

Dexter
Age-Friendly Community Survey Results
July, 2018
[Draft]

Prepared for the Dexter
Age-Friendly Community Committee
By the UMaine Center on Aging

Introduction

The following report presents the findings of the age-friendly survey distributed in Dexter in 2018 by the Dexter Age-Friendly Committee. The goal of this initiative was to uncover the areas of highest need for strengthening Dexter as an age-friendly community. The results will inform the development of an action plan that furthers the age-friendliness of the town for people of all ages, with an emphasis on older adults.

Methodology

The age-friendly survey was distributed in Dexter between January and May of 2018. Convenience sampling was the method for survey distribution. This included distribution of the survey at community locations (town hall, library, etc.) and distribution by the Dexter Age-Friendly Committee partners to citizens in online and paper formats. There were 243 individuals who submitted a survey.

The following report provides a summary of participant demographics, themes from open-ended survey questions, and results from quantitative questions, both for the overall sample, but also broken down by age category.

Demographics

- Slightly less than half the of the survey sample was 65 and older. Approximately 85% of the sample was over 50 or older (Figure 1).
- The overall sample is approximately two thirds female and one third male (Figure 2).
- Individuals were requested to identify their income level. Those making less than twenty thousand dollars per year made up 49.8% of the sample, while those making twenty to fifty thousand dollars per year made up 31.4% of the sample. The smallest category was people making fifty thousand dollars or more (18.8%) (Figure 3).
- Most participants were homeowners (64%). Renters accounted for 27.2%. There was an “other” category (8.8%) that included other individuals such as those living with children, etc. (Figure 4).
- 27.1% of respondents indicated that they live alone (Figure 5).

Figure 1 - Age (N=211)

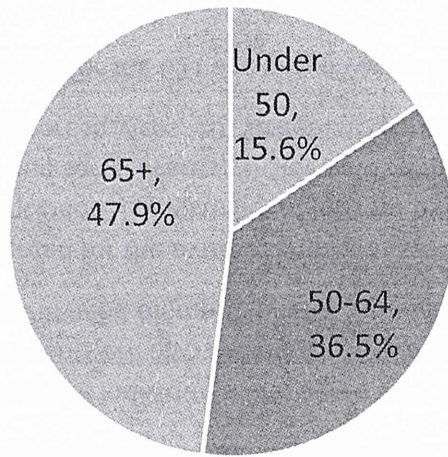


Figure 2 - Gender (N=223)

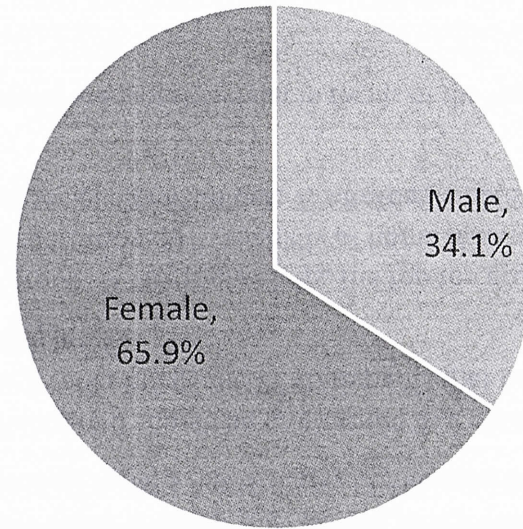


Figure 3 - Income (N=207)

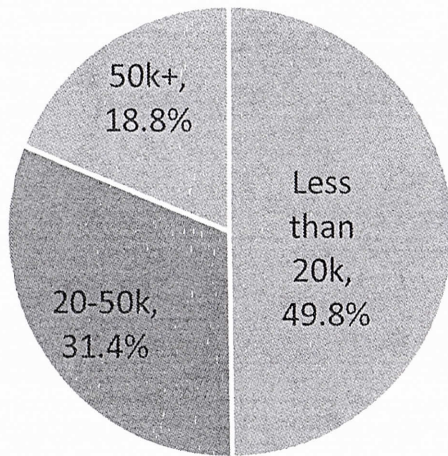


Figure 4 - Housing (N=228)

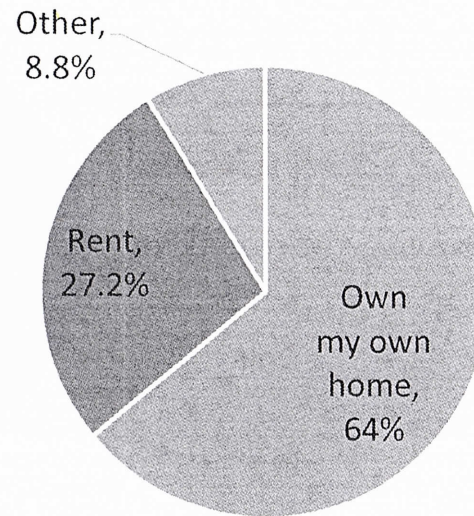
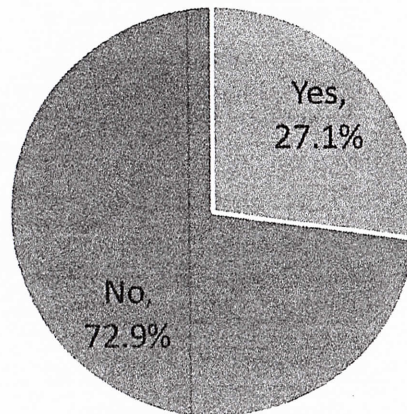


Figure 5 - Do you live alone?
(N=229)



Findings - Eight Domains of Livability

Participants were provided a series of statements about the town of Dexter and were asked whether they agreed, disagreed, or didn't know about the statement. The statements fell into the eight domains of livability framework used by AARP's Age-Friendly Community initiative.

The smaller the percentage of individuals who agree with a particular statement, the more it should be interpreted as a potential focus area for age-friendly work. Statements are also assigned a "Need Rank" which indicates how it ranks out of the 27 statements that people evaluated. Ranks closer to 1 indicate areas in need of improvement, ranks closer to 27 indicate strength areas.

Results below are presented for the overall sample, as well as broken down by age group. In terms of results, the top ten areas for improvement for the overall sample include: 1) Availability of jobs for older citizens; 2) Public transportation; 3) Availability of home maintenance services; 4) Entertainment options and social events; 5) Sidewalk condition; 6) Intergenerational social opportunities; 7) Affordable housing; 8) Sidewalk plowing; 9) In-home support services; 10) Street and parking lot condition.

When looking at the results for the 65+ age group versus the overall sample, the results are largely similar in terms of the ranking of needs.

Transportation

Statement	%Agree (overall)	%Agree (Under 50)	%Agree (50-64)	%Agree 65+	Overall Need Rank	65+ Need Rank
There are enough public transportation options.	18.5	33.3	12.1	20.3	2	2
Streets and parking lots are in good condition.	35.7	18.2	38.7	43.0	10	11
Streets and parking lots are plowed well in the winter.	50.4	48.5	45.9	60.4	13	16
There is enough public parking.	83.4	81.3	87.3	85.3	23	22
There are traffic signs in the right areas.	85.6	87.9	83.3	87.1	24	24
There is street lighting in the right areas.	79.8	89.7	77.3	79.3	21	20
There are crosswalks in the right areas.	67.0	60.0	69.9	72.0	17	18
There are sidewalks in the right areas.	56.3	59.4	59.2	58.0	16	14
Sidewalks are in good condition.	28.0	29.0	24.3	31.0	5	5
Sidewalks are plowed well in the winter	30.3	39.3	25.7	34.1	8	8

1 - highest
2 - lower

Open-ended response themes:

- *Need for low cost transportation such as bus or shuttle service* – Survey respondents discussed the need for transportation options that can allow access to stores downtown and local services, as well as regional transportation to places such as Newport and Bangor.
- *Better plowing of roads and sidewalks during the winter* – Better plowing of roads, and especially clearing of sidewalks, were identified as key needs during the winter months.
- *Need for improved sidewalks, better maintenance of roadways (potholes)* – Numerous respondents advocated for sidewalk and road repairs, with an emphasis on filling potholes.
- *More crosswalks* – When discussing crosswalks, respondents identified that there are areas of the town that could benefit from crosswalks or the repainting of faded crosswalks.

Communication and Information

Statement	%Agree (overall)	%Agree (Under 50)	%Agree (50-64)	%Agree 65+	Overall Need Rank	65+ Need Rank
There are reliable sources of information about community events and resources.	74.3	72.4	80.4	67.9	19	17
Information about community event and resources is available in one place.	53.6	66.7	55.1	45.9	14	12

Open-ended response themes:

Webpage, social media – Facebook was identified as a social media platform that increased outreach efforts could be focused on. The town website was also identified as a key resource.

Central location for obtaining/sharing information – Although numerous avenues were identified for sharing community events and resources, a common theme was that information is not centralized in any way, which would be beneficial.

Bulletin boards/signage – The police station sign and downtown bulletin boards were identified as important methods for information sharing.

Local newspapers – The single most identified media source in open-ended comments was the Eastern Gazette. Respondents highlighted the need for announcements about local events to be timely. Additionally, there were several suggestions that a group should purchase space in the Gazette for a regular feature about community events and resources for older adults.

Keep information updated – A repeated comment was that information, such as web pages for the town, is not kept up to date.

Housing

Statement	%Agree (overall)	%Agree (Under 50)	%Agree (50-64)	%Agree 65+	Overall Need Rank	65+ Need Rank
There is enough affordable housing for older people and people with disabilities.	29.5	30.4	22.5	33.3	7	7
There are enough affordable services that can help with home maintenance.	22.8	37.5	8.5	28.1	3	3

Open-ended response themes:

Access to information about assistance programs – Respondents indicated that greater dissemination of information about available assistance programs for housing and home maintenance is important.

Affordable housing options – Respondents advocated for a general increase in the stock of affordable housing, especially for older adults.

Assistance with maintenance needs for older homes and associated costs – The challenge of maintaining homes was the single most common issue identified related to housing.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Statement	%Agree (overall)	%Agree (Under 50)	%Agree (50-64)	%Agree 65+	Overall Need Rank	65+ Need Rank
There are enough public parks and other outdoor spaces.	77.4	67.7	75.3	82.9	20	21
Public parks and other outdoor spaces are in good condition.	88.2	83.9	92.8	90.2	25	26
Public parks and other outdoor spaces are safe.	90.7	86.7	92.3	89.7	27	25
Public parks and other outdoor spaces are easy to get to.	89.0	87.5	87.5	90.5	26	27

Open-ended response themes:

Public restrooms – A commonly identified improvement for the town’s outdoor spaces was the inclusion of public restrooms.

Accessibility improvements – Surfaced walkways for people with mobility issues and more benches were identified as possible improvements.

Maintenance and improvements to parks and town common areas – Cleaning up litter, mowing lawns and general maintenance were common suggestions for ways that outdoor spaces and buildings could be improved.

Lighting for parks and public spaces – Lighting was identified as a possible safety enhancement for outdoor spaces.

Community and Health Services

Statement	%Agree (overall)	%Agree (Under 50)	%Agree (50-64)	%Agree 65+	Overall Need Rank	65+ Need Rank
There are enough in-home services that support older or disabled citizens and people with dementia and their caregivers (meal delivery, home maintenance, etc.).	35.5	31.3	33.3	37.3	9	9
There are enough in-home healthcare services.	39.6	29.4	43.8	42.2	11	10
There are enough healthcare services in the community.	56.2	52.2	57.1	59.7	15	15

Open-ended response themes:

In-home assistance for those who have difficulty getting out – Respondents had a perception that there were limited services available for those people who are homebound or have mobility issues that could make it difficult to get out.

More home health providers – Home health aides and homecare nurses were identified as healthcare resources where there is currently a shortage.

Affordable care – The affordability of available care was one of the most significant issues identified by respondents.

Better access to and information about available services and eligibility criteria – A theme from participant responses was that individuals often do not know about the full spectrum of medical services that are available and that healthcare could be improved by increased dissemination of information about available services in the community and how people can become eligible for these services.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Statement	%Agree (overall)	%Agree (Under 50)	%Agree (50-64)	%Agree 65+	Overall Need Rank	65+ Need Rank
There are enough options for older citizens to be a part of the community.	40.3	46.7	29.7	48.3	12	13
There are enough entertainment options or social events for older citizens.	26.8	31.3	22.2	29.0	4	4
There are options for older and younger generations to be together.	28.4	26.3	27.7	32.1	6	6

Open-ended response themes:

Multigenerational events – The most common theme from participant responses was that there is a lack of social events for people of “all ages,” and events that could bring together different age groups. However, older adults were identified as the most underserved group.

Ensure accessibility – To support social inclusion, respondents highlighted the importance of accessibility. Transportation to and from events in particular was a repeated comment.

Make information about events clear and available to all – A theme among respondents was that supporting access to events involves using multiple advertising strategies to reach interested individuals as opposed to just one method.

Civic Participation and Employment

Statement	%Agree (overall)	%Agree (Under 50)	%Agree (50-64)	%Agree 65+	Overall Need Rank	65+ Need Rank
Public meetings are accessible for older citizens (ie. Ramps, hearing supports, etc).	82.1	85.0	77.4	85.7	22	23
There are enough jobs that meet the needs of older citizens (part-time, flexible hours, etc).	17.6	27.8	17.0	18.2	1	1
There are enough options to volunteer in the community.	67.6	57.1	64.1	76.9	18	19

Open-ended response themes:

Feedback was limited about civic participation and employment. There was a general perception that there are not enough jobs in the area. In terms of volunteerism, participants didn't identify a lack of volunteer options, although it was suggested that what is available could be better advertised.

Findings – Sources of Trusted Information and Worries About Aging

Respondents were asked to select three places they go to get trusted information about resources and events in Dexter. There were a significant portion of respondents who did not follow or did not understand the directions to identify their top three choices, either selecting less than three or more than three options. These were removed from the analysis due to the risk of skewing the data. The analysis was conducted on 144 respondents. Because of the small sample and the large number of categories, it is not recommended to break down the results by age or other demographic characteristic.

The top three trusted sources were the Eastern Gazette (49.3%), Rolling Thunder Express (46.5%), and a friend or family member (38.9%).

Eastern Gazette	49.3%
Rolling Thunder Express	46.5%
Friend or family	38.9%
Town office	34.0%
Town Website	27.8%
Social Media (facebook, email, etc.)	22.2%
Regional papers (BDN)	16.0%
Library	14.6%
Bulletin boards downtown	11.8%
Piscataquis Observer	9.7%
Library website	3.5%
Other	2.1%

Respondents were asked the question: “What is your biggest worry about being able to live well as you grow older?” Similarly, to the question about trusted sources of information, a significant portion of respondents did not select only three choices. The sample size after removing these responses was 130. The top concerns were home maintenance (66.2%), running out of money (66.2%), and inability to drive (50.0%)

Home Maintenance	66.2%
Running out of money	66.2%
Inability to drive	50.0%
Having to leave my home	44.6%
Loneliness	26.2%
Not having paid work	26.2%
Losing connections to the community	20.8%