

WHY MAUI SHOULD MANDATE VISITABILITY IN HOUSING

MAUI COUNTY COUNCIL

September 11, 2018

**David Leake, PhD, MPH
Patricia Morrissey, PhD
Center on Disability Studies
University of Hawaii at Manoa
(808) 956-0820
leake@hawaii.edu**



This presentation is based on the study entitled *Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice with a Focus on People with Disabilities* conducted by the UH Center on Disability Studies. The study was funded by state and county agencies to meet their requirement to regularly report on such impediments and plans to reduce them to the UH Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

This report is available for free download at

<http://www.cds.hawaii.edu/sites/default/files/imce/downloads/projects/Fair-Housing-Project-Report.pdf>

(but may not work using the Safari browser)

THE AFFORDABILITY CHALLENGE

According to American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates for 2010-2014:

- ❖ 13.3% = disability rate for Maui residents (compared to 10.6% for State and 12.3% for USA)
- ❖ 34.3% = disability rate for Maui residents 65 years and older (compared to 34.9% for State and 36.3% for USA)
- ❖ 15.9% = poverty rate for Maui residents with disabilities, compared to 11.4% for all Maui residents (compared to 11.5% for State and 15.6% for USA)
- ❖ 44.0% = employment rate for Maui residents with disabilities ages 18-64, compared to 74.4% for all Maui residents 18-64 (compared to 72.8% for State and 69.9% for USA)

Hawaii's Supplemental Security Income (SSI) was \$721 per month in 2014. On Neighbor Islands, this only covered about 78% of the rent for a studio apartment.

THE ACCESSIBILITY CHALLENGE

The most affordable housing tends to be older units built before 1990 that are NOT easily accessible to people with mobility impairments.



Shortage of affordable accessible housing means people with mobility impairments often cannot find rentals where they can use Section 8 vouchers before they expire.



The Home Usability Network

Life starts at home.

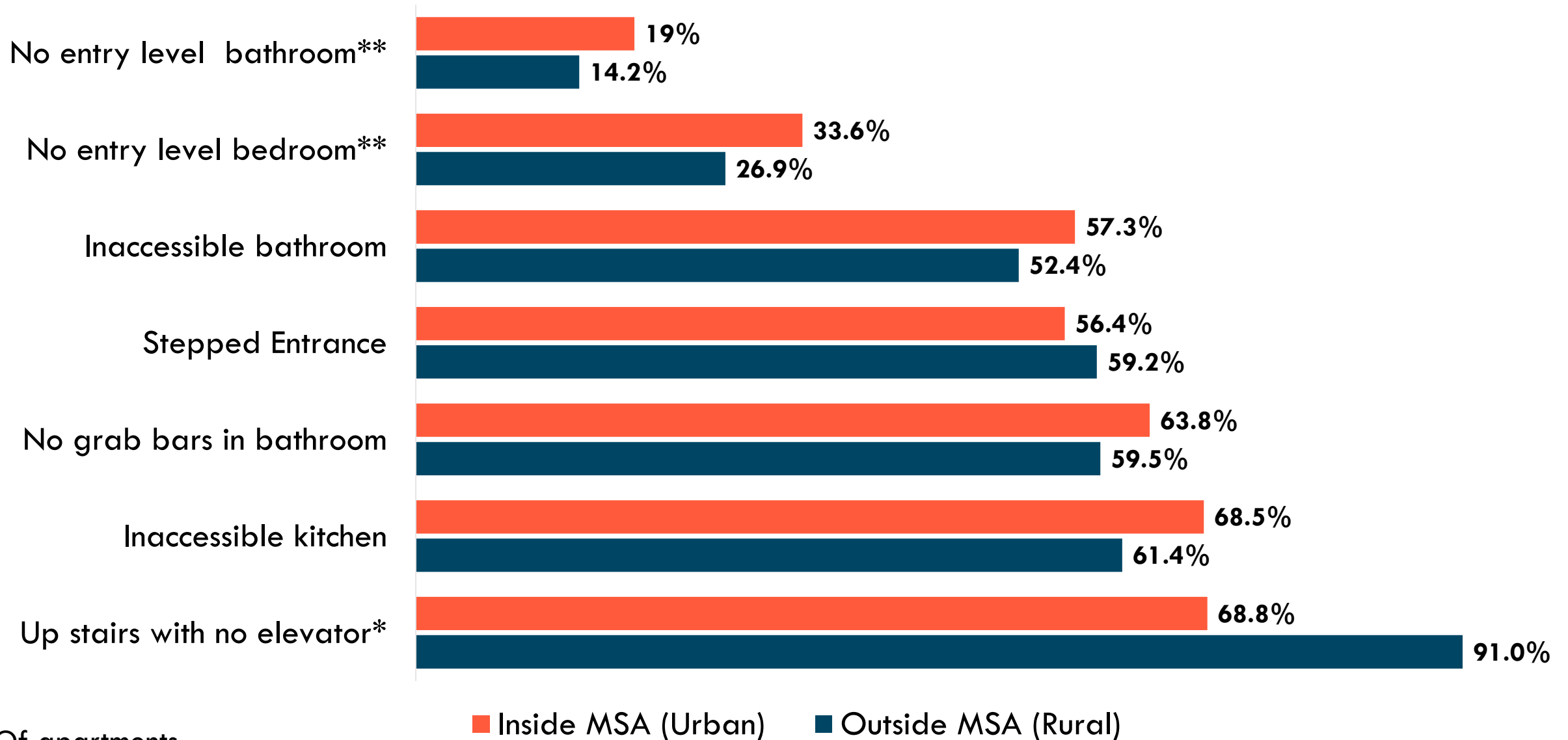
Information from the 2011 American Housing Survey

University of Montana

<http://rtc.ruralinstitute.umt.edu>

www.useablehome.com

Rate of Inaccessible Housing: Urban versus Rural (of households with individuals using a mobility device)

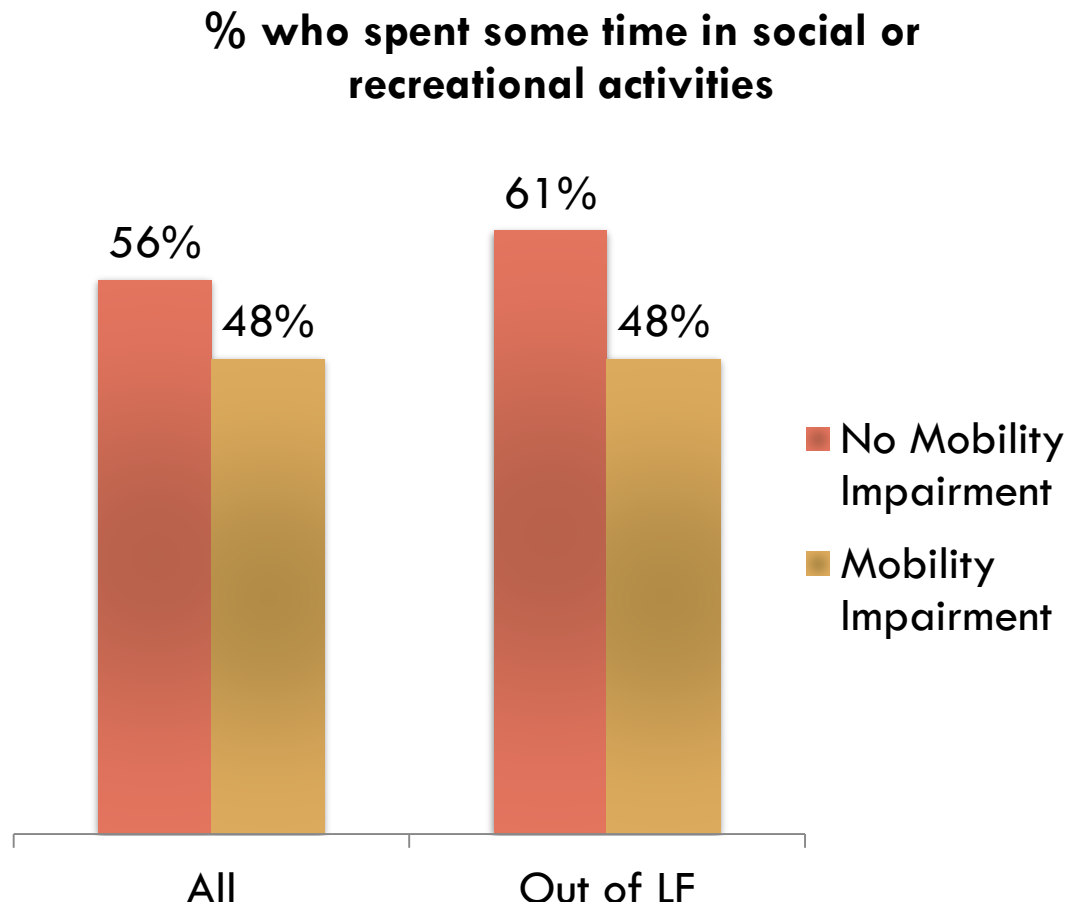
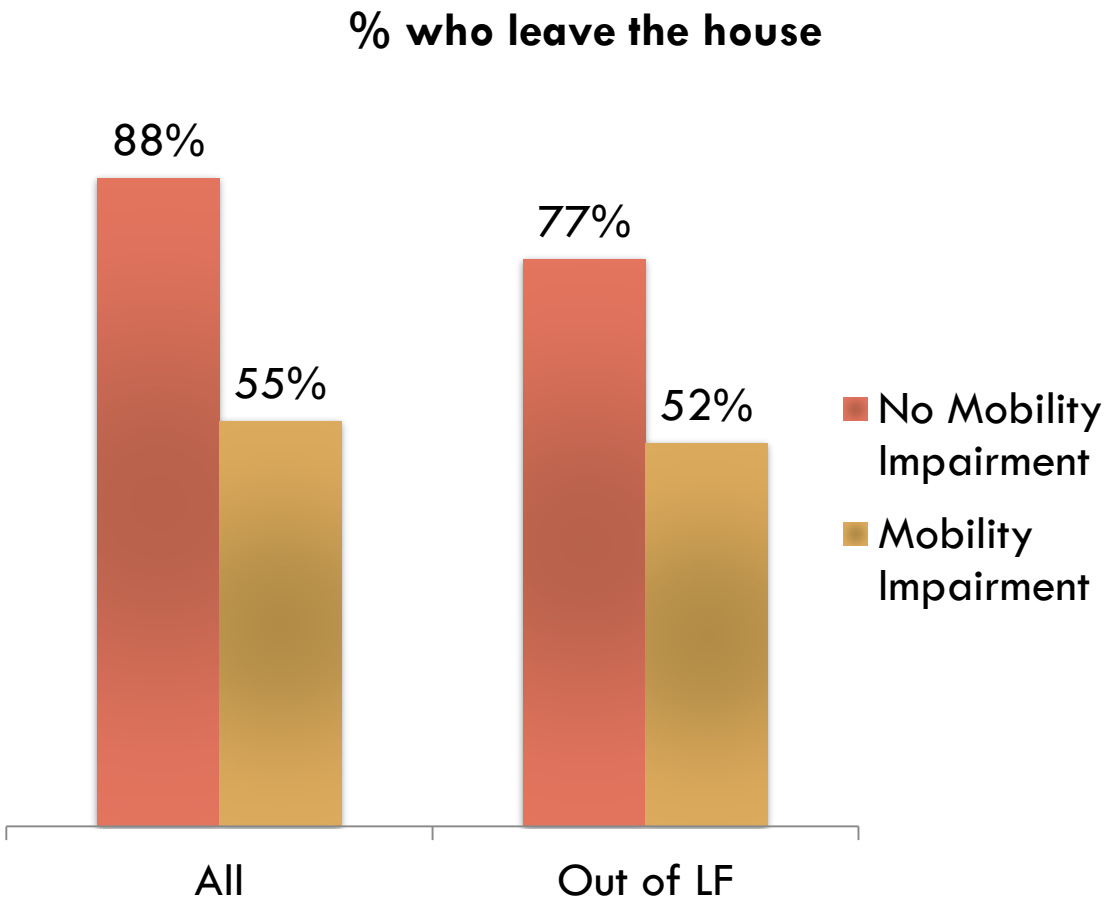


* Of apartments

** Of units with more than 1 floor

PEOPLE WITH MOBILITY IMPAIRMENT LESS LIKELY TO LEAVE HOME AND LESS LIKELY TO ENGAGE IN SOCIAL-RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

(data from American Time Use Survey, 2008-2014)

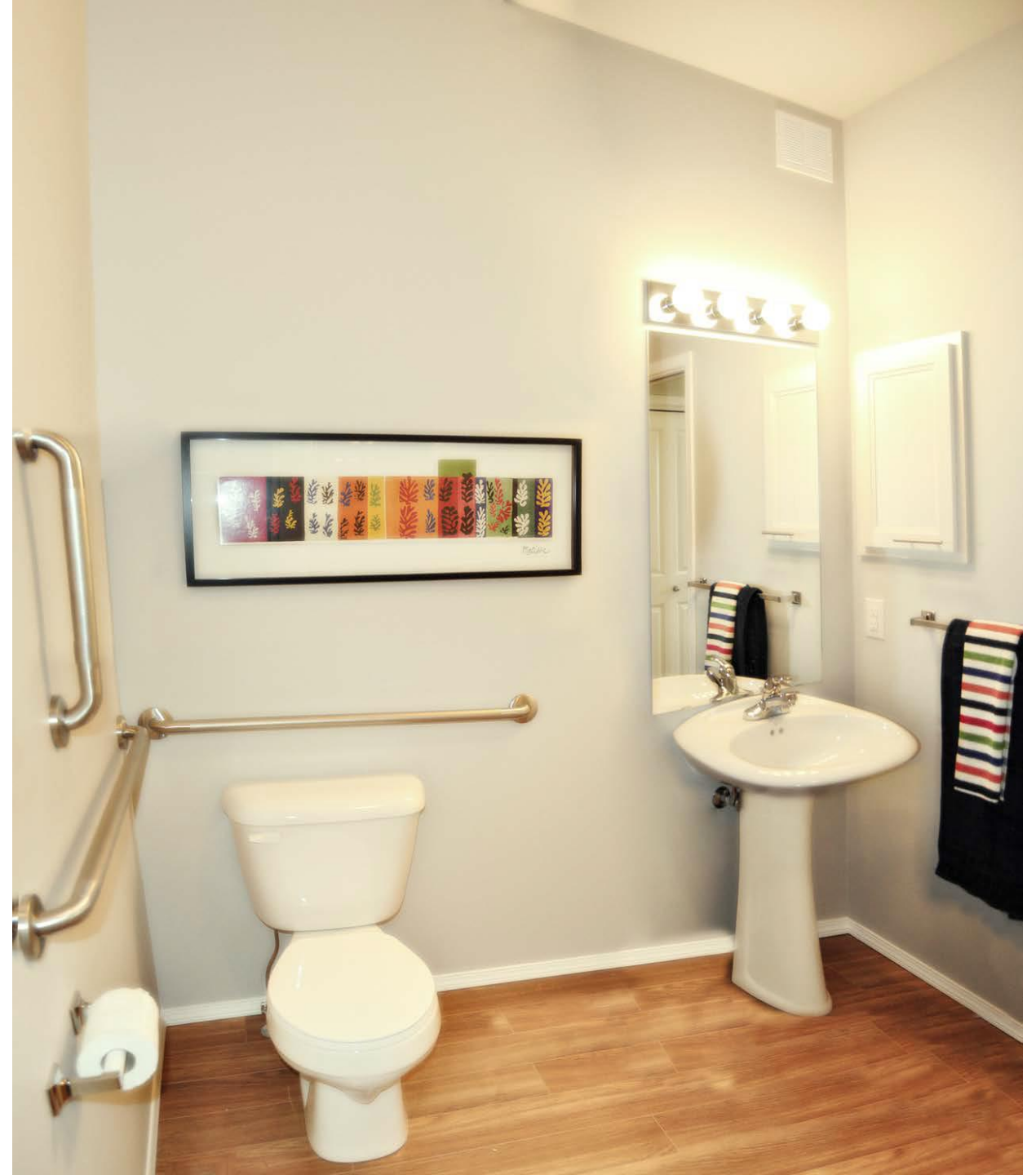


WHAT IS VISITABLE HOUSING?

The visitable housing movement started around 1990 to reduce the social isolation of people with mobility impairments. Over the years, standards for accessibility have been added to U.S. and international building codes. The lowest level of accessibility is called Type C or Visitable, which requires the following six features:

- ❖ at least one zero-step entrance
- ❖ interior doors with at least 32 inches of clear passage space
- ❖ at least a half bath (preferably a full bath) that is accessible on the ground floor
- ❖ reinforcement in bathroom walls for future grab bar installation
- ❖ space to maneuver a wheelchair in food preparation areas
- ❖ light switches and electrical outlets within comfortable reach for all.



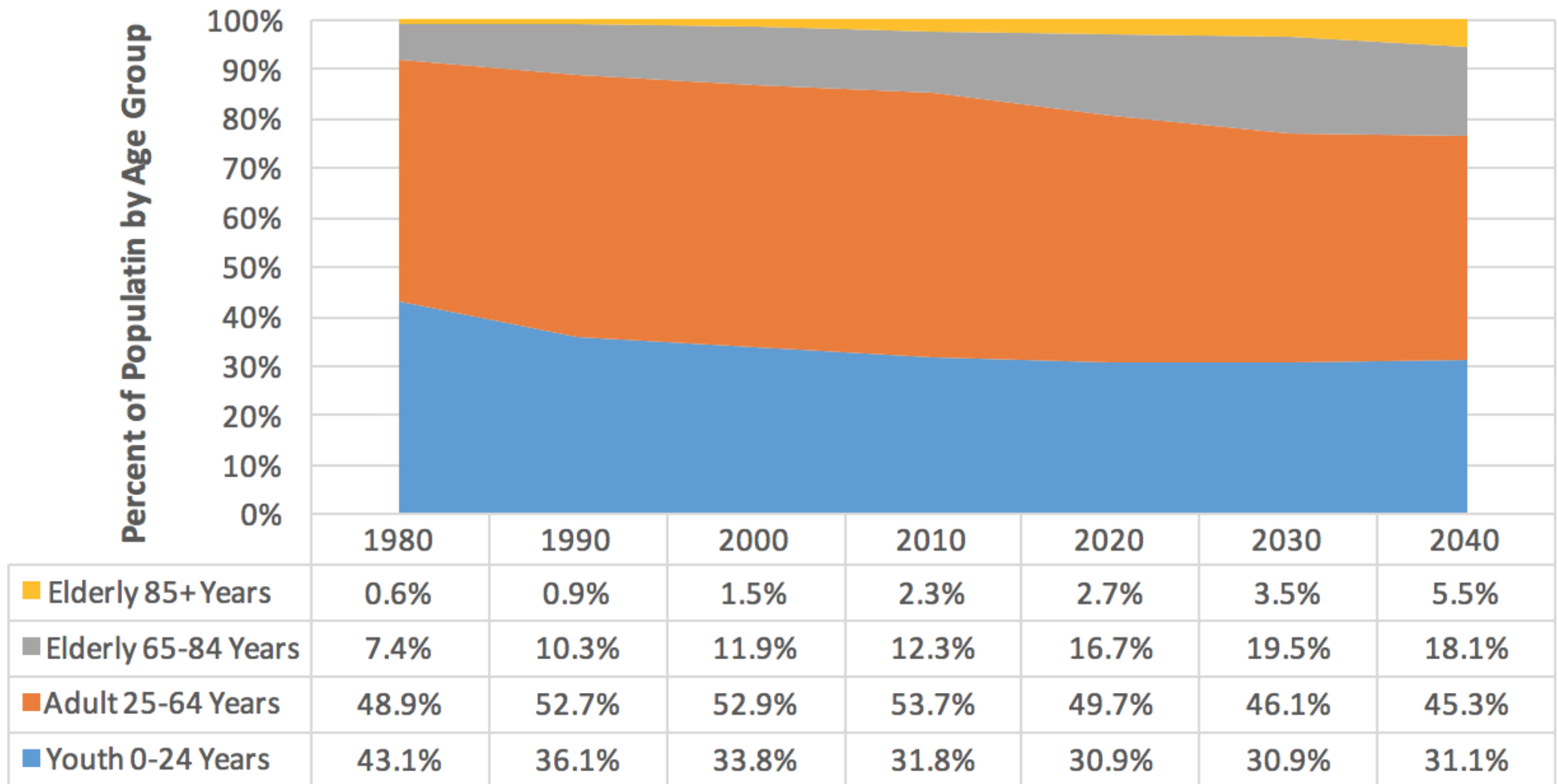


THE CONCEPT OF AGING-IN-PLACE

Visitable homes support *aging-in-place*. This means that as people grow older and develop various disabilities, they are able to stay in their homes without the need for expensive modifications or being placed in a care facility.

Aging-in-place is especially important in Hawaii where we have the nation's fastest growing population of seniors, which has been dubbed a “silver tsunami” because it threatens to overwhelm our health and elder care systems.

Hawaii's "Silver Tsunami"



Source: Hawaii Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (2012, Table A-7)

WHY ACTION ON VISITABLE HOUSING NEEDED NOW

Table 18. Projected Growth in Population and Need for New Housing Units, 2015 to 2025

	State of Hawaii	Honolulu County	Hawaii County	Kauai County	Maui County
% Population Growth 2015-2025	14%	8%	29%	19%	25%
# New Units Required by 2025	64,693	25,847	19,610	5,287	13,949

Source: Hawaii Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (2015a, page 3)

MANDATORY OR VOLUNTARY?

Many states and municipalities have passed visitability legislation. Voluntary laws typically provide incentives like tax credits, but these require taxpayer money and also do not lead to very many new visitable homes. Some laws mandate visitability only for homes built with public financing support, but this excludes most new homes. It has been found that only mandatory laws lead to a substantial increase in visitable homes.

Gold standard mandatory laws targeting all new housing are those of Pima County, Arizona, and Village of Bollingbrook, Illinois, where there have been large and rapid increases in homes that are visitable. The State of Vermont has a mandatory law, but with no enforcement mechanisms it has generally been ignored and therefore ineffective.

THE COST ARGUMENT

Builders have tended to resist visitability requirements, often claiming it would add \$10,000 to \$20,000 in construction costs. However, it has been demonstrated that such costs are quite minimal if visitability is designed in from the start.

It has been estimated that over their usable lifetime, up to 70% of homes will house someone with a mobility impairment. Over the long term, building visitable homes is therefore actually likely to save money because according to the State Legislature's Home for Life Task Force:

- ❖ Adding a wheelchair ramp to an entrance costs \$3,000 to \$10,000**
- ❖ Making a bathroom wheelchair accessible costs \$8,000 to \$20,000**
- ❖ Strengthening bathroom walls for grab bars costs about \$500 (inclusive of grab bar)**

PIMA COUNTY SUCCESS STORY

In 2002, the county passed a mandatory visitability ordinance. It survived a court challenge to its constitutionality and led to construction of more than 21,000 visitable homes over the next 8 years.

In 2010, the Pima County Chief Building Official sent a letter to a US House of Representatives subcommittee in support of proposed national legislation requiring “inclusive home design” that explained:

“While these requirements were at first resisted by builders...it became evident that with appropriate planning, the construction could result in no additional cost. Indeed, the jurisdiction no longer receives builder complaints regarding the ordinance and the ordinance has been so well incorporated into the building safety plan review and inspection processes that there is no additional cost to the County to enforce its requirements. From a real estate perspective, homes built to this standard are deemed more marketable, but even more importantly; the accessible features of these homes remain unnoticed when toured by individuals not seeking accessibility. One of the initial concerns of the ordinance implementation was that it would result in homes appearing institutional in nature. This has not occurred within Pima County.”

MULTIGENERATIONAL MARKETING ANGLE

Another consideration in favor of visitability, as related to aging-in-place, is that Hawaii has the nation's highest rate of multi-generational households, at 7.2%. Only about 32% of Hawaii's older adults live alone compared to 41% nationally.

Some home builders are finding great success with multi-generational home designs. These have ground floors with bedrooms, accessible bathrooms, and kitchen areas, so elderly family members do not have to worry about going up and down stairs.