

Cuyahoga County: Preparing for an Aging Future

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Introduction

The Cuyahoga County Division of Senior and Adult Services (DSAS) is a part of the Cuyahoga County Department of Health and Human Services. DSAS serves as a funder for nonprofits and municipal senior centers, as well as a service provider, supporting services such as transportation, social activities, home-delivered meals and congregate meals. As an organization, DSAS has positioned itself as a leader in the senior services community in Greater Cleveland. The agency is among the leading agencies that work hard to ensure the needs of the county's older residents are met, and that they are able to age safely with dignity and respect. This report will provide a look at the current population of older adults, across the country and within the county. It will also examine the current state of funding for older adult services and supports in Cuyahoga County and show where those dollars are spent. Finally, we will examine demographic projections for the country and the county and explore what could be done to respond to and prepare for this demographic shift.

Current demographics

The current population of the United States is 330,060,490 people,¹ with approximately 22.8 percent 60 years of age or older. In Ohio, there are currently 2,814,200 adults older than age 60, making up 24.3 percent of the population.² In Cuyahoga County, the United States Census Bureau estimates that there are 319,264 persons older than age 60, representing 25.8 percent of the county.

¹ Population Clock. (2021). United States Census. <https://www.census.gov/popclock/>

² McElroy, U. (2021) Ohio Department of Aging. *Proponent Testimony*.
https://ohiohouse.gov/committees/finance/meetings/cmte_h_finance_1_2021-02-10-0930_63

Location	Percentage of individuals older than 60
United States	22.8
Ohio	24.3
Cuyahoga County	25.8

Funding for Cuyahoga County Senior and Adult Services

Cuyahoga County passed its first Health and Human Services (HHS) levy in 1932, the first local levy in Ohio to support programs and services for older adults.³ Today, in Cuyahoga County there are two HHS levies. One of the levies, totaling 4.8 mills, *⁴ was approved by voters in 2016 and expires in December 2024. The other is a 4.7 mill levy, approved by voters in April 2020 (Issue 33). It will expire in December 2028. Combined, these levies bring in more than \$270 million annually to the HHS levy fund.⁵

The amount of money budgeted for the county’s Division of Senior and Adult Services in the 2020-2021 Biennial Budget was \$22.3 million annually. After the passage of Issue 33 in the spring of 2020, Cuyahoga County went through a series of [hearings](#) where the county executive and council deliberated on how to spend the additional revenue in 2021. As a result of those deliberations, DSAS was awarded an additional \$2.1 million. With that addition, the total budget for the division in 2021 is approximately \$24.5 million.⁶

DSAS’ budget relies mostly on the Cuyahoga County Health and Human Services levies, with levy funds making up 85 percent of its overall budget. The amount of money that comes to DSAS from the HHS levy fund, approximately \$20.9 million, represents less than 10 percent of the total Health and Human Services levy fund budget (approximately \$278 million).

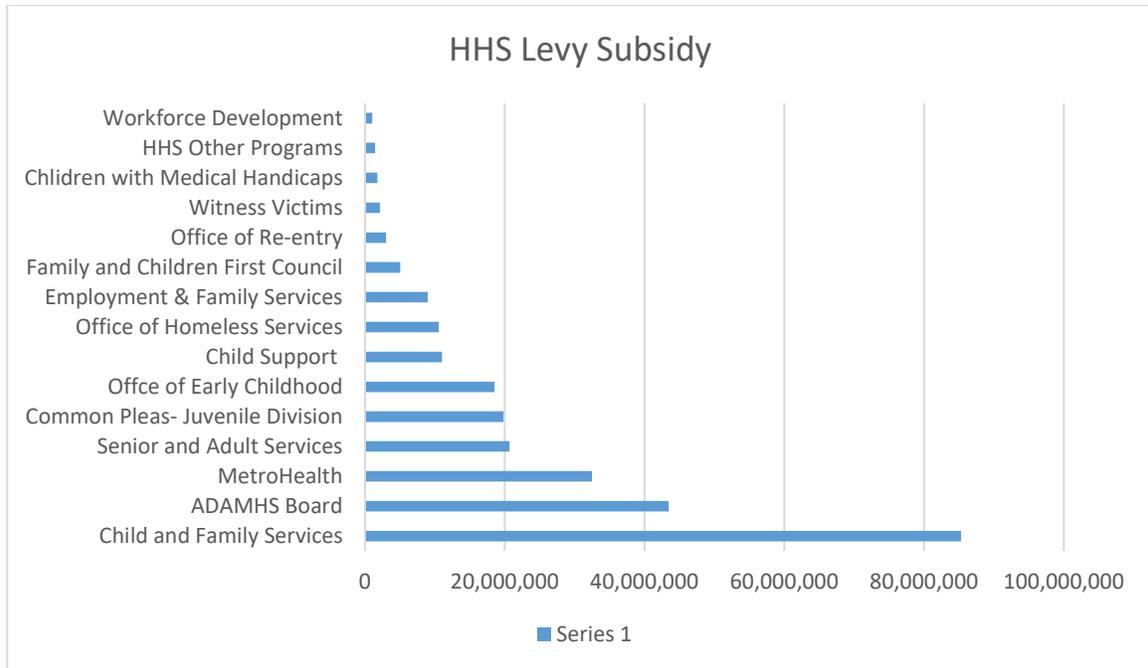
³ Muttillio, E. (2018). *Should Your Address Determine Access to Aging Services?*

<https://www.communitysolutions.com/research/address-determine-access-aging-services-analysis-senior-tax-levies-ohio/>

⁴ *Local property tax rates are always computed in mills. One mill costs the property owner \$1.00 for every \$1,000 of assessed valuation each year. <https://treasurer.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/funding-schools.aspx>

⁵ 2020-2021 Adopted Biennial Budget. (2020). Cuyahoga County. https://fiscalofficer.cuyahogacounty.us/pdf_fiscalofficer/en-US/obm/2020/2020-21-AdoptedBiennialBudget.pdf

⁶ 2020-2021 Adopted Biennial Budget. (2020). Cuyahoga County. https://fiscalofficer.cuyahogacounty.us/pdf_fiscalofficer/en-US/obm/2020/2020-21-AdoptedBiennialBudget.pdf



According to research from 2018, Franklin County spends approximately \$178 per capita for seniors age 60 and older from its senior levy funds. In Hamilton County, senior funding is \$120 per capita.⁷ Even with Cuyahoga County’s HHS levy increase passage, its spending per capita increased from \$55 to \$76. This is below the average amount spent per capita among all senior levies across the state of Ohio (\$77 per capita).⁸

If Cuyahoga County were to fund DSAS at the same per senior capita rate as Franklin County, DSAS would receive \$56.9 million from HHS levy funding, more than twice its current funding level.

State of Older Adults in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County

Older adults in the region are facing difficult circumstances, which have become even more pronounced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We found that even before COVID-19, 26 percent of older adults in Cuyahoga County had to choose between food and at least one other necessity, such as housing, medical care or utilities.⁹ During COVID-19, two-thirds of Ohioans age 65 and older said they used their stimulus payments to pay mostly for those same basic expenses—the most of any age group. In the City of Cleveland, as of 2019,

⁷ Muttillio, E. (2018). *Should Your Address Determine Access to Aging Services?* <https://www.communitysolutions.com/research/address-determine-access-aging-services-analysis-senior-tax-levies-ohio/>

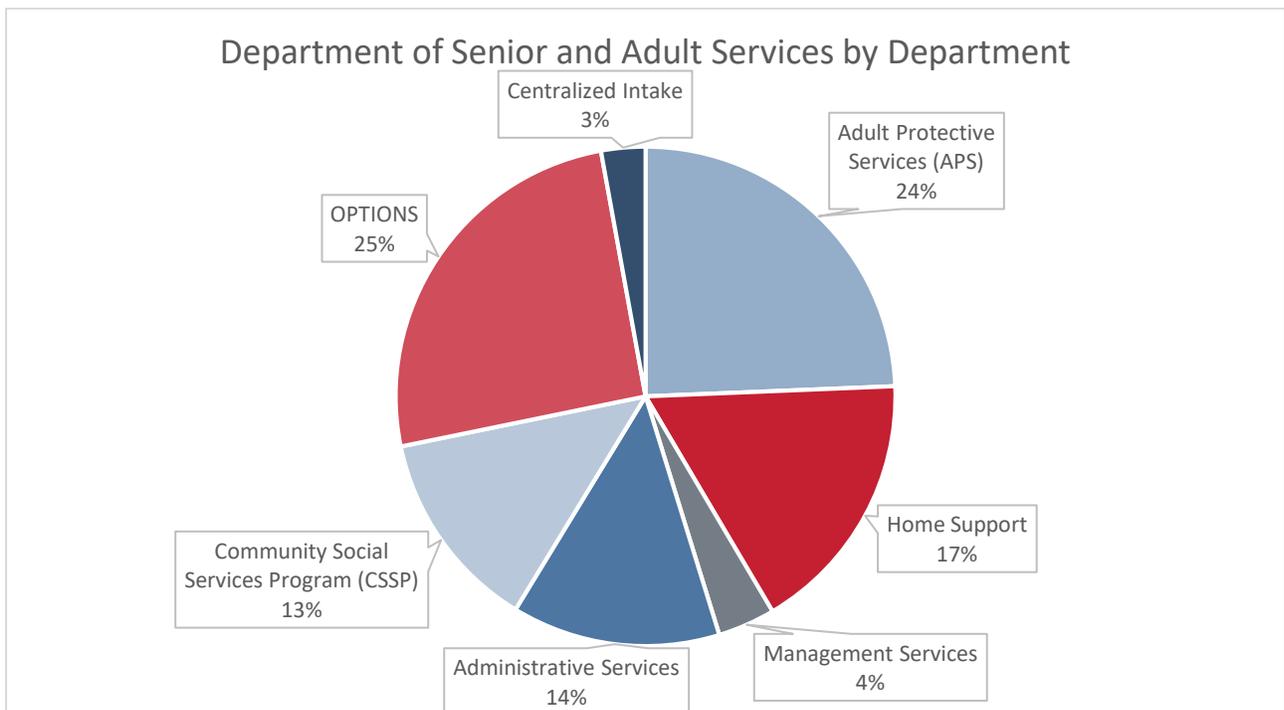
⁸ Muttillio, E. (2018). *Should Your Address Determine Access to Aging Services?* <https://www.communitysolutions.com/research/address-determine-access-aging-services-analysis-senior-tax-levies-ohio/>

⁹ Campbell, E. (2020, December). The Cleveland Plain Dealer/Cleveland.com. *Older Adults Especially Struggle in Cleveland, America’s poorest largest city.* <https://www.cleveland.com/opinion/2020/10/older-adults-especially-struggle-in-cleveland-americas-poorest-large-city-emily-campbell.html>

nearly 12,000 older adults lived in poverty. That means the number and share of people older than age 65 who lived in poverty grew in Cleveland to 22.7 percent, compared with 22.0 percent in 2018. **Cleveland now has the second-worst poverty rate for individuals over 65, trailing only Miami, Florida.**¹⁰

Programming for Cuyahoga County Department of Senior and Adult Services

Cuyahoga County Department of Senior and Adult Services has one of the largest Adult Protective Services divisions in the State of Ohio. Additionally, it offers the OPTIONS for Independent Living program to approximately 1,500 individuals in the county.¹¹ Even though the division completed 21,973 home visits and 48,878 phone calls to seniors in 2020,¹² it admitted in one of its annual reports that it's are only able to serve a "fraction" of the older adult population in the county with its current level of funding.



¹⁰ Campbell, E. (2020, December). The Center for Community Solutions. *Cleveland is now the poorest big city in the country.* <https://www.communitysolutions.com/cleveland-now-poorest-big-city-country/#:~:text=In%202019%2C%20more%20than%20114%2C000,and%20nearly%2012%2C000%20older%20adults.&text=The%20number%20and%20share%20of,rate%20fell%20to%2018.8%20percent>.

¹¹ 2020 Cuyahoga County DSAS Annual Meeting, https://youtu.be/FASv_CySdCM?t=1977

¹² 2020 Cuyahoga Count DSAS Annual Meeting, https://youtu.be/FASv_CySdCM?t=1977

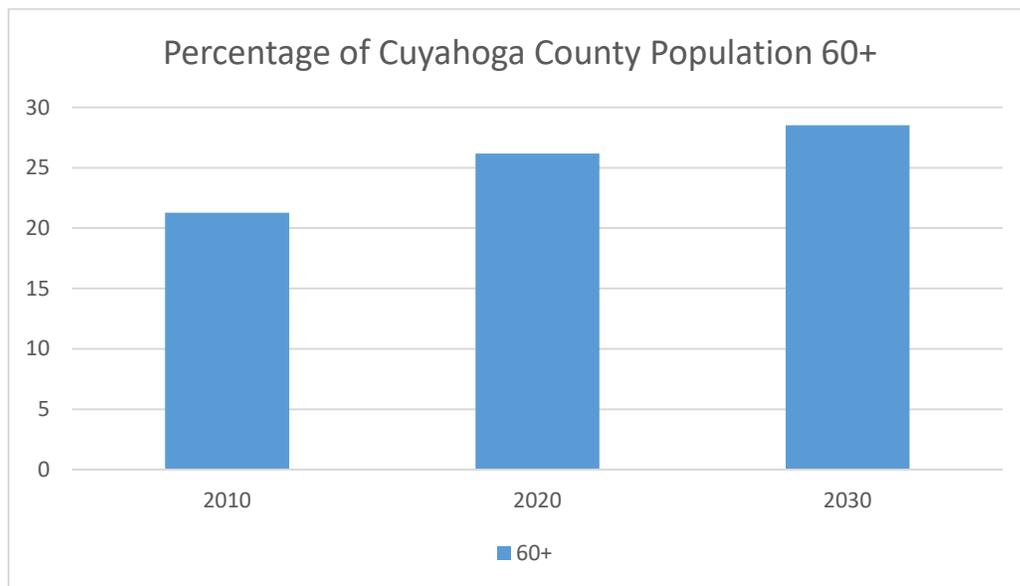
The Future

Demographic Projections

According to the United States Census, in 2034, there will be more individuals in the U.S. who are age 65 and older (77 million) than there will be children under age 18 (74 million).¹³

By 2030, individuals who are 60 years of age and older will be 26.1 percent of the population in the United States. In Ohio, the Miami University School of Gerontology estimates that by 2030, 26.3 percent of the population of the state will be 60 years of age or older.¹⁴ Closer to home, by 2030, Cuyahoga County's population will have almost 30 percent (28.7) of the total population 60 years of age or older.

Location	Percentage of adults 60+
United States	26.1
Ohio	26.3
Cuyahoga County	28.7



The shift to older adults outnumbering young adults is not far away. In fact, in some Cuyahoga County council districts, the change is already happening. According to Census data, County

¹³ Linzer, K. Ray, B. Singh, N. (2020, July). McKinsey. *Planning for an Aging Population*.

<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/planning-for-an-aging-population>

¹⁴ Interactive Data Center. (2020). Miami University.

<https://www.miamioh.edu/cas/academics/centers/scripps/research/ohio-population/interactive/index.html>

Council District 1 (Nan Baker), District 4 (Scott Tuma), District 6 (Jack Schron) and District 11 (Sunny Simon) have the highest percentages of older adults. We expect updated data will show that these districts may have already flipped so they are home to more older adults than children.

Supporting the Needs of Seniors

The labor-force participation rate for adults age 65 and older has increased by 4 percentage points over the past four years, so we are seeing a trend of people staying in the workforce longer.¹⁵ Additionally, according to the Federal Reserve Bank, in 2020, 1 out of every 4 Americans had no retirement savings and fewer than 4 out of 10 Americans feel their retirement savings are on track.¹⁶ According to a recent study, bankruptcies for older adults are three times higher than they were in 1991.¹⁷ This means that while seniors' current needs are high, the number of seniors who will need a strong health and human services safety net is sure to rise in the coming years.

It is true that globally, seniors are the wealthiest age cohort in the world, according to the Brookings Institution. This contributes to the overall "silver economy,"¹⁸ where seniors will continue to have an enormous impact on economic and community development. Therefore, the need to ensure that seniors are valued and supported in their communities has both humanitarian and economic consequences. That said, as evidenced by the current levels of senior poverty locally, not everyone will have the same level of access to resources to help maintain dignity while aging. Many seniors are also likely to live alone. According to the Pew Research Center,¹⁹ in the U.S., 27 percent of adults ages 60 and older currently live alone, that's more than 50 percent higher than seniors in the rest of the world. U.S. adults ages 60 and older also are more likely than their counterparts around the world to live as a couple without children at home – with nearly half of Americans in this age group (46 percent) sharing a home with only a spouse or partner, also according to Brookings. With statistics like these, it will become even more important to address issues such as social isolation, how to combat loneliness and how to best provide home care services in the future. This begs the question, what can be done to meet the need of a changing county population?

¹⁵ Linzer, K. Ray, B. Singh, N. (2020, July). McKinsey. *Planning for an Aging Population*.

<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/planning-for-an-aging-population>

¹⁶ Federal Reserve Bank. (2020) *Report on Economic Well Being of U.S. Households in 2019, Featuring Supplemental Data from 2020*. <https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/files/2019-report-economic-well-being-us-households-202005.pdf>

¹⁷ Thorne, D. Foohey, P. Lawless, R. Porter, K. (2018). SSRN. *Graying of U.S. Fallout from Life in a Risk Society*. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3226574

¹⁸ Fengler, W. (2021) Brookings. *The silver economy is coming of age: A look at the growing spending power of seniors*. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2021/01/14/the-silver-economy-is-coming-of-age-a-look-at-the-growing-spending-power-of-seniors/>

¹⁹ Ausubel, J (2020). Pew Research Center. *Older people are more likely to live alone in the United States than elsewhere in the world*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/03/10/older-people-are-more-likely-to-live-alone-in-the-u-s-than-elsewhere-in-the-world/>

Age Friendly Communities

Across the country, communities have signed on to the World Health Organization’s “Age Friendly Community” initiative. The effort calls for a five-year process to assess, plan and implement public policies and community items that would improve the lives of older adults. Cities across the state of Ohio, including Cleveland, Akron and Oxford, have all committed to being Age Friendly cities. In central Ohio, both Franklin County and Columbus are Age Friendly communities. What if Cuyahoga County considered becoming an Age Friendly county? Like other communities across the state, through research, policy, program planning and implementation, the county could further prepare for the demographic shift that is already underway.

Conclusion

One thing is clear. Cuyahoga County is an aging county, in an aging state, in an aging country. It’s now the time to plan and implement a strong support network for older adults in our community. What is not yet clear, however, is exactly what needs to be improved in order for the county to adequately respond to the needs of its seniors. The programs available through DSAS will likely see more demand, through a combination of changing demographics, as well as increased visibility and marketing. The urgency to ensure the aging network is prepared for that increased workload, will be of vital importance in the months and years ahead.



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