

**CAPE COD SENIOR
AND ELDER
RESIDENTS IN THE
21ST CENTURY**

Summary of Findings

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Background & Project Summary

The Barnstable County Department of Human Services first began to conduct research into the “human condition” of Cape Codders in 1995. For the purpose of more fully understanding the needs of Cape-Codders age 55 and older, data from seven previous research studies conducted by the Department of Human Services have been re-analyzed, updated, and compiled in this addendum publication. Data from Monitoring the Human Condition 2004-2009 and data from the U.S. Census Bureau are included in this report. Data and findings presented relate to full time residents of Barnstable County living in households where at least one member is age 55 or older, defined as “senior households.”

Overview of Findings

Demographics

- ◆ According to the 2008 U.S. Census estimates, there are over 81,000 permanent year round residents of Barnstable County who are 55 or older
- ◆ This number represents 35% of the County’s total resident population
- ◆ In 2008, more than one-half (55%) of households in the County included at least one person age 55 or older
- ◆ Since 2000, there has been a 6% increase in the number of residents age 55+ living on Cape Cod
- ◆ One in three is age 55 or older (1 out of 4 is age 65 or older)
- ◆ The largest percent increase has been in the 75-84 year age range (20%)
- ◆ On Cape Cod, the “baby boomers” (persons born between 1946 - 1964) comprise approximately 23% of the population
- ◆ Barnstable County has the oldest population in New England and has one of the oldest populations on the entire east coast of United States

Top Household Problems Identified (Percentage of all senior households reporting as a problem)

- ◆ Having a lot of anxiety or stress in household (22%)
- ◆ Having a lot of depression in household (22%)
- ◆ Problems paying for or getting dental insurance (20%)
- ◆ Not having enough money to pay for doctor, dentist or to buy prescriptions (17%)
- ◆ Most needy households also report these problems but at a rate 2-3 times higher

Top Barriers to Getting Services (Percentage of all senior households reporting as a problem)

- ◆ Services not accepting new patients (47%)
- ◆ Difficulty paying insurance deductibles/co-payments (42%)
- ◆ Could not afford fees for services (36%)
- ◆ Services located too far away (32%)
- ◆ Cost of time away from work (30%)

Overview of Findings (continued)

Health and Health Status

- ◆ One-quarter (24%) of senior households reports some member has a disability or chronic condition
- ◆ Depression, anxiety, and stress are reported by 20% of households
- ◆ 13% self report obesity/seriously overweight person(s) in the household
- ◆ 12% of households provide informal care giving to an aged or disabled household member
- ◆ 6% of all households report receipt of some type of professional in-home service (home health aid, therapy, nursing)
- ◆ 45% of all senior households used a hospital emergency room within previous 12 months
- ◆ Most needy households report these problems at a rate of 2-3 times higher than other households

Income and Poverty

- ◆ Median household income for seniors is in the \$50,000 - \$59,000 range
- ◆ 23% report an annual income of less than \$30,000
- ◆ 16% report an annual income of more than \$100,000
- ◆ 5% live on less than 100% of the federal poverty level (approximately 2,700 residents)

Housing and Housing Affordability

- ◆ 82% of seniors households own their homes
- ◆ 10% of all senior households report problems affording housing, even in households that have annual incomes above median range
- ◆ Not surprisingly, lack of affordability is a very serious problem for low income seniors

Transportation

- ◆ Six percent of senior households report using a CCRTA public transportation
- ◆ 90% of seniors have access to a private vehicle
- ◆ Public transportation usage is highest in low income seniors who reside in the Hyannis area
- ◆ Public transportation usage is lowest in senior/elder households in which there is a person with a disability, a person over 65, and among people who live in towns on the Lower/Outer Cape

Implications and Policy Questions

It is not surprising to anyone who lives on Cape Cod that one of the major findings of our research is that the residents of the Cape are aging and that Barnstable County has the highest percentage of people aged 60 years and older of any county in New England. The current forecast for future growth of seniors in the County is that the age 55+ population will most likely double over the next 20 years. The continuing demographic climb has important implications in several areas: health care access, medical care, and mental health services.

When looking at access to physical and mental health services, there are dual factors identified in the research - a deficit in systems capacity combined with the inability to afford co-pays and deductibles. These factors combined present significant barriers for people seeking needed services. One out of three seniors reported that their health insurance is not being accepted for service or that health care providers are not accepting new patients. The impact on the inability of seniors to access needed health care is of critical concern. As a health and human service community we must investigate what options are currently available or need to be developed to ensure seniors are successful in receiving needed services. What efforts can be supported that will increase systems capacity? What advocacy efforts can be undertaken so that every senior can access and afford to pay for medical services?

Given the high percentage of senior households reporting depression, there needs to be an increased focus on screening, identification, and referrals for mental health treatment. While there are some efforts underway by the Councils of Aging (COA) to address this issue for the seniors who utilize their services, there are high numbers of seniors who do not participate with their COA's. What other avenues are available for reaching this vulnerable population? How do we engage the community to help reduce isolation and reduce depression?

Another area of concern is the anticipated increased demand for in-home services. As the population on Cape Cod continues to age, the need for in-home long term care will continue to increase - we must support efforts to increase the supply and type of workforce that will be needed to provide nursing assistants and personal care attendants.

The good news is that the Cape is populated with older residents, many of whom are active in civic engagement, volunteerism, and community life. In order to keep our population in good mental and physical health we must reduce the barriers to service and plan to provide for the anticipated needs of our aging population.

BARNSTABLE COUNTY **HUMAN SERVICES**

**PROMOTING THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELL
BEING OF COUNTY RESIDENTS THROUGH
REGIONAL EFFORTS DESIGNED TO IMPROVE
COORDINATION AND EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN
SERVICES TO STRENGTHEN THE FABRIC OF
COMMUNITY CARE AVAILABLE TO ALL.**

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