

# Facts about the aging population in Tucson/Pima County

Source.: Adapted from information compiled by Pima Council on Aging. 08-02-2007

- **Growing aging population.** In 2000, 17% of Arizona's population was 60 years of age or older; by 2020 one in four will be 60+.
- **"Older" senior population.** People 85 and older are the fastest growing segment of Tucson's population, a 43.7% increase since 1990 and a 70% increase for Pima County. Although functional loss and disability are not necessary consequences of the aging process, both tend to increase with age as a result of underlying chronic disease. As the complexities involved in dealing with such once simple things as telephone service increases, the need for assistance by the frail and vulnerable elderly also grows.
- **First choice for most elderly is to remain in their home.** Support services (such as ICS Mobile Meals and Caregiving Services programs) allow seniors to remain living independently. In 2004, the average cost of care for: a person in nursing home was \$44,521 a year.
- **Role and demands on family caregivers.** The availability of family caregivers is often the deciding factor for a move to an institution or not. Nearly one out of every four U.S. households contain at least one caregiver for a relative or friend at least 50 years old. 52% of informal caregivers work full time, another 12% are employed part time. A lack of support for employed caregivers has profound effects in the workplace, resulting in caregivers having to reduce their working hours, using accrued time off for caregiving activities and foregoing promotions/training opportunities/pay raises. Higher healthcare expenses due to depression and stress is common.
- **More grandparents raising their grandchildren.** Older persons can experience significant challenges when caring for younger children – insufficient financial resources, legal challenges, physical and health concerns for themselves, and communication barriers.
- **Transportation becomes increasingly problematic as age increases.** Declining sight impairs the ability to drive; lowered income forces some to give up their cars or use them sparingly. Transportation is also the critical link to essential services: grocery stores, doctors' offices, pharmacy, financial institutions.
- **Elderly abuse, neglect, exploitation.** The increase in elderly population has also seen a corresponding increase in self-neglect, suicide and behavioral health problems. Unfortunately insufficient mental and behavioral resources exist to deal with this underserved population.
- **Housing issues.** Nine in ten people over age 70 live in conventional housing. Regular housing stock is not designed to meet changing needs as people age. With limited fixed incomes, many elderly need assistance with home repairs, modification, and yard upkeep.
- **Behavioral Health issues.** It is estimated that 25% of persons over age 65 have significant mental or behavioral health problems. This includes memory disorders, depression, sleep disorders and substance (alcohol, prescription drug, tobacco) abuse. Older adults have the highest suicide rate in both Arizona and the nation.
- **Seniors and volunteerism.** Older individuals are a valuable resource to community and can utilize their time and expertise to help others.