

Fremont Age Friendly Community Assessment



Prepared for the Town of Fremont by the Rockingham Planning Commission

Funded by Tufts Health Plan Foundation, AARP, and Rockingham Nutrition Meals on Wheels

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Introduction

Fremont is a predominantly rural community located in Rockingham County bordered by the towns of Raymond, Epping, Brentwood, and Danville. As of 2019, Fremont’s population was 4,505, 700 of whom were 65 years or older.¹ Like the rest of New Hampshire, Fremont’s population is aging. In 2009, 8% of the town’s total population was age 65 and older, which steadily increased to 17% by 2019. (Figure 1).

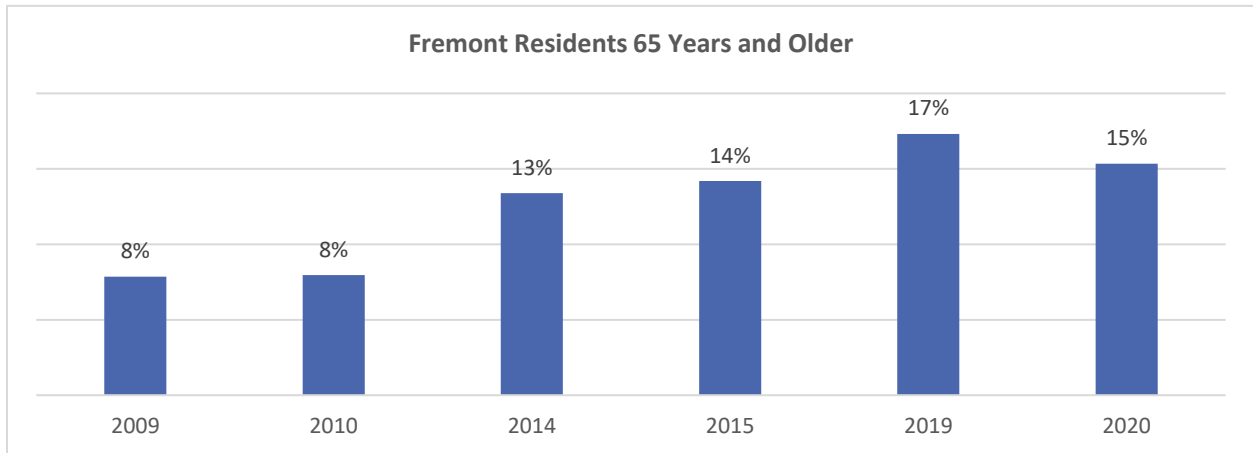


Figure 1: Fremont residents ages 65 years and older

Fremont’s rural character is valued significantly by residents, and according to Fremont’s Age Friendly Community Survey (2022), most residents wish to remain in Fremont as they age (Figure 2).

This statistic is not unique to Fremont. According to AARP, 90% of Americans ages 65 and older want to “age in place” in their homes and their communities. Most want to do so because they like their community and they want to remain close to their doctors, friends and families. Such connections are crucial to the health and wellbeing of older adults.² However, like many rural communities, access to services may become more difficult for people as they age due to proximity and limited transportation options.

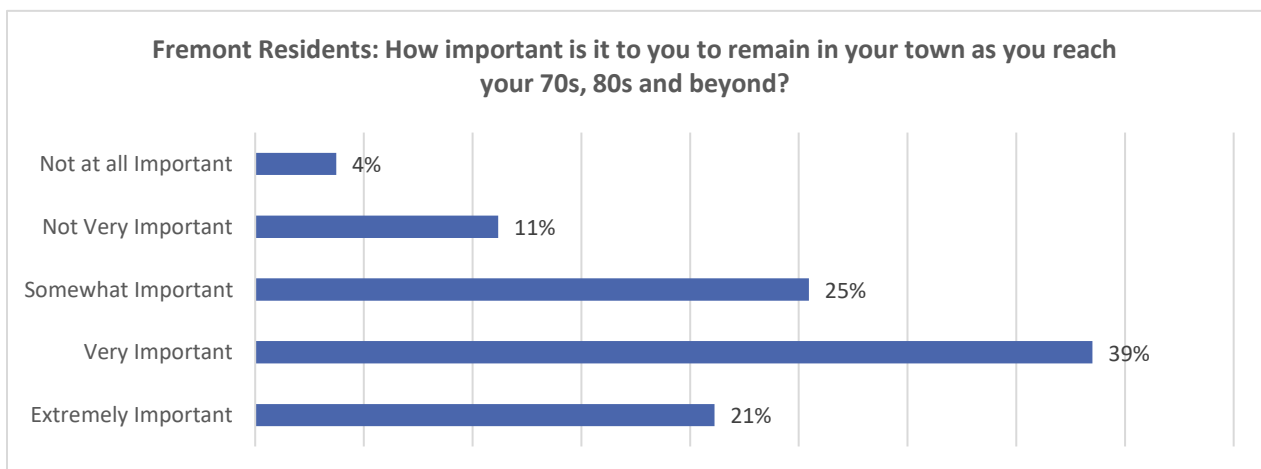


Figure 2: How important is it to you to remain in your town as you reach your 70's, 80's and beyond?

¹ https://healthyagingdatareports.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NHCommunityProfiles/NH_Towncode88_Fremont.pdf

² <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/about/info-2018/aarp-livable-communities-preparing-for-an-aging-nation.html>

Planning for an aging population is crucial and requires coordination among community leaders, local boards, service providers and organizations to meet the needs of older adults. Transportation and mobility are critical for seniors as many will be unable to drive as they reach older adulthood. By 2040, the projected population of NH residents ages 65 and older will be 408,522 (Figure 3). According to AARP 1 in 5 Americans over the age of 65 does not drive. **That equates to 75,000 non-driving older adults in NH by 2030, based on population projections.** There will be a greater need for enhanced recreation and civic engagement opportunities to prevent social isolation as well as for in-home and general support services such as help with shopping, errands, cooking, cleaning, healthcare etc. Another consideration will be the impacts on public safety services in town – particularly calls for medical emergencies. Considering these circumstances, it is important now more than ever to begin proactively planning for age friendly communities that can support residents of all ages and abilities.

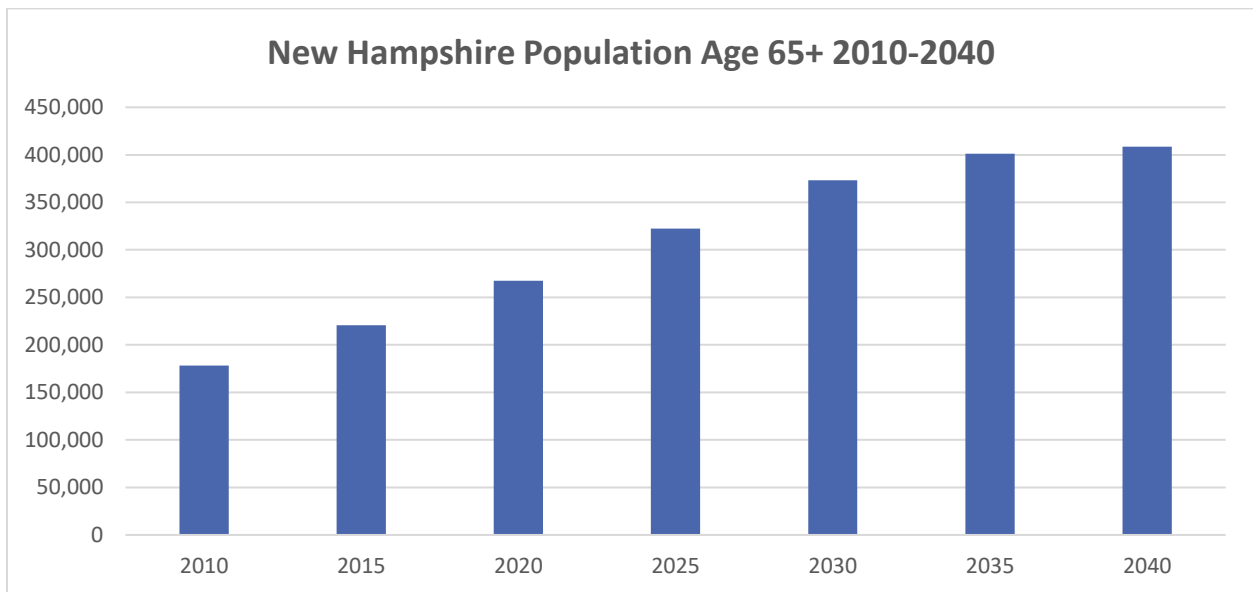
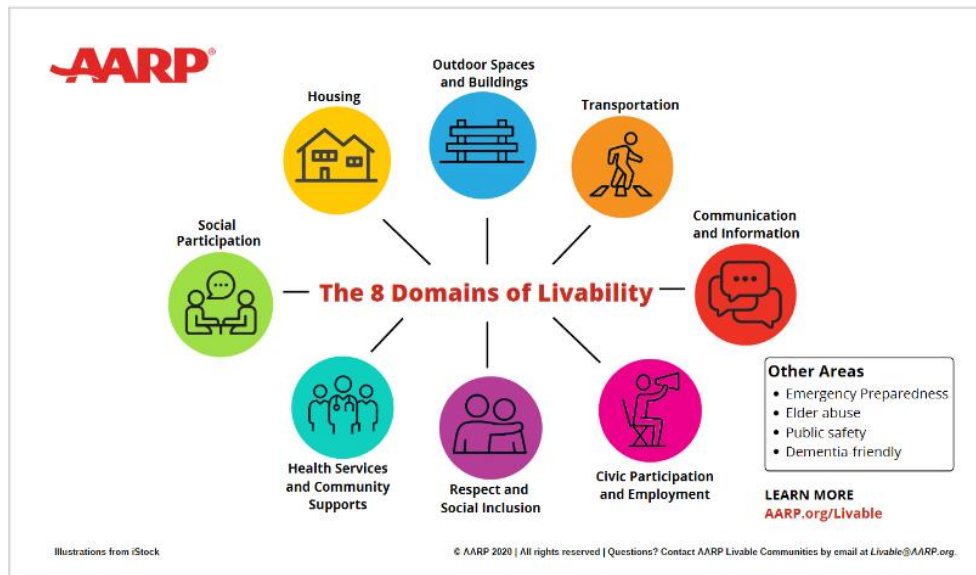


Figure 3: NH Population Age 65+

220,672 NH residents 65+ in 2015 – 408,522 in 2040

What does it mean to be Age Friendly?

Age Friendly Communities are committed to supporting their youngest residents, oldest residents, and everyone in between. Residents of all ages benefit from walkable neighborhoods, a variety of transportation options, access to services, opportunities for social activities, and housing options that are affordable and adaptable. Age Friendly Communities foster economic growth, improve public health, and enhance quality of life for all residents.



The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) has identified eight characteristics or “domains” of Age Friendly Communities: outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, work and civic engagement, communication and information, and health and nutrition services.

Data for the following Fremont Snapshots was obtained from the Fremont Age Friendly Communities survey (full results in Appendix A) and the [2019 New Hampshire Healthy Aging Community Profile](#), unless otherwise noted.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

People need public places to gather, both indoors and out. It is important that gathering spaces are accessible to everyone. Green spaces, abundant seating, highly visible signage, elevators, zero-step entrances, railings along staircases and wide trails/sidewalks that can support wheelchairs, strollers, bicycles etc. are all features that can better support people of varying ages and abilities.

Fremont Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Data Snapshot:

- 61% of survey respondents rated ease of access to Town Facilities as Good or Excellent
- 65% of survey respondents rated ease of access at Town Facilities as Good or Excellent

Transportation

Transportation options should not be limited to driving your own car. Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure such as sidewalks, crosswalks, and designated bike lanes enhance safety for all residents. Public transportation options—such as buses and trains—are also important, but may not be practical in smaller, less densely populated communities. Taxis, shuttles, rideshare, and volunteer driver services play a bigger role in most New Hampshire communities. Affordability is as important as the availability of these transportation services and age friendly communities ensure accessibility across all income levels. As most New Hampshire residents rely on their own vehicles to travel, retiring from driving can be one of the most difficult milestones in a senior’s life. Age-friendly communities encourage transit use and coordinate transit outreach opportunities to help seniors become familiar and comfortable with these services.

Fremont Transportation Data Snapshot

- Percentage of 65+ who own a motor vehicle: 100% (state average 91%).
- Percentage of age friendly community survey respondents who drive their own vehicle to meet daily needs: 97%
- Walk Score: This score estimates the accessibility of community facilities by safe, low stress pedestrian facilities (sidewalks, trails). 10/100 (car dependent) *Source:* <https://www.walkscore.com/score/fremont-nh>
- Bike Score: This score estimates the accessibility of community facilities by safe, low stress bicycle routes (road shoulders, bike paths, trails). 18/100 (somewhat bikeable) *Source:* <https://www.walkscore.com/score/fremont-nh>

Housing

AARP surveys consistently find that most older adults want to remain in their current home or community for as long as possible. Survey data from this project indicates that Fremont residents also feel strongly about remaining in town in their own homes. This is possible if a community has housing options suitable for a variety of incomes and ages, or if homes are designed or modified for aging in-place. Municipalities can encourage development patterns that locate housing near services and amenities that make it easier for older adults to live independently.

Fremont Housing Data Snapshot

- Percent of residents age 60+ who own their home: 86.6 % (state average 79.9%)
- Percent of residents age 60+ who have a mortgage on their home: 38.5% (State average is 35.3%)
- Percent of homeowners age 65+ spending >35% of income on housing: 3.8%
- Percent of renters age 65+ spending >35% of income on housing: 22%
- Town has a senior tax abatement policy: Yes *Source:* <https://www.fremont.nh.gov/assessing/pages/credits-exemptions>
- Town allows accessory dwelling units (in-law apartments): Attached Only *Source:* https://www.fremont.nh.gov/system/files/uploads/2022_zoning_ordinance_amended_030921_fnl_032322.pdf
- Age Restricted Housing Developments: 2

Social Participation

Opportunities for accessible, affordable, and enjoyable social activities reduces feelings of loneliness and isolation. Special attention should be given to ensure that older adults living on low incomes or with long-term limiting health conditions are included.

Fremont Social Participation Data Snapshot

- Percent of survey respondents indicating they have contact with family, friends, or neighbors with whom they don't live, at least several times per week: 42%
- Percentage of survey respondents that utilize public libraries: 66%
- Percentage of survey respondents that utilize restaurants, coffee shops and stores: 68%
- Voter participation rate in 2018 US midterm election: 57.4%
- Percentage of respondents indicating social isolation was a challenge during the covid19 pandemic: 53%

Respect and Social Inclusion

Everyone in the community should feel valued. Opportunities for intergenerational programs that allow community members to learn from one another and honor what each person has to offer are great ways to promote respect and social inclusion. Age Friendly communities encourage partnerships between businesses, agencies, clubs, and town departments to provide opportunities for residents of all ages to interact with and learn from each other.

Fremont Respect and Social Inclusion Data Snapshot

- Percent of survey respondents who agree or strongly agree with the statement "My Community is Welcoming to All People:" 63% (35% Disagree or Strongly Disagree)
- Percent of survey respondents who feel accepted with regard to:
 - Spirituality or religious affiliation (44% yes)
 - Political Views (28% yes)
 - Age (72% yes)
 - Sexuality (60% yes)
 - Gender identity (53% yes)
 - Race and ethnicity (65% yes)
 - Economic status (63% yes)
- Percentage of age friendly survey respondents who agree or strongly with the statement "I feel safe in my community:" 95%

Work and Civic Engagement

Age friendly communities provide opportunities for older adults to remain engaged through paid employment and volunteer positions. Creating an age-friendly business guide is a great way to encourage local businesses to be accessible and attractive to employees and customers. It can also include information about the benefits of employing older workers and tips on recruitment, retention, and training. Volunteer fairs and senior career days are also effective mechanisms for enhancing engagement and involvement among older adults.

Fremont Work and Civic Engagement Data Snapshot:

- Percent of survey respondents working up to 39 hours/week: 12%

- Percent of survey respondents working 40 or more hours/week: 30%
- Percent of survey respondents that are community volunteers: 5%
- Percent of survey respondents who are retired: 55%

Communication and Information

Outreach to older adults should be clear, well-coordinated among partner entities, and disseminated across a variety of methods to ensure it reaches all residents. Through this project Fremont residents expressed a desire to have information for older adults in “one-stop-shop” formats, such as a printed booklet or website highlighting available services.

Fremont Communication and Information Data Snapshot

- Percent of residents age 60+ who used the internet in the past month: 78.2%
- Percent of survey respondents who indicated social media as primary source of information: 60%
- Percent of survey respondents indicating “Not Aware of Social Opportunities that Interest Me”: 41

Health and Nutrition Services

Assistance and care should be available close to where older adults live and affordable to all income levels. Likewise, age friendly communities provide support and services to family caregivers, who are often unprepared for the role, so that they can make informed decisions.

Fremont Health and Nutrition Services Data Snapshot

- Percent of Fremont residents age 60+ received food stamps past year (2019): 1.7%
- Percent 60+ with an annual physical exam/check-up in past year (2019): 90%
- Percent 60+ with an annual dental exam: 72.4%
- Percent Medicare managed care enrollees: 8.7% vs. 7.9% statewide
- Percent dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid: 3.9% vs. 7.5% statewide
- Percent 60+ with a regular doctor: 97.5% vs. 95.8% statewide
- Percent 60+ who didn't see a doctor when needed due to cost: 9.5% vs. 5.4% statewide
- Percent age 65+ with depression: 32.7% vs. 28.8% statewide
- Percent age 65+ with Alzheimer's disease or dementia: 10.4% vs. 12.0% statewide

Fremont Age Friendly Communities Project

In 2021, the Rockingham Nutrition Meals on Wheels Program (RNMOW) and Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) were awarded a two-year grant from [Tufts Health Plan Foundation](#) to work with an array of partners to assist communities in the Rockingham region in becoming Age-Friendly. Age Friendly communities enable residents to thrive at every age and every stage of life, as policies and initiatives that help older residents tend to make communities more livable for all ages. The project draws on a national framework developed by [AARP](#) that has been used widely in New Hampshire in recent years. [AARP New Hampshire](#) is also a collaborating sponsor of the project. Rockingham Planning Commission worked with the following six communities in 2021-2022 to conduct Age Friendly Community Assessments—Exeter, Fremont, Hampstead, Hampton, Portsmouth, and Stratham. Additional assessments and two local pilot implementation projects will be completed by July 2023.

Fremont Steering Committee

The first step in the Age Friendly Community Assessment was to establish a local steering committee made up of town officials, staff, and residents. Fremont's local committee included representatives from the following entities:

- Fremont Public Library
- Fremont Land Use Department
- Fremont Parks and Recreation Commission
- Fremont Police Department
- Black Rocks Village 55+ housing development

At their first meeting on February 10, 2022, steering committee members worked with Rockingham Planning Commission staff to draft a survey designed to assess the needs of older adults in Fremont. They also brainstormed locations and methods to distribute the survey to reach as many residents as possible. Over the next few months, steering committee members helped to disseminate and promote the survey in town, which was available in paper and electronic formats. There were 168 responses to the survey. Full survey results can be found at the end of the assessment.



Figure 4: Age Friendly Community Forum, June 2022

At their second meeting on April 13, 2022, committee members reviewed the survey data and identified key themes to be explored in more detail at a community-wide forum. These themes included access to affordable transportation options, affordable senior support services, and recreation and social opportunities. Members then held a community-wide Forum on June 14, 2022, at the Fremont Public Library, which featured an information sharing component from local service providers as well as breakout sessions to get more detailed input on key themes. Local service partners in attendance included:

- Fremont Parks and Recreation Commission
- Fremont Public Library
- Rockingham Nutrition Meals on Wheels
- ServiceLink

The Rockingham Planning Commission also presented findings from the Age Friendly Community survey as well as an overview of the program to the Black Rocks Village Retirement community in Fremont to gain additional input from older adults living in Fremont. The presentation was held at the community's club house on June 16, 2022.



Figure 5: Age Friendly Community Conversation with Black Rocks Village

The Fremont Steering Committee met for a third time on October 24, 2022, to review a draft assessment report and to discuss next steps with committee members.

Survey Results and Community Forum

Survey Methodology

Fremont's Age Friendly Community Survey was adapted from a national model developed by AARP. The survey includes questions related to AARP's eight dimensions of Age Friendly Communities: transportation, housing, social engagement, outdoor spaces and buildings, work and civic engagement, respect and social inclusion, health and nutrition services, and information flow. The core of the forty-question survey was consistent across the six assessment communities, while each community had an opportunity to add questions of local importance. The survey was available online through the Public Input platform. It was also circulated in paper format at the Fremont Town Hall and Library

The survey was promoted using a range of methods including:

- Post cards at Town Hall and Public Library
- Town website
- Community Facebook page



FREMONT AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY SURVEY

What makes Fremont a great place to grow up and grow old?

In partnership with The Rockingham Planning Commission and Meals on Wheels, Fremont is embarking on a project to understand the needs of older adults in the community. Your input will help us understand what is working now and what's needed in the future.

Take the survey today!

<https://publicinput.com/AgeFriendlyFremont1>



FOR QUESTIONS CONTACT ERIC ABNEY, LIBRARY DIRECTOR (603) 895-9543

Paper surveys available at Fremont Town Hall, and Library

KEY THEME—Transportation

What We Heard

By and large, the most prevalent concern expressed by Fremont residents regarding aging in their community is having transportation options once they can no longer drive (Figure 6). Being a rural community, active transportation options such as walking and biking as well as public transportation services are essentially non-existent in town. Fremont’s downtown is located along State Route 107 and contains some small restaurants and convenience stores. Most essential services such as doctor’s offices, hospitals and grocery stores are in neighboring communities, with the nearest major hospital located in Exeter. Therefore, most residents drive their own vehicles or rely on friends or family to get where they need to go.

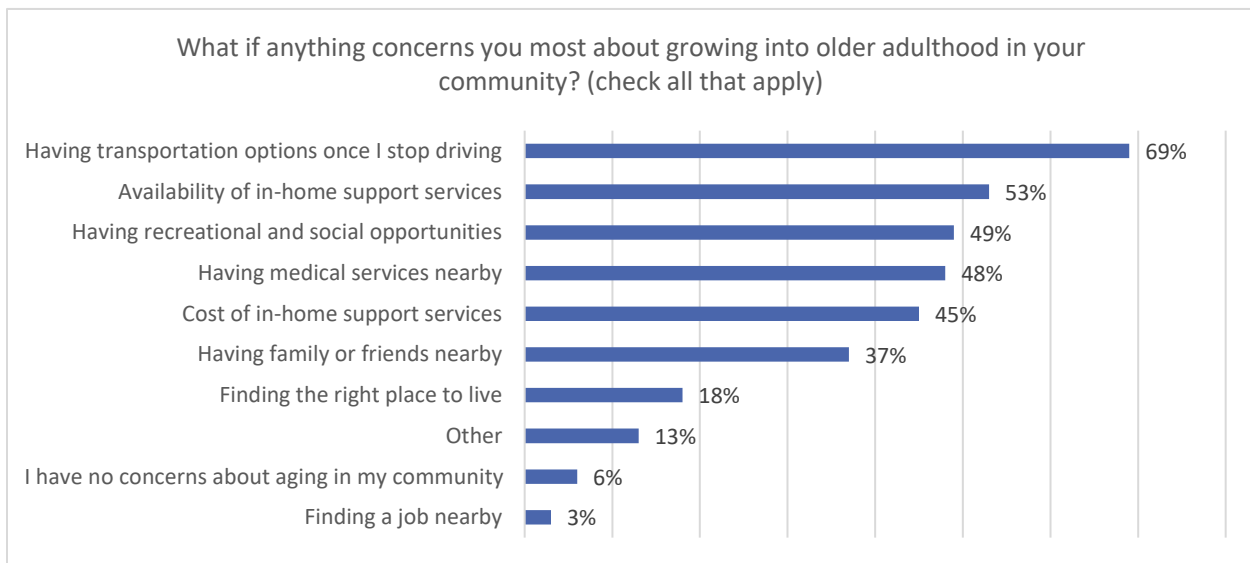


Figure 6: Survey Question 7—What if anything concerns you most about aging in your community?

Many Fremont residents also expressed concern about access to and the availability of in-home support services for seniors. As is the case in many New Hampshire communities, most Fremont residents live in single-family homes. Many express concerns with maintaining large single-family homes as they age, especially when children no longer live at home and/or a spouse passes away. Additionally, large single-family homes may become more difficult to navigate for older adults. Therefore, having access to affordable services for home maintenance, yard work, shoveling, cleaning etc. would greatly benefit older adults in town. Information on such services should be readily available on the town’s website as well as in the town offices and at the library.

Opportunities for improvement

During the Fremont community forum, it was discussed how information on services such as Rockingham Nutrition Meals on Wheels (RNMOW) should be made more readily available to residents. RNMOW offers rides to Epping for medical appointments, errands, and shopping. Rides are free of cost and available to Fremont residents ages 60 years and over. RNMOW also provides home-delivered meals at no cost. This information was widely unknown among the local steering committee as well as residents who attended the community forum. Additionally, ServiceLink is another service that helps connect those who need a ride to transit providers and volunteer drivers. It was emphasized that this information should be more accessible on the town’s website and in the town offices.

Another transportation opportunity that was discussed at the community forum was the possibility of Fremont partnering with neighboring communities such as Hampstead to either purchase or share the cost of an existing vehicle to transport residents to appointments, shopping, and/or recreational excursions. This would lessen the cost involved with owning and maintaining a town vehicle.

Since Fremont has no public transportation, the idea of expanding the geographic range for an existing volunteer driver program such as the Transportation Assistance for Seacoast Citizens (TASC) was discussed. More information is needed on what transit services and/or volunteer driver programs are available in neighboring communities and whether those programs would be able to expand their geographic range. The primary concern would be finding volunteers willing to drive. The local steering committee supported further research into the topic.

Fremont Age Friendly Transportation Goals

1. Improve the town's website to include information on transportation services available to seniors in town such as RNMOV as well as information on ServiceLink. Make this page more easily accessible on the town website.
2. Provide hard copy fliers or brochures with information on RNMOV in town, including information on how to reserve a ride. Make these fliers available at the town offices, library and parks and recreation department.
3. Explore holding an informational session with RNMOV and ServiceLink at the library.
4. Coordinate with neighboring communities such as Hampstead to purchase or share the cost of an existing vehicle to provide rides to shopping, medical appointments, and recreation excursions.
5. Research existing transit services and/or volunteer driver programs in neighboring communities and whether those services could expand their geographic range to include Fremont.

KEY THEME—Senior Support Services

What We Heard

Access to affordable support services was another concern expressed by Fremont residents in both the survey and at the community forum. Most Fremont residents would like to remain in their own town as they age. Furthermore, most residents believe it to be “very” or “extremely” important to be able to live independently in their own homes as they grow older (Figure 7).

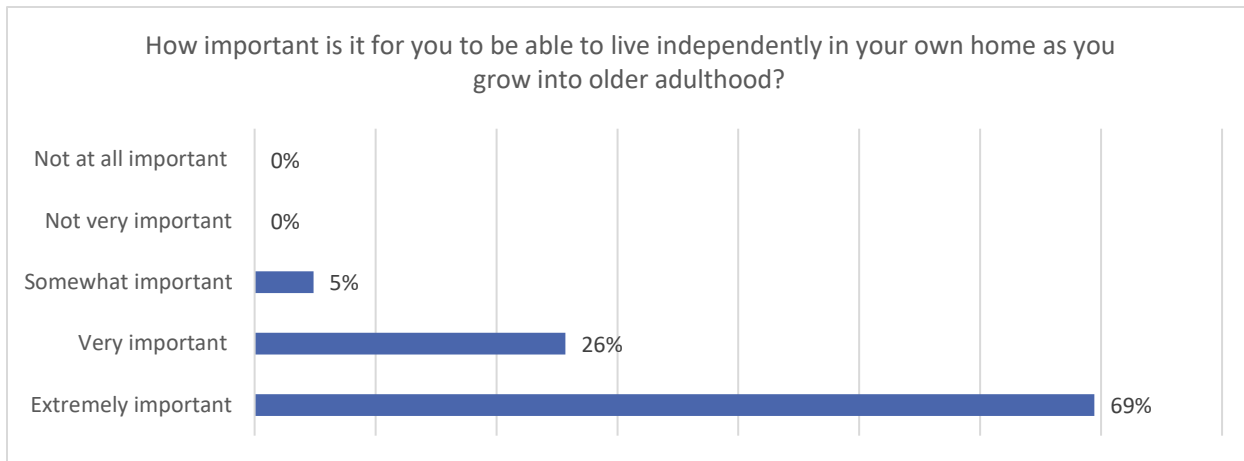


Figure 7: Survey Question 12—How important is it for you to be able to live independently in your own home as you grow into older adulthood?

The lack of nearby services may pose significant challenges to Fremont residents as they get older. As discussed above, transportation services are critical for an aging population as many will be unable to keep driving as they reach their 70’s, 80’s and beyond. Therefore, there may be greater need for help with getting to grocery shopping, errands, medical appointments etc. Additionally, home maintenance, cooking, cleaning, shoveling/plowing etc. may also become more difficult for aging residents. Many discussions arose at the community forum about the difficulty of finding reliable, affordable help with home assistance services in nearby. Additionally, information on such services is not in easily accessible locations. Fremont’s Social Services Department on the town website offers information on food and nutrition, fuel assistance, health and wellness, senior services, and transportation resources. However, most residents who attended the Age Friendly Forum were unaware there was such a town department as well as information for senior support services displayed on the town website.

Opportunities for Improvement

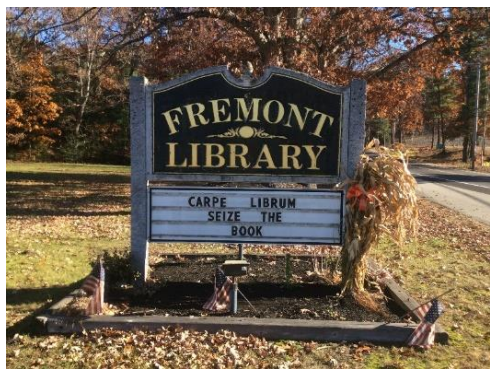
Similar to transportation services, residents expressed that information on support services should be made more accessible on the town’s website and at the Town Hall. As discussed above, many were unaware that Meals on Wheels offered transportation services and that meals could be picked up or delivered free of charge to anyone over 65 years of age, regardless of income or status. Residents were also unaware that Fremont’s Social Services Department publishes information related to support services on the town website. The Fremont Public Library currently operates a curbside pickup and delivery system, where patrons can request books, DVDs, and magazines and pick them up outside the library door. This service has since expanded into a grocery shopping service and medicine pickup/delivery system for those in need and is still available today. However, this service is operated by dedicated library staff and likely does not have the capacity to expand.

“As a healthy senior, livability in Fremont is fine. However, I know of older residents with physical limitations and disabilities who have transportation and home services issues which can be difficult for them. Having better community-based services such as transportation services, nursing and healthcare, home assistance services would go a long way towards make Fremont a better place to live for older individuals.” – Fremont resident

Fremont residents also discussed the possibility for partnerships and collaboration to improve awareness and support those in need. There was discussion on ways the town could partner with high school students or volunteer service organizations such as Key Clubs or Boy/Girl Scouts in the area, which often seek volunteer opportunities as well as paid work to fulfill duties required of their membership.

“The very best part of Fremont is that the library is well stocked and has wonderful people who are so helpful. I use their home delivery system since I no longer feel comfortable driving--I did not know there was such a system until Kathy told me after I had to drop out of their book club. Without this service I would never have survived Covid isolation.” – Fremont resident

Such volunteer organizations could partner with the town to provide help with technology, yard work or home maintenance to residents in need. This type of intergenerational activity would be beneficial as it would foster community relationships and volunteerism as well as help those in need. It was discussed how the library could work to bring in service providers such as Meals on Wheels or Service Link for either informational sessions and/or workshops to help people with finding and accessing transportation, food, healthcare services etc. Additionally, there are many active seniors in town looking for ways to stay involved in the community. Information on volunteer opportunities such as handyman



services, gardening, yard work, etc. was of great interest among Fremont residents at the community forum. Residents discussed the possibility of creating a space on the town website to connect those in need with those who want to help. Many residents utilize the Fremont Community Facebook page to find trusted and reliable services, however, having a dedicated space on the town’s website would provide more structure and an easier path for residents seeking assistance. This would also more easily connect those looking to volunteer and help others in the community find opportunities to do so.

Fremont Senior Support Services Goals

1. Promote the town’s social services department website. Consider making this webpage more accessible, such as placing it on the home page of the website.
2. Explore partnering with schools, Key Clubs and/or Boy/Girl Scouts to engage students in activities that support Fremont residents.
3. Coordinate an informational session with RNMOW, ServiceLink and other service providers at the library for Fremont residents.
4. Explore the possibility of creating a space on the town website to connect those in need of assistance such as yard work, home maintenance, rides etc. with those looking to volunteer and help others in Fremont

KEY THEME—Housing and Livability

What We Heard

Affordable housing options is another major concern expressed by Fremont residents among both young and older generations. As with most New Hampshire communities, single-family homes are the predominant housing type in town. While these types of homes are often suitable for families and valued for maintaining the rural character cherished by New Hampshire residents, many older adults find it challenging to maintain large, single-family homes as they age, especially when children have moved out and/or if spouses have passed away. Therefore, many people look to downsize as they get older as well as to be more centrally located with easy access to stores, pharmacies, doctors, cafes etc. Ironically, many of the community characteristics that older adults desire are the same characteristics that young professionals and families desire when looking for a place to live - smaller, more affordable units in walkable neighborhoods, proximity to downtowns, doctors, retail, cafes etc. and adequate public transit options. Therefore, younger, and older adults are competing for similar housing types in an already competitive housing market, further exacerbating the need for more diverse and affordable housing options. Many Fremont residents indicated that if they have looked for a place to live in the past five years or were considering finding another home to live in Fremont, there were few options available that met their needs/desires (Table 1). While Fremont has a few 55+ residential developments, many residents have expressed frustration with the high cost of the units.

	Many Available	Some Available	Few Available	None Available	Not Applicable	Don't Know
Desired type of home (e.g., single family, apartment, condo, other)	2%	17%	40%	15%	16%	9%
Design (e.g., single floor living, width of doors, few, or no steps to get in)	1%	18%	39%	13%	16%	13%
Location near places I want to go	5%	19%	38%	11%	15%	11%
Maintenance I'm willing to take on (e.g., lawn, raking, snow clearance)	5%	21%	38%	9%	17%	10%
Affordability within my budget	3%	15%	36%	23%	15%	7%
Sense of acceptance (if looking for an assisted living or other retirement community or neighborhood)	3%	19%	28%	8%	25%	18%

Table 1: Survey Question 11—If you have looked for a place to live in the past five years, or are considering finding another place to live in your community in the future, how would you rate the options available to you related to the following

Opportunities for Improvement

While the RPC Age Friendly Communities initiative cannot fix Fremont (and the State's) housing affordability crisis, it does aim to improve awareness of the specific needs of older adults as well as housing preferences among both seniors and young adults. This information can be used to inform decision-making at the local level and improve local land use regulation development. Currently, Fremont allows for some diversity of housing choices in town such as duplexes, in-law apartments, multi-family housing, senior housing, and open space cluster subdivisions. However, Fremont recognizes the need to

revisit and revise some of these existing ordinances to increase opportunities for a variety of housing types in town.

Fremont Housing and Livability Goals

1. Incorporate the feedback and input from this Age Friendly community assessment into the town’s master plan.
2. Encourage the town to review existing zoning, site plan and subdivision regulations to identify areas for improving and incentivizing the development of age-friendly housing types in town including accessory dwelling units, mixed-use and elderly housing development.
3. Consider the establishment of an age friendly housing ordinance (see [Chester, NH](#) example) encouraging accessible housing design features and cluster development..

KEY THEME—Recreation and Social Engagement

What We Heard

Having recreational and social opportunities in town is very important among both younger and older adults. Most residents wish to remain active and engaged in their community, especially after retirement. Residents want to stay connected, especially with friends, community, and family members. Providing opportunities for social engagement and recreation in town enhances community relationships, fosters inclusivity, and prevents social isolation – a significant problem among older adults in rural communities, especially when they can no longer drive.

Fremont currently offers a variety of recreational opportunities. The Parks and Recreation Commission is directly involved with planning and programming community activities for all ages such as arts and craft workshops, game nights and a variety of seasonal and holiday events for Easter, Halloween, and Christmas. The Fremont Public Library also provides a variety of programming for seniors and is viewed as the community “hub” where many go to find out what is going on in town. The library hosts Fremont’s many community clubs including the Giving Hands knitting group, garden club, foreign film club, chess league, book clubs and reading groups for all ages. Throughout the week, residents gather for fitness classes such as Tai Chi and “Walk Away the Pounds,” a low impact exercise class that encourages light movement in a fun and comfortable environment.

In addition to the organized community events and activities that take place in town, Fremont is also home to an extensive network of trails, including the 18-mile Rockingham Rail Trail, that are enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. Fremont’s rural character provides numerous opportunities for outdoor recreation.



Figure 8: Fremont Open Space Committee

Opportunities for Improvement

Despite the various recreational activities offered in town, many Fremont residents, through both the survey and the community forums, expressed not knowing what is available or going on in town. When specifically asked about whether they partake in senior activities in the community, 36% of survey respondents indicated that they were unsure whether such activities were available. Additionally, when asked what prevents you from socializing more with others, 41% of survey respondents indicated that they are unaware of activities/events that interest them (figure 9).

Additionally, space to hold more events and activities is limited to just the library and the Ellis School gymnasium. The Parks and Recreation Commission would be able to organize more activities if it had a dedicated space to do so. This was expressed at both the community forum as well as through the most recent iteration of the town's master plan.

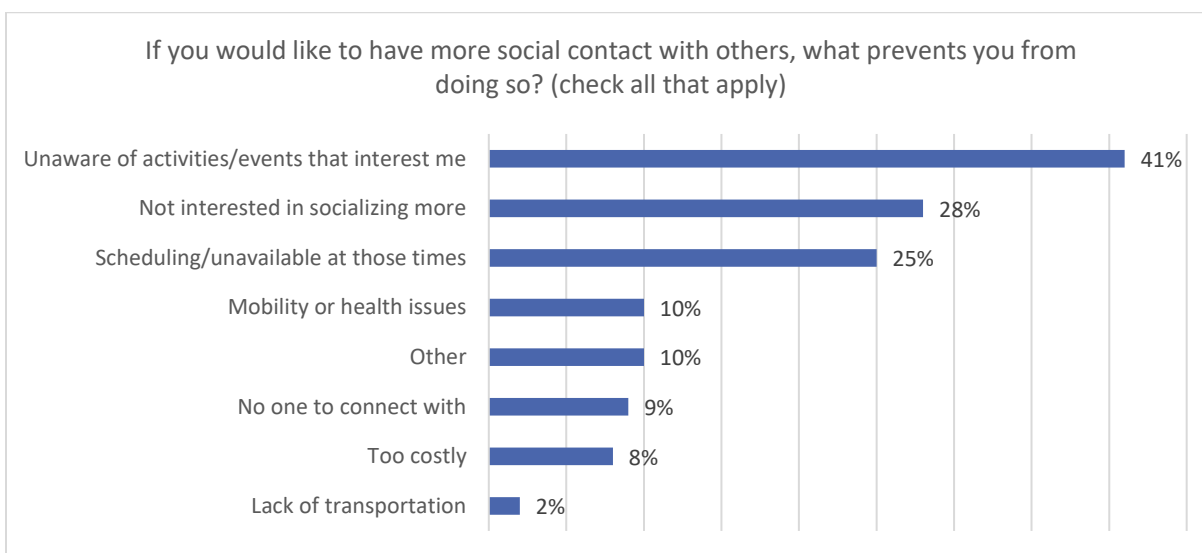


Figure 9: Survey Question 28—If you would like to have more social contact with others, what prevents you from doing so?

Like the previous sections of this assessment, access to information on social events and opportunities in town was identified as a need for Fremont residents. Like the goals mentioned throughout, it was discussed heavily that the town's website should be improved to include a dedicated space listing all recreation and social opportunities in town. Currently, many residents utilize the Community Facebook page, which is effective but limited to only those who have a Facebook account. Improving the town website would further enhance access to information on town wide events and activities. According to the Age Friendly Community Survey, most Fremont residents utilize social media and the internet to find

"It would be great if there was a local senior center for seniors to go for adult interaction; where there would be trips organized; exercise programs (like those offered at the library); safe, flat areas to walk; people to help understand Medicare, completing tax forms; transportation availability to doctors and shopping." – Fremont resident

information about what’s going on. However, word of mouth is still a powerful source of information (Figure 10).

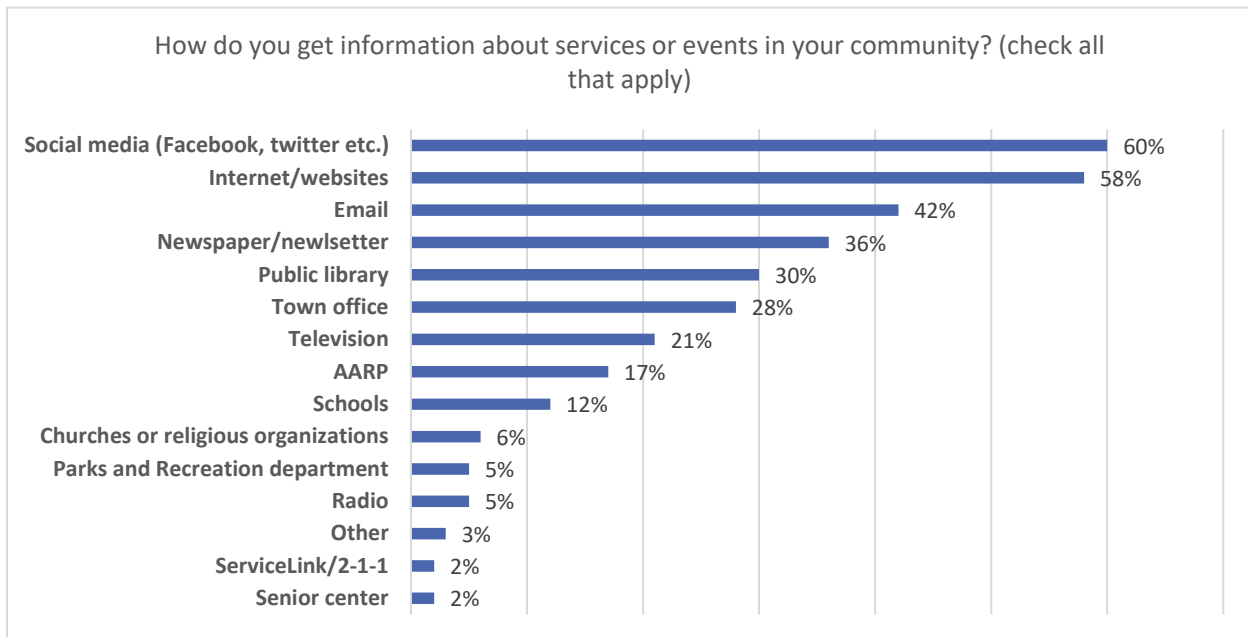


Figure 10: Survey Question 23—How do you get information about services or events in your community?

Other ways the town could improve information flow is by including dedicated space in the town newsletter for programs and activities. Additionally, hard copies of the town newsletter would be beneficial to many that don’t use the internet. Paper copies should be made available at the town hall and the library. Other public outreach strategies discussed included creating “welcome packets” for new residents that include information on town boards and committees, recreation opportunities, special events, volunteer opportunities and other ways to get involved. The Fremont Age Friendly committee brainstormed outlets for these information packets, which included printed copies at the town hall, library, and local businesses. Packets could also be distributed to anyone registering their car with the town of Fremont. Creating such a welcome packet has also been discussed and outlined as a goal in the town’s recent [master plan update](#).

Fremont Recreation and Engagement Goals

1. Improve the town’s website to include a dedicated page for all recreational opportunities available to residents including events, programs, facilities, and maps. Consider consolidating library and town calendar into one online calendar.
2. Include recreational opportunities, upcoming events, and programs in the town’s newsletter. Include hard copies of the newsletter at the town hall and at the library. Look into other possible locations for distributing the newsletter such as at the community church and with Meals on Wheels meal deliveries.
3. Create “welcome packets” to be distributed throughout town with information on “all things Fremont,” such as meeting dates, local businesses, recreation opportunities, and special events. Packets could be mailed to residents, posted online.
4. Advocate for a community center in town or ways in which existing spaces can be utilized by the Parks and Recreation Commission for social events and activities.

Conclusion and Next Steps

This Age Friendly assessment aims to build awareness of and support for community-led initiatives that support the needs of older adults in Fremont. The feedback gathered for this report is intended to be utilized by local leaders, elected officials, town departments and community organizations in their planning and decision-making processes. Creating change in a community starts at the local level where local government, businesses, organizations, and residents all play a role in cultivating a livable community, one where younger and older people can and want to live, work and play.

While this Assessment Report serves as the final product for Year one of the Age Friendly Communities program, it is just the beginning of Age Friendly work to take place in Fremont. During year two of the project, the Rockingham Planning Commission will provide technical assistance to two of the six assessment communities with implementing a local project identified through the Year One assessment work. The RPC encourages Fremont to review the goals and ideas that were voiced by residents through both the survey and community forums to identify potential projects that could be implemented in year two.

The following are potential next steps that the Town could pursue to continue helping residents thrive at every age and stage of life:

Step 1—Conduct an inventory of the community’s existing resources. Communities tend to jump into creating new resources, but often existing assets can be utilized to meet current needs. Cast a wide net when thinking about the community’s resources. They should include everything from individuals who have skills and expertise they can share; physical infrastructure like meeting spaces, walking trails, and park benches; to services such as transportation assistance, meal delivery, and in-home healthcare.

Fremont is fortunate to have vibrant and energetic town staff as well as local community champions working together to address the needs of all residents in the community. Fremont should continue to promote and increase awareness of its existing community resources such as the town library and the parks and recreation commission.

Step 2—Analyze your community’s existing resources. For each resource identified in your inventory, ask the following questions:

- What is working well but is underutilized? Those who know about these resources like them, but not enough people know they exist.
- What is working well but is overutilized? These are resources that may have a long waiting list or simply not enough capacity to meet demand.
- What is working well in another town that could be replicated in our town?
- What is working well but is at risk of falling apart? For example, this could be a resource that’s being spearheaded by a single person and if that person leaves there is no one else to take it over.
- What else needs to be created? Communities should ask this question last to ensure that they are using their existing resources first.

Step 3—Set Goals. Goals should have the following characteristics:

- Specific—make sure your goals are specific and narrow for more effective planning. You should use action words to state exactly what you'll do.
- Measurable—define what evidence will prove you're making progress and reevaluate when necessary.
- Achievable—make sure you can reasonably accomplish your goal within a certain timeframe.
- Relevant—ensure your goals align with your values and long-term objectives.
- Time-bound—set a realistic timeline and end-date for your goals and prioritize tasks accordingly.

Step 4—Implement your first project. While planning is important, completing a successful project often helps to galvanize a volunteer group and build support among community members. Select a project that is low cost and relatively easy to implement. Based on the goals identified from the community survey and town-wide forums, there are several activities Fremont could pursue to help it become a more age-friendly community. These might include creating easy-to-read outreach and educational materials, such as a welcome packet for new residents, improving the town's website, coordinating with neighboring communities on improving transportation options and revising existing land use regulations to strengthen opportunities for elderly housing and mixed-use development.

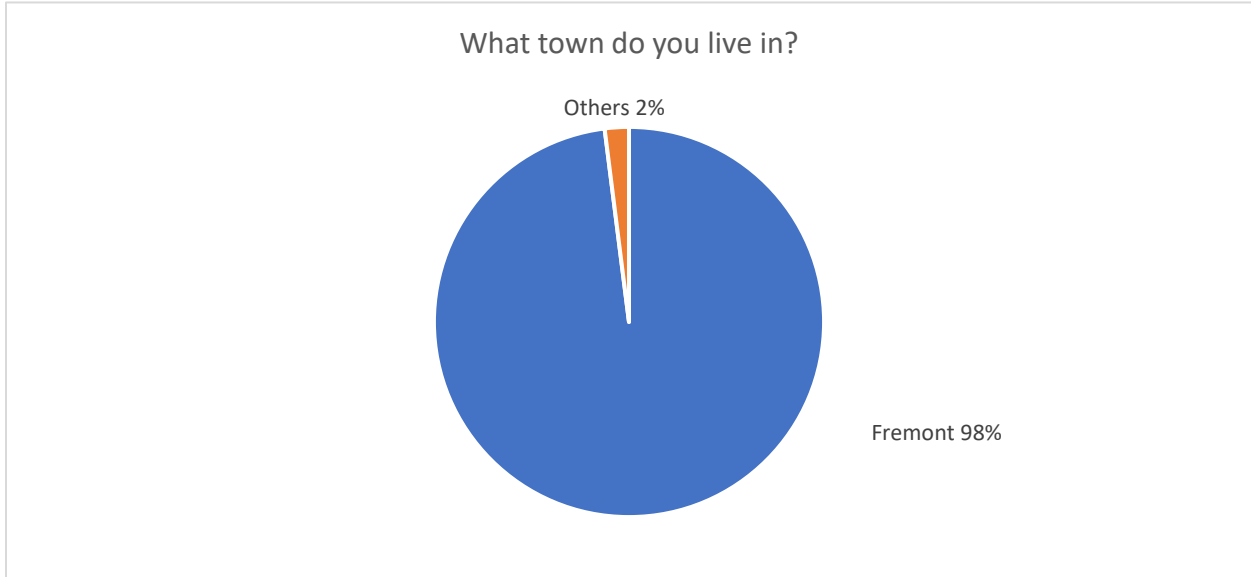
Acknowledgements

The Rockingham Planning Commission thanks the Fremont Steering Committee members for their time and effort in helping to develop this age friendly community assessment. We hope the information provided in this report helps inform and advance efforts to make the community a more livable place for people of all ages and abilities. We look forward to continuing this critical conversation in Fremont and the region and supporting communities in their work to become more Age Friendly.

Fremont Age Friendly Survey Summary

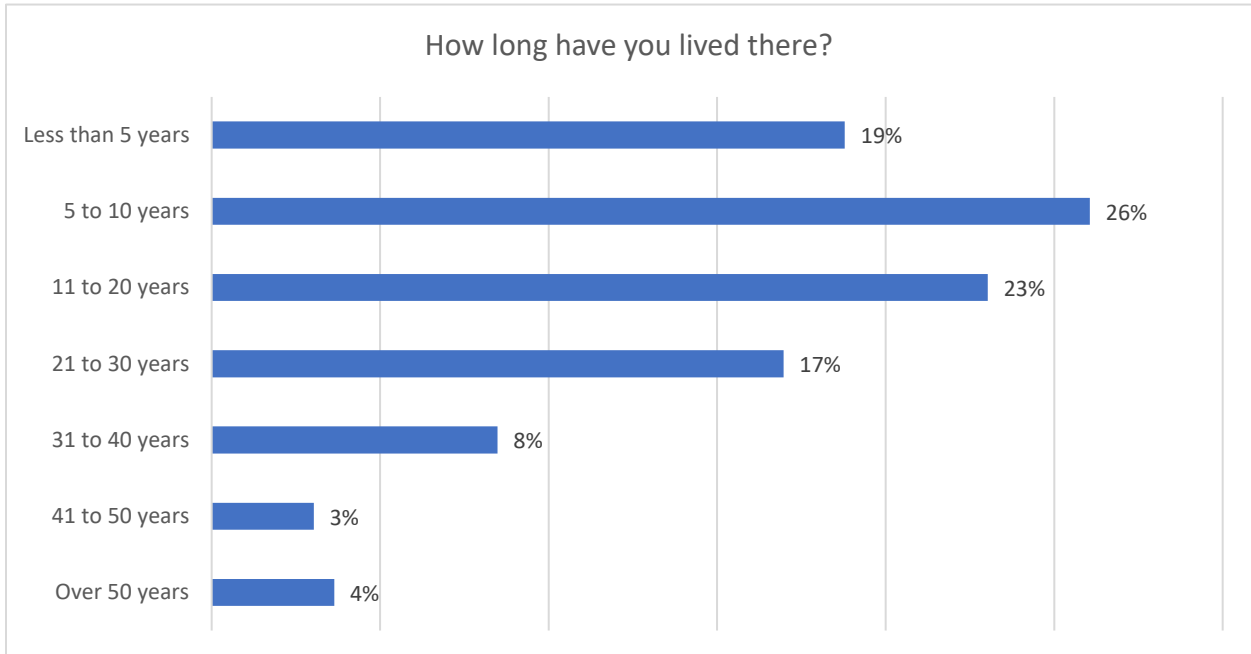
Question 1: What town do you live in?

98% of survey respondents (166) were from Fremont. Two respondents were from Brentwood and Epping (2%)



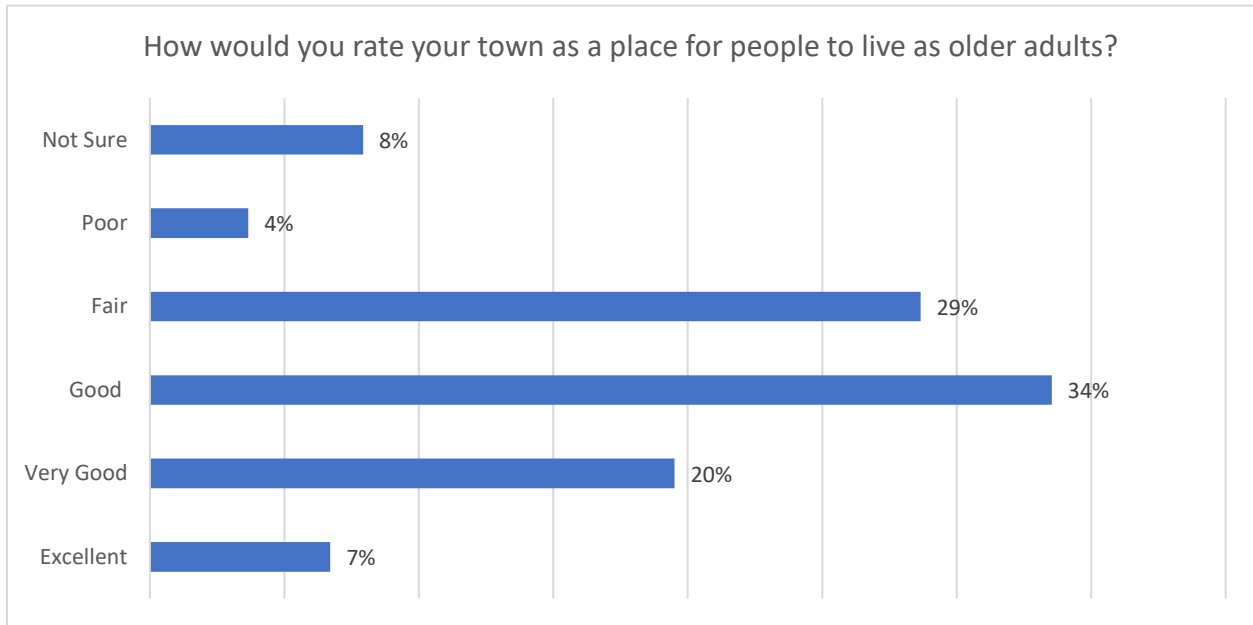
Question 2: How long have you lived there?

Most survey respondents (26%) have lived in town for 5-10 years followed by 11-20 years (23%).



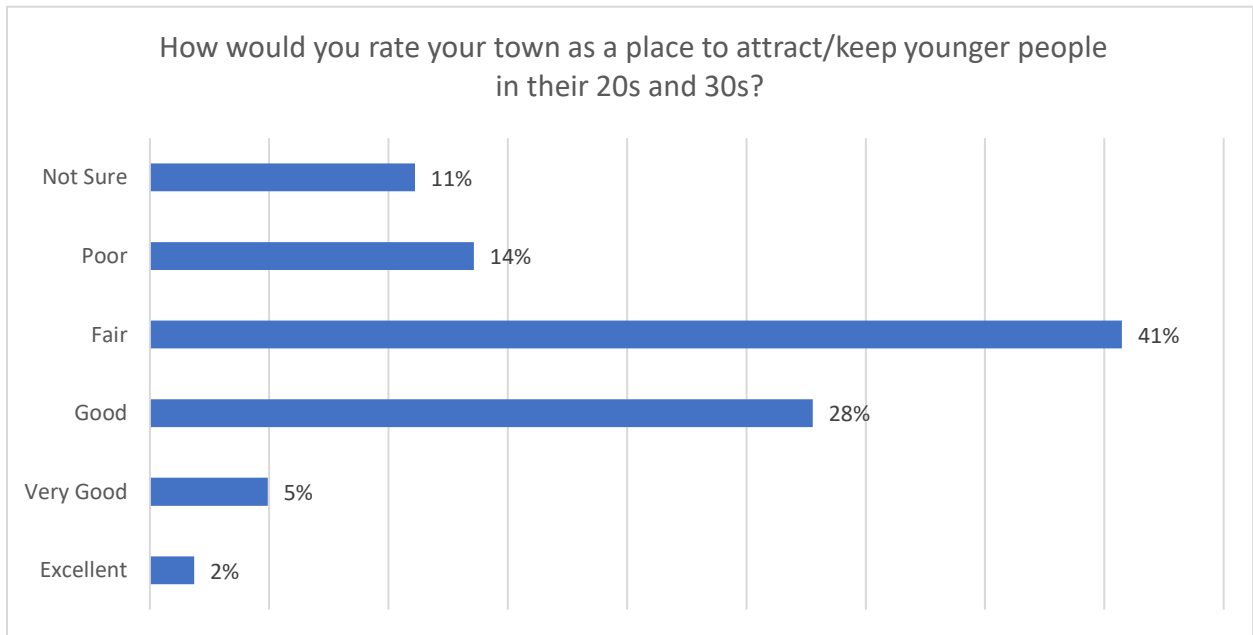
Question 3: How would you rate your town as a place for people to live as older adults?

Most survey respondents indicated that Fremont is a good (34%) or fair (29%) place to grow old.



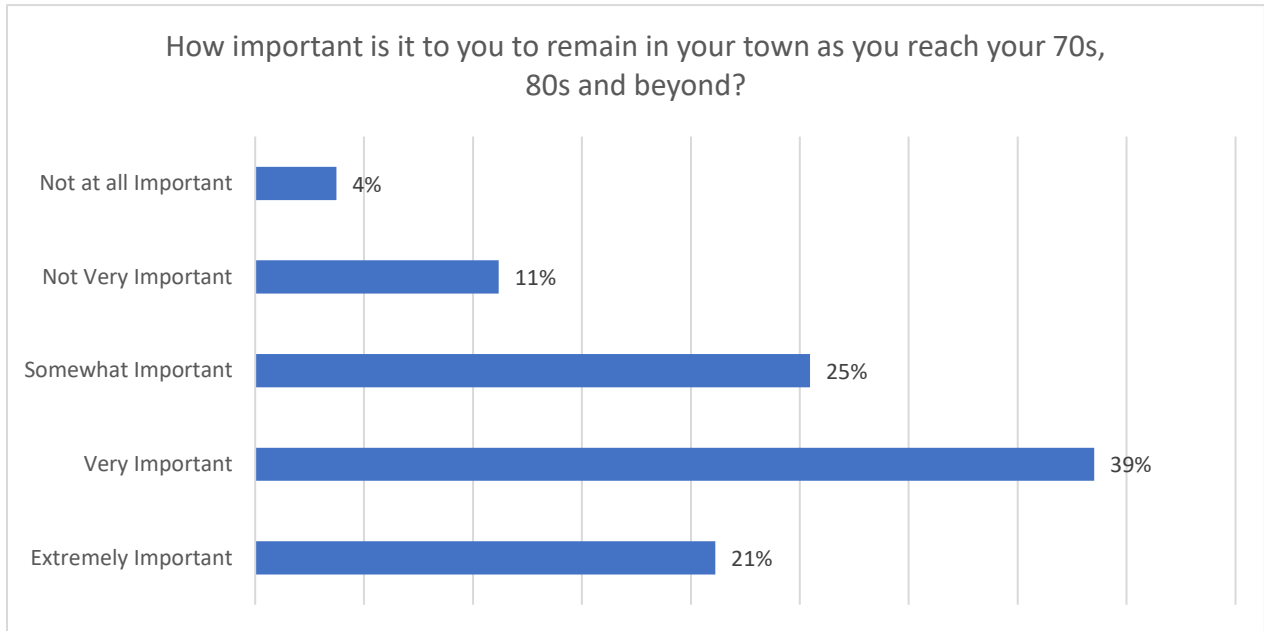
Question 4: How would you rate your town as a place to attract/keep younger people in their 20s and 30s?

Most survey respondents rated Fremont "fair" concerning attracting/keeping younger adults.



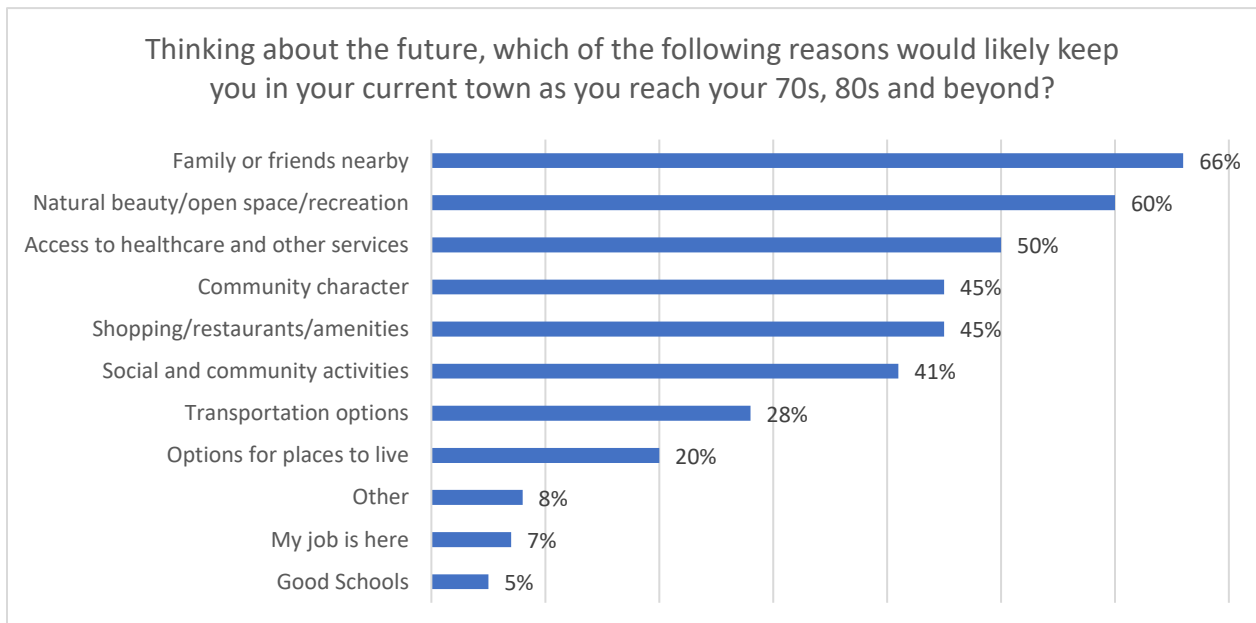
Question 5: How important is it for you to remain in your town as you reach your 70s 80s and beyond?

The majority of respondents indicated that it is very important for them to remain in Fremont as they age (39%) followed by somewhat (25%) and extremely important (21%)



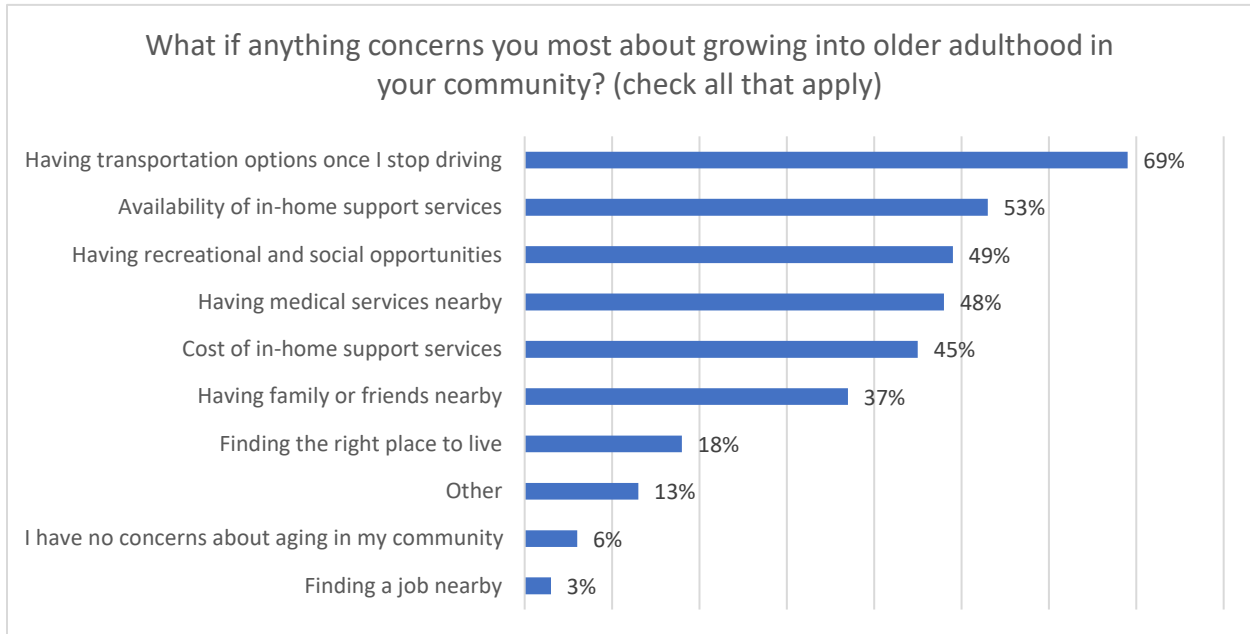
Question 6: Thinking about the future, which of the following reasons would likely keep you in your current town as you reach your 70s, 80s and beyond? (check all that apply)

Most respondents indicated that having family or friends nearby would be the topmost reason for staying in Fremont as they age. This is followed by natural beauty/open space/recreation (60%), access to healthcare and other services (50%) and overall community character (45%).



Question 7: What if anything concerns you most about growing into older adulthood in your community? (check all that apply)

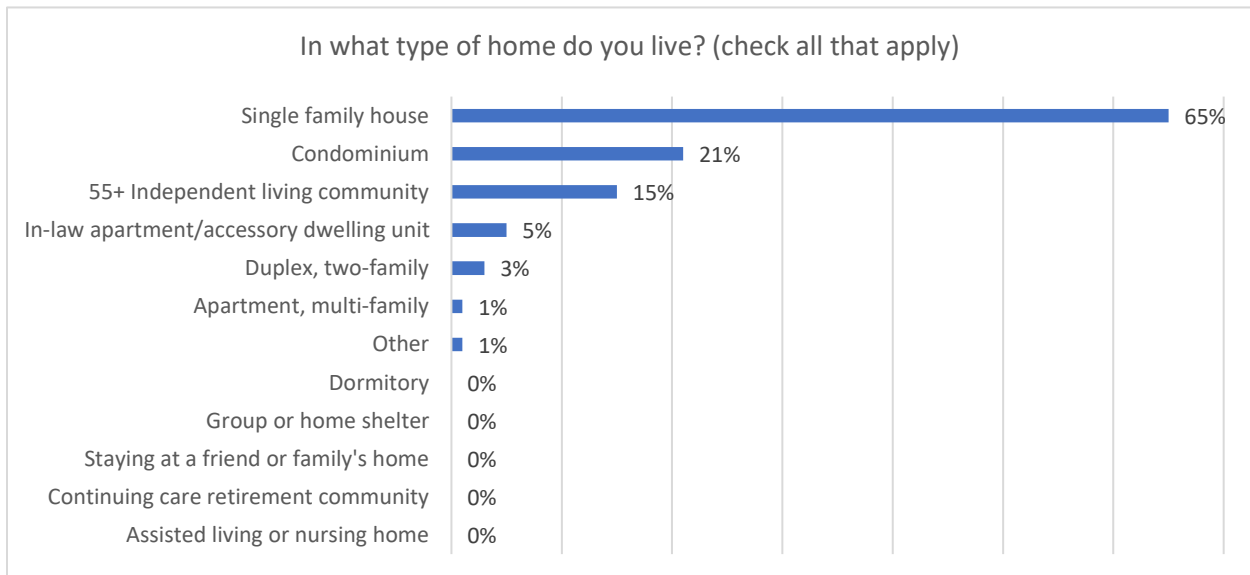
The biggest concern about aging in Fremont indicated by survey respondents is having transportation options once they can no longer drive (69%). This is followed by availability of in-home support services (53%), having recreational and social opportunities (49%), and having medical services nearby (48%).



Question 8: Regarding the concerns you noted in the previous question, what changes would help? (See Appendix for full comments)

Question 9: In what type of home do you live? (check all that apply)

The vast majority of survey respondents indicated that they live in a single-family house (65%).



Question 10: My current home meets or fits my needs regarding:

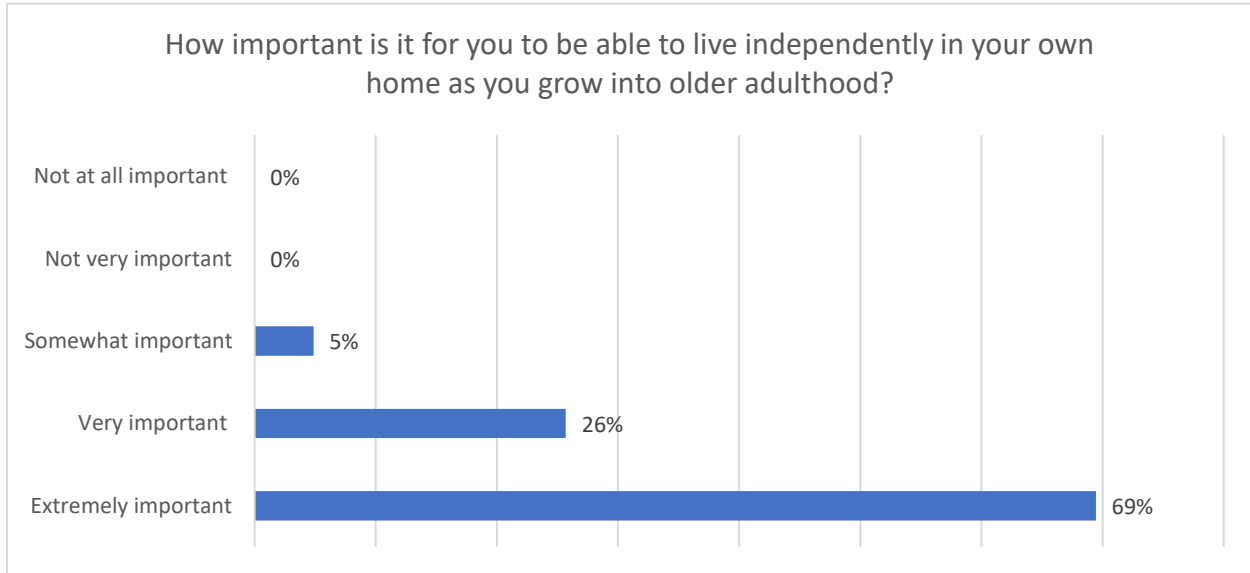
	Very well	OK	Not very well	Not at all
Design (e.g. single floor living, width of doors, few or no steps to get in)	62%	31%	6%	1%
Type of home (ex. Single family, apartment, condominium, other)	71%	25%	4%	1%
Location near places I want to go	49%	38%	12%	1%
Amount of routine maintenance (ex. Raking, snow shoveling)	34%	43%	18%	5%
Affordability within my budget	34%	54%	10%	2%
Sense of acceptance (if in an assisted living or other retirement community)	39%	47%	6%	9%

Question 11: If you have looked for a place to live in the past five years, or are considering finding another place to live in your community in the future, how would you rate the options available for you related to:

	Many Available	Some Available	Few Available	None Available	Not Applicable	Don't Know
Desired type of home (e.g. single family, apartment, condo, other)	2%	21%	37%	13%	18%	10%
Design (e.g. single floor living, width of doors, few or no steps to get in)	2%	22%	37%	7%	19%	14%
Location near places I want to go	6%	23%	32%	9%	13%	10%
Maintenance I'm willing to take on (e.g. lawn, raking, snow clearance)	2%	22%	30%	10%	22%	14%
Affordability within my budget	1%	13%	40%	15%	19%	11%
Sense of acceptance (if looking for an assisted living or other retirement community or neighborhood)	2%	20%	21%	7%	25%	25%

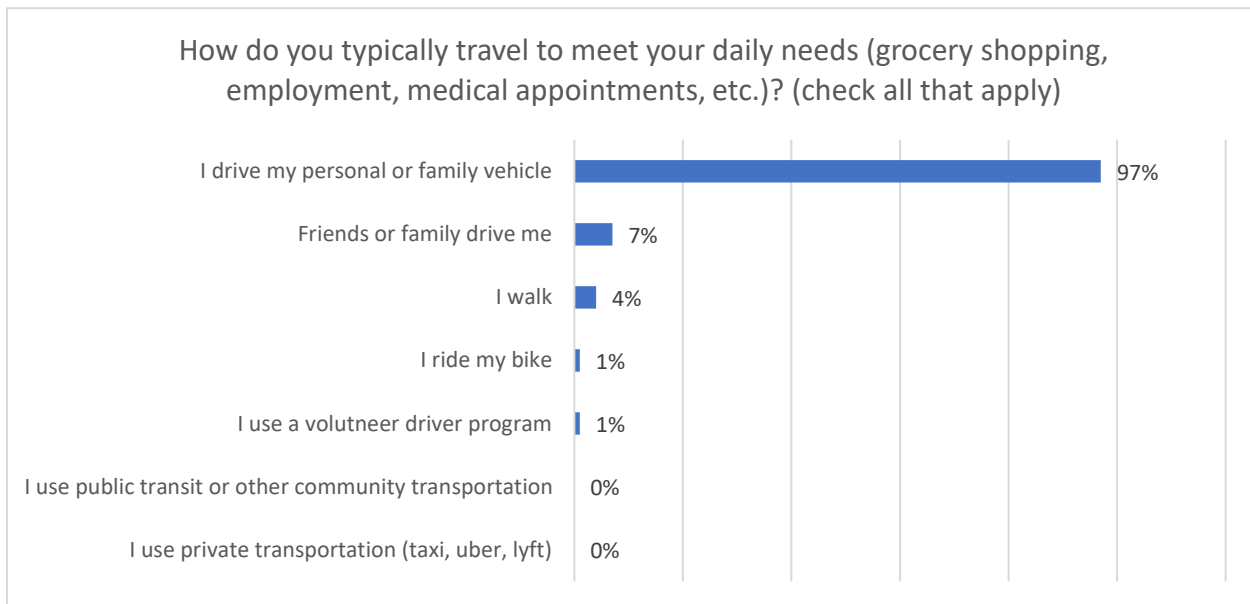
Question 12: How important is it for you to be able to live independently in your own home as you grow into older adulthood?

The overwhelming majority of survey respondents indicated that it is extremely important for them to be able to live independently in their own homes as they age (69%).



Question 13: How do you typically travel to meet your daily needs (grocery shopping, employment, medical appointments, etc.)? (check all that apply)

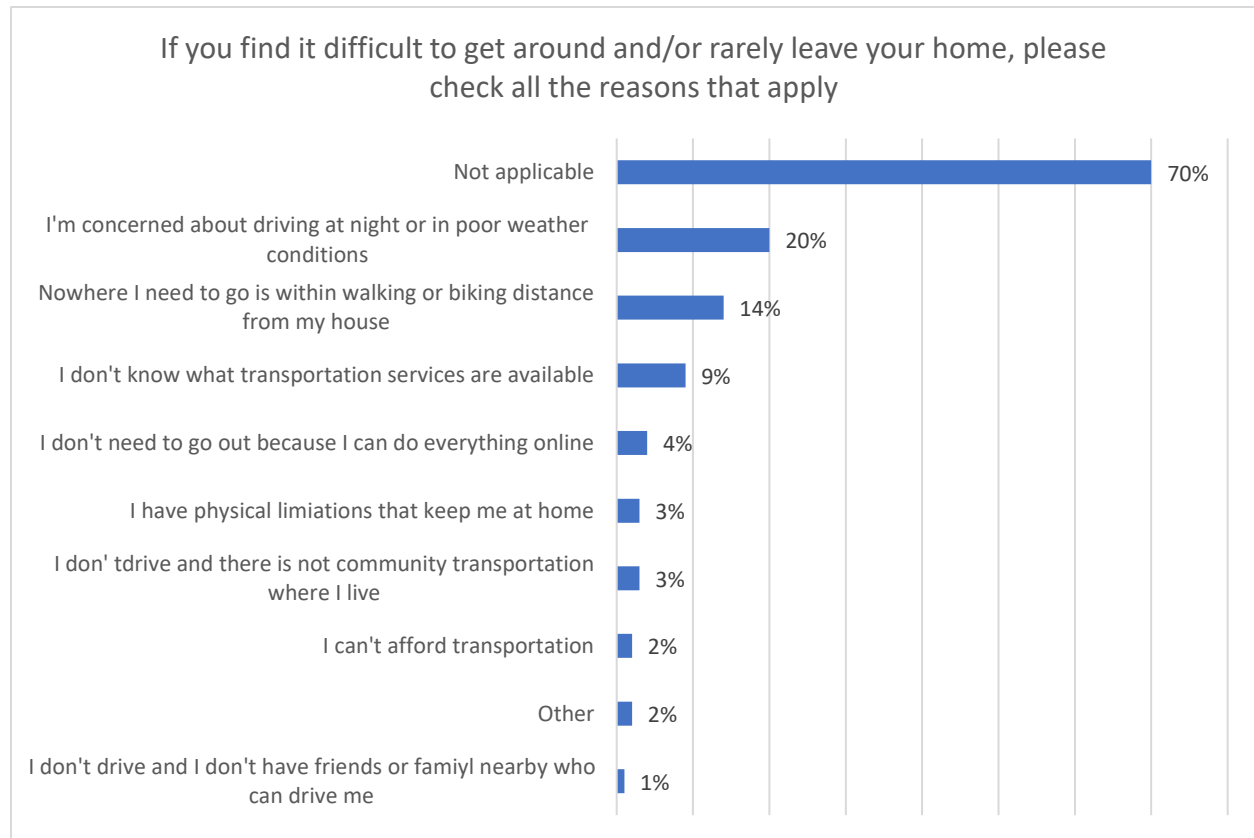
The vast majority of survey respondents drive their own personal vehicle to meet their daily travel needs (97%).



Question 14: How would you rate the following in your town?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Not Sure	Not Applicable
Sidewalks	1%	3%	8%	46%	6%	36%
Bicycle safety	1%	8%	22%	50%	11%	8%
Parking	6%	28%	28%	23%	4%	10%
Public/community transportation	0%	2%	4%	51%	19%	24%
Easy to read traffic signs	16%	57%	18%	3%	3%	3%
Enforced speed limits	13%	44%	27%	8%	6%	2%
Benches where I walk	0%	7%	16%	36%	11%	30%
Ease of getting to town facilities	11%	50%	18%	9%	6%	7%
Ease of access at town facilities	10%	55%	19%	7%	6%	3%
Public restrooms	1%	10%	14%	28%	24%	23%

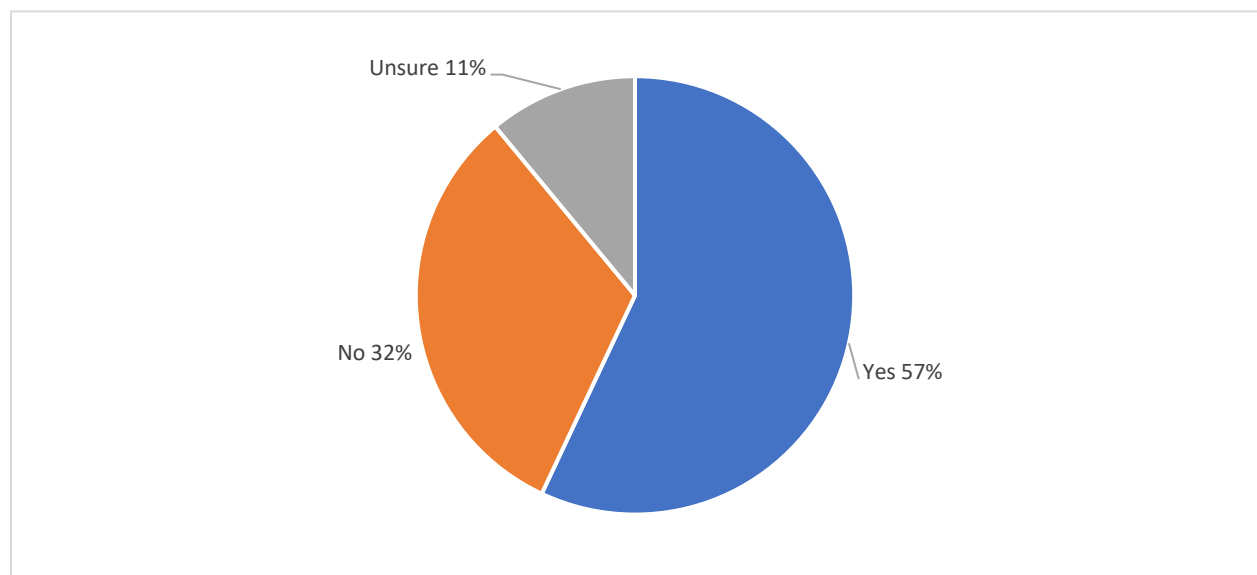
Question 15: If you find it difficult to get around and/or rarely leave your home, please check all the reasons that apply



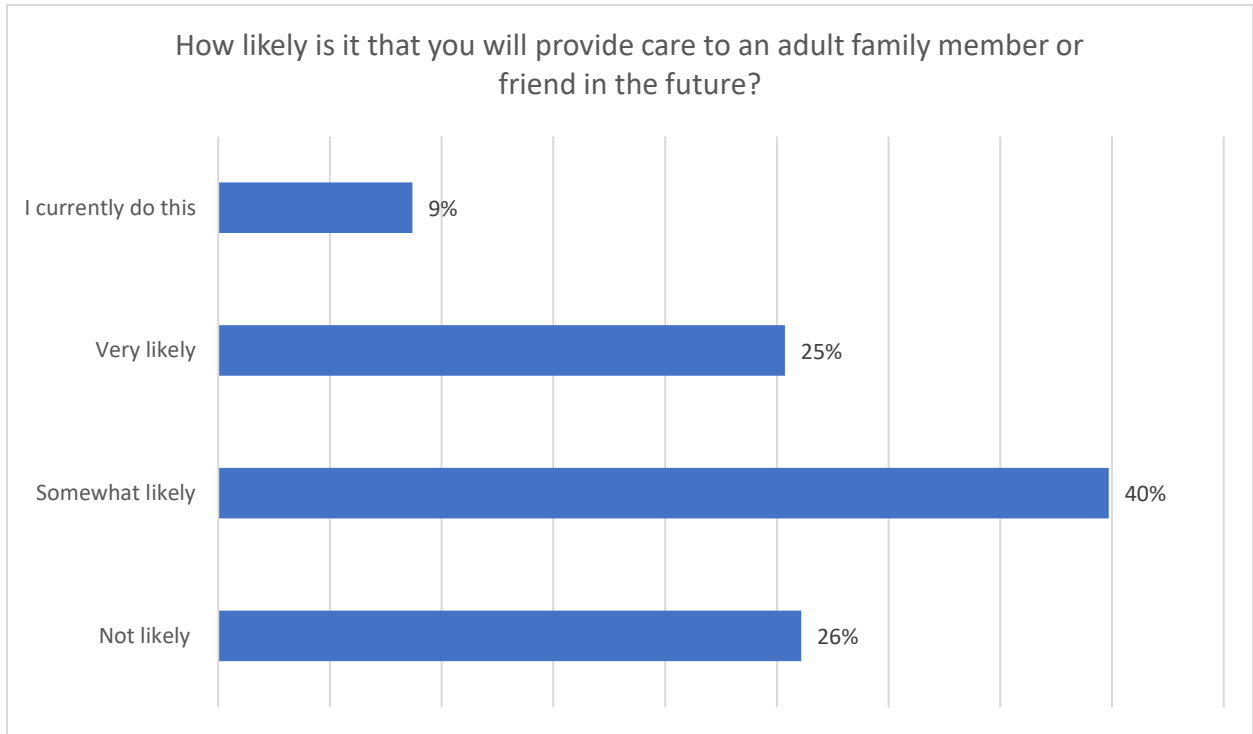
Question 16: Which if any of the following services do you use in your community?

	I use	Available, I don't use	Not available	Not sure if available
In-person medical services	31%	15%	25%	29%
Telehealth medical services	35%	40%	6%	19%
Substance use disorder-recovery services	1%	23%	16%	60%
Dental care services	42%	12%	26%	20%
Vision care or hearing services	39%	10%	26%	25%
Meals on Wheels weekday delivery of meals at home	1%	45%	5%	49%
Weekday luncheons for older adults	0%	14%	23%	64%
In-home personal care assistance	0%	33%	10%	58%
In-home healthcare	0%	33%	10%	57%
In-home help with tasks like housekeeping, cooking, grocery shopping	4%	27%	9%	60%
Early childhood education / preschool / daycare	2%	60%	6%	33%
After school care	2%	49%	6%	43%
Youth summer day camps	2%	42%	1%	44%
Teen center	0%	20%	29%	51%

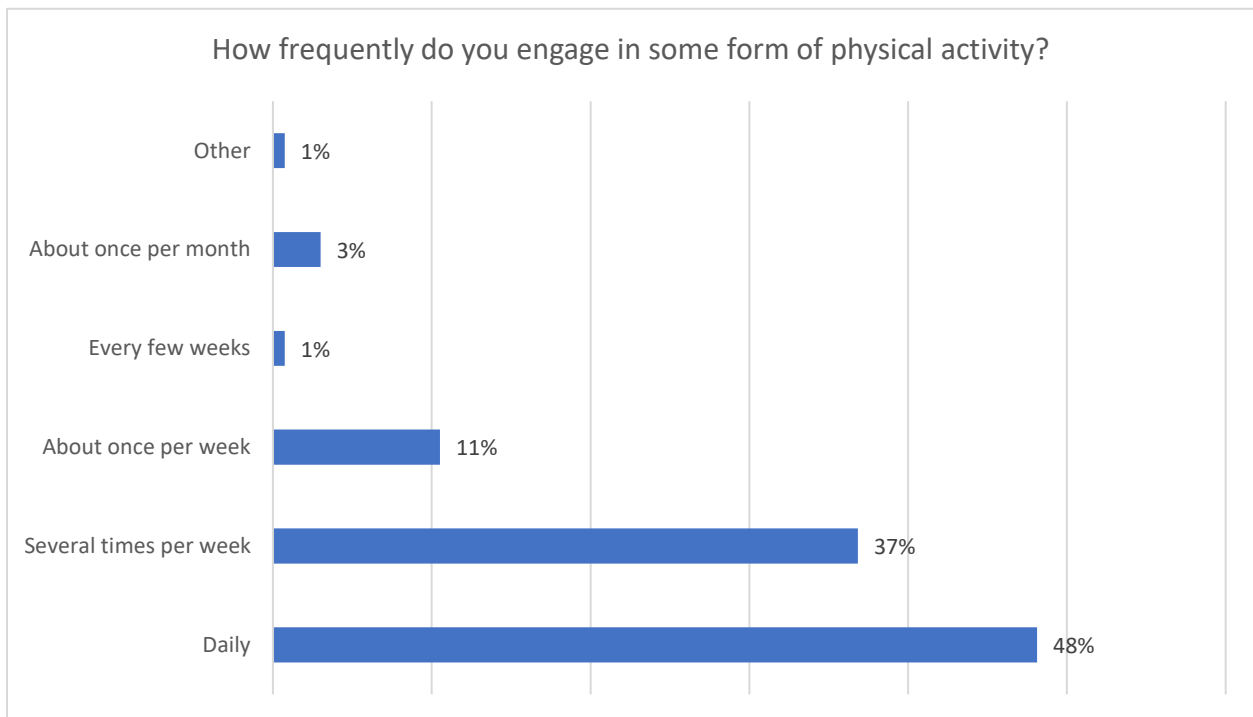
Question 17: Do you have family or friends nearby who can provide you with assistance now or in the future for things like running errands, transportation, cooking, and self-care?



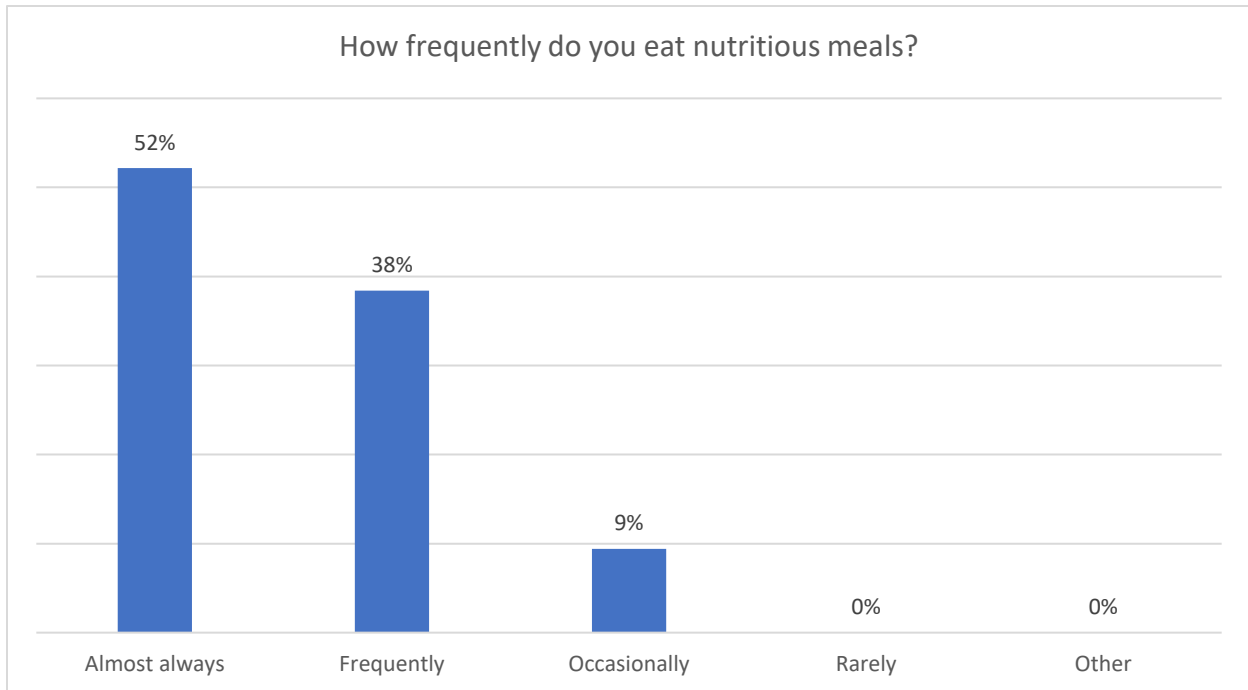
Question 18: How likely is it that you will provide care to an adult family member or friend in the future?



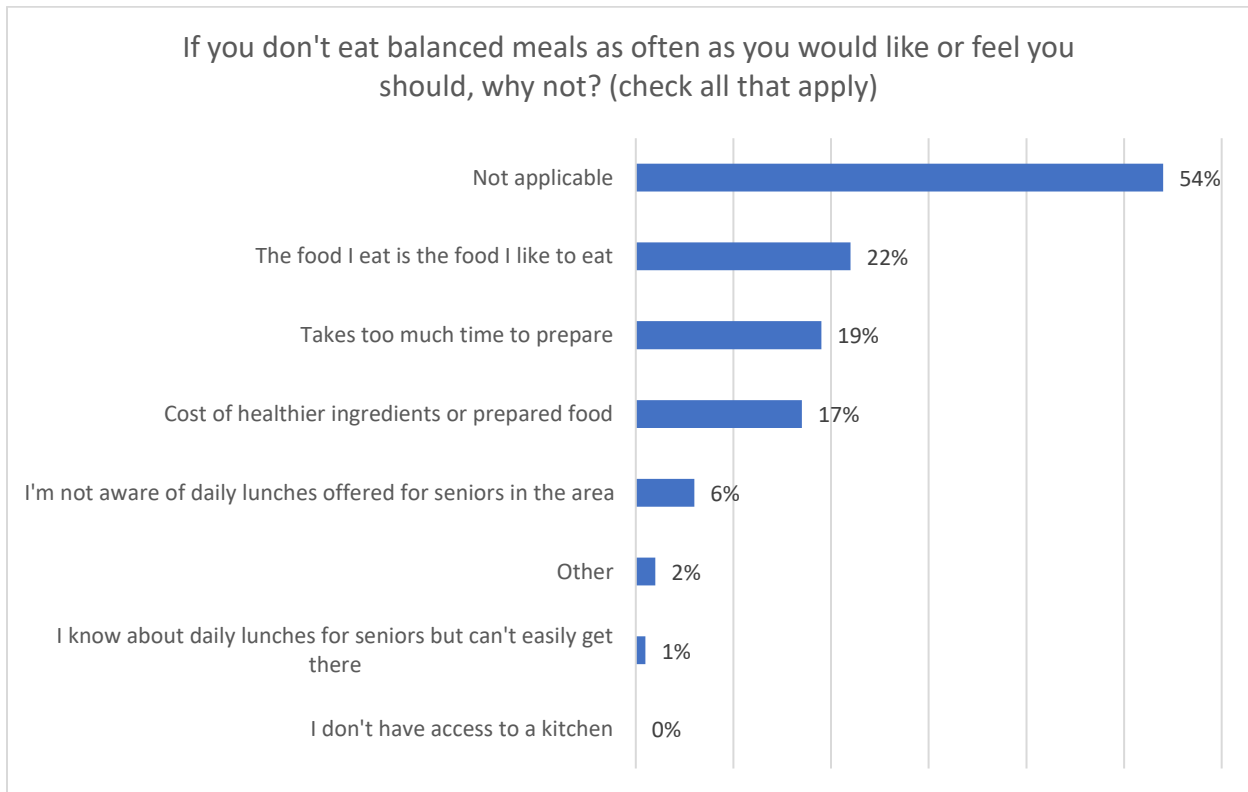
Question 19: How frequently do you engage in some form of physical activity?



Question 20: How frequently do you eat nutritious meals?

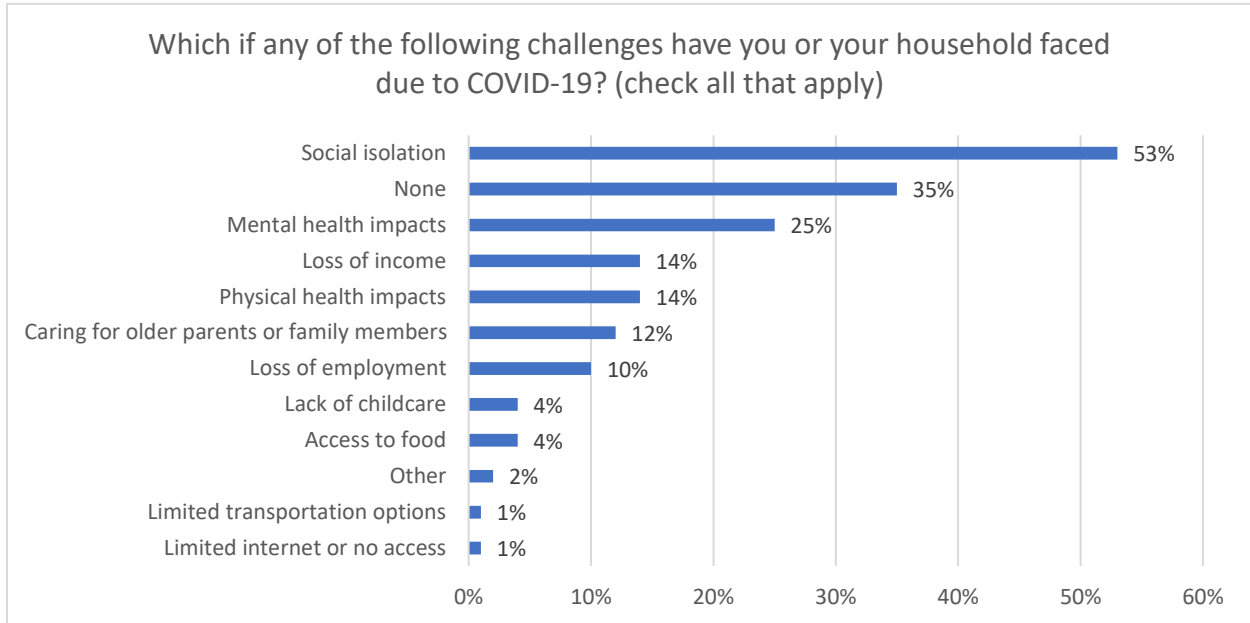


Question 21: If you don't eat balanced meals as often as you would like or feel you should, why not? (check all that apply)

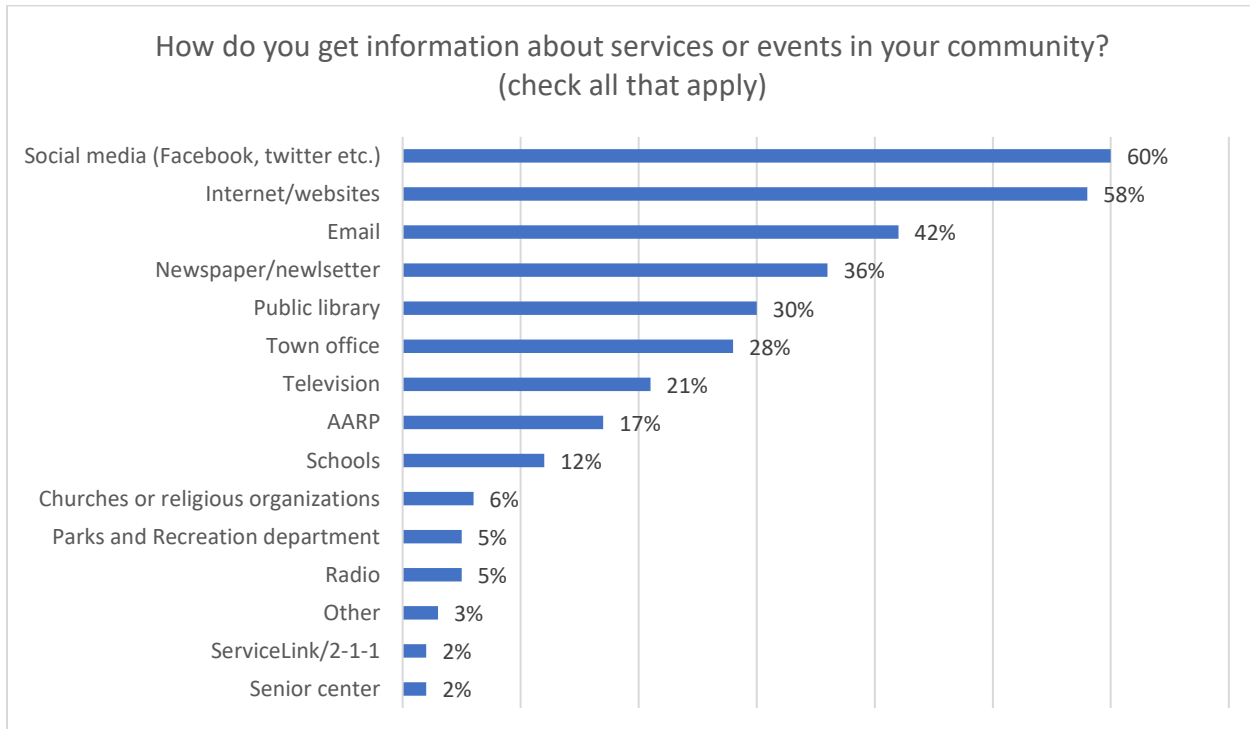


Question 22: Which if any of the following challenges have you or your household faced due to COVID-19? (check all that apply)

Social isolation was the most significant challenged faced by survey respondents during the COVID19 Pandemic.



Question 23: How do you get information about services or events in your community? (check all that apply)

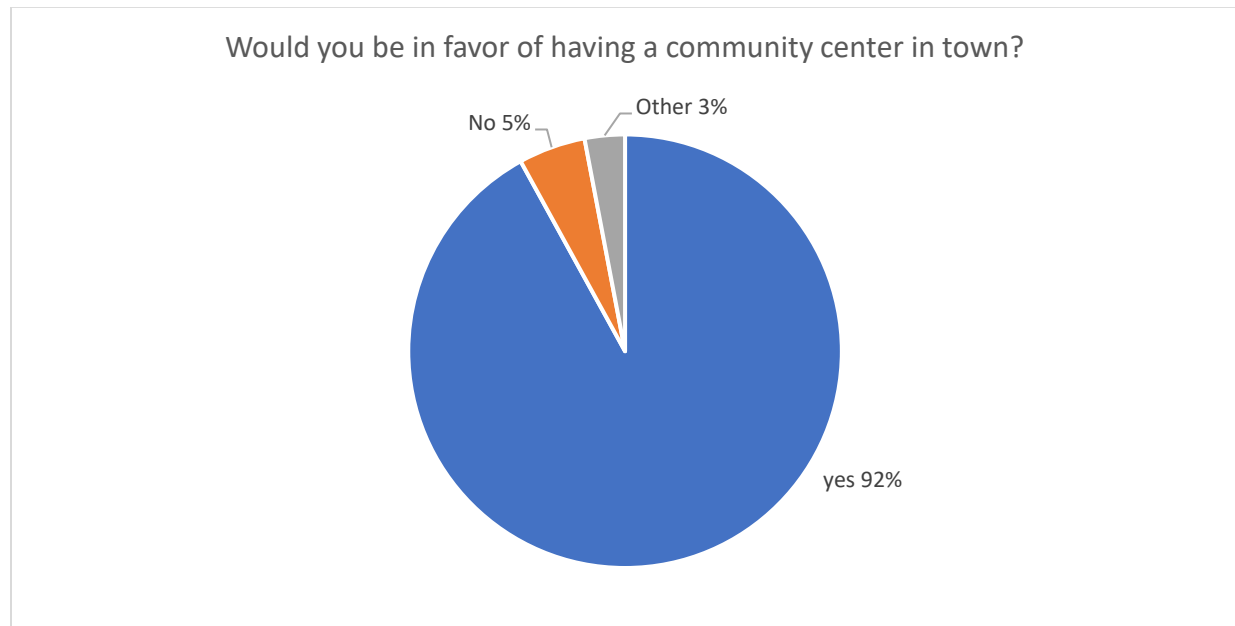


Question 24: Which of the following do you use in your community?

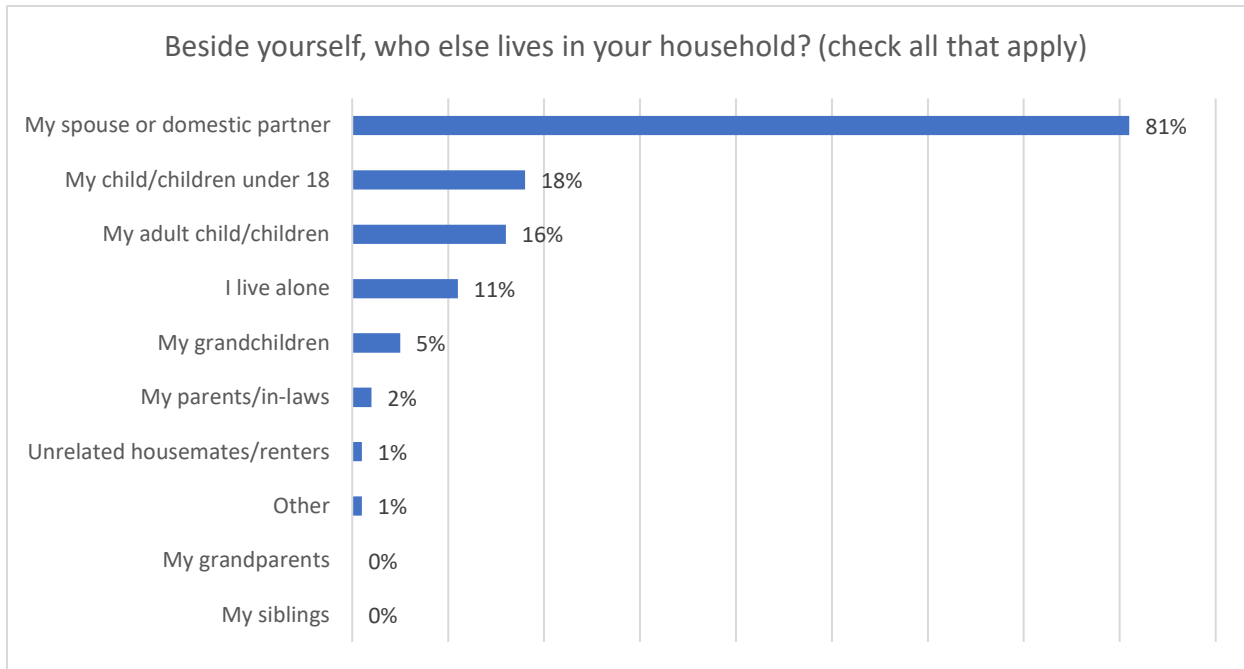
	I use	Available, I don't use	Not available	Not sure if available
Volunteer/ community service opportunities	22%	35%	3%	39%
Trails, conservation land, natural areas	65%	34%	1%	1%
Playgrounds, ball fields, swimming pools	23%	59%	4%	14%
Sidewalks and bike paths	13%	21%	48%	18%
Concerts, dances, socials	4%	10%	44%	42%
Veterans services	3%	20%	19%	57%
Restaurants/coffee shops/stores	68%	13%	16%	4%
Fitness centers, exercise classes, rec sports	11%	44%	20%	25%
Community centers, Boys & Girls Club, YMCA (youth, young adult, family)	2%	12%	53%	32%
Senior center or activities for older adults	1%	21%	42%	36%
Social/civic groups (book clubs, garden clubs, Lions, Kiwanis, VFW)	26%	54%	3%	17%
Continuing education/ learning opportunities	7%	26%	22%	45%
Churches or other places of worship	21%	70%	4%	5%
Food pantry	0%	86%	1%	13%
Town welfare office	2%	57%	7%	34%
Internet access at public locations (library, town hall)	15%	74%	2%	9%
Libraries	66%	31%	1%	2%

Question 25: Would you be in favor of having a community center in town?

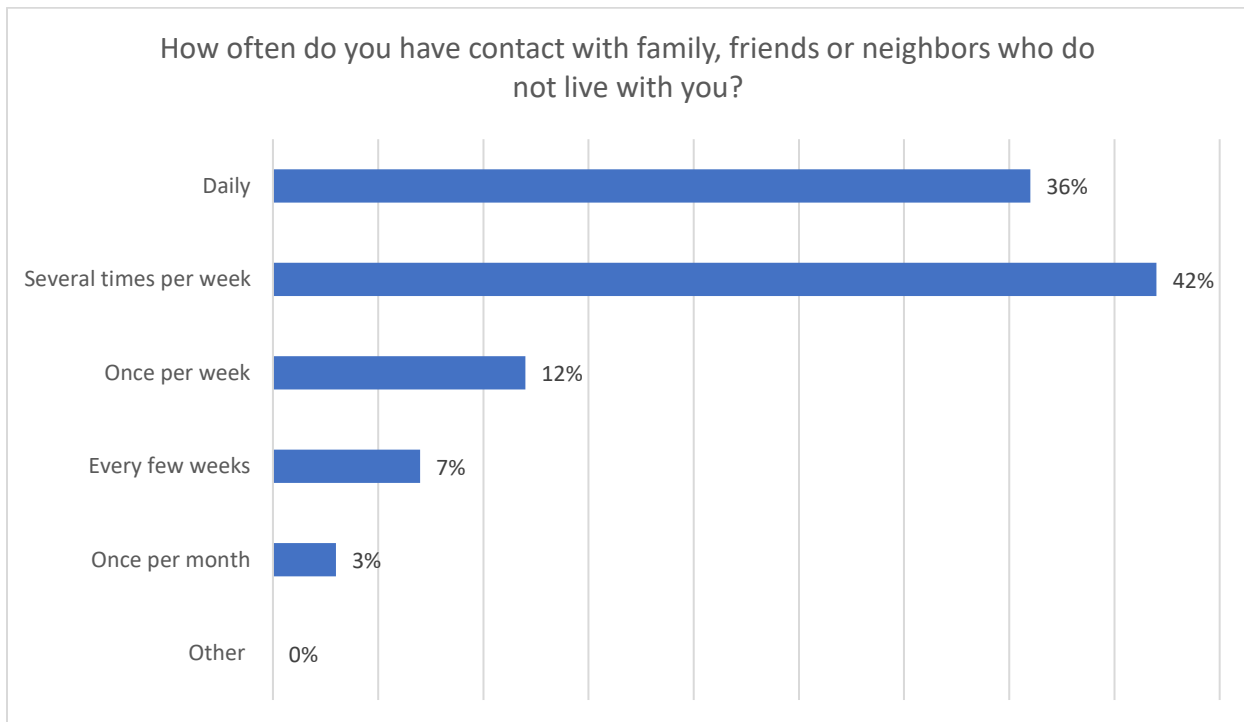
The overwhelming majority of survey respondents would be in favor of having a community center in town.



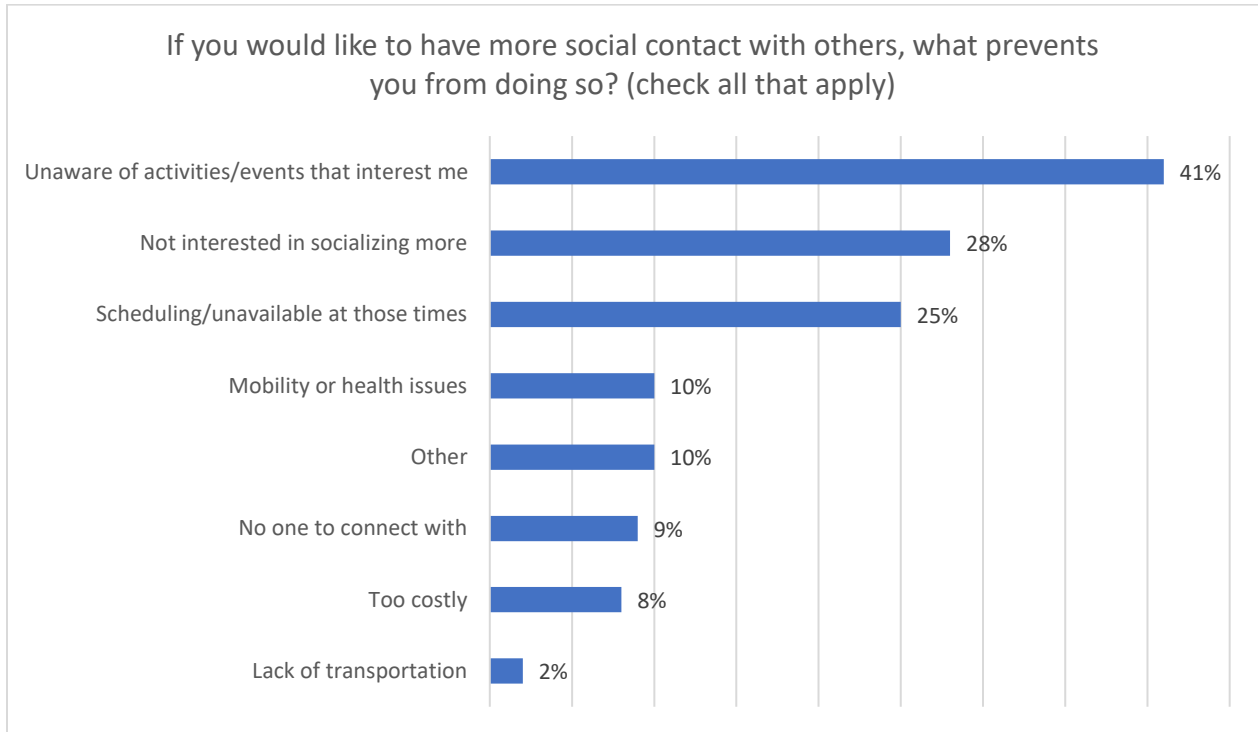
Question 26: Beside yourself, who else lives in your household? (Check all that apply)



Question 27: How often do you have contact with family, friends or neighbors who do not live with you?



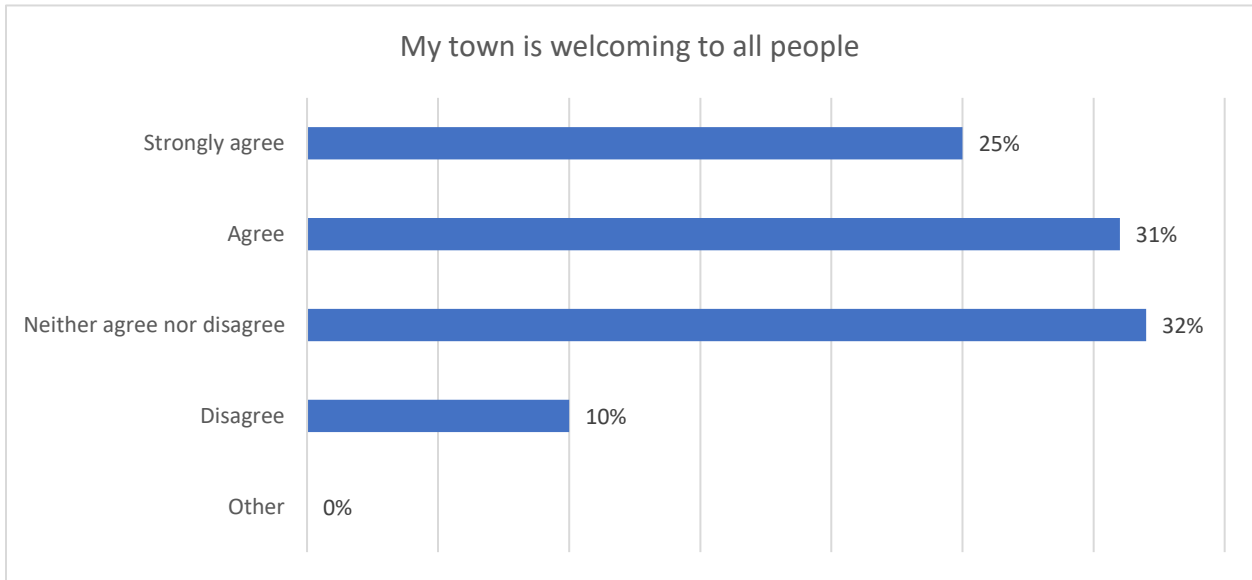
Question 28: If you would like to have more social contact with others, what prevents you from doing so? (check all that apply)



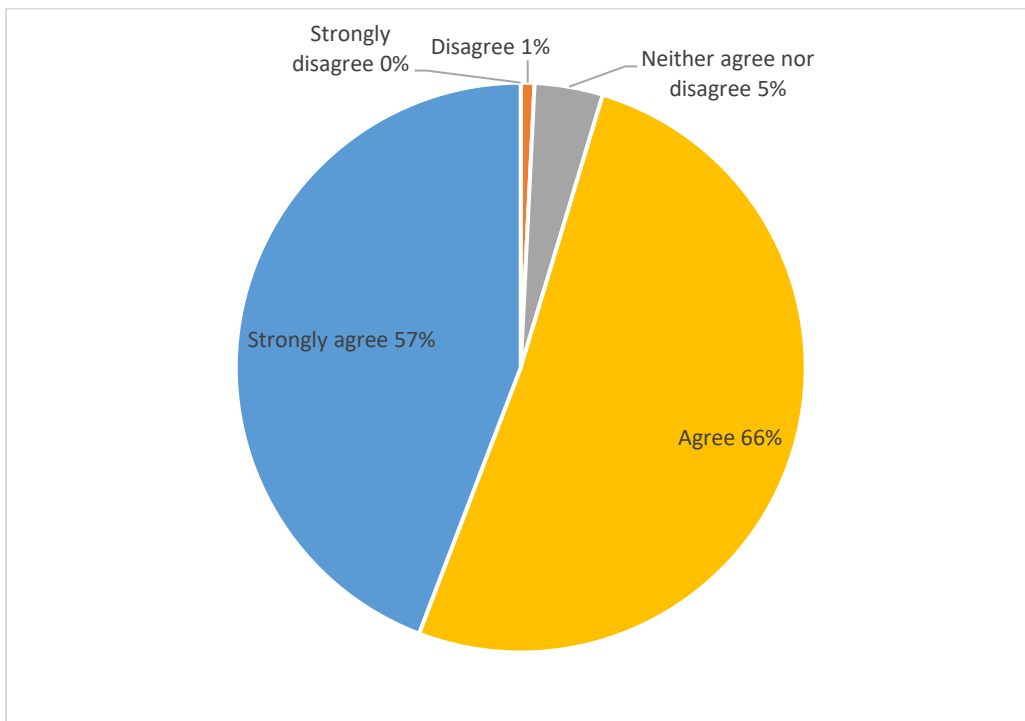
Question 29: Do you feel accepted in your town with regard to:

	Yes	Somewhat	No	N/A
Spirituality or religious affiliation	44%	7%	2%	47%
Political views	28%	32%	13%	27%
Age	72%	20%	2%	6%
Sexuality	60%	5%	0%	35%
Gender Identity	53%	5%	0%	42%
Race and ethnicity	65%	5%	1%	30%
Economic status	63%	11%	5%	21%

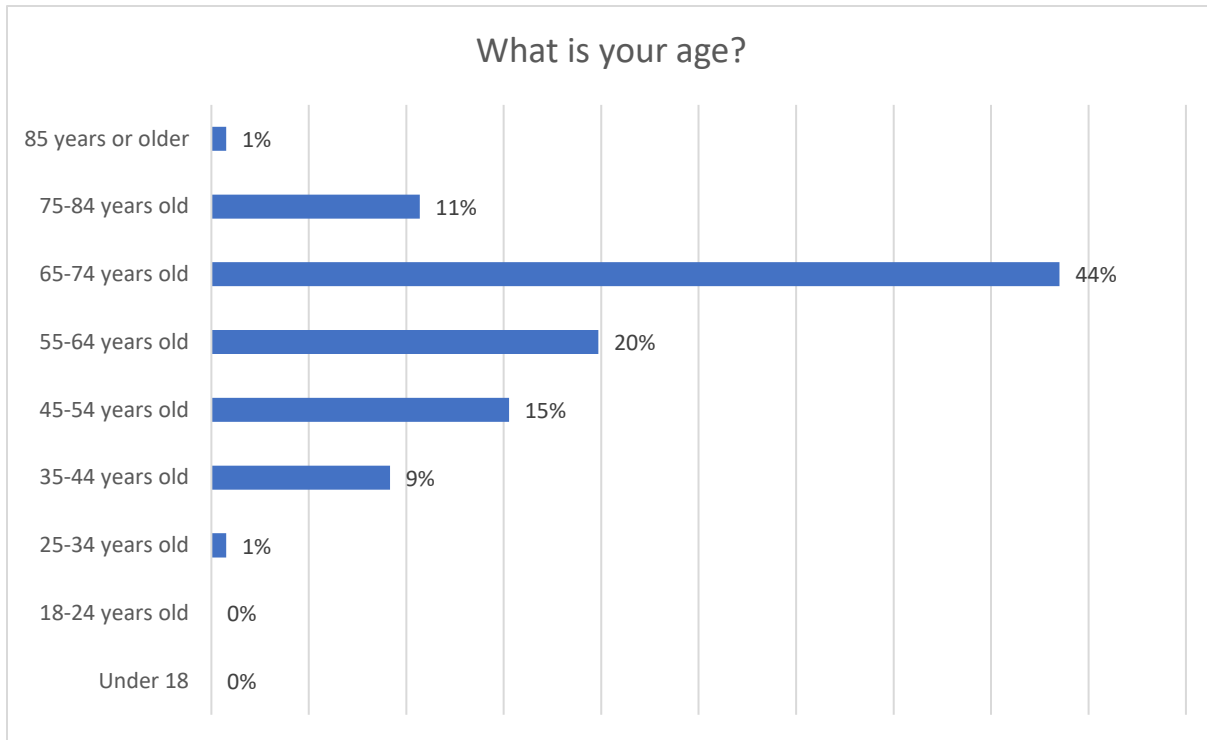
Question 30: My town is welcoming to all people:



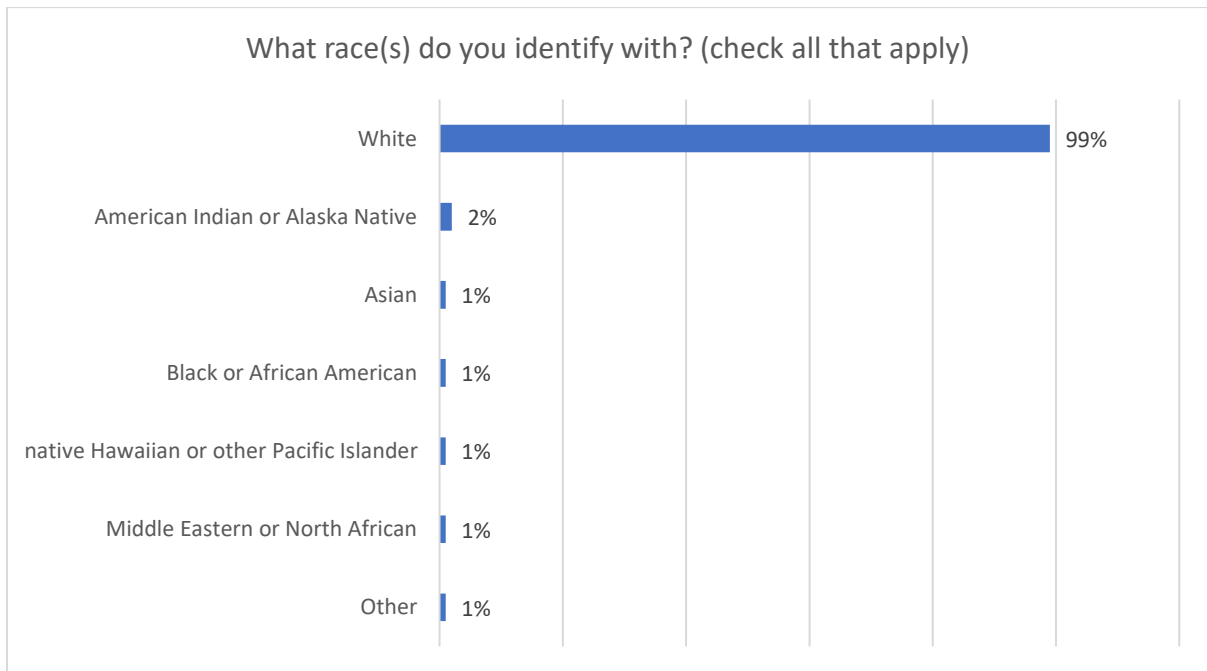
Question 31: I feel safe in my community



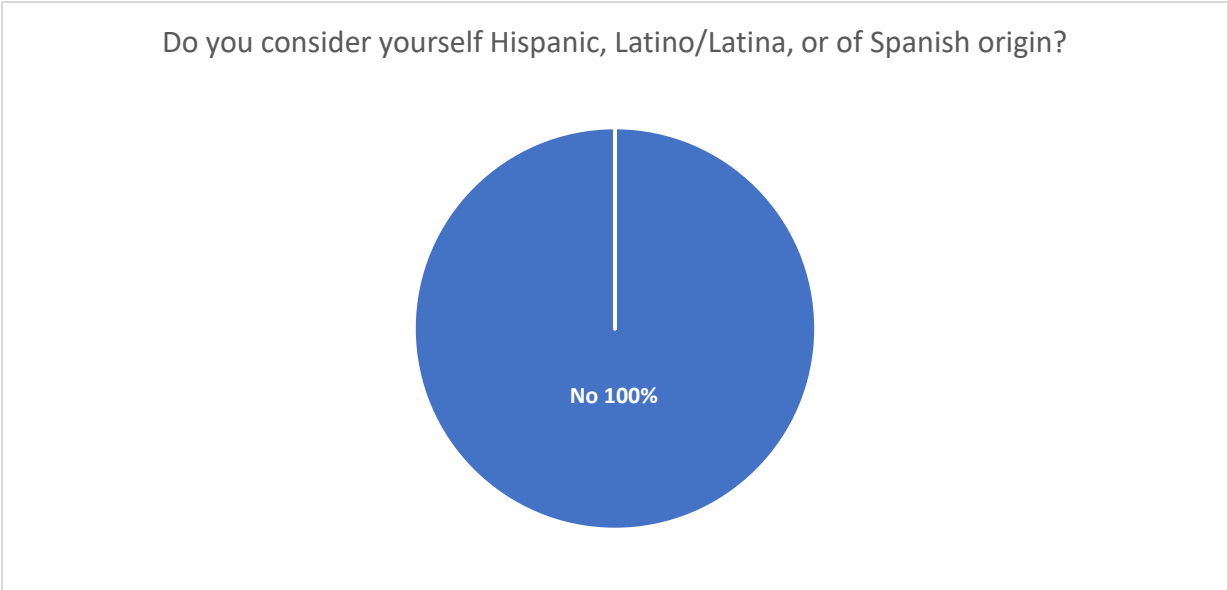
Question 32: What is your age?



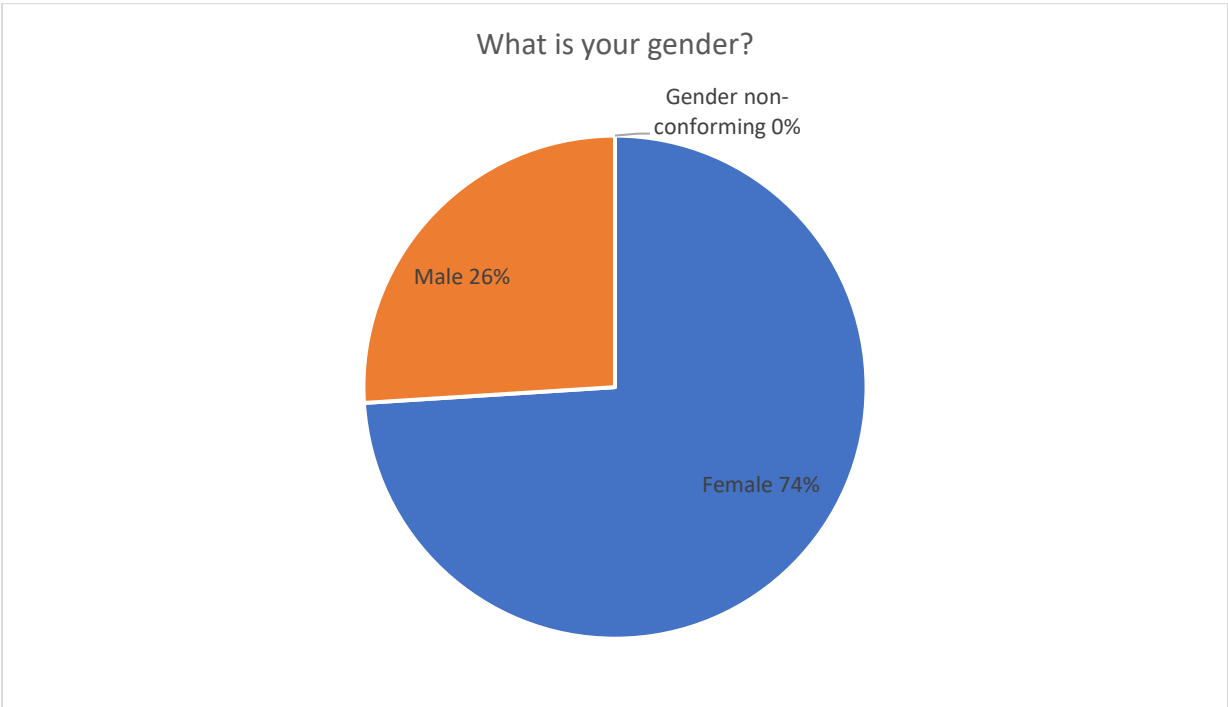
Question 33: What race(s) do you identify with? (Check all that apply)



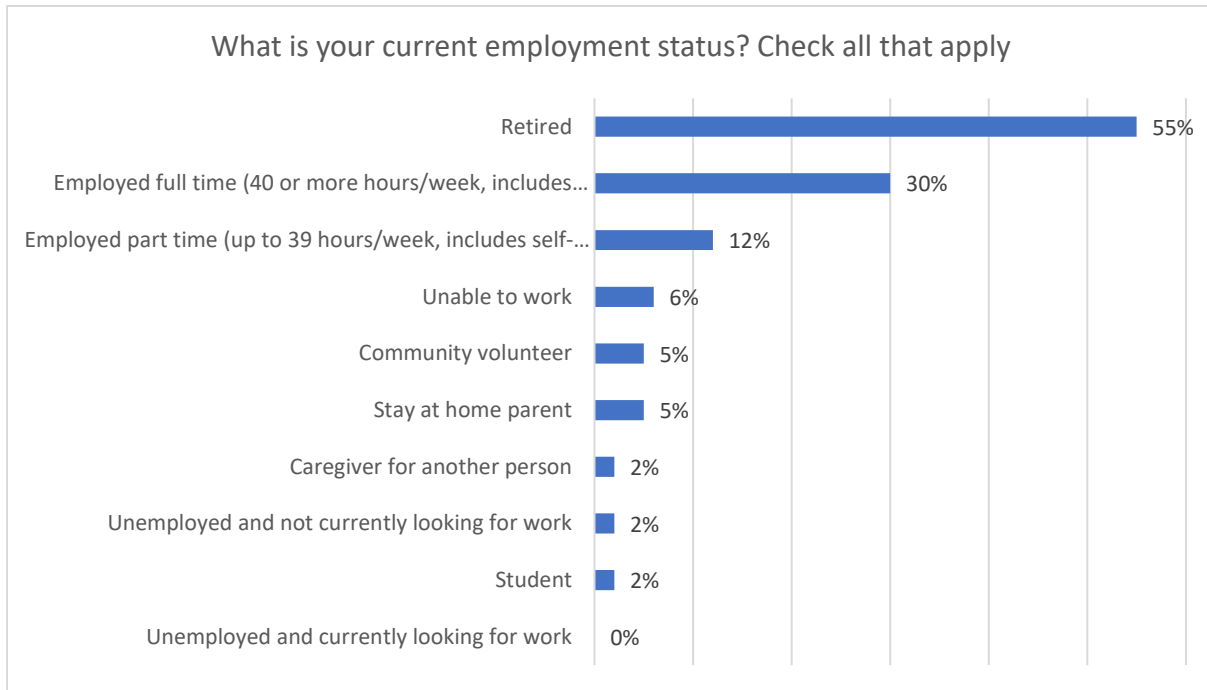
Question 34: Do you consider yourself Hispanic, Latino/Latina, or of Spanish origin?



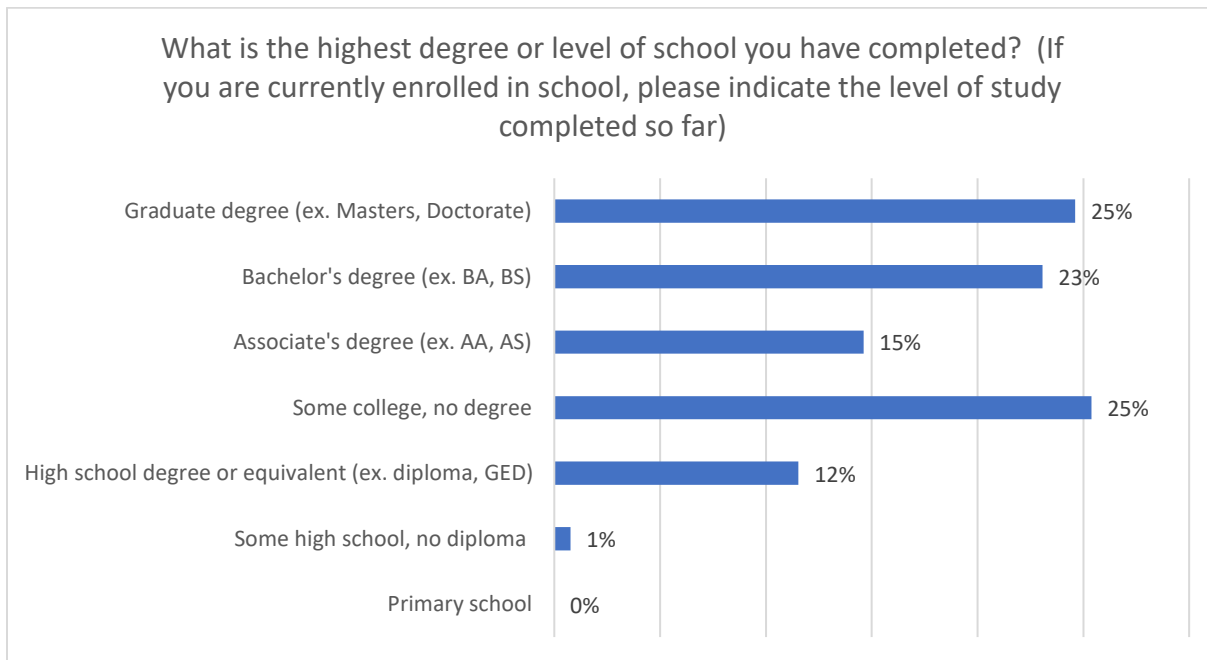
Question 35: What is your gender?



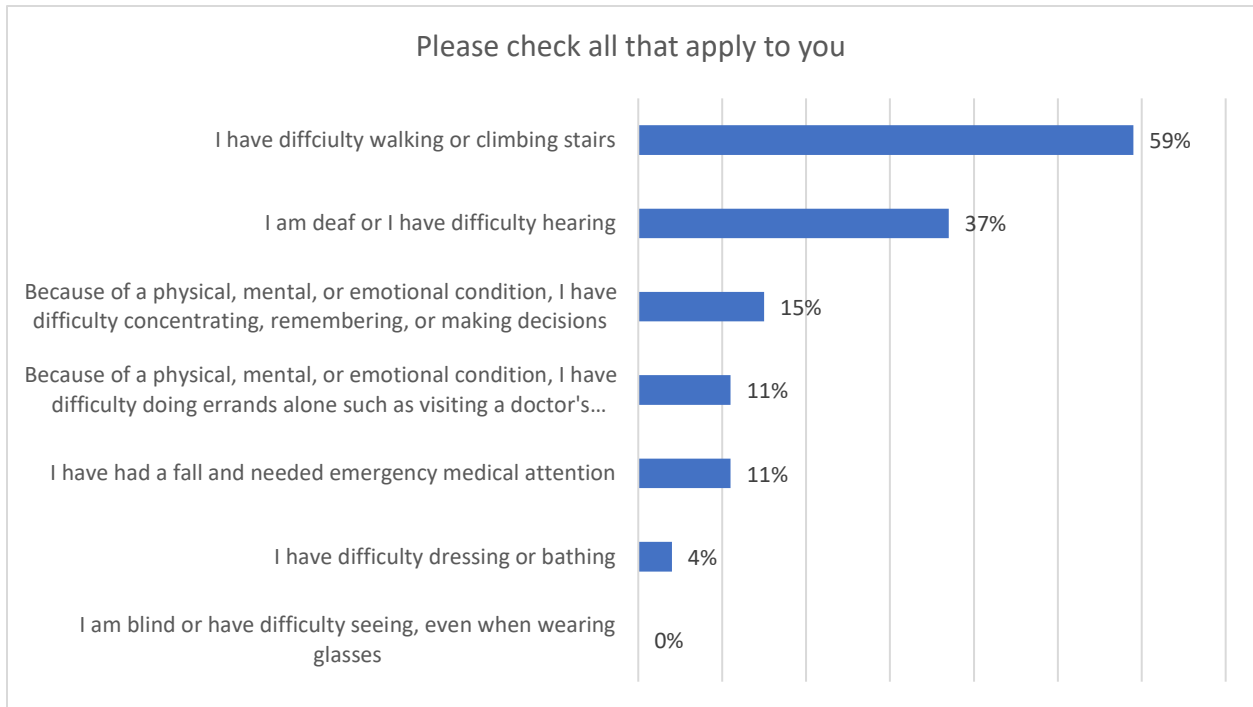
Question 36: What is your current employment status? (Check all that apply)



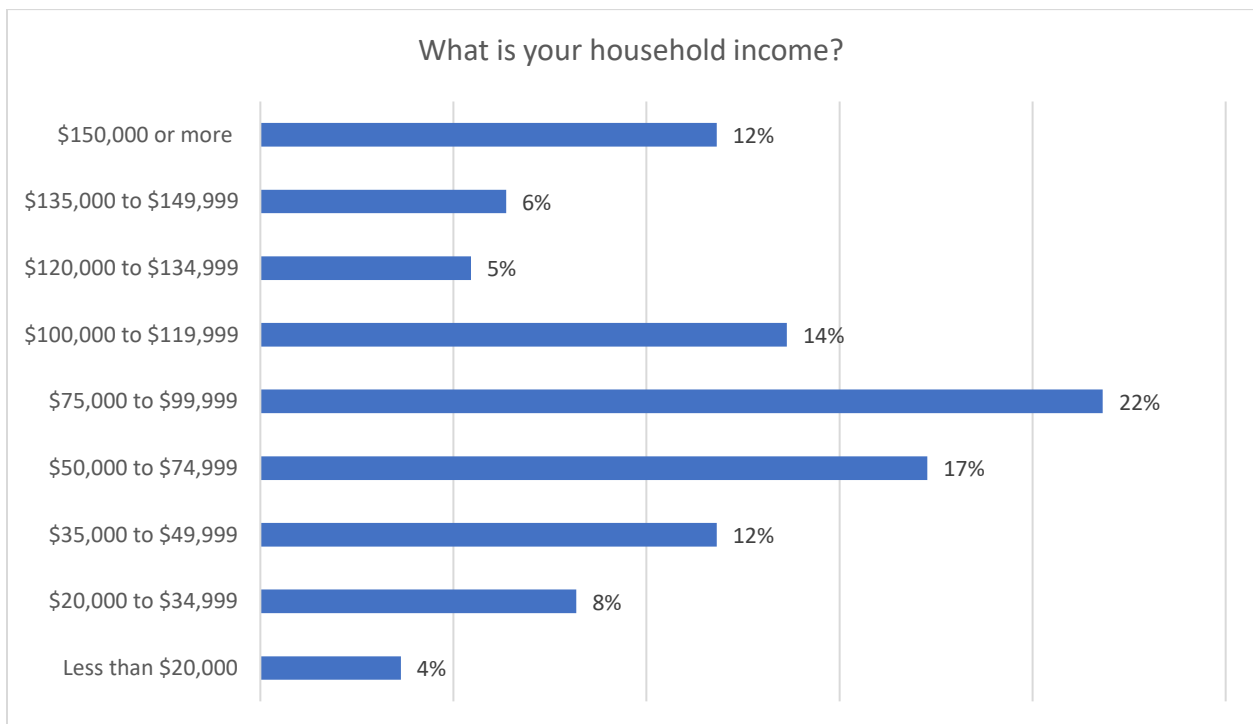
Question 37: What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? (If you are currently enrolled in school, please indicate the level of study completed so far)



Question 38: Please check all that apply to you:



Question 39: What is your household income?



Question 40: Do you have any additional comments about aging and livability in your town or the broader region? (See appendix A for full comments)

Appendix A: Open Response questions

Question 8: Regarding the concerns you noted in the previous question, what changes would help?

Much improved Public Transportation services;
Being more familiar with currently available transportation services and recreational and social services that currently exist.
A shuttle going to key shopping areas in Epping and Raymond; to hospitals in Exeter and Manchester, the library, and local senior centers.
More recreational/social opportunities
AFFORDABLE 55+ housing
Having local, affordable transportation options.
A tax break for 55+, that is my biggest concern by far. I honestly find Fremont a great place to live and wouldn't need anything to change except the high property tax.
As I stated...a tax break for 55+.
If I had medical issues, I would look to move to a town that has a full time Fire and Rescue department. I assume when I am in my 70s and older I may need help with tasks around the home-mowing, etc. I would be looking for a place that includes outdoor maintained.
More involvement with and recognition of Ra-Fre Senior Center.
Having services available locally to help with the listed concerns as I age.
Elder care services, meals on wheels, recreation services or activities, public transportation
Tax breaks, a community center
Transportation - some type of reasonable bus / "as needed" system as this town is too far from all services and supports when unable to drive. It must be for the entire town. not just the "planned" senior areas. Other: 1. property taxes continuous unaffordable escalation (in real dollars): From \$2000 to \$5000 in 20 years, paychecks have not increased at that rate. The taxes cannot continue to do so either. 2. our school system - quality and costs, plus the upcoming need (AGAIN!) for an affordable high school / options / planning. See #1 re: reasonable affordability and taxes. We CANNOT continue to tax people out of their homes. They need to be able to live indoors, be warm, have enough to eat and enjoy living.
Low-cost housing,
Mixed income housing, multi-generational housing
Local low-cost transportation
Transportation to shopping and medical care.
Elderly transportation
We just moved from the South. There were a lot of companies that went to senior citizens homes.
Senior transportation, town rec that provides on-site senior activities and day trips out of town, affordable in-home support services

Connection! Town garden with benches, a “know your neighbors” group to find the people-resources already in the community, a Real town newsletter that shares about People rather than just politics and information. Hiding right here are the people, resources, and camaraderie we all need.
Having the opportunities
Affordable housing
More Medicare coverage
Lower taxes.
Lowering taxes
Taxes are a great concern when you are on social security.
Having transportation to doctors and hospitals. Having senior housing.
Public support for in-home support services and transportation. I would like to see this more accessible and made public.
I'm terrified of growing old in Fremont and not being able to pay the taxes. So I guess the change that would help would be to lessen the taxes on the older residents.
public transportation, meals on wheels
Transportation service to get to shopping, medical appointments
Available senior transportation, more medical offices in the area, keeping recreational areas we have an adding more safe recreational areas i.e. hiking/walking trails, sidewalks etc.
Sidewalks, better transportation, cultural activities
Sharing cost with the public regarding in-home support services and where you might get them.
I am not yet able to answer, as I have only been here 3 months, but all reasons listed are things I have to keep in mind for the future.
Perhaps a Senior Center with activities in town and a Senior Shuttle Service
The existence of some scheduled or community supported transportation options for shopping, appointments, etc. in the area would be very helpful to many seniors.
Some sort of volunteer or paid people to assist elderly people as needed. In practice, it is difficult and costly for elder care and takes a special person. People that are wheelchair bound due to MS or other disease come to mind too
public transportation to this area
Can't think of anything.
Options for transportation available
Consistent local transportation (a regular shuttle up to Epping and Exeter, for example) would be very helpful around here.
Knowledge of support services available and their costs.
Giving seniors a tax break for having no children in the school system
An on-call van for local transportation.
One stop senior advisory service.
Having transportation to medical appointments
Lower the taxes, I don't think I can pay them on social security
Lowering taxes
Lower rate for elderly on fixed incomes.
Not sure.
Better use of money in schools and towns

lower taxes
Very limited transportation options in Fremont. Even uber drivers not very available.
People forget that when they were kids. Some paid for their school. Stop blaming the school on why it hard to retire in Fremont
Bus transportation!
Increase of local and state resources and supports for aging adults that are accessible and affordable.
Would like Fremont to have our own Senior Center.
We now have Derry Medical services nearby on Rte. 107, which is wonderful. In-home services when needed could be costly if insurance doesn't cover it. Being unable to drive oneself will be a problem; therefore, options are needed. Hopefully, family and friends will remain in the vicinity.
Friendlier support for the elderly in general shopping roadways sidewalks
Medical transportation bus to go to medical facilities
Have a large community center or hall large enough for community use or gatherings; transportation to get to appointments or shopping; fulltime fire department & EMT's.
It would be great if there was a local senior center for seniors to go for adult interaction; where there would be trips organized; exercise programs (like those offered at the library); safe, flat areas to walk; people to help understand Medicare, completing tax forms; transportation availability to doctors and shopping.
Tax credit for elderly without restrictions on savings.
On a fixed income derived only from social security anything that costs money is a concern.
Shopping and Restaurants near by
Lower tax rate for seniors with no children or grandchildren in school. Having streetlights
Having a ride share program (e.g., Uber, Lyft) or a bus/van service. Having a place large enough to meet with other seniors.
Giving older adults a better option for reducing our taxes. If we have savings, we are denied a reduction.
a community transportation system to help get to stores, doctors, and social activities. Come social center in town for classes and groups.
transportation nearby

Question 40: Do you have any additional comments about aging and livability in your town or the broader region?

Definitely would love a community center where people could get together to socialize and do various activities
Now that I'm retired, I want to get more involved
None
Needs improvement
Need more low-cost housing for seniors
I still love my town though it's not perfect.
Town officials focus on managing town business but not growing community.
Fremont has limited services for older adults, i will be moving before I retire
I would like to see more public awareness of services available in my community

As a healthy senior, livability in Fremont is fine. However, I know of older residents with physical limitations and disabilities who have transportation and home services issues which can be difficult for them. Having better community-based services such as transportation services, nursing and healthcare, home assistance services would go a long way towards make Fremont a better place to live for older individuals.
I would like to see more senior support, activities and services
Sidewalks and a larger shoulder area on the road to ride bikes on/ or walk. That's the only thing I feel would make getting around town easier.
We tried a 55+ condo. It was not a good experience. The condos were expensive but poorly built, and the condo board mindset was to minimize spending and ignore even significant problems like basement leaks and a septic failure. The 'independence' of someone mowing the lawn and shoveling snow was more than offset by the frustration. Perhaps with some legal changes to give owners more recourse condos would be more workable but currently 55+ condos are a poor solution for aging.
Emergency contact devices at low cost for older residents to have available to them might add confidence and comfort knowing that they can get help.
Hope the community is able to keep its rural character into the future...development pressures are immense and housing costs going through the roof!
I really believe you cannot live in the Bay Area on your Social Security alone after retirement
This is still a relatively rural, sparsely populated area so there is not every kind of opportunity for every kind of person. That is part of what makes it desirable. However, with aging and less contact with people in a work environment and more time on ones' hands, social connection and activities would be more important. Having not grown up here, we don't have a lot of connections from our childhoods or early years. Making new connections is difficult. Our daughter does not attend the local public school and she was not interested in the few clubs in town, so she has not made a lot of friends in town and we have not become friendly with their parents.
Low-income senior housing would be beneficial for those like myself who would like to remain in their hometown.
Coming back to live in New England after 35 years in another state where doctors-dentists-malls-and the hospital was 10-15 minutes away and roads were straight and flat-where my bank grocery store and drug store were not even 5 minutes away. There was a clinic available to do testing or procedures nearby and doctors had their own offices, so you did not have to pay the outrageous price hospital charge. I had forgotten how things were not convenient here. Fremont seems to be a place in the road with no town I have found. Any shopping medical appts mean a journey. THE VERY BEST PART OF Fremont is the library is well stocked and with wonderful people who are so helpful. I use their home delivery system since I no longer feel comfortable driving--I did not know there was such a system till Kathy told me about after I had to drop out of their book club--without this service I would NEVER have survived Covid isolation.
I'd really like to have public transportation and van access. Also, a chance to socialize with people my age.
Affordable Housing and Senior Center in town
would love to see a senior/community center that offers classes, activities, etc. Would love to know there is some kind of transport to stores, doctors, social centers, when I can no longer drive myself.