

# Community Health Improvement Plan: Support for Older Adults

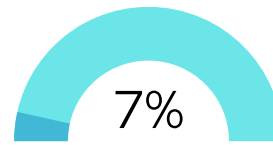
Core Priorities Brief  
October 2025

## OVERVIEW

The Public Health Council of the Upper Valley, using Dartmouth Health’s 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment, has identified priorities for the upcoming Community Health Improvement Plan. We hope these priorities may be incorporated into our partners’ work in serving, educating, and advocating for communities across the Upper Valley.

As the median age continues to increase in the Upper Valley, supporting older adults is a growing area of focus in the healthcare and community settings. Barriers such as lack of transportation and difficulty navigating the healthcare system burden older adults disproportionately. Furthermore, the older portion of the population requires more frequent and intensive medical care, faces higher risk of injury from falls and related accidents, and has a high prevalence of disabilities.

Improving the quality of life for older residents is also a current focus. Many older adults experience loneliness as a result of limited family support, poor mobility, and inability to participate in previously enjoyed activities. This isolation is exacerbated by increasing reliance on digital means of communication. As a result, it is crucial to continue providing people of all ages with opportunities to connect.

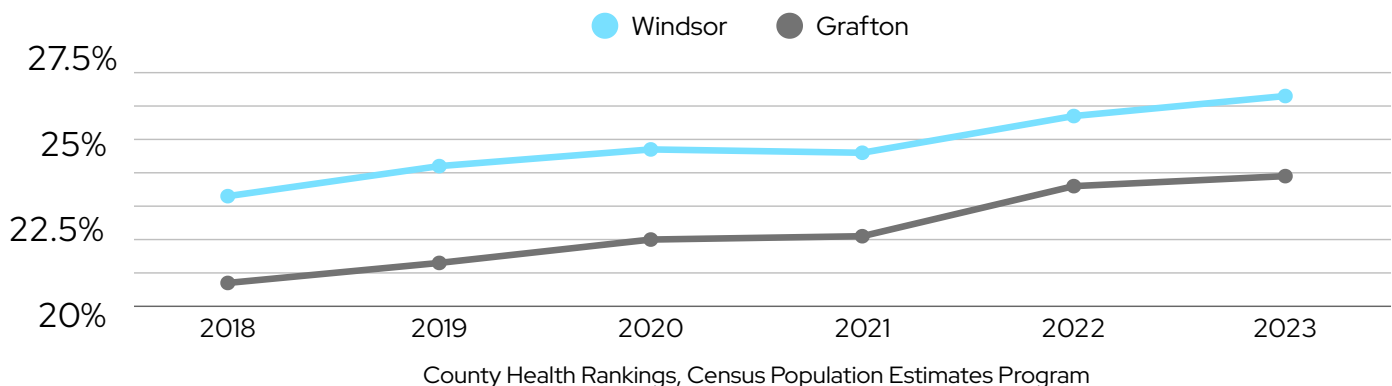


*Percent of community residents reporting that the ability of older adults to get help and support to age in place has gotten better over the last few years*

## FACTS AND FIGURES

- 55% of community leaders report isolated (homebound/very rural) populations being underserved by local resources.
- 32% of people age 65+ in the Upper Valley Public Health Region report having experienced a fall in the past 12 months.
- 12% of community resident respondents report they or someone close to them has had difficulty getting help caring for aging family members in the past year.

## Percent of population age 65 and older



“Lots of time and effort has been put into talking about the kinds of services that are needed to allow older folks to age in place ... programs and infrastructure have been developed and staff have been hired to talk to folks about how to go about availing themselves of services which will allow them to stay in their homes ... but, when the time comes, and real help is needed - that help is not available - at any cost.” - Community Resident Survey Respondent

## CURRENT STRENGTHS

- According to community leaders, the ability of older adults to “get help and support to age in place” showed the second highest improvement among all focus areas.
- **80%** of community survey respondents report that people help each other and **79%** report that there are ways to engage in spiritual groups.
- Community members have seen an increase in the ability of seniors to build intergenerational relationships through school programs pairing them with students.
- **64%** of community resident respondents agree the Upper Valley is a good place to grow old.

## SOME OPPORTUNITIES

- Work toward making more towns Dementia and/or Age Friendly by fixing sidewalks, increasing signage, and offering accessible activities at libraries and gathering spaces
- Host more balance classes and programs to prevent falls at local community centers
- Expand programs that pair older adults with younger community members
- Encourage older residents to participate in home sharing programs, which are often mutually beneficial
- Expand volunteer driver programs for bringing older adults to appointments

“Having designated people at Dartmouth Health or somewhere that were specifically there to help people navigate health care and social services systems. It is daunting for the average person, let alone an elder without a lot of family support.” - Community Resident Survey Respondent

## REFERENCES

Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, Alice Peck Day Memorial Hospital, and Visiting Nurse and Hospice for Vermont and New Hampshire. (2025). Community Health Needs Assessment: Fiscal Year 2025. <https://www.dartmouth-hitchcock.org/about/community-health>