

Serving the Region's Older Residents during COVID-19



Atlanta Regional Commission

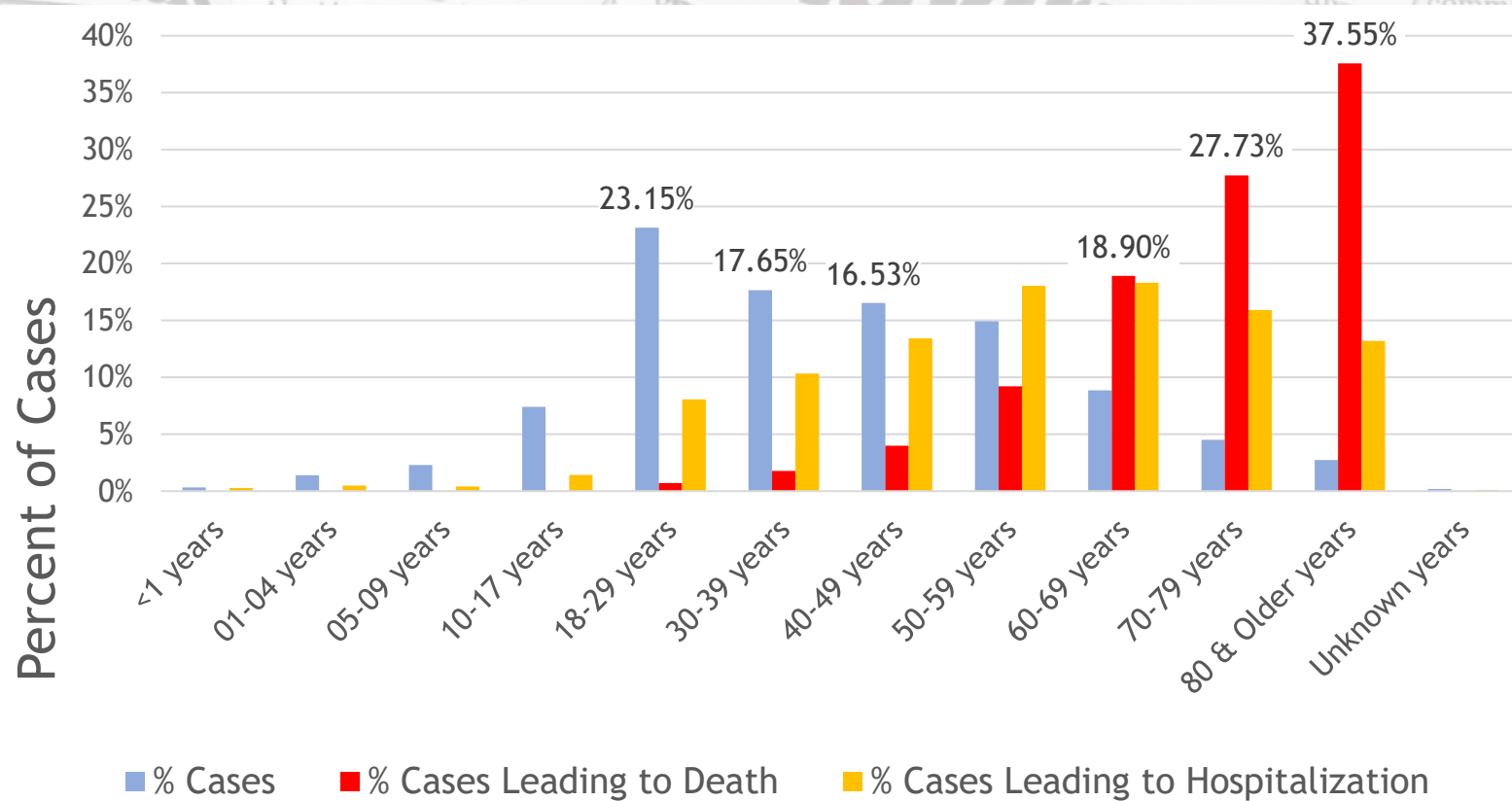
May 26, 2021



COVID

Deaths and Hospitalizations

COVID-19 Cases and Outcomes by Age Cohort (10-county metro area)



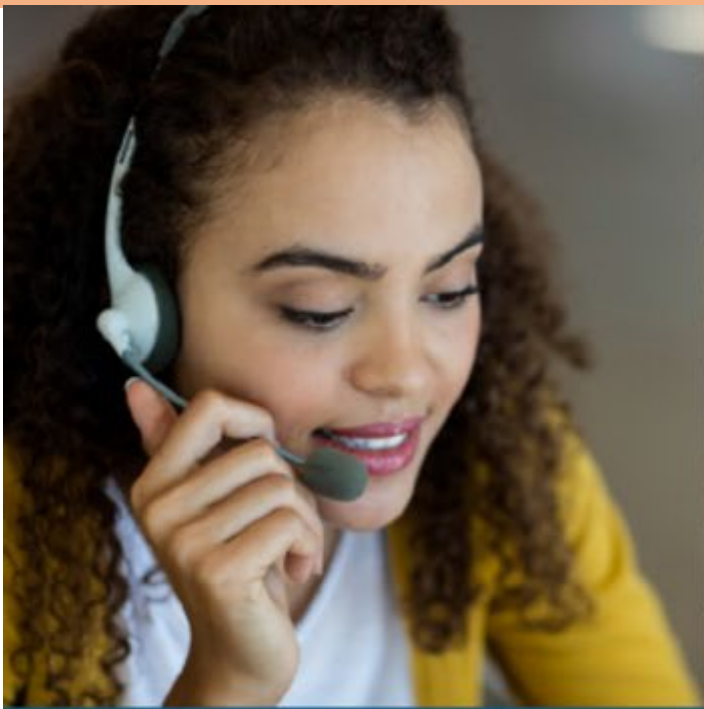
COVID

New Challenges

- Need for accurate and up-to-date information
- Staying home -- and refusing in-home visitors -- to stay safe
 - Isolation and loneliness
 - Virtual services (e.g., telehealth)/need for technology and internet access
 - Exhaustion of caregivers
 - Food insecurity
- Avoiding residential long-term care (e.g., nursing homes, assisted living)
- Added financial burden

COVID

New Challenges



“I don’t want to leave my home. How **can I get food** and medications?”

“I lost my job and my bills are stacking up. How **can I get help?**”

“**I’m worried** that my mom might be feeling socially isolated during this time.”

ARC RESPONSE

Filling Information Needs

■ For individuals:

- ✦ Information counseling
 - ✓ Connecting individuals to services

■ For the general public:

- ✦ Empowerline.org
 - ✓ Added self-search for services
- ✦ Social media:
 - ✓ Facebook
 - ✓ Twitter

■ For professionals:

- ✦ EmpowerlinePRO

CHALLENGE

Isolation & Loneliness

■ Closed:

- ◆ Senior centers and other activities
- ◆ Faith communities
- ◆ Volunteer activities

■ Decline of in-home services:

- ◆ Personal care
- ◆ Homemaker
- ◆ In-home respite

■ Refusing to have workers in home:

- ◆ 21% fewer clients for in-home services (2020 compared to 2019)

COVID

Isolation & Loneliness



Even before COVID, we knew that social isolation is as dangerous to one's health as smoking 15 cigarettes every day.

ARC Response

Connecting in Other Ways

ARC created a new service:

- One2One - telephone reassurance using trained volunteers

ARC shifted some services online:

- AmeriCorps Seniors educational presentations
- Living Well workshops

ARC expanded its behavioral health coaching service:

- Serves residents in designated low-income housing communities

Provider Response

Connecting in Other Ways

- Shifted to virtual and outdoor programming for senior centers
 - ◆ Examples: YouTube fitness classes, parking lot bingo games
- Called clients for wellness checks



CHALLENGE

Exhausted Caregivers

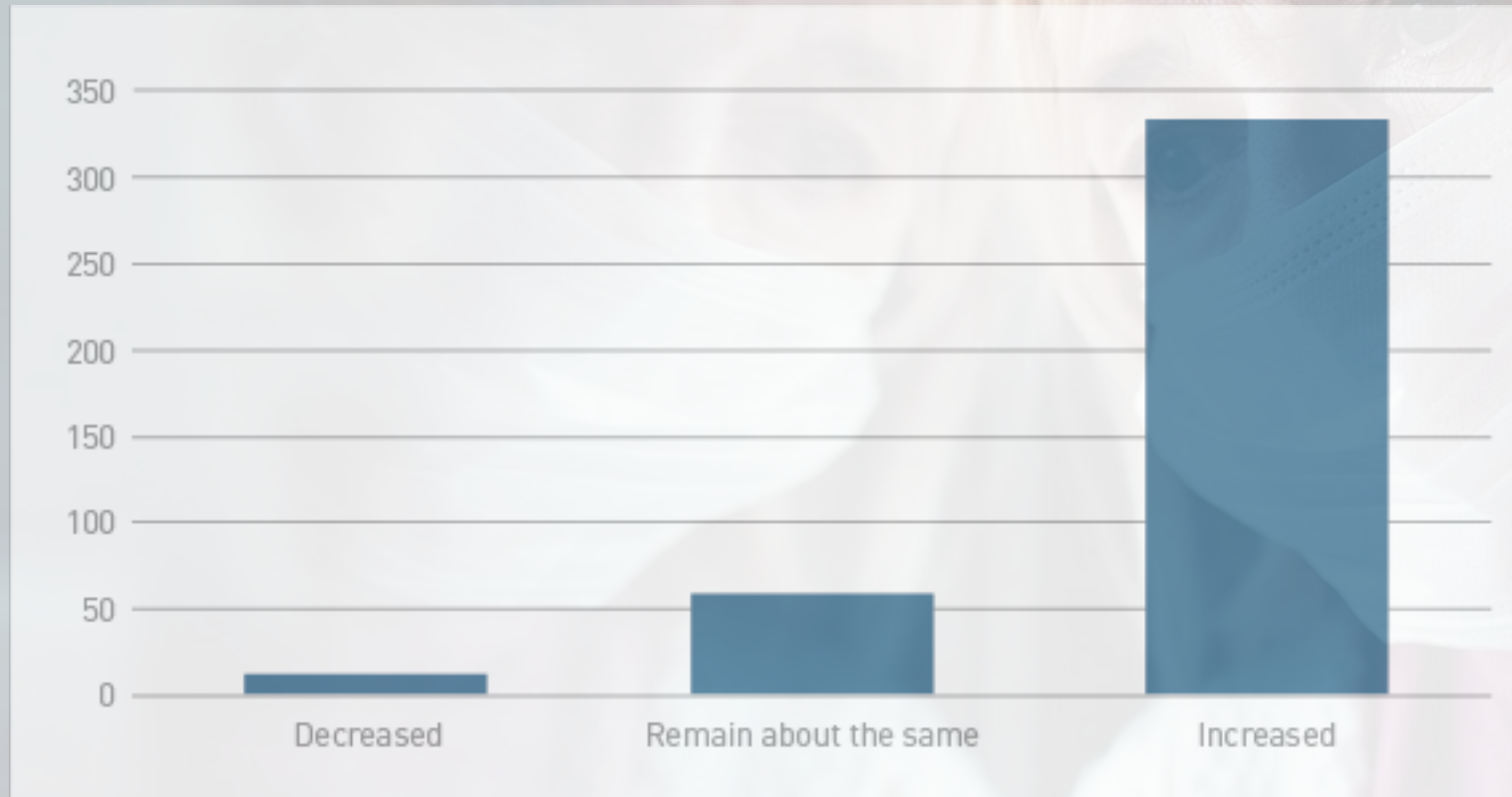
- Client refusal to accept in-home services by others
- Some caregivers were unemployed
- Some caregivers also have childcare needs
- Provider challenges to meet needs
 - Ensuring employee safety (limiting/prohibiting in-person services)
 - Workforce shortages



CHALLENGE

Exhausted Caregivers

Change in Associated Stress of Caregivers



Source: Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving, October 2020

ARC Response

Supporting Caregivers

Providing assistive technology:

- Tablets -- participate in virtual activities, telehealth
- Equipment -- help with bathing, eating, transferring, etc.
- Robotic pets -- lower client distress

Expanding care consultation service:

- Evidence-based, telephonic consultation
 - Created by Benjamin Rose Institute
- Demand growing quickly
- At current rate, will grow by 140% from 2019 level

ARC Response

Supporting Caregivers

Launched respite voucher service:

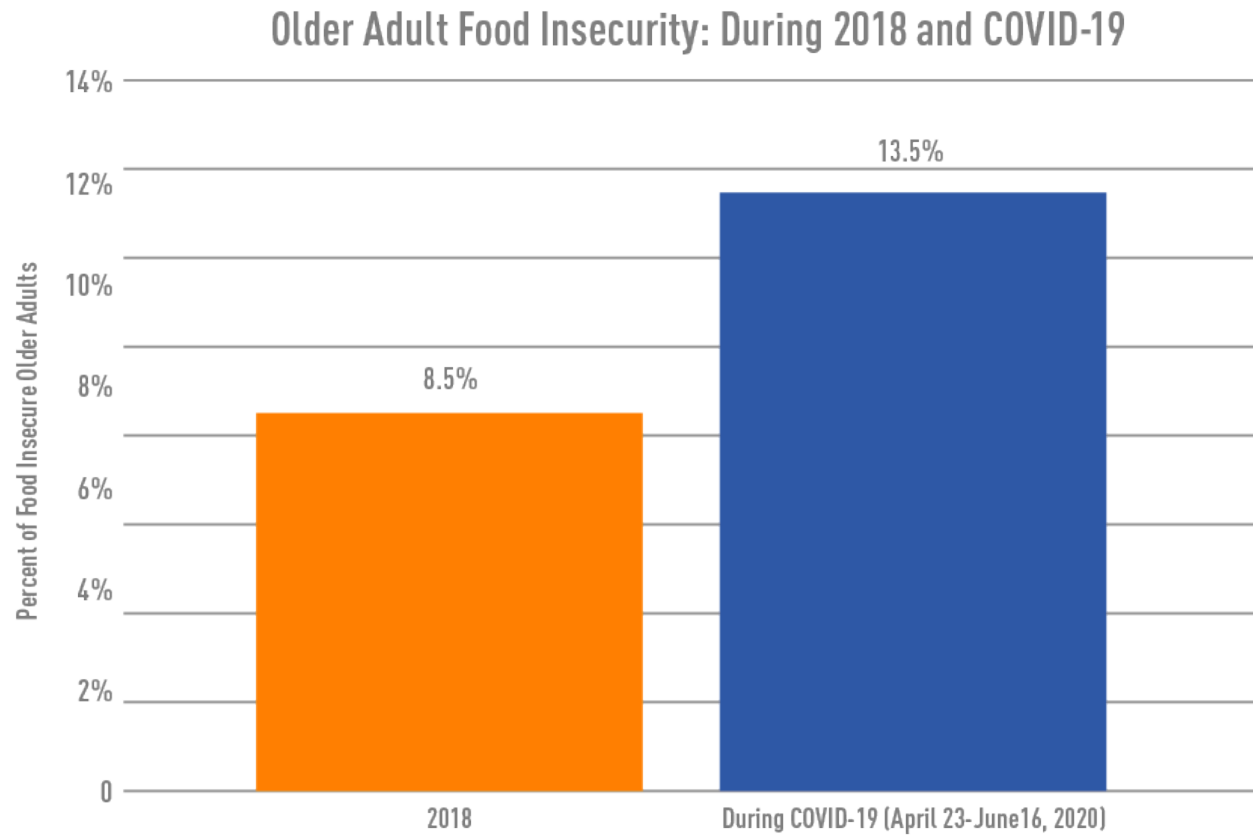
- Partnership with Jewish Family & Career Services
- Gives caregivers a needed break
- Family can pay an attendant in the home or for client visit to adult day center

Launched CARES Flex:

- Consumer-directed budget
- Permits consumer to select/pay caregiver of choice
 - Can include family member or friend

CHALLENGE

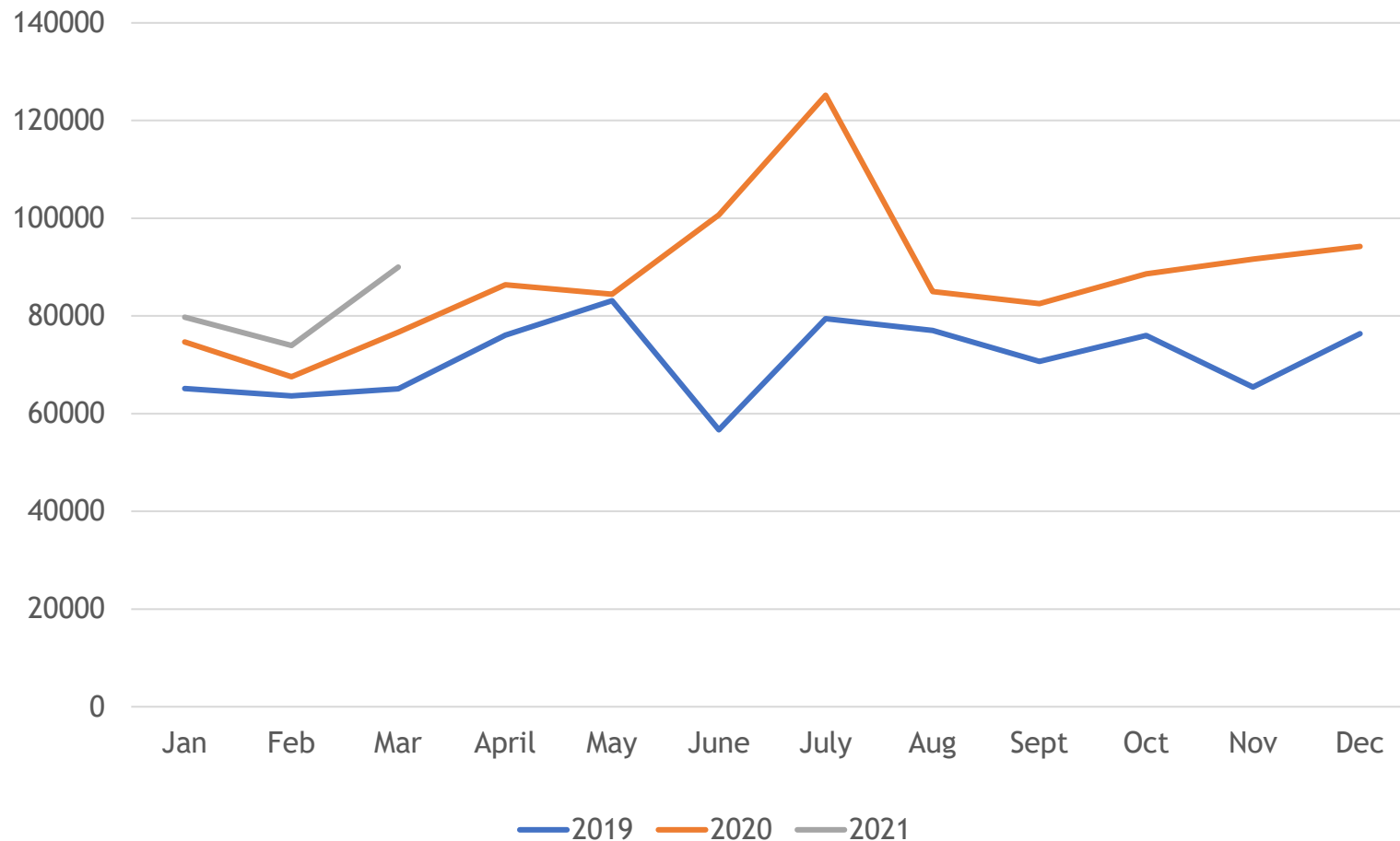
Food Insecurity



Source: Analysis provided by Diane Schanzenbach
and Northwestern University

ARC Response

Food Deliveries



- **1,033,369 meals* in 2020**
- **A 21% increase over 2019**
- **13% increase in clients served**

* Includes grocery boxes, in addition to prepared meals

ARC Response

Shifting Resources

Transportation:

- From senior center trips to food delivery

Provider staff:

- Decline in volunteers delivering meals to homes
- From senior center supports to food delivery



CHALLENGE

Rising Deaths in Long-Term Facilities

- Before COVID, most older persons preferred to live in their homes and communities
- More than 180,000 COVID deaths in US nursing homes (32%)
- Additional deaths in assisted living and other residential long-term care settings
- Admissions to facilities have declined drastically
 - 72% occupancy in Georgia nursing homes

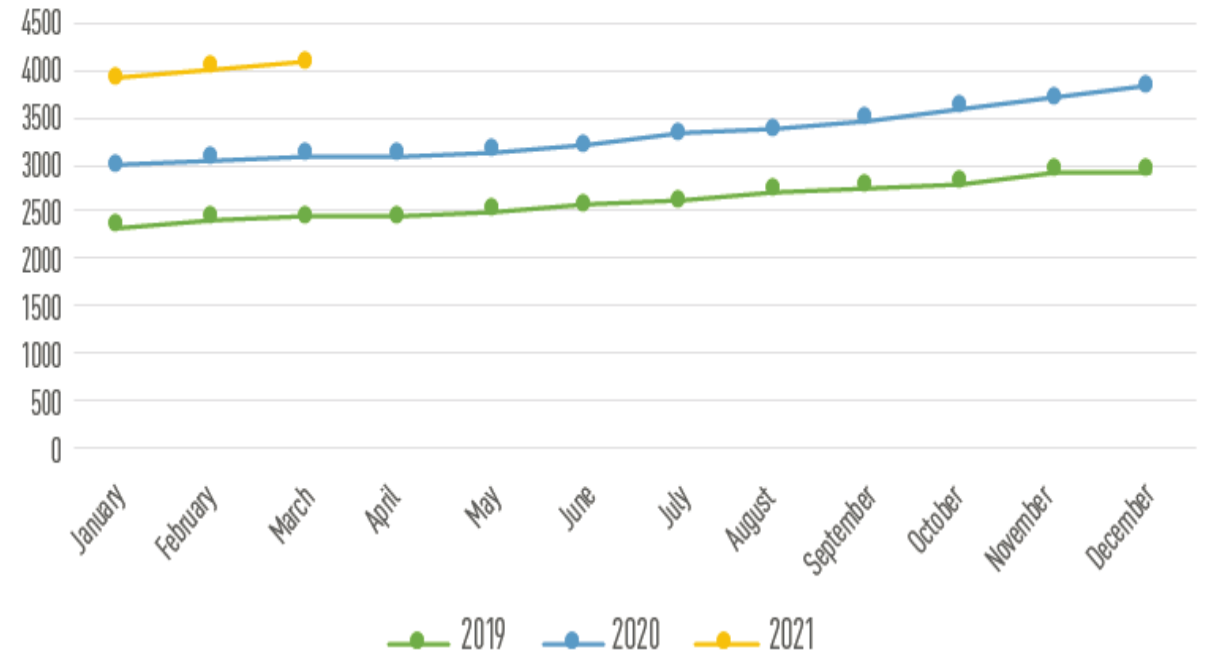


ARC RESPONSE

Medicaid HCBS Access

People are choosing alternatives:

- Community Care Services Program, a home and community-based services (HCBS) waiver
- 4089 clients enrolled in ARC region
- 32% increase since a year ago
- ARC's role:
 - Intake and screening to determine whether client is eligible
 - Advise client of other non-Medicaid service options



ARC RESPONSE

Nursing Home Transitions

ARC counselors have transitioned 91 nursing home residents to community settings

- 2020 and 2021 to date
- Despite being unable to serve clients in person
- Have already exceeded our state-set targets

CHALLENGE

Financial Burdens

“COVID-19 has
been a threat
to finances”

Ages 65+: 26%

Ages 50-64: 46%

Source: Metro Atlanta Speaks 2020

ARC RESPONSE

Material Aid

- Launched new “material aid” service:
 - Grocery delivery
 - Personal protective equipment (PPE)
 - Emergency utility assistance
- Provided by ARC staff and through provider network to:
 - 1035 people in 2020
 - On track to serve about 2500 if trends (and funding) continue
- Some fund sources permitted services to clients under age 60 with disability



COVID

Generosity and Opportunity

ARC RESPONSE

Managing Donations to Meet Community Needs

Philanthropy	Community Foundation	Thanks Mom & Dad
Amount to ARC	\$95,000	\$15,000 + PPE donations
Purpose	Home-delivered meals	Material aid
Received by ARC	Spring 2020	Spring 2020



ARC RESPONSE

Managing Federal COVID Funds to Meet Community Needs

Federal Legislation	FFCRA*	CARES Act**
Amount to ARC	\$1.9 million	\$6.4 million
Supportive Services (flexible funding - material aid, kinship care, case management, etc.)		x
Nutrition Services	x	x
Caregiver Services		x
Contract received by ARC	Spring 2020	Summer 2020

*FFCRA: Families First Coronavirus Response Act

**CARES Act: Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act

On the Horizon

Managing Additional Federal COVID Funds to Meet Community Needs

Federal Legislation	CRRSA*	American Rescue Plan Act
Amount to ARC	\$1.3 million	TBD
Supportive Services		x
Nutrition Services	x	x
Caregiver Services		x
Wellness programs		x
Vaccine access		x
Contract received by ARC	Not yet received	Not yet received

*Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations

COVID

Lessons Learned

- Flexibility has been key to success
 - Person-centered services that give clients and families options
 - Examples: vouchers and consumer-direction
 - Federal/state policies that give us flexibility to meet needs
 - Examples: grocery delivery can be a better fit (and cheaper) than prepared meals; transportation may be needed for delivering food instead of people



COVID

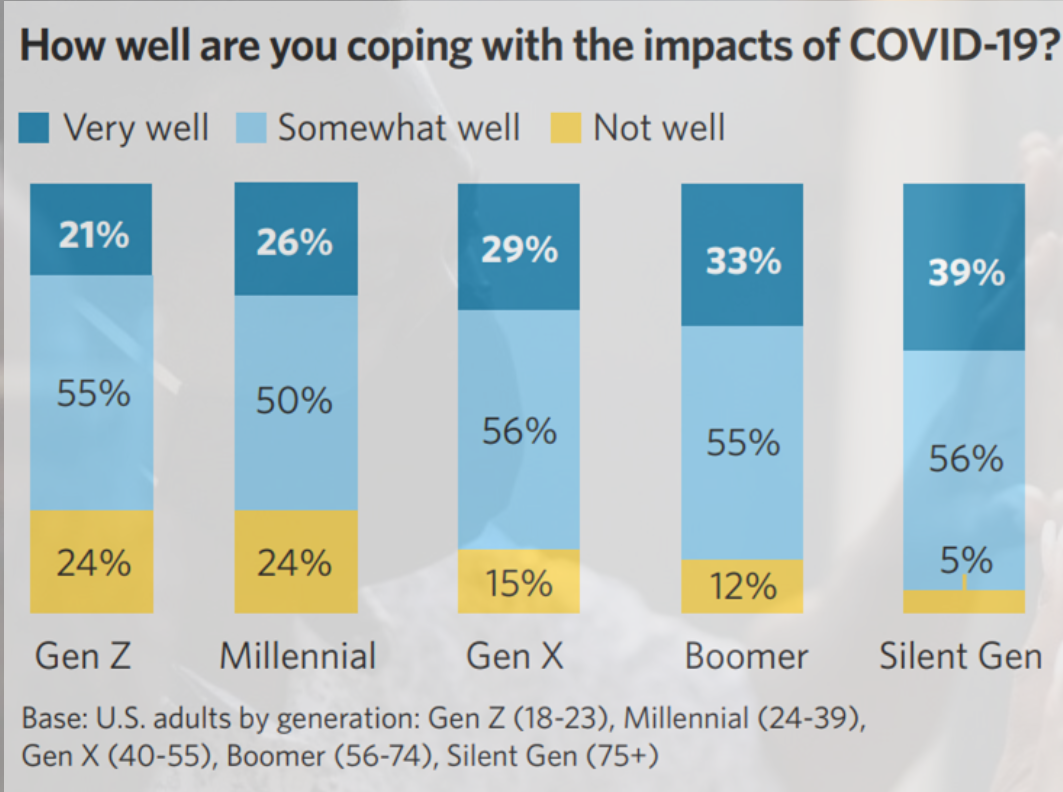
Lessons Learned

- Staff flexibility
 - Almost all were able to shift work to virtual
 - A&IS Group had used remote work and telework before pandemic, so shift wasn't dramatic for many
 - Some staff needed flexibility to support their family needs



Lessons Learned

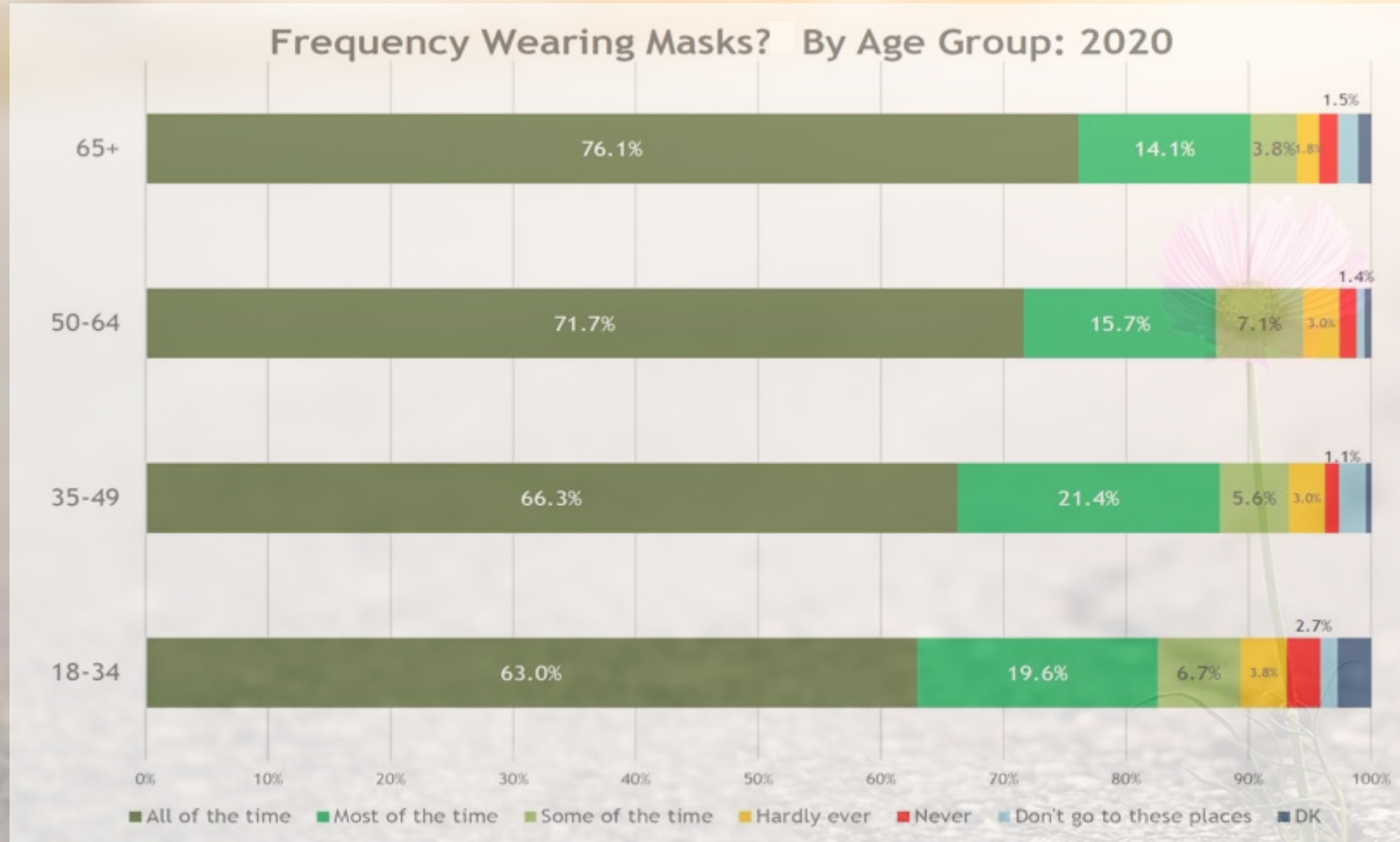
Older People Are Resilient



Source: <https://agewave.com/the-four-pillars-of-the-new-retirement/>

Lessons Learned

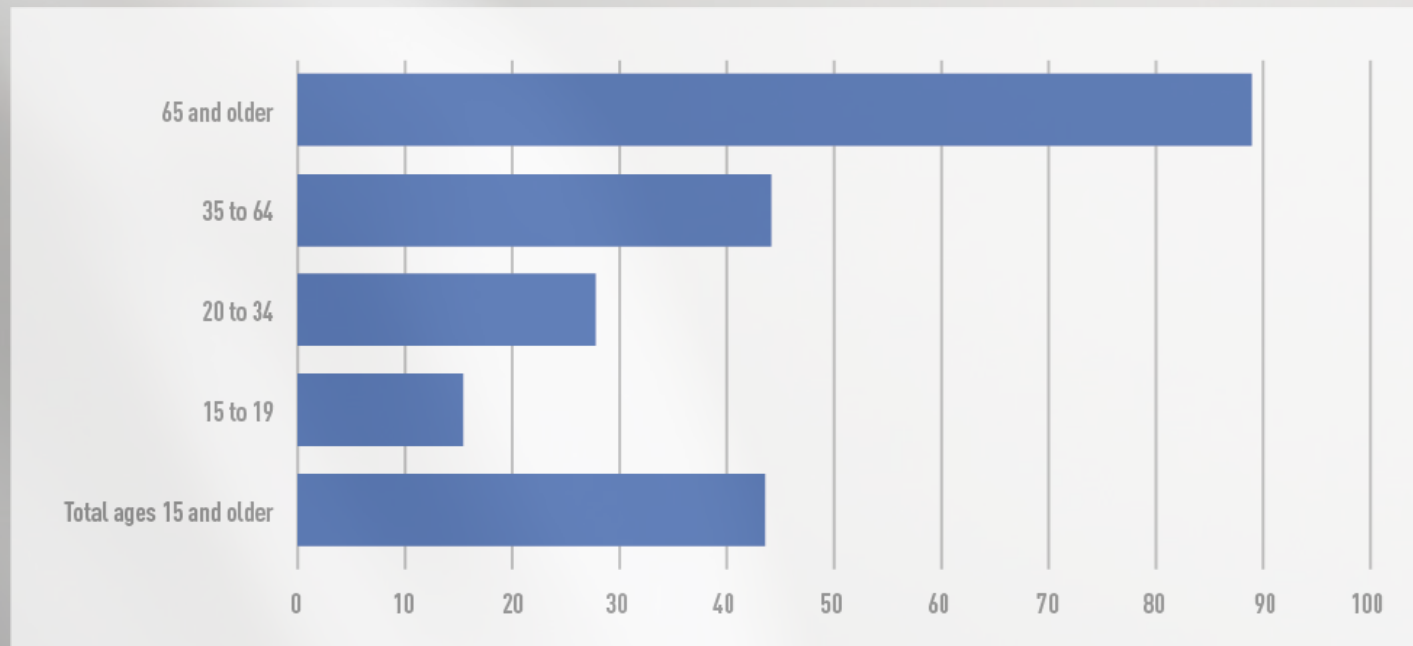
Older People Are Taking Precautions



Vaccines

Older Persons Are the First Priority

% of Population Age 15+ With at Least One Dose of Vaccine



Source: Georgia DPH vaccination dashboard extract May 3, 2021

Federal Policy

Strengthen Access to HCBS

- **American Rescue Plan Act**
 - Passed March 2021
 - Funds increased Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) through:
 - Medicaid (increased federal match)
 - Older Americans Act
- **American Jobs Act (infrastructure proposal)**
 - Major investment in Medicaid-funded HCBS
 - Support for HCBS workforce
- **HCBS Access Act (House and Senate proposal)**
 - Make Medicaid HCBS (and not only nursing homes) an entitlement

Contact

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