

January 2023 Final Report

Community-Based Participatory Needs Assessment for the Elder Population of Leverett, Massachusetts

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Executive summary

Introduction

In early 2022 under the leadership of the Town of Leverett, the Leverett Council on Aging (COA), and LifePath, Town Common Research (TCR) was selected to conduct an in-depth community health needs assessment for Leverett's elder population, funded by a two-year grant from the Massachusetts Department of Revenue. TCR conducted this needs assessment from February to December 2022, utilizing community-based participatory methodologies that prioritized project ownership by the Leverett COA, and the self-determination of Leverett's elder community.

This Final Report by TCR aims to support the COA's effort to discover and prioritize the needs of residents aged 50 and older, to develop Age-Friendly programs that meet those needs, and to ensure that Leverett continues to provide services and to cultivate a community environment, with inclusivity, accessibility, and age-friendliness by design.

Data Collection & Analysis

TCR's activities included review and interpretation of secondary data from local, state, and national sources (output 1); and three types of primary data collection:

- Supporting Lifepath's Aging and Dementia Friendly Community Needs Assessment survey of residents 50 and older in Leverett (output 2, p. 8).
- Conducting confidential, one-on-one Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), prioritizing people with a record of civil service, community participation, and people regarded as opinion leaders among Leverett elders (output 3, p. 10).
- Facilitating two Focus Groups with Leverett residents aged 50+ who had not participated in Key Informant Interviews (output 4, p. 17).

As a small rural community participating in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities, Leverett is a particularly good fit to utilize the AARP's recommended program model for Age-Friendly work, developed in partnership with the World Health Organization. To support compatibility with the AARP model, the TCR team analyzed primary data to identify common themes, and then mapped these themes to AARP's 8 Domains of Livability.

TCR supported LifePath's survey implementation activities during spring 2022, conducted Key Informant outreach and interviews throughout summer 2022, then analyzed survey and KII data according to perceived "assets" and "gaps" to better understand the strengths and needs of elders in Leverett. In fall 2022, TCR met twice with the Leverett COA to present initial results and determine next steps for organizing focus groups.

With discussion, feedback, and approval from the COA, TCR planned and facilitated two focus group meetings in December 2022. Each group addressed separate topics that bundled multiple themes and domains identified during data analysis. The outcome of the focus groups was an important final step to gather personal feedback and insights about needs assessment results and possible next steps that would be relevant and feasible.

Results

277 Leverett residents aged 50+ responded to LifePath's survey, which was the highest response rate across towns in Franklin County and the North Quabbin. Due to this success, LifePath now treats Leverett's efforts and collaboration with TCR as a model for their regional work. TCR conducted 24 key informant interviews, in person or by Zoom, exceeding the proposed goal of 20 interviews. Results from LifePath survey data and the KIIs showed the greatest perceived "gaps" in the following areas:

- Unique Themes: *Access to Facilities and Services; Aging-in-place Support; Transportation; and Community awareness of senior needs.*
- Corresponding AARP Domains: *Health Services and Community Supports; and Communication and Information.*

Based on these themes and with approval of the COA, TCR hosted 2 focus group meetings addressing separate topics. The first meeting addressed *Better Support for Aging-In-Place*, focused on Leverett elders' interest and concerns related to staying in their homes as they age. The second meeting was to discuss *A Town Service and Information Navigator*, focused on awareness and accessibility of information and services, and interest in having a dedicated town "Navigator" to assist elder residents. Results of these focus groups showed:

- A high degree of agreement with the importance of living as independently as possible, for as long as possible, even if that requires increased help and support.
- For some, a sense of independence specifically includes remaining in their homes, which brings unique challenges in a small rural town.
- A high degree of agreement that a town services navigator should be a top priority, and interest in having a dedicated *person* responsible for helping seniors stay informed of events and guide them to resources.
- Lack of awareness and accessibility of information, resources, and services.
- Needing help with technology and keeping up with changes in technology.
- Concerns about aging stigma and fear of losing independence.

- Transportation obstacles, including lack of public transportation and concerns about future reliance on cars/driving.
- The importance of Social events and social connection, and interest in intergenerational events and activities.
- Interest in focusing on feasibility of solutions and concern about trying to address too many issues at once.
- Curiosity and urgency about Leverett elders who are not well represented in the current data, including:
 - Those who were not reached by LifePath and/or TCR's efforts
 - Those with considerable lack of resources
 - An imperative to raise awareness about the needs of BIPOC seniors in Leverett.

The following sections describe the project history and rationale, present detailed project activities, results, and interpretations, and offer recommendations for future efforts.

History & rationale for Age-Friendly community programs

In January 2018, as a part of the [Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative](https://mahealthuagingcollaborative.org/)¹ Massachusetts became the second state to join the [AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities](https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2019/state-members.html)², following New York. The Network began in April 2012 as a program within the larger AARP Livable Communities initiative, and was designed to provide support for neighborhoods, towns, cities and rural areas to be great places for people of all ages.

The AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities utilizes [a standardized program model developed by the World Health Organization](https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/aging/2/age-friendly-communities)³, making it particularly strategic and beneficial to small, rural communities that wish to create truly age-friendly environments but are short on resources and funding. Age-Friendly programs can also improve a community's candidacy for additional programs and grant funding, such as the [AARP Community Challenge grant program](https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/)⁴.

According to the AARP, features of Age-Friendly places include “safe, walkable streets; age-friendly housing and transportation options; access to needed services; and opportunities for residents of all ages to participate in community life.”⁵ **The AARP**

¹ <https://mahealthuagingcollaborative.org/>

² <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2019/state-members.html>

³ <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/aging/2/age-friendly-communities>

⁴ <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/>

⁵ <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/about/>

Age-Friendly Network shares expertise and provides technical support for work to plan and improve communities according to [8 Domains of Livability](#)⁶ that influence the health and quality of life of community members, including older adults. The 8 Domains are as follows:

1. Civic participation and employment opportunities
2. Communication and information
3. Health services and community support
4. Housing
5. Outdoor spaces and buildings
6. Respect and social inclusion
7. Social participation
8. Transportation

In addition to the 8 Domains, livability considerations include Emergency Preparedness, Elder Abuse, Public Safety, and Dementia-Friendliness.



Figure 1: AARP 8 Domains of Livability

⁶ aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2016/8-domains-of-livability-introduction.html

The AARP also recommends that Network members follow their [Age-Friendly Process and Program Cycle](#)⁷:

1. **Establish a way to include older residents in all stages of the age-friendly planning and implementation process.**
2. **Conduct a community needs assessment.**
3. Develop an action and evaluation plan.
4. Submit the plan for review by AARP.
5. Implement and work toward the goals of the plan.
6. Share solutions, successes and best practices with AARP.
7. Assess the plan's impact and submit progress reports.
8. Repeat!

Age-Friendly work in Leverett

In December 2021, [Leverett, MA joined the AARP Age-Friendly Network](#)⁸ as a member of the [Age-Friendly Franklin County and North Quabbin](#)⁹ regional approach led by LifePath. Nour Elkhattaby Strauch, LifePath's Age-Friendly Program Manager until June 2022, submitted the [regional application to the AARP](#)¹⁰ with a [letter of commitment from the Leverett Select Board](#)¹¹, per AARP application requirements. The Select Board's letter identified the goal of "achieving a more livable community for older adults and people living with dementia" and identifying "needs and opportunities for the development of more age and dementia-friendly policies and procedures [to] enhance the relevance and impact of our planning efforts."

Following steps 1 and 2 of AARP's process and program cycle, LifePath has included older residents in its planning and programming outreach efforts and has distributed a community needs assessment survey. The Leverett COA's elder-inclusive activities and the Leverett Age-Friendly needs assessment, funded separately by a two-year Massachusetts Department of Revenue grant are both independent of and complementary to the LifePath needs assessment.

For steps 3 and 4 of the Age-Friendly Process and Program Cycle, AARP recommends that Age-Friendly Network members develop and continuously revise an action plan that

⁷ <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2014/getting-started.html>

⁸ <https://livablemap.aarp.org/member/leverett-ma>

⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/Age-Friendly-Franklin-County-and-North-Quabbin-101593468736459>

¹⁰ <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livableElder-communities/age-friendly-network/2021-applications/ma-age-friendly-franklin-county-and-north-quabbin-application-2021.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/age-friendly-network/2021-letters/ma-leverett-letter-of-commitment-2021.pdf>

focuses on improving the community's 8 Domains of Livability. The plan should include a statement of what can be achieved, target dates for goal completion, identification of participating organizations, and identification of indicators to measure progress.

As a small rural community participating in AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities, Leverett is a particularly good fit to utilize the WHO standardized program model in its Age-Friendly work. As such, the TCR team framed the Community Need Assessment process and analysis around the 8 Domains of Livability. This livability framework will help the COA to organize program design, assessment and monitoring with the terminology and methods that match those used by LifePath, FRCOG and other Age-Friendly organizations and institutions, to best support long-term collaboration and alignment with others in Age-Friendly work. TCR will present research findings and future recommendations using this domain framework and guided by steps 3 and 4 of the Age-Friendly Process and Program Cycle.

Output 1. Review of secondary data

Between April and June 2022, TCR reviewed existing sources of relevant secondary data in order to: 1) understand what has already been assessed and previous methodologies for assessments, 2) deepen their understanding of both environmental and community landscape that impacts aging in Leverett, and 3) identify gaps in existing data that might help direct the collection of new primary data.

Leverett-specific secondary data is summarized below and includes:

- 2020 Census Demographic data
- AARP's 2022 Livability Index Scores

Additional secondary data is in [Appendix D](#) and includes:

- The Massachusetts Healthy Aging Community Profile
- 2015 Affordable Housing Trust Survey Results
- Resources linked on the Leverett COA's website and LifePath's website

Demographics

The [U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates](#)¹² reports that Leverett has:

¹² <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/06000US2501135180-leverett-town-franklin-county-ma/>

- 1,875 residents in 727 households.
- Median age 47.4 years
- 47% of the population is 50 and older
- 28% is 65 and older
- 91% is white
- Median household income is \$93,942
- The poverty rate for seniors (65 and over) is 5%

See [Appendix A](#) for more detail and comparison with Franklin County.

AARP Livability Index

In April, 2022, the AARP Public Policy Institute released updated Livability Index scores for communities. AARP's Livability Index assesses livability of a community for all ages but is meant to focus primarily on improving community livability as we age. The goal of the Livability Index is to help community members and leaders take steps to address gaps when working to improve livability.

By analyzing policies, built environment, municipal services, environmental health, accessibility, affordability, and socioeconomic data, the Livability Index rates each community in 7 categories: Housing, Neighborhood, Transportation, Environment, Health, Engagement, and Opportunity. Individual categories and overall livability are rated on a scale of 0 to 100, benchmarked against the 2022 US median score. Higher scores represent greater livability.

Leverett's overall livability score was 53, compared to the US median score of 50. Leverett scored well above the benchmark in categories of environment and engagement, close to the benchmark in categories of transportation and health, and below the benchmark for housing, neighborhood, and opportunity.

Category	Leverett	2022 US median	Category Measurement
Housing	41	52	<i>Housing is measured by metrics and policies that promote affordability, availability, and accessibility.</i>
Neighborhood	42	48	<i>Neighborhood is measured by metrics and policies focused on proximity to key destinations, safety, and supporting mixed-use development.</i>
Transportation	50	49	<i>Transportation is measured by metrics and policies related to convenience, safety, and options.</i>

Environment	73	54	<i>Environment is measured by metrics and policies related to air and water quality, as well as energy efficiency, and hazard mitigation plans.</i>
Health	54	50	<i>Health is measured by metrics and policies that promote healthy behaviors including smoking cessation, and exercise opportunities.</i>
Engagement	64	53	<i>Engagement is measured by metrics and policies that include voting rights, human rights, and cultural engagement.</i>
Opportunity	48	52	<i>Opportunity is measured by metrics and policies that capture job availability, government creditworthiness, and graduation rates.</i>

Table 1: Leverett's AARP Livability Index Scores

Explore Leverett's score [in more detail on the AARP website](https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/search/Leverett,%20Massachusetts,%20United%20States)¹³.

Results from the 2022 Livability Index reflect a need for further assessment, policy and program considerations specifically related to: housing affordability, availability and accessibility; safety, proximity to key destinations and mixed use development; and opportunities for professional and educational achievement. Other considerations should include transportation options, convenience and safety; and opportunities to engage in healthy behaviors.

Output 2. Primary data collection: LifePath survey

From February to April 2022, TCR supported the LifePath aging and dementia friendly community needs assessment survey of residents 50 and older, by:

- Coordinating with LifePath on communication and survey distribution
- Supporting CoA coordination and discussion
- Conducting personal outreach
- Delivering a printed survey to 1 home
- Joining Select Board member Melissa Colbert at the Town Transfer Station where we handed out 20 printed surveys, got verbal commitment from another 5 people to take the survey online, and spoke with several people who already took the survey.

¹³ <https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/search/Leverett,%20Massachusetts,%20United%20States>

There were 277 survey responses from Leverett¹⁴. Based on verbal reports from Town Administrator Margie McGinnis and LifePath, approximately 265 surveys (96%) were completed online. Based on the 2020 ACS estimate of 880 Leverett residents age 50+, this is a 31.4% response rate. **Among towns across Franklin County and the North Quabbin, Leverett had the highest number of responses (14.18% of the total). Due to this success, LifePath now treats Leverett as a model for their regional work.** LifePath and the Leverett COA have a strong relationship that seems to have become stronger during the course of this project. TCR suggests this relationship will be a significant asset to the Leverett elder community.

LifePath completed their own regional and town-specific analysis of the survey data and issued their own survey report in November 2022.¹⁵ LifePath's next step is to convene work groups around four areas:

- Housing and Outdoor Spaces
- Transportation
- Communication/Information/Social and Civic Participation
- Health Services/Community Support

Visit LifePath's Needs Assessment website to express interest in joining a work group.

In August 2022, LifePath shared deidentified raw survey data of Leverett responses with TCR. TCR then did a preliminary analysis and found the following key takeaways. The 277 survey responses from Leverett came from age groups as follows:

- Caregiver under 50 years old (1)
- 50 to 59 years old (41)
- 60 to 69 years old (81)
- 70 to 79 years old (122)
- 80 to 89 years old (32)

The largest proportion of LifePath survey respondents (42%) rated Leverett “Fair” as a place to age. This rating could form the basis of a key performance indicator for the COA and the town to improve upon.

See [Appendix B](#) for charts that summarize responses to the LifePath Age-Friendly Needs Assessment Survey. Response statistics for each survey question are presented in a pair of stacked bar charts:

¹⁴ LifePath recorded 281 responses, however on reviewing the raw and anonymized survey data provided to TCR by LifePath, we found that four response records were empty, perhaps due to survey form errors.

¹⁵ <https://lifepathma.org/resources/age-and-dementia-friendly-program>

1. **Leverett only:** The first chart in each pair shows responses to each question from age 50+ residents of Leverett only, with bars stacked by age to show how residents responded from different age groups (Caregiver under 50; 50-59 years old; 60-69; 70-79; 80-89; and 90+).
2. **Region:** The second chart in each pair shows Leverett total response to each question compared to the total response from other towns included in LifePath's regional survey.

Note that the comparison between Leverett and other towns is presented for reference and to provide information that may support future collaboration with LifePath and neighboring towns. While TCR included LifePath survey responses from Leverett residents to inform the Leverett needs assessment, TCR did not include the regional comparison within the scope of data used to draw conclusions for the Leverett needs assessment.

Output 3. Primary data collection: Key Informant interviews

Between April 26 and June 17, 2022, TCR conducted 24 key informant interviews, in person or by Zoom. This exceeded the proposed goal of 20 interviews. The TCR team prioritized people with a record of civil service, community participation, and people regarded as opinion leaders among the priority population of seniors. The interviews were confidential and protected as confidential research data, per the interview agreement signed by each key informant.

Data collection methodology

- TCR met with COA to develop a list of 76 key informant interview nominees,
- TCR followed up with a confidential poll to help COA members narrow down to a list of 17 nominees.
- TCR reached out to a total of 31 people.
- 24 people accepted the invitation to be interviewed as a key informant.
 - 8 interviewees were from the COA list of 17 nominees.
 - 8 interviewees were selected by TCR because they are currently in town government or other civil service positions.
 - 8 interviewees were recommended by other interviewees.
- Based on self-report or public identification, TCR assigned each respondent one or more of the following roles:
 - Caretaker
 - Community organizer

- Leverett senior
- Member of town government
- Multi-generational family member
- Nonprofit service provider
- Town-funded service provider
- Volunteer
- Key informant interviews were confidential, one-on-one conversations lasting 30 to 60 minutes and following a prepared list of prompts and questions:

In order to provide a deeper understanding of Leverett's senior population, we would like your input on priority needs from your perspective, and the factors that contribute to health and wellness that are most important to address. We would also like to know about your current work or desired work to support seniors in Leverett.

Tell us about how you engage with or support Leverett's senior population.

From your perspective, what are major assets and contributions that senior residents bring to Leverett?

How would you characterize the needs of seniors in Leverett? How are they different from the needs of the younger population in Leverett?

From where you sit and the work you do, what do you feel is the most important need to address? Why?

What do you see as the major resource gaps with respect to health and wellness for Leverett's seniors?

From your knowledge and experience in the community, what are the most effective strategies or programs to reach and support Leverett seniors?

Are there any particular assets or resources to address the needs of this population that can be better leveraged to meet needs?

What are the most important obstacles to reaching and supporting Leverett seniors?

Who else would you recommend we speak to?

Key Informant interview analysis methodology

For strength of study validity and to mitigate bias in analysis, both TCR analysts reviewed interview recordings and notes and coded responses independently, then worked together to integrate de-identified results into a single data set. TCR then reviewed the coded data set, grouping survey responses by AARP's 8 Domains of Livability plus the AARP framework categories Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness when responses fit those categories.

The result of this analysis of 216 interview answers from 24 key informants was 522 response data points organized under 45 distinct themes, plus a small number of responses themed as *Other* and *No response*.

Results are described and visualized in [Appendix C](#).

To organize qualitative analysis for an efficient and unbiased assessment of need, TCR coded each response data point’s “question posture”, or whether the data point concerned a community asset or a community gap, as determined by the interview question that produced the data point. In this study, data points that concern community assets are about:

- Useful qualities that the town or senior community currently has that meet senior needs; or,
- Useful services that are currently provided that meet senior needs; or,
- Useful qualities and services that could be better leveraged to meet senior needs.

Data points that concern community gaps are about:

- Useful qualities that the town or senior community is missing, or that are present but do not meet senior needs; or,
- Useful services that are not currently provided, or that are provided but do not meet senior needs.

We used “Asset” to code responses to the following questions:

- From your perspective, what are major assets and contributions that senior residents bring to Leverett?
- From your knowledge and experience in the community, what are the most effective strategies or programs to reach and support Leverett seniors?
- Are there any particular assets or resources to address the needs of this population that can be better leveraged to meet needs?

When the time comes to plan and implement Age-Friendly programs and policies, an Asset may identify a resource that helps to meet a need.

We used “Gap” to code responses to the following questions:

- How would you characterize the needs of seniors in Leverett? How are they different from the needs of the younger population in Leverett?

- From where you sit and the work you do, what do you feel is the most important need to address? Why?
- What do you see as the major resource gaps with respect to health and wellness for Leverett's seniors?
- What are the most important obstacles to reaching and supporting Leverett seniors?

In other words, **a Gap may indicate a need, or it may indicate a resource that is currently failing to meet a need.**

Using this coding, the following two graphs (*Figure 2* on p. 14 and *Figure 3* on p. 15) show a comparison of Assets and Gaps grouped first by AARP Livability Domain, next by coded theme. Both graphs sort by the highest number of total responses.

Number of Key Informant Interview Asset and Gap Responses

Grouped by AARP Domain, Ordered by Number of Responses

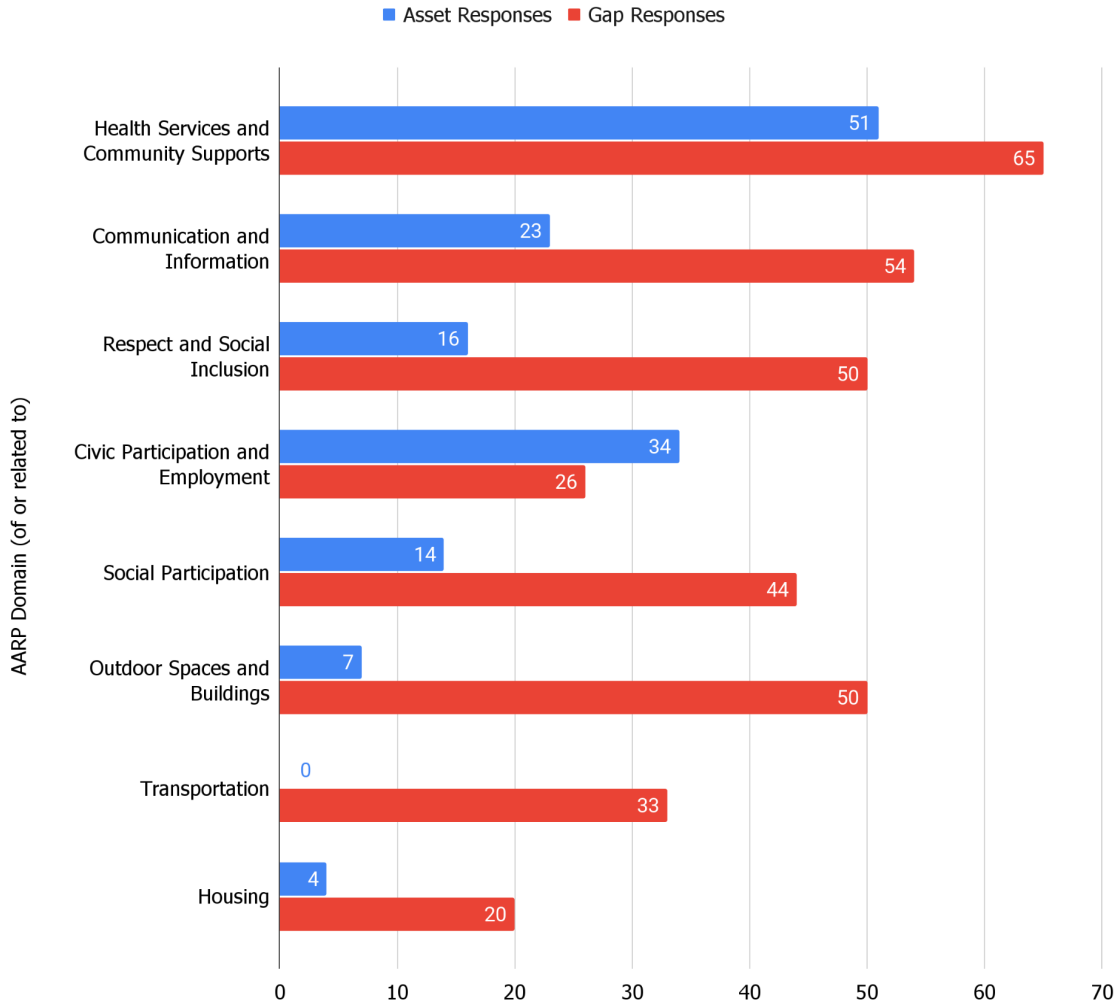


Figure 2: Graph of topics related to AARP domains that showed up most frequently in the 24 key informant interviews.

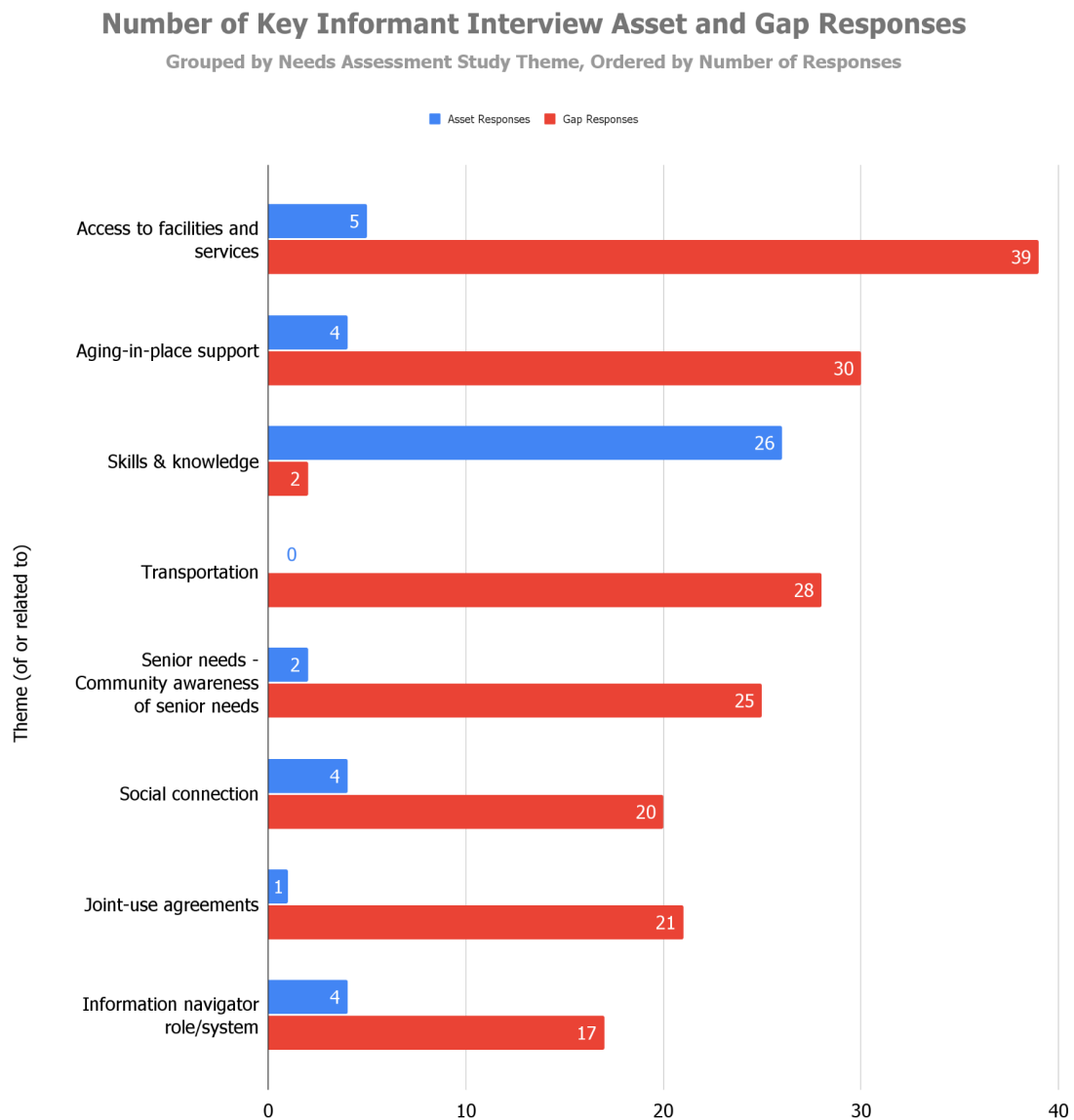


Figure 3: Graph of topics grouped by needs assessment study themes that showed up most frequently in the 24 key informant interviews.

Comparative Analysis

Table 2 below summarizes and compares the two sets of primary data (LifePath survey responses and TCR key informant interviews), organized by the AARP Livability Domain framework. Response and interview summaries are highlighted according to the level of apparent agreement between the 277 survey respondents and the 24 key informants: green means there is alignment and agreement; red means there is disagreement or discrepancy; yellow means there is weak alignment or ambivalence. All elements of *Table 2* are described in greater detail in the following sections and in [Appendix B](#).

Livability Domain	LifePath Survey Responses	TCR Key Informant Interviews
Civic Participation and Employment	Survey responses suggest that Leverett elders have sufficient assets in this domain and the level of need does not merit intervention.	<i>“Elders are the heart of the town.”</i> Key informants see that Leverett elders have a rich sense of local history, and a need for more activities from, and more resources for, COA and town government.
Communication and Information	Leverett elders stay well-informed and use multiple means of communication to engage locally. A significant minority need help learning new technology skills.	Leverett elders are highly skilled in this domain. The community has a significant need for an information navigator. Digital/internet communications are a poor fit for senior needs.
Health Services and Community Supports	Leverett elders have high access to the care they need, and are interested in supporting others in need. Results indicate a need for more Village Neighbors outreach.	Leverett elders have abundant skills & knowledge that aid the community in this domain, and there are significant gaps in access to healthcare facilities and services that need to be addressed.
Housing	Leverett elders are strongly interested in aging-in-place. Respondents present several needs related to this goal, but those who took the survey appear to have the resources to age in place.	Leverett elders need more aging-in-place support. One informant cautioned that some seniors are afraid of losing their homes if they ask for help.
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	Leverett elders have sufficient assets in this domain. A significant minority may need help with access to computers and the internet through public buildings.	Leverett elders enjoy local beauty and natural resources, and some improvements can be made to recreational access. There is a significant need to better utilize existing buildings and to develop joint-use agreements for senior

		events and senior center resources.
Respect and Social Inclusion	Leverett elders who responded to the survey skewed toward white and non-disclosed racial identity when compared to recent demographic data. Female respondents seem to have been more willing to identify their gender. A significant minority may need financial assistance.	Leverett elders are a diverse community that needs to be treated as a diverse community and not as a homogenous community, and that needs access to more intergenerational activities and better community organizing resources.
Social Participation	Leverett elders are mostly secure in terms of income and community connections, but need more relevant and intergenerational events.	Leverett elders need more social events and social connection.
Transportation	Leverett elders are aware of transportation gaps but show evidence of self-sufficiency. A significant number of respondents identify this gap as a factor that would make them consider changing their living situation.	Leverett elders have a significant need for improved transportation resources.

Table 2: Comparison of LifePath Survey Responses and Leverett KILLS, Summarized

Output 4. Primary data collection: Focus groups

The final primary data collection task for this needs assessment was to conduct up to 2 focus groups with Leverett seniors.

In October and November 2022, the TCR team met with the Leverett COA twice to discuss results from the LifePath Survey and the Key Informant Interviews, and determine next steps for the final data collection activity of this Needs Assessment: focus group meetings. Given the survey and interview evidence summarized above, TCR recommended designing groups that focused discussion on the needs that showed up most frequently in the analysis depicted in *Figure 2* (p. 14) and *Figure 3* (p. 15):

- Needs Assessment Themes: Access to Facilities and Services; Aging-in-place Support; Transportation; and Community awareness of senior needs.

- AARP Domains: Health Services and Community Supports; and Communication and Information.

With discussion, feedback, and approval from the COA, TCR planned two focus group events that organized the above needs under two broad topics that would promote discussion of needs that are relevant to the community, urgent, and feasible to address:

1. Better support for aging-in-place
2. A town service and information navigator

Outreach and eligibility

Outreach was conducted by direct mail to all town residents aged 50 and older with valid local mailing addresses, Leverett Connects, and flyers made available at Town Hall, the Leverett Library, the Leverett Coop, and the Leverett Transfer Station. Eligibility criteria were Leverett residents aged 50+ who had not yet participated in TCR's Needs Assessment activities. People who took the LifePath survey were eligible.

24 eligible Leverett residents expressed interest in joining a focus group; 15 RSVP'd for a scheduled meeting; and 13 attended as participants. As part of the outreach process, TCR asked participants for their preferred timing, meeting format (in-person or online), as well as any support (transportation or technology assistance) they would need to participate. TCR then arranged groups, honoring preferences for topic, timing, and meeting format. Each focus group participant completed an informed consent form, and each meeting began with a review of informed consent agreements including: voluntary participation in the project, notification that meetings would be recorded, explanation of how data would be used, protection of personal information, disclosure of participant names in TCR reporting, and assurance that specific opinions and direct quotes would be de-identified.

TCR facilitated both groups with the following agenda:

1. *Informed Consent Reminders*
2. *Introductions*
3. *Discussion Ground Rules*
4. *Background: What is the Leverett Elder Studies Needs Assessment?*
5. *Presentation & Discussion Part 1*
6. *10-15 minute break*
7. *Presentation & Discussion Part 2*

During the *Presentation & Discussion* portion of each focus group, TCR presented slides that visualized and compared LifePath survey responses with Key Informant Interview findings,

and facilitated discussion among and between participants. While the individual focus groups addressed different themes, TCR welcomed fluid discussion in both groups, to ensure that participants were able to discuss what mattered most to them.

Participant visions of healthy aging

"Healthy aging to me is being physically active and socially connected. [...] I'm pretty disappointed that there are no senior centers near enough to Leverett. [...] What's gonna happen when I can't get in the car and go, anymore? It scares me, kinda."

"My parents and several people I know have moved to senior facilities, but they've had to go far away and lose contact with the rest of their neighbors, the people they were in contact with most of their life. [...] I would like to live in a center where I can see other people and have people cook for me, and not have to drive to a senior center. That's where this part of the world does not have it all. I would have to move away if I wanted to do that."

"I'm interested in some kind of help that would help me stay where I am, and stay independent and healthy here. But, sort of under my control. I don't want lots of help, and I don't want help I don't need. And, I don't know what we have for services, actually, within the town. That would be very useful to know"

"Aging while staying in our house as long as we can, in our house, and wouldn't it be ideal to die here instead of in some facility."

"I am physically active. I walk or hike about 4 to 5 miles a day. I've always been a very active person. Over the last year, I have developed some of the afflictions of growing older, and it has made me more cognizant of what my needs may be over the next 10 to 20 years, which is why I'm interested in what you all are doing."

"It's a constant worry. What will I do wrong? Burn down the house, or slip in the bathroom? And who's going to come and take after me? So, my great interest is in having some kind of agency that, some kind of group that can come in an emergency. Other than 9-1-1. I'm not going to call 9-1-1 because I'm going to go shopping."

Visions of healthy aging

To ground the conversation and spark discussion, the first prompt in both focus groups was an invitation to **share your vision of healthy aging**. Participant responses were consistent with themes that arose in the Key Informant Interviews, conveying a desire to balance concerns about the future with a desire for independence, social-connectedness, and self-determination.

Focus group #1 outcomes: Better Support for Aging in Place

Conducted over Zoom, 10 AM to 12 pm on December 5, 2022.

Participants (7): Leslie Fisette, Thomas Matsuda, Kate Moruzzi, Claudia Phillips, Lorna Rivers, Shirley Thomas, Tom Wolff

Focus group insights

"I'm not afraid of being a senior. I'm proud of being a senior! But I also don't like to ask for help, so..."

"Our kids are saying, OK, when are you going to get out of that big house? Our roots are in the ground, in the garden here, so you're going to take us out with the garden. The question is, what do we have to do to be able to stay? Transportation is a huge part of it."

Interest in aging-in-place and concerns related to staying in one's home were a key focus of LifePath's survey and top theme in Key Informant responses. Given many overlapping needs and considerations for aging-in-place, TCR facilitated discussion in focus group #1 to address all four of the top themes that had emerged from the gap/asset analysis of Key Informant responses shown in *Figure 3* (p. 15):

1. Theme #1 Aging-in-Place Support
2. Theme #2 Access to Facilities and Services
3. Theme #3 Transportation
4. Theme #4 Community Awareness of Senior Needs

Participant concerns

Among participants there was strong agreement about the importance of living as independently as possible, for as long as possible, even if that required increased help and support. For some, that sense of independence specifically includes remaining in their homes, which brings unique challenges in a small rural town. Throughout the discussion, participant concerns included:

- The availability and accessibility of information relevant to seniors
- Needing help keeping up with changes in technology
- A lack of finding and accessing regional healthcare specialists, which has gotten worse since the start of the pandemic.
- Transportation obstacles, including lack of public transportation and concerns about future reliance on cars/driving.
- Lack of accessible places to meet and socialize
- Concerns about aging stigma and fear of losing independence if seniors ask for help
- Limitations of a fixed income
- The overwhelm and logistics of moving
- The underrepresentation of people of color at town events, and an imperative to raise awareness about the needs of seniors of color.

Observations and questions about the LifePath and Key Informant Interview data included:

- The difficulty interpreting a lot of “I don’t know” responses in The LifePath survey
- Many LifePath survey respondents seem to have sufficient resources, but for people who don’t have sufficient resources, Leverett is a difficult place to live.
- Interest in reaching more seniors who lack resources, since many of the lifepath survey respondents seem to have the resources to age in place.
- Interest in reaching more seniors in Leverett. The loss of recurring events (senior luncheon, yoga class) due to the pandemic has made this even more difficult.
- Participation in the survey and this focus group process has motivated one participant to think more about what options are available to them.
- Surprise about the high level of Yes / Asset responses to do with public building computer/internet access

- Although 72% drive themselves independently, this means 28% do not. This is a need we must pay attention to.
- Concerns that some LifePath survey respondents who are confident in their transportation independence may be overestimating their ability to drive safely. The group considered the case of an Leverett elder who was convicted in late 2022 of motor vehicle homicide by negligent operation.

Focus group insights

"The pickleball discussion on Leverett Connects is an example of what can happen in this town when someone has an idea."

"I can tell you the spots in town where cell phone service happens. Like, down the hill here on Shutesbury Road, the red barn by the high tensions? We call that the phone booth. Because it's the last place you can get cell service. Everybody parks there."

"I've heard a couple of you mention a senior center. The Town Hall is nice for Friday lunches. [...] A nice little place where we could go and spend the afternoon would be awesome. I doubt that's going to happen anytime soon. [...] I know what it means to find money in this town to erect anything."

Group input on next steps

In addition to voicing concerns and priorities related to aging-in-place, the group was also interested in discussing possible next steps, and considering the feasibility of various solutions. These conversations included:

- **Pessimism about the feasibility of public transportation in Leverett, and interest in alternative solutions.** Based on knowledge of past efforts and the rural nature of our town, the group recognized that it's unlikely that public transportation can serve Leverett any time soon. However, they showed a lot of enthusiasm about finding creative ways to meet the need for transportation services. Some participants were interested in contacting companies like Uber and Lyft to see if an affordable on-demand ride service could be organized to meet this local need. They also discussed the possibility of organizing a cooperative ride sharing system or a senior

van, and leveraging Leverett Connects as a ride-organizing tool.

- **Interest in having a local information navigator.** The suggestion of a dedicated resource/information navigator came up multiple times, as a way to connect seniors to available resources. The group discussed possible responsibilities for this position including organizing ride sharing, and helping address issues accessing healthcare services through navigating options, appointments, and raising awareness of telehealth options.
- **Interest in intergenerational events.** The group discussed a desire for intergenerational activities, including partnerships with Leverett Elementary School, to create opportunities for seniors to share their wealth of skills and knowledge with young people. They also discussed intergenerational workshops to help improve computer literacy and technology skills among seniors by working with young people from local high schools.
- **A desire for continued research and community discussion.** The group was very curious about the “gaps” in responses when comparing LifePath’s survey responses and Key Informant Interview responses, and was concerned about those seniors in town who were not represented in the data. They expressed interest in continuing to investigate these topics.

Focus group #2: A Town Service and Information Navigator

Focus group #2 was held in-person with appropriate COVID-19 precautions, at the Leverett Library from 10:30 AM to 12:30 PM on December 14, 2022.

Participants (6): Gillian Cook, Diane Crowe, Gary Gruber, Alan Guttman, Pat McGiffin, Steve Weiss.

Focus group insights

"The biggest thing to me is there is no easy way to access information about all the services that could be available to older people. And, I think, before anything else, I would like to see a kind of combination of a compendium of all the organizations, agencies, service providers that are in the region that we could access. I'd like that information to be online. I'd also like that information to be in some kind of printed form, because not everybody is so comfortable with online. And, I'd like there to be somewhere that you could call, or email, that if you had an

issue or if you had a question, someone would be able to steer you in the right direction. I think having that would be the simplest and most direct way to take a big step forward."

"To get people to act is huge. Talk is cheap. Oh, it sounds like a great idea -- do you want to follow through with it? No, I'm busy, I've got something else to do. So if you had somebody who is in charge, [...] who has all this information, that would be just fabulous for everybody."

Focus Group #2 explored the idea of a town service and information navigator role. This topic was selected based on LifePath survey responses and TCR's gap/asset analysis of Key Informant responses, which found the greatest areas of need centered around 2 of the AARP domains: Health Services and Community Supports, and Communication and Information, shown in *Figure 2* (p. 14).

Participant concerns

Among focus group participants, there was a high degree of agreement that a town services navigator should be a top priority. Throughout the discussion, participant concerns related to "Health Services and Community Supports" and "Communication & Information" included:

- Issues with impersonal communication and information systems and desire to have a *person* responsible for helping inform town residents about current events and guide them to resources.
- Lack of awareness of existing resources including Village Neighbors and Amherst Survival Center.
- Difficulty keeping up with current events within Leverett government, and a need for more communication and accessibility about town events.
- A lack of awareness of the Leverett Council on Aging and their activities. Participants expressed a desire for the COA to be more proactive about communication and outreach.
- Participants appreciate the option to attend events remotely, but cited Issues with the quality of remote participation.
- Issues with home security and break-ins, and that this issue is not widely known.

- The importance of Social events and social connection, which have become hard to come by in Leverett.
- A desire for computer training that is proactive and available several times a year

Observations and questions about the LifePath and Key Informant Interview data included:

- The ambiguity and lack of specificity in some of LifePath's survey language and interview questions made it hard to plan around.
- Contradictions between LifePath responses and KII responses, and the likelihood that survey respondents and KIs had different things in mind when they responded.
- Agreement with research results that Town Newsletter by mail is preferable to digital delivery.

Additional concerns:

- Interest in a dedicated senior center facility, along with concerns about feasibility in pursuing this as a first step.
- Interest in supporting alternative energies.
- Intergenerational spaces and events, and interest in partnering with the school.
- Interest in a community garden.

Group input on next steps

Focus Group #2 was especially interested in discussing feasibility of ideas, given the strengths and limitations in Leverett. These conversations included:

- **Concerns about funding, feasibility, and trying to make progress on multiple priorities.** Participants pointed out that many of the gaps that arose in the Needs Assessment data and in the focus group discussions would be very hard to address, both in terms of labor and expense. Others warned that attempting to organize and pursue multiple goals could result in wasted efforts. For these reasons, the group viewed a Town Services navigator/role favorably, since it represented a clear, likely feasible objective, which could support additional projects in the future.
- **Interest in leveraging and improving Leverett Connects resources.** Participants pointed out that while the Leverett Connects forum and wiki is a valuable resource for local knowledge sharing that helps with elder needs, there are many people who can't or choose not to use it. They pointed out that Leverett Connects is a great

example of where a dedicated navigator could improve upon existing systems.

- **The value of skills and knowledge among Leverett elders**, which impacts a group's willingness to self-organize to get things done. Participants cited Peter d'Errico's leadership to make the fiber optic broadband network happen as a key example.
- **The difficulty in addressing facilities and services gaps** when we don't have funding or dedicated facilities easily within reach. Participants named the school building as a potential facility that may be available to serve senior needs as well.

Conclusion and next steps

Based on the analysis of themes across LifePath survey data and Key Informant interviews, as well as the content and tone of focus group discussions, the TCR team is confident to present the following conclusions and recommendations.

Elders in Leverett are a diverse population. They bring an invaluable array of community contributions, skills, and knowledge, and have diverse needs and priorities. Common priorities among Leverett elders are:

- Maintaining independence.
- Remaining in their homes if they choose to.
- Social events, connection, and inclusion.
- Greater awareness of, and access to, information and services.
- Computer literacy and assistance with technology.
- Current and future transportation needs.
- A desire to address senior needs thoughtfully, with feasible objectives.
- Concern for others in town, especially underrepresented elders in town. This includes elders who lack mobility or live in harder-to-reach areas of town, those lacking resources, and elders from BIPOC communities.

With the themes discovered by this needs assessment, and honoring the preference for feasible, actionable solutions, **TCR recommends developing capacity for a town Navigator role as the first objective to meeting Leverett elder needs.** A skilled person working in a Navigator role could address and mitigate many concerns discovered by this needs assessment, including (but not limited to) creating and maintaining an organized database of resources; leveraging and learning from existing systems managed by town government, Leverett Connects, and other parties; helping residents find information and resources; coordinating ride-share systems; conducting and managing elder outreach and

communications; coordinating volunteer efforts in town; developing relationships with elders who have specific needs and those who are underrepresented in current data; and ongoing discovery of community needs.

The Navigator role would be a strategic first step in addressing the needs and priorities of Leverett's elder population. A skilled person working in a dedicated Navigator role would develop first-hand knowledge and community relationships that would naturally lead to improved systems, services, funding development, development of partner relationships such as with LifePath, and the design of future senior programs that fit the community. The design of those future senior programs should aim to address the other needs identified by this needs assessment or subsequent research, such as:

1. Start a Leverett Aging-in-Place support program.
2. Join LifePath Age-Friendly work groups¹⁶ to effect regional change.
3. Coordinate more elder-focused and intergenerational social events — Bring back the popular senior luncheon (when safe to do so).
4. Evaluate feasibility of a joint-use agreement with LES as a possible location to site senior center services.

With help from the Town and COA, the Navigator should also monitor and assess key performance indicators to track progress. Indicators could include:

1. Community satisfaction surveys.
2. Metrics tracking senior engagement with program activities and events.
3. Funding development targets.
4. Improved AARP Livability Index scores for Leverett¹⁷.
5. Other metrics designed in collaboration with LifePath.

¹⁶ <https://lifepathma.org/resources/age-and-dementia-friendly-program>

¹⁷ <https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/search/Leverett%20Massachusetts%20United%20States>

About Town Common Research

Town Common Research includes Jya Plavin and Tim Shores, who have been residents of Leverett since 2018 and who have participated with good faith in Leverett politics and community. As researchers, Jya and Tim are committed to living up to values of inclusivity and belonging, and welcome engagement with clientele, implementation partners, and subjects of research from any race, color, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, political affiliation, ideology, religion, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, national origin, genetics, disability, age, veteran status, and criminal history.

As Leverett homeowners with a child at LES and friends in the community, Jya and Tim are motivated by the opportunity to contribute a thorough, attentive needs assessment that will result in more inclusive, accessible, and age-friendly services that will strengthen the Leverett community for many years to come.

Jya Plavin is Director of Impact & Community at [MommaStrong](#), a lecturer in community health education, health equity, and a project-based curriculum on conducting a community health needs assessment at the UMass School of Public Health & Health Sciences. She has a Masters of Public Health from the UC Berkeley School of Public Health where she worked closely with Meredith Minkler, DrPH, a founding director of UC Berkeley's Center on Aging and a pioneer of community-based participatory research to address social justice and public policy. Jya grew up in Amherst and Shutesbury. She has supported LES PTO activities, participated in the LES Racial Equity Commitment Working Group, and is an elected member of the Leverett School Committee. Learn more about Jya at LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jyaplavin/>

Tim Shores is a cybersecurity communications specialist for Cisco Secure and a master's student at the University of Massachusetts Amherst College of Social & Behavioral Sciences. He specializes in data engineering, social science research, program design and impact reporting, community organizing, and group dialogue facilitation. He has served as a Leverett Education Foundation board member and town Revenue Committee member, where he researched and co-wrote a report on tax rate growth, livability, affordability, and strategies for economic development. He currently serves as an elected member of the Leverett Planning Board where he is co-organizing the two-year project to complete a town Comprehensive Plan. Learn more about Tim at LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/timshores/>

Appendix A: Demographics

The [U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates](https://censusreporter.org/profiles/06000US2501135180-leverett-town-franklin-county-ma/)¹⁸ reports the following demographic details for Leverett. Since the COVID-19 pandemic has delayed the 2020 Federal census results, the ACS survey data is the most recent data available. According to Leverett Town Clerk Lisa Stratford, the town census had a total of 1,837 as of February 2022. Note that this figure depends on self-reporting since residents must fill out and return census forms included with annual town tax mailings.

Nearly half of Leverett residents are 50 or older, a fact that on its own makes a strong case for prioritizing age-friendly policies and planning.

Category	Leverett	Franklin County
Total Population	1,875	70,529
Households	727	30,790
Persons per household	2.6	2.2
Housing units	790	34,164
Vacant units	8%	10%
Renter occupied units	12%	31%
Median household income	\$93,942	\$61,198
Poverty rate for seniors (65 and over)	5%	7%
Median age	47.4	47
Age 50-59	10% ~190 people	15%
Age 60-69	17% ~320 people	17%
Age 70-79	15% ~280 people	9%
Age 80+	5%	5%

¹⁸ <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/06000US2501135180-leverett-town-franklin-county-ma/>

	~95 people	
Total 50+	47% ~880 people	46%
Total 65+	28% ~525 people	22%
Asian	5% ~95 people	1%
Black	1% ~20 people	<1%
Hispanic	1% ~20 people	4%
Two or more races	1% ~20 people	3%
White	91% ~1,710 people	90%

Appendix B: LifePath regional survey results for Leverett & other towns

The following 53 pairs of charts summarize responses to the LifePath Age-Friendly Needs Assessment Survey and, where appropriate, organize them by AARP Livability Domain. Response statistics for each survey question are presented in a pair of stacked bar charts:

1. **Leverett only:** The first chart in each pair shows responses to each question from age 50+ residents of Leverett only, with bars stacked by age group.
2. **Region:** The second chart in each pair shows the total response from all towns included in LifePath's regional survey, with the Leverett portion highlighted.

Note that the charts organized by AARP Livability Domain was a good faith effort by TCR to analyze survey responses with meaningful reference to the AARP Livability Index program, and may not match how LifePath organized their survey results.

Note that the comparison between Leverett and other towns is presented for reference and to provide information that may support future collaboration with LifePath and neighboring towns. While TCR included LifePath survey responses from Leverett residents to inform the Leverett needs assessment, TCR did not include the regional comparison within the scope of data used to draw conclusions for the Leverett needs assessment.

See also LifePath's web page for a description of the project:

<https://lifepathma.org/resources/age-and-dementia-friendly-program>

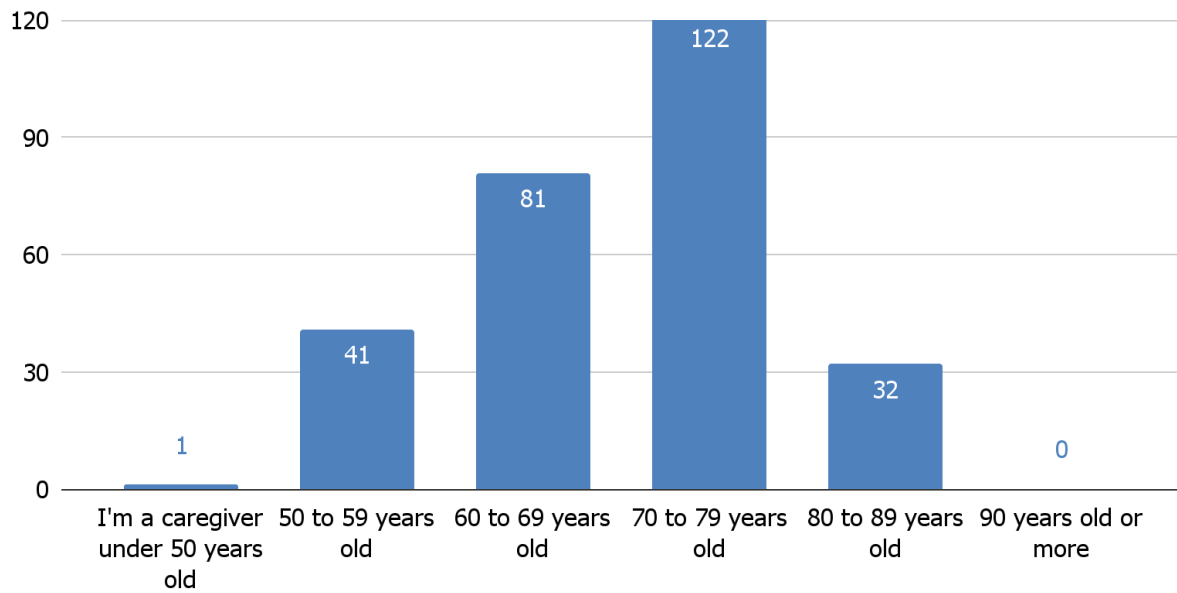
See also LifePath's graphs summarizing responses for the entire region:

https://lifepathma.org/images/Resources/Age-Friendly-Survey-Data_All_220909.pdf

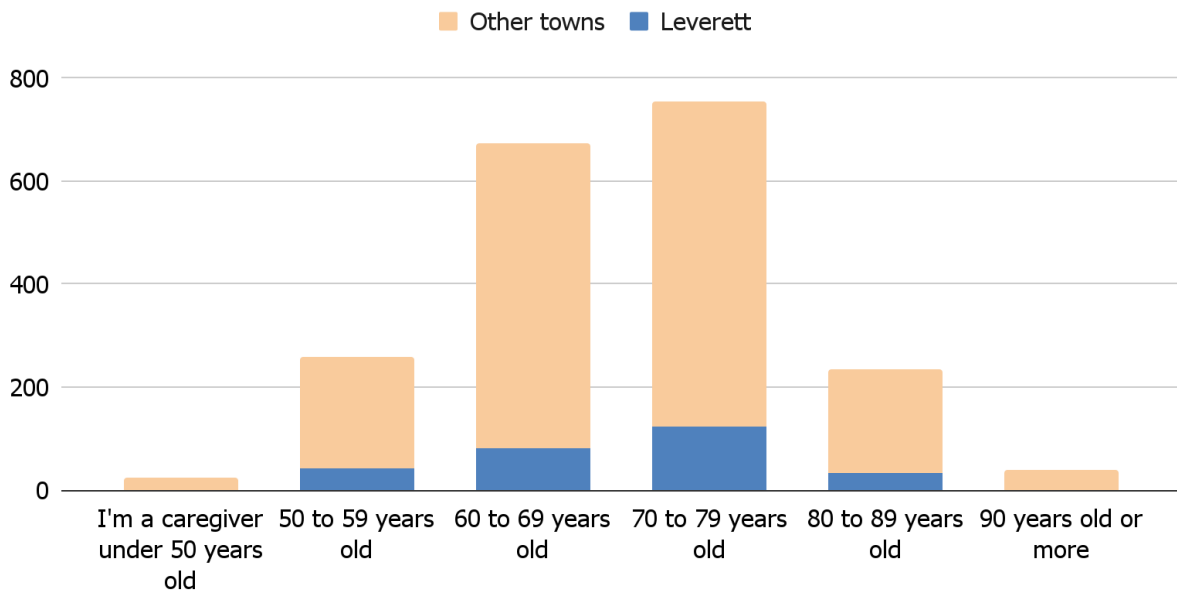
Each domain section offers **Observations when comparing the region in proportion to Leverett** that highlight general differences in patterns seen in the two bar charts. These observations are not the result of numerical analysis. For example, in the first set of charts:

1. There is a somewhat greater proportion of regional respondents in the 60-69 age group.
2. There were some respondents from other towns in the 90+ age group, but none from Leverett.
3. Significantly fewer regional respondents rated their town as a 'Fair' place for people to live as they age.

How old are you? (Leverett Only)

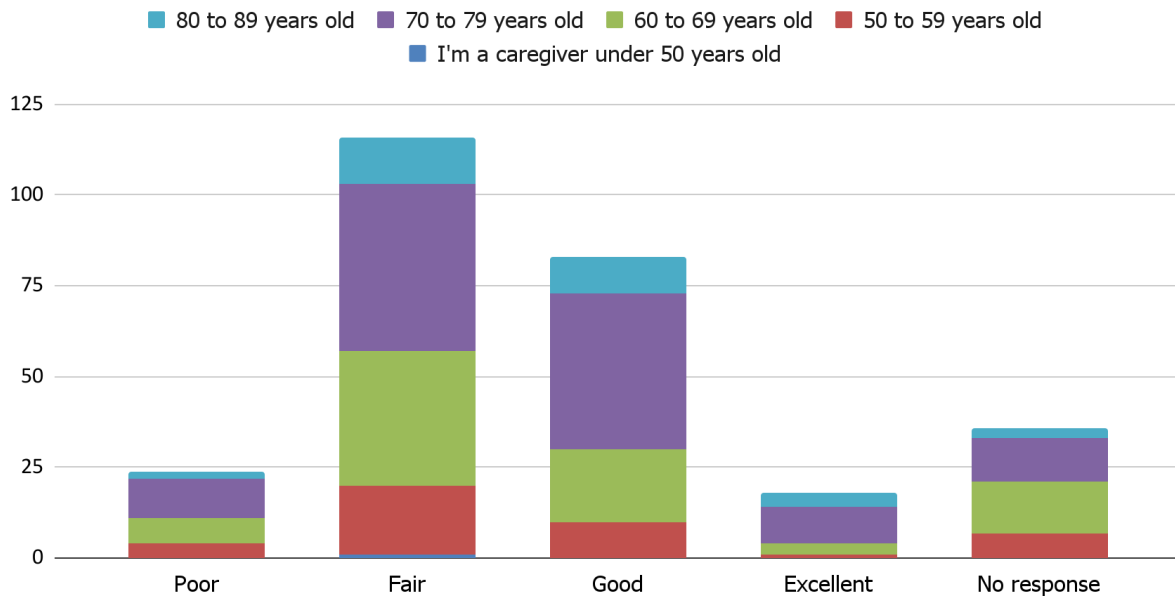


How old are you? (Region)



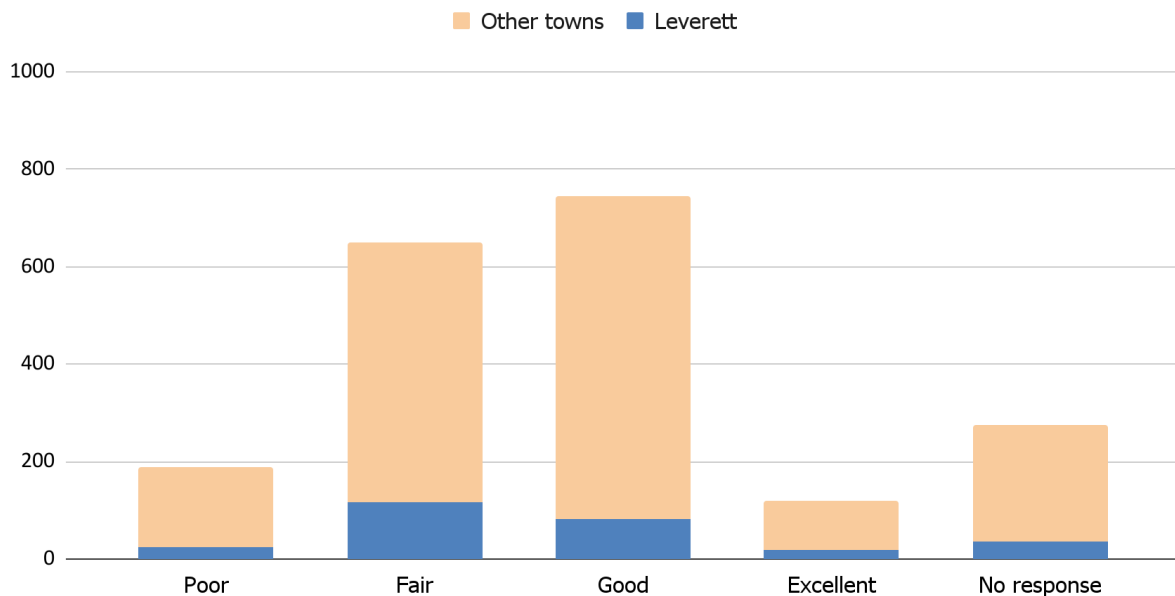
Overall, how would you rate your town as a place for people to live as they age?

(Leverett only)



Overall, how would you rate your town as a place for people to live as they age?

(Region)



Livability Domain: Civic Participation and Employment

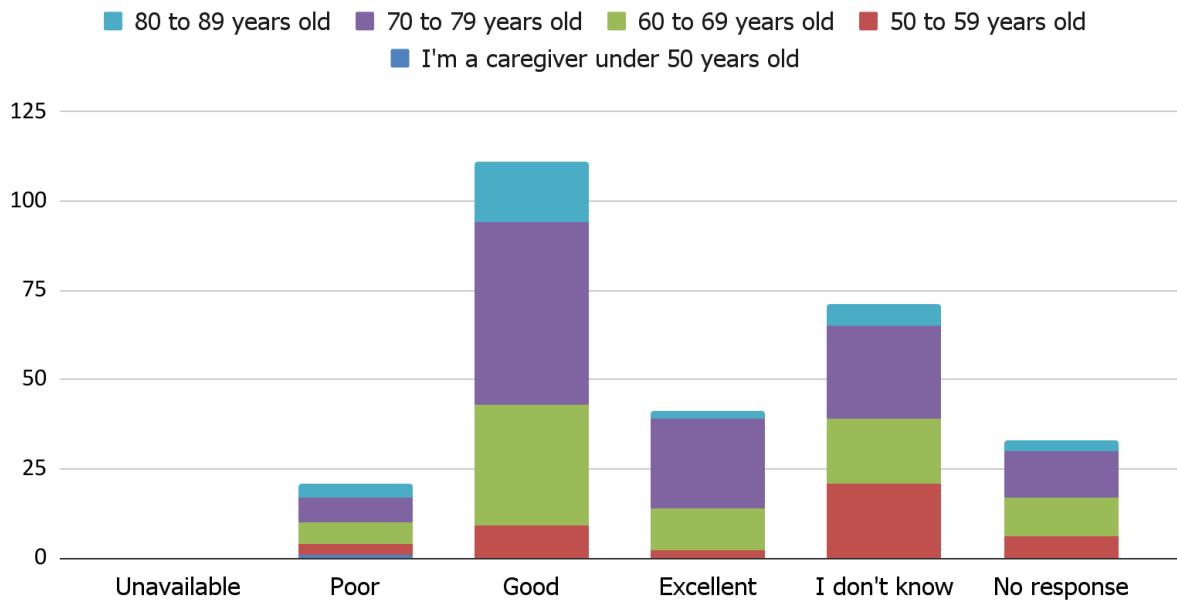
Leverett respondents reported knowing of accessible opportunities for volunteering and civic engagement, but demonstrated high unawareness of remote engagement opportunities for home-bound elders and employment opportunities for older people. Results in this domain area indicate that Leverett elders enjoy greater mobility to engage in activities outside the home, and that respondents are not in need of employment or local online engagement opportunities.

Observations when comparing the region in proportion to Leverett:

1. Significantly more regional respondents indicated 'I don't know' when rating access to civic engagement opportunities for older people.

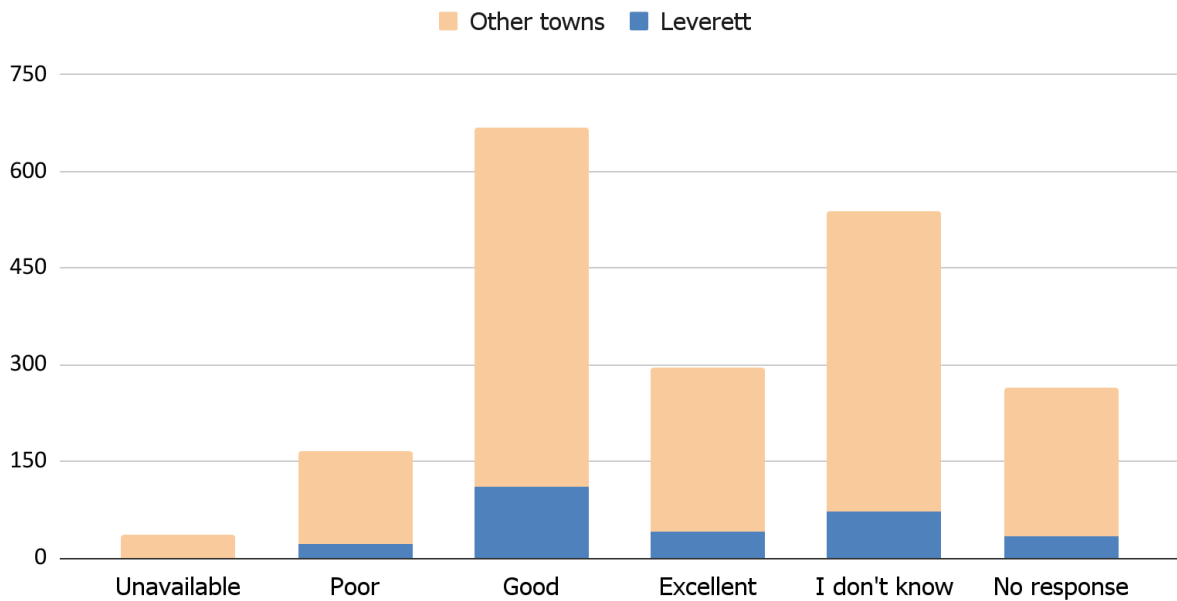
Rate access to volunteering opportunities for older people

(Leverett only)



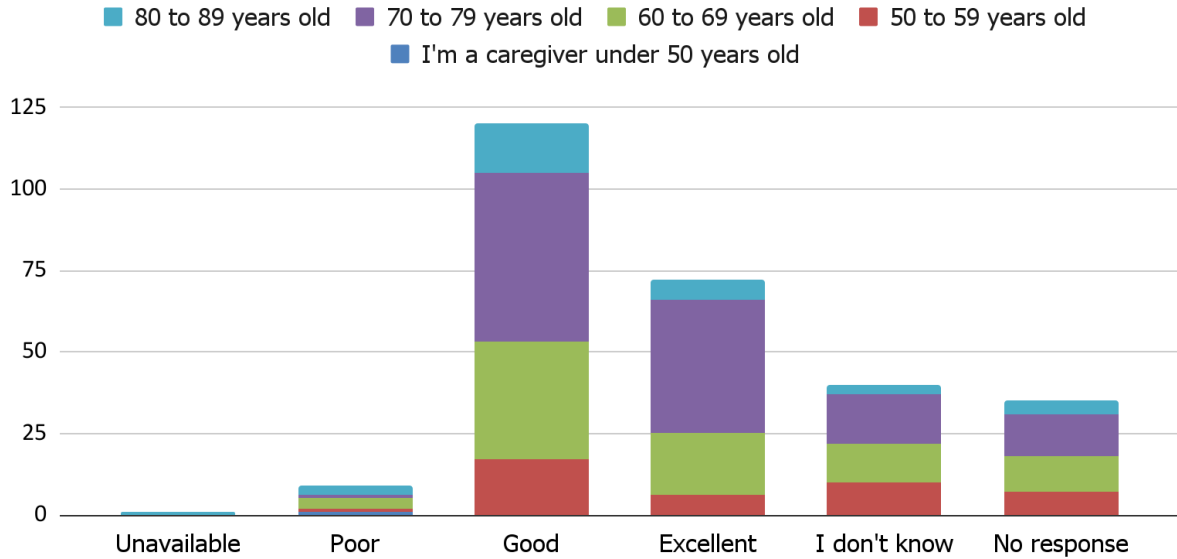
Rate access to volunteering opportunities for older people

(Region)



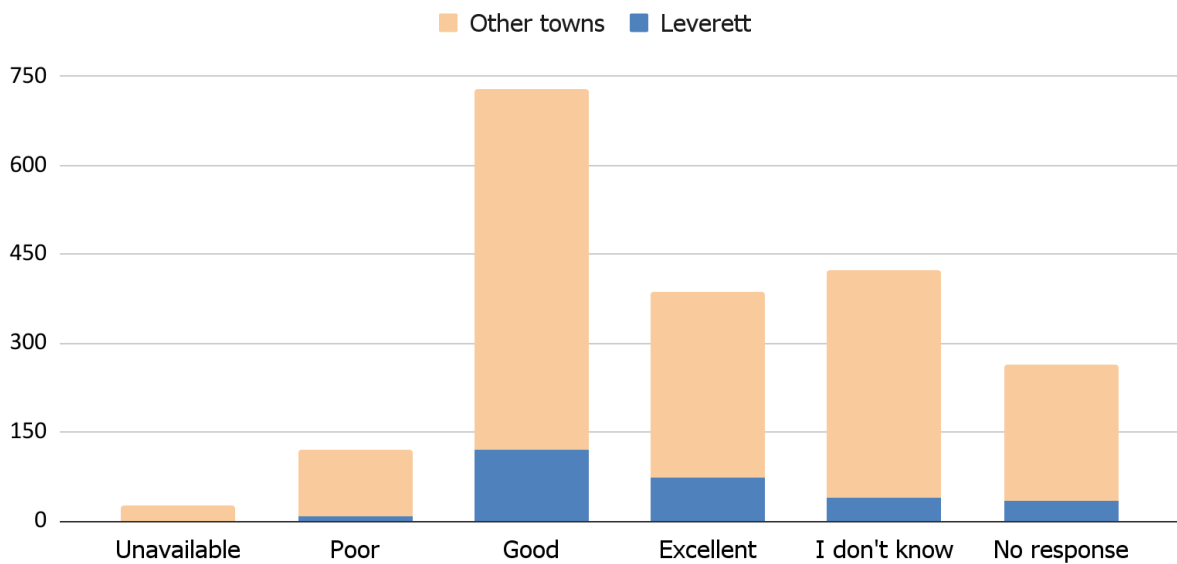
Rate access to civic engagement opportunities for older people, such as participating in a town committee or council

(Leverett only)



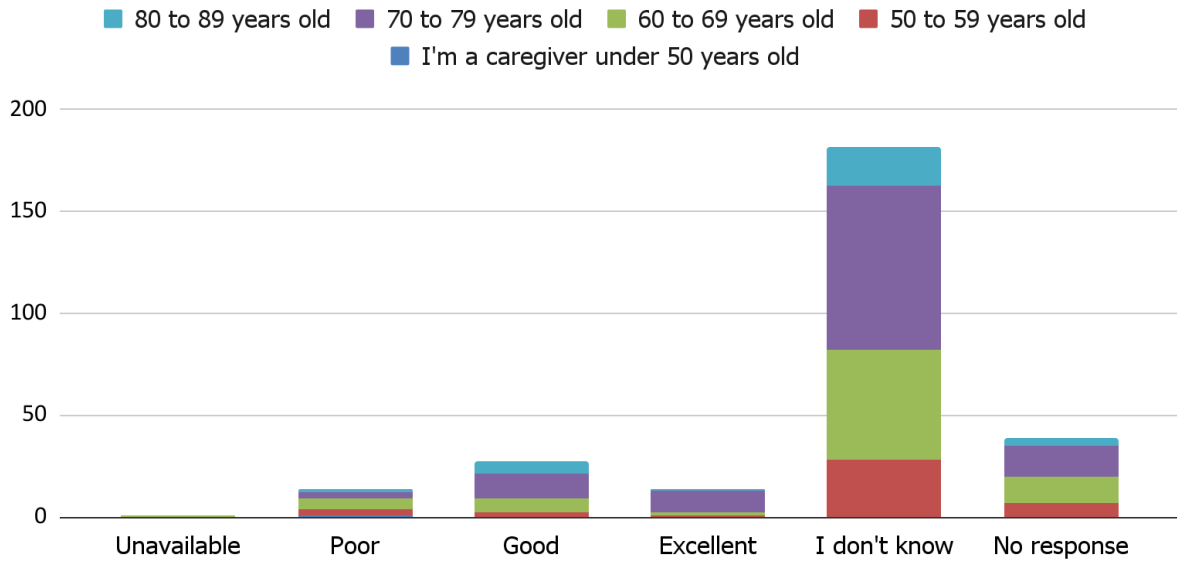
Rate access to civic engagement opportunities for older people, such as participating in a town committee or council

(Region)



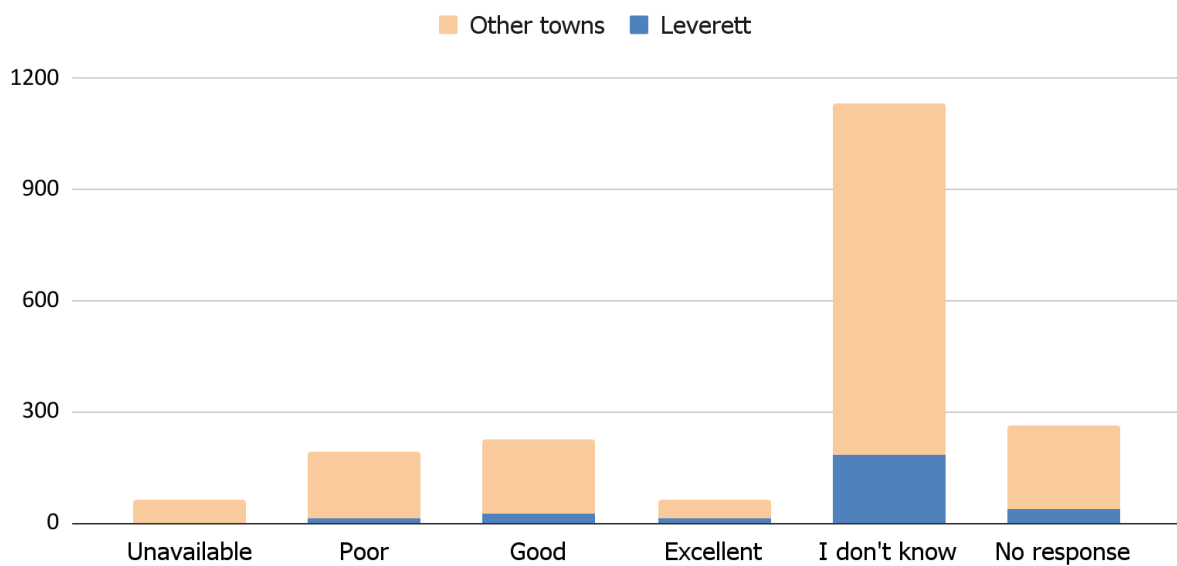
Rate access to remote engagement options for elders who are home-bound

(Leverett only)



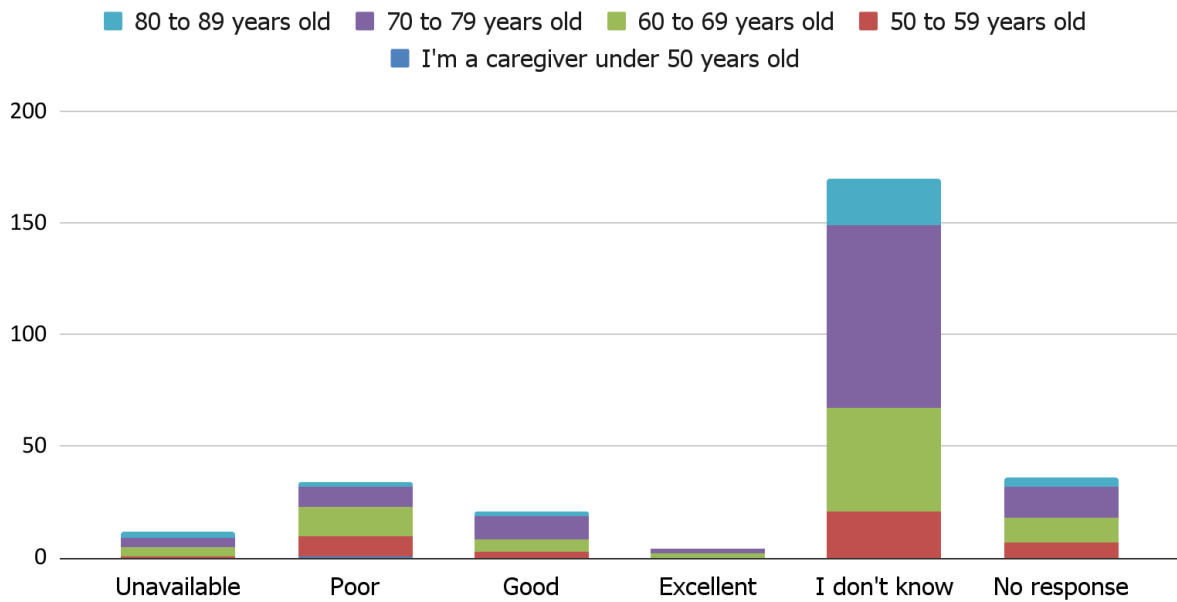
Rate access to remote engagement options for elders who are home-bound

(Region)



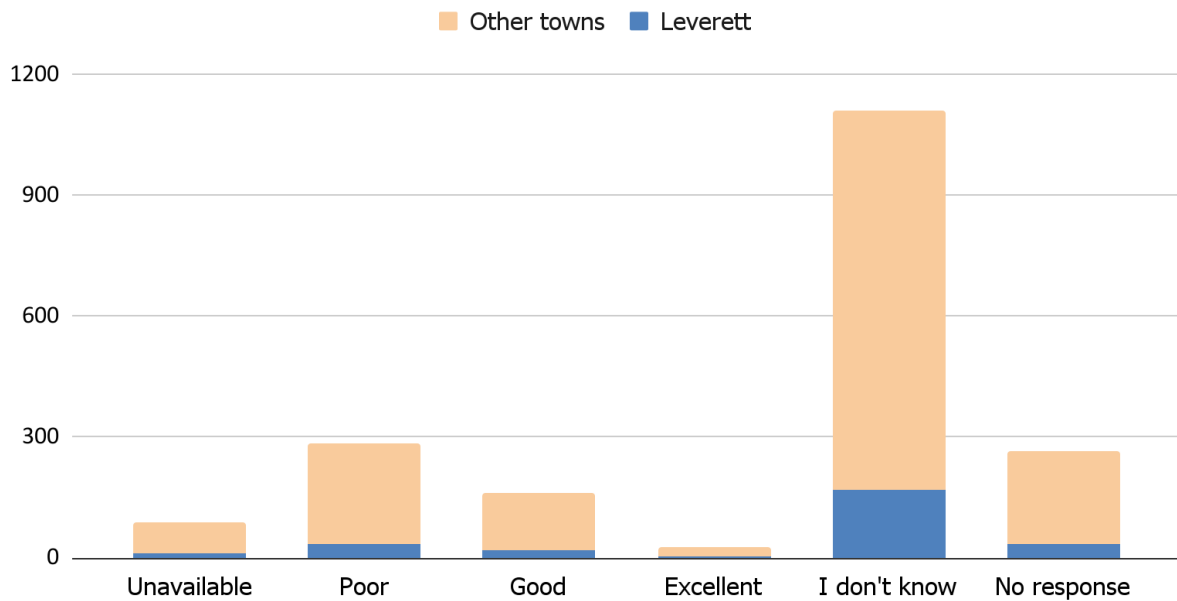
Rate access to flexible employment options for older people

(Leverett only)



Rate access to flexible employment options for older people

(Region)



Livability Domain: Communication and Information

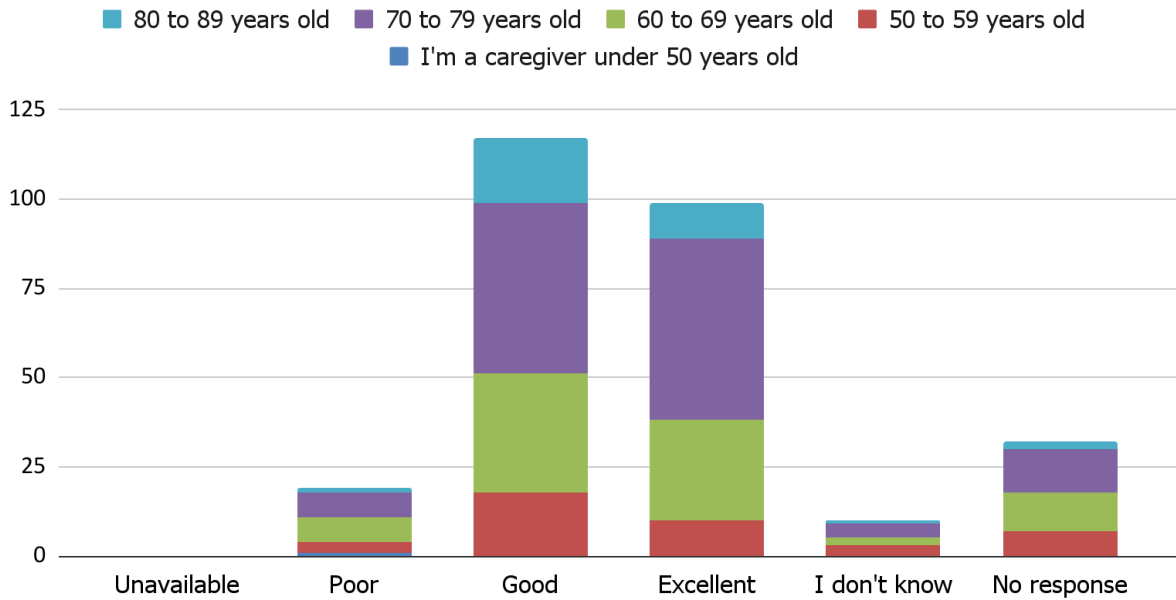
The majority of Leverett respondents (78%) rated “good” or “excellent” access to information about town updates. **When asked about information sources for elder adult services and programs, the highest proportion of respondents selected “Town Newsletter” (66%),** with the next highest proportions choosing “Friends and family”, “Internet and Social Media” and “Newspaper”. This elder population is technically adept: A great majority of respondents reported high degree of access to both internet and technology devices and proficiency with electronic communication. **Note that 24% reported wanting to learn to use new technology, which may represent a minority proportion in need.** Results in this domain area indicate that Leverett elders keep themselves and each other well-informed and are able and willing to use multiple means of communication to engage with town and community. **Note that with approximately 96% survey responses submitted online, results may be skewed toward community members with technology literacy and access that is higher than the true community average. This is a potential gap worth exploring further.**

Observations when comparing the region in proportion to Leverett:

1. Significantly fewer regional respondents rated ‘Excellent’ access to information about town updates.
2. Significantly more regional respondents indicated they use ‘Council on Aging / Senior Center’, ‘Newspaper’, and ‘Television’ as sources of information to learn about services and programs for older adults in their community.

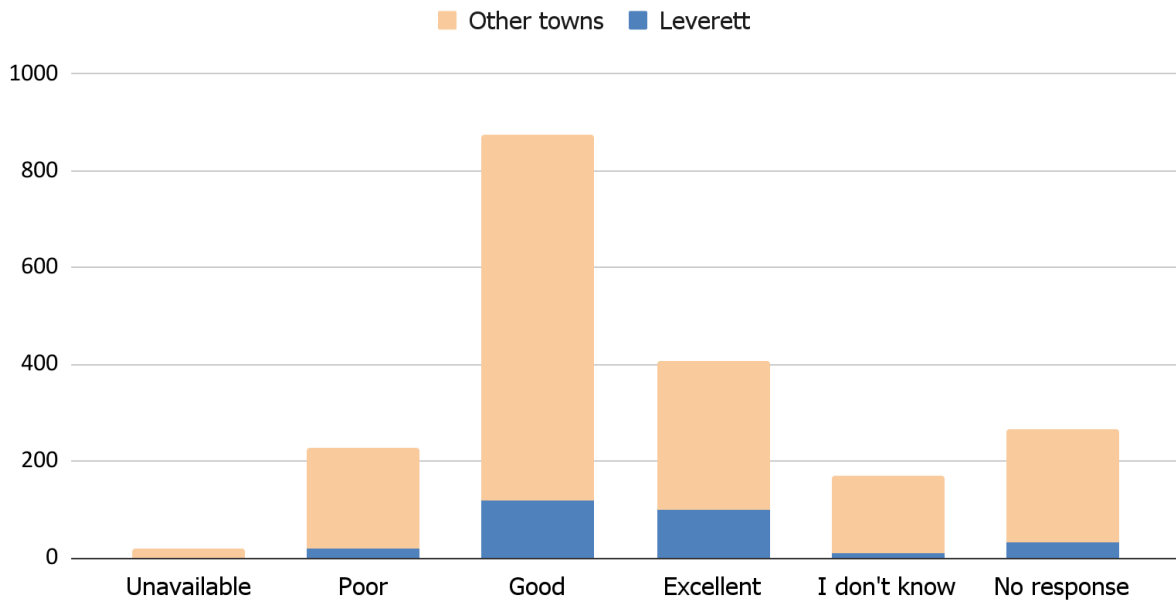
Rate access to information about town updates

(Leverett only)



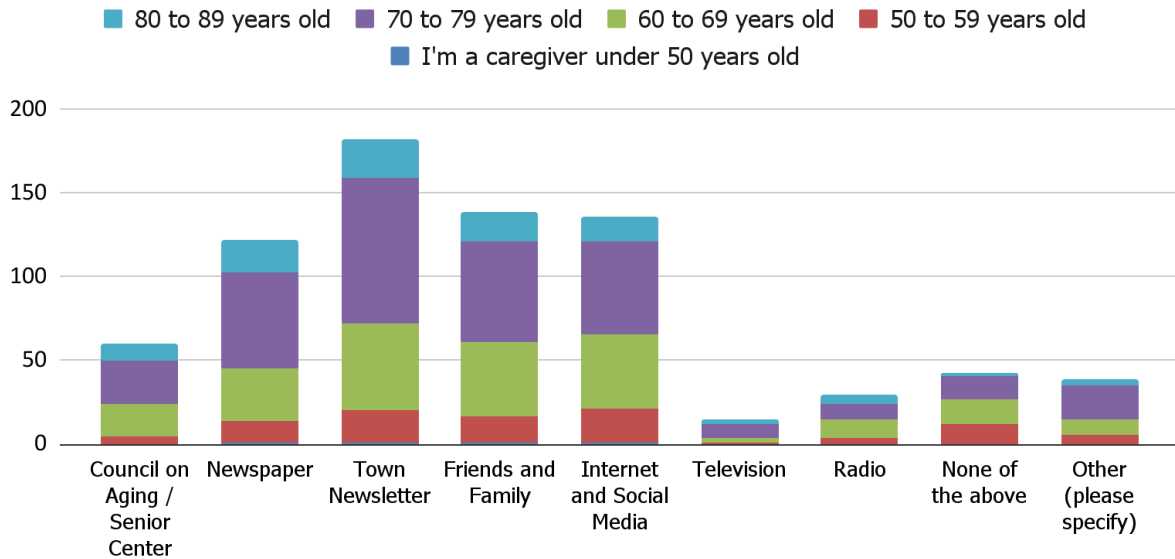
Rate access to information about town updates

(Region)



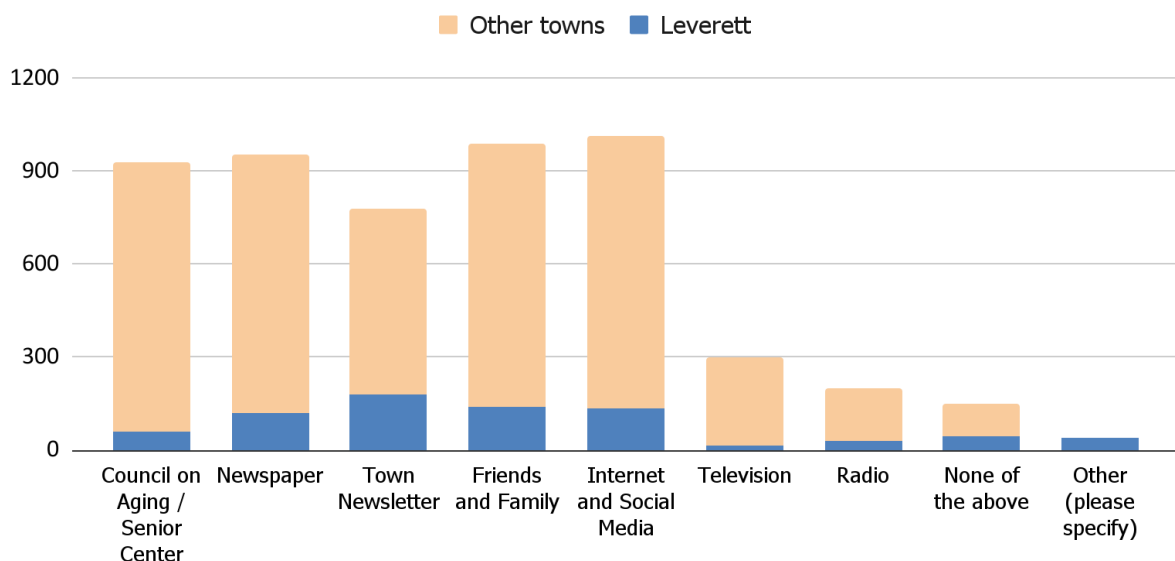
What sources information do you use to learn about services and programs for older adults in your community? Check all that apply.

(Leverett only)



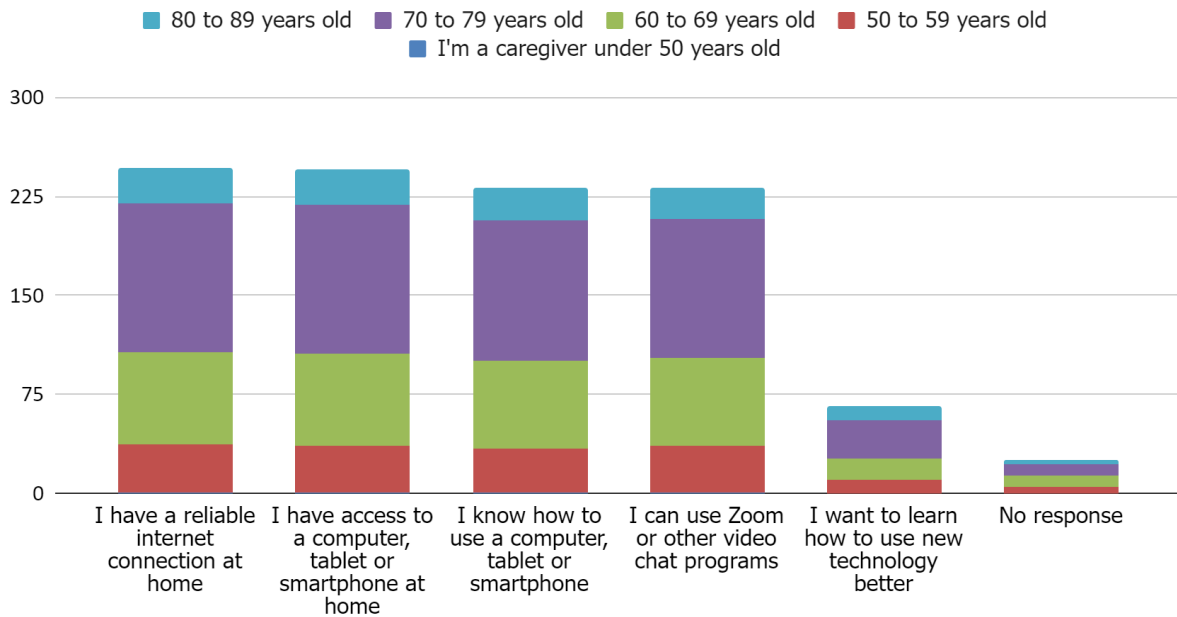
What sources information do you use to learn about services and programs for older adults in your community? Check all that apply.

(Region)



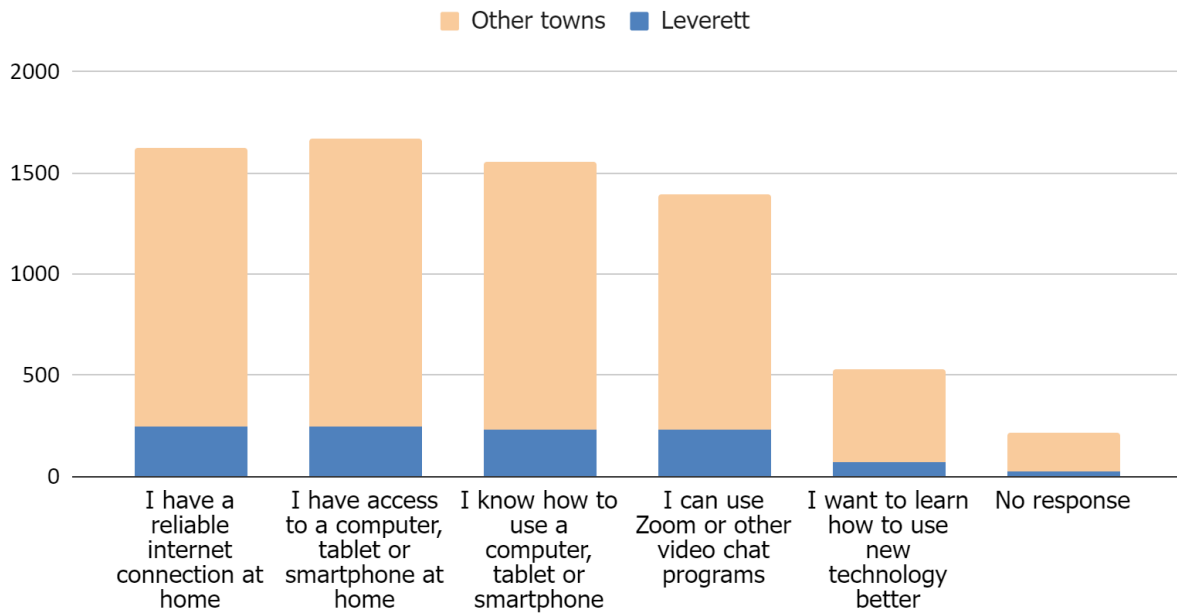
Technology access: Check all that apply

(Leverett only)



Technology access: Check all that apply

(Region)



Livability Domain: Health Services and Community Supports

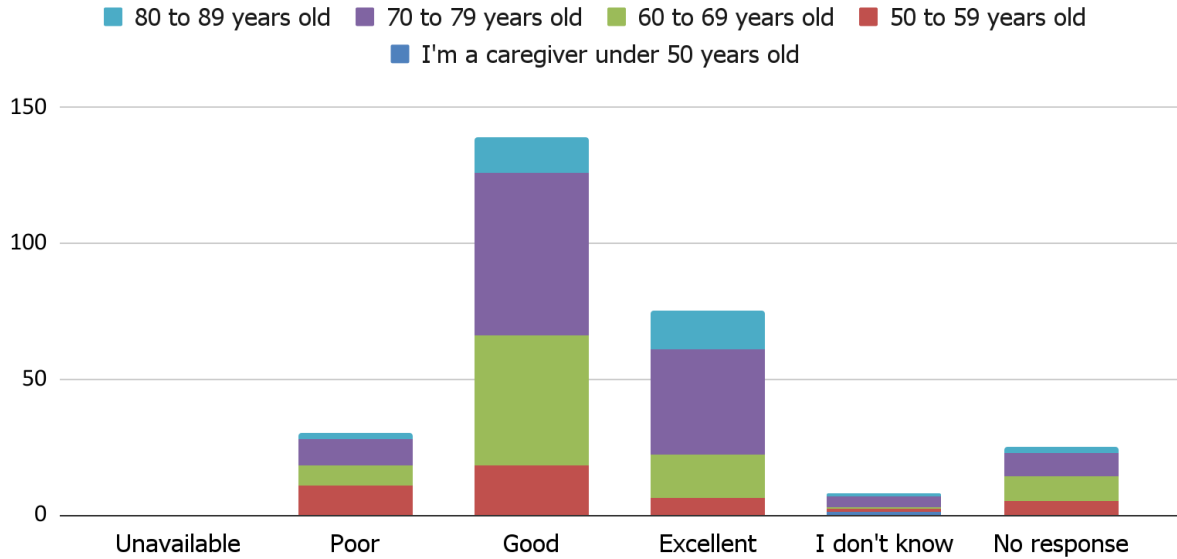
The majority of Leverett respondents (77%) rated “good” or “excellent” the regional availability of healthcare professionals and specialists. While the largest proportions of respondents reported having had good experiences with telehealth that were not confusing and that they would use again, only 11% said they would have not preferred to see their provider in person. Most respondents knew of a village or neighbor-to-neighbor support program in town, but a quarter of respondents didn’t know if Leverett had such a program, indicating an outreach need. 53 respondents (19%) are interested in receiving neighborly support, and 84 (30%) would be interested in volunteering. **These results indicate a need for more outreach from Village Neighbors.** Notably, a great majority of respondents (78%) reported being “fully independent” and not receiving caregiving support. Results in this domain area indicate that Leverett elders have high access to the care they need, and are interested in supporting others in need. However, these results may contain respondent bias as those with higher access and comfort with technology and those with greater overall mobility may be more likely to participate in the survey, and are likely to have an easier time navigating resources and services.

Observations when comparing the region in proportion to Leverett:

1. Significantly more regional respondents rated the region ‘Poor’, and significantly fewer rated the region ‘Excellent’, on having a variety of healthcare professions, including specialists.
2. Significantly more regional respondents indicated that they have never used telehealth services.
3. Significantly more regional respondents responded ‘No’ or ‘I don’t know’ about whether they have a Village or Neighbor-to-Neighbor support program in their town, and fewer responded they are already a member of such a local program.

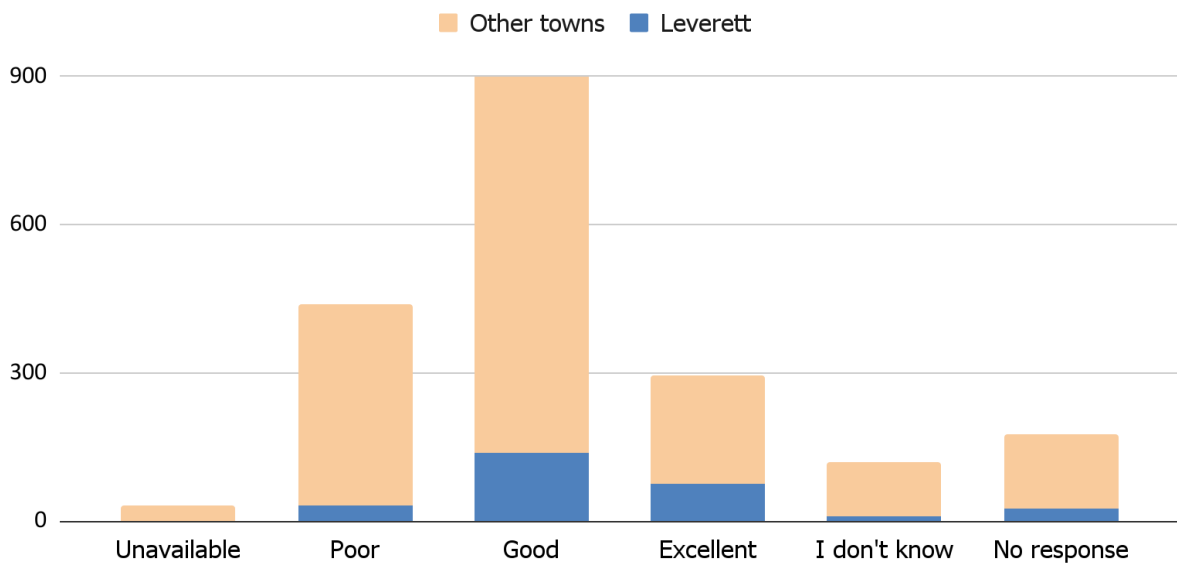
Rate your region on having a variety of healthcare professions, including specialists

(Leverett only)



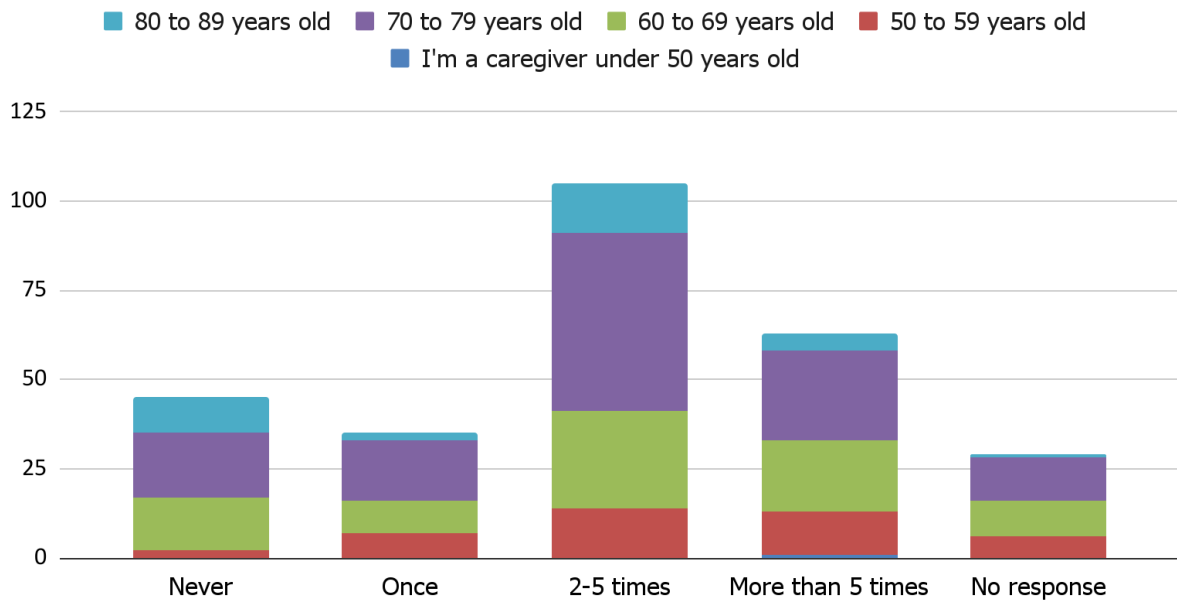
Rate your region on having a variety of healthcare professions, including specialists

(Region)



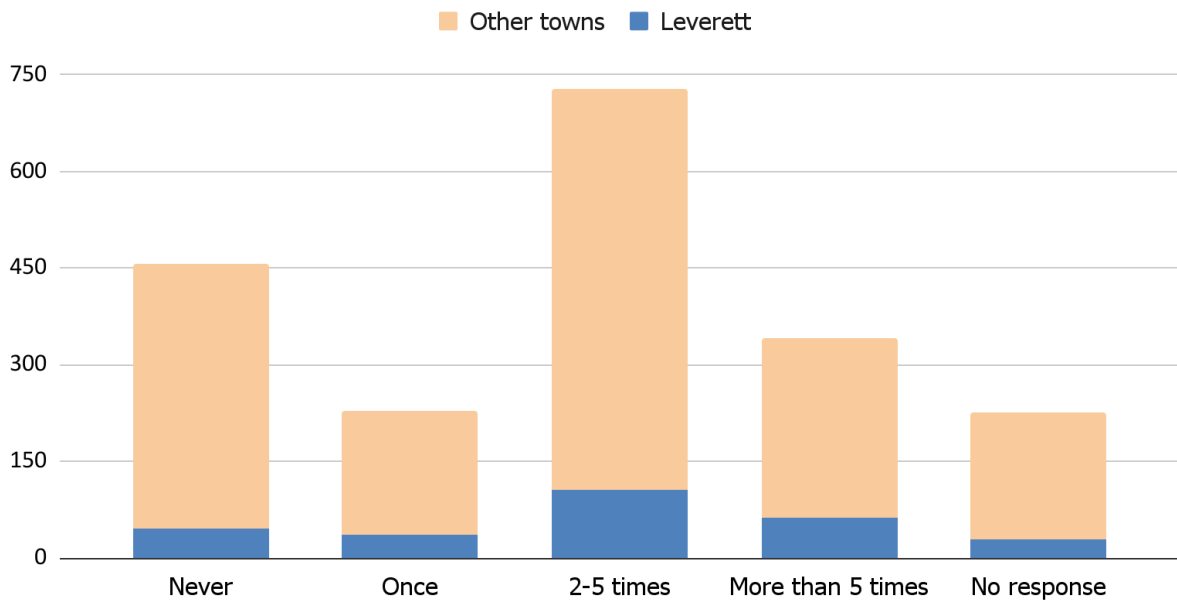
How many times have you used telehealth?

(Leverett only)



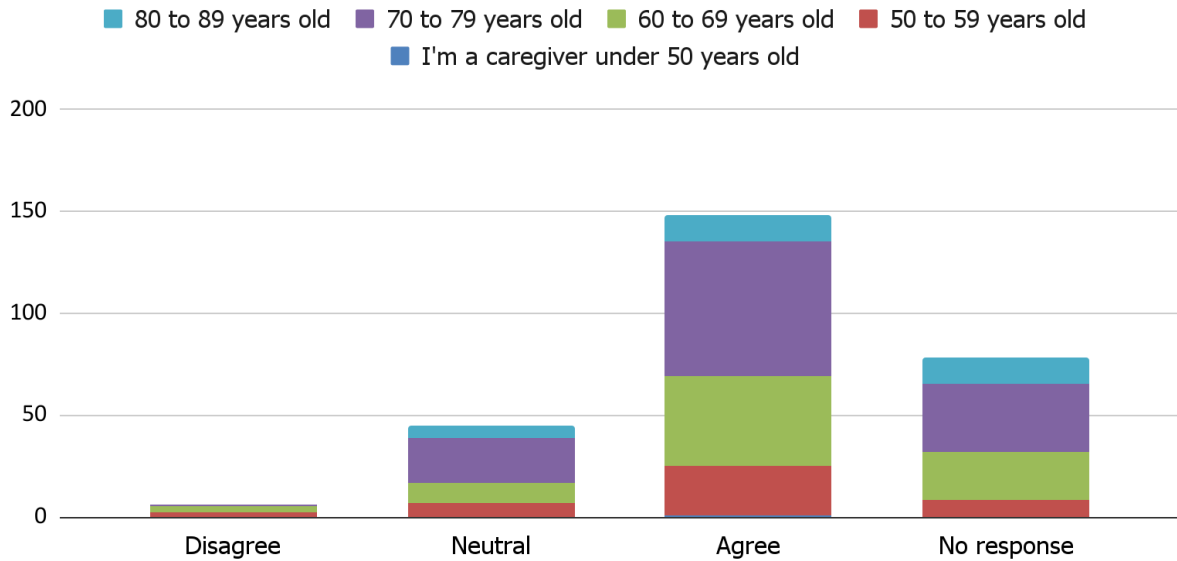
How many times have you used telehealth?

(Region)



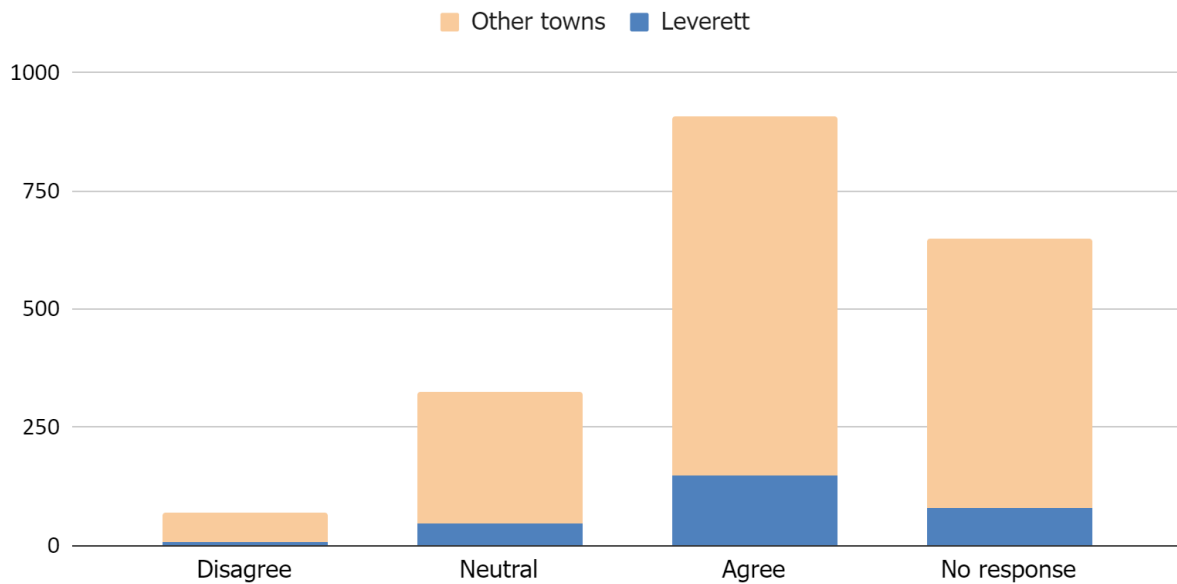
Overall, did you have a good experience talking to your healthcare provider via phone/video?

(Leverett only)



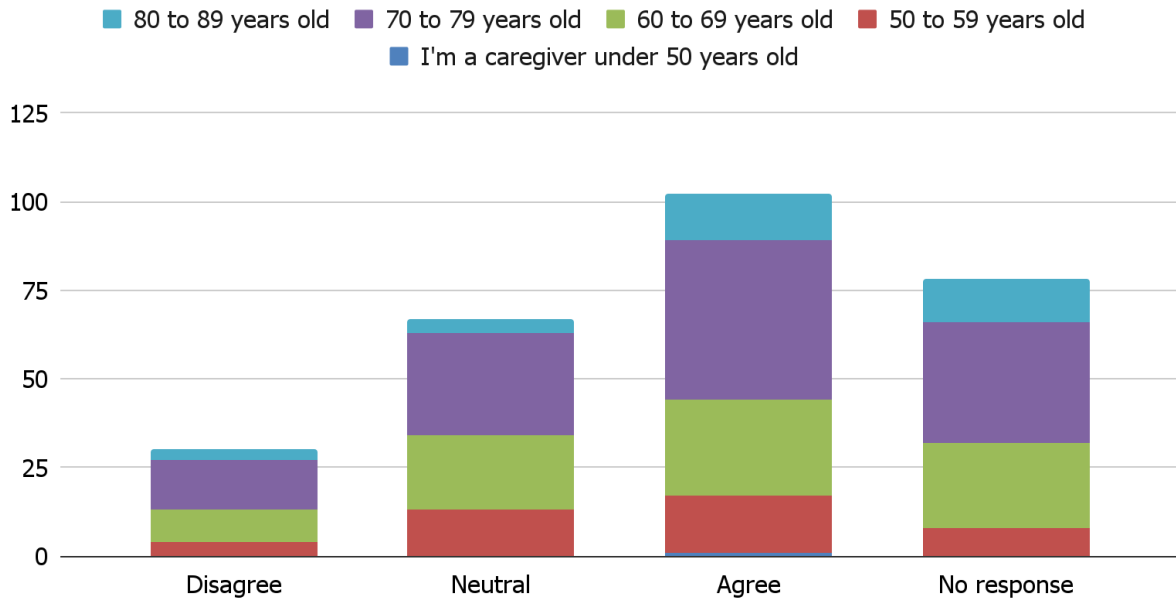
Overall, did you have a good experience talking to your healthcare provider via phone/video?

(Region)



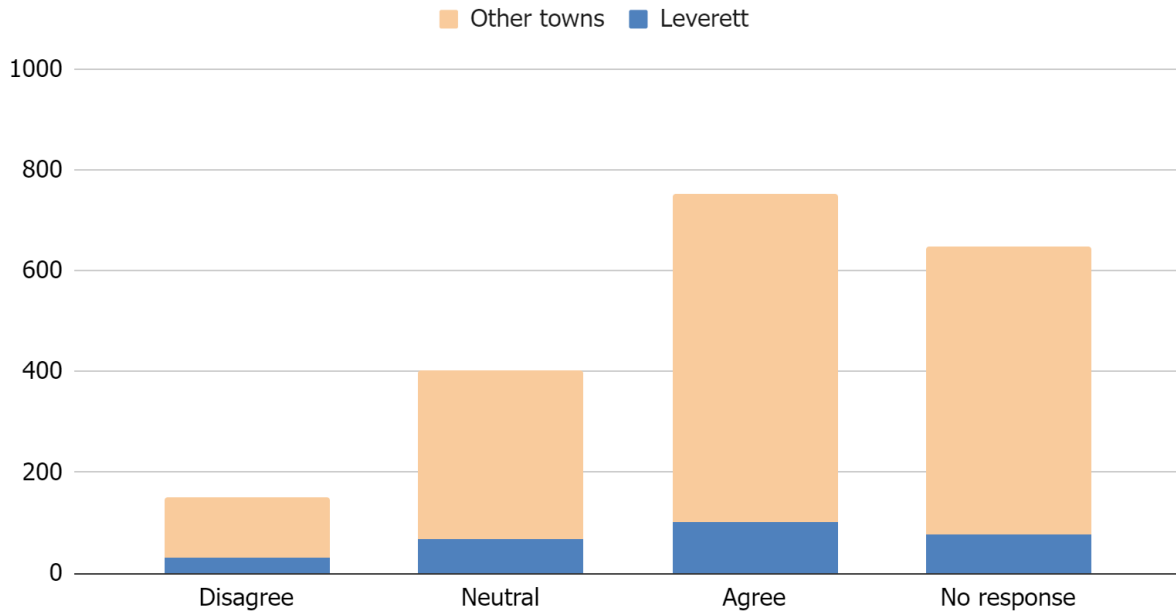
Would you have preferred to see your provider in person?

(Leverett only)



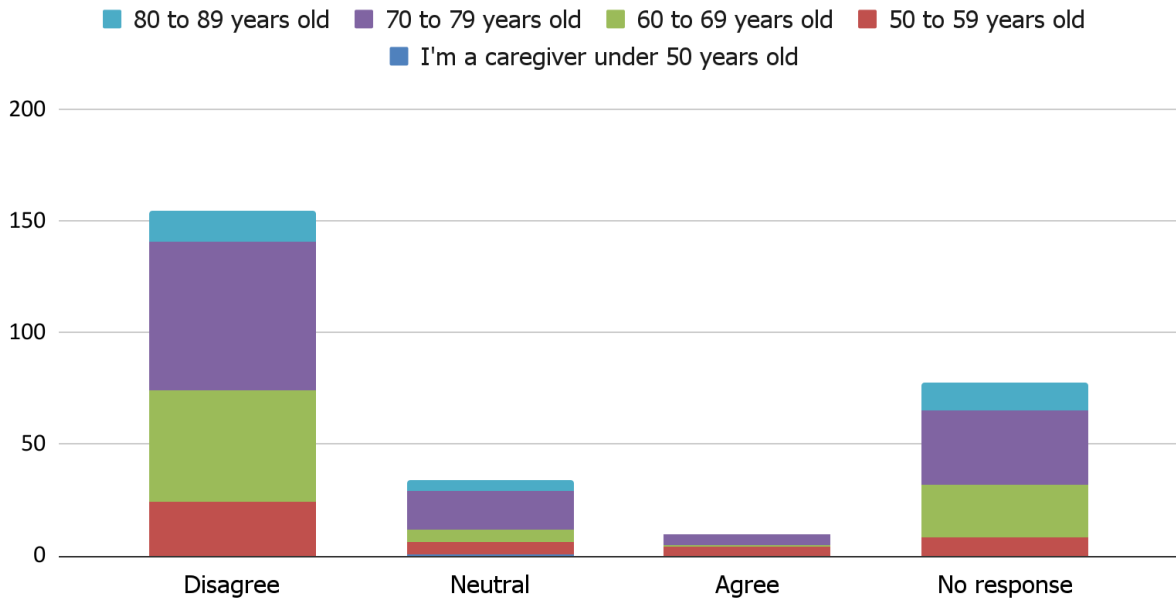
Would you have preferred to see your provider in person?

(Region)



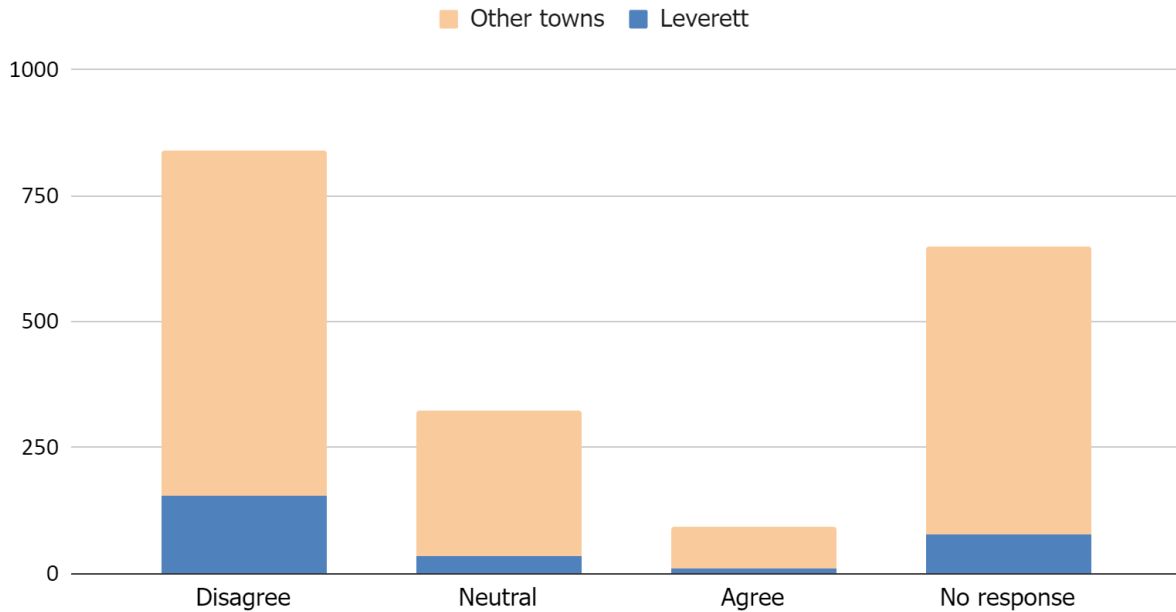
Was the telehealth technology confusing for you to use?

(Leverett only)



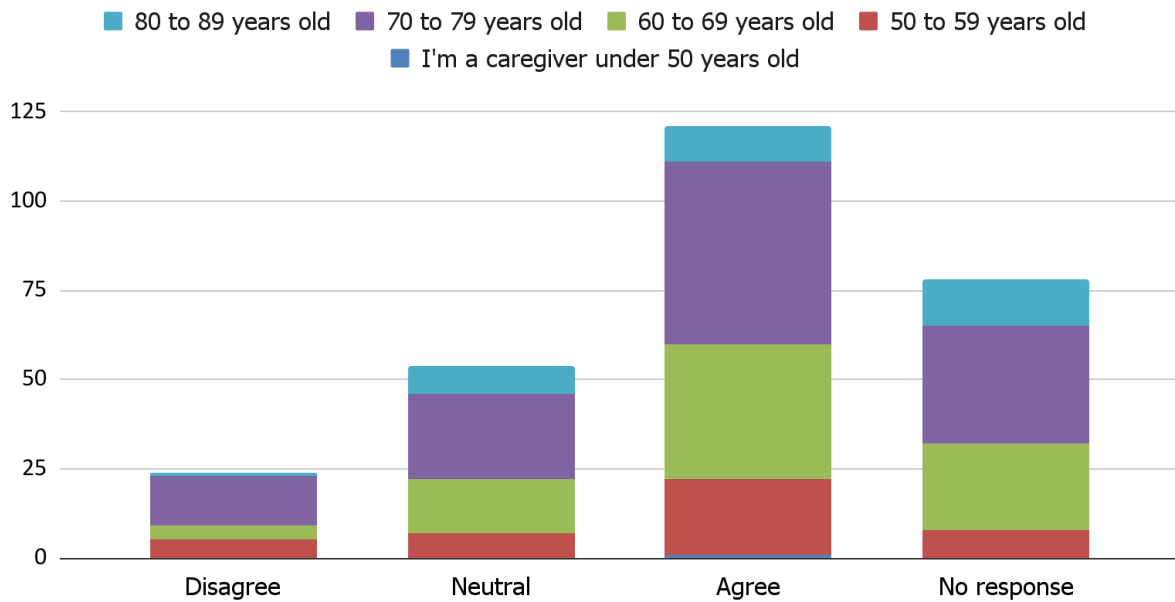
Was the telehealth technology confusing for you to use?

(Region)



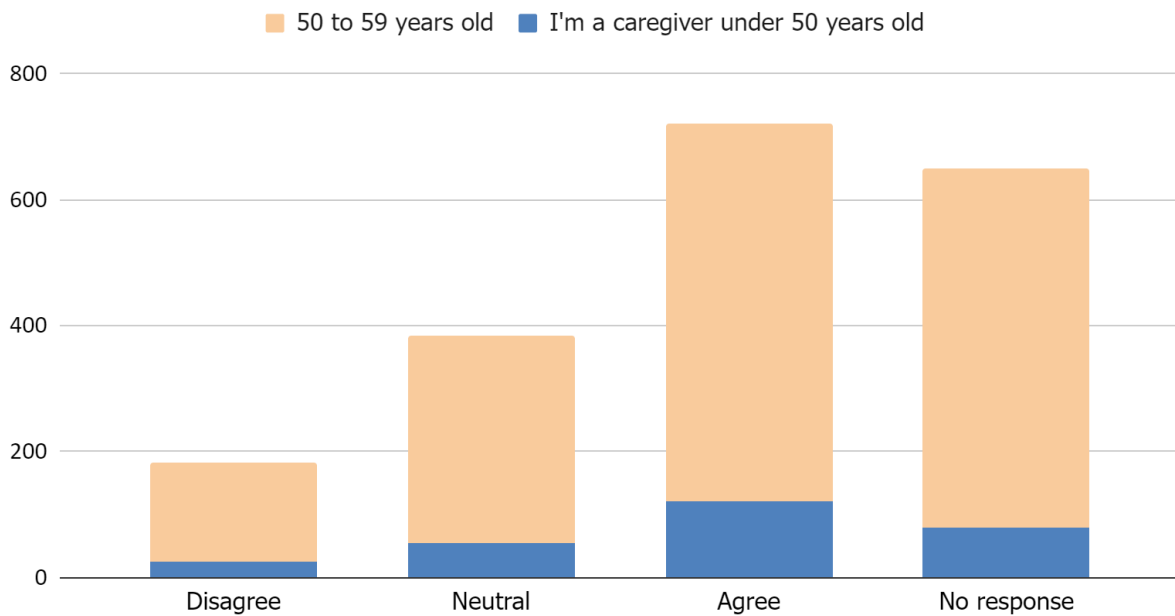
Would you use telehealth again in the future, even after the pandemic?

(Leverett only)



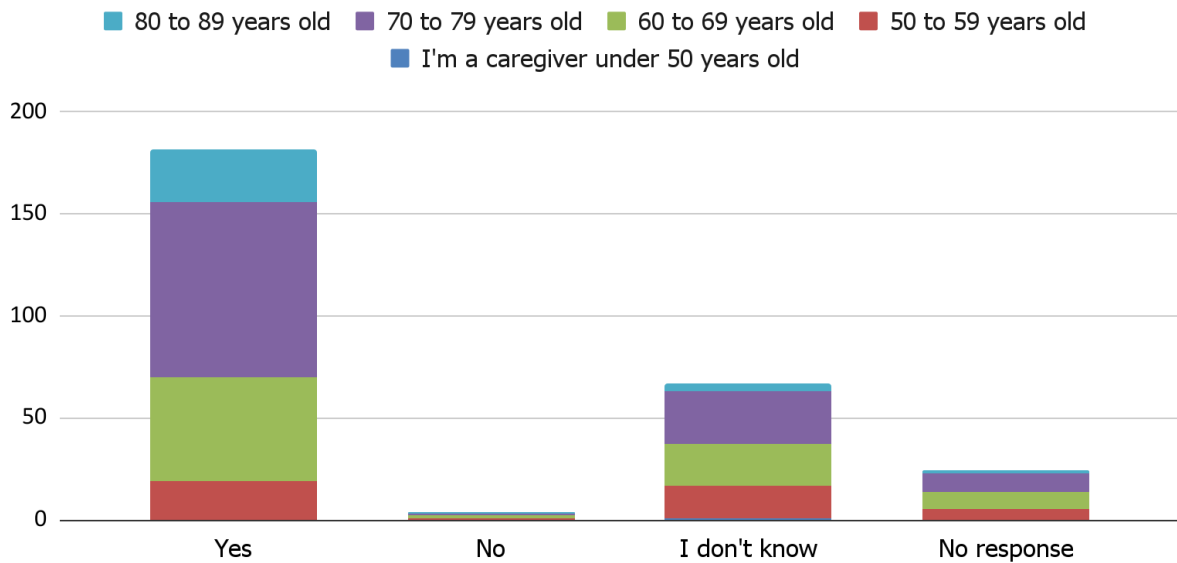
Would you use telehealth again in the future, even after the pandemic?

(Region)



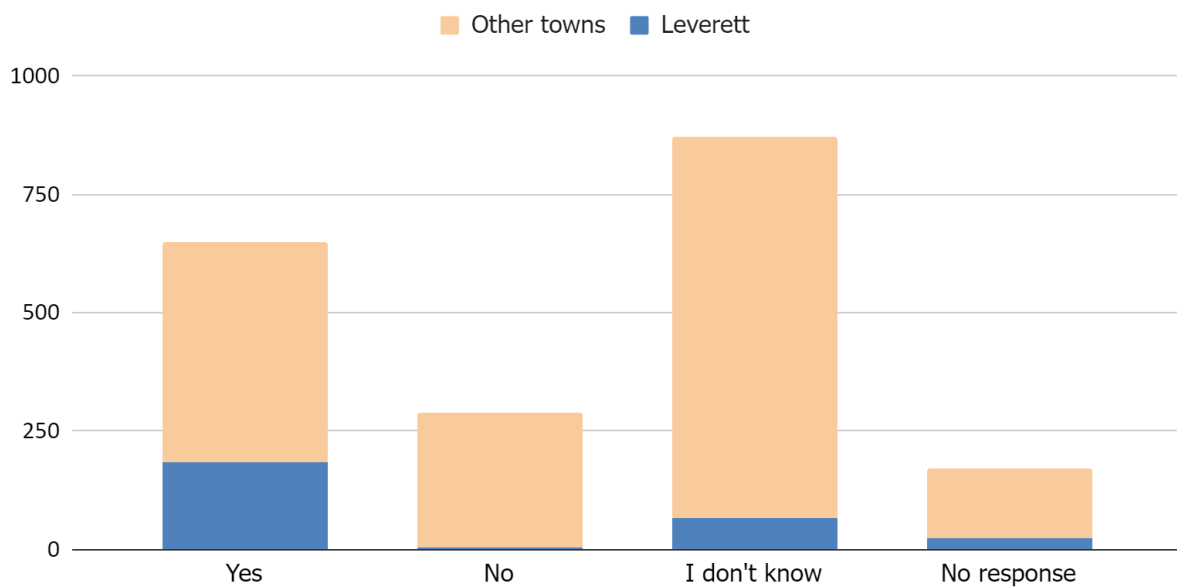
Do you have a Village or Neighbor-to-Neighbor support program in your town?

(Leverett only)



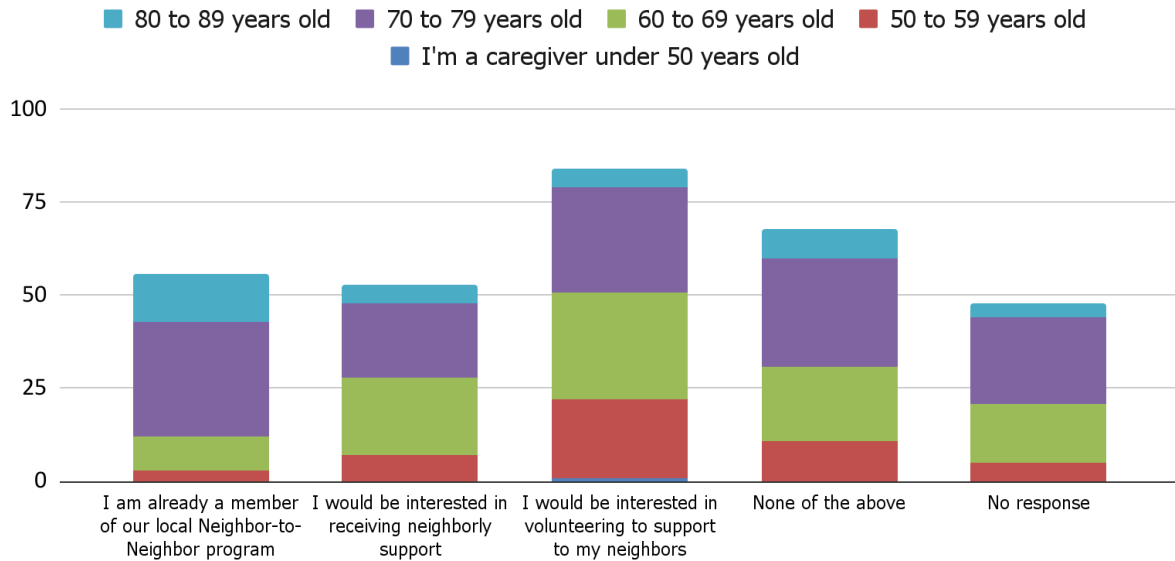
Do you have a Village or Neighbor-to-Neighbor support program in your town?

(Region)



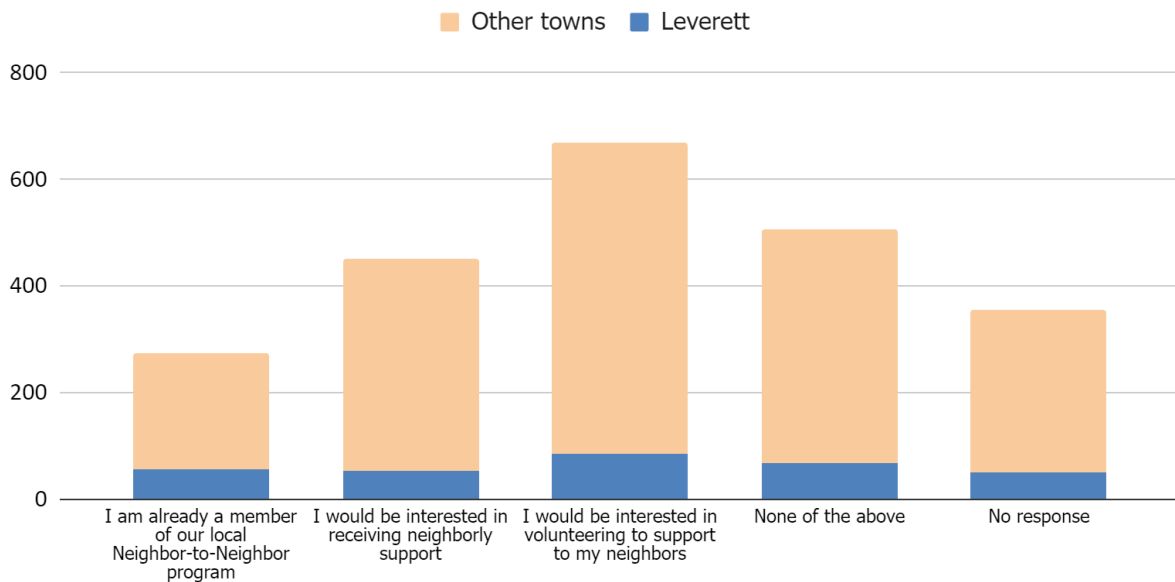
Would you be interested in joining a Village or Neighbor-to-Neighbor support program in your town?

(Leverett only)



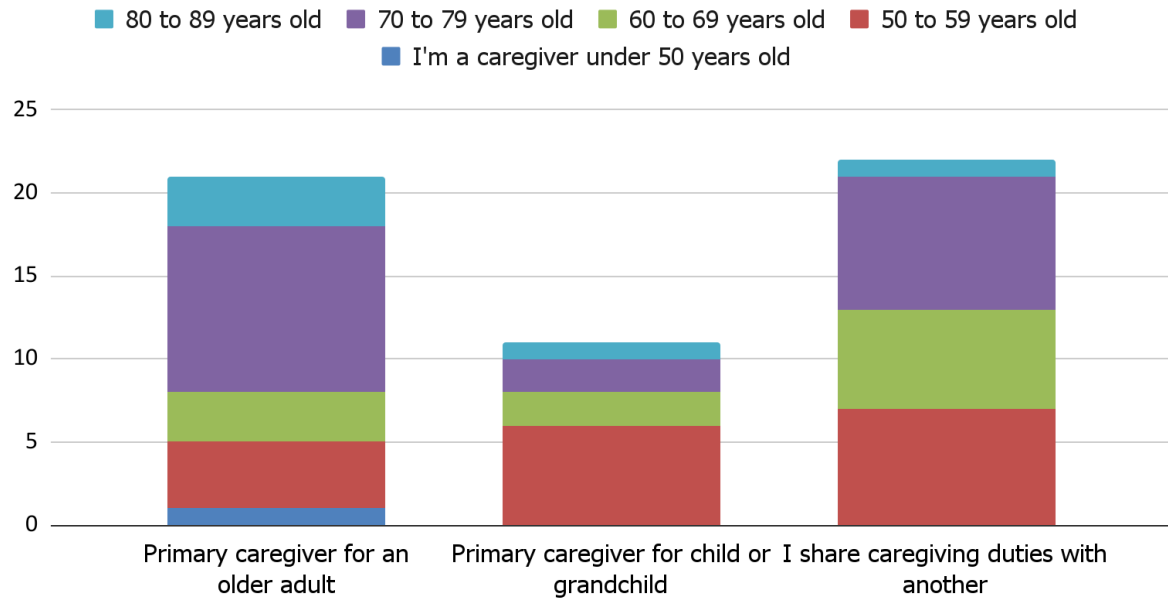
Would you be interested in joining a Village or Neighbor-to-Neighbor support program in your town?

(Region)



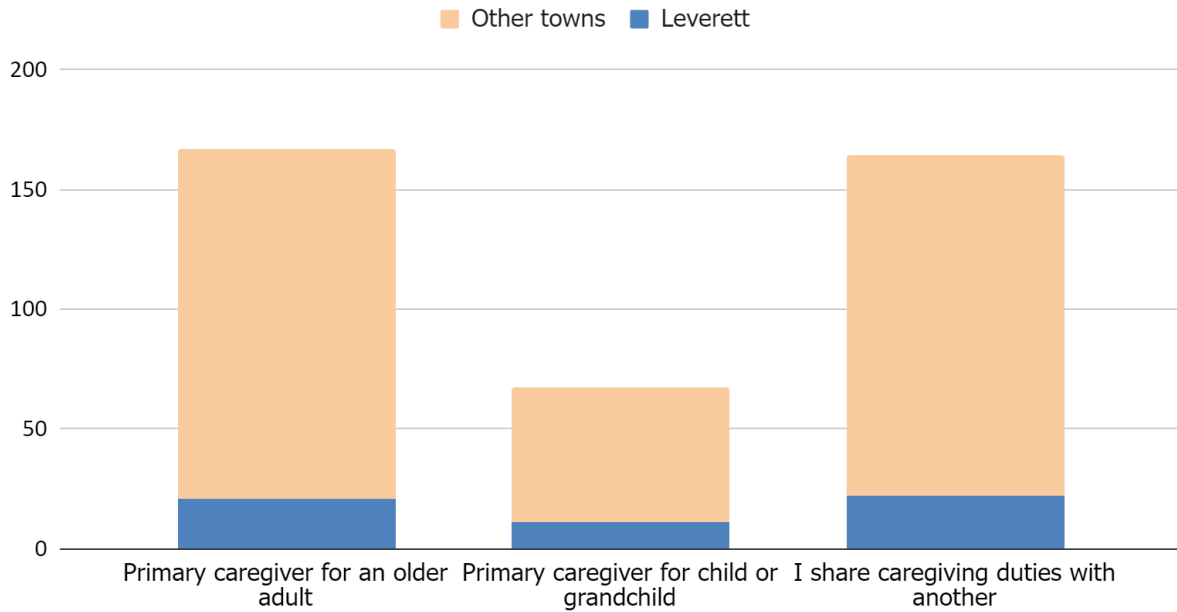
Do you provide caregiving support?

(Leverett only)



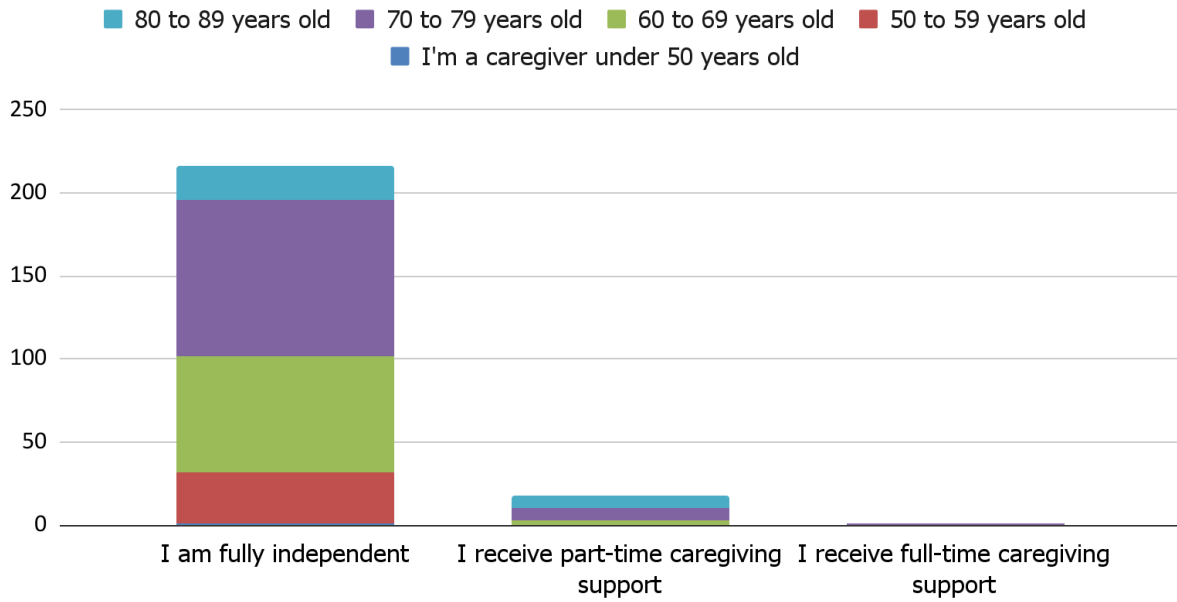
Do you provide caregiving support?

(Region)



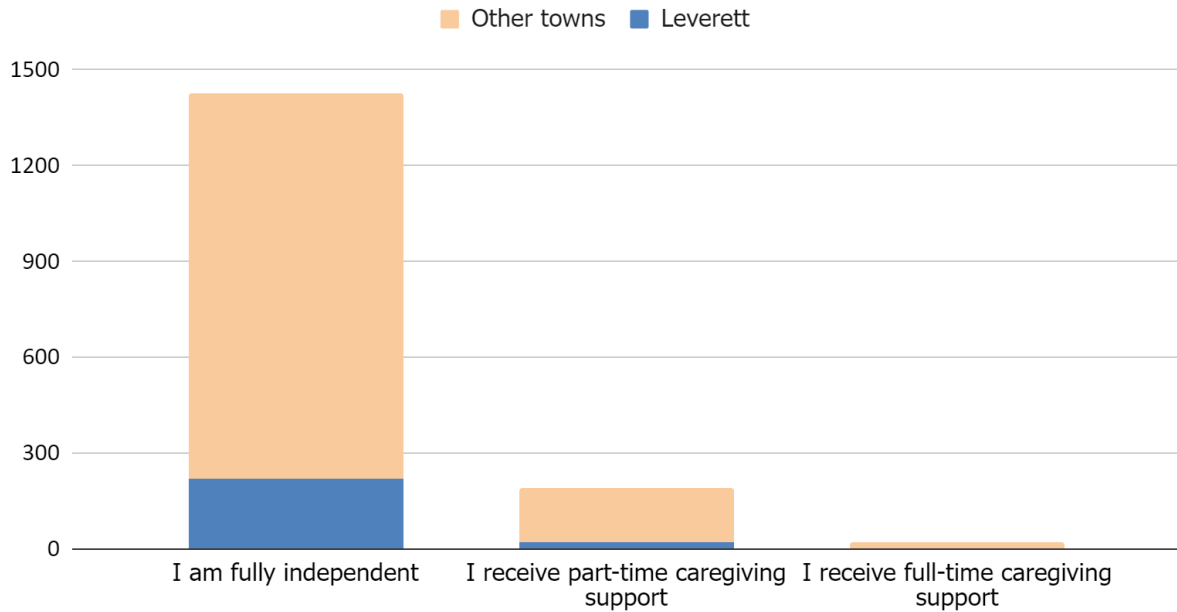
Do you receive caregiving support?

(Leverett only)



Do you receive caregiving support?

(Region)



Livability Domain: Housing

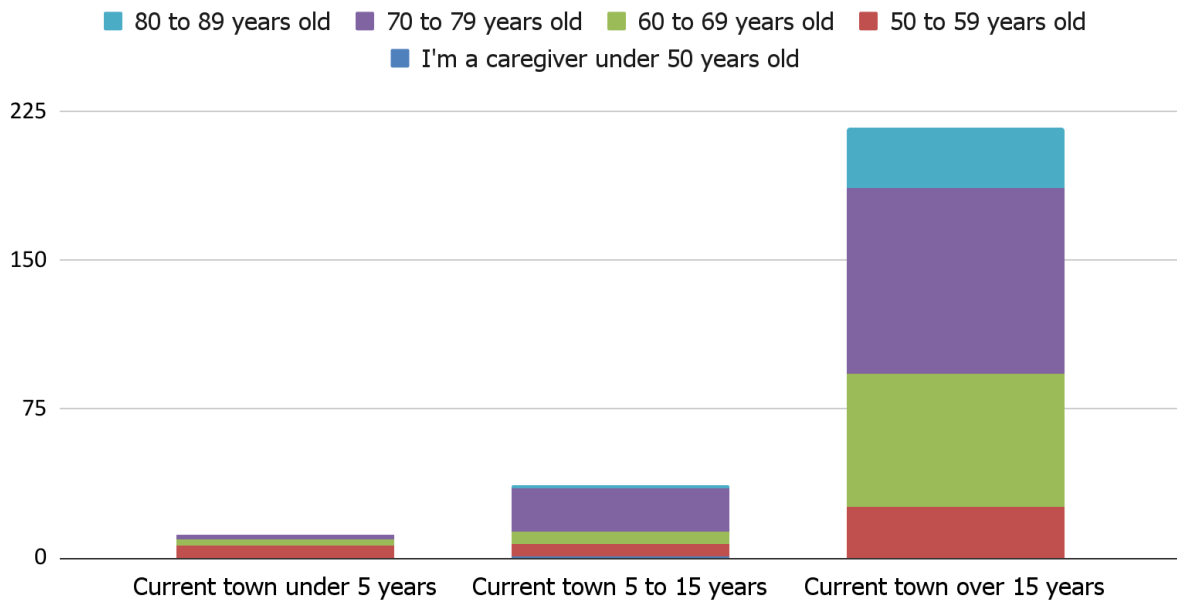
The majority of Leverett respondents reported living in town (78%) and in their current residence (76%) for over 15 years, and felt it was either extremely important or somewhat important to remain in their current residence. Most live with a spouse or partner (69%) and nearly half own their home (47%). When asked about one or more factors that could influence changing their living situation, top responses were a desire for different housing (50%, e.g. assisted living or downsizing), the cost of home maintenance (47%), need for better public transportation (39%), and a need to be closer to family or more opportunities for socializing (34%). The majority of respondents rated their access to affordable & trustworthy home repair/contractors as “good” or “excellent,” and the highest proportion reported “good” access to seasonal services like lawn work. Interestingly, when asked about current access to affordable housing and about access to housing with modifications like a no-step entrance and wider doorways, the highest proportion said “I don’t know” with many choosing both “good” and “poor.” **Results in this domain area suggest strong interest in aging-in-place among Leverett elders.** Results also suggest that those who took the survey have the resources to age in place, as they appear to be financially secure, mobile, and less concerned about affordability and access.

Observations when comparing the region in proportion to Leverett:

1. A somewhat greater proportion of regional respondents indicated ‘I live alone’ or ‘I own my home’.
2. For regional respondents, ‘Cost of maintaining your current home’ was the top factor that would make them consider changing their current living situation. In Leverett, the top factor was ‘Desire for a different housing type (e.g. assisted living, smaller home)’.
3. Significantly more regional respondents indicated ‘I don’t know’ when asked to rate current access to seasonal services such as lawn work for older adults.
4. A somewhat greater proportion of regional respondents rated ‘Poor’, and a somewhat lesser proportion rated ‘Good’, current access to affordable housing for people with their income level.

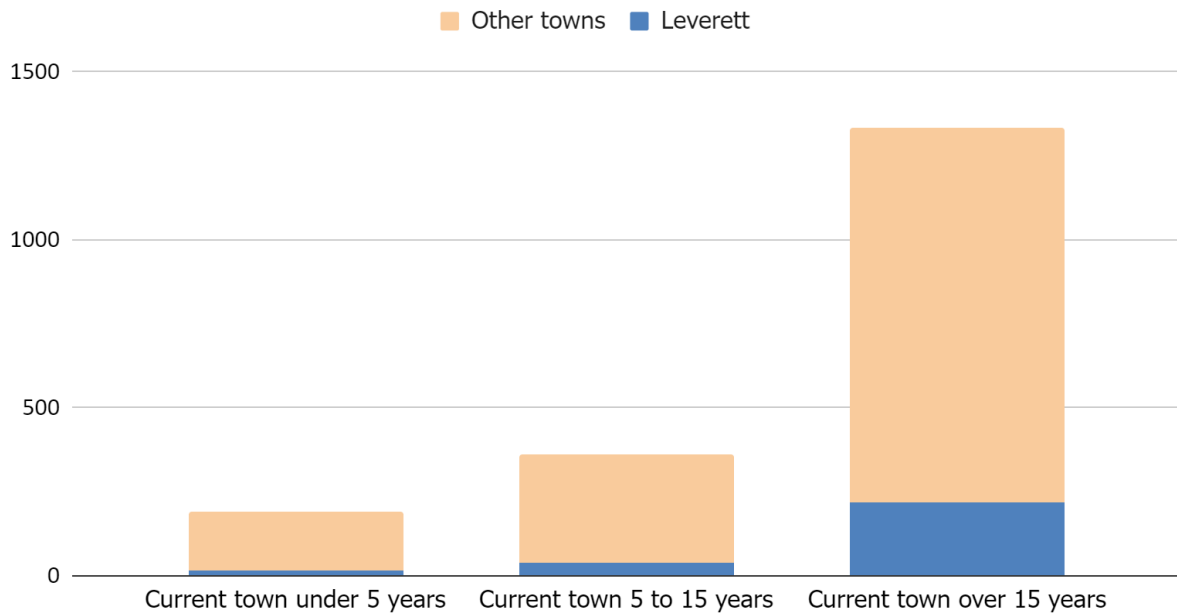
How long have you lived in your current town?

(Leverett only)



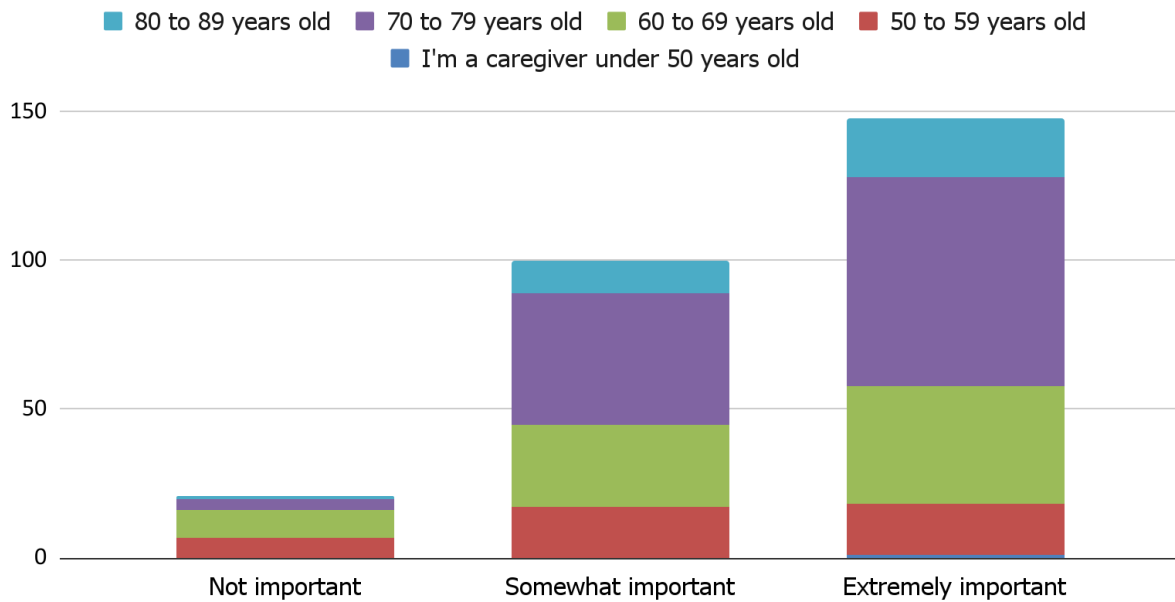
How long have you lived in your current town?

(Region)



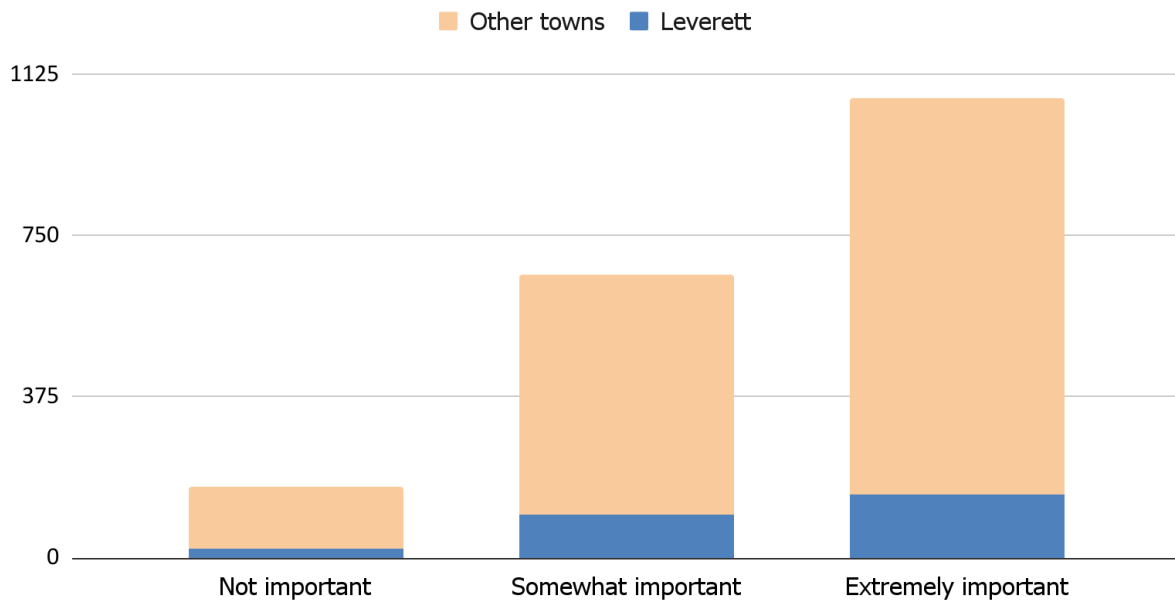
As you age, how important is it for you to remain in your current town?

(Leverett only)



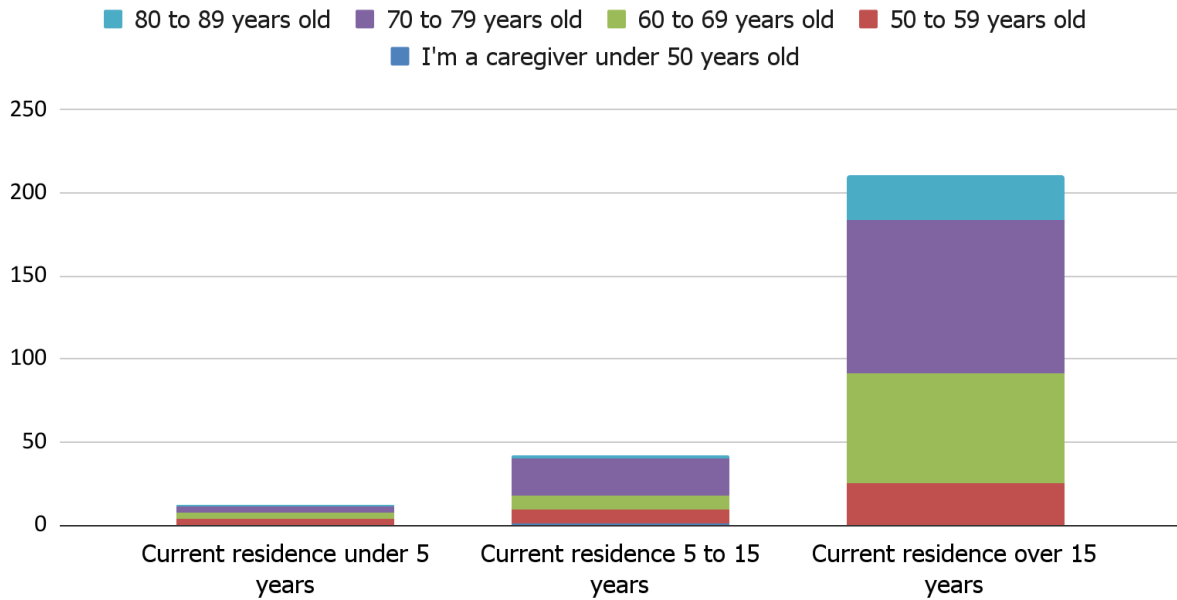
As you age, how important is it for you to remain in your current town?

(Region)



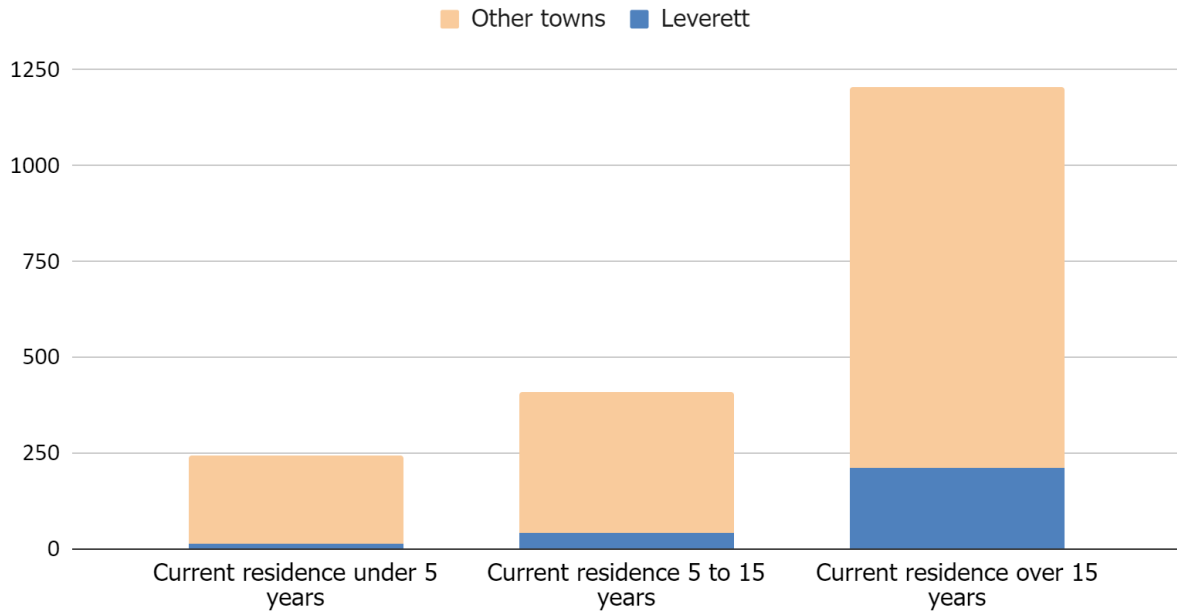
How long have you lived in your current residence?

(Leverett only)



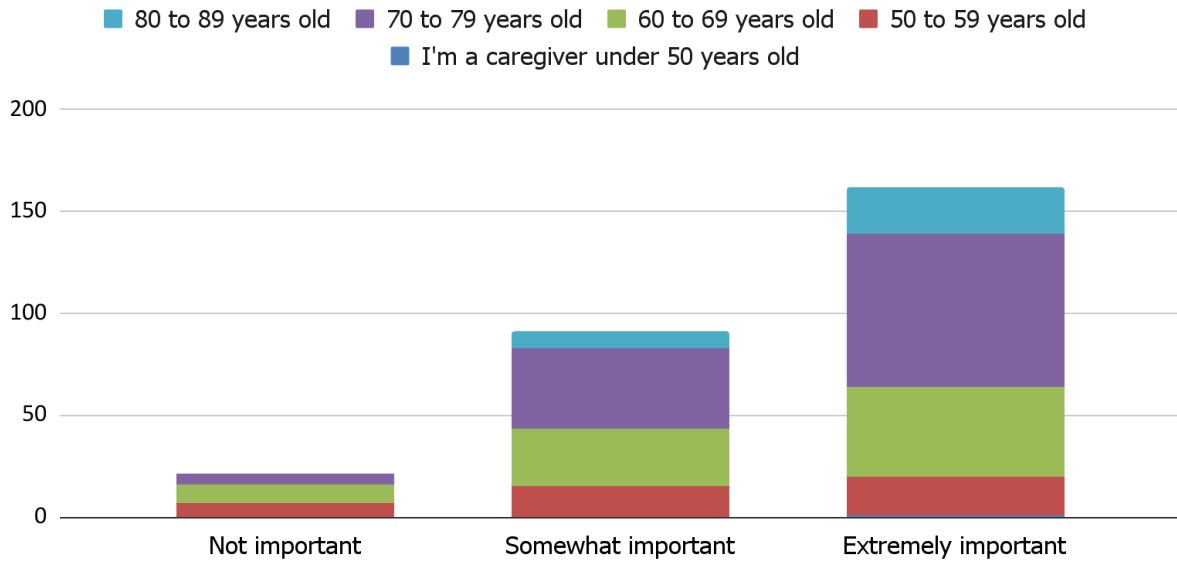
How long have you lived in your current residence?

(Region)



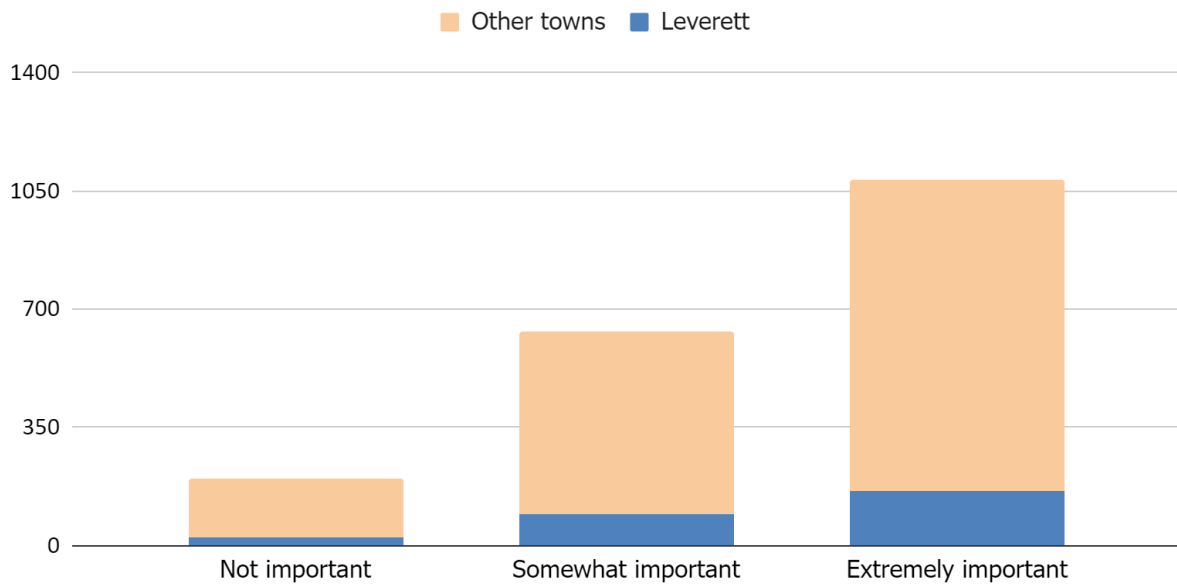
As you age, how important is it for you to remain in your current residence?

(Leverett only)



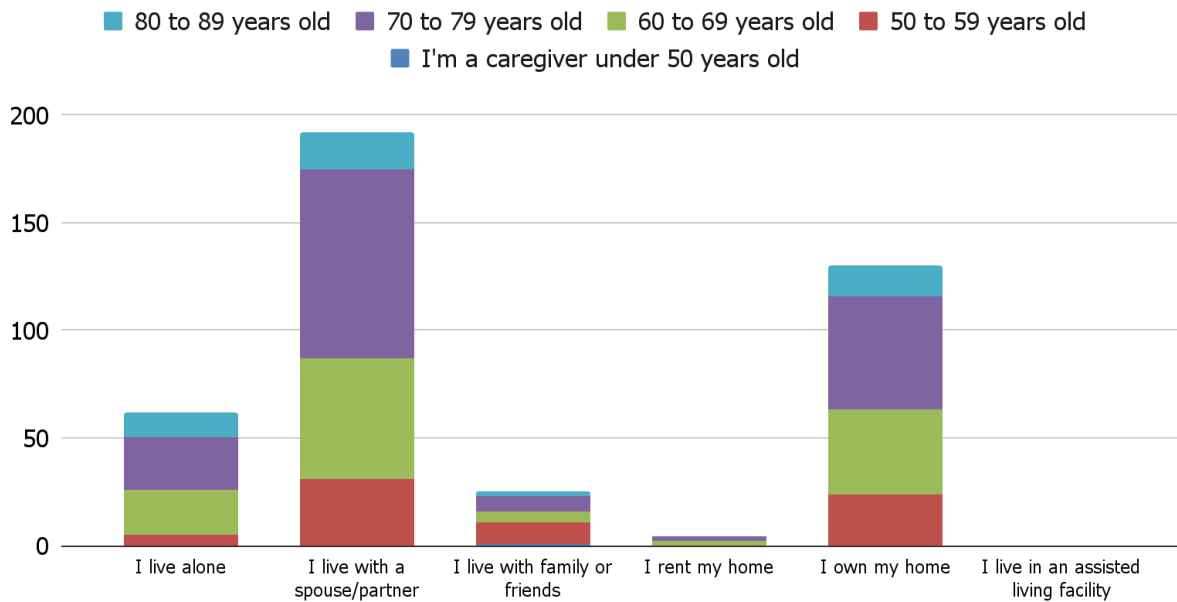
As you age, how important is it for you to remain in your current residence?

(Region)



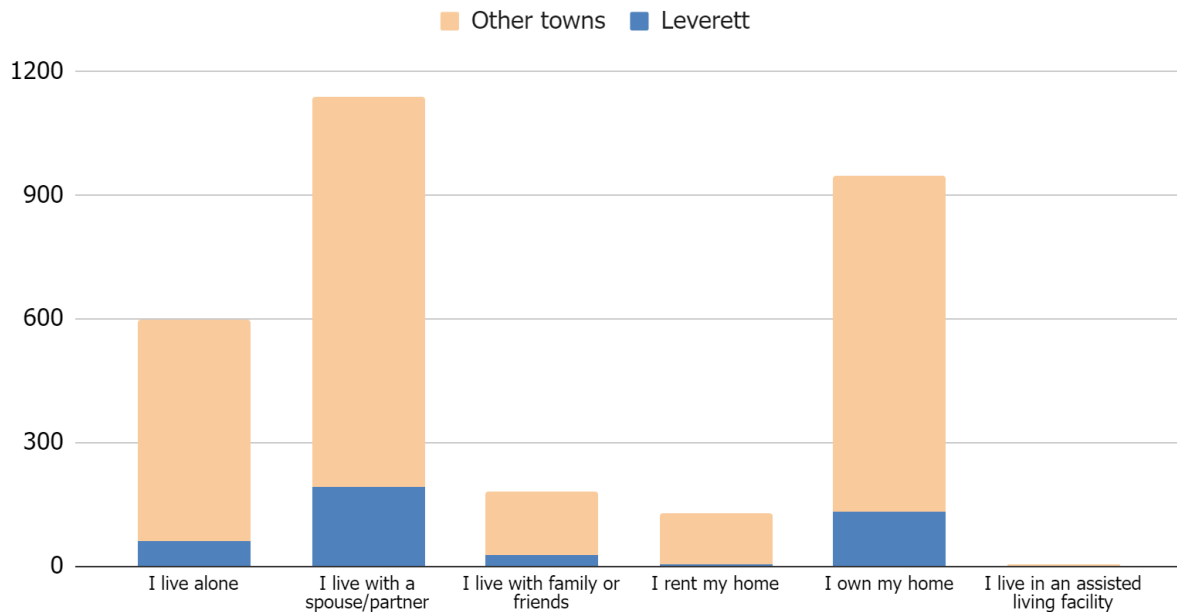
Which of these describe your current living situation? Check all that apply

(Leverett only)



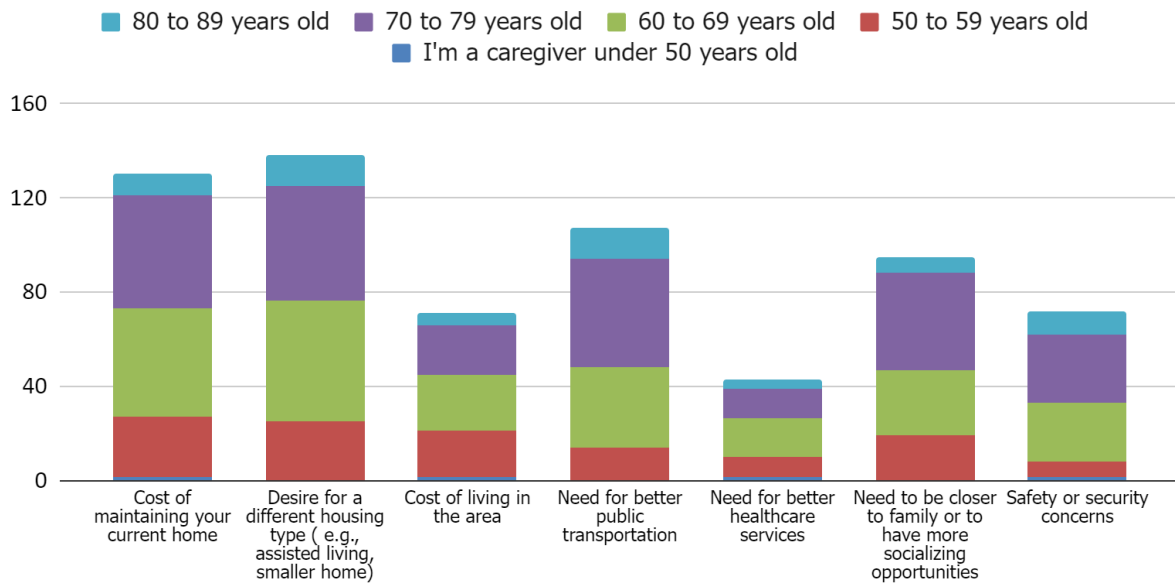
Which of these describe your current living situation? Check all that apply

(Region)



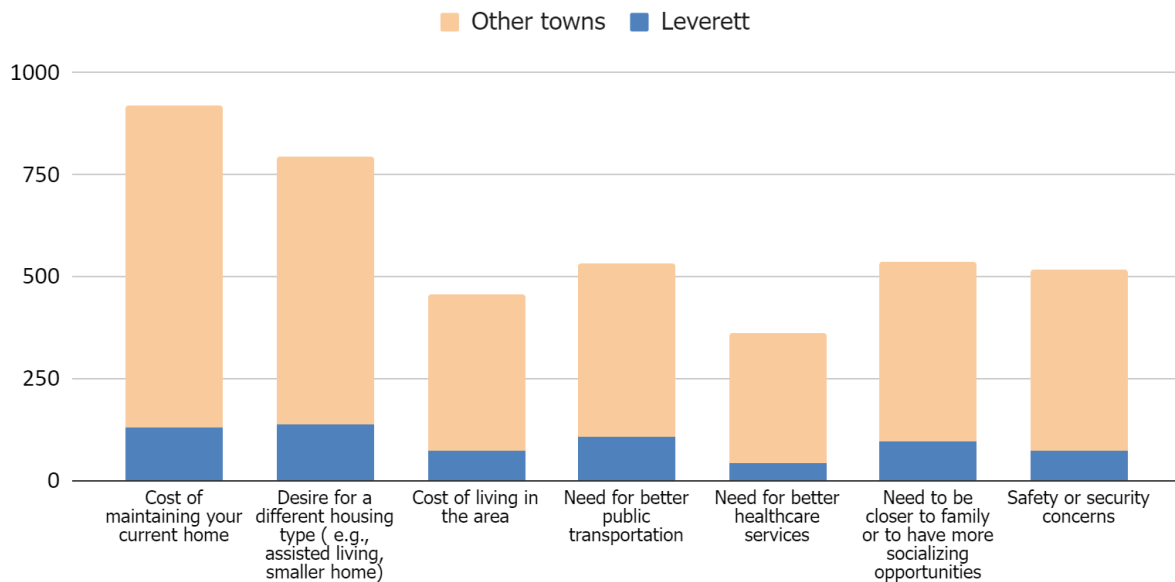
Which of these factors would make you consider changing your current living situation? Check all that apply

(Leverett only)



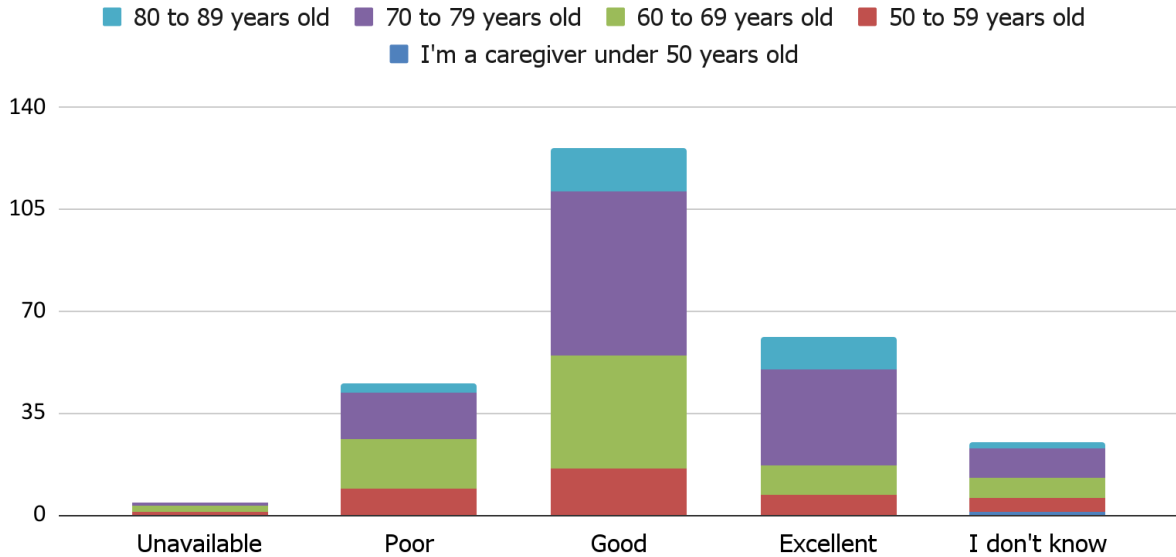
Which of these factors would make you consider changing your current living situation? Check all that apply

(Region)



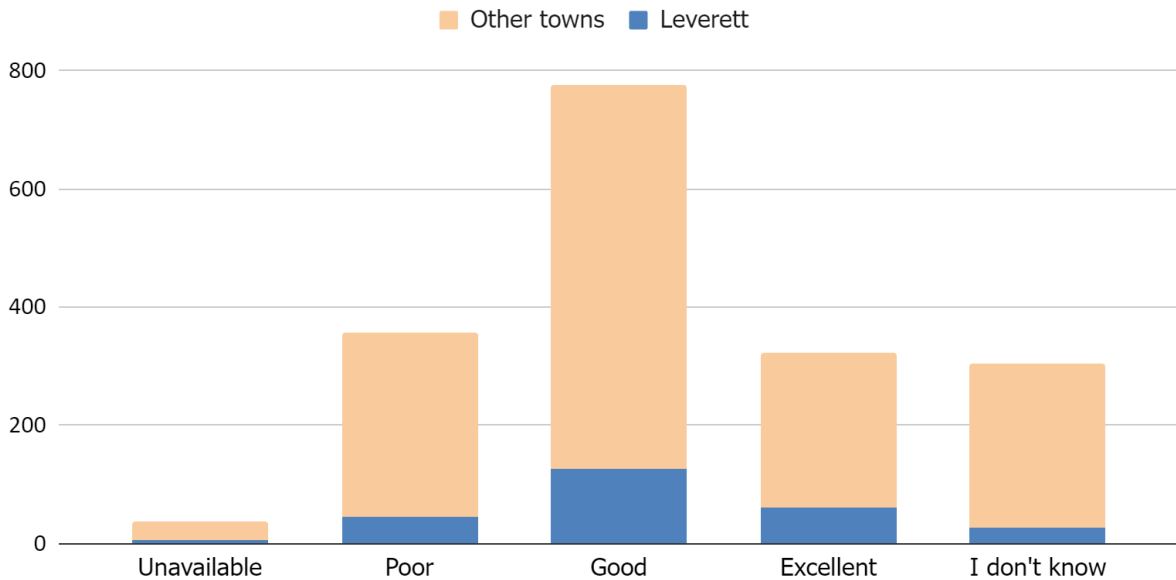
How would you rate your current access to affordable & trustworthy home modification and repair contractors?

(Leverett only)



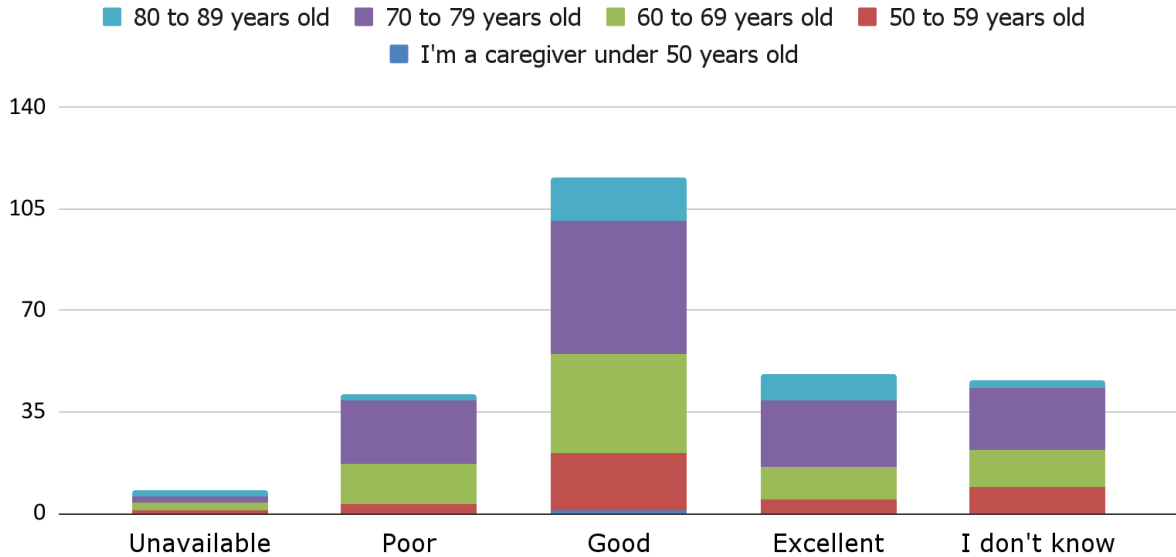
How would you rate your current access to affordable & trustworthy home modification and repair contractors?

(Region)



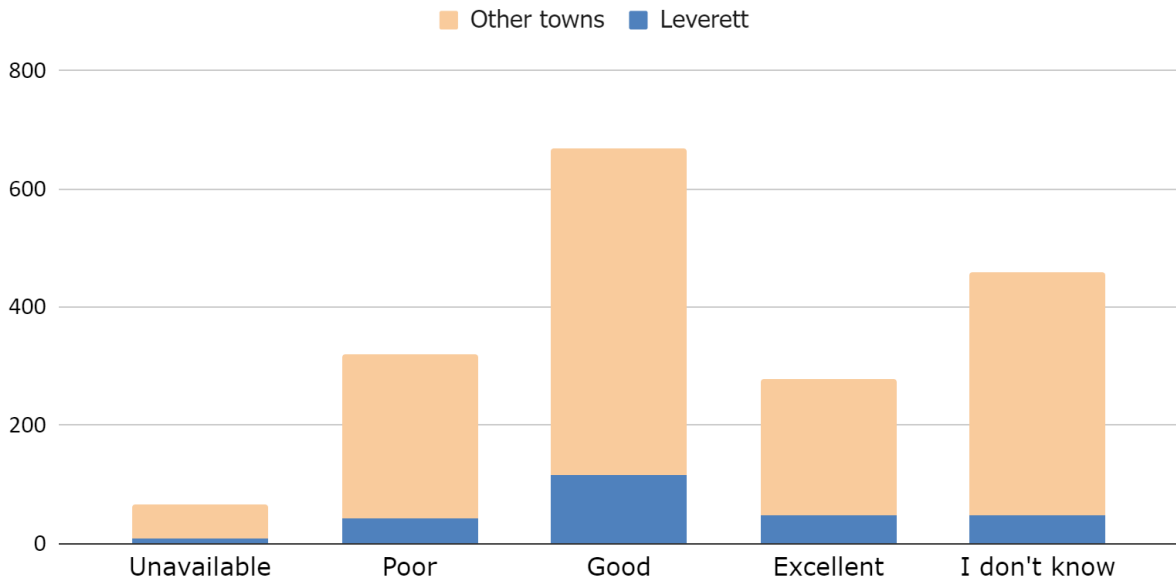
How would you rate your current access to seasonal services such as lawn work for older adults?

(Leverett only)



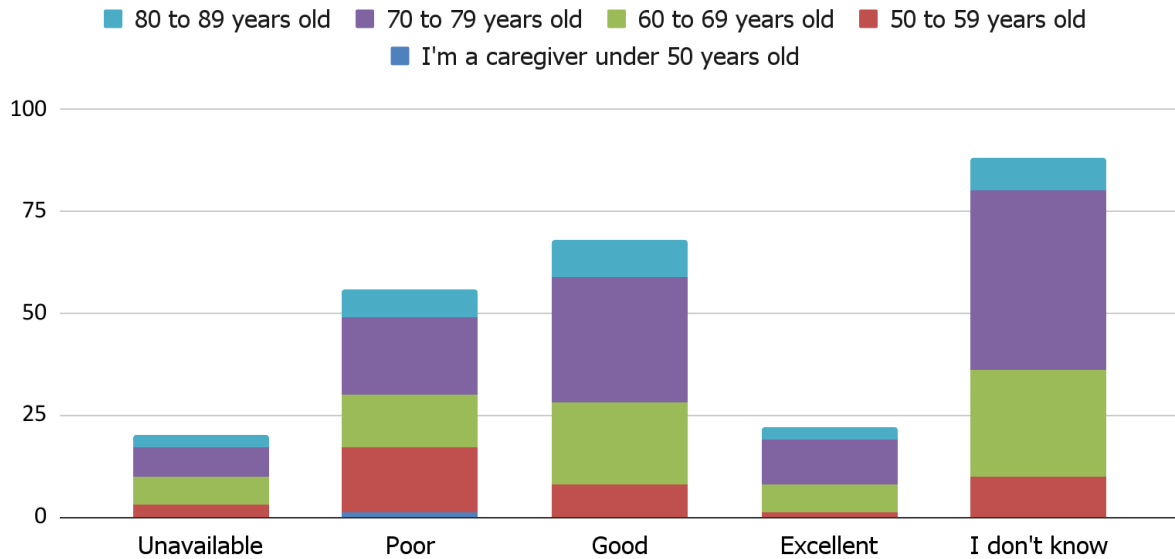
How would you rate your current access to seasonal services such as lawn work for older adults?

(Region)



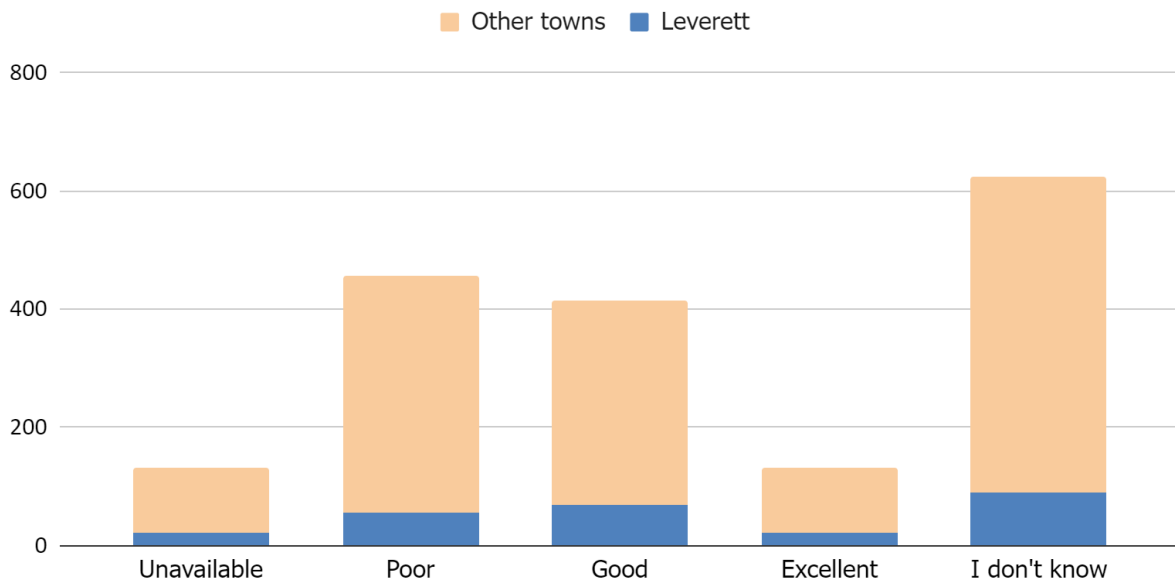
How would you rate your current access to affordable housing for people with your income level?

(Leverett only)



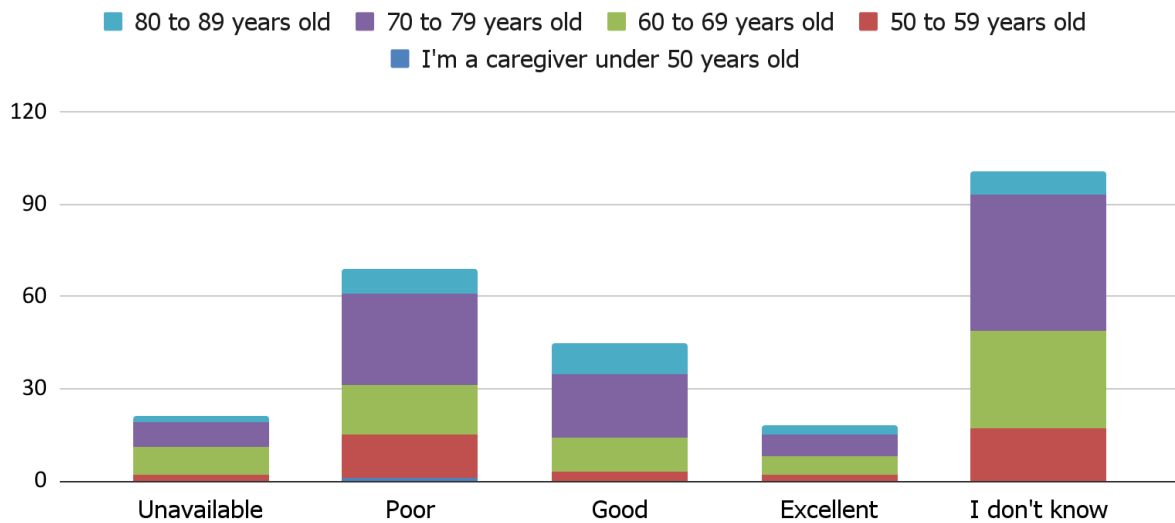
How would you rate your current access to affordable housing for people with your income level?

(Region)



How would you rate your current access to homes that are built with things like a no-step entrance, wider doorways, and first floor bedrooms and bathrooms?

(Leverett only)



How would you rate your current access to homes that are built with things like a no-step entrance, wider doorways, and first floor bedrooms and bathrooms?

(Region)



Livability Domain: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

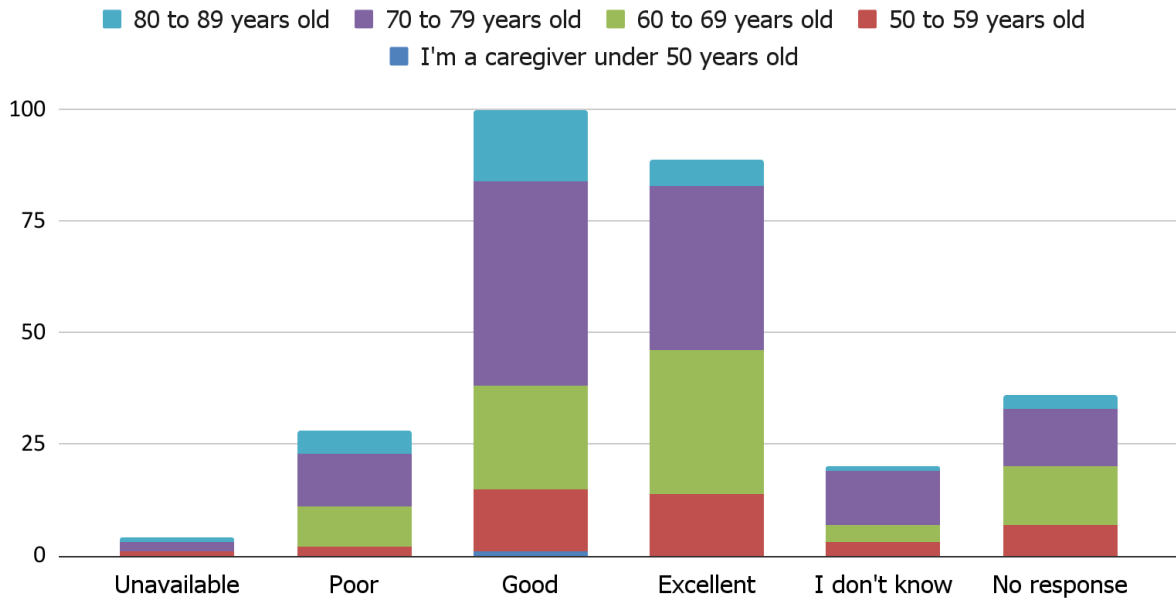
The majority of Leverett respondents (68%) rated “good” or “excellent” their access to fitness/outdoor recreational opportunities. When asked about availability of public buildings accessible for their physical abilities and about availability of accessible, well-maintained and safe outdoor spaces, the majority (74%) reported “good” or “excellent.” **The majority (58%) rated “good” or “excellent” their access to computers and internet through public buildings, however 22% reported “I don’t know” and may represent a group in need.**

Observations when comparing the region in proportion to Leverett:

1. Significantly fewer regional respondents rated ‘Excellent’ access to fitness and outdoor recreational opportunities.
2. Significantly fewer regional respondents rated ‘Excellent’ access to computers and the Internet through the senior center, library or other public building.
3. Significantly fewer regional respondents rated ‘Excellent’ availability of public buildings accessible to people with their physical abilities.
4. Significantly more regional respondents rated ‘Poor’ availability, and significantly fewer rated ‘Excellent’ availability, of well-maintained and safe outdoor public spaces with adequate benches and accessibility.

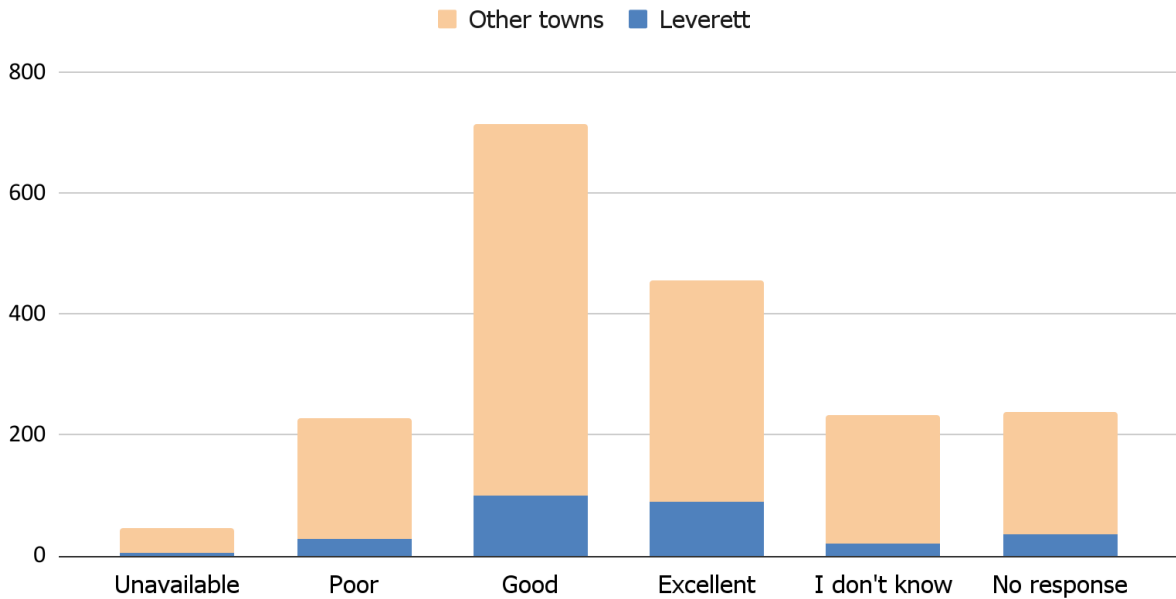
Rate access to fitness and outdoor recreational opportunities

(Leverett only)



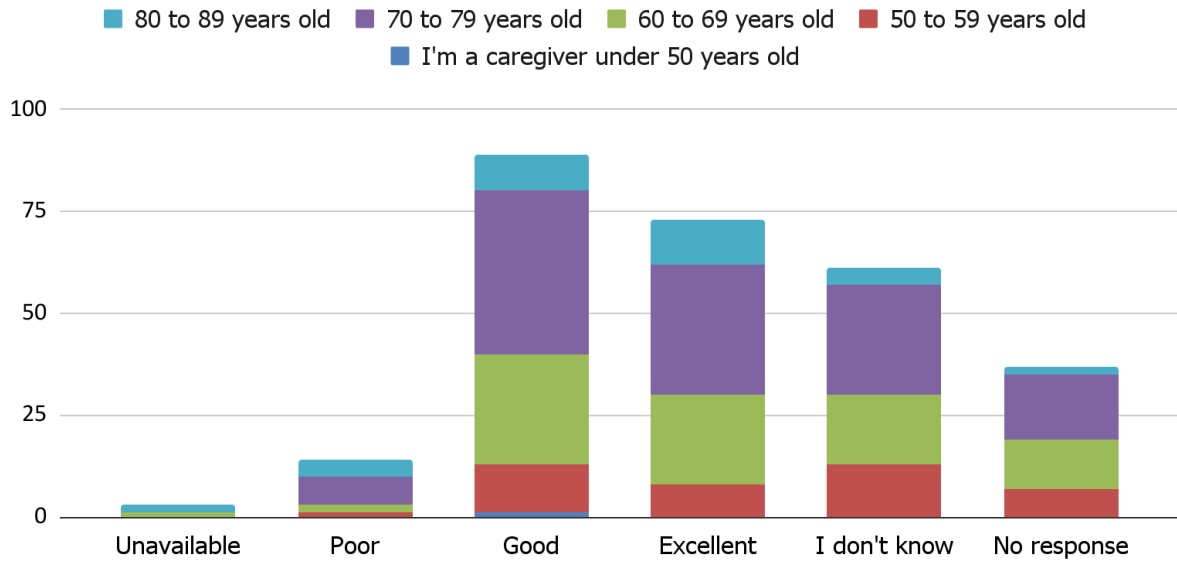
Rate access to fitness and outdoor recreational opportunities

(Region)



Rate access to computers and the Internet through the senior center, library or other public building

(Leverett only)



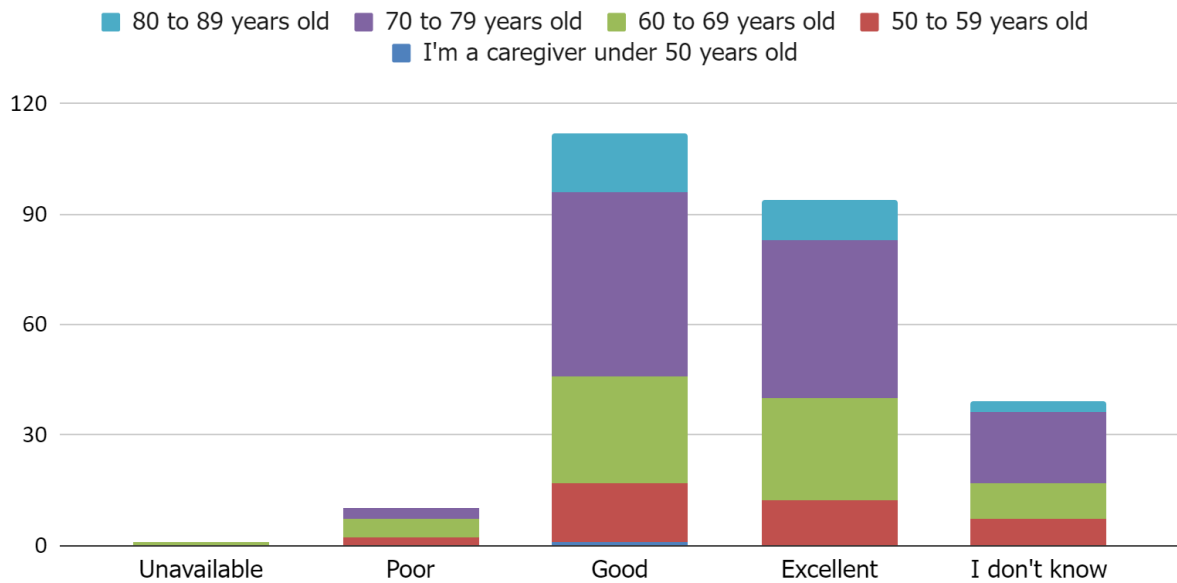
Rate access to computers and the Internet through the senior center, library or other public building

(Region)



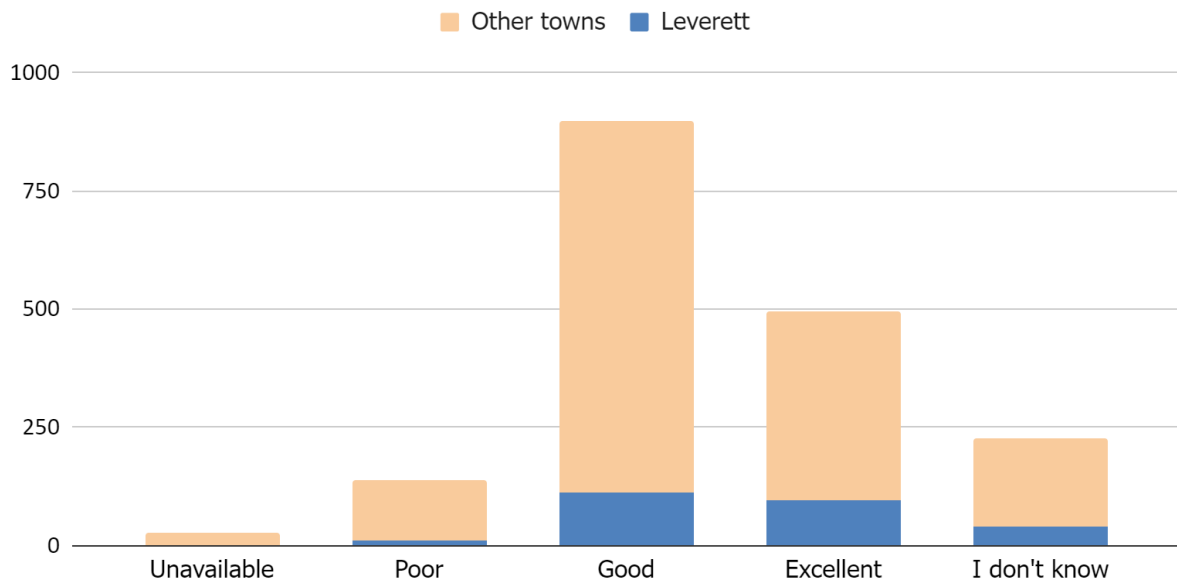
Rate availability of public buildings accessible to people with your physical abilities

(Leverett only)



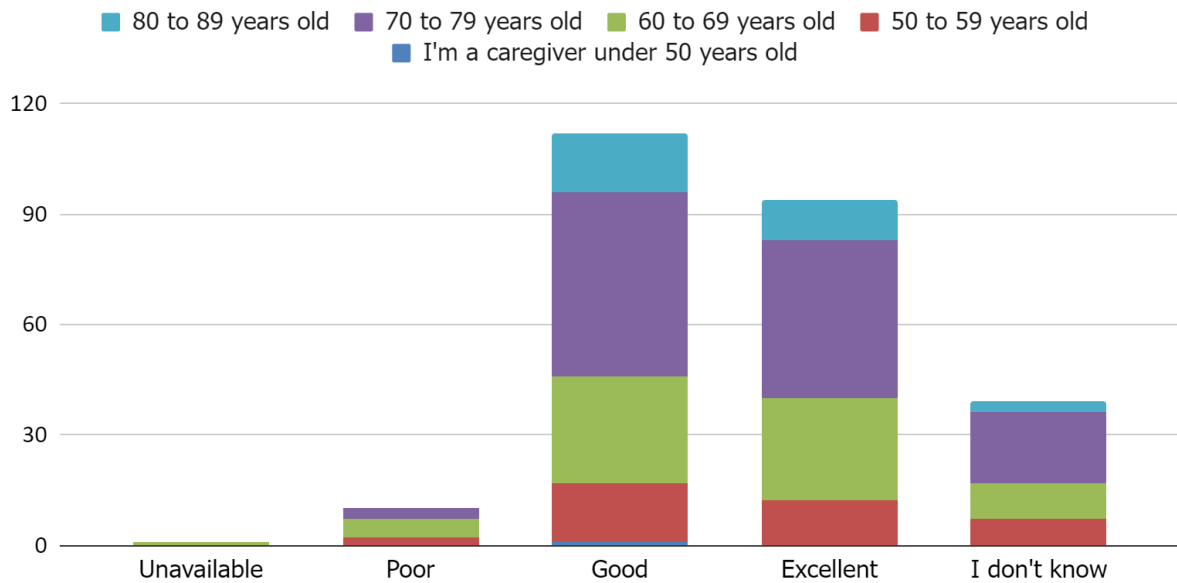
Rate availability of public buildings accessible to people with your physical abilities

(Region)



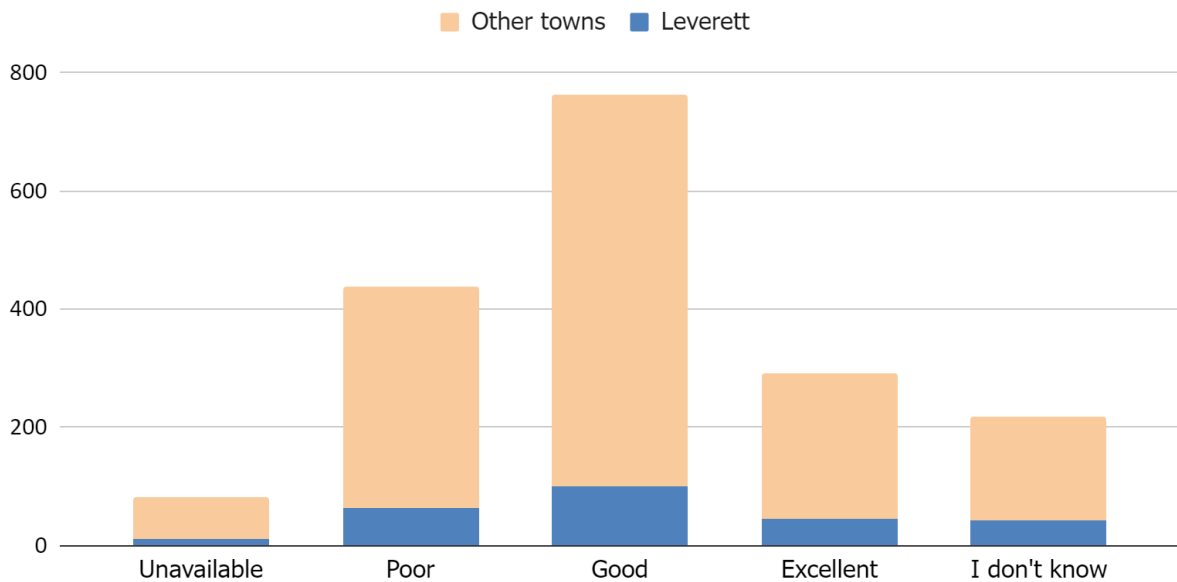
Rate availability of well-maintained and safe outdoor public spaces with adequate benches and accessibility

(Leverett only)



Rate availability of well-maintained and safe outdoor public spaces with adequate benches and accessibility

(Region)



Livability Domain: Respect and Social Inclusion

Consistent with the American Communities Survey, the majority of Leverett respondents (80%) described themselves as white, with 14% skipping the question. Respondents described themselves as follows, compared to ACS 2020 demographics reported in Appendix A.

Response	Respondents	Leverett ACS 2020 estimate
White	222 (80%)	91%
Black / African American	1 (less than 1%)	1%
Asian	2 (less than 1%)	5%
American Indian or Native Alaskan	1 (less than 1%)	No data
Hispanic/Latino	0	1%
Two or more races	3 (1%) ¹⁹	1%
Prefer not to say	9 (3%)	N/A
No response	39 (14%)	N/A

Six respondents selected Other, please specify (6 or 2%), and specified as follows:

- American (1)
- Eastern European Jewish (1)
- Jewish (1)
- Jewish (1, also self-described as White)
- Italian American (1, also self-described as White)
- Saxon (1)

The majority were female (53%, with only 32% identifying as male and 14% skipping the question). The majority speak English at home (87%, with 14% skipping the question). **When asked about financial security, 53% reported “I have enough money for necessities and**

¹⁹ Inferred from the number of people who choose two categories in response to this question. “Two or more races” was not a discrete category on the LifePath survey.

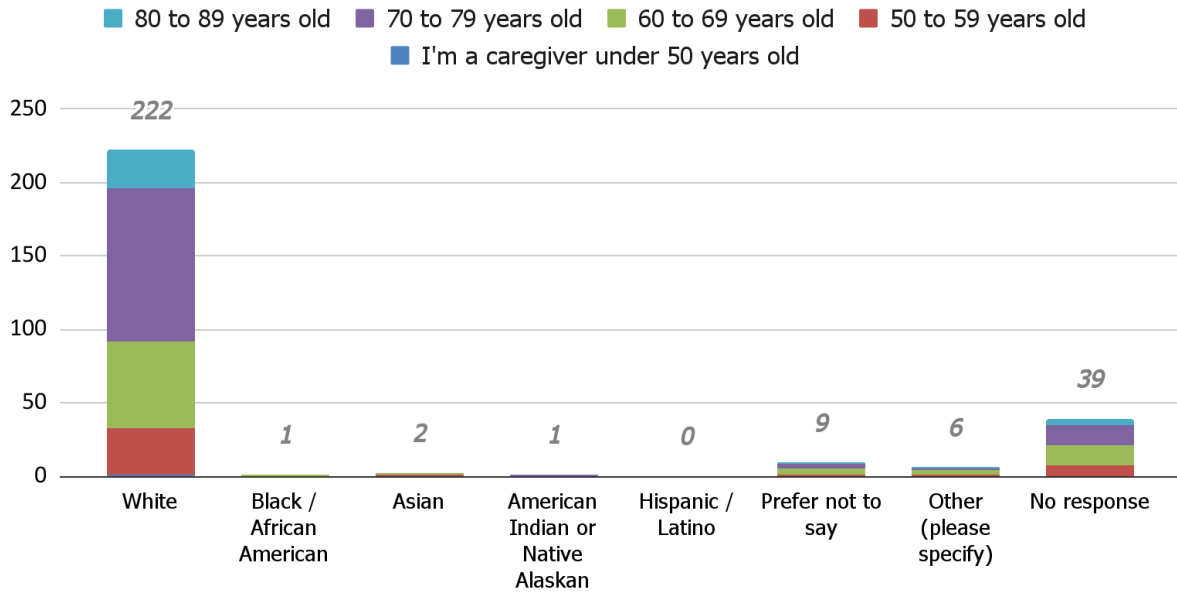
extras,” with the second highest proportion of 31% reporting “I feel ok now, but I’m worried about the future.”

Observations when comparing the region in proportion to Leverett:

1. The response patterns on each of these questions is proportionally similar between the region and Leverett.

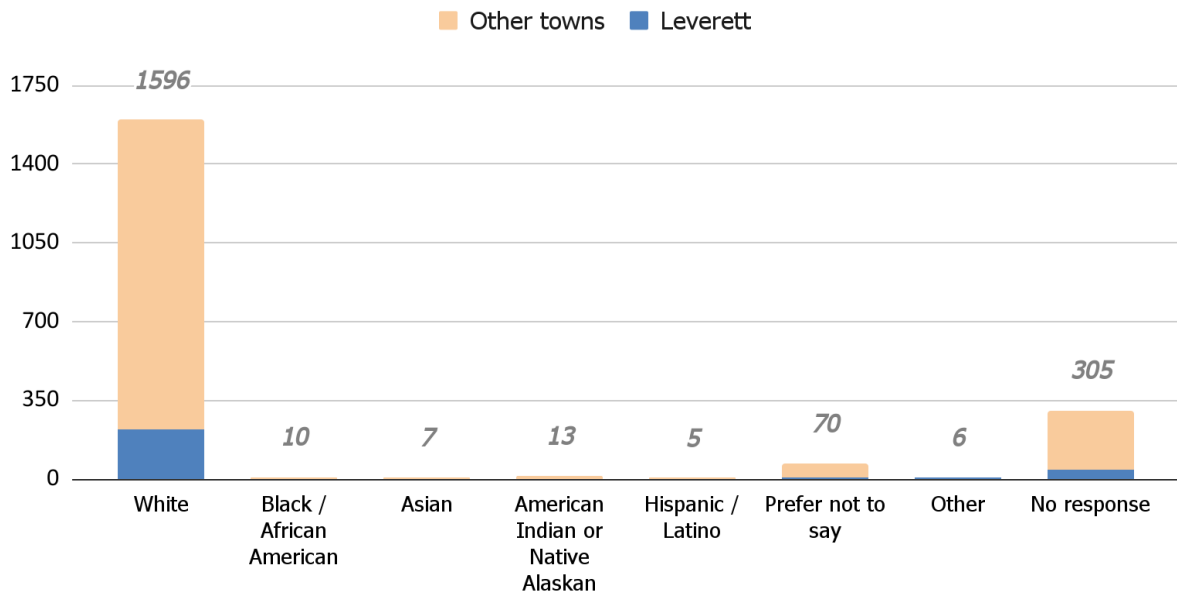
How would you describe yourself?

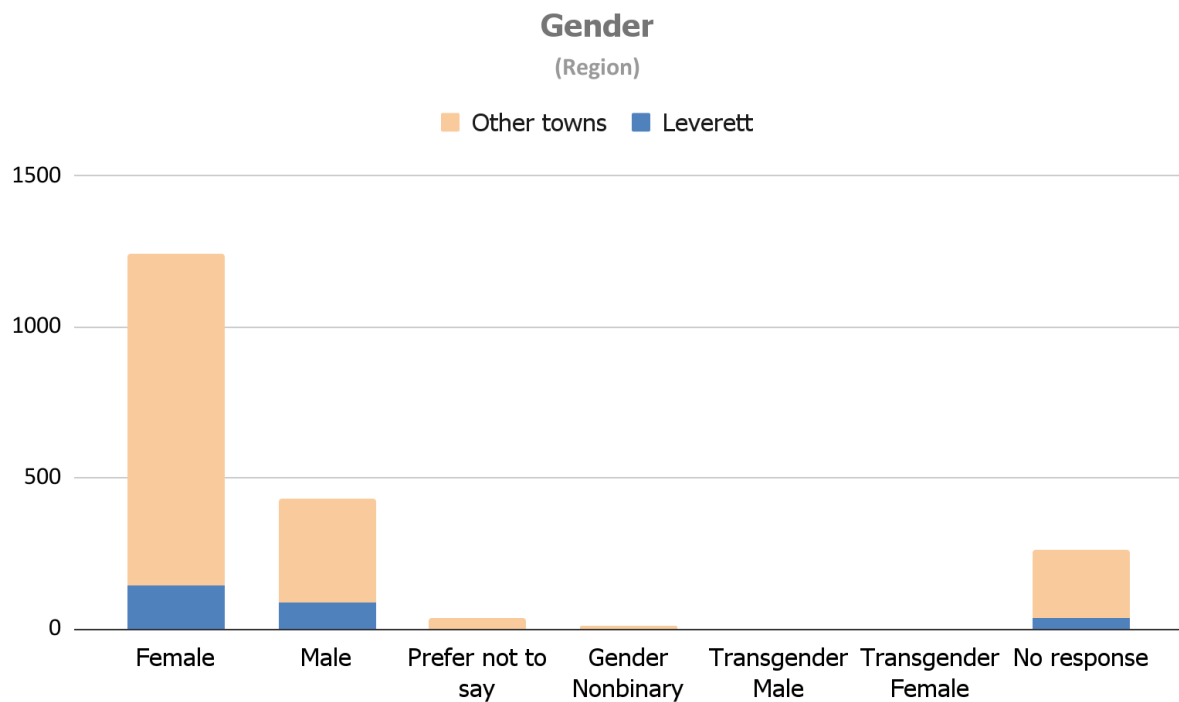
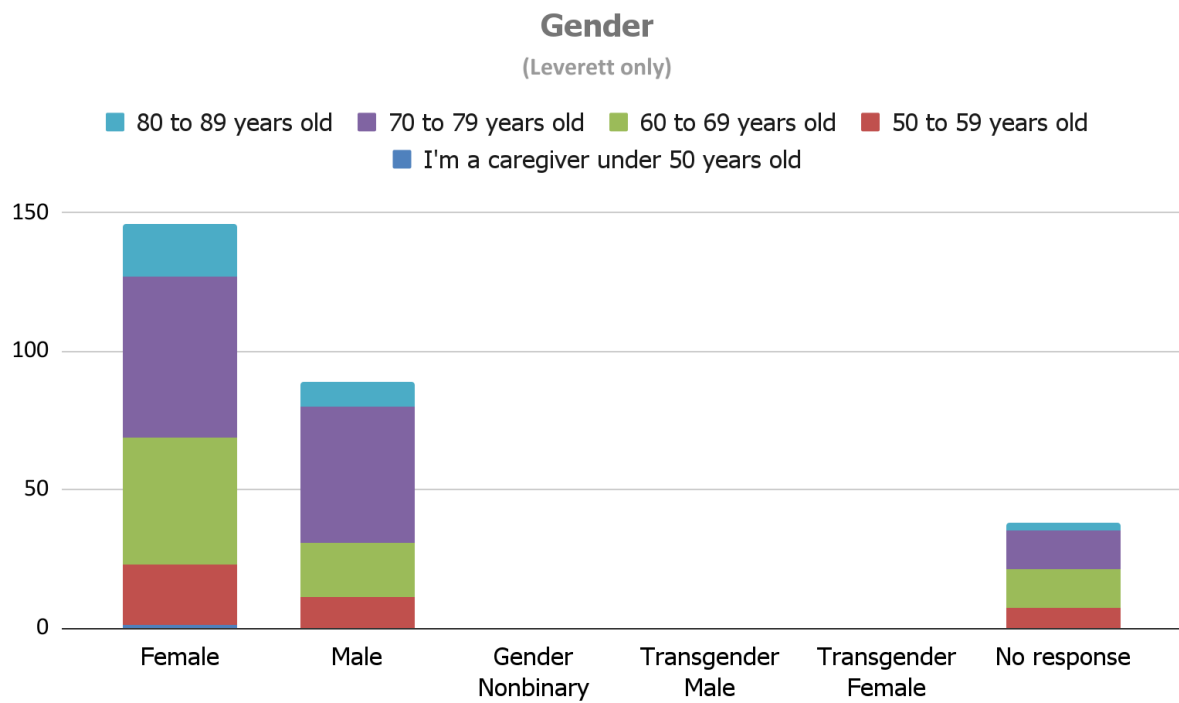
(Leverett only)



How would you describe yourself?

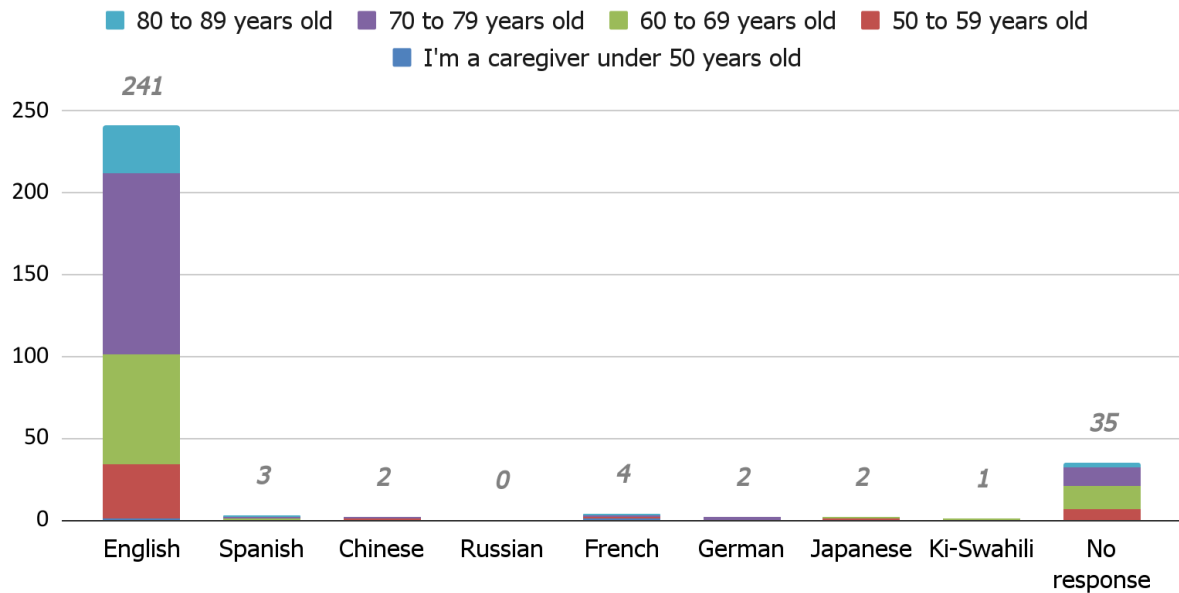
(Region)





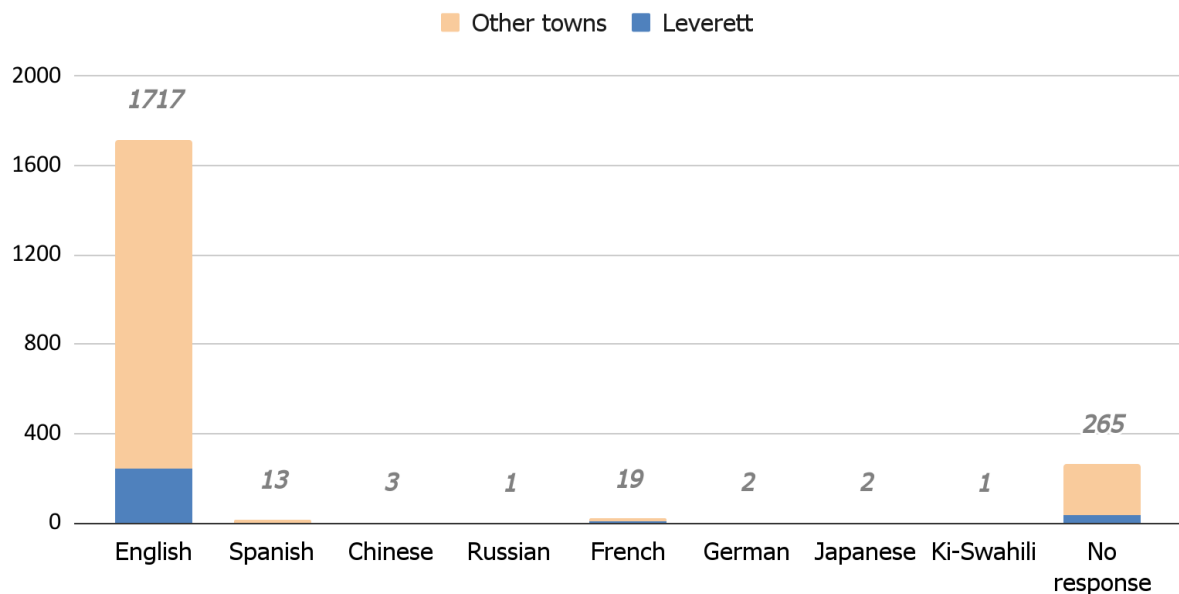
What languages do you speak at home?

(Leverett only)



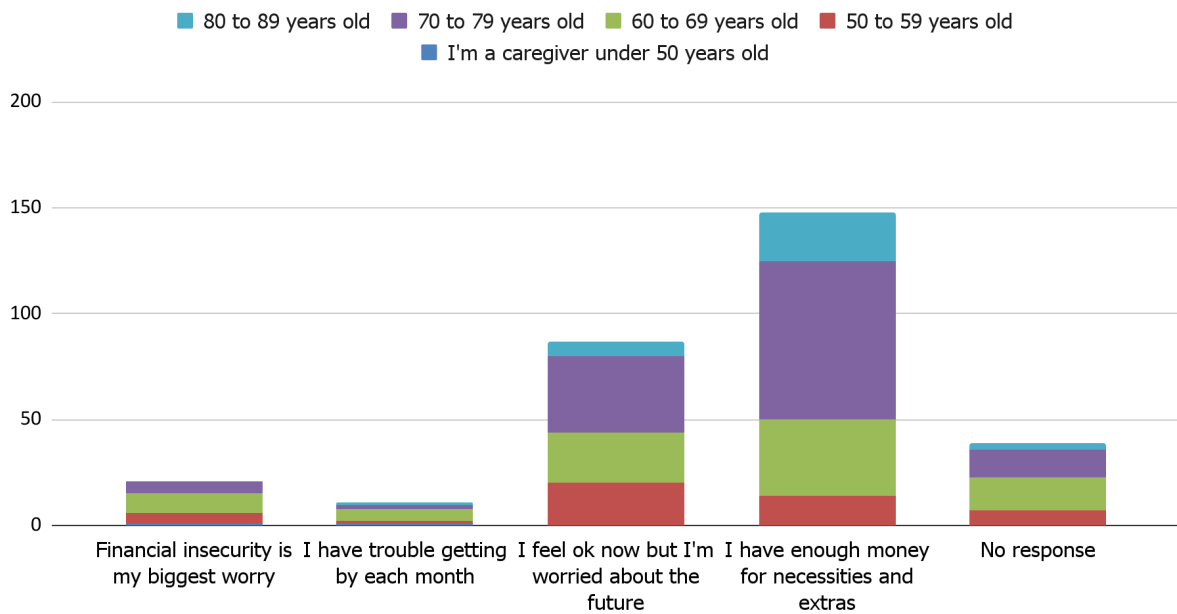
What languages do you speak at home?

(Region)



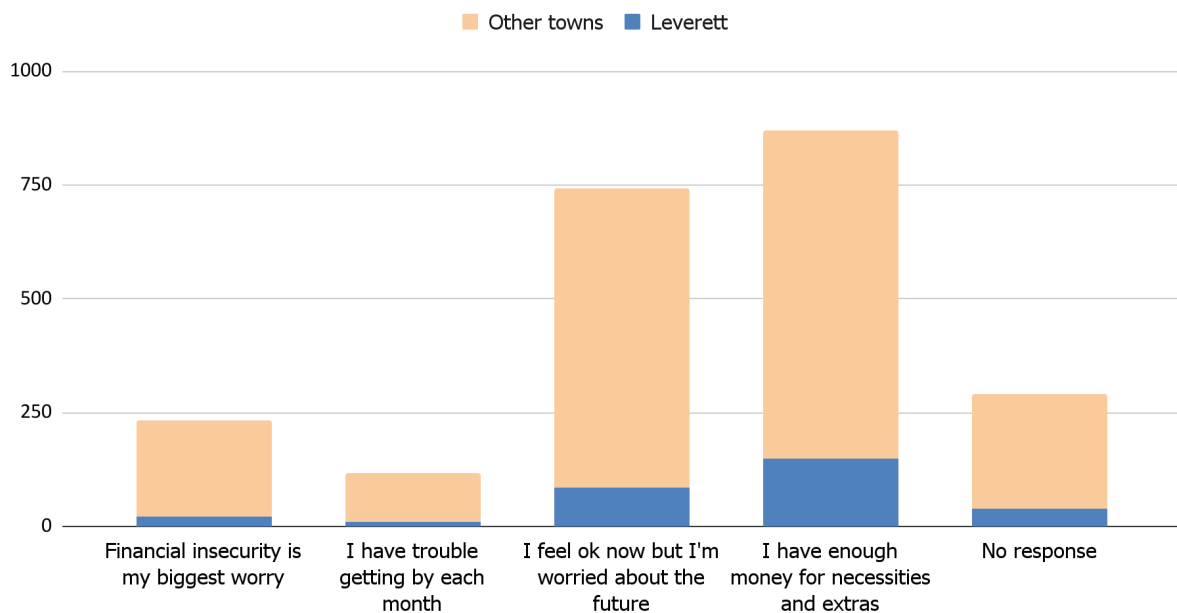
Is financial insecurity a worry for you now and as you get older?

(Leverett only)



Is financial insecurity a worry for you now and as you get older?

(Region)



Livability Domain: Social Participation

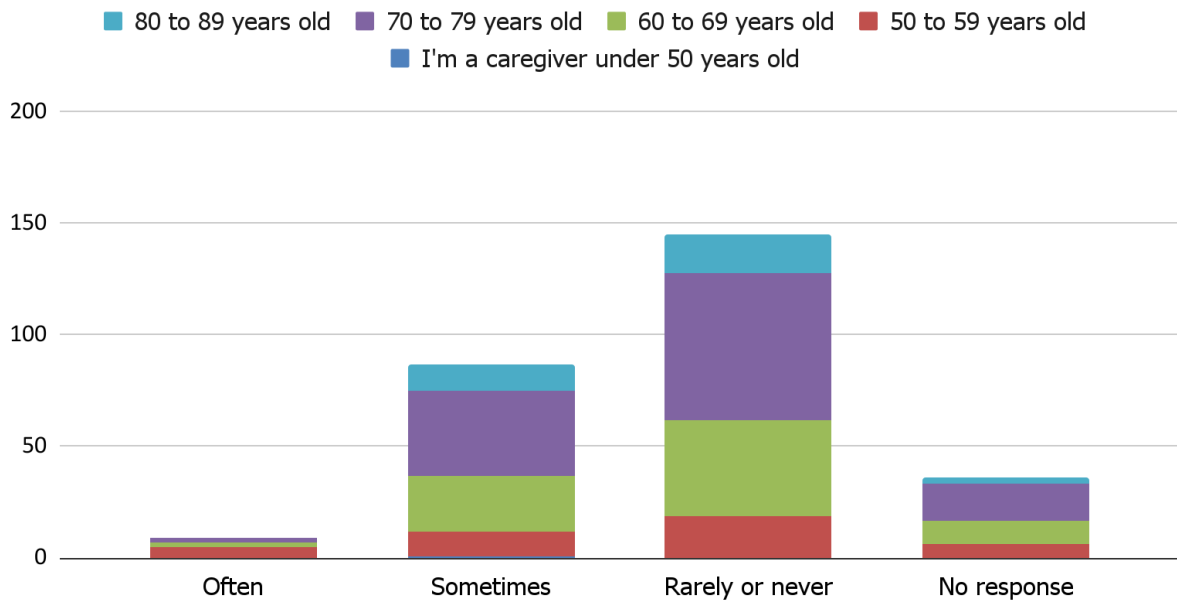
More than half of Leverett respondents (52%) report “rarely or never” feeling lonely or feeling left out of their community, and 67% report “rarely or never” feeling left out of their family. **The second highest proportion (31%) feel lonely “sometimes” and 26% feel left out of their community “sometimes”.** The majority (62%) reported “rarely or never” needing help, and 50% feel supported “often.” Most respondents (70%) said they interact with people they do not live with “multiple times a week” or “every day”. The highest proportion of respondents also indicated “good” access to affordable and conveniently located social and cultural activities for older people, but high proportions also reported poor access to these activities and many said they didn’t know. **When asked about access to intergenerational activities, the largest proportion (35%) said they didn’t know, and the second largest proportion (23%) reported poor access.** Results from this domain indicate a respondent population that is mostly secure in terms of income and community connections, but that the availability of relevant events and intergenerational events is lacking. These results present further questions about who was able to access and respond to the survey.

Observations when comparing the region in proportion to Leverett:

1. Significantly fewer regional respondents rated ‘Excellent’ access to events that are affordable to people with their income level.
2. A somewhat greater proportion of regional respondents rated ‘Good’ access to intergenerational activities that involve both younger and older people.
3. Significantly fewer regional respondents rated ‘Excellent’ access to social participation opportunities for people who speak my language.

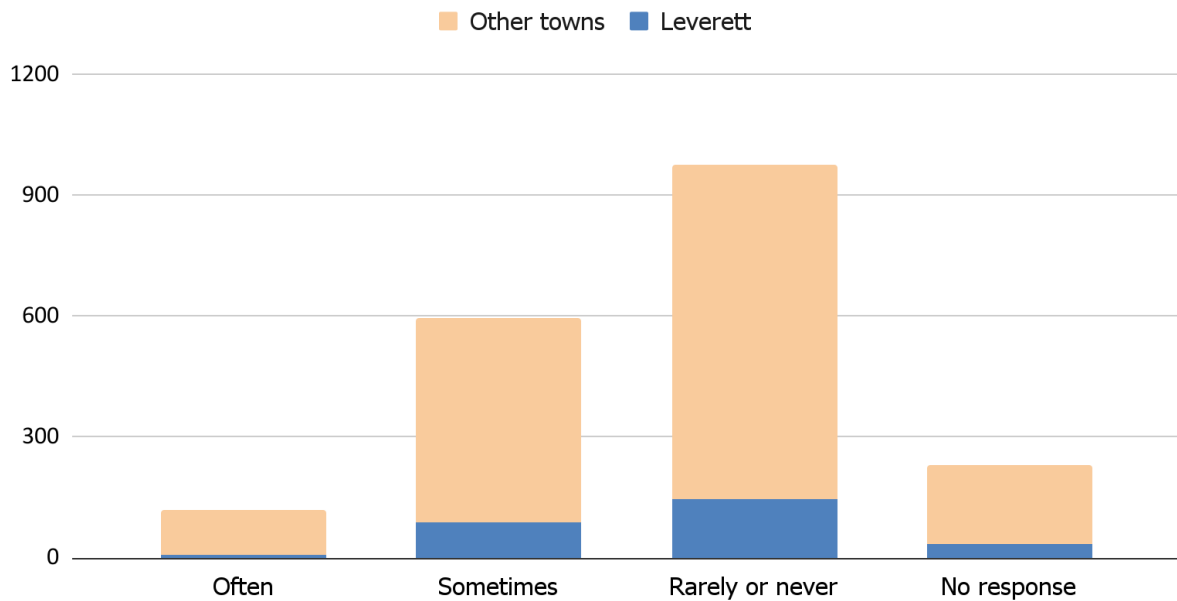
How often do you feel lonely?

(Leverett only)



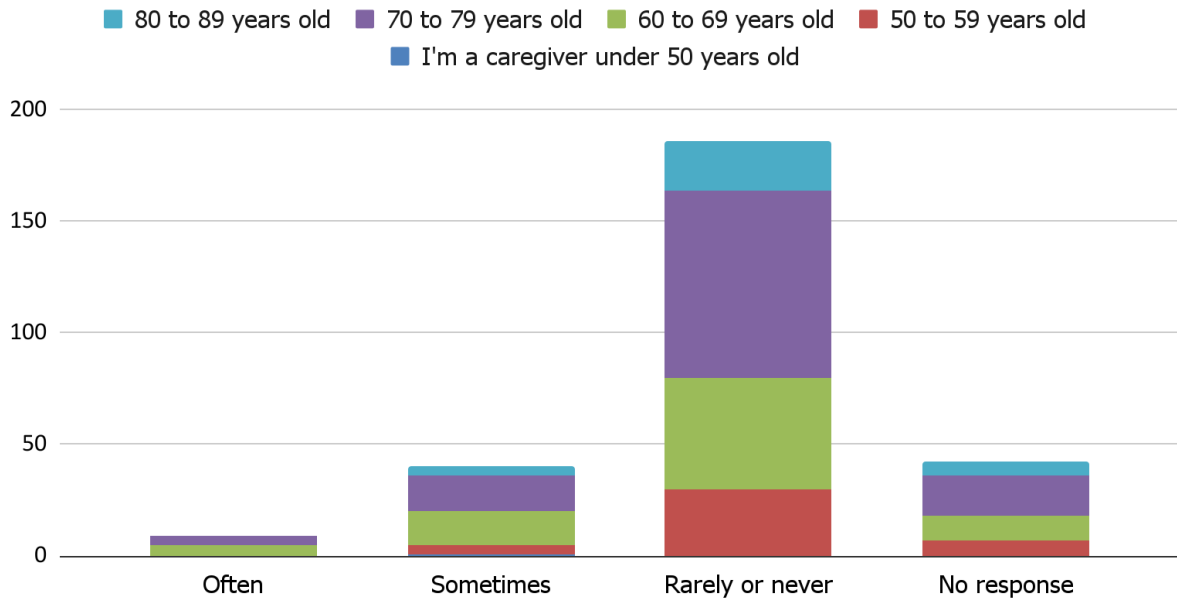
How often do you feel lonely?

(Region)



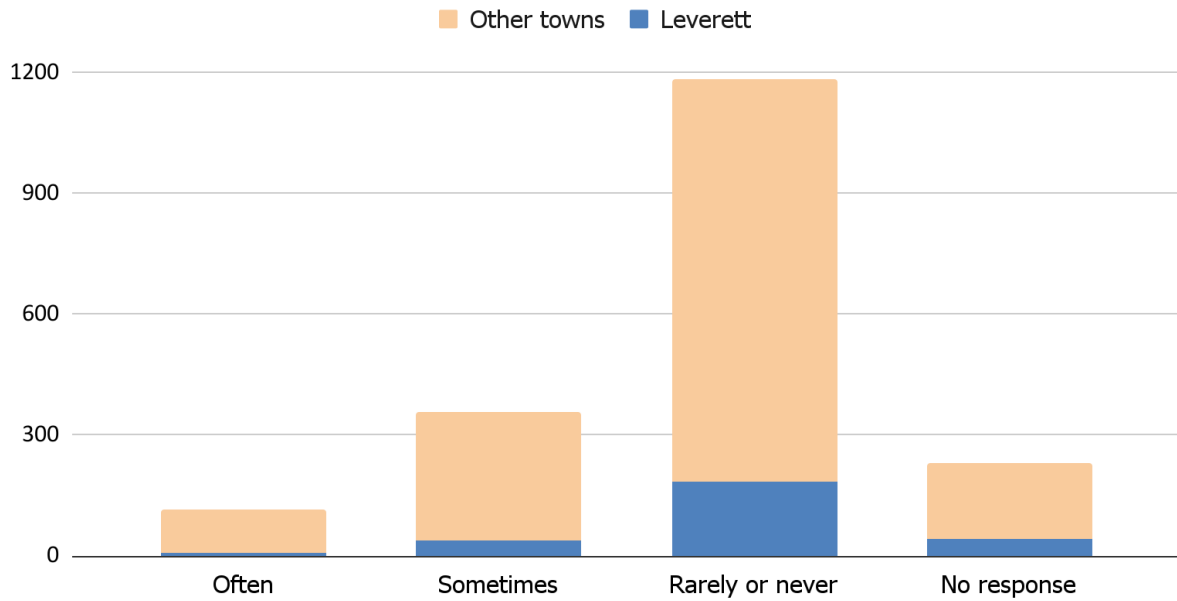
How often do you feel left out of your family?

(Leverett only)



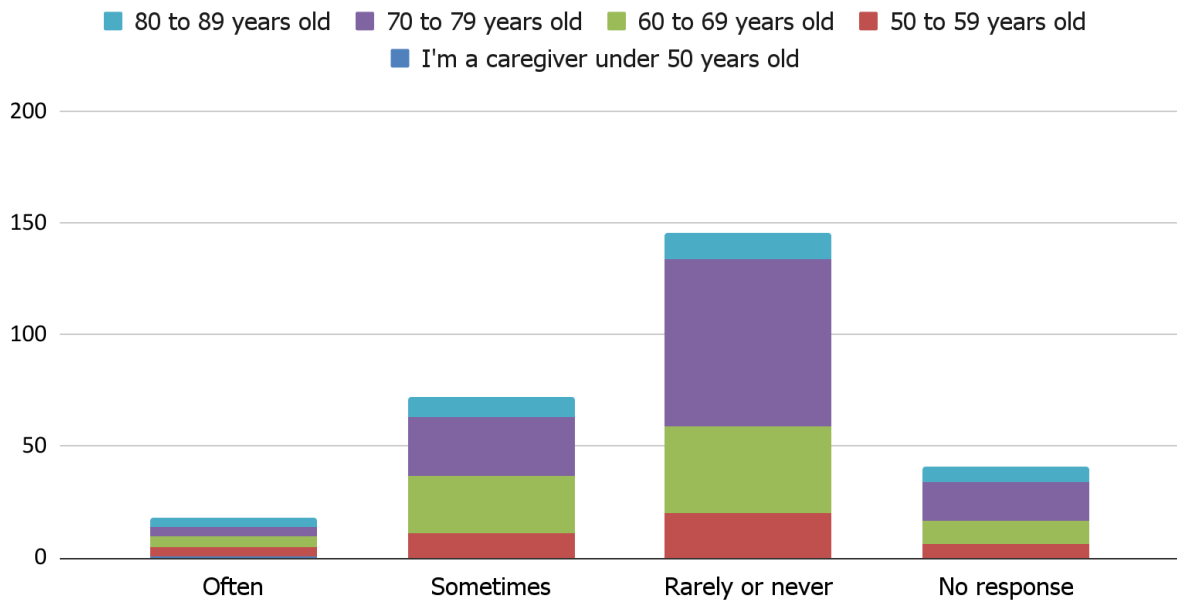
How often do you feel left out of your family?

(Region)



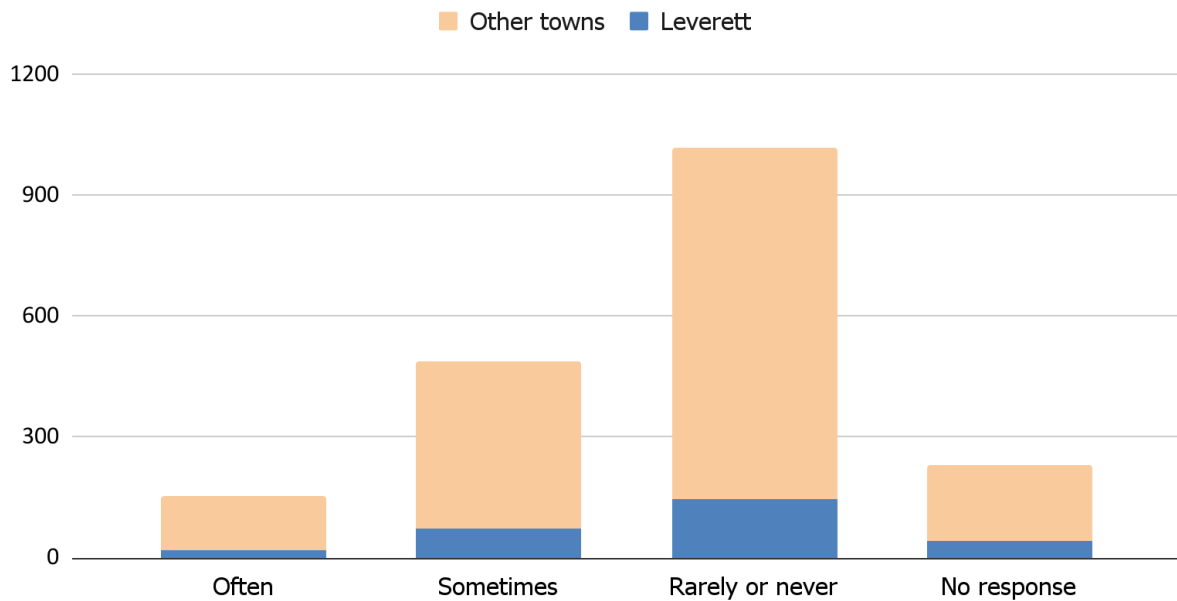
How often do you feel left out of your community?

(Leverett only)



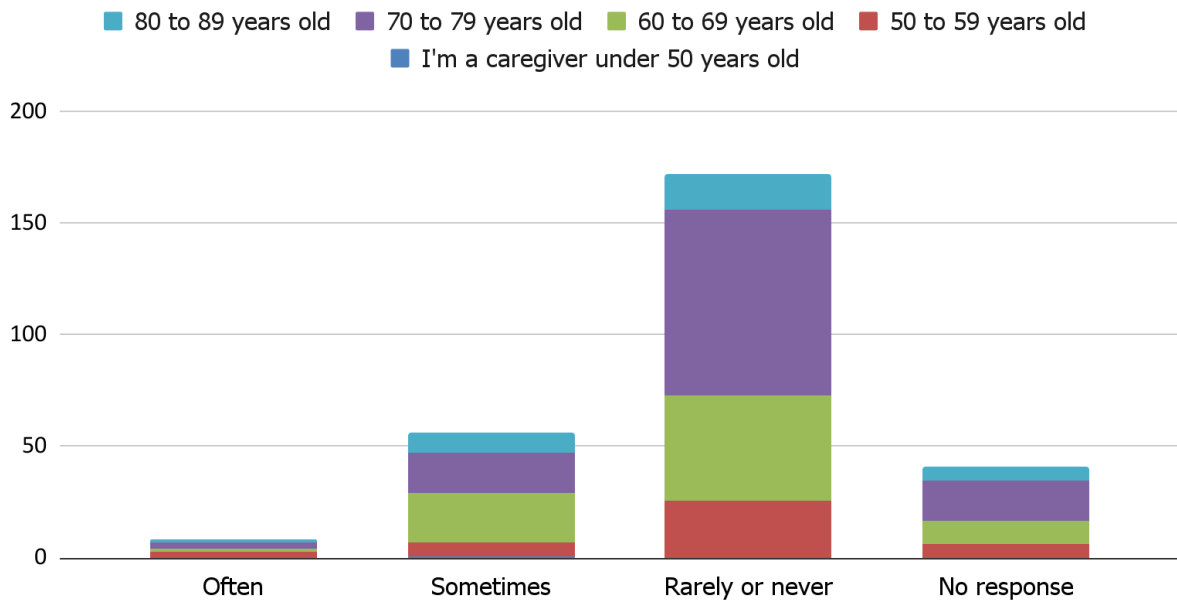
How often do you feel left out of your community?

(Region)



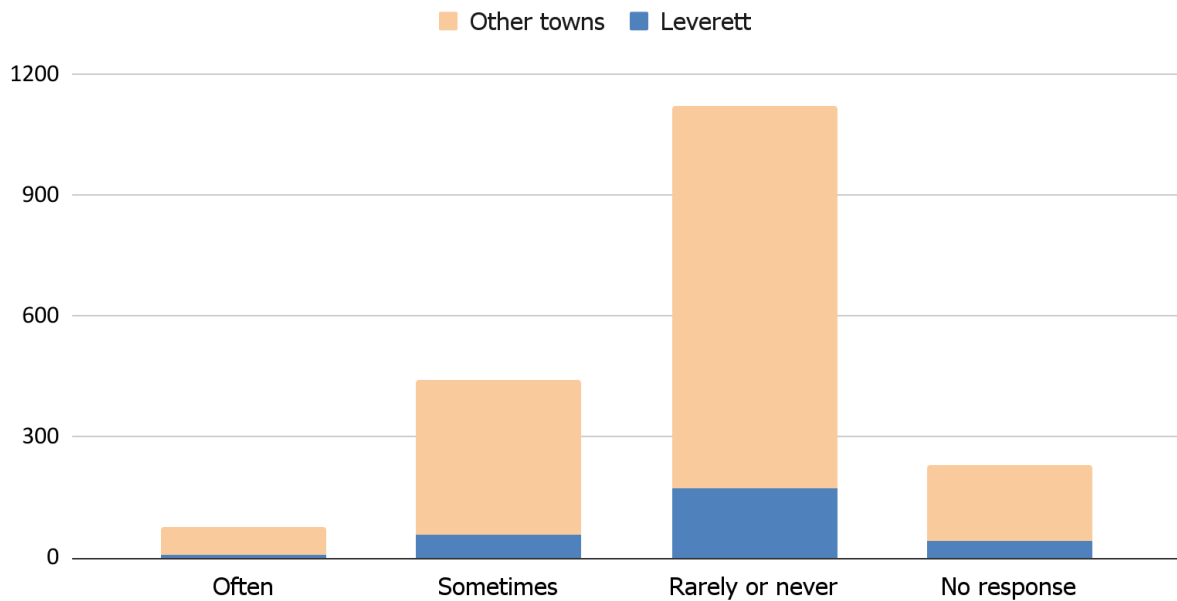
Do you need more help?

(Leverett only)



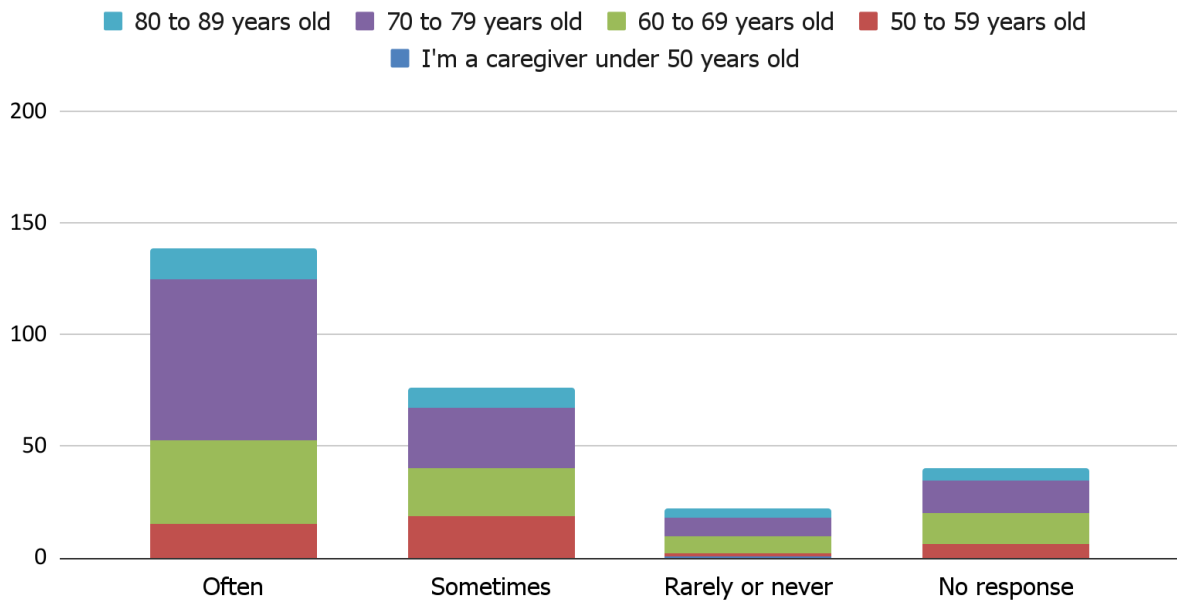
Do you need more help?

(Region)



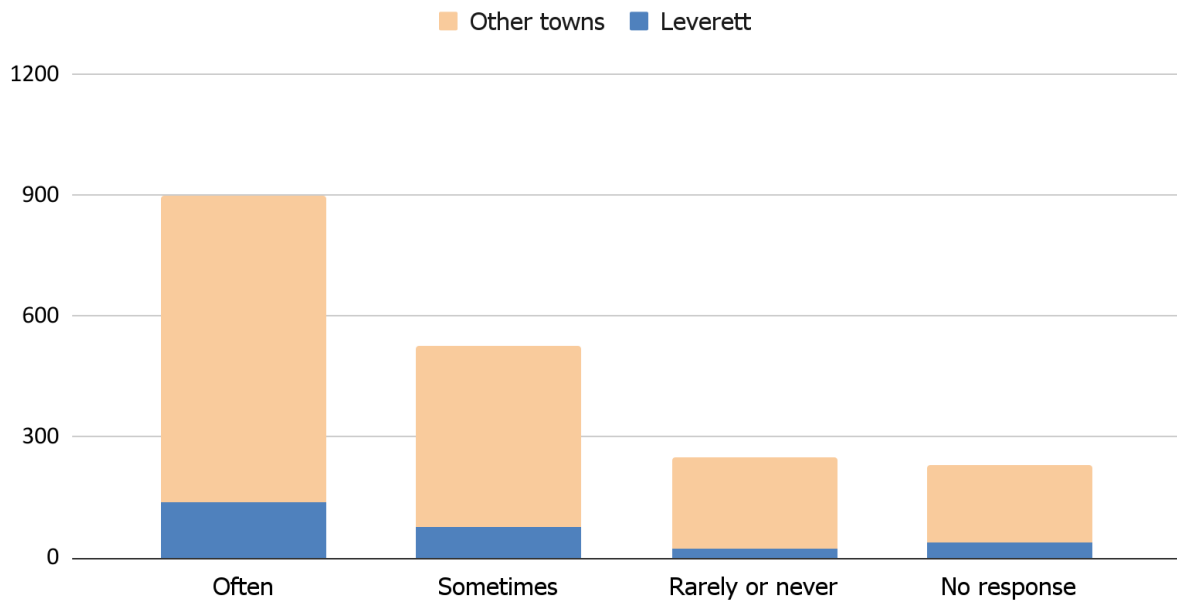
Do you feel well supported?

(Leverett only)



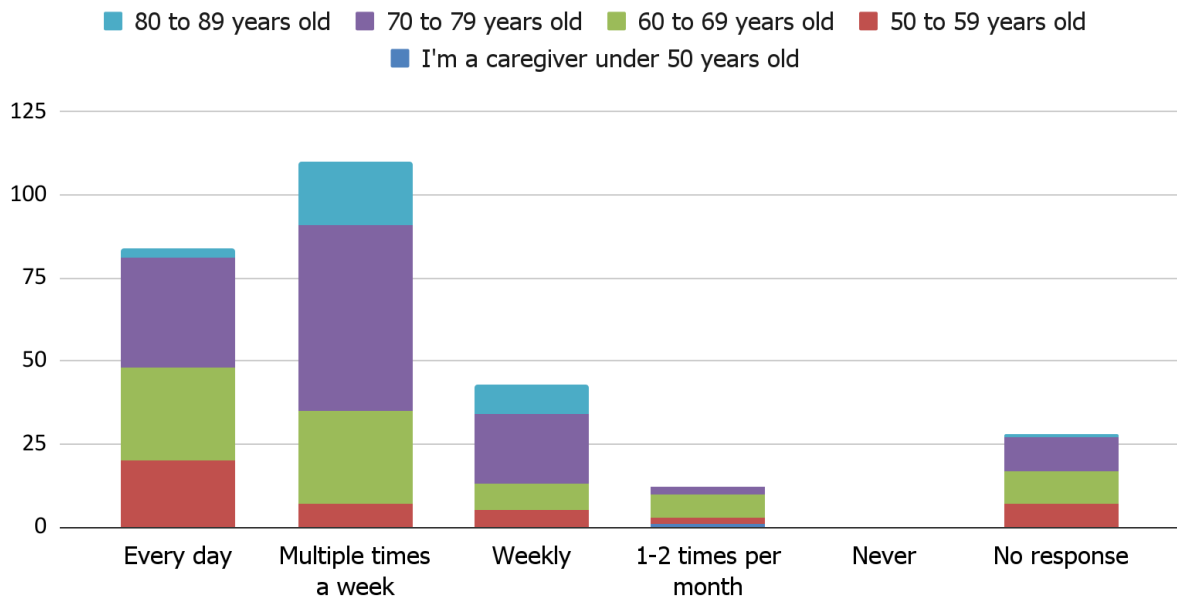
Do you feel well supported?

(Region)



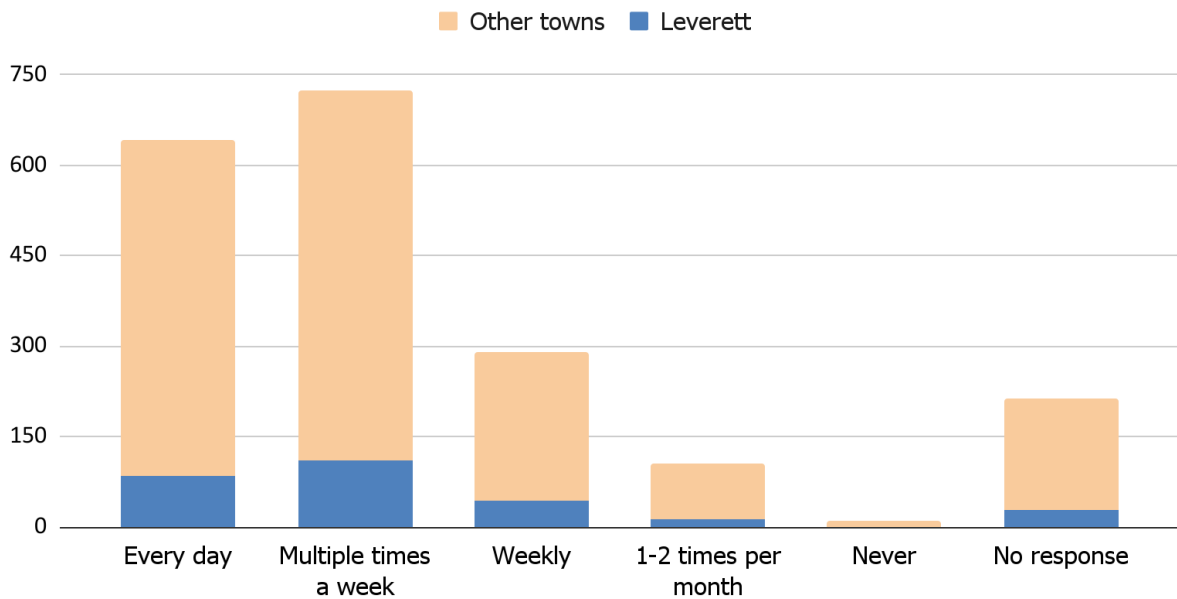
How often do you interact with people who do not live with you?

(Leverett only)



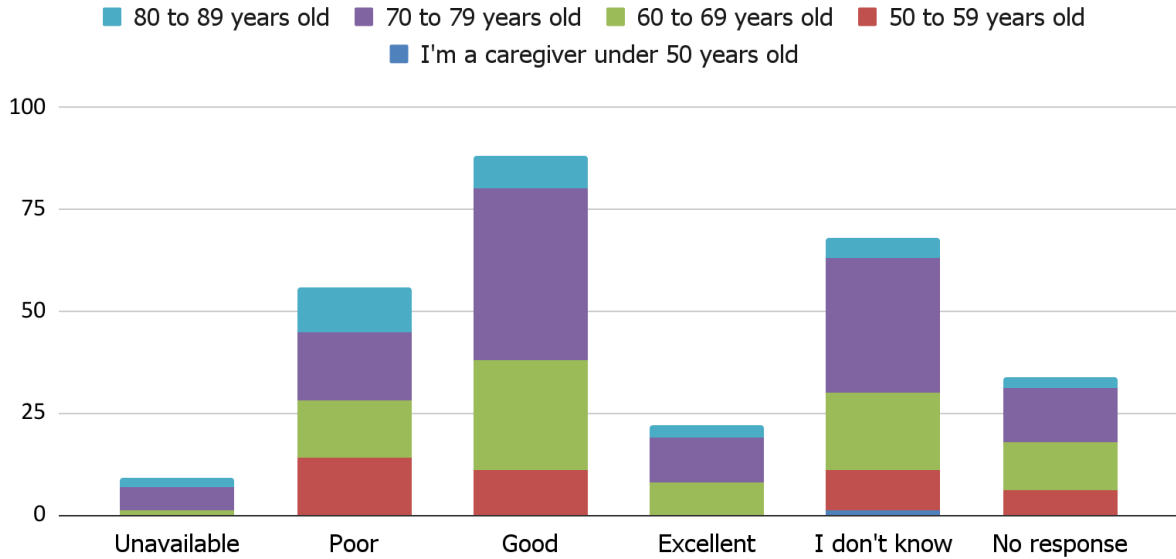
How often do you interact with people who do not live with you?

(Region)



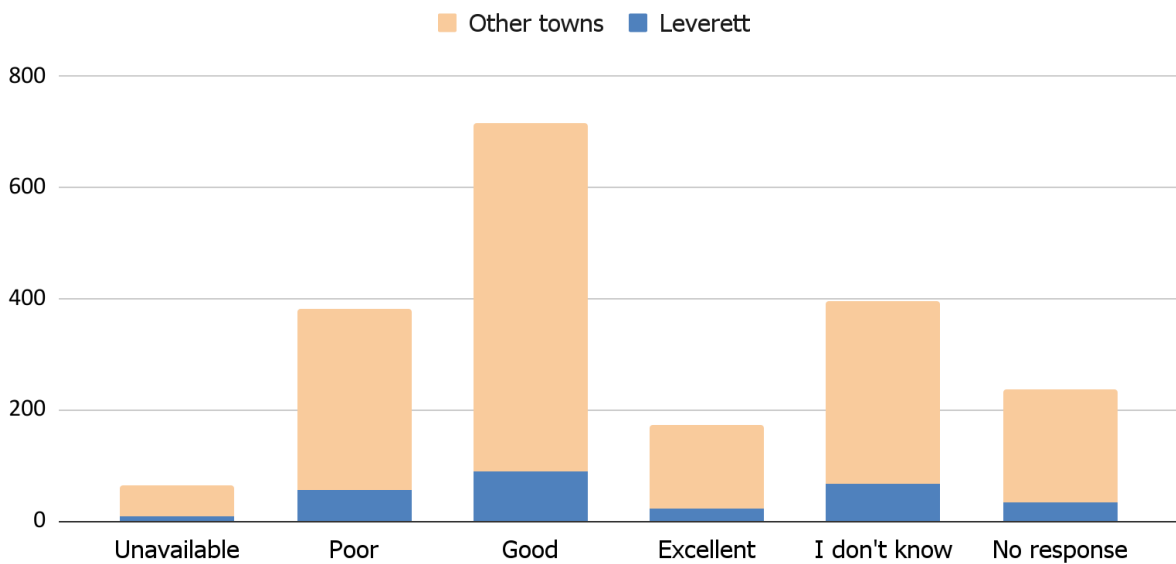
Rate access to conveniently located social and cultural activities for older people

(Leverett only)



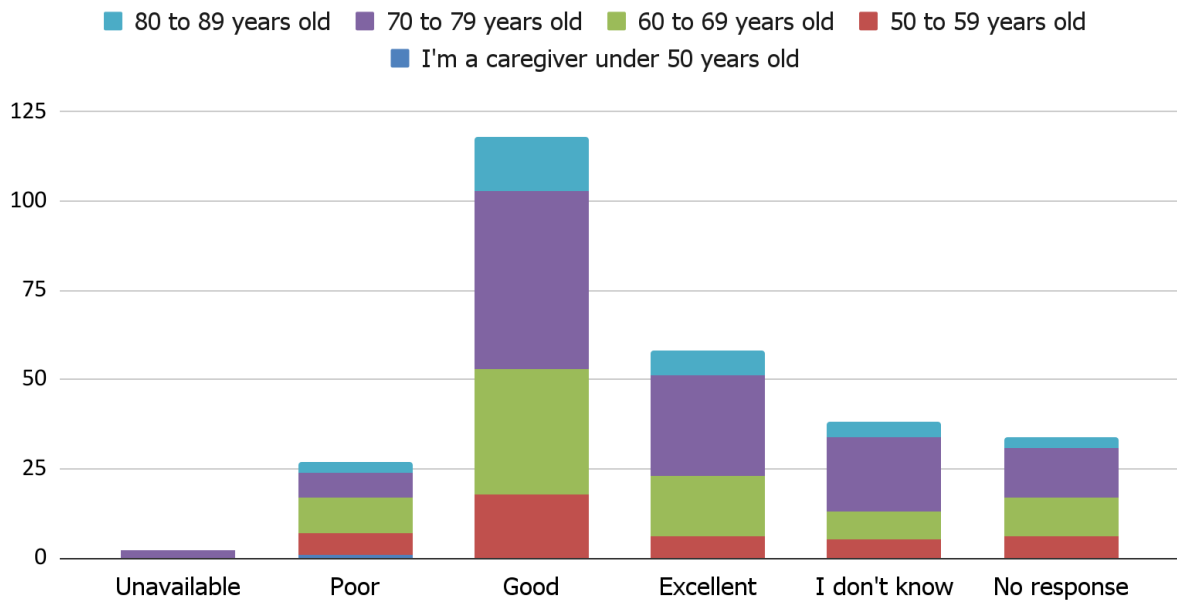
Rate access to conveniently located social and cultural activities for older people

(Region)



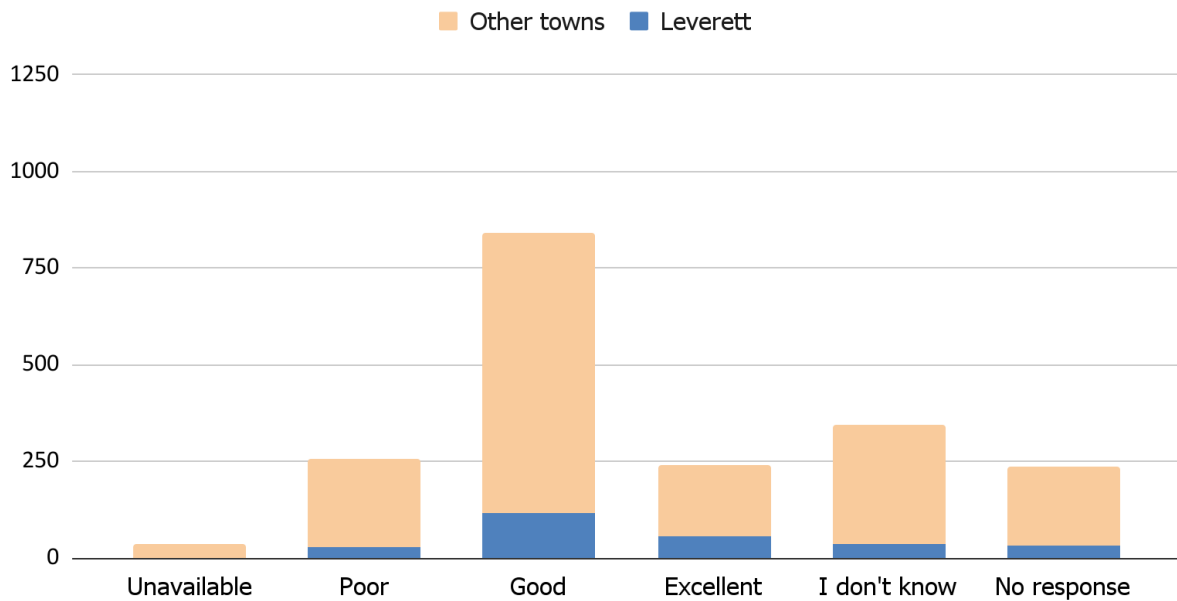
Rate access to events that are affordable to people with my income level

(Leverett only)



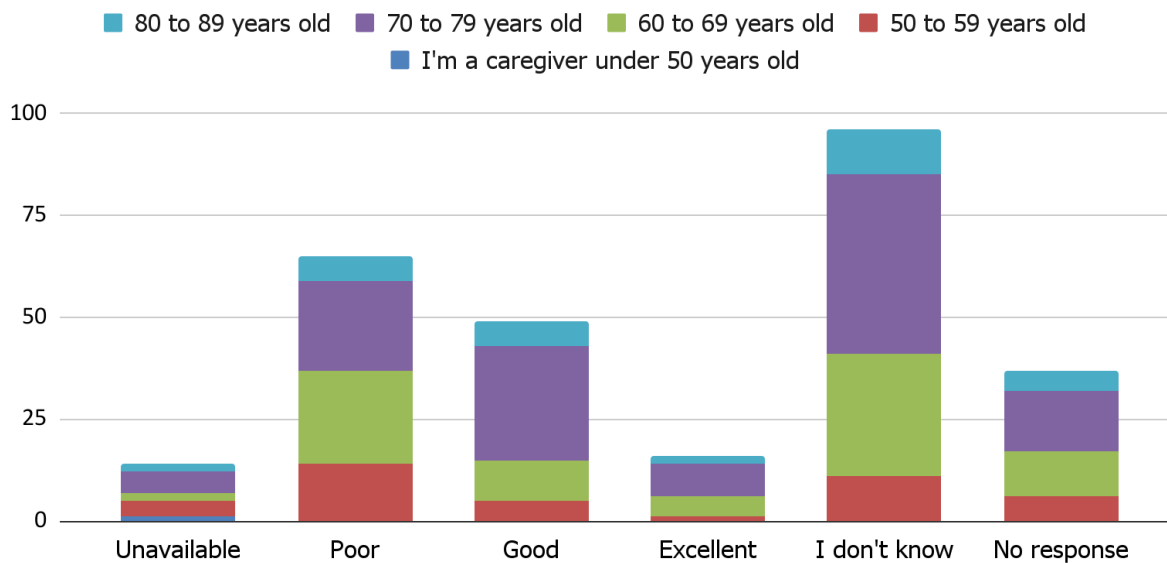
Rate access to events that are affordable to people with my income level

(Region)



Rate access to intergenerational activities that involve both younger and older people

(Leverett only)



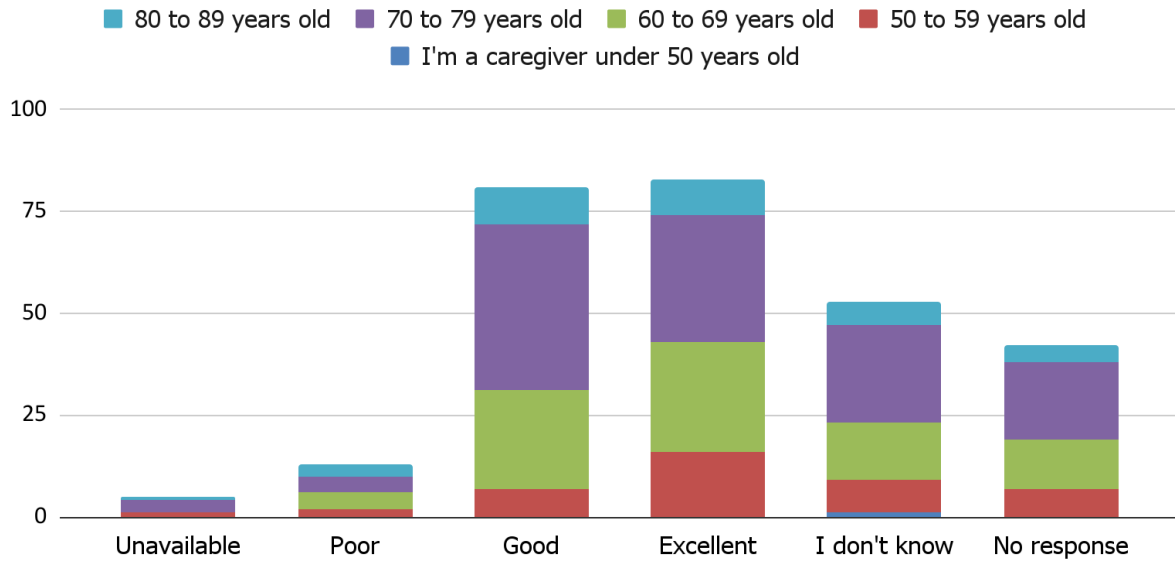
Rate access to intergenerational activities that involve both younger and older people

(Region)



Rate access to social participation opportunities for people who speak my language

(Leverett only)



Rate access to social participation opportunities for people who speak my language

(Region)



Livability Domain: Transportation

The great majority of Leverett respondents (92%) reported driving themselves to get to errands, appointments, and social events. The largest proportion (53%) cited the lack of public transportation to answer why they have difficulty meeting transportation needs.

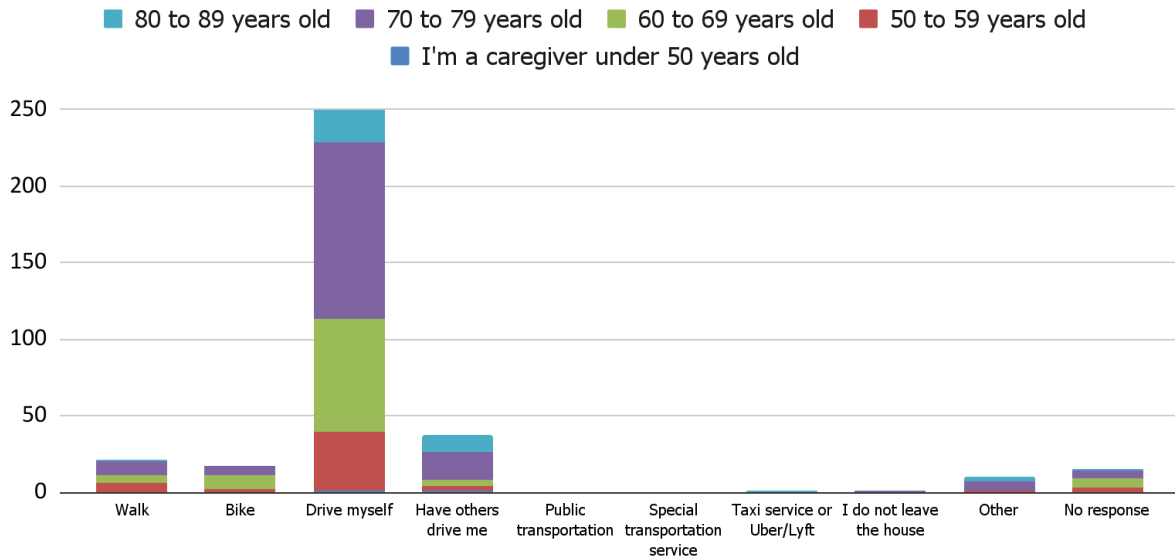
Interestingly, a greater than average 102 respondents skipped this question about difficulty meeting transportation needs – it is tempting to interpret this proportion as not having difficulty meeting transportation needs, but **this is a gap in the data worthy of more exploration to more carefully identify the Leverett elder community point-of-view on and need for transportation.** Results from this domain indicate awareness of a big gap in terms of public transportation, but for the most part survey respondents show little evidence of feeling strongly impacted by this gap.

Observations when comparing the region in proportion to Leverett:

1. A somewhat greater proportion of regional respondents answered 'Walk', 'Public transportation', 'Special transportation service', or 'I do not leave the house' in response to how they usually get around for shopping, medical appointments, social events, etc.
2. Significantly fewer regional respondents indicated 'There is no public transportation in my area', and a somewhat greater proportion indicated 'Not enough free parking available', as difficulties in meeting their transportation needs.

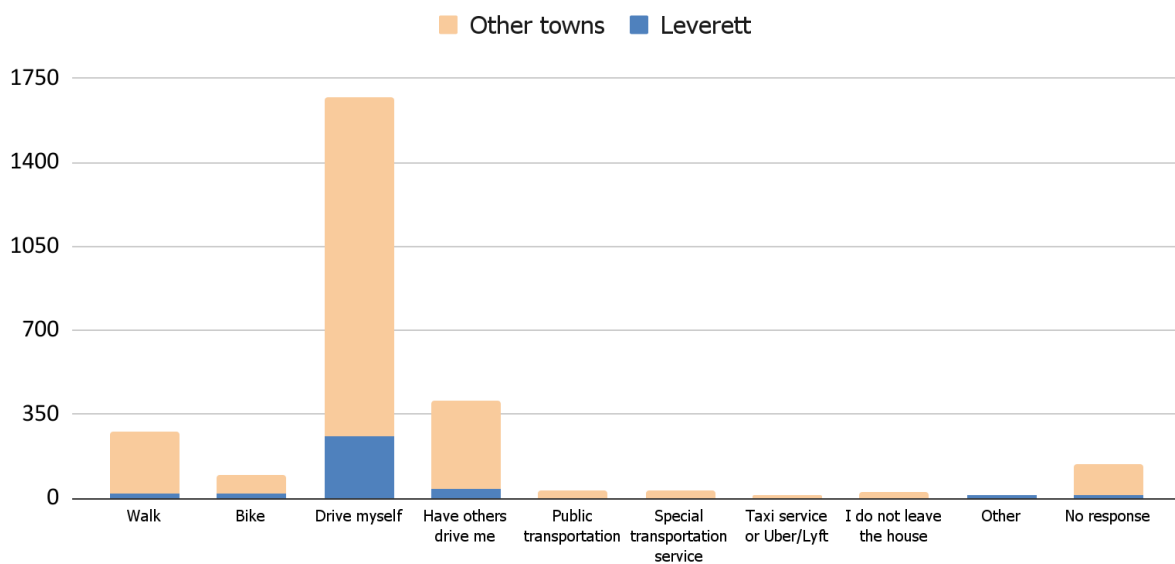
How do you usually get around for shopping, medical appointments, social events, etc.?

(Leverett only)



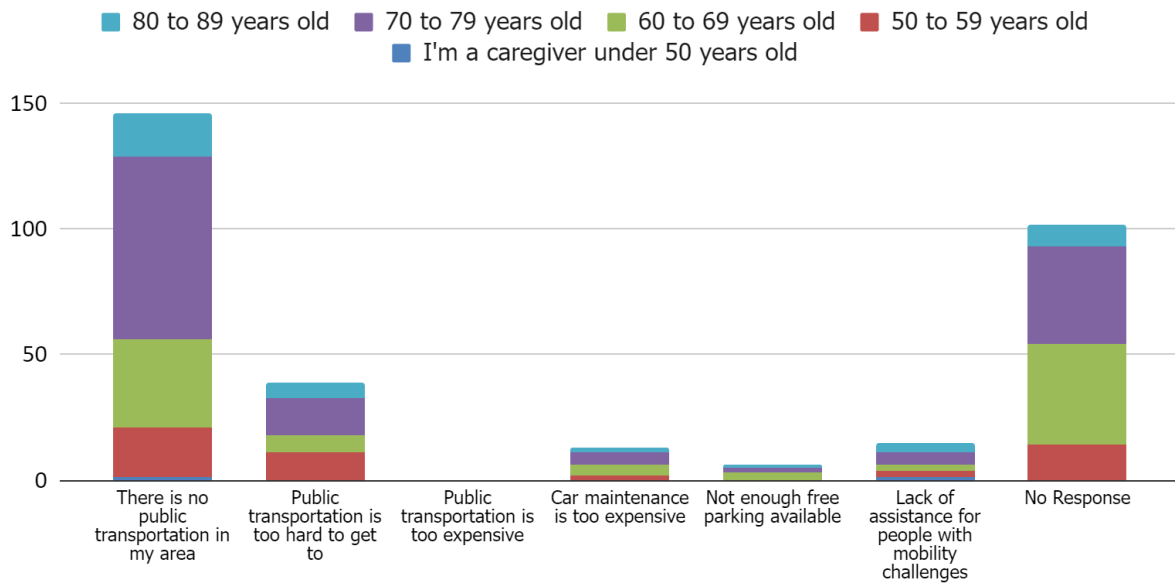
How do you usually get around for shopping, medical appointments, social events, etc.?

(Region)



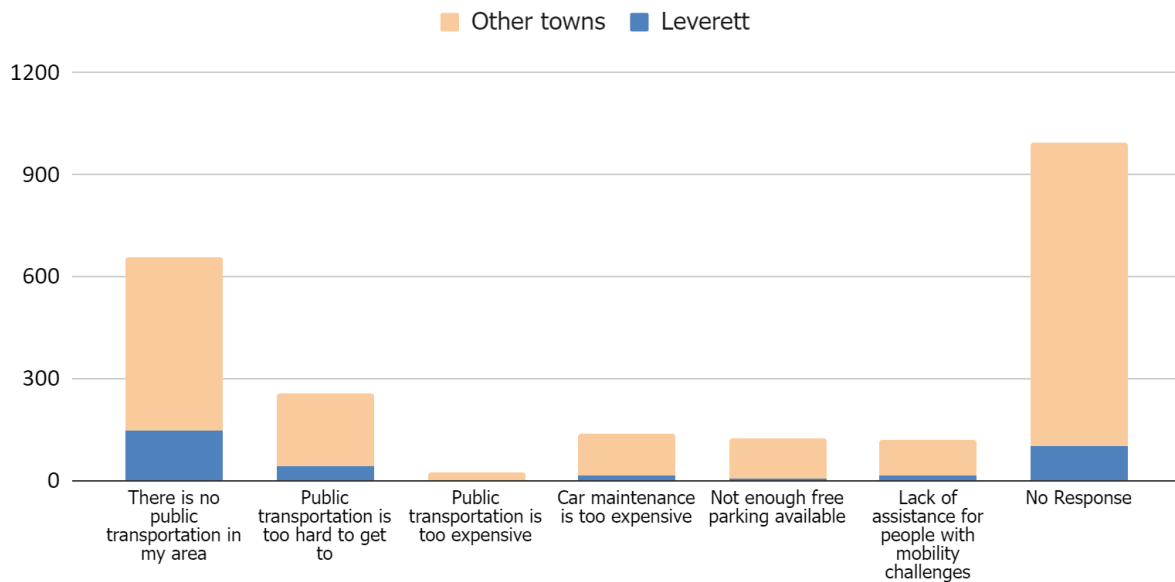
Are you experiencing any of these difficulties in meeting your transportation needs? Check al that apply

(Leverett only)



Are you experiencing any of these difficulties in meeting your transportation needs? Check al that apply

(Region)



Livability Domain: Public Safety

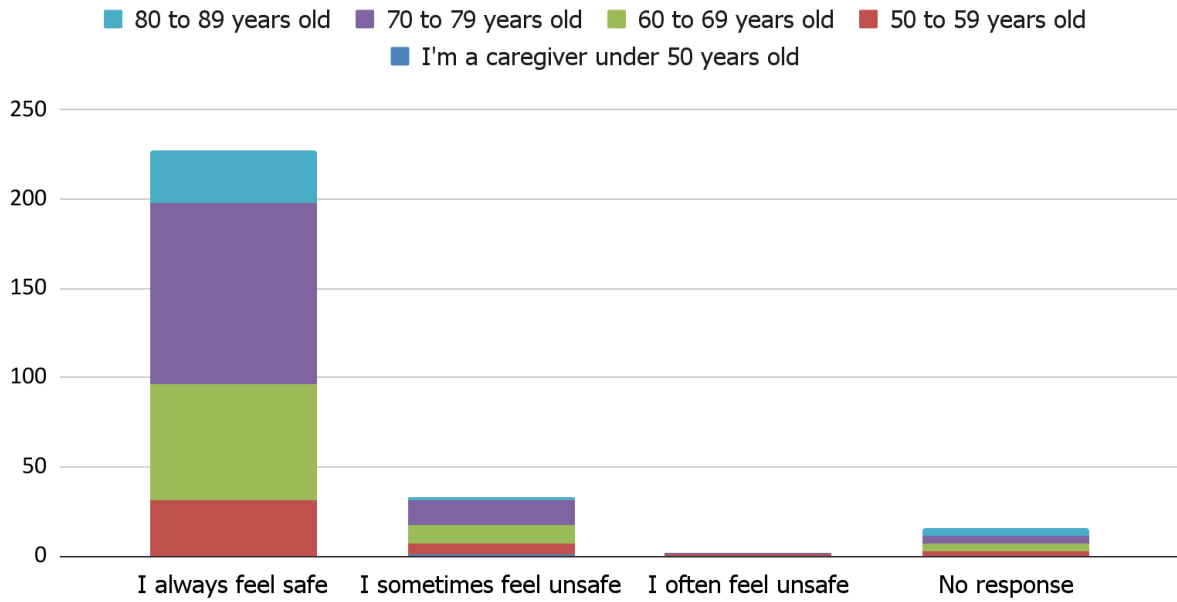
The majority of Leverett respondents (82%) reported that they “always feel safe” in their homes and communities. When asked about well-lit and accessible streets for pedestrians and people with walkers or wheelchairs, most (62%) said access was “poor” or that these were unavailable. The highest proportion (39%) indicated that availability of easy-to-read traffic signs and visual cues for pedestrians was “good” but the second highest proportions selected “poor” (22%) and “unavailable” (11%). **Responses in this domain reflect rural, small town qualities and constraints. They also indicate a need for greater accessibility for pedestrians and those with disabilities, both of which are essential to a vibrant community.**

Observations when comparing the region in proportion to Leverett:

1. Significantly fewer regional respondents rate 'Unavailable', and significantly more rate 'Good' availability, or well-lit and accessible streets or roads for pedestrians and people with walkers or wheelchairs.

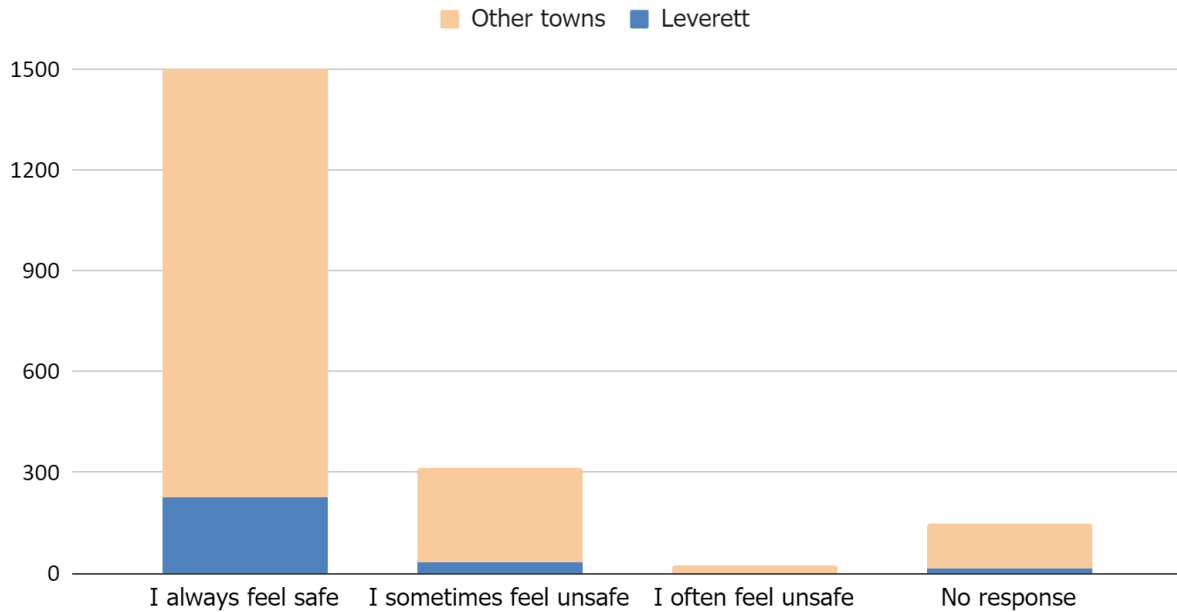
Do you feel safe in your home and community?

(Leverett only)



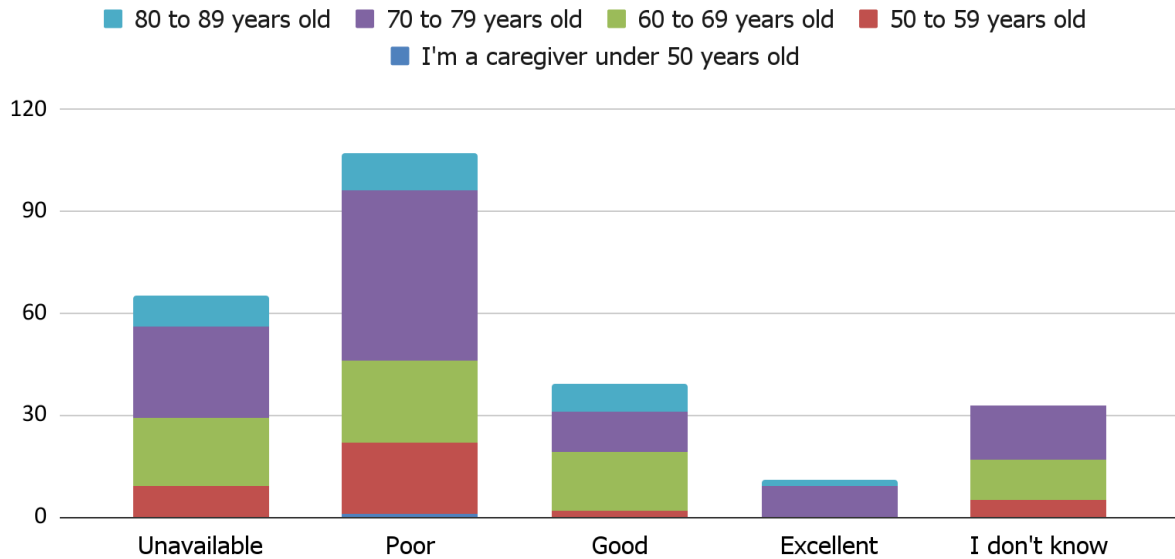
Do you feel safe in your home and community?

(Region)



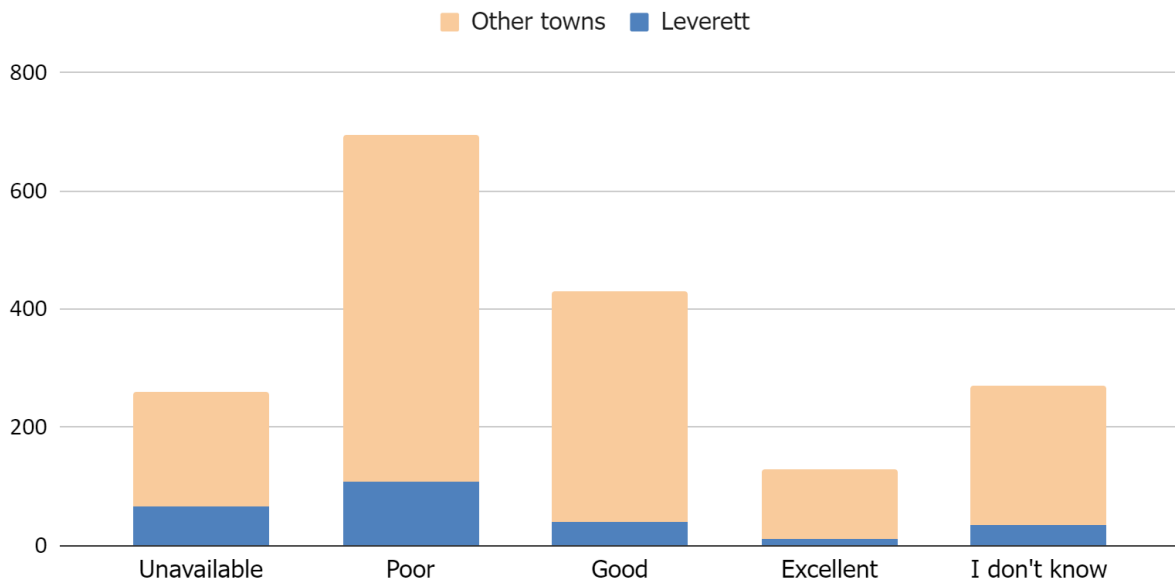
Rate availability of well-lit and accessible streets or roads for pedestrians and people with walkers or wheelchairs

(Leverett only)



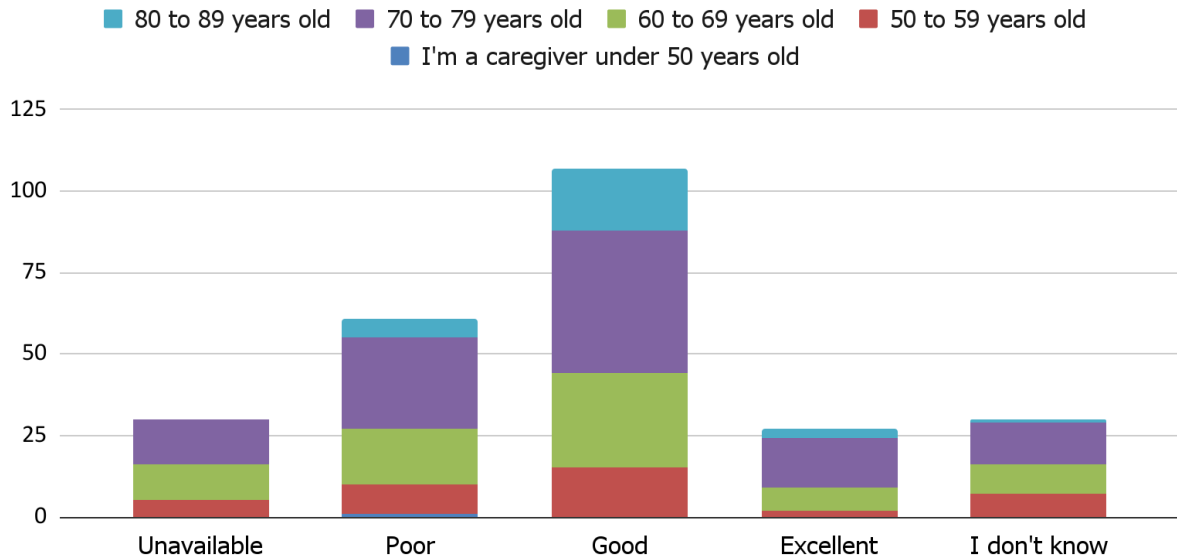
Rate availability of well-lit and accessible streets or roads for pedestrians and people with walkers or wheelchairs

(Region)



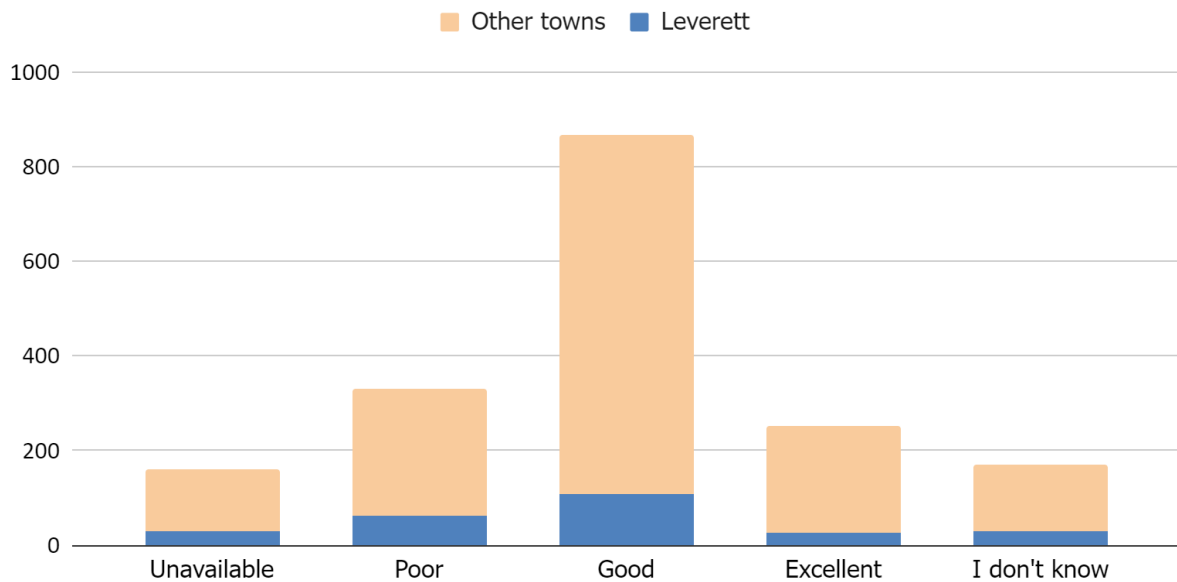
Rate availability of easy to read traffic signs and visual cues for pedestrian crossings

(Leverett only)



Rate availability of easy to read traffic signs and visual cues for pedestrian crossings

(Region)

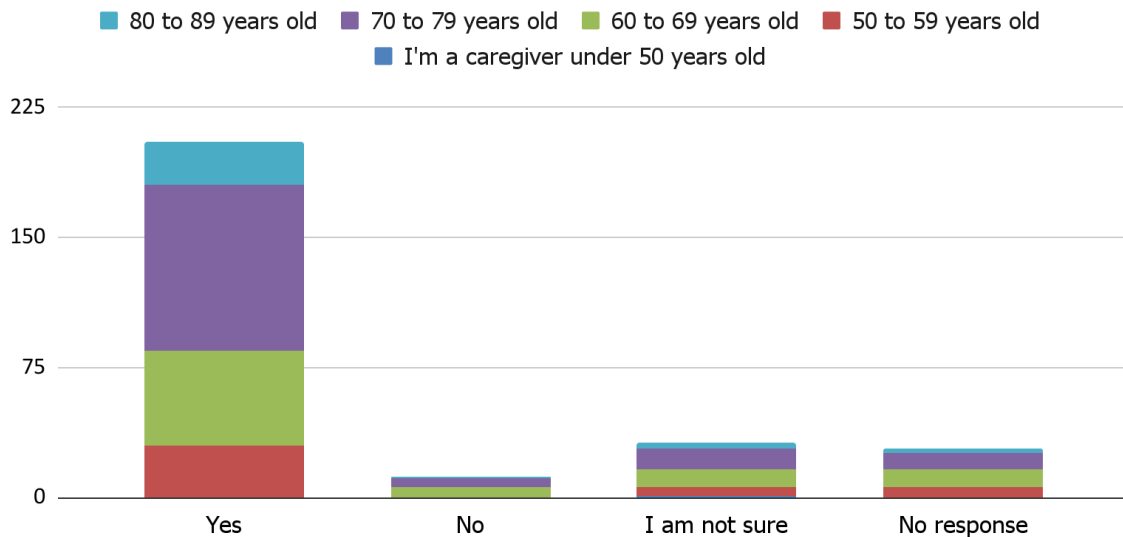


Livability Domain: Emergency Preparedness

The majority of Leverett respondents (74%) indicated that they have family or friends who can help day or night. The pattern of responses is similar between Leverett and the region.

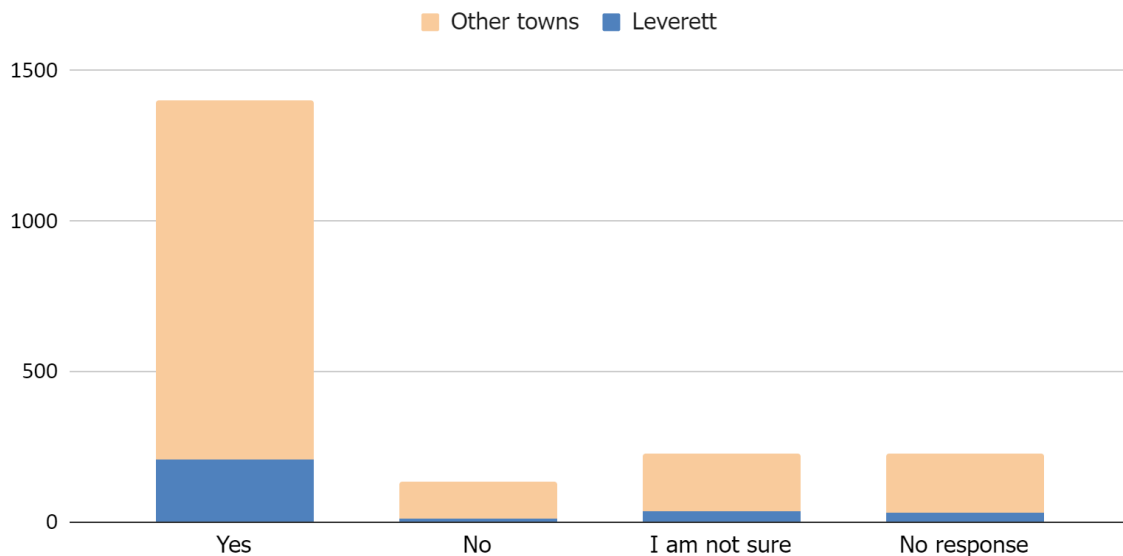
In an emergency, do you have family or friends who can help you at any time of the day or night?

(Leverett only)



In an emergency, do you have family or friends who can help you at any time of the day or night?

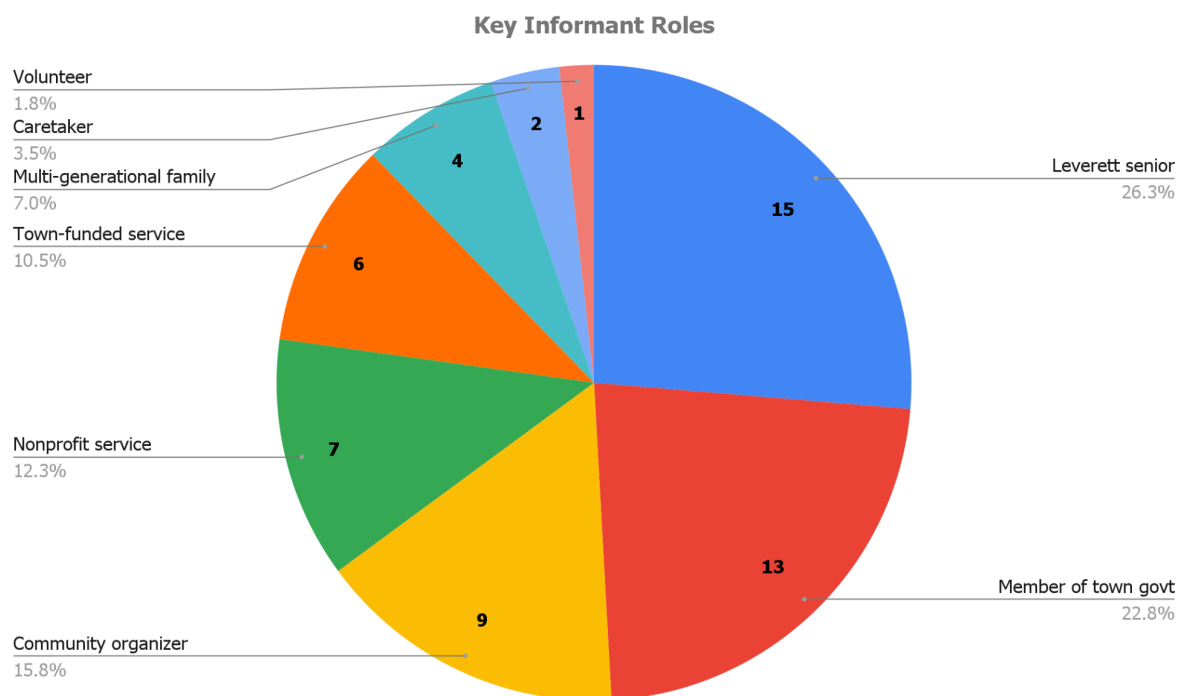
(Region)



Appendix C: Key Informant Interviews asset/gap analysis

Roles (one or more per Key Informant)

- Leverett Elder/ Priority Population (15)
- Member of town government (13)
- Community organizer (9)
- Nonprofit service provider (7)
- Town-funded service provider (6)
- Multi-generational family member (4)
- Caretaker (2)
- Volunteer (1)



Livability Domain: Civic Participation and Employment	
20 key informants provided 42 responses in this domain, about or related to the following themes:	
<p>Civic Participation and Employment Assets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing stigma of aging (1) • Civic participation (8) • COA (1) • Multi-generational families (3) • NGOs (Other) (5) • Other (1) • Sense of culture/history (13) • Skills & knowledge (1) • Town government (1) 	<p>Civic Participation and Employment Gaps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing stigma of aging (1) • Age-friendly policy (1) • COA (7) • Funding for programs/services (2) • Meaningful community participation (5) • Other (1) • Sense of identity & purpose (1) • Skills & knowledge (1) • Town government (7)
<p>Sense of culture/history responses identified the rich sense of local history as an asset of the Leverett elder community.</p> <p>Under Other assets, an informant stated memorably: <i>“Elders are the heart of the town”</i>.</p> <p>COA responses identified a need for staff support for the COA, the COA as an underutilized resource, COA communications and a need for younger members as outreach obstacles, and the need to revitalize the COA since the pandemic as a health & wellness gap. COA activities were described by one informant as a setting for effective outreach.</p> <p>Town government responses identified lack of staffing resources as an outreach obstacle, and the Recreation Committee and town government in general as underutilized resources. One informant identified Historical Commission events and communications as an example of effective outreach.</p>	

Livability Domain: Communication and Information	
21 key informants provided 77 responses in this domain, about or related to the following themes:	
<p>Communication and Information Assets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication by digital system (2) • Communication by mail or in-person 	<p>Communication and Information Gaps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to durable medical equipment (1)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (7) • Communication with signage (1) • Information navigator role/system (4) • Skills & knowledge (8) • Wealth (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to facilities and services (3) • Age-friendly policy (2) • Aging-in-place support (1) • Communication by digital system (13) • Communication by mail or in-person (1) • Communication with signage (1) • Education (general, health) (2) • Emergency preparedness (1) • Funding for programs/services (1) • Information navigator role/system (16) • Joint-use agreements (1) • Meaningful community participation (1) • Senior needs - Community awareness of senior needs (2) • Skills & knowledge (1) • Technology access & literacy (4) • Wealth (3)
<p>Skills & knowledge responses identified elders’ local knowledge, local stories, and communication skills as assets of the Leverett elder community. One informant identified better coordination of skilled locals (including elders) as an underutilized resource.</p> <p>Information navigator role/system responses identified need of a navigator role to organize and help people find information; health & wellness gaps in a lack of publicity for events, insufficient outreach and service delivery resources for first-responder programs, and the absence of a person and centralized system to coordinate knowledge and help people find information and resources; a lack of organized information from the town as an outreach obstacle; and phone trees as an underutilized communication resource. Informants identified effective outreach including compiled knowledge of existing services and resources, coordinated comprehensive or wrap-around services or resources, an “ombudsman” or resource navigator, and education events that attract bigger groups where they can get updates all at once.</p> <p>Communication by digital system responses identified digital newsletter and other internet-based methods as outreach obstacles that do not work well to reach elders. The town website, Code Red, and Leverett Connects were identified as underutilized resources.</p>	

Livability Domain: Health Services and Community Supports	
23 key informants provided 116 responses in this domain, about or related to the following themes:	
<p>Health Services and Community Supports Assets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to facilities and services (4) • Care for community (12) • COA (3) • Joint-use agreements (1) • LifePath (6) • NGOs (Other) (4) • Other (1) • Skills & knowledge (17) • Wealth (3) 	<p>Health Services and Community Supports Gaps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to durable medical equipment (2) • Access to facilities and services (26) • Age-friendly policy (1) • Aging-in-place support (7) • COA (2) • Death & dying support (3) • Education (general, health) (1) • Food security/affordability (5) • Funding for programs/services (2) • LifePath (4) • NGOs (Other) (3) • Other (1) • Public health nurse (7) • Social connection (1)
<p>Skills & knowledge responses identified education, family experience, life experience, professional experience, talent, wisdom, and worldly knowledge as assets of the Leverett elder community that empower a highly supportive community.</p> <p>Access to facilities and services responses identified health & wellness gaps in local and regional public health resources, library staff to run programs, the baby boom cohort in retirement straining the regional healthcare system, COVID creating healthcare worker burnout, town aging and wellness resources, a need for fractional care providers, a lack of general practitioners and geriatric specialists in the region, health insurance supplements, and support for routine exercise and movement; needs for access to wrap-around services, Medicare assistance, mobility programs, respite care, care facilities, general healthcare, support groups, third-party caretakers, mental health, and vision-impairment support; and the challenge of developing scalable programs as an outreach obstacle. Responses identified effective outreach examples in fractional care providers, paid providers (instead of volunteers), and hospice programs. One informant described local healthcare resources as a community asset.</p>	

Livability Domain: Housing	
33 key informants provided 24 responses in this domain, about or related to the following themes:	
Housing Assets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aging-in-place support (4) 	Housing Gaps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable Housing Programs (5) • Aging-in-place support (11) • General Housing (1) • Senior housing (3)
<p>Aging-in-place support responses identified independence (1) and aging-in-place support (1) as assets of the Leverett elder community. One informant identified home visits for specific needs as a setting for effective outreach about other resources. One informant described the Amherst Aging in Place builders group as an example of effective outreach (note that AIP has closed permanently since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic). 10 informants identified aging-in-place support as an unmet need of the Leverett elder community, and one informant described this outreach obstacle that is worth more attention and awareness: “Afraid of losing their homes if they ask for help”.</p>	

Livability Domain: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	
18 key informants provided 57 responses in this domain, about or related to the following themes:	
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Assets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible social places (1) • Commerce & Development (1) • Recreation & natural resources (3) • Social events (2) 	Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Gaps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to facilities and services (3) • Accessible social places (8) • Commerce & development (5) • Information navigator role/system (1) • Joint-use agreements (20) • NGOs (Other) (1) • Recreation & natural resources (4) • Senior/Community center (8)
<p>Recreation & natural resources responses identified Leverett’s beauty, natural resources, and recreational access as assets, and the pavilion plan, parks and recreation planning and development, outdoor recreation access, and the Friendship Trail along Leverett Pond from the boat launch to Cider Mill Road as underutilized resources.</p>	

Joint-use agreements responses identified underutilized resources for the elder community in Leverett Elementary School (LES) (after hours, as an exercise space, as a site for pop-up events and knowledge hub activities, and use of the school building instead of a dedicated senior center), the Leverett Coop as a site for social connection, and Town Hall and other town center facilities for events and instead of a dedicated senior center.

Livability Domain: Respect and Social Inclusion

19 key informants provided 66 responses in this domain, about or related to the following themes:

Respect and Social Inclusion <i>Assets</i>	Respect and Social Inclusion <i>Gaps</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to facilities and services (1) • Addressing stigma of aging (1) • Age-friendly policy (1) • Care for community (1) • Diversity (6) • Education (general, health) (1) • Intergenerational activities (1) • Other (2) • Senior needs - Community awareness of senior needs (2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to facilities and services (1) • Addressing stigma of aging (6) • Age-friendly policy (3) • Aging-in-place support (3) • Intergenerational activities (10) • Multi-generational families (1) • Senior needs - Averse to focusing on senior needs (1) • Senior needs - Community awareness of senior needs (18) • Sense of identity & purpose (4) • Social connection (1) • Wealth (2)

Diversity responses identified diversity as an asset of the Leverett elder community.

Senior needs - Community awareness of senior needs responses identified health & wellness gaps in people who lack family support and the treatment of seniors as a homogenous group; need for more community awareness of senior needs, need for inclusivity efforts for those who are differently abled and specifically for people who are 80 or older, and need for community recognition that seniors are not a homogenous group; outreach obstacles in the lack of data about people struggling with isolation, the need to use different communication methods for different people. Five informants identified the assumption that seniors are a homogenous group as an outreach obstacle. One informant identified community organizing as an underutilized resource.

Intergenerational activities responses identified a need for more intergenerational activities (6 responses), lack of intergenerational social events as an outreach obstacle, and intergenerational activities and programs as an underutilized resource.

Livability Domain: Social Participation	
20 key informants provided 58 responses in this domain, about or related to the following themes:	
<p>Social Participation Assets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care for community (1) COA (3) Discussion groups (3) Social connection (4) Social events (3) 	<p>Social Participation Gaps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to facilities and services (1) COA (2) Communication by digital system (2) Other (1) Senior needs - Community awareness of senior needs (4) Sense of identity & purpose (2) Social connection (18) Social events (14)
<p>Social connection responses identified social interconnection among residents as an asset of the Leverett elder community and personal relationships as an example of effective outreach. A need for more social connection was identified by 13 informants. Three informants identified health & wellness gaps in the stress of loneliness and confinement, isolation, and social connection. One informant identified lack of trust as an outreach obstacle. Another identified an outreach obstacle when the person doing the outreach does not personally know the elders they are reaching out to.</p> <p>Social events responses identified lack of relevant events as a health & wellness gap; a need (11 responses) for social events, entertainment, cultural events, and the senior luncheon; and social events as an underutilized resource, with one informant requesting more pop-up pubs and other pop-up events.</p>	

Livability Domain: Transportation
19 key informants provided 33 responses in this domain, about or related to the following themes:
<p>Transportation Gaps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to facilities and services (4) Emergency preparedness (1) Transportation (28)
Transportation responses identified better transportation options as a health & wellness

gap (5 informants), a need of the Leverett elder community (18 informants), an outreach obstacle (2 informants, with one pointing out that many Leverett homes are remote and hard to reach); underutilized resources in Village Neighbors ride services due to lack of awareness (2 informants) and Lyft or van services organized to better meet senior needs (1 informant).

Livability Domain: Public Safety

10 key informants provided 18 responses in this domain, about or related to the following themes:

Public Safety Assets

- Wellness checks (1)

Public Safety Gaps

- Access to facilities and services (1)
- Aging-in-place support (8)
- Senior needs - Community awareness of senior needs (1)
- Wellness checks (7)

Livability Domain: Emergency Preparedness

**2 key informants provided 5 responses in this domain:
1 Asset and 4 Gaps**

Appendix D: Additional secondary data

Older secondary data sources continued from [Output 1 of this report](#).

2018 MA Healthy Aging Community Profile for Leverett

In partnership with The Gerontology Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston and Tufts Health Plan Foundation, The Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative (MHAC) healthy aging and the delivery of elder services in Massachusetts through evidence-based programs and other health promotion programs. Their searchable [dashboard of Massachusetts community profiles](#)²⁰ presents a wide variety of healthy aging indicators and compares individual community estimates to state estimates. The main sources of data included in community profiles are 1) the American Community Survey (2012-2016); 2) Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Master Beneficiary Summary File (2014-2015); and 3) The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (2010-2015). The full list of data sources is available in their [Technical Report](#)²¹.

[MHAC's summary about Leverett](#)²² indicates that Leverett's elder residents experience lower rates of disease compared to the benchmark, particularly with regard to chronic illness. However, Leverett sees disparities in some mental and behavioral health outcomes including self-reported poor mental health days in the last month, post traumatic stress disorder, personality and psychiatric disorders; and some measures of wellness and prevention: % meeting CDC guidelines for muscle strengthening exercise, % getting the recommended hours of sleep, colorectal cancer screening, smoking, and oral health including annual dental exams and significant (6 or more) tooth loss.

The MHAC report also scores Leverett transportation 0/10 and highlights issues with access to care, citing 0 primary care providers, hospitals, community health centers, nursing homes, health agencies, etc. within 5 miles of Leverett. Resource suggestions to promote healthy aging include “having a Council on Aging, recreation department, and lifelong learning opportunities.”

²⁰ <https://mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/data-report/explore-the-profiles/community-profiles/>

²¹ <https://mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/data-report/explore-the-profiles/data-sources-and-methods/#technical>

²² https://mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/wp-content/themes/mhac/pdf/community_profiles/MA_Towncode154_Leverett.pdf

2015 Affordable Housing Trust Survey

[The Leverett 2015 Affordable Housing Trust Survey of Residents 55 & Older](#)²³ received responses from 49 households. Age of respondents and partners/spouses were as follows:

- A. 55 – 59: 10 people
- B. 60 – 64: 11 people
- C. 65 – 69: 21 people
- D. 70 – 74: 22 people
- E. 75 – 79: 8 people
- F. 80 plus: 5 people

The following is a partial list of questions and responses from the survey report excerpted here because there is overlap in the concerns and responses of this year's LifePath survey and Leverett needs assessment.

- Do you plan to remain in your current residence as you age?
 - Yes (22)
 - No (4)
 - Maybe (30)
- If No or Maybe: Check all that may apply
 - Move to another Town/area with lower housing costs/taxes (19)
 - Move to area with more accessible services (stores, transportation, etc.) (19)
 - Move because of availability of Senior Housing with more services (13)
 - Move to smaller residence in Leverett/smaller house (8)
 - Move to be closer to, or live with, family (6)
- If Yes or Maybe: What financial and/or support services might you need to remain in your home?
 - Tax relief (28)
 - Home repair/modification (22)
 - Home/Health Care (22)
 - Transportation help (23)
 - Home maintenance help (31)
- Would you choose to remain in Leverett (or seriously consider the option) if some type of Senior Housing facility was available at the same or lower cost to you?
 - Yes (22)
 - No (13)
 - Maybe (10)
- Are you aware of local and State tax relief and home repair/maintenance assistance programs for seniors?

²³ https://leverett.ma.us/files/HOUSING_SURVEY_RESULTS.pdf

- Yes (17)
- No (26)
- Have you ever received this assistance?
 - Yes (4)
 - No (42)

The Affordable Housing Trust web page hosts Homeowners Assistance Program application files and some meeting minutes. In personal discussion with Affordable Housing Trust members, TCR has learned that the Trust is still actively working on a plan to develop more affordable housing in Leverett. TCR is also aware of the work done by several town boards and committees to address general affordability and support tax relief. **TCR found no report or other documentation of Affordable Housing Trust outcomes in follow-up to the 2015 survey, or whether the current direction of affordable housing plans will prioritize the needs of elder residents. This is a gap in the data that merits follow-up and ongoing collaboration between the COA and the Affordable Housing Trust.**

Resources listed on the COA page of the Town website

To assess available resources and programs, the TCR team took inventory of resources listed on the Leverett Council on Aging website as well as LifePath's website. Resources are listed below. Current availability has not been confirmed for all listed resources.

- [COVID Vaccine Information in Franklin County](#)
- Take it easy Yoga is currently on Zoom only. A \$6.00 donation is suggested. Contact Nancy Paglia at: npaglia62@gmail.com
- A Foot Clinic is held at the Town Hall on the third Tuesday of the month starting on Dec. 16, 2021. A \$35-45 donation is suggested. Call 367-9573 for information or to make an appointment.
- [Lifepath's Farm-to-Home Program](#): FREE delivery of fresh produce, meat, and dairy products to older adults and adults living with disabilities. CALL 877-590-2450 to apply. If you are experiencing difficulty getting to food distribution sites or are experiencing food insecurity for other reasons, call for an application form. Volunteers needed to help with the program – Call 413-773-5555 ext. 3006
- [Home Repair and Modification Programs](#) to help seniors afford to make their homes accessible or to remove health and safety hazards.
- [Fuel Assistance-Community Action](#) -- Community Action's Energy Programs are committed to helping community members with low income in Franklin and Hampshire Counties cover their energy costs. Their programs work to reduce energy consumption, improve heating systems, and help pay a portion of fuel and utility bills. [Schedule an appointment](#) online or call Community Action at 800-370-0940 or 413-774-2310 for more information.

- [PVTA Dial-a Ride](#) -- PVTA offers door-to-door, demand responsive accessible van service to seniors over the age of 60 throughout the PVTA's 24 member communities. Senior Service trips are provided, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday - Friday, on a space available basis with priority given to certified ADA passengers in accordance with federal law. There is no application process for Senior Service. Prospective passengers who are 60 years or older and live within any one of the 24 member communities must call the Reservation Office at (413) 739-7436 or toll-free 866-277-7741 for their one-time registration upon booking their first trip. Registration cannot take place unless a trip is booked.
- [RSVP of the Pioneer Valley](#) links people 55 and older who wish to share their time and expertise with community organizations.
- [LifePath, Formerly Franklin County Home Care Corp](#) helps older Americans, persons with disabilities and caregivers maximize independence and quality of life by providing information, consultation, referral, assistance with care transitions, and services to support and assist them.
- [The TRIAD Program of the Franklin County Sheriff's Office](#) is a crime-prevention and wellness initiative aimed at protecting the safety and welfare of senior citizens throughout the county. [Medical Equipment Loan Program](#) -- In an effort to keep people in their homes as long as they can safely live there, TRIAD provides/delivers donated medical equipment such as wheelchairs, hospital beds, commodes, canes, walkers and rollators. All equipment is free of charge.
- [Village Neighbors](#) is a volunteer, non-profit organization that serves aging adults in 4 rural Massachusetts towns - Shutesbury, Leverett, Wendell, and New Salem. Their mission is to help aging adults lead independent and engaged lives at home.
- [Leverett Homeownership Assistance Program](#)
- [Leverett Homeowner Rehabilitation Grant Program](#)