



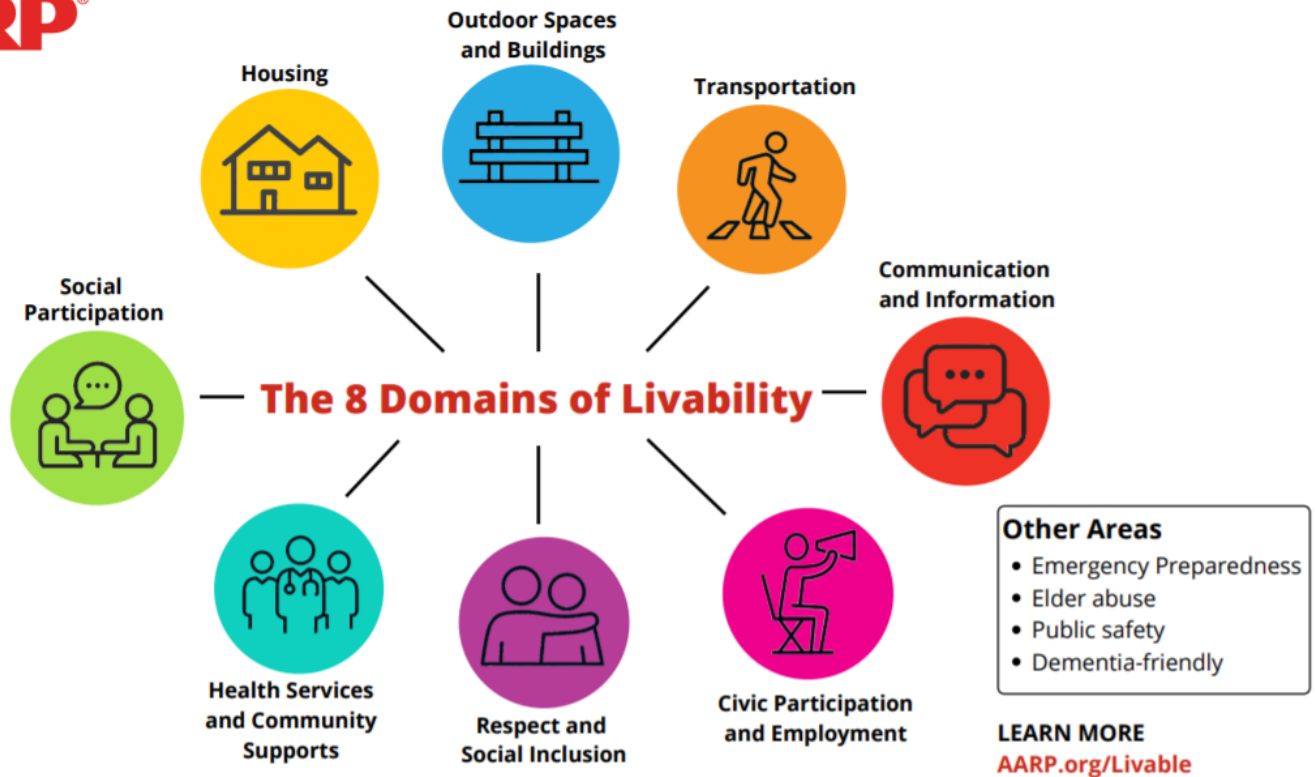
In May 2019, the City of Akron officially joined the AARP network of Age Friendly States and Communities. Akron joins more than 1,000 cities and communities throughout the World Health Organization's Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities, covering more than 240 million people worldwide. The Global Network was established in 2010 to provide a framework for communities to plan programs, services, supports and infrastructure to support aging populations. AARP provides guidance and support to the Age Friendly communities within the United States. By joining the AARP network, Akron will enjoy the benefits of AARP research, planning models and best practices related to the age-friendliness of cities.

Becoming an age-friendly city requires a multi-sector collaboration with consistent and meaningful involvement of the older adults who live, work and spend their time in the city. The City of Akron, AARP, Direction Home Akron Canton, The University of Akron and the City of Akron's Senior Citizens Commission have formed a partnership to guide Akron's process of becoming an Age Friendly City. Mayor Dan Horrigan submitted a letter of commitment to the AARP Network of Age Friendly Cities. Direction Home Akron Canton will coordinate the initiative and is responsible for moving the project through each step. The University of Akron designed, administered and interpreted a survey that provides much of the basis for the assessment of the current age-friendliness of the City of Akron. The city's Senior Citizens Commission is comprised of 10 members, six professionals who work in aging and social services and four community activists. The goal of the commission is to make Akron a better place for people age 60 and older to live, and will provide guidance throughout the Age Friendly Akron process to move towards this goal.

Age Friendly Akron will follow the AARP's eight step process and program cycle to become an age-friendly city. The first step is to establish a way to include older adult residents in all stages of age-friendly planning and implementation. Age Friendly Akron meets this step through the engagement of the Senior Citizens Commission which will provide continuous guidance. The second step is to conduct a community needs assessment. Through partnership with The University of Akron, the assessment has been completed and the results will be shared in this report. Upon the sharing of this report with the community, Age Friendly Akron will be ready to move into step three, develop an action and evaluation plan based on the assessment results. Once this plan is submitted and reviewed by AARP as step four, the work of step five can begin. Step five focuses on the implementation of the plan to work towards the goals of the plan. During step six, solutions, successes and best practices developed through Age Friendly Akron will be shared with AARP. Assessing the plan's impact will be conducted through step seven and in step eight the whole process is repeated. Generally, the process is completed within five years of a community's commitment to become an age-friendly city.

- Establish Older Adult Involvement
- Community Needs Assessment
- Develop Action and Evaluation Plan
- Submit Plan to AARP
- Implement Plan
- Share best practices with AARP
- Assess plan impact
- Repeat!

The Age Friendly model has identified eight specific domains of livability and four additional areas of concerns. A definition of what the domain includes; what the Akron survey revealed; and an example of a best practice implemented in an existing Age Friendly community within the AARP network are listed below.



Civic Participation and Employment

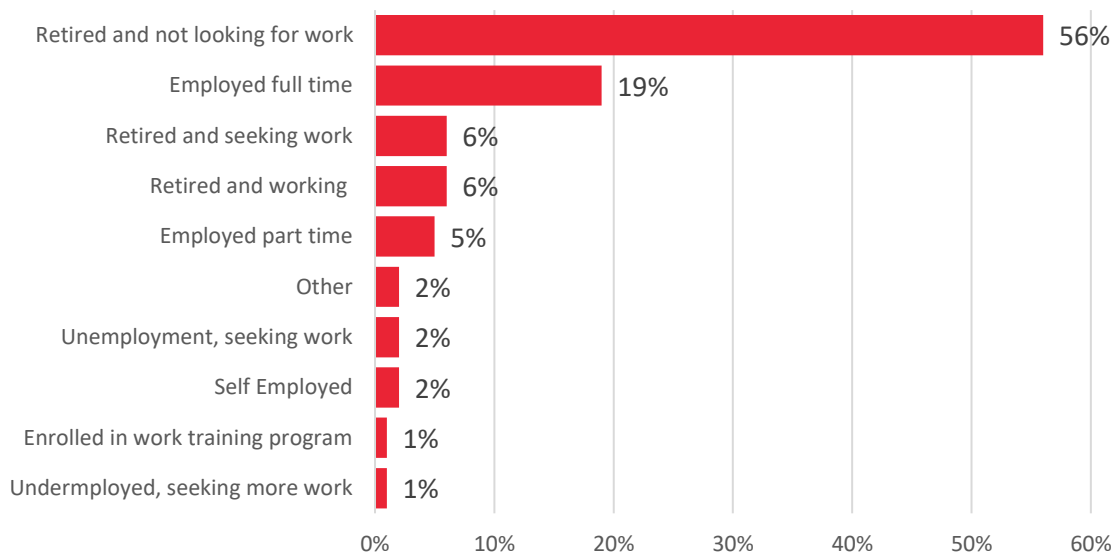
What's included in the Age Friendly Domain

Volunteer opportunities; employment opportunities; employment options; accommodations for the older population; encouraging civic participation; training; entrepreneurial opportunities; valued contributions and fair pay.

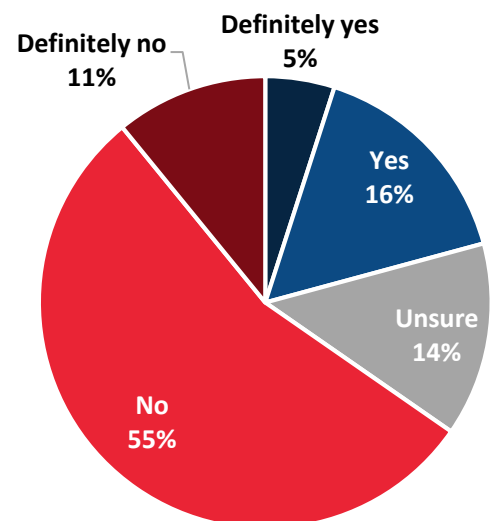
What we learned

The majority of survey takers indicated they are retired and not looking for work, with 73 percent of those who said they were retired indicating it was their choice to retire. A quarter of the retired survey takers indicated it was not their choice to retire. About 12 percent are retired and either working or seeking work. Nineteen percent of survey takers are employed full time and another 5 percent are employed part time. Of those who are currently working, 11 percent continue to work because they enjoy it, however 9 percent do so because they cannot afford to retire and 4 percent do so to maintain health care coverage.

Employment Status

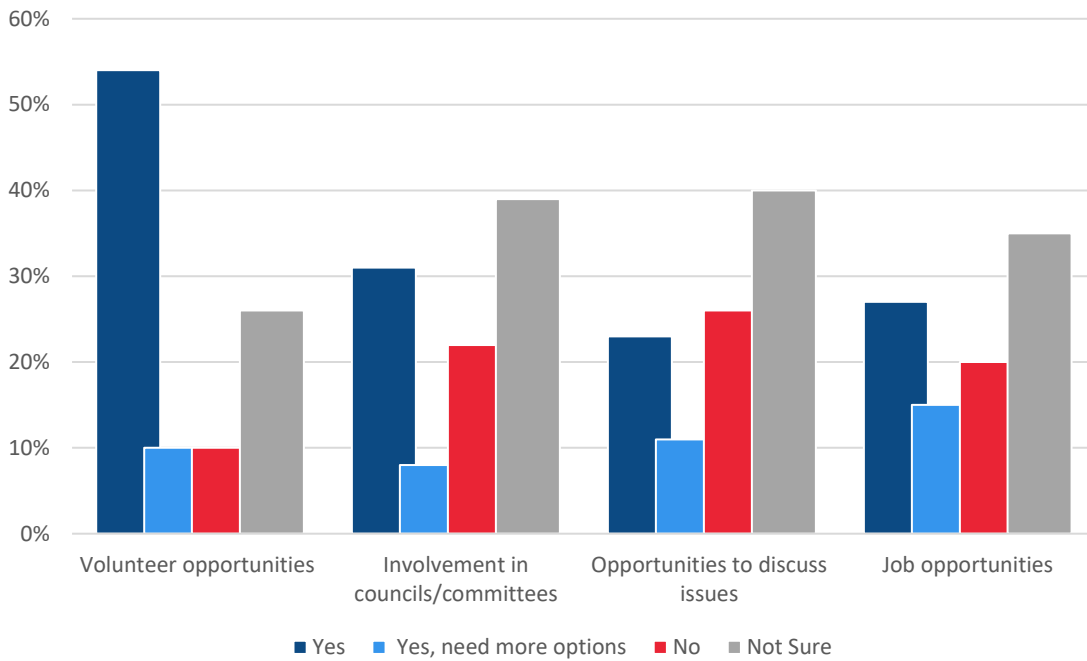


Have You Experienced Ageism in the Work Place?



Two thirds of survey respondents reported they have not experienced ageism in the work place. The WHO defines ageism as *“the stereotyping and discrimination against individuals or groups on the basis of their age. Ageism can take many forms, including prejudicial attitudes, discriminatory practices, or institutional policies and practices that perpetuate stereotypical beliefs.”*

Do You Have Access To...?



Volunteer opportunities appear to be readily available within Akron with more than 60 percent of survey respondents indicating they have access. Fewer have access to job opportunities, with roughly 35 percent reporting access. Twenty and 26 percent of survey takers reported they do not have access to be involved with councils/committees or opportunities to discuss issues related to older adults.



8% of older adults in Akron provide unpaid child care



7% of older adults in Akron provide unpaid elder care

Communication & Information

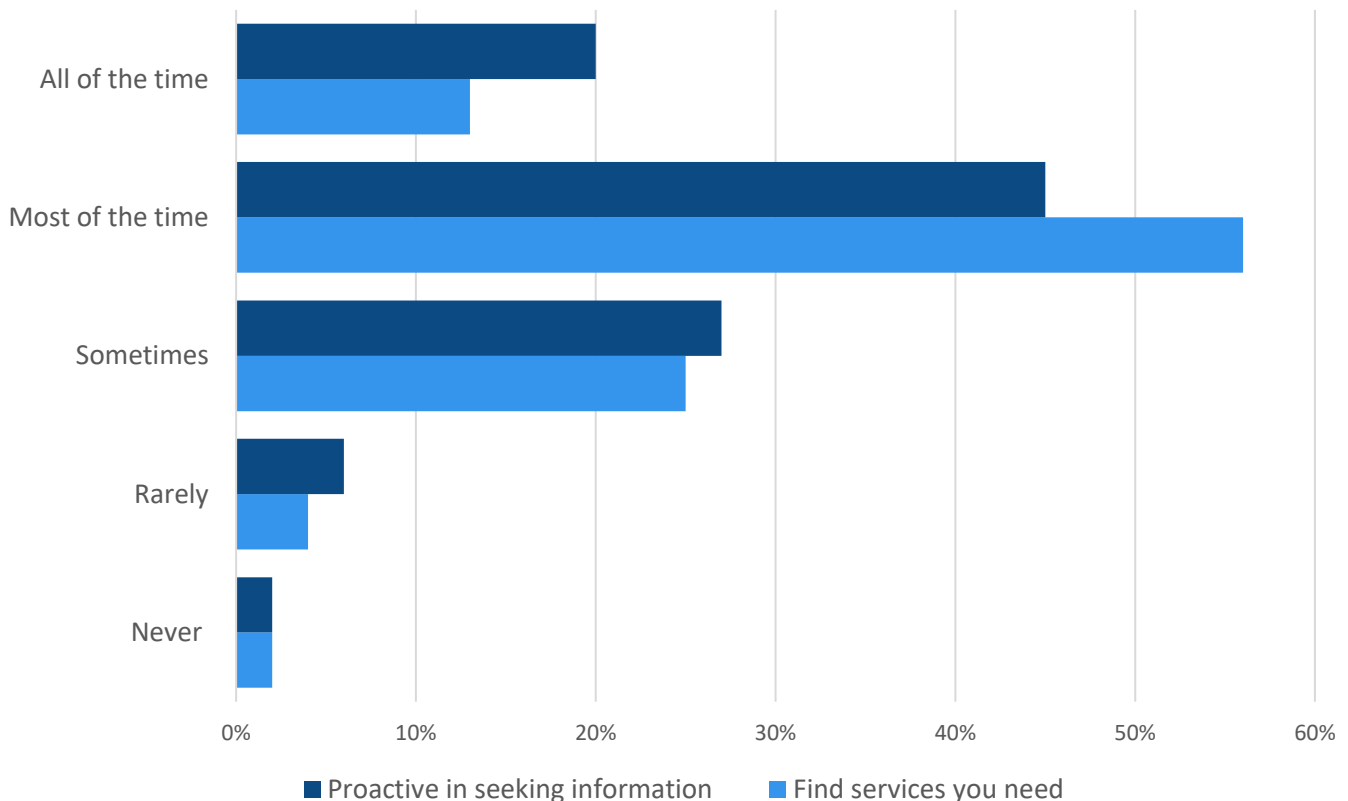
What's included in the Age Friendly Domain

Widespread distribution; timely information; one-to-one conversation; age-friendly format and design; access to technology; printed information; plain language; personal and collective responsibility.

What we learned

Access to information connects individuals to the world outside of their homes. Communications that disperse information come in an ever-increasing number of formats. A daily newspaper, television, radio, affinity group newsletters and word-of-mouth are some of the more traditional ways older adults access information. In addition to these more traditional ways, communicating through technology has become a common practice among older adults who live in Akron. Eighty-two percent of those surveyed indicated they had a computer with internet within their home. Access to a computer increases the likelihood that information will be found when sought. Of those who were able to find the information they were looking for, 96 percent of those who found it all of the time had an internet connected computer, as did 83 percent who found it most of the time. The rate of success decreased as computer ownership decreased, with 78 percent of those who sometimes found information having a computer, and 70 percent of those who rarely found information having a computer. Just 60 percent of those who never find information for said they own a computer.

Seeking and Finding Information





57% of survey takers know where to get assistance for **housing**



61% of survey takers know where to get assistance for **health care**

Housing and health care are two basic needs that older adults may find themselves struggling to maintain. If necessary, 57 percent know where to look if they need help with housing, and 61 percent know where to look if they need assistance with health care.

According to survey results, it seems that most older adults in Akron are connected to the internet in some way, whether by smartphone, WiFi or some other way. Just 66 percent of survey takers have a landline in their households. Being connected, does not necessarily mean being aware of resources specifically designed either for older adults or to connect to assistance programs



66% of survey respondents have a landline



69% of survey respondents have access to WiFi in public areas



82% of survey respondents have internet in their homes

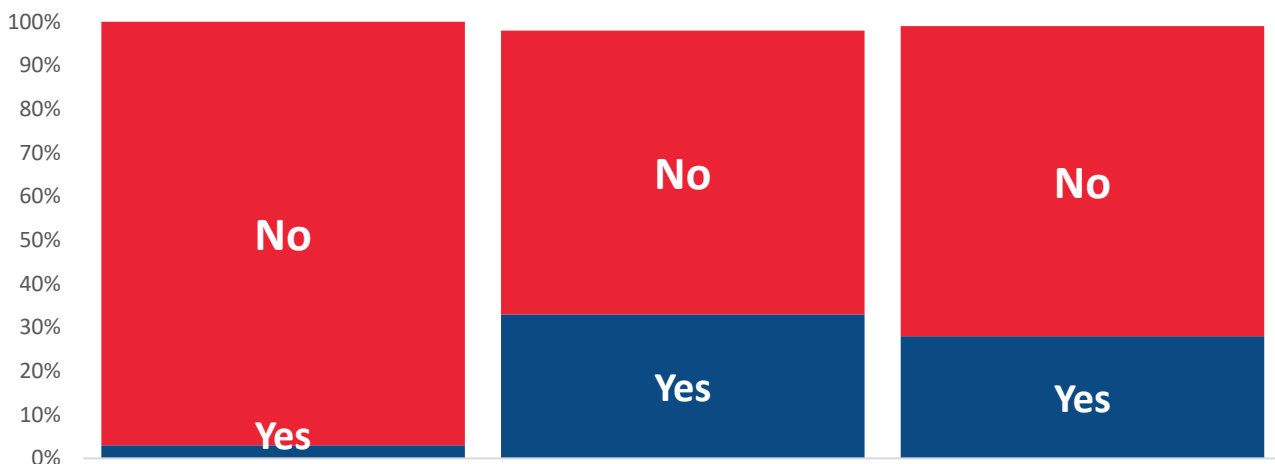


79% of survey respondents have a smartphone



84% of survey respondents have WiFi in their homes

Have You Heard Of...



Getting Wiser



211



Direction Home



Health Services and Community Supports

What's included in the Age Friendly Domain

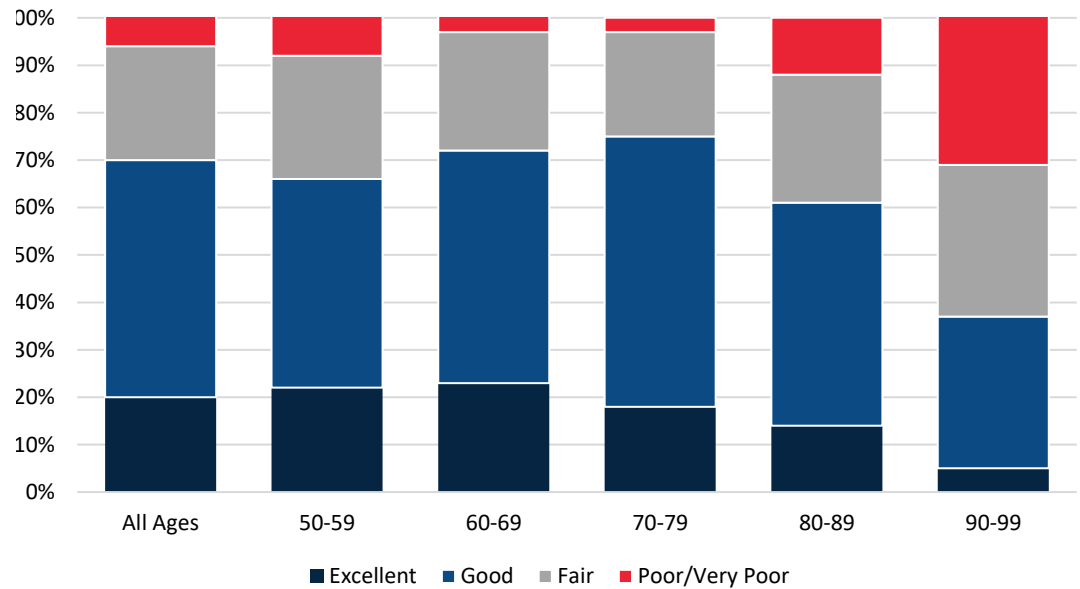
Accessible care; range of health services; home care; residential facilities; network of community services; voluntary support; emergency planning and care.

What we learned

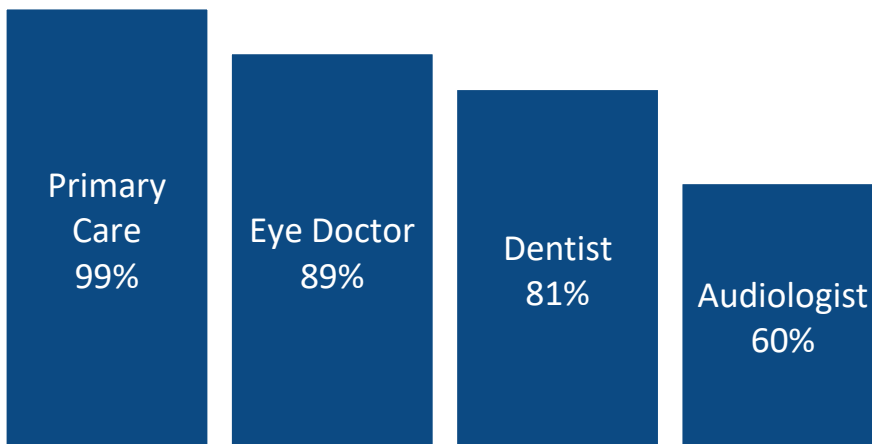
Most older age groups in Akron rate their health as “excellent” or “good” with about 70 percent of each age group rating that way except those over 90-years-old.

When looking at the same measurements by employment status, those who are self-employed and those who work part-time reported the highest rates of excellent and good health.

Overall Health by Age

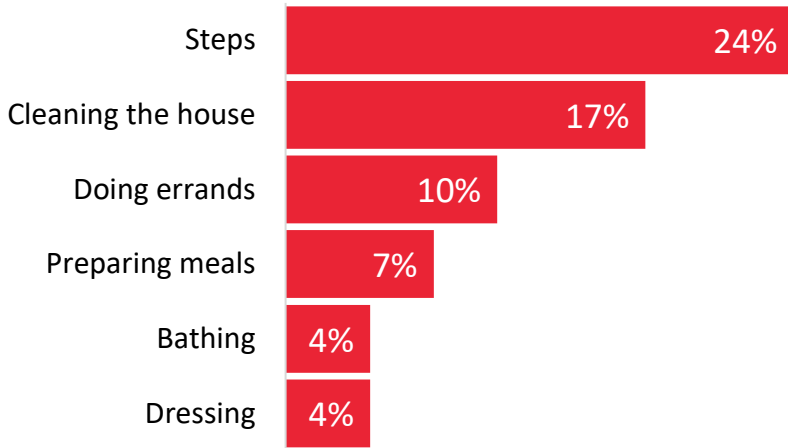


Insurance Accepted



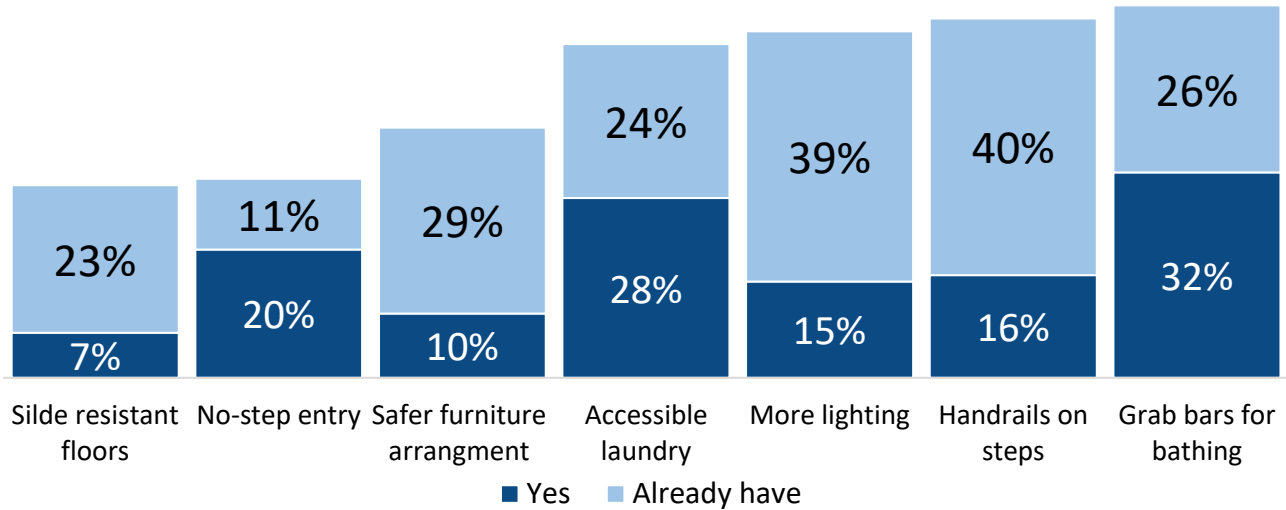
Nearly all survey respondents were able to use their insurance with their primary care provider. Audiologists were the least likely to accept health insurance

Experience Difficulty



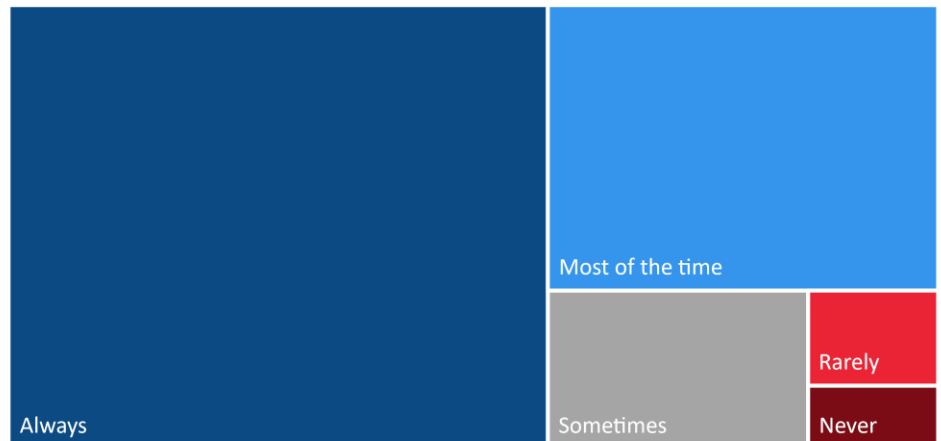
The most common type of difficulty that older adults in Akron experience is with steps. Thirty-one percent indicated the need, or already have, no-step entry and 56 percent have or need handrails on steps. While bathing was only reported as a difficulty by 4 percent of respondents, 58 percent of survey takers say they have or need grab bars for bathing.

Will You Need Modifications to Your Home?



Do You Have People to Rely On In Case of Medical Emergencies?

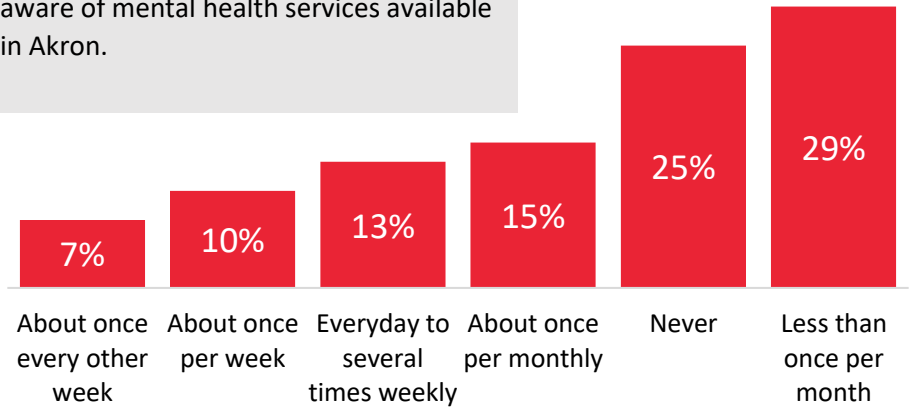
Sixty percent of survey respondents indicated they “always” have access to adequate medical services. Thirty-four percent have access “most of the time.” Five percent have access “sometimes” and about 1 percent “rarely or never” have access to adequate medical services.





How Often Do You Feel Sad or Worried?

Just 58 percent of survey takers are aware of mental health services available in Akron.



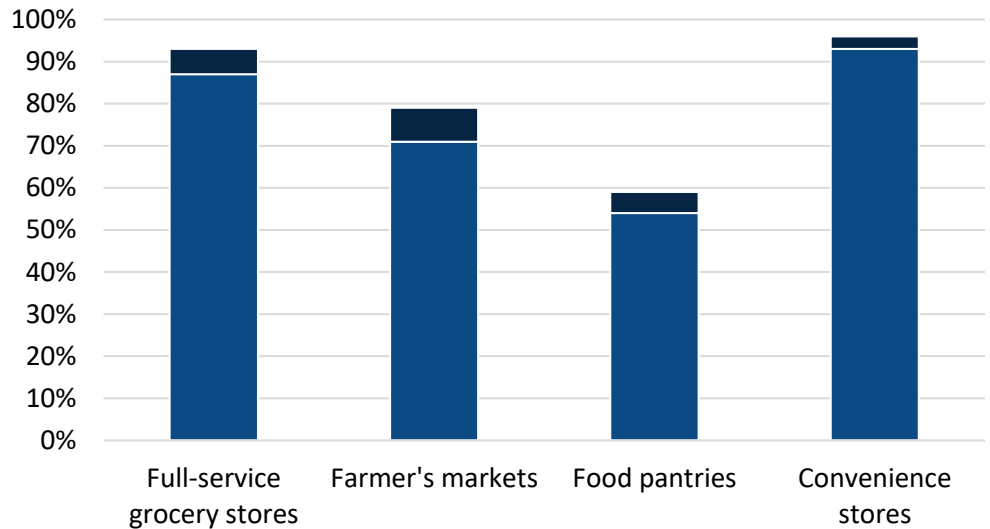
90% of survey takers believe it is extremely or very important to remain physically active

61% of survey takers have access to fitness programs for older adults. Of that group, 7 percent would like to see more options.

72% engage in exercise once or more a week

Access to Food

■ Yes ■ Yes, need more options



About 4 percent of respondents indicated that within the past 12 months they were "worried food would run out." Nine percent were "sometimes worried," 14 percent "rarely worried" and 73 percent were "never worried" about food running out.



Fourteen percent of survey takers reported having some issues getting to food pantries.

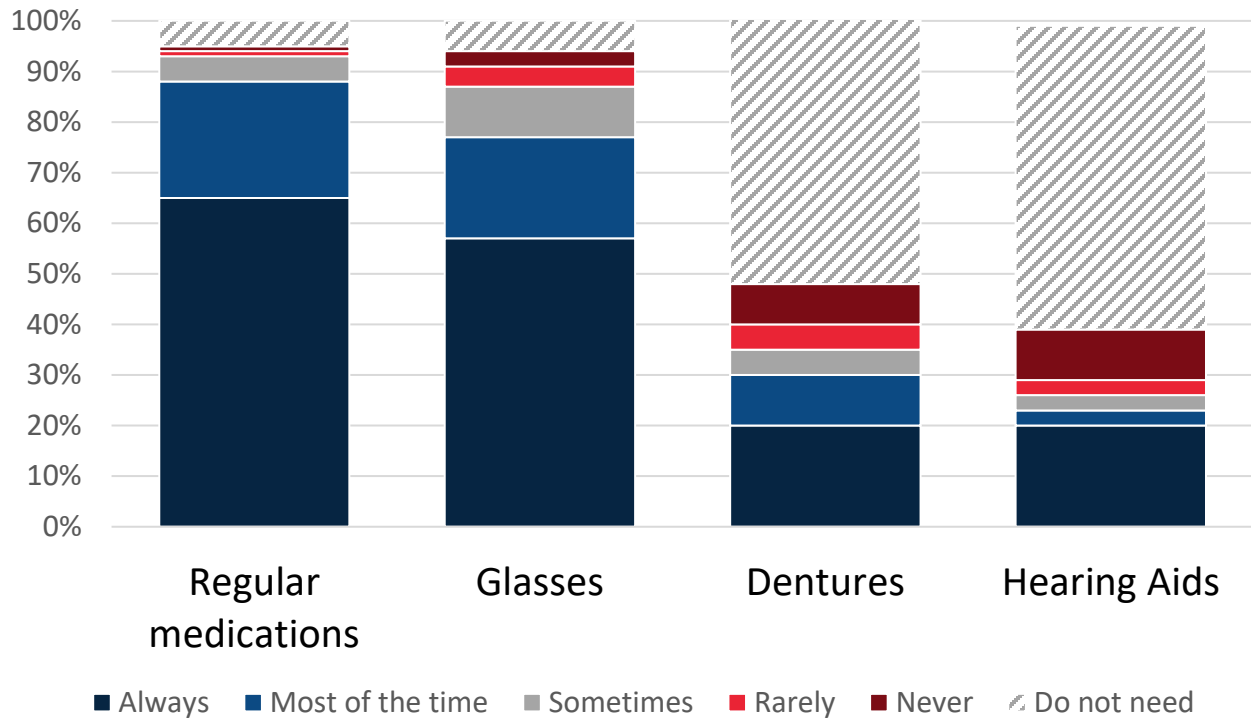


96% of older adults reported they were able to make an appointment with a doctor when needed

88% of older adults reported they were able to make an appointment with a dentist when needed



Are You Able to Afford...

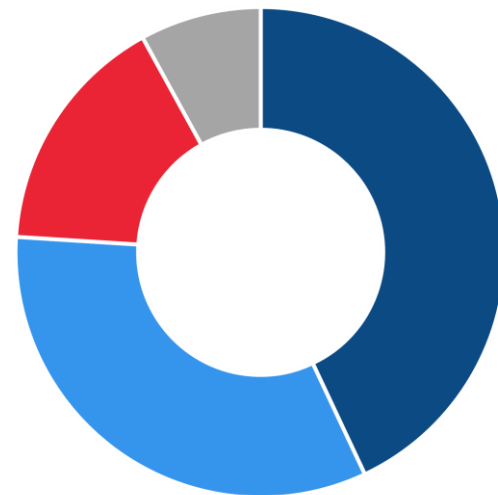
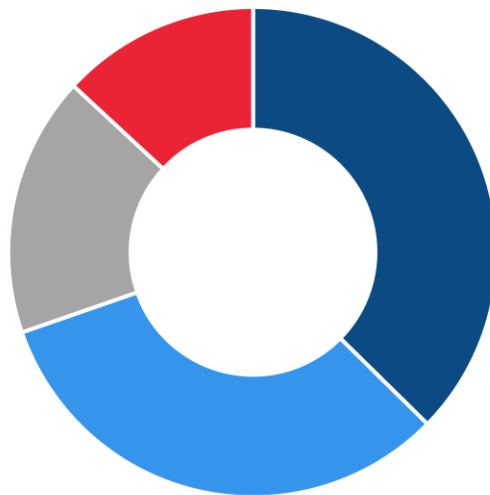
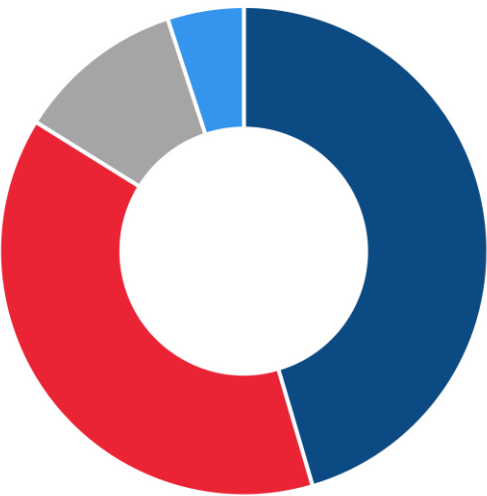


Do You Have Access To...

Home Health Care

Health Care Facilities

Urgent Care



■ Yes
 ■ Yes, need more options
 ■ No
 ■ Not Sure

Housing

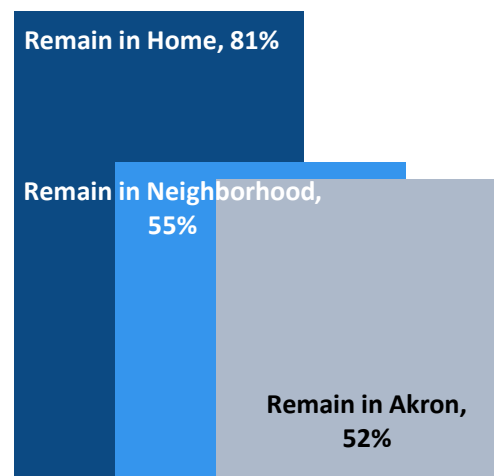
What's included in the Age Friendly Domain

Affordability; Essential Services; Design; Modifications; Maintenance; Access to Services; Community and Family Connections; Housing Options and Living Environment.

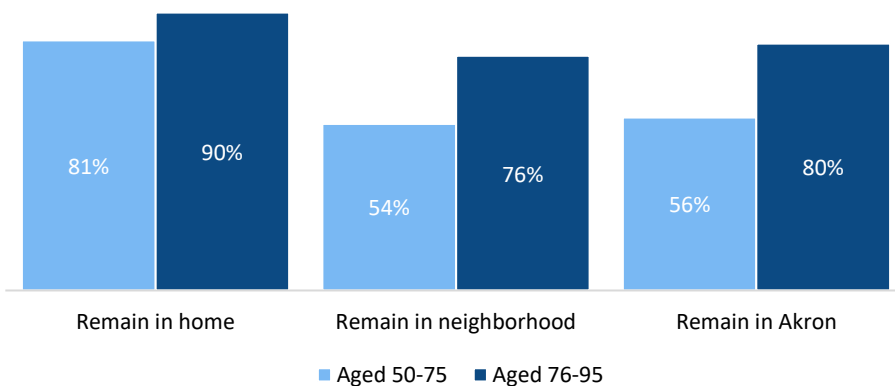
What we learned

Older adults in Akron have a strong connection to their communities and an even stronger connection to their own homes. More than 80 percent of survey respondents said it was “very” or “extremely important” to remain in their homes as they age. When asked about the importance of staying in their neighborhoods as they age, 55 percent said it was “very” or “extremely important” while about 35 percent felt it was “somewhat” or “not very important.” Around 5 percent said it was not important at all. Similarly, just more than half feel it is “very” or “extremely important” to stay in Akron as they age and another 20 percent indicated it was “somewhat important” to remain in the city.

Importance of Aging in Place for Ages 50-95 Years Old Very or Extremely Important



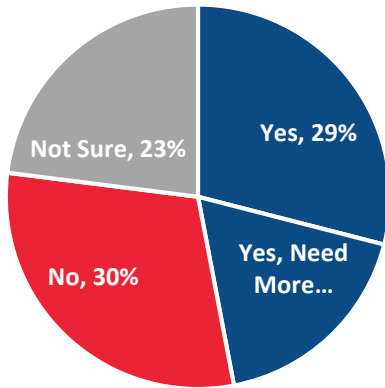
Very or Extremely Important to Age in Place by Age Group



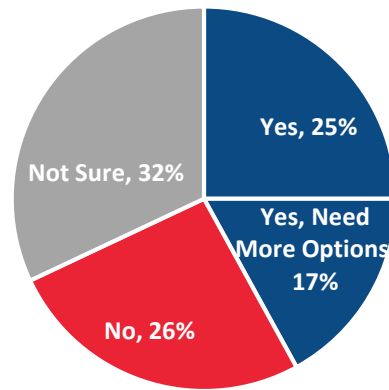
As residents of Akron age, the value of aging in place increases. This is particularly true when asked how important it is to remain in the City of Akron as they age. While 56 percent of those between the ages of 50 and 75 say it is “very” to “extremely important,” 80 percent of those between the ages of 76 and 95 rate it at the highest levels of importance.

Do You Have Access To...

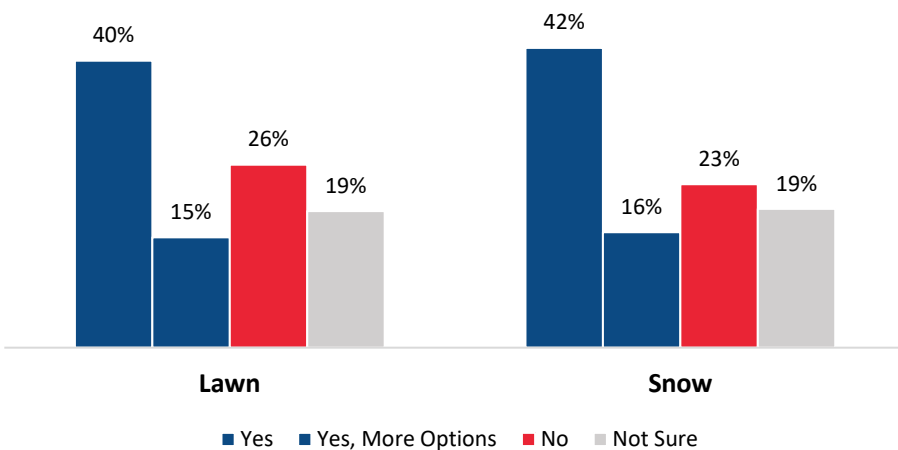
...A Reliable Handyman?



...Neighborhood Watch Programs?



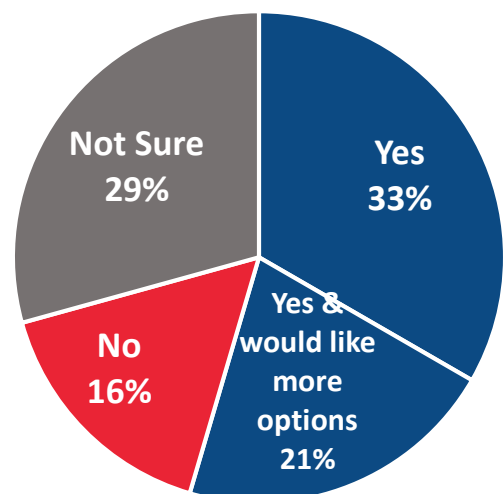
...Seasonal Services For Your Home?



About a quarter of survey takers do not currently have access to seasonal services such as grass cutting and snow removal and another nearly 20 percent are not sure if they have access to these services.

More than half of survey respondents indicated they had affordable housing, though 21 percent of those respondents would like more options. Sixteen percent of residents do not have affordable housing and 29 percent are not sure if they do or do not have access to affordable housing

...To Affordable Housing?



Transportation

What's included in the Age Friendly Domain

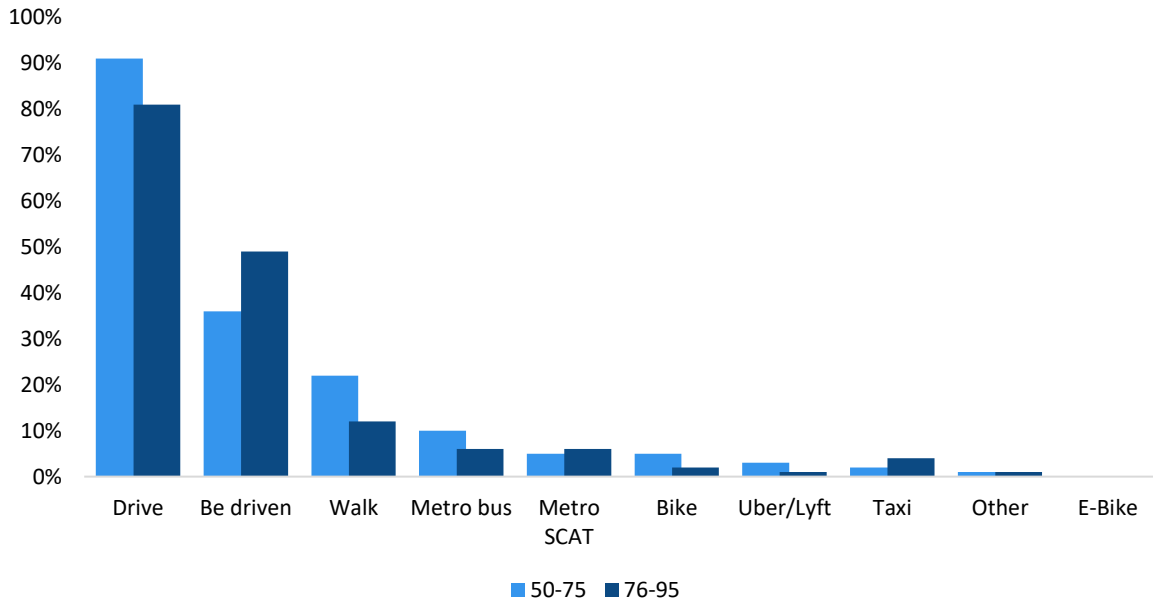
Availability, affordability, reliability and frequency, travel destinations, age-friendly vehicles, specialized services, priority seating, transport drivers, safety and comfort, transport stops & stations, taxis, community transport, information, roads, driving competence and parking.

What we learned

Older adults in Akron largely prefer to drive or be driven by friends or family when running errands, getting to appointments and attending events. Ninety-one percent of those between the ages of 50 and 75 list driving as their first, second or third choice of transportation options. The option rated next highest, with 36 percent of respondents ranking it in their top three, is being driven. Walking was ranked in the top three by 21 percent of respondents.

Preferences shift slightly, with 81 percent of residents between the ages of 76 and 95 listing “driving” in their top three, 49 percent choosing “being driven” most often as their first choice and walking being the next most popular mode of transportation with 11 percent choosing it as their second or third choices. Nearly half of respondents indicated they have access to transportation for people with disabilities, however an additional 12 percent said while they have access, they need more options.

Top Three Combined Preferences for Transportation
By Age Group

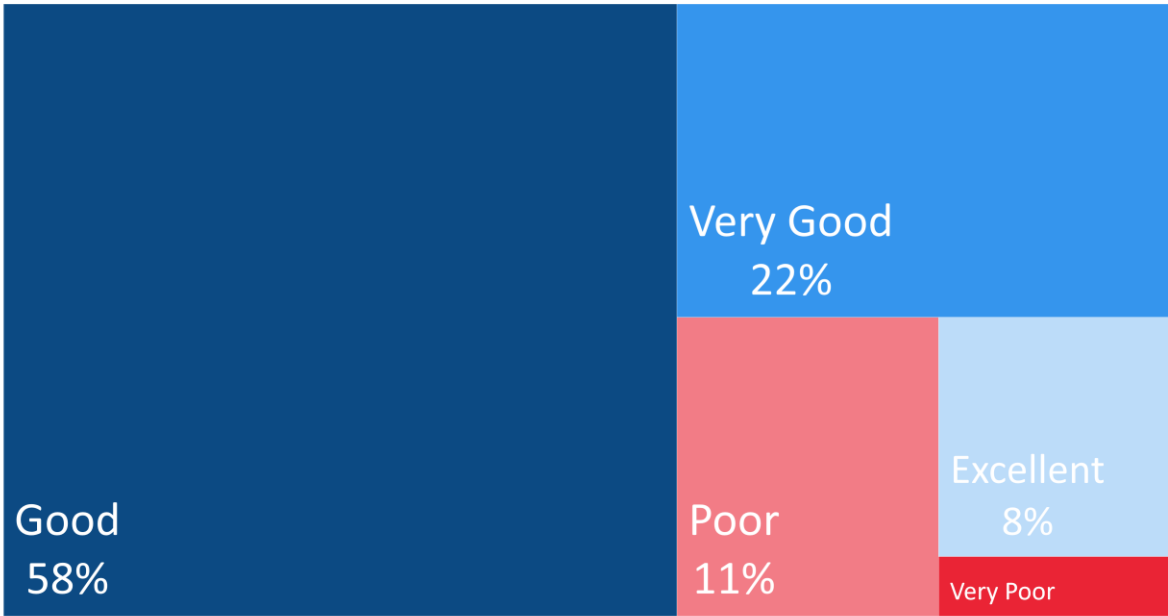


With a high preference for personal transport over public transport, driving safety features are an important part of assessing Akron's age-friendliness in transportation and walkability.

70% say the
Street Signs
are Legible

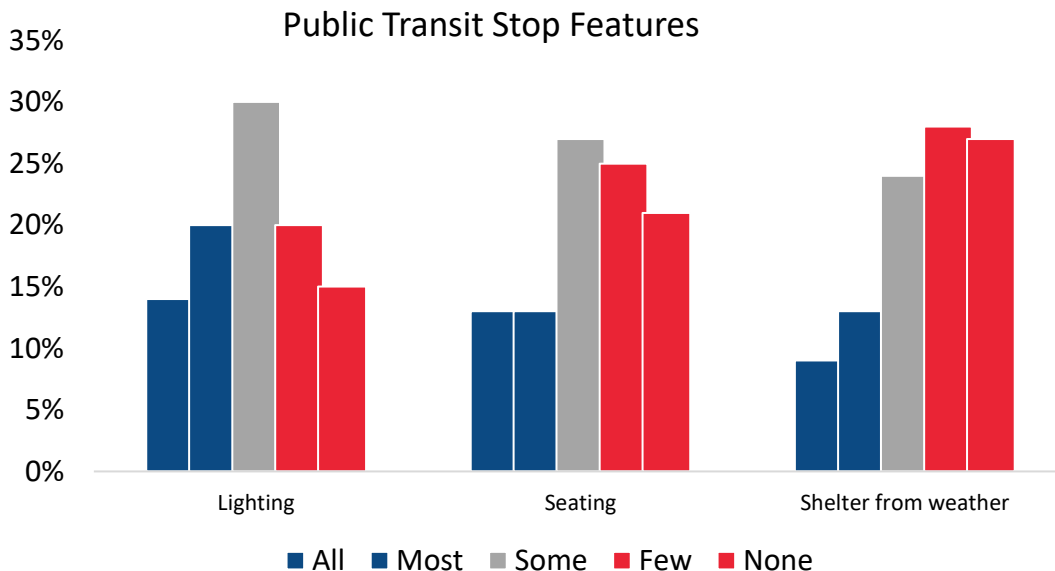
86% are not
aware of Driver
Refresher
Courses

How Would You Rate Public Transportation?



While public transportation is not the preferred method for most of the survey respondents, they have moderately positive opinions of public transportation. Just more than 70 percent of survey takers indicate public transit is reliable.

The physical space provided for riders while they wait for a bus to arrive can add or subtract to the age-friendliness of the public transportation experience; this includes lighting, seating and shelters. While many appear to have lighting and seating, fewer stops include a shelter from the weather.



Do You Have Access to Bike Lanes for Wheelchairs and Bikes?



Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

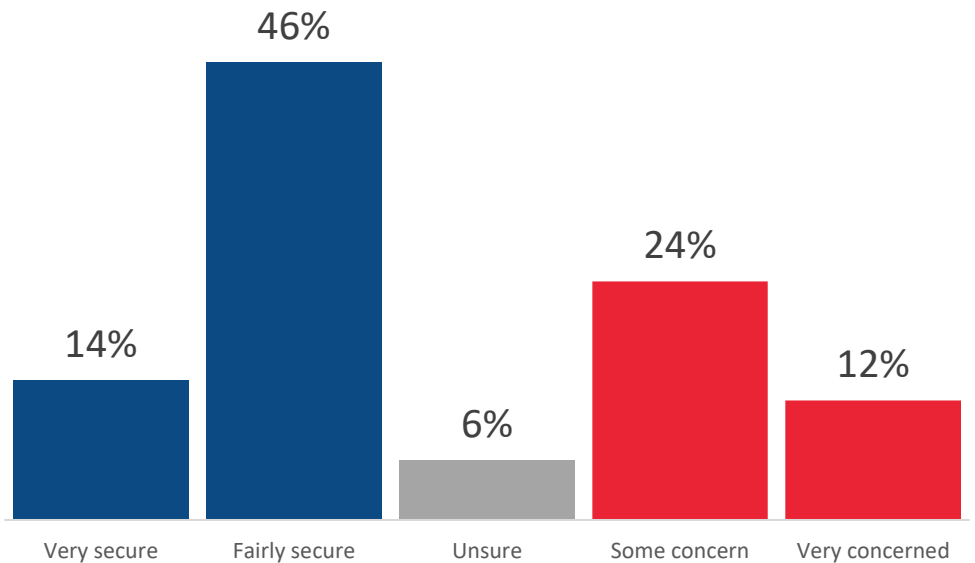
What's included in the Age Friendly Domain

Environment; green spaces and walkways; outdoor seating; pavements; roads; pedestrian crossings; accessibility; age-friendly buildings and public restrooms.

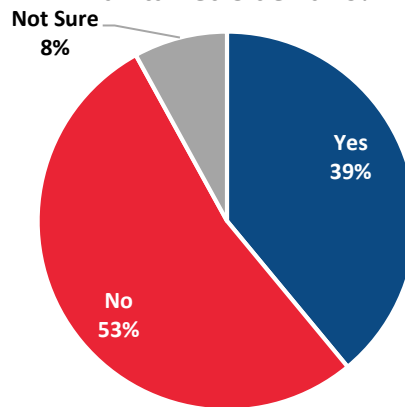
What we learned

Outdoor spaces and buildings are essential to every community and create the places we work, play and gather communally. Having access to these spaces provides access to participation in the community. Walkways, parks and buildings in Akron have been assessed in the survey for their age-friendliness. Currently, more than a third of Akron's older adults who responded to the survey do not feel secure walking in their neighborhoods.

Do You Feel Secure *Walking* in Your Neighborhood?



Do You Have Access to Well-Maintained Sidewalks?



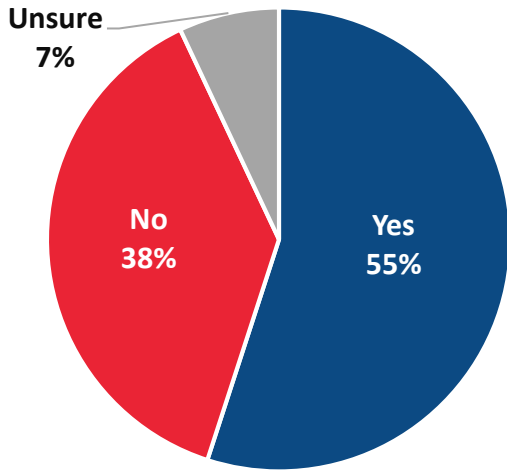
Feeling secure while walking in one's neighborhood relies on a number of factors including well-maintained sidewalks, pedestrian crossings and well-lit streets.

- 39% Have well-maintained sidewalks
- 59% Have timed crossings
- 70% Say streets are well lit

Fifty percent or more of survey respondents in the following ZIP codes indicated they do not have access to well-maintained sidewalks

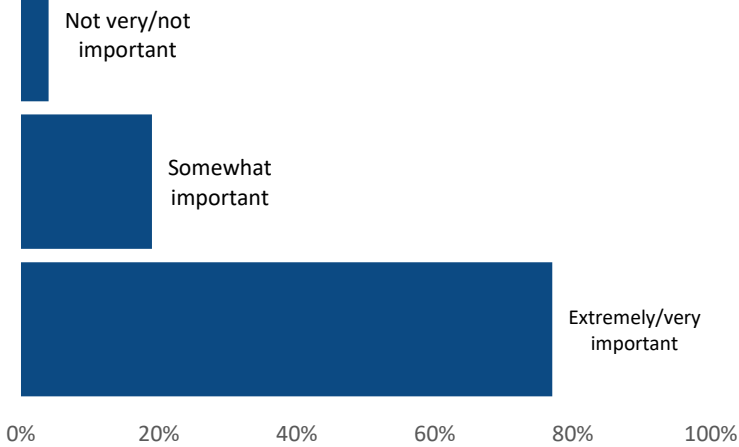
44301	44302	44305
44306	44307	44311
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Do You Have Access to Public Parks?

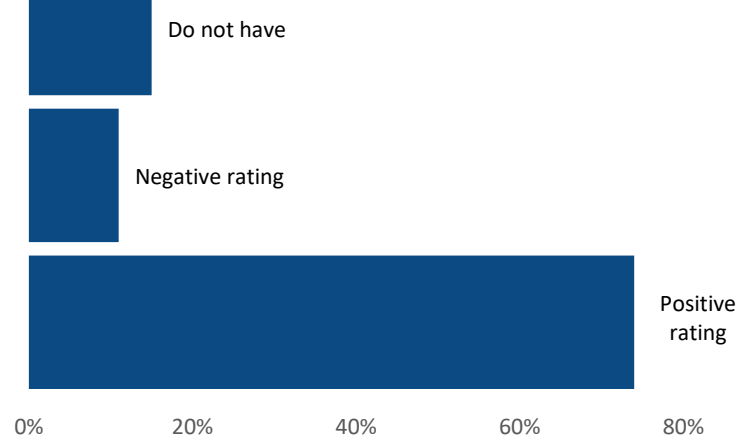


More than half of the older residents of Akron who responded to the age-friendly survey reported having access to public parks, and more than three quarters of survey takers gave the parks a positive rating. Slightly more, about 80 percent, rate the parks as “important” or “very important.” Slightly less than half reported that parks are maintained “all” or “most of the time” in the winter. Another 30 percent said they were “sometimes maintained” in the cold weather months when snow and ice make walking more challenging.

How Important Are Parks?



How Do You Rate Your Parks?



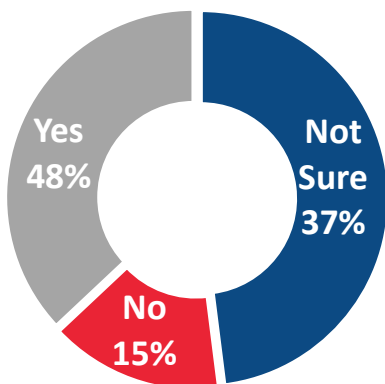
87% said parks have **Flat surfaces**

86% have access to **Benches**

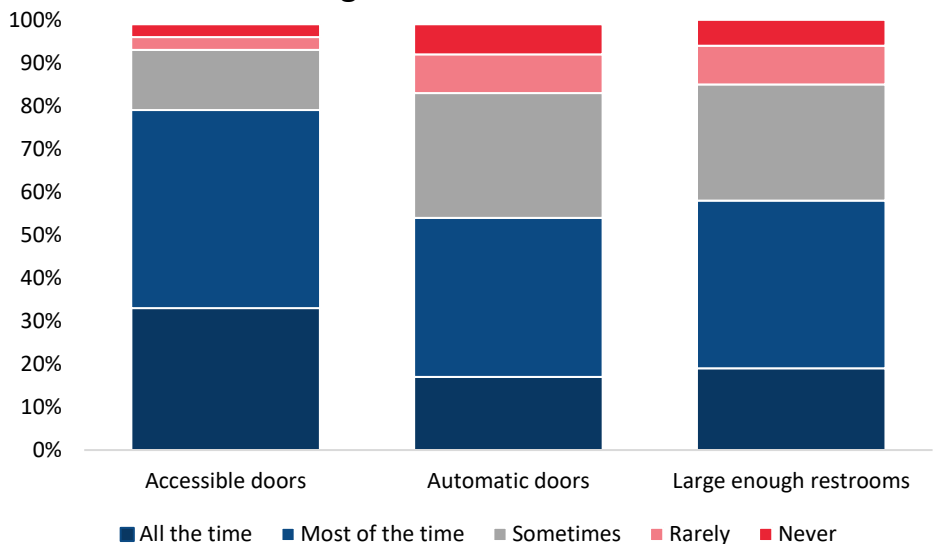
70% have access to **Pathways**

67% said parks have **Accessible Trails**

Are Buildings in Akron Accessible?



Do Buildings Have Accessible Features?



Respect and Social Inclusion

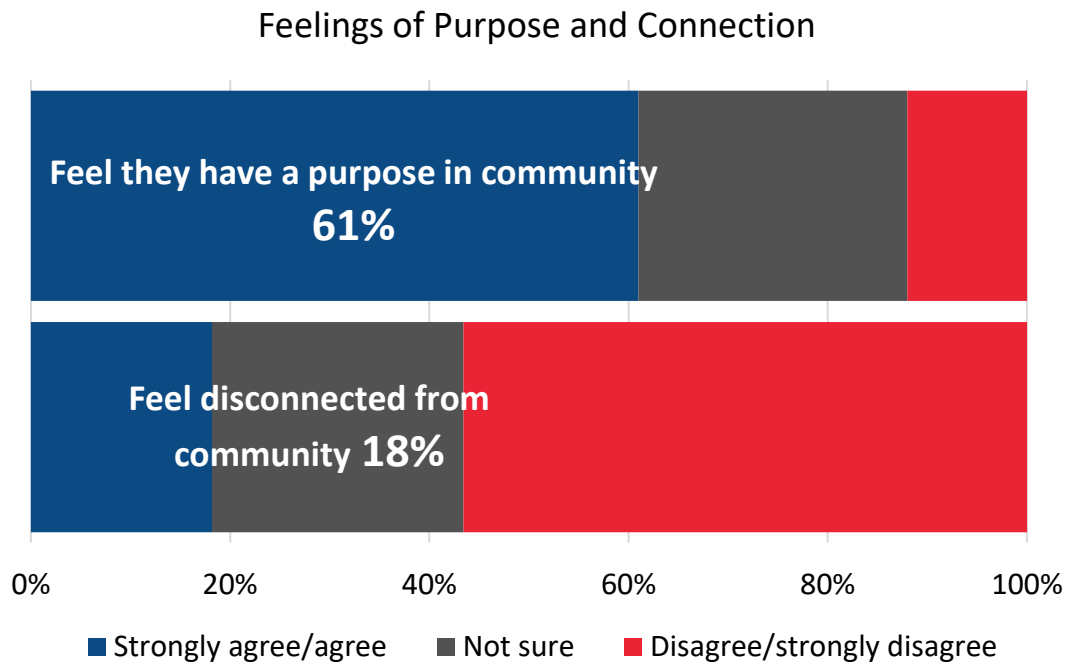
What's included in the Age Friendly Domain

Respectful and inclusive services; public images of aging; intergenerational and family interactions; public education; community inclusion and economic inclusion.

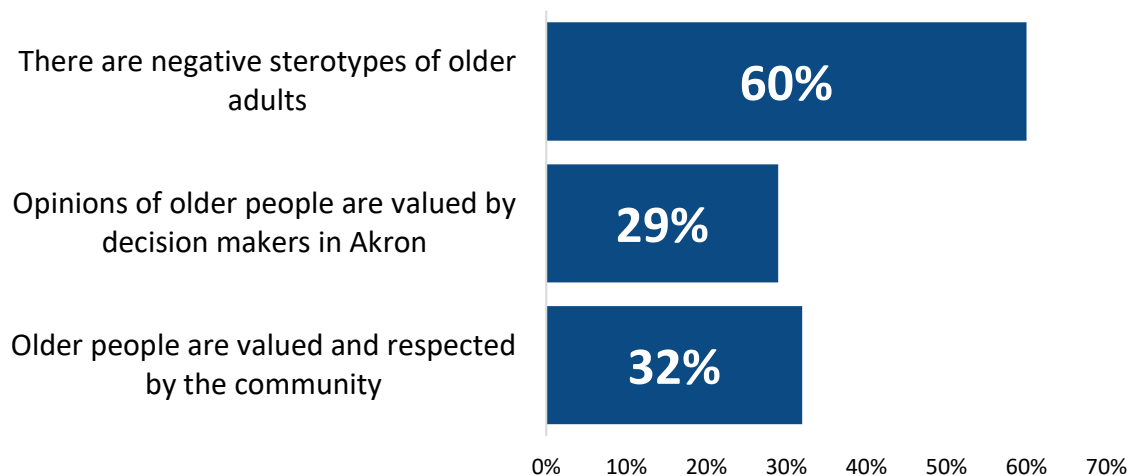
What we learned

More people in the community report feeling a purpose than report feeling disconnected from the community.

More than half of the older adults surveyed indicated there are negative stereotypes of older adults in Akron. Just 30 percent feel their opinions are valued by decisionmakers and slightly more feel valued and respected by the community.



Percent of Survey Takers Who Agreed With the Listed Statements





3% feel lonely all or most of the time

21% feel lonely sometimes

31% rarely feel lonely

45% never feel lonely

Seventy percent of the survey population interacts with friends or family “at least weekly.” Another 18 percent interact “on weekly basis.” Just under 5 percent interact with friends and family “every other week” and another 5 percent reported interacting “once or less than once a month.” One percent of respondents said they never have interactions or do not have family/friends.

How Often Do You Engage With Other Age Groups?

Every day to weekly
40%

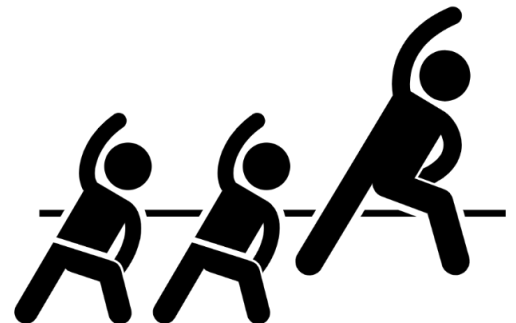
About once per week
26%

Every other week
9%

Once per month
10%

Less than monthly
8%

Never
8%



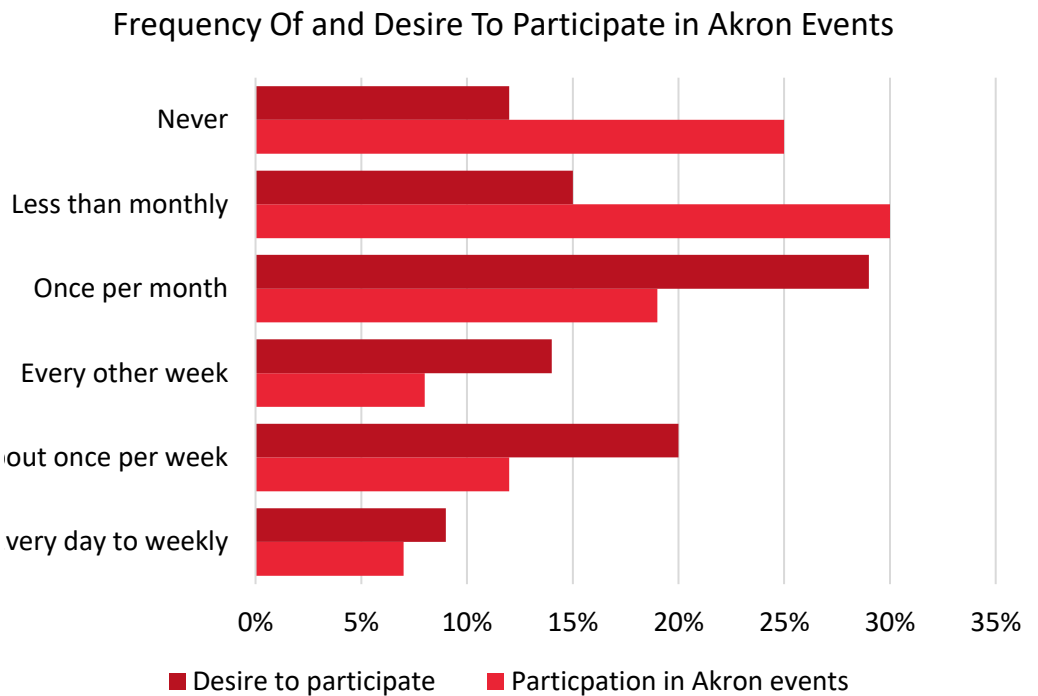
Social Participation

What's included in the Age Friendly Domain

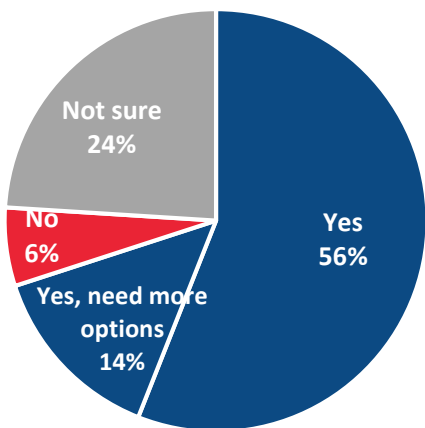
Accessible opportunities; affordable; range of opportunities; awareness of activities; encouragement of participation; addressing isolation and fostering community integration.

What we learned

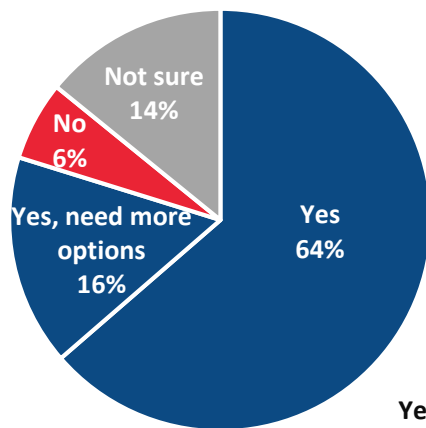
Survey results indicate older adults in Akron participate in events at a lower rate than they desire to participate. About a quarter of respondents indicated they never participate in events in Akron and another 30 percent participate less than monthly. Most feel they have access to social activities, public events and educational activities.



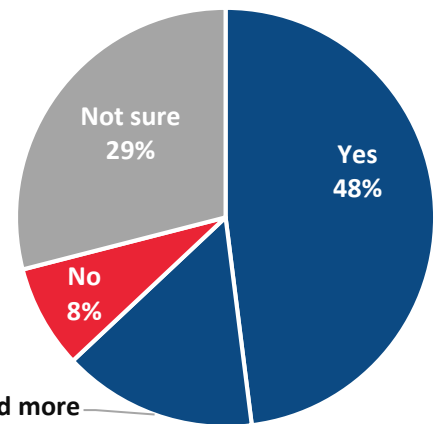
Do You Have Access To...



Social Activities

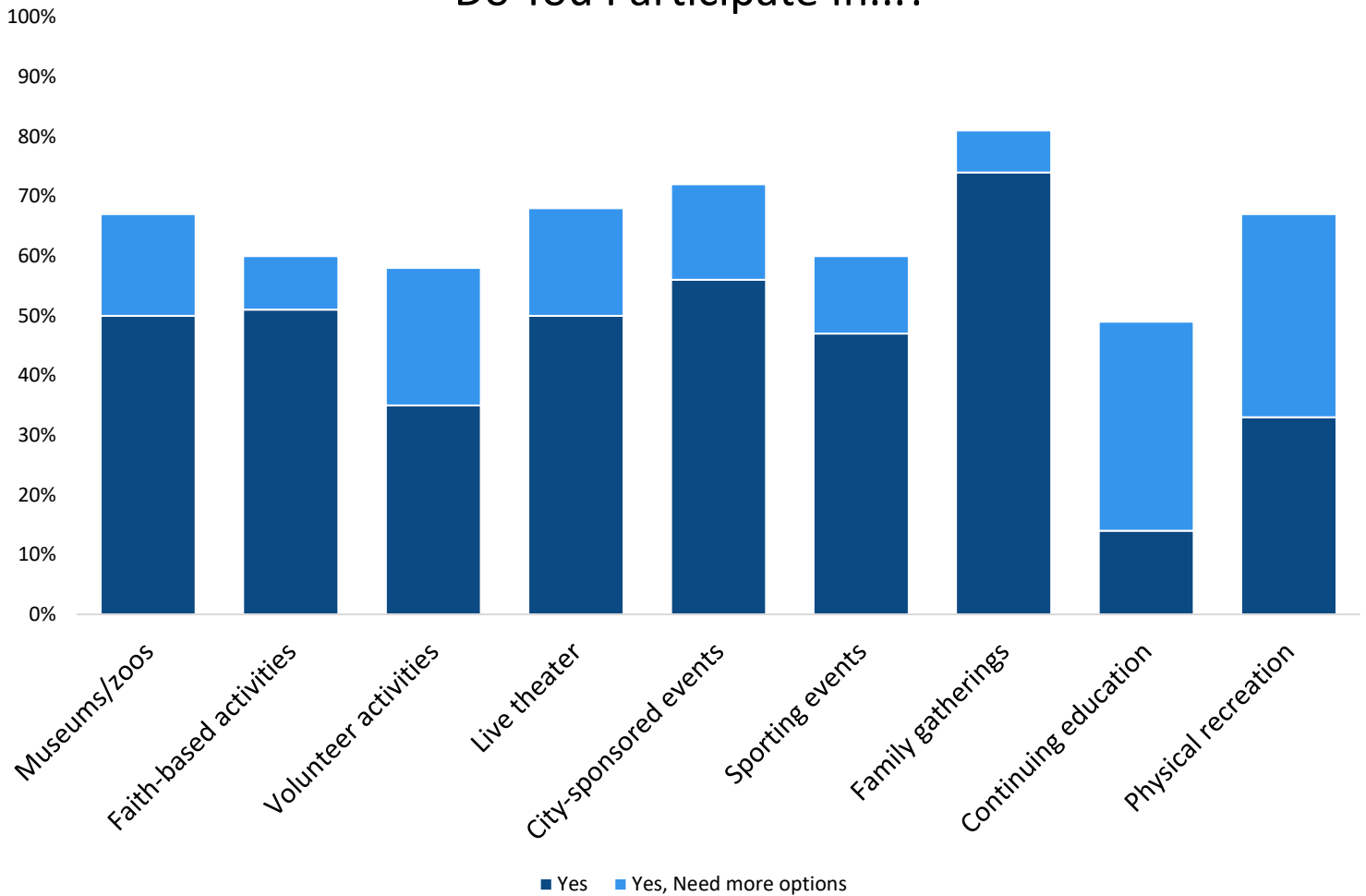


Public Events



Educational Events

Do You Participate In...?



31% of survey respondents are aware of continuing education opportunities.
