



Fulton County State of Seniors Survey

PREPARED BY: A.L. BURRUSS INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND RESEARCH

PREPARED FOR: FULTON COUNTY HOUSING AND HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT OFFICE OF AGING



A.L. Burruss Institute of
Public Service and Research

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FULTON COUNTY

Fulton County
Housing and Human Services Department
137 Peachtree Street, S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
Office (404) 613-7944
www.fultoncountyga.gov/housing-and-human-services

Introduction

Fulton County's population is aging- recent estimates project that within the next two decades, over 30% of Fulton County's population will be over the age of 65. From 2000 to 2010, Fulton County's population over age 65 increased by 8.5%. It is therefore becoming vitally important to ensure that there are resources available to enable older adults to continue leading healthy and independent lives in their own homes.

An aging population is a complex issue that concerns not only the well-being of today's older adults, but also broader areas and sectors affecting the total population, such as health, labor markets, and public finances. It affects and engages communities, all levels of government, and all sectors of society. The challenges of an aging population will require continued efforts to:

- Improve health, well-being, and independence in later life;
- Strengthen the supportive environments within communities;
- Sustain programs and services to support lifelong communities.

To prepare for the demographic shift as both the number and proportion of seniors and caregivers living within Fulton County increases, the State of Seniors initiative provides for the opportunity to further understand, address, and respond to the needs of the community. For these reasons, Fulton County Government collaborated with the A.L. Burruss Institute of Public Service and Research to perform a comprehensive status and needs assessment survey focused on quality of life issues.

This report includes findings from four surveys of Fulton County residents and one survey of Fulton County Senior Service Providers. Data collection strategies consisted of a Random Digit Dial (RDD) telephone survey, online surveys, and a paper-and-pencil survey. The surveys include, but are not limited to questions regarding demographics, health, housing, caregiving, mental health, independent living, and access to community services. Respondents verified residency and age.

Key findings

Individuals 55 and over

- ❖ 35% experienced age discrimination.
- ❖ 8-14% of respondents reported skipping meals due to lack of money.
- ❖ 10% need, but are unable to afford medical care.
- ❖ 20% have experienced depression in the past year.
- ❖ 11% report difficulties paying for prescription medications.
- ❖ 35% of respondents did not know who to contact to report elder abuse.
- ❖ 72% reported not having a grocery store within walking distance.
- ❖ 24% have difficulty performing routine housework.
- ❖ 10% are currently raising grandchildren or children of other family members.

Individuals 54 and under

- ❖ 90% reported that their relative(s) relied on other people for transportation. This was the most frequently reported need.
- ❖ 75% of respondents reported that their relative(s) over 54 years of age relied on other people for help with daily household chores. This was the second most frequently reported need.
- ❖ 13% reported their relative having an unmet care need. The most frequently reported unmet need was medical assistance (26%).
- ❖ 65% agreed with the statement “Parents should be responsible for arranging for their own care without burdening their children.”
- ❖ 75% agreed with the statement that “Children should assume the primary responsibility of providing care for their elderly parents.”
- ❖ 50% agreed with both statements and 10% disagreed with both statements.
- ❖ The biggest obstacles reported for children in taking care of their parents were **financial challenges and job responsibilities**.
- ❖ 54% stated that they knew who to contact to report elder abuse.
- ❖ 28% observed discrimination against a senior because of their age. Accessing employment was the most frequently mentioned form of discrimination (42%).

Fulton County Service Providers

- ❖ 54% reported that they knew of a senior who had skipped a meal due to lack of money.
- ❖ 61% reported that a senior has discussed depression with them in the past year.
- ❖ 70% identified difficulties paying for prescription medications as the top medical need experienced by seniors.
- ❖ 7% of respondents did not know who to contact to report elder abuse.
- ❖ 65% rated the need for transportation at the highest level of priority for improving the quality of life of seniors.
- ❖ 18% observed discrimination against a senior because of their age. Accessing employment was the most frequently mentioned form of discrimination (80%).

Daily Activities

The ability to perform everyday activities including work, homemaking, personal care and recreation impact overall quality of life. Inability to perform these activities renders one dependent on others. A community that supports aging in place creates lifelong opportunities and support services that enable older adults to age with dignity and respect.

The top five activities that older adults participate in:

1. Physical exercise (indicated by 59% of web respondents)
2. Religious activities (indicated by 56% of web respondents)
3. Recreation (indicated by 51% of web respondents)
4. Educational activities (indicated by 50% of web respondents)
5. Volunteering (indicated by 38% of web respondents)

The top three reasons that keep people from doing things in the community include:

1. Health reasons (indicated by 36% of phone respondents)
2. Cost (indicated by 13% of phone respondents, 8% of paper & pencil respondents, and 25% of web respondents)
3. Place offering activity is inaccessible (indicated by 6% of phone respondents, 4% of paper & pencil respondents, and 10% of web respondents)

Table 1. Employment Status of Respondents over Age 54

	Phone Survey	Paper Survey	Online Survey
Employment status			
Full time	21.4%	0.7%	21.4%
Part Time	4.9%	2.5%	6.7%
Unemployed and looking for work	2.8%	1.1%	13.1%
Unemployed and not looking for work	3.6%	5.9%	2.6%
Retired but working in some capacity	9.8%	4.7%	7.4%
Retired and not working at all	47.7%	85.1%	48.8%
Unable to work	9.6%	N/A	N/A
Don't know	0.3%	N/A	N/A
Would like to work more hours	16.1%	3.6%	6.9%
Needs to find a job to meet the cost of living	18.4%	18.0%	23.7%

Over 20% of telephone respondents aged 55 and above reported working full time and approximately five percent part time. Almost 50% indicated that they were retired and not working at all (47.7%). The remaining respondents reported being unemployed and looking for work (2.8%), unemployed and not looking for work (3.6%), retired but working in some capacity (9.8%), or unable to work (9.6%). Almost one-fifth of respondents to the telephone survey aged 55 and above (19.2%) reported that they would like to find a job and 16.1% reported that they would like to work more hours. Over one-third reported that they would like to work fewer hours (34.8%) and that they'd like to quit their job, but need the money (33.9%). Almost two-thirds of service providers to Fulton County seniors responding to the online survey (62.2%) reported that they have observed seniors reentering the workforce due to financial issues.

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Table 2. Percent of Fulton County Survey Respondents over Age 54 Who Have Difficulty with Various Activities

	Phone Survey	Paper Survey	Online Survey
Daily Activities			
Getting out of bed	10.0%	38.5%	12.6%
Preparing meals	12.2%	44.0%	10.8%
Eating	2.4%	16.3%	3.9%
Using the telephone	2.2%	18.1%	4.0%
Routine housework	24.0%	58.9%	20.8%
Grocery shopping	19.6%	53.4%	15.6%
Laundry	12.5%	45.4%	14.7%
Dressing/bathing	11.5%	40.4%	8.7%
Bill paying/budgeting	14.0%	40.1%	20.8%
Walking	28.8%	60.4%	20.1%
Picking up medication	12.0%	41.9%	13.4%
Transferring from bed	9.3%	35.4%	8.2%

Respondents under age 55 with relatives living in Fulton County over age 55 reported that their relatives need assistance with personal needs on a regular basis (29.3%), help with daily household chores (75.4%), and rely on other people to prepare their meals (55.2%).

Seniors were asked how much difficulty they experienced with a variety of day-to-day tasks. Answers ranged from 1-5, with 1 = no difficulty, 2 = some difficulty, 3 = great difficulty, 4 = unable to do task without assistance, and 5 = unable to do task at all. The following figure on page 5 displays the percentage of respondents experiencing difficulty by task.

Almost one-fourth of respondents to the telephone survey (24.5%), 43.9% of the online respondents, and 33.6% of the paper-and-pencil respondents aged 55 and above reported that there are activities that they would like to participate in, but cannot. The figure on page 6 lists reasons given by seniors for not participating in activities. Over half of service providers to Fulton County residents responding to the online survey (57.3%) reported observing seniors restricting their activity in the community due to crime. When asked to choose the top two social needs for seniors, 62.2% of service providers chose need to know more about accessible recreation options in their area, and to have more accessible recreation sites. Over half (52.7%) selected need more opportunities for social and leisure activities.

Table 3. Percent of Fulton County Survey Respondents over Age 54 Reporting Barriers to Participating in Community Activities

	Phone Survey	Paper Survey	Online Survey
Barriers to Activities			
Health Reasons	35.6%	N/A	N/A
Cost	12.8%	8.3%	24.6%
Place offering activity is inaccessible	6.3%	3.9%	10.2%
Nothing offered interests me	4.7%	2.4%	8.4%
Transportation problems	16.8%	22.0%	19.8%
I don't have the time	18.3%	2.9%	21.2%
Language Barriers	0.0%	0.5%	1.6%
I'm not aware of any opportunities	21.0%	13.2%	32.1%
Other	17.8%	5.1%	15.2%

Daily Activities Recommendations

To support daily living, strategies need to focus on home care and community support services to enable people to continue leading healthy and independent lives in their own homes.

Caregiving

Caregivers provide care for spouses, children, parents, extended family members and friends in need of support. While caregiving tasks may include cleaning, home maintenance, meal preparation, transportation and providing personal care, caregivers are frequently called upon to deliver skilled care such as dressing wounds, giving injections, and managing chronic conditions. There have also been increases in the number of grandparents raising grandchildren due to factors such as child abandonment, poverty, unstable environments, mental or physical illness, substance abuse, unemployment, homelessness, and domestic violence. Over half of service providers (61.0%) reported observing the “sandwich generation,” adults caring for both children and aging parents in the population they serve. While caregiving can be both rewarding and satisfying, there has been more research recently on informal caregiving and recognition that caregivers are experiencing considerable stresses and pressure which pose risks to health, wellness and ability to continue to provide care.

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Service providers identified the lack of ability to pay for personal assistance that seniors need (71.6%) and the need for more assistance (such as respite care) for family caregivers (64.9%) as the top two personal assistance needs faced by seniors in their community.

In addition to receiving care, many seniors are also providing care for grandchildren or children of other family members. Of the 9.5% of respondents to the telephone survey aged 55 and above caring for children in their home, only 20.2% were currently receiving assistance. Of those providing unpaid care, 5.2% stated that they need relief, 6.9% need support services, and 18.0% financial assistance. Less than ten percent of online respondents under age 55 (7.7%) indicated that they have children who are being cared for primarily by their grandparents who live in Fulton County.

Table 4. Who Assists When You Need Help? (Respondents over Age 54)

	Phone Survey	Paper Survey	Online Survey
Person Providing Help			
Spouse	27.9%	6.1%	2.7%
Other relative	47.0%	27.8%	4.0%
Friend	20.5%	10.8%	3.7%
Agency or Volunteer	7.9%	19.3%	2.4%
I have no one to assist me	10.7%	7.6%	N/A
Other	N/A	6.3%	N/A

Caregiving Recommendations

Caregiver strategies need to focus on health and social services for care recipients and respite (caregiver relief), resource assistance and user friendly education for caregivers. Caregivers must be supported, recognized and protected from the potential adverse consequences of caregiver burnout.

Information, Assistance and Planning

Accessing services and programs that assist older adults and caregivers can be confusing and challenging. A community can have a variety of support services to offer, but if older adults or caregivers do not know the services exist, they cannot take advantage of them. Timely information, streamlined access and appropriate assistance will support an individual's ability

to age in place. Additionally, financial, social and care planning are vital to ensure that individuals prepare for the future.

About two-thirds of online respondents under age 55 reported that they were very confident (31.1%) or somewhat confident (35.9%) that they would be able to retire comfortably. Half of respondents (50.7%) indicated that they have a plan for retirement. Components of these retirement plans include long term care insurance (40.6%), a will (32.3%), power of attorney (18.8%), and advanced directives (30.8%). About 40% indicated that they had discussed their wishes for future care with someone, most commonly their children. Over 40% of respondents (44.9%) indicate that they participate in a retirement savings plan (other than Social Security). The majority of these (68.5%) participate through work.

Over half of telephone respondents aged 55 and above (56.8%) and slightly over than half of the online respondents aged 55 and above (51.8%) indicated that they knew who to contact to find information on programs and services to support them as they age. Over half of the online respondents age 55 and above (65.3%) reported that they currently use one or more Fulton County programs and/or services. The majority of service providers to Fulton County seniors who completed the online survey (70.7%) estimated that between 26%-70% of seniors do not receive the level of care they need in order to age in place.

Service providers identified problems paying the monthly bills (67.6%) and the lack of money to pay for food, clothing, shelter and other necessary items as the top two income needs faced by seniors.

Seniors taking the online survey indicated that they would contact the following top 3 types of agencies for information and assistance:

1. Legal Aid (27.8% of respondents).
2. Free seminars (26.8% of respondents).
3. Senior center (23.5% of respondents).

Seniors taking the phone survey indicated that they would contact the following top 3 agencies for information and assistance:

1. Private attorney/Paralegal (30.9% of respondents).
2. Other (21.5% of respondents).
3. Social Security & the Internet (13.4% of respondents each).

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Online respondents under age 55 were asked about the types of services that would be important to them as they age. All services were rated as relatively important. The figure below shows the percent of respondents identifying each service as “very important” or “somewhat important.”

Table 5. Percent of Fulton County Survey Respondents under Age 55 Reporting That a Service Is “Very Important” Or “Somewhat Important”

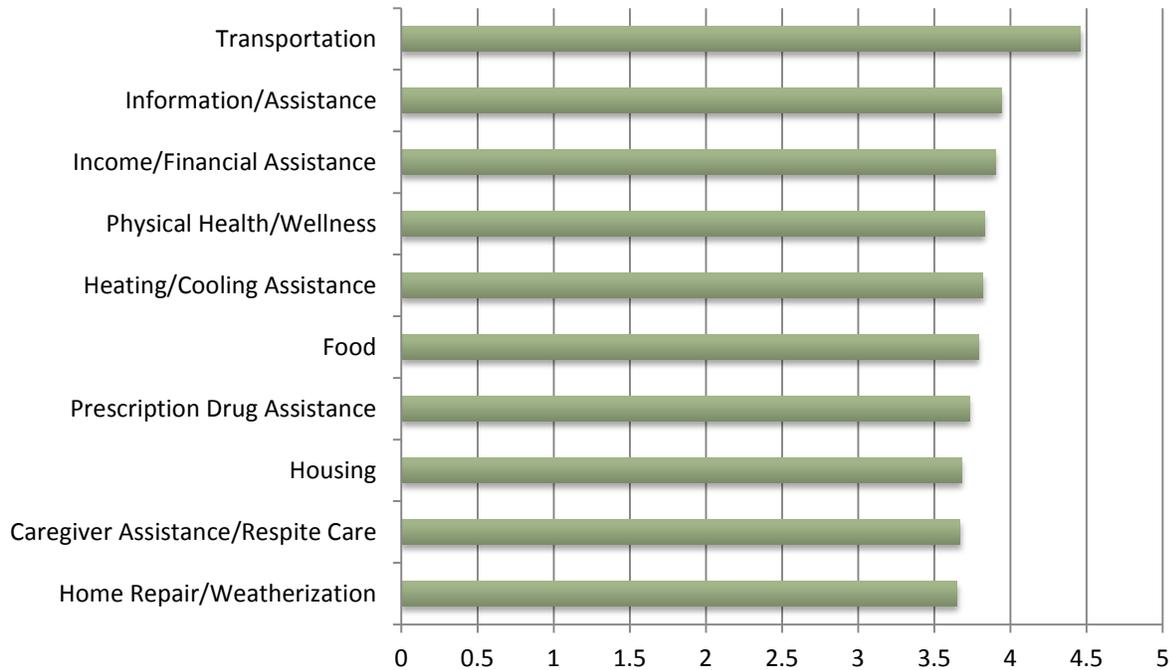
	Percent of Respondents Indicating Importance of Service
Important Services	
Health screening/counseling	95.7%
Transportation services for seniors	95.4%
Crime prevention/protection programs	94.9%
In-home visiting programs	94.6%
Senior citizen centers	94.5%
Visiting nurses	94.5%
Housekeeping or personal care services	94.2%
Grocery shopping services	94.2%
More recreational programs aimed at seniors	94.1%
Home delivered meals	93.8%
Legal assistance programs	93.8%
Emergency home monitoring	93.4%
Housing assistance (locator service)	93.4%
Tax assistance programs	93.3%
Fitness center classes	92.8%
Adult day care (respite care) services	92.1%
Telephone reassurance programs	91.9%
Group meals	91.9%
Walking trail	91.7%
Employment assistance programs	90.0%
Nutrition counseling	89.3%

As can be seen in the table above, the top 3 concerns most important to respondents in their later years include the following:

1. Health Screening/Counseling (95.7%).
2. Transportation Services for Seniors (95.4%).
3. Crime Prevention/Protection Programs (94.9%).

Service providers were asked to rate the needs faced by seniors on a scale of one to five, where 1 = Lowest Priority and 5 = Highest Priority. The figure below depicts the needs in order of priority as rated by service providers in Fulton County.

Figure 1. Service Provider Survey Respondents - Ratings of Various Needs Faced by Fulton County Seniors



Seniors were asked about various types of concerns. Responses varied somewhat by the format of the survey. Online respondents were most concerned about needing a will or trust (35.9%) and phone survey respondents were most concerned about identity theft (18.7%). Online respondents under age 55 listed crime prevention programs as one of the top three services that would be important to them as they age (36.1%)

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Table 6. Percent of Fulton County Survey Respondents over Age 54 Who Have Concerns Regarding Legal Information & Assistance, Benefits, & Safety

	Phone Survey	Paper Survey	Online Survey
Legal Information and Assistance			
Will/trust	6.2%	N/A	35.9%
Financial debt	8.1%	N/A	27.7%
Making ends meet	16.8%	N/A	33.8%
Financial responsibility for a relative	9.0%	N/A	9.9%
Power of Attorney	3.5%	N/A	13.5%
Benefit Information and Assistance			
Social Security benefits	9.9%	N/A	28.1%
Medicare benefits	9.5%	N/A	23.6%
Safety Information and Assistance			
Property crime	10.9%	N/A	24.1%
Identity theft	18.7%	N/A	27.7%
Physical crime	9.4%	N/A	21.9%
Would like information about elder abuse and prevention	N/A	N/A	19.7%
Would like information about safety education and prevention	N/A	N/A	42.0%

Table 7. Percent of Fulton County Respondents under Age 55 with Various Retirement Options

	Online Survey
Retirement plan includes long term care insurance	40.6%
Retirement plan includes a will	32.3%
Retirement plan includes a Power of Attorney	18.8%
Retirement plan includes advance directives	30.8%
Retirement plan includes "other"	25.2%

In addition, respondents under the age of 55 taking the online survey indicated that the following ways would be the best way to get information to them related to services for seniors in Fulton County:

- ❖ TV or radio announcements (48.1%).
- ❖ Personal e-mail (13.7%).
- ❖ Internet website (12.4%).
- ❖ Awareness posters, brochures, flyers (10.4%).
- ❖ Public meetings, seminars, or lectures (7.5%).

Information Assistance and Planning Recommendations

Strategies to improve access and coordination of support services for older adults and caregivers, is vital to ensuring a consistent level of service across the system and a seamless experience for the client. On-going education on retirement planning is needed to prepare individuals for social, financial and care needs as they age in place.

Housing

Safe, appropriate, and affordable housing for all residents is essential for individuals to age in place. A variety of housing options should be available to meet both the needs and preferences of older adults who want to continue to live in their own homes. With limited affordable housing options available within the county, evolving circumstances such as losing a spouse, declining health, reduced income, inaccessible communities and factors such as the size, design and maintenance of a home, challenge a person's ability to remain in their home as they age.

According to the surveys of Fulton County residents ages 55 and above, over three-fourths of telephone respondents (76.5%) and 73.6% of online respondents indicated that they planned to retire in Fulton County. In addition, the majority of online respondents under age 55 indicated that they were very likely (40.3%) or somewhat likely (about a 50-50 chance) (29.9%) to be living in Fulton County when they turn 65. In addition, a majority of seniors who completed the paper and pencil survey stated that the cost of energy and utilities has some effect (35.3%) or a great deal of effect (22.6%) on their quality of life.

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Table 8. Percent of Fulton County Survey Respondents over Age 54 Indicating Housing Concerns

	Phone Survey	Paper Survey	Online Survey
Housing concerns/problems			
Meeting mortgage	7.5%	4.4%	9.8%
Paying homeowner or renter insurance	N/A	8.8%	12.0%
Paying for home maintenance	N/A	16.3%	22.4%
Finding an affordable apartment	3.3%	3.7%	6.9%
Sufficient lighting	4.4%	4.4%	6.4%
Major home repairs	11.3%	19.2%	29.6%
Paying rent	2.9%	6.8%	10.1%
Safety issues	5.0%	5.4%	9.8%
Finding a legitimate lender	1.3%	1.7%	5.0%
Understanding the value of my home	3.0%	3.1%	8.7%
Paying for long-term care facility	N/A	6.1%	4.5%
Minor home repairs	10.2%	18.3%	23.0%
Yard work	9.1%	20.7%	24.6%
Area offers affordable housing	N/A	N/A	30.0%

In addition to problems/concerns listed the table above, seniors were also asked about difficulties they faced with various activities related to housing. Almost 71% of seniors responding via paper and pencil survey indicated that they had difficulty with yard work (while 36.6% of telephone respondents and 44.0% of web respondents indicated that they had difficulty with this task); and 71% of seniors taking the paper survey indicated that they had problems performing minor home repairs (while 33.2% of telephone respondents and 50.4% of web respondents indicated difficulty with this task).

Table 9. Where Respondents over Age 54 Would Go If They Had to Move

	Phone Survey	Paper Survey	Online Survey
Relocation Area			
In another home they own	23.9%	N/A	32.9%
In a retirement community	21.6%	N/A	34.6%
With a relative or friend	13.0%	N/A	16.3%
In assisted living	12.8%	N/A	13.8%
In an apartment	8.3%	N/A	16.2%
Other	7.0%	N/A	4.4%
In a home with three or four other seniors	1.8%	N/A	4.7%
No place else to live	1.7%	N/A	8.9%
In a nursing home	0.5%	N/A	1.3%
In a mobile home park	0.4%	N/A	0.4%

Census data from 2010 indicate that 38.9% of Fulton County residents age 55 and above are homeowners¹. The majority of telephone respondents aged 55 and above indicated their first preference if they could not live in their current home would be to live in another home that they own (23.9%). The next most common choice was in a retirement community (21.6%), followed by with a relative or friend (13%), assisted living (12.8%), and in an apartment (8.3%).

The majority of online respondents aged 55 and above reported that they currently live in a home that they own (62.3%). In an apartment (16.2%) and with a relative or friend (8.5%) were the next most frequently reported living arrangements. The average length of residence in Fulton County was 22.5 years. Fulton County seniors reported that they most commonly needed assistance with major home repairs, yard work, and minor home repairs/paying for home maintenance.

When asked about what would be important to them in later years, over three-fourths of online respondents under age 55 indicated that housing assistance (locator service) would be very important (69.5%) or somewhat important (23.9%) to them. Service providers identified waiting lists for subsidized housing that are too long (71.1%) and inadequate stock of accessible housing (30.3%) as the top two housing needs faced by seniors. In addition, they identified the need for assistance with funding for access modifications (53.9%) and the need for modifications to the kitchen, bathroom, or other rooms (47.4%) as the top two accommodation needs.

Housing Recommendations

Housing strategies need to address the issues of home repair and modifications to enhance safety and accessibility. Additionally, accessible and affordable housing options need to be developed to meet the current and future needs of older adults.

Health

Increases in the number of older adults, life expectancy and risk of disease and injury as one ages, will create serious implications for an already strained public health system. Additionally, a system that focuses on a cure rather than health promotion and disease prevention, will ultimately lead to increases in sickness, disease and unmanageable health care costs.

According to The State of Aging and Health in America report published by the CDC, working to

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census.

http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_SF1_QTH2&prodType=table

adopt healthier behaviors such as engaging in regular physical activity, eating healthy, not smoking and getting regular health screenings can reduce a person's risk for most chronic diseases. There are, however, real environmental, systemic and social barriers to adopting these healthy behaviors which relate to gender, ability, race, income, and geography. These barriers and inequities need to be addressed in order to support healthy aging across the lifespan.²

The majority of respondents to the telephone survey ages 55-64 rated their overall health as good (29.3%), very good (28.2%), or excellent (19.0%). The majority of respondents ages 65 and above also rated their overall health good (33.4%), very good (31.1%), or excellent (16.0%). Over 60% (61.7%) of respondents under age 55 indicated that they have relatives over age 54 who need help managing a health condition. These respondents also rated health counseling and screening service as one of the top three services that would be important to them as they age (with 35.1% of respondents providing this answer). Over 40% of online respondents under age 55 did not know if their current health care plan included nursing home coverage.

Seniors were asked a series of questions regarding health care (See figure on page 16). In general, responses across groups of respondents (paper and pencil, online, and phone) were similar. Most seniors reported having health care coverage, prescription drug coverage, a primary care physician, and a physical exam in the last three years. Seniors were less likely to report having dental insurance, a dental exam in the last three years, a flu shot in the past year, a pneumonia shot in the last ten years, and a preventative screening in the past year. Over a third of seniors reported experiencing pain on a daily basis due to a health issue. Online respondents aged 55 and above expressed interest in information about health promotion and disease prevention activities (40.7%) as well as safety education and prevention (42.0%).

Providers of services to Fulton County seniors were asked about their experiences with health issues affecting seniors. Almost one-fourth of respondents (23.2%) reported observing sexual health issues (STI's, HIV) and unnecessary use of ER services and almost half (45.1%) reported observing self-doctoring due to limited health care insurance.

Seniors were also asked about their ability to afford various medical services. Again, responses were consistent across respondent type. About 20% of respondents indicated that they could afford any service they might need. Dental and vision care were most frequently mentioned as services seniors could not afford.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and The Merck Company Foundation. The State of Aging and Health in America 2007. Whitehouse Station, NJ

Table 10. Health Related Needs of Respondents over Age 54

	Phone Survey	Paper Survey	Online Survey
Insurance			
Does not have medical insurance or HMO	8.2%	9.1%	16.7%
Does not have dental insurance	47.1%	70.3%	47.7%
Does not have prescription drug insurance/coverage	11.7%	10.6%	20.4%
Affordability			
Needs, but is not able to afford medical care	10.4%	8.0%	14.1%
Needs, but is not able to afford dental care	20.1%	37.1%	33.6%
Needs, but is not able to afford prescription drugs	9.3%	7.5%	15.2%
Needs, but is not able to afford vision care	15.2%	29.8%	26.7%
Needs, but is not able to afford hearing care	10.7%	11.2%	8.5%
Needs, but is unable to afford assistive devices	9.8%	N/A	3.5%
If I needed any of the above, I could afford it.	N/A	21.4%	21.8%
Prevention Services			
Has not had a dental exam in the last three years	23.8%	50.3%	35.3%
Has not had a flu shot in the last year	40.4%	32.0%	45.7%
Has not had a pneumonia shot in the last ten years	53.2%	41.4%	56.1%
Has not had a physical exam in the last three years	9.2%	20.2%	21.3%
Has not had a preventative screening in the past year	25.8%	N/A	35.9%
Has a primary care physician	91.4%	94.6%	86.4%
Medication Management			
Has problems with paying for prescription medications	10.7%	16.9%	20.6%
Has problems refilling prescription medications	2.2%	9.8%	6.0%
Has problems with understanding doctor's prescription medication orders	1.2%	4.6%	2.1%
Has problem taking pills on time	5.2%	10.5%	7.8%
Other problems with prescription medications	1.2%	1.9%	2.9%
Experiences pain on a daily basis	44.3%	56.2%	40.6%
Health Problems			
Have you experienced a fall in the past 6 months?	10.0%	26.8%	15.0%
Have you been admitted to the hospital in the past 6 months?	9.5%	22.2%	11.6%
Have you called 911 in the past 6 months for a health issue?	4.6%	13.1%	5.3%

When service providers were asked about the top two medical needs faced by seniors that they serve, the most frequently selected need was that seniors can't afford to pay for prescription drugs (70.3%). The second most frequently mentioned need was difficulty accessing or paying for medical services that are necessary for their health and well-being (60.8%) followed closely by problems with transportation to medical services (59.5%).

Fulton County State of Seniors Survey

Seniors were asked about their mental health. The most frequently reported mental health issues were uncertainty about the future, anxiety, and depression. Service providers who were asked about the top two mental health needs faced by seniors that they serve selected undiagnosed or untreated mental health needs that affect seniors' well-being and ability to cope with day-to-day life (78.4%) most frequently. The second most frequently mentioned need was that seniors have difficulty finding appropriate mental health services by themselves (50%).

Table 11. Percent of Fulton County Survey Respondents over Age 54 Who Report Experiencing Mental Health Issues

	Phone Survey	Paper Survey	Online Survey
Hopelessness	8.8%	6.4%	8.6%
Depression	20.1%	22.9%	20.9%
Inability to cope	5.4%	4.7%	5.7%
Isolation	6.8%	8.8%	9.3%
Anxiety	17.8%	19.5%	24.4%
Disinterested in life	4.8%	4.2%	5.6%
Uncertain about the future	16.7%	16.8%	28.4%

Service providers also identified the need for funding for equipment/assistive technology that is not covered by insurance (66.2%) as the top equipment need faced by seniors. The second most frequently mentioned need was for help for seniors in understanding what equipment/technology is available and the opportunity to try it out before purchasing (64.9%).

Health Recommendations

Health promotion strategies need to focus on creating policies, services, programs and environments that enable healthy aging in settings where Fulton County residents live, work, and participate in daily life. Adopting healthier lifestyles and increasing the use of preventative screenings/ services, are important in the prevention/ delaying of illness and disease.

Food Security

Access to fresh food is one of the single most important determinants of overall health and it is a key factor in promoting healthy aging. As defined at the World Food Summit, food security exists “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life”³. Evidence suggests that low income is the single greatest predictor of food insecurity. Furthermore, a report published by Feeding America on Senior Hunger stated that a senior is more likely to be food insecure if they: live in a southern state, are younger, live with a grandchild, are African America or Hispanic⁵. According to research on food deserts in metro Atlanta, access to fresh food is a major challenge for older adults who live low income, non-white neighborhoods⁴.

Seniors were asked about issues of food security. The results are found in the figure below. Only 3.2% of telephone survey respondents aged 55 and above reported receiving home delivered meals. An additional 8.9% reporting needing home delivered meals.

Table 12. Percent of Fulton County Respondents over Age 54 Answering “Yes” to Questions Regarding Food Security

	Phone Survey	Paper Survey	Online Survey
Food Security			
Receives home delivered meals	3.2%	32.1%	1.7%
Needs help heating home delivered meals	23.4%	2.3%	0.3%
Needs home delivered meals	8.9%	9.6%	11.0%
Skipped meals due to lack of money	7.6%	10.7%	14.0%
Has been unable to get to the grocery store	8.1%	13.7%	8.0%
Has been unable to cook or eat because of health problems	8.0%	11.7%	5.0%
Has not had enough time for shopping or cooking	5.0%	4.9%	11.0%
Has had to reduce size of portions to make food last longer	13.9%	11.5%	16.0%
Has gone without food in order to provide for someone else	4.2%	1.5%	3.8%
Has a grocery store within walking distance	N/A	N/A	28.2%
Relatives over 54 years of age rely on other people to prepare meals	N/A	N/A	55.2%

³ Rome Declaration on World Food Security, FAO, 1996.

⁵ Feed America report reference - Rhoda Cohen, J., Mabli, F., Potter, Z., Zhao. Mathematica Policy Research, Feeding America. Hunger in America 2010. February 2010.

⁴ Atlanta Regional Commission. Regional Snapshot: Fresh Food Versus Fast Food: A Look At Healthy Food Access in Metro Atlanta. Retrieved July 15, 2012 from http://clatl.com/images/blogimages/2011/01/27/1296172724-rs_jan2011.pdf

Food Security Recommendations

Strategies to reduce hunger risk and food insecurity should address access, quality and sustainability to support the nutritional needs of older adults; especially individuals who have limited support and resources. Additionally, strengthening food related knowledge, skills and behaviors is needed to ensure a healthy and nutritious diet.

Transportation

Providing a comprehensive senior transportation network is an essential part of aging in place and providing a means to independence. Transportation services are necessary for accessing much of what the community has to offer, including activity centers, health related services and social recreational opportunities. Within Fulton County, providing transportation services for older adults is challenging due to resource availability within the coordinated service system, and within the public system, service is either unavailable or inconvenient. For individuals who are forced to give up their vehicle because of deteriorating vision, physical function, impaired cognition, or other health issues, mobility can be extremely difficult. Urban design and vehicle dependence creates a challenging environment for older adults to continue to maintain their independence as they age.

Seniors reported needing transportation for various areas with the top need being transportation to medical appointments (7.8%). Transportation needs for grocery shopping and social activities were also listed by respondents (5.4%). Survey respondents were asked to rate the ease of use for public transportation. Of those who used public transportation, most found it easy to use.

Table 13. Transportation Service Needs of Respondents over Age 54

	Phone Survey	Paper Survey	Online Survey
Transportation Needs			
Medical Needs	7.8%	7.3%	N/A
Grocery Shopping	5.4%	19.5%	N/A
Social Activities	5.4%	14.9%	N/A
Other	2.2%	14.9%	N/A
Special Needs	4.6%	N/A	N/A

Table 14. Fulton County Survey Respondents over the Age of 54 Ratings of the Ease of Use of Public Transportation

	Phone Survey	Paper Survey	Online Survey
Public Transportation (ease of use)			
Very easy	37.0%	20.1%	29.8%
Somewhat easy	8.8%	10.8%	19.7%
Somewhat difficult	9.7%	13.3%	10.6%
Very difficult	11.4%	22.3%	7.0%
Not available	8.0%	7.6%	7.2%
Don't need public transportation	N/A	25.9%	25.7%

Over ninety percent (90.3%) of respondents to the online survey under age 55 reported that their relatives over age 54 relied on other people for transportation. The majority also reported that their relatives were very (51.0%) or somewhat (36.7%) dependent on them for transportation. A majority of respondents indicated that transportation services for seniors would be very (78.4%) or somewhat (17.0%) important to them in their later years. This was the top service (53.0 %) identified by these respondents as among the three most important to them in their later years.

Service providers to Fulton County seniors indicate most available public transportation options are inadequate (70.1%) and total dependence on others for their transportation needs (62.3%) as the top transportation issues affecting seniors. When asked to rate various goals on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 the lowest priority and 5 the highest priority, improving transportation options was rated highest with an average score of 4.46.

Transportation Recommendations

Transportation strategies need to focus on a variety of mobility options that are available, accessible, and affordable. Increasing funding will be necessary to meet the growing demand for service and more work needs to be done to enhance coordination at the state, regional and local levels.

Age Discrimination & Elder Abuse

Age discrimination or ageism, are terms which are generally defined as applying false stereotypes to individuals over a certain age, or a change in the way older people are treated in regard to their competence and value in society. From stereotypes in the media, being overlooked in the employment sector, to the lack of adequate treatment options in medical settings, ageism contributes to depression and lack of self-worth.

Elder abuse is often defined as any act or omission that harms a senior or jeopardizes his or her health or welfare. The World Health Organization defines abuse of older adults as “a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring in any relationship where there is an expectation of trust that causes harm or distress to an older person”². Both age discrimination and elder abuse need to be stopped in order to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of older adults.

The majority of respondents to the telephone survey (62.9%) and the online survey (54.3%) aged 55 and above reported that they knew who to contact to report elder abuse. Twenty percent of online respondents aged 55 and above were interested in information on elder abuse intervention and prevention. Over half of the online respondents under age 55 (54.3%) indicated that they knew who to contact in cases of elder abuse. One-third of providers of services to seniors in Fulton County who responded to the online survey indicated that they have worked with a senior who revealed that they have experienced abuse. The most common type of abuse reported was financial (70%), followed by verbal (66.7%), physical (46.7%), and sexual (6.7%). Eighty-seven percent of providers reported knowing who to contact if elder abuse happened to them or someone they knew.

Over one-third of online respondents aged 55 and above (35.3%) reported that they had experienced discrimination based on their age. The most frequently cited source of discrimination was employers (60.6%). Over one-fourth of online respondents under age 55 (28.2%) and almost one-fifth of service providers to seniors participating in the online survey (18.3%) reported observing discrimination against a senior because of their age. Access to employment was listed as the most common area observed by both the general population (41.7%) and service providers (80.0%).

² Missing voices: views of older persons on elder abuse. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2002

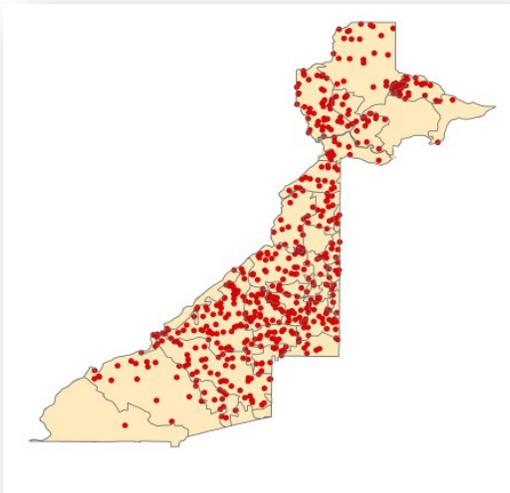
Age Discrimination & Elder Abuse Recommendations

Strategies to combat elder abuse and age discrimination need to focus on raising awareness through public education, professional training, advocacy, and service coordination.

Demographics

Telephone Survey of Seniors

The Burruss Institute conducted a random digit dial (RDD) telephone survey of 622 Fulton County residents aged 55 and above from April 26 to May 21, 2012. The average length of the interview was 17.5 minutes and 2.4 attempts on average were made for each telephone number. The geographic location of respondents is depicted in the map below.



Data were weighted for gender and age (under 65, over 65) using 2010 Census data. This resulted in a sample with 55% female and 24% male. The average age of the respondents was 67. The majority of respondents identified as Black/African American (47.3%). Another 44.9% identified as White/Caucasian, 0.1% as Asian/Pacific Islander, .4% as Native American, and 3.6% as other. In addition, 2.4% identified as Hispanic/Latino. The survey was offered in Spanish. Respondents were primarily married (43.2%) with 20.6% divorced, 20.2% widowed, and 10.3% single. The majority of respondents reported their highest level of

education as some college or an Associates degree (25.3%). 22.8% college graduate, 22.6% postgraduate, 18.2% high school graduate/GED, and 9.4% less than high school.

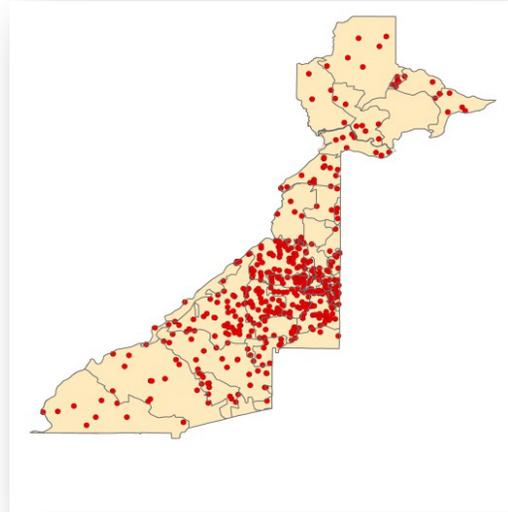
Paper and Pencil Survey of Seniors

The Burruss Institute conducted a paper-and-pencil survey of Fulton County seniors between May 4 and July 3, 2012. Surveys were mailed to seniors currently receiving services from the Office of Aging. Of the 1,505 surveys that were mailed, 68 were returned as undeliverable and 274 were completed. The Office of Aging also distributed paper copies of surveys to seniors who did not have access to the internet. A total of 316 surveys were received from this group.

Fulton County State of Seniors Survey

This resulted in 590 paper-and-pencil surveys. The geographic location of survey respondents is depicted in the map below.

Paper-and-pencil survey respondents were primarily female (82.5%) with an average age of 77. The majority of respondents identified as Black/African American (73.7%). Another 23.0% identified as White/Caucasian, 0.4% as Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.4% as Native American, .9% as multi-ethnic, and 0.5% as other. In addition, less than one percent (0.8%) identified as Hispanic/Latino. The paper-and-pencil survey was not offered in Spanish. Respondents were primarily widowed (48.0%) with 20.0% divorced, 18.8% married, and 12.9% single. The majority of respondents reported their highest level of education as a high school diploma or GED (35.5%), 26.0% some college or an associate degree, 17.2% less than high school, 13.0% college graduate, and 8.4% postgraduate.



Seniors were asked about sources of income. Social Security was the main source of income reported by seniors. Other sources of income are found in the figure below.

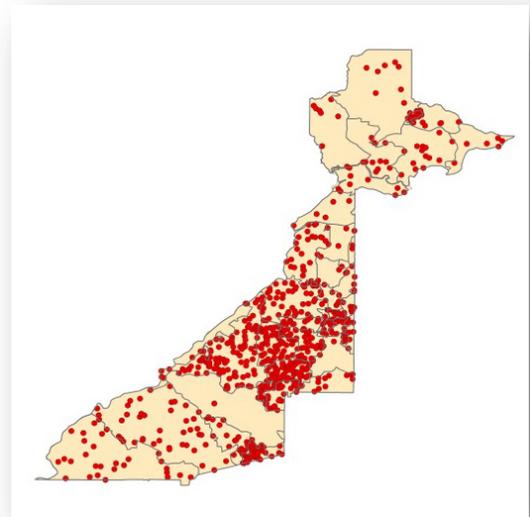
Table 15. Sources of Income for Fulton County Survey Respondents

	Phone Survey	Paper Survey	Online Survey
Sources of Income			
Job	31.5%	2.5%	30.1%
Investment Income	24.3%	5.1%	12.9%
Social security	45.3%	73.2%	47.6%
Pension	32.7%	35.9%	35.7%
SSI or SSP	12.9%	9.5%	2.7%
Other	N/A	2.5%	13.2%

Online Surveys of Fulton County Residents:

The Burruss Institute created an online survey to be used for Fulton County residents ages 18 and above. Residents 55 and older were given questions tailored to seniors and residents under age 55 were asked about the experiences of senior relatives ages 55 and older as well as their own plans and wishes for the future. The survey was accessible from the Fulton County Government website. The online survey was marketed through public meetings, public service announcements, radio and television interviews, printed material, web announcements, internal communication strategies within Fulton County and externally through contract providers and grantees.

Seniors – 849 individuals completed the online survey. The average age of respondents was 66. Almost three-fourths of the respondents were female (72.3%) with the remaining 23.2% male (4.5% did not indicate gender). The majority of respondents identified as Black/African American (70.3%). Another 19.4% identified as White/Caucasian, 0.8% as Asian/Pacific Islander, .4% as Native American, 1.8% as multi-ethnic, 1.6% as other, and 2.5% did not indicate race. In addition, 1.4% identified as Hispanic/Latino. The online survey was not offered in Spanish. The geographic location of the online respondents is depicted in the adjacent map.



General Population – 258 individuals completed the online survey. The average age of respondents was 45.

Online Survey of Fulton County Office of Aging Service Providers

The Burruss Institute created an online survey for service providers. An email invitation with a link to the online survey was distributed to 161 providers (email address supplied by Fulton County Office of Aging). One reminder email was sent to providers who had not yet completed the survey. Eighty-two providers completed the survey from April 30 – June 7, 2012.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This report provides an overview of population aging in Fulton County and the major issues that must be addressed as both the number and proportion of older adults continues to increase.

Community-wide efforts and partnership development will be needed to enhance collaborative strategies to meet the needs of the aging population. As a community, we need to develop and implement strategies and policies that promote successful aging across the lifespan. We need to overcome systemic issues that challenge our ability to promote healthy aging and develop supportive environments. To support aging in place with the quality of life and dignity that older adults deserve, all levels of government and all sectors of society will need to work in partnership to respond to the challenges of an aging population.

Recommendations:

Daily Activities

To support daily living, strategies need to focus on home care and community support services to enable people to continue leading healthy and independent lives in their own homes.

Caregiving

Caregiver strategies need to focus on health and social services for care recipients and respite (caregiver relief), resource assistance and user friendly education for caregivers. Caregivers must be supported, recognized and protected from the potential adverse consequences of caregiver burnout.

Information Assistance and Planning

Strategies to improve access and coordination of support services for older adults and caregivers, is vital to ensuring a consistent level of service across the system and a seamless experience for the client. On-going education on retirement planning is needed to prepare individuals for social, financial and care needs as they age in place.

Housing

Housing strategies need to address the issues of home repair and modifications to enhance safety and accessibility. Additionally, accessible and affordable housing options need to be developed to meet the current and future needs of older adults.

Health

Health promotion strategies need to focus on creating policies, services, programs and environments that enable healthy aging in settings where Fulton County residents live, work, and participate in daily life. Adopting healthier lifestyles and increasing the use of preventative screenings/ services, are important in the prevention/ delaying of illness and disease.

Food Security

Strategies to reduce hunger risk and food insecurity should address access, quality and sustainability to support the nutritional needs of older adults; especially individuals who have limited support and resources. Additionally, strengthening food related knowledge, skills and behaviors is needed to ensure a healthy and nutritious diet.

Transportation

Transportation strategies need to focus on a variety of mobility options that are available, accessible, and affordable. Increasing funding will be necessary to meet the growing demand for service and more work needs to be done to enhance coordination at the state, regional and local levels.

Age Discrimination & Elder Abuse

Strategies to combat elder abuse and age discrimination need to focus on raising awareness through public education, professional training, advocacy, and service coordination.