The Native Urban Elders Needs Assessment Survey (NUENAS) team would like to thank the following individuals and partners for their invaluable contributions to our research:

**Thank You**

- The Native urban Elders who took the time to participate in our study
- Title VI Leaders
- The Urban Indian Organizations who assisted with survey distribution and collection
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- The Administration for Community Living, and particularly the Administration on Aging
- The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH)
- The National Indian Council on Aging, Inc.
- The National Resource Center on Native American Aging (NRCNAA)
- The University of North Dakota, Center for Rural Health
- AARP
- Kauffman & Associates Inc.
The National Resource Center on Native American Aging (NRCNAA) serves Native Elders through education, training, and technical assistance. One of the services provided and conducted by the NRCNAA is the needs assessment Identifying Our Needs: A Survey of Elders. Through this survey, insight of the current health and social needs of the Native Elder population is gained. This effort empowers tribes and Native American organizations with the necessary information to identify existing needs and subsequently address them through planning efforts, decision-making activities, policy development, and pursuit of resources.

In order to explore health and social-related factors among urban Elders in the United States, the NRCNAA partnered with the Coalition on Urban Indian Aging to create a Native Urban Elder Needs Assessment Survey (NUENAS). This survey replicated many of the original needs assessment survey items, as well as the addition of several other questions which were tailored towards an urban Elder population.

Methods

There were 1,023 urban Native Elders, ages 55 and older, who were surveyed through hard copy surveys at urban centers across the United States (located in Nebraska, Minnesota, Oklahoma, California, and Massachusetts; n = 299), as well as through an online Qualtrics survey (n = 724). Surveys were completed from March 2021 through November 2022.

Respondents reported on social and health issues including general health, frequency of health screening procedures, memory and disability, alcohol and tobacco use, healthcare access, social activities, and other factors related to their health and well-being.

Results

In the following pages, results are shown for all urban Native Elders who completed the NUENAS survey. Some survey questions allowed for multiple responses, which may result in totals greater than 100.0%.

The map above shows the number of survey participants located in each state. States in dark grey, such as Arkansas, Connecticut, and Rhode Island (among others) had the smallest numbers of respondents, whereas states such as California, Minnesota, and Oklahoma had the most participants.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6</th>
<th>Demographics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>General Health Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Activities of Daily Living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Screening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Vision, Hearing, and Dental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Memory and Disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Healthcare Access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Tobacco and Alcohol Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Weight and Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Social Support and Caregiving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Housing and Physical Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Social Functioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Technological Connectedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Social Challenges</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1,023 Native Elders over the age of 55 completed the Native Urban Elder Needs Assessment Survey.

**Ethnicity**
- American Indian: 83.3%
- Alaska Native: 8.0%
- Descendant: 4.2%
- Other: 4.2%
- Native Hawaiian: 0.4%

**Gender**
- 80.8% Female
- 17.2% Male

**Age**
- Ages 60-69: 52.9%
- Ages 70-79: 22.6%
- Ages 80+: 4.8%
- Ages 55-59: 19.7%

**Sexual Orientation**
- Straight or Heterosexual: 91.3%
- Bisexual: 0.8%
- Lesbian, Gay, or Homosexual: 2.3%
- Decline to Answer: 3.8%
- Other: 1.4%
- Don’t Know: 0.3%
Over 1,000 surveys were processed as part of the Native Urban Elder Needs Assessment Survey (NUENAS). These included 1,023 surveys from urban Elders over the age of 55 years.

Veteran Status

6.3% of Native Elders served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, Military Reserves, or National Guard.

Annual Income

- $0 - $24,999: 55.5%
- $25,000 - $49,999: 25.9%
- $50,000+: 18.6%

Marital Status

- 18.6% Single/never married
- 36.1% Married or living with a partner
- 28.9% Divorced or separated
- 16.4% Widowed

Highest Education Completed

- Never Attended or Kindergarten Only: 2.6%
- Elementary: 27.2%
- High School: 52.7%
- College/technical School: 17.4%
- Graduate/professional School: 1.6%

Current Work Status in Past 12 Months

- 31.6% Retired
- 32.0% Not Employed
- 23.6% Employed Full-Time
- 12.7% Employed Part-Time

84.4% of urban Native Elders were an enrolled member of a federally recognized tribe.

63.6% of urban Native Elders were an enrolled member of a state recognized tribe.
Among urban Native Elders who reported ever living in an urban area:

- 44.0% Were born or grew up in an urban area
- 27.0% Moved to an urban area for educational or work opportunities
- 13.0% Attended a boarding school

- 11.3% Accompanied a parent, guardian, or Elder who moved to an urban area for work, education, vocational training, or military service
- 10.9% Moved to an urban area as an adult to be closer to family or friends
- 9.0% Accompanied a family member who moved to an urban area for work, education, vocational training, or military service

- 8.8% They or their family received incentives to move under the Indian Relocation Act of 1956
- 5.8% Moved to an urban area for health or healthcare reasons
- 4.7% Moved to an urban area due to problems they were having at a reservation or nearby rural area
Among urban Native Elders who moved from an urban area to a reservation or rural area:

- 27.4% were born or grew up in a reservation or rural area.
- 12.1% moved to a reservation or rural area as an adult to be closer to family or friends.
- 8.4% moved to a reservation or rural area for educational or work opportunities.
- 3.9% moved to a reservation or rural area for health or healthcare reasons.
- 2.9% moved to a reservation or rural area due to problems they were having in an urban area.
- 1.6% moved to a reservation or rural area as part of a child welfare decision.

Most urban Native Elders who were born or grew up in an urban area (44.0%) moved there for school or work opportunities (27.0%), or attended a boarding school (13.0%).

Location

10.6% of Native Elders resided on a reservation, trust land, Alaska village, or Hawaiian homestead.

Number of Years In Current ZIP Code

- 27.6% 5 years or less
- 12.7% 6 to less than 11 years
- 45.6% 20 years or more
- 14.1% 11 to less than 20 years
The average number of falls across all states was 1.44. Wyoming had the average highest number of falls (6.0), and Ohio the lowest (0.3). The values listed for some states are based off of a small sample and should be interpreted with caution.

Among those who reported having a fall, 36.9% injured themselves seriously enough to need medical treatment.
Over one-third of urban Native Elders rated their health as good. Most had between one and four chronic illnesses, with the most commonly reported condition being high blood pressure.

### Chronic Illness
- **High Blood Pressure**: 54.8%
- **Arthritis**: 51.6%
- **Diabetes**: 37.2%
- **High Cholesterol**: 34.9%
- **Depression**: 29.9%
- **Cataracts**: 21.8%
- **Asthma**: 19.7%
- **12.8% - Osteoporosis**
- **6.7% - Stroke**
- **5.6% - Heart Attack**
- **5.5% - Angina/Coronary Heart Disease**
- **5.1% - COPD**
- **4.9% - Cardiovascular Disease**
- **4.6% - Congestive Heart Failure**
- **3.9% - Chronic Kidney Disease**
- **3.7% - Breast Cancer**
- **3.5% - Prostate Cancer**
- **3.1% - Chronic Liver Disease/Hepatitis**
- **1.9% - Cervical Cancer**
- **1.4% - Colon/Rectal Cancer**

### Total Number of Chronic Illnesses
- **12.4%** of Elders reported no chronic illnesses
- **63.2%** of Elders reported 1-4 chronic illnesses
- **23.2%** of Elders reported 5-8 chronic illnesses
- **1.2%** of Elders reported 9 or more chronic illnesses

### Diabetes
Among the **37.2%** of Native Elders who had diabetes:
- **80.1%** took oral medication
- **32.5%** took insulin
- **1.6%** were on dialysis
- **0.6%** were diabetic during pregnancy
- **0.3%** had a diabetes-related amputation

**53.7 years**
Average age of urban Native Elders when diagnosed with diabetes

nrcnna.org 11
Because of a health or physical problem that lasted more than 3 months, urban Native Elders reported having difficulty...

56.2% of urban Native Elders had no activities of daily living that limited them. Approximately 17.7% reported 1 activity that limited them; 9.1% reported 2 activities; and 6.5% reported 3 activities.

49.6% of urban Native Elders had no instrumental activities of daily living that limited them. Approximately 19.3% reported 1 activity that limited them; 9.8% reported 2 activities; and 8.6% reported 3 activities.
**Last Routine Check-up**

86.2% of urban Native Elders had visited a healthcare provider for a routine checkup in the past year.

**Last Mammogram**

1 in 2 urban Native female Elders reported having a mammogram in the past year.

**Last Pap Smear**

1 in 3 urban Native female Elders reported having a pap smear 5 or more years ago.

**Last Prostate-Specific Antigen Test**

1 in 4 urban Native male Elders reported having a prostate-specific antigen test within the past year.
Vision

- 66.4% had seen an optometrist in the past year
- 2.9% were blind in one or both eyes
- 38.3% had trouble seeing, even when wearing corrective lenses
- 89.7% used glasses or contact lenses
- 66.4% had seen an optometrist in the past year
- 2.9% were blind in one or both eyes
- 38.3% had trouble seeing, even when wearing corrective lenses
- 89.7% used glasses or contact lenses

Hearing

- 17.8% had a hearing test in the past year
- 1.8% had total deafness
- 19.8% had trouble hearing, even when wearing their hearing aid
- 10.6% used a hearing aid
- 17.8% had a hearing test in the past year
- 1.8% had total deafness
- 19.8% had trouble hearing, even when wearing their hearing aid
- 10.6% used a hearing aid
Over one-third of urban Native Elders had trouble seeing, even when wearing corrective lenses. Close to twenty percent had trouble hearing, even when wearing a hearing aid.

What type of dental care do you need?

- Teeth filled or replaced: 36.9%
- Teeth pulled: 17.6%
- Gum treatment: 14.0%
- Denture work: 26.8%
- Relief of pain: 10.8%
- Work to improve appearance: 6.4%

About 56.7% of urban Native Elders reported seeing a dentist or dental hygienist in the past year.

Reasons Unable to Get Needed Dental Care

- Could not afford the cost: 55.4%
- Insurance didn’t cover procedure: 31.7%
- Afraid or didn’t like dentists: 15.5%
- Did not have transportation: 13.6%
- Dental office too far away: 12.2%

During the past year, 45.0% of urban Native Elders indicated there was a time when they needed dental care but were unable to get it at that time.

Self-Rated Health of Teeth and Gums

- Excellent: 3.2%
- Very Good: 11.9%
- Good: 29.2%
- Fair: 33.8%
- Poor: 21.8%
Memory Issues Experienced During the Past Year

- None: 42.5%
- Misplacing things: 32.1%
- Memory loss: 19.4%
- Changes in mood or behavior: 16.3%
- Loss of initiative: 11.9%
- Difficulty performing familiar tasks: 8.8%
- Disorientation to time and place: 6.5%
- Problems with language: 5.6%
- Changes in personality: 5.5%
- Poor or decreased judgment: 5.1%
- Problems with abstract thinking: 4.8%

Diagnosis of Memory Problem

- Alzheimer’s Disease: 0.9%
- Dementia: 1.3%
- Other Problems With Memory or Thinking: 7.5%
- None: 83.5%

How Often Given up Day-To-Day Activities Due to Confusion or Memory Loss

- Never: 64.5%
- Rarely: 14.7%
- Sometimes: 15.9%
- Usually: 3.4%
- Always: 1.5%

Confusion and Memory Loss

- Confusion is getting worse or happening more often: 13.9%
- Memory loss is getting worse or happening more often: 20.5%
Approximately 1 in 3 of urban Native Elders reported being disabled.

Reasons for disability, among the 39.8% of urban Native Elders who reported being disabled:

- Congenital: 5.6%
- In military service: 5.9%
- Accident/Injury: 35.5%
- Chronic Disease: 37.9%

Very few urban Native Elders had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease (0.9%), dementia (1.3%) or other problems with memory or thinking (7.5%).

- Diagnosed With a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)?
  - Yes: 5.6%
  - No: 94.4%

- Sustained a Head Injury in the Past 12 Months?
  - Yes: 4.2%
  - No: 95.8%

- Had Brain Injury That Limited in Any Way for More Than a Week?
  - Yes: 8.8%
  - No: 91.2%

31.2% of urban Native Elders reported having a health problem that requires them to use special equipment, such as a cane, wheelchair, special bed, or special telephone.
When you are sick or need professional advice about your health, where do you go?

- Doctor’s Office: 47.6%
- Clinic: 39.8%
- Urgent Care Center: 15.5%
- Hospital Emergency Room: 14.9%
- Hospital Outpatient Department: 13.5%
- Urban Indian Organization: 7.6%
- Urban Native Elders were asked what barriers had kept them from medical care in the past 12 months. Cost (18.2%) and too long a wait for an appointment (15.0%) were the most commonly reported reasons.

Barriers to Medical Care

- Cost: 18.2%
- Too long a wait for appointment: 15.0%
- Lack of transportation: 10.5%
- Distance: 9.9%
- Too long a wait in waiting room: 5.1%
- Office not open when I could get there: 4.6%
- Lack of disabled access: 0.5%
- No childcare: 0.4%
- No one spoke my language: 0.3%
- Other: 6.2%
Urban Native Elders most commonly reported Medicare and Indian Health Services as their types of healthcare coverage. Their greatest barrier to receiving healthcare was cost.

Of urban Native Elders had one person they thought of as their personal doctor/health provider. About 29.1% had more than one provider; 9.8% said they did not have one person they thought of as their personal doctor; 7.4% were not sure.
Most urban Native Elders reported that they did not currently smoke tobacco (74.5%).

Among those who did smoke, 15.7% did so everyday - 15.9% of Elders smoked everyday for ceremonial purposes, and 79.3% for social/recreational. Among the 9.8% who smoked some days, 28.9% smoked for ceremonial purposes, and 75.6% for social/recreational.

*Please note that percentages will not add up to 100.0%.

Among Native Elders who smoked cigarettes, most (41.5%) smoked 1-5 cigarettes per day. This was followed by 35.8% who smoked 6-10 cigarettes. Across all smokers, the average number of cigarettes smoked per day was 8.24.

Most Native Elders did not report chewing tobacco (98.4%). Among the 1.6% who did report using it, the average number of containers was 2.23 per week.
Close to three-quarters of urban Native Elders did not smoke. Over 40% had their last alcoholic drink more than 3 years ago, with 10% reporting never having an alcoholic drink before.

Most Elders’ last alcoholic beverage was more than 3 years ago (40.1%); this was followed by 29.0% who had an alcoholic beverage within the past 30 days. Approximately 10.0% had never had an alcoholic drink.

During the past 30 days, on how many days did you have 5 or more drinks on the same occasion?

- 82.3% – None
- 10.8% – 1-2 Days
- 3.7% – 3-5 Days
- 3.3% – 6+ Days

Among those who reported drinking, 82.3% reported that they did not drink 5 or more drinks on the same occasion in the past 30 days. Approximately 10.8% reported there were 1-2 days in which this occurred.
WEIGHT AND NUTRITION

**Body Mass Index**
- 19.4% Normal
- 28.7% Overweight
- 51.9% Obese

**Most Commonly Listed Exercises in Past Month**
- 62.1% Walking
- 24.0% Yard Work
- 15.0% Gardening
- 8.8% Bicycling

**Nutritional Quality Diet**
- Excellent 4.8%
- Very Good 17.1%
- Good 40.2%
- Fair 29.7%
- Poor 8.2%

**Exercise Frequency**
- 51.6% 1-2 Times Per Week
- 31.5% 3-4 Times Per Week
- 16.9% 5 or More Times Per Week
Over 40% of urban Native Elders had a good nutritional status. Most were likely to report walking as a form of exercise, and 52% were obese.

Based on the Nutrition Screening Initiative, 41.4% of urban Native Elders had a good nutritional status. There were 29.6% who had a moderate nutritional risk and 28.9% with a high nutritional risk.
Approximately one-third of urban Native Elders reported consuming traditional foods regularly (34.9%). When asked how often they consumed traditional foods, most did so between 1-2 times per week (68.3%), followed by 3-4 times per week (22.7%), and 5 or more times a week (9.0%).

Urban Native Elders most frequently reported consuming traditional foods such as wild rice, fry bread, beans, fish, corn, salmon, berries, and meat.
Food Insecurity and Affordability

Among the 30.2% of urban Native Elders who cut the size of or skipped meals, most (51.1%) reported doing so almost every month.
In the past month, most urban Native Elders did not engage in cultural activities (46.6%), although 43.0% did so 1-2 times per week. Another 6.1% participated 3-4 times per week, and 4.4% did so 5 or more times per week.

How often do you get out and socialize per month?

- 0 times: 25.9%
- 1-2 times: 26.3%
- 3-4 times: 23.4%
- 5-8 times: 15.5%
- 9+ times: 8.9%

Support

- Do you have someone you feel like you can depend upon to provide physical support to you? 70.4%
- Do you have someone you feel like you can depend upon to provide social support to you? 77.1%
60.0% of urban Native Elders reported living in a single family residence. Approximately 31.1% lived in an apartment.

Most urban Native Elders had lived in their home for over 10 years (45.5%). This was followed by those who lived in their home less than 5 years (37.1%) and between 6 and 10 years (17.4%).

Living Situation

- 59.2% of Elders lived with family members
- 7.1% of Elders lived with non-family members
- 3.9% of Elders lived with both family and non-family members
- 29.8% of Elders lived alone

Average number of individuals living in urban Native Elders’ households. The average number of children in households was .56.
In the past month, how often did you feel...

**Social Functioning**

- **Happy**
  - 10.3% None of the time
  - 1.0% All of the time
  - 10.8% A little of the time
  - 27.1% Some of the time
  - 50.8% Most of the time

- **Calm and Peaceful**
  - 11.8% None of the time
  - 1.5% A little of the time
  - 32.3% Some of the time
  - 43.9% Most of the time

- **Nervous**
  - 2.6% None of the time
  - 26.4% A little of the time
  - 32.7% Some of the time
  - 27.1% Most of the time

- **Downhearted and Blue**
  - 2.3% All of the time
  - 9.4% Most of the time
  - 24.6% None of the time
  - 26.7% Some of the time
  - 37.1% A little of the time

- **Down in the Dumps - Nothing Could Cheer You Up**
  - 1.3% All of the time
  - 4.2% Most of the time
  - 53.3% Some of the time
  - 25.7% A little of the time

- **Stressed**
  - 4.4% All of the time
  - 23.7% None of the time
  - 29.9% A little of the time
  - 27.7% Some of the time
Most urban Native Elders reported being happy, calm, and peaceful most of the time. Over half reported feeling very safe, and close to one-third rated their quality of life as very good.

How safe do you feel in your daily life?

- Not At All Safe: 1.0%
- Not Very Safe: 14.8%
- Very Safe: 59.9%
- Extremely Safe: 24.3%

During the past 12 months, how would you rate your quality of life?

- Excellent: 1.0%
- Very Good: 10.1%
- Good: 30.2%
- Fair: 40.0%
- Poor: 3.1%

How much of the time, during the past month, has your physical or mental health interfered negatively with your day-to-day functioning?

- All of the time: 3.7%
- Some of the time: 26.3%
- None of the time: 31.5%
- Most of the time: 11.0%
- A little of the time: 27.5%
Most urban Native Elders reported using their smartphone (70.3%), computer (49.8%), or iPad or tablet (35.4%); they could select more than one answer. Approximately 5.8% of respondents did not report using any of the devices listed.
Urban Native Elders were presented with a list of items, and were asked to rate the degree to which they were challenged by it. Nutrition was rated as the greatest challenge, followed by infrastructure/transportation and health facilities, social isolation, and facing a multi-cultural society.
Contact Us Today!

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