



Senior Agenda: Issues, Action and Advocacy

Maria E. Cimini, Director

October 10, 2023

R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-66-1

The legislature finds and declares:

- (1) That *the state has an obligation to provide for the health, safety and welfare of its elderly citizens*;
- (2) That to *develop and implement innovative programs* to insure the *dignity and independence* of our elderly citizens is essential to insure and protect their rights;
- (3) That *upgrading and maintenance of services and programs* pertaining to our elderly citizens deserves priority consideration as a means of preventing ineffective responses to their health, safety and welfare needs;
- (4) That the establishment of a department of state government to provide for the health, safety, and welfare of elderly citizens is the most effective way to insure that they are better prepared and equipped to *lead productive and meaningful lives*; and
- (5) *The abuse of elderly persons is a social and moral problem* in our state and nationally and the state has a responsibility to provide protection to vulnerable elderly persons who were abused and/or neglected. The legislature recognizes that reports of elder abuse of grown significantly and are reaching alarming proportions and that there is an immediate need to clarify and strengthen the state's role and responsibilities in the prevention and alleviation of elder abuse.



Advocates for older adults, adults with disabilities, caregivers


Do * Convene * Inform * Amplify

Investigate elder abuse, connect older adults to services, support community programs

Gather stakeholders to discuss challenges and improve services

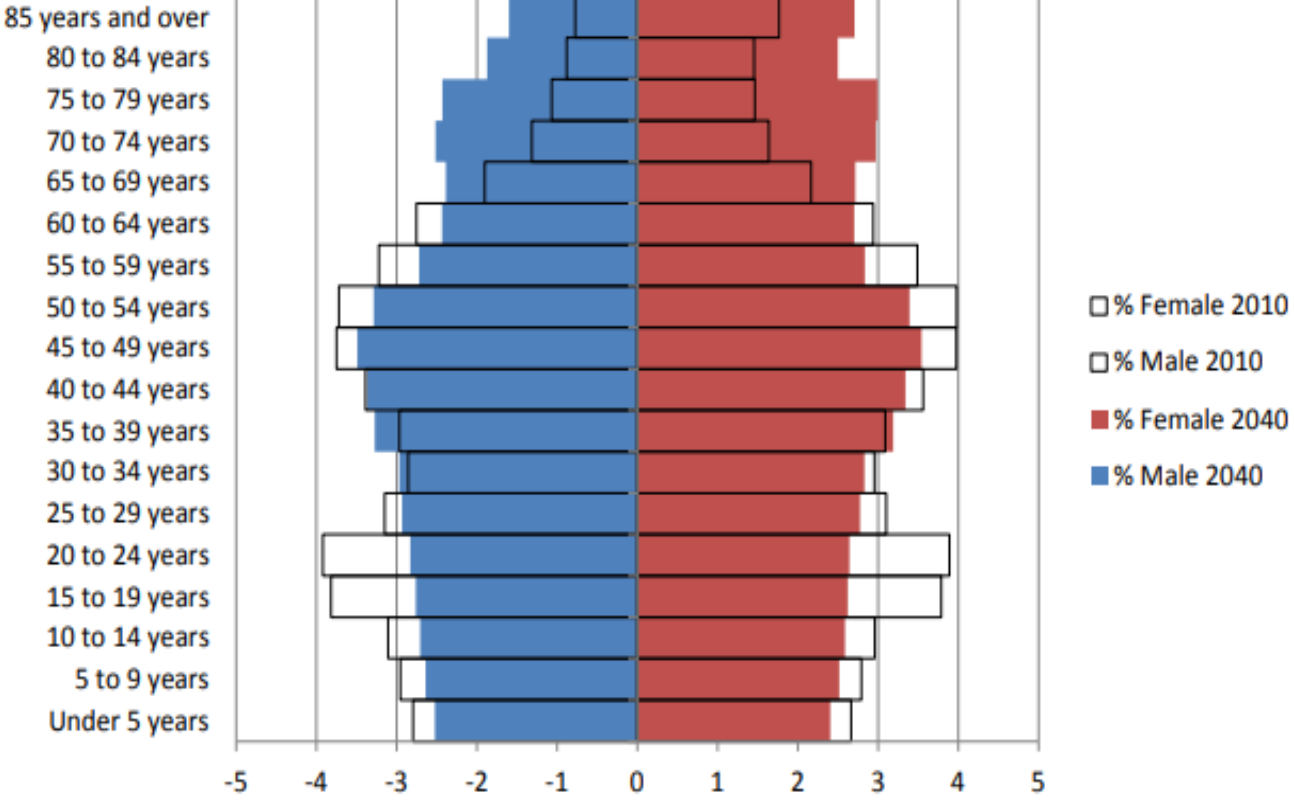
Raise needs and concerns of older adults in spaces of housing, behavioral health, transportation, nutrition, etc.

Promote the work of organizations and individuals working to support older adults and promote older adults themselves

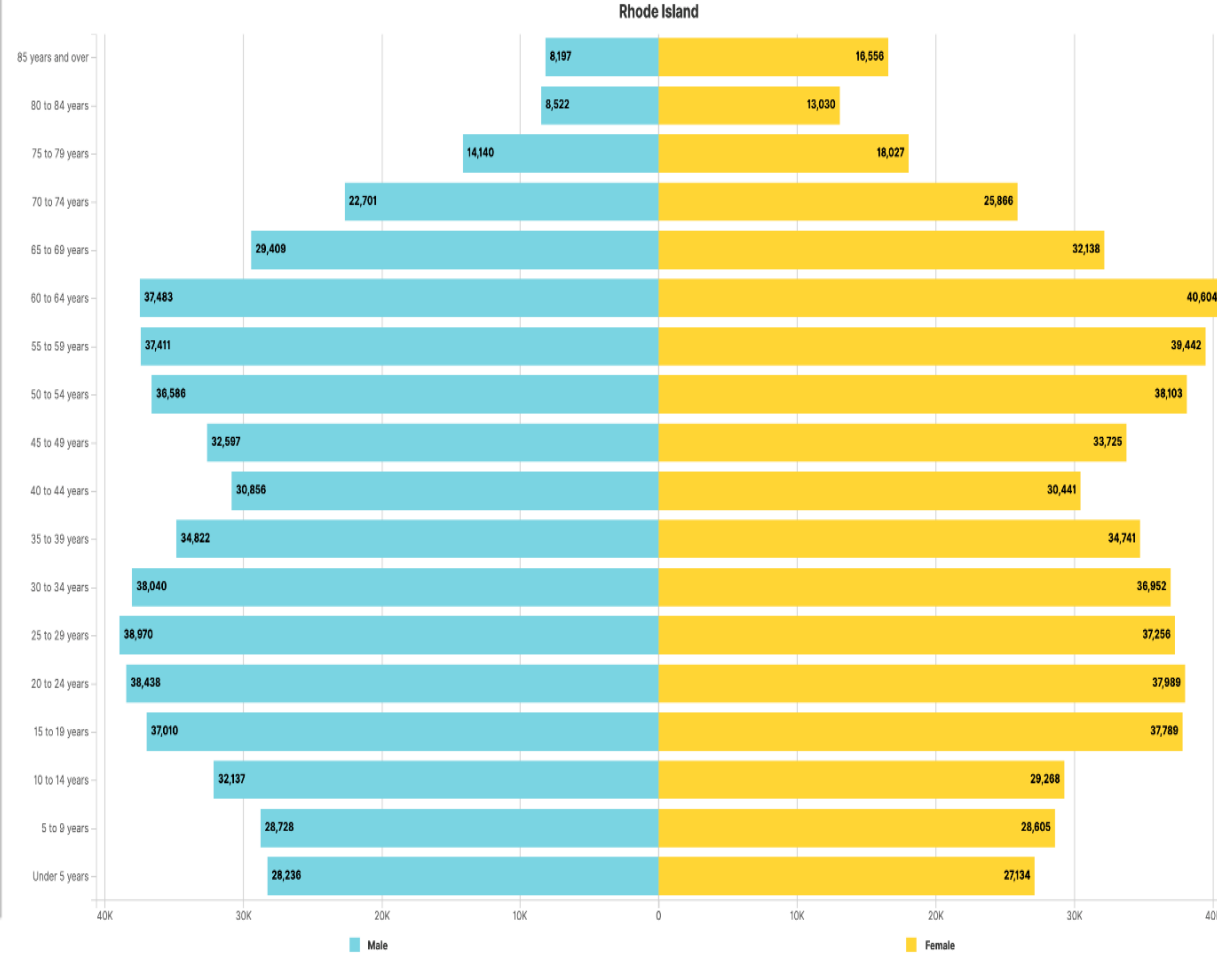


Issues: A growing
older adult
population in RI

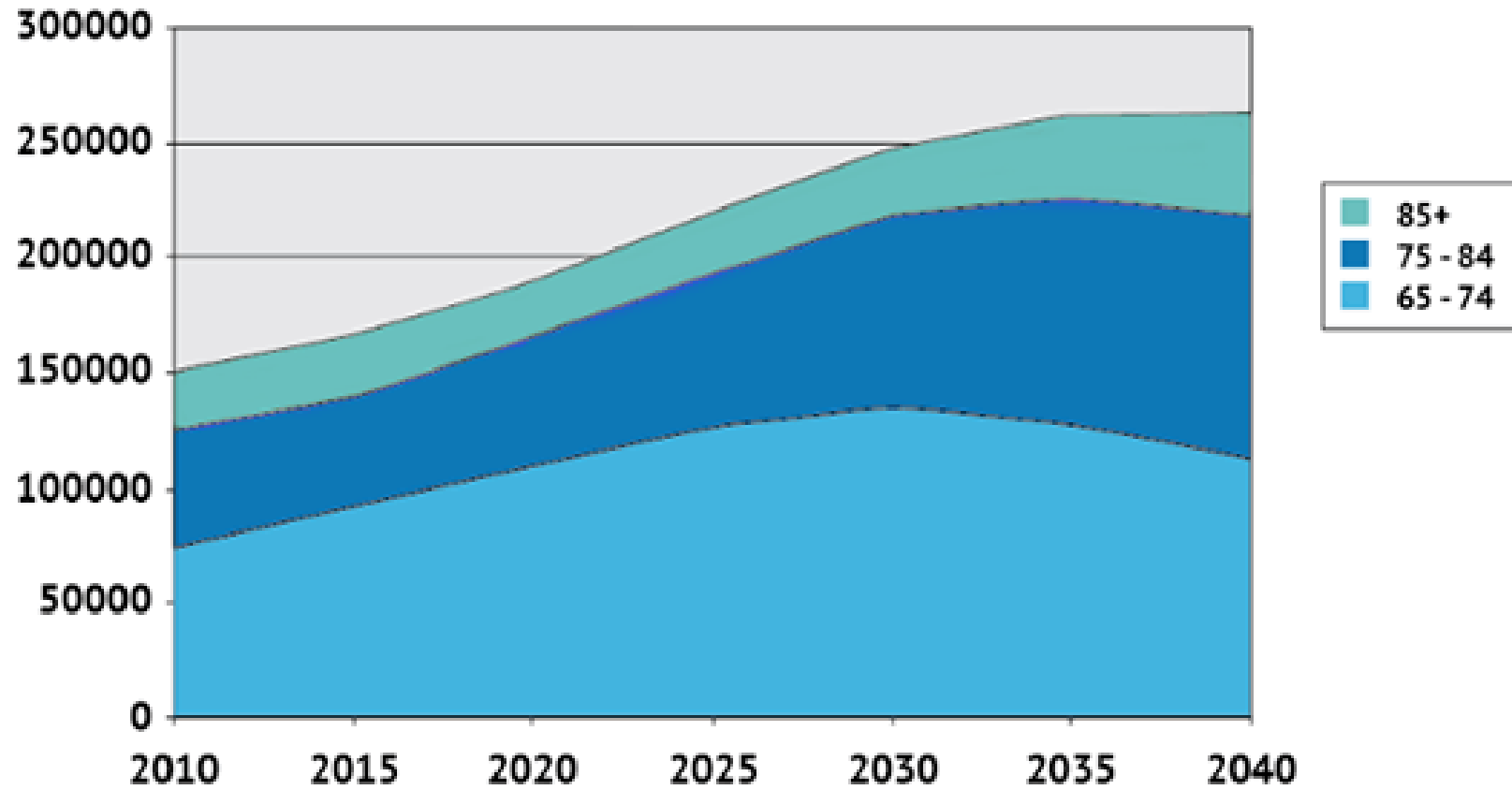
2040 (2010) R.I. Population Pyramids



Population Pyramid: Population by Age and Sex in Rhode Island



RI 65+ Age Projections: 2010-2040
source: Rhode Island Statewide Planning





Issues: Older adult
needs in RI



What we've heard from RI older adults

Feedback from 130 individuals participating in one of 11 focus groups and over 1,000 surveys completed

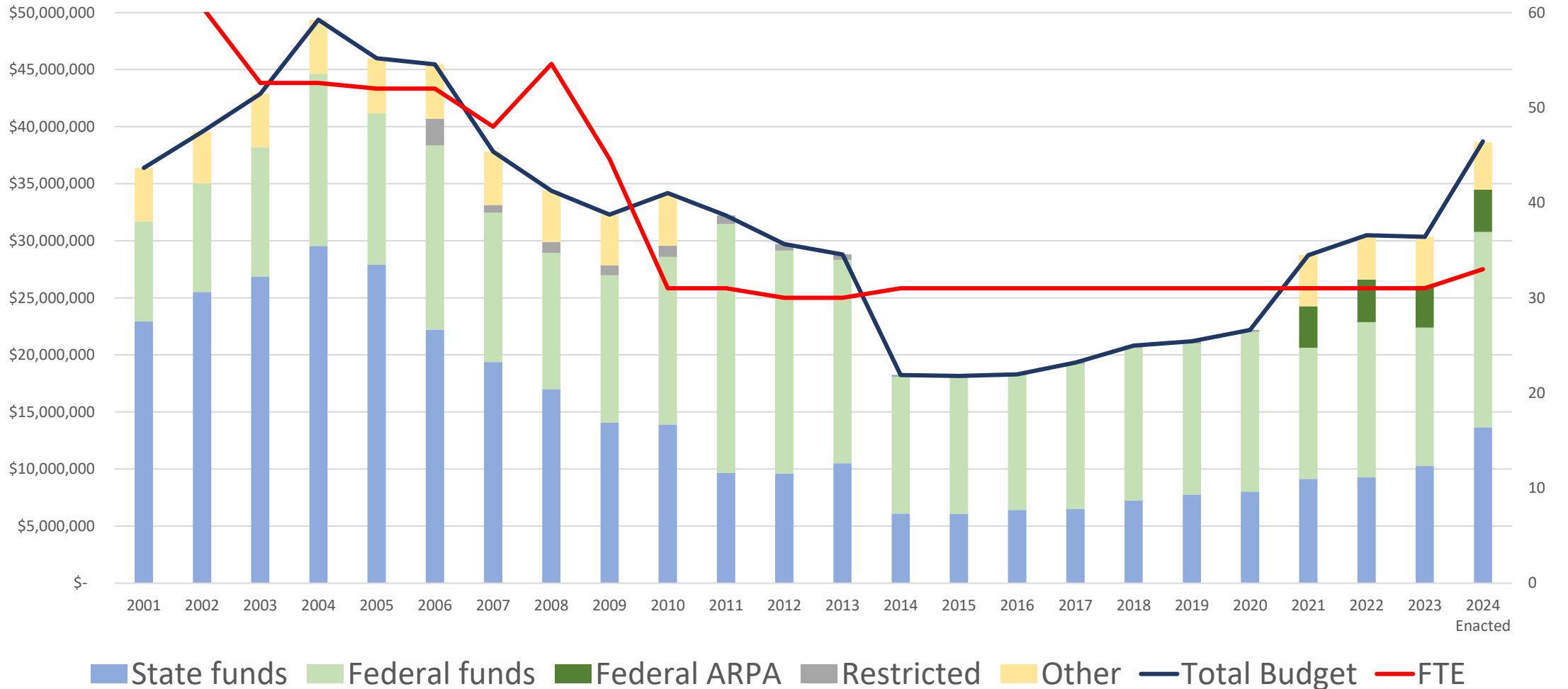
Key themes from the older adults included:

- Access and affordability of reliable transportation
- Access to affordable housing
- Feelings of social isolation and loneliness
- Value of health and wellness programs
- Desire for stronger supportive communities
- Awareness of and access to services



Issues: OHA
Resources

RI Department of Elderly Affairs/Division of Elderly Affairs/Office of Healthy Aging Budgets and Staffing



Our Structure

Adult Protective Services



Medicare Information Assistance and Awareness



At Home Supports



Caregiving, Respite, ADRC



Nutrition, Wellness, Legal



Senior Companion



Reception, Administrative Support, Communications




Finance



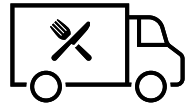
Director, Assoc. Director, Unit Directors





Action: What we do
at OHA

Support Older Rhode Islanders by Distributing Older American Act Funding to Local Agencies



3,604
Seniors received
home delivered
meals



2,081 older adults
received legal
assistance



4,911 seniors
had a meal at
a congregate
meal site



14,426
caregivers
supported

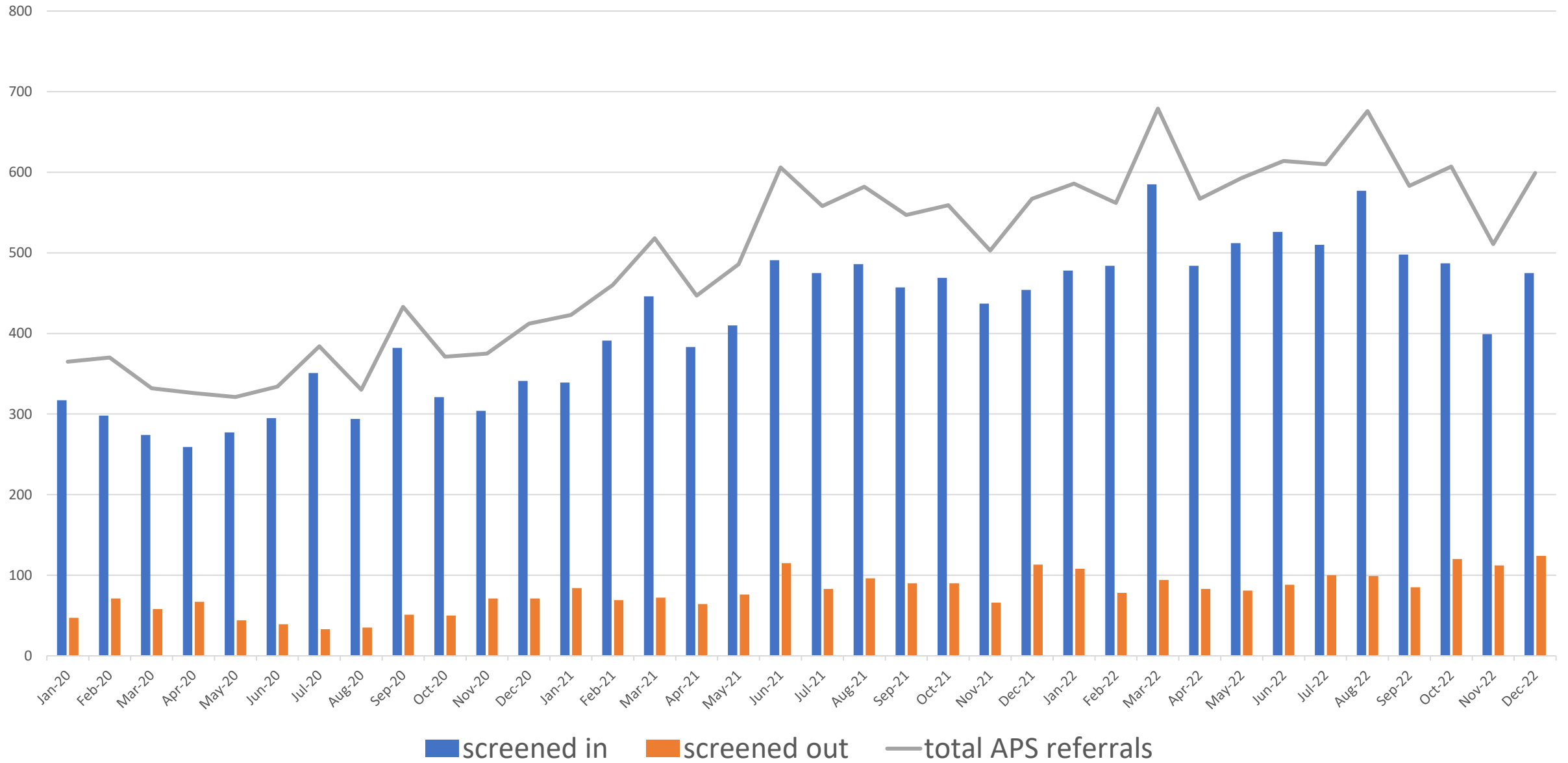


3,348 older
adults
received case
management



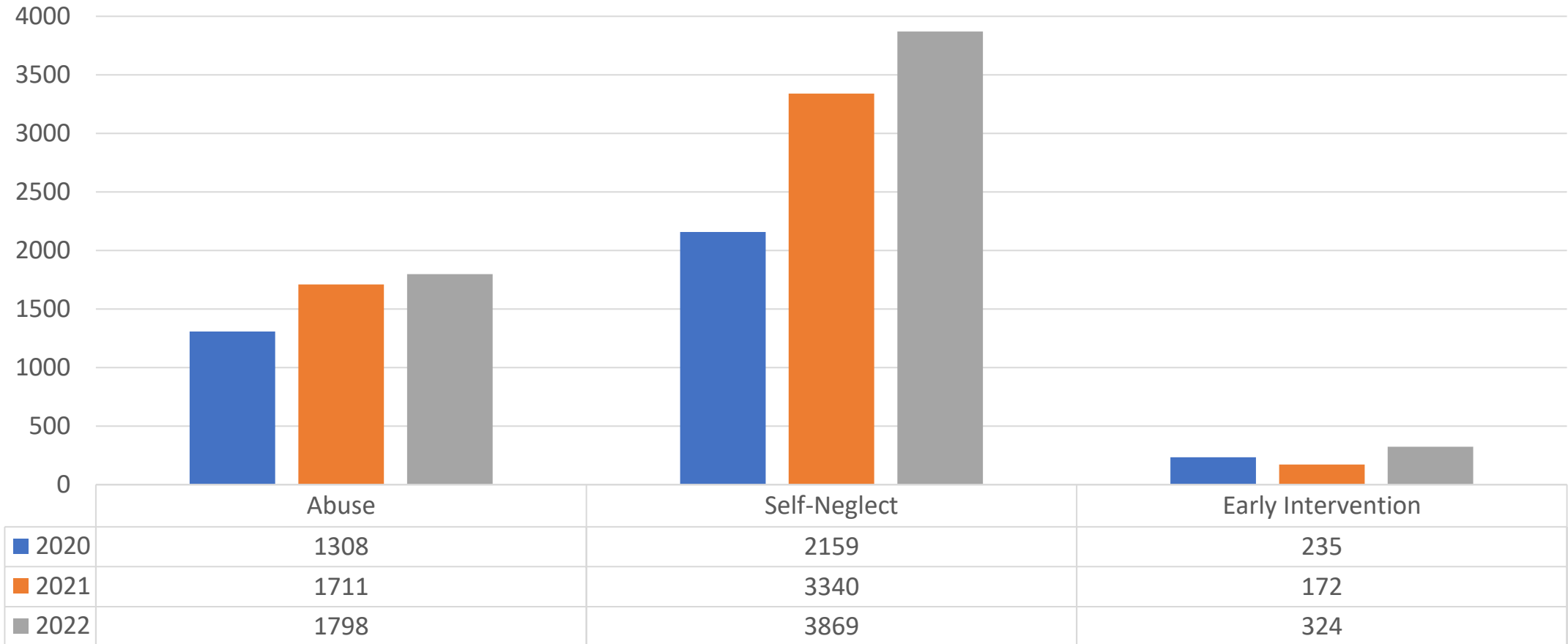
29,520 seniors
attended health and
wellness classes

APS referrals 2020-2022



Reports of Abuse and Self-Neglect in RI 2020-2022

Number of APS Reports Annually by Type



■ 2020 ■ 2021 ■ 2022

*classified as "other" 2020: 10, 2021: 10, 2022: 24



Action: State
supports

2023 State Investments

- ✓ Additional funding for Senior Service Supports (senior centers and community centers)
- ✓ Additional funding for Meals on Wheels
- ✓ First time state funding of the ADRC, the Point
- ✓ Two new FTEs for OHA



Advocacy:
Opportunities for
Engagement

FY 2024-2026 Older Americans Act State Plan on Aging

1. Provide older adults, older adults with disabilities and their caregivers *access to the information* they need to make informed decisions about the supports they need to thrive.
2. Support older adults to *stay active and healthy physically and mentally*.
3. Enable older adults and older adults with disabilities to *remain in their own homes* with maximum independence and quality of life.
4. *Strengthen a caregiving infrastructure* that recognizes, builds, and supports both paid and unpaid caregivers
5. Ensure the rights, safety, independence, and dignity of older adults and *prevent their abuse, neglect, and exploitation*.
6. Build on lessons learned from COVID-19 about *social isolation risk* and the importance of *varied engagement strategies*.
7. *Ensure equity* – All Rhode Islanders should be able to participate fully in society and benefit from available programs and services.
8. Ensure OHA's programs and investments are in line with people's needs and *hold ourselves accountable* to achieving established goals.

Opportunities for Engagement

- ❖ Governor's Advisory Commission on Aging
 - ❖ Citizens Commission for the Care and Safety of the Elderly
 - ❖ Home and Community Care Advisory Commission
 - ❖ Family Caregivers Alliance of RI Advisory Committee
 - ❖ Long Term Care Coordinating Council
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- ❖ Watch the bills being introduced and share ideas for improving the lives of older Rhode Islanders with your elected officials and *with me*.

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