

Health Behaviors & Indicators

SURVEY BACKGROUND

The 2009 Kent County Senior Millage (KCSM) Needs Survey provided consumers, caregivers and service providers an opportunity to provide information of value regarding the current use and future need of services funded by the millage. This survey brief provides an overview of the health behavior and health indicator findings from the survey.

FIELDING OF THE MILLAGE SURVEY

The Millage Survey was fielded between March 15th and April 30th, 2009, and had 805 respondents. Approximately half of these respondents took the survey on line through Survey Monkey, the remainder filled out identical paper surveys available at service providers across the Area Agency on Aging of West Michigan (AAAWM)'s Kent County service area.

USE OF THIS ANALYSIS

This survey was not conducted using a rigorous, random sample of the population of consumers, caregivers and service providers. However, the sample demographics are reflective of the demographics of AAWM's client demographic data. The broad advertising effort preceding and during the survey, as well as the traditionally high response rate of the older adult population accounts for the closeness of the respondents' reported demographics with the service use demographic data. Thus we can interpret these findings as being reflective of the consumer population within the AAWM service area.

HEALTH BEHAVIORS AND INDICATORS

The 2009 KCMS contained questions regarding health screenings, physical activity, eating habits and access to prescription drug coverage. This brief will examine the results of the responses from each of those areas.

HEALTH SCREENINGS AND GENERAL HEALTH

The Needs Survey asked respondents about six preventative screenings (blood pressure, cholesterol, dental, diabetes, vision and general physical) and two preventative inoculations (flu and pneumonia). Of these eight preventative health measures, only the pneumonia vaccine was reported below 50% (at 35% of respondents). Half of the measures were reported to have been concluded by over two-thirds of respondents. (See chart on following page.)



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The Source for Seniors

This suggests that preventative health measures are fairly well known to the consumers of KCSM services, and solid majorities are obtaining most of the screenings. However, it also suggests that these consumers are less well aware of the importance of some of these preventative measures, especially receipt of the pneumonia vaccine.

Table One Use of Preventative Health Measures in Last Year (# Respondents/% Respondents) N=805								
	Blood Pressure	Cholesterol	Dental Exam	Diabetes Exam	Flu Shot	General Physical	Pneumonia Vaccine	Vision Exam
Yes	671/83%	540/67%	412/51%	448/56%	534/66%	549/68%	284/35%	468/58%
No/No response	134/17%	265/33%	393/49%	357/44%	271/34%	256/32%	521/65%	337/42%

Of those who reported that the screening was not done due to affordability, dental was the most common, with just over 7% reporting that they could not afford dental exams. This strongly suggests that cost is NOT the primary reason for these consumers not having preventative screenings/services.

Over 68% of respondents who reported on their general health stated it was either excellent or good. While only 6% reported their general health as poor.

EATING HABITS

As breakfast remains “the most important meal of the day”, respondents were questioned about the frequency of taking breakfast. 76% of those responding reported having breakfast every day, while only 4% reported never having breakfast.

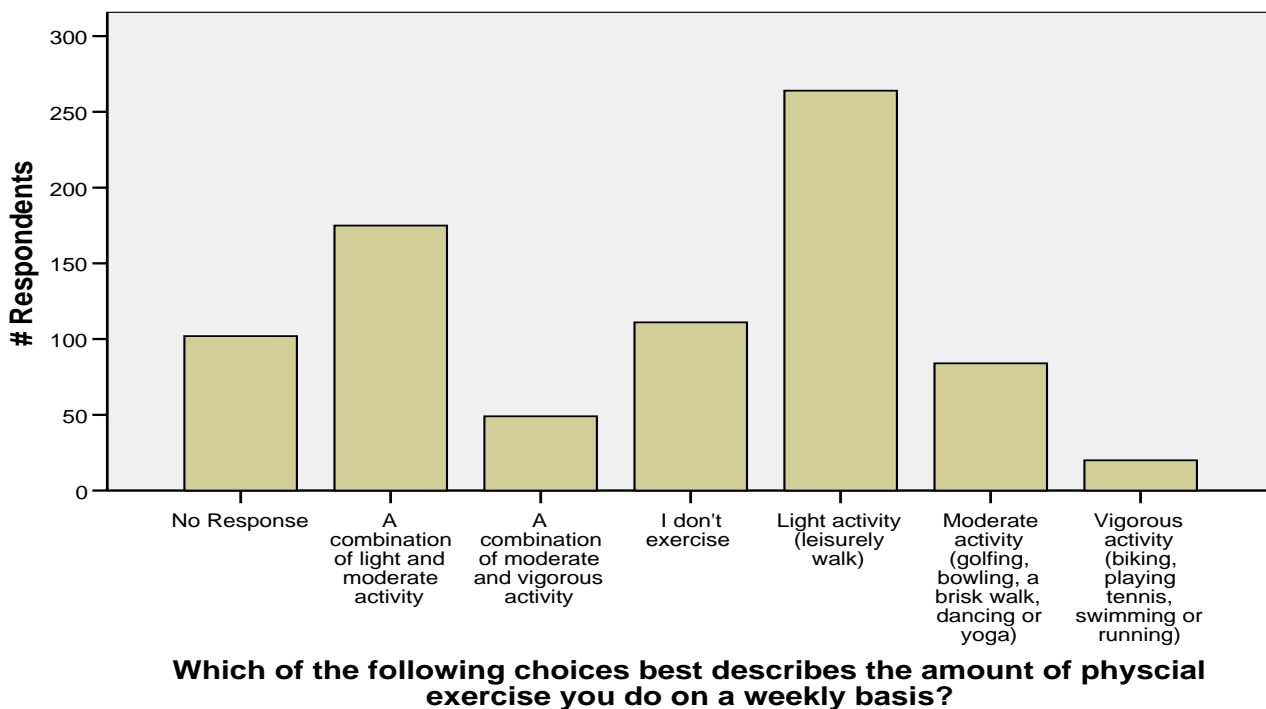
Most of the survey respondents also reported diets that were varied, as found in Table Two, below. However, despite this good news regarding diet balance, 24% of those responding reported at least one instance in the past 12 months when they were not able to purchase groceries.

Table Two Servings per day from food groups Percent of respondents N=706				
	0	1	2	3 or more
Vegetables	4%	37%	40%	19%
Fruits	7%	35%	38%	20%
Milk, cheese, dairy	6%	33%	35%	26%
Protein (meat, eggs, poultry, fish, legumes)	3%	31%	42%	23%

Physical Activity

Survey respondents reported high levels of at least light activity, with only 16% reporting not getting exercise once a week. Of those who did not exercise, 72% of respondents said it was because of physical limitations.

Figure One



ACCESS TO PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE

A majority of respondents (64%) reported having prescription coverage under Medicare Part D, however as it is likely that nearly 100% of the consumers of services funded by the millage are eligible, this percentage remains too low. The difference could be explained by private insurance coverage. It is particularly troublesome considering that 24% of those responding reported not filling a prescription in the last 12 months due to cost.

SUMMARY

In general, the population of consumers responding to this survey report good health, eat a varied diet, and get weekly exercise. In some cases, large proportions of those served do obtain preventative care screenings and services.

There remains room for improvement; primarily in increasing awareness of the value of some preventative care services (cost does not appear to be a factor in consumption of preventative services). It also appears important that eligible members of the service population are enrolled in Medicare Part D and using that the new Kent County Rx Discount Card.

Future surveys should also include additional questions regarding frequency of cost issue and the purchase of groceries, as a disturbing minority (almost one quarter of those responding) found themselves unable to afford groceries at least once in the previous 12 months.