

Executive Summary

A detailed survey conducted by the AARP Research Team/Department between May 1 and August 26, 2022, asked North Carolinians ages 45 plus how their communities, counties and rural areas are meeting the needs of the state's rapidly growing population of older adults. The survey collected results from 3,209 respondents with a 1.8% margin of error. Most survey respondents were homeowners (88%) living in single family houses (81%).



AGE MY WAY NC SURVEY

Information from the survey is being used to identify and evaluate areas of concern when it comes to aging in the state. By 2025, there will be more North Carolina residents ages 60 and older than those under age 18.

Key Findings

Generally, there is high satisfaction when it comes to “loving where you live.” However, the ability to live independently while aging is a primary concern. Most people (88%) said that it is important to live in their community as long as possible.

- Nearly all, (99%) of the survey respondents said that it is important to live independently in their own home as they age.
- A majority, (76%) rated their current community as an “excellent, very good or good” place to live as they age.
- While 53% said they are likely to stay in their current residence and never move, 17% said they would relocate within their community and 30% said they would relocate elsewhere.
- The two major factors for moving are having a house that allows people to live independently as they age, and to be able to afford the cost of maintaining their current residence.

Other significant factors for moving include:

- Personal safety and security concerns;
- Wanting to move to an area with better healthcare facilities;
- Wanting to be closer to family;
- Needing more access to public transportation;
- Wanting to live in an area with a lower cost of living;
- Wanting to live in an area with more opportunities for social interaction.

Support for independent living

Living independently requires support including transportation options, well-designed homes and public spaces, access to health care and home health, and the ability to participate in community life.

Mobility and access to public transportation

- Only 22% of respondents ranked access to public transportation as “excellent, very good or good.”

Mobility and access to public transportation (continued)

- Only 26% ranked it as affordable with a similar number (26%) saying there are special transportation services for older adults and those with disabilities.
- When it comes to mobility, respondents gave high ranks to easy-to-read traffic signs, and low ranks to the availability of separate paths for cyclists and pedestrians in their community.

Healthcare

- 38% of respondents said that access to well-trained certified home health care providers was “excellent, very good or good,” and only 28% said that care is affordable. Also ranked low, was the availability of affordable home care services such as personal care and housekeeping.

Needed services

When it comes to their greatest needs involving home maintenance, participants ranked highest the availability of home repair contractors who are trustworthy, do quality work and are affordable, and lowest for home repair service for low-income and older adults that help with things like roof and window repair.

When rating their own community, the highest marks were given to well-maintained houses, hospitals and health care facilities, as well as public buildings that have restrooms accessible to people with different physical abilities. The lowest rankings were for benches used for resting in public areas like parks, along sidewalks and around public buildings.

Social Participation

Social isolation has a negative health impact and is identified as a factor for why a person has to relocate as they age.

- 25% of the survey respondents said they feel isolated from others and 31% said they have a lack of companionship.

More on the Survey Methodology

A team of community and state partners including NC Department of Health and Human Services Division on Aging, and Hometown Strong steered the Age My Way NC survey implementation.

AARP provided guidance on the format and survey tool.

The team of community partners distributed a link and a QR Code to their organizational contacts so that participants could access the survey online. Participant groups contacted included major providers of aging services, other local nonprofits, recreation facilities, universities, and others. Additionally, paper copies were accessed through libraries and senior centers.

