Lexington for All Ages:
A Community Needs Assessment

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Goals of the Final Report

▸ Increase awareness about demographic changes and implications for the Town of Lexington

▸ Inform the Lexington Department of Human Services, and organizations that work with and on behalf of older residents of Lexington, about the strengths and challenges of aging in the Town

▸ Present recommendations to support the Town in responding to the changing demographics and associated community concerns
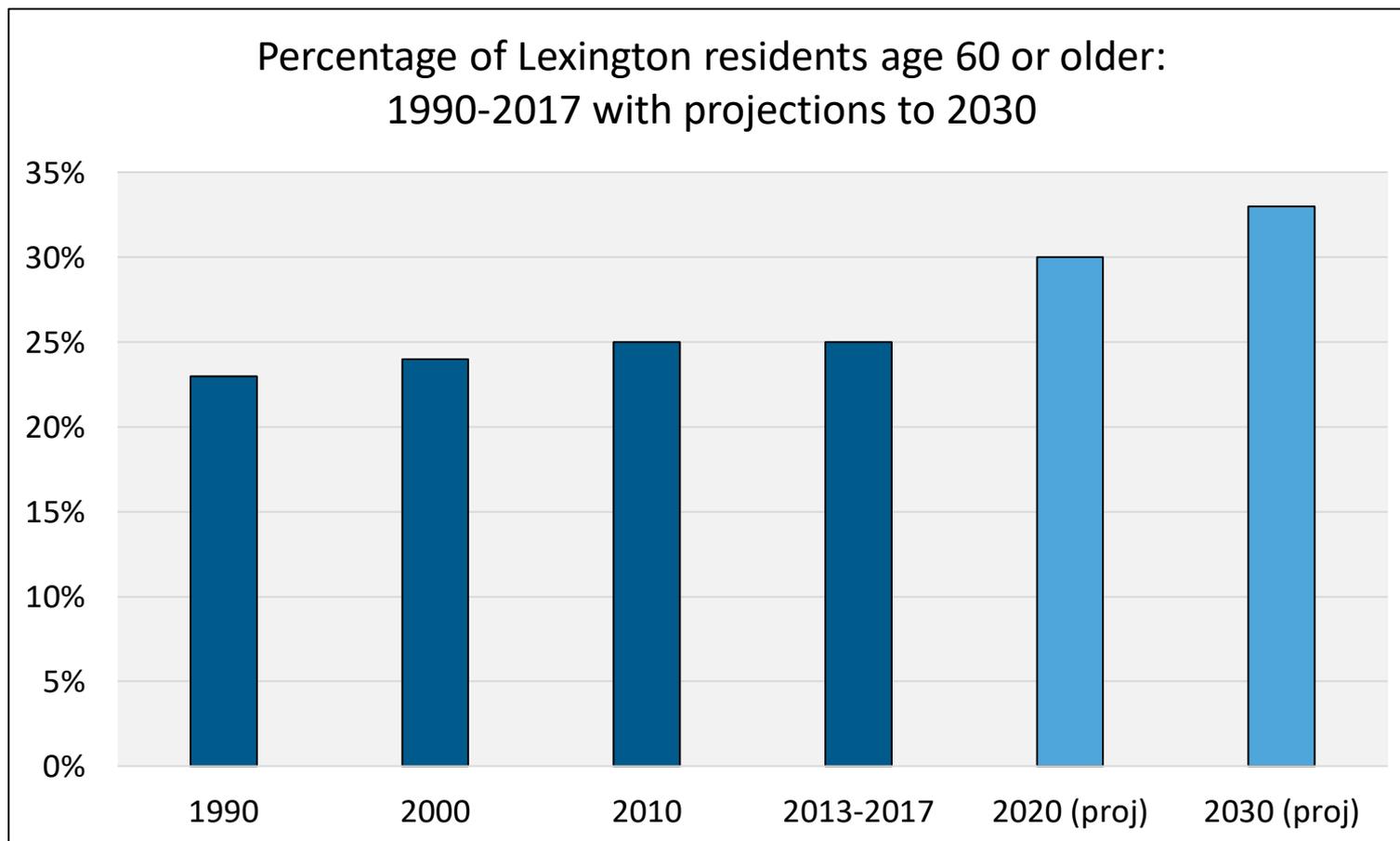
An Age-Friendly Community

"An inclusive and accessible community environment that optimizes opportunities for health, participation and security, in order that quality of life and dignity are ensured as people age." (World Health Organization, 2006)

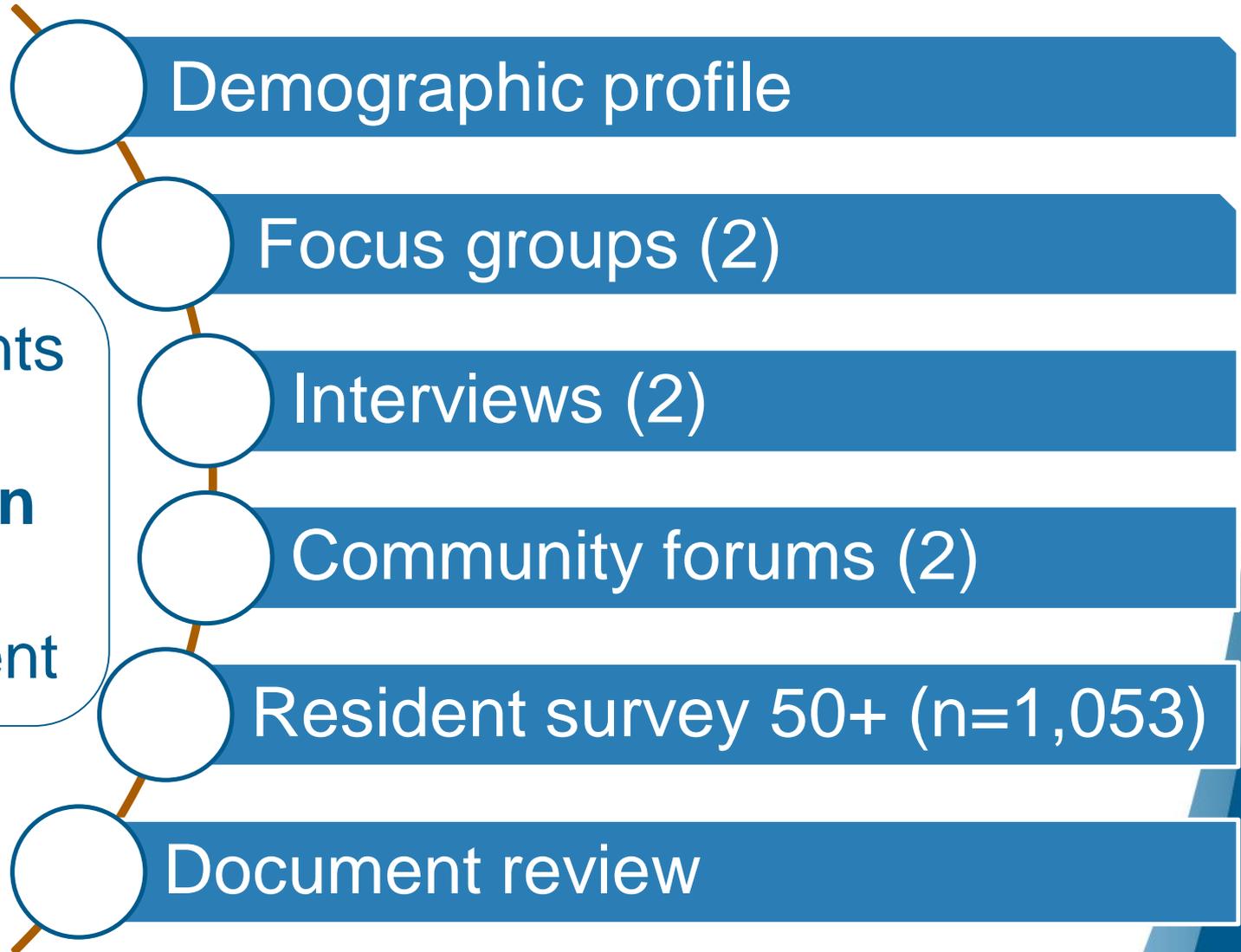| Eight domains of an age-friendly community	
Housing	Transportation
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	Community and Health Services
Social Participation	Civic Participation and Employment
Communication and Information	Respect and Social Inclusion

Lexington is getting older

Percentage of Lexington residents age 60 or older: 1990-2017 with projections to 2030

Sources: Percentages for 1990-2010 are from the Decennial U.S. Censuses. Percentage for 2013-2017 are from the American Community Survey for 2013-2017. Four sets of projections were averaged to generate the percentages for 2020 and 2030, two from the Donahue Institute, University of Massachusetts http://pep.donahue-institute.org/ and two from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council https://www.mapc.org/learn/projections/

Characteristics of Survey Respondents: Age

AGE	Lexington mailing list, residents age 50+	Surveys mailed	Age distribution of mailing list and of surveys mailed	Number of responses	Response rate	Age distribution of respondents	Age distribution, ACS 2013-17
50 to 59	5,095	1,355	39%	297	22%	29%	40%
60 to 69	3,869	1,020	29%	313	31%	30%	27%
70 to 79	2,549	648	19%	250	39%	24%	17%
80 to 89	1,499	358	10%	129	36%	13%	16%
90+	499	119	3%	39	33%	4%	
Total	13,511	3,500	100%	1,053*	30%*	100%	100% [13,564]

Characteristics of Survey Respondents: Gender, Race, and Language

55% of respondents are women

21% speak a language other than English at home

- ❖ 83% are White/Caucasian
- ❖ 13% Asian
- ❖ <3% each: Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American, Other

Key Findings

Survey respondents cite many benefits to living in Lexington

▸ Historic nature of the community

▸ Walkable downtown area

▸ Diversity of the population

▸ Cultural events

▸ High quality of schools

▸ Extensive civic engagement

▸ Cary Library and the Community Center

Housing

Our homes serve not only as a source of shelter, but also as the platform for maintaining social networks and connecting us to neighborhood amenities. Access to affordable and appropriate housing is linked to well-being across the life-course.

Housing Preferences

▸ Housing preferences in Lexington if need to move:

  ▸ **Age 50-59**: 53% marked single-family home

  ▸ **Age 60-79**: About 30% chose each of these—senior independent living, single-family, or apartment/condominium/townhouse

  ▸ **Age 80+**: 54% marked senior independent living community

▸ Many commented they would leave Lexington if they had to move

Cost of living is a concern, especially with respect to housing and property taxes

Lexington is a wonderful town, but annual increases in taxes are biting heavily into our small reserves with no relief in sight.

If physical disabilities prevented us from continuing to live in our cape style home, we would be unable to afford staying in Lexington.

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Side Bar: **Financial Insecurity**
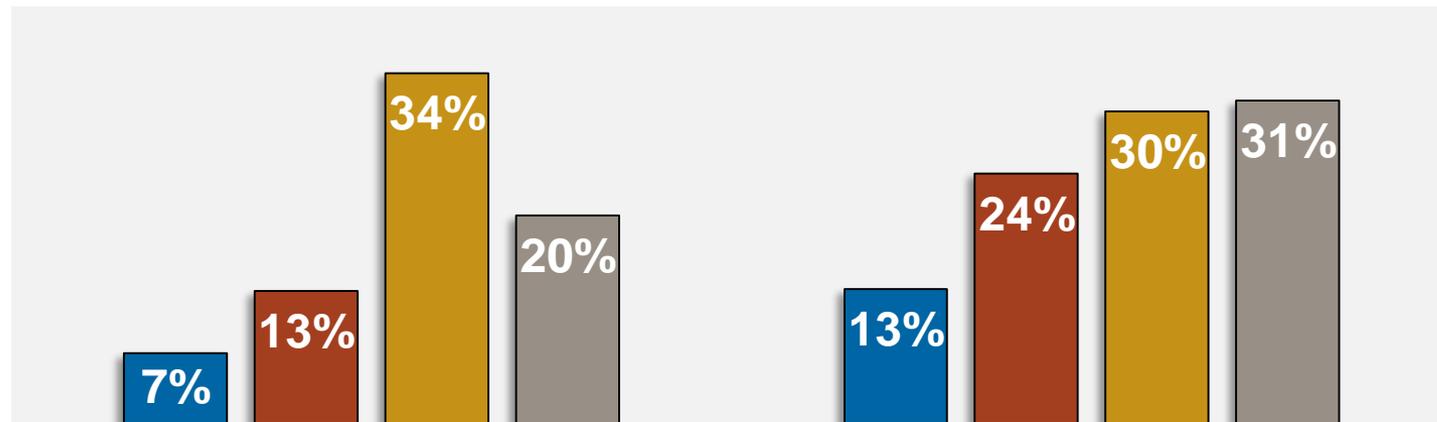
Households headed by someone age 65 and older (from ACS)

- 28% - Annual income under $50,000
- 12% - Annual income under $25,000

"I have adequate resources to meet my financial needs, including home maintenance, personal healthcare, and other expenses." (from survey completed for this study)

- 11% of all ages disagree or strongly disagree
- Consistent across all age groups

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Many older residents struggle to maintain and modify their homes

Home maintenance (among those responsible for these activities) and home modifications

Unable to take care of home maintenance: Age 50-59: 7%, Age 60-79: 13%, Age 80+: 34%, Financially insecure: 20%

Need home modifications: Age 50-59: 13%, Age 60-79: 24%, Age 80+: 30%, Financially insecure: 31%

■ Age 50-59 ■ Age 60-79 ■ Age 80+ ■ Financially insecure

Transportation

Being able to get where one wants and needs to go helps people maintain social ties, obtain needed goods and services, access local amenities and be engaged with the community.

Transportation Concerns

▸ <u>Limited evening/weekend transportation and limited public transportation</u>

It would be very useful to have bus service to and from Alewife in the evenings, to 11:30 or midnight or so. And also on weekends.

▸ <u>Challenge of fixed-routes</u>

I can't walk the distance to get the Lexpress.
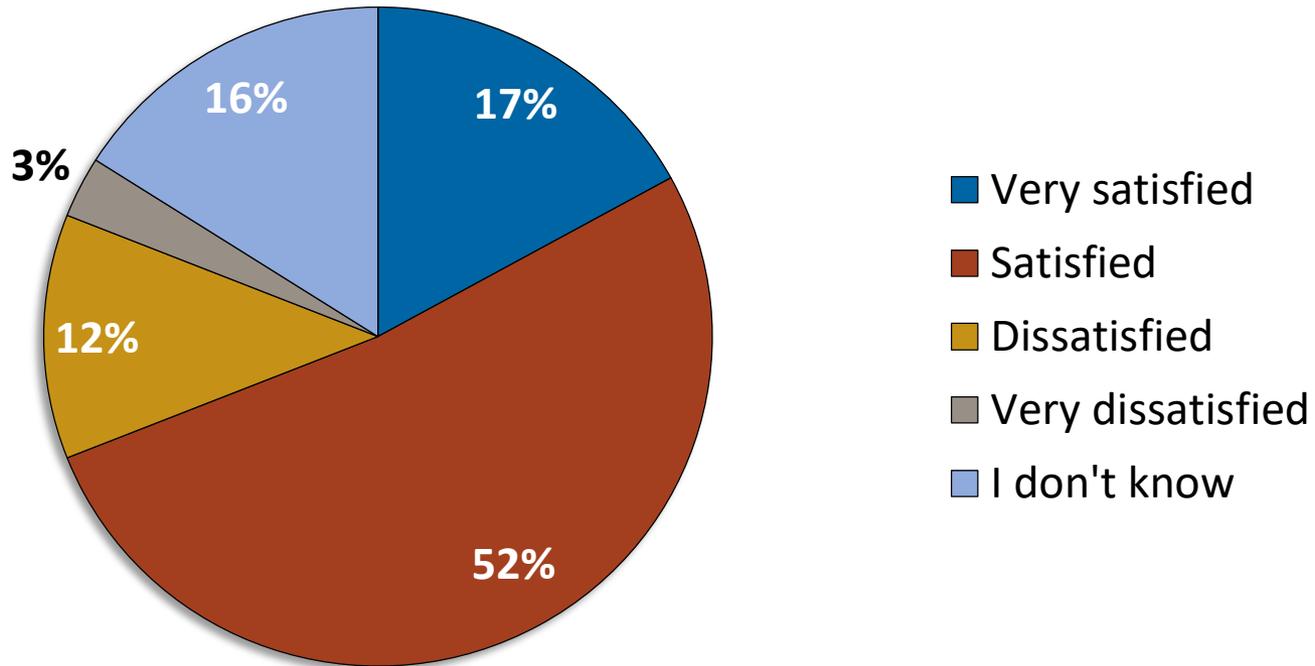
▸ <u>Traffic</u>

Too much cross town traffic passing through town during rush hours in mornings and evening.

▸ <u>Future needs</u>

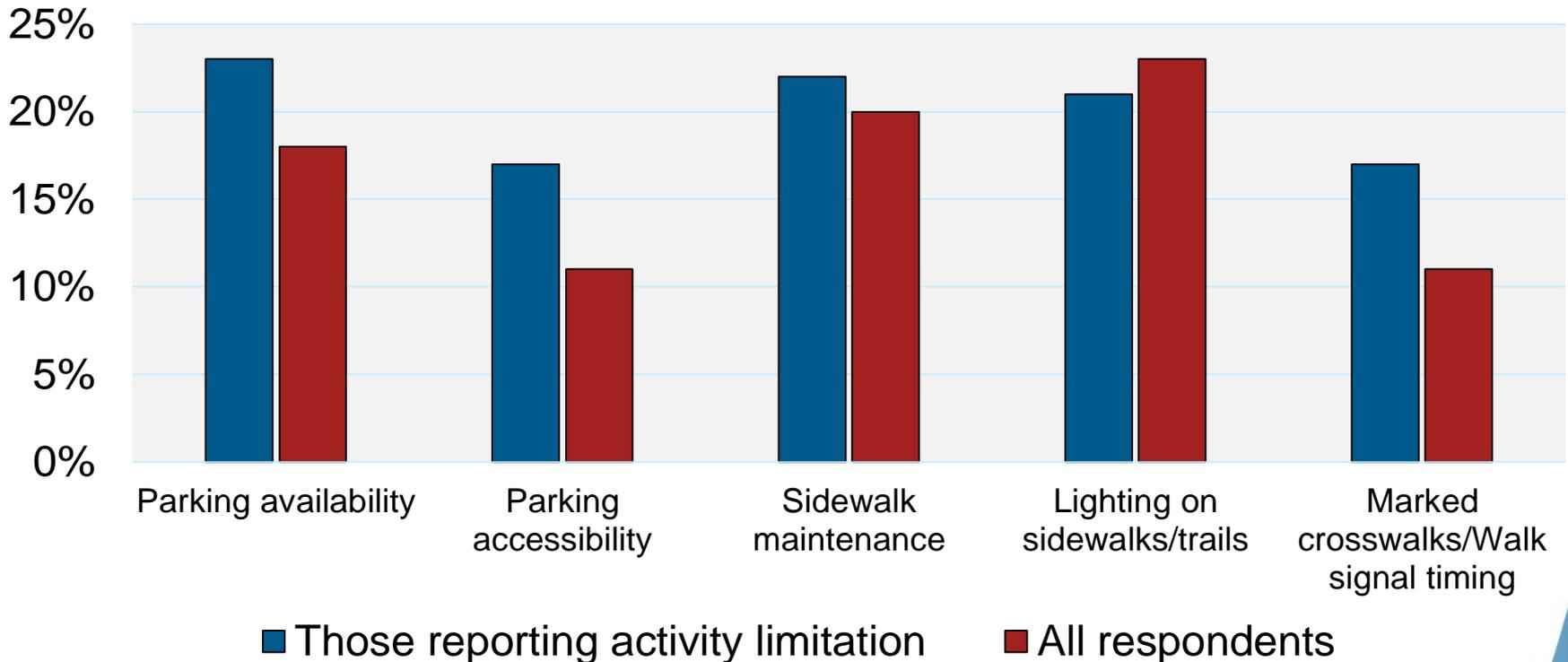*Lexington is not an easy place to live if one does not drive.*

Transportation Options

Satisfaction with transportation options

- Very satisfied — 17%
- Satisfied — 52%
- Dissatisfied — 12%
- Very dissatisfied — 3%
- I don't know — 16%

Parking and walkability

Percentage of people who reported being **dissatisfied or very dissatisfied** with selected transportation features

Legend: ■ Those reporting activity limitation ■ All respondents

Categories: Parking availability, Parking accessibility, Sidewalk maintenance, Lighting on sidewalks/trails, Marked crosswalks/Walk signal timing

Activity limitations –those who reported *sometimes, often or almost always* to the question, "How much are your daily activities limited by your health or health-related problems?"

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Creating safe and accessible shopping, entertainment, and community areas promotes inclusion of all residents. Ensuring that outdoor spaces and public buildings, as well as community meetings and services, are adequate and accessible to all supports a livable community.

Concerns with outdoor spaces and buildings

▸ Some frustrations about lack of dedicated space for seniors

> *I live alone and come to the center to exercise and then leave; there is no place to socialize.*

▸ Senior center parking on lower level can be challenging

> *The Town needs a fully functioning and inviting senior center that has ample parking on the same level as the facility.*
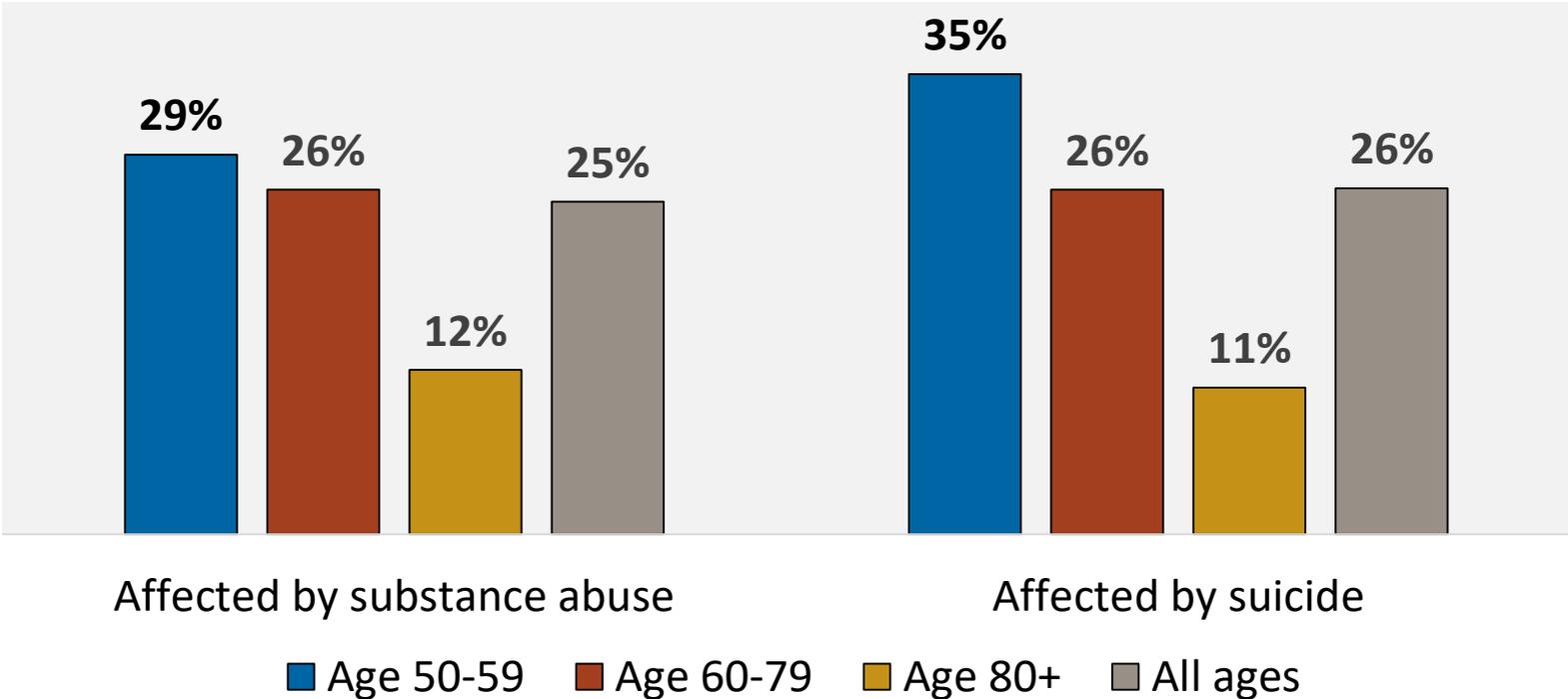
▸ Dissatisfaction with conveniently located public restrooms

  ▸ 37% all respondents dissatisfied

  ▸ 43% of those with activity limitations dissatisfied

Community and Health Services

Livable communities offer nearby access to services and supports. Residents with mobility or driving limitations need services that can be easily accessed using available transportation options or delivered within their homes.

Community and Health Services: **Mental Health**

Percentage of respondents who have been, or have had friends or family members who have been, affected by substance abuse and/or suicide.
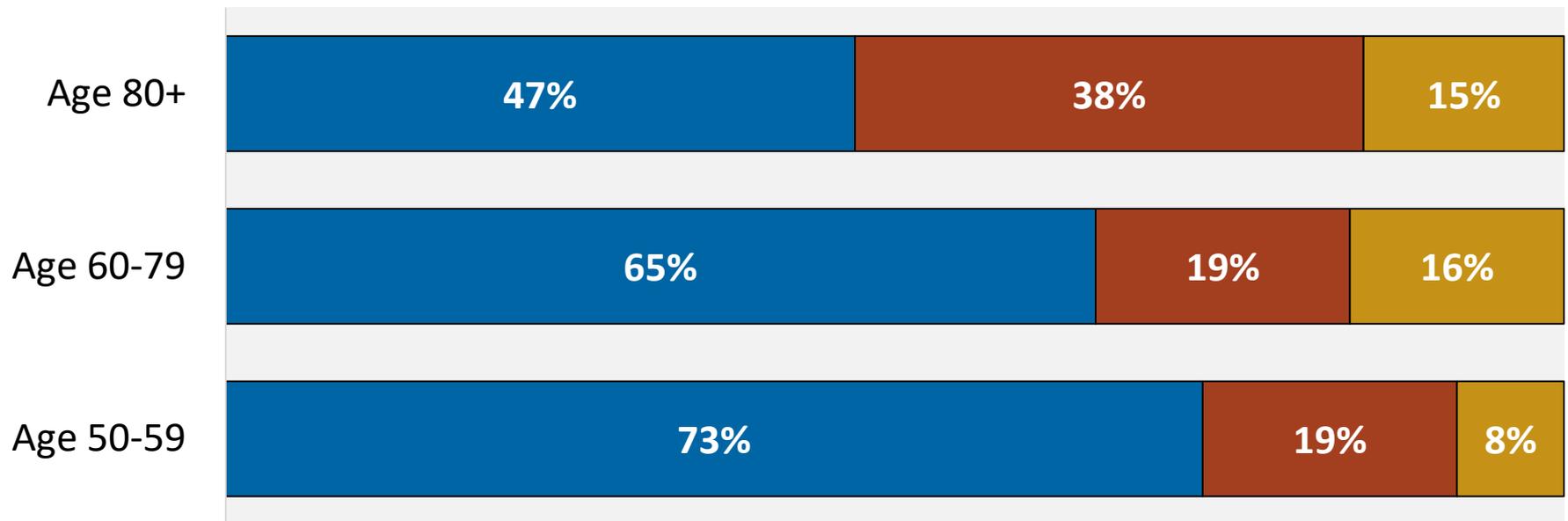
Affected by substance abuse
- 29%
- 26%
- 12%
- 25%

Affected by suicide
- 35%
- 26%
- 11%
- 26%

Age 50-59   Age 60-79   Age 80+   All ages

Community and Health Services: **Caregiving**

▸ **46%** of survey respondents currently provide care or assistance to a person who is disabled, frail, or struggling with a health condition (or have done so in the past 5 years)

▸ Of those**, 37%** live or lived with the person receiving care

Even though the person to whom I provided care or assistance did not live with us, it was plenty challenging
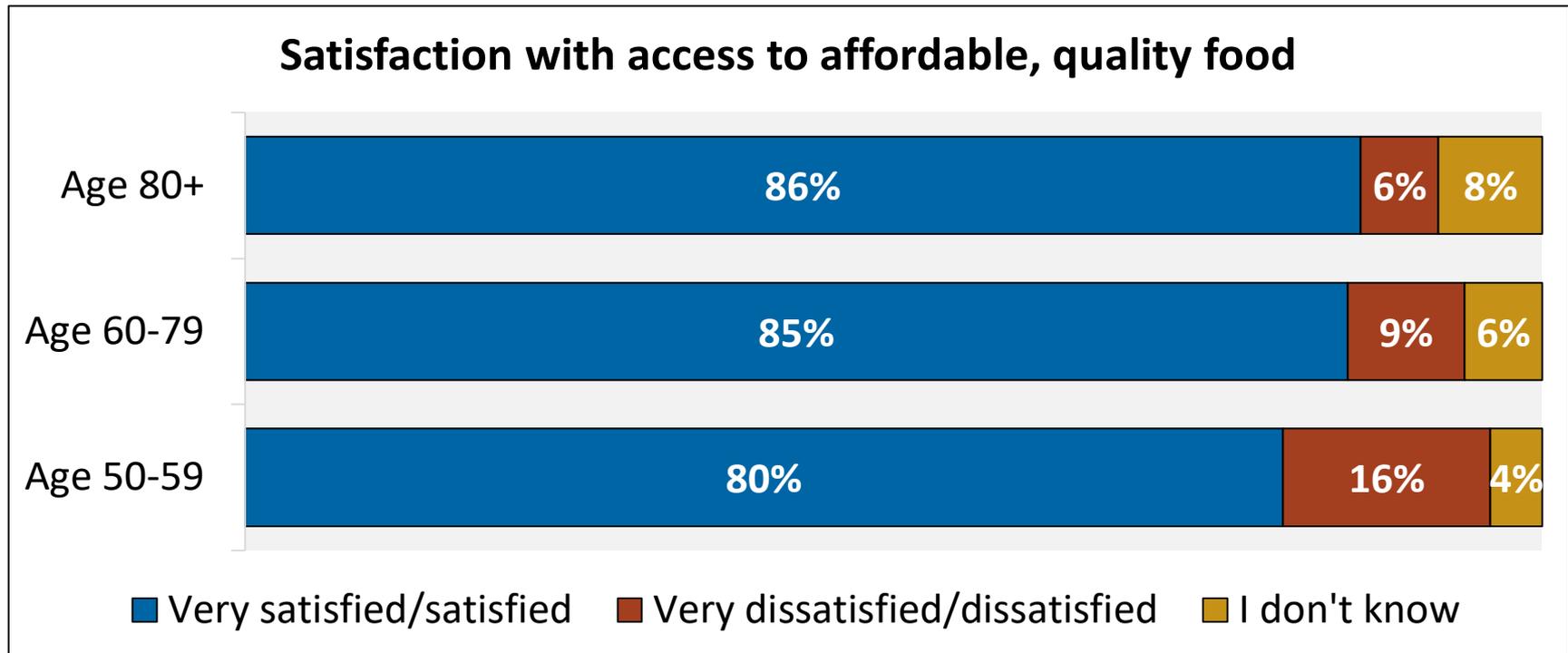
Community and Health Services: **Caregiving**

"How challenging is/was it for you to care for this person(s) and meet your other responsibilities with family and/or work?"

Age	Very or somewhat challenging	Neither challenging or easy	Somewhat or very easy
Age 80+	47%	38%	15%
Age 60-79	65%	19%	16%
Age 50-59	73%	19%	8%

■ Very or somewhat challenging ■ Neither challenging or easy
■ Somewhat or very easy

Community and Health Services:
Access to Food

Satisfaction with access to affordable, quality food

Age	Very satisfied/satisfied	Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied	I don't know
Age 80+	86%	6%	8%
Age 60-79	85%	9%	6%
Age 50-59	80%	16%	4%

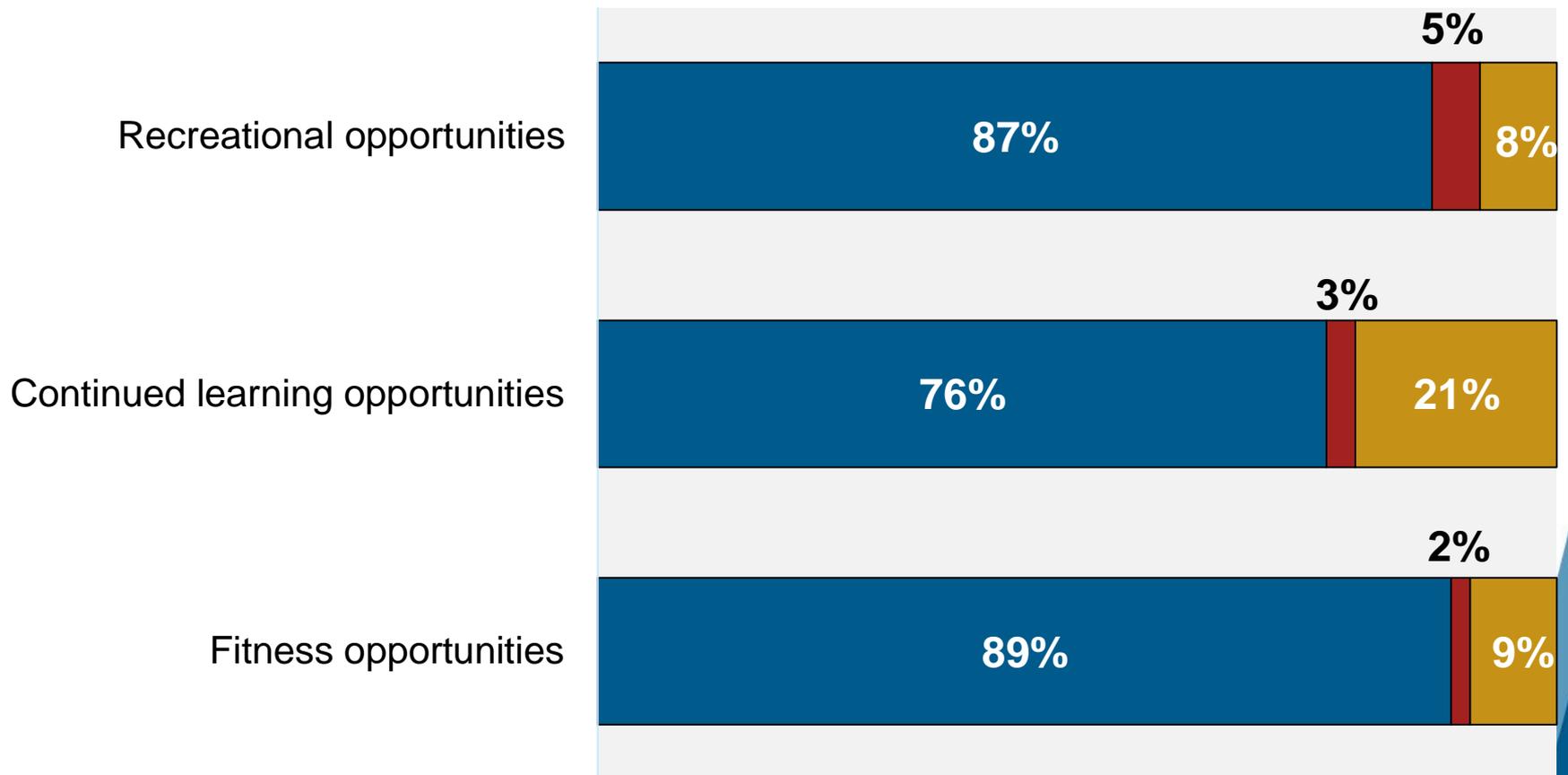Dissatisfaction is higher among those struggling financially:
- Age 80+ - 16%
- Age 60-79 - 17%
- Age 50-59 - 29%

Social Participation

Being engaged and participating in community events helps community members build and maintain social support, remain active, and avoid isolation. Ensuring that ample and accessible participation activities are available is an important task of building a livable community.

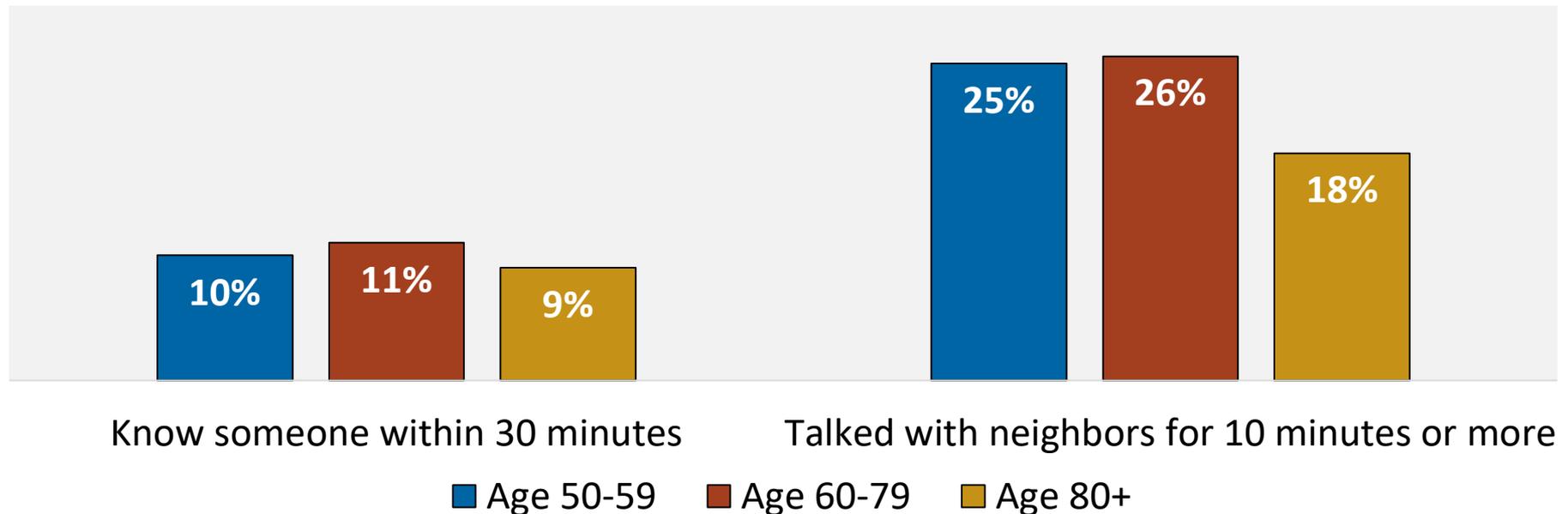# Social Participation: **Formal Activities**

Satisfaction with Formal Activities

- Recreational opportunities: Very satisfied/satisfied 87%, Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied 5%, Don't know 8%
- Continued learning opportunities: Very satisfied/satisfied 76%, Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied 3%, Don't know 21%
- Fitness opportunities: Very satisfied/satisfied 89%, Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied 2%, Don't know 9%

Legend: ■ Very satisfied/satisfied ■ Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied ■ Don't know

Social Participation:
Informal Connections and Isolation

▸ Systems are in place for crisis intervention.
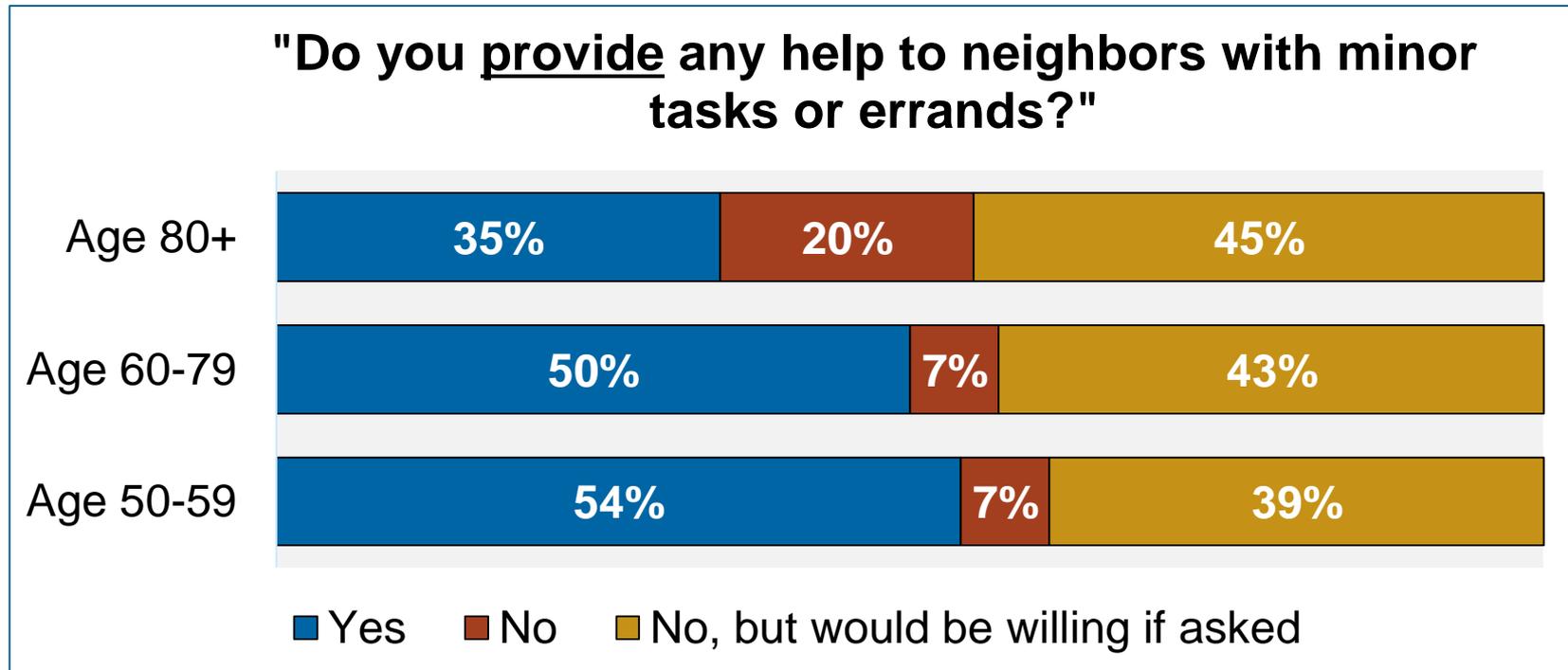
▸ Social isolation, more broadly, may be a concern.

Percentage of respondents indicating no to questions about knowing someone living nearby and talking with neighbors

Know someone within 30 minutes — 10%, 11%, 9%

Talked with neighbors for 10 minutes or more — 25%, 26%, 18%

■ Age 50-59 ■ Age 60-79 ■ Age 80+

Neighborhood Connections

"Would you <u>ask</u> a neighbor for help if you needed assistance with a minor task or errand (e.g., changing a light bulb, shopping, shoveling snow)" (*percentage of those who responded **no***):

- ‣ Age 80+: **34%**
- ‣ Age 60-79: **41%**
- ‣ Age 50-59: **37%**

"Do you <u>provide</u> any help to neighbors with minor tasks or errands?"

	Yes	No	No, but would be willing if asked
Age 80+	35%	20%	45%
Age 60-79	50%	7%	43%
Age 50-59	54%	7%	39%

■ Yes ■ No ■ No, but would be willing if asked

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Civic Participation and Employment

Civic participation builds social capital and allow people to pursue interests and be involved in their communities. Paid employment can yield these benefits as well as provide income. A livable community seeks to promote access and inclusiveness of these opportunities.

Civic Participation and Employment

▸ A majority of survey respondents agree with the statements:

  ▸ "Lexington offers flexible and accessible opportunities for residents to volunteer."

  ▸ "Lexington offers ample opportunities for residents to participate in local government."

One of the things I value most about living in Lexington are the opportunities for us to serve within and outside of governance.

Communication and Information

A livable community provides opportunities for residents to stay connected and informed. Promoting widespread awareness of local services, programs and resources maximizes the impact of community assets.

Communication

"How do you currently obtain information about programs, activities, and services in your community?"
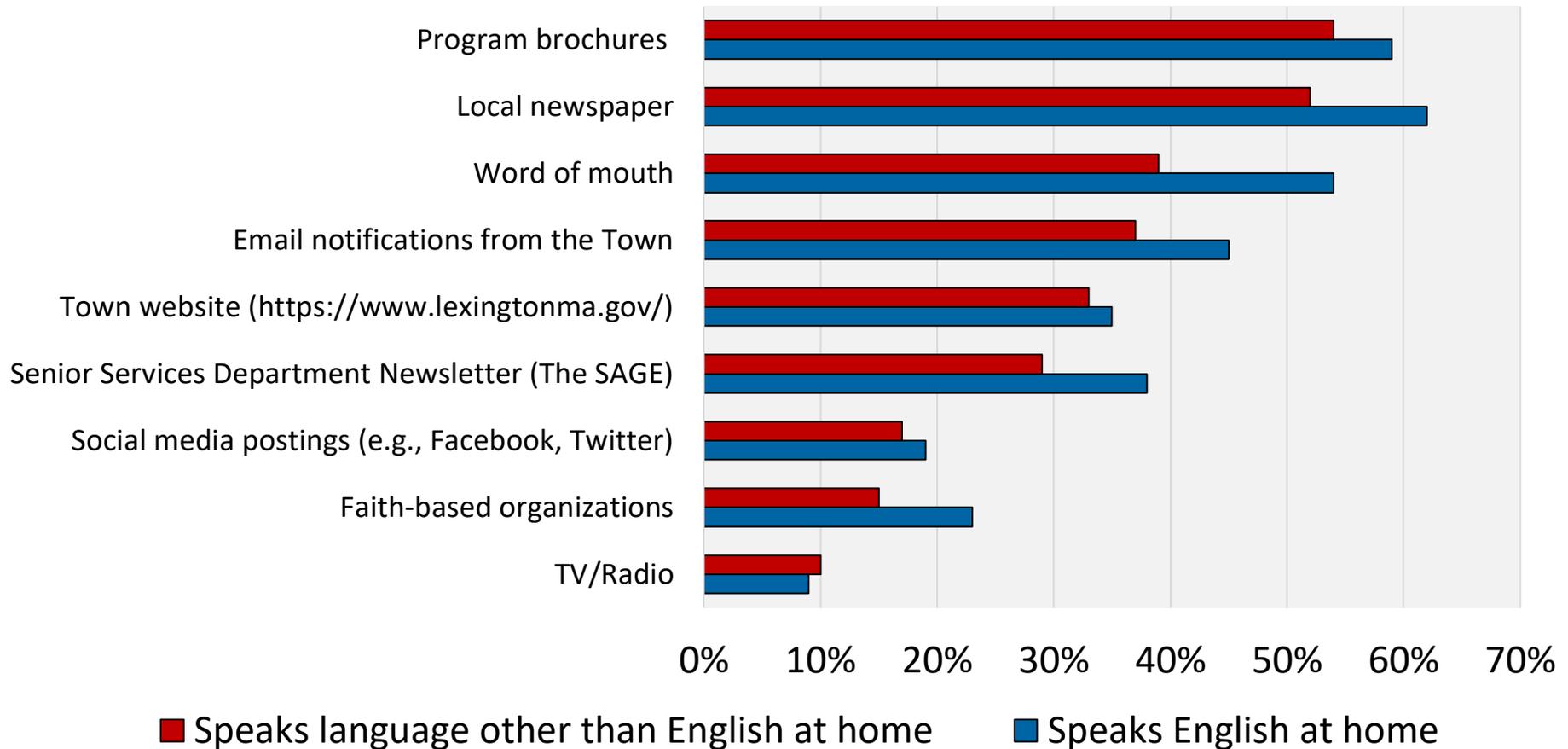
- Top 3 responses-all ages
  - Local newspaper
  - Program brochures
  - Word of mouth

"Are you able to access the Internet from your home?"

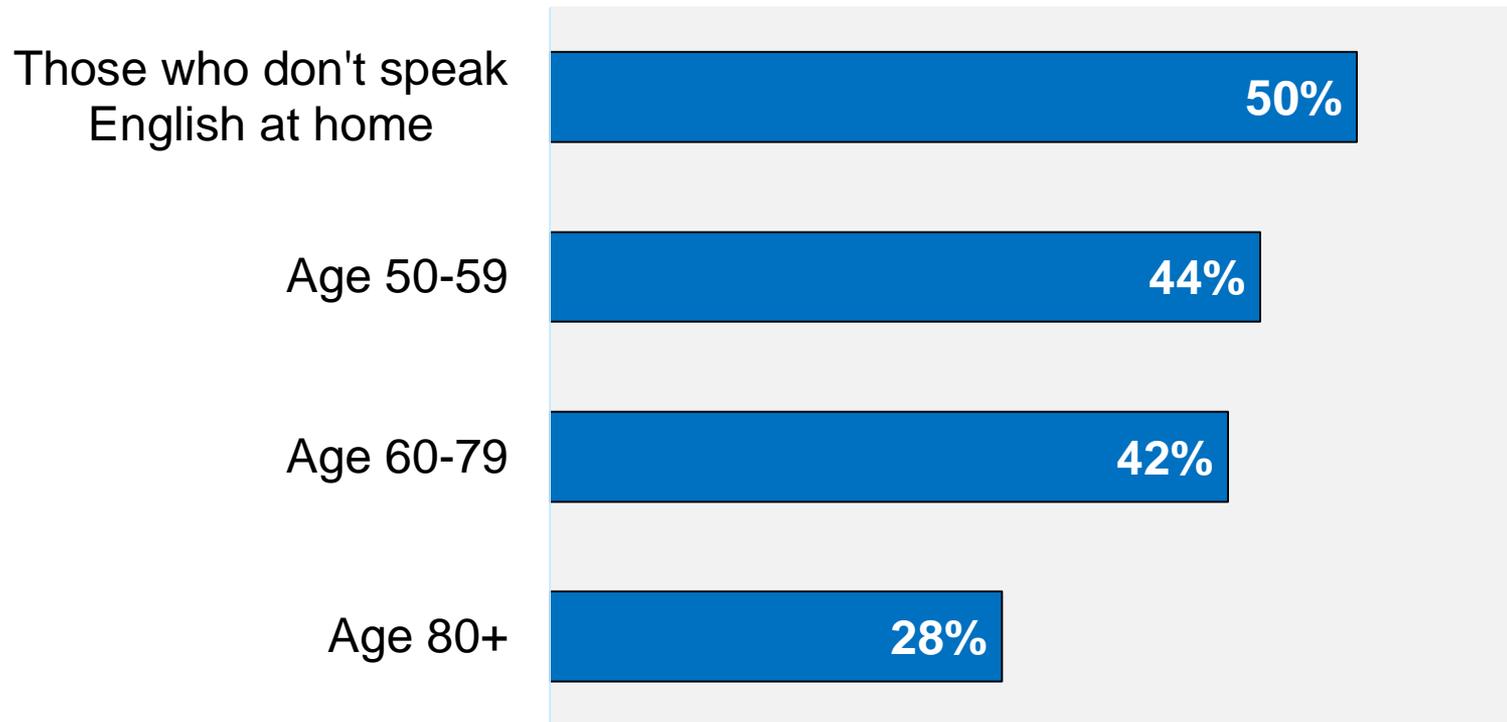- **11%** of those 80+ do <u>NOT</u> have Internet access at home

Communication and Information
(for those who speak a language other than English at home)

"How do you currently obtain information about programs, activities, and services in your community?"

Chart categories (top to bottom):
- Program brochures
- Local newspaper
- Word of mouth
- Email notifications from the Town
- Town website (https://www.lexingtonma.gov/)
- Senior Services Department Newsletter (The SAGE)
- Social media postings (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)
- Faith-based organizations
- TV/Radio

X-axis: 0%, 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%, 60%, 70%

Legend:
- ■ Speaks language other than English at home
- ■ Speaks English at home

Many residents do not know who to contact for help

Percentage who do not know whom to contact in Lexington should they or someone in their family need help accessing social services, health services or other municipal services

Those who don't speak English at home	50%
Age 50-59	44%
Age 60-79	42%
Age 80+	28%

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Many residents are unaware of local resources

▸ For example, 83% of all residents responded "I don't know" regarding satisfaction with caregiver support programs in Lexington

   ▸ Even when looking at just caregivers, 78% stated, "I don't know"

Biggest concern - my declining health and my worry that my husband may not be able to take care of me. I don't know what resources will be available to us here.
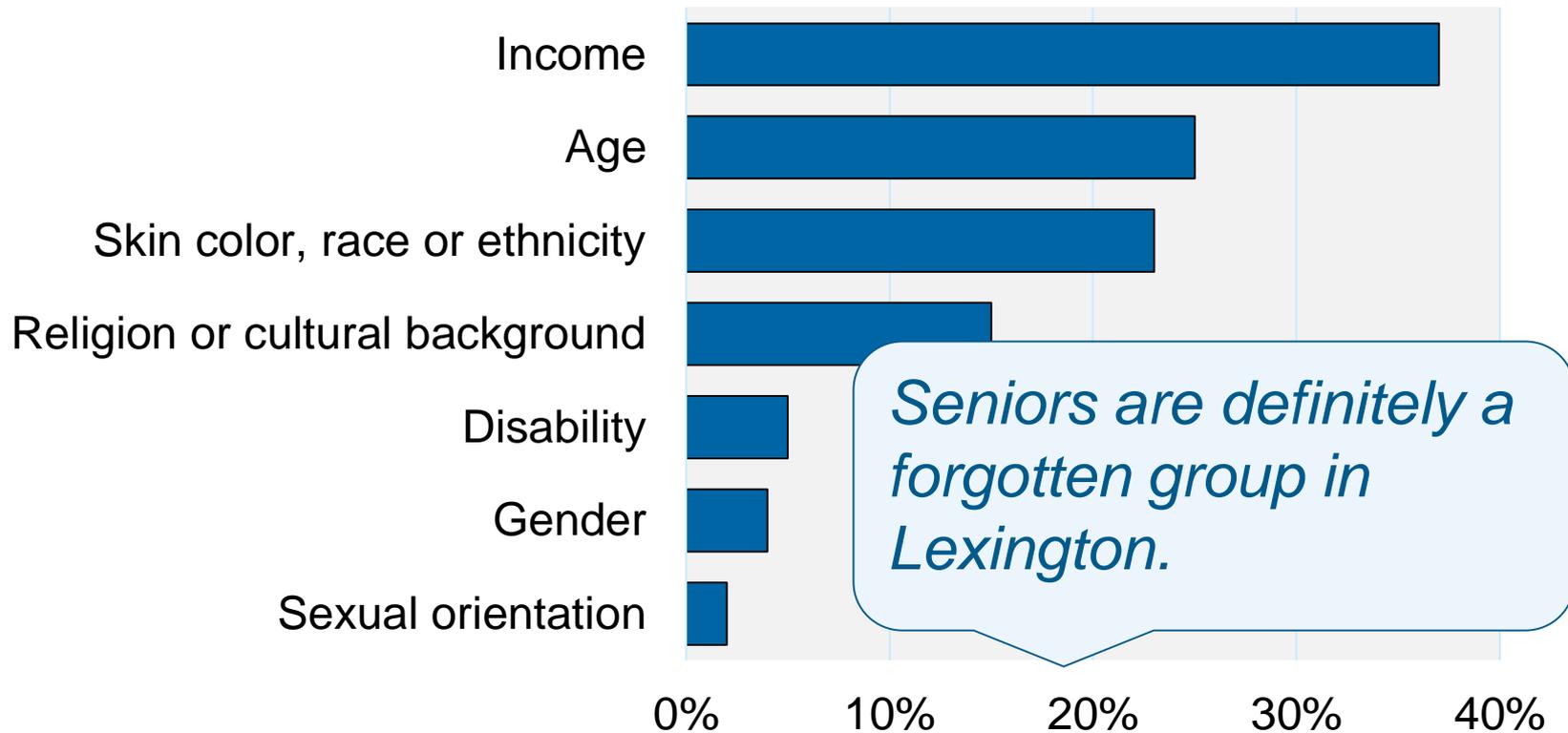
I just learned that there is a disposal box behind town hall for unused pharmaceuticals. I think this should be more widely publicized.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Feeling respected and included promotes participation in the community and facilitates effective use of services and amenities. Promoting broad-based respect for all is a hallmark feature of a livable community.
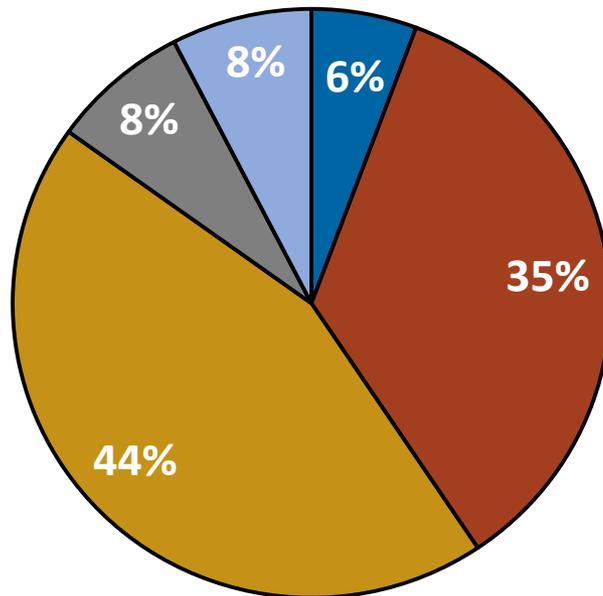
Social exclusion reported by 19% of respondents

Among those who have ever felt excluded (19% of sample), reason for exclusion (all ages, all respondents)

Seniors are definitely a forgotten group in Lexington.

Respect and Social Inclusion

"How satisfied are you with the extent to which local policy makers take into account the interests and concerns of residents?"

- 6% Completely satisfied
- 35% Very satisfied
- 44% Somewhat satisfied
- 8% Slightly satisfied
- 8% Not at all satisfied

Prioritizing next steps

Build on ongoing initiatives:

‣ Comprehensive Plan

‣ Tri-Town Transit Study results

Strengthen communication about existing assets:

‣ Focus outreach especially on those who don't have access to Internet, and those who don't speak English at home

Prioritizing next steps (cont.)

Address cost of living & housing concerns:

▸ Explore additional / expanded property tax relief programs

▸ Consider programs that support older adults in making home modifications

▸ Increase housing options-smaller, one-level living

Strengthen transportation features

▸ Improve public transportation in Lexington

▸ Lexpress stops

▸ Evening/weekend transportation options

Prioritizing next steps (cont.)

Seek to address isolation

▸ Identify/expand neighborhood-based programs

▸ Consider strategies to welcome first-time participants to the Community Center

Strengthen service access and awareness

▸ Increase knowledge about existing resources and services

▸ Explore strategies to support caregivers

▸ Partner with local food pantries and explore funding to increase opportunities for congregate dining

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Prioritizing next steps (cont.)

Explore ways to strengthen access to outdoor spaces and buildings

▸ Consider prioritizing space within the Community Center for older residents

▸ Consider strategies to increase level parking options at the Community Center

▸ Consider opportunities to enhance availability of public restrooms, especially in the downtown area

With appreciation:

❖ Lexington residents and stakeholders

❖ Melissa Interess, Director of Human Services

❖ Hemali Shah, Assistant Director of Senior Services

❖ Elizabeth Borghesani, Julie Ann Shapiro, John Zhao, and

other members of the Council on Aging

❖ Charlotte Rodgers, Director of Human Services (retired)

Thank you!

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http://www.umb.edu/demographyofaging