



Health
Department

**Results of the Physical Activity Survey of Older Adults
Chronic Disease and Healthy Lifestyle Workgroup
Macomb County Health Department**

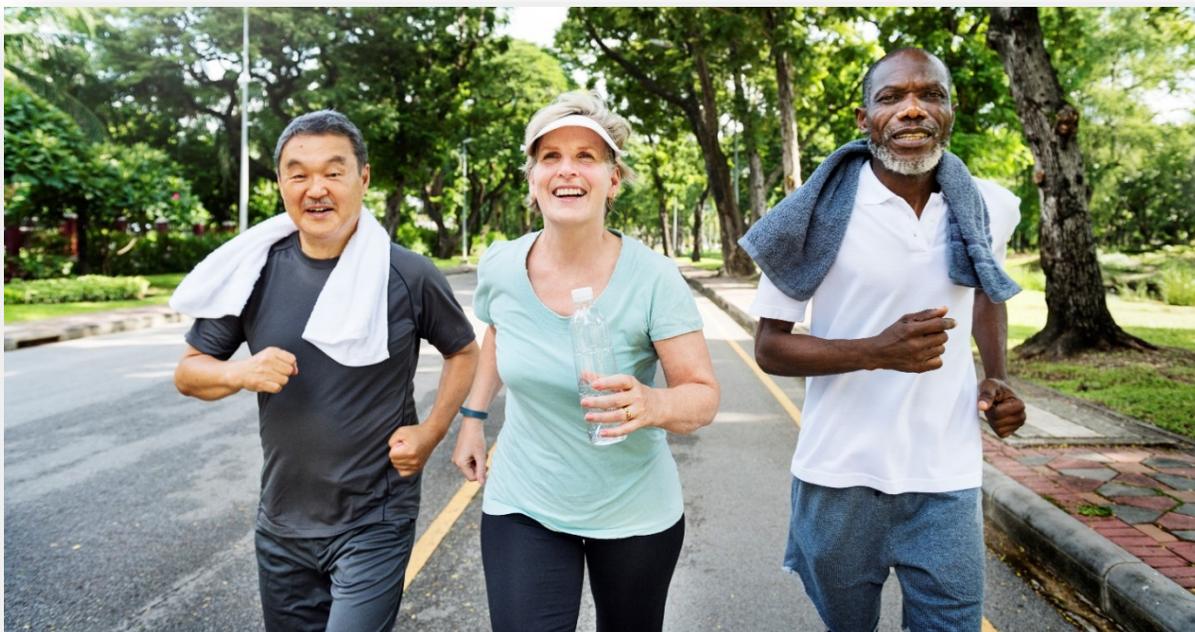


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Introduction

The purpose of the physical activity survey of older adults was to understand where and how older adults are being active, what barriers they are experiencing, and what they would like to learn more about. The results of the survey will be used to identify gaps in services to determine what resources we should be promoting or, where needed, developing. Our hope is that the survey will allow us to work together to identify ways that we can better engage older adults.

Community Health Improvement Plan

The Macomb County Health Department is in the process of implementing a community-driven, strategic and measurable work plan called a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). During the development of the CHIP, we heard from older adults who are interested in being active but experience many barriers to physical activity.

To better understand these issues, the Chronic Disease and Healthy Lifestyles Workgroup decided to develop the survey of physical activity in older adults. We wanted to establish a baseline of physical activity and learn more about the barriers experienced by the population.

Chronic Disease and Healthy Lifestyles is one of four priority areas of the Community Health Improvement Plan. The goal of the Chronic Disease and Healthy Lifestyles workgroup is to promote health and reduce chronic disease risk in Macomb County. One of the workgroup's objectives is to reduce the proportion of Macomb County adults who engage in no leisure-time physical activity from 30% to 25% by 2021. The workgroup is a collaborative effort with a variety of community partners that [meet quarterly](#) to discuss progress and workgroup activities.

We know that Macomb County is an aging population. In Macomb County, it is projected that there will be [more people 65 and older](#) than there are people under the age of 18 by 2025. We believe that increased physical activity opportunities for residents in social settings, as well as increased awareness and promotion of existing opportunities, will allow for an increase in leisure-time physical activity by way of participating senior and community centers.

About the Survey

The survey was intended for adults 60 years of age and older. This age was selected as 60 years of age and older is the age used to qualify for certain Macomb County government services, such as Meals on Wheels through Macomb Community Action. The survey was developed by a Public Health Analyst at the Macomb County Health Department and was implemented throughout the County in partnership with the Community Health Improvement Plan workgroups. The survey included total of 10 questions (a copy of the survey can be found in [Appendix A](#)).

1. What types of physical activity do you do?
2. How many days per week do you engage in physical activity?
3. On these days, how many minutes, on average, do you exercise?
4. Is there anything that has prevented or stopped you from being physically active?
5. Would you like to learn more about any of the following (select all that apply)?
6. What types of physical activity would you like to do?
7. Where do you like to be physically active?
8. How do you currently learn about physical activity or hear about physical activity opportunities?
9. What is your age?
10. What city do you live in?



The survey was distributed between June 2018 and February 2019 at senior centers and recreation centers, faith based organizations, housing centers/ facilities, and events and other organizations. A full list of participating organizations and events where surveys were implemented can be found in [Appendix B](#).

The role of the Macomb County Health Department during survey implementation varied. Some organizations had the Health Department onsite to distribute and collect surveys, while other organizations were provided surveys that they distributed and collected on their own. Surveys were collected, entered, and analyzed in Survey Monkey by a Public Health Analyst at the Macomb County Health Department.

Results

A total of 392 surveys were included for analysis. Surveys were primarily collected in person and via mail. All paper surveys entered into Survey Monkey for analysis. The results were tagged based on responses and data was compiled into the following tables. Raw data is available for those who are interested in seeing the untagged results. If so, please contact healthplanning@macombgov.org.



1. What types of physical activity do you do?

379 responses (13 skipped)

Activity	# Responses	%
Walking	266	70.18%
Household Activities	215	56.73%
Exercise Classes	121	31.93%
Swimming	47	12.40%
Biking	25	6.60%
Sports	24	6.33%
Gym	17	4.49%
Weights	15	3.96%
Tai Chi	6	1.58%
Untagged*	18	4.75%

*Responses included activities like “sleep,” “exercise,” or non-relevant responses such as “none,” “in wheelchair,” or “can’t”



2. How many days per week do you engage in physical activity?

365 responses (27 skipped)

# of Days	# Responses	%
0	9	2.47%
1	15	4.11%
2	49	13.42%
3	102	27.95%
4	56	15.34%
5	66	18.08%
6	35	9.59%
7	83	22.74%
Untagged	2	.55%

**Responses indicated "often"*



3. On these days, how many minutes, on average, do you exercise?

339 responses (53 skipped)

# of Minutes	# Responses	%
10	8	2.36%
15	19	5.60%
20	29	8.55%
30	88	25.96%
40	9	2.65%
45	36	10.62%
60	109	32.15%
90	14	4.13%
120	30	8.85%
More than 120	10	2.95%
None	12	3.54%
Untagged*	23	6.78%

*Responses like “never counted,” “varies,” or increments that weren’t frequent enough for single tag



4. Is there anything that has prevented or stopped you from being physically active?

237 responses (155 skipped)

Barrier Identified	# Responses	%
Pain, injury, or disability	104	43.88%
Not motivated	72	30.38%
Not enough energy	71	29.96%
Not enough time	50	21.10%
Nobody to exercise with	44	18.57%
Cost	26	10.97%
Lack of confidence in physical ability	23	9.7%
I might hurt myself	21	8.86%
It's not fun	19	8.02%
Transportation	16	6.75%
Do not know where to go to be active	15	6.33%
Lack of accessible or adaptive facilities or equipment	15	6.33%
No parks, trails, or paths near me	13	5.49%
Lack of assistance during activity	10	4.22%
Do not know how to be active	7	2.95%



5. Would you like to learn more about any of the following (select all that apply)?

201 responses (191 skipped)

Topic	# Responses	%
How to cook healthy foods	109	54.23%
Healthy eating guidelines	104	51.74%
Physical activity guidelines	64	31.84%
Where you can go to exercise	62	30.85%
How to exercise	50	24.88%
Where to find healthy foods	45	22.39%



6. What types of physical activity would you like to do?

246 responses (146 skipped)

Barrier Identified	# Responses	%
Walking	81	32.93%
Swimming	41	16.67%
Dance/Zumba	24	9.76%
Satisfied	21	8.54%
Anything	21	8.54%
Exercise Classes	20	8.13%
Yoga	17	6.91%
Aerobics	15	6.10%
Sports	14	5.69%
Biking	11	4.47%
Injury/Pain	11	4.47%
None	10	4.07%
Stretching	7	2.85%
Gym	6	2.44%
Weights	4	1.63%
Untagged*	7	2.85%

*Responses included non-exercise related activities such as playing cards or museum trips or other non-relevant responses such as “snow and ice prevent me from being active” or “sex”



7. Where do you like to be physically active?

340 responses (52 skipped)

Location	# Responses	%
Home	168	49.41%
Gym	107	31.47%
Senior Center	69	20.29%
Park	68	20.00%
Outdoors	16	4.74%
Anywhere	15	4.41%
Mall	11	3.24%
Pool	9	2.65%
Untagged	17	5.00%

**Responses included non-relevant responses like “walking” that didn’t make sense or responses that didn’t warrant single tag (at doctor’s office, friend)*



8. How do you currently learn about physical activity or hear about physical activity opportunities?

299 responses (93 skipped)

Location	# Responses	%
Senior/Recreation Center	195	65.22%
Doctor	50	16.72%
Friend	29	9.70%
Church	24	8.03%
Online	12	4.01%
Newspaper	11	3.68%
TV	10	3.34%
Gym	5	1.67%
Physical Therapy	4	1.34
Untagged	31	10.37%

**Responses include various ranges such as "I do it on my own," "talking," "reading," or specific responses that weren't enough for one tag such as "VA hospital"*



9. What is your age?

390 responses (2 skipped)

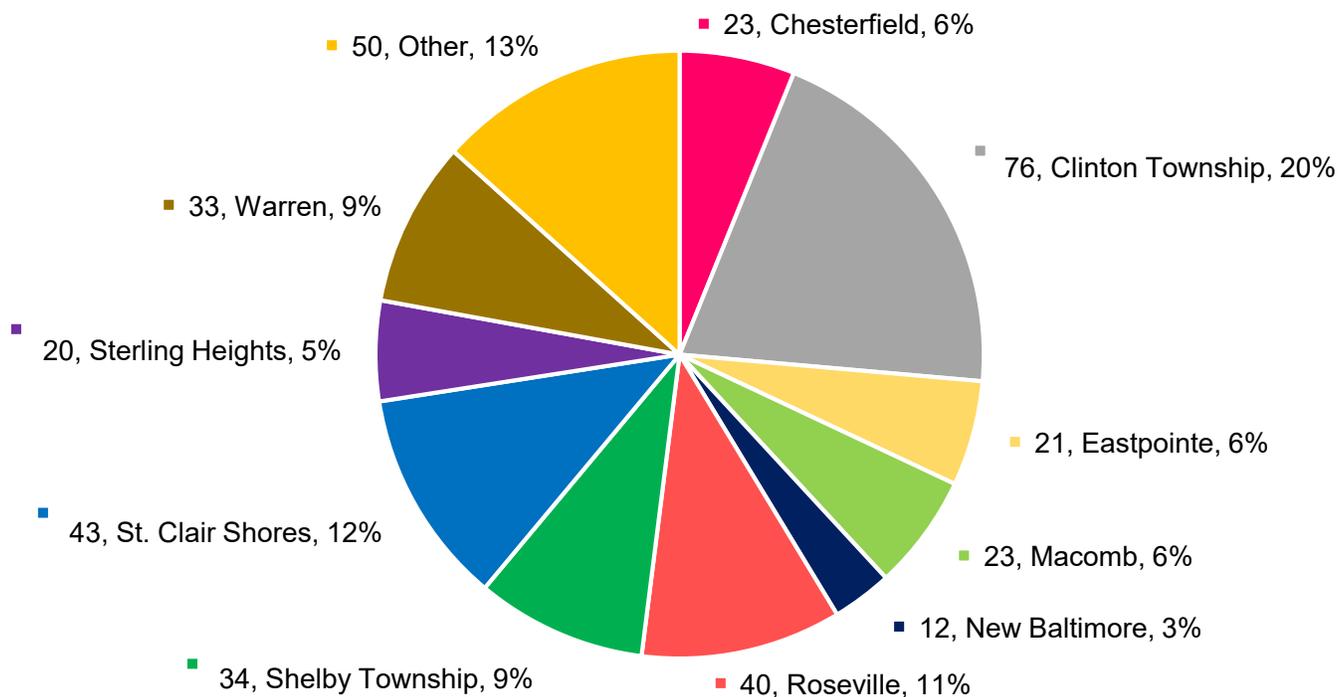
Age	# Responses	%
Under 60 [⊥]	23	5.90%
60-64	30	7.69%
65-69	65	16.67%
70-74	69	17.69%
75-79	83	21.28%
80-84	64	16.41%
85-89	39	10.00%
90-94	14	3.59%
95-99	3	0.77%
100 and over	0	0.00%

[⊥] Below 60 were included as these individuals work closely with older adults or use services/live with older adults and therefore are considered within our target population

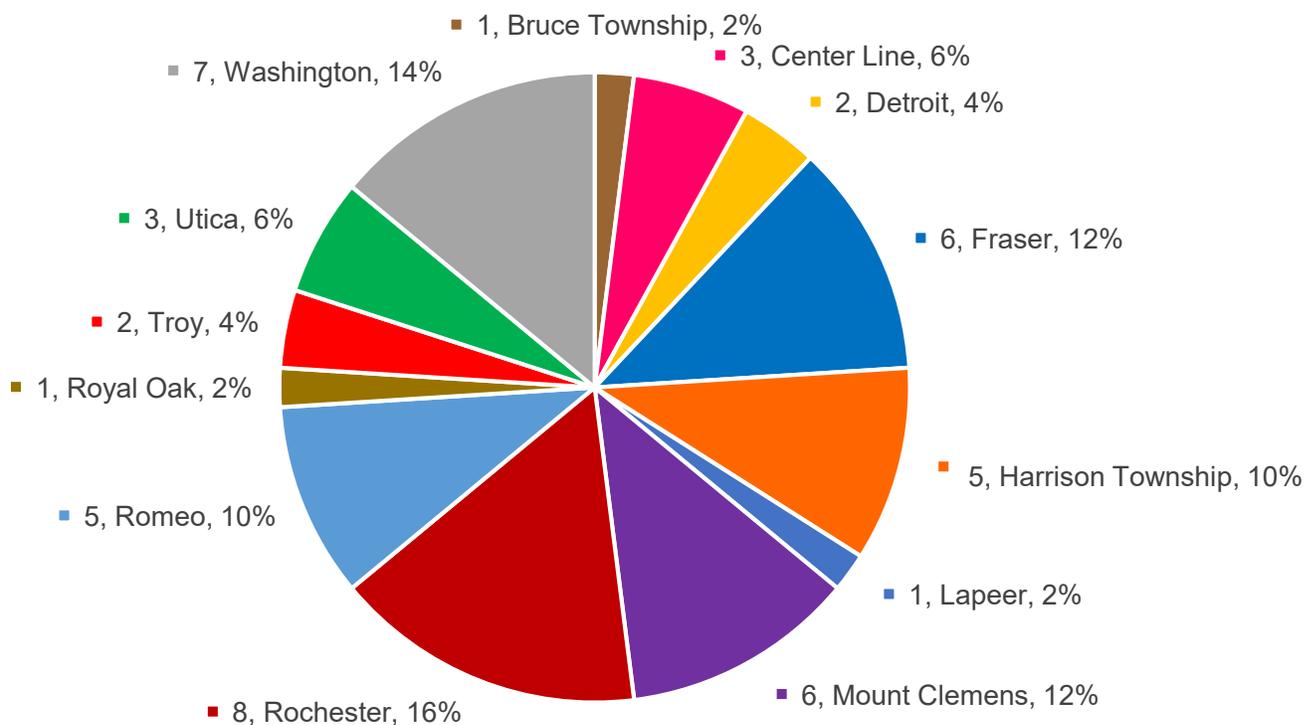


10. What city do you live in?

325 responses (50 other-depicted in chart below, 17 skipped)



50 responses (“Other” category- responses for Question #10 that had less than 10 respondents)



Discussion

Comparison of Reported Physical Activity

The results of the survey provided insight into the types of physical activity older adults are currently engaging in, as well as those activities they report interest in trying. An interesting comparison between the top four most commonly reported current activities and the top four activities older adults would like to try found that many of those activities overlapped.

For types of physical activity that older adults like to do now (in other words, current activity), the most commonly reported activities were walking, household activities (such as cleaning or gardening), exercise classes, and swimming. For types of physical activity that older adults would like to do, walking, swimming, dance/Zumba, and being satisfied with current activities were reported.

As seen in the graphic, walking was the most common activity that older adults are currently doing and that they would like to be doing. Swimming can also be seen on both sides of the graphic. Additionally, dance/Zumba classes are a form of exercise classes and another similar activity reported. These results are of interest because we know that there are opportunities for older adults to participate in these activities. For those who reported interest in engaging in these activities, there are opportunities to connect them with programs or with individuals who are currently engaging in the activity.

Furthermore, we find it of interest that the most common activities individuals like to do or want to try involve social interaction and fun, engaging opportunities to be active. This is an opportunity to promote [senior](#) and [recreation](#) centers that host classes and social events, such as Zumba Gold and dances, as well as partner organizations that host [walking groups](#) and [fitness classes](#).



Most Commonly Reported Barriers

The results of the survey provided a list of the most commonly reported barriers older adults experience to being physically active. The top five barriers reported are depicted in the graphic below. *Pain, injury, or disability* was the top reported barrier (43.88% of respondents). Knowledge of this barrier allows us to provide opportunities to link older adults to pain management and activities that are inclusive for those with pain and/or disabilities. We can also promote resources and campaigns related to injury prevention.

The second most common barrier reported was *lack of motivation* (30.38% of respondents), followed by *lack of energy* (29.96%) and *lack of time* (21.20%). These barriers to physical activity are commonly reported across all age groups and there are campaigns and tools both locally and nationally to address these barriers. We can promote Move More Macomb, at MoveMoreMacomb.org, which includes basic information about physical activity and how to get started, including tips on overcoming these commonly reported barriers. We can also promote resources and campaigns like [Move Your Way](#) and [Go4Life](#) for physical activity, specifically created by the [National Institute on Aging](#) for older adults to promote resources for a healthy and active lifestyle.

Nobody to exercise with was the fifth top reported barrier (18.57% of respondents). This a crucial opportunity to promote [senior](#) and [recreation](#) centers where older adults can access opportunities for increased social and community engagements through, not only the utilization of gyms and fitness classes, but also social events like luncheons, field trips, and more. There is also an opportunity for us to address this barrier in other ways by linking individuals to services, such as [Meals on Wheels](#), and other community programs, as well as by developing resources where there are gaps.

Pain, Injury, or Disability



Not Motivated



Not Enough Energy



Not Enough Time



Nobody to Exercise With



Most Commonly Reported Places to Be Active

The most commonly reported places to be active indicated that older adults prefer to be active at home (49.41% of respondents) but are also active at the gym (31.5%), senior centers (20.29%), and at [parks](#) (20.00%). This provides an opportunity to promote activities and exercises that can be performed at home, programs and gyms that are free to use (such as [Silver Sneakers](#)), and local senior centers.



What Older Adults Would Like to Learn More About

A result of particular interest from the survey found that older adults are interested in learning more about healthy eating, compared to learning more about physical activity. The survey found that older adults reported most interest in learning more about how to cook healthy foods (54.23% of respondents) and healthy eating guidelines (51.74%), followed by learning more about physical activity guidelines (31.84%) and where you can go to exercise (30.85%).

These results provide us with opportunities to promote cooking classes such as [Cooking Matters](#), Michigan State University Extension's [classes and nutrition resources](#), and physical activity resources like [Move More Macomb](#) to assist older adults in finding places to be active and physical activity guidelines. It also provides opportunities for continued and increased engagement with senior centers to assist individuals with learning more about nutrition and physical activity.



Common Themes

There were a number of common themes reported throughout the survey that may be of interest. Responses related to the snow and ice preventing individuals from being active were reported frequently. Another theme that emerged throughout the survey was interest in swimming and a desire for swimming facilities for older adults to use for a nominal fee or no cost. There were also a number of references to the term “handicapped” and references to physical activity being painful. However, on the other hand, a common trend among responses was the theme that individuals felt that they do remarkably well for their age.

Some additional themes to note that emerged were a number of responses that included non-traditional activities including sex, belly dancing, and multiple references to sleeping.

Limitations

Limitations of the survey may include the length of the survey implementation period (June 2018-February 2019). We were fortunate to partner with numerous senior and recreation centers and other organizations to implement the survey over the implementation period. However, throughout the implementation period, lack of follow-up response, placing surveys out (for those where implementation was not on-site), or getting surveys back/collecting completed surveys from partner sites was sometimes limited.

Another possible limitation was that some individuals would not want to provide their information or participate once they received the survey. When implementing surveys at partner sites, we would distribute the survey and let individuals complete and return the survey. We also allowed partner sites to return or mail completed surveys to us. However, we collected many blank or mostly incomplete surveys which had to be excluded from the analysis.

Finally, examples were included in the text of some of the questions to make the survey as clear and easy to complete as possible (copy of the survey can be found in [Appendix A](#)). A possible limitation is that the examples on the survey may have prompted individuals to incorporate those items into their responses.



Next Steps

Our next steps involve sharing the survey results with community partners and stakeholders, including the organizations and individuals who participated in the survey. We plan to work with the locations where older adults reported receiving information from to promote existing resources. For example, we know of resources that are already available for older adults to find physical activity opportunities and resources for living a healthy lifestyle, many of which have been included throughout this discussion. By promoting those resources at the locations where they report receiving information, we can share information more effectively.

In addition, we can share and, where needed, develop resources to assist older adults in finding out more about those opportunities they expressed interest in learning more about (i.e. physical activity and healthy eating). Increased awareness and utilization of the resources discussed throughout this report can assist in beginning to address the barriers reported throughout the survey.

Finally, we would encourage partner organizations and any other interested stakeholders to consider a similar survey. We know that often times certain populations are missed when communities do a large scale assessment and we want to make sure we are hearing from all members of our community. This is the first survey of its kind that we know of to establish where and how older adults are being active, what barriers they are experiencing, and what they would like to learn more about.



Appendix A

1. What types of physical activity do you do (examples: walking, swimming, exercise classes, or strenuous household activities like cleaning or gardening)?

2. How many days per week do you engage in physical activity? _____

3. On those days, how many minutes, on average, do you exercise? _____

4. Is there anything that has prevented or stopped you from being physically active?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not enough time | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of accessible or adaptive facilities or equipment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not enough energy | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of assistance during activity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It's not fun | <input type="checkbox"/> Nobody to exercise with |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not motivated | <input type="checkbox"/> I might hurt myself |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No parks, trails, or paths near me | <input type="checkbox"/> Pain, injury, or disability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know where to go to be active | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know how to be active | <input type="checkbox"/> Cost |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of confidence in physical ability | |

5. Would you like to learn more about any of the following (select all that apply)?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> How to exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> How to cook healthy foods |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Where you can go to exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> Where to find healthy foods |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical activity guidelines | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy eating guidelines |

6. What types of physical activity would you like to do?

7. Where do you like to be physically active (examples: park, gym, home)?

8. How do you currently learn about physical activity or hear about physical activity opportunities (examples: doctor's office, senior center, church)?

9. What is your age?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under 60 | <input type="checkbox"/> 80-84 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 60-64 | <input type="checkbox"/> 85-89 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 65-69 | <input type="checkbox"/> 90-94 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 70-74 | <input type="checkbox"/> 95-99 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 75-79 | <input type="checkbox"/> 100 and over |

10. What city do you live in? _____



Appendix B

Thank you to our partner sites for assisting us with the implementation of the survey. Some of you welcomed us into your communities to implement the survey, while others distributed the survey among community members, and we could not have completed this survey without your support.

Center Line Parks and Recreation

Chesterfield Senior Center

Clinton Township Senior Center

Good Shepherd Coalition

Macomb Community Action (MCA) Senior Fun Festival

Macomb County Health Department Diabetes Prevention Program

Macomb Community College Society of Active Retirees (SOAR)

Recreation Authority of Roseville and Eastpointe

St. Clair Shores Housing Commission

St. Clair Shores Senior Center

St. Thomas Community Presbyterian Church



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Contact us at healthplanning@macombgov.org or (586)463-3021

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