United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 20, 2026

The Honorable Orice Williams Brown
Acting Comptroller General
United States Government Accountability Office
441 G St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Acting Comptroller General Brown:

Over 70 million adults in the United States report that they have a disability and nearly 62 million Americans are age 65 or older.[1] The older adult population in the U.S. is projected to grow rapidly—to more than 106 million—by 2100, and nearly 28 percent of older Americans live alone.[2] Millions of Americans also suffer from social isolation and loneliness, which threatens their health and well-being.[3] This epidemic is associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety, and premature death.[4] Yet, a 2023 poll found one in three older adults had limited contact with those outside their home.[5] People with a health issue or disability that limits daily activities likewise reported limited external engagements.[6]

Older adults and adults with disabilities often struggle to live independently and remain healthy in their homes and communities. Emerging technologies have the potential to significantly improve the lives of older adults and adults with disabilities.[7] For instance, generative artificial

[1] "CDC Data Shows Over 70 Million U.S. Adults Reported Having a Disability," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, July 16, 2024, https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2024/s0716-Adult-disability.html; "Older Adults Outnumber Children in 11 States and Nearly Half of U.S. Counties," United States Census Bureau, June 26, 2025, https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2025/older-adults-outnumber-children.html.
[2] Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics, *Older Americans 2024: Key indicators of Well-Being*, Washington, D.C., 2024, at X, https://agingstats.gov/docs/LatestReport/Older-Americans-2024-508-May-update.pdf; Administration for Community Living, *2023 Profile of Older Americans*, Washington, D.C., May 2024, at 6, https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/Profile%20of%20OA/ACL_ProfileOlderAmericans2023_508.pdf.
[3] "APA Poll Reveals a Nation Suffering from Stress of Societal Division, Loneliness," American Psychological Association, November 6, 2025, https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2025/11/nation-suffering-division-loneliness.
[4] Office of the U.S. Surgeon General, *Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community*, Washington, D.C., 2023, at 4, https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf.
[5] Jeffrey Kullgren et al., University of Michigan, *Trends in Loneliness Among Older Adults from 2018-2023*, Ann Arbor, MI, 2023, at 1, https://ihpi.umich.edu/national-poll-healthy-aging/national-findings/trends-loneliness-among-older-adults-2018-2023.
[6] *Id*., at 2.
[7] "New Report on Emerging Technologies to Help Older Americans Maintain Independence," National Institute on Aging, March 5, 2019, https://www.nia.nih.gov/news/new-report-emerging-technologies-help-older-americans-maintain-independence; Abdullah Alsaleh, "The Influence of Artificial Intelligence on Individuals with

intelligence (AI) might help people with disabilities communicate with others[8] and is being explored as a means to address social isolation for some older adults.[9] Further, wearable devices can allow individuals to live independently by helping older adults monitor their health, detect falls, and access help.[10]

Although they hold potential, these emerging technologies also come with challenges. Some are expensive and potentially beyond the reach of certain older adults and people with disabilities, as most wearable technology users have higher incomes and education levels.[11] Many technologies rely on internet connectivity that can vary in quality and availability, and an estimated 14.5 million Americans lack access to high-speed broadband internet altogether.[12] While AI can help people communicate better, research suggests that AI models may be biased against certain at-risk populations, including older adults and people with disabilities.[13]

Several federal agencies play a role in providing and encouraging the use of technology by older adults and people with disabilities. For instance, the Administration for Community Living within the Department of Health and Human Services has programs to provide assistive technologies to these populations, including through falls prevention efforts.[14] The Food and Drug Administration also regulates wearable devices and recently updated its guidance on wearable and AI-assisted devices.[15] Further, the National Science and Technology Council has

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Disabilities," *Acta Psychologica* 262, February 2026, https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0001691825013241.

[8] Dorit Hadar Souval et al., "Transforming Perceptions: Exploring the Multifaceted Potential of Generative AI for People with Cognitive Disabilities," *JMIR Neurotechnology* 4, January 15, 2025, https://neuro.jmir.org/2025/1/e64182.

[9] Eli Saslow, "To Stay in Her Home, She Let In an A.I. Robot," *New York Times*, February 12, 2026, https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/12/us/elliq-ai-robot-senior-companion.html.

[10] Harjeevan Singh Kang and Mark Exworthy, "Wearing the Future – Wearables to Empower Users to Take Greater Responsibility for Their Health and Care: Scoping Review," *JMIR Health and UHealth* 10, no 7, July 13, 2022, https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9330198/; Daniel Joseph Warrington et al., "Are Wearable Devices Effective for Preventing and Detecting Falls: An Umbrella Review (A Review of Systematic Reviews)," *BMC Public Health* 10, no 7, July 13, 2022, https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8591794/; "How Wearable Technology Enhances Health and Independence for Seniors," Open MedScience, January 6, 2025, https://openmedscience.com/how-wearable-technology-enhances-health-and-independence-for-seniors/.

[11] Ashwini Nagappan et al., "Patterns of Ownership and Usage of Wearable Devices in the United States, 2020-2022: Survey Study," *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 26, 2024, https://www.sciencedirect.com/org/science/article/pii/S1438887124004114.

[12] Brittney Crock Bauerly et al., "Broadband Access as a Public Health Issue," *J Law Med Ethics* 47, no 2, June 2019, https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6661896/; "Broadband Access," County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, last accessed May 14, 2026, https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/community-conditions/physical-environment/civic-and-community-resources/broadband-access?year=2025.

[13] Pranav Narayanan Venkit et al., "Automated Ableism: An Exploration of Explicit Disability Biases in Sentiment and toxicity Analysis Models," *Proceedings of the 3rd Workship on Trustworthy Natural Language Processing*, July 14, 2024, pages 26-34, https://aclanthology.org/2023.trustnlp-1.3.pdf; Dan Andersen et al., "Addressing Bias: Ageism in AI Systems," *Generations: American Society on Aging*, June 24, 2025, https://generations.asaging.org/addressing-bias-ageism-in-ai-systems/.

[14] For example, *see* National Council on Aging, "NCOA Selects 18 Organizations to Test a New Approach to Falls Prevention for Older Adults," *PR Newswire*, June 25, 2025, https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/ncoa-selects-18-organizations-to-test-a-new-approach-to-falls-prevention-for-older-adults-302491156.html.

[15] Catherine Arnold, "What the FDA's 2026 Update Means for Wearables," *IEEE Spectrum*, February 12, 2026, https://spectrum.ieee.org/fda-medical-device-rules.

identified emerging technologies that could support older adults and adults with disabilities that would benefit from additional research and development.[16] Although these efforts show that the federal government is already engaged, the role of the federal government may need to evolve as the rate of technological development increases.

Given the promise of and potential challenges with the adoption of emerging technologies, we ask the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study about how technology can transform the lives of older adults and adults with disabilities. Specifically, we ask that you address:

1. Which technologies show promise in helping older adults and adults with disabilities live safely and independently in their homes and communities, including in areas such as injury prevention, mitigation, and recovery, promoting health and well-being, and reducing isolation and loneliness?

2. What challenges do older adults and adults with disabilities face when adopting these technologies?

3. What role can the federal government play in facilitating and monitoring the adoption of these technologies among older adults and adults with disabilities?

We appreciate your attention to this request. Should you have questions or need additional information, please contact Ranking Member Gillibrand's Aging Committee staff at 202-224-0185.

Sincerely,

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Special
Committee on Aging

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

Andy Kim
United States Senator

[16] National Science & Technology Council, *Emerging Technologies to Support an Aging Population: A Report by the Task Force on Research and Development for Technology to Support Aging Adults*, Washington, D.C., March 2019, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GOVPUB-PREX23-PURL-gpo120909/pdf/GOVPUB-PREX23-PURL-gpo120909.pdf.