



Progress Report

Summer 2020

Introduction

San Diego, California became part of the AARP's Livable Communities Network in 2019. The City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department spearheaded the Age Friendly San Diego initiative to identify and promote improvements that could make Parks and Recreation more supportive, not only of older adult residents, but residents of all ages. To engage residents and community leaders in increasing livability, the City partnered with The San Diego Foundation, Live Well San Diego, AARP, and San Diego State University's Social Policy Institute to better understand resident's perceptions and needs. Completing this foundational work of gaining an understanding of the community's concerns informs the work of responding to and supporting an aging society.

The City of San Diego Parks and Recreation 2020 Parks Master Plan lays out a guiding vision "to bring the many benefits of great parks and recreation opportunities to all City residents and visitors"—thus creating a "Play Everywhere for Everyone" concept. In addition, older adult programming is included as a key deliverable for the department moving forward.

In light of COVID-19, the landscape of our community, nation, and world has greatly changed in 2020. The Parks and Recreation staff pivoted to provide essential services to at-risk residents, facilities and parks were closed to ensure social distancing, and the City's AgeWell Services team reached out by telephone to isolated older adult residents to provide socialization and connections to supportive services. Navigating through this historical time requires compassion and unity among all ages and is essential to re-establishing a thriving society.

The Age Friendly San Diego initiative is on track to successfully complete the first of a two-year process at the end of September 2020. To date, the following activities have been completed:

- **City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department Staff Survey** was administered on-line in fall 2019. Forty-seven staff

responded and provided feedback on the facilities and available programming for older adults.

- **City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Community Interest Survey, available in English and Spanish** was administered fall 2019 and was available on-line and paper versions. A total of 596 patrons over the age of 55 responded from all Parks and Recreation facilities, providing feedback on their interest in recreation activities, scheduling preference, ability to access, and type of programming.
- **Age Friendly San Diego Community Survey** was launched in the fall 2019/winter 2020. A total of 1,790 surveys were analyzed from San Diego residents over the age of 50. The survey was available in on-line and paper versions, and was translated into Chinese, Tagalog, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Staff was also deployed to various locations to encourage residents to complete the surveys and to answer any questions.
- **Policy Scan** was completed in winter 2020 to review and highlight City and County of San Diego plans and policies which support an Age Friendly San Diego and where there are gaps.
- **Age Friendly San Diego Listening Sessions** were held during the winter 2019/2020. A total of eight listening sessions throughout the City of San Diego were completed in conjunction with community partners. The sessions were a follow up to the Age Friendly San Diego Community Survey, and meant to gain a deeper understanding of priorities and challenges facing older adults. There was a strong turnout - 223 individuals attended the sessions which were held at Community Senior Centers, low-income senior living residence, library, and Balboa Park.
 - One listening session was specifically held for persons either currently or recently experiencing homelessness to identify unique needs of that community.
 - Another session was held in Spanish to create an opportunity for Spanish speaking-only participants to share their feedback.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department's AgeWell Services have enhanced the Social Call Program offered to isolated older adults throughout the County. The staff and volunteers are tracking the themes and concerns of conversations to inform future planning and services offered. In addition, AgeWell Services is in the process of deploying a community survey to gauge interest in virtual programming, home delivered meals, and pick-up meals service.

The following will detail insights learned from conducting these engagement activities throughout the City to create a more livable community for all. After consensus is gained on the priorities through community Action Planning Sessions, an Action Plan will be created and reviewed, by City Council. Once approved by the City Council, the Action Plan will be implemented through shared responsibility between City of San Diego and the community. The final Action Plan will inform future City of San Diego planning and expansion of Parks and Recreation programming.

Methods: How we’ve gathered input

Data Sources

To better understand older adults in San Diego and the available City of San Diego Parks and Recreation resources and activities for older adults, four research activities took place: 1. City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department Staff Survey; 2. City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Community Interest Survey; 3. Age Friendly Communities San Diego Survey; and 4. Age Friendly Communities San Diego Listening Sessions.

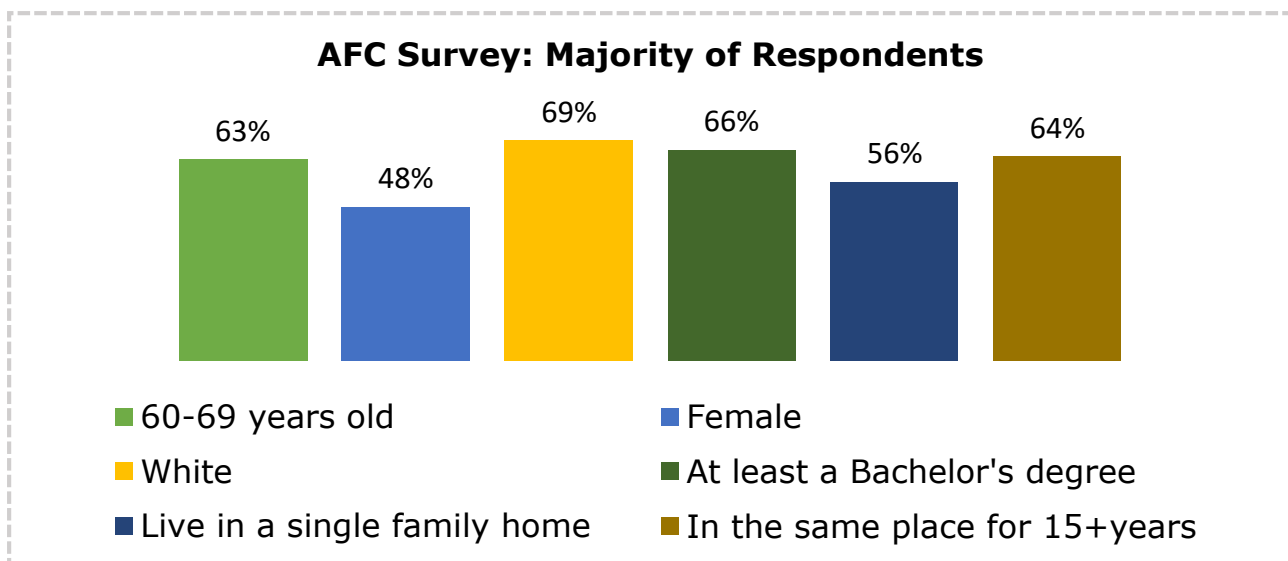
Research Activity	Purpose	Format	Language	Type of Respondents	Total People
City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department Staff Survey	Identify activities and amenities available for older adults in City of San Diego parks	Online	English	City of San Diego Parks and Recreation staff	47
City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Community Interest Survey	Identify programming interests, scheduling preferences, and ability to access services	Online and Paper Survey	English Spanish	Community members that are 55 years and older	596
Age Friendly Communities San Diego Survey	Identify priorities and challenge facing aging adults in San Diego	Online and Paper Survey	English Spanish Chinese Vietnamese Tagalog	City of San Diego residents that are 50+ years old	2129 (1790 analyzed)

Age Friendly Communities San Diego Listening Sessions	The sessions are a follow-up to the AFC San Diego survey, and are intended to gain a deeper understanding of priorities and challenges facing older adults identified by the AFC survey	In-person	English Spanish	City of San Diego residents that are 50+ years old	223 (8 sessions)
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Respondent Profile

The Age Friendly Communities San Diego Survey collected demographic information on the respondents. Below is the summary of analyzed survey respondents.

Most respondents were between 60-69 years old, female (63%), married (48%), and white (69%). Majority were highly educated with 66 percent having at least a bachelor’s degree. When asked where they live, majority stated they resided in a single-family home (56%) and have been in the same place for at least 15 years (64%).



Emerging Themes



Aging in Community

Areas of Strength

Most respondents viewed their communities as an excellent place to live (47%) with a majority wanting to remain in their communities (71%) and in their homes (75%) as they aged. The listening sessions supported this sentiment, with most participants who used interactive boards showing they would like to stay in their homes indefinitely.

Areas for Improvement

Perception of community quality differed by race. White (non-Hispanic) respondents were almost twice as likely to feel that their community is an excellent place to live (51%), while Black respondents stated 27 percent.

Only 12 percent of survey respondents reported being aware of affordable home improvement services. Even though almost two-thirds (64%) stated that it was very important. Lastly, only about one-third (36%) of survey respondents said that housing in their community was accessible to people of different physical abilities. Yet 70 percent believed it was very important to have in the community. During the listening sessions, participants shared that they would mostly want grab bars, heating/AC, and a home safety audit.

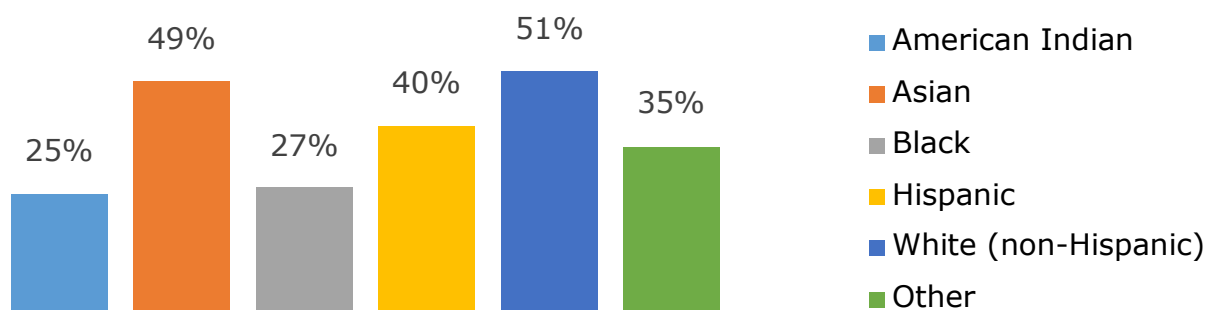


- Excellent place to live
- Want to remain in their community and home as they age



- Lacking affordable home improvement services
- Not enough accessible homes for people of different physical abilities.
- Perception of community quality differs by race

% of Respondents that view their community as an excellent place to live





Outdoor and Public Places



- Sidewalks are generally in good condition
- Most communities have pedestrian crossing with crossing times and visual cues
- Majority of communities have well-maintained and safe parks, and resting areas



- Some uneven pavement issues exist
- Lack of parking
- Unfamiliar with local Parks and Recreation facilities
- Not enough comfortable sitting areas

Areas of Strength

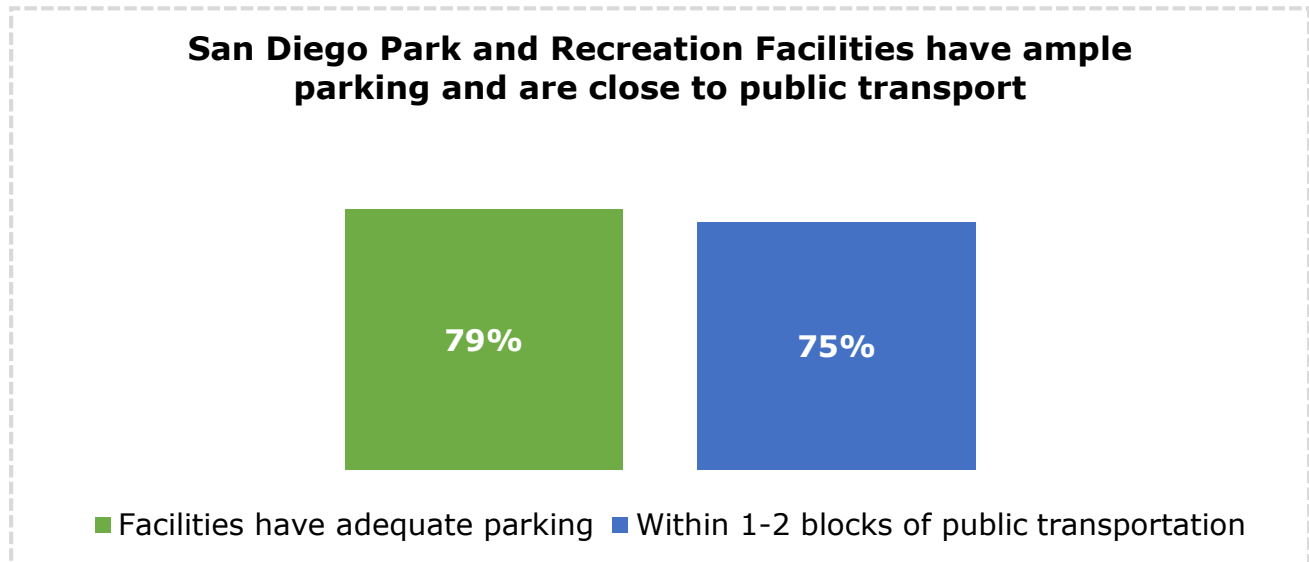
In general, AFC survey answers indicate satisfaction with their outdoor community spaces. At least 50 percent of all survey respondents said that their community has sidewalks in good condition (57%), pedestrian crossings with crossing times and visual and audio cues (61%), well-maintained and safe parks within walking distance of their home (60%), and benches, outdoor seating, and resting areas (50%).

Areas for Improvement

While more than half of the AFC survey respondents stated that their sidewalks are in good condition, the listening session participants said that uneven pavement on sidewalks as a concern to spending time outdoors. The listening sessions also highlighted that walking is a main way older adults spend time outside. For that reason, uneven pavement can interfere with continued exercise and access to goods and services.

The listening session participants also stated that lack of parking also prevents them from participating in activities. Increase in available parking or more transportation options to outdoor activities could address this issue. Other areas of improvement were desire for more comfortable seating and shaded areas. The Community Interest Survey also pointed to the fact that majority of older adults do not know about the Parks and Recreation facilities close to them. Since 79 percent of the respondents in the Staff Survey stated they have adequate parking, promoting park facilities to older adults may help facilitate more outdoor activities. Most facilities also cited that they

were within 5 blocks of public transportation, with 75 percent stating they were between 1 to 2 blocks of public transportation.



Areas of Strength

More than two-thirds (70%) of AFC survey respondents said that their community has housing options within walking distance of community resources, and it was also chosen as the most important housing need in the community. Most respondents also thought it was very important to keep living in their home as they aged (75%).

Areas for Improvement

Lack of affordable housing options and affordable home improvement services are in short supply in the communities. Only one-third (33%) of survey respondents said there are affordable housing options for older adults in the community. While almost three fourths (74%) stated that it was very important to have affordable housing options for older adults, only one-third (33%) of survey respondents said they exist in the community. This sentiment was repeated at the listening sessions, as participants cited high rent costs, fear of becoming homeless, and lack of Section 8 housing to ease the housing difficulties. According to listening session participants, Social Security benefits also do not sufficiently address high housing costs.

There are also not enough affordable home improvement services. Only 12 percent of the AFC survey respondents thought their community has it, while almost two-thirds (64%) thought it was important. The AFC survey feedback also highlighted a need for more accessible homes for people of different physical abilities. At the time of the survey, only 36 percent believed their community has such homes. While majority (73%) thought it was very important. By increasing the amount of affordable home improvement services, many existing homes could be made more accessible for people of different physical abilities. From the listening sessions, participants shared that they would mostly want grab bars, heating/AC, and a home safety audit.

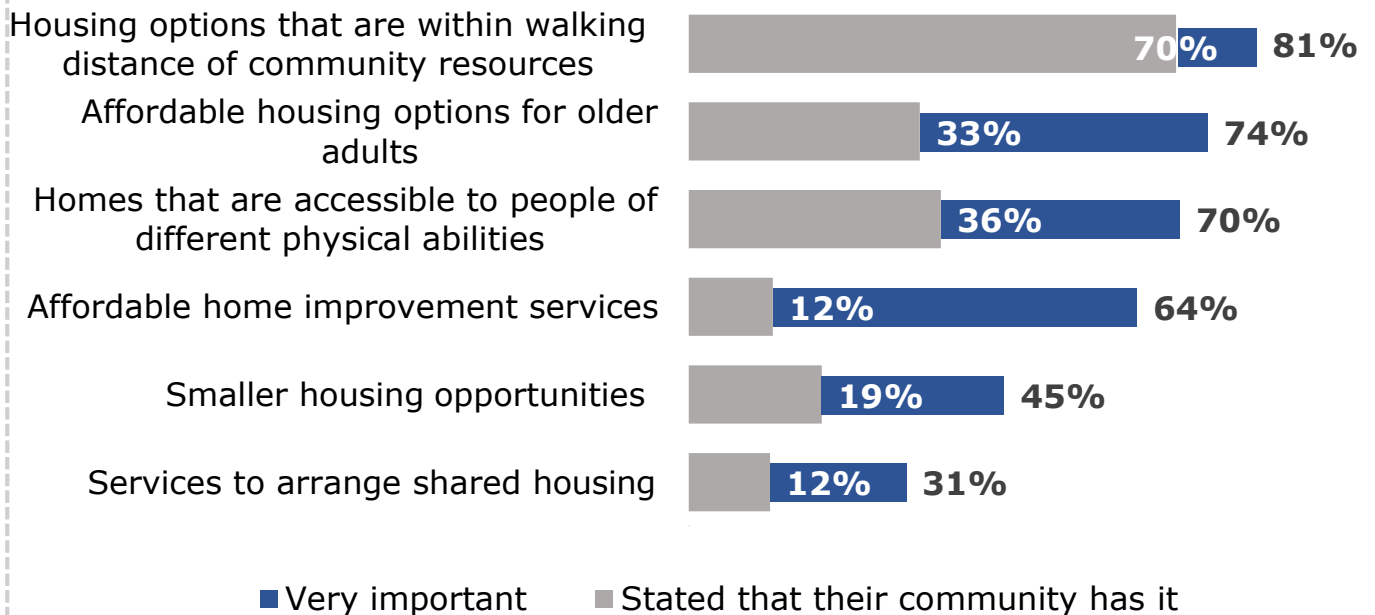


- Community has housing options within walking distance of resources
- Most want to stay in their home as they age



- Lack of affordable housing options for older adults
- High rent costs
- Fear of becoming homeless
- Lacking affordable home improvement services
- Not enough accessible homes for people of different physical abilities.

Housing: Affordable housing, accessible homes, and affordable services appear to be most needed in the community





Areas of Strength

According to the survey respondents, easy to read traffic signs (70%) and public transportation within walking distance of home and places you need to go (62%) is very important and available in the community. Most respondents said they drive themselves (75%), this sentiment is echoed in the Community Interest Survey that saw 74 percent driving themselves. The overwhelming majority of Community Interest Survey respondents (92%) also said they have access to reliable and affordable transportation.

Areas for Improvement

While 80 percent of AFC survey respondents said that transportation options designed for older adults were important, only about 1/3 (36%) said their community had it. That said, the listening sessions uncovered that specialized transportation for older adults is not widely known or used. Instead, most participants drive themselves. The listening sessions also highlighted that there is a strong desire for more public transport to be available throughout San Diego with amenities such as bus stops with covers and benches for older adult comfort.

Community Interest Survey also showed there was an interest in several educational program opportunities to expand knowledge of resources and transportation options. Majority were interested in public transportation education (43%), followed by San Diego Transit resources (36%), and basic car maintenance (30%).

The ride-share options are still not commonly used by older adults. According to the AFC Survey, only 19 percent use taxicabs and Lyft/Uber. This was echoed in the listening sessions, where most participants stated that they do not use modern ride-



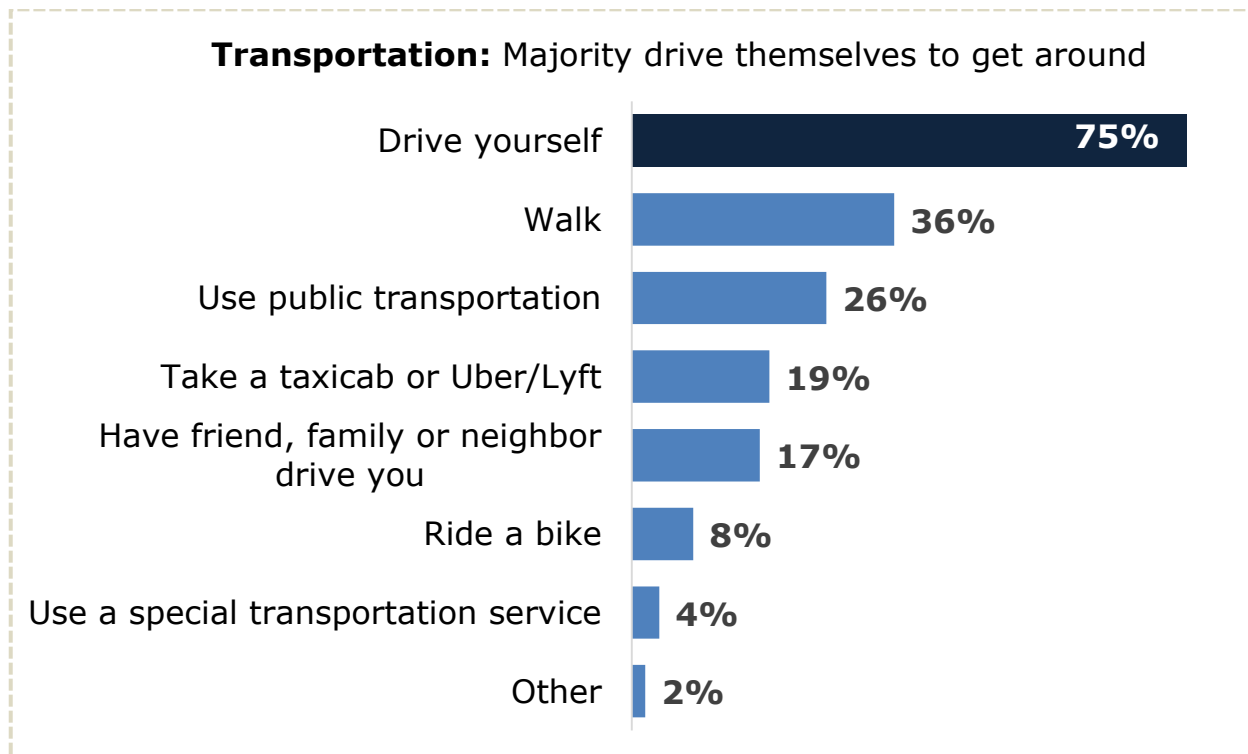
- Easy to read traffic signs
- Public transportation close to home
- Majority has access to reliable and affordable transportation
- Most drive themselves



- More transportation options designed for older adults
- Lack of trust in ride-share services
- Not feeling safe on public transport

sharing options such as Lyft and Uber. In fact, the services are viewed with distrust by some participants. The Community Interest Survey reflects this view, with only a quarter of respondents wanting to learn more about them through educational programming.

Lastly, safety was a recurring concern to older adults. During the listening sessions, participants repeatedly stated feeling uncomfortable with their safety on public transportation.



Social Participation

Areas of Strength

City of San Diego communities appear to offer a wide variety of social activities available for older adults. This domain most closely meets what residents find important in the community and what their community offers. Affordable activities for social adults are seen as very important by over two-thirds (76%) of the respondents, and 66 percent say their community has it. Almost 60 percent (58%) also said that they have opportunities to participate in continuing education/self-improvement classes, and a majority (63%) thought it was very important.

Most older adults responding to the AFC survey stated that they interact with someone at least several times a week (78%). With more than one-third saying that they interact with someone once a day (34%). This was confirmed in the listening sessions, where most participants said they interact with someone daily.

Areas for Improvement



- Variety of social activities for older adults available
- Most older adults interact with someone at least several times a week
- Majority said they have opportunities to participate in continuing education and self-improvement classes



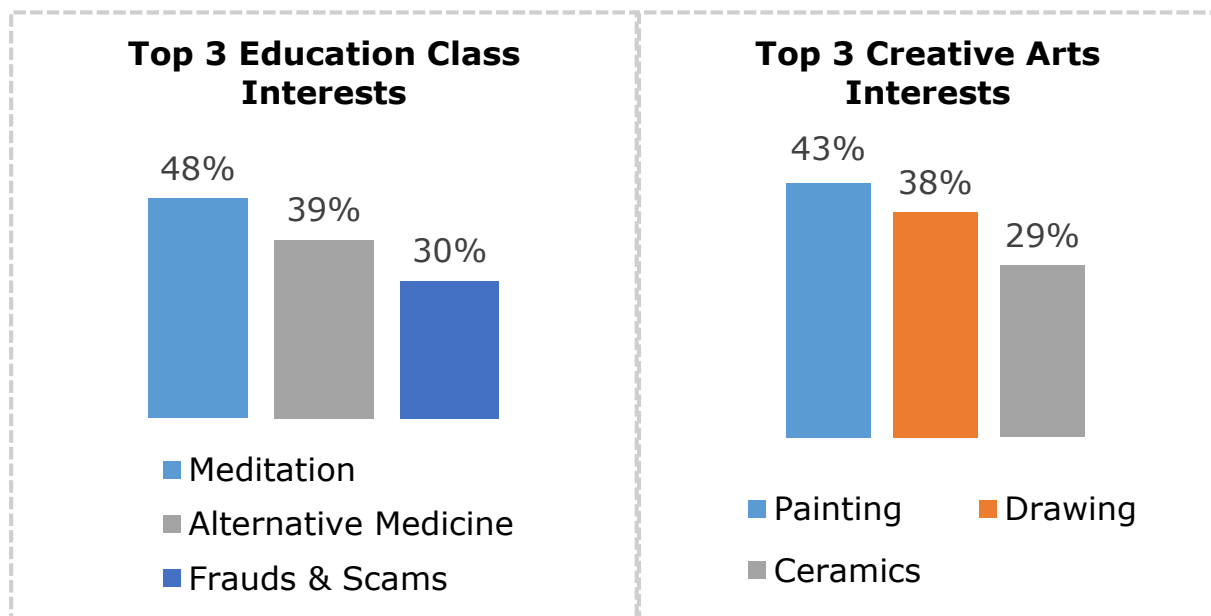
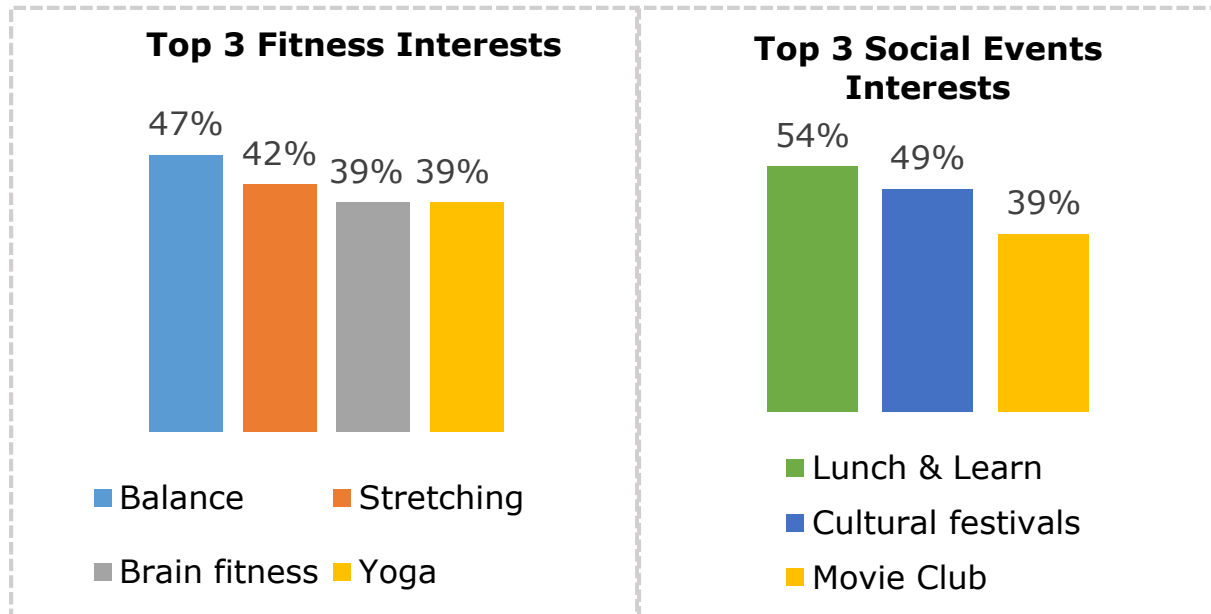
- Lack of opportunities to share life experiences
- Most do not believe their communities offer intergenerational activities
- Only 38% of Parks and Recreation facilities offer intergenerational activities

The listening session feedback revealed that while there is interest to share life experiences, participants did not think there were many opportunities to do so. This sentiment is repeated in the AFC survey; with close to half of respondents saying they never have opportunities to share their life experiences (48%), and only 12 percent saying they always have that opportunity. The AFC survey also specifies that over half (55%) believe the intergenerational activities are very important, but only 47 percent think their communities have them. This is in line with availability of City of San Diego Parks and Recreation intergenerational activity availability. According to the City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Staff Survey, only 38 percent of facilities offer intergenerational programming. Given a specific interest among the older population to engage in intergenerational activities, increase in such opportunities may be

considered.

When asked about most desired time slots for programmatic activities, Community Interest Survey respondents specified weekday slots with 9am-12pm (62%), and 12pm-4pm (56%). Top three fitness interests are: Balance class (47%), stretching (42%), brain fitness (39%) and yoga

(39%). Top three social events are: Lunch & Learn (54%), cultural festivals (49%), and movie club (39%). Top 3 education classes are: Meditation and personal wellness (48%), alternative medicine (39%), and frauds & scams (30%). The top 3 creative arts are: Painting (43%), drawing (38%), and ceramics (29%).





Volunteer and Civic Engagement



- Many opportunities offered to participate in decision-making bodies
- A range of volunteer opportunities to choose from



- Local volunteer information is not easy to find in the community

Areas of Strength

San Diego communities are closely aligned with volunteer opportunity interests and availability. About three fourths (72%) of AFC survey respondents said there are opportunities to participate in decision making bodies, while about two-thirds (65%) said those opportunities are very important. Two-thirds stated there was a range of volunteer activities to choose from, while 63 percent said they were very important.

Areas for Improvement

The accessibility of information about local volunteer opportunities is cited as a challenge. Almost two-thirds of AFC survey respondents said it was very important to have easy to find information about local volunteer communities, but only 40 percent of respondents believed their communities had it.

There is no one specific source that AFC survey respondents, listening session participants, and Community Interest survey respondents learned about local volunteer opportunities. AFC survey respondents mostly learned about the opportunities from the internet (56%), while AFC listening session participants found out through word of mouth, libraries, mail, and senior newsletter. Other frequently cited sources were 211, community centers, and City of San Diego Parks and Recreation centers. The internet was not often cited as a way to find out about the opportunities by listening session participants.

To gain a wider outreach for volunteer opportunities, a communications strategy for dissemination of information that includes both internet and in-person sources may be considered. Since majority of AFC survey respondents obtained their information from the internet, identifying best ways to communicate online may be prioritized.



Areas of Strength

Majority of AFC Survey respondents (65%) thought that the community has wellness events at community locations to check for blood pressure, get vaccinations, and so forth., and considered it very important (62%). More than half (59%) also stated that their areas have meal programs at community locations, and more than half (53%) thought it was very important to have.

Food security was also not a concern for most, with over two-thirds (68%) never worrying about running out of food. The feeling of food security was repeated in the Community Interest Survey, where 88 percent were currently food secure.

Areas for Improvement

In the health and community services area, service professionals trained to address the needs around memory and cognitive impairment is selected most often (67%) as “very important.” Yet only about one-third (32%) stated that their community has such service professionals.

While majority were not worried about running out of food, one-third (33%) were either sometimes or often worried about it. Yet only 9 out of 47 Parks and Recreation facilities said they offered nutrition activities/services. Expanding facilities that offer food may help older adults.

Perception of food insecurity also differed by race. While only 6 percent of White (non-Hispanic) respondents said they *often* worry about running out of food, 27 percent of Hispanic respondents and 26 percent of American Indian respondents say that they worry about running out of food.



- Availability of wellness events in the community
- Most do not worry about running out of food
- Majority believe their communities have meal programs



- Not enough service professionals that are knowledgeable in memory and cognitive impairments
- Lack of knowledge about fall prevention awareness
- One third still sometimes worries about running out of food.

Lastly, more than half of the AFC survey respondents (54%) thought that fall prevention awareness was very important, however only 21 percent believed their community had it. Since more than half of the parks facilities cited fall prevention as a helpful training topic for staff, this can be a potential area of development.



Respect and Inclusion

Areas of Strength

Most AFC survey respondents felt respected and included in their communities. According to the AFC Survey, over three fourths of respondents *never* worry about being discriminated against based on race (76%) or sex (80%). And two-thirds *never* feel discriminated based on age (67%). This sentiment was echoed in the listening sessions, where most participants said they felt respected and accepted in their communities.



- Most older adults feel respected and included
- Majority never feel discriminated based on age, race, or sex
- Over two thirds are treated politely



- About 1/3 still experience age discrimination
- More than 1/2 only *sometimes* feel valued
- Around 40% only *sometimes* get offered help when they need it or are listened to
- Non-white respondents report higher rates of discrimination based on sex, age, and race
- Females report higher discrimination based on sex

Most older adults also feel included in activities for people of all ages (72%) and are treated politely (72%).

Areas for Improvement

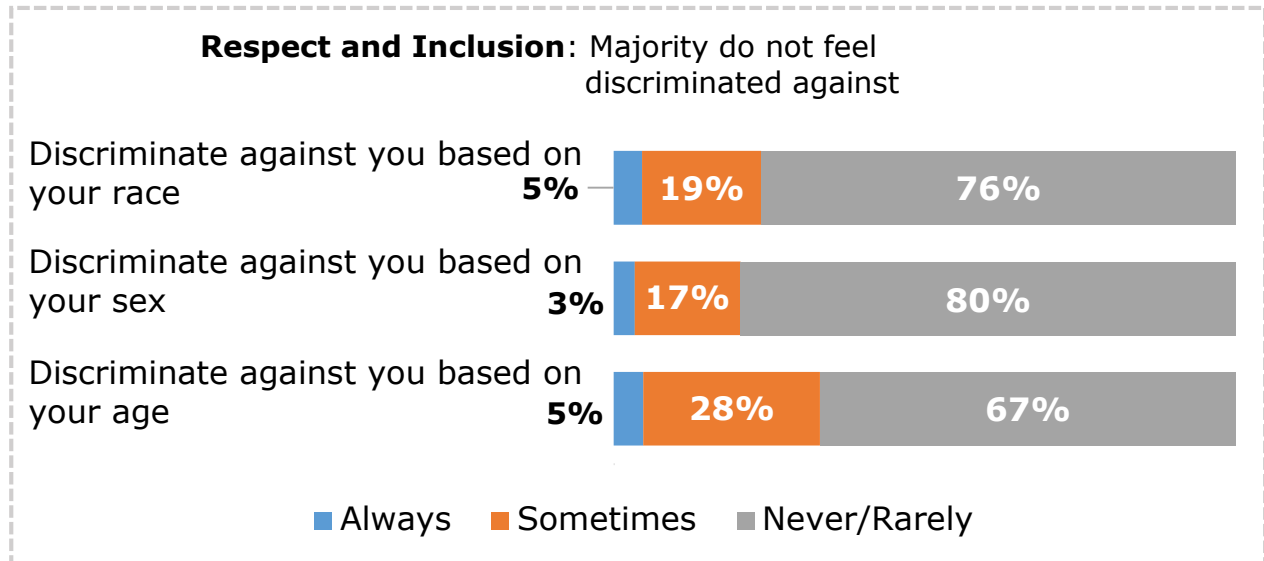
While most people do not feel discriminated against their age, close to one-third of AFC survey respondents stated they experience age discrimination *sometimes* (28%). More half of the respondents only *sometimes* feel valued (52%). The listening session participants also said that while they feel valued, it could be improved. Suggestions for improvement were increasing opportunities to share life experiences.

Feelings of discrimination based on race, sex, and age also greatly differed depending on the race of the respondent. White (non-Hispanic) respondents perceiving much less discrimination in all three areas. The largest differences were among discrimination by race. While almost all White (non-Hispanic) respondents said they *never* get discriminated in the community based on race (92%), only about one-third of Black (37%) and American Indian (38%) respondents

felt the same. And while only 7 percent of White respondents felt *sometimes* discriminated based on race, more than half of Black (51%) and American Indian (50%) survey takers *sometimes* felt discriminated. There was also a large difference in perception of discrimination by sex. Although only 11 percent of men felt discriminated against by sex, 22 percent of women reported the same. Exploring ways to decrease feelings of discrimination between races and sex in the community is another way to improve aging for all.

Lastly about 40 percent of AFC survey respondents said they only sometimes get offered help when they need it or are listened to (43%). And during the

listening sessions, participants repeatedly mentioned the need for mutual respect between younger and older generations. As mentioned in the Social Participation section, opportunities for intergenerational social activities may help increase mutual understanding.



Communication and Information

Areas of Strength

Close to three fourths of AFC survey respondents believe that their community has free access to a computer and the internet in public spaces (74%), followed by family or friends (53%), and local senior centers (52%). Obtaining information from the internet means they have access to a variety of information that goes beyond their local community and friends.

And about half believe that the community information is available online or through social media (56%). Since most of the AFC survey respondents find out about older adults services through the internet (65%), ample access to computers and the internet in public places is an area of strength.

Areas for Improvement

Although there is reportedly sufficient public access to computers and internet, the feedback from the listening sessions suggests that access and use of computers is inconsistent. In several of the listening sessions, half of the group did not use them. Since most respondents get their information from the internet, increased access to computers and internet would boost information sharing.

Access to the internet is also hindered by mobile phone usage. Listening session participants recognized that mobile phones were a good means to communication, but not everyone reported having them. According to the Community Interest Survey, the top technology interest classes is smart phone instruction (59%), and 40 percent wanted to learn about mobile apps. Including smart phone classes for older adults would bridge the gap between internet access and learning about social opportunities for older adults.

Lastly, only about one-third of AFC respondents said they find out about opportunities for older adult services from the library (33%). Given the large local presence of libraries – and their free access to computers and internet – using them to share services about older adults is advised.

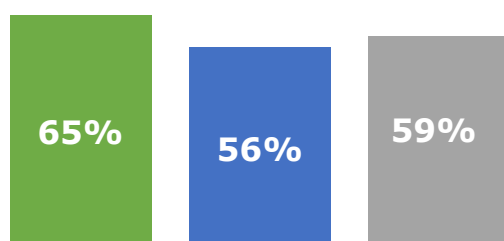


- Free access to computer and internet in public spaces
- Most find out about services for older adults from the internet
- Community information available online



- Uneven access to computers among older adults
- Lack of mobile phone use
- Not enough community information printed with large lettering that is clearly posted
- Only about 1/3 use libraries to learn about older adult services

Increased access to the internet can improve service information sharing



- Get info about services for older adults from the internet
- Believe community information is available online
- Interested in smart phone instruction



Safety



- Most older adults feel safe during the day



- Only about 1/3 feel very safe after dark
- Feeling of safety was specifically lacking among very low-income adults or those experiencing homelessness
- Poor street lighting contributed to feeling unsafe at night

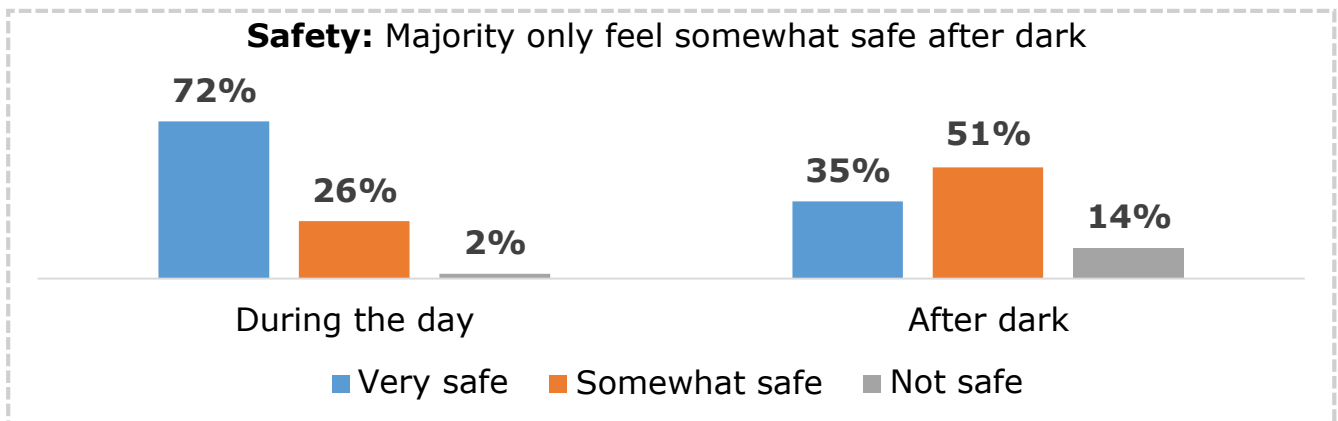
Areas of Strength

According to AFC survey responses, most older adults feel very safe during the day (72%). The feeling of safety is equal between men and women.

Areas for Improvement

Only about one-third of AFC survey respondents felt very safe after dark (35%). With majority feeling only somewhat safe (51%) after dark. Women were also less likely than men to report feeling very safe or somewhat safe after dark. Feeling not safe also varied widely by San Diego districts. In district 4, 8, and 9 respondents reported feeling unsafe at night at least 21 percent of the time. That said, in listening sessions, concerns about burglaries and security enforcement are mentioned in both affluent and low-income communities.

The varying levels of safety were seen in the listening sessions. For some, feeling unsafe was a barrier to spend time outdoors. For others, feeling unsafe originated in their homes and extended outside. Safety was particularly a big concern for very-low income adults or those experiencing homelessness. Lack of streetlights is repeatedly mentioned as a barrier to



attending outside activities in the evening. To increase personal perception of safety, many cited increasing available street lighting.

Domains of Livability for the City of San Diego

Through comprehensive data analysis and consideration of community concerns and priorities, the following domains of livability have been identified as focus areas in the Age Friendly San Diego initiative:

- **Transportation/Mobility (Connecting People to Parks)**
 - Walkability
 - Public transit
 - Slow streets
 - Transportation services for older adults
- **Outdoor Spaces & Buildings (Parks and Recreation Facilities/Grounds)**
 - Well maintained/safe parks
 - Sidewalks- even pavement
 - Pedestrian crossing/audio cues
 - Seating
 - Shade
 - Lighting
- **Housing (Safe Parks to Safe Homes)**
 - Affordable housing options
 - Accessible homes
 - Affordable home improvement services
 - Safe communities
- **Social Participation (Parks and Recreation as Community Hub)**
 - Volunteerism
 - Social programming
 - Activities to counter COVID-19
 - Intergenerational opportunities
 - Information sharing about social participation opportunities
 - Decreasing isolation
- **Respect & Social Inclusion (Equitable and All Ages Parks)**
 - Equitability (Race, Sex, and Income)
 - Age discrimination
 - Intergenerational opportunities
 - Opportunities to share life experiences
 - Programming for all ages

- **Health & Community (Parks Nurturing Healthy Communities)**
 - Fall prevention
 - Decreasing isolation (AgeWell Services Daily Social Calls)
 - Emergency response (COVID-19)
 - Food insecurity
 - Digital divide
 - Dementia friendly/mild cognitive impairment knowledgeable staff
 - Homelessness

Next Steps

The quantitative and qualitative data gathered as part of the Baseline Assessment was used to determine which domains of livability are the most relevant for the city of San Diego. Suggestions and concerns will be mapped out to create draft templates for each domain with vision, objectives, and sample actions and shared with the community to receive feedback.

A series of Community Action Planning Sessions will be conducted for residents and stakeholders to provide input. The sessions will be held at different times and various locations or on-line to maximize participation. Domains that have high crossover and/or influence one another will be clustered together for discussion in a single session, but all domains will be covered in one of the sessions. City staff and community partners who are responsible for and/or working on related efforts or activities will be available at the meetings to provide information, align with existing plans and opportunities.

A DRAFT Age Friendly San Diego Action Plan will be developed following the Community Action Planning Sessions and will be circulated for review and input, including public comment.

The FINAL Age Friendly San Diego Action Plan will be presented to the City Council for approval and adoption. Once approved by the City Council, the Action Plan will be implemented through shared responsibility between the city and community.

If you have any comments you would like to share with the Age Friendly San Diego team, please [click here](#) to provide electronically or call Kristi Fenick, District Manager at 619-533-6333. This report was completed in collaboration between:

