

Assessing the Needs of Older Adults in a Small New England City

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Overview

- Context
- Rationale
- Theoretical framework
- Study aims
- Sample
- Research design
- Methods
- Results
- Limitations
- Implications for social work practice

Setting the context:

Evidence to support the critical importance of understanding the needs of older adults in the communities we serve

- One in five Americans is sixty years of age or older
- Anticipated support needed for this population
- National versus local needs
- Guidance for community service organizations

Clarifying the rationale:

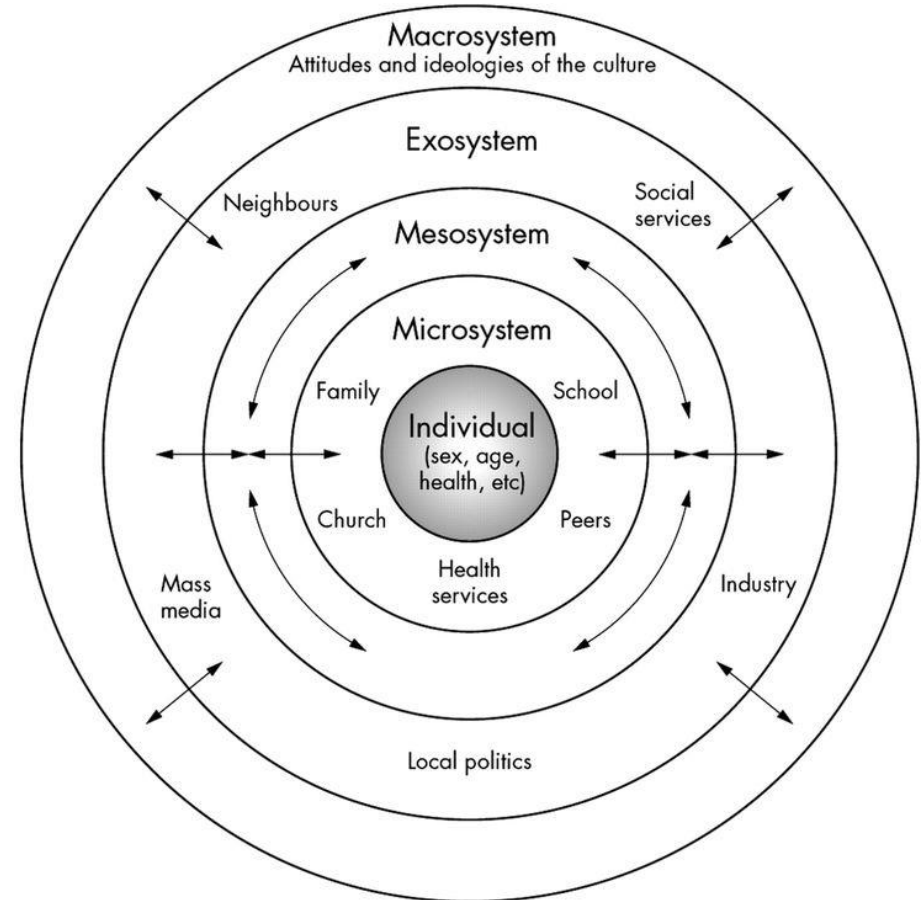
How did we arrive at the conclusion that this study is appropriate for this need?

- Partnership with and guidance from the Amesbury Council on Aging and Senior Community Center
- Needs assessment as an evidence-based practice
- Providing a voice to the community served

Theoretical/conceptual framework

Ecological systems theory

- Reconfiguring
- Equipping
- Reinforcing



Study questions and aims

Research questions

- What are the unique characteristics of the senior community in Amesbury, MA?
- How is the community utilizing services provided by the Amesbury Council on Aging?
- How does the community define their anticipated future needs?

Aim 1:

- Goal: Determine perceived needs
- Hypothesis: Perceived needs will be aligned with previously identified needs, but some new trends may emerge

Aim 2:

- Goal: Stratify needs by age
- Hypothesis: Age-specific trends will be identified

Aim 3:

- Goal: Evaluate mental health needs
- Hypothesis: Community will share mental health needs, and age-specific trends will emerge

Sample & comparison group

Data source: Survey

Sampling frame: Obtained from City Clerk's office

- Selection criteria
 - Age (55+)
 - Residing in Amesbury, MA

Sample: Convenience

Comparison group: None

Research design and study methods

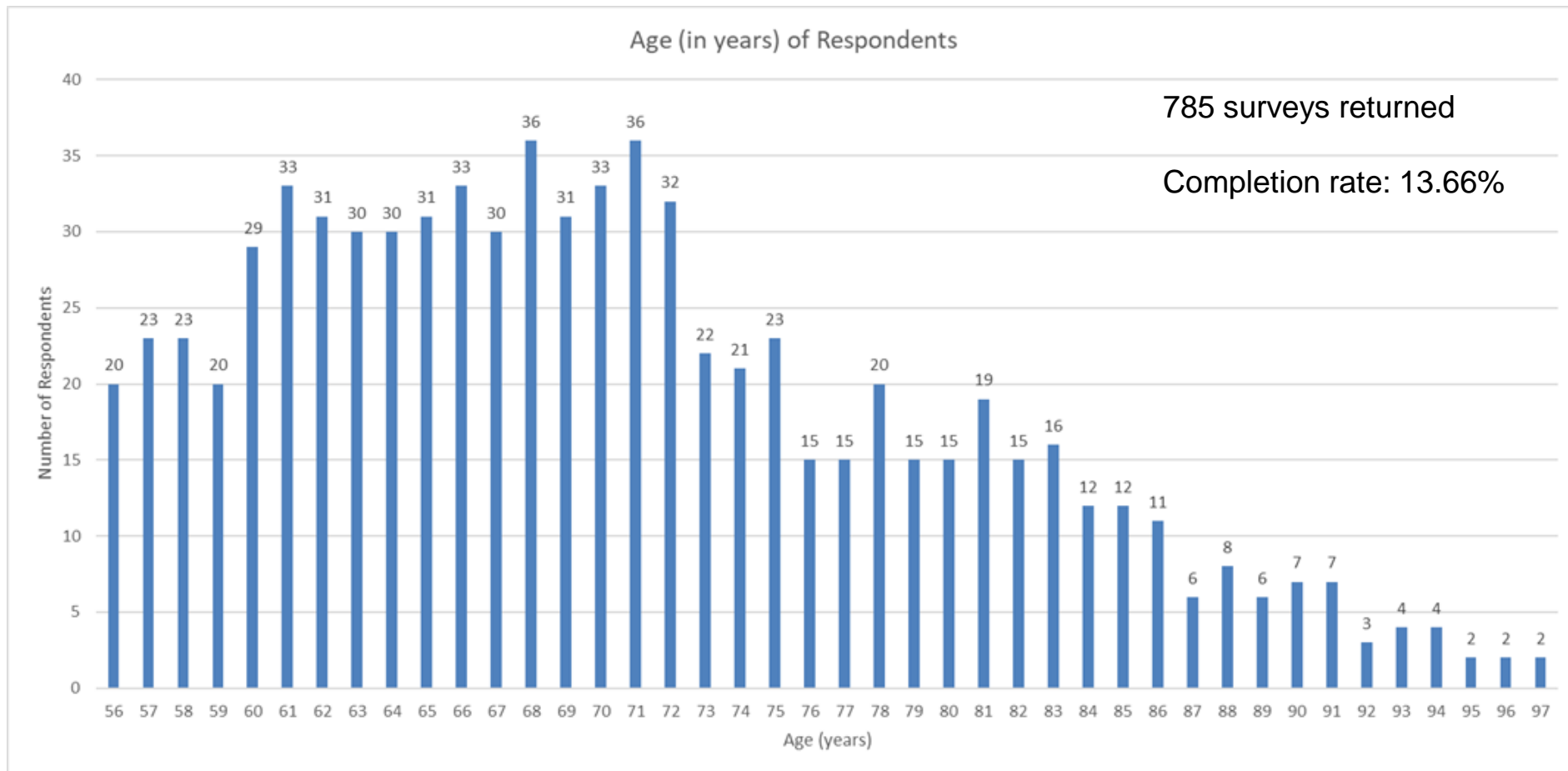
Research design

- Mixed methods
- Descriptive
- Survey
- Cross-sectional

Study methods

- Data collection specifics:
 - USPS mail
 - Online (Survey Monkey)
 - Senior Center
 - 1 month
 - Likert scales, yes/no, free-response
- Analysis approaches
 - Divide into age groups
 - Assign “Need Score”
 - Explore correlations between need and age

Results: Overview



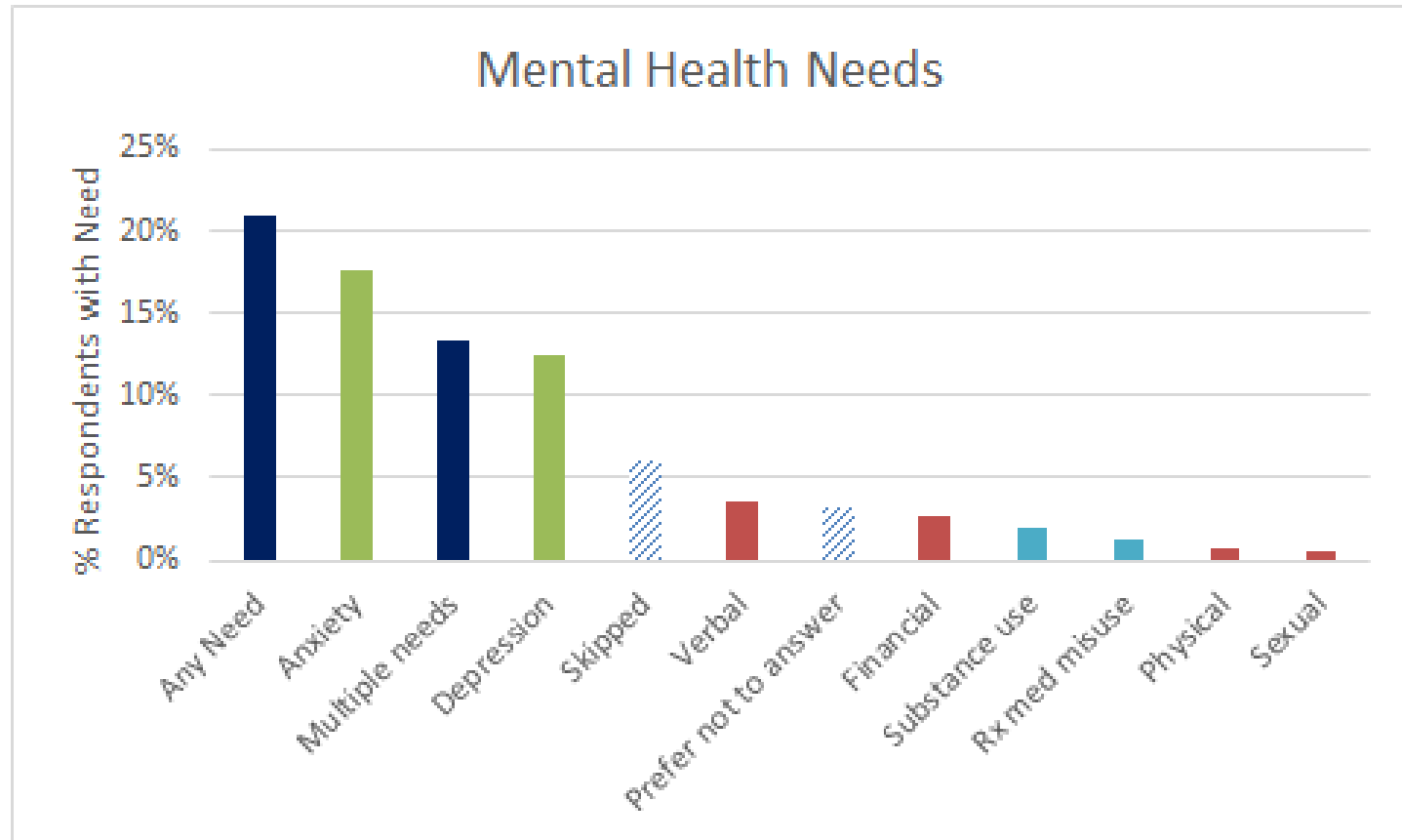
Results: Areas of Need Identified

Area of Need	% Respondents
Mental Health	21.0%
*Legal/Financial	13.9%
Social	11.9%
*Transportation	7.1%
*Personal Care	3.9%
Health	4.0%
*Housing	2.4%
Food	1.6%

* Indicates statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) difference between age groups.

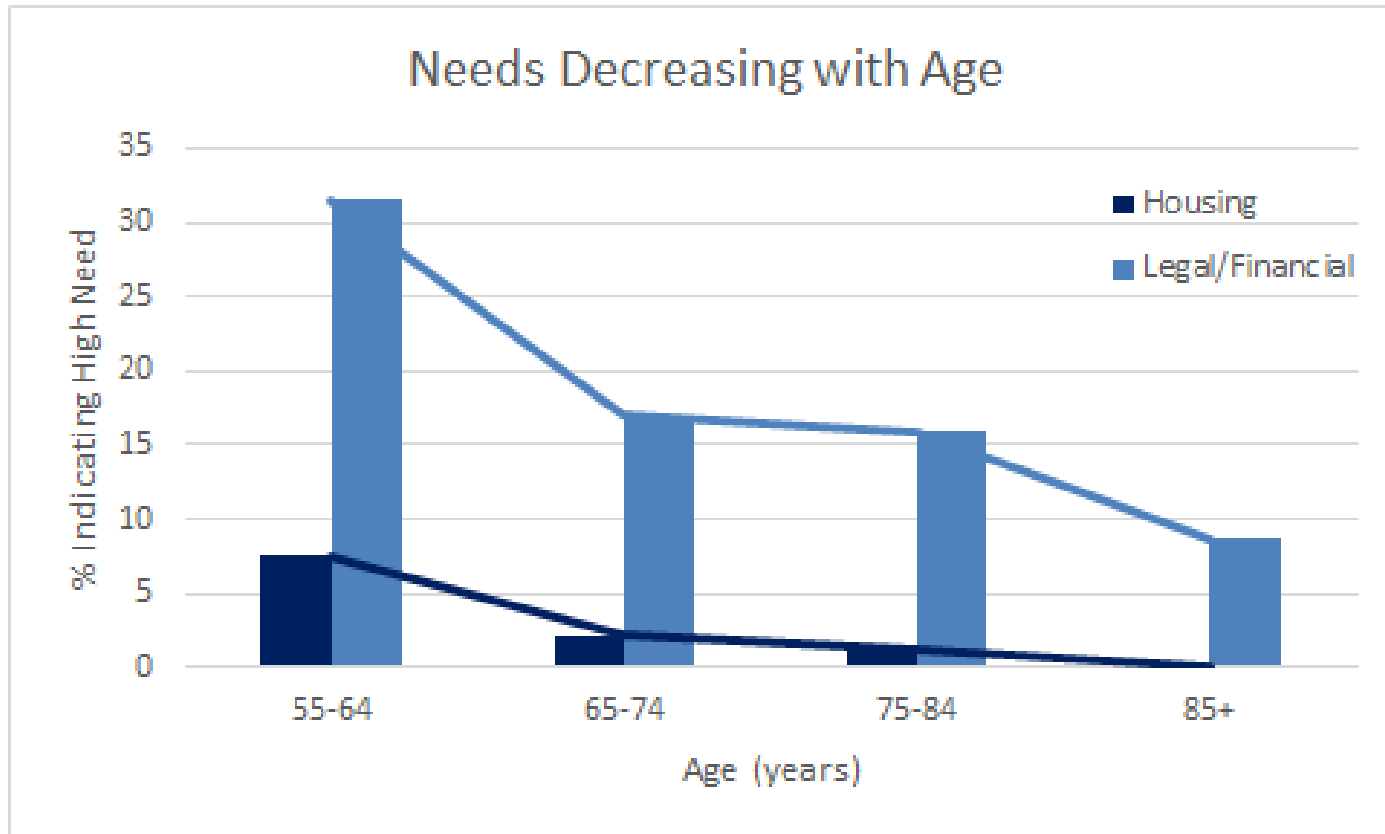
Note: Individuals may have more than one need, or zero needs, thus total will not equal 100%

Results: Mental Health Needs



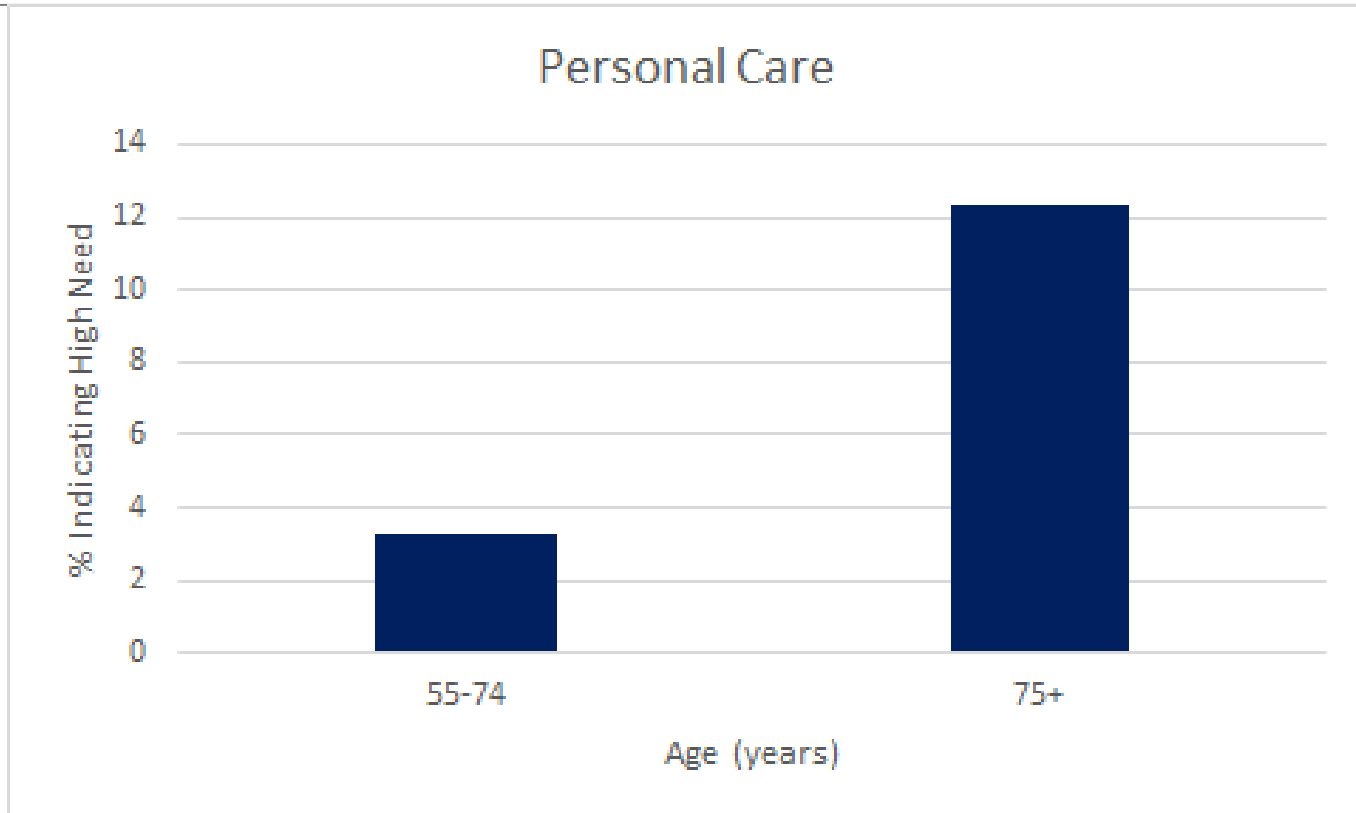
*No statistically significant trends were observed with regards to sex or age.

Results: Decreasing Need



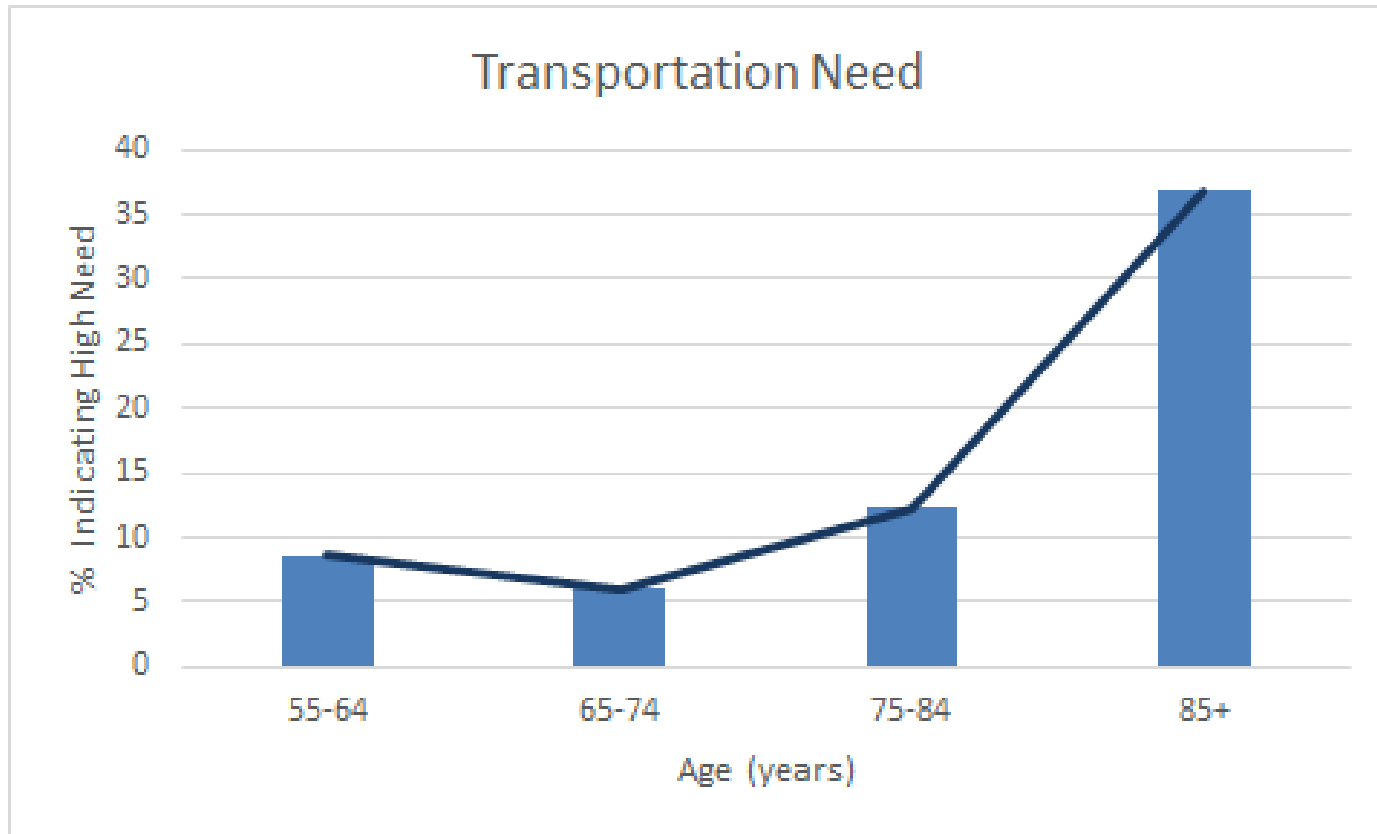
p<0.05

Results: Increasing Need



$p < 0.05$

Results: Variable Need



$p < 0.05$

Study limitations

- Accessibility of survey
- Length of survey
- Physical limitations
- Cultural barriers
- Range of response options
- Generalizability

Potential implications

- In practice
- In policy
- In social justice

Areas for further research

- Open-ended/qualitative data
- Follow-up needs analysis in three years
- Areas of diversity: Disability, chronic illness, race