

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

August 2024

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Commissioned by the City of Newton

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Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging  
Gerontology Institute  
University of Massachusetts Boston





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## CITY OF NEWTON

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1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton Centre, MA 02459

Dear Newton Residents and Community Members,

We are pleased to share the report *Aging in Newton: A Community Needs Assessment* as researched and written by an expert team at the University of Massachusetts Boston Gerontology Institute.

As we were looking forward to the opening of the Cooper Center for Active Living in the fall of 2025, we partnered with the UMASS Boston team to conduct a needs assessment focused on the experiences, interests and long-term needs of Newton residents age 60+.

This report is the result of many months of input within the community and among our outside community partners. Over the past year, Newton residents of all ages participated in programs, discussions, and a community survey. This research has culminated in the enclosed report which includes feedback and recommendations from Newton residents.

The focus areas of this report are broad and deep. They include outdoor spaces and public buildings; transportation options; diversity and social inclusion; communication and public information; housing choices; social participation; civic participation and employment; as well as community and mental & physical health services. The report also provides insights into the ways in which the new Cooper Center for Active Living can add value for older adults in Newton.

We are grateful to everyone who participated in this process and provided thoughtful feedback. We thank the Newton residents, community leaders, service providers, business owners, and municipal employees who gave of their time and provided insights into how to make Newton a more vibrant and inclusive community. We also thank Dr. Caitlin Coyle and her team at UMASS for their enthusiasm, expertise and dedication to this assessment.

We believe you will find this report to be informative and we encourage you to help us with the work ahead to support the needs of older adults in Newton. We will continue to need your input as we develop projects, services and programs that will have positive impacts on how residents live in the City of Newton and how to make us even more all-age friendly.

Thank you for your support, vision, and engagement as we collaborate on our shared goals of "learning, growing, and connecting."

Sincerely,

Ruthanne Fuller  
Mayor  
City of Newton

Mignonne Murray  
Department of Older Adult Services  
Director

# Table of Contents

- Contributors and Acknowledgements ..... 1**
- Executive Summary ..... 2**
- Methods ..... 17**
  - Demographic Profile..... 17**
  - Key Informant Interviews..... 17**
  - Focus Groups ..... 17**
  - Community Survey ..... 18**
  - Data Analysis ..... 18**
- Results..... 19**
  - Demographic Profile..... 19**
  - Key Informant Interviews..... 30**
  - Insights from Focus Group Participants..... 34**
  - Results from Community Survey..... 41**
- Conclusions and Recommendations..... 77**
- Appendix A: Survey Results..... 85**

## 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 the University of Massachusetts Boston. The CSDRA provides resources and research expertise to communities, non-governmental organizations, and other agencies throughout the Commonwealth.

Claire Wickersham, Kathy Burnes, Shu Xu, and Caitlin Coyle are primarily responsible for the contents of this report. Other contributors include CSDRA staff or grad students who participated, Pamela Weinstein, and undergraduate students Bowofoluwa Fahuwa, MaryJane Barron, Rin Hurd, Roisin O'Keeffe, Sabrin Zahid, Taylor Carmody, who worked on data entry or note taking.

We offer our appreciation to Mayor Ruthanne Fuller, Mignonne Murray, Director of the Department of Older Adult Services, and Joan Belle Isle, Chair of the Newton Council on Aging, who provided guidance and leadership that enabled the success of the project. We would like to acknowledge the Senior Citizens Fund of Newton for their financial support of this project. Also, we are grateful to 2Life Communities, Benchmark Senior Living, Carroll Center for the Blind, Hyde Community Center, Jewish Community Center of Greater Boston, Newton-Wellesley Hospital, Newton ADA, Newton Art Center, Newton at Home, Newton Department of Older Adult Services, Newton Food Pantry, Newton Health and Human Services, Newton Parks, Recreation and Culture, Newton Police, Newton Housing Authority, Newton Public Library, Riverside Community Care, Springwell, and the West Suburban YMCA. We are also deeply grateful for every Newton resident who took time to participate in this endeavor.

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## Executive Summary

On March 7, 2024, Newton celebrated the groundbreaking of the Cooper Center for Active Living following years of planning and public meetings. The previous senior center, built originally as a library in 1938, was not sufficiently serving the space, safety, and accessibility needs of the growing older population in Newton. The Cooper Center is being built on the site of the former senior center and will increase available space from approximately 8,000 to 33,000 square feet, designed specifically for the needs of older adults.

At a time of such significant change, a community-wide needs assessment was commissioned by the Department of Older Adult Services with support from the Senior Citizen's Fund of Newton, Inc. The specific goal of this report is to support the strategic planning of the Mayor and the Department of Older Adult Services, particularly as the City readies for the opening of its new Cooper Center for Active Living. An additional goal is to present information that will be useful to other Newton departments and organizations interacting with older residents planning for the future of Newton.

This report presents the results of a comprehensive examination of issues relating to aging in Newton. A needs assessment was undertaken to support planning on the part of the City of Newton and the Department of Older Adult Services. Results presented here focus on the characteristics and needs of Newton residents who are aged 60 and older.

Data was collected via key informant interviews, focus groups with residents and stakeholders and a mailed survey of residents aged 60 and older. Respondents to the community survey included 2,869 Newton residents, which resulted in a response rate of more than 50%. As well, responses to this survey constitute more than 10% of the older adult population as a whole—an incredibly rich source of information for the City to consider as it moves forward with planning both within the Cooper Center for Active Living and beyond its walls to other City Departments and initiatives.

We summarize key themes and make the following recommendations to the City of Newton:

**Considering the size and diversity of experiences among residents age 60+ in Newton is both an opportunity and a challenge for the Department of Older Adult Services and forthcoming Cooper Center for Active Living as it conducts outreach and marketing under its new identity.**

- It is estimated that by 2030, 30% of Newton's population will be age 60 or older. This totals more than 25,000 older adult residents.
- 59% of respondents report that it is very important for them to remain in Newton as they age, including 71% of those in their 80s.
- 32% of respondents have been in Newton for more than 45 years and 12% of respondents have been in Newton for fewer than 15 years.

- Families living out of town or state and the increasing costs of living in Newton may drive older residents to identify as “solo agers”. Solo agers are defined here as those age 50 and older who live alone, are not married or partnered in a long-term relationship, do not have any children or other relatives living nearby.
- The top factors limiting participation among those who never attended the Senior Center included not needing the services (38%), still working (31%), not identifying with the people at the Senior Center (21%), and not being interested in programs offered (21%).
- Similarly, the top factor limiting participation reported by respondents who do attend the Senior Center was not needing the services (30%), followed by “I participate in programs elsewhere” (24%), and other (23%).
- Massive growth in the size of space available at the Cooper Center (8,000 square feet to 33,000 square feet) is expected to come with increases in volume of participation and requests for services.

### **Recommendations:**

- The Cooper Center should be open for many evening and/or weekend hour programs to maximize opportunities for programming during less crowded hours and to meet the needs of residents with schedules that are restricted on weekdays.
- The sheer amount of new space and programs prompts the need for additional staff to ensure the Department of Older Adult Services can meet the needs that will occur with the increased participation expected.
- Developing social connections is an important function of this new space, and providing a comfortable, informal space for informal conversation is suggested. Consider designating drop-in space within the Center for older residents to socialize and mingle, providing coffee and snacks. This would provide space for older residents to “hang out” or socialize in between activities or without attending an organized activity.
- The move to the Cooper Center provides an opportunity to “rebrand” the programs and services offered. Consider formal updates to the organization’s mission statement and governance structure to align with the diverse interests and needs identified in this report. Also, investing in branding products like a logo, advertising or commercials can be useful for sustaining participation. Consider ways to expand the visibility and content of the bi-monthly newsletter. Embedding links into the online version of the newsletter to connect it to other events and resources can deepen the readers' experience. Also explore mailing it to people on their 60<sup>th</sup> birthday as a reminder to explore programs and services.
- Offer curated welcome experiences to residents at the Cooper Center, including a “Welcome to the Cooper Center” session that gives new users basic information about how to use the Center and participate fully. Also, tours of the new Center should highlight the services and programs that target different age cohorts (e.g., navigating Medicare enrollment, transitioning to retirement).

- Create a curated interactive information board that highlights activities of interest in Newton and surrounding areas as well as the opportunity for individuals to connect with each other (e.g., for rides, walking companions, etc.).

**Preferences for active and self-development programming has implications for services outside of the Cooper Center as well as how space is used, and by whom.**

- Indoor fitness and performances and presentations were top priorities for program expansion among all age groups. While individuals 60-69 also prioritized outdoor exercise, individuals aged 70 and older selected educational lectures.
- Among respondents age 60-69, the top three services selected for prioritization were health insurance counseling and enrollment (33%), information/referral for social services (30%), and in-home programs (29%).
- Among respondents aged 70-79, the top three services selected for prioritization were transportation to medical appointments (33%), in-home programs (33%), and transportation for errands around the City (31%).
- Among respondents aged 80 and older, the top three services selected for prioritization were transportation to medical appointments (38%), in-home programs (33%), and information/referral for social services (32%).

**Recommendations:**

- Consider expanding programming around retirement planning or finding a post-retirement job. This type of programming simultaneously addresses residents' later-life work interests and need for income.
- Develop criteria for when programs can be phased out or paused to make room for new programming.
  - Consider hosting meetings for residents to meet with staff to explore new programs to meet the diverse needs of older adults in the City.
- Combine learning and socializing by hosting multicultural events and seminars to promote diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Recognize solo agers and semi-newly retired individuals as an important segment of Newton's older adults. Consider programs that promote making new social connections.
- Consider ways to provide in-home programming or support.
  - Expand online learning opportunities offered by the Department of Older Adults Services for caregivers or residents to get information services and referrals.
  - Ensure that technology is in place for remote participation in programs and events at the Cooper Center.

## **Financial security that will allow people to age in place is the top concern of older residents—rising taxes and costs of housing options are drivers.**

- The number one concern about aging in Newton, as articulated by survey respondents, is financial security with the specific focus on being able to afford housing-related expenses like property taxes, utilities and home maintenance.
- Many focus group participants and survey respondents described challenges associated with housing, including unaffordable property taxes and severely limited affordable options within Newton to downsize.
- A notable share of households headed by someone age 65 and older 13% report annual incomes under \$25,000. This compares with just 7% of households headed by individuals aged 45 to 64 having incomes under \$25,000. Thus, there is a sizeable segment of Newton’s older population that faces financial insecurity or economic disadvantage.
- 46% of respondents reported that their current residence needs repairs. Among them, 9% stated that they could not afford these repairs.

### **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.
- Convene an “Aging in Place Workshop” to educate residents about creative ways to use their home equity to age in place as well as about alternative housing models like home-sharing. This workshop could also widen awareness about currently available options for addressing economic security (e.g., Accessory Dwelling Units).
- Consider asking local businesses to offer an “older adult discount”.
- Consider ways of connecting residents with local resources for home repair or modifications, including sources of funding, and also other individuals who can do minor tasks or projects around the home.
- Engage with organizations to support the development of a local fund to help offset costs of needed home repairs.
- Host a virtual forum to promote community conversations and awareness related to home-sharing opportunities. Include representatives from organizations such as Nesterly<sup>1</sup>, a social enterprise that is dedicated to building intergenerational engagement and access to affordable housing through home sharing.
- Promote “age friendly” employment opportunities for older adults via the Charles River Regional Chamber.

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



### Caregiving is common, and families need support.

- 37% of respondents assisted a disabled or frail person in the past 5 years and rates of caregiving are highest among respondents age 60-69 (45%).
- Mobility challenges (35%), and psychological conditions (e.g., anxiety or depression) (21%) are the most commonly cited reasons for providing care.
- Among caregivers, 17% reported caring for someone with Alzheimer’s disease or related dementia and 14% provided care due to forgetfulness or confusion.
- Across all ages, 21% reported that their social life had deteriorated, 17% reported that their *mental health* had deteriorated, 16% reported that their *physical health* had deteriorated, and 9% reported that their *financial circumstances* had deteriorated.
- Among caregiver survey respondents, informal support from family and friends (29%), formal and in-home caregiving and homemaking services (21%) were identified as the most valuable types of assistance for caregiver support.

### Recommendations:

- Recognize that caregiving needs are substantial and may become more challenging as Newton’s population continues to age. For example, consider ways of engaging residents who might be remotely providing care to a parent or loved one outside of Newton.
- Explore the creation of a prerecorded “caregiver hotline” where available resources can be available 24/7.
- Consider ways of supporting older residents caring for a loved one with psychological conditions via programming or co-hosting with local organizations like National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) or Newton-Wellesley Hospital.
- Continue to develop respite options.
  - Expand awareness of Newton’s Memory Café.
  - Encourage more supportive day and respite programs and provide caregivers with information such services in the community and local area.
- 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.
- Offer caregiver boot camp programming to support families in learning how they can navigate caring for a loved one.
- Continue focusing programs and education on prevention and detection of dementia.
- Encourage municipal employees to become “dementia friends”<sup>2</sup> to learn more about communication and reduction of stigma around dementia.

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<sup>2</sup> [Become a Dementia Friend | Dementia Friends USA](#)

- Consider working with the Newton Public Schools on dementia education as part of high school programming<sup>3</sup>.
- Create new ways to provide information and assistance to caregivers, support groups, and information about referral resources. Consider hosting a family caregiver “resource fair” as an opportunity to connect with family caregivers.

### **Walkability of the community and obtaining supplementary and accessible transportation is a concern for some of Newton’s residents as they age.**

- 32% of respondents report walking or biking as a primary mode of transportation and 24% rely on the MBTA trains and buses.
- Maintaining independence is a major concern for survey respondents and one key facilitator of this independence is transportation. Eighteen percent (18%) of respondents aged 80 or older reported not driving and an additional 29% of respondents aged 80 and older reported driving with some limitations.
- Transportation limitations appear to negatively impact accessing medical care for the most vulnerable segments of Newton’s older resident community. When considering driving status, 34% of those who drive with limitations and 37% of those who do not drive reported having to miss a medical appointment because of a lack of transportation.
- Among respondents aged 80 and older, transportation to medical appointments (38%), and transportation for errands around the City (31%) were prioritized as top services for expansion.

### **Recommendations:**

- Target information to communities within Newton who may have particular need for transportation services including those living alone and those with disabilities.
- Continue providing travel training programs (e.g., through the MBTA) and educational opportunities where residents can learn about options and navigation.
- Continue education and enrollment in the new GoGo Newton Transportation System. Ongoing evaluation of new program will facilitate improvements around education and usage.
- Develop or explore existing programs that focus on making the transition to retiring from driving.
- Support and encourage the expansion of volunteer transportation programs by other non-profits (e.g., Friends in Service Helping<sup>4</sup> (F.I.S.H.) to expand door-to-door transportation to the Cooper Center or other social gatherings or shopping excursions and non-medical appointments.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://dfmassachusetts.org/tools/df-training-resources-by-sector/schools-and-youth-involvement/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://fishlexington.org/>

- Work together with other City departments to install new, or dedicate existing, “Chat Benches” to create public spaces where socializing is encouraged. Provide age friendly features, including shade.
- Document and publicize the location of available bathrooms around Newton.
- Collaborate with the City of Newton’s Transportation Division to improve lighting around sidewalks where needed.

**Expand Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts as well as partnerships with local groups and organizations.**

- The assessment captured components of Newton’s growing diverse older population. Focus groups were conducted in Russian and Chinese to capture feedback from older adults representing these larger groups.
- Educational programming was prioritized by 41% of survey respondents, the third most identified program for expansion.
- 70 different countries were identified on the survey when respondents were asked about their country of origin. Communication in general—and awareness of programs, services, and opportunities more specifically—can be challenging for those who don’t speak English.
- Although the majority (72%) have not felt excluded, some respondents cited age (6%), income (6%), or political views (6%) as reasons for feeling excluded.

**Recommendations:**

- The work of diversity, equity and inclusion is a focus within Newton and is coordinated by the Director of Community Engagement and Inclusion. The Cooper Center can benefit from continued collaboration with the ongoing DEI work in Newton in developing strategies for attracting a more diverse population and maintaining age as a dimension of diversity that is recognized in these efforts.
- Continue to spread the word about the new space and consciously make efforts to reach out to subgroups of Newton residents, specifically Russian and Chinese-speaking individuals.
- Increase language capacity by consider offering a stipend for volunteer positions to help lead programs or translate documents.
- Continue to expand awareness of interpretation and translation services available through the City of Newton.
- Adopt the language recommended by “Reframing Aging<sup>5</sup>” to promote age-inclusive language.
- Implement a Senior Civic Academy<sup>6</sup> that is accessible to older residents by offering daytime sessions, considering adult learner styles, and ensuring that topics relevant to

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.reframingaging.org/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.boston.gov/departments/age-strong-commission/senior-civic-academy>

healthy aging in Newton are included (e.g., transportation, how to access resources, and social engagement opportunities).

- Consider ways to reduce or eliminate the cost of programs to members facing financial insecurity.
  - Offer subsidies or scholarships to area events (e.g., concerts or school performances).

### **A segment of Newton's older population is at risk for social isolation.**

- 22% of Newton residents aged 65 and older live alone, including 39% of survey respondents aged 80 and older.
- 10% reported not knowing someone within 30 minutes of them to call on for help if needed – indicating a small but important segment who are vulnerable to social isolation. Among those who report living alone, 14% report not knowing someone to call on for help.
- 32% of respondents report a lack of confidence in “staying safe” online.
- 10% of survey respondents report that they get together in person with friends or family once per month or less.

### **Recommendations:**

- Provide neighborhood-based programs or mechanisms to strengthen informal networks in neighborhoods and ensure existing neighborhood-based activities are inclusive of older residents (e.g., neighborhood liaison programs)
- Identify programming that can educate residents about staying safe online.
- Consider collaborating with community groups to develop an initiative to reach out to older residents of Newton who are living alone.
- Consider implementing a “surrogate grandparent” program that matches older adults with Newton families for mentorship and socialization to those whose families live out-of-town or are otherwise absent. Consider hosting a grandparent’s day luncheon to celebrate the participants.
- Consider hosting a quarterly breakfast for local organizations to come together. These events would include community education about the programs and services available through various agencies and also provide a mechanism by which communication about issues of isolation among providers can be streamlined and relationships established.

## Introduction

Newton, Massachusetts, is located just outside Boston and is the 11<sup>th</sup> most populous city in Massachusetts. Newton is recognized for its distinctive neighborhoods – 13 villages each with its own distinct character and many containing their own small downtown areas - excellent schools and proximity to Boston and the greater Boston area. Newton has an abundance of parks and recreational opportunities, access to public transportation, a vibrant cultural scene, and a wide range of dining and shopping options. Newton is known for its strong sense of community and offers residents a high quality of life. For these reasons, Newton is considered a great place to grow up and to grow old.

Older residents (age 60 and older) currently represent 25% of the population (2022 American Community Survey). This equates to more than 22,000 residents aged 60 and older. According to projections created by the Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts, by 2035, 30 percent of Newton’s residents will be aged 60 or older. Growth of the older adult population has special significance for the City’s Department of Older Adult Services and increasing demand for its services and programs can be expected moving forward.

In response to this demographic trend, in 2016 Newton was designated to be part of the World Health Organization and AARP Livable Communities Age-Friendly network. As part of its commitment to being an Age-Friendly Community, Newton residents participated in listening sessions to set goals for implementing improvement in 10 focus areas or domains. From this work, Newton developed the [All Age-Friendly Newton Action Plan and Progress Report](#).

The City of Newton’s goal, as an age friendly community, is to build a large, well-equipped, comfortable Center to meet the unique interests and needs of older adults, both those currently using the Senior Center and many others who are not. The Cooper Center will foster a special sense of community and belonging for this growing group. This facility, opening in fall of 2025, will be designed to optimize the quality of life for Newton’s older adults and those who support them, through welcoming, respectful and meaningful opportunities that engage, value, and empower older adults to remain independent and important assets in our community. When spaces within this facility are not programmed for older adults, the goal is to offer well-managed, quality and enriching community and multigenerational experiences for all residents of Newton.

In February 2019, the Guiding Principles for the new Center were developed. These guidelines were intended to further clarify the goals. 1. The Cooper Center will be designed to promote and support the Mission Statements of the Older Adult Services and Parks, Recreation and Culture. 2. Spaces within this facility will be clustered and programmed to preserve the wonderful sense of community that exists in the current Senior Center. 3. The

Cooper Center will be age friendly, welcoming to everyone, and will be designed and programmed to meet the unique needs of older adults as well as the broader community. 4. The Cooper Center will ensure safety and accessibility both inside and outside the facility through thoughtful design and operation. 5. The Cooper Center will promote social equality and maximize access to programs and services to those who are unserved or underserved. 6. The facility will be environmentally conscious, strive to be carbon neutral, and will leave a legacy of responsible design and operation.

On March 7, 2024, Newton celebrated the groundbreaking of a new center – the Cooper Center for Active Living following years of planning and public meetings. The previous center, built originally as a library in 1938, had become untenable in serving the space, safety and accessibility needs of the growing older population in Newton. The Cooper Center is being built on the site of the former senior center and will increase available space from approximately 8,000 to 32,805 square feet.

At a time of such significant change, a community-wide needs assessment was commissioned by the Department of Older Adult Services with support from the Senior Citizen’s Fund of Newton, Inc. A specific goal of this report is to support strategic planning of the Department of Older Adult Services, particularly as the City readies for the opening of its new Cooper Center for Active Living. An additional goal is to present information that will be useful to other Newton city departments and organizations interacting with older residents and considering plans for the future of Newton.

This report presents the results of a comprehensive examination of issues relating to aging in Newton. A needs assessment was undertaken to support planning on the part of the City of Newton and the Department of Older Adult Services. Results presented here focus on the characteristics and needs of Newton residents who are aged 60 and older.

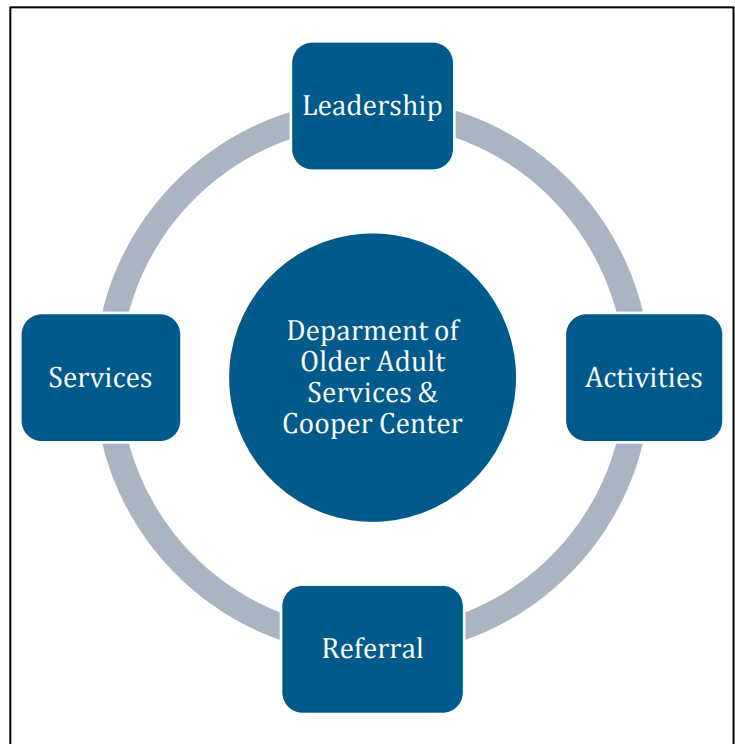
### **The Newton Department of Older Adult Services & Council on Aging**

In Massachusetts, Councils on Aging (COAs) are municipally appointed agencies meant to link older residents to needed resources. 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.

In many communities in the state, the Council on Aging is an official department in the municipal government. In this configuration, the Council on Aging manages the Senior Center in the community. This is not the setup in Newton. In Newton, the Council on Aging is an advisory body to the City whose members are appointed by the Mayor and the City council. The Council on Aging may create committees to aid in its advisory role and these committees may include members drawn from the residents of the city. In Newton, the

responsibility for the management of the Cooper for Adult Living belongs to the Department of Older Adult Services.

The mission of the Newton Department of Older Adult Services is to optimize quality of life for older adults and those who support them through welcoming, respectful, and meaningful opportunities that engage and value older people, and empower them to remain independent and to be important assets in our community. The vision of the Department of Older Adult Services is to provide sustained leadership that helps Newton be a livable and age-friendly community for all who choose to age here.



Working toward that end, Department of Older Adult Services staff and volunteers assist in delivering programs and initiatives that shape and enrich the experiences of three generations of older adults. This work is done in concert with other City departments and various area private and public providers and organizations, including Springwell -- the regional Area Agency on Aging/Aging Services Access Point serving Newton -- 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 City's older adult residents.

In general, when considering the mission of older adult centers, observers commonly think of two sets of responsibilities. First, centers 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, centers 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 the center. Center 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, centers 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 Newton Senior Center, now called the Cooper Center for Active Living (Cooper Center), is an integral part of the community. Given the construction of the new, dedicated center, activities are held at multiple interim locations with the “main” center office at 20 Hartford Street, Newton Highlands. The main functions of the Department of Older Adult Services are to provide information, resources, referrals, transportation, and healthy aging programs. Complete information about programs and services, including a monthly schedule, can be found on the City of Newton website.<sup>7</sup>

### **Department of Older Adult Services Overview**

For the following section, data reported was gathered from the Director of the Newton Department of Older Adult Services, which runs the Cooper Center. As the number of older residents increases, the need for resources dedicated to this segment of the population will also continue to grow and change. Thus, it is crucial that the Newton Department of Older Adult Services plan in earnest to assure that resources are used efficiently and effectively to meet the current and future needs of older people in the City.

Currently the Department of Older Adult Services operates Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The staff is comprised of the six full-time staff (director, deputy director, case manager, executive administrative assistant, 2 program coordinators, outreach and engagement coordinator) and two part-time administrative assistants. The department manages many volunteers. In Newton, 16,000 households receive the *Coming of Age* newsletter every two months online and delivered at home. In addition, a weekly email newsletter with program updates goes to over 5,000 individuals. Residents can also phone into the Center to get a listing of programs.

Department of Older Adult Services programs and services are funded by the City of Newton, State Formula Grant, the Senior Citizens Fund of Newton, Inc., and some program fees. Additional support is achieved through many collaborations with local agencies and businesses for resources, referrals, in-kind support, emergency response reciprocity, and sponsorships.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.newtonma.gov/>



## **Programs and Services**

Programs are planned by the Department of Older Adult Services and are open to any adult 55+, from any community unless otherwise noted.

The Department of Older Adult Services continues to develop a wide range of enriching programs to meet the interests and needs of Newton's population of older residents. In addition to programs that provide opportunities for social engagement, fitness, learning, and pleasure, the Department of Older Adult Services provides critical services to foster access to health and community support resources among Newton's older adults. Services include information and referral, application assistance, outreach services, and wellness checks on homebound older adults. A description of the programs and services offered by the Newton Department of Older Adult Services is described in this section of the report. Information about the Center was collected directly from the staff for this study and online.

### **Recreation, Fitness**

- Older adults participate in a variety of in-person fitness programs such as: Muscle, Movement, & Balance, Chair Yoga, Seated Strength & Balance, Beginner Tai Chi, Intermediate/Advanced Tai Chi, LaBlast, Dance Aerobics, Line Dancing. Virtual fitness and wellness programs include Zumba Gold, Seated, Strength & Balance, Mindful Meditation
- The Department of Older Adult Services works in collaboration with the Newton Department of Parks, Recreation, and Culture. There is a robust variety and schedule of activities (e.g. walking groups, pickleball, bocce, golf, tennis, line dancing, adult soccer, tai chi) that are offered throughout Newton for residents 55+

### **Affinity Groups**

- Men's Club, French, Spanish, French, Spanish, Mandarin and German conversation groups, Book Club

### **Special Programs**

- Examples of programs that may be one-time only or series include: Reducing Financial Risk for a Worry-Free Retirement, Afro-Latin Drumming Series, Shredding Day, Legislative Office Hours

### **Ongoing and Drop-In Arts, Education and Music Programs**

- Sketching/Drawing Studio, Mah Jongg and Bridge Open Play, Billiards Open Play, Zoom swing band, folk sing-alongs

### Support Groups

- A range of support groups includes Caregiver support group, Zoom Grief Support Group, Declutter Support Group, Zoom Parkinson's Support Group and a Coffee and Conversation Group

### Professional and Technical Services

- Legal Clinic, Health Maintenance Clinic, Hearing Screenings, Tech Tutor, chair massage (fee)

### Transportation Services

Newton recently has partnered with an experienced, national, customer service centric company, GoGo Technologies, to provide subsidized rides via services such as Lyft and Uber for people living in Newton who need the most support -- older adults, lower-income individuals, and people with disabilities. The staff of both the Newton Planning Department and Department of Older Adult Services is providing in-depth assistance to help older residents navigate the new system.

### Nutrition Services

Grab-and-go lunches OR dine-in lunches are available Monday through Friday (except holidays) from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the department's interim location at 20 Hartford Street. Springwell provides this lunch program to local adults aged 60+.

### Social Services

- Information and referral around home care services that include assistance with house cleaning, laundry, meal preparation, grocery shopping, and personal care
- Fuel Assistance to help with heating costs; Utility Discounts for telephone, gas and electric bills
- Information and referral to subsidized apartments or other housing options, including long-term care facility resources
- Application and information assistance for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), which can help pay for groceries each month
- Confidential referrals to services to help cope with issues such as retirement, aging, illness, bereavement, family relationships, etc.
- Commodity Supplemental Foods program for eligible older adults to receive two bags of shelf-stable groceries each month
- Applications and referrals to food pantries within Newton
- Caregiver Support for family members needing resources and support for the older adult for whom they provide care

### Volunteer Program

- The programs run smoothly due to the support of volunteers from the community. The volunteers themselves learn new skills, meet new people, and enjoy an increased sense of self-worth. For this reason, the Department of Older Adult Services offers a variety of volunteer opportunities for a diverse set of skills, abilities, and interests.

### Financial Assistance Programs for Eligible Residents

- Property Tax Exemption
- Property Tax Defer/Delay Payment
- Elderly Surviving Spouse, Minor Child Exemption
- Disabled Veteran Exemption
- Age and Infirmary and Financial Hardship Exemption
- Blind Persons Exemption
- Senior Property Tax Work-Off Program
- Veteran Property Tax Work-Off Program
- Newton Elderly and Disabled Taxation Aid Fund
- Newton Water and Sewer Discount Program

## Methods

This assessment utilized both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods alongside rigorous analyses of existing and primary data to capture a broad and deep understanding of the City of Newton and its older residents. 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, focus groups, and a community survey.

## Demographic Profile

As an initial step toward understanding the characteristics of the City of Newton's older population through quantitative data, we generated a demographic profile of the City 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. For purposes of this assessment, we primarily used information drawn from the most current 5-year ACS files (2018-2022), along with U.S. Census data for the City of Newton 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

Key informant interviews were conducted with eight Newton municipal and organizational leaders, including the Mayor, Fire Chief, acting Chief of Police, Director of Planning, Director of Older Adult Services, President and CEO of Charles River Regional Chamber, Commissioner of Health and Human Services, Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Culture. Participants were asked to provide their experiences and perspectives on several questions focused on the impact, needs, and interests of the older adults of Newton.

## Focus Groups

During the winter of 2023 and Spring/Summer of 2024, research staff from the Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging conducted five groups in Newton. Participants included residents and community stakeholders who provide services and interact with residents of Newton. All five focus groups were in person and lasted close to ninety minutes. A total of 53 individuals participated and shared insights related to their interests, needs, and experiences as residents and stakeholders in the community.

The stakeholder group was held at Newton City Hall. Twenty leaders from organizations throughout the city participated.

A “solo ager” focus group of 11 participants was also held at Newton City Hall. “Solo Ager” was defined as those age 50 and older who live alone, are not married or partnered in a long-term relationship, do not have any children, and do not have relatives living nearby. This group makes up 12% of the 50-plus residents in the United States, according to AARP.

Eight residents who identified as semi-retired or newly retired participated in a focus group held at 20 Hartford Street (the temporary location of the Department of Older Adult Services). The outreach for this group asked for people 60+ and still employed part-time, whether by choice or necessity, who have started a second encore career, or who have recently retired within the last year.

To capture the experiences of the significant percentage of older Newton adults who speak Chinese or Russian, two focus groups, one in each language, were facilitated by a translator and a project researcher. Outreach for these groups focused on residents of Newton Housing Authority senior housing properties where there are higher concentrations of Russian and Chinese speaking residents. The Newton Housing Authority is not directly part of the city government, but it operates within Newton and is the largest provider of affordable housing in Newton.

All participants were residents of Newton Housing Authority properties. The focus group for eight Chinese speaking residents met at Haywood House (developed by the Newton Housing Authority but managed by Maloney Properties). Participants came from nearby Newton Housing Authority properties. The Russian speaking focus group, with six participants, was held at Horace Mann, a senior housing property of the Newton Housing Authority.

## Community Survey

In collaboration with the Department of Older Adult Services and COA Advisory Board members, a community survey was developed for this study. A mailing list was obtained from the Newton City Clerk, based on the most current municipal census and a sample of residents aged 60 and older was selected. Postcards were mailed to these residents alerting them to complete the survey online, by telephone, or by picking up a paper copy at various locations throughout the City. Subsequently, printed surveys were mailed, along with a postage-paid return envelope. Also, the survey was made available via the City’s website. A total of 2,896 responses to the survey were obtained (see **Table 3** under Results of Community Survey). 47% of surveys were returned online, and the rest of the responses were returned by mail.

## Data Analysis

Data collected for the resident survey was analyzed using simple descriptive statistics, including frequencies and cross-tabulations, and are reported in full in tables contained 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 Newton?”). Notes taken during the study’s qualitative components (e.g., focus groups, key informant interviews) were reviewed by project staff and used to characterize and categorize salient ways in which aging issues are impacting older adults and individuals who work with older adults in Newton. We used information from all sources of data to develop recommendations reported in the final section of this report.

## Results

### Demographic Profile

#### Age Structure and Population Growth

According to the American Community Survey (ACS), there were about 88,453 residents living in the City of Newton in 2022. About 39% of the population (34,473 individuals) were aged 50 and older (See **Table 1**). Residents who were aged 50 to 59 (12,241 individuals) made up 14% of the population; residents aged 60 to 79 (18,299 individuals) comprised around 21%, and another 3,933 residents (4%) were aged 80 and older.

**Table 1.** Number and percentage distribution of Newton’s population by age category, 2022

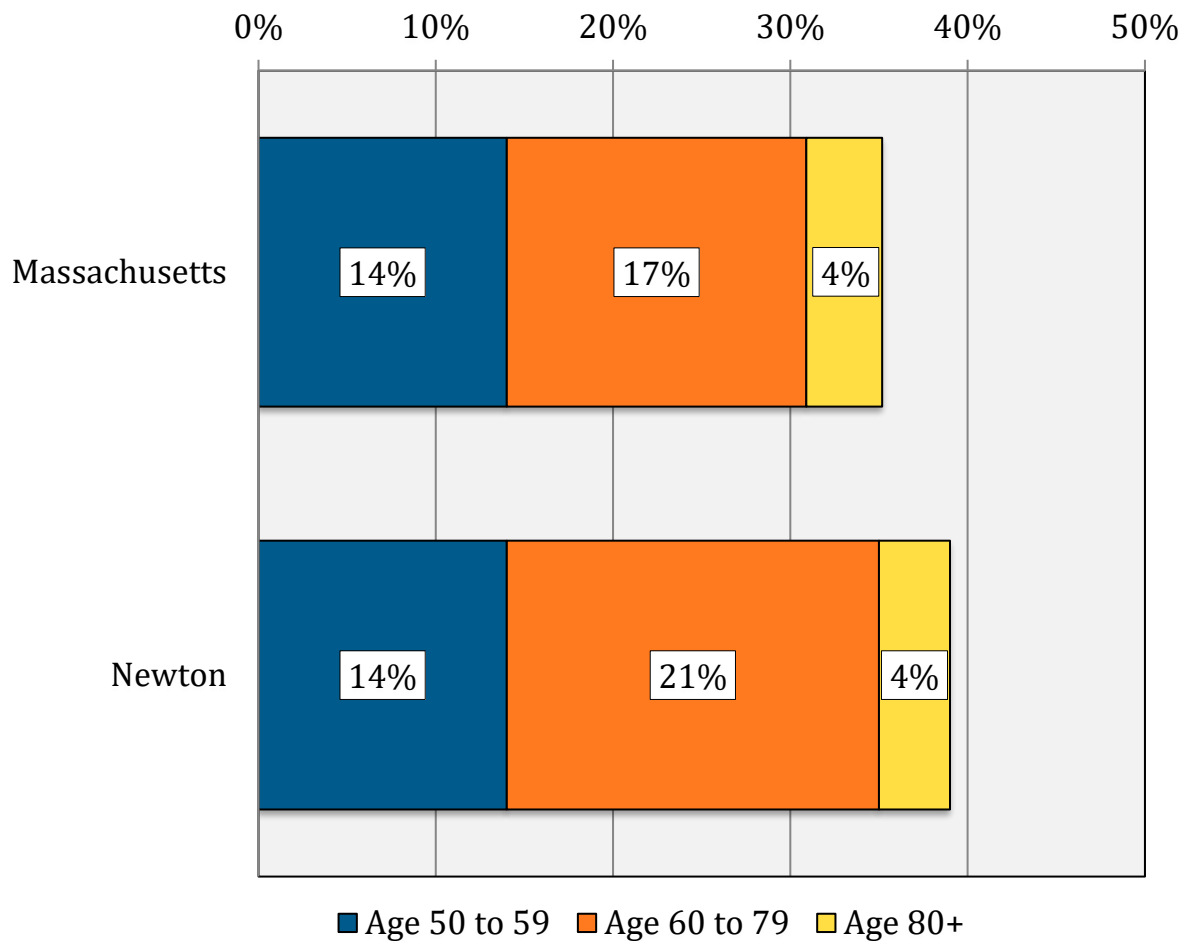
Age Category	Number	Percentage
Under age 18	18,368	21%
Age 18 to 49	35,612	40%
Age 50 to 59	12,241	14%
Age 60 to 79	18,299	21%
Age 80 and older	3,933	4%
Total	88,453	100%

*Source: American Community Survey, 2018-2022, Table B01001. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.*

The share of Newton’s population age 50 and older is larger than the overall state of Massachusetts (**Figure 1**). About 35% of the Massachusetts population was in the 50+ age group in 2022, compared to 39% of the Newton population. Compared to the Commonwealth, Newton also had a higher portion of residents aged 60 and older. However, the share of Newton residents aged 80 and over is almost the same as the one estimated for the state as a whole. In 2022, Massachusetts residents aged 60 and over

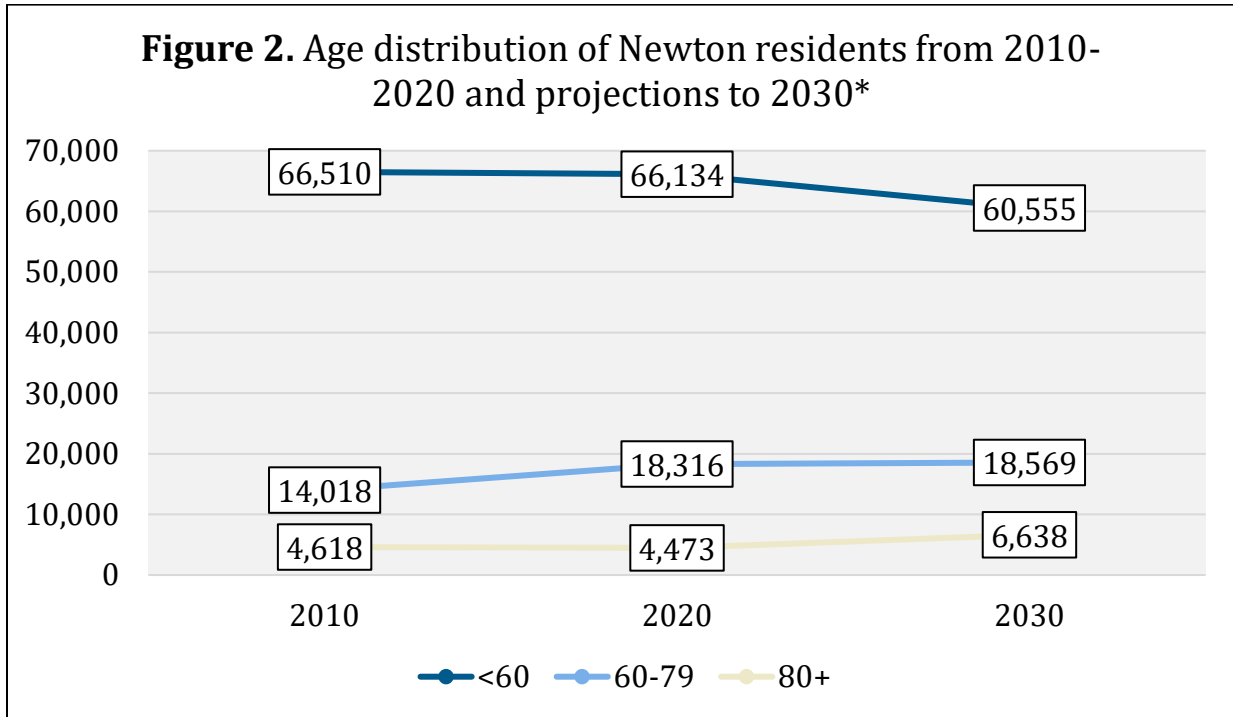
comprised about 21% of the population, including 4% age 80 and over. In Newton, about 25% of the population was 60 or older, including 4% who were 80 years or older.

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



*Source: American Community Survey, 2017–2022, Table B01001. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates*

Between 2010 and 2020, the population of all ages increased by 4% in Newton. The population of residents who are age 60 and older increased by 22% in Newton. **Figure 2** shows the increase in the population of Newton residents aged 60 and older during this time period as well as the projected size of the 60+ population, more than 25,000 residents, in Newton by 2030.

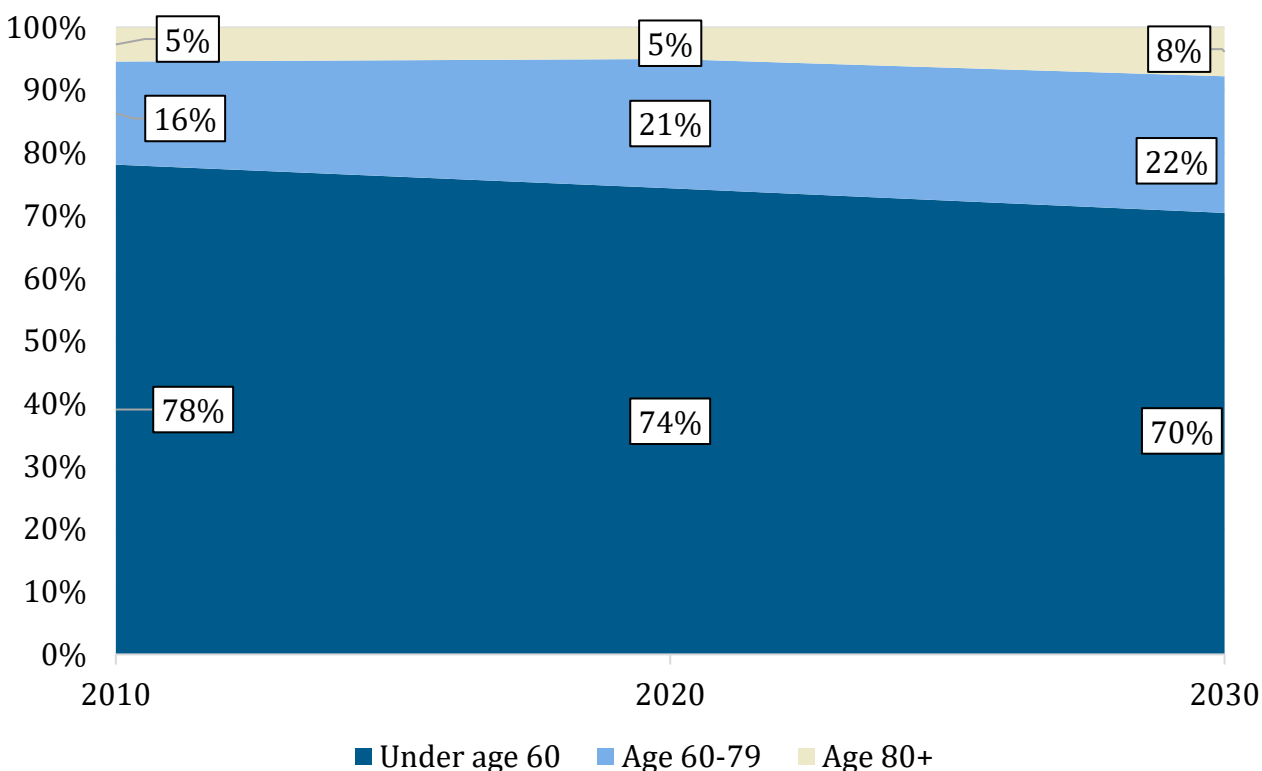


**Figure 3** shows the age distribution of Newton’s population from 2010 to 2020, and population projections for 2030<sup>8</sup>. In 2010, about 21% of Newton’s population was age 60 and older; this percentage steadily increased by 2020 (26%). According to projections created by the Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts, a trend toward an older population is expected in future decades. Donahue Institute vintage projections suggest that by 2030, thirty percent of Newton’s residents will be age 60 or older—22% of Newton’s population will be between the ages of 60 and 79, with an additional 8% age 80 and older.

<sup>8</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 3. Proportion of Newton residents, by age 2010-2020 with projections to 2030\***



Source: Population figures for 2010 through 2020 are from the U.S. Census.

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

### Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Newton’s Older Population

Newton is as diverse as the state with respect to race. For all ages combined, about 73% of Newton residents report their race as White non-Hispanic, compared to 73% in Massachusetts (ACS, 2018–2022, Table B01001). However, among older adults, Newton is less diverse. **Table 2** displays the race and ethnicity of Newton residents aged 65 and older. Most older residents report White race and ethnicity (89%). The remaining percentage of the population 65 and older reported Asian (8%), Black (2%) and Other (1%) race and ethnicity. Less than 1% report Hispanic.

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

Race	Number	Percent
White	14,747	89%
Black	257	2%
Asian	1,318	8%
Other	218	1%
Hispanic	118	<1%
Total	16,540	100%

Source: American Community Survey, 2018–2022, Tables B01001A-I. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.

Additionally, almost 18% of older Newton residents speak a language other than English at home (ACS, 2018–2022, Table B16004). Those who speak another language other than English at home most commonly speak an Indo-European language (10%) followed by an additional 5% who speak an Asian and Pacific Island language. The remaining 3% of the population who speak a language other than English speak Spanish or other language.

American Community Survey estimates on education suggest that Newton residents are well-educated on average. About 73% of persons 65 and older have either a bachelor’s degree (32%) or a graduate/professional degree (68%; ACS, 2018–2022, 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— activities that are often present in highly educated communities (Fitzgerald & Caro, 2014).

Similar to older adults living in communities throughout the U.S., a large proportion of Newton residents aged 65 and over remain in the workforce. Almost 45% of adults aged 64 to 74 are participating in the labor force. Of those aged 75 and older, nearly 17% remain in the workforce (ACS, 2018–2022, Table S2301).

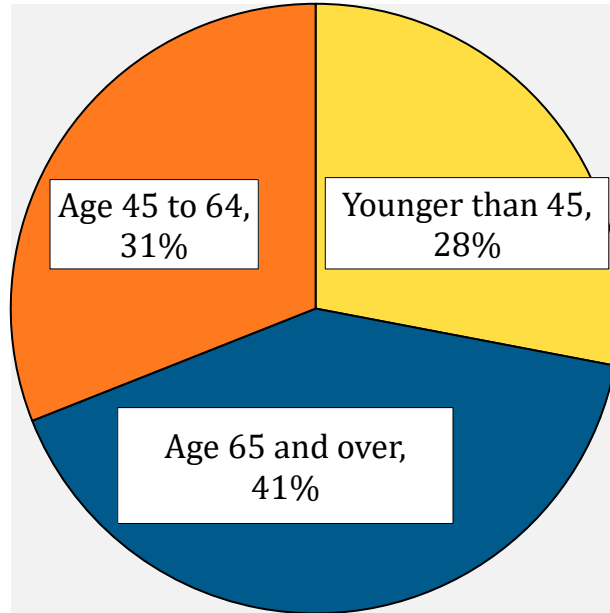
Nearly 16% of men aged 65 and older report veteran status (ACS, 2018–2022, Table B21001). As a result, many of Newton’s older residents may be eligible to receive some benefits and program services based on their military service or that of their spouses.

### Living arrangements and housing costs of Newton’s Older Population

A majority of Newton’s 31,735 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 aged 45 and older are householders of 72% of all households in Newton<sup>9</sup> including 41% of those who are age 65 and over (**Figure 4**).

**Figure 4.** Age structure of Newton householders



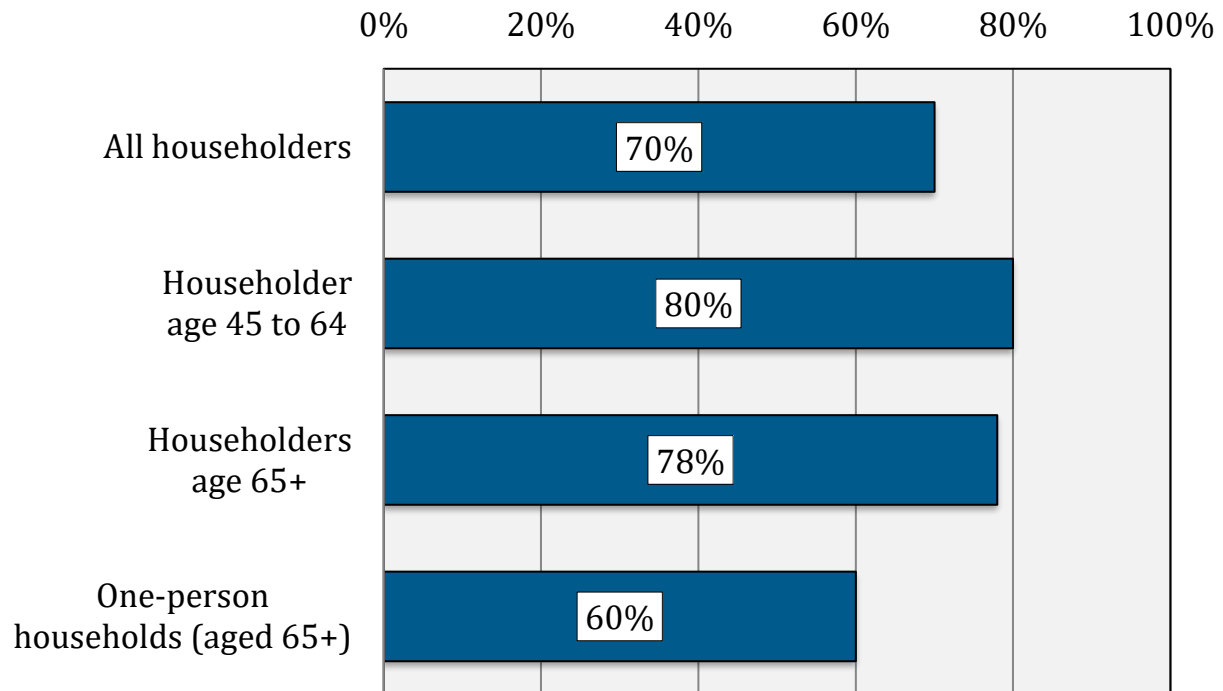
*Source: American Community Survey, 2018–2022, Table B25007. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.*

Most Newton residents live in homes that they own or are purchasing (70%; **Figure 5**). Nearly 80% of residents aged 45 to 64 own their homes, and 78% of householders 65 and older own their homes. A sizeable share of Newton residents who are 65 and older and live alone, also own their home (60%). The much higher 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—to maintain comfort and safety in their homes.

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<sup>9</sup> Many available Census data on the older population of Newton are based on ages 45 and 65 as reference points rather than ages 50 and 60, as are used elsewhere in this report.

**Figure 5.** Percent of Newton householders who are homeowners by age category

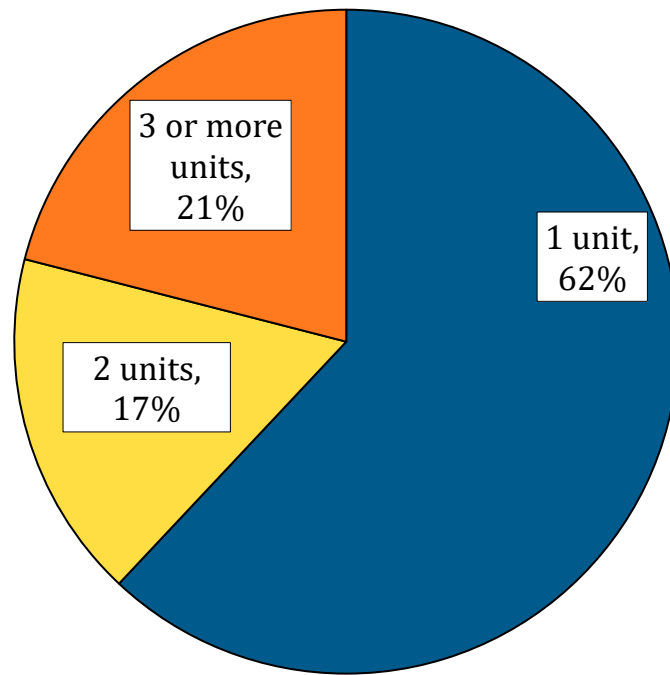


Source: American Community Survey, 2018–2022, Tables B25007 and B25011. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.

Additionally, 45% of Newton’s 31,735 households have at least one individual who is age 60 or older (ACS 2018–2022, Table B11006). This high 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.

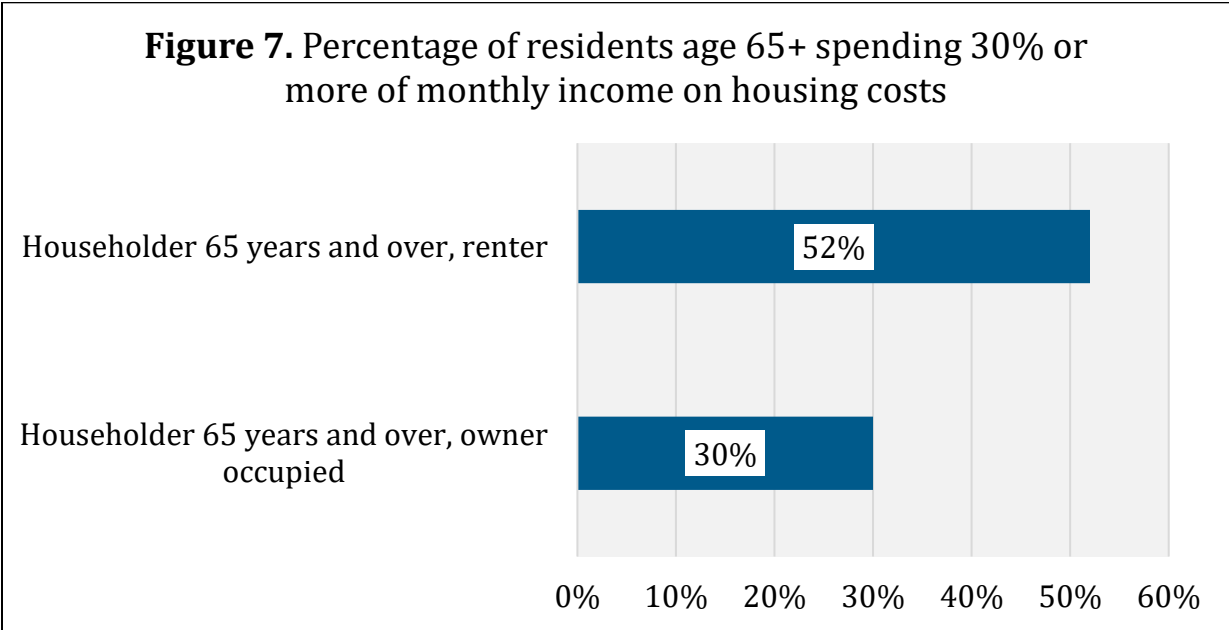
Among the 33,331 housing structures in Newton (**Figure 6**), 62% are single unit structures and the remaining 38% are housing structures that contain two or more housing units, which include apartment complexes.

**Figure 6.** Number of units in Newton housing structures

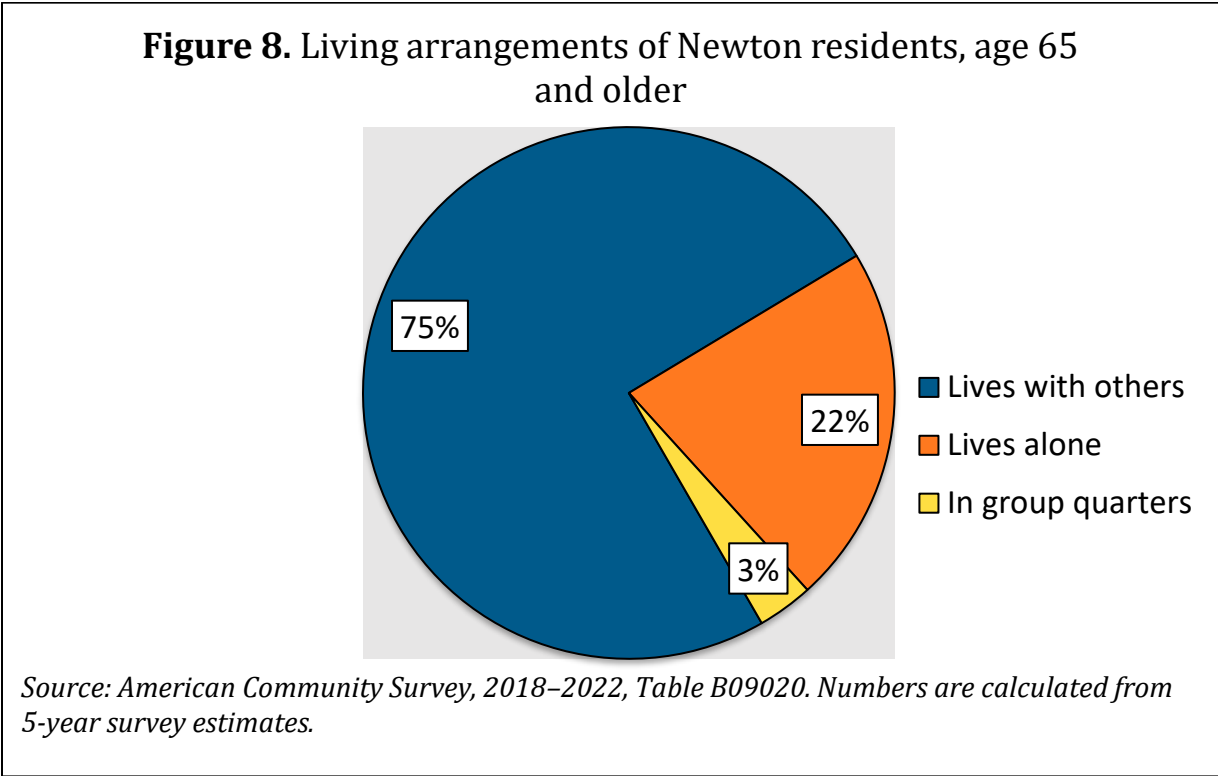


*Source: American Community Survey, 2018–2022, Table B25024. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.*

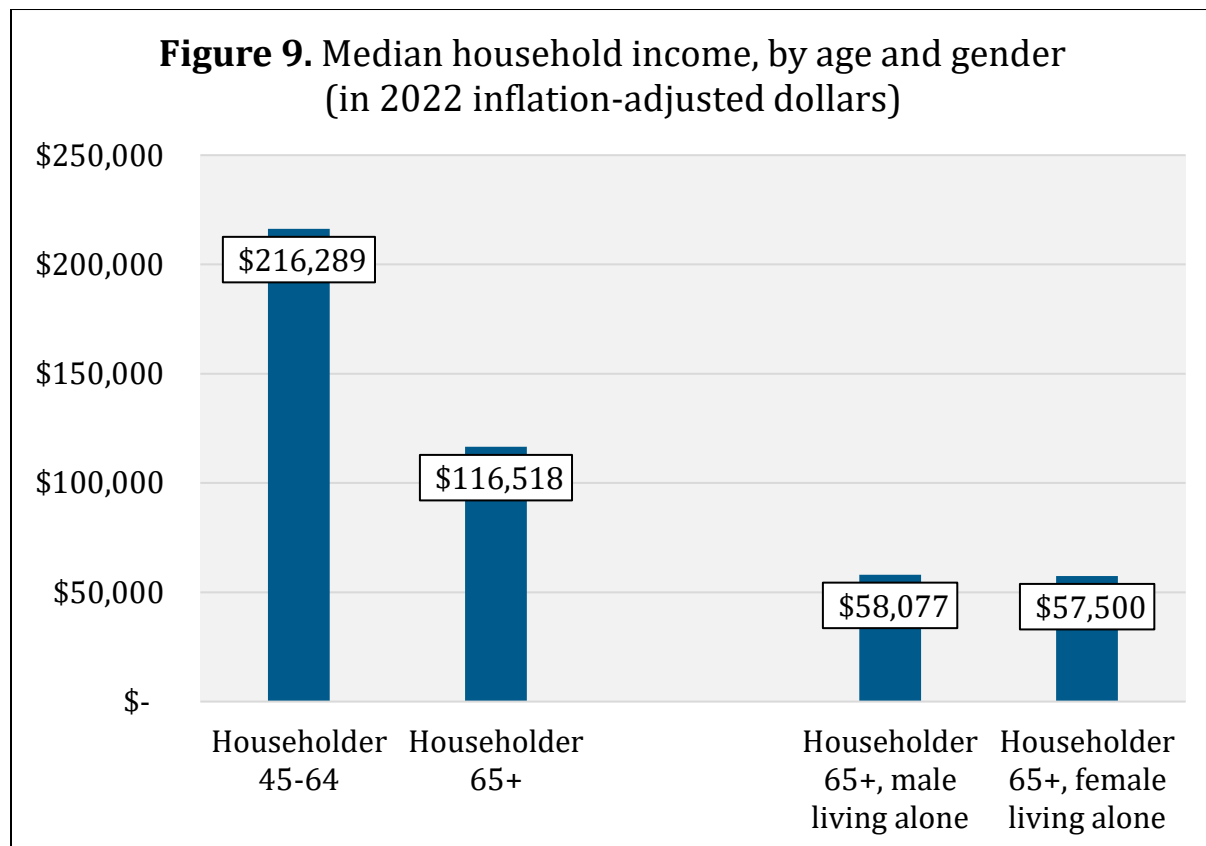
Housing cost burdens vary significantly between homeowners and renters across different age groups (see **Figure 7**). Among homeowners, 30% of those aged 65 and older, 43% of those aged 15-24; 25% of those aged 25-34; and 22% of those aged 35-64 spent 30% or more of their household income on housing costs. Among renters, 52% of those aged 65 and older, 3% of those aged 15-24; 25% of those age 25-34; 22% of those age 35-64 spend 30% or more of their income on rent. About half of older renters spend 30% or more of their income on just rent, compared to 30% of older homeowners spending 30% of income on housing costs. Older renters face a greater housing cost burden compared to their homeowner counterparts.



More than 1 in 5 Newton residents who are age 65 and older (22%) live alone in their household, whereas 75% live in households that include other people, such as a spouse, parents, children, or grandchildren (**Figure 8**). Additionally, around 3% of older Newton residents live within group quarters.



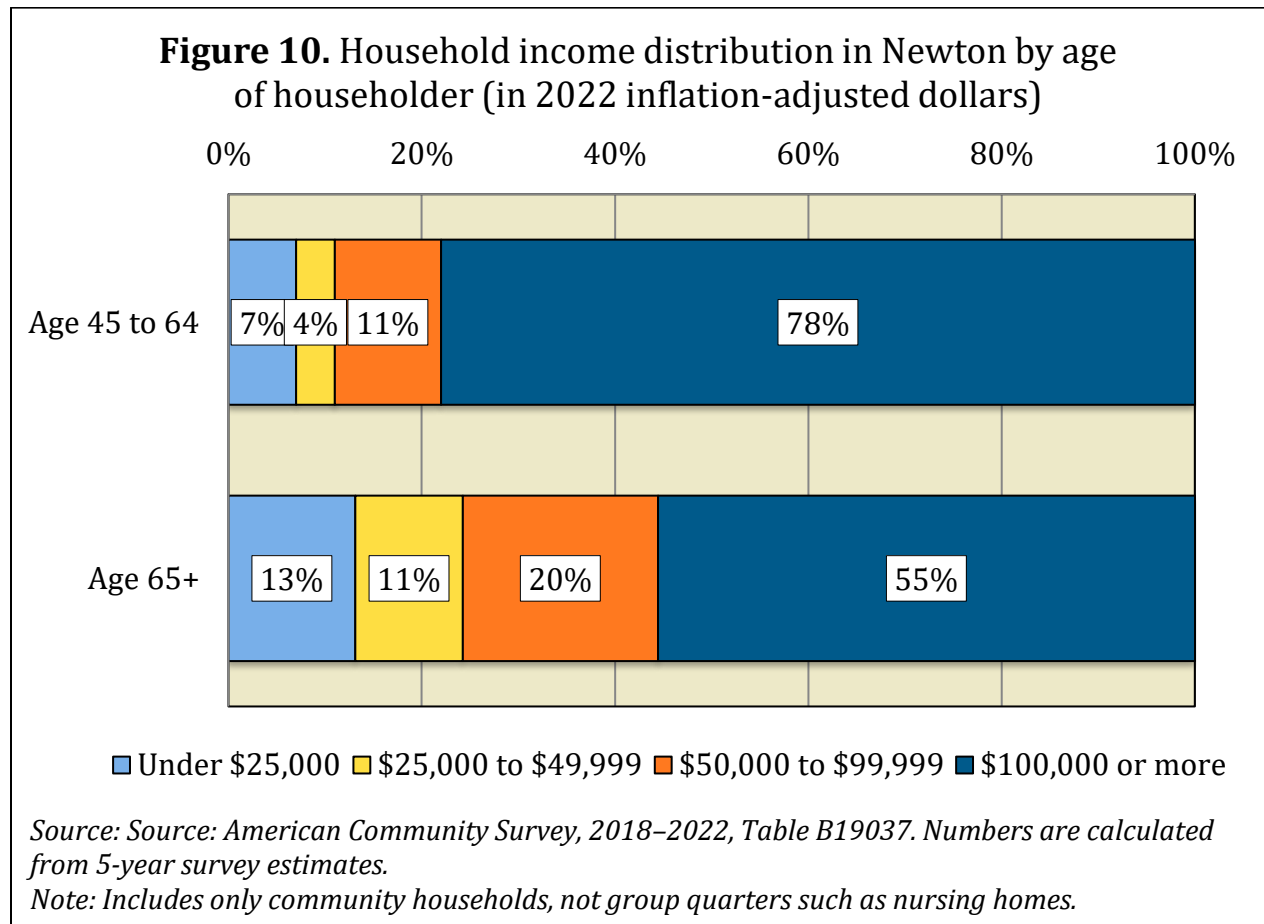
Newton residents' median household income is considerably higher than the one estimated for Massachusetts as a whole, \$176,373 compared to \$74,167. **Figure 9** shows that among Newton's householders, those aged 45 to 64 have the highest median income at \$216,289—which is also greater than the statewide median for this age group (\$92,096). Among householders 65 and older, the median income is \$116,518, which is also higher than the statewide median for this age group (\$45,193) and much lower than the median income of younger Newton householders. Older residents living alone are at the greatest disadvantage in terms of household income. Older men living alone have slightly higher median income (\$58,077) than women (\$57,500). Given that about 22% of older residents aged 65 and older live alone in Newton, these figures suggest that a sizeable number of residents are at risk of economic insecurity.



*Source: American Community Survey, 2018–2022, Table B19049. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.*

The economic profile of older Newton residents relative to younger residents is further illustrated in **Figure 10**, which shows that the older adult population lives on a modest income. Over half of Newton residents aged 65 and older report incomes of \$100,000 or more. By comparison, 78% of households headed by residents aged 45-64 report this level of income. Nevertheless, a large share of households headed by someone age 65 and older (13%) report annual incomes under \$25,000. This compares with just 7% of households headed by individuals aged 45 to 64 having incomes under \$25,000. Thus, a sizeable

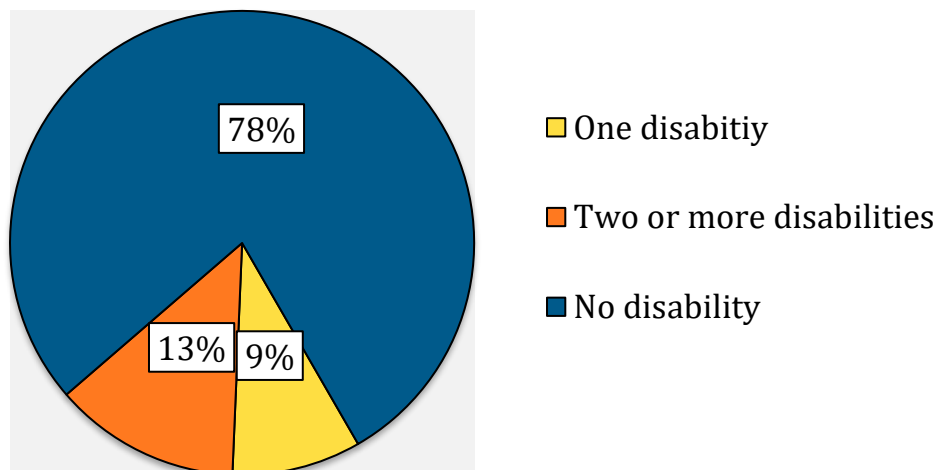
segment of Newton’s older population is at risk of financial insecurity or economic disadvantage.





The increased likelihood of acquiring disability with age is evident in data from the ACS. Many Newton residents aged 65 and older experience some level of disability that could impact their ability to function independently in the community. About 11% of Newton’s residents aged 65 and older have one disability, and 13% report two or more disabilities (**Figure 11**). Among the different types of disability that are assessed in ACS, the most commonly cited by older Newton 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 12%, 10%, and 10% of the older population in Newton (*ACS 2018–2022, Table S1810*). Other disabilities experienced by older Newton residents include self-care difficulties (6%), cognitive difficulties (4%), and vision difficulties (3%).

**Figure 11.** Percentage of Newton residents age 65+ reporting at least one disability



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2018–2022, Table C18108.

## Insights from Key Informant Interviews

The needs assessment process included individual interviews with eight leaders in Newton. The purpose of these conversations was to assess the needs of the community from key viewpoints and to provide context relative to various other priorities and issues facing the City. Interview participants included the Mayor, Planning Director, Health and Human Services Commissioner, Parks, Recreation and Culture Commissioner, acting Police Chief, Fire Chief, Older Adult Services Director and the CEO of the Charles River Chamber. Interviews were conducted in person or via Zoom and lasted approximately one hour.

All key informants shared the many resources, services, and amenities found in Newton. High quality public safety, schools, access to public transportation and amenities like access

to healthcare, food, and shopping were cited as features making Newton a good place to age. There is also great pride in various current and anticipated projects that will provide residents with new and/or upgraded services, including the Cooper Center for Active Living. Despite the current wealth of programs and services and exciting plans for the future, key informants identified some pervasive issues facing Newton's older residents that must continue to be addressed.

### **Closely linked issues of costs of living and housing options for older residents**

Key informants were asked to share their perspectives on the needs of the older population. Chief among these concerns were housing and the cost of living. Housing is top of the list for all of Massachusetts, but each city or town has its own set of circumstances that make housing the most challenging issue. In Newton, concerns center on a lack of affordable housing options for people who are looking for "right-sized" housing to meet their needs. For example, some long-time Newton residents want to find smaller or single-level housing and stay in Newton. As costs, including property taxes, utilities, and food continue to rise, older residents of Newton are pushed to make choices that might limit their social activity or have implications for their health. As one key informant shared: *"People living on a fixed income, even if they have their own home, they're just struggling financially."* Another key informant commented, *"They thought they had enough money for the rest of their life and more and more older people are realizing, they don't."*

Another example of the impact of the costs of living and access to housing is the lack of appropriate housing choices for younger individuals and families, which makes it difficult for employers to fill job openings. Finally, for those who need support with activities of daily living or are facing complex challenges related to how the rising costs of living have impacted their health—few supportive housing options exist. The Newton Housing Authority has a long waitlist as do other affordable and subsidized housing buildings. The Department of Older Adult Services case manager spends considerable time and effort addressing myriad housing situations from homelessness to downsizing. One key informant summarized by saying, *"People are boxed out whether you've been here a long time, multigenerational family or moved here thinking you would spend the rest of your years here because it's a great community. I think people thought this is where I'm going to stay. Even they are at the end of their rope. So, it's very worrisome when you have to make a decision (about where to go)."*

Key informants were sure to mention that Newton is slowly working to address housing options that allow people to downsize. A ribbon cutting ceremony for an addition to affordable housing at Golda Meir House took place this past year as well as the opening of Haywood House, an affordable housing property developed by Newton Housing Authority and managed by Mahoney Properties, Opus, a 2Life Communities national housing model focused on affordability for older adults in the middle market will open in 2025. Village

Center zoning will allow for more “attainable” housing. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) have been liberalized in Newton though only a small number of ADUs have been developed. Adding housing stock via projects like Northland and Riverside will hopefully offer older adults an option when looking for downsizing options. Whether there’s enough to accommodate demand and within a range that families can afford and find attractive will be a challenge.

### **Accessible transportation is a significant concern and is linked to isolation**

*“Transportation and older adults are on almost every agenda”,* one key informant explained. Across interviews it became clear that despite access to public transportation and walkability, when it comes to getting around, residents who have mobility challenges or modify their driving need help.

While access to public transportation as well as the benefits of proximity to the Boston area are often touted as strengths of Newton, several Key Informants also talked about challenges. Access to buses, MBTA subway and commuter rail provides connections to surrounding cities and towns. While Newton is fortunate to have multiple green line subway stops and three commuter rail stations these options may not be easily accessible due to stairs, lack of seating, and limited schedules.

To respond to the need for more convenient, accessible, transit, in 2019 the City launched Newton in Motion or “NewMo”. Though successful in filling gaps in transit, in July 2024 the city launched a new service, “GoGo Newton” in order to address the need for financial sustainability as well expanded availability and areas of service. GoGo Newton is an Uber/Lyft type of on-demand service that provides access 24 hours per day, seven days per week, within Newton, and to six cities and towns contiguous to Newton as well as selected hospitals in Boston and the Boston area. The new service will be subsidized by the City of Newton based on eligibility criteria. Evaluation of its benefits and drawbacks will be important in understanding its impact on challenges facing older adults in Newton.

When residents have difficulty getting around, one potential consequence is becoming socially isolated. Key informants, particularly public safety officials, described other challenges related to social isolation. For example, Newton has experienced an uptick in telephone and internet scams whose victims include people of all ages but are often focused on older adults. Residents who live alone, or without family nearby, are less inclined to report these scams. As well, key informants cited victims’ embarrassment as a huge reason for not reaching out to authorities. An ongoing concern is incidents involving people who live alone, don’t have family and are having health issues. Mental health issues add to the challenge of trying to address these growing number of situations. *“It’s difficult when there’s no family, health proxy, power of attorney, etc.”* Emergency responders get calls

for things that may not be emergencies. Keys informants reported that many emergencies are more emotional or social.

Some of these challenges are part of the work of a full-time social worker embedded in the police department who partners with police officers in handling and following up on complex cases. The Newton Police Department also has a full-time elder affairs Officer, a position that has been in place for many years. A lot of the work is following up with day-to-day incidents regarding the older population such as falls, some domestic violence, and isolation. But there are many cases that do not warrant the services of the social workers. As one key informant expressed the *“wish there was a service or someone who could handle the questions and concerns that don’t rise to the level of an emergency. Someone to link people to resources.”* The pandemic highlighted the importance of checking in on the status of older adults and connecting them to resources. Connecting older adults with trusted people who can provide help through friendly visiting is a post-pandemic goal.

### **Ideas for solutions and the role of the Cooper Center for Active Living**

In response to the issues of public safety among older adults, Newton Police will have space on-site at the Cooper Center for Active Living with the goal of continued collaboration and accessibility. A concerted effort is being made to connect with residents. The Police Department has started the “Safe Sidewalks Operation” where officers are assigned to walk the various village squares to meet people and talk with them and get a sense of what police can do to help them. In collaboration with the Department of Older Adult Services, the Newton Fire Department is setting up a “Senior Safe” education program to better gauge the needs and numbers of older adults rather than waiting for people to come to them.

In addition to the wide range of programming and services that will be offered at the Cooper Center for Active Living, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture (DPRC) has “55 plus programming” that responds to the specific needs, and interests for social, active or passive recreation. The partnership between the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department and the Older Adult Services Department will continue to be important in developing programming at the Cooper Center that dovetails rather than duplicates existing services in Newton. There is enthusiasm for the new Cooper Center. *“NewCal is going to be completely different from what was able to happen in the previous building.”* Key informants described how the new space will provide a hub that will hopefully not be static but will change to meet the interests and needs of Newton’s growing older population.

## Insights from Focus Group Participants

Five focus groups were conducted in support of the needs assessment. The purpose of these groups was to document the lived experience of particular segments of Newton's older adult population: "solo-agers", or those aging without a spouse/partner or children, those who are newly or recently retired, and representatives from the Chinese and Russian ethnic communities.

Like solo agers, semi/newly retired older adults bring a unique and often underrepresented set of circumstances and preferences. Taken as a whole, these two separate focus groups, representing 19 older residents, provided a wealth of insight into the needs, concerns, interests and suggestions of a "younger-old" group of individuals. Both focus groups were lively, and participants were grateful for the opportunity to share their experiences and perspectives. Overall, the 6 men and 13 women who participated were active and looking for opportunities to socialize.

### Public safety and access to transportation are appreciated features of aging in Newton

When asked what they liked about living in Newton, several immediately shared positive experiences with services that helped them feel safe and supported. The police and fire departments were praised for their responsiveness and support. Said one participant of her experience, *"The police show up in one second. You're hanging up the phone, and the police are there. They are so solicitous. In my case they suggested a door lock to me. I am just wowed by the police department. And the same thing can be said of the fire department and the ambulance service."* A second participant shared his gratitude when *"a wonderful young officer stayed with me for the rest of the day after my wife died. He didn't particularly have any skills; he was just a pleasant young man and kept me company."* Participants from these two groups also expressed gratitude for the services and support from the Center. *"I was blown away by the support I got from the Senior Center when I suddenly lost my mobility to arthritis. At a time when I felt so vulnerable and so alone the Senior Services help was just invaluable."*

There was considerable discussion about transportation in Newton. Public transportation has appeal as well as limitations. One participant loves the accessibility to public transportation. *"...I have always lived close to the T. I am still driving somewhat. I dread the point when I am no longer driving. I can't get on the steps of buses anymore."*

Articulating the challenges with intra/inter-city public transportation, a participant said, *"I think the city may not be aware of the lack of transit on the north side of the city. We used to have transit that was cut back. Neither buses nor trains run with any frequency. A whole section of the city is no longer served by transit."* *"Could you make that note to expand buses*

to Watertown square?” requested one participant who said that Watertown Square is a nexus to all kinds of transportation but currently there’s not enough access by bus.

Solo agers are looking for transportation services to be expanded both in terms of hours of operations and the region covered. *“We need to really think out of the box and think about the needs of people who are alone. Who may not drive at night but have needs to socialize and to be able to do some of the things they did before.”*

### **Opportunities for social connection in and outside of the new Cooper Center for Active Living**

When asked about what they wanted from the new Cooper Center for Active Living, this group had many suggestions as well as concerns about programs, services, and ambiance. A major theme for the solo agers was the desire for opportunities to socialize. They want dedicated spaces within the Center as well as outdoor spaces where they can interact informally. One focus group participant articulated, *“I’m just looking for people to hang out with. I thought that the senior center would sort of be like a coffee shop atmosphere. Where you could drift in and there’d be people sitting around chit chatting and it’d be ok to walk up to a group (you can tell I’m really shy) and say hi can I join you? Just for conversation or chat over a board game.”* Many in the group volunteer and see volunteering as a way to bring people together. *“Because I live alone and have periods of loneliness and boredom... got involved in volunteering.”* Combine socializing with volunteering (e.g., gift wrapping) to bring people together in a group in a place they can talk and do something meaningful. The idea is to think about ways people can have an opportunity to socialize, preferably in the afternoon and evenings, around projects, lectures, and events.

These focus groups represent younger older adults who have many skills and have a desire to learn new skills. They talked about developing a mechanism for benefiting from and sharing skills, such as a bartering or skills bank initiative. Combining learning with socializing is attractive. Progressive dinners or potluck suppers around a specific topic were examples of activities that could be organized/offered by the senior center. Keep programs affordable. Participants wanted to emphasize the fact that not everyone has money in Newton. For programs with fees, the suggestion was to provide coupons for programs so people can sample what they like before committing fully.

The other attractive function that the Cooper Center for Active Living can offer to these focus group participants is connection with services that support people’s ability to live independently. Though social opportunities were the main topic of conversation, the focus group participants ended the session by talking about their concerns about aging alone in their homes. One person described the need for a “traffic director” at the Center who, like a social worker, can help identify and connect people to resources that are reputable and cost effective.

One participant wants to know the services she can get to continue living at home. *“I want to know what services are available for as long as I can maintain myself independently to continue to do that. I do go to some of the fitness classes, which has provided a sense of community. Really what I’m looking for is help,”* Another participant is feeling the strain of maintaining her home. As someone who lives on Social Security, she needs help navigating services for home maintenance. She also needs social support in general *“on how to figure out life.”* Participants expressed interest in workshops on aging in place, planning for retirement, aging alone, downsizing, decluttering, decision making around housing, and *“what to do if I get sick”*. One focus group participant wanted information to answer her question, *“How can we survive in our house that is not age friendly and would cost several hundred dollars to make it age friendly?”* Finally, a younger participant came to the focus group because she needs caregiving support for her mother who doesn’t have a lot of financial resources yet is not eligible for income-based services in the home.

They are excited about what the new center will be for them now and in their future. They want updated programming that reflects what aging looks like today. *“A lot of what’s offered seems like it’s for my parents.”* Many ideas were shared about topics and activities of interest. One participant’s description of pickleball captured the qualities they look for in activities: welcoming, active, fun, mentally stimulating, social and healthy. Drop-in tech help would be helpful as would consultations with professionals who can provide advice without marketing their services. They want educational opportunities that involve panels, discussions, and guest speakers on political and social issues. For example, one participant didn’t need basic computer skills but rather wanted to learn more about AI, its implications for the future and how to use it effectively.

Because this population is still working, it’s important to them that hours be more flexible, including late afternoons, evenings, and weekends. *“I don’t fit into anything given my hours. I’m a very social beast and I like to do things. I’m not going to play bingo. And I’m not available at 9 or 12 o’clock.” “I read the weekly newsletter. Oh that sounds interesting but it’s always at a time I have other commitments.”* Another participant said, *“Weekends and evenings are really important times. I think there are times when people in the community are looking for something. If we had folk dancing on a Saturday night.”*

Another theme that emerged was a desire for engaging activities to socialize outside of the future building. One participant suggested that activities to socialize can be organized via fun trips and collaborations with other entities. *“Where I find community is music. One of the things that would be helpful to me would be for the senior center to provide information about places that would be compatible for seniors to go where you wouldn’t stick out like a sore thumb. And you might enjoy yourself with people who are your age.”*

To extend the activity and value of the Cooper Center for Active Living, participants suggested a clearinghouse function – a bulletin board - to allow people to share information

about places and things to do that would appeal to solo agers. *“Put up a message board where people can recommend places to go or ask people if they’re up for activities. I have been trying to find a swim buddy to go to the Y. I picture a giant message board where someone could say “there’s this really neat thing that is happening.”* Participants also described the value of accessing a list of places older residents can go to be with their peers and have fun.

### **Limited English Speakers**

Two focus groups were held for limited English speakers, one for Chinese (Mandarin) speaking adults and one for Russian speaking adults. All participants were residents of Newton Housing Authority properties. Fourteen older adults participated. The eight Chinese speaking participants were relative newcomers to Newton (7- 16 years in Newton). The six Russian speaking participants had greater longevity living in Newton.

### **Much gratitude was expressed about aging in Newton**

Both Russian and Chinese speaking residents cited good transportation, proximity to family and amenities like the supermarket were positives. A Chinese speaking resident said, *“The transportation in Newton is pretty good. We don’t know how to drive. Buses and subways are convenient.”* Russian speaking residents in Newton listed many positive attributes. *“No city serves its old people the way our city does.” “We are treated very well here.”* The public transportation is excellent. One can get to Boston without a car. The buses are clean and comfortable.

Newton is also described by these groups as walkable, with lots of great stores. It’s quiet and peaceful. There are great parks and pools where fun events happen. There are places of worship for people of all faith backgrounds. Finally, there was agreement that the food pantry on Watertown Street, within walking distance, is wonderful. There’s always high-quality food and fresh produce.

### **Ongoing support of public safety and maintenance of public housing are among top concerns of the Chinese and Russian speaking participants**

When asked about things they would like to improve, some Chinese-speaking residents focused on housing management concerns including a rat problem. One person was scared about recent criminal behavior in Newton. Initially, multiple Russian speaking participants answered that they can’t think of anything they don’t like about living in Newton. However, they were concerned that more people had moved to Newton and the city’s culture had changed. There’s more crime and theft.

Like the Chinese speaking residents, they cited some issues related to the Newton Housing Authority. (The Newton Housing Authority (NHA) is not directly part of the city government, but it operates within Newton and is the largest provider of affordable



housing in Newton.) Before COVID, there was a meeting every month in the community room. There would be group events. After COVID, these events are no longer happening. Some concerns about security and overfilled dumpsters at these housing authority buildings were also cited as concerns.

### **Information and language accessibility are crucial to inclusion at the Cooper Center for Active Living**

Participants were asked about how they learn about what is going on in Newton. Language is a barrier for both Chinese and Russian speaking older residents. Previously staff at the Newton Housing Authority did not speak Chinese but now there is a staff member who can speak Chinese and provides limited information. While the library has some information, it lacks Chinese resources, and some people are not able to go to the library. *“We are not familiar with the situation in Newton at all. The senior center lacks Chinese resources. I have visited senior centers in Belmont, Waltham, Lexington, and Malden, which have Chinese activity rooms that elderly individuals enjoy attending. These centers are quite spacious and have translation services available.”* Russian speaking residents sometimes get information through the housing authority and from the Senior Center.

Given a lack of knowledge about the offerings, one participant said, *“I would love to learn more about it. I want to look at what activities are available. If it is nearby, consider attending the activities and making new friends. It would be best if there were Chinese-language programs available”*. Another participant described the kinds of programs that would attract Chinese adults. *“For example, in this area, there are many Chinese older adults, and in the 65-75 age group, they are more active and enjoy learning. This could be the highlighted feature of the center to attract people.”* Recommendations for physical activities included walking machines, treadmills, and table tennis. Other recommendations were Chinese calligraphy, vocal exercises in music and yoga. Learning sessions on medical matters, history, and AI robotics can help strengthen relationships within the community. *“Many of our older adults graduated from prestigious Chinese universities when they were young, so we can invite them to share their experiences.”* The focus on physical activity and learning is similar to what was heard among solo-agers and those who are recently retired or partially retired.

About half of the Russian speaking residents have gone to the Center. Participants want activities that promote health: sports and games. The Department of Older Adult Services gives food once a month, and it would be great if this were continued. They are looking for conversation and community, lots of greenery, and a garden. They prefer wooden benches outside (not metal), which are more comfortable and don't get hot when they want to sit outside and talk. *“The thing is that we have trouble with English. We don't always understand things. It would be great if there could be a translator.”*

## **Stakeholders reinforce issues of housing costs and accessible transportation but add the increasingly complex needs of residents.**

A cross-section of municipal and organizational leaders participated in a Stakeholders' focus group at City Hall. There was broad representation from a variety of sectors/issue areas including housing, recreation, disability, older adult services, mental health, food insecurity, public health, healthcare, arts, LGBTQ+ and law enforcement. Not surprisingly, housing options and support for housing costs are significant unmet needs for Newton's older population. Participants called for reducing rental costs and supporting older adults seeking housing. For those who have challenges walking long distances or climbing stairs, accessible transportation options emerged as a crucial concern, limiting older adults' access to programs and services. The need for more accessible transportation options and education around transportation services was emphasized. The introduction of GoGo Newton will, no doubt, result in improvements as well as challenges. The need for evaluation of GoGo Newton as it relates to transportation concerns will be important.

Participants shared their concerns about how isolation, mental health, and economic security have created complex situations for residents that require multidisciplinary attention. *"Since COVID we've seen a big increase in their frailty. ...a perfect example of how isolation can truly impact a person's health."*

Another participant commented on the rise of mental health issues. *"...(we are) giving people a place to go. I've seen our referrals skyrocket since the pandemic."* Efforts to prevent isolation among older adults with disabilities, particularly vision and hearing impairments, were highlighted. It was suggested that the Department of Older Adult Services help increase education on available resources for older adults with vision and hearing disabilities. Part of this effort should include information on free resources.

Participants focused on challenges related to care received at home. Coordination of care can help prevent hospitalizations but care transitions from hospital to home continue to be problematic. *"Healthcare is in crisis and so I think part of it is making sure that seniors when they get discharged, that there is a handoff and an appointment made with the PCP within a week upon discharge. Patients don't understand they are the ones that have to initiate this."* Access to homecare is difficult, given vendor worker shortages. *"We see a lot of residents who wait and wait and wait for service because they're low income, so they don't have that choice of getting private care."*

## **Promoting Inclusion at the Cooper Center for Active Living is a Priority**

As with all focus group participants, there was excitement about the new Cooper Center. The new center has great potential for being a connector, bringing various services together to create a one-stop-shop for information and assistance. A key concern was

insufficient parking at the new center, with participants suggesting additional parking spaces, particularly in the vicinity of Austin Street.

The importance of making the Cooper Center for Active Living more inclusive and culturally sensitive was stressed. This included considering language barriers, cultural relevance, and creating a welcoming environment for older adults from diverse backgrounds. Participants shared their organizational need for additional capacity to serve limited-English speaking residents.

The challenge of effectively communicating information about programs and services to older adults was highlighted. Participants discussed the need for increased collaboration around communication and outreach efforts across the City to more effectively promote programs and services. With so much going on in the City there's a need to consolidate a myriad of information to make it easier for both providers and residents to know what is available. Along with more consolidated information was the desire for more coordination among organizations. Participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity the focus group provided for networking and sharing information. As said by one participant, "*We all inevitably get into the silos of our days. The silos of our organizations. If there's opportunity to carve out time across some organization, there could be some very rich ways to address some of these issues because there is a wealth of resources here.*"

## Results from Community Survey

Disclaimer: Throughout this section of the document, the terms “NewCaL,” “Senior Center,” and “Council on Aging” may be used interchangeable with “Cooper Center for Active Living.” Please note that the Cooper Center for Active Living is the new name for the facility and services previously referred to by these other terms, all references are intended to represent the same center and its associated programs focused on active living and aging support within the community.

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 2,869 Newton residents (**Table 3**). This is a strong return rate and reflects interest among community residents. Compared to the age distribution of Newton as a whole we heard from a smaller share of residents aged 60 to 69; survey response rates were higher among those aged 70 and older. Response distributions by age group are shown for all survey questions in **Appendix A**.

**Table 3. Community Survey Respondents**

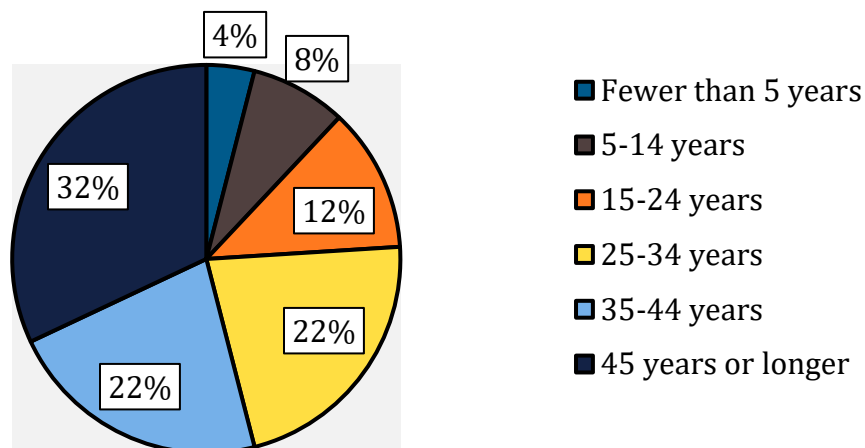
	Number of responses	Age distribution (%), survey responses	Number of residents	Age distribution of residents age 60+
<b>Age 60-69</b>	978	34%	10,538	47%
<b>Age 70-79</b>	1,125	39%	7,761	35%
<b>Age 80+</b>	506	18%	3,933	18%
<b>Age not provided</b>	260	9%	0	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	2,869	100%	22,232	100%

## 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.

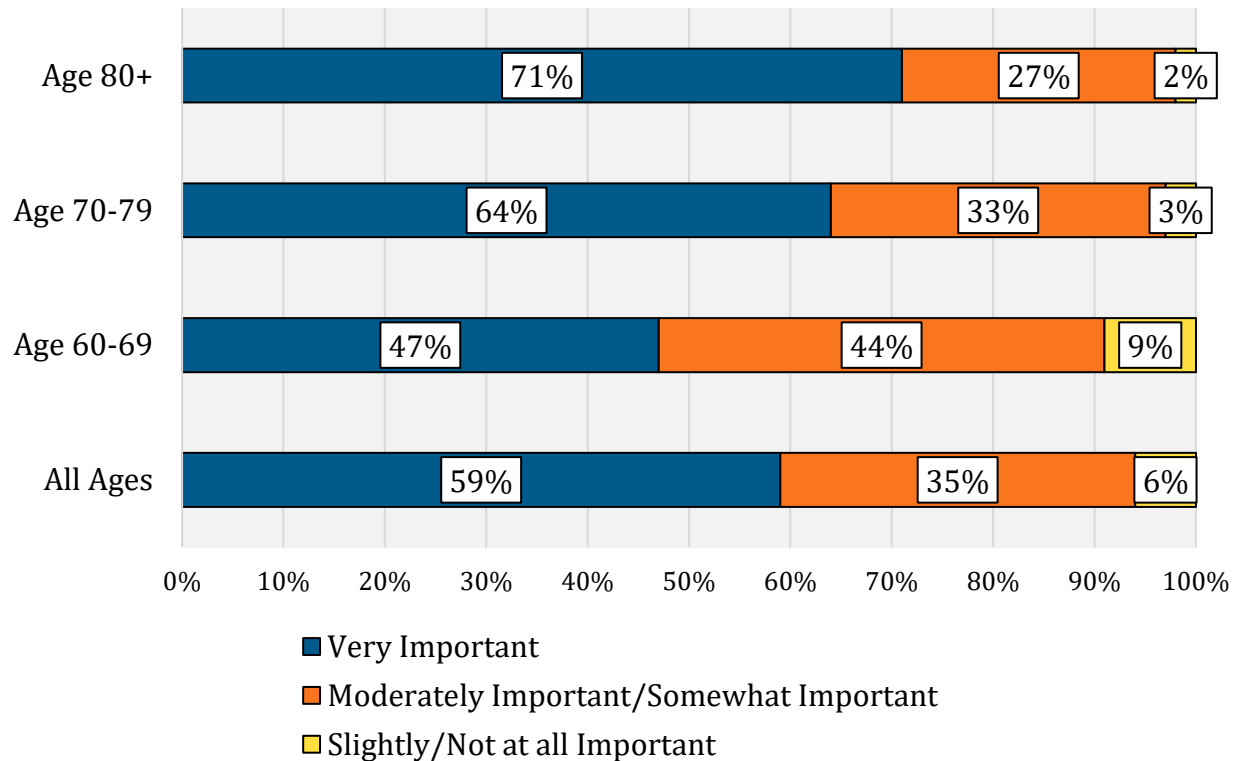
Survey respondents included residents who have lived in Newton for many years, as well as relative newcomers. The duration of residence in Newton varies from 12% of respondents who have been in the city for less than 15 years to 44% who have lived in Newton for more than 35 years (see **Figure 12**). These individuals offer insight based on their years of experience living in Newton. It is also helpful, however, to hear from those who are new to Newton.

**Figure 12.** How long have you lived in Newton?



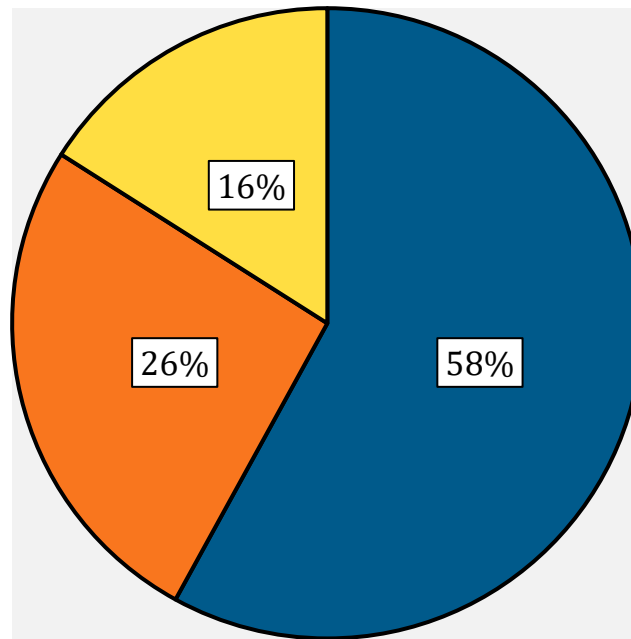
Eighty-nine percent of survey respondents report feeling a sense of belonging in the community where they live (see **Appendix A**). An additional 8% did not report this sense of belonging and 3% reported “I don’t know” when it comes to feeling a sense of belonging in Newton. As seen in **Figure 13**, survey respondents were asked, “How important is it to you to remain living in Newton as you get older.” Seventy-one percent (71%) of residents 80 and older and 64% of residents between the ages of 70 and 79 indicated that it was very important to them to continue living in Newton as they age. This is compared to only 47% of residents aged 60-69 who reported that it is very important to them to remain in Newton as they age.

**Figure 13: How important is it to you to remain living in Newton as you get older?**



Across all ages, 58% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “Local policy makers consider the interests and concerns of older residents.” Another 26% indicated they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, and 16% neither agreed nor disagreed. (see **Figure 14**).

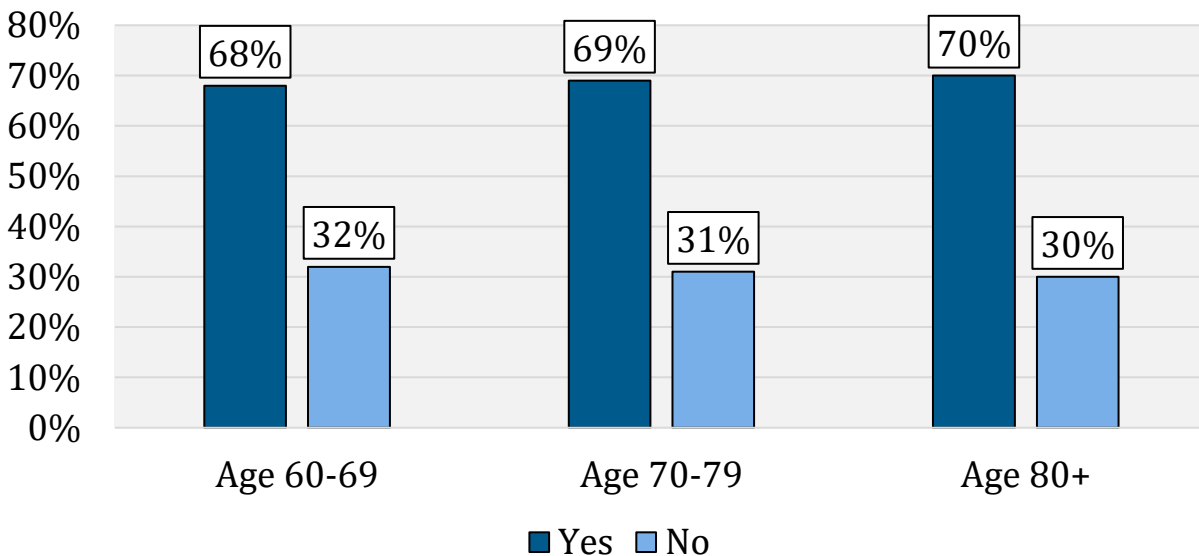
**Figure 14.** "Local Policymakers consider the interests and concerns of older residents"



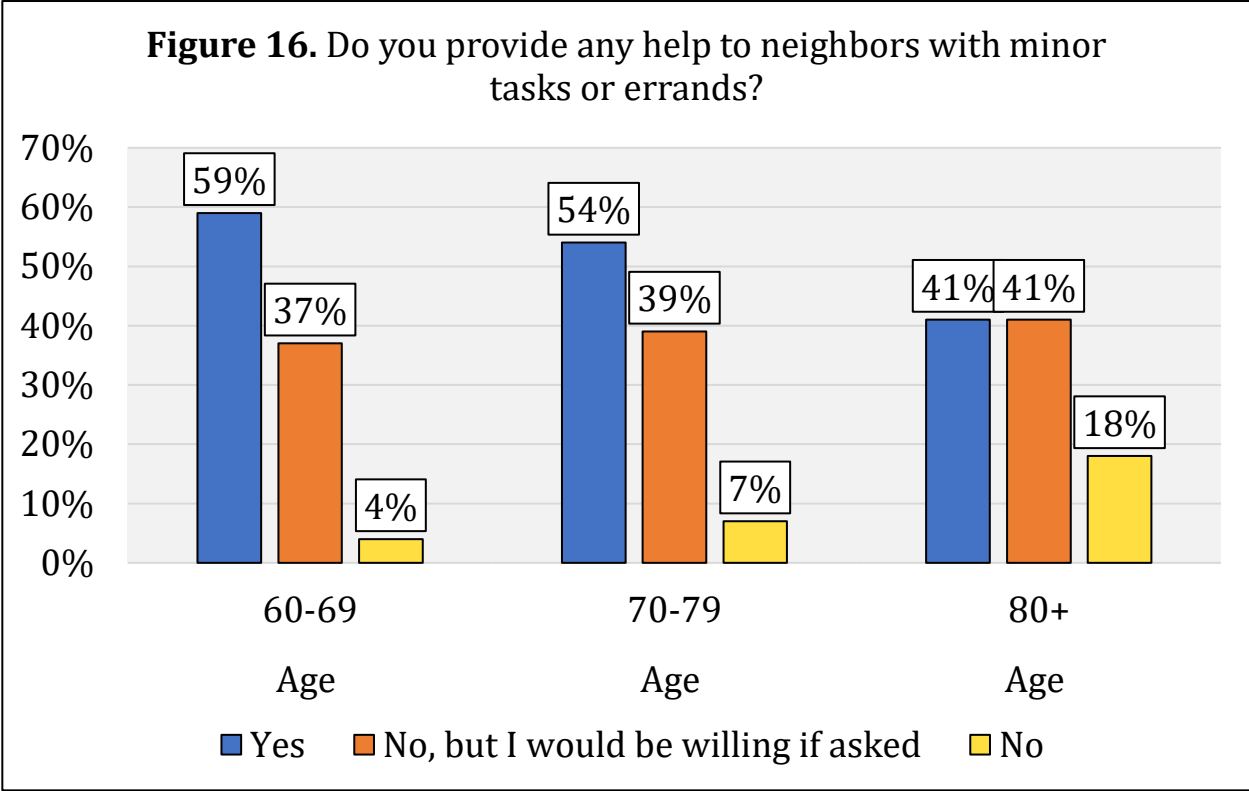
■ Strongly Agree/Agree   ■ Disagree/Strongly Disagree   ■ I don't know

Survey respondents were asked if they would ask a neighbor for help if they needed assistance with a minor task or errand. **Figure 15** illustrates that, regardless of age, nearly one-third of respondents would not ask for help.

**Figure 15.** Would you ask a neighbor for help if you needed assistance with a minor task or errand?



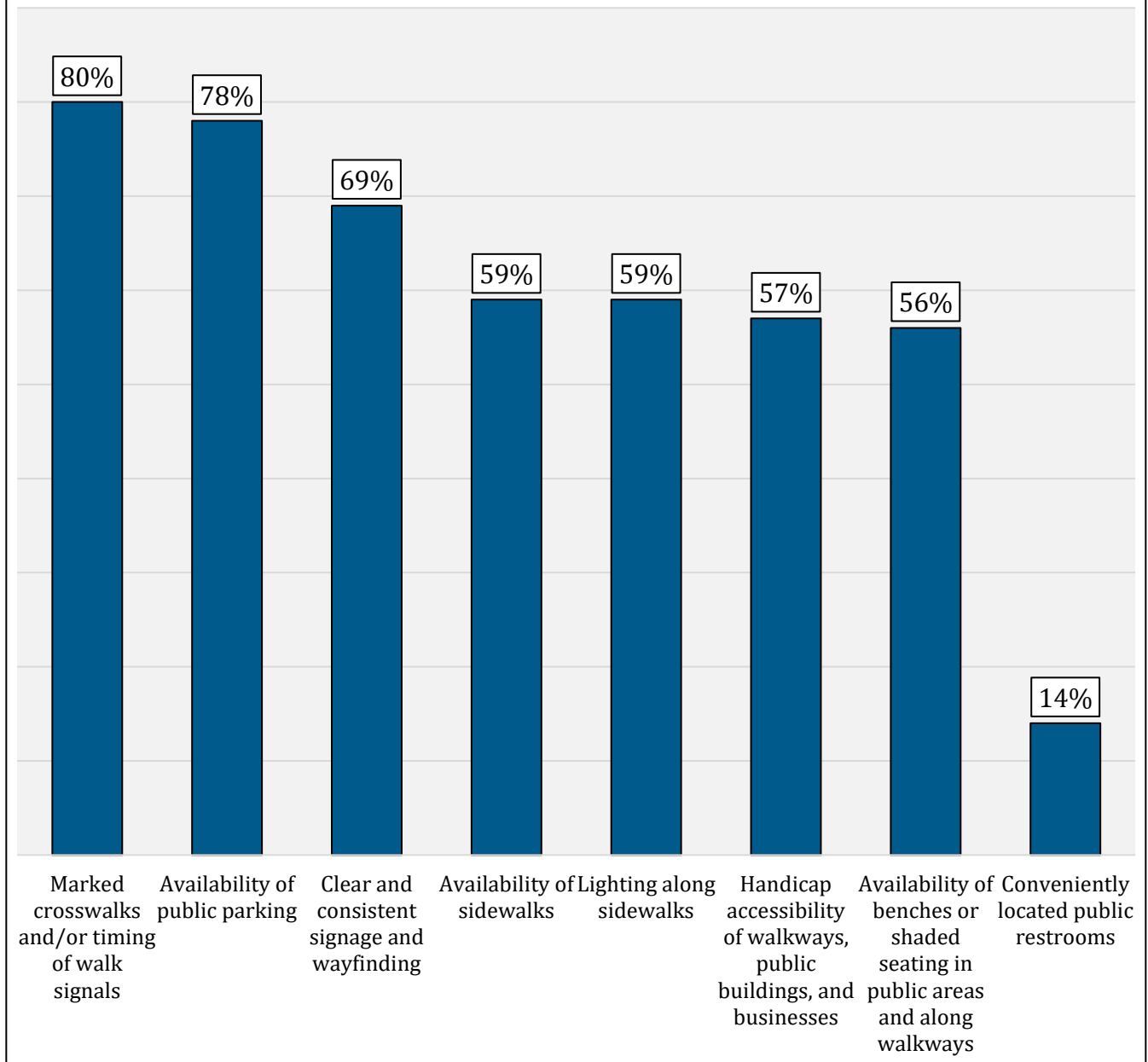
Additionally, respondents were asked if they currently provide help to a neighbor with minor tasks or errands. **Figure 16** shows that more than half of respondents under age 80 do provide some help, and even more would do so if asked. Taken together, these results suggest that strengthening neighbor-to-neighbor relations in Newton is one possible way of supporting those who choose to age in place.



**Figure 17** indicates that most respondents are satisfied with local features like marked crosswalks, availability of public parking, and clear and consistent signage. The local features that respondents most commonly reported being “very dissatisfied” or “dissatisfied” include conveniently located public restrooms, lighting along sidewalks, and availability of benches or shaded seating in public areas and along walkways.



**Figure 17.** "Very satisfied" or "Satisfied" with features of Newton



Most respondents took time to respond to the open-ended question, “*What do you value most about living in Newton?*” Responses are summarized into major themes with verbatim quotes shown in **Table 4**. Most write-in responses emphasized the importance of Newton’s geographic location, in relation to outdoor spaces and proximity to Boston and other communities as well as needed amenities, such as healthcare, shopping, and restaurants. Most written responses centered on the people of Newton 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 their neighborhoods and the City, many citing long histories of

living in Newton. Lastly, respondents to this open-ended question cited satisfaction with City infrastructure, noting services provided by City departments and the local government.

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

<b>Location, outdoor spaces, and access to amenities</b>
<i>Proximity to Boston without living in an urban environment.</i>
<i>Proximity to Boston, but not as densely populated as Brookline and Cambridge, Good schools, Newton Center retail offerings, both hard goods and restaurants.</i>
<i>Small villages, community services, small town feel in a big city.</i>
<i>Location, beauty, access to Boston, Cambridge, etc. Services, shopping, restaurants, villages. It's home!</i>
<i>Walkable especially the path along the Charles, many grocery stores, nice neighbors.</i>
<b>Community: People, Friends, Family</b>
<i>Social capital: friends, neighbors, religious community, schools to be proud of with significant Metco participation.</i>
<i>It has been my home for over 100 years and is convenient to much from Boston.</i>
<i>My family lives here in Newton. Excellent Police and Fire Department. Good schools. Love the community spirit.</i>
<i>Each village is small enough that you feel you are a part of a small town.</i>
<i>Social, political, environmental values; great schools, convenient accessibility to shops and services; village design.</i>
<i>Shared values of fairness, justice in race, climate, education, gender, politics, religion, income. I love my neighbors.</i>
<b>Safety</b>
<i>Many things but if I pick one I feel very safe living here.</i>
<i>Newton is safe and where I live is close to shops and public transportation.</i>
<i>My friends live here. I feel safe 24/7. It is close to Boston. It is very quiet at night. I value the amount and diversity of restaurants here.</i>
<i>Safety. Low crime rate. Good schools and quality education.</i>
<i>A safe community that has or is nearby anything one could need or want.</i>
<b>City infrastructure</b>
<i>It is a city with a lot of conveniences (e.g., transportation, arts, music, hiking).</i>
<i>Local government has always cared about Newton's citizens, from early ages to senior citizens.</i>
<i>Location near highways, T stops, shops &amp; restaurants, great public services.</i>

Similarly, most respondents wrote about their greatest concerns about aging in Newton. Commonly cited concerns with sample quotes are included in **Table 5**. Most responses focused on financial security: residents are concerned about being able to afford to continue living in Newton as they age, citing property 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 the availability of 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 also about making sure they existed in or around Newton. Many respondents cited the lack of publicly available transportation as a common concern. Another primary concern for those who provided a response was that they could remain healthy, active, and independent in later life. Several respondents communicated challenges with housing: maintaining current homes could become physically and financially burdensome, but the ability to affordably downsize within Newton is limited.

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

<b>Affordability, cost of living, and taxes</b>
<i>Taxes that are too high for elderly/retiree income; it went up 100% in 20 years.</i>
<i>Affordability – the cost of real estate taxes on a fixed income.</i>
<i>Affordable housing for the surviving spouse.</i>
<i>Cost – we are renters and are concerned about high rent when we retire.</i>
<i>Cost of housing. If I sell my house (which I’d like) I will be priced out of Newton.</i>
<i>Expensive. I’m in a first-time homebuyer condo and alone. I have 4 bedrooms and would love to downsize, but I can’t afford anything else in Newton, so I have to stay where I am. It’s too bad as a family with kids could benefit from my place!</i>
<i>I am a renter now, single and I earn \$200 too much per mo. to qualify for any services. When this apartment ends, my car is likely to become my house.</i>
<i>With the recent teacher’s strike, I am worried about increased taxes, a Prop 2.5 override, and the needs of the young (schools) pitted against the needs of seniors.</i>
<b>Accessible transportation</b>
<i>Getting around if I am unable to drive; lack of connection to others.</i>
<i>Hard to get around without a car. We are not within walking distance of any public transportation.</i>
<i>I can’t drive far and probably won’t be driving at all soon.</i>
<i>Limited public transit within Newton for when I can no longer drive.</i>

*I used to take the 553/554 bus from Washington and Chestnut to Boston for appointments, etc. That line was terminated during Covid and never resurrected. That is a huge inconvenience and deterrent from taking public transportation.*

### **Ability to Maintain Living in Current Home**

*Access to walking safely to all that I need to be independent. Sidewalks and streets are hazardous. Sidewalks must be shoveled and salted and consistently enforced.*

*Physical demands related to winter/summer; outdoor upkeep of premises.*

*Our current home would be difficult to navigate as we get older due to number of steps.*

*Having to move because of physical constraints like stairs if my health deteriorates.*

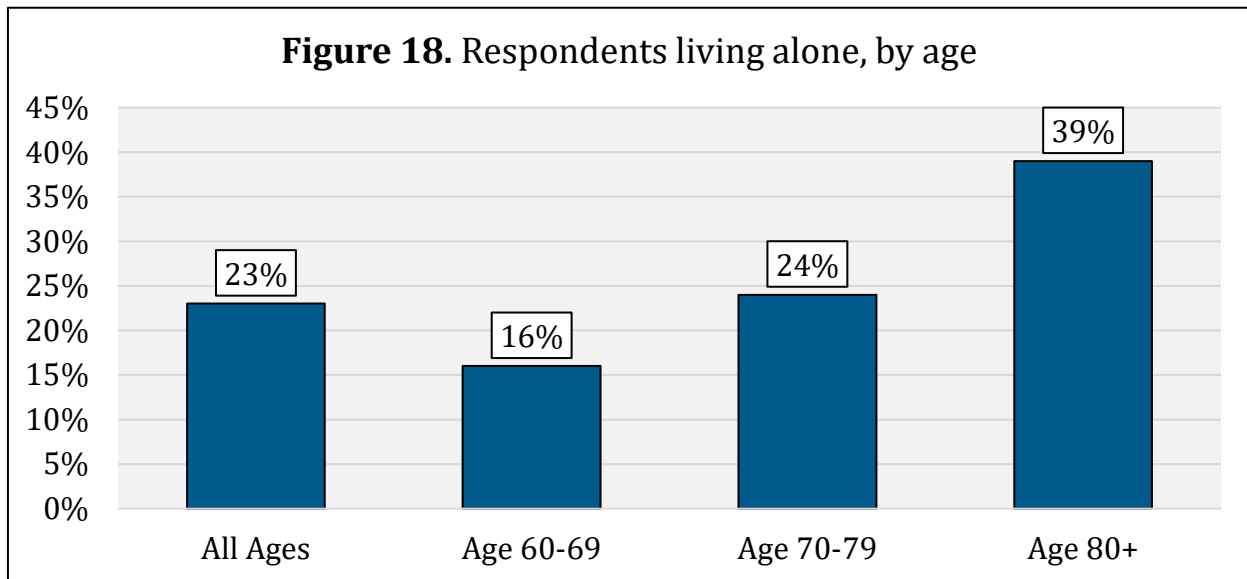
*Becoming isolated with aging. Lack of smaller homes to downsize to.*

## **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

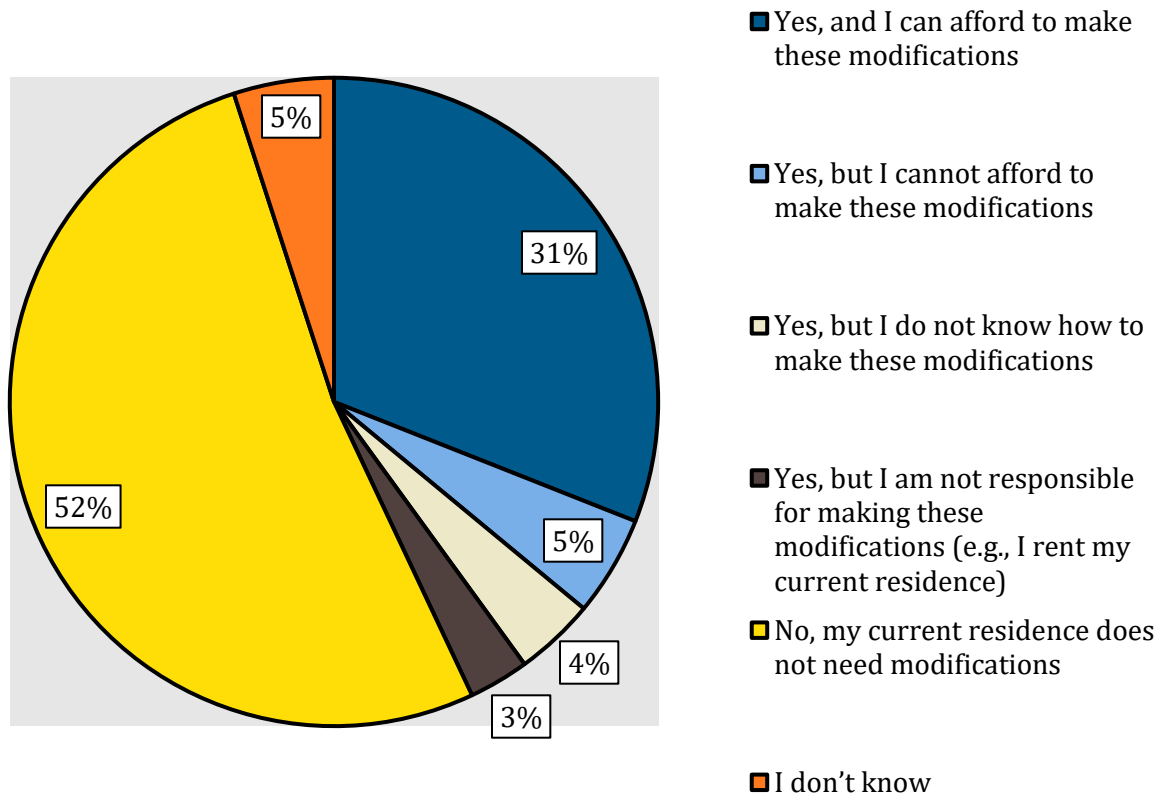
As shown in **Figure 18**, 39% of those respondents aged 80 and older report living alone compared to only 16% of those aged 60-69. Living alone has the potential to lead to social isolation and has implications for services that may be needed by the older segment of the

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.



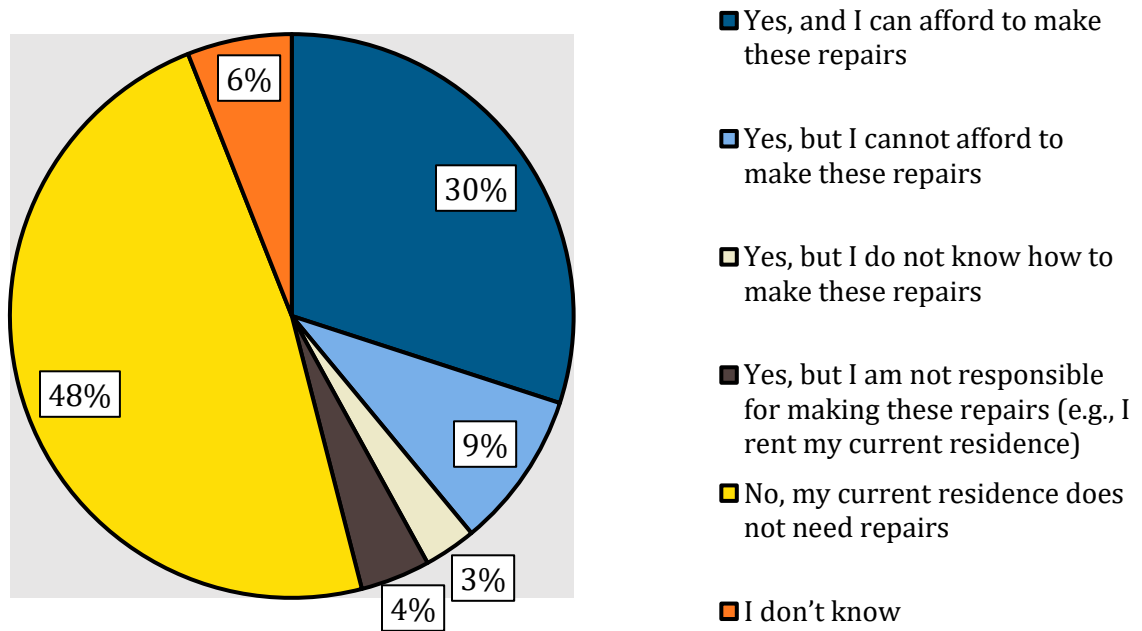
Maintaining a home requires resources, including people who can make repairs and the finances to pay for these repairs. In response to the question, “*Does your current residence need home modifications (e.g., grab bars in showers or railings on stairs) to improve your ability to live in it safely for the next five years?*” 43% of respondents stated “yes”. Among them, 5% cannot afford to make these changes, 3% are not responsible for making such changes (e.g., they rent their home), and 4% do not know how to make these repairs (**Figure 19**).

**Figure 19.** 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 5 years?



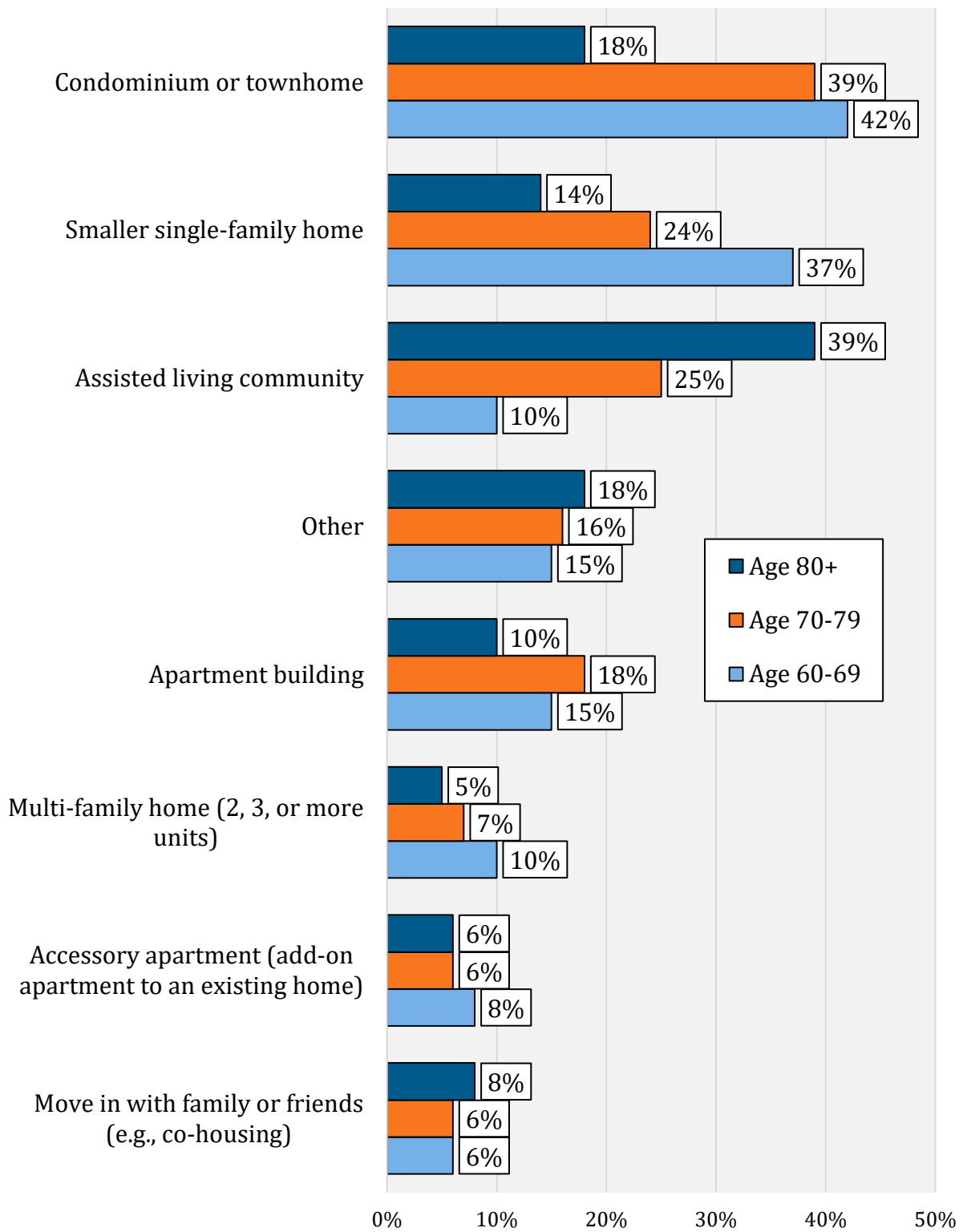
Similarly, 46% of respondents reported that their current residence needs repairs. Among them, 9% stated that they could not afford these repairs (see **Figure 20**).

**Figure 20.** Does your current residence need significant home repairs to improve your ability to live in it safely for the next 5 years?



Survey respondents 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 (see **Figure 21**). Responses varied greatly by age group. Nearly forty percent (40%) of respondents aged 60-69 would choose a condominium or townhome or a smaller single-family home over other options. Assisted living communities were selected by 25% of respondents aged 70-79 and 39% of respondents 80 and older. Notably, 16% of survey respondents selected “other”. Common themes among write-in responses included interest in Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs) 55+ communities, independent living, senior living, and senior housing. These preferences for alternative senior living options by those age 50 and older have implications for future housing policy decisions in Newton.

**Figure 21.** In the next 5 years, if you needed to move from your current home, what kind of housing would you prefer in Newton?

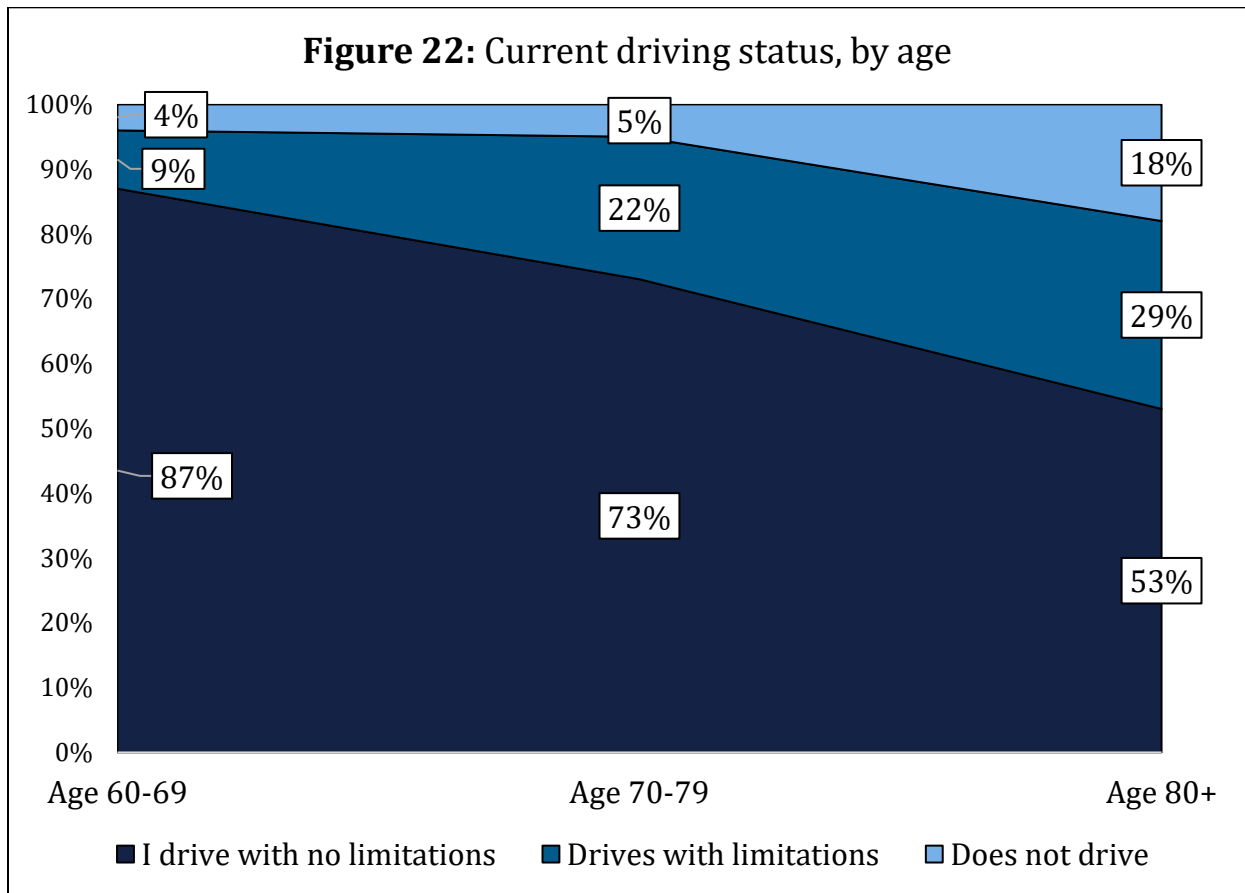




## Transportation

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.

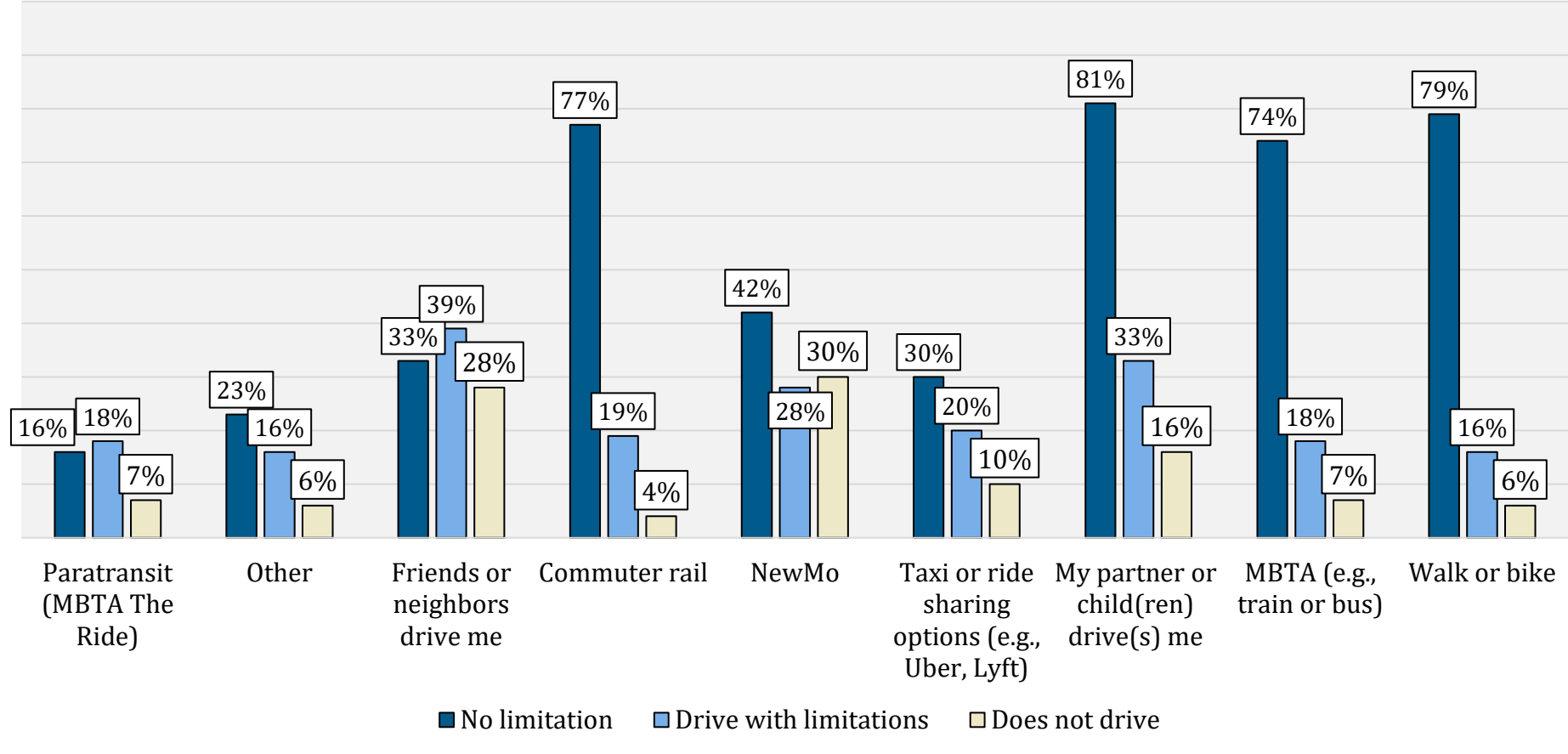
Most survey respondents reported active driving status, with 79% driving with no limitations, and 8% not driving at all, although this number is significantly larger when looking at just those age 80 and older. **Figure 22** demonstrates that driving status diminishes with age: 87% of those aged 60-69 drive without limitations, compared to 73% of those in their 70s and 53% of those age 80 and older. Eighteen percent (18%) of respondents aged 80 or older reported not driving and an additional 29% of respondents aged 80 and older reported driving with some limitations.



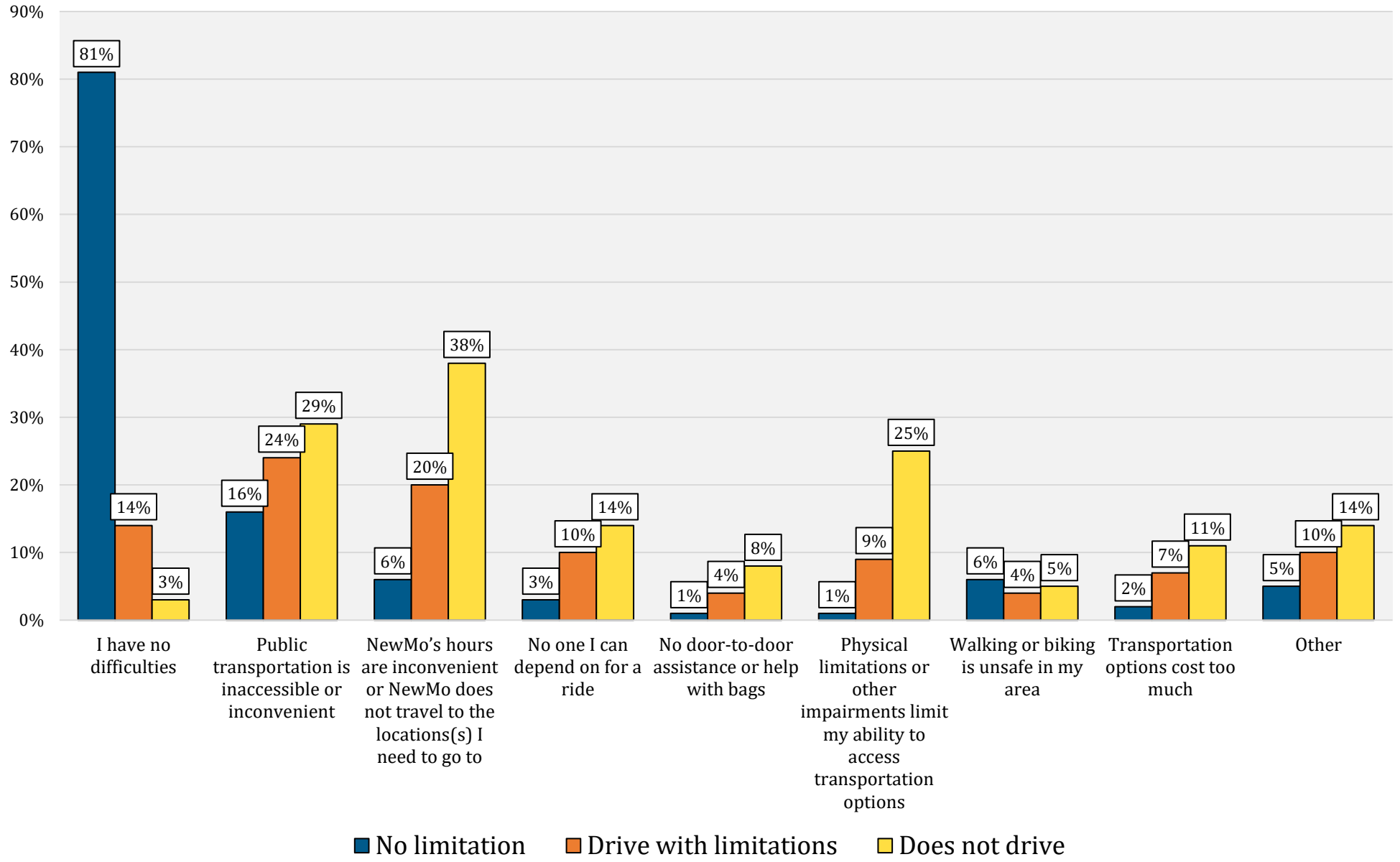
Survey results suggest that most respondents (84%) drive themselves as a primary mode of transportation. Walking or biking (32%), taking the MBTA (e.g., train or bus) (24%), and having a spouse or child drive (20%) were among the other primary ways that respondents met their transportation needs (see **Appendix A**). Other primary ways respondents meet their transportation needs include taxi or ride sharing (17%), NewMo (7%), the commuter rail (6%) and having friends or neighbors provide transportation (5%). Only 2% (n=45) of respondents reported using Paratransit (MBTA The Ride) as a primary mode of transportation. The percentage of respondents using Paratransit (MBTA The Ride) as a primary method of transportation increases from 25% for those under 80 to nearly 50% for those age 80 and older. At the same time, use of the MBTA (train or bus) as a primary mode of transportation decreases with age, from 44% of respondents less than 80 to nearly 13% of respondents 80 and older.

Among those who drive with some limitations or report not driving at all, the most common sources of transportation are a reliance on friends, neighbors, or family (see **Figure 23**). On-demand transportation sources like NewMo and taxi or ride-sharing are also used by significant shares of non-drivers or those who limit their driving in some ways.

**Figure 23. Primary transportation methods by driving status**

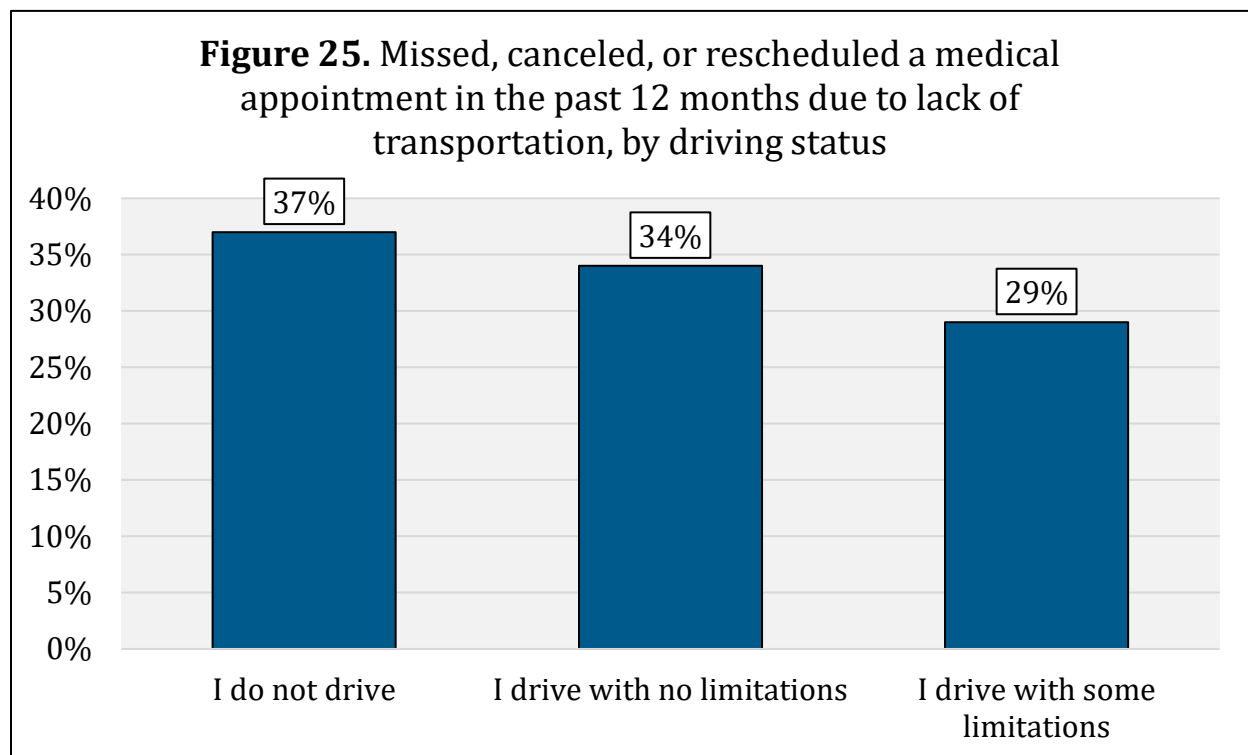


**Figure 24: Transportation difficulties by driving status**



A small share of respondents (5%) 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, 34% of those who drive with limitations and 37% of those who do not drive reported “yes” to this question (**Figure 25**). These findings suggest that transportation limitations appear to negatively impact accessing medical care for the most vulnerable segments of Newton’s older resident community.

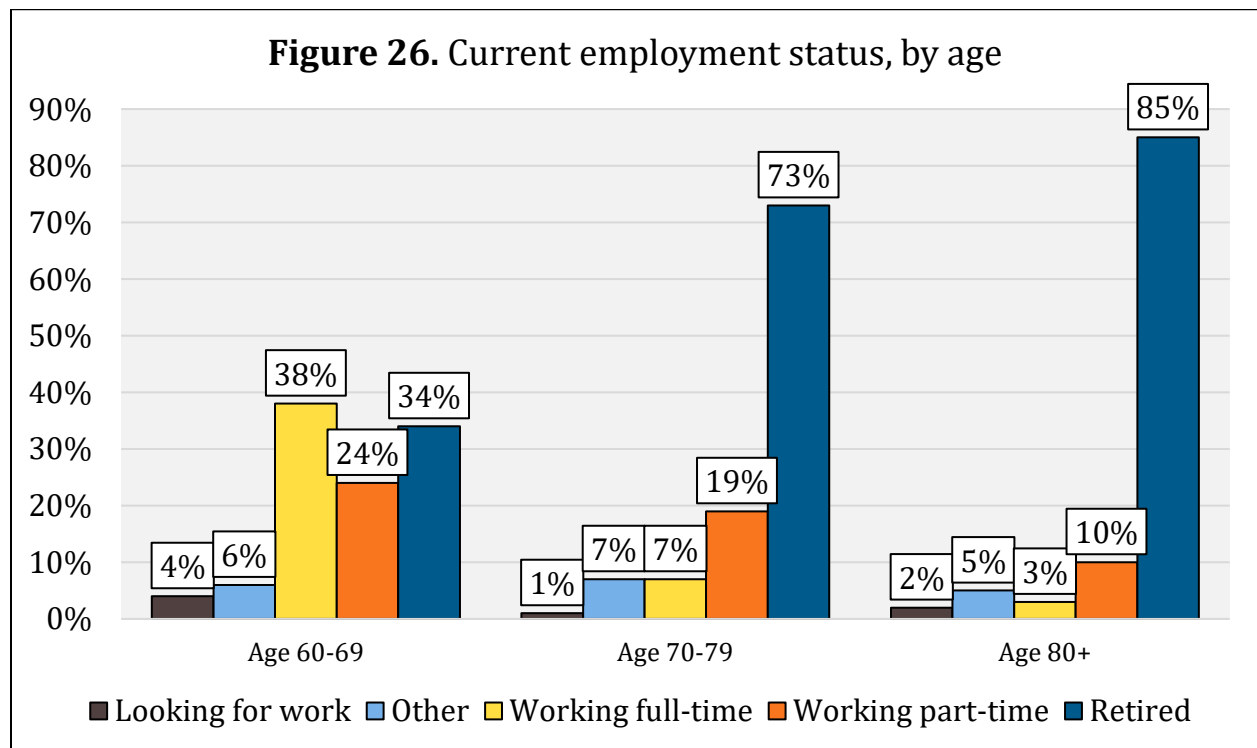
When asked about satisfaction with transportation options, 14% of those who reported not driving at all were not at all satisfied. This is compared to 6% of those who limit their driving or do not drive at all (see **Appendix A**).



## 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 Newton survey results. **Figure 26** shows that most respondents in their 60s are still working full or part-time (62%), and 26% of those in their 70s are also working.

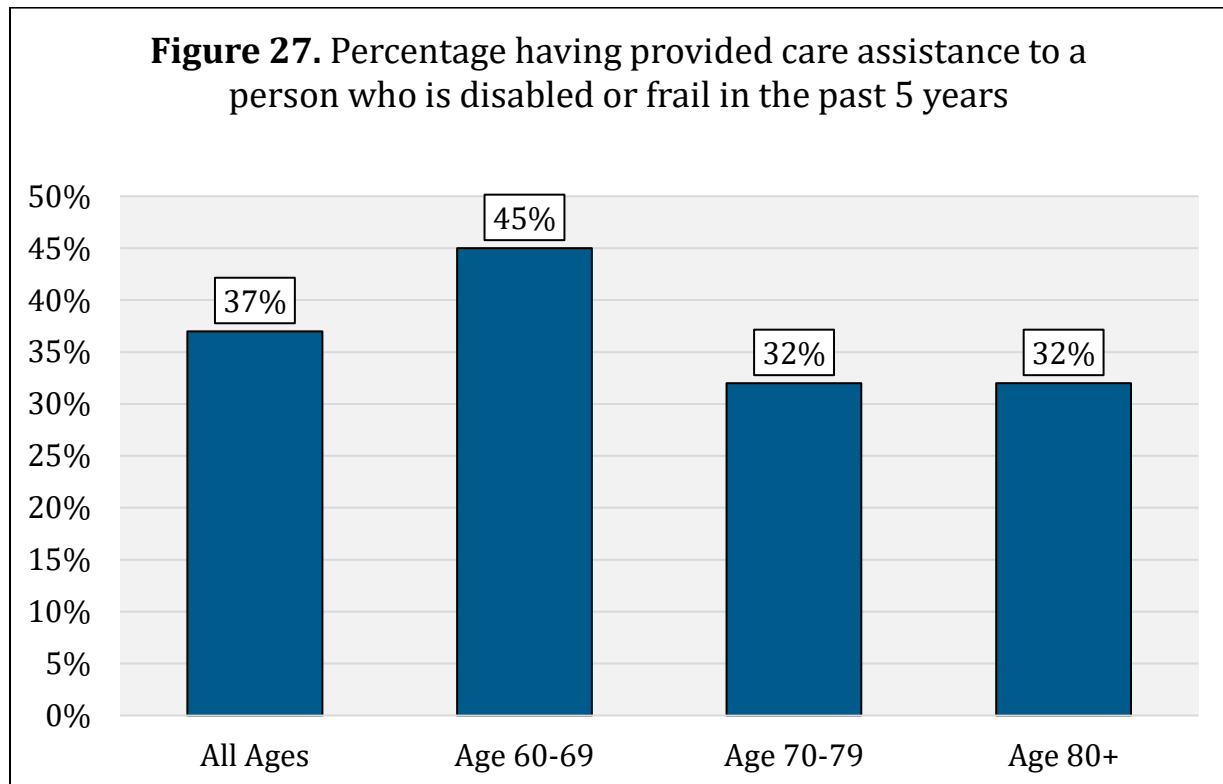


## Health and Caregiving

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).

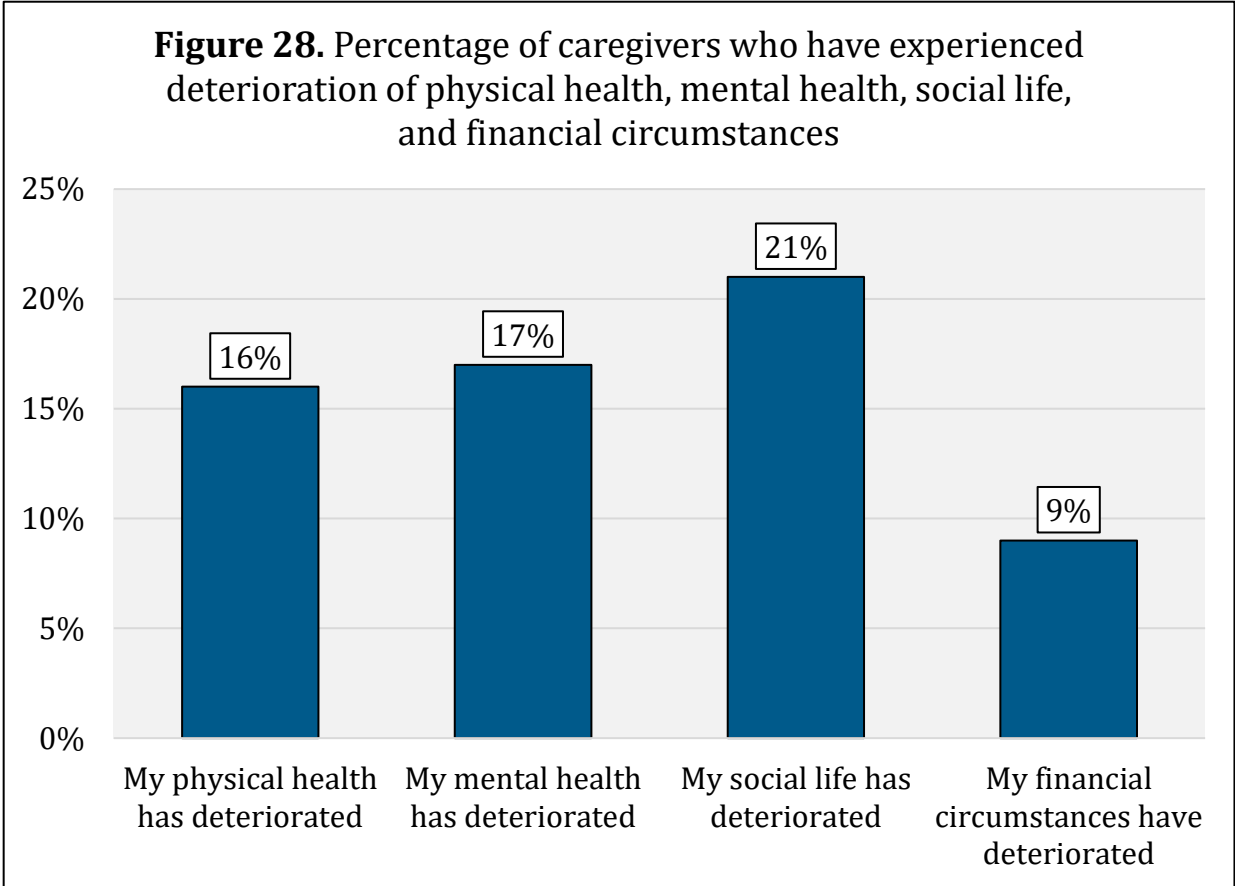
According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the number of caregivers increased from 43.5 million in 2015 to 53 million in 2020. By 2030, an estimated 73 million people will be 65 or older and many will require daily assistance from at least one caregiver. Studies show that caregiving can lead to physical, emotional, and financial strain for many individuals.<sup>10</sup>

Among Newton survey respondents, 37% reported 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 aged 60-69 (45%) (see **Figure 27**).



<sup>10</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/publications/features/supporting-caregivers.htm>

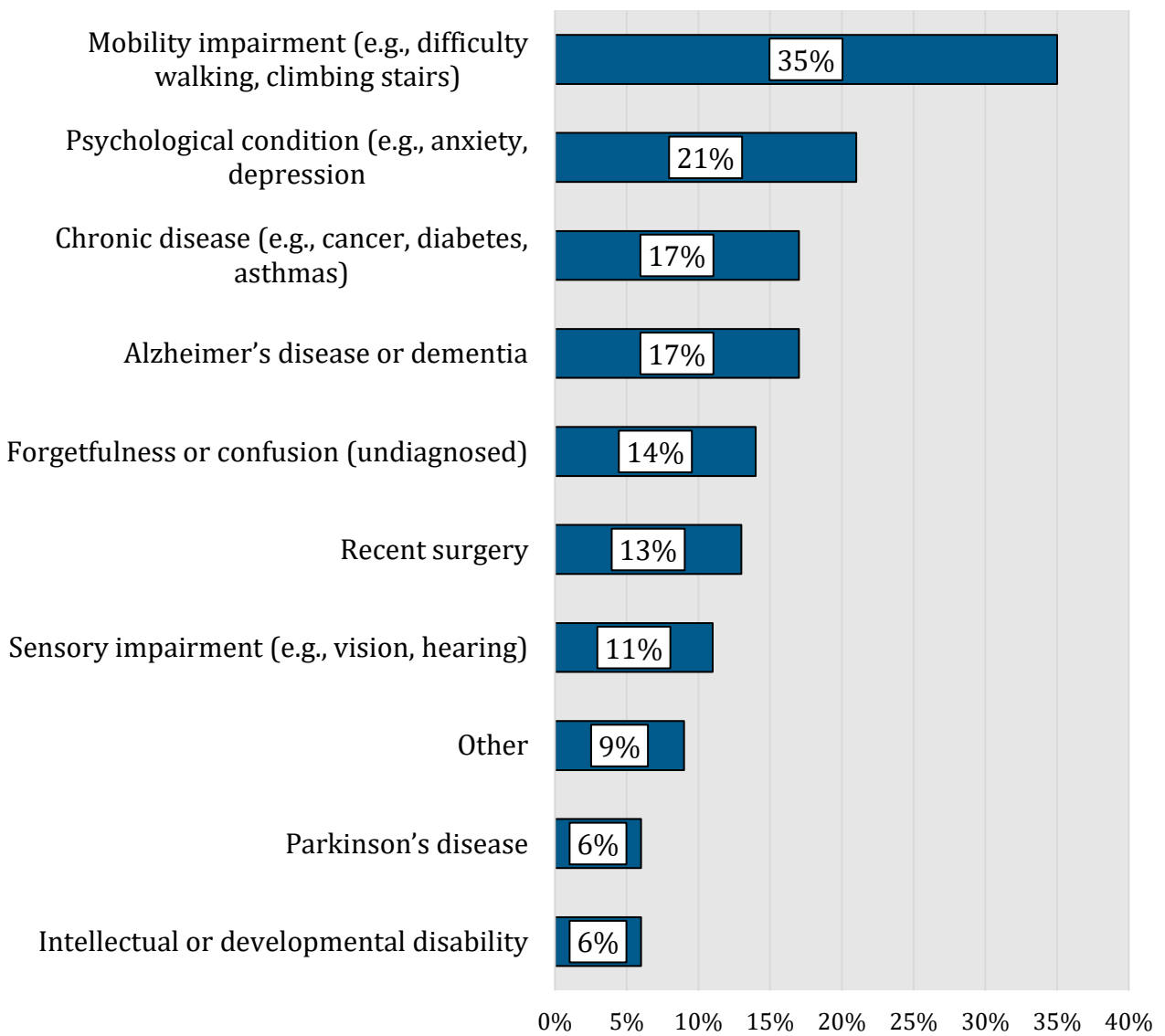
Many caregivers who responded to the Newton survey reported deterioration in physical health, mental health, social life, and financial circumstances (see **Figure 28**). Across all ages 21% reported that their social life had deteriorated, 17% reported that their mental health had deteriorated, 16% reported that their physical health had deteriorated, and 9% reported that their financial circumstances had deteriorated.



Caregivers were asked to indicate which conditions their care recipient experienced. The most frequently reported condition was mobility impairment (such as difficulty walking or climbing stairs) at 35%, followed by psychological conditions (such as anxiety and depression) at 21%, chronic diseases like diabetes, arthritis, or heart disease at 17%, or Alzheimer’s or related dementia (17%) (see **Figure 29**).

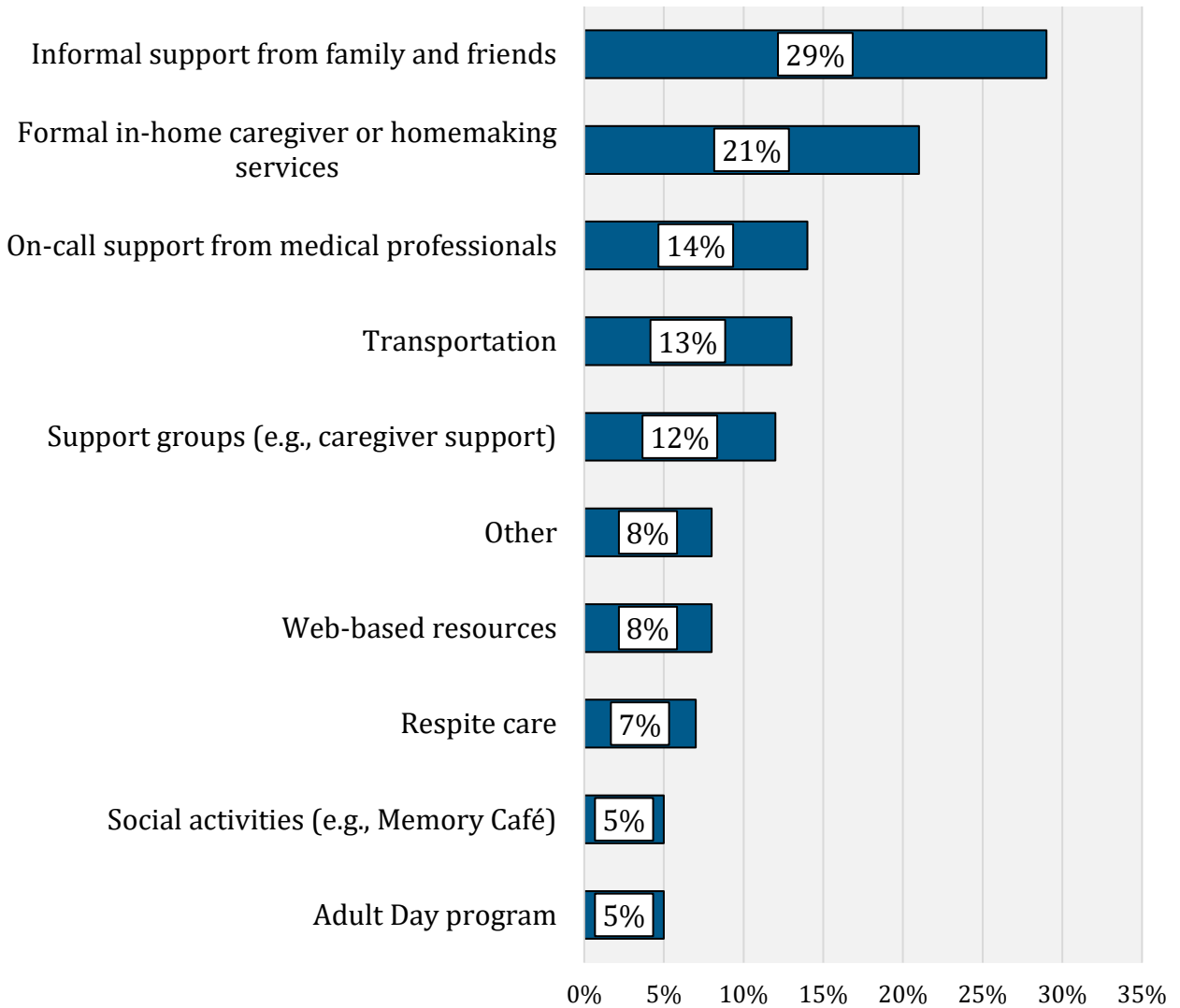


**Figure 29.** What condition is the primary reason for needing care?



Among caregiver survey respondents, informal support from family and friends (29%), formal and in-home caregiving and homemaking services (21%) were identified as the most valuable types of assistance to support caregiving responsibilities (see **Figure 30**).

**Figure 30.** What supports were, or would have been, most valuable to you during your time providing care or assistance?

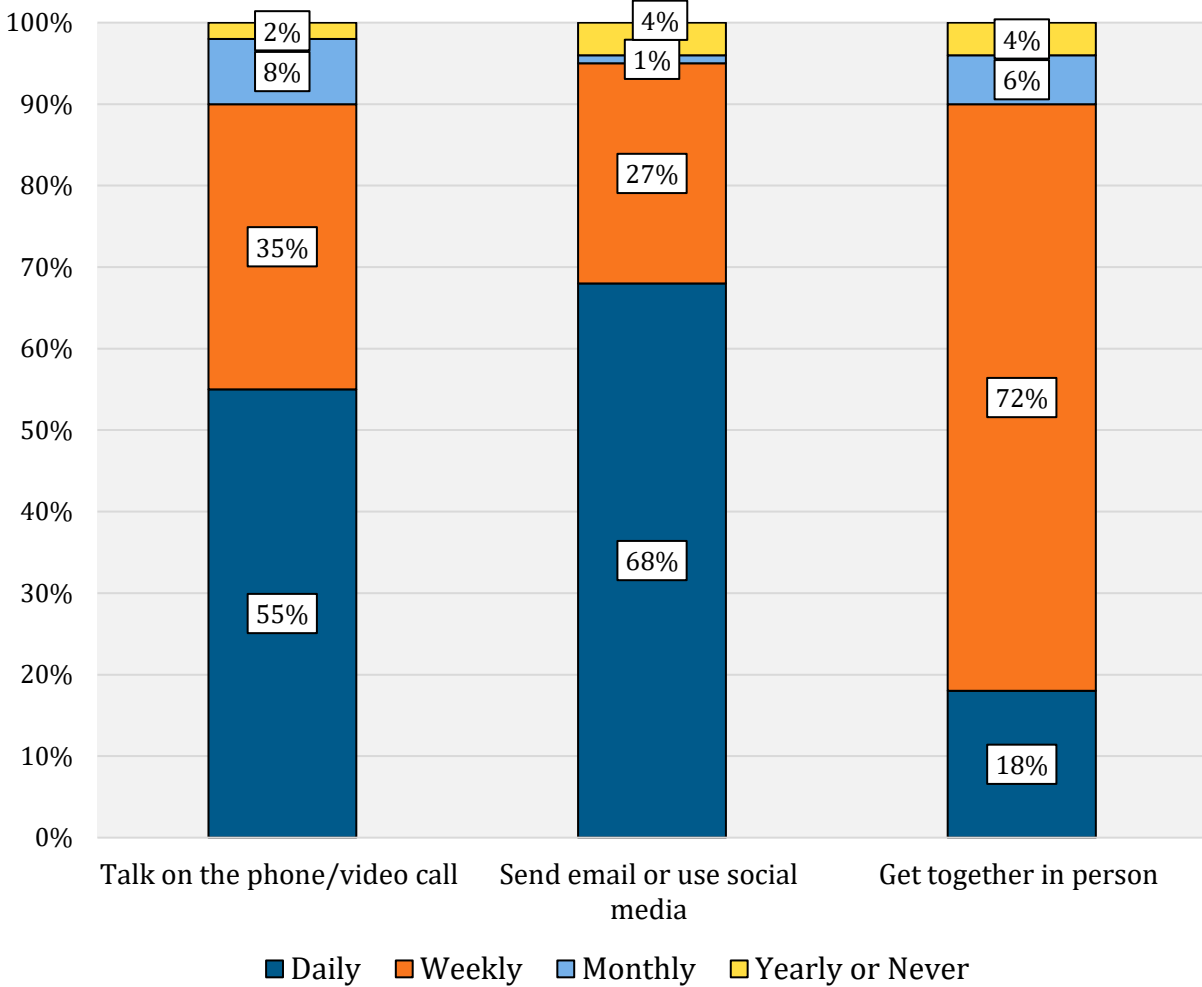


## Social Activities and Relationships

Social activities and relationships shape wellbeing for individuals of all ages. Indeed, the absence of social relationships may have as substantial a 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.

Most 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 31**). Although 90% of the respondents get together in person with someone at least weekly, 10% only get together monthly or less frequently. 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.

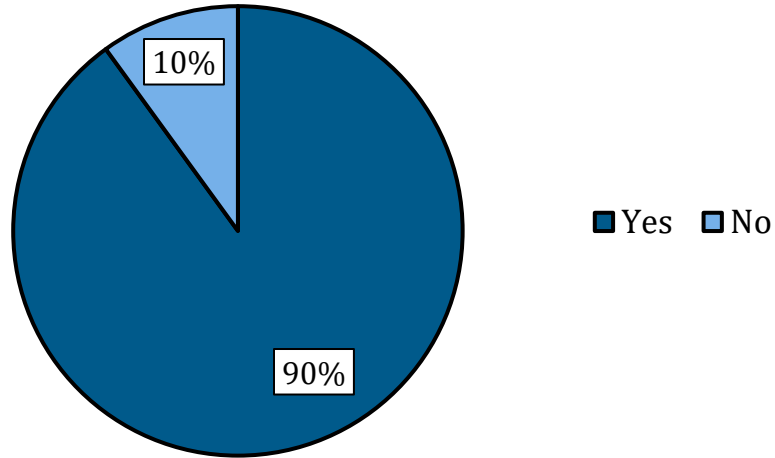
**Figure 31.** How often do you talk on the phone, send email or use social media, or get together in person to visit family, friends, or neighbors?



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 knew someone living nearby on whom they could rely for help when needed, 10% of all respondents said they did not (**Figure 32**).

Respondents were asked if they had felt excluded in Newton because of personal characteristics (**Appendix A**). Although the majority (72%) have not felt excluded, some respondents cited age (6%), income (6%), or political views (6%) as reasons for feeling excluded.

**Figure 32.** Do you know someone living within 30 minutes of your home on whom you can rely for help when you need it?



### Current & Future Programs & Services at the Newton Senior Center<sup>11</sup>

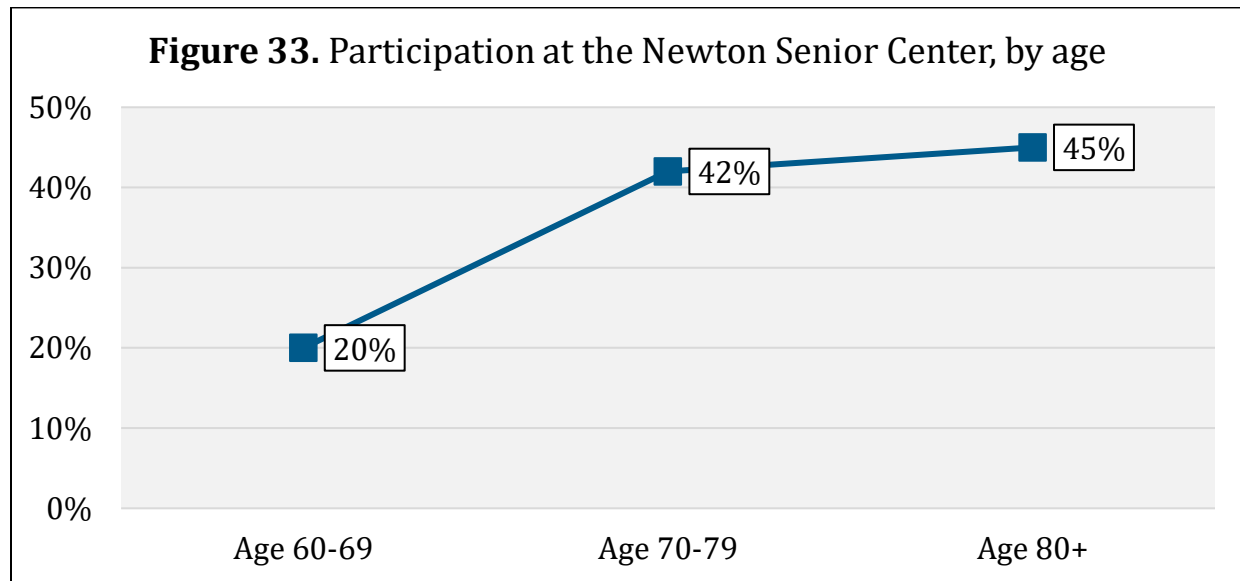
Local senior centers play a part in helping older adults age in place and in community. Residents may obtain transportation, health screening, or social services through their local senior center. Older adults may seek opportunities for engagement and socialization through volunteer programs, learning 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.

Survey results suggest that participation in the Newton Senior Center is considerably more common among older residents. As shown in **Figure 33**, just 20% of those age 60-69 and 42% of respondents in their 70s report ever using programs or services offered by the Newton Senior Center. Then, 45% of respondents aged 80 and older indicated they had

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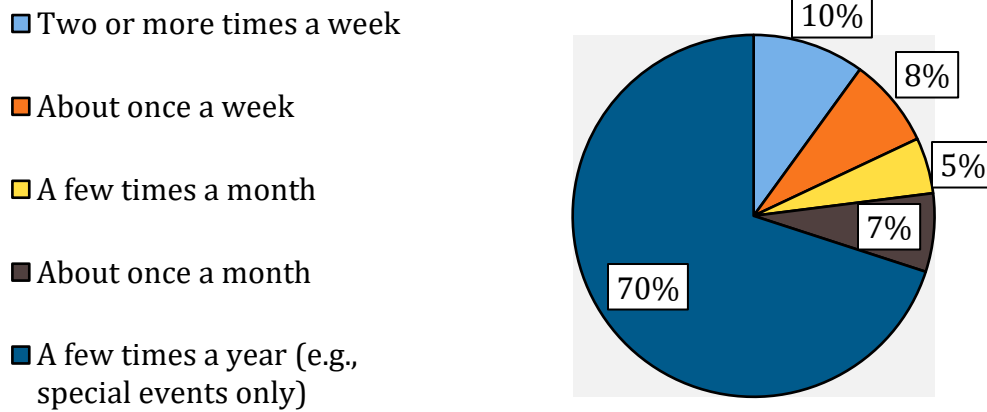
<sup>11</sup> In this section there are references to the current programs and services offered at the Newton Senior Center as it was functioning at the time of the survey (Winter 2024). The authors acknowledge that future space operated by the Department of Older Adult Services will be referred to the Cooper Center for Active Living.

participated in the Newton Senior Center. This age-graded pattern of participation is not unusual in senior centers and may reflect the increasing value of the Newton Senior Center to older residents.



Among respondents who participate at the Newton Senior Center, 70% only visit a few times a year, while 18% attend weekly (**Figure 34**). This range of participation levels highlights the broad continuum of affiliation with the Newton Senior Center, with many residents participating just periodically, while others include visits to the Newton senior center as part of their regular weekly schedule. Note that participation on a weekly or more frequent basis was reported by just 3% of respondents who are age 60-69 and 7% among those age 70-79 while 11% of those age 80 and older participate weekly, suggesting that older participants attend more frequently during a month or a year (**Appendix A**).

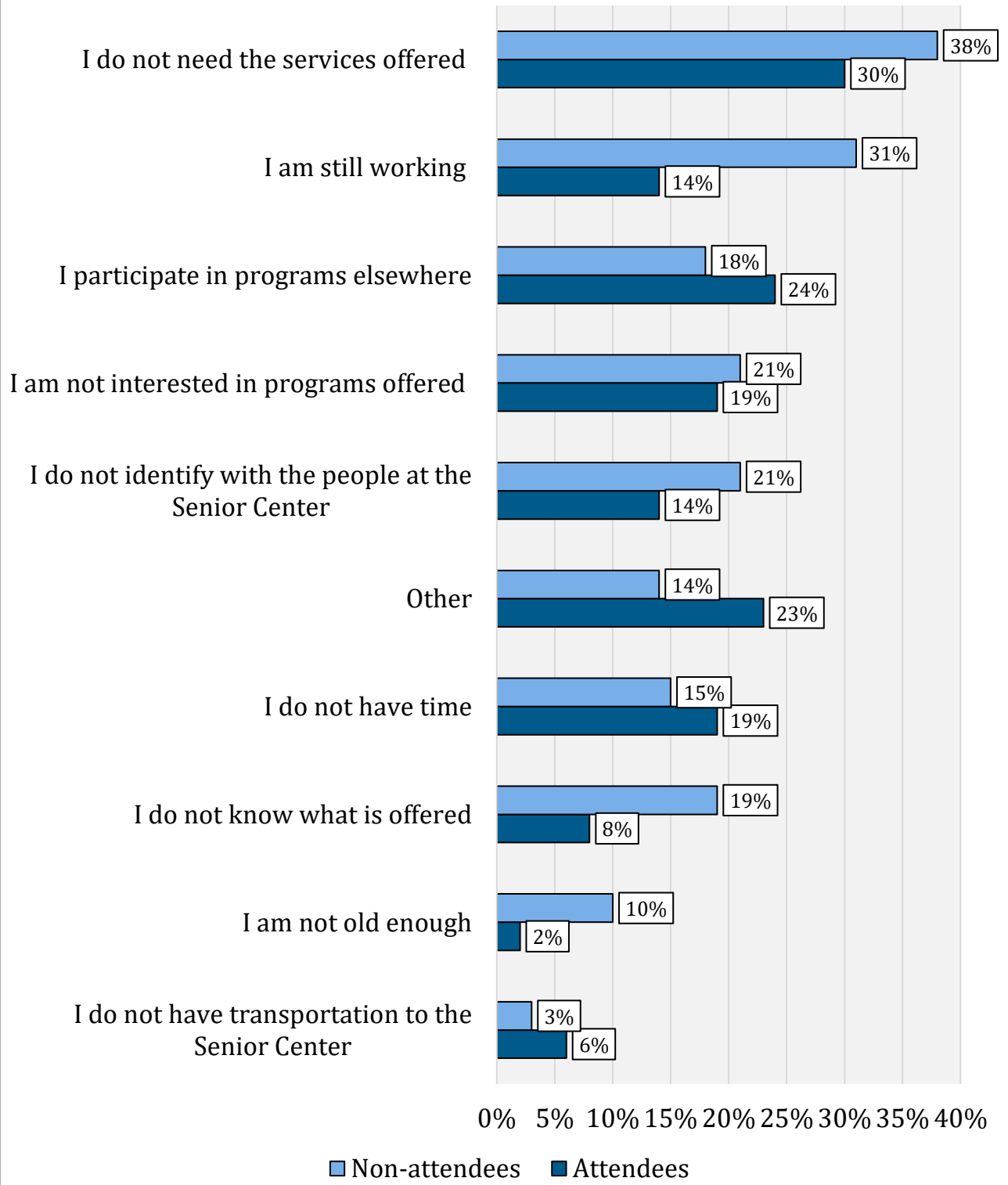
**Figure 34.** Frequency of participation at the Newton Senior Center, among attendees



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

**Figure 35** presents the factors that limit participation at the Senior Center. The top factors limiting participation among those who never attended included not needing the services (38%), still working (31%), not identifying with the people at the Senior Center (21%), and not being interested in programs offered (21%). Similarly, the top factor limiting participation reported by respondents who do attend the Senior Center was not needing the services (30%). This finding suggests that the Senior Center is perceived by the community as a needs-based organization versus an entity for all residents wishing to engage.

**Figure 35: Factors that limit participation at the Senior Center**

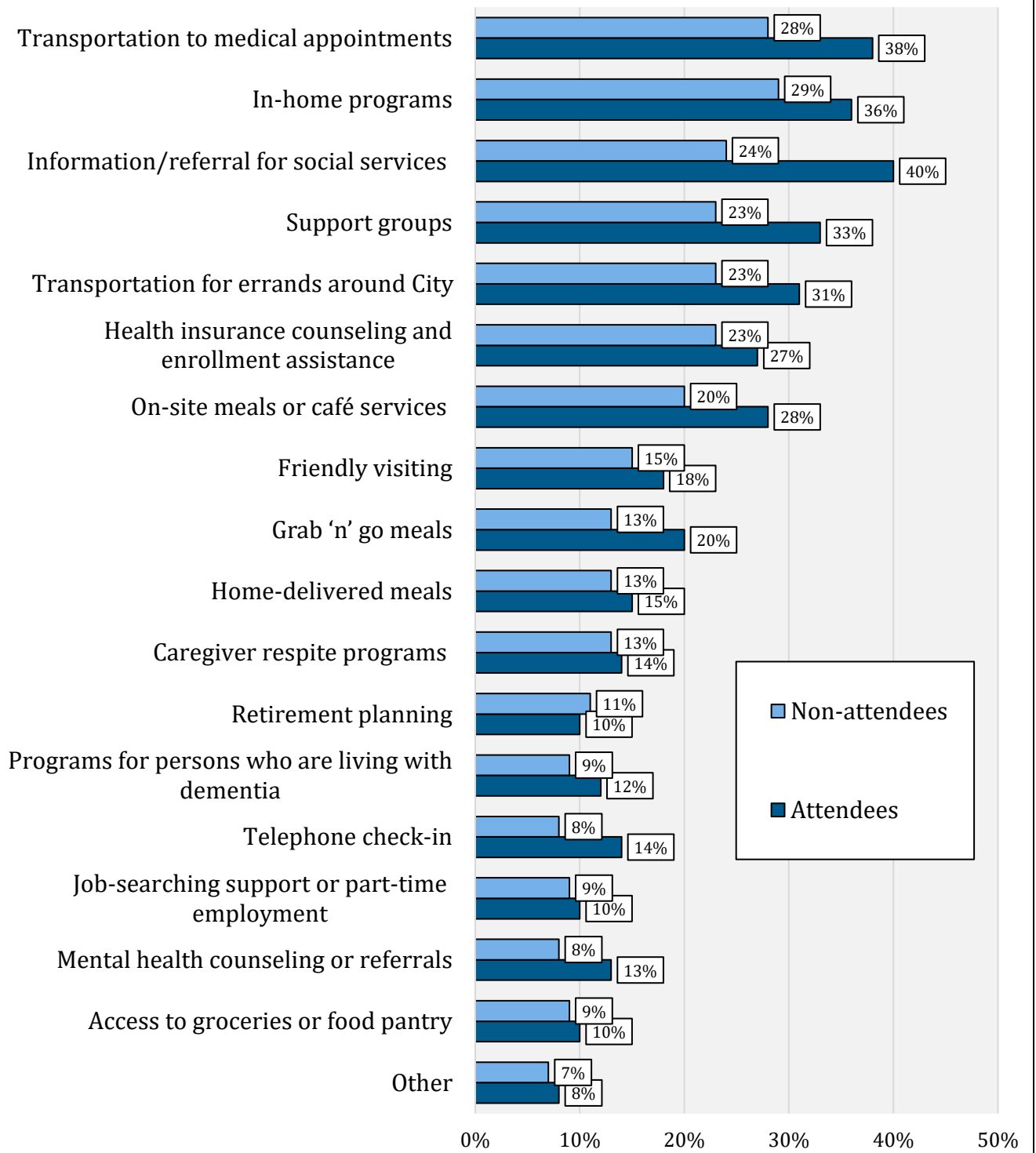




When it comes to priorities for future expansion of services provided by the Senior Center, we examined responses by attendee status (see **Figure 36**). In other words, among those who currently attend programs or services at Senior Center, the services prioritized for expansion include information/referral for social services (40%), transportation to medical appointments (38%) and in-home programs (e.g., help with minor chores/errands) (36%). Additionally, 33% of current attendees would prefer to expand support groups (e.g., caregivers, bereavement, Parkinson's, low vision) and 31% would prefer transportation for errands around the City.

Among those who do not currently attend programs or utilize services offered by the Senior Center in the new Cooper Center, a similar pattern of priorities emerged (see **Figure 36**). In-home programs (29%), transportation to medical appointments (28%), and information and referral to social services (24%) were the most frequently reported priorities for expansion.

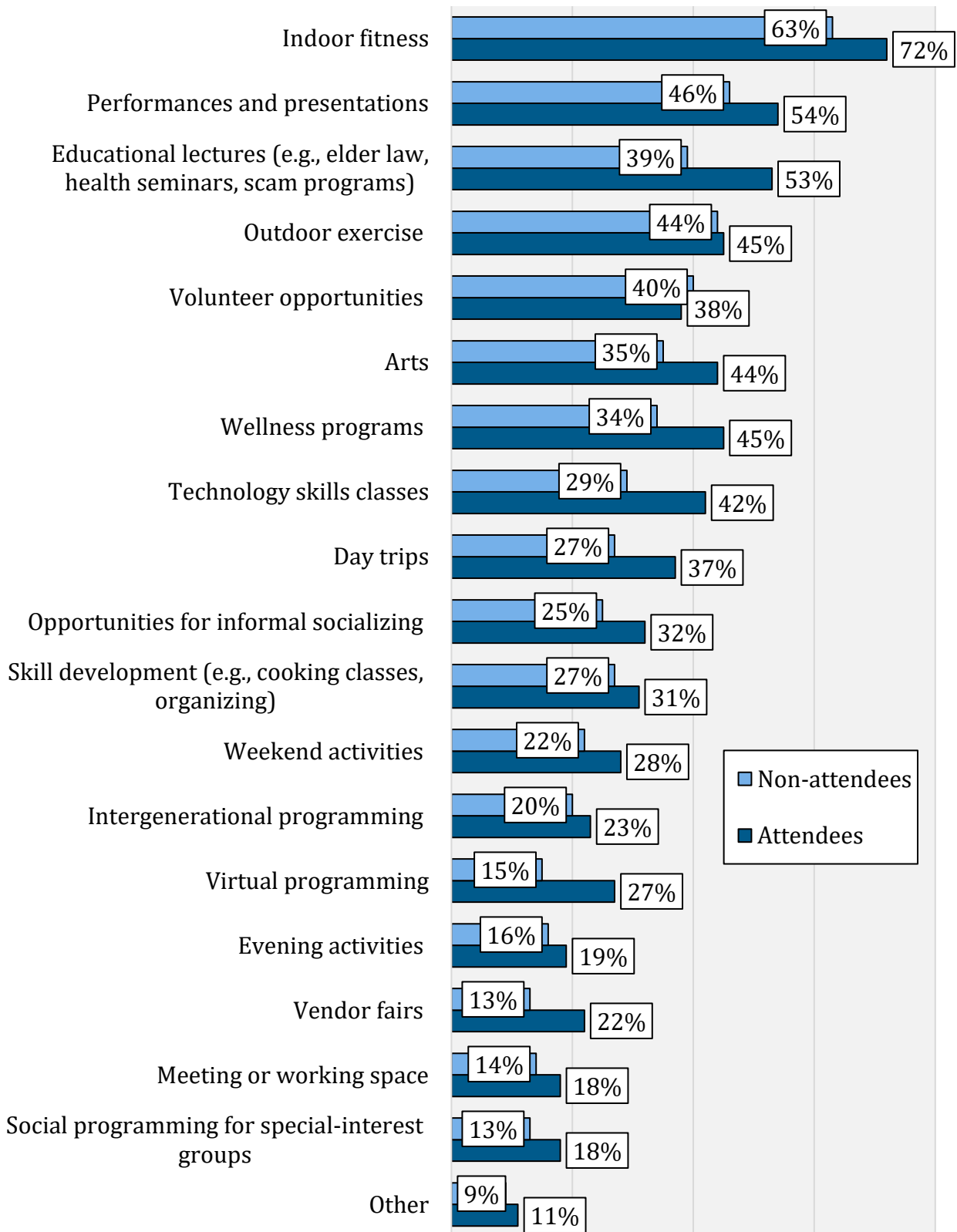
**Figure 36.** Which of the following areas would you prioritize in expanding the **services** available in Newton?



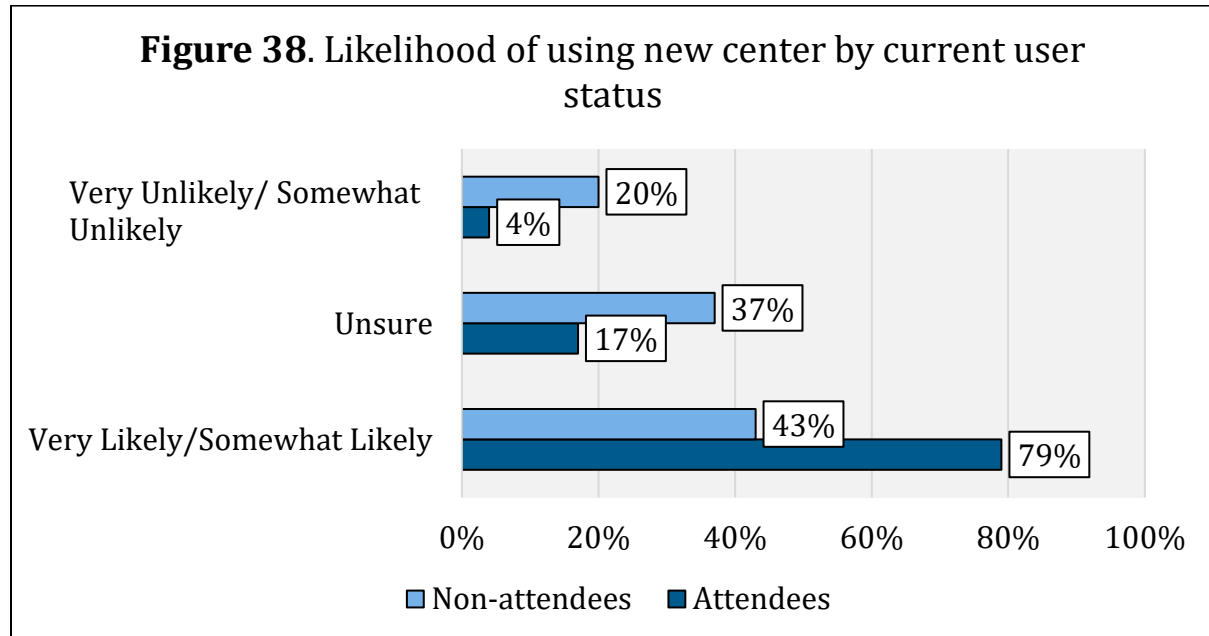
When it comes to priorities for future expansion of programs offered by the Newton Senior Center, we examined responses by attendee status (see **Figure 37**). In other words, among those who currently attend programs or services at the Senior Center, the programs prioritized for expansion include indoor fitness (72%), performances and presentations (54%), and educational lectures (54%). Additionally, 45% of current attendees would prefer to expand wellness programs and outdoor exercise organized by the Senior Center.

Among those who do not currently attend programs or utilize services offered by the Senior Center, a similar pattern of priorities emerged (see **Figure 37**). Indoor fitness programs (63%), performances and presentations (46%) and outdoor fitness programs (44%) were the most frequently reported priorities for expansion. Additionally, among those who do not currently participate at the Senior Center 40% would like to expand volunteer opportunities.

**Figure 37.** Which of the following would you prioritize in expanding the programs available in Newton?



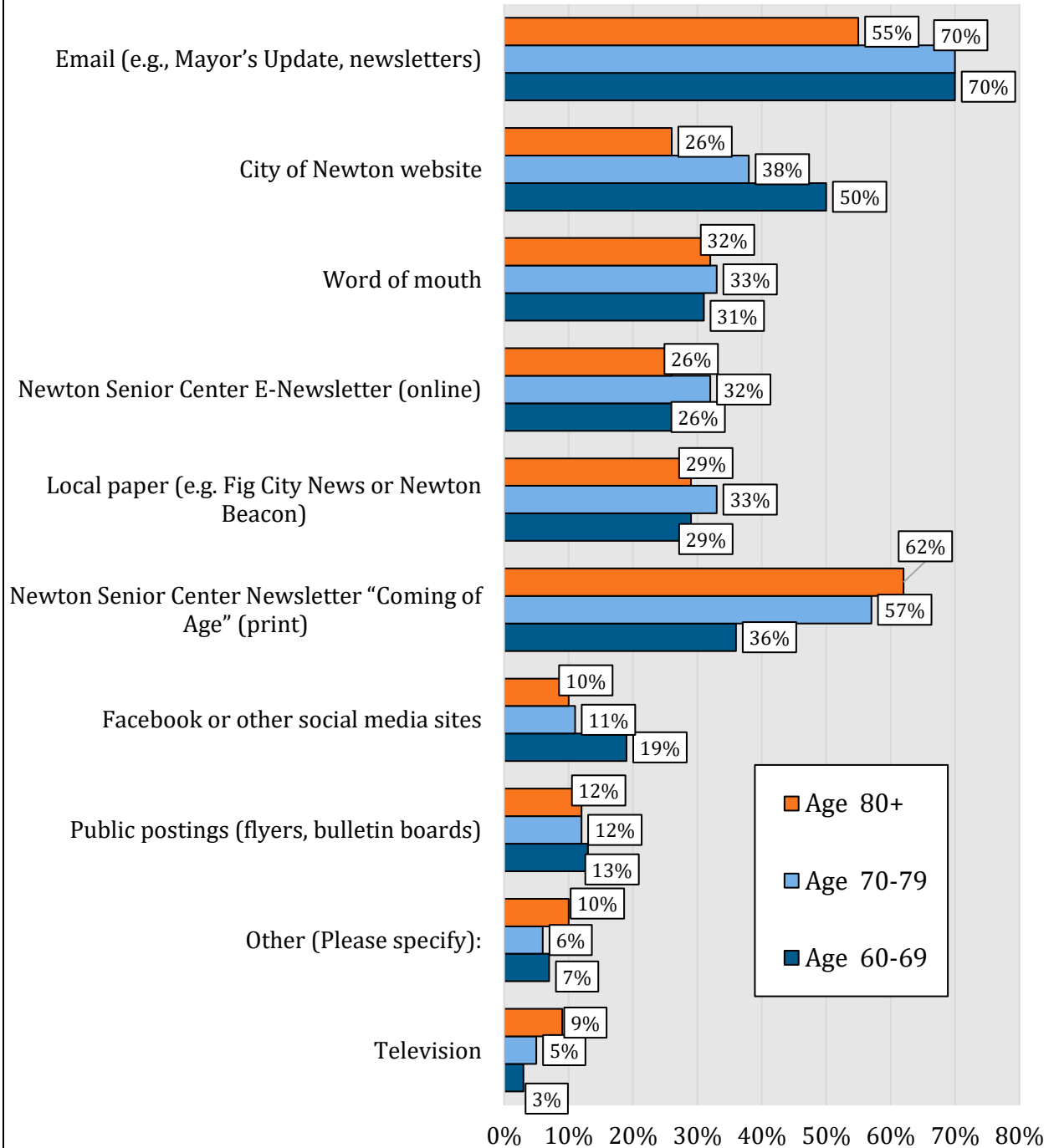
Survey respondents were asked how likely it would be that they or someone in their household would use the new center being built in Newton. **Figure 38** shows that among respondents who have never used the Newton Senior Center in the past, 43% will be likely to use the new space.



## Communication & Information

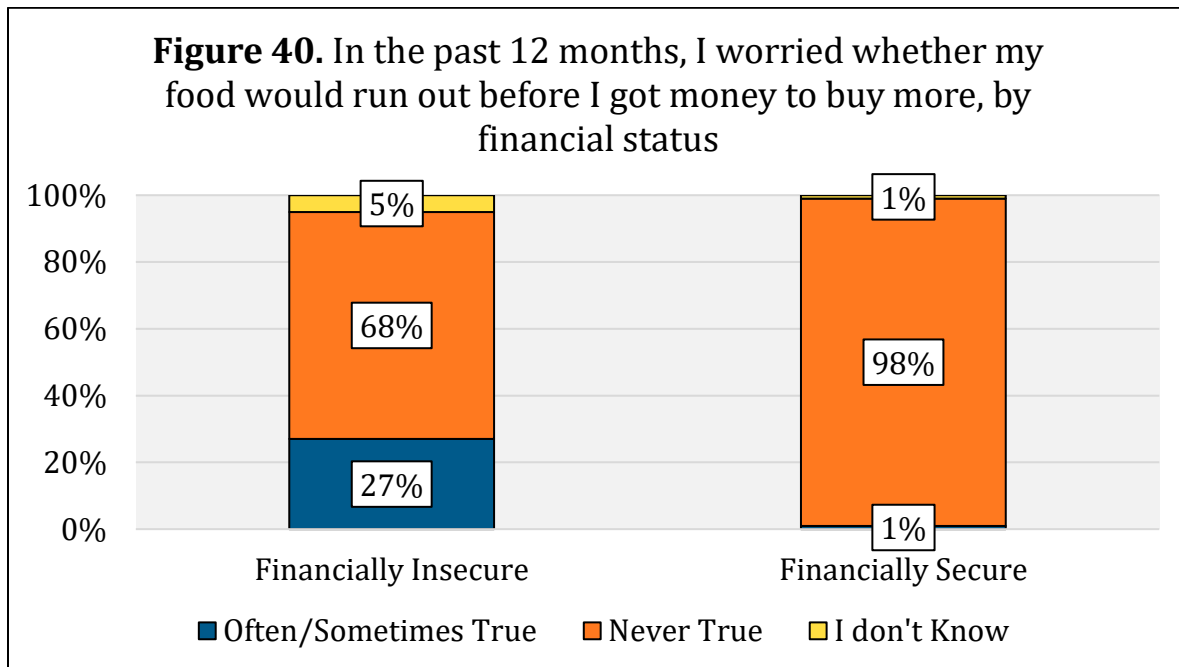
**Figure 39** shows that for those in their 60s, email (70%) and the City of Newton’s website (50%) are the ways in which information is currently obtained. Among those in their 70s, email newsletter is the primary way information is obtained (70%), followed by the Newton Senior Center Newsletter “Coming of Age” (print) (57%), and the City of Newton’s website (38%). Among those 80+, the Newton Senior Center Newsletter (print) is the primary way information is obtained (62%), followed by email (55%), and word of mouth (32%).

**Figure 39: Where do you prefer to find information about the activities and services offered by the City?**



## Financial Security

About 10% of survey respondents (n=255) report that they do not believe they have sufficient financial resources to meet their financial needs, including home maintenance, personal healthcare, and other expenses (see **Appendix A**). Also, 5% (n=113) reported that they were worried about their ability to buy food in the past year (see **Appendix A**). **Figure 40** shows a significant overlap between these two groups of respondents. For example, among those who identify as financially insecure, 27% of them also reported worrying about being able to buy enough food (compared to just 1% of those who report more financial security).



## Conclusion 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 City of Newton. The goals of this project were to investigate the needs, interests, preferences, and opinions of Newton's residents aged 60 or older by engaging the community regarding their experiences and needs relevant to the Department of Older Adult Services objective to identify and serve the needs of all Newton citizens aged 60 and older. The contents of this report are meant to inform the City of Newton, the Department of Older Adult Services and organizations that work with and on behalf of older residents of Newton for the purposes of the Department of Older Adult Services 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 Newton among community members at large.

In particular, it will provide value to the development and implementation of programs and services in the new Cooper Center for Active Living.

A broad range of findings are reported in this document, highlighting the many positive features of Newton 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 Cooper Center, 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.

### **Considering the size and diversity of experiences among residents age 60+ in Newton is both an opportunity and a challenge for the Department of Older Adult Services and forthcoming Cooper Center for Active Living as it conducts outreach and marketing under its new identity.**

- It is estimated that by 2030, 30% of Newton's population will be age 60 or older. This totals more than 25,000 older adult residents.
- 59% of respondents report that it is very important for them to remain in Newton as they age, including 71% of those in their 80s.
- 32% of respondents have been in Newton for more than 45 years and 12% of respondents have been in Newton for fewer than 15 years.
- Families living out of town or state and the increasing costs of living in Newton may drive older residents to identify as "solo agers". Solo agers are defined here as those age 50 and older who live alone, are not married or partnered in a long-term relationship, do not have any children or other relatives living nearby.
- The top factors limiting participation among those who never attended the Senior Center included not needing the services (38%), still working (31%), not identifying



with the people at the Senior Center (21%), and not being interested in programs offered (21%).

- Similarly, the top factor limiting participation reported by respondents who do attend the Senior Center was not needing the services (30%), followed by “I participate in programs elsewhere” (24%), and other (23%).
- Massive growth in the size of space available at the Cooper Center (8,000 square feet to 33,000 square feet) is expected to come with increases in volume of participation and requests for services.

### **Recommendations:**

- The Cooper Center should be open for many evening and/or weekend hour programs to maximize opportunities for programming during less crowded hours and to meet the needs of residents with schedules that are restricted on weekdays.
- The sheer amount of new space and programs prompts the need for additional staff to ensure the Department of Older Adult Services can meet the needs that will occur with the increased participation expected.
- Developing social connections is an important function of this new space, and providing a comfortable, informal space for informal conversation is suggested. Consider designating drop-in space within the Center for older residents to socialize and mingle, providing coffee and snacks. This would provide space for older residents to “hang out” or socialize in between activities or without attending an organized activity.
- The move to the Cooper Center provides an opportunity to “rebrand” the programs and services offered. Consider formal updates to the organization’s mission statement and governance structure to align with the diverse interests and needs identified in this report. Also, investing in branding products like a logo, advertising or commercials can be useful for sustaining participation. Consider ways to expand the visibility and content of the bi-monthly newsletter. Embedding links into the online version of the newsletter to connect it to other events and resources can deepen the readers' experience. Also explore mailing it to people on their 60<sup>th</sup> birthday as a reminder to explore programs and services.
- Offer curated welcome experiences to residents at the Cooper Center, including a “Welcome to the Cooper Center” session that gives new users basic information about how to use the Center and participate fully. Also, tours of the new Center should highlight the services and programs that target different age cohorts (e.g., navigating Medicare enrollment, transitioning to retirement).
- Create a curated interactive information board that highlights activities of interest in Newton and surrounding areas as well as the opportunity for individuals to connect with each other (e.g., for rides, walking companions, etc.).

**Preferences for active and self-development programming has implications for services outside of the Cooper Center as well as how space is used, and by whom.**

- Indoor fitness and performances and presentations were top priorities for program expansion among all age groups. While individuals 60-69 also prioritized outdoor exercise, individuals aged 70 and older selected educational lectures.
- Among respondents age 60-69, the top three services selected for prioritization were health insurance counseling and enrollment (33%), information/referral for social services (30%), and in-home programs (29%).
- Among respondents aged 70-79, the top three services selected for prioritization were transportation to medical appointments (33%), in-home programs (33%), and transportation for errands around the City (31%).
- Among respondents aged 80 and older, the top three services selected for prioritization were transportation to medical appointments (38%), in-home programs (33%), and information/referral for social services (32%).

### **Recommendations:**

- Consider expanding programming around retirement planning or finding a post-retirement job. This type of programming simultaneously addresses residents' later-life work interests and need for income.
- Develop criteria for when programs can be phased out or paused to make room for new programming.
  - Consider hosting meetings for residents to meet with staff to explore new programs to meet the diverse needs of older adults in the City.
- Combine learning and socializing by hosting multicultural events and seminars to promote diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Recognize solo agers and semi-newly retired individuals as an important segment of Newton's older adults. Consider programs that promote making new social connections.
- Consider ways to provide in-home programming or support.
  - Expand online learning opportunities offered by the Department of Older Adults Services for caregivers or residents to get information services and referrals.
  - Ensure that technology is in place for remote participation in programs and events at the Cooper Center.

### **Financial security that will allow people to age in place is the top concern of older residents—rising taxes and costs of housing options are drivers.**

- The number one concern about aging in Newton, as articulated by survey respondents, is financial security with the specific focus on being able to afford housing-related expenses like property taxes, utilities and home maintenance.

- Many focus group participants and survey respondents described challenges associated with housing, including unaffordable property taxes and severely limited affordable options within Newton to downsize.
- A notable share of households headed by someone age 65 and older 13% report annual incomes under \$25,000. This compares with just 7% of households headed by individuals aged 45 to 64 having incomes under \$25,000. Thus, there is a sizeable segment of Newton’s older population that faces financial insecurity or economic disadvantage.
- 46% of respondents reported that their current residence needs repairs. Among them, 9% stated that they could not afford these repairs.

### **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.
- Convene an “Aging in Place Workshop” to educate residents about creative ways to use their home equity to age in place as well as about alternative housing models like home-sharing. This workshop could also widen awareness about currently available options for addressing economic security (e.g., Accessory Dwelling units).
- Consider asking local businesses to offer an “older adult discount”.
- Consider ways of connecting residents with local resources for home repair or modifications, including sources of funding, and also other individuals who can do minor tasks or projects around the home.
- Engage with organizations to support the development of a local fund to help offset costs of needed home repairs.
- Host a virtual forum to promote community conversations and awareness related to home-sharing opportunities. Include representatives from organizations such as Nesterly<sup>12</sup>, a social enterprise that is dedicated to building intergenerational engagement and access to affordable housing through home sharing.
- Promote “age friendly” employment opportunities for older adults via the Charles River Regional Chamber.

### **Caregiving is common, and families need support.**

- 37% of respondents assisted a disabled or frail person in the past 5 years and rates of caregiving are highest among respondents age 60-69 (45%).
- Mobility challenges (35%), and psychological conditions (e.g., anxiety or depression) (21%) are the most commonly cited reasons for providing care.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.nesterly.com/>

- Among caregivers, 17% reported caring for someone with Alzheimer’s disease or related dementia and 14% provided care due to forgetfulness or confusion.
- Across all ages, 21% reported that their social life had deteriorated, 17% reported that their *mental health* had deteriorated, 16% reported that their *physical health* had deteriorated, and 9% reported that their *financial circumstances* had deteriorated.
- Among caregiver survey respondents, informal support from family and friends (29%), formal and in-home caregiving and homemaking services (21%) were identified as the most valuable types of assistance for caregiver support.

### Recommendations:

- Recognize that caregiving needs are substantial and may become more challenging as Newton’s population continues to age. For example, consider ways of engaging residents who might be remotely providing care to a parent or loved one outside of Newton.
- Explore the creation of a prerecorded “caregiver hotline” where available resources can be available 24/7.
- Consider ways of supporting older residents caring for a loved one with psychological conditions via programming or co-hosting with local organizations like National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) or Newton Wellesley Hospital.
- Continue to develop respite options.
  - Expand awareness of Newton’s Memory Café.
  - Encourage more supportive day and respite programs and provide caregivers with information such services in the community and local area.
- 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.
- Offer caregiver boot camp programming to support families in learning how they can navigate caring for a loved one.
- Continue focusing programs and education on prevention and detection of dementia.
- Encourage municipal employees to become “dementia friends”<sup>13</sup> to learn more about communication and reduction of stigma around dementia.
  - Consider working with the Newton Public Schools on dementia education as part of high school programming<sup>14</sup>.
- Create new ways to provide information and assistance to caregivers, support groups, and information about referral resources. Consider hosting a family caregiver “resource fair” as an opportunity to connect with family caregivers.

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<sup>13</sup> [Become a Dementia Friend | Dementia Friends USA](#)

<sup>14</sup> <https://dfmassachusetts.org/tools/df-training-resources-by-sector/schools-and-youth-involvement/>

### **Walkability of the community and obtaining supplementary and accessible transportation is a concern for some of Newton's residents as they age.**

- 32% of respondents report walking or biking as a primary mode of transportation and 24% rely on the MBTA trains and buses.
- Maintaining independence is a major concern for survey respondents and one key facilitator of this independence is transportation. Eighteen percent (18%) of respondents aged 80 or older reported not driving and an additional 29% of respondents aged 80 and older reported driving with some limitations.
- Transportation limitations appear to negatively impact accessing medical care for the most vulnerable segments of Newton's older resident community. When considering driving status, 34% of those who drive with limitations and 37% of those who do not drive reported having to miss a medical appointment because of a lack of transportation.
- Among respondents aged 80 and older, transportation to medical appointments (38%), and transportation for errands around the City (31%) were prioritized as top services for expansion.

### **Recommendations:**

- Target information to communities within Newton who may have particular need for transportation services including those living alone and those with disabilities.
- Continue providing travel training programs (e.g., through the MBTA) and educational opportunities where residents can learn about options and navigation.
- Continue education and enrollment in the new GoGo Newton Transportation System. Ongoing evaluation of the new program will facilitate improvements around education and usage.
- Develop or explore existing programs that focus on making the transition to retiring from driving.
- Support and encourage the expansion of volunteer transportation programs by other non-profits (e.g., Friends in Service Helping<sup>15</sup> (F.I.S.H.) to expand door-to-door transportation to the Cooper Center or other social gatherings or shopping excursions and non-medical appointments.
- Work together with other City departments to install new, or dedicate existing, "Chat Benches" to create public spaces where socializing is encouraged. Provide age friendly features, including shade.
- Document and publicize the location of available bathrooms around Newton.
- Collaborate with the City of Newton's Transportation Division to improve lighting around sidewalks where needed.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://fishlexington.org/>

## **Expand Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts as well as partnerships with local groups and organizations.**

- The assessment captured components of Newton’s growing diverse older population. Focus groups were conducted in Russian and Chinese to capture feedback from older adults representing these larger groups.
- Educational programming was prioritized by 41% of survey respondents, the third most identified program for expansion.
- 70 different countries were identified on the survey when respondents were asked about their country of origin. Communication in general—and awareness of programs, services, and opportunities more specifically—can be challenging for those who don’t speak English.
- Although the majority (72%) have not felt excluded, some respondents cited age (6%), income (6%), or political views (6%) as reasons for feeling excluded.

### **Recommendations:**

- The work of diversity, equity and inclusion is a focus within Newton and is coordinated by the Director of Community Engagement and Inclusion. The Cooper Center can benefit from continued collaboration with the ongoing DEI work in Newton in developing strategies for attracting a more diverse population and maintaining age as a dimension of diversity that is recognized in these efforts.
- Continue to spread the word about the new space and consciously make efforts to reach out to subgroups of Newton residents, specifically Russian and Chinese-speaking individuals.
- Increase language capacity by considering offering a stipend for volunteer positions to help lead programs or translate documents.
- Continue to expand awareness of interpretation and translation services available through the City of Newton.
- Adopt the language recommended by “Reframing Aging<sup>16</sup>” to promote age-inclusive language.
- Implement a Senior Civic Academy<sup>17</sup> that is accessible to older residents by offering daytime sessions, considering adult learner styles, and ensuring that topics relevant to healthy aging in Newton are included (e.g., transportation, how to access resources, and social engagement opportunities).
- Consider ways to reduce or eliminate the cost of programs to members facing financial insecurity.
  - Offer subsidies or scholarships to area events (e.g., concerts or school performances).

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.reframingaging.org/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.boston.gov/departments/age-strong-commission/senior-civic-academy>

### **A segment of Newton's older population is at risk of social isolation.**

- 22% of Newton residents aged 65 and older live alone, including 39% of survey respondents aged 80 and older.
- 10% reported not knowing someone within 30 minutes of them to call on for help if needed – indicating a small but important segment who are vulnerable to social isolation. Among those who report living alone, 14% report not knowing someone to call on for help.
- 32% of respondents report a lack of confidence in “staying safe” online.
- 10% of survey respondents report that they get together in person with friends or family once per month or less.

### **Recommendations:**

- Provide neighborhood-based programs or mechanisms to strengthen informal networks in neighborhoods and ensure existing neighborhood-based activities are inclusive of older residents (e.g., neighborhood liaison programs)
- Identify programming that can educate residents about staying safe online.
- Consider collaborating with community groups to develop an initiative to reach out to older residents of Newton who are living alone.
- Consider implementing a “surrogate grandparent” program that matches older adults with Newton families for mentorship and socialization to those whose families live out-of-town or are otherwise absent. Consider hosting a grandparent’s day luncheon to celebrate the participants.
- Consider hosting a quarterly breakfast for local organizations to come together. These events would include community education about the programs and services available through various agencies and provide a mechanism by which communication about issues of isolation among providers can be streamlined and relationships established.

## Appendix A: Survey Results

Note: Appendix tables are based on 2,869 responses to the City of Newton Survey of residents aged 60 and over, conducted in Spring 2024. 47% of respondents completed the survey online and the rest were returned by mail. See text for additional details.

### SECTION I: Community & Neighborhood

#### **Q1. How long have you lived in Newton?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Fewer than 5 years</b>	4%	4%	4%	4%
<b>5-14 years</b>	8%	9%	6%	7%
<b>15-24 years</b>	11%	17%	8%	7%
<b>25-34 years</b>	22%	37%	17%	8%
<b>35-44 years</b>	22%	20%	29%	12%
<b>45 years or longer</b>	32%	13%	36%	62%
<b>I do not currently live in Newton</b>	1%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%



**Q2. What village in Newton do you live in?**

	<b>All Ages</b>	<b>Age 60-69</b>	<b>Age 70-79</b>	<b>Age 80+</b>
<b>Auburndale</b>	9%	9%	7%	12%
<b>Chestnut Hill</b>	3%	2%	3%	4%
<b>Newton Corner</b>	7%	8%	7%	7%
<b>Newton Centre</b>	19%	18%	20%	21%
<b>Newton Highlands</b>	11%	10%	12%	12%
<b>Newton Lower Falls</b>	2%	1%	2%	3%
<b>Newton Upper Falls</b>	3%	4%	2%	3%
<b>Newtonville</b>	16%	15%	17%	14%
<b>Nonantum</b>	2%	2%	3%	2%
<b>Oak Hill</b>	2%	3%	3%	1%
<b>Thompsonville</b>	1%	1%	1%	2%
<b>Waban</b>	9%	8%	10%	6%
<b>West Newton</b>	15%	19%	13%	13%
<b>I do not currently live in Newton</b>	1%	0%	0%	0%
<b>I do not know</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q3. How important is it to you to remain living in Newton as you get older?**

	<b>All Ages</b>	<b>Age 60-69</b>	<b>Age 70-79</b>	<b>Age 80+</b>
<b>Very Important</b>	59%	47%	64%	71%
<b>Moderately Important</b>	26%	31%	25%	21%
<b>Somewhat Important</b>	9%	13%	8%	6%
<b>Slightly Important</b>	3%	4%	1%	1%
<b>Not Important</b>	3%	5%	2%	1%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q6. Please select your level of agreement with each statement below.**

*I feel a sense of belonging in the community where I live.*

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	36%	33%	38%	41%
<b>Agree</b>	53%	56%	52%	49%
<b>Disagree</b>	6%	6%	5%	6%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	2%	2%	2%	1%
<b>I don't know</b>	3%	3%	3%	3%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

*The city government considers my interests and concerns.*

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	9%	7%	10%	11%
<b>Agree</b>	49%	47%	52%	47%
<b>Disagree</b>	17%	19%	15%	17%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	9%	11%	8%	7%
<b>I don't know</b>	16%	16%	15%	18%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q7. Please rate your level of satisfaction with each of the following features of Newton.**

*Availability of public parking*

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Satisfied</b>	19%	17%	21%	23%
<b>Satisfied</b>	59%	59%	60%	54%
<b>Dissatisfied</b>	15%	17%	13%	14%
<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	4%	4%	4%	3%
<b>I don't know</b>	3%	3%	2%	6%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

***Handicap accessibility of walkways, public buildings, and businesses***

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Satisfied</b>	13%	11%	12%	17%
<b>Satisfied</b>	44%	41%	45%	46%
<b>Dissatisfied</b>	8%	8%	8%	10%
<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	2%	2%	2%	2%
<b>I don't know</b>	33%	38%	33%	25%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

***Availability of sidewalks***

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Satisfied</b>	17%	16%	17%	17%
<b>Satisfied</b>	63%	64%	63%	62%
<b>Dissatisfied</b>	15%	15%	16%	16%
<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	3%	3%	2%	2%
<b>I don't know</b>	2%	2%	2%	3%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

***Lighting along sidewalks***

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Satisfied</b>	9%	8%	9%	11%
<b>Satisfied</b>	50%	50%	51%	48%
<b>Dissatisfied</b>	26%	28%	26%	22%
<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	5%	6%	4%	4%
<b>I don't know</b>	10%	8%	9%	15%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

***Availability of benches or shaded seating in public areas and along walkways***

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Satisfied</b>	9%	9%	9%	9%
<b>Satisfied</b>	47%	48%	45%	47%
<b>Dissatisfied</b>	23%	22%	24%	22%
<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	3%	3%	3%	4%
<b>I don't know</b>	18%	18%	19%	18%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

***Marked crosswalks and/or timing of walk signals***

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Satisfied</b>	16%	16%	16%	18%
<b>Satisfied</b>	64%	62%	66%	61%
<b>Dissatisfied</b>	13%	15%	12%	12%
<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	3%	3%	3%	3%
<b>I don't know</b>	4%	4%	3%	6%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

***Clear and consistent signage and wayfinding***

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Satisfied</b>	11%	11%	12%	12%
<b>Satisfied</b>	58%	60%	58%	56%
<b>Dissatisfied</b>	17%	18%	18%	16%
<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	3%	2%	3%	3%
<b>I don't know</b>	11%	9%	9%	13%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

***Conveniently located public restrooms***

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Satisfied</b>	2%	2%	2%	3%
<b>Satisfied</b>	12%	12%	11%	11%
<b>Dissatisfied</b>	33%	32%	37%	28%
<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	14%	16%	13%	14%
<b>I don't know</b>	39%	38%	37%	44%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

**SECTION II: Housing & Living Situation**

**Q8. Which of the following best describes your current place of residence?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Single-family home</b>	72%	76%	72%	66%
<b>Multi-family home (2, 3, or more units)</b>	10%	10%	11%	8%
<b>Accessory apartment (add-on apartment to an existing home)</b>	0%	0%	0%	1%
<b>Apartment (affordable) (e.g., NCDF, 2Life)</b>	2%	2%	2%	5%
<b>Condominium or townhome</b>	10%	8%	11%	11%
<b>Assisted living community</b>	1%	0%	0%	2%
<b>Apartment (market rate) (e.g., Trio, Woodland Station, Avalon)</b>	2%	2%	2%	2%
<b>Newton Housing Authority (e.g., Horace Mann)</b>	1%	1%	1%	1%
<b>Other</b>	2%	1%	1%	4%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q9. Do you rent or own your current place of residence?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>The residence is owned by me or someone who I live with</b>	90%	92%	90%	84%
<b>The residence is rented by me or someone who I live with.</b>	8%	7%	8%	11%
<b>Other</b>	2%	1%	2%	5%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q10. Who do you live with?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>I live alone</b>	23%	16%	24%	39%
<b>A spouse or partner</b>	64%	76%	69%	49%
<b>My adult child(ren) (age 18 or older)</b>	12%	21%	8%	10%
<b>My parent(s)</b>	1%	1%	0%	0%
<b>My grandchildren</b>	2%	2%	2%	3%
<b>My child(ren) (under age 18)</b>	2%	4%	0%	0%
<b>Pets</b>	9%	14%	8%	7%
<b>Another relative</b>	2%	3%	2%	1%
<b>Someone else</b>	2%	2%	2%	2%

*\*Figures do not sum to 100%*

**Q11. Does your current residence need home repairs? (e.g., a new roof or heating system) to improve your ability to live in it safely for the next five years?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes, and I can afford to make these repairs</b>	30%	30%	31%	30%
<b>Yes, but I cannot afford to make these repairs</b>	9%	11%	7%	9%
<b>Yes, but I do not know how to make these repairs</b>	3%	3%	3%	3%
<b>Yes, but I am not responsible for making these repairs (e.g., I rent my current residence)</b>	4%	2%	3%	6%
<b>No, my current residence does not need repairs</b>	48%	49%	50%	44%
<b>I don't know</b>	6%	5%	6%	8%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q12. 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 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes, and I can afford to make these modifications</b>	31%	26%	38%	29%
<b>Yes, but I cannot afford to make these modifications</b>	5%	5%	4%	4%
<b>Yes, but I do not know how to make these modifications</b>	4%	4%	6%	3%
<b>Yes, but I am not responsible for making these modifications (e.g., I rent my current residence)</b>	3%	2%	2%	5%
<b>No, my current residence does not need modifications</b>	52%	58%	46%	53%
<b>I don't know</b>	5%	5%	4%	6%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q13. In the next 5 years, if you wanted to move from your current residence, what kind of housing would you prefer in Newton?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Smaller single-family home	25%	37%	24%	14%
Multi-family home (2, 3, or more units)	7%	10%	7%	5%
Accessory apartment (add-on apartment to an existing home)	6%	8%	6%	6%
Condominium or townhome	34%	42%	39%	18%
Assisted living community	21%	10%	25%	39%
Apartment building	14%	15%	18%	10%
Move in with family or friends (e.g., co-housing)	3%	6%	6%	8%
Other	16%	15%	16%	18%

*Figures do not sum to 100%*

### **SECTION III: Transportation**

**Q14. What are the primary ways in which you meet your transportation needs?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
I drive myself	84%	94%	92%	76%
My partner or child(ren) drive(s) me	20%	17%	22%	28%
Friends or neighbors drive me	5%	3%	5%	10%
MBTA (e.g., train or bus)	24%	30%	27%	17%
Paratransit (MBTA The Ride)	2%	1%	1%	4%
Commuter rail	6%	9%	4%	3%
Taxi or ride sharing options (e.g., Uber, Lyft)	17%	20%	18%	13%
NewMo	7%	5%	7%	11%
Walk or bike	32%	43%	35%	20%
Other	2%	1%	2%	5%

*Figures do not sum to 100%*



**Q15. Which of the following best describes your driving status?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>I do not drive</b>	7%	4%	5%	18%
<b>I drive with some limitations (e.g., avoid driving at night or on highways)</b>	19%	9%	22%	29%
<b>I drive with no limitations</b>	74%	87%	73%	53%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q16. What kind of difficulties do you have in getting the transportation that you need?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>I have no difficulties</b>	68%	76%	74%	63%
<b>Public transportation is inaccessible or inconvenient</b>	17%	18%	19%	15%
<b>NewMo's hours are inconvenient or NewMo does not travel to the locations(s) I need to go to</b>	10%	8%	10%	15%
<b>No one I can depend on for a ride</b>	5%	3%	5%	8%
<b>No door-to-door assistance or help with bags</b>	2%	2%	1%	5%
<b>Physical limitations or other impairments limit my ability to access transportation options</b>	4%	2%	4%	11%
<b>Walking or biking is unsafe in my area</b>	5%	7%	5%	3%
<b>Transportation options cost too much</b>	3%	3%	2%	6%
<b>Other</b>	6%	7%	6%	7%

*Figures do not sum to 100%*

**Q17. Within the past 12 months, did you have to miss, cancel, or reschedule a medical appointment because of lack of transportation?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes</b>	5%	4%	4%	10%
<b>No</b>	95%	96%	96%	90%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100

**Q18. How satisfied are you with the transportation options available to you?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Completely Satisfied</b>	19%	20%	18%	20%
<b>Very Satisfied</b>	32%	32%	34%	29%
<b>Somewhat Satisfied</b>	35%	34%	35%	36%
<b>Slightly Satisfied</b>	7%	7%	7%	9%
<b>Not Satisfied</b>	7%	7%	6%	6%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

**SECTION IV: Social Participation & Civic Engagement**

**Q19. 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?**

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

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Everyday</b>	55%	58%	54%	56%
<b>One or more times a week</b>	35%	32%	37%	36%
<b>More than once a month</b>	6%	6%	5%	6%
<b>Once a month</b>	2%	2%	2%	1%
<b>2-3 times a year (e.g., holidays)</b>	1%	1%	1%	1%
<b>Never</b>	1%	1%	1%	0%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

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

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Everyday	68%	69%	70%	61%
One or more times a week	23%	23%	23%	24%
More than once a month	4%	4%	3%	4%
Once a month	1%	2%	1%	2%
2-3 times a year (e.g., holidays)	1%	1%	1%	2%
Never	3%	1%	2%	7%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

***Get together in person with family, friends, or neighbors***

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Everyday	18%	20%	17%	19%
One or more times a week	50%	48%	52%	48%
More than once a month	22%	21%	21%	23%
Once a month	6%	6%	6%	5%
2-3 times a year (e.g., holidays)	3%	4%	3%	4%
Never	1%	1%	1%	1%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q20. Do you know someone living within 30 minutes of your home on whom you can rely for help when you need it?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Yes	90%	91%	90%	87%
No	10%	9%	10%	13%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q20. In the past five years, have you ever felt excluded in Newton because of your:**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Age	6%	6%	5%	9%
Cognitive impairment	1%	0%	0%	1%
Disability	2%	2%	2%	3%
Gender	1%	1%	0%	1%
Income	6%	8%	4%	4%
Language	1%	1%	1%	1%
Political views	6%	8%	6%	5%
Sexual Orientation	0%	0%	0%	0%
Skin color, race, or ethnicity	1%	2%	1%	1%
Religion or cultural background	3%	4%	2%	3%
No, I have never felt excluded	72%	73%	80%	75%
Other	3%	4%	3%	2%

*Figures do not sum to 100%*

**Q22. Would you ask a neighbor for help if you needed assistance with a minor task or errand?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Yes	69%	68%	69%	70%
No	31%	32%	31%	30%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q23. Do you provide any help to neighbors with minor tasks or errands?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Yes	54%	59%	54%	41%
No	8%	4%	7%	18%
No, but I would be willing if asked	38%	37%	39%	41%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q24. Where do you prefer to find information about the activities and services offered by the City?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Newton Senior Center Newsletter "Coming of Age" (print)	27%	36%	57%	62%
Newton Senior Center E-Newsletter (online)	29%	26%	32%	26%
Television	5%	3%	5%	9%
Local paper (e.g. Fig City News or Newton Beacon)	28%	29%	33%	29%
Public postings (flyers, bulletin boards)	12%	13%	12%	12%
Facebook or other social media sites	13%	19%	11%	10%
Word of mouth	30%	31%	33%	32%
City of Newton website	37%	50%	38%	26%
Email (e.g., Mayor's Update, newsletters)	62%	70%	70%	55%
Other (Please specify):	7%	7%	6%	10%

*Figures do not sum to 100%*

**Q25. How confident do you feel about the following activities?**

*Finding information online*

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
I am confident	86%	93%	88%	69%
I need more practice	9%	4%	9%	16%
I am not confident	3%	2%	1%	7%
N/A I don't do these things	3%	1%	2%	8%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

***Submitting information or making applications online***

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>I am confident</b>	78%	89%	77%	57%
<b>I need more practice</b>	12%	6%	14%	20%
<b>I am not confident</b>	5%	3%	5%	11%
<b>N/A I don't do these things</b>	5%	2%	4%	12%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

***Purchasing items and managing money online***

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>I am confident</b>	81%	90%	82%	63%
<b>I need more practice</b>	8%	6%	8%	13%
<b>I am not confident</b>	5%	2%	5%	9%
<b>N/A I don't do these things</b>	6%	2%	5%	15%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

***Staying safe (e.g., protecting your personal data) online***

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>I am confident</b>	63%	72%	62%	46%
<b>I need more practice</b>	20%	17%	22%	23%
<b>I am not confident</b>	12%	9%	13%	16%
<b>N/A I don't do these things</b>	5%	2%	3%	15%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

***Online/virtual doctors' appointments***

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>I am confident</b>	76%	84%	76%	59%
<b>I need more practice</b>	9%	6%	10%	12%
<b>I am not confident</b>	4%	3%	4%	8%
<b>N/A I don't do these things</b>	11%	7%	10%	21%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

***Registering for events online***

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>I am confident</b>	84%	92%	84%	68%
<b>I need more practice</b>	7%	3%	9%	10%
<b>I am not confident</b>	3%	2%	3%	7%
<b>N/A I don't do these things</b>	6%	3%	4%	15%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

**SECTION V: Newton Senior Center**

**Q26. How frequently do you participate at the Newton Senior Center?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Two or more times a week</b>	3%	1%	4%	6%
<b>About once a week</b>	3%	2%	3%	5%
<b>A few times a month</b>	2%	1%	2%	2%
<b>About once a month</b>	2%	1%	3%	3%
<b>A few times a year (e.g., special events only)</b>	24%	15%	30%	29%
<b>Never, I do not use programs or services offered by the Senior Center</b>	66%	80%	58%	55%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q27. What factors limit you from participating at the Newton Senior Center?**

	<b>All Ages</b>	<b>Age 60-69</b>	<b>Age 70-79</b>	<b>Age 80+</b>
<b>I am not interested in programs offered (e.g., fitness classes, lectures)</b>	18%	16%	22%	23%
<b>I do not know what is offered</b>	15%	31%	25%	13%
<b>I do not have time</b>	15%	18%	16%	13%
<b>I do not have transportation to the senior center</b>	4%	2%	3%	10%
<b>I am still working</b>	23%	45%	16%	8%
<b>I do not need the services offered (e.g., tax counseling, fuel assistance)</b>	32%	32%	38%	35%
<b>I am not old enough</b>	7%	17%	2%	0%
<b>I participate in programs elsewhere</b>	19%	14%	24%	25%
<b>I do not identify with the people at the Senior Center</b>	17%	18%	19%	18%
<b>Other</b>	16%	13%	20%	20%

*Figures do not sum to 100%*



**Q28. Thinking about your own future needs and interests, which of the following areas would you prioritize in expanding the programs available at NewCAL?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Indoor fitness (e.g., strength training, yoga, tai chi, dance)</b>	61%	71%	68%	54 %
<b>Meeting or working space</b>	14%	19%	14%	13%
<b>Weekend activities</b>	22%	28%	23%	19%
<b>Technology skills classes (e.g., learning computer programs or smartphone applications)</b>	31%	26%	38%	40%
<b>Performances and presentations (e.g., theater, comedy, concerts)</b>	45%	49%	53%	44%
<b>Intergenerational programming (e.g., mentorship, collaborative learning)</b>	20%	27%	21%	12%
<b>Social programming for special-interest groups (e.g., singles, grandparents raising grandchildren)</b>	13%	16%	15%	10%
<b>Wellness programs (e.g., mindful meditation or stress management)</b>	35%	45%	38%	29%
<b>Volunteer opportunities</b>	36%	48%	38%	26%
<b>Outdoor exercise (e.g., hiking/walking club, pickleball)</b>	41%	57%	43%	26%
<b>Evening activities</b>	16%	23%	15%	11%
<b>Day trips</b>	29%	29%	31%	36%
<b>Educational lectures (e.g., elder law, health seminars, scam programs)</b>	41%	44%	47%	41%
<b>Skill development (e.g., cooking classes, organizing)</b>	26%	35%	28%	17%
<b>Arts (e.g., painting, memoir writing, theater, orchestra, cultural events)</b>	35%	42%	40%	30%
<b>Opportunities for informal socializing (affinity groups, parties, hang-out space)</b>	26%	31%	27%	23%

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Vendor fairs (e.g., health fair, housing fair, job fair, aging in place, etc.)</b>	15%	19%	16%	14%
<b>Virtual programming</b>	18%	18%	22%	19%
<b>Other</b>	9%	9%	10%	12%

*Figures do not sum to 100%*

**Q29. Thinking about your own future needs and interests, which of the following areas would you prioritize in expanding the services available at NewCAL?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>On-site meals or café services</b>	21%	23%	22%	25%
<b>Grab ‘n’ go meals</b>	15%	15%	16%	16%
<b>Access to groceries or food pantry</b>	9%	10%	8%	12%
<b>Support groups (e.g., caregivers, bereavement, Parkinson’s, low vision)</b>	25%	28%	27%	24%
<b>Information/referral for social services</b>	27%	30%	32%	25%
<b>Friendly visiting</b>	15%	18%	15%	15%
<b>In-home programs (e.g., help with minor chores/errands)</b>	29%	29%	33%	33%
<b>Caregiver respite programs</b>	12%	14%	13%	13%
<b>Health insurance counseling and enrollment assistance</b>	23%	33%	22%	14%
<b>Transportation to medical appointments</b>	29%	28%	33%	38%
<b>Home-delivered meals</b>	13%	12%	13%	19%
<b>Mental health counseling or referrals</b>	9%	12%	10%	7%
<b>Job-searching support or part-time employment</b>	9%	15%	7%	5%
<b>Transportation for errands around City</b>	24%	24%	25%	31%
<b>Telephone check-in</b>	9%	8%	11%	13%
<b>Programs for persons who are living with dementia (e.g., Memory Café)</b>	9%	12%	9%	11%
<b>Retirement planning</b>	11%	19%	7%	4%
<b>Other (Please specify):</b>	7%	8%	7%	7%

*Figures do not sum to 100%*

**Q31. How likely is it that you, or a member of your household, will utilize the Center for Active Living in Newton (NewCAL)?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Likely</b>	27%	23%	31%	26%
<b>Somewhat Likely</b>	28%	30%	27%	27%
<b>Unsure</b>	30%	31%	29%	31%
<b>Somewhat Unlikely</b>	7%	7%	7%	9%
<b>Very Unlikely</b>	8%	9%	6%	7%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

**SECTION VI: Caregiving**

**Q32. Do you now or have you in the past 12 months provided care or assistance to a person who is *disabled, frail, or struggling with a physical or mental health condition (e.g., a child, a spouse, parent, relative, or friend)?***

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes</b>	37%	45%	32%	32%
<b>No</b>	63%	55%	68%	68%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q33. If yes: In your role as a caregiver, have you experienced any of the following?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>My physical health has deteriorated</b>	16%	17%	21%	21%
<b>My mental health has deteriorated</b>	17%	28%	16%	17%
<b>My social life has deteriorated</b>	21%	27%	24%	25%
<b>My financial circumstances have deteriorated</b>	9%	15%	8%	10%

*\*This table only includes respondents who reported providing care to someone now or in the last 12 months. \*Figures do not sum to 100%*

**Q34. If yes: Did this person have any of the following conditions?**

	<b>All Ages</b>
<b>Alzheimer’s disease or related dementia</b>	17%
<b>Psychological condition (e.g., anxiety, depression)</b>	21%
<b>Intellectual or developmental disability</b>	6%
<b>Sensory impairment (e.g., vision, hearing)</b>	11%
<b>Parkinson’s disease</b>	6%
<b>Chronic disease (e.g., cancer, diabetes, asthma)</b>	17%
<b>Mobility impairment (e.g., difficulty walking, climbing stairs)</b>	35%
<b>Recent surgery</b>	13%
<b>Forgetfulness or confusion (undiagnosed)</b>	14%
<b>Other</b>	9%

*\*This table only includes respondents who reported providing care to someone now or in the last 12 months.\*Figures do not sum to 100%*

**Q35. If yes: What supports were, or would have been, most valuable to you during your time providing care or assistance?**

	All Ages
Informal support from family and friends	29%
Adult Day program	5%
Respite care	7%
Social activities (e.g., Memory Café)	5%
Web-based resources	8%
Formal in-home caregiver or homemaking services	21%
Support groups (e.g., caregiver support)	12%
On-call support from medical professionals	14%
Transportation	13%
Other	8%

*\*This table only includes respondents who reported providing care to someone now or in the last 12 months.*

*\*Figures do not sum to 100%*

## **SECTION VII: Demographic & Health Information**

**Q36. Please select your gender.**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Male	33%	33%	33%	35%
Female	67%	67%	67%	65%
Non-binary	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q37. What is your age range?**

	All Ages
60-69	38%
70-79	43%
80+	19%
Total	100%

**Q38. What is your employment status?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Working full-time	17%	38%	7%	3%
Working part-time	18%	24%	19%	10%
Looking for work	2%	4%	1%	2%
Retired	56%	34%	73%	85%
Other	6%	6%	7%	5%

*Figures do not sum to 100%*

**Q39. In what country were you born?**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
United States	85%	84%	87%	84%
Other	15%	16%	13%	16%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Q40. "In the past 12 months, I worried whether my food would run out before I got money to buy more."**

	All Ages	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Often true	1%	1%	1%	1%
Sometimes true	4%	5%	2%	4%
Never true	94%	93%	96%	94%
I don't know	1%	1%	1%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	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 healthcare, and other expenses."***

	<b>All Ages</b>	<b>Age 60-69</b>	<b>Age 70-79</b>	<b>Age 80+</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	49%	55%	49%	42%
<b>Agree</b>	41%	35%	43%	46%
<b>Disagree</b>	9%	9%	7%	11%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	1%	1%	1%	1%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%