

***The Needs of Genesee County
Senior Citizens***

September 2007

For

Valley Area Agency on Aging

Research Conducted

by

Social Systems Research Institute

**1176 Robert T. Longway Blvd.
Flint, Michigan 48503**

**This research was made possible through a grant from the
Community Foundation of Greater Flint**

The VAAA was established under the Federal Older Americans Act as a non-profit agency to provide services for senior citizens residing in Genesee, Lapeer, and Shiawassee counties (PSA Region V).

THE RESPONSIBILITIES of Valley Area Agency on Aging

To ensure that the Valley Area Agency on Aging (VAAA) is the leader relative to all aging issues on behalf of all older persons in Planning and Public Service Area 5 (PSA 5), which is comprised of Genesee, Lapeer and Shiawassee Counties, VAAA shall proactively carry out a wide range of functions related to the following:

- **advocacy**
- **planning**
- **coordination**
- **inter-agency linkages**
- **resource and program development**
- **information sharing**
- **brokering**
- **monitoring**
- **evaluation**

These functions are designed to lead to the development of a comprehensive and coordinated system in Genesee, Lapeer and Shiawassee Counties. These systems shall be designed to assist older persons in leading independent, meaningful and dignified lives in their own homes and communities.

All activities undertaken by VAAA will be consistent with its mission, through the development or enhancement of a coordinated and comprehensive service delivery system to older persons in Genesee, Lapeer and Shiawassee Counties.

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The Needs of Genesee County Senior Citizens

Introduction

It has been said that the quality of a civilization may be judged by the way it treats its elderly, the disabled, and the disadvantaged. While America has been blessed far beyond any other civilization today or in the past, we still bare the responsibility to help those in need. The Valley Area Agency on Aging has the primary responsibility for the needs of the senior citizens in Genesee, Shiawassee and Lapeer counties. It is the primary organization through which resources are provided for this constituency. Because the “baby boomer” phenomenon is approaching its peak, the proportion of seniors within the total population is growing exceedingly fast. Some have described this pace of growth as “explosive.” The boom will peak somewhere between 2016 and 2019. Until then the seniors population will continue to grow. A U.S. Census report has estimated the 2004 population in Genesee County of seniors (55 years plus) at approximately 97,409, or about 22 percent of the population estimate. Based on this statistic, and a 10 percent growth rate between 2000 and 2004, it is estimated that the population of seniors in Genesee County will rise by another 16 percent by 2010 to about 113,000, - compared to another 10 percent increase for Lapeer County and another 24 percent for Shiawassee County. By 2010 the senior population of Lapeer and Shiawassee counties will be 24,600 and 22,000 respectively. These events will continue to put a serious strain on the limited resources available for senior services. Moreover, it requires a periodic monitoring of the actual needs of this population to assure that resources are proportioned to the various needs according to their severity.

On top of this trend is the fact that the City of Flint has one of the highest proportions of households in poverty among American cities. The most recent statistic reports that better than a quarter of homes in Flint are below the poverty threshold. This extreme level of poverty reflects itself among our senior citizens. Statistics from this report show that 75 percent of seniors in the City of Flint live on less than \$30,000 per

year. Forty percent live on less than \$20,000. Moreover, according to recently published reports, the Flint population’s age of mortality is significantly lower than the State of Michigan and the nation as a whole. These figures are considerably more negative than those seniors in Out-County areas. (See Chart 12 thru 13b.) Throughout this report the differences between Flint and Out-County are given primary attention.

Dying Before Their Time

Recent statistics gathered by the Genesee County Health Department give strong emphasis to the high mortality rate among Blacks in Genesee County. Members of our Black community can expect to live on average ten years less than Whites. (See Table 1.) However, if Blacks and Whites reach the age of 55 years, each group will experience a longevity that is not significantly different.

Table 1

Average Age at Death (Years), Genesee County Residents, 2005

	Total	White	Black
Average Age at Death	70.3	72.3	62.4

Source: Genesee County Health Department

Compounding this tragedy is the fact that our statistics on Black mortality indicate higher rate in Genesee County than in the State generally – and in the nation. Anyone reading these statistics should be disturbed by them. A recent study conducted by Wayne State University found the same phenomenon in the Detroit area. They attributed the premature death among Blacks to poverty, late identification of health problems, and poor health care generally.¹ These same dynamics are at work among Blacks in Genesee County. The role of services provided by Senior ~~Citizen~~ Centers is highly important. Yet there is a more pressing need to bolster our community’s health delivery systems to those in need. Providing such services to these individuals is truly a matter of “life and death.”

¹ Actually the study was a collaboration of Detroit Medical Center/Wayne State University Community Health Institutes, Wayne State University's Institute of Gerontology, Center for Urban Studies, and Center for Healthcare Effectiveness Research.

Table 2

**Health Indicators for Flint
and Out-County Residents Age 55 and Over**

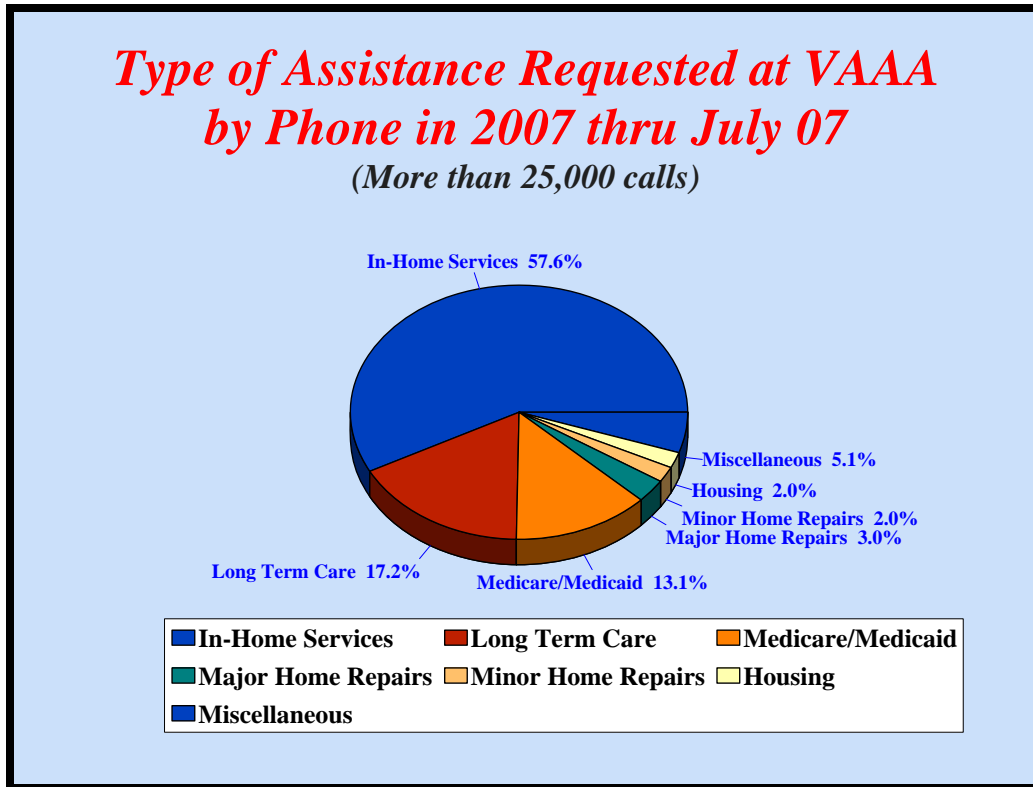
Condition	City of Flint Blacks	City of Flint Whites	Out- County
Overweight or Obese	75 %	73 %	72 %
High Blood Pressure	73 %	57 %	57 %
Heart Disease	24 %	26 %	21 %
Stroke	14 %	6 %	8 %
Cancer	12 %	18 %	20 %
Depression	25 %	17 %	19 %
Anxiety	18 %	20 %	16 %
Diabetes	26 %	24 %	19 %
In Poor Health	14 %	11 %	6 %
Not Enough to Eat	9 %	3 %	1 %

Source: Genesee County Health Department, 2007.

Table 2 amplifies the extent to which the health needs of seniors in the City of Flint are more severe than those living in Out-County. Of the ten health indicators only one (Cancer), was more negative in the Out-County than in the City. Especially disturbing is the extent of hunger (9 %) among Black seniors in the City. Moreover, better than twice the proportion of City Blacks reported *poor health* (14 %), than reported by those in the Out-County (6 %). These statistics are helpful in defining where the emphasis needs to be placed in serving senior health needs throughout the County. Together with the interview data laid out below, spending priorities can be targeted to make the most difference in the quality-of-life for seniors in our community.

Requests for help. To illustrate the types of requests that come through the VAAA phone lines, consider the following. Since the beginning of this year (2007), and through the end of July, more than 25,000 calls for assistance have been received from area citizens. The chart below indicates the types of problems for which people request information and/or help. By far senior citizens (sometimes caregivers) are asking for “in home” assistance (57 %), enabling them to stay in their homes, remaining independent. More than 17 percent are requesting information on receiving “long term care” options. About one in eight (13 %) indicate a need for information on Medicare/Medicaid issues. Better than six percent (6 %) have said that they need assistance for “major or minor

repairs” to their home. Those response categories with one percent or less of the total were labeled “miscellaneous.”



Purpose of Research

The purpose of this research was to interview a representative sample of senior citizens in Genesee County to assess their various needs and to learn more about their characteristics than might be available from census reports. More specifically our objectives were the following:

- To better understand the types of physical, social, psychological, economic and environmental needs of seniors,
- To better predict the types of needs seniors will have in the next ten years,
- To better understand how well current needs are being met,
- To better understand who is using which services, why certain services are not being used,

- To identify what elements of community life most affect the quality-of-life for seniors,
- To develop a fuller demographic profile of seniors than is provided by Census data, and
- To help VAAA and other agencies develop services that will meet current and future needs.

In pursuing these objectives, the researchers have drawn on data collected from 502 interviews with senior citizens living in Genesee County during September of 2006. Other data is based on research collected from seniors in Genesee County in February of 2006 by Social Systems Research Institute. These latter data are included for the purpose of comparison and because the seniors in the February sample provide an opportunity to examine quality-of-life issues from a larger database with a similar constituency.

Recommendations

Based on the numerous needs expressed by respondents in the survey, the following recommendations are offered in hopes that they will help direct the policies and guide the resources that will improve the quality-of-life among seniors in Genesee County.

1. Whereas Genesee County has 6.8 percent of the State's senior Medicaid eligible population, and the State now allocates only 3.3 percent of available MI Choice Waiver funding to the county to serve that group, and whereas the minority population is dying prematurely compared to the State's mortality rate from lack of health care services,² it is imperative that the County stakeholders do all that can be done to help secure our community's fair share of MI Choice Waiver funding.

² The waiting list to receive care services under the MI CHOICE program has grown by nearly 700 percent in the past two years.

2. The VAAA already responds in many ways to more than 35,000 requests for various types of assistance in 2006. Even so this agency has very limited resources with which to serve a quickly growing demand. However, with the passage of the seniors' millage in 2006, a significant portion of the revenue should flow through this agency, which is the central organization established by Federal law and prepared to administered services to seniors in Genesee County. This will help to assure the equitable distribution of resources.
3. There is a significant need among seniors for greater understanding of the Medicaid/Medicare programs – what are the differences in benefits, purposes, co-pays, etc. This issue should be addressed through the VAAA and the various Senior Centers throughout the County through seminars and direct mail.
4. VAAA contracted for more than 500,000 home delivered meals to seniors in 2006. Such a large commitment ought to be accompanied by periodic audits of the nutritional value of these meals. Moreover, nutritional information should be communicated each year to those receiving this service. Such information ought to be distributed through the Senior Centers as well.
5. At least a quarter of the seniors in the County need transportation services. This need is expected to grow dramatically over the next five years. In preparation for this, greater resources should be found to enable the MTA to serve this expanding need. Because of this there will need to be greater efforts to educate seniors about how to access public and specialized transportation services. One of these specialized services might be a cab service providing seniors rides at special discounted rates or total reimbursement for cab companies in special circumstances.
6. Develop a volunteer organization designed exclusively for assistance to seniors in need, especially in the areas of home assistance and transportation. Significant numbers of seniors need these and other services.

7. Establish and publicize a Seniors Information Line for special information and assistance. This should be supported through the VAAA because it is the legal agency through which senior needs are provided for in Genesee County. Currently the VAAA receives approximately 35,000 requests annually. As the need for this service expands with an expanding “boomer” population, expanded resources will be required.
8. To keep seniors better informed about aging services provided through the VAAA and the various Senior Centers in the County, a brochure should be mailed to every person in the County on their 60th and 65th birthdays, outlining those services available. These services should address most of the needs said to be most in demand by the survey respondents.
9. One of the problems associated with providing services to those in need is the duplication of missions and objectives by the hundreds of service organization in the County. For purposes of efficiency, coordination and continuity, there should be a single entry organization for the allocation and distribution of State, Federal and local funding for services to seniors. Creating new bureaucracies for delivering these services generates waste through inefficiencies – and delays through unnecessary red tape.
10. Genesee County should establish a clearinghouse for volunteer services to seniors, helping them to do maintenance activities both in and outside the homes of seniors. Providing such a system may require some nominal costs to the senior. For those unable to pay for such services, a fund should be established to provide monetary assistance where needed. The Resource Center may be able to provide such a clearinghouse and help direct resources to support the system. Providing such services will help seniors maintain their independence as long as possible. Also, it would be advisable to involve the faith community in this effort.
11. Monitor how well senior needs are being met year by year.

Method of Research

Sample Selection

Five hundred-two (502) senior citizens over the age of 55 years were interviewed for this research. Each interview was based on a probability sampling of telephone numbers in Genesee County. A technique known as the “seed number” method was employed. This assured that even households without listings in the phone directory would have an equal probability of selection into the sample. An over-sampling of Flint households was selected in order to provide enough interviews to enable adequate subgroup analysis. Caregivers were also interviewed. They were asked to respond to the questions as they would relate to the person receiving care. In all, 15 percent of the sample said they were administering care to a senior citizen. Assuming 53,300 seniors 65 years and over (2007 estimate), there are now about 8,000 receiving the services of a caregiver. (See Chart 2.)

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to reflect the inputs of representatives of several agencies serving the needs of seniors. After four drafts there were 167 items used to measure those variables defined by the research objectives. Interviews were conducted for those who were screened to assure they qualified as seniors or who were caregivers to a senior.

Interviews

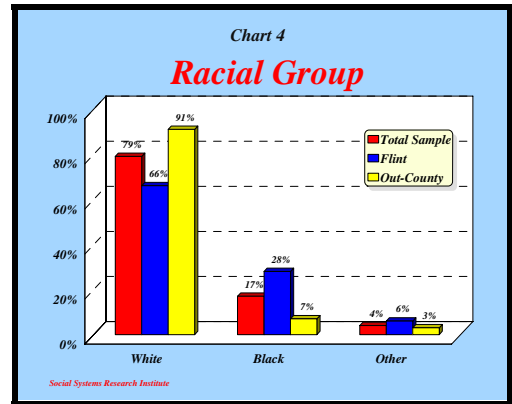
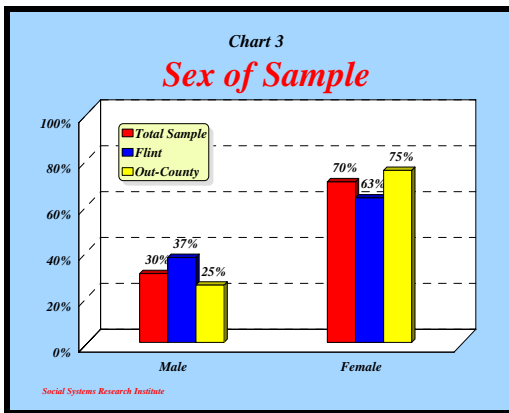
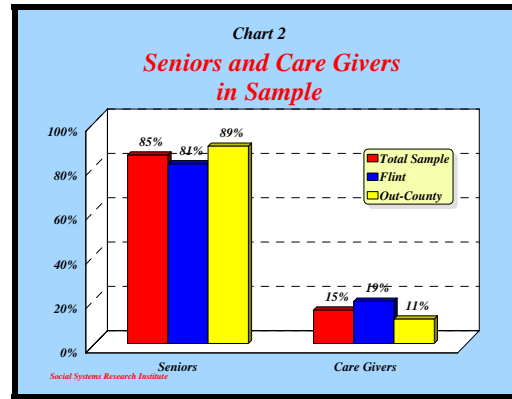
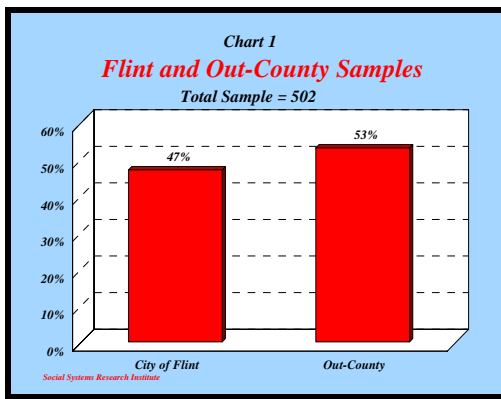
Experienced, supervised interviewers made over 8,000 calls to secure 502 completed questionnaires. On average calls ran between 12 and 14 minutes. Unfinished interviews were discarded. When respondents were unable to talk due to time constraints, appointments were made for callback time.

Analysis

Analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), the standard for social researchers in business and academe. Descriptive analyses were performed defining distributions, means, standard deviation, etc. Cross tabulations with Chi Squares were performed to define statistically significant differences between subgroups. From these analyses charts and tables were designed.

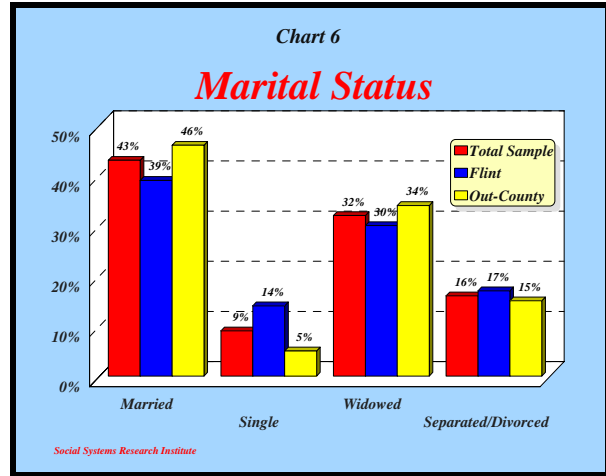
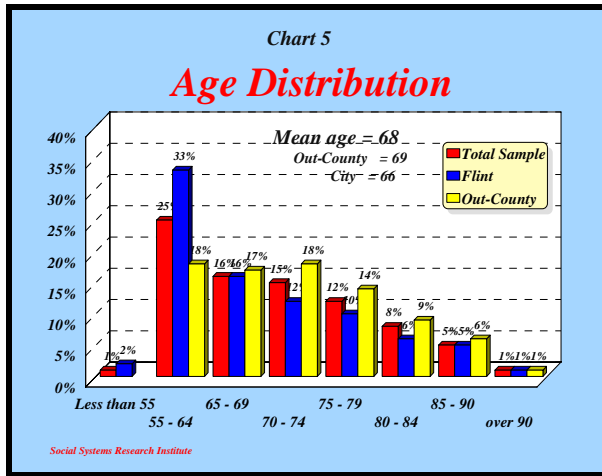
Sample description

The charts 1 thru 13 present the demographic data collected in the survey. They describe the various characteristics of the 502 respondents. A disproportionately large number of respondents were interviewed in the City of Flint. They represent 47 percent of the total sample, yet they constitute only about 25 percent of the County population. This was done to assure that subgroup analyses would have sufficient numbers. (See Chart 1.) As you examine the charts below to understand the demographic characteristics of the sample, bear in mind that these percentages represent households and not populations, and they represent those over the age of 55 years and not the populations.



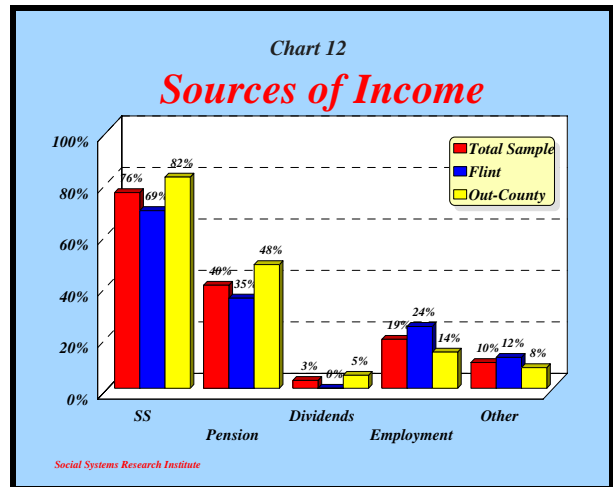
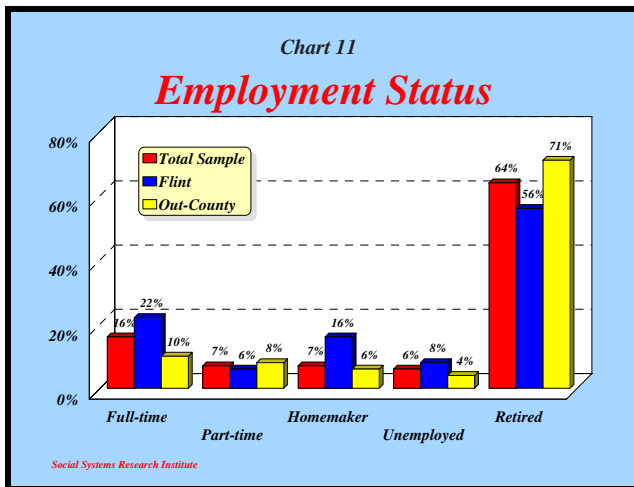
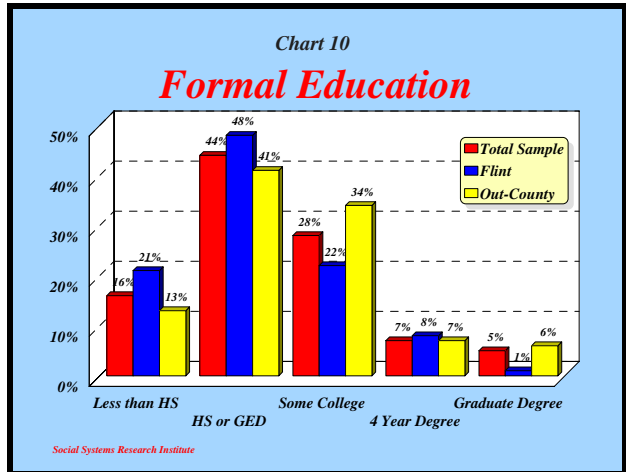
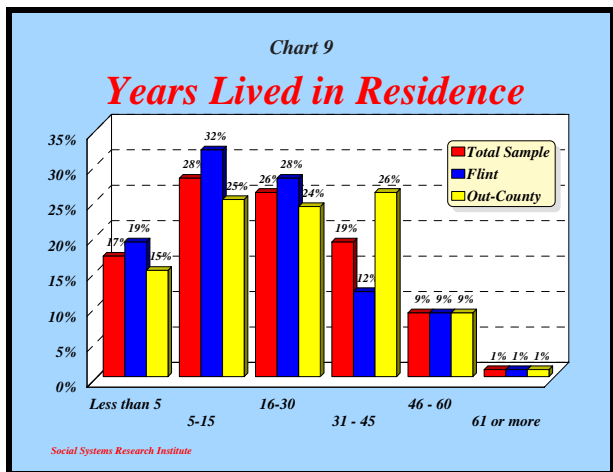
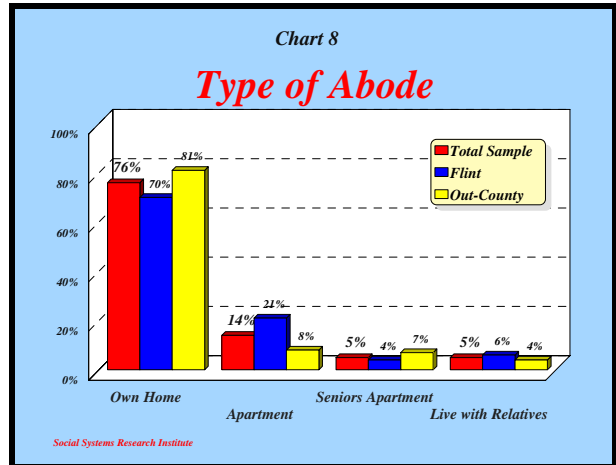
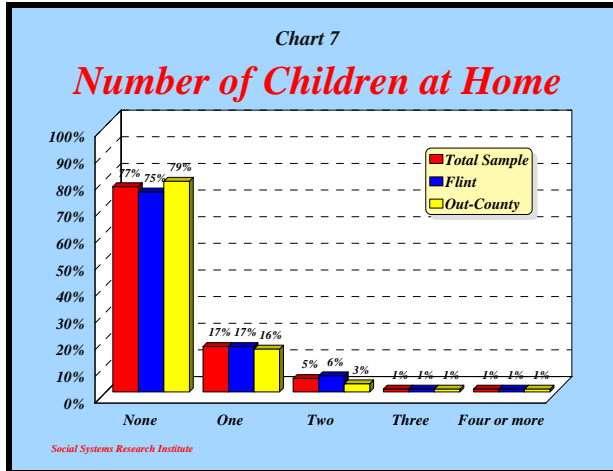
Based on past research in Genesee County the proportion of male to female respondents is consistent. In most telephone research males usually constitute between 34 and 40 percent of the total. Considering the mortality tables for the sexes, the proportions in this survey are consistent. (See Chart 3.) The same rationale applies to the differences for racial groups. (See Chart 4.) The minority sample is about 21 percent of the County respondents, while they represent about 25 percent of the population. The four percent

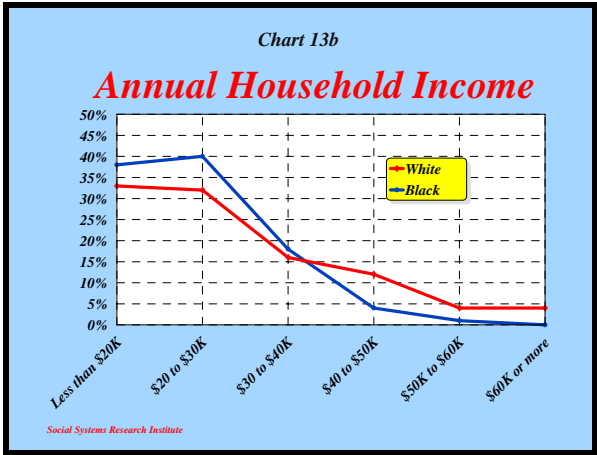
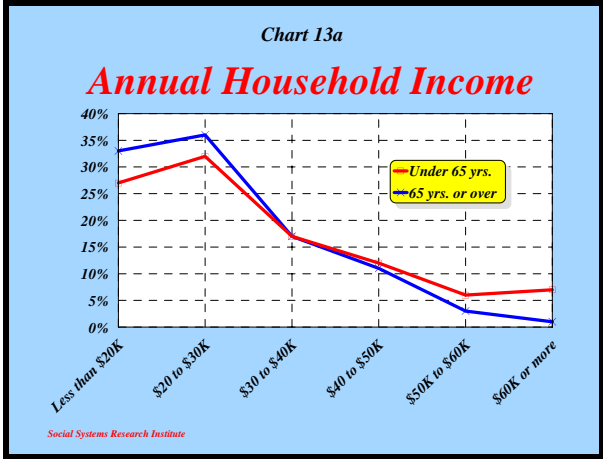
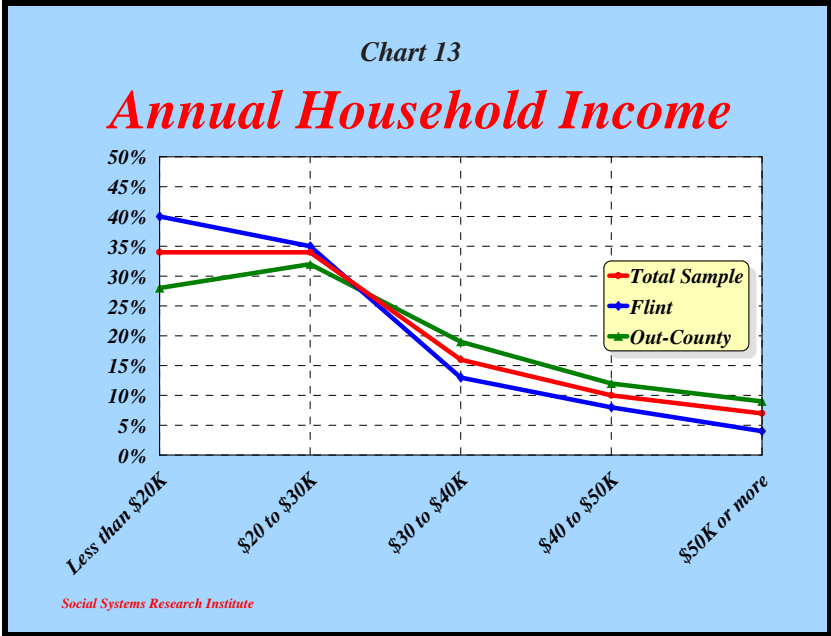
difference may be attributable to the difference in mortality rates between racial groups among seniors.



The demographic characteristics, which most define the sample, include the following points:

1. The sample from the Out-County has an average age of 69 years, while those in the City of Flint averaged 66 years. (See Chart 5.)
2. Better than four in ten in the sample are married, while about three in ten are widowed. (See Chart 6.)
3. Seven in ten have no children at home. (See Chart 7.)
4. About three in four live in their own homes. (See Chart 8.)
5. Better than half have lived in their current residence less than 15 years, while one in ten have lived in the same location for more than 49 years. (See Chart 9.)
6. Twelve percent of the sample has at least a 4-year college degree. (See Chart 10.)
7. While nearly two of three (63%) report that they are retired, more than one in four (28%) are working either full or part-time. (The figure of those who work full or part-time is 20 percent among those 65 years plus, and 52 percent for those 55 to 64 years.) (See Chart 11.)
8. Nearly eight in ten receive Social Security benefits, while four in ten receive a pension. (See Chart 12.)
9. Better than two in three respondents report annual household incomes of less than \$30,000, only seven percent have incomes of better than \$50,000. (See Chart 13.)





Results³

Needs of Seniors

The *needs of seniors* have been audited in four groups: (1) *healthcare*, (2) *transportation*, (3) *homecare*, and (4) *miscellaneous* needs. In all there are thirty-one (31) specific needs examined. (See Table A1 and A2.)

Healthcare. Nearly a quarter of the respondents (25 %) report that they need a better *understanding of their health benefits*. About one in five (19 %) say they need to have a *physical*. The same proportion (19 %) needs *treatment for some ailment*. Other frequently reported needs were need help in *paying for medication* (15 %) and for *medical treatment* (14 %).

Transportation. Better than one in four respondents need help in *going shopping and other tasks* (27 %) and getting to the *doctor's office* (27 %). About one in five say they need assistance in case of *non-medical emergencies* (20 %), doing *personal business* (19 %) going to *other communities* (18 %) than their own, and going to *religious services* (18 %).

Homecare. Respondents have said that their greatest needs are for help with *yard work* (33 %), *major* (33 %) and *minor home repairs* (29 %), *light housekeeping* (26 %), *laundry* (20 %), and *cooking* (17 %).

Miscellaneous Needs. Better than one in ten say that they need *companionship* (12 %) and to secure *healthier meals* (11 %).

Other Needs. A follow-up question asked respondents (Table A2) whether or not there were other needs that were not asked by the items in Table A1. Of the few responses, five percent (5 %) mentioned *help and care at home*, while two percent (2 %) offered *better medical and dental services* and *money*.

³ A further breakdown of this information regarding needs, medical problems, and assistance sources is available in the Appendices. There, it will be useful to examine the needs for younger compared to older members of the sample, Flint compared to Out-County, and the White sample compared to the Black sample.

**Table A1
Senior Needs**

Healthcare	Need Assistance	Need Not Being Satisfied
Understanding your health insurance benefits	24 %	30 %
Getting a physical check-up by a physician	19 %	4 %
Getting treatment for ailments	19 %	3 %
Paying for medication	15 %	47 %
Paying for medical expenses	14 %	39 %
Getting a health screening at home, church, etc.	11 %	4 %
Getting help in paying Medicare premiums	6 %	35 %
Transportation		
Going shopping or other tasks	27 %	5 %
Getting to the doctor	27 %	6 %
Getting transportation in case of a non-medical emergency	20 %	8 %
Going for personal business	19 %	8 %
Getting to other communities outside Genesee County	18 %	5 %
Getting to religious services	18 %	1 %
Visiting friends	15 %	1 %
Getting from my door to a vehicles	13 %	13 %
Getting information about transportation choices	9 %	51 %
Getting to work	3 %	7 %
Paying for transportation services	3 %	33 %
Homecare		
Yard care	33 %	18 %
Major home repairs	33 %	25 %
Minor home repairs	29 %	24 %
Light housekeeping (dusting, vacuuming, etc.)	26 %	11 %
Laundry	20 %	9 %
Cooking	17 %	5 %
Special equipment (i.e. oxygen, etc.)	13 %	8 %
Personal care (i.e. bathing, grooming, or dressing)	13 %	10 %
Moving around at home	10 %	10 %
Miscellaneous Needs		
Companionship	12 %	12 %
Secure healthier meals	11 %	18 %
Daily money management	9 %	6 %
Legal Assistance	8 %	37 %

Table A2
Other Needs of Seniors

	City	County	Total
None	85 %	90 %	87 %
Help and care at home	6 %	3 %	5 %
Better medical and dental care	3 %	2 %	2 %
Money	2 %	3 %	2 %
Miscellaneous	4 %	3 %	4 %

Medical Problems

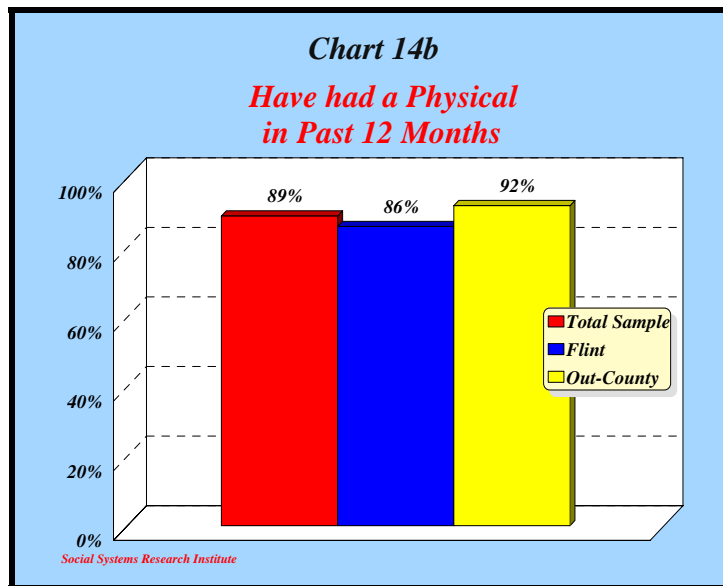
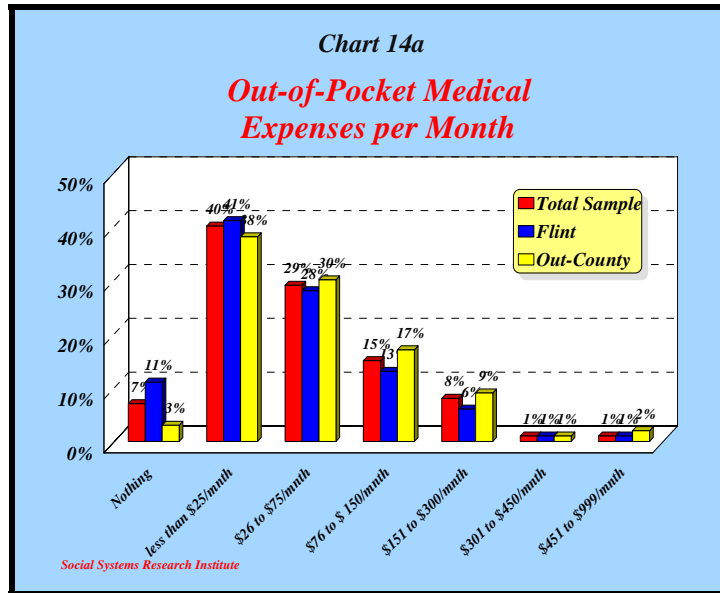
To assess the health of our sample seniors each was asked if they suffered from various maladies. By far *high blood pressure* was the most frequently mentioned (53 %), followed by *diabetes* (28 %), *heart disease* (25 %), and *vision problems* (24 %). *Hearing* and *mobility* problems followed at 22 percent. Except in the case of *hearing* and *depression*, most sufferers were receiving treatment. (See Table B.)

Table B

Medical Problems	Have Problem	Not Being Treated
High blood pressure	53 %	2 %
Diabetes	28 %	4 %
Heart disease	25 %	1 %
Vision problem	24 %	9 %
Hearing problem	22 %	22 %
Mobility problem	22 %	5 %
Depression	21 %	27 %
Stroke	7 %	3 %
Alzheimer's	4 %	10 %

Respondent were also asked how much out of pocket money they spend on average each month on “medical care and drugs.” Just under half the sample said they spend less than \$25 per month, while about ten percent (10 %) spend more than \$151 per month on average. Only two percent (2 %) spend more than \$300 per month. A statistical examination of the differences by age of respondents revealed no significant differences.

(See Chart 14a.) Chart 14b indicates that about 90 percent (89 %) of those interviewed had had a physical within the past 12 months. (See Charts 14a and 14b.)



Where Assistance is Sought

Respondents were asked to tell if they had sought assistance from any of fourteen sources of help within the community. Not surprisingly, a family member was mentioned most often (50 %). In second and third place were friends (29 %) and neighbors (18 %). Among the social agencies, the *Department of Human Services* led with eighteen percent (18 %), followed by the *MTA* (15 %). *Religious organizations* had 12 percent (12 %),

followed by *professional help* (11 %), and the *Genesee County Health Department* (10 %). Near the bottom were a *Senior Center* (9 %), *charitable organizations* (8 %), *local government* (7 %), *VAAA* (6 %), *G-CARD* (4 %), and *Center for Gerontology* (1 %). (See Table C1.)

Table C1

Where Assistance is Sought	Total Sample
A family member	50 %
Friends	29 %
Neighbors	18 %
Department of Human Services (FIA or Welfare office)	16 %
Mass Transportation Authority (MTA, “Your Ride”)	15 %
A church or religious organization	12 %
Professional help	11 %
Genesee County Health Department	10 %
A Senior Citizen Center	9 %
Charitable organizations (Salvation Army, Catholic Charities, etc.)	8 %
Your local government	7 %
Valley Area Agency on Aging	6 %
G-CARD (Genesee County Community Action Resource Depart.)	4 %
Center for Gerontology	1 %

Problems. When asked about the type of problems encountered when seeking assistance for senior citizen services, respondents were generally pleased. Nearly nine in ten said they had encountered no problems. (See Table C2.) The only problems were “won’t return calls” (4 %) and “can’t get financial help” (3 %).

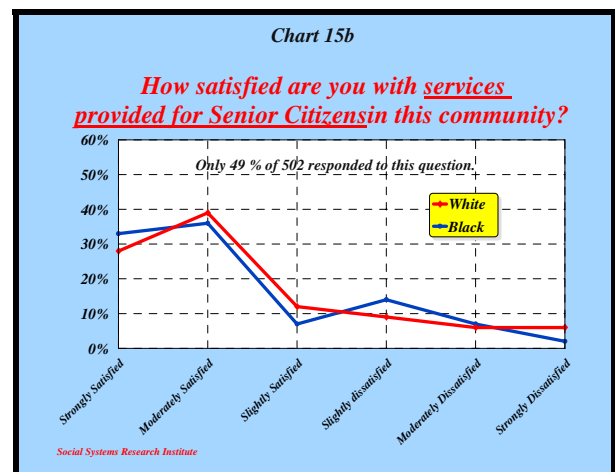
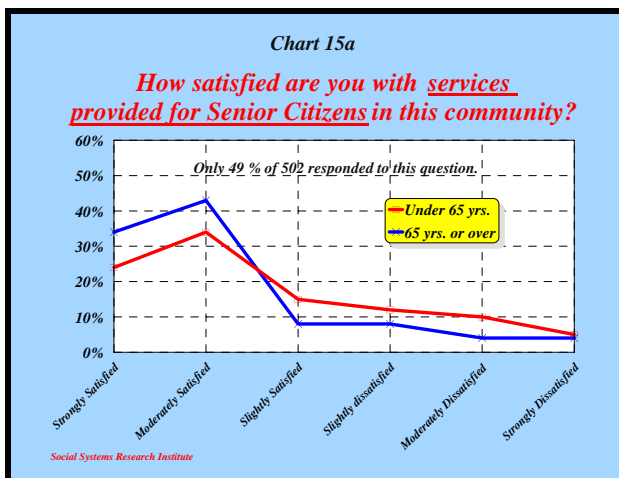
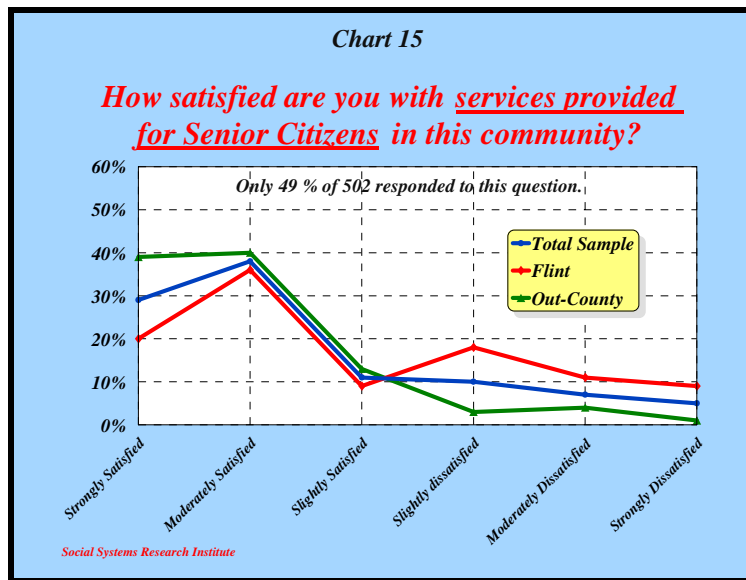
Table C2

Types of problems encountered when seeking assistance

	City	County	Total
None	88 %	89 %	88 %
Won’t return calls	5 %	3 %	4 %
Can’t get financial help	3 %	2 %	3 %
Medical and visiting nurse problems	1 %	1 %	1 %
Trouble with Your Ride	1 %	2 %	1 %
Miscellaneous problems	3 %	3 %	3 %

Evaluating Senior Services

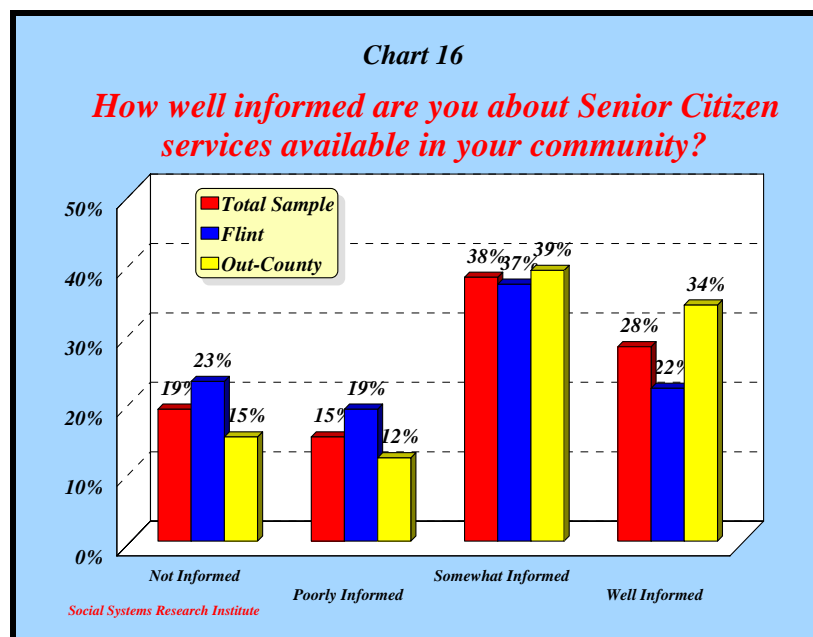
Respondents were asked to rate how satisfied they were with the “services provided for seniors in this community.” (See Chart 15.) The satisfaction scale had six points from Strongly Dissatisfied (1) to Strongly Satisfied (6). Nearly seven of ten responded Moderately or Strongly Satisfied, while only about one in five were Dissatisfied. **It should be noted that only about half (49 %) responded to this question. The balance said they had not sought any senior citizen services, thus they had no experience on which to base their evaluation.**



Charts 15a and 15b show the differences in the distributions of satisfaction scores by age and race. While those 65 and older have significantly higher satisfaction scores

than those under 55, the differences between Whites and Blacks is not statistically different. (When speaking of statistical significance, it refers to whether or not the two distributions are systematically different from one another, or whether the differences are just by chance.)

It was discovered in the survey that about one third of the sample (34 %) was either *not informed* or *poorly informed* about senior citizen services available in the community. Almost three in ten (28 %) considered themselves to be *well informed*. (See Chart 16.)



Participation at Senior Citizen Centers

Respondents were asked whether or not they participate in the activities of a senior citizen center. Nearly a quarter of those interviewed responded in the affirmative (24 %). In the Out-County about twice the proportion (30 %) participate as those who do so in Flint (16 %). (See Chart 17.) When asked what attracted respondents to a Senior Center, *socializing* (8 %), *recreation* (7 %), *travel* (6 %), and *dinners and luncheons* (5 %) were the main motivations. (See Table D.)

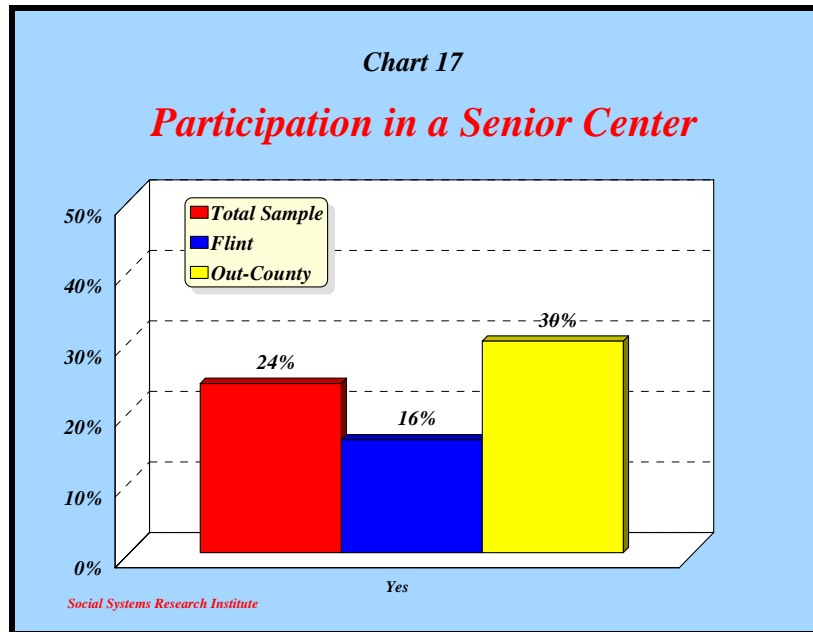


Table D
**Services or activities that attract
to Senior Citizens Centers**

	City	County	Total
None	84 %	70 %	76 %
Socializing	7 %	8 %	8 %
Recreation (cards and bingo, etc.)	5 %	9 %	7 %
Traveling	1 %	10 %	6 %
Dinners and luncheons	1 %	8 %	5 %
Miscellaneous	2 %	3 %	2 %

Who Participates? A demographic profile was developed for senior center participants. (See Table E.) Those groups with higher than average probabilities of participation are: *Out-County residents, other racial groups, those over 65 years, widows, those living in senior apartments, and those living with relatives.*

Table E
Characteristics of
Senior Citizen Participants

Demographics	Percent
Total Sample	24
Flint	16
Out-County	30
Black	21
White	24
Others racial groups	29
Under 65	15
65 or Older	31
Male	22
Female	24
Married	22
Single	11
Divorced/separated	21
Widowed	30
Disabled	22
Own home	21
Live in Apt.	26
Live in Senior Apt.	48
Live with relative	29

Relying on Others

Interviewers asked respondents how frequently they had to rely on others for assistance. Nearly six in ten (57 %) said never or hardly ever, while more than a quarter reported “a few days a week” or more (27 %). Nearly one in five said they need more help. In Flint 22 percent need more help, while its 14 percent for respondents in the Out-County. (See Charts 18 and 19.) The most frequent type of assistance needed was help around the house and yard, - 19 percent in Flint, and 7 percent for those in the Out-County. (See Table F.)

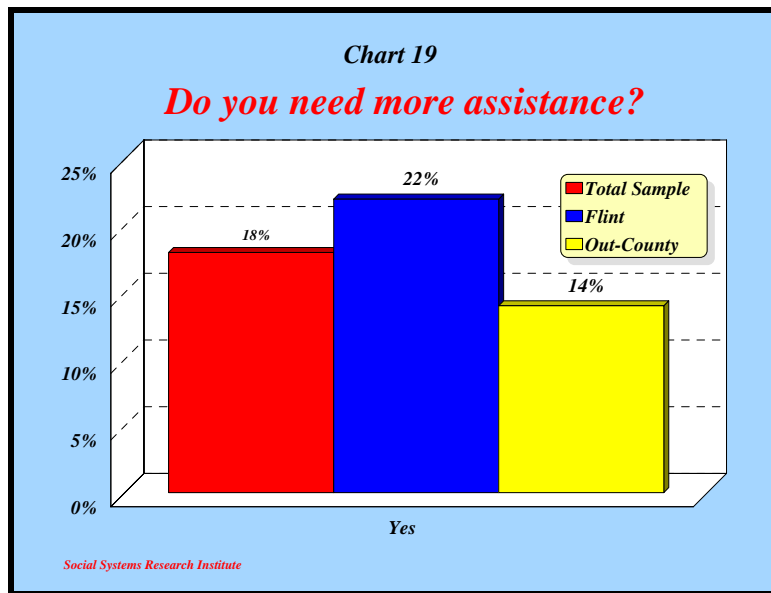
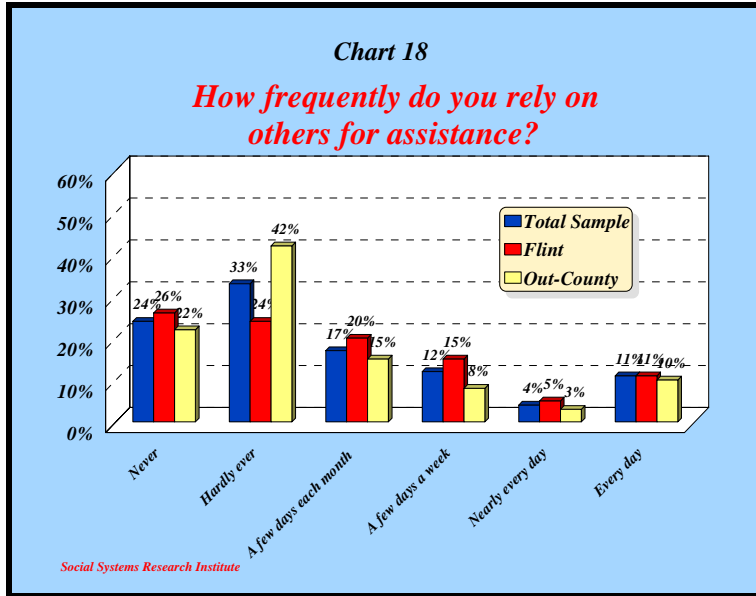


Table F
What type of assistance do you need now?

	City	County	Total
None	78 %	86 %	82 %
Help around the house and yard	19 %	7 %	13 %
Medical help	2 %	4 %	3 %
Financial assistance	1 %	2 %	2 %
Respite for caregiver	1 %	2 %	1 %

Disabilities

Respondents were asked if they had a disability. Fully one-third said they did, nearly four in ten in Flint (38 %) and about three in ten in the Out-County (29 %). (See Chart 20.) When asked to define their disabilities the most frequent response was *heart trouble* (8 %) followed by *mobility problem* (5 %). It is useful to note that 14 percent fall into a *miscellaneous* category. This is for responses that were one percent or less.

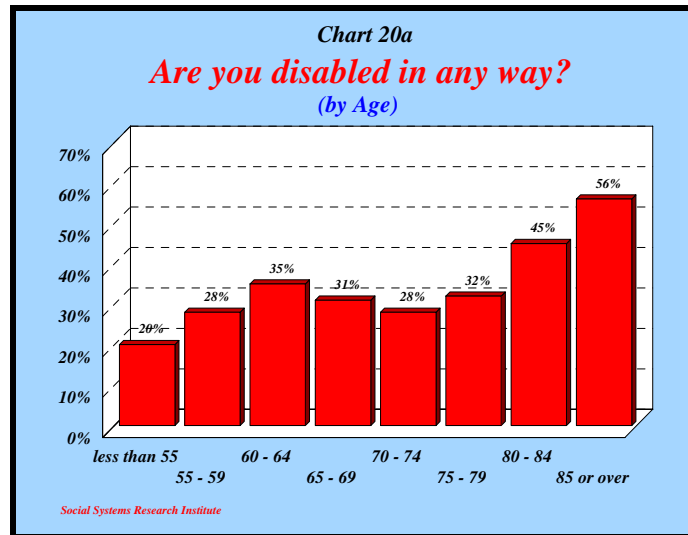
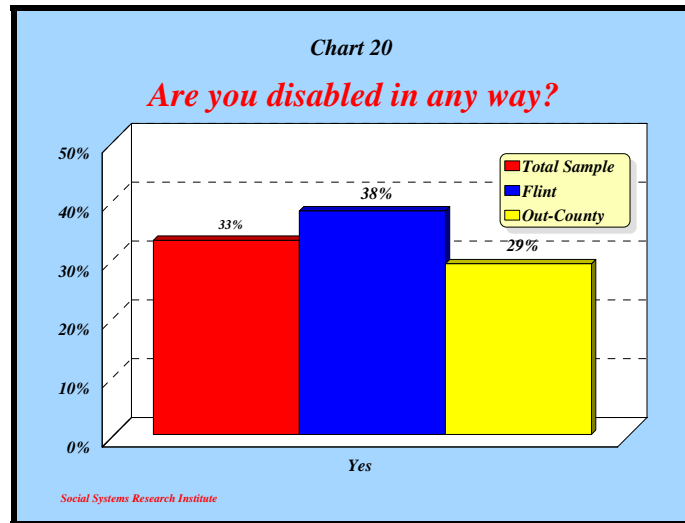


Chart 20a presents the distribution of those who consider themselves to be disabled by age group. With the exception of those between 60 and 64, the trend line rises as age increases. Those 55 or younger report a 20 percent rate. This statistic rises to 56 percent for those 85 years or older.

Table G
In what way(s) are you disabled?

	City	County	Total
None	62 %	71 %	67 %
Heart problems	9 %	7 %	8 %
Mobility problem	5 %	4 %	5 %
Arthritis	3 %	3 %	3 %
Eyesight	2 %	3 %	2 %
Alzheimer's	2 %	2 %	2 %
Miscellaneous	18%	11 %	14%

Table H
Characteristics of Senior Citizens with Disabilities

Demographics	Percent
Total Sample	33
Flint	38
Out-County	29
Black	28
White	34
Others	40
Under 65	24
65 or Older	37
Male	35
Female	32
Married	29
Single	40
Divorced/separated	27
Widowed	38
Own home	31
Live in Apt.	30
Live in Senior Apt.	52
Live with relative	48

Still Driving. Another indicator of one's disability is whether or not a person is still able to experience mobility, to go and come at will. The survey asked respondents if they drive a car or other vehicle. Chart 20a indicates that overall 75 percent of the sample still drives. This figure does not drop substantially until the age of 85. From this point on the percent of drivers equal 36 percent or less.

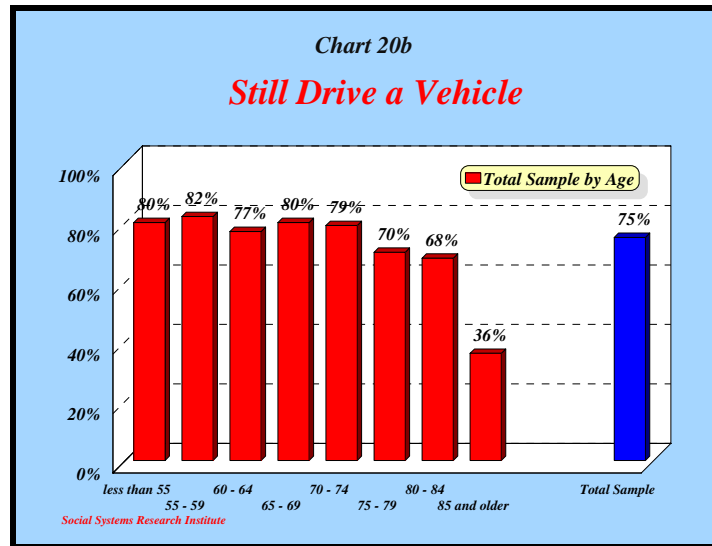


Table I
Respondents Still Driving

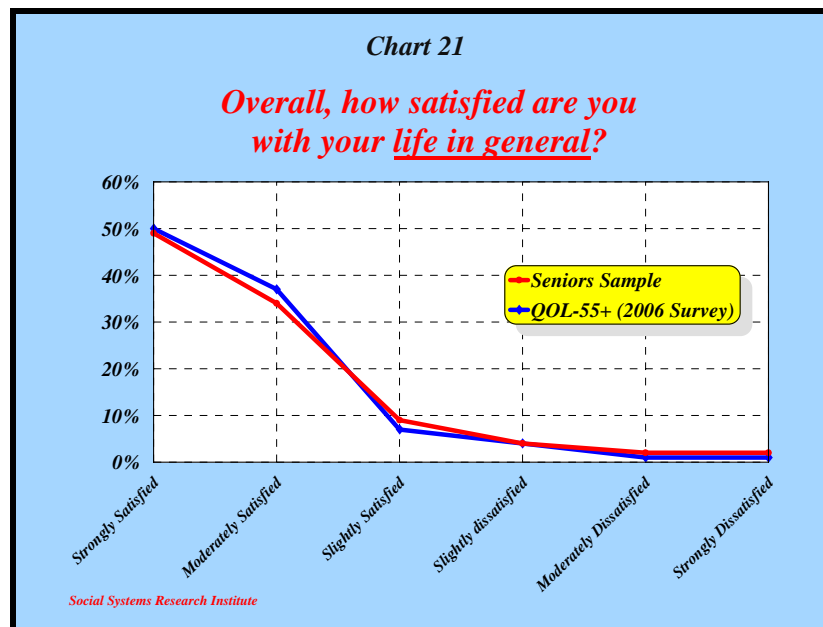
Demographics	Percent
Total Sample	75
Flint	69
Out-County	80
Black	65
White	77
Others	68
Under 65	80
65 or Older	71
Male	79
Female	73
Married	86
Single	61
Divorced/separated	77
Widowed	62
The Disabled	19
Own home	81
Live in Apt.	58
Live in Senior Apt.	44
Live with relative	48

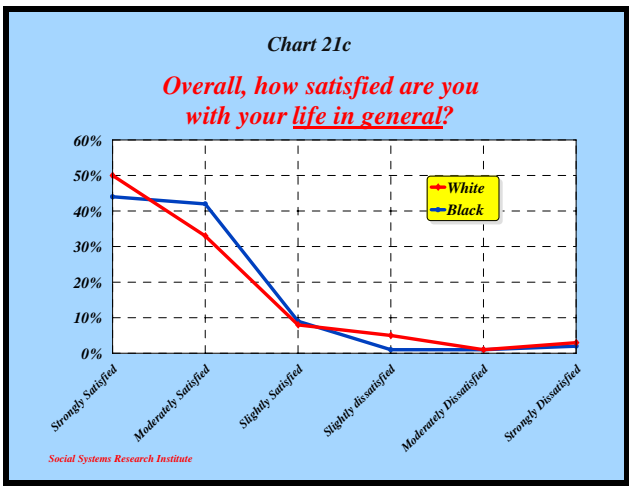
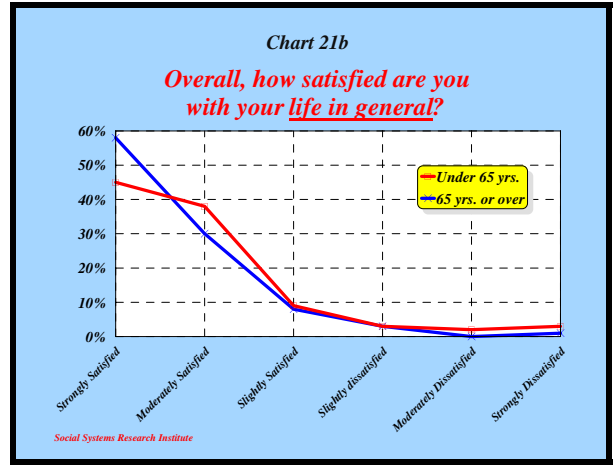
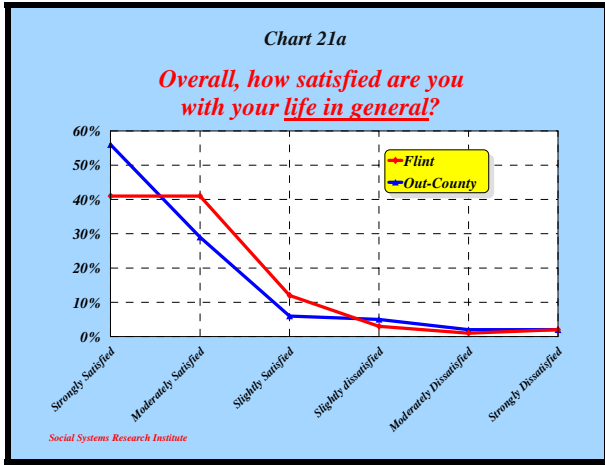
Table I provides a demographic profile of respondents still driving. Those most likely to be drivers are *Out-County residents*, those *under 65*, *male*, *married*, and

homeowners. Those least likely to still be driving are Blacks, singles, and those living in residents other than their own home.

The Quality-of-Life Among Seniors

Respondents were asked, “Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your life in general?” Ratings were measures on a six-point scale from Strongly Dissatisfied (1) to Strongly Satisfied (6). Scores were compared with scores collected among those over 55 in a survey (QOL-55+) done by Social Systems Research Institute in Genesee County in February of 2006. (See Chart 21.) The distributions for both samples were nearly identical. About 95 percent in both sets of data respondents reported high satisfaction scores. Charts 21a thru 21c report satisfaction distributions Flint/Out-County, by age, and by Race. An Analysis of Variance was performed on the means of these distributions. The mean differences were found to be statistically significant for the age analysis. The analyses for the Flint vs. Out-County and White vs. Black were not found to be statistically different, - any differences in mean scores are probably attributable to chance. However, the older group was significantly more satisfied than the younger group.





Attitudes and Age

The following charts represent plots of mean scores illustrating the relationship between age groups and several attitudes about several aspects of the urban experience. With the exception of *trust in public schools*, satisfaction with *health* and *family income*, (Charts 22, 24 and 27) there is a direct and positive relationship between age and the various attitude objects. These data have been abstracted from research on the quality-of-life in Genesee County. The survey was conducted among 1,100 randomly selected households in February of 2006. Unlike the seniors survey, these analyses provide an important insight into the role of age in determining perceptions about the countless items in our experience for which we may have attitudes. These charts are a sampling of some of these items (attitude objects). Most notable is the last chart measuring the individual's assessment of their life in general, their well-being. (See Chart 30.)

Chart 22

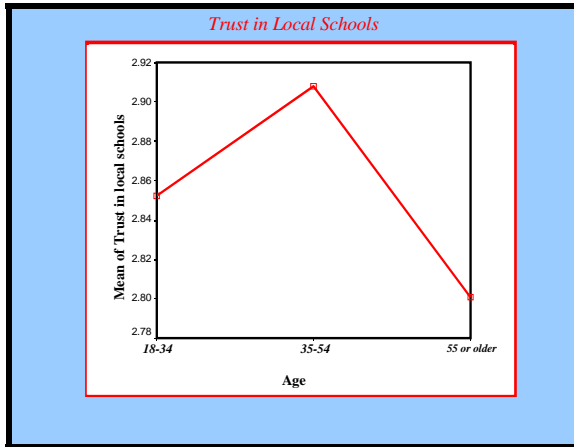


Chart 23

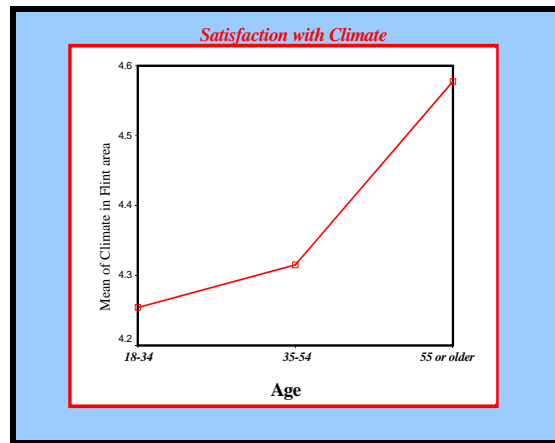


Chart 24

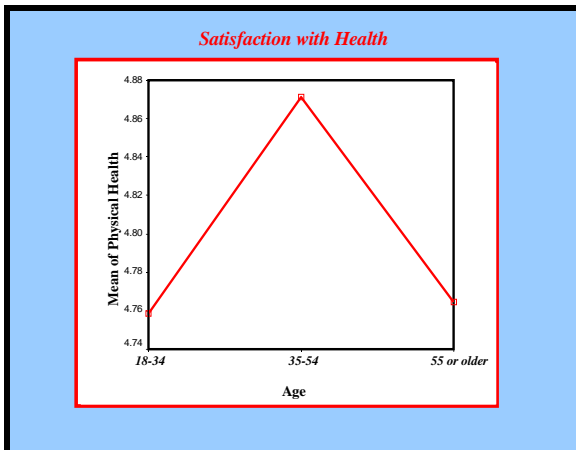


Chart 25

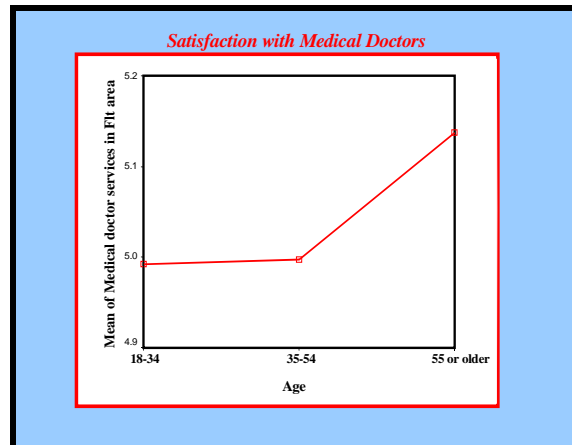


Chart 26



Chart 27

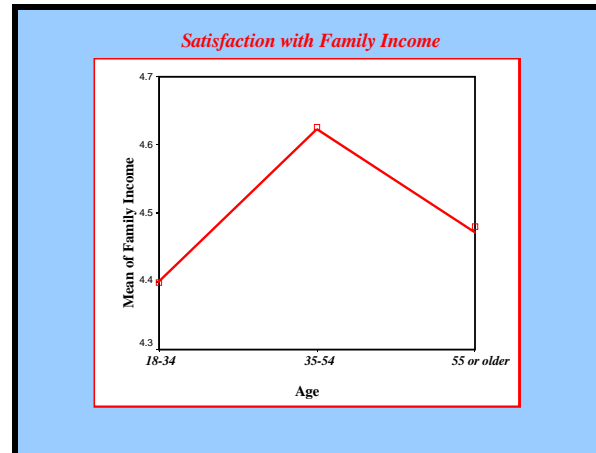


Chart 28

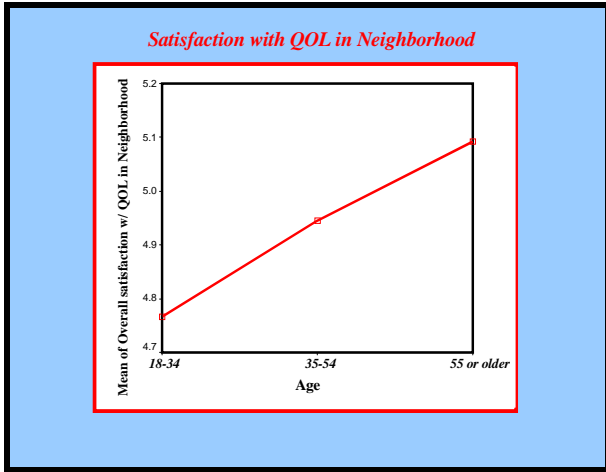


Chart 29

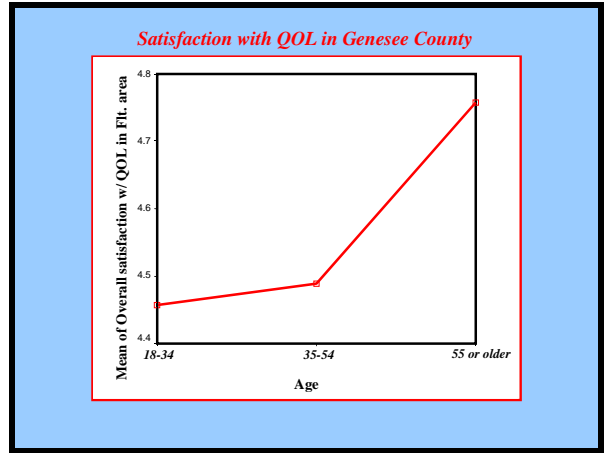
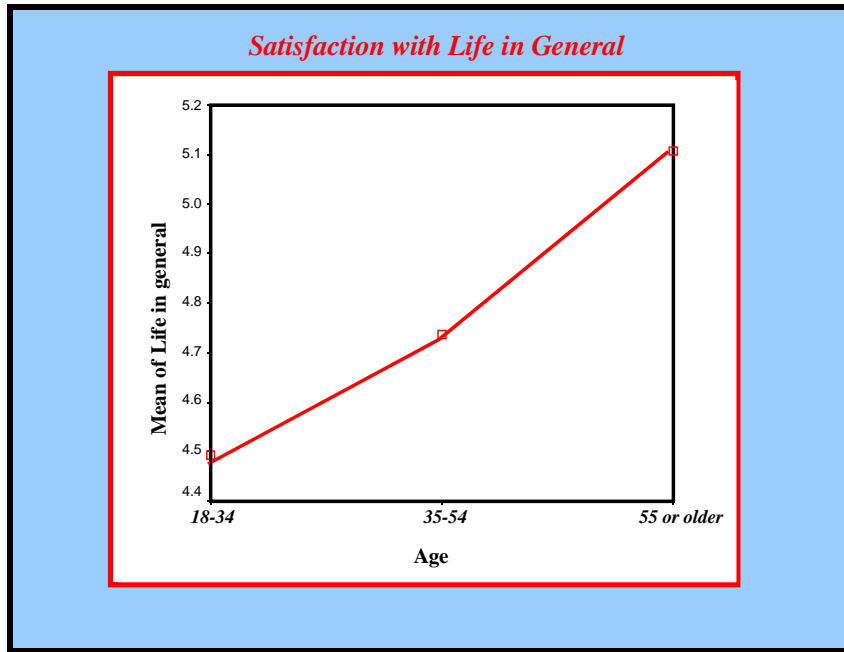


Chart 30



Conclusions

The ultimate purpose for doing research on the needs and conditions among senior citizens is to help service providers develop the means and methods to help improve the quality-of-life for their constituency. This research has shown that most seniors do not seek services based on their age. While one-third believes that they have disabilities, 85 percent believe they have a high quality-of-life, - in fact higher than those junior in years.⁴

When asked whom they rely on for help, most seniors are more likely to rely on *family and friends* than seeking assistance from public agencies. In fact, only 6 percent say that they have called on the VAAA for services, and only one percent have called on the *Center for Gerontology* for assistance.

The more serious needs among seniors related to better understanding their medical benefits and getting treatment for ailments, while transportation for personal business, especially getting to a doctor's office, were serious for about a quarter of the sample. On the home front needs focused on caring for their home, inside and out. As people get older, simple and major repair work around the house becomes more arduous. They become less able to do this type of work themselves, and may be less able to pay for someone else to do it.

One of the more notable findings of this research indicated that high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease are the three most serious medical problems suffered by members of the sample. Fortunately, almost all who had these ailments were receiving some kind of treatment. Problems such as hearing loss and depression were not as likely to be receiving treatment.

It's very obvious that the helper of choice is someone in the family or a friend. These two sources of assistance were far and away the most likely to be called upon for aid by those in the sample. Public agencies were far down the list. This may well be a manifestation of senior's reticence in going to the government or its agencies for relief. Many seniors may be too proud to admit their needs.

4 This is based on data collected through repeated research over three decades (1978 – 2006) in Genesee County by Social Systems Research Institute.

Despite the hesitancy to seek help from agencies, about half the sample responded to the evaluation of the senior services available in the area. This half indicated a very high degree of satisfaction with their experience at seeking aid. The half that did not respond to this question indicated that they had never sought help from agencies serving the needs of seniors. It is noteworthy that even among those under the age of 65, respondents were highly satisfied, - though not to the degree as those over 65.

The role of senior citizen centers in the life of our older populace is significant. In the Out-County sample fully thirty percent attend these centers. About half this proportion attend in the City of Flint. Socializing, recreation, travel, and food are the motivational draws. These centers also provide important information about senior services available from various public agencies, and sometimes they offer services themselves.

When respondents were asked how frequently they needed help, about 15 percent said they needed someone “nearly every day” or “every day.” This figure may represent the high water mark for those who have the most serious needs in the community. Nearly 60 percent said they “never” or “nearly never” have need for assistance.

Not surprising is the finding that disabilities rise as age increases. The magnitude for this phenomenon rises from 20 percent among those 55 years or younger to 56 percent for those 85 or older. It is worth noting that the rate of disability for those in the 60 to 64 years group is higher than those in the 65 to 79 groups. This may be an indication that there will be a sharp increase in the rate of disabilities over the next few years. This may be a bell weather indicating significant increases in caseload for service providers.

Despite the needs, problems and maladies that accompany aging, the findings of this research, as well as earlier findings by the researchers, demonstrate that as people age, they generally become more satisfied with their quality-of-life. In light of the burdens of aging illustrated in this report, these results seem counter-intuitive. This phenomenon begs explanation. Perhaps as we age we find ways to reconcile the conflicts and unfinished business of our lives. Or, we may have learned to better appreciate our accomplishments and experiences. Such resolutions may help make our problems more bearable.

Appendices

- 1. Tables for Subgroup Comparison**
- 2. Questionnaire**

Tables of Subgroup Comparisons

Specific Seniors' Needs

Healthcare	Total Sample	64 and Younger	65 and Older	City of Flint	Out-County	White Sample	Black Sample
Understanding your health insurance benefits	24 %	28%	22%	27%	22%	24%	20%
Getting a physical check-up by a physician	19 %	17%	20%	21%	16%	19%	17%
Getting treatment for ailments	19 %	18%	20	23%	15%	19%	22%
Paying for medication	15 %	20%	12%	17%	13%	14%	21%
Paying for medical expenses	14 %	19%	11%	17%	10%	13%	18%
Getting a health screening at home, church, etc.	11 %	9%	13%	12%	10%	10%	14%
Getting help in paying Medicare premiums	6 %	9%	4%	8%	3%	5%	5%

Transportation	Total Sample	64 and Younger	65 and Older	City of Flint	Out-County	White Sample	Black Sample
Going shopping or other tasks	27 %	23%	30%	30%	23%	27%	25%
Getting to the doctor	27 %	22%	31%	31%	24%	27%	24%
Getting transportation in case of a non-medical emergency	20 %	16%	24%	24%	17%	20%	21%
Going for personal business	19 %	16%	22%	22%	16%	19%	21%
Getting to other communities outside Genesee County	18 %	13%	22%	19%	16%	18%	17
Getting to religious services	18 %	16%	19%	22%	14%	16%	23%
Visiting friends	15 %	14%	16%	19%	11%	13%	18%
Getting from my door to a vehicles	13 %	9%	15%	16%	10%	13%	10%
Getting information about transportation choices	9 %	9%	9%	12%	7%	8%	12%
Getting to work	3 %	5%	1%	4%	2%	3%	1%
Paying for transportation services	3 %	5%	2%	4%	3%	3%	6%

Specific Seniors' Needs (Cont.)

Homecare	Total Sample	64 and Younger	65 and Older	City of Flint	Out-County	White Sample	Black Sample
Yard care	33 %	28%	37%	32%	34%	36%	17%
Major home repairs	33 %	30%	36%	28%	38%	37%	16%
Minor home repairs	29 %	21%	35%	25%	33%	33%	14%
Light housekeeping (dusting, vacuuming, etc.)	26 %	21%	30%	29%	23%	26%	26%
Laundry	20 %	18%	22%	25%	16%	20%	21%
Cooking	17 %	16%	18%	21%	14%	18%	16%
Special equipment (i.e. oxygen, etc.)	13 %	10%	15%	14%	12%	14%	9%
Personal care (i.e. bathing, grooming, or dressing)	13 %	9%	15%	18%	8%	12%	13%
Moving around at home	10 %	9%	10%	14%	6%	10%	9%

Miscellaneous Needs	Total Sample	64 and Younger	65 and Older	City of Flint	Out-County	White Sample	Black Sample
Companionship	11%	11%	11%	16%	8%	11%	9%
Secure healthier meals	9%	9%	12%	14%	8%	9%	14%
Daily money management	8%	8%	11%	10%	9%	9%	6%
Legal Assistance	9%	9%	8%	9%	7%	8%	7%

Medical Problems

	Total Sample	64 and Younger	65 and Older	City of Flint	Out-County	White Sample	Black Sample
High blood pressure	53 %	45%	59%	52%	54%	52%	59%
Diabetes	28 %	27%	29%	32%	24%	25%	37%
Heart disease	25 %	17%	30%	20%	29%	27%	14%
Vision problem	24 %	19%	27%	23%	24%	24%	21%
Hearing problem	22 %	19%	24%	24%	20%	22%	17%
Mobility problem	22 %	19%	24%	25%	20%	23%	19%
Depression	21 %	26%	18%	26%	16%	21%	20%
Stroke	7 %	5%	9%	7%	8%	7%	8%
Alzheimer's	4 %	3%	5%	5%	3%	5%	1%

Where Assistance is Sought

	Total Sample	64 and Younger	65 and Older	City of Flint	Out-County	White Sample	Black Sample
A family member	50 %	38%	59%	48%	52%	53%	39%
Friends	29 %	24%	32%	29%	29%	29%	26%
Neighbors	18 %	13%	23%	14%	22%	20%	8%
Department of Human Services (FIA or Welfare office)	16 %	20%	14%	24%	9%	14%	25%
Mass Transportation Authority (MTA, "Your Ride")	15 %	15%	15%	17%	14%	14%	22%
A church or religious organization	12 %	15%	10%	17%	7%	11%	15%
Professional help	11 %	11%	11%	10%	13%	12%	8%
Genesee County Health Department	10 %	14%	7%	14%	7%	10%	7%
A Senior Citizen Center	9 %	5%	7%	8%	10%	9%	9%
Charitable organizations (Salvation Army, Catholic Charities, etc.)	8 %	12%	5%	12%	4%	7%	7%
Your local government	7 %	9%	6%	11%	3%	8%	7%
Valley Area Agency on Aging	6 %	5%	6%	5%	7%	6%	7%
G-CARD (Genesee County Community Action Resource Depart.)	4 %	4%	4%	5%	3%	3%	8%
Center for Gerontology	1 %	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	0%

Opinion Survey for Seniors Genesee County

Hello! My name is _____. I'm calling on behalf of the Community Foundation of Greater Flint. Our purpose is to identify the various needs of our citizens over the age of 55. This will enable several non-profit organizations in our community to better serve this segment of our population. Our interview will take only a very few minutes. And, all your opinions and information will be recorded anonymously. No attempt will be made to identify you in any way.

Are you over the age of 55? (If NO, ask next question)

Are you a caregiver for a person over the age of 55? (If NO to 1 and 2, discontinue.)

1. Responses below relate to: 1 – person over 55 2 – a caregiver

READ: I will read you a list of various needs that are sometimes experienced by those 55 years and older. Please respond if you, (or the person for whom you provide care) need assistance with the following items:

**If YES: ASK
Has your need been satisfied?**

Healthcare

2. Getting a physical check-up by a physician	Yes	No	Yes	No
3. Getting a health screening at home, church, or elsewhere	Yes	No	Yes	No
4. Getting treatments for ailments	Yes	No	Yes	No
5. Paying for medical expenses	Yes	No	Yes	No
6. Paying for medication	Yes	No	Yes	No
7. Getting help in paying Medicare premiums	Yes	No	Yes	No
8. Understanding your health insurance benefits	Yes	No	Yes	No

Transportation

9. Getting to work	Yes	No	Yes	No
10. Going shopping or other tasks	Yes	No	Yes	No
11. Getting to the doctor	Yes	No	Yes	No
12. Paying for transportation services	Yes	No	Yes	No
13. Visiting friends	Yes	No	Yes	No
14. Going for personal business	Yes	No	Yes	No
15. Getting information about transportation choices	Yes	No	Yes	No
16. Getting from my door to a vehicles	Yes	No	Yes	No
17. Getting to other communities outside Genesee County	Yes	No	Yes	No
18. Getting transportation in case of a non-medical emergency	Yes	No	Yes	No
19. Getting to religious services	Yes	No	Yes	No

Homecare

20. Light housekeeping (dusting, vacuuming, etc.)	Yes	No	Yes	No
21. Cooking	Yes	No	Yes	No
22. Laundry	Yes	No	Yes	No
23. Yard care	Yes	No	Yes	No
24. Personal care (i.e. bathing, grooming, or dressing)	Yes	No	Yes	No
25. Minor home repairs	Yes	No	Yes	No
26. Major home repairs	Yes	No	Yes	No
27. Moving around at home	Yes	No	Yes	No
28. Special equipment (i.e. oxygen, etc.)	Yes	No	Yes	No

Miscellaneous

29. Legal Assistance	Yes	No	Yes	No
30. Companionship	Yes	No	Yes	No
31. Daily money management	Yes	No	Yes	No
32. Secure healthier meals	Yes	No	Yes	No

33. What other needs do you, (**or the person for whom you provide care**) have that I have not mentioned? (describe)_____

READ: Do you, (**or the person for whom you provide care**) suffer from any of the following?

Are you being treated?

34. Alzheimer's	Yes	No	Yes	No
35. Depression	Yes	No	Yes	No
36. Diabetes	Yes	No	Yes	No
37. Hearing problem	Yes	No	Yes	No
38. Heart disease	Yes	No	Yes	No
39. High blood pressure	Yes	No	Yes	No
40. Mobility problem	Yes	No	Yes	No
41. Stroke	Yes	No	Yes	No
42. Vision problem	Yes	No	Yes	No

43. Have you, (**or the person for whom you provide care**) had a physical examination by a physician in the past 12 months? Yes No

44. Approximately, how much do you, (**or the person for whom you provide care**) spend each month on medical care and drugs out of pocket? (not covered by some type of insurance)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 - Nothing | 5 - \$151 to \$300 per mth |
| 2 - less than \$25 per mth. | 6 - \$301 to \$450 per mth. |
| 3 - \$26 to \$75 per mth. | 7 - \$451 to \$999 per mth |
| 4 - \$76 to \$150 per mth. | 8 - \$1,000 or more |

45. Do you, (or the person for whom you provide care) participate in a senior citizen's center?
 Yes No

If "YES," ASK:

46. What types of services or activities attract you, (or the person for whom you provide care) to this center? _____

47. How well informed are you, (or the person for whom you provide care) about the many services provided for senior citizens in our community?

READ:

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 - Not informed | 3 - Somewhat informed |
| 2 - Poorly informed | 4 - Well informed |

Have you, (or the person for whom you provide care) sought assistance from any of the following community organizations?

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|----------|
| 48. Valley Area Agency on Aging | Yes | No | Not Sure |
| 49. Center for Gerontology | Yes | No | Not Sure |
| 50. Genesee County Health Department | Yes | No | Not Sure |
| 51. Mass Transportation Authority (MTA, "Your Ride") | Yes | No | Not Sure |
| 52. A Senior Citizen Center | Yes | No | Not Sure |
| 53. Department of Human Services (FIA or Welfare office) | Yes | No | Not Sure |
| 54. A church or religious organization | Yes | No | Not Sure |
| 55. Your local government | Yes | No | Not Sure |
| 56. Charitable organizations (Salvation Army, Catholic Charities, etc.) | Yes | No | Not Sure |
| 57. G-CARD (Genesee County Community Action Resource Department) | Yes | No | Not Sure |
| 58. A family member | Yes | No | Not Sure |
| 59. Friends | Yes | No | Not Sure |
| 60. Neighbors | Yes | No | Not Sure |
| 61. Professional help | Yes | No | Not Sure |

(ASK Questions 62 and 63 of those 55 or older only.)

READ:

I am going to ask you the degree of your satisfaction or dissatisfaction. After I mention each question, would you please tell me if you are satisfied or dissatisfied? (After the interviewee responds to each question, then ask: slightly, moderately, or strongly.)

62. Generally speaking, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the **services provided** for senior citizens in this community?

READ:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 - Strongly dissatisfied | 6 - Strongly Satisfied |
| 2 - Moderately dissatisfied | |
| 3 - Slightly dissatisfied | 9 - Never used any of these services |
| 4 - Slightly satisfied | |
| 5 - Moderately satisfied | |

63. Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with **life in general**?

READ:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 - Strongly dissatisfied | 4 - Slightly satisfied |
| 2 - Moderately dissatisfied | 5 - Moderately satisfied |
| 3 - Slightly dissatisfied | 6 - Strongly Satisfied |

64. In the past, when seeking assistance with senior citizen services, what types of problems have you encountered? _____

65. How frequently do you, (**or the person for whom you provide care**) rely on others for assistance of any kind?

READ:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 - Never | 4 - A few days a week |
| 2 - Hardly ever | 5 - Nearly every day |
| 3 - A few days each month | 6 - Every day |

66. Do you, (**or the person for whom you provide care**) need more assistance? Yes No

If “**YES,**” ask:

67. What type of assistance do you now need? _____

68. Are you, (**or the person for whom you provide care**) disabled in any way? Yes No

If “**YES,**” ask:

69. In what way are you disabled? _____

70. Do you, (**or the person for whom you provide care**) drive a car or other type of vehicle?
Yes No

Demographics:

(These are related only to the senior citizen.)

READ: Please remember for the next few questions, that we cannot identify who you are, because your phone number has been chosen randomly, without knowing your name.

71. In what year were you (or the person for whom you provide care) born? _____
OR (record age _____)

72. Do you live within the City of Flint?

- 1 - Yes
- 2 - No

73. What is your Marital Status?

READ:

- 1 - Married
- 2 - Single
- 3 - Divorced or separated
- 4 - Widowed

74. How many children do you have living at home? _____

75. Do you (or the person for whom you provide care) live in one of the following ?

READ:

- 1 - Your own house
- 2 - A traditional apartment
- 3 - An apartment for senior citizens
- 4 - A residence of relatives

76. How many years have you lived in your current residence? _____

77. How many years of formal education have you (or the person for whom you provide care) had?

READ:

- 1 - less than High School
- 2 - High School Diploma or GED
- 3 - Some college but not a 4-year degree
- 4 - Finished a 4 year degree
- 5 - Some graduate study
- 6 - Finished a Graduate Degree

78. Into which of these broad groups does your annual household income fall?

READ:

- 1 - less than \$20,000
- 2 - \$20,001 to \$30,000
- 3 - \$30,001 to \$40,000
- 4 - \$40,001 to \$50,000
- 5 - \$50,001 to \$60,000
- 6 - \$60,001 or more

79. Do you receive an income from any of the following sources? (**circle all that apply**)

READ:

- 1 - Social Security
- 2 - a pension
- 3 - dividends
- 4 - employment
- 5 - other sources

80. Are you (or the person for whom you provide care):

READ:

- 1 - Employed Full-time
- 2 - Employed Part-time
- 3 - Unemployed
- 4 - Retired
- 5 - Homemaker

81. To which racial group do you (or the person for whom you provide care) belong?

READ:

- 1 - White
- 2 - Black
- 3 - Hispanic
- 4 - Asian
- 5 - mixed race

82. What is your ZIP code? _____

83. Sex? (Don't ask)

- 1 - Male
- 2 - Female

READ:

That was the last question. Thanks very much for assisting us in this survey.