



# **Livability For All: The 2015 AARP Age-Friendly Community Survey of Charlotte-Matthews, North Carolina Residents Age 50-plus**

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# Background and Methodology

The World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Age-Friendly Cities and Communities project was created to help cities prepare for the rapid aging of populations and the increase in urbanization. The program targets the environmental, social, and economic factors that influence the health and well-being of older adults. The WHO has identified eight areas of livability that influence the quality of life of those in a community, particularly older adults. The eight domains, or areas of livability, are: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, Transportation, Housing, Social Participation, Respect and Social Inclusion, Civic Participation and Employment, Communication and Information, and Community and Health Services.

AARP Research developed a survey instrument that captures the WHO eight areas of livability in order to: (1) help communities establish a baseline with regards to older adults being able to age in place, and (2) conduct a community needs/gap analysis to identify and prioritize areas of focus. To minimize the survey length as well as respondent burden the survey encapsulates the WHO eight areas of livability in a slightly different structure.

According to the AARP survey and for the purposes of this report the eight areas are:

1. Housing
2. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
3. Transportation and Streets
4. Health and Wellness
5. Social Participation, Inclusion, and Education Opportunities
6. Volunteering and Civic Engagement
7. Job Opportunities
8. Community Information

To identify needs/gaps, survey respondents were asked how important community features and services were to them and whether or not these features and services exist. To compare these questions, respondents who said a feature or service is extremely, very, or somewhat important were aggregated and then compared to respondents who said the feature or service was present in their community.

The present report is based on data from a mail survey of 3,000 residents age 50-plus living in Charlotte-Matthews, North Carolina. The zip codes included in this survey were: 28104, 28105, 28106, 28202, 28205, 28206, 28208, 28210, 28211, 28213, 28217, 28226, 28246, 28262, 28269, 28273. Resident addresses were provided by Survey Sampling International's (SSI) proprietary database. Each respondent was contacted four times receiving the following pieces of mail: Pre-notification postcard, the first survey, a reminder postcard, and a second survey. A total of 390 completed surveys were returned by the cutoff date of September 10th. There were 275 undeliverable surveys.

This survey has a margin of error of +/- 4.8 percent. This means that if 95 out of 100 samples of this same size and population were given the same survey, the responses to the questions would fall within a range of plus or minus 4.8 percentage points of what would have been obtained if every resident age 50-plus in the sampled area were asked the same questions. The sample was weighted by age, gender and membership to reflect the actual distribution of residents age 50-plus in Charlotte-Matthews, North Carolina.

An annotated questionnaire for the entire sample is also available upon request. For a copy of the annotated survey, you can contact Michael Olender at [molendar@aarp.org](mailto:molendar@aarp.org) or Cassandra Burton at [ccantave@aarp.org](mailto:ccantave@aarp.org).

Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding. Also due to rounding, the percentages reported in the text may vary slightly from those in the graphs or the annotated survey.

# Executive Summary

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## The Top Reported Important Community Features Are Concentrated In Two Domains: Health and Wellness and Transportation

A livable community provides resources that allow residents to age-in-place, and fosters residents' engagement in their community's civic, economic, and social life. The **"2015 AARP Age Friendly Community Survey of Charlotte-Matthews, North Carolina Residents Age 50-plus"** was commissioned to help Charlotte-Matthews decision makers achieve the goal of livability. Using an operationalization of the World Health Organization's eight areas of livable community, the findings show:

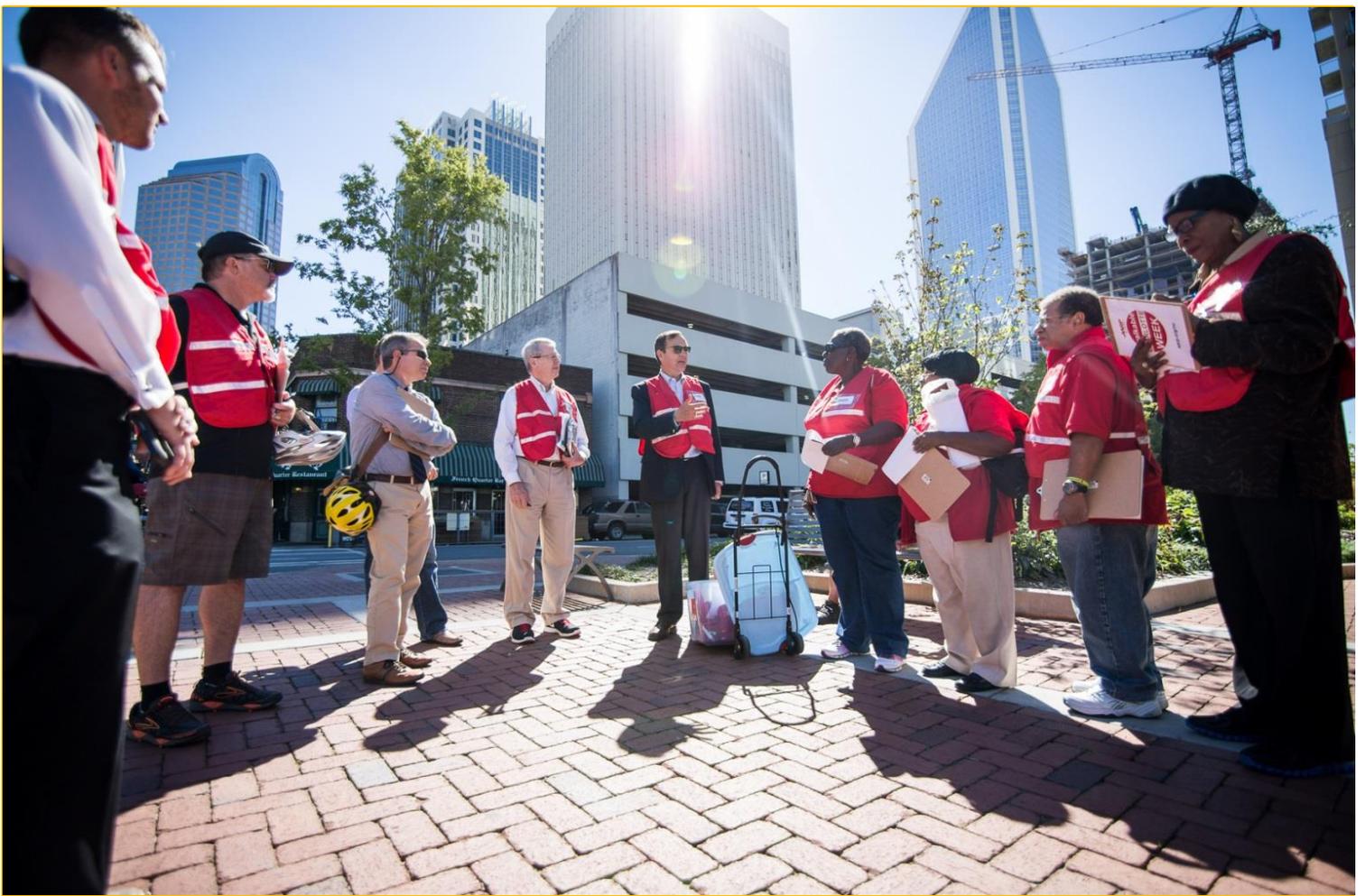
- Charlotte-Matthews had a healthy mix of native and new residents. Three in ten (30%) have lived in their community for 25 years or more, however more than four in ten (43%) have lived there for 15 years or less. Most do not plan to move, and nearly nine in ten (88%) say their community is a good place for older people to live.
- On average, features within Health and Wellness are rated as the most important for Charlotte-Matthews residents age 50-plus among all eight areas. Transportation and Streets ranks as the second most important livable community domain.
- Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities (98%), having a variety of health care professionals including specialists (97%), conveniently located emergency care centers (96%), respectful and helpful hospital and clinic staff (97%), a service that helps seniors find and access health and supportive services (97%), and having easy to read traffic signs (97%) were the top important community features for Charlotte-Matthews residents.

# Executive Summary cont.

## The Top Reported Charlotte-Matthews Community Needs Are Concentrated In Four Areas: Community Information, Volunteering and Civic Engagement, Job Opportunities, and Health and Wellness

- In order to identify the needs of Charlotte-Matthews residents age 50-plus, survey respondents were asked about the importance of a community feature and service, then they were asked if these features and services existed in their community. These questions were then paired together to identify community needs or "gaps."
- While health and wellness and transportation and streets dominated the list of important features, the top community needs gaps were identified in the areas of community information, volunteering and civic engagement, and job opportunities.
- Transportation to and from volunteer activities for those who need it (78%) was identified as the top community need. This was followed by job training opportunities for older adults (77%) and having clearly displayed printed community information with large lettering (75%). Refer to the Key Findings for a summary of the top 10 community needs by WHO Areas.
- An important element of creating livability for all must be individual preferences. These survey findings help policymakers, planners, and others better understand the needs of an aging population in order to begin to brainstorm steps and policies that can be taken to improve livability.





# Community Experience

From a simple perspective, a "livable community" is a place that allows individuals to age-in-place. A comprehensive definition of a livable community is one that is "safe and secure, has affordable and appropriate housing and transportation options, and offers supportive community features and services. Once in place, those resources enhance personal independence; allow residents to age in place; and foster residents' engagement in the community's civic, economic, and social life."

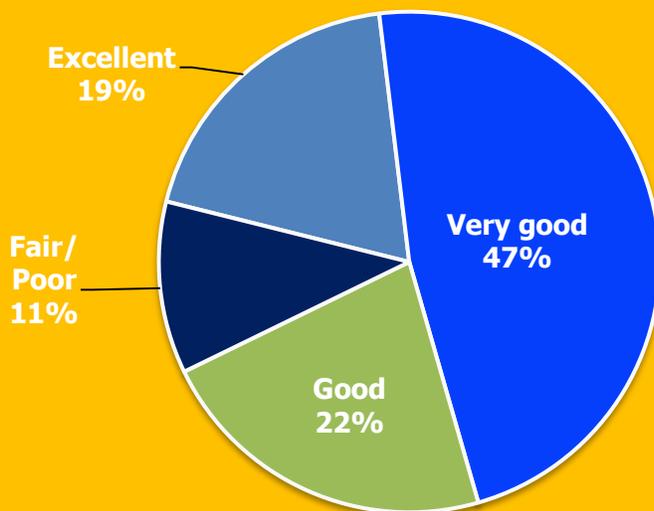
Across the nation, individuals make connections and commitments to homes, friendships, community organizations, and local social ties within their community and want to age-in-place. Charlotte-Matthews residents are no different.

# Community Experience

**Charlotte-Matthews has a healthy mix of both native and new residents. Most say their community is a good place to age in place.**

Three in ten (30%) Charlotte-Matthews residents age 50-plus have lived in their community for at least 25 years. One-quarter (26%) has lived in their community between 15 and 25 years, and more than four in ten (43%) has lived in their community between 0 and 15 years.

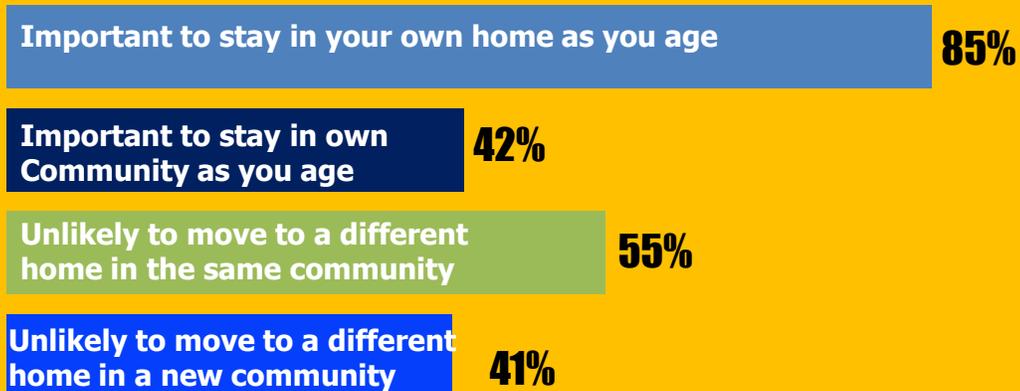
Rate Community as Place to Age in Place



Nearly nine in ten (88%) say their community is an excellent, very good or good place for older people to live.

**Most Charlotte-Matthews residents age 50-plus are unlikely to move into a different home within their community (55%) or move outside their community (41%) in their retirement years.**

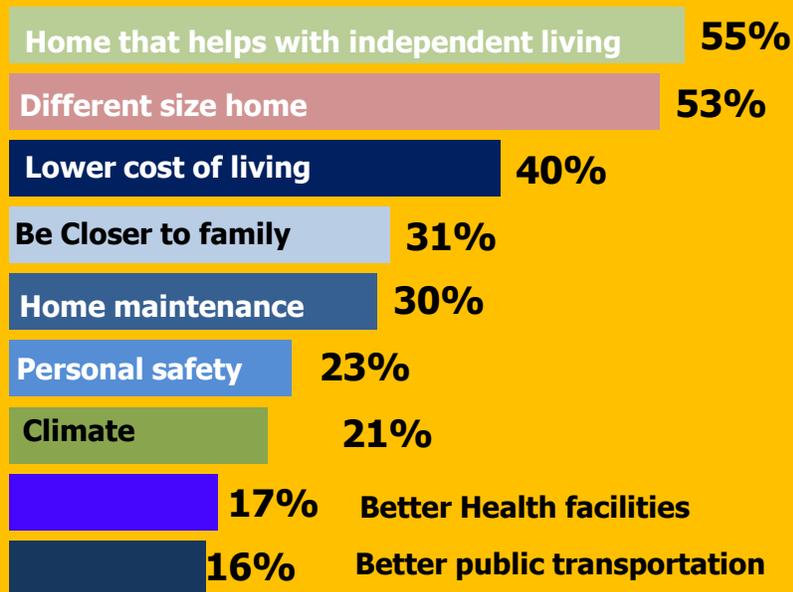
Charlotte-Matthews residents age 50-plus want to continue to live in their community and their home for as long they can. More than four in ten (42%) say it is extremely or very important to stay in their community as they age. Even more respondents (85%) say it is extremely or very important to stay in their own home as they age.



# Community Experience

**Residents say the top factors that would impact their decision to move out of the area are finding a home that helps them live independently and is an appropriate size for their needs.**

While it is important for most (69%) respondents to remain in their community as they age, if Charlotte-Matthews residents were to consider moving when they retire and do not work, over half (55%) say that they would move because they want a home that will help them live independently as they age.

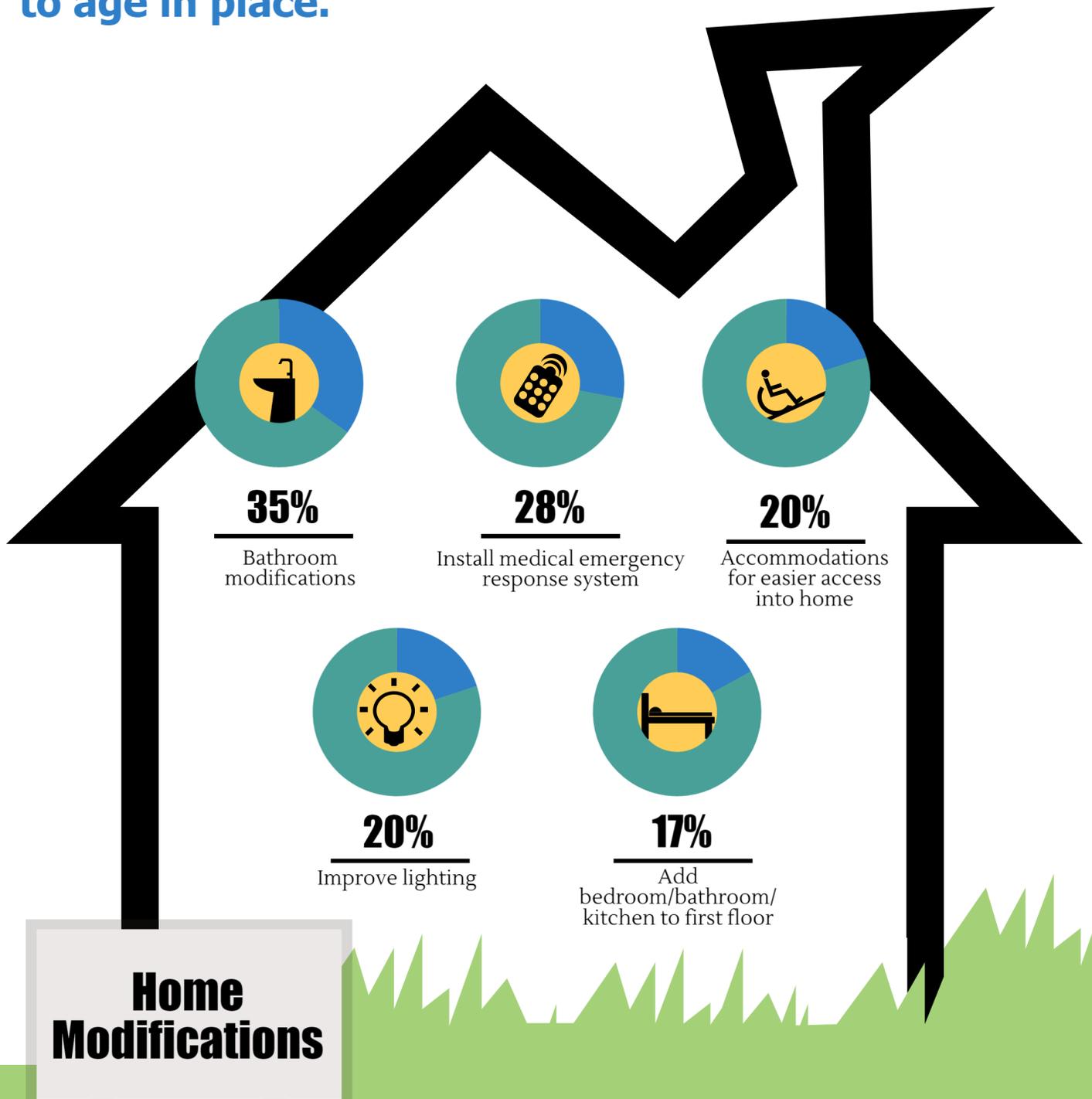


**The majority of Charlotte-Matthews residents age 50-plus own their own homes and live in a single family home.**

Three-quarters of respondents (75%) own their homes while about one in five (20%) rents. About three quarters live in a single family home. One in ten lives in an apartment, condominium, or townhome or duplex. While most say they want to age-in-place, many will need to make home modifications in order to do so.

Type of Home	
Single Family Home	72%
Apartment	11%
Condominium	4%
Townhouse/Duplex	6%

# Many Charlotte residents age 50-plus say they will need to make home modifications to enable them to age in place.

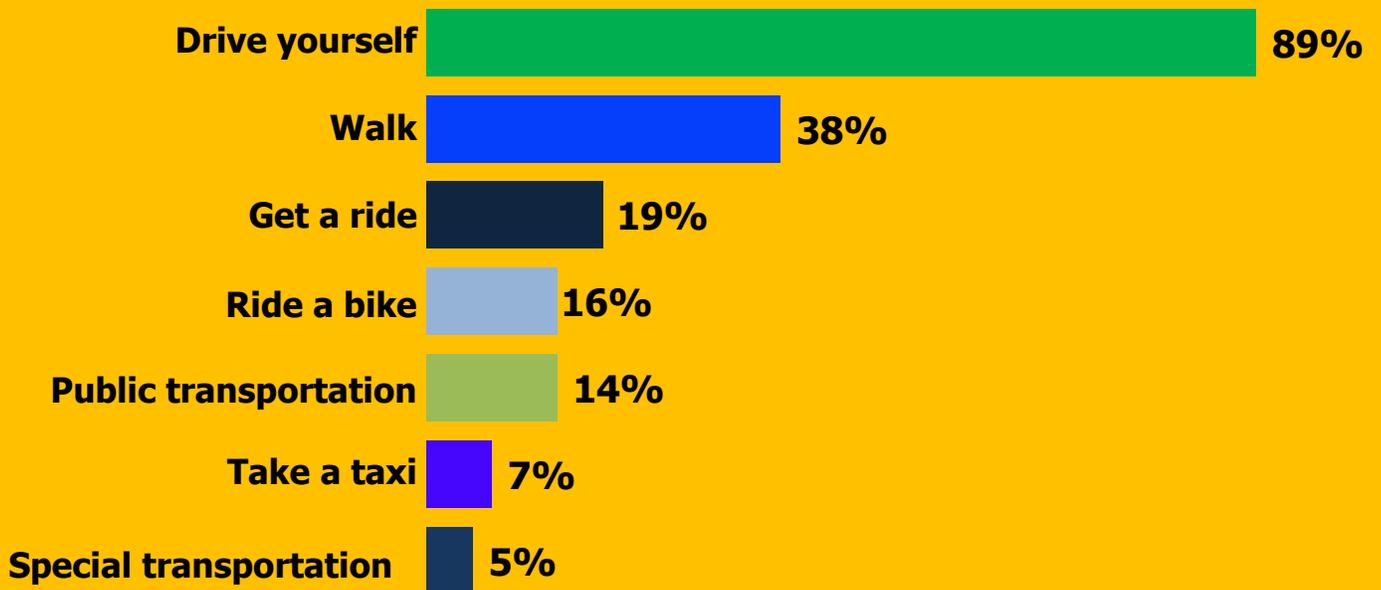


The top home modification that one in three Charlotte residents age 50-plus say they will need to make in order to stay in their home as they age is bathroom modifications such as installing grab bars, handrails, high toilet seats or non-slip tile. Installing emergency response systems are a likely modification for less than three in ten. One in five says they will need to add things like ramps or chairlifts for easier access into and within their home or improve lighting. Only 17 percent say they will need to make structural changes like adding a bedroom or bathroom on the first floor.

# Community Experience

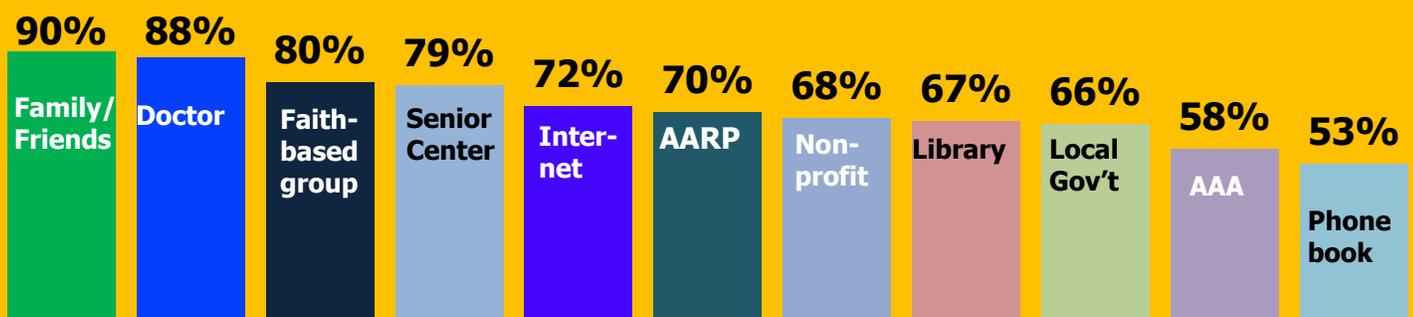
**Most Charlotte-Matthews residents drive themselves when they need to get around. Many also get a ride, walk or ride a bike.**

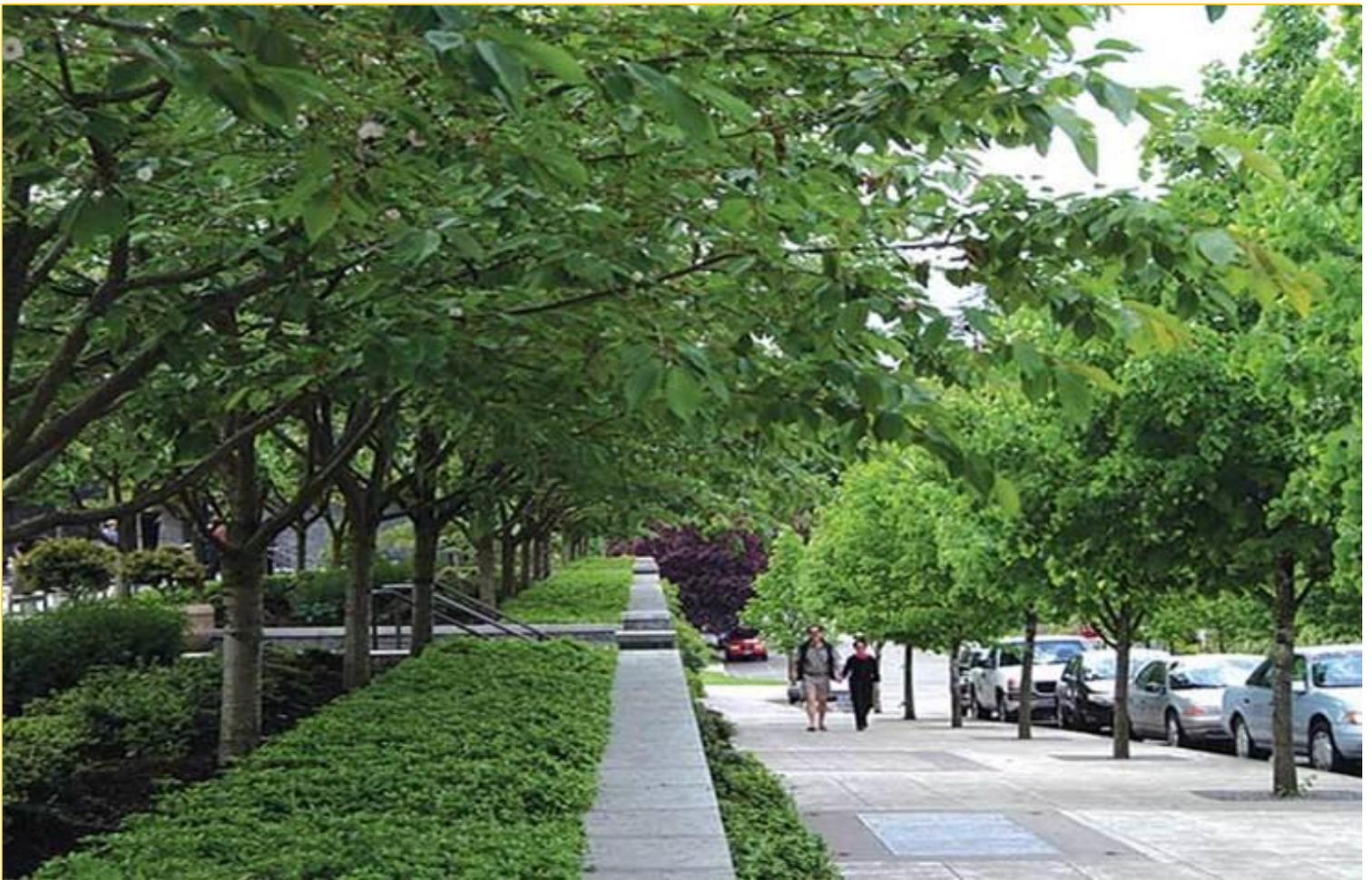
Nine in ten say when they need to get around for things like shopping, visiting the doctor, or running errands they drive themselves.



**Charlotte-Matthews residents would turn most to family, friends, or neighbors for information on services for older adults. They would also turn to a local doctor, faith based organization, or a local senior center**

About nine in ten say they would turn to family or friends, or a local doctor for information about services for older adults such as caregiving, home delivered meals, home repair, medical transport, or social activities. About eight in ten would turn to a faith-based organization or a local senior center. At least seven in ten would turn to the Internet, AARP, a local non-profit, the library or local government for this type of information. More than half would look to the local Area Agency on Aging or would turn to the phone book.



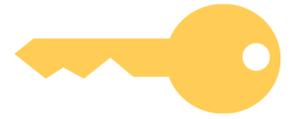


# Community Features

The formula for what makes a community livable isn't particularly complex. For the most part, the features are fairly simple. In a livable community, people of all ages can go for a walk, safely cross the street, ride a bike, get around without a car, live comfortably, work or volunteer, enjoy public places, socialize, spend time outdoors, be entertained, go shopping, buy healthy food, find the services they need, and make their city, town, or neighborhood a lifelong home.

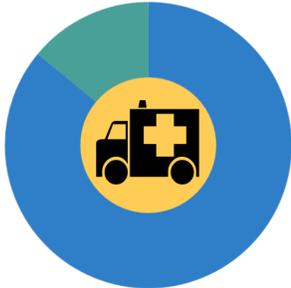
A community that includes all of these livable community features can be great for people of all ages. Charlotte-Matthews residents rated their community on 66 characteristics across eight domains (Health and Wellness, Transportation, Housing, Outdoor Spaces, Social Participation, Volunteering and Civic Engagement, Job Opportunities, and Community Information) in order to identify important and available community features.

# Summary of Average Community Feature/Domain



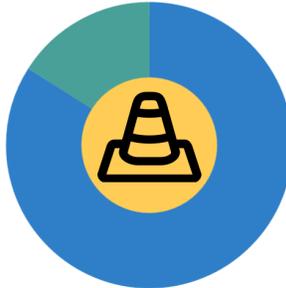
Average Importance Rating of Features Within each Community Domain  
(On a 5 point scale where 5 = Extremely Important and 1= Not At All Important)

## Health and Wellness



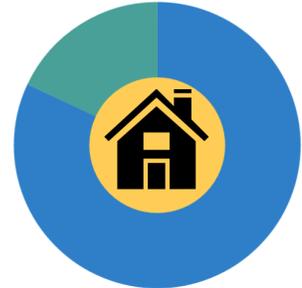
**4.25**

## Transportation



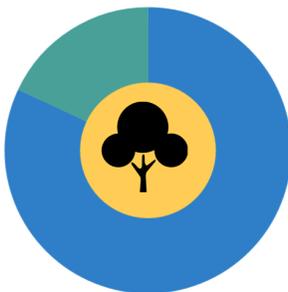
**4.16**

## Housing



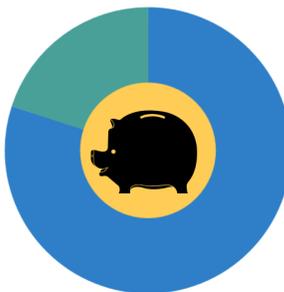
**4.13**

## Outdoor Spaces



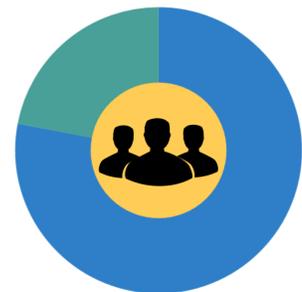
**4.07**

## Job Opportunities



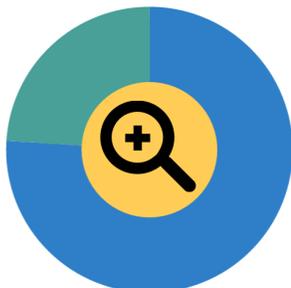
**3.97**

## Social Participation



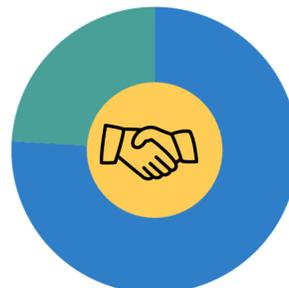
**3.91**

## Community Info



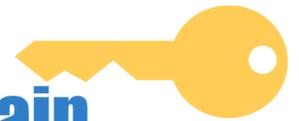
**3.85**

## Volunteer and Civic Engagement



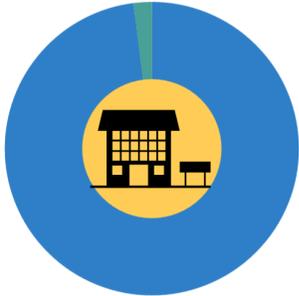
**3.86**

# Summary of Important Charlotte-Matthews Community Features by Domain



Top Important Item Within Each Community Feature/Domain  
(Percent of respondents who rated the item as Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important)

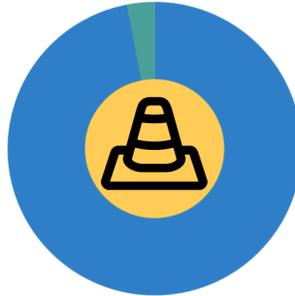
## Health and Wellness



**98%**

Well-maintained hospitals

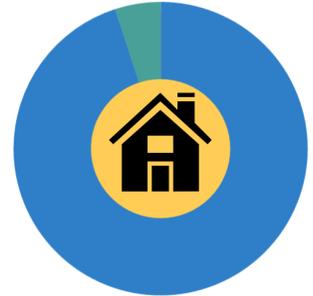
## Transportation



**96%**

Well-maintained streets and roads

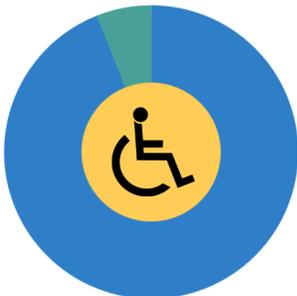
## Housing



**95%**

Well-maintained homes

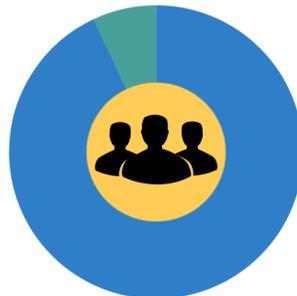
## Outdoor Spaces



**94%**

Accessible public buildings

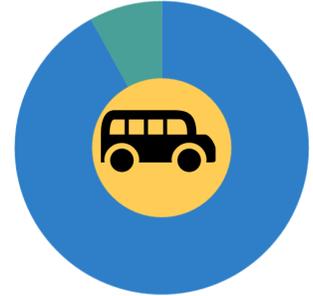
## Social Participation



**93%**

Senior discounts for activities

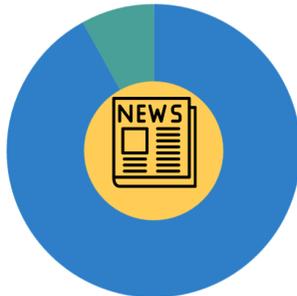
## Volunteer and Civic Engagement



**88%**

Transportation to and from activities

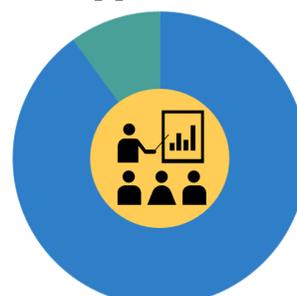
## Community Info



**92%**

Access to information in one central location

## Job Opportunities



**90%**

Job training for older adults

# Top Important Community Features



Across All 66 Features and 8 Domains

(Percent of respondents who rated the item as Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important)

Top Overall Community Items	Importance	Feature/ Domain
Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities	98%	Health and Wellness
A variety of health care professionals including specialists	97%	Health and Wellness
Easy to read traffic signs	97%	Transportation and Streets
A service that helps seniors find and access health and supportive services	97%	Health and Wellness
Conveniently located emergency care centers	97%	Health and Wellness
Respectful and helpful hospital and clinic staff	97%	Health and Wellness
Affordable home health care providers	96%	Health and Wellness
Well-trained certified home health care providers	96%	Health and Wellness
Well-lit, safe streets and intersections	96%	Transportation and Streets
Fitness activities specifically geared towards older adults	96%	Health and Wellness
Well-maintained streets	96%	Transportation and Streets
Easy to find information on local health and supportive services	96%	Health and Wellness



# Community Needs

Every community has its own culture, social structure, traditions, history, and needs. A community needs assessment is a tool to understand and identify community needs defined as the gap between what is and what should be. In order to identify the needs of Charlotte-Matthews AARP residents age 50-plus, survey respondents were asked how important community features and services were to them. Then they were asked if these features and services existed in their community. These questions were then paired together to identify community needs or “gaps” between the importance of a feature or service and its existence in the community.

To compare these questions, respondents who said a feature or service is extremely, very, or somewhat important were aggregated and then compared to respondents who said whether or not the feature or service existed in their community.

# Summary of Charlotte-Matthews Community Needs Gaps by Domain



Top Community Needs Gaps Item Within Each Feature/Domain  
 (Needs Gaps = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present)

## Volunteer and Civic Engagement



**78%**

Transportation to and from activities

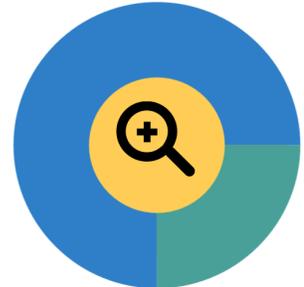
## Job Opportunities



**77%**

Job training opportunities for older adults

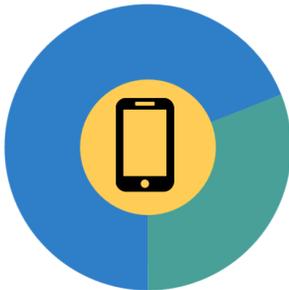
## Community Info



**76%**

Clearly displayed and printed information

## Health and Wellness



**69%**

Easy access to health services

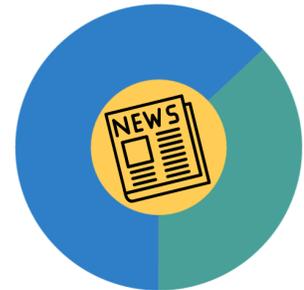
## Housing



**67%**

A repair service for low-income and older adults

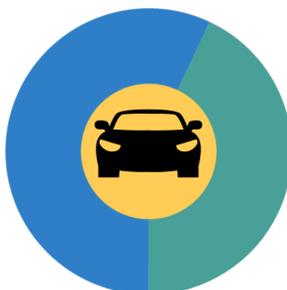
## Social Participation



**58%**

Publicized info about activities

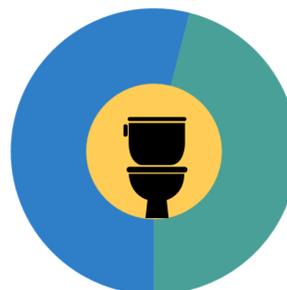
## Transportation



**54%**

driver education/refresher course

## Outdoor Spaces



**54%**

Well-maintained public restrooms

# Top Community Needs Gaps



Across All 66 Features and 8 Domains

(Needs Gaps = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present)

Top Overall Gaps	Gap	Feature/ Domain
Transportation to and from volunteer activities for those who need it	78%	Volunteering and Civic Engagement
Job training opportunities for older adults	77%	Job Opportunities
Clearly displayed printed community information with large lettering	76%	Community Information
Community information that is delivered in person to people who have difficulty or may not be able to leave their home	74%	Community Information
Jobs that are adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities	73%	Job Opportunities
Range of flexible job opportunities for older adults	73%	Job Opportunities
Access to community information in one central source	72%	Community Information
Volunteer training opportunities	70%	Volunteering and Civic Engagement
Easy to find information on available volunteer opportunities	69%	Volunteering and Civic Engagement
A service that helps seniors find and access health and supportive services	69%	Health and Wellness
An automated community information source that is easy to understand like a toll-free telephone number	69%	Community Information



# Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Features	% Important	% Present
Well-maintained public buildings that are accessible to people of different physical abilities	94%	51%
Neighborhood watch programs	93%	58%
Sidewalks that are in good condition	93%	53%
Well-maintained and safe public parks	87%	44%
Well-maintained public restrooms that are accessible to people of different physical abilities	87%	33%
Public parks with enough benches	86%	35%
Separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians	86%	33%

The largest unmet need in outdoor spaces and buildings is



Well-maintained public restrooms that are accessible to people of different physical abilities

**54%**

**87%** say it is important to have well-maintained public restrooms that are accessible to people of different physical abilities. Only **33%** say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of **54%**.

(Needs Gaps = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present )



# Housing Features

Features	% Important	% Present
Well-maintained homes and properties	95%	81%
Home repair contractors who are trustworthy and affordable	92%	52%
Seasonal services such as lawn work	89%	44%
Homes that are equipped with things like a no step entrance, wider doorways, etc.	89%	38%
Home repair service for low-income and older adults that help with repairs	89%	22%
Affordable home prices for residents of varying income levels	86%	36%
Well-maintained and safe low-income housing	82%	29%



The largest unmet need in housing features is

**A repair service for low-income and older adults**

**67%**

89% say it is important to have a repair service for low-income and older adults that helps with things like roof or window repair. Only 22% say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of 67%.

(Needs Gaps = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present )



# Transportation and Streets

<b>Features</b>	<b>% Important</b>	<b>% Present</b>
<b>Easy to read traffic signs</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>83%</b>
<b>Well-maintained streets and roads</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>76%</b>
<b>Well-lit, safe streets and intersections for all users</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>Enforced speed limits</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>66%</b>
<b>Special transportation services for seniors or people with disabilities</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>58%</b>
<b>Public parking lots and areas to park</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>Affordable public parking</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>49%</b>
<b>Audio/visual pedestrian crossings</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>41%</b>
<b>Well-maintained public transportation vehicles</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>53%</b>



# Transportation and Streets, cont.

Features	% Important	% Present
Safe public transportation stops or areas	89%	50%
Affordable public transportation	88%	52%
Reliable public transportation	87%	53%
Accessible and convenient public transportation	86%	55%
Driver education/ refresher course	79%	24%

The largest unmet need in transportation features is

**55%** Driver education/refresher course



**79%** say it is important to have driver education and refresher courses. Only **24%** say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of **55%**.

(Needs Gaps = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present )



# Job Opportunities

Features	% Important	% Present
Job training opportunities for older adults	90%	13%
A range of flexible job opportunities for older adults	89%	16%
Jobs that are adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities	88%	15%



The largest unmet need in employment features is



**Job training opportunities for older adults**

**77%**

**90%** say it is important to have Job training opportunities for older adults who want to learn new job skills within their job or get training in a different field of work. Only **13%** say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of **77%**.



# Community Information

Features	% Important	% Present
Access to information in one central location	92%	20%
Printed information that has large lettering and is clearly displayed	91%	15%
Free access to computers and the internet in public places	90%	55%
Information delivered in person to people who have difficulty leaving their home	88%	14%
An automated community information source	87%	18%
Information that is available in different languages	77%	17%



The largest unmet need in communication and information is

**Printed information that has large lettering and is clearly displayed**

**76%**

**91%** say it is important to have printed information that has large lettering and is clearly displayed. Only **15%** say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of **76%**.

(Needs Gaps = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present )



# Volunteering and Civic Engagement

Features	% Important	% Present
Volunteer training opportunities to help better perform volunteer role	92%	22%
Opportunities for older adults to participate in decision making roles	92%	28%
A range of volunteer activities to choose from	91%	39%
Easy to find information on available local volunteer opportunities	91%	22%
Transportation to and from volunteer activities for those who need it	88%	10%

The largest unmet need in volunteering and civic engagement is



**Transportation to and from volunteer activities**

**78%**

**88%** say it is important to have transportation to and from volunteer activities for those who need it. Only **10%** say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of **78%**.

(Needs Gaps = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present )



# Social Participation, Inclusion, and Education Opportunities

Features	% Important	% Present
Activities that offer senior discounts	93%	43%
Activities that are affordable to all residents	92%	34%
Widely publicized reliable information about activities	92%	34%
Conveniently located venues for entertainment	90%	50%
Activities specifically geared towards older adults	90%	38%
Activities that involve both younger and older people	88%	45%
A variety of cultural activities for diverse populations	86%	32%
Social clubs such as book, gardening, craft or hobby	85%	41%
Continuing education classes	85%	47%
Local schools that involve older adults in events and activities	81%	27%

The largest unmet need in social participation, inclusion, and education opportunities is



**Accurate and widely publicized information about social activities**

**58%**

**92%** say it is important to have accurate and widely publicized information about social activities. Only **34%** say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of **58%**.

(Needs Gaps = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present )



# Health and Wellness

<b>Features</b>	<b>% Important</b>	<b>% Present</b>
<b>Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>82%</b>
<b>Respectful and helpful hospital and clinic staff</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>A variety of health care professionals</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>74%</b>
<b>Conveniently located emergency care centers</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>73%</b>
<b>A service that helps seniors find and access health services</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Fitness activities specifically geared towards older adults</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>48%</b>
<b>Well-trained certified home health care providers</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Easy to find information on local health and supportive services</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>Affordable home health care providers</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>33%</b>



# Health and Wellness, cont.

Features	% Important	% Present
Home care services including health, personal care, and housekeeping	95%	45%
Easily understandable and helpful hospital answering services	95%	55%
Conveniently located health and social services	95%	57%
Health and wellness programs and classes	95%	42%
Health care professionals who speak different languages	76%	41%

The largest unmet need in health services is

**69%** A service that helps seniors find and access health services **69%**

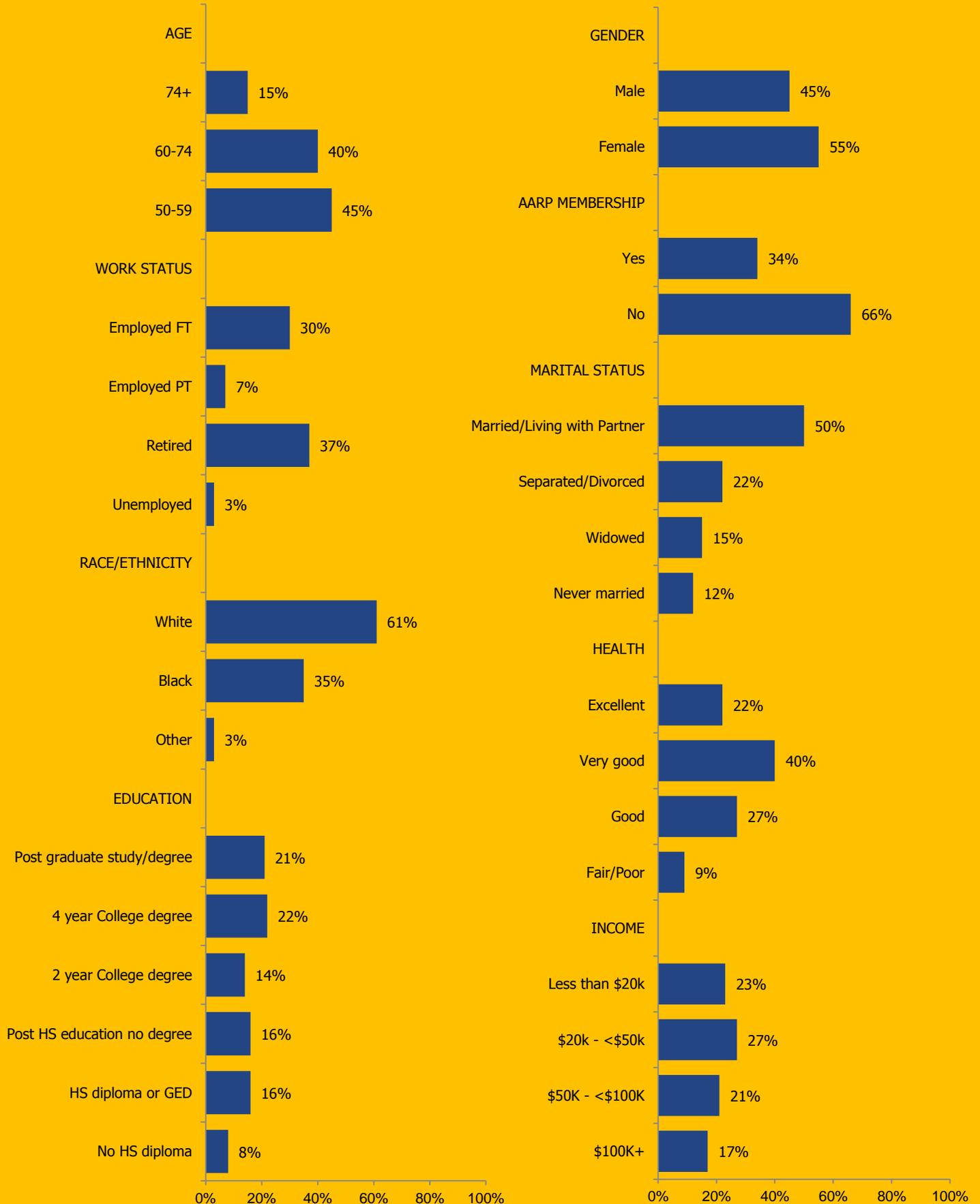
**97%** say it is important to have services that help seniors find and access health services. Only **28%** say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of **69%**.



(Needs Gaps = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present )

# Demographics

n= 390



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## Real Possibilities

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, with a membership of nearly 38 million, that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as health care, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse. We advocate for individuals in the marketplace by selecting products and services of high quality and value to carry the AARP name as well as help our members obtain discounts on a wide range of products, travel, and services. A trusted source for lifestyle tips, news and educational information, AARP produces AARP The Magazine, the world's largest circulation magazine; AARP Bulletin; [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org); AARP TV Et Radio; AARP Books; and AARP en Espanol, a Spanish-language website addressing the interests and needs of Hispanics. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to political campaigns or candidates. The AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. AARP has staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Learn more at [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org).

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