that effort, and their concerns included healthcare costs, transportation issues, and Aging-in-Place. They also cited the importance of resource information, adjustment of income eligibility criteria for services, and provision of more and better home care and assistance.

Program Preparation

This year, a similar structure for the needs assessment program was adopted. The program began with small discussion groups each led by two facilitators. Each small group participant offered issues and concerns; these in turn were consolidated into common themes. Each panel “voted” on its list to provide a weighting of importance, and then the participants suggested solutions. Each panel recorded the essence of its discussion.

To prepare for the program, planners met in early April to set a timeline. They identified potential leaders and issued invitations to a training session held on May 2, 2022. At that session, which drew 15+ volunteers, participants were taught the roles of both facilitator and recorder.

Well before the training session, publicity for the program was provided in local media including an article in the May/June issue of *Elder News and Views*. The meeting was also featured in the Sunday *Knoxville News Sentinel* in the Office on Aging weekly bulletin, on Social Media pages including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, and TV interviews on WATE.

In addition to the meeting on May 12, 2022, two smaller meetings were held for Foster Grandparent Volunteers and Senior Companion Volunteers at O'Connor Senior Center. Smaller meetings were also hosted at Knox County Senior Centers including Corryton Senior Center, South Senior Center and West Knox County Senior Center.

Lastly, an on-line survey hosted by QuestionPro was available for those who could not attend any of the in-person discussions.

Summary of Needs Assessment

This year 266 individuals participated in the Knox County Senior Needs Assessment with a total of 154 participating in the digital survey and 110 participating at in-person events. Of the 266 participants, 212 answered that they are concerned citizens of Knox County, and 54 answered they are representatives of organizations addressing the needs of seniors in Knox County (Figure 1).

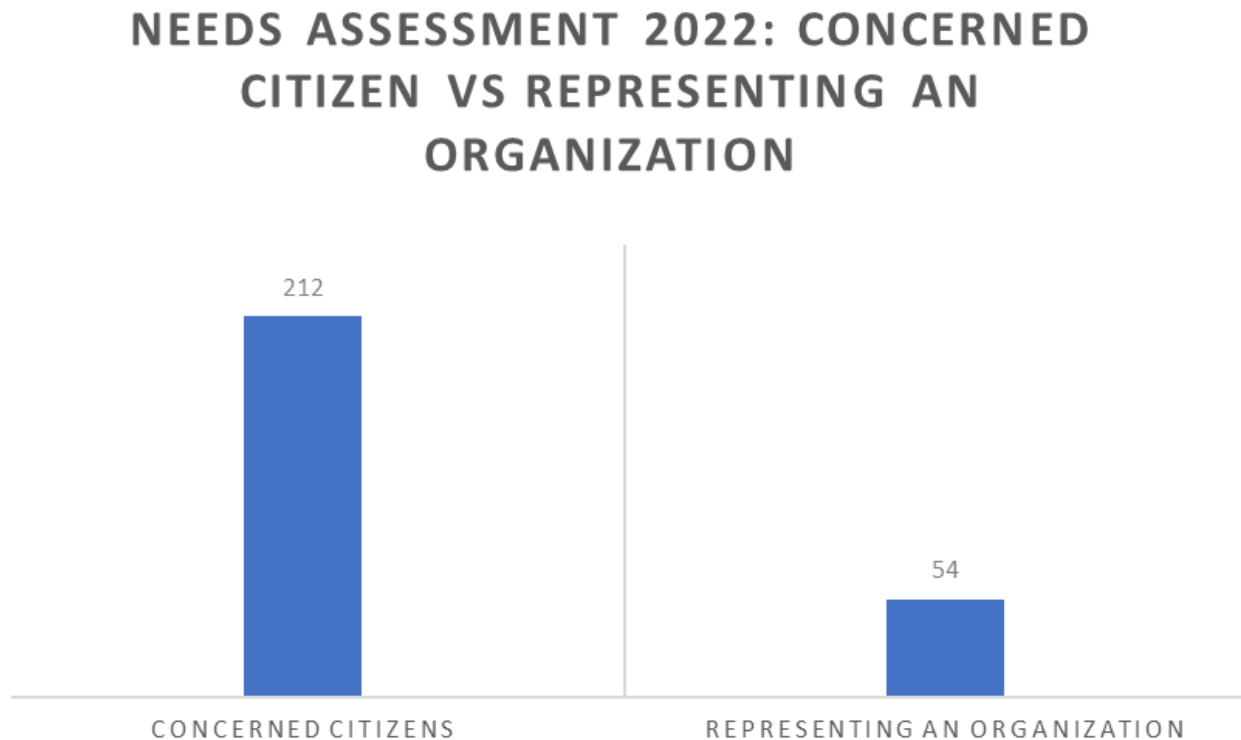


Figure 1

Of the 266 participants, 196 participants answered female for gender while 64 answered male, 3 answered gender non-conforming/non-binary, and 3 preferred not to answer (Figure 2).

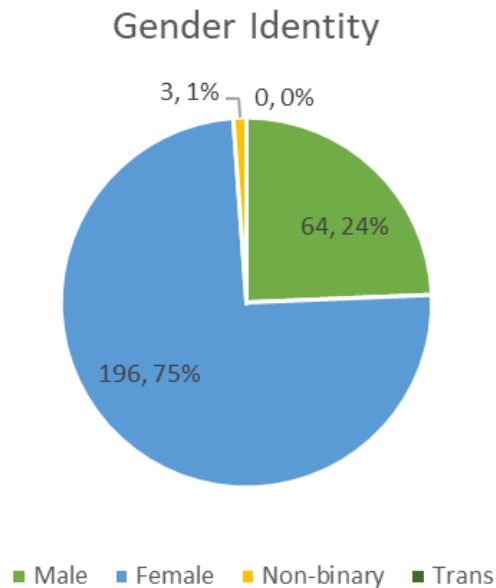


Figure 2

With the ability to choose more than one race and ethnicity, 190 answered Caucasian for race or ethnicity, 56 answered African American, 1 answered Aboriginal, 2 answered Asian, 1 answered Hispanic/Latino, 2 answered Multi-Ethnic, 4 answered not-listed and 11 did not answer. 56 answered under the age of 60, 209 answered over the age of 60, and 1 did not answer. The graphs below represent the ethnicity totals (Figure 3) and shows the breakdown of the over 60 age group (Figure 4).

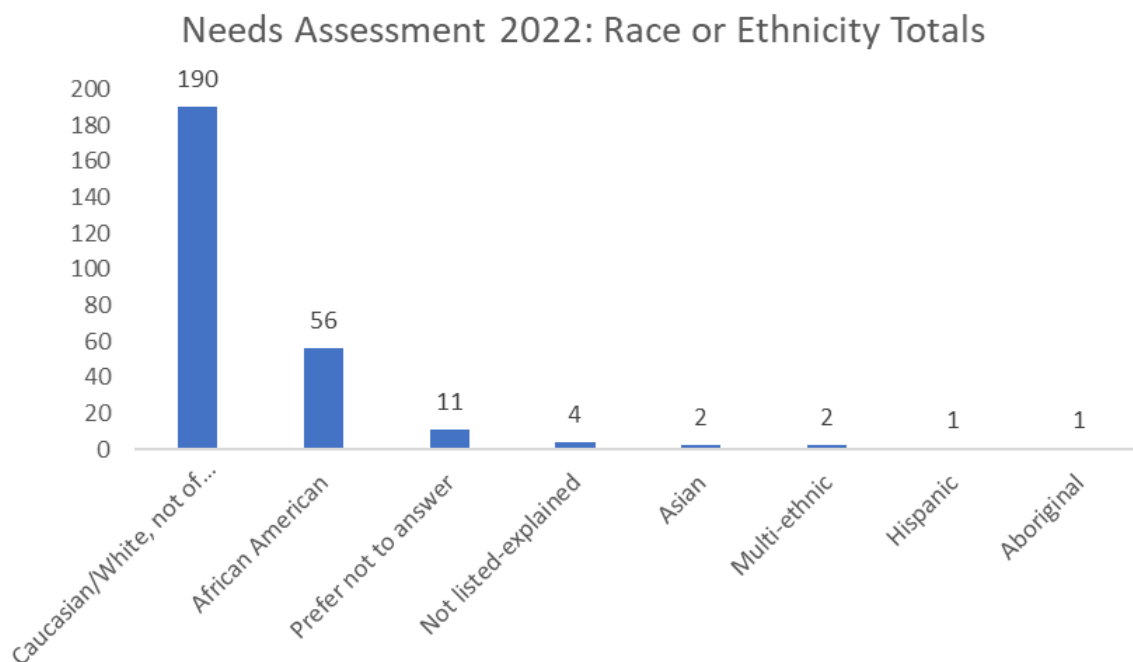


Figure 3

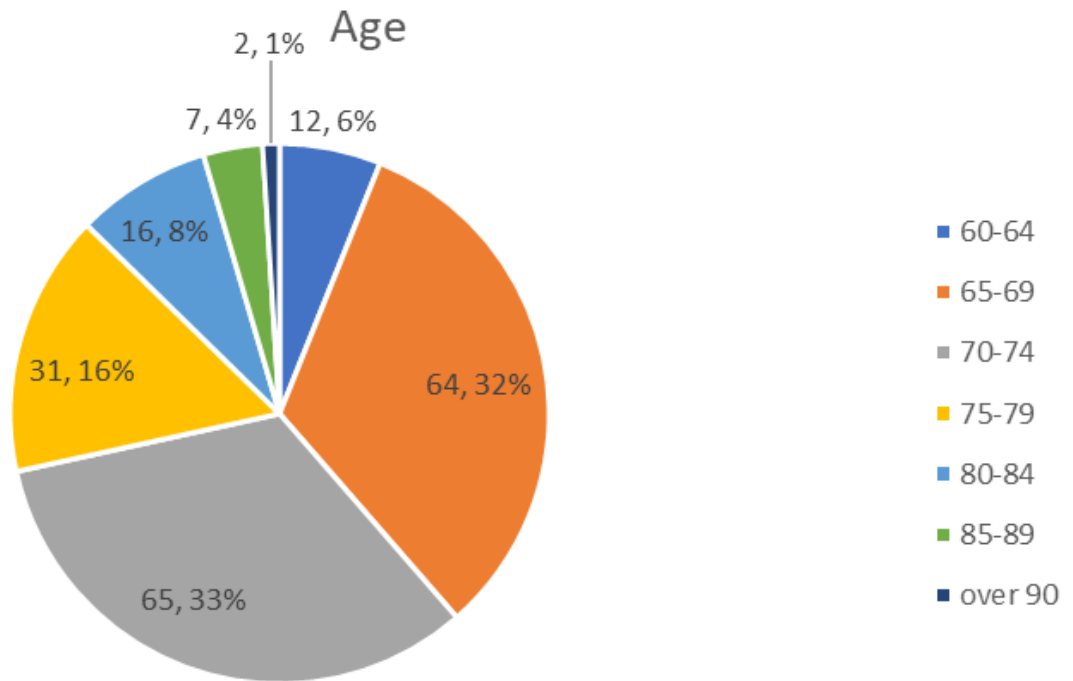


Figure 4

The organizers also expanded the survey to include sexual orientation. 216 participants answered heterosexual/straight, 5 participants answered asexual, 7 participants answered bisexual, 6 participants answered gay or lesbian, 1 participant answered pansexual, and 31 preferred not to answer or didn't answer.

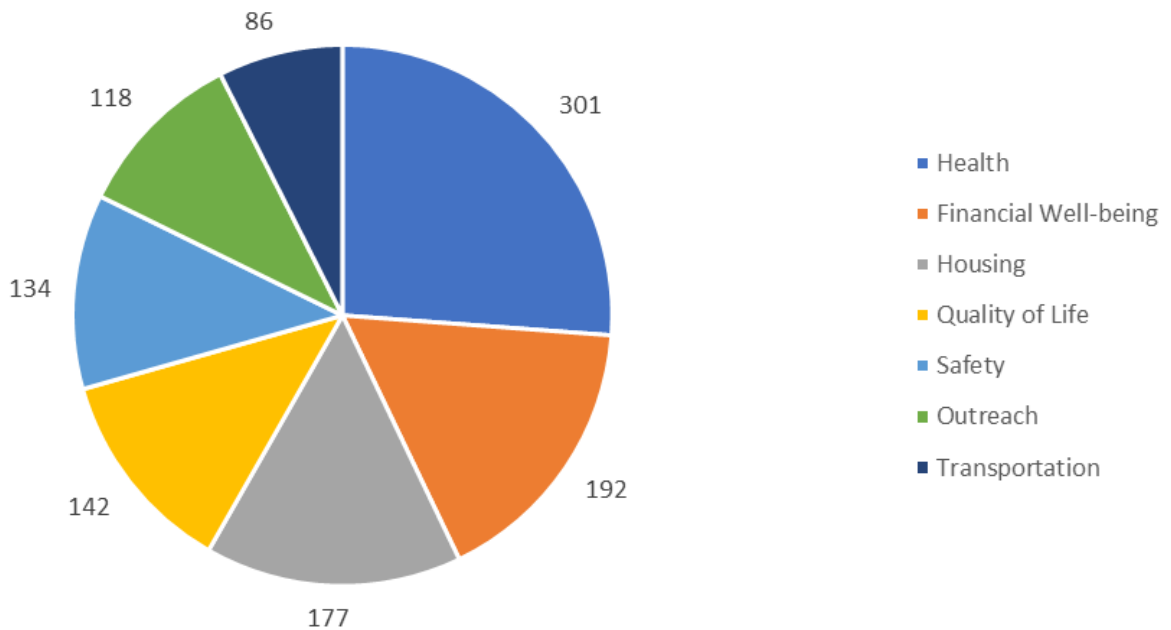
Results

Seven distinct categories became evident after CAC Office on Aging staff analyzed all feedback. These categories are listed in the following pages. The top five ideas in each category will be listed along with potential solutions.

1,150 Mentions Total

- Health—301
- Financial Well-being—192
- Housing—177
- Quality of Life—142
- Safety—134
- Outreach—118
- Transportation—86

Needs Assessment 2022: Mentions



Health

301 Mentions; 26% of feedback

It should come as no surprise that health is the largest topic of discussion in a senior services needs assessment. This category covers everything from doctor's visits, to medical costs, to caregiver support and supply. Issues related to health will only continue as people live longer and the costs for adequate healthcare increases. The effects of ill health impact more than just the older adult; the strong mention of caregiver support speaks to the need to view the health of older individuals as a family or community issue.

Top Five Ideas

Healthcare—97

Medical Costs—57

Nutrition—52

Caregiver Support and Supply—33

Healthy Living—27

Potential Solutions

- Improving health/well-being with more interactive options.
- Ongoing health literacy education and training to seniors, groups, or individuals.
- A detailed guide to give to all frontline workers access to resources, including after hours.
- Long term care for homeless or vulnerable adults when they don't have an address.
- Train senior volunteers as community mental health educators.
- Partner to host farmers' markets at area senior centers.

Financial Well-being

192 mentions; 16.7% of feedback

With the cost of living and inflation rising, seniors are feeling the tightening of the budget. Many seniors are having to choose between fresh foods, prescriptions, utilities and gas. Having to choose between so many essentials gives way to decreased health outcomes, poor mental wellbeing and increased social isolation. Even if the older adult prepared for retirement, many people did not factor in inflation.

Top Five Ideas

Financial Security/Well-being—53

Income—52

Access and Affordability—25

Food Prices—25

Gas Prices—23

Potential Solutions

- Eligibility limits for benefits and services could fluctuate based on inflation.
- Vouchers for seniors to assist with increasing prices of gas.
- Rent-controlled housing for seniors.
- Advocate for Medicare to provide funeral cost assistance for all Medicare beneficiaries.
- Utility support for seniors.
- Provide free trash services for senior citizens living within the Knox county limits.

Housing

177 mentions; 15.4% of feedback

Housing is another major issue for older adults in Knox County. Affordability continues to be a top concern as the affordable housing stock is practically nonexistent. The lack of available, affordable housing has put a strain on service providers trying to find housing for homeless seniors or those at risk of being homeless. Issues related to senior independence crop up in the housing conversation as assessment participants identified needs for more home maintenance help and support services for seniors in low income housing, such as case management.

Top Five Ideas

Affordable Housing—70

Aging in Place/In-Home care—52

Housekeeping/Maintenance—21

Housing—17

Appropriate Housing (Accessibility)—14

Potential Solutions

- Implement required affordability for housing in new developments.
- Research and education to increase the number of landlords accepting vouchers.
- Create programs to cover housekeeping for those who don't qualify for existing programs.
- Provide a well check system for seniors in a community/apartment.
- Increased adequate housing for seniors who wish to live independently.
- Partner with apartment complexes to rent some apartments to seniors at a reduced rate.
- Build housing in safe neighborhoods.
- Create a program that assesses current homes to ensure they are safe and structurally sound, and helps seniors maintain their home.
- Provide an online resource for older adults to access for minor and major home repairs from companies or volunteers.

Quality of Life

142 mentions; 12% of feedback

“Quality of life” is a broad term that speaks to the varying issues that shape an older adult’s wellbeing. Having companionship, nearby resources such as grocery stores, and the technological tools to stay connected vastly increase the quality of life for older adults. A positive mental outlook can stave off a number of other health issues that affects their independence and happiness. Though maintaining this outlook can be difficult when faced with ageism in the community and when seeking medical care. Participant responses show how the varying issues come together as quality of life.

Top Five Ideas

Isolation and Loneliness—58

Increase for more Senior Centers, Programs, Activities—40

Technology Use—12

Ageism and other forms of Discrimination—7

Social Anxiety due to COVID, Politics, etc.—6

Potential Solutions

- Educate the community to help combat ageism via public schools, community events, and the media.
- Connect new residents through Welcome Wagon program.
- Create a program where high school students “foster” a senior (similar to the Senior Companion program structure).
- Establish additional adult day centers.
- Extended hours of operation at senior centers.
- More events with intergenerational audience (older and younger populations mixed together).
- Expand nonprofit programs, such as McNabb Center, to counsel with seniors suffering loneliness, depression or other mental or emotional issues.

Safety

134 mentions; 11.6% of feedback

People are becoming increasingly aware about seniors' safety, especially in regard to elder abuse. Elder abuse can take many forms but is most commonly financial exploitation, neglect, or physical abuse against an older adult. Scams and financial exploitation of older adults have been dramatically increasing in the last few years. These, along with concerns about safety in their neighborhoods, can increase isolation and self-neglect among our community's most vulnerable members.

Top Five Ideas

Public Safety—134

Elder Abuse—13

Fraud/Scamming—5

Adult Protective Services/Security Services—5

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and/or Questioning (LGBTQ+) Safety—2

Potential Solutions

- Make process simpler to report abuse.
- Establish Emergency Blue Light call system in public spaces.
- Repair cracks, uneven sections or gaps, and create curb ramps in existing sidewalks.
- Offer more information/education campaigns on topics such as scams and frauds.
- Promote and enforce civil rights for older LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Create an organization for LGBTQ+ older adults to report discrimination in housing and services that would be supportive and sensitive to those issues.

Outreach

118 mentions; 10.3% of feedback

Resources are only as good as the number of potential clients who know about them. Outreach is necessary to continue educating seniors, their families, caregivers, and community partners about what services are available for older adults in Knox County. Outreach can help bring more seniors into the fold, decreasing loneliness and increasing the level of connectivity felt between older adults and their community.

Top Four Ideas

Navigating Health Services—44

Resource Education—43

Increased Financial Resources—24

Inability to Access Services—7

Potential Solutions

- Business cards with Office on Aging phone number and website.
- Increase information sources to seniors (such as mail, radio, church announcements, newspaper, neighborhood mailers).
- Publication “in large print” of local resources.
- Create community ambassador program to share information about resources for seniors.

Transportation

86 mentions; 7.5% of feedback

Older adults have several transportation options in Knoxville, but gaps still exist—especially in the county. In response to a previous needs assessment, the Volunteer Assisted Transportation program was born at CAC. This program offers a low-cost way for seniors and people with disabilities to get door-through-door assistance to doctor’s appointments, grocery visits, and social events. This program has increased capacity year after year, but it is completely dependent on volunteer availability. Increased volunteer help would allow this program to continue to grow and serve.

Top Five Ideas

Public Transportation—54

Limited Access to Transportation—11

Transportation to Requested Locations—10

Alternative Options—7

Traffic—2

Potential Solutions

- Expand transportation scheduling to include time frame reservations.
- Create a rolling store or shop on a bus/truck to visit senior housing.
- Produce bus information materials in large print.
- Create bus schedules in Knox County that would stop at points of interest for seniors, such as senior centers.
- Incorporate bus rapid transit along Oak Ridge Highway to help seniors access downtown who are not able to currently.
- Run buses along nearby roads to help transport seniors (and others) to a bus rapid transit stop.

Moving Forward

Using the information from the 2022 Needs Assessment, the Council on Aging plans to share results with partner agencies, elected officials, and other parties and create new or expand existing programs to meet these needs. If you have any comments or feedback, please contact us at 865-524-2786 or email knoxooa@knoxseniors.org.

Mission statement of the Knoxville—Knox County Community Action Committee (CAC) Office on Aging

The CAC Office on Aging is a public nonprofit agency that serves all older adults, regardless of life situation, but we are passionate about helping those for whom aging often presents the greatest hardship: those who are poor, in frail health, or alone.

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