

Central Ohio Older Adult Needs Assessment

Franklin County Office on Aging | Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging



Contents

Executive Summary	3
Study Facilitators and the Planning Team	5
Methodology and Data Collection Overview	6
Community Phone Survey	6
Intercept Survey	6
Focus Groups	6
Research Highlights	7
Community Phone Survey	7
Intercept Survey	13
Focus Groups	15



Executive Summary

The Franklin County Office on Aging and the Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging conducted a comprehensive needs assessment to better understand the issues and opportunities facing a growing older adult population in central Ohio. This study included qualitative and quantitative methods to gather input from older adult residents in the region as well as providers and agencies who serve them.

OrangeBoy, Inc., the study facilitator, identified several key findings.

People ages 55-64 years old make up more than half of the older adult population in central Ohio. This age cohort's need for services will grow as the population continues to age, and they are receptive to using resources provided by the agencies. In fact, nearly half of the respondents in this age group indicated that they are 'likely' or 'very likely' to use agency services in the future when the need arises. Overall demand will continue to swell as the total number of older adults rises and the receptiveness to using services increases.

Demand on the agencies will be particularly influenced by changes in the way older adults seek out and access services. Technology adoption continues to play a growing role in the lives of seniors today, especially in the younger age cohorts. These younger groups have increasingly higher adoption rates for technology ranging from smartphones to computers, and are much more likely to engage in technology-driven activities such as online banking and ways to stay connected with others. These higher adoption levels will present opportunities for the agencies to use technology to build awareness and deliver services.

The needs assessment also identified key drivers and barriers related to when and why individuals do or do not access agency services as they or their loved ones grow older. Understanding these factors will help the agencies promote their services efficiently and recognize some of the obstacles faced by older adults in the community.

Many elements can impact a person's decision to seek agency services. Financial barriers can not only limit one's ability to secure adequate care as they age, but can also have a detrimental effect on health, quality of life, and emotional well-being. Even if major financial issues are not a primary concern, declining physical and/or mental health was also found to serve as a primary driver for individuals to seek out additional services. A third key driver is an individual's desire to remain in their own home even as they have an increasing need for assistance with basic activities of daily living.



Even in the face of multiple drivers indicating an older adult may need additional services, several common barriers may prevent them from obtaining those services even if they are qualified to receive them. One such barrier is that many older adults and their families lack awareness and information regarding agency services. These individuals do not know what is available or how to go about accessing additional resources. Another common barrier is a lack of access to resources, which may be due to geography, transportation constraints, limited caregiving resources, or other similar issues.

Additional barriers may also develop due to a lack of preparation. Many people do not plan for unforeseen needs until they are facing an immediate, major problem. These individuals often do not seek services for themselves or their loved ones until after there is a crisis situation.

These main barriers – a lack of awareness, access, and preparation – present the agencies with several opportunities to enhance the way they support their communities throughout central Ohio. These opportunities begin with methods to increase awareness of service offerings among older adults and their caregivers. Targeted marketing, expanded and improved websites, and collaboration with other community organizations would all enhance the agencies' ability to distribute information.

In addition to increasing awareness in the community, the agencies must also focus on internal processes to meet growing demand. The agencies' personnel and financial resources are not likely to grow as quickly as the increasing demand for services. In order to help bridge that gap between demand and resources, innovative and efficient process improvements should be considered.

Innovation is the primary opportunity for the agencies moving forward. Increasing the use of technology to manage schedules and distribute services would help agency personnel use their time efficiently. Combined with metrics designed to specifically track agency workflow and progress, the agencies could support their current teams while monitoring processes to ensure efficiency. Other innovative service expansions based on consumer and stakeholder feedback can now be evaluated as both agencies plan for the future.

The needs of the older adult population in central Ohio will continue to grow as this group expands. Agencies working to serve this group must focus their efforts on decreasing barriers while increasing their own efficiency. This will allow these agencies to meet increasing demands without any guaranteed increase in funding.



Study Facilitators and the Planning Team

OrangeBoy, Inc., a strategic analytics company based in Columbus, Ohio, served as the study facilitators for this project. Founded in 1996, OrangeBoy has established itself both as a strategic advisor to help organizations chart their course as well as a partner who can deliver tactical, results-oriented services.

The planning team was comprised of the OrangeBoy team members, directors of each agency, and other key personnel.

- **Antonia Carroll**, Director, Franklin County Office on Aging
- **Cindy Farson**, Director, Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging
- **Barbara Sullivan**, Senior Options Program Manager, Franklin County Office on Aging
- **Linda Gillespie**, Aging and Disability Resource Director, Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging
- **Sandra Swanson**, President, OrangeBoy, Inc.
- **Erin Behn**, Business Analyst, OrangeBoy, Inc.



Methodology and Data Collection Overview

OrangeBoy, Inc. worked with both agencies to develop a three-stage data collection process. The purpose was to develop an understanding of the needs and attitudes of older adults in central Ohio.

The three types of data collection employed during this study were a series of community phone surveys, intercept surveys at the 2013 Senior Living Festival, and five focus groups with community stakeholders. Detailed survey results are available upon request.

Community Phone Survey

The community phone survey provided an assessment of older adults throughout central Ohio. A total of 803 surveys were collected from Franklin and the seven neighboring counties (Delaware, Fairfield, Fayette, Licking, Madison, Pickaway, and Union). Approximately half of the surveys came from Franklin County, and the other half were distributed across the remaining seven counties based on their 2013 census-reported population sizes. Quotas within each county were established based on age distributions in order to ensure representative samples.

Intercept Survey

Intercept surveys were collected during the Senior Living Festival on October 31, 2013. Responses were collected from 173 attendees.

Focus Groups

OrangeBoy facilitated a series of five focus groups with various agency stakeholders. The first focus group took place during the Senior Services Roundtable of Columbus and Franklin County in November 2013. The second and third focus groups were with staff members from the two agencies. The fourth focus group included law enforcement officials from the surrounding area, and the final focus group was comprised of older adults who had experiences with recent hospitalizations.

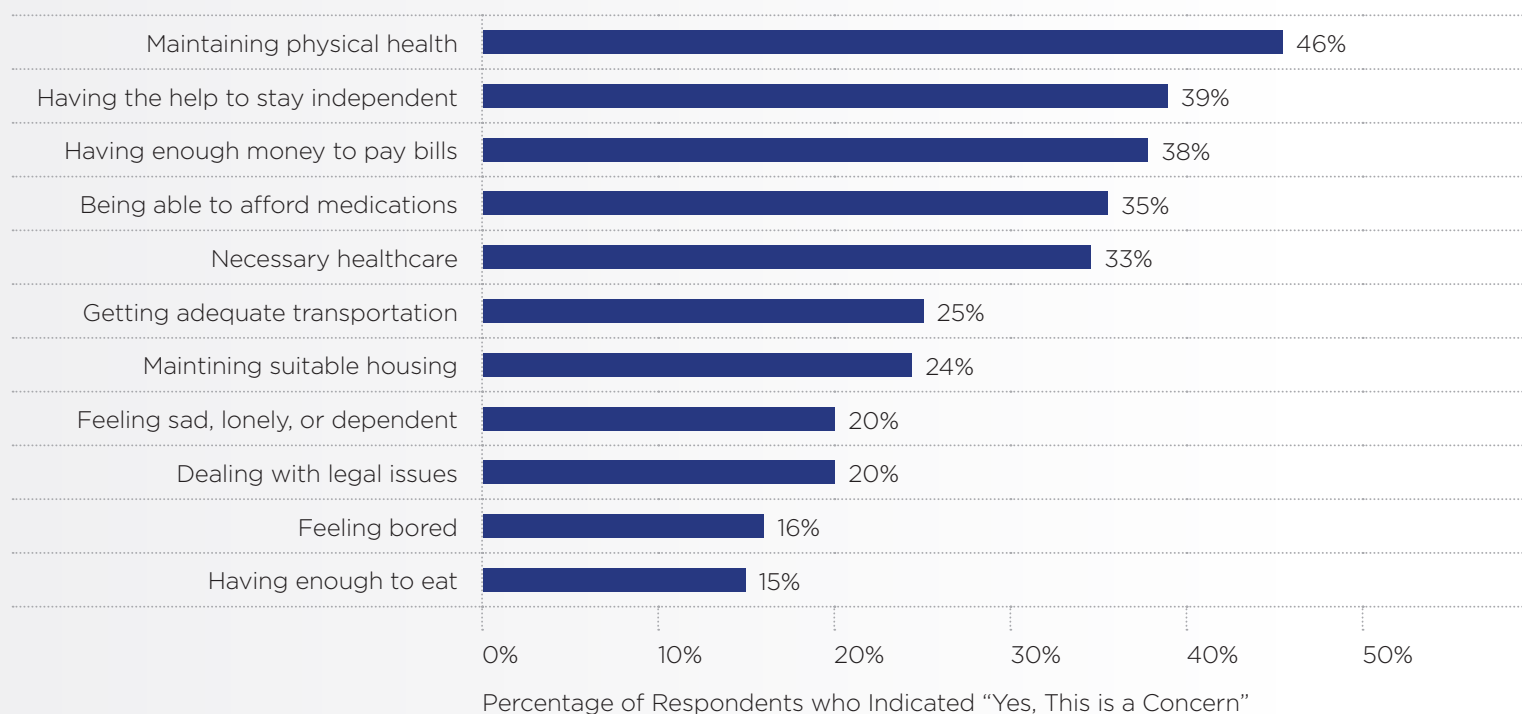
Research Highlights

Community Phone Survey

The community phone survey provided insight into the needs and attitudes of the older adult population throughout central Ohio, regardless of whether they are already accessing agency services. Overall, concerns about health and independence were the most common, and the younger age ranges tended to have slightly more concerns than the oldest age ranges.

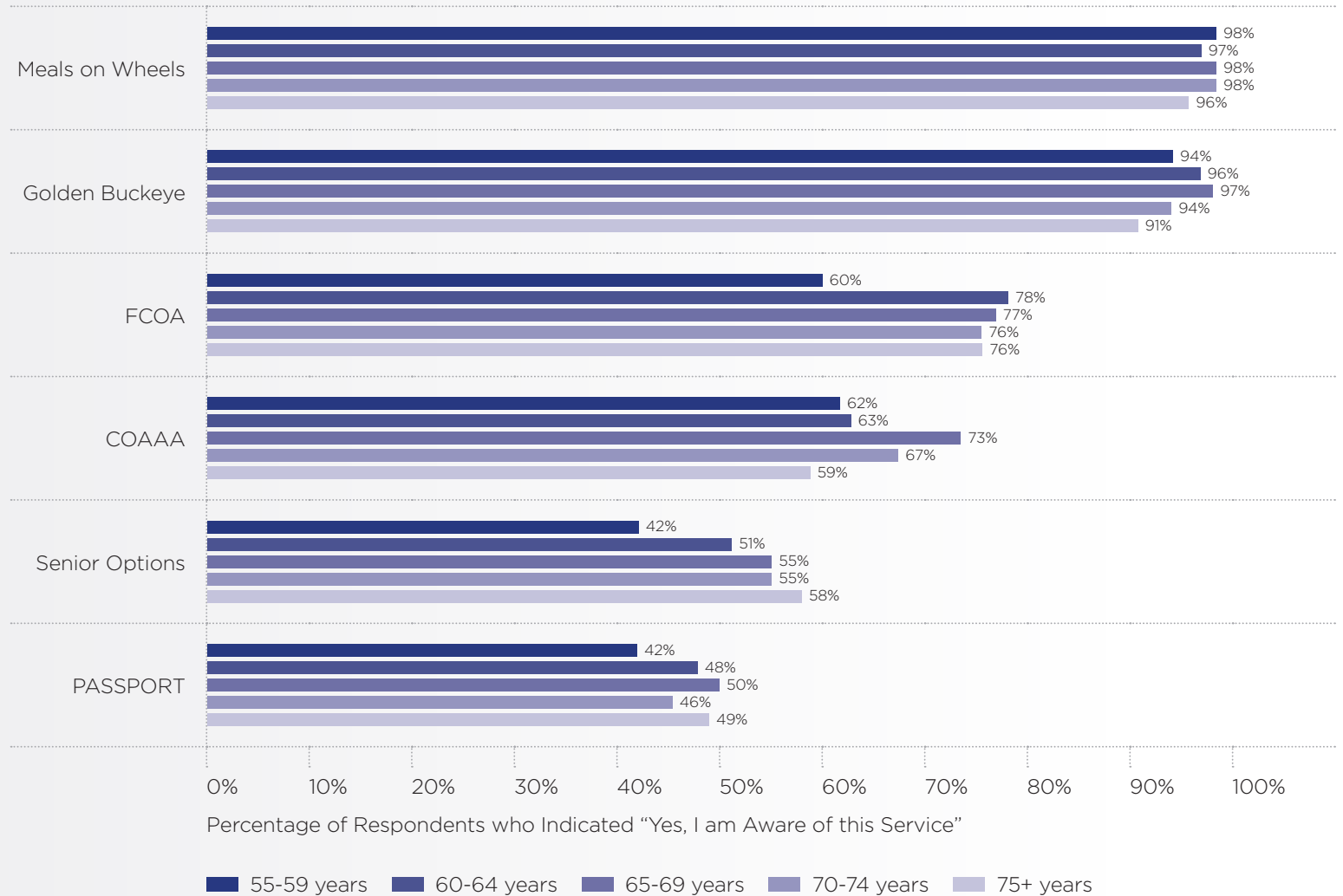
Concerns About Getting Older

The most common concerns regarding aging relate to the ability to maintain one's physical health, ability to stay independent, and having the necessary financial resources. This is followed by medication costs and getting access to healthcare.



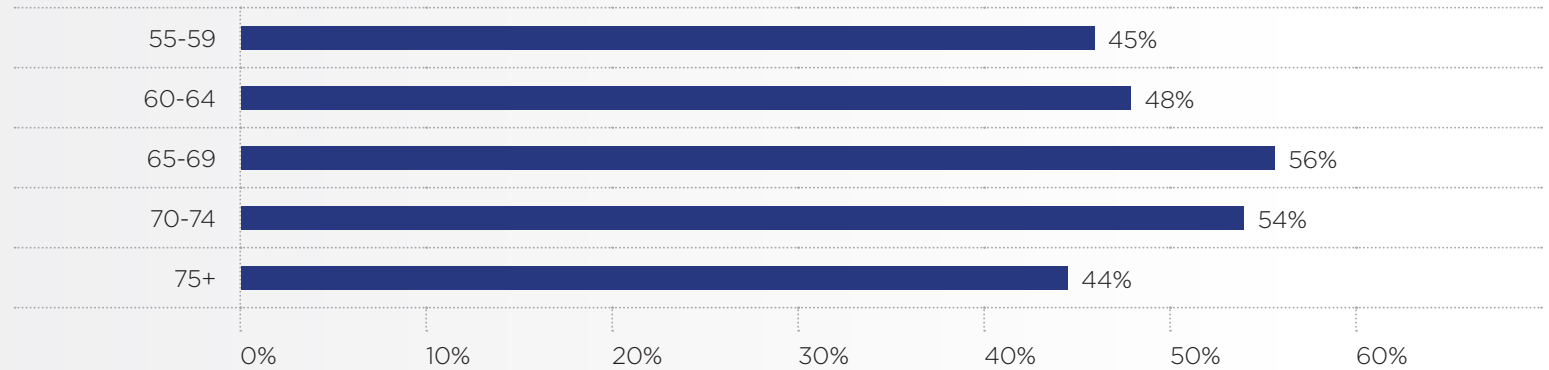
Awareness of Services

When asked if they had heard of different services and programs available for older adults, respondents were most familiar with Meals on Wheels and Golden Buckeye. The two agencies (FCOA and COAAA) were more well-known than their corresponding service offerings, Senior Options and PASSPORT. A fake organization was also included to check for respondents who were saying yes to organizations they have not actually heard of before.



Likelihood of Accessing Services

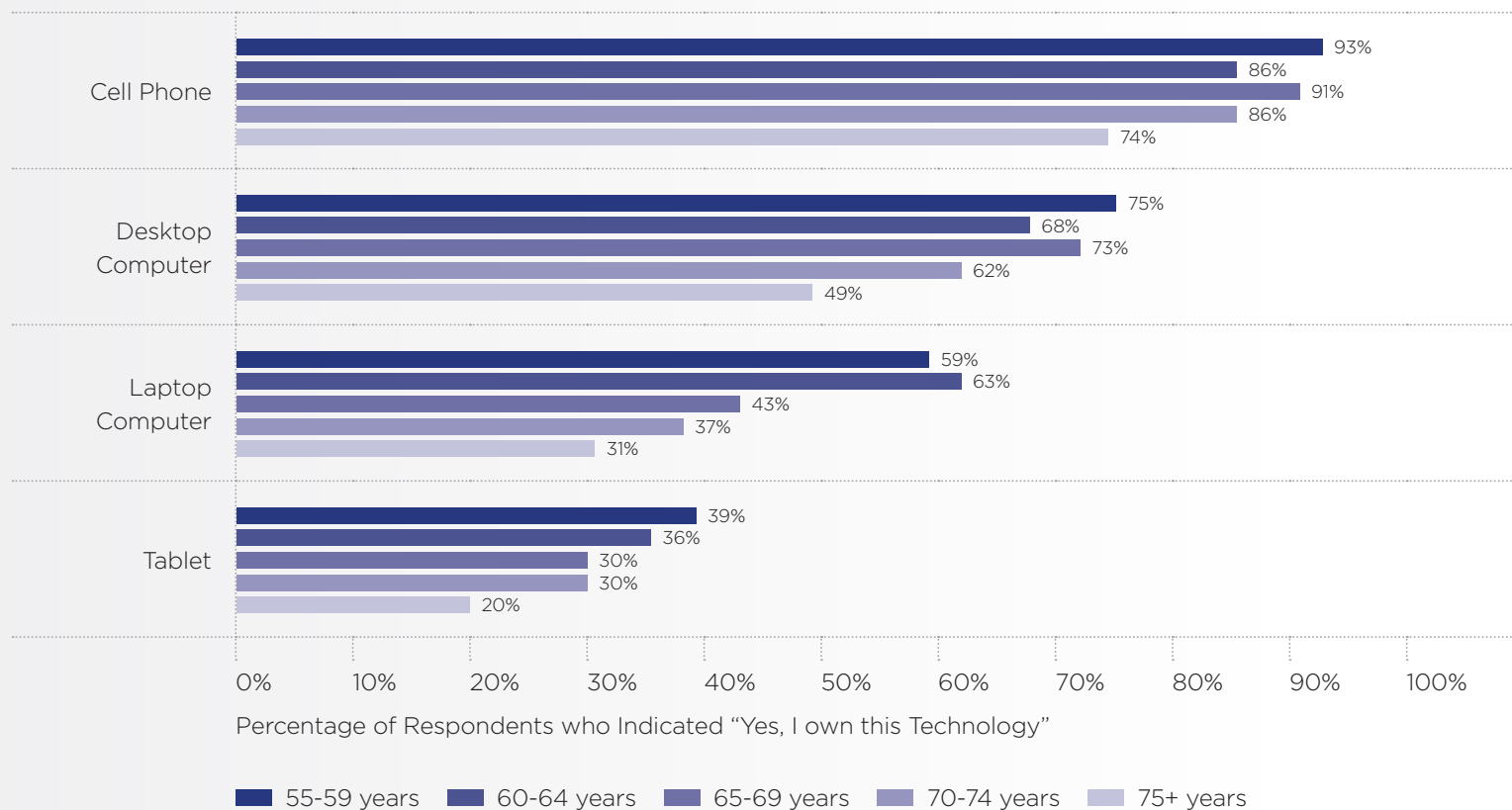
When asked the likelihood of accessing services when the need arises, the younger age cohort mirrored the response of the 75+ age cohort, with nearly half of respondents in these age groups saying they have a high likelihood of accessing services in the home such as Meals on Wheels.



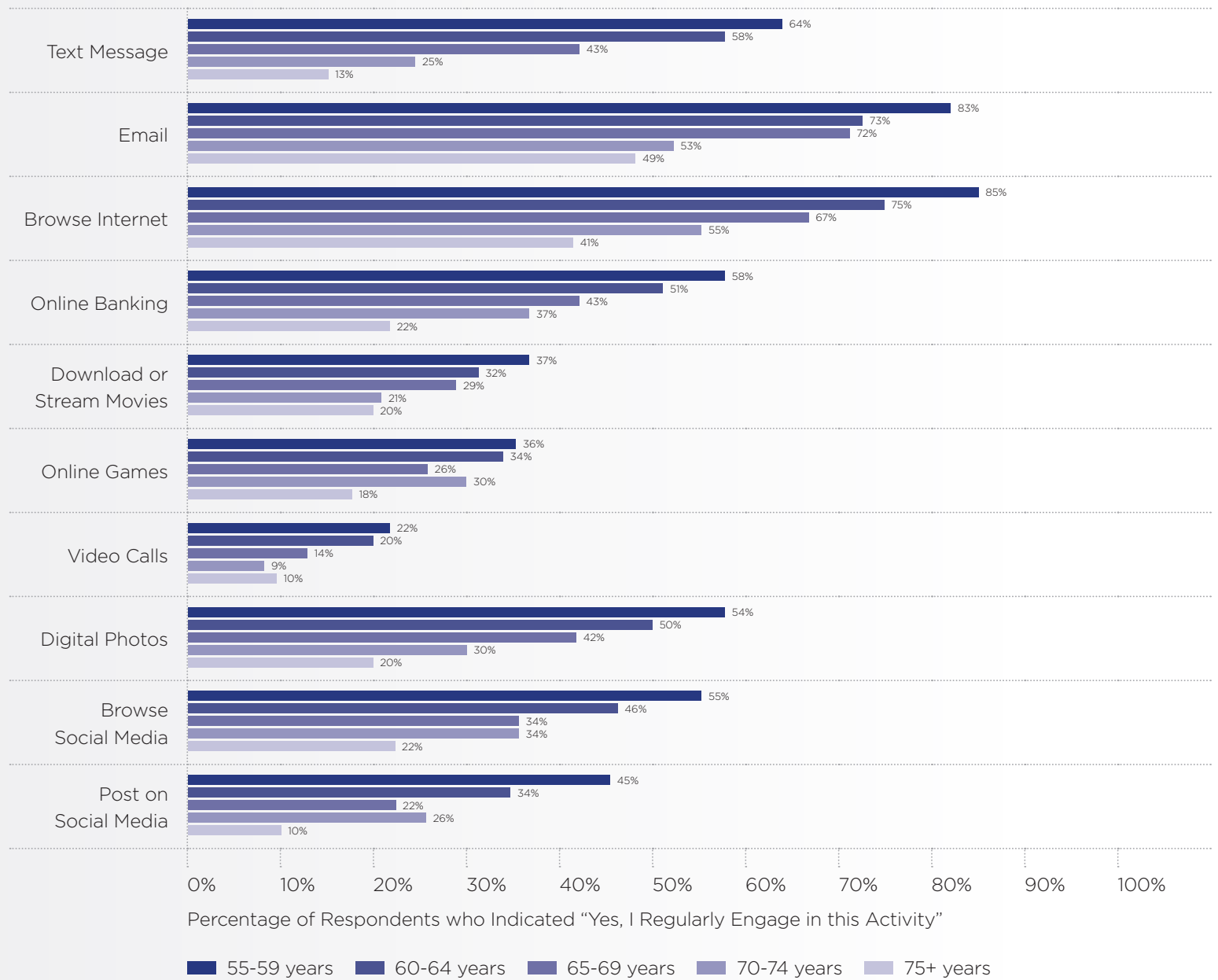
Percentage of Respondents who Answered “4” or “5” When Asked to Rate the Likelihood that they will Access Services in the Future, on a Scale from “1 (Very Unlikely)” to “5 (Very Likely)”

Technology Use

Age plays a strong role in technology usage. There is high adoption for technology devices such as a cell phone ownership across all age groups. Disparity starts to show in actual use of the devices. Younger age cohorts have higher adoption for uses such as email, texting, online banking, and participation in social media.



Technology Behaviors



Other Findings:

- 68% of older adults reported that their health is “good” or “excellent” compared to their peers, and this did not vary significantly when looking at Franklin County compared to the surrounding counties. Only 5% of respondents identified their health as “poor.”
- 24% of Franklin County residents are dissatisfied with their retirement savings, compared with 19% of non-Franklin County residents. When looking at this issue by age, 31% of 55-59 year olds are dissatisfied with their retirement savings while only 11% of individuals age 75 and older are concerned in this area.
- 61% of respondents regularly attend activities outside the home. Several reasons preventing attendance at activities and events more often include lack of time, cost, physical limitations, and lack of awareness.
- Transportation and cost were bigger issues for Franklin County residents and a lack of interesting events to attend was a bigger issue for non-Franklin County residents. Older adults in the younger age cohort cited lack of time and awareness as reasons they do not attend outside activities more often, and transportation and physical limitations were listed among those in the older age cohorts.



- Related to assistance with daily activities, 31% of respondents identified housework as an activity they need help with sometimes or always, 18% identified assistance with shopping, 13% cited assistance with scheduling and getting to appointments, and 12% need assistance with food preparation.
- 11% of respondents provide care for another older adult for four or more hours per week. For one-third of these caregivers, they are the sole caretaker, and the remaining caretakers have shared duties. Among caregivers, 28% said they need additional help providing care to their care recipient.

Intercept Survey

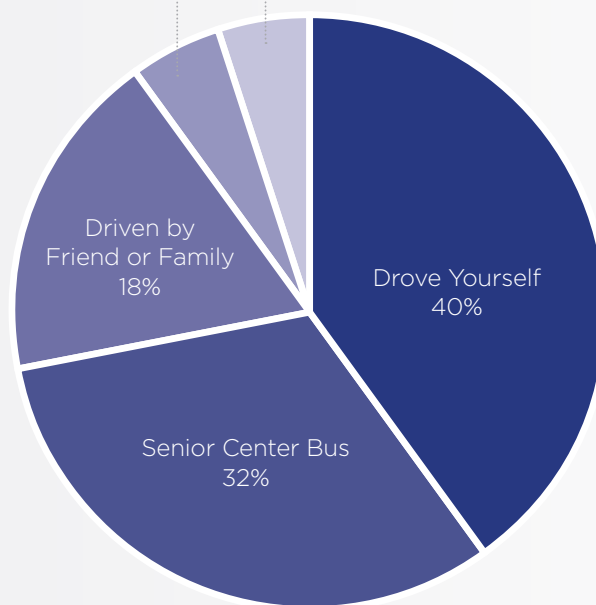
The Senior Living Festival held on October 31, 2013, was co-sponsored by the two agencies and attracted nearly 2,000 attendees. Surveys distributed to some of the active older adults attending the Festival highlighted some key factors related to how seniors hear about and find transportation to special events. Senior Centers were identified as the first way many seniors heard about the Festival. Most attendees also reported that they got to the festival by driving themselves or by taking a senior center bus. Of all survey respondents, only 39% reported that they had attended the Festival before in the past, indicated that most seniors were new rather than returning attendees.

Attendees were from across central Ohio, with 61% from a ZIP code in Franklin County. The majority of attendees live in their own home or apartment (88%).

How did you get here today?

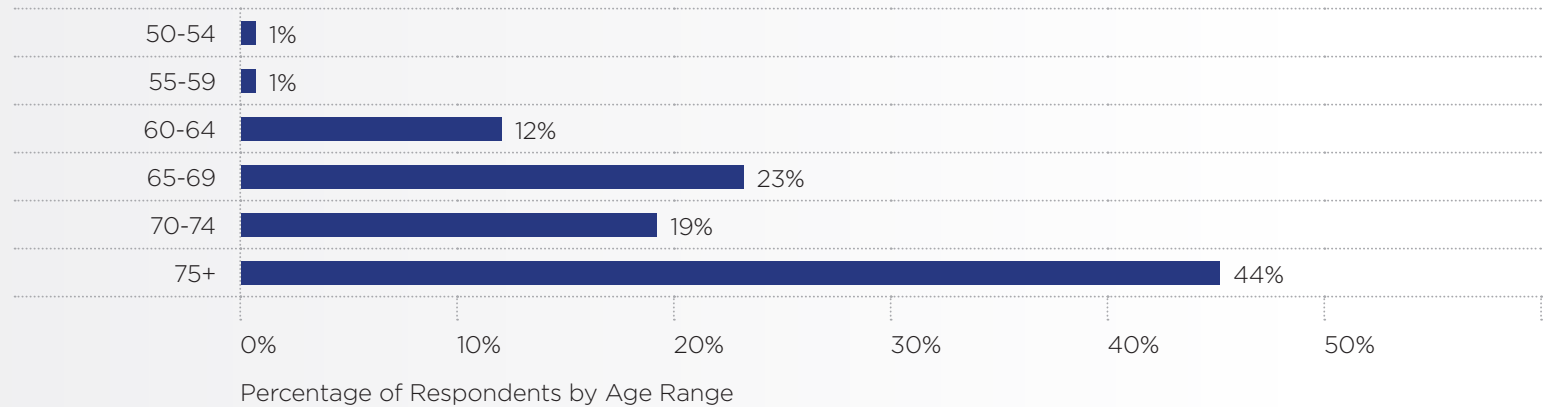
Public Transportation 5%

Other 5%



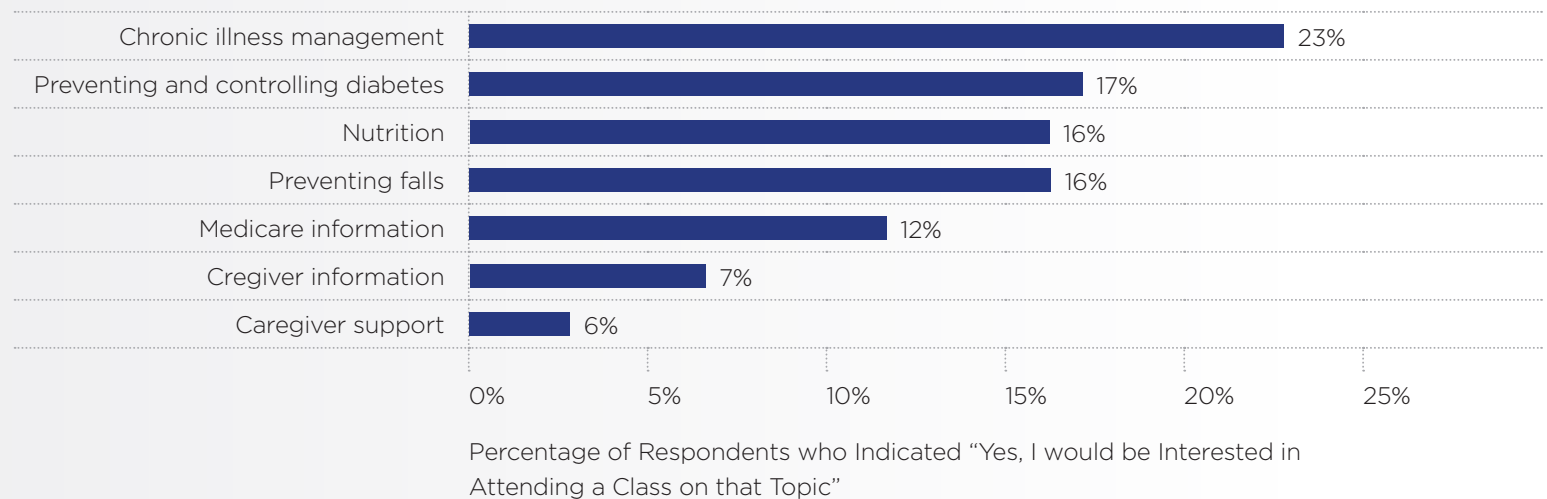
Festival attendees also tended to be older than the general population represented by the phone surveys, with 44% of intercept survey respondents at least 75 years old.

Age of Attendees



Festival attendees provided information regarding classes or workshops that they would be interested in attending, with 46% of respondents indicating that they would be interested in at least one of the suggested workshops if they were available.

Interest in Classes and Workshops



Focus groups

Case Manager Staff Focus Group

Case Managers work directly with older adults in need of services and assistance. Ten Case Managers from the Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging and eight Case Managers from the Franklin County Office on Aging provided their insight regarding older adults in central Ohio.

Case Managers are seeing a growing demand for services from younger seniors. This younger group is more aware of services and are seeking more from providers than previous age cohorts. Case Managers have also noticed several trends related to longer life expectancies, such as more Alzheimer's and dementia cases that require more from caregivers. Case managers also identified key issues facing older adults, including financial burdens that leave older adults working longer or sometimes facing issues maintaining their housing. Frequently mentioned barriers to care included negative societal views towards older adults, technological barriers for seniors who cannot use the internet, and a lack of understanding of the services that are available.

Suggested areas for service expansion:

- Broader home maintenance offerings (e.g., yard work, snow removal, emergency maintenance, large appliance replacement, bedbug extermination)
- Expanded homemaker escort services
- Affordable housing solutions
- Neighborhood-focused efforts (e.g., increased community service options, volunteer registry for snow removal, pet care, etc.)
- Increased education regarding fraud

Information and Assistance Staff Focus Group

Information and Assistance staff are often the first agency personnel to speak with people who are seeking services. Five individuals from COAAA and six from FCOA discussed their perspectives.

Information and Assistance staff identified similar trends as the Case Managers. They stated that they also see an increase in younger seniors calling for services than in the past. They are also seeing more calls related to mental health issues, as well as calls stemming from financially oriented issues, such as inability to pay utility bills. They also identified challenges navigating through complex systems, such as Medicare and Job and Family Services. The group also agreed that transportation can be a barrier, and that public transit options often do not work well for most seniors.

Suggested areas for service expansion:

- Home maintenance (e.g., home repair, bedbug treatment and solutions)
- Increased homemaker escort services
- More assistance with Medicare navigation
- Comprehensive case management (“a navigator”)
- Website enhancements to increase usability for younger older adults and caregivers

Senior Roundtable Focus Group

The Senior Roundtable is comprised of organizations that provide services and support to older adults in central Ohio.

The group agreed that technology is vital to helping an aging population, but that there are many gaps in how technology is used. The primary concerns regarding health and wellbeing were access to care (both financial access and informational) and social isolation. There were also many concerns for caregivers of older adults, and agreement that finding support can be difficult. Finally, the group felt that transportation and easy-to-find access to personal care services would be very beneficial to older adults. Awareness was the most common concern regarding barriers to service.

Suggested areas for service expansion:

- Promote programs through churches and other community groups
- Keep people engaged in the community (volunteer work, etc.)
- Create an online service that allows caregivers to login and view which services were provided to an older adult they are caring for

Law Enforcement Focus Group

Six law enforcement officials from several central Ohio municipalities and counties participated in a discussion about the older adult population based on their experiences. Local police and sheriff departments regularly spend time doing ‘wellness checks’ for seniors. They are also increasingly incorporating technology into their work to serve this population, such as finding missing people who suffer from dementia or Alzheimer’s. Law enforcement officials receive calls about elder abuse, but the issues are often non-criminal in nature and law enforcement can offer little assistance. The agencies represented have great interest in collaborating across central Ohio to coordinate efforts to serve the older adult population.

Suggested areas for service expansion:

- Provide law enforcement with wallet-size cards they can use to refer services to older adults
- Create one-page handouts that summarize services offered by local agencies
- Make website enhancements to allow finding resources online easier
- Create and fund training programs for law enforcement officials on dealing with older adult issues

Recently Hospitalized Focus Group

Ten individuals who have been recently hospitalized identified both good and bad experiences with their recent hospital stays. Negative experiences tended to focus on communication issues between the patient and hospital personnel, and inconsistent care. Most respondents agreed that it is a more positive experience when the patient has an advocate, such as a spouse, friend or other family member who can participate in discussions about care and treatment. Most respondents did not recall receiving information upon discharge about services offered to assist in their transition back to health, such as Franklin County Office on Aging’s Senior Options program.

Suggested areas for service expansion:

- Upon discharge, provide patients with a checklist to assist with their transition back to health, including information about services that are available to assist them
- Provide a ‘patient advocate’ for individuals who do not have a spouse, friend, or family member to fill that role