



Photo from [www.pexels.com](http://www.pexels.com)

**The 2017 AARP Age-Friendly  
Community Survey  
Community Features Summary**

**Report Updated By: Sai Sundaramurthy and Joanne Binette  
December 2017**



# AFC Top Needs Summary of Findings

---

## Background:

### Working to Make Our Communities a Place Where People Can Successfully Age

A community's "livability" covers several domains and AARP has defined a "livable community" as "a community that is safe and secure, and provides affordable, appropriate housing; adequate transportation; and supportive community features and services. Once in place, these resources enhance personal independence, allow residents to "age-in-place"<sup>1</sup>, and foster residents' engagement in the community's civic, economic, and social life."<sup>2</sup>

Since 2005, AARP has conducted approximately 90 studies [via both mail and telephone] under the age friendly and livable communities' umbrella with both AARP members and the 45-plus population. In 2013, AARP Research collaborated with the Livable Communities Team in CSN to develop a survey instrument that would assess how communities are doing across the WHO eight domains of "age friendliness." There are eight specific domains defined by the World Health Organization that are used to examine a community's "age-friendliness" which are:

1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
2. Transportation
3. Housing
4. Social Participation
5. Respect and Social Inclusion

---

<sup>1</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Definition of "Aging-in-place": The ability to live in one's own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level. <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/terminology.htm>

<sup>2</sup> AARP definition of a "livable community" can be found here: <http://www.aarp.org/research/ppi/liv-com2/policy/>

6. Civic Participation and Employment
7. Communication and Information
8. Community and Health Services

In 2013 and 2014, 16 communities used this survey or some form of it to assess the community's livability.

The top community needs from the 2013-2014 surveys were:

- ✓ Job opportunities and training for older adults
- ✓ Community information that is easily readable and delivered in person to those who may not be able to leave their home
- ✓ A home repair service that helps low-income and older persons
- ✓ Dependable transportation
- ✓ Separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians
- ✓ Affordable home health care
- ✓ Affordable social activities for older adults
- ✓ Volunteer opportunities

### **Age-Friendly Community Survey 2015:**

**Background and Methodology:** In 2015, AARP Research improved the survey design and created a standardized mail survey instrument used in 14 communities. Using this standardized survey instrument will provide each individual community with data to identify and prioritize areas of focus concerning being able to age in place. It is the goal of AARP Research to continue to use this standardized instrument in order to gather comprehensive data on age friendly and livable communities' across the nation.

To identify needs/gaps, survey respondents were asked how important community features and services were to them and whether or not these features and services exist. To compare these questions, respondents who said a feature or service is extremely, very, or somewhat important were aggregated and then compared to respondents who said the feature or service was present in their community.

**Executive Summary:** The top reported community needs across the 14 communities are concentrated in three areas: communication & information, employment, and civic participation.

- ✓ Community information that delivered in person to people who may have difficulty or may not be able to leave their home (total %: 75.4)
- ✓ Job training opportunities for older adults (total %: 75.2)

- ✓ Clearly displayed printed community information with large lettering (total %: 74.8)
- ✓ Transportation to and from volunteer activities for those who need it (total %: 72.8)
- ✓ Jobs that are adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities (total %: 71.8)

Similarly, the top community needs for *individual communities* are around employment and communication & information.

Community	Top Community Needs
Atlanta, GA	Job training opportunities for older adults (76.6%)
Bangor, ME	Community information that delivered in person to people who may have difficulty or may not be able to leave their home (77.2%)
Brownsville, TX	Job training opportunities for older adults (80.7%)
Charlotte, NC	Community information that delivered in person to people who may have difficulty or may not be able to leave their home (74.7%)
Dallas, TX	Community information that delivered in person to people who may have difficulty or may not be able to leave their home (73.8%)
Fort Worth, TX	Job training opportunities for older adults (78.3%)
Houston, TX	Community information that delivered in person to people who may have difficulty or may not be able to leave their home (75.9%)
Lansing, MI	Clearly displayed community information with large lettering (78.1%)
Philadelphia, PA	Job training opportunities for older adults (76.9%)
Phoenix, AZ	Job training opportunities for older adults (77.7%)
San Antonio, TX	Community information that delivered in person to people who may have difficulty or may not be able to leave their home (76.8%)
Tallahassee, FL	Community information that delivered in person to people who may have difficulty or may not be able to leave their home (75.5%)
Washington County, OR	Job training opportunities for older adults (76.8%)
West Sacramento, CA	Jobs that are adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities (77.5%)

Contrarily, the bottom community needs across the 14 communities are around transportation, housing, and community & health.

- ✓ Easy to read traffic signs (total %: 19.6)
- ✓ Well-maintained homes and properties (total %: 21.2)
- ✓ Well maintained hospitals and health care facilities (total %: 24.2)
- ✓ Accessible and convenient public transportation (total %: 27.9)

Likewise, the bottom community needs for *individual communities* are also around transportation, housing, and community & health.

Community	Bottom Community Needs
Atlanta, GA	Accessible and convenient public transportation (15.3%)
Bangor, ME	Well maintained hospitals and health care facilities (8.9%)
Brownsville, TX	Easy to read traffic signs (25.3%)
Charlotte, NC	Easy to read traffic signs (12.9%)
Dallas, TX	Well maintained hospitals and health care facilities (18.1%)
Fort Worth, TX	Easy to read traffic signs (19.6%)
Houston, TX	Well-maintained homes and properties (18.0%)
Lansing, MI	Well maintained hospitals and health care facilities (13.0%)
Philadelphia, PA	Accessible and convenient public transportation (7.7%)
Phoenix, AZ	Easy to read traffic signs (14.2%)
San Antonio, TX	Well maintained hospitals and health care facilities (23.2%)
Tallahassee, FL	Well-maintained homes and properties (18.3%)
Washington County, OR	Well-maintained homes and properties (12.8%)
West Sacramento, CA	Easy to read traffic signs (15.3%)

## Age-Friendly Community Survey 2016:

**Background and Methodology:** In 2016, the mail survey was revised to accommodate the telephone methodology because it was cost effective and would give AARP Research better quality control over the sample and the data. However, this meant tightening up the survey and greatly reducing the length. One of the biggest changes from the mail survey to the telephone survey was to eliminate asking about the “importance” and “presence” of community features/services and simply ask a single question about how the community rates on these community features. So for example in looking at the community service “Having a home repair service for low-income and older residents” the 2015 mail survey included two questions:

1. “How important do you think it is to have **a home repair service for low-income and older adults** in your community?”  
[Extremely important, Very important, Somewhat important, Not very important, Not at all important]
2. “Does the community where you live have **a home repair service for low-income and older adults**?” [Yes, No, Not sure]

The 2016 telephone survey was revised to include only one question on this service:

1. “Would you rate your community excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor on having **a home repair service for low-income and older adults**?”

In 2015, we were able to conduct a “gap” analysis by looking at respondents who said a feature or service is extremely, very, or somewhat important and then compare them to respondents who said the feature or service was present in their community. By looking at the gaps, we are able to see in which areas communities are not doing as well at providing features/services for their residents (large gaps). It is important to take into account that the data from these surveys reflects the opinions and perceptions of residents and does not necessarily reflect what is actually available in their communities. This data reflects what is important to residents and what they “believe” is available in their communities.

As previously mentioned in order to accommodate the change in the methodology from the 2015 mail survey to the 2016 telephone survey, we needed to simplify the measurement and just ask respondents to rate their communities on each community feature or service. We are able to identify the areas where communities are not doing well at providing features and services for their residents by looking at those features and services that received the most negative ratings (fair/poor).

**Executive Summary:** The top rated community features (rating of excellent, very good, good) across the 14 communities are concentrated in two domain areas: community & healthcare and housing.

- ✓ Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities (total %: 65.2)
- ✓ Respectful and helpful hospital and clinic staff (total %: 63.2)
- ✓ A variety of health care professionals including specialists (total %: 61.0)
- ✓ Well-maintained homes and properties (total %: 53.3)
- ✓ Conveniently located emergency care centers (total %: 52.7)

Similarly, the top community features for *individual communities* are around community & healthcare and transportation.

Community	Top Rated Community Feature (Excellent, Very good, Good)
Pittsburgh/Allegheny County, PA	Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities (63.0 %)
Warren County, KY	Respectful and helpful hospital and clinic staff (58.6%)
Augusta, ME	Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities (57.9%)
Monroe County, NY	Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities (69.8%)
DeSoto County, MS	Enforced Speed limits (60.8%)
Sioux Falls, SD	Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities (82.0%)
Mecklenburg County, NC	Respectful and helpful hospital and clinic staff (62.4%)
New Orleans, LA	A variety of health care professionals including specialists (47.5%)
Maple Grove, MN	Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities (89.1%)
Larimer County, CO	Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities (69.2%)
Alexandria, VA	A variety of health care professionals including specialists (67.1%)
St. Petersburg, FL	Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities (68.7%)
Grand Rapids, MI	Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities (75.5%)
Chula Vista, CA	Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities (66.4%) Respectful and helpful hospital and clinic staff (66.4%)

Contrarily, the community features that rated the lowest (rating of fair, poor) across the 14 communities are around employment, housing, and outdoor spaces & buildings.

- ✓ A range of flexible job opportunities for older adults (total %: 34.8)
- ✓ Well-maintained, safe low-income housing (total %: 32.0)
- ✓ Job training opportunities for older adults who want to learn new job skills within their job or get training in a different field of work (total %: 30.9)
- ✓ Affordable housing options for adults of varying income levels such as older active adult communities, assisted living and communities with shared facilities and outdoor spaces (total %: 30.2)
- ✓ Separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians (total %: 30.2)

Similarly, the lowest rated features for *individual communities* are around outdoor spaces & buildings, employment, housing, and transportation.

Community	Bottom Rated Community Feature (Fair, Poor)
Pittsburgh/ Allegheny County, PA	Separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians (40.2%)
Warren County, KY	Separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians (36.4%)
Augusta, ME	A range of flexible job opportunities for older adults (41.5%)
Monroe County, NY	Separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians (41.2%)
DeSoto County, MS	A range of flexible job opportunities for older adults (46.2%) Job training opportunities for older adults who want to learn new job skills within their job or get training in a different field of work (46.2%)
Sioux Falls, SD	Well-maintained, safe low-income housing (23.4%)
Mecklenburg County, NC	Separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians (40.6%)
New Orleans, LA	Well-maintained streets (77.2%)
Maple Grove, MN	Well-maintained, safe low-income housing (17.6%)
Larimer County, CO	Affordable housing options for adults of varying income levels such as older active adult communities, assisted living and communities with shared facilities and outdoor spaces (40.0%)
Alexandria, VA	Affordable housing options for adults of varying income levels such as older active adult communities, assisted living and communities with shared facilities and outdoor spaces (42.3%)



St. Petersburg, FL	A range of flexible job opportunities for older adults (31.7%)
Grand Rapids, MI	Well-maintained streets (37.4%)
Chula Vista, CA	Affordable housing options for adults of varying income levels such as older active adult communities, assisted living and communities with shared facilities and outdoor spaces (40.2%)

### **Age-Friendly Community Survey 2017:**

**Background and Methodology:** In 2017, the 2016 telephone survey was replicated with the additional survey items outlined below:

Q9g. Some people find that they need or want to move out of their community as they get older. If you were to consider moving out of your current community, would the following be a major factor, a minor factor, or not a factor at all in your decision to move?

g. Wanting to live in an area with better opportunities for social interaction

Q15. Next, I am going to ask you about homes and public buildings and spaces in your community. Would you rate your community as excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor on having the following...?

e. Well-maintained parks [**enough benches and was dropped and put into a separate item h.**]

h. Enough benches for resting in public areas like parks, along sidewalks and around public buildings.

D5. A family caregiver is someone who provides care for an adult loved one who is ill, frail, elderly, or has a physical, mental, or emotional disability. This care may include helping with personal needs like bathing or dressing, meals, household chores, shopping, transportation, managing medical care or finances, or even visiting regularly to see how they are doing. This adult need not live with you.

Are you currently a family caregiver providing unpaid care to an adult loved one to help them take care of themselves?

D6. **[ASK ONLY IF NOT CURRENTLY A CAREGIVER.]** How likely is it that you will provide unpaid care to an adult loved one in the future?

**Executive Summary:** The top rated community features (rating of excellent, very good, good) across the 14 communities are concentrated in two domain areas: community & healthcare and outdoor spaces & buildings.

- ✓ Respectful and helpful hospital and clinic staff (total %: 57.4)
- ✓ A variety of health care professionals including specialists (total %: 56.3)
- ✓ Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities (total %: 55.7)
- ✓ Conveniently located emergency care centers (total %: 46.9)
- ✓ Well-maintained parks (total %: 46.4)

Similarly, the top community features for *individual communities* are around community & healthcare.

Community	Top Rated Community Feature (Excellent, Very good, Good)
Greater East Lansing, MI	Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities (68.3 %)
Rapid City, SD	Well-maintained parks (61.1%)
Springfield, IL	Respectful and helpful hospital and clinic staff (71.2%)
Seattle, WA	A variety of health care professionals including specialists (60.5%)
Wilmington, NC	Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities (67.0%)
Miami-Dade County, FL	Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities (55.8%)
Tucson, AZ	A variety of health care professionals including specialists (60.6%)
Warwick, RI	A variety of health care professionals including specialists (65.4%)
Davidson County, TN	Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities (57.6%)
Greater Kanawha Valley, WV	Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities (47.1%)
Greater Milwaukee, WI	Well-maintained homes and properties (64.8%)
Albany County, NY	A variety of health care professionals including specialists (64.9%)
Bernalillo County, NM	Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities (47.2%)
San Juan, PR	Respectful and helpful hospital and clinic staff (44.2%)

Contrarily, the community features that rated the lowest (rating of fair, poor) across the 14 communities are around employment, housing, transportation, and communication & information.

- ✓ A range of flexible job opportunities for older adults (total %: 41.4)
- ✓ Job training opportunities for older adults who want to learn new job skills within their job or get training in a different field of work (total %: 37.2)
- ✓ Well-maintained, safe low-income housing (total %: 37.0)
- ✓ Well-maintained streets (total %: 36.2)
- ✓ Affordable housing options for adults of varying income levels such as older active adult communities, assisted living and communities with shared facilities and outdoor spaces (total %: 35.4)
- ✓ Clearly displayed printed community information with large lettering (total %: 35.4)

Likewise, the lowest ranked features for *individual communities* are around employment, housing, and transportation.

Community	Bottom Rated Community Feature (Fair, Poor)
Greater East Lansing, MI	Well-maintained streets (44.7%)
Rapid City, SD	Well-maintained, safe low-income housing (42.3%)
Springfield, IL	A range of flexible job opportunities for older adults (38.8%)
Seattle, WA	Affordable housing options for adults of varying income levels such as older active adult communities, assisted living and communities with shared facilities and outdoor spaces (50.8%)
Wilmington, NC	A range of flexible job opportunities for older adults (39.8%)
Miami-Dade County, FL	A range of flexible job opportunities for older adults (48.2%)
Tucson, AZ	Well-maintained streets (54.1%)
Warwick, RI	Well-maintained streets (44.0%)
Davidson County, TN	Well-maintained, safe low-income housing (45.6%)
Greater Kanawha Valley, WV	A range of flexible job opportunities for older adults (54.9%)
Greater Milwaukee, WI	A range of flexible job opportunities for older adults (40.1%)
Albany County, NY	Enough benches for resting in public areas like parks, along sidewalks, and around public buildings (34.7%)
Bernalillo County, NM	A range of flexible job opportunities for older adults (52.2%)
San Juan, PR	Well-maintained, safe low-income housing (48.6%)

**2015, 2016 and 2017 Comparison:** Overall, even with the changes in methodology [from mail to telephone] and response scales, the findings from the 2015 and 2016 & 2017 surveys are consistent.

- The key community needs/low-rated features are *mainly* in the areas of: **employment, information, and housing**.
  - Across all three years, all employment-related survey items asked about rank in the top 10 community needs.
  - Having community information that delivered in-person and that is clearly displayed made the top needs across all three years.
  - While housing items rank in the top 10 across all three years, the items are different between 2015 and 2016 & 2017.
  - **Volunteering** emerges as a domain of top need in 2015 but not in the other years and **outdoor spaces** and **transportation** emerge as domains of top needs in 2016 & 2017 but not in 2015.

2015	2016	2017
<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>		
1)Job training opportunities	1)A range of flexible job opportunities	1)A range of flexible job opportunities
2)Jobs adapted for people w/disabilities	2)Job training opportunities	2)Job training opportunities
3)A range of flexible job opportunities	3)Jobs adapted for people w/disabilities	3)Jobs adapted for people w/disabilities
	4)Policies to protect against age discrimination (not asked in 2015)	4)Policies to protect against age discrimination (not asked in 2015)
<b>COMMUNITY INFORMATION</b>		
4)Information delivered in-person	5)Clearly displayed information	5)Clearly displayed information
5)Clearly displayed information	6)Information delivered in-person	
6)Central information source		
7)Automated telephone number (not asked in 2016)		
<b>HOUSING</b>		
8)Home repair services for low-income and older adults	7)Well-maintained, safe low-income housing	6)Well-maintained, safe low-income housing
	8)Affordable housing options for people with varying incomes	7)Affordable housing options for people with varying incomes

VOLUNTEERING		
9)Transportation to and from volunteer activities		
10)Volunteer training		
OUTDOOR SPACES		
	9)Separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians	8)Separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians
		9)Enough benches for resting in public areas like parks, along sidewalks, and around public buildings
TRANSPORTATION		
	10)Well-maintained streets	10)Well-maintained streets

Interestingly between 2015 and 2016 & 2017, while there is more overlap in the top 10 community needs/low-rated features, there is almost no overlap in terms of the number one need/low-rated feature across communities. Job training opportunities is the only community feature that shows up as the number one need for six communities in 2015 and one community in 2016.

Community Feature	2015	2016	2017
Job training opportunities for older adults	Atlanta; Brownsville; Fort Worth; Philadelphia; Phoenix; Washington County	DeSoto County	
Community information that is delivered in-person	Bangor; Charlotte-Matthews; Dallas; Houston; San Antonio; Tallahassee		
Clearly displayed community information	Lansing		
Jobs that accommodate people with disabilities	West Sacramento		
A range of flexible jobs for older adults		Augusta; St. Petersburg	Bernalillo County; Greater Kanawha Valley; Greater Milwaukee; Miami-Dade; San Juan; Springfield; Wilmington
Well-maintained, safe low-income housing		Sioux Falls; Maple Grove	Davidson County; Rapid City
Affordable housing options		Larimer County; Alexandria; Chula Vista	Seattle
Separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians		Pittsburgh/Allegheny County; Warren County; Monroe County; and Mecklenburg County	
Well-maintained streets		New Orleans; Grand Rapids	Greater East Lansing; Tucson; Warwick
Enough benches for resting in public places like parks, along sidewalks, and			Albany County

around public buildings (only asked in 2017)			
---	--	--	--

The 2015, 2016 and 2017 Age-Friendly Community Surveys are available at [www.aarp.org/AgeFriendlyCommunities](http://www.aarp.org/AgeFriendlyCommunities).

<b>2015 Mail Age-Friendly Community Surveys (Standard Survey)</b>		
	<b>Community</b>	<b>Sample Population</b>
1.	Atlanta, GA	Member 50+
2.	Bangor, ME	General Population 50+
3.	Brownsville, TX	General Population 50+
4.	Charlotte-Matthews, NC	General Population 50+
5.	Dallas, TX	Member 50+
6.	Fort Worth, TX	Member 50+
7.	Houston, TX	Member 50+
8.	Lansing, TX	General Population 50+
9.	Philadelphia, PA	General Population 50+
10.	Phoenix, AZ	General Population 50+
11.	San Antonio, TX	General Population 50+
12.	Tallahassee, FL	General Population 50+
13.	Washington County, OR	Registered Voters 45+
14.	West Sacramento, CA	General Population 45+



<b>2016 Telephone Age-Friendly Community Surveys (Standard Survey)</b>		
	<b>Community</b>	<b>Sample Population</b>
1.	Alexandria, VA	General Population 50+
2.	Pittsburgh/Allegheny County, PA	General Population 50+
3.	Augusta, ME	General Population 50+
4.	Chula Vista, CA	General Population 45+
5.	DeSoto County, MS	General Population 45+
6.	Grand Rapids, MI	General Population 50+
7.	Larimer County, CO	General Population 50+
7.	Maple Grove, MN	General Population 50+
8.	Mecklenburg County, NC	General Population 50+
10.	Monroe County, NY	General Population 45-64
11.	New Orleans, LA	General Population 45+
12.	Sioux Falls, SD	General Population 50+
13.	St. Petersburg, FL	General Population 45+
14.	Warren County, KY	General Population 50+

<b>2017 Telephone Age-Friendly Community Surveys (Standard Survey)</b>		
	<b>Community</b>	<b>Sample Population</b>
1.	Albany County, NY	General Population 50+
2.	Bernalillo County, NM	General Population 50+
3.	Davidson County, TN	General Population 50+
4.	Greater East Lansing, MI	General Population 45+
5.	Greater Kanawha Valley, WV	General Population 50+
6.	Miami-Dade County, FL	General Population 50+
7.	Greater Milwaukee, WI	General Population 45+
8.	Rapid City, SD	General Population 50+
9.	San Juan, PR	General Population 50+
10.	Seattle, WA	General Population 45+
11.	Springfield, IL	General Population 50+
12.	Tucson, AZ	General Population 50+
13.	Warwick, RI	General Population 50+
14.	Wilmington, NC	General Population 50+