

Towards equitable investments for addressing challenges and needs of older African Americans in the State of Ohio





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Executive Summary





























Towards Equitable Investments for Addressing the Challenges and Needs of Older African Americans in Ohio was commissioned by and completed in partnership with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to expand two previous studies conducted by the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity (Kirwan Institute). Kirwan's 2014 report, *Meeting the Challenges of an Aging Population with Success*,¹ focused on older adult vulnerability in Franklin County. The older adult vulnerability and density mapping tool that emerged from this report garnered attention from aging practitioners and interest in using this mapping tool for additional analysis. In 2017,² the Kirwan Institute completed a second study, which focused on African American older adult vulnerability in Franklin County. The current study expands the analysis to the entire state of Ohio by replicating the older adult vulnerability and density mapping tool and spatial analysis at the state level and engaging older African American Ohioans about their experiences.

The most disturbing finding of this work is that many of our state's older African Americans are facing what we define as *multiple and complex needs in high vulnerability areas*. The analysis of vulnerability and density by race/ethnicity revealed that more than half (58.1%) of African American older adults reside in high vulnerability areas where older adult population density is either high (41.9%) or moderate (16.2%). These older African Americans are experiencing several chronic physical, mental, and behavioral health challenges, live in high vulnerability and high density or prevalence areas, and lack reliable internet access, which is why we use the term multiple. However, our spatial analysis indicates that not all African Americans experience these challenges in the same way based on the census tracts where they live. Given that a one-size fits all solution does not exist, we term these needs *complex*. These multiple complex needs neighborhoods where many older African American Ohioans live are areas experiencing acute challenges that will likely require both

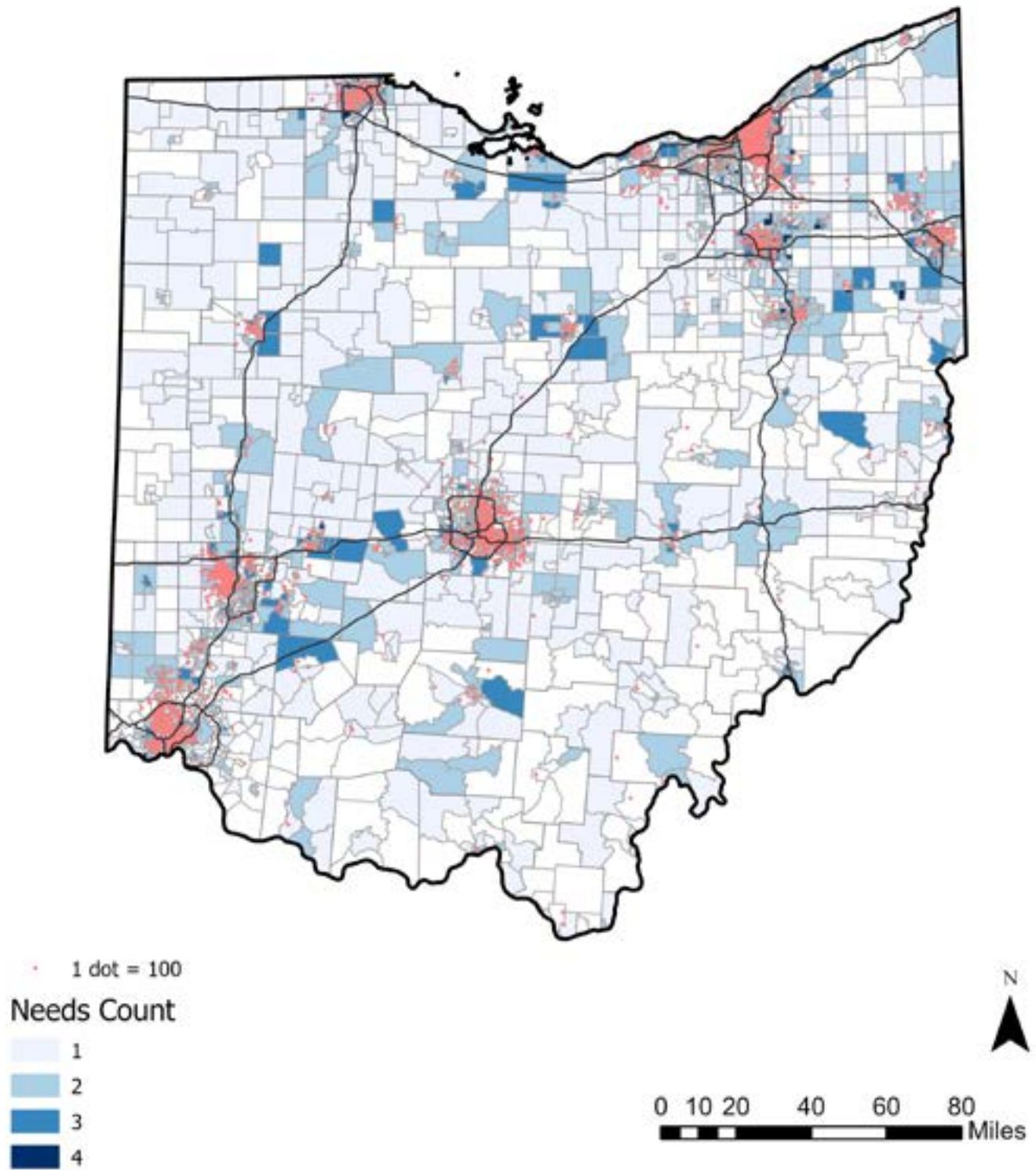
policy and programmatic solutions. **More than 44% of Ohio census tracts fit this definition (1,302 census tracts total).** Table A illustrates the variety of combinations experienced by older African Americans living throughout the state of Ohio, while Map A illustrates the locations of these census tracts. The larger report both provides the maps that substantiate this conclusion and greater detail from several focus groups confirming both the needs analysis along with several proposed solutions.

This research was conducted in partnership with a variety of experts and agencies from around the state of Ohio. We would like to thank the members of our Steering Committee who guided this work, providing invaluable advice, feedback, and critique throughout the research process (in alphabetical order): Beth Kowalczyk, Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging; Julie Maurer, Ohio Education Research Center; Ann Nguyen, Case Western Reserve University; and Katina Williams, Area Office on Aging of Northwest Ohio, Inc. Finally, we would not have been able to complete this project without the support of the agencies and the 28 participants in the six focus groups we held in Akron (at the University of Akron), Columbus (at Chandler Arms on the city’s Southeast Side and made possible by Concord Counseling and St. Stephen’s Community House located in the Linden neighborhood), and Toledo (at Senior Services, Inc.). We are grateful for everyone’s contributions and expertise; all responsibility for the final report content remains that of the Kirwan Institute.

Table A Multiple and Complex Needs Census Tracts in Ohio and Their Patterns of Need

Multiple and Complex Needs Census Tracts (total 1,302)	Cumulative Percentage of Multiple Complex Needs Tracts	Vulnerability-Density Index	Ten Chronic Conditions	Mental & Behavioral Health Needs	Broadband Supply & Demand
295	22.6%				
204	15.7%				
160	12.3%				
160	12.3%				
154	11.8%				
91	7.0%				
79	6.1%				
69	5.3%				
48	3.7%				
22	1.7%				
20	1.5%				

Map A Ohio Locations Where Multiple Needs Exist for Older African Americans




































Following a multi-method study approach that consisted of spatial analysis and qualitative focus groups with older African Americans in Akron, Columbus and Toledo, this study produced **16 recommendations** designed to inform future programs and policies of the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Ohio Department of Aging. The recommendations are organized around five themes.

The *Improving Access* theme focuses on strengthening access to the resources already available to Older African Americans in Ohio. The *Expanding Access* theme focuses on enhancing the amount and quality of access older African Americans have to care resources. The *Increase Inclusion* theme responds to the isolation and lack of respect articulated by focus group participants and is a call for including the voices and needs of older African Americans. *Enhancing Experiences* refers to the need across agencies for an improved understanding of and relationship to the older African American Ohioan community. Finally, *Strengthen Place* refers to place-specific planning and policy decisions that can improve outcomes for older African Americans in Ohio. Table B lists the themes and their connections to various recommendations; for more information about each recommendation, please go to page 60 in the larger report.

We note in much greater detail throughout the report two key realities. First, implementation of these recommendations will likely require multiple sectors (government, non-profit, philanthropy) as well as cross-agency collaboration within government. Second, where applicable we note multiple areas where greater research would expand the ability to successfully implement these recommendations.

Nearly 18% of Ohioans are over the age of 65, and a significant proportion of them are African American. As we discuss below, a strong public health case can be made for including African Americans between the ages of 55-64 within the cohort of an aging population in Ohio. As we continue to change as a state it will be critical to address the needs of older African Americans at younger ages in order to ensure all Ohioans have the benefit of the highest quality of life possible for as long as possible. We encourage all key stakeholders to include older African Americans in the discussions of changes that will impact their lives; not only is it the right thing to do, but increased involvement in community discussions is good for their health outcomes as well. The Kirwan Institute stands ready to support community efforts that fall within our mandate to conduct community-engaged research in partnership going forward.

Table B General Recommendations to Address the Complex Vulnerability of Older African American Ohioans

#	Recommendation	Improve Access	Expand Access	Increase Inclusion	Enhance Experiences	Strengthen Place
1	Utilize Statewide Older Adult Vulnerability Mapping Tool for Programs and Policy					
2	Utilize Statewide Older Adult Mapping Tool to Site Low-Income and Affordable Housing in High Opportunity Neighborhoods					
3	Conduct Statewide Listening Series					
4	Review Existing Policies & Programs					
5	Increase Volunteer Opportunities					
6	Foster Relationships Among Older Adults					
7	Directly Engage Older Adults in Safety-Related Decision-Making					
8	Foster Positive Relationships with First					
9	Partner with Local Law Enforcement to Ensure Bias Trainings for Officers					
10	Support Age-Friendly and Inclusive Community Development and Redevelopment					
11	Create and Disseminate a Black Medical Practitioner's Guide					
12	Create a Cultural Humility and Bias Certification for Service and Medical Providers					
13	Pilot a Statewide Case Worker Program					
14	Grow and Support Existing Transportation Assistance and Better Disseminate to Vulnerable African Americans					
15	Lower Programmatic Eligibility Age from 65 to 55 when are where possible					
16	Support, Replicate, and Expand Age- and Income-dependent Tablet and Technological Assistance Programs	