

Serving the Region's Older Residents during COVID-19



Atlanta Regional Commission

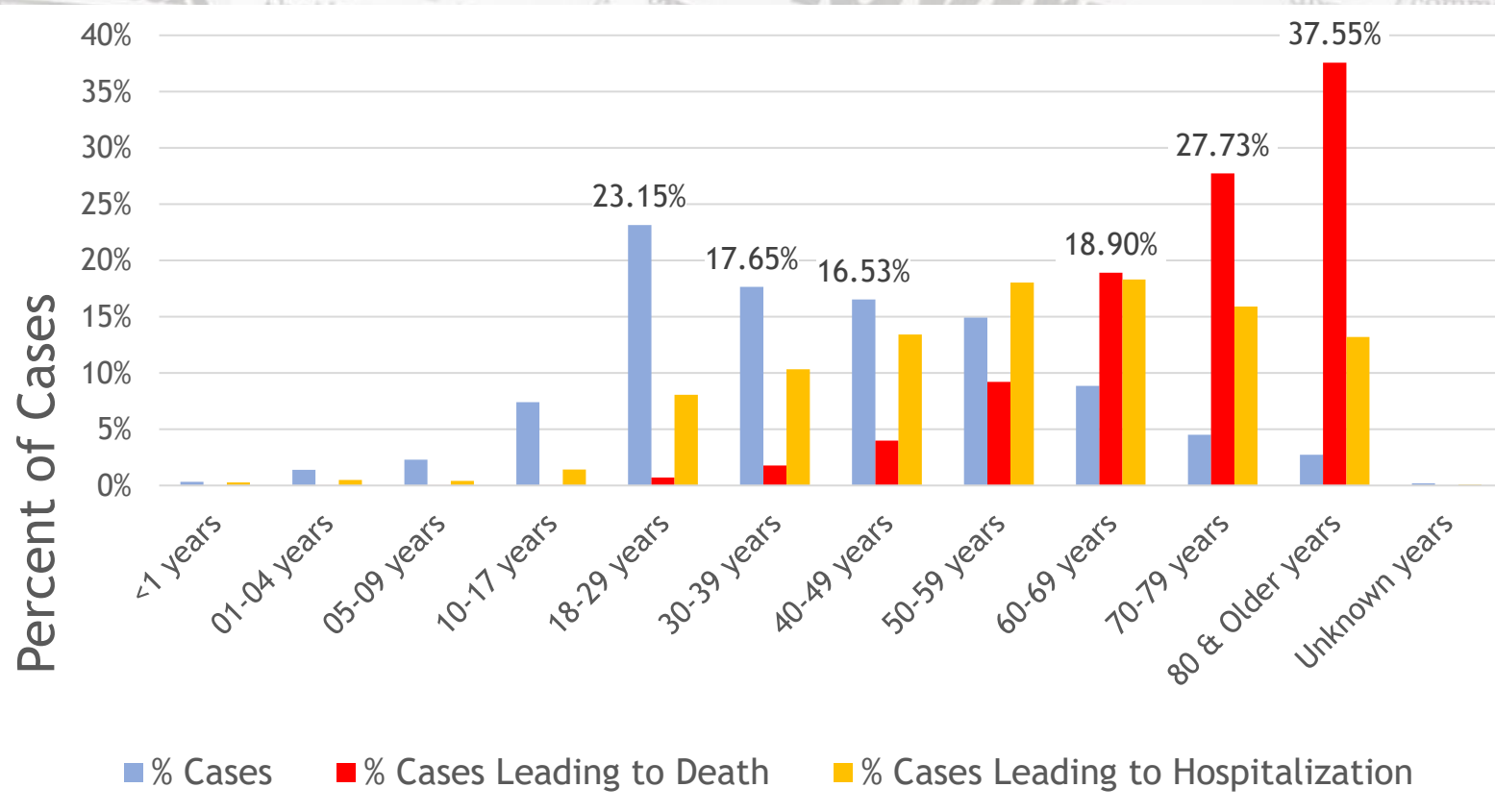
May 12, 2021



COVID

Deaths and Hospitalizations

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



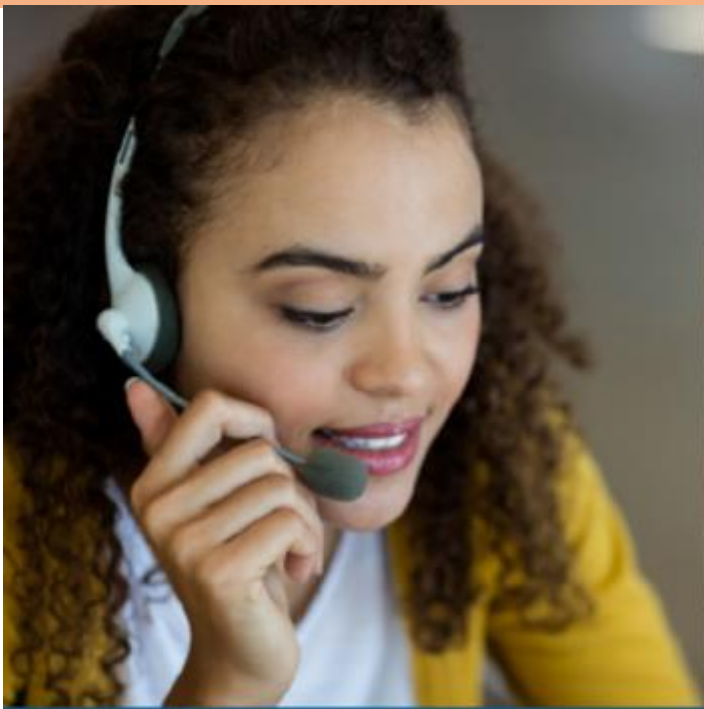
COVID

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

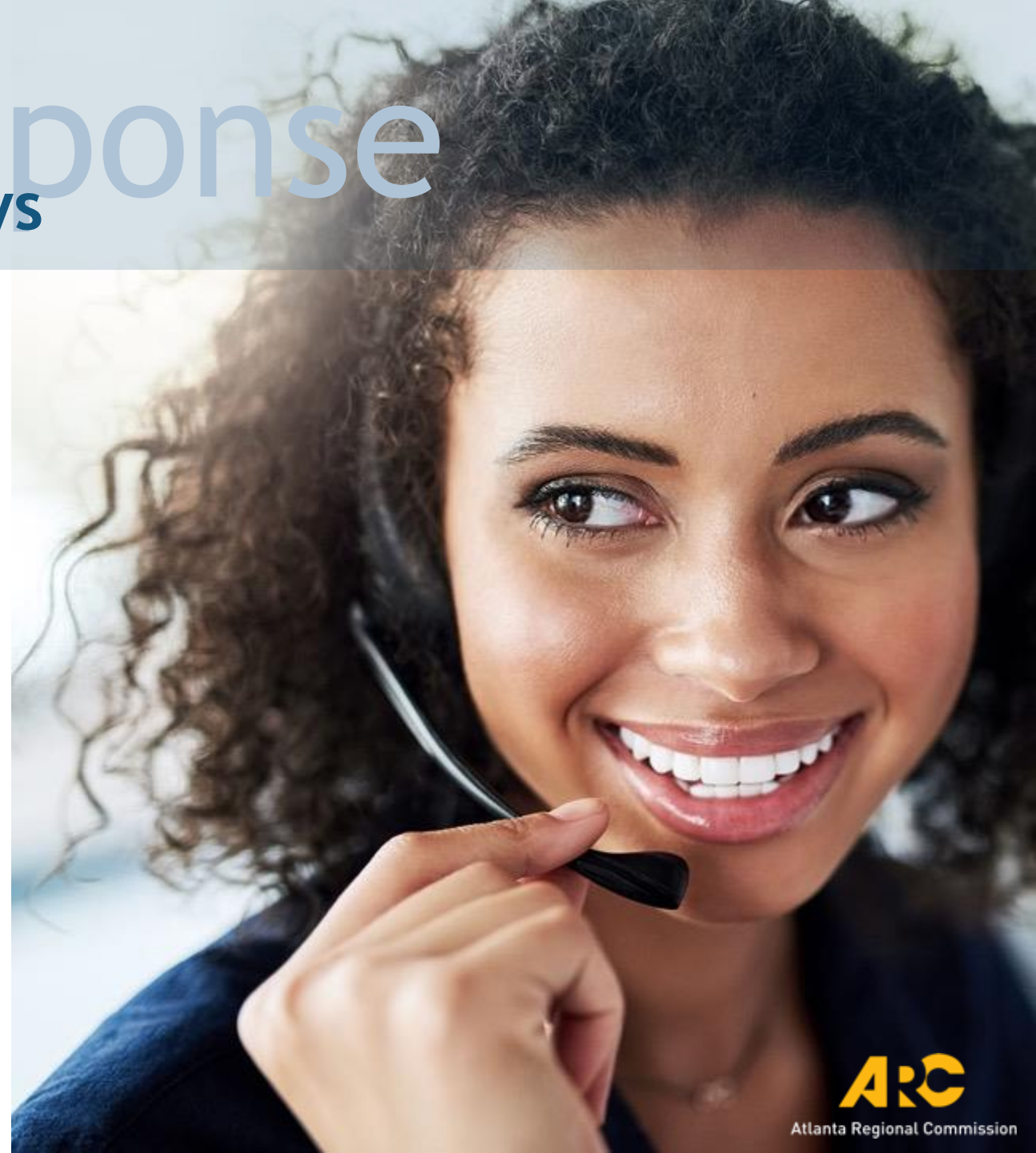
ARC expanded its behavioral health coaching service:

- 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

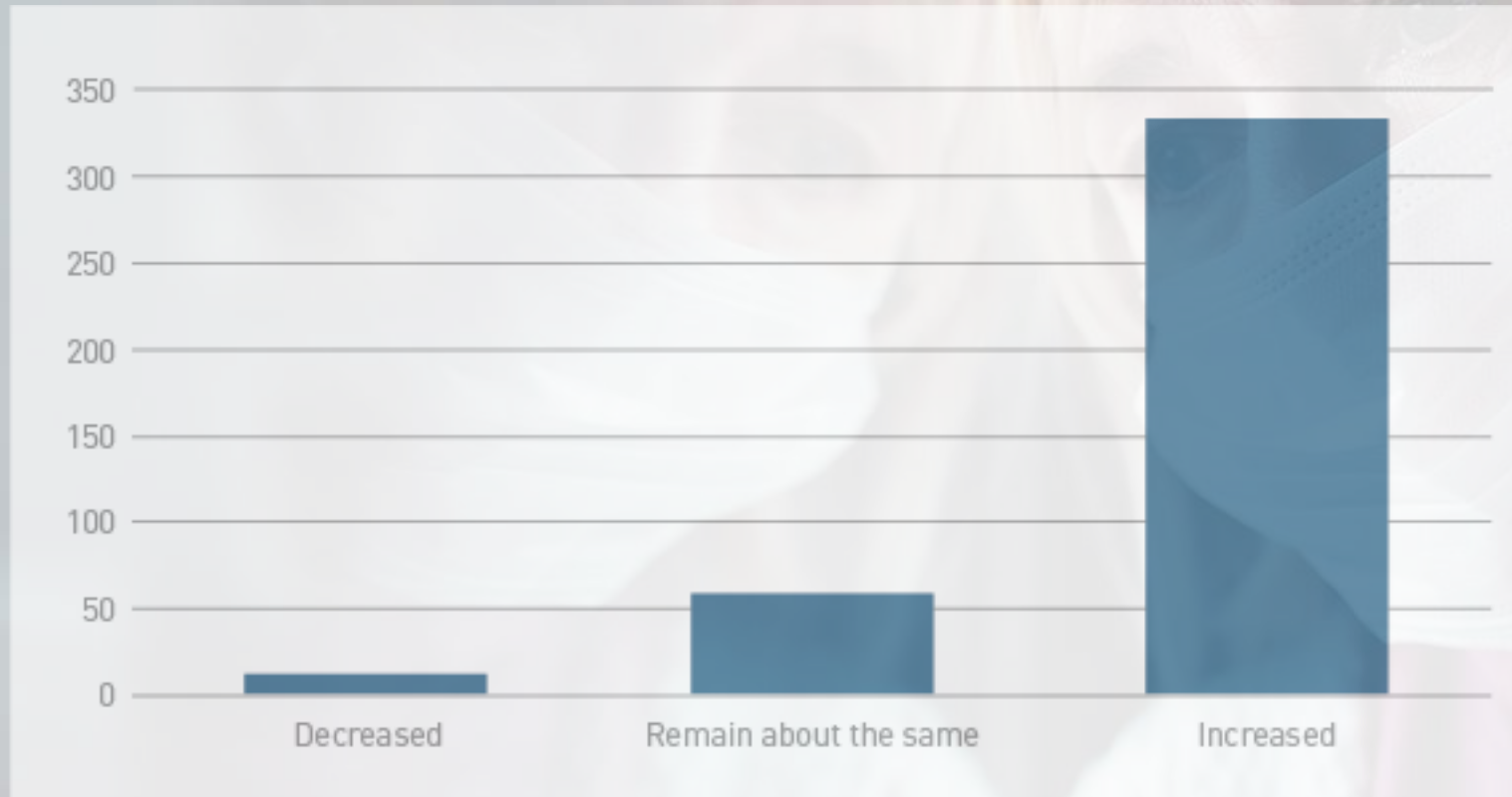
- Client refusal to accept in-home services by others
- Some caregivers were unemployed
- Some caregivers also have childcare needs
- Provider challenges to meet needs
 - Ensuring employee safety (limiting/prohibiting in-person services)
 - Workforce shortages



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:

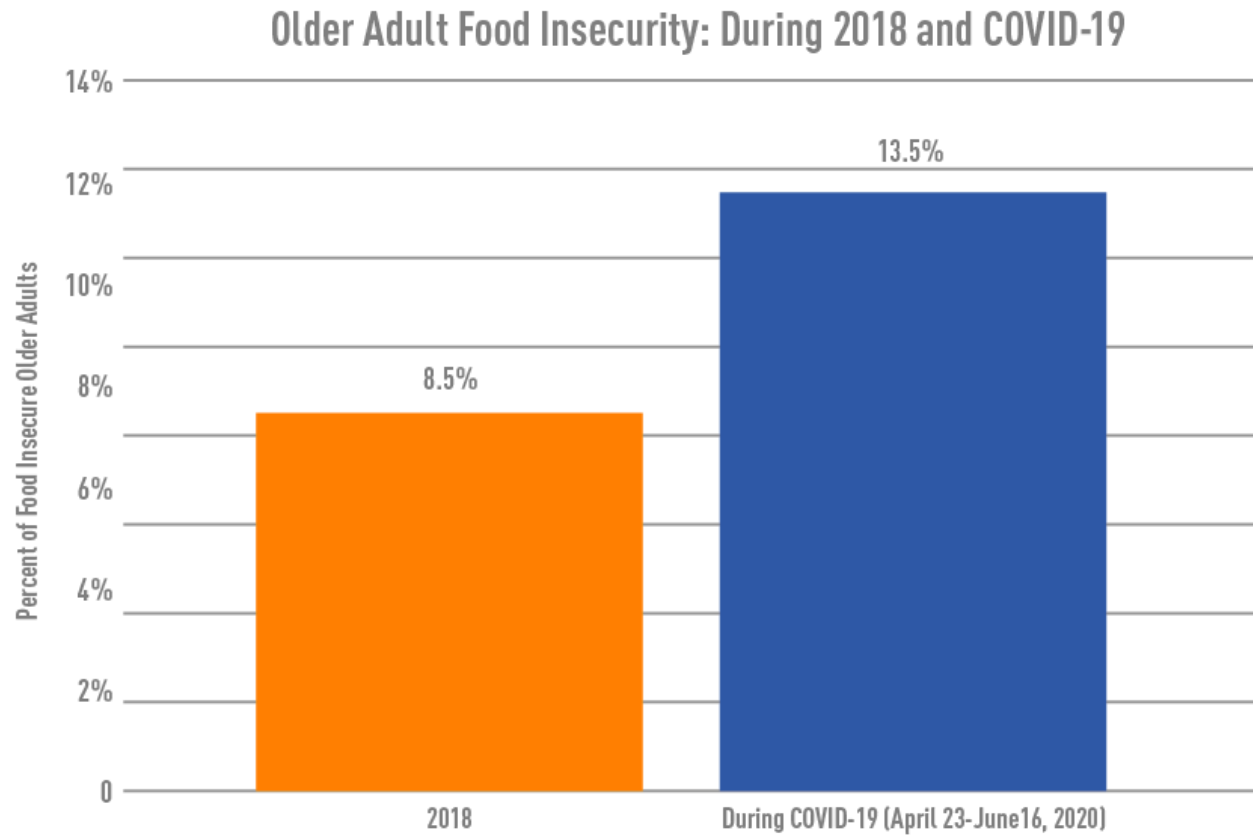
- Partnership with Jewish Family & Career Services
- Gives caregivers a needed break
- Family can pay an attendant in the home or for client visit to adult day center

Launched CARES Flex:

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

CHALLENGE

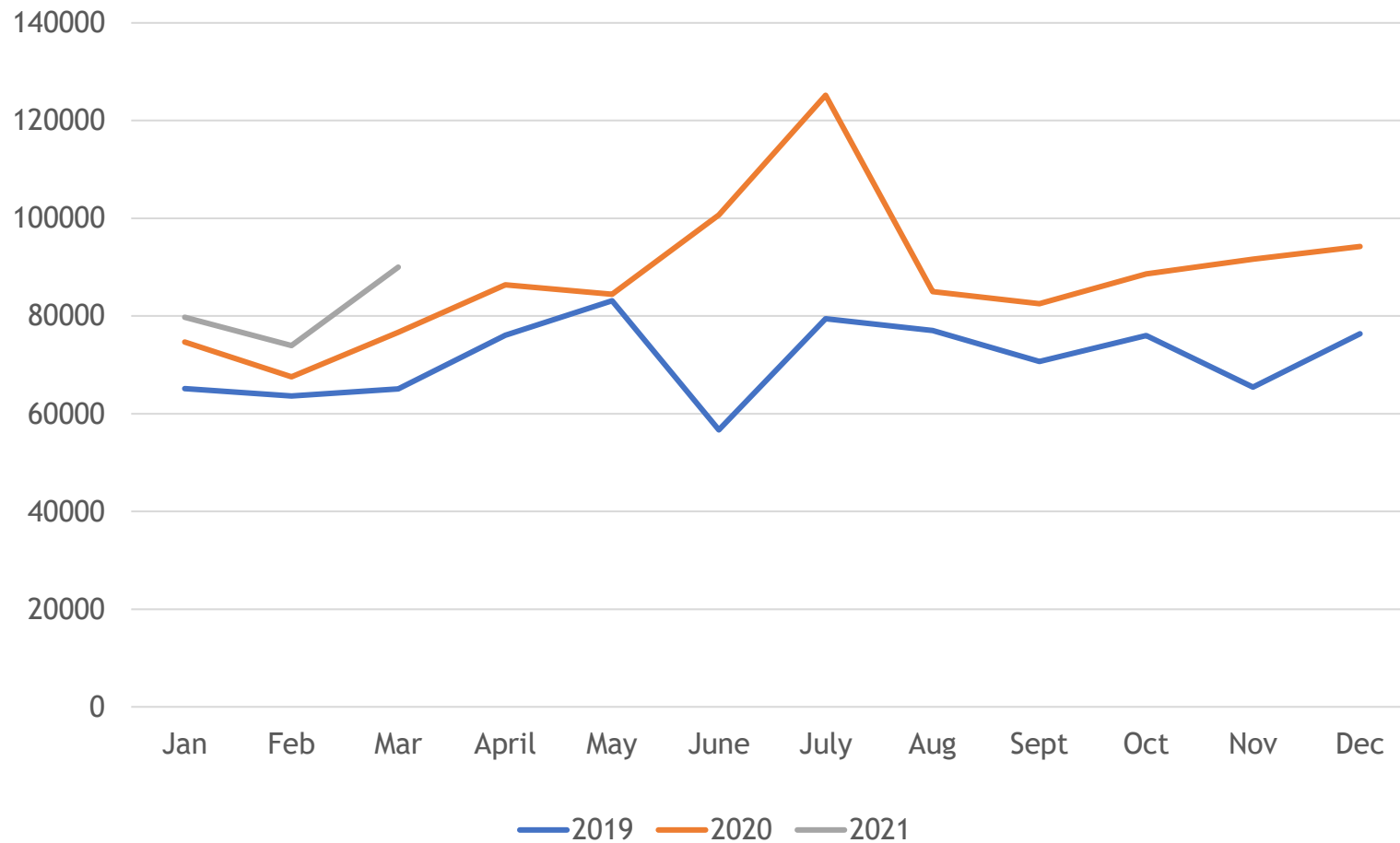
Food Insecurity



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

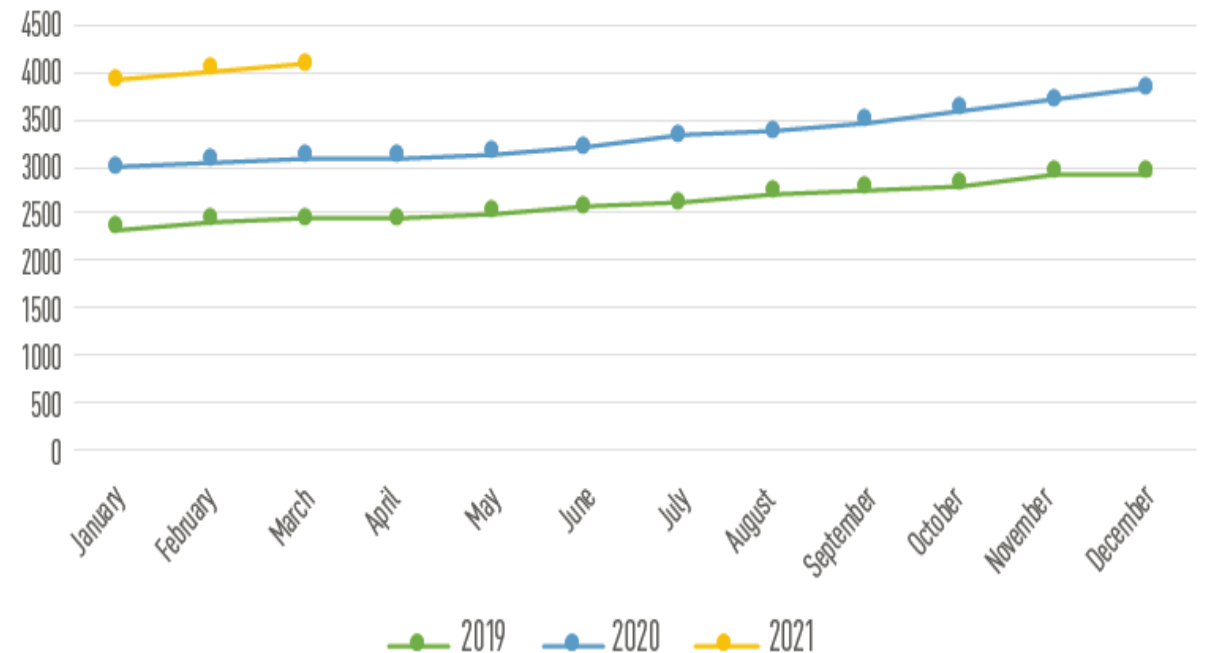


ARC RESPONSE

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



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



A hand holding a heart against a bokeh background. The background is a warm, orange-toned bokeh with soft, out-of-focus light spots. A hand is visible on the right side, holding a heart. The heart is a dark, solid color, possibly a deep red or brown, and is being held gently. The overall mood is warm, hopeful, and loving.

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

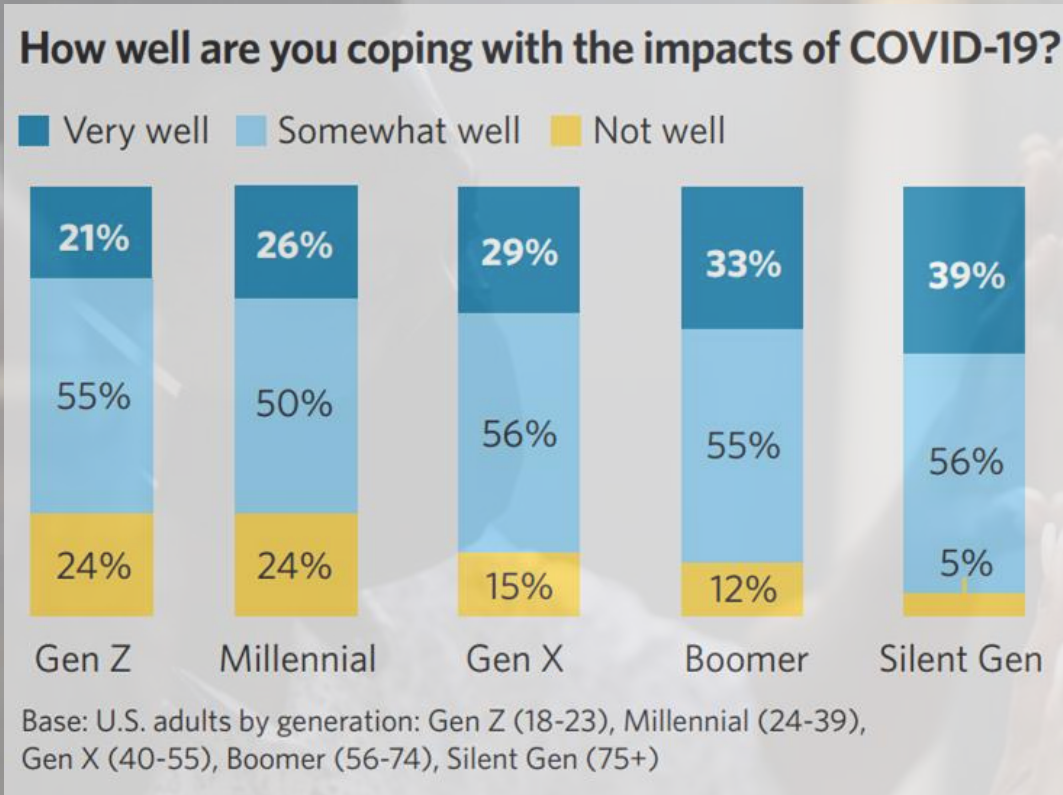
Lessons Learned

- 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

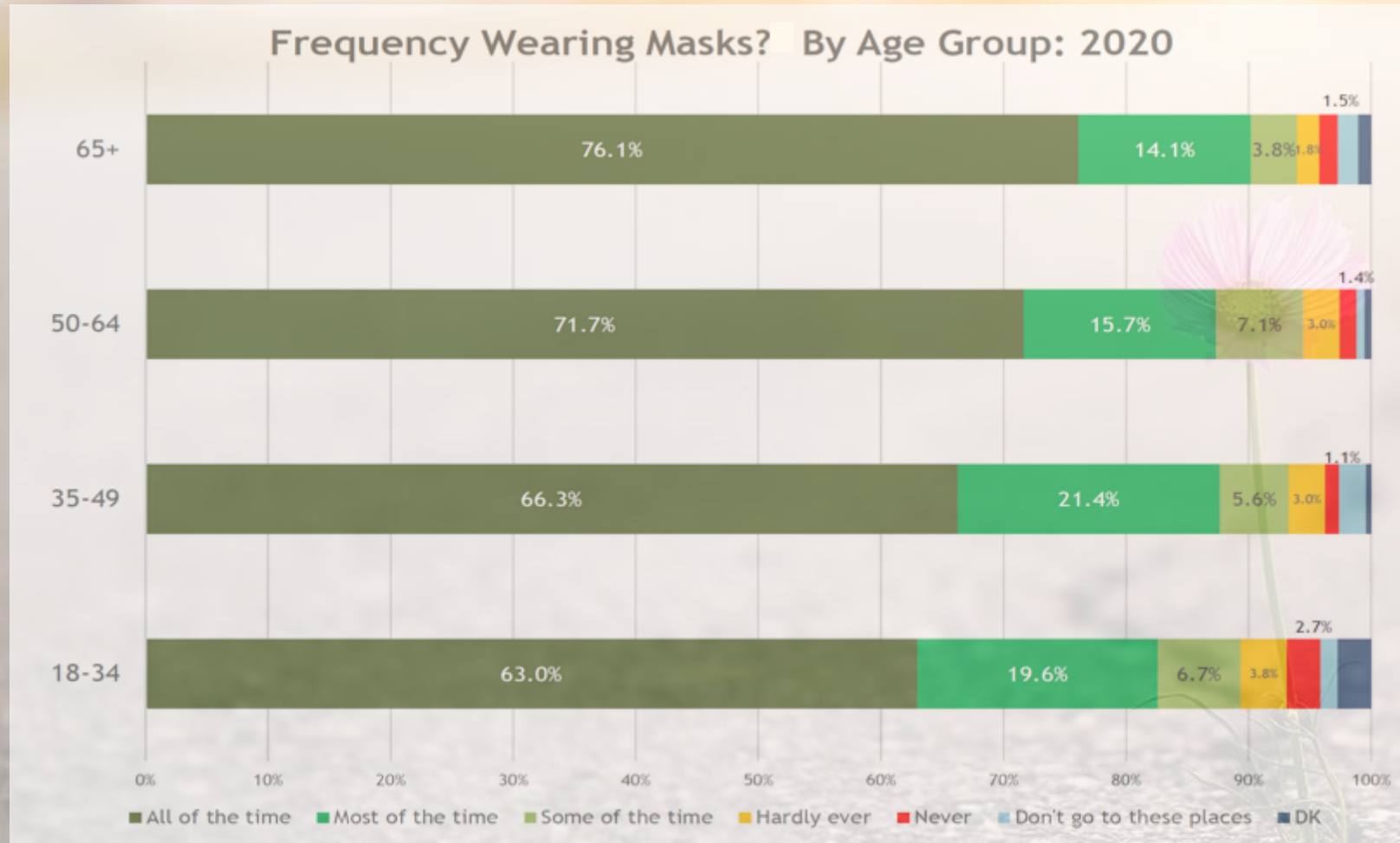
Older People Are Resilient



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

Lessons Learned

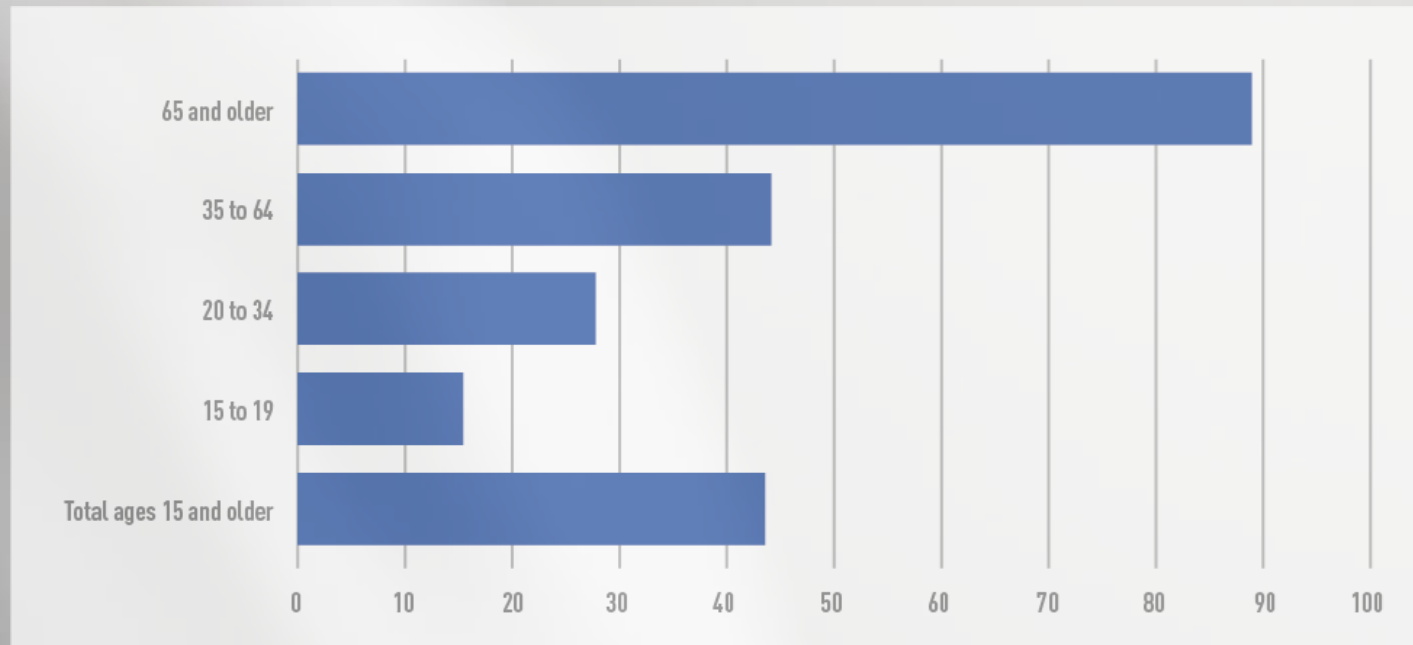
Older People Are Taking Precautions



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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