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

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

February 2023

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Commissioned by The Town of Holliston &  
The Holliston Council on Aging

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Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging  
Gerontology Institute  
John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy & Global Studies  
University of Massachusetts Boston



## 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 UMass Boston's McCormack School. The CSDRA provides resources and research expertise to communities, non-governmental organizations, and other agencies through the Commonwealth.

Caitlin Coyle, PhD and Mary Krebs, MS, MPPM are primarily responsible for the contents of this report. Others contributing to the project include Ceara Somerville. We offer our appreciation to Lisa Borchetta, Director of the Holliston Council on Aging, and Yvette Cain (Chair of the Council on Aging) for their leadership and guidance. As well, we appreciate the Holliston COA Board Members: Carmen Chiango, Millie Bedard, Kathy Anguish (Vice Chair), Janet Alexander, Lynne Bajdek, Georgia Papavasiliou, and Peter Eagan (Associate Member). We acknowledge with gratitude the Town of Holliston, which provided funding for the project. As well we are deeply grateful to the Holliston leaders and the many residents who shared their thoughts as part of the data collection.

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## Table of Contents

<i>Contributors and Acknowledgements</i> .....	<i>i</i>
<i>Executive Summary</i> .....	<i>4</i>
<i>Introduction</i> .....	<i>10</i>
The Holliston Council on Aging and Senior Center .....	10
<i>Methods</i> .....	<i>14</i>
Demographic Profile.....	15
Key informant Interviews .....	15
Focus Groups.....	15
Community Survey.....	16
Data Analysis.....	16
<i>Insights from Interviews and Focus Group Participants</i> .....	<i>26</i>
<i>Results from the Community Survey</i> .....	<i>31</i>
Community and Neighborhood .....	31
Housing and Living Situation.....	36
Transportation .....	41
Caregiving & Health.....	46
Employment and Retirement .....	49
Social Activities and Relationships.....	51
Holliston Senior Center .....	53
<i>Conclusion and Recommendations</i> .....	<i>66</i>

Dear Holliston Residents and Community Members –

In the fall of 2021, the Holliston Council on Aging decided to undertake a study of the town's 55+ population. This decision arose in part due to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic which highlighted the need for the Holliston Senior Center to expand our reach and connect with all residents who could benefit from the programs and services that we offered. The target population of the Senior Center spans a five-decade age-range of Holliston's residents. This broad range of community members come to the center with widely varied interests, experiences, and needs. Our desire is to get an accurate reflection of how best the town of Holliston can serve this multi-faceted target group at our center through the programs, services, and opportunities we provide.

In order to do so most effectively, we sought the input of the town's 55+ residents by giving them the opportunity to speak for themselves. Fortunate to be in the greater Boston area, our first step was to engage the services of the University of Massachusetts – Boston (UMB), Gerontology Institute, to conduct a community needs assessment. We hired the research team at the UMB – Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging to conduct the Holliston 55+ Survey with grant funding provided by the MetroWest Health Foundation and the Town of Holliston's, American Recovery Plan Act fund.

This report is the culmination of months of planning and coordination within the community and with our outside partners. Over the last year, Holliston's residents, community and municipal leaders, service providers and business owners have shared their time and insights about how we can make Holliston a more responsive age friendly community. We are excited to learn from and incorporate the results of this study in our work going forward. We hope you read this report and are stimulated to support Holliston as a place where you come to live and stay for a lifetime. We intend to distribute and share this report with relevant stakeholders. The report will be used to inform the work we do and advise the initiatives we undertake to support those initiatives. The COA is grateful for the work of Dr. Caitlyn Coyle, Director of the Center for Social and Demographic on Aging, along with Research Associate, Mary Krebs and the rest of their team, for their expertise and assistance. We also want to thank you for your support, input, thoughtfulness, vision, and engagement in helping to make Holliston a community for its residents of all ages!

Sincerely,

*Lisa S. Borchetta, M.A.*

Lisa S. Borchetta, MA

Director, Holliston Council on Aging

## Executive Summary

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 Holliston Council on Aging (COA). The goals of this project were to investigate the needs, interests, preferences, and opinions of Holliston's residents age 55 or older by engaging the community regarding their experiences and needs relevant to the COA's objective to identify and serve the needs of all Holliston citizens 55 and older. The contents of this report are meant to inform the Town of Holliston, the Holliston COA, Senior Center, and organizations that work with and on behalf of older residents of Holliston for the purposes of COA 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 Holliston among community members at large.

The population of Holliston is comprised of about one quarter older adults (24%); and an additional 16% age 50-59 are expected to move into this demographic within the next few years. This central, overarching observation—that the older population of Holliston is already large and will continue to expand—makes clear the importance of considering how well features of the Town, the services and amenities available, and virtually every aspect of the community align with the age demographic moving forward.

In preparing for this demographic shift, the Holliston Council on Aging and the Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging at the University of Massachusetts Boston partnered to conduct a study to investigate the needs, interests, preferences, and opinions of the Town's residents age 55 and older. As part of this assessment, we conducted interviews and focus groups to hear from Holliston leadership, key stakeholders in the community, and specific cohorts of residents. In addition, a survey was developed and administered to Holliston residents age 55 and older. A total of 1,332 questionnaires was returned, reflecting a strong return rate of 26%. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources were examined in support of the project aims.

A broad range of findings are reported in this document, highlighting the many positive features of Holliston as well as concerns expressed by older residents. The report is intended to inform planning by the Holliston COA as well as other Town offices, private and public organizations that provide services and advocate for older people within Holliston, and the community at large. While many of our findings, and the recommendations that follow, intersect with the scope of responsibility of the Holliston Council on Aging, 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.

We summarize key findings and make the following recommendations to the Holliston Council on Aging:

**Plan for expected growth in demand and variety of senior programs and services.**

- Estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau show that in 2021, there were 2,550 residents age 60 or older living in Holliston—comprising nearly one quarter of the population (24%).
- Not only is the size of the older population growing in Holliston, but the range of interests and needs is widening. In addition to basic needs (food, housing, transportation), participants identified meaningful opportunities to be engaged in their community and maintain physical health as key elements desired at the COA.
  - Among survey respondents, the most important services offered by the Holliston COA is health and wellness programming and professional services like health insurance counseling and information and referral to available resources.

**Recommendations:**

- Plan for escalating demand for Senior Center programs and services—including the expansion of both staffing and space.
  - Pursue a site study or feasibility study to determine options for expanding existing space or relocating the center.
- Advocate for more dedicated space for older adult programming. Specifically, space to accommodate lifelong learning courses and large group exercise programs is needed to meet the current and future preferences of Holliston residents.
- Consider selectively increasing the involvement of volunteers in staffing the Senior Center. Recognize that recruiting, training, and managing a strong volunteer program will require additional paid staff effort.

**The perception of the Holliston COA is that it is “needs-based”—which deters participation.**

- When asked why they don’t participate at the Holliston COA, 31% of respondents selected “other” as an option and took the time to write in their thoughts. Themes included not having a need, still working, and intentions for future use. For example, one respondent wrote, *“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.”*
- Among those who do not currently utilize the Holliston COA, the number two factor (26%) that would increase the likelihood of participating is when they retire or have a need for things to do...implicating that future use is a likely outcome.

### Recommendations:

- Consider changing the name to be more inclusive. Contemplate 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 a larger public awareness campaign around aging in Holliston.
- Consider ways to host satellite programming around the Town to promote Senior Center programs and draw-in a wider range of residents. Alternatively, partnerships with the library, local businesses, and schools could help meet the needs for additional programming opportunities targeted for older adults.
- Consider ways to welcome newcomers to the Center. Offer incentive for “bringing a friend” and consider hosting programs specifically for newcomers.

### **Programming at the Holliston COA does not currently align with the range of interests of residents.**

- Regardless of whether respondents use the Holliston COA or not, indoor and outdoor exercise were among the most preferred types of programs to be expanded at the Holliston COA and educational programs were the second most preferred.
- Among those who do not currently use the Holliston COA, 38% would be more likely to participate at the Holliston COA if programs were better suited to their interests.
- Respondents were able to write-in their ideas for programs that they’d like to see expanded upon, intergenerational programs, volunteering opportunities, and intellectual or personal growth programming is valued.

### Recommendations:

- Advocate for new space that includes ample space for indoor exercise classes that can accommodate large groups and offers access to exercise equipment (e.g., weights, stationary bikes etc.). Also consider a walking track that is available to all 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. Perhaps COA Board members could facilitate special interest groups to develop programs.
- 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 in Holliston.**

- Cost of living, particularly rising property taxes, is named as a top concern among respondents as they think about being able to stay in Holliston as they age.



- 38% of survey respondents report needing some kind of home repair to remain living safely over the next 5 years and 41% report needing home modifications. Among them, 10%-11% are unable to afford such repairs. Among those who wrote-in about their concerns, maintaining property and homes was also a top concern, specifically citing the lack of knowledge about finding a handy person or contractor to help with small repairs or modifications.
- When asked about preferences for type of housing, more than one-third (37%) of respondents aged 60-69 and 39% of respondents age 70-79 would prefer to live in 55+ community, and among those respondents age 80+, assisted living is the most preferred housing type for the future.

#### Recommendations:

- 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, including condominiums and other types of housing that offer low maintenance and single-floor living. Assisted living communities and senior independent living units are desirable housing options.
- Promote awareness of existing property tax relief programs. Document the number of residents who are “turned away” from existing programs due to eligibility requirements or other reasons to establish recommendations for how to expand access.
- Promote awareness of various housing options across the lifespan. Consider hosting a “housing choice” planning seminar to encourage pro-active thinking about aging in place. Invite local experts (e.g., real estate agents, contractors, disability commission members, lawyers, financial professionals) who can share their perspective about future housing options based on a wide range of individual scenarios.

#### Being able to get around Holliston and access needed resources is a concern for Holliston’s residents as they age.

- Nearly one out of four respondents (24%) who do drive modify their driving to make it easier or safer; and 5% of respondents do not drive at all. Among the oldest old, respondents in the 80s or older, 18% report that they do not drive at all.
- 19% of those who modify their driving or who do not drive at all report having difficulty getting to where they want to go.
- When asked about barriers to using existing transportation in Holliston, having physical mobility challenges that make accessing transportation difficult and public

transportation options not being available were the top barriers reported by those who modify their driving or do not drive at all.

- Respondents who wrote-in their thoughts about transportation, as well as focus group and interview participants, cited transportation as a critical factor for aging well in Holliston given that the community is neither currently walkable, nor does it have transportation connections to nearby communities—where many of the amenities are located. For example, one respondent wrote in that their biggest concern about aging in Holliston is “*...how will the town address the needs of those of us who need to rely on downtown as accessible for walking, access to being able to get transportation to appointments, groceries, or even get to senior center to stay connected.*”

#### Recommendations:

- 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.
- Consider collaborations with neighboring COAs to coordinate transportation to medical services, adult day programs, or special trips.
- 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.**

- 13% of all residents in Holliston aged 65 or older have been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease or related dementia.
- 38% of survey respondents reported having been a caregiver within the past 5 years, including 48% of respondents aged 55-59.
  - Among caregivers, 64% reported that it is challenging to provide care and complete their daily responsibilities.
  - Among caregivers, 62% are caring for someone who is frail or has limited mobility, and 27% are caring for someone living with dementia.

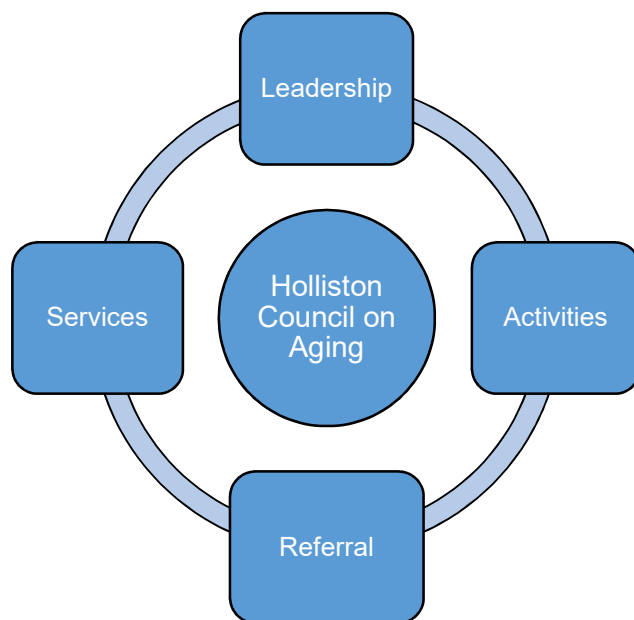
### Recommendations:

- 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 ability to re-establish an adult day program.

## Introduction

Over the coming years, the senior population of Holliston is expected to increase substantially, with growth rates far outpacing those of younger segments of the population. Currently, many older adults benefit from programs and services designed to address aging-related needs and prolong independence, offered through the Holliston Council on Aging and the Holliston Senior Center. As a municipal entity, Holliston's Senior Center is an important and valued resource, operating as the Town's central point of contact for older residents who seek services to promote healthful and fulfilling lives. Growth of the older adult population therefore has special significance for the Senior Center and increasing demand for its services and programs can be expected moving forward.

This report presents results of a comprehensive examination of issues relating to aging in Holliston. A needs assessment was undertaken to support planning on the part of the Holliston Council on Aging (COA) and the community as a whole. Results presented here focus on the characteristics and needs of Holliston residents who are age 55 and older, considering their needs and preferences both now and in the future. While the primary goal of this report is to support planning on the part of the COA, a secondary goal is to present information that will be useful to other Holliston offices and organizations interacting with older residents.



## The Holliston Council on Aging and Senior Center

The Holliston Council on Aging (COA) a municipally appointed board and the Senior Center, a municipal department, are 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.

Holliston's Council on Aging (COA) is charged with providing services, programming, and support to the town's 55+ population so that they may live well and independently in the

community. This work is done in concert with other local town departments and various, area private and public providers and organizations, including 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 Town's older adult residents. The Holliston Council's mission is "to identify and serve the diverse needs of all Holliston citizens 55 and older." Working toward that end, they assist in delivering programs and initiatives that shape and enrich the experiences of three generations of older adults. This mission statement was retrieved in January 2023 from: <https://www.townofholliston.us/senior-center/pages/board-members>.

In general, when considering the mission of COAs, observers commonly think of two sets of responsibilities. First, COAs 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, COAs 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 COAs. COA 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, COAs 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 Holliston Council on Aging offers programs and services at the Senior Center located on Goulding Street. An array of services, resources, and programs are offered for free or at low cost to community members who are age 55 and older. Staff at the COA also refer eligible residents to services and programs available through other offices and organizations. The COA plays an important leadership role in the community, serving as a resource to other Town offices and organizations working in the community, and collaborating on initiatives broadly beneficial to residents. COA services and programs are funded by municipal appropriation, grant support from several sources, gifts and donations, and nominal fees charged for some activities. The Holliston Senior Center operates Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and on Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The staff consists of a full-time Director, full-time Assistant Director, full time Outreach Coordinator, full-time Van Driver, part-time Technical Assistant, and part-time Van Drivers.

The Senior Center offers assistance with programs such as: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC) fuel assistance, SafeLink Wireless phones, Housing, Linkup/lifeline discount programs. We also connect the seniors with other agencies who provide assistance. The Outreach Coordinator works closely with BayPath Elder Services to coordinate services for homemaker/personal care, caregiver programs, Meals on Wheels, financial management and elder at risk referrals. A Grief and Loss Support Group met virtually during the year. Home visits are made and needs assessments are formulated as staff work to help the elders remain in their own homes. The Outreach Coordinator also serves as a liaison between the police, fire and EMT's and the senior center. Throughout the year, the Outreach Coordinator oversaw home-delivered meals, twice weekly from the Senior Center for older adults who most needed the nutritional support and outside contact. S.H.I.N.E (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of the Elders) The Senior Center has a certified SHINE counselor, who volunteers to assist with senior health care needs. One of the most perplexing problems of the elderly continues to be health insurance, the escalating costs, how to pay for them and how to decipher the bills received. Other programs and application assistance that she assists with is MassHealth, Health Connector, QI1, SLMB, QMB, Limited Income Subsidy, Prescription Advantage, Health Insurance Coverage, and Part D coverage. The Shine program helped over 125 Holliston residents recently.

The COA consists of a seven-member advisory board appointed by the Select Board. The COA Board meets at the Senior Center on the second Wednesday of the month at 2:00 pm. COA board members help the Senior Center to set goals and objectives, and to offer their support and advocacy to help implement and promote the COA's mission. The responsibilities of the COA board members are; to identify the needs of Holliston's older adults and to assist in the development of programs and services to meet those needs. Additionally, the COA Board promotes and helps educate the community on issues of importance to older adults and advocates on their behalf. The COA Director is responsible for department operations. The Senior Center is an integral part of the community providing a dedicated space to serve the interests and needs of Holliston's 55+ residents. Its presence serves as a reminder that no matter your age, you are a valued member of the community. The goal is to provide programs and services that: encourage connection, provide access to information/services and resources, assist with a variety of needs, nourish body/mind and spirit, assist members and their families, while we educate, stimulate, support and celebrate older adults. Family members also utilize the Senior Center to gather information or explore services when caring for a loved one. Additionally, the center serves as a resource and gathering space for a number of other town organizations and we welcome the opportunity to broaden intergenerational offerings. Complete information about programs and services, including a monthly schedule, are available online at <https://www.townofholliston.us/senior-center/pages/about-us>.

For the following report, data regarding number of participants served by the Holliston Senior Center was gathered through the 2021 annual report, which covers July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021, as well as from the Senior Center Director. As the numbers of older residents increase, the need for resources dedicated to this segment of the population will also continue to grow and to change. Thus, it is crucial that the Holliston COA plan in earnest to assure that resources are used efficiently and effectively to meet the current and future needs of older people in the Town. The purpose of this report is to describe the research process and key findings of the study. The report concludes with a set of recommendations for the Holliston COA as it moves ahead.

Initiatives offered through the Holliston Senior Center include:

- *Transportation:* The Holliston Van Transportation Service continues to provide essential transportation services during the pandemic trips for medical appointments, grocery shopping, and other essential needs. Due to the pandemic and for everyone's safety, only 2 passengers are permitted on the bus at one time and masks were required for all riders. All appointments are scheduled through the MWRTA (Metro West Regional Transit Authority). The current service operates from 8:00am to 4:00pm Monday through Friday on a fixed schedule. In FY 2021, approximately 1,462 rides were provided for senior and disabled residents. The MWRTA is also the primary funding source for the Transportation Program.
- *Nutrition Program:* Lunch is served three times a week at the Senior Center. The Assistant Director works with the local caterer to develop twice weekly nutritional lunches that will attract elders, their caregivers, neighbors and friends to the Senior Center. A third soup, salad, sandwich lunch is prepared at the Senior Center. Volunteers assist with serving the meals. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, a delivered meal program is conducted by Center staff and drivers to seniors in need, every Monday and Wednesday. There are 4,680 home delivered meals per year. The Center also provides roughly 1,169 drive-by, special event meals.
- *Newsletter:* The Holliston Senior Center News is produced by the Senior Center every-other-month. The center prints 3,600 copies, in house which are available for pick-up at the Senior Center or are mailed directly to residents. The newsletter is also available to view on-line at: [www.townofholliston.us/senior-center](http://www.townofholliston.us/senior-center). The newsletter provides information about Senior Center programs, services, special events, meals, and helpful resources, including updates from other town departments, including the; Police and Fire Departments, Library, and more.
- *Recreation, Fitness & Social Events:* Seniors participate in a variety of programs such as: Bingo, Quilting, Watercolor painting, Chi Gong, Focus Energy Movement exercise, Fall Prevention, Pilates, Yoga, Zumba, Line dancing, Tai Chi, Arts & Crafts, Chair Massage, Photography Class, Writers' Group, Book Club, Grief and Loss Support

Group, Educational Programs, Legal Hour, Computers, Tune Timers Big Band, Monthly Breakfast, Birthday Parties, Cookouts, Holiday Parties and more. Since the pandemic, several groups, including Pilates, Yoga, Book Club, Singing for Health and Zumba class, as well as Grief and Loss support group are offered via Zoom. HCAT shows some of these programs, as well as other pre-recorded programs held at the Senior Center. Town funds are not used for any of the above programs. The town budget is used for the maintenance, use and upkeep of the building and salaries. All other expenses, programs, activities and instructor fees are paid through the Senior Support Foundation, fundraising efforts, donations and grants. Over 51 unduplicated individuals participated in over 1,040 hours of exercise and fitness programming.

- *Community:* The Holliston Senior Center and COA work collaboratively with the Knights of Columbus, American Legion, VFW, Newcomers, Holliston Police Association, Holliston Public Schools, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Lions and Leo Club, The Holliston Pantry Shelf, and the Cultural Council for their continued support. Despite Covid-19 restrictions, these groups all find ways to contribute and support the center through donations to the Gifts for Seniors program, Drive by lunches, Outdoor Concerts, Delivered Sunday meals and more. The Holliston High School Drama Club and National Honor Society provided a dinner and play for the seniors.
- *Massachusetts State Formula Grant & Senior Support Foundation:* The Council on Aging receives an annual grant award from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. The grant is used for select items/options allowed per the contract such as: printing of the monthly newsletter, fall prevention and nutrition programs. The Senior Support Foundation provides support and often fundraise for senior residents. Their efforts provide needed equipment, supplies, supplement instructors fees, and many other items to better serve our elderly in Holliston. The SSF Group sponsors special occasion programs to raise funds for the Senior Center.
- *Volunteering:* Approximately 41 volunteers contribute a total of 2,566 hours of service to the Senior Center per year. In a typical year, volunteers assist in the office, answer phones, assemble the newsletter, serve as board members, assist in the kitchen, call bingo, coordinate trips, assist with health care options, take blood pressure, assist with tax preparation, coordinate the annual fall fair, assist with fundraising and participate in programs that help seniors, etc. The significant contribution by volunteers is met with gratitude to all who give their time and talents to keep programs running and the support given to the staff.

## Methods

This assessment utilized both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods alongside rigorous analyses in order to capture a broad and deep understanding of the Town of Holliston and its older residents. Methods used in compiling this report include analysis of existing data. Demographic material used in this report was drawn from the U.S. Census



Bureau (the decennial censuses and the American Community Survey), from projections generated by the Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts, and from the Healthy Aging Data Report for Holliston (Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative, n.d.). Additional information about the Holliston COA was retrieved from material drawn from the COA's 2021 Annual Report as well as original data collected for this study.

## **Demographic Profile**

As an initial step toward understanding characteristics of the Town of Holliston's older population through quantitative data, we generated a demographic profile of the Town 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 (2017-2021), along with U.S. Census data for the Town of Holliston 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**

In the Fall of 2022, we conducted individual interviews with five individuals who currently hold leadership positions in Holliston. Both the current and former Director of the Council on Aging, the Town of Holliston Administrator, the Fire Chief, and a Senior Center Volunteer each participated in these interviews. Interviews focused on the interviewees' perceptions relating to unmet needs of older adults in the community, and how the growing size of the older population is impacting Holliston and the work that the key informants do. All interviews were conducted remotely via telephone or video conference. Interviews ranged from 35-90 minutes.

## **Focus Groups**

During the Fall of 2022, we conducted four focus groups with residents and stakeholders who were recruited by the Director of the COA, with input from the COA board of directors. The four focus group participants totaled twenty-four individuals who represented municipal offices, community stakeholders, older residents, volunteers, and town organizations. Each of these participants offered unique insights into interactions with Holliston's older adult residents and shared candid observations relevant to learning more about the community more broadly, as well as identifying gaps in supports and services for the healthy aging of Holliston's older residents. Contributors included current and former COA Board members, Senior Support Foundation, which helps raise funds and support the COA, volunteers, a newsletter contributor, group organizers, community members, Elder

Affairs public safety officers, a Youth and Family Services representative, Finance Committee, and Select Board members.

## Community Survey

In collaboration with the COA Board members, a community survey was developed for this study and mailed to all residents aged 55 and over (N=4,984). A mailing list was obtained from the Holliston Town Clerk, based on the most current municipal census. Postcards were mailed to participants alerting them that they would be receiving a survey in the coming weeks. Subsequently, printed surveys were mailed to the sample of Holliston residents meeting the age requirement, along with a postage-paid return envelope. As well, the survey was made available via the Town's website. A total of 1,332 responses to the survey were obtained, representing a strong return rate of 27% (see **Table 3**). Ten percent (n=128) were returned online, and the rest of the responses were returned by mail. In **Appendix A**, response distributions are shown by age group.

## Data Analysis

Data collected for the resident survey were 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 Holliston?"). 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 Holliston. We used information from all sources of data to develop recommendations reported in the final section of this report.

## Results: Demographic Profile of Town of Holliston

### Age Structure and Population Growth

According to American Community Survey (ACS) estimates, there were about 14,891 residents living in the Town of Holliston in 2021. About 40% of the population (5,947 individuals) were age 50 and older (See **Table 1**). Residents who were age 50 to 59 (2,318 individuals) made up 16% of the population; residents age 60 to 79 (2,101 individuals) comprised around 21%, and another 449 residents (13%) were age 80 and older.

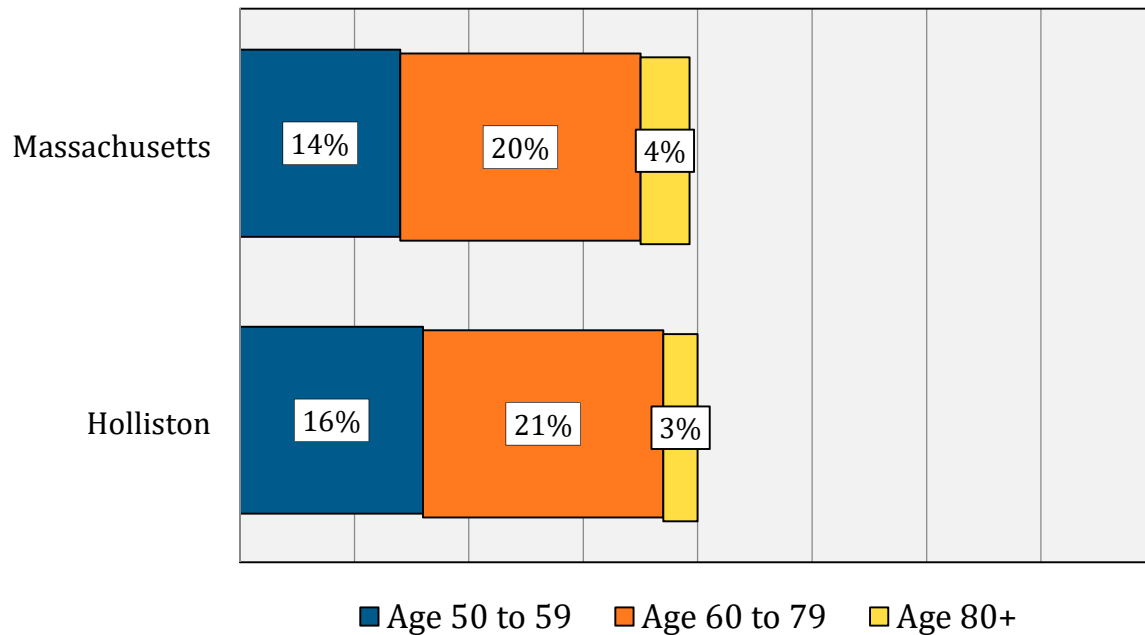
**Table 1.** Number and percentage distribution of Holliston’s population by age category, 2021

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	<b>14,891</b>	100%

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

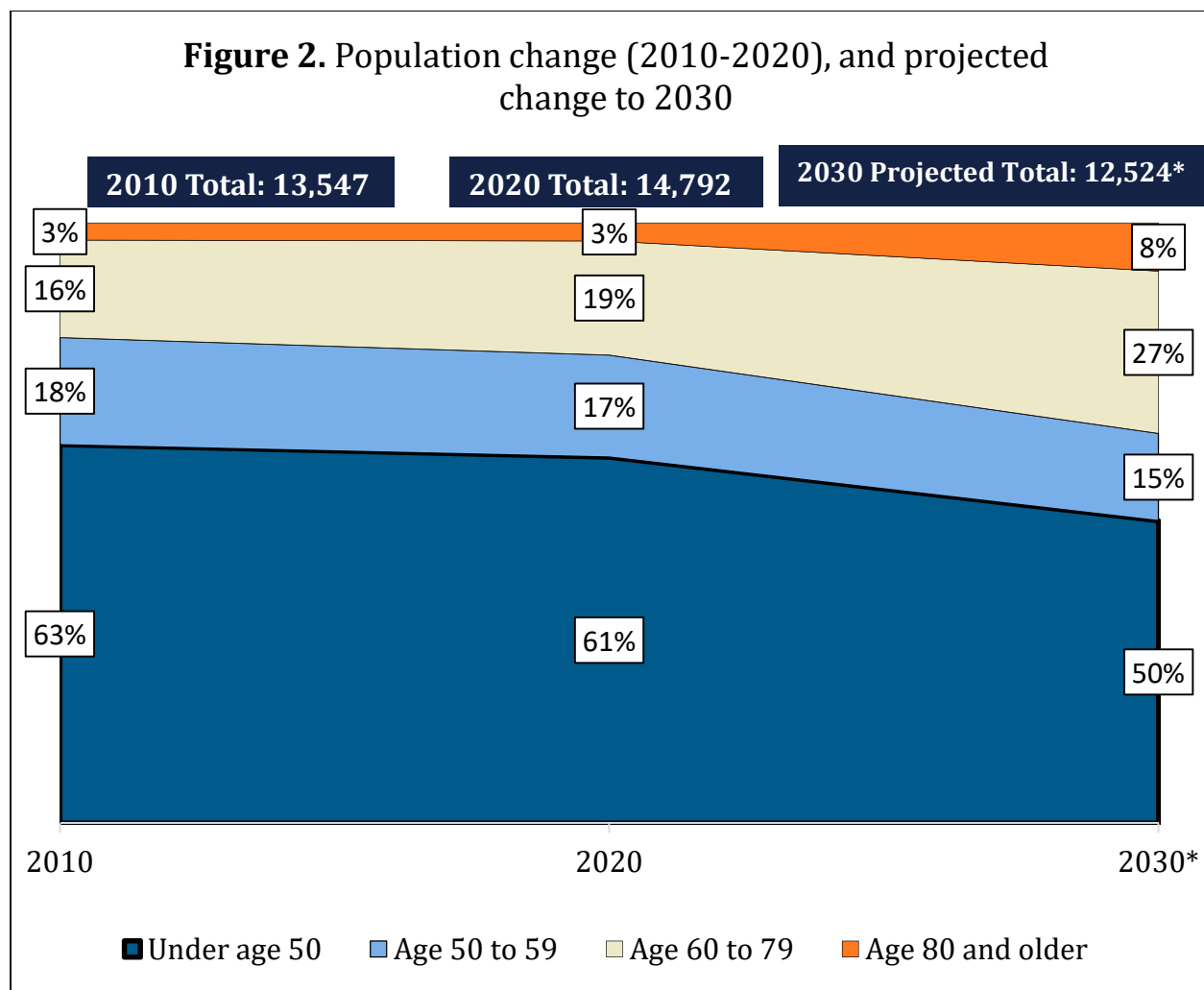
The share of Holliston’s population age 50 is practically the same as the distribution across the Commonwealth (**Figure 1**). About 38% of the Massachusetts population was in the 50+ age group in 2021, compared to 40% of the Holliston population. Holliston has a slightly higher share of residents in their 50s.

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



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

Population growth in the Town of Holliston has been concentrated in older age groups. Between 2010 and 2021, the population of all ages increased by 9% in Holliston. Among older residents, the population 60+ grew by 40% during this period. The absolute numbers of residents age 60 rose from 2,586 residents in 2010 to 3,629 in 2021.



*Source: 2010 Data come from the U.S. Census, 2020 estimates from the American Community Survey, 2017-2021, and the 2030 projections are estimated by the UMass Donahue Institute and Vintage estimates are shown here.*

## Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Holliston's Older Population

Holliston is less diverse than the state with respect to race. For all ages combined, 88% of Holliston residents report their race as White non-Hispanic, compared to 71% in Massachusetts (ACS, 2017-2021, Table B01001).

**Table 2.** Race and Ethnicity of Holliston’s population

Age Category	Number	Percentage
White	13,136	88%
Black	173	1%
Asian	1,000	7%
Two or more races	458	3%
Other	124	1%
Total	<b>14,891</b>	100%

Among older residents of Holliston, there is less racial and ethnic diversity at this time. Most older residents of Holliston identify as White race or ethnicity (94%). The remaining percentage of the population age 65 and older reported 2 or more races (2%), Asian race/ethnicity (2%), 1% report Black race/ethnicity, and <1% Hispanic or Latino race/ethnicity.

American Community Survey estimates on education suggest that Holliston residents are well educated on average. About 50% of persons 65 and older have either a bachelor’s degree (23%) or a graduate/professional (26%); *ACS, 2017-2021, 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).

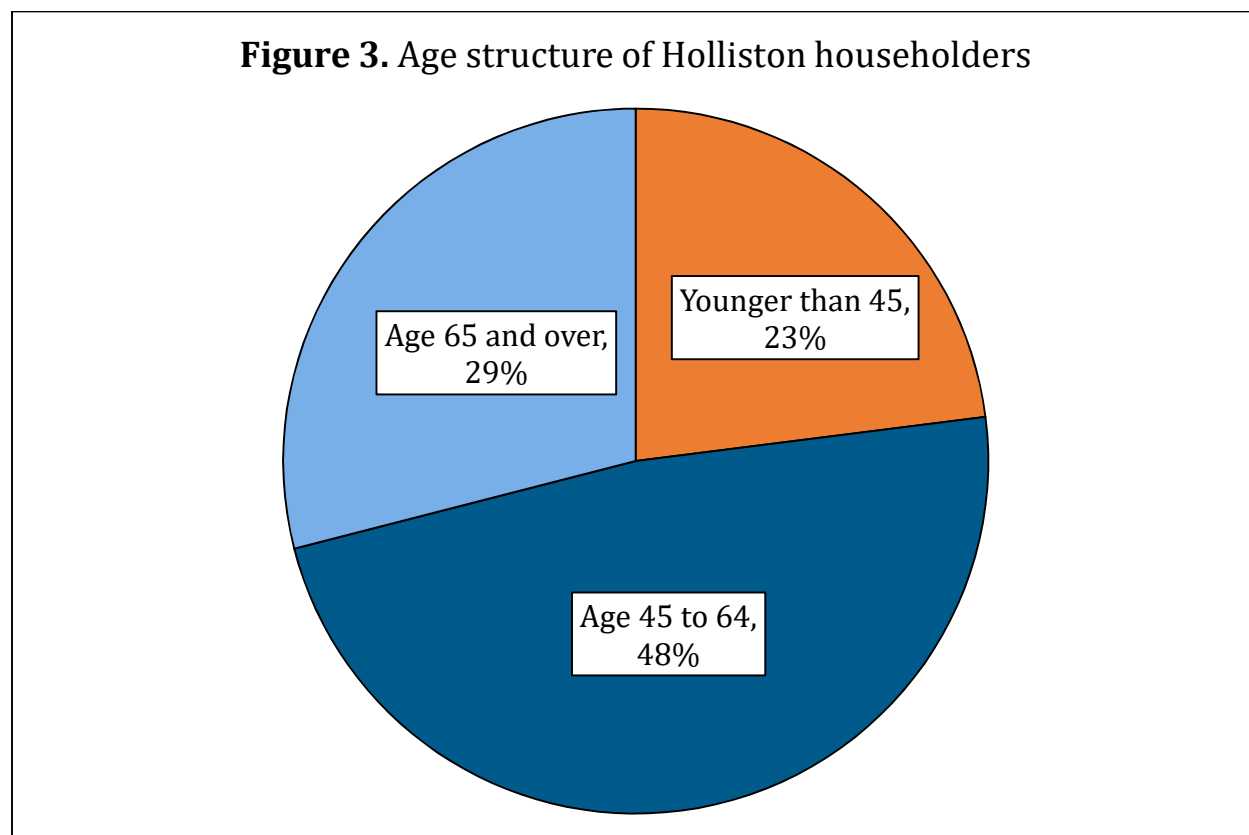
Similar to older adults living in communities throughout the U.S., a large proportion of Holliston residents aged 65 and over remain in the workforce. More than 39% of adults age 64 to 74 are participating in the labor force. Of those age 75 and older, 1% remain in the workforce (*ACS, 2017-2021, Table S2301*).

Nearly 14% of residents age 65 and older report veteran status (*ACS, 2017-2021, Table S2101*). As a result, some of the Town’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 Holliston’s Older Population**

A majority of Holliston’s 5,485 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 age

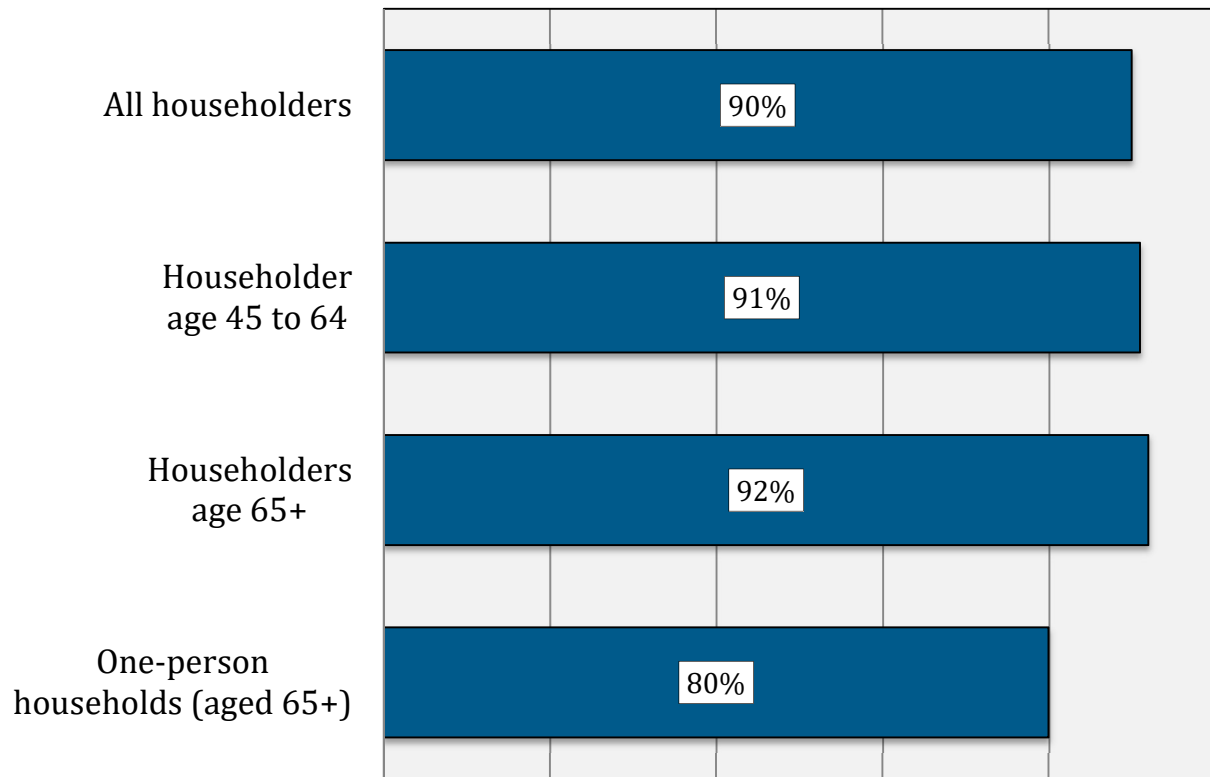
45 and older are householders, in fact, about 77% of all households in Holliston are headed by someone age 45 or older, including 57% of those who are age 65 and over (**Figure 3.**)



*Source: American Community Survey, 2017-2021, Table B25007. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.*

Most Holliston residents live in homes that they own or are purchasing (90%; **Figure 4**). Nearly 96% of residents age 45 to 64 own their homes, and 95% of householders 65 and older own their homes. A sizeable share of Holliston residents who are 65 and older and live alone, also own their home (90%). 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—in order to maintain comfort and safety in their homes.

**Figure 4.** Percent of Holliston householders who are homeowners by age category



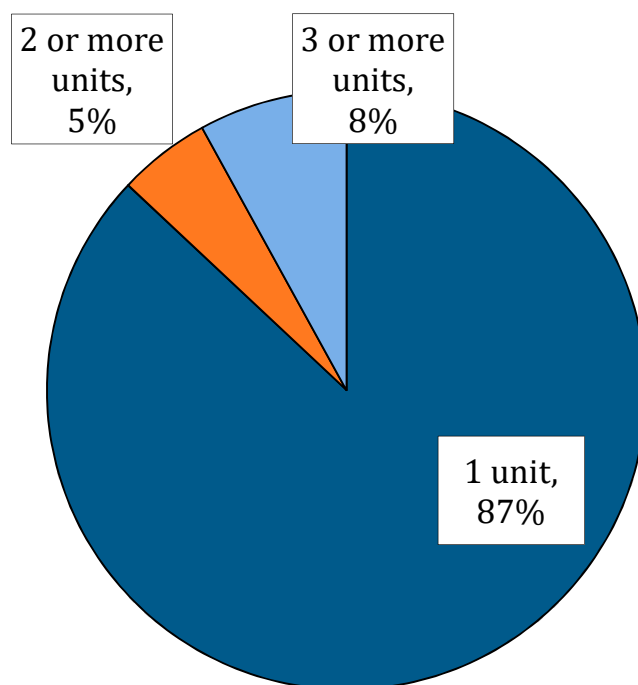
*Source: American Community Survey, 2017-2021, Tables B25007 and B25011. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.*

Additionally, 47% of Holliston's 5,485 households have at least one individual who is age 60 or older (*ACS 2017-2021, Table B11006*). This half of the population— 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 5,617 housing structures in Holliston (**Figure 5**), 87% are single unit structures and the remaining 13% are housing structures that contain 2-4 housing units or 5+ housing units (8%), which include apartment complexes.



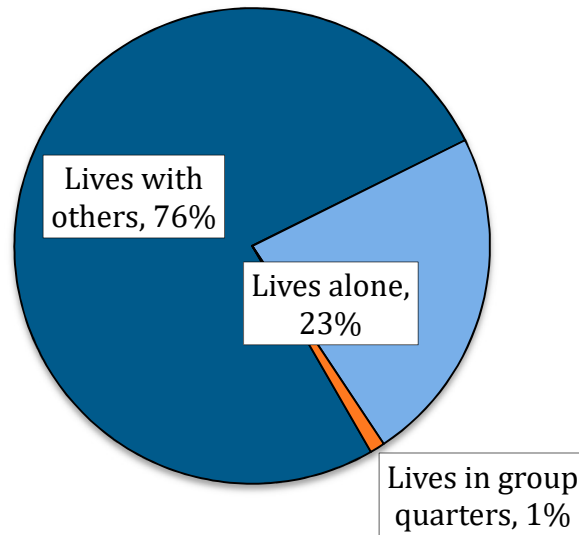
**Figure 5.** Number of units in Holliston housing structures



*Source: American Community Survey, 2017-2021, Table B25024. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.*

A large proportion of Holliston residents who are age 65 and older (23%) live alone in their household whereas 76% live in households that include other people, such as a spouse, parents, children, or grandchildren (**Figure 6**). Additionally, 1% Holliston's older residents live within group quarters.

**Figure 6.** Living arrangements of Holliston residents, age 65 and older



*Source: American Community Survey, 2017-2021, Table B09020. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.*

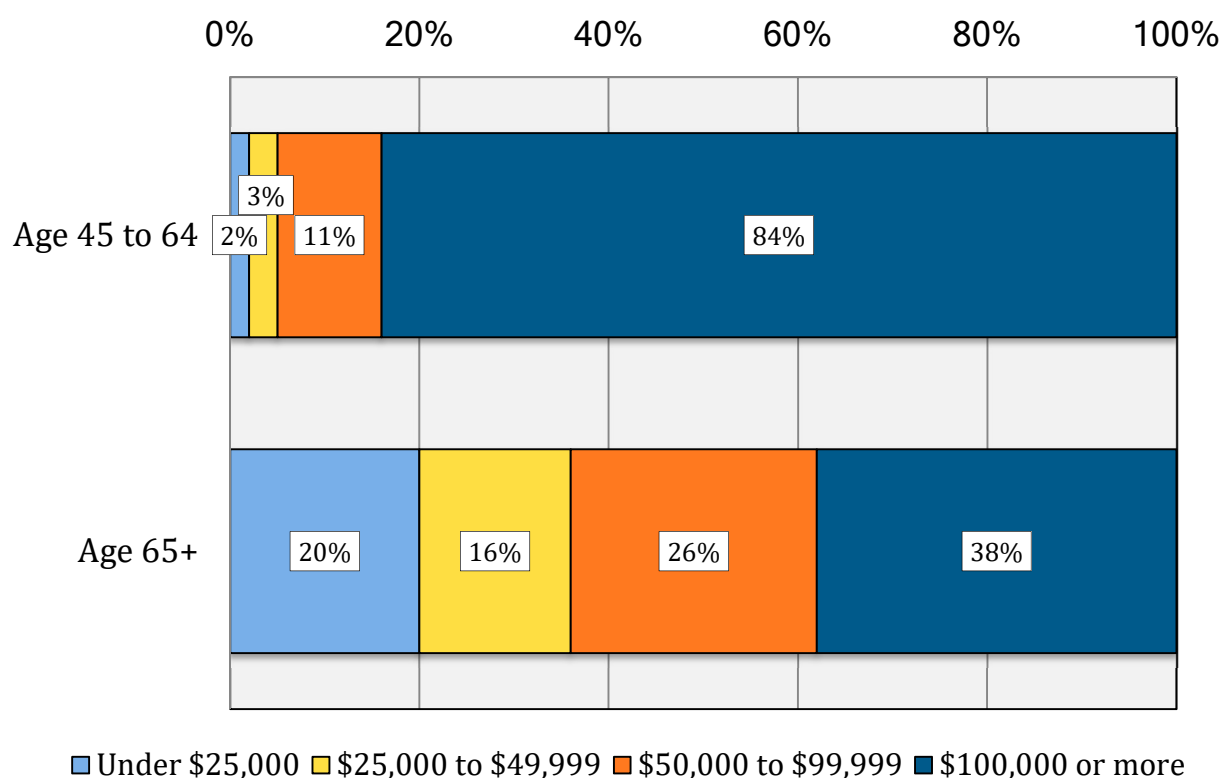
With respect to household income, there is some comparative disadvantage of some older residents in Holliston. Holliston residents' median household income is higher than the one estimated for Massachusetts as a whole, \$142,348 compared to \$89,026 (Table s1901). Among Holliston's householders those aged 45-64 have the highest median income at \$168,276—which is also higher than the statewide median for this age group (\$109,641). Among householders 65 and older, the median income is \$71,550, higher than the statewide median for this age group (\$56,483), but lower than the median income of younger Holliston householders. Older residents living alone are at the greatest disadvantage in terms of household income. Older men living alone have considerable higher median income (\$98,021) than women (\$37,000). Given that close to 23% of residents age 65 and older live alone in Holliston, these figures suggest that a sizeable number of residents are at risk of economic insecurity.

The economic profile of older Holliston residents relative to younger residents is further illustrated in **Figure 7**, which shows that the older adult population lives on a modest income. It is estimated that 38% of Holliston residents age 65 and older report incomes of \$100,000 or more. By comparison, 84% of households headed by younger residents report this level of income. Nevertheless, one out five households headed by someone age 65 and older (20%) report annual incomes under \$25,000. This compares with 2% of households headed by individuals age 45 to 64 having incomes under \$25,000. Thus, there is a sizeable

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

As well, costs associated with housing make up a significant share of monthly costs for older householders. Estimates indicate that 26% of householders age 65+ spend 35% of their monthly household income on housing costs (ACS 2017-2021, Table B25093).

**Figure 7. Household income distribution in Holliston by age of householder (in 2021 inflation-adjusted dollars)**

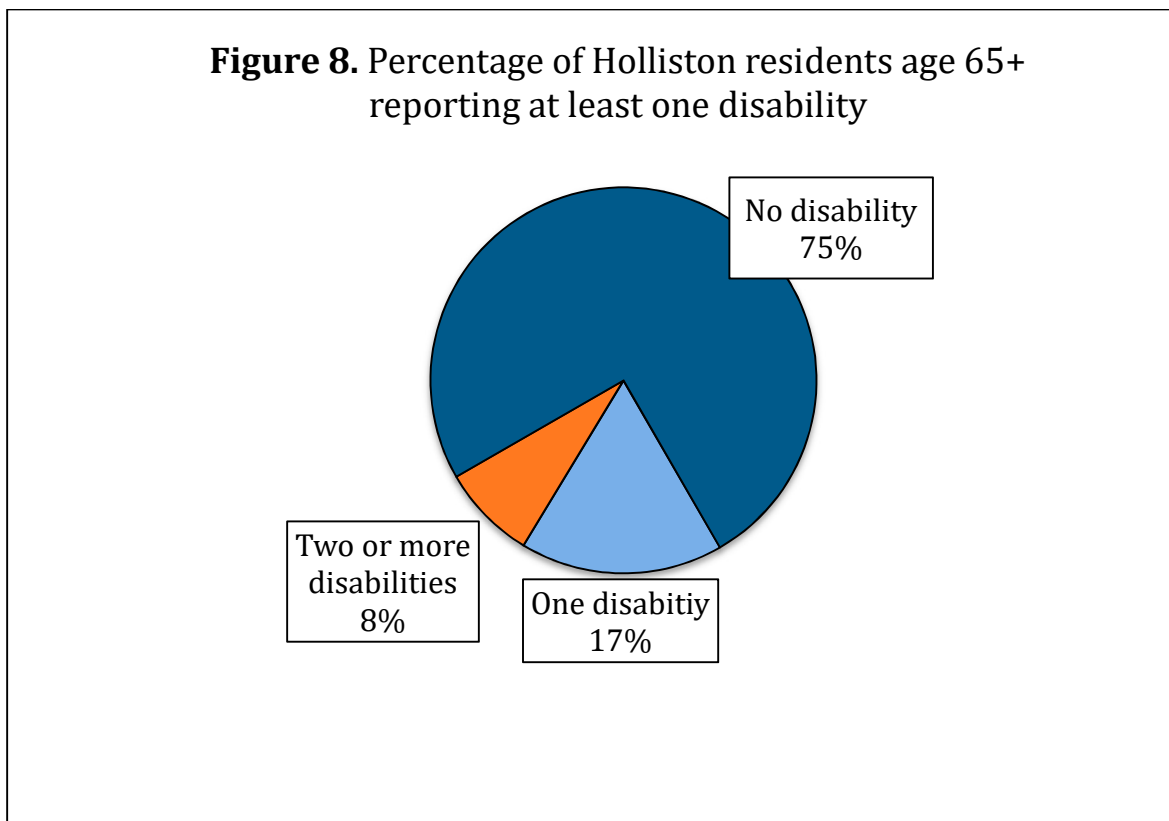


*Source: Source: American Community Survey, 2017-2021, Table B19037. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.*

*Note: Includes only community households, not group quarters such as nursing homes.*

The increased likelihood of acquiring a disability with age is evident in data from the ACS. Taken together, 25% of Holliston residents age 65 and older experience some level of disability that could impact their ability to function independently in the community. About 12% of Holliston’s residents age 65 and older have one disability, and nearly 5% report two or more disabilities (**Figure 8**). Among the different types of disability that are assessed in ACS, the most commonly cited by older Holliston residents 65 and older were hearing (10%) and ambulatory difficulty (10%), followed by independent living difficulty (7%) (ACS 2017–

2021, Table S1810). Other disabilities experienced by older Holliston residents include vision difficulty (3%), cognitive difficulties (3%).



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2017-2021, Table C18108.

## Insights from Interview and Focus Group Participants

In support of this needs assessment, one-on-one interviews were held with five individuals and four focus groups captured the observations of twenty-four participants. The overarching goal of these sessions was to obtain in-depth information on aging in Holliston and gain a broader understanding of the role the Senior Center plays within the community as well as in partnership with other Town Offices. Reported below are the major themes that emerged from the interviews and focus groups.

### Access to nature and sense of community are valuable aspects of living in Holliston.

Interactions with interview and focus group participants revealed a deep sense of place where the community is perceived as strong and neighborly. Favorable Town features such as the Rail Trail were highlighted by most participants. Additionally, the close-knit natures of the downtown area, walkable to some residents from their homes, was a cherished characteristic,

*"People go out of their way for each other. They are there for each other."* -Holliston resident

particularly in conjunction with the familiarity of many residents with one another. Building on the theme of a connected and beloved community is the presence of the Holliston Reporter, highlighted as a core feature strengthening the fabric of local society.

### **Physical access to community assets can be challenging for older people.**

The need for walkability, to safely walk around the Town of Holliston, is perceived as tantamount to healthy aging in Holliston and the average residents' inability to do so was highlighted frequently in private as well as group discussions. An additional consistent theme expressed by all interviewees and focus group participants were concerns for transportation options. As being able to drive is also essential to the autonomy and independence of older residents, views expressed by participants reflected concern for not only those known to not have the ability to drive themselves at this time, but also for their own personal future needs and ability. It was noted that parking at central locations can be challenging. Pedestrian safety was expressed consistently as a major concern by Key Informants, citing that a simple errand like going to the bank or grocery shopping can come with high risk for older residents. Similarly, it was reported that the frequency of emergency calls involving older drivers has increased in recent years—a trend that is expected to continue over the coming decade. Focus group respondents noted that residents were not aware of rideshare options and that snow accumulation in winter was a barrier for car owners. Given that walkability is low and proximity to needed resources and shopping options is high, many felt deep concern for the current and future well-being of older residents.

### **Limited transportation options decrease community engagement and access to needed resources.**

Access to transportation, particularly in the evenings and on weekends, is viewed as crucial for accessing Holliston's amenities and needed resources, as well as traversing in and around the region. This sentiment includes an overarching sense that the Senior Center is both inconveniently located as well as difficult to access for older residents. Inadequate transportation systems alongside driver safety were noted as major concerns that, if addressed, could benefit residents of all ages.

Several Key Informants described dynamics controlling access to health care and emphasized that for many older adults in Holliston, these challenges represent a major hurdle, whether it be for routine

appointments to facilitate ongoing care or needed support for an emerging crisis. One participant cited an example of requiring an entire day of travel alongside idle waiting, simply to attend a brief appointment with a physician. The lack of options, inability for

*"The Senior Center is not on route to anything. It is not a convenient place to try to get to for folks."*  
-Key Informant Interviewee

spontaneity, and concern for future increased need was a consistent theme reverberated during interviews and focus group discussions.

### **Several factors deter participation at the Holliston Senior Center.**

Tremendous concern was expressed consistently for the location of the Senior Center in interactions with interview and focus group participants. Positioned far from the center of Holliston, many participants stated that given its current location, they almost felt the Senior Center is located in another town. This sentiment combined with low interest in volunteering with the Council on Aging, limits not only the town-wide visibility of the center as a community institution, but also restricts inclusion of diversified perspectives that could benefit future planning and supports.

Strong concern was expressed by many participants that the center may not be accessible by existing transport, and it is possible that the limited capacity and current physical environment deter some residents from considering it a viable resource for them or their families.

Additionally, interview participants shared concerns that rising seniors do not feel included in the opportunities for activity and social interaction at the center. For example, specific comments indicated that Holliston is not perceived as a friendly place to age and moreover, “younger-older” residents do not have targeted activities that they want and need at the Senior Center.

*“Our Senior Center is speaking to an older generation, a more traditional mindset of what aging looks like, and we’re not reaching the broader swath of older residents. I think that we are missing the younger-olders in Holliston. Even for the older-olders, it’s not a place they can see themselves.”*

-Interview Participant

### **Barriers to civic and municipal engagement leave some residents feeling left out.**

Key Informants as well as focus group participants emphasized that many residents strongly recognize ageism in the community beyond what they feel is a reluctance on the part of the

*“Aging is a natural course affecting everyone. We should be seen, heard, and respected.”*

-Focus Group Participant

Town to allocate resources and to offer supports. One interviewee summarized this sentiment by stating, “Holliston is a less-than senior friendly town.”

Additional comments supported this view. One such statement expressed that, “older adults should be considered a resource rather than a burden.” Other participants in discussions pointed to a sense that as one ages, “you often feel treated as if you have a disease.” These perceptions are viewed by older adults in Holliston with frustration specifically, and a distrust for Town governance more broadly. This sentiment was illustrated in one

participant's comment stating that, "aging is a natural course affecting everyone. We should be seen, heard, and respected."

Conversely, while the Town states support for older residents, an interviewee elaborated that, "the Town tries to support what the Senior Center and Council on Aging need but at some point, we recognize that if a senior needs to leave Holliston, we don't generally look at it and say we didn't do all that could have been done. If a family wants to spend a lot of money to move to Holliston, then this is going to impact seniors."

Focus group participants alongside interviewees demonstrated that residents are reluctant to voice their interest in a broad spectrum of choices for program and service opportunities; however, there are lingering doubts about specific needs to support resident preferences in the context of a revised Senior Center schedule. Moreover, concern was expressed for available funding to support improvements for program and service offerings. A broad perception expressed by many participants throughout the needs assessment was that the Town of Holliston refrains from monetary contributions supporting needed programs and services for Holliston's older residents. An overarching theme is that as a large proportion of Holliston's population, older residents do not receive a corresponding amount of support and attention. Long-time municipal committee volunteers as well as residents, both interviewed individually and as participants in focus groups, echoed deep concern for the minimal monetary contribution provided by the Town of Holliston in support of essential operations.

#### **There is increased demand for essential services among seniors.**

Not only was it evident in conversations with Key Informants that they are witnessing an increased demand for senior services, but also an influx of requests for supports, and calls for assistance, both medical and personal. Participants conveyed consensus that food insecurity is rising and nutritional support for older residents should expand. For example, it was suggested that an existing program could be available five days a week instead of offering the current three-day schedule. Ultimately, the extent of food security issues experienced by older residents is not known. Moreover, a general understanding was expressed that many residents are likely unaware of existing supports such as SNAP benefits and heating assistance. Several individuals cited continued increased demand for food deliveries despite the phasing out of pandemic era precautionary impacts.

Overall, it was unclear in conversations with Town departments as well as with residents as to the availability of emergency heating and/or cooling facilities to accommodate Holliston's older residents in the event of an extreme weather event. Concerns for issues are considered

*"Electronic outreach is not necessarily useful to a senior population."*  
-Town Official

difficult to raise with town officials, as they are perceived as unresponsive to these concerns by some focus group and interviewee responses. In some instances, it was cited that emergency services currently faces challenges in response times. Given the volunteer nature of emergency response, coordination with area dispatch can create delays.

Even though the Senior Center's transitional phase with new leadership was acknowledged during our discussions, it was clear from the interviews that available resources are not prepared to deal with current or future increased demands. There is agreement that while the work being done by organizations in the community is invaluable to residents, there is an explicit awareness that the unmet breadth and depth of needed services is immeasurable, particularly as it pertains to issues surrounding mental health, housing security, cleanliness, and food security. Several needs assessment participants commented on the overwhelming demand for limited resources with many residents identifying neighborhood issues in proximity to their own dwelling, specifically surrounding identified challenges to substance abuse, depression, isolation, and hoarding. Both urgent and nonurgent medical support for public safety response as well as social supports are reported by interviewees alongside focus group participants to be steadily increasing in Holliston.

#### **Issues around housing and isolation are prevalent.**

Key Informants and focus group participants reported that many seniors are in distress because they are finding it difficult to afford expenses and to remain in their homes. Additionally, older adults tend to be isolated in their often maintenance-intensive homes and can be reluctant to ask for help. Easily manageable housing down-sizing options are not common in Holliston, particularly due to the Town's desirable Metro-West proximity to the City of Boston as well as regional employment opportunities. As the aging population increases, this situation is likely to become untenable. Many issues exist for older adults living alone in single-family homes requiring maintenance. Additionally, the cost of utilities, municipal fees, and property taxes were named as a critical need for some older residents. Taken together, these challenges have implications not only for the support networks available to seniors, but also for local service providers and municipal departments who take the place of younger family members in this social support role.

In general, an essential aspect for healthy aging is an individual's ability to remain living in the community as one ages—and the desire to do so was a salient point expressed by both focus group participants and key informant interviewees. The strong consensus is that without adequate housing options for residents looking to downsize, older adults will either remain in homes that are inappropriate or unmanageable, or they will be forced to leave the community.



## Results from the Community Survey

In this section we report key findings from each section of the survey. Tables illustrating results in detail are included in **Appendix A**.

Respondents to the community survey included 1,332 individuals age 55 and older, representing a response rate of 26% (see **Table 2**). This is a strong return rate and reflects interest among community residents. Compared to the age distribution of Holliston as a whole, we heard from more resident in the age 55-59 and age 60-69 age group and from fewer residents in age the 70-79 age group and the 80+ age group<sup>1</sup>. To facilitate comparison of younger and older segments of the population with respect to needs and interests, we often present results grouped into four age groups; age group 55-59, age group 60-69, age 70-79, and age 80 or older.

**Table 2.** Community Survey Respondents

	Number of Responses	Age Distribution of Responses
Age 55-59	153	12%
Age 60-69	483	37%
Age 70-79	450	34%
Age 80+	225	17%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,311**</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*5 respondents reported ages under 55, and were included in this group.

\*\*21 respondents did not report their age

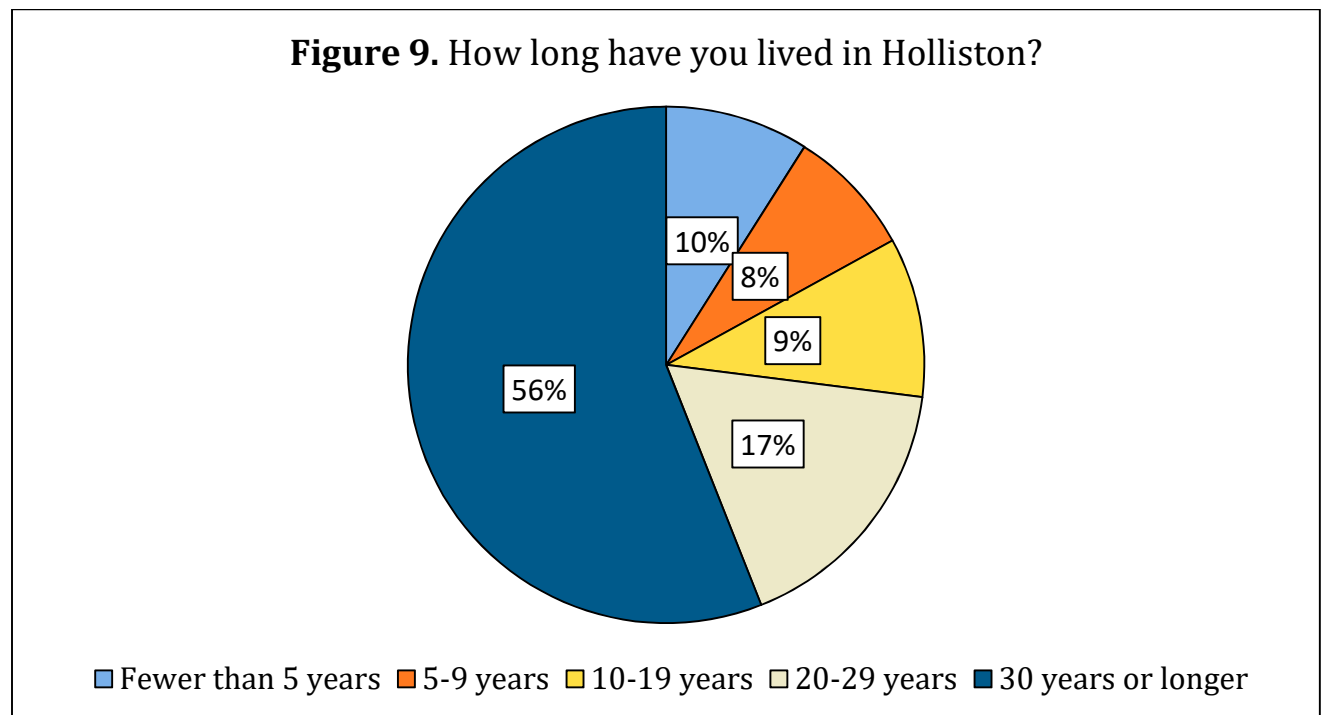
## Community and Neighborhood

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 (Salomon, 2010). By aging in place, older adults can retain their independence, as well as maintain valued social relationships and engagement with the community. In turn, aging in place may promote wellness by supporting physical activities that reduce risk of chronic disease and by accommodating disabling conditions.

Survey respondents included residents who have lived in Holliston for many years, as well as relative newcomers. Duration of residing in Holliston varies from 18% of respondents who have been in Town less than 10 years compared to 56% who have lived in Holliston for

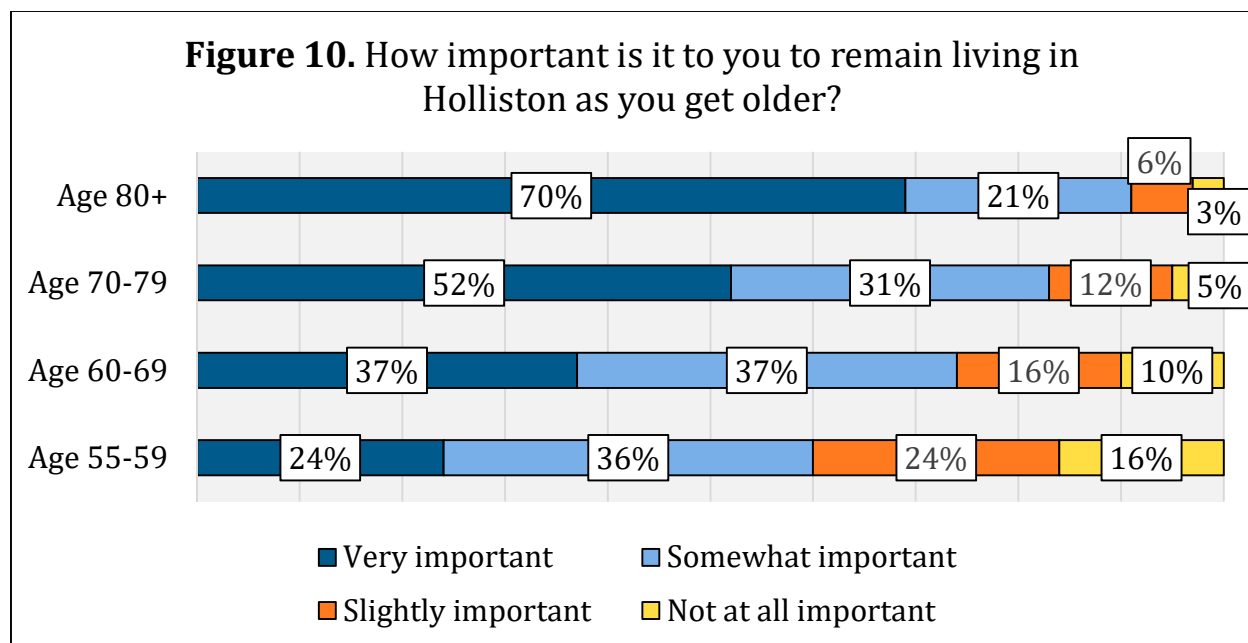
<sup>1</sup> Among residents age 55+ in Holliston, 28% are age 55-59, 42% are 60-69, 21% are 70-79, and 9% are age 80+ (Source: American Community Survey, 2017-2021, Table B01001. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates).

more than 30 years (see **Figure 9**). These individuals offer insight based on their years of experience of living in Holliston. It is also helpful, however, to hear from those who are new to Holliston.



It is important to consider preparations for responding to weather and other local emergencies. Respondents were asked if they felt informed about what to do in case of such emergency and a majority responded “yes” (83%; **Appendix A**). Among respondents age 55-59, 24% report not feeling informed about what to do in the event of a weather or other emergency. Feeling safe and prepared to respond to emergencies are among some reasons why respondents are committed to aging in Holliston.

This finding is reinforced by the survey data that suggests more than two-thirds of survey respondents are committed to remaining in Holliston as they age (see **Figure 10**).



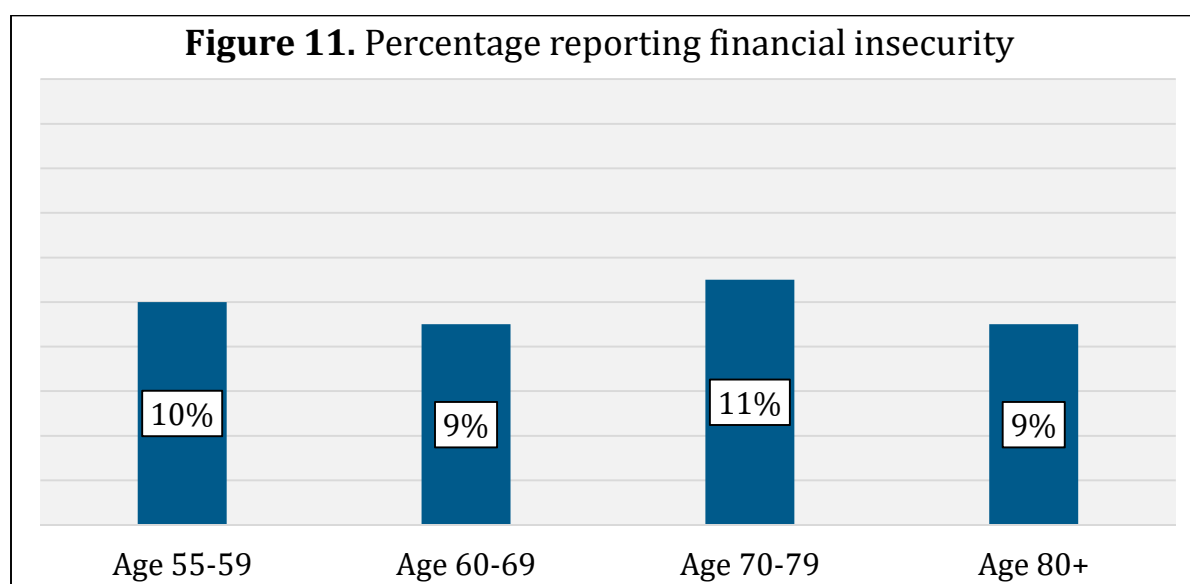
A large majority of survey participants (94%) took the time to respond to the open-ended question, “What are your greatest concerns about your ability to continue living in Holliston?” Despite the high number of comments, they could readily be categorized into three key areas of concern: 1) cost of living in Holliston; 2) lack of appropriate housing options; 3) worry about mobility and transportation to maintain quality of life. **Table 3** summarizes these concerns, drawing on verbatim responses from the survey.

**Table 3.** Sample responses to question, “What are your greatest concerns about your ability to continue living in Holliston?”

Costs of living in Holliston
It is beyond scary and stressful fearing our fate as we use all our resources on taxes and doctor's bills.
Taxes are too high. Cost to maintain house, septic system, no activities
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. No raise or little raise in pension in 20 years is now taking a toll on my resources
Lack of appropriate housing options
limited choices, expensive over 55 developments, limited apartments in homes- no congregate or innovative senior living options close to downtown and transportation
Accessibility inside our home - need to eventually be on one level and not sure if we can afford to buy a one-level home in Holliston

Worry about mobility and transportation to maintain quality of life
I am concerned about the lack of public transportation should something happen and I can no longer drive. I am aware there is a limited bus service that I can take to Stop & Shop but I would like an intra Holliston bus service so I can go to CVS, Library, Bar Athena, Bertucci's etc.
There are no sidewalks. We live about 5 minutes from Stoddard Lake (pond) but we risk our lives to walk there and we can't park there due to the high parking fee.
Access to stores, doctors, etc. when we are not able to drive.
...how will the town address the needs of those of us who need to rely on downtown is accessible for walking, access to being able to get transportation to appointments, groceries, or even get to senior center to stay connected.

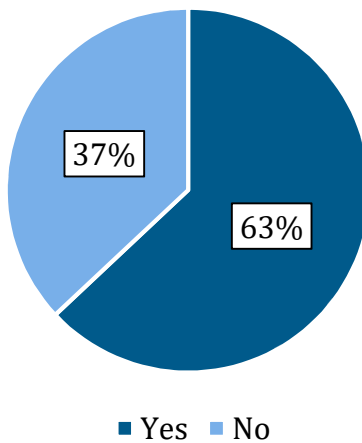
Given that the number one concern about aging in Holliston is the cost of property taxes and living, it is important to note that between 9% of survey respondents (about 120 people) do not believe they have the financial resources to meet their basic needs (see **Appendix A**). Relatedly, 7% of respondents were asked if they would have enough money on-hand to cover an unexpected expense of \$400 or more and only 6% reported that they would not be able to cover it with funds they have on-hand (see **Appendix A**).



In order to understand survey respondents' awareness of local resources, we asked them if they would know who to contact in the Town if they or someone in their family needed assistance (see **Figure 12**). While a majority said yes, 37% of respondents reported not knowing who to contact in Holliston. Interestingly, among younger respondents (age 55-59), this rate was highest with 47% reporting that they did not know who to contact should their

family need assistance compared to 26% of those over age 80 (see **Appendix A**). It may be that these survey respondents have never had the need for services—and therefore have not investigated the matter. It may also be indicative of a need for continued outreach about basic functions of both municipal departments but also local organizations to consider targeting some outreach to younger residents or newcomers to the Town.

**Figure 12.** Would you know whom to contact in Holliston should you or someone in your family need help accessing social services?

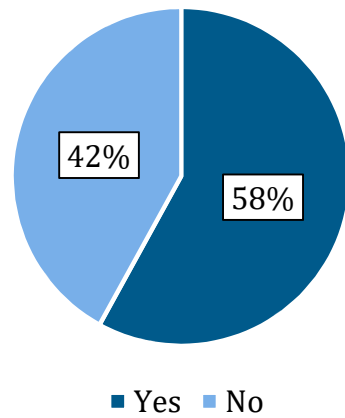


## Housing and Living Situation

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 community.

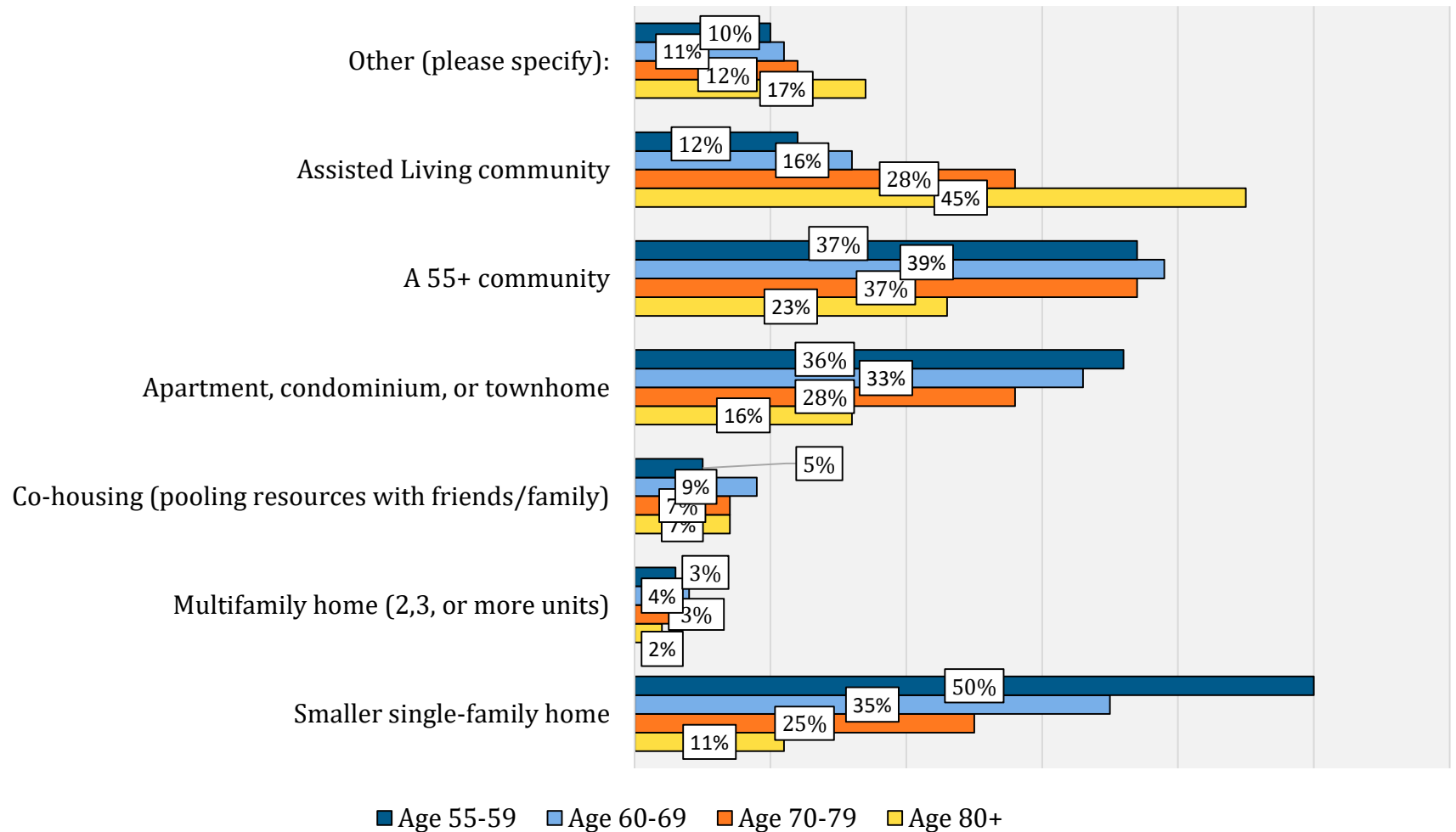
Most respondents live in owns that are owned by them or someone with whom they live (94%) and only 6% report renting their current home (see **Appendix A**). In order to assess the “age-friendliness” of the housing stock in Holliston, respondents were asked if they currently had a bedroom and bathroom on the entry-level of their home—an important feature as occupants age and mobility (up and down stairs) becomes more challenging. **Figure 13** shows that a majority of respondents do have this feature in their home (58%).

**Figure 13.** Does your current residence have a bedroom and full bath on the entry level?



Survey participants were asked the type of housing they would prefer if a change in health or physical ability required moving from their current residence. Responses varied greatly by age group. Among the youngest respondents, the highest rated type of future housing is a smaller single family home (50%) and among respondents age 60-79 the most preferred type of future housing is assisted living rated by 37%-39% of respondents in these age groups (see **Figure 14**). Among those in their 80s, assisted living was the most preferred type of future housing. This interest in senior housing options by those age 60 and older has implications for housing stock needs in Holliston.

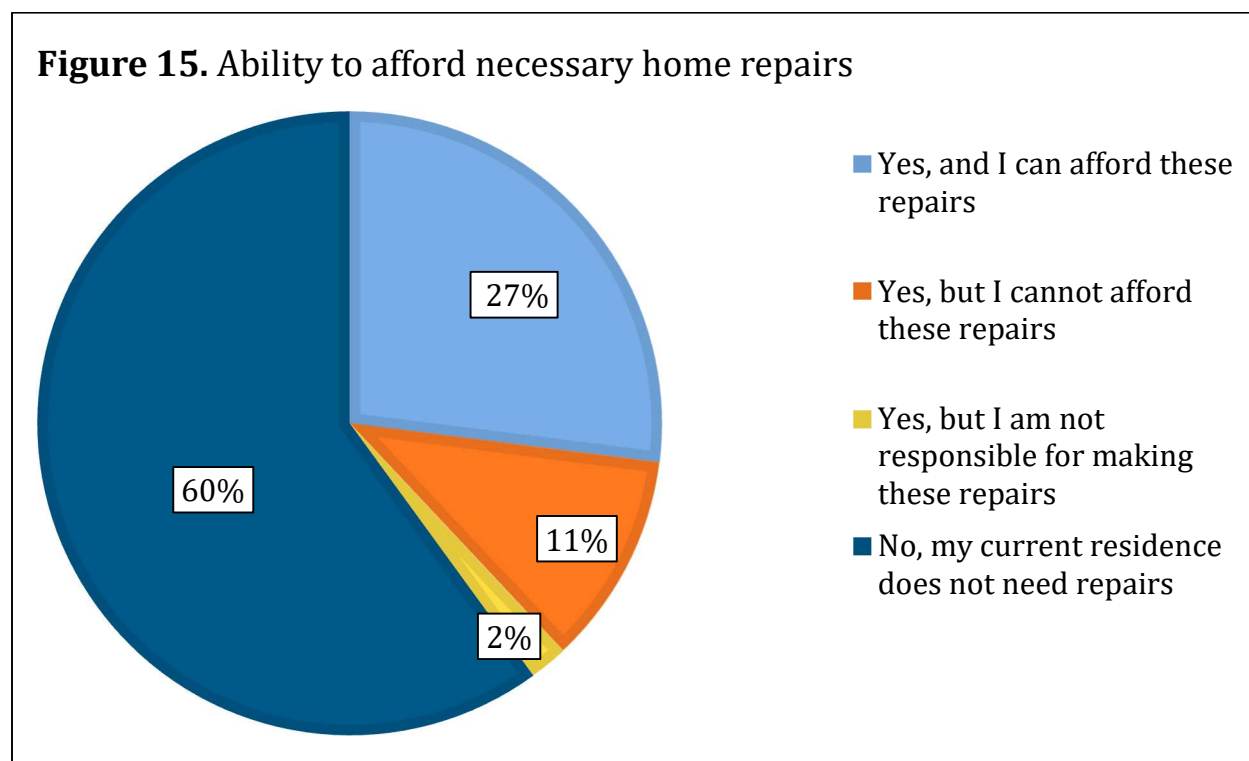
**Figure 14.** In the next 5 years, if a change in your/your partner's health or physical ability required that you move from your current residence, what kind of housing would you prefer in Holliston?





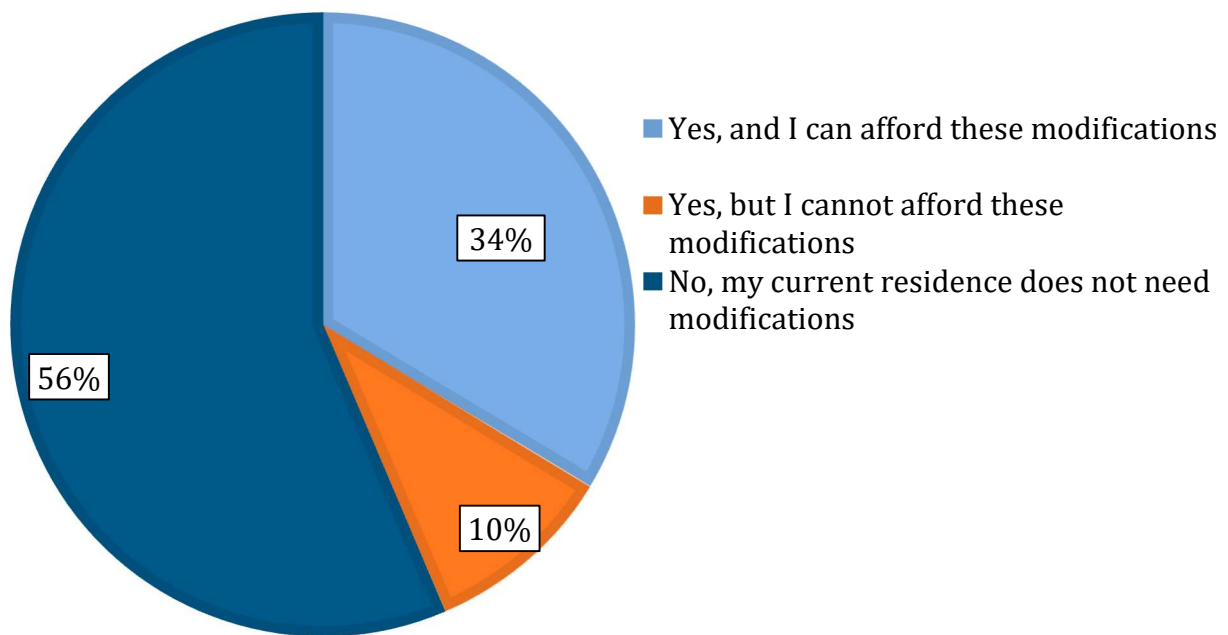
As displayed in **Appendix A**, the majority of survey respondents live with at least one other person (80%), but not surprisingly, this number is smaller for the older cohorts. Ninety percent of participants age 55-59 live with someone else whereas about 61% of people age 80 and older do. In contrast, 18% of survey respondents age 70-79 report living alone and among respondents age 80 and older, this proportion is significantly higher (39%). 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 Holliston population. Additionally, 9% of respondents reported living with child under age 18. This suggests that for a small percentage of Holliston's older residents, significant childcare or other family responsibilities could play a role in their lives.

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 repairs (e.g., a new roof, electrical work, etc.) to improve your ability to live in it safely for the next five years?", 40% respondents stated that their home would need repairs (**Figure 15**). Of those whose current residence needs repairs, 11% stated that they could not afford these repairs (see **Figure 15**).



Modifying one's home (e.g., installing railings or grab bars in showers) in response to changing needs and preferences can promote independence and quality of life. While a majority of respondents do not need such modifications as this time, 42% report that modifications are needed (see **Figure 16**). Among them, 10% cannot afford to make these changes. Given the share that need such modifications and have the resources to implement them, suggestions for connecting residents with handyman services or information about taking action are made.

**Figure 16.** Ability to afford necessary home modifications



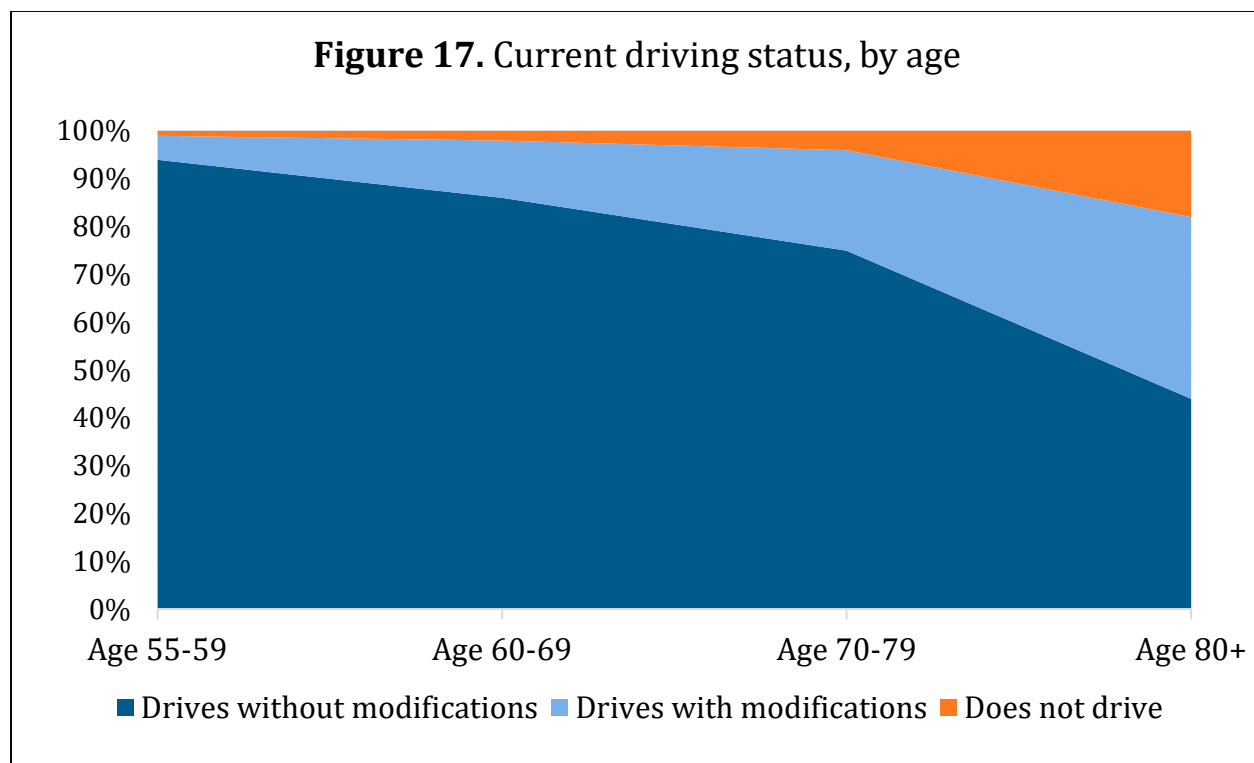
## Transportation

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.

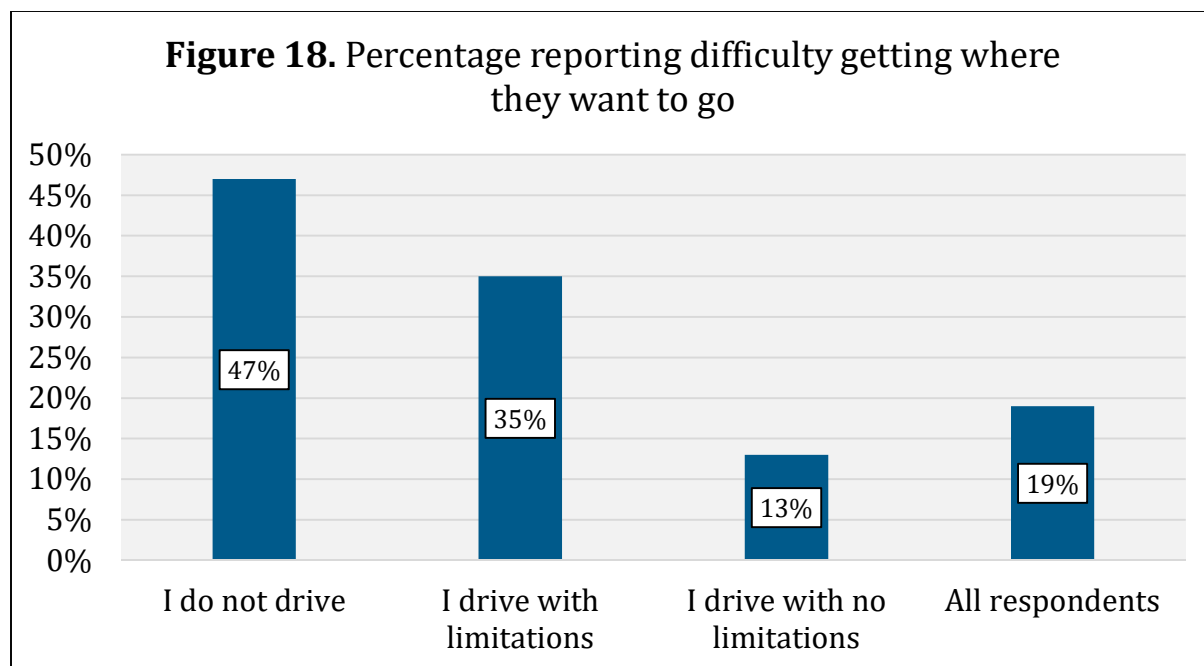
There were several questions on the survey related to transportation. Holliston is a town with limited public transportation options. Served by the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA), Holliston has access to a door-to-door bus service that connects Holliston residents to local amenities like shopping or errands that operates by appointment. MWRTA also has limited medical transportation services available to take residents to Boston area medical services.

Survey results suggest that most respondents (92%) drive themselves. Being driven by a spouse or family member (26%) and walking or biking (14%) were among the other primary ways that respondents meet their transportation needs (see **Appendix A**). Survey results show that only 5% of respondents do not drive, although this number is significantly larger when looking at just those age 80 and older, as 18% of this older segment of the population do not drive (see **Appendix A**).

More than one out of five respondents (24%) who do drive modify their driving to make it easier or safer. Modifications include avoiding driving at night, in rush hour, or during bad weather. While 94% of survey respondents age 55-59, 86% of respondents age 60-69, and 76% of those age 70-79 drive without modification, only 43% of those age 80 and older drive without making any modifications (see **Figure 17**). Modifying driving habits promote safety, but may limit independence and participation, especially if other transportation options are inaccessible, costly, or inconvenient. For example, older adults who avoid driving at night will struggle to participate in evening community meetings and programs. Those who avoid driving in bad weather may become isolated during the winter months.

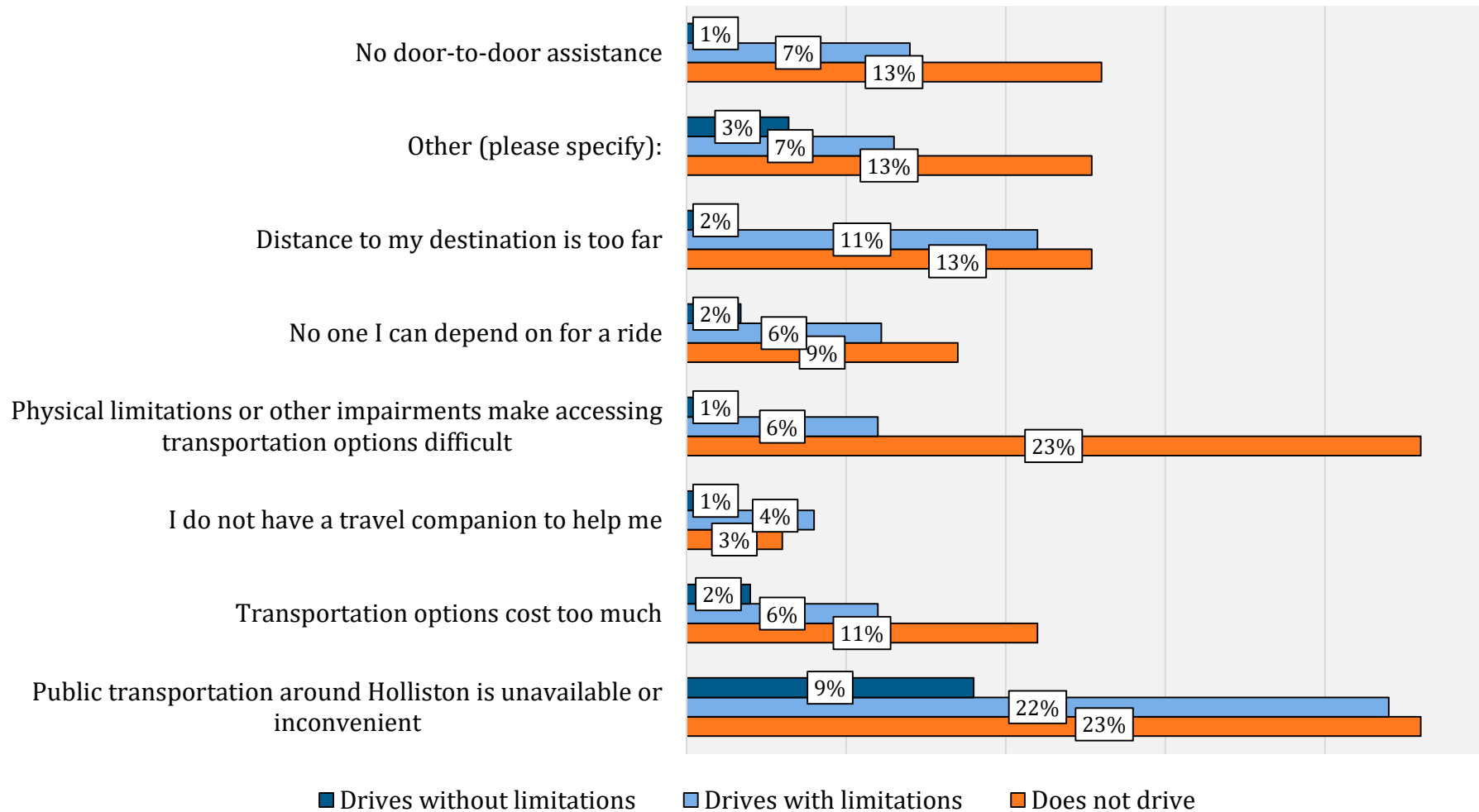


In response to the survey question, “What kind of difficulties do you have in getting where you want to go?” 19% of all survey participants reported at least one challenge (see **Figure 18**). Those who drive without modifications had the least difficulty getting where they want to go, while 47% of respondents who do not drive and 35% of those who drive with modifications mentioned at least one obstacle to them getting around.

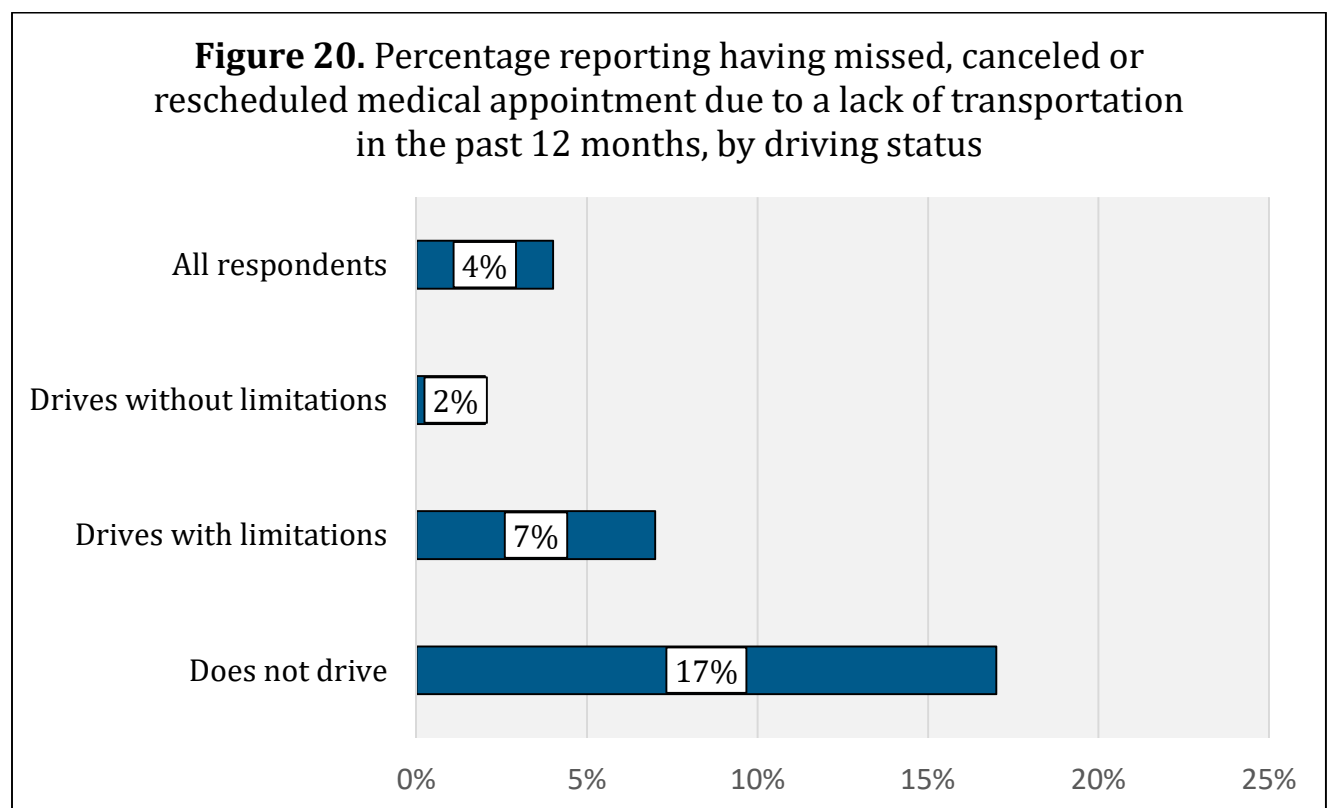


For those who do not drive, physical limitations making accessing transportation options difficult was the most common reasons for transportation difficulties (**Figure 19**). For the group of individuals who limit their driving in some way, where transportation options are critical, the most common barrier was public transportation not being available or convenient.

**Figure 19.** Difficulties in getting transportation, by driving status



Transportation barriers can limit a person's access to obtaining necessary services such as medical care. Respondents were asked if within the previous 12 months they had missed, cancelled, or rescheduled a medical appointment because of a lack of transportation. Among all respondents, only 4% reported this experience, and even among those who drive with modification, few (7%) indicated that this had occurred (see **Figure 20**). However, 17% of respondents who don't drive missed, cancelled, or rescheduled a medical appointment within the past year. These findings suggest that transportation limitations appear to negatively impact accessing medical care for the most vulnerable segments of Holliston's older resident community. This is particularly salient in Holliston as often residents have to travel to other communities to access healthcare.

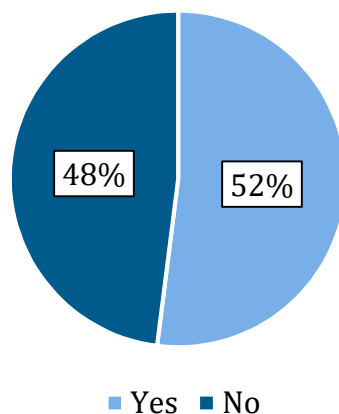


## Caregiving & Health

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).

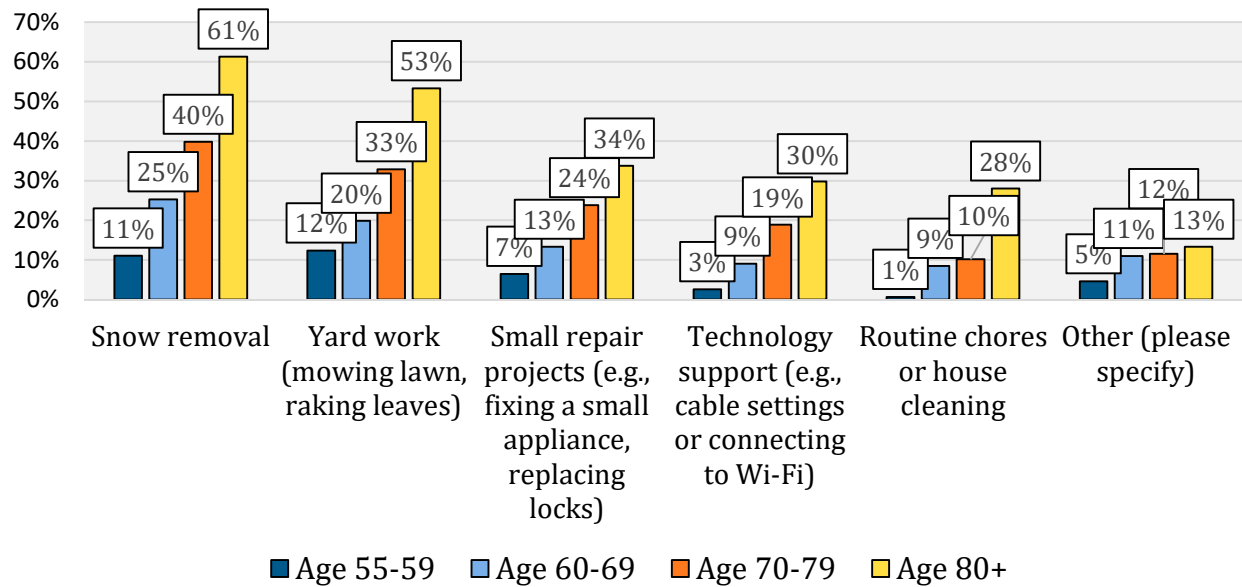
Aside from providing care to those who are frail or disabled, help may also be needed to safely accomplish common chores or home maintenance. Holliston survey respondents were asked if they needed help with activities around the house, due to a health issue. Over half of survey respondents reported needing help with at least one task (52%) (**Figure 21**). Specifically, yardwork and snow removal were the most commonly reported tasks requiring help (**Figure 22**).

**Figure 21.** Proportion needing help with at least one household task



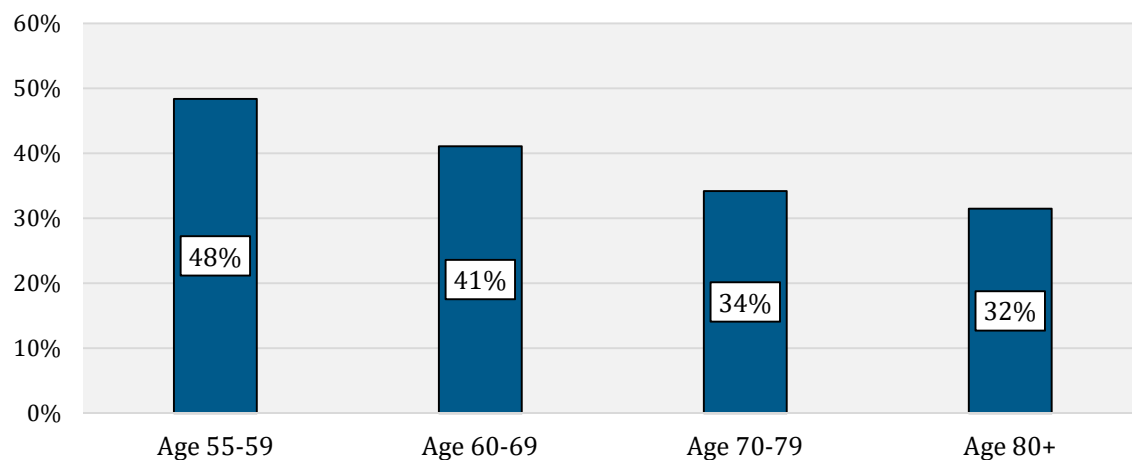


**Figure 22.** Due to any health issue, do you require help with activities around the house?

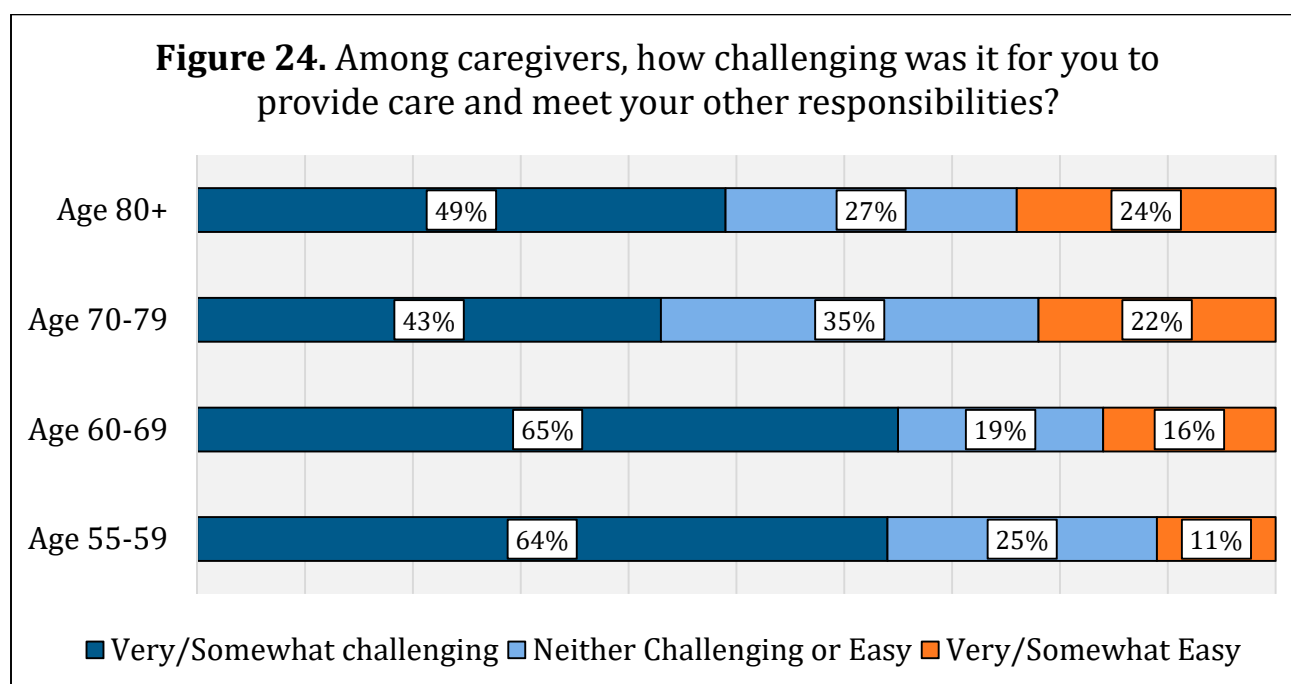


More than one-third (38%) of survey respondents stated that they currently or have in the past 24 months provided care or assistance to a person who was disabled or frail and that number is highest among those age 56-59 (48% reporting having provided care) (see **Figure 23**). According to the Massachusetts Healthy Aging community profiles, 13% of Holliston's residents age 65+ have been diagnosed with some type of dementia.

**Figure 23.** Percentage having provided care or assistance to a person who is disabled or frail in the past 2 years?

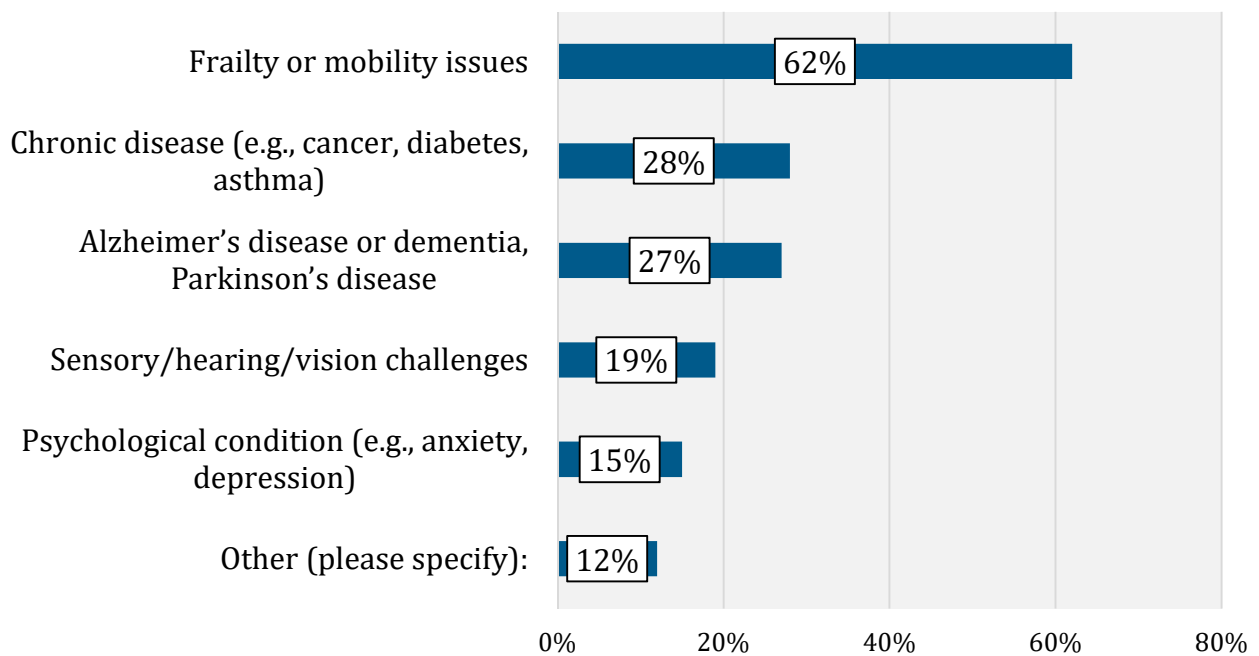


Many of those who have provided care or assistance to someone within the past 24 months stated that it was very or somewhat challenging to provide this care and meet other family and/or work responsibilities. This was especially true for those age 50-59, where 46% of those providing care reported this was very or somewhat challenging (see **Figure 24**). Many in this age group are likely still working and therefore may be struggling to meet the demands of both caregiving and work. Even for the other age groups, more than half of those who provide care find it very or somewhat challenging. Services (e.g., transportation to adult day programs) and programming (e.g., support groups) might be needed to support caregivers.



Caregivers were asked to indicate which conditions were experienced by their care recipient; the most frequently marked condition was mobility impairment (such as difficulty walking or climbing stairs) (60%; see **Figure 25**), while 23% of the people the survey respondents cared for were living with Alzheimer's or dementia. Many respondents checked multiple responses to this question, indicating that their care recipient had more than one disability.

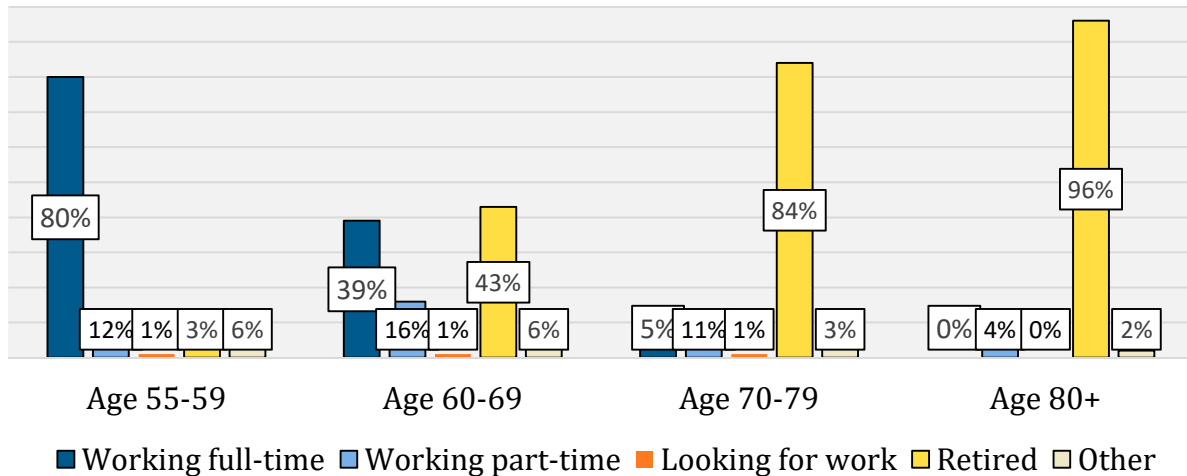
**Figure 25.** What condition is the primary reason for needing care?



## Employment and Retirement

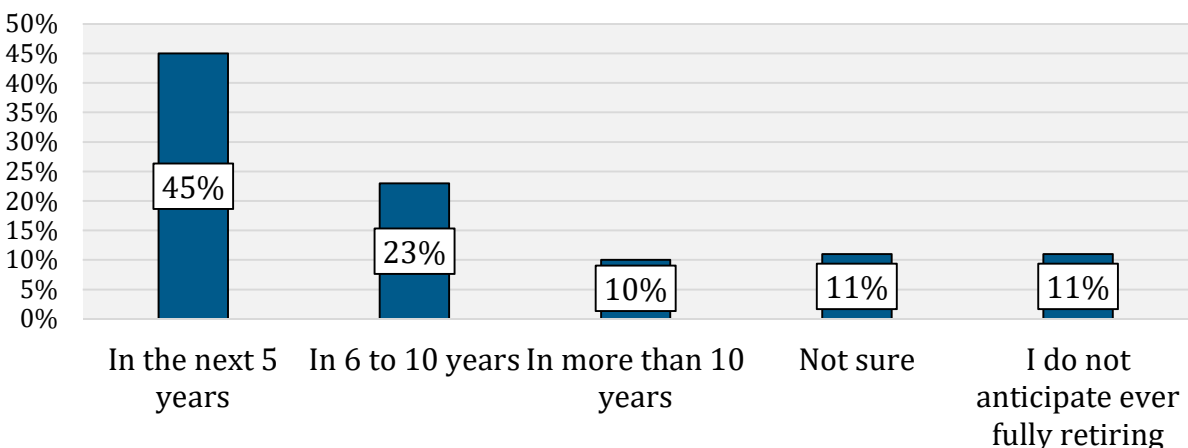
Many people across the country continue to work beyond the traditional retirement age of 65. For example, in Holliston, 45% of respondents age 60-69 report still working full or part time (**Figure 26**). However, more than three-quarters of respondents in their 70s (84%) and 80+ (96%) report being currently retired. These results suggest that a large share of survey respondents have free time.

**Figure 26.** Which of the following best describes your employment status?



For those who responded they are still working, 45% anticipate retiring in the next 3-5 years. (see **Figure 27**). This has implications for the Holliston Senior Center that could experience an increase in attendance as a result. Interestingly, more than 1 out of 5 respondents who are still working do not know when they expect to retire or do not anticipate ever retiring. Pilot-testing evening and weekend programming might be one way to engage these older workers with the Holliston Senior Center. Additionally, developing new programs that would particularly attract older workers would be useful. For example, convening a job fair for part-time or volunteer positions or hosting seminars on retirement planning—both financial and social.

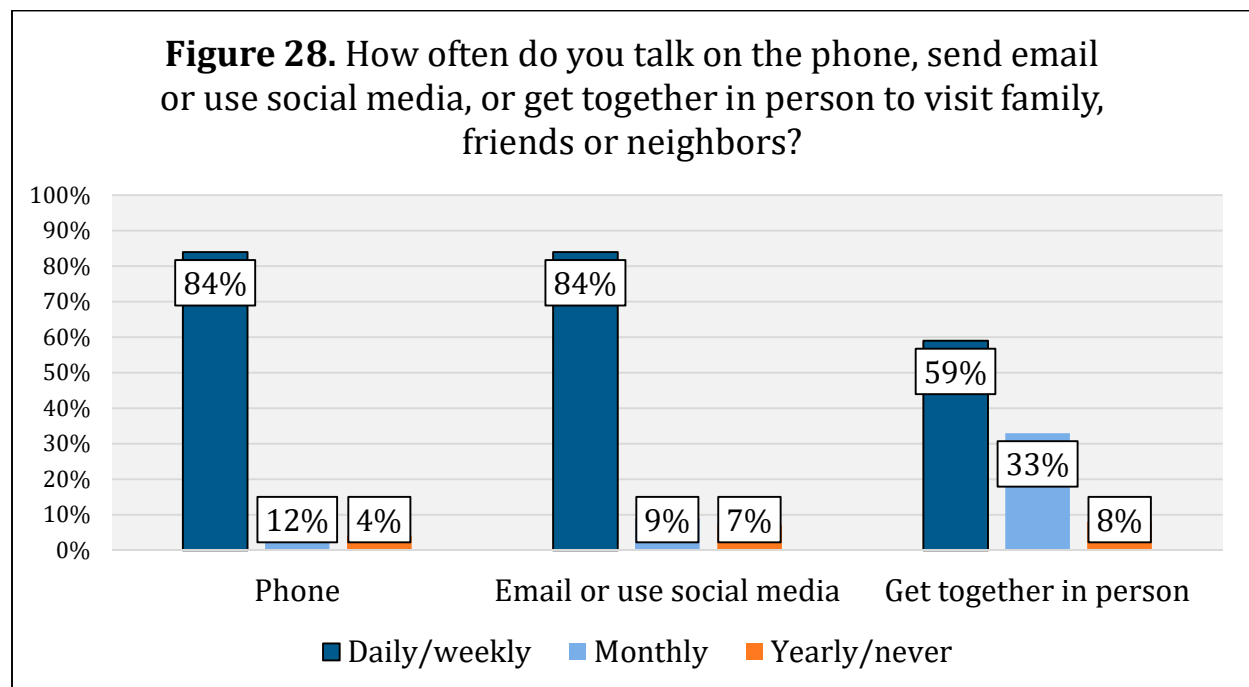
**Figure 27.** Anticipated retirement timing, among those currently working



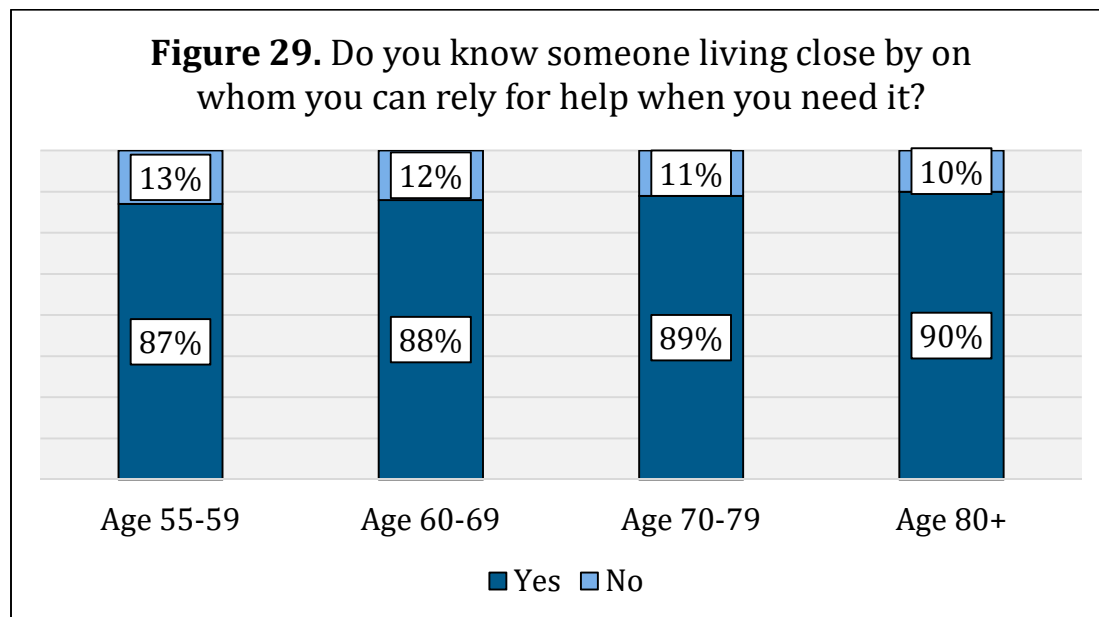
## Social Activities and Relationships

Social activities and relationships shape well-being 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.

The majority of survey respondents speak with someone and use email or social media on at least a weekly basis to connect with family, friends, or neighbors (see **Figure 28**). Although 59% of the respondents get together in person with someone at least weekly, 44% only get together monthly or less frequently. Individuals who have infrequent contact with friends or relatives represent important groups to target for efforts aimed at reducing isolation and, more generally, improving emotional wellbeing.

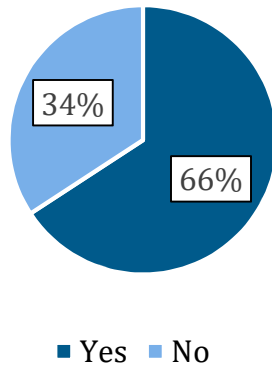


Survey respondents were asked if they knew someone living close by on whom they could rely on for help if they needed it, a majority of respondents across age groups do, in fact, have a person to call upon (**Figure 29**). However, 10%-13% of respondents do not have someone to call upon and this indicates that in times of hardship or crisis, a portion of residents will be looking to the Town or other systems for support.

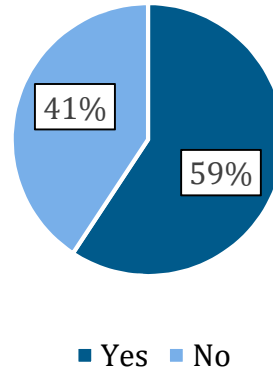


Survey participants were asked if they would ask a neighbor for help if they needed assistance with a minor task or errand (e.g., changing a lightbulb or shopping) and 66% of respondents of all ages said they would ask a neighbor (see **Figure 30 and 31**). Conversely, respondents were asked if they currently provide help to a neighbor and 59% said they would. These findings illustrate a strong neighbor-to-neighbor connection in Holliston and offer an opportunity to strengthen neighbor-to-neighbor relations in Holliston as a way of supporting older residents wishing to age in place.

**Figure 30.** Would you ask a neighbor for help if you needed assistance with a minor task or errand?



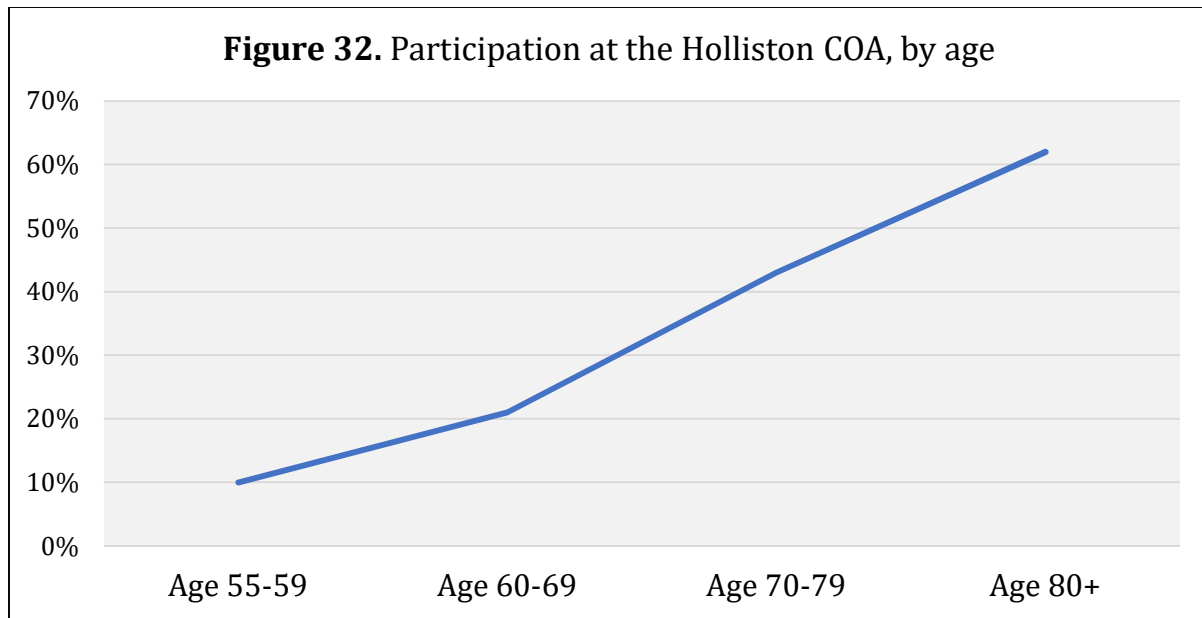
**Figure 31.** Do you provide any help to neighbors with minor tasks or errands?



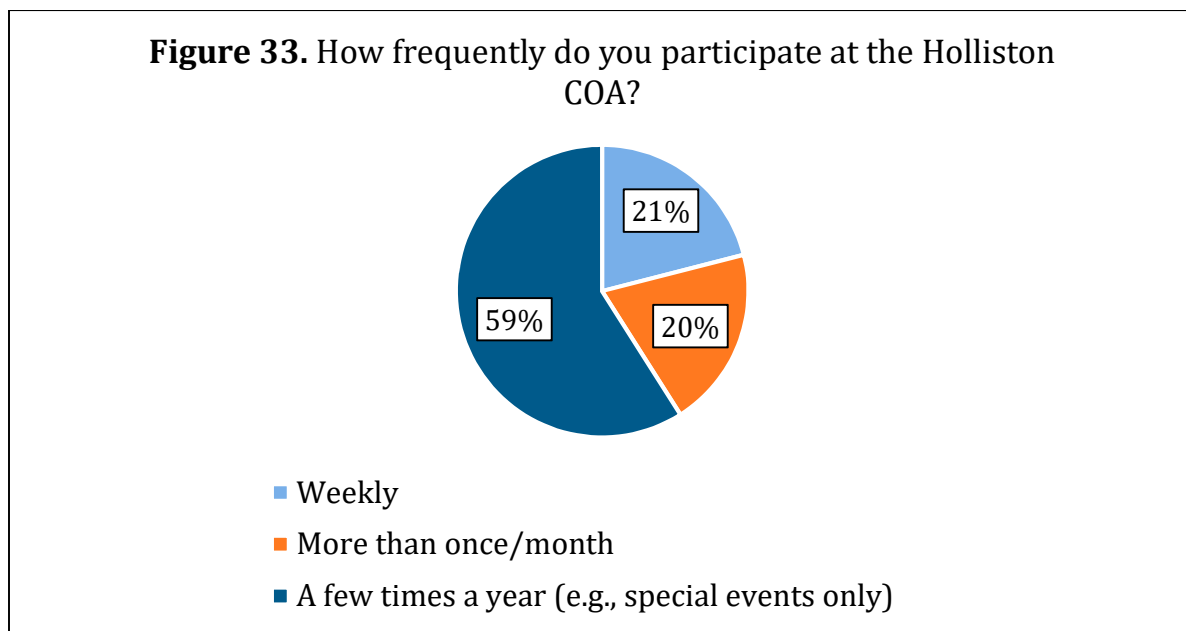
## Holliston Senior Center

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 COA. 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.

A majority (52%) of survey respondents report that the Holliston Senior Center plays a role in their lives or the lives of their loved ones, neighbors, or friends—making it clear that the Holliston Senior Center is a revered community asset for many (see **Appendix A**). Survey results suggest that participation in the Holliston Senior Center is considerably more common among older residents. As shown in **Figure 32**, just 10% of those age 55-59 and ever use programs or services offered by the Holliston COA, while 62% of the respondents age 80 and older indicated they do participate in the Holliston Senior Center. This age-graded pattern of participation is not unusual in Senior Centers and may reflect the increasing value of the Holliston Senior Center to older residents.

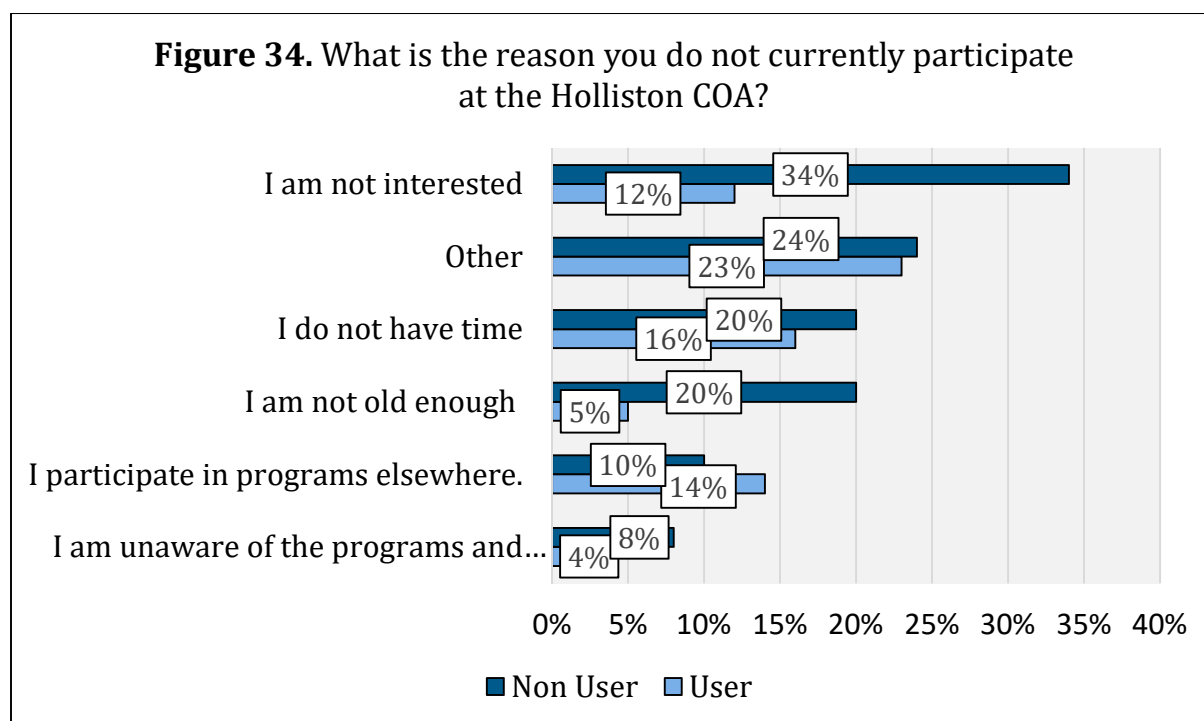


Of those who do use the Holliston COA, 59% only visit the Center a few times a year, while 21% of COA users participate at least weekly (**Figure 33**). This range of participation levels highlights the broad continuum of affiliation with the Holliston COA, with many residents participating just periodically, while others include visits to the Holliston COA as part of their regular weekly schedule. Note that participation on a weekly or multiple times per month basis was reported by just 1% of respondents who are age 55-59 while 16% of those age 80 and older participate weekly or multiple times per month, suggesting that older participants attend more frequently during the course of a year (**Appendix A**).





Of survey respondents don't participate at the Holliston COA, 83% are still working which may be a reason for not attending programs offered by the Holliston Senior Center (tabulations not shown). When asked for the reason why they don't participate at the Holliston COA, 34% of "non-user" respondents reported they are not interested (see **Figure 34**). If attracting new users to the senior center is a goal, reevaluating the programmatic content is needed.



Interestingly, for both users and non-users, many wrote in an "other" reason for not participating more frequently. For those who wrote in a response, the most common responses centered around not having time and still working. In addition, the perception of "not needing" to visit the Senior Center or "not knowing" what goes on at the Senior Center was extracted from these write-in responses, suggesting that communicating the purpose of the Senior Center and defining its target audience is a possible future step that would allow a wider range of residents to be drawn in. See **Table 4** with sample comments regarding why survey respondents don't use the COA.

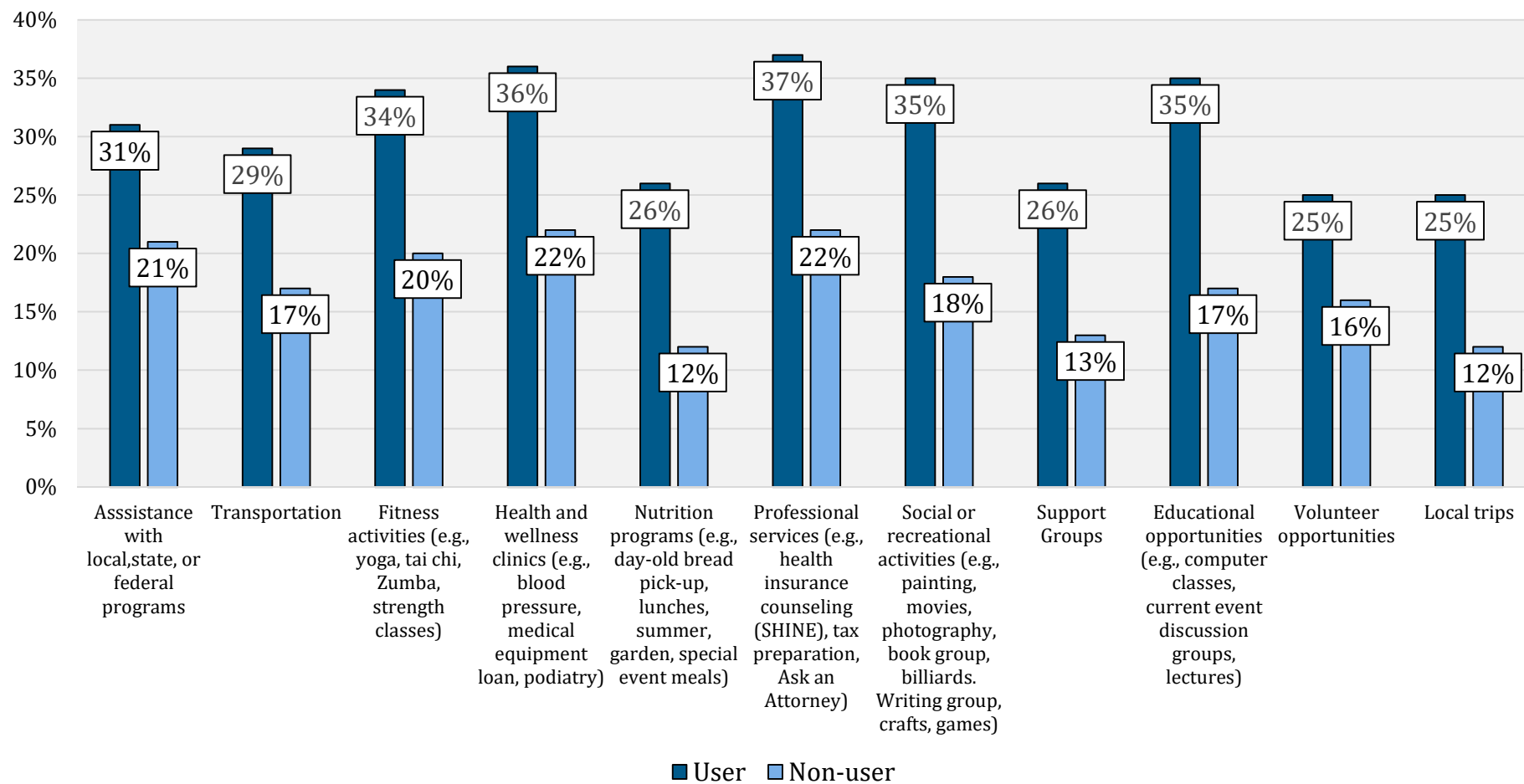
**Table 4.** Sample responses to question “What is the reason that you do not currently use programs or services offered by the Holliston Senior Center”

<b>I don't have a need</b>
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.
<b>Too busy with family, friends, and work</b>
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
<b>Not interested</b>
I find more interesting programs at other senior centers
“I think of it as a place for ‘old people’—not me!
Need more interesting programs geared to people, seniors 50-65-70, more mobility, social programs, educational programs

There are two ways that respondents were asked to identify their preferences for programs and services. First, respondents were asked to rate the importance of existing programs and services offered by the Holliston Senior Center (**Figure 35**). Health and wellness programming and professional services were the top rated services by both current users of the senior center and those who do not participate at the center.

Among respondents in their 50s and 60s, and 70s, the third most important service provided by the Holliston COA is fitness activities like yoga, tai chi or strength training. For those in their 90s, transportation was among the top three most important services (see **Appendix A**).

**Figure 35. Importance of current COA programs and services, (% reporting very important or important)**

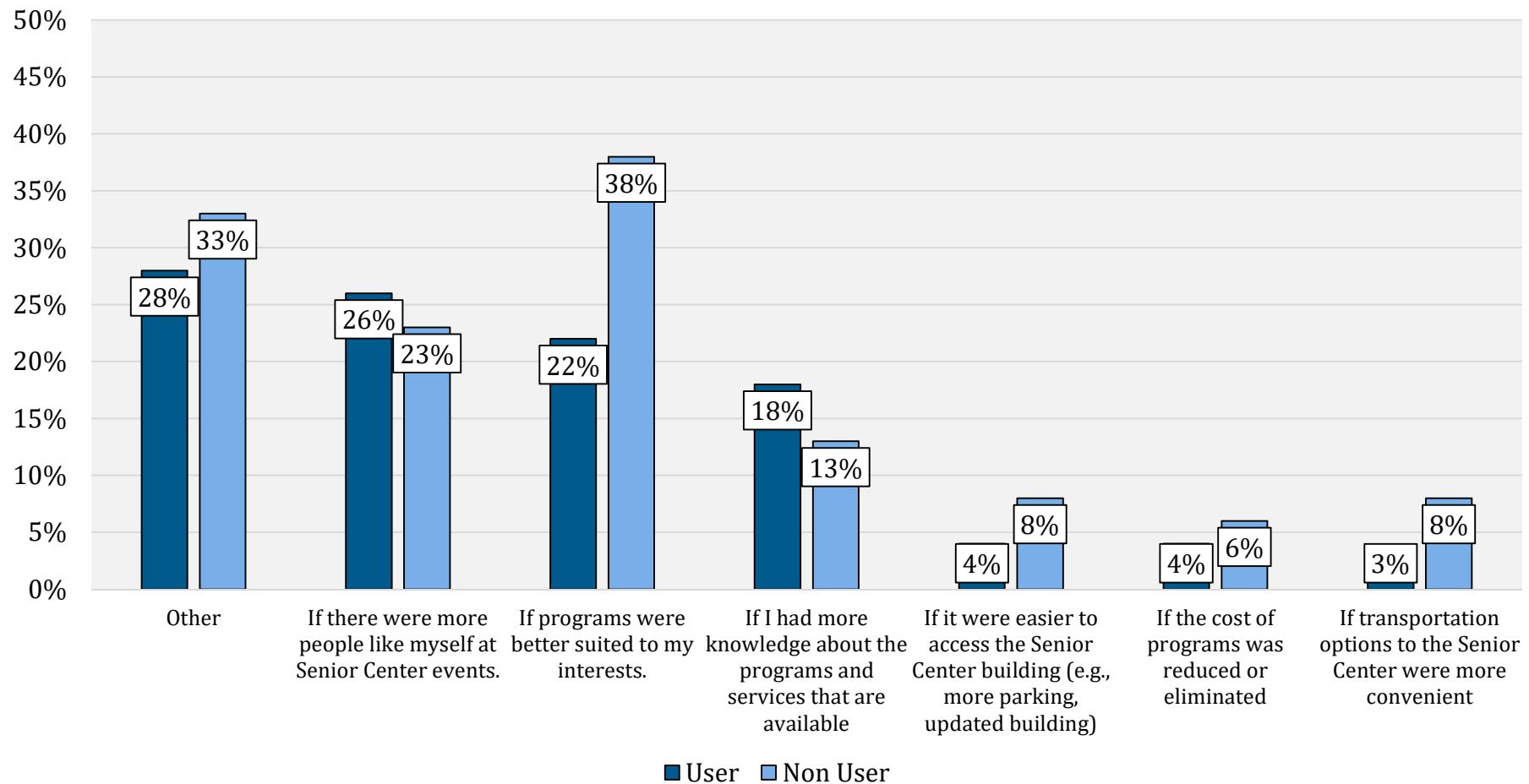


We asked respondents to select the reasons that would increase likelihood of participating at the Holliston Senior Center (**Figure 36**). For those who have not participated at the Holliston Senior Center, the most commonly reported reason that would increase their likelihood of participating was “if programs were better suited to my interests” (38%). Among 33% of respondents who do not participate at the senior center, the factors that would increase their likelihood of participating were written-in under “other”. Upon reviewing responses, the most common theme related to “when I am older” “when I develop a need”. For example, one respondent wrote “*As I age and when I retire, I see myself using the senior center*” and a different respondent wrote “I have not looked into any of the programs offered by the senior center as I have all that I require at this time.”

Among “non-users” of the Holliston COA (e.g., those reporting having never been to the Holliston COA), the third most commonly reported factors that would increase their participation is if more people like themselves participated at the center (23%). Suggesting that being able to identify with the activities and patrons of the center is an important motivating factor for participation.

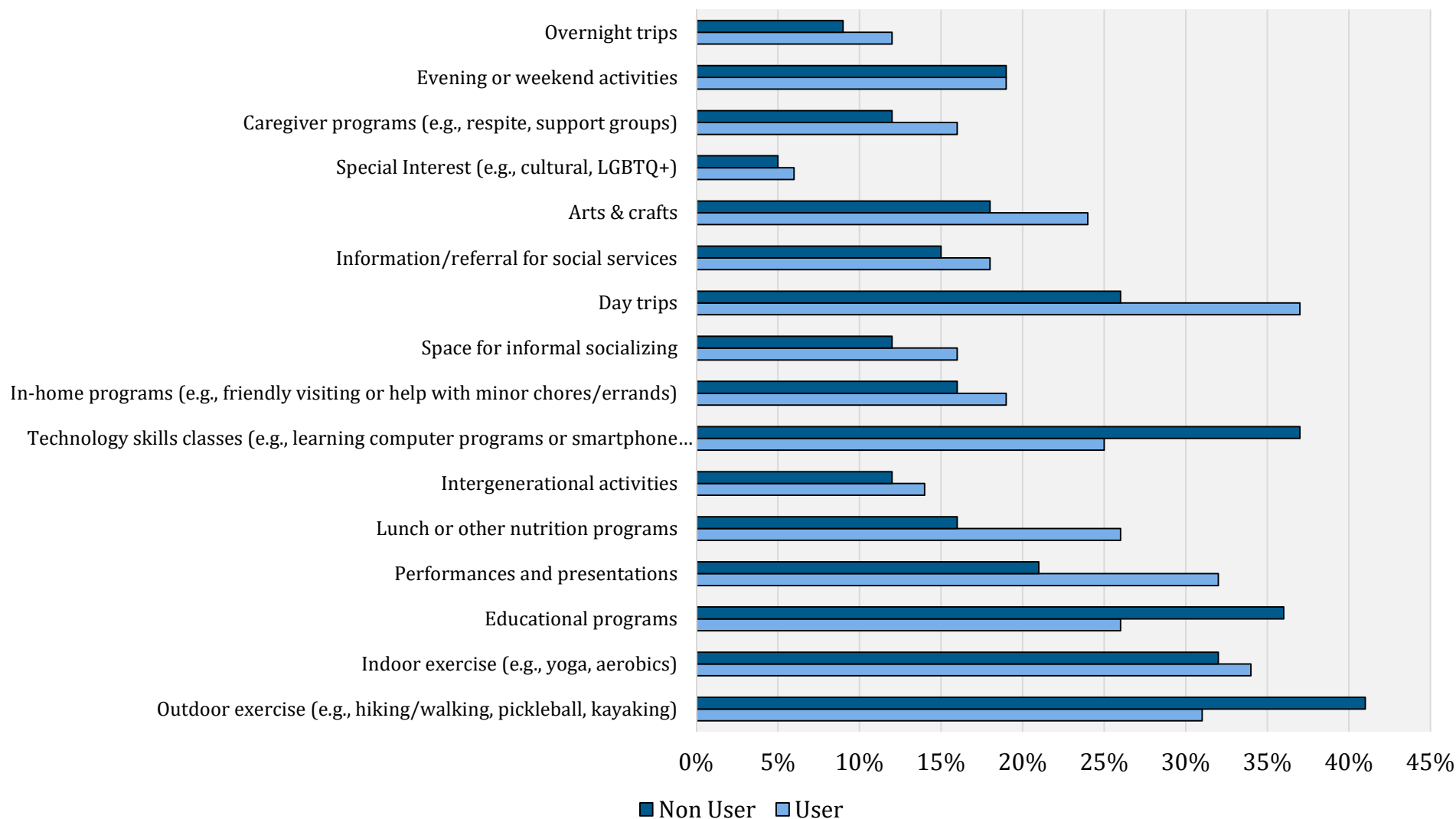
Understanding reasons for lack of participation provides direction and opportunities for change. Overcoming the obstacle of unfamiliarity, increasing outreach, adapting programming to meet the broad interests of the older adult population, and exploring strategies to update the image and space of the Senior Center may be areas to consider as future Holliston COA goals. Interestingly, the starkest difference between users and non-users was the perception of parking. One out of four participants report that more parking would increase their participation.

**Figure 36.** What would increase the likelihood of you participating at the Holliston COA?

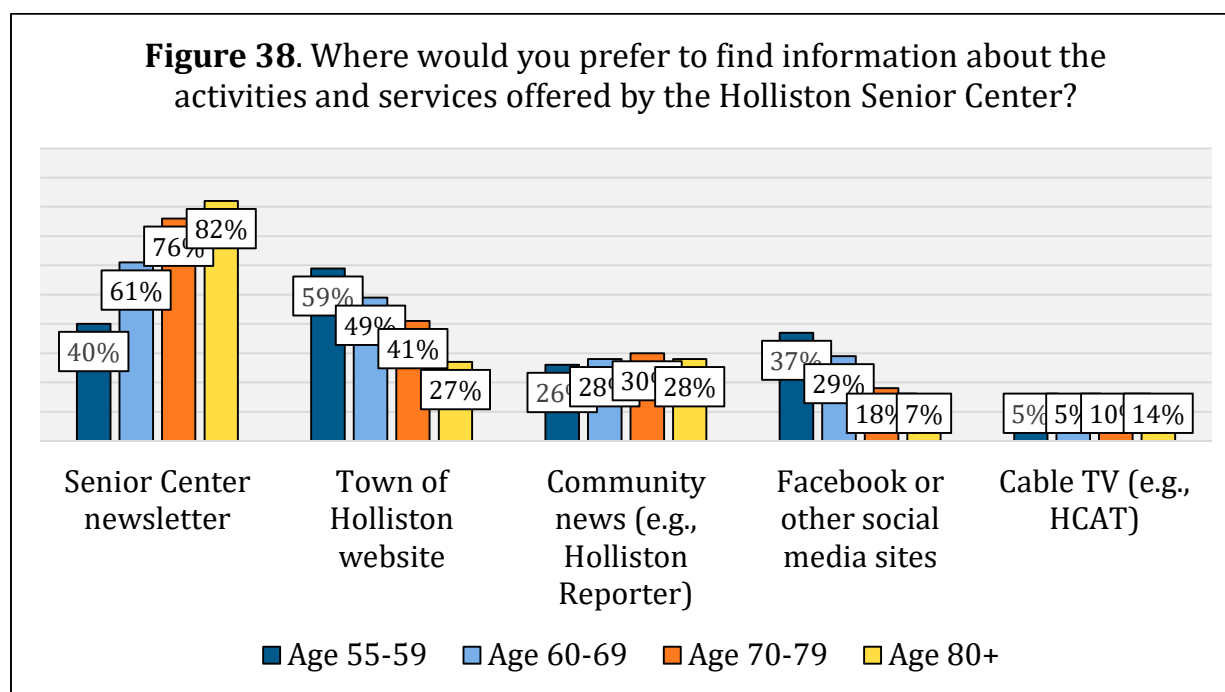


Another way that the survey assesses the preferences for future programming was by asking, “Thinking about your own future needs and interests, which of the following areas would you prioritize in expanding the programs available through the Holliston Senior Center”. **Figure 37** illustrates how responses vary across those who currently participate at the Holliston Senior Center compared to those who have not yet visited the center. Among users, the highest priority for expanding programming was given to day trips (37%), indoor exercise classes (34%), and performances (32%). Comparatively, among those who have not been to the Holliston Senior Center priority was given to outdoor exercise programming (41%), technology skills courses (37%) and other educational programs (36%), and indoor exercise opportunities (32%). These results indicate an overall preference for active programming that promotes physical health, intellectual stimulation, and active engagement in the world around them—and obviously facilities that would allow for such programs to be delivered comfortably and safely.

**Figure 37.** Thinking about your own future needs and interests, which of the following areas would you prioritize in expanding the programs available through the Holliston COA?



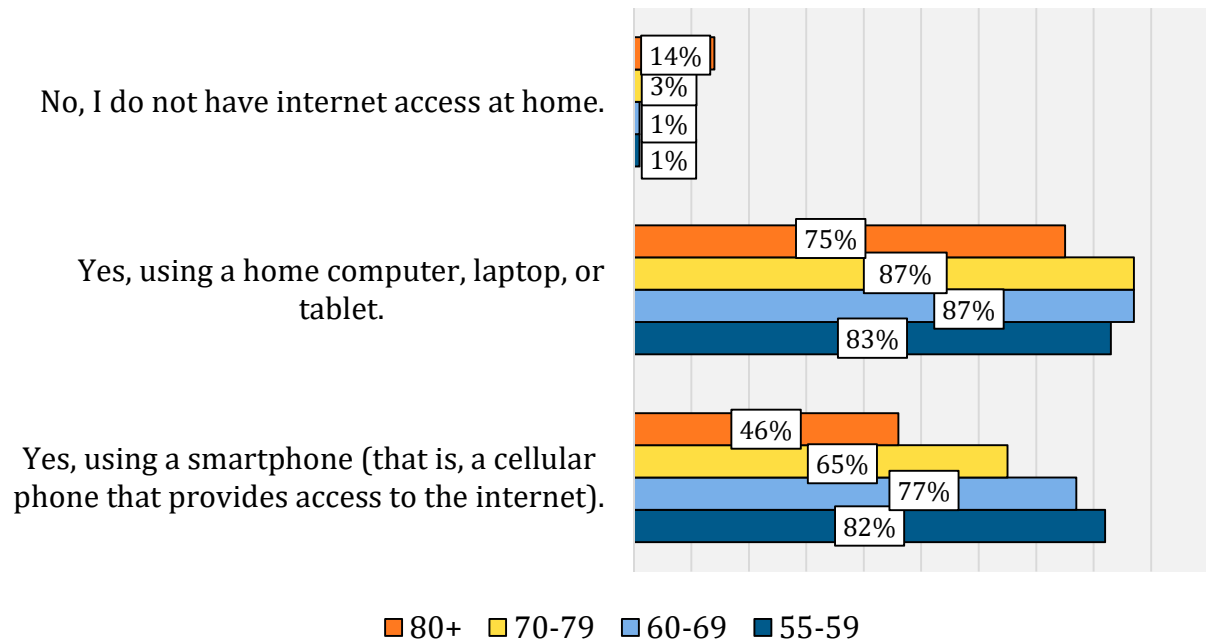
Communication and accessing information regarding activities and programs emerged as a theme from the focus groups. There was one question included in the survey related to preferred method of getting information. Preference for email, website, or social media communication varied by age (see **Figure 38**). Among respondents age 60 or older, the Senior Center newsletter is the most consistently reported source of information, across age groups with more than two-thirds of all age groups naming it as a preferred source of information. Nearly 60% of respondents age 55-59 prefer to find information about activities and services on the Town website. Given that current Holliston Senior Center participants are somewhat older, we conclude that continuing to make information about the Senior Center available through print media remains important. Considering ways to amplify the distribution of the Senior Center Newsletter could be useful as well as planning for expansion of existing digital presence will aid in effectively reaching younger residents.



While most community survey respondents do have access to the Internet from their home via computer (85%) a majority also use smartphones (74%) (see **Figure 39**). It is important to note that 7% of respondents age 70-79 and 11% of those age 80 and older **do not**. This is important information both for outreach mechanisms but also to highlight the need for public access to Internet services for those who do not have connectivity in their homes.



**Figure 39. Do you have access to the internet at home?**



At the conclusion of the survey, respondents were invited to write in any additional thoughts or comments about the Town of Holliston and more than 400 participants took the time to provide additional feedback. The majority of the comments were positive, about the Town of Holliston in general, and about the Holliston Senior Center, more specifically. It is evident from the comments that while some of those who complimented the Senior Center take advantage of the programs and services, others do not at this time, but are comforted to know that the Senior Center is available for their future needs.

In addition, there were many suggestions regarding additional programs and services. Some respondents provided specific ideas, such as “tips to save money” programs, volunteer opportunities for participants to “help others”, and access to a friendly visitor or someone to help with minor tasks around the home, and intergenerational opportunities to mentor students, pickle ball or Maj Jong lessons are among some suggestions. Other suggestions focused on broader issues such as reaching a more diverse population of residents. Many commented on the limited, affordable options for downsizing and the costs of property taxes that burden older residents in particular. As for services, the most mentions included a call for better gathering spaces in Holliston for residents to socialize, partake in programming and collectively engage in the community as volunteers.

Many survey respondents commented on the location and space limitations of the current Holliston Senior Center. While many suggestions included ways to increase the number of residents who participate at the Senior Center, others recognized that the current space and is not adequate to accommodate the growing number of older residents in Holliston. As well, findings from this needs assessment suggest that there is a local perception that one must demonstrate “need” to participate at the Holliston Senior Center—as opposed to participating by choice to maintain social connections and contribute to quality of life. More outreach to the community and more transmission of information about existing resources are things that respondents identified as needs—but would require additional workforce capacity. A sample of additional comments are presented on **Table 5**.

**Table 5.** Additional thoughts or comments about the Town of Holliston senior center or about current or future needs of older residents in Holliston

<b>Program and service suggestions</b>
Assistance regarding information on necessary steps and things to be aware of ie: insurance, SSI, living wills/trusts for the future.
At age 62, I feel young for the activities offered... perhaps a focus on the community-building aspect of the programs could help attract younger seniors
More intellectual content (e.g. lectures on local history, or world history and events) ... programs for people w/ disabilities and their care givers decisions near the end of life. More community projects that are intergenerational. like gardening, cooking, bird-watching etc.
More engagement with schools - reading, library, lunch volunteers etc...
<b>Location and facilities</b>
Get a building closer to downtown, nicer, and more enjoyable location. Closer to the parks, rail trail, and businesses'
I think that the Senior Center needs some updating/improvements of the physical space.
I wish we had a new center that has plenty of room for the many activities that we seniors enjoy.
I've been to other surrounding community centers, more bright, modern, spacious and more centrally located
<b>Recognition that improvements to the COA require investments</b>
I wish the town would help out with more funds to pay for programs and instructors for these programs
The current senior center lacks appeal and I would not want to spend my time there. If there were more updated facilities it would mean that Holliston is investing in its older community.
I think the Sr. center is very important and resources should be provided to enable it to thrive and be an on-going critical part of our community. The center should do more outreach to the community to ask

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The population of Holliston is comprised of about one quarter older adults (24%); and an additional 16% age 50-59 are expected to move into this demographic within the next few years. This central, overarching observation—that the older population of Holliston is already large and will continue to expand—makes clear the importance of considering how well features of the Town, the services and amenities available, and virtually every aspect of the community align with the age demographic moving forward.

In preparing for this demographic shift, the Holliston Council on Aging and the Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging at the University of Massachusetts Boston partnered to conduct a study to investigate the needs, interests, preferences, and opinions of the Town's residents age 55 and older. As part of this assessment, we conducted interviews and focus groups to hear from Holliston leadership, key stakeholders in the community, and specific cohorts of residents. In addition, a survey was developed and administered to Holliston residents age 55 and older. A total of 1,332 questionnaires was returned, reflecting a strong return rate of 26%. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources were examined in support of the project aims. Information from peer community Senior Centers was reviewed, as well.

A broad range of findings are reported in this document, highlighting the many positive features of Holliston as well as concerns expressed by older residents. The report is intended to inform planning by the Holliston COA as well as other Town offices, private and public organizations that provide services and advocate for older people within Holliston, and the community at large. While many of our findings, and the recommendations that follow, intersect with the scope of responsibility of the Holliston Council on Aging, 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.

We summarize key findings and make the following recommendations to the Holliston Council on Aging:

### **Plan for expected growth in demand and variety of senior programs and services.**

- Estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau show that in 2021, there were 2,550 residents age 60 or older living in Holliston—comprising nearly one quarter of the population (24%).
- Not only is the size of the older population growing in Holliston, but the range of interests and needs is widening. In addition to basic needs (food, housing,

transportation), participants identified meaningful opportunities to be engaged in their community and maintain physical health as key elements desired at the COA.

- Among survey respondents, the most important services offered by the Holliston COA is health and wellness programming and professional services like health insurance counseling and information and referral to available resources.

#### Recommendations:

- Plan for escalating demand for Senior Center programs and services –including the expansion of both staffing and space.
  - Pursue a site study or feasibility study to determine options for expanding existing space or relocating the center.
- Advocate for more dedicated space for older adult programming. Specifically, space to accommodate lifelong learning courses and large group exercise programs is needed to meet the current and future preferences of Holliston residents.
- Consider selectively increasing the involvement of volunteers in staffing the Senior Center. Recognize that recruiting, training, and managing a strong volunteer program will require additional paid staff effort.

#### **The perception of the Holliston COA is that it is “needs-based”—which deters participation.**

- When asked why they don’t participate at the Holliston COA, 31% of respondents selected “other” as an option and took the time to write in their thoughts. Themes included not having a need, still working, and intentions for future use. For example, one respondent wrote, *“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.”*
- Among those who do not currently utilize the Holliston COA, the number two factor (26%) that would increase the likelihood of participating is when they retire or have a need for things to do...implicating that future use is a likely outcome.

#### Recommendations:

- 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 a larger public awareness campaign around aging in Holliston.
- Consider ways to host satellite programming around the Town to promote Senior Center programs and draw-in a wider range of residents. Alternatively, partnerships

with the library, local businesses, and schools could help meet the needs for additional programming opportunities targeted for older adults.

- Consider ways to welcome newcomers to the Center. Offer incentive for “bringing a friend” and consider hosting programs specifically for newcomers.

### **Programming at the Holliston COA does not currently align with the range of interests of residents.**

- Regardless of whether respondents use the Holliston COA or not, indoor and outdoor exercise were among the most preferred types of programs to be expanded at the Holliston COA and educational programs were the second most preferred.
- Among those who do not currently use the Holliston COA, 38% would be more likely to participate at the Holliston COA if programs were better suited to their interests.
- Respondents were able to write-in their ideas for programs that they’d like to see expanded upon, intergenerational programs, volunteering opportunities, and intellectual or personal growth programming is valued.

### **Recommendations:**

- Advocate for new space that includes ample space for indoor exercise classes that can accommodate large groups and offers access to exercise equipment (e.g., weights, stationary bikes etc.). Also consider a walking track that is available to all 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. Perhaps COA Board members could facilitate special interest groups to develop programs.
- 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 in Holliston.**

- Cost of living, particularly rising property taxes, is named as a top concern among respondents as they think about being able to stay in Holliston as they age.
- 38% of survey respondents report needing some kind of home repair to remain living safely over the next 5 years and 41% report needing home modifications. Among them, 10%-11% are unable to afford such repairs. Among those who wrote-in about their concerns, maintaining property and homes was also a top concern, specifically citing the lack of knowledge about finding a handy person or contractor to help with small repairs or modifications.

- When asked about preferences for type of housing, more than one-third (37%) of respondents aged 60-69 and 39% of respondents age 70-79 would prefer to live in 55+ community, and among those respondents age 80+, assisted living is the most preferred housing type for the future.

#### Recommendations:

- 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, including condominiums and other types of housing that offer low maintenance and single-floor living. Assisted living communities and senior independent living units are desirable housing options.
- Promote awareness of existing property tax relief programs. Document the number of residents who are “turned away” from existing programs due to eligibility requirements or other reasons to establish recommendations for how to expand access.
- Promote awareness of various housing options across the lifespan. Consider hosting a “housing choice” planning seminar to encourage pro-active thinking about aging in place. Invite local experts (e.g., real estate agents, contractors, disability commission members, lawyers, financial professionals) who can share their perspective about future housing options based on a wide range of individual scenarios.

#### **Being able to get around Holliston and access needed resources is a concern for Holliston’s residents as they age.**

- Nearly one out of four respondents (24%) who do drive modify their driving to make it easier or safer; and 5% of respondents do not drive at all. Among the oldest old, respondents in the 80s or older, 18% report that they do not drive at all.
- 19% of those who modify their driving or who do not drive at all report having difficulty getting to where they want to go.
- When asked about barriers to using existing transportation in Holliston, having physical mobility challenges that make accessing transportation difficult and public transportation options not being available were the top barriers reported by those who modify their driving or do not drive at all.
- Respondents who wrote-in their thoughts about transportation, as well as focus group and interview participants, cited transportation as a critical factor for aging well in Holliston given that the community is not currently walkable nor does it have transportation connections to nearby communities—where many of the amenities are located. For example, one respondent wrote in that their biggest concern about

aging in Holliston is “...how will the town address the needs of those of us who need to rely on downtown is accessible for walking, access to being able to get transportation to appointments, groceries, or even get to senior center to stay connected.”

#### Recommendations:

- 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.
- Consider collaborations with neighboring COAs to coordinate transportation to medical services, adult day programs, or special trips.
- 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.**

- 13% of all residents in Holliston aged 65 or older have been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease or related dementia.
- 38% of survey respondents reported having been a caregiver within the past 5 years, including 48% of respondents aged 55-59.
  - Among caregivers, 64% reported that it is challenging to provide care and complete their daily responsibilities.
  - Among caregivers, 62% are caring for someone who is frail or has limited mobility, and 27% are caring for someone living with dementia.

#### Recommendations:

- 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 ability to re-establish an adult day program.



## Appendix A: Community Survey Results

Note: Appendix tables are based on 1,332 responses to the Town of Holliston Survey of residents age 55 and over, conducted in Fall 2022. Of all the respondents, 9.6% completed the survey online and the rest were returned by mail. See text for additional details.

### Section I: Community & Neighborhood

#### How long have you lived in the Town of Holliston?

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Fewer than 5 years</b>	10%	9%	10%	9%	8%
<b>5-9 years</b>	8%	7%	8%	9%	7%
<b>10-19 years</b>	9%	19%	7%	7%	10%
<b>20-29 years</b>	17%	41%	25%	8%	4%
<b>30 years or longer</b>	56%	24%	50%	67%	71%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

#### How important is it to you to remain living in Holliston as you get older?

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Important</b>	46%	24%	37%	52%	70%
<b>Somewhat Important</b>	32%	36%	37%	31%	21%
<b>Slightly Important</b>	14%	24%	16%	12%	6%
<b>Not at All Important</b>	8%	16%	10%	5%	3%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

#### Do you feel informed about what to do in the event of a weather or other local emergency?

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes</b>	83%	76%	83%	83%	89%
<b>No</b>	17%	24%	17%	17%	11%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Would you know whom to contact in Holliston should you or someone in your family need help accessing social services (*e.g., access to food, subsidies for transportation or housing, in-home support, or access to mental health services*)?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes</b>	63%	53%	58%	66%	74%
<b>No</b>	37%	47%	42%	34%	26%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

## **Section II: Housing and Living Situation**

**Do you live alone or do you live with other people?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes</b>	20%	10%	15%	18%	39%
<b>No</b>	80%	90%	85%	82%	61%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Do you own or rent your current residence?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>The residence is owned by me or someone with whom I live</b>	94%	97%	96%	94%	89%
<b>The residence is rented by me or someone with whom I live</b>	6%	3%	4%	6%	11%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

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

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes</b>	58%	37%	54%	62%	70%
<b>No</b>	42%	63%	46%	38%	30%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

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 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes, I can afford to make these modifications</b>	34%	23%	34%	37%	34%
<b>Yes, but I cannot afford to make these modifications</b>	10%	7%	9%	11%	9%
<b>No, my current residence does not need modifications</b>	56%	70%	57%	52%	57%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Does your current residence need home repairs (e.g., new roof, electrical work, etc.) to improve your ability to live in it safely for the next five years?

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes, and I can afford to make these repairs</b>	27%	27%	28%	24%	28%
<b>Yes, but I cannot afford to make these repairs</b>	11%	12%	10%	12%	11%
<b>Yes, but I am not responsible for making these repairs (e.g., I rent my current residence).</b>	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%
<b>No, my current residence does not need repairs</b>	60%	60%	60%	62%	59%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**If you faced an unexpected expense of \$400 or more, would you be able to cover it with money that you have on hand?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes</b>	94%	93%	94%	94%	93%
<b>No</b>	6%	7%	6%	6%	7%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Due to a health issue, do you require help with activities around the house (e.g., doing routine chores like cleaning or yard work)? (Check all that apply)**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Routine chores or house cleaning</b>	12%	1%	9%	10%	28%
<b>Yard work (mowing lawn, raking leaves)</b>	29%	12%	20%	33%	54%
<b>Snow removal</b>	35%	11%	25%	40%	61%
<b>Small repair projects (e.g., fixing a small appliance, replacing locks)</b>	20%	7%	13%	24%	34%
<b>Technology support (e.g., cable settings or connecting to Wi-Fi)</b>	15%	3%	9%	19%	30%
<b>Other</b>	11%	5%	11%	12%	13%

In the next 5 years, if a change in you/your partner's health or physical ability required that you move from your current residence, what kind of housing would you prefer in Holliston? *(Check all that apply)*

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Smaller single-family home	29%	50%	35%	25%	11%
Multi-family home (2, 3, or more units)	3%	3%	4%	3%	2%
Co-housing (pooling resources with friends/family)	7%	5%	9%	7%	7%
Apartment, condominium, or townhome	29%	36%	33%	28%	16%
A 55+ community	35%	37%	39%	37%	23%
Assisted Living community	25%	12%	16%	28%	45%
Other	12%	10%	11%	12%	17%

*\*Figures do not sum to 100%*

### Section III: Social Activities & Relationships

How often did you talk on the phone, send email or use social media, or get together to visit with family, friends, or neighbors? *(Check only one per item)*

*Talk on the phone or over video call (such as Zoom or FaceTime) with family, friends, or neighbors*

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
Every day	51%	58%	49%	50%	54%
One or more times a week	33%	25%	34%	32%	36%
More than once a month	9%	7%	10%	11%	5%
About once a month	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%
A few times a year (e.g., holidays)	3%	6%	3%	3%	1%
Never	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

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

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Every day</b>	56%	61%	59%	56%	39%
<b>One or more times a week</b>	28%	24%	27%	28%	34%
<b>More than once a month</b>	7%	9%	6%	7%	9%
<b>About once a month</b>	2%	3%	2%	2%	4%
<b>A few times a year (e.g., holidays)</b>	2%	--	3%	2%	2%
<b>Never</b>	5%	3%	3%	5%	12%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

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

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Every day</b>	13%	16%	14%	11%	16%
<b>One or more times a week</b>	46%	35%	45%	46%	51%
<b>A few times a month</b>	25%	28%	24%	27%	19%
<b>About once a month</b>	8%	10%	8%	8%	6%
<b>A few times a year (e.g., holidays)</b>	7%	9%	8%	7%	7%
<b>Never</b>	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Do you know someone living close by on whom you can rely for help when you need it?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes</b>	89%	87%	88%	89%	90%
<b>No</b>	11%	13%	12%	11%	10%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Would you ask a neighbor for help if you needed assistance with a minor task or errand (e.g., changing a light bulb, shopping)?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes</b>	66%	72%	68%	62%	64%
<b>No</b>	34%	28%	32%	38%	36%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

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

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes</b>	59%	65%	63%	58%	49%
<b>No</b>	41%	35%	37%	42%	51%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

#### Section IV: Caregiving

**Do you now or have you in the past 2 years provided care or assistance to a person who is *disabled or frail* (e.g., a spouse, parent, relative, or friend)?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes</b>	38%	48%	41%	34%	32%
<b>No</b>	62%	52%	59%	66%	68%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

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

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Challenging</b>	19%	28%	24%	12%	11%
<b>Somewhat Challenging</b>	36%	36%	41%	31%	38%
<b>Neither Challenging Nor Easy</b>	26%	25%	19%	35%	27%
<b>Somewhat Easy</b>	12%	7%	9%	16%	12%
<b>Very Easy</b>	7%	4%	7%	6%	12%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

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

**If yes: Did this person have any of the following conditions? (Check all that apply)**

	All Ages
<b>Frailty or mobility issues</b>	62%
<b>Chronic disease</b>	28%
<b>Alzheimer's disease or dementia</b>	27%
<b>Sensory/hearing/vision</b>	19%
<b>Psychological condition</b>	15%
<b>Other</b>	12%

### Section V: Transportation

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

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>I do not drive</b>	5%	1%	2%	4%	18%
<b>I limit my driving (e.g., I avoid driving at night, during bad weather, in unfamiliar areas)</b>	19%	5%	12%	21%	38%
<b>I drive with no limitations</b>	76%	94%	86%	75%	44%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%



**What are the primary ways in which you meet your transportation needs? (Check all that apply)**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>I drive myself</b>	92%	98%	97%	93%	77%
<b>Bus</b>	1%	--	1%	--	3%
<b>Walk or bike</b>	14%	17%	17%	13%	5%
<b>Taxi or ride sharing service (e.g., Uber, LYFT)</b>	3%	5%	3%	2%	3%
<b>My spouse or child(ren) drive(s) me</b>	26%	19%	19%	30%	41%
<b>Friends or neighbors drive me</b>	6%	3%	3%	6%	10%
<b>MetroWest Regional Transit/Route 6 service</b>	2%	1%	1%	1%	5%
<b>Transportation provided by the Council on Aging</b>	2%	2%	2%	2%	5%
<b>Other</b>	3%	2%	2%	2%	5%

*\*Figures do not sum to 100%*

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

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes</b>	4%	3%	4%	3%	5%
<b>No</b>	96%	97%	96%	97%	95%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**What kind of difficulties do you have in getting the transportation that you need?**  
*(Check all that apply)*

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Public transportation around Holliston is unavailable or inconvenient</b>	12%	6%	12%	12%	17%
<b>Transportation options cost too much</b>	3%	1%	3%	4%	4%
<b>No door-to-door assistance</b>	3%	1%	3%	2%	5%
<b>I do not have a travel companion to help me</b>	2%	1%	1%	2%	3%
<b>Physical limitations or other impairments make accessing transportation options difficult</b>	3%	1%	1%	3%	8%
<b>No one I can depend on for a ride</b>	3%	1%	3%	3%	5%
<b>Distance to my destination is too far</b>	4%	1%	3%	4%	10%
<b>I have no difficulties</b>	78%	88%	81%	80%	78%
<b>Other</b>	5%	2%	4%	4%	8%

**How satisfied are you with transportation options available to you in Holliston?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Satisfied</b>	7%	7%	6%	6%	12%
<b>Somewhat Satisfied</b>	11%	8%	10%	12%	14%
<b>Slightly Satisfied</b>	10%	10%	9%	11%	11%
<b>Not at All Satisfied</b>	12%	12%	13%	10%	13%
<b>Not Applicable</b>	60%	62%	62%	61%	51%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

## Section VI: Programs & Services at the Holliston Senior Center

The following items refer to programs and services that are offered through the Holliston Senior Center. **Please rate the importance of each program/service to you or your family. (Check only one box per item)**

**Assistance with local, state, or federal programs** (*e.g., food assistance, SNAP*)

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Important (1)</b>	21%	23%	21%	20%	21%
<b>(2)</b>	3%	3%	5%	3%	1%
<b>Moderately Important (3)</b>	13%	8%	12%	16%	12%
<b>(4)</b>	6%	6%	7%	4%	5%
<b>Not at all important (5)</b>	39%	42%	33%	41%	46%
<b>I don't know</b>	18%	18%	22%	16%	15%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

### **Transportation**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Important (1)</b>	17%	17%	16%	14%	25%
<b>(2)</b>	5%	6%	6%	4%	3%
<b>Moderately Important (3)</b>	14%	9%	12%	16%	16%
<b>(4)</b>	7%	6%	7%	8%	6%
<b>Not at all important (5)</b>	41%	45%	39%	44%	40%
<b>I don't know</b>	16%	17%	20%	14%	10%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Fitness activities** (*e.g., yoga, tai chi, Zumba, strength classes*)

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Important (1)</b>	18%	22%	18%	18%	16%
<b>(2)</b>	7%	7%	9%	7%	3%
<b>Moderately Important (3)</b>	24%	18%	24%	23%	29%
<b>(4)</b>	7%	10%	7%	7%	5%
<b>Not at all important (5)</b>	32%	31%	26%	34%	38%
<b>I don't know</b>	12%	12%	16%	11%	9%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Health and wellness clinics** (*e.g., blood pressure, medical equipment loan, podiatry*)

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Important (1)</b>	19%	24%	19%	16%	20%
<b>(2)</b>	8%	7%	10%	7%	7%
<b>Moderately Important (3)</b>	23%	20%	20%	26%	26%
<b>(4)</b>	8%	8%	8%	9%	6%
<b>Not at all important (5)</b>	30%	28%	29%	32%	33%
<b>I don't know</b>	12%	13%	14%	10%	8%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Nutrition programs** (e.g., day-old bread pick-up, lunches, summer, garden, special event meals)

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Important (1)</b>	12%	17%	10%	11%	14%
<b>(2)</b>	5%	5%	8%	3%	2%
<b>Moderately Important (3)</b>	17%	15%	16%	19%	22%
<b>(4)</b>	8%	12%	8%	6%	7%
<b>Not at all important (5)</b>	44%	37%	41%	49%	46%
<b>I don't know</b>	14%	14%	17%	12%	9%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Professional services** (e.g., health insurance counseling (SHINE), tax preparation, Ask an Attorney)

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Important (1)</b>	21%	21%	22%	19%	20%
<b>(2)</b>	7%	9%	11%	5%	2%
<b>Moderately Important (3)</b>	20%	15%	17%	22%	29%
<b>(4)</b>	8%	8%	8%	9%	5%
<b>Not at all important (5)</b>	31%	33%	26%	35%	35%
<b>I don't know</b>	13%	14%	16%	10%	9%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Social or recreational activities** (e.g., painting, movies, photography, book group, billiards.  
Writing group, crafts, games)

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Important (1)</b>	17%	20%	17%	16%	18%
<b>(2)</b>	7%	11%	8%	5%	6%
<b>Moderately Important (3)</b>	23%	20%	20%	22%	31%
<b>(4)</b>	10%	8%	10%	13%	6%
<b>Not at all important (5)</b>	31%	29%	29%	33%	33%
<b>I don't know</b>	12%	12%	16%	11%	6%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

#### Support Groups

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Important (1)</b>	11%	16%	10%	11%	11%
<b>(2)</b>	7%	7%	8%	6%	3%
<b>Moderately Important (3)</b>	18%	20%	15%	16%	23%
<b>(4)</b>	9%	7%	11%	10%	5%
<b>Not at all important (5)</b>	38%	35%	36%	40%	42%
<b>I don't know</b>	17%	15%	20%	17%	16%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Educational opportunities** (e.g., computer classes, current event discussion groups, lectures)

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Important (1)</b>	15%	17%	13%	14%	17%
<b>(2)</b>	9%	10%	10%	7%	6%
<b>Moderately Important (3)</b>	23%	22%	21%	23%	27%
<b>23%</b>	9%	8%	9%	11%	8%
<b>Not at all important (5)</b>	30%	29%	30%	34%	32%
<b>I don't know</b>	14%	14%	17%	11%	10%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Volunteer opportunities**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Important (1)</b>	12%	15%	13%	13%	9%
<b>(2)</b>	7%	12%	9%	4%	3%
<b>Moderately Important (3)</b>	25%	25%	26%	25%	23%
<b>(4)</b>	10%	8%	10%	10%	10%
<b>Not at all important (5)</b>	31%	28%	23%	33%	42%
<b>I don't know</b>	15%	12%	19%	15%	13%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

### Local trips

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Very Important (1)</b>	11%	11%	10%	10%	14%
<b>(2)</b>	6%	10%	6%	6%	4%
<b>Moderately Important (3)</b>	21%	21%	20%	20%	27%
<b>(4)</b>	10%	11%	11%	12%	4%
<b>Not at all important (5)</b>	38%	32%	34%	40%	40%
<b>I don't know</b>	14%	15%	19%	12%	11%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Currently, do you see the Holliston Senior Center as playing a role in the lives of yourself, loved ones, friends, or neighbors?

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes</b>	48%	35%	41%	53%	65%
<b>No</b>	52%	65%	59%	47%	35%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Over the last 12 months, how frequently have you used services or attended programs offered by the Holliston Senior Center, either in-person or remote? (*Check only one*)

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Two or more times a week</b>	3%	--	1%	5%	5%
<b>About once a week</b>	4%	--	2%	5%	10%
<b>A few times a month</b>	3%	1%	1%	4%	6%
<b>About once a month</b>	4%	1%	3%	4%	7%
<b>A few times a year (e.g., special events only)</b>	20%	8%	14%	24%	34%
<b>Never</b>	66%	90%	79%	57%	38%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%



**What is the reason that you do not currently use programs or services offered by the Holliston Senior Center? (Check all that apply)**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>I am not interested</b>	26%	16%	26%	29%	26%
<b>I am not old enough</b>	15%	52%	20%	3%	15%
<b>I am unaware of activities and programs available</b>	7%	10%	8%	7%	2%
<b>I participate in programs elsewhere</b>	11%	5%	9%	16%	12%
<b>I do not have time</b>	19%	23%	24%	16%	12%
<b>N/A, I currently use programs or services offered by the Holliston Senior Center</b>	12%	1%	6%	16%	24%
<b>Other</b>	23%	18%	24%	23%	25%

*\*Figures do not sum to 100%.*

**Below, please check all factors that would increase the likelihood of your using the Holliston Senior Center programs and services more often: (Check all that apply)**  
***I would be more likely to use the Holliston Senior Center programs and services...***

	All ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>If transportation options to the Senior Center were more convenient</b>	5%	2%	4%	4%	12%
<b>If I had more knowledge about the programs and services that are available</b>	16%	21%	17%	14%	14%
<b>If the costs of programs was reduced or eliminated</b>	5%	2%	4%	6%	4%
<b>If programs and services were better suited to my interests</b>	28%	16%	26%	33%	28%

<b>If the hours of the Senior Center were more convenient</b>	6%	4%	8%	6%	4%
<b>If it were easier to access the Senior Center building (e.g., more parking, updated building)</b>	6%	2%	4%	7%	9%
<b>If there were more people like myself at Senior Center events</b>	24%	24%	29%	23%	15%
<b>Other</b>	31%	38%	34%	26%	29%

*\*Figures do not sum to 100%*

**Where do you prefer to find information about the activities and services offered by the Holliston Senior Center? (Check all that apply)**

	<b>All Ages</b>	<b>Age 55-59</b>	<b>Age 60-69</b>	<b>Age 70-79</b>	<b>Age 80+</b>
<b>Senior Center Newsletter</b>	68%	40%	61%	76%	82%
<b>Cable TV (e.g., HCAT)</b>	8%	5%	5%	10%	14%
<b>Community news (e.g., Holliston Reporter)</b>	28%	26%	28%	30%	28%
<b>Facebook or other social media sites</b>	22%	37%	29%	18%	7%
<b>Town of Holliston website</b>	44%	59%	49%	41%	27%
<b>Other</b>	6%	7%	7%	6%	5%

*\*Figures do not sum to 100%.*

Thinking about your own future needs and interests, which of the following areas would you prioritize in expanding programs available through the Holliston Senior Center? *(Check all that apply)*

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Lunch or other nutrition programs</b>	20%	19%	20%	17%	24%
<b>Intergenerational activities</b>	13%	22%	14%	11%	8%
<b>Technology skills classes (e.g., learning computer programs or smartphone applications)</b>	29%	31%	27%	30%	31%
<b>Performances and presentations</b>	25%	25%	24%	27%	22%
<b>In-home programs (e.g., friendly visiting or help with minor chores/errands)</b>	17%	28%	17%	16%	13%
<b>Space for informal socializing</b>	13%	16%	14%	13%	11%
<b>Day trips</b>	30%	37%	30%	26%	33%
<b>Information/referral for social services</b>	16%	25%	16%	17%	10%
<b>Arts &amp; crafts</b>	20%	26%	26%	14%	16%
<b>Special Interest (e.g., cultural, LGBTQ+)</b>	5%	10%	6%	4%	2%
<b>Outdoor exercise (e.g., hiking/walking, pickleball, kayaking)</b>	37%	56%	50%	30%	13%
<b>Indoor exercise (e.g., yoga, aerobics)</b>	33%	48%	38%	28%	20%
<b>Caregiver programs (e.g., respite, support groups)</b>	13%	20%	12%	12%	11%
<b>Evening or weekend activities</b>	19%	30%	23%	15%	9%
<b>Educational programs</b>	29%	34%	29%	32%	23%
<b>Overnight trips</b>	10%	12%	13%	8%	7%
<b>Other</b>	8%	1%	8%	8%	9%

*\*Figures do not sum to 100%*

## Section VII: Demographic Information

**Please select your gender identity.**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Male</b>	41%	37%	39%	45%	38%
<b>Female</b>	59%	63%	61%	55%	62%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**What is your age range?**

<b>55-59</b>	11%
<b>60-69</b>	37%
<b>70-79</b>	34%
<b>80-89</b>	15%
<b>90+</b>	2%
<b>No response</b>	1%
<b>Total</b>	100%

**Are you able to access the internet from your home?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Yes, using a smartphone (that is, a cellular phone that provides access to the internet)</b>	68%	82%	77%	65%	46%
<b>Yes, using a home computer, laptop, or tablet</b>	84%	83%	87%	87%	75%
<b>No, I do not have internet access at home</b>	4%	1%	1%	3%	14%

*\*Figures do not sum to 100%*

**What is your employment status?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Working full-time</b>	26%	80%	39%	5%	--
<b>Looking for work</b>	1%	1%	1%	1%	--
<b>Working part-time</b>	12%	12%	16%	11%	4%
<b>Retired</b>	61%	3%	43%	84%	96%
<b>Other</b>	4%	6%	6%	3%	2%

*\*Figures do not sum to 100%*

**When do you plan to fully retire?**

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>N/A, I am already fully retired</b>	58%	3%	39%	82%	94%
<b>Within the next 3 years</b>	10%	6%	21%	3%	2%
<b>In 3 to 5 years</b>	9%	13%	17%	2%	--
<b>In 6 to 10 years</b>	8%	38%	8%	--	--
<b>In more than 10 years</b>	3%	18%	1%	1%	--
<b>Not sure</b>	7%	13%	9%	6%	2%
<b>I do not anticipate ever fully retiring</b>	5%	9%	5%	6%	2%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement:**

***"I have adequate resources to meet my financial needs, including food, home maintenance, personal healthcare, and other expenses."***

	All Ages	Age 55-59	Age 60-69	Age 70-79	Age 80+
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	42%	42%	43%	43%	36%
<b>Agree</b>	49%	48%	48%	46%	55%
<b>Disagree</b>	7%	7%	7%	8%	8%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	2%	3%	2%	3%	1%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%