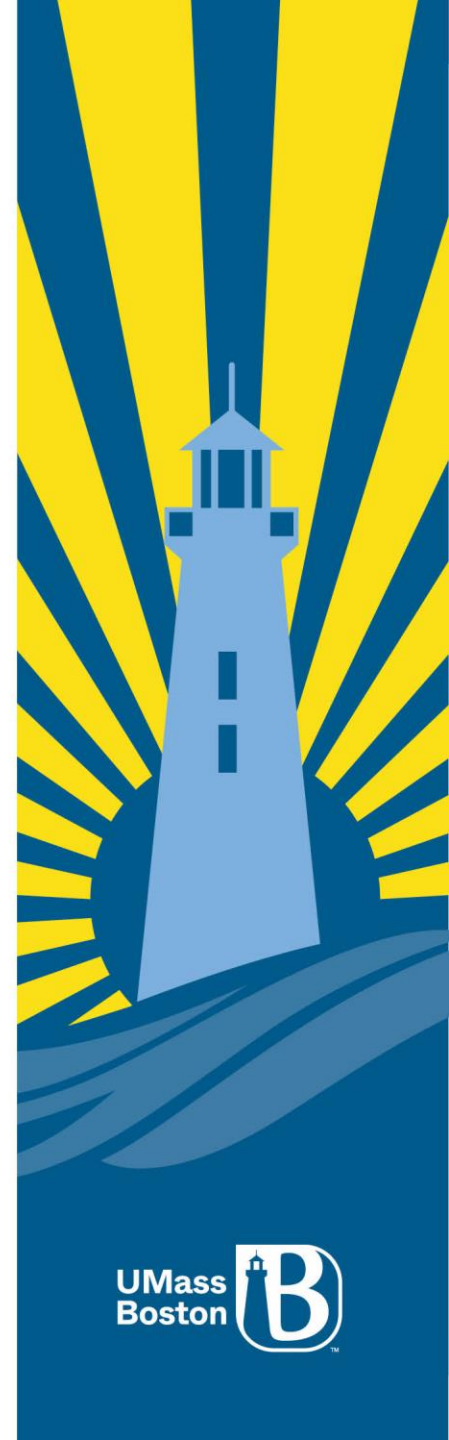


Aging in Melrose: Results of the Community Needs Assessment

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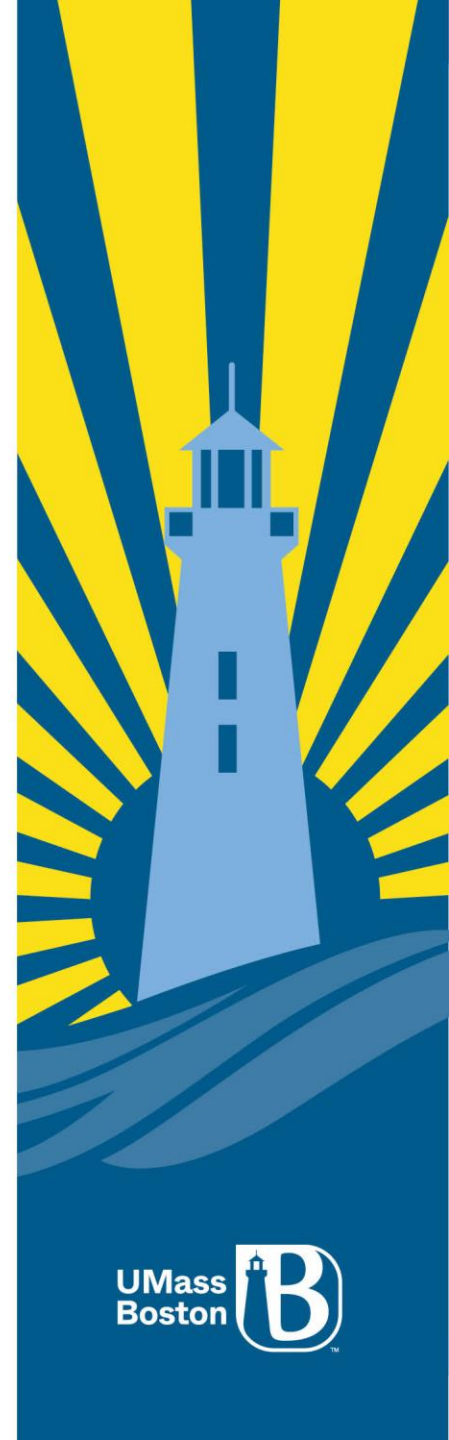
Acknowledgments

This project would not have been possible without support from:

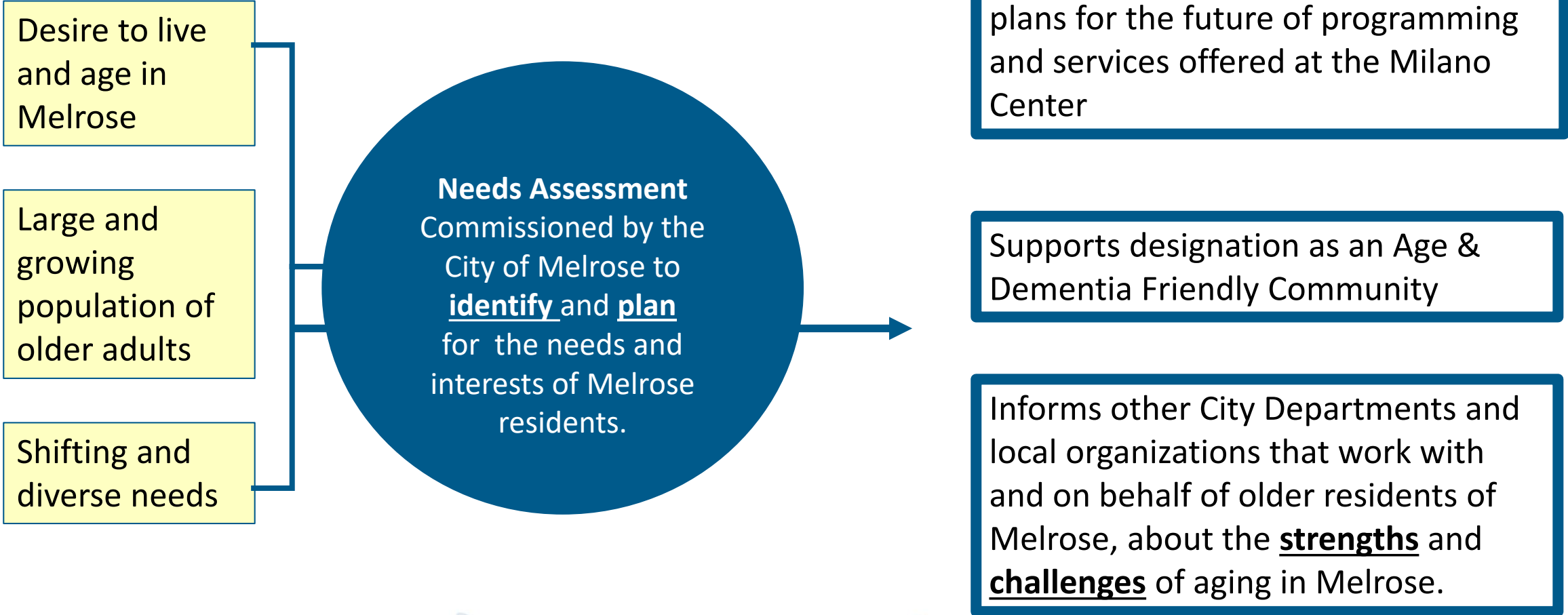
- ❖ Stacey Minchello and Erica Brown, Former and Current Executive Directors of the Melrose Council on Aging
- ❖ Melrose Council on Aging Board Members:

- ❖ John Capuano, Chair
- ❖ David Kourtz, Vice Chair
- ❖ Kristin Thorp, Clerk
- ❖ Margaret Ivins
- ❖ Ellen Cobau
- ❖ Maura Sullivan

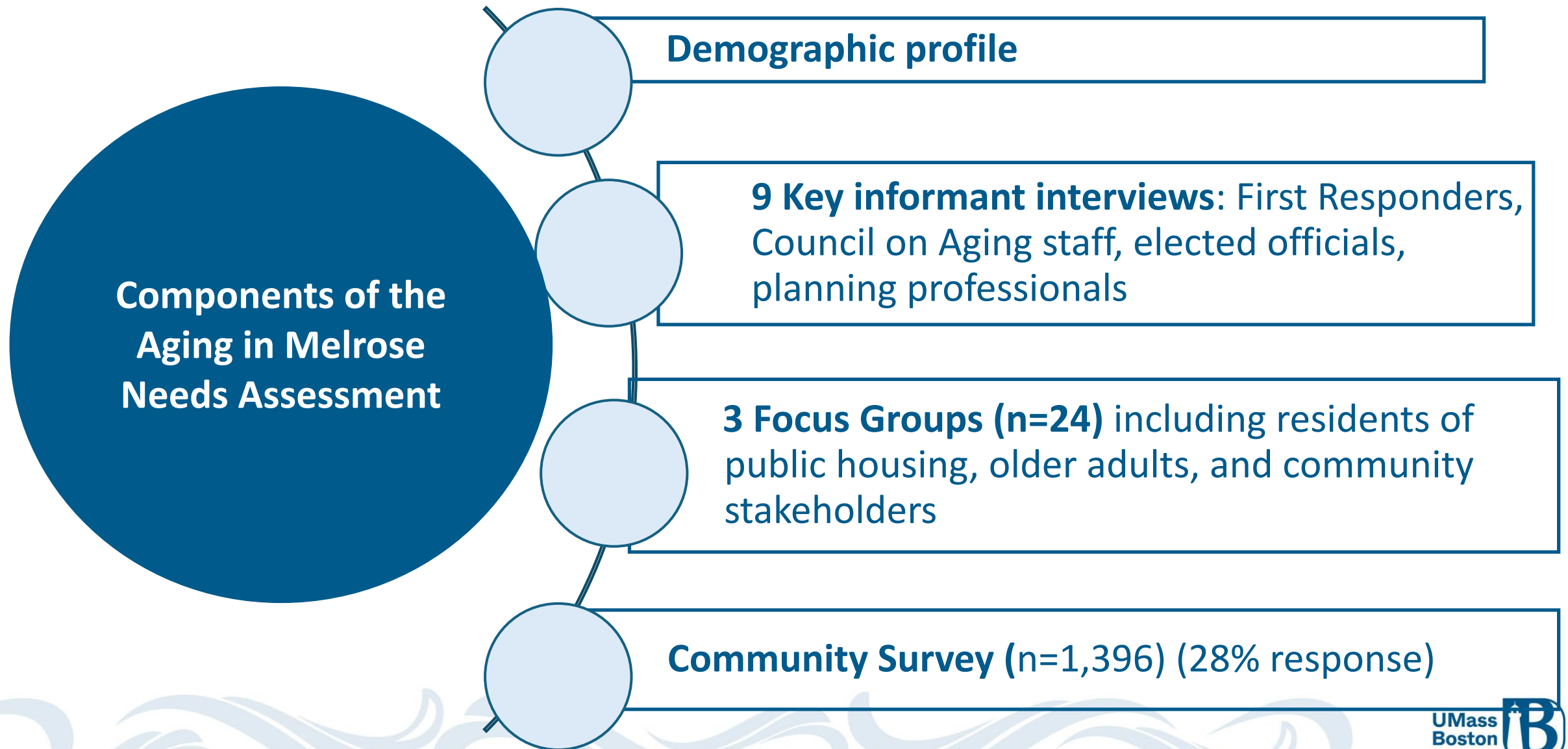
- ❖ All the stakeholders and residents who took time to participate in interviews, focus groups, and the survey



Background & Purpose



Data Collection Process

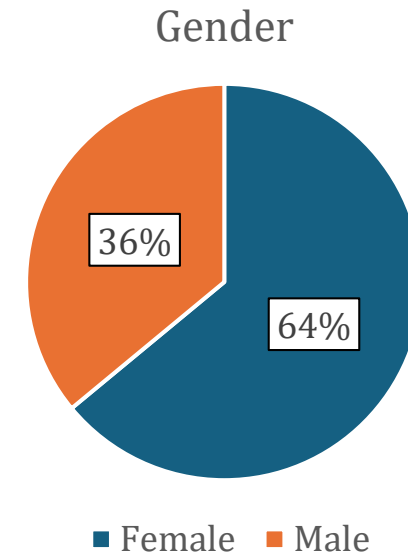


Who did we hear from?

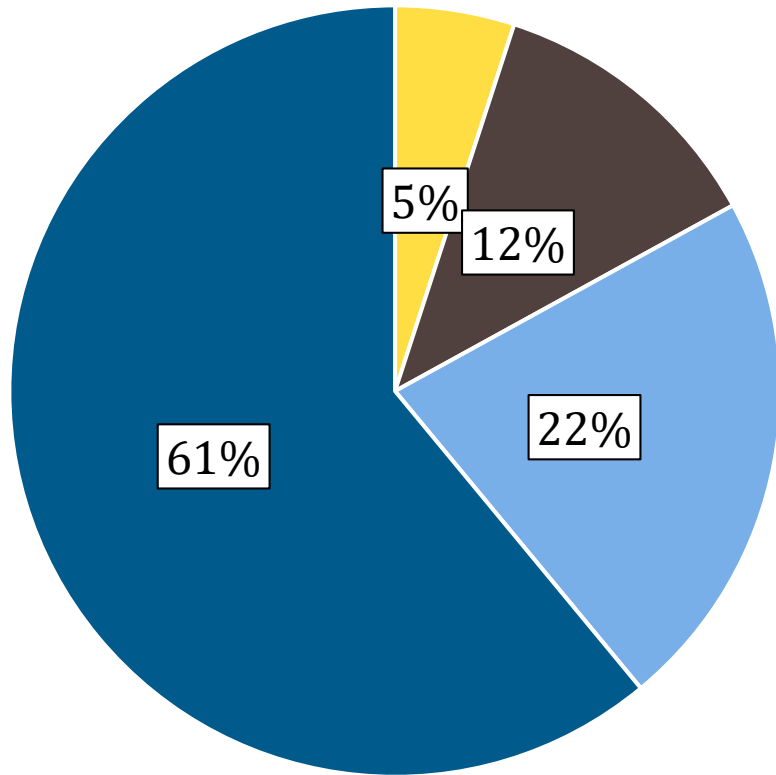
	Number of responses	Age distribution (%), survey responses	Age Distribution of Melrose's 55+ population**
Age 55-59*	156	12%	22%
Age 60-69	470	35%	35%
Age 70-79	488	37%	26%
Age 80+	216	16%	17%
TOTAL	1,396	100%	100%

*66 respondents did not report their age.

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

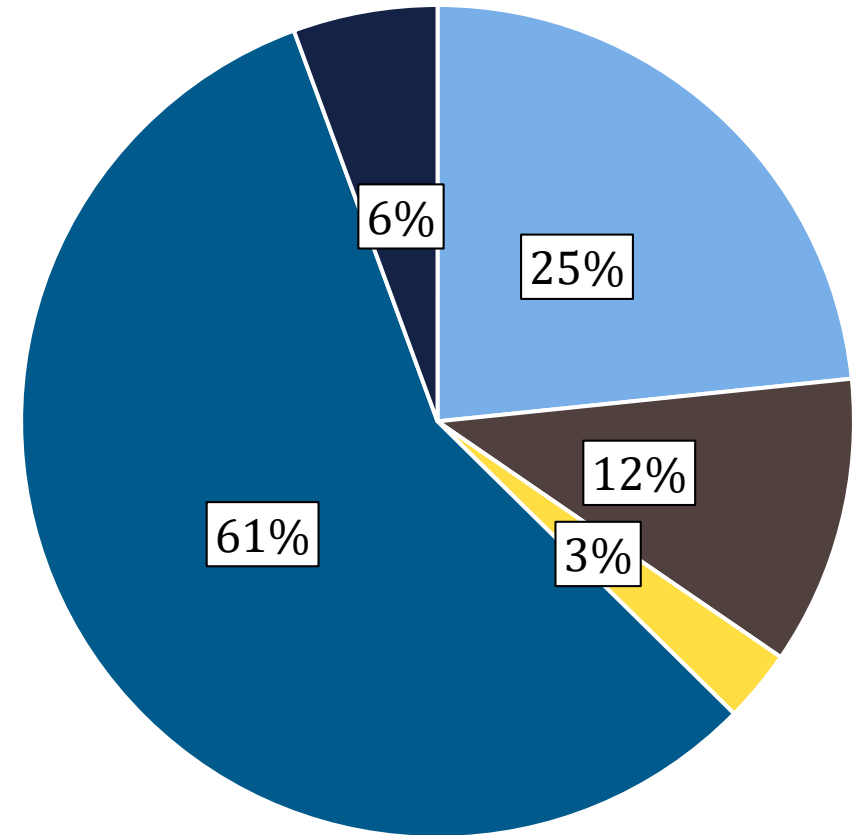


Length of Residency



- Fewer than 5 years
- 5-15 years
- 16-29 years
- 30 years or longer

Employment Status



- Working full-time
- Working part-time
- Looking for work
- Retired

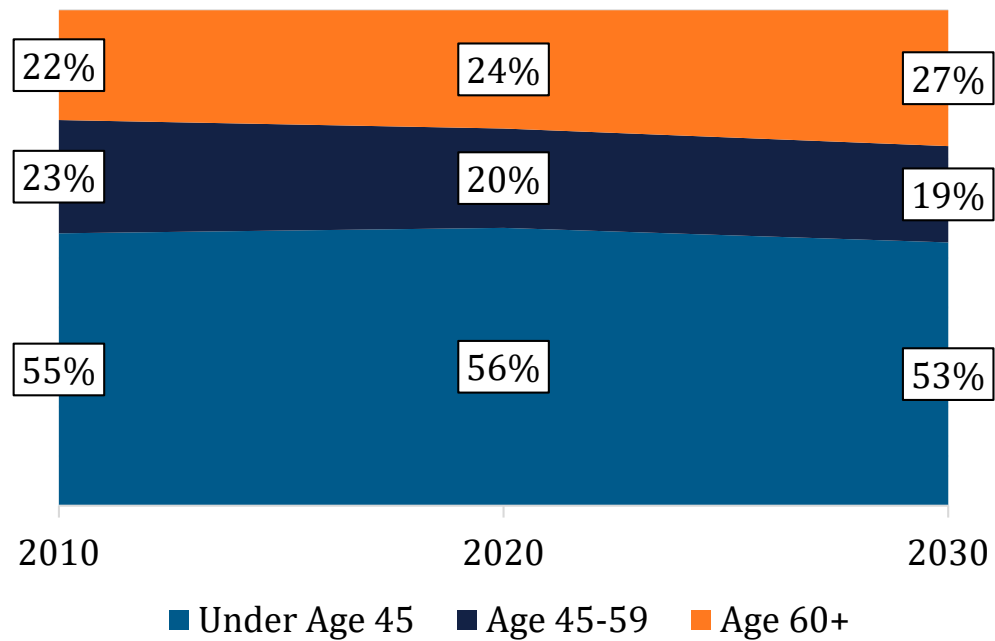


Key Findings

Information synthesized from all data sources

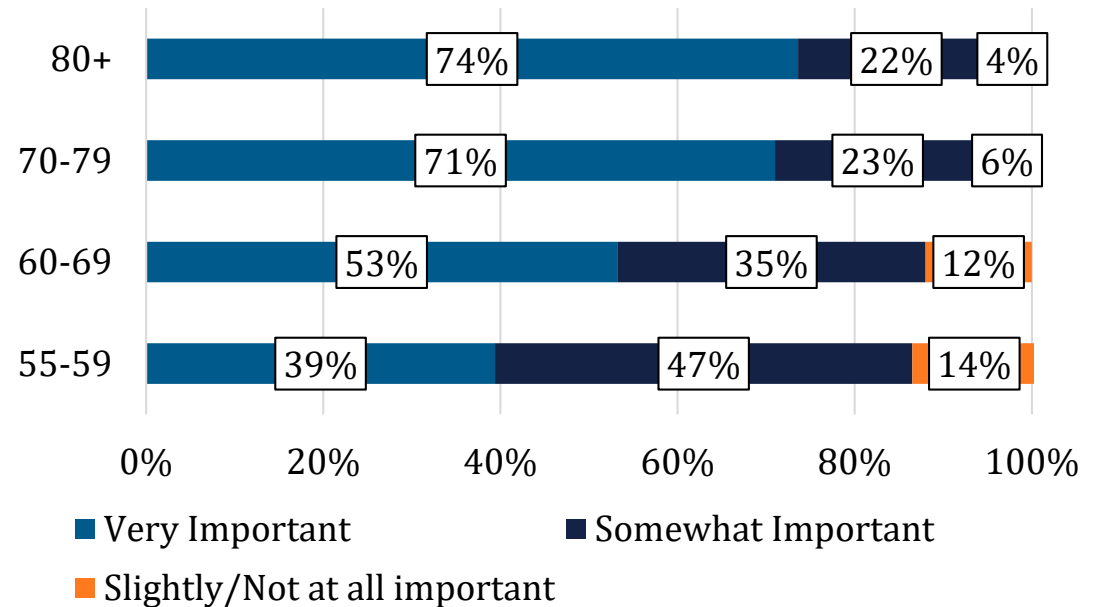
Overall, there was 11% growth in the Melrose population 2010-2020. The proportion with the most growth is age 60 and older.

Age Distribution of Melrose from 2010-2020 and projections to 2030.



For older residents, staying in Melrose as they age is very important.

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



Focus groups, interviews, and survey write-ins demonstrated that residents love their community...

“Proximity of many amenities, including senior center, YMCA, stores, church, restaurants, etc. also the "small city" vibe.”

Residents value...

- Small town feel and sense of community
- Proximity to Boston and amenities
- Walkability of downtown and outdoor spaces

“It's walkability. Charming village-type downtown...”

“Green spaces provide a welcoming environment for families, fitness enthusiasts, and those simply looking to enjoy a bit of nature”

“I appreciate the ability to be able to walk to do errands and that we have options for groceries, restaurant, pharmacy.”

“I find the people in this city are very friendly, kind and willing to help their neighbors.”

“Access to services and I like the small town feeling of neighbors caring about one another.”

“Access to all necessary places (food shopping, drug store, post office, bank, library) and doctors and hospitals in Boston.”

Top Concerns Regarding Ability to Age in Melrose

“I worry that I won’t have anyone to help me as I age, I worry that I won’t be able to live independently, and assisted living is far too expensive for the middle and lower class.”

“I am still in my house but I find it increasingly difficult to contend with stairs, house repairs, and isolation.”

“Mobility is a concern, but not as much as the reality of aging in a 2-story home.”

“Maintaining health or dealing with declining health. How long will keeping up our own house be viable?”

Common concerns...

- Affordability,
 - Taxes
 - housing
- Living independently, maintaining health and function
- Access to in-home supports
- Older resident concerns not adequately considered in local decision-making

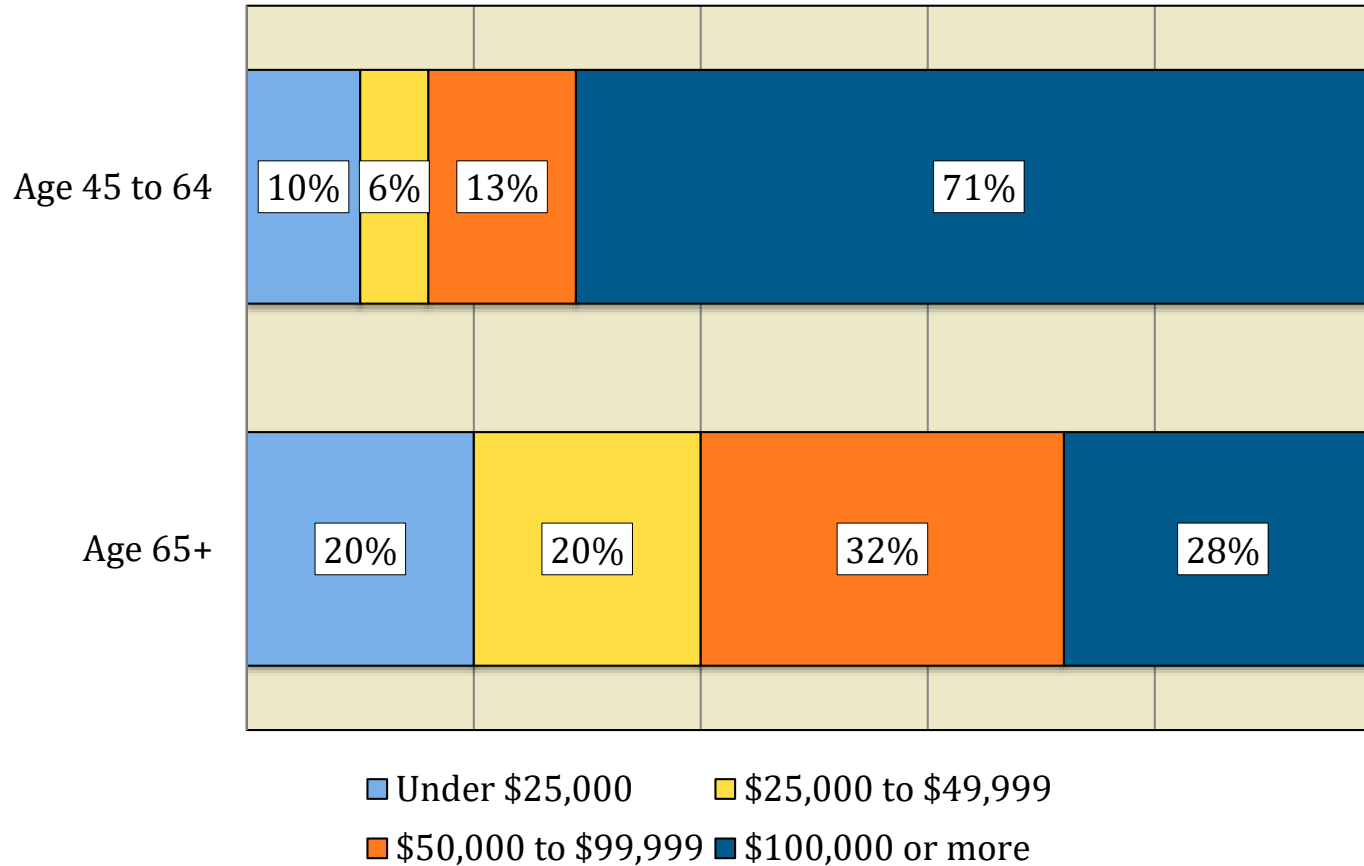
“I have enough now but if things continue to rise in cost, I do not know how long I can sustain this.”

“(My concern is) the ability of town to upgrade infrastructure, including schools, roads, and public buildings without squeezing out a fully diverse population.”

“There are many young families moving into town, which is great to keep community growing. However, it seems that long term/older residents get pushed aside.”

“I think the cost of housing is going to drive older folks out.”

Financial Security is a crucial issue facing older adults in Melrose.



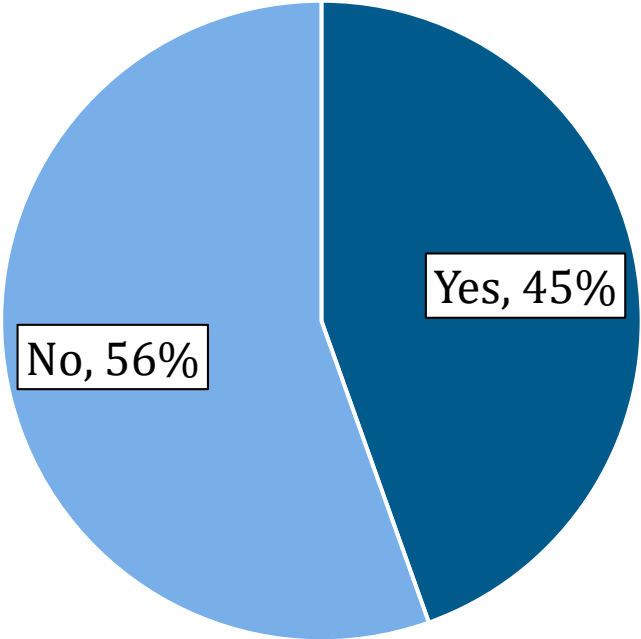
Among Melrose survey respondents, 12% (n=158) report that they do not believe they have adequate resources to meet their financial needs, including food, home maintenance, personal healthcare, and other expenses.

A stylized illustration of a light blue lighthouse on the left side of the frame. Behind the lighthouse is a large sunburst composed of many yellow rays radiating outwards. At the bottom left, there are stylized blue waves. The word "Housing" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font, positioned in the middle of the image, overlapping the lighthouse and the sunburst.

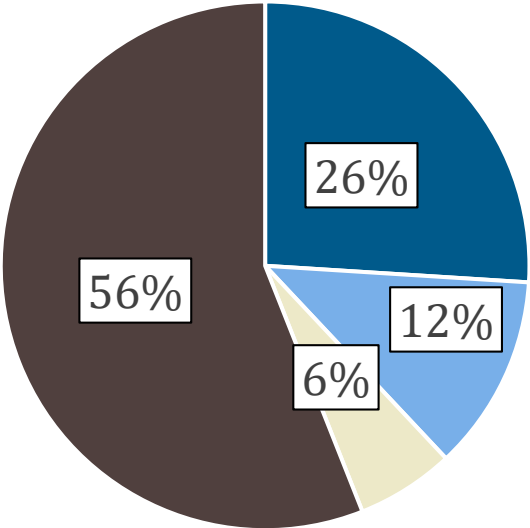
Housing

Current housing stock in Melrose is not age friendly and requires home repair, maintenance, and modifications.

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

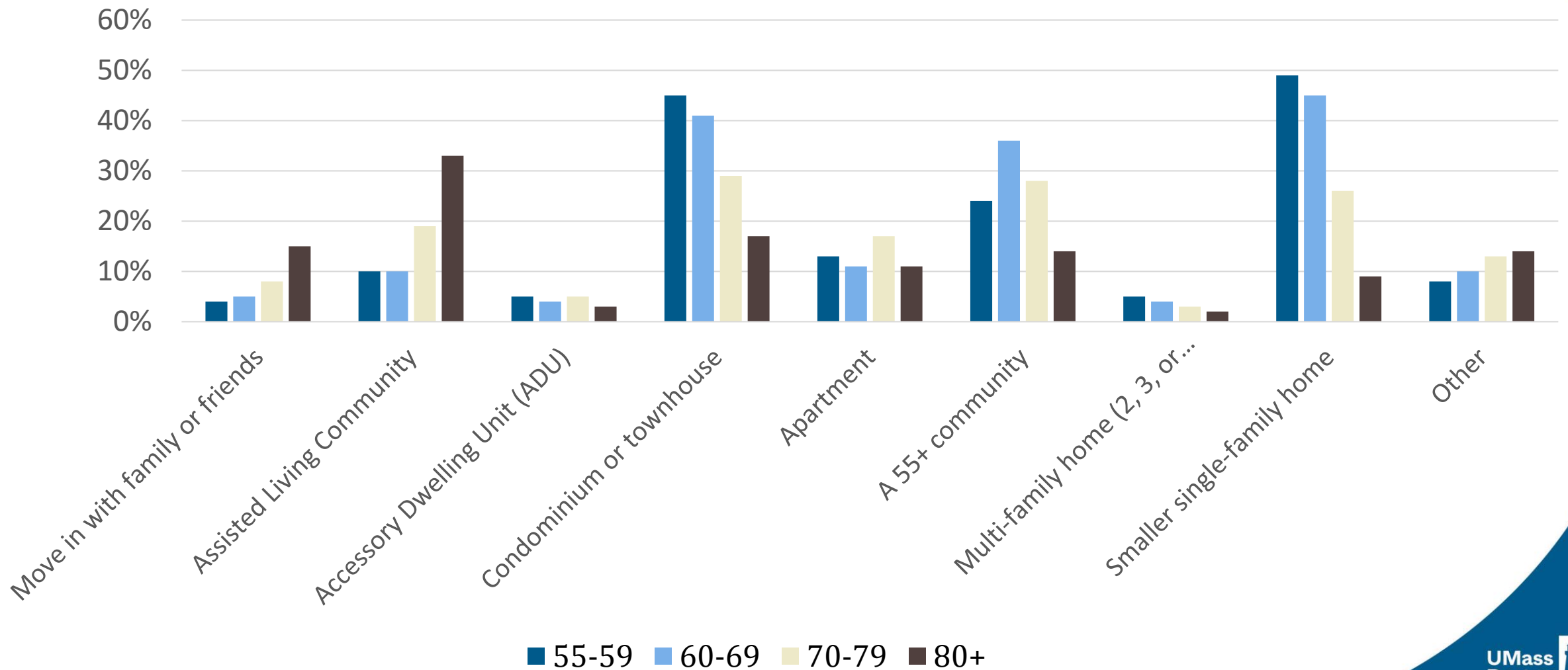


Does your current residence need home repairs (e.g., a new roof, electrical work, etc.) to improve your ability to live in it safely for the next five years?



- Yes, and I can afford to make these repairs.
- Yes, but I cannot afford to make these repairs.
- Yes, but I am not responsible for making these repairs (e.g., I rent my current residence).
- No, my current residence does not need repairs.

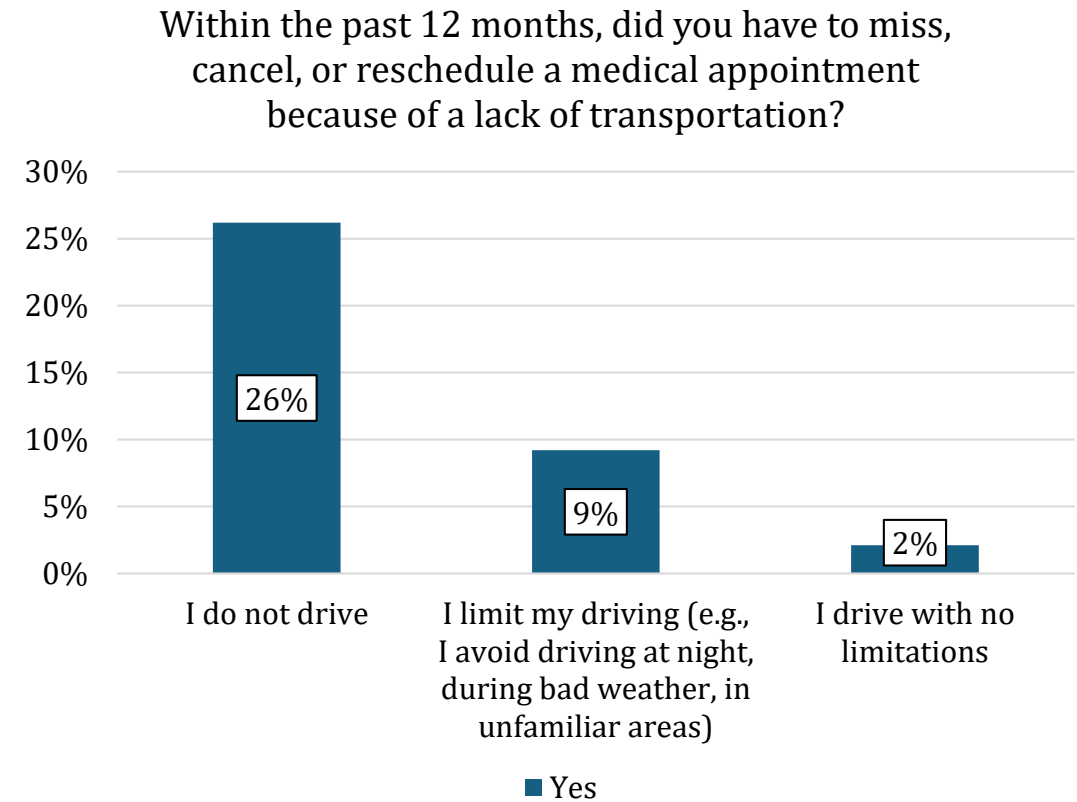
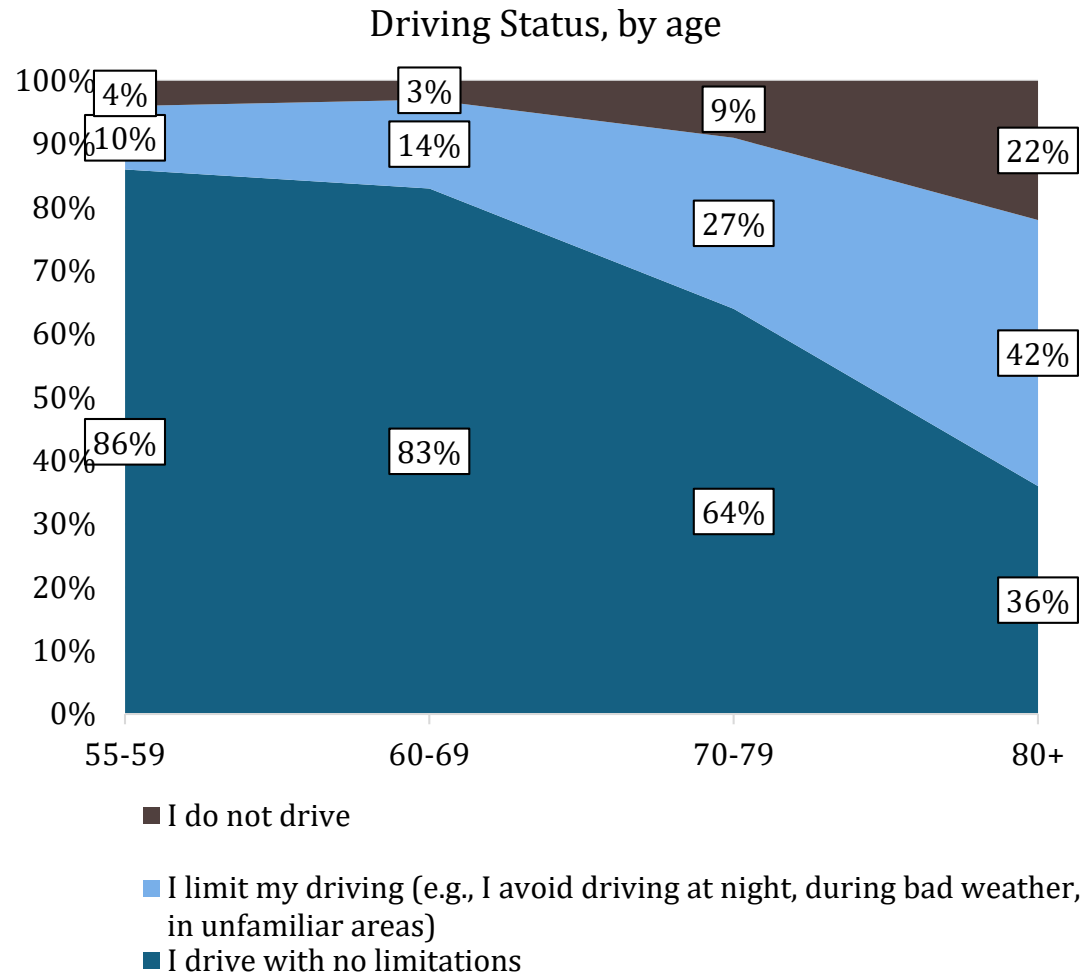
Smaller, accessible dwellings are the preference across ages 55-79—for those 80, it's assisted living



A stylized illustration of a blue lighthouse on the left, with yellow sun rays emanating from behind it. The background is white with yellow rays extending across the top and right. At the bottom left, there are blue wavy lines representing water.

Transportation

For those with limited driving capacity, local transportation being inconvenient or unavailable and physical mobility limitations are the most commonly reported transportation challenges.



Current Transportation Use

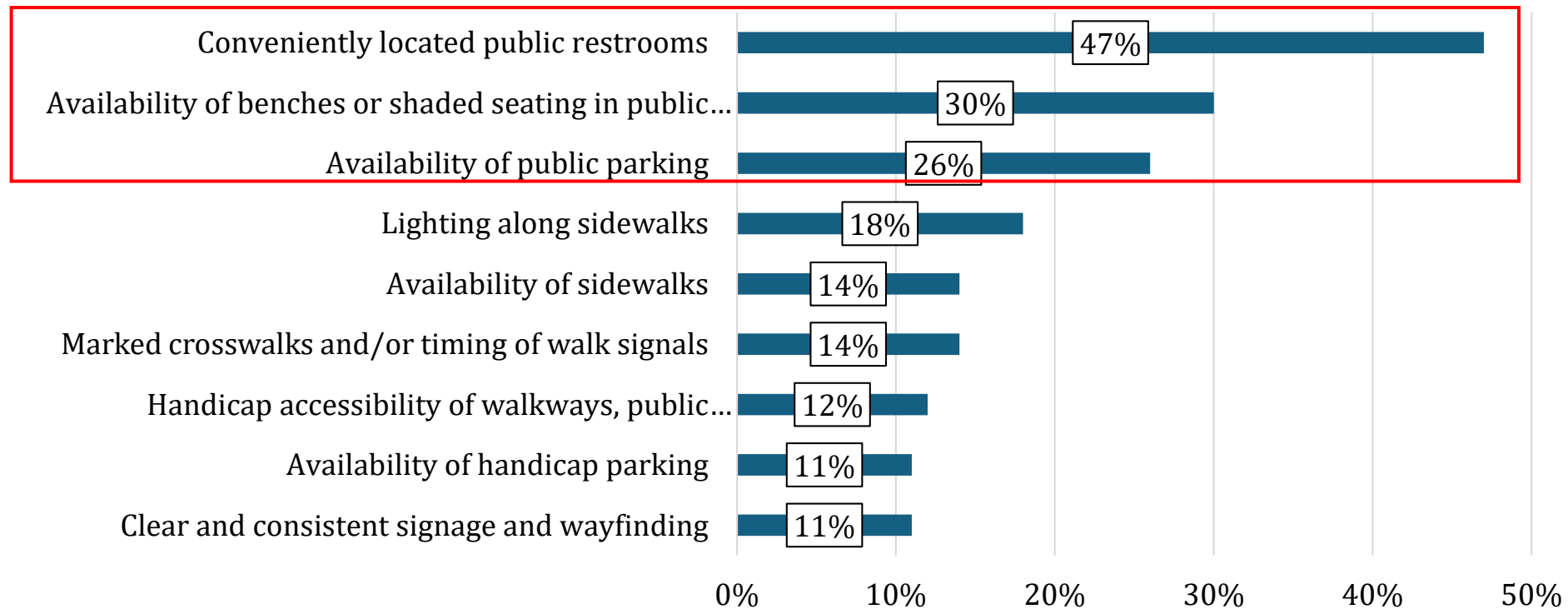
- For those who do not drive, these are the top ways they meet their needs:
 - My spouse or child(ren) drive(s) me (55%)
 - Walk or bike (33%)
 - MBTA Buses (26%)
- For those who limit their driving, these are the top ways they meet their needs:
 - I drive myself (88%)
 - My spouse or child(ren) drive(s) me (49%)
 - Orange Line/MBTA Oak Grove (36%)
 - Walk or bike (33%)

A stylized illustration of a lighthouse on the left side of the slide. The lighthouse is light blue with a white top section. Behind it are several thick, yellow diagonal rays emanating from the top left, suggesting a sun or light source. At the bottom left, there are stylized blue waves. The background is white.

Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

Location of public restrooms, availability of benches and shaded seating, and availability of public parking are the most unsatisfactory aspects of Melrose

% Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied

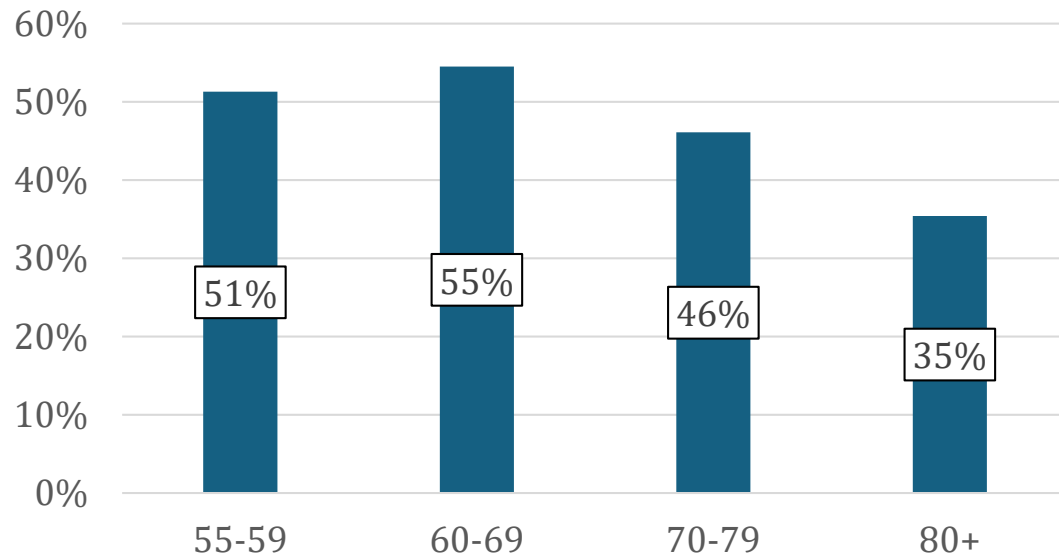


A stylized illustration of a lighthouse on the left side of the page. The lighthouse is light blue with a white top section. Behind it are several yellow rays of light radiating outwards. At the bottom left, there are blue wavy lines representing water. The background is white with the yellow rays extending across it.

Community Supports & Health Services

Caregiving is common and plays a major role in how residents spend their time...

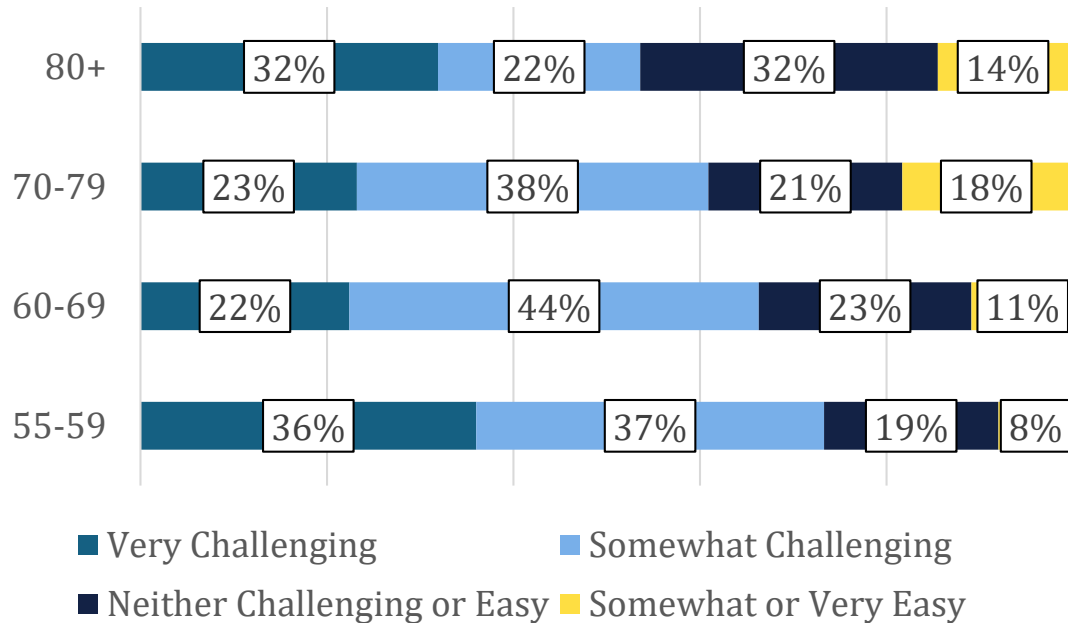
Do you now or have you in the past 5 years provided care or assistance to a person who is disabled or frail)?



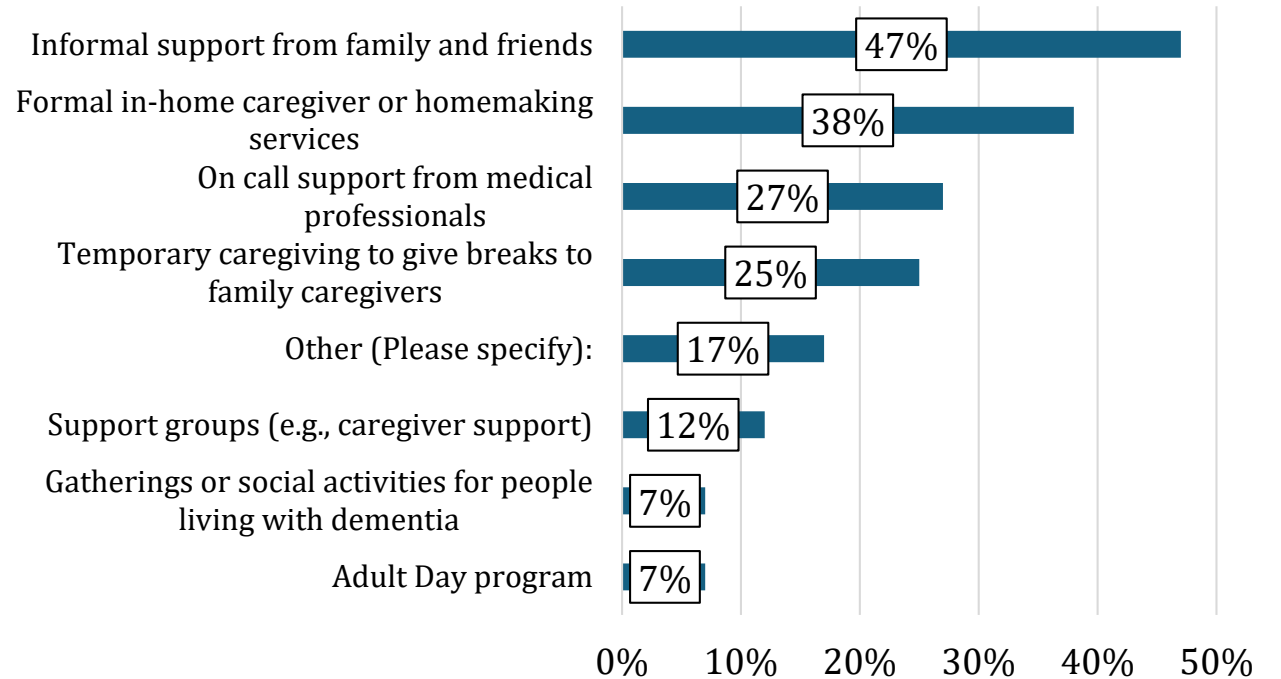
- ***The most frequently reported conditions requiring care include:***
- mobility impairment (such as difficulty walking or climbing stairs) at 52%
- chronic diseases like diabetes, arthritis, or heart disease (26%)
- Alzheimer's or dementia (24%)

It is also challenging for most caregivers...

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



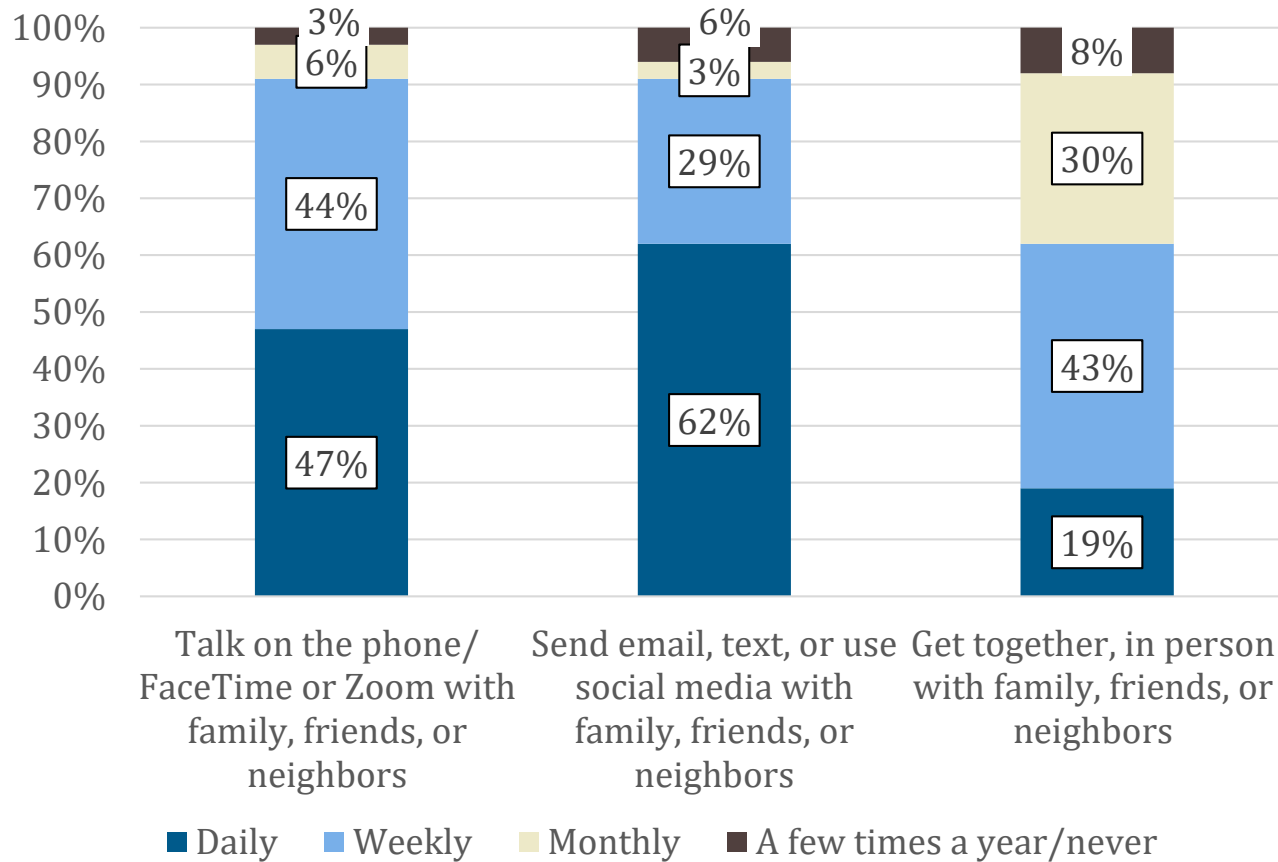
What supports were, or would have been, most valuable to you during your time providing care or assistance?



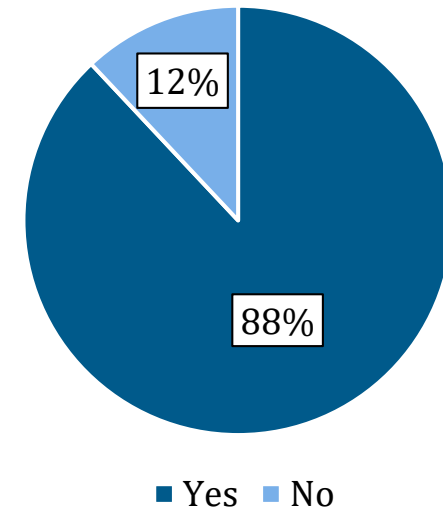
A stylized graphic featuring a light blue lighthouse on the left side, with a sunburst of yellow rays emanating from behind it. The rays extend across the top and right portions of the image. Below the lighthouse, there are stylized blue waves. The text 'Social Participation' is centered in the middle of the image, overlaid on the sunburst.

Social Participation

A portion of Melrose's older residents are at risk for social isolation.

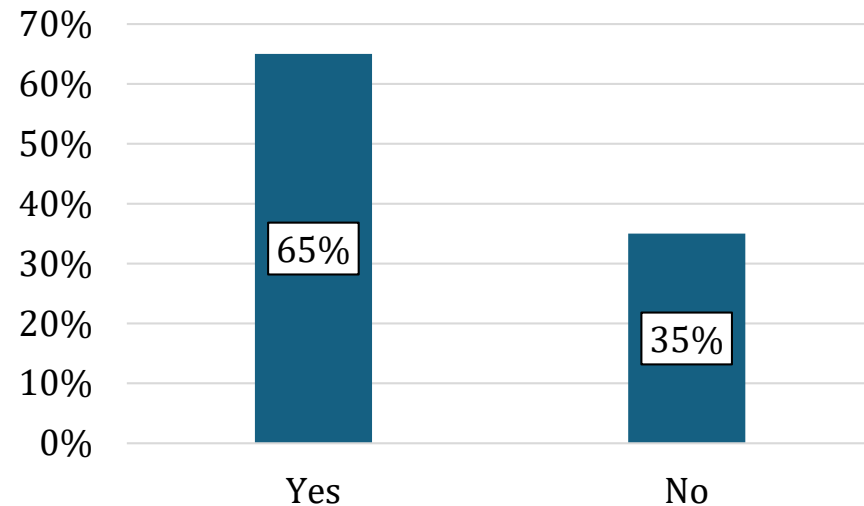


Do you know someone living close by on whom you can rely for help when you need it?

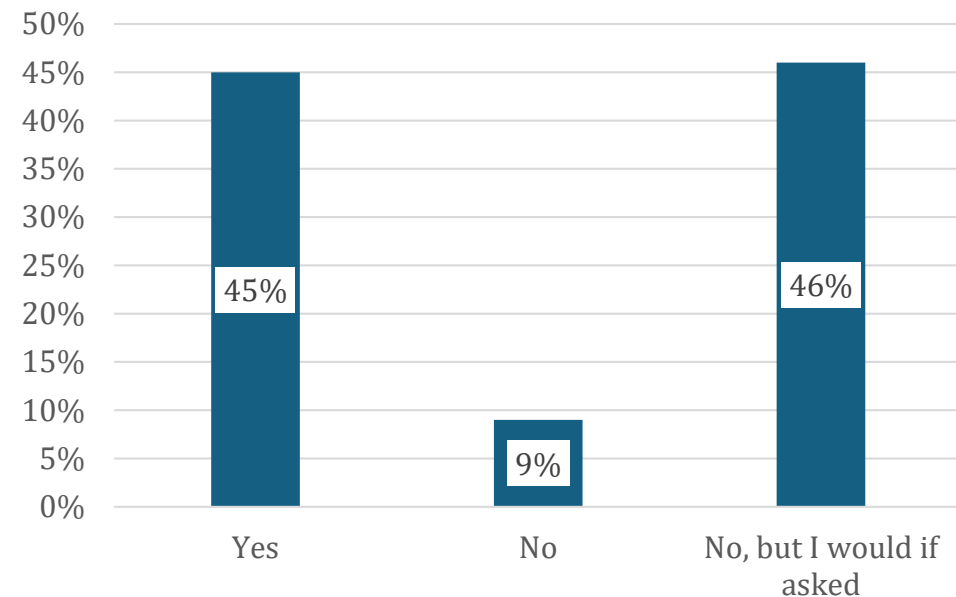


Neighbor to neighbor relations can be a support; but they require the willingness to ask!

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



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

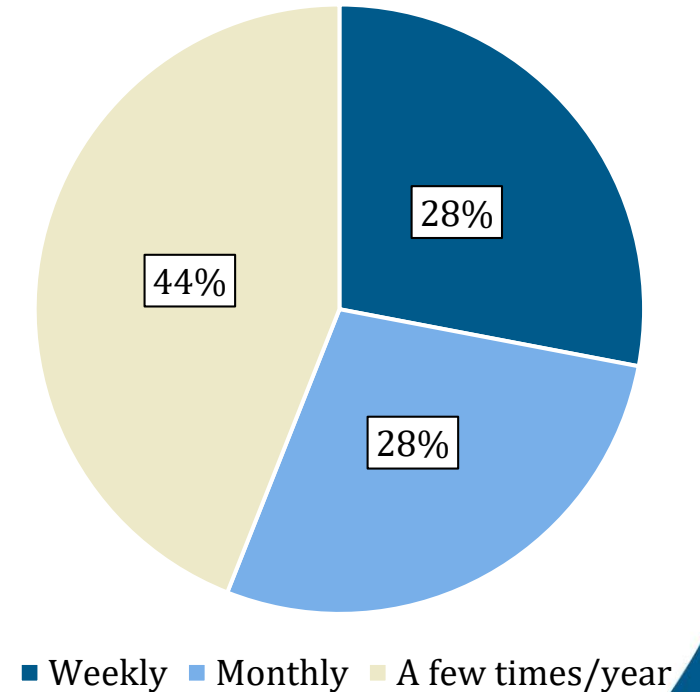
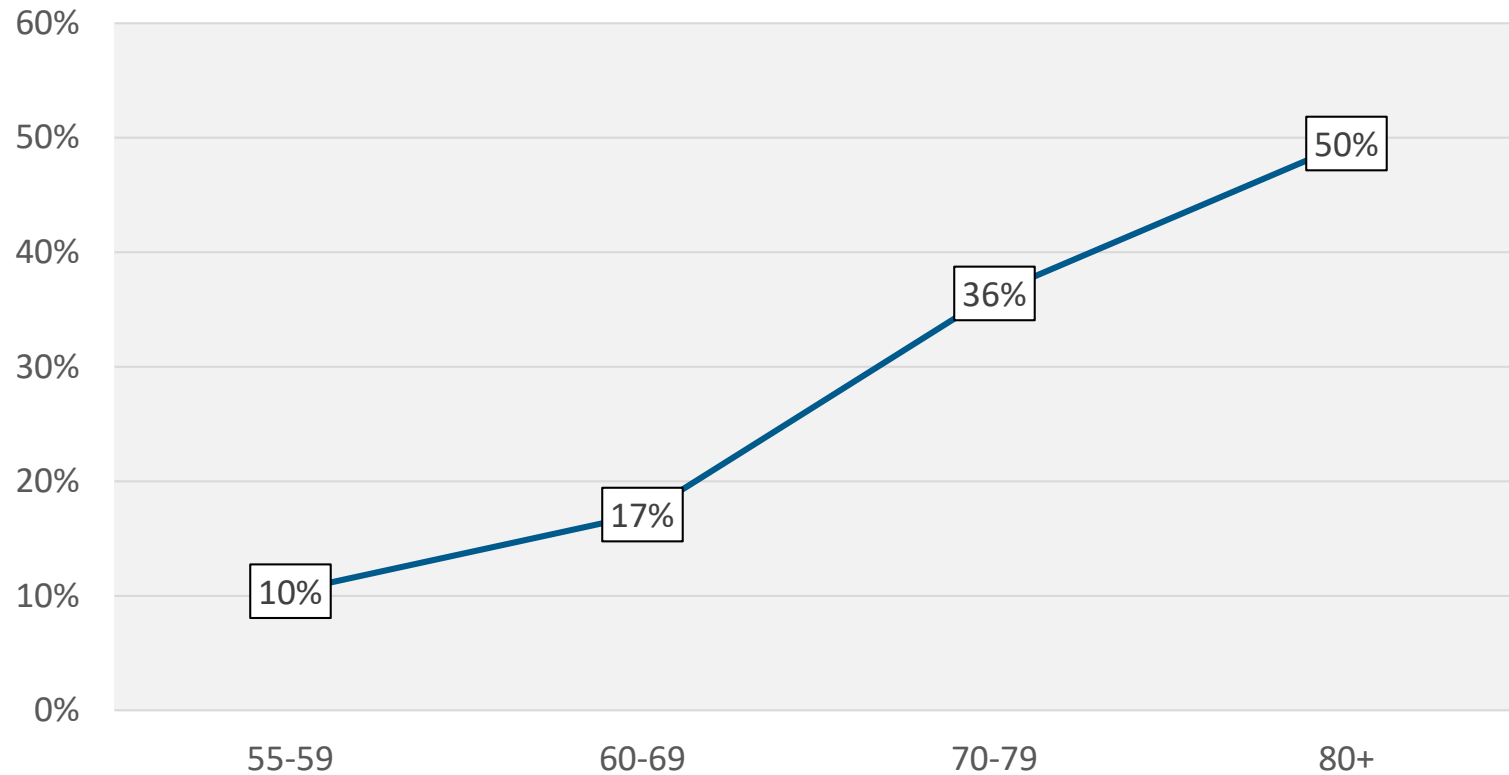


A stylized graphic featuring a light blue lighthouse on the left, with a sunburst of yellow rays emanating from behind it. Below the lighthouse are blue waves. The text 'Milano Center' is centered in the middle of the image.

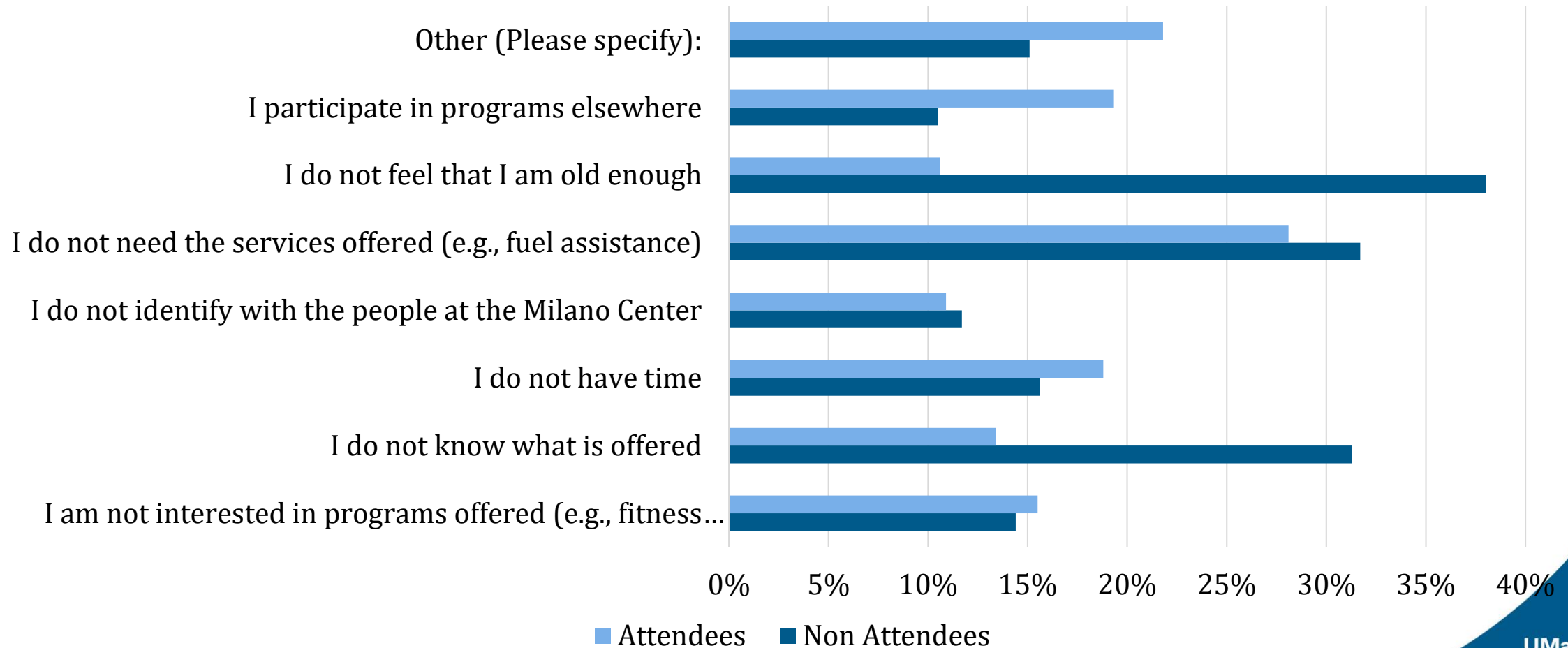
Milano Center

Attendance at the Milano Center increases with age. Among users 44% come only a few times a year

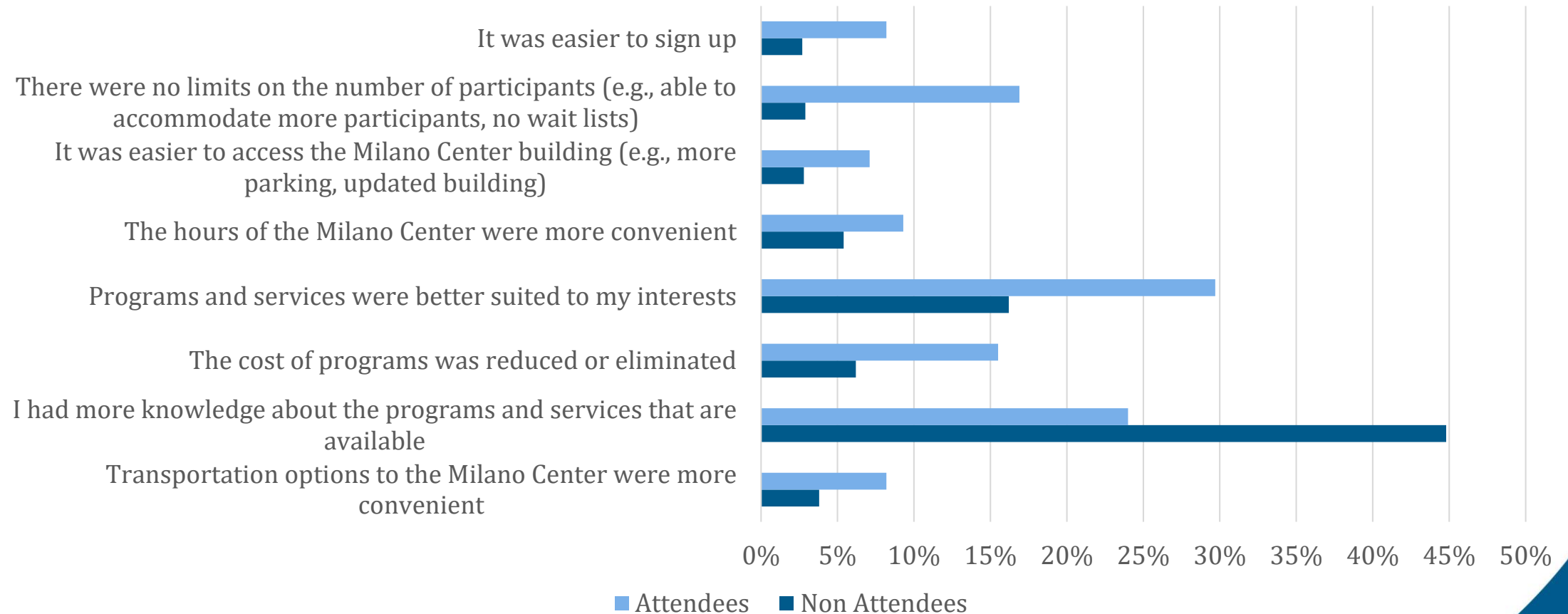
% of respondents who have attended the Milano Center, by age



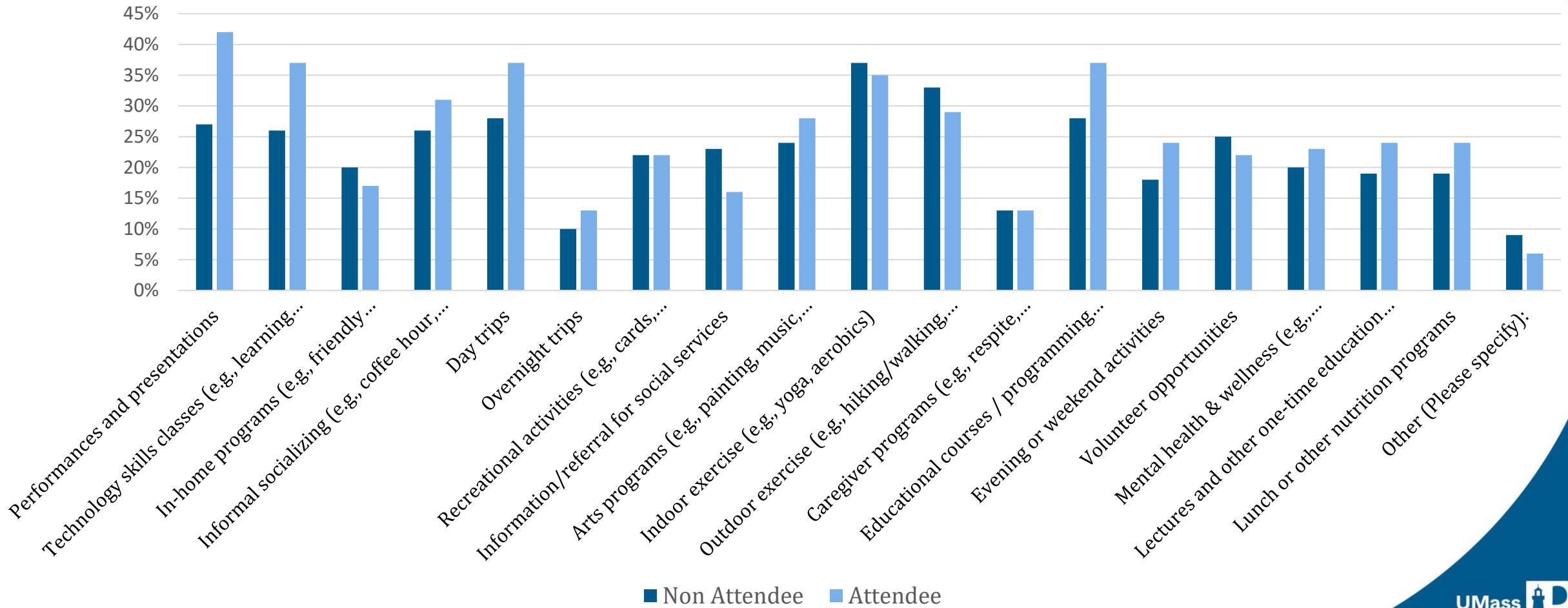
Which of the following factors limit how often you attend the Milano Center?



“I would be more likely to use Milano Center programs and services if...”



Thinking about your own future needs and interests, which of the following areas would you prioritize in expanding the programs available through the Milano Center?

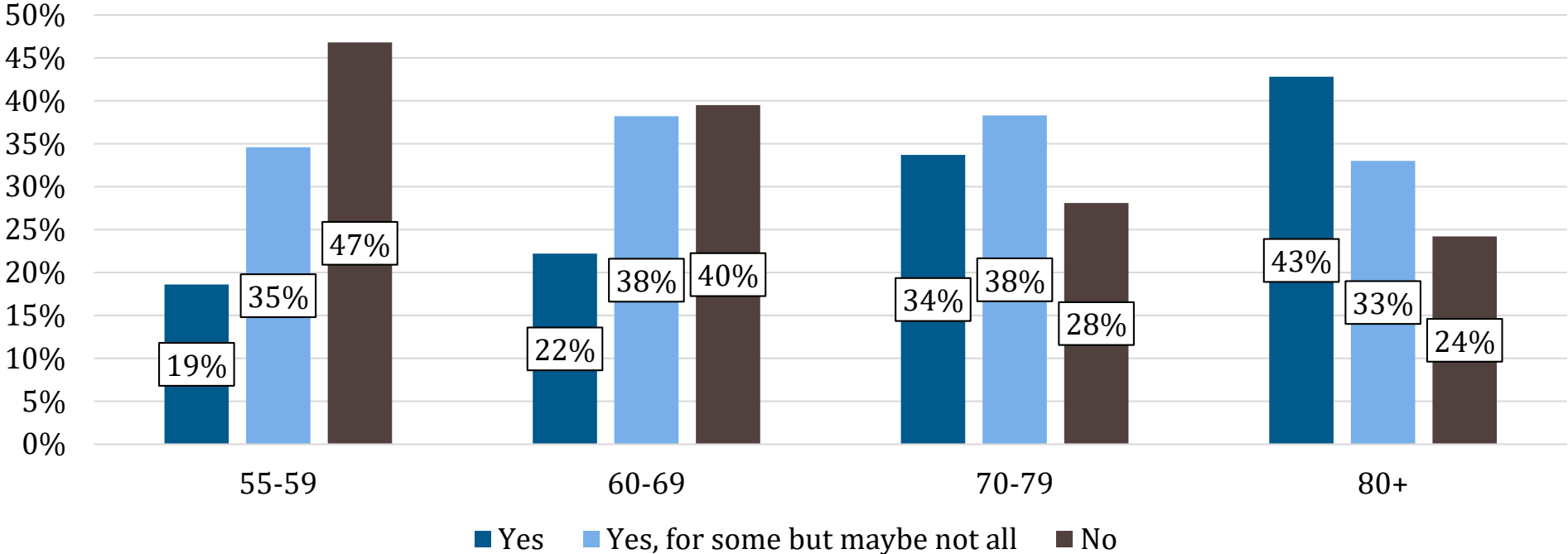


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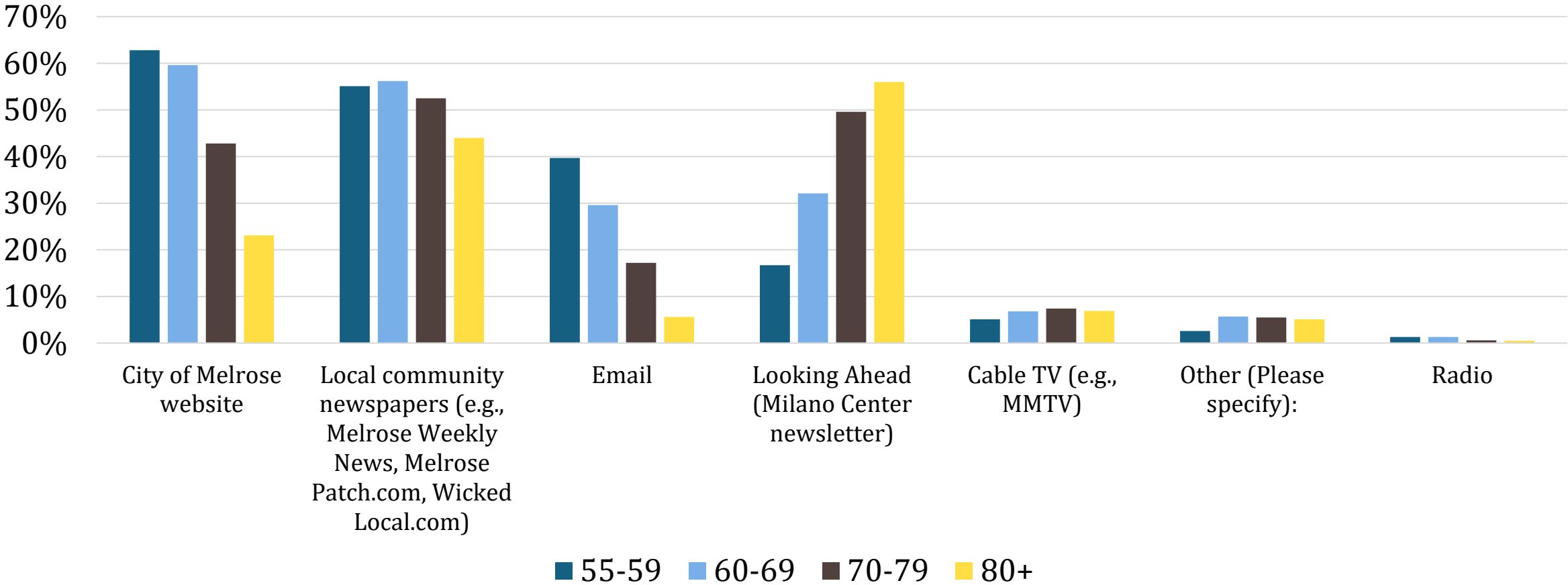
Communication & Information

Residents don't know who to call in the community

Would you know whom to contact in Melrose should you or someone in your family need help accessing social services (e.g., access to food, transportation, or in-home supports).



Where would you prefer to find information about the activities and services offered by the Milano Center?



A stylized illustration of a light blue lighthouse on the left, with yellow sun rays emanating from behind it. The background is white with yellow rays extending across the top and right. At the bottom left, there are blue wavy lines representing water.

Recommendations

Financial security is the top concern of older residents—rising taxes and costs of housing options are drivers.

- Convene an “Aging in Place Workshop” to educate the public about creative ways to use their home equity to age in place as well as about alternative housing models like home-sharing. This workshop could also widen publicity about currently available options for addressing economic security through the Melrose COA (e.g., SNAP benefits, fuel assistance, Circuit Breaker Income Tax Credit, and free tax preparation services).
- Continue promoting existing tax relief programs, document the number of people who do not currently qualify as a means of pursuing a change in qualifying terms
- When it comes to tax overrides, explore options for exemptions for older residents
- Consider offering a “senior discount” at local businesses

Housing maintenance, repair and developing down sizable options are primary needs.

- Ensure residents are aware of online resources (e.g. Melrose Chamber of Commerce, Home Advisor, Angie's List, Thumbtack) that provide local contacts. Host an education event and exchange on how to vet handymen or contractors.
- Engage with fraternal organizations, or others, to develop a local fund to help offset costs of needed home repairs
- Continue pursuit of accessory dwelling unit zoning
- To strengthen relations with Melrose Housing Authority properties:
 - Make minor updates to senior public housing to create more desirable and conducive places to age;
 - Create a quarterly information exchange for resident services providers in affordable housing to help support each other around realistic ways to encourage community bldg. and support each other around dealing with challenges situations (e.g. social bullying)

Need for more senior transportation services and wider geographic coverage to address increasing demand.

- Work with MBTA to ensure changes that would allow commuters who have mobility issues, can get on and off the trains.
- Prioritize funding for staffing and additional van for Milano Center.
- Look for grant opportunities to fund a feasibility study for an intra-Melrose Shuttle.
- Create additional “senior spaces” beyond handicapped spaces that are closer to event venue and can be used by those who have mobility challenges.
- Consider ways to acquire a sedan for local trips that can supplement van rides.

Increased awareness of programs and services available is needed.

- Consider ways to welcome first-time participants who are reluctant to participate on their own (e.g., a “new member day” or a bring a buddy” program to welcome new participants)
- Offer an “Introduction to the Milano Center” sessions a couple of times a year
- To encourage organized advocacy for older residents, implement a Senior Civic Academy that is accessible to older residents by offering daytime sessions, considering adult learner styles, and ensuring that topics relevant to healthy aging in Melrose are included (e.g., transportation, how to access resources, and social engagement opportunities.)

Continued refreshing of programs offered at Milano Center to better align with interests.

- Create a resource guide for older adults that highlights where there are opportunities for programming elsewhere in Melrose (e.g. art center and computer center). Look for other collaborations that would minimize duplication of effort (and make space available for nonduplicative programs). Consider the programs of interest:
 - Performances
 - Lectures
 - Educational
 - Indoor exercise
 - Outdoor exercise

Caregiving is common, and families need support.

- Continue to encourage City employees to become “dementia friends”
- Explore the creation of a “Caregiver hotline” where a recording can be accessed with available resources and available 24/7
- Consider developing respite options
- Consider hosting a “Caregiver’s Night Out” to provide residents who might be caring for a spouse, parent, or grandparent an opportunity to enjoy a night of entertainment.

Risk of isolation of older residents—the need for age-inclusive features throughout the City.

- Look for opportunities in Melrose neighborhoods to host events, meetings; sponsor neighborhood/area picnics that bring neighbors together and facilitate a conversation about how to communicate with one another in times of distress or inclement weather and for simple socialization. Emphasize outreach efforts to include multiple generations and ensure inclusivity
 - Neighborhood liaison program?
- Implement a Senior Civic Academy that is accessible to older residents by offering daytime sessions, considering adult learner styles, and ensuring that topics relevant to healthy aging in Melrose are included (e.g., transportation, how to access resources, and social engagement opportunities.)
- Work together with the Public Works Department to identify funding sources (e.g. AARP Community Challenge grant) for public spaces where benches can be installed to provide places to rest and opportunities for socialization. Ensure age friendly features, including shade!
- Document and publicize the location of available bathrooms around Melrose.
- Explore the use of technology (e.g., phone or other mobile devices) to include residents who are unable to leave their home in existing programs through video technology or making “friendly visits” by telephone.
 - Partner with the schools to recruit a Technology Advisor and establish a Teens Teaching Technology Club to offer training workshops in the community

Thank you!

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