



Age Friendly Communities

Q3 Update

October 16th, 2025



Overview

The Bruce County Age-Friendly Communities Q3 Update highlights ongoing efforts to foster inclusive, supportive environments for older adults across Bruce County. This quarter focused on gathering community feedback through surveys, which revealed key themes around

transportation, housing, social connection, and access to health services. The insights gained help shape strategic priorities that respond to emerging needs and guide future planning, ensuring that Bruce County continues to evolve as a place where residents of all ages can thrive.



Bruce County's Age-Friendly Community Strategy

Development of the Age-Friendly Strategy

In Mid-2024, Bruce County formed its Age-Friendly Committee, bringing together representatives from county departments, local municipalities, senior-serving organizations, and community members. The committee's early work included drafting guiding principles, establishing terms of reference, and preparing a community profile, all aimed at grounding its planning process for addressing the needs of older adults. In collaboration with Brock University students, the committee initiated a comprehensive needs assessment, capturing understanding into the ever-changing of older adults across the region. This was followed in mid-2025 with the launch of a broad-based public survey targeting residents age 50+ and their caregivers, designed to gather input on all eight of the World Health Organizations' Age-Friendly Domains relevant to the communities needs.

Guiding Principles

This strategy is grounded in the following principles:

Inclusion - All residents, regardless of age, ability, income, or background, should feel welcome and valued.

Accessibility - Services, spaces, and information are easy to find, use and navigate.

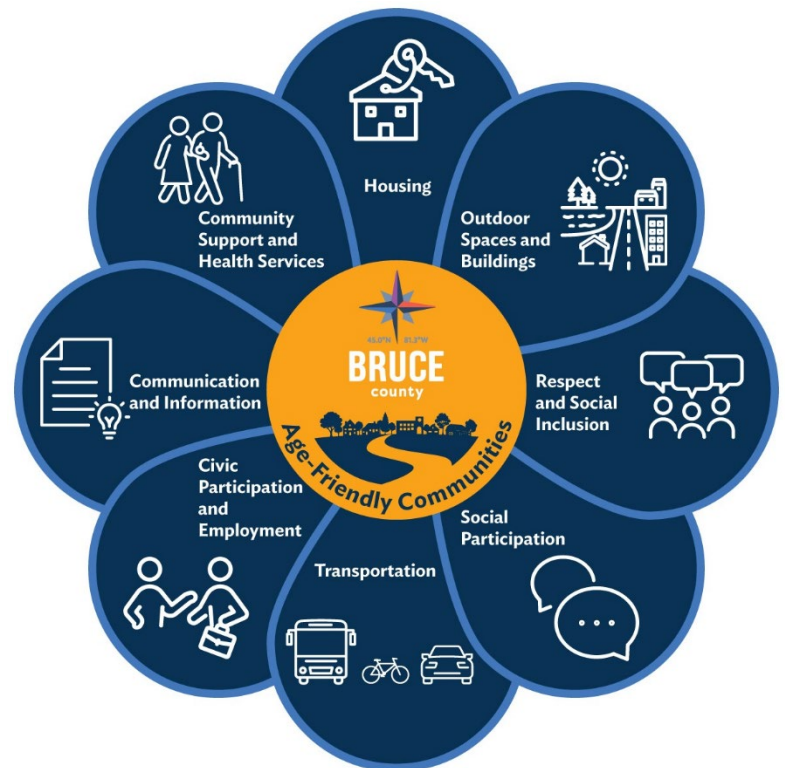
Collaboration - Success depends on working together with municipalities, community groups, and businesses.

Evidence-Informed - Decisions are guided by local data and proven best practices.

Sustainability - Actions are achievable within available resources and designed for long-term impact.

What We Heard

As a result of surveys, committee discussions, and targeted engagement sessions, four major themes emerged that highlight the key areas of concern for the community:



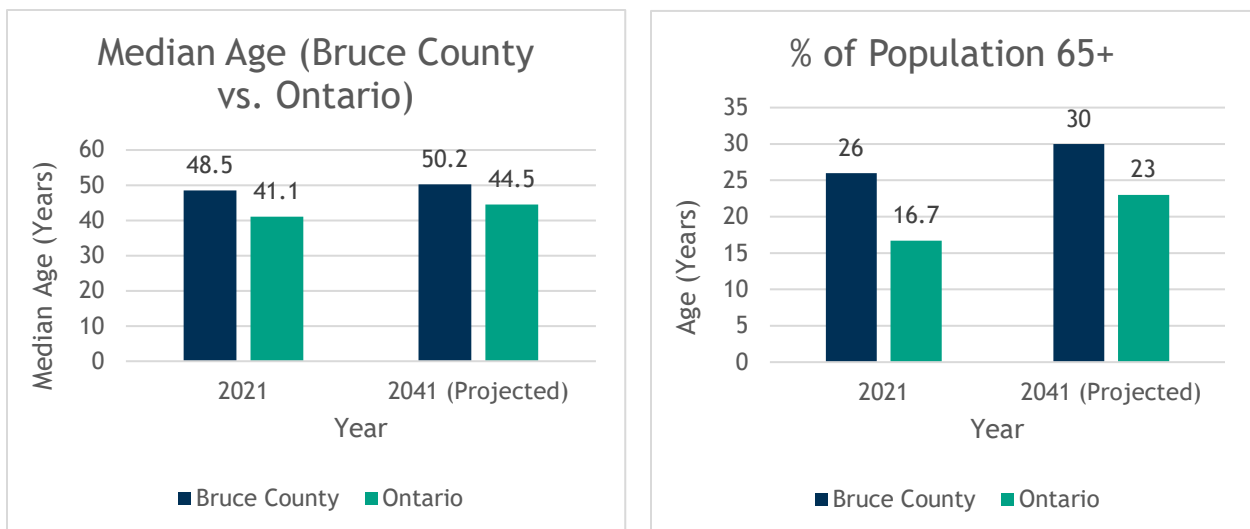
- Transportation access is a challenge, especially in rural areas.
- Affordable and adaptable housing is a top concern for aging in place.
- Social connection opportunities- particularly for intergenerational programs - are highly valued.
- Clear and accessible information about services is needed to connect people with supports.

Why It Matters

Bruce County is home to approximately 73,400 residents (2021), with over one-quarter (26.5) aged 65 and older- well above the Ontario average of 16.7%. By 2041, the proportion of residents over 65 is projected to exceed 30%. This shift will influence housing demand, workforce participation, transportation systems, health services, and the local economy.

An age-friendly approach supports our communities to not just to meet needs, but to leverage the skills, experience, and contributions of older adults to strengthen Bruce County’s social and economic vitality.

Figure 1: Median Age Comparison (Bruce County vs. Ontario) and % of Population Aged 65+



Demographic Context & Vision

The vision of the strategy is to leverage Bruce County’s existing community assets- infrastructure, service networks, and social capital- to help businesses, municipalities, and organizations adapt and thrive in supporting an aging population. Through coordinated action and community-driven solutions, Bruce County aims to become a World Health Organization- recognized Age-Friendly Community, where older adults can live with independence, dignity, engagement, and well-being.

County Role

Bruce County’s role is to coordinate, convene, and communicate. This includes:

- Providing tools, resources, and recognition programs to support municipalities, businesses, and organizations.
- Promoting age-friendly principles across the County.
- Tracking and reporting on progress toward strategic goals.

Local partners- including municipalities, service clubs, health providers, and community organizations play a critical role in implementing age-friendly actions on the ground, supported by County leadership.



Age Friendly Community Needs Assessment Survey

The Age Friendly Community Needs Assessment Survey rendered 429 respondents, representing seniors aged 50-94. The primary respondents were female, making up 75% of the total responses. Most live with a spouse or partner, and a smaller portion live alone or with family/friends.

Strengths are identified as:

Community Engagement: Many respondents feel valued and respected in their communities.

*“I am not only working but am providing caregiving to my elderly parents and the support in this community has been wonderful.”-
female, age 60, Kincardine*

Technology Access

- High levels of access to smartphones, tablets, and internet noted among older adults.
- Interest in learning more about digital tools and services.

Parks & Recreation

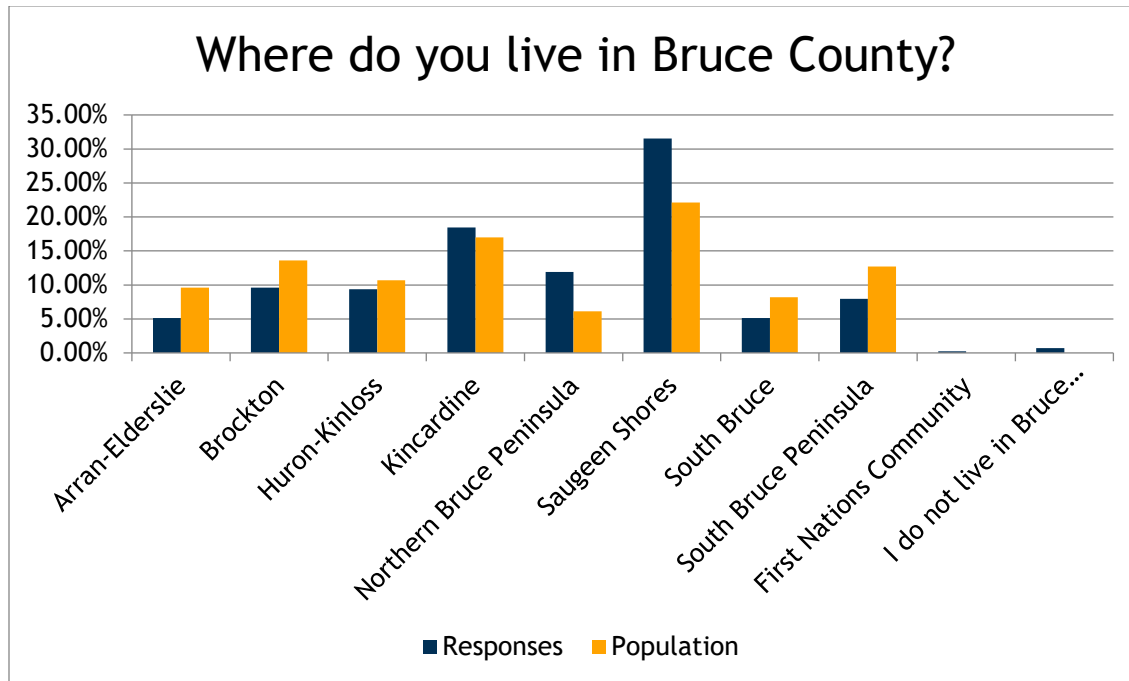
- Well-lit and inviting parks were appreciated.
- Respondents enjoy walking, biking, and outdoor activities when conditions allow.

Desire to Age in Place

- Strong preference to remain in their own homes as they age.

- Indicates a need to support aging in place through home modifications and community supports.

Responses varied between municipalities:



Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

Accessible, well-maintained outdoor areas are essential for healthy aging. Sidewalks, parks, and public buildings should be safe, clean, and free of barriers, with features like benches, good lighting, and clear signage. Age-friendly communities ensure that older adults can navigate their surroundings confidently and independently in all seasons.

Concerns:

- 40% rated sidewalk conditions as fair or poor
- 50% said public washrooms are inaccessible or unavailable
- Winter maintenance: frequently cited as a barrier

Strengths:

- Parks and benches appreciated in Saugeen Shores & South Bruce

*“I avoid walking in winter because the sidewalks are never cleared”-
Female, age 74, Municipality of Kincardine*

Transportation

Reliable, affordable, and accessible transportation enables older adults to stay socially connected and access essential services. This includes public transit with clear schedules, well-designed stops, volunteer driver programs, and safe roadways for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists.

60% of Respondents rated transit options as poor or very poor

Barriers:

- Limited public transit in rural areas
- Unsafe walking conditions in winter
- Lack of affordable options

Most dissatisfied: Northern Bruce Peninsula, Kincardine



I wish there was a shuttle service for seniors. I don't drive anymore.

MALE, AGE 82, MUNICIPALITY of NORTHERN BRUCE PENINSULA

Housing

Housing should support independence, offering a range of affordable and accessible options that allow older adults to age in place. Age-friendly communities promote universal design, encourage home modifications, and provide information on local resources, grants, and supports to keep seniors safe and comfortable at home.

40% of respondents believe housing is unaffordable

Concerns:

- Long waitlist for seniors housing
- Lack of accessible housing options

Most dissatisfied: Brockton, Kincardine

“We need more affordable housing options for seniors who want to stay in the community”- Female, age 71, Saugeen Shores

“Downsizing options are scarce, and waitlists for seniors’ apartments are too long.”- Male, age 69, Kincardine

Social Participation

Inclusive, affordable social, cultural, and recreational opportunities help prevent isolation and support well-being. Communities should offer programs at convenient times and locations, with transportation support and proactive promotion so that all residents are aware of available activities.

50% rated availability of social activities as fair or poor

Barriers:

- Weather
- Finances
- Lack of Awareness
- Transportation

Opportunities:

- More intergenerational programs
- Informal gathering spaces

“We have lots of activities here for seniors- they keep us active and engaged!”- Female, age 68, Arran-Elderslie

Respect & Social Inclusion

Older adults should feel valued, respected, and recognized as integral members of the community. Age-friendly initiatives encourage intergenerational programs, celebrate seniors’ contributions, and create inclusive decision-making processes that reflect diverse voices.

Strengths:

- Many respondents feel valued and respected



Did you know?

In 2010, older adults in Canada contributed over **372 million hours** of volunteer work - that’s thousands of years’ worth of civic contribution - even though their volunteer *rate* was lower than among younger age groups.

- Strong sense of community in South Bruce & Arran-Elderslie

Opportunities:

- Increase inclusion in decision-making
- More culturally inclusive programming

“I’ve found in my 20 years in Wiarton you have a lot of supportive programs and helpful people.”- Female, Age 91, South Bruce Peninsula

“I feel valued, but I wish older adults had more say in local planning”- Male, age 65, Municipality of South Bruce

Civic Participation & Employment

Opportunities for volunteering, community leadership, and employment keep older adults engaged and contribute to community vitality. Age-friendly communities support flexible job options, lifelong learning, and accessible information on civic roles to empower seniors to stay active contributors.

Need for Supportive Programs:

There is a growing need for programs that educate and support older adults in citizen advocacy and civic participation to combat ageism and promote active aging.

“Volunteering gives me purpose- there are many opportunities to give back here.”- Female, age 60, Kincardine

Communication & Information

Clear, timely, and accessible communication ensures that older adults are aware of services, programs, and opportunities. Age-friendly communication uses plain language, large print, multiple formats (print, online, phone), and offers digital literacy programs to close the technology gap.

The survey found that there is a high smartphone/tablet usage rate among older adults in Bruce County, and around 80% feel comfortable using digital tools.

Barriers:

- Lack of awareness of available services
- Need for centralized, easy-to-access information

“Not everyone has internet- we need more printed information available at key locations.”- Female, age 72, Arran-Elderslie

“I have a tablet but don’t know where to find info about programs.”- Female, age 67, Municipality of Saugeen Shores

Community Support & Health Services

Access to affordable, person-centred health and social services is critical. Age-friendly systems offer coordinated care, mental health supports, wellness programs, and timely emergency response, enabling seniors to maintain their health and independence.

55% of survey respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with healthcare access. Main concerns include:

- Long wait times
- Lack of family doctors
- Limited access to specialists

“We need more after-hours clinics and walk-in services for seniors.”- Male, age 83, Huron-Kinloss

“I haven’t had a family doctor in years. It’s frustrating.” - Male, age 76, Municipality of Kincardine



Strategic Priority Areas

Strategic Priority	Domain(s)	Goals (2027-2031)	Proposed Actions (2026-2027)	Lead/Partners
Improve transportation access and mobility	Transportation	Ensure older adults can access key services, recreation, and social activities.	Map existing transportation options across the County. Identify gaps in access to service for seniors. Provide input from an age friendly lens into the efforts of the four County Regional Transit Initiative.	Bruce County Planning Department, Municipalities, Community Groups, Bruce County Transportation & Environmental Services Department
Expand access to affordable and appropriate housing	Housing	Support aging-in-place and expand affordable housing options.	Expand awareness of accessing senior friendly housing units. Host community info sessions on home modification supports. Leverage and promote the efforts in the Housing Action Plan.	Bruce County Human Services, Planning Departments, Builders, OHT, Community Paramedicine Program.
Strengthening social connection and reduce isolation	Social Participation, Respect & Inclusion	Increase opportunities for seniors to stay socially active and feel valued.	Expand on existing intergenerational community events. Create awareness on existing partnerships with libraries, Early Years and LTC.	Libraries, Municipal Recreation Departments, Service Clubs, Youth Groups.
Enhance communication and information sharing.	Communication & Information	Ensure older adults and caregivers know where to get help, services, and updates.	Boost awareness of 211 and brucegreycommunityinfo.cioc.ca and maintain inventory of programs and services. Launch an Age-Friendly Alert monthly bulletin (mail or email). Provide training for digital literacy in libraries.	Bruce County Public Libraries, Municipalities.

