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### **Aging in Westborough: A Community Needs Assessment**

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# **Aging in Westborough: A Community Needs Assessment**

May 2023

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Commissioned by the Town of Westborough

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Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging  
Gerontology Institute  
John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy & Global Studies  
University of Massachusetts Boston





# TOWN OF WESTBOROUGH MASSACHUSETTS

**TOWN MANAGER**  
Kristi Williams

**TOWN HALL - 34 WEST MAIN STREET  
WESTBOROUGH, MA 01581-1998  
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Dear Westborough Residents and Community Members:

I am very excited to share with you the report *Aging in Westborough: A Community Needs Assessment*, researched and written by the expert team at the University of Massachusetts Boston Gerontology Institute.

This report is the result of many months of coordination and planning within the community as well as with outside partners. Many of Westborough's residents and seniors have participated in a number of programs, discussions and surveys over the last year. I am excited to share in this report the culmination of feedback and ideas from Westborough's residents who have provided their time, energy and insights. The Senior Needs Assessment was designed to better understand the needs of older adults, the current service delivery model and the gaps that may exist between the existing and needed or desired services. The focus areas include outdoor spaces and public buildings; broader transportation options; respect for diversity and social inclusion; communication and public information; housing choices; social participation; civic participation and employment; community and mental and physical health services.

We are deeply grateful to Westborough's residents, community leaders, service providers, business owners and municipal leaders who shared their time and insight into what can be done to make Westborough a more age friendly community. I hope you enjoy reading this report and are stimulated to engage in the community around seniors' needs. We intend to distribute this report to all the stakeholders and use the information to advance relevant projects that will have demonstrable impacts on how older residents live in Westborough. It is important to note that the Town views the Senior Needs Assessment as a beginning, not an end, and will use this as a living document to help chart the course for shaping the long-term services and supports system in the community. In doing so, the Select Board and Council on Aging will continue to welcome feedback from community partners, aging stakeholders, policymakers and the community at large.

The Town is grateful to all those who took the time to thoughtfully contribute through participation in the focus groups and/or by completing the mail survey. Thank you to Dr. Caitlin Coyle and her team for their time and expertise in creating such an informative document.

Thank you for your support, vision, and engagement as we seek to make Westborough a vibrant, inclusive, safe, attractive, connected, and engaged community – for a lifetime.

Sincerely,

Kristi Williams,  
Town Manager

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## Contributors and Acknowledgements

This report was produced by the Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging (CSDRA), a research unit within the Gerontology Institute at UMass Boston's McCormack School. The CSDRA provides resources and research expertise to communities, non-governmental organizations, and other agencies throughout the Commonwealth.

Ceara Somerville, Caitlin Coyle, Mary Krebs, and Holly Stockdale are primarily responsible for the contents of this report. Other contributors include Sue Berger, Adriana Hernandez, Kingsley Mbam, and undergraduate students Giana Brandolini, Daniel Caron, Rin Herd, Roisin O'Keefe, Himani Pachchigar, and Sabrin Zahid.

We would like to acknowledge the Town of Westborough for their support of this project. Specifically, we offer our appreciation to Kimberly Foster who provided guidance and leadership that enabled the success of the project. Also, we are grateful to Alma DeManche (Director of the Council on Aging), Shelby Marshall (Select Board Member), Guido Lonardo (Council on Aging Board member), Jennifer Kirkland (Recreation Director), and Jennifer Sullivan (Health Director). As well, we are deeply grateful for every Westborough resident that took time to participate in this endeavor.

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## Executive Summary

This report describes research undertaken by the Center for Social & Demographic Research on Aging (CSDRA) within the Gerontology Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston, on behalf of the Town of Westborough. The goals of this project were to investigate the needs, interests, preferences, and opinions of Westborough's residents age 55 or older by engaging the community regarding their experiences and needs relevant to the Council on Aging's (COA's) objective to identify and serve the needs of all Westborough citizens 55 and older. The contents of this report are meant to inform the Town of Westborough, the Westborough COA, Senior Center, and organizations that work with and on behalf of older residents of Westborough for the purposes of COA mission fulfillment alongside planning and coordination of services for current and future needs of residents. The report will also help to build awareness about issues facing Westborough among community members at large.

A broad range of findings are reported in this document, highlighting the many positive features of Westborough as well as concerns expressed by older residents. While many of our findings, and the recommendations that follow, intersect with the scope of responsibility of the Westborough Council on Aging, it is understood that responding to many needs and concerns expressed in the community will require the involvement of other municipal offices or community stakeholders, and some will require substantial collaborative effort.

We summarize key findings and make the following recommendations to the Town of Westborough:

- **Costs of living and availability of downsizing options are perceived as challenging in Westborough.**
  - Almost all focus group participants described challenges associated with housing, including that property taxes are becoming unaffordable and that there are severely limited options within Westborough to downsize.
  - Cost of living, particularly rising property taxes, is named as a top concern among respondents as they think about being able to stay in Westborough as they age.
  - Nearly a third of survey respondents report needing some kind of home repair to remain living safely over the next 5 years. Among them, 5% are unable to afford such repairs.
  - When asked about preferences for type of housing, 41% of respondents aged 55-59 and nearly a third of respondents in their 60s would prefer to live in an apartment, condo or townhome. Among respondents in their 70s, 43% would choose a senior independent living community; assisted living is the most preferred housing type for the future, reported by those age 80+.

## Recommendations:

- Promote awareness of various housing options across the lifespan and continue to contribute to local conversations about housing options for older adults who wish to find supportive housing.
  - Advocate for options that current residents prefer, including condominiums and other types of housing that offer low maintenance and single floor living. Assisted living communities and senior independent living units are desirable housing options.
  - Host a virtual forum to promote community conversations and awareness related to home sharing opportunities. Include representatives from Nesterly, a social enterprise that is dedicated to building intergenerational engagement and access to affordable housing through home sharing. Distribute Nesterly's<sup>1</sup> digital toolkit in advance of the meeting to Town leaders and residents.
- Consider ways of connecting residents with local resources for home repair or modifications. Including sources of funding, but also with other individuals who can do minor tasks or projects around the home.
  - The FY24 Town budget includes increasing the COA Handyman position from 8 hours a week to 16 hours. Continue to track demand for their services and consider further expansion of the role as needed.
- Promote awareness of existing property tax relief programs.
  - Document the number of residents who are “turned away” from existing programs due to eligibility requirements or other reasons to establish recommendations for expanding access.
  - Explore other incentive programs for volunteers.

## ➤ **Obtaining supplementary and accessible transportation is a concern for some of Westborough's residents as they age.**

- Maintaining independence is a major concern for survey respondents and one key facilitator of this independence is transportation.
- Only 7% of respondents do not drive, although this number is significantly larger when looking at just those age 80 and older, as 24% of this older segment of the population do not drive. Many residents who do drive, modify their driving to make it easier or safer.
- Among those who do not currently drive, 23% have missed or needed to reschedule a medical appointment because of a lack of transportation within the past 12 months. This is compared to only 2% of those who drive themselves and 9% of those who drive with some modifications.

## Recommendations:

- Conduct targeted, proactive, outreach to raise awareness of the existing programs that provide transportation to medical appointments and for other trips.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nesterly.com>

- Consider developing a local “travel training” program where residents can learn about options and navigation.
- Explore the expansion of volunteer transportation programs beyond medical appointments (e.g., Friends in Service Helping<sup>2</sup> (F.I.S.H.) to expand door-to-door transportation to the Senior Center or other social gatherings or shopping excursions and appointments.
- Target information to communities within Westborough who may have particular need for transportation services including those living alone and those with disabilities. Consider additional outreach for transportation when inclement weather is anticipated.

➤ **Many Westborough residents need support due to physical or cognitive conditions, and many caregivers need help**

- 11% of survey respondents reported having an impairment that limits their ability to participate in the community. This share more than doubles for those age 80 or older (25%)
- Nearly a third (36%) of survey respondents reported having been a caregiver within the past 5 years. Three quarters of caregivers reported that it is challenging to provide care and complete their daily responsibilities, including 79% of those in their 60s.
- The most valued supports reported by caregivers included informal support from family and friends (53%), formal in-home services (52%), and on-call support from medical professionals (23%).

**Recommendations:**

- Create new ways of providing information and assistance for caregivers, support groups for caregivers, and provide information about referral resources available. Consider hosting a family caregiver “resource fair” as an opportunity to connect the Senior Center with family caregivers.
  - The FY24 Town budget includes increasing the COA Homemaker position from 16 hours a week to 18 hours. The FY24 Town budget includes increasing the COA Homemaker position from 16 hours a week to 18 hours. This position provides short-term in-home support (e.g., light housekeeping) for residents during a recuperation period.
  - Continue to track demand for their services and consider further expansion of the role as needed.
- Consider hosting a “Caregiver’s Night Out” to provide residents who might be caring for a spouse, parent, or grandparent an opportunity to enjoy a night of entertainment. Explore partnerships with volunteer groups and other aging service providers to provide respite care during the event.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://fishlexington.org/>



- Revisit the potential for offering a Memory Café<sup>3</sup> or providing resources of nearby Cafés for residents and their caregivers to attend.
  - Consider pilot-testing a volunteer respite program.
- Encourage Town employees or resident volunteers to become “dementia friends<sup>4</sup>” to learn more about communication and reduction of stigma around dementia.
  - Continue to coordinate with other COAs and organizations to connect Westborough caregivers with existing services.

➤ **Awareness and understanding of the Westborough Senior Center is uneven among residents, particularly those under the age of 70.**

- More than half of respondents age 70 or older reported participating at the senior center, compared to just 24% of those in their 60s.
- Among those who do participate, about two-thirds (63%) attend just a few times a year.
- 21% of all survey respondents have traveled to other senior centers to participate in programs. A sizeable share of respondents that participate regularly at the Westborough Senior Center also travel to other senior centers.
- The number one factor (reported by 32%) that would increase participation is having more knowledge about what is available.
- A lack of familiarity with the Westborough Senior Center is another deterrent that was commonly reported by survey respondents. For example, one wrote: *“if people were informed when they turned the appropriate age to start using the Senior Center- like a “welcome to the Senior Center” postcard maybe- and it could list what is offered there.”*

**Recommendations:**

- Consider developing an “ambassador program” and coach residents to actively encourage new participants. Perhaps this could function as a property-tax work-off position or offer an incentive for the number of new participants they can recruit.
- Create a “newcomers” group at the Westborough Senior Center so participants feel connected to a group when they first arrive.
- Ensure that the forthcoming Citizen Leadership Academy is accessible to older residents by offering daytime sessions, considering adult learner styles, and ensuring that topics relevant to healthy aging in Westborough are included (e.g., transportation, accessory dwelling units, property tax relief programs, and how to access to food or social engagement opportunities).
- Host programming for newly retired residents or those considering retirement. Topics could include financial planning, health insurance coverage, volunteer work etc.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.jfcsboston.org/our-services/services-for-older-adults/home-community-supports/alzheimers-related-dementias-family-support/percolator>

<sup>4</sup> [Become a Dementia Friend | Dementia Friends USA](#)

- In order to avoid the deterrence of financially insecure residents from participating, consider noting on any promotional materials that if a resident is unable to pay the requested amount that they can contact the Westborough Senior Center to make other arrangements.
- **The physical space of the Senior Center does not currently meet the needs and interests of the range of ages of the Westborough older adult population. As well, the preference for programming and services is placed on personal growth and enrichment, as well as physical health.**
  - The Westborough 2021 Master Plan<sup>5</sup> documents space constraints at the Senior Center and sets goals toward expanding facilities and programs over the coming years.
  - Focus group conversations and key informant interviews illuminated accessibility challenges of the Senior Center space, both inside and outside the building.
  - Qualitative data from focus groups and survey write-in responses include descriptions of the Westborough Senior Center space as outdated and unappealing.
  - About a quarter of survey respondents (26%) would be more likely to use the Westborough Senior Center if programs and services were better suited to their needs and interests. About 14% would increase participation if the space were more comfortable and inviting.
  - Respondents identified educational programming, day trips, fitness, and performances as priority areas of expansion at the Westborough Senior Center.
  - When asked about preference for a potential new combined Senior/Community/Recreation Center, 40% of all respondents selected “An all-ages Community Center including designated space and programming for residents age 60+.” The share of residents who prefer that scenario decreases with age: 52% of respondents in their 50s to 25% of respondents age 80 or older.

### **Recommendations:**

- Consider a rebranding effort to raise awareness about what is offered by the Westborough Senior Center. Perhaps changing the name to be more inclusive and creating an image that reframes aging as a positive and active experience may empower residents to participate in the community.
  - Becoming designated as an Age and Dementia Friendly community<sup>6</sup> provides an avenue of community organizing and outreach that could support the effort to build a renewed perception of aging in Westborough.

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<sup>5</sup> Accessible at: <https://www.town.westborough.ma.us/planning>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/examples-of-age-and-dementia-friendly-community-characteristics>

- Consider updating the physical space of the Senior Center: new paint, decorations, and furniture to create a more welcoming space can encourage new participants to come and participate.
- Further investigate opportunities for providing COA programs and services at satellite locations in the community, such as public housing, the library, the schools, and local businesses
- Consider ways to welcome first-time participants who are reluctant to participate on their own (e.g., a “new member day” or a “bring a buddy” program to welcome new participants).
- Explore the use of technology (e.g., phone or other mobile devices) to include residents who are unable to leave their home in existing programs through video technology or making “friendly visits” by telephone.
- Consider developing a resident ambassador program to educate residents with information about existing resources to be conduits between the Senior Center and the community at-large, this could even be a property tax work off position.
- Further explore the appetite and potential for a Westborough Community Center.
  - Continue to engage the community for input and feedback about what a Community Center could look like. Use multiple avenues of communication and information (e.g., written feedback, email or online feedback, public forums) and ensure that perspectives representative of the community are heard.
  - Consider assembling a Committee to lead the initiative. For example, the Reading Center for Active Living Committee (ReCalc)<sup>7</sup> was established in 2021 as a volunteer ad hoc committee to comprehensively assess the current and future needs of the community, specific to the development of a potential new Senior/Community Center.
  - Continue and strengthen collaboration between Town Departments that may be most directly affected by the development of a Community Center (e.g., Council on Aging, Recreation, Youth and Family Services) and incorporate perspectives of their staff while exploring potential options for a Westborough Community Center.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.readingma.gov/601/Reading-Center-for-Active-Living-Committ>

## **Introduction**

Located only 12 miles east of Worcester and 28 miles west of Boston, the Town of Westborough is a crossroads of the Commonwealth. Westborough is also home to beautiful greenspaces and conservation land. These factors make Westborough a peaceful, yet practical, community attractive to many. Strong public schools and ease of access to Worcester and Boston make it attractive to working families and many older adults benefit from programs and services offered through the Westborough Council on Aging and Senior Center that are designed to address aging-related needs and prolong independence. As a municipal entity, Westborough's Senior Center is an important and valued resource, operating as the Town's central point of contact for older residents who seek services to promote healthful and fulfilling lives. Growth of the older adult population therefore has special significance for the Senior Center and increasing demand for its services and programs can be expected moving forward.

This report presents the results of a comprehensive examination of issues relating to aging in Westborough. A needs assessment was undertaken in order to support planning on the part of the Town of Westborough, the Council on Aging (COA), and the community as a whole. Results presented here focus on the characteristics and needs of Westborough residents who are age 55 and older. While the primary goal of this report is to support COA planning, a secondary goal is to present information that will be useful to other Westborough offices and organizations interacting with older residents.

## **The Westborough Council on Aging and Senior Center**

The Westborough Council on Aging (COA), a municipally appointed board, and the Senior Center, a municipal department, are meant to link older residents to needed resources and desired activities. Virtually every city and town in Massachusetts has a COA, and in most communities, they serve as the only public social service agency. Each COA is expected to establish its own priorities based on local needs and resources. Many COAs are responsible for operating a senior center, a community facility housing senior services and programs, along with the staff and volunteers offering them.

Westborough's COA is charged with providing services, programming, and support to the town's older 55+ population so that they may live well and independently in the community. This work is done in concert with other local town departments and various area private and public providers and organizations, including Springwell—the regional Area Agency on Aging serving Westborough—the Massachusetts Council on Aging (MCOA) and the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA). The goal is to provide a welcoming environment that services the diversity of the Town's older adult residents. The Westborough Council's mission is "To promote social, recreational, and educational activities and provide advocacy and assistance

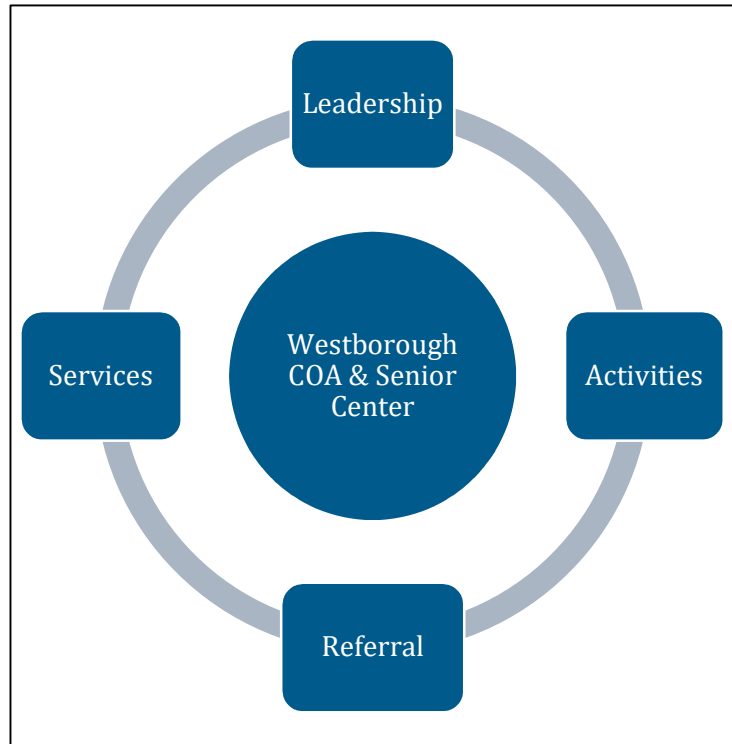
to Westborough's Senior Citizens and their families. <sup>8</sup> Working toward that end, they assist in delivering programs and initiatives that shape and enrich the experiences of three generations of older adults.

In general, when considering the mission of COAs, observers commonly think of two sets of responsibilities. First, COAs promote well-being among older residents by offering activities that appeal specifically to older adults and that promote personal growth and social engagement. Exercise classes, late-life learning programs, and informational programs are good

examples. Second, COAs provide services to older residents and their families that promote physical and emotional wellness. Blood pressure clinics and transportation services are common examples of such services.

Many observers are not aware of two additional important responsibilities of COAs. COA staff members link older residents in the community to existing programs for which they may be eligible by providing needed information and referring residents to appropriate programs and services. For example, staff may help residents apply for income support programs or health insurance made available through the state or federal government. Finally, COAs provide leadership within the community around issues faced by older adults, by serving on municipal boards, interacting with other municipal offices, and serving as resources to residents and organizations.

The Westborough COA consists of an eleven-member advisory board appointed by the Select Board and each appointment is for a three-year term. The COA Board meets at the Senior Center monthly and provides policy-setting guidance to the Executive Director, who is responsible for departmental operations. COA board members help the Senior Center to set goals and objectives, and to offer their support and advocacy to help implement and promote the COA's mission. The responsibilities of the COA board members include: setting policy for the Senior Center; advocating for the senior population and representing Westborough on other committees per request; serving as an escort on trips; assisting in set-up for events or other volunteer activities; and identifying the needs of Westborough's older adults to assist



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<sup>8</sup> This mission statement was retrieved in March of 2023 from <https://www.town.westborough.ma.us/council-aging-senior-center>

in the development of programs and services to meet those needs. Additionally, the COA Board promotes and helps educate the community on issues of importance to older adults and advocates on their behalf.

The Westborough Council on Aging offers programs and services at the Senior Center located on Rogers Road. An array of services, resources, and programs are offered for free or at low cost to community members who are age 55 and older. Staff at the COA also refer eligible residents to services and programs available through other offices and organizations. The COA plays an important leadership role in the community, serving as a resource to other Town offices and organizations working in the community, and collaborating on initiatives broadly beneficial to residents. Some members serve as liaisons to other boards and committees or agencies that provide services to Westborough.

The Senior Center is an integral part of the community, providing a dedicated space to serve the interests and needs of Westborough's 55+ residents. Its presence serves as a reminder that no matter your age, you are a valued member of the community. The goal is to provide programs and services that: encourage connection, provide access to information/services and resources, assist with a variety of needs, nourish body/mind and spirit, while educating, supporting, and celebrating older adults. Family members also utilize the Senior Center to gather information or explore services when caring for a loved one. Additionally, the center serves as a resource and gathering space for a number of other town organizations, welcoming the opportunity to broaden intergenerational offerings. Complete information about programs and services, including a monthly schedule, can be found on the Town of Westborough website<sup>9</sup>.

## Senior Center Operations Overview

For the following section, data reported about the Westborough Senior Center was gathered from Town of Westborough Fiscal Year 2024 Proposed Municipal Budget and Capital Plan<sup>10</sup>, the 2022 Town Annual Report<sup>11</sup>, as well as from the Senior Center Executive Director. As the numbers of older residents increase, the need for resources dedicated to this segment of the population will also continue to grow and to change. Thus, it is crucial that the Westborough COA plan in earnest to assure that resources are used efficiently and effectively to meet the current and future needs of older people in the Town.

The Westborough Senior Center operates Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and is closed on weekends. The staff consists of a full-time Executive Director, and part-time positions for a Program and Volunteer Coordinator, an Outreach Case Manager, an Administrative Assistant, Elder and Asian Outreach specialists, an outreach aide, a

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<sup>9</sup> Available at: <https://www.town.westborough.ma.us/council-aging-senior-center/pages/senior-information>

<sup>10</sup> Available at: <https://www.town.westborough.ma.us/town-manager/pages/town-managers-budget-documents-thru-fy2024>

<sup>11</sup> Available at: <https://www.town.westborough.ma.us/select-board/pages/annual-reports>

Handyman, Homemaker, and four Mini-Van Drivers, in addition to volunteers who provide a variety of services. In collaboration with the Westborough Board of Health, the Public Health Nurse spends one day at week at the Senior Center and works with the COA and staff to coordinate clinics, such as for flu and covid vaccines, falls prevention, and medication review clinics.

For fiscal year 2023, the total budget for the COA was approved at \$400,373; an increase of about 1.3% is expected for FY24. COA services and programs are funded by municipal appropriation, grant support from several sources, gifts and donations, and nominal fees charged for some activities. The town budget is used for the maintenance, use, and upkeep of the building and salaries. All other expenses, programs, activities, and instructor fees are paid through donations and grants. The Council on Aging receives an annual grant award from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs and is used for select line items allowed per the contract such as: fall prevention and nutrition programs and some part-time salaries.

Initiatives offered through the Westborough Senior Center include:

- Transportation: The Westborough COA's Mini-bus service continues to provide essential transportation services for medical appointments (in-town and select regional communities), hairdresser/barber appointments, errands such as grocery shopping alongside other essential needs, as well as to/from activities at the Senior Center. Reservations must be made by noon at least the day before the ride is needed with a one-dollar fare charged for those who do not have a punch card for multiple rides. Additionally, weekly shopping trips take place each Tuesday, visiting different shopping plazas in the area. Weekly grocery transport is scheduled every Thursday. The mini-buses have also made available for transportation to special events in Town, including the Memorial Day and Veterans Day Parade ceremonies. All vehicles are handicapped accessible, and aid is provided for those with mobility issues. All appointments are scheduled through the Senior Center. During calendar year 2022, 6,019 rides covering 22,636 miles were provided for senior and disabled residents.
- Nutrition Offerings: Lunch is served several times a week at the Senior Center. Nutritional lunches and Grab-N-Go events attract elders, their caregivers, neighbors and friends to the Senior Center, as does Soup for the Senior Soul. Volunteers assist with serving the meals. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, a delivered meal program is conducted by Center staff and drivers to seniors in need. Events such as Breakfast with the Police Chief and Monthly Birthday Lunch are provided on site every month, and other special events and holidays are often opportunities for meals with entertainment (e.g., St. Patrick's Day Party). During the summer of 2022, the Senior Center collaborated with Springwell to provide Farmer's Market coupons and locally harvested fresh produce to older residents. They supplied 20 older residents with Farmers Market coupons and provided 20-30 bags of produce every two weeks between July and September.

- Support Services: A variety of services are offered directly through the Westborough Senior Center, including but not limited to: health insurance counselling (SHINE), help with fuel assistance applications, legal and tax assistance, no-cost handyman assistance for small jobs, document shredding, short-term housekeeping services, drug-take back events, durable medical equipment loans, replacement space heaters, basic medical checks (e.g., blood pressure, blood sugar, height and weight, hearing and vision). The Senior center has worked with the Westborough Fire Department for over 25 years on Project Alarm, an annual event during which household smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are inspected and updated. In 2022, 45 homes participated in the program. Additionally, the Westborough Police Department and the Senior Center work together to identify residents with memory impairment and who are at risk of confusion and wandering through the Alzheimer's Alert program.
- Recreation, Fitness & Social Events: Seniors participate in a variety of programs such as: Classical Music, Piano, Gentle Yoga, Cribbage, Bingo, Knit and Crochet, Tai Chi, Zumba, Strength & Balance, Spanish, Pool Lessons, Line Dancing, Painting/Arts & Crafts, Birthday Parties, Cookouts, Holiday Parties, Trivia and more.
- Newsletter: The Westborough Senior Scene News is produced by the Senior Center every month. Printed copies of the newsletter are made available at numerous locations around Westborough and can be mailed to residents for an annual fee of just \$6. The newsletter is also available to view online, under "News and Announcements" at: <https://www.town.westborough.ma.us/council-aging-senior-center>. The newsletter provides information about Senior Center programs, services, special events, meals, and helpful resources, including updates from other town departments, including the Police and Fire Departments, Library, and more.
- Volunteering: In a typical year, volunteers assist in the office, answer phones, deliver the newsletter, serve as board members, assist in the kitchen, tend to the vegetable garden, assist with programs, assist with tax preparation, coordinate annual events, and participate in programs that help seniors. Volunteer drivers supplement the services provided by the mini-buses, taking residents to medical appointments and grocery shopping, and also support nutrition services by delivering Meals on Wheels. The Senior Center oversees the Senior/Veteran Tax Work program, which placed 51 older volunteers across Town and School Departments in calendar year 2022. The significant contribution by volunteers is met with gratitude to all who give their time and talent to keep programs running and the support given to the staff.
- Community: The Westborough Senior Center and COA work collaboratively with numerous municipal departments and other local, regional, and state agencies to provide the array of programs and services offered. Partnerships include public safety departments, Westborough Public Schools, Westborough Housing Authority, the Cultural Council, local banks (e.g., Central One Federal Credit Union), SMOC Fuel



Assistance, Protective Services Program, Springwell Elder Services, MetroWest Legal Services, MetroWest SHINE, Worcester Regional Transit Authority/PBSI, Executive Office of Elder Affairs, Westborough American Legion Post 0163, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Lions, Local Cable TV, Senior Center Supporters, and for their continued support of Westborough's older residents.

## Methods

This assessment utilized both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods alongside rigorous analyses in order to capture a broad and deep understanding of the Town of Westborough and its older residents. Methods used in compiling this report include analysis of existing data and primary data collected through qualitative and quantitative methods. Demographic material used in this report was drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau (the decennial censuses and the American Community Survey) and from projections generated by the Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts. Primary data was collected through qualitative methods, including key informant interviews and focus groups, and through a community survey. Additional information about the Westborough COA was retrieved from material drawn from the COA's 2022 Annual Report as well as original data collected for this study.

## Demographic Profile

As an initial step toward understanding characteristics of the Town of Westborough's older population through quantitative data, we generated a demographic profile of the Town using data from the decennial U.S. Census and the American Community Survey (ACS)—a large, annual survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau<sup>12</sup>. For purposes of this assessment, we primarily used information drawn from the most current 5-year ACS files (2017-2021), along with U.S. Census data for the Town of Westborough to summarize demographic characteristics including growth of the older population, shifts in the age distribution, gender, race and education distributions, householder status, living arrangements, household income, and disability status.

## Key Informant Interviews

In the Fall of 2022, we conducted individual interviews with eight individuals who currently hold leadership positions in Westborough. The current Director of the Council on Aging, the Fire Chief, the Deputy Police Chief, the Town Manager, the Select Board Chair, the Advisory Finance Committee Chair, the Superintendent of Schools, and the Recreation Director each participated in these interviews. Interviews focused on the interviewees' perceptions relating to unmet needs of older adults in the community, and how the growing size of the older population is impacting Westborough and the work that the key informants do. All

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

interviews were conducted remotely via telephone or video conference (e.g., Zoom). Interviews ranged from 35-90 minutes.

## Focus Groups

During the Fall of 2022 and Winter of 2023, we conducted six focus groups with residents and stakeholders who were recruited by the Assistant Town Manager or Director of the COA, with input from the COA and project working group. The seven focus group participants totaled fifty-two individuals who represented municipal offices, community stakeholders, older residents, rising seniors, caregivers, Asian American residents, and town organizations. Each of these participants offered unique insights into interactions with Westborough's older adult residents and shared candid observations relevant to learning about the community more broadly, as well as identifying gaps in supports and services for the healthy aging of Westborough's older residents. Contributors included current COA Board members, Senior Center Supporters (which helps raise funds and support the COA), volunteers, a member of the Diversity and Inclusion committee, a newsletter contributor, group organizers, community members, faith leaders, Elder Affairs public safety officers, a Youth and Family Services representative, a Veteran's Services representative, Finance Committee, local media representatives, and Select Board members.

While the initial plan was to hold seven focus groups, residents who are currently providing care to people with disabilities or chronic diseases were, not surprisingly, busy and difficult to coordinate in-person schedules. Therefore, we did phone interviews with individuals who have provided care or assistance to a loved one. These phone conversations took place in Winter 2023.

## Community Survey

In collaboration with the representatives of the Town, a community survey was developed and mailed to all residents age 55 and over (N=5,514). A mailing list was obtained from the Westborough Town Clerk, based on the most current municipal census. Postcards were mailed to participants alerting them that they would be receiving a survey in the coming weeks. Subsequently, printed surveys were mailed to all Westborough residents age 55 and older, along with a postage-paid return envelope. The survey was also made available online, accessible through the Westborough website homepage and was open to residents age 18 and older. A total of 1,633 responses to the survey were obtained, representing a strong return rate of 29% (see **Table 2**). About 9 percent (n=141) were returned online, and the rest of the responses were returned by mail. In **Appendix A**, response distributions are shown by age group.

## Data Analysis

Data collected for the resident survey were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics, including frequencies and cross-tabulations, and are reported in full in **Appendix A** and throughout the results section of this report. Some responses elicited through open-ended questions were extracted and cited verbatim within this report (e.g., "What are your greatest

concerns about your ability to continue living in Westborough?"). Detailed notes taken during the study's qualitative components (i.e., interviews, focus groups) were reviewed by multiple project staff and used to characterize and categorize the ways in which aging issues are impacting older adults and individuals who work with older adults in Westborough. We used information from all sources of data to develop recommendations reported in the final section of this report.

## Results

### Demographic Profile

According to American Community Survey (ACS), there were 21,213 residents living in the Town of Westborough in 2021. About 34% of the population (7,194 individuals) were age 50 and older (See **Table 1**). Residents who were age 50 to 59 (2,935 individuals) made up 14% of the population; residents age 60 to 79 (3,325 individuals) comprised around 16%, and another 934 residents (4%) were age 80 and older.

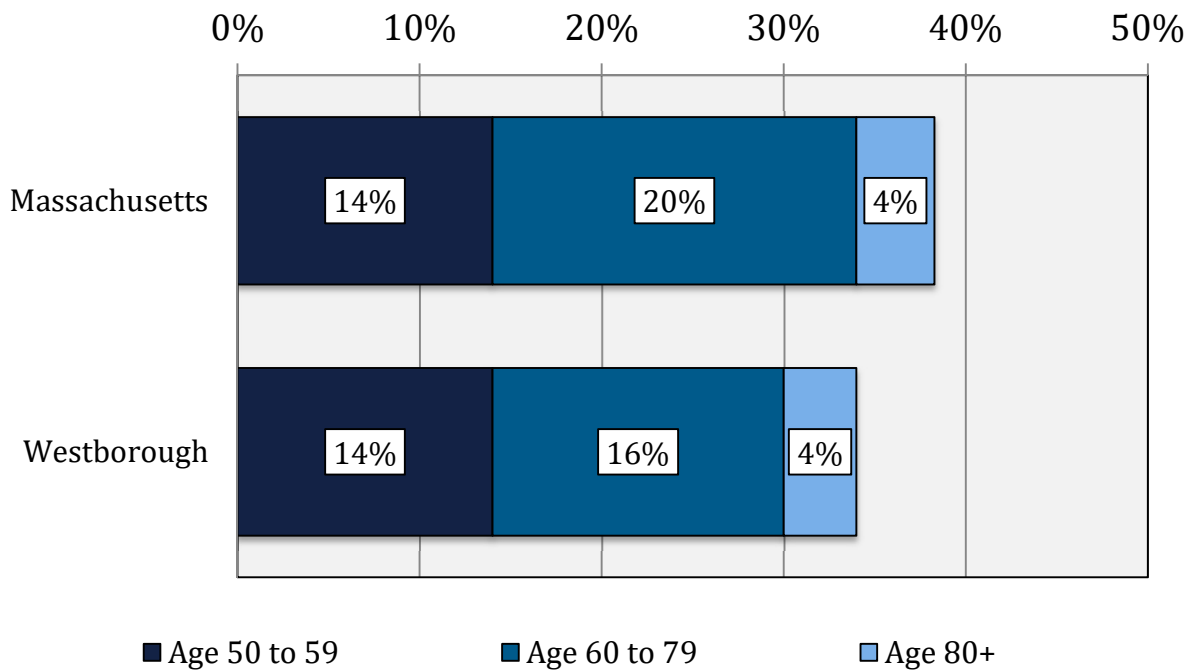
**Table 1.** Number and percentage distribution of Westborough's population by age category, 2021

Age Category	Number	Percentage
Under age 18	5,509	26%
Age 18 to 49	8,510	40%
Age 50 to 59	2,935	14%
Age 60 to 79	3,325	16%
Age 80 and older	934	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,213</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: American Community Survey, 2017-2021, Table B01001. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.*

The share of Westborough's population age 50 and older is slightly lower than the overall state of Massachusetts (**Figure 1**). About 38% of the Massachusetts population was in the 50+ age group in 2021, compared to 34% of the Westborough population. Compared to the Commonwealth, Westborough had a slightly lower portion of residents age 60 and older. The share of Westborough residents age 80 and over is the same as the share estimated for the state as a whole. In 2021, Massachusetts residents age 60 and over comprised about 24% of the population, including 4% age 80 and over. In Westborough, about 20% of the population was 60 or older, including 4% who were 80 years or older.

**Figure 1. Age distribution in Westborough and Massachusetts**



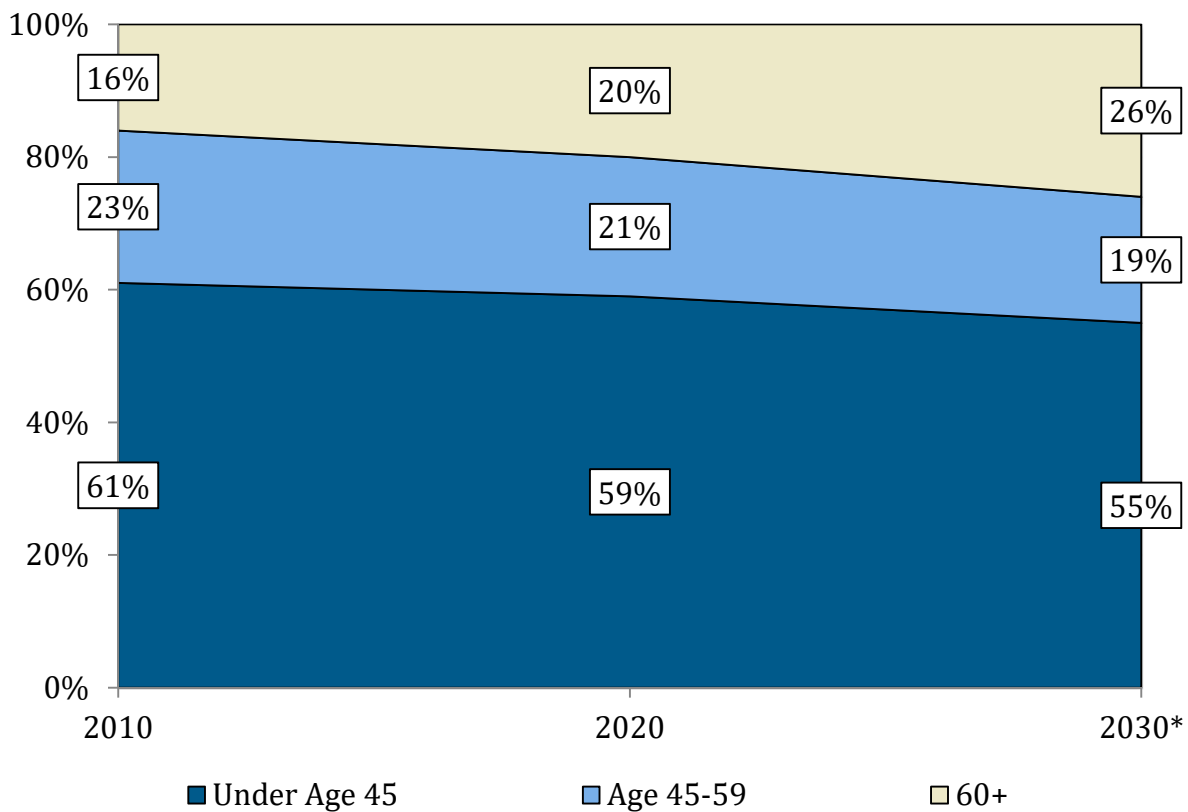
Source: American Community Survey, 2017–2021, Table B01001. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates

Population growth in both Massachusetts and the Town of Westborough has been concentrated in older age groups. Between 2010 and 2020, the population of all ages increased by 4% in Westborough and 5% in the state as whole. The absolute numbers of residents age 60 and over across the Commonwealth also grew substantially during this time period: from 2,944 in 2010 to 3,783 in 2020 in Westborough. The segment of Westborough’s population age 60 to 79 increased in size by 48%, a rate of growth higher than in Massachusetts overall (30%).

**Figure 2** shows the age distribution of Westborough’s population from 2010 to 2020, and population projections for 2030<sup>13</sup>. In 2010, about 16% of Westborough’s population was age 60 and older; this percentage steadily increased by 2020 (20%). According to projections created by the Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts, a trend toward an older population is expected in future decades. Donahue Institute vintage projections suggest that by 2030, 5,925 residents, or 26% of Westborough’s population will be age 60 or older—19% of the Westborough’s population will be between the ages of 60 and 79, with an additional 7% age 80 and older.

<sup>13</sup> Population projections are shaped by assumptions about birth rates and death rates, as well as domestic and international in-migration and out-migration. The Donahue Institute projections used here also account for population change associated with aging of the population, which is a strong predictor of future growth and decline of population levels. For more information on the methods used to create Donahue Institute projections, see Renski, Koshgarian, & Strate (March 2015).

**Figure 2. Population trends; age distribution of Westborough residents 2010 to 2020 with projections to 2030\***



Source: Population figures for 2010 are from the U.S. Census.

\* Figures for 2020 are from the American Community Survey Estimates 2016-2020. Figures for 2030 are from the Vintage Population Projections generated by the Donahue Institute, University of Massachusetts: <http://pep.donahue-institute.org/>

### Socio-Demographic Composition of Westborough’s Older Population

Westborough is more diverse than the state with respect to race. For all ages combined, about 63% of Westborough residents report their race as White non-Hispanic, compared to 69% in Massachusetts (ACS, 2017–2021, Table B01001A). However, among older adults, Westborough is less diverse. **Table 2** displays the race and ethnicity of Westborough residents age 65 and older. The large majority of older residents report White race and not Hispanic ethnicity (89%). The remaining percentage of the population 65 and older reported Asian (9%), and (2%) reported Hispanic, Black, or other race and ethnicity<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Other includes Hispanic, Black, and other race.

**Table 2.** Race distribution of residents who are age 65 and older in Westborough

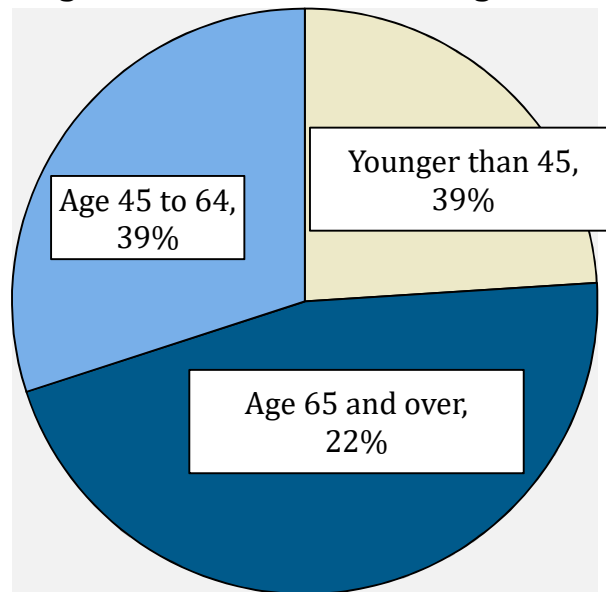
Race	Number	Percent
White	2,776	89%
Asian	283	9%
Other	64	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,112</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: American Community Survey, 2017–2021, Tables B01001A-I. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.

Additionally, 13% (N=408) of older Westborough residents (65+) speak a language other than English at home (ACS, 2017–2021, Table B16004). Of those 65+ who speak another language other than English at home, most (67%) speak an Indo-European language, (18%) speak an Asian and Pacific Island language, 5% report speaking Spanish at home, and the remaining 10% of the population speak another language.

A majority of Westborough’s 7,980 households have householders who are middle-aged or older. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, a “householder” is the person reported as the head of household, typically the person in whose name the home is owned or rented. Residents age 45 and older comprise 61% of all households in Westborough<sup>15</sup> and residents age 65 and over comprise 22% of all households in Westborough (**Figure 3**).

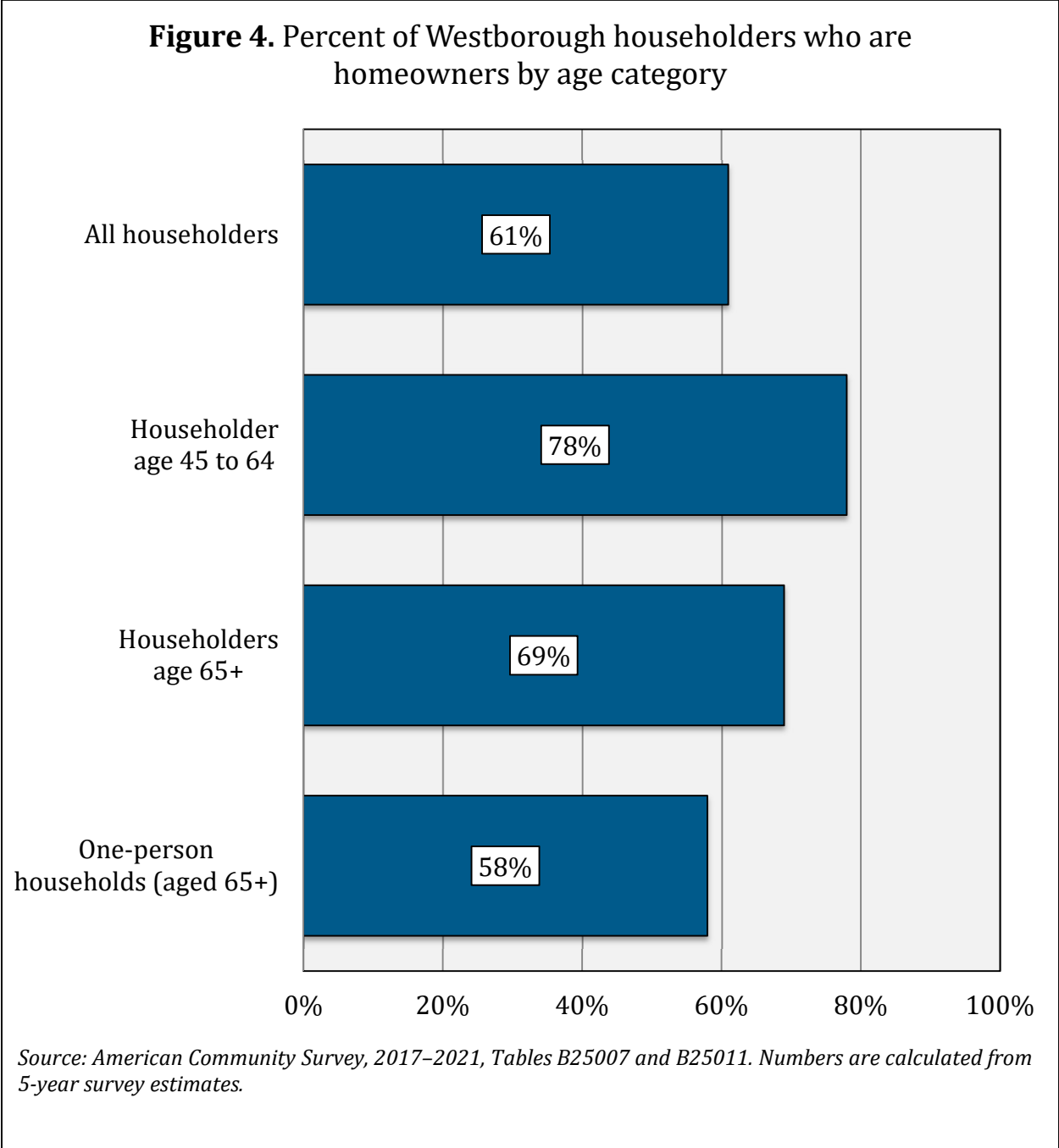
**Figure 3.** Age structure of Westborough householders



Source: American Community Survey, 2017–2021, Table B25007. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.

<sup>15</sup> Many available Census data on the older population of Westborough are based on ages 45 and 65 as reference points rather than ages 50 and 60, as are used elsewhere in this report.

Approximately 61% of Westborough householders live in homes that they own or are purchasing (**Figure 4**). Nearly 78% of householders age 45 to 64 own their homes, and 69% of householders 65 and older own their homes. A sizeable share of Westborough residents who are 65 and older and live alone, also own their home (35%). The number of older homeowners has implications for what amenities and services are likely to be needed and valued by members of the community. Home maintenance and supports are often necessary for older homeowners—especially those who live alone—in order to maintain comfort and safety in their homes.



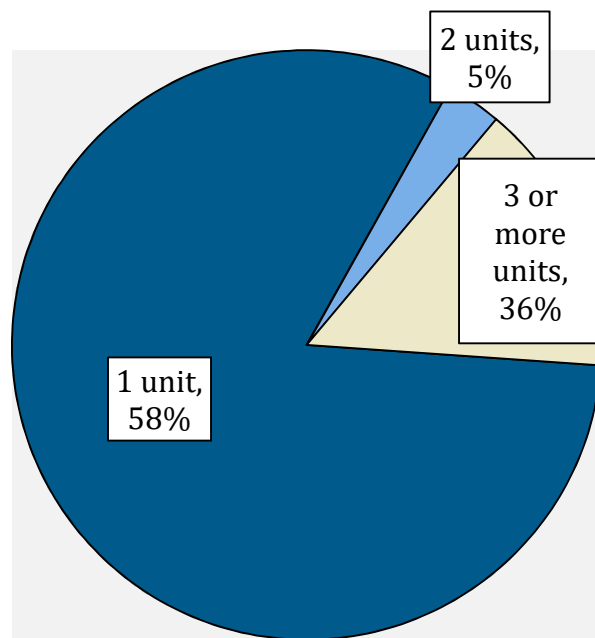
Additionally, 33% of Westborough’s 7,980 households have at least one individual who is age 60 or older (ACS 2017–2021, Table B11006). This proportion— which is likely to increase

in the future—generally reflects the widespread demand for programs, services, and other considerations that address aging-related concerns, including health and caregiving needs, transportation options, and safe home environments.

Among the 8,405 housing structures in Westborough (**Figure 5**), 58% are single unit structures and the remaining 42% are housing structures that contain two or more housing units, which include apartment complexes.

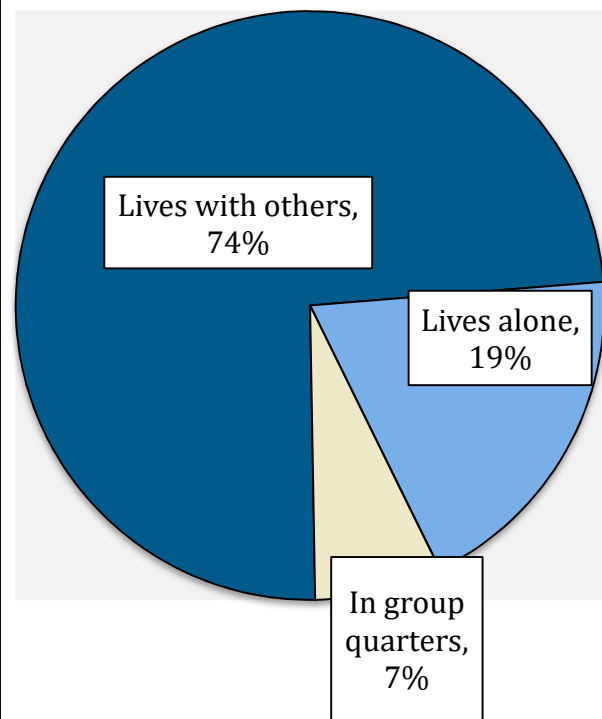
Nearly one out of five Westborough residents who are age 65 and older (19%) live alone in their household whereas 74% live in households that include other people, such as a spouse, parents, children, or grandchildren (**Figure 6**). Additionally, around 7% of older Westborough residents live within group quarters.

**Figure 5.** Number of units in Westborough housing structures



Source: American Community Survey, 2017–2021, Table B25024. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.

**Figure 6.** Living arrangements of Westborough residents, age 65 and older



Source: American Community Survey, 2017–2021, Table B09020. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.



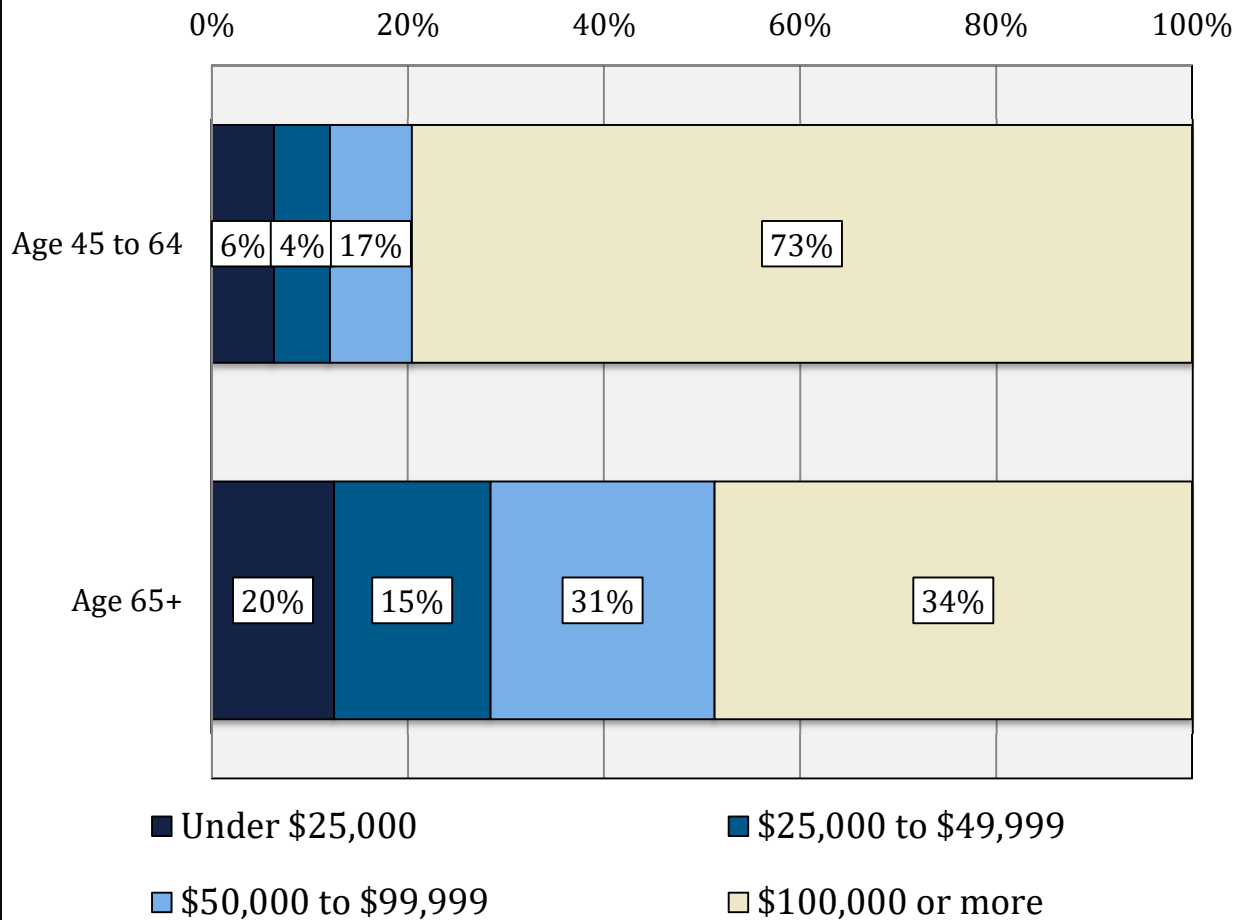
American Community Survey estimates on education suggest that, on average, Westborough residents are well educated. About 60% of persons 65 and older have either a bachelor's degree (30%) or a graduate/professional degree 30% (*ACS, 2017–2021, Table B15001*). This educational profile contributes to the vitality and character of the community, which depends on older adults who value opportunities to be involved through volunteer and civic engagement activities, as well as late-life learning opportunities.

Similar to older adults living in communities throughout the U.S., a large proportion of Westborough residents aged 65 and over remain in the workforce. Almost 44% of adults age 64 to 74 are participating in the labor force. Of those age 75 and older, more than 3% remain in the workforce (*ACS, 2017–2021, Table S2301*).

Nearly 24% of men age 65 and older report veteran status (*ACS, 2017–2021, Table B21001*). As a result, many of Westborough's older residents may be eligible to receive some benefits and program services based on their military service or that of their spouses.

With respect to household income, there is some comparative disadvantage of some older residents in Westborough. Westborough residents' median household income is considerably higher than the one estimated for Massachusetts as a whole, \$118,185 compared to \$89,645 (*ACS, 2017–2021, Table B19049*). Among Westborough's householders, those aged 45 to 64 have the highest median income at \$174,920—which is also greater than the statewide median for this age group (\$109,842). Among householders 65 and older, the median income is \$64,107, also higher than the statewide median for this age group (\$57,075), and much lower than the median income of younger Westborough householders. Older residents living alone are at the greatest disadvantage in terms of household income. The economic profile of older Westborough residents relative to younger residents is further illustrated in **Figure 7**. About one-third of Westborough residents age 65 and older report incomes of \$100,000 or more. By comparison, nearly three-quarters of households headed by residents aged 45-64 report this level of income. A large share of households headed by someone age 65 and older (20%) report annual incomes under \$25,000. This compares with just 6% of households headed by individuals age 45 to 64 having incomes under \$25,000. Thus, there is a sizeable segment of Westborough's older population that is at risk of financial insecurity or economic disadvantage.

**Figure 7. Household income distribution in Westborough by age of householder (in 2021 inflation-adjusted dollars)**



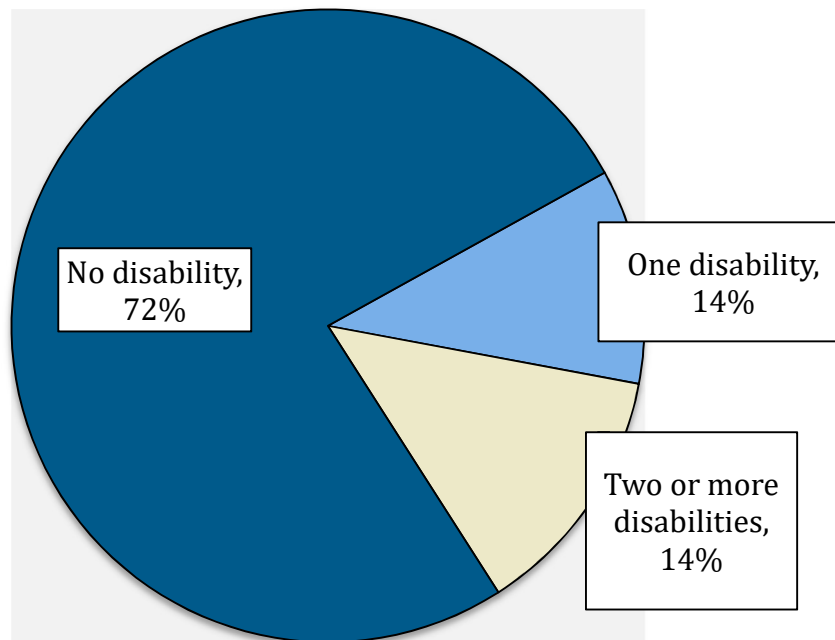
Source: American Community Survey, 2017–2021, Table B19037. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.

Note: Includes only community households, not group quarters such as nursing homes.

A common benchmark for household finances is that no more than 30% of household income should be spent on housing costs (e.g., rent or mortgage, taxes, insurance, other fees). In Westborough, about 29% of all households spend 30% or more of their income on housing costs each month (ACS, 207-2021, Table S2503). About 71% of households with annual income less than \$75,000 spend 30% or more on monthly housing costs, compared to just 11% of household incomes of \$75,000 or more. Furthermore, there is a higher share of renters spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs compared to owners, regardless of income level. About 44% of renter-occupied households spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs compared to 19% of owner-occupied households. Renter-occupied and lower income households are at greater risk of financial insecurity, with large shares of their income going toward housing.

The increased likelihood of acquiring disability with age is evident in data from the ACS. Many Westborough residents age 65 and older experience some level of disability that could impact their ability to function independently in the community. About 14% of Westborough residents age 65 and older report having one disability, and another 14% report having two or more disabilities (**Figure 8**). Among the different types of disability that are assessed in ACS, the most commonly cited by Westborough residents 65 and older were ambulatory difficulties—difficulty walking or climbing stairs—independent living limitations—difficulty doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor’s office or shopping—and hearing problems. Each difficulty was reported by between 10-15% of the older population in Westborough (*ACS 2017–2021, Table S1810*). Other disabilities experienced by older Westborough residents include cognitive difficulty (4%), self-care difficulties (4%), and vision difficulties (3%).

**Figure 8.** Percentage of Westborough residents age 65+ reporting at least one disability



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2017–2021, Table C18108.

## Key Informant Interviews

In the Fall of 2022, we conducted eight interviews with town leaders and stakeholders to gather additional insights and information about how the town of Westborough is addressing the needs of the aging population. Individuals representing the police and fire departments, schools, town committees, aging services, and recreation were selected for interviews. Participants were encouraged to share their thoughts and perspectives on what features make Westborough both a dynamic and challenging town for seniors to reside in as they age. Topics discussed included changes in town demographics and its impact on the town, current services for older adults, challenges accessing services, and strategies for making Westborough a strong and vibrant community for residents of all ages. In this section of the report, we present salient points and key themes that emerged from these conversations.

### Action needed to prioritize the needs of older residents

Most interview respondents noted that changes in town demographics were playing a role in the local policymaking process, particularly in defining priorities and making budget decisions. In recent years there has been an influx of young families moving to Westborough which has led to an increased emphasis on improving the schools and creating an engaging and vibrant town for children. As a result, respondents perceived that addressing the needs of seniors has become less of a priority. One respondent described tension between older, longtime residents of Westborough and newer, younger residents. There is a general perception that new residents choose to settle in Westborough only for the schools and then leave, creating a more “transient” feel to the town, noted one interviewee. Another respondent reported that “town meetings are all about schools and playgrounds” and there is less discussion about meeting the needs of older residents. Furthermore, the town budget for senior services was described as relatively small making it difficult to improve and enhance offerings for older residents.

As illustrative of these tensions, some interview respondents described ongoing discussions about creating a multi-generational recreation center designed to meet the needs of younger and older residents. Proponents of a multi-generational center emphasize that recently retired and young seniors need more opportunities to engage in physical and recreational activities, which are not currently offered at the Senior Center. Additionally, a multi-generational center would help encourage a broader feeling of connectedness among individuals of all ages in the community. Critics expressed uncertainty about whether a multi-generational center would sufficiently address the needs of seniors, particularly those who are older and frailer. As noted by one interview respondent, not all older adults want to be around children and appreciate having a “dedicated” place where they can socialize with other residents of a similar age.

## Adequacy of current senior center to meet the evolving needs and preferences of older residents

Interview respondents identified several disadvantages associated with the current senior center. Disadvantages related to the actual physical location of the Center were noted by multiple interviewees. Primarily, the traffic pattern combined with most participants needing to make a left-hand turn to exit the senior center towards downtown is both described as challenging and potentially dangerous—particularly at high traffic parts of the day. Additionally, interviewees also relayed a desire for the space to have more active and physical offerings for seniors (e.g., exercise classes or dancing). One interviewee indicated that the perception among many town residents was that the senior center was geared towards more sedentary activities (i.e., a place for seniors to have lunch and play cards). Because of these physical and perceived limitations, multiple respondents noted that older adults were visiting neighboring senior centers which had newer buildings, more offerings, and a greater feeling of “vibrancy”. One interviewee also described feeling like the current Center does not feel welcoming to new members at a time when many older adults are really craving connection and a sense of community.

## High cost of living and insufficient housing options have disproportionate effects on older residents

A key challenge for seniors living in Westborough is the lack of affordable and flexible housing options. Increasing rents, higher property taxes, rising heating costs, and inflation are putting more and more pressure on seniors living on fixed incomes. According to interviewees, the town zoning and planning committees have modified their zoning requirements to allow for the development of more 55+ communities and accessory dwelling units (ADUs) to help address the problem. However, the average price of a house in many of these senior developments (\$600,000 and up) was considered out of reach for many. Participants also reported observing more seniors aging alone prompting concerns about their overall well-being and safety. Because waiting lists for subsidized housing in the town and the state are very long, town residents are becoming increasingly concerned that homelessness among seniors could increase in future years. Several participants also expressed concerns that more and more older adults may leave the area to escape the high cost of living.

## Current transportation options are limited

Many interviewees described problems accessing transportation services for seniors. There are some transportation options available during the day, but access in the evening hours was limited. Furthermore, a few stakeholders noted challenges arranging transportation for those needing ADA accommodations. The town does have an active volunteer rides program to drive seniors to local medical appointments, but there is little in the way of transportation to help seniors seeking medical care in Boston. One interviewee suggested collaborating with the WRTA to help expand access to transportation for seniors.

## Increase in complex needs of residents requires collaborative response

Town safety officials reported that the overall demand for emergency services to address the health and well-being needs of older adults has been increasing. Calls requesting well-being checks, assistance related to falls in homes, help for older adults with mental health and cognitive issues, and other safety concerns are on the rise. As noted by one interviewee, it is not unusual to receive upwards of 20 calls per day related to falls. Furthermore, because resolving these needs can be time consuming and complicated many go unaddressed for some time. For example, many needs require someone with mental health expertise to become involved and others require coordination and assistance from other service organizations to resolve (i.e. food pantries).

Many stakeholders believed that communication and collaboration among town departments and local organizations that serve seniors could be improved. Interview respondents noted that there are multiple departments and local entities that provide critical services to seniors (i.e. Board of Health, Fire Department, Recreation, Senior Center, etc.), however alignment and collaboration among these departments was lacking. For example, one respondent would like to see a stronger partnership between the town recreation department and the senior center to organize more active and dynamic programming for older adults. Another interviewee recommended using monthly town leadership meetings as a vehicle for creating a comprehensive strategic plan for addressing the needs of seniors to help engender more coordination and collaboration among town officials.

## Continued outreach to older residents is needed to increase participation

Many interview respondents would like to see more outreach to seniors, both for the purposes of educating older adults about current offerings and to solicit their participation in future planning. A few participants noted that the town relies too much on passive or digital forms of communication such as social media and websites to educate seniors about activities in the town. Although digital forms of communication are important, many seniors do not use them and therefore may be uninformed about town happenings. As noted by one interviewee, bulk and paper mailings have declined in recent years due to the expense but it is an important mechanism for reaching many older adults, particularly those who do not use the internet. Additionally, several interviewees noted that the community of Westborough is becoming more culturally and racially diverse necessitating a greater investment in translation services and culturally appropriate materials. One interviewee estimated that there were approximately 38 languages spoken in Westborough and that although the town has a Mandarin translator on staff, the Hindi and Latino communities were underserved. Notably, on a positive note, interviewees praised Westborough TV for its ongoing contribution to educating and supporting the senior population in town.

Participants made several recommendations for improving outreach and communication to seniors including:

- Hiring a dedicated outreach manager for the town
- Using monthly town leadership meetings to discuss communication and coordination strategies
- Reinstating regular mailings and creating paper calendars of upcoming offerings to include in mailings
- Performing targeted outreach to special populations such as renters or other marginalized groups
- Improving cultural diversity in its communications
- Building relationships with the press
- Repurposing community newsletters such as Westborough Connects and Community Advocate to include important information

To cultivate additional representation from seniors in planning, one interviewee recommended organizing small, informal round tables with seniors to gather their perspectives on how the town can better meet the needs of older adults.

## **Insights from Focus Group Participants**

In support of this needs assessment, six focus groups captured the observations of fifty-two unique individuals, all of whom either resided in or worked to serve the community of Westborough. The overarching goal of these sessions was to obtain in-depth information on aging in Westborough and gain a broader understanding of the role the Senior Center plays within the community as well as in partnership with other Town Offices. Taken together, interactions with the focus group participants revealed an awareness and appreciation for Westborough as a vibrant and neighborly community, alongside genuine concern for challenges faced by residents. Reported below are the major themes that emerged from these six focus group discussions.

### **Caregivers persist in finding support outside of the Westborough community**

Joining loved ones on their journey, by most accounts in interactions with caregivers, is a painful and stressful process. Moreover, it was reported that many do not know where to find support. Acknowledging, accepting, listening, and planning were described as only the initial steps in the caregiving process. Proactive strategy formation, options research, identification of resources, travel to regional communities seeking support and/or services, alongside organizing the monetary means to accomplish comprehensive care were all described by Westborough caregivers in our discussions. Taken together, these steps were described as requiring a level of troubleshooting, creativity, and resilience to offer care to

loved ones, much of which is accomplished by many without the support or knowledge sharing with others. Most resources discussed existed in neighboring communities such as Hopkinton, Framingham, Marlborough, Northbridge, and Northborough, for example.

*“Grief is powerful and day programs gave me time to be me. To take care of me.”  
-Caregiver*

In discussions with caregivers in Westborough, many described finding autonomous ways to process grief and adapt to their new circumstances. Others reached out to find support groups elsewhere across the region, and as those groups disbanded over time, a few residents secured space at the Westborough Senior Center to meet. This support group is comprised of experienced caregivers whose loved ones have passed, alongside those at various stages of the caregiver process while welcoming newcomers--all hoping to navigate what is described as a lack of information and resources, stigma, support, safety, and understanding. Tantamount to these challenges is the widely reported truth of self-care for caregiving: “If caregivers don’t take care of themselves, they can get sick and pass before who they are caring for in the first place. It happens.”

Of greatest value, many participants cited adult day programs, memory café options, early grief counseling, in-home resources, transportation, expanded respite care, formal support groups representing the various stages of the process, tandem activities, caregiver events like a monthly dinner, and bereavement counseling specific to grief experienced by those having lost their loved ones after years of offering caregiving support. The latter was described by one participant as “requiring re-invention,” a task that is not intuitive for everyone as an older adult. It was reported that many caregivers would benefit from direct support. This sentiment was exemplified in most conversations with caregivers who noted the 24/7 nature of the responsibility, often found to be overwhelming.

### Physical access to community assets can be challenging for older people

Overall, many participants expressed gratitude for the friendly small-town feel of Westborough while also in proximity to the urban environment of Boston and its many resources. Conversely, the need for walkability, to safely walk around the Town, is perceived as tantamount to healthy aging in Westborough and the average residents’ inability to do so outside of the immediate downtown was highlighted frequently in private as well as group discussions. Challenges to accessing the community’s assets were expressed in the context of health, wellness, and safety as much as necessity. Given that walkability is low in large swaths of Town and proximity to needed resources and shopping options can be low for residents outside of Westborough’s downtown, many felt deep concern for the current and future well-being of older residents as it pertains to accessing essential community assets and resources.

*“It would be useful to see more benches so people could walk around and rest.” -Resident*



## Limited transportation options decrease community engagement and access to needed resources

An additional consistent theme expressed by many focus group participants were concerns for transportation options for essential errands, medical or self-care appointments, and shopping. As being able to drive is essential to the autonomy and independence of older residents, views expressed by participants reflected concern for not only those known to not have the ability to drive themselves at this time, but also for their own personal future needs and ability.

It was noted that parking is generally available, although availability at central locations can be challenging. Pedestrian safety relative to proximity of parking to needed destinations was expressed consistently as a major concern, citing that a simple errand like going to the bank or grocery shopping can come with high risk for older residents. Similarly, it was reported that the frequency of emergency calls involving older drivers has increased in recent years—a trend that is expected to continue over the coming decade. Focus group respondents noted that residents were not aware of rideshare options and that snow accumulation in winter was a barrier for car owners.

Access to convenient transportation options, particularly in the evenings and on weekends, is viewed as crucial for accessing both needed resources in and around Westborough; but also to engage socially and access to recreational activities. When it comes to medical transportation, some options do exist, but combined with the overall issue of long wait times and changing appointment schedules, due to the currently burdened healthcare systems, current medical transportation options can mean spending multiple hours waiting and having to rearrange appointments to access transportation options. If alternative transportation options are available, public awareness of these resources is crucial—particularly for older residents. Limited current options, inability for spontaneity, and concern for future increased need was a consistent theme reverberated during focus group discussions.

## Increased housing-related expenses and taxation create an unstable quality of life for older residents

In interactions with focus group participants, it was reported that many older adults are in distress because they are finding it difficult to afford expenses and to remain in their homes. Additionally, it was reported that some residents tend to be isolated in their often maintenance-intensive homes and are reluctant to ask for help. Easily manageable housing down-sizing options are not common in Westborough, particularly due to the Town's desirable Metro-West proximity to the City of Boston as well as regional employment opportunities. As the aging population increases, this situation is likely to become untenable. This sentiment was illustrated in comments stating that affordable housing in Westborough is unaffordable. Moreover, this feeling was echoed in multiple comments proposing that if

one did not own their own home, local rents would be unaffordable--signaling a deep sense by many focus group participants that a worry for future housing stability is prevalent. Moreover, a large portion of the tax base, which is reported as the same for business as residences, supports the school. Many of the people we spoke with wished that the older residents benefited more from Westborough's high taxes, mentioning that the older residents are hesitant to support new projects in town, such as the library expansion, as they are concerned about how it will affect their taxes. One person explained that older residents don't want to spend money, even on senior related projects, as new initiatives might raise their tax burden. Therefore, these residents watch as their taxes are raised but perceive gaining no benefit.

Many issues exist for older adults living alone in single-family homes requiring maintenance. Some older residents live in large houses that they can no longer care for. Several reasons were mentioned regarding the struggles older adults face in maintaining their home including not having the money to pay for upkeep and repairs, not knowing who to contact, not having the energy to move forward with the maintenance, and in some cases, not having

*"Affordable housing is not affordable. If I didn't own my home, I couldn't afford to buy or rent in Westborough."*  
-Resident

the desire to make needed changes. Additionally, the cost of utilities, municipal fees, and property taxes were named as a critical concern for some older residents. In multiple focus group conversations, the issue of taxation dominated the discussion as a major expense facing older adults. An explicit consensus

that property tax liability has become burdensome due to the frequency of past rate increases in Westborough in recent years was apparent. Resident participants overwhelmingly perceived property taxation disproportionate to municipal services offered. Tremendous anxiety was expressed across groups for future cost burdens, and the relationship of this expenditure for older residents to afford routine maintenance and needed repairs on their homes. Taken together, these challenges are perceived by residents to have real implications for their housing stability and quality of life.

Overall, an essential aspect for healthy aging is an individual's ability to remain living in the community as one ages—and the desire to do so was a salient point expressed by focus group participants, many of whom have spent much of their lives in Westborough. Strong agreement was presented in focus group discussions that without adequate housing options for downsizing and/or tax burden solutions, older adults will either remain in homes that are inappropriate, or unmanageable, or they will be forced to leave the community.

### Several factors deter participation at the Westborough Senior Center

During several focus group discussions, appreciation for the Senior Center as an available resource in the community was consistently expressed. Explicitly, the core activities offering opportunities for social interaction alongside the availability of van rides to facilitate independence for many older residents. Also highlighted in interactions with focus group

participants was tremendous concern for many of the characteristics of the Senior Center, including the location, the perceived condition of the building, programming of interest to a narrow range of older residents, interest in newcomers, and the limits on availability of vans for older adults to access evening and weekend community events.

*“Every time I visit the Senior Center, we sit, we talk, we feed, we leave. I feel like there needs to be more. People should be active for their health and longevity.”*  
-Stakeholder

Positioned far from the center of Westborough, many participants stated that given its current location, they almost felt the Senior Center is largely inaccessible. Moreover, strong concern was expressed for driver safety in exiting the facility, noting traffic challenges to returning downtown by car after leaving the Senior Center. This sentiment combined with few alternative transportation options, limits not only the town-wide visibility of the center as a community institution, but also restricts participation, inclusion of diversified perspectives, and overall resident use of the center that could benefit future support and planning for robust programming serving Westborough’s older adults.

Solid concern was expressed by many participants that the center is outdated, described by one participant as feeling like the inside of a factory, supporting others’ comments that they perceived the Senior Center as dilapidated. The limited capacity alongside current physical environment deter some residents from considering it a viable resource for them or their families. Cost for activities was also mentioned as a barrier to access for Westborough’s low-income residents.

Additionally, participants shared concerns that rising seniors do not feel included in the opportunities for activity and social interaction at the center and often need to venture into nearby communities to do so. One participant stated that, “there is no welcome mat.” Others mirrored this comment by stating that Westborough’s Senior Center is not perceived as a “friendly or welcoming” place to all. Moreover, younger-older residents expressed strong opposition to what they perceived as a community resource for the inactive where older residents sit and participate in sedentary activities like bingo or sharing meals. General sentiment across focus groups was that the Senior Center would benefit from a fresh approach to welcome older residents into the Senior Center and target activities that have broad appeal to diverse interests of Westborough’s 55+ population.

*“Senior Center really directs their activities to the elderly but that’s not representative of the entire senior population— doesn’t feel vibrant. Also, many of these folks have been here for generations, so less welcoming to newer residents.”*  
- Focus Group Participant

Taken together, these views were echoed in focus group discussions with Town officials. Recognizing the need for robust programming suited to Westborough’s older residents, they

voiced a common concern for challenges to collaboration between departments and the Senior Center. A strong desire was expressed for improved and increased collaboration with the Senior Center by pooling resources to achieve common goals in serving Westborough's population. Focus group participants believe these efforts will facilitate event planning and programming inclusive of older adults, both during evening hours and on weekends, activities which to date are rarely possible.

### There is a desire for improved information and communication

Communication is important in all aspects of town government, and this is no different in Westborough. The majority of the people across groups spoke about the need for better communication not only among organizations within the Town but also between the municipality and its residents. Participant statements emphasized a desire for more organized, efficient, comprehensive formal communication. One participant stated that even though he had paid for newsletter delivery, it never arrived. Several residents stated that the Town's website could not be relied upon to be up to date. Municipal participants suggested a master calendar available to all would be useful. While there was no clear consensus on an effective strategy moving forward, a clear desire was expressed throughout the focus groups for some formal strategy to make information about services relative to older adults alongside municipal resources of interest and ongoing events more clearly available and known by Westborough's older population.

Communication between town leaders and the older residents is critical as well. Almost all of the individuals spoke about Westborough older adults as being private, not wanting to admit they need or want help. Several individuals shared that although Westborough is perceived as a very wealthy town, there are pockets of people who are struggling, yet even these people, who are not doing fine, are hesitant to reach out. One participant noted that the Police and Fire departments and the COA are doing a good job at identifying people when they notice residents are struggling and they reach out to each other, as needed. But there are other Town departments that don't communicate as well and don't realize the needs of older residents until something happens in their own family. Several participants acknowledged that reaching residents before a crisis occurs is important and that better communication with residents and among departments would help.

Additionally, many participants expressed a desire to bring the departments together and several suggestions for how to do this emerged. Individuals suggested holding more frequent department head meetings and collaborating on projects and programs, including intergenerational programs that involve leaders from a variety of town groups. The police department suggested added funding for a liaison position, to provide time for an individual to facilitate communication among municipal departments and Town organizations and better support the needs of older residents.

Numerous ideas arose regarding ways to improve communication with residents. Word of mouth in addition to frequent education about the role of the COA and the many services and programs available was highlighted in focus group discussions as an effective strategy. The challenge of reaching the older residents who don't have Internet access or are not technologically savvy was also discussed. The Town's digital media presence seems to not reach all older residents so assuring that information is conveyed via print material, as well as web-based, is important. Using Cable Television more often was another suggestion to support communication with those who don't use or don't have access to the Internet.

### There is a perceived increase in mental health challenges

Unfortunately, one of the themes that emerged from discussions was an acknowledgement that more older residents were struggling with mental health now than in the past and most attributed this increase in poor mental health to the "pandemic isolation". Others have noted a deterioration of spirits, more loneliness, and more depression in the older population. Adding to this burden, one participant noted that accessing health care, for mental health or physical health, has been challenging for some older adults as they have had a hard time adjusting to medical appointments online. Conversely, several older residents expressed enthusiasm for a Town sponsored telehealth option, possibly in conjunction with a visiting nurse for those less able to access care.

### Older residents note a sense of feeling undervalued in the community

Most of the people emphasized the important role the older residents play in Westborough but commented that the Town doesn't see them as a priority. Funding is often prioritized for school-aged children and families while funding for the COA and older adult programming is limited. Town organizations don't always appreciate the value that older adults bring to the Town, including their contributions to the tax base, their volunteerism, and their role in town government. For example, one participant commented that the group of Westborough residents 75 and older are an extremely community minded, dynamic group and not "your typical group of older adults who like to sit and play cards." Another individual stated that "seniors aren't valued as much as they should be and their needs are ignored in favor of funding for young families." Overall, focus group participants emphasized that many residents strongly recognize what they feel is a reluctance on the part of the Town to allocate resources and to offer supports.

## Results from Community Survey

In this section, we report key findings from each section of the survey. Tables illustrating results in detail are included in **Appendix A**.

### Respondent Characteristics

Respondents to the community survey included 1,633 Westborough residents, representing a 29% response rate (**Table 3**). This is a strong return rate and reflects interest among community residents. Compared to the age distribution of Westborough as a whole, we heard from a smaller share of residents age 55-59; survey response rates were higher among those age 70 and older<sup>16</sup>. Given the small number of respondents reporting age 90 or older, results will be reported for age groups 55-59, 60-69, 70-79, and 80+ throughout the remainder of this report. Response distributions by age group are shown for all survey questions in **Appendix A**.

**Table 3.** Community Survey Respondents

	Number of responses	Age distribution (%), survey responses
Age 55-59*	221	13%
Age 60-69	552	34%
Age 70-79	510	31%
Age 80+	339	21%
Age not provided	11	<1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,633</b>	<b>100%</b>

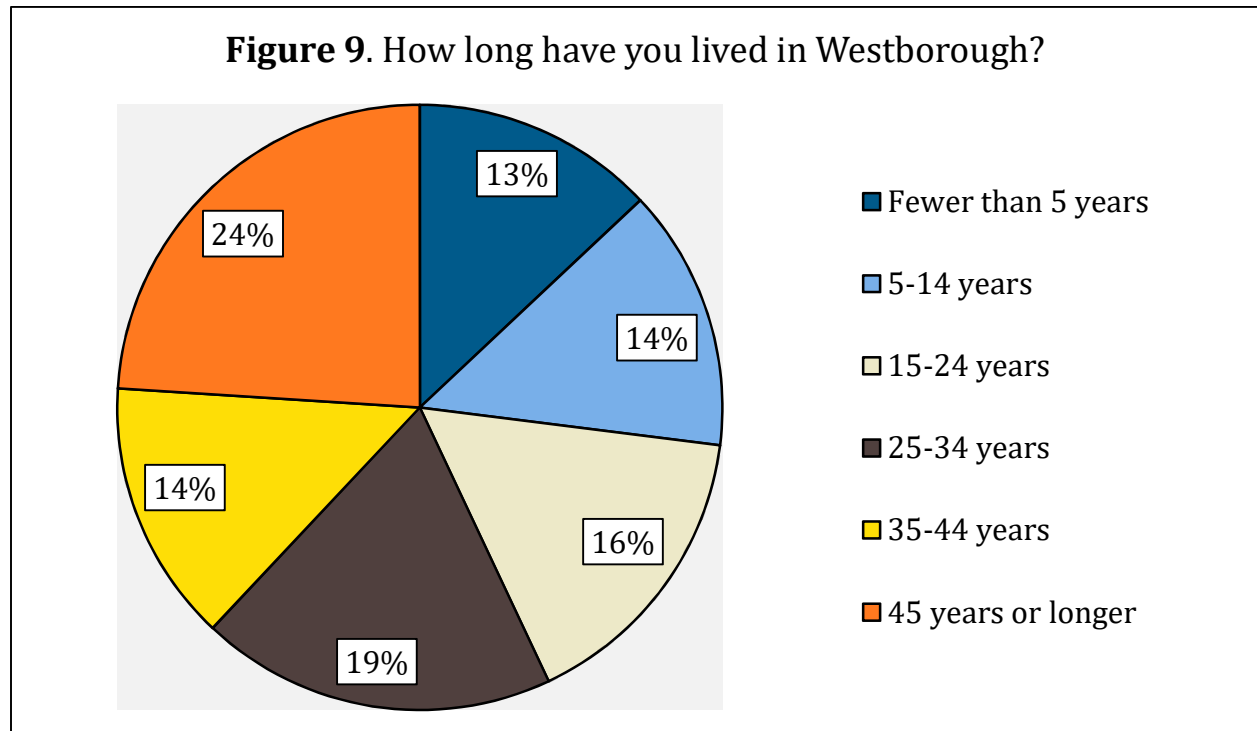
\*10 respondents reported ages under 55 and were included in this group.

### Community and Neighborhood

A commonly expressed goal of older adults is to remain living in their own homes for as long as possible. Aging in place implies remaining in familiar home and community settings, with supports as needed, as opposed to moving to institutional settings, such as nursing homes. By aging in place, older adults can retain their independence, as well as maintain valued social relationships and engagement with the community.

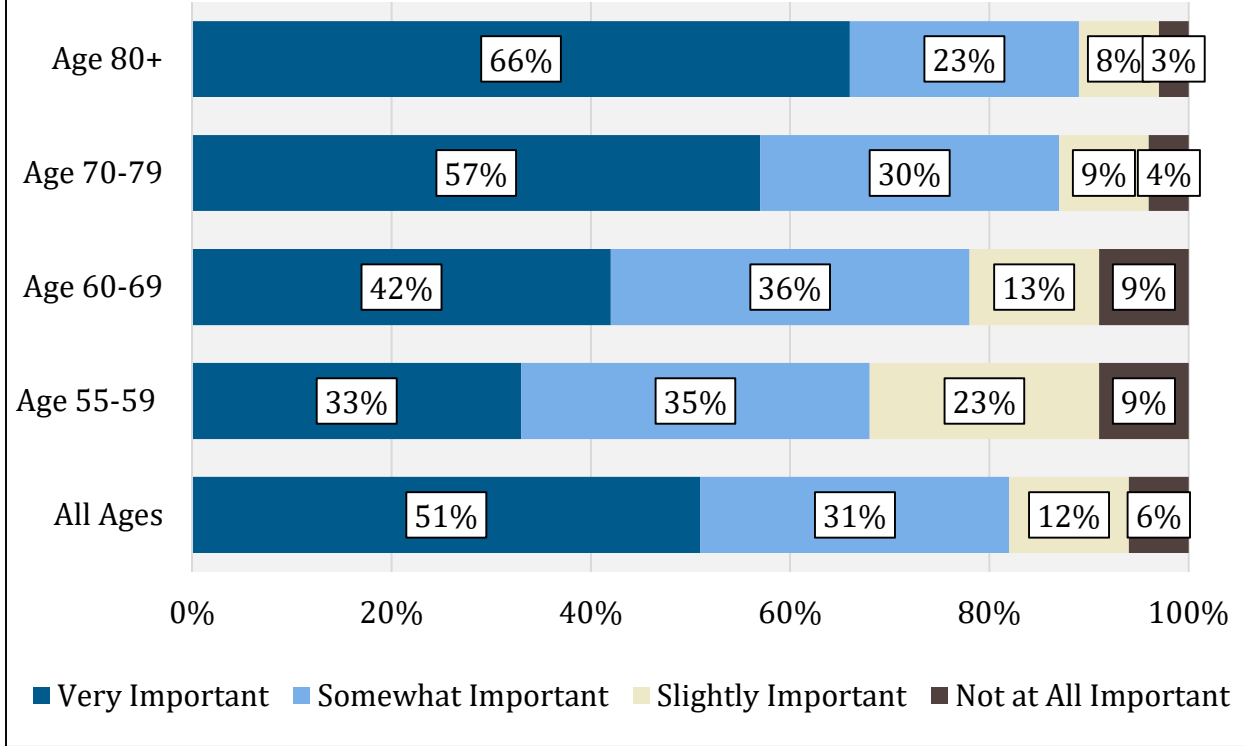
<sup>16</sup> Among residents age 55+ in Westborough, 26% are age 55-59, 38% are 60-69, 20% are 70-79, and 16% are age 80+ (Source: American Community Survey, 2017-2021, Table B01001. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates).

Survey respondents included residents who have lived in Westborough for many years, as well as relative newcomers. Duration of residing in Westborough varies from 27% of respondents who have been in Town less than 15 years compared to 38% who have lived in Westborough for more than 35 years (see **Figure 9**). These individuals offer insight based on their years of experience of living in Westborough. It is also helpful, however, to hear from those who are new to Westborough. Thirteen percent (13%) of residents have resided in Westborough for less than 5 years.



As seen in **Figure 10**, survey respondents were asked “How important is it to you to remain living in Westborough as you get older.” Sixty six percent (66%) of residents 80 and older and 57% of residents between the ages of 70 and 79 indicated that it was very important to them to continue living in Westborough as they age. This is compared to only 33% of residents aged 55-59 who said they would like to continue living in Westborough as they age.

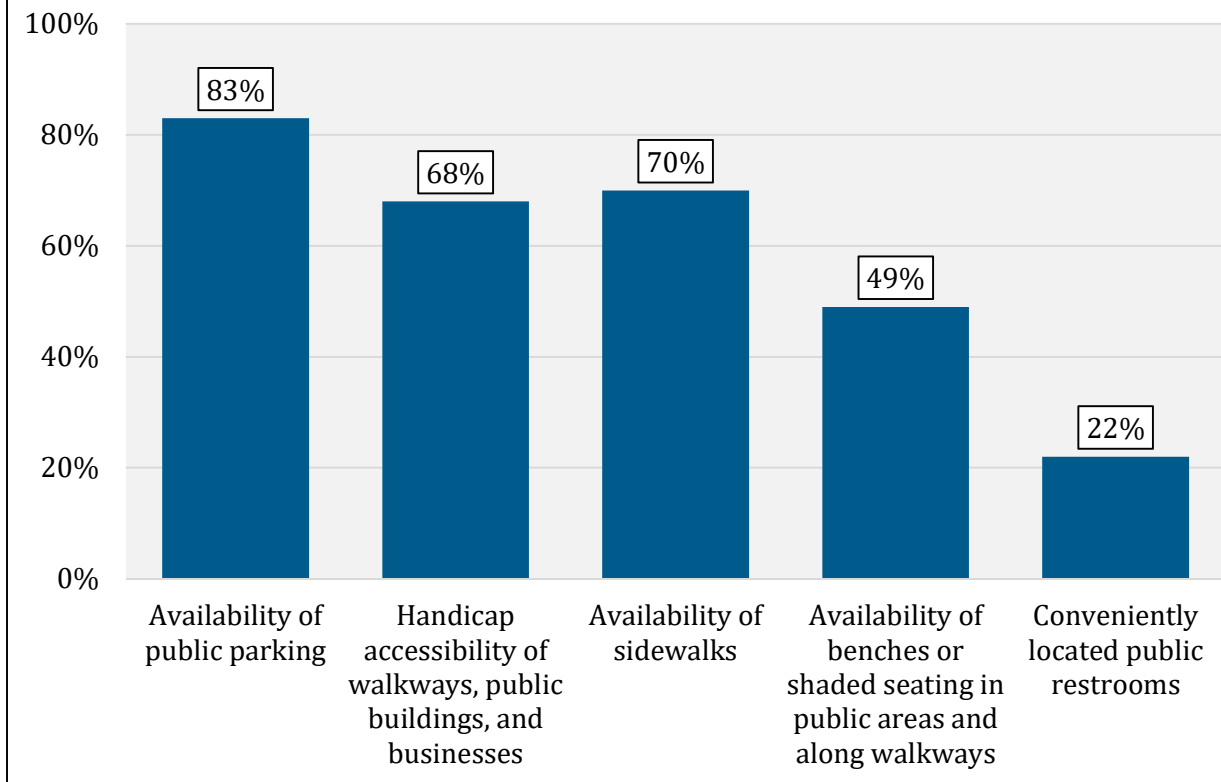
**Figure 10.** How important is it to you to remain living in Westborough as you get older?



Across all ages, 28% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “Local policy makers consider the interests and concerns of older residents.” Another quarter indicated they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, and 47% neither agreed nor disagreed. Results were consistent across age groups, though agreement among those 80+ was slightly higher compared to younger respondents (**Appendix A**). **Figure 11** indicates that while a majority of respondents are satisfied with local features like parking, accessibility of buildings and sidewalk availability---many respondents are not satisfied with the availability of seating and restrooms available to the public.



**Figure 11.** "Very satisfied" or "Satisfied" with features of Westborough



The vast majority of respondents (93%) took time to respond to the open-ended question “What do you value most about living in Westborough?” Responses are summarized into major themes with demonstrative quotes in **Table 4**. Nearly a third of write-in responses emphasized the importance of Westborough’s geographic location, both in terms of outdoor spaces and natural resources, and in relation to other communities and needed amenities, such as shopping and healthcare. Most written responses centered on the people of Westborough and feeling a sense of community. Many attributed that feeling to “small-town charm,” citing close-knit connections and feeling safe and secure in the community. Others also described their personal connections to the Town, many citing long histories living in Westborough. Lastly, respondents who provided a response to this open-ended question cited satisfaction with Town infrastructure, noting the downtown area as walkable and active, as well as the services provided by Town departments.

**Table 4.** Sample responses to question, “What do you value most about living in Westborough?”

<b>Ideal location</b>
<b>Rural, outdoor spaces</b>
“I like the woods and hiking trails, ponds, and clean well defined town center.”
“I value the physical beauty of the area and access to trails, ponds, biking, benches”
<b>Proximity to amenities</b>
“Rural areas yet all the amenities of everyday life in the area. Location- central to all the big cities in all directions- in 1/2 hr can reach most New England states- 50 minutes to Boston”
“Restaurants, hardware stores etc. All the services, everything I need is usually in Westborough”
<b>Sense of community</b>
<b>Small-town living</b>
“It still feels like a "small town". Connections with residents of all ages. Feeling of being included, valued, respected, recognized”
“The sense of community especially my neighborhood. I like that my neighborhood is multi-generational. I feel safe here, as well.”
<b>Personal connections and history</b>
“Value friendships and relationships with the people and organizations in the town”
“This is where we have raised our family. We have family, friends, & many social connections that we want to maintain as we get older”
<b>Town infrastructure</b>
“Our historic downtown village that is walkable, personable that encourages human interaction and provides services we need as we age.”
“We value the excellent town services, including police and fire protection and excellent public works activities, including well maintained roads...and tree trimming to keep the wires clear during storms”

Similarly, 94% of respondents wrote about their greatest concerns about aging in Westborough. Commonly cited concerns with sample quotes are included in **Table 5**. More than half of responses focused on financial security: residents are concerned about being able to afford to continue living in Westborough as they age, citing increasing taxes and cost of living as burdensome, especially with respect to limited income in retirement. The second most common concern was about accessing essential services and amenities. This included concerns about being able to drive later in life as well as availability of and safe infrastructure for alternative modes of transportation. Concerns about transportation most often referred to being able to get to where respondents need to go—healthcare services, shopping, social engagements, and others. Respondents were not only concerned about getting to these

places, but making sure they exist in or around Westborough. Another primary concern for those who provided a response was that they can remain healthy and active in later life. Worries about physical health changes that could limit mobility and independence as well as concerns about having ample opportunity to stay active and engaged in the community were described. Lastly, several respondents communicated challenges with housing: maintaining current homes could become physically and financially burdensome, but the ability to affordably downsize within Westborough is limited.

**Table 5.** Sample responses to question, “What are your greatest concerns about your ability to continue living in Westborough?”

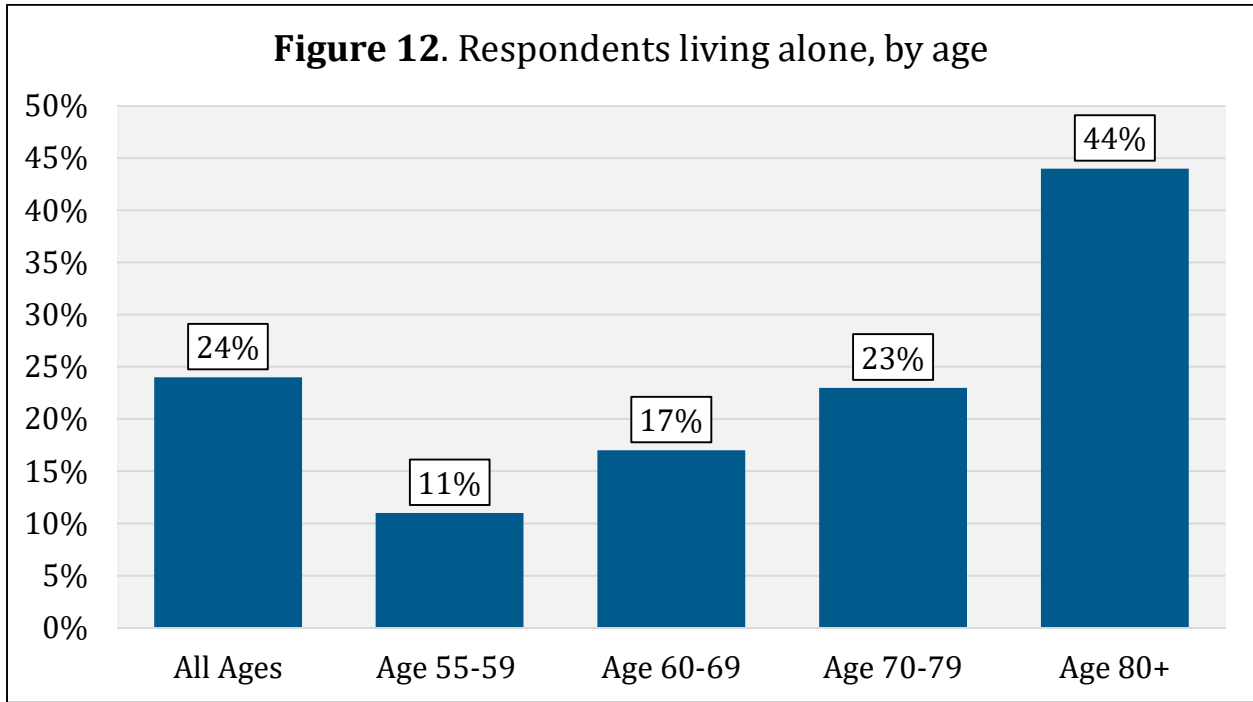
<b>Affordability, cost of living, and taxes</b>
“High taxes! Taxes have gotten and have increased- very high. Too much spending going on. For many residents of Westboro, the high taxes are not an issue, but for SENIORS it is a definite issue .”
“Ever-increasing property taxes. That's the biggest threat and unknown. Not at all confident I have prepared financially to retire, this scares me.”
<b>Access and transportation to amenities and services</b>
“Ability to access home medical care and transportation to and from it making it possible to die in your own home.”
“Finding the many more services I would need to continue living in my home, such as household help, help with personal care including activities of daily living, food preparation appropriate with my vegan dietary habits, and transportation to medical care over the area from Worcester to Boston.”
“Many sidewalks where we live are not in good shape so dangerous to walk as we get older. Would love to be able to ride a bike into town to shop but it is not safe since no dedicated bike lanes.”
“lack of public transportation close to home, isolation/lack of community events, sidewalks are not cleared after snow storm, this includes all areas, not just downtown or around schools”
<b>Staying healthy, active, and independent</b>
“Physical condition may deteriorate to a point where I need to go elsewhere, I don't think much of such facilities currently in town.”
“Continuing to live independently. My daughter helps me a lot, but I don't want to be dependent on her and take up too much of her time.”
<b>Home upkeep and lack of housing options</b>
“I need smaller space with covered parking. Need some community check over older residents leaving independently.”
“I want to "age in place" and die in my beautiful home by a pond. If I am alone, how will I manage home repairs, finances, landscaping that now my husband manages?”

## Housing and Living Situation

The availability and affordability of housing that is suitable to meet the changing capacity of older people are key factors that influence the ability of residents to age in place, and to lead fulfilling and healthy lives into old age. Many people are attached to their current home, even if the “fit” between individual capacity and the home environment decreases. Homes may become too large for current needs, or may become too expensive to maintain on a fixed income. Design features of homes, such as the number of stories and manageability of stairs, may challenge older residents’ ability to remain living safely in their home. Home modifications, including installation of bathroom grab bars, railings on stairs, adequate lighting throughout the home, ramps, and/or first floor bathrooms, may support residents’ safety and facilitate aging in place. Programs that connect older homeowners with affordable assistance for maintaining and modifying their homes and their yards can help protect the value of investments, improve the neighborhoods in which older people live, and support safe living. The availability of affordable housing options, especially those with accommodating features, including assisted living, may allow residents who are no longer able to stay in their existing homes to remain in their community.

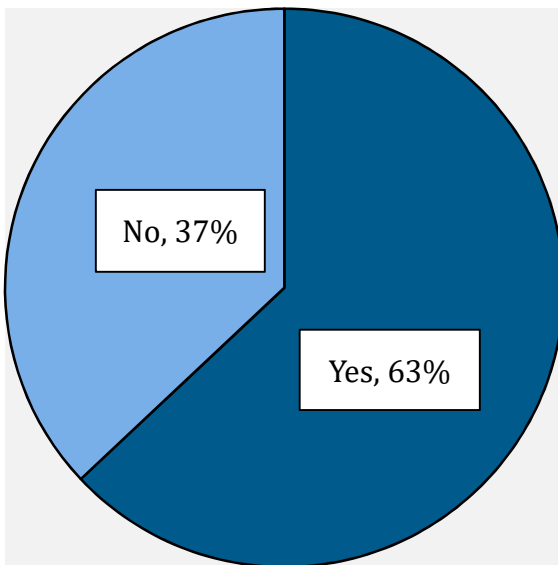
Shown in **Figure 12**, 44% of those 80 and older in Westborough report living alone compared to only 11% of those age 55-59. Living alone has the potential to lead to social isolation and has implications for services that may be needed by the older segment of the population. Living alone does not, on its own, indicate social isolation. However, considering the type and quantity of support services required with age, living alone is an important factor to consider.

**Figure 12.** Respondents living alone, by age



Most respondents currently live in single-family homes (65%), and 18% live in an apartment, condo, or townhome (see **Appendix A**). In order to assess the “age-friendliness” of the housing stock in Westborough, respondents were asked if they currently had a bedroom and bathroom on the entry-level of their home—an important feature as occupants

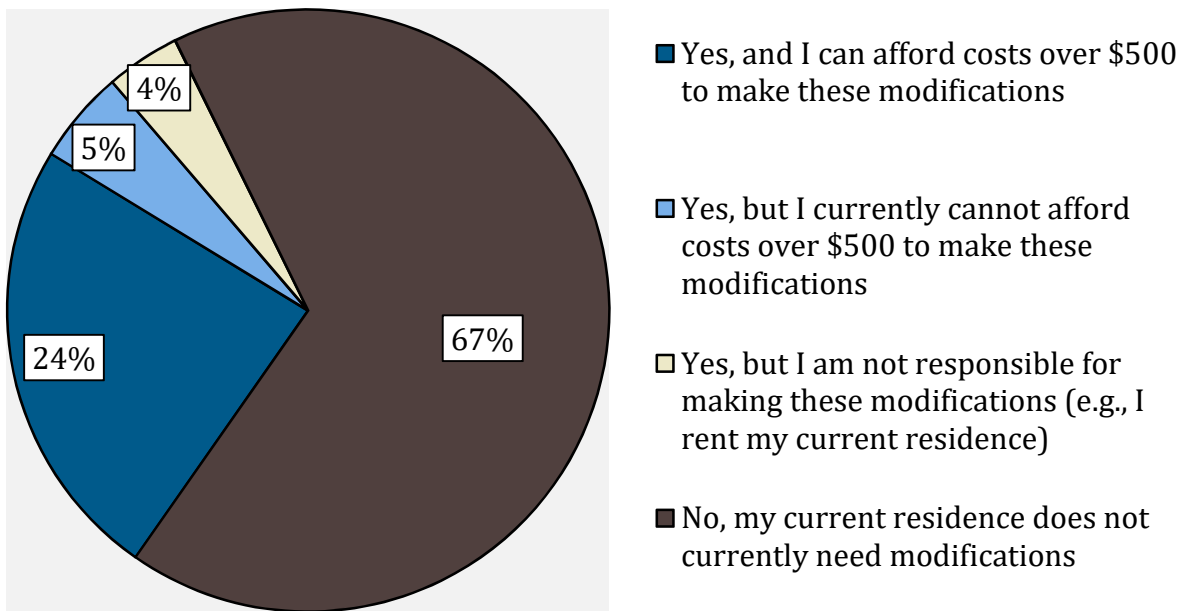
**Figure 13.** "Does your current residence have a bedroom and bathroom on the entry level such that you could meet your self-care needs?"



age and mobility (up and down stairs) becomes more challenging. **Figure 13** shows that a majority of respondents do have this feature in their home (63%). Given that over 80% of respondents reported planning to stay in their current homes over the next 5 years (**Appendix A**), having living space that can be accessible as residents age is crucial.

Maintaining a home requires resources, including people who can make repairs and the finances to pay for these repairs. In response to the question, “Does your current residence need home modifications (e.g., grab bars in showers or railings on stairs) to improve your ability to live in it safely for the next five years?” 24% of respondents stated “yes” and that they could afford to pay over \$500 to make these modifications (**Figure 14**).

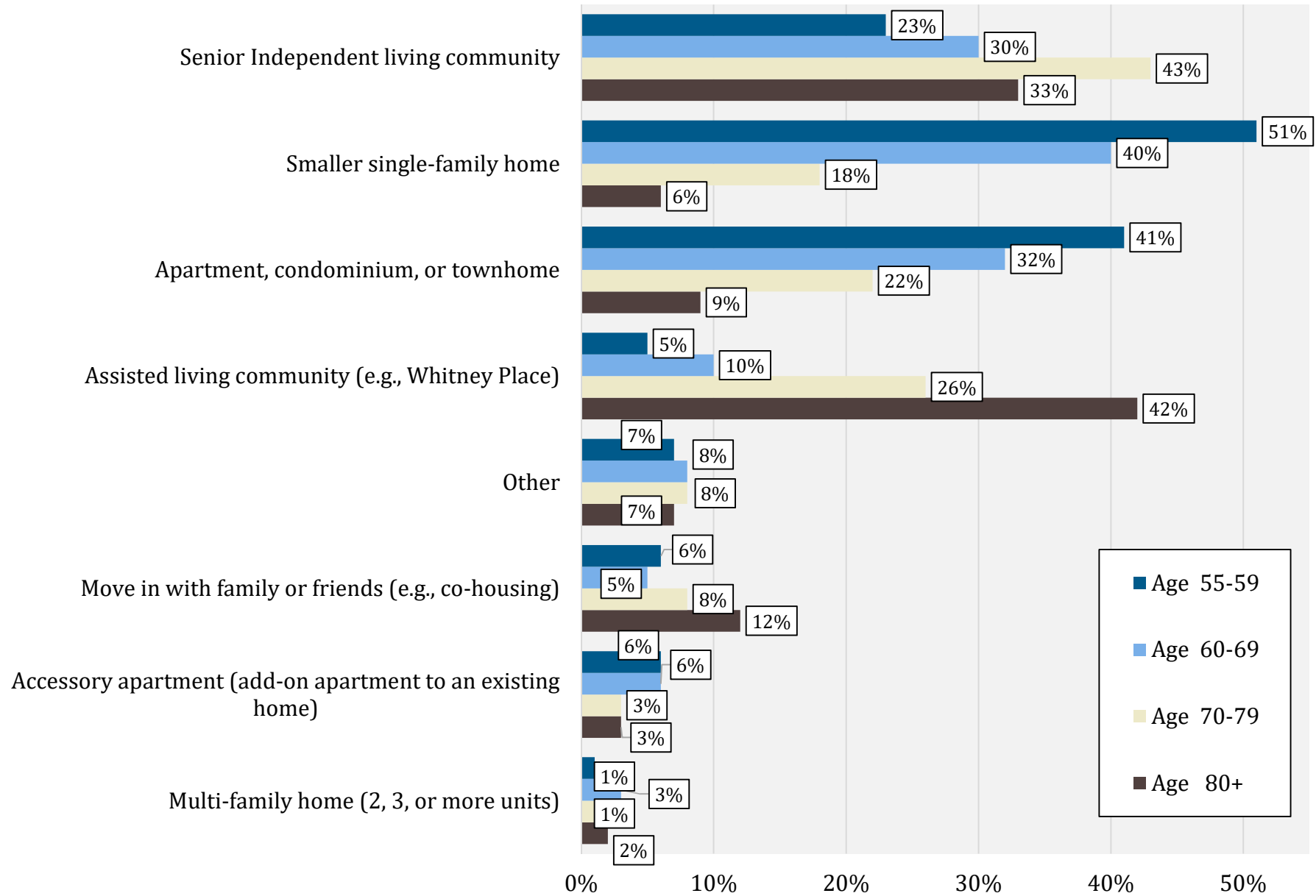
**Figure 14. Ability to afford needed home modifications**



Of those whose current residence needs repairs, 5% stated that they could not afford these modifications (see **Figure 14**). The percentage of respondents who report not being able to afford home modifications increases slightly to 7% for those between the ages of 70-79 and 6% for those over the age of 80 (**Appendix A**)

Survey participants were asked the type of housing they would prefer if a change in health or physical ability required moving from their current residence in the next five years. Responses varied greatly by age group. Nearly half (51%) of respondents age 55-59 would choose a smaller single-family home to other options, as would 40% of those age 60-69 (see **Figure 15**). Similarly, 41% of those age 55-59 and 32% of those age 60-69 would choose an apartment, condominium, or townhome if a change in health required moving from their current residence. Senior independent living communities were selected by 43% of respondents age 70-79 and 33% of respondents 80 and older, and assisted living communities (e.g., Whitney Place) were selected by 26% of those age 70-79 and 42% of those age 80 and older. These preferences for alternative senior living options by those age 50 and older has implications for future housing policy decisions in Westborough. Interestingly, only 3% of residents over age 70 preferred an accessory apartment to an existing home.

**Figure 15.** In the next 5 years, if a change in your health or physical ability required that you move from your current residence, what kind of housing would you prefer in Westborough?



## Transportation

Transportation is a basic need for people of all ages who desire to lead independent, meaningful, and socially engaged lives. For older adults specifically, limited transportation options can lead to challenges in socializing, attending appointments, and fully participating in their community. The vast majority of Americans rely primarily on private transportation to meet these needs, and most individuals drive their own automobiles well into old age. Due to difficulties with transportation, individuals with health conditions and disabilities that adversely affect their ability to drive safely may be unable to participate in activities they previously enjoyed and valued. Indeed, a national survey of people aged 50 and older conducted by the AARP (2005) found that compared to older drivers, non-drivers reported lower quality of life, less involvement with other people, and more isolation.

Westborough is connected to Boston via the commuter rail on the Framingham/Worcester line. In 2020, the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA), also launched a new on-demand public transportation network, Via WRTA where residents can use the VIA app to call a shuttle to take them to various locations throughout the city such as the Senior Center, the public library, downtown, and local commuter rails stations.<sup>17</sup> The senior center will also arrange transportation for senior residents.

Most survey respondents reported active driving status, with 81% driving with no limitations, and 7% not driving at all. **Figure 16** demonstrates that driving status diminishes with age: 96% of those age 55-59 drive without limitations, compared to 82% of those in their 70s and 53% of those age 80 and older. A quarter of respondents age 80 or older reported not driving.

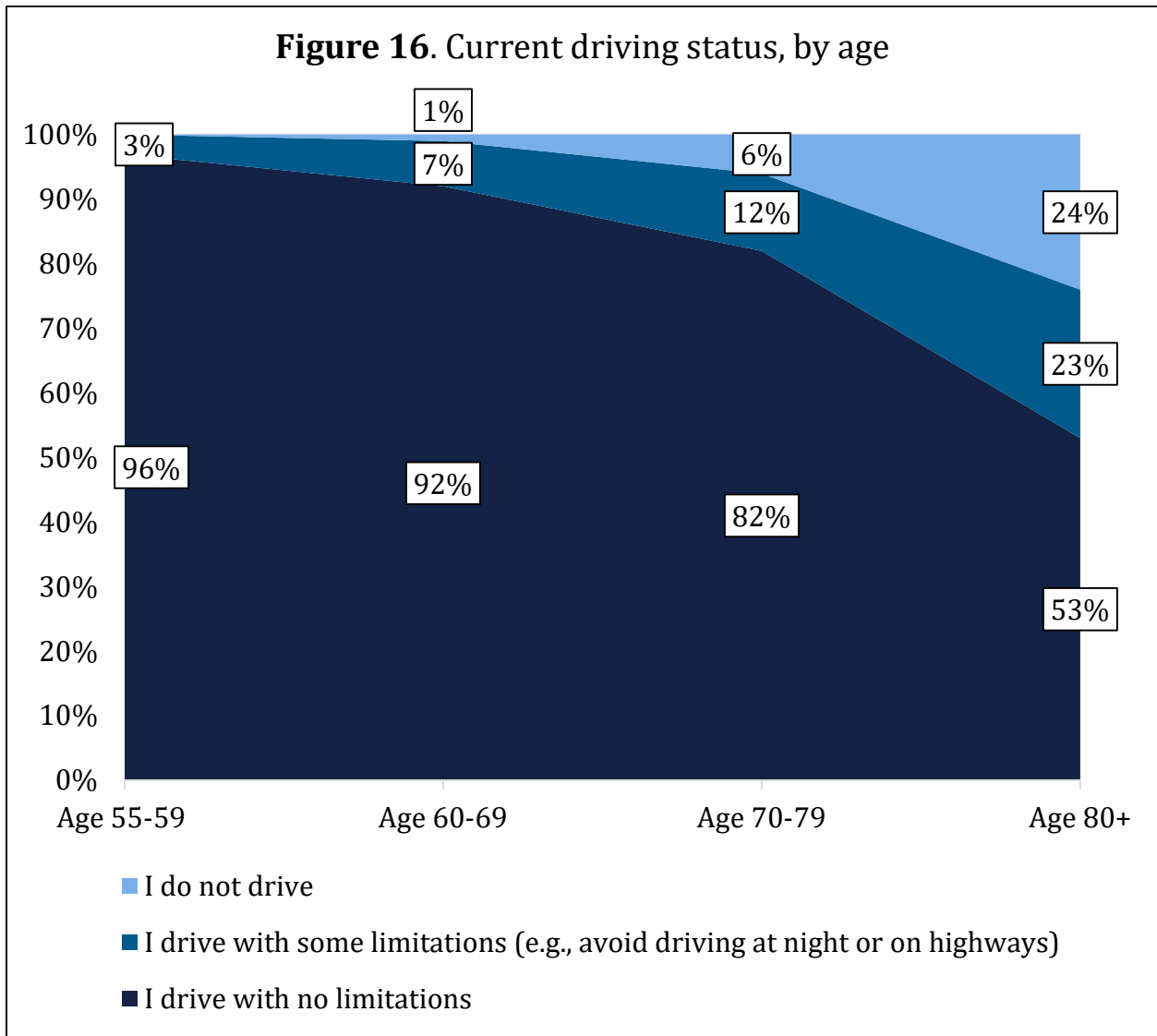
Survey results suggest that most respondents (90%) drive themselves as a primary mode of transportation. Having a spouse or child drive (26%) and walking or biking (18%) were among the other primary ways that respondents meet their transportation needs (see **Appendix A**). Other primary ways respondents meet their transportation needs include the commuter rail (7%), taxi or ride sharing (5%), transportation provided by the Senior Center (5%), and Via WRTA (1%). The percentage of respondents using transportation provided by the Senior Center increases to 13% for those age 80 and older.

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<sup>17</sup> [WRTA, Via launch new on-demand public transit system in Westborough | Mass Transit \(masstransitmag.com\)](https://www.masstransitmag.com)

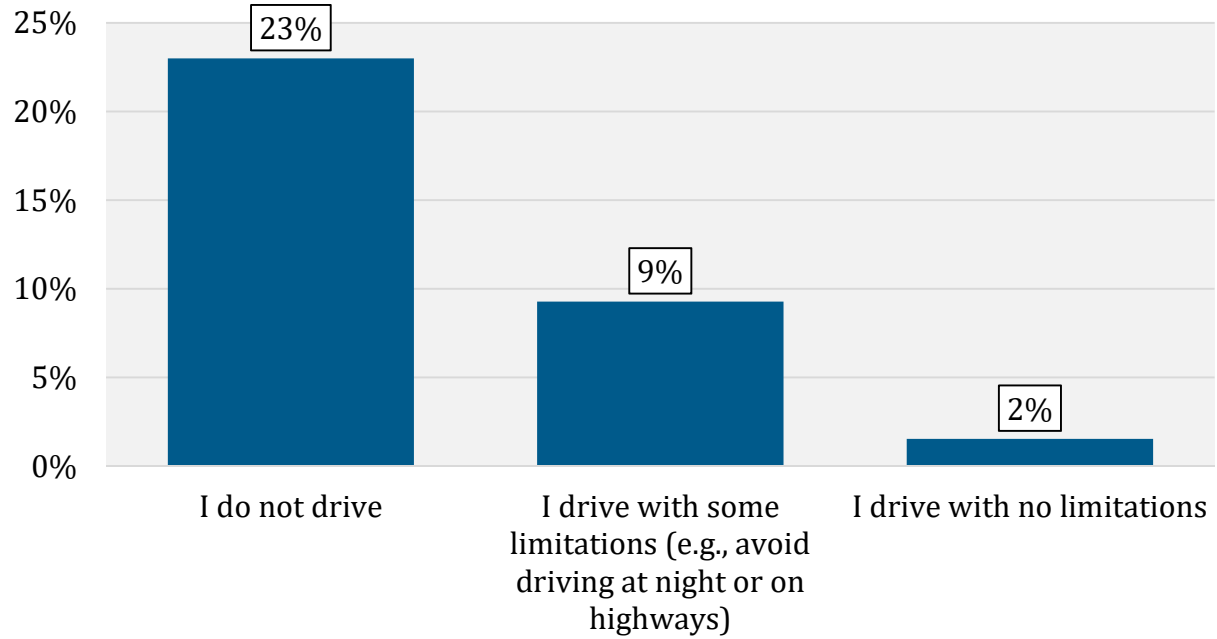


**Figure 16. Current driving status, by age**



A small share of respondents (4%) reported “yes” when asked if they have had to miss, cancel, or reschedule a medical appointment due to lack of transportation (**Appendix A**). When considering driving status, however, 9% of those who drive with limitations and 23% of those who do not drive reported “yes” to this question (**Figure 17**). These findings suggest that transportation limitations appear to negatively impact accessing medical care for the most vulnerable segments of Westborough’s older resident community.

**Figure 17.** Missed, canceled, or rescheduled a medical appointment in the past 12 months due to lack of transportation, by driving status

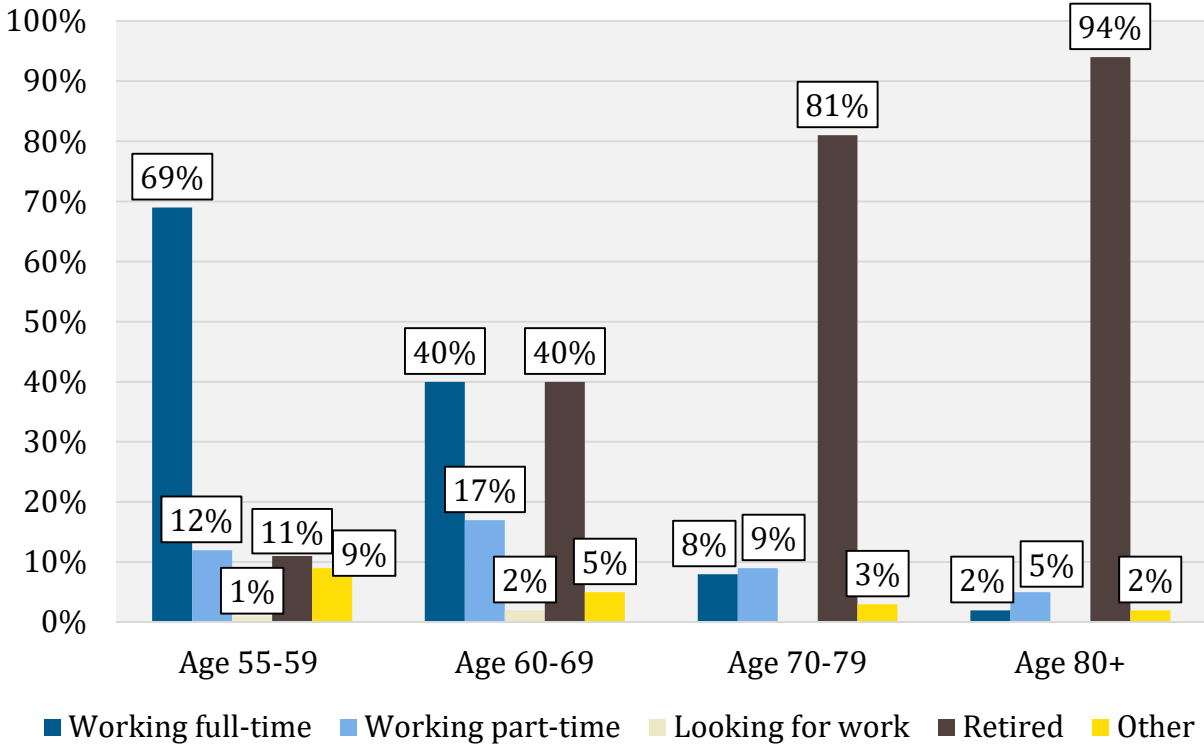


## Employment and Retirement

Remaining in the workforce due to financial necessity or personal preference is a decision that shapes later life for most older people. For those still working, their experiences can mean less hours, different schedules, and an interest in maintaining professional relationships. For those who have chosen retirement, maintaining active lifestyles and contributing to the world around them can be important factors when considering how to spend their time. Regardless of employment status, the ability to pay for necessary expenses and maintain quality of life can be challenging due to age-related shifts in health, ability, costs, and streams of income.

Many people across the country continue to work beyond the traditional retirement age of 65 and this is evident in the Westborough survey results. Among all survey respondents, about a third (36%) are still working. **Figure 18** shows that a majority of respondents in their 60s are still working full or part-time (57%), and 17% of those in their 70s are also working. These results are similar to results from the American Community Survey, which reports that almost 44% of adults age 64 to 74 are participating in the labor force. Of those age 75 and older, more than 3% remain in the workforce (*ACS, 2017–2021, Table S2301*). These results indicate that many Westborough residents over age 60 remain in the workforce.

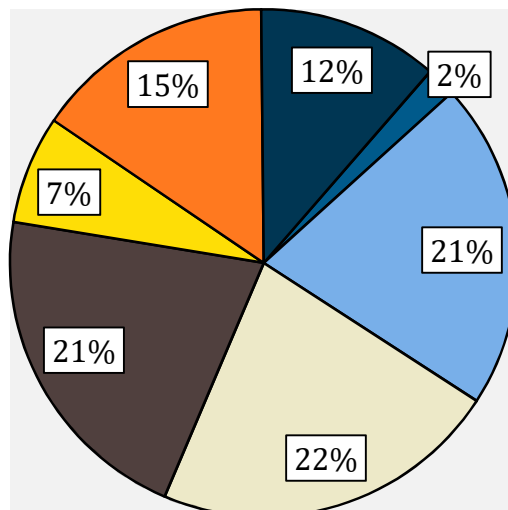
**Figure 18. Current employment status, by age**



For those who responded that they are still working full or part-time, 43% expect to retire within the next 5 years (see **Figure 19**). Interestingly, many older adults who are still working do not know when they expect to retire, or do not anticipate ever retiring. Developing new programs that would particularly attract older workers may be useful. For example, convening a job fair for part-time or volunteer positions or hosting seminars on retirement planning—both financial and social.

**Figure 19. Anticipated retirement timing, among those currently working**

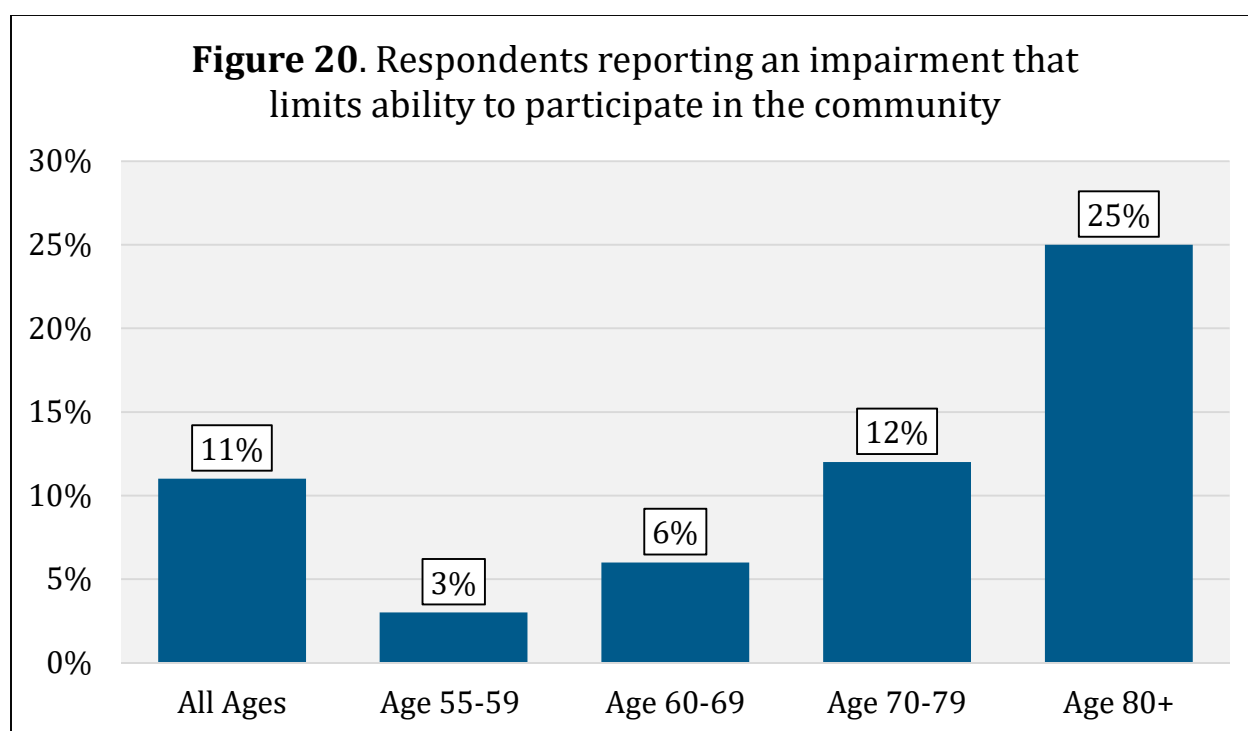
- N/A, I am already fully retired
- Within the next 3 years
- In 3 to 5 years
- In 6 to 10 years
- In more than 10 years
- Not sure
- I do not anticipate ever fully retiring



## Health and Caregiving

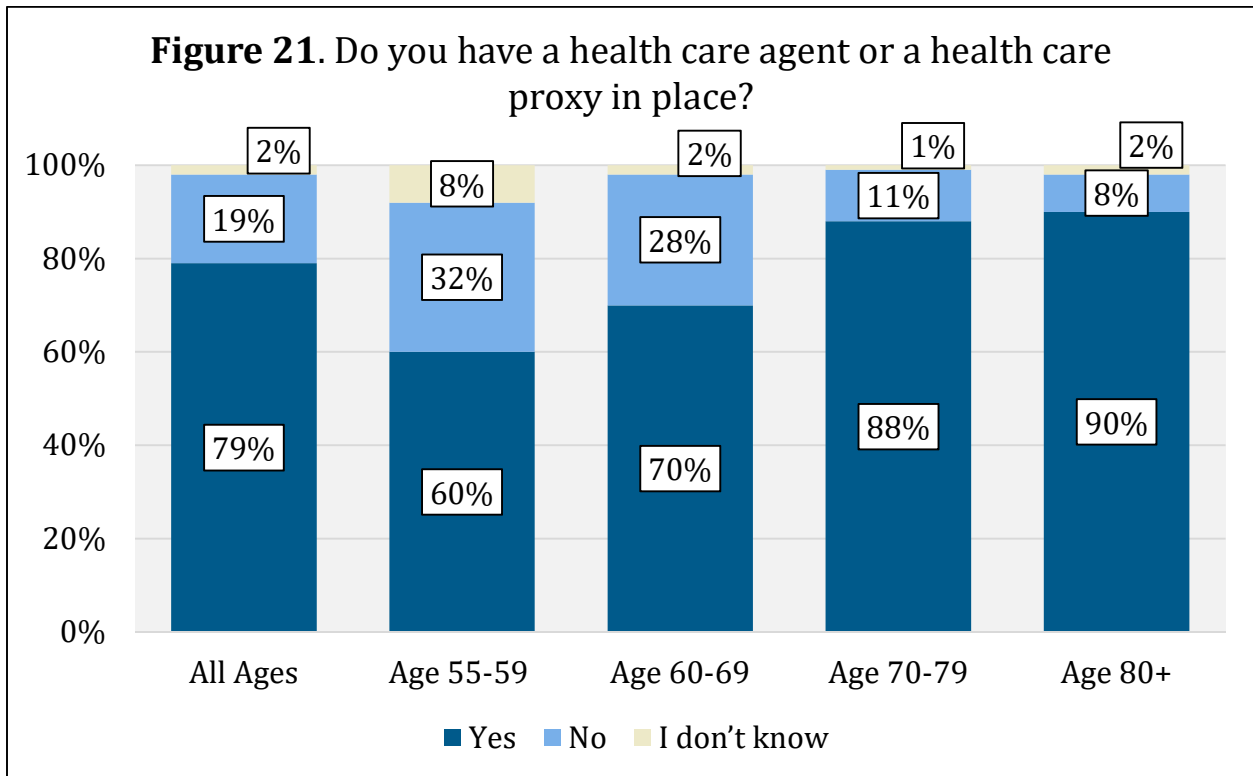
Nationally, most of the care and support received by older adults due to health difficulties or disability is provided informally by family members or friends. Informal caregivers throughout the country contribute millions of hours of care without financial compensation (see statistics through the [Family Caregiver Alliance](#)).

Survey participants were asked to report whether they had an impairment that limits their ability to participate in community activities. Although 11% of all respondents reported having a limiting impairment, it is apparent that the likelihood of impairment increases with age. About 60% of those in their 60s reported having an impairment that limits their ability to participate in the community. This share doubles to 12% for respondents in their 70s, and increases to a quarter of respondents age 80 or older (see **Figure 20**).



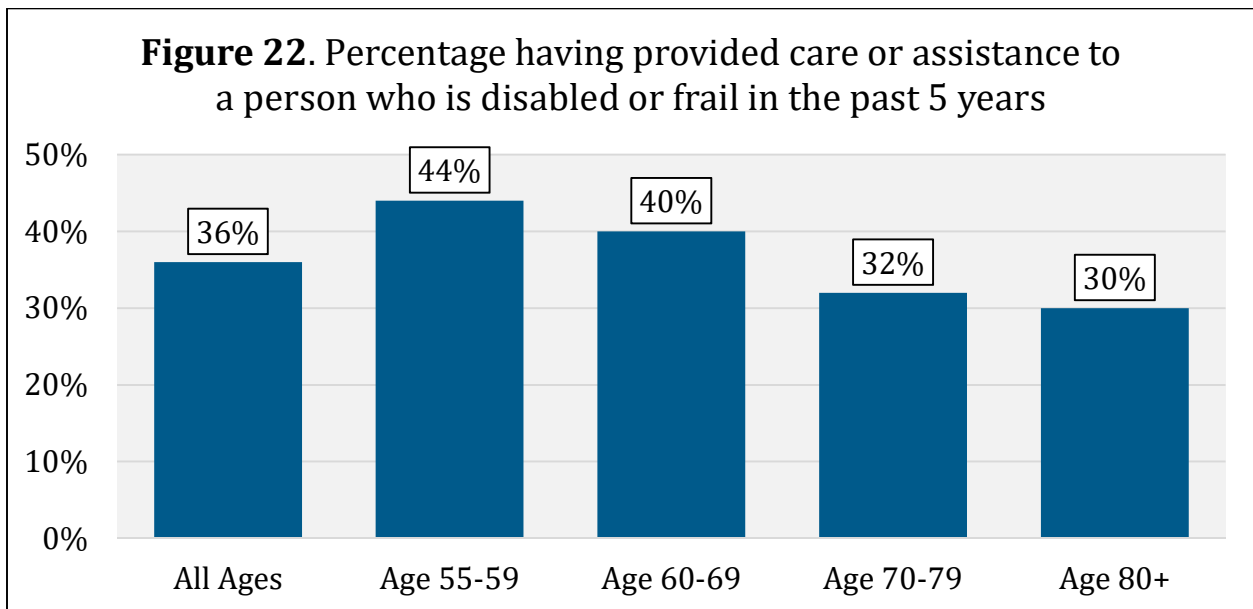
A health care proxy is a person who can make health care decisions for an individual if they are unable to communicate for themselves. Health care proxies are important because in an emergency or at the end of life someone may not be able to make decisions about their own medical care.<sup>18</sup> As shown in **Figure 21**, 79% of survey participants indicated having a health care proxy or agent in place. Among those age 80 and older, the percentage increases to 90%.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/choosing-health-care-proxy>



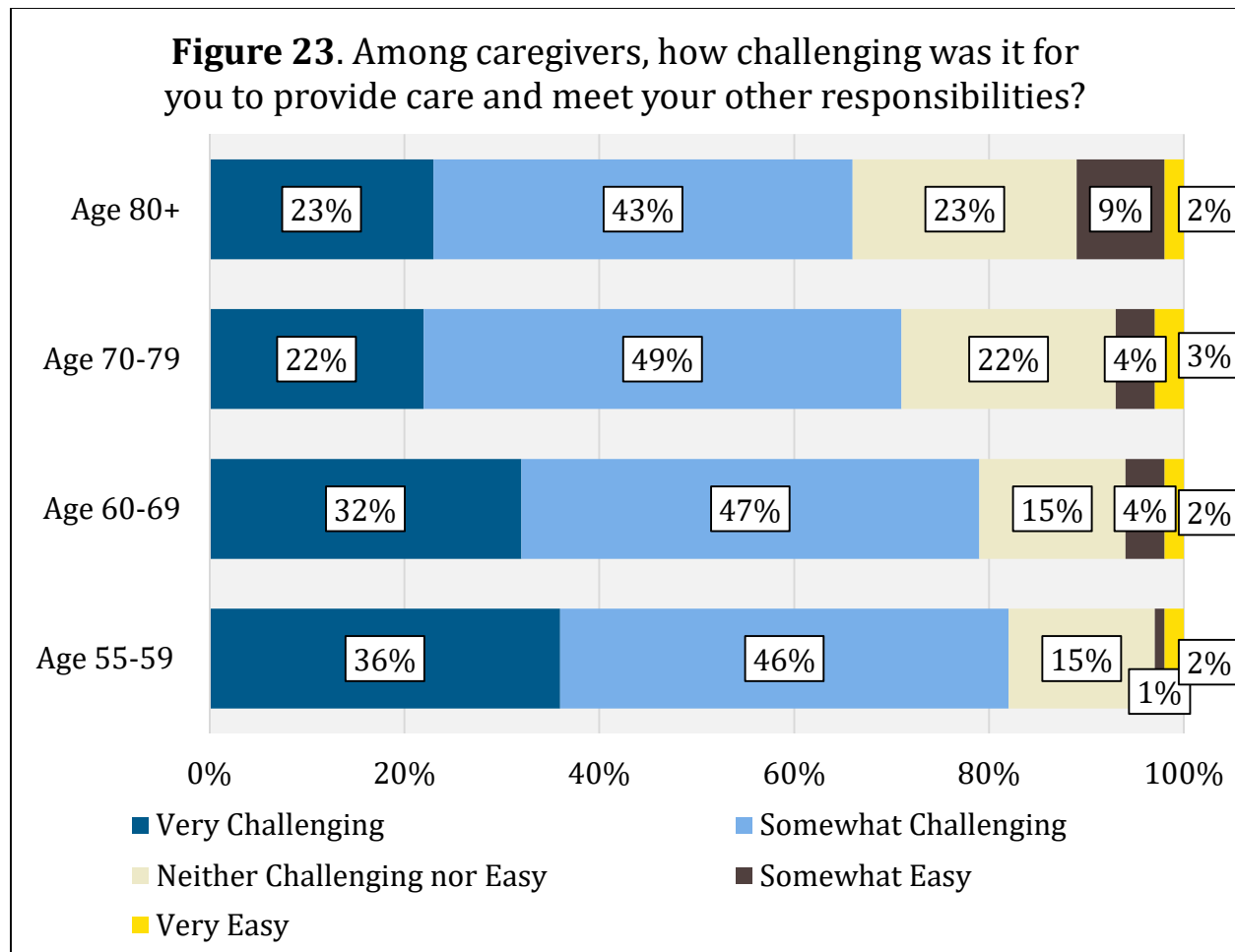
According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the number of caregivers increased from 43.5 million in 2015 to 53 million in 2020. By 2030, an estimated 73 million people will be 65 or older and many will require daily assistance from at least one caregiver. Studies show that caregiving can lead to physical, emotional, and financial strain for many individuals.<sup>19</sup>

Just over one-third of survey respondents stated that they are currently providing care or have provided care or assistance to a person who was disabled or frail in the past 5 years. That percentage is highest among those age 55-59 (44%) (see **Figure 22**).



<sup>19</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/publications/features/supporting-caregivers.htm>

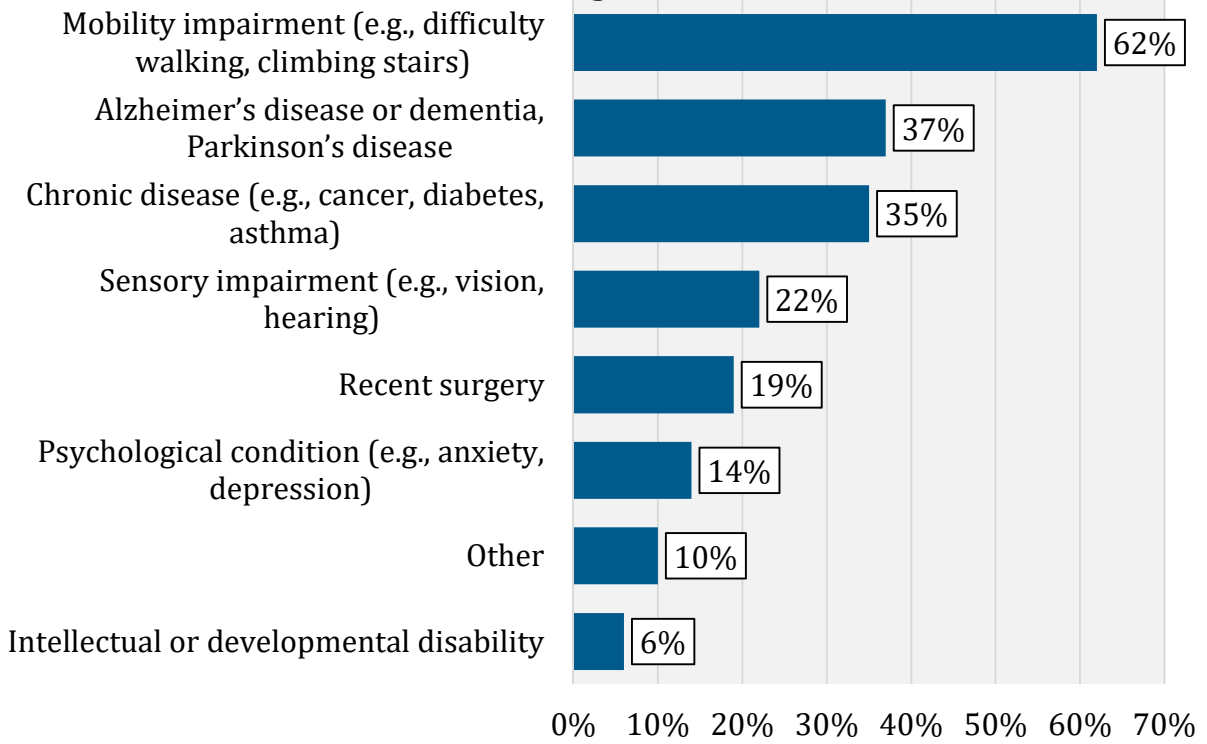
Many caregivers who responded to the Westborough survey, when asked how challenging it was to provide care and meet other family/work responsibilities, stated that it was very or somewhat challenging. This was especially true for those age 55-59 and 60-69, where more than 75% of those providing care reported this was very or somewhat challenging (see **Figure 23**). Many in this age group are likely still working and therefore may be struggling to meet the demands of both caregiving and work. Even for the other age groups, between 60-70% of those who provide care find it very or somewhat challenging. Services (e.g., transportation to adult day programs), connections to local or state care giving supports, and programming (e.g., support groups) might be needed to support caregivers.



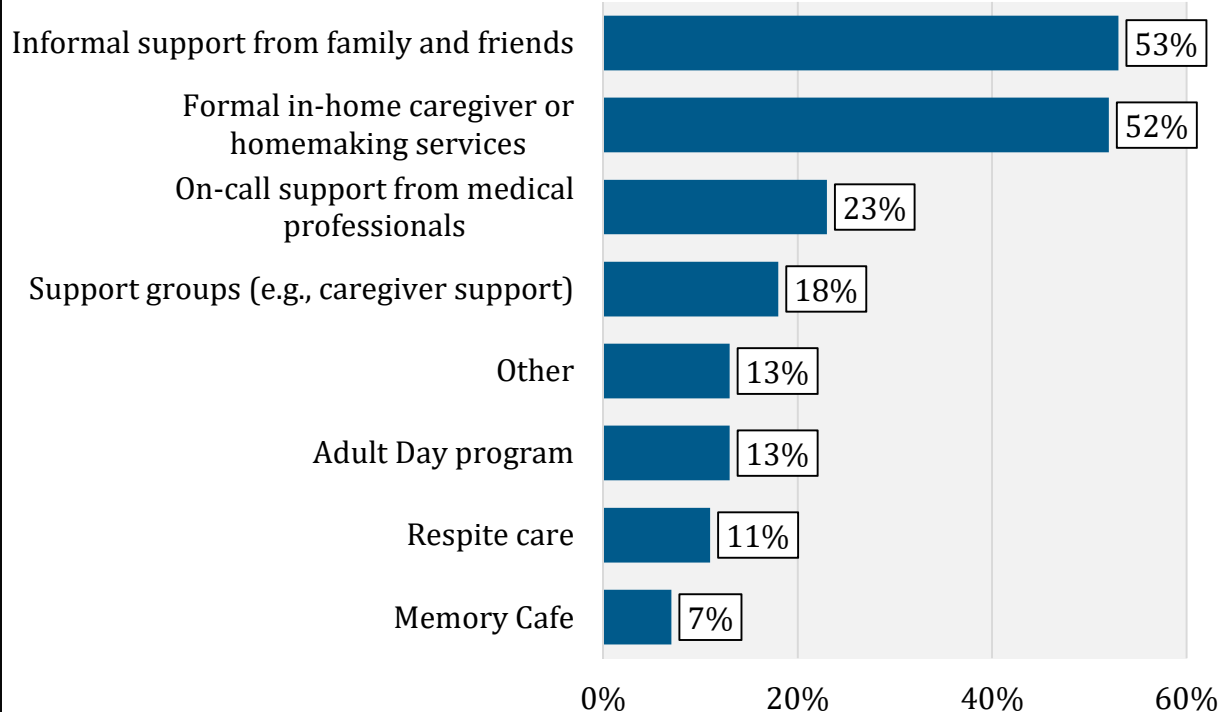
Caregivers were asked to indicate which conditions were experienced by their care recipient. The most frequently reported condition was mobility impairment (such as difficulty walking or climbing stairs) at 62%, followed by Alzheimer’s or dementia (37%) or chronic diseases like diabetes, arthritis, or heart disease (35%) (see **Figure 24**).

Among caregiver survey respondents, informal support from family and friends (53%), formal and in-home caregiving and homemaking services (52%) were identified as the most valuable types of assistance to support caregiving responsibilities (see **Figure 25**).

**Figure 24.** What condition is the primary reason for needing care?



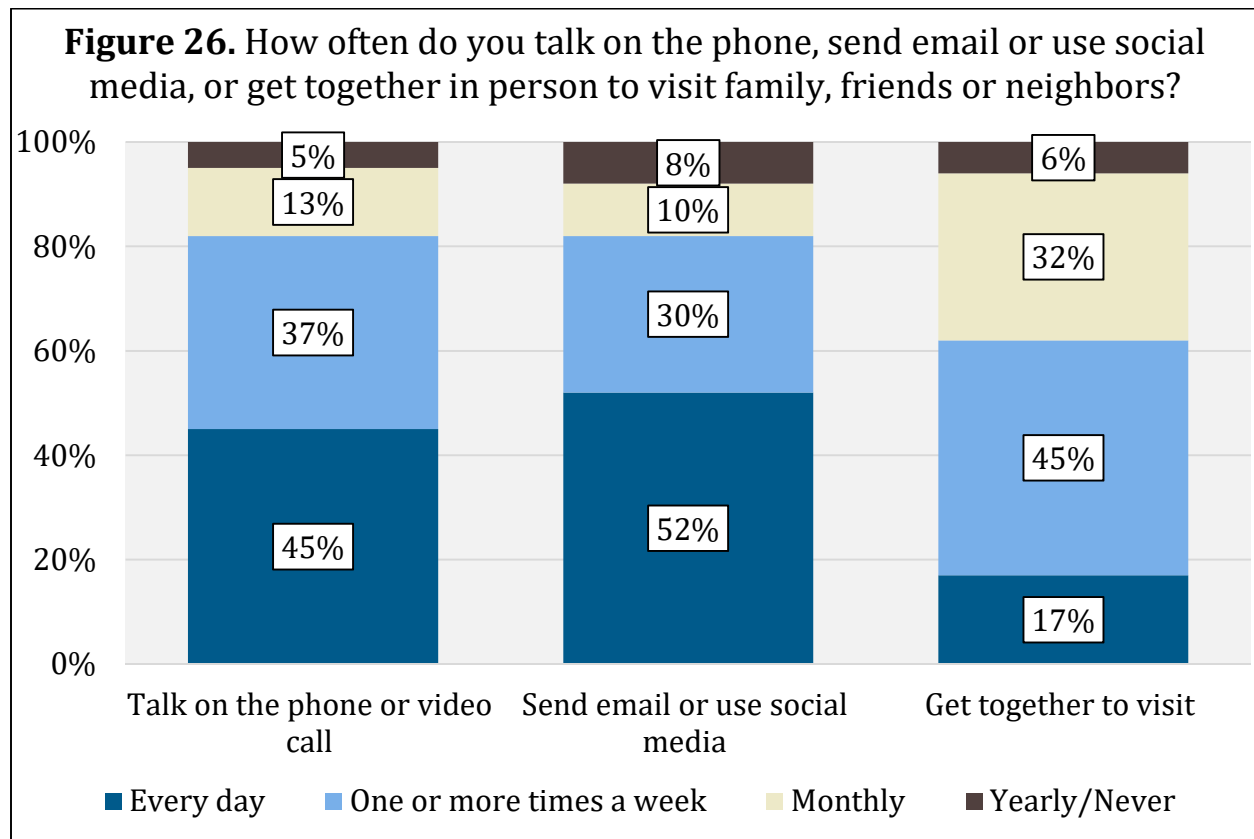
**Figure 25.** "What supports were, or would have been, most valuable to you during your time providing care or assistance?"



## Social Activities and Relationships

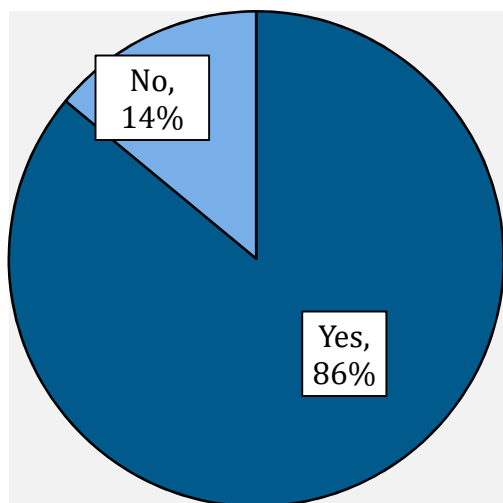
Social activities and relationships shape wellbeing for individuals of all ages. Indeed, the absence of social relationships may have a substantial negative impact on health as behaviors such as smoking or overeating. Many older adults are at high risk for social isolation, especially if their health and social networks break down. These risks are exacerbated if accessible services and transportation are not readily available to them as a means for maintaining contact with the world outside their homes. Providing opportunities for social engagement and participation in community events—through volunteer programs, learning opportunities and exercise programs, as well as social activities—can help community members maintain social support, remain active, prolong independence, and improve quality of life.

The majority of survey respondents speak with someone or use email or social media on at least a weekly basis to connect with family, friends, or neighbors (see **Figure 26**). Although 62% of the respondents get together in person with someone at least weekly, more than one third only get together monthly or less frequently. Of note, 25% of respondents age 80 or older reported getting together with loved ones daily, compared to less than 20% for all other age groups (**Appendix A**). Individuals who have infrequent contact with friends or relatives represent important groups to target efforts aimed at reducing isolation and, more generally, improving emotional wellbeing.





**Figure 27.** Do you know someone living nearby on whom you can rely for help when you need it?



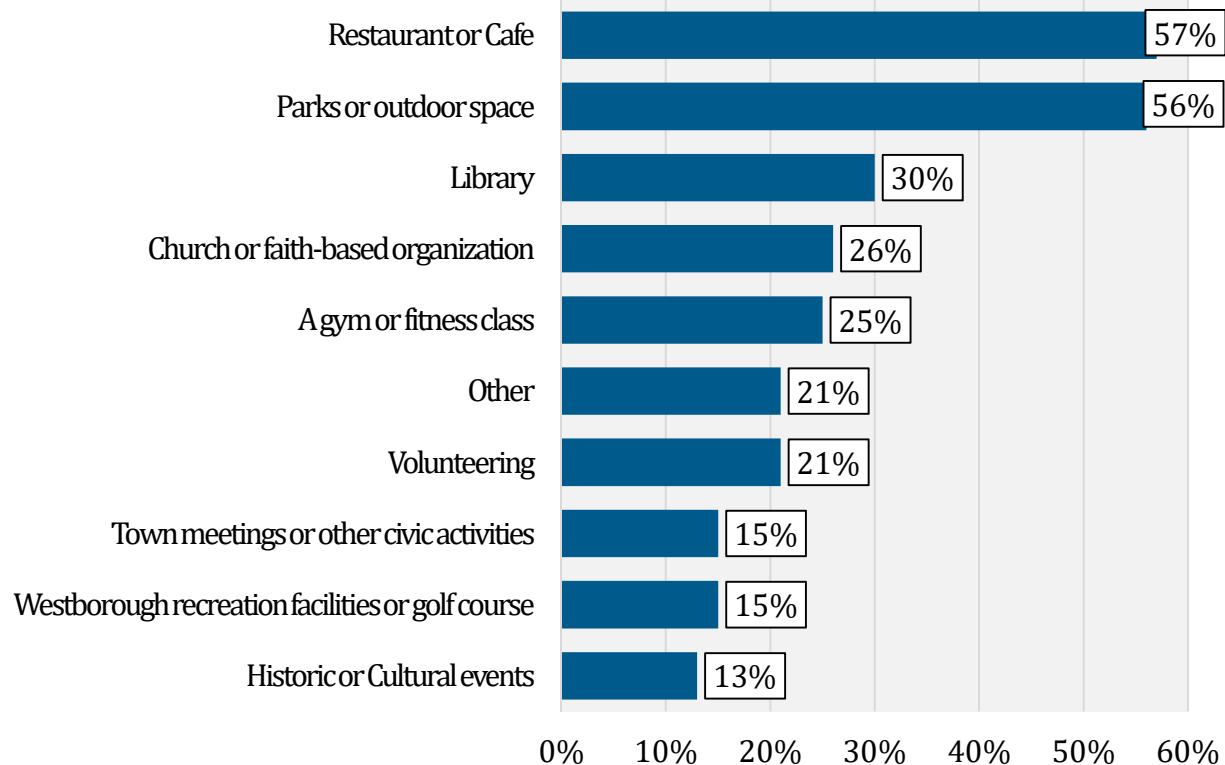
Openness to helping others, watching out for neighbors, and being embedded in a strong system of mutual support are hallmarks of a strong community. Yet when survey respondents were asked if they know someone living nearby on whom they can rely for help when needed, 14% of all respondents said they did not (**Figure 27**).

Respondents were asked if they have felt excluded in Westborough because of personal characteristics over the last five years (**Appendix A**). Although the majority (82%) have not felt excluded, some respondents cited age (6%), income (6%), or other (4%) as reasons for feeling excluded.

In order to understand how residents spend their time, respondents were asked about where they spend their free time, outside of the Westborough

Senior Center. **Figure 28** highlights the types of places and activities that respondents participate in, with over half of respondents identifying restaurants or cafes, and parks or outdoor spaces. Among those reporting “other”, write-in responses included staying home or with friends and family, engaging in personal hobbies (e.g., knitting, art classes, book club), and outdoor or fitness activities (e.g., walks, fishing, gardening and yard maintenance).

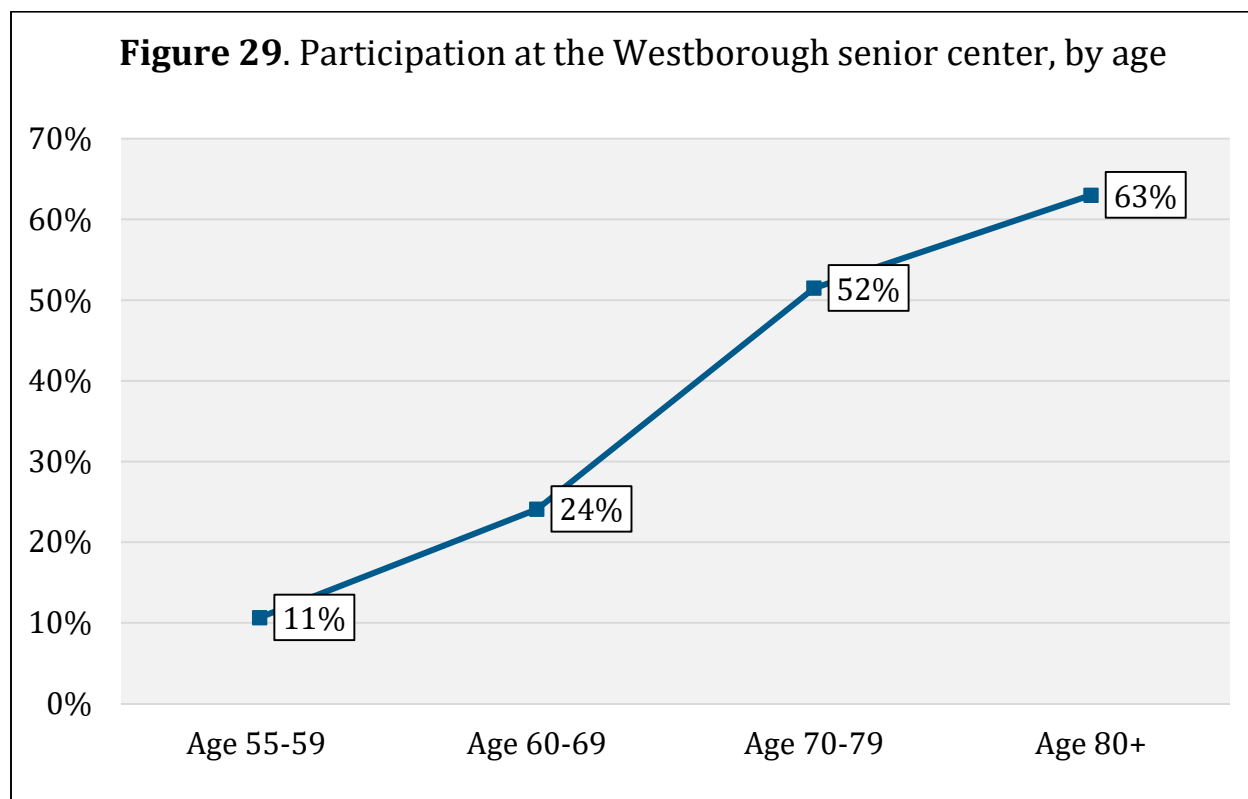
**Figure 28.** Where respondents spend their free time



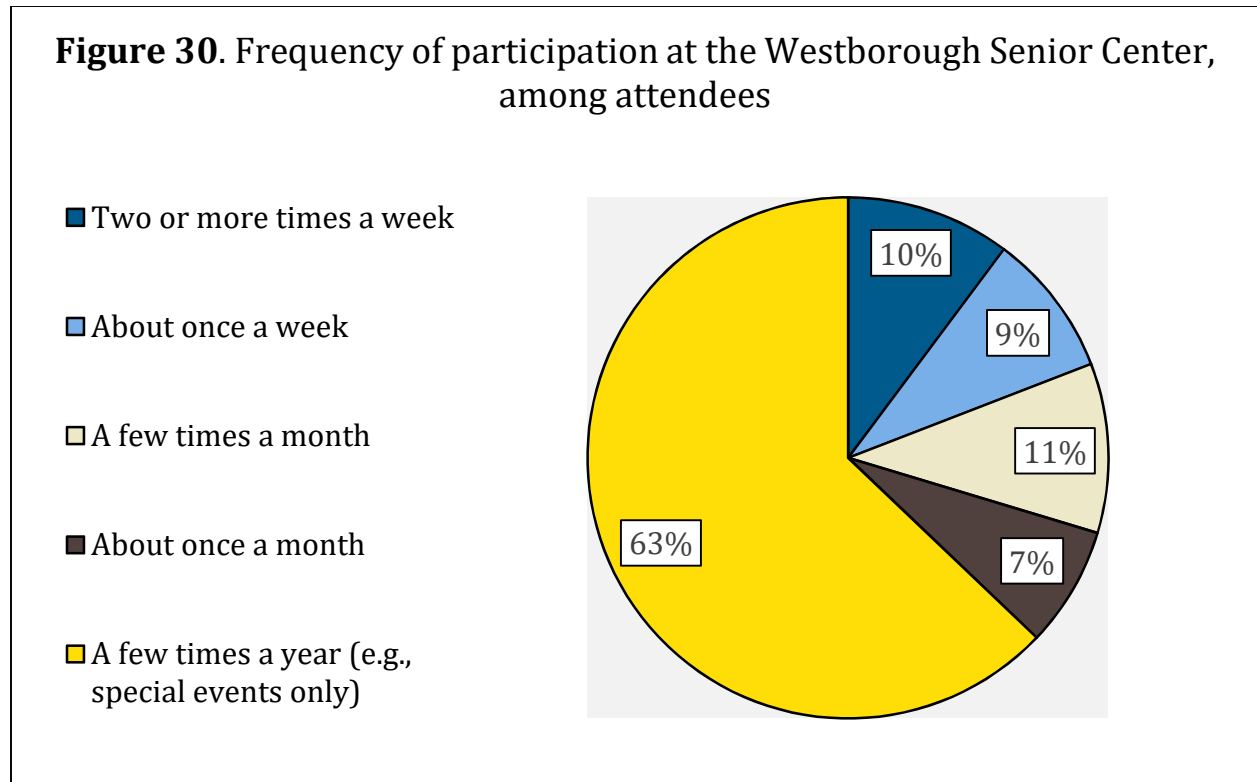
## Current & Future Programs & Services at the Westborough Senior Center

Local senior centers play a part in helping older adults age in place and in community. Residents may obtain transportation, health screening, or social services through their local COA. Older adults may seek opportunities for engagement and socialization through volunteer programs, learning opportunities and exercise programs, as well as social activities. These involvements can help community members maintain social support, remain active, prolong independence and improve quality of life. Some research suggests that participating in a Senior Center may reduce one's sense of isolation, a highly significant outcome given the negative consequences of being disconnected socially.

About two-thirds of respondents see the Westborough senior center as playing a role in their or their loved one's lives—making it clear that the Westborough Senior Center is a revered community asset for many (**Appendix A**). Survey results suggest that participation in the Westborough Senior Center is considerably more common among older residents. As shown in **Figure 29**, just 11% of those age 50-59 and 24% of respondents in their 60s report ever using programs or services offered by the Westborough Senior Center. Then, about half of respondents in their 70s and 63% of respondents age 80 and older indicated they have participated in the Westborough Senior Center. This age-graded pattern of participation is not unusual in senior centers and may reflect the increasing value of the Westborough Senior Center to older residents.

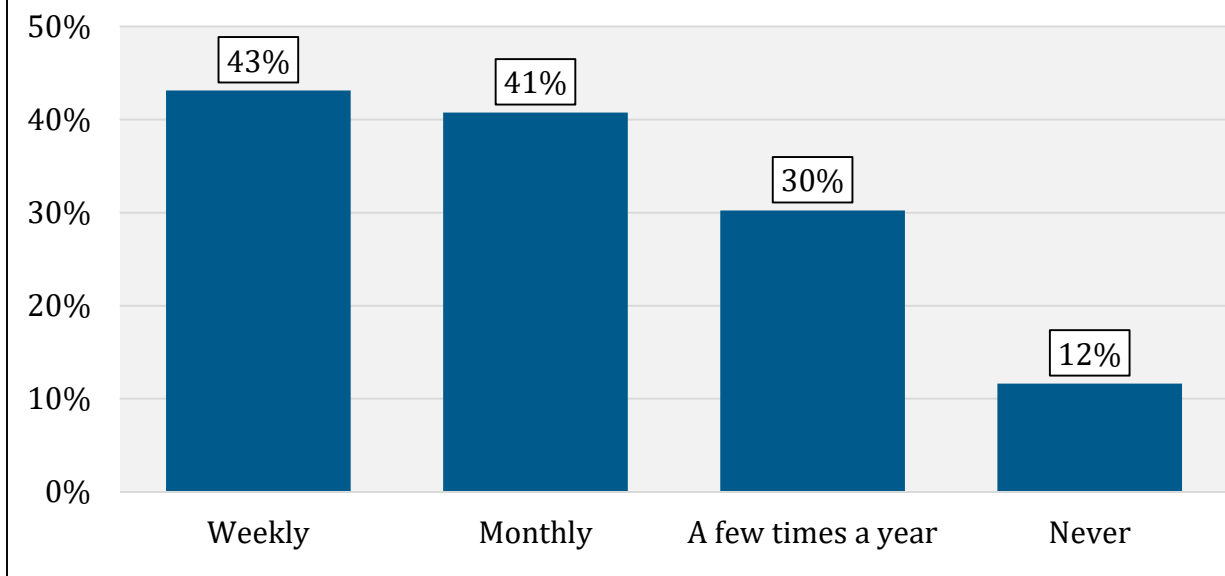


Among respondents who participate at the Westborough Senior Center, nearly two-thirds only visit a few times a year, while 19% attend weekly (**Figure 30**). This range of participation levels highlights the broad continuum of affiliation with the Westborough COA, with many residents participating just periodically, while others include visits to the Westborough COA as part of their regular weekly schedule. Note that participation on a weekly or more frequent basis was reported by just 2% of respondents who are age 50-59 and 4% among those age 60-69 while 13% of those age 80 and older participate weekly, suggesting that older participants attend more frequently during the course of a month or a year (**Appendix A**).



A fifth of all respondents reported traveling to senior centers in other towns to participate in programs and services, with 27% of respondents in their 70s and 32% of respondents age 80 and older (**Appendix A**). **Figure 31** presents the share of respondents who travel to other senior centers by how often they participate at the Westborough Senior Center. About 40% of those who attend the Westborough Senior Center regularly also travel to other senior centers, and 30% of those who participate a few times a year travel to other senior centers. Just 12% of respondents who never participate at the Westborough COA travel to other senior centers. These results suggest that current and potential participants of the Westborough Senior Center may seek out different programs, services, and experiences at other senior centers.

**Figure 31.** Respondents who have traveled to senior centers in other towns, by participation at the Westborough Senior Center

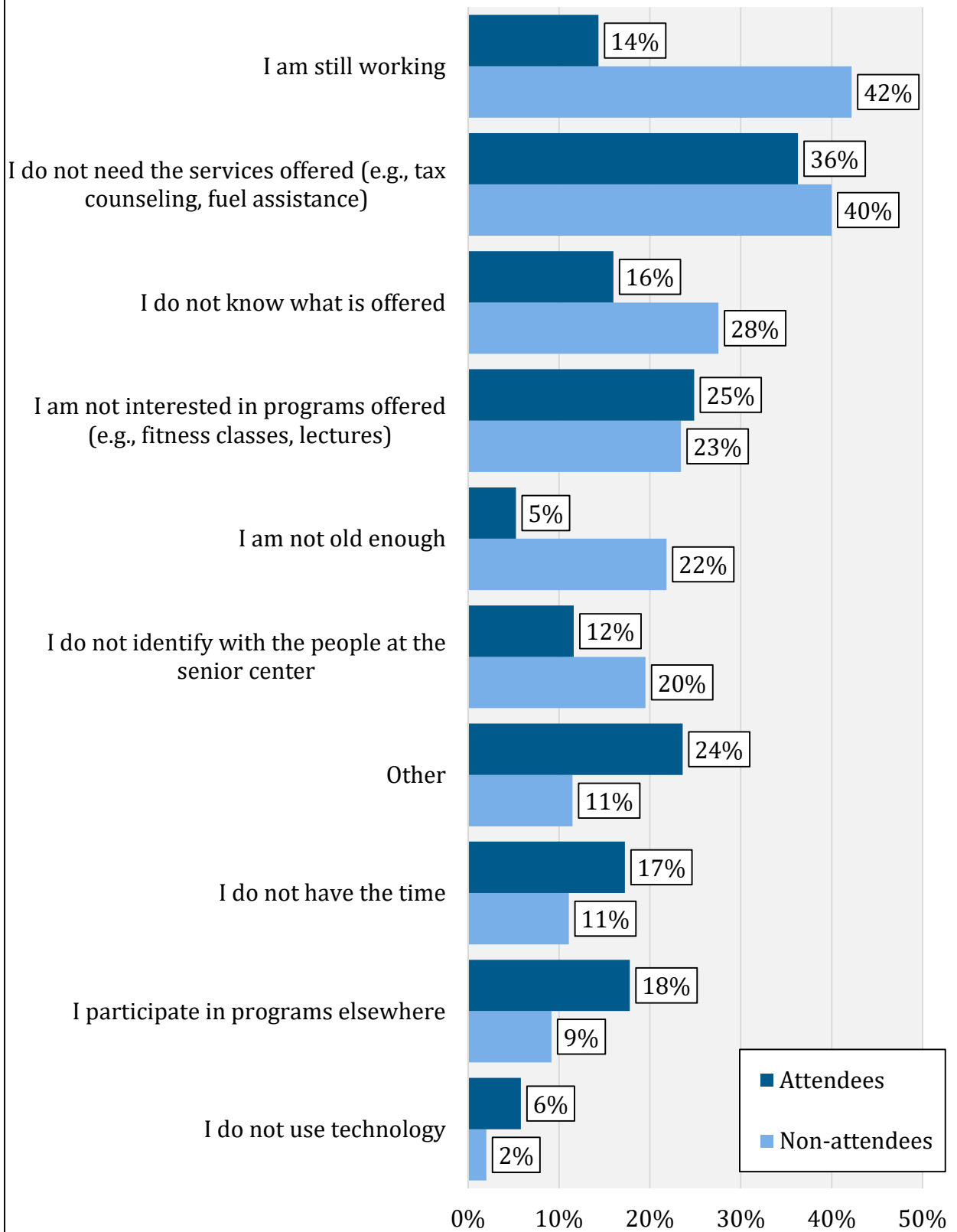


The following three figures present findings related to barriers and facilitators to participation at the Westborough Senior Center. Results are presented for both attendees and non-attendees (respondents who never attend the Senior Center). Results for all respondents and by age group can be found in **Appendix A**.

**Figure 32** presents the factors that limit participation at the Westborough Senior Center. The top factors limiting participation among those who never attend included still working (42%), followed by not needing services (40%). Similarly, the top factor limiting participation reported by respondents who do attend the Senior Center was not needing the services (36%).

Nearly a quarter of both groups of respondents cited not being interested in the programs offered as a factor that limits their participation at the Senior Center. These results suggest that there is a perception that one has to “need” to attend the senior center, not just desire, and that accessibility to community resources for those in the workforce is crucial to participation.

**Figure 32. Factors that limit participation at the Westborough Senior Center**



When asked to indicate what would make it more likely they would use the services offered by the Westborough Senior Center, approximately one-third of respondents reported that having more knowledge about the programs and services available would be helpful (see **Appendix A**).

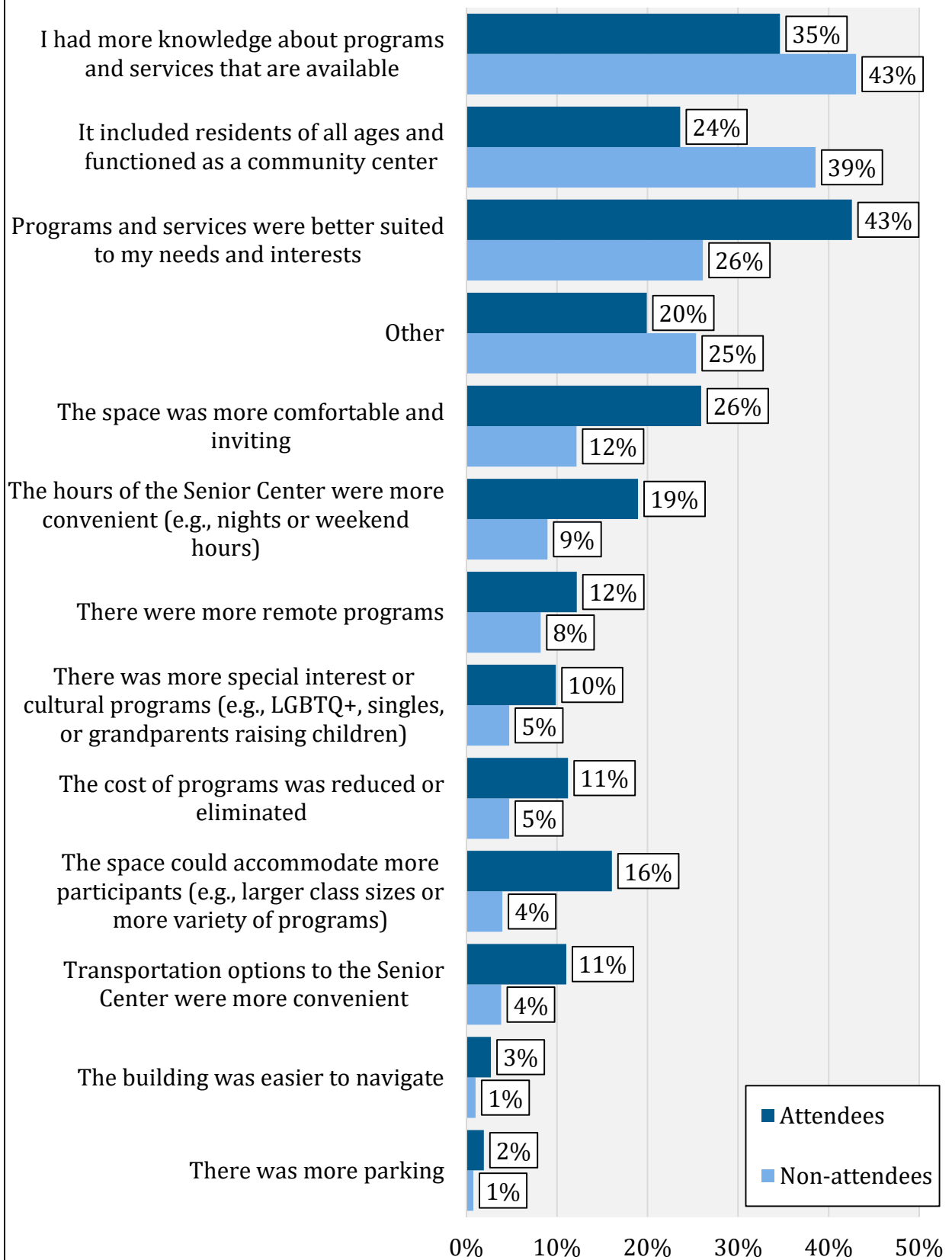
**Figure 33** demonstrates differences in responses between attendees and non-attendees. Higher shares of non-attendees reported that additional information about the Senior Center would increase the likelihood of attendance compared to attendees (43% vs 35%). Additionally, 39% of respondents who never attend the Westborough Senior Center reported they would be more likely to participate if the Center included residents of all ages and functioned as a community center; this compares to 24% of attendees. Among the quarter of respondents who selected “Other,” written responses included forward-thinking sentiments: although some respondents may not need, be interested, or have the time to participate currently, expectations to participate later in life were expressed. Additional explanations provided as an “Other” response included thoughts that the location of the Senior Center is challenging to get to, the physical space needs updating and expansion, and ideas for additional programs.

*“Right now I keep very active and busy with my family and pet. The Senior Center is a wonderful organization and if I need it in the future I would not hesitate to use it..” -Survey respondent*

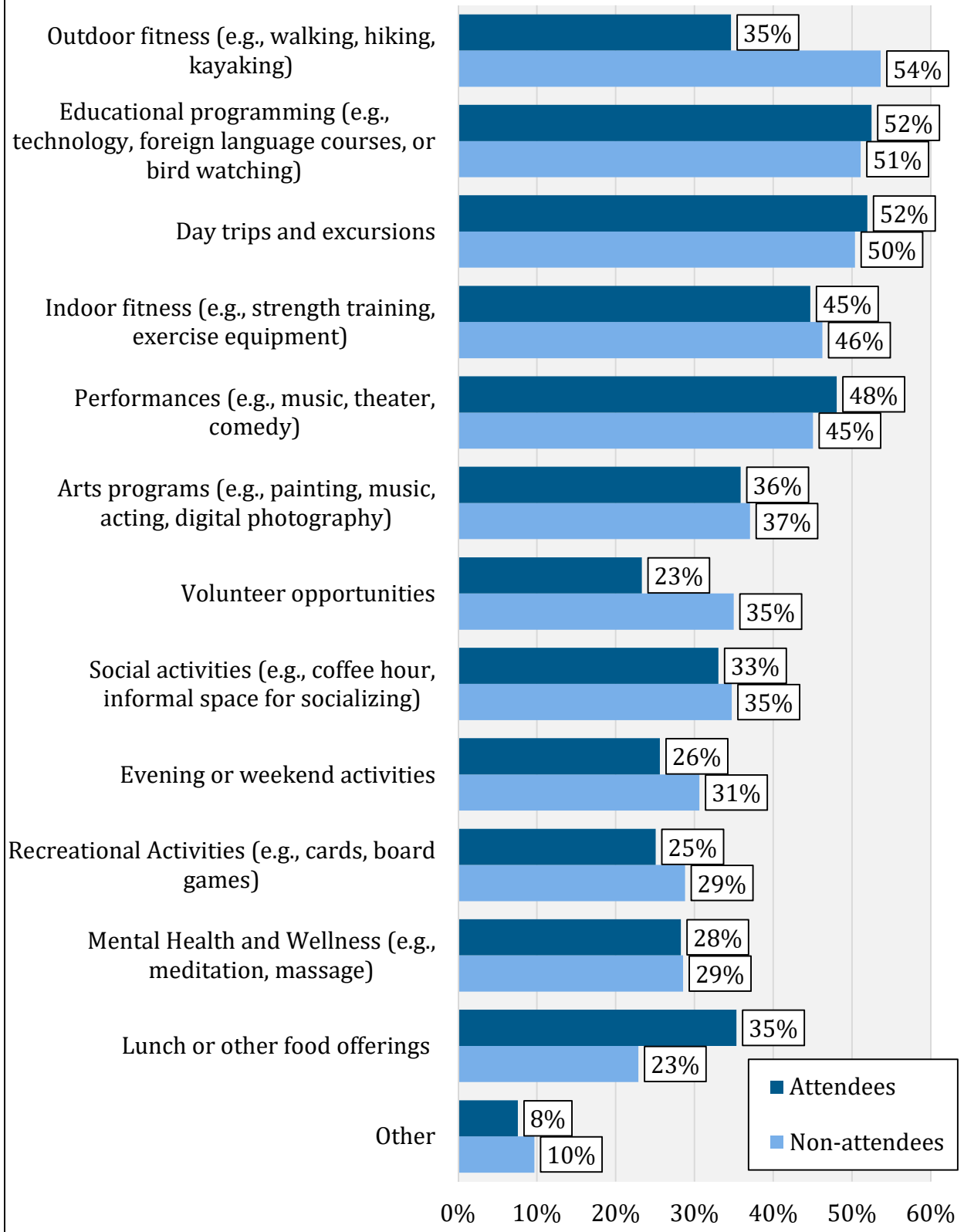
Taking into consideration future needs and interests, survey participants were asked to prioritize what features or offerings of the Senior Center they would like to see expanded (see **Figure 34**). Attendees and non-attendees responded to this question similarly. About half of both attendees and non-attendees indicated that they would prioritize educational programming (e.g. technology, language courses, etc.) and day trips and excursions. Approximately 45% would prioritize indoor fitness activities as well as artistic performances (e.g. music, theater, comedy). And about one-third of survey respondents would prioritize arts programs (e.g. painting, music, acting) and social activities (e.g. coffee hour or informal socializing).

There are a few notable differences in preferences between those who currently participate at the Westborough Senior Center and those who do not. For example, 39% of non-attendees would be more likely to use the Westborough Senior Center if it included residents of all ages—compared to just 24% of attendees. As well, 43% of attendees would be more likely to attend the Westborough Senior Center if the programs were better suited to their interests—suggesting that higher frequency of attendees could be attained through developing new and different programs.

**Figure 33. “I would be more likely to use the Westborough Senior Center programs and services if...”**



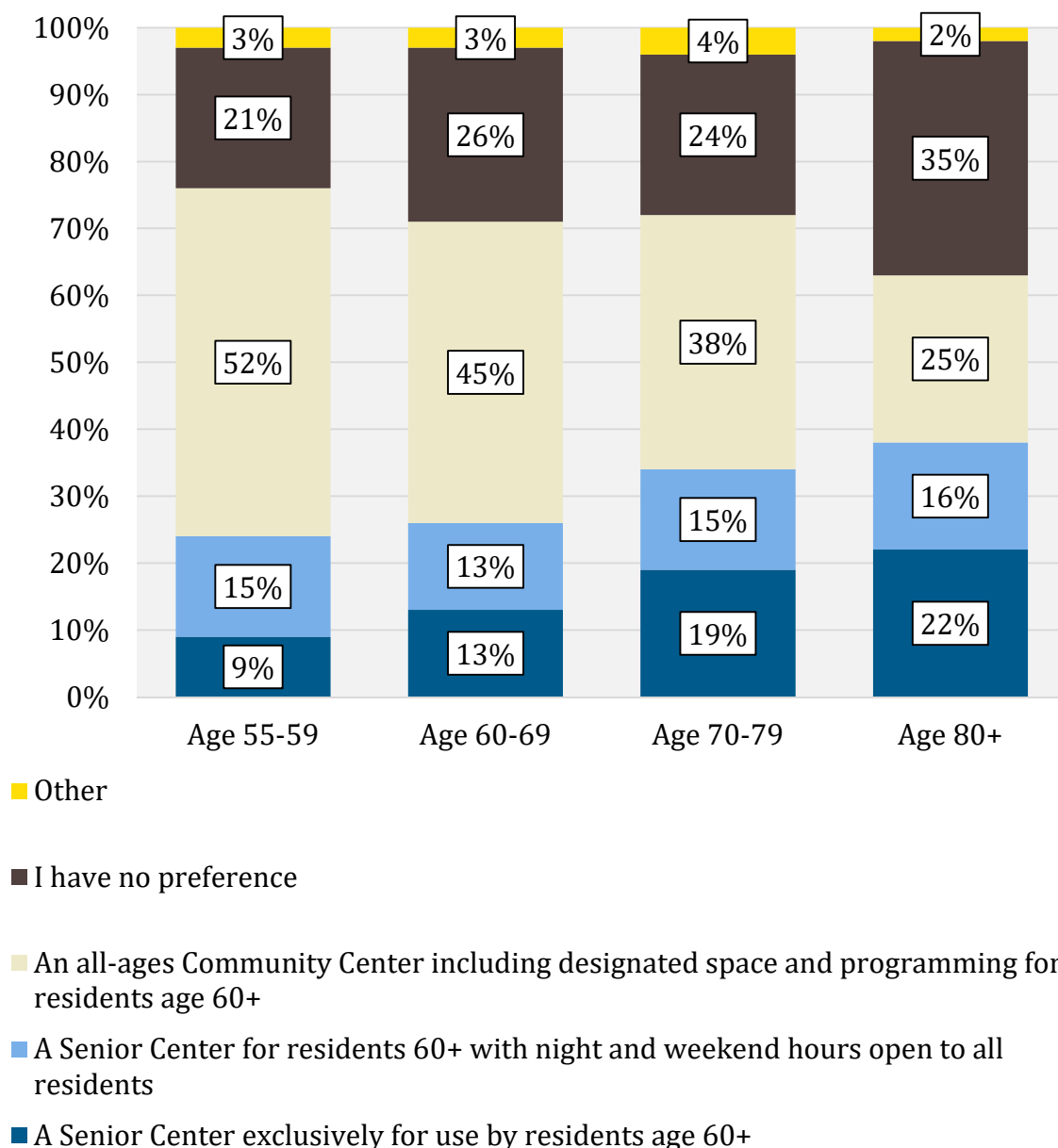
**Figure 34.** Thinking about your own future needs and interests, which of the following areas would you prioritize in expanding availability through the Westborough Senior Center?





The Town of Westborough is considering building a new combined Senior/Community Center. Survey participants were asked to rate their preference for a senior center vs. a community center available to residents of all ages (see **Figure 35**). Just over 50% of survey respondents between the ages of 55-59 and approximately 45% of survey respondents between the ages of 60-69 expressed preference for an all-ages community center with designated space for 60+ activities. Among those age 80+, 35% reported “no preference” for a combined Senior/community center, 25% indicated a preference for an all-ages community center, and about 20% preferred a Senior Center exclusively for use by residents 60+.

**Figure 35.** Preferences for potential options for a new combined Senior/Community/Recreation Center, by age



At the conclusion of the survey, respondents were invited to write in any additional thoughts or comments about the Town of Westborough and more than 600 participants took the time to provide additional feedback. Some comments mirrored support for topics learned during this needs assessment while many comments provided fresh insights. The most prominent themes that emerged are presented in **Table 6**, with sample quotes. The majority of the comments were positive, about the Town of Westborough more broadly, and about the Westborough Senior Center, specifically. It is evident from the comments that while some of those who complimented the Senior Center take advantage of the programs and services, others do not at this time, but are comforted to know that Westborough’s Senior Center is available for their future needs.

In addition, there were many suggestions and strong sentiment regarding the structure of the senior center, in addition to its programs and services. Several respondents identified physical features of the building as deterrents to participation, while recommending updates to the furniture, interior design, and physical structure as actions that would make the senior center feel more inviting and contemporary. Moreover, many respondents wrote-in suggestions for programs and services, focusing on adding variety to the existing catalog of offerings. Respondents recognized the need for continued and expanded services, such as transportation, financial assistance, and home maintenance referrals, echoing concerns about continuing to live independently in Westborough, as reported in **Table 5**. Other comments regarding programs emphasized participating in energetic and engaging activities, creating social connections, and wellness that contribute to quality of life, as well as having opportunities to participate late in the afternoon and evening or on weekends. Modernized surroundings and expanded offerings are things that respondents identified as needs—but in the opinion of many residents, would require additional investment in an appropriate space, staffing, and other resources conducive to a vibrant center.

Another common sentiment expressed by survey respondents included the perception that older residents in Westborough need more attention and support from the Town. Many cited feeling that their own needs and interests were in competition with those of younger residents, specifically when it comes to municipal spending and development priorities.

Many statements shared as write-ins by survey participants focused on community-wide issues such as reaching residents through improved communication strategies. Some respondents provided specific ideas for the Senior Center to amplify outreach, such as welcoming programs to facilitate participation by Westborough’s newer residents, and “open house” greeting events to encourage COA engagement with Westborough’s younger-older-adults, in addition to other suggestions. Recognizing the heterogeneity among the older population, multiple streams of communication and information (e.g., print materials, emails, social media, phone calls) can be synthesized to maximize reach.

**Table 6.** Additional thoughts or comments about the Town of Westborough

<b>Senior Center is a valued asset, but facility needs improvements</b>
"I think the senior center has done a good job meeting the needs of Westboro's seniors but in order to meet the needs of incoming generations of older adults, the programming and overall offerings and atmosphere need to be brought up to date."
"The Westborough senior center needs a face lift. The atmosphere should be welcoming...I would like to enjoy the facility and the activities offered."
"The center needs expansion + updating to attract "today's type" of seniors who are active and mobile."
<b>Consensus for new and varied programs &amp; services in Westborough</b>
"I think the town needs to consider that there are residents 60+ who are still working full time. The senior center seems to focus only on those who are retired."
"More activities/classes for seniors. I shouldn't have to go to other towns."
"The senior center is a wonderful service the town provides however I believe more variety in programming is needed and more aid should be provided to the most vulnerable members of our community."
<b>Perception that older residents are not a priority</b>
"The older residents of Westborough are a significant segment of our community, but more attention and town revenues are given to other segments (i.e., school children and families of school children) at the expense of resources devoted to our senior residents"
"Not all seniors have the same needs. Can't be treated as a "bloc" some are physically active into their 70's-80's, others not."
"Pay more attention to the elderly on fixed incomes and those with disabilities, apparent and non-apparent."
"Learn more about the demographics and interests of seniors in Westboro."
<b>Desire for accessible and comprehensive communication and information</b>
"I'm 62 and know nothing about the Senior Center. No newsletter, no social media. I don't have cable, so Westborough TV is no help. Are there already programs I could be participating in?"
"I just looked for info on senior center. Nothing on website except - council on aging committee. Buried in a newsletter I see an address. Please update website with information."
"I often find out about events after they have happened. More communication would help. Where is the newsletter available- didn't know they did one."

## Conclusions and Recommendations

This report describes research undertaken by the Center for Social & Demographic Research on Aging (CSDRA) within the Gerontology Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston, on behalf of the Town of Westborough. The goals of this project were to investigate the needs, interests, preferences, and opinions of Westborough's residents age 55 or older by engaging the community regarding their experiences and needs relevant to the Council on Aging's (COA's) objective to identify and serve the needs of all Westborough citizens 55 and older. The contents of this report are meant to inform the Town of Westborough, the Westborough COA, Senior Center, and organizations that work with and on behalf of older residents of Westborough for the purposes of COA mission fulfillment alongside planning and coordination of services for current and future needs of residents. The report will also help to build awareness about issues facing Westborough among community members at large.

A broad range of findings are reported in this document, highlighting the many positive features of Westborough as well as concerns expressed by older residents. While many of our findings, and the recommendations that follow, intersect with the scope of responsibility of the Westborough Council on Aging, it is understood that responding to many needs and concerns expressed in the community will require the involvement of other municipal offices or community stakeholders, and some will require substantial collaborative effort.

We summarize key findings and make the following recommendations to the Town of Westborough:

- **Costs of living and availability of downsizing options are perceived as challenging in Westborough.**
  - Almost all focus group participants described challenges associated with housing, including that property taxes are becoming unaffordable and that there are severely limited options within Westborough to downsize.
  - Cost of living, particularly rising property taxes, is named as a top concern among respondents as they think about being able to stay in Westborough as they age.
  - Nearly a third of survey respondents report needing some kind of home repair to remain living safely over the next 5 years. Among them, 5% are unable to afford such repairs.
  - When asked about preferences for type of housing, 41% of respondents aged 55-59 and nearly a third of respondents in their 60s would prefer to live in an apartment, condo or townhome. Among respondents in their 70s, 43% would choose a senior independent living community; assisted living is the most preferred housing type for the future, reported by those age 80+.

## Recommendations:

- Promote awareness of various housing options across the lifespan and continue to contribute to local conversations about housing options for older adults who wish to find supportive housing.
  - Advocate for options that current residents prefer, including condominiums and other types of housing that offer low maintenance and single floor living. Assisted living communities and senior independent living units are desirable housing options.
  - Host a virtual forum to promote community conversations and awareness related to home sharing opportunities. Include representatives from Nesterly, a social enterprise that is dedicated to building intergenerational engagement and access to affordable housing through home sharing. Distribute Nesterly's<sup>20</sup> digital toolkit in advance of the meeting to Town leaders and residents.
- Consider ways of connecting residents with local resources for home repair or modifications. Including sources of funding, but also with other individuals who can do minor tasks or projects around the home.
  - The FY24 Town budget includes increasing the COA Handyman position from 8 hours a week to 16 hours. Continue to track demand for their services and consider further expansion of the role as needed.
- Promote awareness of existing property tax relief programs.
  - Document the number of residents who are “turned away” from existing programs due to eligibility requirements or other reasons to establish recommendations for expanding access.
  - Explore other incentive programs for volunteers.

## ➤ **Obtaining supplementary and accessible transportation is a concern for some of Westborough's residents as they age.**

- Maintaining independence is a major concern for survey respondents and one key facilitator of this independence is transportation.
- Only 7% of respondents do not drive, although this number is significantly larger when looking at just those age 80 and older, as 24% of this older segment of the population do not drive. Many residents who do drive, modify their driving to make it easier or safer.
- Among those who do not currently drive, 23% have missed or needed to reschedule a medical appointment because of a lack of transportation within the past 12 months. This is compared to only 2% of those who drive themselves and 9% of those who drive with some modifications.

## Recommendations:

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.nesterly.com>

- Conduct targeted, proactive, outreach to raise awareness of the existing programs that provide transportation to medical appointments and for other trips.
- Consider developing a local “travel training” program where residents can learn about options and navigation.
- Explore the expansion of volunteer transportation programs beyond medical appointments (e.g., Friends in Service Helping<sup>21</sup> (F.I.S.H.) to expand door-to-door transportation to the Senior Center or other social gatherings or shopping excursions and appointments.
- Target information to communities within Westborough who may have particular need for transportation services including those living alone and those with disabilities. Consider additional outreach for transportation when inclement weather is anticipated.

➤ **Many Westborough residents need support due to physical or cognitive conditions, and many caregivers need help**

- 11% of survey respondents reported having an impairment that limits their ability to participate in the community. This share more than doubles for those age 80 or older (25%)
- Nearly a third (36%) of survey respondents reported having been a caregiver within the past 5 years. Three quarters of caregivers reported that it is challenging to provide care and complete their daily responsibilities, including 79% of those in their 60s.
- The most valued supports reported by caregivers included informal support from family and friends (53%), formal in-home services (52%), and on-call support from medical professionals (23%).

**Recommendations:**

- Create new ways of providing information and assistance for caregivers, support groups for caregivers, and provide information about referral resources available. Consider hosting a family caregiver “resource fair” as an opportunity to connect the Senior Center with family caregivers.
  - The FY24 Town budget includes increasing the COA Homemaker position from 16 hours a week to 18 hours. The FY24 Town budget includes increasing the COA Homemaker position from 16 hours a week to 18 hours. This position provides short-term in-home support (e.g., light housekeeping) for residents during a recuperation period.
  - Continue to track demand for their services and consider further expansion of the role as needed.
- Consider hosting a “Caregiver’s Night Out” to provide residents who might be caring for a spouse, parent, or grandparent an opportunity to enjoy a night of entertainment.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://fishlexington.org/>

Explore partnerships with volunteer groups and other aging service providers to provide respite care during the event.

- Revisit the potential for offering a Memory Café<sup>22</sup> or providing resources of nearby Cafés for residents and their caregivers to attend.
  - Consider pilot-testing a volunteer respite program.
- Encourage Town employees or resident volunteers to become “dementia friends<sup>23</sup>” to learn more about communication and reduction of stigma around dementia.
  - Continue to coordinate with other COAs and organizations to connect Westborough caregivers with existing services.

➤ **Awareness and understanding of the Westborough Senior Center is uneven among residents, particularly those under the age of 70.**

- More than half of respondents age 70 or older reported participating at the senior center, compared to just 24% of those in their 60s.
- Among those who do participate, about two-thirds (63%) attend just a few times a year.
- 21% of all survey respondents have traveled to other senior centers to participate in programs. A sizeable share of respondents that participate regularly at the Westborough Senior Center also travel to other senior centers.
- The number one factor (reported by 32%) that would increase participation is having more knowledge about what is available.
- A lack of familiarity with the Westborough Senior Center is another deterrent that was commonly reported by survey respondents. For example, one wrote: *“if people were informed when they turned the appropriate age to start using the Senior Center- like a “welcome to the Senior Center” postcard maybe- and it could list what is offered there.”*.

**Recommendations:**

- Consider developing an “ambassador program” and coach residents to actively encourage new participants. Perhaps this could function as a property-tax work-off position or offer an incentive for the number of new participants they can recruit.
- Create a “newcomers” group at the Westborough Senior Center so participants feel connected to a group when they first arrive.
- Ensure that the forthcoming Citizen Leadership Academy is accessible to older residents by offering daytime sessions, considering adult learner styles, and ensuring that topics relevant to healthy aging in Westborough are included (e.g., transportation, accessory dwelling units, property tax relief programs, and how to access to food or social engagement opportunities).

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.ifcsboston.org/our-services/services-for-older-adults/home-community-supports/alzheimers-related-dementias-family-support/percolator>

<sup>23</sup> [Become a Dementia Friend | Dementia Friends USA](#)

- Host programming for newly retired residents or those considering retirement. Topics could include financial planning, health insurance coverage, volunteer work etc.
  - In order to avoid the deterrence of financially insecure residents from participating, consider noting on any promotional materials that if a resident is unable to pay the requested amount that they can contact the Westborough Senior Center to make other arrangements.
- **The physical space of the Senior Center does not currently meet the needs and interests of the range of ages of the Westborough older adult population. As well, the preference for programming and services is placed on personal growth and enrichment, as well as physical health.**
- The Westborough 2021 Master Plan<sup>24</sup> documents space constraints at the Senior Center and sets goals toward expanding facilities and programs over the coming years.
  - Focus group conversations and key informant interviews illuminated accessibility challenges of the Senior Center space, both inside and outside the building.
  - Qualitative data from focus groups and survey write-in responses include descriptions of the Westborough Senior Center space as outdated and unappealing.
  - About a quarter of survey respondents (26%) would be more likely to use the Westborough Senior Center if programs and services were better suited to their needs and interests. About 14% would increase participation if the space were more comfortable and inviting.
  - Respondents identified educational programming, day trips, fitness, and performances as priority areas of expansion at the Westborough Senior Center.
  - When asked about preference for a potential new combined Senior/Community/Recreation Center, 40% of all respondents selected “An all-ages Community Center including designated space and programming for residents age 60+.” The share of residents who prefer that scenario decreases with age: 52% of respondents in their 50s to 25% of respondents age 80 or older.

### **Recommendations:**

- Consider a rebranding effort to raise awareness about what is offered by the Westborough Senior Center. Perhaps changing the name to be more inclusive and creating an image that reframes aging as a positive and active experience may empower residents to participate in the community.

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<sup>24</sup> Accessible at: <https://www.town.westborough.ma.us/planning>



- Becoming designated as an Age and Dementia Friendly community<sup>25</sup> provides an avenue of community organizing and outreach that could support the effort to build a renewed perception of aging in Westborough.
- Consider updating the physical space of the Senior Center: new paint, decorations, and furniture to create a more welcoming space can encourage new participants to come and participate.
- Further investigate opportunities for providing COA programs and services at satellite locations in the community, such as public housing, the library, the schools, and local businesses
- Consider ways to welcome first-time participants who are reluctant to participate on their own (e.g., a “new member day” or a “bring a buddy” program to welcome new participants).
- Explore the use of technology (e.g., phone or other mobile devices) to include residents who are unable to leave their home in existing programs through video technology or making “friendly visits” by telephone.
- Consider developing a resident ambassador program to educate residents with information about existing resources to be conduits between the Senior Center and the community at-large, this could even be a property tax work off position.
- Further explore the appetite and potential for a Westborough Community Center.
  - Continue to engage the community for input and feedback about what a Community Center could look like. Use multiple avenues of communication and information (e.g., written feedback, email or online feedback, public forums) and ensure that perspectives representative of the community are heard.
  - Consider assembling a Committee to lead the initiative. For example, the Reading Center for Active Living Committee (ReCalc)<sup>26</sup> was established in 2021 as a volunteer ad hoc committee to comprehensively assess the current and future needs of the community, specific to the development of a potential new Senior/Community Center.
  - Continue and strengthen collaboration between Town Departments that may be most directly affected by the development of a Community Center (e.g., Council on Aging, Recreation, Youth and Family Services) and incorporate perspectives of their staff while exploring potential options for a Westborough Community Center.

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/examples-of-age-and-dementia-friendly-community-characteristics>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.readingma.gov/601/Reading-Center-for-Active-Living-Committ>

## Appendix A: Survey Results

Note: Appendix tables are based on 1,633 responses to the Town of Westborough Survey of residents age 55 and over, conducted October-November 2022. Of all the respondents, 9% completed the survey online and the rest were returned via mail. See text for additional details.

### Section I: Community & Neighborhood

#### Q1: How long have you lived in the Town of Westborough?

	All Ages	Age 55-59*	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Fewer than 5 years	13%	9%	12%	15%	11%
5-14 years	14%	16%	12%	14%	17%
15-24 years	16%	32%	17%	9%	16%
25-34 years	19%	27%	31%	13%	6%
35-44 years	14%	4%	16%	20%	8%
45 years or longer	24%	12%	12%	29%	42%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Here and throughout the report and these tables, eleven participants who noted their age as <55 are included with the age 55-59 age group.

#### Q2: How important is it to you to remain living in Westborough as you get older? (Check only one)

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Very Important	51%	33%	42%	57%	66%
Somewhat Important	31%	35%	36%	30%	23%
Slightly Important	12%	23%	13%	9%	8%
Not at All Important	6%	9%	9%	4%	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### Q5: The following items refer to the level of satisfaction with features of Westborough. Please rate your level of satisfaction with each of the following features of Westborough. (Check only one box per item)

##### Q5\_1: Availability of Parking

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Very Satisfied	26%	33%	29%	23%	24%
Satisfied	56%	52%	57%	58%	53%
Dissatisfied	11%	10%	8%	13%	14%
Very Dissatisfied	2%	3%	2%	2%	<1%
I don't know	5%	2%	4%	4%	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Q5\_2: Handicap accessibility of walkways, public buildings, and businesses**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Satisfied</b>	21%	16%	22%	20%	23%
<b>Satisfied</b>	47%	43%	43%	51%	52%
<b>Dissatisfied</b>	6%	6%	4%	7%	7%
<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	1%	0%	1%	2%	1%
<b>I don't know</b>	25%	35%	30%	20%	17%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q5\_3: Availability of sidewalks**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Satisfied</b>	18%	10%	19%	19%	19%
<b>Satisfied</b>	51%	48%	48%	52%	58%
<b>Dissatisfied</b>	21%	31%	22%	21%	13%
<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	6%	8%	8%	5%	3%
<b>I don't know</b>	4%	3%	3%	3%	7%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q5\_4: Availability of benches or shaded seating in public areas and along walkways**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Satisfied</b>	10%	7%	11%	10%	9%
<b>Satisfied</b>	40%	43%	39%	37%	41%
<b>Dissatisfied</b>	26%	27%	24%	30%	24%
<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	4%	6%	4%	4%	4%
<b>I don't know</b>	20%	17%	22%	19%	22%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q5\_5: Conveniently located public restrooms**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Satisfied</b>	4%	4%	5%	3%	5%
<b>Satisfied</b>	18%	18%	15%	19%	22%
<b>Dissatisfied</b>	30%	31%	29%	34%	26%
<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	12%	13%	12%	12%	10%
<b>I don't know</b>	36%	34%	39%	32%	37%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q6: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:  
 “Local policy makers consider the interests and concerns of older residents.”**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	4%	6%	5%	4%	5%
<b>Agree</b>	24%	21%	24%	20%	30%
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	47%	50%	48%	48%	42%
<b>Disagree</b>	18%	18%	18%	20%	16%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	7%	5%	5%	8%	7%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Section II: Housing and Living Situation**

**Q7: Which of the following best describes your current place of residence? (Check only one)**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Single-family home</b>	65%	82%	76%	57%	45%
<b>Multi-family home (2, 3, or more units)</b>	4%	4%	5%	4%	3%
<b>Accessory apartment (add-on apartment to existing home)</b>	1%	0%	<1%	1%	1%
<b>Apartment, condominium, or townhome</b>	18%	13%	14%	25%	20%
<b>Senior subsidized housing</b>	3%	<1%	<1%	3%	7%
<b>Assisted living community</b>	<1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
<b>Senior independent living community</b>	8%	<1%	3%	9%	22%
<b>Other</b>	1%	<1%	<1%	1%	1%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q8: Does your current residence have a bedroom and a bathroom on the entry level such that you could meet your self-care needs?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes</b>	63%	45%	54%	67%	84%
<b>No</b>	37%	55%	46%	33%	16%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q9: Who do you live with? (Check all that apply)**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
I live alone	24%	11%	17%	23%	44%
A spouse/partner	69%	81%	76%	71%	45%
Pet(s)	21%	36%	27%	19%	6%
My child(ren) (age 18 or older)	14%	30%	17%	7%	9%
My child(ren) (under age 18)	3%	14%	3%	0%	0%
My grandchildren	1%	0%	1%	2%	1%
My parent(s)	<1%	2%	1%	<1%	<1%
Another relative	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%
Someone else	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%

*\*Figures do not sum to 100%*

**Q10: Do you plan to stay in Westborough for the next 5 years or more?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Yes, I plan to stay in Westborough in my current home	84%	83%	80%	86%	90%
Yes, I plan to stay in Westborough but move to a different home	6%	6%	6%	7%	6%
No, I plan to move out of Westborough	10%	11%	14%	7%	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Q11: Does your current residence need home modifications (e.g., grab bars in showers or railings on stairs) to improve your ability to live in it safely for the next five years?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Yes, and I can afford costs over \$500 to make these modifications	24%	16%	27%	26%	19%
Yes, but I currently cannot afford costs over \$500 to make these modifications	5%	5%	4%	7%	6%
Yes, but I am not responsible for making these modifications (e.g., I rent my current residence)	4%	3%	3%	5%	7%
No, my current residence does not currently need modifications	67%	76%	66%	62%	68%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Q12: In the next 5 years, if a change in your health or physical ability required that you move from your current residence, what kind of housing would you prefer in Westborough? (Check all that apply)**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Smaller single-family home</b>	27%	51%	40%	18%	6%
<b>Multi-family home (2, 3, or more units)</b>	2%	<1%	3%	1%	2%
<b>Accessory apartment (add-on apartment to an existing home)</b>	5%	6%	6%	3%	3%
<b>Apartment, condominium, or townhome</b>	25%	41%	32%	22%	9%
<b>Assisted living community (e.g., Whitney Place)</b>	21%	5%	10%	26%	42%
<b>Senior Independent living community</b>	34%	23%	30%	43%	33%
<b>Move in with family or friends (e.g., co-housing)</b>	8%	6%	5%	8%	12%
<b>Other</b>	8%	7%	8%	8%	7%

*\*Figures do not sum to 100%*

### **Section III: Transportation**

**Q13: Which of the following best describes your driving status?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>I do not drive</b>	7%	<1%	1%	6%	24%
<b>I drive with some limitations (e.g., avoid driving at night or on highways)</b>	12%	3%	7%	12%	23%
<b>I drive with no limitations</b>	81%	96%	92%	82%	53%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q14: What are the primary ways in which you meet your transportation needs?  
(Check all that apply)**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
I drive myself	90%	98%	96%	92%	72%
My spouse or child(ren) drive(s) me	26%	20%	21%	27%	36%
Friends or neighbors drive me	7%	3%	5%	7%	15%
Walk or bike	18%	22%	24%	17%	7%
Commuter rail	7%	10%	7%	7%	2%
Taxi or ride sharing options (e.g., Uber or Lyft)	5%	6%	6%	3%	3%
Transportation provided by the Westborough Senior Center (e.g., mini-bus, volunteer drivers)	5%	1%	1%	4%	13%
Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) services (e.g., paratransit or Via WRTA app)	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%
Other	2%	1%	1%	1%	7%

*\*Figures do not sum to 100%*

**Q15: Within the past 12 months, did you have to miss, cancel, or reschedule a medical appointment because of lack of transportation?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Yes	4%	3%	2%	3%	8%
No	96%	97%	98%	97%	92%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q16: How satisfied are you with the transportation options available to you?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Completely Satisfied	23%	30%	26%	20%	18%
Very Satisfied	33%	27%	33%	33%	36%
Somewhat Satisfied	29%	24%	29%	32%	29%
Slightly Satisfied	10%	15%	8%	9%	10%
Not at all Satisfied	5%	4%	4%	6%	7%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

#### **Section IV: Caregiving**

**Q17: Do you now or have you in the past 5 years provided care or assistance to a person who is *disabled or frail (e.g., a spouse, parent, relative, or friend)*?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes</b>	36%	44%	40%	32%	30%
<b>No</b>	64%	56%	60%	68%	70%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q18: How challenging is/was it for you to care for this person(s) and meet your other responsibilities with family, your personal health, and/or work? (*Check only one*)**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Challenging</b>	28%	36%	32%	22%	23%
<b>Somewhat Challenging</b>	47%	46%	47%	49%	43%
<b>Neither Challenging nor Easy</b>	18%	15%	15%	22%	23%
<b>Somewhat Easy</b>	4%	1%	4%	4%	9%
<b>Very Easy</b>	3%	2%	2%	3%	2%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*\*This table only includes respondents who reported providing care to someone now or in the last five years.*

**Q19: If yes: Did this person have any of the following conditions?**

	All Ages
<b>Alzheimer's disease or dementia, Parkinson's disease</b>	37%
<b>Psychological condition (e.g., anxiety, depression)</b>	14%
<b>Intellectual or developmental disability</b>	6%
<b>Sensory impairment (e.g., vision, hearing)</b>	22%
<b>Chronic disease (e.g., cancer, diabetes, asthma)</b>	35%
<b>Mobility impairment (e.g., difficulty walking, climbing stairs)</b>	62%
<b>Recent surgery</b>	19%
<b>Other</b>	10%

*\*This table only includes respondents who reported providing care to someone now or in the last five years. Age breakdown is not provided due to small cell sizes. Figures do not sum to 100%.*



**Q20: If yes: What supports were, or would have been, most valuable to you during your time providing care or assistance? (Check all that apply)**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Informal support from family and friends</b>	53%	45%	48%	59%	63%
<b>Adult Day program</b>	13%	16%	13%	11%	10%
<b>Respite care</b>	11%	13%	12%	10%	7%
<b>Memory Cafe</b>	7%	13%	8%	4%	5%
<b>Formal in-home caregiver or homemaking services</b>	52%	58%	53%	54%	40%
<b>Support groups (e.g., caregiver support)</b>	18%	17%	15%	23%	17%
<b>On-call support from medical professionals</b>	23%	27%	22%	24%	22%
<b>Other</b>	13%	12%	13%	11%	16%

*\*This table only includes respondents who reported providing care to someone now or in the last five years. Figures will not sum to 100%*

### **Section V: Social Activities and Relationships**

**Q21: How often do you talk on the phone or video call, send email, use social media, or get together to visit with family, friends, or neighbors? (Check only one per item)**

***Talk on the phone or video call with family, friends, or neighbors***

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Every day</b>	45%	47%	43%	43%	51%
<b>One or more times a week</b>	37%	34%	35%	41%	38%
<b>More than once a month</b>	9%	9%	11%	10%	5%
<b>Once a month</b>	4%	4%	6%	3%	3%
<b>2-3 times a year (e.g., holidays)</b>	3%	5%	3%	2%	2%
<b>Never</b>	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

***Send email or use social media with family, friends, or neighbors***

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Every day</b>	52%	57%	55%	54%	42%
<b>One or more times a week</b>	30%	28%	30%	31%	29%
<b>More than once a month</b>	8%	7%	10%	6%	9%
<b>Once a month</b>	2%	2%	2%	1%	4%
<b>2-3 times a year (e.g., holidays)</b>	2%	3%	<1%	2%	3%
<b>Never</b>	6%	3%	2%	6%	13%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

***Get together to visit with family, friends, or neighbors***

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Every day</b>	17%	17%	13%	15%	25%
<b>One or more times a week</b>	45%	40%	43%	51%	41%
<b>More than once a month</b>	22%	23%	25%	19%	23%
<b>Once a month</b>	10%	14%	12%	7%	6%
<b>2-3 times a year (e.g., holidays)</b>	6%	6%	6%	7%	5%
<b>Never</b>	<1%	0%	1%	<1%	0%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q22: Do you know someone living nearby on whom you can rely for help when you need it?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes</b>	86%	84%	83%	87%	91%
<b>No</b>	14%	16%	17%	13%	9%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q23: In the past five years, have you ever felt excluded in Westborough because of any of the following? (Check all that apply)**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Age</b>	6%	5%	6%	8%	4%
<b>Disability</b>	3%	1%	1%	3%	4%
<b>Gender</b>	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
<b>Income</b>	6%	9%	7%	5%	2%
<b>Religion or cultural background</b>	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%
<b>Skin color, race, or ethnicity</b>	1%	2%	1%	<1%	1%
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	0%
<b>No, I have never felt excluded</b>	82%	77%	79%	84%	86%
<b>Other</b>	4%	8%	5%	3%	2%

*\*Figures do not sum to 100%.*

**Q24: Where do you spend your free time in Westborough? (Check all that apply)**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Library</b>	30%	26%	29%	32%	29%
<b>Parks or outdoor space</b>	56%	74%	67%	53%	34%
<b>Restaurant or Cafe</b>	57%	66%	58%	60%	47%
<b>Historic or Cultural events</b>	13%	11%	15%	14%	12%
<b>Westborough recreation facilities or golf course</b>	15%	18%	18%	15%	8%
<b>A gym or fitness class</b>	25%	31%	24%	25%	25%
<b>Town meetings or other civic activities</b>	15%	12%	15%	16%	15%
<b>Church or faith-based organization</b>	26%	20%	20%	28%	38%
<b>Volunteering</b>	21%	18%	22%	22%	19%
<b>Other</b>	21%	15%	18%	24%	28%

*\*Figures do not sum to 100%.*

**Section VI: Current & Future Programs & Services at the Senior Center**

**Q25: The following items refer to programs and services that are offered through the Holliston Senior Center. Please rate the importance of each service to you or your family. (Check only one box per item)**

**Q25\_1: Assistance with local, state, or federal programs (e.g., MassHealth, SNAP, fuel assistance)**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Important (1)</b>	27%	32%	28%	24%	25%
<b>(2)</b>	6%	7%	7%	7%	4%
<b>Moderately Important (3)</b>	17%	18%	16%	17%	17%
<b>(4)</b>	8%	4%	8%	10%	6%
<b>Not at all important (5)</b>	42%	39%	41%	42%	48%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q25\_2: Transportation**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Important (1)</b>	26%	30%	25%	21%	30%
<b>(2)</b>	7%	9%	7%	8%	6%
<b>Moderately Important (3)</b>	19%	21%	17%	20%	17%
<b>(4)</b>	10%	6%	11%	12%	8%
<b>Not at all important (5)</b>	38%	34%	40%	39%	39%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q25\_3: Physical health programs and wellness clinics (e.g., Blood pressure, hearing, health education, exercise)**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Important (1)</b>	26%	31%	28%	22%	27%
<b>(2)</b>	10%	18%	9%	10%	6%
<b>Moderately Important (3)</b>	24%	18%	23%	26%	24%
<b>(4)</b>	9%	7%	10%	11%	9%
<b>Not at all important (5)</b>	31%	26%	30%	31%	34%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q25\_4: Social and emotional wellness programs** (e.g., friendly visiting, mental health counseling)

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Important (1)</b>	19%	31%	20%	15%	17%
<b>(2)</b>	9%	15%	9%	8%	8%
<b>Moderately Important (3)</b>	21%	19%	22%	24%	17%
<b>(4)</b>	12%	6%	12%	14%	10%
<b>Not at all important (5)</b>	39%	29%	37%	39%	48%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q25\_5: Nutrition programs** (e.g., Grab N Go, congregate, or home-delivered meals)

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Important (1)</b>	18%	28%	19%	14%	17%
<b>(2)</b>	8%	12%	8%	9%	5%
<b>Moderately Important (3)</b>	19%	18%	17%	20%	19%
<b>(4)</b>	11%	8%	11%	12%	11%
<b>Not at all important (5)</b>	44%	34%	45%	45%	48%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q25\_6: Professional services** (e.g., health insurance counseling, tax prep)

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Important (1)</b>	26%	32%	27%	22%	25%
<b>(2)</b>	9%	9%	11%	10%	6%
<b>Moderately Important (3)</b>	20%	19%	21%	22%	16%
<b>(4)</b>	9%	9%	8%	12%	8%
<b>Not at all important (5)</b>	36%	31%	33%	34%	45%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q25\_7: Support Groups (e.g., Parkinson's Support, caregiver support)**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Important (1)</b>	18%	25%	19%	13%	18%
<b>(2)</b>	8%	16%	8%	6%	5%
<b>Moderately Important (3)</b>	18%	15%	18%	20%	15%
<b>(4)</b>	11%	9%	12%	14%	8%
<b>Not at all important (5)</b>	45%	35%	43%	47%	54%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q25\_8: Errand or handy man/minor repairs program**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Important (1)</b>	26%	29%	26%	21%	30%
<b>(2)</b>	11%	16%	11%	10%	7%
<b>Moderately Important (3)</b>	19%	18%	17%	21%	19%
<b>(4)</b>	9%	7%	10%	11%	7%
<b>Not at all important (5)</b>	35%	30%	36%	37%	37%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q25\_9: Home Safety programs (e.g., lockbox, smoke detectors, durable medical equipment)**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Important (1)</b>	28%	27%	25%	26%	35%
<b>(2)</b>	10%	15%	10%	9%	8%
<b>Moderately Important (3)</b>	19%	19%	18%	21%	17%
<b>(4)</b>	10%	7%	12%	10%	7%
<b>Not at all important (5)</b>	33%	32%	35%	34%	33%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q26: Do you see the Westborough Senior Center as playing a role in the lives of yourself, loved ones, or neighbors?**

	All ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes</b>	66%	64%	62%	67%	72%
<b>No</b>	34%	36%	38%	33%	28%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q27: Currently, how frequently have you used services or attended programs offered by the Westborough Senior Center? (Check only one)**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Two or more times a week	4%	1%	2%	5%	9%
About once a week	3%	<1%	2%	6%	4%
A few times a month	4%	1%	1%	5%	9%
About once a month	3%	1%	2%	3%	4%
A few times a year (e.g., special events only)	25%	7%	17%	33%	37%
Never, I do not use programs or services offered by the Westborough Senior Center	61%	89%	76%	48%	37%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q28: Have you ever traveled to senior centers in other towns to participate in their programs?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Yes	21%	10%	12%	27%	32%
No	79%	90%	88%	73%	68%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q29: Which of the following factors limit how often you attend the Westborough Senior Center? (Check all that apply)**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
I am not interested in programs offered (e.g., fitness classes, lectures)	22%	11%	16%	29%	31%
I do not know what is offered	22%	24%	29%	20%	12%
I do not have the time	13%	10%	15%	11%	12%
I do not use technology	3%	0%	1%	4%	8%
I do not identify with the people at the senior center	15%	13%	17%	17%	11%
I do not need the services offered (e.g., tax counseling, fuel assistance)	36%	35%	31%	39%	40%
I am not old enough	15%	51%	18%	5%	<1%
I participate in programs elsewhere	12%	3%	6%	16%	19%
I am still working	30%	65%	48%	13%	3%
<b>Other</b>	15%	6%	11%	20%	19%

*\*Figures do not sum to 100%*

**Q30: “I would be more likely to use the Westborough Senior Center programs and services if...” (Check all that apply)**

	All ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Transportation options to the Senior Center were more convenient</b>	5%	5%	4%	4%	10%
<b>There was more parking</b>	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
<b>The building was easier to navigate</b>	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%
<b>I had more knowledge about programs and services that are available</b>	32%	32%	38%	33%	21%
<b>Programs and services were better suited to my needs and interests</b>	26%	16%	26%	32%	26%
<b>There were more remote programs</b>	8%	6%	8%	9%	6%
<b>The hours of the Senior Center were more convenient (e.g., nights or weekend hours)</b>	10%	9%	11%	12%	8%
<b>The space could accommodate more participants (e.g., larger class sizes or more variety of programs)</b>	7%	3%	5%	9%	10%
<b>The space was more comfortable and inviting</b>	14%	7%	11%	19%	17%
<b>The cost of programs was reduced or eliminated</b>	6%	4%	6%	6%	7%
<b>There was more special interest or cultural programs (e.g., LGBTQ+, singles, or grandparents raising children)</b>	5%	8%	4%	5%	6%
<b>It included residents of <u>all ages</u> and functioned as a community center</b>	26%	40%	30%	24%	16%
<b>Other</b>	19%	20%	20%	17%	19%

*\*Figures do not sum to 100%*



**Q31: Thinking about your own future needs and interests, which of the following areas would you prioritize in expanding availability through the Westborough Senior Center? (Check all that apply)**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Lunch or other food offerings</b>	24%	30%	22%	23%	26%
<b>Arts programs (e.g., painting, music, acting, digital photography)</b>	32%	46%	38%	27%	20%
<b>Educational programming (e.g., technology, foreign language courses, or bird watching)</b>	45%	56%	50%	42%	32%
<b>Performances (e.g., music, theater, comedy)</b>	40%	45%	44%	38%	35%
<b>Social activities (e.g., coffee hour, informal space for socializing)</b>	29%	47%	30%	26%	22%
<b>Day trips and excursions</b>	44%	51%	47%	42%	40%
<b>Volunteer opportunities</b>	26%	41%	35%	20%	11%
<b>Mental Health and Wellness (e.g., meditation, massage)</b>	25%	42%	29%	20%	14%
<b>Recreational Activities (e.g., cards, board games)</b>	24%	41%	25%	20%	17%
<b>Outdoor fitness (e.g., walking, hiking, kayaking)</b>	40%	59%	53%	33%	16%
<b>Indoor fitness (e.g., strength training, exercise equipment)</b>	39%	50%	44%	37%	28%
<b>Evening or weekend activities</b>	25%	40%	30%	20%	13%
<b>Other</b>	8%	7%	7%	8%	9%

*\*Figures do not sum to 100%*

**Q32: The Town of Westborough is considering potential options for a new combined Senior/Community/Recreation Center. Please select your most preferred scenario. (Check only one)**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>A Senior Center exclusively for use by residents age 60+</b>	17%	9%	13%	19%	22%
<b>A Senior Center for residents 60+ with night and weekend hours open to all residents</b>	14%	15%	13%	15%	16%
<b>An all-ages Community Center including designated space and programming for residents age 60+</b>	39%	52%	45%	38%	25%
<b>I have no preference</b>	27%	21%	26%	24%	35%
<b>Other</b>	3%	3%	3%	4%	2%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Section VII: Current & Future Retirement Plans**

**Q33: What is your employment status?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Working full-time</b>	25%	69%	40%	8%	2%
<b>Working part-time</b>	11%	12%	17%	9%	5%
<b>Looking for work</b>	1%	1%	2%	<1%	0%
<b>Retired</b>	60%	11%	40%	81%	94%
<b>Other</b>	4%	9%	5%	3%	2%

*\*Figures do not sum to 100%*

**Q34: When do you plan to fully retire?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>N/A, I am already fully retired</b>	56%	10%	36%	80%	92%
<b>Within the next 3 years</b>	9%	6%	19%	4%	1%
<b>In 3 to 5 years</b>	10%	15%	18%	3%	1%
<b>In 6 to 10 years</b>	9%	34%	11%	<1%	0%
<b>In more than 10 years</b>	3%	17%	<1%	<1%	0%
<b>Not sure</b>	8%	12%	9%	7%	3%
<b>I do not anticipate ever fully retiring</b>	5%	6%	7%	5%	3%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Section VIII: Communication**

**Q35: Where do you prefer to find information about the activities and services offered by the Senior Center? (Check all that apply)**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Westborough Senior Center Newsletter</b>	53%	28%	40%	64%	73%
<b>Television (<i>Westborough TV</i>)</b>	10%	9%	6%	10%	16%
<b>Public postings (<i>flyers, billboards</i>)</b>	19%	26%	17%	20%	17%
<b>Facebook or other social media sites</b>	27%	41%	32%	24%	12%
<b>The local newspaper</b>	30%	26%	30%	34%	30%
<b>Town of Westborough website</b>	46%	59%	55%	45%	25%
<b>Other</b>	12%	14%	15%	12%	8%

*\*Figures do not sum to 100%.*

**Q36: Are you able to access the internet from your home?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes, I have access to the internet at home</b>	95%	99%	98%	95%	87%
<b>No, I cannot afford to have access to the internet at home</b>	1%	1%	1%	1%	3%
<b>No, I choose not to have access to the internet at home</b>	4%	0%	1%	4%	10%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Section IX: Demographic Information**

**Q37: Do you have an impairment that limits your ability to participate in your community?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes</b>	11%	3%	6%	12%	25%
<b>No</b>	89%	97%	94%	88%	75%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q38: Do you have a health care agent or a health care proxy in place?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes</b>	79%	60%	70%	88%	90%
<b>No</b>	19%	32%	28%	11%	8%
<b>I don't know</b>	2%	8%	2%	1%	2%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q39: Please select your gender identity.**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Female</b>	57%	59%	56%	55%	62%
<b>Male</b>	43%	41%	44%	45%	38%
<b>Other</b>	<1%	0%	<1%	<1%	0%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q40: What is your age range?**

Age category	%
<b>Under 55</b>	<1%
<b>55-59</b>	13%
<b>60-69</b>	34%
<b>70-79</b>	31%
<b>80-89</b>	17%
<b>90+</b>	4%
<b>Total</b>	100%

**Q41: Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: “I have adequate resources to meet my financial needs, including home maintenance, personal care, and other expenses.”**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	31%	40%	34%	28%	25%
<b>Agree</b>	56%	44%	54%	61%	62%
<b>Disagree</b>	11%	13%	11%	9%	11%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	2%	3%	1%	2%	2%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%