

Aging in Weston: A Community Needs Assessment

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Plan for this presentation

- ▶ Purpose
- ▶ Methods of investigation
- ▶ Key findings
- ▶ Key recommendations
- ▶ Questions / Discussion

Background & Purpose

- ▶ To investigate the needs and opinions of Weston residents age 55 and older.
- ▶ The final report is meant to:
 - ▶ increase awareness about demographic changes and related challenges facing Weston
 - ▶ inform the COA, and organizations that work with and on behalf of older residents of Weston, about the strengths and challenges of aging in Weston
 - ▶ present recommendations to support Weston in responding to the changing demographics and the community concerns

Methods



Demographic profile

Focus groups (4)

Components
of *Weston*
Needs
Assessment

Key informant interviews (5)

Document review

Peer community comparison

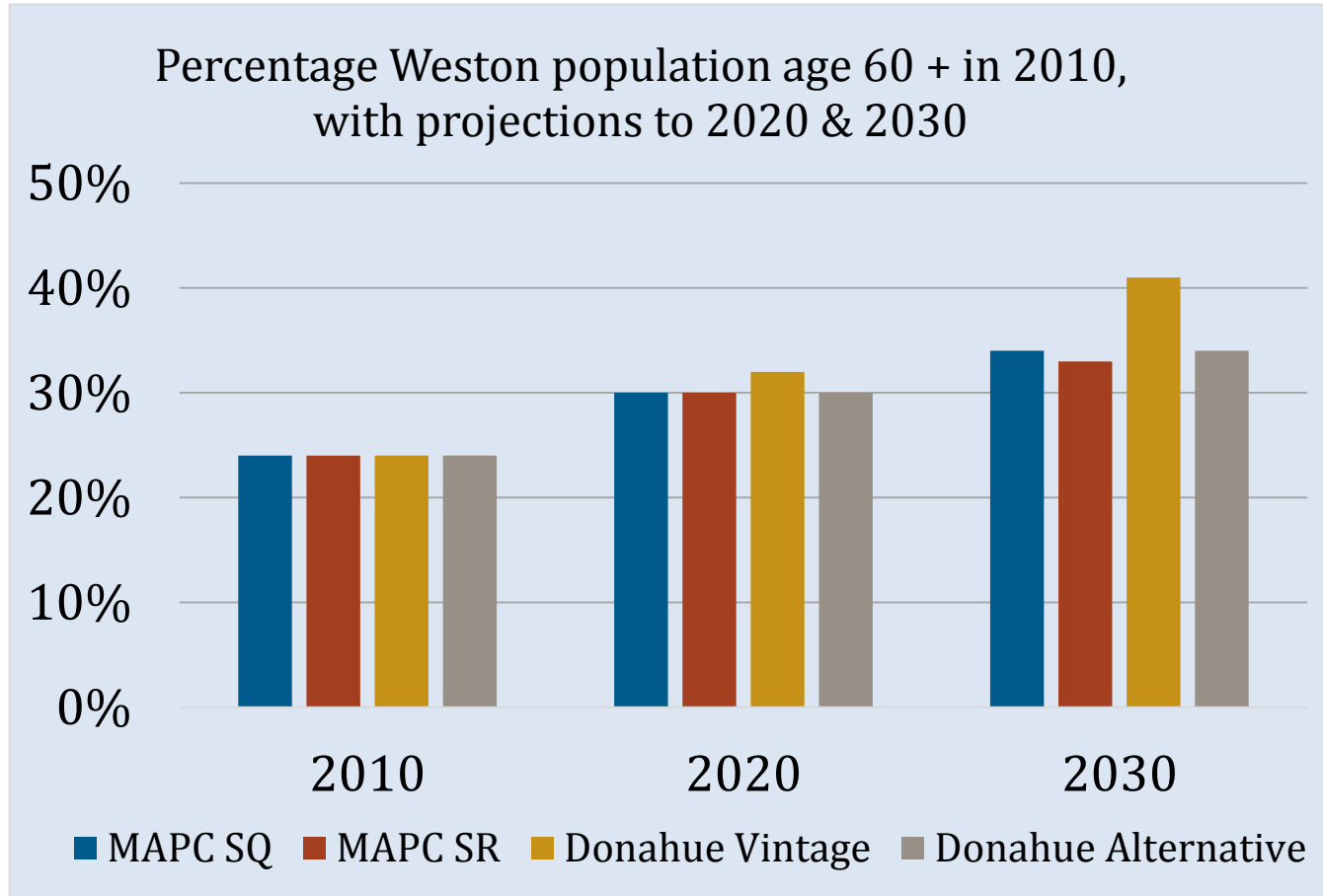
Resident survey 55+ (n=1,211)

Age distribution of survey respondents

	Residents age 55+	Percentage	Number of Responses	Response rate	% age distribution for responses
55-59	1,004	24%	190	19%	16%
60-69	1,472	35%	390	26%	32%
70-79	949	23%	370	39%	30%
80-89	597	14%	222	37%	18%
90+	166	4%	33	20%	3%
TOTAL	4,188	100%	1,211*	29%	100%

*Includes 6 surveys where people declined to provide their age

Weston is getting older



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population for 2010.

*Figures for 2020-2030 are projections generated by the Donahue Institute, University of Massachusetts: <http://pep.donahue-institute.org/> and Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC): <https://www.mapc.org/learn/projections/>

Key Findings

Benefits to Living in Weston

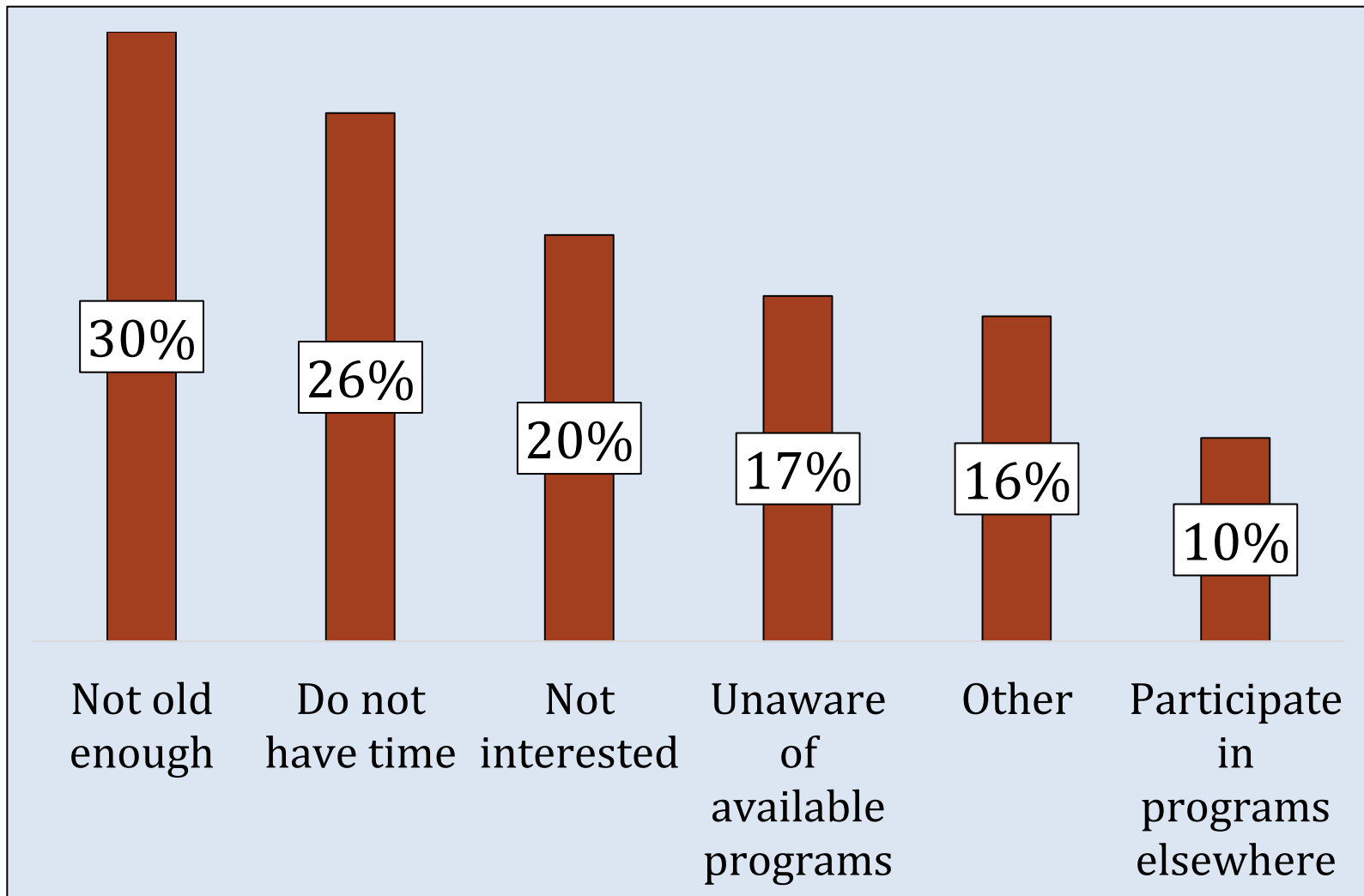
- ▶ Natural beauty and extensive conservation land
- ▶ “Small town” environment
- ▶ Strength of public safety services
- ▶ High quality schools
- ▶ COA programs and services

“COA is my lifeline”

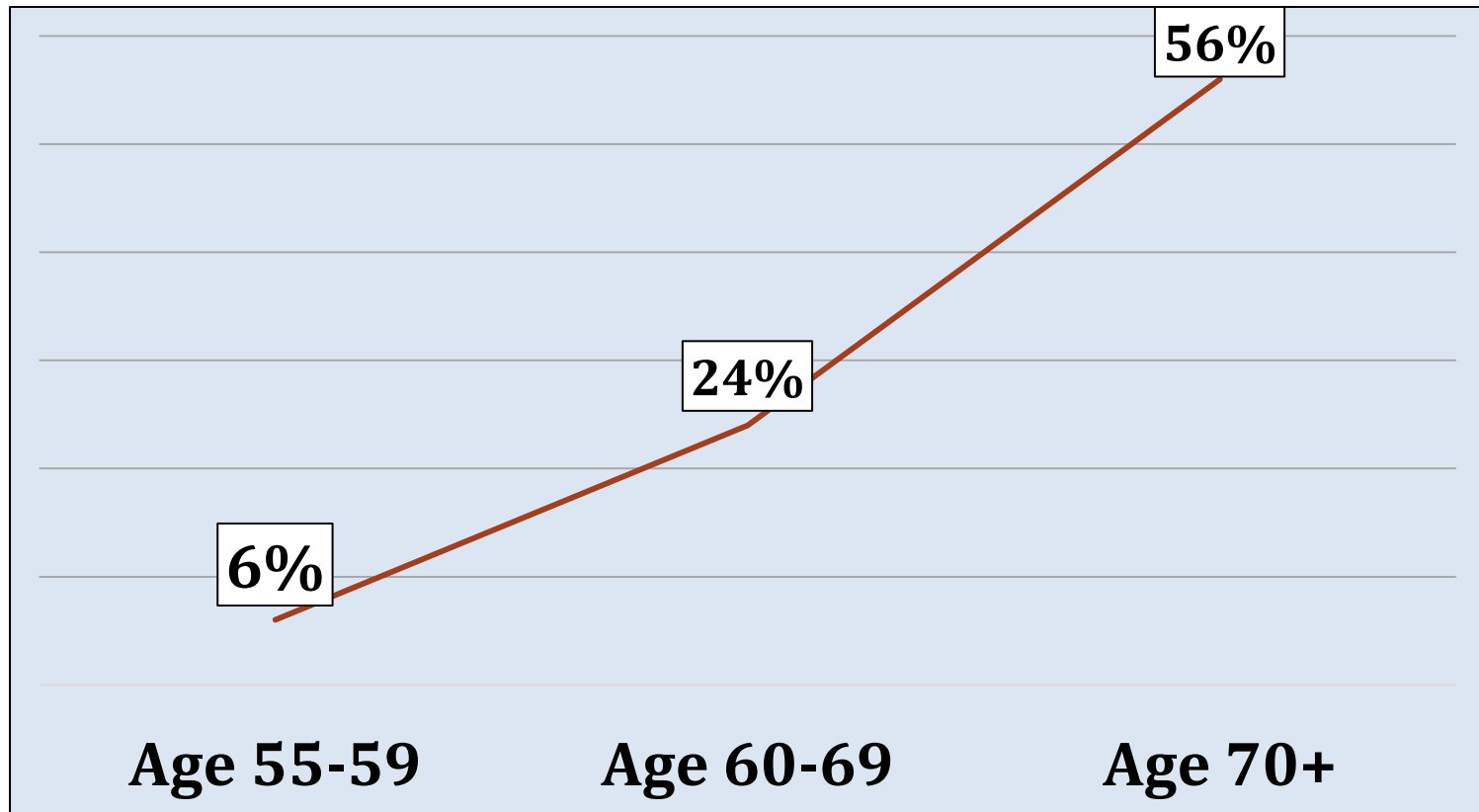
Weston COA Use

- ▶ 75% of respondents report being very or completely satisfied with programs & services offered by the COA
- ▶ 63% of respondents have never used
- ▶ Majority of respondents who use COA, use it infrequently

Reasons for not using programs or services offered by the Weston COA



Percentage of survey respondents who have ever attended programs or used services offered by the Weston COA



Percentage of older adults in Weston

	Number	Percentage
Age 55-59	1004	24%
Age 60-69	1472	35%
Age 70-79	949	23%
Age 80-89	597	14%
Age 90+	166	4%
TOTAL	4188	100%

Weston COA Layout and Image

- ▶ Focus group and survey respondents suggested:
 - ▶ need for updating programming to meet changing needs of older adults
 - ▶ reorganizing space would support different types of programming
- ▶ Peer COA/Senior Center comparisons
 - ▶ Weston has less space and less dedicated space

Peer Communities: Size of Senior Center/Council on Aging Space

All senior centers/COA's that we compared with Weston have more space and more dedicated space

- ▶ **Similar in Socioeconomic status**
 - ▶ Needham
 - ▶ Newton
 - ▶ Lexington
 - ▶ Sudbury
 - ▶ Wellesley
 - ▶ Westwood
- ▶ **Similar in size (or smaller)**
 - ▶ Littleton
 - ▶ Northborough
 - ▶ Southborough

COA program/services - Importance

Users

- ▶ Fitness activities
- ▶ Educational opportunities
- ▶ Social and recreational activities
- ▶ Contractor lists
- ▶ Physical health and wellness
- ▶ **Trips and outings**

**30-40%

Non-users

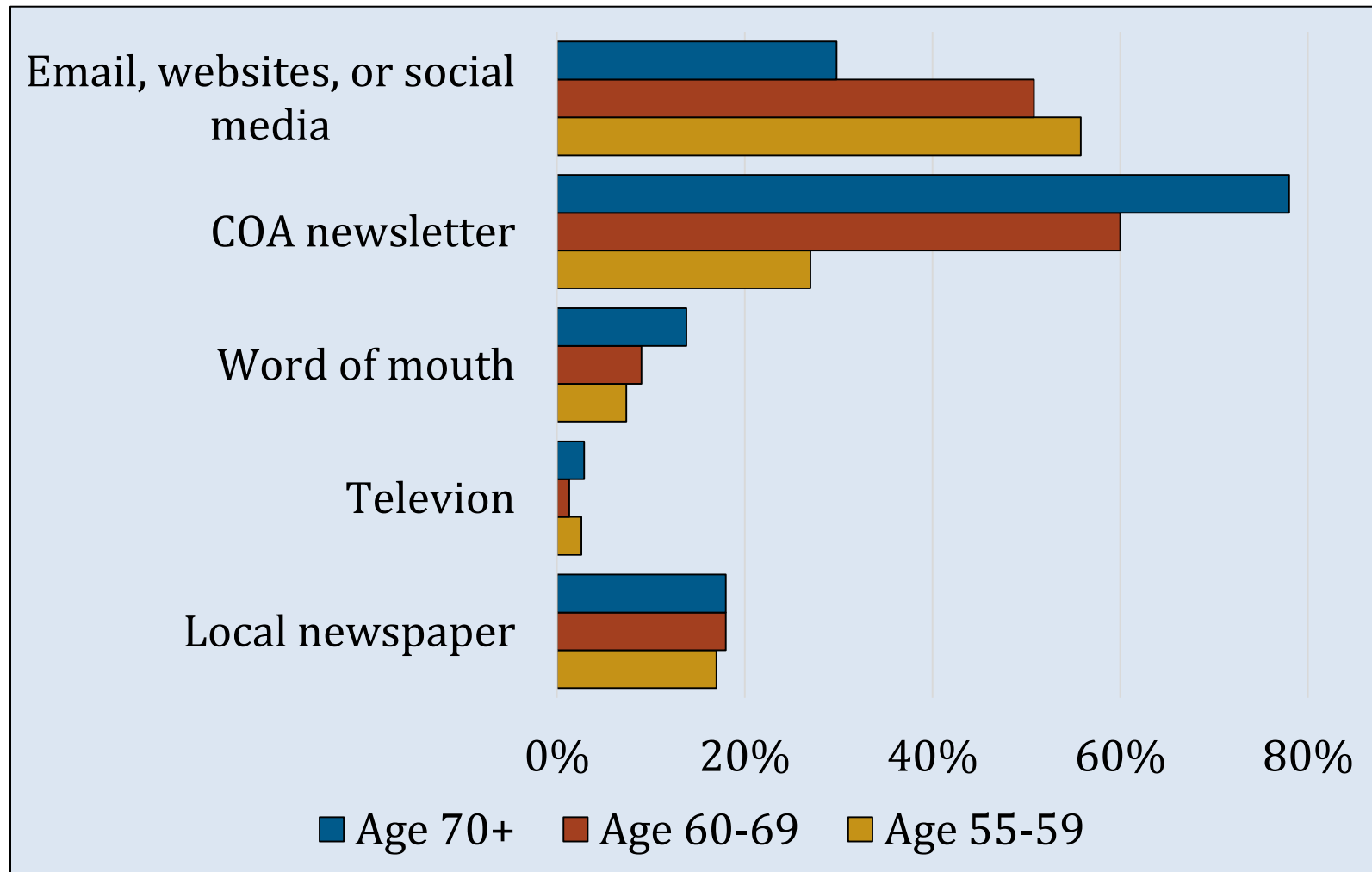
- ▶ Contractor lists
- ▶ **Transportation**
- ▶ Fitness activities
- ▶ Physical health and wellness
- ▶ Educational opportunities
- ▶ Social and recreational activities
- ▶ **Volunteer opportunities**

**24-27%

Top COA programs that respondents would like to see expanded

	Age 55-59	Age 60+
Educational programs	40%	44%
Health & wellness programs	48%	40%
Hiking/walking club	47%	25%
Performances/presentations	26%	32%

Where do you prefer to find information about the activities and services offered by the COA?



Housing

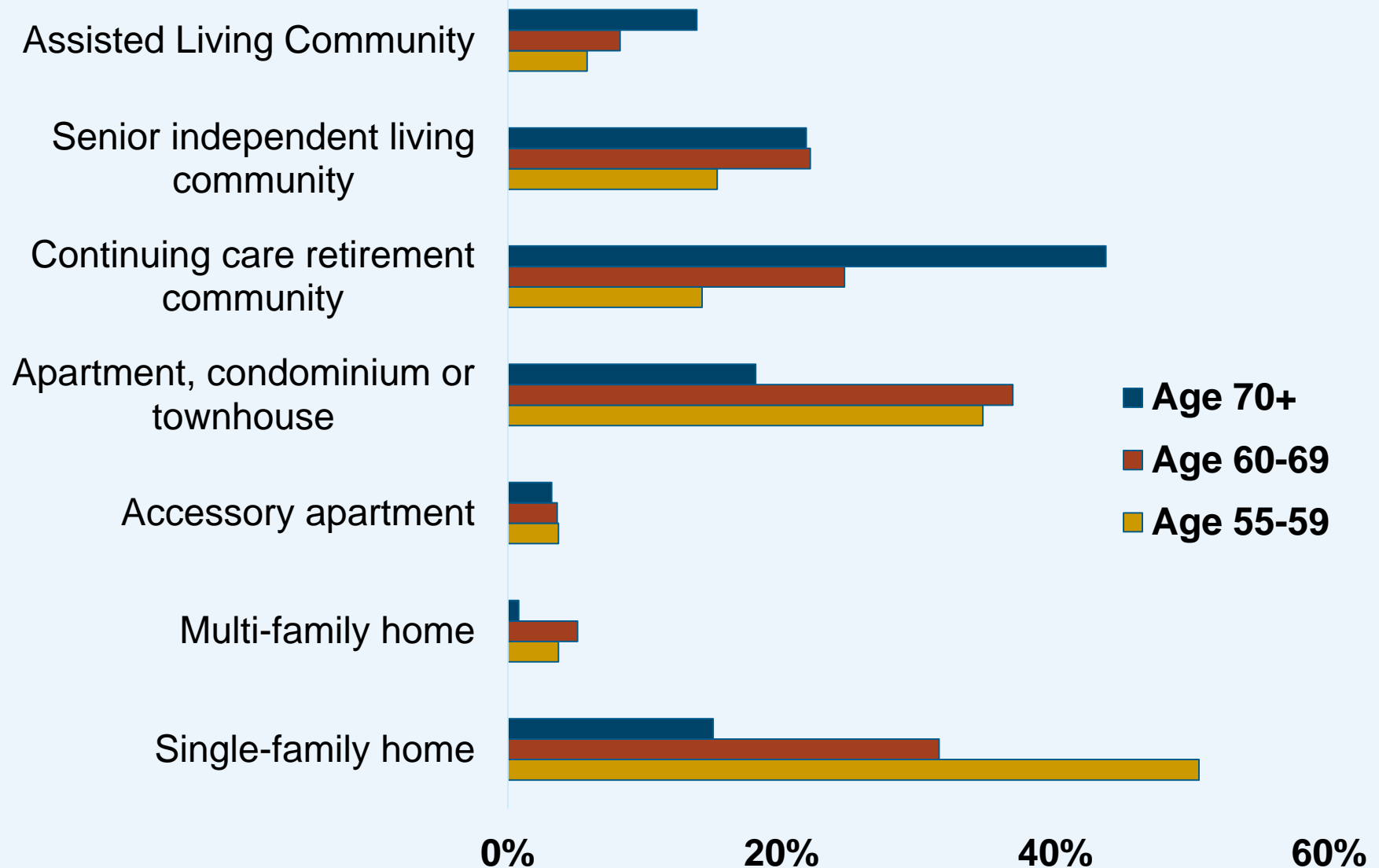
Adapting current housing

- ▶ 47% of survey respondents stated their current residence needs home repairs and/or home modifications
- ▶ Many expressed concern about ability to identify trustworthy assistance
- ▶ Small segment stated they can not afford repairs or modifications

Downsizing and other housing options

- ▶ More than half of respondents would prefer to own their next residence if they move
- ▶ Many survey respondents 70+ indicated a preference for senior independent living community if need to move
- ▶ Key informants reported lack of senior housing and downsizing options

“In the next 5 years, if a change in your health/physical ability required that you move from your current residence, what kind of housing would you prefer?”



Transportation

- ▶ Limited transportation options were expressed by residents, town leaders, and key stakeholders
- ▶ More than 30% of those who either drive with modifications or don't drive reported difficulty getting where they want to go. Top 2 reasons:
 - ▶ Limited access to public transportation
 - ▶ Unaware of local transportation options

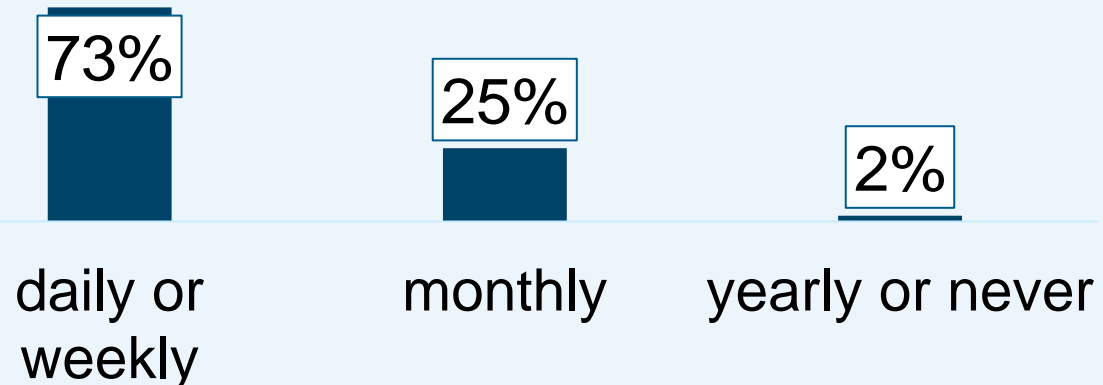
“When I can no longer drive, I will move.”

Social Isolation

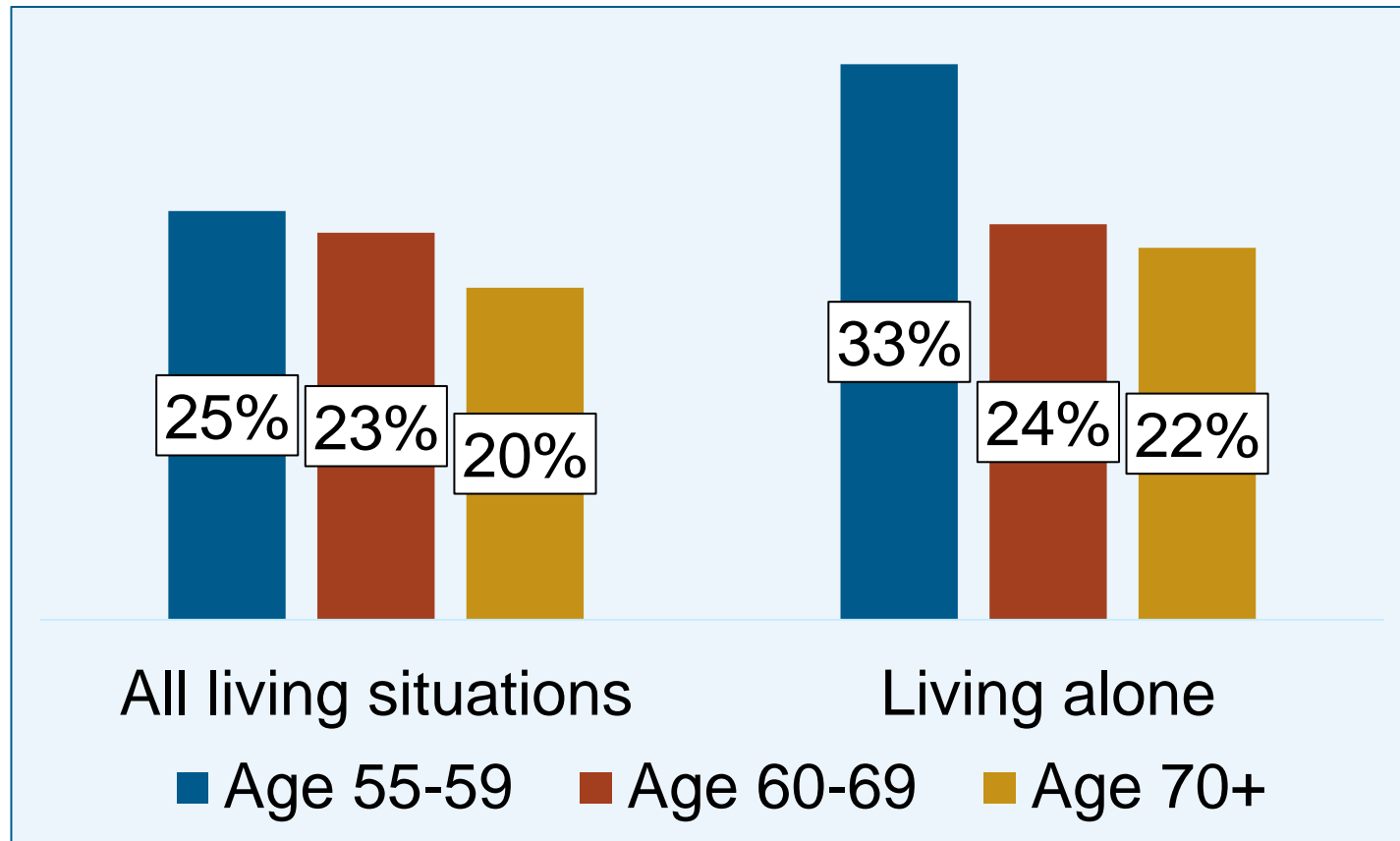
“We are concerned about lack of transportation and social isolation if we stay in our Weston home to age in place.”

- ▶ 27% of survey respondents get together in person with family or friends monthly or less frequently

How often do you get together in person with family, friends, or neighbors?



Do you know someone living close by on whom you can rely for help when you need it?
(Percentage indicating no)

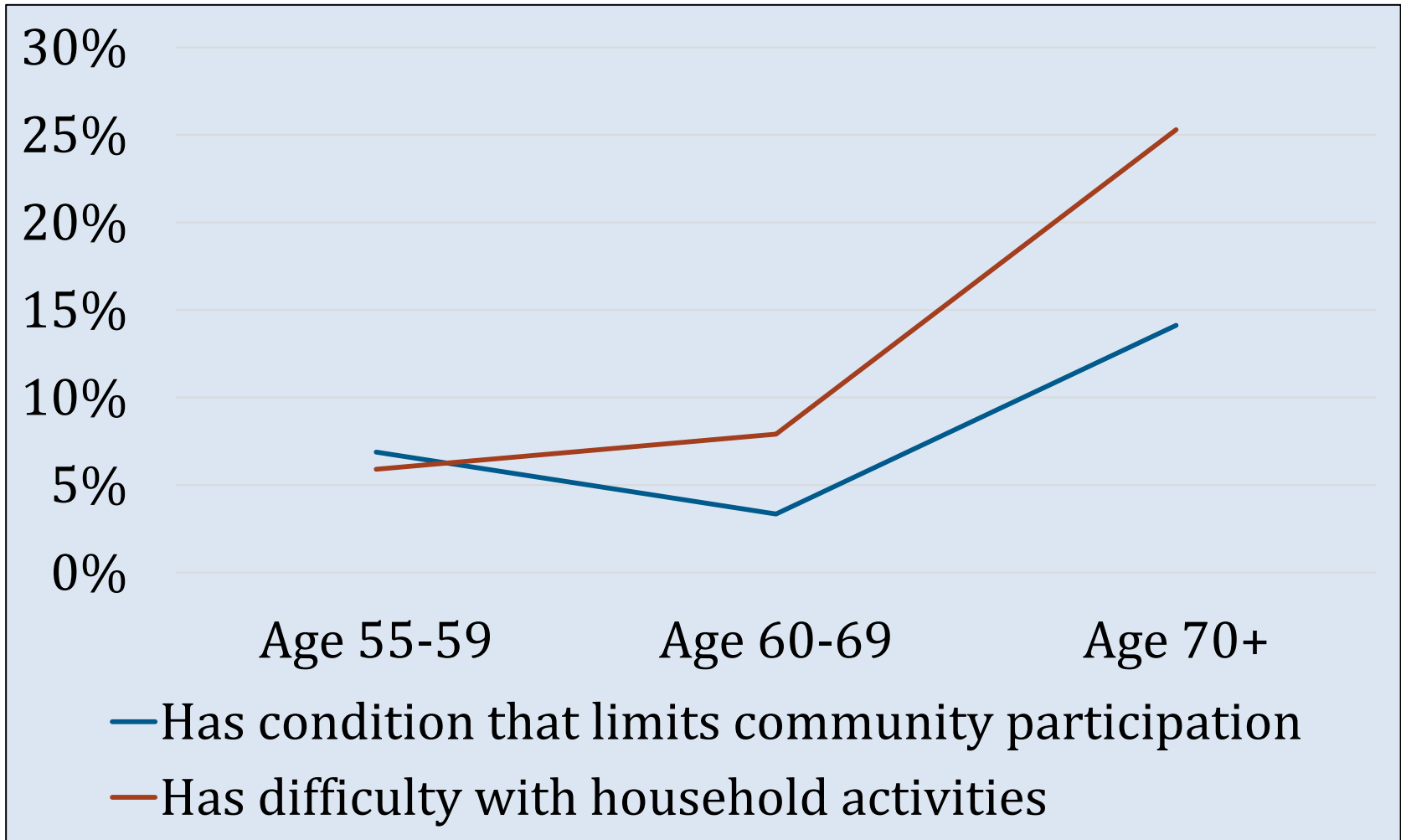


Economic Insecurity is a Concern for Some Older Adults

- ▶ About 14% of Weston residents age 65 and older report annual incomes under \$25,000
- ▶ There are limited affordable housing options
- ▶ Many commented regarding property taxes

“Property tax is quite high for someone on fixed income and this [probably] is reason for us to leave town in the years to come.”

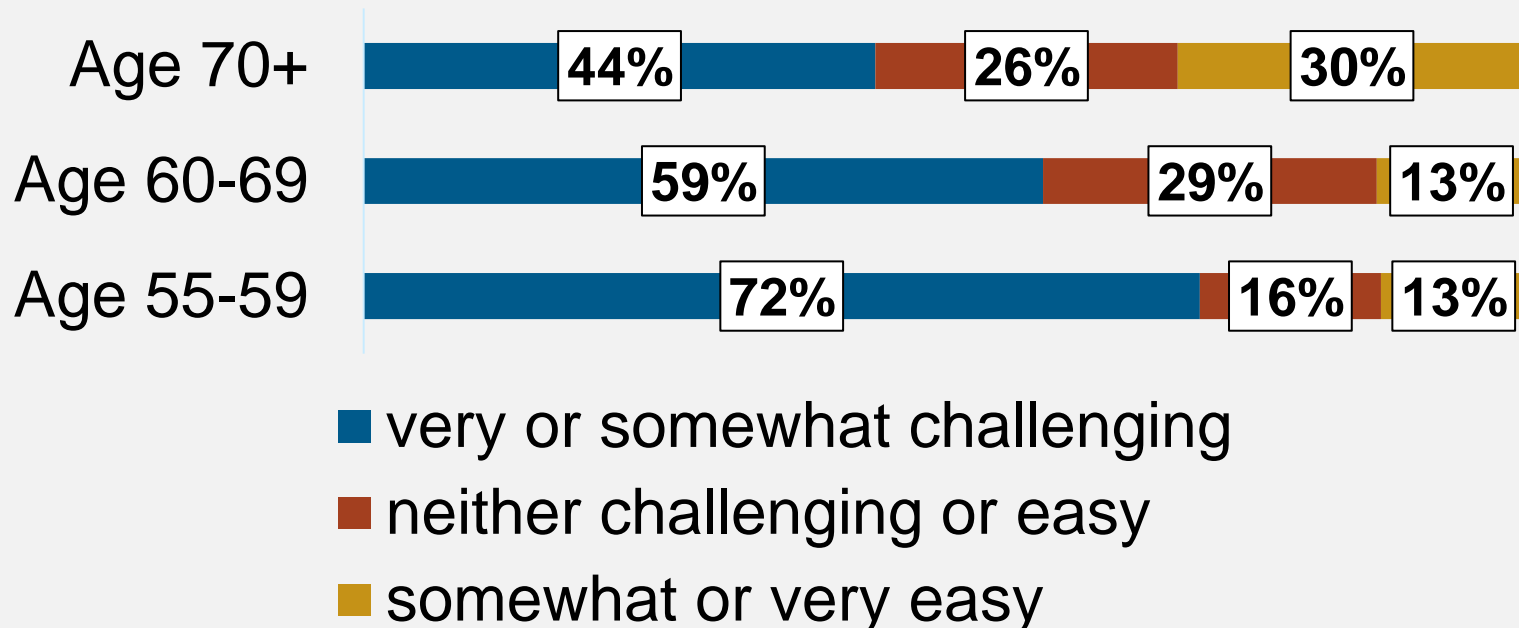
Disability



Caregivers

- ▶ One third of respondents have recently or are currently providing care

“How challenging is/was it for you to care for this person(s) and meet your other responsibilities with family and/or work?”



Recommendations for the Town of Weston

Update and Expand Council on Aging

- ▶ **Prepare for increased number of older adults**
- ▶ Expand and reorganize space
 - ▶ Place to socialize and mingle
 - ▶ Lunch area / food options
 - ▶ Fitness center
- ▶ Expand educational and fitness activities
- ▶ Consider renaming the Senior Center

Support Aging-in-Community

- ▶ Increase awareness of transportation options, expand current options, explore new options, and promote driver safety programs
- ▶ Continue to participate in dialogue regarding housing development
- ▶ Support home modifications (e.g., provide updated contract list)

Provide Resources for Those Who are Struggling

Caregivers

- ▶ Host family caregiver “resource fair” and/or a “caregiver’s night out”
- ▶ Collaborate with surrounding communities to meet caregiver needs (e.g., adult day health)

Socially Isolated

- ▶ Develop programming such as a welcoming committee, COA buddy system, etc.

Economically Insecure

- ▶ Provide education about available programs (e.g., tax work-off)
- ▶ Develop programming around employment, retirement planning, alternative housing opportunities, etc.

Elderly & Low Income Programs: Tax and Fee Relief

- ▶ Transfer Station Sticker Waiver
- ▶ Water Discount Program
- ▶ Weston Service Program
- ▶ Community Preservation Surcharge Exemption
- ▶ Property Tax Exemption Limits set at Maximum
- ▶ Property Tax Deferral Program

Spread the Word

- ▶ Continue to use multiple ways to disseminate information (e.g., newsletter, email, social media, etc.)
- ▶ Consider a town-wide calendar
- ▶ Communication methods and preferences are changing - continue to monitor best ways to get the information to the people who need it

Thank you!

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