



Native Urban Elders Deserve Better

We live in a world where data shapes decisions that impact lives every day. However, when it comes to Native populations, available information is not always accurate or reliable. Native Elders* are a rapidly growing - and underserved - population that is often invisible in the data that shapes key funding and policy decisions, making exact data from a trusted source a critical need.

Currently, most existing data on Native populations defaults to overall aggregates that fail to identify and highlight the unique health and social challenges specific to Urban-located Native Elders.

Due to this lack of comprehensive data, Native Urban Elders are overlooked for critical support such as healthcare, housing and social services. Living in urban areas, removed from their reservation communities, these Native Urban Elders often lack access to culturally appropriate services.

This lack of adapted support creates challenges to access and program participation and perpetuates gaps in services and funding that directly result in poorer health and wellness outcomes, and reduced quality of life.

* Native Elders definition: most federal programs state elders being at 65, because of the earlier loss of lives, the tribes shift that number to 55.

80%
of Native Americans now live outside reservations.
National Council of Urban Indian Health. (2025). Policy Priorities 2025. Washington D.C.

1%
of Indian Health Service funding supports Urban Indian Organizations.
Indian Health Service, office of Urban Indian Organizations. (n.d.) About Urban Indian Organizations.

By 2040
the number of Native Elders is expected to increase by 39.0%.
Administration for Community Living. (2024). 2023 Profile of Older Americans.



Building on Proven Success

The need for accurate, community-informed data is not theoretical—it is essential for real world impact. The first phase of the Native Urban Elder Needs Assessment Survey (NUENAS) successfully demonstrated both the urgency of these issues and the power of targeted data collection.

Through rigorous research and meaningful engagement with Native communities, the first round of NUENAS provided clear insights into the lived experiences of Native Urban Elders. The findings informed advocacy efforts, guided resource allocation, and empowered organizations to push for solutions tailored to this often-overlooked population. *Below are sample findings from our research. For a deeper dive into the data, visit nrcnaa.org/urban-needs-assessment.*



59.2% of Native respondents reported a need for home-delivered meals.



Nearly half (47.0%) needed long-term care services.



30.2% skipped meals or cut portion sizes because they couldn't afford food.



Most respondents had an average of 3 chronic conditions.



45.0% were unable to get dental care last year, and of those, 55.4% cited cost as the main barrier.



34.7% reported difficulty walking, 42.7% needed help with heavy housework, and 20.0% struggled with bathing/showering—highlighting the urgent need for home & community-based supports.

Source: Native Urban Elder Needs Assessment Survey: 2023 Final Report

Initiative to Drive Change

NUENAS is a groundbreaking initiative designed to address these gaps. By collecting, analyzing, and sharing targeted data on health and social needs of Native Urban Elders, the NUENAS empowers communities and decision-makers with the tools to take action and ensure that the unique challenges of Native Urban Elders are no longer overlooked.

With a decades-long history of nationwide partnerships with Indigenous communities, the National Resource Center on Native American Aging (NRCNAA) had cultivated deep, trusted connections rooted in respect, collaborations, and shared commitment to improving the well-being of Native Elders. NRCNAA recognizes that data sovereignty is not just about collecting information—it is about ensuring that Native communities have control over their own narratives and the ability to leverage data for self-determination and systemic change.

This initiative is a call to action for communities, advocates, and decision-makers to use this data to improve quality of life and health outcomes for Native Urban Elders across Indian Country.

NUENAS Will Achieve: Data-Driven Solutions

To create the systemic changes required to address these gaps and needs, the NUENAS is dedicated to supporting Native Urban Elders by using data-driven solutions and community collaboration to:

- Create a comprehensive repository of data to identify and address service gaps.
- Respect cultural practices and ensure data sovereignty by partnering with Indigenous communities.
- Meet the needs of Urban Elders by equipping Urban Indian Health centers with actionable insights.
- Build the capacity of Urban Indian Health centers to advocate for funding and develop impactful programs.
- Secure vital resources by enhancing advocacy efforts at federal, state, and tribal levels.
- Improve health outcomes for Native Elders, fostering dignity and care for one of the most underserved populations in the United States.

Partner with Us

Your investment will advance:

Survey Development and Data Collection:

Enabling the administration of an updated NUENAS 2.0 survey across participating Urban Indian Health centers.

Capacity Building:

Expanding resource opportunities through training Urban Indian Health centers in data collection, analysis, and grant writing to secure additional funding and show definitive levels of need.

Data-Driven Advocacy:

Drive systemic change through development of key materials such as data/needs reports, infographics, and policy briefs.

Community Support:

Increase participation and involvement through targeted subawards for Urban Indian Health centers to coordinate data collection and participation honorariums for Elders taking part in survey efforts.



“For the first time, we have data that truly represents the challenges our Elders face. This has allowed us to secure funding for a community health program tailored to their needs. NUENAS gave us a voice.”
—Urban Center Leader



Join Us

Your support has the power to transform the lives of Native Urban Elders—one of the most underserved yet resilient communities in our country. **Together, we can ensure NUENAS data informs equitable resource allocation, supports sustainable programs, and amplifies their voices so they are seen, heard, and prioritized.**

A special thank you to our early supporters and partners:



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