Snohomish County COVID-19 Seniors Survey
Measuring the Pandemic's Impact on Senior Residents

The mission of Human Services is to help all persons meet their basic needs and develop their potential by providing timely, effective human services and building community.
Greetings!

Over the past year and a half, we have all seen the tremendous impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on residents aged 55 and older in our community. While all residents have been impacted, our most vulnerable residents have faced unprecedented challenges on a daily basis; challenges which the Snohomish County Department of Human Services Division of Aging and Disability Services and our network of committed service providers have mobilized to address.

As the Area Agency on Aging for our community, meeting the needs of older adults in Snohomish County is at the heart of everything we do. The pandemic has demonstrated the importance of having a strong network of aging services available in our community to address the unmet needs people face during these unfamiliar times. Our collective focus during this pandemic has been to utilize a wide range of supplemental federal, state, and local resources to ensure the continuity of in-home care services, increase the availability of home delivered meals to help address food insecurity, provide care coordination to prevent hospital admissions, and provide telephone reassurance and wellness checks for older residents in need.

Given the unprecedented nature of the challenges presented by the pandemic on residents aged 55 and older, Snohomish County conducted a wide-reaching survey to better understand its impact on our senior residents. The survey measured challenges in six critical areas including Health and Wellbeing, Financial Impact, Kinship Care, Risk of COVID-19 Infection, Use of Technology, and Emergency Preparedness.
The survey was available online and in hard copy between December 2020 and January 2021 to seniors aged 55 and older. It was published in five languages and additional languages were available upon request.

In the coming months, we will be utilizing the responses from the 3,480 older adults who responded to help guide our ongoing actions to address their needs. We will also use this data to guide the development of our Area Plan on Aging for Snohomish County.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the network of Senior Centers in Snohomish County and Snohomish County Division of Aging and Disabilities Services staff for their assistance in distributing the survey. I would also like to thank all our community partners for their ongoing efforts to ensure continuity of services for seniors in Snohomish County. Their participation has been critical to our collective response to the pandemic during these challenging times.

With my best wishes for a safe and healthy future,

Dave Somers
Snohomish County Executive
State of Snohomish County

The first reported case of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the United States was confirmed right here in Snohomish County on January 20, 2020. On March 2, 2020 we sadly learned we lost our first Snohomish County resident to COVID-19. For our safety, in person services and activities were abruptly impacted following the announcement of Washington’s "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order on March 23, 2020.

One of the hardest years in our history has come and gone, but still continues to impact our community, nation, and world. February 22, 2021 marked half a million American lives lost to the pandemic. Fortunately, hope is on the horizon now more than ever with vaccination efforts underway.

As our region continues the pandemic response, Human Service’s Aging and Disability Services surveyed residents 55 and older to better understand the unique difficulties seniors in Snohomish County face during these times. The survey measured critical areas around health and wellbeing, technical abilities, financial impacts, kinship care, risk of infection, and emergency preparedness. This report summarizes those responses and will help inform future planning efforts and services to assist seniors.
Survey Distribution

Snohomish County has a diverse population of 822,083 spread over 2,086 square miles, from the northern Puget Sound in the west to the Cascade Mountains in the east. There are approximately 212,020 residents aged 55 or older.

Snohomish County Human Services allocated a portion of Coronavirus Relief Funds to support the distribution of the survey to seniors throughout the County. Information about the survey was shared during the County’s weekly COVID-19 media briefing and was posted to the Human Services website. The survey was also shared on the County’s social media platforms and across the County’s network of Public Information Officers, service providers, and community partners.

The COVID-19 Seniors Survey was published in five languages:

- English
- Korean
- Russian
- Spanish
- Vietnamese

Additional translations were made available upon request.

The survey was offered online through SurveyMonkey and in paper form from December 2020 - January 2021. Additional paper copies were made available upon request. Paper surveys were mailed to known addresses of seniors with return postage provided.
Response Rates

Approximately 14,500 surveys were mailed. An additional 600 surveys were delivered with Homage's home delivery meal program (22% of these were returned). In total, 3,010 hardcopy surveys were returned with an overall hard copy response rate of 20%.

In addition to the hard copy surveys, 470 were completed online. Only one online survey was taken in Spanish. No other surveys were taken in the other offered languages. There were also no requests to translate the survey into additional languages.

The COVID-19 Seniors Survey reached approximately 7.3% of Snohomish County seniors aged 55 or older. A total of 3,480 surveys were completed.

Thank you all for caring enough to send out this survey.
Race and Ethnic Heritage

9.2% of Responses were from BIPOC Seniors

92% of the seniors who took the survey shared their race: 9.2% were Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Of these seniors, 80% were Asian, 11.5% were Black or African American, 6% were American Indian, and 2% were Pacific Islander. Seniors who shared a Hispanic or Latinx ethnicity were included as People of Color and accounted for 0.72% of respondents.

The information below illustrates the proportion of seniors within Snohomish County BIPOC communities:

- **Asian Seniors**: 22% of the Snohomish County Asian population are seniors aged 55 or older.
- **American Indian Seniors**: 21% of the Snohomish County American Indian population are seniors aged 55 or older.
- **Pacific Islander Seniors**: 18% of the Snohomish County Pacific Islander population are seniors aged 55 or older.
- **Black or African American Seniors**: 16% of the Snohomish County Black or African American population are seniors aged 55 or older.
- **Hispanic or Latinx Seniors**: 9% of the Snohomish County Hispanic/Latinx population are seniors aged 55 or older.
While the majority of respondents identified as White (91.6%), the survey found that many seniors across Snohomish County come from a wide variety of ethnic heritages as depicted in the map and chart below.

Our Seniors are Multi-Cultural

Most Prevalent Ethnic Heritages Reported by Snohomish County Seniors
Seniors of All Ages

70% of respondents were Females, more than twice the number of male respondents.

Female seniors make up 53% of Snohomish County’s senior population.

0.3% of seniors identified as Transgender. Another 0.2% identified as Non-Binary, Undecided, or Other.
Seniors by Living Arrangement

- 38.7% Live with their partner (spouse)
- 38.6% Live alone
- 18.9% Live with family
- 2.1% Live with a roommate
- 1.9% Have an alternative living arrangement

Seniors with Disabilities

- 38% of Seniors are Disabled
Among our seniors who responded to the survey (ages 55 and older), 38% reported having a disability. Recent Census data indicates that 25% of Snohomish County seniors aged 65 to 74 have a disability. The Census also estimates that 51% of Snohomish County seniors aged 75 and older have a disability.

Seniors with Pets

- 4 out of 9 Seniors Have a Pet
43% of seniors in Snohomish County reported having a pet. Of those with a pet, approximately 38% live alone, 43% have a disability, and the younger the senior, the more likely they are to have a pet.

I am very worried about what will happen to my two rescue animals should I get covid. There are little to no support systems for people with pets.

The isolation is the worst. Some days I don’t even want to get out of bed. Luckily I have to get up to take my dog out. I don’t know what I would do if I didn’t have my dog; makes me less lonely and unneeded. I wish I knew the solution to help us out but I don’t.
Financial Impacts on Seniors

Finances are tight. Hard to afford anything other than the most necessary living expenses. Costs keep going up squeezing more money, that I don't have. Financial assistance would help.

26% Financially Impacted
Among our seniors who responded to the survey, 26% strongly agreed and agreed that they have been financially impacted by the pandemic.

8% Struggling with Housing Payments
8% of seniors indicated they are having difficulty paying their rent or mortgage.

Just like most people, our savings and our social security are not good.

32% Worried about Savings
The economic toll caused by the pandemic has 32% of seniors worried about their retirement savings. Of these, 70% were females and 36% were females with a disability. While fewer males were worried about their savings, 50% of the males who were worried have a disability.
Food Insecurity

Healthy food is hard to find. Meat is way too expensive. You never know what the grocery stores will be out of.

78% of Seniors Eat Nutritious Meals Every Day
2,676 seniors (78%) shared that they eat nutritious meals every day.

For seniors who indicated they do not eat nutritious meals every day, 47% have been financially impacted by the pandemic.

13% of Seniors Have Difficulty Obtaining Healthy Food
439 seniors (13%) had difficulty obtaining healthy food because of the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing rules. Of these seniors, 59% have a disability.

It would be helpful if the food bank would deliver because I am homebound.

Open Senior Center so I can eat healthy food.

44% of Seniors Go Walking
1535 seniors (44%) shared that they go on a walk near home at least three times a week.

It would be nice to have someone to walk with 3x a week. I have fallen down while walking by myself, I have a great fear of falling.

Since I am unable to walk without assistance, I need indoor equipment.
Health and Wellbeing

I'm trying really hard to get through this difficult time. I know that other seniors are having a hard time as well.

Despite the majority of seniors leaving home 2 to 4 times a week and feeling safe while wearing a mask, 69% shared that they are worried that they or a loved one will get infected with COVID-19.

Majority of Seniors Leave Home 2 to 4 times per week

The survey asked seniors how often they were leaving home during the pandemic. 41% indicated they leave home 2 to 4 times per week. Of these seniors, 28% were BIPOC.

I wish I could get out more. I feel like I am housebound. I only get out once a week. I need more exercise, I feel my legs getting weaker.

66% Feel Safe Leaving Home When Wearing a Face Covering

2,280 seniors shared that they feel safe leaving home while wearing a face covering. However, many seniors left comments advocating for more public education about the importance of wearing face coverings and ensuring noses are covered.

69% Worried about Contracting COVID-19

Despite the majority of seniors leaving home 2 to 4 times a week and feeling safe while wearing a mask, 69% shared that they are worried that they or a loved one will get infected with COVID-19.

I worry a lot and feel lonely most of the time.
Kinship Care and Visitation

I babysit for family that goes to work, they lost their daycare.

8% of Seniors are Providing Child Care for Friends or Family

283 seniors (8%) shared that they are helping friends or family by watching their children. Of these seniors providing child care, 23% live with their family.

I do daycare for my grandson 2days + per week.

82% of Seniors Kept from Visiting with a Loved One

The pandemic limited 82% of seniors from visiting with a loved one. Responses illustrate that seniors of all age groups were impacted.

The Mental Health for my husband, myself, and our friends is suffering. We are irritable, sad, angry, lonely. We need interaction with friends and family.

Miss being able to hug and see my kids and grandkids.
Health and Wellbeing

80% of Seniors Have Social Support
Among our seniors who responded to the survey, 80% strongly agreed and agreed that they have someone who provides social support during the pandemic.

28% of Seniors Have Started a New Hobby
Approximately 956 seniors have started a new hobby during the pandemic. Of these seniors, 35% live alone and 26% have left home less than 1 to 3 times in the past month.

84% of Seniors Have Someone to Talk to Every Day
5 out of 6 seniors have someone to talk to every day. 11% of seniors do not have someone to talk to every day, 83% of which live alone.

1 in 4 Seniors Feel Lonely
25% of seniors shared that they feel lonely. There are too many Senior Adults in our county that are alone and lonely. They need more ways to be connected.
Health and Wellbeing

If someone can help me find medical help during emergencies it would be appreciated.

32% of Senior’s Sleep Worsened During the Pandemic
1,112 seniors (32%) shared that their sleep has worsened compared to the months before the pandemic. 26% of which are worried that they or a loved one will get infected with COVID-19.

39% of Seniors Have Their Medications Delivered
1,345 seniors (39%) have their medications delivered to their home.

It is hard to get the delivery of my medications. Free medication delivery would help.

5 out of 11 Seniors Have Not Had Their Teeth Cleaned Recently
1,554 seniors (45%) shared that they have not had their teeth cleaned in the past six months of taking the survey. 13% of which are also worried about their retirement savings.
Technical Abilities

Don’t assume everyone has internet or cell phones. Provide a way for others to be able to qualify for the vaccine without using the internet.

55% of Seniors Recently Used Telehealth Services
1,902 seniors (55%) indicated that they used telehealth services in the past year and 45% of which also had their medications delivered.

I could use someone to help pay for internet and a computer to get in touch with doctors and family.

14% of Seniors Do Not Have Reliable Internet
466 seniors (14%) shared that they do not have reliable internet at home or on a smartphone. 9% of which also shared that they do not feel comfortable using technology to stay connected.

Share information about when I can get the vaccine through non-internet means of communication. I have no internet and no car.

17% of Seniors Do Not Feel Comfortable Using Technology
589 seniors (17%) do not feel comfortable using technology to stay connected. 40% of which also feel lonely most days.

I don’t have a phone to stay connected, I feel lost.

I don’t know how to use electronics so my physical isolation has become social isolation.

Need help trying to find a primary care doctor. I don’t have computer or internet, just a land line only. Really need help with this.
Emergency Preparedness

I have no one as an emergency contact or a solution to leave a house key for emergency entrance if a wellness check is needed.

With the senior center closed it would be helpful to have a HELP line available to seniors that have questions. I have questions about the vaccine. Many seniors do not get the Herald or have a computer.

Stay in touch with us! Thanks for asking how we’re doing. Many challenges out there, for sure. A lot of work ahead to make things better.

82% of Seniors Stay Informed
2,844 seniors (82%) regularly watch, read, or listen to the news to stay informed.

I feel anxious thinking about COVID and watch the news for hours to make sure I can stay safe.

For seniors who indicated they do not regularly watch, read, or listen to the news, 35% are also worried about their retirement savings.

I do not have internet, home phone, television (I can’t afford it) no computer either.

22% of Seniors Do Not Have an Emergency Kit
769 seniors (22%) do not have an emergency kit of food, supplies, and medicine at home. 8% of which indicated they have also been financially impacted by the pandemic.

It would help to have a list of emergency kit supplies to guide.
Feeling Hopeful

80% of Seniors are Feeling Hopeful

80% of seniors indicated that they are hopeful that life will return to pre-COVID conditions once a vaccine is distributed.

Of the seniors who indicated that they were not feeling hopeful, 72% of these seniors regularly watched, read, or listened to the news to stay informed.

Vaccination Efforts

Washington State began administering the first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine on December, 15 2020. As of March 27, 2021, 72.8% of people aged 65 or older in Washington State have received the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine; 53.7% have been fully vaccinated.

Data for Snohomish County residents aged 65 or older from December 15, 2020 - March 14, 2021, indicates that 28,961 seniors have been partially vaccinated and 44,067 have been fully vaccinated.

"Miss my exercise class at senior center, hopeful to resume normal routine when safe. See family and friends again.

Trying to stay positive and hopeful."
Snohomish County Senior Centers

I look forward to returning to senior center activities.

Snohomish County has a number of County funded Senior Centers that offer a wide range of activities and services. 35% of seniors who responded to the survey indicated they have never visited a senior center prior to the pandemic. A quarter of respondents indicated they have been visiting for 1 to 5 years.

35% of Seniors have never visited a senior center.

I don’t drive or have a car, so I don’t go to the senior center.

25% of Seniors have been visiting for 1 to 5 years.

16% of Seniors have been visiting for over 10 years.

I look forward to returning to senior center activities.

County Funded Senior Centers

Carl Gipson Senior Center in Everett
Cascade Seniors in Darrington
Edmonds Senior Center
Ken Baxter Senior Community Center in Marysville
Lake Stevens Senior Center
Lynnwood Senior Center
Mill Creek Senior Center

Monroe Community Senior Center
Mountlake Terrace Community Senior Center
Mukilteo Seniors Association at Rosehill
Northshore Senior Center in Bothell
Snohomish Senior Center
Stanwood Community & Senior Center
Stillaguamish Senior Center in Arlington

For more information about senior centers in Snohomish County please visit Human Services’ Aging and Disability Services’ webpage: https://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/1022/Senior-Centers
Survey Comments About Senior Centers

I really miss my senior center because now I have one one to help me w/my computer problems nor can I take computer classes!

Telephone calls from the senior center more often than every 2-3 months would help.

I have some help from the senior center and food bank, that’s really helped.

I really miss my senior center because now I have one one to help me w/my computer problems nor can I take computer classes!

Counseling would be beneficial at a reduced rate though senior centers via phone and zoom.

Senior’s need something to look forward to and for many a lack of socialization is a killer mentally and physically!

Arrange to distribute vaccine at senior center.

I would love to have some ready made meals to either pick up at senior center in Arlington or delivered to me.

Find a way to reopen senior centers.

I do miss going to the senior center as it was my main social connection outside of my home.

Miss my exercise class at senior center.

I need the Senior Center for exercise, lunch, and friendship.

For those alone the senior center is their only social interaction and is necessary.

Miss the social activities at the senior center.

Build a Mukilteo Senior Center so we have a better place to go after the pandemic.

Need senior center for Latinos.

Please support building a senior center in Mukilteo for hot meals, learning and socializing.

Make opening senior centers a priority.
Resources for Seniors

Snohomish County Senior Information and Assistance line:
1-800-422-2024 and online resource directory
www.waclc.org/consite/index.php

Snohomish County Human Services List of Resources:
https://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/191/Human-Services

Snohomish County Coronavirus Response and Community Resource Hub:
Planning & Evaluation

SNOHOMISH COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES

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