2025

Community Needs Assessment

DIRECTION HOME AKRON CANTON

AREA AGENCY ON AGING & DISABILITIES

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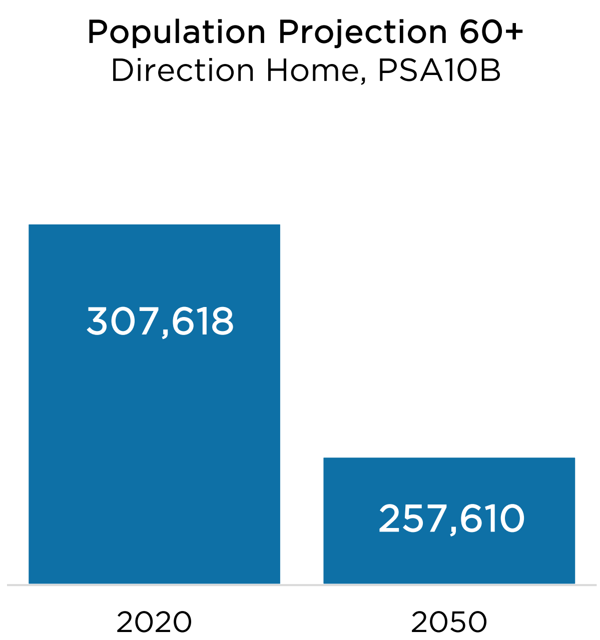
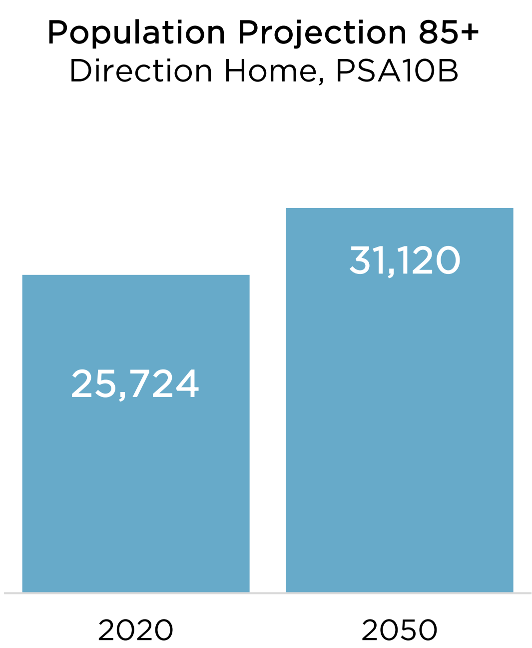
Our Community

Direction Home Akron Canton Area Agency on Aging (Direction Home), serving the Ohio Area Agency on Aging PSA10B region, covers an area encompassing four counties in Ohio: **Portage, Stark, Summit, and Wayne.**

The area is home to 312,078 older adults over the age of 60, accounting for 26.2 percent of the total population of the four counties. Following state and national trends, the number and share of older adults has been growing in the region, and past projections showed this increase peaking around 2030. This increase is the result of generational demographics and the fact that people are living longer lives and remaining in their homes and communities as they age.

The growth is particularly pronounced among the population ages 85 and above, which is projected to increase 21 percent by 2050 compared to 2020. Increasing numbers of the oldest residents is expected to increase demand for supportive services including home-delivered meals, housekeeping, home modification, in-home care, and social connectedness. Direction Home and the entire community will need to adapt to these changes.





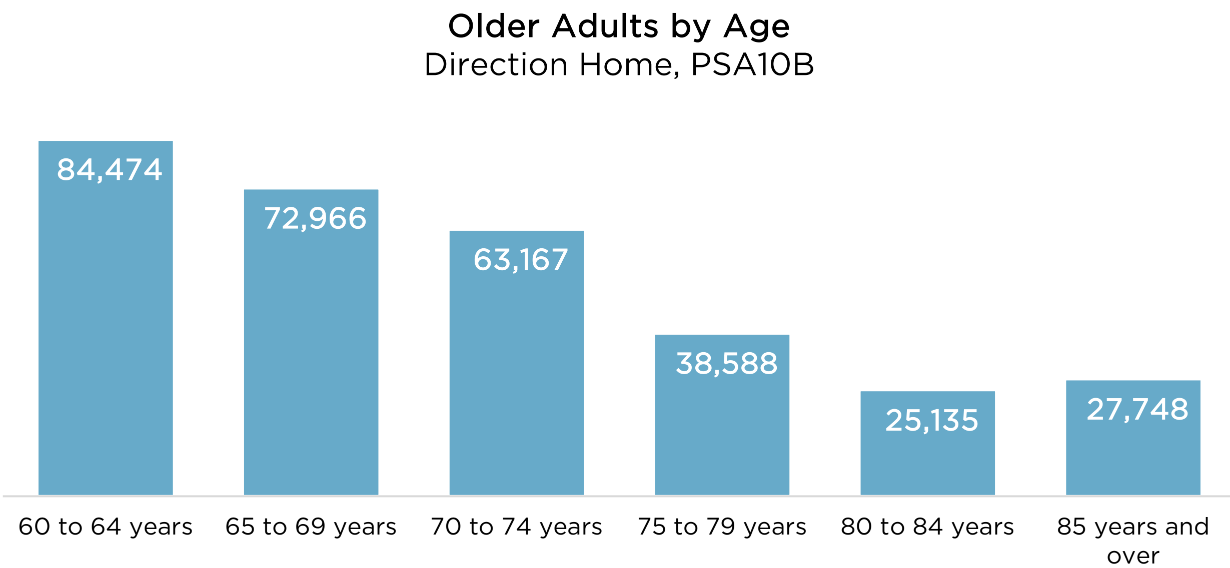
Source: Ohio Department of Development, Office of Research

Secondary data analysis for this assessment was compiled by The Center for Community Solutions on behalf of Area Agency on Aging District 10B. We relied on the latest available data for the civilian, non-institutionalized population. Unless otherwise noted, the data source is the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2023 5-Year estimates. Data was compiled for each county within the region, then aggregated for the region as a whole. When possible, data is reported for ages 60 and older. However, due to data availability, some indicators are for the population ages 65 and older. All the data carry margins of error. For smaller geographies and subpopulations, margins of error can be substantial, and differences should be interpreted with caution.

The indicators selected for examination provide an overview of the demographic, social, economic, and health characteristics of the older adult population in the region with special emphasis on older individuals with greatest economic need, greatest social need, low-income minority older individuals, those with limited English proficiency, and/or those living in rural areas.

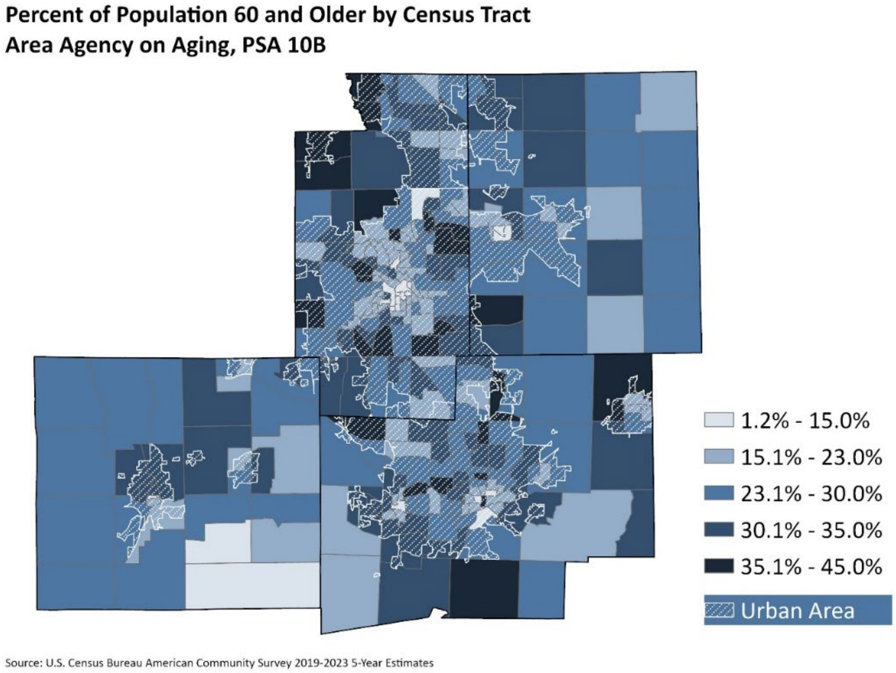
Demographic and Social Profile of the Region

Over 312,078 adults aged 60 and over live in the four-county area. This includes 27,748 people who are 85 and older, accounting for 8.9 percent of older adults in the region. Around 54 percent of residents over the age of 60 are female.



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2019-2023

The map below shows the percentage of the population who are over the age of 60.



Race and Ethnicity

The Direction Home Akron Canton Area Agency on Aging region has pockets that are more racially and ethnically diverse, and 11.2 percent of the population over age 60 are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC). More detailed breakdowns of racial and ethnic makeup of the population is provided in the table below.

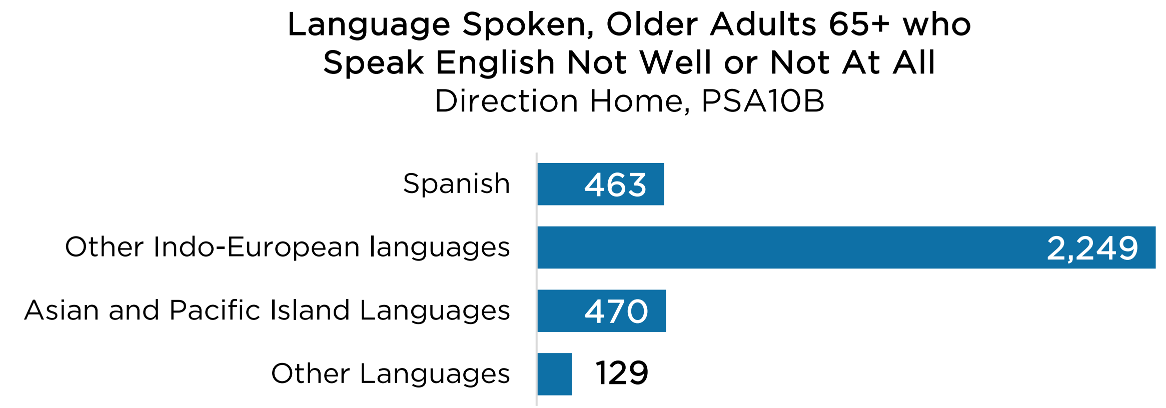
	Region 10B		Ohio
Total Number of Older Adults (60+)	**312,078**		**2,904,497**
Race/Ethnicity	Number	%	%
White	278,327	89.2%	86.0%
Black/African American	22,513	7.2%	9.5%
American Indian and Alaskan Native	341	0.1%	0.1%
Asian/Asian American	3,782	1.2%	1.3%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	-	0.0%	0.0%
Other Race	1,219	0.4%	0.8%

More than One Race	5,743	1.8%	2.2%
Hispanic/Latinx	3,311	1.1%	1.7%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2019-2023

Limited English Proficiency

While most older adults over age 60 in the region speak only English (96.1 percent), there are 4,476 individuals over age 60 in the region who do not speak English at all or do not speak it well. As shown in the chart below, the most common languages spoken by adults over age 65 who have limited English proficiency are Indo-European Languages, Asian and Pacific Island Languages, and Spanish.

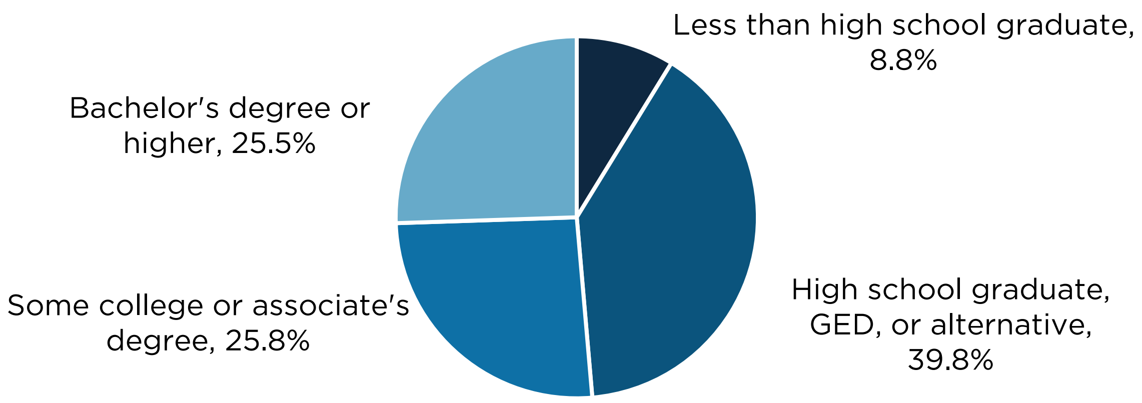


Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2019-2023

Educational Attainment

Over half of adults over age 60 in the region have at least some college education (51.3 percent). About 1 in 11 adults over age 60 do not have a high school diploma or equivalent.

Educational Attainment, Older Adults (60+),
Direction Home, PSA10B Region



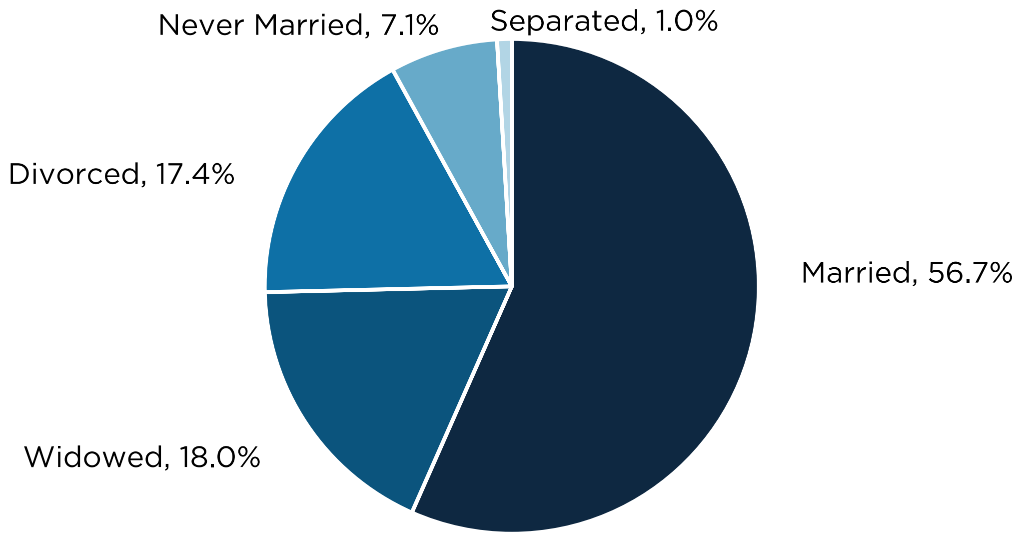
Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2019-2023

Family Status

In the Direction Home region, 85,102 people (27.3 percent) over the age of 60 live alone. In terms of households over the age of 60, more than two out of five (43.2 percent) live alone. Living alone can contribute to social isolation and vulnerability.

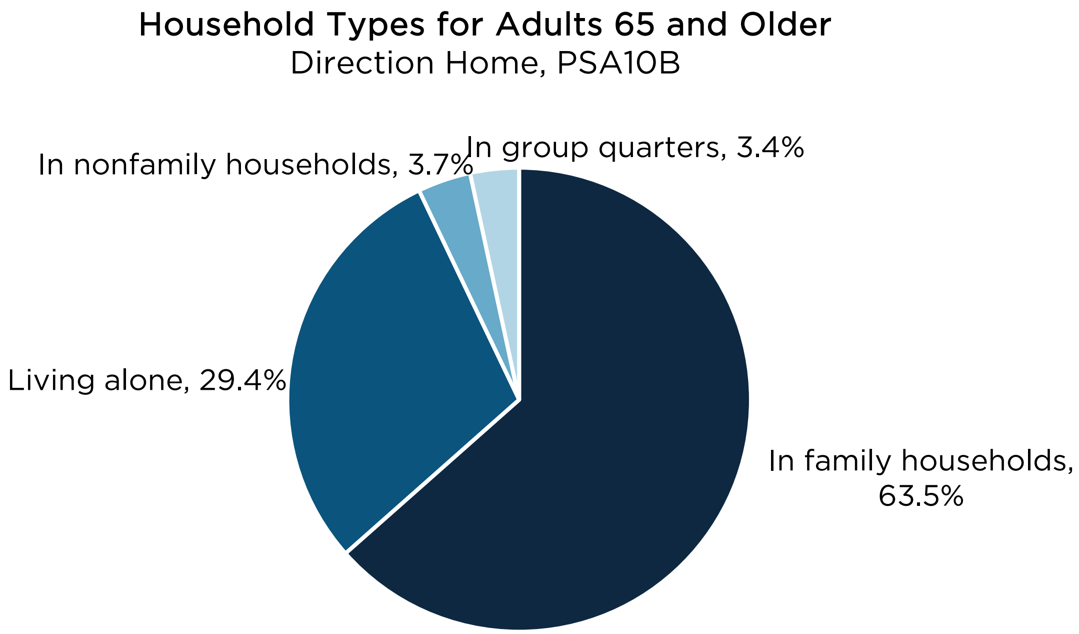
Of adults 60 and older, over half are married. Almost 20 percent of adults 60 and older are widowed, and an equal number are divorced, which relates to the number of adults over 65 living alone. An additional seven percent have never married and one percent are separated.

Marital Status, Older Adults (60+)
Direction Home, PSA10B



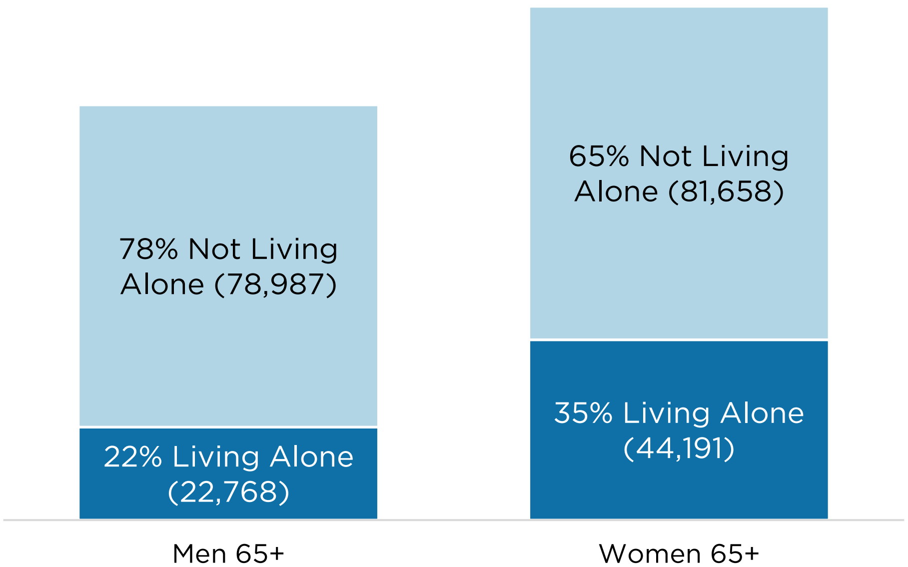
Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2019-2023

While most older adults in the Direction Home region live in family households, almost a third of adults (29.4 percent) 65 and older are living alone. This is more pronounced for women 65 and older. Thirty-five percent of women 65 and older are living alone, whereas twenty-two percent of men 65 and older are living alone. Living alone can contribute to social isolation and vulnerability. Three percent of adults 65 and older are living in group quarters.



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2019-2023

Adults 65 and Older Living Alone by Sex
Direction Home, PSA10B



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2019-2023

In the region as a whole, there are 10,991 adults over age 60 living with their own grandchildren under 18 years. This is 3.5 percent of adults over age 60 in the region. Of these older adults, 3,439 are responsible for their grandchildren.

Veteran Status

One out of every eight people over the age of 60 in the region are veterans, accounting for 12.1 percent of the total. Men are much more likely to report having served in the military than women.

Food Insecurity

Many older adults experience food insecurity, the condition that leads to hunger. Across Ohio, 8.3 percent of older adults (60+) are food insecure according to the latest data from Feeding America.[1] Applying the state average to the population of the region, The Center for Community Solutions estimates that nearly 26,000 older adults are food insecure, defined as having "a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access

[1] "Food Insecurity among the Senior Population in Ohio," Feeding America, https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2023/senior-60-plus/ohio

to adequate food."[2] Many older adults rely on benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to meet their basic needs. Almost 19,000 households with at least one older adult in the region reported receiving SNAP.

Rural vs. Urban

Of all people in the Direction Home region, 105,943 individuals ages 60 and older live in rural areas within the region, accounting for 34 percent of the older adult population. The population living in rural areas was calculated by The Center for Community Solutions based on guidance from the U.S. Census Bureau. The Center for Community Solutions applied the percentage of the 2020 Decennial Census population count designated as living in rural areas to the American Community Survey 2019-2023 5-Year Estimates. The percent of the population in each county living in areas defined as rural is shown in the table below.

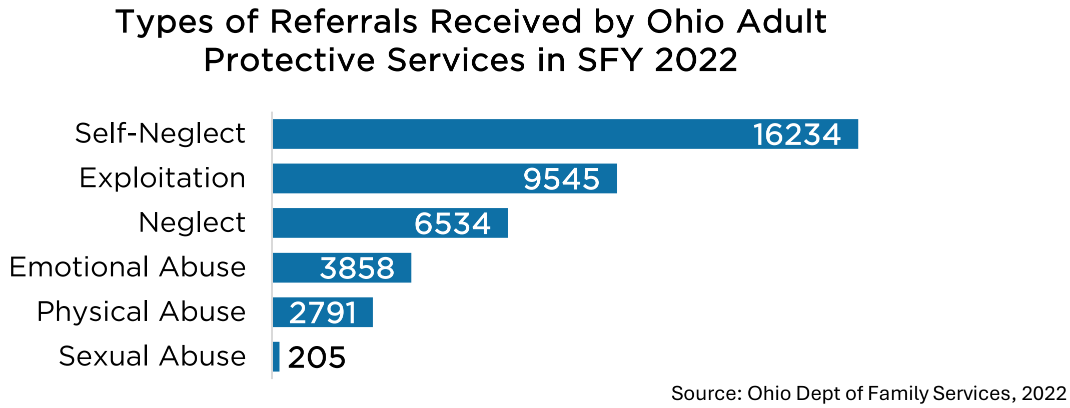
County	Percent of Population living in areas defined as rural
Portage	38.0%
Stark	14.8%
Summit	3.8%
Wayne	55.8%

Source: U.S. Census 2020; U.S. Census American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2019-2023

Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is an intentional or negligent act by any person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to an older adult. Older adults are considered vulnerable populations due to their higher rates of social isolation, cognitive decline, physical limitations, and related increased dependence on others. County agencies in Ohio track statistics about elder abuse with their county and share this information with the state, which is reported in combined state-level data. From July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022, a total of 36,016 referrals of abuse, neglect, and exploitation were received by the county departments of job and family services for adults age 60 and over.[3]

[2] "Definitions of Food Security," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security
[3] "Adult Protective Services Data Fact Sheet for SFY 2022," Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, https://jfs.ohio.gov/static/APS/APS+Data+Fact+Sheet+2022+SFY.pdf



Data indicates that there are thousands of older adults in the region served by Direction Home who have great economic and social needs. It is these individuals, as well as low-income minority older adults and those with limited English proficiency that Direction Home seeks to serve.

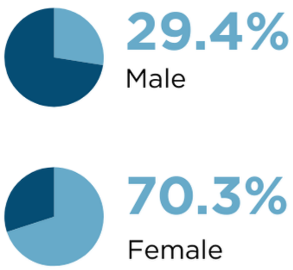
Methodology

Primary Data: Quantitative

A community survey was distributed to households in the Direction Home service region through a combination of a random mailing and a random selection of households already connected to Direction Home. A total of 396 households completed the survey, with 95 percent indicating that they completed the survey for themselves, as opposed to filling it out for someone else.

Survey Demographics

Gender

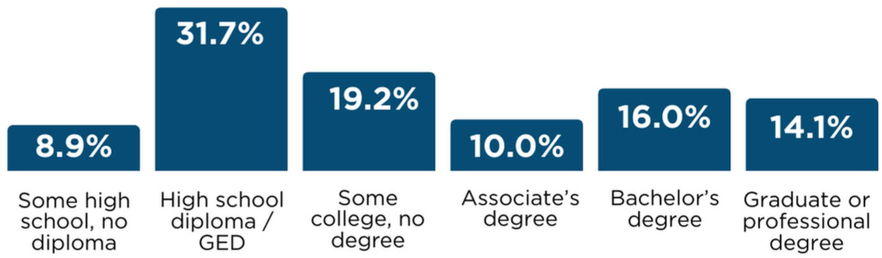


Race and Ethnicity	
White or Caucasian	85.2%
Black or African American	11.7%
American Indian or Native American	1.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.8%
Hispanic or Latino	0.5%
Other	0.5%

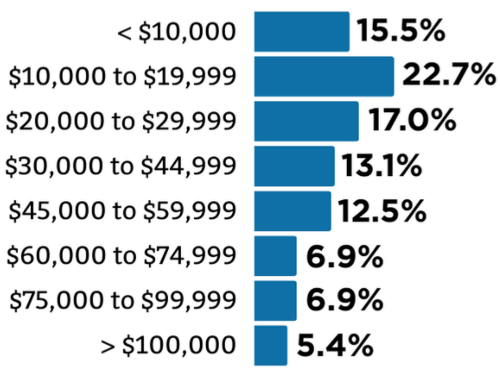
73
Median Age

74
Average Age

Education

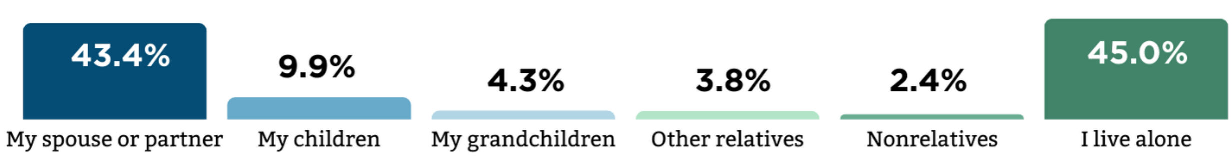


Household Income Range



Household type	
Single-family home	65.1%
Multi-family home (duplex, condo, etc.)	10.9%
Apartment	10.6%
Senior apartment building	9.2%
Assisted Living home	2.8%
Townhouse	0.8%
Continuing care retirement community	0.3%
Nursing home	0.3%

Who is in your household?



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2019-2023

Primary Data: Qualitative

Community Solutions gathered qualitative data throughout this assessment, hearing from older adults and service providers across the Direction Home service region.

Five focus groups were held in November and December 2025.

Date	Partner Organization
11/3/2025	ASIA Inc and Jin Huo
11/7/2025	SRINA Tea House
11/14/2025	Center on the Lake
12/5/2025	Portage County Senior Center
12/12/2025	Paul Belcher Apartments

Data Insights

Data insights were provided through an analysis of secondary data from a variety of reputable sources, including:

- U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey
- U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census
- National Center for Health Statistics
- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
- Feeding America
- Ohio Department of Development
- Ohio Department of Health
- Ohio Adult Protective Services
- Purdue Center for Regional Development

A note on "Data Comparison Throughout the Years"

- Data comparisons across years reflect responses to the same survey questions administered in 2018, 2022, and 2025. While this allows for a general comparison of trends over time, results should be interpreted with caution, as data collection methods and sampling approaches varied across survey years and may influence comparability.

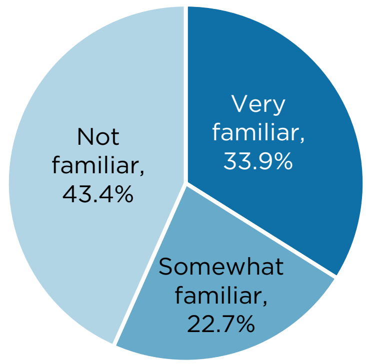
Emerging Themes

Service Awareness & Navigation

Community Perspectives

Even when services are available, limited awareness and difficulty navigating complex systems can prevent older adults from accessing critical support. Barriers such as unclear eligibility requirements, fragmented information, and lack of coordinated guidance can result in delayed or unmet needs.

How familiar are you with Direction Home Akron Canton Area Agency on Aging & Disabilities?



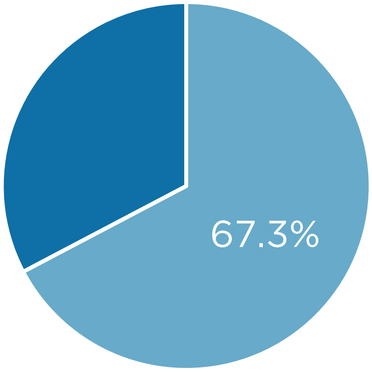
Over half of older adults indicated familiarity with Direction Home, however 43 percent indicated that they were not at all familiar with the organization.

Of the services that Direction Home provides, home delivered meals were the most frequently used, with 37 percent indicating that they had used the service. In contrast, congregate meals were the most frequently mentioned service that individuals were not familiar with – with almost 70 percent indicating that they had not heard of that service.

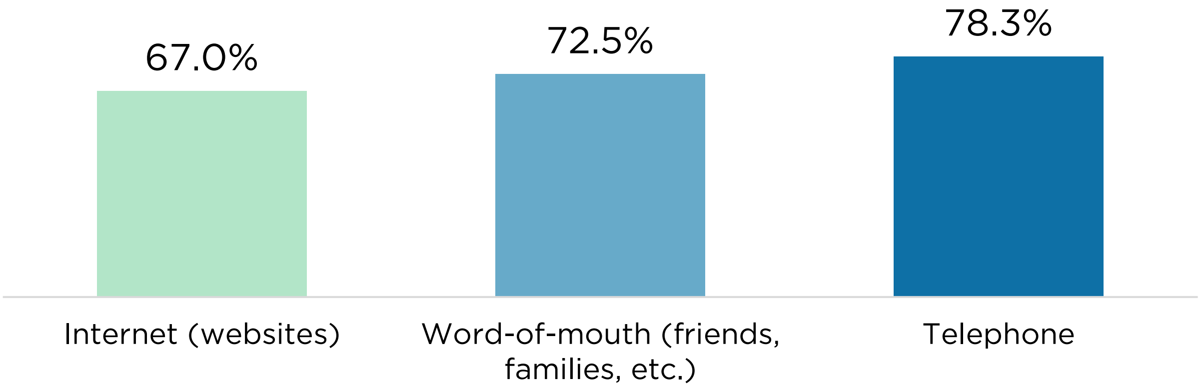
Top Services Used or Unknown		
	Personally Used	**Not at all familiar**
1	Home Delivered Meals	Congregate Meal
2	Case management	HOME Choice
3	Emergency Response Units	Chronic Disease Self-Management
4	Personal Care Aide	Chore Services
5	PASSPORT/MyCare Ohio	Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

Most individuals reported that they are generally able to locate services when needed. The telephone was the most commonly used method for accessing services, with 78 percent of respondents relying on it. Additionally, word of mouth emerged as another key way people learn about available services, which was frequently mentioned in community conversations. Word of mouth was a primary source of information for many older adults, but especially for older adults who were not connected to formal systems, such as refugees or individuals who did not speak English.

Two-thirds of individuals are able to find information on services needed all or most of the time

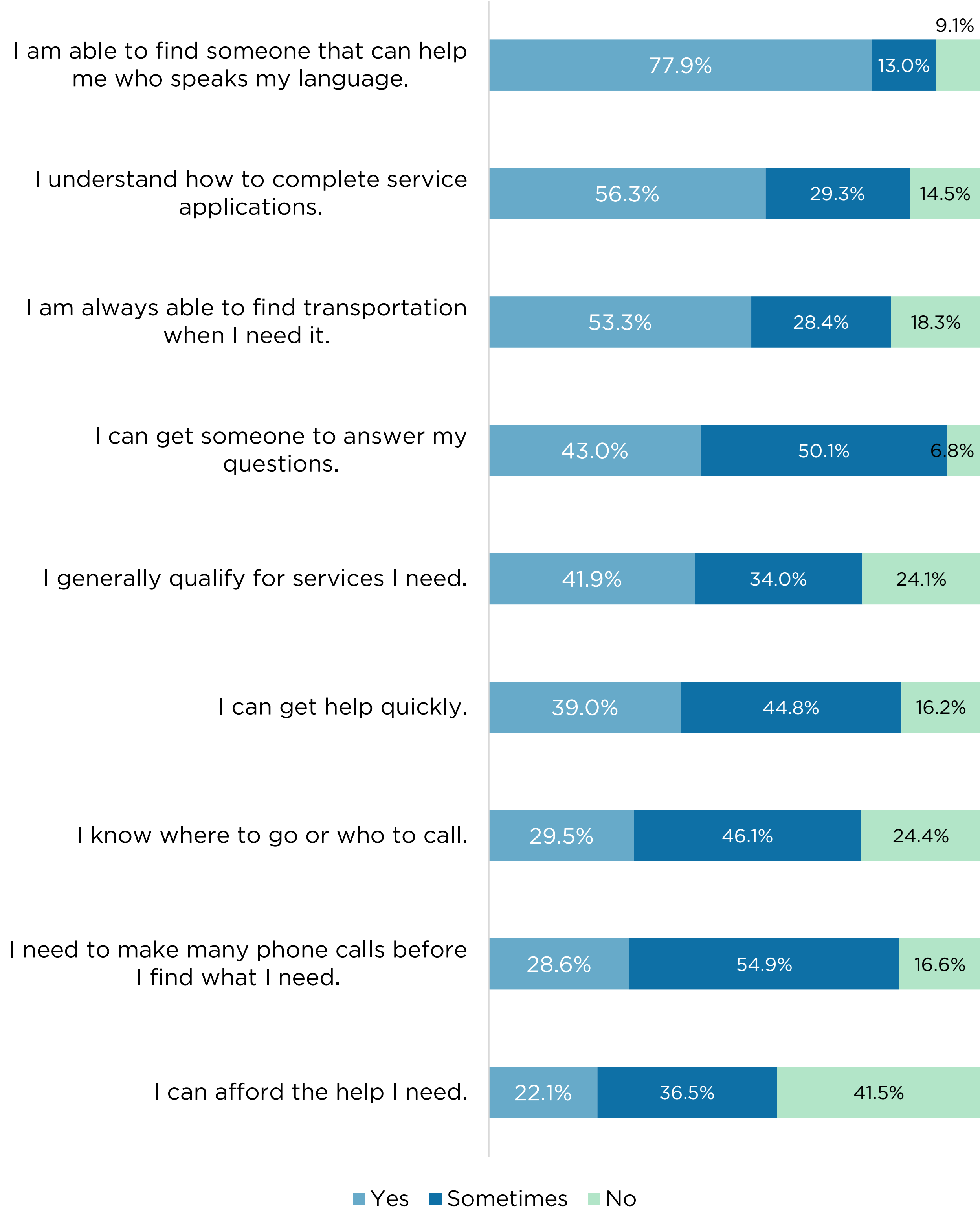


Top 3 sources used to identify and access community services

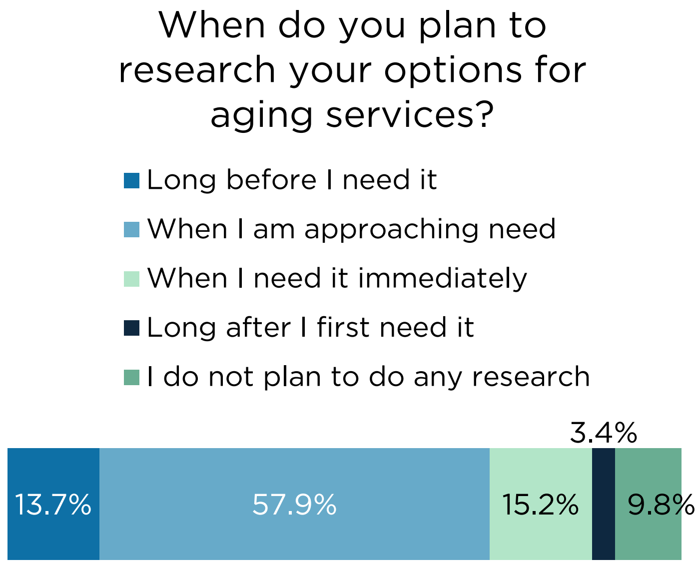


Older adults across the region shared mixed experiences when trying to access services. While many are able to complete applications once they know what's available, identifying those services remains a major challenge. Confusion about where to begin is common and was emphasized in community conversations as well. Affordability continues to be a significant barrier. Even when help is available, delays, inconsistent communication, and eligibility issues often complicate the process.

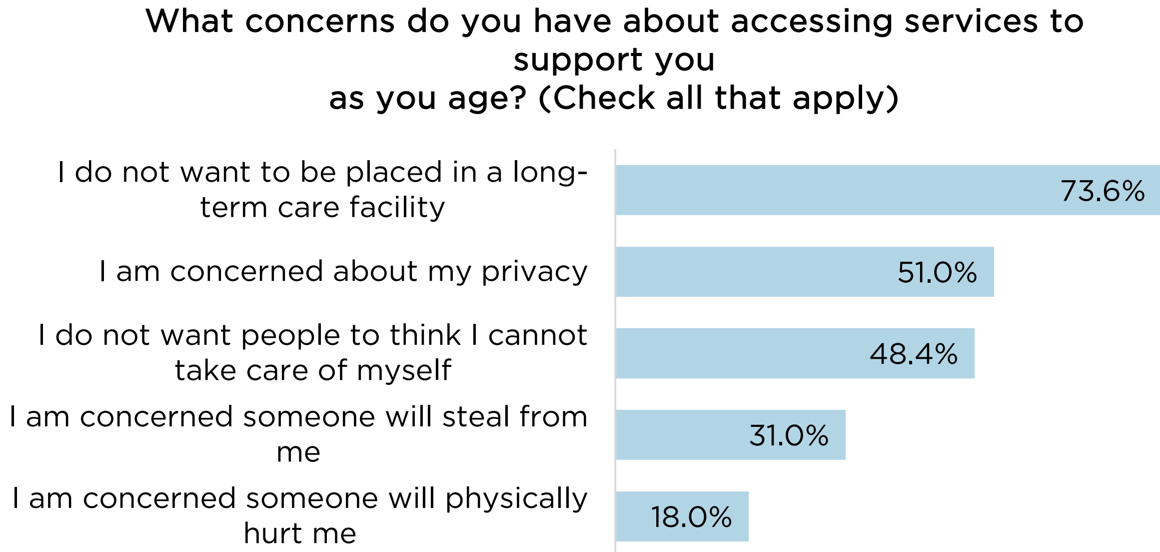
What is your experience when seeking help in meeting needs as you get older?



Services can include current issues, but also for planning for the future. Researching potential services before they are needed can allow for thoughtful planning and a better understanding of available options. A small percentage (14 percent) indicated that they plan to research options long before they need it. The majority of older adults stated that they will begin research when they are approaching the need for additional services. One in ten indicated that they do not plan to do any research.



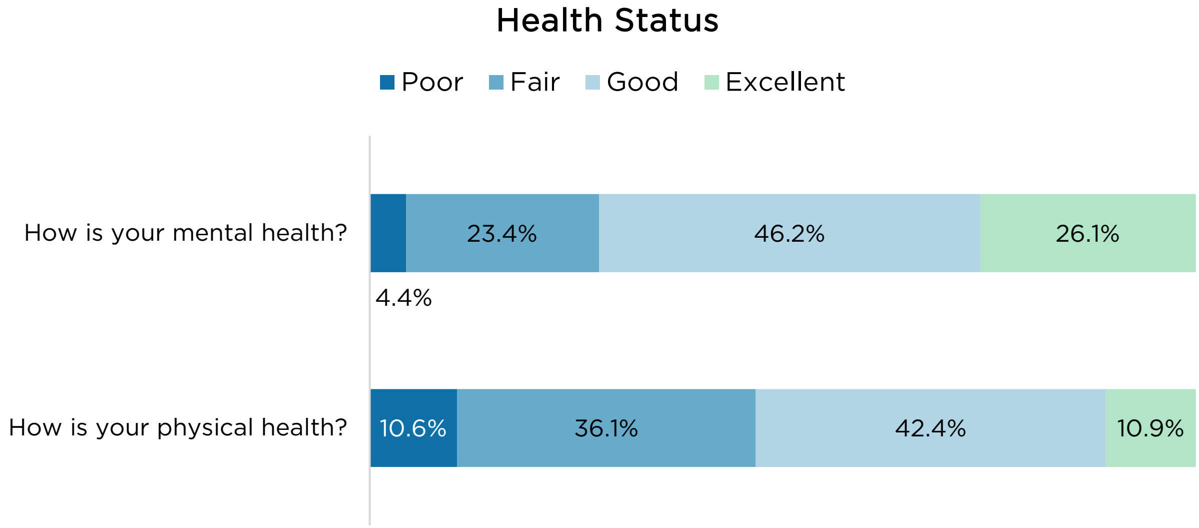
Alleviating concerns about the future can help older adults to more confidently plan for their future. The most common concern from older adults is being placed in a long-term care facility, with over three-fourths of older adults expressing this concern. Similarly, half of older adults were concerned about people thinking they could not care for themselves. Building awareness of available services and exploring options early can empower older adults to maintain independence for as long as safely possible.



Health & Wellness

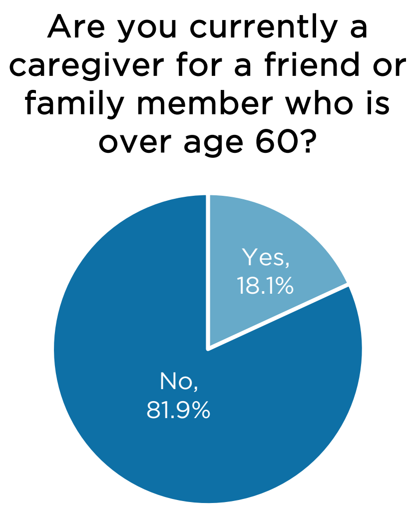
Community Insights

The majority of survey respondents reported their physical and mental health as at least "good." However, a higher proportion rated their physical health as "fair" or "poor" compared to mental health, with slightly less than half indicating that their physical health fell into the fair or poor categories.



Caring for a family or friend can place significant physical and emotional strain on caregivers. In Ohio, nearly one in five (18 percent) have difficulty taking care of their own health while caregiving and one in six (17 percent) feel alone as a caregiver. Additionally in Ohio, 50 percent of caregivers are over the age of 55.

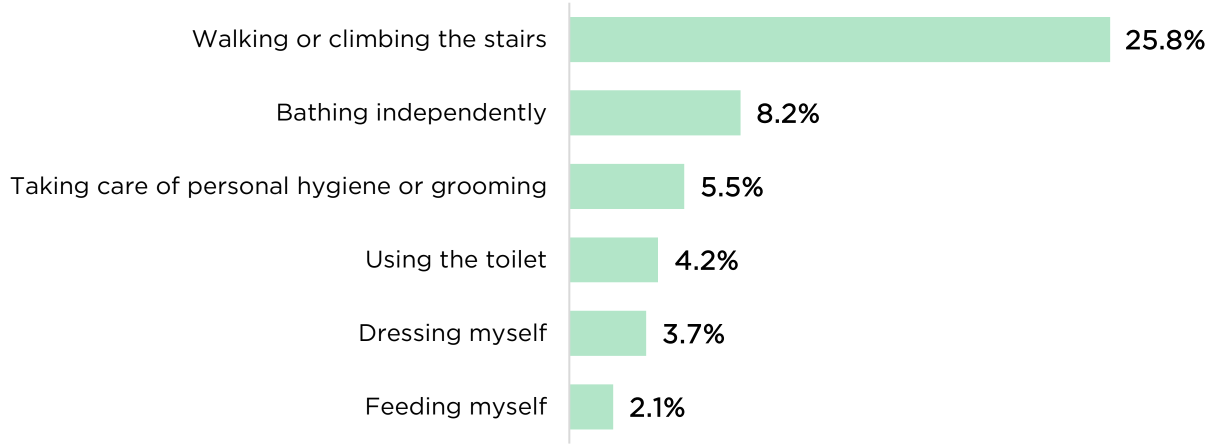
As life expectancy increases, older adults are increasingly likely to take on caregiving roles for aging parents as well as spouses, often while managing their own health and aging-related needs.



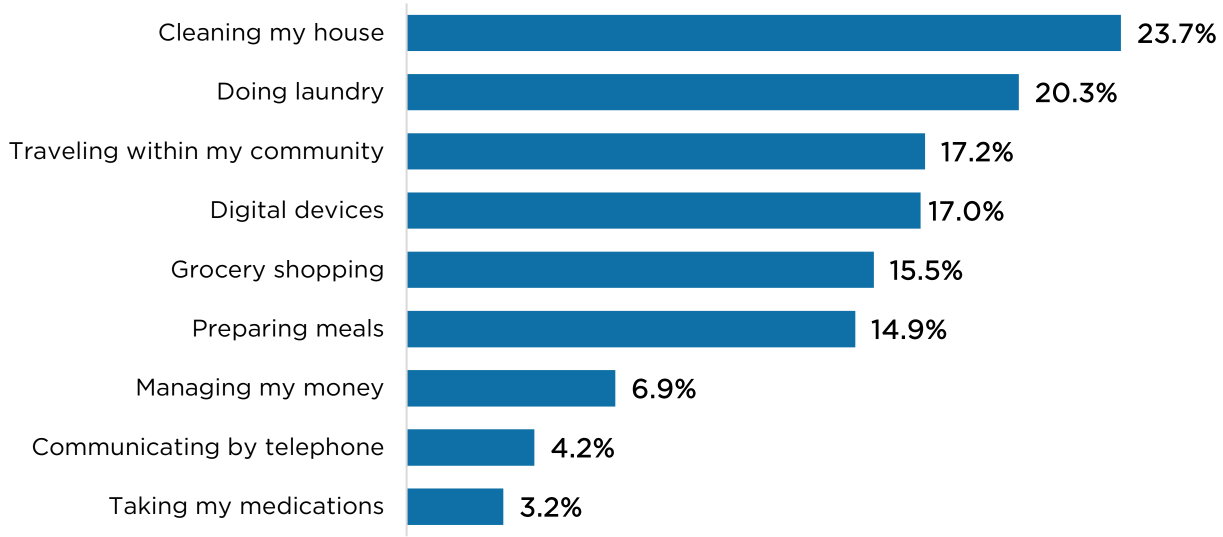
Social programs and senior centers were often highlighted in community discussions as valuable resources that helped to combat loneliness and support mental health. Many older adults appreciated how these programs encouraged them to leave home and make new friends.

Activities of daily living (ADLs) refer to basic self-care tasks that are essential for everyone, while instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) involve more complex tasks necessary for independent living. Among older adults, one in four reported difficulty or inability to walk upstairs. This poses a significant concern, as many homes do not offer full first-floor living arrangements, making navigation and accessibility a challenge for individuals with mobility limitations.

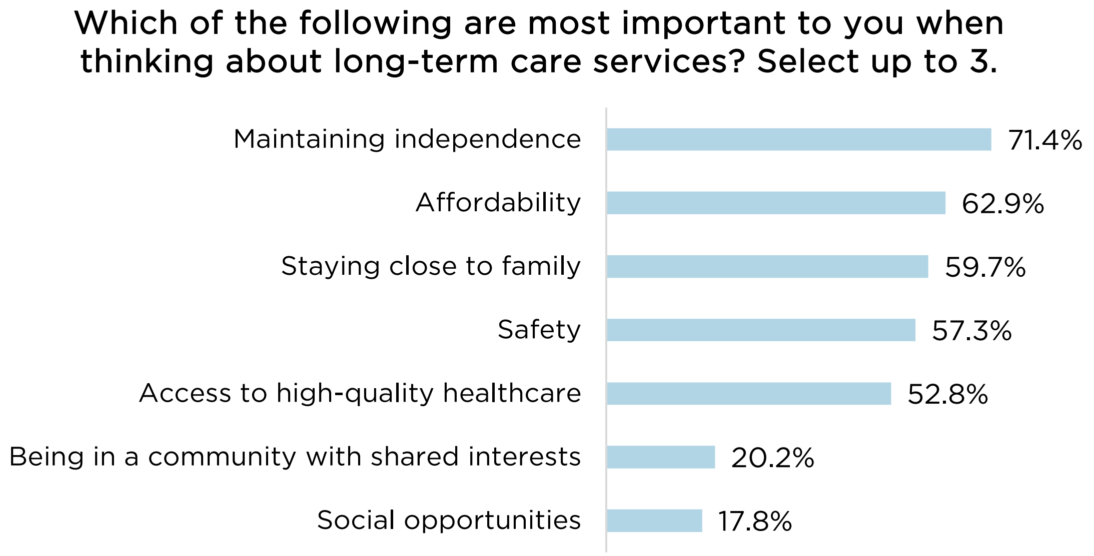
Percent who find activities of daily living very difficult or are unable to do the activity



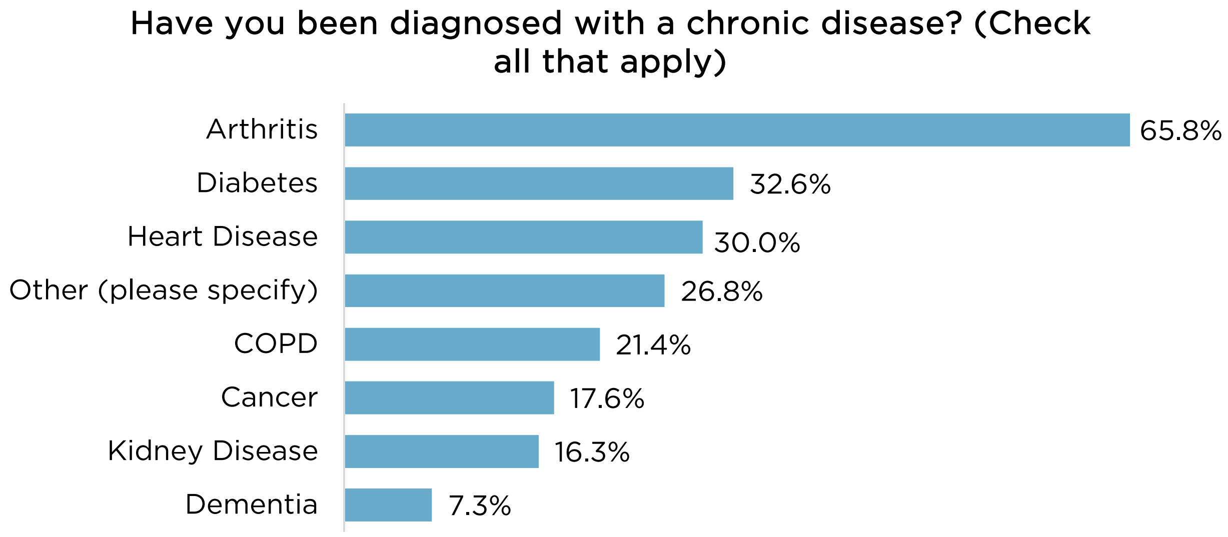
Percent who find instrumental activities of daily living very difficult or are unable to do the activity



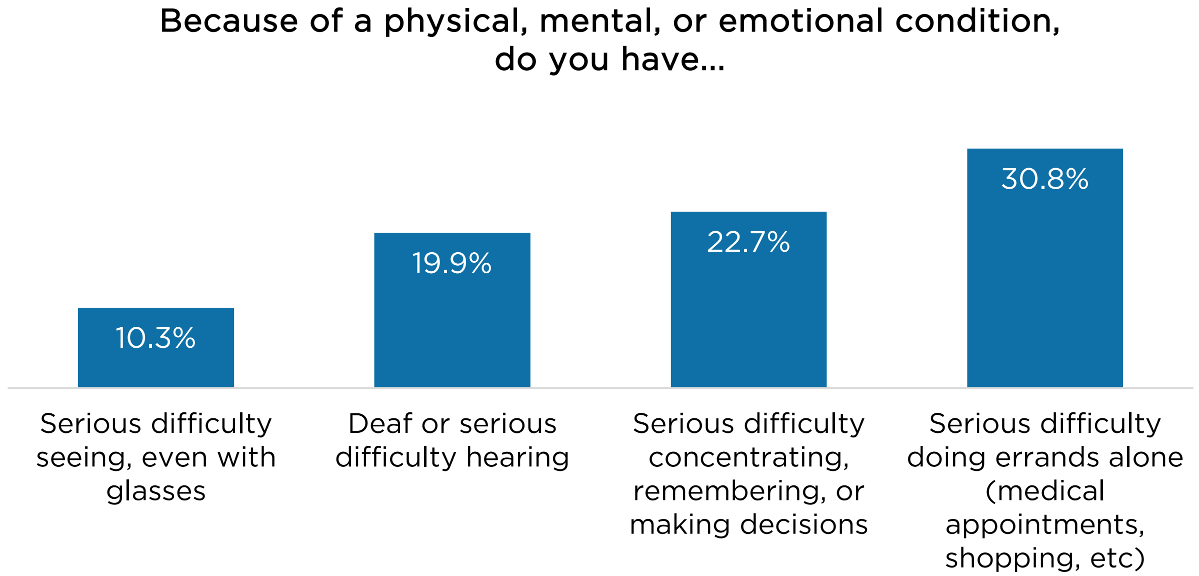
Additionally, an overwhelming majority (95 percent) expressed that remaining in their own homes as they age is very important to them and 71 percent value independence when planning for long-term services. This underscores the need for homes to be safe and properly equipped to support independent living. Ensuring that homes are outfitted to meet the evolving needs of older adults is crucial to enable aging in place and maintain autonomy.



Chronic diseases and other conditions can affect older adults' independence and well-being. Vision problems affect 1 in 10, and hearing issues impact 1 in 5 older adults—both important considerations for community events and planning. Physical and mental conditions can greatly affect daily and independent living tasks.



One in four older adults indicated that their conditions restrict them in the ability to remember and make decisions and almost one in three have difficulty doing errands and getting around.



Chronic diseases can also have an impact on activities necessary for daily and independent living. About two-thirds of older adults reported having arthritis, a condition that can affect both their mobility and their ability to perform everyday tasks such as dressing.

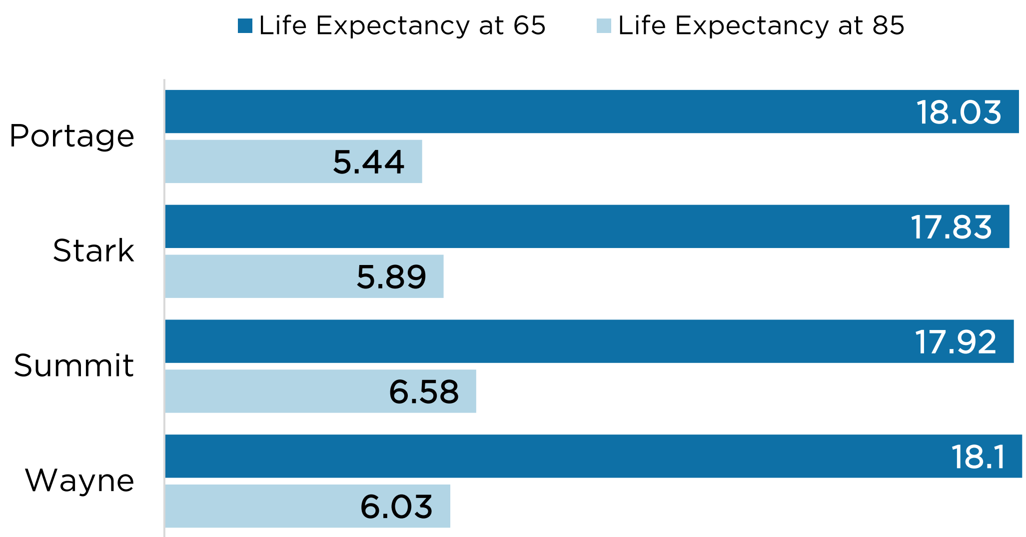
During community discussions, members of the immigrant and refugee community expressed concerns regarding limited access to culturally relevant health services, insufficient counseling resources, and challenges in managing chronic conditions, including issues related to diabetes equipment.

Data Insights

Life Expectancy

Life expectancy is influenced by genetics, individual decisions, and the environment where people live. Large differences in life expectancy within a community are indications of community inequality. The chart below shows the average remaining life expectancy for individuals at both 65 and 85 years of age in the counties within the Direction Home region.[4] Life expectancy is similar in all the counties.

Life Expectancy at Certain Ages by County, Direction Home, PSA10B Region



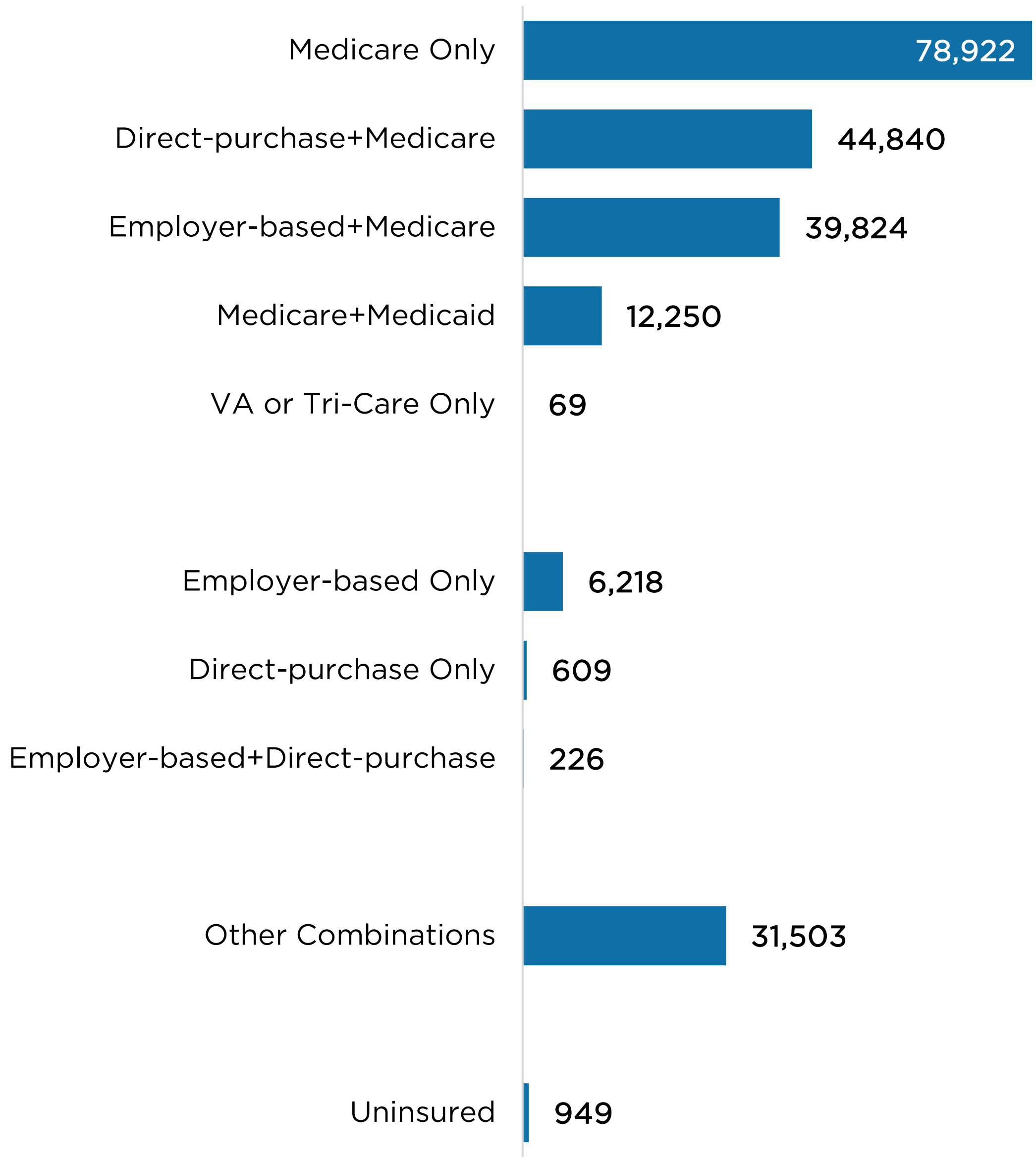
Health Coverage

The vast majority of adults over the age of 65 in the region have at least some health insurance coverage, but 949 older adults over the age of 65 are uninsured. Over 96 percent of non-institutionalized insured older adults have at least some public coverage. As shown below, Medicare is the most common source, either alone or in combination with other types of insurance. Most people covered by Medicare supplement it with private coverage, either purchased directly or through their employer. There are also 12,250 dually enrolled individuals who are covered by both Medicare and Medicaid.

[4] U.S. Census Bureau and the Ohio Department of Health https://miamioh.edu/cas/centers-institutes/scripps-gerontology-center/research/ohio-population-research.html

Type of Health Insurance Coverage (65+)

Direction Home, PSA10B



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2019-2023

Disabilities

Twenty-eight percent of non-institutionalized adults over age 60, or 83,744 people, had one or more disabilities. This percentage increases to 31.2 percent of adults over age 65, or 68,752 people. This includes 22.5 percent of those ages 65-74 and 44.8 percent who are 75 and older. As shown below, ambulatory difficulties, defined as having serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs, were most common, followed by hearing difficulty, and independent living difficulties, where a person has difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping.[5]

Older Adults 65+ With One or More Disabilities	#	%
With a **Hearing** Difficulty: *Deafness or serious difficulty hearing*	27,793	12.6%
With a **Vision** Difficulty: *Blindness or serious difficulty seeing, even with glasses*	10,086	4.6%
With a **Cognitive** Difficulty: *Serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions*	15,340	7.0%
With an **Ambulatory** Difficulty: *Serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs*	41,768	19.0%
With a **Self-Care** Difficulty: *Difficulty bathing or dressing*	12,763	5.8%
With an **Independent Living:** Difficulty *doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping*	27,431	12.4%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2019-2023

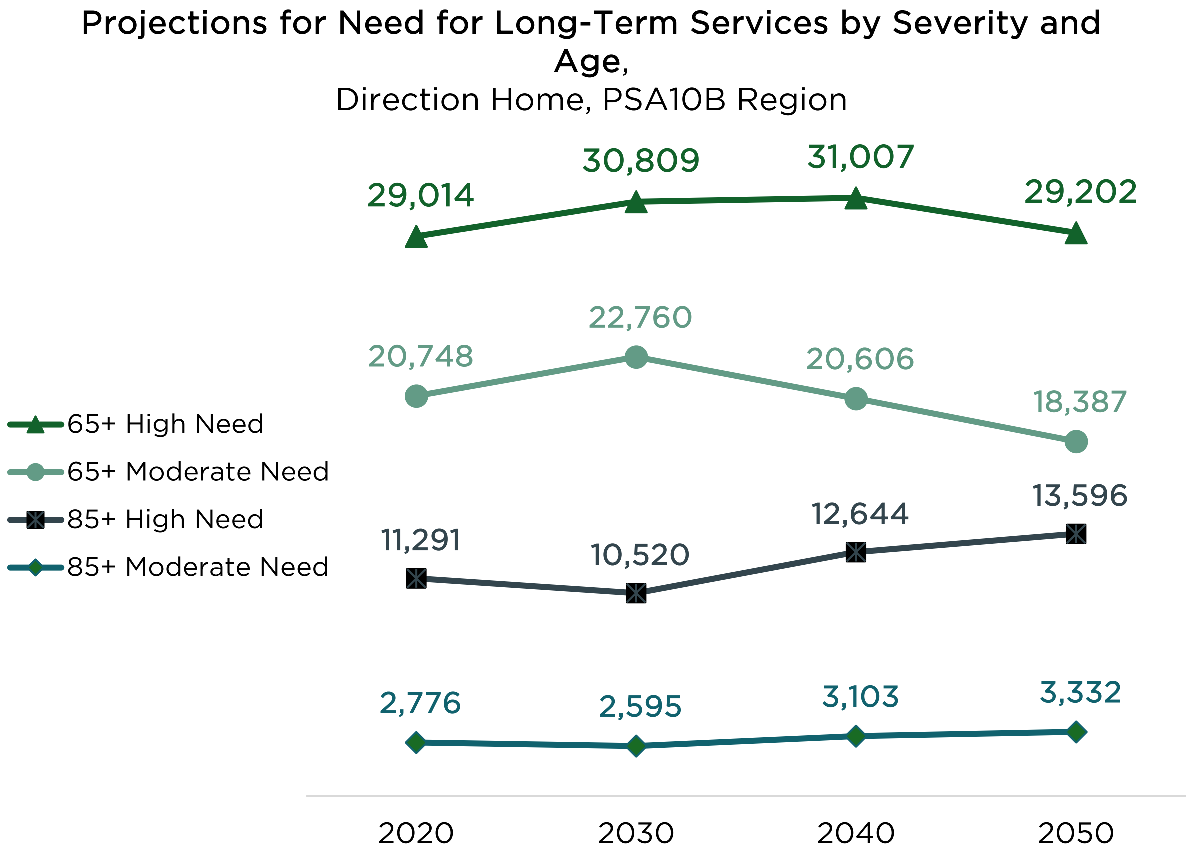
Projections for Need for Long-Term Services

More adults over 65 are projected to have both moderate and high need for long-term services in 2030. By 2040, more adults over 85 are projected to have both moderate and high need for long-term services.

Moderate Need is defined as having one impairment with an Activity of Daily Living (ADL) task (mobility, eating, bathing, dressing, grooming, toileting) that requires direct assistance or two or more impairments in Instrumental Activity of Daily Living (IADL) tasks (Shopping, meal preparation, light housework) that require hands-on assistance. High Need is defined as having two impairments with Activities of Daily Living (ADL) tasks (mobility, eating, bathing, dressing, grooming, toileting) that require hands-on assistance or a doctor's

[5] "How Disability Data are Collected from The American Community Survey," U.S. Census Bureau, https://www.census.gov/topics/health/disability/guidance/data-collection-acs.html

diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease or Related Dementia or one impairment with ADL tasks and medication management assistance.[6]



Alzheimer's Prevalence

It is estimated that 11.1 percent of adults 65 and older in the Area Agency on Aging, PSA10B region have Alzheimer's Disease. This is an estimate of over 25,000 older adults across the region. Alzheimer's Disease prevalence estimates vary across the four counties, with Summit County having the highest estimated prevalence of 11.5 percent of the population 65 and older.[7]

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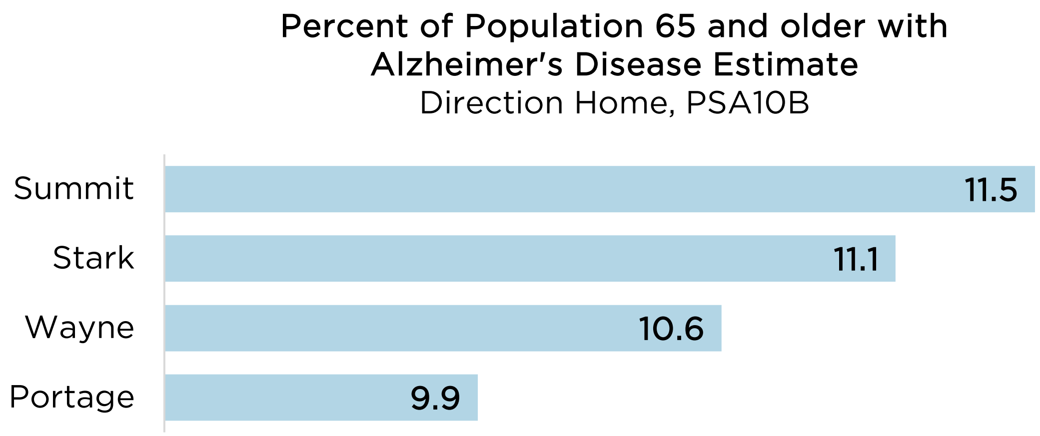
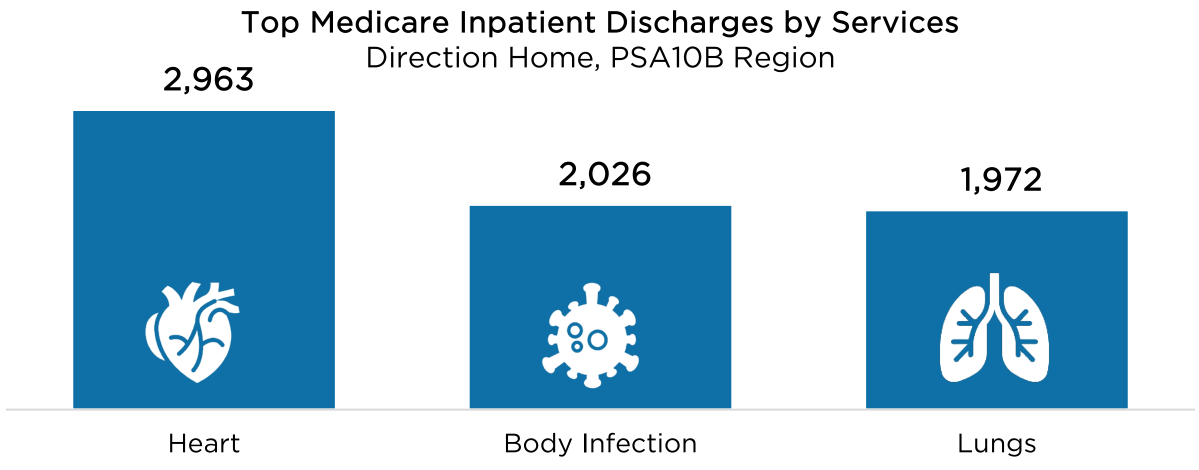
[6] Calculated using data from the Ohio Department of Development (ODD), Office of Research, "County Population Projections: 2020-2050"
Ohio Department of Development (ODD), Office of Research, "County Population Projections: 2020-2050;" National Health and Aging Trends Study (NHATSs). Produced and distributed by www.nhats.org with funding from the National Institute on Aging (grant number NIA U01AG32947)."

[7] Dhana K, Beck T, Desai P, Wilson RS, Evans DA, Rajan KB. Prevalence of Alzheimer's disease dementia in the 50 US states and 3142 counties: A population estimate using the 2020 bridged-race postcensal from the National Center for Health Statistics. Alzheimer's Dement. 2023;19:4388–4395. https://doi.org/10.1002/alz.13081



Top Reasons for Hospitalization

In 2023, the top three reasons for inpatient services for Medicare patients in the Direction Home region were conditions of the heart, body infections, and lungs. These three categories accounted for over half (52.1 percent) of all inpatient discharges. Heart-related discharges include heart failure, cardiac arrhythmia, acute myocardial infarction, coronary bypass surgery, valve replacement, and pacemaker implant. Body infections include septicemia, sepsis, post-operative infection, and infectious and parasitic diseases. Lung-related discharges include respiratory infection, pneumonia, bronchitis, pulmonary edema, COPD, and pulmonary embolism. Adding in stays related to kidney, digestive, and bone or muscle related issues accounts for three-fourths (77.9 percent) of all inpatient discharges. This data is for the Original Medicare (fee-for-service) population.[8]



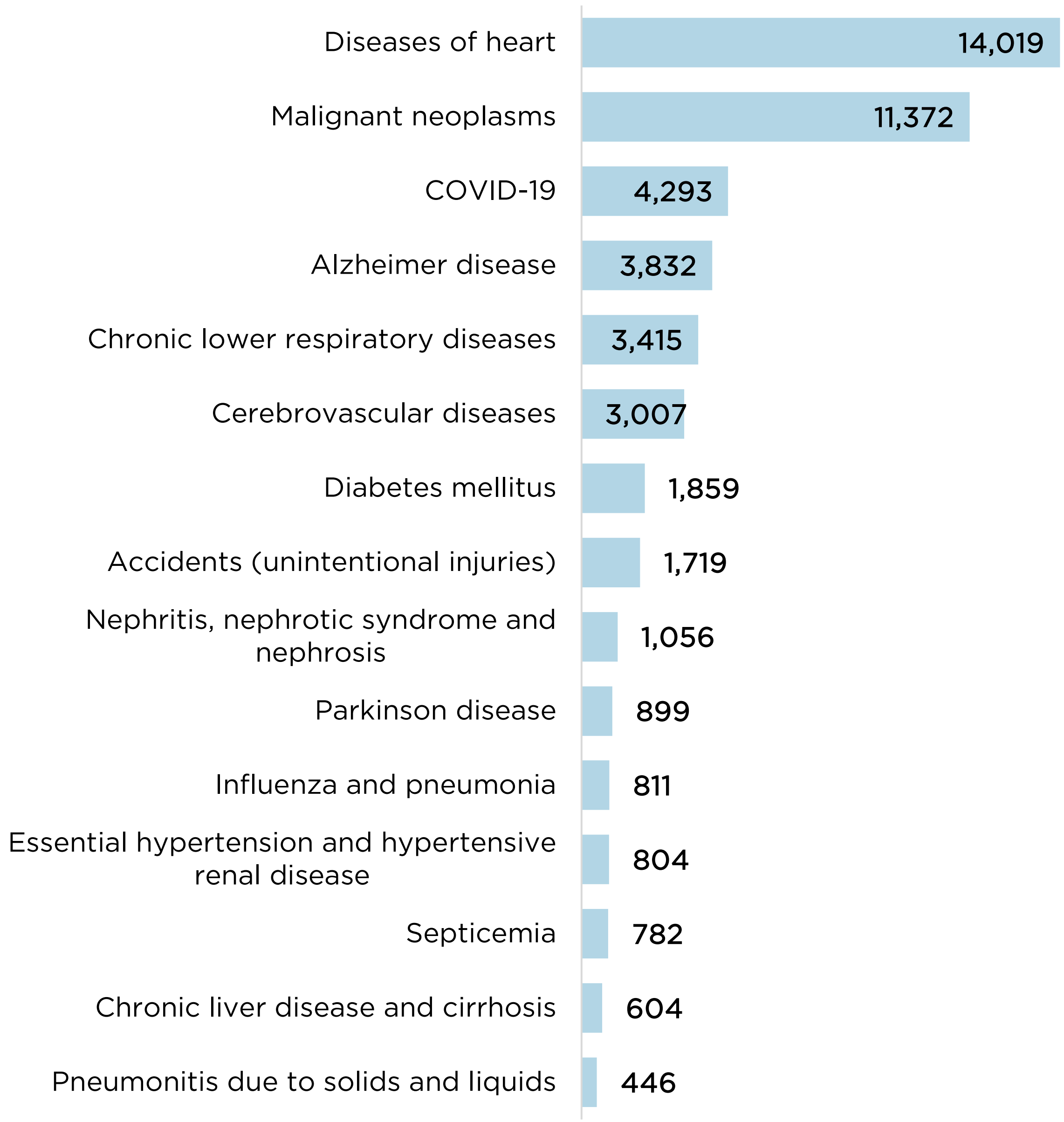
[8] "Medicare Inpatient Hospital Look-up Tool," Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, https://data.cms.gov/tools/medicare-inpatient-hospital-look-up-tool

Reason for Inpatient Stay	Sum of Total Discharges	Average Covered Charges	Average Total Payments	Average Medicare Payments
Heart	2,963	$68,481	$14,681	$11,306
Body Infection	2,026	$76,629	$18,074	$14,760
Lungs	1,972	$49,427	$11,894	$9,430
Kidney	1,297	$36,131	$9,618	$7,528
Bone or Muscle Related	1,076	$64,445	$15,058	$12,386
Digestive	1,076	$47,660	$11,962	$8,942
Head	729	$59,007	$13,118	$9,885
Nutrition or Dehydration	375	$38,240	$8,733	$6,643
Spine	349	$120,543	$29,514	$23,744
Type of Inflammation	188	$27,402	$8,243	$5,538
Blood	157	$39,604	$8,851	$6,764
Blood Vessels	152	$69,336	$15,330	$11,677
Back	145	$36,983	$9,248	$6,984
Diabetes	128	$49,778	$10,347	$7,046
Fainting	106	$44,445	$7,605	$5,702
Nervous System	84	$58,997	$11,990	$9,513
Chest	76	$69,194	$16,934	$10,777
Drug Abuse	76	$49,435	$9,431	$7,274
Cancer Related	71	$40,086	$11,543	$9,215
Liver	64	$45,161	$13,218	$9,980
Blood Pressure	49	$45,340	$7,338	$5,216
Other Procedure	49	$177,605	$39,238	$28,869
Obesity Related	48	$51,389	$15,591	$9,454
Symptoms of Illness	36	$43,178	$7,331	$5,352
Dizziness	34	$50,499	$7,181	$4,861
Hormonal	30	$27,272	$10,802	$7,943
Treatment Complications	14	$70,278	$16,022	$12,573

Leading Causes of Death

Between 2019 and 2023, the leading causes of death for adults 60 and older in the Direction Home region were diseases of the heart and malignant neoplasms; the medical term for cancerous tumors. These two causes account for half the deaths. Over 4,200 deaths were attributed to COVID, over 3,800 deaths were attributed to Alzheimer's, and over 3,400 deaths were caused by chronic lower respiratory diseases.

Leading causes of death for adults 60 and older 2019-2023
Direction Home, PSA10B Region



Falls

Unintentional falls among older adults are a leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries. The risk of falling increases with aging-related realities such as vision loss, hearing loss, side effects from medications, and symptoms from conditions such as diabetes and arthritis. In the Direction Home region, between 2019-2023 there has been a year-over-year increase in the total number of deaths from unintentional falls among adults 65 years and older. In 2023, 188 adults aged 65 or older died in the region from unintentional falls.

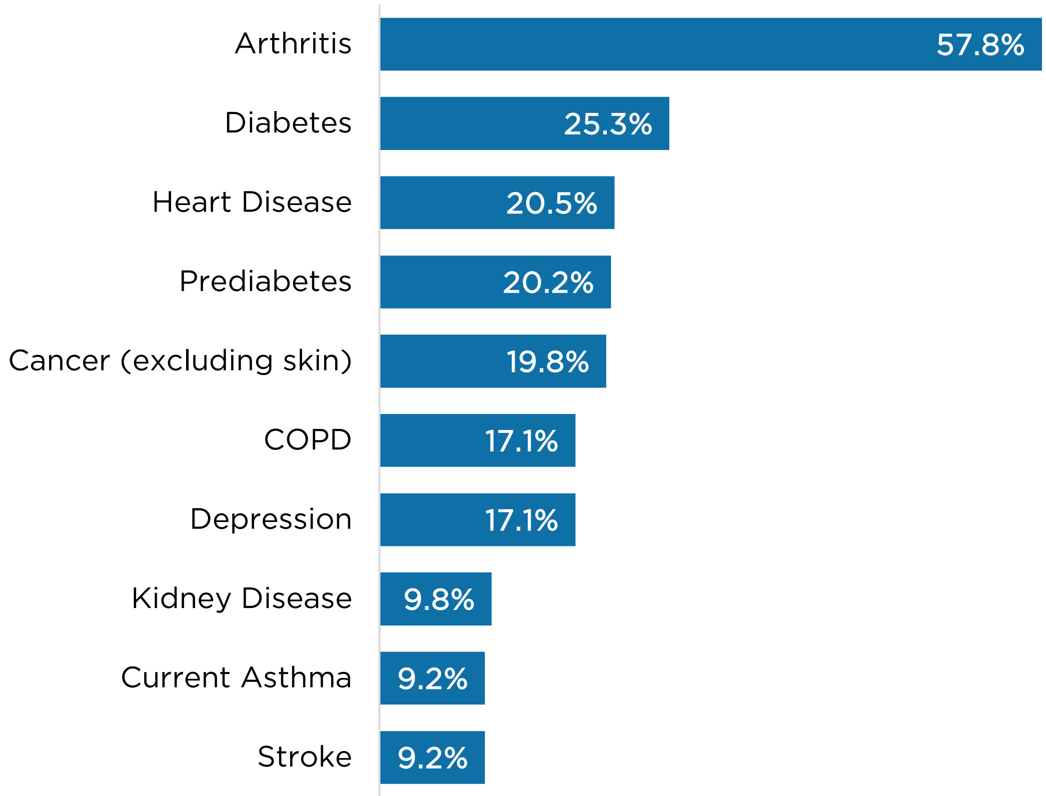
Number and Age-Adjusted Rate of Unintentional Fall Deaths Among Adults 65+ Years by County in PSA10B							
County	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2023 Rate	2020-2023 Rate
Portage	16	12	23	17	26	105.1	80.4
Stark	66	58	45	58	60	83.8	79.1
Summit	38	66	70	69	73	76.5	74.2
Wayne	24	23	32	31	29	143.7	145.5

Data Insights: Statewide

Chronic Diseases

The prevalence of many chronic diseases and conditions, including arthritis, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, prediabetes, skin cancer, other cancers, COPD, and kidney disease, increases as age increases.[9] Over half of all adults (57.8 percent) age 65 and older in Ohio suffer with arthritis. One in four older adults has diabetes, and one in five older adults has heart disease, prediabetes, and/or cancer.

Prevalence of Chronic Diseases and Conditions
Among Ohioans 65 years and older



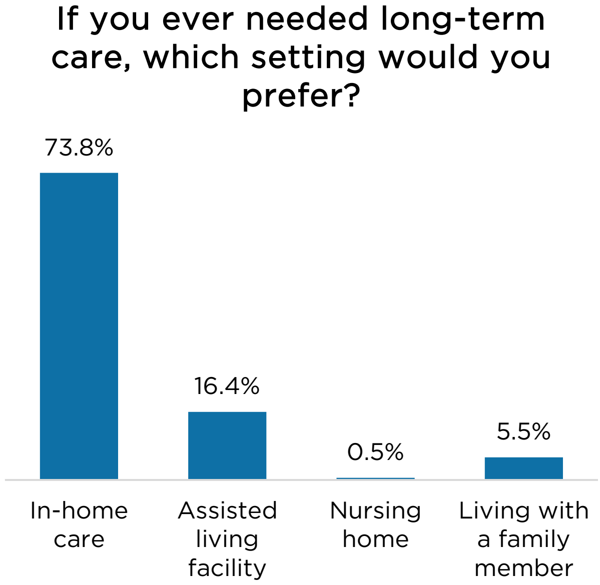
[9] Source: Ohio Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System: 2022 Annual Report. Chronic Disease Epidemiology and Evaluation Section, Bureau of Health Improvement and Wellness, Ohio Department of Health, 2024.

Housing & Living Environment

Community Insights

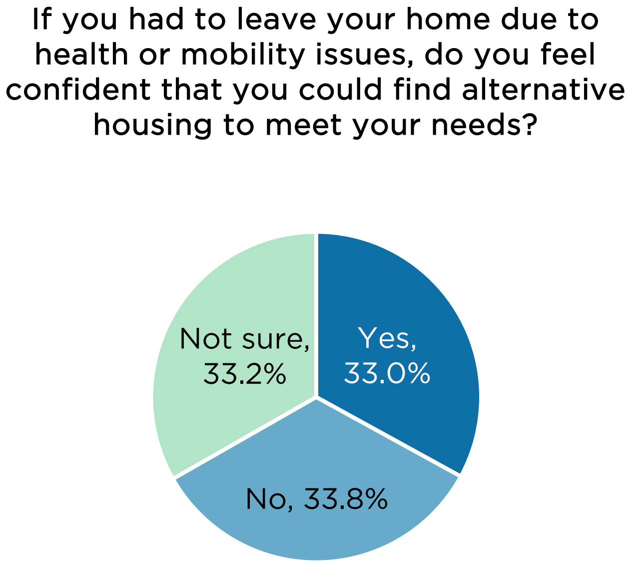
Housing and living environment play a critical role in older adults' ability to age safely, independently, and with dignity. The availability, affordability, and accessibility of appropriate housing options directly influence health, stability, and quality of life.

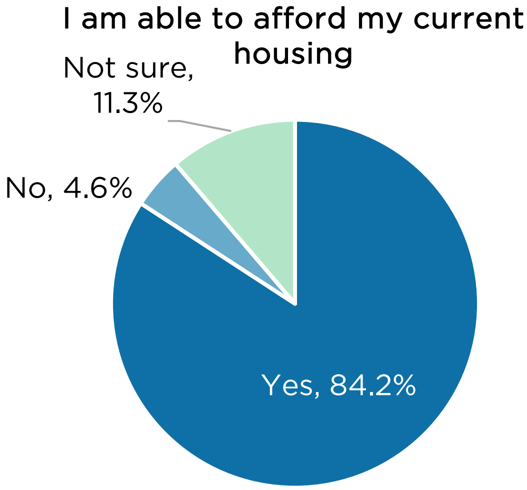
Many older adults expressed the desire to remain in their homes for as long as possible. Additionally, three-fourths of older adults said that they preferred long-term care to be provided in their home. However, only one-third of adults were confident that if they needed to move out, that they would be able to find alternative housing options.



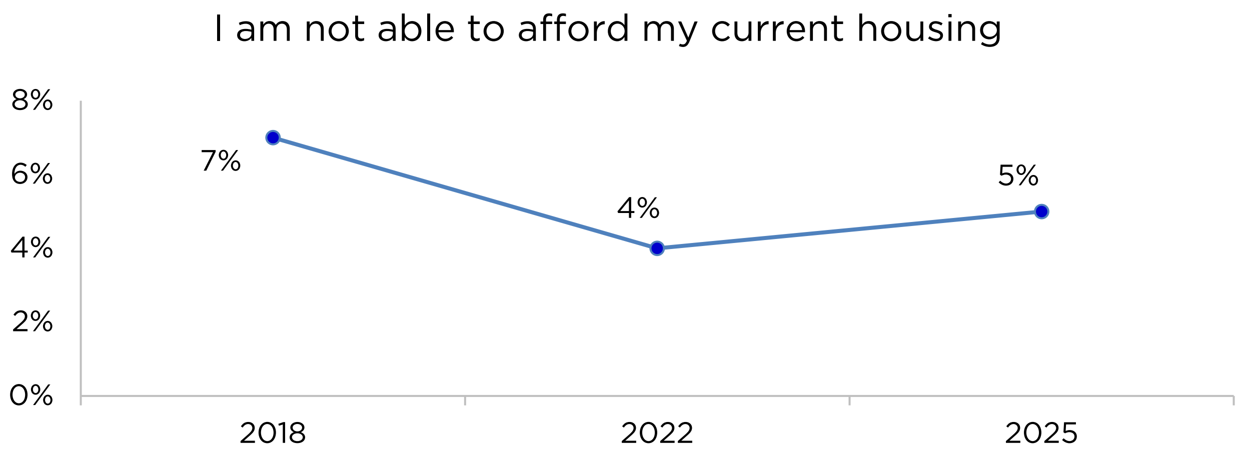
Housing affordability was top of mind during community conversations, with older adults citing rising housing costs, including property taxes and utilities, as straining their fixed incomes.

While the majority of older adults indicated that they could afford their current housing, close to 5 percent indicated that they were unable to.

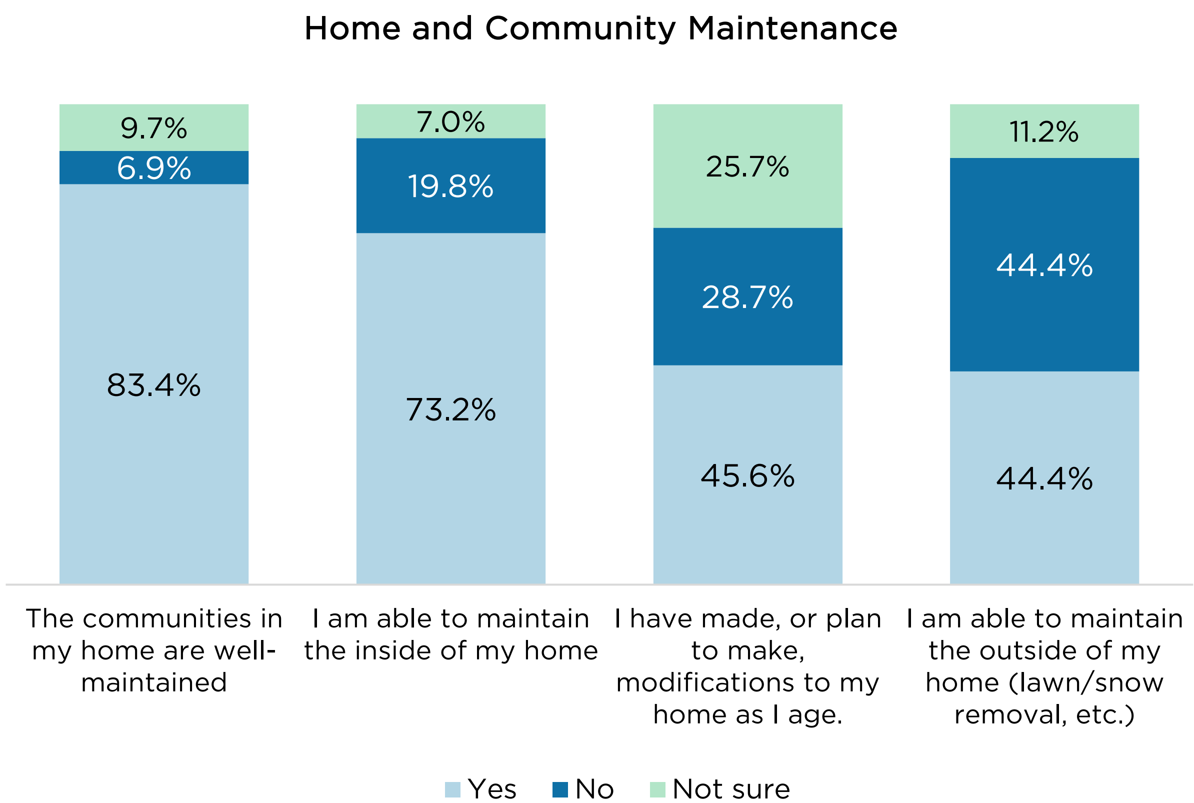




Data comparison through the years



For the most part, older adults are able to care for the inside of their homes, but the outdoor and lawn work is a bigger struggle. Community conversations echoed the survey results, and older adults said that they needed help with general maintenance items, like changing light bulbs.



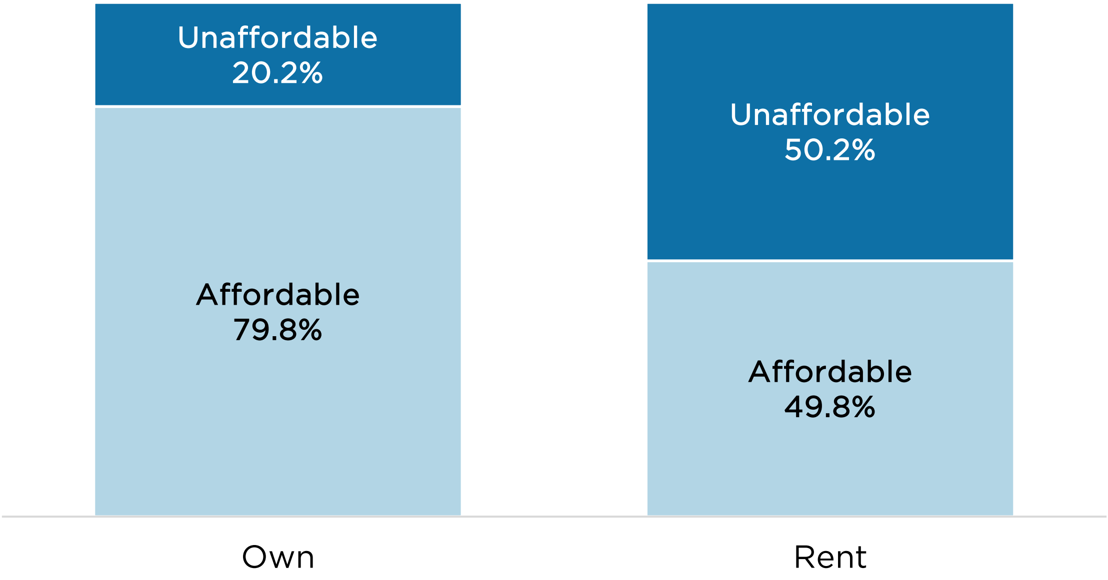
Data insights

Housing

According to data from the 2020 Decennial Census, there were 7,870 people in the region age 60 and older living in nursing facilities or skilled nursing facilities. Among older adults living in the community, most own their homes. Around 79 percent are owners and 21 percent are renters. In fact, although people ages 60 and above make up 26 percent of the population, 46 percent of all people who own their homes in the four-county area are older adults.

Although they are fewer in number, older adults who rent are more likely to struggle to afford their housing. Half (50.2 percent) of renters over age 60 pay 30 percent or more of their total income for housing costs, compared to 20.2 percent of owners. In total, 52,162 older adult (60+) households in the region are in unaffordable housing situations. When housing costs account for a large portion of a household's total income, it is more difficult for them to afford other necessities.

Housing Affordability by Tenure (60+)
Direction Home, PSA10B



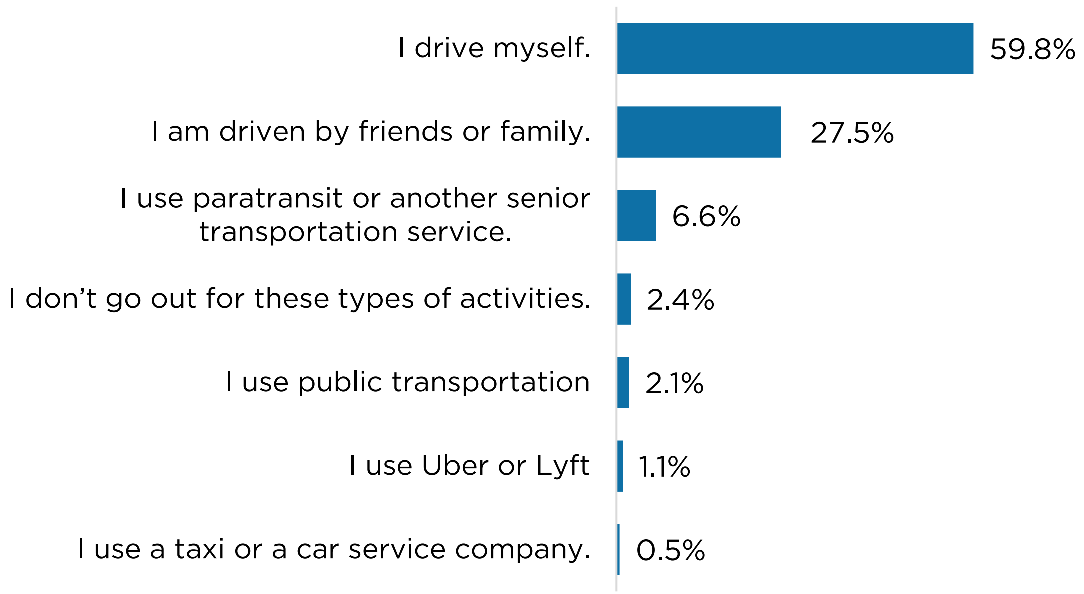
Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2019-2023

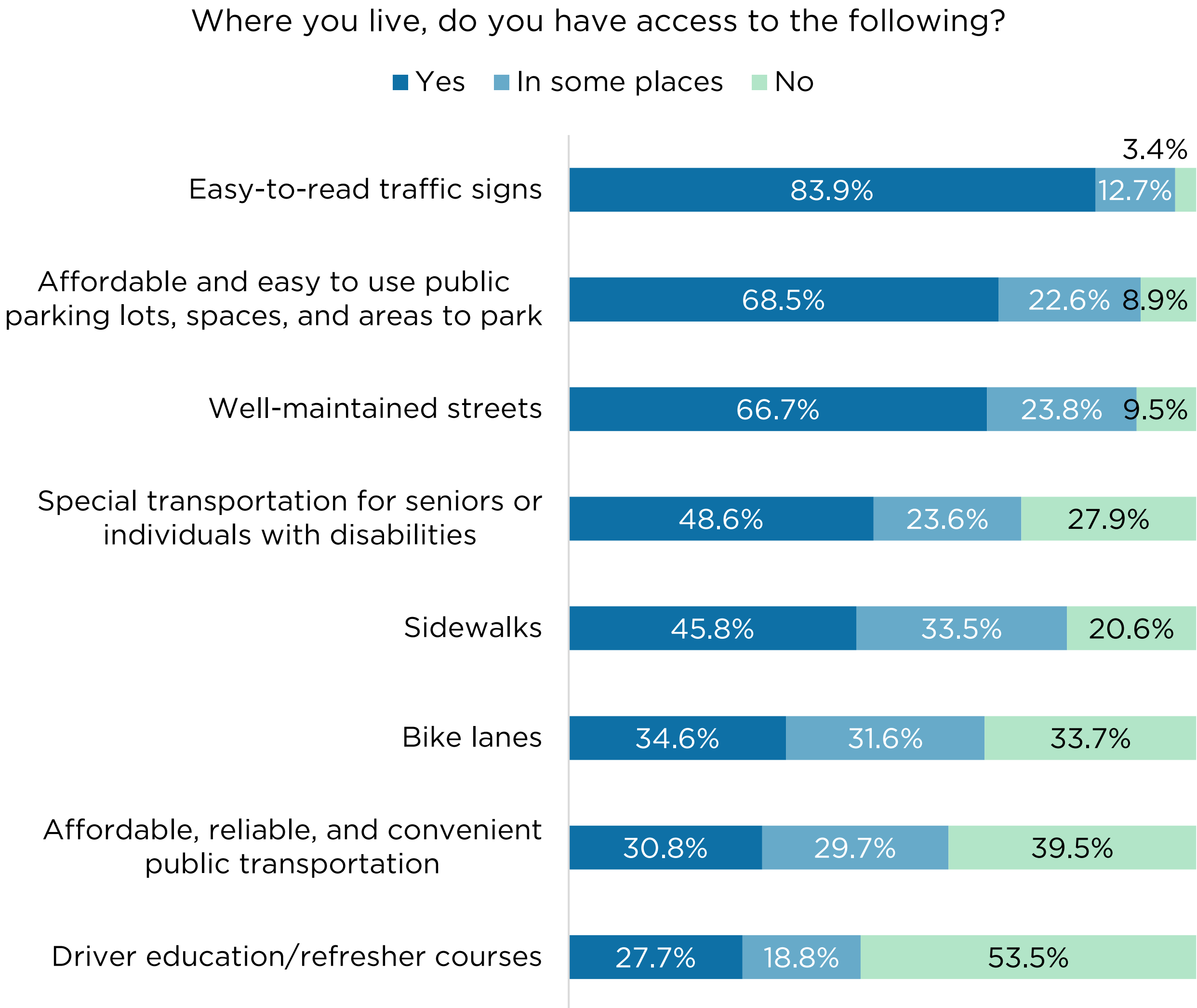
Transportation & Mobility

Community Insights

Over half of older adults indicated that they drive themselves to get around. One quarter are driven by friends or family. Less than 10 percent use various public or private transportation services. Community conversations revealed that older adults have used transportation services like SCAT or health insurance-sponsored rides, but that many reported them to be unreliable, with delays and limited coverage. Language barriers were also mentioned as a barrier, as older adults who didn't speak English well did not feel comfortable accessing transportation independently. Those without transportation usually rely on family or neighbors for rides but hesitate to ask frequently out of concern for being a burden.

Usual method of transportation





Data Insights

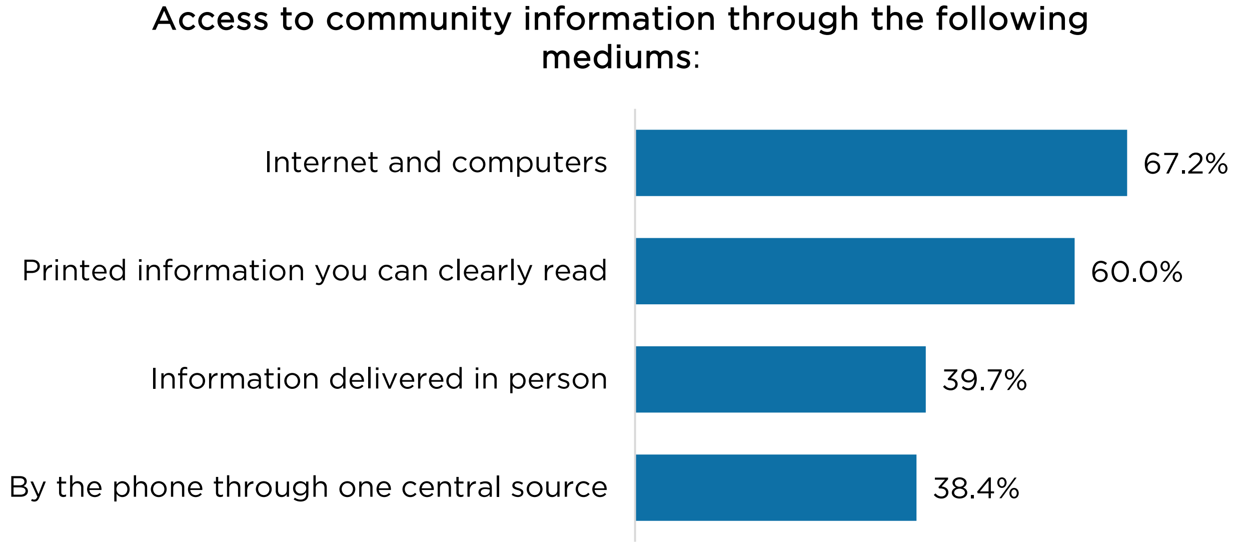
Access to a Vehicle

Of households with a householder 65 years and older in the Direction Home region, one in 11 households (8.9 percent) do not have access to a vehicle, according to the U.S. Census. This is 12,911 older adult households across the region. Access to a vehicle varies greatly depending on households that rent vs. own. Over a quarter (27.6 percent) of older adult households that rent do not have access to a vehicle, whereas less than five percent (4.2 percent) of older adult households that own their home do not have access to a vehicle.

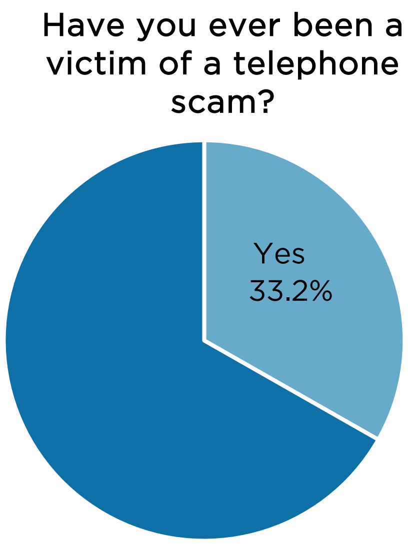
Communication & Information

Community Insights

In community conversations, older adults emphasized that they didn't know where to go to find information on community events and news. While two-thirds indicated through the survey that they use the internet to access community information, many in the conversations preferred a local newspaper or central spot on the internet. Individuals in the conversations personally felt that they were able to navigate the digital landscape but talked about others who were unable to navigate the internet well.



One-third of older adults indicated that they had been a victim of a telephone scam. This was a serious concern brought up in the community conversations and led to some mistrust in the service system as well. Older adults expressed that they were hesitant to reach out for assistance due to a fear of fraud.



Data Insights

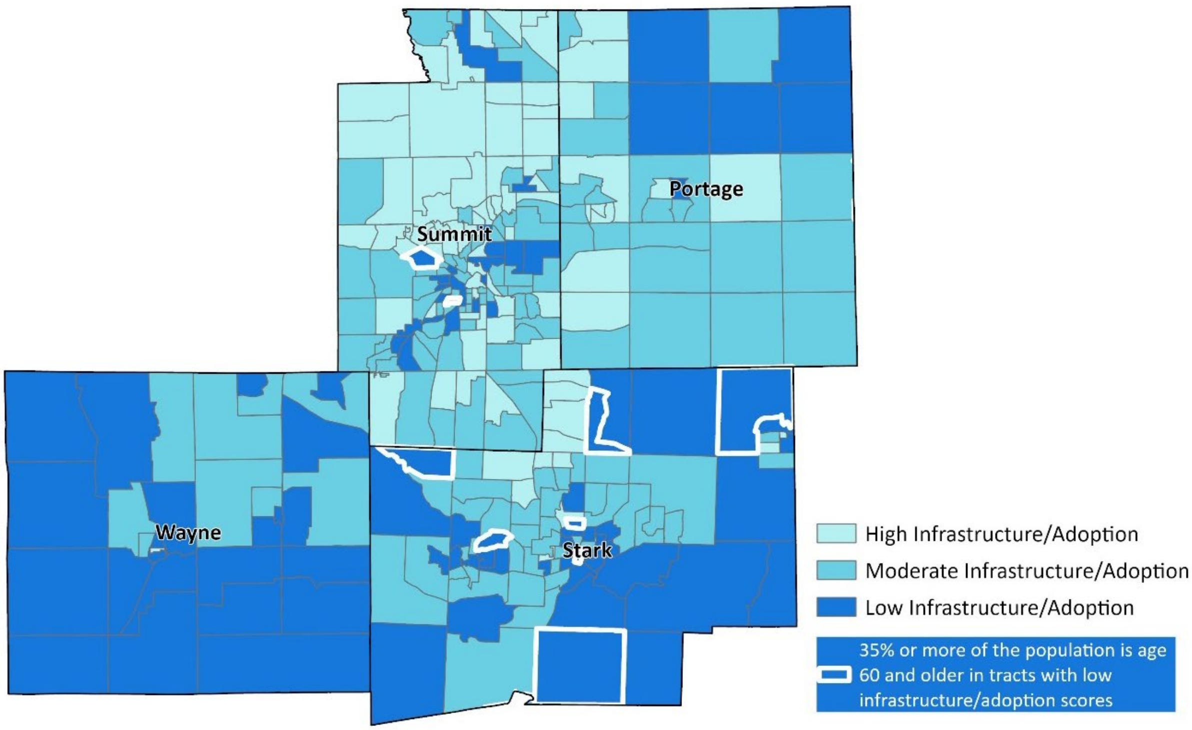
Access to the Internet

In recent years, the number of older adults who have access to the internet has increased. According to the U.S. Census, around 81.1 percent of people over the age of 65 report that they have a broadband subscription. On the other hand, 25,381 adults over the age of 65 have no computer at all.

The Purdue Center for Regional Development developed a Digital Divide Index consisting of two components: a measure of infrastructure/adoption and a socioeconomic measure. The infrastructure/adoption component includes average download (DNS) and upload (UPS) speeds, percent of homes without internet access or not subscribing (NIA), and percent of homes with no computing devices (NCD).[10] This infrastructure/adoption measure is mapped by tracts below. These tracts are compared to all the tracts in Ohio and are divided into thirds. The third of the tracts with the best infrastructure/adoption scores are noted as high infrastructure/adoption, the third of the tracts with the middle infrastructure/adoption scores are noted as moderate infrastructure/adoption, and the third of the tracts with the worst infrastructure/adoption scores are noted as low infrastructure/adoption. Any tracts with low infrastructure/adoption scores that also have 35 percent of the population in the tract age 60 or older are outlined.

[10] Gallardo, R. (2025). Digital Divide Index. Purdue Center for Regional Development. Retrieved from Digital Divide Index (DDI): http://pcrd.purdue.edu/ddi

Digital Infrastructure/Adoption Score
Direction Home, PSA10B

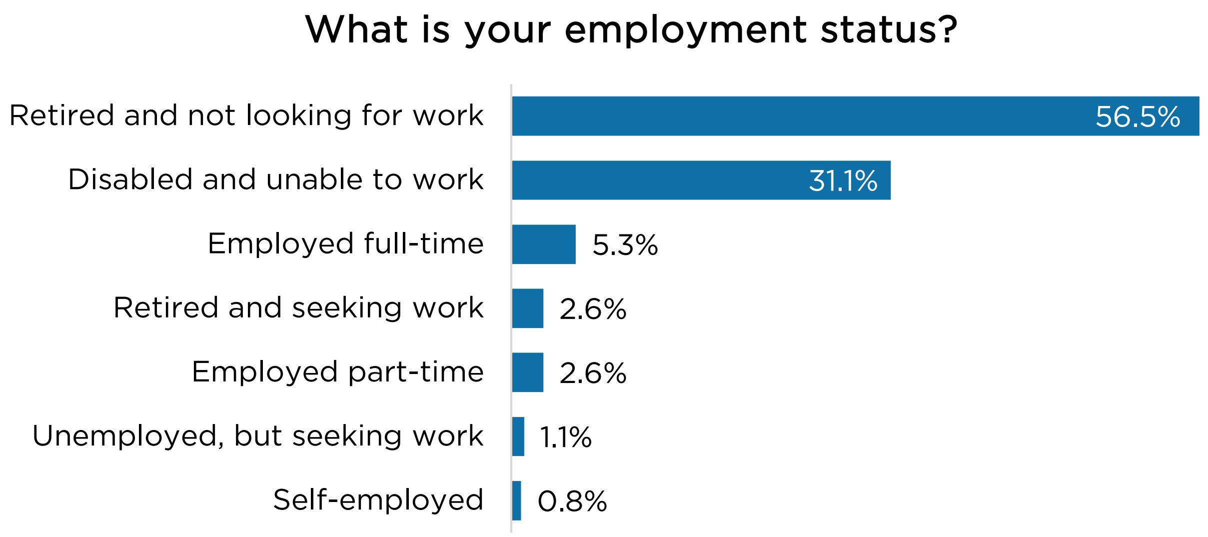


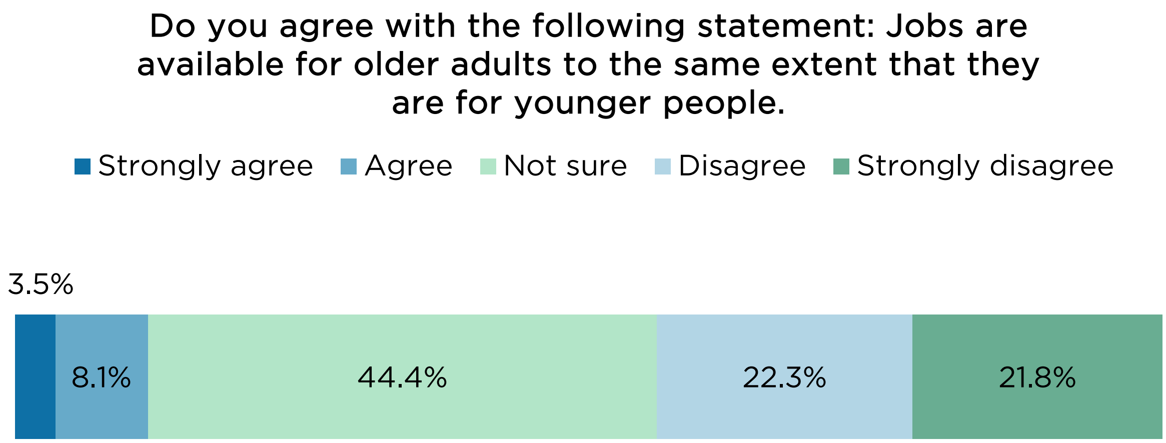
Gallardo, R. (2025). Digital Divide Index. Purdue Center for Regional Development. Retrieved from Digital Divide Index (DDI): http://pcrd.purdue.edu/ddi

Economic Security

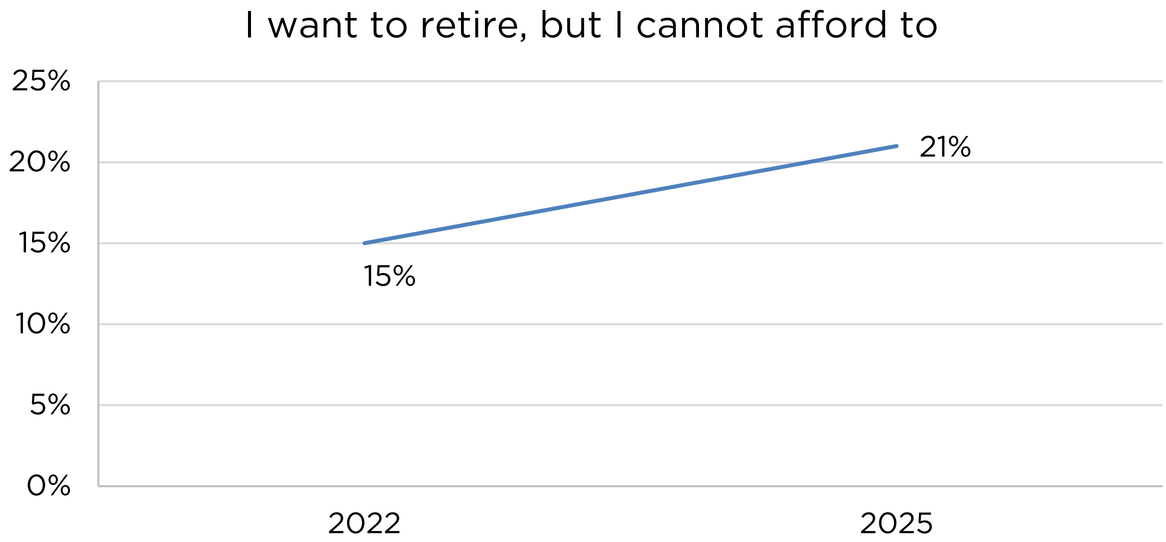
Community Insights

As people live longer, many older adults are working later into life, sometimes by choice and sometimes out of financial necessity. More than half of the older adults surveyed reported being retired and not seeking employment. However, eight percent are employed and another four percent are actively looking for work. Of those employed, a third indicated that they will work for as long as possible for professional reasons or personal reward and a third indicated that they needed to work for financial reasons. Nearly half of all older adults (44 percent) expressed the view that job opportunities for older adults are not as readily available as they are for younger individuals. During community discussions, participants reinforced this finding, noting challenges in finding positions that are both accessible and suitable for older adults. One respondent specifically mentioned difficulty locating jobs that do not require prolonged standing, illustrating that physical demands can limit job options for older adults.


What is your employment status?
Retired and not looking for work
56.5%
Disabled and unable to work
31.1%
Employed full-time
5.3%
Retired and seeking work
2.6%
Employed part-time
2.6%
Unemployed, but seeking work
1.1%
Self-employed
0.8%


Do you agree with the following statement: Jobs are available for older adults to the same extent that they are for younger people.
Strongly agree
Agree
Not sure
Disagree
Strongly disagree
3.5%
8.1%
44.4%
22.3%
21.8%

Data comparison through the years

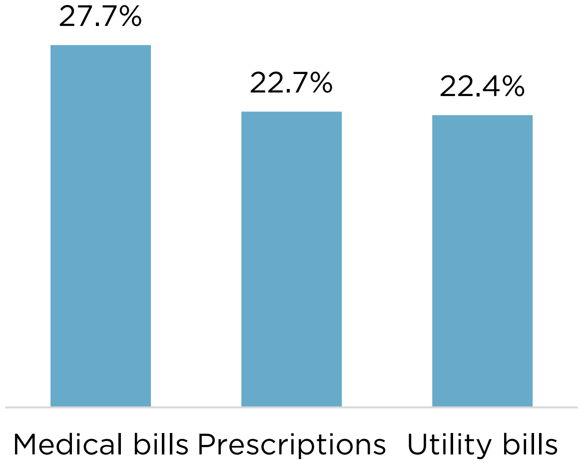


Affordability concerns are widespread and tied closely to fixed incomes. Only twelve percent of older adults had no concern about being able to afford services as they aged, while nearly half reported being either very or extremely concerned. An additional 38 percent reported being slightly concerned, which may indicate that financial insecurity is present even without acute hardship.

Where would you decrease your monthly spending if you have an increase in medical or home health costs?	
Top 5 areas of decreased spending if necessary	Percent
Restaurants	50.8%
Groceries	46.7%
Entertainment	40.8%
Gifts	28.3%
Over the counter medical expenses	22.3%

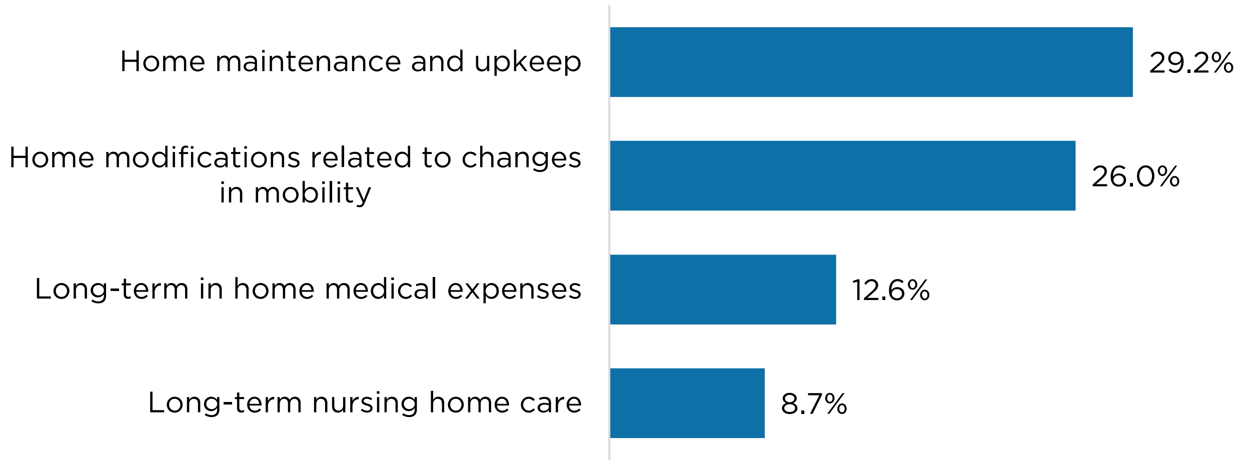
Current affordability challenges are already impacting essential expenses. More than one in four (27 percent) older adults stated that they would be unable to afford medical bills. A similar number indicated difficulty affording prescriptions or utilities without having to sacrifice other necessities. Twenty-two percent had extreme concern about the ability to afford services. Only 16 percent of respondents indicated that they would be able to maintain their current monthly expenditure if medical costs increased, without having to make any adjustments.

Unable to afford these expenses without sacrificing other necessities.



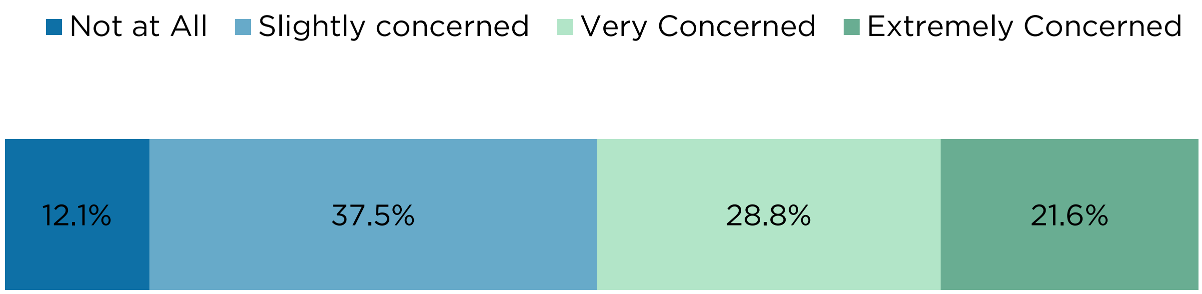
Individuals expressed concern over rising costs and stagnated fixed incomes in community conversations. Others expressed that they did not qualify for assistance programs but were still struggling to afford basic needs.

Feel confident in the ability to pay for:



Confidence in affording future care needs is notably low, particularly for long-term care services. While around one in four older adults felt confident in their ability to pay for home maintenance and upkeep or home modifications for mobility, even fewer felt that they would be able to pay for long-term care. Only 13 percent felt confident they could afford long-term in-home medical expenses, and fewer than one in ten (9 percent) felt confident in their ability to pay for long-term nursing home care. Overall, approximately two-thirds of older adults indicated they would not be able to afford long-term nursing care if it were needed.

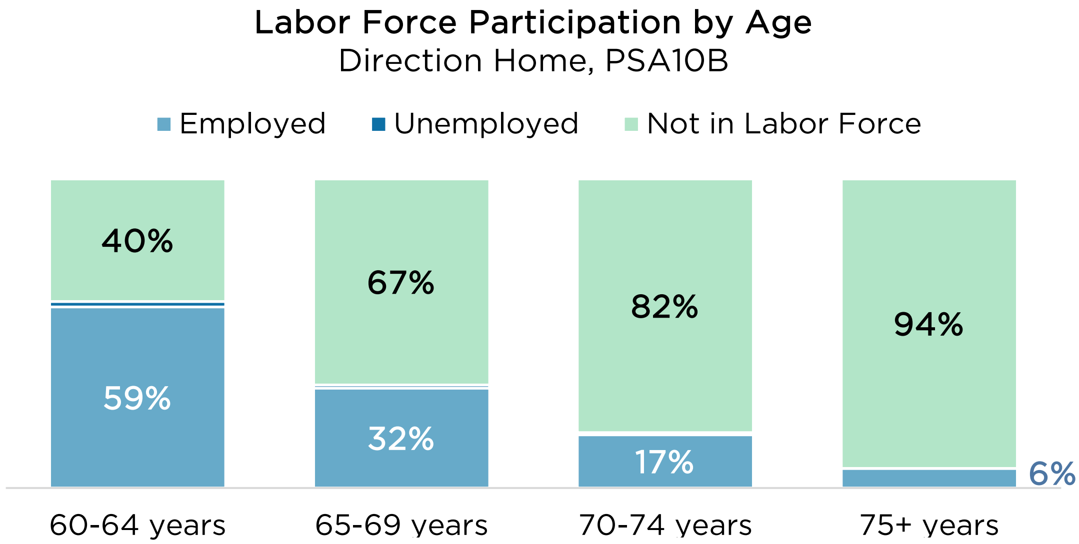
How concerned are you about being able to afford the services you may need as you age?



Data insights

Labor Force Participation

Nationwide trends show that people are delaying retirement and remaining in the workforce longer than in previous generations. In the Direction Home region, over 92,502 people over the age of 60 are in the labor force, including 89,662 who are employed and 2,841 who are unemployed and actively looking for work. According to this data, the unemployment rate for older adults in the region overall was .9 percent. As shown in the chart below, labor force participation drops substantially after age 65, as people retire either by choice or by necessity.



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2019-2023

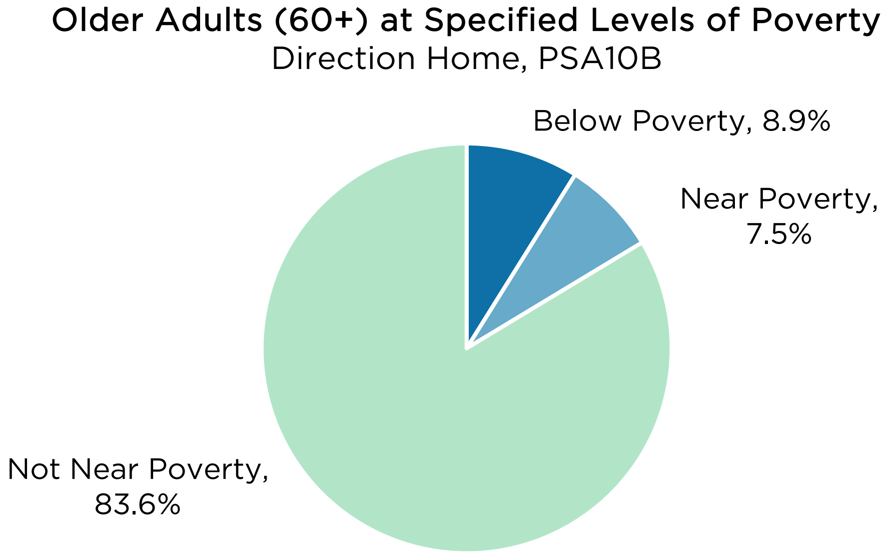
In the Direction Home region, most older adult (60+) households receive Social Security, and many have income from earnings or retirement. Public benefits programs such as SSI, cash assistance and SNAP support far fewer households and provide fewer resources on average than private retirement funds and earnings.

	Older Adult (60+) Households	
Income Source	Share of Households	Regional Average, Annual Income
Social Security	73.3%	$23,908
Retirement	56.6%	$31,570
Earnings	47.0%	$73,185
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	9.6%	
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	5.8%	$11,468
Cash Public Assistance	2.6%	$3,282

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2019-2023

Poverty

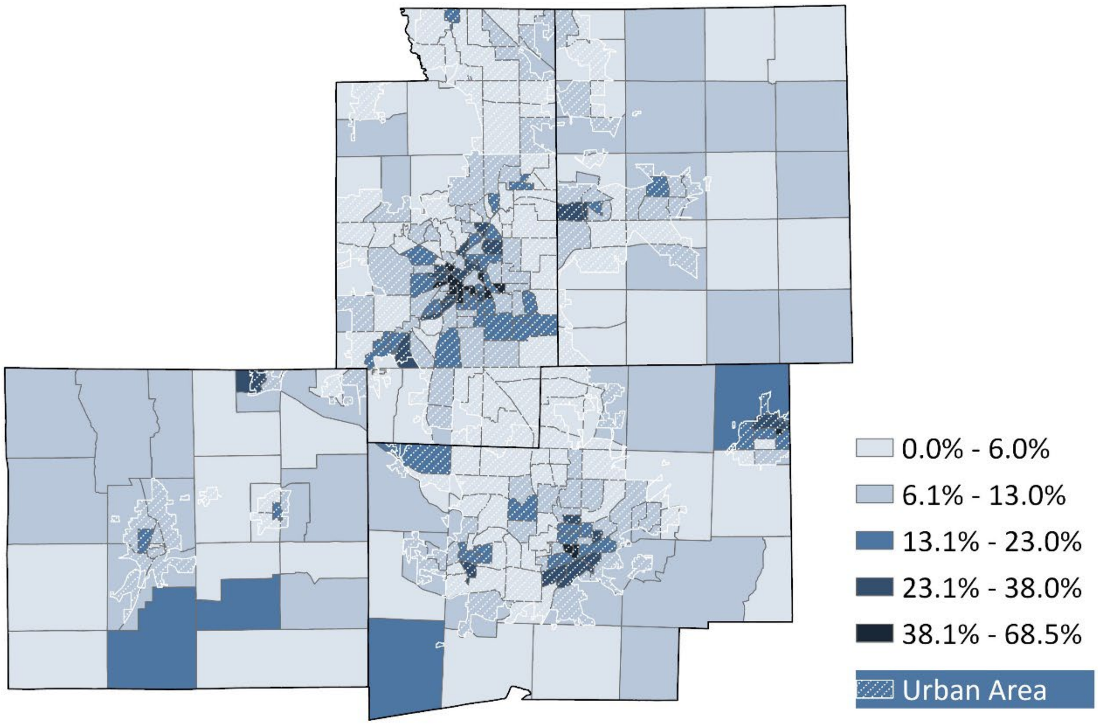
Even with the increases in labor force participation, many older adults (60+) in the region still struggle to make ends meet. One in eleven older adults have incomes that officially fall below the poverty threshold meaning that almost 27,000 people over age 60 in the region are living in poverty. Almost as many older adults are near poverty, with incomes between 100 and 150 percent of poverty. At 8.9 percent, the poverty rate for adults over the age of 60 in the region is lower than the state average of 10.2 percent.



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2019-2023

Poverty is not spread evenly throughout the region. The map below shows the concentration of older adults living in poverty in various parts of the region.

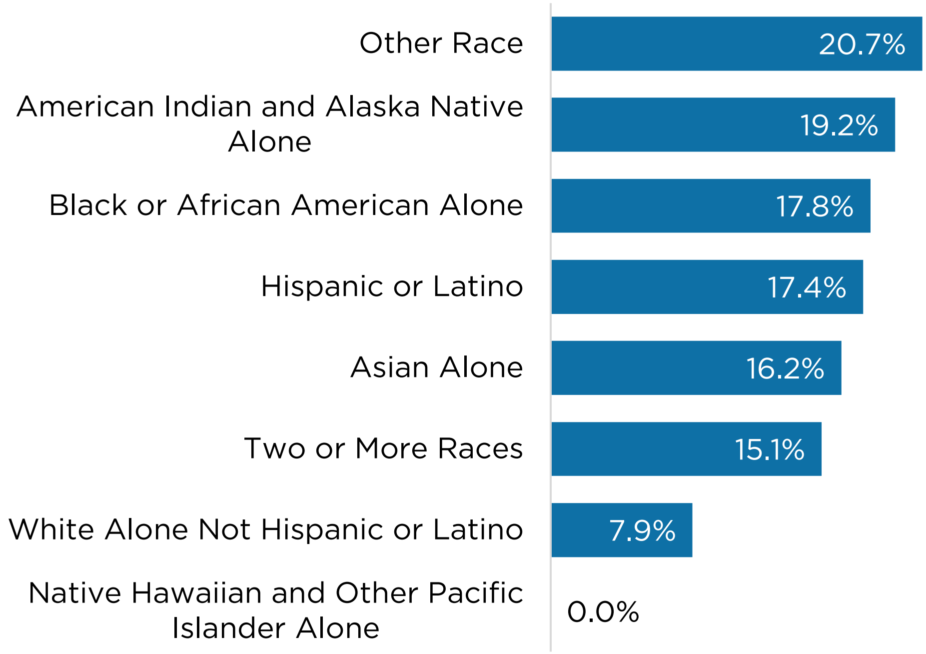
Percent of Population 60 and Older by Census Tract
Area Agency on Aging, PSA 10B



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2019-2023 5-Year Estimates

There are also racial disparities in poverty. As shown in the chart below, people over age 60 who are Black or African American are more than two times as likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanic White older adults, and the poverty rate for Hispanic or Latinx people over age 60 is more than twice the poverty rate for non-Hispanic Whites.

Poverty Rate (60+) by Race/Ethnicity
Direction Home, PSA10B

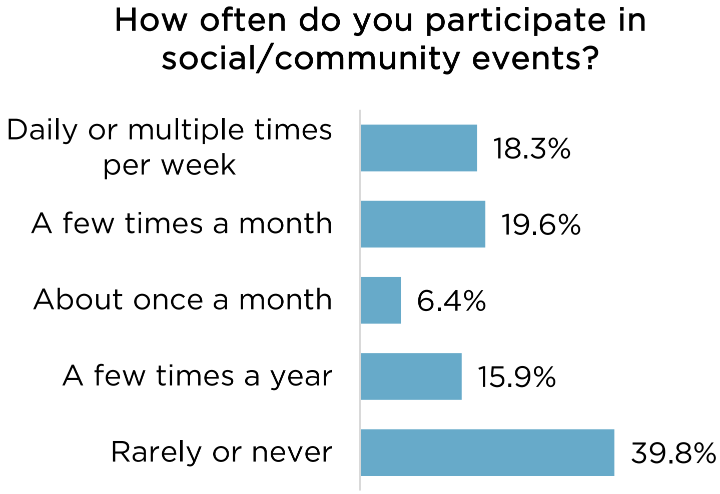


Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2019-2023

Community Connection & Social Engagement

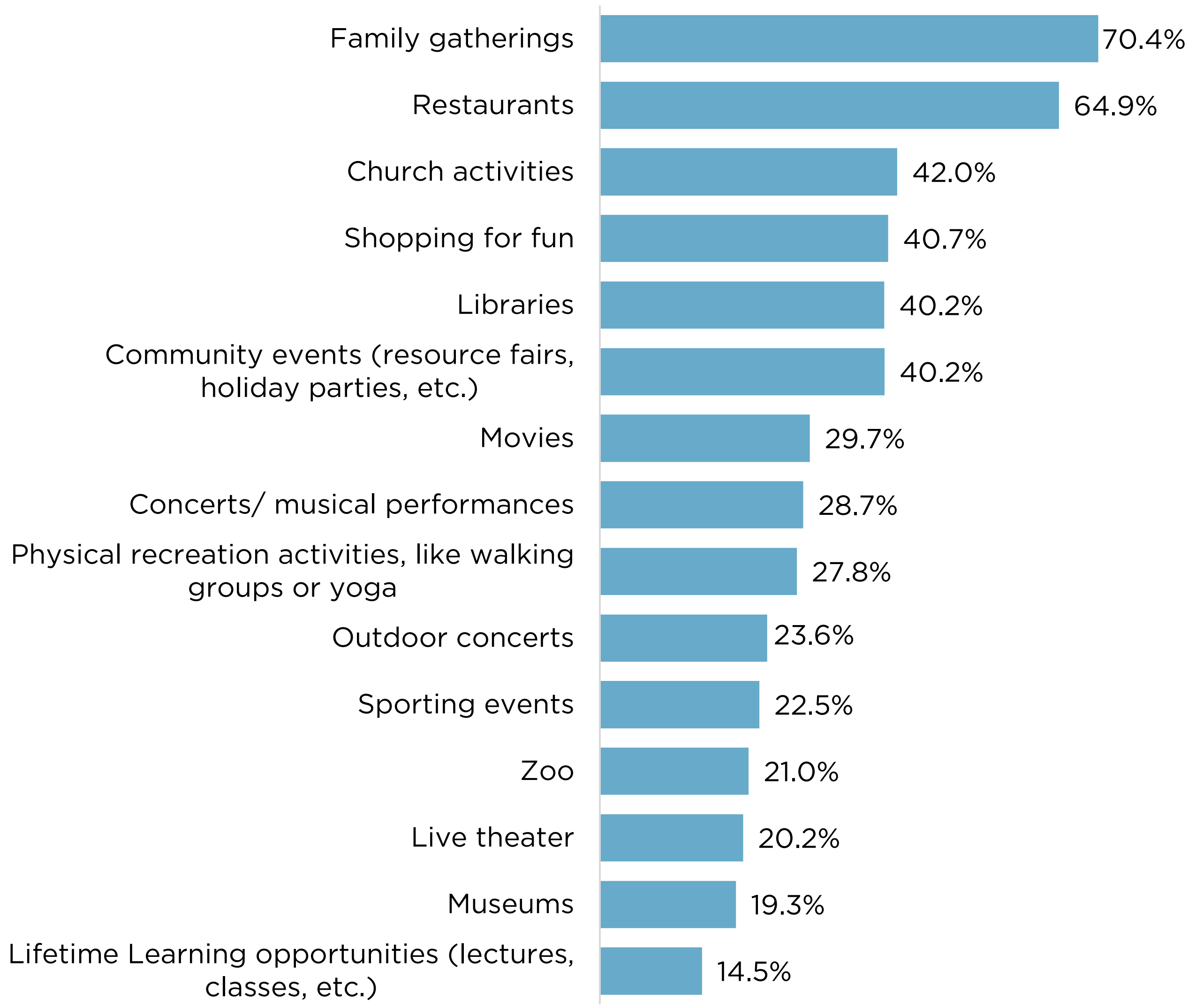
Community Insights

Social engagement and a sense of community connection are important components of healthy aging. Meaningful relationships, opportunities for participation, and access to inclusive activities contribute to older adults' overall well-being and quality of life.



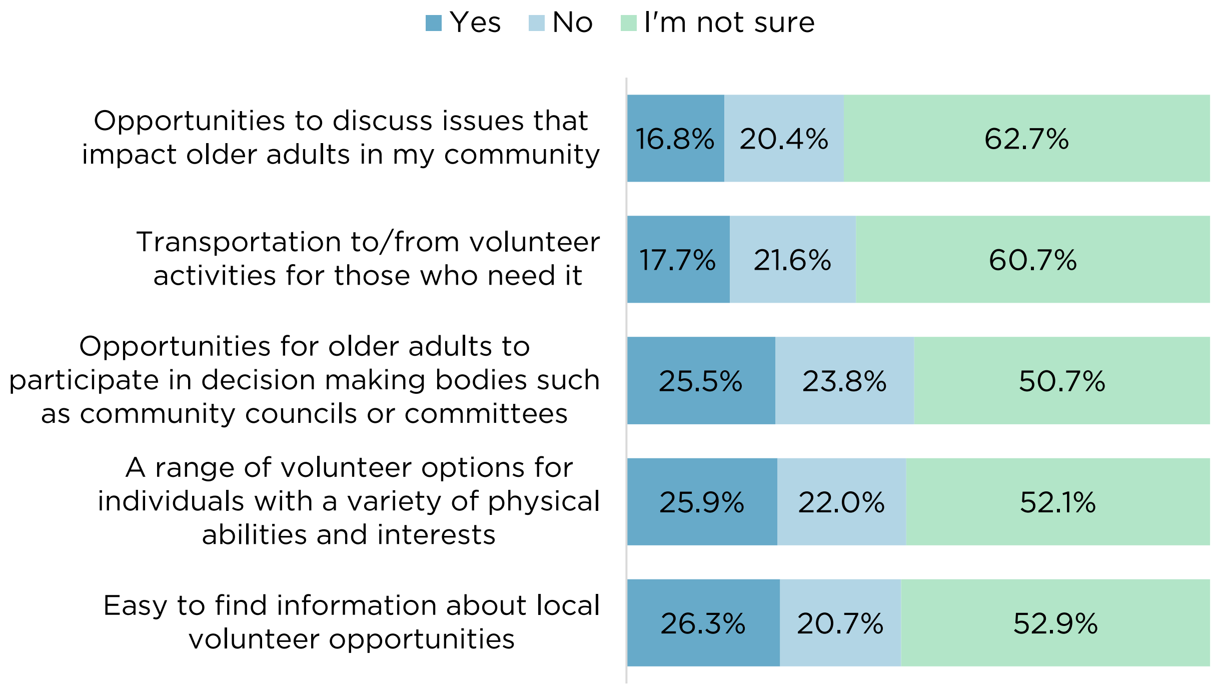
Many older adults in the region may have limited social engagement. Over 50 percent of older adults (56 percent) indicated that they participate in community events rarely or a few times a year. However, 71 percent of older adults indicated that they attend family gatherings. This suggests that while older adults may not participate in community events, their families remain an important part in social engagement and connection to their community.

Percent indicating they currently participate in activities:



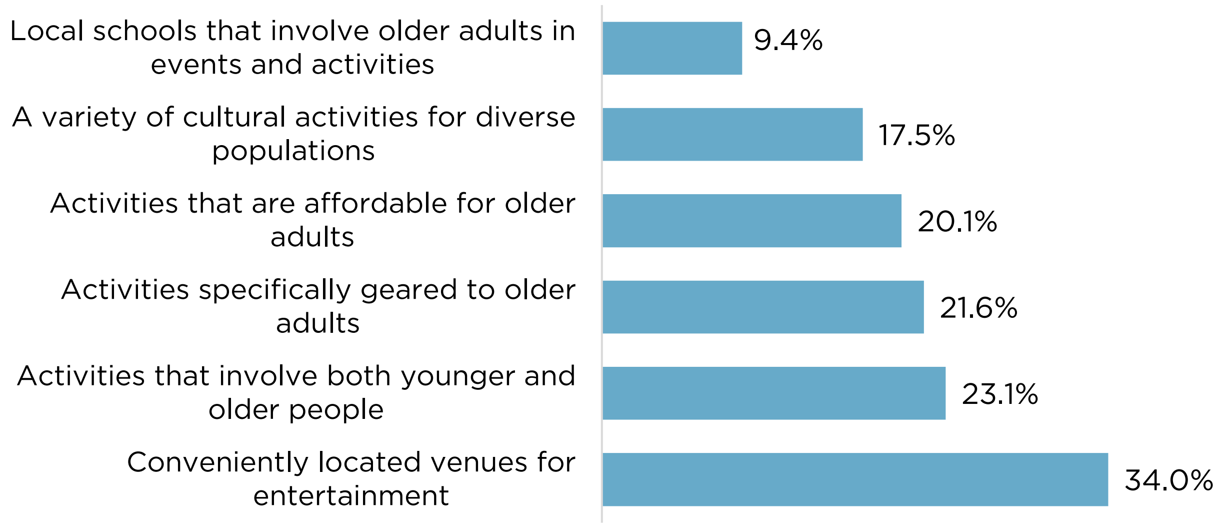
Less than a quarter of older adults feel confident about community opportunities for decision making and volunteering. However, the majority of older adults indicated that they weren't sure if these programs and opportunities existed. This may indicate that current programs could benefit from increased publicity or awareness efforts.

Where you live do you have access to the following?



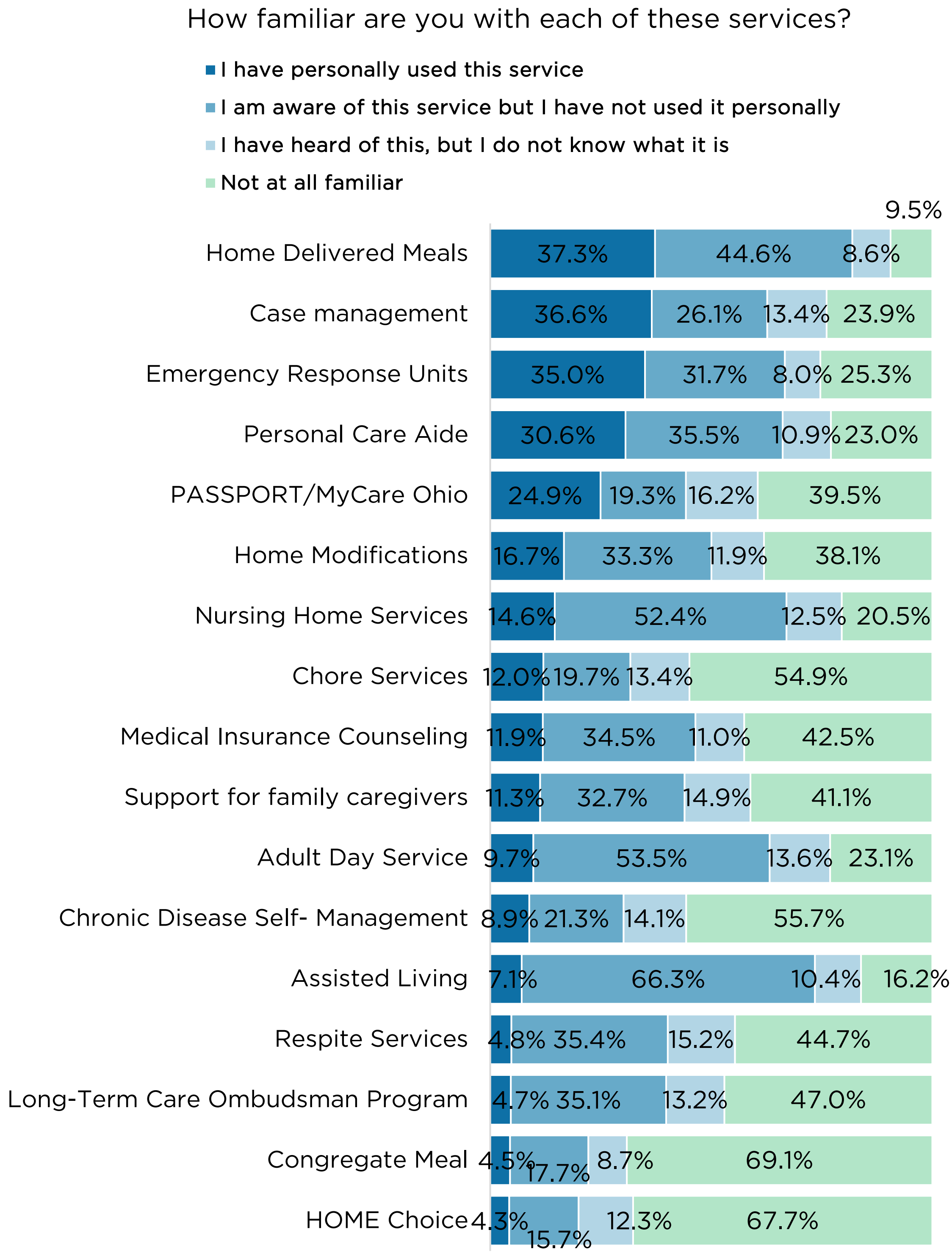
Older adults in community conversations expressed the desire to be able to partner with local schools and in the survey, less than 10 percent indicated that they had access to programs that encourage collaboration with local schools, and 23 percent have access to intergenerational activities.

Percent who have access to amenities all the time

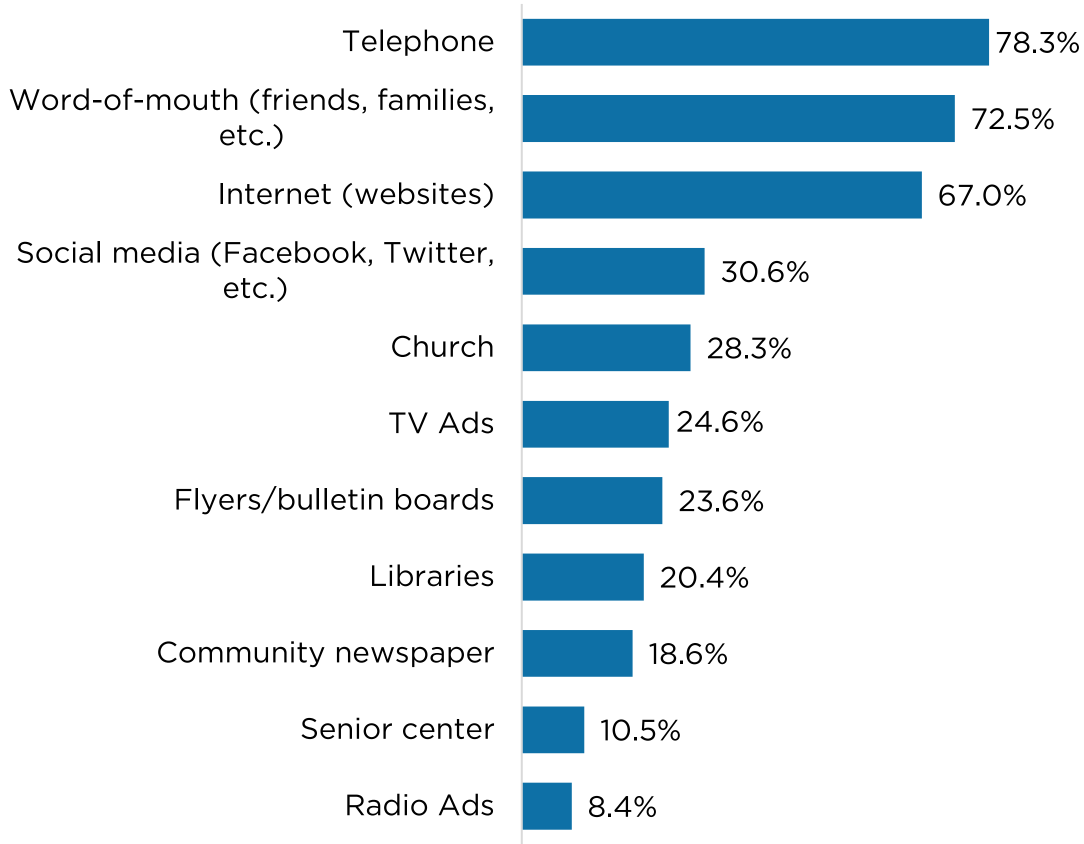


Data Appendix

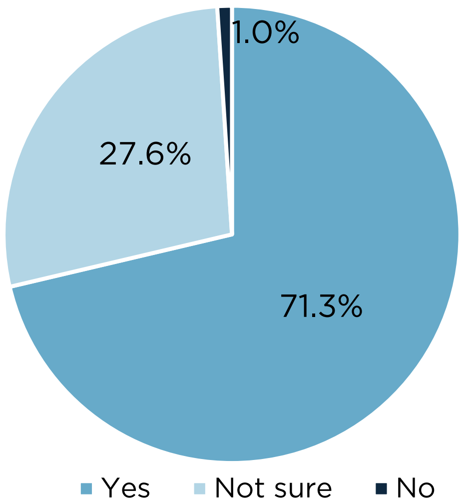
Service Awareness & Navigation



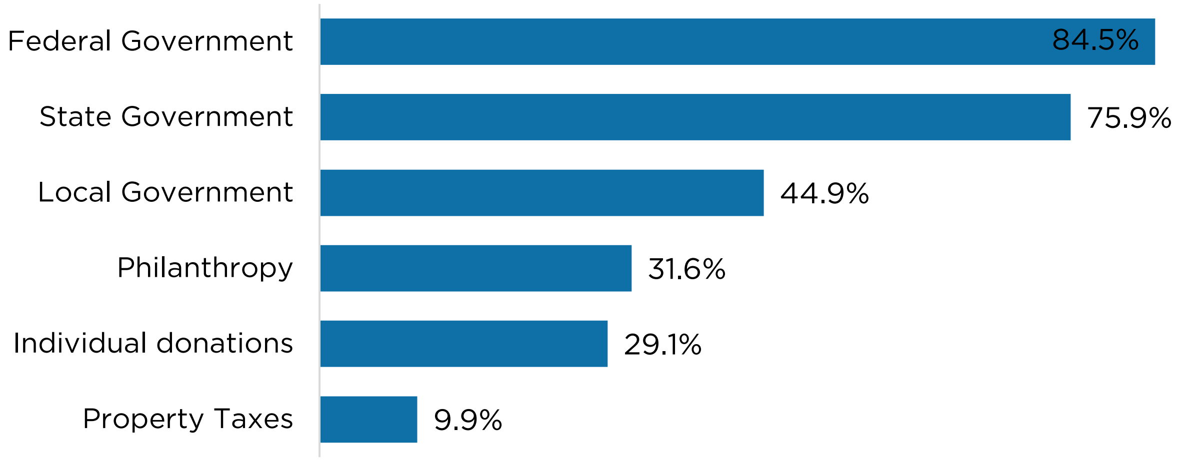
What sources do you use to identify and access community services? (Select all that apply)



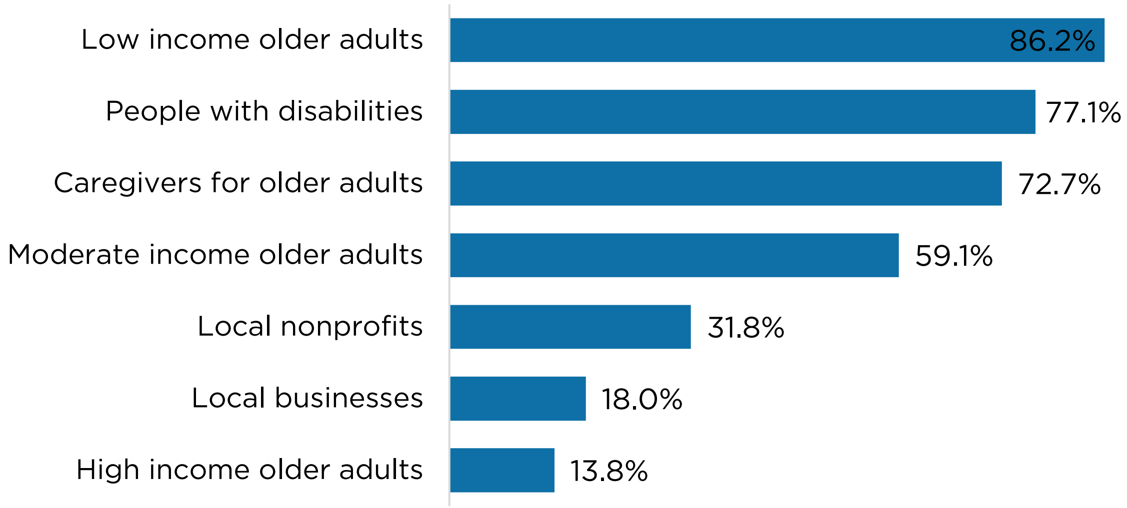
Do you think more funding is needed for aging services?

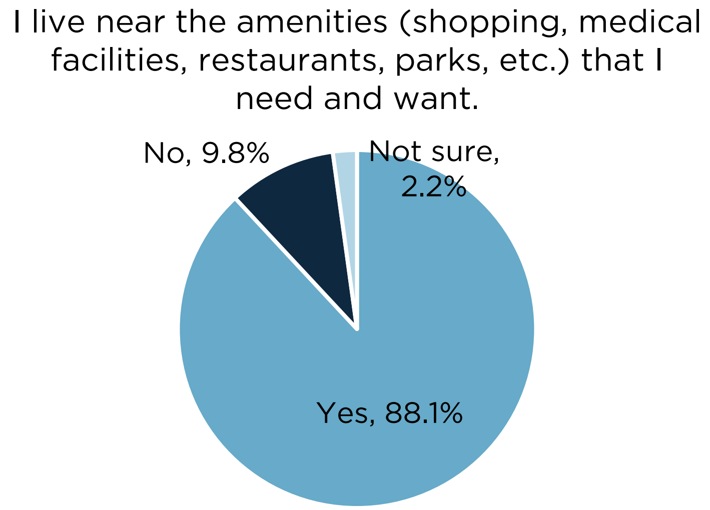


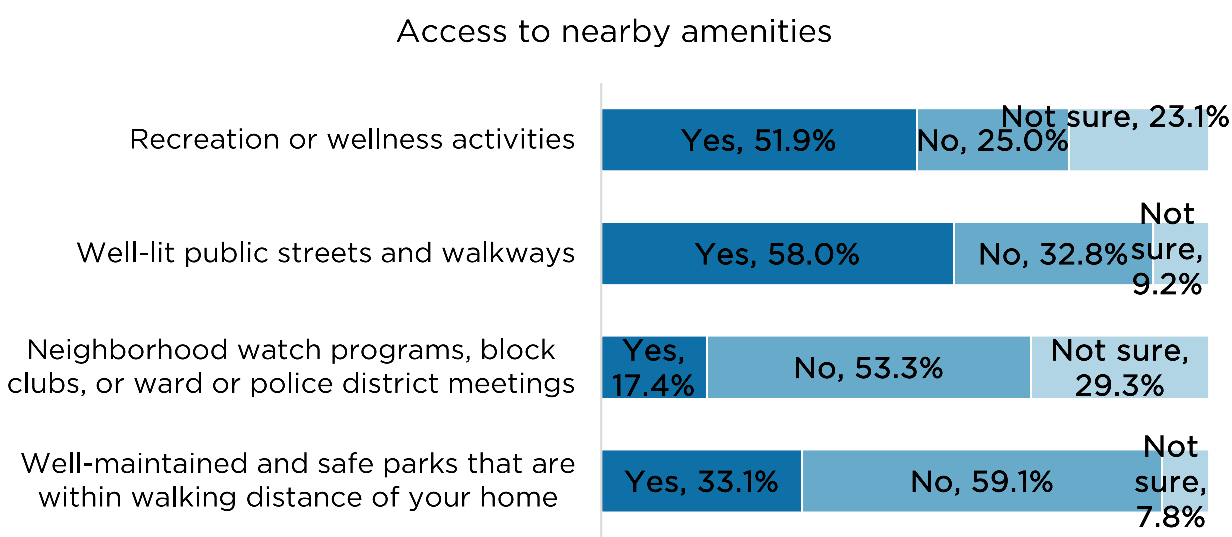
Where do you think increased funding for aging services should come from? (Select all that apply)

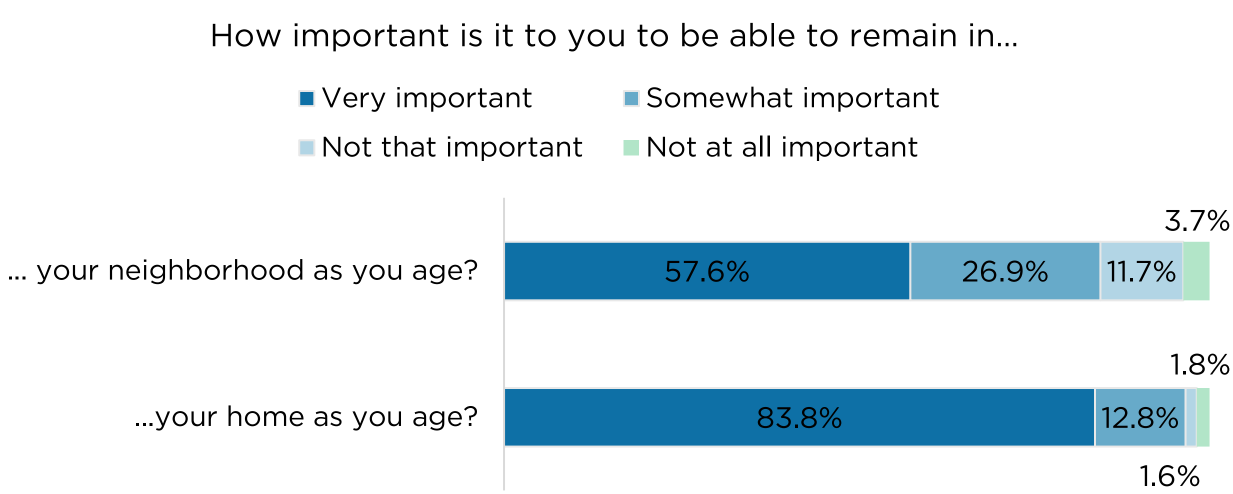


Who would benefit from increased funding for aging services? (Select all that apply)

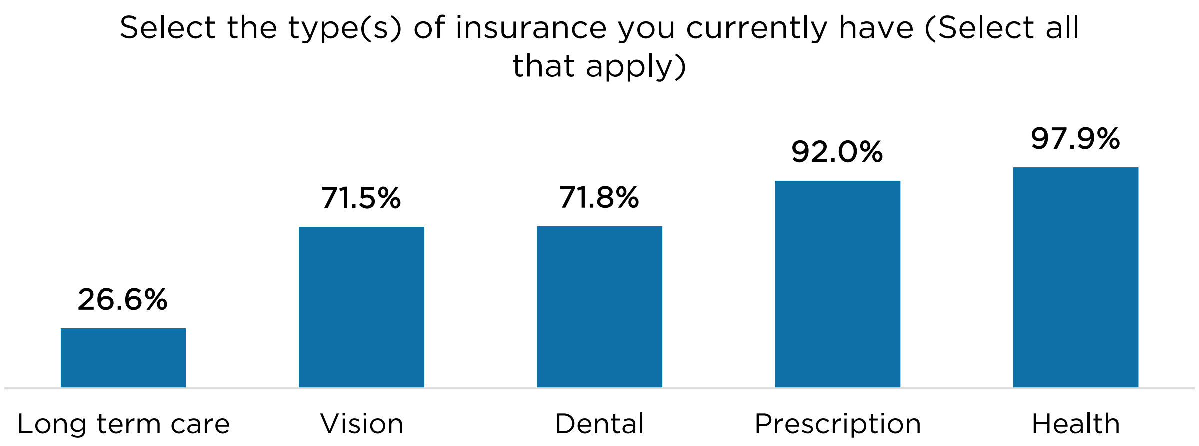


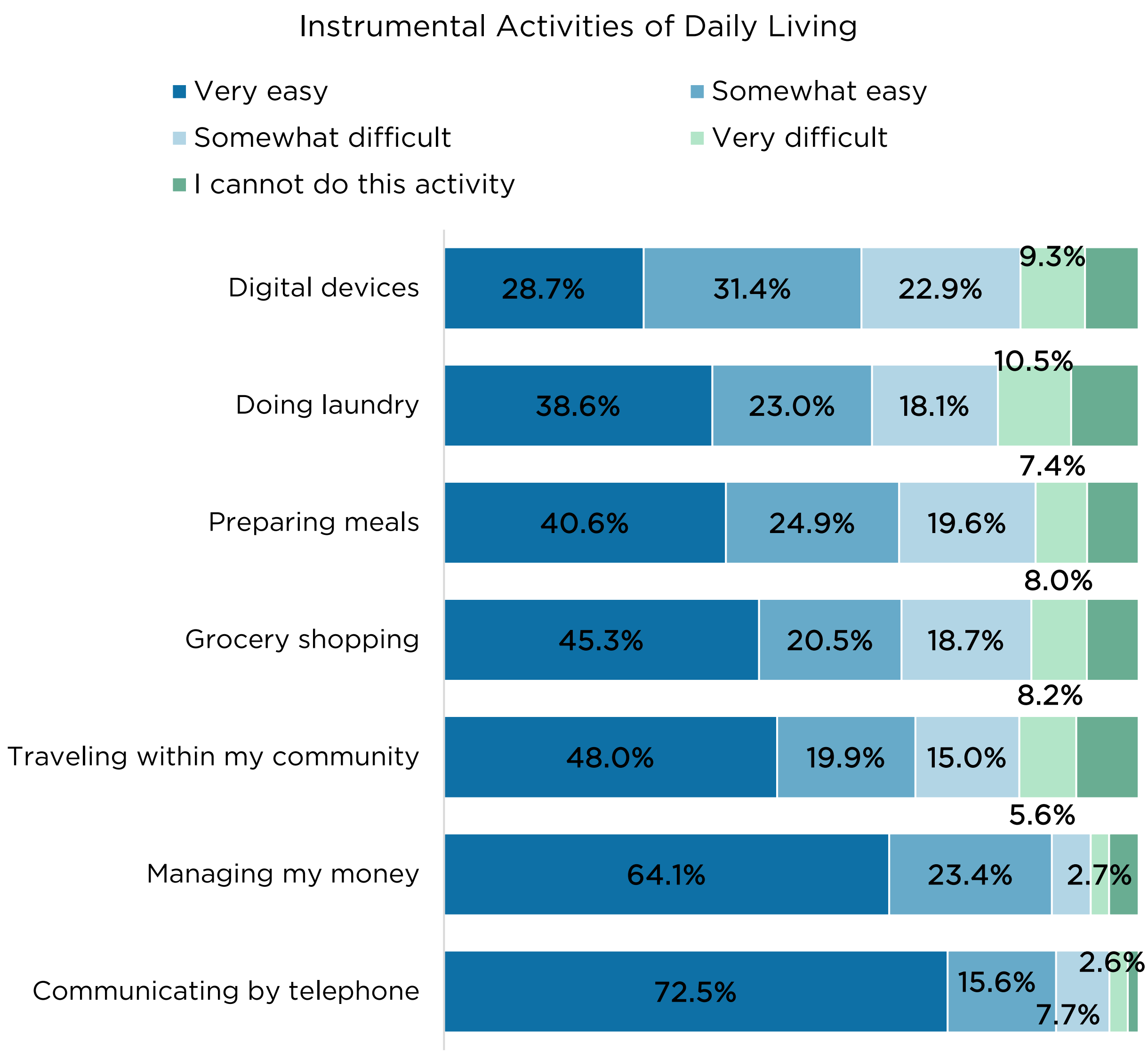

I live near the amenities (shopping, medical facilities, restaurants, parks, etc.) that I need and want.
No, 9.8%
Not sure, 2.2%
Yes, 88.1%

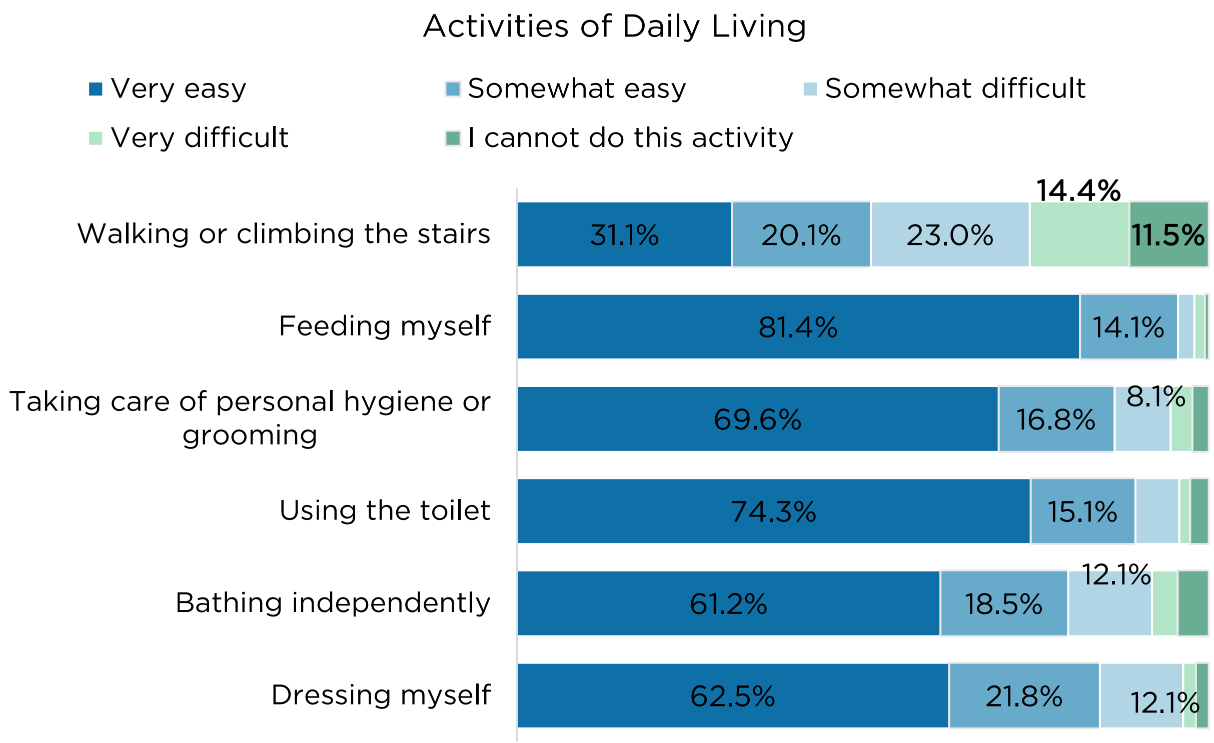

Access to nearby amenities
Recreation or wellness activities
Yes, 51.9%
No, 25.0%
Not sure, 23.1%
Well-lit public streets and walkways
Yes, 58.0%
No, 32.8%
Not sure, 9.2%
Neighborhood watch programs, block clubs, or ward or police district meetings
Yes, 17.4%
No, 53.3%
Not sure, 29.3%
Well-maintained and safe parks that are within walking distance of your home
Yes, 33.1%
No, 59.1%
Not sure, 7.8%

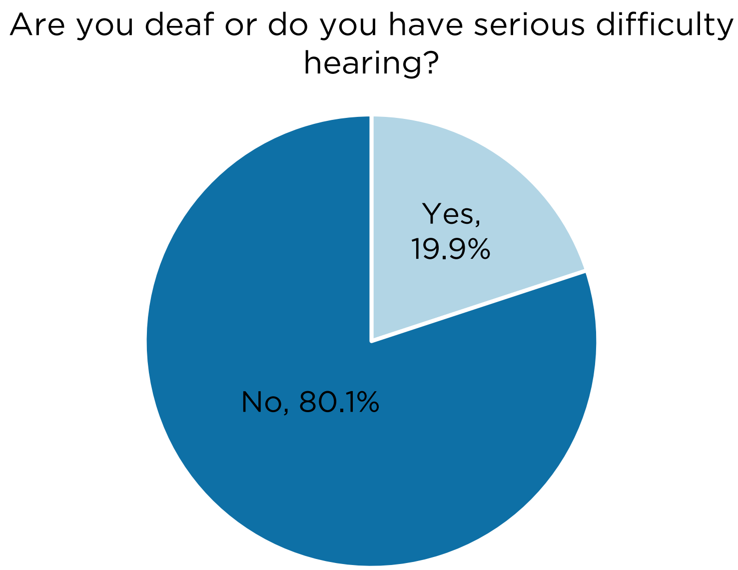

How important is it to you to be able to remain in...
Very important
Somewhat important
Not that important
Not at all important
... your neighborhood as you age?
57.6%
26.9%
11.7%
3.7%
...your home as you age?
83.8%
12.8%
1.6%
1.8%

Health & Wellness

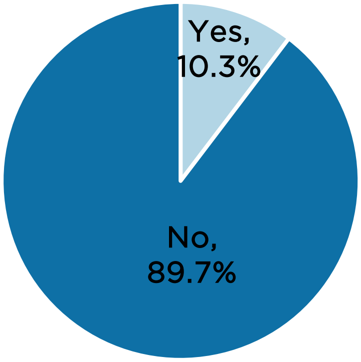




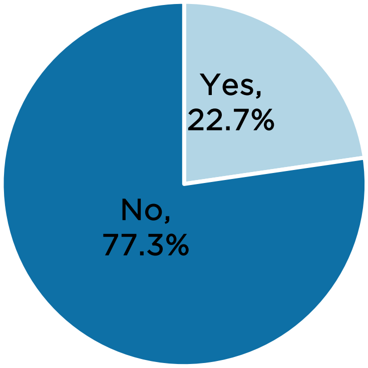

Activities of Daily Living
Very easy
Somewhat easy
Somewhat difficult
Very difficult
I cannot do this activity
Walking or climbing the stairs
31.1%
20.1%
23.0%
14.4%
11.5%
Feeding myself
81.4%
14.1%
Taking care of personal hygiene or grooming
69.6%
16.8%
8.1%
Using the toilet
74.3%
15.1%
Bathing independently
61.2%
18.5%
12.1%
Dressing myself
62.5%
21.8%
12.1%


Are you deaf or do you have serious difficulty hearing?
Yes, 19.9%
No, 80.1%

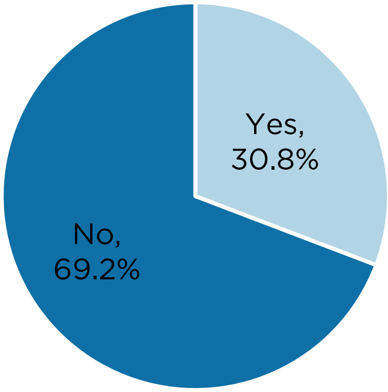
Are you blind or do you have serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses?

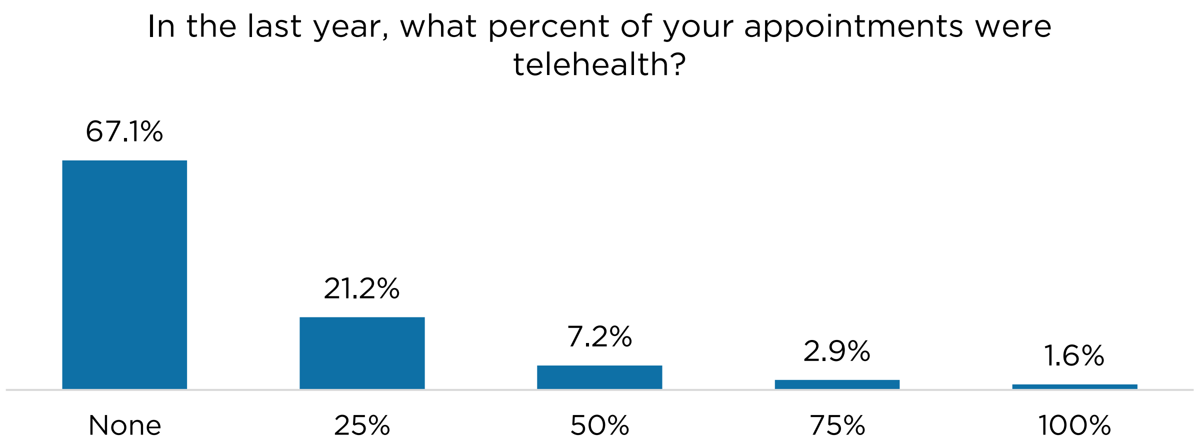


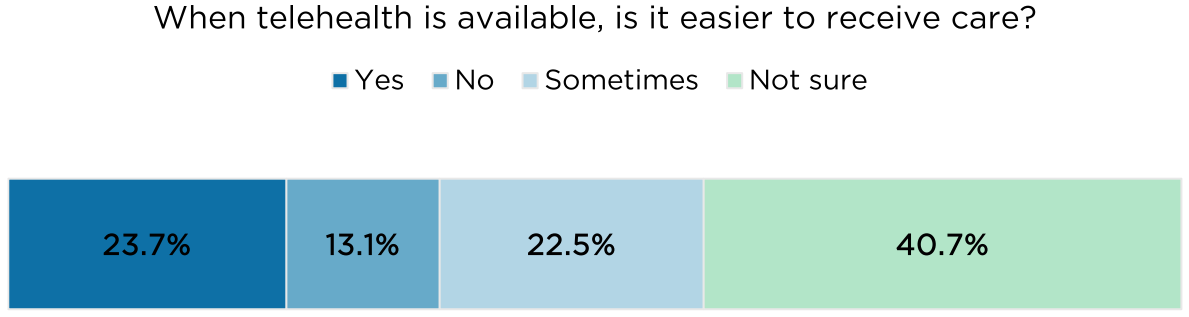
Because of a physical, mental or emotional condition, do you have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions?

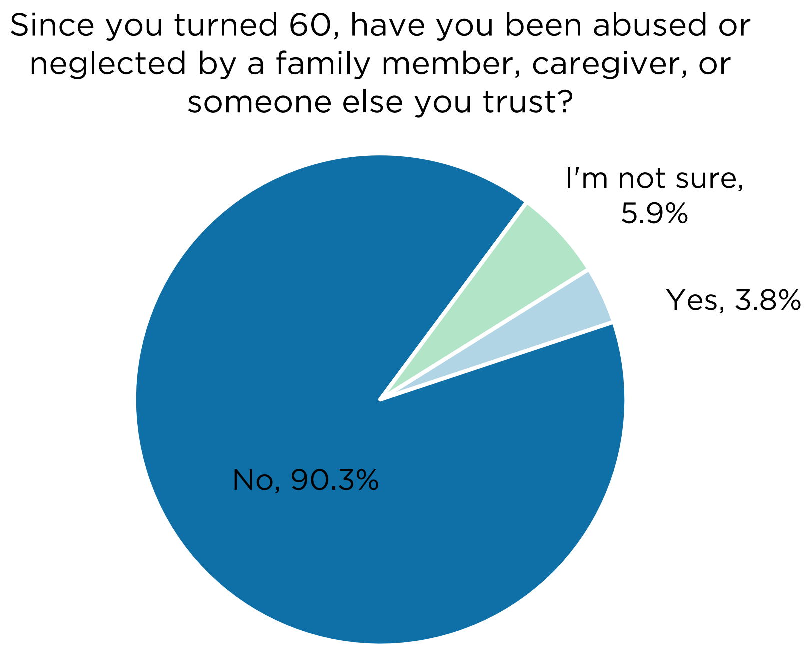


Because of a physical, mental or emotional condition, do you have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping?

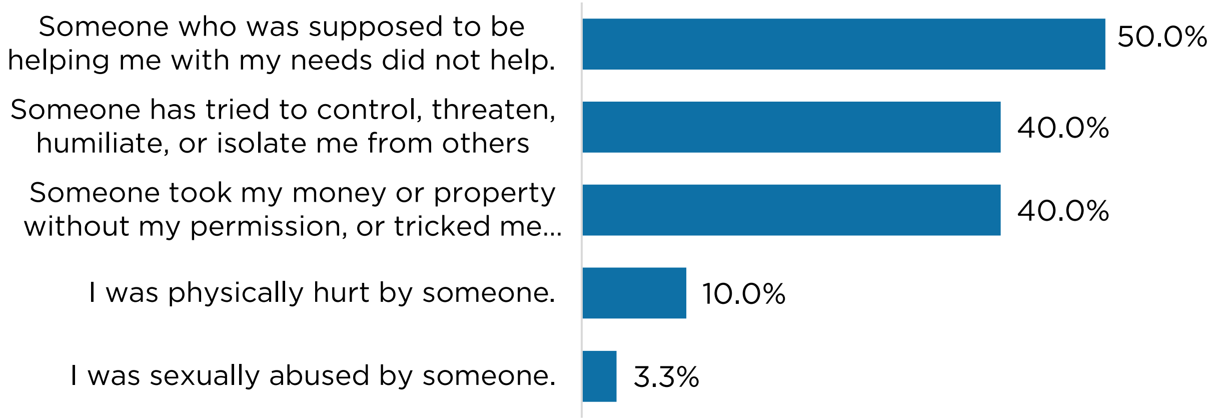



In the last year, what percent of your appointments were telehealth?
67.1%
21.2%
7.2%
2.9%
1.6%
None
25%
50%
75%
100%


When telehealth is available, is it easier to receive care?
Yes
No
Sometimes
Not sure
23.7%
13.1%
22.5%
40.7%

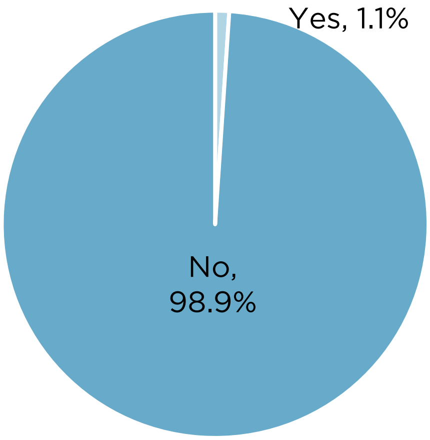

Since you turned 60, have you been abused or neglected by a family member, caregiver, or someone else you trust?
I'm not sure, 5.9%
Yes, 3.8%
No, 90.3%

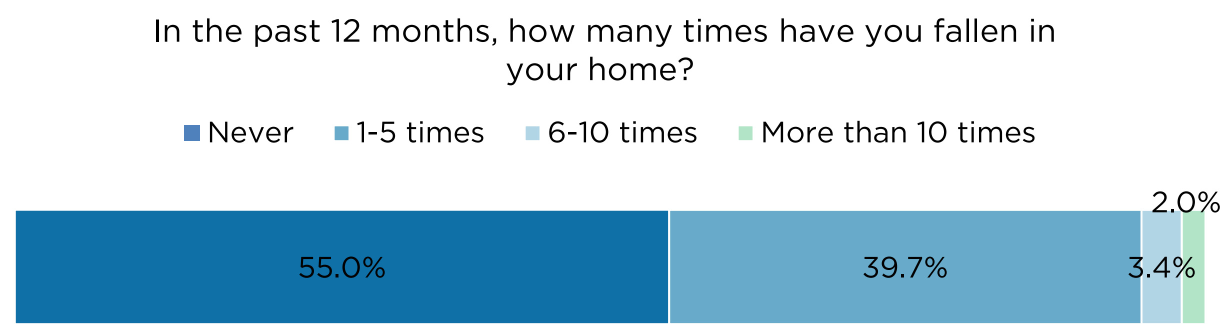
If you were abused, please indicate how



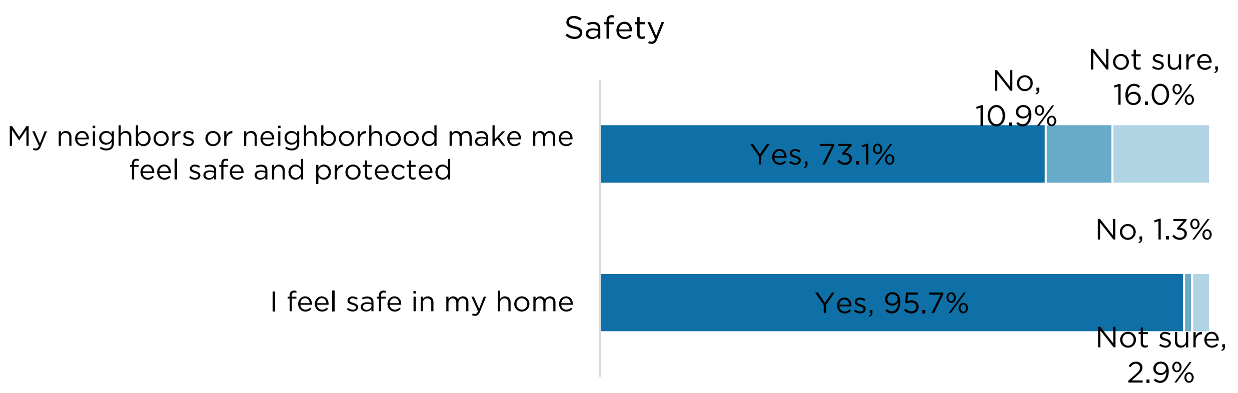
Housing & Living Environment

Are you currently homeless or have you experienced homelessness in the past 3 years?

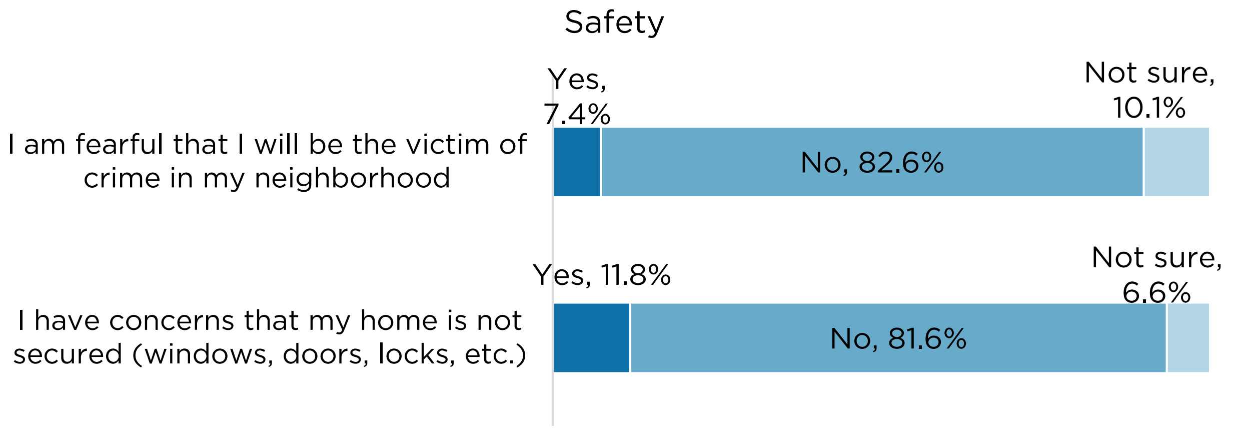




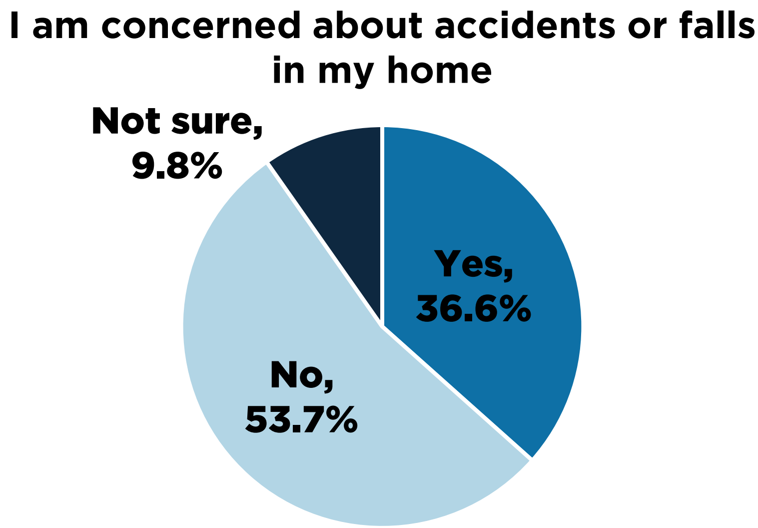
In the past 12 months, how many times have you fallen in your home?
Never
1-5 times
6-10 times
More than 10 times
55.0%
39.7%
3.4%
2.0%



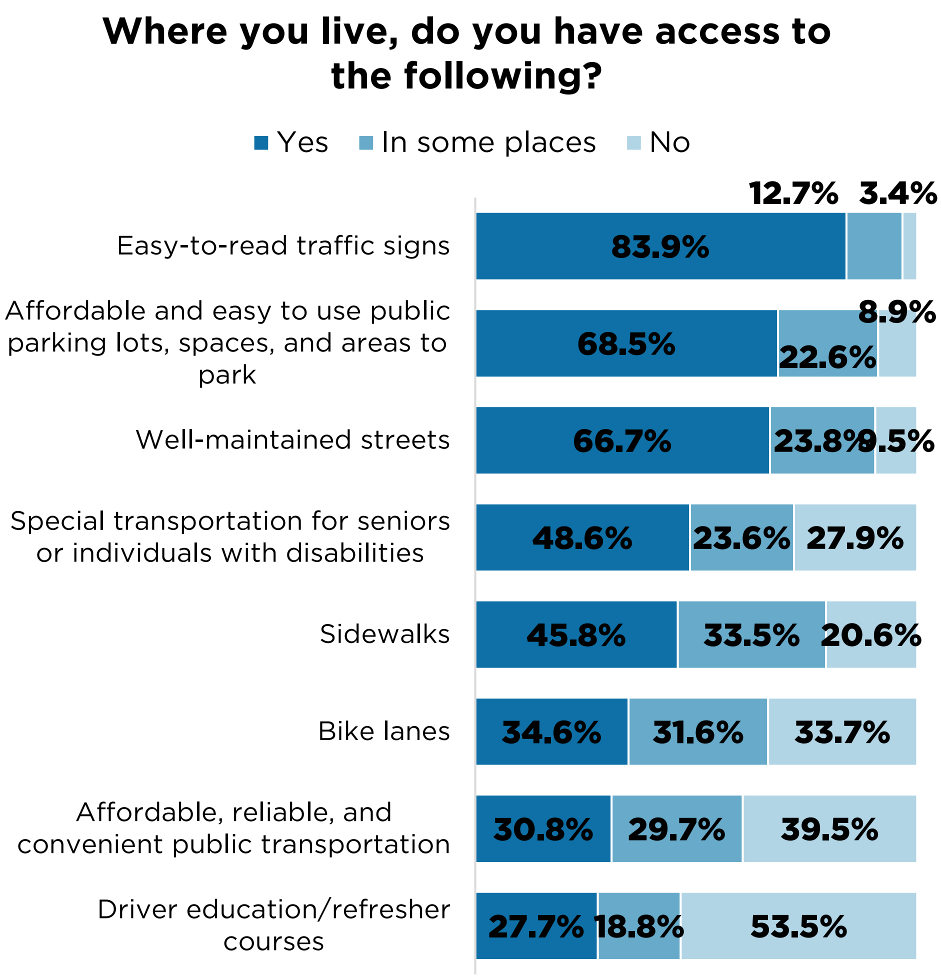
Safety
My neighbors or neighborhood make me feel safe and protected
Yes, 73.1%
No, 10.9%
Not sure, 16.0%
I feel safe in my home
Yes, 95.7%
No, 1.3%
Not sure, 2.9%



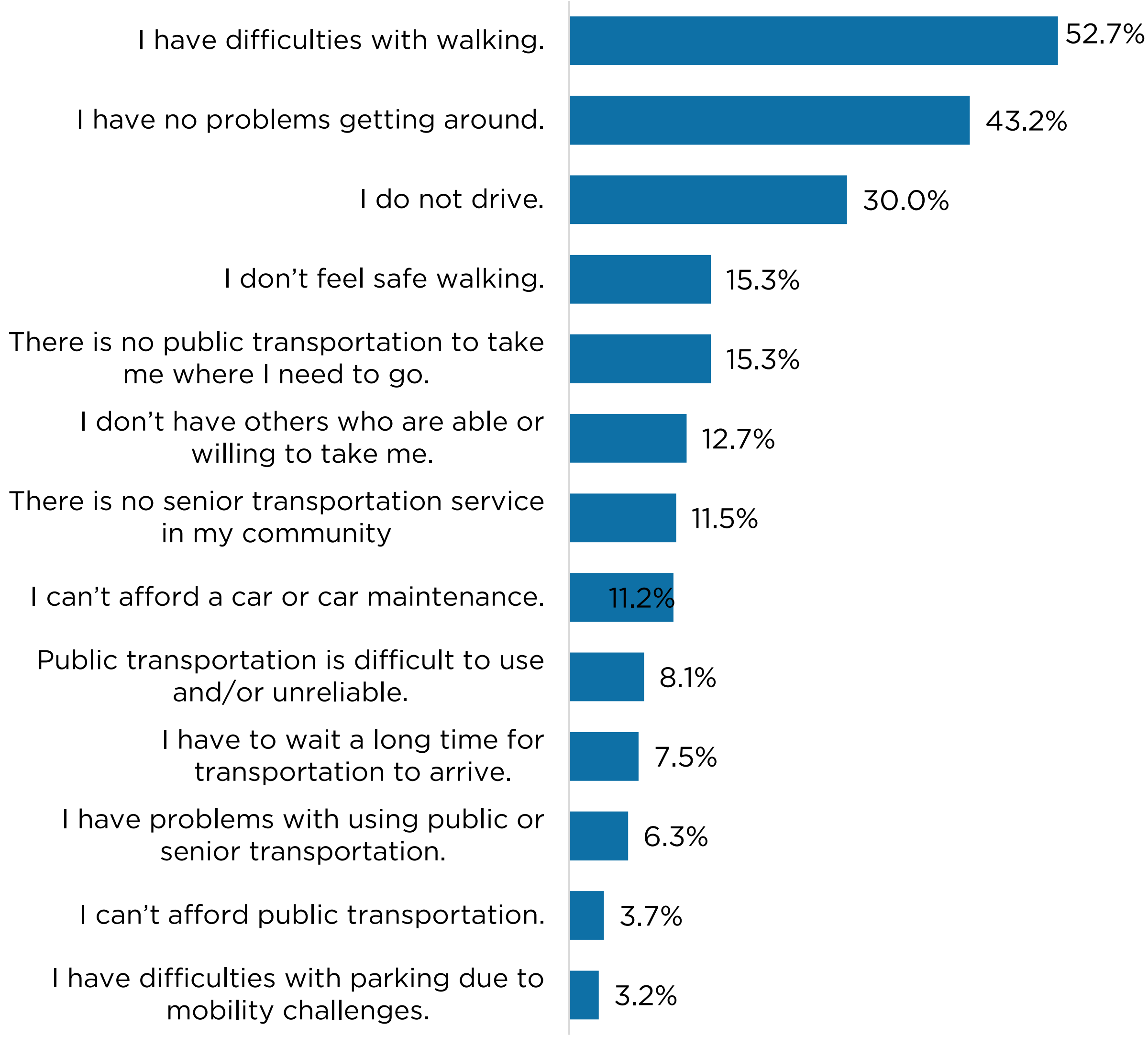
Safety
I am fearful that I will be the victim of crime in my neighborhood
Yes, 7.4%
No, 82.6%
Not sure, 10.1%
I have concerns that my home is not secured (windows, doors, locks, etc.)
Yes, 11.8%
No, 81.6%
Not sure, 6.6%

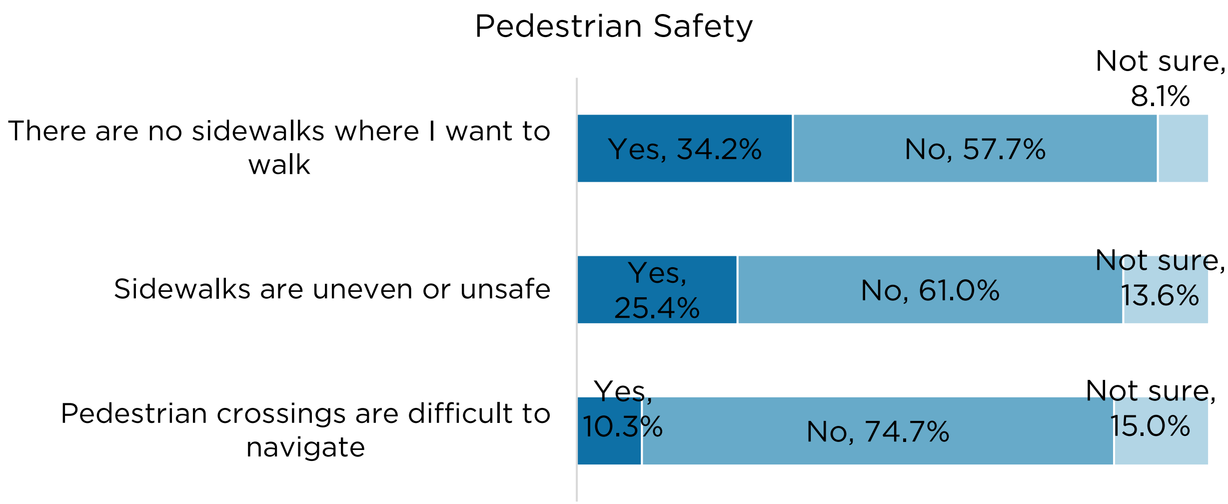


Transportation & Mobility

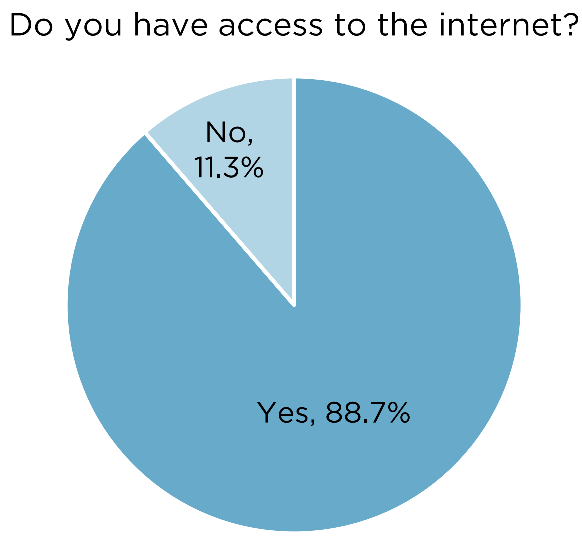


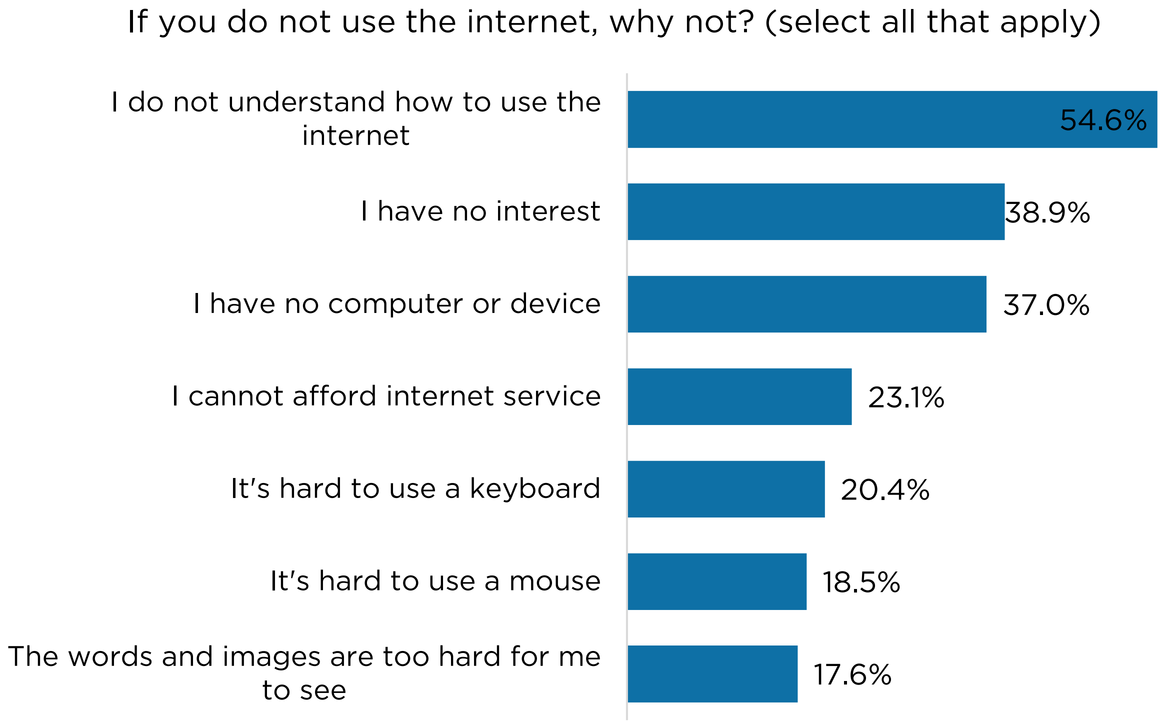
Do you face any of the challenges listed below when travelling to an appointment, event, or community location? (Select all that apply)

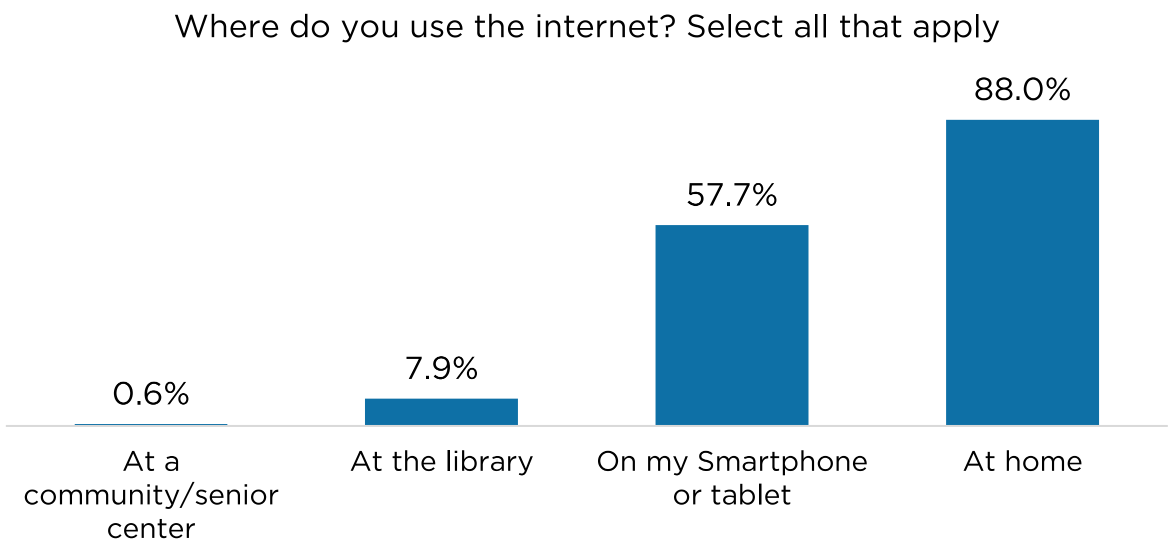




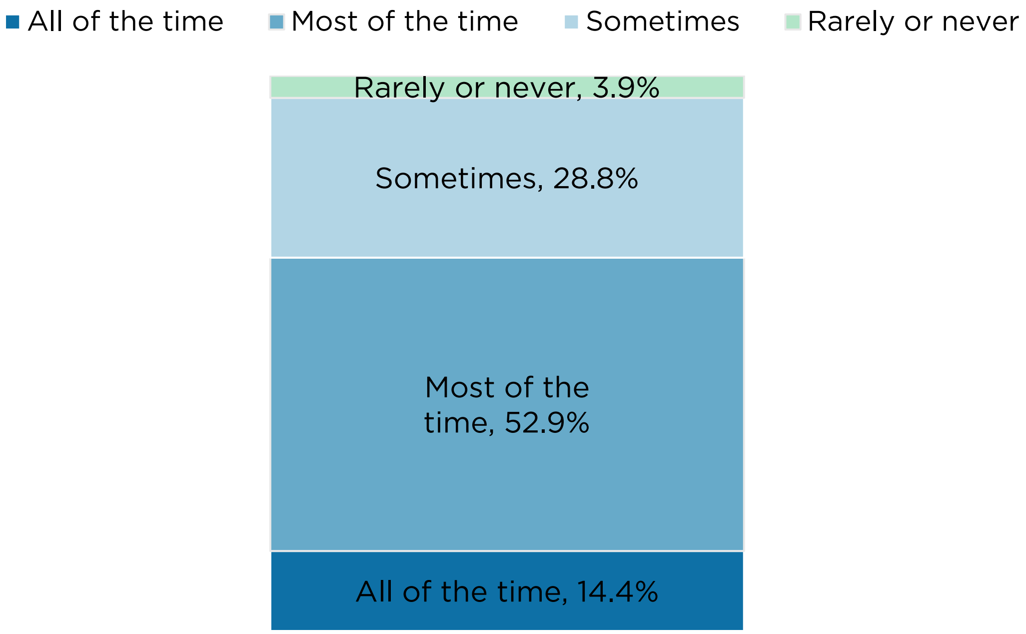
Communication & Information



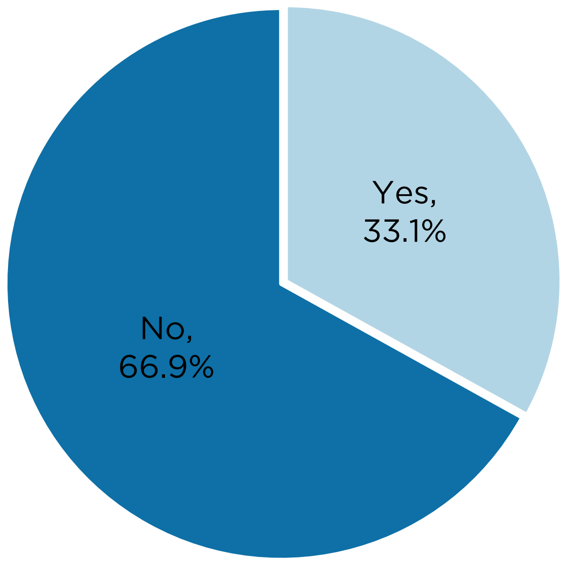

If you do not use the internet, why not? (select all that apply)
I do not understand how to use the internet
54.6%
I have no interest
38.9%
I have no computer or device
37.0%
I cannot afford internet service
23.1%
It's hard to use a keyboard
20.4%
It's hard to use a mouse
18.5%
The words and images are too hard for me to see
17.6%

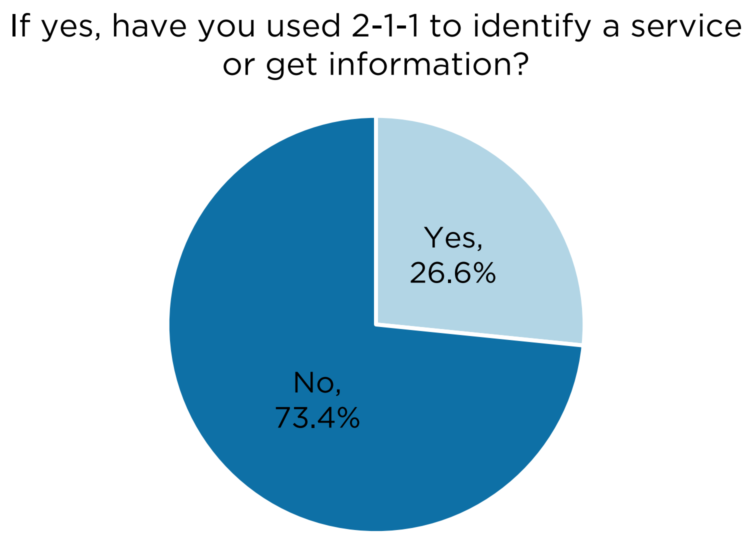

Where do you use the internet? Select all that apply
0.6%
7.9%
57.7%
88.0%
At a community/senior center
At the library
On my Smartphone or tablet
At home

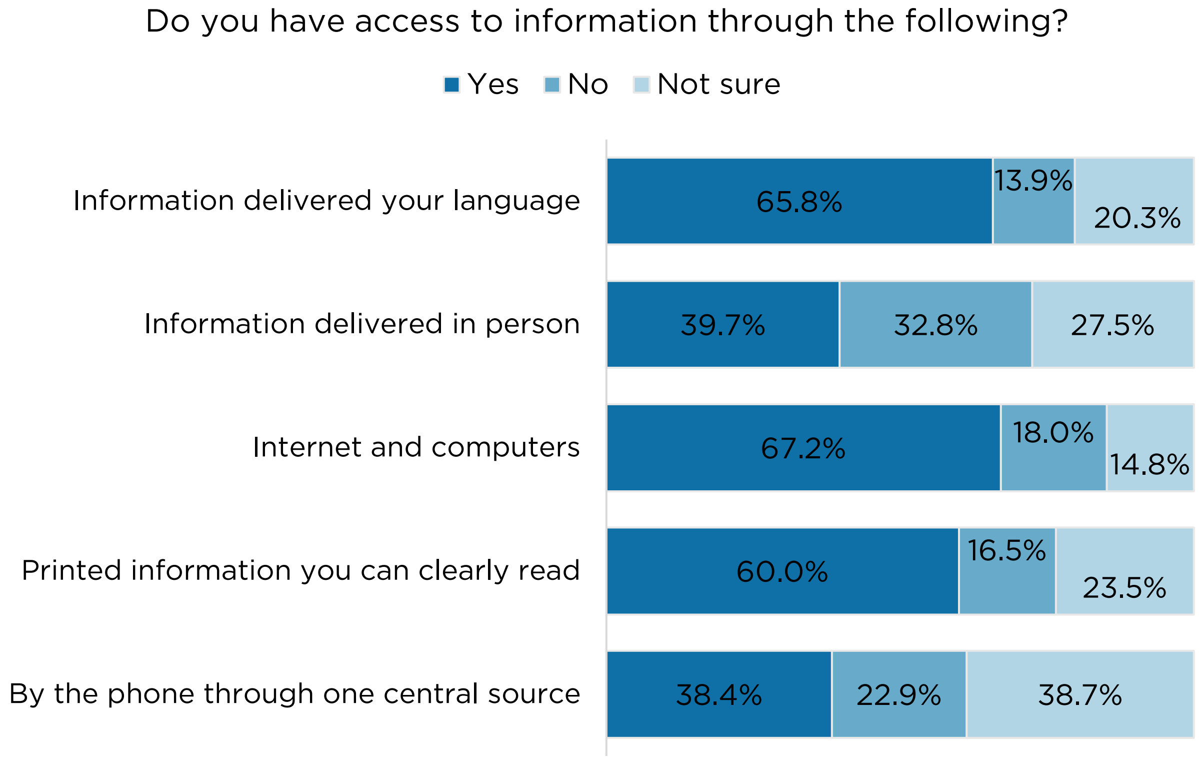
In general, are you able to find information on the services that you need?



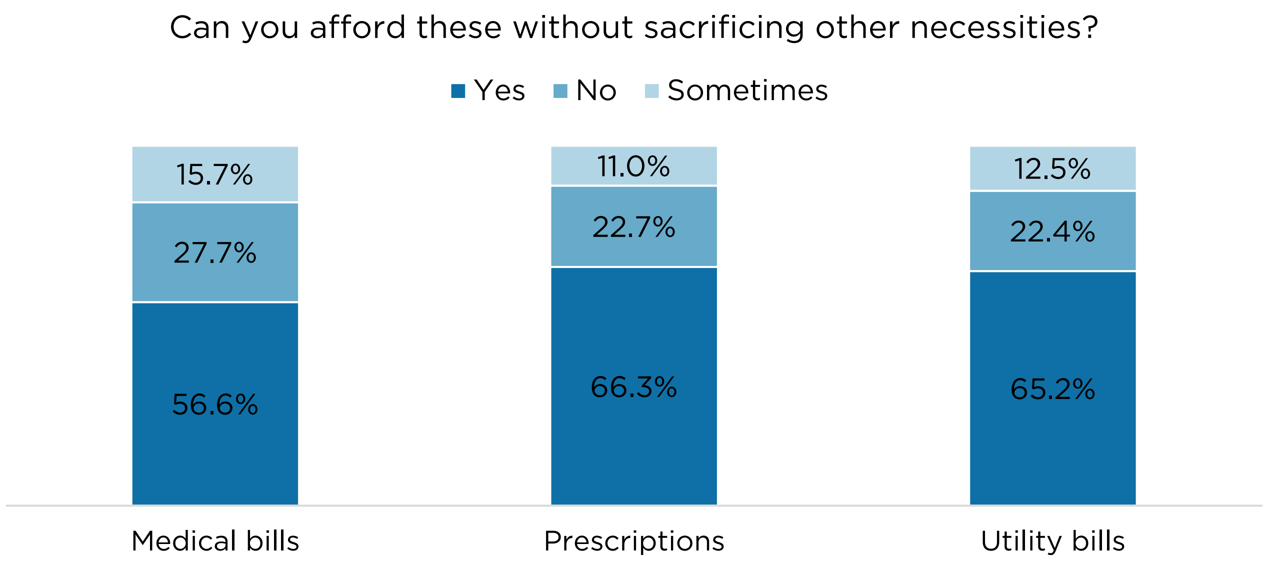
Are you familiar with the local information and referral hotline Info Line 2-1-1?

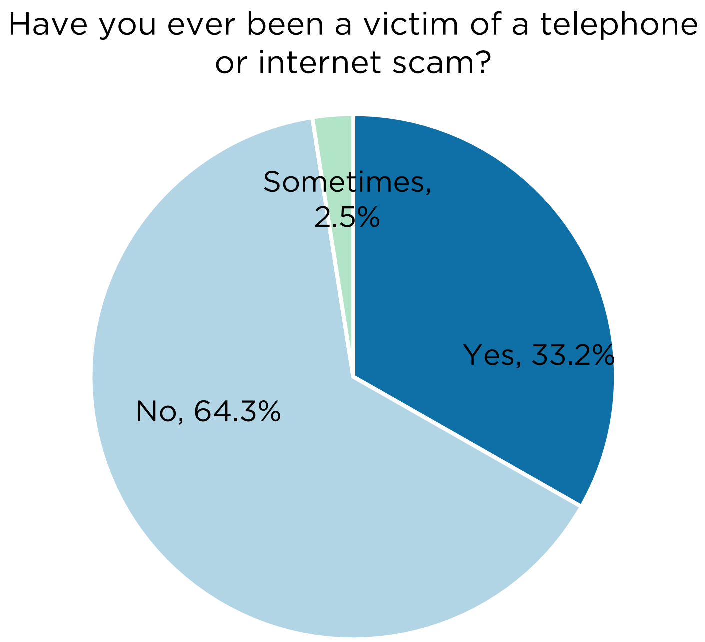



If yes, have you used 2-1-1 to identify a service or get information?
Yes, 26.6%
No, 73.4%

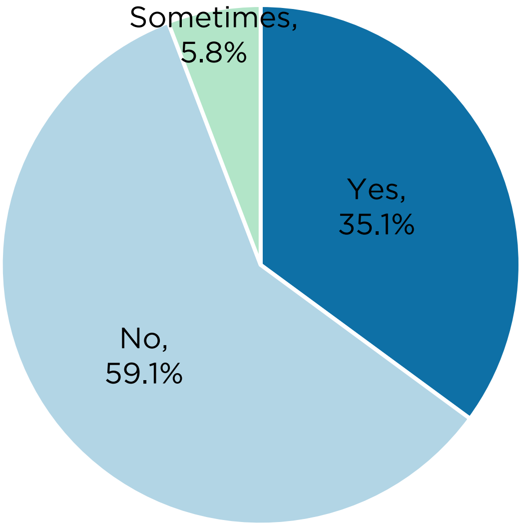

Do you have access to information through the following?
Yes
No
Not sure
Information delivered your language
65.8%
13.9%
20.3%
Information delivered in person
39.7%
32.8%
27.5%
Internet and computers
67.2%
18.0%
14.8%
Printed information you can clearly read
60.0%
16.5%
23.5%
By the phone through one central source
38.4%
22.9%
38.7%

Economic Security

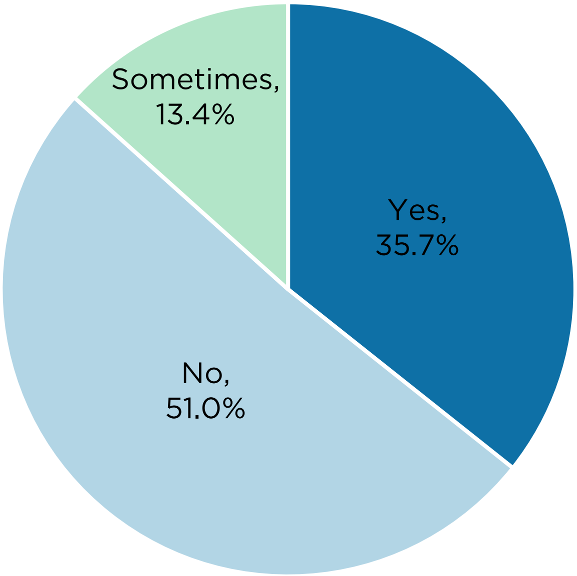




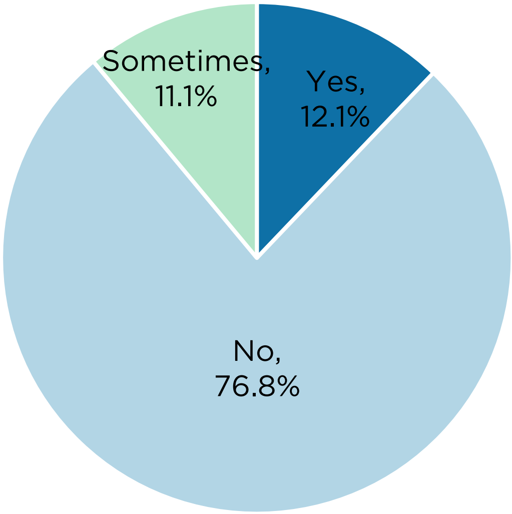
Do you carry a credit card balance?

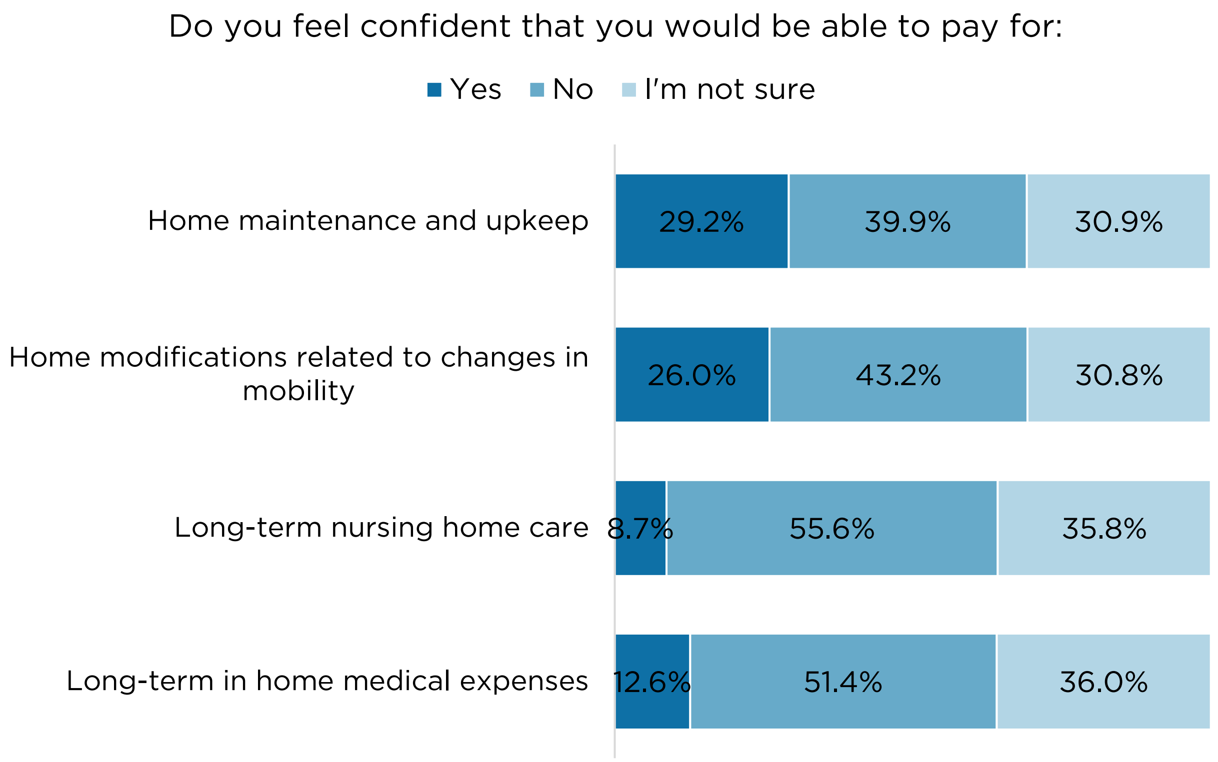


If you were to experience a financial crisis, do you have someone who can lend you money?

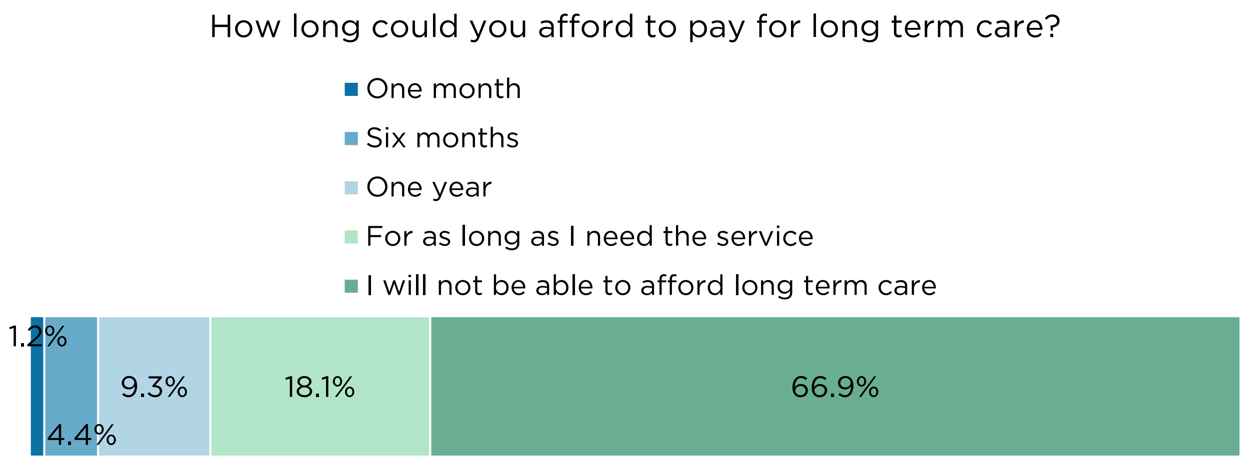


Do others depend on you for financial support?

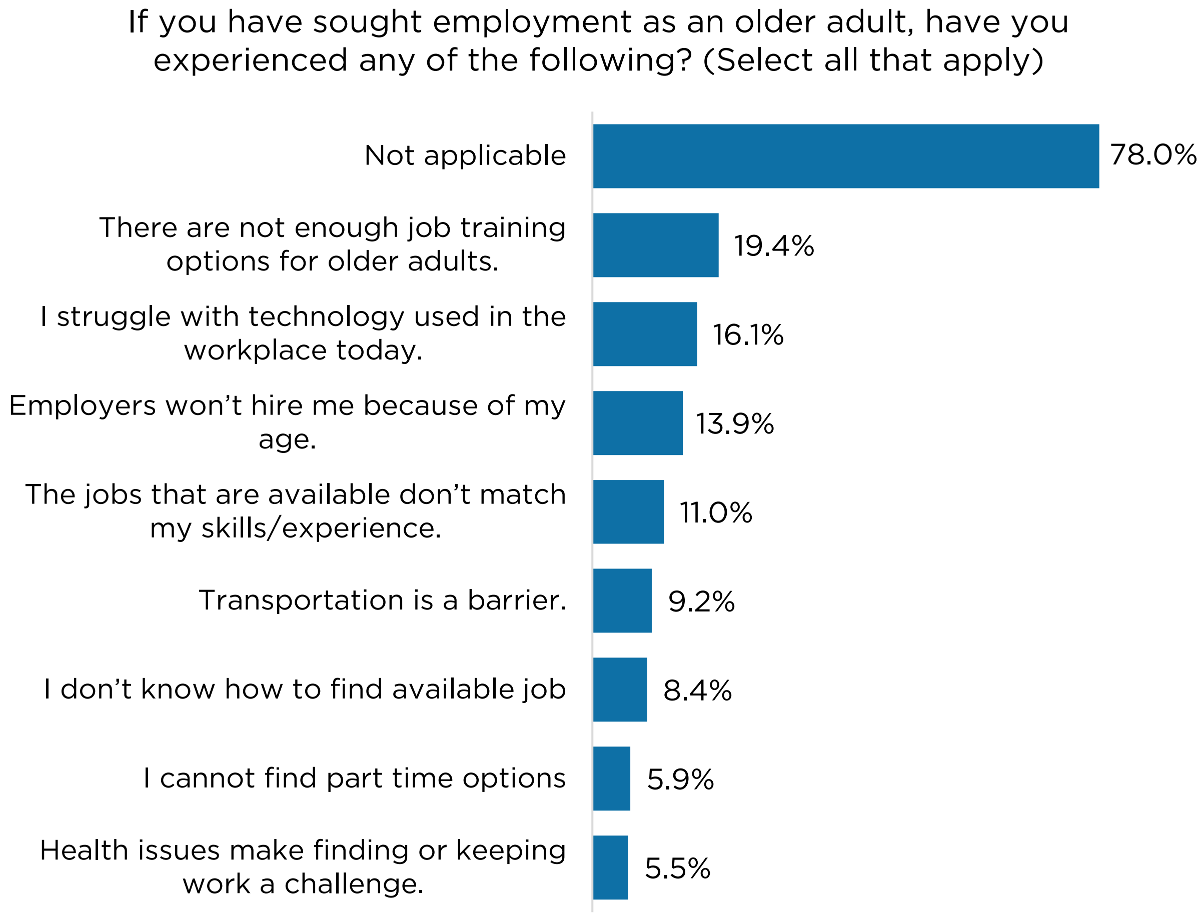


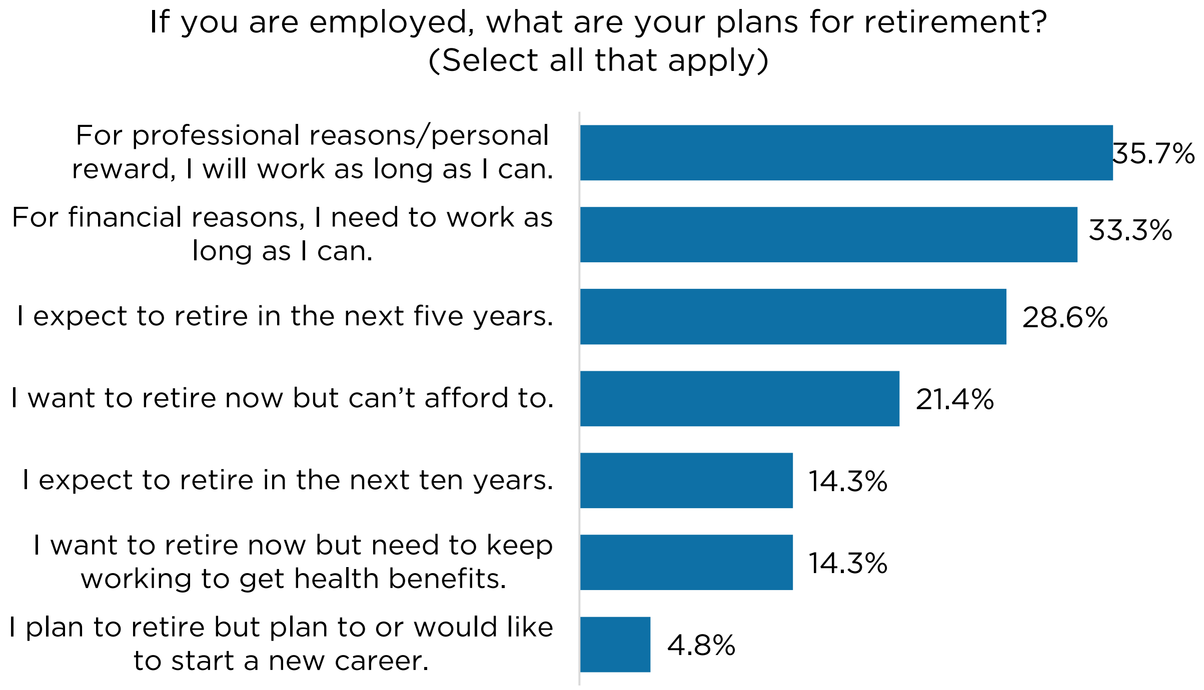


Do you feel confident that you would be able to pay for:
Yes
No
I'm not sure
Home maintenance and upkeep
29.2%
39.9%
30.9%
Home modifications related to changes in mobility
26.0%
43.2%
30.8%
Long-term nursing home care
8.7%
55.6%
35.8%
Long-term in home medical expenses
12.6%
51.4%
36.0%



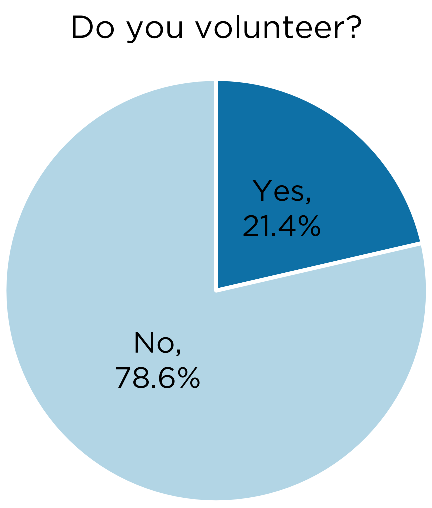
How long could you afford to pay for long term care?
One month
Six months
One year
For as long as I need the service
I will not be able to afford long term care
1.2%
4.4%
9.3%
18.1%
66.9%

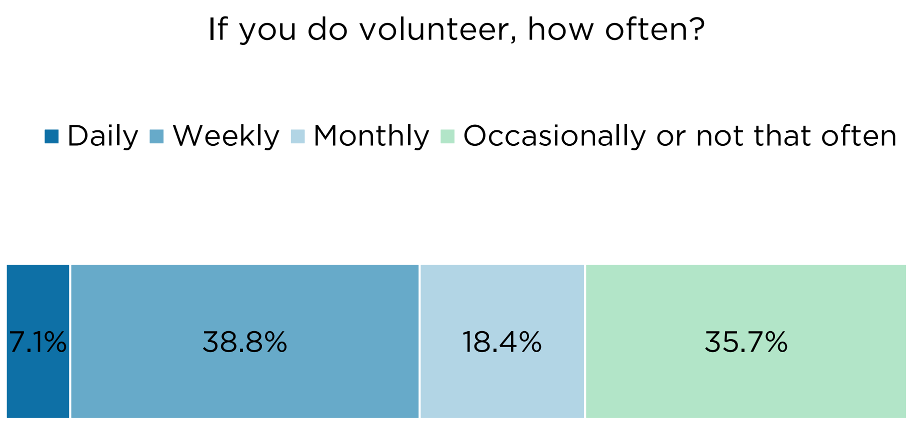

If you have sought employment as an older adult, have you experienced any of the following? (Select all that apply)
Not applicable
78.0%
There are not enough job training options for older adults.
19.4%
I struggle with technology used in the workplace today.
16.1%
Employers won't hire me because of my age.
13.9%
The jobs that are available don't match my skills/experience.
11.0%
Transportation is a barrier.
9.2%
I don't know how to find available job
8.4%
I cannot find part time options
5.9%
Health issues make finding or keeping work a challenge.
5.5%

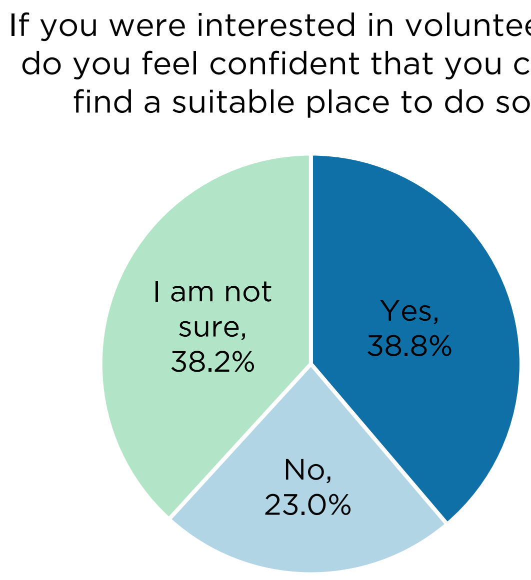

If you are employed, what are your plans for retirement? (Select all that apply)
For professional reasons/personal reward, I will work as long as I can.
35.7%
For financial reasons, I need to work as long as I can.
33.3%
I expect to retire in the next five years.
28.6%
I want to retire now but can't afford to.
21.4%
I expect to retire in the next ten years.
14.3%
I want to retire now but need to keep working to get health benefits.
14.3%
I plan to retire but plan to or would like to start a new career.
4.8%

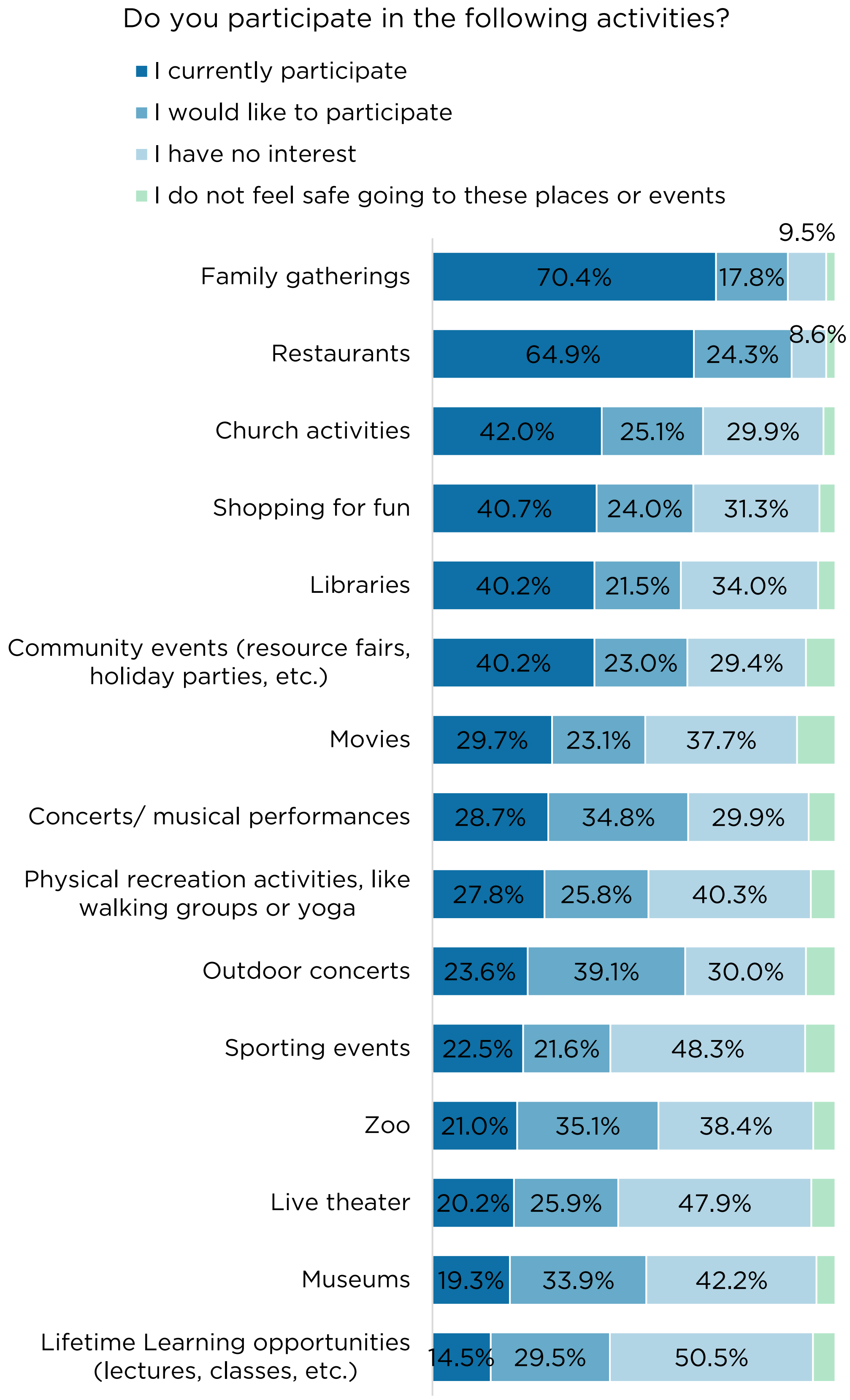
Which of the following items are included in your typical spending during a month? (Select all that apply)	
Savings contributions	9.4%
Investments	9.4%
Gym Membership	10.2%
Supporting family members	13.6%
Over the counter medical expenses	21.8%
Monthly subscriptions	26.0%
Home Health Care	31.0%
Gifts	34.6%
Pet Food and Pet Care	37.3%
Home maintenance services (grass/snow/ housecleaning)	38.3%
Entertainment	39.4%
Life insurance policy	39.6%
Transportation expenses	42.0%
Health insurance	44.6%
Medical Bills	48.8%
Charitable and faith based giving	52.5%
Prescriptions	59.6%
Restaurant	61.2%
Utilities	85.8%
Groceries	95.3%

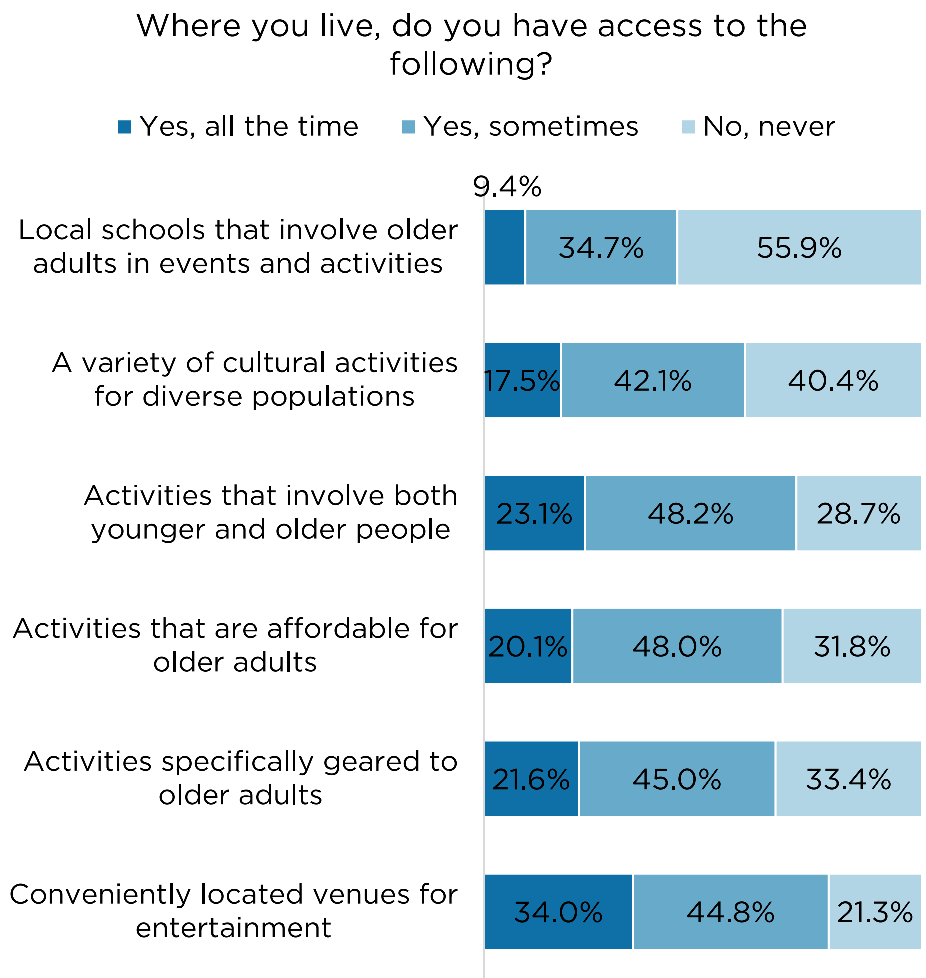
Community Connection & Social Engagement








Do you participate in the following activities?
I currently participate
I would like to participate
I have no interest
I do not feel safe going to these places or events
Family gatherings
70.4%
17.8%
9.5%
Restaurants
64.9%
24.3%
8.6%
Church activities
42.0%
25.1%
29.9%
Shopping for fun
40.7%
24.0%
31.3%
Libraries
40.2%
21.5%
34.0%
Community events (resource fairs, holiday parties, etc.)
40.2%
23.0%
29.4%
Movies
29.7%
23.1%
37.7%
Concerts/ musical performances
28.7%
34.8%
29.9%
Physical recreation activities, like walking groups or yoga
27.8%
25.8%
40.3%
Outdoor concerts
23.6%
39.1%
30.0%
Sporting events
22.5%
21.6%
48.3%
Zoo
21.0%
35.1%
38.4%
Live theater
20.2%
25.9%
47.9%
Museums
19.3%
33.9%
42.2%
Lifetime Learning opportunities (lectures, classes, etc.)
14.5%
29.5%
50.5%


Where you live, do you have access to the following?
Yes, all the time
Yes, sometimes
No, never
Local schools that involve older adults in events and activities
9.4%
34.7%
55.9%
A variety of cultural activities for diverse populations
17.5%
42.1%
40.4%
Activities that involve both younger and older people
23.1%
48.2%
28.7%
Activities that are affordable for older adults
20.1%
48.0%
31.8%
Activities specifically geared to older adults
21.6%
45.0%
33.4%
Conveniently located venues for entertainment
34.0%
44.8%
21.3%