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# Berwick Area Community Survey

*The Age-Friendly Community Project*



 ANALYTIC INSIGHT

*November 28, 2016*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Analytic Insight would like to thank the members of the Age-Friendly Community Project team who are working to make the Berwick area more age-friendly and ensure residents can age in place with comfort and dignity.

The survey was funded through the AARP's Age-Friendly Community Initiative. More than three dozen communities representing more than a dozen states are enrolled in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities.

At Analytic Insight, we congratulate the Town of Berwick on its good work so far, and wish you the best as you continue to make the Berwick area more age-friendly so that residents of all ages can participate fully in the Maine philosophy of "life the way it should be."

Sincerely,



Amy Flowers  
President, Analytic Insight

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The goal of the project is to help the Berwick area and its town leaders better understand the needs of older residents and support healthy aging of all residents. This study was developed and administered by a team of volunteers working with the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities Program. Analytic Insight, a professional research firm based in Lewiston, was hired to compile the survey results and develop this report.

This Executive Summary summarizes the findings presented in the full report, and is designed to help guide the strategic planning and program implementation efforts of the City of Berwick and its neighboring communities.

## METHODS

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Surveys were distributed using a variety of methods. One thousand surveys were mailed to residents selected at random from a voter list of Berwick residents. The survey was also available on the Internet and links were emailed to residents with email addresses available to the Town. Lastly, paper surveys were distributed at senior centers and local groups.

The sample is comprised of 181 paper surveys, which includes mailed and distributed surveys, and 95 surveys taken on the Internet or returned directly to the City of Berwick where they were entered via the Internet survey form.

Method	Surveys Received
Paper	181
Internet	95
<b>Total</b>	<b>276</b>

The survey covered The World Health Organization's 8 Domains of Livability including:

- ◆ Outdoor Space and Buildings
- ◆ Transportation
- ◆ Housing
- ◆ Social Participation and Socializing
- ◆ Civic Participation and Employment
- ◆ Awareness of Local Services and Events
- ◆ Interest in Technology to Communicate and Stay Connected
- ◆ Community Support and Health Services
- ◆ Importance of Services in the Community

## COMMUNITY RESPONSE

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Seven out of ten Berwick residents rated staying in Berwick as extremely or very important to them, with three in ten saying it is “extremely” important. A very small percentage said that remaining in Berwick was not at all important to them.

When asked what would impact the decision to move, a large percentage of respondents said that the expense of maintaining their home and the need for a smaller home to meet changing needs. In addition, about half said that personal safety or transportation needs would impact a decision to move.

## OUTDOOR SPACE AND BUILDINGS

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Residents are most satisfied with the accessibility of Berwick’s parking, safe places to walk near homes, and snow removal for sidewalks. Residents were most dissatisfied with having public parks with enough benches or public restrooms. On the average, residents rated even those services with which they were most satisfied as “okay.”

## TRANSPORTATION

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Well-lit, safe streets and intersections were rated as being very important to residents of Berwick, as well as transportation services for people living with a disability, and easy to read traffic signs. Transportation is often a critical issue for older adults and those living with a disability, as it often underlies access to other important services. For example, about half of respondents said that transportation needs would impact a decision to leave the area and one in five said they would use transportation services if available to them.

## HOUSING

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Almost nine out of ten residents said that it was extremely or very important to independently remain in their homes, with the majority saying it was extremely important. Just one out of fifty residents said that remaining independently at home was not very or not at all important.

Over two-thirds of Berwick residents reported concerns about being able to keep up with home maintenance. In particular, many think they may need grab bars or hand rails, a medical emergency response system or a ramp or wider doorway to be able to stay in their homes as they age. Installing a bedroom or bathroom on the first floor and outdoor lighting are also of interest to a substantial number of residents.

Over half out of Berwick residents said that if they were to move out of their home during retirement, they would seek out an active adult community.

## SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Overall, Berwick residents expressed a high level of interest in social activities. Activities geared toward both younger and older people known as intergenerational activities, physical activities, activities with senior discounts and volunteer opportunities generated the most interest.

For those residents who would like to socialize more, the thing that prevents most from doing so is the belief feeling that there isn't much to do in Berwick. Events being scheduled at times when respondents aren't available or finding out too late are also an impediment for many residents.

## CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Respondents indicated that many civic participation and employment opportunities are available within ten miles of Berwick. Volunteering is the most utilized opportunity, as well as the most available. Job opportunities is the second most available item.

One in four respondents said that job training is not available, but they wish it was and one in five would use transportation services if available to them.

## AWARENESS OF LOCAL SERVICES AND EVENTS

Just one in four residents said finding information about local services and events is easy to find. Newsletters, newspapers and websites are the most popular sources of information about community services, news and events. Email is used by more than one in four residents, as are flyers, word of mouth and Facebook.

Almost half of residents said they would be interested in learning more about how to use technology to communicate and stay connected.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND HEALTH SERVICES

Respondents reported that, on the average, they are somewhat likely to use home maintenance, library services or fitness classes within the next five years.

## IMPORTANCE OF HAVING SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY

Residents rated seasonal services for low-income and older adults such as lawn work or snow removal and affordable housing options as being most important to have available in the community. All of the services included in the survey were rated between somewhat and very important with a small range of difference.



## **2. Challenges to Aging In Berwick: Outdoor Spaces and Home Maintenance.**

Outdoor space and buildings were rated as merely “okay”. In particular, residents were most dissatisfied with having public parks with enough benches and public restrooms that are clean and accessible.

In addition, a large percentage of respondents said that the expense of maintaining their home, property taxes and the need for a smaller home to meet changing needs would be what might necessitate a move. In addition, home maintenance and home improvements such as grab bars or hand rails and medical emergency response systems were of interest. Information on community resources, financial assistance or incentives, or a listing of recommended, affordable contractors to do such work may be beneficial to residents planning these improvements.

## **3. Opportunities for Social Interaction.**

Although Berwick residents expressed a high level of interest in social activities, just one in four residents said information about local services and events is easy to find. Informational campaigns to increase awareness of events may wish to focus on newsletters, newspapers and websites, which are the most popular sources of information.

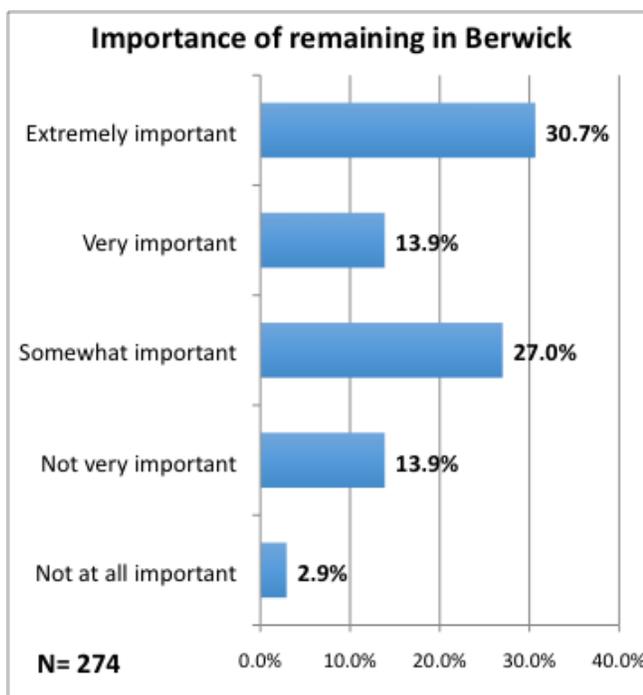
Almost half of survey respondents said they would be interested in learning more about how to use technology to communicate and stay connected. This interest could be used to mobilize the community while offering important skills. Incorporating both younger and older people in activities may generated additional interest.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

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Overall, respondents’ desire to remain in the Berwick community is strong, despite concerns expressed about the downtown area, affordability and safety. Addressing these concerns is likely to strengthen residents’ existing commitment to the area and encourage participation in community events.

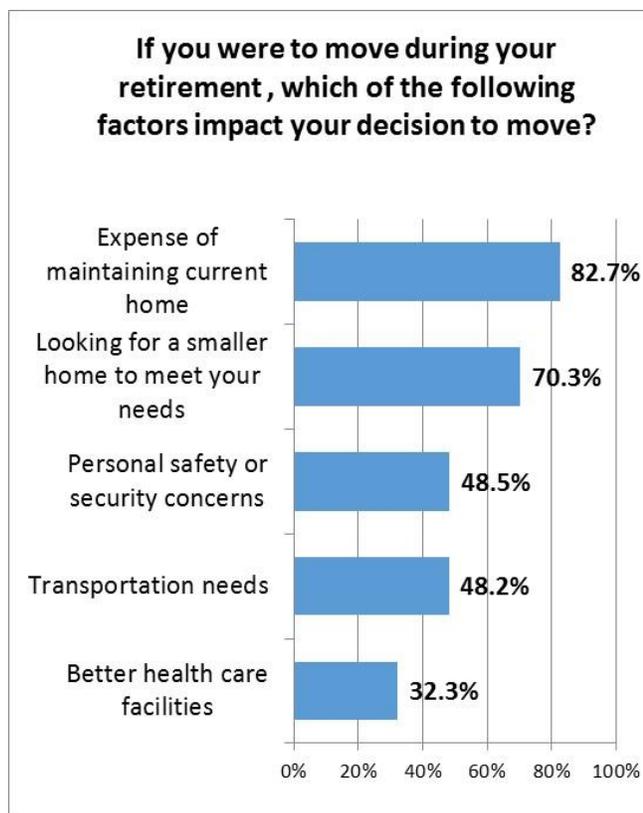
Seven out of ten Berwick residents rated staying in Berwick as extremely, very important or somewhat to them (71.6%), with three in ten saying it is “extremely” important (30.7%). A very small percentage said that remaining in Berwick was not at all important to them (2.9%).



The expense of maintaining their home and the need for a smaller home to meet changing needs would each impact the decision to move for over half of Berwick residents (82.7% and 70.3%, respectively).

About half said that personal safety (48.5%) or transportation needs (48.2%) would impact their decision.

One in three residents (32.3%) would consider a move for access to better health care facilities.



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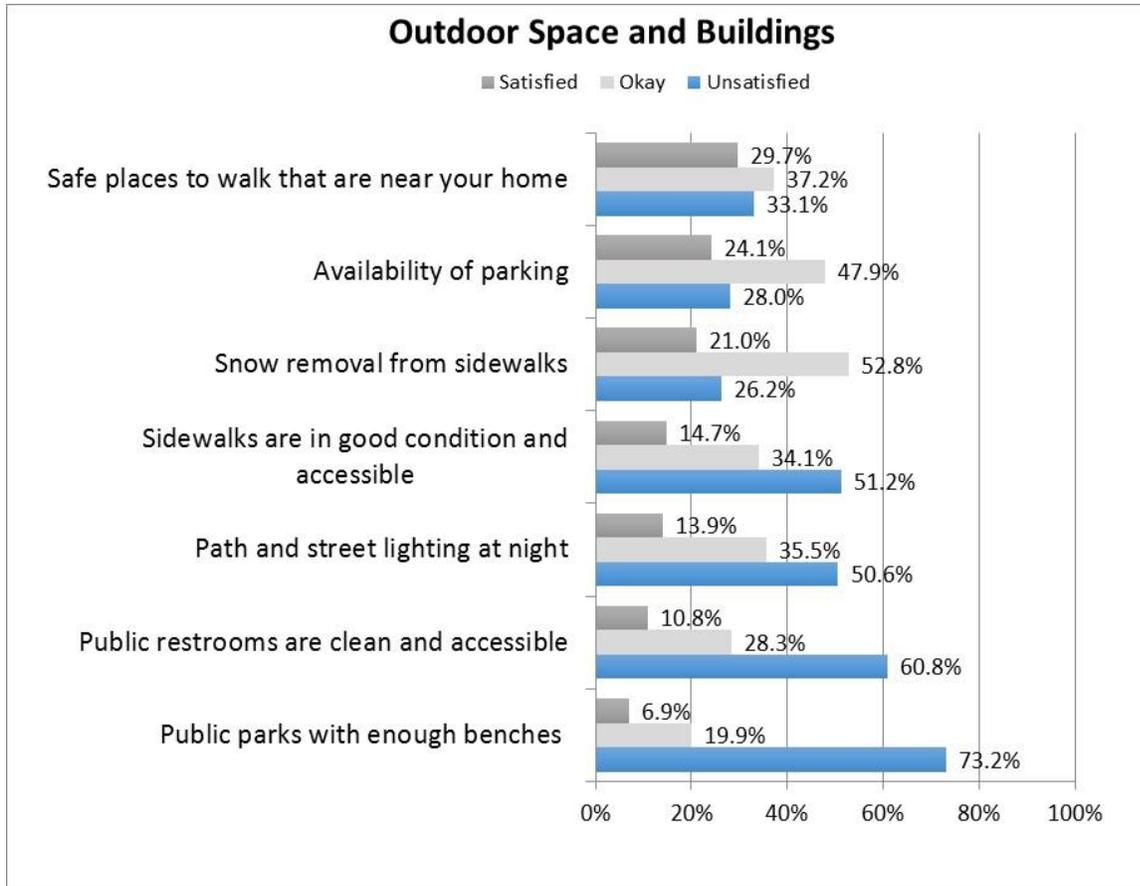
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## OUTDOOR SPACE AND BUILDINGS

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Safe places to walk near their home was the most satisfactory item (29.7%), followed by the availability of parking (24.1%). By a large margin, the number of park benches was rated unsatisfactory by the largest percentage of residents (73.2%) and had the least number report in satisfied (6.9%) followed by public restrooms that are clean and accessible (60.8%).



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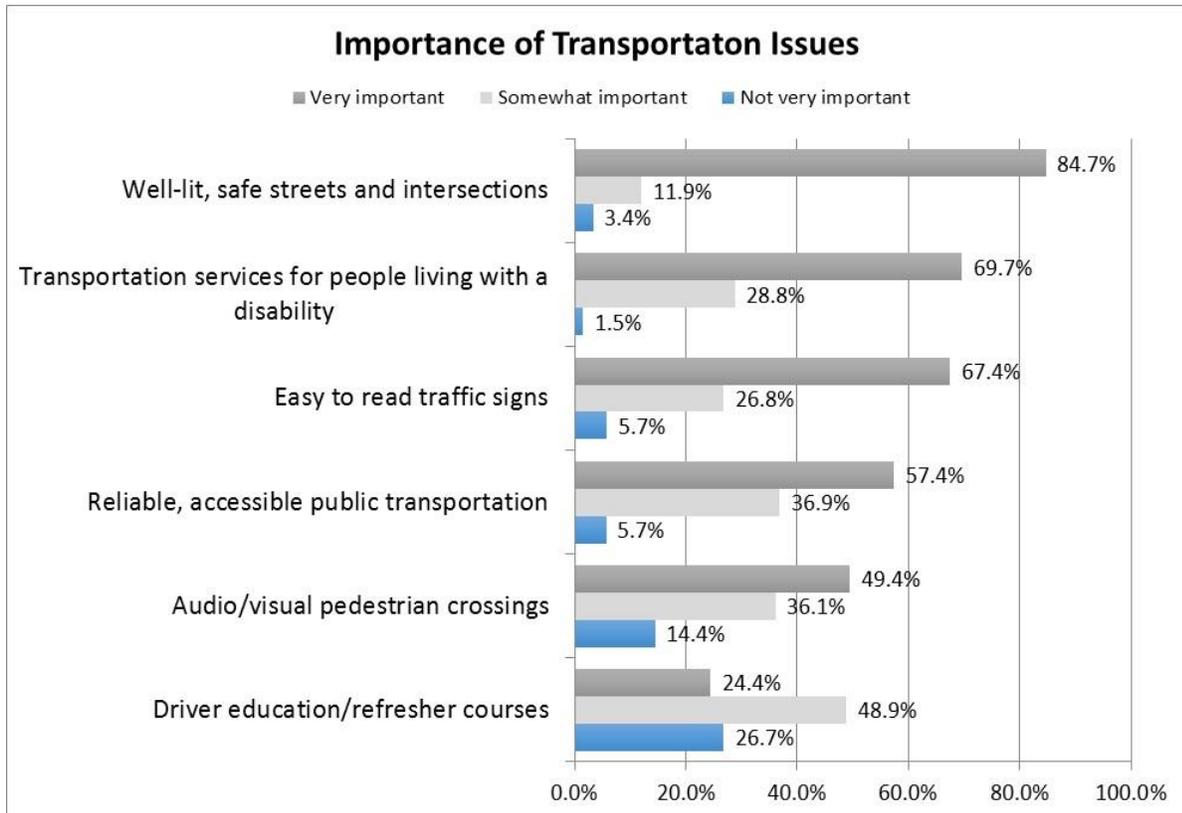
## TRANSPORTATION

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Overall, the vast majority of residents rated every item as somewhat or very important.

Well lit and safe streets was very important to the largest percentage of respondents (84.7%) followed by transportation services for people with disabilities (69.7%) and easy to read traffic signs (67.4%).



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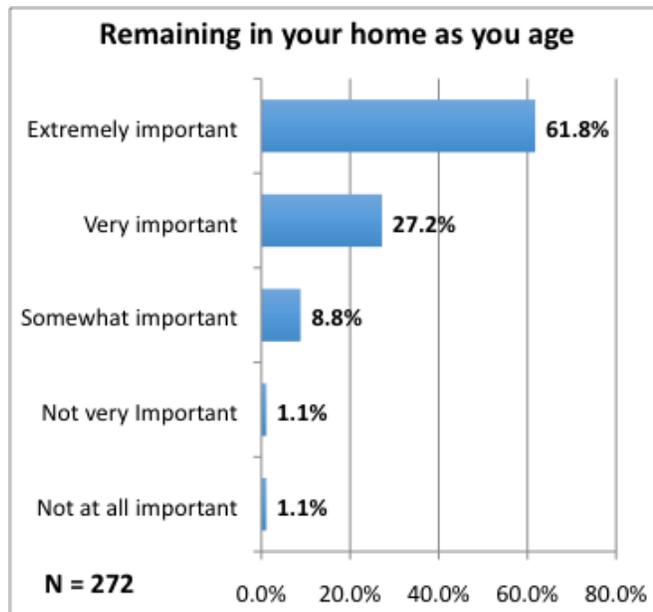
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## HOUSING

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Almost nine out of ten respondents said that it was extremely or very important to independently remain in their homes (89%), with the majority saying it was extremely important (61.8%). Just one out of fifty residents (2.2%) said remaining independently at home was not very or not at all important.

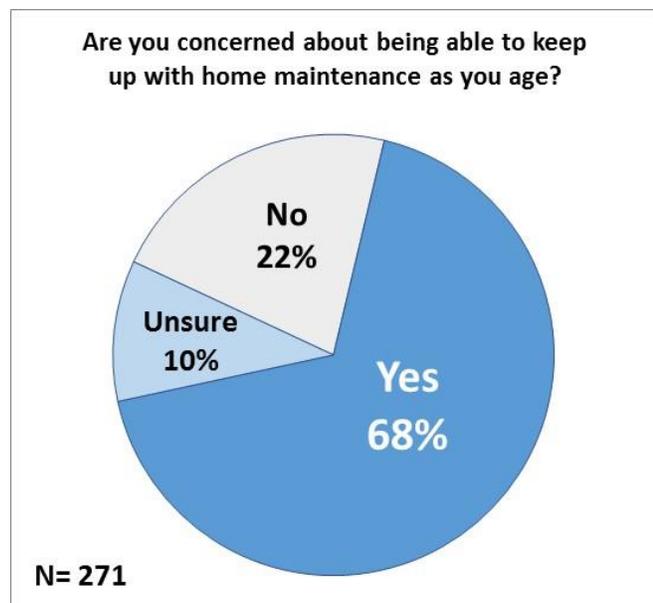


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## CONCERNS ABOUT HOME MAINTENANCE

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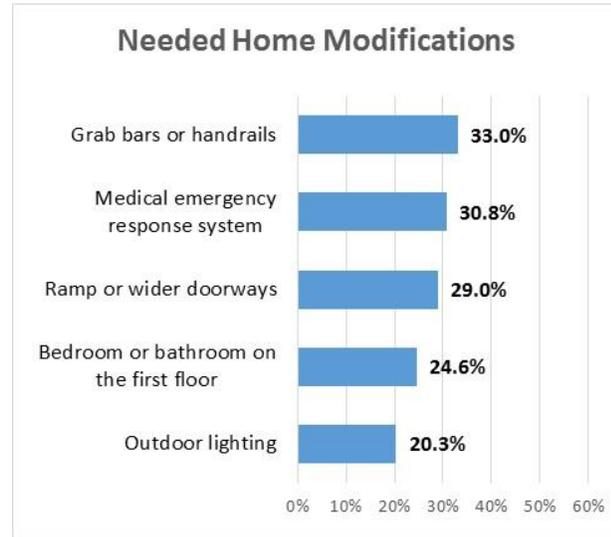
Over two-thirds of Berwick residents (68%) reported concerns about being able to keep up with home maintenance.



## NEEDED HOME MODIFICATIONS

About one in three residents think they may need grab bars or hand rails (33%), a medical emergency response system (31%) or a ramp or wider doorway (29%) to be able to stay in their homes as they age.

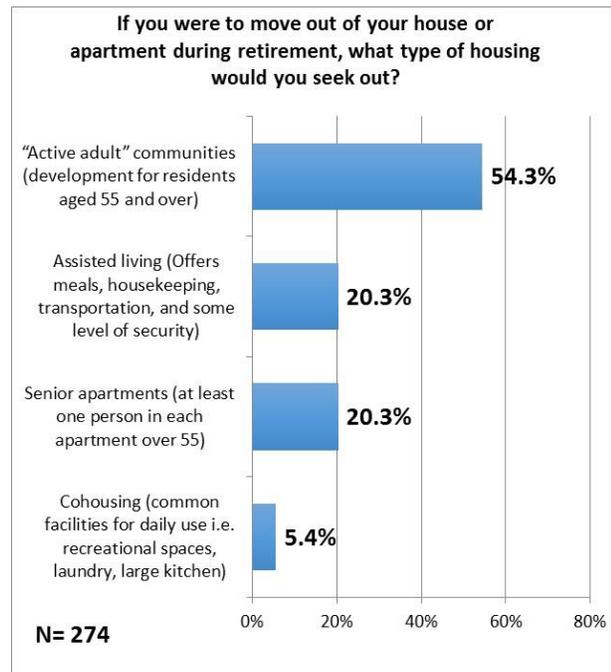
Installing a bedroom or bathroom on the first floor (24%) and outdoor lighting (20%) are also of interest to a substantial number of residents.



## DESIRED TYPES OF HOUSING

Over half out of survey respondents said that if they were to move out of their home during retirement, they would seek out an active adult community (54.3%).

Assisted living (20.3%), senior apartments (20.3%) and cohousing opportunities (5.4%) were of interest to smaller percentages of residents.



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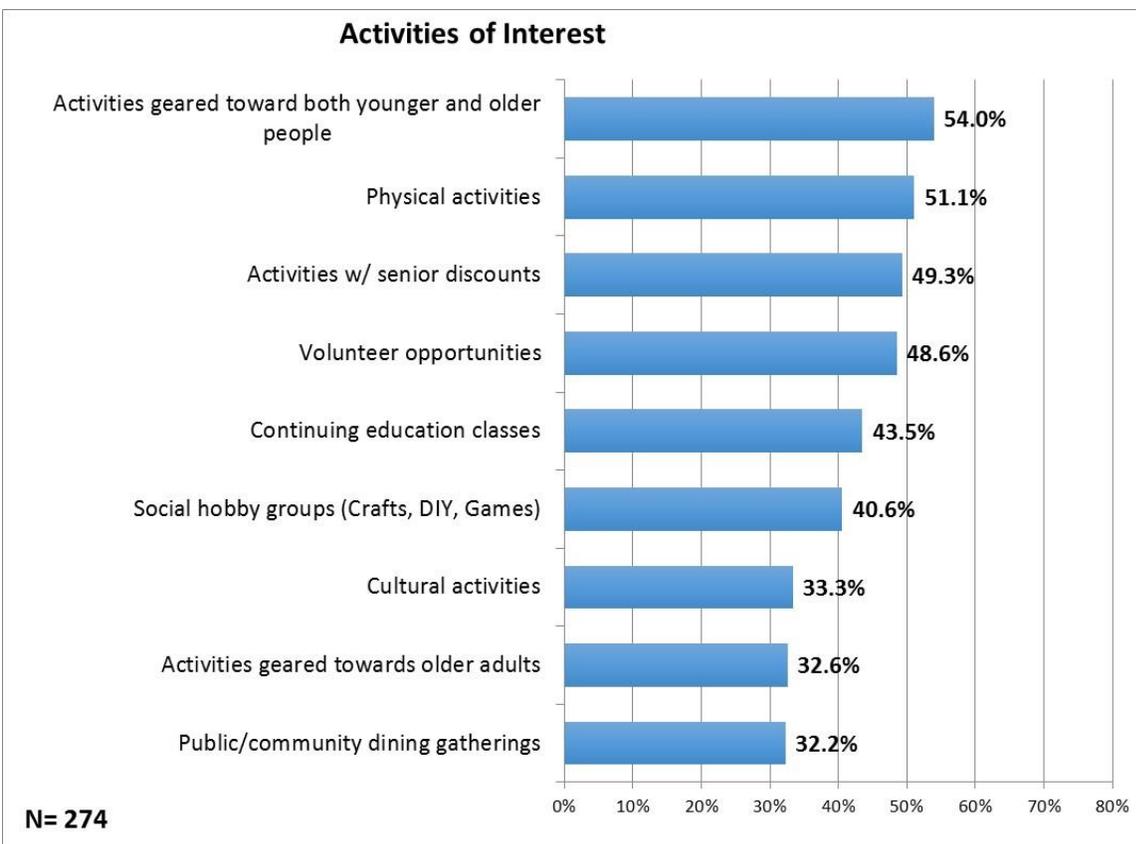
## SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

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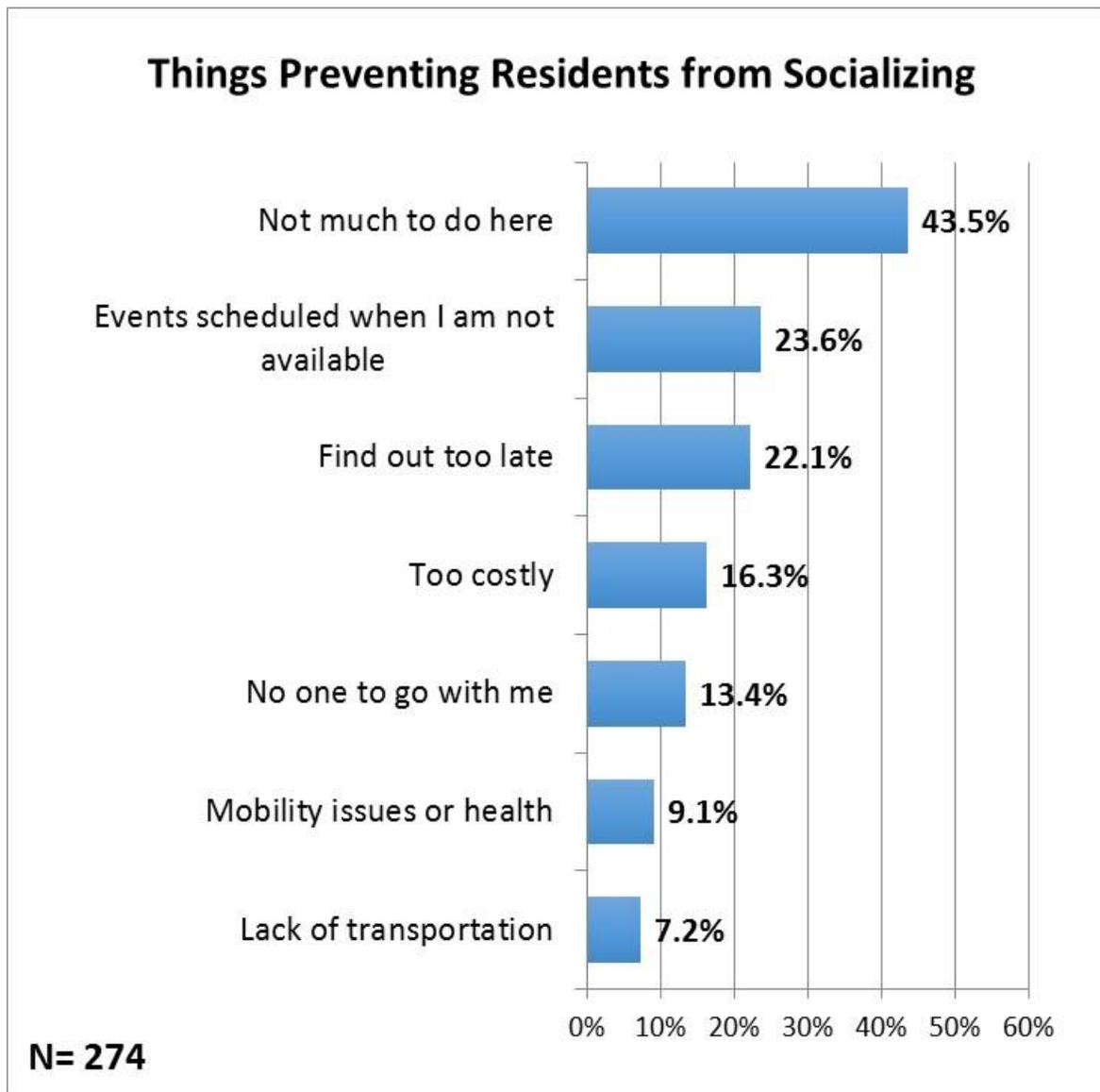
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Overall, Berwick residents expressed a high level of interest in social activities.

About half were interested in participating in intergenerational activities (54%), physical activities (51.1%), activities with senior discounts (49.3%) or volunteer opportunities (48.6%).



If residents would like to socialize more, the thing that prevents most from doing so is the belief feeling that there isn't much to do in Berwick (43.5%). Events being scheduled at times when respondents aren't available (23.6%) or finding out too late (22.1%) are also an impediment for many residents.

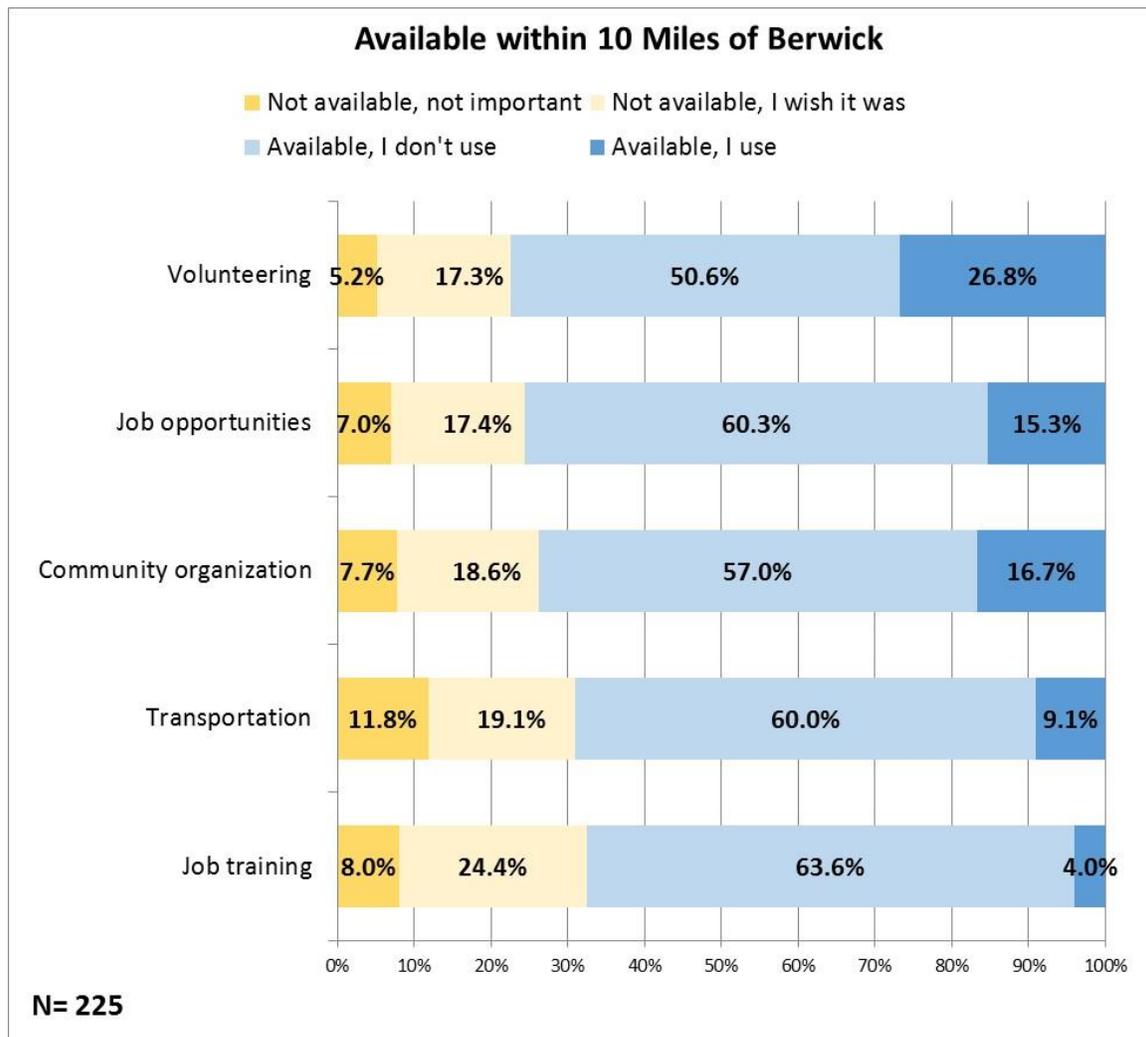


## CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The majority of respondents said that all of the civic participation and employment opportunities shown in the chart below are available within ten miles of Berwick. Volunteering is the most utilized opportunity, with 26.8% of survey respondents saying they use volunteering opportunities. Volunteering is also the most available. Another 50.6% of respondents said the opportunity is available but they do not use it.

Job opportunities is the second most available item, with a total of 75.6% of respondents reporting that it is available, and 15.3% saying they use this item.

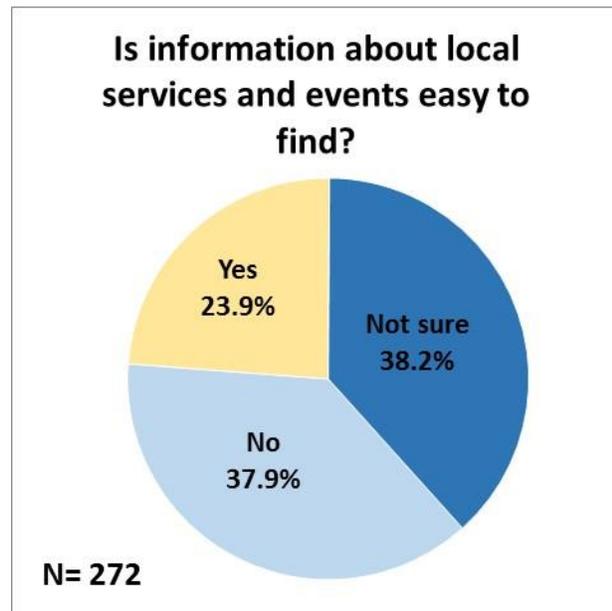
One in four respondents (24.4%) said that job training is not available, but they wish it was and one in five (19.1%) would use transportation services if available.



## AWARENESS OF LOCAL SERVICES AND EVENTS

Just one in four residents said finding information about local services and events is easy (23.9%).

In contrast, over one in three residents (38.2%) said they were unsure if information about local services is easy to find and an additional third (37.9%) said information is not easy to find.

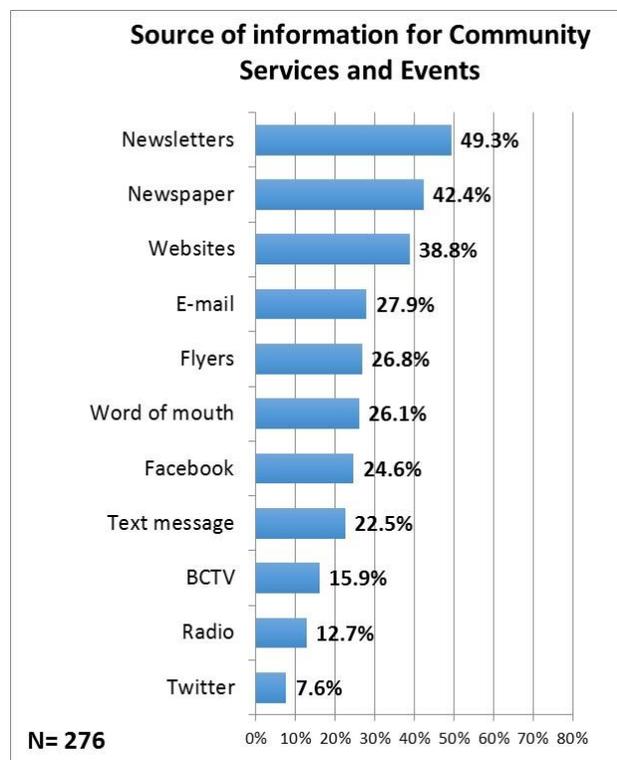


## INFORMATION ABOUT COMMUNITY SERVICES, NEWS AND EVENTS

Newsletters (49.3%), newspapers (42.4%) and websites (38.8%) are the most popular sources of information about community services, news and events.

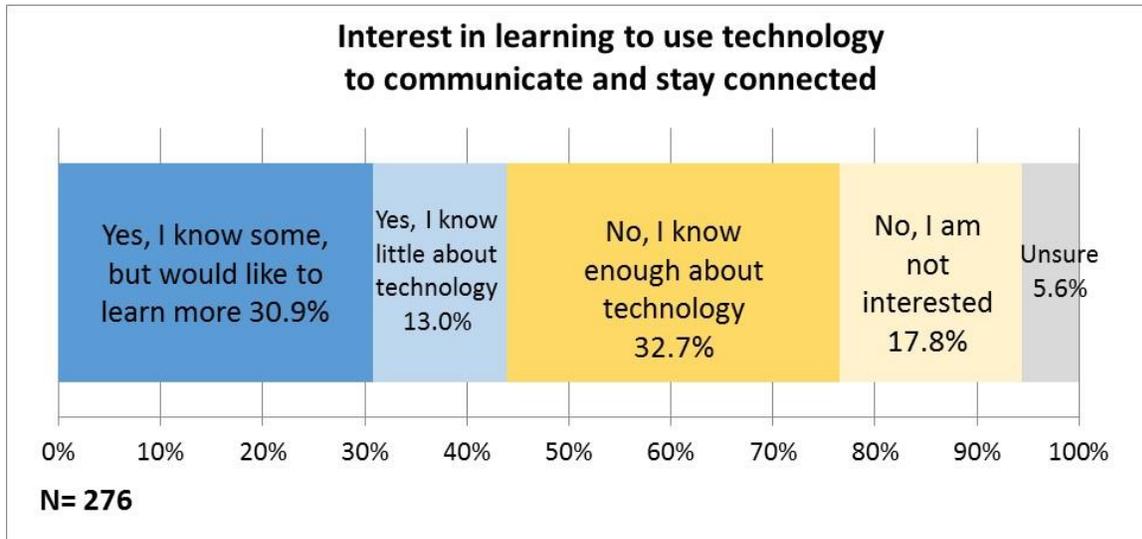
Email is used by more than one in four residents (27.9%), as are flyers (26.8%), word of mouth (26.1%) and Facebook (24.6%).

The least used source was Twitter (7.6%), with less than one in ten residents saying they use it for local information.



## INTEREST IN TECHNOLOGY TO COMMUNICATE AND STAY CONNECTED

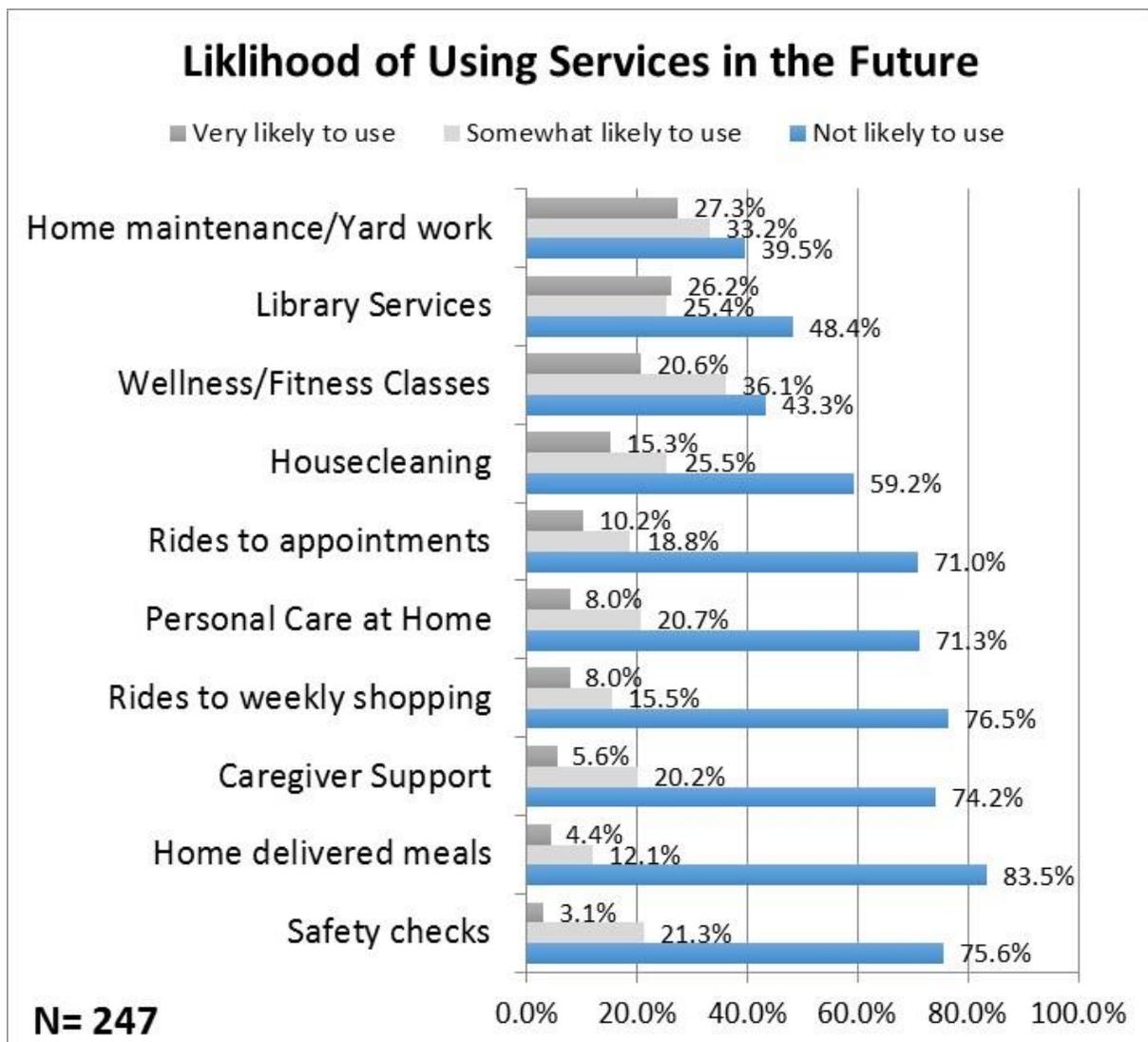
Almost half of residents (43.9%) said they would be interested in learning more about technology, including those who currently know little (13%) and those who know some, but would like to learn more (30.9%).



## COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND HEALTH SERVICES

Respondents are most likely to use home maintenance or yard work services (27.3%) or library services (26.2%).

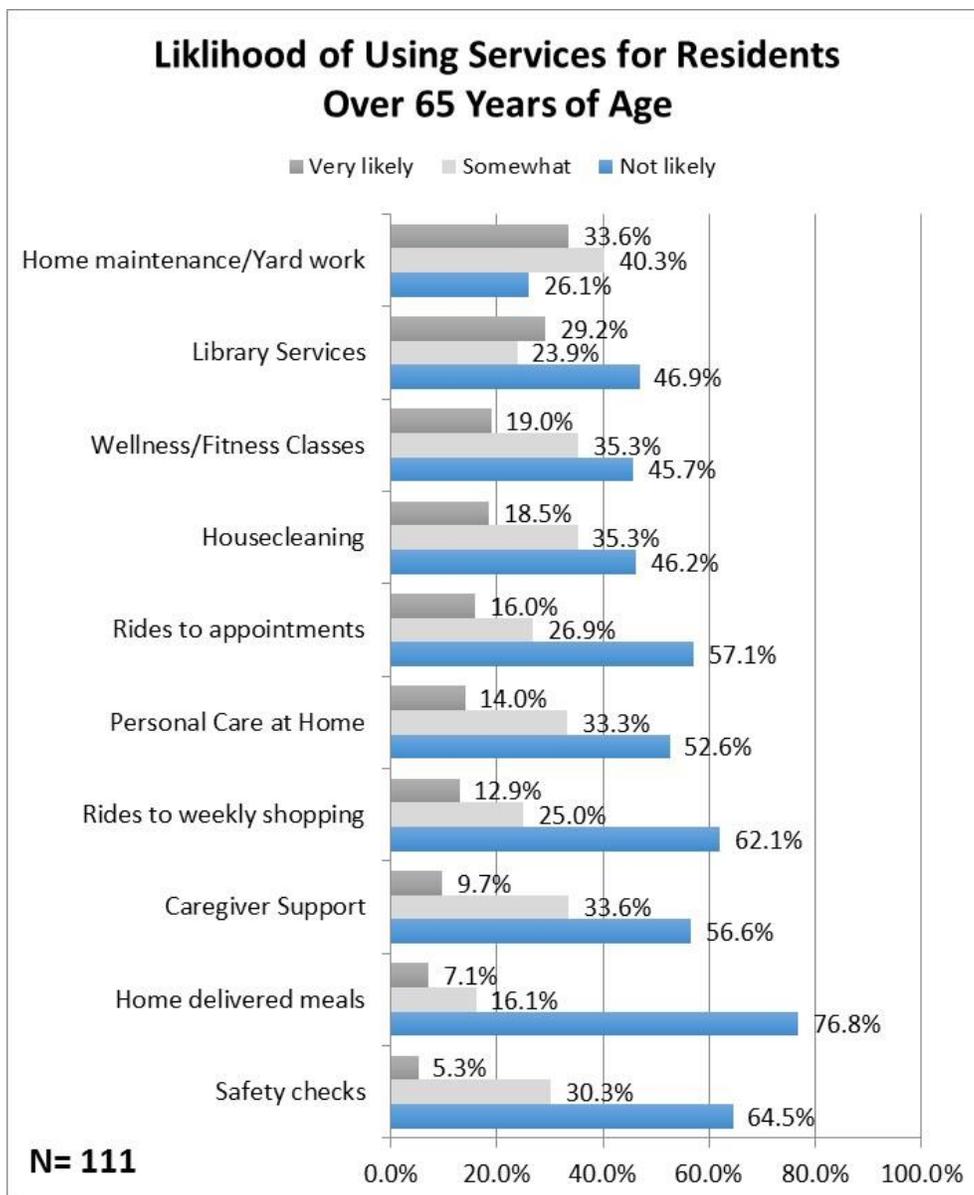
Over half of Berwick residents said they were *not* likely to use a large number of services, including house cleaning (59.2%), safety checks (75.6%), and home delivered meals (83.5%). It is important to note that many of these services are dependent on physical ability and needs which may change for some residents as they age. Although many may not believe they will need the services in the near future, this may be based on currently not having the need for assistance with these types of services.



## SERVICES OF INTEREST TO RESIDENTS OVER 65 YEARS OF AGE

In comparison to younger respondents, results for residents over the age of 65 were similar with a few exceptions. Older residents are somewhat more likely to use services like home maintenance (33.6% vs. 22.6%) and rides to weekly shopping (12.9% vs. 8%).

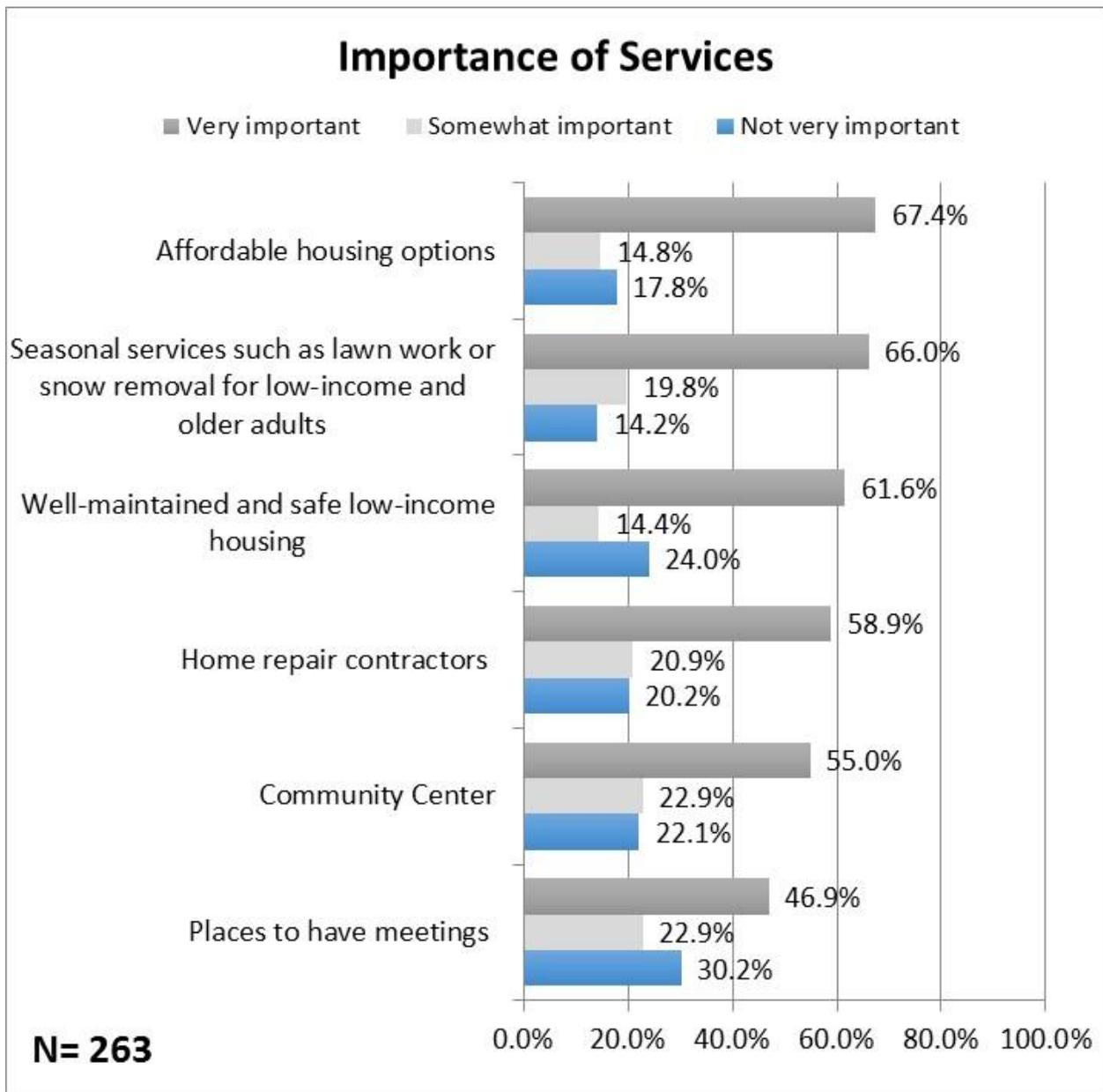
The greatest differences between the two groups however, was in services residents said they were *not* likely to use. In general, older residents seemed to be more open to the possibility they would need the services, with substantially fewer reporting they were not likely to use home delivered meals (76.8%), safety checks (64.5%), and house cleaning (46.2%).



## IMPORTANCE OF HAVING SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY

The most important services to residents include affordable housing options (67.4%), seasonal services for low-income and older adults such as lawn work or snow removal (66.0%), and well maintained and safe low in-come housing (61.6%). Home repair contractors and a Community Center were also rated as very important by over half of respondents (58.9% and 55%, respectively).

Places to have meetings was rated as being least important to respondents with 30.2% saying it is not very important.



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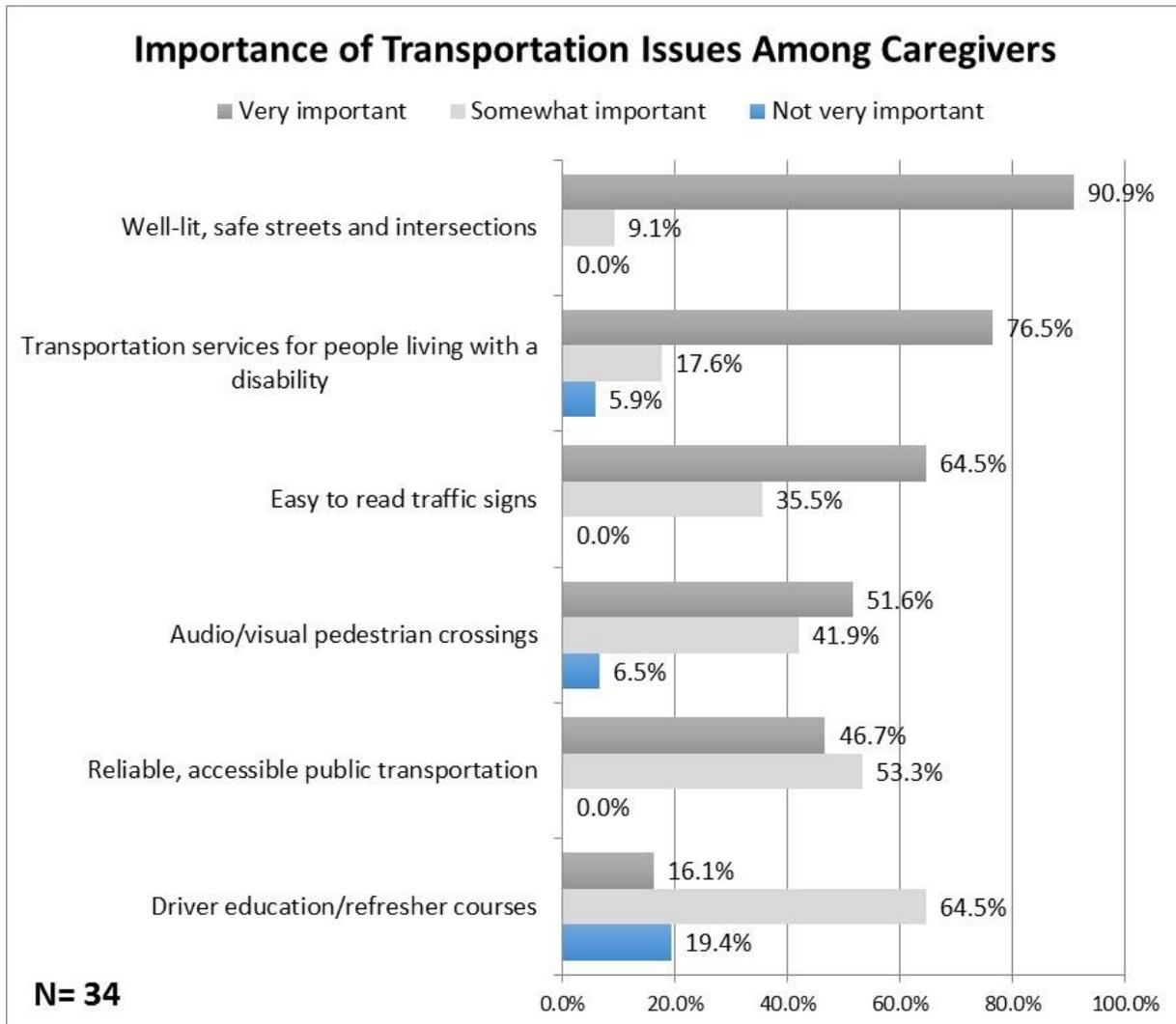
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## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CAREGIVERS AND OTHER RESPONDENTS

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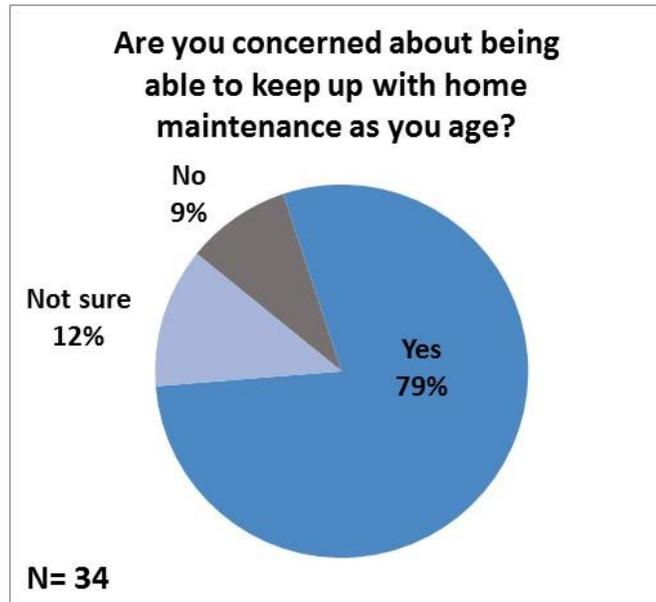
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Caregivers rated well lit, safe streets and intersections (90.9%) and transportation services for people living with a disability (76.5%) as more important compared with other respondents (84.7% and 69.7% respectively for all respondents).



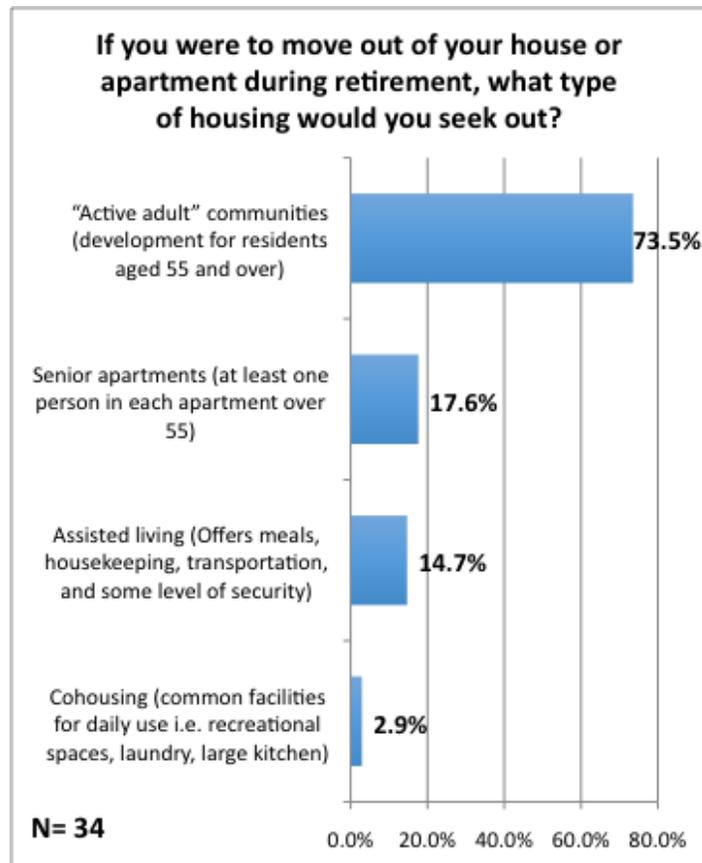
## HOME MAINTENANCE

A higher percentage of caregivers said that they were concerned about being able to keep up with home maintenance as they aged (79% vs. 68% for residents overall).



## DESIRED HOUSING

Caregivers are more likely to say they would seek out an active adult communities than the average Berwick resident (73.5% vs. 54.3%).



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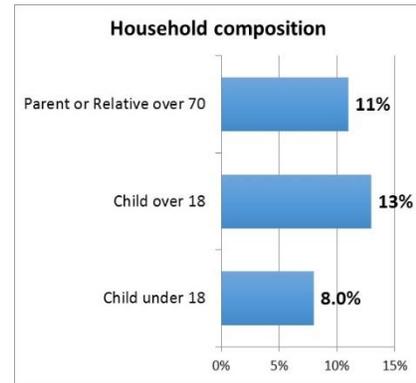
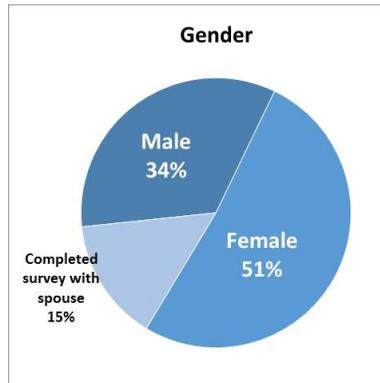
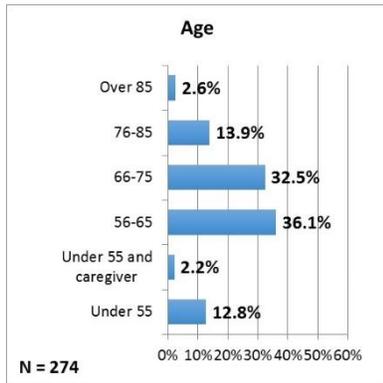
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## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

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The charts in this section show the demographic composition of the respondents to the survey.





Taxes will drive us all out of town.

Taxes are the main problem, especially school tax, those of us without kids get screwed paying way too much in school taxes.

School taxes are a killer for older generations. We don't have children in school, so why should we pay full benefit. This is a big concern for all older generations on SSI.

People on fixed incomes over 80 need a property tax exception.

Most important issue for people getting older, high taxes.

Green space does not bring in taxes.

Due to high real estate and income taxes, I have sold my home in Berwick ME and moved to North Carolina. Weather was also a contributing factor.

Berwick is a great town to live in, "However" every year taxes keep increasing, although pensions and Social security does not. There needs to be a "CAP" on property taxes for those homeowners 55 and above, so that they can retain their homes and properties!

Need senior discounts on taxes and stop wasting my tax dollars!

#### DOWNTOWN AND HOUSING:

The addition of lots of additional section housing creates a poor, unsafe environment for seniors. The downtown area is turning into a drug dealer's safe haven. Clean up downtown!

In order to have viable community we need housing and shops/restaurants that attract younger professionals. We seem to have enough apartments and housing for the young crowd.

Too many homes turned into apartments in downtown. Need park space and local shops downtown, not more apartments.

We need senior housing very much in Berwick!

Our low income housing includes places that are not safe for elderly (or acceptable). Need senior housing! Fix Sullivan St sidewalks, people are walking in the street, not safe! For me, it is over a mile without sidewalks to get to the closest bus stop.

Berwick needs a nice downtown park/gathering area with ample green space and benches. Maybe even a gazebo. We need an open and friendly space where people can gather and meet their neighbors and make new friends in the community.

Hoping new shops and cafes will become available.

Berwick needs more affordable housing.

Need major crackdown on drug dealers in downtown area. 8pm anyone under 18 should be home where they belong, off the streets with their bucket mouths. All section 8 housing should be drug tested and booted.

Probably #1 reason I will move after retirement: too much crime/drugs/violence. I feel unsafe in Berwick. #2 reason: no restaurants down town that cater to average crowd. Every tried to be too gourmet in Berwick.

Would be nice to have more elderly housing.

#### INDIVIDUAL NEEDS:

My husband is 70 years old and is at the age for care giving. Just recently lost his lower right leg, so the help of various jobs from family and friends are very important at this time. Very hard for me to participate in any activities because of his constant care.

We feel cable TV should be available to all tax paying residents of Berwick- not just select sections. High-speed internet access would be a plus as would cell phone service.

For our household, parks and community centers are very important.

Do more for seniors, then they won't move out.

A community building would really be nice in the Berwick area for the elderly.

Need sidewalks on any roads with a double yellow line.

Police department here isn't very helpful to older citizens! We have had several times experienced this since beginning of the year. Very distressing.

I live in a mobile home without a car. I have accommodated as much as possible, I am disabled and have 5 hours of a care-giver. In time, I shall need assisted living.

I could use help cleaning out some closets and my basement and garage. I'd like to sell or donate many items that have accumulated but can be used by younger homeowners.

There are no services available to my mom. I have to do it all and I have a full time job.

We have my husband's parents living on our property in their own home. They want to stay there as long as they can.

Live with husband who has Alzheimer's who is 81. I love Berwick but we could have a park with benches for the elderly to enjoy. Small shops that we could walk to and enjoy.

My wife and I are both over 70.

Always loved Berwick, Vic's Ice Cream trips, moved to Berwick 8 years ago to retire.

Rec. department needs something of shelter for our children during hot summer days and rainy days. Doesn't need to be fancy but something for shade.

Financial aid for elderly

#### THE SURVEY:

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to express our thoughts.

This survey was a great idea! Very proactive. A newsletter would be great to find out what is available in the community.

Since nearby towns joined to create an aging in place organization, based on Beach Hill Village model, I wondered why Berwick was not one of the towns.

This is great. So many communities are too expensive or focused on wealthy/healthy people. Creating an elder friendly niche is wonderful! Berwick is perfectly suited for it too. Good thinking!

Will you send results of this survey to the community?

Thank you

#### OTHER:

Berwick has come a long way, offering low cost housing, accessible to transportation is very important.

I like seeing the progress on the Tannery project.