

Submitted by

Chairman of the Assembly
at the Request of the Mayor
Department of Health and
Human Services

Prepared by

For reading

AUGUST 29, 2000

CLERK'S OFFICE

APPROVED

Date: 8-29-00

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

AR NO. 2000-254

A RESOLUTION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE ACCEPTING THE ANCHORAGE
SENIOR STUDY 2000 REPORT AND AUTHORIZING THE SENIOR CITIZENS ADVISORY
COMMISSION TO DISTRIBUTE THE REPORT.

THE ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY RESOLVES

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Anchorage Senior Study is to assess and examine the
health and human services needs of Anchorage's senior citizens;

WHEREAS, the Municipal Senior Citizens Advisory Commission undertook this study
with the funding assistance of the Anchorage Assembly, AARP, the Alaska Mental Health Trust, and
Providence Alaska Medical Center and the cooperation of more than 1,000 study respondents;

WHEREAS, effective planning requires assessment of the current needs and resources of
senior citizens within the Municipality of Anchorage, and this study performed that assessment.

THE ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY RESOLVES

Section The Anchorage Senior Study 2000 Report is hereby accepted as complete;

Section 2. That the Municipal Senior Citizens Advisory Commission may authorize
the copying and distribution of the Anchorage Senior Study 2000 Report to interested parties;

Section 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon passage and approval

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Assembly this 29 day of August, 2000.


Chairman

ATTEST


Municipal Clerk

Anchorage Senior Citizens Advisory Commission

AR-2000-254
RECEIVED
Office of Municipal Clerk
AUG 24 2000

P.O. Box 196650
Anchorage, AK 99519-6650

The Anchorage Senior Study 2000

*A Planning Document for the
Aging Population of Anchorage*

Final Report
June 2000

Acknowledgements

The Municipal Senior Citizens Advisory Commission wishes to acknowledge and thank the following for their support of, and assistance with, this project:

The Anchorage Assembly

Providence Alaska Medical Center

Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority

American Association of Retired Persons

The Municipality of Anchorage Department of Health & Human Services

Patrick Consulting

All of the volunteers and respondents who participated in this study

Foreword

The Anchorage Senior Citizens Advisory Commission was created in 1976 to advise the Mayor, the Assembly and the appropriate department heads with respect to those aspects of aging which bear upon the welfare of senior citizens in the Municipality of Anchorage. More specifically, this fifteen member body is to:

Conduct surveys and compile and disseminate for the benefit of senior citizens information on housing, health, nutrition, transportation, education, recreation, legal services, community/social services, employment and income maintenance and senior citizen involvement with the community.

Carry out educational and public relations programs designed to create public awareness of needs of senior citizens and the services which senior citizens can provide.

Assist and provide programs that alert elderly persons of the resources available to them.

There are more people aged 65 and older alive today than have ever reached age 65 in the whole of human history. This fact, combined with the aging of the “baby boom” generation, has brought the recognition and interest of seniors’ concern to the attention of our state and national lawmakers.

Planning for and with seniors also must be addressed at the local level. The Commission, as a neutral body, believed it possible to learn from seniors and their experiences as well as determine their expectations of the government. Greater longevity poses many dilemmas and as the senior population increases, views become more diverse. Seniors need input in planning at the local level to permit and enhance quality of life as desired. The Commission decided that current information about needs and resources available to meet those needs would be helpful. The aging of Anchorage impacts everyone, all generations are connected, each dependent on the other at some point in life.

As the question “If you plan to get older, are you prepared?” continued to be asked, the Commission decided to find an answer from seniors and “gonna-be” seniors. The Commission emphasized a “consumer-driven” study, suggesting that the contractor recruit, train and employ seniors as interviewers for the study. The Commission’s belief that this almost invisible group of the population needed to be heard from and included in future planning for Anchorage.

The study was an intense and sometimes challenging process, but it was also extremely interesting, educational and rewarding for the Commissioners. The process of the study has enabled us to find some answers to questions initially posed and realize that Anchorage and Alaska seniors seem in agreement when discussing their hopes and desires for their own aging.

Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Foreword	v
Executive Summary	1
Part I: Introduction	11
Purpose	12
Major Factors Impacting the Quality of Life of Seniors	13
Data Collection Methods	14
Survey Results	14
Part II: Senior Voice Survey Results	15
Introduction	15
Data Limitations	15
Who Responded	16
Economics	18
Health	19
Social Well-Being	20
Housing	21
Part III: In-Person Interview Survey Results	23
Description	23
Data Limitations	23
Profile of Survey Respondents	24
Economics	26
Health	28
General health	28
Impact of health on retirement	29
Health insurance coverage	29
Life style behaviors that impact overall health	30
Social Well-Being	31
Life in Retirement	31
Social support network	34
Crime & safety	34
Services	34
Housing	36

The Anchorage Senior Study 2000

Executive Summary

Introduction

The needs of seniors are changing and will continue to change as the baby-boomers come into their senior years.

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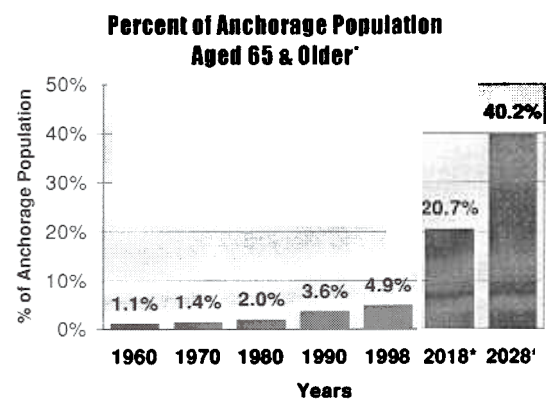
The face of Anchorage is changing. It is getting older. The ever dominant baby boomer generation is marching toward retirement—a trend the U.S. Census Bureau calls "a social phenomenon without historical precedent."¹

For purposes of this study, persons who are 65 years of age or older are defined as senior citizens.

By 2028, as much as 40% of Anchorage's population will be age 65 or older—a 700% increase.

The aging of Anchorage's population will generate social and economic changes that will affect everyone—from housing to employment to medical care and public service needs.

Anchorage needs to start planning today for the socioeconomic effects of this demographic shift.



* Rough estimation. Source: 1960-1990 by U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1998 Anchorage estimate by Alaska Dept. of Labor, Demographics unit (3/10/99).

¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998. *Projections of the United States by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1995 to 2028*. Population Reports, P25-1129, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

mic Origin: 1995 to

Positive Findings

1. Seniors Are a Rich Source of Knowledge

The Senior Voice Survey found 85% of respondents have lived in Alaska for 20 or more years. Only 3% of respondents have lived in Alaska for 5 or less years. In contrast, 25% of Anchorage residents have lived in Alaska for 5 or less years. (p.18)

Seniors with a lifetime of experience and with special skills should form small groups to act as volunteer consultants to young people, students, and others approaching retirement.

—Community Forum Participant

Implication: Seniors have a wealth of history, knowledge, and time invested in Alaska. Anchorage needs to figure out ways to tap into this rich resource.

2. Seniors Are Here to Stay

Both the Senior Voice and In-Person Interview surveys found over 90% of current seniors have retired or plan to retire in Anchorage. Moreover, 75% of future seniors report they plan to retire in Anchorage. (p.17, 25)

Implication: Supports population estimates projecting rapid growth in senior population.

3. Seniors Have High Levels of Emotional Health

In general, survey respondents appear satisfied and happy with retirement.

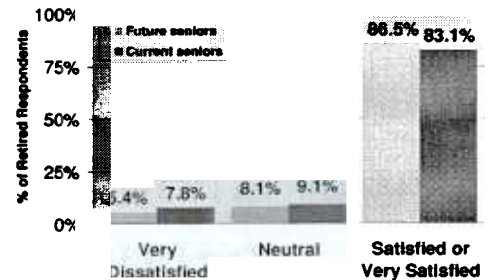
More than 8 in 10 *retired* respondents felt satisfied or very satisfied overall about their retirement (p.22). There was some gender difference as a greater number women were satisfied than men—87% of women compared to 81% of men. (p.31)

Survey respondents reported high levels of emotional health. Approximately 8 in 10 respondents reported having good, very good, or excellent emotional health. (p.28)

Furthermore, 8 in 10 survey respondents reported feeling financially able to live the quality of life they wanted. (p.27)

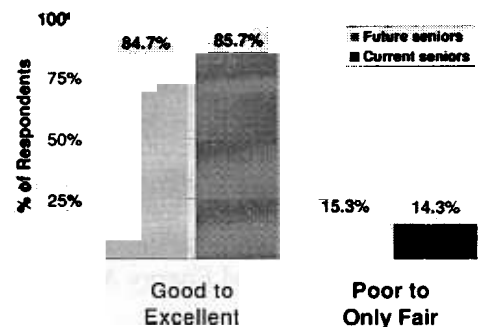
Implication: In general, people who retire in Anchorage appear to be satisfied with their lives.

How Retired* Respondents Feel About Retirement



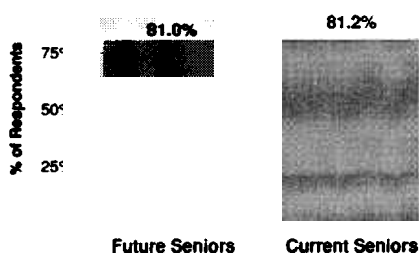
*Includes retired and partly-retired from Interview Survey, 1999.

Respondents Report of Emotional Health



In-Person Interview Survey

Respondents Who Feel Financially Able to Live the Quality of Life They Want



Increasing Pressure on Health Care System

Lack of Health Care and Long-Term Care

The study estimates that we can expect 1 in 10 seniors to experience a major health event within a year—i.e., a serious illness or accident, being hospitalized, being bed-ridden at home, or having to stay in a long-term care facility. (p.28)

In our surveys, at least 1 in 10 respondents had no health insurance other than Medicare and at least 8 in 10 had no long-term care coverage (not covered by Medicare). (p.20, 29)

Furthermore, of respondents who attempted to use Medicare almost a quarter (24%) had been turned away by their health care provider at some point. (p.20)

Risky Lifestyle Behaviors

Risky lifestyle behaviors—such as tobacco use, alcohol abuse, and lack of exercise—have serious health ramifications. Our survey results estimate risky lifestyle behavior to be significantly prevalent. The serious negative health effects that result will put added pressure on Anchorage's health care system.

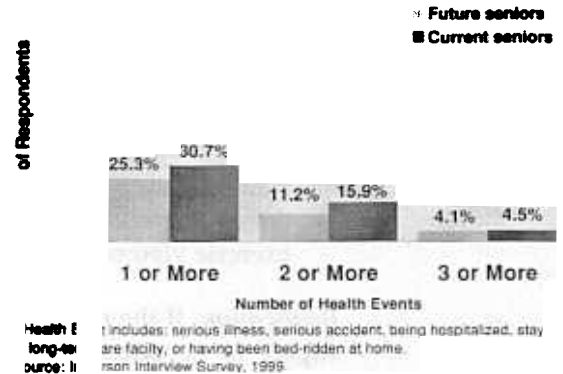
Tobacco use is the single most important cause of preventable death and disease. It is a major risk factor for heart disease and cancer as well as other health problems. (p.30)

More than 1 in 3 current seniors presently use tobacco products. For future seniors, 1 in 5 use tobacco products

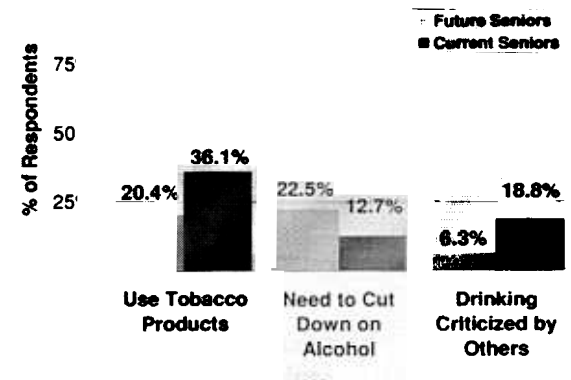
Alcohol is a significant contributing factor to crime, injury, and adverse health outcomes like cancer and immune system problems. (p.30)

Alcohol appears to be a significant problem for respondents—1 in 5 either thought they needed to cut down on their alcohol consumption or had been criticized by others about their drink

Respondents Who Had a Serious Health Event* in the Last Year



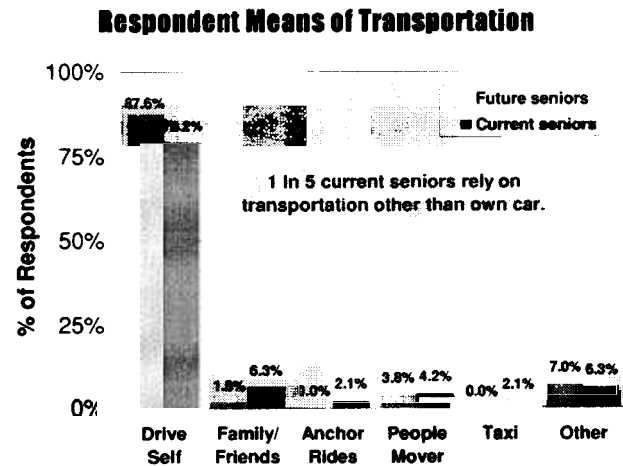
Respondent Tobacco & Alcohol Use



4. Increasing Need for Public Transportation

As respondents age, they appeared to become increasingly dependent on means transportation *other* than driving themselves. Over 1 in 5 current seniors did not drive themselves. (p.37) Being driven by family and friends and other were both more often used than People Mover or Anchor Rides.

Implication: If this proves to be a trend, then the community will need to begin planning how to meet this increasing need for public transportation with more success. Transportation is fundamental to a person's access to health care, employment and social support.



Source: In-Person Interview Survey, 1999.

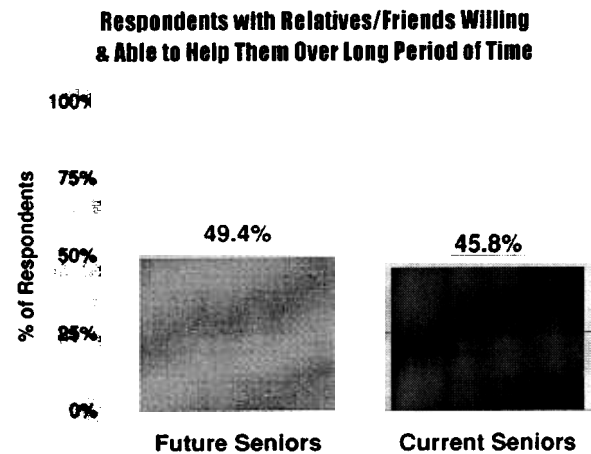
5. Social Support

There is evidence that seniors lack strong social support network:

As people age, research shows that they increasingly rely on their social support networks to maintain their quality of life.

More than half of current seniors and almost half of future seniors reported having no relatives or friends who were able and willing to help them over a long period of time. (p.34)

Implication: If Anchorage seniors lack individual social support resources, then they will be forced to turn to public resources, so we might anticipate increasing weight and pressures on Anchorage's public infrastructure.

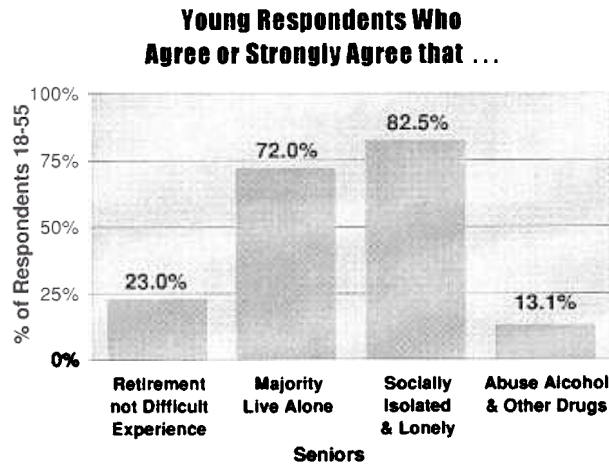


Source: In-Person Interview Survey, 1999.

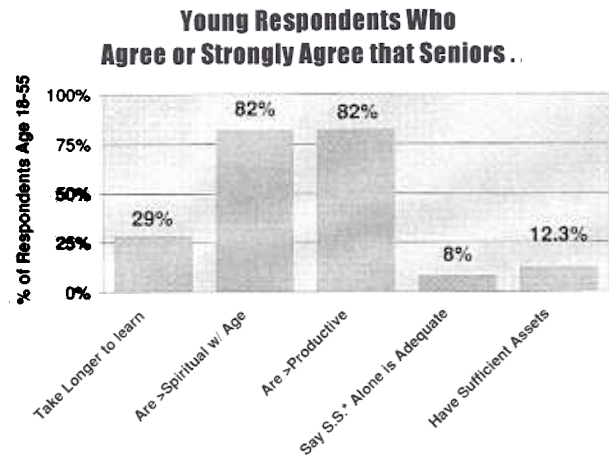
Younger Generation Perceptions & Contact with Seniors

1. Perception of Seniors Favorable

At least 8 in 10 telephone survey respondents under age 55 believe seniors to be more productive than unproductive and more spiritual. Less than 1/3 believe seniors take longer to learn and only 13% believe they abuse alcohol or other drugs. (p.39)



Source: Telephone Interview Survey, 1999.



Source: Telephone Interview Survey, 1999.

2. Perception of Retirement Unfavorable

Their perception of retirement, however, appears less positive. More than 3 of 4 non-seniors believe retirement will be a difficult experience. At least 8 in 10 believe seniors are isolated and lonely. Most believe there will be financial hardships. Only 1 in 10 believe seniors have sufficient assets, and even less (8%) believe social security alone will be financially adequate (see charts above). (p.39)

Implications: Highlights concern over being financially prepared for retirement and having social support networks in place.

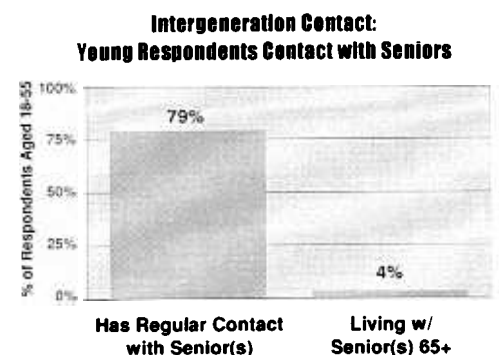
3. Younger Generation Report High Levels of Contact with Seniors

Young respondents reporting regular contact with seniors was quite high—85%. (p.39)

Being a part of my grandchildren's lives is very important to me.

—Community Forum Participant

Implication: If this high level of contact is true then seniors will be less isolated and have improved emotional and physical health.



Source: Telephone Interview Survey, 1999.

**FULL TEXT
OF DOCUMENT
CAN BE
OBTAINED
AT THE MUNI
CLERK'S
OFFICE.**
