

2006 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

COUNTY OF SUSSEX DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION OF SENIOR SERVICES



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Introduction

The mission of the Sussex County Division of Senior Services is to develop and assure accessibility of services to older individuals and their families. Older citizens are provided with direct services, referral services, and information needed to help them remain in their community, and to lead independent lives as long as possible. The Sussex County Division of Senior Services is working hard to address the needs of residents. This is an ongoing challenge to assure services are being delivered and that the needs of all senior age groups are met.

In 2006, the Division of Senior Services conducted a needs assessment designed to maximize service utilization and enhance program development. Respondents were not assumed to represent the entire Sussex County senior population; however, their responses had the potential to establish how prospective service consumers perceive their needs and their likelihood of utilizing programs. The information gathered provided insight on the population's characteristics, problems, and expressed needs.

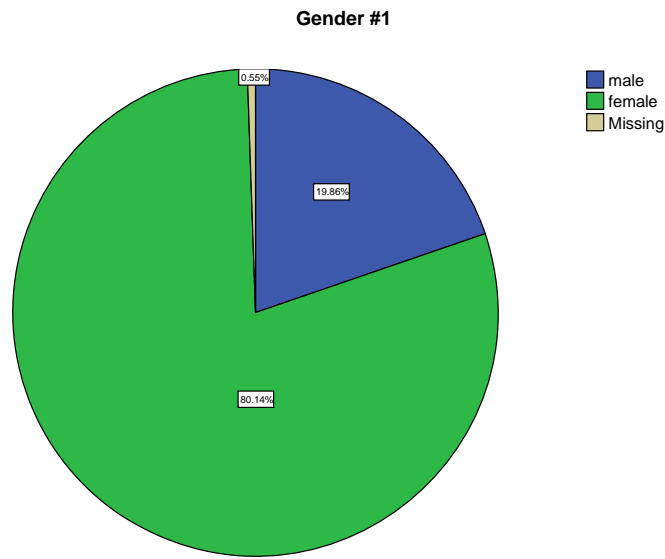
Methodology

About 2,000 surveys were distributed throughout the county. Surveys were made available through senior clubs and groups, nutrition sites, senior functions, the Internet, and Sussex County Transit. In an attempt to reach the more vulnerable and isolated seniors, the surveys were also distributed with home delivered meals. The questionnaire was anonymous unless the individual requested to be contacted for additional information and services. The assessments were self administered and collected between April and July of 2006. Quantitative methods were used in order to emphasize precise, objective, and generalizable findings. The response rate was 36 percent; out of 2,000 surveys distributed, 729 were returned. The data was compiled using an excel spreadsheet. Each survey was given an identification number for recording and analytic purposes. A quantitative analysis was conducted through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software in order to describe and explain observations through numerical representation. Cross-tabulations were completed to detect if any significant relationships existed between variables.

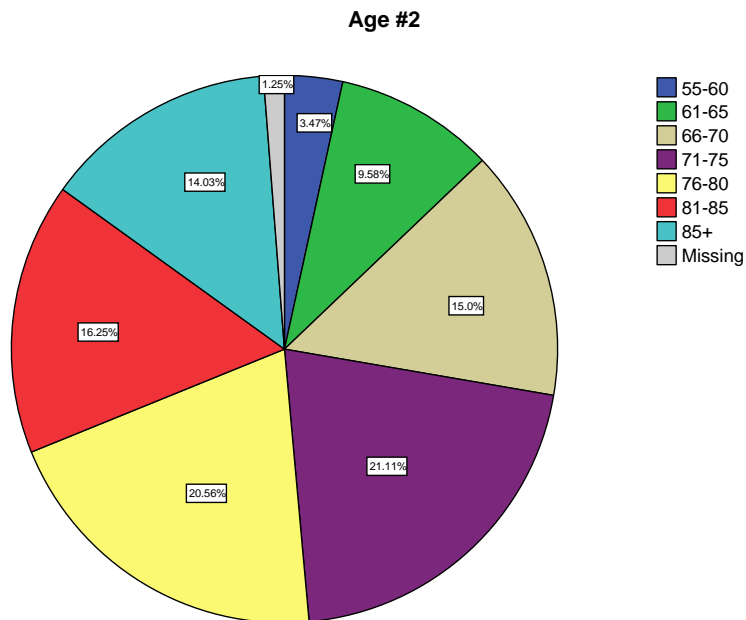
Results

Demographics

According to the Census Bureau's 2005 American Community Survey, there are about 14, 245 individuals aged 65 and older in Sussex County, making up 9.4 percent of the population. This group is made up of 54 percent females and 46 percent males compared to the survey respondents who were about 80 percent female and 20 percent male.

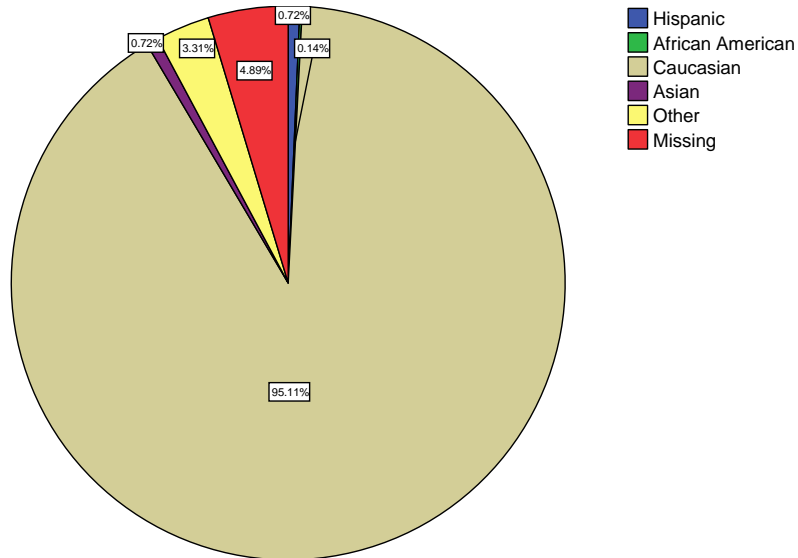


The Division of Senior Services provides assistance to those 60 years of age and older, which accounts for approximately 25,000 individuals in Sussex County. This accounts for about 16.8% of the population. Respondents ranged from 55 years of age to over the age of 85. Over 30 percent of respondents were over the age of 80, with about half of those individuals being over the age of 85.



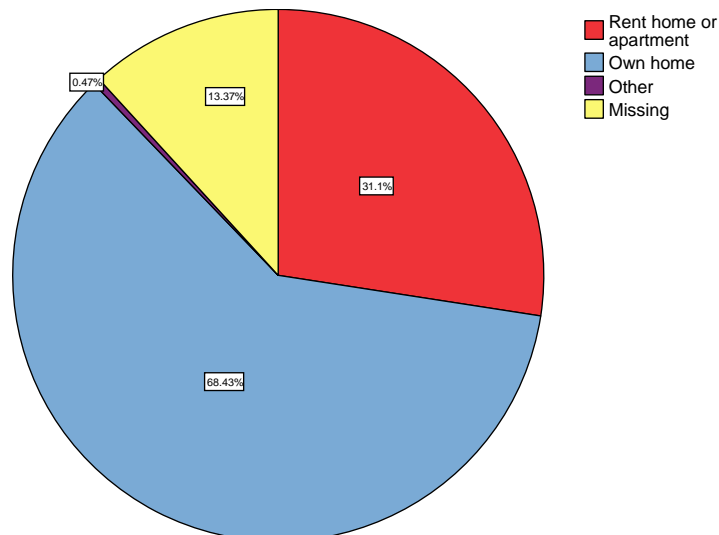
The majority of respondents (90.7%) were Caucasian, which coincides with the total population of Sussex County, which is 94.1 percent Caucasian. Only five individuals from Latino origin, one African American, and five of Asian descent completed need assessments.

What Is Your Race/Ethnicity #6



Of the 24 municipalities in Sussex County, about half (53.9%) were from Hamburg, Hardyston, Hopatcong, Newton, Sparta, and Vernon. Most respondents either lived alone (44.1%) or lived with their spouse (27.6%). More than half (68.4%) reported owning their own home and almost a third (31.1%) reported renting a home or an apartment.

What Is Your Home Status #5



About 37 percent of participants reported having an income of less than \$15,000 and more than half (67.4%) reported having income of less than \$24,999 per year. According to the 2005 Census Bureau the mean Social Security income for Sussex County was \$14,300 and the mean total retirement income was \$22,690. Many of the respondents (68.4%) also reported owning their own home. With property taxes being extremely high in New Jersey, this raises concern for low-income senior citizens on fixed incomes who are trying to maintain their independence in the community.

Do You Rent or Own Your Own Home		
	Frequency	Percentage
Rent Home or Apartment	200	31.1%
Own Home	440	68.4%
Other	3	0.5%

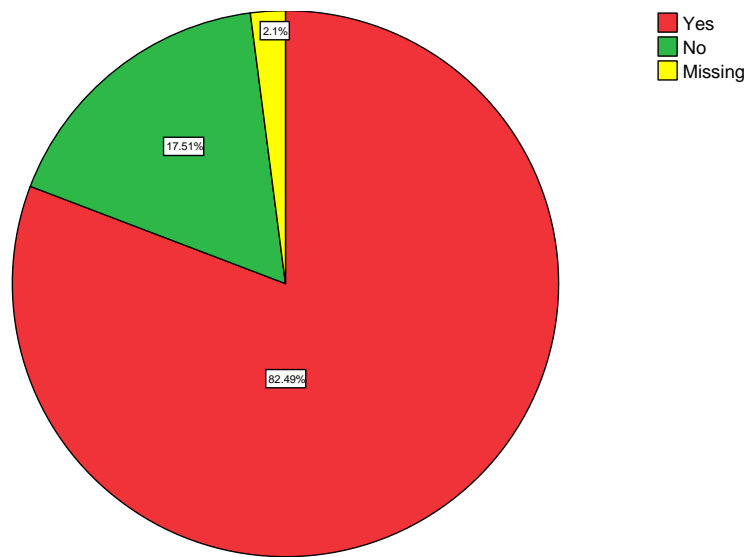
What Is Your Income		
	Frequency	Percentage
Less Than \$15,000	203	37.4%
\$15,000-\$24,999	163	30.0%
\$25,000-\$39,999	71	13.1%
\$40,000-\$59,999	66	12.2%
\$60,000-\$75,000	22	4.1%
More Than \$75,000	18	3.3%

Median Property Taxes Paid in 2005	
Sussex County	\$5,363
New Jersey	\$5,352

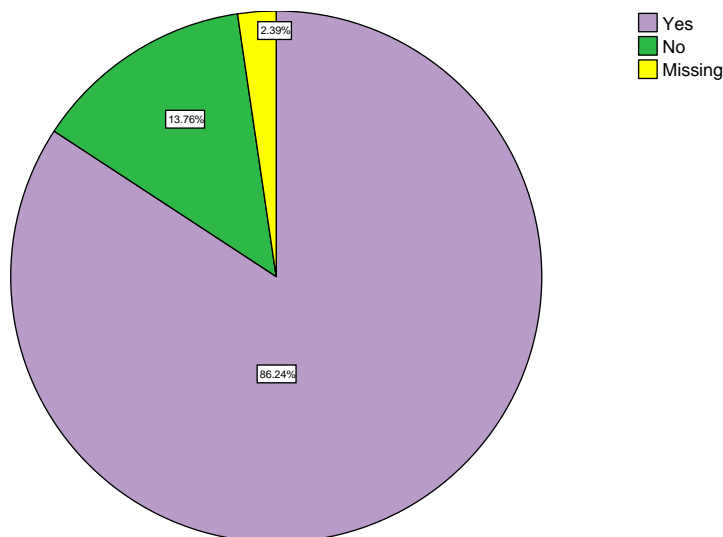
Healthcare and Seniors

Almost all participants (94.9%) had a doctor visit in the previous six months of completing the survey. A large majority (82.5%) of participants had a health screening and (75.2%) had a flu shot in the previous 12 months. The participants who did visit a doctor in the previous six months were about five times more likely to also have had a health screening in the previous 12 months than those who did not visit a doctor. The majority of the respondents (86.2%) participate in a prescription drug plan.

Have You Had A Health Screening In The Last 12 Months # 16



Do You Participate In A Prescription Drug Plan # 14



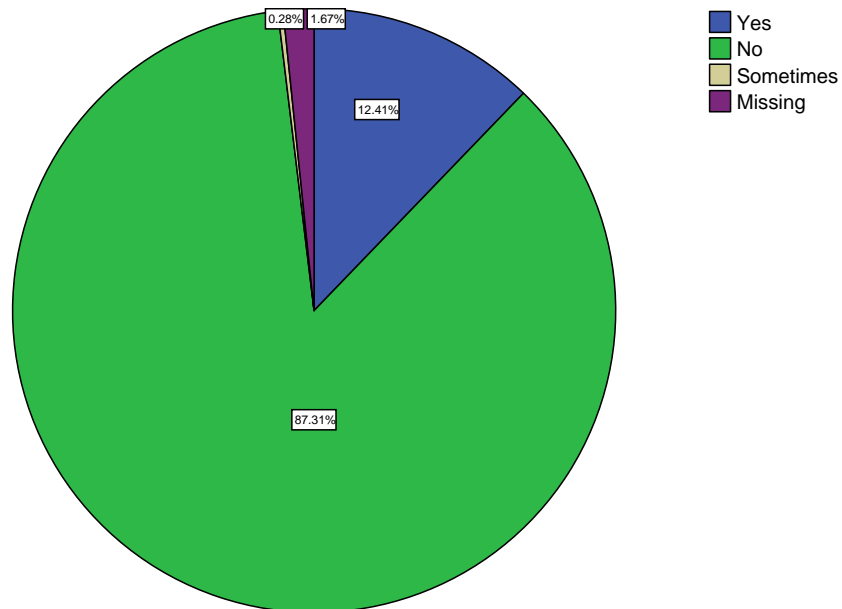
Only 12.7 percent of respondents reported needing help with Medicare or insurance paperwork. During the year 2005, the Sussex County State Health Insurance Program (SHIP) serviced 622 Medicare beneficiaries with over 2,200 counseling hours. Of those who reported needing assistance with Medicare or insurance paperwork, 90.8% participate in a prescription drug plan.

Do You Need Assistance With Medicare or Insurance Paperwork		
	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	90	12.7%
No	617	86.9%
Sometimes	3	4.0%

Independent Living

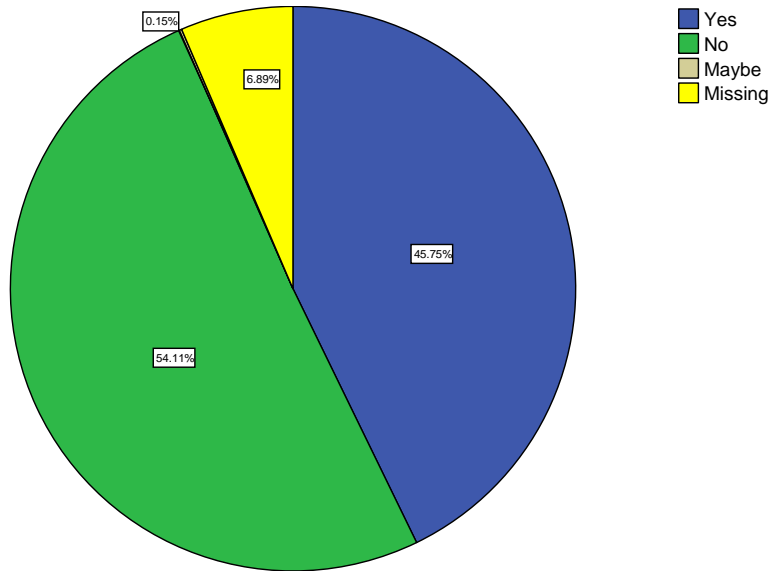
The majority of the respondents (87.3%) did not need assistance with activities of daily living (ADL). Activities of daily living include dressing, toileting, eating, functional mobility, and personal hygiene and grooming. More participants reported a need for assistance with household chores (23.9%) than assistance with activities of daily living (12.4%). Most respondents reported needing help with laundry, food preparation, and outside work, including snow removal and lawn maintenance.

Do You Need Assistance With ADL's # 9



About two-thirds (68.3%) of respondents who reported needing assistance with activities of daily living have a support system in place. Of those participants who reported only needing assistance sometimes or not at all, almost half (42.8%) had a support system in place if the need were to arise.

Do You Have A Support System In Place For ADL's # 19



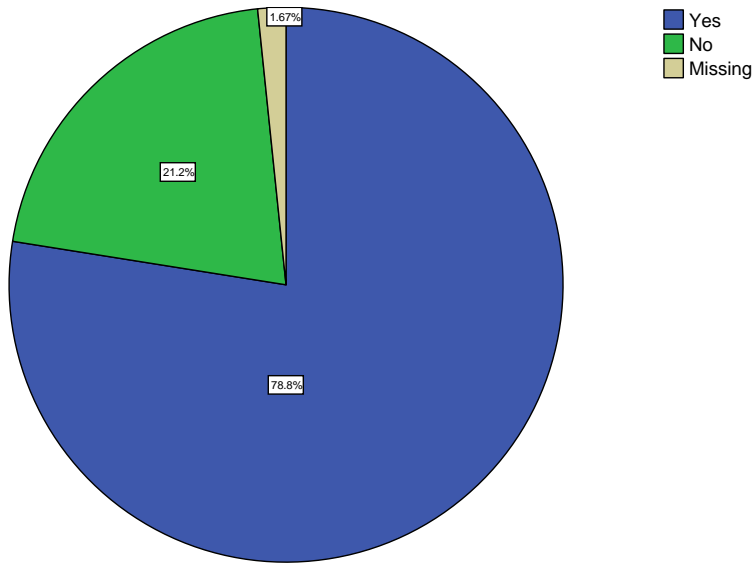
Has a Support System In Place For ADL's	
Needs Assistance With ADL's	68.3%
Does Not Need Assistance With ADL's	42.8%

Does Not Have a Support System In Place For ADL's	
Needs Assistance With ADL's	31.7%
Does Not Need Assistance With ADL's	57.2%

Services and Programs

More than ¾ of participants (78.8%) reported that they are aware of the Division of Senior Services. The majority (85%) of respondents indicated that they are able to access services.

Are You Aware of the Division of Senior Services # 29

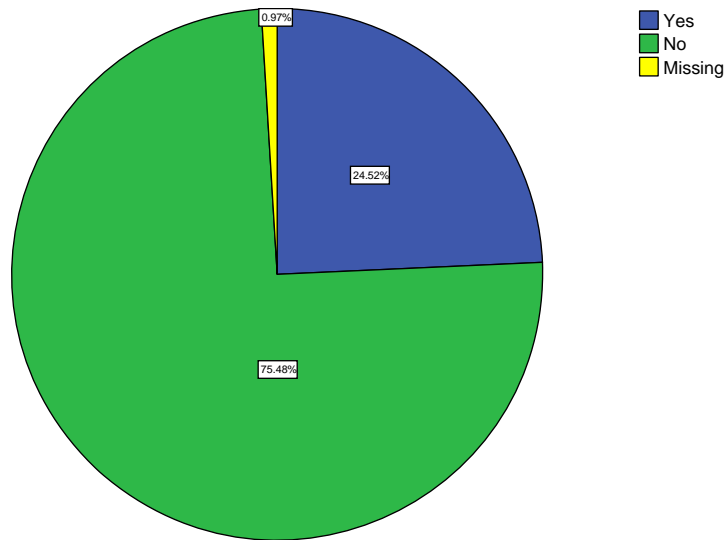


About 1/5 (19.8%) of participants reported a need for income tax assistance. In 2005 the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program helped over 300 low-income seniors prepare Federal and State income taxes.

Do You Need Assistance With Tax Preparation		
	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	142	19.8%
No	574	80.2%

While only 4.4 percent of participants utilized the Meals On Wheels (MOW) program, 24.5 percent attended one of the congregate nutrition sites. In 2005, Meals On wheels served 41,192 meals to over 356 clients.

Congregate Nutrition Site Attendance # 20



Nearly ¾ of respondents (72.6%) attend a senior club. Of the participants who attended senior clubs, 73.5 percent were aware of services. Of those who did not attend senior clubs, only 54.7 percent were aware of services.

Attends a Senior Club or Group	
Aware of the Services Provided By the Health Department	73.5%
Not Aware of the Services Provided By the Health Department	26.5%

Does Not Attend a Senior Club or Group	
Aware of the Services Provided By the Health Department	54.7%
Not Aware of the Services Provided By the Health Department	45.3%

Discussion

The results indicate that the majority of seniors are aware of services; however, a significant number (31.3%) report that Sussex County is lacking needed services. Respondents indicated transportation to be the most important service needed. In addition, transportation was stated to be the most significant reason for not being able to access services. Older adults' ability to maintain independence in the community is predicted by adequate transportation. In Sussex County, transit is often the only way for elderly and disabled persons to access health and social services, and other essential needs. Outreach is an important part of delivering services to the senior population. While computer technology is increasingly a main source of communication in our society, we cannot assume that this is true for seniors as well. Almost 2/3 of respondents reported not having access to a computer. Therefore it is important to continue traditional methods, as well as creative methods of outreach and communication with this population.

Over a third of respondents had an income of less than \$15,000, yet more than two-thirds of respondents indicated owning their own home. The average property taxes paid in 2005 for Sussex County was \$5,363. This raises the issue of affordability of independent living for seniors on fixed incomes. Less than a third of seniors who expressed a need for assistance with activities of daily living (ADL's) utilized the home delivered meals program. However, when asked what tasks they needed help with, a majority reported needing assistance with preparing meals and going food shopping. There may need to be a greater effort in outreach to the senior population regarding the Meals On Wheels program. The service provided by this agency addresses these issues and offers a solution. Only a very small number of participants who live alone reported needing assistance with ADLs, but almost a third of participants who live with other adults reported needing assistance. Many seniors have trouble with maintenance and the upkeep of their home. The majority of respondents indicated cleaning gutters, raking leaves, mowing the lawn, and shoveling snow to be the most difficult to do and the most difficult to receive assistance with. It is also the small tasks that can be a challenge for older adults like changing a light bulb, vacuuming, or taking out the garbage.

The needs assessment suggests that programs involving home and community-based care are an increasing need. According to the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, about 60 percent of people over 65 will need some type of long term care assistance during their lives (2005). The cost of nursing home and assisted living long term care services in New Jersey ranges from about \$30,900 to \$80,180 per year (AARP, 2005). Many individuals are unable to afford these costs and do not have an adequate support system or services to remain in the community. Long term care spending accounts for one-third of states' Medicaid budget, which now accounts for 21.9 percent of states' total budget (Reinhard, 2005). About half of all women and a third of all men will need nursing home care at some point in their lives, with even more needing home and community based care (Conaway & Diegnan, 2006). These issues potentially affect everyone, whether one is the individual in need, the caregiver, or the taxpayer.