

**Selected Results of Tompkins County Office for the Aging's
2012 Senior Needs Assessment Survey
November 2012**

(Copies of the full evaluation available at the Office for the Aging's website: www.tompkins-co.org/cofa)

In July of 2012, the Tompkins County Office for the Aging (COFA) contracted with Horn Research to implement a telephone survey of Tompkins County residents age 60+. A random sample of 402 older adults completed interviews and the following topics were covered: demographic information, employment, housing, transportation, isolation, volunteerism, technology use, physical and mental health, food security and nutrition, caregiving, awareness of services, health insurance coverage and prescriptions. The sample size allows us to generalize to the Tompkins County older adult population as a whole, within a 5% margin of error. Therefore, the percentages throughout may be multiplied by the number of older adults in the County (16,042) to make estimates for the County seniors as a whole. COFA conducted a survey asking comparable questions in 2004, and wherever notable, results of the two surveys are compared and trends examined. The following are some selected results:

I. Demographics

Since the last assessment done in 2004, the first of the baby boomers has started to reach senior status. According to the 2010 Census, Tompkins County experienced a 34% increase in population of people age 60 and over between 2000 and 2010. The first wave of the baby boomers accounts for the largest part of this growth: between 2000 and 2010, there was an 88.7% increase in persons age 60-64 in Tompkins County.

The age of the 2012 sample respondents corresponds to the 2010 Census, with approximately 50% of the sample being between the ages of 60-69. In comparison, in the 2004 survey, 34.2% of the sample was between the ages of 60-69. The higher numbers of younger seniors in the 2012 survey and in the County as a whole is reflected in many of the results throughout the survey.

Respondents were sampled from every township in Tompkins County, and the vast majority of respondents (86.8%, N=348) have lived in the County for 25 years or more. 25.9% of respondents (N=104) lived alone, and of them, 75% (N=78) were women. 4.6% of respondents (N=17) had incomes below 100% of poverty, and of those, 88.2% (N=15) were women. The racial/ethnic makeup of the sample was slightly less diverse than that of the Tompkins County senior population as indicated in the 2010 Census. The racial/ethnic makeup of sample respondents was as follows: 98.2% White/Caucasian; 0.3% Black/African-American; 0.5% Asian; 0.8% two or more races; and 2.6% Spanish/Latino descent. 55.1% of respondents (N=221) had college or advanced degrees.

II. Employment

29% of respondents (N=118) were employed, and of these individuals, 17.5% (N=70) had full time jobs and 12.0% (N=48) had part-time jobs. These figures represent a 5.3% increase from the 2004 survey in seniors who were employed, with most of the increase being in full-time employment. Over 13% of respondents (N=38) stated they would like to be employed, and 35 of the 38 respondents would prefer part-time work. Twenty-one individuals stated that they had actually been looking for part or full time work in the last six months.

III. Housing

88.3% of respondents (N=353) owned their own homes, while another 9.5% (N=38) were renters. 33% (N=132) stated their homes needed at least one major repair (\$500 or more). Of these, 38.2% (N=50) cited the high cost of repair as the reason why it had not been completed. 22.1% of respondents (N=88) stated their

homes needed small repairs, and of these, 11.5% (N=10) cited the high cost of repair as the reason why it had not been completed. 14.3% of respondents (N=57) stated their homes were not fully insulated.

12.9% of respondents (N=51) were planning to move in the next 5 years, and of these, 34 respondents were planning to stay in Tompkins County. Of these, 32.5% (N=11) were planning to move into single family homes while 27% (N=9) were planning to move into a senior housing complex.

21.6% of respondents (N=75) spent 30% or more of their total income on housing costs (rent/mortgage, utilities, taxes and insurance). 75.1% (N=16) of those with incomes below 100% of poverty had housing cost burdens of 30% or more. 64% (N=48) of those with housing cost burdens of 30% or more were women. 32.6% (N=30) of seniors living alone had housing cost burdens of 30% or more. Adjusted figures indicate a 14.4% decrease in the number of older adults with excessive housing cost burdens from 2004 to 2012.

IV. Transportation

87.9% of respondents (N=350) drove themselves when they needed to go somewhere in or around the County, a 9.5% increase since 2004. Conversely, the percentage of respondents reporting transportation problems either “most of the time” or “sometimes” decreased between 2004 (11.0%, N=42) and 2012 (7.0%, N=28). 3.8% (N=15) had experienced a problem getting to an out-of town medical appointment in the last year.

V. Isolation

A series of questions related to social isolation were asked, including frequency of getting out of the house, having friends or neighbors to call on for help, frequency of visiting with family or friends, and having someone with whom you feel close with. Based on the responses to these questions, an isolation index was created, and 3.5% of respondents (N=14) were judged to be too isolated. 10 of these 14 individuals were women. This figure has decreased somewhat since 2004, when 5.9% of respondents (N=23) indicated isolation.

VI. Activities and Volunteering

Respondents were asked about their participation in a list of activities, and the most frequently reported activities included going shopping (65.8%), going to the home of a friend, neighbor or relative (40%), or going to a restaurant (35.1%). 42% of respondents report volunteering at least an hour or more per week, as compared with 35% of respondents in 2004.

VII. Technology and Information Sources

81.6% of respondents (N=328) reported having a computer with internet access in their home. The likelihood of not having a computer increased with age, with the highest proportion of respondents without a computer (24.3%, N=18) being 85 or older. Respondents were most likely to use their computer for e-mail and researching topics of interest.

79.7% of respondents (N=298) have both a land line and a cell phone for their telephone service. Lower income respondents were much less likely to have cell phone access than higher income respondents; however still over half reported having both a cell phone and a land line.

Respondents most frequently reported getting information from the newspaper or from television, with over 70% saying they get their information from these sources a lot of the time. The next highest rated sources included word of mouth (51.2%), radio (50.3%), internet (49.9%), e-mail listserves (24.6%), Pennysaver (11.5%), and senior newsletter (10.3%).

VIII. Health

A comparison between health conditions reported in 2004 and 2012 reveals that rates of incidence decreased or stayed the same in all categories. In 2012, 53% of respondents (N=210) reported having arthritis. 45.3% (N=180) reported having high blood pressure. 27.9% (N=110) reported having eye problems (exclusive of glaucoma). 25.3% (N=100) reported having hearing problems. 20.9% (N=83) reported having heart disease. 20.9% (N=83) reported having foot problems. 16.9% of respondents (N=67) reported having osteoporosis. 14.4% of respondents (N=57) report feeling anxious, while 12.7% (N=50) report feeling depressed. 2.0% of respondents (N=8) stated that there was someone 60 or older in the household with Alzheimer's or other dementia.

Nearly 23% of respondents said they had recently or were afraid to fall. 8.7% of respondents (N=35) needed help with three or more activities of daily living.

95% of respondents (N=379) had a regular physician who coordinates their health care needs. 2.3% (N=9) reported having difficulty obtaining needed health care.

96.5% of respondents (N=383) reported seeing a physician within the last year, and another 2.3% (N=9) had done so within the last two years.

5.1% of respondents (N=20) reported currently smoking occasionally or daily. 40.8% (N=161) reported having smoked in the past, but do not smoke now. Another 54.2% (N=214) reported never having smoked.

IX. Food and Nutrition

A series of questions were asked regarding nutrition, food security and alcohol consumption. According to the USDA food security scale, approximately 4.7% of respondents (N=19) are at risk of hunger, translating to 754 of the County's senior population. 10.8% of respondents (N=43) stated they do not eat at least two balanced meals, including fruits and vegetables every day.

Respondents were asked to report the number of alcoholic beverages consumed on an average day, and based on U.S. Department of Health and Human Services definitions, we estimate that at least 5.6% of respondents (N=22) drink alcohol to excess.

X. Caregiving

14.8% of respondents (N=55) reported caring for grandchildren, including babysitting. 1.3% of respondents (N=5) care for their grandchildren more than 40 hours a week, and consider themselves to be the primary caregiver. 8.8% of respondents (N=35) care for someone 60 or older in or near Tompkins County. 3% (N=12) care for someone more than an hour away. Another 8.6% (N=34) care for someone age 60+ in their own household.

XI. Awareness of Services

Respondents were asked if they knew about the existence of the following services: Gadabout, Hospicare, Foodnet Meals on Wheels, Suicide Prevention Telephone Hotline, Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), Adult Day Program, Respite Care, Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC), Health Insurance Counseling, Foodnet Congregate Meals, the Long Term Home Health Care Program, and NY Connects Long Term Care Services. A majority knew about all services with the exception of EPIC (42.6%, N=169), Health Insurance Counseling (40.5%; N=160), Foodnet Congregate Meals (39.8%, N=158) the Long Term Home Health Program (26.1%, N=104) and NY Connects Long Term Care Services (25.9%, N=103). Awareness for Gadabout, Hospicare and Foodnet Meals on Wheels were all over 90%.

XII. Health Insurance Coverage and Prescriptions

All respondents reported having some sort of health insurance coverage. 27.4% (N=107) stated that they were not covered by Medicare Part A, and 31.6% (N=124) stated that they were not covered by Medicare Part B. 8.3% (N=32) reported having Medicaid coverage. 28.4% of respondents (N=109) said they had Medigap coverage and 73.3% (N=288) reported having other medical insurance coverage. 28.5% of respondents (N=111) stated they had long term care insurance policies.

13.4% of respondents (N=53) reported needing help in understanding their health insurance coverage or in deciding whether to purchase additional coverage. 4.5% (N=18) stated a need for help filling out their claim forms.

81.9% of respondents (N=325) take prescription medications daily. 30.9% of respondents (N=100) take 1-2 prescriptions daily, while 42.6% (N=138) take 3-5 prescriptions daily.

10.4% of respondents (N=42) were not enrolled in insurance or a program providing prescription drug coverage. 3.7% of respondents (N=12) stated they fail to fill prescriptions or stretch out their medications to make them last longer than they should because of the cost. Of these individuals, all reported having prescription drug coverage.

XIV. Recommendations

1. THAT COFA continue to educate legislators, health and human service providers and other community partners about the rise in the 60+ population, and the related effects on every sector of society, in order that coordinated planning efforts can take place;

2. THAT COFA educate Federal, New York State and Tompkins County government to support, beyond current efforts, programs providing home repair assistance to low-income seniors to meet the continued and growing need for such services;

3. THAT COFA share current housing related results with the Tompkins County Planning Department to address the housing needs of seniors as part of the County's Comprehensive Plan;

4. THAT COFA and others educate Federal, New York State and Tompkins County government to direct funding toward in-home assistance to help maintain seniors living independently within their homes. There is a current waiting list for such services, and this need will only continue to grow as the population ages;

5. THAT COFA continue to make supports for informal caregivers a priority, as they provide the majority of unpaid personal care to seniors;

6. THAT COFA work with its respective community partners to increase awareness of the Health Insurance Information, Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP), Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC), Foodnet Congregate Meals, the Long Term Home Health Care Program and NY Connects Long Term Care Services. In providing outreach and publicity for these and other programs and services, attention should be given to the modes by which older adults report receiving information, and to the content of the messaging addressing the older adult population;

7. THAT COFA continue to work with the Health Planning Council of Tompkins County and others to offer a range of falls prevention interventions to older adults;

8. THAT COFA continue to work with partnering agencies on the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Planning Committee to enrich and expand transportation options for older adults and persons with disabilities.