

## In This Issue:

### Aging and Public Health

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Delaware is growing in many ways. The state's overall population has increased by nearly 21% since 2006, with much of the growth occurring downstate (Sussex grew 57%, Kent grew 30%, and New Castle, 12% -- all over the same 20 years). The evidence indicates that most of the senior migration happened to Sussex County, likely due to its desirable factors with still a relatively affordable cost of living.<sup>1</sup>

Delaware also has the eighth-oldest population in the country and, equally importantly, the rate of growth of the senior population is the sixth highest in the country. There has been a 92% increase in Delaware residents over the age of 65 since 2006.<sup>1</sup> Our number of older adults is doubling, and many are retired, or retiring. According to Pew Research, most older adults currently live in their own home or apartment. Most (60%) say they would prefer to stay in their home and have someone care for them. Others state they want to move into assisted living (18%), move in with family (11%), or move into a nursing home (1%).<sup>2</sup>

While we are glad to see Delaware be a location of choice for all generations, and that our older generations in particular are enjoying beach living, this multi-pronged change is highlighted by rapid population growth and a demographic shift, loss of workforce to retirement, and increased retirees requiring healthcare from a diminishing (younger) workforce. This change in the labor force can mean a loss of experience and access. It also means that Delaware needs to stand up a healthcare workforce well-studied in the medical needs of seniors (e.g., geriatrics, polypharmacy, complex medical decision making<sup>3</sup>), preferably practicing where those seniors are enjoying their retirement.

In 2022, we featured work in our Place Matters issue on aging in place,<sup>4</sup> and in this issue of the Delaware Journal of Public Health, we hear from researchers (including the author of one of the 2022 articles) looking into how to help our seniors age gracefully, as well as from authors working in the fields of home health care and assisted living. We are deeply grateful to this issue's Guest Editors, Elizabeth Orsega-Smith and Julia O'Hanlon, for their work curating this issue.

And as always, we look forward to your comments.

## References

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