

Livability For All in Houston

**An Age-Friendly Community Survey
of AARP Members Age 50-plus**



Real Possibilities

2016

Background

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.¹ 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 that influence the quality of life of those in a community, particularly older adults. The eight areas or domains are: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, Housing, Transportation, 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 age-friendly community in order to help communities: (1) establish a baseline with regards to older adults being able to age in place, and (2) conduct a community needs assessment to identify and prioritize areas of focus.

To minimize the survey length as well as respondent burden, the AARP 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 domains of age-friendly community are:

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

These survey findings reflect individual preferences and 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 for all.



¹ Learn more at www.agefriendlyworld.org

Executive Summary

For AARP Members in Houston, the most important age-friendly community features center heavily around quality and convenient healthcare providers and services, street maintenance and safety for all users, and well-maintained housing.

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 **"2016 AARP Age-Friendly Community Survey of Houston, Texas AARP members"** was commissioned to help Houston decision makers achieve the goal of livability.

Survey results show that 41% of Houston AARP members age 50-plus have lived in their community for over 25 years. Most do not plan to move, and more than eight in ten (85%) say their community is a good, very good or excellent place for older people to live.

Based on the eight domains of age-friendly community, survey findings also help identify the community features that are most important in Houston:



On average, **Health and Wellness** is rated as most important among livable community domains for Houston AARP members. Items that top the list in this area of community life relate primarily to facilities, providers, and services, including home health care. It is highly important to have respectful and helpful hospital staff and access to a variety of professionals and specialists. Hospitals and facilities must be well-maintained, emergency centers conveniently located and home health providers must be affordable and well-trained.



Transportation overall ranks a close second area of importance. Specifically, survey respondents consider it highly important to ensure streets are well-maintained, traffic signs are easy to read, speed limits are enforced, and intersections are well-lit and safe for all users.



One community feature from the **Housing** domain rounds out the top tier of importance: having well-maintained homes and properties.

More information on the importance of community features by each of the eight age-friendly community domains can be found in the following pages of this report.

Executive Summary

The top reported need gaps in Houston are concentrated in the areas of Community Information and Job Opportunities. Home repair services, volunteer transportation and home health services are also large unmet needs.

In order to identify the needs of Houston AARP members 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 features of Health and Transportation dominate the list of what is important for an age-friendly community in Houston according to AARP members, the largest community need gaps are concentrated primarily in the areas of Community Information and Job Opportunities. Additional needs are identified for some Health services, Volunteer and Civic Engagement, and Housing.



Disseminating **Community Information** in ways that are friendly to older and potentially home-bound residents is a need. Survey respondents identify salient gaps in having community information that is delivered in person, clearly displayed information, from a centralized source, and automated.



Job Opportunities for older adults is an area of unmet need for 50-plus adults in Houston. Job training specifically for older workers, jobs adapted to needs of the disabled, and job flexibility are all among the largest need gaps.



In the **Health** domain, two features rise to the top tier of unmet needs: affordable home health providers, and having a service to connect seniors to supportive services.



One feature of the **Housing** domain rises to the top of unmet needs that would help residents stay in their own homes: home repair services for low income and older adults.



The chief need for connecting older residents to **Volunteer and Engagement** opportunities is providing transportation to and from volunteer activities for those who need it.

More information on the community need gaps by each of the eight age-friendly community domains can be found in the following pages of this report.



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.

Community Experience

Forty-one percent of AARP Members in Houston have lived in their community for over 25 years and most say their community is a good place to age in place.

Houston AARP members age 50-plus have deep roots in their community. Four in ten have lived in their community for over 25 years. One in four (25%) has lived in their community between 15 and 25 years, and one in three (33%) has lived in their community less than 15 years.

How would you rate your community as a place for people to live as they age?



Four in five (85%) AARP members in Houston say their community is an excellent (19%), very good (38%) or good (28%) place for older people to live as they age. Fourteen percent give it an assessment of fair or poor.

Most Houston AARP members want to live independently in their own home for as long as they can.

While a substantial percentage of Houston AARP members (44%) say it is extremely or very important to stay in their community as they age, a large majority (87%) say it is extremely or very important to stay in their own home. In addition, the majority of Houston AARP members age 50-plus expect to stay in their current home during their retirement years.



Important to stay in your own home as you age

87%

Important to age in your own community

44%

Unlikely to move to a different home in the same community

59%

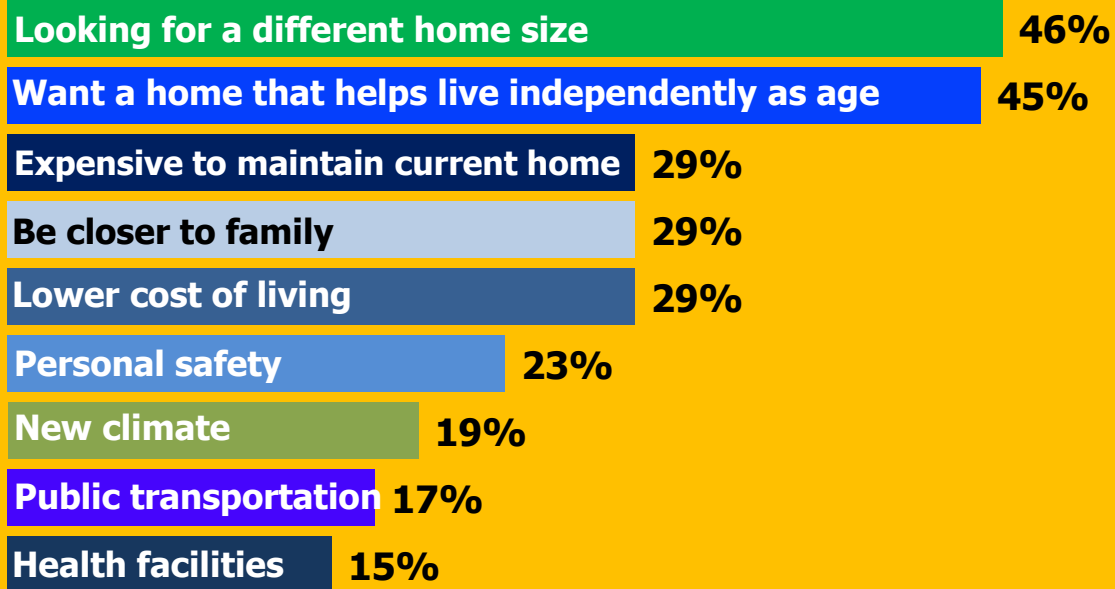
Unlikely to move to a different home in a new community

54%

Community Experience

A desire for right-sized housing and age-friendly housing is most likely to influence Houston AARP members to move out of their community.

If Houston AARP members were to consider moving during retirement, housing decisions would be among the most likely influencing factors. About half say that they would move because they want a different sized home that will meet their needs (46%) or a home that would help them live independently as they age (45%).

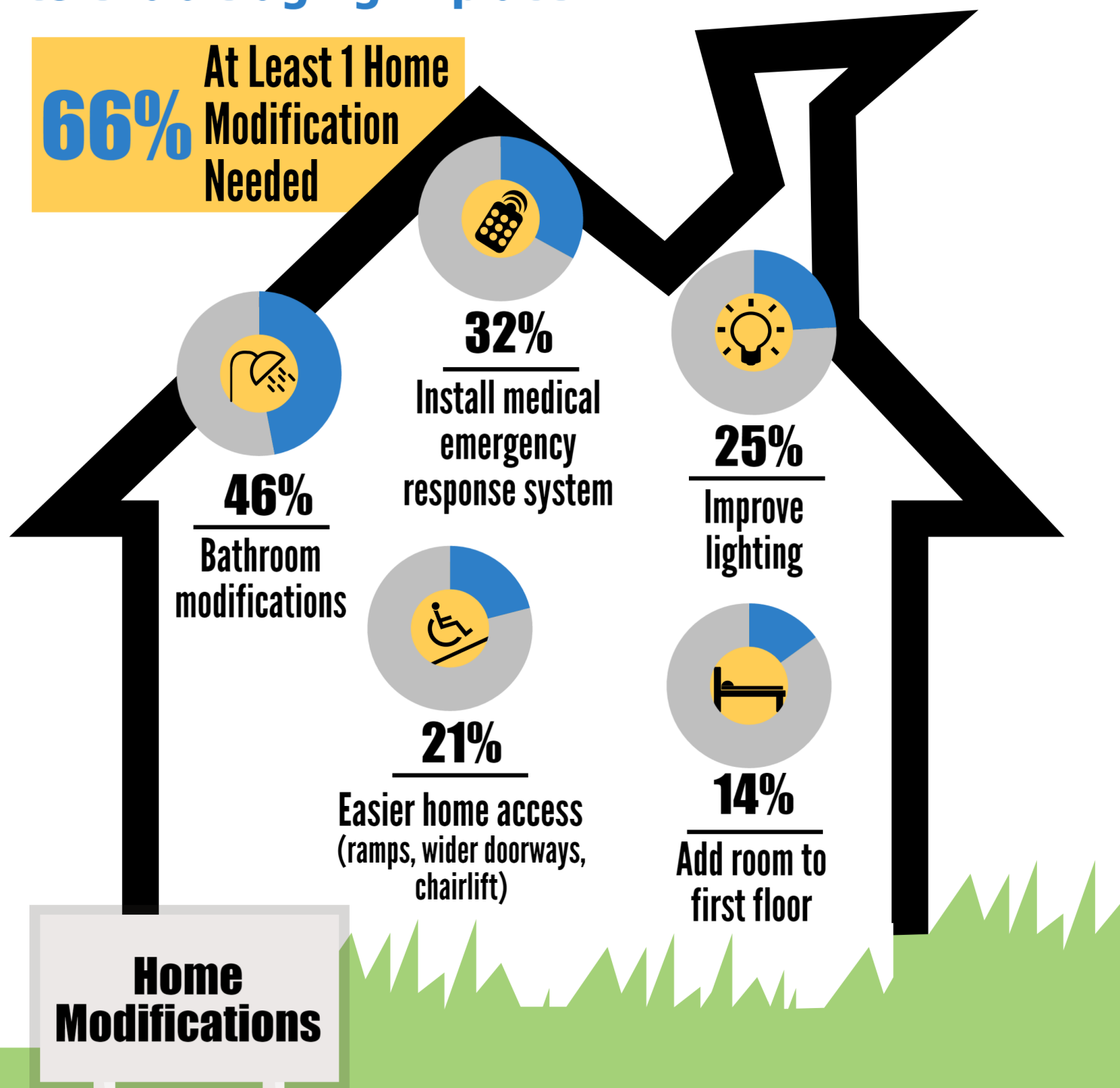


Most Houston AARP members age 50-plus own single family homes.

Most respondents (77%) own their homes while fifteen percent rent. The majority lives in a single family home (72%). Twenty-two percent live in some form of multi-unit structure such as an apartment (11%), townhome or duplex (6%) or condo (5%). 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%
Townhouse/Duplex	6%
Coop/Condo	5%
Mobile home	1%

Many Houston homes will need modifications to enable aging in place.

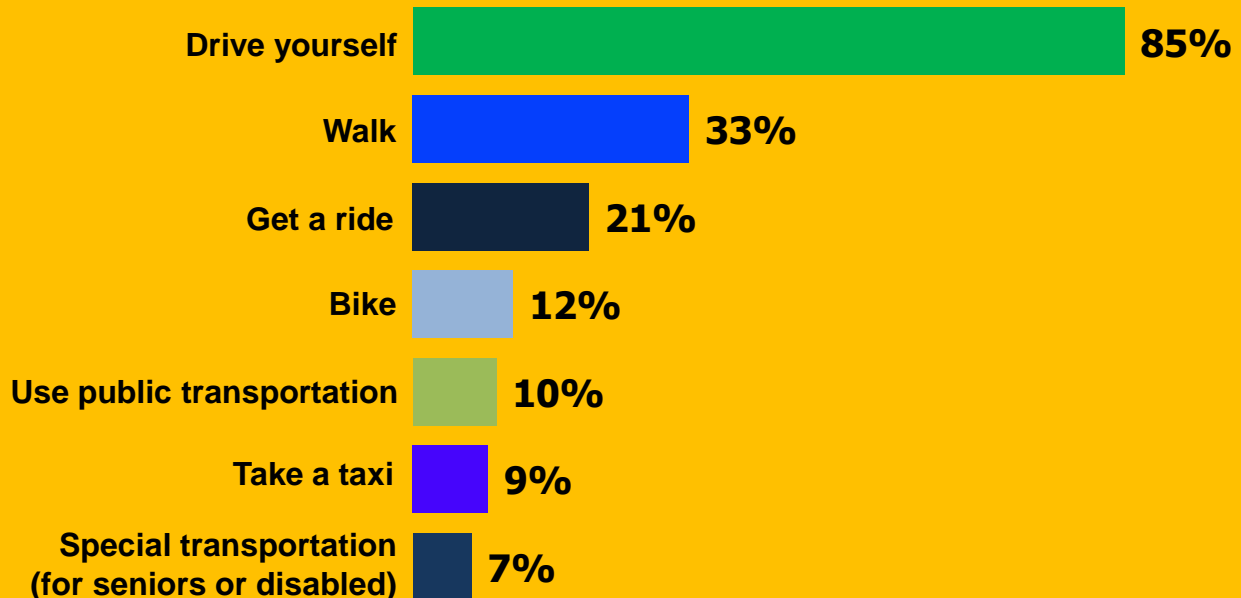


Bathroom modifications such as installing grab bars, handrails, high toilet seats or non-slip tile, are expected to be needed by nearly half of survey respondents in order to stay in their homes as they age. Installing emergency response systems is a likely modification for nearly one in three. A quarter say they will need to make improvement to lighting, while one in five says they will need to add things like ramps or chairlifts for easier access into their home. Fourteen percent say they will need to make structural changes like adding a bedroom or bathroom on the first floor.

Community Experience

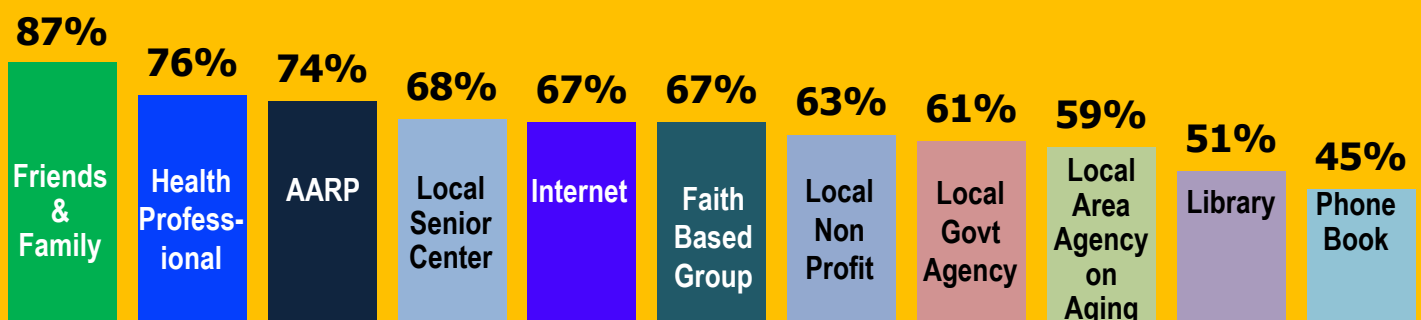
Houston is a driving community. One in three also walks to get where they need to.

About nine in ten (85%) say when they need to get around for things like shopping, visiting the doctor, or running errands they drive themselves; and about one in five (21%) will get a ride. In addition, one in three (33%) uses walking as a means of transportation for daily destinations.



Houston AARP members are most likely to turn to people they know for information on services for older adults.

More than eight in ten (87%) say they would turn to family, friends, or neighbors for information about services for older adults such as caregiving, home delivered meals, home repair, medical transport, or social activities. About three-fourths would turn to their doctor or AARP. Seven in ten would seek information from a local senior center, the Internet, or a faith-based organization. Six in ten would go to a local non profit, local government agency or local Area Agency on Aging. Half would get information from the library or 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.

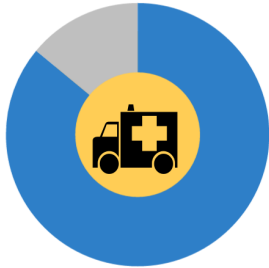
Houston AARP members rated their community on 66 characteristics across eight domains (*Health and Wellness, Transportation, Housing, Outdoor Spaces, Social Participation, Volunteering and Civic Engagement, Community Information, and Job Opportunities*) in order to identify important and available community features.

Summary of Importance: 8 Age-Friendly Community Domains



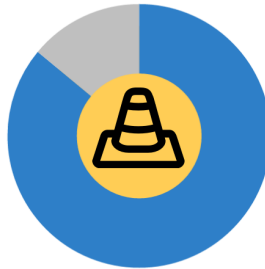
Average Importance Rating of each Community Feature/Domain
(on a 5 point scale where 5 = Extremely Important and 1= Not At All Important)

Health and Wellness



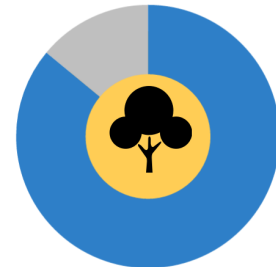
4.25

Transportation



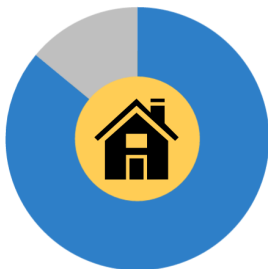
4.22

Outdoor Spaces



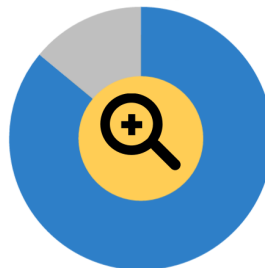
4.09

Housing



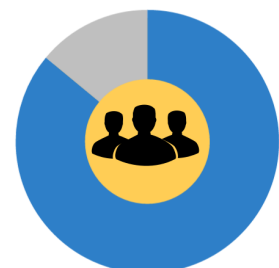
4.00

Community Info



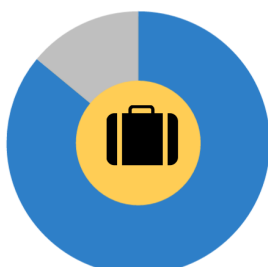
3.82

Social Participation



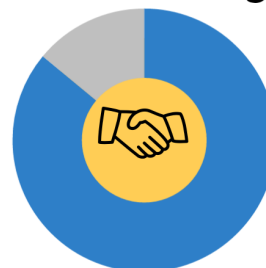
3.81

Job Opportunities



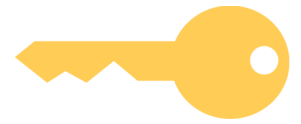
3.80

Volunteer and Civic Engagement



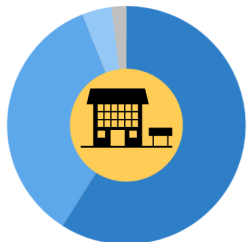
3.76

Summary of Importance: Community Features by Domain



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

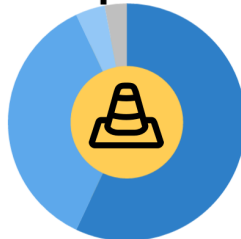
Health and Wellness



98%

Well-maintained hospitals

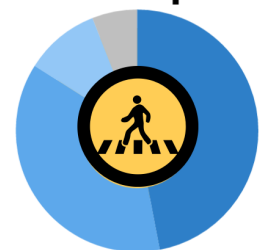
Transportation



97%

Well-maintained streets

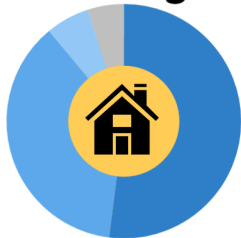
Outdoor Spaces



94%

Sidewalks that are in good condition

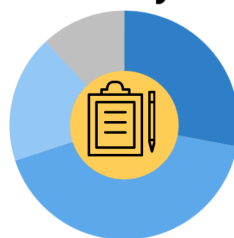
Housing



95%

Well-maintained homes and properties

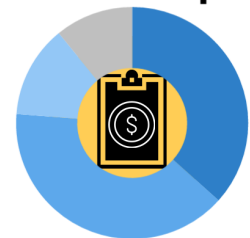
Community Info



88%

Central located community information

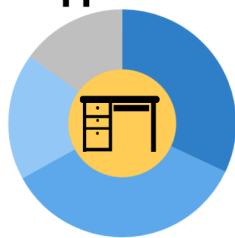
Social Participation



89%

Affordable activities

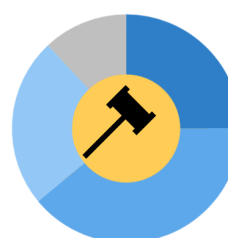
Job Opportunities



85%

Jobs adapted for people with disabilities

Volunteer and Civic Engagement



88%

Participate in community councils or committees



Top Important Community Features

Top Tier of Important Items Among All 66 Features in 8 Domains

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

Top Overall Community Features	Importance	Domain
Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities	98%	Health and Wellness
A variety of health care professionals including specialists	97%	Health and Wellness
Well-maintained streets	97%	Transportation
Respectful and helpful hospital and clinic staff	97%	Health and Wellness
Conveniently located emergency care centers	97%	Health and Wellness
Easy to read traffic signs	97%	Transportation
Enforced speed limits	96%	Transportation
Easy to find information on local health and supportive services	96%	Health and Wellness
Affordable home health care providers	96%	Health and Wellness
Home care services including health, personal care and housekeeping	95%	Health and Wellness
Well-trained certified home health care providers	95%	Health and Wellness
Well-lit, safe streets and intersections for all users (pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers)	95%	Transportation
Well-maintained homes and properties	95%	Housing

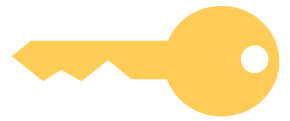


Community Needs

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 Houston AARP members, 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.

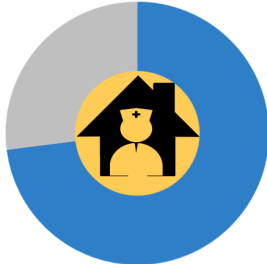
To compare these questions, respondents who said a feature or service is extremely, very, or somewhat important were aggregated and then compared to respondents who said whether or not the feature or service existed in their community.

Summary of Needs: Community Features by Domain



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

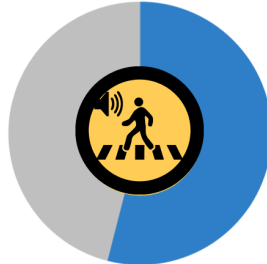
Health and Wellness



73%

Affordable home
health care

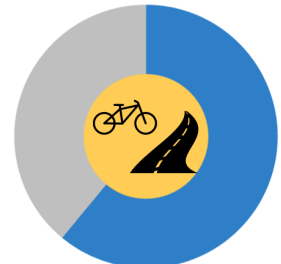
Transportation



54%

Audio/visual
pedestrian crossings

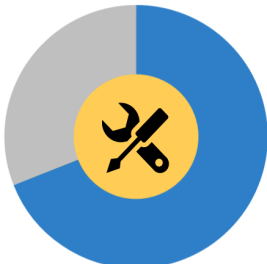
Outdoor Spaces



61%

Separate pathways for
bikes and pedestrians

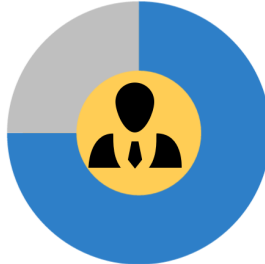
Housing



69%

A repair service for low-
income and older adults

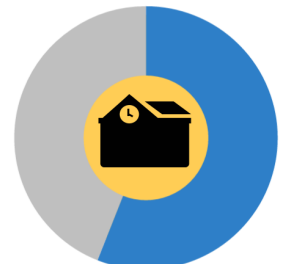
Community Info



75%

Information delivered
in person

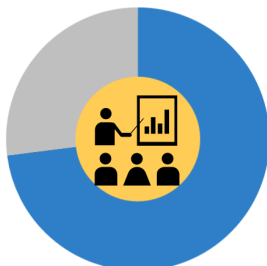
Social Participation



56%

Local school activities
involve seniors

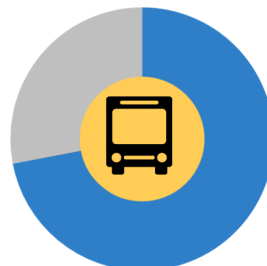
Job Opportunities



73%

Job training opportunities
for older adults

Volunteer and Civic Engagement



72%

Transportation to and
from activities

Top Community Need Gaps



Top Need Gaps Among All 66 Features in 8 Domains

(Need Gap is the difference between Importance and Present:
% Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present)

Top Overall Gaps	Gap	Domain
Community information that is delivered in person to people who may have difficulty or may not be able to leave their home	75%	Community Information
Clearly displayed printed community information with large lettering	75%	Community Information
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	73%	Jobs
Jobs that are adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities	73%	Jobs
Affordable home health care providers	73%	Health and Wellness
Access to community information in one central source	72%	Community Information
Transportation to and from volunteer activities for those who need it	72%	Volunteer & Civic Engagement
An automated community information source that is easy to understand like a toll-free telephone number	70%	Community Information
A home repair service for low-income and older adults that helps with things like roof or window repairs	69%	Housing
A service that helps seniors find and access health and supportive services	67%	Health and Wellness
A range of flexible job opportunities for older adults	66%	Jobs



Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Features	% Important	% Present
Sidewalks that are in good condition	94%	42%
Neighborhood watch programs	94%	43%
Well-maintained public buildings that are accessible to people of different physical abilities	92%	51%
Well-maintained and safe public parks	90%	49%
Well-maintained public restrooms that are accessible to people of different physical abilities	89%	31%
Public parks with enough benches	89%	40%
Separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians	87%	26%

The largest unmet need in outdoor spaces and buildings is



Separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians

61%

87% say it is important to have separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians. Only **26%** say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of **61%**.

(Need Gap = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present)



Housing Features

Features	% Important	% Present
Well-maintained homes and properties	95%	77%
Home repair contractors who are trustworthy and affordable	90%	50%
Home repair service for low-income and older adults that help with repairs	86%	17%
Affordable home options for residents of varying income levels	84%	31%
Homes that are equipped with things like a no step entrance, wider doorways, etc.	85%	32%
Seasonal services such as lawn work	83%	37%
Well-maintained and safe low-income housing	79%	25%



The largest unmet need in housing features is

A home repair service for low-income and older adults **69%**

86% say it is important to have a home repair service for low-income and older adults that helps with things like roof or window repair. Only 17% say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of 69%.

(Need Gap = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present)



Transportation and Streets

Features	% Important	% Present
Well-maintained streets and roads	97%	54%
Easy to read traffic signs	97%	74%
Enforced speed limits	96%	59%
Well-lit, safe streets and intersections for all users	95%	52%
Public parking lots and areas to park	92%	56%
Special transportation services for seniors or people with disabilities	92%	51%
Audio/visual pedestrian crossings	91%	37%
Well-maintained public transportation vehicles	90%	45%
Affordable public parking	89%	41%



Transportation and Streets, cont.

Features	% Important	% Present
Affordable public transportation	89%	52%
Accessible and convenient public transportation	89%	49%
Reliable public transportation	89%	46%
Safe public transportation stops or areas	88%	37%
Driver education/ refresher course	83%	31%

The largest unmet need in transportation features is

54%

Audio/visual pedestrian crossings

91% say it is important to have safe public transportation stops or areas. Only **37%** say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of **54%**.



(Need Gap = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present)



Job Opportunities

Features	% Important	% Present
Jobs that are adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities	85%	12%
Job training opportunities for older adults who want to learn new skills or get training	83%	10%
A range of flexible job opportunities for older adults	79%	13%

The largest unmet need in employment features is



**Job training opportunities
for older adults**

73%

83% 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 **10%** say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of **73%**.

(Need Gap = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present)



Community Information

Features	% Important	% Present
Access to information in one central location	88%	16%
Printed information that has large lettering and is clearly displayed	88%	13%
Free access to computers and the internet in public places	87%	46%
An automated community information source	86%	16%
Information delivered in person to people who have difficulty leaving their home	85%	10%
Information that is available in different languages	76%	19%

The largest unmet need in communication and information is



Information delivered in person to people who have difficulty leaving their home

75%

85% say it is important to have information delivered in person to people who have difficulty leaving their home. Only 10% say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of 75%.

(Need Gap = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present)



Volunteering and Civic Engagement

Features	% Important	% Present
Opportunities for older adults to participate in decision making bodies such as community councils or committees	88%	27%
Easy to find information on available local volunteer opportunities	88%	25%
A range of volunteer activities to choose from	86%	34%
Transportation to and from volunteer activities for those who need it	86%	14%
Volunteer training opportunities to help better perform volunteer role	85%	21%

The largest unmet need in volunteering and civic engagement is



Transportation to and from volunteer activities



86% say it is important to have transportation to and from volunteer activities for those who need it. Only **14%** say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of **72%**.

(Need Gap = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present)



Social Participation, Inclusion, and Education Opportunities

Features	% Important	% Present
Activities that are affordable to all residents	89%	35%
Activities that offer senior discounts	88%	46%
Widely publicized and accurate information about social activities	88%	34%
Activities specifically geared towards older adults	86%	36%
Activities that involve both younger and older people	84%	35%
Social clubs such as book, gardening, craft or hobby	84%	41%
A variety of cultural activities for diverse populations	82%	35%
Conveniently located venues for entertainment	82%	50%
Continuing education classes	80%	48%
Local schools that involve older adults in events and activities	78%	22%

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



Local schools that involve older adults in events and activities

56%

78% say it is important to have local schools that involve older adults in events and activities. Only 22% say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of 56%.

(Need Gap = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present)



Health and Wellness

Features	% Important	% Present
Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities	98%	74%
Conveniently located emergency care centers	97%	72%
A variety of health care professionals	97%	69%
Respectful and helpful hospital and clinic staff	97%	68%
Easy to find information on local health and supportive services	96%	37%
Affordable home health care providers	96%	23%
Home care services including health, personal care, and housekeeping	95%	38%
Well-trained certified home health care providers	95%	31%
Easily understandable and helpful hospital answering services	94%	52%



Health and Wellness, cont.

Features	% Important	% Present
A service that helps seniors find and access health services	94%	27%
Conveniently located health and social services	93%	47%
Fitness activities specifically geared towards older adults	93%	40%
Health and wellness programs and classes	93%	35%
Health care professionals who speak different languages	83%	56%

The largest unmet need in health services is



**Affordable home health
care providers**

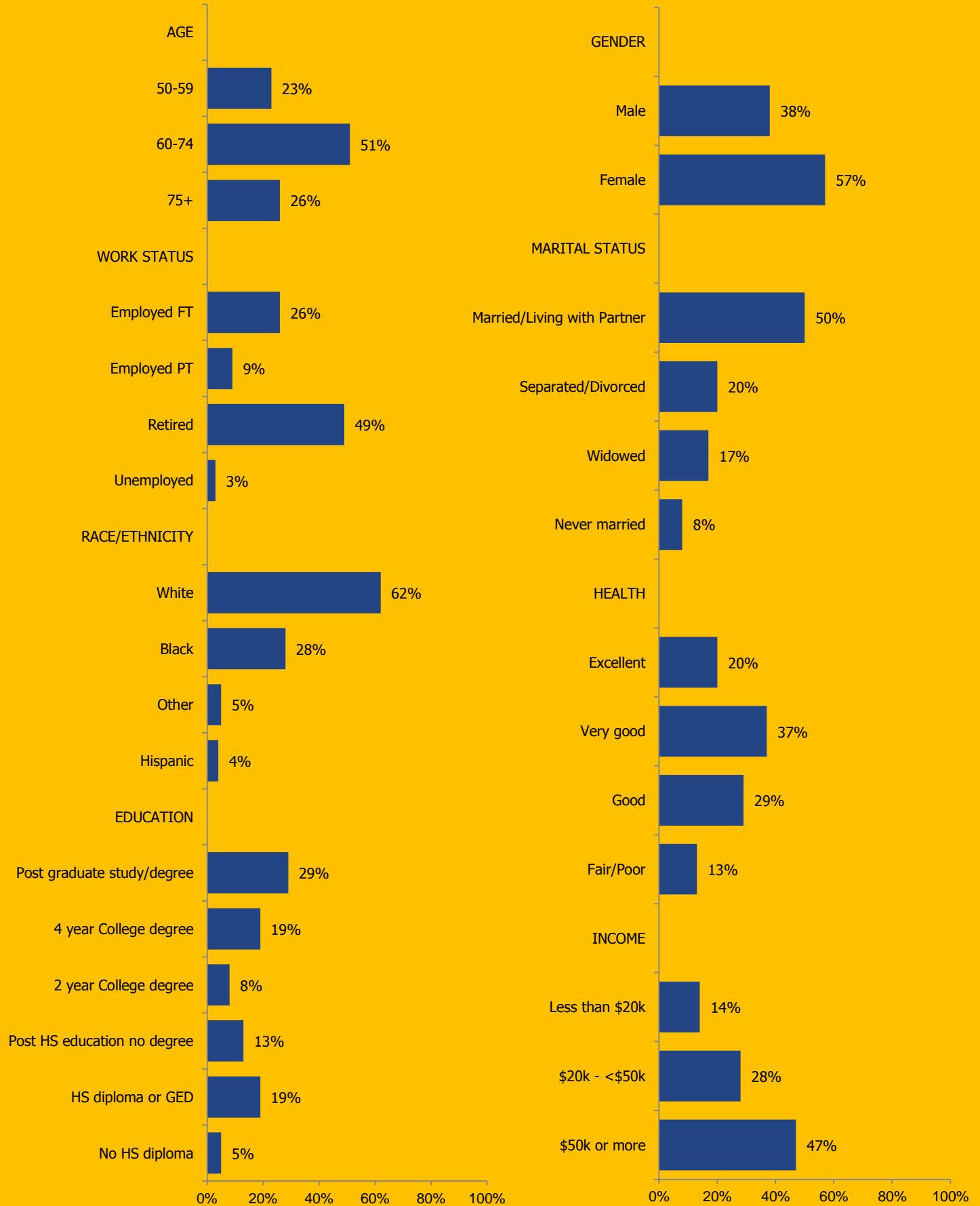
73%

96% say it is important to have services that helps seniors find and access health services. Only **23%** say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of **73%**.

(Need Gap = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present)

Demographics

n= 328



Survey Methodology

This report is based on data from a mail survey of 2,000 AARP members age 50-plus living in the City of Houston, Texas. The sample was drawn from AARP's membership database. Each sampled member 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 328 completed surveys were returned by the cutoff date of August 21, 2015. The sample has a margin of error of +/- 5.5 percent. The sample was weighted by age and gender to reflect the actual distribution of AARP members age 50-plus in the City of Houston, Texas. Data in this report represents the opinions of AARP members and is not projectable to the total 50-plus population in Houston.

Vupoint Research was commissioned to enter and tabulate the data from returned surveys.

An annotated questionnaire and addendum tables are available upon request. Percentages in this report 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 annotation or in graphs.

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Others provided by AARP Texas.

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Real Possibilities

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