

Medina County Senior Needs Assessment Survey: Primary Findings and Recommendations

Jacqueline Kirby Wilkins, Ph.D.

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Background

- Of the 151,095 people living in Medina County, 21,818 are 60 years or older.
- Five percent of the population is over the age of 75.
- Medina County has experienced a 23.5% population growth overall between 1990 and 2000 and a 32 % increase in seniors over the age of 60 according to the 2000 U.S. Census.
- By 2020, there will be 46,400 individuals age 60+ in Medina County, representing a 113% increase in the 60+ population since 1990.
- This is the largest increase in Northeast Ohio, including Cleveland and Akron.

Issues of Concern

- Over 10% of the 60+ population in Medina County live in poverty and nearly 30% of individuals age 60+ have at least one disability.
- By 2020, almost 4,000 individuals age 60+ residing in Medina County will have a severe disability.

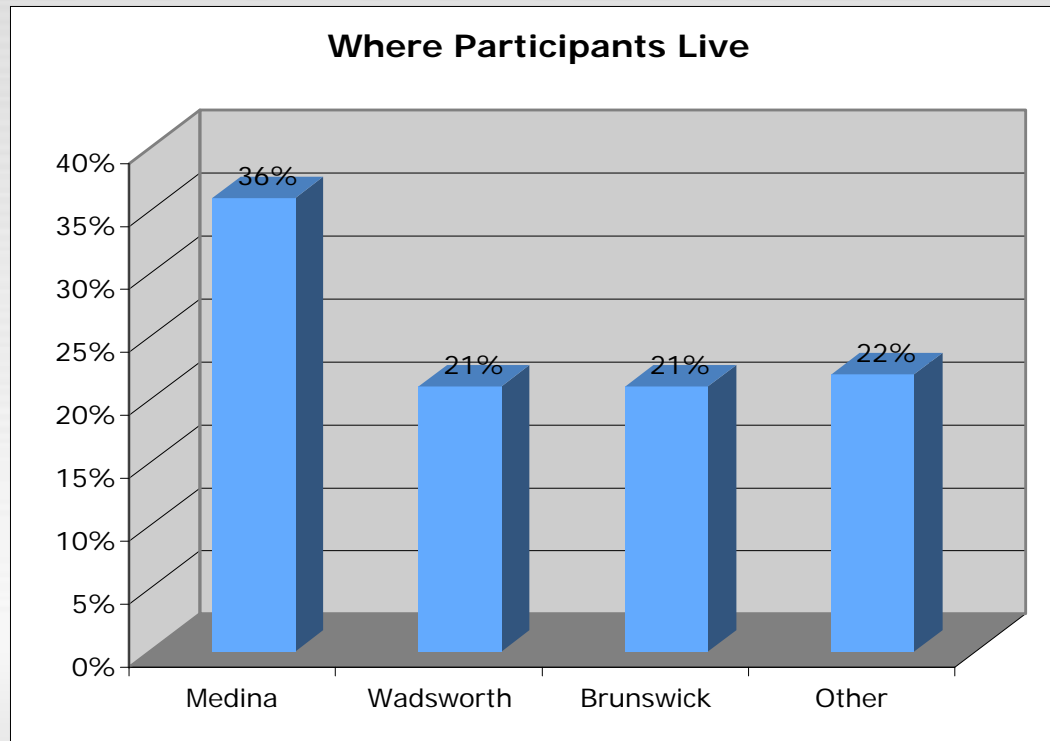
Methodology

- The survey took place May through July 2008, using a variety of community partners to ensure a representative sample of Medina County seniors.
- A total of 709 surveys were collected.
- The survey sample is representative of the older adult population in Medina County in terms of race and ethnicity, age, gender, and income.
- The survey sample did not include older adults who were institutionalized.
- All interviews were conducted in English and took 20 to 30 minutes to complete.

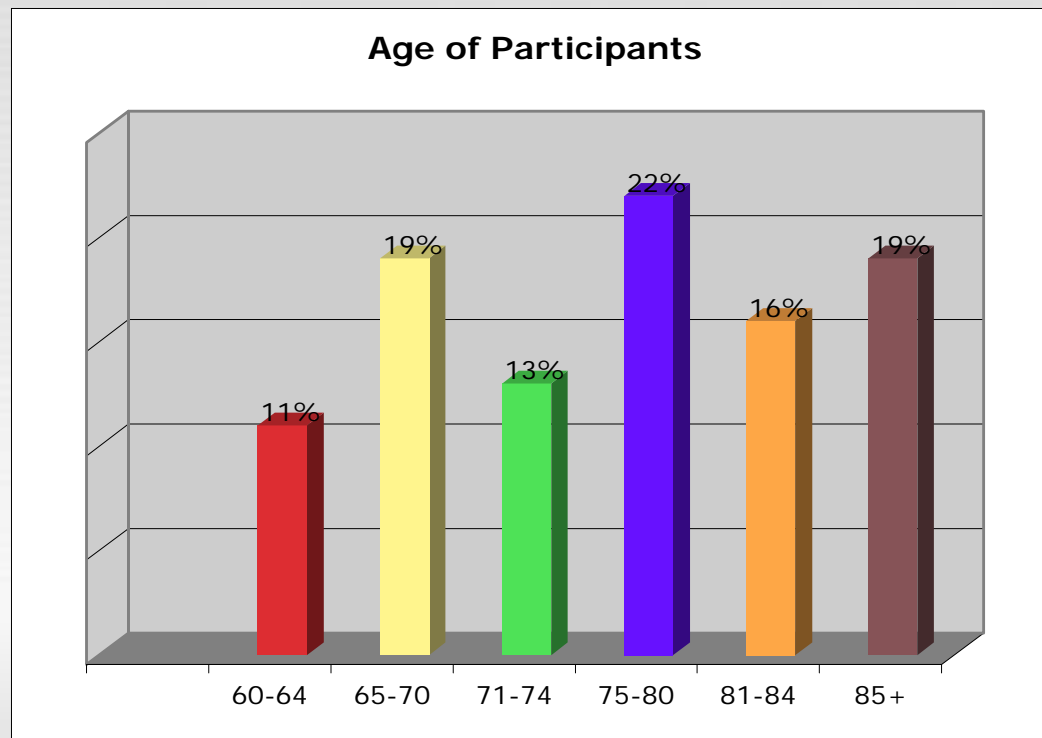
Partners
Data Collection

Agency	# Surveys Returned
Brunswick Recreation Center	18
Catholic Charities Services of Medina County	20
HANDS Foundation	56
Hospice of Medina County	8
Lodi Good Samaritans	29
Medina County District Library	50
Medina County Health Department	20
Medina County Home	7
Medina County Office for Older Adults	75
Medina General Hospital	20
Medina Community Recreation Center	14
Medina Metropolitan Housing Authority	19
Northside Christian Church	5
Nottingham Court	5
Samaritan Care Center & Villa	3
Second Baptist Church	10
Senior Day	154
Social Security Administration & S.S.I.	4
Wadsworth Center for Older Adults	103
Wadsworth Public Library	6
Wadsworth Recreation Center	8
Wadsworth-Rittman Hospital & Home Care	13
United Labor Tower	62
TOTAL	709

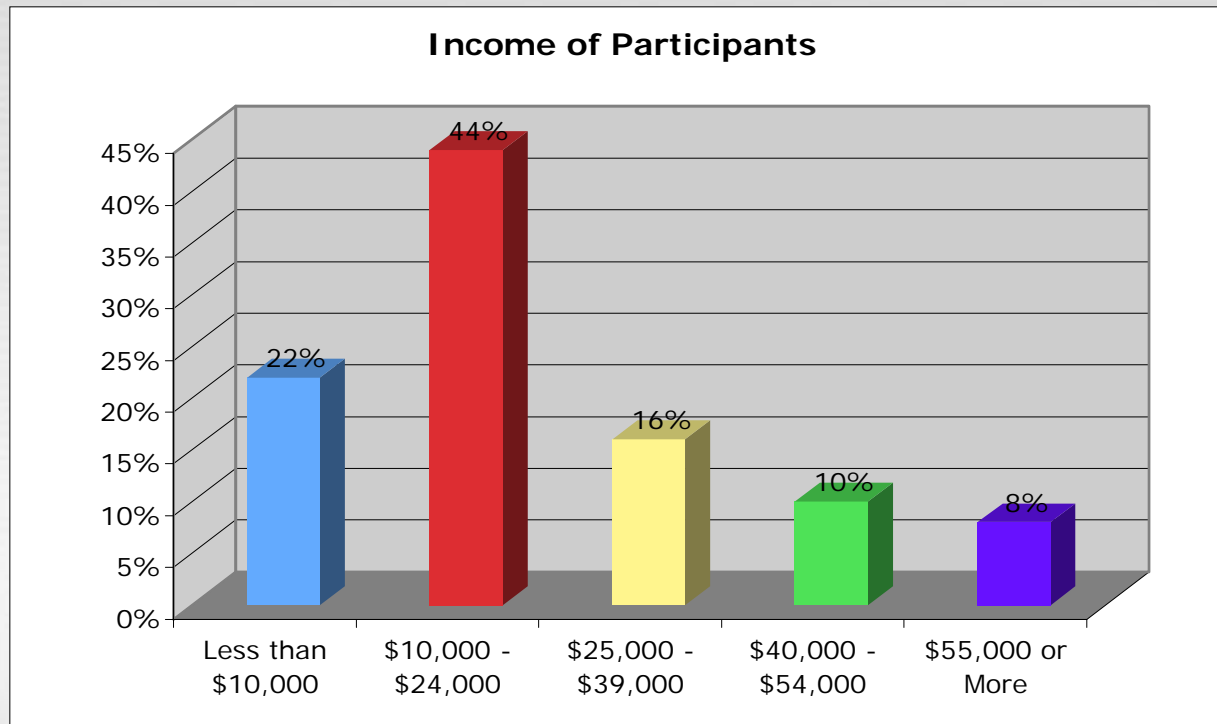
Geographic Distribution of Participants



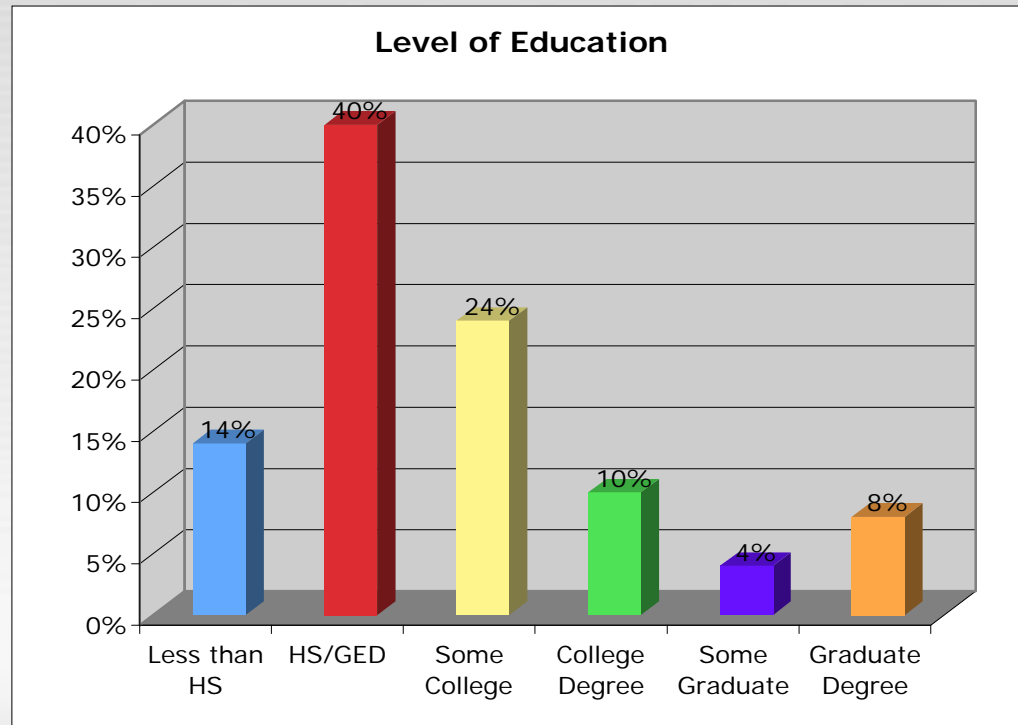
Age Distribution of Survey Respondents



Income of Participants



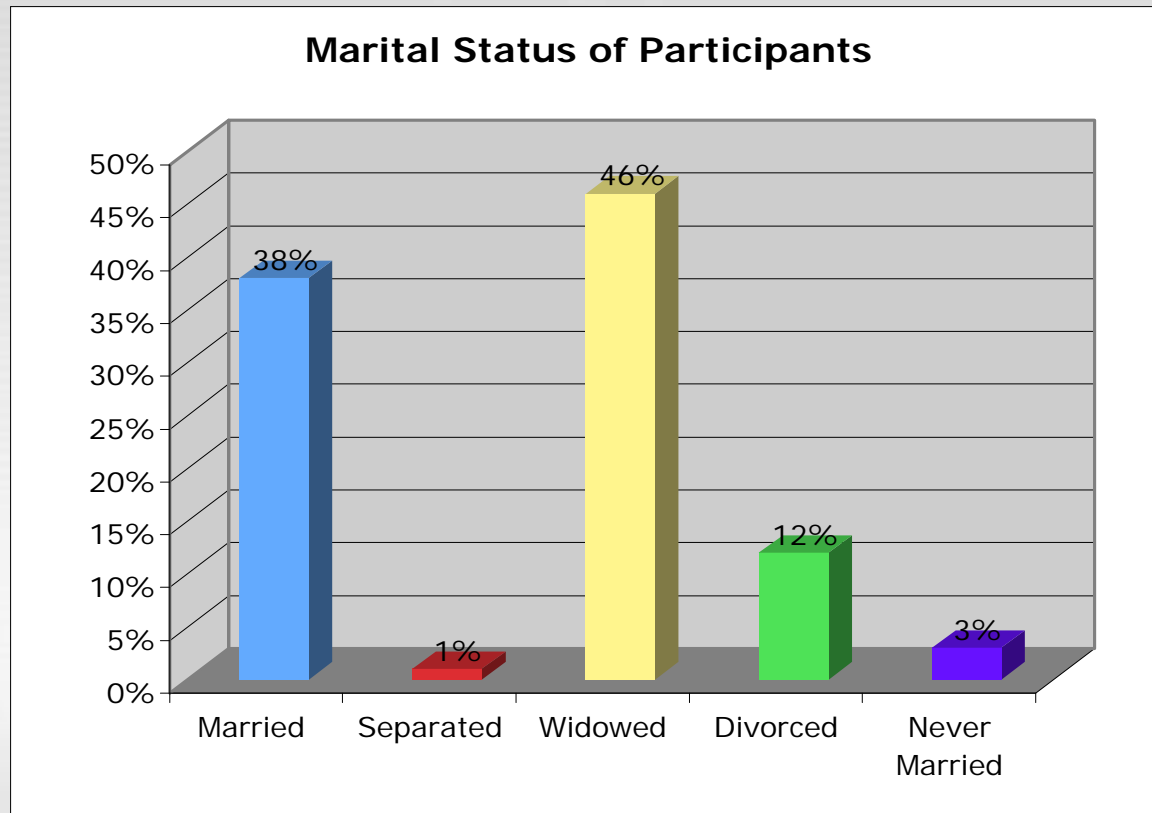
Level of Education



Number in Household

Number in Household	
1	52%
2	41%
3	4%
4	1%
5	1%
6	1%

Marital Status



Biggest Issues as Supported by the Data

- Transportation
- Affordable Housing
- Financial Management
- Safety and Security
- Health and Well-being
- Public Awareness

Recommendation #1: Improve Transportation

The vast majority of responses regarding the biggest problem in Medina County for older adults centered on transportation. Older adults would like to have more accessible, affordable, regular transportation that reaches desired destinations, often beyond the boundaries of Medina County.

Transportation

- Utilize a more fully integrated planning process including coordination with community-based organizations, as well as with human services and government-sponsored transportation programs;
- Inventory the existing transit services;
- Review existing Medina County Transit Authority ridership survey findings to analyze transit utilization and customer satisfaction data and make data-informed decisions;
- Identify opportunities (both within and outside of the city or county limits) to expand services or collaborate between providers to provide services where demand is not currently being met;

Transportation

- Collaboratively partner with those serving older adults with disabilities (e.g., Medina County Creative Housing, MMHA, MRDD, etc.) to ensure the county is meeting the transportation needs of the older adult population with disabilities;
- Research other communities (e.g., Cuyahoga County and outer ring suburbs) to determine how they addressed the increasing demands for convenient and affordable public transportation during diminishing funding;
- Increase investment in public transportation to improve mobility for older adults. Transportation remains very expensive and greatly under funded in Medina County;

Transportation

- Create public transportation services and pedestrian-friendly environments for older adults, particularly in the more rural areas that may not currently offer convenient alternatives to driving; and
- Consider the expansion of senior transportation by funding community design initiatives that make shopping, entertainment and essential services more easily accessible. Possible solutions might include improvements to roadway design such as large print road signs, grooved lane dividers, dedicated left turn lanes, and extended walk times at pedestrian crosswalks to accommodate older drivers and pedestrians.

Recommendation #2: Increase Housing Alternatives and Affordability

Older adult concerns regarding housing centered around the desire to remain independent, to maintain their current home, to afford utilities and repairs, and to be able to adapt their home to meet changing needs as they age. Currently, much of the focus related to senior housing is on people in crisis. Much remains to be done to be proactive in providing preventative services to help older adults afford and maintain their homes, or become aware of housing alternatives before they experience a housing crisis.

Affordable Housing

- Utilize a more fully integrated planning process including coordination with community-based organizations, as well as with human services and government-sponsored housing programs;
- Inventory the existing housing services, providers, costs, and locations to obtain a clear picture of what housing and housing resources are available to older adults, who is providing these housing options or services, and how affordable it is for older adults;
- Finalize and distribute widely the Housing Pathways model so that all providers of service to older adults are aware of the housing issues facing older adults, the decision-making process that often occurs when making housing decisions, and the resources available within the county to assist older adults with housing-related issues;

Affordable Housing

- Promote the development of home modification and home improvement programs that assist older citizens to adapt their existing homes to meet their needs, and market more effectively the existing services and programs available to seniors (e.g., home weatherization, home maintenance and repair, chore services, home adaptation, etc.);
- Ensure that there are resources in place to assist older adults in obtaining housing that is affordable and appropriate in size and design to accommodate their changing needs;
- Consider innovative ideas for helping older adults age in place, such as home sharing projects between seniors and young adults;
- Assess the existing land use plans, zoning ordinances and building codes to promote the development of a range of housing options that meet the needs of the county's aging population;

Affordable Housing

- Consider the expansion of senior housing partnerships with local non-profits and vendors to address countywide housing needs. Possible partnerships include: Home Depot, Medina County Career Center, WFD, and Senior ICAT;
- Encourage all agencies who are considering new projects and grant writing efforts to submit their ideas through the Medina County Housing Network to increase county-wide awareness of housing projects, increase collaboration between partners with similar interests and objectives, reduce redundancy of program services and duplicate grant applications, and increase economies of scale; and
- Facilitate the development of a plan for addressing housing-related needs for those seniors with geropsych issues.

Recommendation #3: Increase Financial Management Assistance

While the vast majority of older adults responding to the survey indicated they had enough money to pay their rent or mortgage and utilities and purchase the food and gas they needed over the last year, many mentioned the increasing difficulty in affording these expenses as the economy continues to be poor and gas prices keep climbing.

Nearly 1 in 4 survey respondents said they were concerned about outliving their financial resources and about 1 in 5 indicated they have had to change their way of life significantly in the past year to pay their medical bills.

Financial Management

- Expand appropriate tax assistance, rental assistance, and utility assistance to offer a level of relief to those most in financial need. Medina County should continue to examine opportunities to reduce the financial burden of older adults;
- Inventory the existing financial assistance available to County residents, both public and private to obtain a clear picture of what assistance is available, who is providing the service, where it is located, how often and where it is offered, and how affordable it is for older adults;

Financial Management

- Fully utilize existing resources such as OSU Extension's Master Money Manager Program, Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP), Homestead Exemption Program, and the United Way's Sustainable Families initiative, as well as encouraging local churches and professionals (e.g., local accountant, attorneys, financial planners) to provide necessary financial programs for little to no charge to seniors as part of their community service; and
- Develop partnerships to offer job training, retraining programs, and lifelong learning opportunities that assist older adults who wish to remain in the workforce do so successfully.

Recommendation #4: Increase Safety and Security

While the majority of Medina County residents surveyed reported feeling safe during the day within their neighborhoods, a substantial number reported not feeling safe in those same neighborhoods at night. There is also a significant need to improve other areas of safety and security.

Safety and Security

- Develop a task force of relevant stakeholders (i.e., representatives from police and fire, hospitals, city or township government, caretakers, and older adults), both within each community and across the county, to identify other areas of safety and security that may need addressed to ensure all seniors feel safe in their homes and neighborhoods, are aware of and possess the knowledge and tools to handle emergencies, and have community safety nets when they do not have a local family member to help them in times of need;
- Expand the Senior ICAT Geriatric Assessment model through interdisciplinary cooperative partners across the county, in a variety of environments, to achieve safety and security goals for older adults;

Safety and Security

- Increase the awareness and utilization of neighborhood watch programs, especially in the areas where individuals were more likely to report feeling less safe (e.g., areas with respondents reporting incomes of less than \$24,000);
- Continue to build relations between the police, fire departments and older adults to improve older adult awareness of programs and services and strengthen partnerships between citizens and their community protectors;
- Offer additional education and training for older adults about how to protect themselves against financial fraud and predatory lending, focusing on those with incomes below \$10,000 who indicated that they had not received such training and are perhaps the least able to afford to be a victim of this type of crime.

Recommendation #5: Improve Health and Well-Being

While there is overall high rating of health and life satisfaction in Medina County, there is a dramatic need to reach the older adults with limited income and other resources to ensure that their health and well-being improves to more closely match that of their counterparts.

Health and Well-being

- Utilize a more fully integrated planning process including coordination with community-based organizations, as well as with human services and government-sponsored health and wellness programs;
- Continue to fully recruit and engage all relevant program providers (e.g., Emergency Rooms, Primary Care Physicians, Senior ICAT, Geriatric Case Management, etc.) in the development of a mechanism or procedure for identifying those older adults who do not have someone who could take care of them if they became sick or disabled and connect them in a timely and proactive fashion to community resources;

Health and Well-being

- Develop a mechanism or procedure for identifying those older adults who do not have dental insurance and are facing significant health concerns as a result. Develop partnerships with local dentists to build a cooperative of providers who will offer pro bono care in collaboration with local hospitals or through mobile dental units;
- Develop an inventory of public and private providers of food banks, food-rescue, and food lines to obtain a clear picture of what assistance is available, who is providing the service, where it is located, how often and where programs are offered, and how affordable it is for older adults. Specific attention should be given to addressing the food security needs of shut-ins, those with lower incomes, and individuals with special diets that are not closely following their recommended regimen; and

Health and Well-being

- Develop a countywide marketing campaign to increase older adult involvement in community activities and physical activities, such as the Step Up to Health Program. Determine specific barriers to low participation, especially for those reporting incomes below \$10,000. Identify useful strategies for increasing participation.

Recommendation #6: Enhance Public Awareness and Service Outreach

This survey made it quite clear that there is still a great deal of public awareness and outreach that needs to occur to ensure older adults are aware of the existing services, know how to access these services, and are comfortable reaching out to providers.

Public Awareness and Service Outreach

- Find a mechanism for funding and distributing the Medina County Senior Resource Guide and the Medina County Commissioners Guide to Services in Medina County to all older adults living in the county.
- Create and expand opportunities for the **effective and purposeful participation** of older adults on community boards and commissions as well as to create and expand meaningful volunteer opportunities in local government and non-profit organizations; and

Public Awareness and Service Outreach

- Promote the development of a primary point of entry for information and access to all aging services. This single point of service should be committed to providing timely and relevant information to older adults about available resources throughout the county. They should also be committed to supporting the continuum of supportive services that older adults need to remain living independently at home and in the community.

CONCLUSION

An admirable number of community and county-wide collaborative organizations composed of public and private stakeholders currently exist. Engaging these collaborative organizations to enhance services is key to the successful development and implementation of effective strategies designed to address the existing gaps in services for older adults in Medina County. These strategies should embrace a “Front Door, No Wrong Door” approach that recognizes the holistic needs of older adults and is cognizant of the various pathways that exist to identifying and addressing current and future needs.

THANK YOU!



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