

Long-Range Planning Issue Brief

Healthy Aging



Minnesota's population is getting older, driven by longer life expectancy and fewer births. According to the State Demographer, the number of Minnesotans over the age of 65 is projected to rise permanently over the coming decades, reaching nearly 1.2 million by 2050.¹

Older adults bring significant value to the state. In 2013, Minnesotans aged 50 and older contributed \$148 billion to the state's GDP, held 1.9 million jobs, and generated \$14 billion in state and local taxes.² They also have the highest rates of formal volunteering and provide the most childcare, playing a vital role in their families and communities.

Minnesota is already feeling the effects of an aging population, impacting the state's workforce and increasing demand on health and social care systems. **Planning for a population of vibrant, healthy aging adults who can age in their communities means rethinking how the state supports its workforce, economy, and care infrastructure.**

Where Are We Now?

Minnesota's population is aging in communities across the state, with the shift happening more rapidly in Greater Minnesota. Women, people living alone, and rural residents are especially impacted. Many older adults live with complex and ongoing health needs. Over 80% of 65+ Minnesotans have at least one chronic condition such as arthritis, heart disease, or diabetes. These conditions disproportionately impact people of color, who often face higher rates of illness and more severe health outcomes.

Hospitals and long-term care facilities are struggling to meet growing demand due to outdated systems, staffing shortages, and transportation barriers. Geriatric care remains underemphasized in clinical training, and the quality of care in residential settings is declining.³ Paid caregivers are underpaid, under-resourced, and difficult to recruit and retain. Family members often step in to fill the gaps, but many face burnout and financial strain.

In response, the Legislative Task Force on Aging, established in 2023, was charged with reviewing state resources for older adults, identifying gaps in support, and ensuring aging-related policies are inclusive and up to date. The Minnesota Board on Aging, a 25-member governor-appointed board, advises on statewide planning and oversees direct service programs.

By the Numbers

Nationally, 70% of adults who survive to age 65 will require long-term services and supports before the end of life.⁴ According to the Department of Employment and Economic Development, the state faces a critical shortage in the long-term care workforce needed in both community and residential settings. As of mid-2022, caregiving roles like nursing assistants (17.4%) and home health aides (12.7%) faced a higher vacancy rate than the state's average of 6.9%.⁵ 2024 projections from the Minnesota Demographic Center suggest that the number of 65+ adults needing nursing home care in Minnesota will increase by 21.6% between 2025 and 2035, further exacerbating the demand for qualified caregivers.⁶

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What Could Progress Look Like?

Progress means making it possible for all Minnesotans to grow older in their communities with health, dignity, and support. One of the strongest themes from community engagement was the urgent need for a stronger care infrastructure. Across the state, people raised concerns about the shortage of trained caregivers, especially in rural areas, and the strain it places on families. Meeting the needs of an aging population will require better pay, improved training, and clear career pathways for the caregiving workforce to ensure older Minnesotans can receive care when and where they need it.

Aging in place—being able to live safely and comfortably at home as one ages—was also a top concern. It requires access to senior-friendly housing, transportation and community services. Senior-friendly housing should incorporate principles of universal design to meet current and future needs. Accessible transportation and mobility options are also essential to staying connected to services and community.

Healthy aging also depends on broader conditions like access to affordable care, strong social ties, and opportunities to stay active. This is especially important for those aging alone. Many systems still assume traditional family structures, even as more Minnesotans grow older without them. Future efforts must adapt to the needs of solo agers.

Aging in community remains a widely shared goal. To make that vision a reality, the state must strengthen what supports healthy aging: better-connected systems where health care, social services, and long-term care work together, and a well-prepared care workforce. With the right planning and investment, healthy aging can become a reality for all Minnesotans.

How Can Long-Range Planning Help?

The Long-Range Planning (LRP) Team can play a key role in advancing healthy aging—an issue that requires long-term focus and collaboration. LRP can help build a shared vision reflecting the needs of older adults, especially solo agers and those in rural communities. The team can bring together community members, care providers, advocates, and experts to identify priorities, align strategies, and shape policy agendas. This process can foster common language, build momentum, and outline clear steps to strengthen the care workforce and promote wellness within the aging population.

By involving communities throughout the process, LRP can help ground solutions in real experiences and needs. With its broad perspective, cross-sector connections, and growing relationships with Tribal Nations, the team can break down silos, build shared understanding, and pave the way for long-term progress. This work can help raise aging as a statewide priority and guide policies, partnerships, and investments that make healthy aging possible for all Minnesotans.

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Get Involved

Join us in shaping Minnesota's future! If you have questions or want to participate, contact the Long-range Planning team at planning.mmb@state.mn.us.