

Aging in Holliston: A Community Needs Assessment

Key Findings and Recommendations

Commissioned by the Town of Holliston

Caitlin Coyle, PhD & Mary Krebs, MS, MPPM
Center for Social & Demographic Research on Aging
Gerontology Institute
University of Massachusetts Boston



Acknowledgments

- ❖ Lisa Borchetta, Director, Holliston Council on Aging
- ❖ Travis Ahern, Town Administrator
- ❖ All the residents, municipal staff, and community stakeholders who took time to participate in interviews, focus groups, and the survey
- ❖ The Council on Aging (COA)
 - Carmen Chiango
 - Millie Bedard
 - Yvette Cain, Chair
 - Kathy Anguish, Vice Chair
 - Janet Alexander
 - Peter Eagan, Associate Member
 - Lynne Bajdek
 - Georgia Papavasiliou

Background & Purpose

- ❖ In cooperation with the Town of Holliston's Council on Aging, researchers at the Center for Social & Demographic Research on Aging at UMass Boston conducted this study focusing on the needs and interests of Holliston's adult population.
- ❖ The final report is meant to:
 - Shape the planning and development of Holliston's Council on Aging.
 - Inform planning of programs and services provided by the Senior Center.
 - Raise awareness of the needs of Holliston residents among both the community at large and other municipal departments and organizations that work on behalf of the community.

Project overview

Components of the Assessment

5 Key Informant Interviews (Spring/Summer 2022)

4 Focus Groups (Spring/Summer 2022, n=20)

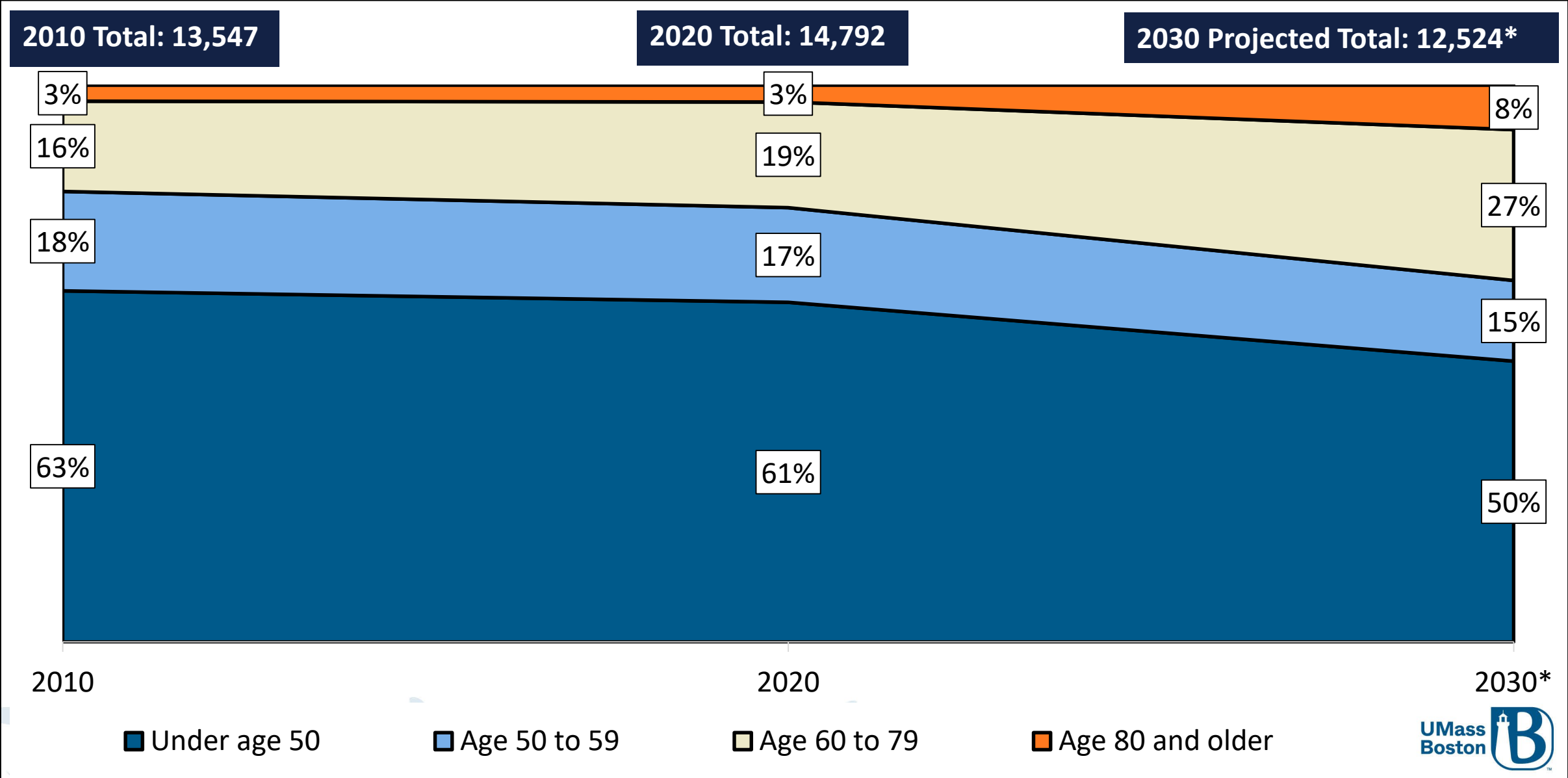
Community Survey 55+ (Fall 2022, n=1,322) with a 26% Response Rate

24% of Holliston's Population is 60+

Age Category	Number	Percentage
Under age 18	3,486	23%
Age 18 to 49	5,458	37%
Age 50 to 59	2,318	16%
Age 60 to 79	2,101	21%
Age 80 and older	449	3%
Total	14,891	100%

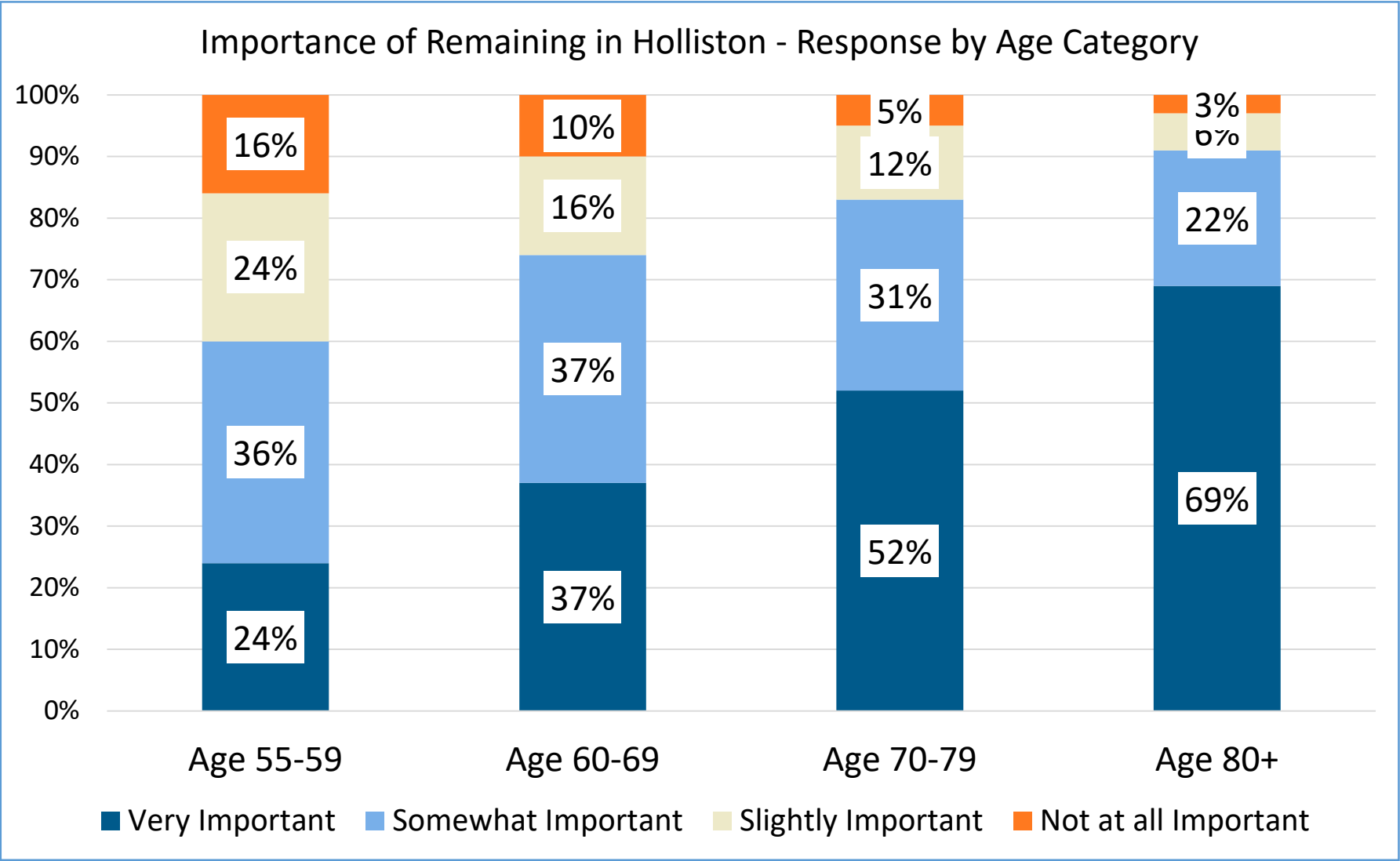
Source: American Community Survey, 2017-2021, Table B01001. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.

By 2030, it is estimated that 35% will be 60+



Aging in Holliston: Key Findings

Importance of staying in Holliston grows with age.



What are your greatest concerns about your ability to continue living in Holliston as you get older”

“I retired 20 years ago and town costs are beginning to outstrip my pension now. I may lose my property here and be forced to leave.”

70% of respondents reported concerns of affordability and cost of living as a challenge

26% of respondents are concerned about transportation options and being able to access the community

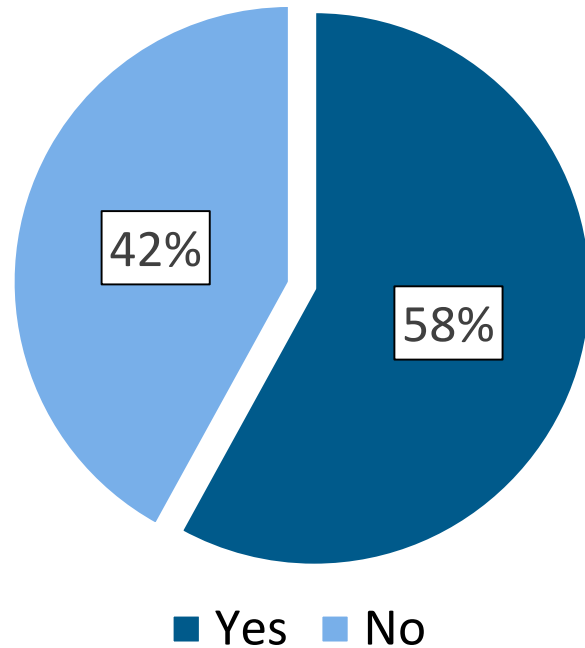
“If I can no longer drive, if support is gone I will have problems getting food.”

“Lack of houses suitable for aging in place- the 55+ communities are 2 stories.”

About 15% identified concerns about being able to maintain property or being able to downsize their housing to maintain independence.

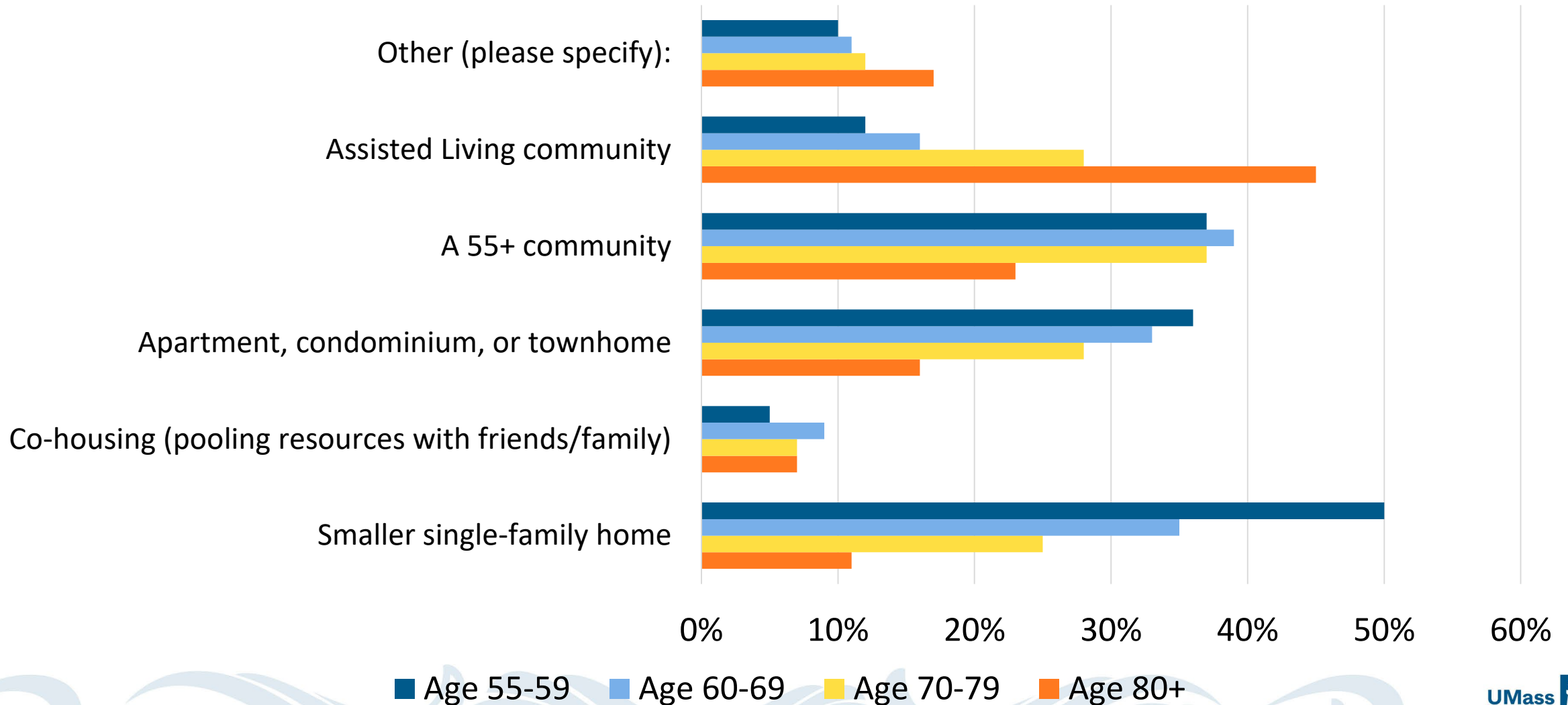
Home modifications and repairs are essential to maintaining independence:

Does your current residence have a bedroom and full bath on the entry level?



- 41% report needing home modifications, 10% of those cannot afford to make these changes.
- 38% report needing home repairs, 11% of those cannot afford to make these changes.

55+ or Assisted Living Community Housing Preference is Favored by Respondents



24% of respondents limit their driving in some way or do not drive

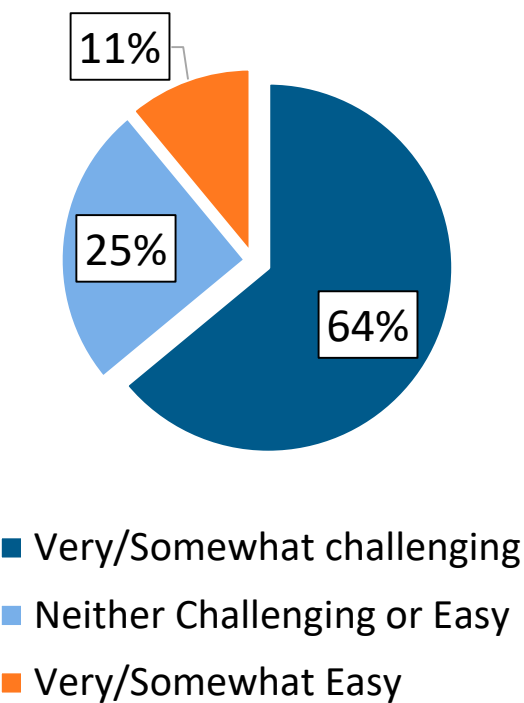
“ No Idea how long I can do this myself so can't answer the question of what kind of difficulties I'll have in getting the transportation that I need.”

- Holliston Resident

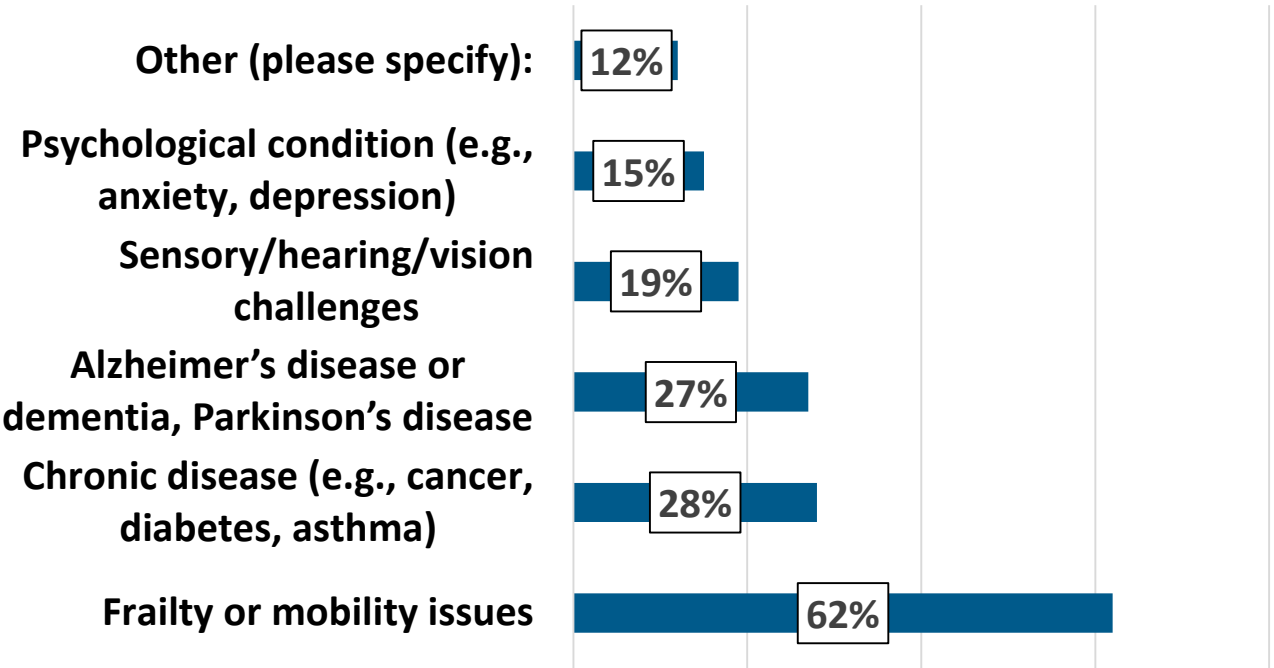
23% of those who limit their driving or do not drive, cite the inconvenience and/or unavailability of public transportation as the biggest difficulty they face in getting around.

38% of Respondents are Caregivers and They Need Help.

64% of respondents shared that caregiving and meeting other responsibilities is challenging.

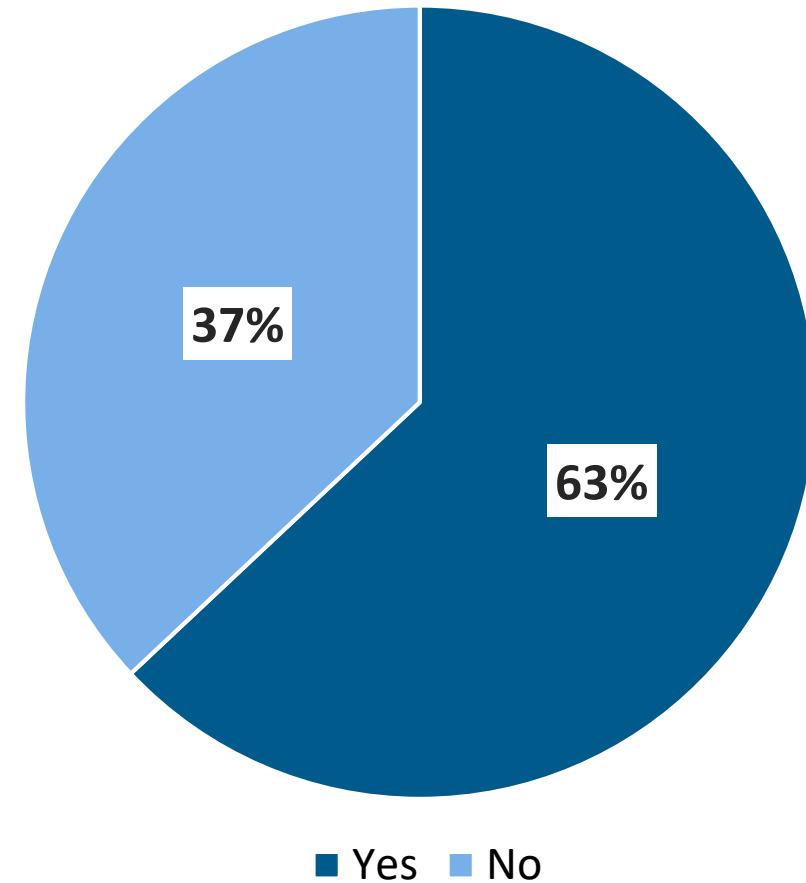


Specific Conditions Needing Support

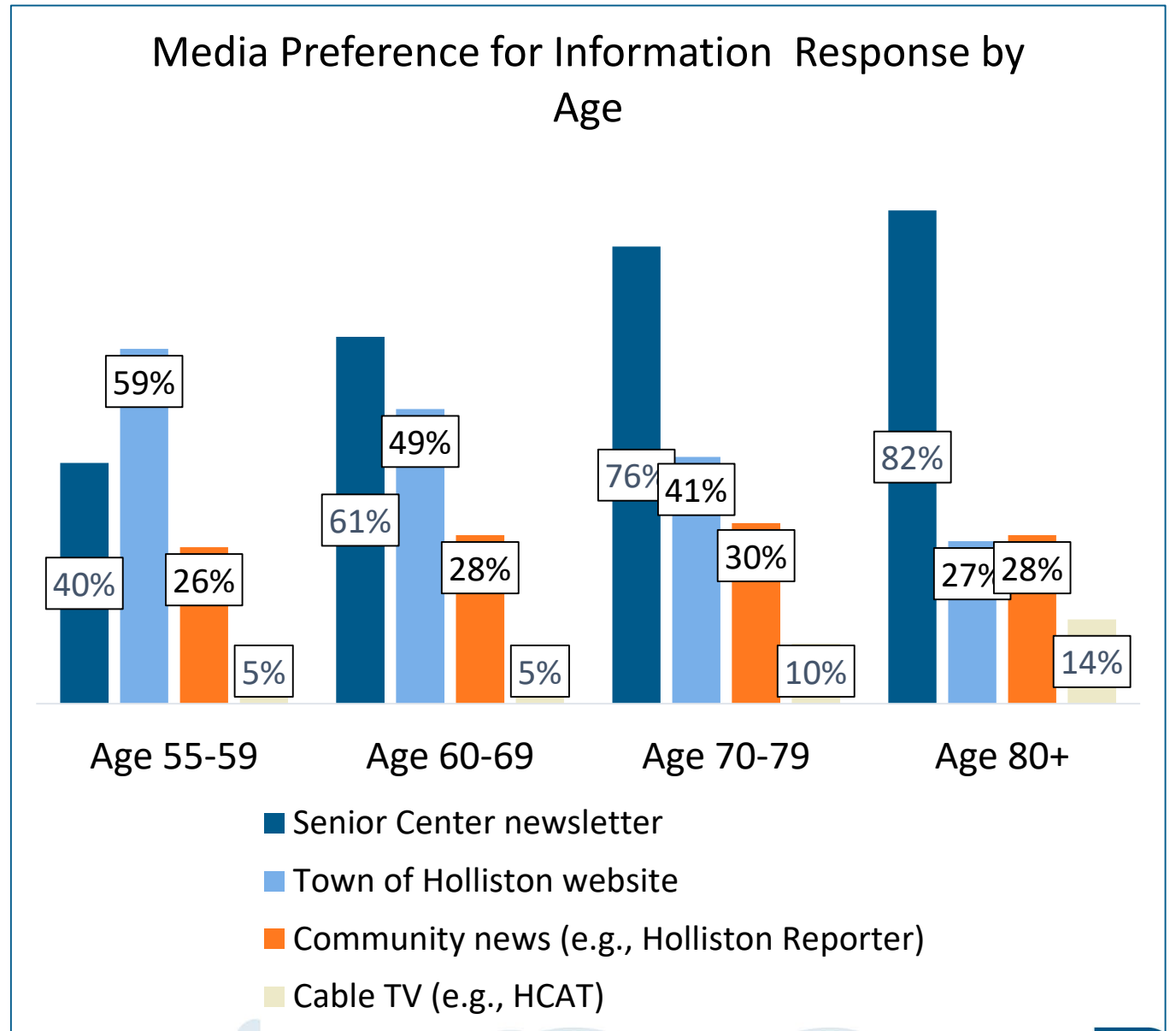


37% of
respondents
don't know who
to contact if they
need help.

Would you know whom to contact in Holliston should
you or someone in your family need help accessing
social services?



Senior Center Newsletter is a vital resource. Multimedia approaches are needed.

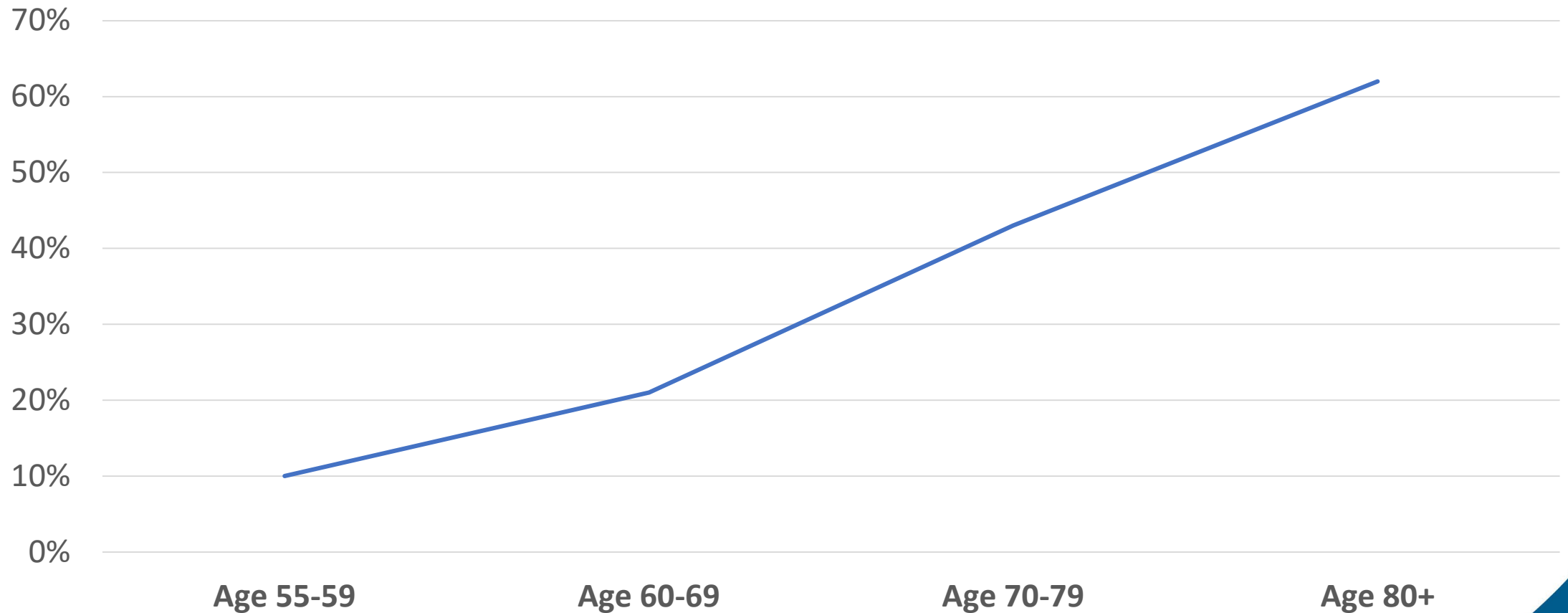


A stylized illustration of a light blue lighthouse on the left, with yellow sun rays emanating from behind it and blue waves at the bottom left. The text "Holliston Council on Aging" is centered in the middle of the image.

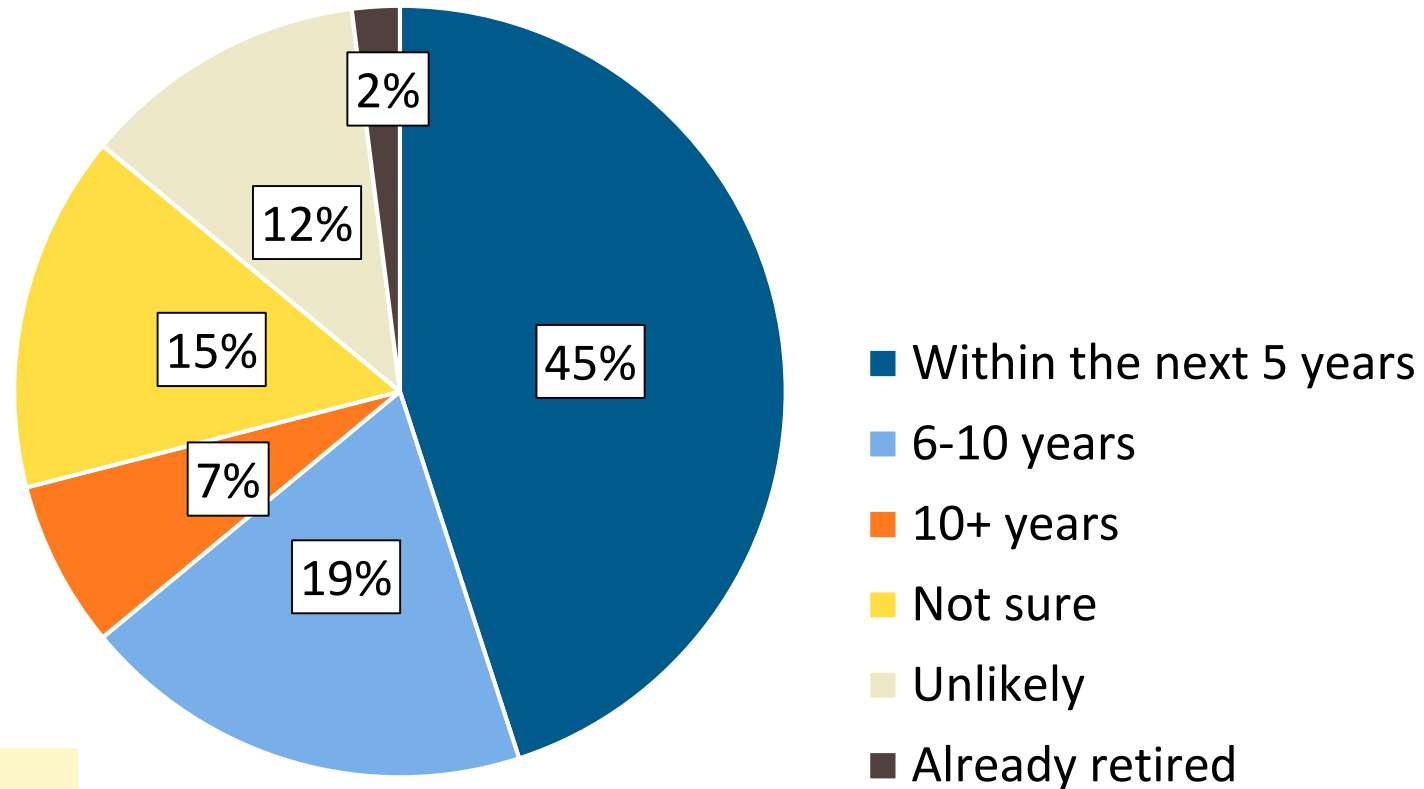
Holliston Council on Aging

Senior Center Usage Increases with Age

Usage of services or programs offered by the Holliston Senior Center



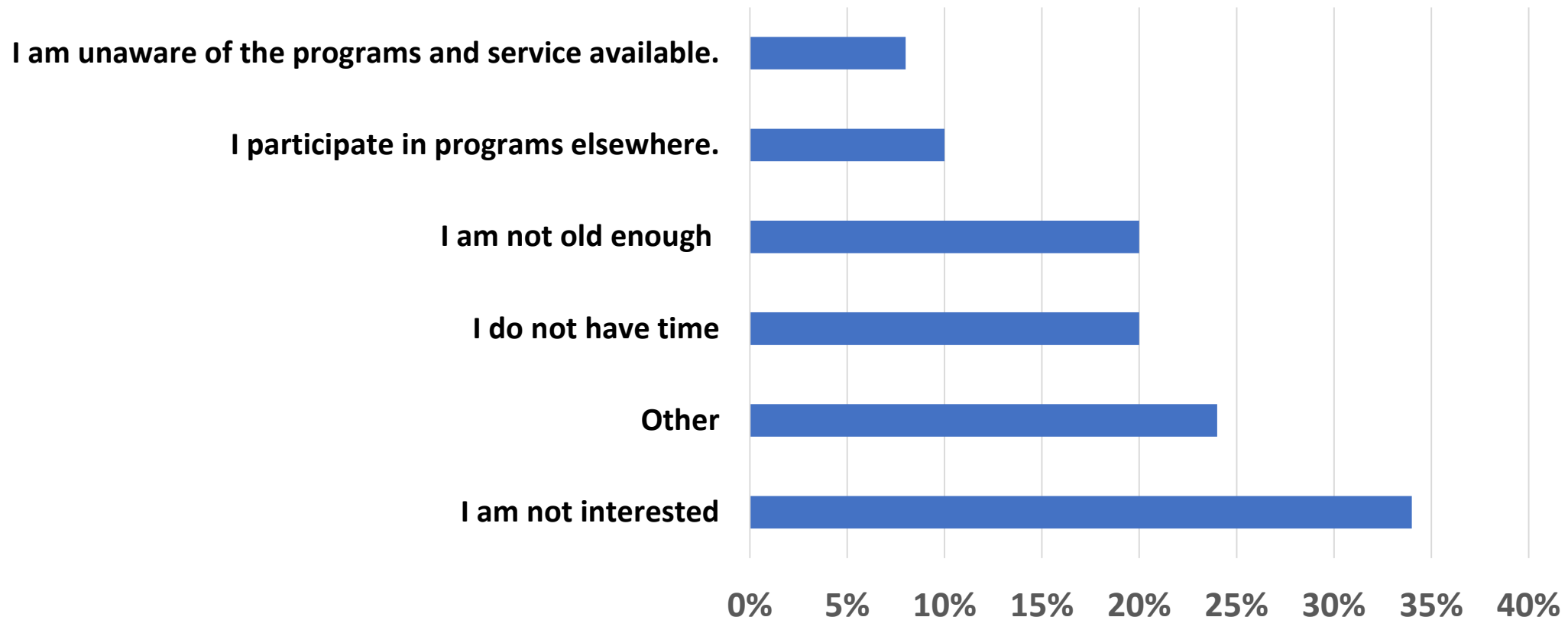
45% of Respondents Will Retire in the Next 5 Years



27% are unsure if they will retire or think it is unlikely they will retire.

59% of users only participate once/year or for a special event.

Rationale for Limited Engagement with Programs or Services Offered by the Holliston Senior Center



Not yet having a need and being busy are the other reasons cited for not participating:

No need for the senior center at this time:

“I am independent, physically and emotionally and travel extensively.”

“At this time, I feel others are more in need of those services than me.”

“I am not yet inhibited by health or finances or transportation in any way. I am about to turn 70. I could see in 5 - 10 years how this could be very important, but not yet, thankfully.”

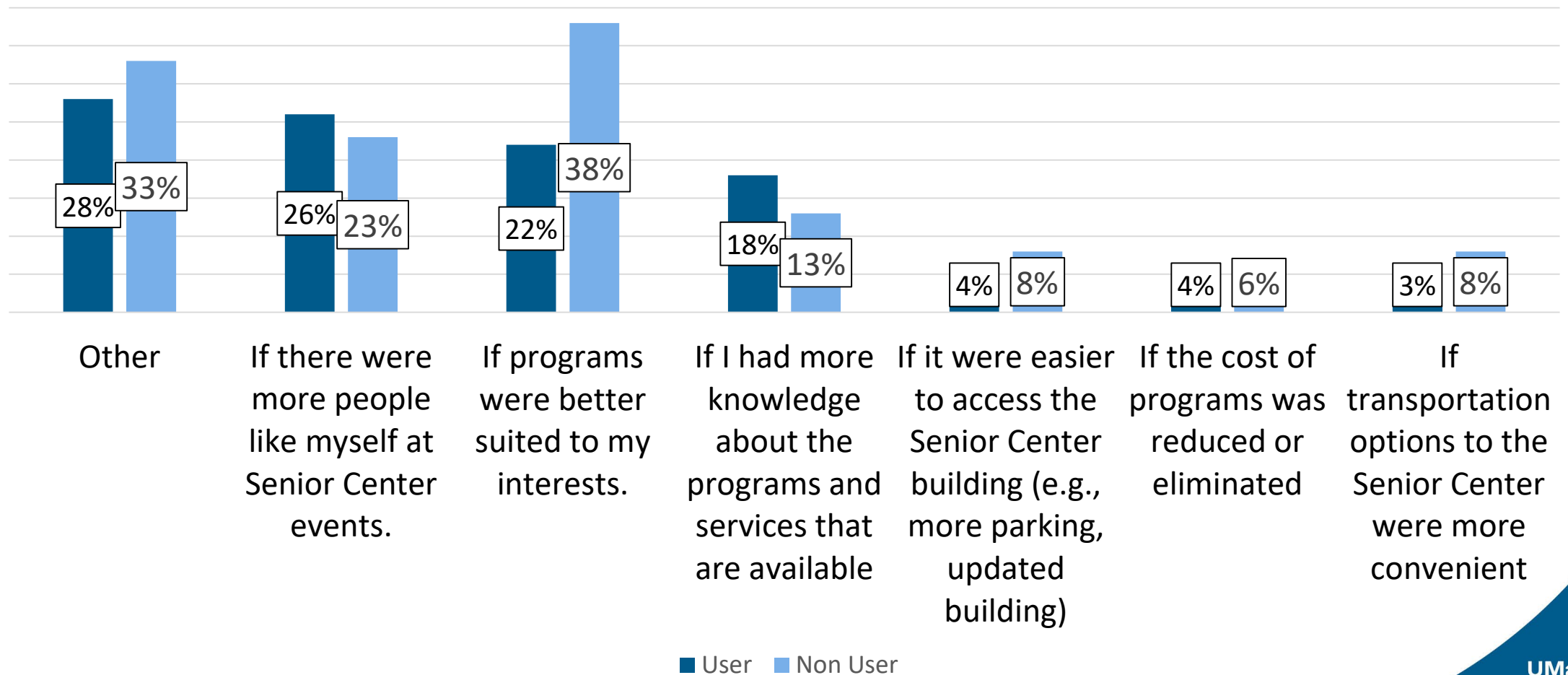
Not enough time to participate at the senior center:

“I am a 62 yr old and still work. I would like classes offered early evening and weekends. “

“I am involved in quite a few other activities and also still watch my grandchildren. I also do not have enough of my friends who are involved with the Senior Center.”

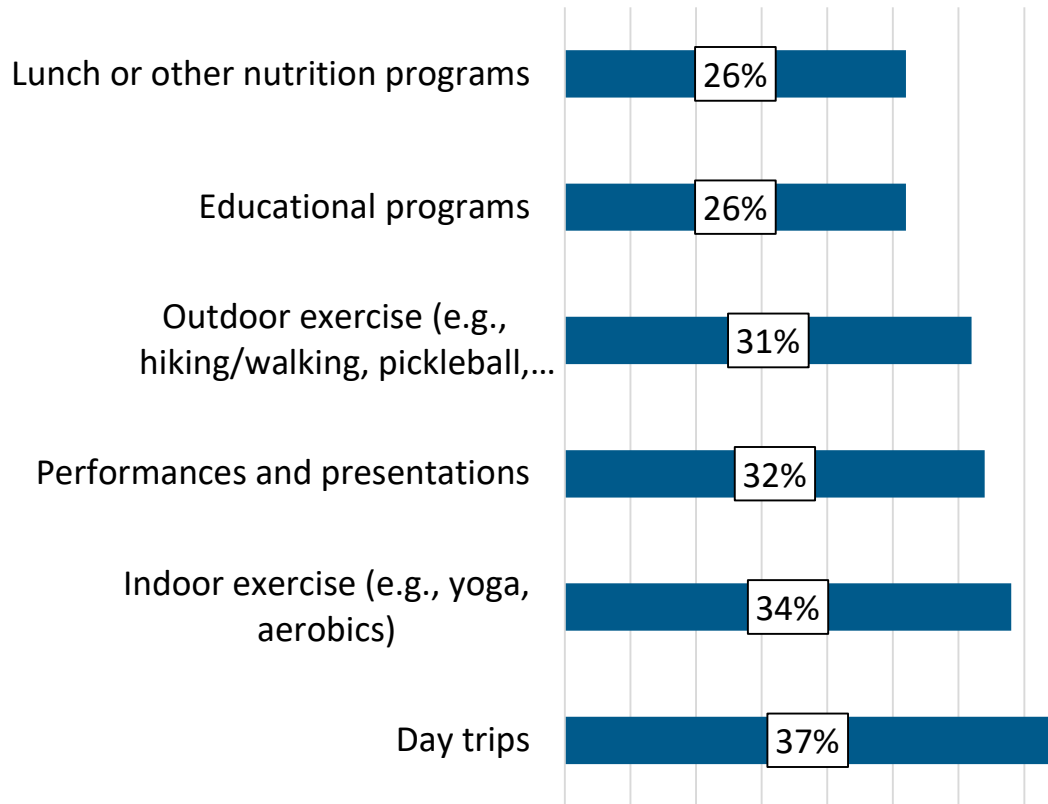
“I am still working + doing lots of activism + volunteering. Until recently I was caring for an elderly relative so, not much time”

“Seeing themselves” reflected at the Senior Center would increase likelihood of participating.

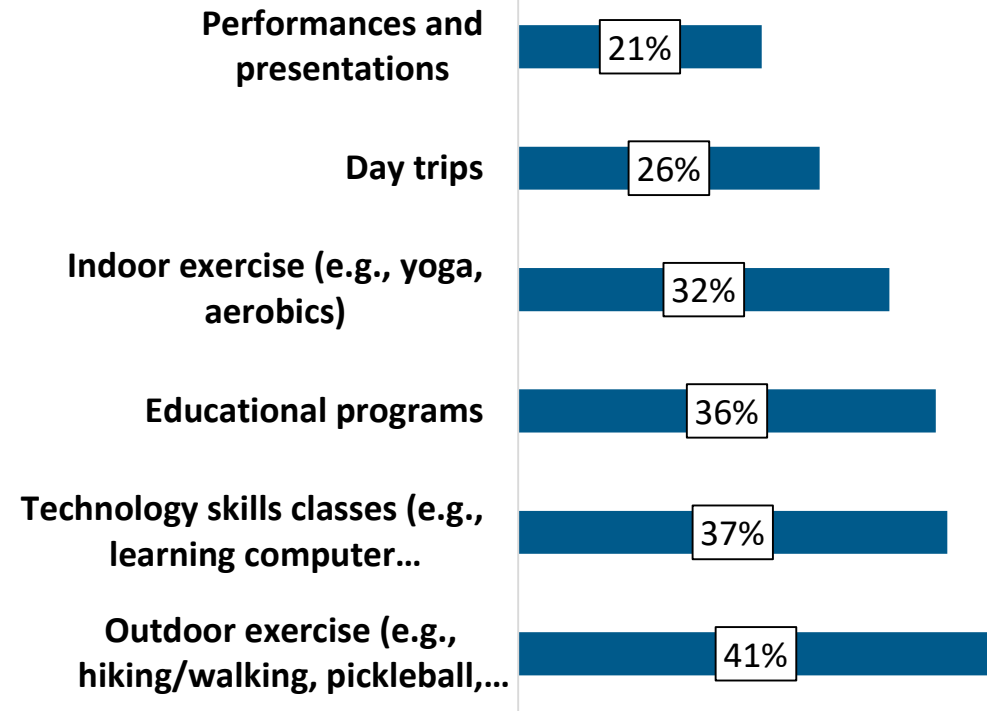


Which of the following areas would you prioritize in expanding the programs available through the Holliston Senior Center?

User



Non User





Recommendations

Plan for expected growth in demand for senior programs and services.

- **The physical space and location of the Holliston COA can not currently meet the needs of the range of ages and interests of the Holliston older adult population.**
 - Consider hosting programs in spaces around the community to enhance visibility and expand programming.
 - Solicit volunteers to run programs.
- **The demand for Senior Center programs and services is expected to escalate in coming years. Preferences are for physical activity and lifelong learning programs.**
 - Pursue a site study or feasibility study to determine sites for a new or expanded space

Perception is that the COA is needs based—which deters participation.

- Consider changing the name to be more inclusive. Consider soliciting ideas for a new name by facilitating a Town-wide contest. Creating an image that reframes aging as a positive and active experience may empower residents to participate.
- Consider ways to welcome newcomers to the Center. Offer incentive for “bringing a friend” and consider hosting programs specifically for newcomers.

Programming does not currently align with the range of interests of residents.

- Support the development of a Trailblazers club to connect with adults seeking to connect via outdoor activities.
- Coordinate with residents to identify topics and skills they can share with others and pilot-test a lifelong learning program.
 - Could there be a stipend or tax relief associated with volunteering to teach?
- Consider establishing a “Reverse Mentorship” program or a “Sages and Seekers” program to connect students with older residents.

Opportunities to adapt current housing, downsize, or obtain housing with services are perceived as challenging.

- Work with partners to establish a list of contractors or handypersons who will provide home modifications to support safety within the home. Continuously update the list.
- Continue to contribute to local conversations about housing options for older adults who wish to find supportive housing. Advocate for options that current residents prefer. Assisted living communities and senior independent living units are desirable housing options.
- Promote awareness of existing property tax relief programs. Consider expanding eligibility so that more residents are eligible and brainstorm ideas for new positions related to COA activities.

Obtaining supplementary and accessible transportation is a concern for Holliston's residents as they age.

- Ensure that segments of the community at high risk of experiencing barriers to transportation are aware of available options: residents aged 80 and older, non-drivers, and those with significant mobility limitations.
 - Consider developing a local “travel training” program where residents can learn about options and navigation.
- Explore the development of a formal volunteer transportation program (e.g., F.I.S.H). to expand door-to-door transportation to the Senior Center or other social gatherings or shopping excursions and appointments.
- Support the development of a “village” in Holliston that can support volunteer transportation and also support in-home repairs/maintenance and supplement programming.

Many Holliston residents need support due to physical or cognitive conditions, and many caregivers need help.

- Create new ways of providing information and assistance for caregivers, support groups for caregivers, and provide information about referral resources available through the COA. Consider hosting a family caregiver “resource fair” as an opportunity to connect the Holliston COA with family caregivers.
- Encourage Town staff to participate in Dementia Friends training to raise awareness about residents and families living with dementia.
- Respite is needed.
 - Consider developing a volunteer respite program, which would require space and staff oversight, to offer residents a few hours of respite.
 - Explore opportunities to connect with local adult day programs and provide transportation.

Thank you!

Caitlin Coyle, PhD

Director, Center for Social & Demographic Research on Aging

University of Massachusetts Boston

Caitlin.coyle@umb.edu

