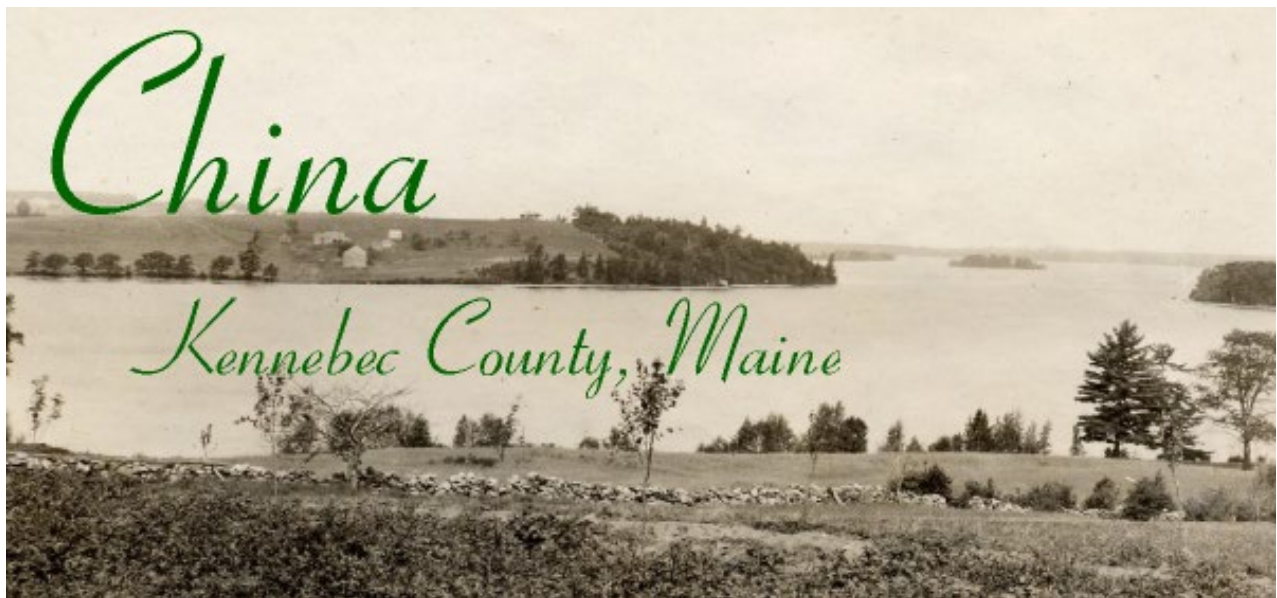


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# China for a Lifetime

*Assessment*



*February 15, 2018*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The goal of this project is to help the Town of China and, specifically, the China for a Lifetime Committee, better support healthy, active, and engaged living by people of all ages in our community.

The survey was developed and administered by residents appointed by the Town of China Select Board to serve on the China for a Lifetime Committee.

The China for a Lifetime Committee members are:

Christopher Hahn (Chair)  
Sandra Kostron (Secretary)  
Joann Austin  
Robert Batteese  
Irene Belanger  
Dawn Castner  
Joyce Goodine  
Sheldon Goodine  
Jeanne Hanson  
Tom Michaud  
Helen Roy  
Francis Soares  
Toni Wall

This report presents the findings of the survey and is designed to help guide the strategic planning and program implementation efforts of the China for a Lifetime committee.

### METHODS

Surveys were distributed between October 18 and November 30 in direct mailings to residents, an insert in the October 18 edition of the *Town Line*, and were distributed at the Transfer Station and Town Office. An electronic version was available on the town website. A total of 291 completed surveys were collected.

### ASSETS TO BUILDING A LIFELONG COMMUNITY

The vast majority of respondents (96%) said it was somewhat or very important to remain in China as they age, with almost two out of three residents 70+ (63%) saying it is very important.

When asked how confident people were that they would receive needed emergency services when they call 911,

- 93% were confident or very confident that they would receive help from the volunteer fire departments
- 89% were confident that ambulance and rescue would provide needed help
- 87% were confident they would receive police services

When asked about their ability to use public buildings and spaces or attend community events,

- 95% found the transfer station easy to use
- 84% have had good experiences using the town office and interacting with staff
- 80% enjoy the recreational opportunities offered at China Lake
- 70% look forward to participating in China Community Days

China residents care deeply about their community. Overall, about 38% of the respondents volunteer for the town or for a local organization that serves the Town of China. Many people also reported helping neighbors, friends and family members.

Overall, 68% of people thought it was easy to find information about local activities and events. The most popular source of information was the *Town Line* (77%), followed by friends and family (50%).

The enthusiastic response to the survey and high level of participation in volunteering are strong indicators that the residents of China are committed to making the community a place where residents can thrive at all ages, despite differences in age, ability, or economic status. The assets of the China community's committed volunteers, the *Town Line*, municipal commitment to providing high quality services at the Transfer Station and Town Office, town events, and emergency services provide a foundation to build a strong community that supports independence and a high quality of life for residents of all ages and abilities.

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

When asked about barriers to being as active and engaged in community life as they wanted to be, 42% of respondents said that inconvenient times, nothing of interest for their age group, affordability, or lack of information about opportunities were barriers. Many respondents wanted to increase the number of social, educational, and recreational opportunities for adults in China. Only 15% of adults were satisfied with the recreational opportunities available for their age group.

About half, 54% of people under 50 and 43% of people 50-69 wanted access to local wellness classes—from healthy eating demonstrations to yoga.

More than half (57%) of people 70+ wanted to participate in activities but said there was nothing for them to do in China or that they lacked needed transportation. People 70+ wanted a range of recreational and social opportunities—from a place to gather for coffee and socialization to an outdoor recreation club.

Financial concerns, the need for help with home maintenance, and transportation were the main issue driving the concerns residents age 70+ had about aging in China.

Being able to pay property taxes and afford routine maintenance were concerns for 39% of people 70+. About one-third (34%) were worried about difficulties maintaining their home. Thirty-three percent of people 70+ were worried about falling. Safety and well-being are affected when someone has trouble with seasonal chores such as shoveling and raking leaves, completing simple home repairs such as changing a light bulb or installing a shower

wand, and making needed modifications such as adding a second bannister on a stairwell or installing a grab bar. All those things, when left undone, increase the risk that a person will fall.

Only 68% of people 70+ were able to get everywhere they wanted to go. For most older people, being able to get to medical appointments, do errands, or participate in social or recreational opportunities, meant driving their own vehicle. The majority planned to continue driving as long as possible, and, if they were no longer able to drive, hoped that friends, family, or a public transportation service would be available to help them get to where they needed to go. A substantial percentage of older respondents (45%) said accessible transportation would make it easier for them to live in China

Respondents who are seasonal rather than year-round residents were more concerned than others with obtaining easily accessible sources of information regarding services for older adults. Reaching out to this group with information may help increase participation and support for community initiatives.

### **ANTICIPATING CHANGES IN DEMAND FOR SERVICES: THE NEXT FIVE YEARS**

Overall, the desire for more local recreation, social, and lifelong learning opportunities were the greatest need. The desire to be fully engaged in community life did not diminish with age.

Other issues of importance that emerged were a community center and better communication about all that China offers its residents. There were some additional themes by age group:

- People under age 50 were interested in after school programs for children, especially for children not interested in sports
- People 50-69 wanted to see an increase in community events, such as suppers, were looking for meaningful volunteer opportunities, and needed services to help them provide care for an older family member or friend.
- Residents 70+ wanted to find meaningful ways to engage in China community life by volunteering and participating in intergenerational opportunities.

The effort to make China a better place for people of all ages will have to address the availability of services, programs, activities, and events as well as affordability and the transportation to make them accessible to people of all abilities.

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## INTRODUCTION

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This study began as an initiative of the Town of China Select Board, supported by the Town Manager. The Select Board appointed the China for a Lifetime committee to identify changes that will make China a better place to live for people of all ages and abilities. To start creating a plan to increase the livability of China, the China for a Lifetime committee developed and distributed a community-wide survey for residents of all ages. The Tri-State Learning Collaborative on Aging was hired to compile the survey results and help the committee develop this report.

The goal of the project is to help the town and town leaders better understand what residents need to thrive in China and support the healthy, active and engaged aging of all residents.

This report presents the findings of the survey and is designed to help guide the strategic planning and program implementation efforts of the China for a Lifetime committee.

## SURVEY METHODS

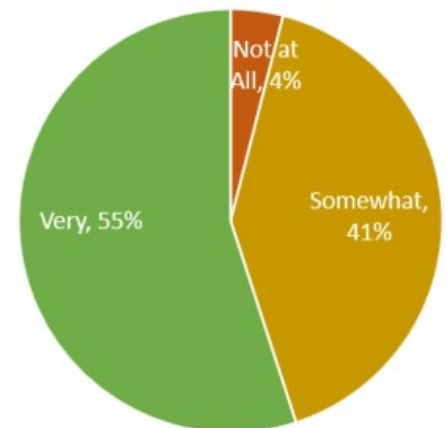
The survey was developed by the China for a Lifetime committee members who studied several other surveys to help them develop an effective survey for the Town of China. The survey was structured to collect information about what residents saw as the strengths of China and to learn about areas for improvement.

Surveys were mailed to every seventh householder in China and were distributed in the October 18<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Town Line*, which is mailed to every resident in the community. Additional copies were made available at the Town Office and the Transfer Station. Surveys were also distributed directly through the network of volunteers.

291 completed surveys were collected.

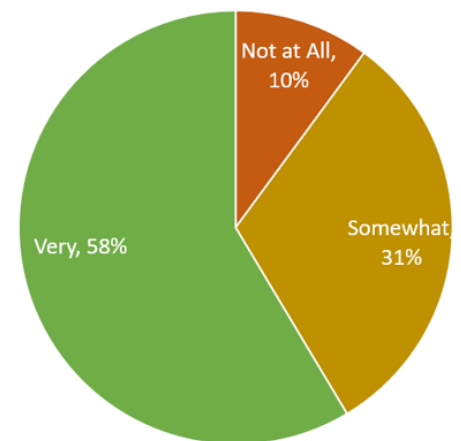
The clear majority of China residents enjoy living in China and plan to stay in the community as long as they can. The commitment to remain in China did not diminish with age. 63% of people 70+ said that it was very important for them to continue living in China. Renters and home owners are equally invested in continuing to live in China.

Importance of Aging in China



Nine in ten respondents (90%) said that it is very or somewhat important for them to be able to live independently in their home as they age. There were some differences by age; 37% of younger people (age 50 or less) said it was very important to them to age in their current home, compared with 78% of older people (age 70+).

Importance of Aging in Current Home



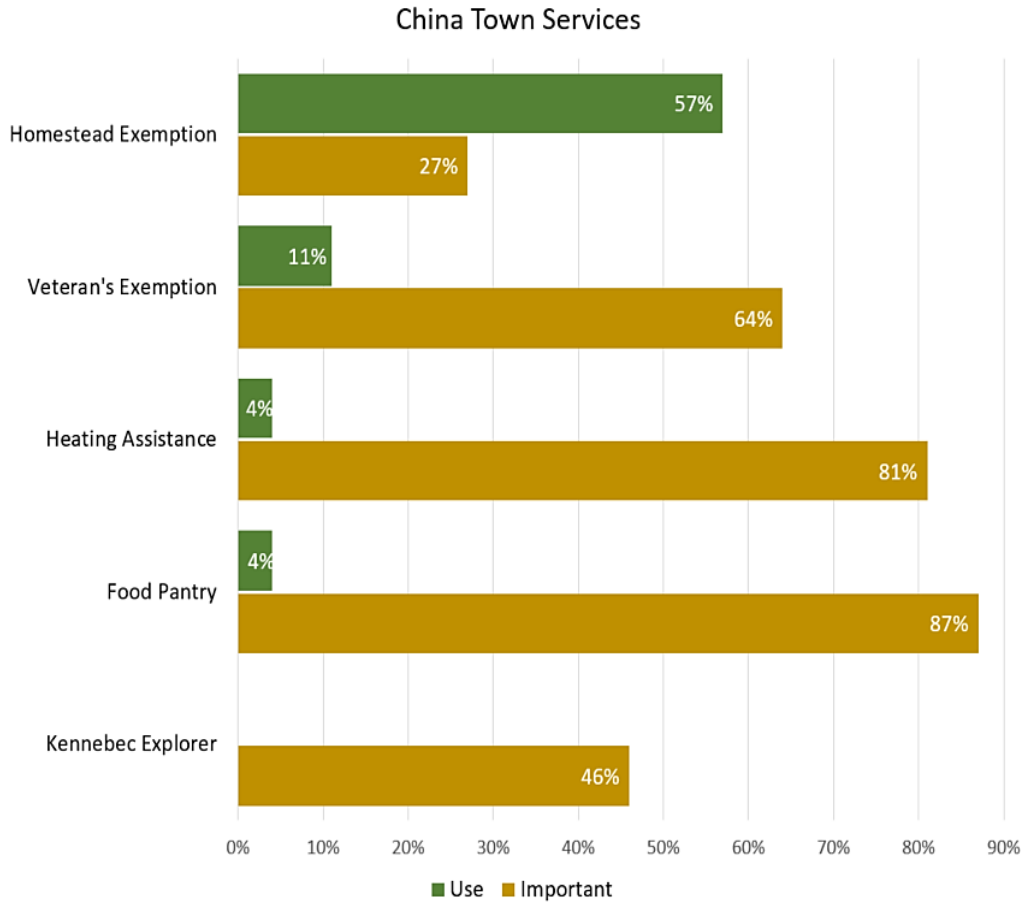
### PLANNING AHEAD

When asked about living arrangements as they aged, 90% of older people (70+) did not plan to make any adjustments, while 24% of their younger neighbors in China planned to downsize to a smaller home, preferably in China.

When asked how people planned to get around as they aged, older respondents were most likely to say they planned to drive as long as possible. 84% planned to continue driving, compared with 97% of their younger peers. 31% of older people planned to rely on friends and neighbors for rides when they could no longer drive.

When asked what people planned to do as they age, people were most likely to say that they would spend time with family and friends of all ages. Less than 1:4 thought they would be able to remain active in the community of China.

## SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE TOWN OF CHINA

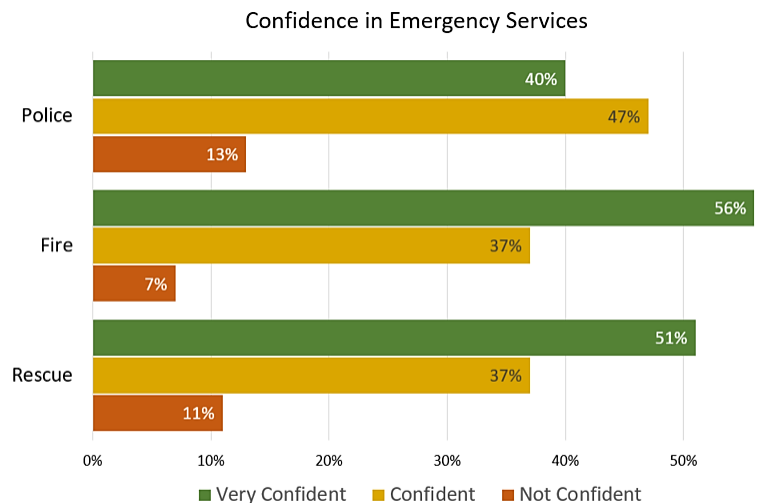


Overall, people of all ages were happy with the services and programs offered by the Town of China. Even when people did not use services, such as the food pantry, heating assistance, or Kennebec Explorer, they thought it was an important service for the town to offer.

## Emergency Services

The vast majority of respondents (92.2%) said they were confident or very confident that they would receive needed services when they called 911, with half (52%) saying they were very confident.

Respondents were most likely to express confidence in services from the Volunteer Fire Departments. People were least familiar with the role of the China Police Department.





## COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

Finding information about activities and events was relatively easy for 68% of respondents.

Middle-aged respondents (age 50-69) had more trouble finding out about activities, events and new services than their younger or older neighbors in China. 39% percent of middle-aged people struggled to find needed information, compared with 26% of younger people (younger than age 50) and 22% of older people (age 70+).



The most popular places to look for information were the *Town Line* newspaper, friends and family, and the Town Sign located at the Town Office.

People who answered the survey had several ideas to increase the ease of finding information. Some of the most popular ideas were to

1. expand the function of the school-based “Tuesday Notice” that goes out to parents with children in the school system
2. enhance the community calendar included in the *Town Line*
3. create a regular email “blast” from the town office with a list of upcoming events, changes in services, and other information of interest to residents.
4. Create a “Friends of China” Facebook page where residents and friends of China can post events, activities, or information.

When asked where respondents would look if they needed information, 70% said that the first place they would turn was the Town Office. The second most popular place to turn for needed information was the *Town Line* (67%) followed by friends and family (56%) and online sites (51%).

## ENJOYING A HEALTHY, ACTIVE ENGAGED LIFESTYLE

Respondents were asked if they were as social as they want to be. Overall, 73% of people said they were. Barriers to socialization were different for different ages.

Lack of information was the top barrier for people younger than 70. For older people the greatest barrier was nothing for their age, followed by not wanting to go out after dark.

### BARRIERS TO SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

When asked about barriers to spending time with friends and neighbors in China, the most common barrier for all age groups were:

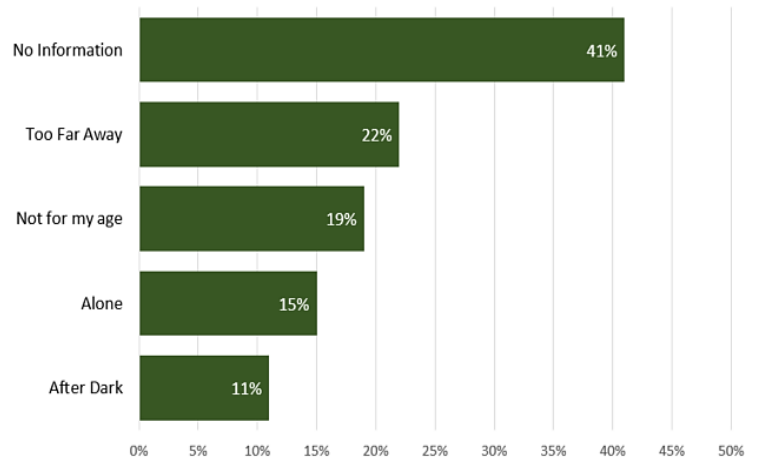
- Inconvenient timing (42%)
- Cannot afford (17%)
- No public restrooms (15%)

Accessibility was a barrier for people 70+. Older respondents listed the following barriers in the physical environment:

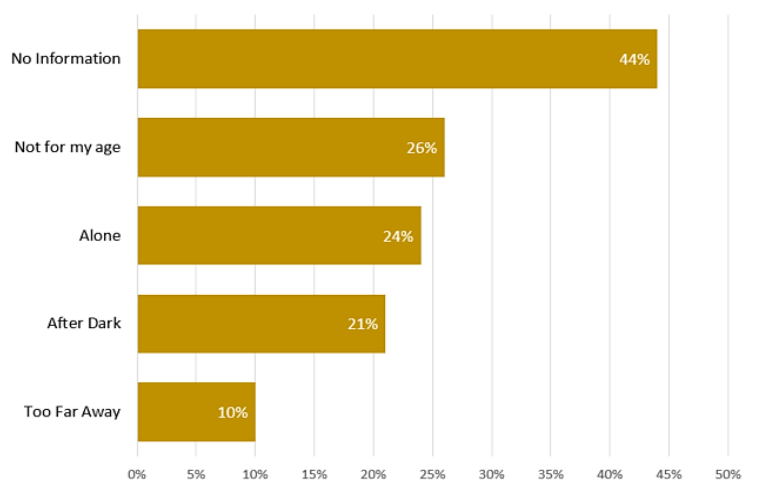
- No place to sit (24%)
- No public Restroom (14%)
- Hard time getting to the activity (14%)
- Wheelchair/Walker access (10%)

Transportation was a barrier for 14% of older people.

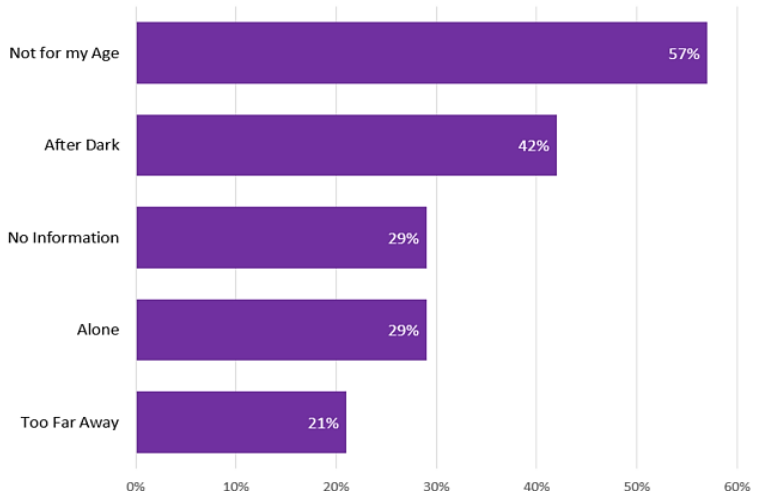
Barriers to Socialization in China, people younger than 50



Barriers to Socialization in China, people 50-69



Barriers to Socialization in China, people 70+



## THINGS TO DO, PLACES TO GO IN CHINA

The survey asked people which places they use in the Town of China and which places they find difficult to use. The five most popular places to use in town were:

1. Transfer Station (94%)
2. Town Office (84%)
3. China Lake (80%)
4. China Community Days (70%)
5. China Village Fire Department Bar-B-Que (52%)

The most common places for people to face barriers to using were:

1. Four Seasons Club (30%)
2. China Baptist Church, Central and Dirigo Masonic Lodges (29%)
3. Recreation and Ball Field, China Lake Conference Center, South China Library (27%)

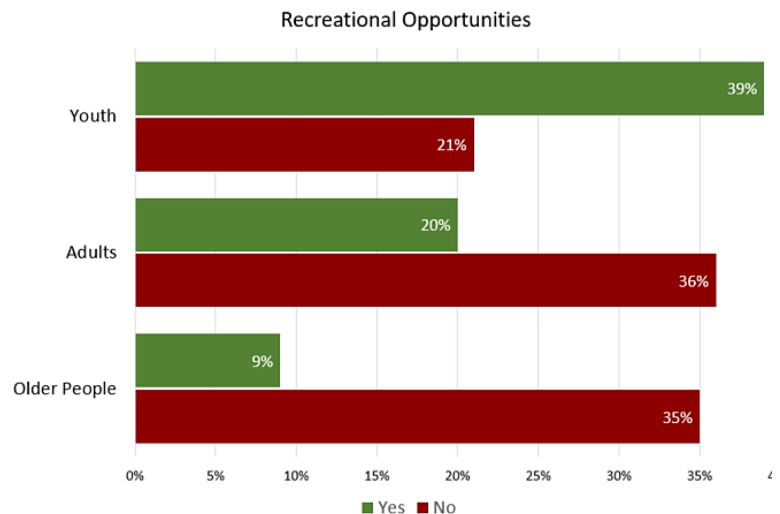
Many people who answered the survey were not aware that the Four Seasons Club, the South China Baptist Church, and the Masonic Lodges offered programs open to the public. Similarly, the largest barrier to using the Recreation and Ball Fields and China Lake Conference Center was not knowing about programs.

People who were still working found it difficult to use the South China Library because the hours did not coincide with a 9-5 workday schedule.

People were least likely to be familiar with the Emergency Shelter developed by the Town of China; 74% of respondents said they did not about the shelter or did not know how to use it.

Respondents were not, generally, satisfied with the recreational opportunities available in China. Only 39% of people thought there were enough opportunities for youth and children. People were interested in after-school programs and opportunities for young people that do not participate in sports.

Adults wanted more recreational opportunities for their age group. People were interested in wellness programming, outdoor recreation, lifelong learning and socialization opportunities.

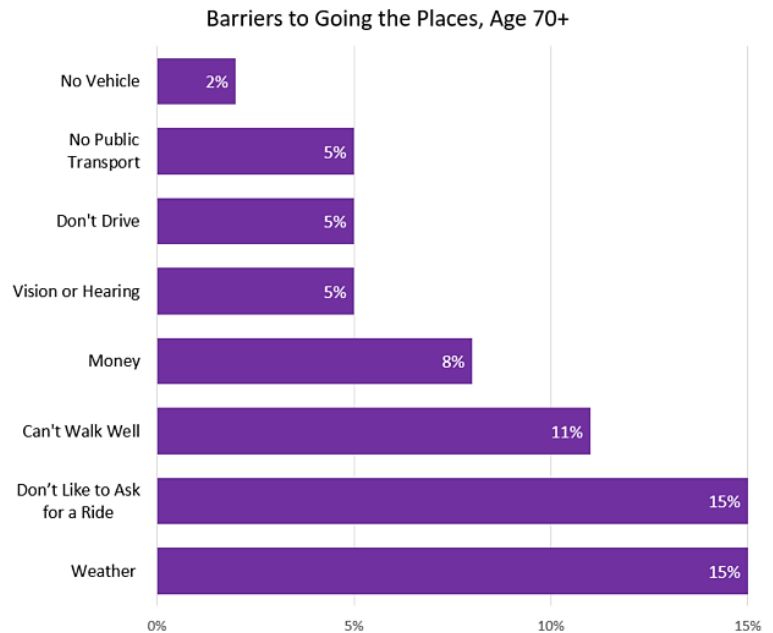


## OUT AND ABOUT IN CHINA

Respondents were asked what kinds of things they do when they go out. Overall, the most popular activity as eating out at a restaurant (85%), followed by errands (82%), visiting with family and friends (80%), going to medical appointments (76%), walking (70%), and helping family and friends (68%).

For about 14% of older respondents, transportation was a barrier to getting to appointments.

Rather than drive themselves, 29% of older respondents occasionally asked for a ride from a family member or friend.



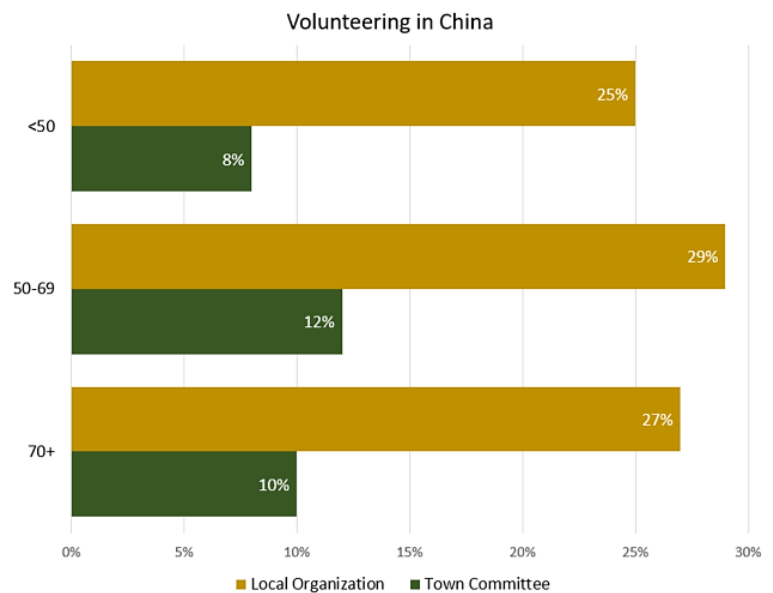
## VOLUNTEERING AND HELPING NEIGHBORS

Overall, about 38% of respondents said that they volunteer in China. Some volunteer on a town committee, others give their time to a local organization.

Almost two-thirds of respondents (68%) said they help neighbors, friends and families when there is a need. Overall, 23% of respondents said they provide care for an older or disabled family member or friend.

Volunteerism did not decline with age.

Despite the high rate of volunteerism in the Town of China, several people mentioned that they wanted to be more involved in volunteering in China but didn't know how to find volunteer opportunities in town.



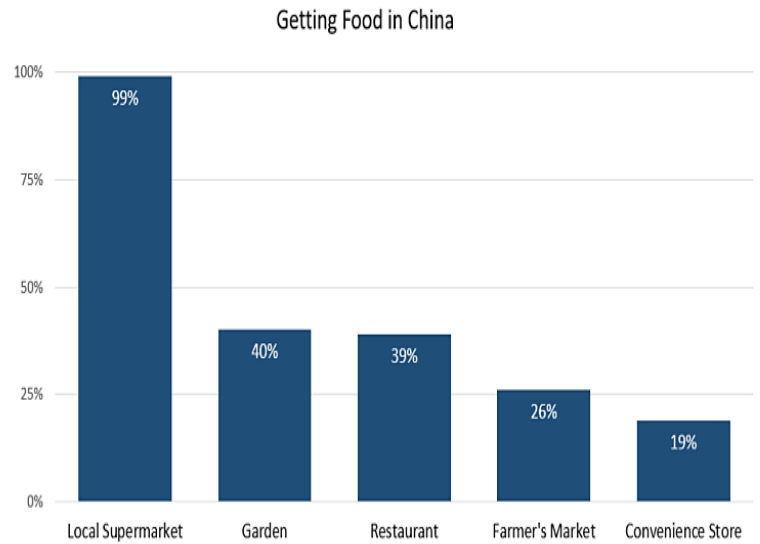
## MEETING BASIC NEEDS

### FOOD SECURITY

When asked if there were times when respondents did not have enough food, 5% of respondents said there were times when they didn't have enough to eat.

The highest rate of food insecurity was among people younger than 50; 13% said they did not always have enough food, compared with 2% of their middle-aged neighbors and 3% of older people.

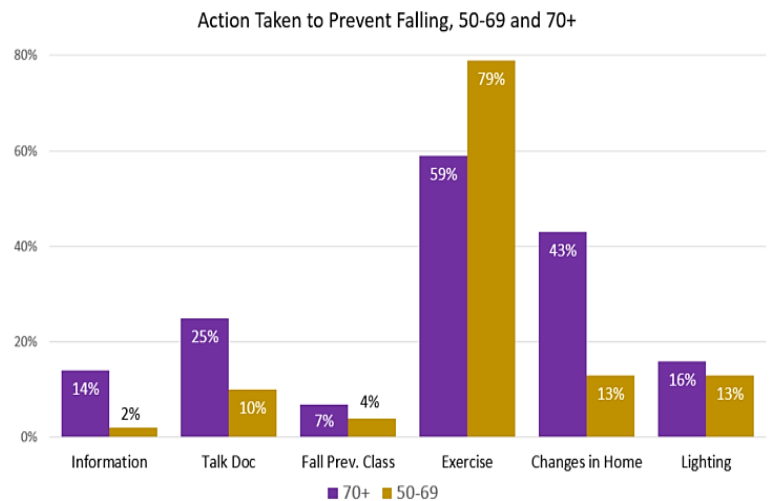
Three percent of respondents said they use the food pantry. The most popular places to get food are the local supermarket, home gardens, and restaurants.



### FALL PREVENTION

When asked about concerns about falling, 33% of older people (70+) said that they were worried about falling, compared with 10% of middle-aged respondents (50-69) and 3% of younger people.

Many of the respondents 50+ had taken measures to address their concerns about falling. By far, the most common was exercise. People signed up for yoga classes, started a walking regimen, and had joined a gym.



## MAINTAINING A COMFORTABLE HOME

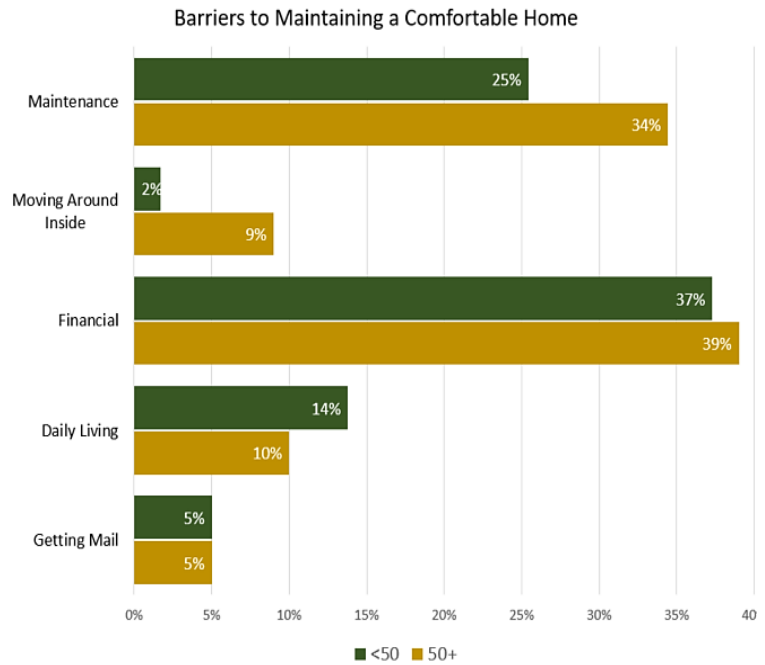
People were asked to tell us what the biggest barriers were to live comfortably in their current home. Overall, finances were a concern for 39% of respondents and maintenance for 32%.

Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are important for all ages. Overall, 3% of respondents said they did not have smoke detectors, 24% lacked Carbon monoxide detectors and 16% of respondents did not have a working fire extinguisher.

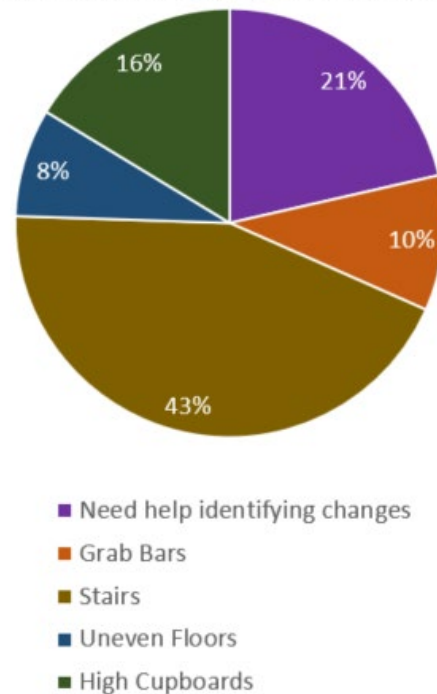
A comfortable home is warm enough in the winter and is easy to move around in. 12% of respondents said their homes were not warm enough in the winter. Drafts and a lack of insulation were the primary problem for 60% of older people, 63% of middle-aged respondents, and 78% of younger people whose homes were not warm enough; paying for fuel was a challenge for 50% of older respondents, 75% of middle-aged folks, and 56% of younger people.

When asked about needed home modifications, older respondents were more likely to identify needs than younger people. Stairs and the need to adapt a home for one-story living was the most commonly identified challenge.

One in five older residents needed help identifying changes to make their home safer.

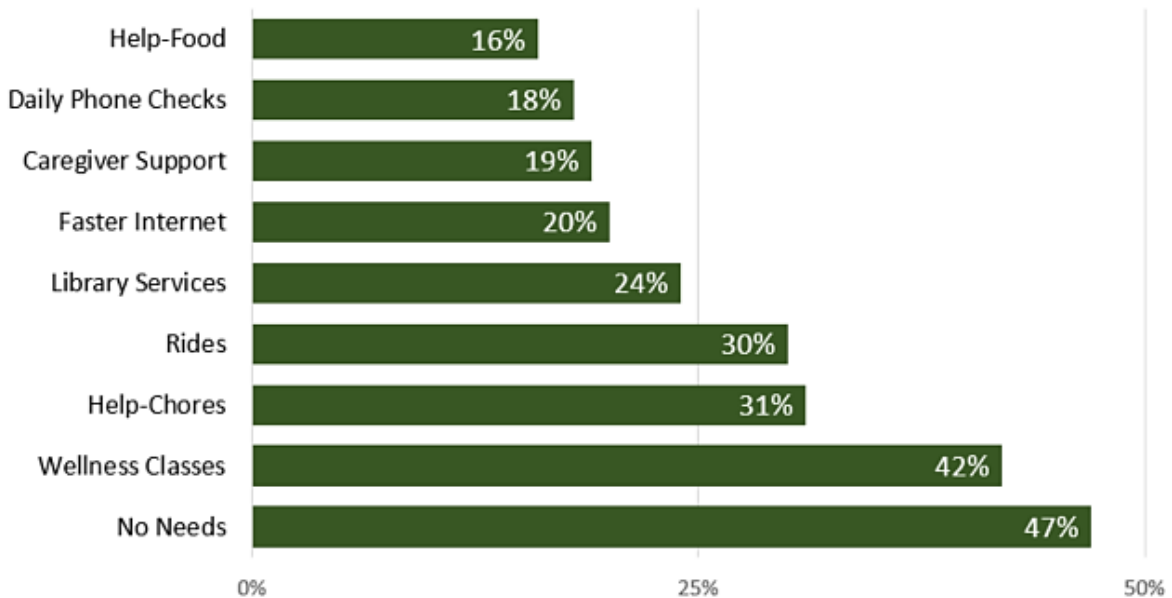


Changes Needed in the Home, age 70+



## MOST IMPORTANT SERVICES TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR PEOPLE TO LIVE IN CHINA

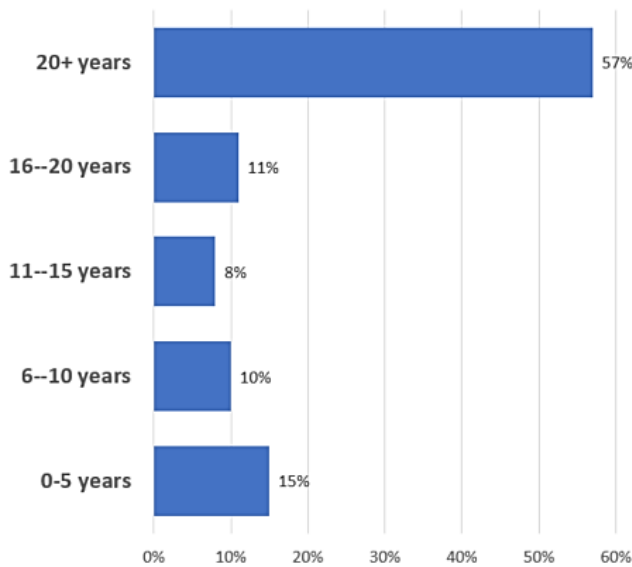
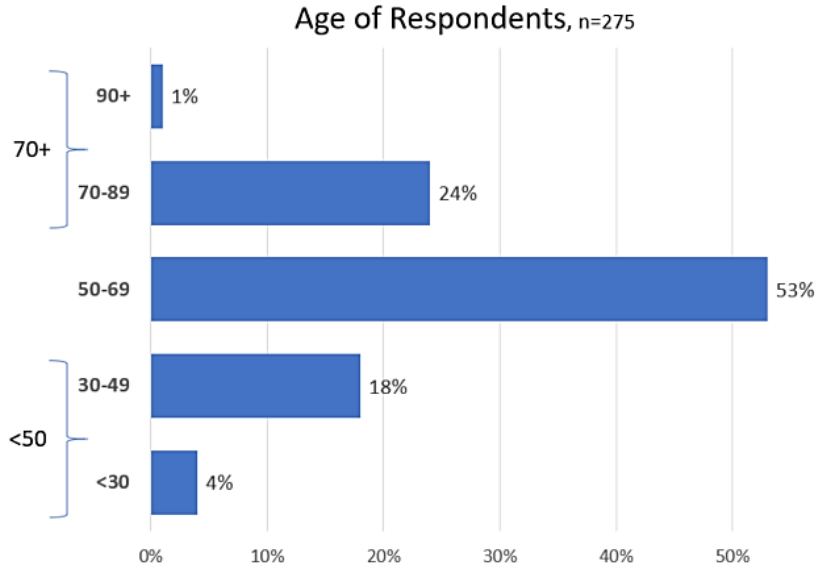
The survey asked respondents to name the most important services that need to be available to allow them to thrive in China. Almost half of respondents said they had no needs. Among those who indicated a need, access to wellness classes was the most popular choice. In this case, wellness classes referred to outdoor recreation opportunities, classes to maintain or improve health, and indoor recreation. The next most popular categories were help with chores and home maintenance, followed by access to affordable, convenient, accessible, and reliable transportation options.



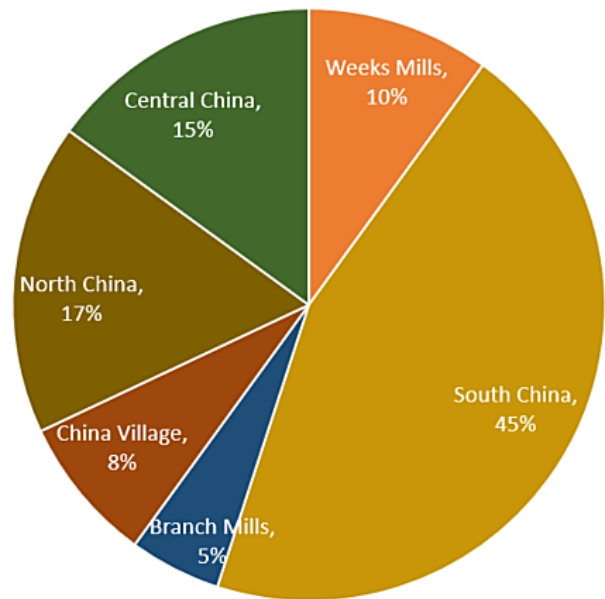
## WHO COMPLETED AND RETURNED THE SURVEY?

The charts in this section show the demographic composition of the respondents who completed a survey.

- 291 surveys returned
- 4% seasonal residents  
96% year-round
- 38% men; 62% women



Years Living in China, n=280



Neighborhood in China, n=253