

Aging Our Way: Recognizing ageism and the SDOH as part of a long-term planning process for older adults

Allegheny County

Allegheny County, PA has the second highest concentration of older adults in the United States next to Palm Beach, FL. Unlike Palm Beach or other areas that are the destinations of new retirees, the communities in Allegheny County have aged in place, providing a glimpse at demographic trends that will become much more common across the nation as the aging population continues to grow.

Background

In 2023 the PA Department of Aging (PDA) launched the Commonwealth's first-ever 10-year Master Plan on Aging, to become one of only five states with fully developed plans. PDA worked closely with Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) across the state to capture community input. Allegheny County AAA engaged a multi-pronged outreach strategy to gather input.

Methodology

AAA implemented the following strategies to get input on the master plan.

- 17 Listening Sessions reaching 260 people
- Online engagement web page
- 2,500 Palm cards
- Online survey

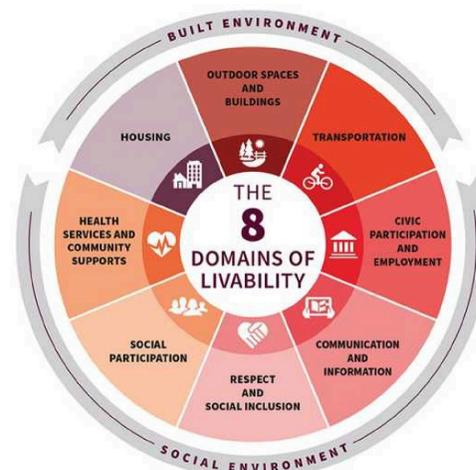
There were 596 individual comments that were coded using cluster analysis to identify secondary themes within the AARP Domains of Livability and cross-cutting themes.



Framework

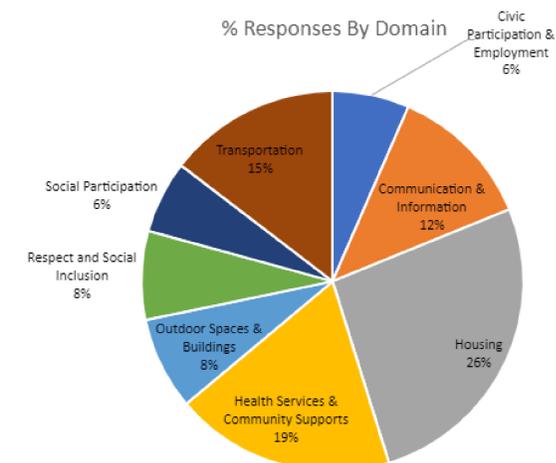
The AARP's Domains of Livability provided the guiding framework for collecting input on the Master Plan on Aging.

- Questions on the interview guide were in each of these domains.
- The online form for comments prompted people to provide input in each of these domains.
- AAA used these domains to analyze the information gathered.



Results/Findings

- The three domains with the highest responses are social determinants of health.
- Ageism is a pervasive issue with comments in each of the domains.
- There are 12 additional secondary themes and additional sub-themes that are described in more detail in the report linked below.



Ageism Quotes

"Age discrimination is bad."

"Ageism impacts older people's ability to obtain and maintain work."

"An example is for people who are on a fixed income. Everyone else gets some kind of increase except older adults. Stagnant income is an economic microaggression. There are also social microaggressions. One example of a social and economic microaggression is the cost of cable."

Conclusion

- The top three concerns of older adults in Allegheny County are housing, health services and community supports, and transportation, which are all social determinants of health.
- Ageism is a pervasive issue impacting older adults in each of the domains of livability.
- This information is valuable for more than just the completion of the master plan. The AAA used it to develop goals and strategies addressing the social determinants of health as part of the four-year plan that guides the agency's work through 2028.

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