

Highlights

The Context: Challenging Times

The key overall finding of this survey is that, *due to severe economic challenges stemming from the Great Recession, communities have generally only managed to “hold the line,” maintaining existing policies, programs and services to meet the needs of an aging population.* It does not appear that a significant expansion of age-friendly policies, programs and services is occurring across the country. While there are clear differences among regions, in general, communities seem to be “just keeping their heads above water.”

The stresses on local government produced by sustained economic crisis show up in many places. In particular, the contrast between responses to questions about economic growth in the 2005 and the 2010 Maturing of America surveys is telling:

- In 2005, 67% of jurisdictions described their current economic condition as experiencing *some growth*; in 2010, only 42% indicated they were experiencing some growth—a *drop of 25 percentage points*.
- In 2005, 11% reported that they experienced *some decline*; in 2010, 30% experienced some decline, proportionately, *a nearly three-fold increase*.

This is the context in which we must view the findings of Maturing of America II. In view of these circumstances, it is not surprising—but is nonetheless disappointing—that community support for older adults has taken one very significant “back-step” in the area of property tax relief. The survey reveals a noticeable **decrease** in availability of *property tax relief for older adults on limited incomes*. In 2005, 72% of respondents reported this program; in 2010, only 54% reported its availability.

Another question asked in both surveys underscores the strain communities are feeling. Participants were asked to identify the “top three challenges your community faces in meeting the needs of or planning for older adults.” While responses varied, the challenges most often cited were financial/funding shortages, transportation and housing. This lineup contrasts with the top three identified challenges in 2005, which were, in the following order, housing, financial issues and various health issues.