

Parry Sound District Age Friendly Community Needs Assessment

May 2025



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Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the Parry Sound District Age Friendly Community Committee for their support and commitment to this project. We would also like to extend our gratitude to the municipalities and First Nations communities in the Parry Sound district for their support in the promotion and dissemination of project information.

Executive Summary

The Parry Sound District includes a high proportion of adults over 50 years of age. Age Friendly Communities are areas where all ages, abilities, and backgrounds live safely, and stay involved, active, and informed. Due to the unique geography, rural nature of the district, and diverse needs of older adults, a needs assessment was conducted by the Parry Sound District Age Friendly Community Committee to gather information from the community and report back to municipalities, organizations, and the general public. The goal of the assessment was to identify the needs and priorities of older adults in the community, including barriers to accessibility and community involvement. A survey was disseminated throughout Parry Sound district between August 14, 2024, and October 25, 2024. Respondents included individuals 50 years of age and older, who completed the survey online or through paper copies available throughout the district.

Findings from the surveys highlighted the need for accessible transportation throughout the Parry Sound district, a coordinated communication plan and/or directory that older adults and their families can access to learn about programs, services, events, and activities offered in and around their community, as well as the importance of engaging with the older adults and the community in planning and decisions making. These results will be shared by members of the Parry Sound District Age Friendly Community Committee through knowledge translation including, sharing the report and presentations to municipalities and decision makers. Continued engagement with older adults and services providers throughout the Parry Sound district is recommended to ensure a plan is developed and representative of all communities.

Local Context and Rationale

The North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit's (Health Unit) service area spans over 23,000 square kilometers and serves a population of approximately 134,400. This catchment area includes 31 municipalities, 6 First Nations communities, and 4 unorganized areas. Individuals 50 years of age and over make up 26,615 of those living in the Parry Sound district, which accounts for approximately 57% of the district's population (Statistics Canada, 2023). Comparatively, 39% of Ontario's population is over the age of 50.

In the Parry Sound district, adults 60 to 69 years of age comprise the highest percentage of the population (North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit, n.d.). This age group is most represented in the population of the North East Parry Sound area and West Parry Sound area, compared to adults aged 55 to 64 years in the South East Parry Sound area (North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit, n.d.). The older adult population (adults aged 65 years and older) has increased significantly by 32.2% in the Parry Sound district between 2013 and 2022 (North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit, n.d.). Please see Appendix 1 for a map of the Health Unit's Municipal Geographic Designations.

Age Friendly Communities are accessible environments that allow for individuals of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds to live safely, stay involved, active, and informed. This is done through policy development, services, physical and social environment and the wellbeing of individuals. The World Health Organization has identified eight domains that support an age friendly community which include: outdoor spaces and public buildings, transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, community support and health services, and communication and information (World Health Organization, n.d.).

Using the World Health Organization's Framework, the Ontario Age-Friendly Communities Outreach Program aims to help address issues related to social isolation, mobility, housing, and health and well-being throughout the province (Providence Care, n.d.). The Parry Sound District Age Friendly Community Committee, formed in 2023 and is a collaborative group of organizations that serve the older adult population across the district. By conducting a local community needs assessment, the committee will be able to establish priorities based on needs identified by the community, and address inequities across the district.

Methods

The research team consisted of Health Unit staff from the Community Health and Foundational Services programs, and members of the Parry Sound District Age Friendly Community Committee. The research project was approved by the Health Unit's Research Ethics Review Committee (RERC) on July 2, 2024 (RERC #24-01).

The survey included multiple choice questions and open-ended responses on topics related to the eight domains of age friendly communities (Appendix 2). The target audience for the survey was individuals 50 years of age and older living in the Parry Sound district. The research team adapted an existing survey for rural communities provided by Ontario's Age Friendly Communities Outreach Program (Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors, 2011).

A letter was sent to municipalities and First Nation communities to outline the committee's goals for completing a community needs assessment in the Parry Sound district and included information on OCAP principles, highlighted data that would be collected, and how information would be stored and shared. Two meetings were held with representatives from 13 municipalities and one meeting was held with a First Nation community. The goal of these meetings was to increase awareness of the project, encourage dissemination support, and to inform that the results would be shared back. Permission was received by Dokis First Nation to include their data in the report and data has been returned to their community.

The survey was disseminated by providing paper copies and an online survey tool to community partners that included municipalities, libraries, community support services, health services, and members of the research team. Additionally, the survey was promoted through the distribution of posters within communities, social media posts on community partner pages, and shared on municipal websites and municipal newsletters. Please see Appendix 3 for promotional material used during dissemination.

Surveys were completed between August 14, 2024, and October 25, 2024. Paper copies of the survey were inputted into the online survey tool by a project team member. Survey participants were provided

with an opportunity to voluntarily enter their names into a draw for 1 of 5 \$50 grocery gift cards at the completion of the survey.

Data analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel to determine descriptive statistics (e.g. frequencies). Qualitative data collected through open ended questions were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis. Codes were gathered and themes were identified that were representative of the data. Due to individual community response rates being low, responses were separated into East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound regions. Since some organizations may only serve East Parry Sound or West Parry Sound residents, and/or individuals in these communities access services outside of the region, a comparison was conducted to determine key differences and similarities.

Results

Demographics

A total of 463 respondents, 50 years of age and over, from the Parry Sound district completed the survey. 145 respondents identified as living in East Parry Sound (31%), 273 respondents reported living in West Parry Sound (59%), 38 from an unorganized territory (8%), and 6 from First Nation Communities (1%). One respondent did not identify where they lived. The Town of Parry Sound and McKellar both accounted for 17% of the respondents, while Whitestone had 9% and Callander had 6%. (Table 1) Please note that First Nation population specific data was omitted from Table 1 comparison data is currently unavailable.

Forty one percent (41%) of respondents included individuals between the ages of 61 and 70 years of age (Figure 1). The majority of respondents (312) stated that they lived with their partner or spouse, 83 stated that they resided alone, and 58 respondents indicated they lived with their child(ren). The Parry Sound district attracts many seasonal residents, 359 of survey respondents identified as year-round residents while 43 identified as full summer seasonal (Figure 2).

Table 1

Number of survey respondents and percentage of respondents in each community.

Municipality	Survey Respondents (Count)	Percentage of Survey Respondents (%)	Population of individuals 50 years and over (Statistics Canada, 2023)	Percentage of individuals 50 years and over
McKellar	79	17%	1000	7.90%
Town of Parry Sound	79	17%	3675	2.15%
Whitestone	40	9%	790	5.06%
Callander	26	6%	2005	1.30%
Parry Sound Unorganized Centre Part	25	5%	1790	1.40%
The Archipelago	24	5%	715	3.36%
McDougall	20	4%	1440	1.39%
Carling	19	4%	935	2.03%
Magnetawan (Municipality)	14	3%	1125	1.24%
Machar	13	3%	635	2.05%
Parry Sound Unorganized North East Part	13	3%	90	14.44%
Armour	12	3%	890	1.35%
Seguin	12	3%	2965	0.40%
Burks Falls	10	2%	430	2.33%
Kearney	10	2%	620	1.61%
McMurrich/ Monteith	9	2%	540	1.67%
South River	9	2%	545	1.65%
Nipissing Township	9	2%	1010	0.89%
Perry	8	2%	1375	0.58%
Powassan	8	2%	1680	0.48%
Dokis First Nation	6	1%	Data unavailable	
Joly	6	1%	170	3.53%
Ryerson	5	1%	420	1.19%
Strong	4	0.9%	865	0.46%
Sundridge	2	0.4%	515	0.39%

Figure 1

Survey respondent's age from Parry Sound district (n= 461).

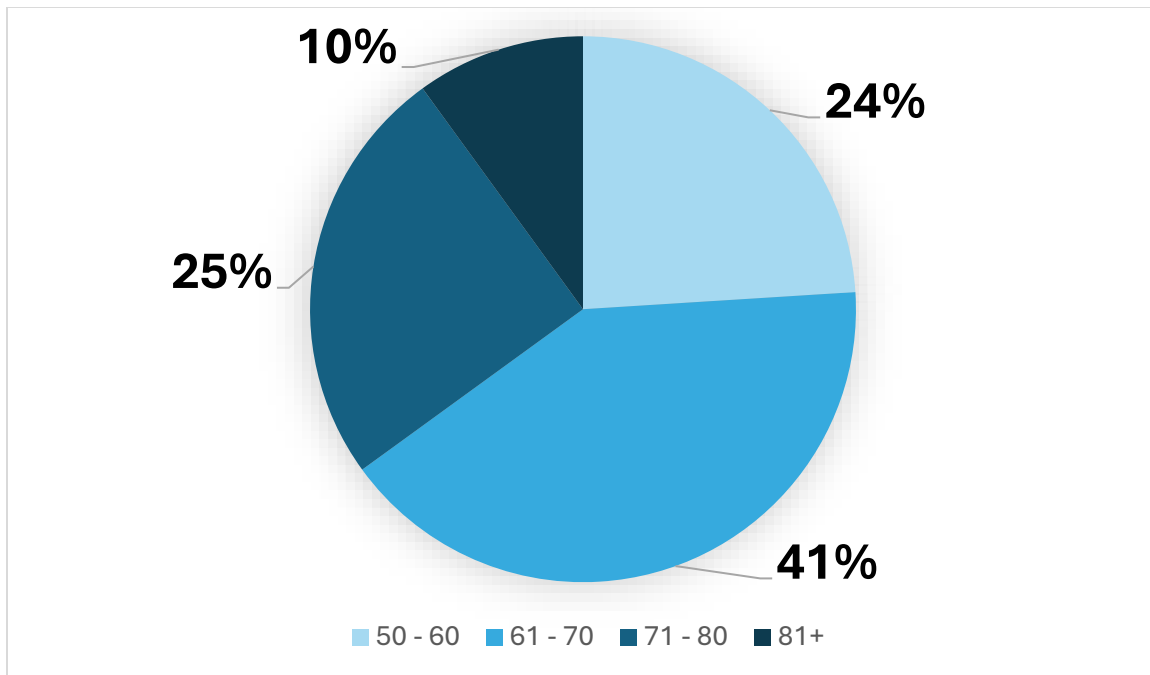
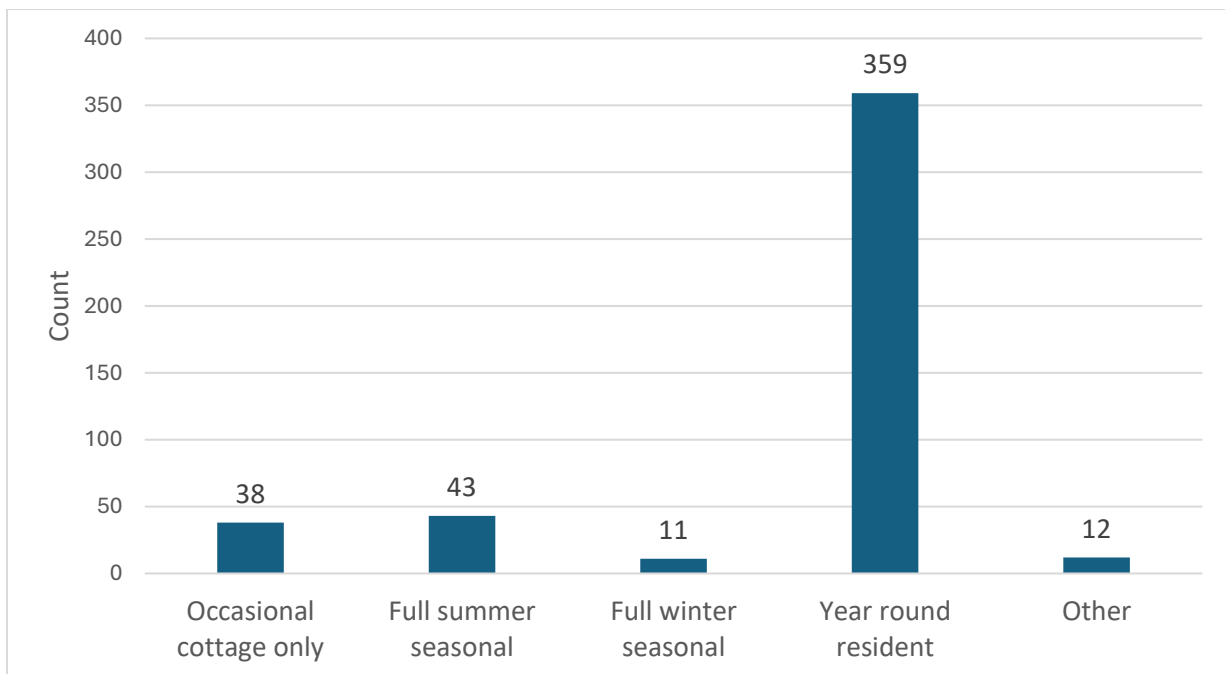


Figure 2

Survey respondent's residency definition in Parry Sound district (n=463).



Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Parry Sound District Data

Respondents were asked questions about sidewalks and trails in the Parry Sound district, as well as accessible benches, ramps, parking, and public washrooms. Forty five percent (45%) of respondents stated sidewalks, pathways, and trails are well-maintained, cleared in the winter, non-slip and accessible, while 33% stated that they do not access sidewalks, pathways, and trails, and 22% felt that sidewalks, pathways, and trails are not maintained, cleared in the winter, non-slip or accessible. Similarly, 46% of respondents reported accessible benches are located along sidewalks, paths, or trails and are spaced at regular intervals, while 30% stated that they do not access sidewalks, pathways, and trails, and 24% stated that accessible bench were not adequately available. When asked to provide additional information, respondents highlighted the importance of accessibility of pathways and sidewalks that include benches and seating for rest stops, parking spaces, ramps, and washrooms in or near public buildings in town centres. Respondents also emphasized the impacts of winter snow removal delays and the importance of snow removal on the shoulders of rural roads as this can contribute to being a barrier to movement in communities.

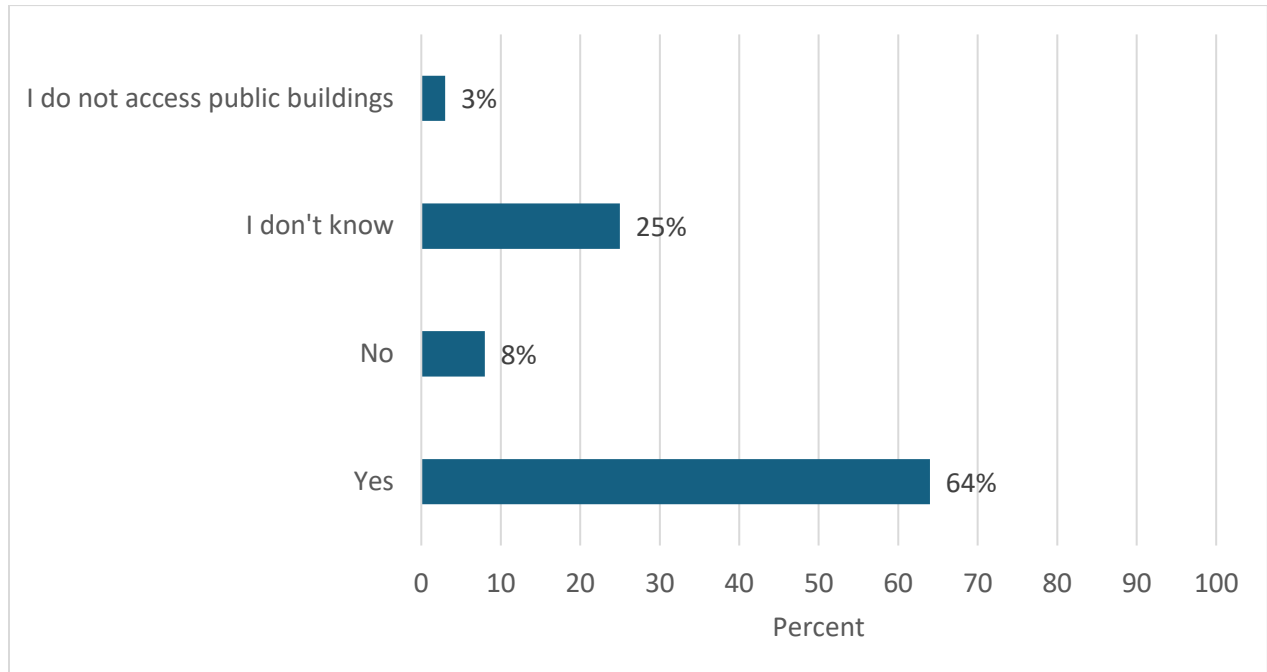
Two thirds (67%) of respondents stated that ramps at entrances of public buildings were at an appropriate slope for wheelchairs, 22% reported that they didn't know, 7% stated that ramps at entrances are not at an appropriate slope, and 4% stated that they do not access public buildings. Sixty four percent (64%) reported that there are a few stairs to get into and within public buildings, 23% reported that they did not know, 8% did not agree with the statement, and 5% stated that they do not access public buildings. For accessibility of buildings, a respondent stated, *"Generally, government buildings (hospitals, municipal offices, clinics) are well serviced. Private buildings (stores, recreation businesses) are more variable."* When asked if public washrooms are accessible and located on the main floor of public buildings, 64% of respondents reported yes, while 25% reported that they did not know (Figure 3). Over three quarters (78%) of respondents reported that parking is well-maintained and located near public buildings for easier access. Respondents also highlighted that signage on building or in public places needs to be clear and visible to read from a distance.

Forty six percent (46%) and 35% of respondents stated that their neighbourhood and trails are well lit, respectively. When asked to expand, respondents stated that many of them live in rural communities where there are no street lights and do not walk in town or on their streets at night because of this. Some respondents noted that they prefer dark skies and that light pollution is a concern. Respondents highlighted the need for improved lighting at municipal buildings, such as libraries, municipal offices, and community centres. For public buildings, a respondent highlighted, *"Adequate lighting in outdoor spaces enhances visibility and safety, especially during evenings. Lights should be positioned to avoid glare and shadows."*

Finally, a respondent highlighted the importance of engagement with local residents to allow for valuable feedback and consideration for municipalities and local businesses. They stated *"Engage older community members in the planning process to understand their needs and preferences. Their input can guide effective design and service delivery."*

Figure 3

Response to question “Accessible washrooms are located on the main floor” for Parry Sound district (n = 463).

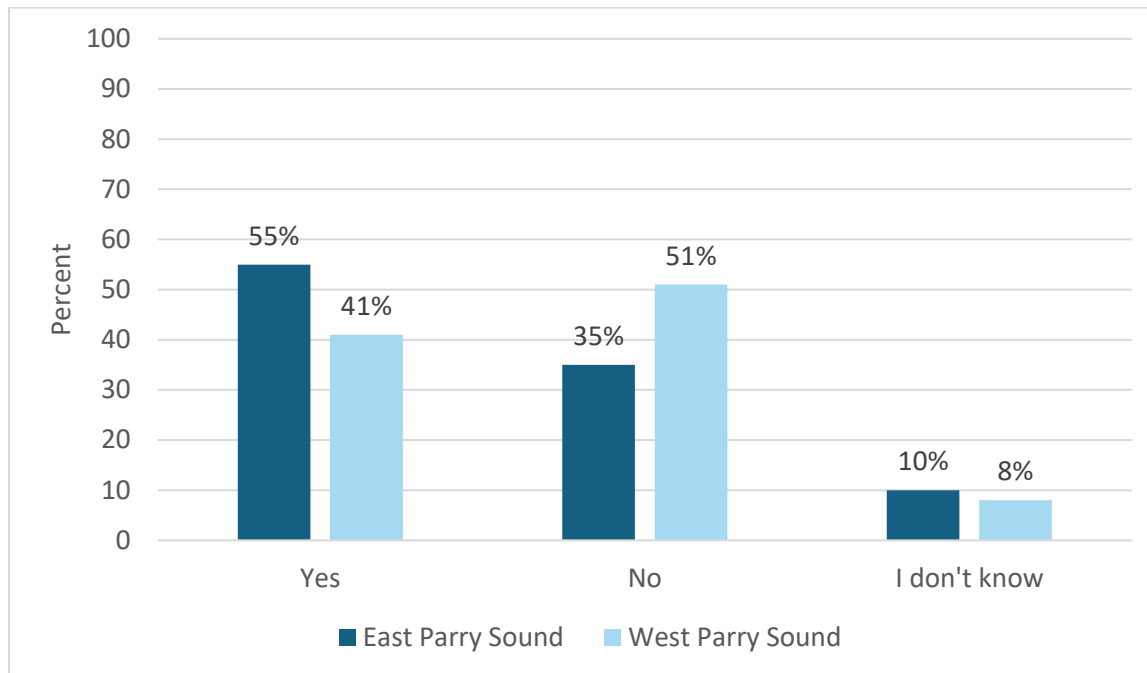


East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound Regions

When comparing data for East and West Parry Sound regions, there were differences in responses when looking at if communities or neighborhoods are well-lit. Over half (55%) of respondents in East Parry Sound stated that neighbourhood is well lit, while 41% of respondents in West Parry Sound stated that their neighbourhood is well lit (Figure 4). This was discussed above with open ended responses to questions regarding the concern for light pollution in rural areas and the need for adequate lighting around municipal and public buildings.

Figure 4

Response to question “Your neighbourhood is well-lit.” for East Parry Sound (n=145) and West Parry Sound (n=273).



Transportation Services

Parry Sound District Data

Respondents were asked to answer questions about affordable and accessible transportation options in the Parry Sound district. One third (31%) stated that affordable and accessible community transport services are available to take older adults to events, shopping, social events, and medical appointments, while 37% of respondents reported that they do not access community transportation services, and 31% stated these services do not exist. For accessible transportation services that take older adults to and from medical appointments (including in larger cities), 43% reported these services exist, while 57% stated that they are not aware of accessible transportation services in their communities (Figure 5).

When asked to provide additional responses, many respondents highlighted the reliance on family members and friends to get them to and from appointments or services, as they are not aware of transportation services in their community. One respondent stated, “My daughter drives me where I need to go. I am not aware of other services (I can't drive myself).” Respondents stated that they are unable to find information about local services through online search engines.

When asked if taxis are available and affordable to older adults in the Parry Sound district, 30% reported yes, while 29% stated that they are available by not affordable. Forty-one percent (41%) stated that they are not aware of taxis being available or affordable in their community. Almost half of respondents (49%) stated that they are not aware of taxis that are accessible to those using mobility devices (Figure 6).

Many respondents emphasized that taxi services are not always accessible and can be expensive since many individuals live in rural communities that require longer commutes to access services. One

respondent stated, “Taxis will come but are over 50 dollars to get to the nearest grocery store.” Respondents referred to taxis as only being used for emergencies. They also noted that finding accessible transportation is difficult, stating that many taxis and vehicles are difficult to get in and out of, and that transportation services are essential to remaining in their community and aging in place. Respondents reported previous attempts have been made in some communities to implement a rural bus service to connect communities however these services are no longer available.

Figure 5

Response to question “Accessible transportation services are available to take older adults to and from health appointments (including those in larger cities)” in Parry Sound District (n=463).

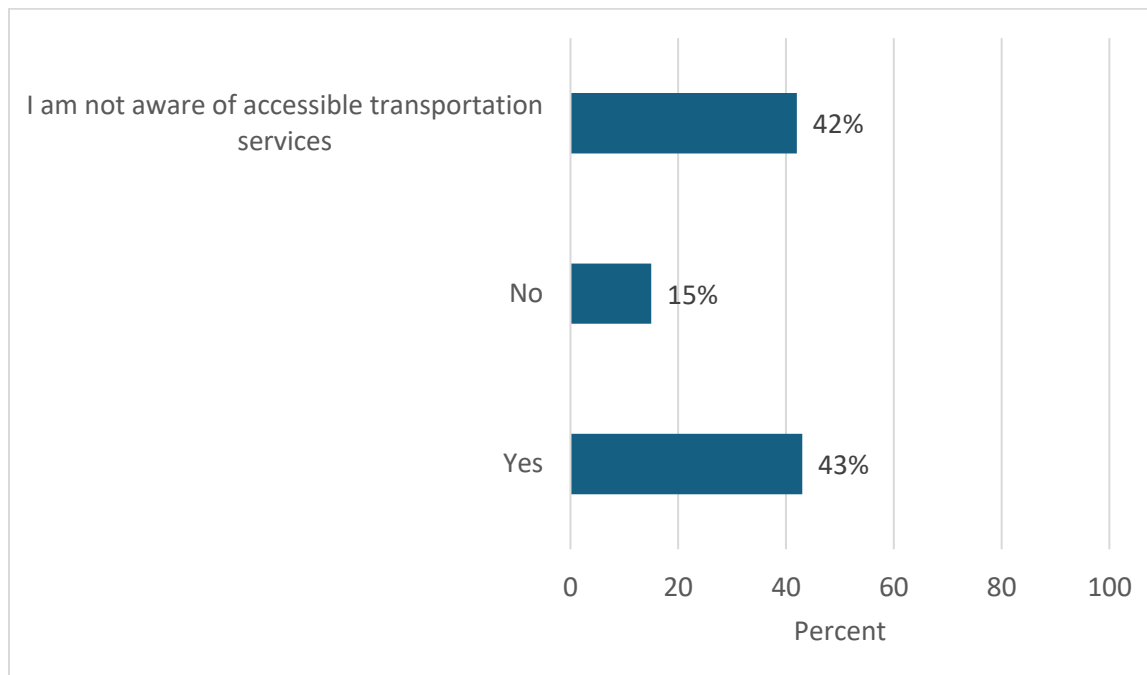
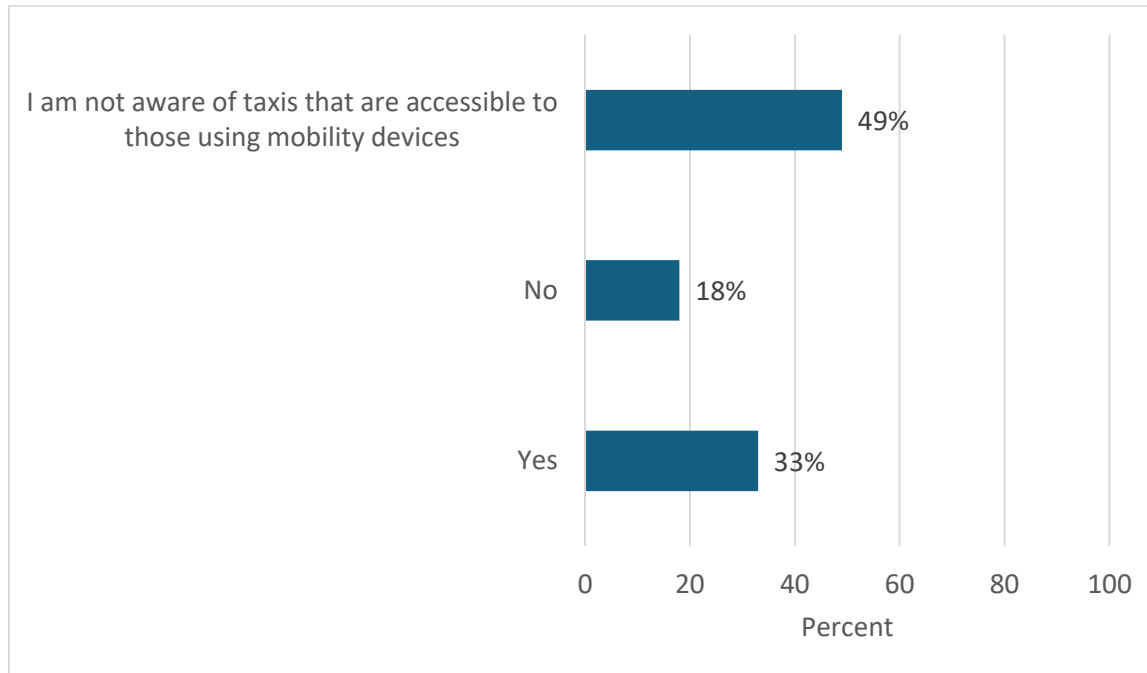


Figure 6

Response to question “Taxis are accessible to older adults using mobility devices (e.g., walker, wheelchairs, etc.) in Parry Sound district (n=463).



East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound Regions

Forty one percent (41%) and 26% of respondents in East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound respectively reported that affordable and accessible community transport services are available to take older adults to events, shopping, social events, and medical appointments. While 23% and 46% of respondents in East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound respectively reported that they do not access community transport services (Figure 7).

Fifty two percent (52%) and 37% of respondents in East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound respectively reported accessible transportation services are available to take older adults to and from health appointments (including those in larger cities), while 31% and 51% of respondents in East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound respectively reported that they are not aware of accessible transportation services (Figure 8). Many respondents (145) who identified as being from West Parry Sound reported that there is no community transportation in their communities and that many of these services require volunteers which can be difficult to recruit.

Figure 7

Response to question “Affordable and accessible community transport services (including shuttle vans) are available to take older adults to events, shopping, social events, and medical appointments.” For East Parry Sound (n=145) and West Parry Sound (n=272).

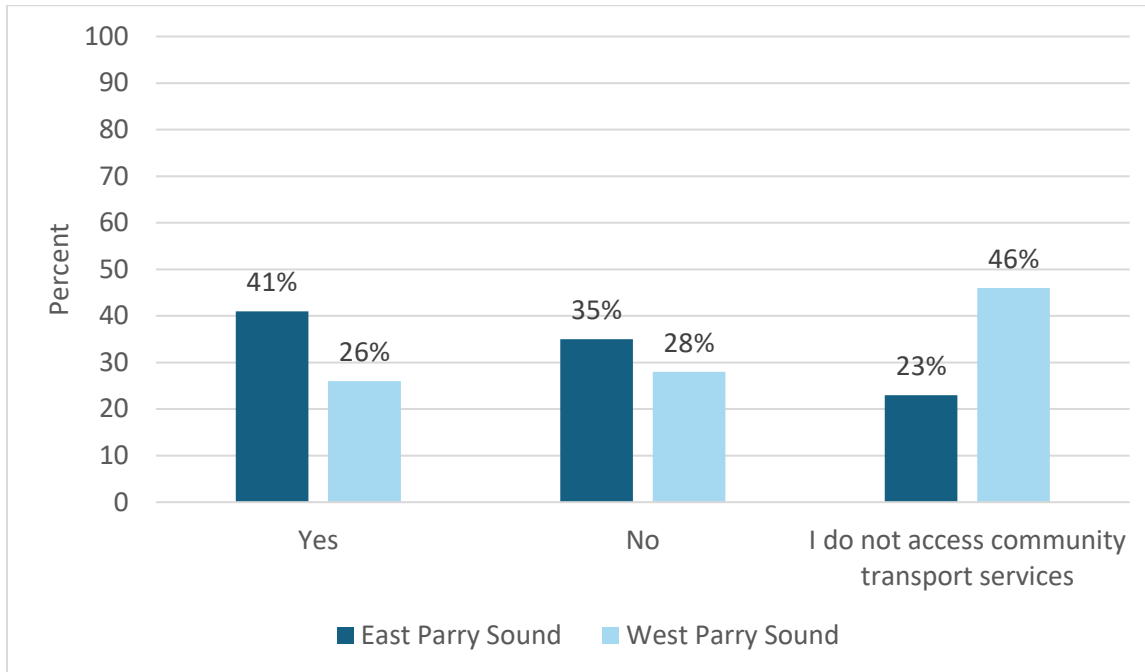
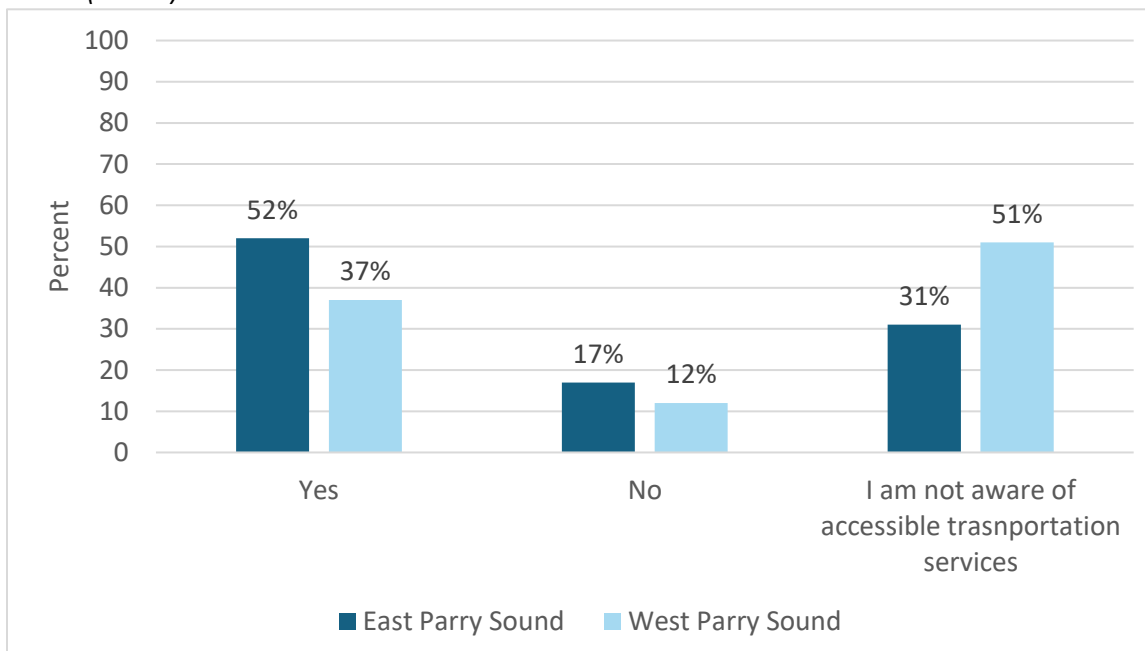


Figure 8

Response to question “Accessible transportation services are available to take older adults to and from health appointments (including those in larger cities).” For East Parry Sound (n=145) and West Parry Sound (n=273)



Aging in Place

Parry Sound District Data

Respondents were asked to answer questions about affordable supports, assisted living options, information on financial assistance programs, and health and social services. When asked if affordable supports are available to enable older adults to remain at home, 40% responded yes, while 60% stated no or that they were not aware of supports available. Almost half (44%) of respondents reported that they were not aware of assisted living options available in Parry Sound district, while 37% responded that there are options in their community. When asked if affordable or free general maintenance services are available in the community for older adults, 56% stated that they are not aware of these services (Figure 9). One third (31%) of respondents stated that they are informed on financial assistance programs for housing modifications available and accessible to older adults, while 54% stated they were not aware (Figure 10).

When asked if home visiting programs are offered in the community to those who do not or cannot leave their home, 45% stated yes, while 55% stated they are not aware or that these programs do not exist. For health and home care services, such as personal care and housekeeping, 41% of respondents reported that these services are affordable and available in the community, while 43% stated they were not aware of these services.

When asked to provide additional responses related to aging in place, they highlighted, waitlists and affordability as being the main barrier to accessing services. Many respondents reported that family members and friends provide the supports and care to their loved ones when services are not available. Respondents noted that many assisted living options are not affordable to majority older adults, and that many of the home visit programs and services are provided by volunteers who are not trained to provide medical assistance. Additionally, staffing issues have been highlighted as a barrier to access services. One respondent stated *“No options were suggested to us when my husband was in hospital trying to coordinate a safe return home. We have been on the wait list for a family doctor for 3 years. Home care took 3 weeks to get (family members had to figure out how to do the care themselves). Not enough staff in the area to service the need.”*

Of respondents, 35% stated that delivery services for groceries and medications or escorted shopping services are available to older adults in the community. While 65% stated that they were not aware of or that these services are not offered in their community. One respondent mentioned, “Meals on Wheels is mentioned at Lunch & Learn but no information on how to access [...]”

Two thirds (68%) of respondents reported that they have a local primary care provider (e.g., family doctor, nurse practitioner, etc.), while 12% stated that they do not have a primary care provider, and 12% report they have a primary care provider, although they are not local (Figure 11). Respondents highlighted the difficulty finding a family doctor in their community, with many individuals who have recently moved to the area mentioning keeping their doctor in other communities. One respondent stated, *“Family doctor retired, no others are available + 2 years, at the time in my life when I most need a family doctor.”*

Figure 9

Response to question “Affordable or free general maintenance (i.e., yard work) is available for older adults” in Parry Sound district (n=463).

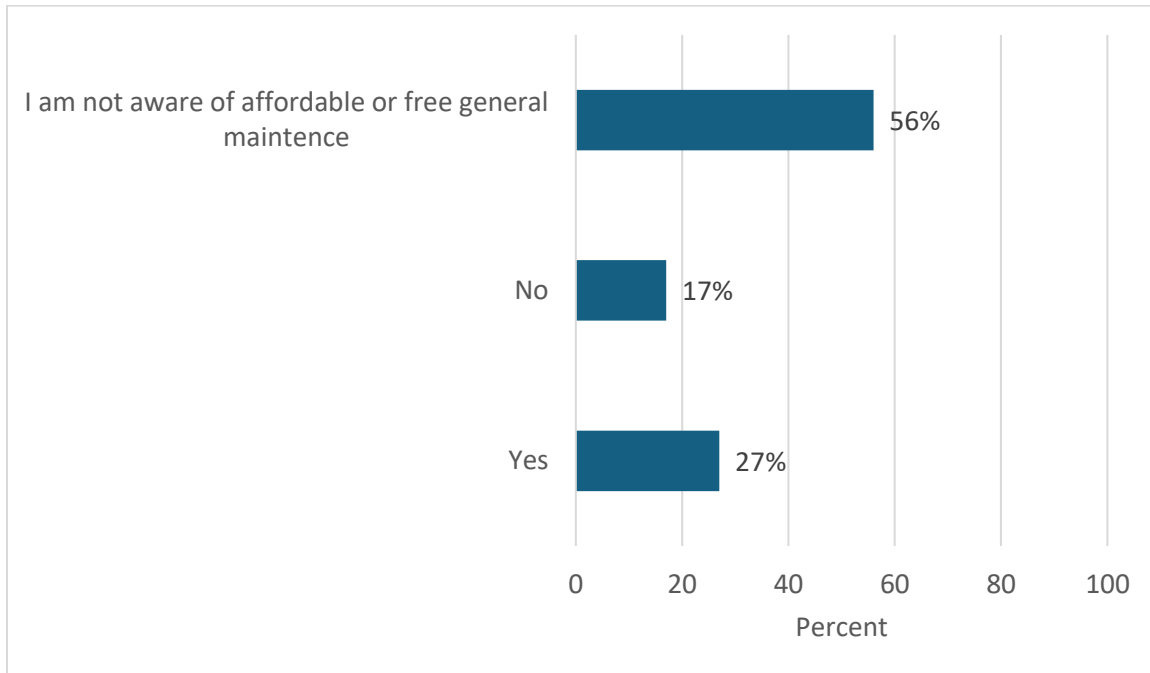


Figure 10

Response to question “Information on financial assistance programs for housing modifications is readily available and easily accessible by older adults” in Parry Sound district (n=463).

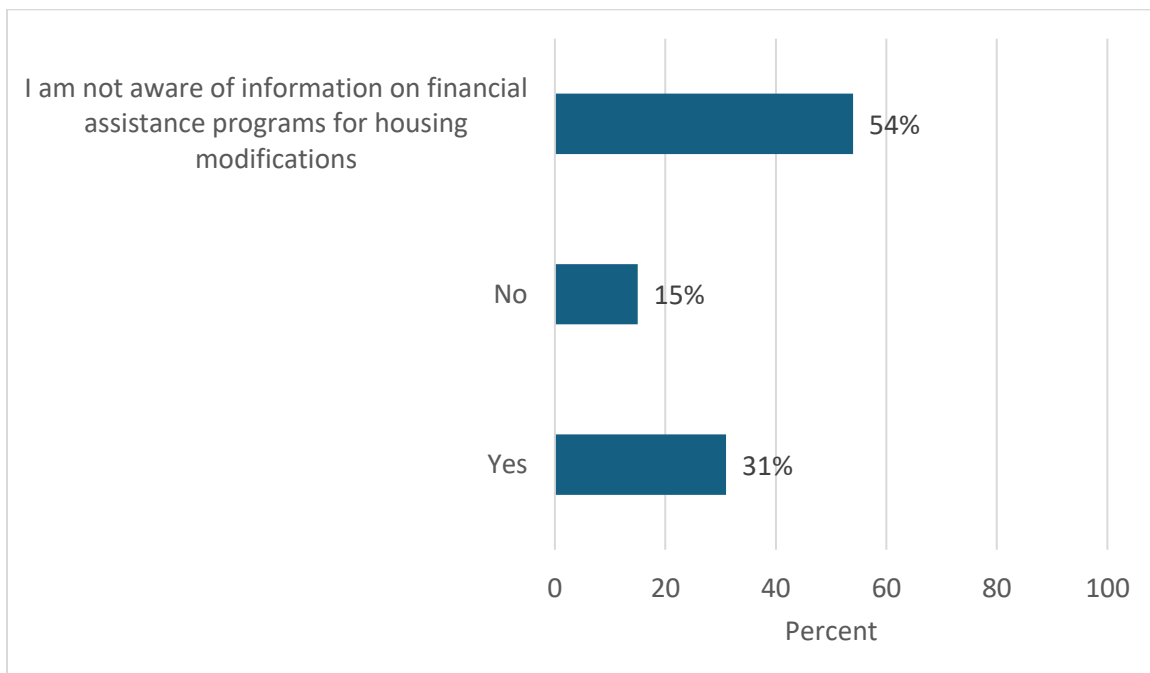
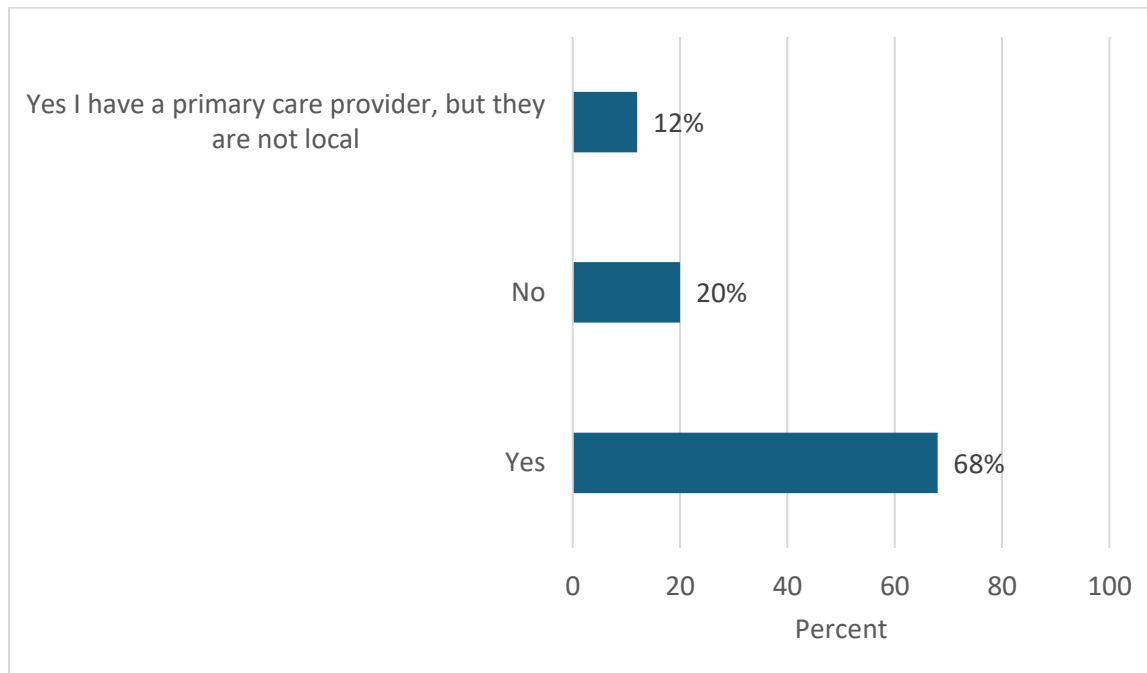


Figure 11

Response to question “Do you have a local primary care provider (family doctor, nurse practitioner, etc.)?” in Parry Sound district (n=463).



When asked if medical equipment is available through loan programs or at no cost to older adults in the community, 31% stated that these programs are available, while 69% stated that they do not access or are not aware of these programs available in their community. One respondent stated, “[...]Access to medical equipment may be from the Legion but their equipment is old.”

Respondents highlighted being unaware of services and being unsure of where to get information whether that being where to start online searches for services, or those with limited access, who can support with navigation. One respondent stated *“The reason I am replying negatively to these questions is that I don’t think there are nearly enough of these services available for elderly people now, and baby boomers like myself enter this higher need category, I think a disaster is coming. Some of these services are available, but not enough. I have a few elderly friends who can afford to pay for services like medic alerts. Friendly visiting is really needed when people can’t get out, and is hard to find. When people qualify for services at home, such as meals, they are very time limited services, and Meals on wheels are pretty expensive. I think we should be thinking of co-housing here.”*

East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound Region

Thirty four percent (34%) and 50% of respondents reported that they were not aware of assisted living options available, respectively, while 40% and 35% responded that there are options in their community in East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound respectively (Figure 12).

When asked if affordable or free general maintenance services are available in the community for older adults, 37% and 67% of respondents in East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound, respectively stated that

they are not aware of these services, while 37% and 22% reported there are services in their community (Figure 13).

Thirty nine percent (39%) and 28% of respondents in East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound, respectively, stated that there is information on financial assistance programs for housing modifications are available and accessible to older adults, while 42% and 60% stated they were not aware (Figure 14).

Figure 12

Response to question “Assisted living options are available to all.” For East Parry Sound (n=145) and West Parry Sound (n=273).

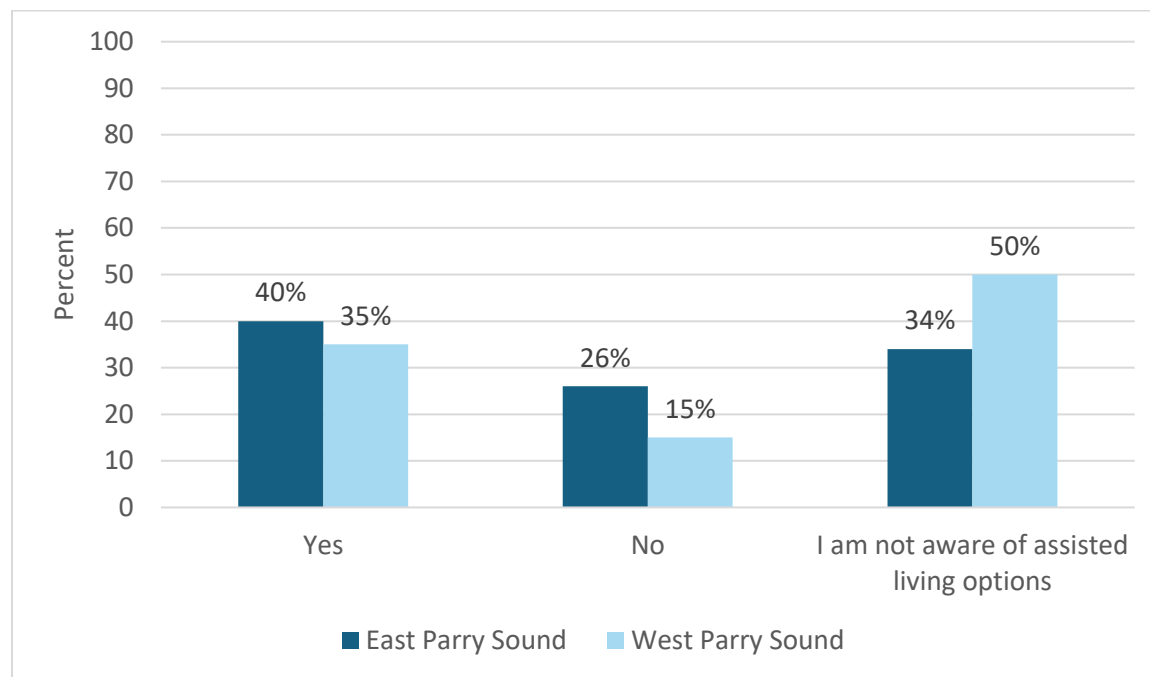


Figure 13

Response to question “Affordable or free general maintenance (i.e. yard work) is available for older adults.” For East Parry Sound (n=145) and West Parry Sound (n=273).

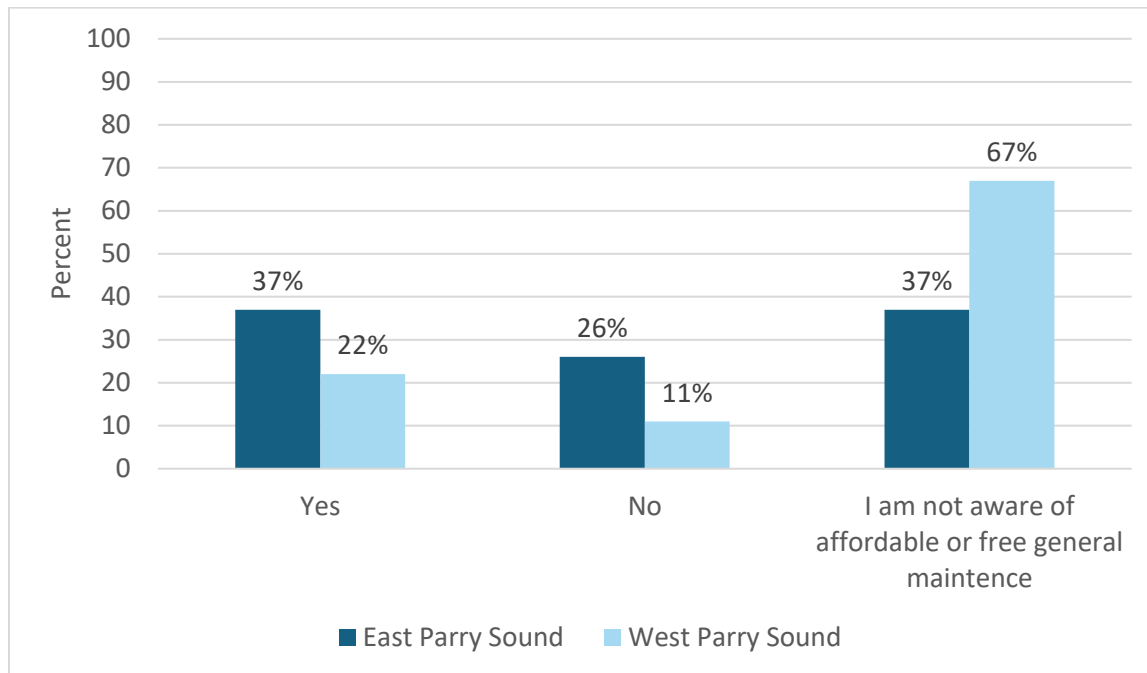
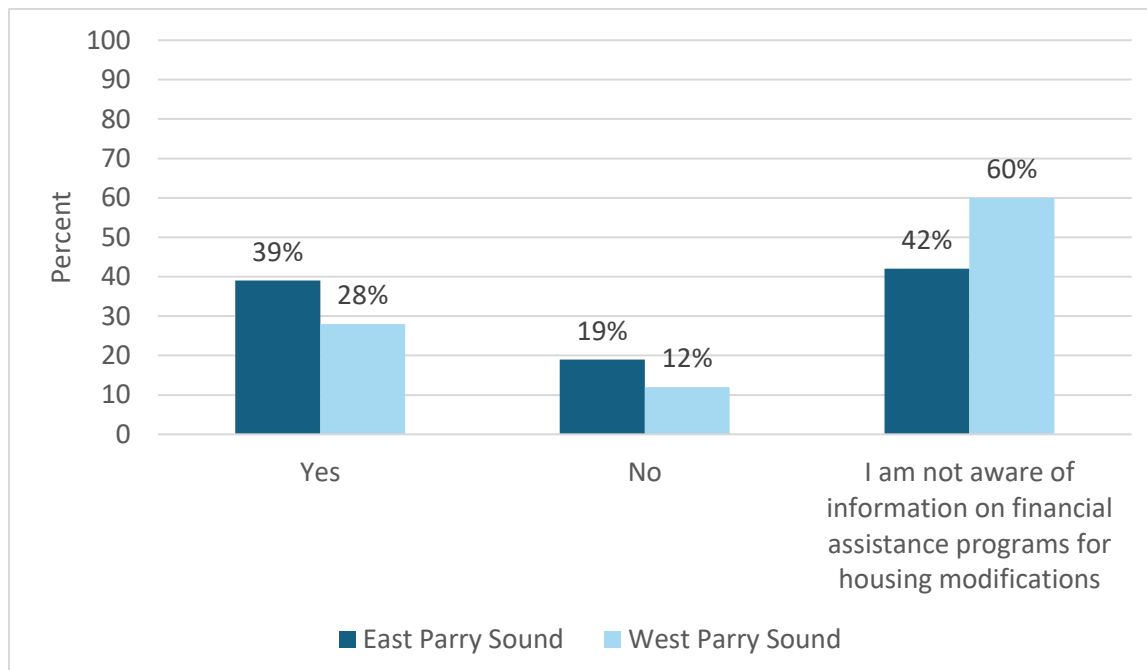


Figure 14:

Response to question “Information on financial assistance programs for housing modifications is readily available and easily accessible by older adults.” For East Parry Sound (n=145) and West Parry Sound (n=273).



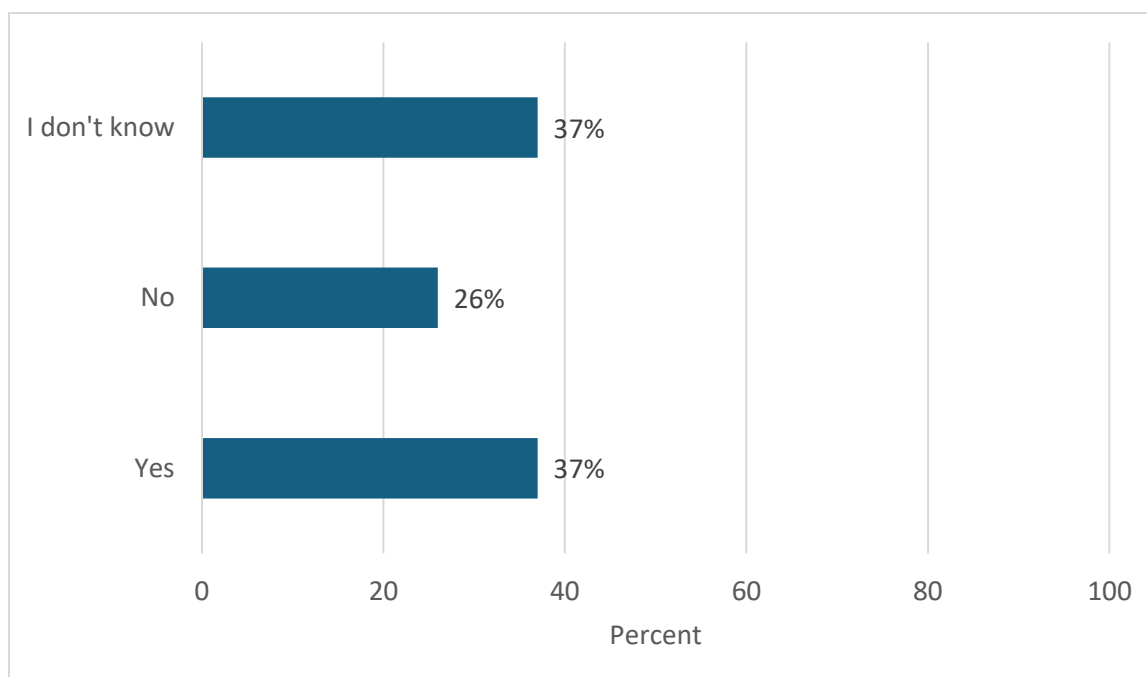
Long Term Care

Parry Sound District Data

There are three long-term care homes in the Parry Sound district. This includes two in the Town of Parry Sound and one in Powassan. When asked if there are affordable long-term care options available that prevent the separation of families and the need to move out of the community, 37% stated that there were options, while 37% were unsure of options available (Figure 15). A respondent stated, *“I don’t believe there are enough long-term care rooms to satisfy the needs of the community.”*

Figure 15

Response to question “Affordable long-term care options are available that prevent the separation of families and the need to move out of the community.” For Parry Sound District (n=463).

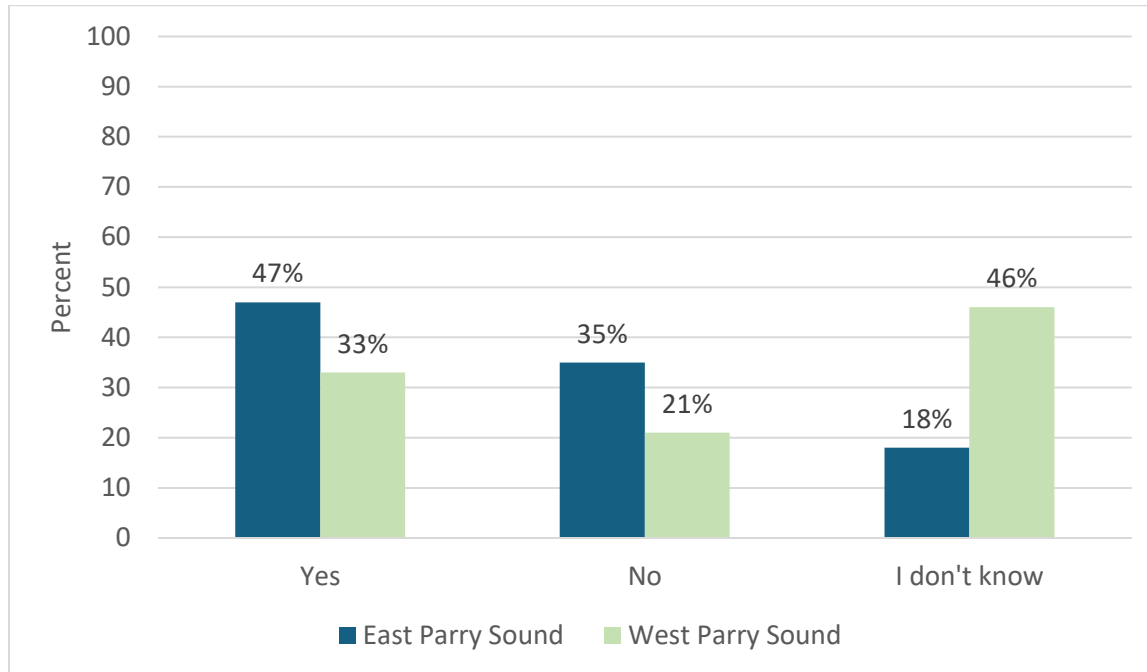


East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound Regions

Forty seven percent (47%) and 33% of respondents stated that affordable long-term care options are available that prevent the separation of families and the need to move out of the community, while 18% and 46% were unsure of options available in East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound, respectively (Figure 16).

Figure 16

Response to question “Affordable long-term care options are available that prevent the separation of families and the need to move out of the community” for East Parry Sound (n=145) and West Parry Sound (n=273).



Community Involvement

Parry Sound District Data

Respondents were asked to answer questions about volunteer and employment opportunities, and events and programs offered for older adults in Parry Sound district. Two thirds (64%) of respondents reported that they feel included and respected in their community, while 17% do not, and 19% were unsure (Figure 17).

When asked about volunteer opportunities, 64% of respondents feel there are a range of volunteer opportunities available in their community that meet their interest, while 36% stated that they are not aware of or that volunteer opportunities are not available in the Parry Sound district (Figure 18). More than half (56%) of respondents felt that volunteer opportunities are flexible and accommodate older adults needs, while 34% reported that they do not access volunteer opportunities. With respect to paid employment, 29% of respondents felt there is a range of paid employment opportunities for older adults, while 82% were unsure or stated these opportunities are not available.

Three quarters (75%) of respondents reported that there are a range of events and activities for older adults, one quarter (25%) stated that they were not aware of or that these event and activities are not available in their community (Figure 19). Seventy seven percent (77%) of respondents stated that indoor and outdoor activities are available in their community. When asked to expand, respondents suggested including programs that encourage social interactions such as community gardens, fitness classes, social nights, and arts and crafts workshops for older adult. Respondents also highlighted that communication

and promotion of activities and events do not always reach older adults. Communication is explored further in the next section of this report.

Respondents highlighted that much of the programming offered for this population are run by volunteers who are older adults. One respondent stated, *“There is some limited activity but it's all run by volunteers who are themselves seniors. Too have activity, seniors have to do all the work!”* Respondents stated that many rely on their family members to provide them with this information, as well as support with transportation. Transportation was identified as a barrier to being involved, as many need to travel to different communities to participate in events.

Figure 17

Response to question “You feel included and respected in your community? (ex. Are you asked to participate, provide your input on community issues and your contributions are honoured) (n=463)."

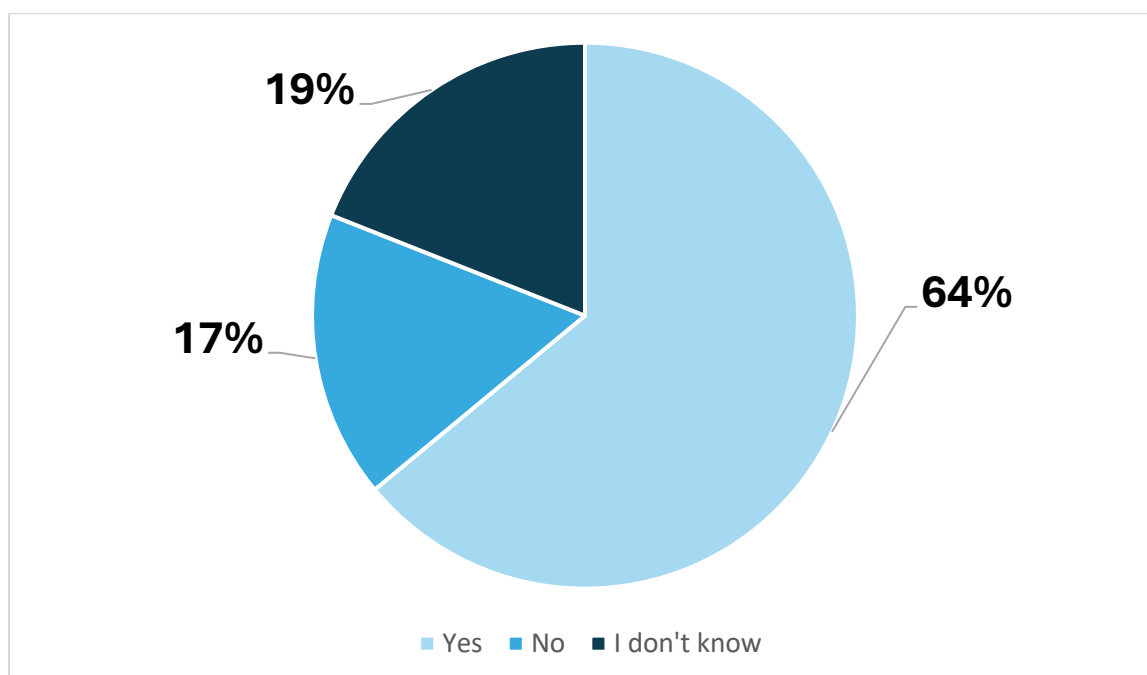


Figure 18

Response to question “A range of volunteer opportunities is available that meets the interests of older adults” in Parry Sound district (n=463).

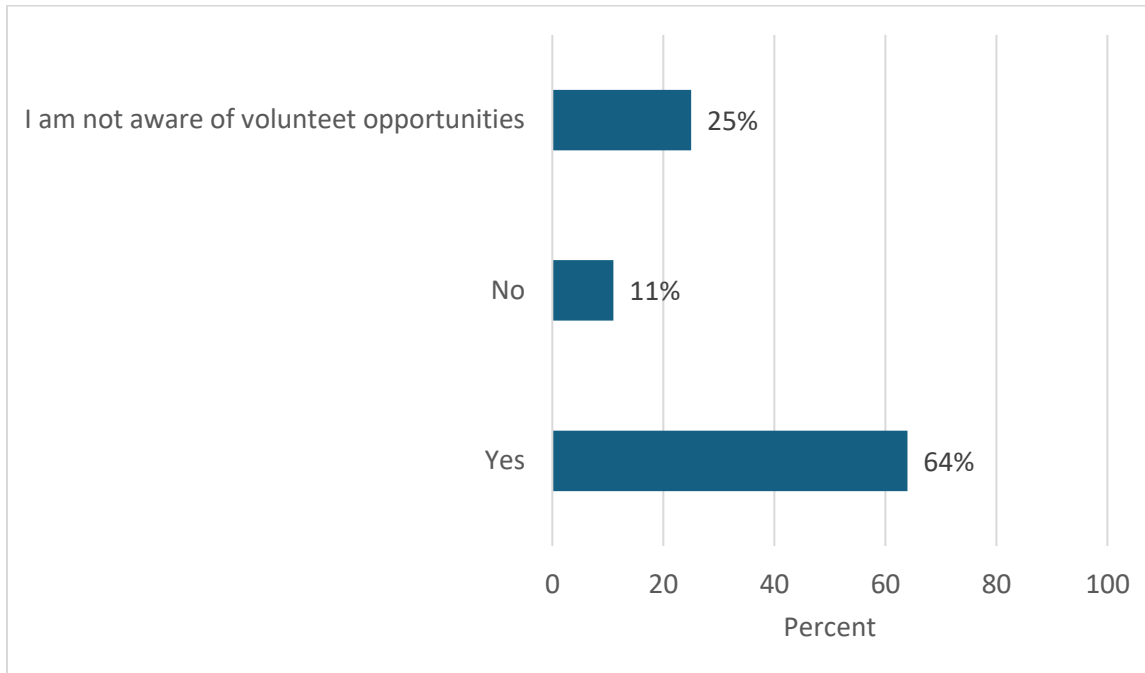
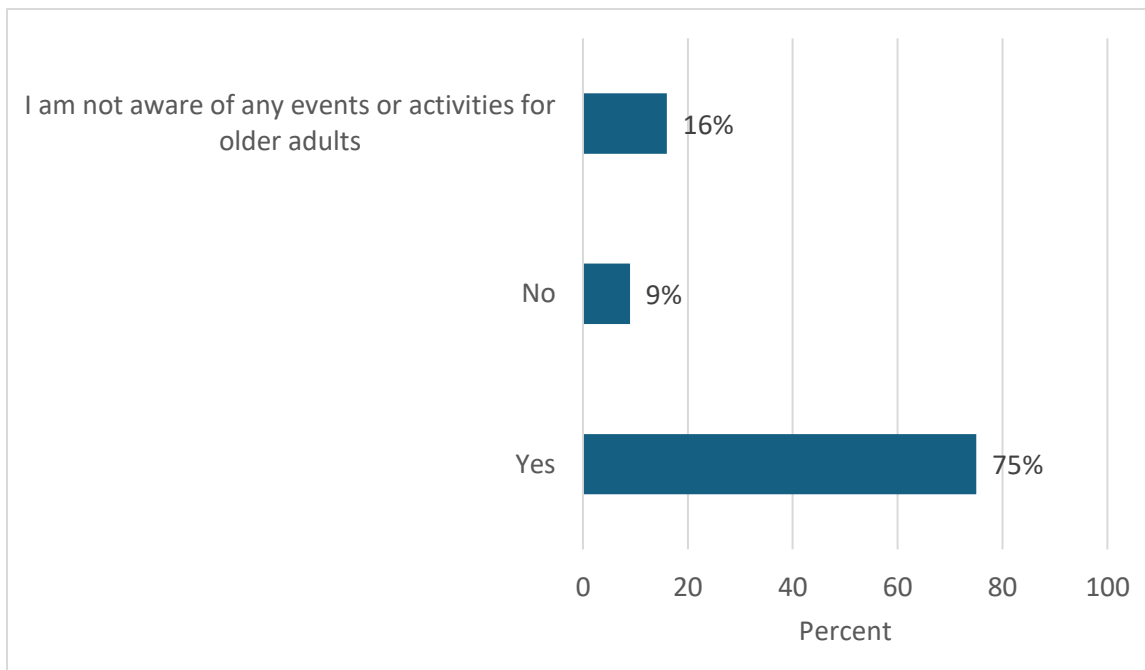


Figure 19

Response to question “There is a range of events and activities for old adults of all ages—some are age-specific and others are intergenerational. Activities could include physical/recreational activities, spectator sporting events, church and school related events, gatherings” for Parry Sound district (n=463).

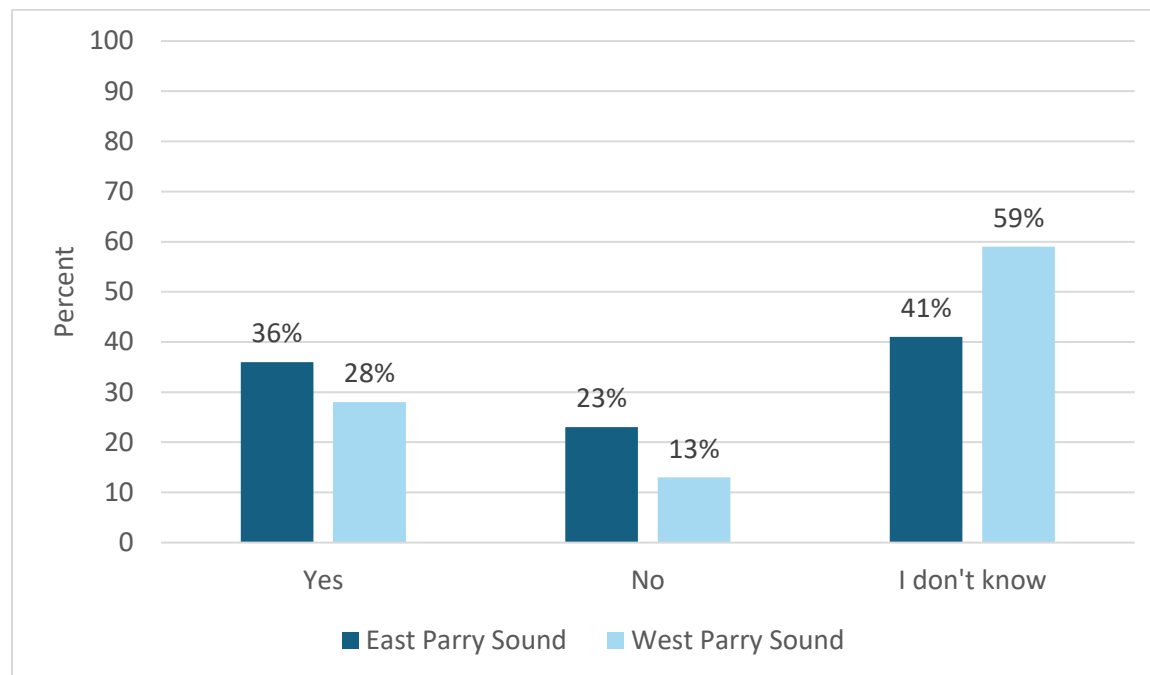


East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound Regions

One third (36%) and 28% of respondents felt there are a range of paid employment opportunities for older adults, while 23% and 13% reported there were no opportunities, and 41% and 59% were unsure in East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound respectively (Figure 20).

Figure 20

Response to question “There is a range of paid employment opportunities for older adults.” For East Parry Sound (n=145) and West Parry Sound (n=273).



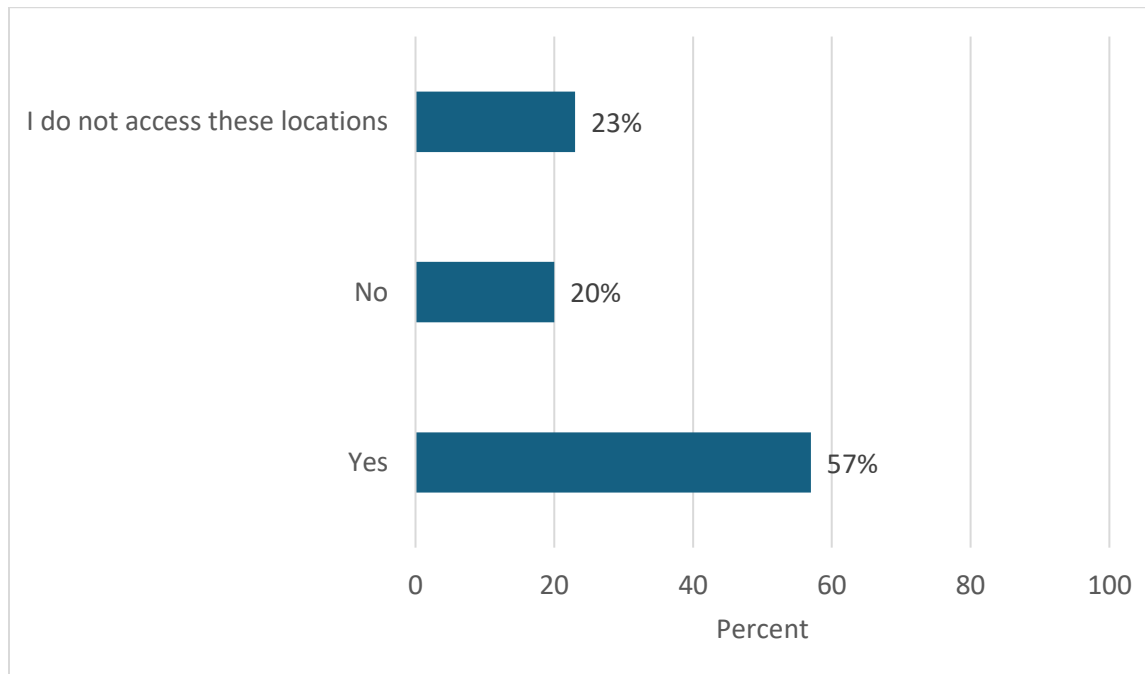
Communication

Parry Sound District Data

Respondents were asked to answer questions about regular and reliable distribution of information, central directories, and accessible ways and formats information is provided. Two thirds (65%) of respondents reported that information about local events and programs are distributed regularly and reliably. More than half (57%) reported that information is disseminated and posted where older adults conduct their daily activities (e.g., post office, place of worship, local centre, and town halls), while 20% stated this is not the case, and 23% stated they do not access these locations (Figure 21). Half of the respondents feel that there is a central directory where older adults can access information on activities and services, which includes information on how to access the service.

Figure 21

Response to question “Information is disseminated/ posted where older adults conduct their daily activities – such as the post office, places of worship, local centres, and town halls” in Parry Sound district (n=463).



Common themes that were identified included ensuring that information is disseminated with a purpose, in a way that older adults access (e.g., physical newsletters, community bulletins, flyers delivered to homes/ mailboxes), and not only through social media. One respondent shared that *“Face-to-face communication through community centers, senior clubs, or local events helps build trust and relationships. Older adults should have opportunities to ask questions and receive information directly from staff or volunteers.”*

Respondents highlighted that there is no local newspaper, radio, or tv channel in many of communities in the Parry Sound district. These media outlets were highlighted as a place to share community events, health tips, and local news. *“As a healthy senior, I can travel and “dig” for information yet even I am constantly exasperated by the lack of a comprehensive source for learning about available social services and optional social activities or events. It’s extremely fragmented.”* Respondents also referred to accessing information through their municipality’s websites, although stated that many are not up to date or intuitive on where information can be found.

One quarter (26%) of respondents reported that information is delivered by phone or through personal visits to older adults who are socially isolated, while 57% of respondents were unsure if this is being done. When asked if an interactive speaker series that delivers important information to older adults is available in their community, 37% reported yes, while 63% stated that they were unsure or that speaker series are not offered in their community. Thirty seven percent (37%) of older adults report that they have been recruited and used as volunteers to fill roles as experts, disseminators of information, and trainers, while 50% stated they were unsure.

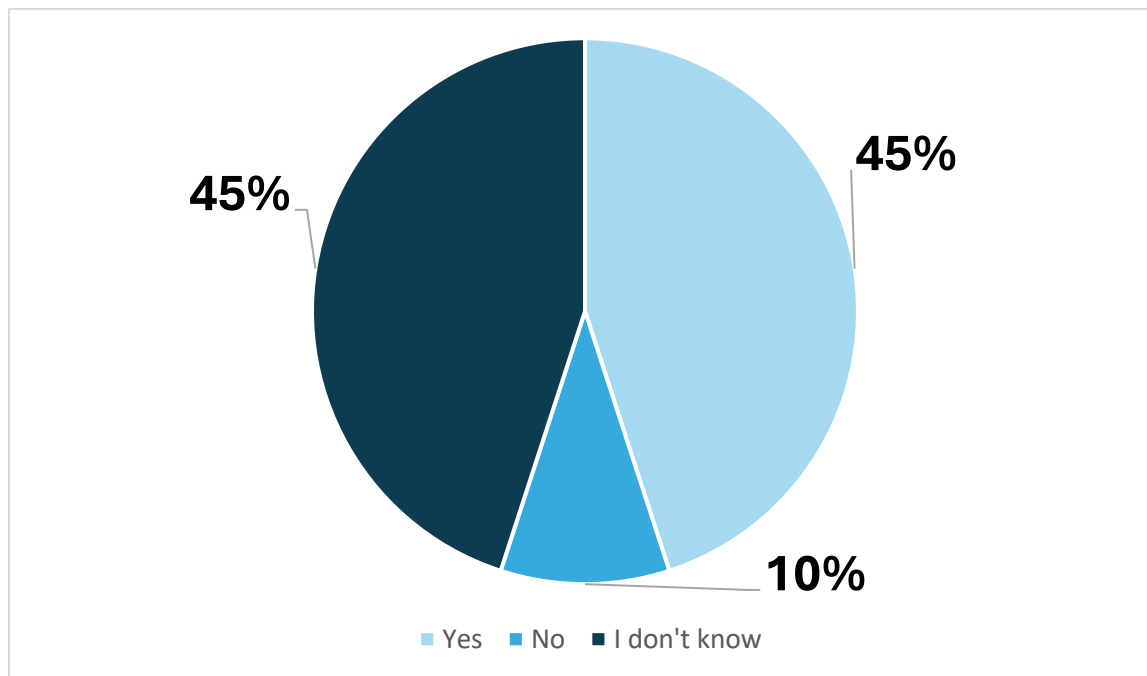
When asked if written communication is clearly printed in large letters, is easy to read and includes simple messaging, 41% stated yes, while 36% of respondents reported that they do not have access to this type of communication. One respondent reported that information shared needs to be in an accessible way and stated, *“Ensure that communication materials (pamphlets, posters, websites) use clear, simple, and jargon-free language. Avoid complex terminology that might be confusing, and use large, easy-to-read fonts.”*

Almost half (44%) of respondents reported that information of interest to older adults is being disseminated effectively, such as information on local events, vital information (health, security, etc.), and programs and services that are available to them, while 41% were unsure.

Seventy percent (70%) of respondents reported that they have access to computers and the internet at local centres open to the public, while 20% reported that they were unsure. Half (45%) of respondents reported that trainings courses on new technology are available and accessible to older adults, while 45% were unsure (Figure 22).

Figure 22

Response to question “Training courses on new technologies are available and accessible to older adults” for Parry Sound district (n=463)



East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound Regions

Thirty three percent (33%) and 22% of respondents reported that information is delivered by phone or through personal visits to older adults who are socially isolated, while 40% and 68% of respondents were unsure if this is being done in East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound respectively (Figure 23).

When asked if an interactive speaker series that delivers important information to older adults is available in their community, 45% and 32% respondents reported yes, while 30% and 59% stated that they were unsure in East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound respectively (Figure 24).

Figure 23

Response to question “Information is delivered to older adults who are socially isolated by phone or other person visits.” For East Parry Sound (n=145) and West Parry Sound (n=273).

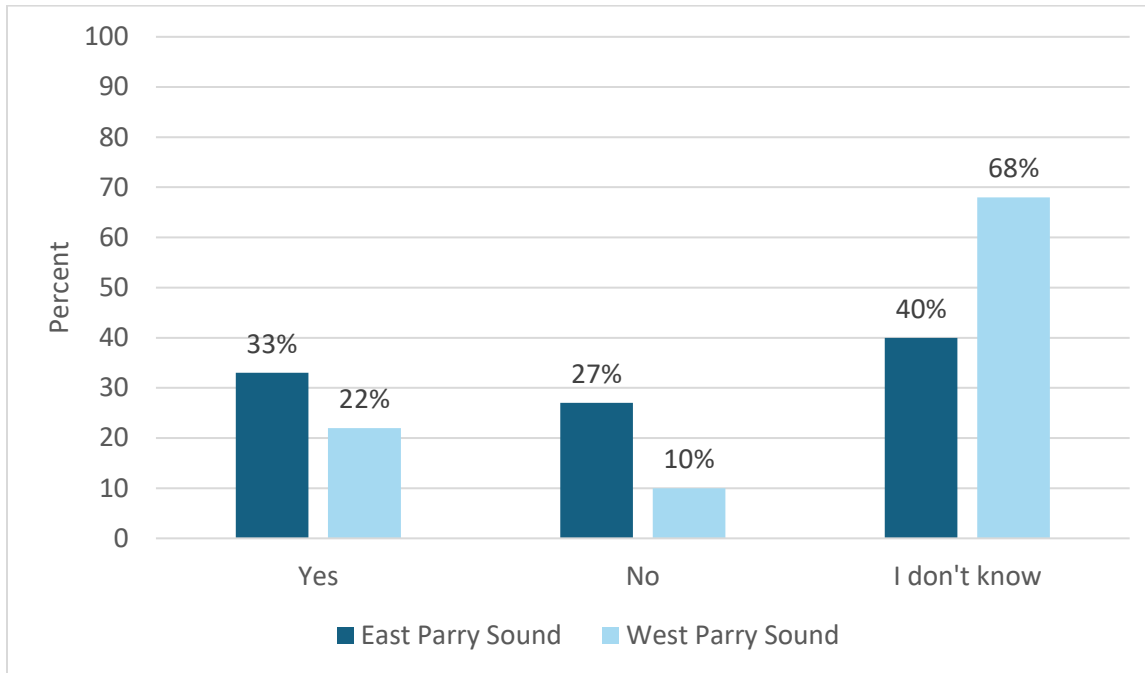
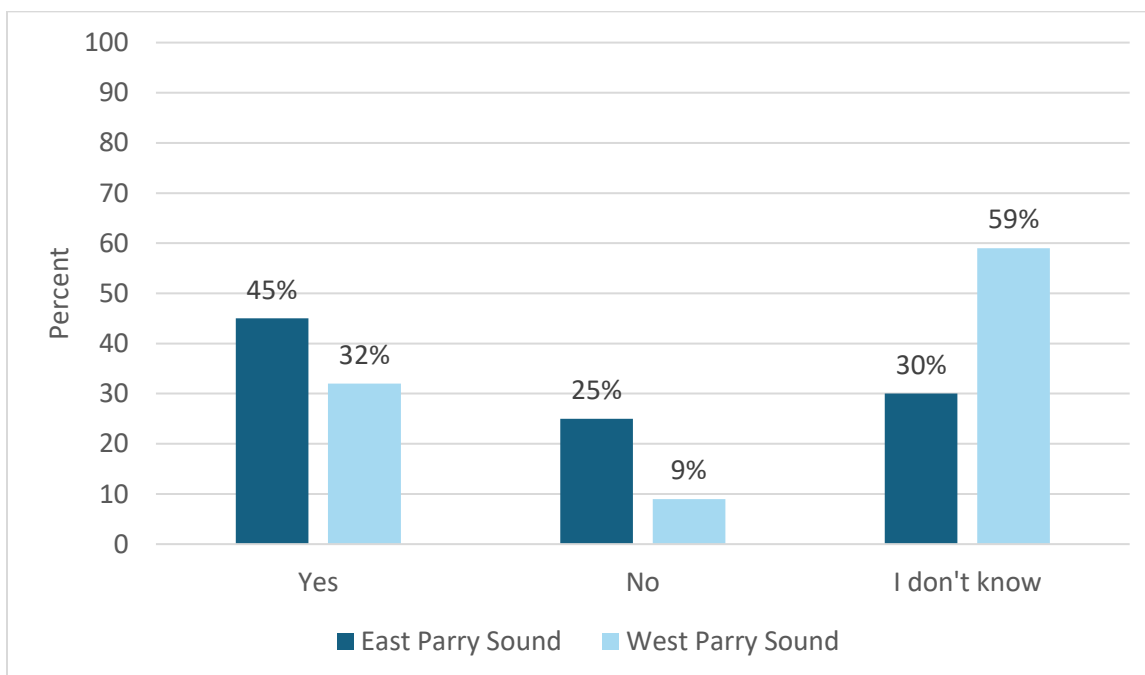


Figure 24

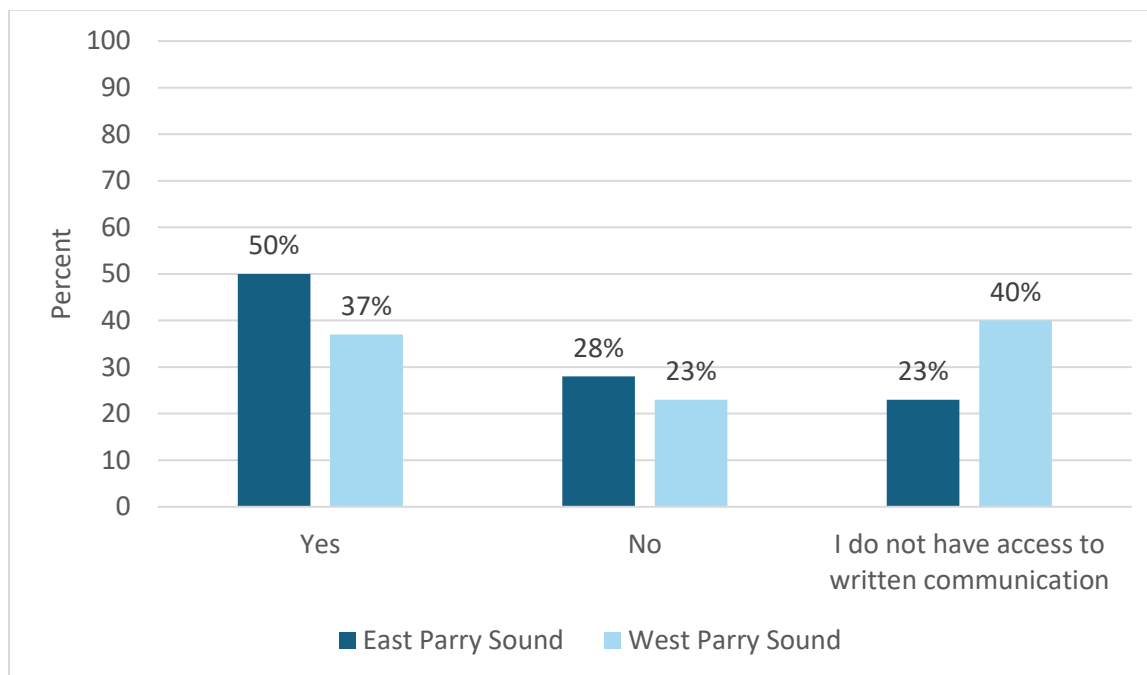
Response to question “An interactive speaker series is created that delivers important information (e.g., on health issues, protecting against fraud).” For East Parry Sound (n=145) and West Parry Sound (n=273).



When asked if written communication is clearly printed in large letters, is easy to read and includes simple messaging, 20% and 37% of respondents reported yes, while 23% and 40% reported do not have access this communication in East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound respectively (Figure 25).

Figure 25

Response to question “Written communication is clearly printed in large letters and is easy to read, with simple messaging.” For East Parry Sound (n=145) and West Parry Sound (n=273).



Forty one percent (41%) and 34% of respondents report that they are recruited and used as volunteers to fill roles as experts, disseminators of information and trainers, while 38% and 57% stated they were unsure from East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound respectively (Figure 26).

Fifty two percent (52%) and 40% of respondents reported that information of interest to older adults is being disseminated effectively, such as information on local events, vital information (health, security, etc.), and programs and services that are available to them, while 26% and 48% were unsure, in East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound respectively (Figure 27).

Figure 26

Response to question “Older adults are recruited and used as volunteers as experts, disseminators of information and trainers.” For East Parry Sound (n=145) and West Parry Sound (n=273).

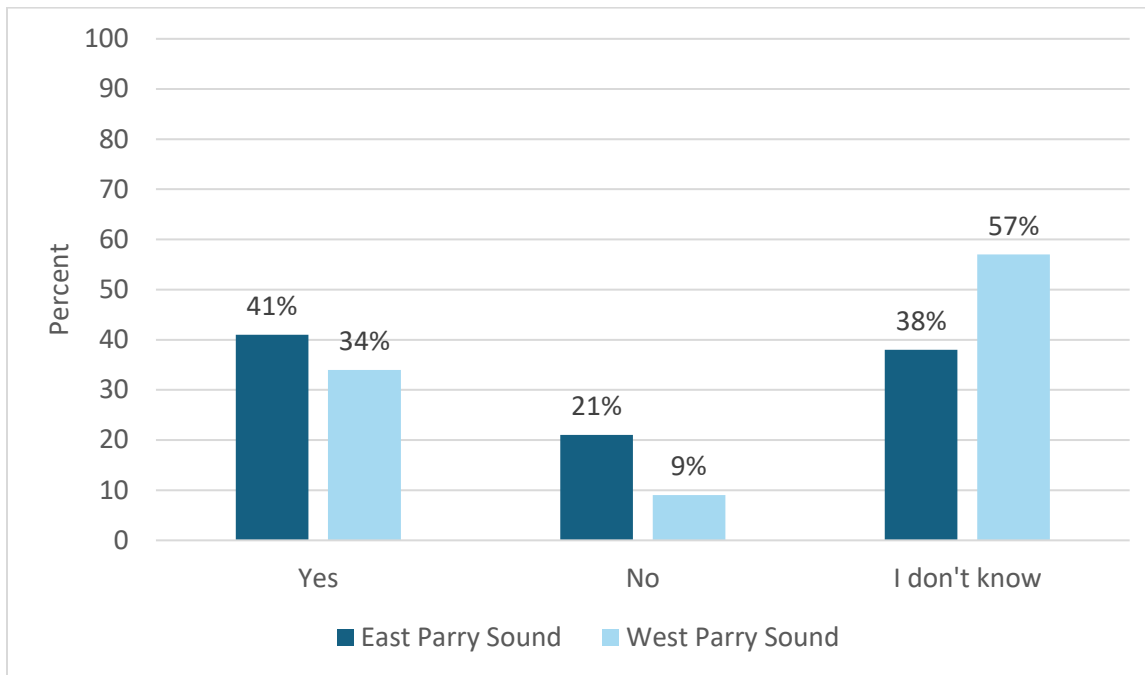
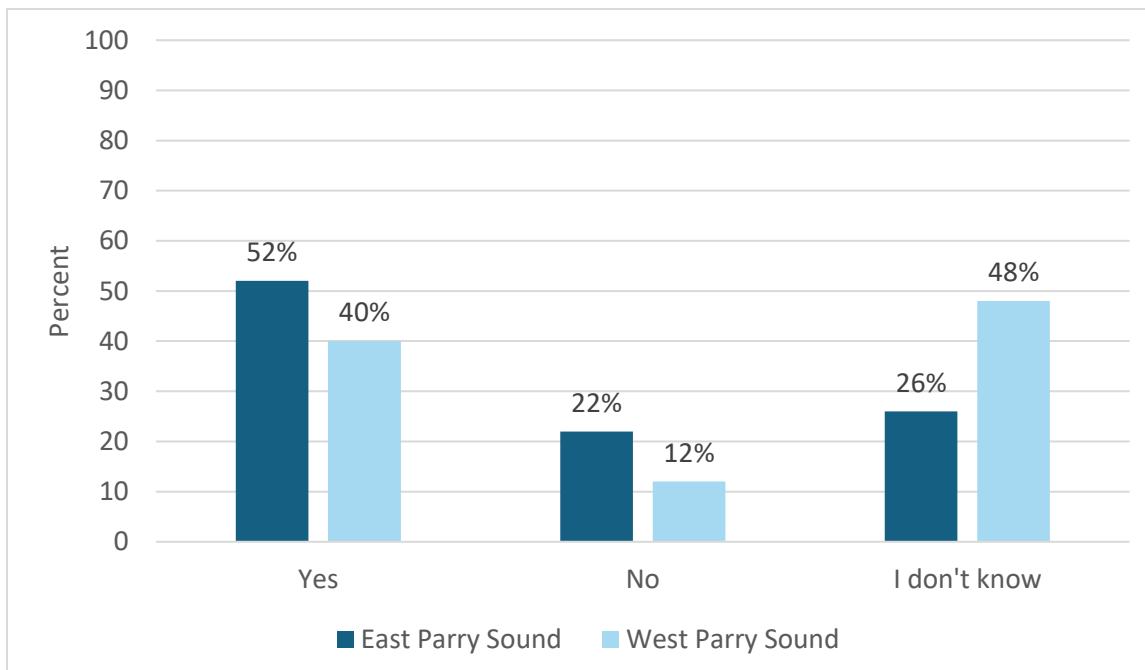


Figure 27

Response to question “Information of interest to older adults is disseminated effectively – such as information on local events, vital information (health, security, etc.), and programs and services that are available to them” for East Parry Sound (n=145) and West Parry Sound (n=273).



Caregiver

Parry Sound District Data

Respondents were asked to answer questions about program and services available to caregivers supporting older adults. Sixty percent (60%) of respondents stated that they were not aware of or that home support or older adult day programs to provide respite to their care partner are not available in their community. Forty-one percent (41%) stated that these programs were available in their community.

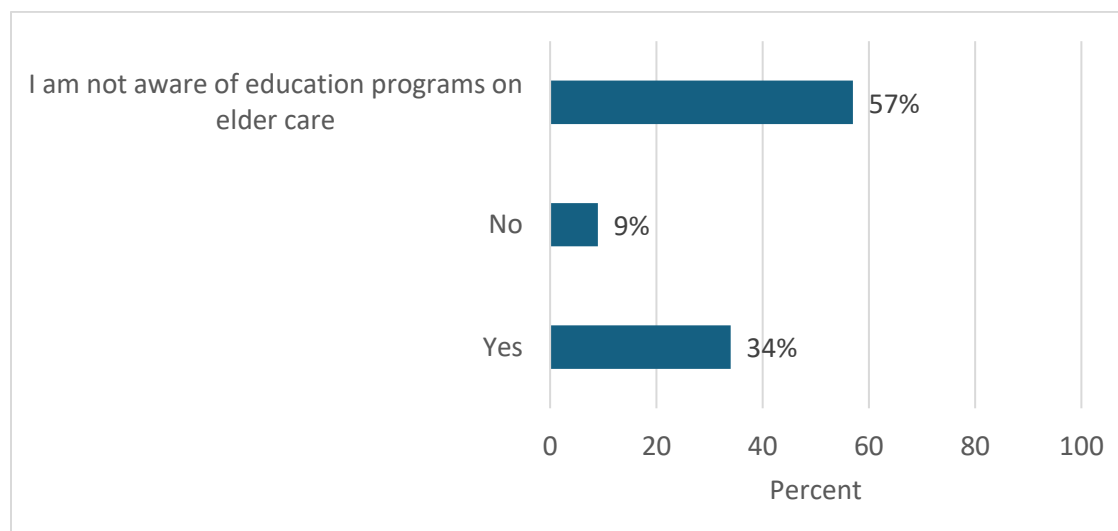
Many respondents highlighted that respite services are not available in rural communities, and that there is a need to advocate for increased funding for support services. One respondent reported, *“Advocate for local funding to support caregiver relief services, such as subsidies for in-home care or adult day services.”* Additionally, another respondent reported, *“While I didn't answer no, the fact that I don't know is equally unfortunate. It is difficult to know where this info can be found when you don't even know the names of organizations that might assist.”*

The importance of programs and services that promote prevention was mentioned by one respondent who stated, *“Services that I am aware of that provide this sort of program is CSS and the Friends. The unfortunate reality is that services are usually only available after an incident, (i.e., stroke/fall/dementia incident). It would be good to see more programs that address preventing incidents.”*

When asked if education programs are offered to individuals caring for an older adult, 34% stated there are programs available, 66% stated that they are not aware of or that these programs are not available (Figure 28). Respondents highlighted the need for training sessions available in the community to provide individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to provide care for an older adult. One respondent stated, *“Offer regular training sessions that cover essential caregiving skills, such as managing medications, understanding chronic illnesses, and navigating health care systems.”* Additionally, it was highlighted that there is a need for community resource centres that support with navigating local services, joining support groups, and providing education/ training.

Figure 28

Response to question “Education programs on elder care and similar available services are provided to families who are, or will be, caring for an older adult.” For Parry Sound district (n=463).



East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound Regions

Thirty eight percent (38%) and 57% of respondents in East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound respectively stated that they were not aware of home support or older adult day programs to provide respite to their care partner. Forty six percent (46%) and 38% stated that these programs were available in their community (Figure 29).

When asked if education programs are offered to individuals caring for an older adult, 41% and 31% of respondents in East Parry Sound and West Parry Sound respectively stated there are programs available, while 43% and 63% stated they were not aware of programs in their community (Figure 30).

Figure 29

Response to question "Caregivers are "given a break" from caretaking through programs such as home support and senior's day care programs." For East Parry Sound (n=145) and West Parry Sound (n=273).

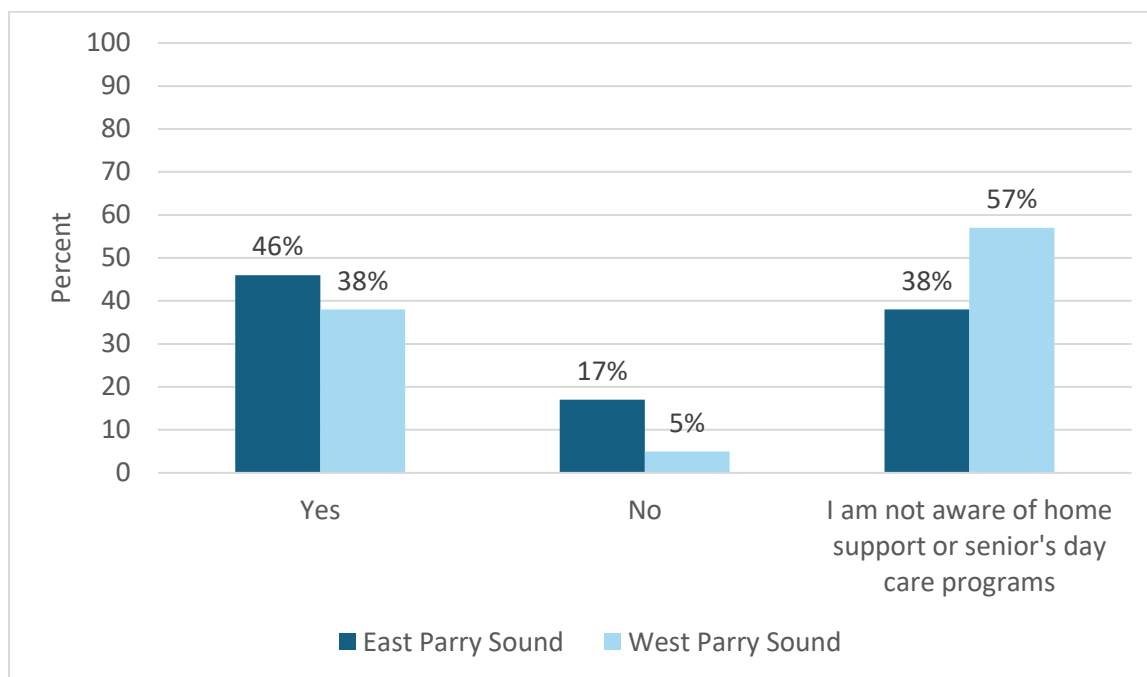
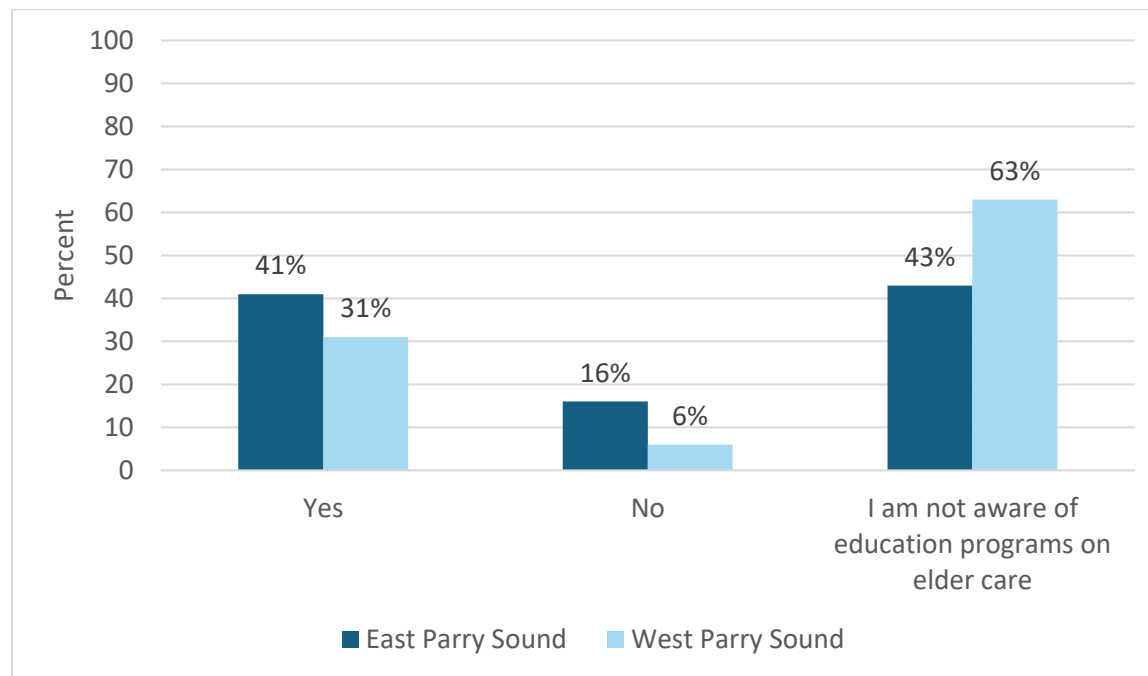


Figure 30

Response to question “Education programs on elder care and similar available services are provided to families who are, or will be, caring for an older adult.” For East Parry Sound (n=145) and West Parry Sound (n=273).



Limitations

The project team recognizes that there were limitations with this research project. While efforts were made to mitigate these limitations, the following should be noted. Due to the vast geography of the Parry Sound district, and the rural nature of these communities, where individuals access services may be outside of the communities in which they reside in, as well as outside of the Parry Sound district. This will specifically affect responses to questions in the survey about the built environment and aging in place supports. Therefore, general themes were included in the survey and specific locations were omitted.

The survey was disseminated throughout the Parry Sound district and although the overall response count was high for the survey, there was a low response rate in individual communities. Future research should look at ensuring that dissemination of surveys or other data collection efforts are done consistently through the district. Additionally, First Nation Communities had limited representation in the report. Future research should include First Nation Communities during all phases of the research including planning, implementation, data analysis and knowledge translation and ensure that OCAP principles are being incorporated throughout.

Finally, due to the dissemination plan, socially isolated older adults may not have been reached. Community partners and online social media advertisements were used to disseminate the survey which may limit respondents to individuals who are connected to services and/ or have access to the internet. Due to these limitations the data must be interpreted with caution.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The survey's main focus was to conduct a community needs assessment to identify needs and priorities for older adults living in the Parry Sound district, including barriers to accessibility and social inclusion. Three main themes were identified based on respondents answers to the survey questions. These themes included increased awareness and promotion of services, transportation as a barrier to accessing programs and services, and the importance of the continued involvement of older adults in planning of initiatives.

Further consultations are recommended with older adults and service providers throughout the Parry Sound district. Additional information on where older adults access services, how older adults access information, and how accessible their community or communities they access services in, is required. In collaboration with the 19 municipalities, 5 First Nations Communities, and 2 unorganized territories that make up the Parry Sound district, the Parry Sound District Age Friendly Communities Committee can support a coordinated next phase of the needs assessment to ensure all residents across the district provide input and are engaged throughout.

To be an age friendly community, individuals of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds are able to live safely, stay involved, active, and informed in the accessible environments that they live, work, and play in. The information collected in this initial survey provides organizations and decision-makers who service these area valuable insights from older adults in the Parry Sound district.

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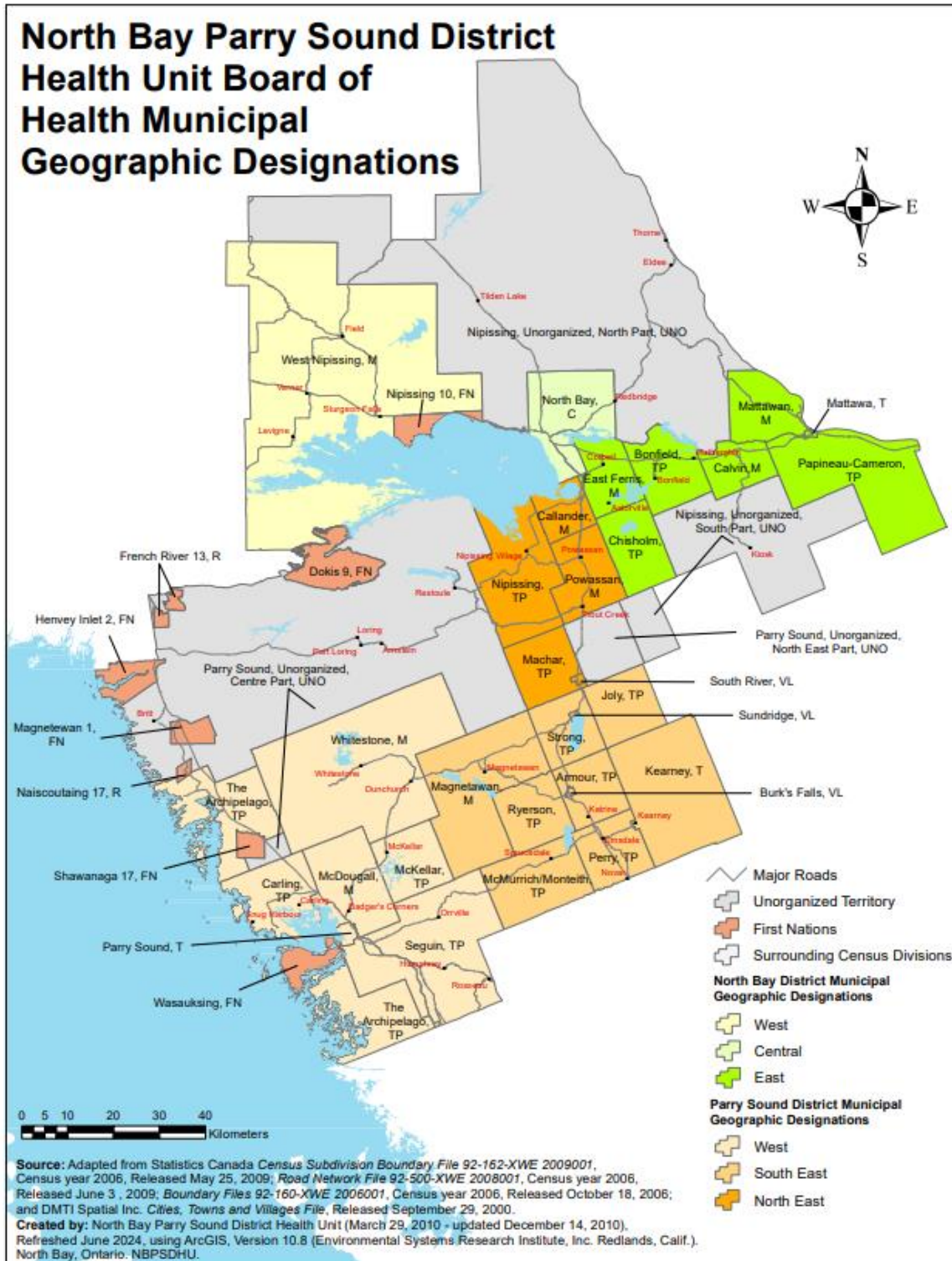
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Appendices

Appendix 1: North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit Board of Health Municipal Geographic Designation



Appendix 2: Age Friendly Parry Sound Community needs assessment survey

Introduction:

Age-friendly communities are designed to meet the needs of people of all ages, but they specifically focus on the needs and preferences of older adults. These communities are designed to be safe, walkable, accessible, and provide opportunities for social engagement, civic participation, and continued learning. The Parry Sound Age Friendly Committee (AFC) is conducting a community needs assessment to identify the needs and priorities of older adults in the community to make the district of Parry Sound more age friendly.

Purpose, Benefits and Risks to Participate:

The purpose of this community needs assessment is to guide the AFC in the development of an action plan that includes specific initiatives to address identified needs and priorities for older adults living in the district of Parry Sound, including barriers to accessibility and social inclusion.

There are no direct benefits to participation in this survey, however there will be indirect benefits which include an opportunity to contribute to the action plan which will directly affect your community. There are minimal risks to participating in this survey, however for those who have experienced many inequities in aging you may feel disconnected from your community. If you need to speak with someone call ConnexOntario at 1-866-531-2600 or visit <https://www.connexontario.ca/en-ca/> to find a mental health service in your area.

Time Commitment and Incentive to Participate:

The survey will take approximately 25 minutes to complete. At the end you can choose to have your name entered into a draw to win 1 of 5 \$50 grocery gift cards.

Protection of Information:

All findings from this survey will be stored securely on a password protected computer on the servers at the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit. Project information will be stored for 7 years, and then destroyed. Responses will be kept private and confidential and will be summarized for reporting purposes.

Questions or Concerns:

If you have any questions about your participation in this needs assessment or general questions about the project, please contact Sam Docherty at the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit at 1-800-563-2808 ext. 3222 or via email at Samantha.docherty@healthunit.ca

- By proceeding to complete the survey, I provide consent to participate in this survey. Please check box if you wish to proceed.

Demographic information:

What is your age?

- ☐ Under 50 (please skip to the end of the survey)
- ☐ 50-60
- ☐ 61-70
- ☐ 71-80
- ☐ 81+

Who do you live with? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Partner/Spouse
 - ☐ Child(ren)
 - ☐ Parent(s)
 - ☐ Friend(s)/Roommate(s)
 - ☐ I live alone
 - ☐ I do not currently have a permanent residence/home
 - ☐ Other, please specify:
-

Which town, township, or First Nation do you live in?

- ☐ Armour
- ☐ Burk's Falls
- ☐ Callander
- ☐ Carling
- ☐ Dokis First Nation
- ☐ Henvey Inlet First Nation
- ☐ Joly
- ☐ Kearney
- ☐ Machar
- ☐ Magnetawan (Municipality)
- ☐ Magnetawan First Nation
- ☐ McDougall
- ☐ McKellar
- ☐ McMurrich/Monteith
- ☐ Nipissing Township
- ☐ Parry Sound Unorganized Centre Part
- ☐ Parry Sound Unorganized North East Part
- ☐ Perry
- ☐ Powassan
- ☐ Ryerson
- ☐ Seguin
- ☐ Shawanaga First Nation
- ☐ South River

- ☐ Strong
- ☐ Sundridge
- ☐ The Archipelago
- ☐ Town of Parry Sound
- ☐ Wasauksing First Nation
- ☐ Whitestone
- ☐ I do not live in the district of Parry Sound (please skip to the end of the survey)

How would you define your residency?

- ☐ Occasional cottage only
- ☐ Full summer seasonal
- ☐ Full winter seasonal
- ☐ Year-round resident

Outdoor spaces and buildings

Sidewalks, pathways and trails are well-maintained, cleared in the winter, non-slip and accessible.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not access sidewalks, pathways, and trails.

Accessible benches (the appropriate height for older adults) are located along sidewalks, paths, or trails and are spaced at regular intervals.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not access sidewalks, pathways, and trails.

Your neighbourhood is well-lit.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

Your local trails are well-lit.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not access local trails

Public buildings (such as municipal buildings, medical offices, hospitals, etc.) are accessible and have the following:

Ramps with a slope appropriate for wheelchairs

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

- ☐ I do not access public buildings

Fewer stairs to get into buildings and within buildings

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ I do not access public buildings

Non-slip flooring

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ I do not access public buildings

Accessible washrooms located on the main floor

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ I do not access public buildings

Parking that is well-maintained and located near public buildings for easier access

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ I do not access public buildings

If you answered no to any of the above, please provide any more detail you would like to share about age friendly priorities for outdoor spaces and buildings in your community:

Transportation services

Affordable and accessible community transport services (including shuttle vans) are available to take older adults to events, shopping, social events, and medical appointments.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not access community transport services

Volunteer and/or an informal network of drivers are available and are compensated (i.e. gas money) for their efforts.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not aware of volunteer and/or informal networks of drivers

Accessible transportation services are available to take older adults to and from health appointments (including those in larger cities).

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not aware of Accessible transportation services

Taxis are available, and affordable to older adults.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Taxis are available, but not affordable to older adults
- ☐ I am not aware of taxis

Taxis are accessible to older adults using mobility devices (ex. Walkers, wheelchairs, etc).

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not aware of taxis that are accessible to those using mobility devices

If you answered no to any of the above, please provide any more detail you would like to share about age friendly priorities for transportation in your community:

Aging in Place

Affordable supports are available to enable older adults to remain at home.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not aware of supports to enable older adults to remain at home

Assisted living options are available to all.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not aware of assisted living options

"Alert systems" are available for older adults living alone (i.e. systems that alert someone when an older adult needs help).

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not aware of "alert systems"

Affordable or free general maintenance (i.e. yard work) is available for older adults.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not aware of affordable or free general maintenance

Information on financial assistance programs for housing modifications is readily available and easily accessible by older adults.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not aware of information on financial assistance programs for housing modifications

Home visits are provided to those who do not, or cannot, leave their homes.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not aware of home visiting programs

Affordable and available health and home services are in place and include health, personal care and housekeeping.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not aware of health and home services

Home supports are available in a timely manner.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not access home supports

Affordable meal programs are available to all older adults in the community, regardless of their health status.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Meal programs are available, but not affordable
- ☐ I am not aware of meal programs

Delivery services (groceries, medicines, etc.) or escorted shopping services are available to older adults.

- ☐ Yes

- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not aware of delivery services or escorted shopping services

Do you have a local primary care provider (family doctor, nurse practitioner, etc.)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes I have a primary care provider, but they are not local

Medical equipment (including medical alerts) is available through a loan program, at no cost to older adults.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not access medical equipment

If you answered no to any of the above, please provide any more detail you would like to share about age friendly priorities for aging in place in your community:

Long-term care

Affordable long-term care options are available that prevent the separation of families and the need to move out of the community.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Community involvement

You feel included and respected in your community? (ex. are you asked to participate, provide your input on community issues and your contributions are honoured)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

A range of volunteer opportunities is available that meets the interests of older adults.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not aware of volunteer opportunities

Volunteering options allow for intergenerational involvement.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not aware of intergenerational volunteer opportunities

Opportunities for volunteering are flexible (e.g., short-term) to accommodate older adults who travel or have other commitments

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not access volunteer opportunities

There is a range of paid employment opportunities for older adults.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

There is a range of events and activities for old adults of all ages—some are age-specific and others are intergenerational. Activities could include physical/recreational activities, spectator sporting events, church and school related events, gatherings with food, hobbies and courses, etc.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not aware of any events or activities for older adults

Activities available include outdoor (e.g., walking) and indoor activities (e.g., bingo, cards, darts, etc.).

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not aware of any events or activities for older adults

If you answered no to any of the above, please provide any more detail you would like to share about age friendly priorities for community involvement in your community:

Communication

There is regular and reliable distribution of information about events and programs (including contact information) through local government and/or voluntary organizations.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Information is disseminated/ posted where older adults conduct their daily activities—such as the post office, places of worship, local centres and town halls.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not access these locations

Local channels (TV and radio) advertise community events and news items of interest to older adults—for example, through "community access channels."

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not access local channels (TV and radio)

There is a central directory where older adults can find information about what activities and services are available, and how to access them (including phone numbers).

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Information is delivered to older adults who are socially isolated by phone, or through personal visits.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

An interactive speaker series is created that delivers important information (e.g., on health issues, protecting against fraud).

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

Written communication is clearly printed in large letters and is easy to read, with simple messaging.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not access written communication

Older adults are recruited and used as volunteers as experts, disseminators of information and trainers.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

Information of interest to older adults is disseminated effectively — such as information on local events, vital information (health, security, etc.), and programs and services that are available to them.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

- ☐ I don't know

Access to computers and the internet is available at a local centre open to the public.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I don't know

Training courses on new technologies are available and accessible to older adults.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I don't know

If you answered no to any of the above, please provide any more detail you would like to share about age friendly priorities for communication in your community:

Caregiver support

Caregivers are "given a break" from caretaking through programs such as home support and senior's day care programs.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I am not aware of home support or senior's day care programs

Education programs on elder care and similar available services are provided to families who are, or will be, caring for an older adult.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I am not aware of education programs on elder care

If you answered no to any of the above, please provide any more detail you would like to share about age friendly priorities for caregiver support in your community:

Thank you for completing our community needs assessment, your feedback is incredibly valuable in setting the stage for the creation of an Age Friendly Action Plan.

If you would like to be entered into a draw to win 1 of 5 \$50 grocery gift cards, please enter using your name and contact information below (your information will not be linked to your survey results).

If you would like to be contacted in the future to provide input into Age Friendly Parry Sound, please provide your contact details to the project team member at your location (your information will not be linked to your survey results).

Would you like to be entered to win **1 of 5 \$50 grocery gift** cards?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide contact details (your information will not be linked to your survey results):

Name: _____

Email address: _____

Phone number: _____

Would you like to be contacted in the future to provide further input into Age Friendly Parry Sound?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide contact details (your information will not be linked to your survey results):

Name: _____

Email address: _____

Phone number: _____

Appendix 3: Promotional Material

Promotional Poster

Age-Friendly Parry Sound

We need to know!

What do YOU need to age well?

Are you over the age of 50, living in the Parry Sound district? We need your help to create an action plan to make Parry Sound more Age Friendly.

Take our survey

Why participate?

- Enter for your chance to win 1 of 5 \$50 grocery gift cards
- Have your voice heard!

Benefits of Age Friendly communities



Supports independent, active living



Allows everyone to contribute to the community



Creates accessible built environments

Find the survey online:
ca.mar.medallia.com/AFC


Or visit a participating location near you for a paper copy. Check your:

- Municipal office
- Community Centre
- Library

*locations vary by community



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Age-Friendly Parry Sound

We need to know!

What do YOU need to age well?

Take our survey

- Enter for your chance to win **1 of 5 \$50** grocery gift cards
- Have your voice heard!



Caption: The Parry Sound Age Friendly Committee is asking for your help to create an action plan to make Parry Sound more Age-Friendly. Take the short survey to have your voice heard and enter for your chance to win a \$50 grocery gift card. <https://ca.mar.medallia.com/AFC>

Newsletter Insert Options

Electronic Newsletter:

What do YOU need to age well?

The Parry Sound Age Friendly Committee is asking for your help to create an action plan to make Parry Sound more Age-Friendly. Take the short survey to identify priorities in your community, have your voice heard and enter for your chance to win a \$50 grocery gift card.

Age-Friendly Communities support independent, active living; allow everyone to contribute to the community; and create accessible built environment

Follow [this link](#) to fill out our survey online OR pick up a paper copy from your local municipal office, community centre or library from August 23-September 30, 2024.

Paper/mail out newsletter:

What do YOU need to age well?

The Parry Sound Age Friendly Committee is asking for your help to create an action plan to make Parry Sound more Age-Friendly. Take the short survey to identify priorities in your community, have your voice heard and enter for your chance to win a \$50 grocery gift card.

Age-Friendly Communities support independent, active living; allow everyone to contribute to the community; and create accessible built environment

Scan the QR code with your smartphone camera to fill out our survey online (ca.mar.medallia.com/AFC) OR pick up a paper copy from your local municipal office, community centre or library from August 23-September 30, 2024.

