



# Age-Friendly Cleveland Summary



A REPORT by THE CENTER FOR COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

January, 2016



Cleveland is home to over 69,000 residents age 60 and older, who have a wide range of characteristics, abilities, strengths, and needs. This number is likely to grow over time, as people are living longer and healthier lives. The World Health Organization (WHO) established the Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities as “an international effort to help cities prepare for two global demographic trends: the rapid aging of populations and increasing urbanization.” WHO identifies eight domains of city life that might influence the health and quality of life of older adults:

1. Outdoor spaces and buildings;
2. Transportation;
3. Housing;
4. Social participation;
5. Respect and social inclusion;
6. Civic participation and employment;
7. Communication and information; and
8. Community support and health services.



In 2014, the City of Cleveland became a member of the WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and later joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities. According to the Cleveland Department of Aging, the Age-Friendly Cleveland initiative is an opportunity to reassess the needs of the community and respond with an action plan to build upon current programming and develop innovative solutions. This report was prepared as part of the planning phase of the Age-Friendly Cleveland initiative, which includes a baseline assessment of the age-friendliness of the city, development of a three-year city-wide plan of action based on assessment findings, and identification of indicators to monitor progress.

According to the WHO, an age-friendly city is an inclusive and accessible urban environment that promotes active aging.

From April, 2015, through January, 2016, The Center for Community Solutions conducted research and analysis to complete an assessment of the age-friendliness of Cleveland. Our method of collecting primary data from older residents had three components: facilitated focus group discussions, a comprehensive survey of a randomly selected representative sample of older adult residents, and a shorter outreach questionnaire distributed by service providers and the Department of Aging. In total, we collected feedback from well over 1,000 older adult residents of Cleveland. In addition, the project engaged dozens of community leaders, service providers, and stakeholders. This document is a summary of data and findings.

Overall, the information collected and presented here will serve as the building blocks as the community plans for the future. Through these efforts, the City of Cleveland and its partners seek to create an environment where older adults can remain engaged members of the community, safe from crime and violence, physically active, financially stable, healthy, and embraced by neighborhoods, friends, and family.

*This report was prepared by the applied research team of The Center for Community Solutions, in collaboration with staff from the City of Cleveland Department of Aging. The project would not have been possible without the support of the Cleveland Foundation, McGregor Foundation, and Saint Luke's Foundation.*



# Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

*The overall environment, including the quality of indoor and outdoor settings, plays a role in determining quality of life for all residents, and this is certainly true for older adults. Clean and accessible outdoor areas are readily available in age-friendly cities, as are buildings and businesses that can accommodate the unique needs of older adults.*

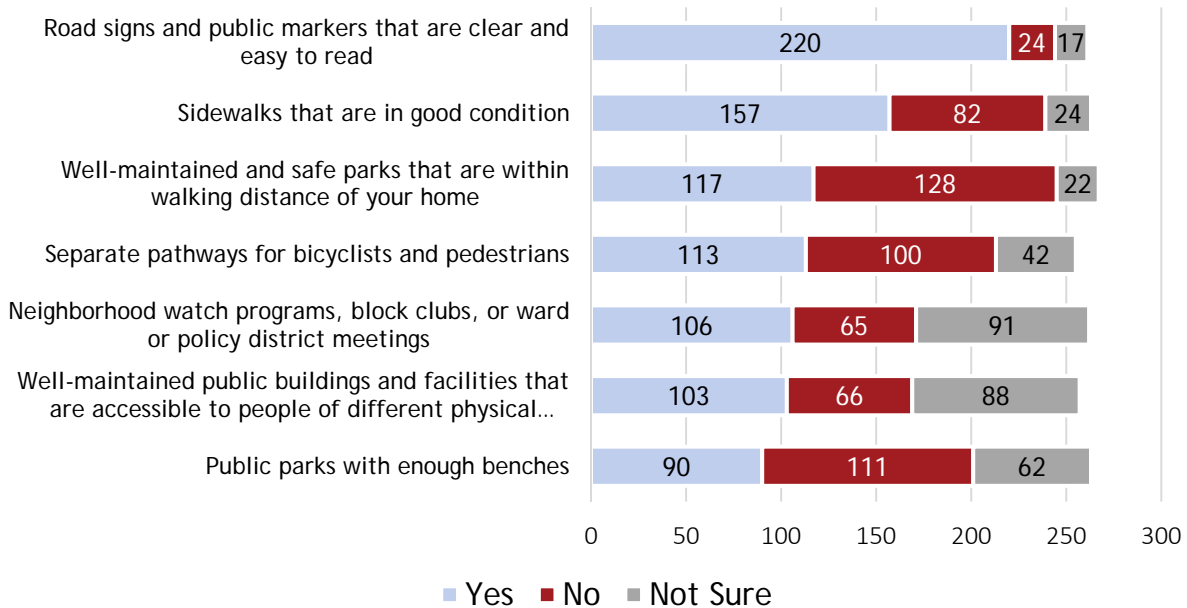
## Parks

*Parks are identified by many older adults as an asset in Cleveland, however some lack access.*

Many Cleveland older adults shared that they live near, and enjoy, local parks. Walking and sitting to enjoy the scenery were cited as activities older adults participate in at parks. Even with over 150 parks in Cleveland, forty-eight percent of older Cleveland residents identified that they are not within walking distance to well-maintained and safe parks; 44 percent do have this access. Fewer than half reported having access to parks with enough benches. According to an outreach questionnaire for older adults in Cleveland, 28 percent of respondents indicated there are not enough parks and that parks are not conveniently located.

### Do you have access to the following?

n=275



## Buildings and Businesses

*Public buildings are accessible, but public restroom options are limited, and long lines can be a concern.*

Older adult residents identified public buildings as mostly accessible, and reported few difficulties entering and exiting these spaces. A lack of public restrooms was named as a barrier for older adults; some noted that if they think there will not be a restroom, they often will not go to an event. Long lines at businesses are also a concern for older adults; 28 percent of outreach questionnaire respondents identified long lines as a challenge they face in public buildings. Furthermore, 51 percent reported that there is often nowhere to sit and rest when out in public.

## Sidewalks and Roads

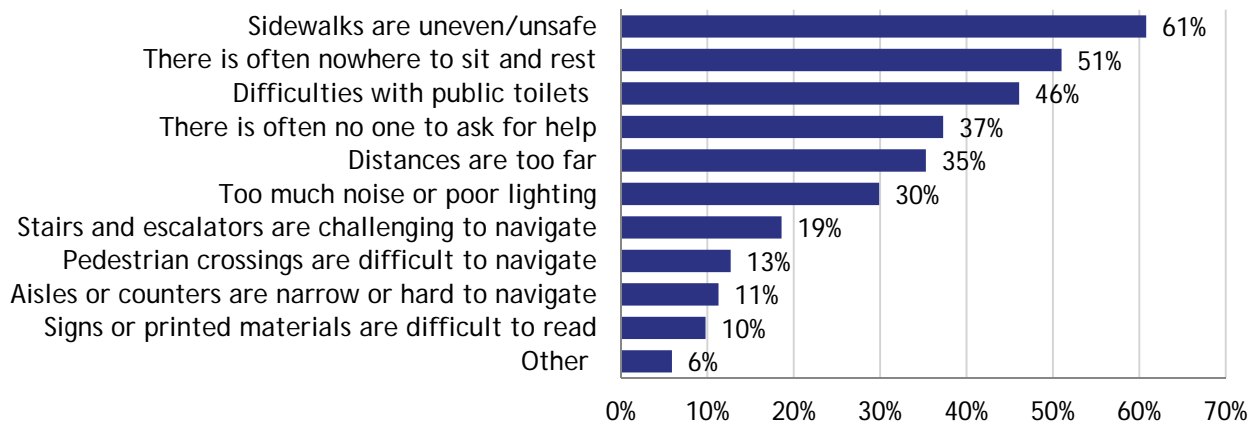
Poor sidewalk conditions were widely cited as a challenge that poses a safety risk to local older adults. As in any cold-weather city, snow and ice add to this danger.

While about 60 percent of older adult residents reported access to sidewalks in good condition, many older adults identified concerns about sidewalks in disrepair (cracked and uneven), which have posed tripping hazards to older pedestrians. Individuals using wheelchairs stated that the sidewalks made travel difficult and unsafe, noting bumpy terrain and a lack of curb ramps. The City continues to work to address the problem of sidewalks in disrepair. Sidewalk conditions were particularly problematic for older residents during the winter months, when many shared that owners of businesses and households do not always clear paths. Many found icy and snow-covered sidewalks to be a significant barrier to spending time outdoors in the winter. Most Cleveland older residents reported access to easy-to-read road signs and markers, and few identified pedestrian crossings as difficult to navigate.

***One older adult shared, "I walk the neighborhood daily but cannot enjoy the surroundings due to the uneven sidewalks. They are a hazard and if unheeded cause falls."***

### Challenges Cleveland older adults face when spending times outdoors or in public places

n=204



## Neighborhoods

Abandoned and vacant properties are a concern for Cleveland older adults, and many worry over the impact on their property values. Safety is also a frequent worry for many older residents in the city.

Older adults expressed concern over the high number of vacant and foreclosed properties in the city. Older adults found that the properties posed significant safety risks due to people and animals, and that they were an eyesore that could impact their property values. Progress is underway, however, as the number of vacant residential properties has fallen by more than 1,000 in the past two years, thanks in large part to the City's demolition program. In addition, many older adults identified safety concerns while in public. Many reported being vigilant about what times they leave their homes, and what neighborhoods and streets they visit. A great number reported not leaving their homes after dark due to feeling unsafe. Forty-one percent of Cleveland older adults reported access to neighborhood watch programs, block clubs, or ward or police district meetings, however many (35 percent) were unsure about their access to these programs.



# Transportation

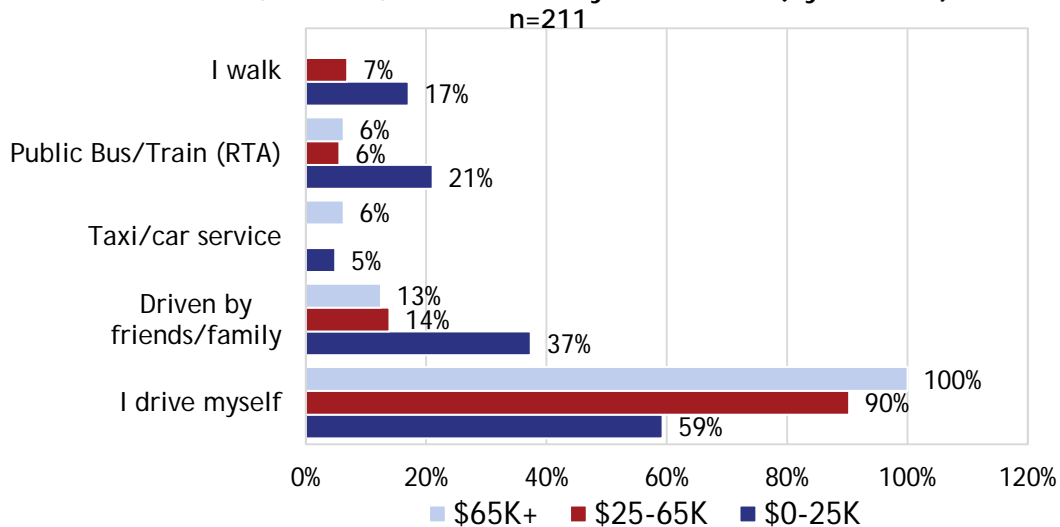
*Access to transportation is necessary to age in place. Depending on age, health, and mobility, travel needs will vary considerably among the older adult population. Some are interested and able to drive for many years beyond age 60, and others who need to rely on public transportation or other community transport for much of their older years.*

## Transportation Status

*Most older adults in Cleveland report having no or few difficulties getting around.*

Overall, 78 percent of Cleveland older adults surveyed reported having no problems traveling to appointments, events, or other community locations. Many older adults described an active lifestyle, and reported moving around the city using various forms of transportation on a regular basis.

**What is your usual way of traveling to appointments, errands, events, or community locations? (by income)**



Sixty-eight percent of Cleveland older adults state that they usually drive themselves. Many other older persons (28 percent) are driven by friends or family members, while fewer than 15 percent report that public transportation is their usual means of travel. Eleven percent uses a senior transportation service or a service for individuals with disabilities. Many respondents indicated more than one transportation method. Differences in travel were evident across incomes. For those with incomes of \$25,000 annually or less, 37 percent are driven by friends and family and 21 percent utilize public transportation. Of those with incomes above \$65,000 per year, everyone reported driving as their usual means of transportation, and fewer than 7 percent regularly use public transportation.

## Driving and Roads

*Many Cleveland older adults continue to drive, however road conditions can be an obstacle.*

Cleveland older adults report that traffic signs are generally easy-to-read, and 71 percent find that speed limits are enforced. Furthermore, 62 percent of Cleveland older adults have access to well-lit, safe streets and intersections. Poor road conditions resulting from snowy or icy weather conditions, road maintenance issues, and traffic were identified as an obstacle for older drivers. Potholes were frequently cited as a concern. Bike lanes were mentioned at focus groups as particularly problematic for senior drivers, some who found them to be dangerous and difficult to understand. Less than 20 percent of older adults said they had access to driver education/refresher courses.

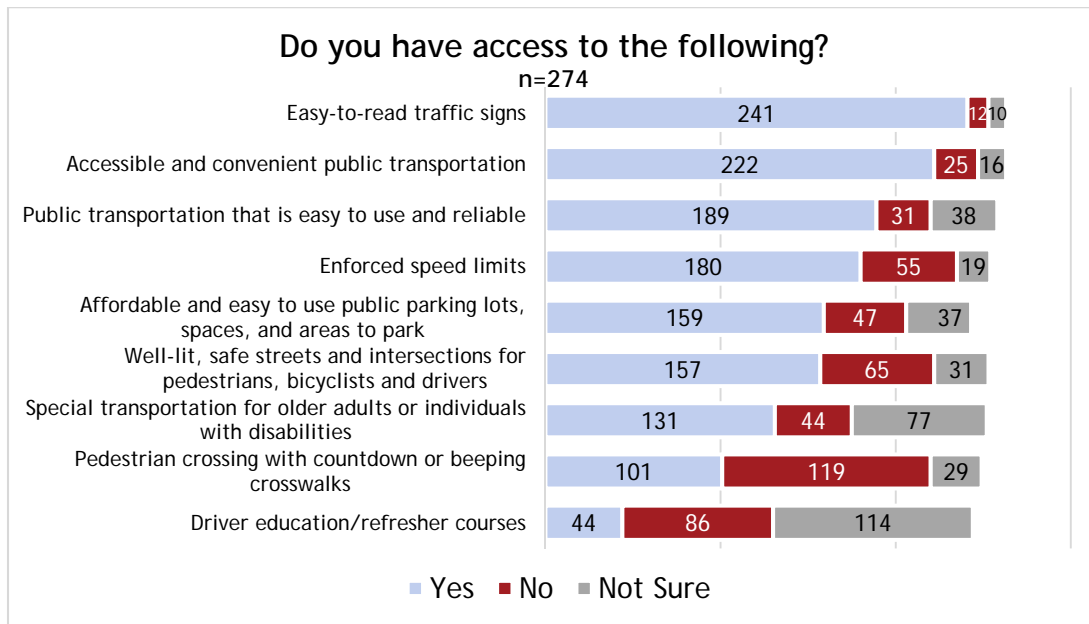
## Public and Private Transit Services

Most older adults in Cleveland report access to accessible and convenient public transportation, however scheduling difficulties present challenges for older adults when using senior transportation services.

Almost three-fourths of older adults in Cleveland find public transportation easy-to-use and affordable.

Responses from those who said they regularly use public transit (RTA) were overwhelmingly positive.

However, a common challenge cited during the focus groups was riding the bus with school-aged children, some of whom rely on RTA to get to and from school. Safety was also cited as a concern while riding on buses and trains, and several pointed to the need for more security on public transit.



About half of the survey takers indicate access to special transportation for older adults or those with disabilities, while 18 percent report no access. For services such as Paratransit and other “dial-a-ride” services, scheduling was identified as a challenge. Many services require at least 24-hours advance scheduling, which means that older adults who utilize these services cannot receive services for spontaneous trips or to meet last-minute needs. Some services are not available on weekends or evenings. It was suggested that available transportation programs could improve their outreach strategies so that a greater number of older adults were aware of available programs.

***As one attendee at a focus group lamented, “Our lives don’t end at 4:30 on Friday.”***

## Walking

Many Cleveland seniors walk, however some lack access to beeping crosswalks. Fears about safety are prevalent. Pedestrian crossings with countdown or beeping crosswalks were accessible to 40 percent of Cleveland older adults, while almost half (48 percent) reported no access to such crosswalks. Safety was another major concern for older adults when traveling in the community. Nineteen percent reported that they don’t feel safe walking to where they need to go, and this was a sentiment frequently echoed during community focus groups.



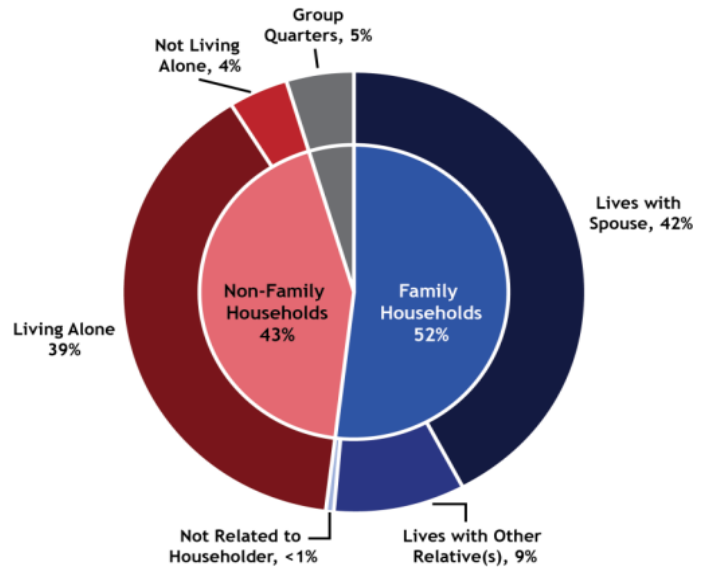
# Housing

*Older people have diverse housing preferences and needs, and an age-friendly city should have a spectrum of housing options available to meet the needs of older adults. Services and supports can help older adults age in place, if they wish to do so.*

## Current Housing

*Older adults in Cleveland generally feel positive about their current housing, their ability to pay for and maintain that housing, and the area where they live.* Between 80 and 85 percent of Cleveland older adults agreed with the statements, “I am able to maintain the inside of my home,” “I feel safe in my home,” “I am able to afford my current housing,” and “I am able to afford my utilities.” About 40 percent of residents over age 65 live alone. Over half of older adult renters and almost 40 percent of owners live in housing which is considered unaffordable. Some older adults expressed that there are not enough housing options in the city, waiting lists for certain public housing can be long, and housing costs prevent them from downsizing to an apartment that might otherwise be better for them.

**Household Type of Older Adults (Ages 65+), 2013**



Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates

## Home Maintenance and Repair

*Home maintenance was named as a concern in focus groups, and in particular, the outside of one’s home.* Only about half of Cleveland older adults indicated that they are able to maintain the outside of their home, and even fewer (38 percent) of outreach questionnaire respondents responded “yes” to this question. Focus group participants shared that they had safety concerns when completing routine maintenance tasks, especially snow removal; they were worried about falls, or did not feel they could do the work themselves. Approximately 36 percent of Cleveland older adults are concerned about accidents or falls in their homes. Some had family members or neighbors frequently help them with snow removal or other maintenance tasks. Older adults noted that hiring people to help with maintenance can be expensive, and it can be difficult to know which businesses to trust. Many focus group participants were familiar with programs to help with indoor and outdoor services, and agreed that these programs were useful to older residents. Others noted that services provided were not adequate; they had limits to how often they could help, how much they could do; they were unreliable; eligibility requirements were too stringent; or older adults did not know how to apply for assistance.

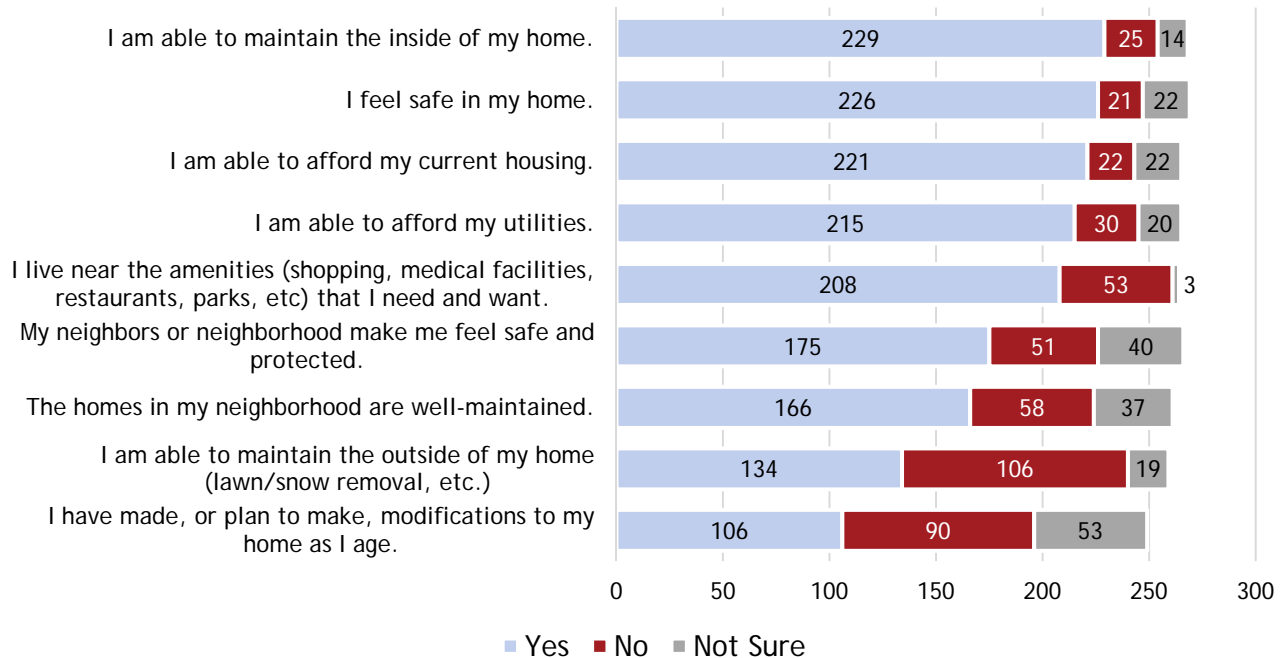
## Neighborhoods

*Neighborhood and community safety is an important concern to many older adults, which can create barriers for older adults to walk in their neighborhoods and feel connected to their community. On the other hand, many said their neighbors and neighborhood made them feel safe and protected.*

Twenty-three percent of older Cleveland residents fear that they will be the victim of crime in their neighborhood, and 19 percent are concerned that their home is not secured. Some focus group participants noted safety issues in their neighborhoods, and were concerned about break-ins and violence.

Others felt that police presence, security guards in their apartment buildings, and security cameras around their buildings helped them to feel secure. Many in the focus groups noted concerns about housing code violations and abandoned housing in their neighborhoods, which can reduce property values. They also felt that these vacant and abandoned homes were dangerous, encouraged criminal activity, and attracted unwanted animals.

### Do you agree with the following statements?

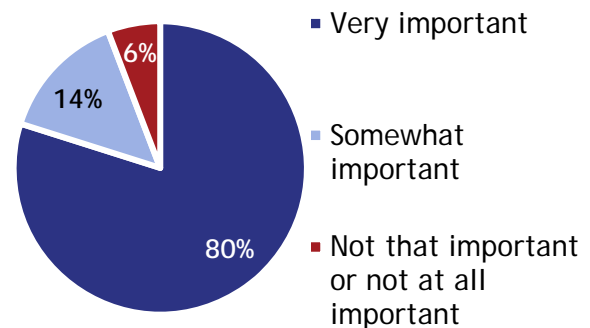


### Aging in Place

*Cleveland older adults place a high importance on aging in place. While some senior housing complexes and private residences have design features that make them accessible to older adults and people with disabilities, many homes need additional modifications in order for them to be comfortable and safe residences.*

Cleveland older adults place high value on remaining in their homes and neighborhood. Nearly 80 percent of Cleveland older adults indicated that it was “very important” to be able to remain in their home as they age. Many homes need modifications in order for them to be comfortable and safe residences in which seniors can age in place, particularly as 47 percent of older residents have some type of disability. Some in the focus groups were pleased with the accessibility features in their house or apartment building; it was noted that in public housing, it is fairly simple to have design modifications made or switch units with a doctor’s note. Others expressed frustration at elevators in their buildings that were unreliable. For those who are not able to remain in their homes, identifying services or facilities can be a challenge. Fifty six percent of Cleveland older adults were not sure if they could find a care facility or nursing home to meet their needs if they had to move due to health or mobility issues, while only 27.5 percent were confident that they could.

How important is to you to be able to remain in your home as you age?  
n=258







# Social Participation

*Participating in cultural, social, spiritual, and leisure activities in the community or spending time with friends and family often becomes more difficult as people age, yet is critical for an individual's health and well-being. Social participation is key to remaining connected to one's community and staying informed.*

## Social/Community Event Participation

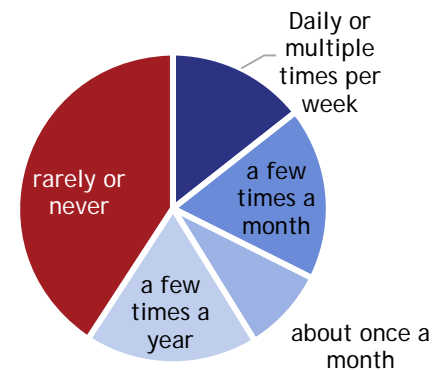
*About one-fourth of Cleveland older adults participate in social or community events at least monthly. Fourteen percent of Cleveland older adults participate in social/community events daily or multiple times per week, while an additional 9 percent participate about once a month. Forty-one percent rarely or never participate in these activities.*

## Preferred Activities

*Cleveland older adults participate in a variety of activities. Older persons, like people of any age, have differing levels of interest in certain activities.*

More than half of older adults currently participate in family gatherings, restaurants, and church activities. Lifetime learning, sporting events, and concerts were the activities most frequently identified as those in which older adults would like to participate. Yet, more than a quarter indicated no interest in participating in live theater, lifetime learning, sporting events, physical recreation, and concerts. The overlap displays how much individual preferences impact this domain.

How often do you participate in social/community events?  
n=283

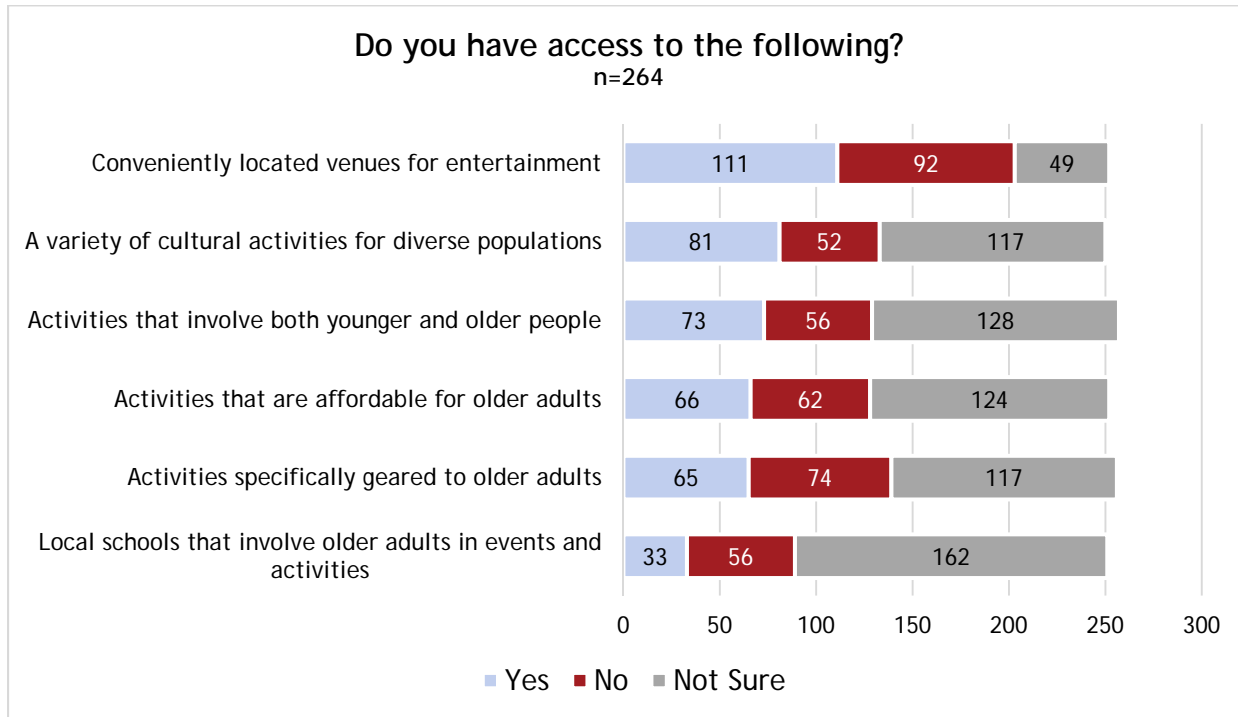


Do you participate in the following activities? (response counts)			
Answer Options	I currently participate	I would like to participate	I have no interest
Family gatherings	196	29	16
Restaurants	151	48	24
Church activities	140	40	50
Shopping for fun	135	44	45
Movies	102	47	57
Community events	93	66	51
Physical recreation activities	68	78	62
Concerts/ musical performances	64	86	56
Sporting events	61	57	86
Live theater	59	77	68
Lifetime learning opportunities	49	90	65
Other	25	7	3

## Barriers to Participation

*Some older adults desire increased social participation in their community; however, there are obstacles to social participation, including location and cost.*

Thirty-five percent of Cleveland older adults indicated that they did not have access to conveniently located venues for entertainment. This barrier was repeated by individuals who participated in the focus groups and is likely tied to transportation challenges. Communication, or not knowing about available opportunities for social participation, was also frequently cited as a reason older adults do not participate in social or cultural events.



High costs were a barrier to social participation that came up frequently in the focus groups. When asked, several groups indicated that around \$15 would be a good price for older adults to pay to attend special events. For example, many individuals expressed a desire to attend professional sporting events, but noted that ticket prices, as well as transportation, were a significant barrier.

## LGBT Older Adults

*Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) older adults may face additional risk factors for social isolation.* According to the advocacy organization Services and Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Elders (SAGE), LGBT older adults in America may face an increased risk for social isolation. SAGE reports "... the research shows that LGBT elders face higher disability rates, struggle with economic insecurity and higher poverty rates, and many deal with mental health concerns that come from having survived a lifetime of discrimination." LGBT older adults are more likely to live alone, be single, and have no children. Therefore, they may have less family support, or feel stigmatized or excluded from the broader community. All of this may contribute to increased feelings of social isolation and the need for greater community support. In fact, in a survey SAGE Cleveland conducted with LGBT older adults in Northeast Ohio, 39 percent reported feeling lonely, isolated, or frequently depressed, and one-fourth reported incidence of verbal harassment in the past five years. Programs and opportunities for social interaction specifically targeting this demographic can help.



# Respect and Social Inclusion

*Being a part of a respectful and inclusive community can play a significant role in an older adult's physical and emotional well-being.*

## Respect in the Community

*The majority of Cleveland older adults agree that older persons are generally treated with respect.*

Forty-seven percent of older adults in Cleveland believe older persons are valued in the community, while a slightly higher number (49 percent) do not believe this to be true.

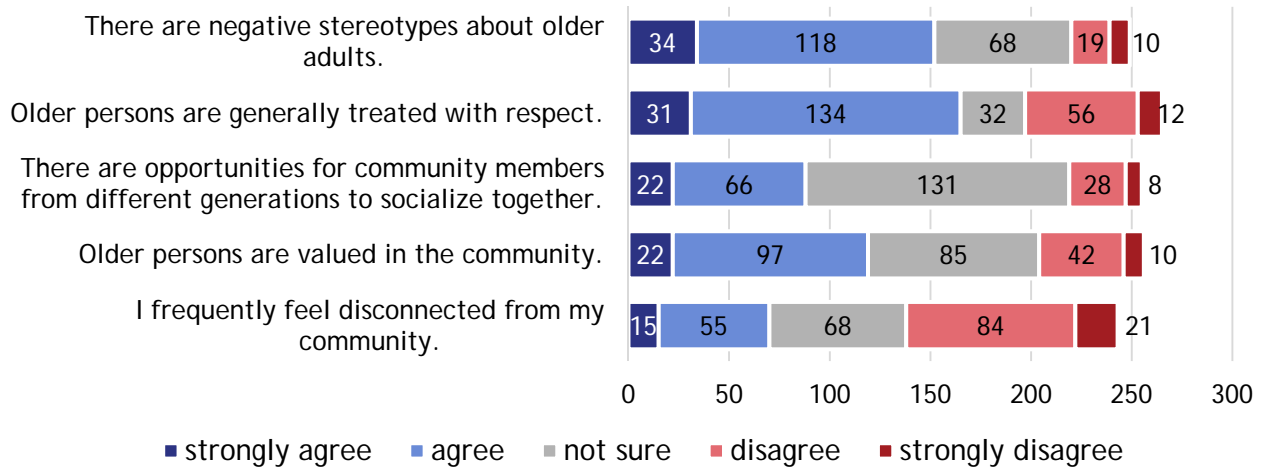
Many focus group participants shared that certain younger

people frequently come to older adults for advice and that neighbors and other people in the community show respect for older adults by holding doors open for them, helping them carry shopping bags, or helping with snow or leaf removal. However, many expressed the belief that older adults are not treated with respect in the community, particularly by young people. To illustrate this point, many shared stories of instances when younger residents would not give up seats on buses, did not open doors, made rude remarks, or otherwise made an older adult feel unsafe or disrespected. Older adults (61 percent) believe that negative stereotypes about older persons exist.

***One older adult questioned, "Don't they [young people] realize that they will get old too?"***

State your agreement with the following statements.

n=272



## Intergenerational Interaction

*Older adults seek and enjoy intergenerational activities, and would welcome more opportunities.*

Many Cleveland older adults were unsure about whether there were opportunities for community members from different generations to socialize together. However, about 35 percent feel that these opportunities do exist, while 14 percent do not. Several participants mentioned venues for intergenerational interaction, and it was noted that there are opportunities in the city for older adults to mentor younger people. Senior centers and churches were also identified as providing these opportunities.

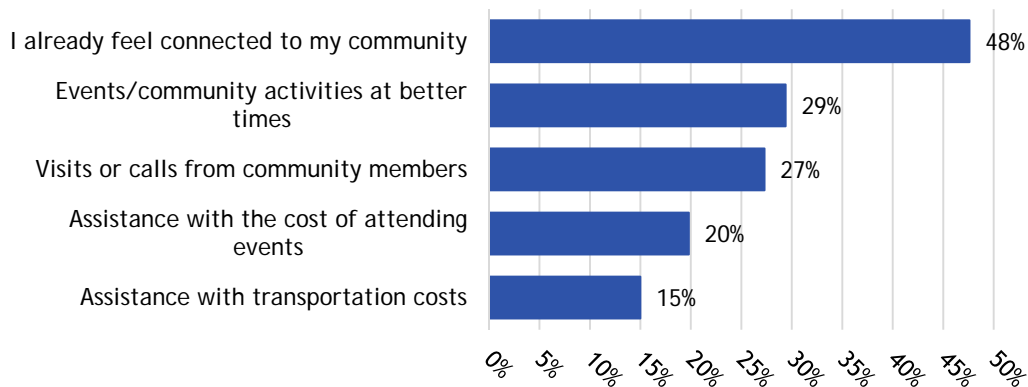
## Social Inclusion

*Nearly half of Cleveland older adults report feeling connected to their communities, and adjustments to the times of activities offered would work to increase feelings of connectedness.*

Twenty-nine percent of older Cleveland residents report feeling disconnected to their community, while 28 percent were unsure. Older adults shared that events labeled for “families” were welcoming to all ages, though many expressed no interest in participating. When asked about what would make them feel more connected to the community, about 30 percent reported that events at better times would improve their feeling of connectedness, while 27 percent identified that calls or visits from community members would be helpful. The highest number indicated that they currently feel connected to their community.

### What would make you feel more connected to your community?

n=187



## Economic Inclusion

*A low income can contribute to feelings of social isolation.*

Economic inclusion was addressed in the focus groups as several identified cost as a barrier to participating in community events and activities, including plays and sporting events, even when a senior discount is available. According to the survey, about 60 percent identified that Social Security was their primary source of income, and over half (51.5 percent) live on less than \$25,000 annually. This suggests that many older Clevelanders may not have “extra” money for activities that may increase their sense of inclusion in the community.

## Abuse and Neglect

*Abuse and neglect among the older adult population is a concern.*

In the survey, 5.9 percent of individuals reported being the victim of elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation. However, as with all counts of elder abuse, this number may be an underestimate; older adults may be reluctant to report abuse or neglect or may be unaware that they have been victimized. In describing the type of abuse or neglect they experienced, the highest number of older adults categorized their abuse or neglect as financial in nature.



# Civic Participation and Employment

*This domain includes volunteer opportunities and civic engagement, employment (such as pay, entrepreneurship, and accessible workplaces), and training programs for older adults. For many, these activities can be an important variable in their overall quality-of-life as they age.*

## Employment

*Many Cleveland older residents continue to stay in the workforce, primarily for financial reasons.*

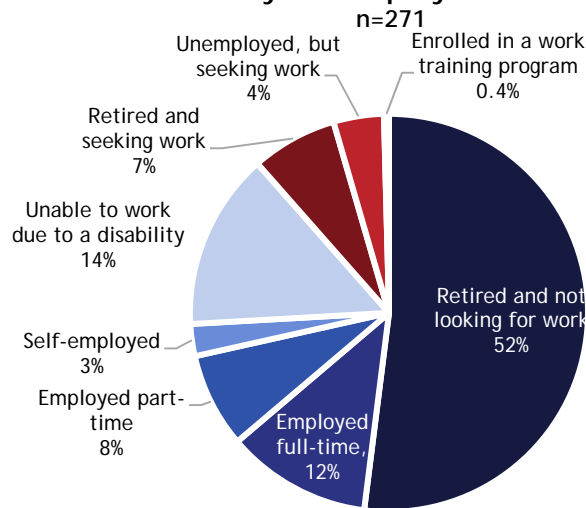
*Unfortunately, most believe that jobs are not available to older adults to the same extent as younger people.*

Over half of Cleveland older adults are retired and not looking for work. About 12 percent report full-time work, while 7.7 percent work part-time. Eleven percent of older adult residents are seeking employment (including both the unemployed and retired). Among those who are employed, the most common motivators to remain employed were financial.

Almost one-third of working older adults report that they would like to retire but cannot afford to, and almost half report that they will need to work as long as possible for financial reasons. However, 27 percent said that they want to work as long as they can for professional reasons. When seeking employment, the most frequently cited challenges among Cleveland older adults

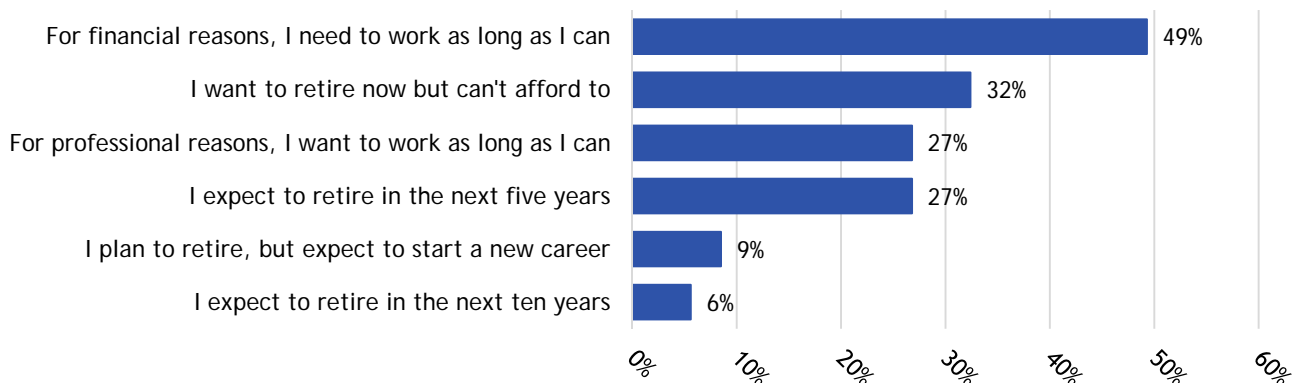
were health issues and age-discrimination (employers not hiring due to age). Over one-quarter of survey takers find that there are not enough available part-time jobs. Through the focus groups, the assets that older employees bring to the workplace were discussed, including work experience, loyalty, and dependability; many believed that there were employers who valued these traits.

**What is your employment status?**



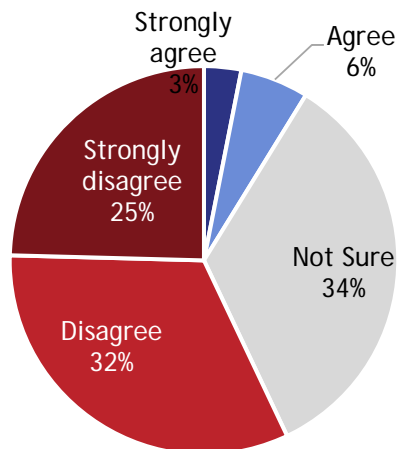
**If you are employed, what are your plans for retirement?**

n=71



Jobs are available for older adults to the same extent that they are for younger people.

n=228



Fifty-seven percent of older adults either disagree or strongly disagree that jobs are available for older adults to the same extent that they are for younger people. Only 9 percent strongly agree or agree with this statement, while 34 percent are unsure. The perception that jobs are not available to the same extent for them may impact the likelihood that older adults will seek employment.

Some older adults fear seeking and obtaining employment as it may reduce the public benefits they receive. For example, many of the older adults in attendance at the focus groups

receive subsidized housing assistance, and expressed concern that this may decrease if their income increases through work wages. Web-based job applications were also cited as a challenge to some older adults, who do not have access to a computer or who struggle with technology.

## Volunteerism

*One-in-four Cleveland older adults report that they volunteer.*

Volunteering is a way that many Cleveland older adults stay engaged and give back to their community. Twenty-three percent of Cleveland older adults currently volunteer, which is aligned with national data suggesting that 23.6 percent of people ages 65 and over volunteered in 2014. Among those who report volunteering, 41 percent volunteer occasionally or not that often. Twenty-one percent volunteer monthly, nearly 30 percent volunteer weekly and about 9 percent volunteer daily. Forty-seven percent were unsure about access to easy-to-find information about local volunteer opportunities. More than half reported that they were unsure about the availability of volunteer options for individuals with a variety of abilities. However, though not all Cleveland older adults currently volunteer, 38 percent feel confident that they could find a suitable place to do so. Many residents at the focus groups expressed an interest in volunteering and were curious about opportunities to become engaged.

## Civic Participation

*Older adults enjoy sharing their input on community issues and appreciate when their voices are heard.*

Older adults appreciated council members who were visible in their neighborhoods and easily accessible. Many residents shared that they would welcome other opportunities to interact with government officials. Additionally, many expressed an interest in attending ward meetings, but said that they could be better advertised, or held at times more convenient for older people. For those who do attend, it was noted that the ward meetings present an opportunity to learn about what is happening in the neighborhood. At several focus groups, it was suggested that the city develop a call line for them to report issues they are facing or observing in their communities. The City currently has a call line and online submission form, the Mayor's Action Center, for citizens to report issues to the Mayor's office.



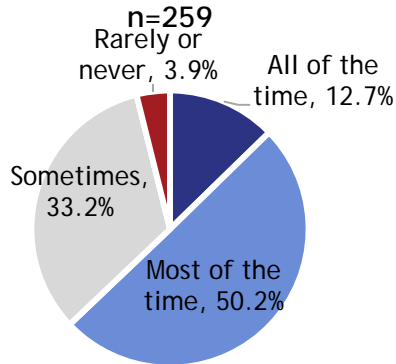
# Communication and Information

*In order for older adults to age in place and stay connected to their community, they need access to timely information about services and community events. Since communication is becoming increasingly electronic, it is important for age-friendly cities to ensure that older adults have access to this information, and that it is accessible in a variety of mediums that will reach older adults in their daily lives.*

## Access to Information

*The majority of Cleveland older adults say they are able to find the information on services they need; however, most are unaware of centralized sources of information on services, such as the local 2-1-1 help center. Most older adults in Cleveland are able to find information on the services they need most or all of the time. Fewer than 4 percent of older adults indicated that they were rarely or never able to find information on services they need. Sixty percent of older residents were unfamiliar with the local 2-1-1 help line. Of those who had heard of 2-1-1, 37 percent said they had used it to identify a service or get information.*

**Are you able to find information on the services that you need?**



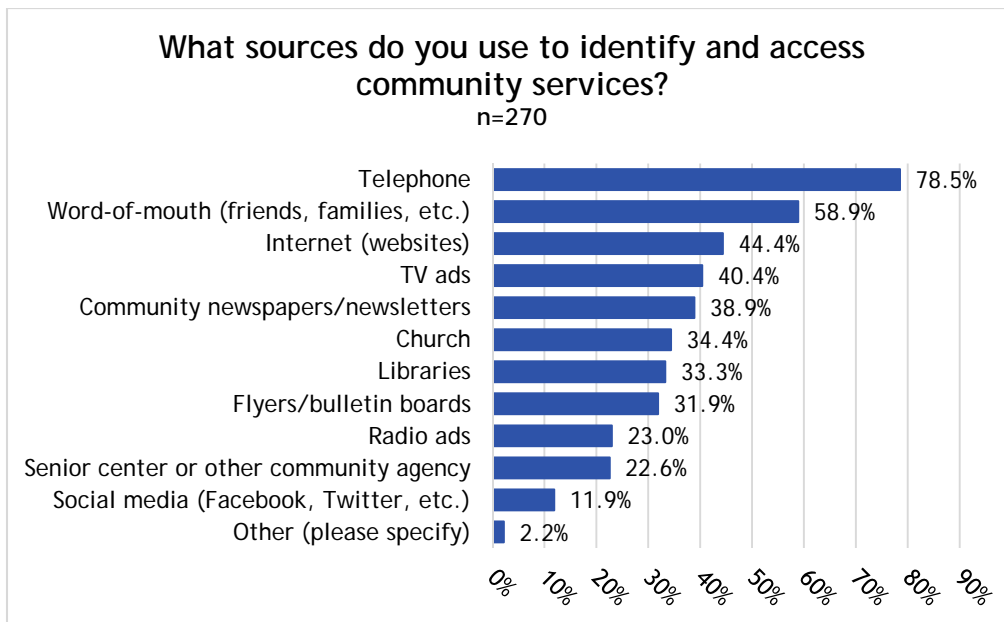
The majority of older adults (67 percent) indicated that they have free access to computers and the Internet in public places, like libraries, senior centers, or government buildings. Most (65 percent) also indicated that community information is available in their language, though it should be noted that the vast majority (92 percent) indicated that English is the language primarily spoken in their home. When asked if they have access to community information that is mailed or delivered to people who may have

difficulty or may not be able to leave their home, the majority (66 percent) said either “no” or “not sure.”

## Sources of Information

*Older adults in Cleveland have a variety of preferences about how they receive and consume information about community programs and services, as well as how they communicate with friends, family, and service providers.*

When asked what sources they use to identify and access community services, the highest number indicated that they use the telephone (79 percent). Nearly three out of five indicated that they use word-of-mouth as a way to identify and access services. Other information sources identified by many older adults included the Internet, TV ads, and community newspapers/newsletters.



### Internet Usage

*Though most Cleveland older adults have access to the Internet and use it regularly, more vulnerable groups, such as older adults over age 75 and those with low incomes, are less likely to access the Internet.*

Most older adults in Cleveland have access to the Internet (58.6 percent), which is aligned with national research suggesting that 59 percent of adults ages 65 and over are Internet users. Those under age 75 in Cleveland were considerably more likely to have access to the Internet. Lower income individuals were significantly less likely to have access to the Internet than respondents with moderate or high incomes. Only half of low-income older adults said they have access to the Internet. While some older adults use Facebook to keep in touch with friends and family and access information, rarely do older adults use other social media platforms, such as Twitter or Instagram. Of those older adults who have Internet access, 91 percent indicated that they have the Internet at home. Most of Cleveland's older adult Internet users are frequent users; 59 percent said they use the Internet once a day or multiple times per day. Only 13 percent of those who have access to the Internet said they use it monthly or hardly at all. Older adults who do not have access to the Internet were asked why they do not use it, and the most common response was "I have no computer" (60 percent) followed by "I don't understand it" (45 percent). About a quarter of those who are non-Internet users indicated that they have no interest in accessing the Internet.

### Age-Friendly Communication

*Many Cleveland older adults feel that printed material is not age-friendly, and struggle to find timely information about the services they need or events in their community.*

One communication challenge faced by older adults is accessing information that is presented in an age-friendly format. Sixty-nine percent of Cleveland older adults stated that they either didn't have access to or weren't sure if they had access to "clearly displayed printed community information with large letters." It seems that most flyers, brochures, newspapers, print media, forms, and product labels are not created with older adults in mind, which is a barrier for many older adults who have trouble reading small fonts. Additionally, during focus groups, a challenge that many older adults identified was access to timely information. Cleveland has myriad services available to older adults, but since space is limited and funding is scarce, older adults stressed the importance of finding out about the programs and services and applying to them in a timely fashion.





# Community Support and Health Services

*Health is a key indicator that determines an individual's ability to stay independent and active in the community across the lifespan; inadequate health services and community supports can be particularly detrimental to older adult residents. Age-friendly community supports and health services are conveniently located, accessible to people with various physical abilities, and delivered respectfully.*

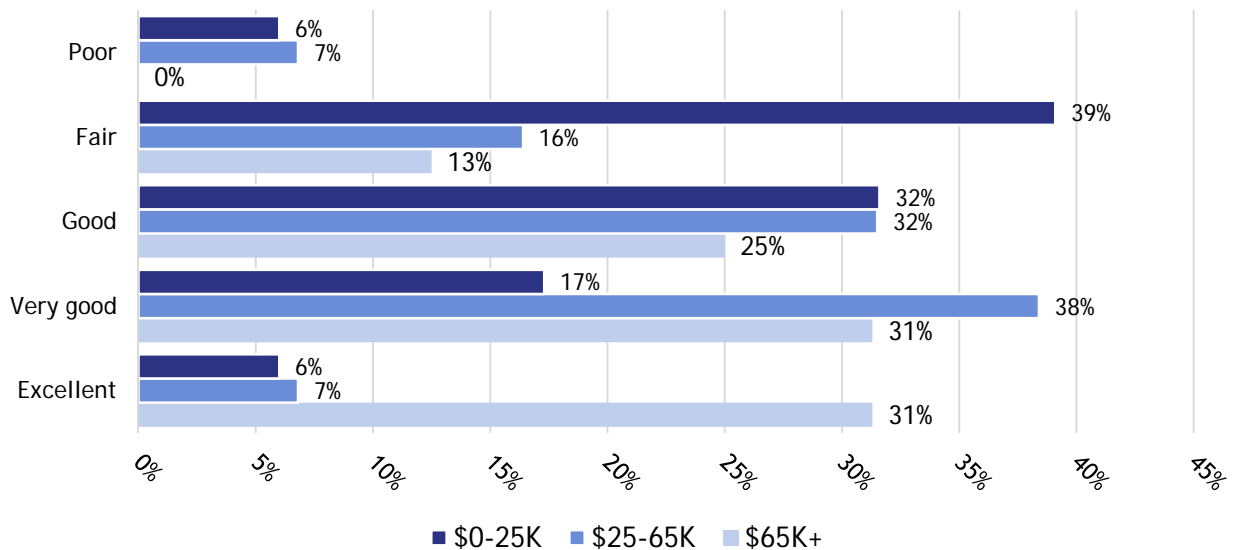
## Health Status in Cleveland

*While overall, Cleveland older adults reported good health status, low-income adults were more likely to report poor or fair health than upper-income individuals.*

Two-thirds of Cleveland older adults rate their overall health as good, very good, or excellent, while just 5 percent indicate that they are in poor health. However, among those with incomes below \$25,000 per year, 45 percent reported a poor or fair health status. In contrast, nearly 90 percent of those with incomes above \$65,000 annually reported an excellent, very good, or good health status.

**How would you rate your overall health? (by income)**

n=222



## Access to Health Services

*Most older adults are generally satisfied with their health services, however affordability is a challenge for some.* Most focus group participants reported general satisfaction with their health services. This includes their physician, and most said they have options when it came to selecting providers. Moreover, 88 percent of Cleveland older adults report respectful and helpful hospital, clinic, or doctor's office staff. Seventy-five percent report access to conveniently located urgent care or emergency rooms. However, focus group participants widely shared that they were not familiar with, or do not have access to, available mental health services. With regard to preventive services, focus group participants generally agreed that many services were available, though some felt that more should be done to promote these programs and activities. Some reported utilizing free services at businesses like pharmacies to receive preventive care such as blood pressure checks and flu shots. Focus group participants named many locations where fitness classes were readily available for them, including city recreation centers and the YMCA. Affordability of health care is a challenge for some older adults. Forty-six percent of Cleveland older adults report that they struggle to afford medical bills at least some of the time, and 35 percent have had difficulties affording medications.

## Access to Community Supports

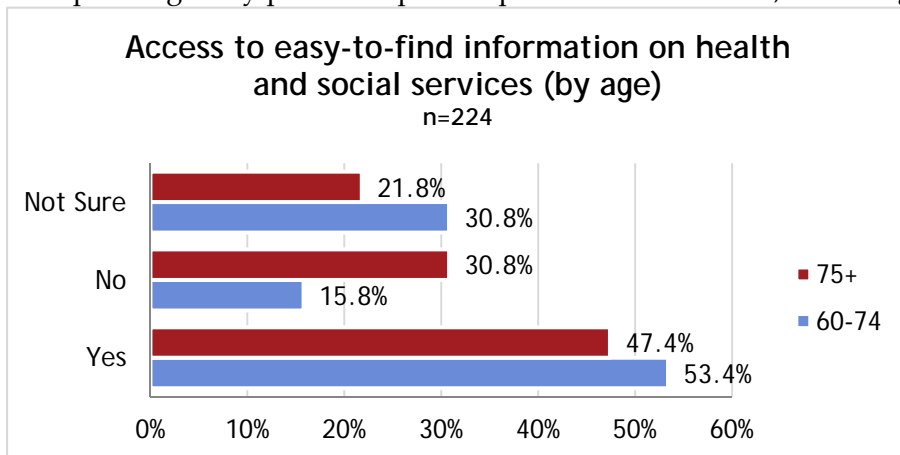
*Services are available, but some Cleveland older adults struggle with lengthy applications or restrictive income guidelines. Others need more information on available supports.*

Throughout focus groups, some Cleveland older adults expressed frustration with the process involved in applying for services or benefits. Long applications were cited as a challenge. The requirement for in-person meetings when applying for certain benefits was noted as particularly onerous, especially if they required the older adult to travel to a central location. Complex eligibility processes proved problematic for some, including long wait times to get a response.

Older residents also expressed frustration with eligibility criteria, sharing that their incomes were often slightly too high to qualify for needed services and benefits. Nearly 30 percent of those who completed the outreach questionnaire indicated that when seeking help for health, financial, or housing issues, they do not qualify for the services they need.

Moreover, some older adults in

Cleveland do not know where to go to get help in the community. Cleveland residents age 75 and over were twice as likely as their counterparts aged 60-74 to report having no access to easy-to-find information on local health and supportive services. However, those living in senior housing often reported having social workers on staff that are regularly available to provide assistance with accessing benefits and services, and these individuals were appreciated and their services were utilized. Over 12 percent of Cleveland older adults said they do not have access to places to get healthy and affordable food, and another 14.6 percent said that they were not sure if they did. According to the Ohio Association of Foodbanks, approximately 16 percent of older Ohioans were at risk of hunger in 2013. This can have a significant negative impact on older adults, including an increased incidence of depression, heart attack, and congestive heart failure.



## Long-term Care

*While 94 percent of older adults responded that it was important for them to stay in their homes as they age, there was an overall lack of awareness about home providers and services.*

Many older adults will require long-term care as they age. While nursing homes and other institutional settings had once been the standard model for this type care, the recent shift to an emphasis on home and community-based care has led to a decline in nursing home beds and an increase in Medicaid Waivers, such as PASSPORT, which allow people to receive in-home care. According to the Ohio Department of Aging website, there are nearly 1,000 nursing homes across the state, however only 20 nursing facilities and fewer than 8 assisted living facilities are located in the city of Cleveland. Overall, 56 percent of older adults reported that in the event that they need to move out of their home due to health or mobility issues, they were unsure that they could find a care facility or nursing home to meet their needs. Only 27.5 percent said they could. Forty percent were unsure about the availability of home health care services, and 47 percent were unsure about service providers that would come to your home. Many reported no access to home-delivered meals, and one-third were unsure about this resource. Not knowing where to go could contribute added stress to any already difficult situation if someone needs to move out of their home due to health or mobility issues. Those over age 75 were more familiar with home-based services, perhaps because they are using them to a greater extent than those in other age groups.

## Conclusion: Cleveland's Age-Friendly Assets and Opportunities

The results of this assessment clearly demonstrate that older adults in Cleveland are diverse, active, and engaged; they take great pride in their city and offer valuable contributions to the community. The assessment process involved over 1,000 older Cleveland residents, and many discussed vibrant lifestyles that include regular interaction with friends and family, involvement with church and neighborhood groups, volunteering, and socializing. However, the findings indicate that there is still work to be done in order for Cleveland to become a more Age-Friendly city. The following assets and opportunities were identified.

### Community Assets

- Overall, almost half of Cleveland older adults rated the city as an excellent or good place for people to live as they age compared to only 11 percent who said it was poor or very poor.
- Cleveland's older residents value their independence, and most hope to remain independent and in the community for as long as possible. Overall, Cleveland older adults have sufficient access to, and are satisfied with, transportation, health care, and housing in the city. Many older residents feel connected to their community, and are involved in a wide range of activities throughout the city.
- Cleveland's older adults expressed an interest in participating in sporting events, lifetime learning, physical recreation, and concerts. Moreover, one-fourth of Cleveland older adults are involved in some type of volunteer activities, demonstrating a strong commitment to community service. Finding ways to involve even more older adults in these valuable activities will enhance the quality of life for all Cleveland residents.
- Older adults seek and enjoy intergenerational activities, and Cleveland has several well-established programs which provide opportunities for this type of interaction. Expanding these opportunities, and reaching out to more residents of all ages to participate, can create growth and learning opportunities for the city's oldest and youngest.

### Community Challenges and Opportunities

- Many Cleveland older adults are unaware of existing resources. The need for more information on available services and supports was evident. These efforts will need to be responsive to the finding that older adults in Cleveland prefer to receive information in many different ways.
- Most Cleveland older adults hope to stay in their homes as they age, and will need additional supports and services to achieve this goal. Helping older adults to plan ahead for these supports will decrease stress as residents age.
- Safety is a key concern for older adults; many expressed worry about violence in their neighborhoods, the large number of hazardous vacant properties, and dangerous conditions while waiting for, or riding on public transportation. Efforts to increase feelings of safety and security among Cleveland older adults will be necessary.
- While many older adults are satisfied with their housing, difficulties do exist, including the inability of some to complete routine indoor and outdoor maintenance, public housing waiting lists, and fears about safety, particularly for those living alone. Expanded chore services and home repair programs, visits from community members, and neighborhood safety networks were suggested as ways to alleviate housing-related stress for some.

- Some older adults desire increased social participation in their community but face obstacles. Efforts to reduce barriers to participation would be beneficial; for example, city residents shared that adjustment to the times and costs of activities offered would work to increase feelings of connectedness.
- While many older adults report positive experiences when patronizing businesses or seeking public and private services, opportunities exist to improve this experience for older adults. This could include efforts such as streamlining application processes, or working with local businesses to become more age-friendly, such as by reducing wait times for older adults, adding benches, or improving parking.
- Many Cleveland older adults report that age-based discrimination in hiring is a challenge when seeking a job. Campaigns to reduce real or perceived hiring discrimination and to highlight the benefits of hiring older adults, as well as expanding or increasing the visibility of programs that provide job training and placement to older adults, may prove beneficial.
- Despite the city's relative affordability, many older adults continue to struggle to make ends meet. Nearly 22 percent of those age 60 and over live in poverty. Continuing efforts to address the economic insecurity of these older adults presents an opportunity for the City of Cleveland, as well as state and federal policy makers. Similarly, health disparities may exist among low-income older adults, and efforts must take place to reduce these disparities.
- Most Cleveland older adults report positive experiences getting around the city. However, increased flexibility in both routes and times of public transportation, streamlined processes for accessing transportation supports, as well as improved outreach about existing services, could lead to an improved quality-of-life for local residents.
- Many Cleveland older adults struggle to manage ice and snow covered roads and sidewalks during the City's often severe winters. While some assistance is already available, there may be opportunities to organize efforts to reduce the challenges older people face when dealing with the impact of inclement weather.

We hope that the findings of this report will create a path forward as Cleveland seeks to become a premier age-friendly city, and will serve as a guide as priority issues and action plans are developed. Throughout this process, it was evident that Cleveland older adults are engaged, dynamic and invigorated by the prospect of improving their city. Many have great love and pride for their city. Building on this positivity to improve existing systems, and engaging more local residents in taking advantage of the city's many existing assets, will undoubtedly lead to Cleveland being recognized as a preeminent place for people to live as they age.

*For more information about Age-Friendly Cleveland, contact the  
City of Cleveland, Department of Aging.*

