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Access To Transportation For Chittenden County Senior Citizens

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Introduction
- Aging often means loss of independence and ability to drive.¹
- Driving cessation can lead to depression and lack of mobility.²
- An estimated 25% of Vermonters will be 65 years or older by 2030.³
- We surveyed senior citizens in Chittenden County, VT to determine access to transportation and its effect on their lives.
- We focused on seniors without personal vehicles and assessed their transportation challenges.

Important Daily Activities Surveyed

Medical/Healthcare Appointments  Pharmacy  Grocery Store
Essential Errands (Bank, Post Office, etc.) Religious Services  Visit Family/Friends
Community and Leisure Activities (ie. events at senior centers, community meals, bingo, etc.) Self-care activities (ie. hair appointments, fitness classes, etc.)

Methods
- 1,221 surveys were distributed to senior congregate meal sites, senior housing, and other senior community providers in Chittenden County.
- 252 completed surveys were analyzed.
- Surveys consisted of 37 questions assessing transportation access and the perceived importance of various activities.
- Surveys were in English, and required the participant to be literate.
- Individuals were considered to not have a personal vehicle if they reported it being "rarely available" or "not available." (n = 82)
- Activities were considered difficult to get to if individuals reported that it was "never" or "sometimes" easy to get there.
- SPSS was used for statistical analysis.

Findings

Types of Transportation Challenges
Many seniors face a multitude of transportation challenges.

Seniors Who Delay Medical Appointments Due to Lack of Transportation

Of those who consider medical appointments to be very important, 69% of individuals always, often or sometimes delay medical appointments due to lack of transportation.

Seniors Who Find it Difficult to Ask Family and Friends for Rides and Are Dependent on them for Transportation

Of the 35% who indicated difficulty asking family or friends for rides, 40% were often or always dependent on family or friends as their primary mode of transportation.

Percentage of people reporting difficulty getting to important activities
Regardless of activity, >40% of individuals reported having difficulty getting to activities they considered very important.

Conclusion
- The inability to drive combined with the lack of accessible and affordable transportation options leads to missed healthcare appointments, decreased community involvement, and social isolation, which may have detrimental effects on the health and well-being of seniors.
- Seniors commonly report difficulties asking family and friends for rides, yet this is the primary mode of transportation for almost half of them.
- Our data show that there are many seniors who are still facing transportation challenges; it is critical that their access to transportation improves.

Future Directions
- Inability to drive combined with the lack of accessible and affordable transportation options leads to missed healthcare appointments, decreased community involvement, and social isolation, which may have detrimental effects on the health and well-being of seniors.
- Seniors commonly report difficulties asking family and friends for rides, yet this is the primary mode of transportation for almost half of them.
- Our data show that there are many seniors who are still facing transportation challenges; it is critical that their access to transportation improves.

Sources