

Baseline assessment

Current status of senior citizens' needs, experience and views on age-friendliness in Gothenburg



Summary

Introduction

The City of Gothenburg is striving to make the city a better place to grow old in, through the municipal council assignment “Age-Friendly Gothenburg”. In accordance with the decision of the municipal council, the City of Gothenburg has been a member of the WHO’s global network for age-friendly cities – Age-Friendly Cities and Communities (AFCC) – since 2015.

The background for the decision to join the network is that the population of Gothenburg is ageing and the number of people aged 65+ is on the rise. The demographic forecast for Gothenburg points to a 40 percent increase in the 65+ population between 2020 and 2040. The city is growing rapidly, and an age-friendly perspective on urban planning could have the effect of helping more old people remain not only independent but also more active in society.

As the rest of the world, Gothenburg is facing a major demographic challenge and increasing urbanisation. AFCC is based on these two trends. Membership is built on an evidence-based approach by the WHO with contributions from researchers, combined with experience from 33 major cities and metropolitan regions in the world and their senior residents. The City of Gothenburg considers membership to reinforce the local development work through the provision of inspiration, the exchange of experience and research partnerships.

The work consists of designing and organising the city’s social and physical environments so as to promote security, health and participation in all phases of life, and it is built on participation from senior citizens and having strategic players plan and adapt Gothenburg to suit an ageing population.

AFCC currently comprises more than 1,000 cities which exchange experience and best practice with one another. Gothenburg was the first Swedish city to become a member, and has now been joined by Stockholm, Uppsala and others.

Method

The foundation of becoming an age-friendly city is to listen to and involve old people. By asking open, exploratory questions, Age-Friendly Gothenburg has built up a pool of information about needs, experiences and views on what makes an age-friendly city, as well as opportunities for improvements and what the city already does well. A total of 630 people have contributed in different ways. The baseline assessment is also built on interviews with service staff, statistics, material from public service and relevant research.

The quantitative part of the method consists of analyses statistics available from the city management office, as well as data from the most recent H70 and H85 studies from AgeCap at the University of Gothenburg.

Some methods used include Life filming, focus groups, workshops, interviews, outreaching dialogues, service design, surveys and a compilation of views for additional comments.



“An age-friendly city has everything nearby, within walking distance.”

Urban environment

An age-friendly urban development perspective is distinguished by proximity, accessibility and security in urban environments and green spaces. Aspects highlighted as important to spending time in the urban environment include places to sit, public toilets, drinking water fountains and public art. A varied mix of buildings that invites both rest and activity is also important. Security encompasses both physical measures and human presence in public spaces.

- One of the most important aspects regarding proximity is that destinations – such as communication options, shops and other important community functions and everyday service – should be within easy walking distance. Places to sit in “good” locations are good places to meet and contribute to seniors finding the energy to spend longer outside in urban environments.
- For our urban environments to be genuinely age-friendly, we need to use an accessibility perspective that takes into account when people have or develop difficulties in moving, seeing, hearing, processing, interpreting and communicating information, and when they have difficulty physically tolerating certain substances.
- Functional lighting that facilitates orientation, illuminates important functions and does not dazzle with its glare increase the sense of security in the same way as human presence.
- Senior citizens would like to participate in urban planning and to have an influence on issues that affect seniors’ needs. It is not possible to create age-friendly environments without involving senior citizens.

Mobility

How mobile we are has an influence on our health, life quality and independence, as it affects our opportunities to be socially active and participate in the life of the community. The ability to decide for ourselves when we wish to travel by foot or by bicycle, to use a walker, a wheelchair or a mobility scooter, or to use public transport is good for our health. An age-friendly environment features clear, spatial oriented, even, non-slip and wide pavements that are interlinked and offer regular places to stop and rest.

- A “walkable” urban environment with level ground (without potholes and uneven paving stones), good lighting and separate lanes for bicycles and pedestrians, as well as extra time to make it to the other side of pedestrian crossings are all aspects highlighted by senior citizens as age-friendly.
- The free senior card has contributed to increased mobility and participation in society. Seniors also mention public transport vehicles that start and stop gently so as to prevent falls. There is a general need for slower pace, good interaction and mutual respect between road users.
- Accessibility to public transport stops close to where senior citizens live is another important factor for a good life.
- The extent to which streets, pavements and pedestrian paths are maintained is highly important. Extremely often, senior citizens comment on how maintenance of the street environment is handled, and how important it is to have it done well so as to reduce the risk of falls. Good snow clearing and gritting are two examples.
- Flex Line’s small buses is a greatly appreciated service where senior citizens would also like to see the service available in evenings and on weekends, as well as at lunchtime. They would also like more appropriate routes that are not governed by the city district administration department’s zone boundaries.

“Being able to hang out in streets and squares in the centre without having to look down to check where you’re putting your feet. Gothenburg is full of cobbles – square stones.”

Housing

Our homes define how we live⁽¹⁾. Most Gothenburg residents over the age of 65 live – and enjoy living – in ordinary housing. Many, however, live in a way that does not align with the new needs that inevitably arise when we grow older. Life quality could be so much better – good accessibility in the residential environment, reasonable rent, conveniences involving new technology, for example, and close contact with neighbours all contribute to good health and a continued active life.

Senior citizens are interested in a holistic perspective on the issue of housing: having residential housing located close to everyday services such as shops, ATMs, public transport, Flex Line transport, culture venues, meeting places, libraries is fundamental to an age-friendly city, as is access to green areas for nature experiences and physical activity.

There is a low knowledge among seniors about the availability of existing well-constructed housing, housing adaptation and housing supplements. Consequently, more information is required to allow seniors to make conscious choices and plan for old age.

A major Swedish-German study highlights the environmental obstacles in the home that would have the greatest benefit if they were removed, in relation to investments in housing adaptation among old people in Sweden⁽²⁾. The study confirms much of what senior citizens say is important in order to keep living in their homes:

- Automatic door openers in the entrance, with doors remaining open long enough for people to enter
- A level entry area – no (or only low) doorsteps
- Storage solutions in the kitchen placed at an accessible height
- Sufficient space to manoeuvre near domestic appliances and storage units in the kitchen.
- Support handles by the shower, bath and/or toilet

Social participation and inclusion

Social participation, inclusion and community enhance the health of the individual, as well as one's capacity to cope with difficulties. Many senior citizens highlight the importance of meeting places and the ability to participate in associations. A study at Fou i Väst indicates that what is defined as a meeting place or social arena depends on what the individual identifies as and with. Few people identify as old.

- Meeting places must exist close to where senior citizens live, have good communication options, be easy to reach, and be accessible without steps or steep inclines. They should ideally also allow different generations to meet, and everyone should be welcome.
- One way to counteract ageism is to expand the image of old people and what ageing can entail. Another way is to involve old people. Many respondents stated that they are keen to contribute as volunteers, and to become actively involved in the work of associations or pensioners' organisations. Some mention that they could help by making suggestions, acting as a sounding board and making themselves available for tasks.
- Many pensioners have limited financial means and emphasise the importance of free admission to cultural activities, museums and swimming centres, as well as local libraries and premises in the immediate neighbourhood that can be rented at low cost.

“I like the fact that there is a good mix of ages here; a lot of families with children – yes, we have everyone here, from babies to 90 year olds, it’s really homely, I don’t want to move from here.”

According to the WHO, ageism is the most accepted form of discrimination, and is rarely opposed to the same extent as racism or sexism, for example⁽⁴⁾.

“The switch to digital payment methods is going faster and faster right now.”

Social support and service

Social support and service that are both nearby and readily accessible enable senior citizens to maintain a good health and to look after themselves. Most important of all is to have grocery shops, a healthcare centre and a pharmacy in the immediate neighbourhood. Several seniors consider one of the key issues in the field of social support and service to be maintaining and developing the city's meeting points and meeting places.

- Many seniors mention that it is particularly important to strengthen and protect the local squares. Going out shopping is a social activity, grocery shops become a natural meeting place.
- When service in the immediate environment is lacking, it is even more important that there is a bus or tram stop or a meeting point for Flex line nearby.
- Good treatment and interaction is the cornerstone of age-friendly social support and service. Poor interaction can result in old people not feeling welcome, feeling insecure and ceasing to make use of the service.
- Research indicates that stimulating activity and social community can help prevent or postpone the need for care and support ^(3,4).
- There is a need for an advisory service senior citizens can use for interaction with the authorities, bank transactions and the like. Not everyone has relatives and/or friends they can trust.
- The importance of there being ATMs in the area – and of your feeling safe when withdrawing cash – is a topic that arises in numerous interviews. Only being able to pay electronically or with a payment card excludes a lot of senior citizens.

Information and communication

To reach the heterogeneous group of senior citizens, the city needs to employ a range of different methods and channels. It is therefore important to run an annual analysis of which channels old people use – and to make sure the local authority is represented there.

TV, daily newspapers and radio are the information channels senior citizens use most. To reach the target group, senior citizens advise the local authority to provide information via pensioners' organisations, the Swedish Homeowners' Association, cooperative housing associations and the *Hyresgästföreningen* tenants' association, by advertising in free newspapers, and by having service staff visit meeting places to talk about the activities that are currently taking place. Other useful options include sending information via text messages, mailshots and offers, running an apolitical information television channel, posting information on noticeboards in healthcare centres, pharmacies, grocery stores, squares, malls, culture centres and other places visited by the old.

Many people find oral information easier to comprehend. Oral information is also crucial to people who suffer from illiteracy.

- Senior Gothenburg residents are largely unaware of the city services intended for their age group and tend not to seek out information actively. Extremely few use the city website, which is difficult to navigate. Generally speaking, senior citizens do not experience that the services are “for me”.
- Senior citizens want consolidated and clear information in a single place, ideally in hard copy format. The information should cover everything that has to do with old people. A shared website or an app are other suggestions.
- The information must be concise, easy to read, written in a large font and with well-spaced lines. The layout must be clear and text must not be written on photos.
- Not all age groups are able to use the digital channels. It is important to continue working to reduce digital exclusion.

“It was someone who was here who told one of my friends who told me.”

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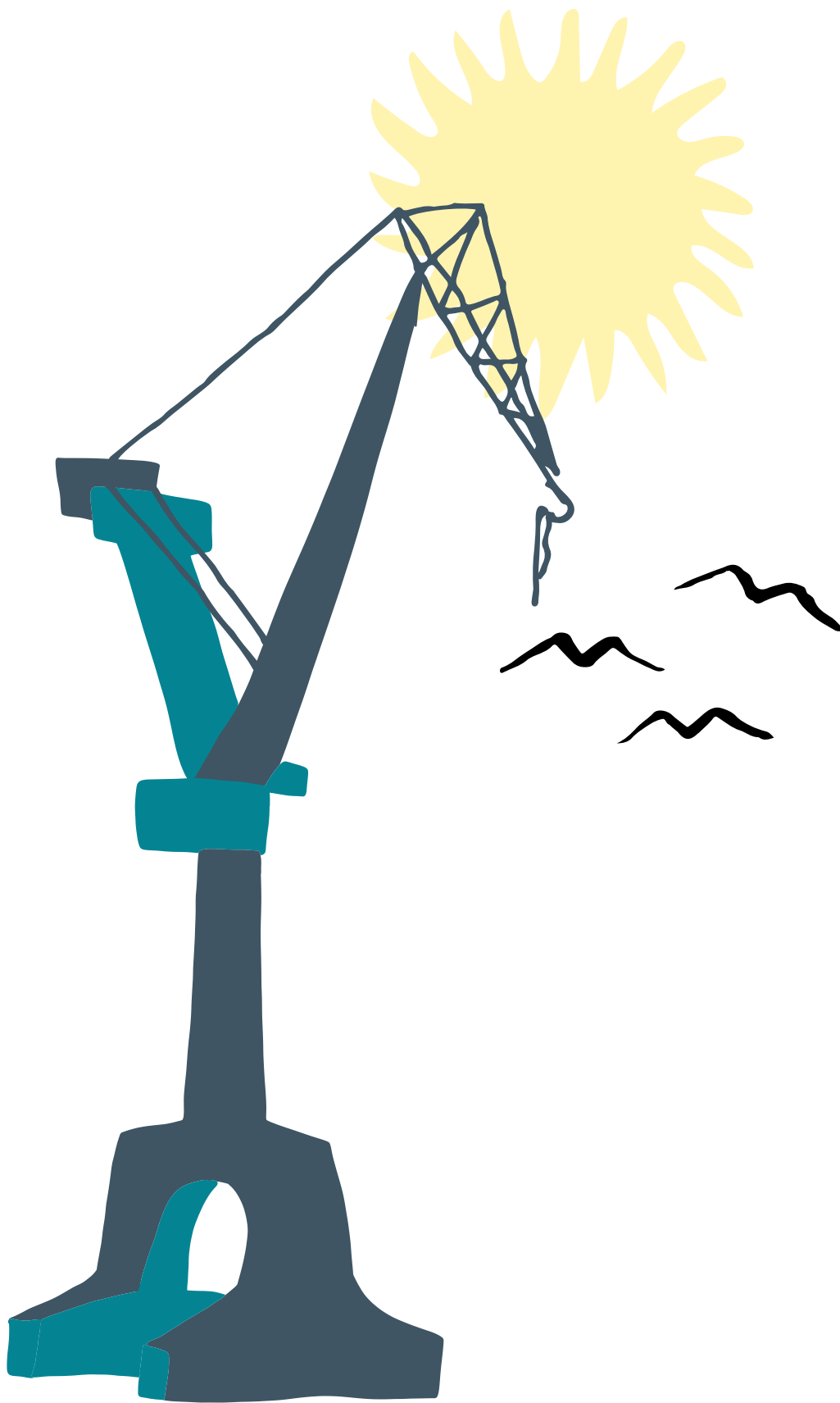
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Introduction

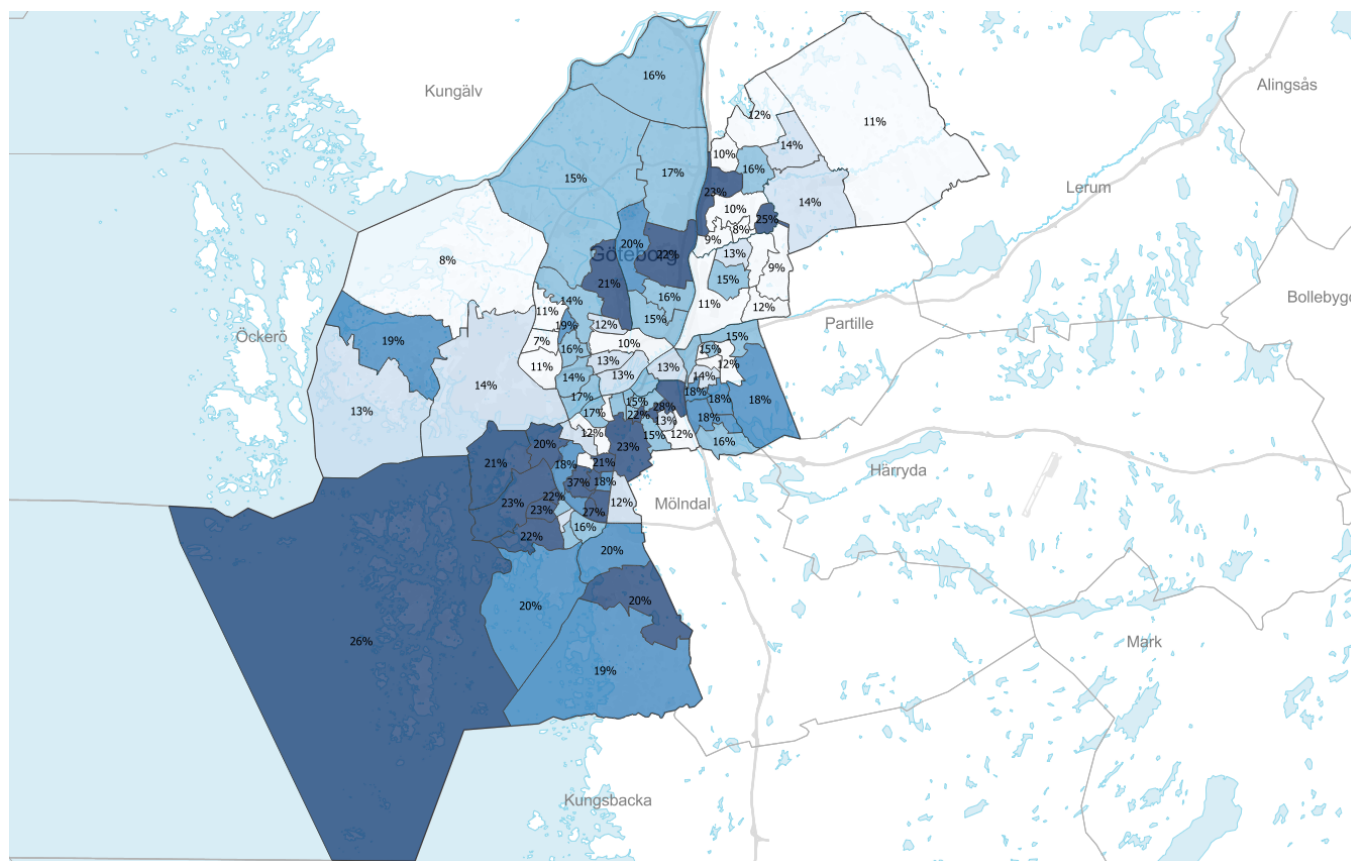
The world is changing. Cities are developing and expanding at a rapid rate, at the same time as their demographics are changing. The proportion of old people in the world is increasing, and more and more senior citizens are living in cities. Against the background of these global trends, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched the global Age-Friendly Cities and Communities (AFCC) network in 2010. This network focuses on issues concerning how best to plan and adapt our cities for an ageing population.

In short, “Age-friendly cities” is about how cities design and organise their social and physical environments to promote security, health and participation throughout life⁽¹⁾.

Gothenburg is building and planning major urban development projects simultaneously as the proportion of senior residents steadily increases. Already today there are several (primary) areas in Gothenburg where the proportion of residents aged 65+ is between 20 and 37%. Moreover, the group of Gothenburg residents aged 80 or more is set to rise, as a consequence that people born in the 1940s are growing older. The issue of how the City of Gothenburg can create age-friendly environments to provide conditions for citizens to participate and be active in society in old age is therefore highly relevant.

This is a part of the reason why, in autumn 2015, the City of Gothenburg decided to apply for membership of the WHO Age-Friendly Cities and Communities network. Today, the network comprises more than 1,000 member cities which, together, which together are committed to promote age-friendly cities, and to exchange knowledge and experience with each another.

Figure 1: The map shows the share of people aged 65+ in percent and per primary area in the City of Gothenburg.



The City of Gothenburg's membership has been translated to *Åldersvänliga Göteborg* (Age-Friendly Gothenburg) and entails the city undertaking to involve senior residents in the age-friendly work, and to prepare an action plan comprising specific measures and indicators. The age-friendly cities project is founded on the participation of senior citizens. This is both the objective of age-friendly environments and a key element in the process of creating them. In other words, nothing for the seniors without the participation of the seniors. Gothenburg's old people are the ones who know what it is like to live life as a senior resident of the city, what is important to them and what can be improved. In the WHO Age-Friendly Cities and Communities network, old people are members of society with knowledge and experience that can contribute in how the city's different environments can be good for everyone.

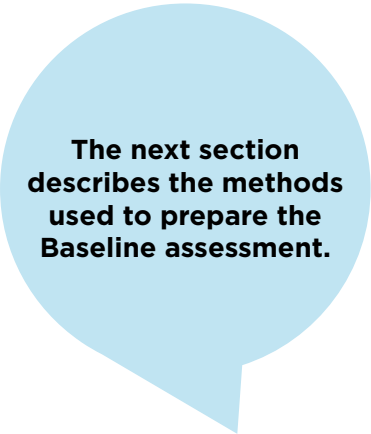
Therefore, a vital focus in creating age-friendly cities is to change attitudes to ageing and older persons. So that it is considered positive to grow old, and to ensure that old people are viewed as the resource they are with the capacity to contribute to their own lives, to their immediate surroundings and to society in general.

The work process

By focusing on and collecting experiences in creating age-friendly cities, the AFCC prepared a handbook in 2016⁽²⁾ that describes age-friendly work in four different phases:

- 1. Engage and understand** > Examine needs and complete a baseline assessment
- 2. Plan strategically** > Intersectoral work
- 3. Act and implement** > Co-create action plan
- 4. Evaluate** > Generate collaboration and integrate with research

Senior citizens must participate actively in all phases, from generating engagement and understanding, to evaluating the action plan together. The present document "Baseline assessment: current status of senior citizens' needs, experience and views on age-friendliness in Gothenburg" is part of the process to prepare an action plan for Age-Friendly Gothenburg. The baseline assessment creates the conditions for using the next step to look at which measures need to be applied in practice, and what actually contribute to improved security, health and participation for old people in Gothenburg. The baseline assessment is also built on interviews with service staff, statistics, material from public service and relevant research.



The next section describes the methods used to prepare the Baseline assessment.

Method

This chapter describes the various methods used in the baseline assessment. The AFCC work method of listening to and involving old people is to be applied to each step of the process. By asking open and exploratory questions, Age-Friendly Gothenburg has gathered information about needs, experience and views on what an age-friendly city actually is, and on opportunities for improvements and what old people appreciate. The baseline assessment also contains interviews with service staff, statistics, and material from public services and relevant research.

The quantitative part of the method consisted of analysing statistics available from the city office, as well as data from the most recent H70 and H85 studies from AgeCap at the University of Gothenburg.

The H70 and H85 studies by AgeCap, University of Gothenburg, are longitudinal, population-based studies of seniors in Gothenburg, which have been run since 1971. A total of six birth cohorts between 1901 and 1944 have been examined, with follow-ups conducted for up to 30 years. A total of 1,203 old people have participated in the H70 studies and 491 old people in the H85 studies.

From Älvstaden to a full-city perspective

Initially, the Age-Friendly Gothenburg project focused on Älvstaden (the inner city) as its development arena, but in order to ensure inclusion of a mix of senior citizens with different backgrounds, ages, genders, experiences and needs in the process, the focus was expanded to include the whole city. Research indicates that old people also spend the majority of their time in their immediate environment⁽¹⁾. As the physical landscape of Gothenburg varies, it is extremely important that senior citizens living in different districts have been given the opportunity to describe what constitutes an age-friendly city, what is important and appreciated, and what are the most important measures. This creates the conditions for establishing a comprehensive image, as well as the possibility of drawing general conclusions. The collection of data took place as a dynamic process with continuous analysis of representation regarding the city's senior residents. This resulted in our implementing selective measures in order to ensure better representation in the material.



Life filming is a method where seniors create life-affirming films on the basis of themselves. No previous skill or knowledge is required, and everyone who needs to can learn to take photos, shoot film and use a tablet to edit the footage. The idea of using life filming has to do with exploring the needs senior citizens have in their immediate environment, and to find new ways of allowing seniors to participate in urban development.

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Description of methods

A wide variety of methods have been used to listen to and involve senior citizens, because varying methods attracts and reaches different groups of seniors. It is important to reach both those who are extremely active and those who are not active at all with regard to development issues within the city. A successful way of working to reach senior citizens is to take an outreach approach. As a result, multiple activities were conducted by issuing invitations to associations and meeting points, and by attending activities that attract large numbers of senior citizens.

Proactive selective measures were applied to reach foreign-born senior citizens of Gothenburg. This method was chosen on the basis of what suited each individual group. Several associations and groups including foreign-born senior citizens of Gothenburg were reached through the established relations built up by service staff in the city who work with prevention initiatives for seniors. Special selective measures were applied for Spanish-speaking Gothenburg seniors, Finnish-Swedish Gothenburg seniors, Muslim-Bosnian Gothenburg seniors and Christian, Arabic-speaking Gothenburg seniors. Methods included interview workshops, focus groups, interviews after presentation and life filming.

Dialogue was also held with senior citizens who invited Age-Friendly Gothenburg, and with senior citizens who participated in activities arranged or jointly arranged by Age-Friendly Gothenburg.

The service design method was used for a preliminary study about information and communication that was carried out in the district Västra Göteborg. The service design contains different methods for establishing an understanding of the needs and unspoken needs of the users. In-depth interviews and user tests of the city website and rating scales were completed with a total of 33 people in the 65–99 age group.

A summary of the views received was completed in the autumn of 2018, where the intention was to provide feedback on the information collected to date and to give seniors additional opportunities to give feedback to the material. The document was supplemented with a questionnaire of open questions. The summary was distributed in hard-copy format to meeting points, etc. around the city, and as a digital survey to all pensioners' organisations, associations and senior advisory boards.

In all, 152 responses were received. Many seniors also telephoned to say that they agreed with everything in the summary.

Limitation

Age-Friendly Gothenburg has not touched on issues to do with home assistance and healthcare. There are other assignments in the city that deal with the development of these areas. Views on home assistance and healthcare are therefore not included in the baseline assessment.

Participating seniors and representation

A total of almost 630 Gothenburg seniors contributed, describing needs and experience and putting forward views and ideas.

The analysis indicates that women are over-represented, as men account for only approx. 21 percent. The gender identity of one person was stated as transperson. There are men represented from each city district.

The statistic regarding whether the Gothenburg seniors were born outside Sweden or not produces a figure of approx. 12 percent. Gothenburg seniors who participated in the survey stated a variety of countries of birth, including Bosnia, Finland, Hungary, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Lebanon, Norway, Poland, Spain, Syria and Turkey.

The age mix among participants was broad. The “old” group is a heterogeneous group with a variety of states of health. The mean age of the respondents to the questionnaire is around 76.

In addition, between 35 and around 100 people from each city district participated.

Old people with cognitive disabilities are not expressly represented more than having relatives participate in a workshop. Many of the old persons who participated are members of associations and pensioners’ organisations, or spend time in one of the city’s meeting places and/or libraries. All in all, it is important to ensure that in the next stage of the action plan, work continues on reaching out to and involving more old people who are involuntarily alone, seniors who are not members of associations and organisations, foreign-born Gothenburg seniors, and seniors who define themselves as men.

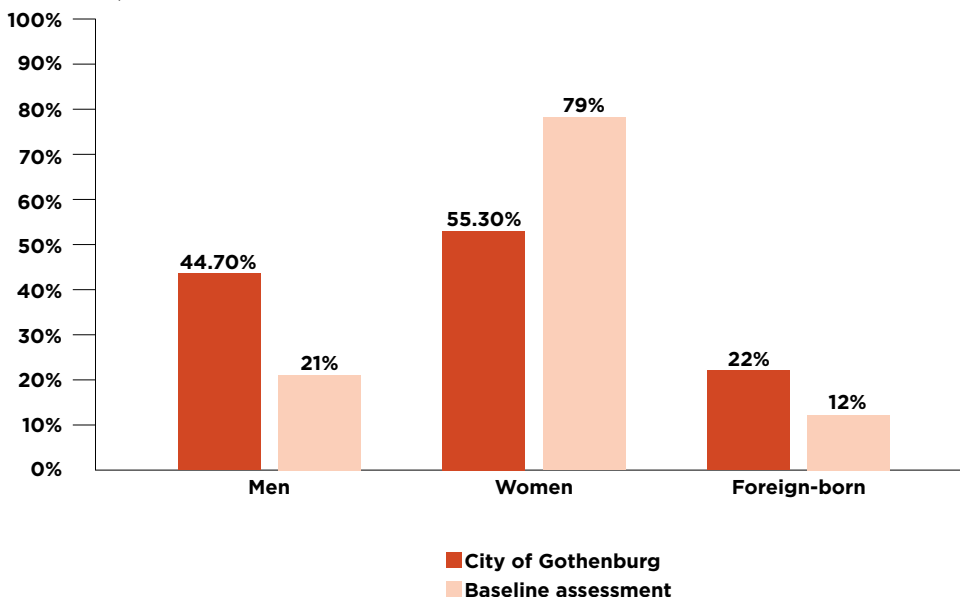


Figure 1: The diagram shows the distribution of men, women and foreign-born residents aged over 65 in the City of Gothenburg, and among the participants in the baseline assessment.

Validation and generalisation

With around 630 old people having participated and contributed to the study – people with different backgrounds, genders, disabilities, socio-economic conditions, experiences and ages from all parts of Gothenburg – we have been able to put together a comprehensive and diversified image of existing needs and experiences.

To guide you, the reader, through the text with regard to generalisation and for more specific needs and views, we have classified by size as follows:

Some = Individual people. Describes both something that may be good for everyone and something that could be examined in more depth.

Several = More than five people. Describes both something that could be good for everyone, and something that could be examined in more depth.

Many = More than ten people and mentioned in multiple interviews and multiple locations in the city. Has a generalising significance.

Often = Something mentioned more than in “many” interviews. Has a generalising significance.

Extremely often = Something mentioned in almost all interviews. Has a generalising significance.



Dialogue forms and locations

Method	Location/Activity
Life filming	Meeting points for seniors in the City Centre and Lundby, Muslim-Bosnian women's group in Lundby
Focus group	Spanish association, Tuve book club, Muslim-Bosnian women's group in Lundby
Interview workshop	PRO Askim study circle on housing, tenants at <i>Öster om Heden</i> 70+ housing, participating seniors on Backaplan Culture Centre, comments during Q&A from the series of lectures entitled <i>En åldersvänlig stad</i> (An Age-friendly City) in partnership with AgeCap, summer presentation of <i>Jubileumsparken</i> with participating seniors from all parts of Gothenburg, The Central Pensioners' Council, the district of Västra Göteborg Pensioners' Council, conversation bingo at a conference on age-friendly cities in the Nordic region
Proactive dialogue through invitations issued by Age-Friendly Gothenburg	<i>Caritas i Hjällbo</i> , senior housing at <i>Gårdstensbostäder</i> , the Högsbo coffee group, waffle lunch on Styrso, at a Friday activity at Monsunen Meeting Point in Södra Biskopsgården
Proactive "sit-in" at places visited by senior citizens	Seniors day at <i>Kortedala Forum</i> , Local accommodation expo at <i>Kåken</i> in Örgryte-Härlanda, Mini-expo at Almhults Torg 7, the prevention units tent at Gothenburg Culture Festival, Community Singing at Bergkristallsparken, Tellus festival in Bergsjön
Service design on information for old people	Interviews and tests with old people and service staff in Västra Göteborg
Interviews in connection with the preparation of the magazine <i>En stad att åldras i</i> (A city to grow old in)	Seniors on Bankogatan in Högsbo on usable bathrooms, seniors who train at Växthuset on Frölunda Torg and men's dinner party in Centrum
Supplementary questionnaire for summary of senior citizens' views, winter 2018-19.	Printed questionnaires were sent to the city's prevention units for distribution at various meeting points. Digital surveys were sent to all pensioners' organisations and local associations with involved seniors, as well as to all pensioners' councils in the city. Some associations received printed material by post. Survey and questionnaire at www.goteborg.se/seniorgoteborg .
Material processed	Local development programme for Västra Hisingen, Lundby and Västra Göteborg. Dialogue material with seniors in Majorna-Linné prior to preparation of local development programme, reports from businesses in the City of Gothenburg, graduate theses linked to prevention, interviews and workshops with service staff, research.



Status, 65+ in Gothenburg

Today, Gothenburg is home to 86,620 people over the age of 65. The old population of Gothenburg is expected to increase, at the same time as Gothenburg residents continue to live longer. Old people today are healthier than previous generations, but there are great variations in their level of health. The number of 70-year-olds who felt “healthy” in 1971–72 was around 65 percent for both men and women, while the corresponding figures today for the same age group are 90/88 percent. At the same time, there is something of a health paradox in that later generations suffer from more illnesses, but are actually healthier with their illnesses⁽¹⁾.

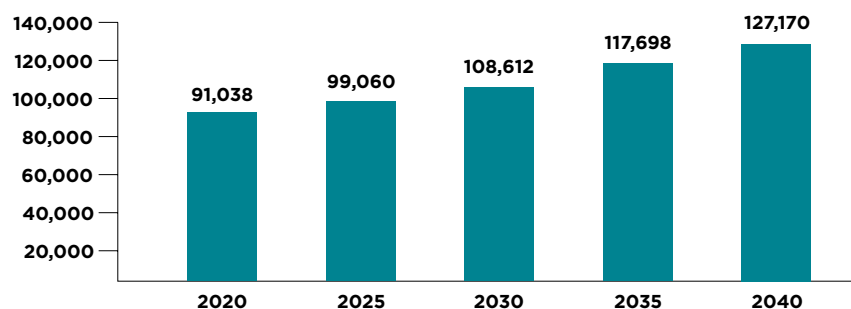


Figure 1: The diagram presents the forecast for numbers of people aged 65+ from 2020 to 2040⁽²⁾.

Combining the highest figure in each category makes it possible to define the “Majority senior citizen” in Gothenburg as: a woman born in Sweden, who lives together with another person in a rented flat measuring 61–80 sqm in the Askim-Frölunda-Högsbo district. She completed her high school education and has an annual income of SEK 162,000–282,000⁽²⁾.

Forecasts indicate that the 65+ age group is expected to increase by 40 percent between 2020 and 2040 because this is the period in which the huge generation born in the 1940s will reach the age of 75–84. This is the group that will increase at the fastest pace up until 2025. Differences in the size of birth cohorts born in the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and 1950s is of great significance to how many old persons there are in the different age groups⁽³⁾. Despite an increasingly healthy senior population, there are major inequalities in ageing. The report entitled *Äldres hälsa – en sammanställning av äldre personers hälsa i Göteborg* demonstrates that there are major differences in health among Gothenburg residents. These differences are made clear in the remaining life expectancy⁽⁴⁾.

Figure 2: The diagram presents the remaining life expectancy at the age of 65 and at birth, Statistics and Analysis, SLK 2019.

The graph below illustrates the differences in remaining life expectancy at the age of 65, and the remaining average life expectancy at birth per city district and gender.



The diagram shows that women generally live longer than men in Gothenburg. The average male Gothenburg resident lives to the age of 79, while the average age of female Gothenburg residents is 83.4. The age gap in the average expected lifetime between men and women in the city is thus 4.4 years. There are, however, major variations between genders and city districts, as well as within the intermediate areas in the different districts. The maximum age gap in the expected average lifetime for women in Gothenburg is 6 years, while for men it is 9.1 years⁽⁵⁾.

The intermediate areas with the highest remaining life expectancy are Södra Västkusten, Södra Askim, Stora Sigfridsplan, Norra Älvstranden and Norra Centrum. A common trait of the intermediate areas is that the average mean income here is higher for both men and women than the general mean income for men and women over the age of 65. The biggest education group in the respective areas is people with post-secondary school education. In addition, more than half the old people in Södra Västkusten and Södra Askim live in an area larger than 121 sqm. In Norra Centrum and Norra Älvstranden there is a greater variation in the size of housing occupied by people aged 65+. All intermediate areas have a lower proportion of people born outside Sweden, which varies between 8 and 13 percent, compared to the Gothenburg average of 22 percent.

The middle areas with the lowest remaining life expectancy are Bergsjön, Västra Biskopsgården, Centrala Lundby, Norra Angered and Kortedala. All old people who live in these intermediate areas have a lower mean income than the average mean income for men and women over the age of 65 in Gothenburg. It is also more common for the residents of these intermediate areas to have a high school or pre-high school education. In the areas of Bergsjön, Västra Biskopsgården and Norra Angered, it is common for people to live in an area of 61–80 sqm, while in Centrala Lundby almost equal proportions live in an apartment covering 41–60 sqm or 61–80 sqm. Kortedala is an outlier, where the majority of old people live in an apartment of 41–60 sqm. All the intermediate areas have a higher proportion of Gothenburg seniors born outside Sweden than the Gothenburg average of 22 percent. The highest figure is in Norra Angered, where 64 percent were born in another country, while the lowest figure – 31 percent – is recorded in Centrala Lundby.

In all, there is a general relationship with the combination of high income, higher education, larger residential living area, being born in Sweden and having a higher remaining life expectancy. The Equality Report 2017 – differences in health and living conditions in Gothenburg⁽⁶⁾, describes how high income receivers, irrespective of gender, background and sexuality, enjoy better health than lower income receivers.

People in Bergsjön have the lowest average life expectancy. Bergsjön residents have an average life expectancy of 74.1 years (men) and 80 years (women). Residents of the Södra Västkusten district, in contrast, have the highest average life expectancies: 83.2 years for men and 86 years for women. This means that at the east end of tram line 11 live the people with the lowest average life expectancy, while the west end is where people with the highest average life expectancy live⁽⁵⁾.

Stora Bagaren and Centrala Tynnered are two intermediate areas that lie close to the average remaining life expectancy. In Stora Bagaren, men are estimated to live to the age of 79.1 years, and women to 83.2 years. The corresponding figures for Centrala Tynnered are 78.8 years and 83.4 years, respectively.

In order to work to reduce the differences in health and life conditions among old people in Gothenburg, it is necessary to focus in particular on old women, old people born outside Sweden, old people with limited finance resources and old people with disabilities⁽⁴⁾.

Spread of mean income

Higher income is associated with conditions for increased health and life quality^(4,6). A solid financial base is important to the capacity to cease worrying about unforeseen expenses and one's capacity to participate in social activities in the community⁽⁴⁾. The diagram below illustrates that in all city districts, women receive a lower mean annual income than men. This image of inequality in mean income between men and women also appears at intermediate area level.

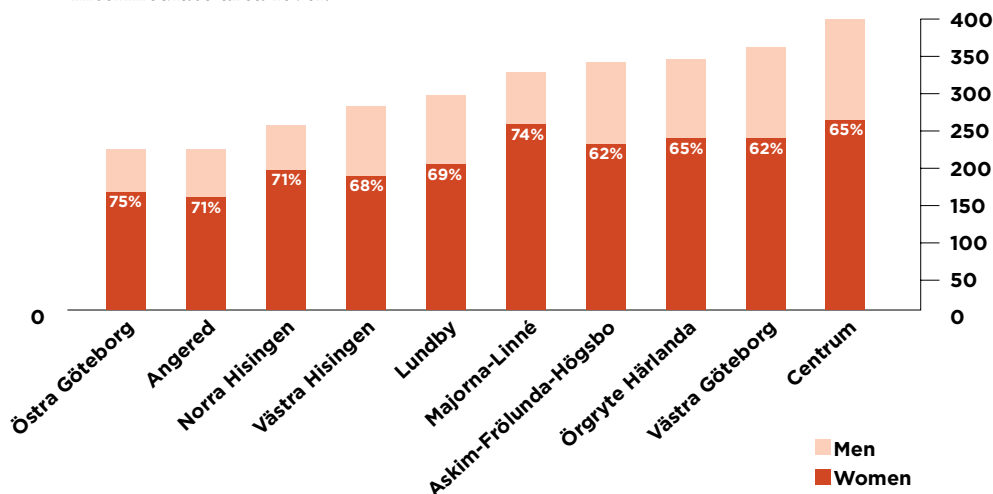


Figure 3: Diagram of mean annual income for men and women over the age of 65, divided by city district and how high a percentage old women receive of the mean income for old men. Produced using data from Statistics and Analysis, City of Gothenburg Executive Office, 2019.

The average mean income for people aged over 65 is SEK 258,700. The mean income for women aged 65+ is SEK 213,200, and for men of the same age it is SEK 315,300. This means that men aged over 65 generally have a mean income that is 30 percent higher than women aged 65+, and a mean income approximately 20 percent higher than the average mean income for people aged over 65.

There are big differences between and within city districts. One trait shared by all districts except the centre (Centrum) is that they all show internal variations where at least one area has a lower average income for the district.

The district that shows the smallest deviation between men and women is Östra Göteborg, where women have a mean income that is 24.8 percent lower than men in the same age group. At the same time, mean income in Östra Göteborg is 30 percent lower than the average for the rest of the city, and remaining life expectancy here is also lower than the average for Gothenburg as a whole. Other city districts where both men and women receive a mean average income that is lower than the average for the city are Norra Angered, Norra Hisingen, Lundby and Västra Hisingen. The last two of these include two intermediate areas that deviate from the norm in that both men and women receive a higher mean income than the Gothenburg average: Norra Älvstranden and Torslanda.

The city district with the greatest difference in income between men and women is Askim-Frölunda-Högsbo. This is likewise one of the districts – together with Västra Göteborg, Majorna-Linné and Örgryte-Härlanda – that is home to people aged over 65 with a higher mean average income, although it also has one or two intermediate areas inhabited by people over the age of 65 who receive a lower mean average income.

Women over the age of 65 in Södra Angered receive the lowest mean annual income, at SEK 126,100. This is equivalent to SEK 10,508 per month. Men aged 65+ in Stora Sigfridsplan receive the highest mean annual income, at SEK 505,500 – or SEK 42,125 per month. This means that women aged over 65 living in Södra Angered have a monthly income that is approximately 25 percent of that received by men aged over 65 and living in Stora Sigfridsplan.

There are mean income variations where women aged 65+ receive a higher mean income than men aged over 65. Examples include women aged over 65 living in Södra Sigfridsplan, Norra Centrum, Norra Älvstranden, Södra Västskusten, Linnéplatsen and Stora Askim, who have a significantly higher mean income (SEK 249,300–280,500) than men aged 65+ living in Södra Angered, Norra Angered, Bergsjön, Västra Biskopsgården, Kortedala and Nya Frölunda (SEK 171,200–220,300).

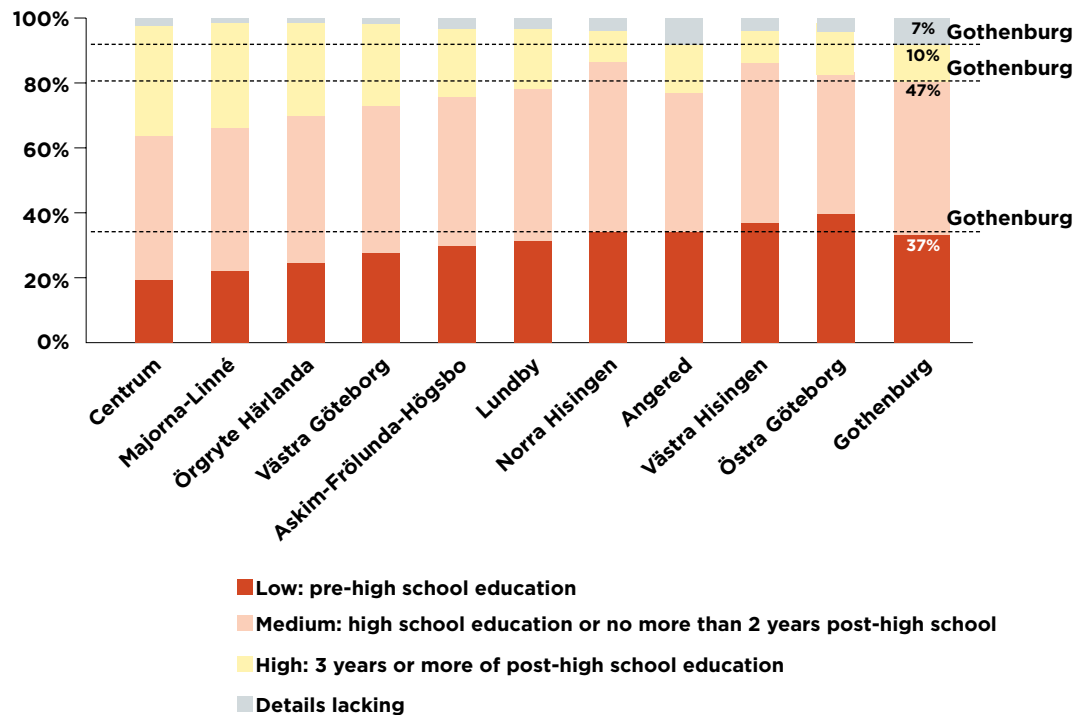
Differences in education among people aged over 65

Education is one of the aspects that can result in an individual enjoying a higher social position in society. One’s social position, in turn, has an effect on health and life expectancy⁽⁶⁾. Moreover, raising the level of education among the population has proved to be a key measure in preventing dementia⁽¹⁾.

There are major variations in the level of education among Gothenburg residents over the age of 65. The best-educated groups of old people are to be found in the Centrum and Majorna-Linné districts, where almost 50 percent of all residents over the age of 65 have post-high school level education. Östra Göteborg, Angered and Norra Hisingen are the areas with the lowest proportion of people over the age of 65 with post-high school level education. Figures in the other city districts are close to the average for the City of Gothenburg as a whole: 31 percent. However, the largest group with post-high school level education is to be found in Stora Sigfridsplan, where the average is 60 percent. The intermediate areas in the districts of Askim-Frölunda-Högsbo, Örgryte-Härlanda, Lundby and Västra Göteborg, show differences of around 30 percentage points in the proportion of people over the age of 65 with post-high school level education..

The spread in level of education closely resembles the spread of mean income among Gothenburg residents aged over 65.

Figure 4: The diagram shows people aged 65+, divided by level of education and city district⁽²⁾.

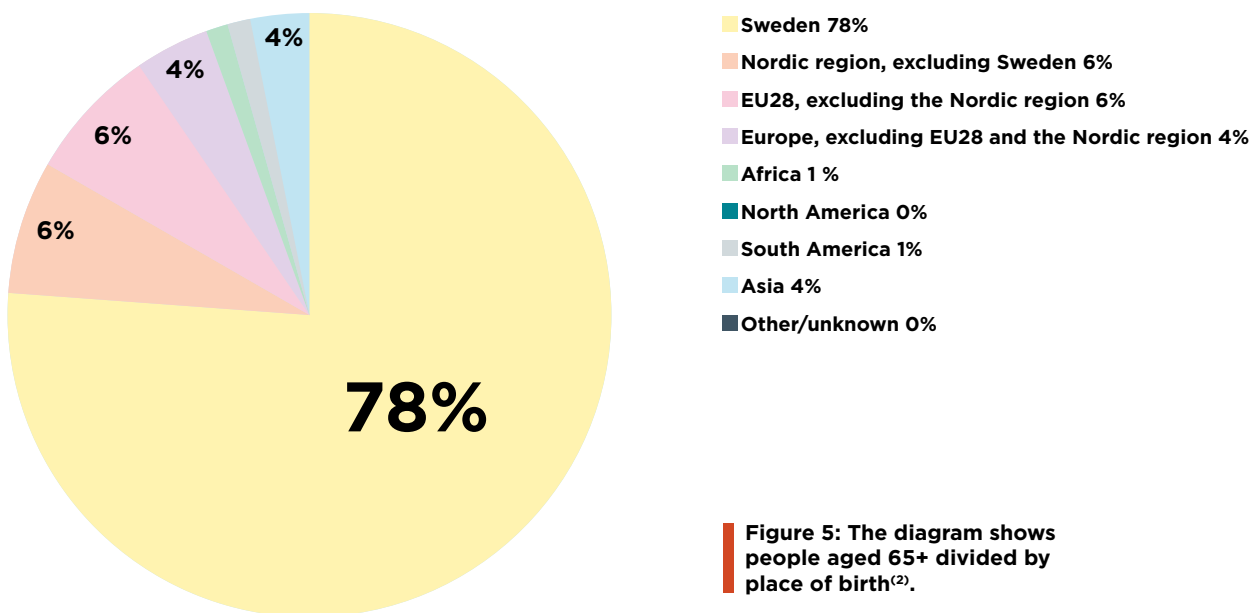


Where were senior Gothenburg residents born?

The average figure for foreign-born senior Gothenburg residents is 22 percent. The biggest concentration of foreign-born residents in the “old” group is to be found in the north-east sections of the city, i.e. the administrative districts of Angered and Östra Göteborg, which have an average of 54–44 percent. In Södra Angered, the figure is 70 percent. The city districts with the lowest proportions of foreign-born senior Gothenburg citizens are Västra Göteborg, Askim-Frölunda-Högsbo, Örgryte-Härlanda, Centrum and Majorna-Linné, where the average figures are 12–15 percent. In every city district there are variations in the proportions of foreign-born senior Gothenburg citizens, with the exception of the three last districts, which feature an even level, spread throughout the district. Lundby is the “average” district, where 24 percent of those aged 65+ were born outside Sweden.

Generally speaking, the areas primarily made up of detached and terraced houses feature lower percentages of foreign-born senior Gothenburg citizens. The highest percentages of foreign-born residents live in Nord-östra Göteborg and Västra Biskopsgården, closely followed by parts of Hisingen, such as Biskopsgården, Lundby and Litteraturstråket. In contrast, the multi-family residential areas in Centrum, Majorna-Linné and Norra Älvstranden stand out by having a lower proportion of foreign-born senior residents than the average for Gothenburg as a whole.

In Södra Skärgården, 4 percent of senior Gothenburg citizens were born outside Sweden, and these 4 percent are generally born in the Nordic region or in EU Member states. In Södra Angered, 70 percent of senior Gothenburg citizens were born outside Sweden and represent all parts of the world.





1. Urban environment

Urban environment

The design and content of the urban environment are of great significance to our independence, life quality and conditions for using public spaces and green areas.

“An age-friendly city has everything nearby, within easy walking distance.”

There are multiple features that make urban environments and green areas age-friendly – proximity, accessibility and security.

An age-friendly urban development perspective

The term “proximity” arises extremely often in conversations with senior citizens regarding what constitutes an age-friendly urban environment. One of the most important aspects of proximity is that communication options, shops and other important societal functions and everyday services be within easy walking distance. Research indicates that walkable urban environments help make it easier for old people to deal with their daily chores and continue to participate in the city life.⁽¹⁾

At the same time as senior citizens highlight the significance of proximity, many also emphasise the importance of ensuring that new developments are not built too densely. It is important to leave light, airy and green environments, as well as other open areas and squares to hang out. Many mention in particular the importance of maintaining gardens and small parks in new build projects.

A varied mix of buildings and the opportunity to experience change and variation is often mentioned. In this context, “change and variation” means having the opportunity to follow and experience the distinctive features of the seasons, and having environments that provide experiences for all the senses. Senior citizens like to see colours in urban environments. Altogether, an age-friendly urban development perspective shares many characteristics with the key qualities for sustainable urban development. Both perspectives highlight the significance of “walkability”, proximity, mixed buildings, diversity and green environments^(2,3,4).

Many senior citizens explain what an age-friendly urban environment is by referring to the content. Aspects highlighted as encouraging use of the urban environment include public toilets, drinking water fountains and public artworks. Drinking water fountains and public toilets have been mentioned as especially good to have near playgrounds, local nodes, popular pedestrian paths and coastal areas. Several respondents also mentioned the importance of rain shelters in the urban environment.

Having the city provide meeting places for both resting and activity in the immediate area is mentioned as being important, as is the existence of places where people of different ages can meet and enjoy visiting. The ability to be physically active in the city’s shared spaces often comes up in interviews. Both fitness centres and places to dance are mentioned as examples. However, calm, quiet places are also in demand, along with areas with little traffic.

Examples of what senior citizens want and are able to participate in:

- **evaluation and testing of new public spaces**
- **evaluation of newly built areas with Life filming**
- **developing a senior perspective and an all-age perspective in urban development**
- **involvement in security walks and open calls**
- **functioning as a reference group in urban development projects**

Research indicates that in order to build in preventive environmental qualities for everyone, it is necessary to establish places for silent retreat, as well as for social interaction and activity. Spaces for calm contemplation are distinguished by wilderness and the ability to be alone, while the more socially engaging places offer a variety of cultural activities and views⁽⁵⁾.

Senior citizens are keen to be involved in urban planning and to have an influence so that their needs are taken into account. It is important that the City of Gothenburg work actively with the age perspective and analyse how different measures affect old people.

Places to sit become natural meeting places

Good places to sit are fundamental in an age-friendly urban environment. Places to sit allow more people to interact with the urban environment, and for longer. Places to sit also become natural meeting places for a lot of people – both from the perspective of maintaining existing social relations and for establishing new social contacts. There needs to be a variety of places to sit in different “good places”: protected from the wind, in the shade and in the sun, as well as places where people can sit together and benches around a table. More places to sit are needed in Gothenburg’s hilly areas and in the city centre. An age-friendly place to sit is characterised by being of the appropriate height, with good back support and arm rests that provide support when people want to stand up.

The Park and Nature Administration (Park and Nature) and the Traffic Office continue to establish accessible places to sit. The park administrators at Park and Nature determine where the new places to sit are to be positioned. At the Traffic Office, a member of staff checks the places to sit to make sure they are accessible, with the appropriate arm and back supports.

Several seniors have mentioned that they would like to have heated places to sit. Today, there are a few such places to sit – on Fjällgatan in Majorna, for example.

Physical accessibility

For our urban environments to be age-friendly, we need to apply an accessibility perspective that takes into account when people have or develop difficulties in moving, seeing, hearing, processing, interpreting and communicating information, and when they have difficulty physically tolerating certain substances.

One particular issue that has arisen is that senior citizens would like to sit along the canals in the Vallgraven area, and that the city is working actively to make the canals accessible all the way to the harbour. It should be easy to walk alongside the canals to the harbour, and to sit and watch the activity on and around the water. Generally speaking, there is a need to make the city waterscape more accessible, through the establishment of hand rails, ramps, lighting and benches.

Park and Nature is responsible for all piers and quays in the city and makes sure there are development opportunities for working with accessibility.

In 2019, Park and Nature will continue working with measures to remove easily eliminated obstacles. This work involves taking a holistic approach, whereby flights of steps are evened out or replaces, or having the department asphalt the ground surface to level it out. Lighting, contrast markings and places to sit will be positioned at appropriate distances, such as at the top and bottom of a flight of steps. Systematic work with easily eliminated obstacles in public utility areas is under way in the city.

It’s lovely to sit down and enjoy a ‘pensioner coffee’, look at all the boats and people, and take a ferry to Hisingen and the islands.

Some respondents state it is important to make the city's vantage points more accessible so that everyone can use them. Other seniors emphasise the importance of there not being too many steps in public areas, because this hinders accessibility for people who use walkers, for example. Good accessibility is necessary if people are to be active and move around in the urban environment.

Churchyards are important places for many seniors, so there is a particular need to make the city churchyards more accessible. Defined needs include more benches and public toilets.

Security

Good lighting is important in enabling senior citizens to feel safe when they are outdoors. It is also important to make sure that the lighting in public settings does not dazzle with its glare. The eyes start to become yellow and clouded with age, starting as early as in the 40s. This means that they let less light in, at the same time as the pupil becomes smaller and the retina becomes more sensitive to glare. In addition, the eyes become less able to adapt to different lighting conditions⁽⁶⁾. Altogether, this means that lighting needs to be designed to accommodate all factors related to ageing eyes. It is essential that the lighting facilitates orientation, illuminates relevant functions and does not dazzle. In addition, it is important to ensure that trees do not obscure lighting.

To the question of what it entails to feel safe outdoors, many respondents answered "human presence in public spaces". Inter-personal relations are important to the sense of security; being greeted by one's neighbours, for example, and being recognised in the immediate neighbourhood.

Several respondents state that security in public places can be ensured by the presence of police officers, public safety personnel and CCTV monitoring.

Where activity premises are located, what type of activity takes place there, and when they are open are other factors that affect the perception of presence and security. The ability to use the toilet when the need arises is also highlighted as important to a feeling of security.

There are various opinions on the extent to which senior citizens feel safe or unsafe when they see a group of young people. Some think it is positive. As one senior citizen puts it: "They see me if I would stumble". Other seniors say they feel afraid or suspicious when they see a group of young people in squares, close to tunnels and so on. The sense of insecurity is defined by how the young people behave more than by the fact they are in a group. Several seniors state that young people also need to feel they have a right to hang out in public places, and that the sense of insecurity that can arise stems from the fact that senior citizens and young people are unfamiliar with one another.

Particular incidents – like when cars are set on fire – contribute to the sense of insecurity among a number of old people.

Many senior citizens always feel safe in urban environments. At the same time, many old persons have stated that they do not go out in the evenings.

Green environments in the city

There is a need to protect green areas and to create more green areas that are easily accessible and adapted for senior citizens who use walkers and wheelchairs. Level ground is important in ensuring that parks are accessible to many seniors. There is a pronounced desire for more district parks that are easily accessible and which feature content that encourages old people to participate in pleasant exercise.

Research indicates that those people who are most ill and weakest, as well as those who experience stress and discomfort, enjoy the greatest benefits from being in a qualitative and usable green outdoor environment. These are the people who are likewise most sensitive to how environments are designed to allow them to be used^(7, 8, 9). To optimise outdoor environments as a preventive resource, it is important to plan contact with the outdoor environment in four zones. Several effects commence within the building itself and then continue out onto a balcony or terrace. Zone 3 is categorised as a nearby park, courtyard or garden, while Zone 4 is the surroundings in general⁽¹⁰⁾.

Parks and green areas must have a large number of places to sit – both benches and individual seats. Border flower beds, lots of trees and fine green stretches to walk in are all in demand. Many seniors like to sit close to and among plants, and suggestions have been put forward to make small green “mini-oases” in a number of discontinued car parks.

Many seniors enjoy nature areas and forests. They appreciate being able to swim, take walks and pick mushrooms, and to enjoy the peace and quiet of a green area.

One obstacle to ensuring the upkeep of green environments is a lack of funds for maintenance. This results, for example, in park administrators having to de-prioritise grass cutting, clearing and maintenance. Operation and maintenance cost money, and it is important that existing green environments receive the supervision and care they need to assure cared-for, safe, usable and appreciated green urban environments⁽¹¹⁾.

The Trädgårdsföreningen park and Positivparken are two good examples of green spaces with level ground.

The Green Strategy for the City of Gothenburg states there must be a park within 300 metres of housing. For these parks to be usable, the routes to them must be free from physical barriers.



Appreciated and used urban environments and spaces

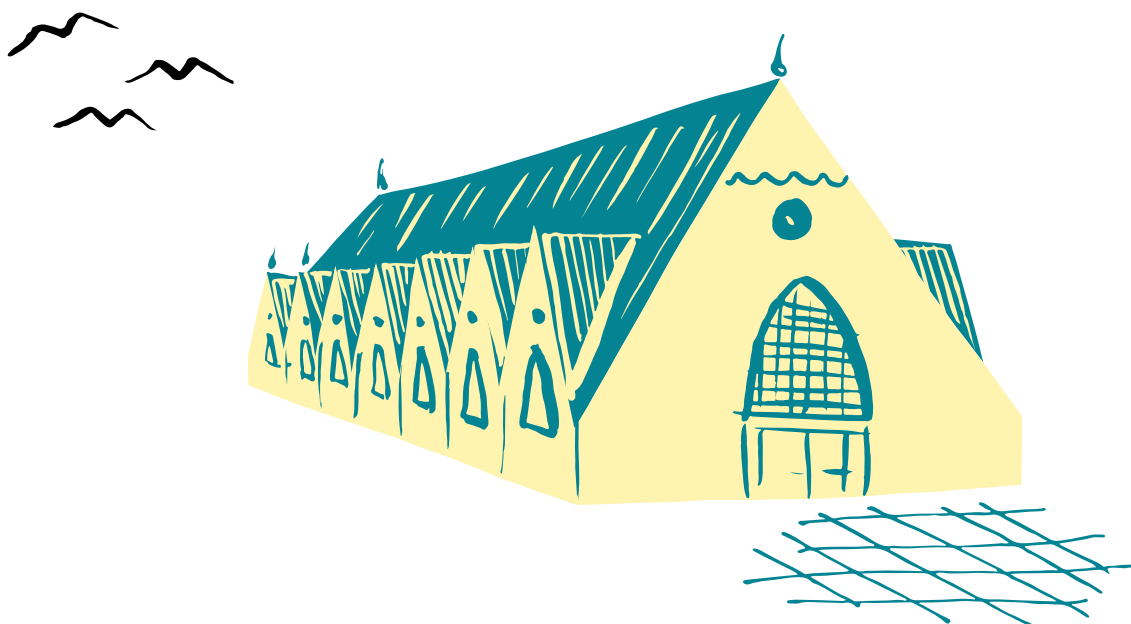
The fact that old people spend the most of their time in their immediate environment⁽¹²⁾ becomes clear when they list the urban environments they use and enjoy. A local perspective often appears on selected places that senior citizens choose to spend time in. Most like their own city district, the square, green areas and district parks in the immediate vicinity. Several specifically mention that their favourite places are the courtyard and the park around the corner. This applies in particular to senior citizens who cannot walk as far and have a major need for usable and qualitative places absolutely nearby.

Examples of the local perspective in Hisingen are Ramberget, the pedestrian path at Eriksberg, the remaining part of the Norra Älvstranden area and Hisingsparken. Local squares mentioned include Selma Lagerlöfs torg, Wieselgrensplatsen, Frölunda Torg, Angered Centrum and Tuve Torg. Many Västra Göteborg residents appreciate the city cliffs.

Many places in the inner city are identified as appreciated urban environments. Respondents state that it is pleasant to watch people on Avenyn, to walk around in Haga, Linné and certain streets in Vallgraven.

Senior residents from all parts of the city enjoy the Slottsskogen. The same applies to the Trädgårdsföreningen park and the Botanical Gardens. The Trädgårdsföreningen is appreciated for its flat land and good access to benches along the pedestrian paths, as well as for the proximity to a café. Respondents state that Slottsskogen need benches in the hilly areas around the animal parks.

Stenpiren pier is another popular place, with respondents highlighting the chance to sit and watch the boats and people, and to have “pensioner coffee”. Many seniors say they enjoy using urban environments where there are good opportunities for taking walks, pedestrian streets and car-free environments.



Urban environments that are avoided

The places seniors tend to avoid are environments considered confusing, where there are a lot of people in a limited space. This makes it difficult to take in all impressions.

Heavily trafficked places such as public transport hubs and urban environments with many cars, as well as places with poor lighting, tunnels, a shortage of places to sit and inaccessible streets are also avoided.

Gustav Adolfs Torg and Kungstorget square are two examples of places several respondents say it is impossible to visit if you use a wheelchair.

The central parts of Gothenburg contain several places that seniors do not like and tend to avoid. Several respondents explain that they avoid the Nordstan area because it is packed with people and confusing. Some avoid the place on account of the risk of pickpockets, theft and previous experience of molestation – and because places to sit are in short supply.

Respondents state that they avoid the place completely or only in the evening. Generally speaking, many seniors state that they avoid the centre of the city – including Brunnsparken, Drottningtorget, Kungstorget and Avenyn – in the evening. Some respondents avoid the centre on account of the ongoing construction work which makes it difficult to get to where you are going. A lot of cycle traffic is another factor that contributes to some people avoiding the city centre areas.

Many people who live in Västra Göteborg and Askim-Frölunda-Högsbo mention that they avoid Frölunda Torg in the evening, and some avoid the square completely. Frölunda Torg is a place mentioned as both a favourite place and a place to avoid. Several people avoid Hjalmar Brantingsplatsen due to the presence of different groups and gangs.



“Cars take up far too much space.”



2. Mobility

Mobility

How mobile we are has an influence on our health, life quality and independence, as it affects our opportunities to be socially active and participate in the life of the community.

The ability to decide for ourselves when we wish to travel by foot or by bicycle, to use a walker, a wheelchair or a mobility scooter, or to use public transport is good for our health.

An age-friendly environment features clear, spatial oriented, even, non-slip and wide pavements that are interlinked and offer regular places to stop and rest.

“It’s a real advantage to have the bus. It’s close by and you can even travel to Östra Sjukhuset hospital on the no. 17.”

How do senior citizens move around in the city?

The most common forms of movement for senior citizens are walking, using public transport or a combination of the two, according to the responses to 152 questionnaires and interviews from other participation activities. Mobility among seniors is therefore often a question of walking or taking public transport.

Of the 152 questionnaire respondents, around 30 percent stated that they drive a car. Almost half of these use their car to do their weekly shop, to travel to their summer cottage, and to visit relatives who live in another location. The others use their car to go to the gym or for other errands. Several respondents stated that they would rather take public transport into the city than drive. There are clear differences regarding age and gender among senior citizens who drive a car. Fully 50 percent of male respondents to the questionnaire stated that they drive a car, while only 18 percent of women did so. In the H70 study, three-quarters of participants state that they drive a car, while among the older participants in the H85 study, less than a third do so⁽¹⁾.

22 percent of respondents to the questionnaire state that they cycle. It is more common to cycle in the summer or when the weather is fine, and most people cycle more in their immediate area. A higher percentage of men than women say they cycle.



Age-friendly mobility in urban environments

An age-friendly environment features clear, spatial oriented, level, non-slip and wide pavements that are interlinked and provide regular places to stop and rest. This increases social interaction and participation in the city⁽²⁾.

A “walkable” city is an age-friendly city

Many respondents think that pedestrians should be prioritised. It is a matter of making the city more “walkable”, for example by establishing more pedestrian streets in the centre and outside the city itself, and by reducing the amount of space for cars. Suggestions have been made for creating a car-free inner city area. Planning a “walkable” city on the basis of the needs of senior pedestrians means that plans for liveable, sustainable and healthy urban environments will be accessible and inclusive for everyone, irrespective of pace or functional variation⁽³⁾. Good walking paths are necessary for the “daily walk”. Pavements need to be wider to allow people to walk using their walking aids.

In order to improve the “walkability” of a given route, greenery such as plants and the like should be kept back from paths and pavements. Public toilets are an incredibly important measure that increases the sense of security and life quality when people are outside. Many respondents highlight the need for public toilets located at “hubs”, popular green areas and parks, as well as close to playgrounds and significant pedestrian and cycling paths. It is important that there be places to sit and rest, especially on and near hills and inclines.

One of the most important aspects of all is the need for smooth, level ground. This entails fixing potholes on paths and removing paving stones. Senior citizens mention that there is a risk of falling where paving stones are missing or uneven, and that it is hard to negotiate such areas, which also become slippery in the rain. It is particularly urgent to improve conditions for people who use walkers and wheelchairs. The need for level ground and ease of access increases with age. This is clearly evidenced in the H70 and H85 studies, where 9 of 10 respondents to the H70 study walk without aids, while 4 of 10 respondents to the H85 study use walking aids outdoors⁽¹⁾.

Research indicates that adapting the physical environment to the needs and preferences of old people is a key factor in preventing falls⁽²⁾

Many senior citizens think it is important to reduce speed and make space for people who move at a slower pace. There is a demand for more calm pedestrian paths in the city, and for a general speed reduction. For example, there is a suggestion for setting the speed limit at 30 km/h in the city and at 50 km/h on approach roads into Gothenburg.

Outdoor furniture around cafés and restaurants need to be separated from walking areas to reduce the risk of tripping or having to walk on the road. Large outdoor service areas that take up a significant part of the pavement are not desirable.

Senior citizens often mention good lighting as one of the most important measures. Paths and pavements need to be well illuminated. Potholes in paths and pavements and poor lighting – combined with the risk of slipping – lead to many unnecessary accidents among old people.

“Being able to hang out in streets and squares in the centre without having to look down to check where you’re putting your feet. Gothenburg is full of cobbles - square stones.”

Read more about places to sit in the section about urban environment.

Feeling safe in traffic and around other people are key issues for senior pedestrians. Old people themselves need and want to participate in planning work to increase understanding and generate insight into how to design “walkable” urban environments⁽²⁾.

Separate lanes for pedestrians and cyclists

The need for clear and separate lanes for pedestrians and cyclists is mentioned extremely often. This is one of the most important measures for improving mobility in the city. Several respondents state that they feel safe when there are no cyclists nearby.

Several emphasise that it is obviously more positive to have a wider path than when pedestrians and cyclists need to use the same narrow area. To facilitate interaction and orientation, it is important to have clearly separated lanes. Continual changes between combined and separate lanes leads to lack of clarity. The H70 study reveals that around 3 out of 10 have minor to measurable difficulties in noting things in their periphery while walking⁽¹⁾, and it generally becomes more difficult and can take longer to take in impressions from your surroundings with advancing age. Many senior citizens have expressed a need to be able to perceive what is happening around them if they are to feel secure.

Prioritising cyclists has sometimes meant that making space for cyclists at the expense of pedestrians. It is a question of what part of the street is to be prioritised for cyclists. Public officials from the Traffic Office explain that it is not equally common to take space from motorised traffic lanes for cycle lanes. The rapid rise in electric cycles makes the issue of separate pedestrian and cycle lanes even more urgent because electric cycles can reach high speeds⁽⁴⁾. Bicycle boulevards would be a good solution.

Many respondents state that in general, individual groups – motorists, pedestrians and cyclists, for example – should study the traffic regulations and learn how all road users can interact with each other. It is a matter of everyone using public spaces trying to keep track of their surroundings on the basis of their own individual circumstances. For improved clarity, orientation and interaction, there is a need to clarify junctions with signs stating who has right of way.

“Old people can’t sprint over crossings.”

Age-friendly crossings

Many respondents state that it is difficult to cross roads in time, and some think that crossing points should ideally have light signals. Several people state they feel unsafe at unmarked crossings and crossings where the traffic lights change too quickly.

The principle behind the timings today is to prioritise public transport and traffic flow. It is possible to implement location-specific solutions in certain places⁽⁴⁾. Good lighting is needed in areas around crossing points. Several people mentioned that the white markings around crossings are slippery, and wondered if anything could be done about this.


Street maintenance

The extent to which streets, pavements and walking paths are maintained is highly important. Extremely often, senior citizens comment on how maintenance of the street environment is handled, and how important it is to have it done well so as to reduce the risk of falls.

It is important to clear snow from pedestrian paths in a way that makes it safe and secure for people to make their way along them. When snow is cleared, it often results in banks being formed on pedestrian paths so many people choose to walk on the cycle lane instead. Some respondents suggest that pedestrian paths need to be shovelled and sanded at the same time as cycle lanes are kept clear of snow. Many senior citizens notice that cycle paths – but not pedestrian paths – are ploughed and salted, and think that pedestrians should be given priority over cyclists. Some comment that it's lucky the cycle lanes are clear of snow because it gives them somewhere to walk.

Several respondents want stricter punishments for property owners who do not take care of anti-slip treatment of the pavements they are responsible for.

One obstacle to good, efficient snow clearing and anti-slip treatment is that the snow is moved around because several different suppliers handle the clearing of pedestrian paths, public transport stops and roads. The different suppliers need to co-ordinate their input to take care of the snow in the best possible way. Otherwise, there is a risk that the snow will simply be shovelled back onto the pedestrian paths, for example⁽⁴⁾. Devoting resources to the operation and maintenance of pedestrian areas – especially winter road maintenance for pedestrian – is socio-economically profitable because accidents involving falls are extremely costly^(5, 6). A 2011 report from the Traffic Office about falls among pedestrians demonstrates that the risk of falls increases dramatically with increasing age. Furthermore, the study reveals that of the 400 accidents involving falls in Gothenburg in the period 2000–09, slipping was a contributory factor to the accident among 66–79-year-olds, while the most common contributory factor among the over 80s was stumbling over uneven surfaces, kerbs, loose or prominent paving stones⁽⁵⁾.



“An age-friendly environment is one where the local authority does its job on streets and squares so I don’t fall over when I’m out for a walk.”

Public transport

Accessible stops need good lighting, contrast markings, pavement guides, shelters for waiting passengers, audio-visual time information, benches with armrests, space to fold out a ramp, and a kerb stone measuring at least 17 cm^(9, 10).

“Disabilities generally increase with age. Among people aged 64–84, around half state that they have one or more disabilities, of whom about a third say they have mobility disabilities⁽⁷⁾.”

An age-friendly city has public transport stops nearby. Several respondents who live in central city districts have mentioned that the proximity to public transport means that they do not need a car. Many respondents highlight the importance of there being regular public transport services and easily accessible public transport stops.

Public transport stops need to be located in places that are easy to reach, without physical barriers such as steep inclines or steps. Several tram stops can only be reached by climbing steep inclines and steps, which makes it difficult to use public transport. Kungssten is one example of a public transport stop with many physical barriers that make it hard to use public transport. Vårväderstorget is another example of a stop that is difficult to access on account of a steep incline and steps.

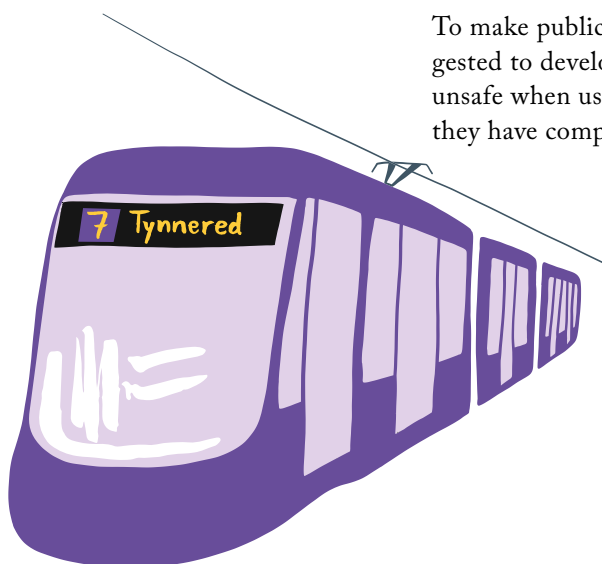
Many seniors experience a long distance to stops, which reduces the accessibility of public transport.

Work is under way in the Västra Götaland Region to ensure that 800 prioritised public transport stops are accessible in 2020. Several stops have been identified in Gothenburg. However, the accessibility work does not apply to the entrance/exit routes to and from the stops, only to the stops themselves⁽⁹⁾.

Vehicles and stops need to have matching designs to accommodate the need to for people to enter buses and trams with walkers and baby carriages. Another aspect of inaccessibility is the lack of snow clearing around stops. Piled up snow banks make it difficult to enter and leave public transport vehicles. Good lighting is another key factor for increased accessibility at stops.

To improve the accessibility of stops, old people with impaired vision have noted that it would be good to have public transport timetables read aloud at the stops. This can be done by using the Västtrafik mobile browser. Travellers can then choose to have the timetables read aloud if their smartphone has voiceover. Other improvements would be to lower the timetables and use a larger font because the current format is hard to read. Respondents also request sharper contrast in displays at stops and on board the vehicle to make them easier for visually impaired people to read.

To make public transport accessible to more senior citizens, it has been suggested to develop a system of “bus buddies”. Many seniors say that they feel unsafe when using public transport late at night, but they feel less insecure if they have company.



Inaccessible trams

Many old trams are still in operation, which means that people who use walkers and other walking aids have to stand and wait for several trams to pass until they find one that they can board and so use the public transport system. It is difficult to lift a walker up into the old tram carriages. It has been suggested that one carriage in the middle of a tram should be accessible so that it is easy to board and alight.


Senior card

It is highly appreciated that the City of Gothenburg offers a senior card that allows free travel on public transport. It gives a higher quality of life, opportunities to participate in social life, and to manage the everyday chores. Several respondents mention that people who retire early and/or for reasons of health also need free travel on public transport.

It was mentioned extremely often that there is a real need to expand the period covered by the senior card to cover the entire day. It was suggested to allow seniors to use the card to travel for healthcare appointments in the period 15:00–18:00 as well. Some senior citizens wondered if it would be possible to expand the senior card to cover neighbouring municipalities as well.

A comparative study of three local authorities in the Västra Götaland Region, which includes Gothenburg, showed that almost all 249 respondents used their senior card. Those seniors with a lower income use their card to a greater extent. Around 66 percent of users have adjusted their travel times to match the periods when the card is valid – this is especially true of people with low incomes⁽¹¹⁾.

Due to the senior card, 24–35 percent of journeys previously made by car are instead made by public transport. Furthermore, the study reveals that people whose primary mode of travel is public transport walk more on a daily basis compared to older people who primarily use car. The use of the senior card may have contributed to users walking more than before. One possible explanation presented in the study is that seniors who use their card have started walking more generally. However, some people's activities – such as shopping – has been transferred from walking or cycling to using public transport. In summary, the study demonstrates that the senior card is a good incentive to increase the number of journeys on public transport. It also shows that physical accessibility and proximity of public transport stops are of crucial importance to whether or not the senior card is used⁽¹¹⁾.



“Free travel is a must for us pensioners – ideally all day. I’ve seen a lot of the city using trams and buses. It’s exciting to discover new places. The ferries from the city centre to Hisingen, for example, are really good.”

“I feel safe when the driver sees me, waits for me and gives me a smile! I also feel safe when the driver pulls in close to the pavement and I can get off safely with my shopping bag on wheels. This often happens on bus route 16. I give the driver a ‘thumbs up’ when I walk past.”

Age-friendly public transport driving

Reduced balance skills is a factor that contributes to feeling insecure about using public transport. The need for a slower speed in public transport is highlighted by the fact that several respondents mention that they are afraid when they need to stamp their ticket. High speeds and buses that make sharp turns can also lead to feelings of insecurity. Many people state that drivers need to pull up closer to the bus/tram stop to avoid the problem of large gaps between the vehicle and the platform. One good example mentioned by several seniors is the drivers who operate bus route 60.

Many respondents mention it is important for buses to start and stop smoothly, and for drivers to wait until they have sat down before leaving the stop. This is important in reducing the risk of falling. A number of seniors mention that it is difficult to board and alight from tram carriages – and to do so before the tram leaves the stop.

To improve driving in public transport, there is the opportunity to use autonomous support. One example is that when a bus approaches its stop, make sure it brakes in a particular way. Västtrafik says it is a matter of demand from the customer. It is important that Västtrafik receive views and opinions that are as specific as possible so as to allow a systematic breakdown and thus instigate change. Information is required about the trip in question, vehicle, time, line and direction.

Strategy for public transport on equal terms and reference group

In the ongoing work to develop public transport for everyone in the region, a strategy for public transport on equal terms has been prepared (reference). What is now needed is to test what is required to show consideration for the various disabilities and grounds for discrimination, with a view to working with universal design. Reference groups are being used today to test technology and design.

There are opportunities to participate in

a reference group for the development of public transport on equal terms. The method used comprises service design and UX (user experience) in order to gain an understanding of what the customer wants to experience⁽¹⁰⁾.

Interaction and consideration in public transport

There is a need to highlight how we interact and show consideration for one another in public transport. For example, many old persons note that seats reserved for senior citizens and people with disabilities are often occupied by passengers who do not need a seat and show little regard for their surroundings.

Suggestions have been received from seniors regarding having announcements played on buses and trams encouraging people to give up seats for people who need them more. They suggest that there could be a sign explaining “How to behave on public transport” which could be put up in several places in buses and trams. Another suggestion is to educate school children about old people’s difficulties when travelling by tram and bus.

Västtrafik plans to make instruction videos about how public transport functions, what customers can expect and what is expected of customers. The intention is to create video clips that can be used to educate customers, assistants, drivers and train hosts. The videos will be made available on the website and used as advertising clips.

Boats have a special significance for many seniors. Älvsnabben is greatly appreciated; people feel safe using it and enjoy the fact that it sails between the islands and the Stenpiren . Archipelago residents would like to see better ferry operations between the islands. Several respondents on Hisingen would like improved mobility options across the river – more bridges, for example.



Flex Line

Flex Line is a popular, specialised transport service that is greatly appreciated. Suggestions made extremely often are to expand the times for the rides. Respondents typically want Flex Line to operate in the evenings and on weekends, as well as around lunchtime, when many activities take place.

Another common improvement suggestion is to change the Flex Line routes. What is needed is more appropriate and relevant routes, rather than having the routes divided up into the city district areas. In some places, such as Södra Skärgården, respondents would like there to be more Flex Line vehicles. There is also a need to disseminate more information about Flex Line so that more people can use the service.

Several respondents mention that they would like there to be a bench at the Flex Line meeting point. In several places, including Axel Dahlströms Torg, people would like there to be a shelter for those waiting for a Flex Line pick-up. Some people start to feel insecure when the Flex Line service drives for what they consider to be too long without stopping on long routes.

Service journeys to develop Flex Line

There is a stated objective of increasing the number of Flex Line journeys over the coming years. In autumn, service staff will look at what needs to be done to increase the journeys, and one idea is to operate the service in a different way within district boundaries. It is a question of how they can develop journey length and the number of journeys, and create Flex Line routes that run exclusively from A to B. They will also be looking at the entire chain: from the application for travel service for the trip, to examining how Flex Line can become a more attractive option for everyone.

One development option involving Flex Line has to do with the city during the construction period, when space in the inner city is set to be reduced for vehicles over the coming 15–20 years. Here, they need to look at how Flex Line could become an alternative type of public transport for travellers who need to pass through the city by car. In the development of Flex Line, they are open to suggestions and new opportunities that match the needs of old people⁽⁴⁾.

Cars and parking

Senior citizens who use cars mention the importance of being able to pay for their parking space without having to use an app or digital bank services. It is currently difficult to park and pay correctly. Many seniors do not have smartphones, which translates into inaccessibility and unnecessary digital exclusion in the context of parking. It is therefore important to ensure it remains possible to pay cash. Some respondents mention that they think that parking fees are expensive for pensioners. Other suggestions that have been made include carpooling with other pensioners – for example, talk to friends about sharing a car to attend activities that are hard to reach using public transport.

Insecurity as a driver is mentioned when it is hard to know which route to take when roads are closed or altered. Several respondents state that they avoid the city centre on account of the frequent and rapid changes. This results in great uncertainty about which lane goes where. Several car drivers experiences that other drivers drive too fast.

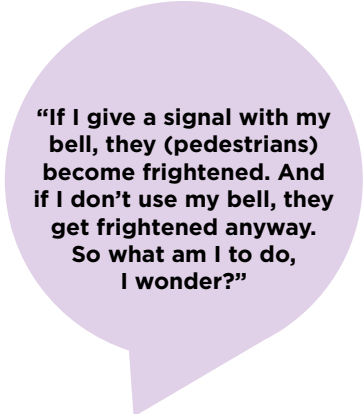
Cycling

Senior citizen cyclists highlight the importance of having a better, clearer and more coherent infrastructure for cycling. Many cycle paths are not interlinked in Gothenburg, and this needs to be improved. For popular and highly trafficked cycle paths, the age-friendliness of Gothenburg's network of cycle paths can be improved by creating more stretches where cyclists can choose their speed.

There is a need for wider cycle lanes, especially with regard to the use of trishaws bikes in the city. One thing that would facilitate cycling for senior citizens is to expand the bike share scheme with electric bikes and trishaws bikes. Respondents appreciate the fact that there are cycle pumps and bike-washes at different locations in the city.

There is a need for education and information that is easy to assimilate. One senior citizen cyclist states that there is some uncertainty regarding how to behave.

The senior citizen cyclists who responded to questions regarding when they feel unsafe mentioned cycling on the approach roads. Some say they feel that a lot of car drivers drive too fast, and that control measures are needed. Another source of insecurity has to do with crossing traffic, and respondents relate that cycle paths are often affected by various works that have nothing to do with cycling. Several respondents think it is safer to cycle in your immediate area, while others state that they do not cycle in the city centre.



“If I give a signal with my bell, they (pedestrians) become frightened. And if I don’t use my bell, they get frightened anyway. So what am I to do, I wonder?”

To protect the mobility of older persons during construction periods

Several comments have to do with how the city is to protect mobility for old people when so much building is going on, and where the building projects involve digging up the city's paved surface. It should be easy for people to make their way through the city when excavation work is under way: as pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users and drivers.

Lundby, for example, possesses experience from cases where construction projects create diversions across areas of grass, steps and the like. Respondents also requested decent signage in connection with roadworks.



3. Housing

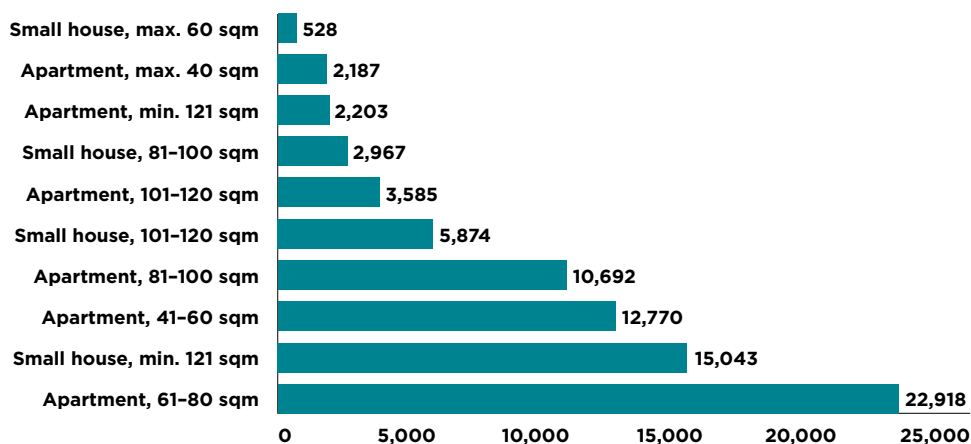
Housing

The housing is a fundamental precondition for security and an active life. Seniors emphasise the importance of functioning housing unit and living environment. Many are unable to afford a newly built apartment. Old people want to be able to choose where and how they would like to live. Seniors need more and better information about the possibilities that exist to improve their living conditions: alternative housing, adapting residential housing and how to apply for rental housing.

How do old people live?

The vast majority of senior Gothenburg citizens live in ordinary housing and enjoy doing so. However, many live in inaccessible housing that do not align with the new needs that arise with the advent of age-related disabilities. In the H70 and H85 studies, 8 out of 10 respondents state that they always feel safe in their residential area. Only 1 out of 10 say that they only feel safe during the day. Most do not think their home is noisy. In contrast, several senior citizens stated on their questionnaires that an important measure would be to improve the air quality in their residential area. Almost all go outside in both summer and winter. There is a marginal difference between respondents to the H70 and H85 studies, in that somewhat fewer from the H85 group walk unaccompanied in both summer and winter⁽¹⁾.

Figure 1. The diagram shows people aged 65+ divided by type of housing and residential area (2, statistics and analysis)



Housing

The vast majority of people over the age of 65 live in a 65 sqm apartment, in a small house larger than 121 sqm, or in an apartment measuring 41–60 sqm. Those seniors who live in the smallest living area – i.e. apartments smaller than 40 sqm – live in the intermediate areas – Centrala Lundby, Södra Centrum, Stigbergstorget and Stora bagaren. The old people who live in the largest homes live in the intermediate areas Södra Västkusten, Stora Askim, Torslanda and Norra Centrum.

Around a quarter of Gothenburg seniors live in an apartment of 61–80 sqm⁽²⁾.

Age in place: does not simply mean continuing to live in your existing home; it can also refer to moving to a more needs-adapted housing in your current immediate area.

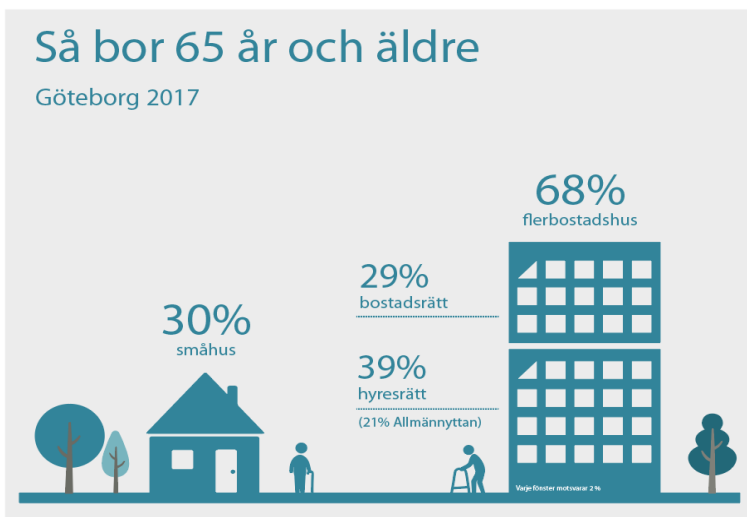
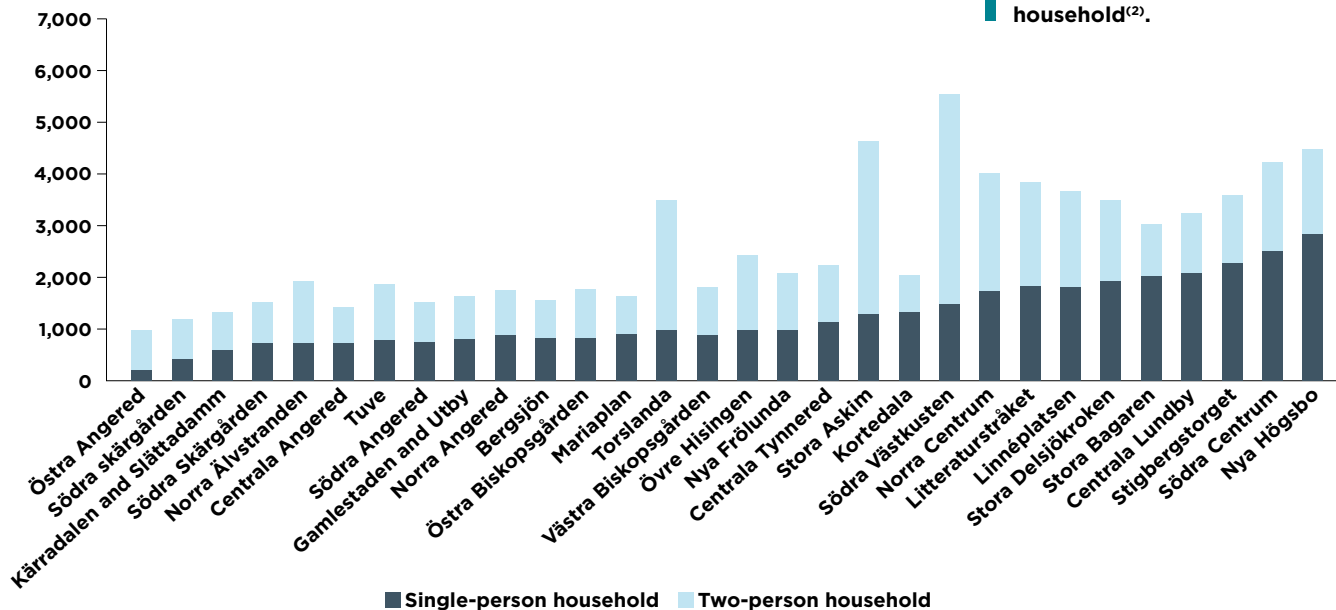


Figure 2. The diagram shows people aged 65+ by type of housing⁽²⁾.

The most common way for senior citizens to live in Gothenburg is either together with another person or in a single-occupant household. Almost half the senior citizens in the City of Gothenburg live with another person. In the intermediate areas Nya Högsbo, Stigbergstorget, Kortedala, Stora Bagaren, Södra Centrum, Centrala Lundby, Mariaplan, Bergsjön, Nya Frölunda and Västra Biskopsgården, it is more common for seniors to live in single-occupant households. However, it is more common to live in two-person households in the intermediate areas Stora Askim, Torslanda, Östra Angered, Norra Älvstranden, Södra Skärgården, Stora Sigfridsplan, Norra Centrum, Centrala Tynnered, Kärradalen and Slättadamm, Litteraturstråket, Tuve and Övre Hisingen.

Figure 3: The diagram shows people aged 65+ divided by single-person and two-person household⁽²⁾.



Gårdsten, Södra Biskopsgården and Masthuggstorget are examples of residential environments that are close to shops and offices, green areas, pharmacies, healthcare centres and places to meet with important services nearby.

Live an independent life in a good residential environment

The residential environment and immediate surroundings are the most important place for many seniors. Research indicates that old people spend the majority of their time in their immediate environment⁽³⁾. A high-quality and accessible residential environment is therefore of the greatest importance to the capacity to live an active, well-functioning everyday life with full participation.

Having residences located close to everyday services such as shops, ATMs, public transport, Flex Line transport, culture venues, meeting places, libraries, etc. is of fundamental importance to an age-friendly city, as is access to green areas for nature experiences and physical activity.

Develop housing in collaboration with seniors

In order to create appropriate and usable residential environments for the senior citizens of the future, the city needs to involve seniors in both development and planning. Many old people are keen to be involved. In ongoing projects involving the city, building on older persons needs as the starting point is highlighted as one of the keys to creating well-designed environments that provide support and contribute to maintaining health and independence⁽⁴⁾. The pilot project *Görbra för äldre*, (Doing good for seniors) which was run in the period 2010–2012 under the leadership of Senior Gothenburg, is a good example, where the involvement of tenants in the project resulted in measures in the fields of community, accessibility and technology that allow people to stay living in their own homes for longer.

An age-friendly planning perspective

With regard to the planning of new housing, old people consider it especially important to ensure proximity to services and communication options. All areas of the new build process must feature physical access solutions for wheelchair users. There are examples of residential housing designed specifically for old people being built on hills, and where there are major differences in height not only to the housing, but also to public transport stops.

Framtiden Byggutveckling has identified development opportunities in including a senior perspective

Framtiden Byggutveckling is currently working to prepare a New Production Strategy and a Shared Standard for the new production of rented housing with tenancy rights. While the senior perspective is not currently a defined priority, it can be an asset in projects to build good residential housing that function for all phases of life. Establishing a reference group of senior citizens to work on a shared standard for new production and future programme requirements is a development opportunity.

With a view to increasing understanding of building projects, it is considered important to hold an introductory meeting with the contractor about the project before construction commences. If necessary, education in various aspects of accessibility may be an option.

There is a need to understand the financial benefits accessibility and other social aspects can provide as a driving force in the project budget, in order to “do things right from the start”⁽⁵⁾.

Planning to facilitating independence for people with cognitive disabilities and dementia disease is an issue that is attracting more and more attention. Some senior citizens propose trying to build dementia-friendly towns as in Denmark and the Netherlands.

Several senior citizens consider it important to build with more variation. High-rise buildings, low-rise buildings and terraces, with detached houses included to ensure variation and dynamism in a given area. It is also important to ensure there is plenty of light, air and green spaces in the residential area.

Age-integrated residential areas

Many people appreciate living in areas with a mixed ages – having the chance to live in areas with both walkers and prams. Some have stated that it is important for different generations to live in the same area so as to reduce the risk of different generations growing apart from one another. Some have shown positive interest in having the city test and develop generation housing and apartment buildings where students live in the same building as residents aged 70+. Some seniors have stated that they want to live in a place with only old people in the same stairwell.

Several want collective or communal housing

There is a clear interest in collective and communal housing, and several respondents see this as a way to deal with the issue of loneliness. Generation housing, cooperative rental housing and collective housing for all ages are also mentioned as being desirable. Some demand was also expressed for separate category housing such as senior housing for LGBTQ people.

Today, there are three non-profit organisations working for collective and communal housing in Gothenburg. The *Boihop* (Live together) association has active seniors among its members, and is currently working on a number of concepts for different ages⁽⁶⁾. The other association, *Under samma tak* (Under the same roof) is constructing a collective apartment building intended for all ages⁽⁷⁾.

For LGBTQ seniors, living in communal housing can mean an extra sense of security and access to an important social network. Gothenburg is home to one such association: *hbtqBo*. Since autumn 2016, this association has been looking into the preconditions and opportunities for creating communal housing for people aged over 45 in Gothenburg⁽⁸⁾.

The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning can facilitate the progress of such forms of housing, for example by providing information, adapting municipal processes and easing the path to financing⁽⁹⁾.

“I like the fact that there is a good mix of ages here; a lot of families with children – I want to see everything from babies to 90-year-olds. It’s really cosy here, and I don’t want to move.”

Informing property owners about – and following up on the use of – state investment support is important with regard to improving accessibility in the existing housing mass.

State investment support can help people continue to remain resident

In many cases, simple measures in the residential setting can significantly improve accessibility and allow people to continue living independently. Implementing these measures in connection with maintenance visits would help keep costs down. The greatest effect for residents as a group can be achieved by measures in entrances, stairwells and outdoor areas.

Investment support is available today for housing for old persons, in connection with

both new builds and renovation projects. A part of this investment support is earmarked for improving accessibility in properties’ shared areas. This includes, for example, support for adapting entrances, stairwells and laundry rooms in buildings with rented apartments and cooperative housing. This support is not linked to housing companies simultaneously having to implement any other measures for old people in the housing⁽¹²⁾.

Supplement with forms of tenure and physically accessible apartments

In residential areas dominated by detached houses, such as the Askim-Frölunda-Högsbo and Västra Göteborg districts, many seniors would like to see the areas supplemented with physically accessible apartments in order to allow people to age in place. The ability to stay living in the same immediate environment and area is significant, as it allows people to maintain their social network, for example.

Several seniors who have had and taken the opportunity to move to an accessible apartment in their detached-house dominant area are doing extremely well.

Renovation and accessibility in existing housing stock: low rents

In order to reduce the need for individual solutions such as housing adaptations, efforts should be made through both renovations and new builds to design housings so that they function for everyone to the greatest extent possible⁽¹⁰⁾.

It is important to make the existing holdings of accommodation more generally accessible – by converting existing apartments into 70+ housing, for example. However, the importance of a reasonable rent to allow people to remain resident after renovations was often mentioned in interviews with seniors living in rented apartments. One of the city's public rental housing companies, *Gårdstensbostäder*, works specifically on renovating carefully so as to keep costs down. For example, when the company renovates bathrooms, the rent is not raised because functioning washbasins and WCs are not replaced⁽¹¹⁾.



The supply of housing is important

The importance of having a sufficiently large supply of appropriate housing is often mentioned by the city's old people. This also includes apartments in nursing homes. Senior citizens feel secure if they know that housing will be available when they need to move for health reasons. It is important to them that they can choose and take control of their own housing situation.

The differences (heterogeneity) of the group of old people, as regards both financial conditions and individual preferences, confirms the need to develop different forms of housing options and opportunities in order to meet future demand.

Many respondents state that more housing in the form of accessibly designed accommodation, 70+ housing, senior housing, nursing homes and 70+ housing with service and support are indicative of an age-friendly city. Many people who have heard of the City of Gothenburg's conversion of 70+ housing in the existing holdings of accommodation would like to see the city working to create more 70+ housing/apartments, and want them to be available in all parts of Gothenburg.

Outdoor environment near the housing

The immediate outdoor environment is highly appreciated and considered significant to the lives of senior citizens. It is important to design an outdoor environment that is readily usable and provides inspiration. Calm, green environments are highlighted as valuable.

Being outdoors in a green environment provides numerous health benefits for old persons⁽¹³⁾. Exposure to daylight and sunlight helps combat osteoporosis, irritation and depression, anxiety and sleep irregularities, which are all common in old people. An active life outdoors also helps old people retain muscle mass and mobility, increases stress tolerance and resistance to infections. It can also help promote social interaction and counteract loneliness⁽¹³⁾.

For many seniors, their daily walk is the most important form of exercise. Research demonstrates that the form the outdoor and immediate environment takes largely affects whether old people acquire and use walking aids. This, in turn, affects their scope of opportunity to remain active and socially engaged⁽¹⁴⁾.

Sense of security in the residential environment

- Good lighting. Both to facilitate orientation and to allow people to see more clearly in the dark.
- Immediate surroundings that are clean and well-kept.
- Good snow clearing and anti-slip measures increase mobility and reduce the risk of falling.
- Measures to promote community and good neighbours.

Sense of insecurity in the residential environment

- Large gangs of young people roaming the residential area can contribute to a sense of insecurity. Several seniors relate that they want to be accompanied by other people if they are to feel safe outdoors.
- Poor lighting.
- Obstacles that hamper mobility and increases the risk of falling, as do inappropriately placed bike racks and bicycles left close to entrances.

On the daily walk route, it is important that there be appropriately designed places to rest.

The courtyard serves as a meeting place for many seniors, and being able to sit outside in the company of others is mentioned as a major need. Several respondents state that more benches and other places to sit are needed in their immediate area. They would also like to see more green spaces bordered by flowers.

Raised potting benches adapted for old people make things easier for seniors interested in gardening.

The importance of having a good, simple waste management facility is mentioned in answers from several seniors from all parts of the city. People who use walkers need to be able to sort and dispose of their refuse for themselves, i.e. without assistance from their home help. The design of waste management stations need to become more age-friendly. One development suggestion from Familjebostäder is for someone in the city to collect old furniture and the like, and then deliver it to Fixotec or for recycling in exactly the same way the city runs routes to collect hazardous waste.

The City of Gothenburg defines senior housing, 70+ housing and communal housing as different types of intermediate housing⁽¹⁶⁾. According to this definition, these types of housing should offer increased opportunities for social interaction with neighbours. This is one of the approaches the city uses to promote community and independence in the residential environment.

Social community in the residential environment is important

Many seniors consider it important to create different forms of meeting places in the residential environment, both indoors and outdoors. This is particularly important for facilitating social interaction and creating good relations with one's neighbours. Involuntary solitude can be viewed as a public health issue. Rising age also increases the risk of loneliness and social isolation.

Several seniors who live in apartment buildings and residential environments with access to a common room state that it is valuable for the social network. In Gårdsten, Biskopsgården, Högsbo and Öster om Heden, tenants make good use of the common room and emphasise how important it is. It is also significant that the room is available free of charge.



It is considered positive that the common room can be used in many different ways. As a suggestion, some seniors have made the point that they can invite young people living in the same area to visit their common room. The groups can get to know one another and participate in shared activities such as playing games together.

Several neighbours state that they originally got to know each other on account of proximity to activities and having a common room where they could meet. Other seniors comment on the lack of a common room in their residential area.

Some seniors have suggested that the collaboration between public housing, private property owners and residential associations in neighbourhoods can provide an opportunity for increasing community in the area. This, in turn, can open up possibilities for co-utilising existing spaces both indoors and out.

Familjebostäder is keen to see activities generated at overarching level. For example, organise coach trips, excursions, courses in how to use a tablet, arrange tours with different service and theme meetings to different residential areas in the city. This would mean that different housing companies and organisations would not need to “reinvent the wheel”, but could draw benefit from one another and work together⁽¹⁵⁾. The activities organised in the Gårdstenbostäder area must be designed for all Gårdsten residents, and they are trying to work in such a way that tenants themselves enjoy organising the activities. Associations can simply rent premises if the event is organised for everyone⁽¹¹⁾.

70+ housing in Gothenburg

The number of 70+ housing units in Gothenburg has increased in recent years on account of a clear political assignment. At the start of 2019 there were 830 70+ apartments in 19 70+ housing units. In addition to these, applications are currently being processed for six new 70+ housing units comprising around 150 apartments⁽¹⁷⁾.

Most 70+ housing units have been established in the existing housing stock. This contributes to improved service and better opportunities for social interaction among the people who live in this housing. 70+ housing is available today in a varying number of apartments in all city districts except Norra Hisingen.

Housing companies are looking into where new 70+ apartments can be converted. In the experience of *Familjebostäder*, a long processing time applies to the establishment of 70+ apartments, and there is a clear need for support in finding creative and effective solutions. There is also a need for more help with the details. Poseidon says that it has several new 70+ apartments in the pipeline, but there are fewer places today suitable for conversion into 70+ apartments^(15,18).

Gårdstensbostäder has its own version of 70+ housing in the form of a senior housing for the 55+ age group. This arose as a desire from senior citizens. They have access to a space where they can organise activities themselves.

Digital peep-hole and stove guard promote security

People who live in the city's 70+ apartments appreciate the digital peep-hole and state they feel more secure with a stove guard.

The Real Estate Office (Fastighetskontoret) has prepared an overview of regulations pertaining to 70+ housing. They suggest discontinuing the start-up subsidy for accessibility and security-promoting measures. Instead, accessibility should be improved by tenants themselves requesting individual adaptations of their housing. Start-up subsidy currently covers measures such as the digital peep-hole.

“It’s great that activities are organised in your immediate area and you can choose whether or not you want to take part.”

The organisation plans to build more apartment buildings and apartments suitable for people aged 55+. Both existing Gårdsten seniors and other senior citizens will have the opportunity to move into them⁽¹¹⁾.

Familjebostäder would like to see the issue of 70+ apartments dealt with centrally to allow players to work together on developing the 70+ apartment concept. Issues may include everything from what type of stove guard the companies can obtain at a good price, to how the rooms themselves are designed.

Security hosts and building managers are highly appreciated by senior citizens, and are considered important in promoting social interaction among the tenants. Gårdstensbostäder has a building manager linked to the senior housing unit who can also arrange conditions for the residents to take part in activities.

Studies of 70+ housing confirm how important the role of the security host is in including all tenants and encouraging participation⁽¹⁹⁾. They are also “knowledge carriers” as a point of contact to the city’s services.

Familjebostäder is wondering if proactive work could play a greater part in the role of the security host.

Definitions of different forms of housing

Ordinary housing – Residences on the ordinary housing market. No age limit.

Intermediate housing – According to the City of Gothenburg definition: senior housing, 70+ housing and communal housing that offers increased opportunities for social interaction with neighbours.

Senior housing – Usual apartments, for renting or as part of a cooperative housing association. The age limit for entitlement to a “senior housing apartment” is usually 55–65. Senior housing apartments are not obliged to implement special accessibility adaptations. Social activities are often offered, and many residential complexes feature community rooms. Some also offer various services.



70+ housing – According to the City of Gothenburg definition: Regular apartments for people aged 70 or more, with access to community rooms. A security host is linked to the housing unit and supports community-promoting activities. The housing can be let as either a rented apartment or a cooperative flat. The housing can either be gathered together or spread among the other apartments in the building. The apartments are to offer good physical accessibility in the housing itself, around the entrance and outside the building.

Communal housing – A communal housing unit is a multi-family building comprising ordinary housing and communal rooms where the residents can prepare meals and eat together, cultivate their interests and spend time together.

Special housing for old people (commonly known as “nursing homes”) – An umbrella term for forms of housing adapted to old people with greater need of care. An assessment by a care administrator is required before someone can move into special housing.

Accessibility in the housing

“Being able to leave and enter” your home is a common response to the question: what is an age-friendly city to you? Being able to leave and enter your housing and apartment building is crucial to social participation, the opportunity to take part in physical activity and to live an independent life. Many seniors state that the opportunity to stay living in their homes is closely tied to physical capacity.

The life quality and health of seniors increases with the opportunity to participate actively – both as regards handling everyday activities in the home and the perception of participation in society. The accessibility of one’s own home has proved to be strongly linked to participation. Being able to carry out chores and activities on one’s own is similarly significant to self-esteem and life quality, and has been shown to have links to life expectancy among people of highly advanced age⁽²⁰⁾.

Many respondents state that automatic door openers have an important role to play in entering and exiting buildings. This applies in particular to people who use walking aids and/or are carrying boxes. Heavy doors are described as inconvenient. A level entrance area with places to sit both indoors and out is also considered important.

Seniors who are aware of the accessibility inventory in the city suggest using it to build lifts in places where many old persons live.

Many seniors state that they will need an accessibility-adapted housing if they are to remain resident in their homes. No doorsteps and wide doorways are examples of recurring suggestions with regard to improving accessibility.

How cabinets are positioned in the apartment is also important to accessibility. Several respondents mention that it is hard for them to reach cabinets at home. Having to climb up on stools and ladders naturally entails a risk of falling.

The lift: an important physical accessibility measure

Things that have been mentioned in interviews is access to a lift. This applies in particular to people who live in multi-residence buildings. Many people today live in apartment buildings constructed before the 1980s, when the majority of multi-residence buildings did not feature lifts.

More Swedish people are living and growing old with dementia in their own homes⁽²¹⁾.

Accessibility and user-friendliness do not only apply to the physical environment. It is important to design housing and the immediate surroundings to make them safe and functional for people with cognitive disabilities. Examples mentioned include living in a residential area that functions well for one partner, but not for the other partner who has Alzheimer's.

Design of the bathroom

The design of the bathroom has a key role to play in independence and in preventing falls. One aspect that improves accessibility, for example, is the possibility of removing the bathtub and installing a shower. Options for a seat and handles in the shower are also important. Another factor that has been mentioned is a raised toilet seat. One suggestion is to start require toilets that are 5 cm higher than standard, with a built-in option to connect arm supports. This is comparable to installing stove protection for children or assuring a minimum height on the balcony railing.

It is also important to choose bathroom materials with care. For example, wet tiles are a contributory factor to falls that can result in death.

Most falls occur in the home

Most falls which can result in serious injury or even death affect old people. A clear majority of accidents occur in the residential environment due to people tripping, stumbling or losing their balance. In Västra Götaland, 7,134 seniors aged 65–85+ were hospitalised on account of falls in 2017⁽²²⁾.

For old people, information and knowledge about steps that can be taken to eliminate risks in their residential environment are extremely important measures, as is information about options for diet and training to help maintain musculature and balance. The preventative work is dependent on collaboration between the municipal authorities and the healthcare sector⁽²³⁾.

The cost to society of falls in 2012 amounted to almost SEK 25 billion, which is higher than for many other types of accident. Even though the cost of preventing falls is significantly lower than for other types of accident, no comprehensive initiatives are being launched to prevent falls⁽²⁴⁾.



Types of accident	Cost of accidents	Cost of prevention
Falls	SEK 24.6 billion	SEK 3.4 billion
Road traffic accidents	SEK 23.51 billion	SEK 43.72 billion
Fire	SEK 6.53 billion	SEK 19 billion
Drowning	SEK 0.8 billion	SEK 4.7 billion

Adapting housing for old people pays off

The average age of people successfully applying for subsidy to adapt their homes in Gothenburg in 2017 was 75⁽²⁵⁾.

A major Swedish-German study reveals that despite significant investments in the short term, adapting housing for old people on a large scale would likely pay dividends in the long term. The costs for dealing with the environmental obstacles that would provide the greatest benefit for old persons aged over 80 in Sweden would be paid off within a year through reduced costs for home help⁽²⁶⁾.

Five environmental obstacles in the home that would provide the greatest benefit if they were removed, in relation to investments in adapting housing for old people in Sweden⁽²⁶⁾:

1. Wall cabinets or storage solutions in the kitchen that are too high
2. Lack of support handles by the shower, bath and/or toilet
3. Entrance door that doesn't stay open, or closes too quickly
4. Insufficient space to manoeuvre near domestic appliances and storage units in the kitchen.
5. High doorsteps and/or steps at entrances

Other important functions in the housing

Old people have poorer blood circulation and therefore need more heat. It is therefore important to be able to adjust the heat in your apartment. How the heat needs to be adjusted is an individual issue, and can also be affected by different illnesses. A low indoor temperature can have an adverse effect on mental capacity and physical stiffness. The capacity to determine heat and cold is also reduced in people suffering from dementia. The Swedish Public Health Institute's recommendations for indoor temperature for sensitive people are 22–24°C⁽²⁷⁾.

It is important to have access to good laundry options. For many seniors, the laundry room is a good place to meet and spend time with neighbours.

Which functions does the housing need to fulfil in a digital world?

With the ongoing digitalisation of society, everyone – including the old – will make new demands on the housing and will have new needs, desires and wishes to fulfil in order to live a comfortable, secure and stimulating life. The residential housing of the future and, in particular, the existing housing stock, will need to be adapted to communication and interaction with the digital world we are already living in, and which is sure to develop even further with more services and products that we can only imagine today.

Lack of knowledge about housing adaptation

Several interviews with seniors make it clear that many people are still unaware of the opportunities that exist for adapting one's housing. There is a major need for information initiatives targeted at old people, explaining the kinds of adaptation you can apply for, and how to submit an application.

“We had the best laundry room in the city, but the building got a new owner that introduced locked doors and an electronic system. What was once a great place to meet is now nothing but a laundry room. We old tenants miss it.”

The home of the future will be a place to live, work and care for one another, writes the consultancy company Kairos Future⁽²⁸⁾. Care activities in an increasingly qualified form will move into the home, and the housing will come to function as a workplace for care staff. Digital solutions for service, security, care follow-up and life quality involve both opportunities and challenges. It must be possible to connect the home to the right broadband so as to ensure the secure functioning of digital solutions essential to life, and committed digital users are often needed. One fundamental issue has to do with how people will get their digital everyday lives to function.

Housing at affordable rent

Extremely often, senior citizens state that they do not have the finance needed to benefit from the supply of newly built accessible apartments. That the city work for building affordable housing is highlighted as important.

Seniors are requesting more 70+ housing at affordable rent.

The 70+ housing that are converted in the existing housing stock are very rarely published online at www.boplats.se. The 70+ housing units published are principally new builds with higher rents than the existing housing options⁽²⁹⁾.

For the 131 70+ apartments published on Boplats in the period January 2018–March 2019, the average monthly rent was SEK 8,368 per apartment⁽²⁹⁾. In the calculation basis the Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs uses for proposals for raising housing subsidy and an elevated guaranteed pension for senior citizens, the average monthly rent for an apartment is SEK 7,000⁽³⁰⁾.

Gårdstensbostäder is attempting to influence developers to think more carefully about the price spectrum. One example would be to build 1-room cooperative housing apartments for SEK 800,000 with a monthly rent of around SEK 2,000⁽¹¹⁾.

Proposal to increase guaranteed pension and housing supplement for pensioners

The Swedish Government and the Pension Group suggest increasing both the housing supplement and guaranteed pension as from 2020.

The basic protection consists of the guaranteed pension, housing benefit and income support for the old, and it is intended to guarantee

a reasonable minimum level for those pensioners who were unable to earn a sufficient income pension. Changes in the basic protection are a part of the pension agreement for raising and securing pensions in the long term⁽³⁰⁾.

Moving or swapping to an accessible accommodation

Several seniors state that it is tough to swap housing. Problems include everything from finding the energy and drive to sell the apartment that you own, or the will to swap your rented home for a more appropriate one. Several respondents think it should be easier to arrange a swap with young people living in more accessible apartments and old people living in less accessible homes. At the same time, there are some seniors who have found it hard to swap with another apartment when they live in a cooperative housing. Support and advice on selling and moving are other needs mentioned by a number of seniors.

On account of the inaccessibility of many homes in the existing housing stock, many people think that seniors should be given preferential access to ground floor flats. A representative of Poseidon says that a development opportunity could exist in altering the priority and allowing old people to jump the queue in order to obtain better accommodation more adapted to their needs⁽¹⁸⁾. A representative of Familjebostäder relates that ground floor apartments are those that have been converted into 70+ apartments as the organisation does not have many buildings with lifts⁽¹⁵⁾.

A number of respondents stated that it is not possible to swap apartments at the property company where they live. Others mention that they have too little queue time to be able to move within the same property company. All public rental housing companies have an internal queue, and work is under way to create a shared “exchange market place” for the entire public rental housing stock⁽¹⁸⁾.

Poseidon ran a project in 2018 to encourage old people to swap their large apartment for a 1- or 2-room apartment in Högsbo. The results are currently being analysed but it is already clear that there is a need for factual knowledge about how to encourage old people to move. Poseidon has noted that it is the practical matters senior citizens need help with⁽¹⁸⁾.

Familjebostäder confirms the image that the move, the rent and the area are more significant than queuing time⁽¹⁵⁾. Seniors themselves also highlight the need for support in the context of moving or swapping housing. Some wanted Boplats to set up a swap site.

Information about housing, housing adaptation and housing supplement

Many respondents highlighted the importance of knowing where, as a senior, you need to go to find consolidated information about housing suitable for seniors. Good, simple contact with a tenant and property manager is considered valuable. There were also requests for information in Finnish and other languages.

Many senior citizens in different parts of the city neither know about Boplats, nor are registered on it. As Boplats primarily issues advertisements and information through digital channels, people who do not use computers have little awareness of Boplats.

Need for accessible housing around the age of 80

The decision to move is often triggered by a decline in health or mobility. The need to live in an accessible housing typically appears around the age of 80-85 in people who age “normally”. People can, however, “acutely” develop a need to enter and exit their home more easily. An inaccessible housing often translates into increased dependency on support from relatives and the local authority. The costs for initiatives from the local authority can, for example, relate to housing adaptation subsidy, home help for assistance with shopping, assistance with laundry, etc.⁽⁸⁾.

Boplats to become a housing agency

Boplats is to become a municipal housing agency after the summer of 2019, in line with a decision taken by the municipal council in 2018. The decision means that all landlords who advertise on boplats.se must comply with the queue time of the housing applicants. It is expected that the Boplats queue fee will increase from SEK 100 to SEK 200.

The fact that targeted information for old people is effective is confirmed by organisations including Boplats, which teamed up with Senior Gothenburg in 2016 to run information initiatives for all Gothenburg residents aged over 65. Following the initiatives, the number of registrations among the over 65s more than doubled from 1,323 people to 2,726⁽²⁹⁾.

Information about housing is a prioritised issue for Boplats, which will be doing more work with visit consultancy for old people, for instance, and will be prioritising the development of a platform containing information for people seeking housing. Housing expos in the various city districts constitute one opportunity to bring information to senior citizens. For Boplats, this is a prioritised issue which it is keen to develop. With the switch to a housing agency, the business will be financed through queue fees, and extra financing will be required in order to carry out additional initiatives⁽²⁹⁾.

As regards support when swapping or moving, Boplats has identified opportunities to support old people to a greater extent, and is interested in working to promote this in partnership with other players in the city. Boplats currently has no swap section, as they are not yet permitted to compete with existing swap sites⁽²⁹⁾.

The differences in income between pensioners who have the lowest income and other members of society have been increasing for a long time. Many seniors do not apply for housing supplement or income support for the old, even though they are entitled to do so. The reason for this is lack of knowledge about the support, or the misconception that they are not entitled to apply⁽³¹⁾.

There is a need for greater awareness of housing supplement and how it can be used so as to make it possible for more old people to afford a newly built apartment. Familjebostäder's landlords inform tenants about housing supplement today. Several of the public rental housing companies say that they can assist in disseminating information about housing supplement, housing adaptations and income support for the old. It is also thought that the housing supplement system needs reforming to allow pensioners on low incomes to stay living in their homes.

Priorities for developing good housing for old people

- Improve accessibility in existing housing
- Establish more new accessible housing at affordable rent
- Facilitate moving and swapping
- Help people remain resident through community, accessibility and new technology
- Collect information about housing for seniors and make it readily available
- Evaluate initiatives and construction projects that have been completed to learn from them
- Need for more research and development to promote smart and accessible housing environments
- Involve old people in research and evaluations⁽¹⁰⁾

4. Social participation and inclusion

Social participation and inclusion

Having the opportunity to take part in leisure activities, social, cultural, political and religious activities, and to feel community in society is important to maintaining good health. It gives you the opportunity to use your skills and knowledge, to gain respect, build self-confidence and establish close relations. It also contributes to a sense of being familiar with your surroundings and staying informed.

According to the WHO, ageism is the most accepted form of discrimination, and is rarely opposed to the same extent as racism or sexism, for example⁽⁴⁾.

Ageism is harmful

It is important to work with positive attitudes to ageing. Negative attitudes associated with cognitive and physical deterioration can result in damaged self-image and affect an individual's perception of his/her actual capacities, which can lead to the person choosing not to participate in various activities⁽¹⁾.

Ageism exists in society today and is comparable to the concept of racism. It entails different prejudices and specific features being linked to a person's age. This leads to age discrimination and can produce harmful consequences for the health and life quality of old people.

The basis for combating ageism involves referring back to basic human rights and the equal value and entitlement everyone enjoys to be seen, heard, confirmed and feel welcome⁽²⁾.

One way to combat ageism in society is to work consciously to expand the image of seniors and what ageing can entail through allowing many different narratives to appear⁽³⁾. Involving old people and using their knowledge in the development of an Age-Friendly city is an appropriate method.

Benefits to society from promoting social participation

Research demonstrates that a social network generates benefits in all phases of life. Positive social relations can reinforce the immune defence system and help lower blood pressure. Researchers also mention that people who have social relations that entail social support, influence and engagement, reinforce aspects such as their self-esteem, self-image, well-being and sense of security. It also provides an opportunity to seek help in times of difficulty⁽¹⁾.

Promoting participation and social community constitutes the core of the City of Gothenburg's work to promote health and prevent illness in seniors. Generally speaking, senior citizens say it is important that the city focus on activities for old people.

Meeting places

Interviews with senior citizens in Gothenburg confirm the importance of having many different meeting places to hang out so as to facilitate social participation. One of the most important measures is thus to assure a good supply of meeting places in the city.

Examples of meeting places highlighted by senior citizens include libraries, cafés, culture centres, local gyms and sports facilities, different community rooms, and the city's own meeting places and meeting points. These places are important in maintaining social networks and the opportunity to make new contacts. A study indicates that what does or does not constitute a meeting place or social arena depends on what the individual identifies as and with⁽¹⁾. During the mapping interviews with the city districts' staff, a discussion was held regarding what a meeting place and meeting point could entail in the future. It could be a question of renting time at often visited meeting places and taking a more ambulatory approach to work – both with assignments and activities that move from place to place, and increasing collaboration with other actors to make contact with more seniors and break down social isolation.

It is important to ensure a good spread of meeting places and meeting points throughout the city. Senior citizens emphasise that there must be meeting places close to where old people live. They must be close to good communication options, easy to find, and located in accessible places away from steps, hills and inclines. Seniors want to see more meeting places, meeting points and “activity centres”.

In cases where meeting places and meeting points are only open once a week, seniors would like to see them open more often. Many seniors would like to see meeting places open in the evening and on weekends as well. Several have highlighted a need for activities at meeting places, meeting points and cultural institutions on long weekends when many people are lonely.

The City of Gothenburg's own meeting places and meeting points are extremely important. The opportunity to enjoy social interaction with other people, and to feel community is a distinguishing feature of a good meeting point or meeting place. Extremely many respondents state that they appreciate the staff who work at the meeting places and meeting points they visit. The staff are knowledgeable and able to provide support and inspiration, to communicate knowledge and ask questions to and offer help when necessary. The staff are also considered important in generating a good atmosphere where everyone feels welcome and included.

Some seniors state that they would like to see meeting places and meeting points established separately from their housing if they are to choose to visit them. If they are in the same building, it is important that they have their own separate entrance from the outside. This is confirmed in the mapping interviews with service staff who work with prevention measures for seniors. In their experience it can be harder to entice younger seniors in particular to a meeting place located in a nursing home than to one located in a culture centre. The meeting place risks being associated with “care for the old”, with which many seniors do not want to identify.



Meeting places can arise in various places, both indoors and out. Pedestrian paths, shared spaces in the residential environment, in parks, in the local square, in the shopping centre or at one of the large second-hand stores in the city are just some of the examples old people mention.

The value of libraries is highlighted extremely often. Libraries are seen as having pleasant and knowledgeable staff and organising good activities. Many seniors express concern about the closure of local libraries. Proximity and ease of access are the main reasons for going to libraries. The library is also an important source of information, and senior citizens appreciate reading printed material and daily newspapers – especially as many consider it expensive to have their own subscriptions. The quiet corners in libraries for reading newspapers are particularly popular and should be protected. One suggestion is to have a separate section for old people in the library’s journal section.

Activities that contribute to social participation

An age-friendly city has a broad range of different activities to accommodate different needs and interests. Many seniors state they consider it important to have a good range of programme activities. This can include everything from small discussion groups and lectures, to dance classes and the opportunity to interact with other cultures.

Living on a small pension means that financial considerations can be an obstacle to participating in society and benefiting from prevention activities. To allow as many people as possible to participate in activities and interact with other people, it is important to ensure that activities are free of charge or available for a small fee.

Some respondents mention the opportunity to go on excursions together. Suggestions have been made that there should be a coordinated function where people can get together to go on excursions and participate in activities.

Another wish mentioned is for meetings between senior citizens in different parts of the city, i.e. the chance to meet other seniors in other districts, or to invite other seniors to visit your own area and meeting place.

The importance of ensuring that activities at meeting places and meeting points also include people with different physical needs was also highlighted in interviews. Disabilities and a lack of energy can constitute an obstacle to visiting a meeting place⁽¹⁾. For example, visually impaired people have a pronounced need to feel active and to participate in different kinds of activities.



Market senior camps

The City of Gothenburg organises camps for seniors at two facilities in Alingsås and Hindås. The objective is to counteract loneliness and encourage activity. The arrangement is intended for people who are aged 65+ and living alone, or senior citizens who are caring for, helping or supporting a close relative. Participants must be able to handle all aspects of their own personal care.

There are staff at the camp 24/7: one cook and two activity leaders. The staff run the programme, and all activities are voluntary. SEK 100 per day includes food, accommodation and activities. The camp arrangement is known to people who hang out at meeting places and meeting points, but the information needs to be disseminated more widely⁽⁵⁾.

Social participation and inclusion

Several people whose native language is not Swedish would also like to have activities in their own language. Some suggest that culture centres could be places where different language groups could meet. The city's activities also need to continue to show consideration for the Finnish administration area, and to offer and develop Finnish-language activities. Moreover, language difficulties can constitute an obstacle to visiting a meeting place or meeting point⁽¹⁾.

Many seniors think it is important that meeting places and meeting points have access to a kitchen to allow people to have coffee or meals together. Several of the city restaurants that are close to a meeting point or a nursing home are highly appreciated.

Information about activities and meeting places

There is a demand for consolidated information about what activities are available to senior citizens, and where and when they can contact them. It has been suggested to publish shared information on the website for all meeting places and meeting points for old people in the city. Several seniors would also like to see the programme distributed in hard copy format.

Seniors who already have a functioning social network say that they do not visit meeting places themselves. However, knowing that they exist and what they have to offer promotes a sense of security for the day when the need arises.

Working norm-critically to include more people

The report entitled *Normbrytande liv i Göteborg: Lägesrapport om hbtq-personers livsvillkor* ("Norm-breaking life in Gothenburg: Status report on the life conditions of LGBTQ persons") highlights the importance of physical meeting places for LGBTQ persons – such as culture centres and seniors' meeting places – on account of their higher risk of living an isolated life at an advanced age⁽⁶⁾. At present, there are no such meeting places under the auspices of the city itself.

Several city districts, including Örgryte-Härlanda, Centrum and Lundby are working in a structured manner to team up with staff and seniors to hold a dialogue about how the city's meeting places and meeting points can do more to make more people feel welcome. An important part of this project is to work closely with seniors who identify as LGBTQ persons. Together, the team arranges film screenings, lectures and education opportunities where the subsequent dialogue and conversation between staff and seniors is an important part of the work.

HBT-seniorerna is the name of a network linked to RFSL Gothenburg. The network is a meeting place and pressure group for safeguarding the interests of old LGBTQ persons in society. Examples of key issues include: forms of housing where life experiences are not squeezed out, LGBTQ certification (RFSL) and LGBTQ diplomas (VRG) for health and healthcare centres, a buddy programme with an LGBTQ perspective, and a trustee function for LGBTQ persons⁽⁷⁾.

Norm-conscious work method

The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare highlights the City of Gothenburg as a good example for the pilot model for working with LGBTQ issues targeted at staff who work with old people in nursing homes, in home help schemes and in activities intended to promote health and prevention⁽⁸⁾.

The model has been trialled in the city districts of Centrum, Lundby, Majorna-Linné and Norra Hisingen. In the final report and evaluation of the pilot model, the development managers in Human Rights and Public Health highlight the need for ownership in order to continue the work⁽⁹⁾.

More men when men are leading groups

The Centrum district has implemented targeted initiatives that resulted in an increase in the number of male participants at meeting places and meeting points. The emphasis is on conversation and interest groups. According to the staff, one of the success factors is to have male staff and old men as the leaders of the groups. The majority of new participants live alone.

Reaching more men

Men are often under-represented at municipal meeting points for old people.

This is apparent both in surveys of Gothenburg and national surveys. The fact that women live longer than men and therefore live alone for longer is not sufficient as an explanation for such a lack of male participants^(10, 11). Explanations may be found in the range of activities on offer, and in the fact that the participants are overwhelmingly women, which can result in men feeling less included. The Mariaträffen meeting place in Majorna-Linné stands out from the other municipal meeting places in the city in that the people who spend time there are divided roughly 50/50 between men and women. One success factor here is that men can come without any reason and simply spend time there; in addition, men came to this meeting place from the start, which may have led more men to identify with the meeting place. Mariaträffen is not a specifically senior meeting place either, which means that visitors do not have to self-define as seniors to go there.

In some places where targeted meetings for men are arranged, seniors express a desire for the content of the meetings to be developed and better thought-out, they would also like to see the quality improve and the content appeal to more people. Some city districts have made special efforts to inventory and clarify old men's needs and interests to include more men in the work to promote health and prevention^(12, 13).

Accessible premises are important to active participation in associations

For many seniors, participating in associations constitutes an important meeting place, where they have the chance to spend time together, and where they can make use of their own resources, experience and knowledge. It is considered extremely important that the city promote and support opportunities for old people to be active and engaged. Many respondents express concern that the city may cut down on their opportunities to participate in associations.

Access to suitable premises in the immediate vicinity is a factor highlighted as an important facilitator, allowing people to remain active up to an advanced age. It is important that there be premises in the immediate area where people can meet at a low cost or free of charge. Different size premises need to be available, and it must be possible to rent them for individual events.

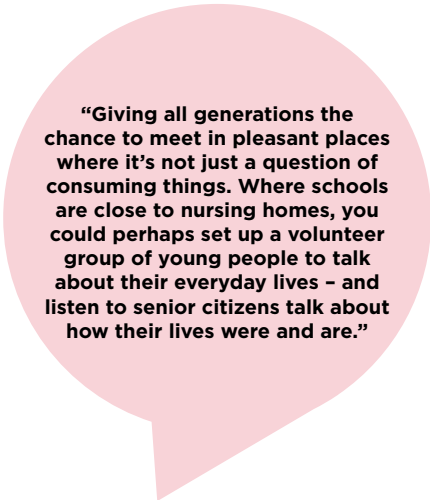
Suggestions from seniors active in associations are that when access to existing premises is withdrawn, they should be referred to other suitable premises nearby. Many seniors cannot travel too far to participate in association activities. There is thus a risk that social interaction and participation as seniors may disappear.

Facilitating meetings between generations and combating age segregation


Meetings between generations are one way to build bridges between generations, generate trust and a sense of security in society, and reduce ageism and generation gaps. Today, all city districts and some administration departments work with meetings between generations. Several service staff at the city confirm that the “all age perspective” is gaining ground. This provides openings for different forms of development work to diverge the ignored segregation issue: age segregation.

Many old people would like to see meeting places where generations can meet. It is considered valuable to have different generations meet each other, learn from one another and ensure that no-one feels left out on account of age. Meeting places where different generations and ages can interact and enjoy activities together provide the city with the opportunity to implement prevention activities for senior citizens who do not identify with meeting places and meeting points for the old.


At the same time, some old persons say they only want to visit meeting points for the old. Some seniors think it is important that there be “own time” for senior citizens at the meeting places. On the other hand, there may be certain activities that can be done together.



“Giving all generations the chance to meet in pleasant places where it’s not just a question of consuming things. Where schools are close to nursing homes, you could perhaps set up a volunteer group of young people to talk about their everyday lives – and listen to senior citizens talk about how their lives were and are.”



“The opportunity for meetings between generations is crucial to combating ageism.”



“Greater potential than we see today. Perhaps pensioners’ organisations could be catalysts?”

When old people’s opportunities to participate and be active are protected appropriately, this naturally benefits the old themselves, as well as other groups such as children and young people. “Seniors in schools” in the central city district⁽¹⁴⁾.

Having the opportunity to take part in cultural activities

Many seniors emphasise that culture is important. Here, respondents would like to see the city increasing accessibility and opportunities to participate in cultural activities. It is important that there be a varied range of activities that are free of charge, as there are many pensioners whose pensions are so small that they are officially classified as poor. Several have mentioned they are sad that they cannot take part in culture as much as they could before they had to live on a pension.

The city programme for free entrance to museums, other cultural institutions and swimming halls is appreciated and considered a factor that makes Gothenburg age-friendly. Several seniors express concern that their free entrance to swimming centres and museums will be withdrawn. Other schemes that are appreciated include pensioner discounts for the Opera and other cultural institutions.

An article was recently published based on female participants whose lives in Gothenburg had been traced over a period of 44 years, demonstrating that cultural activities can reduce the risk of dementia. These activities can be everything from visiting the theatre and art exhibitions, to more active options such as singing in a choir, playing an instrument, listening to music and reading a book⁽¹⁵⁾. Initiatives in the field of culture are just as important to mental health as initiatives in the area of physical activity, and can result in major socio-economic savings.

Some respondents highlighted a need for consolidated information about offers for pensioners at different cultural installations. Some also suggested that Liseberg could offer pensioners free admission in the same way as Gröna Lund.



Utilize old people's resources for an Age-Friendly Gothenburg

Senior citizens today are more active than old people were a few decades ago; they also live longer and stay healthier. In the H70 and H85 studies at AgeCap, University of Gothenburg, more than 6 of 10 respondents state they think it's hard to find time for everything. Among the H70 participants, fewer than half say they find it hard to make time for everything⁽¹⁶⁾. This means that it is important to understand how seniors today want to become involved and make use of their time so as to utilize people's resources.

Volunteer programmes are an example of how to use old people's resources and skills. A number of old people mention that volunteering has helped them discover new sides of themselves, develop new interests and meet new people.

One of the most important issues highlighted by senior citizens is how the city reaches out to involuntarily alone. Seniors suggest volunteering as a good way to support old people who are on their own and want to get involved in activities. Suggestions were put forward for volunteers as company in different activities, as partners on walks and as someone to prepare meals with.

One particular initiative mentioned from several sides is to spread information about the Red Cross "Buddy Programme". Some have highlighted the need for a buddy programme for different language groups.

Many respondents stated they would like to contribute to Gothenburg becoming more age-friendly by volunteering, helping out, continuing their non-profit work and getting actively involved in the work of associations. Several mention that they would like to contribute through their involvement in pensioners' organisations. Some say that they can help distribute information and lend a hand with activities. Others can contribute by collecting wishes from members of pensioners' organisations. Several mention that they can simply be positive, spread happiness and pass on information about what's happening in the city.

Other seniors are keen to contribute by taking part in activities, discussions and meetings, or by sharing opinions and answering surveys. Some comment that they can make suggestions for activities, act as a sounding board and make themselves available for assignments.

In Gothenburg, the Red Cross operates the "Buddy Programme" (Väntjänsten), where volunteers offer to provide company for lonely people. The scheme offers home visits in both private housing and nursing homes. The visits can involve taking coffee together, having a chat, going for a walk or reading newspapers.

All volunteers complete a short course in the Red Cross ideology. When the visits have started, Väntjänsten always performs follow-up, and asks both parties how they feel and how they think the arrangement is working out. The same volunteer visits the same person to ensure continuity^(17, 18).



5. Social support and service

Social support and service

Social support and service, close by and designed for accessibility have an impact on the capacity of senior citizens to remain in good health and to look after themselves.

Good interaction is the cornerstone of age-friendly social support and service.

Proximity to and accessibility of service

When asked to describe what an age-friendly city is, many senior citizens mention proximity to general stores, health centres, cafés, libraries, meeting places, ATMs, swimming pools and wellness centres.

Most important of all is to have general stores, health centres and pharmacies in the immediate vicinity, and many seniors highlight having ATMs, libraries and meeting places nearby as well. Some also think it is important to have cafés and other eateries close by, along with waste management facilities, parcel service, culture centres, hair-dressers and a visible police presence.

Services that may be farther away include wellness centres, cinemas and theatres, Systembolaget outlets, shopping centres, florists, shoe and clothing shops and religious meeting places.

When service options in the immediate vicinity are limited, it is even more important to have easy access to a bus and tram stop, or a Flex Line pick-up point. In that way, the city can enable individuals to make use of a wider range of services.



Local squares are significant

Many senior citizens mention that it is particularly important to reinforce and protect local squares. Living close to everyday shops also eliminates the need for many seniors to use their cars. Walking to the shops to buy food is a social activity. Grocer's shops become a natural meeting point and a reason to leave the house. Many of these shops also offer the chance to meet for coffee, which is a cheaper option than visiting a café for many seniors.

A decline in service level in the local squares has major consequences for senior citizens, who find it harder to travel farther to use the services they need.

Interaction

Interaction is the alpha and omega of social support and service. Poor interaction can result in old persons feeling they are not welcome, becoming less confident and finally choosing not to utilise the service. Needs mentioned in interviews with the city's service staff include knowledge about dementia, minorities' rights, cultural skills and norm awareness both within the city's own businesses and in contact with the health service.

The City of Gothenburg's pilot model for a norm-aware work method is one way to assure the quality of the city's services such that city staff and managers are better able to interact with everyone as individuals, especially when it comes to meeting the needs of old LGBTQ persons⁽¹⁾. It is essential that the city continue to develop and disseminate a norm-aware work method in order to ensure that all senior citizens experience good interaction, and to generate confidence in the services supplied by the city.


Important to be able to pay cash

The importance of there being ATMs in the area – and of your feeling safe when withdrawing cash – is a topic that arises in numerous interviews. Only being able to pay electronically or with a payment card excludes a lot of senior citizens, given that they do not all use such means of payment.

It is important that it continue to be possible to purchase tickets “manually” – otherwise many people will be prevented from cultivating their interests. Not being able to pay cash is also viewed as discriminatory.

Design and furnishing of shops and offices

It is important for shops and offices to present an age-friendly design. The way furniture and goods are positioned is important in making it easy for old people to find what they need and make their way around the premises. If food shops continually change their layout, it becomes harder for customers to find the various goods.



“The switch to digital payment methods is going faster and faster right now.”

“Frölunda Torg needs more places to sit, like fold-out seats near shop entrances so that I can take off and put on my cleats.”

In the oldest age group - 80 years or older - nine out of ten injuries are caused by a fall. Most falls among old people occur at home or in connection with the home. The cost to society of falls is higher than for other types of accidents; at the same time, this is the category that costs least to prevent⁽³⁾.

WHO (2016) emphasises the importance of society having comprehensive fall strategies and preventative measures targeted at seniors, given that falls are extremely costly to society and painful for the individual. The strategies should comprise both research and assessment of risk factors and preventative measures⁽⁴⁾.

Some respondents mention that there should be a special checkout for people who find it hard to spend a long time queuing up, as well as more space around the checkouts in food shops. There should be sufficient space to accommodate customers who use walkers, wheelchairs and mobility scooters. Several respondents state that there is a shortage of places to sit both inside and outside shops and service facilities.

The city’s buildings and other facilities should be accessible to everyone, irrespective of disability. One example highlighted is that people with disabilities can find it hard to climb onto the benches in the city sauna facilities.

Prevention service

Senior citizens highlight the prevention activities in the various city districts as particularly valuable, partly because they provide the opportunity for activity and social interaction, as well as access to community information. Moreover, the different city districts work proactively to reach out to senior citizens and break down isolation.

Staff at the different meeting points are often mentioned in positive terms. Several senior citizens consider one of the most important issues in the field of social support and service to be maintaining and developing the various meeting places and venues in the city.

Research studies demonstrate that stimulating activity and shared social interaction helps prevent or postpone the need for care and support. There are therefore multiple reasons for the city to focus on prevention initiatives targeted at seniors⁽²⁾.

The “Fixer service” is highly appreciated. It is a service whereby people over the age of 67 can access practical assistance in their homes to prevent falls. For example, senior citizens can get help with replacing light bulbs, fitting fire alarms and having things brought down from the attic. Seniors appreciate being able to receive information from – and interacting with – service staff working with the Fixer service. In addition, this service reaches people who would not otherwise make contact with the local authority, and can help people to stay living in their own homes.

A number of senior citizens have noted that the Fixer service should be marketed more clearly to provide more people with information about the service. Some have indicated that they need help with light gardening work, and wonder if this can be included in the Fixer service. Opportunities to develop the Fixer service have to do with need rather than age being the defining factor. One suggestion is that instead of having one Fixer service per city district, all services should be combined centrally so that resources can be distributed on the basis of need. The WHO recommends working with fall prevention programmes for people particularly at risk of suffering falls. For example, this could involve scheduling home visits to assess risks in the home environment and provide preventative advice, or offering balance and strength training programmes⁽³⁾.

The local display settings for simple everyday products need to be updated, and it should be possible to mobilise them. Another suggestion from service staff is for the Fixer service to offer digital support.

The needs of relatives

Several old people mention support from relatives as an important issue in their lives. Drawing on the knowledge and commitment relatives possess will make it possible to improve and adapt the services and support provided. Many relatives would like to see the city establish a Relative Council.

Another need that appeared in a workshop involving relatives was the need for short-term placements for dementia patients so as to provide a respite for relatives.

A study conducted of the GR municipalities' prevention work in 2016 reveals that a challenge facing the local authorities is that when old people start to develop vulnerabilities, they need access to support in retaining their capabilities and easing the burden on their relatives. Without support from relatives, many people would have needed to seek more help from the local authority, and at an earlier stage⁽⁵⁾.

Advisory service

There is a need for an advisory service that senior citizens can turn to for help with banking transactions and contact with the authorities, etc. given that not everyone has a friend or relative they trust. The city does offer a budget advisory service, but it needs to be marketed more clearly. It is also a matter of being able to access advice via a central unit people can turn to for answers and assistance with specific tasks.

Make services accessible


Making existing services available is a question of user-friendliness. It should be easy to access services and make contact with the authorities by phone. Issues that make telephone contact difficult include the need to use phone buttons to select the relevant task area, combined with the often protracted time spent waiting in a telephone queue.

Apps for toilets and parking exclude a large number of senior citizens, preventing them from making use of existing services.

There are suggestions for offering a kind of "everyday assistance" without excessive bureaucracy. The need to fill in all kinds of forms written in complicated language is described as both tiring and off-putting. It would also be good to have volunteers available to provide assistance – during hospital visits and phone calls, too.

In order to make the city's services available, it is necessary to provide information about the services the city offers. Interviews with senior citizens revealed questions including: Where do I apply for home help? Can I afford to move into a nursing home? There seems to be a low level of awareness of the service provided by the city, how it works, what people are entitled to, and what they can expect. For additional details, see the following chapter – Information and communication.

Making service available also has to do with financial accessibility. Senior citizens appreciate free admission to swimming centres and sports facilities, and this is considered to be an important social support used by many.



"I'd rather avoid having to fill in all the forms here, there and everywhere! It's tiring and off-putting!"

“To help pensioners integrate with the digital society, tablets should be given out freely like cleats are today.”

Courses in digital technology for seniors

There is a major need for education in digital technology for seniors. The City of Gothenburg needs to continue courses on the internet and digital technology. These courses should also be adapted to reach additional target groups such as people with dementia and other cognitive disabilities. Senior citizens have commented that they would be happy to help teach other seniors. Many of them already do so today at the city meeting points and through the “Seniornet” association, etc.

Senior citizens view meeting points and libraries as good arenas for accessing advice about and education in digitisation. The target group considers it important that it should not cost money to get help with emailing or performing internet searches.



New report on digital exclusion:

- In a recently published report⁽⁶⁾, the Swedish Agency for Participation highlights the fact that there are groups at risk of experiencing digital exclusion. These groups comprise people aged over 74, people born in countries other than Sweden, people with a low level of education, and people with various disabilities. People with cognitive disabilities are those who experience greatest difficulty using the internet⁽⁷⁾.
- There are several reasons why people experience digital exclusion, even though the technology is intended to facilitate their everyday lives. Many people lack support to help them exploit the full potential of the digital technology. Another reason is that the technical products and services are not designed on the basis of different people’s needs and preconditions.
- It is important that both the players who develop digital product and those who introduce digital technology in various services learn from the needs of different users so as to develop user-friendliness and support utilisation⁽⁶⁾.

6. Information and communication

Information and communication

In an age-friendly city, everyone knows where to find information about the city's services. The information is straightforward and accessible. It is easy to communicate with the city through the channels senior citizens typically use. The services are communicated in a way that stimulates curiosity, emotions and interest. Old people experience that "the services are there for me" and it is clear that the local authority is the issuer.

Low awareness of the city's services

Many old people are unaware of the city's full range of municipal services for senior citizens. Most are familiar with the home help and nursing home offers, but knowledge of health-promoting services is limited⁽¹⁾. The city contact centre receives few enquiries about these services. The only service that is reasonably well-known is the Fixer service.



Ageing – an unwanted status

Unwillingness to accept ageing is one of the reasons given by the interview subjects why they fail to seek out information about preventative services such as meeting points, activities and transport⁽²⁾.

As a result of senior citizens failing to stay informed about the services the city provides for them, they often find themselves thrown head-first into the business of the local authority when a serious incident occurs. It is important to change the information about the city's range of services so that seniors feel that they are "there for me" and easy to find.

Jungle telegraph – source of information

Many pensioners have a rich social network. They share experience and listen to what others have seen and done. Experience from friends and acquaintances, as well as what they see on TV, hear on the radio and read in the papers, often forms the basis of the expectations an individual has or develops with regard to the services offered by the local authority. People with small contact networks are therefore particularly vulnerable⁽¹⁾.

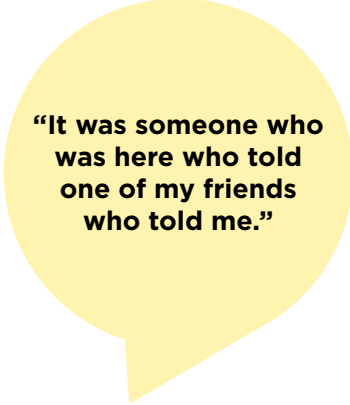
Information needs to come in the right situation

Senior citizens must be motivated to seek out information, and need to be able to relate to it and understand that a given service is or may become relevant to them.

The local authority must either reach the target group when the information is relevant and the old person can "take it on board", or provide information that is easy to file and return to when the senior citizen needs the knowledge. The information must be targeted. The interview subjects are happy to have the local authority collect contact details with a view to communicating information about activities on the basis of personal interests, by email or – for those who prefer – by standard post⁽¹⁾.

Following issues that affect seniors in the media

Old people build their perception of the services available from the local authority on the basis of what they read or hear in the media⁽²⁾. The media can thus contribute to creating an erroneous image of what the city's services for seniors entail.



"It was someone who was here who told one of my friends who told me."

Being aware of the local authority's services in advance makes the information more relevant when it is needed.

Old people express a desire to have, in advance, some kind of general education about and fundamental understanding of the municipal range of services, and how/where they can find support. This would make it easier for them when they have to act.

Knowledge is required regarding the following:

- **That** a service exists.
- **When** it is relevant.
- **What** the service entails.
- **How** people can utilise or apply for it.
- **Who** they need to contact⁽²⁾.

“Old people need mail.”

“At some point, I got a brochure listing all the meeting points. Where they were, and their phone numbers. It was great! I’m wondering if it came by post ...”

The information must be accessible in the right setting and format

If old people are to obtain information, it must be easily accessible; i.e. it must be available in the settings and the channels the target group visits. In order to reach the heterogeneous group of seniors, the city needs to use a wide variety of methods and channels. For example, it may involve providing oral or printed information at information meetings, or running advertisements in digital channels rather than on the city website.

Many senior citizens consider it important to be able to access societal information free of charge. It is important to make sure that all people – irrespective of their level of disability and/or other barriers such as language difficulties or illiteracy – have access to equal information.

Oral communication is crucial to people who are illiterate, where the issue is quite simply being able to contact – and be contacted by – the authorities. Oral communication in multiple languages is also crucial to making sure the information is delivered. The city can use informal leaders to carry the message and information to citizens. One good example are the Health Guides at the “Hälsoteket” (Health Library) in Östra Göteborg and Angered. Experience shows that oral information is important in the Bergsjön region, for instance, where many people do not read information they receive in Swedish.

Several respondents who do not speak fluent Swedish mention that a lot of service staff speak too fast in Swedish on the telephone and in one-to-one meetings, and that they can be hard to understand. In such cases, it is useful to have printed material that the old person can ask a friend or relative to help them read. The information should be available to read in printed format at the local authority offices, and at the city library, meeting points, citizens’ offices, culture centres, etc. A need is also progressively arising for information in the languages of the national minorities and other major languages other than Swedish.

One example of fragmented information is the apps that only present one type of information. Many senior citizens find it complicated and confusing to have one app for local public transport, one for Flex Line transport, one for swimming pools, one for toilets, etc. At the same time, there is great potential in the app format – having a targeted and limited volume of information, for instance – and perhaps most importantly of all, the target group can be given information about what is happening in the immediate area, which is a need highlighted in multiple interviews⁽¹⁾.

Here are some tips from seniors to the local authority:

- A good way to provide information is through pensioners’ organisations, Swedish Home-owners’ Association, cooperative housing associations and tenants’ associations.
- Advertisements in free newspapers.
- Service staff can come over and talk about what’s on – ideally at a meeting place close to where old people live and spend their time.
- Send information by SMS.
- Information via the internet.
- Senior citizens appreciate mail-shots and age-specific offers, such as receiving a free Västtrafik public transport card on turning 65. Printed information is often saved for later use. Material sent to the home address is appreciated at a rate of from once a month to twice a year – it varies from person to person.
- An apolitical information channel on TV.
- Put information up in health centres, pharmacies, squares, supermarkets, culture centres and other places visited by old people. Several senior citizens make the point that this method would make it possible to reach a lot of people who live on their own.
- One senior citizen suggests that people can establish networks where they can call people in their area every two days to pass on information.

Seniors want a simple overview so they can see the big picture

Many seniors express a need for information about all the services the local authority offers, gathered together in a single place. For such an overview to be useful to seniors, it should be as complete as possible, i.e. it should also contain information about services provided by other operators.

Having a complete set of information in a single place will also make it easier for users to find out whom to contact to express an opinion or ask a question. The contact centre phone line is highly appreciated by people who know the number. A digital channel with direct response would also find favour. Several respondents mention the need for easier access by phone, as they find it hard to use the push-button menus. Today, users state that they find it hard simply to reach an actual person to have their questions answered and that telephone queues can be long.

There is a demand for a website where Gothenburg citizens can access all information of interest to pensioners. For example, a monthly programme per meeting place, pensioner discounts and relative support.

Several respondents state that they would like a phone book. This is clearly a need as some seniors have saved old phone books that they still use today.

Two clear examples of good sources of straightforward information were the now discontinued newspapers *Seniorliv i Örgryte-Härlanda* (Senior life in Örgryte-Härlanda) and *Vårt Göteborg* (Our Gothenburg).

How can information be made more age-friendly?

Seniors say it is important that the information be concise, easy to read, and written in a large font with wide line spacing. Some old people think that best approach is to write easy-to-read Swedish using short sentences and simple words. The local authority should also avoid using foreign words such as “app”, “Swish” and “workshop”. The layout must also be clear – i.e. do not write text on illustrations or photos – and must feature straightforward contact details.

“A phone book for seniors would have been helpful.”

“The information should be less bureaucratic. Can’t you write it in a way we can understand?”



Which information and communication channels do senior citizens use?

In the H70 studies, almost 9 out of 10 respondents state that they read the newspapers and use the internet daily. In the H85 studies, the figure is approximately 8 out of 10 who read newspapers daily, but barely 2 out of 10 use the internet daily.

The H70 and H85 studies from AgeCap at the University of Gothenburg, are longitudinal, population-based studies of old people in Gothenburg that have been run since 1971. The H70 studies are based on around 1,200 Gothenburg residents born in 1944. The H85 studies are based on approx. 490 Gothenburg residents born in 1930.

Public information on the internet is less important to the oldest age groups. Fully 58% of the oldest respondents do not use the internet to read public information from the local authority and council. The corresponding figure for the 66–75 age group is 21%.

In responses to open questions, more than 200 senior citizens have stated the information and communication channels they use. TV, the P4 radio station, various free local papers, national dailies (especially GP) and conversations with other people are the most popular channels by far. Data from the latest H70 (people born in 1944) and H85 (people born in 1930) population studies indicate that the most commonly used information channels are TV, national dailies and radio. More than 9 out of 10 respondents in both the H70 and H85 studies watch TV daily. Around 9 out of 10 participating seniors in the H70 study read one or more daily newspapers every day, compared to 8 out of 10 seniors in the H85 study. Radio is the third-most popular daily information channel. Almost 8 out of 10 seniors born in 1944 listen to the radio, while the corresponding figure among people born in 1930 is closer to 7 out of 10⁽⁴⁾.

In interviews and questionnaire responses, it is clear that major differences exist in the use of the internet and digital technology among senior citizens in Gothenburg – both in how they use it and how often. Many respondents state that they use computers, smartphones, telephones and the internet to communicate and to obtain information. Some responded that they use tablets and social media such as Facebook and Instagram.

Data from the most recent H70 study show that the vast majority of respondents use the internet and that around two-thirds use it daily or several times per day. About one-tenth responded that they never use a computer or the internet. Much internet use is devoted to seeking information. Otherwise, the internet is commonly used to answer emails and for online banking, followed by reading newspapers and blogs, watching videos, participating in social media, other, shopping, Skype, games, work and writing own blogs⁽⁴⁾.

The H85 studies revealed a much lower proportion who use the internet, computers and tablets compared to the senior respondents in H70. Around 6 out of 10 never use the internet, computers or tablets, compared to one-tenth of H70 respondents.

Among the one-tenth of H85 respondents who use the internet daily, most use it for email, online banking and information searches. Participating seniors in the H70 study use the internet to a greater extent and for more purposes than the old people who took part in the H85 studies. In contrast to the H70 respondents, only a small share of respondents use the internet for other purposes⁽⁴⁾.

The Swedish Internet Foundation's annual report entitled *Svenskarna och internet 2018* (The Swedes and the internet 2018)⁽⁵⁾ demonstrates that the digital gap no longer runs between those who use the internet and those who do not do so at all, but between regular users and rare users. Those who use the internet a few times a week feel much less involved in the digital community than those who log on every day. Whoever is responsible for planning tomorrow's society needs to take into consideration not only whether a given target group uses the internet or not, but also how often they do so, and how experienced the group is⁽⁵⁾.

Information and communication

Other significant information channels are associations, social networks, relatives, children and grandchildren, libraries, city meeting points and the staff who work there. The library is a particularly important place for studying information and communicating, because many people go there to read different newspapers and magazines free of charge. Some respondents emphasised that they prefer mouth-to-mouth information.

Take users as the basis on the City of Gothenburg website

Many respondents make the point that it is hard to find information on the City of Gothenburg website, and that it is really necessary to make the information more straightforward and accessible.

The logic applied today to categorise and define services on the city website is public service logic. Old people do not think in the same way as public service, however, tending instead to classify services on the basis of function: transport, housing, etc.⁽²⁾

Many old persons find it stigmatising to have services classified in the “Care for the old” category. Restaurants for the old, keep fit for the old, housing for the old, meeting points for the old, help for the old and home help. These people do not want to be associated with the designation of OLD⁽¹⁾.

At the same time, there are many others who have not problem with being called – and actually being – old.

The city calendar needs to be improved and to be marketed as a place presenting comprehensive information about activities taking place in the city. It should also be made easier to search in the calendar⁽¹⁾.

Logical categorisation for users according to the KoM customer journey in care for the old⁽²⁾.

TRANSPORT With information about:	SERVICE With information about:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation service • Healthcare transport • Flex Line • Västtrafik (free transport) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning • Fixer • Washing • Cooking
HOUSING With information about:	SECURITY With information about:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing adaptation • Aid resources • Housing supplement • Nursing homes, 70+ housing • and other forms of housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security alarm • Access. Home help has access to your home with a key. • Supervision/Security camera
SOCIAL AND ACTIVITIES With information about:	HEALTHCARE With information about:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting points and other social • Activities (church, pensioners' associations, etc.) • Talks and information • Activities and excursions • Companions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthcare centres • Home health care • Care and hygiene (home help)
	RELATIVES With information about:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relief team • Short-term housing

“It’s so civil-servant like.”

“If you don’t need it, you’re not there.”

“I had to look here, there and everywhere ... I can’t see the big picture.”

The information under “Care for the old” on the City of Gothenburg website is to be improved over the course of 2019. The focus here is on prevention service, health and care, as well as on keeping the calendar up to date. The objective of the improvements is to ensure that senior citizens know what the city is doing and why, and that they can familiarise themselves with the services that the city offers.

Digital exclusion

Digital exclusion is a recurring dilemma for many senior citizens. It may have to do with everything from being unable to access all information if you have no internet connection, to being unable to pay for parking or to use a toilet if you do not have the Swish app. People who struggle with illiteracy are particularly excluded. Many old people state that if you do not have a computer, smartphone or tablet, and if you do not know how to use digital technology, you often experience discrimination. Moreover, multiple respondents say that it is expensive to use the digital services – it is expensive to have a smartphone with a mobile subscription and mobile broadband.

Senior citizens make the point that it is important not to let digitalisation progress too quickly without showing consideration for the eldest group of the population, whose members have never been able to learn or keep up with digital technology. It is essential to take into account that more and more people in the oldest age group are suffering from visual impairment or other disabilities, and that this age group is expanding rapidly.

What does the research say?

People who are digitally literate and are more involved in the world of social media enjoy numerous benefits compare to those who are excluded. Using the internet can help reinforce factors that contribute to well-being and life quality among senior citizens – self-confidence, for example.

Using a computer can help old people to live an independent life in their own home. For those seniors who are less physically mobile, it is particularly beneficial to be able to handle financial transactions, access entertainment and information, and do their shopping via the internet.

Being active on the internet is considered a meaningful way to distract from a lonely existence. Digital literacy is directly proportional to use.

Digital communication technology is said to contain the potential to reduce social isolation. Using the internet is a valuable tool for accessing information, particularly health-related information. Use of the internet may also have a positive influence on old people susceptible to depression.

Access and use are strongly linked to socio-economic resources, which are expected to decline with increasing age. In other words, 65-year-old internet users should not be expected to be as skilled and competent when they turn 90. Digital gaps within the 65+ age group persist over time. The spread pattern where seniors “arrive late” repeats in the context of new digital applications⁽⁶⁾.

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Age-friendly Gothenburg

The purpose of Age-Friendly Gothenburg is to make the city a better place to grow old in. We are working with old people and strategic players in order to focus on the right measures.

About the assignment

Senior Gothenburg has been tasked by the Municipal Council to prepare a governing plan to ensure Gothenburg becomes more age-friendly. This is an international initiative from the World Health Organization, WHO.

More than 1,000 cities are participating in the WHO network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities, which was established in 2010 on the basis of two trends:

- An ageing population
- Increased urbanisation

To find out more, see:

www.goteborg.se/aldersvanliga

City of Gothenburg, 2019

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Göteborgs
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