

The Status of Older Adults in Boulder County

Creating Vibrant Communities in Which We All Age Well

Boulder County Adults 60+

<u>Year/Data</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of total population</u>
Census 2000: ²	28,661	10.6%
Projected 2004: ³	32,251	11.3%
Projected 2008: ³	39,312	13.1%
Projected 2012: ³	48,743	15.5%
Projected 2020: ³	69,563	20.2%

Boulder County is aging faster than the rest of the state. And, adults 60 and older will become an **even larger portion of the population** as the baby boom generation begins to turn 60 in 2006.

The increasing number and percent of older adults 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. In Boulder County, 1,653 older adults were interviewed. This report summarizes the key findings of the *Strengths and Needs Assessment of Older Adults in Boulder County*.⁴

An Elder-Friendly Community

A community that is prepared to both meet the needs and build upon the strengths of its older adults is considered to be **elder-friendly**.¹ This report presents information that identifies areas of **strength** as well as the **concerns** of Boulder County adults 60 and older. It identifies key areas where we can work together to *create vibrant communities in which we all age well*.

Areas for Community Action

- **Address basic needs.**
- **Optimize physical and mental health and well-being.**
- **Promote social and civic engagement.**
- **Maximize independence; support caregivers.**¹

The results of Boulder County's 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.

For more information about the survey upon which this status report is based, contact Boulder County Aging Services Division at 303.441.3570. The entire *Strengths and Needs Assessment of Older Adults in Boulder County* report is available at: www.co.boulder.co.us/cs/ag/resources.html



Boulder County Aging Services Division serves as the Area Agency on Aging for Boulder County. Our mission is:

To promote the health and well-being of older adults by building on individual, family, and community strengths.

Basic Needs



Housing



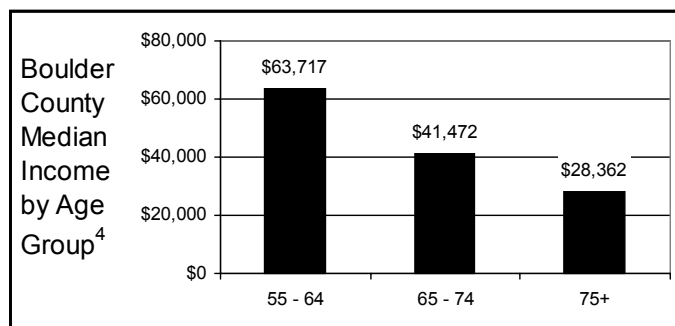
- ◆ Overall, 5% (1,699)⁶ of Boulder County adults 60 and older reported a **problem having housing suited to their needs**; 21% of older Hispanics.⁴
- ◆ 21.1% of Boulder County householders 60 and older **do not own their own home**.⁴
- ◆ 32.7% (10,706) of older adults in Boulder County **live alone**, somewhat higher than elsewhere in the state (28.7%). Older women are much more likely to live alone than older men.⁴
- ◆ It is estimated that 4% (1,392)⁶ of older adults with income less than \$15,000 are **at risk of institutionalization**.⁴
- ◆ 95% of Boulder County adults 60 and older reported **no problem having housing suited to their needs**.⁴
- ◆ Overall, 78.9% of Boulder County householders 60 and older **own their own home**; 84.1% of Boulder County householders 60–64; 50.9% of those 85+.⁴
- ◆ 58.1% (19,050) of Boulder County adults 65 and older live in family households with a spouse or other relative.⁴
- ◆ 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



- ◆ Nearly 4,000 (20.1%) Boulder County adults 65 and older were poor or “near poor” in 1999.⁴
- ◆ 23% (7,312)⁶ of Boulder County adults 60 and older reported having **financial problems** in the last 12 months; 29% of women 60 – 74; 39% of older Hispanics.⁴
- ◆ 5.7% (1,115) of adults 65 and older had **income below the federal poverty level** in 1999; 11.5% of older Hispanics. 20.1% of adults 65 and older had **income below 200% of the poverty level**; 42.4% of Hispanics 65 and older.⁴
- ◆ Poverty rates were substantially higher for older women than men and the levels and differentials increased with age.⁴
- ◆ 24% (7,750)⁶ of older adults reported **problems affording needed medications**; 31% of older Hispanics; 39% of older adults with income less than \$15,000.⁴
- ◆ 2% (541)⁶ of older adults said they were **not able to afford enough food to eat**; 6% of older Hispanics; 7% of those with income with less than \$15,000.⁴
- ◆ 77% of Boulder County adults 60 and older said **finances had been no problem** in the past year.⁴
- ◆ The **median household income** of Boulder County adults 65–74 was \$41,472 in 1999; for those 75 and older it was \$28,362.⁴
- ◆ 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 (97%).⁴
- ◆ 98% said they **were able to afford enough food to eat**.⁴





Safety



- ◆ 3% (992)⁶ of Boulder County adults 60 and older reported that **being physically or emotionally abused** had been a problem in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 5% (1,470)⁶ said being a **victim of crime** had been a problem in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 9% (3,041)⁶ said being **financially exploited** had been a problem in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 97% of Boulder County adults 60 and older said that **being physically or emotionally abused had not been a problem** in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 95% said **being a victim of crime had not been a problem** in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 91% said **being financially exploited had not been a problem** in the past year.⁴



Nutrition



- ◆ 3% (810)⁶ of older adults reported **having enough food to eat was a problem** in the last year; 8% of older Hispanics.
- ◆ 21% 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**; 10% of older Hispanics.⁴
- ◆ 8% (2,477)⁶ of adults 60 and older said they **do not eat two or more complete meals a day**; 13% of older Hispanics; 17% of older adults with income less than \$15,000.⁴
- ◆ 97% of Boulder County 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
- ◆ 94% 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



- ◆ 21% (6,773)⁶ of Boulder County adults 60 and older said **feeling depressed had been a problem** in the past year; 33% of older Hispanics.⁴
- ◆ 2% (696)⁶ said they have an **emotional or mental illness** that limits their daily activities.⁴
- ◆ 18% (5,853)⁶ said **feeling lonely, sad, or isolated had been a problem** in the past year; 24% of older Hispanics.⁴
- ◆ 79% of Boulder County adults 60 and older said **feeling depressed had not been a problem** in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 98% agreed they are **generally a happy person**.⁴
- ◆ 82% said feeling **lonely, sad, or isolated had not been a problem** in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 90% agreed they **feel hopeful about the future**.⁴



Health



- ◆ 23% (7,489)⁶ said they have a **condition that substantially limits their daily activities**; 20% (6,519)⁶ have a significant hearing loss; 7% (2,339)⁶ are blind or have a severe vision impairment.⁴
- ◆ 14% (4,515)⁶ of Boulder County adults 60 and older said their **health is only fair or poor**.⁴
- ◆ 43% (13,962)⁶ said their **physical health was a problem** in the past year; 51% of older Hispanics; 65% of older adults with income less than \$15,000.⁴
- ◆ 8% (2,580)⁶ said they had **not visited their doctor** or health care provider in the past year; 27% had **not had a dental exam**; 32% had **not had an eye exam**; 78% had **not had a hearing exam**.⁴
- ◆ 11% (3,548)⁶ reported they **had fallen and injured themselves seriously enough to need medical attention** at least once in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 10% (3,225)⁶ **never engage in moderate physical activity** for at least 30 minutes a day; 13% said they do so only once or twice a week.⁴
- ◆ 3% (968)⁶ of Boulder County older adults said they **have no medical insurance**, up from 1% in 1997.⁴
- ◆ Older Hispanics rated their overall **quality of health** at only 51 on a 100-point scale.
- ◆ 59% of Boulder County adults 60 and older said their **health is excellent or very good**.⁴
- ◆ 57% said their physical health has **not been a problem** in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 92% said they **had visited their doctor** or health care provider in the past year; 73% **had a dental exam**; 68% **had an eye exam**; 22% **had a hearing exam**.⁴
- ◆ 80% said they **had not spent any days** in the hospital in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 90% **engaged in moderate physical activity** for at least 30 minutes a day, at least once a week; 30% did so seven days a week.⁴
- ◆ On average, adults 60 and older engaged in **moderate physical activity** 4.3 days a week.⁴
- ◆ 77% 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), Boulder County adults 60 and older rated their overall **quality of health** at 68.⁴



Well-Being



- ◆ 3% (968)⁶ of Boulder County adults 60 and older rated their **quality of life as bad or very bad**.⁴
- ◆ Hispanic older adults rated their **quality of life** at only 69 on a 100-point scale.
- ◆ 7% (2,258)⁶ said they **do not feel they have control** over the things that happen to them.⁴
- ◆ 5% (1,613)⁶ said they **do not have a sense of purpose**.⁴
- ◆ 10% (3,225)⁶ feel their **community does not value older people**.⁴
- ◆ Overall, Boulder County adults 60 and older rated their **quality of life** at 85 on a 100-point scale (where 100 = excellent and 0 = poor).⁴
- ◆ 91% of Boulder County adults 60 and older rated their **quality of life as very good or good**.⁴
- ◆ 94% agreed their **community values their language and traditions**.⁴
- ◆ 90% agreed they were **willing to ask for and accept help from others**.⁴
- ◆ 97% agreed they were **satisfied with the relationships in their life**.⁴

Social and Civic Engagement



Participation



- ◆ 13% (4,178)⁶ of Boulder County adults 60 and older said **having too few activities or feeling bored** had been a problem in the past year; 19% of older Hispanics.⁴
- ◆ Some older adults **do not participate** in many, if any, activities with others. In a typical week:⁴
 - 77% do not participate in senior center activities.
 - 58% do not participate in a club or civic group.
 - 51% do not volunteer or help out in the community.
 - 47% do not attend movies, sporting events, or group events.
 - 44% do not participate in religious or spiritual activities with others.
 - 7% do not visit with friends in person or over the phone.
- ◆ 68% of Boulder County adults 60 and older said they participate in at least one of the following:⁴
 - **volunteer** at least one hour per week (49%);
 - **are employed** at least part time (26%);
 - **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; 93% visit with friends in person or over the phone.
 - 56% participate in religious or spiritual activities with others.
 - 42% participate in a club or civic group.
 - 23% participate in senior center activities.
- ◆ 79% spend at least one hour per week **participating in a hobby** such as art, gardening, or music.⁴



Social Support



- ◆ 10% (3,225)⁶ of Boulder County adults 60 and older said they were **not willing to ask for and accept help from others**.⁴
- ◆ 10% (3,225)⁶ said they **get only a little or no social support** (defined as being cared for, loved, listened to, and respected) **from family**.⁴
- ◆ 16% (5,160)⁶ said they **get only a little or no social support from friends**; 36% said they get only a little or no social support from neighbors.⁴
- ◆ 31% (9,998)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% (14,513)⁶ said they **get only a little or no practical support from friends**; 57% said they get only a little or no practical support from neighbors.⁴
- ◆ 66% of Boulder County adults 60 and older said, during a typical week, they spend some time **providing help to friends or relatives**.⁴
- ◆ 86% agreed their **family and friends rely on them**.⁴
- ◆ 90% agreed their **community values older people**.⁴
- ◆ 71% said they **get a lot of social support from family**; 53% said they **get a lot of social support from friends**.⁴
- ◆ 26% said they **get a lot of social support from a church or spiritual group**; 25% **get a lot of social support from neighbors**.⁴
- ◆ 95% agreed they **could handle about anything that life throws at them**.⁴

Independence and Support



Assistance With Everyday Activities



- ◆ 17% (5,573)⁶ of Boulder County 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
 - 29% of adults 60 and older with income less than \$15,000.
 - 27% of Hispanics 60 and older.
 - 19% of adults 60 and older who live alone.
- ◆ 19% (6,128)⁶ **cannot do heavy housework**; an additional 20% **need some help** to do heavy housework.⁴
- ◆ 20% (6,450)⁶ **cannot do interior or exterior repairs**; an additional 22% **need some help** to do interior or exterior repairs.⁴
- ◆ 19% (6,128)⁶ **cannot do yard work and snow shoveling**; an additional 13% **need some help** to do yard work and snow shoveling.⁴
- ◆ 4% (1,290)⁶ **cannot do light housework** like dusting or vacuuming; an additional 5% **need some help** to do light housekeeping.⁴
- ◆ 83% of Boulder County 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; 68% of males age 85 and older and 74% of females age 85 and older reported **no problem**.⁴
- ◆ 77% **did not have a condition that substantially limits daily activities** such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying.⁴
- ◆ 60% are **able to do heavy housework** like moving furniture or washing windows without any help; 58% **can do interior or exterior repairs** without any help; 68% **can do yard work and snow shoveling** without any help.⁴
- ◆ 91% are **able to do light housework** like dusting or vacuuming without any help.⁴
- ◆ 95% are **able to prepare their meals** without any help.⁴
- ◆ 98% are **able to manage their medications** without any help.⁴



Transportation



- ◆ 9% (2,820)⁶ of Boulder County adults 60 and older said **having inadequate transportation had been a problem** for them in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 9% (2,879)⁶ **needed help getting or arranging transportation** in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 7% (2,258)⁶ said it had frequently or sometimes been difficult to arrange transportation for **medical trips** in the past year; 6% reported difficulty arranging transportation for **recreational or social trips**.⁴
- ◆ 91% of Boulder County adults 60 and older said **having inadequate transportation had not been a problem** in the past year; 91% **needed no help getting or arranging transportation**.⁴
- ◆ 92% said it had never been difficult to arrange transportation for **medical trips** in the past year.⁴
- ◆ 94% 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



- ◆ 12% (3,932)⁶ of Boulder County adults 60 and older said **providing care for another person had been a problem** in the past year; 23% of older Hispanics.⁴
- ◆ Of the 18% (5,733)⁶ who said they **provide care for one or more family members or friends on a regular basis**:⁴
 - 38% (2,171)⁶ had **frequently or sometimes felt burdened** by their caregiving.
 - 28% (1,616)⁶ said the person they care for was **frequently or sometimes uncooperative**.
 - 19% (1,083)⁶ said the person they care for was **frequently or sometimes verbally aggressive**.
 - 11% (616)⁶ said the person they care for was **frequently or sometimes physically aggressive**.
 - 7% (411)⁶ said the person they care for was **frequently or sometimes sexually aggressive**.
 - 12% said they could use **more services or information** about services.
 - 10% said they could use **more financial support**.
 - 5% said they could use **more respite** or free time for themselves.
- ◆ 18% (5,733)⁶ of Boulder County adults 60 and older said they **provide care for one or more family members or friends on a regular basis**. Of these:⁴
 - 33% provided care for a **spouse**, averaging 12.5 hours per week.
 - 18% provided care for a **parent**, averaging 10.6 hours per week.
 - 14% provided care for a **friend or neighbor**, averaging 9.2 hours per week.
 - 11% provided care for an **adult child**, averaging 7.4 hours per week.
 - 22% provided care for a **grandchild**, averaging 17.0 hours per week.
 - 6% provided care for a **child**, averaging 17.5 hours per week.
 - 1% provided care for a **partner**, averaging 30.0 hours per week.
 - 17% provided care for **another family member**, averaging 8.7 hours per week.
- ◆ 62% 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, 31% **cared for more than one person**.

Strengths and Aging Well

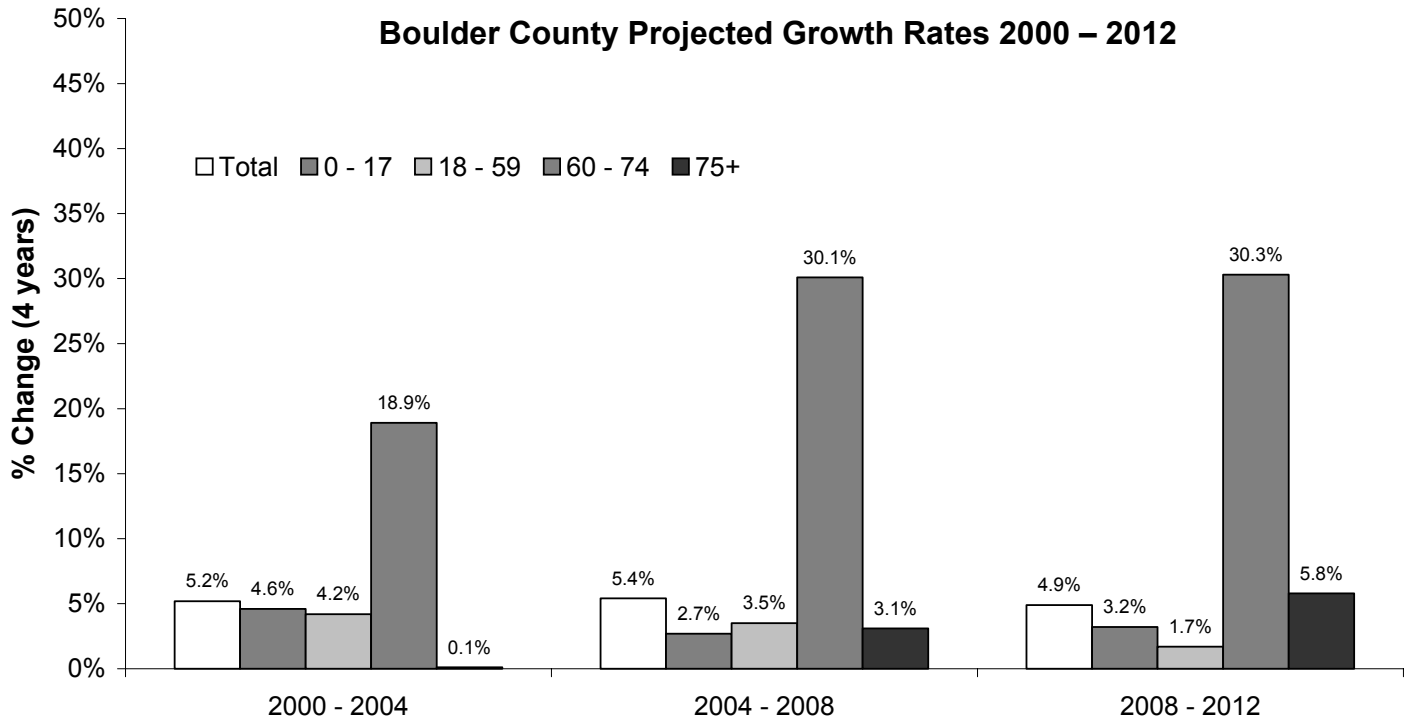
The *Strengths and Needs Assessment of Older Adults in the State of Colorado* identified twelve strengths that correlate with aging well. These strengths were grouped into three categories—physical health, outlook on life, and connection with others and the community. Fifty-four percent of Boulder County adults 60 and older had nine to twelve strengths; 40% had five to eight strengths; 7% 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 vibrant communities in which we all age well*.



Where to Turn

Resource Specialists and Community Care Coordinators provide information and assistance to older adults, their families, and the public in the cities and rural areas of Boulder County:

Resource Specialists:

Boulder 303-441-4388
 Lafayette 303-665-9052
 Longmont 303-651-8716
 Louisville 303-335-4919

Community Care Coordinators:

Allenspark area 303-747-2592
 Lyons area 303-823-9016
 Nederland area 303-258-3068
 Niwot area 303-652-3850

Boulder County Aging Services Division – P.O. Box 471, Boulder, CO 80306
Telephone (303) 441-3570 FAX: (303) 441-4550

Website: www.co.boulder.co.us/cs/ag Email: bcaaa@co.boulder.co.us

Endnotes

1. 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.
2. U.S. Census 2000 (adjusted to exclude Broomfield).
3. Colorado Department of Local Affairs.
4. *Strengths and Needs Assessment of Older Adults in Boulder County*, National Research Center, Inc., December 2004.
5. *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>
6. Numbers in parentheses are estimates based on the reported percent and a population of 32,251. Any differences between these numbers and those reported in (4) are the result of rounding of the reported percent.