

REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

February 2007

Characteristics of Older Adults in the Atlanta Region

Since 2000, metro Atlanta has been the fastest growing major city in America. In addition, those 55 and over are growing faster than the population as a whole, with most older adults planning to “age in place,” meaning – contrary to popular belief – that the majority of older adults now living here plan to stay here. This Snapshot examines “aging in place” and other findings from a recent scientific survey of the older adult population in the Atlanta region, conducted by the Carl Vinson Institute of the University of Georgia.

GROWING FAST, GROWING OLDER

The 55 and older population grew at a faster rate than the total population in every county except Henry. (Chart1) Region-wide, the 55 and older population growth rate of 30.6 percent was more than double the total population growth rate of 13.7 percent. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau’s 2005 population estimates)

ARC forecasts that the 55 and older population more than doubles by 2030 and comprise about 27 percent of the region’s overall population. (Source: ARC’s Envision6 forecasts)

TABLE 1
POPULATION AGE 55 AND OVER

	2000	2005	% Change
Cherokee County	19,987	29,134	45.8%
Clayton County	29,139	39,004	33.9%
Cobb County	86,274	116,879	35.5%
DeKalb County	99,203	116,998	17.9%
Douglas County	14,517	18,342	26.3%
Fayette County	16,895	23,868	41.3%
Fulton County	128,598	160,671	24.9%
Gwinnett County	69,807	101,776	45.8%
Henry County	18,118	24,403	34.7%
Rockdale County	12,601	15,545	23.4%
10-County Total	495,139	646,620	30.6%

Chart 1
2000-2005 Population Change

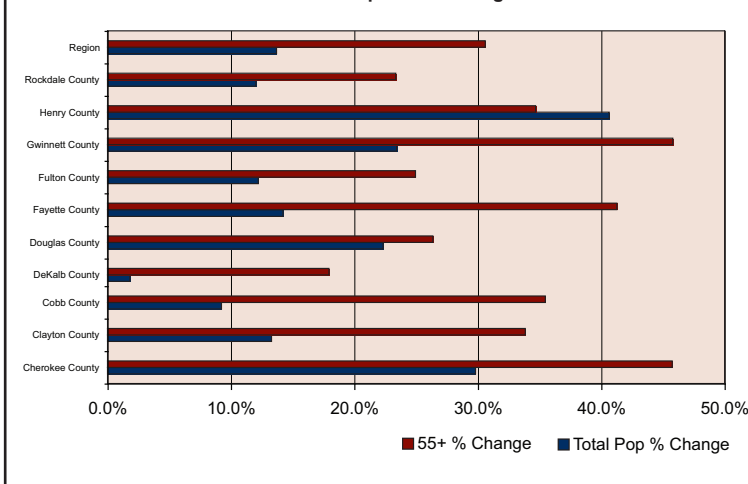


TABLE 2
SURVEY ON AGING CHARACTERISTICS

How would you rate the Atlanta region as a place to retire?	
Excellent	23%
Good	44%
Fair	22%
Poor	10%
Don't Know/Refused	1%
How long have you lived in the Atlanta region?	
Average	37 years
Median	35 years
How long do you plan to live in your current home?	
Less than one year	6.6%
One to three more years	9.5%
Four to six more years	5.6%
Six to ten more years	5.2%
More than ten years	2.0%
Until I retire	1.4%
As long as I can/As long as I live	63.7%
Don't Know/ Refused	6.0%

REGION RATED HIGH AS PLACE TO RETIRE

In the fall of 2006, the Carl Vinson Institute conducted a scientific survey of more than 1,600 adults age 55 and over in the 10-county region. When asked to rate the Atlanta region as a place to retire, **67 percent rated it either excellent or good.**

Residents of the Atlanta region who are 55 and older have lived here, on average, for 37 years. Some 64 percent said they plan to stay in their current residence as long as they can. When asked if they were to move, 52 percent of the respondents would stay within the Atlanta region. **This shows that most of the older adult population will remain in the region and, more than likely, in their current home.**

Additionally, data from the 2000 Census show that Georgia **ranked eighth in the nation in net in-migration of those age 60 and older.** So, in addition to those who plan to stay here, Georgia and metro Atlanta can expect significant in-migration of older adults looking to retire here as well. (Source: Charles Longino, Wake Forest University, “Retirement Migration Trends in Georgia: Who’s Coming, Who’s Going and Why.”)

Surprisingly, there are more 60 and older migrants moving **from Florida to Georgia** than vice versa. In fact, Georgia receives a greater net in-migration of those 60 and old from Florida than any other state.

FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO WWW.ATLANTAREGIONAL.COM



For more information on these issues or to suggest new subjects, please email mcarnathan@atlantaregional.com.
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OLDER ADULTS EXPRESS INTEREST IN DOWNSIZING

While the majority of survey respondents said they would remain in their current house as long as possible, when asked if they were to eventually move, 49 percent said they would move into a smaller house.

**TABLE 3
SURVEY ON AGING CHARACTERISTICS**

If you were to move from your current home, would you find a home that is smaller, larger or about the same size?	
Smaller home	49%
Same size	33%
Larger home	7%
Not sure	8%
Didn't answer	3%
If you were to move, which of the following are the most important factors in choosing where you live?	
To be near family	43%
Affordable housing/cost of living	19%
To be near doctor/good doctors	25%
To have ample entertainment venues	17%
To be around other people my own age	13%
To be in a quiet community	29%
Other	30%
Don't Know/Refused (Vol.)	4%
What is your primary means of transportation?	
Use own car	88%
Driven by others	7%
Use public transportation	4%
Or some other means (SPECIFY)	1%
Didn't answer	0%
How do you plan to get around when you are no longer able to drive?	
Driven by others	57%
Use public transportation	13%
Or some other means (SPECIFY)	10%
Didn't know	21%

Forty-three percent of survey respondents said that if they were to move, they would move closer to family, while only 12 percent said they would move to be closer to people their age. This finding is surprising since a significant amount of **the housing being built for seniors today is age-restricted.**

Since a majority of older adults plan to live in their current house or community for as long as possible, knowing how they plan to travel is critical. Some 88 percent of respondents currently drive their own car, seven percent are driven by others and only four percent take public transportation. When asked how they would travel once they could no longer drive, 55 percent said they would rely on others and 13 percent would rely on public transportation. Also, 21 percent said they did not know.

If anyone is interested in more information or examining county-level trends, please visit

www.atlantaregional.com/aging

to download the entire survey.

INCOMES AND HEALTH CORRELATED

Fewer than half of older adults surveyed reported that their health was "very good" or "excellent." The greater an individual's income, however, the more likely they were to report very good or excellent health. **Only five percent of those with annual incomes less than \$20,000 reported having "excellent" health, compared to 37 percent of those with annual incomes greater than \$100,000.**

**TABLE 4
SURVEY ON AGING CHARACTERISTICS**

Would you say your health is excellent, very good, good, fair or poor?							
	Total	Less than \$20K	\$20K to less than \$30K	\$30K to less than \$50K	\$50K to less than \$75K	\$75K to less than \$100K	\$100K or more
Excellent	21%	5%	8%	13%	23%	31%	37%
Very good	27%	21%	18%	25%	37%	32%	39%
Good	29%	35%	39%	37%	24%	23%	14%
Fair	17%	26%	29%	19%	13%	7%	7%
Poor	5%	12%	5%	5%	3%	6%	3%
Didn't answer	0%						
Total Respondents	1,651	178	152	272	223	132	219
How often do you participate in physical activity?							
	Total	Less than \$20K	\$20K to less than \$30K	\$30K to less than \$50K	\$50K to less than \$75K	\$75K to less than \$100K	\$100K or more
3 or more times a week	56%	34%	45%	59%	61%	60%	64%
1 or 2 times a week	20%	24%	15%	18%	20%	24%	20%
1 or 3 times a month	7%	7%	11%	6%	7%	4%	10%
Less than once a month	6%	10%	10%	7%	5%	3%	4%
Never	11%	24%	18%	10%	6%	8%	3%
Didn't answer	1%	2%	2%	1%			
Total Respondents	1,651	178	152	272	223	132	219

Not surprisingly, the levels of physical activity and income are also related. **Only 34 percent of those with annual incomes under \$20,000 exercise at least three times per week, compared to 64 percent of those with incomes over \$100,000.**

Finally, **there does not seem to be a high correlation between income levels and preventative care.** Regardless of income, the majority of older adults recently had tests for blood pressure, cholesterol, mammograms, pap tests and prostate exams. Similarly, the majority of older adults have not taken these preventive steps:

- only 43 percent recently had a flu shot
- only 42 percent recently had a pneumonia vaccine
- only 39 percent recently had a colorectal screening

A Note about Methodology

The Carl Vinson Institute of the University of Georgia drew 11 independent samples from across the Atlanta region, including the City of Atlanta and Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry and Rockdale counties. In total, 1,651 individuals 55 and over were interviewed in 2006 between Sept. 15 and Oct. 14. The maximum sampling error for any single county is plus or minus eight percent, while the sampling error for the entire region is plus or minus four percent.

