

# **AGING WELL IN WALDO COUNTY**



## **A REPORT OF ASSETS AND NEEDS OF PERSONS 50 YEARS AND OLDER RESIDING IN WALDO COUNTY, MAINE**

**2017**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background**

Starting in the summer of 2016, a group of interested persons began meeting to explore and discuss local issues related to aging. Various constituent groups were represented from Belfast and some of the other 25 towns outside Belfast in Waldo County. For example, the Waldo County General Hospital (WCGH), the Belfast city nurse, the 911 director, representatives from Senior College, Triad, the YMCA, and the City of Belfast began to hold regular meetings. Guest speakers from the Maine chapter of the American Association of Retired People (AARP Maine), other communities in the area, and people with relevant experience spoke to the emerging group. The name *Aging Well in Waldo County* (AWWC) was adopted, along with the commitment to treat all of Waldo County as the area to be covered by this initiative. The stated goals were to:

- Assess the strengths and needs of Waldo County for persons 50 and over;
- Seek “Age-Friendly” status from AARP; and
- Explore solutions to some of the challenges identified by the assessment process.

WCGH offered the assistance of their grant writer. A small grant was funded by AARP Maine and managed by WCGH as the fiscal agent through the *Journey to Health* office. A sub-committee was formed to address the development and implementation of a survey.

### **Waldo County**

Waldo County, Maine is located in the rural mid-coast region of Maine in the Northeast corner of the United States. It occupies 853 square miles.

The County includes towns and their populations listed in the chart that follows. Note that Belfast is the County seat. (<http://www.maine.gov/economist/state/census.html>).

Belfast	6668
Belmont	942
Brooks	1078
Burnham	1164
Frankfort	1124
Freedom	719
Islesboro	566
Jackson	548
Knox	806
Liberty	913
Lincolnton	2164
Monroe	890
Montville	1032

Morrill	884
Northport	1520
Palermo	1535
Prospect	709
Searsmont	1392
Searsport	2615
Stockton Springs	1591
Swanville	1388
Troy	1030
Thorndike	1030
Unity	2099
Waldo	762
Winterport	3757

According to US census data. 16.4% of households in Waldo County are below the poverty Waldo County identifies racially as “White.”

Maine now has the oldest median age in the United States.

(<http://www.pressherald.com/2013/06/16/maine-is-nations-oldest-state-and-getting-older/>)

Within Maine, the most recent five-year estimates by the US Census, calculated in 2015, show Waldo County has a median age of 45, compared to a median age of 37.6 for the whole US. The County has a population of 38,976, with 7,248 residents age 65 and older, or 18.6%. About 43.9% of people age 65 and over live alone.

The County has a high school graduation rate of 85.4%. Mean income is \$42,221. However, 16.4% of households in Waldo County are below the poverty level, and the percentage of people who rate their health as poor is 15.9%. Thirty percent of the County is registered with Mainecare/Medicaid, which includes 48.2% of all children. Additionally, 14.3% of residents report receiving outpatient mental health services, and 24.8% believe their lifestyle would be called sedentary.

The top five health issues in Waldo County are identified as obesity, drug and alcohol abuse, mental health issues, depression, and tobacco use. The five top health factors are considered poverty, employment, transportation, health insurance, and housing stability (<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/phdata/SHNAPP/documents/county-reports/county-summary/Maine%20Shared%20CHNA%20Five%20Page%20Summary%20Report%20-%20Waldo%20County.pdf>).

## METHOD

### Instrumentation

The *Assessment Sub-committee* of AWWC reviewed instruments used by other Maine communities who conducted assessments previously and gained AARP “Age-Friendly” status. These samples provided direction and offered many ideas, but none were quite right for Waldo County.

As a result, the committee worked arduously through many meetings to create an assessment survey that would suit the entire County, based on the AARP Eight Domains for Age-Friendly Communities. These eight domains include: (1) *Outdoor Spaces and Buildings*; (2) *Communication and Information*; (3) *Social Participation*; (4) *Housing*; (5) *Respect and Social Inclusion*; (6) *Civic Participation and Employment*; (7) *Transportation*; (8) *Community Support and Health Services*. The committee further decided that the length of the survey should be limited to one page and have a comfortable and inviting format.

The final survey consisted of 26 multiple-choice items and a narrative box that invited respondents to write-in the *strengths* and *needs* of the communities where they live within Waldo County. (see Appendix 1).

### Survey Distribution

The newly minted assessment instrument was distributed principally in two ways.

First, and more traditionally (and with the help of WCGH personnel), the survey was entered into a popular online survey program that the hospital is licensed to use. The link was then posted on a new website created for AWWC and on an associated AWWC Facebook page. The website address is *agingwellinwaldocounty.org*.

Second, because Waldo County is one of the poorest in Maine, the assessment committee advertised for volunteer “research assistants” who could introduce the survey to County residents directly.

We advertised our search for research assistants in various venues, such as newsletters of likely organizations. We created a short application where applicants could share something about their areas of expertise. Overall, we had retired teachers, social workers, hospice workers, publishers, and an accountant. Everyone was experienced working with the public and would observe a level of professionalism in the process, including confidentiality where needed. The volunteers who applied were all highly interested in the topic, motivated to help obtain good data, and all but two were retired or of retirement age.

On January 31, 2017, 16 mostly retired professionals attended a two-hour training session on distributing and administering surveys. The session was held in the community center in the town of Waldo, Maine. In the figure that follows, we include the agenda.

*January 31, 2017 (1-3 pm)*  
*Town of Waldo, Community Center*  
*Research Assistant Training*

1. *Welcome, Thanks, Introductions*  
10min.
  2. *Background - Waldo County*  
5 min.
  3. *Poverty in Waldo County- don't be shocked*  
5 min.
  4. *Background of AWWC and assessment process*  
10 min.
  5. *Conducting the surveys*  
10 min.
  6. *Conducting focus groups*  
5 min.
  7. *Distribution of surveys- electronic – "Snowballing."*  
5 min.
  8. *Distribution of surveys - hand copies*  
5 min.  
*(Jan Dodge and Paul Sheridan)*
- quick break and reconvene for...**
9. *Sorting out assignments within Waldo County*  
10 min.
  10. *Handing in completed surveys*  
10 min.
  11. *Timeline for our work*  
10 min.
- Questions?  
*As needed*



Prior to the meeting, two members of the Assessment Sub-Committee amassed information County-wide about places seniors gather, arranged by towns. At the meeting, each research assistant chose assignments in two or three towns in Waldo County, or selected veteran organizations or other likely venues, or decided on some combination of these. Training was conducted to satisfy three goals:

- Assistants were trained to “Snowball” Waldo County residents 50 and over among their own computer contacts, asking those contacts to take the survey online, and send the message along to their contacts with the same request (see Appendix 2);
- Assistants were provided with a half-page flier to distribute to people they happened to talk to in town to provide them the information needed to understand AWWC and to take the survey online at home (see Appendix 3);
- Assistants left the training session with 100 blank copies of the survey for distribution around the County at the venues and in the contexts where the assistants chose populations to target. The intent of this innovative distribution was to ensure participation from a wide demographic—including lower SES (Socio-Economic) homes, places where seniors have more limited technology—aiming to get survey responses from every Waldo County community, and a threshold of 500 or higher (N= 500+).
- No survey mailing was included. First of all, mail returns in surveys are generally poor. Second, the majority of potential respondents do not live within walking distance of a post office, and in some cases, personal mailboxes are far from residences.

Data collection began February 1, 2017 and ended May 5, 2017. Hand-administered surveys were delivered to personnel from the hospital. These surveys were inputted into the survey software by hand, in order to create a single data base.

Overall, 1047 surveys (N=1047) were part of the combined efforts of online and hand-administered surveys.

### **Discussion about Survey Data Collection**

The research team feels certain that our efforts to reach people without digital technology gave us more, better data than relying on online surveys alone. While training a team of assistants to go out into the County was time-consuming, the time spent proved worthwhile.

Our training session, as described in an earlier section, assured distribution to different demographic groups. For example, one of our male research assistants set out to visit all the County veteran organizations, thus ensuring male respondents. Some research assistants visited cafes in a target area to find respondents. Church, library, and YMCA functions were one good venue for collecting surveys. Others asked permission to attend town meetings. One pair of assistants rode the ferry to our only island to find respondents there.

All surveys were given in person, or by a trusted ally, such as a librarian or town clerk, and a research assistant would revisit a location to retrieve the completed surveys.

One of the distribution strategies we employed is called *Snowball sampling*, or just *snowballing*. As has been described earlier, this was designed spread the survey to a rapidly widening group of people, similar to what happens when a message “goes viral” on the Internet. This strategy gave us several hundred surveys within the first few days of the survey being live online. We were off to a good start.

As research assistants visiting around the County, there were places and venues where they were warmly greeted and made to feel welcome, as is consistent with Maine hospitality. There were also places and venues where they were met with cold shoulders and suspicion, as also is consistent with some Maine municipalities.

We provided each assistant with an official-looking name tag, a hundred blank surveys, and a script for what to say by way of introduction at a venue. One research assistant asked a town clerk for permission to attend a town meeting. Permission was granted but the town clerk neglected to inform the selectmen in charge of the meeting. Although they politely introduced the assistant, and explained that she’d be set up at a table with chairs to sit and take the survey, the group was not responsive. When the introducer stated that the survey was funded by Maine AARP, the comment drew negative reactions. One woman ranted, “I don’t like AARP, they fund the LEFT, and I’m not telling ‘em where my guns are.” This was not a successful venue.

In spite of our efforts, and a robust number of surveys, we believe we never got our poorest and most vulnerable populations represented. A research assistant who went to a low-income housing unit to urge tenants to take the survey was met with suspicion, and everyone she asked refused to participate. We believe it will always be difficult to reach this marginalized sector of any population. We did get the cooperation of some social workers to collect at least some data from seniors who are home-bound and/or disabled.

We have the following recommendations for other communities doing assessments:

- Do not rely only on respondents who have computers and Internet access.
- Put together a robust team of helpers to distribute surveys. Do not assume media publicity alone will suffice.
- Decide on locally logical strategies and venues. Train and keep in touch with the distribution team.
- Expect mixed results in participation from various demographic groups.
- Be explicit about procedures for distributing, submitting, and collecting paper surveys.
- Leave the online survey open for many weeks to ensure good use of the link.

## Focus Groups

Focus groups had been planned to follow the administration of the survey and analysis of its results. Three such groups were ultimately held: they were comprised of Waldo County senior citizens from a wide socio-economic and demographic profile.

In April 2017, a training session was held to prepare some people to organize and/or administer focus groups. Each group had an organizer, an administrator to lead the group, and 1-2 note-takers who made audio recordings with participant permission and took copious notes as backup. Note-takers reviewed and tidied document files and submitted audio and document files to the principal investigator to arrange for analysis.

The first focus group included the towns of Palermo, Liberty, Unity, Montville, and Freedom. It was held in Liberty on May 9, 2017. The second focus group was organized in Stockton Springs and included the towns of Stockton Springs, Searsport, Prospect, and Frankfort. (Efforts to identify and include representation from Monroe and Winterport were not successful.) It was held on May 22, 2017 in Stockton Springs. The third focus group included Belfast and surrounding communities. It was held in Belfast on June 5, 2017. Overall, 29 seniors participated in one of the three focus groups.

All the focus groups discussed the same four open-ended questions. These emerged from the analysis of the open-ended questions at the end of the survey. They were carefully selected to solicit in-depth information and challenges that might be actionable in further endeavors of AWWC.

The focus group questions were:

1. What in your community or area is an asset to people 50 and over?
2. What in your community or area needs to be different or changed to suit people 50 and over?
3. If there is one thing you could change in your community or area, what would that be?
4. Do you have anything else you would like to say?

Appendix 4 shares the Demographic Registration filled out by participants. Appendix 5 includes the form granting permissions from participants to be audio-recorded.

More details about the focus groups are offered in the section on findings.

## ANALYSIS

The software used for the surveys provided the tallies, charts and graphs that represent the instrument's major findings. Overall, 1047 surveys were completed from 26 communities (N=1047).

Data are presented by question number and AARP Domain topics. The last question, 27/27A, was the narrative item. In the question's two parts, respondents were invited to comment on the assets of their communities and on challenges in their community that could use improvement for people ages 50 and over. Not all respondents chose to address this item: the total number of responses was slightly over 400.

A team of six people met multiple times to analyze the open-ended item. "Constant Comparative Analysis" (a technique first developed by Corbin and Strauss that is highly accepted in qualitative research) was used to analyze these items. The data were separated into two parts—27/27A—and then disaggregated by all Waldo County and Belfast-only. Comments were read and reread to determine logical categories. Responses were then coded using the categories. All responses were first coded by a team of two researchers, and then traded with another team of two researchers. Therefore, all responses were evaluated by at least four people who agreed on the categories assigned.

Responses could warrant multiple categories, as is common in narrative analysis. For example, a comment that a town asset is the food pantry at the church would be assigned a category for the *church* being an asset, and the *food pantry* being another asset. A comment where a respondent mentioned attending a movie and a potluck dinner at the local library would be coded both for *church*, and *social*. A comment about liking *Senior College* would get a code of *Learning* and *Social*.

The researchers then took the codes that emerged from the data and attempted to fit them under the eight AARP domains. The majority of codes fit into one of those domains. Those that did not dealt with how respondents felt about where they lived, and concerns about the cost of living and finances. Such comments were especially related to the rising costs of living while on fixed incomes, affording the rising costs of health care, and living with a disability, none of which seemed to fit exactly into the eighth domain of "Community Support and Health Services."

## RESULTS

In the sections that follow, actual items are presented from the survey with the raw data and percentages. The clustering mostly fit the AARP Eight Domains. Commentary is offered where appropriate. In this section, data have been disaggregated, presenting first the Waldo County data overall and then the Belfast-only data, since Belfast is the County seat and the largest community in the County. This disaggregation was possible only for the multiple-choice items. The demographic information is presented for Waldo County overall only.

## Findings: Survey Items 1-5 – Demographic Information

### Question 1 – Where is Waldo County do you live?

#### 1. Where in Waldo County do you live?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Belfast	310	29.6%
Belmont or Morrill	22	2.1%
Brooks	17	1.6%
Burnham or Troy	30	2.8%
Frankfort or Prospect	23	2.1%
Freedom or Montville	41	3.9%
Islesboro	32	3.0%
Jackson	26	2.4%
Knox or Thorndike	22	2.1%
Liberty or Palermo	107	10.2%
Lincolnvile	36	3.4%
Monroe	40	3.8%
Northport	28	2.6%
Searsmont	64	6.1%
Searsport	44	4.2%
Stockton Springs	55	5.2%
Swanville	20	1.9%
Unity	12	1.1%
Waldo	25	2.3%
Winterport	46	4.3%
No Responses	47	4.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1047</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Question 1A – Can you walk to the center of town from where you live?

#### 1A. Can you walk to the center of town from where you live?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes	410	39.1%
No	575	54.9%
No Responses	62	5.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1047</b>	<b>100%</b>

Most respondents in Waldo County cannot walk to the center of the township where they live. Waldo County is a rural area.

**Question 2 – How many years have you lived in Waldo County?**

<b>2. How many years have you lived in Waldo County?</b>		
	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
0-5	155	14.8%
6-20	329	31.4%
21-50	373	35.6%
All my life	138	13.1%
No Responses	52	4.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1047</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Question 3 – How do you identify yourself?**

<b>3. How do you identify yourself?</b>		
	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Female	705	67.3%
Male	272	25.9%
Non-binary	3	<1%
No Responses	67	6.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1047</b>	<b>100%</b>

Over 67% of our Waldo County respondents are women. Some people omitted this question.

**Question 4 – How many years old are you?**

<b>4. How many years old are you?</b>		
	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
50-55	76	7.2%
56-59	95	9.0%
60-65	199	19.0%
66-70	223	21.2%
71-75	189	18.0%
76-79	85	8.1%
80+	126	12.0%
No Responses	54	5.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1047</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Question 5 – What is your marital status?**

<b>5. What is your marital status?</b>		
	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Single	112	10.6%
Married	576	55.0%
Widowed	129	12.3%
Divorced	126	12.0%
Have a partner	42	4.0%
No Responses	62	5.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1047</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Summary and Discussion of Demographic Information**

All 25 towns and Belfast are represented among the respondents. Belfast, the largest community, has the strongest returns (N=310). Several towns have limited responses. All age ranges are well represented in our responses, with 12% being 80 years or older, our most vulnerable age group. Some respondents omitted this question.

Most respondents in this rural county cannot walk to the center of town, where their post office, town office, fire department, and perhaps a store and gas station are typically located.

Question 2 reflects an influx of people moving to Maine or within Maine to places such as Waldo County for retirement. Overall, 52.2% of respondents have lived in Waldo County less than 20 years.

Female respondents heavily outweigh males. Most respondents in the survey report being married or partnered. Some respondents omitted this question.

Note: Because of a software limitation, several pairs of towns had to be created on the menu, such as Knox or Thorndike together. Great pains were taken to ensure that towns paired together had some similarities. County data were used to make these determinations.

## Findings: Survey Items 6-9A – Housing Situations

### Waldo County Overall

#### 6. Check all that apply:

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Own my own home	806	81.8%
Rent	101	10.2%
Live in a group facility	27	2.7%
Live alone	84	8.5%
Live with relatives	53	5.3%
Relatives live with me	42	4.2%
Have an apartment	41	4.1%
Am homeless	4	<1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>985</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 7. Is your housing situation ideal for you now?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes	823	84.3%
No	163	16.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>976</b>	<b>100%</b>



**7A. If no, I'd rather be:**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Downsizing	94	58.0%
Living with family members	12	7.4%
Living in a group facility	11	6.7%
Living alone	26	16.0%
Having someone live with me	36	22.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>100%</b>

**8. How many people live in your household?**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
1	279	26.6%
2	572	54.6%
3	70	6.6%
4 or more	60	5.7%
No Responses	66	6.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1047</b>	<b>100%</b>

**9. Are you warm enough in the winter?**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Yes	894	85.3%
No	88	8.4%
No Responses	65	6.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1047</b>	<b>100%</b>

**9A. If no, please check those that apply to your situation:**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Paying for fuel is a problem	94	67.1%
There are problems with insulation	89	63.5%
<b>Total</b>	140	100%

**Belfast Overall**

**6. Check all that apply:**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Own my own home	208	68.4%
Rent	57	18.7%
Live in a group facility	27	8.8%
Live alone	33	10.8%
Live with relatives	11	3.6%
Relatives live with me	4	1.3%
Have an apartment	29	9.5%
Am homeless	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	304	100%

**7. Is your housing situation ideal for you now?**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Yes	274	90.4%
No	32	10.5%
<b>Total</b>	303	100%

**7A. If no, I'd rather be:**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Downsizing	17	53.1%
Living with family members	3	9.3%
Living in a group facility	5	15.6%
Living alone	5	15.6%
Having someone live with me	4	12.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>

**8. How many people live in your household?**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
1	110	35.4%
2	165	53.2%
3	14	4.5%
4 or more	16	5.1%
No Responses	5	1.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>100%</b>

**9. Are you warm enough in the winter?**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Yes	293	94.5%
No	13	4.1%
No Responses	4	1.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>100%</b>

**9A. If no, please check those that apply to your situation:**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Paying for fuel is a problem	16	61.5%
There are problems with insulation	16	61.5%
<b>Total</b>	26	100%

**Summary and Discussion of Housing Situations**

985 of the 1047 respondents filled in this question, with over 800 people reporting owning their own home. Four people reported being homeless.

In both Waldo County overall and in Belfast, most people report that their housing situation is ideal for now (Waldo County 84.3%; Belfast 90.4%) but more than half further report that they may consider downsizing (Waldo County 58%; Belfast 53.1%). Nearly all households include either 1 or 2 people (Waldo County 81.2%; Belfast 88.6%).

Most people also report being warm enough in winter (Waldo County 85.3%; Belfast 94.5%). It could be inferred that outside Belfast almost 15% are not warm enough in winter.

Paying for fuel is cited as a problem (Waldo County 67.1%; Belfast 61.5%), as are problems with insulation (Waldo County 63.5%; Belfast 61.5%)

**Findings: Surveys Items 10-11 – Transportation****Waldo County Overall****10. How do you get around?**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
My car	910	92.1%
The bus	22	2.2%
Bike	49	4.9%
A friend takes me	69	6.9%
Walk most places	81	8.1%
Boat/ferry	16	1.6%
Taxi	8	<1%
Homebound and get deliveries	8	<1%

Family	69	6.9%
Significant other	33	3.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>988</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 10A. If transportation is an issue for you, why?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
No problems	498	77.8%
Money is an issue	71	11.0%
No vehicle	26	4.0%
No public transportation	43	6.7%
Uncomfortable asking for rides	42	6.5%
Difficulty walking	48	7.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 11. What keeps you from getting out?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Nothing	608	64.2%
Use a wheelchair, walker or other device	32	3.3%
Difficulty seeing	22	2.3%
I have trouble hearing	41	4.3%
Weather conditions	290	30.6%
Dislike going out	27	2.8%
Dislike going alone	54	5.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>947</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Belfast Overall

### 10. How do you get around?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
My car	263	86.2%
The bus	21	6.8%
Bike	33	10.8%
A friend takes me	25	8.1%
Walk most places	67	21.9%
Boat/ferry	3	<1%
Taxi	7	2.2%
Homebound and get deliveries	3	<1%
Family	17	5.5%
Significant other	10	3.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 10A. If transportation is an issue for you, why?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
No problems	151	80.3%
Money is an issue	14	7.4%
No vehicle	10	5.3%
No public transportation	10	5.3%
Uncomfortable asking for rides	11	5.8%
Difficulty walking	16	8.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 11. What keeps you from getting out?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Nothing	198	67.8%
Use a wheelchair, walker or other device	16	5.4%
Difficulty seeing	9	3.0%
I have trouble hearing	5	1.7%
Weather conditions	81	27.7%

Dislike going out	1	<1%
Dislike going alone	12	4.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Summary and Discussion of Transportation

In both the County overall and Belfast specifically, personal cars are the most common way people get where they are going. In Waldo County, 2.2% report using the bus, while in Belfast, 6.8% ride the bus. In the County, 1% of respondents report being homebound, while in Belfast that figure is less than 1%. In Waldo County, 4% of respondents report having no vehicle; in Belfast 5.3%. County-wide, 6.5% report no public transportation is available, while 5.3% of Belfast responded similarly.

In Waldo County, 6.5% of respondents do not feel comfortable asking people for rides; Belfast respondents (5.8%) cited this same issue.

7.5 % of respondents County-wide report having difficulty walking, as do 8.5% of Belfast respondents.

The most popular response to “What keeps you from getting out?” is bad weather. (Waldo County 30.6%; Belfast 27.7%).

Waldo County does have public transportation, although limited. Researchers infer here that the availability of public transportation is not commonly known.

### Findings: Survey Items 12-20 – At Home and In Your Community

#### Waldo County Overall

#### 12. Do you feel included and respected as an older person?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes	839	80.1%
No	124	11.8%
No Responses	84	8.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1047</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 13. Would you like to be more involved in community activities?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes	375	35.8%
No	521	49.7%
No Responses	151	14.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1047</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 14. How do you find out what's happening?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Read the newspaper	619	63.1%
Use the internet	676	68.9%
Go to church	292	29.7%
Talk to friends	679	69.2%
Watch TV	476	48.5%
Listen to the radio	400	40.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>980</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 15. Is it easy to find out about community events and local activities?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes	535	51.0%
No	89	8.5%
Somewhat	344	32.8%
No Responses	79	7.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1047</b>	<b>100%</b>



**16. When you go out, what kinds of things do you do?**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Walks	679	68.7%
Exercise class	264	26.7%
Sports	109	11.0%
Visit friends	619	62.7%
Religious gathering	287	29.0%
Cards or bingo	88	8.9%
Restaurant	614	62.2%
Hobby group	125	12.6%
Volunteer	407	41.2%
Classes	241	24.4%
Medical appointments	634	64.2%
Work	307	31.1%
Hunting and fishing	88	8.9%
Book group	135	13.6%
Errands	771	78.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>987</b>	<b>100%</b>

**17. Are you as social as you want to be?**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Yes	716	68.3%
No	247	23.5%
No Responses	84	8.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1047</b>	<b>100%</b>

**17A. If no, please select all that apply to your situation:**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
No one to go with	114	43.0%
Cannot afford to go out	94	35.4%
No ride	30	11.3%
Nothing to do	44	16.6%
Too far to drive	79	29.8%
Do not know what's happening	77	29.0%
Do not like to go out after dark	123	46.4%
Event times are not convenient	63	23.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>100%</b>

**18. Please select the services you need now:**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Home health care providers	26	3.0%
Help with government forms	46	5.4%
Where to get medical equipment	3	<1%
Daily phone check to make sure I'm ok	17	2.0%
Wellness classes	48	5.6%
How to find care	22	2.5%
Help with home chores (plowing, gardening)	156	18.3%
None	612	72.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>850</b>	<b>100%</b>

**19. Are you:**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Working full-time	169	18.1%
Working part-time	182	19.5%
Retired	567	60.8%
Looking for work	54	5.7%
Homemaker	57	6.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>932</b>	<b>100%</b>

**20. Do you volunteer?**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Help out through a local organization, service group or church	501	56.4%
Help others informally	412	46.3%
Would like to do more	159	17.9%
Not interested in volunteering	114	12.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>888</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Belfast Overall**

**12. Do you feel included and respected as an older person?**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Yes	275	88.7%
No	23	7.4%
No Responses	12	3.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>100%</b>

**13. Would you like to be more involved in community activities?**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Yes	121	39.0%
No	157	50.6%
No Responses	32	10.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 14. How do you find out what's happening?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Read the newspaper	233	76.6%
Use the internet	223	73.3%
Go to church	99	32.5%
Talk to friends	217	71.3%
Watch TV	135	44.4%
Listen to the radio	122	40.1%
<b>Total</b>	304	100%

#### 15. Is it easy to find out about community events and local activities?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes	202	65.1%
No	8	2.5%
Somewhat	86	27.7%
No Responses	14	4.5%
<b>Total</b>	310	100%

#### 16. When you go out, what kinds of things do you do?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Walks	238	79.0%
Exercise class	117	38.8%
Sports	38	12.6%
Visit friends	189	62.7%
Religious gathering	97	32.2%
Cards or bingo	29	9.6%
Restaurant	207	68.7%
Hobby group	36	11.9%
Volunteer	130	43.1%

Classes	110	36.5%
Medical appointments	202	67.1%
Work	80	26.5%
Hunting and fishing	7	2.3%
Book group	50	16.6%
Errands	237	78.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100%</b>

**17. Are you as social as you want to be?**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Yes	231	74.5%
No	66	21.2%
No Responses	13	4.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>100%</b>

**17A. If no, please select all that apply to your situation:**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
No one to go with	27	41.5%
Cannot afford to go out	18	27.6%
No ride	6	9.2%
Nothing to do	7	10.7%
Too far to drive	4	6.1%
Do not know what's happening	16	24.6%
Do not like to go out after dark	32	49.2%
Event times are not convenient	15	23.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100%</b>

**18. Please select the services you need now:**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Home health care providers	26	3.0%
Help with government forms	46	5.4%
Where to get medical equipment	3	<1%
Daily phone check to make sure I'm ok	17	2.0%
Wellness classes	48	5.6%
How to find care	22	2.5%
Help with home chores (plowing, gardening)	156	18.3%
None	612	72.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>850</b>	<b>100%</b>

**19. Are you:**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Working full-time	169	18.1%
Working part-time	182	19.5%
Retired	567	60.8%
Looking for work	54	5.7%
Homemaker	57	6.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>932</b>	<b>100%</b>

**20. Do you volunteer?**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Help out through a local organization, service group or church	501	56.4%
Help others informally	412	46.3%
Would like to do more	159	17.9%
Not interested in volunteering	114	12.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>888</b>	<b>100%</b>

## **Discussion of At Home and in Your Community**

*Respect.* In Waldo County, 80.1% of people report feeling respected, but 11.8% do not. Some respondents omitted this question. In Belfast, 88.7% report feeling respected while 7.4% do not. This study did collect any additional information to illuminate this finding.

*Involvement.* In Waldo County, 35.8% of respondents are involved as they wish to be. However, 49.7% are not. 151 respondents omitted this question.

In Belfast, 39% of respondents are as involved as they want to be while 50.6 % are not. 10% of respondents omitted this question.

This finding is notable, as it is similar between the County and Belfast data. Clearly respondents want to be more involved and engaged than they currently are.

*Finding Out About What's Going On.* The newspaper and the internet account for the majority of responses, both in Waldo County and Belfast, with internet use being slightly higher in Belfast. The use of newspapers is notable in a time when print communication is fighting for its existence. In the County, 63.1 % of respondents get information they need from the newspaper, and in Belfast only, 76.6% or more than ¾ of our respondents use newspapers. Television and radio are also important sources, but not as high as what people find out from friends (WC 69.2%; Belfast 71.3%). Churches also play a role communicating information.

Most respondents conclude that it is easy or somewhat easy to find out what's going on (Easy: WC 51%, Somewhat Easy WC 32.8%; Belfast Easy 65.1%; Somewhat easy 27.7%).

*Senior activities (16,17, 17a).* In both the Waldo County data and the City of Belfast, walking, eating out at restaurants, visiting friends, doing errands, and medical appointments are the most common activities reported. Volunteering is also popular. In the County data, 68.3% as a social as they want to be and 23.5% are not. In Belfast data, 74.5% are as social as they want to be. These data suggest it may be more convenient to be social within the City of Belfast.

The most common reason cited for not being more social in both the city and county wide is not liking to go out after dark. The second most common response is not having anyone to go out with.

## Findings: Survey Items 21-22 Public Places You Visit Waldo County Overall

### 21. Do you visit any of these public spaces?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Public parks	641	67.7%
Public buildings/libraries	668	70.6%
Walking trails	515	54.4%
no	129	13.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>946</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 21A. Public spaces are a problem for me because:

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
No problem	629	88.0%
No wheelchair/walker access	20	2.8%
No parking nearby	13	1.8%
Doors are difficult to open	17	2.3%
No public restrooms	30	4.2%
Poor sidewalks	30	4.2%
Poor lighting	19	2.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 22. Where do you get your food?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Supermarket	910	94.6%
Farmers' market	486	50.5%
Convenience stores	189	19.6%
Co-op	413	42.9%
Local farms	241	25.0%
Food pantry/soup kitchen	59	6.1%
My own garden	417	43.3%
I do not have enough food	18	1.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>961</b>	<b>100%</b>



**Belfast Overall****21. Do you visit any of these public spaces?**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Public parks	242	81.4%
Public buildings/libraries	235	79.1%
Walking trails	216	72.7%
no	14	4.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>100%</b>

**21A. Public spaces are a problem for me because:**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
No problem	193	88.9%
No wheelchair/walker access	7	3.2%
No parking nearby	4	1.8%
Doors are difficult to open	7	3.2%
No public restrooms	7	3.2%
Poor sidewalks	11	5.0%
Poor lighting	2	<1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>100%</b>

**22. Where do you get your food?**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Supermarket	274	94.4%
Farmers' market	183	63.1%
Convenience stores	38	13.1%
Co-op	179	61.7%
Local farms	58	20.0%
Food pantry/soup kitchen	14	4.8%
My own garden	109	37.5%
I do not have enough food	1	<1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Summary and Discussion of Public Places You Visit

In Waldo County and in Belfast-only, Parks, Public buildings and trails are all popular, although each of these has a higher percentage of responses in the Belfast-only data. Some places are hard to manage for some respondents because of mobility problems and sometimes insufficient adaptations for accessibility.

Supermarkets remain the most commonly-cited source for food in both the County and in Belfast. However, in both cases, more than half of respondents also shop at a farmer’s market, and the Belfast Coop is also popular, especially for Belfast residents. In both data sets, some people report not having enough food.

The data team believed these numbers at around 1% are under-representing the issue of food insecurity in Waldo County, as we know an array of active food pantries provide critical services to residents with insufficient food supplies.

## Findings: Survey Items 23-26A – When You Look Ahead

### Waldo County Overall

23. Where will you live?		
	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Current home	524	55.7%
Sell my home and rent	51	5.4%
Go on renting	50	5.3%
Move in with a family member	26	2.7%
Have someone move in with me	43	4.5%
Move to assisted living	51	5.4%
Move to a senior community	56	5.9%
Move closer to the center of town	80	8.5%
Do not know	290	30.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>940</b>	<b>100%</b>

**24. How will you get around?**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Public transportation	94	10.0%
Rides for seniors	110	11.8%
Will drive as long as I can	754	80.9%
My family will drive me	115	12.3%
Someone will help	100	10.7%
Do not know	153	16.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>932</b>	<b>100%</b>

**25. Who will you spend time with?**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
My larger community	343	36.2%
People my age	282	29.8%
Family only	35	3.7%
Friends	634	67.0%
Family	522	55.2%
Worry about being alone	106	11.2%
Do not expect this to be a problem	352	37.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>945</b>	<b>100%</b>

**26. What are your concerns about dying?**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Pain	282	31.2%
Being alone	186	20.6%
Adequate care	234	25.9%
Medical bills	271	30.0%
None	379	42.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>902</b>	<b>100%</b>

**26A. Where do you prefer to die?**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Home	648	72.3%
Hospital	33	3.6%
Hospice facility	133	14.8%
Nursing home	3	<1%
Don't care	201	22.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>896</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Belfast Overall****23. Where will you live?**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Current home	152	53.5%
Sell my home and rent	6	2.1%
Go on renting	31	10.9%
Move in with a family member	8	2.8%
Have someone move in with me	14	4.9%
Move to assisted living	25	8.8%
Move to a senior community	17	5.9%
Move closer to the center of town	15	5.2%
Do not know	81	28.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>100%</b>

**24. How will you get around?**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Public transportation	52	18.0%
Rides for seniors	65	22.5%
Will drive as long as I can	233	80.9%
My family will drive me	33	11.4%
Someone will help	45	15.6%
Do not know	37	12.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 25. Who will you spend time with?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
My larger community	144	49.4%
People my age	107	36.7%
Family only	6	2.0%
Friends	202	69.4%
Family	142	48.7%
Worry about being alone	33	11.3%
Do not expect this to be a problem	117	40.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 26. What are your concerns about dying?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Pain	79	28.3%
Being alone	55	19.7%
Adequate care	63	22.5%
Medical bills	69	24.7%
None	125	44.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 26A. Where do you prefer to die?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Home	201	74.1%
Hospital	15	5.5%
Hospice facility	58	21.4%
Nursing home	1	<1%
Don't care	50	18.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100%</b>

## **Summary and Discussion of When You Look Ahead**

Most people want to stay in their own home, drive as long as they can, spend time with friends, families, and their communities, and prefer to die at home.

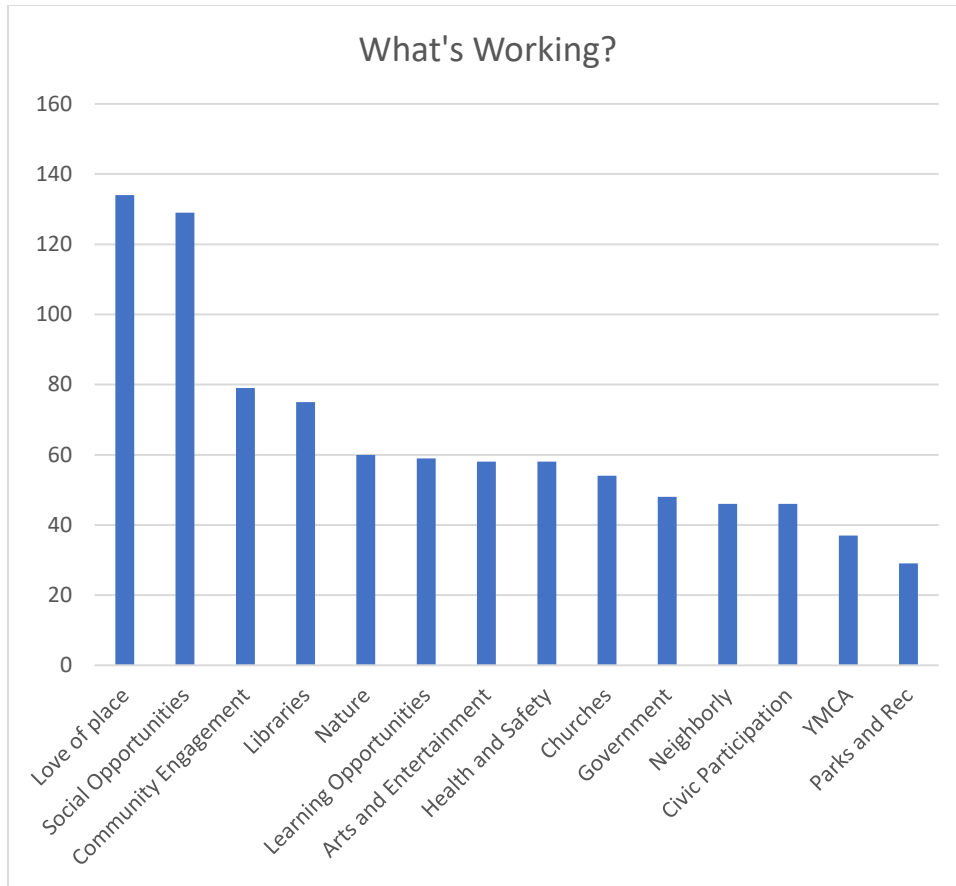
## **Findings: Open-Ended Question (27/27A) – What is Working in Your Community/What is Not?**

Initially, the team wanted to analyze the Waldo County data overall, and do the Belfast data separately. Our justification to disaggregate Belfast was that a larger community might have services and assets that smaller communities do not, such as easy access to a larger grocery store, or proximity to a hospital. However, the software used and owned by WCGH and generously made available to AWWC proved to be limited in its ability to disaggregate data on the narrative item. Consequently, the results for the two-part narrative Question 27 (What's working?)/27A (What's not working?) are presented here as one entire data set.

### **Overall Assets in Waldo County**

The responses to the first part of the open-ended question— “What is working in your community?”—was not filled in by all 1047 respondents, but it was completed by slightly more than 400. We do not have a definitive explanation as to why many respondents chose to leave this item blank. Whatever the reason, we feel we have some very informative data from people taking the time to write.

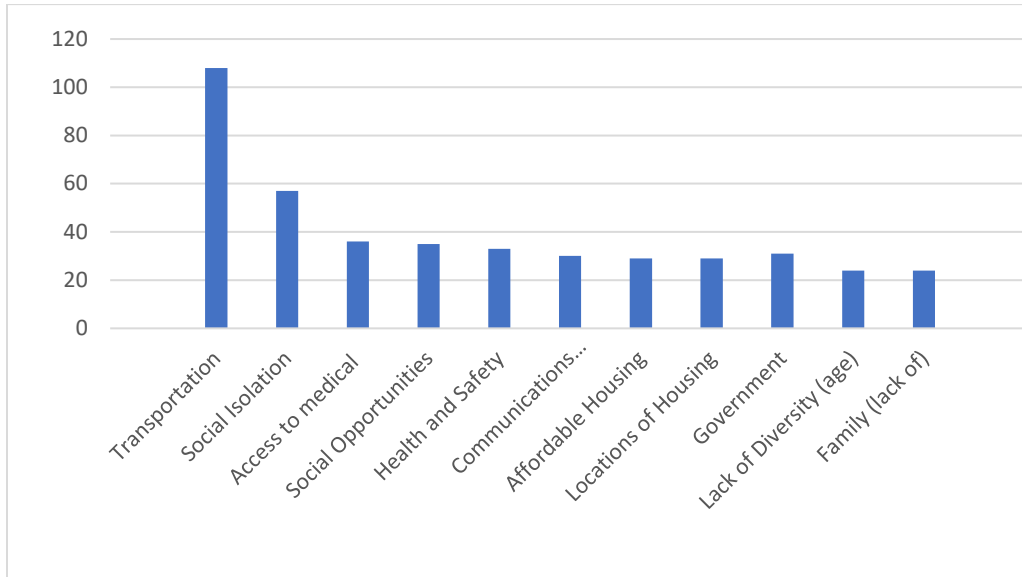
The most frequent response to this question is the unsolicited information about how many people love where they live. An overall sense of satisfaction with living circumstances might be on account of respondents loving their home, their community, or life in mid-coast Maine, as short answers were generally non-specific. Seniors further report social opportunities frequently, and the importance of libraries as centers of many communities. The importance of local churches and of the County YMCA were also often mentioned. Social opportunities, learning opportunities, and the beauty of nature summarize responses to the first part of Question 27/27A.



We report above only the most frequent responses. Idiosyncratic responses, or even irrelevant ones are not reported as they do not translate into information that can be used for action items. *Love of Place* and *Social Opportunities* dominate the chart. *Community engagement, libraries, nature, learning, arts and entertainment* and *health and safety* occupy the second tier.

## Overall Complaints About Waldo County

Again, we report here only more frequent responses worth noting.



The most frequent complaint on this rank-ordered graph is transportation. This puzzles the researchers somewhat because Waldo County does have a Mid-Coast transportation system. We suspect that the presence, schedules, and scope of these services are simply not well known, or not as convenient as having one's own car.

The next most frequent response has to do with feeling socially isolated. We believe this finding is noteworthy and should be taken seriously as AWWC continues toward an action plan. It comes as no surprise that in a region underserved for medicine we would have complaints about access to doctors and hospitals: this issue is familiar and often addressed, with some but not full success.

Comments about health and safety often occur in small rural communities where residents feel unsafe because houses are far apart and the County Sheriff cannot come by as often as they believe is necessary; in some cases, respondents live in towns that aren't large enough to have a local department of public safety.

Comments on communications were mostly complaints about radio reception, costs of television service, and poor Internet connections.

Comments on government arose in both parts of 27/27A. Some people are quite happy with local town governments, and some are quite dissatisfied. We do not know if these comments are specific to certain towns, or just in general.

Respondents complained about not having family nearby, and not having opportunities to interact with people who are not retired. Interaction with families who have children seemed to be desired by many respondents.



### Narrative Question 27/27A Presented in Terms of AARP Domains

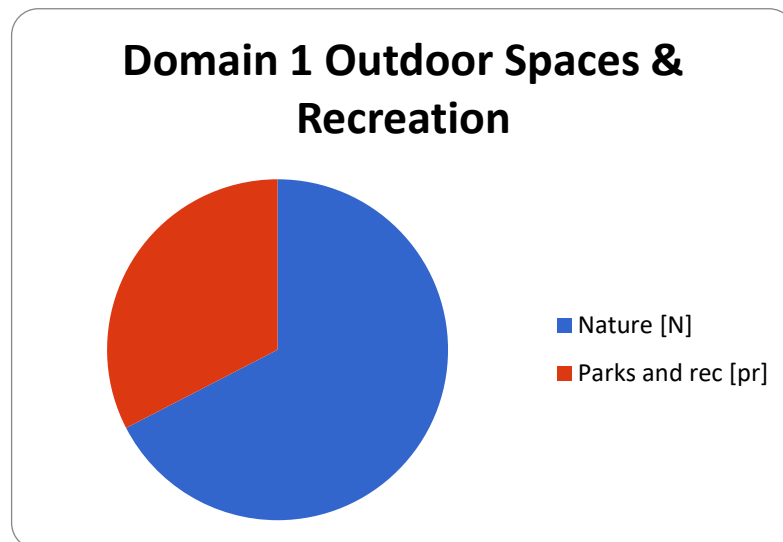
In our analysis, we found that many but not all comments made by respondents fit into the AARP Eight Domains. Optimally, we would like to have had one domain related to all areas of “Health, Fitness, and Medicine.” Staying healthy is an obvious concern of aging people. Additionally, since seniors worry about money – especially in a county reported to be the second poorest in the State of Maine - we felt that another viable domain might be entitled something like “Finances and Cost of Living.”

We do not report here comments respondents made about family: the desirability of having family nearby, the problems with not having family nearby, etc. The data analysis team decided that these comments, while interesting, are not actionable, since these circumstances are solely controlled by the respondents or their families.

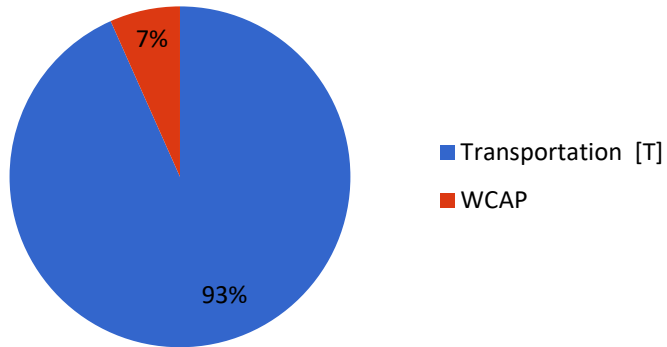
What follows is the raw data from narrative Question 27/27A, with graphs fitting responses into the AARP Domains, where suitable.

## AWWC Survey Narrative Analysis - AARP DOMAINS

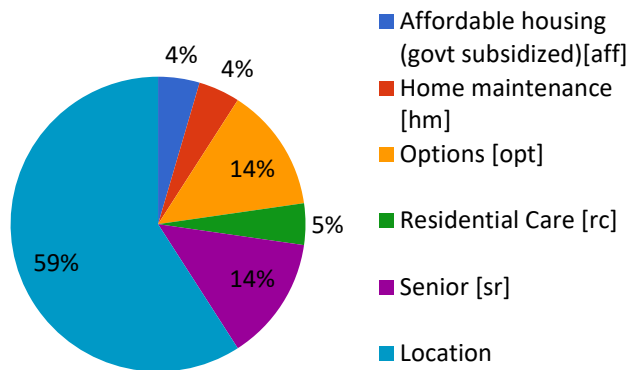
**Domains and Sub Categories – Each pie graph presented below represents one of the 8 domains of AARP. The distribution of participant responses that belong in any domain are presented.**



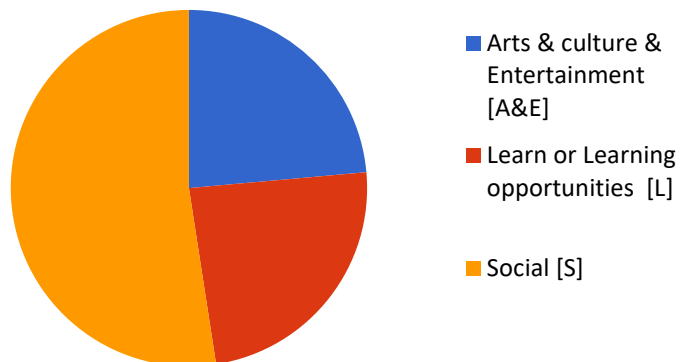
### Domain 2 Transportation



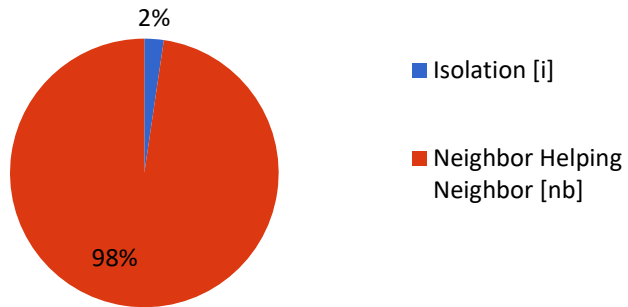
### Domain 3 Housing



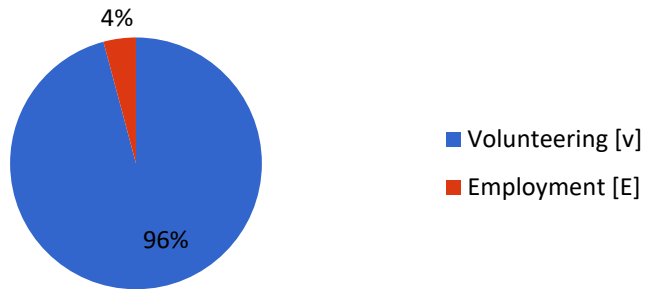
### Domain 4 Social Participation



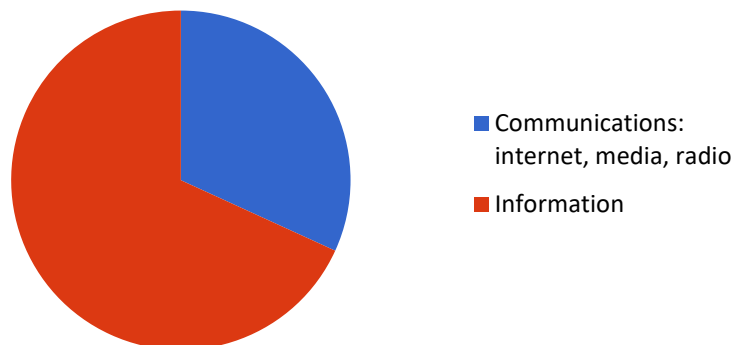
### Domain 5 Respect & Social Inclusion

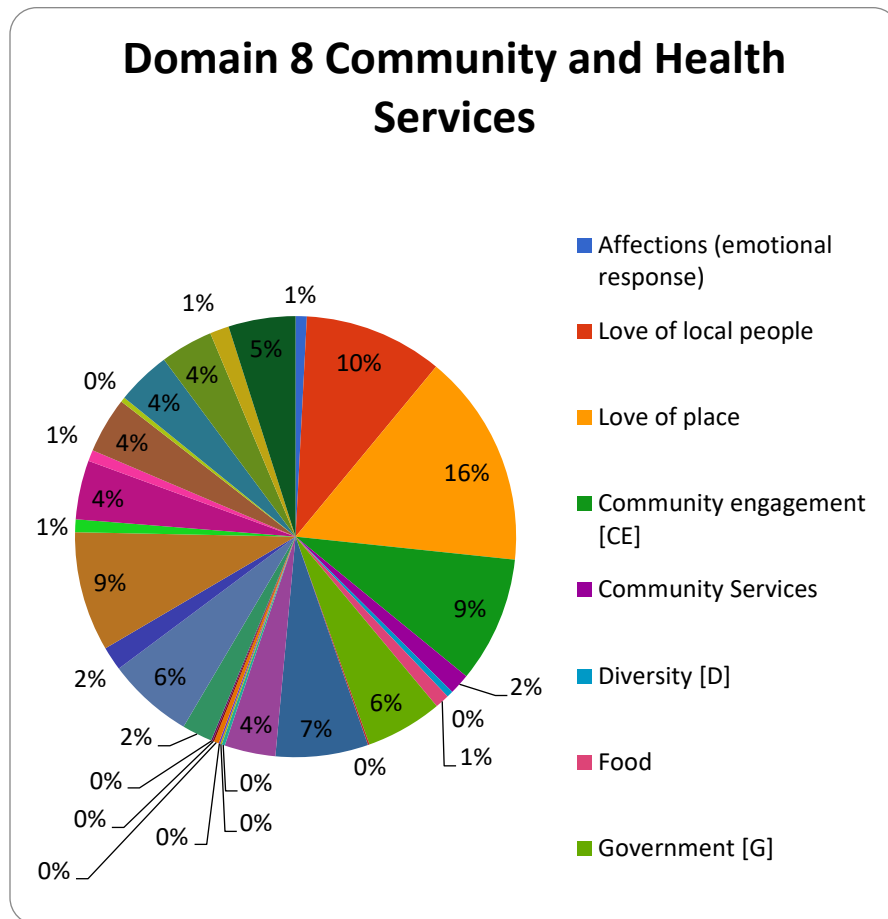


### Domain 6 Civic Participation & Participation



### Domain 7 Communication and Information





### Focus Group Organization

Although we had hoped for more focus groups, in the end various volunteers were successful at organizing three focus groups in three different geographical regions of the County: Liberty, Stockton Springs, and Belfast.

We required participants to have taken or seen the survey, and to have sufficient hearing to participate in the conversation, as we have no adaptive devices to make available.

Gathering people for the focus groups was difficult mainly on account of participants' schedule constraints. Efforts were made to include people of different ages and backgrounds, especially different educational and economic backgrounds. Preference was given to very long-time residents who would likely know their communities in depth. It took special effort to ensure males were represented.

Each focus group was organized by a host who knew the community very well. This person identified, invited, and confirmed participants leading up to the focus group date. Additionally, they provided name tags, light refreshments, and, in most cases, a small thank-you gift, such as seasonal flowers or herbs for people's gardens.

Each group was assigned a moderator who had received training in conducting a focus group. This person introduced the focus group, presented the questions, one at a time, and was responsible for pacing, as well as ensuring broad participation. All the groups kept within an hour.

Each group was assigned at least one note-taker who both made an audio recording and took copious, detailed notes. The note-taker collected permissions for the audio recording and demographic forms, which included only town, age, income level, and gender. No names were collected, and anonymity was assured.

Overall, 29 seniors participated in a focus group in one of our locations, ages ranging from 58-91, with incomes from less than \$20,000 per year to over \$80,000. Only nine participants were males.

### **Analysis of Focus Group Discussions**

Transcripts were analyzed by a team of volunteers from among the research assistants. Using *Constant Comparative Analysis* (Corbin and Strauss), the narrative data were combed for trends and patterns that emerged in the sessions. Topics that arose in the patterns were then categorized, and ranked by the frequency of certain types of responses. The AARP's Eight Domains were considered in arranging the findings.

### **Findings: Focus Groups**

Overall, the three focus groups yielded comments similar to those in Question 27/27A on the survey. As a result, we decided to analyze the results of the three focus groups as one data set, and to mine these data for ideas that would be informative and actionable for the future work of AWWC. These are detailed below.

### **Discussion and Recommendations of the AWWC Assessment**

Two major themes emerged throughout this assessment. They are the need to: 1) combat social isolation among older people; and 2) provide intergenerational company as much as possible. The list that follows is a compilation of ideas supplied during focus groups. The ideas are associated with the two major themes just mentioned and several subordinate ones.

### **Ideas to publicize community social events more widely**

- A sign furnished by a local business to advertise social events — Focus group members shared that in one community a local business bought the township a portable, lighted sign with changeable letters. It is believed that this sign has been valuable to keep local people informed of upcoming social events, as it has been placed where townspeople must pass it frequently.
- Event signs at Fire Dept. and public school — It was noted that in some communities fire departments and public schools are social centers. It was recommended that town events advertised in these places could be effective.
- Email blasts re social activities. Someone reported on two towns (Liberty and Montville) that use email blasts to remind people about activities and events. While recognizing that not all people have email access, we can see that email still appears to be a helpful type of communication in some communities.
- Events page on local library website – Libraries and churches emerged as social centers in communities. Using town, library, or church websites and Facebook pages for announcements has been effective for some communities.
- Phone-calling tree to publicize particular events – To fill the gap that results from some seniors not having access to digital technologies, someone recommended examples of towns they know of where old-fashioned telephone trees still work to keep seniors and others informed about needed and desired information.

### **Ideas to support health and safety for older people**

- Tap local knowledge to make a list of all who are homebound – Someone suggested that frequently certain people in a town, such as ministers or town clerks, are well aware of the households where vulnerable residents reside, and further recommended that such a list could be combined with a telephone tree to keep track of isolated seniors.
- Institute a storm preparedness team – It was suggested that towns organize an emergency preparedness team, and include youth. Especially after bad weather, each person on the team would call or check 6-7 households in town to ensure people are safe and warm.

### **Ideas to make older people more aware of services available to them in town**

- Someone suggested a “Welcome Wagon” type of service whereby newly-arrived residents get a visit and a packet of information about the town and County, including information on emergency services and other public safety information. This could be run by community volunteers.

### **Ideas for specific community events that would attract older people**

- Intergenerational community book groups – Some libraries already have book groups, but adding intergenerational groups was suggested, even having large groups of people reading the same book and someone organizing opportunities for book discussions.
- Lake Keepers camp — One community holds a yearly week-long free day camp for youth concerning the environment and focusing on their lakes. Some older people act as contributing counselors, teaching children and teens skills and knowledge. Fund-raisers are held to enable children to attend this camp for free.
- Veteran’s Day at local elementary school – Someone reported that a local school has a celebration for Veteran’s Day. People of all ages participate in different ways towards the event.
- Thanksgiving supper at local Community Center – Organizing a Thanksgiving or other holiday dinner for community members without families nearby was reported as a viable idea.
- Dinner, movie, and discussion group at local church or Community Center – Some of our local community centers or libraries have movie night, often accompanied by a potluck dinner.

### **Ideas for specific community programs or arrangements that would be useful to older people**

- Ride-share program – Some communities help with transportation needs by organizing folks willing to drive for those who cannot.
- Learning exchanges – Churches, libraries, or community centers might organize learning exchanges through which a person who wants to learn a skill can be instructed by a volunteer who has that skill. For example, a person could teach another person—or a group—how to knit; someone with good computer skills could offer to tutor others; someone who knows how to fix lawn mowers could get together with someone who needs a lawnmower repaired.
- Senior day-care program – Someone suggested instituting a type of senior program during the daytime that might include a wide range of activities for seniors. Some volunteers might be after-school teens.
- Community gardens — Community gardens are popular. A community garden could be started that would supply produce to the local food pantry every week, perhaps supplemented by donations from local grocers.
- Grange programs — Local Granges could be encouraged to sponsor programs or events that would serve or attract older people, perhaps following some of the ideas above that would be appropriate for Granges to organize, or perhaps coming up with new ideas.

### **Ideas for helping older people with home maintenance**

- Provide a list of people (vetted for competence, low-cost or volunteer) who could help with simple home maintenance tasks for aging in place. Some simple tasks could be done by teens to help them earn a little money.
- Organize neighborhood events – Someone reported on a neighborhood that organized something like a block party to address the needs of a senior homeowner, making the activity intergenerational, social, and productive. Activities might include helping to paint a house, build a ramp, or repair a wall.

### **Ideas for creating more affordable housing for older people**

- In one of our communities a developer has renovated an old elementary school for affordable senior housing or co-housing. Other opportunities may be available in the County to do something similar.

## **SELF-CRITIQUE of OUR ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

### **The research team recommends a few changes**

- At the behest of our hospice representative on the committee, we included several questions on the survey concerning end-of-life preferences. These questions did not yield much useful information. Instead, we would like to have pursued issues of poverty and food insecurity more than we did, as well as issues facing people who are caregivers for medically fragile or disabled elders.
- Our local Waldo CAP agency has access to contact information from the County households that request food baskets for Thanksgiving and the December holiday season. We think we should have tried to work with these households in some way, to gain more access to the perspectives of the poorest households in the County where seniors live.
- Two of the focus group questions elicited much the same responses as the narrative item in the survey. We would recommend that focus group questions be more probing and explore issues more deeply, so as to avoid any repetitiveness with the survey.



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Many people worked on this initiative, either directly or indirectly. They are: Samantha Paradis, Joy Osterhout, Cary Bradford, Happy Bradford, Jennifer Hill, Betty Johnson, Kathleen Kearns, Eliza Eager, Susan Henkel, Nancy Galland, Barbara Currier Bell, Nan Borton, James Bradney, Marcia Cooper, Jan Dodge, Liz Fitzsimmons, Shirley Jarvella, Ron Jarvella, Cher Jones, Ruta Kadanoff, Barbara Lehn, Constance McCarthy, Tim Paul, Suzanne Pelletier, Trisha Rose, Marge Sheridan, Marjory Stickler, Paul Sheridan. Additionally, some town officials assisted in obtaining surveys from senior citizens.

## APPENDICES

### **Appendix 1 – Survey for Aging Well in Waldo County**

To all those 50 and older who participate in our survey, we at *Aging Well in Waldo County* thank you! Filling out this form is voluntary; your name will not be part of our information gathering. Feel free to answer any or all questions and stop if you want to for any reason. We hope to learn more about our county-wide strengths and needs. Your answers will be helpful for planning and decision making.

Call 207-338-0462 if you have questions about this survey. And thanks again.

Please answer all that apply on any question.

#### ABOUT YOU:

1. Where in Waldo County do you live? \_\_\_\_\_ (please write in your town/city)

1A. Can you walk to the center of town from where you live?  yes  no

2. How many years have you lived in Waldo County?  0-5  6-20  21-50  all my

life 3. How do you identify yourself?  female  male  non-binary

3. 4. How many years old are you?

50-55  56-59  60-65  66-70  71-75  76-79  80+

5. What is your marital status?  single  married  widowed  divorced  have a partner

#### ABOUT YOUR HOUSING SITUATION:

6. Check all that apply:  own my own home  rent  live in a group facility  live alone  
 live with relatives  relatives live with me  have an apartment  am homeless

7. Is your housing situation ideal for you now?  yes  no

7A. If no, I'd rather be:  downsizing  living with family members  living in a group facility  
 living alone  having someone live with me

8. How many people live in your household? (including yourself)  1  2  3  4 or more

9. Are you warm enough in the winter?  yes  no

9A. If no, please check those that apply to your situation:

- paying for fuel is a problem  there are problems with insulation

#### HOW YOU GET FROM HERE TO THERE:

10. How do you get around?  my car  the bus  bike  a friend takes me  walk most places

- boat/ferry  taxi  homebound and get deliveries  family  significant other

10A-If transportation is a problem for you, why?  no problems  money is an issue  no vehicle

- no public transportation  uncomfortable asking for rides  difficulty walking

11. What keeps you from getting out?  nothing  use a wheelchair/walker/other device

- difficulty seeing  I have trouble hearing  weather conditions  dislike going out

- dislike going alone

#### AT HOME IN YOUR COMMUNITY:

12. Do you feel included and respected as an older person?  yes  no

13. Would you like to be more involved in community activities?  yes  no

14. How do you find out what's happening?  read the newspaper  use the Internet  go to church  talk to friends  watch TV  listen to the radio

15. Is it easy to find out about community events and local activities?  yes  no  somewhat

16. When you go out, what kinds of things do you do?  walks  exercise class  sport  visit friends  religious gathering  cards or bingo  restaurant  hobby group  volunteer  classes

- medical appointments  work  hunting and fishing  book group  errands

#### Revision 10

17. Are you as social as you want to be?  yes  no

17A. If no, please check those that apply to your situation:  no one to go with  cannot afford to go out  no ride  nothing to do  too far to drive  do not know what's happening  do not like to go after dark  event times are not convenient

18. Please check the services you need now.  home health care providers  help with government forms  where to get medical equipment  daily phone check to make sure I'm ok  wellness classes  how to find care  help with home chores (plowing, gardening)  none

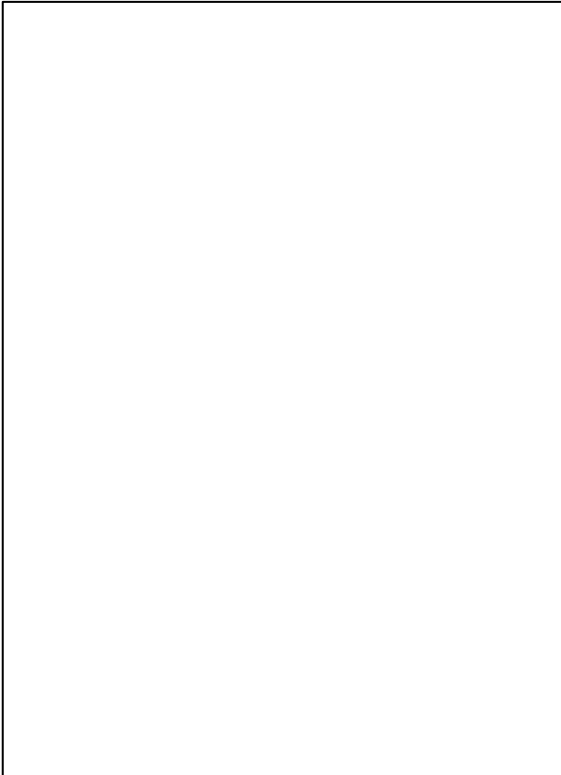
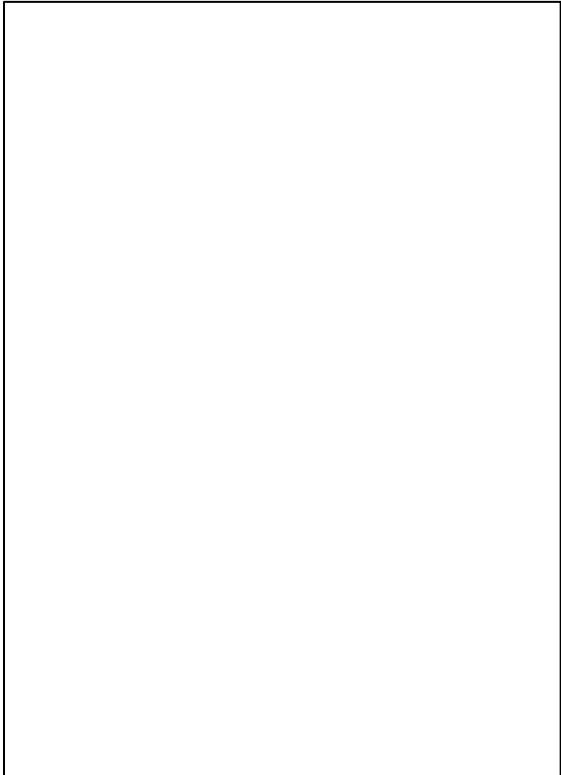
19. Are you:  working full-time  working part-time  retired  looking for work  homemaker
20. Do you volunteer?  help out through a local organization, service group, or church  
 help others informally  would like to do more  not interested in volunteering

### THE PUBLIC PLACES YOU VISIT:

21. Do you visit any of these public spaces?  public parks  public buildings/libraries  
 walking trails  no
- 21A-Public spaces are a problem for me because:  no problem  no wheelchair/walker access  
 no parking nearby  doors are difficult to open  no public restrooms  poor sidewalks  poor lighting
22. Where do you get your food?  supermarket  farmers' market  convenience stores  co-op  
 local farms  food pantry/soup kitchen  my own garden  do not have enough food

### WHEN YOU LOOK AHEAD:

23. Where will you live?  current home  sell home and rent  go on renting  move in with family member  
 have someone move in with me  move to assisted living  move to a senior community  
 move closer to the center of town  do not know
24. How will you get around?  public transportation  rides for seniors  will drive as long as I can  
 my family will drive me  someone will help  do not know
25. Who will you spend time with?  my larger community  people my age  family only  
 friends  family  worry about being alone  do not expect this to be a problem
26. What are your concerns about dying?  pain  being alone  adequate care  medical bills  none
- 26A-Where do you prefer to die?  home  hospital  hospice facility  nursing home  don't care
27. What is working for you in your community:
- 27A. What is not?



Revision 10

## Appendix 2 – Directions for Snowball sampling

# “Snowball” Sampling Aging Well in Waldo County

### Help us get out the word about our survey!

*Paste a message like this (or use this one) to Waldo County residents over 50 who are in your email contacts. Invite them to take this survey, and to forward it to others. Send a version of the same message to any social or professional groups you belong to where there are Waldo County seniors.*

### Dear Friends and Contacts:

I am acting as a research assistant for the group “Aging Well in Waldo County.” This grass roots movement which began in summer 2016 is funded by Maine AARP. We are conducting a county-wide assessment of seniors in Waldo County (anyone age 50 and over). Our goal is to learn about the assets and challenges of people over 50 in our county.

The long-term goal is to find ways to address some of the needs as well as celebrate what’s working to share with the 26 towns of Waldo County. Ultimately, we hope to achieve “age-Friendly community” status by AARP (about 20 Maine communities already have this designation!) and improve conditions for an aging population.

**Would you consider taking our survey?** If so, go to:

<http://agingwellinwaldocounty.org/>

*Find the green button on the right of the screen for the survey.* Taking this survey is voluntary. We hope you will answer all the questions, but completing the survey is also voluntary. All responses are, of course, private and anonymous. Please, only take the survey once. If for any reason, you have already received an invitation, then please ignore this one.

**Would you consider passing along this message to other contacts on your email list?** We would be so thrilled if you could help us out this way. With surveys, the more responses, the stronger the data.

**Questions?** Email Dr. Wendy C. Kasten ([wkasten@kent.edu](mailto:wkasten@kent.edu)) principal investigator of this research.

Thank you so much for your participation!

### **Appendix 3 – Half-page Flier to Elicit Survey Respondents**

**“Aging Well in Waldo County”** Is a grass roots movement which began in summer 2016 is funded by Maine AARP. AWWC has the support of the Belfast City Council, the Waldo County Commissioners and others. We are conducting a county-wide assessment of senior in Waldo County (anyone age 50 and over). Our goal is to learn about the assets and challenges of people over 50 in our county.

The long-term goal is to find ways to address some of the needs as well as celebrate what’s working to share with the 26 towns of Waldo County. Ultimately, we hope to achieve “age-Friendly community” status by AARP (about 20 Maine communities already have this designation!) and improve conditions for an aging population. Questions? Contact Dr. Wendy C. Kasten ([wkasten@kent.edu](mailto:wkasten@kent.edu)).

**Would you consider taking our survey?** If so we appreciate your participation! Taking this survey is voluntary. We hope you will answer all the questions, but completing the survey is also voluntary. All responses are, of course, private and anonymous. Please, only take the survey once. If for any reason, you have already received an invitation, then please ignore this one. To take the survey, please go to this website or face book page by the same name and click on our survey: **[Agingwellinwaldocounty.org](http://Agingwellinwaldocounty.org)**

### **Appendix 4 – Demographic Information Sheet for Focus Group participants**

#### **Aging Well in Waldo County -2017**

#### **Participant Profile**

**When you are finished, please return to the discussion leader**

Please answer each of the questions below by filling in the blank. We want your information to be completely anonymous, so please do not write your name on this page. Thank you.

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_
3. City or town where you live: \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your approximate annual household income?  
\_\_\_ \$0 - \$19,999  
\_\_\_ \$20,000 - \$39,999  
\_\_\_ \$40,000 - \$59,999  
\_\_\_ \$60,000 - \$79,999  
\_\_\_ \$80,000+

## **Appendix 5 – Participant Permissions to be Recorded for Focus Groups**

### Aging Well in Waldo County – Informed Consent for Focus Groups

This community discussion is part of a research study being conducted by the *Aging Well in Waldo County* with Wendy C. Kasten, Ph.D. as the principal investigator. The study is funded by Maine AARP.

#### **What Will You Be Asked to Do?**

During an approximately 1hour long community discussion, we will ask you to provide your thoughts on the 2-4 questions concerning aging in Waldo County and what can be improved to make Waldo County a better place to live for older adults and people of all ages. The discussion will be recorded.

Sample Question:

*What are challenges for people over 50 in Waldo County as they age?*

#### **Risks**

We do not anticipate any risks of participation in this discussion other than your time and inconvenience.

#### **Benefits**

There are no direct benefits to you from participation in this discussion. The feedback you provide may help in identifying strategies for making Bangor more age-friendly.

#### **Confidentiality**

The audio recording of the focus group session will be stored in a password protected computer with extra security in the computer of the principal investigator and will be destroyed by the end of the study (Fall 2017). De-identified transcripts of the session will be developed and will be kept indefinitely (forever) on password protected computers Any reporting done on the discussion will not include identifying information. Out of respect to other participants, we request that you not share another participant's comments outside the group, but we cannot guarantee confidentiality of your responses. Information from your profile that you provide as well as your note sheet will be anonymous and will be kept indefinitely in locked file cabinets at the Center on Aging.

#### **Voluntary**

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may choose not to answer a specific question and you may end participation at any time.

#### **Contact Information**

If after the discussion session you have further questions about the research, you may contact Dr. Wendy C. Kasten.at 207-338-0462.



## **Appendix 6 – Protocol for Focus Groups**

### **Arranging a Focus Group**

#### **Aging Well in Waldo County**

**Wendy C. Kasten, Ph.D. ([wkasten@kent.edu](mailto:wkasten@kent.edu))**

**2017**

### **How many people should be in a focus group?**

7-15 people can participate. Invite 15, and hope that at least 7 will be able to attend on the appointed day.

### **Who should be in a focus group?**

FG's are more effective when the participants are good representatives of the real world. In our case,

- A variety of ages (50's, 60's, 70's, 80+'s)
- People who have taken the survey
- Both genders
- Community members who have lived in that municipality for a long time (people who recently retired to a community are not good candidates)
- Individuals in positions to know lots about the community (such as clergy, social workers, town clerks, selectmen, former selectmen, etc.)
- People who can participate effectively (someone hearing impaired without a hearing aid would not be able to participate effectively; someone who by virtue or personality or otherwise dominates conversation, does not take turns well, does not listen to others).
- People from different walks of life, including some who do not hold college or high school credentials.

### **Where should focus groups take place?**

In a quiet, distraction free setting, such as at a community center, library, church community room, etc.

### **How long should focus groups last?**

After some introduction and explanation, the actual focus group is timed by the administrator to last 30-45 minutes. Conduct introductions prior to beginning the actual procedure.

## Procedure

### Introduction

Introduce yourself and the purpose of this focus group (as a follow up to a county-wide survey, to gain more in-depth information and insight about aging in Waldo County. Give a brief background of the AWWC and why we are doing this. Allow for questions.

Ask each participant to fill out a participant form. These give us demographic information only, and give permission to make an audio recording of the discussion. These forms are anonymous. The audio files are not used for any other purpose except to assess the thoughts and outcomes of the group.

Invite each participant to give a 30 second introduction of themselves, where they are from, and why they decided to participate.

Explain that you will pose one question at a time. Questions are open ended, designed to stir conversation. You hope to hear from as many people as possible on each question. Participants should be sure multiple voices get heard and that people take turns. It is important only one person talks at a time, and that there are no side conversations.

If one participant says something, and another member of the group feels compelled to respond to or build on the person's response, allow that by calling on folks who may raise their hand to do this. However, all contributions need to be said to the entire group and not just one individual. Keep the group moving in the direction of the questions if this gets off track. Let it go for a few minutes if it is genuinely good data.

Invite the entire group to stay and enjoy some conversation and refreshments following the close of the formal group. They may want to connect with people in the group and continue some conversation.

Give an overview of the number and sorts of questions you will be posing.

Ask the group if there are any questions before you proceed.

As moderator, you will decide when to proceed to the next question. The same rules apply for each question. The last question will be an opportunity to say anything at all related to our topic which was not addressed in the other questions and resulting conversations.

Each person should speak one at a time, and always begin, "I am Sue from Thorndike" or "I am Joe from Freedom" when they begin to make a point.

(Demonstrate this when you pose the first question).

Check with notetakers to ensure that she/they are ready to begin the recording and note-taking process.

Have a clock visible for pacing the FG.

## Questioning

Pose question 1, such as “I am James and question 1 is...”

As people talk, encourage detail. For example:

“I am Sam from Searsport, and I am fed up with our council.”

James: *Sam, could you say more about that?*

Resist any urges to share information, correct misconceptions, or offer any advice or solutions. Nod, make eye contact, look genuine and interested.

IF one person talks too often or too long, say something like...

James: *I appreciate all your contributions but we need to hear from others as well. Who else has something to say on this question?*

Decide when to proceed to question 2. If some issues related to this item have already come up, say something like:

James: *“A few people have already mentioned ....., but let’s consider this question more thoroughly.”*

Proceed similarly through all your questions.

Introduce the last question something like this:

James: *When we were thinking about what would be the best questions to pose here, we knew we might forget something important. So our last question is designed to be totally open because you might have important ideas to share we would not want to miss.*

Decide on when a good stopping point is. Be somewhat flexible. Ask for any last thoughts.

Thank everyone for their time, and to making a contribution to our assessment of Waldo County.

Remind them they can stay updated using our website and/or our facebook page, and that at some future point, findings and recommendations will be available to all town leaders.

Pass out the contact cards provided at the Steering Committee meeting. (if your FG has been supplied with refreshments, encourage them to be consumed, taken home, etc.

## For the Organizer(s)/Hosts

- Locate and confirm a group as mentioned earlier with a balance of backgrounds and the ability to be an effective participant.
- Collect contact information from each participant, including email, snail mail, and phone numbers. Ask if participants need rides, and try to arrange carpools as needed.
- Confirm participants several days in advance.
- Have name tags prepared (first name only, and township).
- Wear your *Aging Well in Waldo* button.
- Have some pads of paper and pencils available to participants. Try to arrange the space to accommodate tables if possible.
- Decide on some light catering – water bottles, snack foods. Save receipts for the grant administrator for reimbursement. Invite people to visit a while following the conclusion of the recording.
- Consider arranging small thank-you gifts. Save receipts for the grant administrator.
- Greet participants as they arrive, and thank them personally when they depart.

## Survey Administration Protocol

**Introduction:** Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I live in \_\_\_\_\_. (say a little more if you like to establish comfort and rapport with the group).

I represent a new and grassroots organization called *Aging Well in Waldo County*. Thank you for letting me attend your (event) today. I am here to ask each of you over age 50 to take a survey.

**Background and Purpose:** As you know, demographically, Waldo County is one of the oldest counties within one of the oldest states in our country. This organization began in response to the needs that arise with an aging population. You have all heard of AARP, no doubt. The state chapter of AARP is supporting and funding this assessment of our county.

AARP designates certain communities as “age friendly” places to live, if they qualify on certain criteria, such as opportunities for socialization, work, elder services, etc. There are over 90 such designated communities in the country. About 20 of them are in Maine. Both Bangor and Bucksport gained this designation in 2016.

What is different for us, however, is we are trying to address this assessment to the entire county rather than just Belfast, or just any other single town.

The first step in seeking age-friendly status is to conduct an assessment. Through this process, we hope to identify both the strengths and needs in Waldo County.

**Instructions:** I have here paper copies of the survey for you to take. Taking this survey is completely voluntary. We hope that you will respond to all the questions, but it's a choice to respond to the questions. If you do not wish to answer all questions or complete the survey, **you have the right to stop, at any point.**

**All responses are anonymous.** No one will know what you, individually, said on the survey. So don't put your name on it. We do ask that you indicate your town, age group, and gender, etc. because sometimes looking at data in these categories can be interesting. The responses of people over 80, for example, may be quite different than responses of people in their 50's.

The purpose of this survey is to learn about our county, and you are helping us do that by volunteering to take the survey. It should take about 20 minutes. But don't rush if you need more time. I am here to help if you have questions, or if you cannot read the size of the print without some assistance.

You will notice there are two questions at the end asking you to write in responses. This information can be very valuable, so I hope you will take time to think about what you would like to say these.

I have pencils if you don't have a pencil or pen handy. I will collect the surveys as soon as you are done. Please don't have conversations with others while you are taking the survey. We value your individual responses. And remember, I am here to help, and answer questions.

*Memo: There is absolutely no expectation that you would read or recite this. Use your own language, use this as a guideline.*