LOCAL STUDY AREA / ACS 2020–2024 5-YEAR PUMS

Phoenix: living alone and household vehicle availability among older adults

Version 1.0 fact sheet · Aging Without a Car · SeniorMedRides.com · Publication date: November 17, 2026

Study area: Maricopa County, AZ. Data: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2020–2024 5-year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), analyzed by SeniorMedRides.com.

Key numbers

- An estimated **26,230 ±1,579** people 65+ in the Phoenix study area live alone in a household with no vehicle (based on 1,287 sample records): 3.62% ±0.22 of all people 65+.
- **64.25% ±3.15** of people 65+ in a household with no vehicle live alone, compared with 21.90% ±0.46 of those with a vehicle.
- Among people 65+ who live alone, 14.90% ±0.83 have no household vehicle, compared with 2.66% ±0.30 of those who live with others. Adjusted for age: 13.44% ±0.74 vs 2.76% ±0.31, a difference of 10.68 ±0.84 points (ratio 4.86 ±0.64). The difference remains after Holm adjustment and is unchanged under the alternative age standard.
- An estimated 13,066 ±1,237 people 65+ live alone, have no household vehicle and report serious walking difficulty: 49.81% ±3.23 of the living-alone, no-vehicle group.
- 34.88% ±2.41 of people 65+ in a household with no vehicle report independent living difficulty, compared with 9.12% ±0.33 of those with a vehicle.
- Version 1.0 context: 40,826 ±2,101 people 65+ in the study area live in a household with no vehicle (5.63% ±0.29 of all people 65+), reused as published in Version 1.0 of the Senior Transportation Access Report (https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.24210261).

These estimates do not directly measure missed medical appointments, transportation demand, wheelchair use, or unmet transportation needs. Independent living difficulty is a self-reported difficulty doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping; it is not a record of missed appointments. Figures are ACS 2020–2024 5-year estimates: period averages for 2020–2024, not single-year values. They cover people 65+ living in housing units; nursing homes and other group quarters are excluded. ± is the 90% margin of error.

By age

Age	People living alone with no vehicle	Share of all people in the age group	Share of no-vehicle older adults in the age group who live alone	No-vehicle share, all people in the age group (Version 1.0)
65–74	9,037 ±847 (n=456)	2.15% ±0.20	58.20% ±4.89	3.70% ±0.28
75–84	7,458 ±760 (n=365)	3.24% ±0.33	62.58% ±4.94	5.17% ±0.46
85+	**9,735 ±911 (n=466)**	**13.02% ±1.14**	**72.75% ±4.45**	**17.90% ±1.40**

Profile: people 65+ with no household vehicle and with a vehicle

Characteristic	Category	No household vehicle	With a household vehicle
Sex	Male	32.67% ±2.25	46.38% ±0.16
Sex	Female	67.33% ±2.25	53.62% ±0.16
Living arrangement	Lives alone	64.25% ±3.15	21.90% ±0.46
Living arrangement	Lives with others	35.75% ±3.15	78.10% ±0.46
Poverty	Below 100% of poverty threshold	27.44% ±2.29	7.88% ±0.30
Poverty	100–149% of poverty threshold	18.26% ±2.12	5.92% ±0.34
Poverty	150% or more of poverty threshold	54.30% ±2.84	86.20% ±0.44
Tenure	Owner	37.42% ±2.64	86.74% ±0.45
Tenure	Renter or occupied without paying rent	62.58% ±2.64	13.26% ±0.45
Tenure detail	of which rented	60.09% ±2.70	11.94% ±0.43
Tenure detail	of which occupied without payment of rent	2.49% ±0.70	1.31% ±0.18
Serious walking difficulty	With	43.52% ±2.63	16.78% ±0.44
Serious walking difficulty	Without	56.48% ±2.63	83.22% ±0.44
Independent living difficulty	With	34.88% ±2.41	9.12% ±0.33
Independent living difficulty	**Without**	**65.12% ±2.41**	**90.88% ±0.33**

Shares of each group, in percent; ± is the 90% margin of error. Descriptive only. "— (sample too small)" marks a cell based on fewer than 30 sample records (or a CV above 50%), which is not shown; "indicative only" marks a cell based on 30–49 sample records or a CV above 30%, which should not be quoted on its own.

How this study area compares with the other seven combined

- On the age-standardized share of all people 65+ who live alone in a household with no vehicle, the Phoenix study area is **lower than the other seven combined** (-0.67 ±0.26 points; Holm-adjusted p <0.001). Unchanged under the alternative age standard S2 (S2 Holm-adjusted p 0.0163).
- Each study area is compared only with the other seven areas combined, using the age-standardized share of all people 65+ who live alone in a household with no vehicle; p-values are Holm-adjusted across the 8 comparisons at a 10% familywise level (more lenient than the common 5%). Study areas are not ranked. All eight comparisons, with their sensitivity notes, are in Table 6 of the full report.

Terms and limits

- **No household vehicle:** no car, van or truck (1 ton or less) kept at home for use by household members (ACS item VEH = 0). It describes household vehicle availability. It does not show whether a person drives, and it is not a measure of transportation access.
- **Living alone:** the only person in the household (NP = 1), for people 65+ in housing units. Living alone is measured from the household roster; the survey does not record whether relatives or friends live nearby or help with rides.
- **Serious walking difficulty:** the ACS ambulatory difficulty item (serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs), self- or proxy-reported; a functional-difficulty measure, not a clinical diagnosis.
- **Independent living difficulty:** a self-reported difficulty doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping; it is not a record of missed appointments.
- These estimates do not directly measure missed medical appointments, transportation demand, wheelchair use, or unmet transportation needs. A household without a vehicle may still get rides from family, friends, transit or paratransit.
- Differences between groups are associations, not causes. Study-area figures describe the area as a whole and should not be applied to individual people or to places outside the study-area definition. Figures are ACS 2020–2024 5-year estimates: period averages for 2020–2024, not single-year values.

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How to cite

SeniorMedRides.com. (2026). *Aging Without a Car, Version 1.0: Phoenix fact sheet*. https://seniormedrides.com/research/aging-without-a-car/phoenix/ https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.24235541

Source data: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2020–2024 5-year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS). The Census Bureau has not reviewed, endorsed or certified this analysis or its findings.

Full report: https://seniormedrides.com/research/aging-without-a-car/. This page: https://seniormedrides.com/research/aging-without-a-car/phoenix/. Version 1.0 study-area page: https://seniormedrides.com/research/senior-transportation-access/phoenix/. Rides and providers in the area: https://seniormedrides.com/phoenix-az/.