

# **Age-Friendly Summit County Needs Assessment**

**May 2021**

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## *Age Friendly Summit County Assessment Report*

### *Executive Summary*

May 2021

Under the leadership of County Executive Ilene Shapiro, Summit County joined the AARP network of Age-Friendly States and Communities in January 2020. Summit County, AARP, and Direction Home Akron Canton have joined forces to guide the process of Summit County becoming an Age-friendly Community to fulfill a vision of all 31 cities, villages, and neighborhoods of Summit County becoming an accessible place for people of all ages and abilities.

An Age-Friendly Summit County advisory council has convened to guide the process of assessing the age friendliness of the county and to develop an action plan. Both the assessment and action plan will focus on the eight age-friendly domains: work and civic engagement, communications and information, housing, outdoor spaces and public places, social participation, respect and social inclusion, and transportation.

In 2018, the Center for Community Solutions surveyed the older adults in Summit County for a needs assessment. The assessment aligns well with the age-friendly domains and has been analyzed through an age-friendly lens. Virtual listening sessions were held in 2021 to gather additional information from Summit County residents. The full report includes a more detailed analysis of the age-friendly domains, a summary of the listening sessions, and a demographic profile of older adults in Summit County. The key findings below provide a brief overview of the most pressing needs of the community.

### ***Staying in Summit County***

Summit County consists of both urban and suburban cities, villages, and neighborhoods. One thing that remains constant among all communities is the desire of older adults to remain in their homes for as long as possible. Ninety-four percent said it is very important, or somewhat important, to remain in their community in their own homes. The same amount of older adults indicate they feel safe within their homes. In the listening sessions, suburban community members shared concerns about their ability to maintain their property as they age and expressed a desire for more low-maintenance options, such as senior apartment buildings, condos, or smaller homes on less property.

### ***Long-Term Care Supports***

Overall, Summit County older adults are unsure of how they will pay for long-term care expenses, both in-home and in a facility, should they need them in the future. Those who have middle incomes and those who are near poverty but do not qualify for assistance programs are most at risk of not being able to afford long-term care. Within this group, less than a quarter are confident in their ability to afford nursing home care. Those with higher incomes have more confidence they will be able to afford long-term care. Within the group who expects to be able to afford long-term care more than 75 percent believe they will be able to afford it for as long as they need the service. Those with incomes below \$25,000 are least confident in their ability to pay for long-term care. This group, however, is also the most likely to be able to qualify for Medicaid to cover their long-term care.

### ***Walkability***

A walkable community is highly desired by many of the older adults who attended listening sessions and completed the survey. Unfortunately, nearly 40 percent of older adults report they do not have sidewalks where they live. Another 22 percent indicate that their sidewalks are uneven or unsafe. Slightly more than 10 percent of older adults indicate pedestrian crossings are difficult to navigate. Summit County older adults would like to be able to walk within their neighborhoods, both for exercise and to access amenities like pharmacies, restaurants, libraries, and entertainment venues. Improvements to existing sidewalks and installation of new sidewalks would be welcomed and well used by older adults in the community.

### ***Outdoor Community Spaces***

Older adults in Summit County place a high value on parks, even more so during COVID-19 when indoor activities have been unavailable. Summit County is fortunate to have both municipal parks and the Cuyahoga Valley National Park within its boundaries. Just under half of older adults can walk to well-maintained and safe parks, and 64 percent indicate they live near recreation areas. Continued maintenance and improvements to parks, particularly local parks within walking distance of residential areas, can increase mobility and reduce social isolation of Summit County residents of all ages.

### ***Transportation***

While older adults who are able to drive themselves face very few barriers to getting around the community, those without this ability have more difficulty getting to the places they need to be. The 18 percent who do not drive themselves rely on family or friends or use public transportation. With limited routes and long wait times, especially in the less urban areas of the county, public transportation does not fully meet the needs of those who do not drive. Very few options exist for those who need transportation that is wheelchair or other mobility-device accessible. In some communities faith-based organizations and senior centers have developed ways to address the transportation needs of older adults; these programs, however, do not fully meet the need nor cover the entire county.

## Introduction

Under the leadership of County Executive Ilene Shapiro, Summit County joined the AARP network of Age-Friendly States and Communities in January 2020. Over 1,000 cities and communities throughout the world are currently members of the World Health Organizations Global Network for Age-friendly



Cities and Communities, covering over 240 million people worldwide. AARP provides guidance and support to the Age-friendly Communities within the United States. By becoming a member of the AARP network, Summit County benefits from AARP research, planning models, and best practices related to the age-friendliness of cities. The Global Network was established in 2010 to provide a framework for communities to plan programs, services, supports, and infrastructure to aid their aging population.

Summit County, AARP, and Direction Home Akron Canton have joined forces to guide the process of Summit County becoming an Age-friendly Community with a vision of Summit County becoming an accessible place for people of all ages and abilities. One-fifth of the population is expected to reach the age of 60 by 2030, so being an Age-friendly Community will ensure people of all ages are able to live, enjoy life, and thrive in Summit County. More than 540,000 residents live in the 31 cities, villages, and neighborhoods of Summit County. While each of the 22 communities has unique attributes, all are poised to become age-friendly environments that promote healthy and active aging that centers the voices of older adults in the process.

Becoming an Age-friendly City requires a multi-sector collaboration with consistent and meaningful involvement of older adults who live, work, and spend their time in the county. An advisory council has been chosen to guide the five-year process of becoming an Age-friendly Community. The council includes representatives for each of the eight age-friendly domains: work and civic engagement, communications and information, housing, outdoor spaces and public places, social participation, respect and social inclusion, and transportation. The advisory council also includes representatives from the University of Akron and the Akron Community Foundation. The advisory council will oversee and will constantly be assessing the effectiveness of the plan and adapting it to the ever-changing world. Throughout the process, community members will be invited to participated in assessing the community, suggesting improvements, designing implementation plans, and evaluating the success of age-friendly changes. Age-friendly Summit County is a community-wide effort in building, creating, and planning the future of the county.

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Age-Friendly Summit follows the AARP eight-step process and program cycle to becoming an age-friendly city. The first step is to establish a way to include older adult residents in all stages of age-friendly planning and implementation. Age Friendly Summit meets this step through the engagement of the Direction Home, an older adult-serving agency, and the inclusion of older adults on the advisory council. Direction Home and the advisory council will provide continuous guidance. The second step is to conduct a community needs assessment. Through partnership with The Center for Community Solutions, the assessment has been completed and the results will be shared in this report. Upon the sharing of this report with the community, Age-Friendly Summit advances to step three, which is to develop an action and evaluation plan based on the assessment results. Once this plan is submitted and reviewed by AARP as step four, the work of step five can begin. Step five focuses on implementation to work toward the plan goals. During step six, solutions, successes, and best practices develop through Age-Friendly Summit will be shared with AARP. The plan's impact will be assessed in step seven, and in step eight, the whole process is repeated. Generally speaking, the eight-step process is completed within five years of joining the network.

- ☒ Establish Older Adult Involvement
- ☒ Community Needs Assessment
- ☐ Develop Action and Evaluation Plan
- ☐ Submit Plan to AARP
- ☐ Implement Plan
- ☐ Share best practices with AARP
- ☐ Assess plan impact
- ☐ Repeat!

In 2018, the Center for Community Solutions surveyed the older adults in Summit County for a needs assessment. The assessment aligns well with the age-friendly domains and has been analyzed through an age-friendly lens in this report. Two domain areas were not robustly covered in the 2018 assessment: respect and social inclusion and social participation. To assess the community's standing in these domains, five virtual listening sessions were held in March 2021. All sessions were held over Zoom, and participants received a gift card in exchange for their time and contributions. Participants were recruited from groups associated with Direction Home, Asia Services in Action, and the Akron-Summit Public Library. Additional demographic data from secondary sources provides a profile of older adults currently living in the community.

## Listening Sessions

Listening sessions were held with five groups in March 2021. Out of concern for COVID-19, all sessions were held virtually over the Zoom video-conferencing platform. Participants were recruited from groups that had been meeting virtually on a regular basis throughout the pandemic. These groups included a caregiver group and Tai Chi group associated with Direction Home. Two of the groups were promoted through the Richfield branch of the Akron-Summit Public Library. The fifth group included older adult immigrants from China who spoke Mandarin. The conversation was interpreted by a certified interpreter from Asia Service in Action.

Though over the course of the year many older adults became quite familiar with video communication, the method which was used to recruit and conduct listening sessions was likely not accessible to many. As vaccination rates increase and COVID-19 cases decrease, Age-Friendly Summit is hopeful to engage more older adults through in-person gatherings during the planning phase. Health and safety have been and will continue to be a priority of AARP, Direction Home, and Executive Shapiro.

## What we learned

- Older adults were pleased with living in Summit County. Participants had deep roots in the community, appreciated the parks system, and generally felt they were respected as community members.
- Living in Summit County is not without barriers, however. Commonly reported concerns centered around poor/infrequent transportation options, lack of knowledge about resources for seniors, and some community events not being friendly to older adults (night time shows, difficult parking). Caregivers specifically cited isolation as a burden older adults felt in Summit County.
- Chinese older adults also mentioned concerns with personal safety, especially amid rising anti-Asian violence.
- Common suggestions to make Summit County more age-friendly included the following: better transportation options, more affordable/free events, and help with housing concerns. Housing was a multifaceted problem, with many issues discussed, such as affordability of rent and skilled-care living facilities, availability of facilities that accept Medicaid, and availability of more universally designed living spaces with low-maintenance/first-floor accessibility. Some other specific suggestions included better sidewalks, access to senior water-based programs, strategic additions of benches for resting in outside spaces, a call/check-in system for older adults more prone to being isolated, and the addition of more senior-specific spaces like centers.
- Caregivers specifically mentioned the difficulty in Summit County for older adults and caregivers in navigating accessibility features, many of which they say are unintuitive and cumbersome.

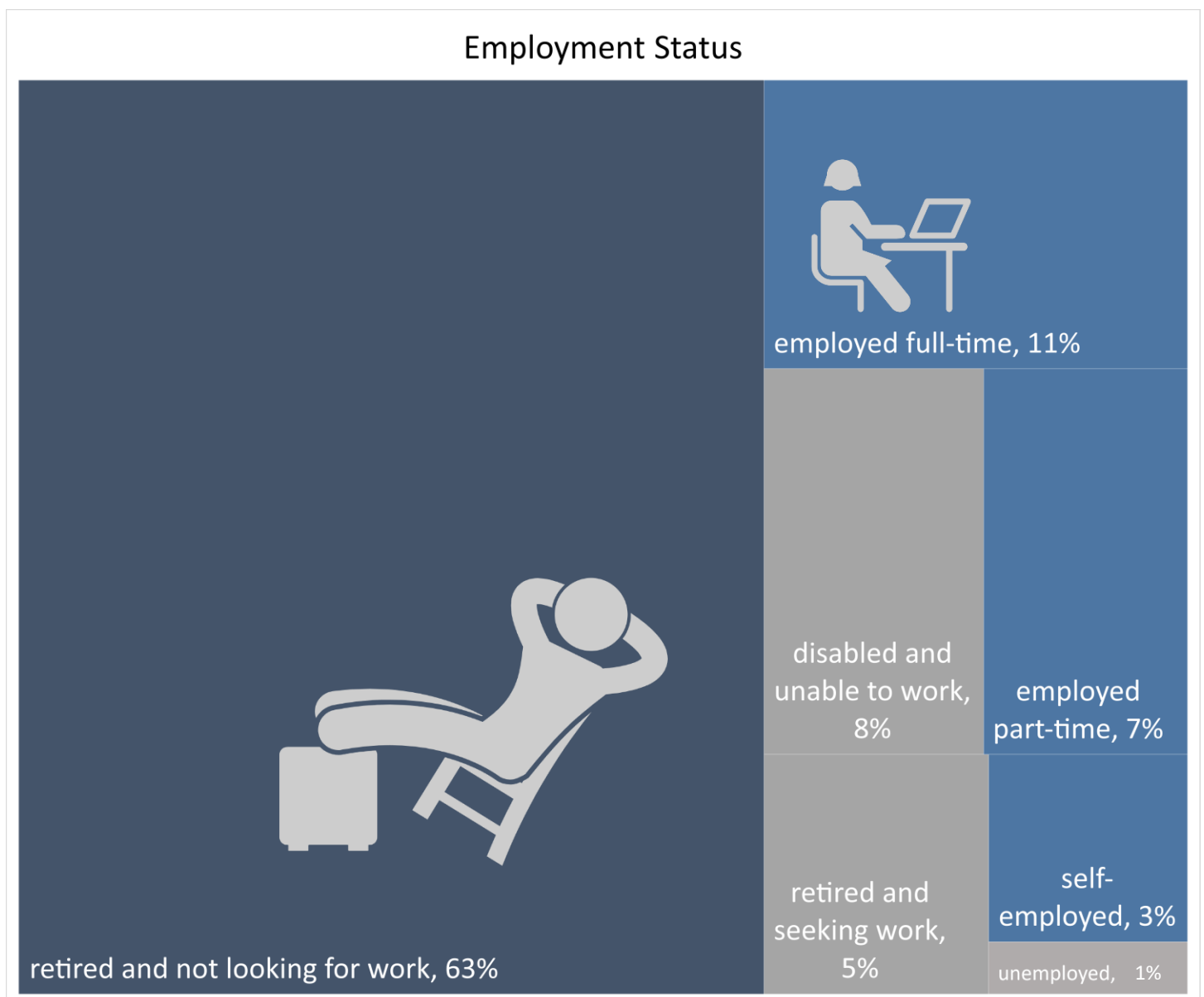
## Work and Civic Engagement

### What's included in the Age-Friendly Domain?

Volunteer opportunities, employment opportunities, employment options, accommodations for the older population, encouraging civic participation, training, entrepreneurial opportunities, valued contributions, and fair pay.

### What we learned

Most older adults are not currently working full time in Summit County. Over 60 percent of survey respondents indicated they are retired and not looking for work, while just over 10 percent are employed full time, and 3 percent are self-employed. Another 7 percent are employed part time, and 5 percent are

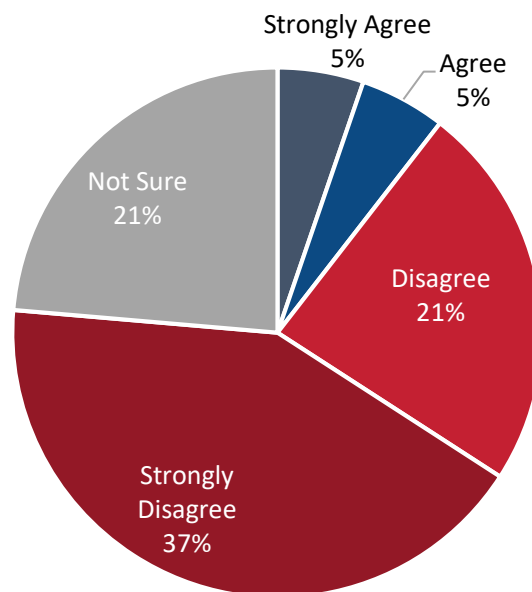


retired and seeking work. Eight percent are disabled and unable to work, and just one percent are unemployed and not seeking work.

### Are jobs available for older adults to the same extent that they are for younger people?

Residents over sixty disagree with the statement that jobs are available for older adults to the same extent as for younger people. Fifty-eight percent of respondents “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with this statement. Ten percent of respondents “strongly agree” or “agree” with the statement.

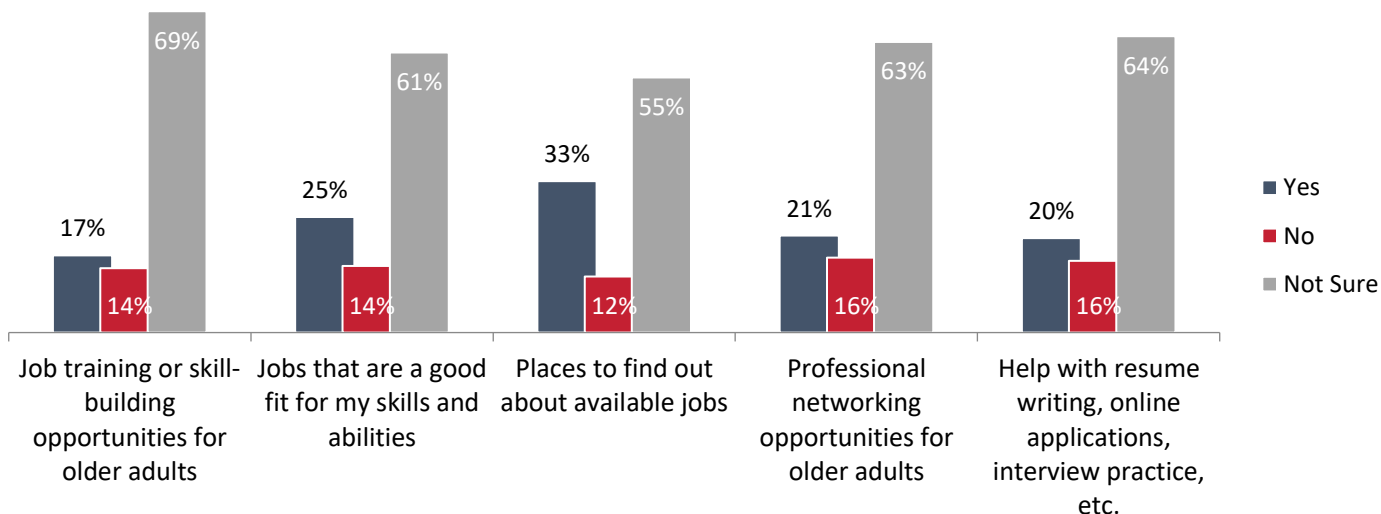
The top barriers reported were not being hired because of age, struggling with technology, and health issues.



Survey respondents reported a lack of awareness of job training opportunities in their communities. Regarding employment, respondents were most aware of places to find out about available jobs, with 33 percent reporting they had access to this type of information.



### Do you have access to...?





## Communication & Information

### What's included in the Age-Friendly Domain?

Widespread distribution, timely information, one-to-one conversation, age-friendly format and design, access to technology, printed information, plain language, personal and collective responsibility.

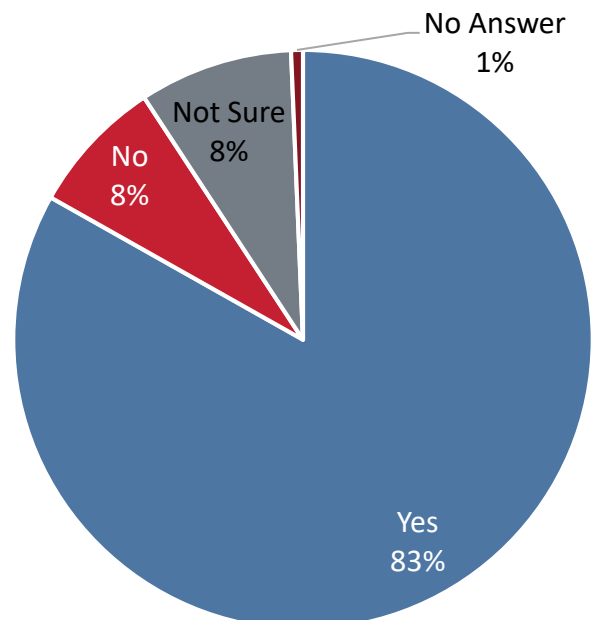
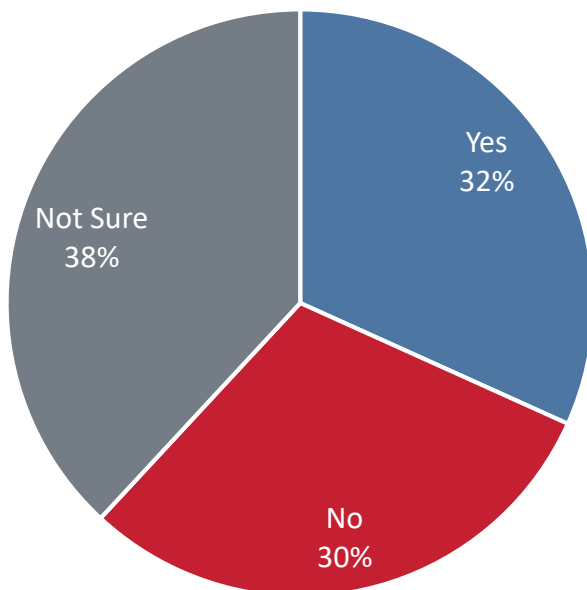
### What we learned

Older adults obtain information about the services they need and education about aging in a variety of ways, with various levels of success. When access to information and education is high, older adults gain the ability to find and connect with the services they need in a way that is sustainable over time. Older adults were asked various questions related to finding and accessing services.

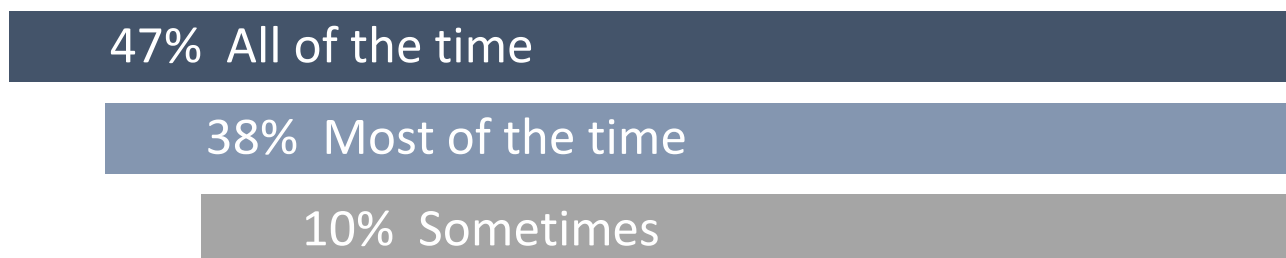
Callers to Direction Home and Metro Transit were asked if they were able to find the services they need related to growing older. Sixty eight percent of callers to Direction Home said they were not able to, or were not sure if they were able to find services. There is a high probability these callers have reached out to Direction home for help in finding those services. Most of the Metro Transit callers indicated they were able to find services they need. Compared to the Direction Home callers, this group may not have many aging needs and therefore may have less difficulty finding services to meet those needs.

### Are you able to find the aging services you need?

(phone survey)



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



Is information accessible?



**82%** of survey respondents have access to information in their own language



**83%** of survey respondents have access to clearly printed information



**75%** of survey respondents have internet in their homes and access to internet and computers



**55%** of survey respondents can find information by phone through one central source



**42%** of survey respondents receive information delivered in person

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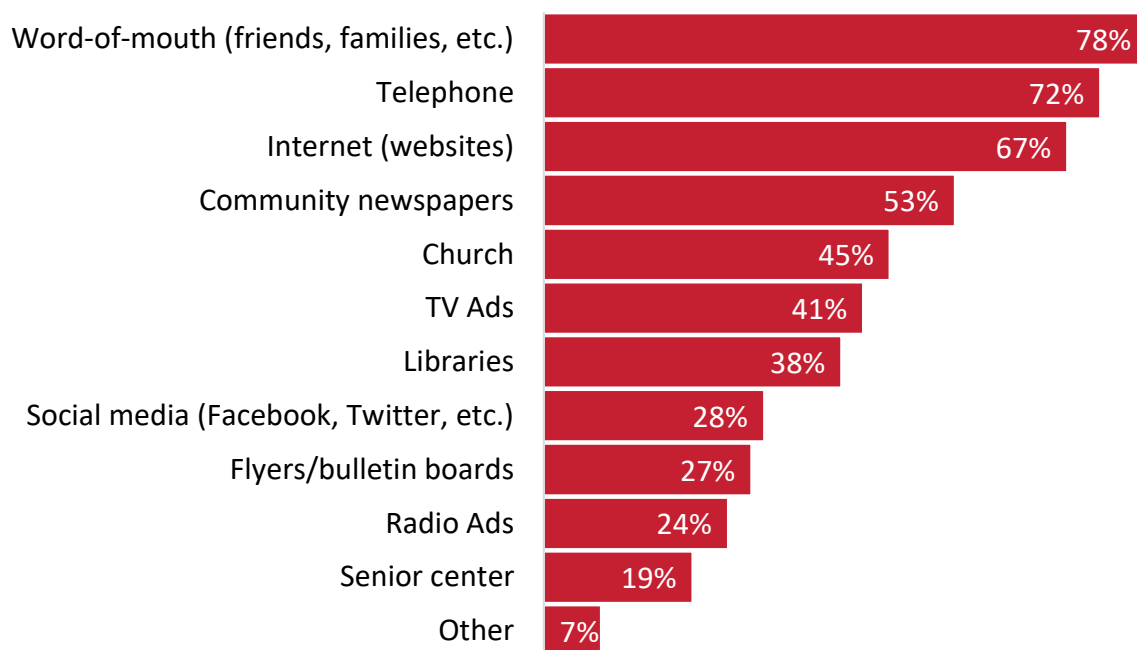
## Top Three

### Ways Older Adults Identify and Access Community Services

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What sources do you use to identify and access community services that you need?



The most common information access point for Summit County older adults is word-of-mouth (78 percent) followed by telephone (72 percent). The internet is used often by respondents (67 percent), and of those with access, 94 percent use the internet at home—38 percent on their smartphone or tablet. Ten percent use internet at the library, and just 3 percent are using the internet at a community or senior center. Twenty-five percent of residents reported they were familiar with the 211 referral hotline, and just 12 percent had used 211 to identify a service or get information.

## Health Services and Community Supports

### What's included in the Age-Friendly Domain

Accessible care, range of health services, home care, residential facilities, network of community services, voluntary support, emergency planning and care.

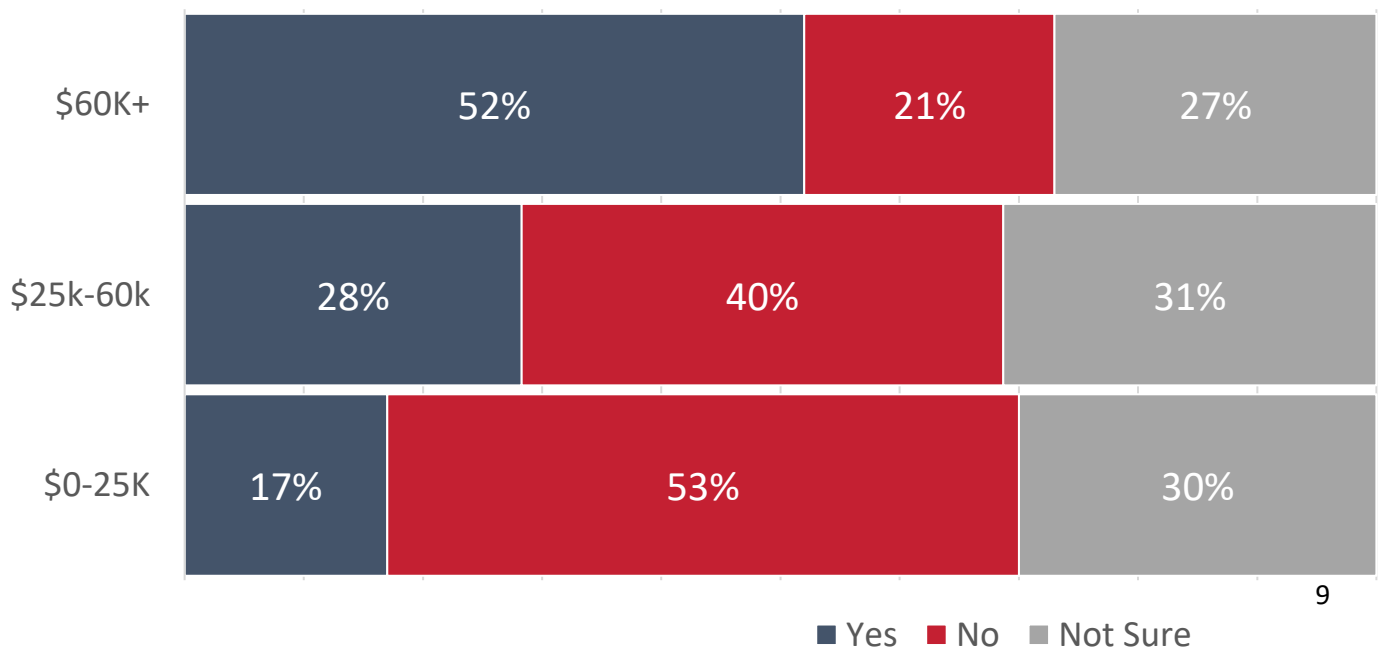
### What we learned

Overall, Summit County older adults are unsure how they will pay for long-term care expenses, both in-home and in a facility, should they need them in the future. The highest proportion of people (40 percent) report that they would not be able to pay for long-term in-home medical expenses, and another 29 percent aren't sure if they could afford it. Just under one-third of people reported they would be able to afford it.

Higher income residents (those with more than \$60,000 in annual income) are most likely to say they could afford **long-term in-home** medical expenses. Just more than half of the lowest income group said they would not be able to afford **long-term in-home** medical expenses. In all income groups, between one-quarter and one-third of individuals were uncertain about their ability to afford these services.



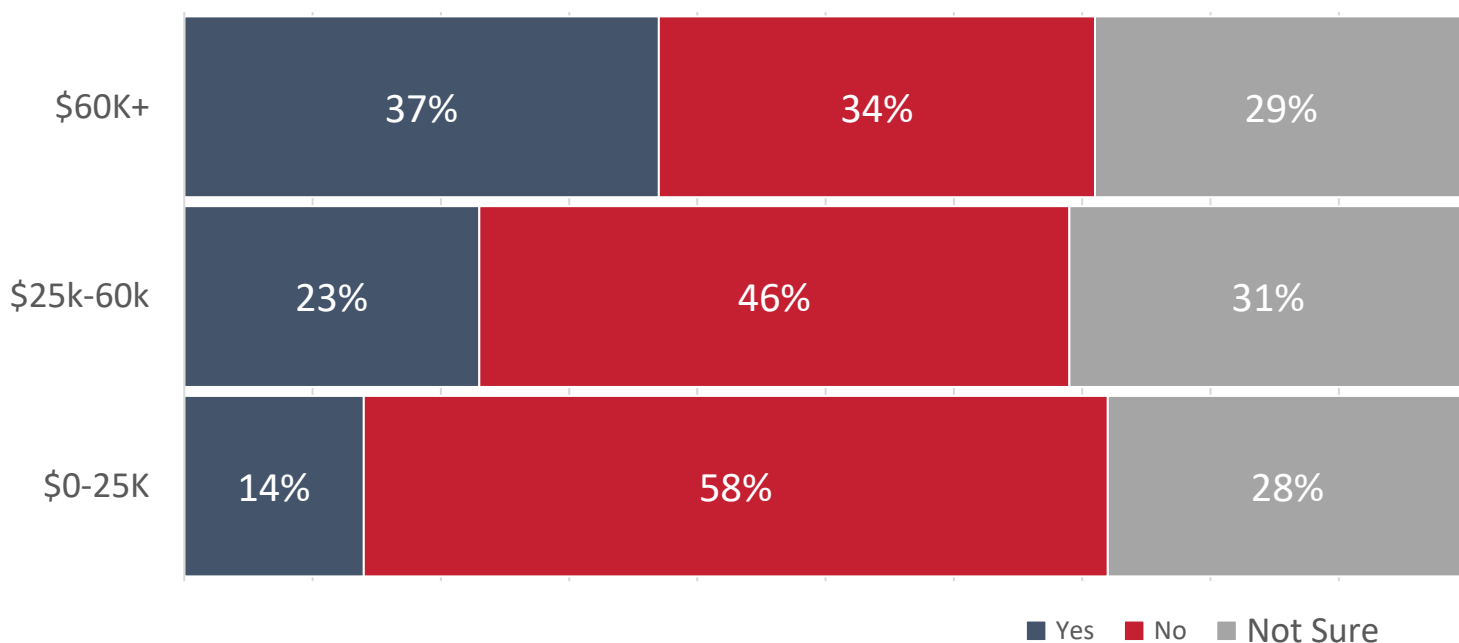
Do you feel confident  
that you would be able to pay for long-term **in-home** medical care in  
the future?



People indicate they are even less able to afford **long-term nursing home** care compared with long-term in-home care. Nearly half of older adults surveyed report they would not be able to afford **long-term nursing care**, and another 29 percent are not sure if they could afford it. Fewer than one in four individuals think they could afford long-term nursing home care if they needed it. The lowest income group (those with income below \$25,000 annually) are the least likely to be able to afford nursing home care, with 58 percent reporting they would not be able to afford it and another 28 percent unsure about whether they could. But, even within the highest income group (those with more than \$60,000 in annual income), about one-third of individuals say they could not afford nursing home care.

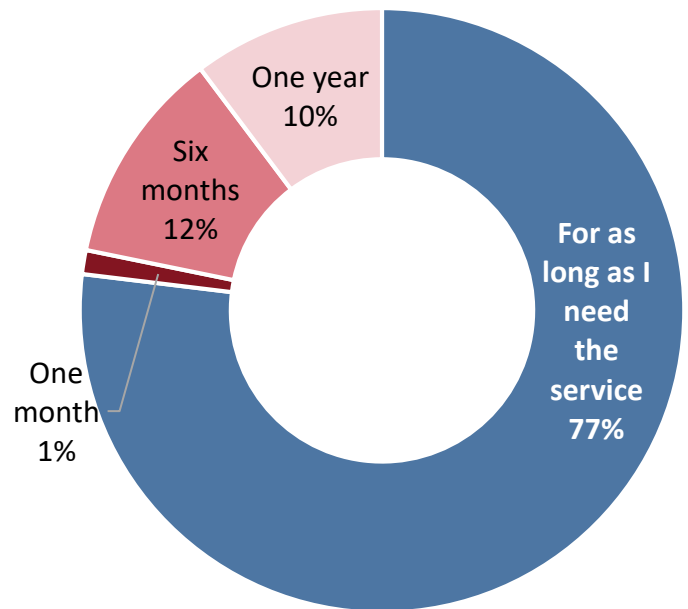


Do you feel confident that you would be able to pay for long-term **nursing home care** in the future?



## How long would you be able to afford long-term care?

Among those who said they could afford long-term care expenses, more than three-quarters of those respondents said they could afford the service for as long as they needed it, while the other one-quarter of individuals would be able to afford service for one year or less.



Older adult residents of Summit County largely reported an ability to afford necessary supports—including utility bills, prescription medications, and medical bills—to be able to remain in their homes.



81% of older adults report they can afford utility bills

76% of older adults report they can afford prescriptions

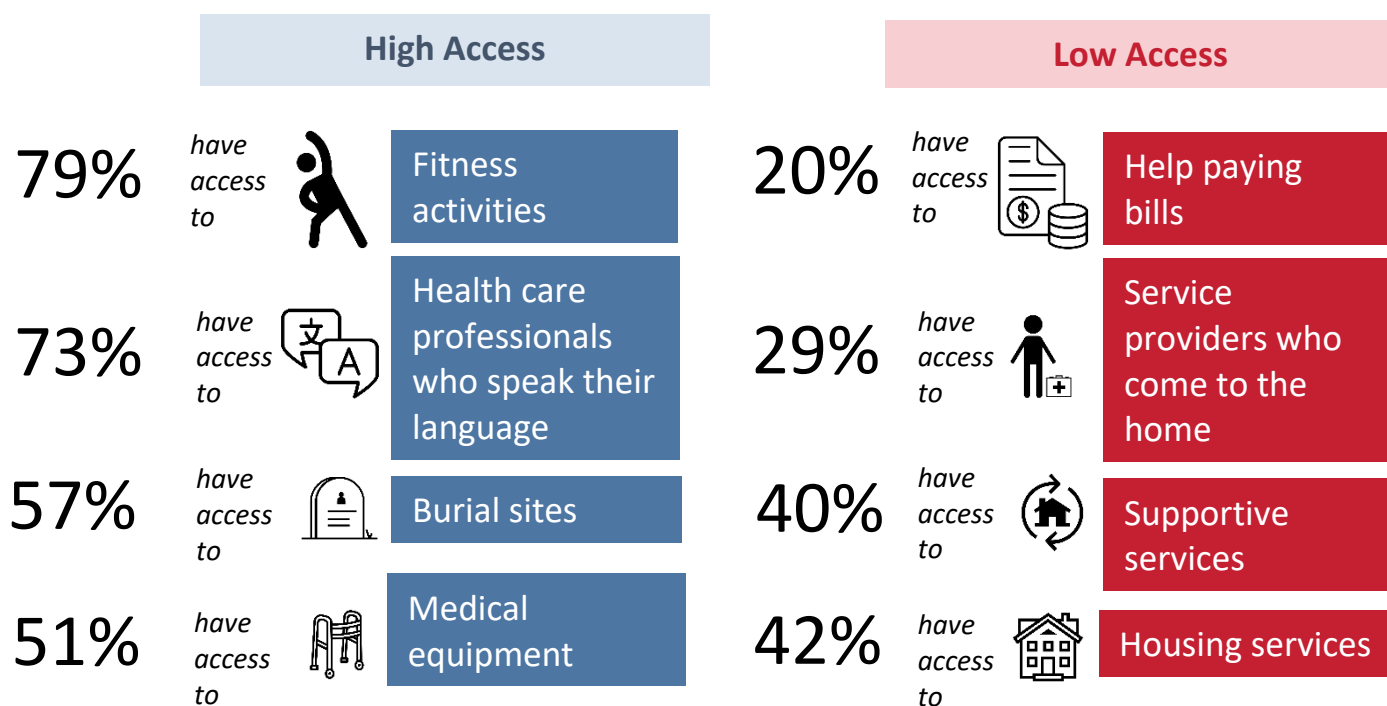


72% of older adults report they can afford medical bills

According to the survey, residents of Summit County have high access to a number of health and community supports, including urgent care and emergency rooms, fitness activities, health care professionals who are respectful, and medical equipment. There is less access to assistance program for paying bills, service providers who come to the home, and aging supportive services.

Are the following available in your neighborhood?	✓	✗	?
Conveniently located urgent care or emergency rooms	93%	4%	2%
Home care services, including personal care and housekeeping	54%	15%	30%
Meals and/or food delivered to your home	55%	18%	27%

### Do you have access to...?



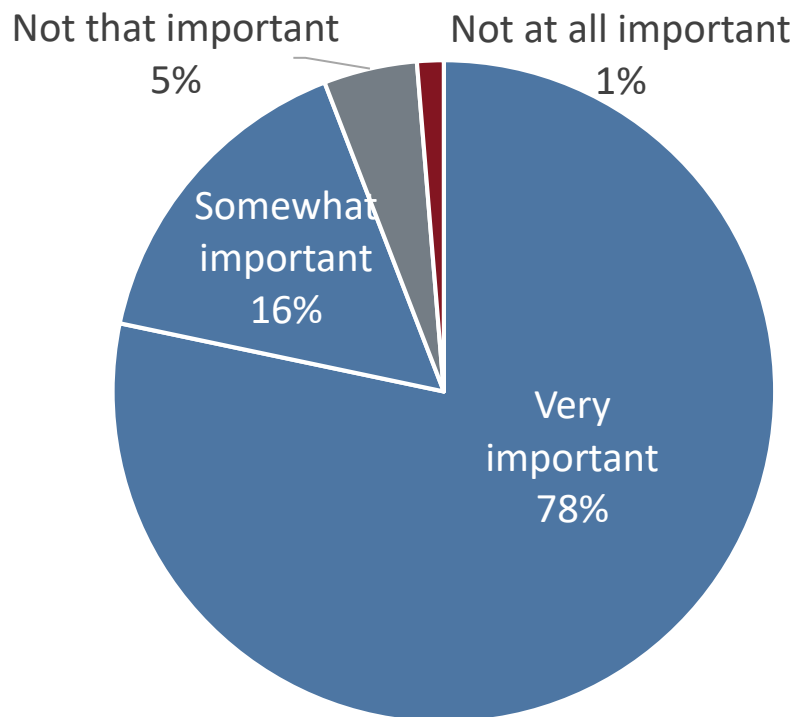
## Housing

### What's included in the Age-Friendly Domain?

Affordability, essential services, design, modifications, maintenance, access to services, community and family connections, housing options, and living environment.

### What we learned

Summit County consists of both urban and suburban municipalities, with some variations in income, race, and education among Akron proper and suburban communities. One thing that remains constant among all older adult populations surveyed for this assessment is the desire to remain in their homes for as long as possible. Older adults were asked to identify the level of importance they place on remaining in their home as they age, and 94 percent said it is very important, or somewhat important, to remain in their homes.



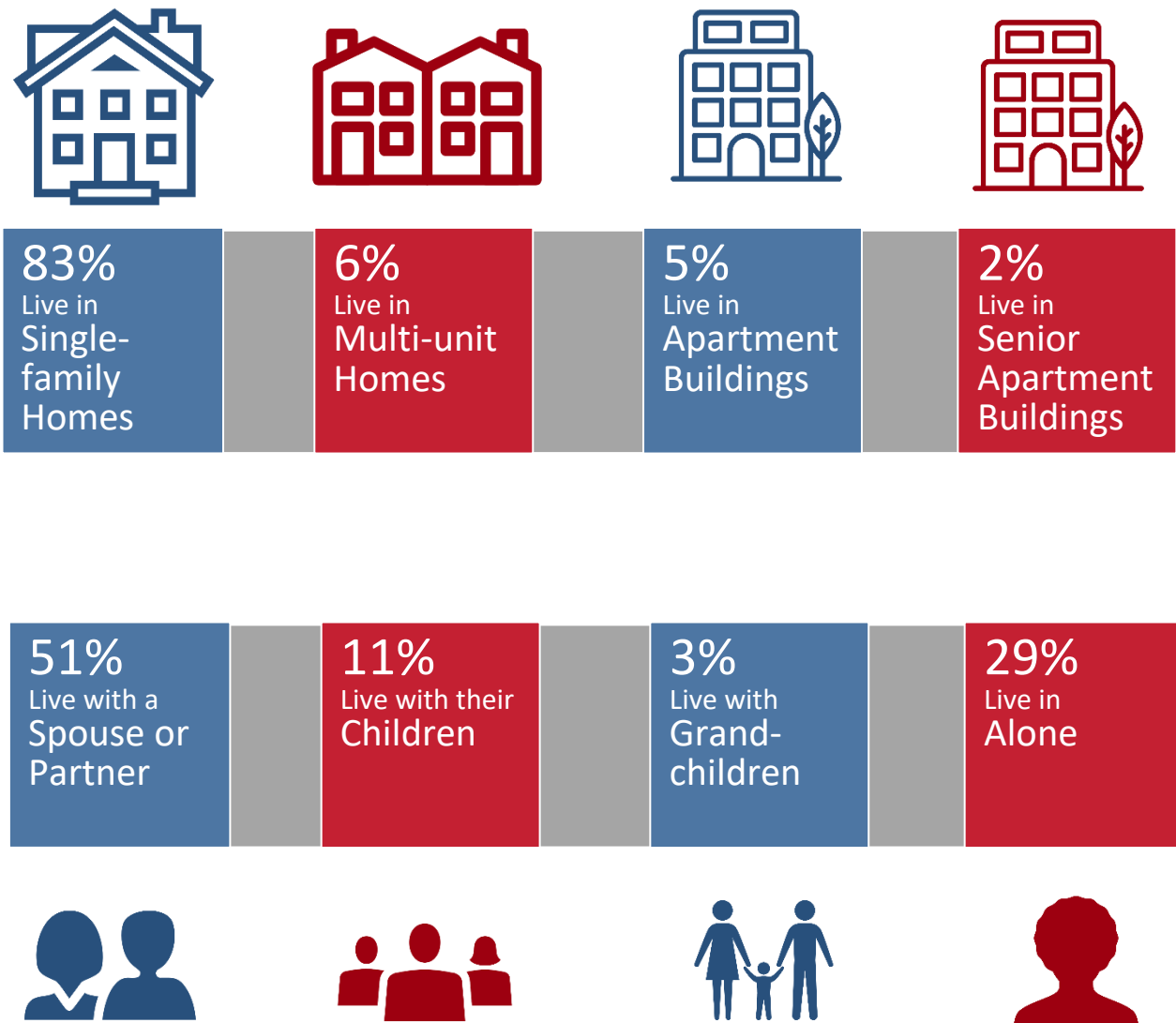
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Survey takers were asked if they had access to the features of a community that increases the likelihood of successful independent living. **Ninety five percent** of Summit residents 60+ said they **live near the amenities they need and want**, like shopping, restaurants, parks and medical facilities.

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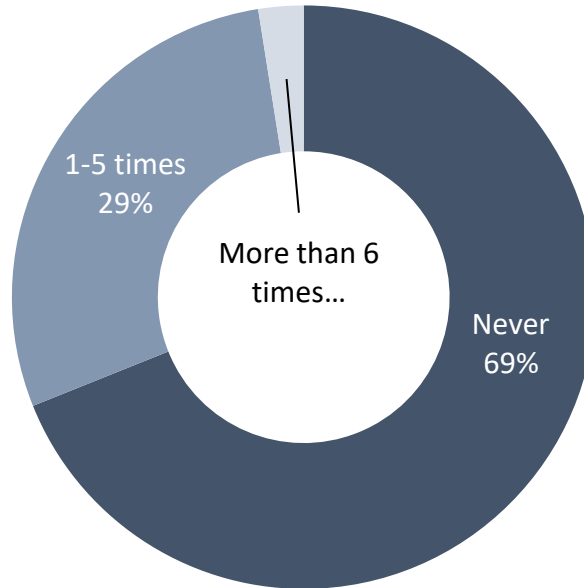


By far, single-family homes are the most common type of housing older adults in Summit County reported living in, followed by multi-unit homes and apartment buildings. Just over half live with their spouse or partner, and less than a third live alone. Eleven percent live with their own children, and three percent live with their grandchildren.



Falls in the home can be a factor in the decline of health of older adults, and the presence of falls may indicate an unsafe living situation. Past falls in the home are the greatest predictor of future falls. Just under 30 percent of respondents report they have fallen in the past 12 months, with 3 percent having fallen more than six times in that time period. More than one-quarter of survey takers indicated a concern about accidents or falls in their home.

In the past 12 months, how many times have you fallen in your home?



**Do you agree with the following statements?**

	Yes	No	Not Sure
I feel safe in my home	94%	4 %	2%
I am concerned about accidents or falls in my home	28%	63 %	8%
I have concerns that my home is not secured (windows, doors, locks, etc.)	12%	81%	6%
I am fearful that I will be the victim of crime in my neighborhood	10%	73%	16%



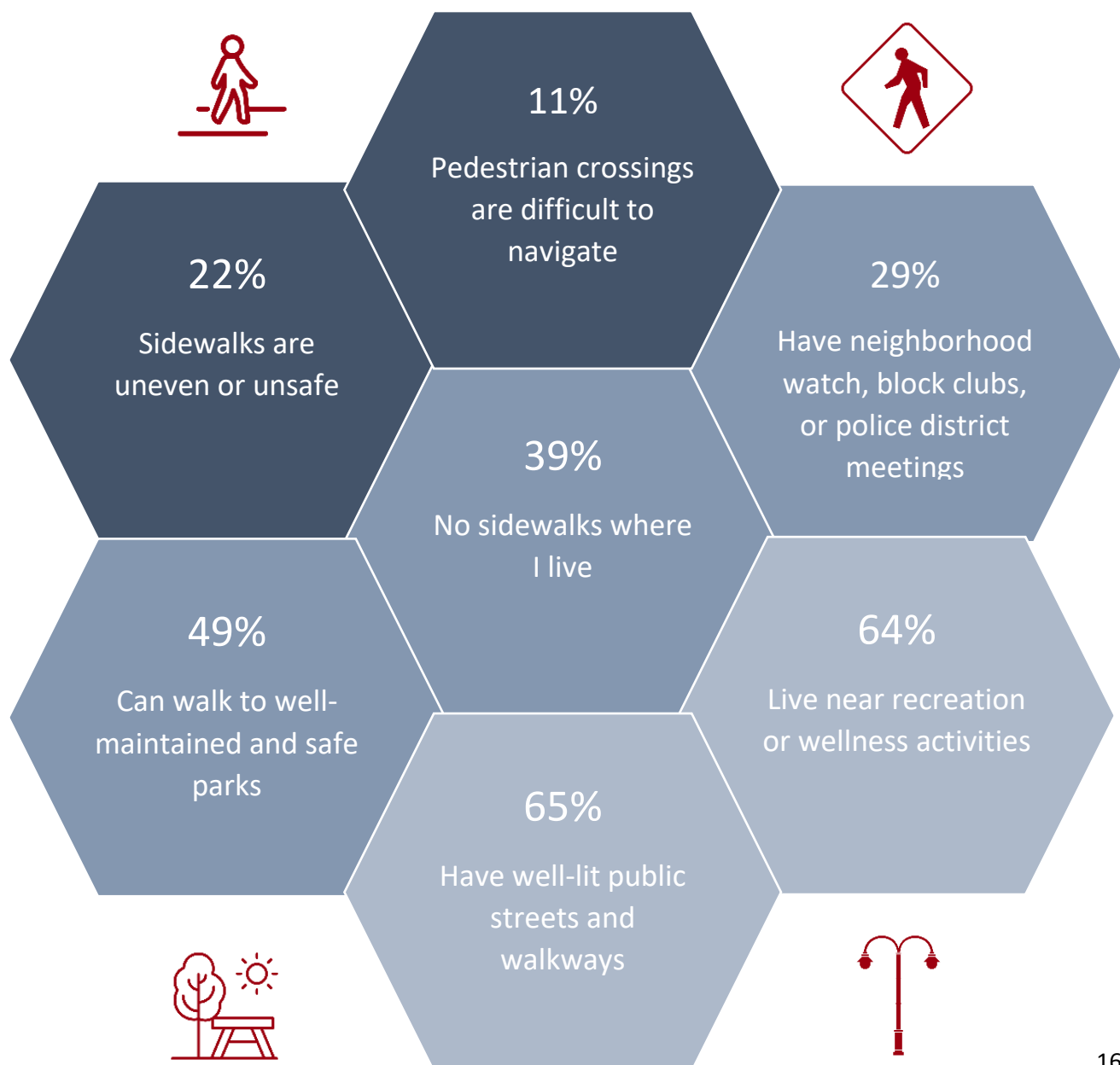
## Outdoor Spaces and Public Places

### What's included in the Age Friendly Domain

Environment; green spaces and walkways; outdoor seating; pavements; roads; pedestrian crossings; accessibility; age-friendly buildings and public restrooms.

### What we learned

Eighty percent of survey takers in Summit county reported that their neighbors (or neighborhood) make them feel safe and protected. Just 10 percent fear being a victim of crime within their neighborhood. While many residents feel safe inside of their homes, they also report a lack of sidewalks or say sidewalks are uneven or unsafe. Thirty percent of respondents do not have access to well-lit public streets and walkways, and more than half do not have, or are not sure if they live within walking distance of, safe and well-maintained parks. Access to safe areas to walk can increase mobility and reduce social isolation.



## Respect and Social Inclusion

### What's included in the Age-Friendly Domain?

Respectful and inclusive services. public images of aging, intergenerational and family interactions, public education, community inclusion, and economic inclusion.

### What we Learned

Almost unanimously, older adults reported feeling respected in Summit County. The residents spoke of thoughtful, respectful, and helpful interactions with both strangers and neighbors. These sentiments were echoed by the group of Chinese Elders who participated in the listening sessions. There was some concern raised however about the digital divide, with some older adults feeling left behind when it comes to newer technologies like Zoom, leading to increased isolation. The caregivers were also very concerned about how young kids today are not taught to respect their elders, but felt that more purposeful mixing of the different generations would yield positive results for all generations.

The way older adults feel about interactions between themselves and members of their community indicate how well respected they feel and how well included older adults are within the local culture. Older adults in Summit county report feeling respected when visiting medical community, but feel less secure when considering how they will be treated during longer term relationships with providers.



9 out of 10 older adults say hospital, clinic or doctor's staff are respectful and helpful.

Nearly half of older adults are concerned about privacy when accessing services.

A third of older adults are concerned someone will steal with them.



**19%** have been a victim of a **telephone scam**



**44%** have someone they **can lend them money** if they have a financial crisis



**80%** say their **neighbors** or neighborhoods **make them feel safe** and protected

## Social Participation

### What's included in the Age-Friendly Domain?

Accessible opportunities, affordable, range of opportunities, awareness of activities, encouragement of participation, addressing isolation, and fostering community integration.

### What We Learned

The older adults were very grateful for the community events in Summit County. Specific mentions included free concerts in the summer, ballet, performances at EJ Thomas Hall, and Rubber Ducks games. With some exceptions, participants found the events to be affordable and diverse; however, the big barrier for access was centered around affordable and flexible transportation. Most of these events were postponed due to COVID-19, so there was an excitement for the events to begin safely again. Some suggestions for events included more multi-generational programming. However, even during the pandemic, the parks system was considered a valuable resource, with participants citing both their ease of access and quantity of parks as big assets.

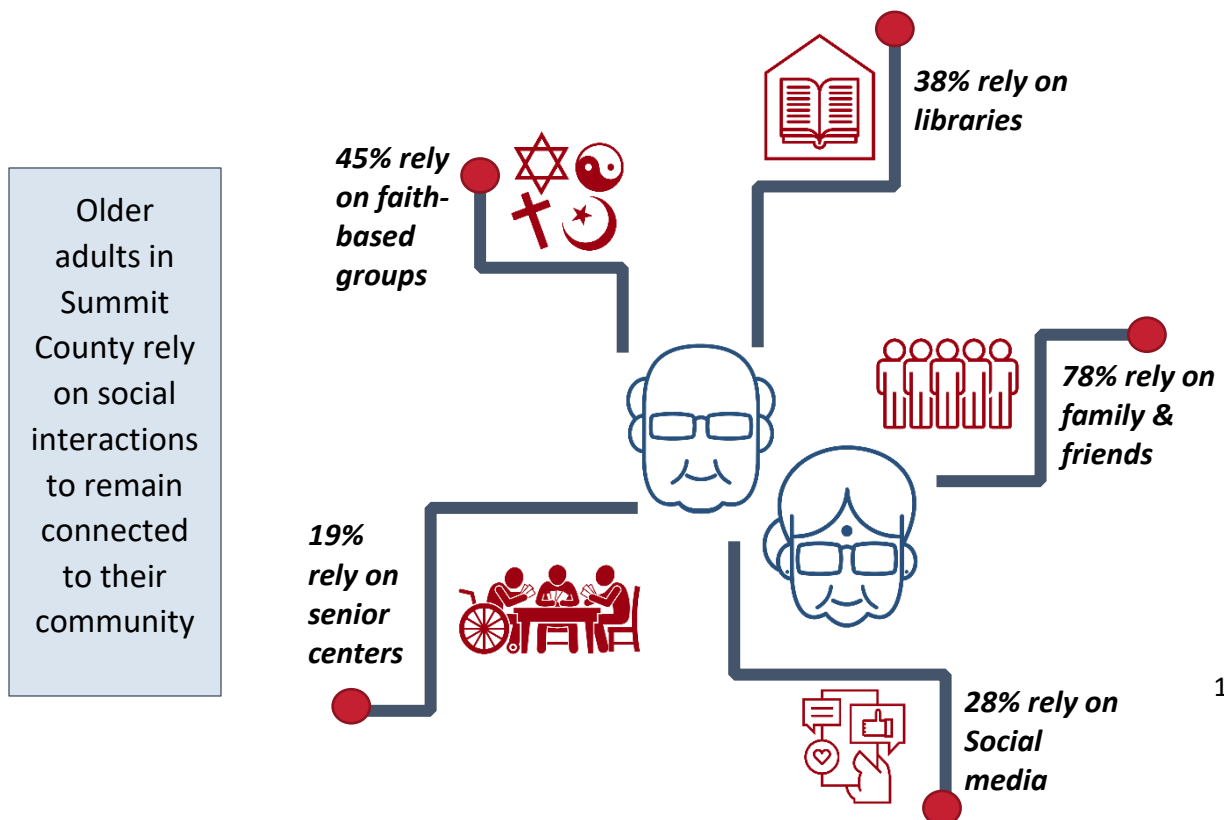
96% of older adults in Summit County live near the amenities they need and

**79%**  
have places to  
**Socialize & Attend  
Programs**

**74%**  
have access to  
**Health & Wellness  
Programs**

**64%**  
live near  
**Recreation &  
Wellness Areas**

82% have no problem getting around when they want to attend events



## Transportation

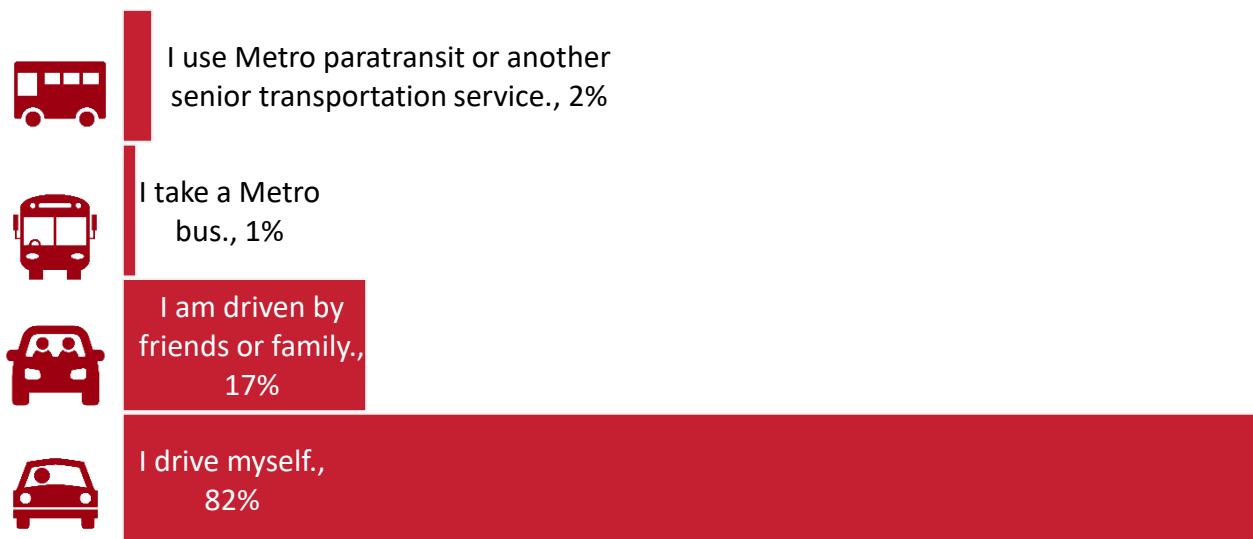
### What's included in the Age-Friendly Domain?

Availability, affordability, reliability and frequency, travel destinations, age-friendly vehicles, specialized services, priority seating, transport drivers, safety and comfort, transport stops and stations, taxis, community transport, information, roads, driving competence, and parking.

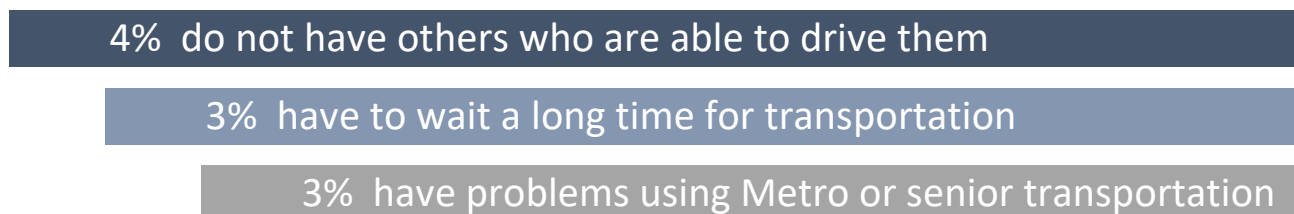
### Transportation

Safe, reliable, and affordable transportation plays a key role in an older adults' ability to maintain independence in a community setting. Transportation connects the individual to vital community features, including medical facilities, social activities, and nutrition services. Most of the survey respondents are able to drive, and 79 percent report they have no problems getting around. Just under 10 percent do not drive.

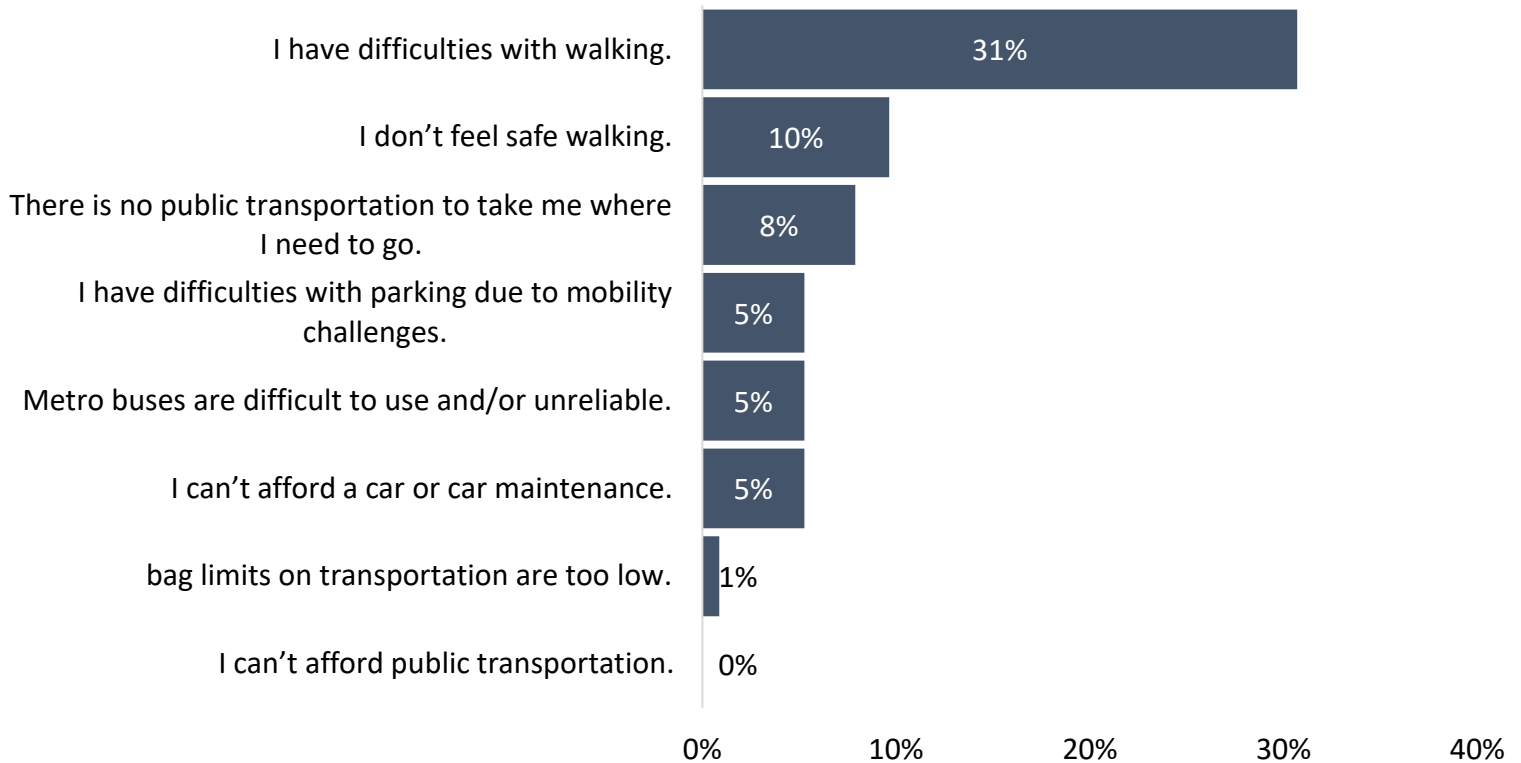
What is your usual way of running errands, getting to medical appointments, or attending events?



What challenges do you face when traveling in your community?



## Do you face any of the challenges when traveling within Summit County?



## Do you have access to...?

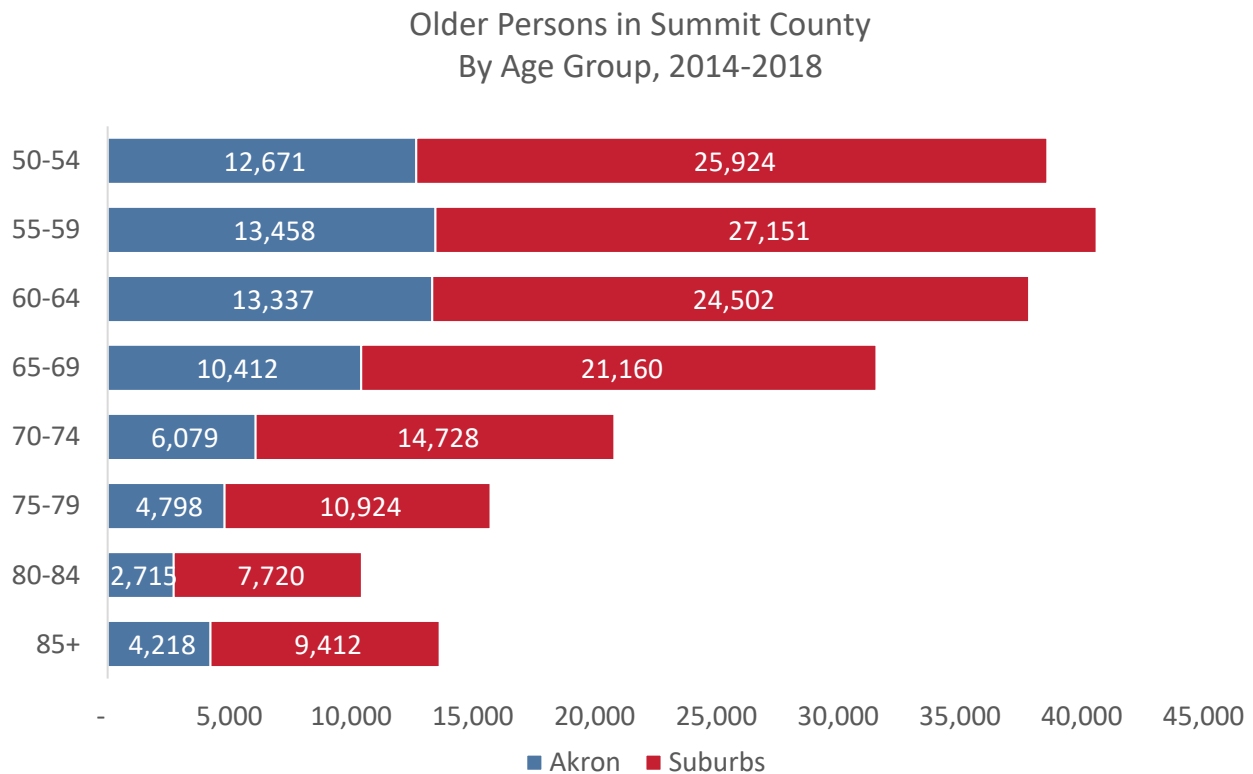


Survey takers were also asked if they had access to various features related to transportation within their community. The majority of respondents agreed their community has easy to read traffic signs (92 percent), well-maintained streets (81 percent), and affordable parking (76 percent). Just more than half of respondents reported having sidewalks (58 percent) and bike lanes (51 percent). The majority of respondents (59 percent) were not sure if driver education/refresher courses were available in their community.

## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF OLDER ADULTS IN SUMMIT COUNTY

### *Population and Age*

From 2014 through 2018, there were more than 209,000 older adults ages 50 and older in Summit County; 68,000 lived in the city of Akron, and 141,000 lived in the balance of the county. About 14,000 of these seniors were 85 or older. Currently, seniors make up 38.6 percent of the county's population; this number is projected to increase to 39.5 percent by 2030.<sup>1</sup>



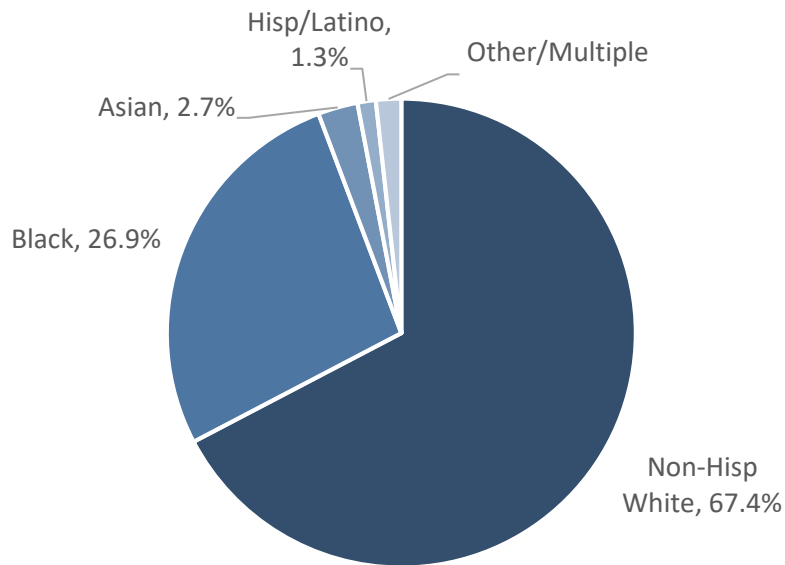
### *Race and Ethnicity*

Eighty-four percent of Summit County older adults are non-Hispanic whites, 12 percent are African American, 2 percent are Asian, and 1 percent are Hispanic or Latino. There is a considerable difference between Akron and the suburbs. Non-Hispanic whites make up 67 percent of Akron's older residents but 92 percent of suburbanites, while African Americans comprise 27 percent of Akronites but only 4 percent of suburban seniors.

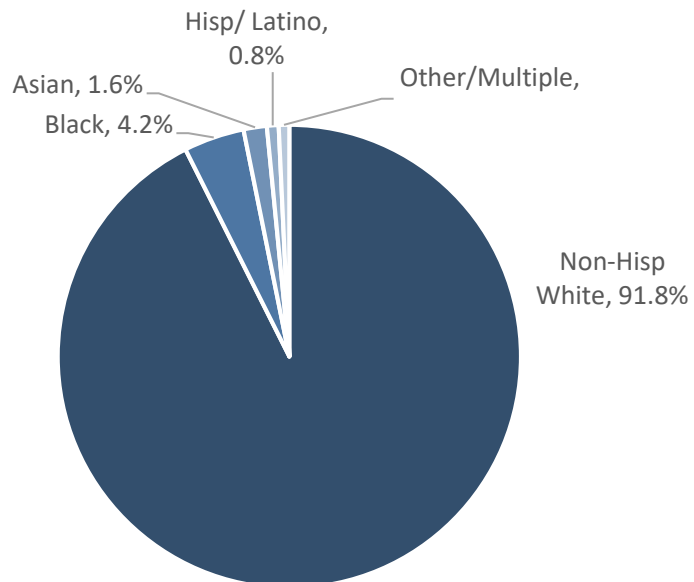
<sup>1</sup> Mehri, N., Cummins, P. A., Nelson, I. M., Wilson, T. L., and Kunkel, S. (2019). *Ohio Population Interactive Data Center*, Scripps Gerontology Center, Miami University, Oxford, OH. [www.ohio-population.org](http://www.ohio-population.org).



**Race/Ethnicity of Akron Older Adults (50+)  
2014-2018**

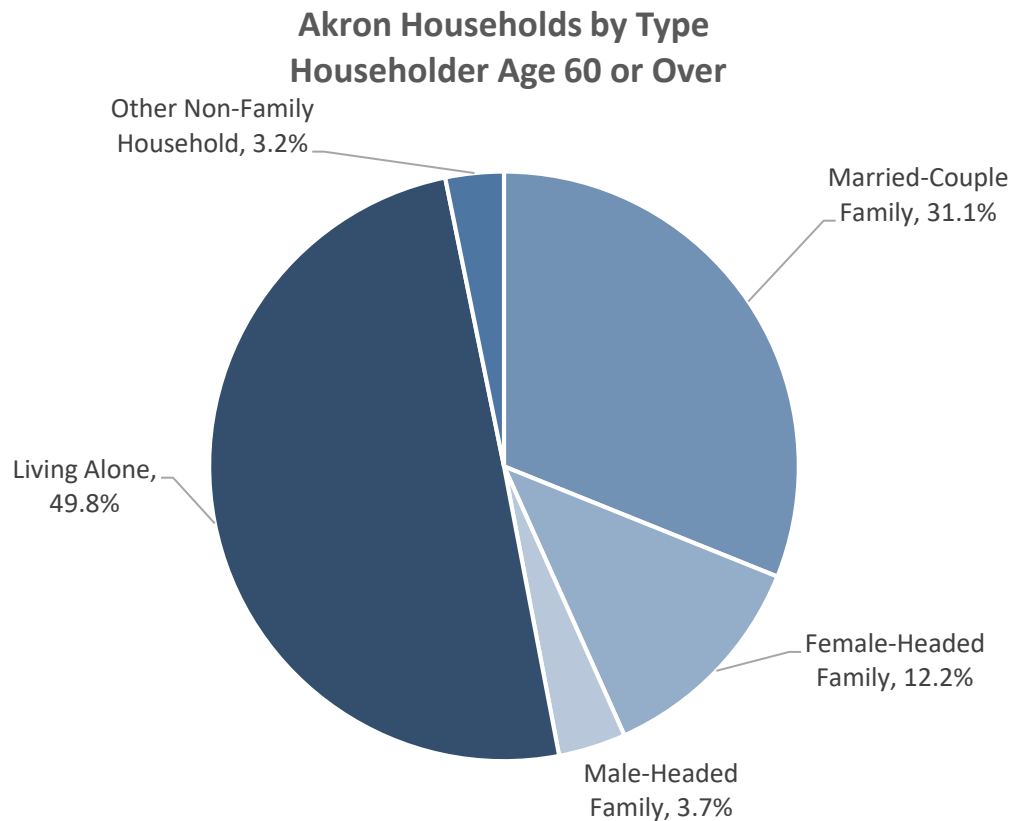


**Race/Ethnicity of Suburban Summit Older Adults (50+)  
2014-2018**

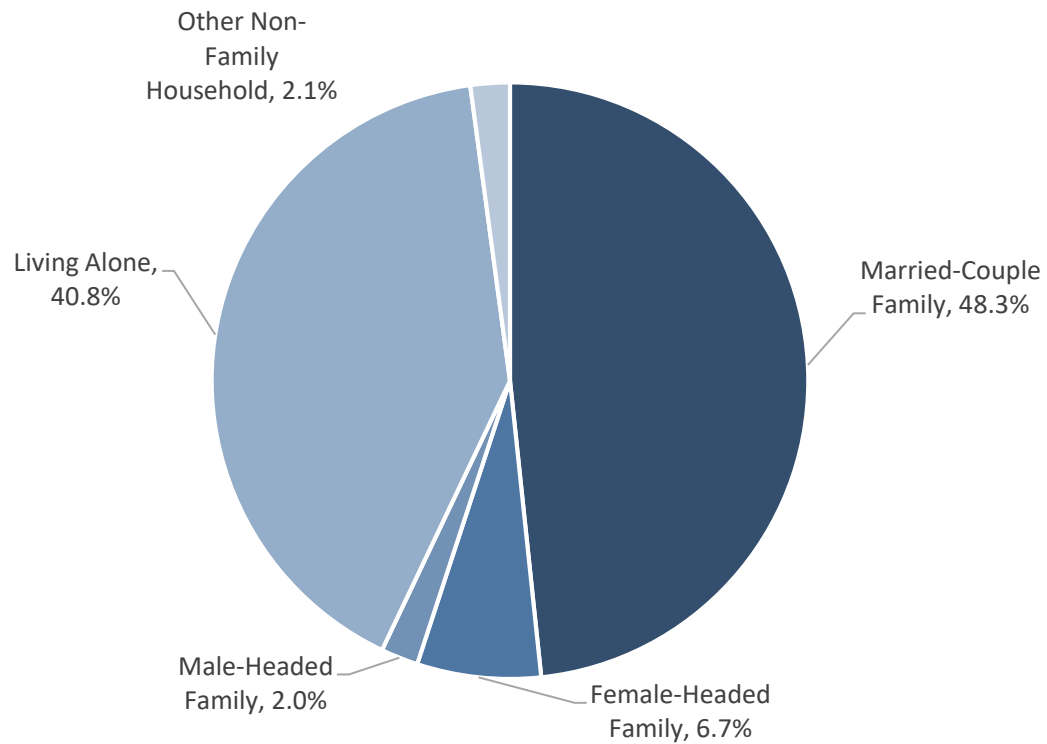


### ***Household Type***

Forty-two percent of senior-headed households in Summit County were married-couple families, and 9 percent were female-headed families. Forty-four percent (36,200) of senior households were persons living alone. Married-couple families were more prevalent in the suburbs (48 percent) than in Akron (31 percent), while the reverse was true for female-headed families (12 percent in Akron and 7 percent in the suburbs). Half (50 percent) of senior households in Akron were persons living alone, compared to 41 percent in the suburbs.



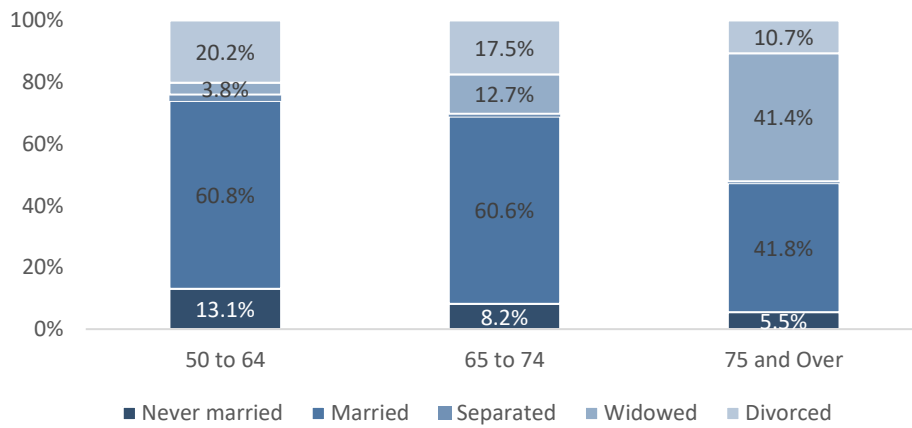
### Summit Suburban Households by Type Householder Age 60 or Over



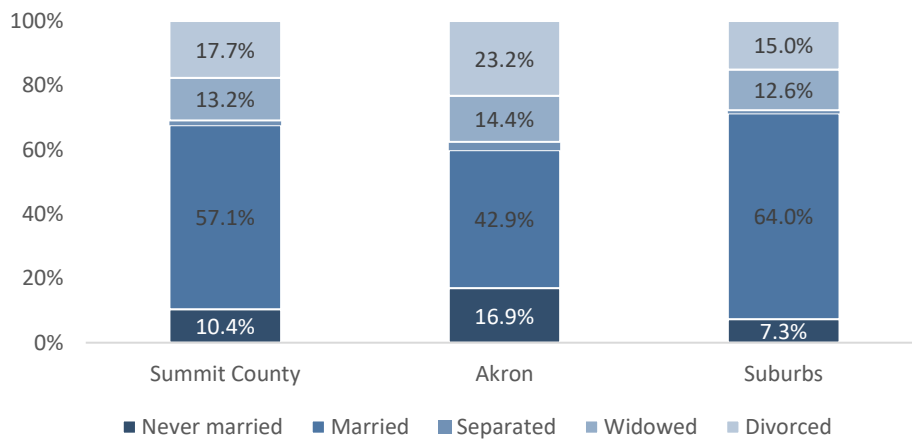
### ***Marital Status***

More than half of Summit County residents 50 to 74 (61 percent) were currently married. This proportion fell to 42 percent for those 75 and over, while another 41 percent in this age group were widowed. Sixty-four percent of all suburbanites 50 and over were married, compared to 43 percent of Akronites. Akron seniors were much more likely to be divorced (23 percent) or never married (17 percent) than suburbanites (15 percent divorced and 7 percent never married).

### Marital Status, By Age Group Summit County, 2014 to 2018



### Marital Status, Ages 50 and Over Summit County, Akron, and Suburbs, 2014 to 2018



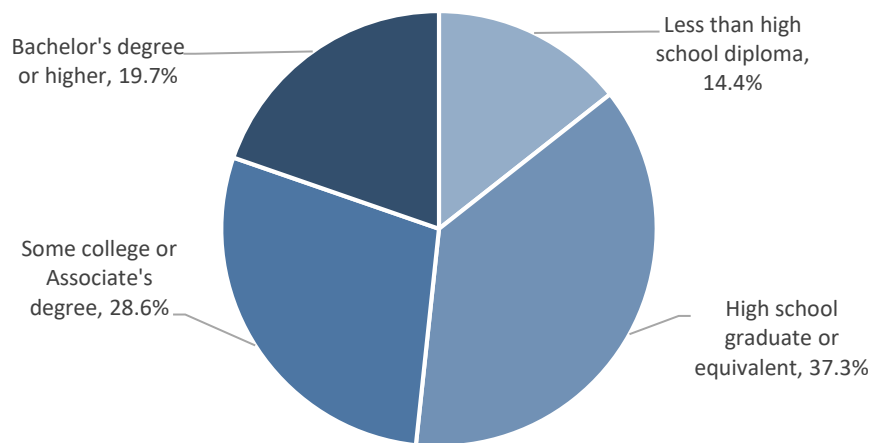
### ***Presence of Grandchildren in the Household***

About 4,500 adults 60 and older (4 percent) in Summit County lived with their grandchildren. About 1,600 of these seniors were responsible for their grandchildren.

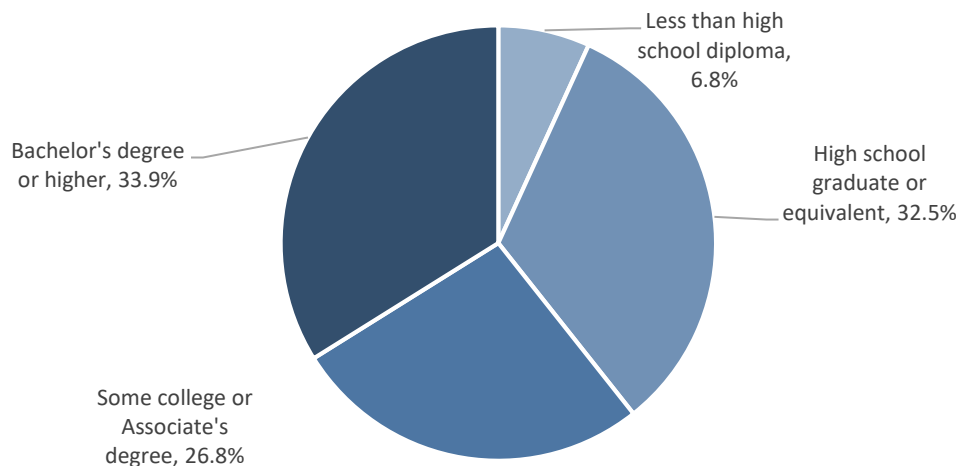
### ***Educational Attainment***

About one-tenth (9.3 percent) of Summit County residents 45 and over lacked a high school diploma. This proportion was higher in Akron (14 percent) than in the suburbs (7 percent). Thirty-four percent in the county had a high school diploma or equivalent, and 27 percent had some college or an associate's degree; there was little difference between Akron and the suburbs for these categories. However, 34 percent of older suburbanites had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 20 percent of Akron residents; county-wide, 29 percent of those 45 and over were college graduates.

**Educational Attainment, Ages 45 and Over  
Akron City, 2014-2018**



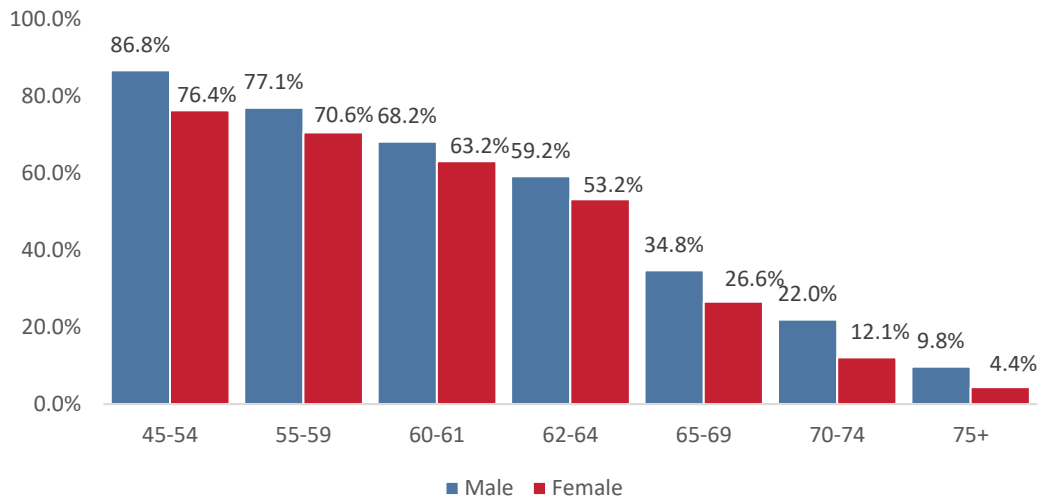
**Educational Attainment, Ages 45 and Over  
Summit County Suburbs, 2014-2018**



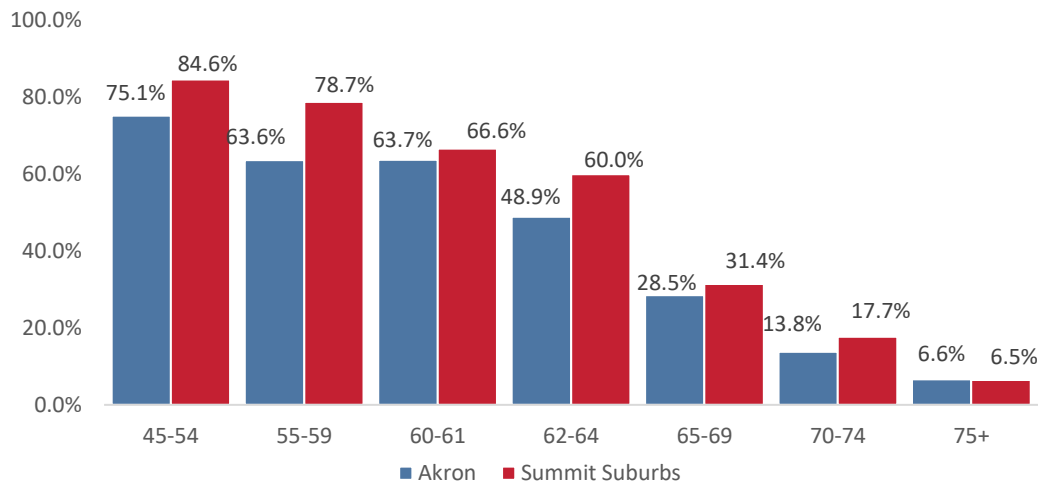
### ***Labor Force Participation***

Overall, about 129,000 older adults in Summit County are in the labor force, (i.e., either employed or looking for work); this number comprises just over half (53 percent) of all persons age 45 and older. As shown in the figures below, labor force participation is higher among males than females, among younger seniors, and among suburbanites than Akron residents.

**Labor Force Participation Rate  
Summit County, 2014-2018**

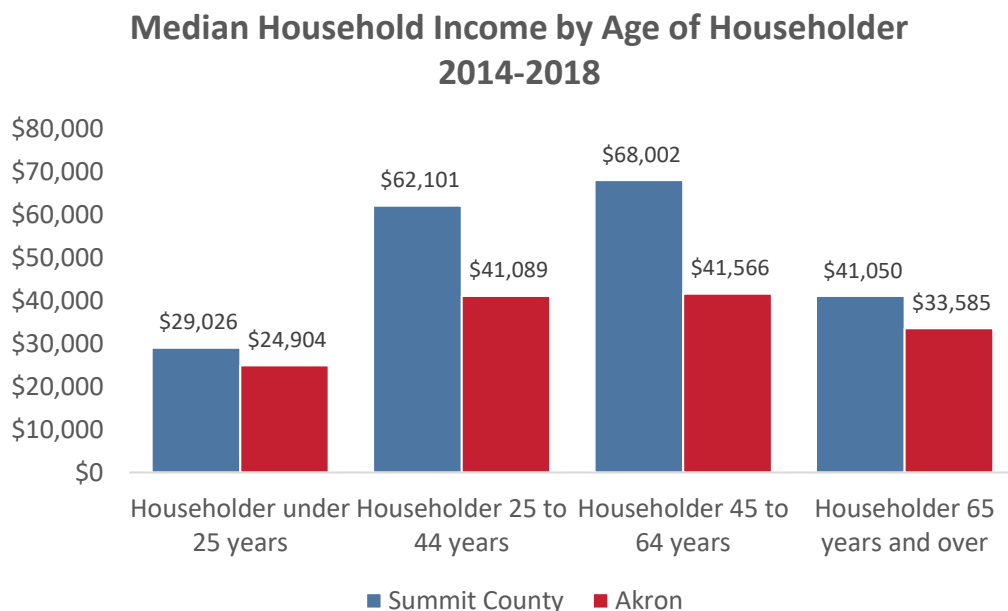


**Labor Force Participation Rate  
Akron and Suburbs, 2014-2018**



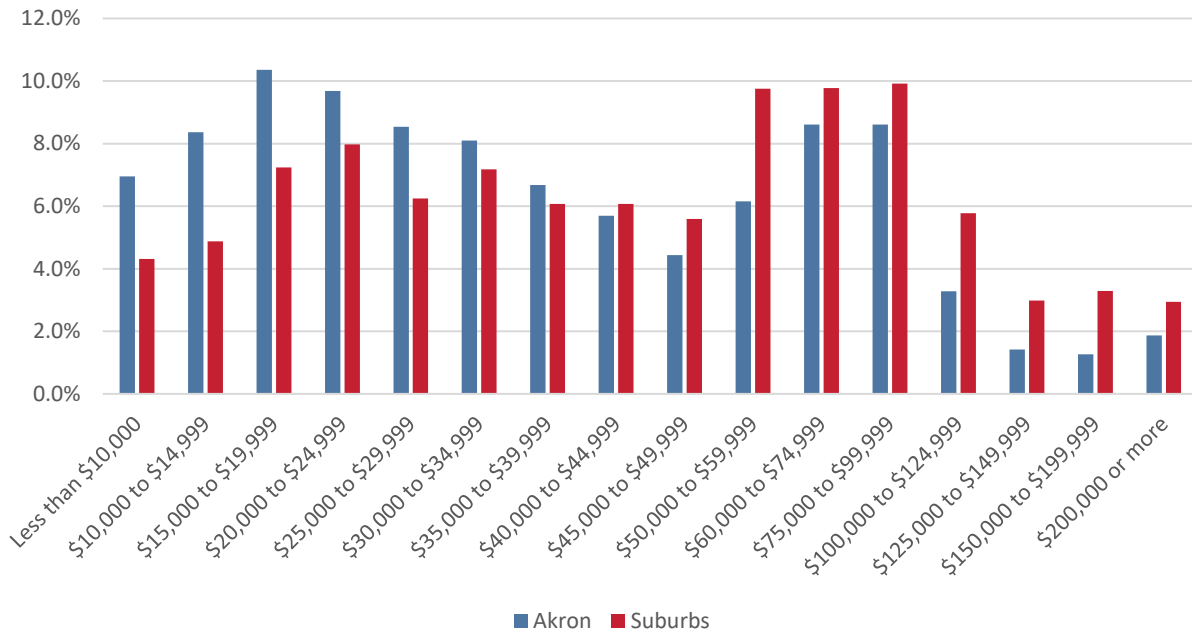
### ***Household Income and Poverty Status***

Summit County households headed by persons age 65 and older had a median annual income of \$41,050 (in 2018 dollars), lower than the median for households headed by those 25 to 64. Senior households in Akron had a median of \$33,585. Households headed by those age 45 to 64 had the highest median incomes, \$68,002 in the county and \$41,566 in Akron.



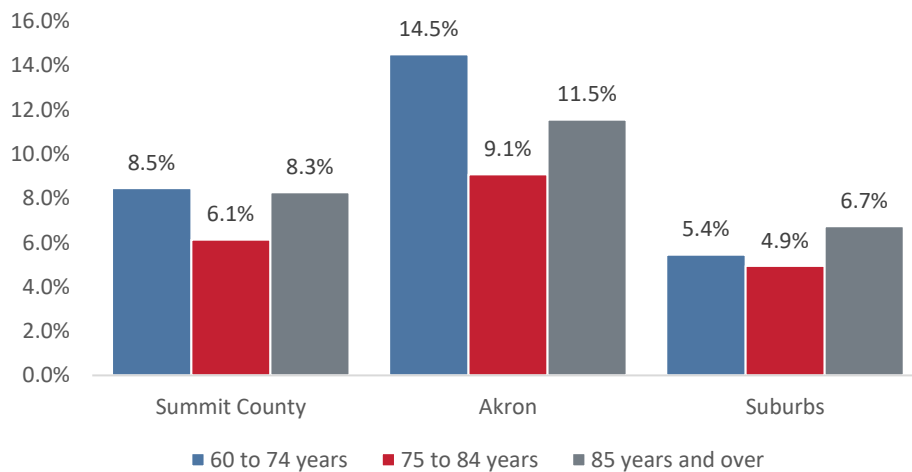
The distribution of seniors' household income differed between Akron and its suburbs. A greater percentage of Akron seniors 65 and over had household incomes below \$40,000, while a greater percentage of suburban seniors had incomes above \$45,000.

### Household Income, Householder 65 and Over Akron and Summit Suburbs, 2014-2018



An estimated 10,100 seniors age 60 and older in Summit County (8 percent) had incomes below the federal poverty level; in Akron, 13.3 percent of seniors were poor, compared to 5.5 percent of suburban seniors. Seniors age 85 and older had a higher proportion below poverty than did younger seniors, both in the county overall and in the suburbs; however, Akron residents age 60 to 74 had a higher poverty rate (14.5 percent) than older seniors.

### Percent Below Poverty, 2014-2018





### ***Health Insurance***

Less than one-half of one percent of Summit County seniors age 65 and older were uninsured. Almost half (46 percent) had Medicare in combination with other private or public coverage, and an additional 33 percent had Medicare coverage only.

Health Insurance Coverage, 2014-2018	Summit County, Ohio	
	Estimate	Percent
All persons 65 and over	89,324	
With one type of health insurance coverage:	31,521	35.3%
With employer-based health insurance only	2,075	2.3%
With direct-purchase health insurance only	274	0.3%
With Medicare coverage only	29,121	32.6%
With TRICARE/military health coverage only	0	0.0%
With VA Health Care only	51	0.1%
With two or more types of health insurance coverage:	57,565	64.4%
With employer-based and direct-purchase coverage	20	0.0%
With employer-based and Medicare coverage	19,595	21.9%
With direct-purchase and Medicare coverage	16,121	18.0%
With Medicare and Medicaid/means-tested public coverage	5,381	6.0%
Other private only combinations	0	0.0%
Other public only combinations	2,184	2.4%
Other coverage combinations	14,264	16.0%
No health insurance coverage	238	0.3%

### ***Disabilities***

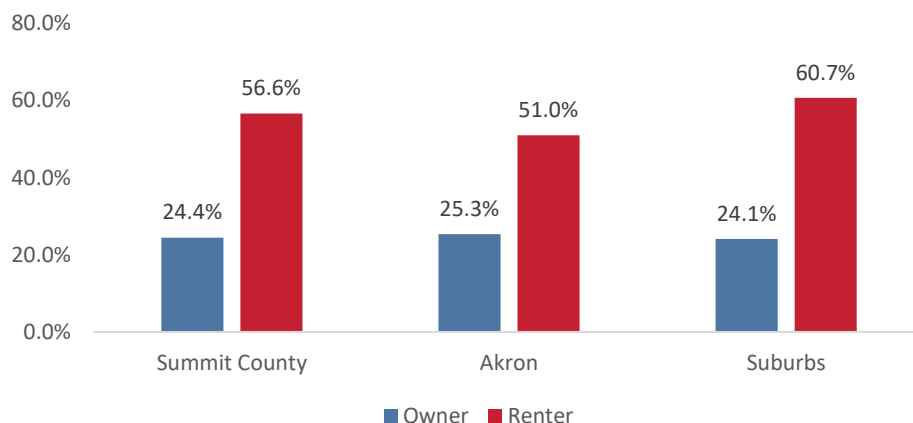
One-third of non-institutionalized older adults in Summit County had one or more disabilities – 22% of those age 65 to 74, and almost half (45percent) of those 75 and older. The most prevalent difficulties were ambulatory (13 percent of those age 65 to 74, and 30 percent of those 75 and over) and independent living (7 percent of those 65 to 74, and 24 percent of those 75 and older).

Prevalence of Disabilities, Summit County, 2014-2018			
	All seniors 65+	65-74	75+
Any disability	31.4%	21.7%	44.8%
Hearing	11.9%	7.0%	18.7%
Vision	5.7%	3.3%	9.1%
Cognitive	8.1%	4.8%	12.7%
Ambulatory (walking/ climbing stairs)	20.2%	13.1%	29.9%
Self-care (bathing/ dressing)	7.7%	4.4%	12.1%
Independent living (doing errands alone)	13.8%	6.8%	23.5%

### ***Housing Affordability***

Almost 80 percent of Summit County seniors ages 65 and older own their own homes; senior home ownership is more prevalent in the suburbs (81 percent) than in Akron (72 percent). A household is considered cost burdened if they spend 30 percent or more of their income on housing, including utilities. In both Akron and the suburbs, about a quarter of seniors who own their houses are cost burdened. However, more than half of senior renters in Akron, and almost two-thirds of senior renters in the suburbs are cost burdened.

### **Cost-Burdened Senior Households 2014-2018**



### ***Leading Causes of Death***

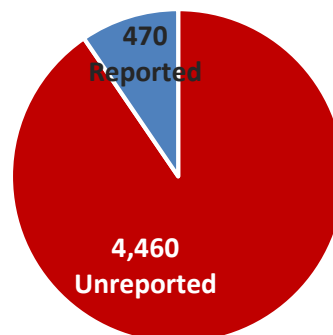
The age-specific death rate in Summit County was 2,400 deaths per 100,000 persons ages 50 and older, slightly lower than the statewide rate. With some exceptions, the rates for leading causes of death were similar in the county and the state. Of particular note is the suicide rate among older persons, which is 10 percent higher in the county than in the state as a whole. The death rate in the county was also more than 10 percent higher than the state for Alzheimer's, hypertension, and pneumonitis; while the county's rate was more than 10 percent lower for accidents and influenza/pneumonia.

<b>Leading Causes of Death, Ages 50 and Over Summit County and Ohio, 2016-2018</b>			
	<b>Age-Specific Death Rate per 100,000</b>		
<b>Cause of Death</b>	<b>Summit County</b>	<b>Ohio</b>	<b>Summit/ Ohio Ratio</b>
All Causes	2,400.0	2,419.2	0.99
Diseases of Heart	602.9	616.7	0.98
Malignant Neoplasms	540.9	555.1	0.97
Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease	155.5	164.3	0.95
Alzheimer's Disease	139.3	119.7	1.16
Cerebrovascular Disease	138.5	140.1	0.99
Diabetes Mellitus	74.9	79.8	0.94
Accidents (Unintentional Injuries)	74.2	89.5	0.83
Nephritis / Nephrosis	44.8	48.9	0.91
Septicemia	42.7	43.3	0.99
Influenza / Pneumonia	42.1	49.0	0.86
Hypertension (Essential or Renal)	37.0	30.9	1.20
Parkinson's Disease	31.1	30.5	1.02
Pneumonitis due to solids/liquids	29.8	20.1	1.48
Chronic Liver Disease / Cirrhosis	28.7	29.8	0.96
Suicide (Intentional Self-Harm)	19.8	18.0	1.10
In Situ or Benign Neoplasms	15.5	15.4	1.00
Source: Ohio Department of Health; Summit County Public Health			

## Elder Abuse and Neglect

Elder abuse can occur in many ways, including financial exploitation; physical, sexual, and/or emotional harm; or neglect. According to the Ohio Family Prevention Project, there were 4,930 cases of abuse, neglect or financial exploitation in Summit County in 2014. Of those cases, 470 were reported to Adult Protective Services (APS).<sup>1</sup> Summit County Public Health reports that 9.7 per 1,000 Summit residents age 60 and older experienced elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation in 2016.<sup>2</sup> One of the goals of the Public Health Department's Community Health Improvement Plan is to improve senior health and reduce incidences of elder abuse and neglect by creating a screening tool that can be used by medical and social service providers to increase reporting.

**Estimated Cases of Abuse/Neglect in Summit County**

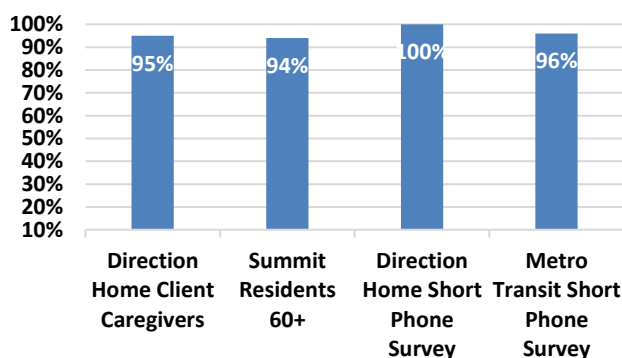


COVID-19 has further reduced APS referrals in 2020, likely as a result of the closure of offices with mandated reporters, like doctors. Establishments, like banks, who report on financial exploitation, were also closed. In addition, hospitals and nursing homes have also been closed to APS workers. APS usually receives 100 cases a month, but in March and April 2020, that number decreased to 71 and 75, respectively.<sup>3</sup>

## United States of Aging Survey, 2015

Generally, older adults in Summit County, and nationally, want to remain in their current home for as long as possible. In Summit County, 94 to 100 percent of residents 60 and older felt it was very important or somewhat important to remain in their home as they age. This trend remained constant, whether they were client and caregivers associated with Direction Home, randomly selected residential older adults, or general callers to Direction Home and Metro Transit. The United States of Aging Survey is a national telephone survey conducted with older Americans, age 60 and over.<sup>4</sup> The proportion of Summit County older adults who want to remain in their home is larger than the 75 percent of older adults nationally who want to live in their current home for the rest of their lives.

**Percent of Older Adults that Want to Remain in Their Home**



<sup>1</sup> <https://grcapps.osu.edu/ofvpp/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.scph.org/sites/default/files/editor/2017\\_CHIP\\_111517.pdf](https://www.scph.org/sites/default/files/editor/2017_CHIP_111517.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.communitysolutions.com/research/aps-seven-counties-revisited-covid19-pandemic/>

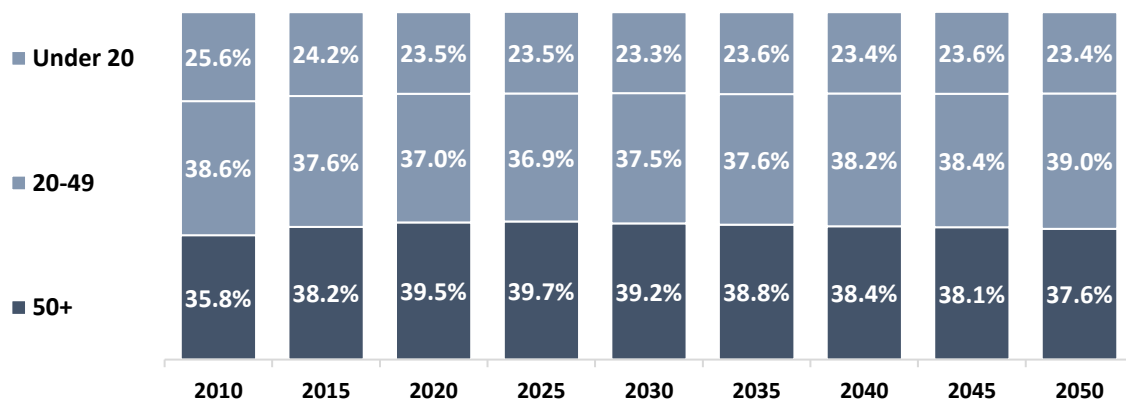
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ncoa.org/uncategorized/usoa-survey/2015-results/>

## Aging Projections

Source: Ohio Development Services Agency

After 2010, the proportion of older adults grew slightly larger than the proportion of those of working age between 20 and 49 years old in Summit County. Older adults have always outnumbered youth under age 20 since 2010, and they are projected to outnumber them into 2050. The proportion of older adults 50 and older in Summit County is projected to grow steadily until a peak in 2025, after which there will be a steady decline until 2050. Working-age adults between 20 and 49 will grow to outnumber older adults 50 and up in 2050.

### Summit County 50+ Population Projection (2010-2050)



## Service Needs

Between October 2019 and October 2020, there were 95,475 requests for 2-1-1 assistance in Summit County. Around 41,627 (43.6 percent) of those people were 50 and older. Healthcare, employment and income, government and legal assistance were the most requested services for seniors 60 and older. Seniors ages 50 to 59 had a fairly equal percentage of requests in most categories, but transportation and food had the highest proportion of requests.

Employment and income for all seniors were among the most requested needs during COVID-19, but they were the highest requested needs for those 60 and older. The next highest need for older seniors 60 and over was health care. The highest requested need during COVID-19 for seniors ages 50 to 59 was education, and the proportion of those needing government and legal assistance was nearly the same as those who needed help with employment and income.

## AARP Livability Index

The AARP Livability Index rates the livability of a neighborhood, city, county, or state based on an average score of seven categories, including housing, neighborhood, transportation, environment, health, engagement, and opportunity.<sup>5</sup> Scores range from 0 to 100. Getting a high score is difficult, as scores are based on the average of the livability scores of all the neighborhoods in a city, county, or state. The average livability score is 50. Akron, Ohio, and Summit County both have a slightly higher-than-average livability score of 53 and higher-than-average scores in five of the seven categories. Where scores are lower than average, they are highlighted in red.

<b>53</b>	<b>AKRON, OH LIVABILITY SCORE</b>
62	Housing (Affordability and access)
53	Neighborhood (Access to life, work and play)
53	Transportation (Safe and convenient options)
56	Environment (Clean air and water)
44	Health (Prevention, access and quality)
60	Engagement (Civic and social involvement)
41	Opportunity (Inclusion and possibilities)
<b>53</b>	<b>SUMMIT COUNTY LIVABILITY SCORE</b>
53	Housing (Affordability and access)
50	Neighborhood (Access to life, work and play)
48	Transportation (Safe and convenient options)
55	Environment (Clean air and water)
49	Health (Prevention, access and quality)
62	Engagement (Civic and social involvement)
52	Opportunity (Inclusion and possibilities)

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<sup>5</sup> <https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/>

## County Health Rankings

Every year, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute release a comparison of health rankings of counties in all 50 states, examining factors that influence the health of communities.<sup>6</sup>

The first major category is “Health Outcomes”—with subcategories of length of life and quality of life, which can be affected by the resources available to the community. Summit County’s “Health Outcomes” ranking was 58 out of 88 counties in 2020.

The second major category is “Health Factors”—with subcategories of health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and physical environment, which are factors that can be changed to improve community health. Summit ranked 40 out of 88, and the clinical care category was marked as an area of strength, having a ranking of 14 out of 88.

**Summit County Health Rankings**

<b>Health Outcomes</b>	<b>58</b>	
Length of Life	52	
Quality of Life	66	
<b>Health Factors</b>	<b>40</b>	
Health Behaviors	31	
<b>Clinical Care</b>	<b>14</b>	←
Social & Economic Factors	47	
<b>Physical Environment</b>	<b>88</b>	

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/reports/2020-county-health-rankings-key-findings-report>