



TOWN OF  
**CARLISLE, MASSACHUSETTS**

# **2009 Town Needs Survey**

and Powerpoint Presentations  
to Board of Selectmen 2009-2010

June 14, 2010

## **Town Needs Survey Committee**

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through the Community Preservation Act*

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# Executive Summary

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In January 2009 the Carlisle Survey Committee mailed the Town Needs Survey to every household in Town. The purpose was to gather information about the future needs and services of town. Given the changes in Carlisle over the past twenty years and those anticipated in the future, we were trying to gather as much information about our quality of life and future needs, so that the town government could establish its priorities. We are pleased that over 43% of town adults responded to the survey, giving us a broad sample in every age, income and demographic group.

Carlisle is a wonderful place to live and almost everyone appreciates the town. Overall, most residents were satisfied with the level and quality of town services. They trusted fellow townspeople and generally felt that the town was well run. More importantly, almost all responding to the survey felt they had an excellent or very good quality of life. This is in contrast to the rest of the country or comparable towns in New Hampshire and other medium sized towns such as Winston Salem, N.C. Carlisle citizens are generally happy with their lives and satisfied with how the town operates.

The survey did, however, reveal three pressing needs:

- A strong need for more housing options – smaller homes or apartments – so that more people can remain in town as they age.
- The need for more public transportation to Concord and other areas.
- And a need to keep taxes / costs under control while continuing to provide quality town services.

Addressing these needs demands creative solutions and will take much discussion.

Most adult residents (95%) felt they had a very high quality of life. The reasons behind this are varied; nonetheless it appeared that much of what makes people's quality of life high is related to their individual actions, such as walking, visiting with friends or exercising. Many people feel that public services also contribute to their quality of life, as long as they don't cost too much. Demographic characteristics also matter: people with more income and time at home reported relatively higher life. Interestingly, trust and participation were less important to quality of life.

It should come as no surprise that Carlisle attracts a group of independent, affluent individuals who value the rural nature of the town, their networks of friends, and their physical well-being. While people in Carlisle participate, vote and support the town and the services it provides, most of us reflect some of the New England values of our heritage – independence, self-sufficiency and friendliness. Conversely, the survey revealed a small but significant portion of the population that is more isolated and less satisfied with their quality of life. This small number of survey respondents (about 80) spans all age groups. As a town, we must also be cognizant of the needs of this small but diverse group of

people, who may require additional services or means of connection to build a better quality of life.

Overall Carlisle works very well. Most adult residents are quite satisfied with their lives here. It behooves the town to continue to find creative and economical ways to meet the evolving needs our residents, particularly in housing and transportation.

The survey was divided into sections, results of which are summarized as shown below:

### Demographics

Carlisle is aging affluent town in which over 90% of adults are married or in a relationship. Over 60% of survey respondents have lived in Carlisle for more than 10 years. The median income is \$155,000. Response to the survey was strong (43%), and appears representative of the entire adult population of the town.

### Quality of life

Over 95% of survey respondents reported that their quality of life is good or excellent. The rural nature of the town (94%) and the network of friends and acquaintances (78%) were strong positive contributing factors to the quality of life, while the cost of living here was a major negative factor (67%). Other issues such as locally available medical care, education, housing, town services, availability of cultural activities, and proximity to family were also important, but to a lesser extent.

### Leaving Carlisle

A significant percent (28 %) of survey respondents plan to remain in town indefinitely as they age. An additional 17% plan to remain here until they can no longer drive or live independently. Many (33%) are undecided about their future plans for remaining in Carlisle. Of those under 50 (whose children are presumably still living at home), 23% plan to leave town when their children leave home."

### Health

Survey respondents say they are very healthy: over 95% rate their general health as good or excellent, and most feel that they have adequate access to health information and area healthcare professionals. As residents age, they desire additional services and information (clinics, insurance information, transportation)

### Fitness and Recreation:

Most adults in Carlisle exercise on a regular basis – over 85% do so weekly or more frequently. And most feel that exercise is important or very important to their quality of life. Many exercise on their own (walking, running, etc) but some make use of local gyms or sports programs.

### Socialization

Most survey respondents socialize weekly or more frequently (72%). However, a significant number (10%) across all age groups socialize rarely or not at all. This is a concern since many studies show that socialization is critical to quality of life and overall

### Housing

Most adult residents are satisfied with their current housing (83%). Nonetheless, many (41%) want more housing options in future. This desire increases with age and is related to decreasing income expectations in retirement.

### Transportation

There appears to be a need for additional transportation services to neighboring towns or medical appointments (between 40 to 50%). Over one third of survey respondents felt they would use public transportation if it were available.

### Town government and trust

General trust in neighbors, volunteers, and parts of local government (particularly the police department) is strong (60 to 80%) when compared to the rest of the country. Survey respondents reported that town boards and committees were generally responsive to their needs (most over 50%).

### Community Activities and Attitudes

Participation in town and volunteer events is high; voting is high compared to national averages. Most survey respondents depended on the Mosquito as their primary source of local information; most would also like to have more up-to-date information on the town websites.

### Comments

Over 1000 people provided written comments to the survey. Many were concerned about taxes, the cost of living here. Many too were quite happy with the quality of life in Carlisle: they prize the rural environment but would like to see more pathways and better roads, and more housing options.

# Demographics

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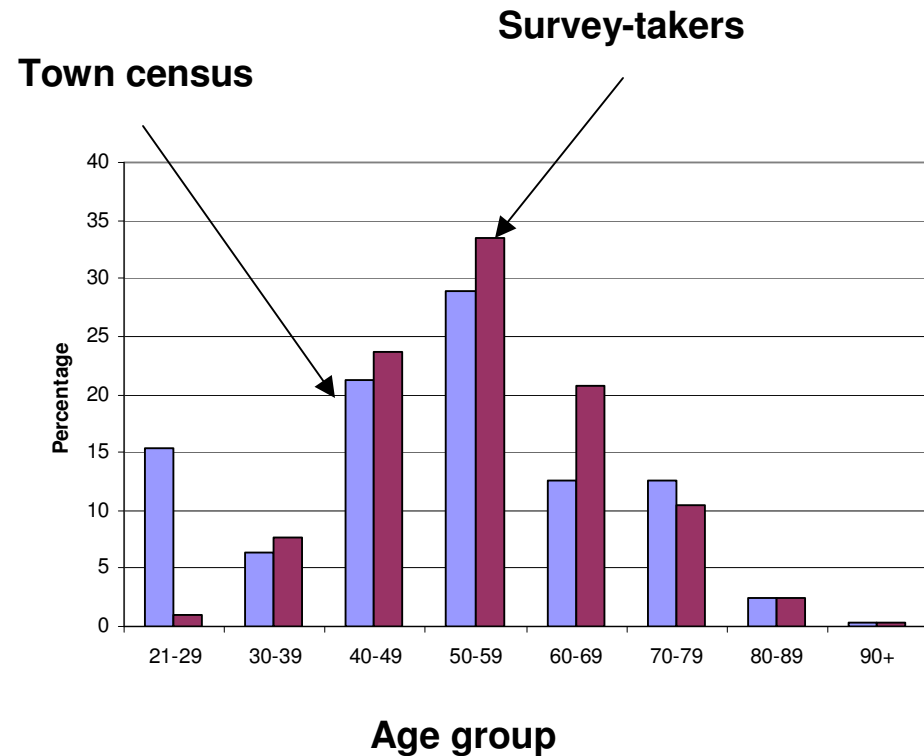
# Demographics highlights

- **1755 Carlisle residents responded to the survey.**
  - (43.5% of the total population over age 21.)
- **The age distribution of the respondents was similar to that of the town as a whole.**
  - Exception: Few residents in their 20s responded.  
(Most are students still living with their parents.)
- **Many younger respondents had family income levels above the town average (\$160K).**

# Response

A total of 1755 townspeople, out of the 4028 over 21.

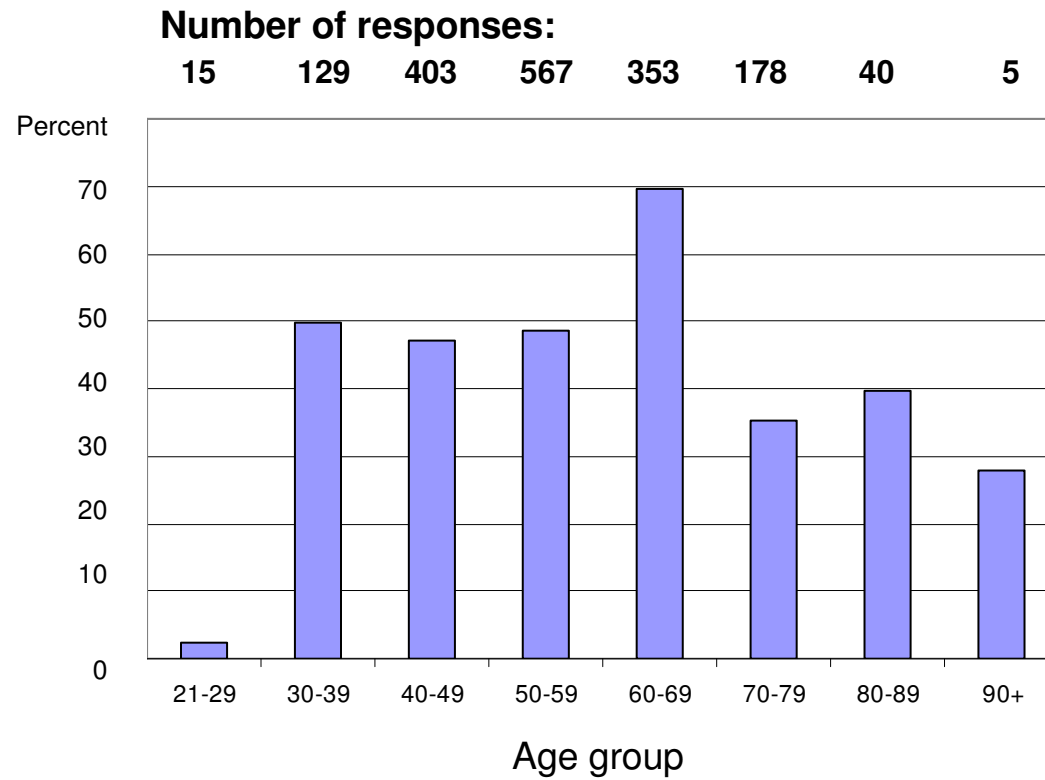
The segment of the population between 21 and 29 – mainly children still registered as living with their parents rather than heads of households – did not participate extensively in the survey.





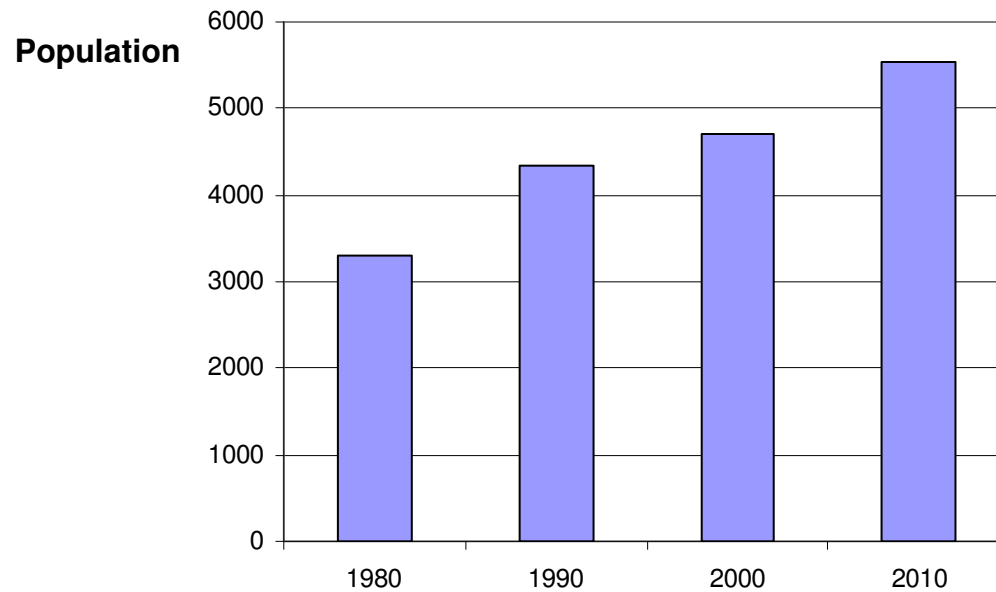
# Percentage participation

- 40% to 50% of all residents in their 30s, 40s and 50s completed surveys.
- 69% of those in their 60s completed surveys.
- 30% to 40% of those over 70 completed surveys.



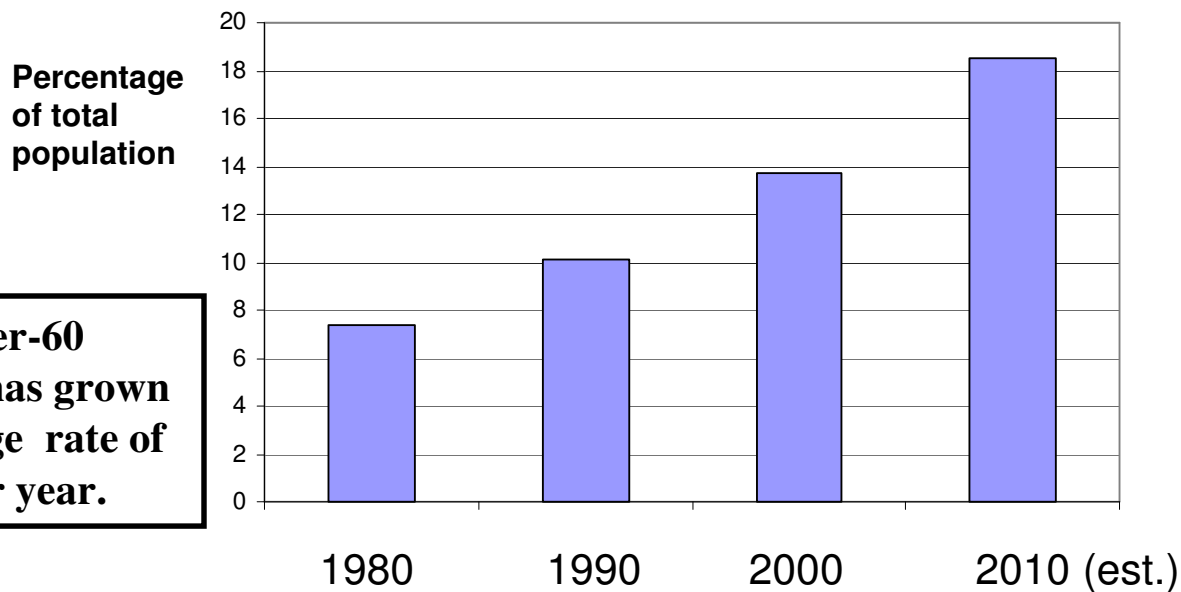
# Carlisle is growing

From 3306 to 5550 over the past 30 years  
(An average growth rate of 1.75% per year)



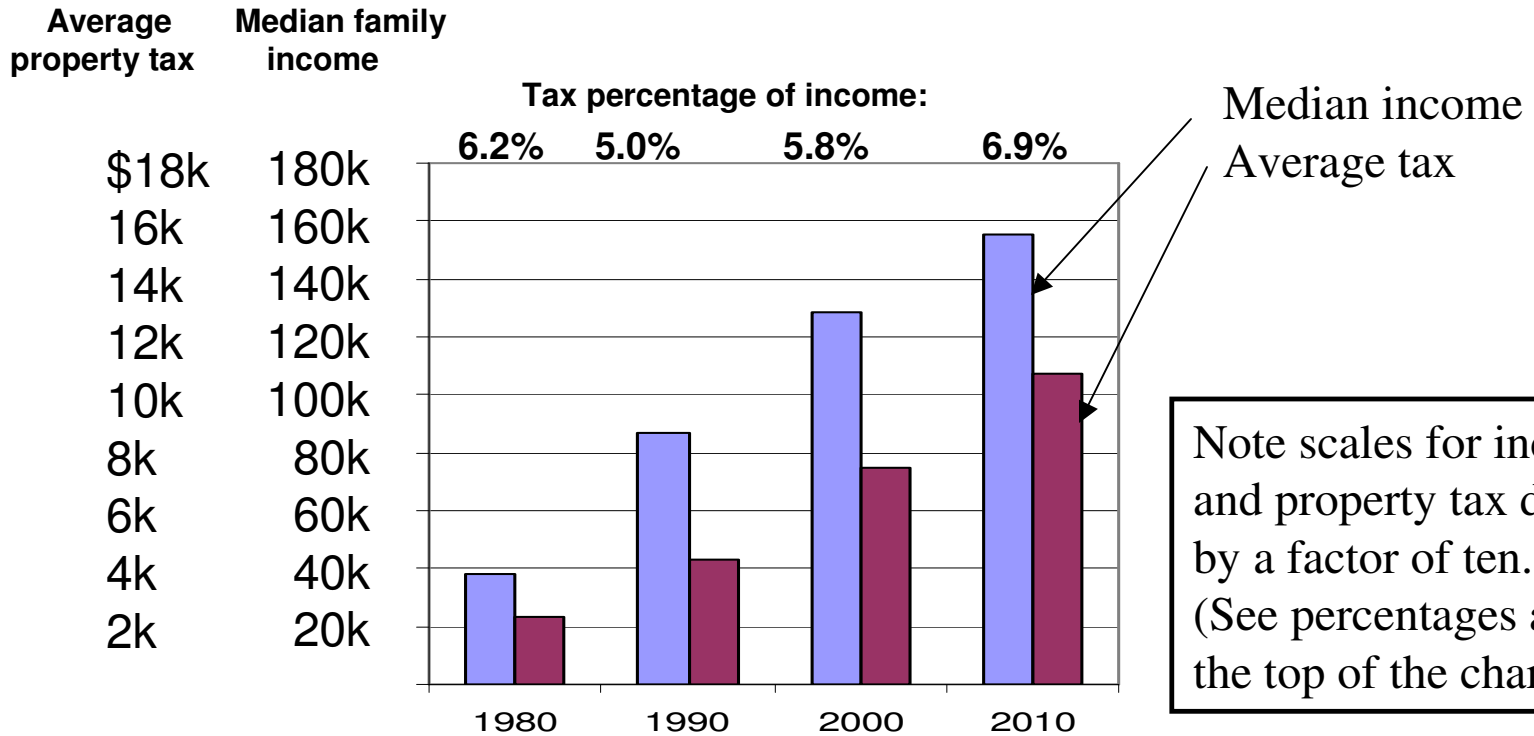
# ...But our elderly population is growing more rapidly

Percentage of Carlisle's total population over 60 years of age:



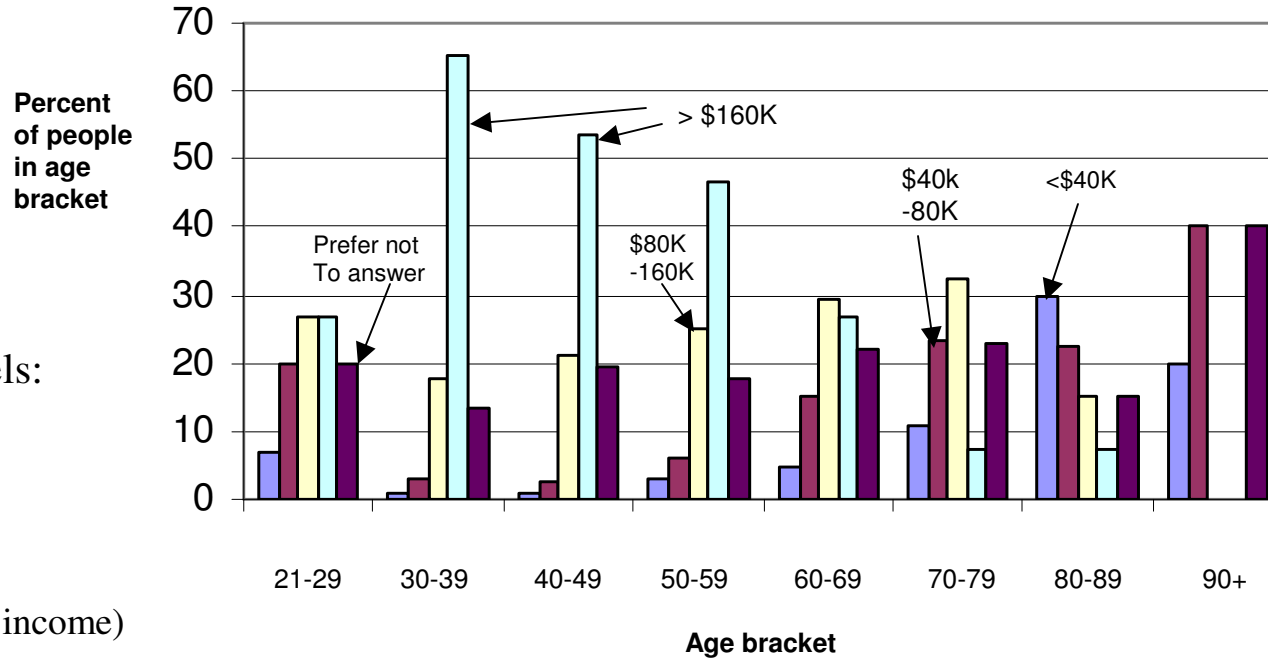
**Our over-60 population has grown at an average rate of 4.5% per year.**

# Our income is also growing (as are our property taxes)



# ...But our elders are not sharing that high income

Current distribution of family income level\*  
(by age bracket):



(Four income levels:  
 • <\$40K,  
 • \$40K - 80K,  
 • \$80K – 160K,  
 • >\$160K)  
 (\$80K is the median income)

\* Income distributions for past years are not available.

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[Related Survey Questions](#)

# Quality of life

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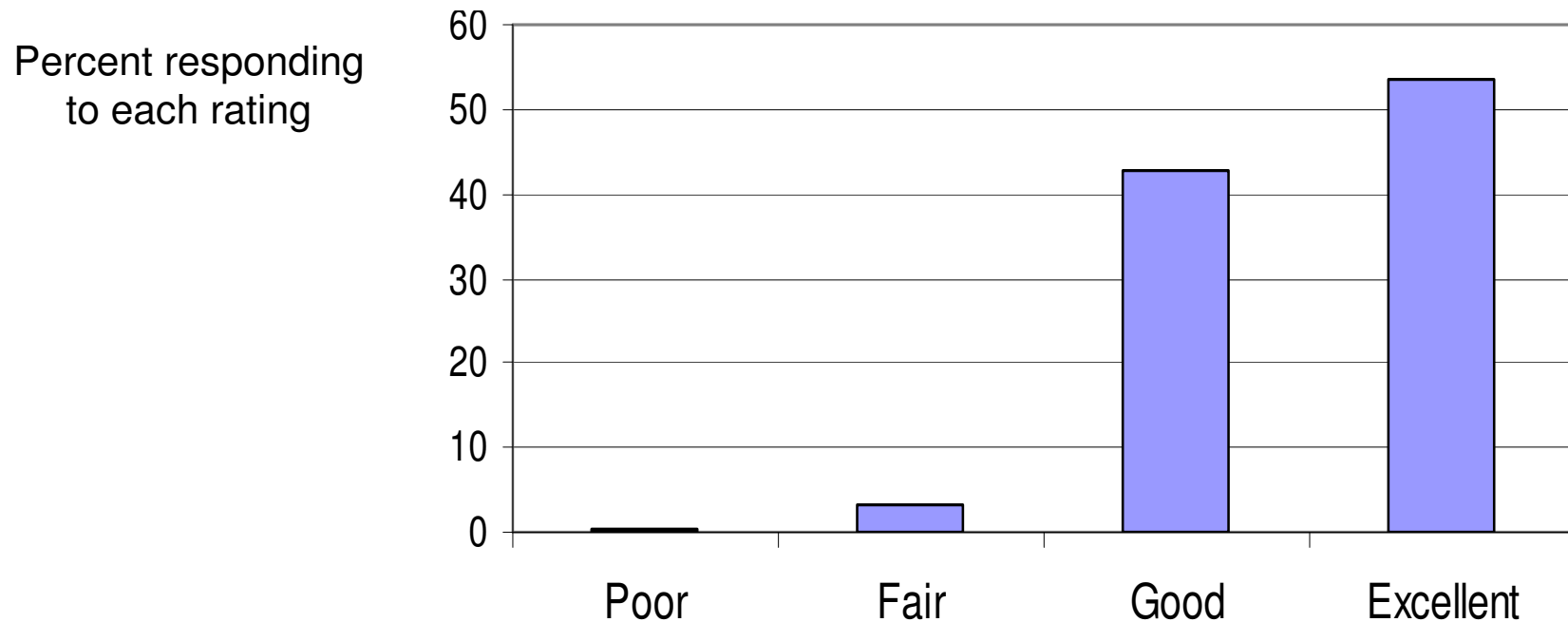
# Quality of life highlights

- **96% of respondents reported that their quality of life was good or excellent.**
  - Positively affected by Carlisle's rural environment (93%) and their friends and acquaintances (78%)
  - Negatively affected by the high cost of living here (67%)
- **Related responses:**
  - 95% are healthy and fit, and exercise several times a week.
  - 84% trust the Carlisle Police Department (a lot).
  - 47% trust town volunteers (a lot).
  - 41% would like to see other housing options.
  - 38% want additional venues for recreation and socialization.
  - 30% would use public transportation if it were available.

**But, 28% of respondents reported that they socialize less often than once a month.**

# Quality of life assessments

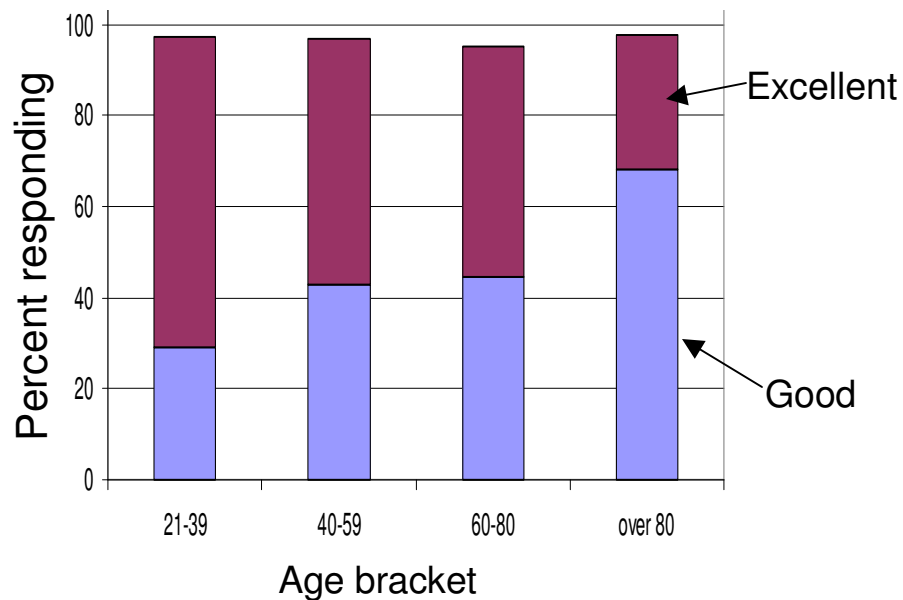
Responses to “How would you rate the overall quality of your life?”





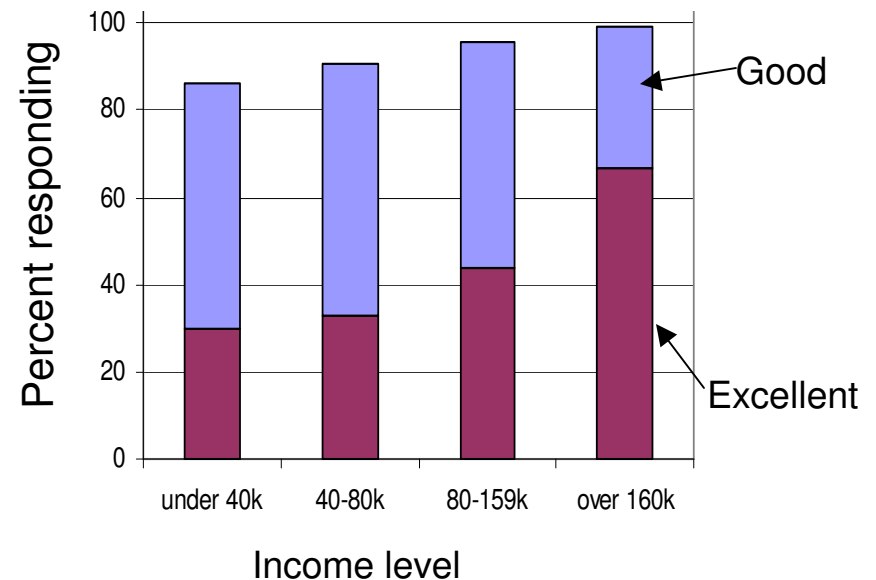
# Variation in QOL assessment with age and income

## Age



Fewer elders considered their QoL 'excellent'.

## Income



More wealthy people considered it 'excellent'.

# Why do we consider our quality of life to be so high?

## Comparison to other towns / cities

- 96% good / excellent in Carlisle
  - 72% very / extremely satisfied over entire U.S.
  - Our level is higher than comparable towns in New Hampshire, Winston-Salem, and smaller suburbs
- **Why is our quality of life higher?**
    - Many factors could affect it: public services, individual actions, demographics, income, age, families, other things

**We did a statistical analysis of the survey responses to see how variations in quality of life estimation correlated with other factors.**

# Factors contributing to high quality of life

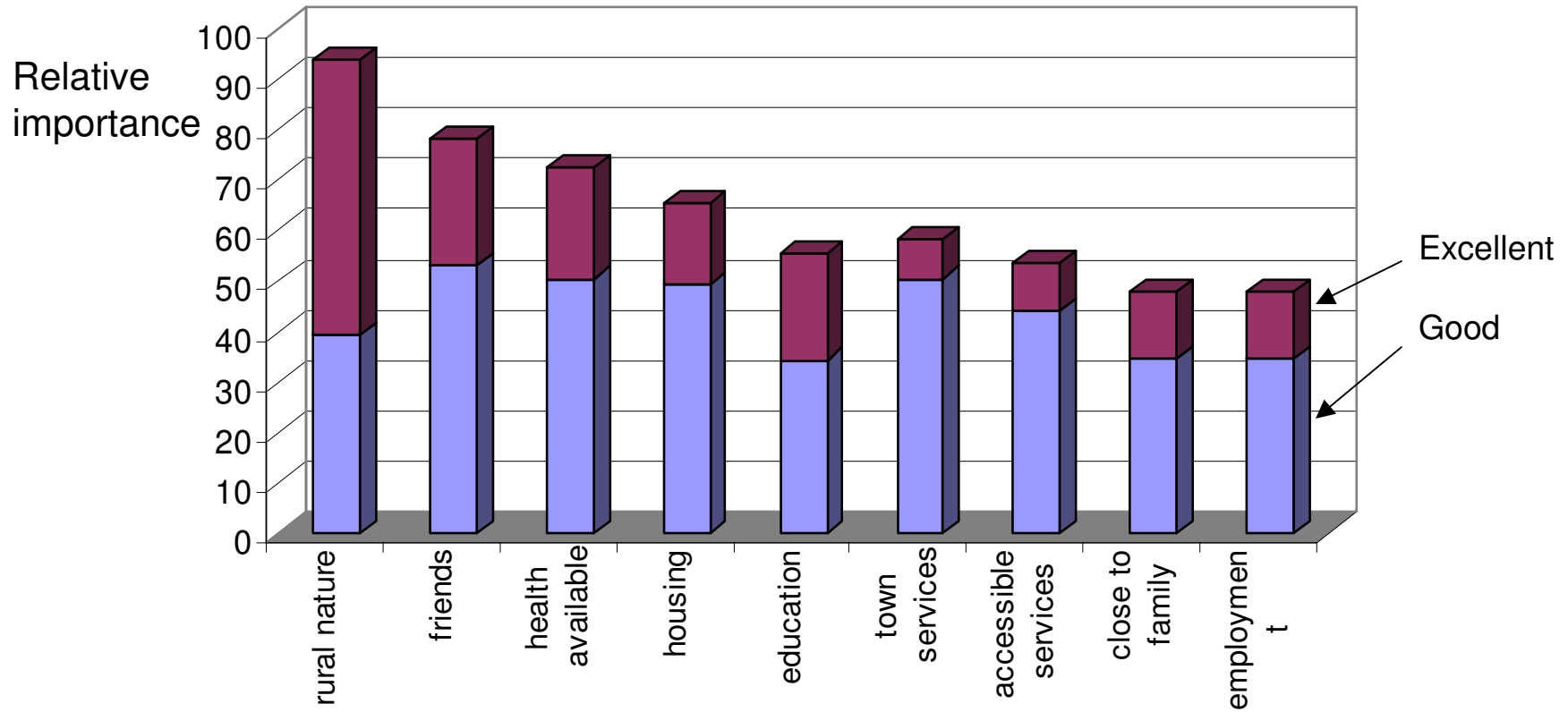
- Demographics: age, income, family size, work status
- Public facilities: area hospitals, information sources (Mosquito), schools, town government, public transportation
- Private activities: health and exercise, Carlisle's rural nature, friends, socializing
- Trust: general trust in neighbors, police, town volunteers
- Civic participation: the ability to participate in town affairs, voting

**The high cost of living here (taxes) had a negative impact on quality of life. The services provided through those taxes contributed to the positive impact.**

# Importance of the various factors

- **Through regression analysis we determined the factors having the strongest impact on perceived Quality of Life:**
  - Carlisle's rural nature
  - Friends in town
  - Income level
  - Health
- **The cost of living here had a strong negative impact.**
- **Other factors having a less strong impact:**
  - Exercise
  - Responsiveness of town government
  - Availability of information
  - Trust in neighbors, police, town officials
  - Work status
  - Area hospital services
  - Civic participation
  - Socializing

# Summary: How other factors affect quality of life



# Quality of life analysis

## Our regression analysis shows

- Living in a rural environment contributes strongly to high quality of life.
- Individual connections and attributes are also very important: friends, socialization, health, income level.
- Public goods and services also contribute.  
But, the cost of living here contributes adversely.
- Civic participation and trust contribute to quality of life, but are less critical.

**The surprise is that factors outside the public / civic arenas are so important. It is clear that there is much we do not know about the quality of life in Carlisle, that is not explained in this analysis.**

# Leaving Carlisle

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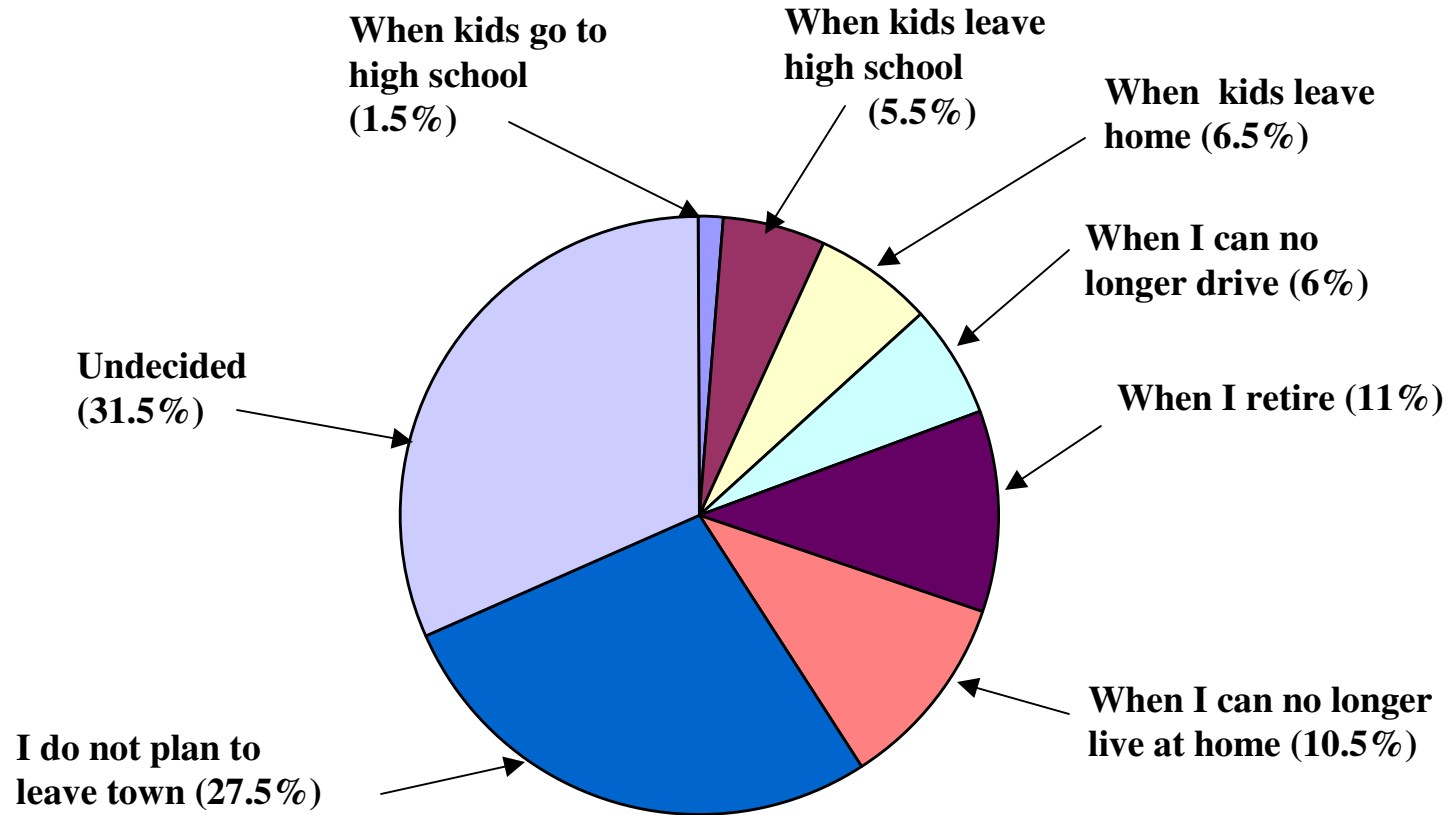
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# Leaving Carlisle highlights

- **59% of respondents either don't plan to ever leave town or are undecided.**
- **27.5% plan to leave when they retire, can no longer drive, or can no longer live at home.**
- **13.5% plan to leave when kids leave home or sooner.**
  - **But that decision varies considerably with age**
    - 25% of 40-somethings plan to leave then.
    - Only 3% of those over 60 plan to leave then (they're still here).
- **Major factors in that decision are taxes/cost of living, house maintenance cost and bother, health, and loss of a partner/spouse.**

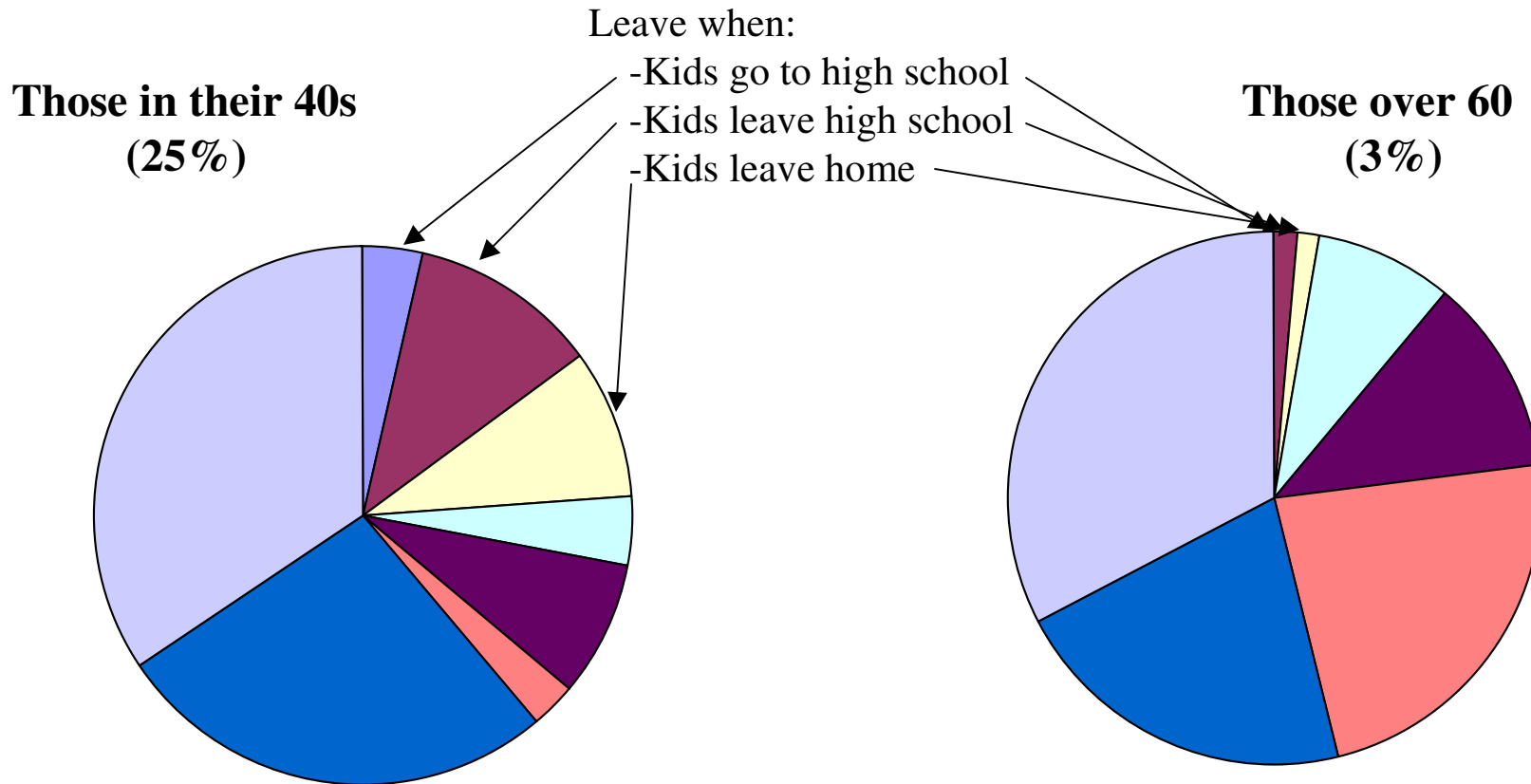


# Plans for leaving Carlisle



# The decision to leave varies with age

(Overall, 14% plan to leave when kids leave home, or sooner.)



# Factors influencing the decision to leave

- Taxes and cost of living (82%)\*
- Cost and bother of maintaining a house (72%)
- General health (62%)
- Loss of partner/spouse (59%)
- Availability of other housing options (53%)
- Family living elsewhere (44%)
- Housing and support services (32%)
- Friends living elsewhere (29%)
- The climate (29%)
- Gathering place to socialize (28%)

\* Percent of survey respondents stating that this would be a factor contributing to their decision to stay in Carlisle

# Health

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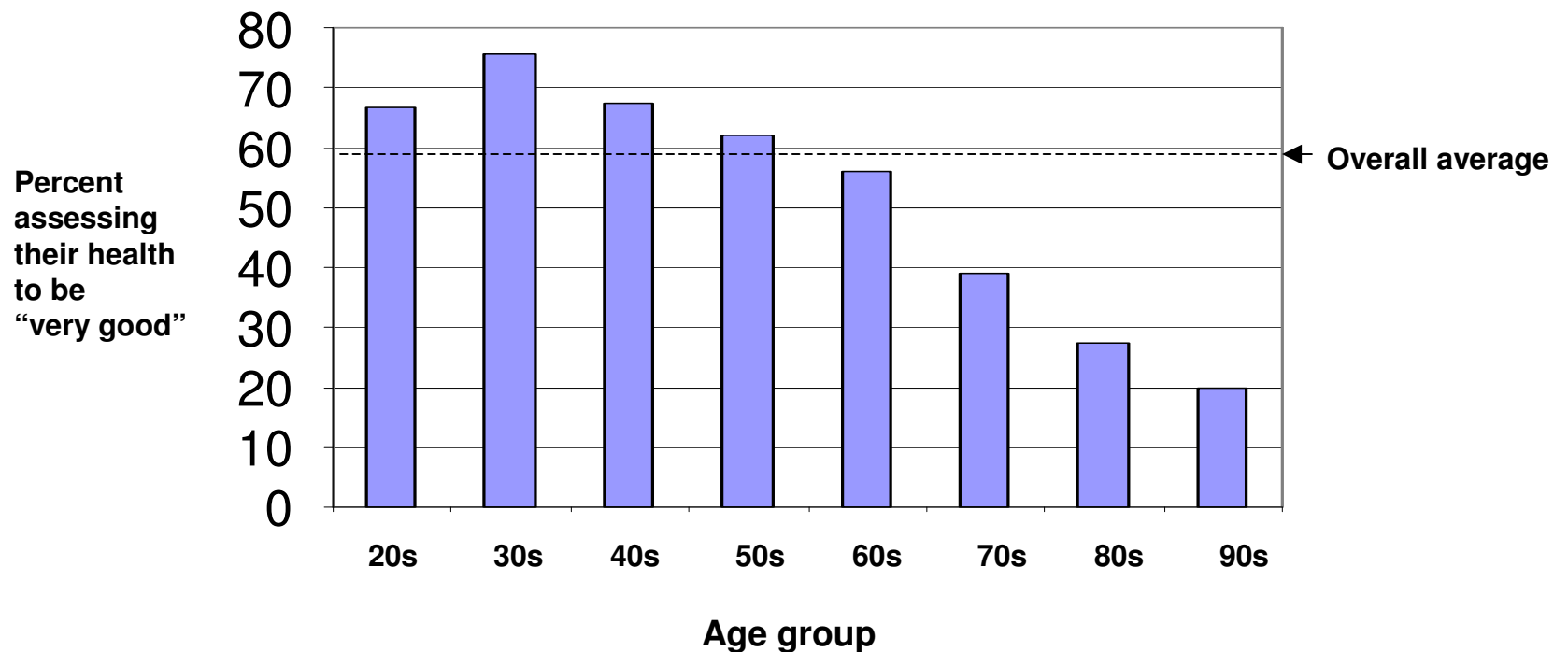
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# Health highlights

- **Townspeople feel that they're in good health.**
- **They're happy with area medical options.**
- **They do not want more town health services.**
  - **Although elders would use some services.**

# Our health is good

- 60% of the population assess their health as “very good.”
  - Another 35% assess it as “good” (Total 95% good or better).
  - Those with children, the wealthier have slightly better health.
  - The perceived quality of health declines with age:

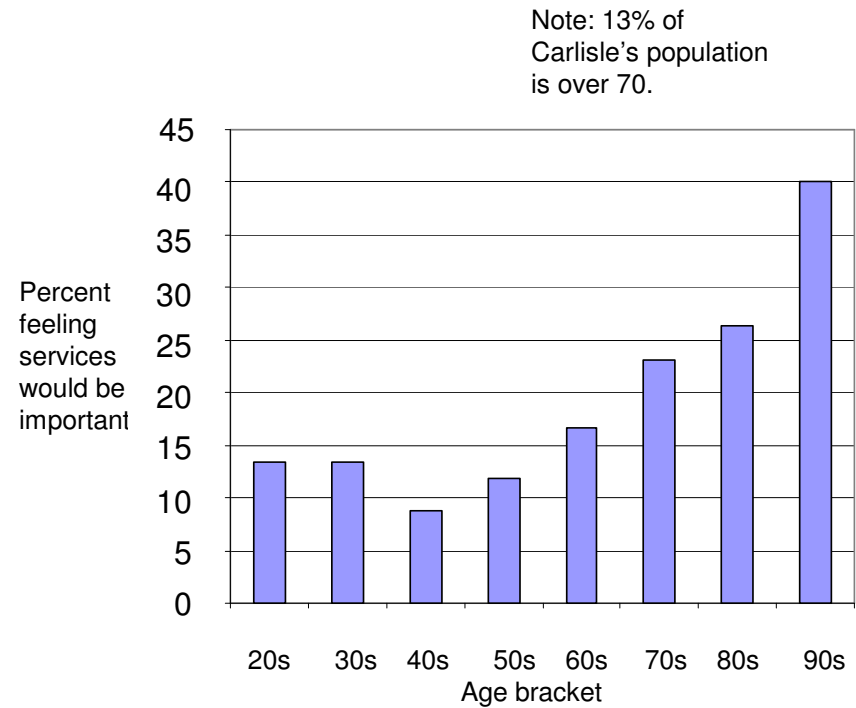
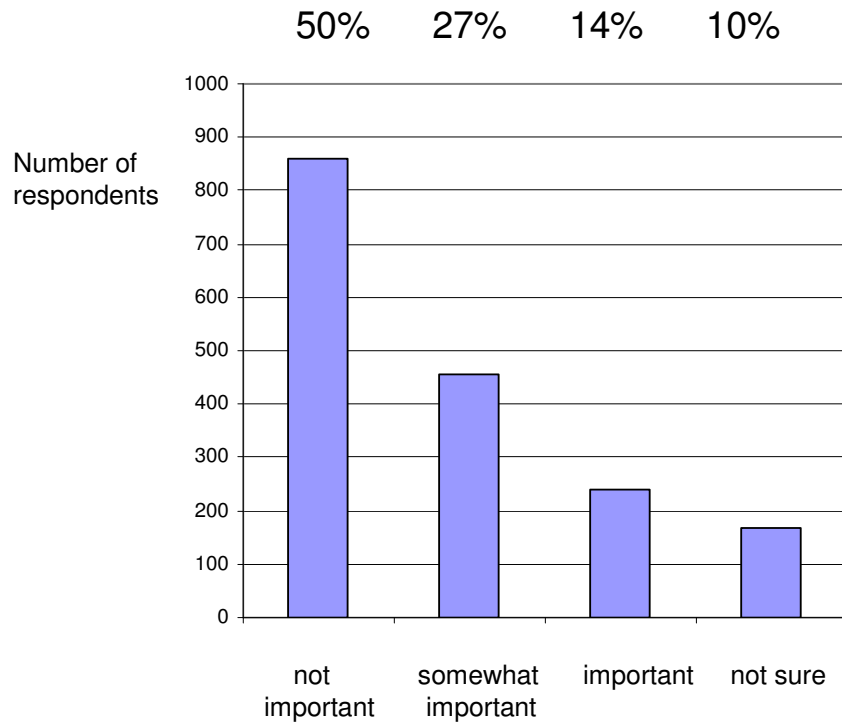


# Healthcare access

- **85% of us consider ourselves informed about healthcare options.**
  - 20-somethings, those with lower incomes are slightly less informed.
- **94% have adequate access to healthcare professionals.**
- **92% do not defer healthcare access for financial reasons.**
  - 20% of those with lower incomes defer sometimes or often.

# Importance of town-provided healthcare services

- Overall, 50% of respondents felt that town health services would not be important to them.
- But, this feeling varied considerably with age.





# **Importance of other health-related services**

- **51% felt area hospital clinics, wellness programs important.**
- **18% felt COA elderly insurance information important.**
- **14 % felt Carlisle town health services important.**
- **13% felt support groups important.**
- **12% felt health/wellness seminars important.**
- **10% felt insurance information seminars important.**

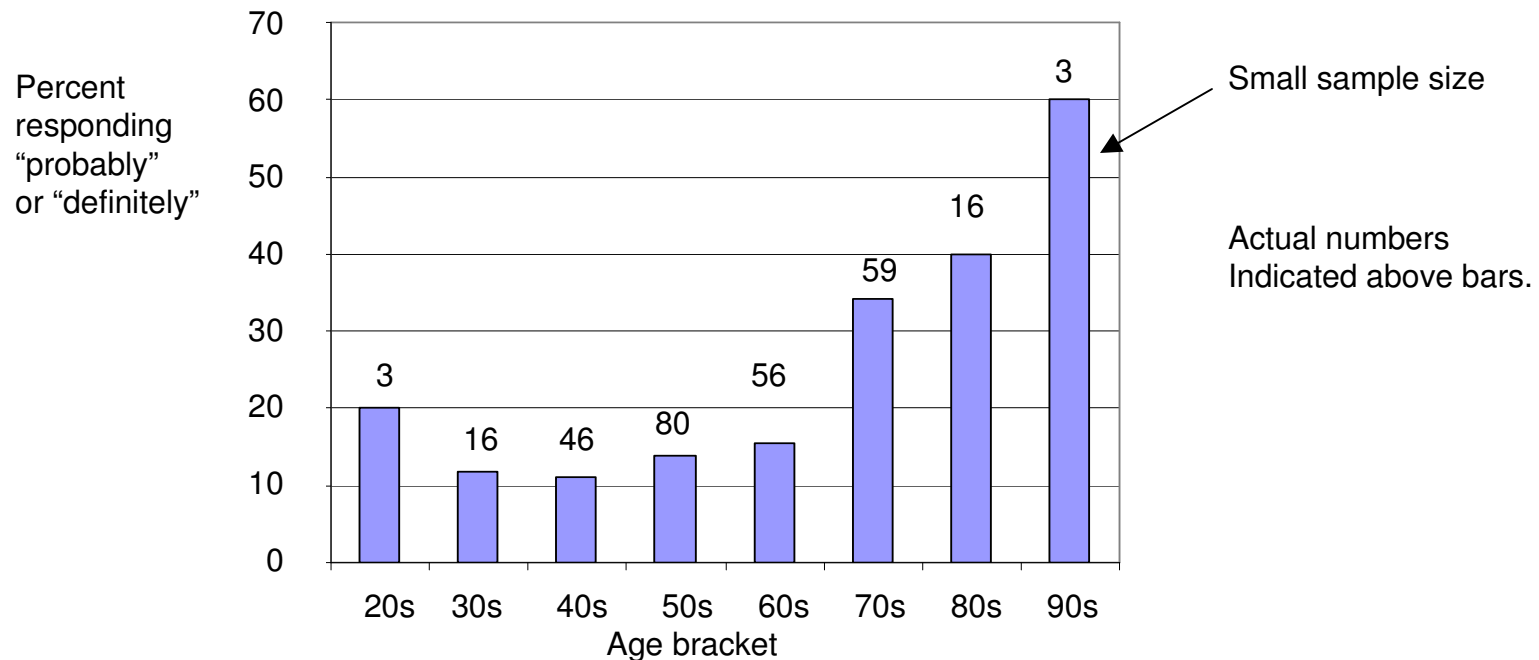
**Again, perceived importance varied significantly with age, with elders perceiving 3 to 4 times more importance than younger respondents.**

# **Area hospitals meet our needs**

- **86% of respondents felt area hospitals met their healthcare needs for in-patient services.**
  - 4% felt they did “not at all.”
- **There were no significant variations with age, income or family size.**
- **More of those who have lived here a long time felt that way.**
  - 91% of those who have lived here over 30 years
  - 83% of those who have lived here under 20 years

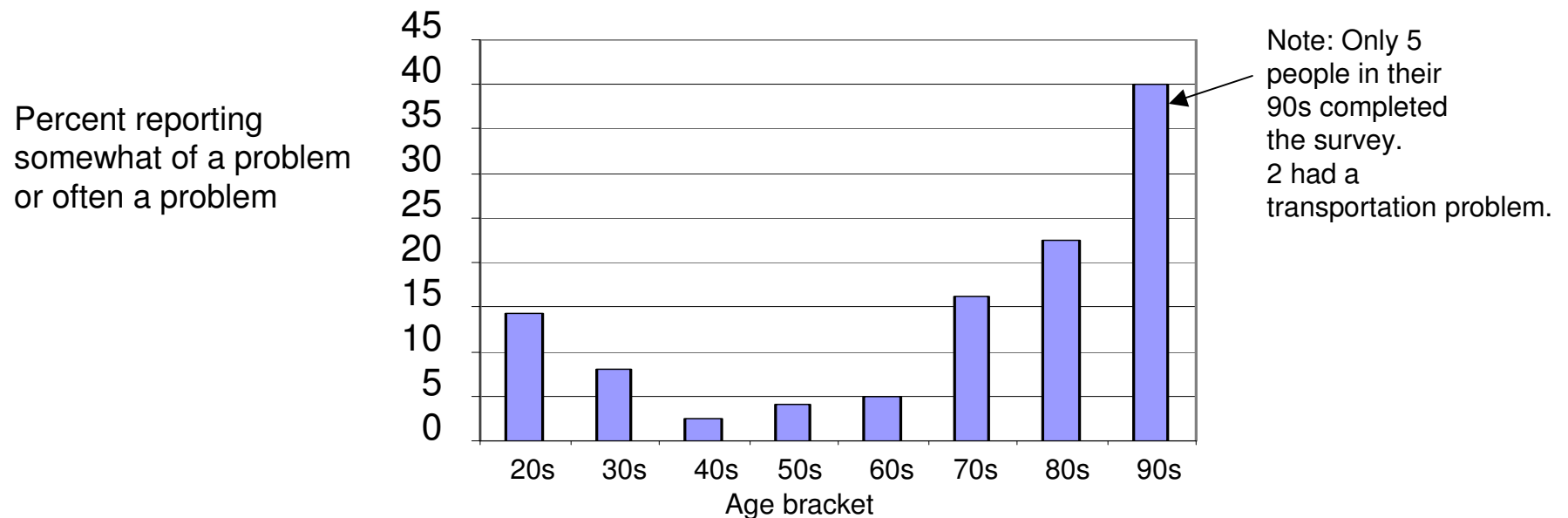
# Town-provided services

- When asked, “If available, would you use the services of a town nurse or social worker?”, 16% of respondents said “probably” (226) or “definitely” (50).
- Demand increased with age.



# Getting to medical appointments

- For 6% (106 people), getting transportation to doctors, hospitals, and clinics is “somewhat of a problem” or “often a problem.”
- That percentage increases with age.



# Fitness and recreation

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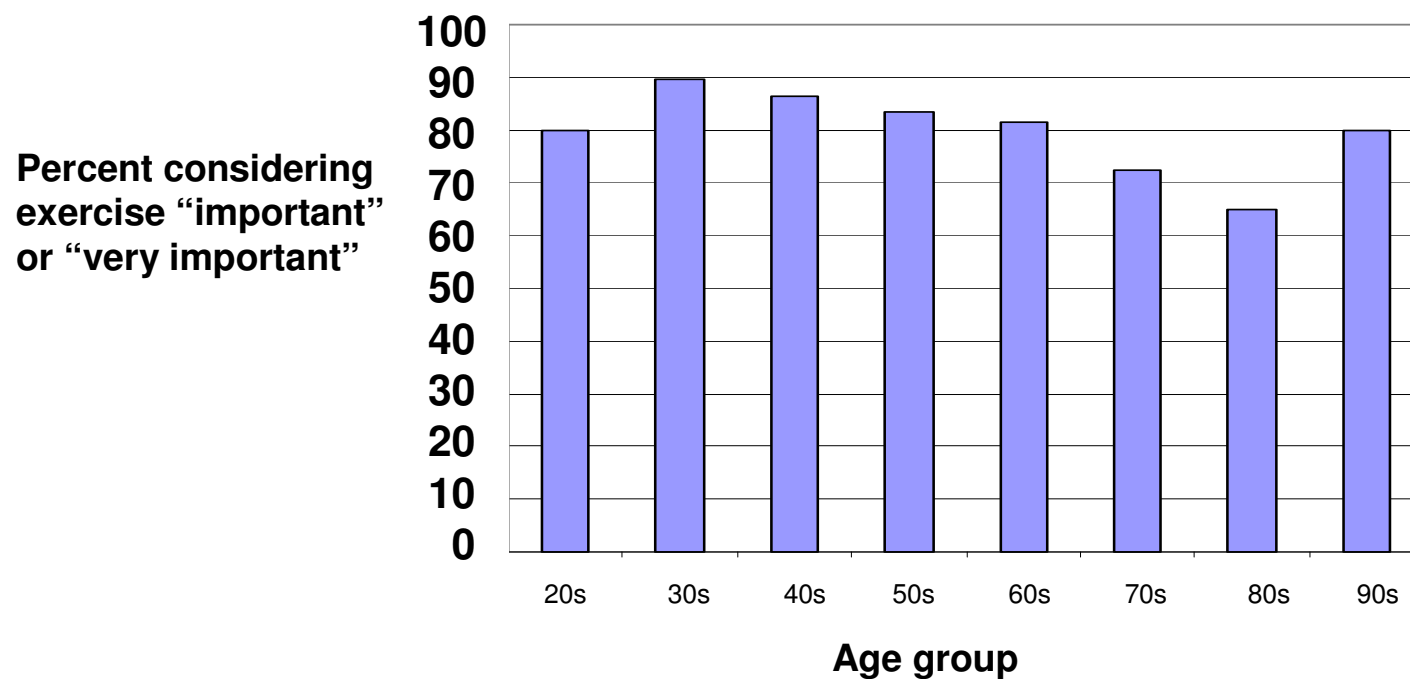
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# **Fitness and recreation highlights**

- **We exercise often, but mainly by ourselves.**
- **Many use the town trails and pathways.**
- **Many respondents would welcome more group activities.**

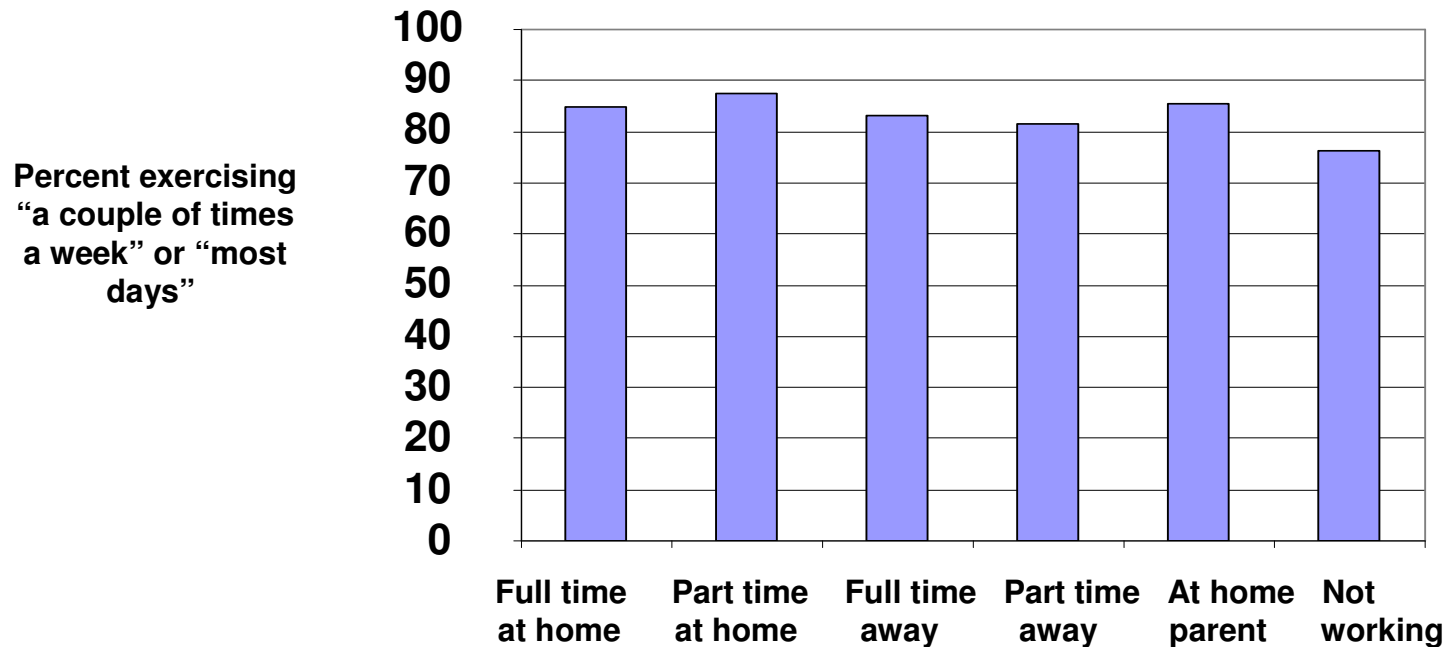
# We appreciate the value of exercise

- Overall, 83% consider exercise to be “important” or “very important” to their quality of life.
- This consideration declines slightly with age.



# We exercise often

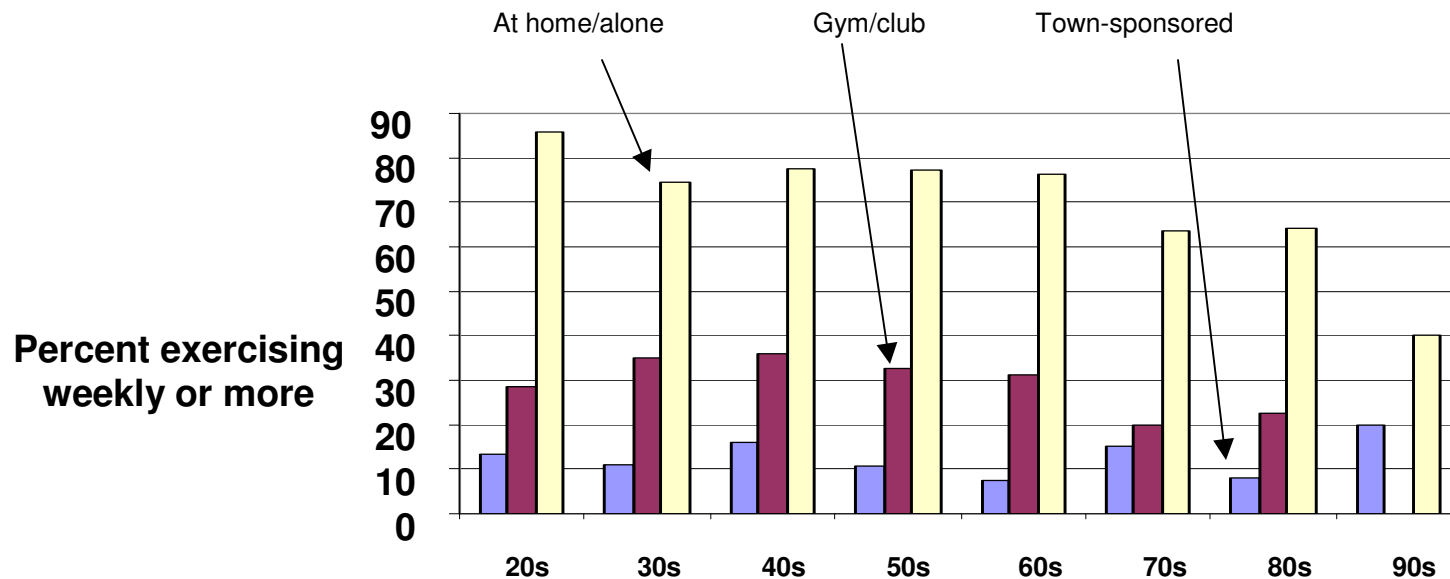
- 75% of us exercise a couple of times a week or more, with 40% exercising most days.
- Varies slightly with working status





# Frequency of exercise

- We exercise mostly by ourselves.
  - Slightly less as we age



- **38%** of respondents belong to health clubs.
- **70%** use town trails and pathways “sometimes” or “often.”

# Would we exercise more if more classes or activities were available?

- Interest groups (walking, biking) 32% say they would
  - T'ai Chi, yoga, pilates 28% say they would
  - Exercise equipment 26% say they would
  - Active (group) sports 17% say they would
  - Family fitness programs 15% say they would
- 
- Lack of transportation limits only 2% of respondents.

# Socialization

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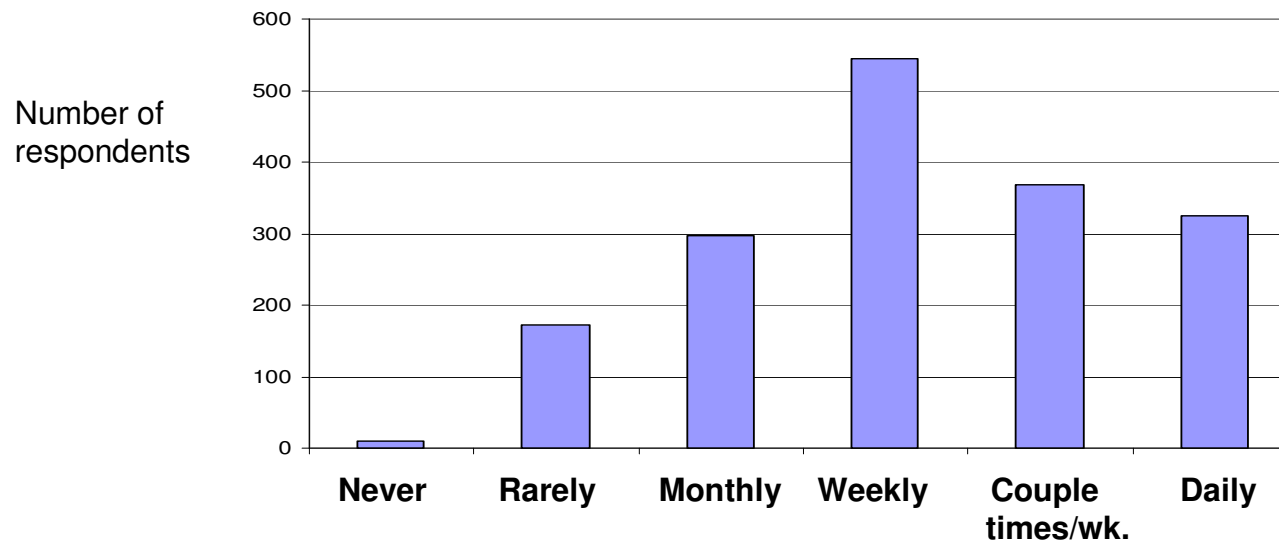
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# Socialization highlights

- **Most respondents (72%) socialize weekly or more often. Ten never socialize.**
- **Residents believe there are ample opportunities for socialization.**
  - 43% listed “some” and 27% listed “plenty” (70% altogether).
  - Only 5% (about 90 people) said there were “no opportunities”.
- **Opportunities increase with age:**
  - Few in their 20s felt adequate opportunity to socialize with their own age group.
  - Over 80% of those over 60 did.
  - Even 80% of those over 90 felt adequate opportunity to socialize with other (presumably younger) age groups.
- **Generally, people felt they had greater opportunity to socialize within their own age group (78% vs. 66%).**
  - Except for those in their 20s and those in their 90s (for obvious reasons)
- **Those voting frequently in town elections felt there were greater opportunities.**
- **Generally, wealthier families felt fewer opportunities ( by ~ 10%).**
- **Opportunities were felt to be greater by those who have lived longer in Carlisle, and by those in smaller households (1 or 2).**

# Socializing frequency

- Respondents were asked how often they socialized with others. Choices were: never, rarely, monthly, weekly, a couple of times a week, and daily.

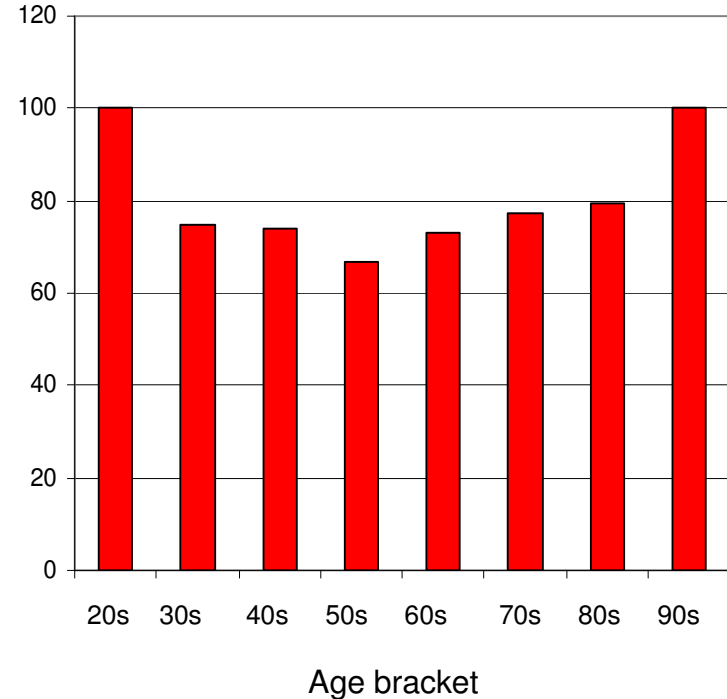


**72% socialize weekly or more frequently.  
Ten respondents (0.6%) never socialize.  
(ages 30 to 80)**

# Socializing frequency by age

- Only 67% of those in their 50s socialize weekly or more frequently (presumably because they're busy working).
- All of those in their 20s and all of those in their 90s do so.
- Those at home part or all of the time are more likely to do so than those who work full-time. (85% vs 65%)

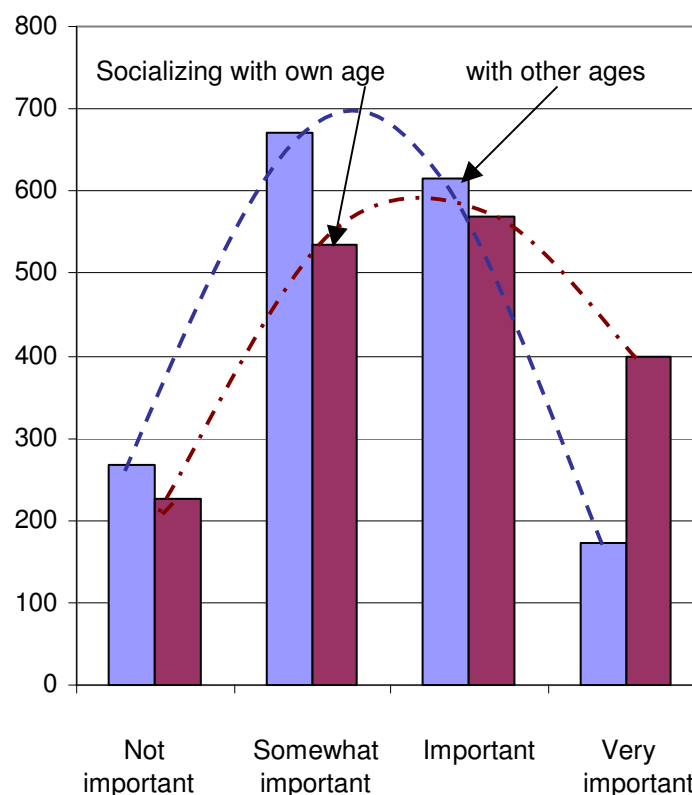
Percentage of people who socialize weekly or more often



# Importance of socializing

**Socializing with one's own age group was felt to be more important than socializing with other age groups.**

- 46% of respondents felt that socializing with other age groups was important or very important, compared with 56% for same age group.
- 23% felt socializing with their own age group to be very important, compared with 10% for other age groups.
- In general, more older people felt it important or very important to socialize with other age groups (55% of people in their 70s, compared to 39% of those in their 30s).
- More people who vote often in town elections felt it important or very important.
- More people who have lived in town longer felt so (likely correlated with age).



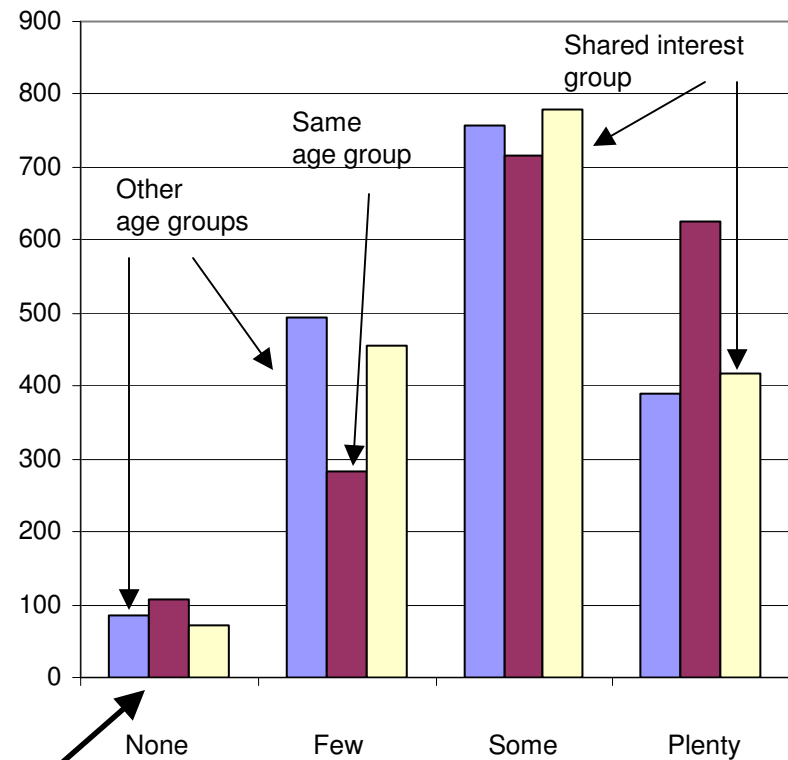
# Opportunities for meeting others

- In other age groups
- In your age group
- With shared interests

This chart shows numbers of responses to three questions:  
 How many opportunities do you have to meet/interact with:

- People in other age groups
- Others in your age group
- People who share your interests

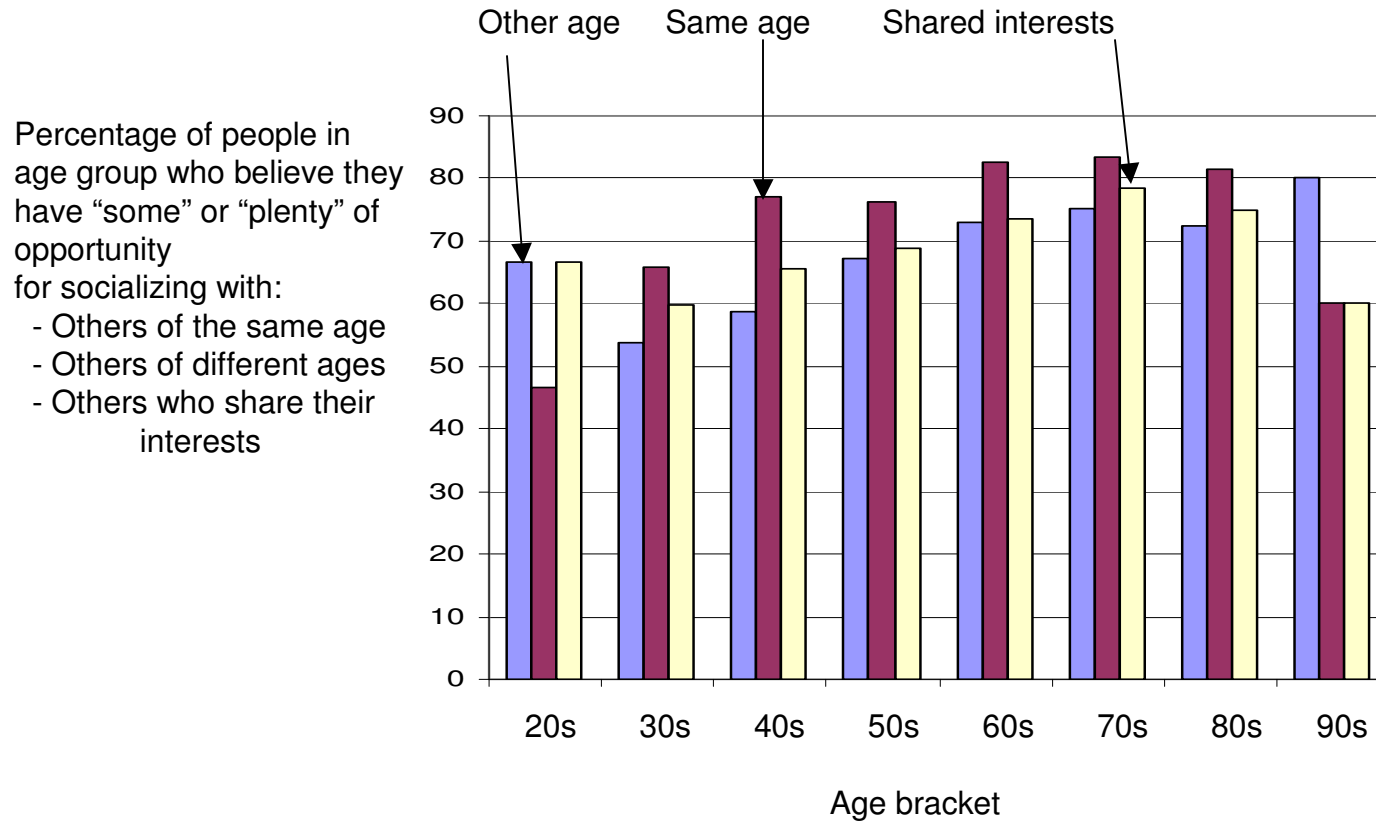
66% of respondents felt there were adequate (some or plenty) opportunities for socializing with other age groups.  
 ...as opposed to 78% who felt adequate opportunity for socializing with their own age group.  
 ...and 69% who felt adequate opportunity for socializing with others sharing common interests.  
 People who socialize “plenty” do so with their own age group.



Note there are about 90 residents who feel they have no socialization opportunities.



# Perceived opportunities for socialization by age group



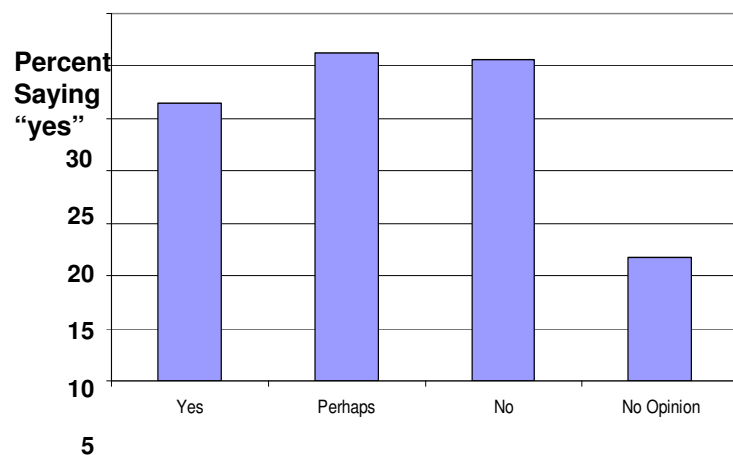
# Need for more venues

- **Strong support is not apparent for additional venues for either socialization or recreation.**
  - **33% of the overall population that had an opinion said an additional venue for socialization was needed.**
    - **44% of those working part-time at home said that (highest)**
    - **23% of those in their 70s said it (lowest)**
  - **30% of the overall population that had an opinion said an additional venue for recreation was needed.**
    - **47% of those in their 30s said that (highest)**
    - **16% of those in their 70s (and small families) said it (lowest)**

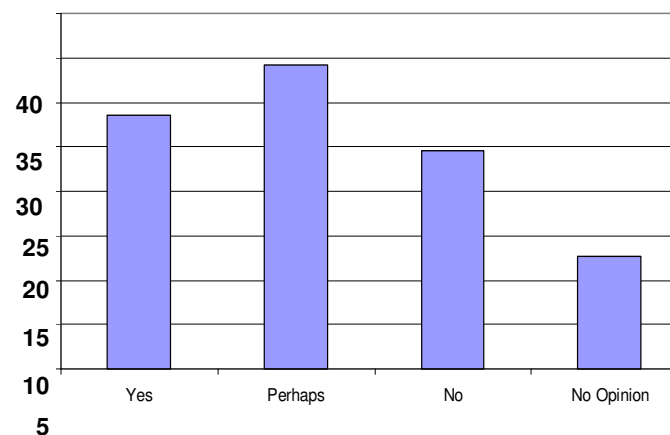
# Venues

- Participants were asked “Do we need more venues in town for a) recreation?, b) socialization?”
- Choices were: Yes, Perhaps, No, No Opinion
- Overall, there was **no strong support** for either (also **no strong opposition**)
  - Most respondents said “perhaps”.
  - Support level varied somewhat among different sub-populations

Overall - Recreation



Overall - Socialization



# Housing

Survey Index

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# Housing highlights

- 83% were satisfied or very satisfied with their current housing situation.
- 41% felt the town should have more housing options.

**Participants were asked whether more housing options would impact their decision to stay in town longer.**

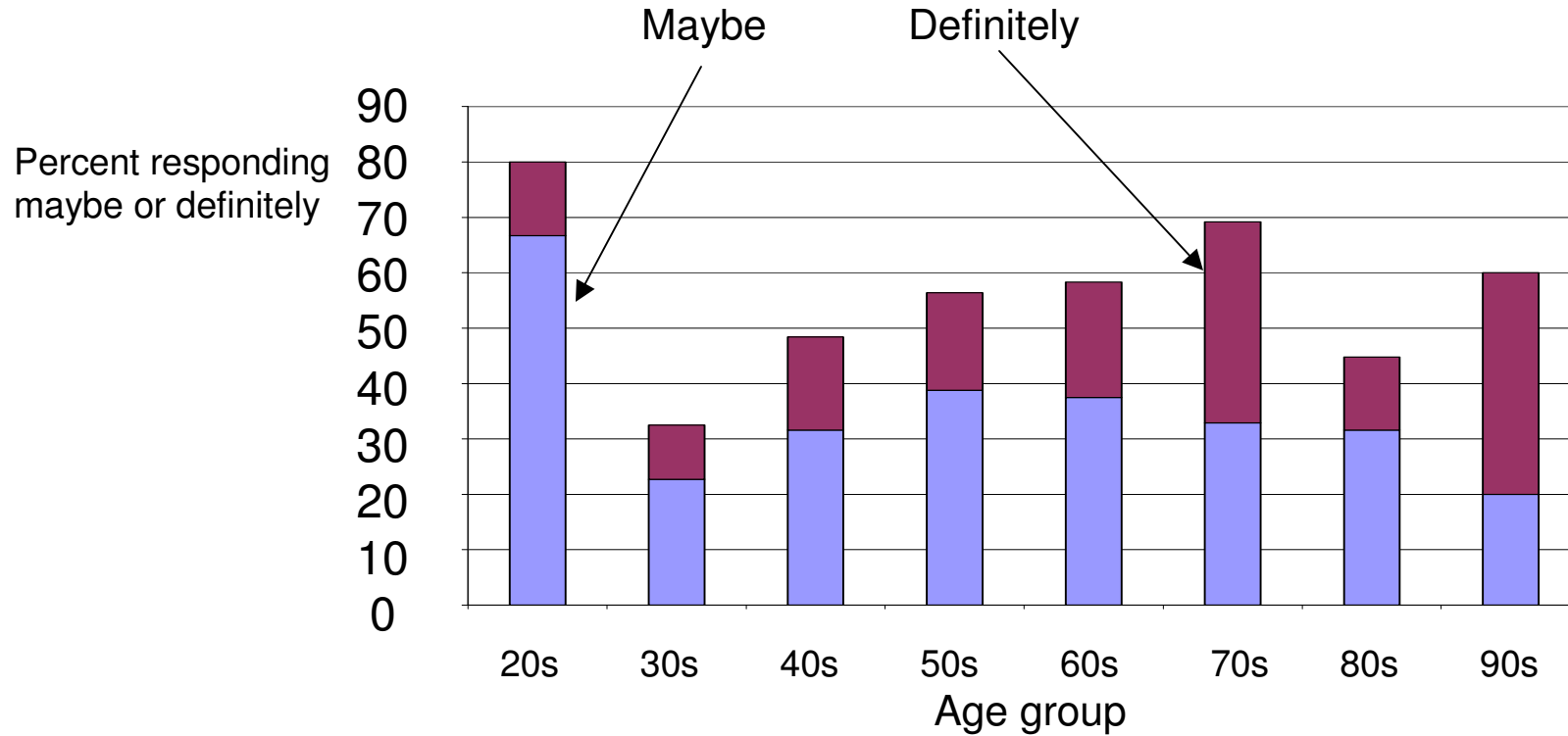
- 53% stated availability of small private residences would. \*
- 46 % stated condos or apartments would. \*  
(\*Maybe or definitely)

# Stay if....

- “Would the availability of housing options impact your decision to stay in town longer?”
  - By age group in Carlisle
  - Shifting demand for more options as we age

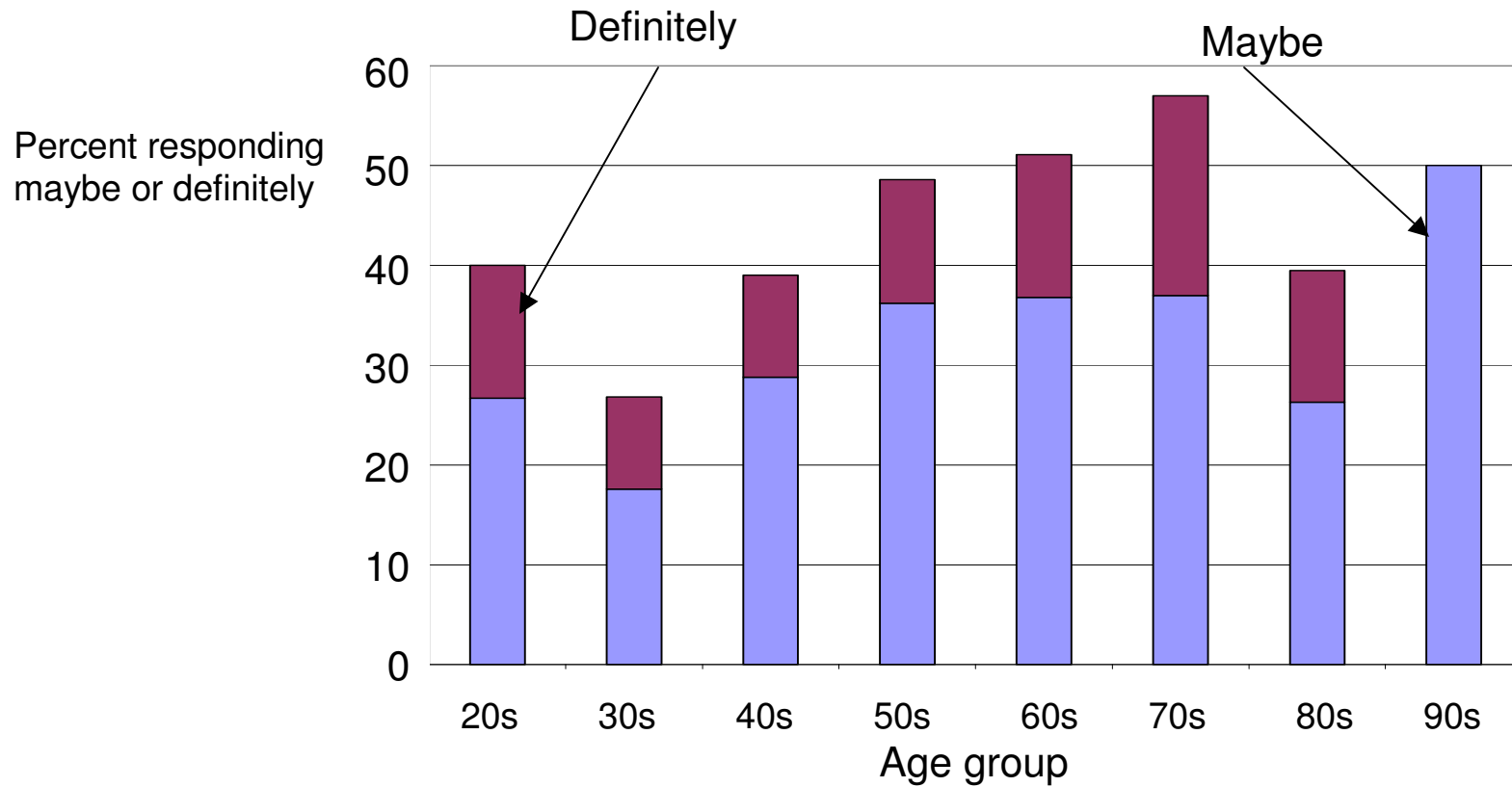
# Stay if...smaller houses

Percent positive: small private houses



# Stay if...apartments/condos

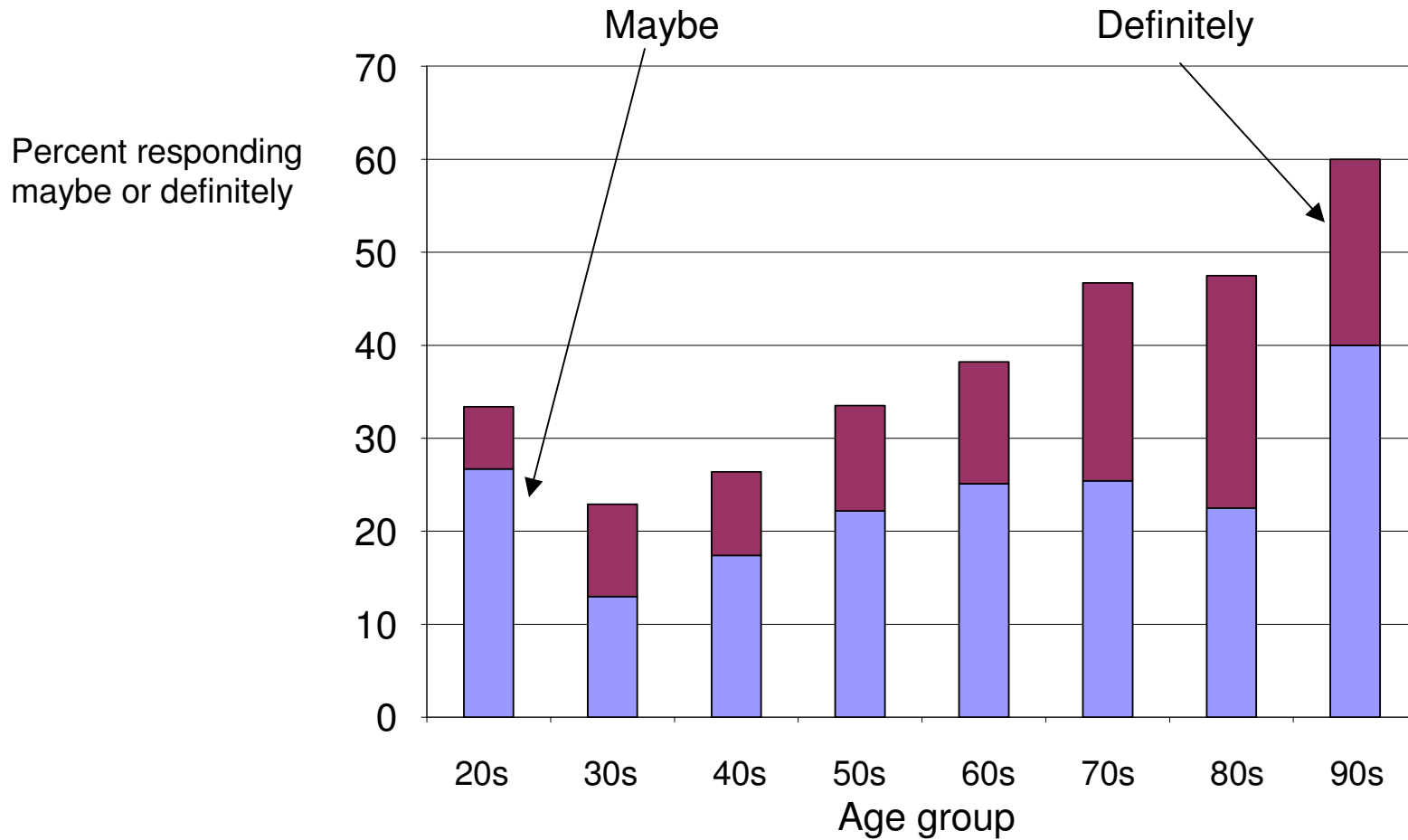
Percent positive: apartments/condos



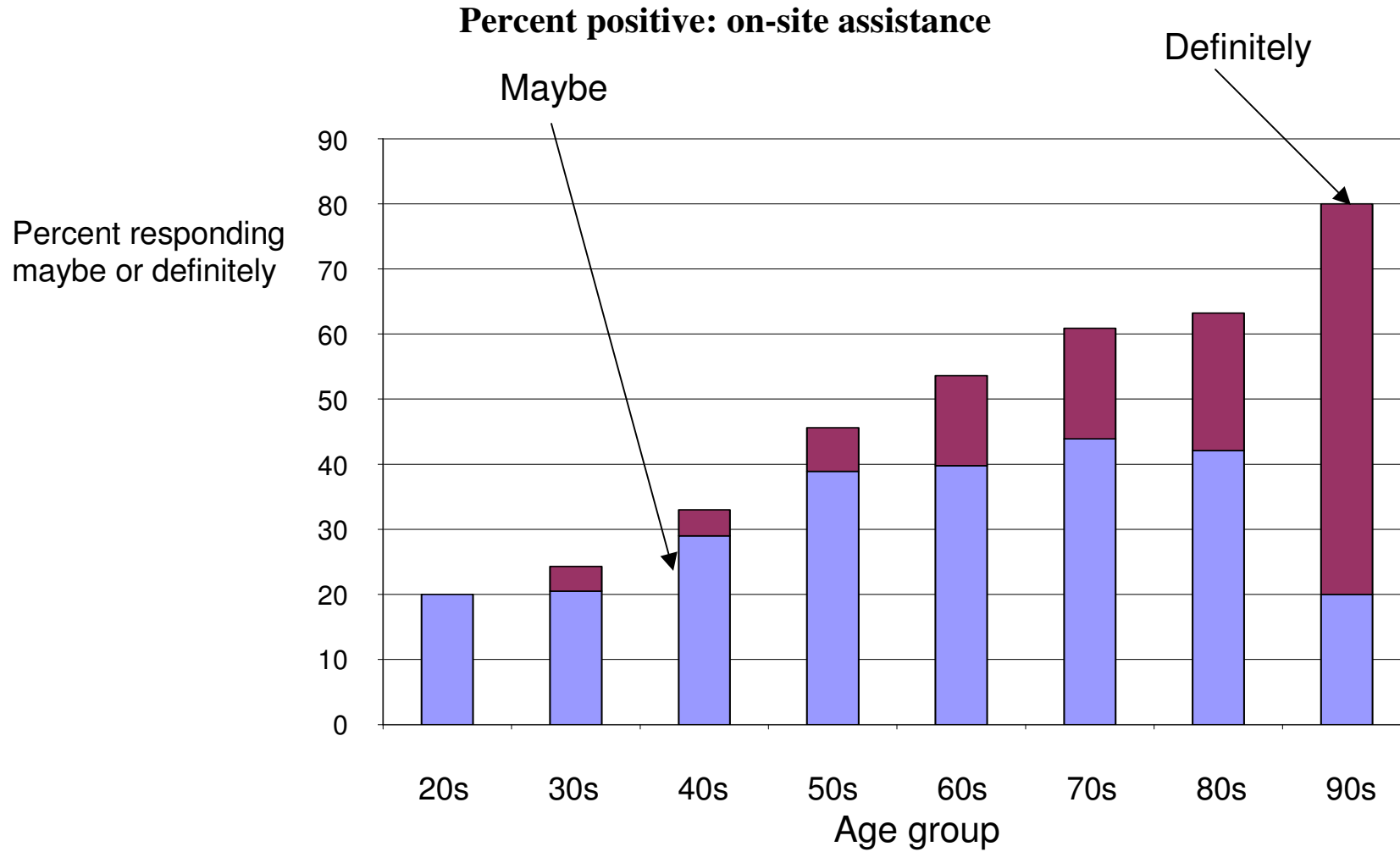


# Stay if...affordable housing

Percent positive: affordable housing



# Stay if...on-site assistance

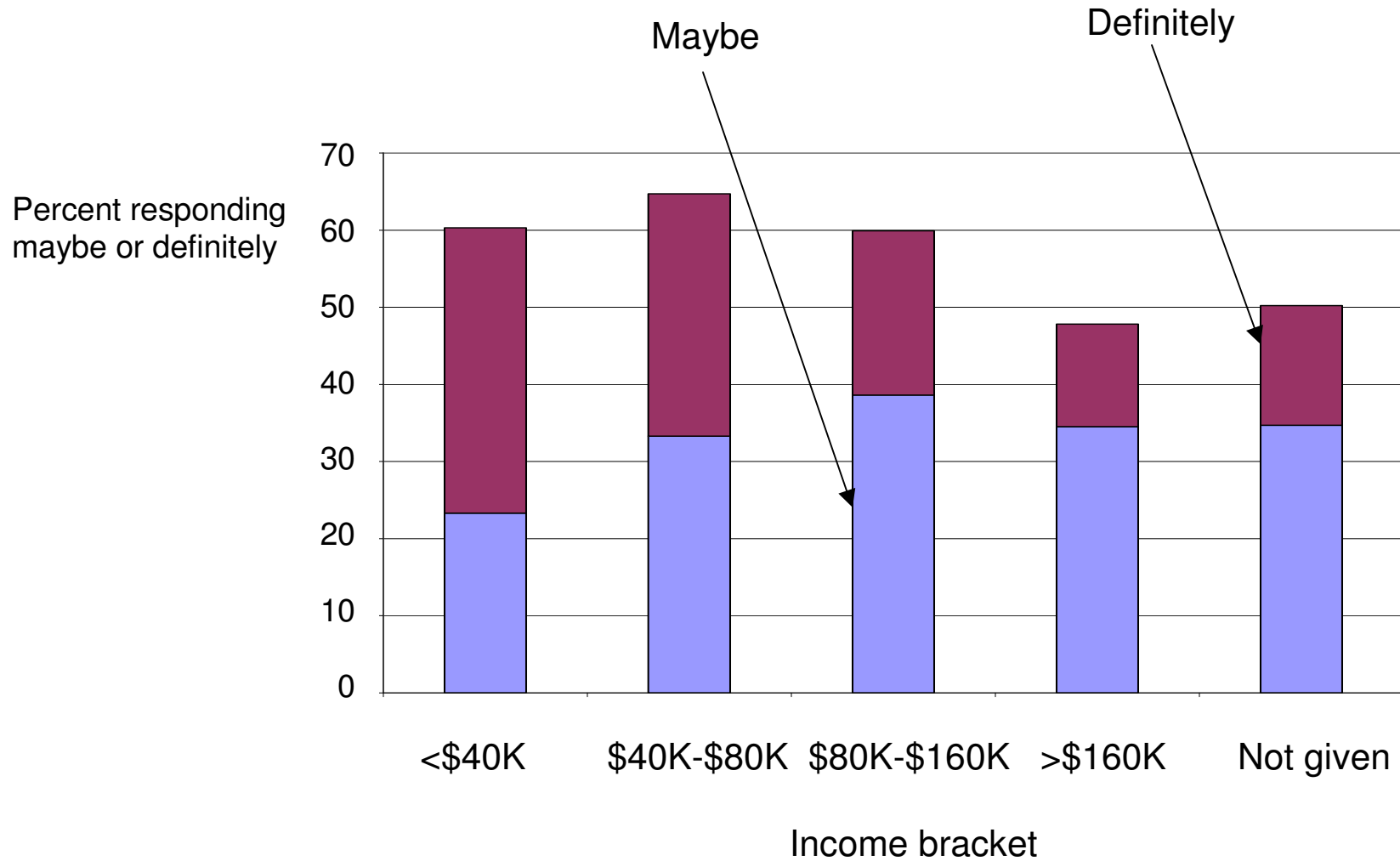


# Stay if....

- “Would the availability of housing options impact your decision to stay in town longer?”
  - By income group in Carlisle
  - Different demand for housing options by income

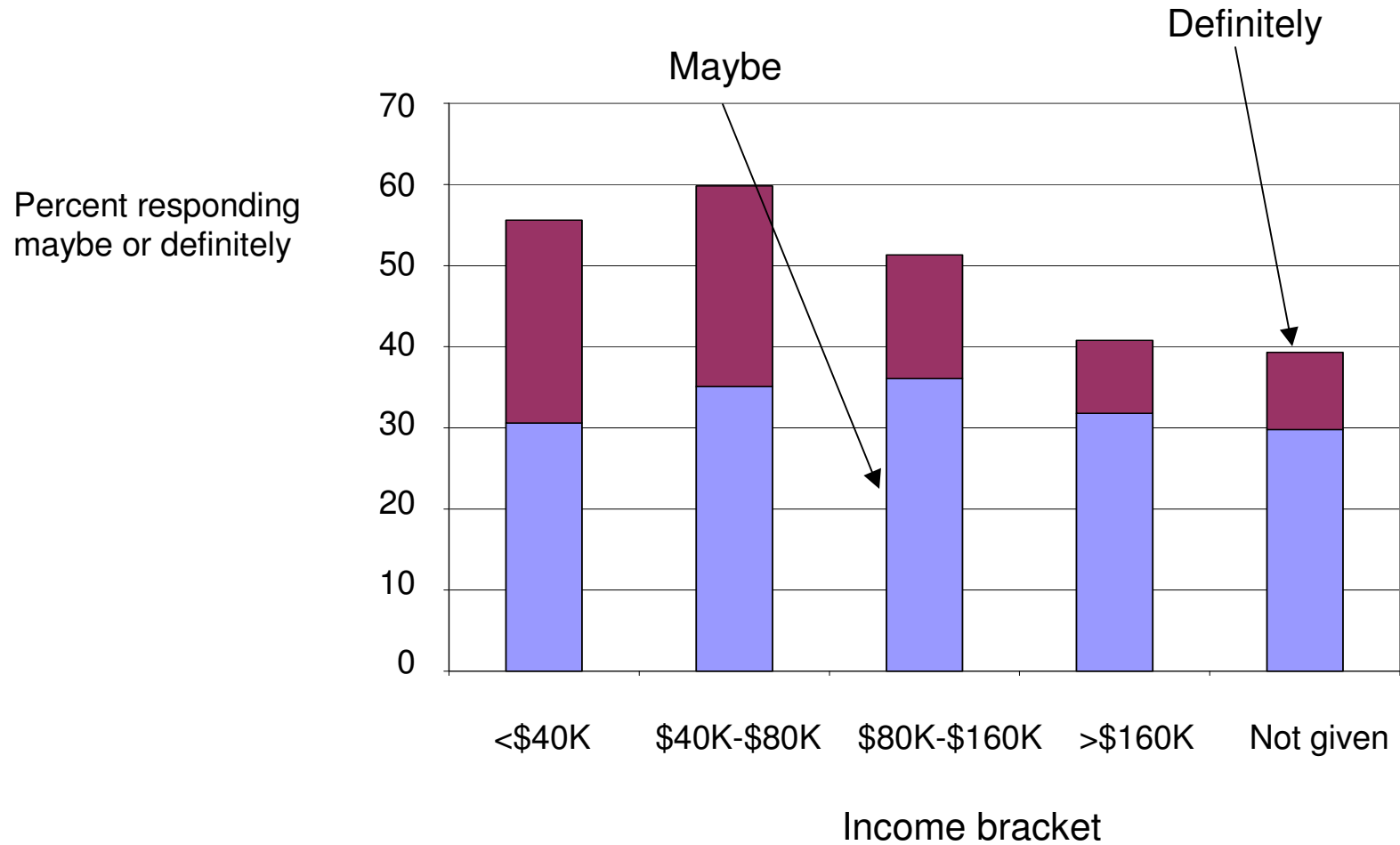
# Stay if...smaller houses

Percent positive: smaller houses

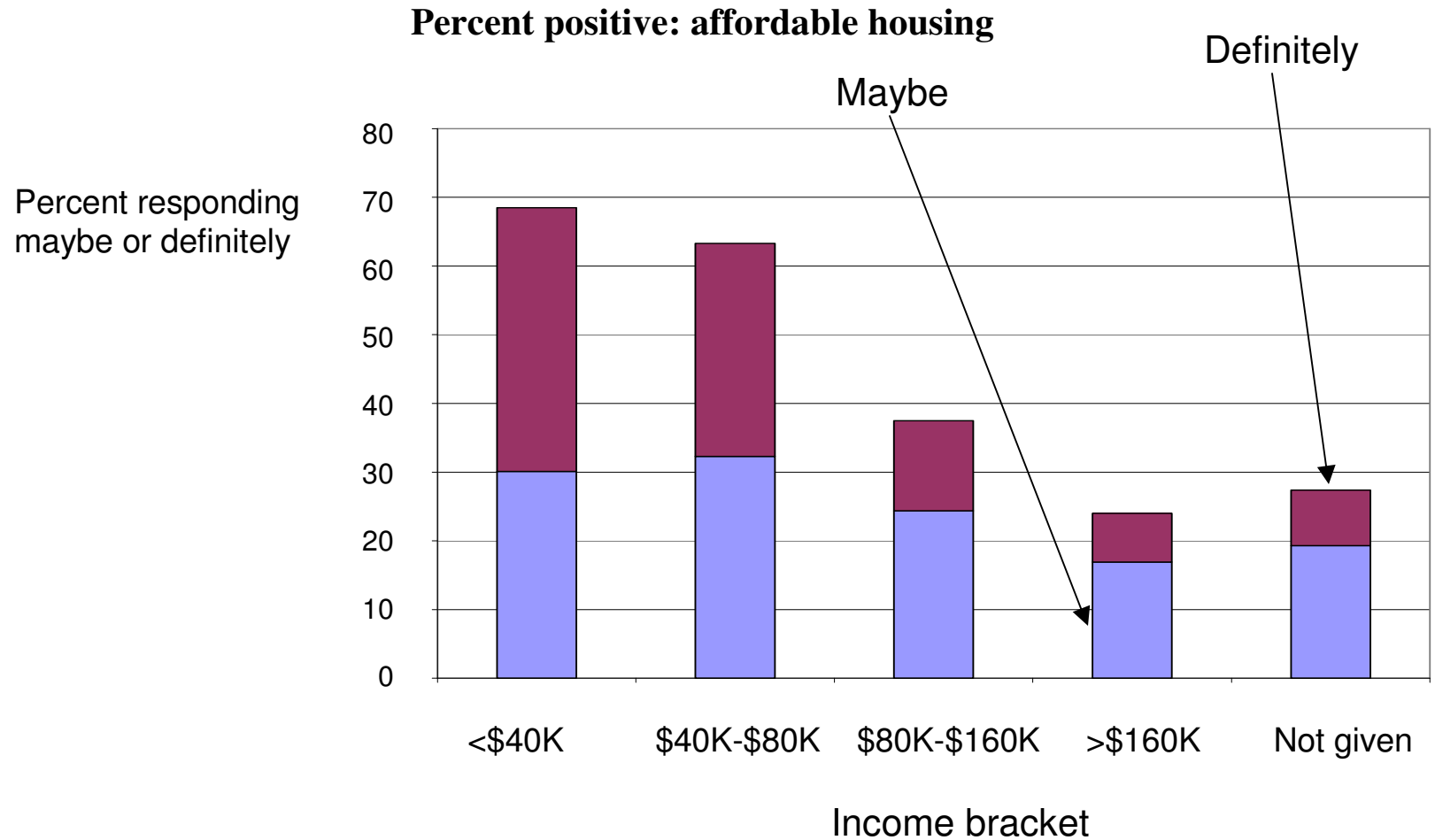


# Stay if...apartments/condos

Percent positive: apartments/condos

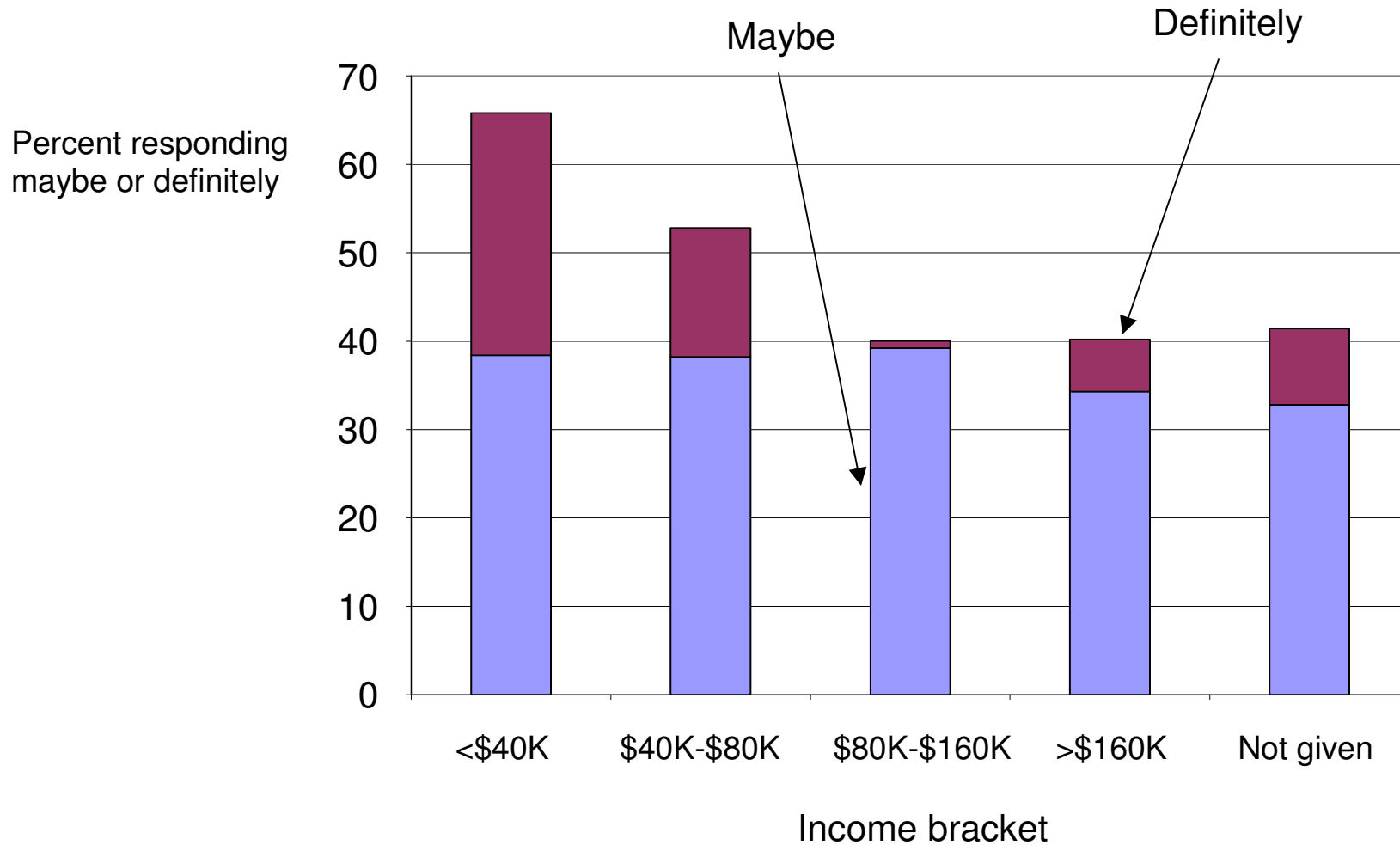


# Stay if...affordable housing



# Stay if...on-site care

Percent positive: on-site care



# Housing needs

- **Life cycle demand for housing in Carlisle: People want more options as they age and their incomes decline.**
- **A significant portion of Carlisle adults want to age in place and stay in town if there were more housing options.**
- **Many would stay in Carlisle if there were smaller houses and apartments / condos or on-site assistance.**



# Future housing options

**There are two large populations in Carlisle who want additional housing options:**

1. Approximately 55% of residents between 50 to 80 years would consider staying in smaller houses or apartments ( 633 survey respondents).
2. Approximately 65% of residents with income under \$80,000 would consider staying in affordable housing units (150 survey respondents).

**There also appears to be strong demand for on-site housing assistance for those over 50: 51% would consider it (586 survey respondents).**

# Transportation

[Survey Index](#)

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# Transportation highlights

- **The survey asked about needs in three areas:**
  - What is your need for transportation to each of the following? (Medical, events, travel, etc.)
  - What types of transportation service are needed? (door to door, curb to curb, fixed route)
  - Would you use public transportation if available?
- **The responses indicated that:**
  - There is very little difference in need for transportation in terms of why the transportation is needed, except for “get out of town” transportation. (e.g. Concord, MBTA, Airport)
  - 1/3 of those surveyed would use some form of public transportation if it were offered & met their needs, with the highest need being for seniors and those with lower incomes. This represents a significant need that is currently unfulfilled.
  - There is very little difference in need depending on the type of transportation being offered (e.g, curb to curb, door to door).

# Transportation needs in Carlisle

We need transportation to ...

Airport	56%
MBTA	56%
Concord	48%
Medical appointments	33%
School & classes	29%
Social visits, shopping, etc	27%
Scheduled events (sports, etc.)	27%

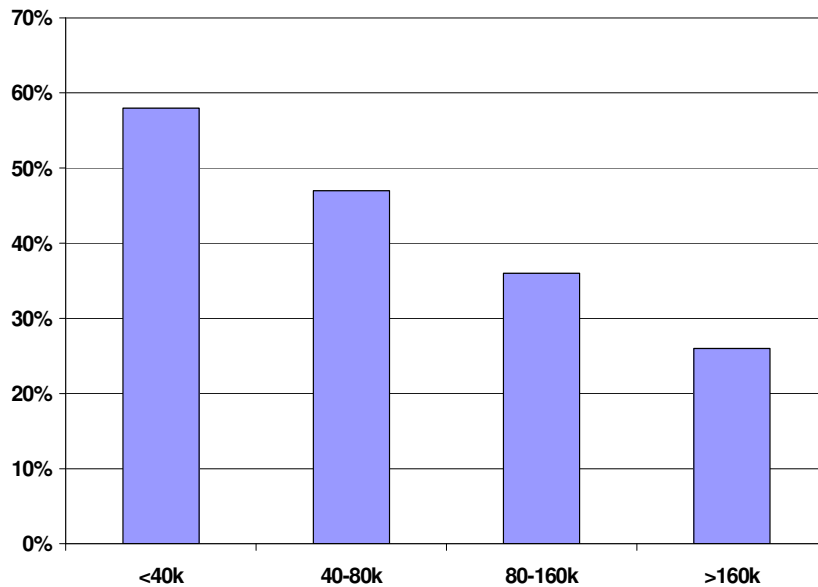
(Percentage of respondents indicating some or great need)

# Need for transportation to medical appointments

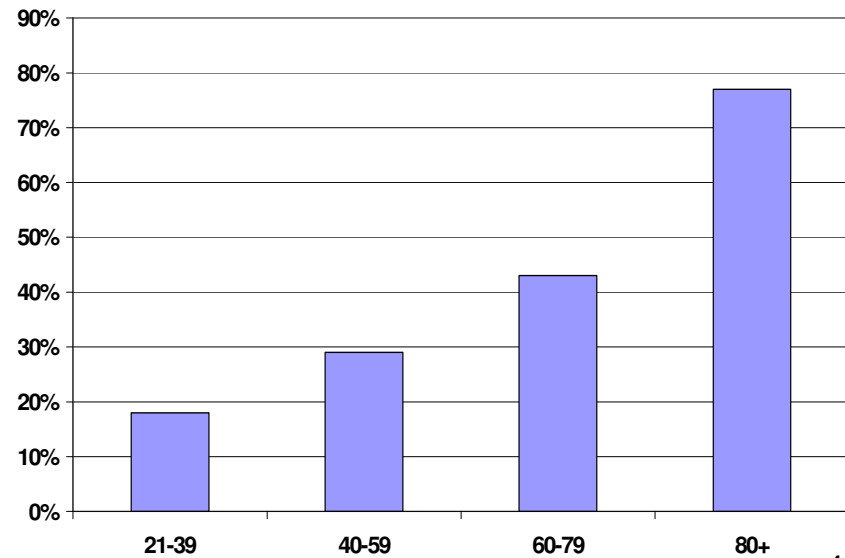
- 8% overall have a great need.
- 56% overall need transportation to medical appointments.
- 75% of those over age 79 need transportation to medical appointments.
- Age has about twice the impact as income (59% vs. 32%)

## Percentage of respondents indicating need:

By family income



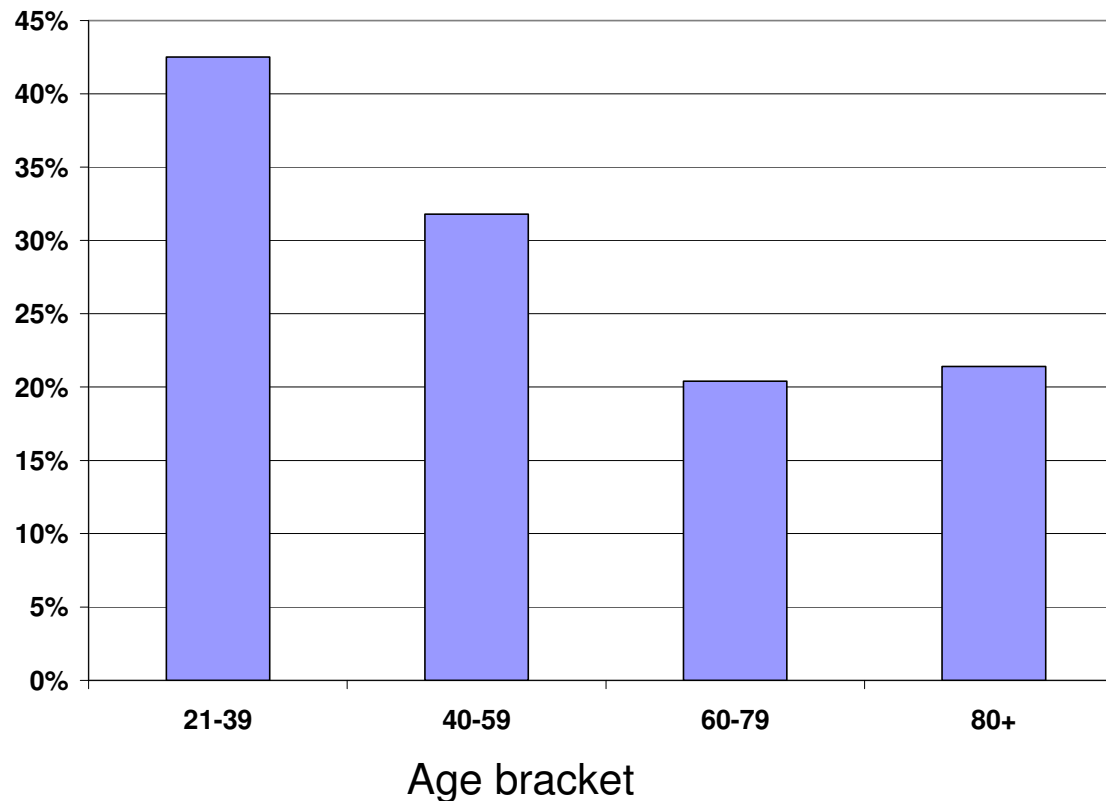
By age



# Need for transportation to school or classes

- 29% of the respondents have some or great need for transportation to school or classes.
- The need for transportation to classes decreased with age, but the total swing from youngest to oldest was just 20 percentage points.

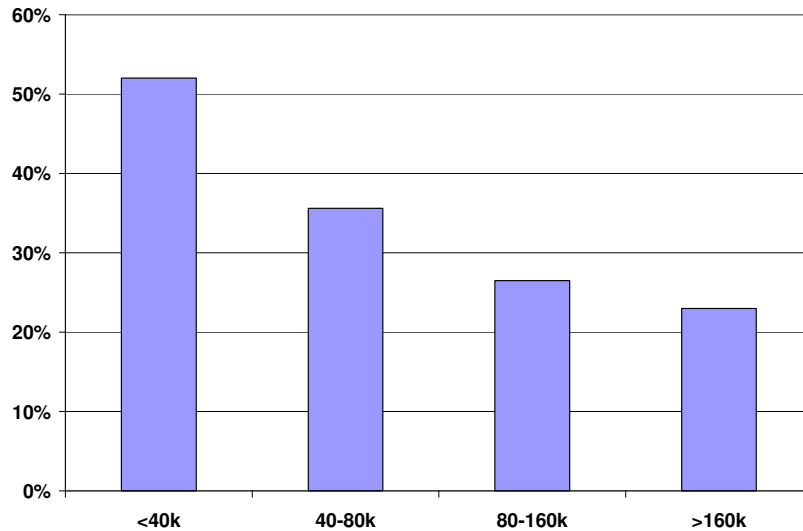
Percentage of those responding indicating some or great need:



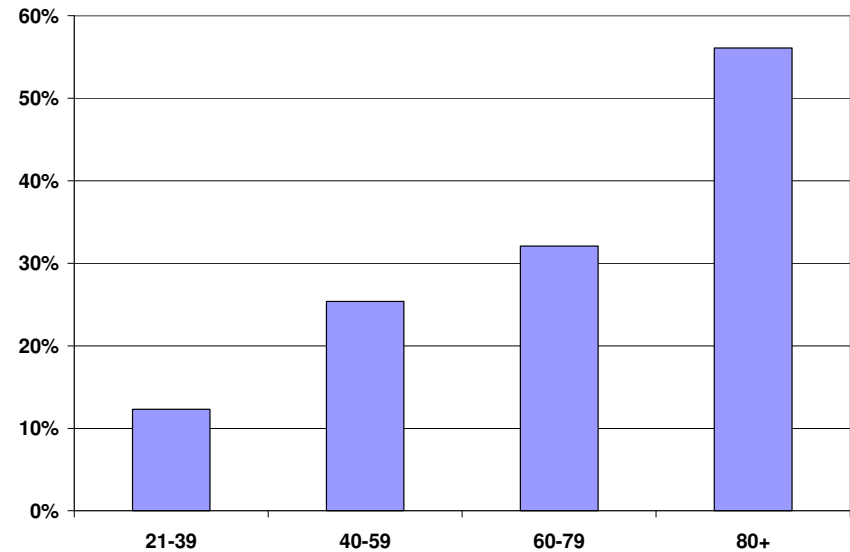
# Need for transportation for social visits, shopping, etc.

- Overall, 27% of the respondents have a need for transportation for social visits, shopping, etc.
- The variation in need by age is significant, with almost 60 percentage points between the youngest and oldest respondents.
- Family income has a less profound influence with a range of 37 points.

## Percentage of respondents indicating some or great need:



By family income

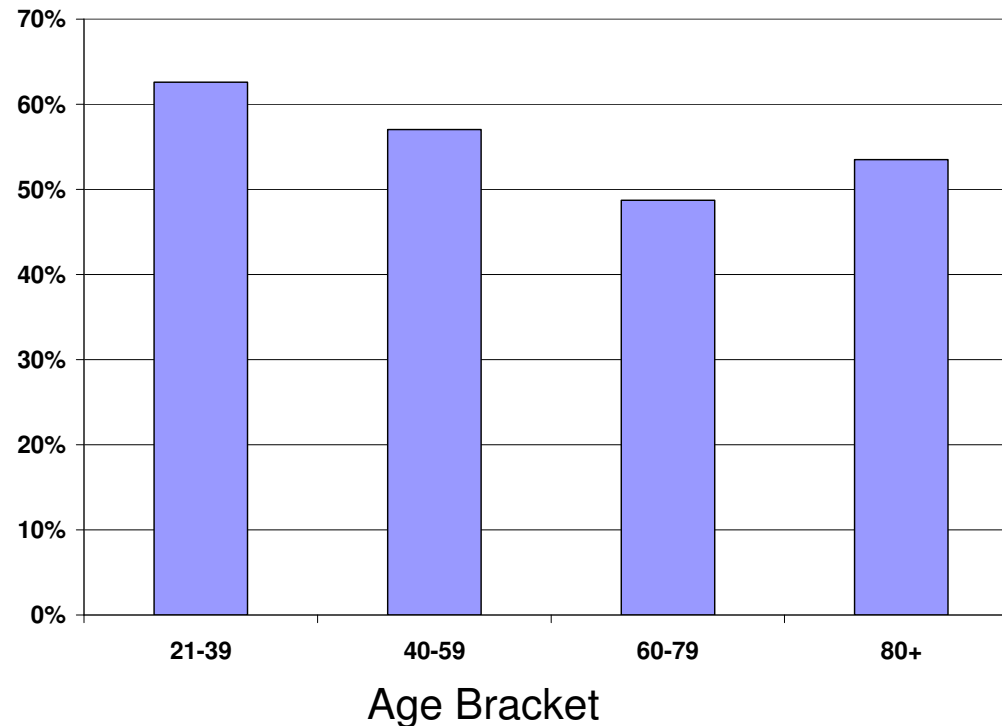


By age group

# Need for transportation to MBTA

- Overall, 56% of respondents have a need for transportation to the MBTA.
- The difference in need between age groups is small at just 11 percentage points.
- There is virtually no difference in need between income groups (56% to 58%).

Percent of respondents indicating some or great need:



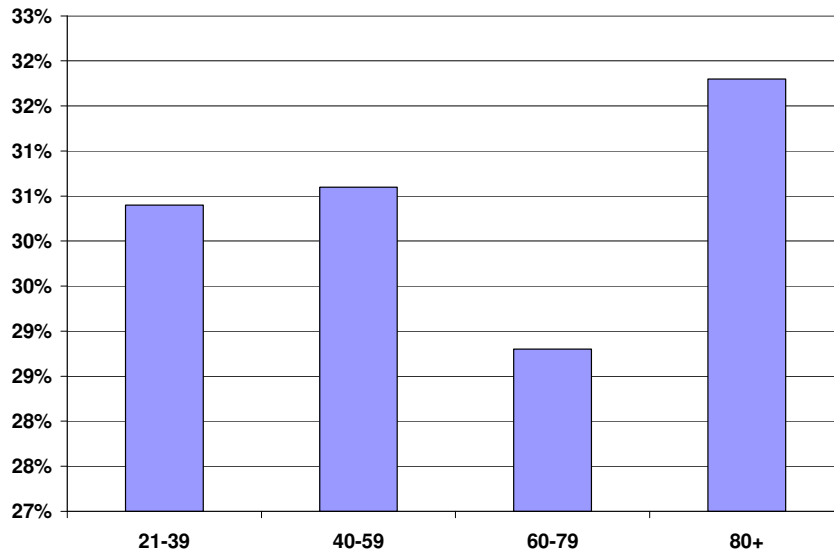


# Need for public transportation

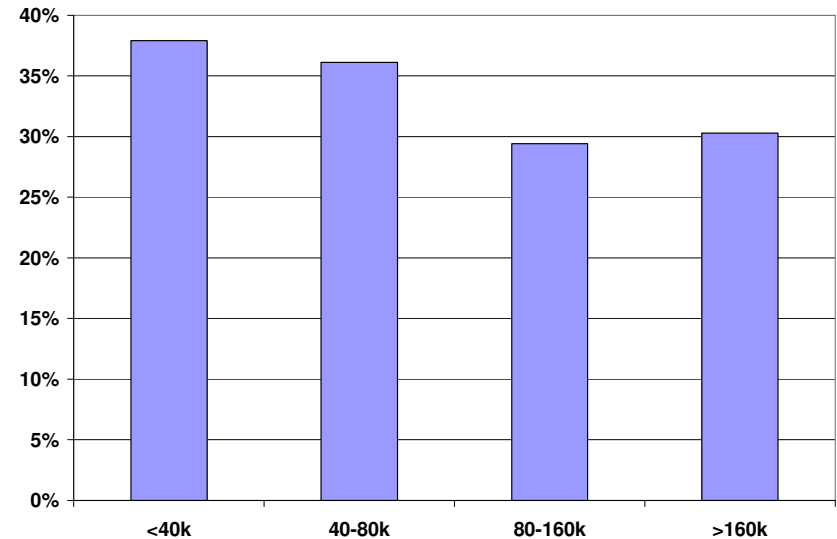
Only 1/3 of the respondents indicated that they would not likely use public transportation, while another 1/3 said they they would be likely or very likely to use it if it met their needs.

The graphs below show that there are very small differences in the responses to this question depending on age or income group! (5% and 10% respectively)

## Percentage of respondents indicating need:



By age



By income

# Need for types of transportation

**There is very little difference in need for transportation based on type.**

Service type	% Some/great need
On-demand	45%
Fixed route	43%
Curb to curb	40%
Special event	35%
Door to door	32%

# Town government and trust

[Survey Index](#)

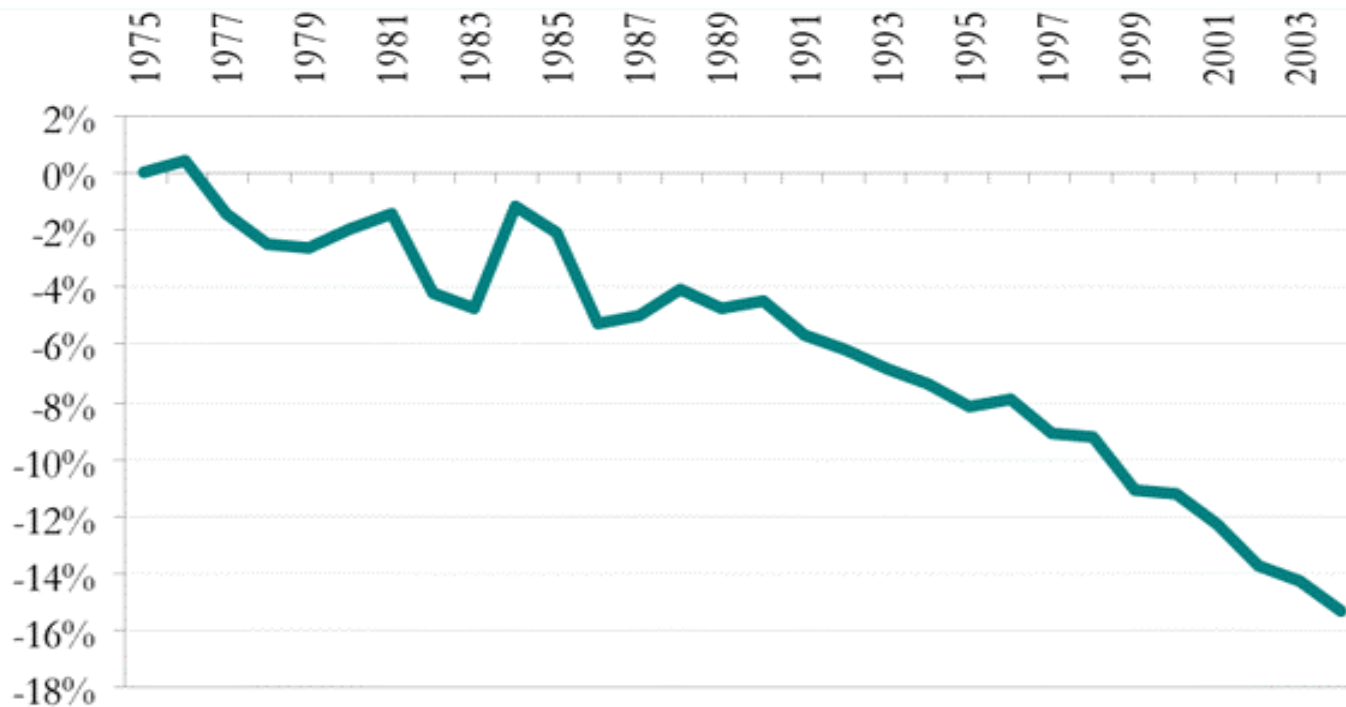
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# Town government and trust

- **There has been a nationwide decline in peoples' trust of others over the past decade.**
  - Carlisle residents have followed the nationwide pattern.
- **We still have a high degree of trust in certain aspects of town government (e.g., the police department).**
  - Far more than in state and national government
  - We're skeptical about the fiscal management abilities and responsiveness of some parts of town government, especially those we're unfamiliar with.
- **We participate in town activities (especially the library) and town government as time allows.**
  - Many are too busy to become more involved in town government.

# Decline in trusting others

- **Nationwide, trust in others has declined since the 1970s.**
  - From over 50% to the mid 30% range
- **Response to the question “Can most people be trusted?”:**



# Current degree of trust in others

- Carlisle response to question: “Would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?”
- The Carlisle Survey question was slightly different: ‘depends’ in the national index was volunteered, not a forced choice.
- Conclusion: Carlisle people are a bit more trusting than the national average.

	People can be trusted	Depends	You can't be too careful	Don't know
Nationwide*	36%	22-30%	38-30%	3%
Carlisle	35%	53%	11%	1%

\*(Pew, NCOC)

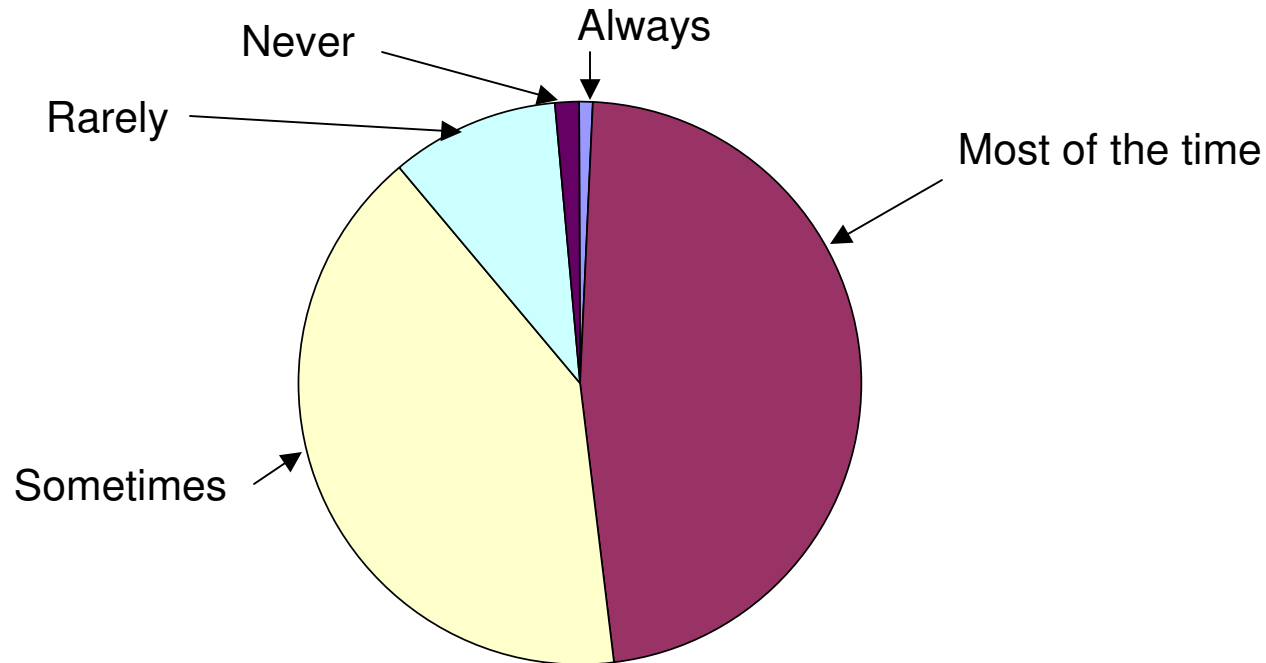
# Carlisle trust in various entities

- Respondents were asked “How much do you trust this group?”  
- Choices: Not at all, Very little, Somewhat, A lot
- Local trust in Carlisle is higher than national averages.
- Nationwide response varies with the size of city / town – smaller towns are more trusting.

<b>Group</b>	<b>% indicating they trust “a lot”</b>	<b>Nationwide</b>
Carlisle police	84%	50 - 60%
People in your neighborhood	64%	40 – 50%
People you do business with	53%	30 – 35%
Town volunteers	44%	Not asked
Town boards and committees	29%	Not asked
National government	7%	5-7%
State government	6%	6-8%

# Trust in the town's ability to spend money wisely

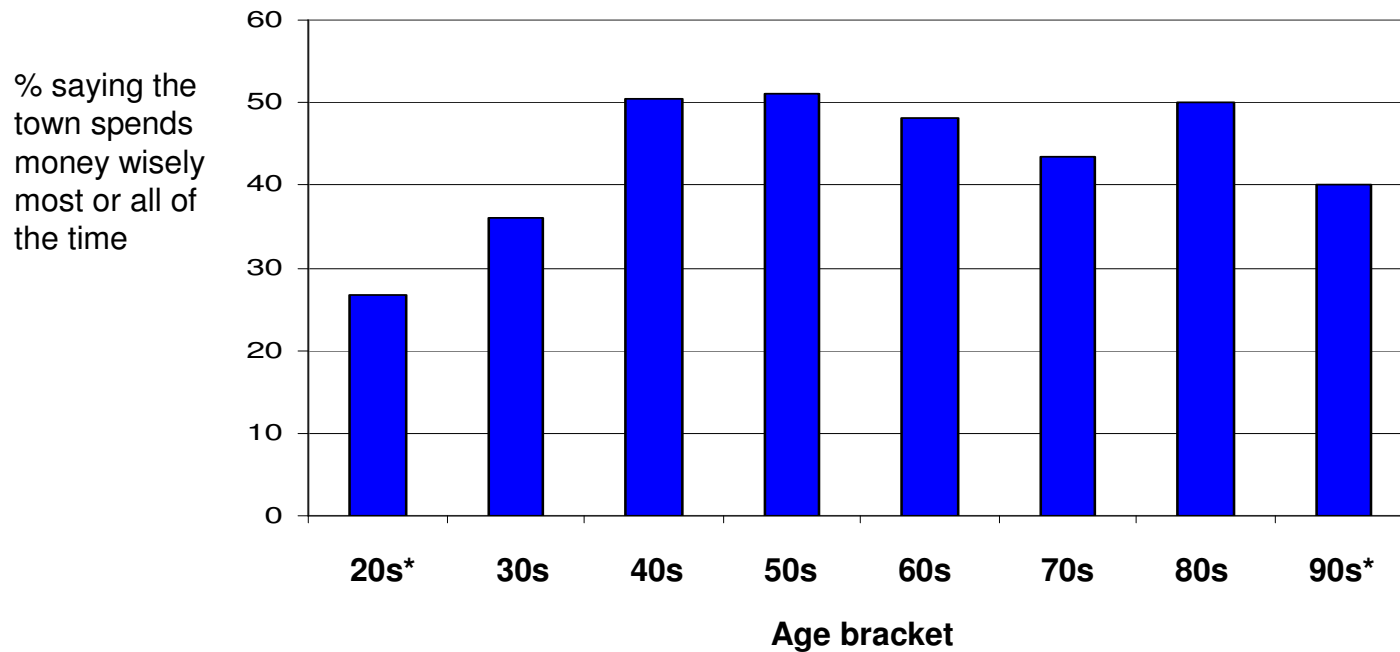
“Do you feel that the town spends money wisely?”





# Trust in the town's spending ability varies somewhat with age

- More higher income bracket families felt that the town spends money wisely most or all of the time than did lower (55% over \$160K; 43% between \$40K and \$80K).
- More families with children at home felt so than those without children (51% vs 45%).



\* Small sample size

# Responsiveness of town boards

- **One question was: “Do you feel the following town boards, departments and committees are responsive to the needs of the community?”**  
 - Choices were: not at all, to a small extent, to some extent, to a great extent, don’t know.

<u>Board/ department</u>	<u>% answering “To a great extent”</u>	<u>% answering “Do not know”</u>
Police	80	8
Fire	78	11
Library	72	11
DPW	52	15
Carlisle Public Schools	37	23
COA	34	50
CCHS	31	32
Recreation	27	37
Other boards & committees	19	49

- **More elders felt the library, fire and police departments, and COA were more responsive. (79% of those in their 70s vs 53% of those in their 30s for the library)**

# “Normalized” opinions on responsiveness

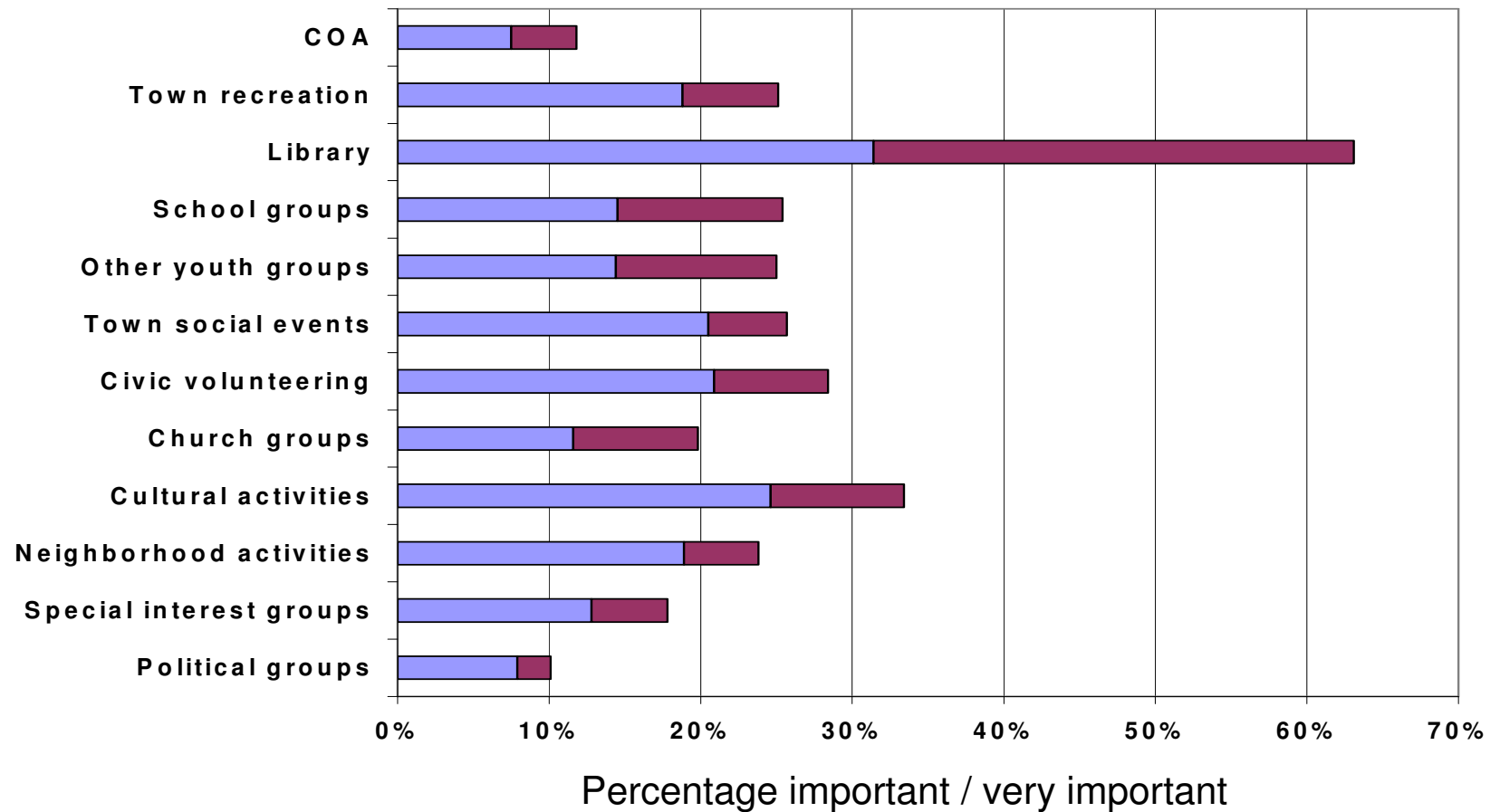
- **The perceived responsiveness of the departments was “normalized” by excluding those who indicated “I don’t know” from the percentage calculations.**

Board/department	Responsiveness excluding, “I don’t know” % who indicated “to a great extent”
Police	87%
Fire	87%
Library	81%
COA	69%
DPW	61%
Carlisle Public Schools	48%
CCHS	46%
Recreation	42%
Other town boards, committees	37%

- **The responsiveness of the COA increased significantly when those unfamiliar with its activities were excluded.**

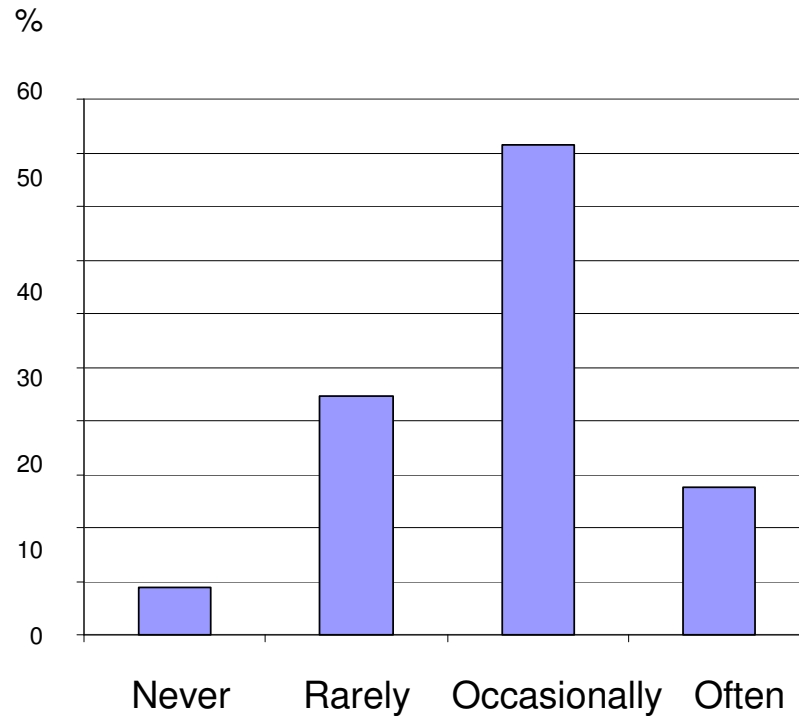
# Importance of participation

“To what extent is participation in the following important to you?”



# Participation in local activities/events

“How often do you participate in any local activities / events?”



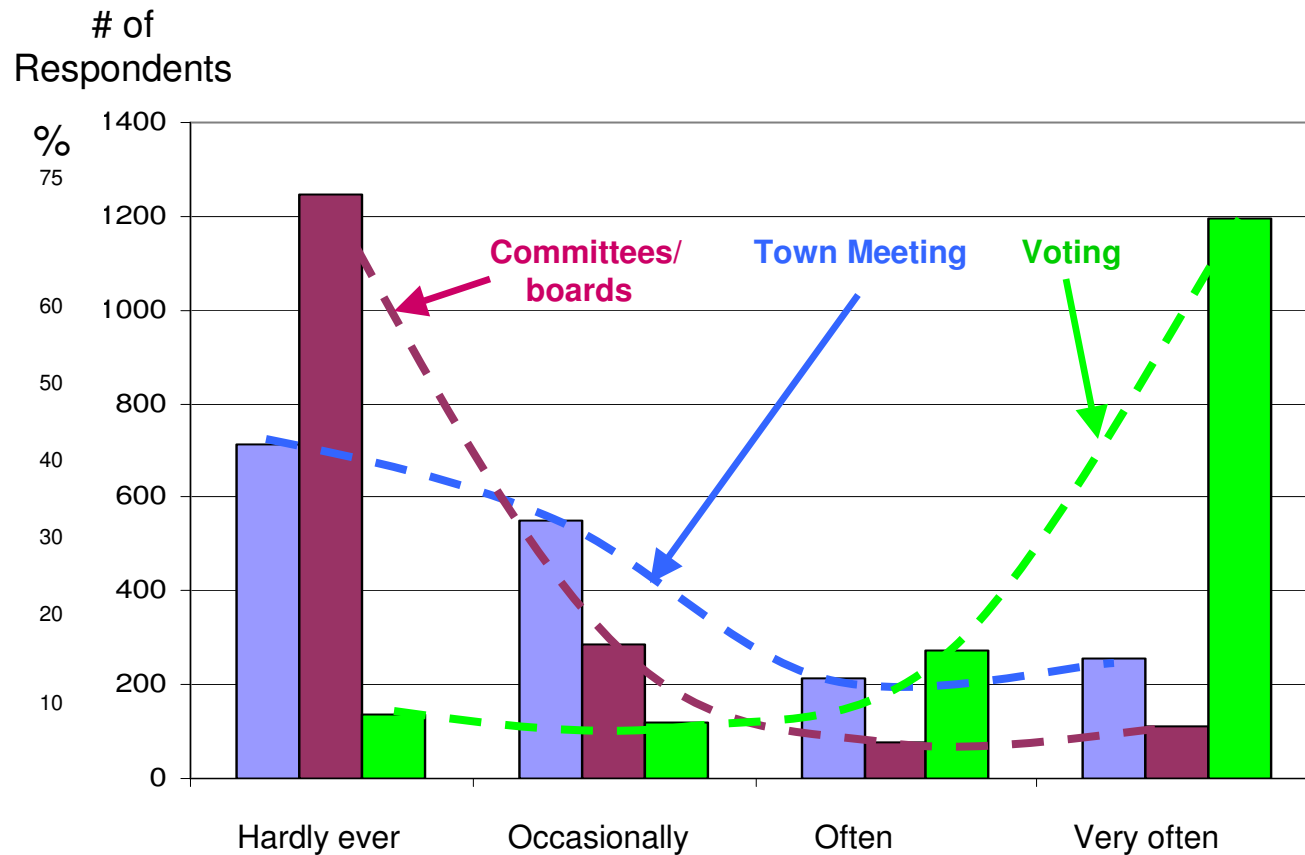
# Why people don't participate more

- **Too busy (61%)**
  - Especially people in their 30s and 40s
- **No interest (27%)**
  - The wealthy and those over 50 had the least interest
- **Groups not welcoming (14%)**
  - At-home parents, people who vote “occasionally”
- **Too shy (8%)**
  - Most saying that were in their 20s
- **Insufficient mobility (2%)**
  - Mostly elders

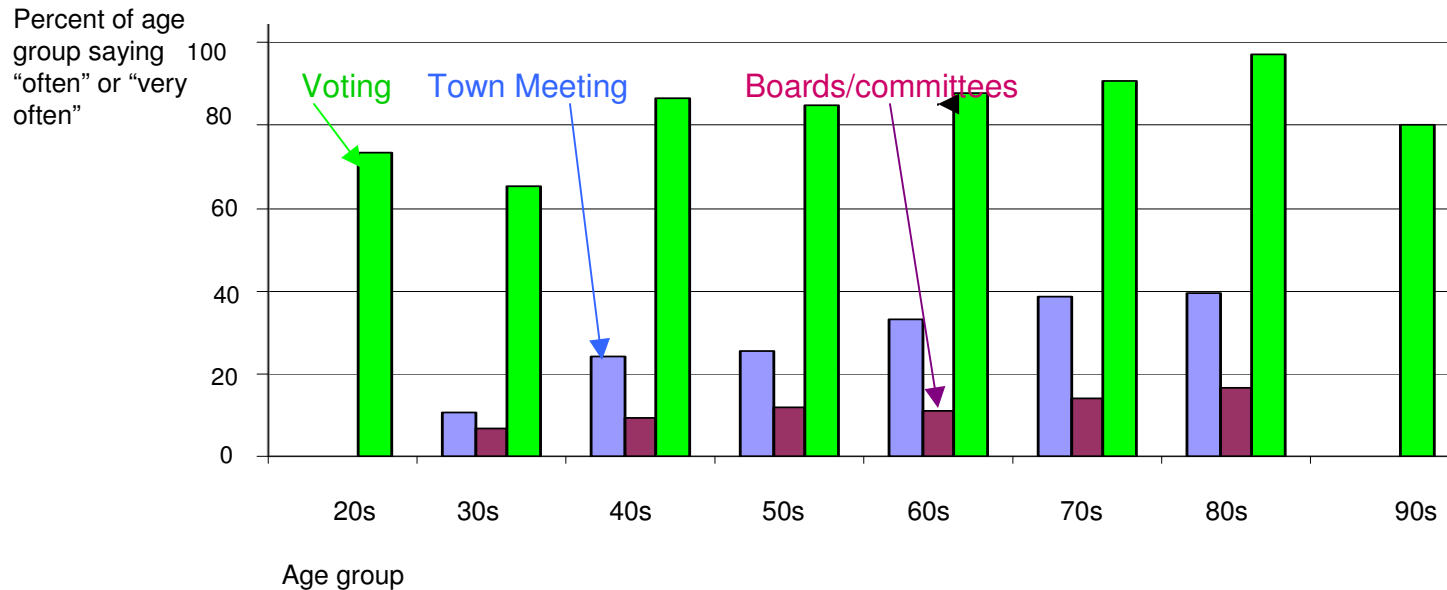
# Participation in town government

People were asked to indicate the frequency of their:

- Town Meeting attendance
- Town committee / board participation
- Voting in town elections



# Government participation varies with age



- **Generally, older people were more involved.**
  - 39% of those in their 70s and 80s said they attended Town Meeting often or very often, vs. 11% (30s) and 24% (40s).
  - 14% of those in their 70s participated in board/committee work vs. 7% of those in their 30s.
- **But interest varied little with other factors (income, kids at home).**



# Factors limiting participation in government

- **What factors limited participation in town government?**
  - 79% cited time limitations.
  - 78% cited too many other commitments.
  - 63% said they worked too much.
  - 62% said they were happy with the way things are.
  - 46% cited lack of interest.
  - 44% cited child raising.
  - 32% did not believe they could have an input.
  - 5% cited physical reasons/lack of mobility.

# Community activities and attitudes highlights

## Survey Index

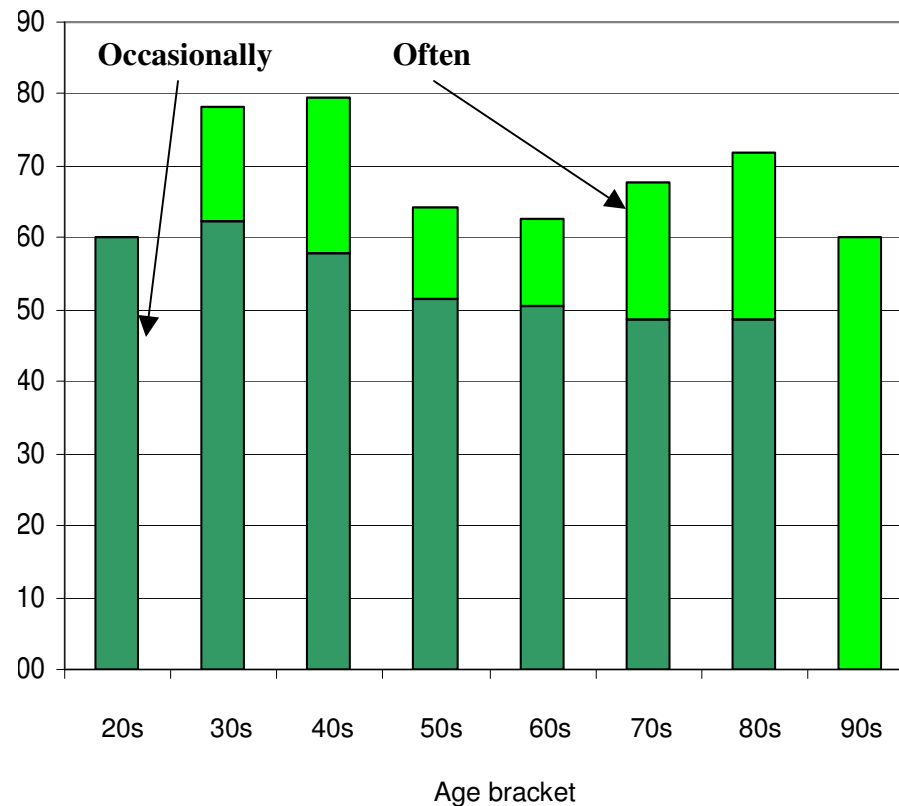
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- **Most townspeople participate “occasionally” in town events and activities.**
- **Most vote very often, but few are otherwise involved in town government.**
- **Most believe they are well-informed.**
  - **Almost all listed the Carlisle Mosquito as their principal information source.**

# Participation in events/activities varies with age

80% of people in their 30s and 40s expressed a strong interest in participating in local activities, compared with 63% of those in their 60s.

**Percent responding often or occasionally**



# Carlisle vs. nationwide participation

(Direct comparison is difficult since the questions were asked differently)

In US, civic engagement is picking up:\*

Voting in national elections: 60+%

(vs. 70% voting “very often” in Carlisle)

Community project / meeting participation: 33%

Serving on a committee: 16%

(vs. 8% often/very often and 16% occasionally)

Volunteering: 58%

(vs. 72% occasionally or often in local activities)

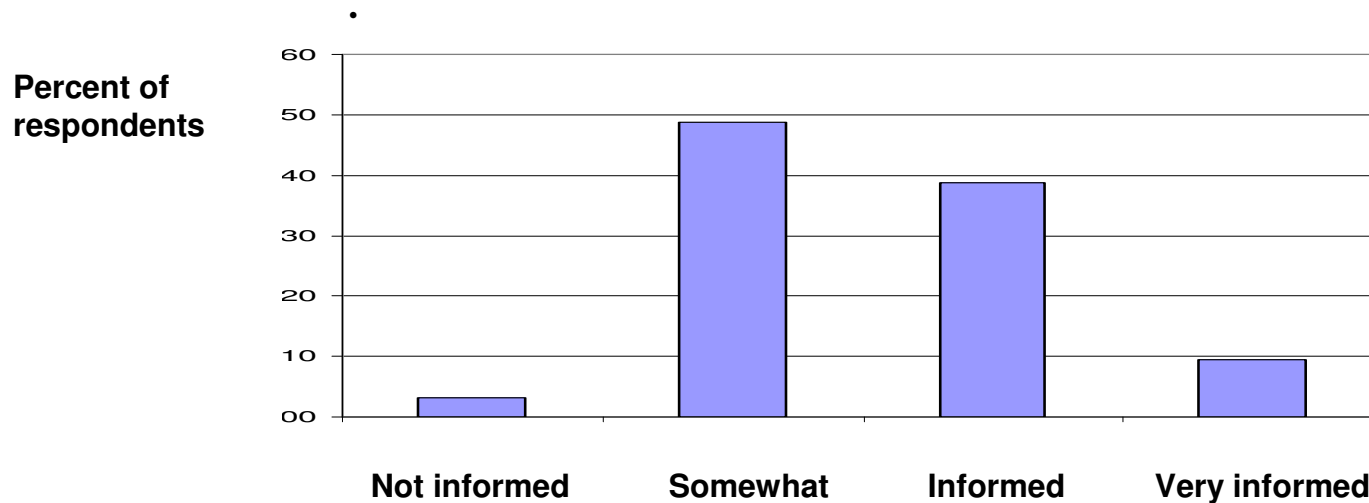
Attending Religious services once a month: 48%

(vs. 20% who said church activities were important/very)

\*”Civic Health Index 2008 (NCOC)”

# How informed people are about local activities

How informed are you about local activities and events?



- Most informed were long-time residents, people working at home part-time, and people in their 70s.
- Least informed were people who voted occasionally or hardly ever, and people in their 20s.

# Sources of local information

- People were asked how much information they got about local activities/events from several sources: none, very little, some, or a lot.

<b>Source</b>	<b>% indicating “a lot”</b>
Mosquito	84
Friends, word of mouth	18
School newsletters and emails	16
COA Senior Connection	11
Other newspapers	7
Internet	7
Other newsletters and mailings	3
Local television	2
Other	1

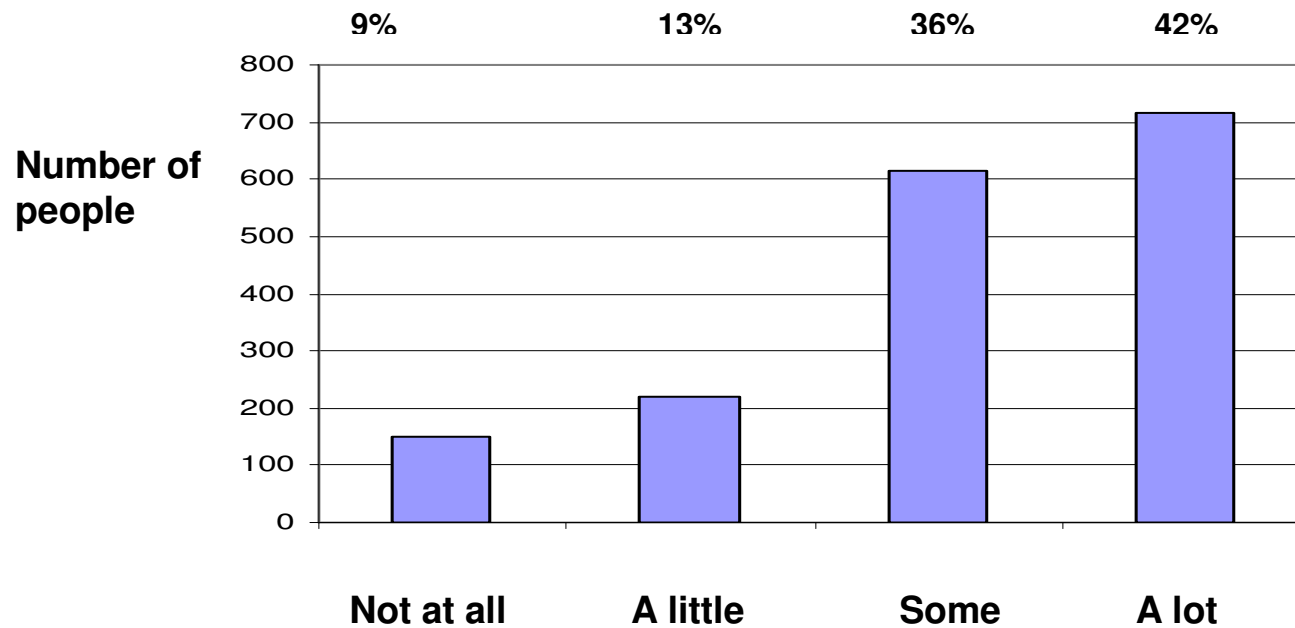
# How to spread the word better

- “To what extent would each of the following improve your access to information about local activities/events?” (not at all, a little, some, a lot)

<u>Information source</u>	<u>% indicating some or a lot</u>
More in the Mosquito	78
Up-to-date web site	72
Town-wide email	64
Center bulletin board	25

# Information access (continued)

- More Mosquito publicity
  - 42% (717 people) thought it would improve access “a lot”





# Information access (continued)

- An up-to-date web site
  - 43% (723 people) thought it would help a lot.  
(6 more than those wanting more information in the Mosquito)
  - 15% (247 people) thought it would not help at all.
- Town-wide email notices
  - 34% (564 people) thought they would help a lot.
  - 23% (387 people) thought they would not help at all.
- A bulletin board in the town center
  - 53% (878 people) thought it would not help at all.
  - 7% (116 people) thought it would help a lot.

People most want an up-to-date web site, and  
least want a bulletin board in the town center.

## Survey Index



# Comments

[Survey Index](#)

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# Comments from respondents

**The comments section was a free-form response from those who took the survey. The question posed was “*What can we do to make Carlisle a better place in which to live?*” More than 1000 respondents answered this question, many having more than one suggestion.**

# Comments highlights

- **Reduce taxes/control growth of taxes/control spending (324)**
- **Need a gathering place/pub/restaurant (115)**
- **Protect open space and rural character (98)**
- **More sidewalks/bike lanes/pathways/trails (85)**
- **Reduce/freeze taxes for seniors/those with no children (72)**
- **Keep it the way it is – I love it! (68)**
- **Increase the commercial tax base (61)**

# Noteworthy quotes

- “Carlisle is a wonderful community with talented and responsive residents. My major concern has to do with increasing property taxes. Ultimately this will force people out of town and we will lose age and socio-economic diversity.”
- “Taxes, taxes, taxes! Lower them.”
- “Taxes must be addressed. I want to be able to stay in Carlisle after my kids are out of school in 5 years.”
- “More affordable housing and more affordable taxes.”
- “As I age, I would definitely consider staying if there were smaller homes available as well as transportation options.”
- “Limit growth. Preserve open space.”

# Taxes and spending

- 30% of the comments pertained to taxes and spending, including...
  - Reduce taxes/control growth rate/control spending
  - Freeze taxes for seniors and those with no children
  - Increase commercial tax base

# Infrastructure

- 18% of the comments pertained to infrastructure, including...
  - More sidewalks, bike lanes, pathways
  - Wider and better maintained roads
  - Better cell phone coverage
  - Plow roads better
  - Have town trash collection



# Recreation

- 15% of the comments pertained to recreation, including...
  - Need for gathering place, pub, restaurant
  - Need for senior/community center
  - Need for an affordable pool/pond/gym
  - Need for more town-wide social events (e.g, Old Home Day)

# Housing

- 13% of the comments pertained to housing, including...
  - Protect open space and rural character
  - More affordable senior housing
  - Limit new houses being built

# Schools

- 8% of the comments pertained to schools, including...
  - Improve schools and teachers
  - Less money/emphasis on schools
  - Fix schools, don't rebuild
  - Preserve and reuse Highland

# Public transportation

- 5% of the comments pertained to better public transportation to Concord, Bedford, MBTA, etc.

[Survey Index](#)

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