

# Assessing the Needs of Older Adults in Rural West Texas

Dr. Suzie Macaluso, PHD, Julia Free

## Intro

As adults progress in age, specific challenges may begin to surface. Some common changes may affect health, transportation, economic, and living conditions. Those who live in towns full of resources may find that this transition into older adulthood is smoother as there are means in place to support the aging community. The question of this study, however, sought to answer the question of what difficulties older adults in rural communities may face daily.

## Literature

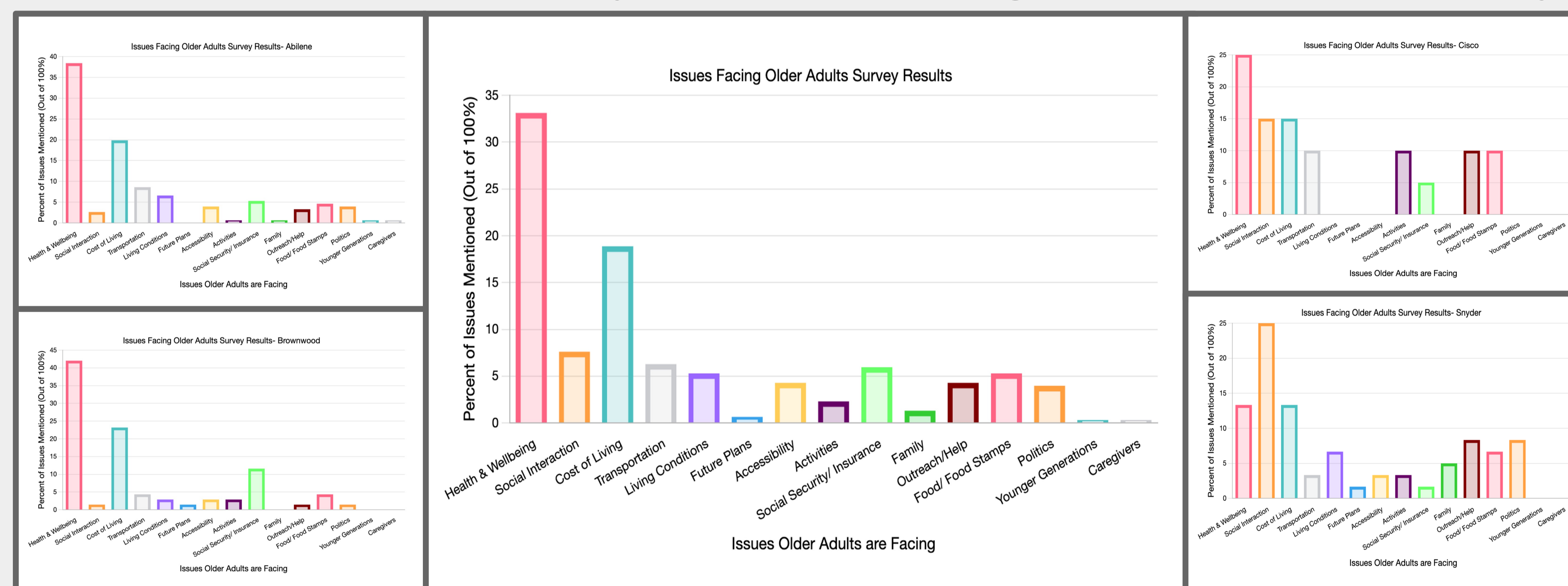
Aging in a rural community can present difficulties in healthcare, transportation, social interaction, economics, and environment (Dize, 2019; MacKinney et al., 2019; Nelson & Lang-Lindsey, 2020; Weirich & Benson, 2019). Limited resources can be a cause of individuals not receiving necessary supportive care. Further, many of these difficulties are highly correlated. For example, individuals who do not have the transportation or the resources available to leave their homes and socialize are at a higher risk of decreased health and well-being.

## Method

- In total, 183 participants from 4 cities around West Texas participated.
  - Cities and percentage of participants; Abilene-54%, Brownwood- 26%, Snyder- 16%, Cisco- 4%
- Ages range from 56-95 years of age.
- Anonymous survey consisting of demographic questions ( age, gender, race, marital status, education, children living nearby, and county of residence) and identification of most salient concerns
- Students from Abilene Christian University attended the senior town hall events in each town's community center and administered the questionnaire.

## Main Idea

Out of 15 provided categories of issues facing older adults, participants identified the top three pressing issues as being; health and wellbeing, social interaction, and cost of living. The four cities utilized in this study (Abilene, Brownwood, Snyder, Cisco) vary by size, population, and general demographics. Additionally, this study set out to identify whether or not the issues of concern vary across West Central Texas. It is evident in the responses that social interaction appears to be more of a salient concern for respondents in Snyder than in Abilene and Brownwood particularly. Cost of living is a higher concern for individuals from Brownwood than in the three other cities. Activities are less of a concern for the Abilene participants than the other three locations, likely related to the larger size of the community.

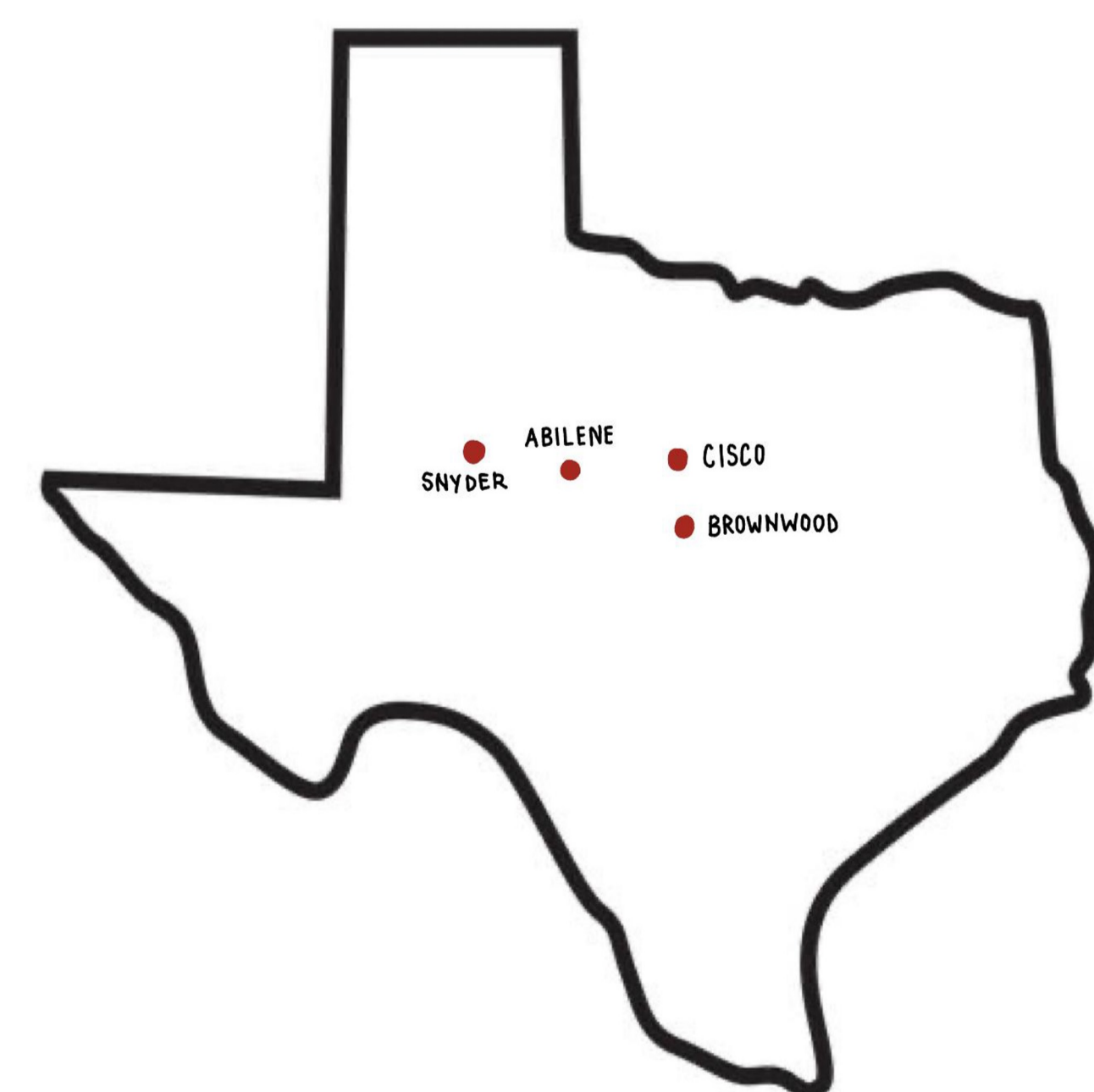


### Abilene

- Population: 125,070
- Race and ethnicity:
  - White: 69.9%
  - African American or Black: 10.2%
  - Hispanic or Latino: 27.7%
  - Asian and Pacific Islander: 2.2%
  - Native American: 0.04%
- Median Age: 32.1 years

### Cisco

- Population: 3,851
- Race and ethnicity:
  - White: 91.2%
  - Two or more races: 4.78%
  - African American or Black: 1.45%
  - Asia: 0.31%
- Median Age: 29.5 years



### Brownwood

- Population: 18,770
- Race and ethnicity:
  - White: 79.7%
  - Two or more races: 11.9%
  - African American or Black: 5.18%
  - Asian: 0.41%
  - Native American: 0.36%
- Median Age: 35.4 years

### Snyder

- Population: 11,366
- Race and ethnicity:
  - White: 80.88%
  - Two or more races: 7.1%
  - African American or Black: 3.11%
  - Asia: 0.84%, N
- Median Age: 32.6 years

## Implications

This study highlighted various areas of need for older adults in parts of rural West Texas. It is evident that concerns vary based on the services available and size of the community. While this information provided a helpful glimpse into the lives of the aging population, it is essential to note that the participants in this study were the ones who were physically at these senior town hall events, biasing the sample by leaving out a portion of individuals who were unable to be there due to a lack of transportation, knowledge of services, or poor health and mobility. In further studies, it would be beneficial to expand the survey population to be more inclusive of those who could not attend.

## Thoughts Moving Forward

- Revise the answer categories to make the health and well-being category more specific.
- Continue assessing the needs of older adults around the state of Texas.
- Expand the study to include individuals unable to attend senior town hall events.
- Provide education and resources to different facilities responsible for the care and services offered to older adults.

## References

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