



Aging Well Whatcom

2021 Older Adult Survey Report

March 2022

KEY FINDINGS

WHAT'S IMPORTANT

Older adults' five most frequent responses regarding what's important to their quality of life were 1) Family and friends, 2) Health, 3) Interaction, relationships, and connection, 4) Food and nutrition, and 5) Healthcare. The themes "Family and friends" and "Interaction, relationships, and connection" have obvious similarities; if combined, the broader theme of **relationships and connection** is overwhelmingly what older adults consider to be most important to their quality of life

CHALLENGES OR CONCERNS

The top five challenges or concerns mentioned by respondents were 1) Healthcare 2) Medical condition(s), 3) Physical activity, 4) Pandemic, and 5) "Concern regarding future needs."

IMPACTS OF COVID-19

The two most frequently mentioned impacts were related themes: 1) Less interaction, relationships, connection and 2) Isolation. Far more people mentioned these than the other three themes that made up the top five: 3) Fewer activities, 4) [Less] travel, and 5) Fear, worry, and stress.

What older adults clearly identify as most important to their wellbeing – **relationships and connection** – is precisely what COVID-19 has most impacted for our communities' older adults. This is not new information; social isolation among older adults has been well-documented throughout (and prior to) the pandemic. However, it's an important confirmation that this core aspect of wellbeing for older adults in Whatcom County has been further eroded by the pandemic.

WHAT TO ADD OR CHANGE

Respondents' highest priorities for areas to add to or change were 1) Transportation, 2) Housing, 3) Healthcare, 4) Social & recreational activities, and 5) Physical activity. Interestingly, a relatively high number of respondents left this question blank or gave responses that were coded as "Nothing, don't know."

Background

The Aging Well Whatcom (AWW) initiative was launched by the Chuckanut Health Foundation in December 2017 with the goal of making Whatcom County a community where all of us are able to age well. AWW's early work included building a broad-based coalition, conducting a community assessment related to older adults, and developing a [Blueprint for Aging Well](#) that was shared at a Community Summit in September 2019.

In 2022, AWW is refreshing the Blueprint. This includes examining what has changed in Whatcom County since the 2018 assessment, and revisiting the strategies outlined in the Blueprint. The survey findings in this report are one piece of key information that will give insight into changes since 2018 and inform stakeholders' decisions regarding Blueprint revisions. We hope other organizations will also use these findings to sharpen their focus on older adults in their program development and planning work.

Survey Implementation Methodology

- AWW conducted a survey 2018 as part of the community assessment that resulted in the Blueprint.¹
- For the 2021 survey, essentially the same questions were used, with the addition of one question regarding COVID impacts.
- The survey was conducted in November-December 2021.
- Both online and paper surveys were distributed via the AWW mailing list and community partner organizations.
- A total of 512 older adults responded to the 2021 survey; 415 (81%) completed online surveys and 97 (19%) completed paper surveys.
- Online responses were downloaded and paper survey responses were transcribed into an Excel spreadsheet for analysis.

Analysis Methodology

- Because survey questions were open-ended, the majority of responses spoke to more than one issue.
- Responses were disaggregated into items. Therefore, one **response** (answer to the question) could yield multiple **items** (distinct themes within the response).
- Each **item** was assigned a theme.
- A new theme was assigned if three or more items could not be coded to an existing theme.
- Coding keys were created for consistency and reader reference (see appendix D).

Disaggregation Example:

A response such as "Getting together with other people, my dog, and being able to get outside" was broken down into four discrete items and coded separately.

- "Getting together with other people" would be coded as **Interaction, connection, relationships**.
- "My dog" would be coded as **Pets, animals**.
- "Being able to get outside" would be coded as **Nature, outdoors**.

¹ In 2018, listening sessions were the primary assessment activity, with thirteen sessions held across the county with older adults, people who work closely with older adults, and family members of older adults. The survey was a secondary data collection method. For the 2022 Blueprint update, the survey was the primary assessment method for gathering data regarding the opinions and experiences of older adults. No listening sessions were held in 2021, due to COVID-19.

Results

Question 1. What things do you feel are the most important to your quality of life?

This question generated the lengthiest and most varied responses, resulting in 1,357 items to which 41 distinct themes were assigned.

Theme	Number of respondents who mentioned this theme	Percent of respondents who mentioned this theme
1. Family, friends	167	33%
2. Health	162	32%
3. Interaction, relationships, connection	95	19%
4. Food, nutrition	80	16%
5. Healthcare	77	15%
6. Physical activity	74	14%
7. Housing	71	14%
8. Finances	53	10%
9. Nature, outdoors	53	10%
10. Safety	46	9%
11. Learning, intellectual stimulation	43	8%
12. Transportation	41	8%
13. Community	35	7%
14. Mobility	33	6%
15. Music, art, creativity	29	6%
16. Independence, autonomy	27	5%
17. Purpose, service, contribution	26	5%
18. Activities	25	5%
19. Environmental quality	25	5%
20. Religion, church, spirituality	25	5%
21. Services, programs	12	2%
22. Travel	12	2%
23. Aging in place	11	2%
24. Mental health	11	2%
25. Pets, animals	11	2%
26. Society	11	2%
27. Technology, media	11	2%
28. Assistance	10	2%
29. Attitude, mindset	10	2%
30. Government	8	2%
31. Library	8	2%
32. No response	8	2%
33. Walkability	8	2%
34. Basic needs	7	1%
35. Joy, enjoyment	6	1%
36. Love	6	1%
37. Other, unclear	5	1%
38. Senior center	5	1%
39. Employment	4	1%
40. Neighborhood	3	1%
41. Sleep	3	1%

Question 1. Sample Responses for the Top 5 Themes

Theme	Sample Responses
1. Family, friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My sons (scattered all over the country). • Good (imperfections accepted) family and close friend relationships. • My family. Especially my husband. • Regular visits w/ family and friends. • Having family and friends in my life regularly, in person, by phone, on zoom, etc. • Being able to spend time with grandkids and family. • Engagement with my children and grandchildren...they are my emotional ballast; they support my sense of well-being. • My dear life partner, a loving relationship with my children • Loving family (even though some are far away) • Family close enough to visit; neighborhood friends.
2. Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My health is good and I hope to keep it that way. • Health maintenance. • Physical well-being. • Staying as healthy as possible, whatever that is. • What is most important to me as I age is the quality of my health. • My health and the health of my family. • Good health, above all else. • Overall feeling of health.
3. Interaction, relationships, connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting out of home to see and talk to others. • Connection with folks, all ages and backgrounds, in my community. • Meaningful social interactions. • Social connectedness with a variety of people. • I'm healthy but alone, and I need even casual contact with others. • Ability to be with other people almost daily. • The ability to be with people. • Having someone who cares about me living in my home with me. • Companionship.
4. Food, nutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We [Blaine] have challenges when it comes to access to fresh food at affordable prices as our only grocery store gouges prices which affect those of lower income. • Convenient grocery stores. • Access to healthy foods from local farms and distributors. • Being able to always afford plenty of good food. • Meals on wheels + food bank. • Good food – diabetic. • Healthy food options.
5. Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical facility that listens to your medical concerns. • Healthcare available that meets my needs to stay healthy and active (including available affordable, monthly massage; naturopathic medicine; chiropractic; physical therapy; and a great MD like mine) • To have access to affordable healthcare. • Doctors who take Medicare. • Affordable medical, dental, vision, and mental healthcare • Quality, affordable, accessible health care in the north end of the county. I live in Birch Bay and driving to Bellingham for everything is tedious and inconvenient. I would appreciate Quest Lab or other blood draw services closer to Blaine. • WHY WON'T INSURANCE COMPANIES PAY FOR MORE THAN A PITTANCE FOR HEARING AIDS?

Question 2. What challenges or concerns do you have in regards to your health and well-being?

Responses to this question resulted in 666 items to which 35 distinct themes were assigned.

Some responses to this question refer directly or indirectly to the COVID-19 pandemic. These responses have been coded according to **what the respondent feels the pandemic is impacting**. For example, the response, “I miss going to the pool” was coded as “physical activity” not “pandemic,” even though the pandemic is the likely reason for not going the pool. Please see Question 3 for more detailed responses regarding pandemic impacts.

Theme	Number of respondents who mentioned this theme	Percent of respondents who mentioned this theme
1. Healthcare	88	17%
2. Medical condition	56	11%
3. Physical activity	41	8%
4. Pandemic	39	8%
5. No concerns	39	8%
6. Concern re future needs	38	7%
7. Mobility	31	6%
8. Finances	28	5%
9. Transportation	27	5%
10. Interaction, relationships, connection	23	4%
11. Housing	22	4%
12. Assistance	19	4%
13. Isolation, loneliness	19	4%
14. Physical decline	18	4%
15. Aging-general	16	3%
16. Health	15	3%
17. No response	14	3%
18. Cognition, mental acuity, memory	12	2%
19. Independence, autonomy	12	2%
20. Caregiving	11	2%
21. Other, unclear	11	2%
22. Environment, climate change	10	2%
23. Safety	10	2%
24. Hearing	8	2%
25. Food, nutrition	8	2%
26. Mental health	8	2%
27. Vision	7	1%
28. Aging in place	6	1%
29. Weight management	6	1%
30. Death, loss, grief	5	1%
31. Fear, worry, stress	5	1%
32. Pain, pain management	4	1%
33. Technology	4	1%
34. Government	3	1%
35. Walkability	3	1%

Question 2. Sample Responses for the Top 5 Themes

Theme	Sample Responses
1. Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health providers becoming too crowded, making it harder to get appointments. • My concerns are that my budget and Medicare will not cover the important things for my long-term health. • I do not always feel listened to by medical personnel, and feel lucky when I find someone who has a solution which others have not thought of. • They never have enough time adequately take care of my concerns. • More specialists as I age, and not finding them locally. Having to travel to Seattle. • We need another hospital with no religious or political affiliations. • I am currently having thousands of dollars of dental care - it is challenging financially with only SS income. • My wife and I have no doctor due to turn overs. We have been without a replacement for several months. • Health care system has trouble addressing those of us with multiple chronic conditions. • Frustrations about our local health care system which does not facilitate care for disabled and elderly in general - for example, many could use advocates to help them understand procedures etc. There are options for people in poverty or with a lot of wealth, but less assistance for those in the middle. • How to understand Medicare in a way that can balance services and fees/co-pays and expectations. • I don't think doctors see quality of life as important. • Possible future collapse of healthcare system/Medicare • Medicare not covering 'alternative' health care (acupuncture, massage, counseling).
2. Medical condition(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The condition of my right knee holds me back, limits my ability to exercise or walk. • Osteo-arthritis - both shoulders should be replaced, bit difficult to perform daily life chores without "homecare" or assistance i.e. splitting firewood, so I must forego same! • Concerns are now biological. Incontinence (bowel and urinary) has become a problem. I can no longer go for long walks without worrying where the next bathroom is. • I have a chronic lumbar stenosis that will only worsen as I age. I need to stay active to slow its progress. • Health issues are monitored and medicated. Developing new aches and strains!! • I have several medical conditions over which I can exercise little, if any, control. • Physical limitations due to spinal degeneration. • I had a stroke a year ago...I can't drive anymore, I rarely leave my apartment. I used to walk 3 miles a day. • Osteo-arthritis - both shoulders should be replaced, bit difficult to perform daily life chores without "homecare" or assistance i.e. splitting firewood, so I must forego same!
3. Physical activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have seemed to somewhere misplaced my enthusiasm for strength training and cannot get back to it. • Inability to hike/walk outside due to weather for half the year, and insurance not covering a gym membership. • Exercise and movement for Osteoporosis. • Getting enough exercise in winter weather.

Theme	Sample Responses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of access to workout facilities. • Senior exercise programs beyond “chair yoga.” • I have to have good self discipline to exercise daily, stretch etc., at home since I am not comfortable going to groups during COVID. • I need consistent outdoor exercise each day, regardless of weather. • Silver and Fit classes are GREAT - advertise them.
4. Pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid - so many folks refuse to get vaccinated. And businesses open up because they need to. It is a very confusing and isolating time. • Very concerned about Covid and related future pandemics. • Uncertainty about safety regarding COVID even when I’m completely vaccinated • Ongoing pandemic and failure among so many people to observe masking and vaccination standards. • The constant danger of the pandemic. Having get vaccines. Having to wear masks. • Not knowing who is vaccinated against Covid-19. • Requiring to wear a mask with severe breathing problems with it on.
5. No concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No concerns, we have wonderful health care. • All is well at the moment. • None at this point - my loved ones take care of all my needs. • None. I have spent a lifetime eating organically and taking very good care of my health, and, as a result, I'm extremely healthy. • I’m lucky. I’m 80 and don’t really have any health issues. • Not too much - I'm healthy (at 83 years old), and have no money worries. • None now; very aware that can change at any time. • None - everything is more or less under control. • We take our supplements, no prescriptions, feeling good.
6. Concern re future needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not having kids and what that means for the future as we age. Nursing homes, etc? • No major challenges at this time, but anticipate eventual challenges to maintain independence, and also the possibility of caring for, or being cared for, my partner. • Future possibility of having to move out of my home due to health. • Currently OK, concern about devastating problem like a stroke. • The unknown. At this age our health can change rapidly for the worse. • What will happen when I reach the age when I'll need assistance? • Concern of future physical or mental disabilities. • Worry about breaking bones and then not able to stay in my home. • Fear of the unknown future and concerns if I’ll be able to take care of myself.

Question 3. What are the main ways the pandemic has impacted you?

Responses to this question resulted in 745 items to which 28 themes were assigned.

Less interaction, relationships, connection and **Isolation** were clearly the most widespread impacts experienced by respondents. Since the two are similar, they could be considered together. In general, respondents stated or implied that these impacts were undesirable or harmful.

It is interesting to note, however, that some people did not experience less interaction as isolation. This is apparent in responses such as, “I stayed at home until vaccinated due to a health issue. I love my home so did not find this a problem” and “It's given me (an introvert) an excuse to stay home and limit my activities and interactions.”

Theme	Number of respondents who mentioned this theme	Percent of respondents who mentioned this theme
1. Less interaction, relationships, connection	151	29%
2. Isolation	101	20%
3. Fewer activities	70	14%
4. Travel	61	12%
5. Fear, worry, stress	37	7%
6. Physical activity	37	7%
7. Decreased family contact	28	5%
8. Masking	24	5%
9. No, little impact	24	5%
10. Other, unclear	20	4%
11. Finances	19	4%
12. Health issue, healthcare	17	3%
13. Society, government	17	3%
14. Employment changes	15	3%
15. Positive impact	15	3%
16. Sadness, depression	14	3%
17. Technology	14	3%
18. Division, conflict related to COVID	12	2%
19. Volunteering	12	2%
20. Loneliness	11	2%
21. No response	11	2%
22. Food, nutrition	8	2%
23. Senior center	6	1%
24. Change in living situation	5	1%
25. Death	5	1%
26. Caregiving	4	1%
27. Mobility	4	1%
28. Housing, basic needs	3	1%

Question 3. Sample Responses for the Top 5 Themes

Theme	Sample Responses
1. Less interaction, relationships, connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's been hard not being able to be with people. • Unable to meet in person with church and some groups. • Limited social interaction due to over-reaction to pandemic. • Loss of social contacts over the past year. • Limited face to face socialization. • I learned the value of incidental socialization such as unscheduled meetings of someone at the Senior Center, grocery store, library. Closures, special hours for groups, masks, social distancing all disrupted that flow. • New in Bellingham pre-COVID, hadn't made many contacts here...How do you make contacts when everyone is fearful and socially-distancing?? • Diminished ability to gather with others often. • Stay home too much, no social visiting. • Social distancing, treasuring human contact and relationships. • Fewer opportunities for informal interactions with others.
2. Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolated from activities + people - I live alone. • Too much isolation has been difficult at times. • Greatly increased isolation. • Social isolation is depressing. • Isolation. Living alone with no family here. • The Pandemic has made serious changes in my life. My residence was completely shut for a year. No daily activities. No meals in the dining room. We had to eat all our meals in our rooms. We still have to wear masks. We were told to keep apart from our friends. My family took my car from me to keep me safe. • Isolation from working from home for nearly a year. • Isolated much more than before • Isolation, loss of personal contacts.
3. Fewer activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My wife and I have basically stopped eating out at restaurants. We do take out once in a while. Cultural events such as music and theater have disappeared. • No ballet, movies, plays, and book club meetings...hesitant about shopping. • Diminished ability to find meaningful entertainment. • I go out in public less often, especially for entertainment. • Not able to go to concerts & movies, all feel too risky. • Diminished away from home activities— dining, movies, concerts, public events like art fairs, book talks. • Less available activities, entertainment. • Restrictions getting out and engaging in community activities. The pandemic stopped my normal activities. • I miss in-person classes - through ALL, WCC, and the Co-op. • My groups quit meeting, community orchestra and spinning club.
4. Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stopped travelling anywhere. • To not be able to travel even only a few miles to see family in Canada, or overseas. • Delayed opportunities to travel. • The lack of travel has changed how I adjust to retirement. • Four of our overseas trips were canceled. • restricted travel during the years we are most able to travel in our retirement. • Not traveling as hoped to do in early retirement. • Not being able to travel as easily.

Theme	Sample Responses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less recreational travel. • Curtailed travel outside of Washington.
5. Fear, worry, stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress...too many risk decisions. • Fear of suffering, loss of loved ones. • Difficulty going to church for fear of Covid. Although I am vaccinated and boosted, I am still afraid. • Dread there isn't going to be a return to "normal". • Increased fear about the world. • I have two shots of vaccine, but fear new varieties of COVID- pretty sure if I get it, it will kill me due to other disabilities/lung disease. • Worrying about people close by that are not vaccinated or wearing face masks. • Worried about well-being of family members; anxiety level in general increased. • The fear in the air wears on me, along with my concern for others in less fortunate countries. • I am now on anti-anxiety pills due to fear of infecting 2 vulnerable loved ones.

Q4. If you could add or change one thing that is available for older adults and their families in Whatcom County, what would that be?

Responses to this question generated 575 items to which 33 distinct themes were assigned.

Theme	Number of respondents who mentioned this theme	Percent of respondents who mentioned this theme
1. Transportation	64	13%
2. Housing	63	12%
3. Healthcare	57	11%
4. No response	42	8%
5. Social & recreational activities	40	8%
6. Nothing, don't know	31	6%
7. Physical activity	21	4%
8. Have what I/we need	20	4%
9. Information, navigation of services	18	4%
10. In-home caregivers, caregiving	17	3%
11. Food, nutrition	17	3%
12. Interaction, relationships, connection	17	3%
13. Sr Center improvements	17	3%
14. COVID response	16	3%
15. Long term care	11	2%
16. Other, unclear	11	2%
17. Outreach	11	2%
18. Technology assistance	11	2%
19. Walkability	10	2%
20. Social, political change	9	2%
21. Home maintenance assistance	8	2%
22. Finances	7	1%
23. Intergenerational interactions	7	1%
24. Parks, trails, open space	7	1%
25. Educational, learning opportunities	6	1%
26. Purpose, service, contribution	6	1%
27. Shopping access	6	1%
28. Adult day care, adult day health	5	1%
29. Safety	5	1%
30. Awareness, appreciation for older adults	4	1%
31. Dementia awareness, support	4	1%
32. Employment	4	1%
33. Legal assistance	3	1%

Question 4. Sample Responses for the Top 5 Themes

Theme	Sample Responses
1. Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some older adults in outlying areas get really cut off when their car doesn't work. How about a trustworthy mechanic who would come to them? • One of the last controls we have over our lives is the freedom driving brings & having to pay for parking is a huge hit on our already stretched fixed incomes. So no parking [fees] where we live would be a huge help. • A public transportation system that makes it cheaper and easier than traveling by car. • Would like Uber services at the airport. The Port of Bellingham needs to reach an agreement with them. • Access to special taxis for short distance - adults my age should not be driving. • More bike lanes. • More public transportation with realistic hours to outlying county areas. • Better access to [WTA] - they only come out once a week where I live [Ferndale zip code]. • More bus routes. I no longer take the bus. I can't walk as far to where the bus stops are. • Availability of public transportation, day and night, including covered bus stops to allow for more mobility for seniors and those with disability to more independently access health care, shopping, social events, etc.
2. Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior apartments that ARE NOT ASSISTED LIVING and are affordable for medium income and convenient distance to services. • More intergenerational housing opportunities. • Affordable housing at all price points. I fall into the category of too rich to qualify for section 8 but too poor to rent on the open market. • Property tax exemption so that older adults can afford to stay in their own home. • Affordable housing for seniors that is pleasant. • A low-cost apartment that wouldn't take all my social security to pay for - apartment right now would take all my S.S. + then some. • More single family or attached one level living housing options for aging in place without stairs. • Living situations where seniors are integrated into our society instead of sequestered in senior-only housing. More support for seniors to age in their homes.
3. Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased free, or very low cost, medical resources. • More dentists accepting Medicare advantage plans • Some kind of medical coordination help for those who don't have family to help them. • Access to alternative health care for greatly reduced cost. • More primary care physicians readily available by phone. • More geriatricians. I want a doctor who cares about keeping me as healthy as possible and who doesn't chalk up every issue to my age. • That there would be a hospice not under a Catholic system and perhaps another hospital not affiliated with a religion. • At home medical services for homebound seniors which include primary care, dental, podiatry, vision, hearing. Some homebound adults with disabilities don't have the stamina to go to appointments so forego important care. • Counselors trained for & working specifically with and only with older patients.

Theme	Sample Responses
4. <i>No response</i>	
5. Social & recreational activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create more outings, create a special event e.g. a visit to a restaurant, have a small donation from the restaurant (Italian, Indian, Chinese...), pick them up to visit different parks (if weather permits) and create more indoor activities. • Older adults need a place they can hear music, socialize and be able to dance. • More events for socializing and intellectual stimulation at low cost. • Having more concerts and events scheduled on afternoons for those of us who find it difficult to drive at night. • A vibrant community center. The library, community gathering rooms and Senior Center would be a wonderful addition to the GP site...34% of our population is over 65.... The county and city need to step up and support this. • More options for senior men to be involved - perhaps outreach to initiate connections. • More senior activities available beside senior center when open. • The Senior Center used to offer travel options and day trip options. Recreation Without Borders did the same. Also, Bellair Tours. Please bring back the opportunity for travel within the county and beyond. Many older citizens do not want to drive themselves so their options are limited.
6. <i>Nothing, don't know</i>	
7. Physical activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities that move the body. • I would add a fitness center for people over the age of 50. • Having access to a variety of fitness classes and options • A community well-being center with hydrotherapy and a place for tai chi, longevity stick, etc. • An older-person-only workout center/physical therapy/swimming pool. • Indoor swimming and gyms at Senior Living facilities. • Swimming pool with WARM water with deep and shallow sides. • Pool for elderly to use. • A covered outdoor space for exercise

2021 vs. 2018 Survey Response Comparisons For the 10 most frequently mentioned themes.

Comparing responses from 2018 and 2022 helps us answer the question “What has changed?” However, there are some important limitations to comparability due to methodological differences. The most important are the following:

1. The number of survey respondents (sample size) was greater in 2021 (512 people) than in 2018 (148 people).
2. In the comparisons below, the 2018 respondents include both people who completed a survey or participated in listening sessions.
3. The 2021 survey included a question regarding pandemic impacts, which is not part of the 2018 survey for obvious reasons.
4. The wording of the final question regarding what to add or change was modified in the 2021 survey. The 2018 question asked, “If you could add or change one thing **about the programs, services, and supports** for older adults and their families in Whatcom County, what would that be?” (emphasis added). Not surprisingly, this wording generated many responses related to programs and services. In an effort to broaden the question, it was modified to, “If you could add or change one thing **that is available** for older adults and their families in Whatcom County, what would that be?” (emphasis added).

Q1. What things do you feel are the most important to your quality of life?

2021 Survey			2018 (Survey + Listening Sessions)		
512 Respondents, 1,357 items			196 respondents, 521 items		
THEME	Number of respondents who mentioned this theme	Percent of respondents who mentioned this theme	THEME	Number of respondents who mentioned this theme	Percent of respondents who mentioned this theme
1. Family, friends	167	33%	1. Interaction, relationships, connection	52	27%
2. Health	162	32%	2. Family	48	24%
3. Interaction, relationships, connection	95	19%	3. Health	43	22%
4. Food, nutrition	80	16%	4. Healthcare	30	15%
5. Healthcare	77	15%	5. Friends	29	15%
6. Physical activity	74	14%	6. Housing	26	13%
7. Housing	71	14%	7. Physical activity	26	13%
8. Finances	53	10%	8. Finances	25	13%
9. Nature, outdoors	53	10%	9. Independence, autonomy	25	13%
10. Safety	46	9%	10. Food and nutrition	24	12%

Q2. What challenges or concerns do you have in regards to your health and well-being?

2021 Survey			2018 (Survey + Listening Sessions)		
512 Respondents, 666 items			196 respondents, 248 items		
THEME	Number of respondents who mentioned this theme	Percent of respondents who mentioned this theme	THEME	Number of respondents who mentioned this theme	Percent of respondents who mentioned this theme
1. Healthcare	88	17%	1. Medical condition(s)	28	14%
2. Medical condition(s)	56	11%	2. Physical decline	22	11%
3. Physical activity	41	8%	3. Healthcare	21	11%
4. Pandemic	39	8%	4. Transportation	16	8%
5. No concerns	39	7%	5. Housing	15	8%
6. Concern re future needs	38	7%	6. Finances	14	7%
7. Mobility	31	6%	7. Health maintenance	12	6%
8. Finances	28	5%	8. Dementia, memory loss	11	6%
9. Transportation	27	5%	9. Caregiving, caretakers	10	5%
10. Interaction, relationships, connection	23	4%	10. Interaction, relationships, connection	10	5%

Q4. If you could add or change one thing that is available for older adults and their families in Whatcom County, what would that be?

Please note: In 2018, a slightly different question asked was, "If you could add or change one thing about the programs, services, and supports for older adults and their families in Whatcom County, what would that be?"

2021 Survey			2018 (Survey + Listening Sessions)		
512 Respondents, 575 items			196 respondents, 219 items		
THEME	Number of respondents who mentioned this theme	Percent of respondents who mentioned this theme	THEME	Number of respondents who mentioned this theme	Percent of respondents who mentioned this theme
1. Transportation	64	13%	1. Programs and services	28	14%
2. Housing	63	12%	2. Healthcare	25	13%
3. Healthcare	57	11%	3. Transportation	25	13%
4. No response	42	8%	4. Interaction, relationships, connection	20	10%
5. Social & recreational activities	40	8%	5. Housing	14	7%
6. Nothing, don't know	31	6%	6. Meals on Wheels - Program Feedback	13	7%
7. Physical activity	21	4%	7. Senior Center	12	6%
8. Have what I/we need	20	4%	8. Finances	9	5%
9. Information, navigation of services	18	4%	9. None/Unsure/don't know	8	4%
10. In-home caregivers, caregiving	17	3%	10. Caregiving, caretakers	7	4%

Summary of Comparison Between 2021 vs. 2018 Responses

Overall, responses in 2021 are remarkably similar to those in 2018.

- Nine of the top ten responses regarding **What's Important** are the same, though the rank order is different. The one difference is that the theme “Nature, outdoors” appeared in the 2021 top ten, replacing “Independence, autonomy” in 2018’s top ten.
- The top three most important things for quality of life from both 2021 and 2018 surveys are “family, friends”, “Interaction, relationships, connection” and “Health.”
- For **Challenges and Concerns**, five of the top ten responses are the same, though in different rank order.
- “Physical activity,” “Pandemic” and “Concern regarding future needs” are new challenges appearing in the top ten themes of the 2021 survey.
- For **What to Add or Change**, four of the top ten responses are the same, though in different rank order. “Housing” was mentioned more frequently in 2021, moving to #2 from #5.

Appendices

Appendix A - Respondent demographics

Appendix B - Survey tool (paper version)

Appendix C - Survey distribution channels and partners

Appendix D - Theme Coding Keys

Appendix E – Aging Well Whatcom

Appendix A - Respondent Demographics

A total of 512 older adults responded to the 2021 survey.

Geography

The majority (74%) of respondents reported a Bellingham ZIP code. Eighteen percent reporting living in other parts of Whatcom County, 5% declined to answer, and 1% live in places outside Whatcom County.

ZIP Code	City/town	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
94402	San Mateo CA	1	0.20%
97203	Portland OR	1	0.20%
98110	Bainbridge WA	1	0.20%
98220	Acme	1	0.20%
98225	Bellingham	166	32.42%
98226	Bellingham	112	21.88%
98227	Bellingham	2	0.39%
98228	Bellingham	2	0.39%
98229	Bellingham	105	20.51%
98230	Blaine	43	8.40%
98232	Bow	1	0.20%
98239	Coupeville	1	0.20%
98240	Custer	4	0.78%
98244	Deming	2	0.39%
98247	Everson	2	0.39%
98248	Ferndale	22	4.30%
98262	Lummi Is	5	0.98%
98264	Lynden	8	1.56%
98284	Sedro Woolley	4	0.78%
98237	Concrete	1	0.20%
Blank/no answer		28	5.47%
Total		512	100.00%

Gender

A significant majority of respondents (72%) identified as female.

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Female	371	72%
Male	119	23%
Other/Prefer not to answer	10	2%
Blank	12	2%
Total	512	100.00%

Age

Most respondents (65%) were between the ages of 66 and 80. Fourteen percent were 65 or younger, 18% were 81 or older, and 3% declined to answer or left the question blank.

Age Category	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Under 55	1	0.20%
55-60	22	4.30%
61-65	50	9.77%
66-70	102	19.92%
71-75	137	26.76%
76-80	92	17.97%
81-85	54	10.55%
Over 85	40	7.81%
Prefer not to answer	5	0.98%
Blank	9	1.76%
Total	512	100.00%

Race

The vast majority of respondents (89%) identified as white.

Race	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	0.39%
Asian	5	0.98%
Black/African American	0	0.00%
Hawaiian Native or Pacific Islander	0	0.00%
Hispanic/Latino	1	0.20%
Mixed race	11	2.15%
Other/prefer not to answer	27	5.27%
White	454	88.67%
Blank	12	2.34%
Total	512	100.00%

Income

There was a much greater degree of income diversity reported than diversity of other demographic variables. Nineteen percent of respondents reported income of less than \$25,000 per year, and ten percent reported income of over \$150,000 per year. This question also had the greatest number of non-responses, with almost a quarter (23%) leaving the question blank or stating they preferred not to answer.

Income range	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Less than \$25,000	95	18.55%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	52	10.16%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	72	14.06%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	73	14.26%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	50	9.77%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	35	6.84%
\$150,000 and above	18	3.52%
Prefer not to answer	94	18.36%
Blank	23	4.49%
Total	512	100.00%



SURVEY FOR OLDER ADULTS

Send completed survey to:
[Aging Well Whatcom](#)
[c/o Chuckanut Health Foundation](#)
1500 Cornwall Ave, Suite 201
Bellingham, WA 98225

**The deadline
for submitting this survey
is December 3.**

Aging Well Whatcom wants to hear what's important to older adults in Whatcom County!

In 2018, we surveyed older adults as part of developing the Aging Well Blueprint, which outlines ways to help make Whatcom County a place for all of us to age well. Now we're updating the Blueprint, and are eager to hear your current views.

1. What things do you feel are the most important to your quality of life?

2. What challenges or concerns do you have in regards to your health and well-being?

3. What are the main ways the pandemic has impacted you?

4. If you could add or change one thing that is available for older adults and their families in Whatcom County, what would that be?

Please answer a few demographic questions on the other side 

5. Demographic Information

The following questions are optional. We know that the experiences and views of older adults are varied, and this demographic information helps us understand the differences among survey respondents.

5a. What is your zip code?

5b. What is your age?

- Under 55
- 55-60
- 61-65
- 66-70
- 71-75
- 76-80
- 81-85
- Over 85
- Prefer not to answer

5c. How do you identify your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other/prefer not to answer

5d. How do you identify your race?

- White
- Black/African American
- Asian
- Hispanic/Latino
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Hawaiian Native or Pacific Islander
- Mixed race
- Other/prefer not to answer

5e. What is your annual household income before taxes?

- Less than \$25,000
- \$25,000 - \$34,999
- \$35,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$74,999
- \$75,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$149,999
- \$150,000 and above
- Prefer not to answer

Thank you for sharing your views with us!

Would you like to receive emails from Aging Well Whatcom?
If so, please provide the following:

Name

Email Address

Appendix C - Survey Distribution Channels and Partners

The 2021 Aging Well Survey was distributed via the following channels:

Digital Survey:

- Sent to the Chuckanut Health Foundation/Aging Well Whatcom mailing list (approximately 400 addresses)
- Posted on the Aging Well Whatcom website (link to digital survey and downloadable PDF).
- Sent to Aging Well Whatcom Steering Committee members, with request to distribute to networks.
- Sent to Whatcom County home care agencies with request to share with caregivers and clients (hardcopy and/or digitally).
- Included in Bellingham Senior Activity Center electronic member newsletter.

Paper Survey (self-addressed and stamped envelopes were included with surveys):

- Distributed and collected at Whatcom County Senior Centers (people could return completed surveys to senior center or submit by mail).
- Included with Meals on Wheels and More home-delivered meals and weekly take-home meal bag distribution at Senior Centers.

Appendix D - Theme Coding Keys

General Notes Regarding Coding

- Efforts were made to use consistent themes across questions to the extent possible. However, each question also generated themes that were unique to that question.
- The survey’s open-ended questions generated some responses could be interpreted in more than one way. These items were coded as precisely and consistently as possible, based on the context of the full response. Examples of the most common “grey area” situations are included in the coding key descriptions.
- Some responses refer directly or indirectly to the COVID-19 pandemic. These have been coded according to the respondents' comment regarding what the pandemic is impacting, for example their sense of safety or social interactions and connections. Question 3 theme codes are the most detailed in terms of pandemic impacts.

Question 1: What things do you feel are the most important to your quality of life?

Q1 THEME CODES n=41	Explanation and Examples
1. Activities	References to entertainment, restaurants, shopping, hobbies, "doing things" "places to go". References to music, art, theater are codes as "music, art, creativity." General reference to "being active" is generally coded as activities, unless the context implies physical activity or social activity, in which case it's coded accordingly.
2. Aging in place	Use of term "aging in place" or mention of living or staying in own home.
3. Assistance	Reference to help with household or caregiver needs.
4. Attitude, mindset	General outlook, life philosophy.
5. Basic needs	General reference to basic needs such as clothing. If "food" or "shelter" are specifically mentioned, they are coded “Food, nutrition” or “Housing,” respectively.
6. Community	Specific use of the word "community" or reference to feeling part of a group of like-minded people
7. Employment	Reference to job, employment, work. References to earnings or making money are coded as "financial security."
8. Environmental quality	Reference to clean air, water.
9. Family, friends	Specific mention of family and/or friends.
10. Finances	Reference to having enough money, affordability, income, inflation, cost of living. If affordability is mentioned in relation to a specific item (e.g. housing or healthcare) it is coded to that item.
11. Food, nutrition	Mention of food, eating, having enough to eat, meals, food bank, Meals on Wheels, groceries, grocery store, farmers market.
12. Government	Reference to government, governmental leaders, governmental role or policies, US Constitution.
13. Health	Reference to health, well-being, health condition, or a specific aspect of health such as vision, hearing, etc. References to mental health are coded as such. For Q1, pain and pain management are included in "health."
14. Healthcare	Reference to medical, dental, vision, mental health care services, prescriptions, hospital, doctor, health insurance, Medicare.
15. Housing	Reference to house, apartment, home, place to live, lack of housing (e.g. living in vehicle), shelter.
16. Independence, autonomy	Reference to doing things by oneself, self-sufficiency, desire to not burden others, in addition to specific use of words independence and autonomy.

Q1 THEME CODES n=41	Explanation and Examples
17. Interaction, relationships, connection	Use of these terms specifically or mention of visiting, relationships, getting together, "seeing people." Specific mention of friends and/or family are coded as "family, friends."
18. Joy, enjoyment	Mention joy, enjoyment, fun.
19. Learning, intellectual stimulation	Mention of learning, classes, reading, mental acuity, "staying sharp."
20. Library	Specific mention of library.
21. Love	Specific use of the word "love."
22. Mental health	Reference to mental health, emotional health, therapy, counseling.
23. Mobility	Reference to physical movement, "moving around," walking. If responses suggest walking as exercise, such as "taking a walk," it's coded as physical activity. In some cases, it was difficult to differentiate between "mobility" and "transportation" (such as a response, "Being able to get around.")
24. Music, art, creativity	Mention of music, performances, museums, film, and visual arts. Unless music or art are specifically mentioned, "hobbies" are coded as "Activities."
25. Nature, outdoors	Reference to parks, trails, rivers, beaches, plants and animals, garden/gardening. Sometimes hard to differentiate coding between "physical activity" or "Nature, outdoors." For example, "walking in nature" could be either.
26. Neighborhood	Specific mention of "neighborhood."
27. No Response	Question was left unanswered.
28. Other, unclear	Response doesn't fit another code, or meaning is not clear enough to assign a code.
29. Pets, animals	Mention of pets or animals. If in reference to wild animals, such as "hearing the birds," it's coded as "Nature, outdoors."
30. Physical activity	Reference to exercise, fitness, pools, walking, biking, classes such as Zumba, yoga, etc.
31. Purpose, service, contribution	Includes volunteering and general statements such as "helping others" or "making a difference."
32. Religion, church, spirituality	Mention of church, congregation, God, worship, meditation, spiritual life.
33. Safety	Reference to physical safety, crime, police protection, security. For Question 1, references to COVID-related safety or risks are coded as "Safety."
34. Senior centers	Specific reference to senior center(s).
35. Services, programs	Reference to general services or programs. Healthcare services are coded as such.
36. Sleep	Reference to sleep, sleeping well, getting enough sleep.
37. Society	Reference to society or social issues. Comments that specifically mention aspects of government or community are coded as "Government" or "Community," respectively.
38. Technology, media	Reference to TV, radio, newspaper, phones, cell phones, internet, Wi-Fi, computers, online, Zoom.
39. Transportation	References to driving, gas money, bus, public transport, "getting places." Mention of walking is coded as "Walkability," "Physical activity" or "Mobility" based on the context of the response. In some cases, it is difficult to discern respondents' meaning of "transportation" vs "mobility" (such as a response "Being able to get around.")
40. Travel	Reference to travel, trip, visiting a person or place far away.
41. Walkability	Reference to sidewalks, distances, or other environmental aspects of walkability. References to personal ability to walk are coded as "mobility."

Question 2: What challenges or concerns do you have in regards to your health and well-being?

Q2 THEME CODES n=35	Explanation and Examples
1. Aging in place	Reference to "aging in place" or mention of living or staying in own home.
2. Aging - general	General reference to aging, getting older.
3. Assistance	Mention of help with household chores, house, yard, or garden maintenance, or caregiver needs.
4. Environment, climate change	Reference to air or water quality, environmental issues, or climate change or climate action.
5. Cognition, mental acuity, memory	Reference to memory, brain function, "staying sharp."
6. Concern re future needs	Reference to potential <u>future</u> problems, and/or uncertainty about future needs and how they will be met.
7. Death, loss, grief	Specific mention of death, or other significant loss or grief.
8. Family, friends	Specific mention of family and/or friends.
9. Fear, worry, stress	Reference to generalized fear, worry, or stress. If fear is related to a specific issue, e.g., finances or healthcare, it is coded to that theme.
10. Finances	Reference to having enough money, affordability, income, inflation, cost of living. If affordability is mentioned in relation to a specific item (e.g., housing or healthcare) it is coded to that theme.
11. Government	Reference to government, governmental leaders, governmental role or policies, US Constitution.
12. Health	Reference to general health, well-being. Mention of specific medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, arthritis, "bad heart") are coded as "Medical condition." For question 2, references to vision, hearing, or mental health care coded to those themes.
13. Healthcare	Reference to medical, dental, vision, mental health care services, prescriptions, hospital, doctor, provider, health insurance, Medicare.
14. Hearing	Specific mention of hearing, hearing loss or impairment, hearing aids, or deafness.
15. Housing	Reference to house, apartment, home, place to live, lack of housing (e.g., living in vehicle), shelter.
16. Independence, autonomy	Use of specific terms "independence" or "autonomy" or reference to doing things by oneself, self-sufficiency, desire to not burden others.
17. Isolation, loneliness	Reference being alone, not knowing people, not having people to help, feeling lonely, experiencing isolation.
18. Medical condition	Reference to medical condition(s) such as diabetes, arthritis, "heart", "bad back."
19. Mental health	Reference to mental health, emotional health, therapy, counseling.
20. Mobility	Reference to mobility, physical movement, "moving around." References to balance are coded as "Mobility."
21. No response	Question was left unanswered.
22. None	Statement of no concerns, including expressions such as "none right now," "not much," "nothing really," etc.
23. Food, nutrition	Mention of food, eating, having enough to eat, meals, food bank, Meals on Wheels, groceries, grocery store, farmers market.
24. Other, unclear	Response doesn't fit another code, or meaning is not clear enough to assign a code.
25. Pain, pain management	Specific mention of pain or managing pain.

Q2 THEME CODES n=35	Explanation and Examples
26. Pandemic	Reference to COVID-19 pandemic, including contact with others, vaccination, masking. Other concerns that are described as direct results of the pandemic are coded as "Pandemic," not "Healthcare," for example "Shortage of hospital workers and space due to unvaccinated."
27. Physical activity	Reference to exercise, fitness, pools, walking, biking, classes such as Zumba, yoga, etc.
28. Physical decline	General references to physical decline. References to a specific health condition or diagnosis, or loss of hearing, vision, or mobility are coded as to those themes.
29. Safety	Reference to physical safety, crime, police protection, security. For Question 2, references to COVID-related safety or risks are coded as "Pandemic."
30. Interaction, relationships, connection	Specific use of these terms or mention of visiting, relationships, "getting together", "seeing people." Specific mention of friends and/or family are coded as "Family, friends."
31. Technology	Reference to phones, cell phones, internet, Wi-Fi, computers, online, Zoom.
32. Transportation	References to driving, gas money, bus, public transport, getting places. Mention of walking are coded as "walkability," "physical activity" or "mobility" based on the context of the response.
33. Vision	Specific mention of vision, vision loss or impairment, sight, or blindness.
34. Walkability	Reference to sidewalks, distances, or other environmental aspects of walkability. References to personal ability to walk are coded as "mobility."
35. Weight management	Mention of obesity, overweight, losing weight, healthy weight, weight control.

Question 3: What are the main ways the pandemic has impacted you?

Q3 THEME CODE n=27	Explanation and Examples
Caregiving	Reference to caregiving role, providing or receiving care.
Change in living situation	Reference to new living situation, such as change in household, type of housing, location of residence.
Death	Specific mention of death, regardless of cause (COVID or other).
Decreased family contact	Specific mention of no or less family contact, visits, interaction. If family is not specifically mentioned, the response is coded as "Less social interaction, connection."
Division, conflict r/t COVID	Mention of divisiveness, social or political polarity, or conflict specifically related to COVID or COVID response measures such as masking, distancing, etc.
Employment changes	Reference to change in employment, job, work. Changes to volunteer work are coded to "Volunteering."
Fear, worry, stress	Reference to generalized fear, worry, or stress. If fear is related to a specific issue, e.g., finances or healthcare, it is coded to that item.
Fewer activities	Mention of less entertainment, eating out, shopping, or reduction in "doing things," "going places," or "being out and about." Changes to activities such as visiting or spending time with friends are coded as "Less interaction, relationships, connection."
Finances	Reference to having enough money, affordability, income, inflation, cost of living. If affordability is mentioned in relation to a specific item (e.g., housing or healthcare) it is coded to that theme.

Q3 THEME CODE n=27	Explanation and Examples
Food, nutrition	Reference to food, eating, having enough to eat, meals, food bank, Meals on Wheels, groceries, grocery store, farmers market. Reference to restaurants or eating out is coded as "Reduced activities."
Health issue, healthcare	Reference to general health, specific medical conditions or concerns, or healthcare including medical, dental, vision, mental health care services, prescriptions, hospital, doctor, health insurance, Medicare.
Housing, basic needs	Reference to house, apartment, home, place to live, lack of housing (e.g. living in vehicle). For Question 3, also includes general reference to basic needs such as clothing.
Isolation	Specific use of the words "isolation," "isolated" or "isolating." Terms such as "staying home" or "stuck at home" are also coded as "Isolation" unless the respondent specified that they didn't feel isolated.
Less interaction, relationships, connection	Use of these terms specifically or mention of less visiting, "getting together" or "seeing people." Specific references to reduced interaction with family is coded as "Decreased family contact."
Loneliness	Specific mention of loneliness, being lonely, or being alone.
Masking	Reference to masks or face coverings as part of COVID response.
Mobility	Reference to physical movement, "moving around," walking. If responses suggest walking as exercise, such as "taking a walk," it's coded as physical activity. In some cases, it was difficult to differentiate between "mobility" and "transportation" (such as a response, "Being able to get around.")
No response	Question was left unanswered.
No, little impact	No, or little impact from COVID; includes expressions such as "not much," "nothing really," "hardly at all," etc.
Other, unclear	Response doesn't fit another code, or meaning is not clear enough to assign a code.
Physical activity	Reference to exercise, fitness, pools, walking, biking, classes such as Zumba, yoga, etc.
Positive impact	Reference to general, positive impacts of COVID. If reference is to a positive change related to something specific, such as [increased] physical activity or [benefits of] technology, it is coded as "Physical activity" or "Technology" respectively.
Sadness, depression	Specific mention of sadness or depression.
Senior Center	General reference to senior center(s). References to specific senior center programs or services are coded accordingly; for example, a comment "senior center meals" is coded as "Food, nutrition" and "gym at senior center" is coded as "Physical activity."
Society, government	Comment on society or social issues, the government, governmental leaders, governmental role or policies.
Technology	Reference to phones, cell phones, internet, Wi-Fi, computers, online, Zoom.
Travel	Reference to cancelled, reduced or altered travel. Where travel is mentioned but the indicated purpose of travel is to visit family, it is coded as "reduced family contact."
Volunteering	Reference to general changes in volunteer opportunities or specific volunteer roles or activities.

Question 4: If you could add or change one thing that is available for older adults and their families in Whatcom County, what would that be?

Q4 THEME CODES N=33	Explanation and Examples
1. Adult day care, adult day health	Specific mention of adult day care or adult day health site or program.
2. Awareness, appreciation for older adults	Reference to ageism, understanding of older adults, or regard or respect for older adults (lack of or need to increase).
3. COVID response	Reference to COVID-19 pandemic and actions or policies to reduce risk, including vaccination, masking, etc.
4. Dementia awareness & support	Specific mention of dementia education, awareness, training, programs, services or supports.
5. Educational, learning opportunities	Mention of classes, workshops, etc. If learning or education is not specifically mentioned or implied, activities that could be educational are coded as "Social and recreational activities."
6. Employment	Reference to work, jobs or employment, securing employment, or views of employers' or practices regarding older adults employees.
7. Finances	Reference to having enough money, affordability, income, inflation, cost of living. If affordability is mentioned in relation to a specific item (e.g., housing or healthcare) it is coded to that theme.
8. Food, nutrition	Reference to food, eating, having enough to eat, meals, food bank, Meals on Wheels, groceries, grocery store, farmers market.
9. Have what I/we need	References to having adequate services or programs, needs being met, not needing additional resources, or general availability of resources in Whatcom County.
10. Healthcare	Reference to medical, dental, vision, mental health care services, prescriptions, hospital, doctor, provider, health insurance, Medicare; includes references to healthcare access, availability, and affordability.
11. Home maintenance assistance	Mention of assistance with doing the work of or paying for home maintenance.
12. Housing	Reference to house, apartment, home, place to live, lack of housing (e.g., living in vehicle), shelter.
13. Information, navigation of services	Reference to information regarding services and programs, need for information access or navigation support, "knowing what's available."
14. In-home caregivers, caregiving	Reference to in-home caregivers, paid or unpaid, for both medical and general support, chore services, etc..
15. Interaction, relationships, connection	Reference to meeting others, visiting, connecting with like-minded people. Differentiation from "Social & recreational activities" can be somewhat challenging, but responses coded here focus on relationships , particularly when respondent indicates disinterest in group activities.
16. Intergenerational interactions	Reference to interactions with people of all ages, different generations, children, families, youth, "younger people."
17. Legal assistance	Reference to legal services such as wills.
18. Long term care	Reference to assisted living, retirement homes, skilled nursing facilities.
19. No response	Question was left unanswered.
20. Nothing, don't know	Includes statement that no improvements are needed, or expressions such as "not sure" or "can't think of anything."
21. Other, unclear	Response doesn't fit another code, or meaning is not clear enough to assign a code.
22. Outreach	Reference to outreach or direct, personal contact by phone or in-person.
23. Parks, trails, open space	References to parks, trails, places to be outside, access to outdoors.

24. Physical activity	General reference to physical activity, exercise, staying fit, gym, fitness center, exercise classes.
25. Purpose, service, contribution	Mention of words "purpose", "service", "contribution," or general statements such as "helping others" or "making a difference;" and references to volunteering.
26. Safety	Reference to physical safety, crime, police protection, security.
27. Shopping access	Reference to increased options, easier access, or more convenient locations for shopping. Reference to grocery shopping is coded as "Food, nutrition."
28. Social & recreational activities	References to entertainment, organized outings and trips, group activities such as dancing, hiking, playing cards. Differentiation from "Social interaction, connection" sometimes is challenging, but responses coded to this theme focus on the activity .
29. Social, political change	Comment on society or social issues, politics in general, the government, governmental role or policies.
30. Sr Center improvements	References to specific improvements to senior center programs, services, or facilities.
31. Technology assistance	Reference to giving or receiving assistance with computers, internet, electronic devices, or other aspects of technology.
32. Transportation	References to driving, gas money, bus, public transport, getting places.
33. Walkability	Reference to sidewalks, distances, or other environmental aspects of walkability.

Aging Well Whatcom: A Community Vision for Aging Well

The Aging Well Whatcom Initiative was launched by the [Chuckanut Health Foundation](#) in December 2017 with the goal of making Whatcom County a community where all of us are able to age well. Pulling together a group of experts, providers, and community leaders, the initial Coalition embarked on 18 months of research, discussion, and deep listening to our community. In September 2019, over 185 individuals and 89 organizations came together at the first-ever Aging Well Whatcom Summit. A [Blueprint for Aging Well](#) was debuted at the event, bringing our community together in a shared vision. The Blueprint includes six major areas: Information & Navigation Services; Intergenerational Community; Cultural Shift; Transportation; Housing; and Wellness & Healthcare.

In 2022, Aging Well Whatcom is updating the Blueprint, asking two key questions: “What has changed since 2018, when the first assessment was conducted?” and “What are the current challenges and opportunities related to aging and older adults in Whatcom County?” The Older Adult Survey was conducted in late 2021 to help answer these questions. Data review and meetings, conversations, and work sessions with over 100 community members and organizational partners are also part of the update process.

We hope that others in the community will also use these survey findings inform their program planning, service development, advocacy efforts, and personal and professional interactions with older adults.

Many thanks to the Blueprint Update Committee, a subgroup of the Aging Well Whatcom Steering Committee:

- Chris Orr, Whatcom Council on Aging
- Heather Flaherty, Chuckanut Health Foundation
- Mary Anderson, Whatcom Transportation Authority
- Sarah Lane, Health Ministries Network
- Tessa Whitlock, Chuckanut Health Foundation

Project support provided by Lara Welker

We’d love to hear from you!

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