

EMPLOYMENT

**COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S SUMMIT ON AGING
DECEMBER 2015**

READ AHEAD PAPER



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

EMPLOYMENT

BACKGROUND

According to the Montgomery County Age Friendly Community Survey conducted November 2015 , four in ten respondents plan to continue working after age 65; an equal number plan not to work; the remainder are unsure.

Do you think you will continue to work in your older years (i.e. 65+)?

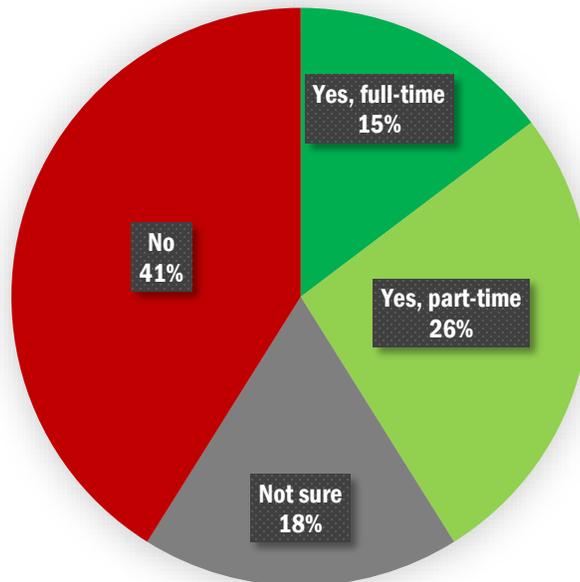


Figure 1

Yet, even as many respondents plan to continue working, nearly half rate employment opportunities as fair or poor – i.e., the second lowest rating for a community attribute (after affordable housing). At the same time, four in ten respondents said they are very concerned or somewhat concerned about their ability to afford a good quality of life after age 65. And, although nine in ten rate the overall quality of life in Montgomery County as good or excellent, one in four would not recommend the County to a family or friend for retirement – the reason for this often is tied to the cost of living.

Hispanic, Asian and Black or African American residents were more likely to express a plan to continue working. This may relate to their higher poverty rates: Overall, 6.5% of County residents age 65 and over live in poverty, but 17% of Hispanic elders, 13% of Asian elders and 10% of Black or African American elders live below the poverty line. Those with some of the greatest poverty levels, i.e., Black or African American residents and Hispanic residents, are even more likely to rate employment opportunities as poor or fair.

Rating for Community Characteristics

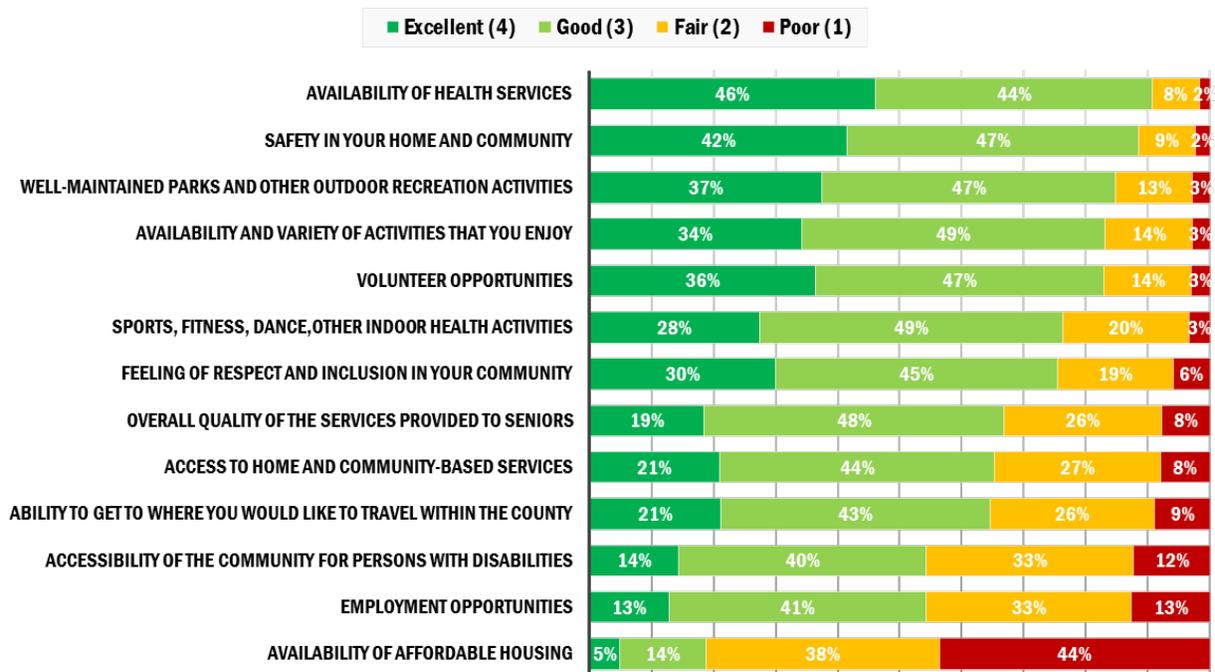


Figure 2

Survey respondents recommended the County take steps to improve employment opportunities, including: attract more jobs and achieve better economic development – especially in the East part of the County; compete for jobs against Virginia and the District of Columbia; develop better transportation system to spur job growth; and, provide more opportunity for young people. Others suggested that the County help small businesses succeed and also communicate to employers the potential benefits of maintaining and hiring older workers.

People of all ages are more likely to find work in a context of available jobs, and Montgomery County is the economic engine of Maryland. Yet, despite Montgomery County’s competitiveness, there is substantial competition among local jurisdictions to attract and retain tens of thousands of jobs. To maximize local employment opportunities,

Montgomery County is working to become more competitive and nimble, to attract and maintain employers. Toward that, the County recently privatized economic development efforts to create a non-profit, private sector corporation that will lead economic development efforts. That effort will continue to be supported by County efforts in the areas of transportation, community development, etc.

Discrimination based on age, disability and unemployment status exists in the workplace. According to AARP, such discrimination can be blatant or subtle. It can affect hiring, promotions, layoffs, benefits, training opportunities and job responsibilities. AARP also notes that “a disproportionate number of workers who are discriminated against on the basis of disability are older.”

Yet in many ways, employers are well-served hiring older workers. A 2014 survey of HR managers, conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management, found that employment professionals cited five top advantages of older workers, compared with other workers. Those included:

- 77% say older workers have more work experience (knowledge, skills)
- 71% say older workers are more mature/professional
- 70% say older workers have a stronger work ethic
- 63% noted that older workers are able to serve as mentors to younger workers
- 59% say that older workers are more reliable.

Maintaining and acquiring skill sets, job knowledge and certifications are important. Swiftly changing technologies and job requirements is one area of challenge for some older workers. Montgomery County provides access to such trainings via Montgomery College, UMUC, and several human-service nonprofits as well as online trainings and test preparation available via the Montgomery County Libraries.

The combination of four in ten older County residents planning to continue working after age 65 and significant numbers perceiving only fair or poor employment opportunities creates an opportunity for the County to do more. For example we must continue to improve County efforts to grow jobs all across the County, educate employers about the value of maintaining; hiring and training older workers and, help older persons maximize their ability to find work – whether through being hired, developing self-employment, or a combination of both.

SENIOR AGENDA (2012)

Vision: Montgomery County will recognize the extent and value of the contribution of older adults to the economy.

- The County will encourage County agencies and private companies to offer employment opportunities as older adults' transition to retirement.
- The County will encourage job fairs, partnerships, and forums to help older adults prepare themselves to continue in or reenter the workforce and find jobs.
- The County will provide information that promotes the value of older workers.

SELECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Continued to Support Training and Employment Resources:

- Continued to fund and publicize the annual 50+ Employment Expo, sponsored by JCA, which benefits thousands of County residents by offering resume and job hunting advice and connecting them to employers.
- In 2015, County Executive Isiah Leggett presented the second annual Experience Counts Best Practices Awards at the 50+ Employment Expo to Social and Scientific Systems, Inc., Dynaxis LLC and the Beacon Newspaper, Inc.
- Montgomery College continued to provide Senior Tuition Waivers for Maryland residents, age 60-plus, to enroll in classes after the regular registration period has passed by paying only fees.
- Montgomery College Workforce Development and Continuing Education continued to offer courses and certificates.
- Montgomery County Public Libraries continued to offer residents aggregated online access to a wide range of career, enrichment and study support resources.

- The Senior Community Service Employment Program provided on-the-job training to low-income older adults while enabling job trainees to support local charities and government agencies.
- The JCA SeniorTech Computer Training Centers and Career Gateway program provided senior-specific employment assistance. In addition, JCA supported the Wheaton One Stop Employment Center of WorkSource Montgomery.

CHALLENGES

The County is confronted by a number of challenges in the coming years as it relates to ensuring that people have adequate access to employment:

- Maintaining and attracting more jobs to Montgomery County:
 - The County population is projected to increase, and substantial numbers of people age 65+ intend to keep working, if possible. However, many perceive poor or fair job prospects. The County is focusing on job growth, as there is a need to enable more older adults to find work.
 - Transportation to work and from work can present challenges for some workers. And, improved transportation is needed to attract and retain employment opportunities.
- Improving job skills and knowledge:
 - Job requirements are changing and lifelong learning is the new norm.
 - Some older residents interested in finding work may not be aware of the areas of local job growth. For example, Home and Community-Based Support Services experts predict a growing need for homecare workers. Such workers need training, transportation, affordable housing and physical fitness to provide such services to seniors.
 - The projected need for geriatric Certified Nursing Assistants offers the possibility of local community colleges offering geriatric nursing assistant programs or certified nursing assistant programs partnering with local vendor agency providers that would allow graduates to have employment upon completion of the curriculum. Scholarships, stipends, and other incentives may be necessary to help meet the demand.

- Promoting self-employment in viable ways:
 - For some older persons, self-employment may be a realistic option. However, many need guidance and support to evaluate this option or be successful at it.
- Improving pre-retirement planning
 - Some people fail to plan adequately for retirement or incorrectly assume that it would be easy to find a full-time or part-time job in later life.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION STEPS

Opportunities available to address challenges include, but are not limited to:

- Promote economic development:
 - Expand economic development efforts throughout the County, to increase job opportunities for all, including older County residents. Address barriers to employment growth, such as transportation.
- Training and job-search guidance:
 - Build awareness among older adults seeking employment regarding existing employment services and training opportunities. Continue support for 50+ job fairs and other senior-specific employment programs in Montgomery County.
 - Identify areas of job growth and consider the possibility of collaborating with local community college and local agency providers to identify viable candidates or employ graduates upon completion of the curriculum. Scholarships, stipends, and other incentives may be necessary to help meet the demand.
- Initiate or expand County practices / models in this arena:
 - Consider annual reporting about demographics of workers.
 - Consider expansion of the County's Senior Fellow Program.
 - Promote pre-retirement planning.

- Help older workers understand the protections afforded them via the Age Discrimination in Employment Act and other law.
- Educate employers:
 - Educate employers about the value of hiring and retaining older workers, e.g., via Chambers of Commerce.
 - Combat age discrimination in employment.
 - Encourage employers to assess the impact of the aging workforce on their organization's ability to do its work. If they perceive an issue, encourage them to retain older workers by offering flexible hours, part-time positions, phased retirement and otherwise modeling best practices.
 - Encourage employers to sign the AARP Employer Pledge (which is also the law), which is being launched nationwide. It says, "We believe in equal opportunity for all workers, regardless of age, and that 50+ workers should have a level playing field in their ability to compete for and obtain jobs. Recognizing the value of experienced workers, we pledge to recruit across diverse age groups and to consider all applicants on an equal basis as we hire them for positions within our organization."
- Promote viable self-employment strategies:
 - Develop strategies to help County residents decide the viability of becoming independent contractors or self-employed and to help nurture self-employment.
 - Promote freelance opportunities for skilled workers, including those age 50+.