

**Joint Council Agenda**  
**Thursday, September 21 2023**  
**Council Chambers, Town Hall**  
**6:00 p.m.**

1. Welcome and Introduction – Mayor and Warden
2. Approval of June 5, 2023 Joint Council Committee Minutes
3. Presentations
  - a. Tourism Strategy Presentation
  - b. Antigonish Aging Well Coalition - Adam Perry
  - c. Antigonish AREMO Update - Blaise MacDonald
4. Adjournment

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Joint Town and County Council Minutes  
Wednesday, June 5, 2023, 6:00 PM  
Town Council Chambers  
274 Main Street  
Antigonish, NS

**Present:**

Warden Owen McCarron  
Deputy Warden Hughie Stewart  
Councillor Shawn Brophy  
Councillor John Dunbar  
Councillor Remi Deveau  
Councillor Mary MacLellan  
Councillor Donnie MacDonald  
Councillor Gary Mattie  
Councillor Harris McNamara

Mayor Laurie Boucher  
Deputy Mayor Willie Cormier  
Councillor Sean Cameron  
Councillor Andrew Murray  
Councillor Mary Farrell  
Councillor Donnie MacInnis  
Councillor Diane Roberts

Glenn Horne, CAO, County of  
Antigonish  
Beth Schumacher, Deputy Clerk  
Marlene Melanson, Recreation Director  
Tammy Feltmate, Director of Community  
Development

Jeff Lawrence, CAO, Town of  
Antigonish  
Dianne Wilson, Deputy Clerk, Recording  
Secretary  
Kate MacInnis, Director, Community Development  
Lise Roy, Strategic Initiatives  
Maria Fraser,

**Also Present:**

Delegates: Antigonish Heritage Museum, People for an Antigonish Recreation Centre,  
Antigonish Regional Emergency Measures Organization

**Absent with Regret:** Councillor Bill MacFarlane

**Call to Order**

The Joint Town and County Council Committee was called to order by the Chair, Mayor Laurie Boucher at 6:00 PM. Mayor Laurie Boucher and Warden Owen McCarron welcomed everyone in attendance to the meeting.

**Approval of March 22, 2022, Council Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Bill MacFarlane

Seconded by Councillor Shawn Brophy

"To approve the Joint Council Minutes of March 22, 2022 as amended." Motion carried.

**Business Arising**

There was no Business arising from the Minutes.

June 5, 2023

Joint Town and County Council Meeting Minutes

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### **Antigonish Heritage Association**

Barry MacKenzie introduced himself at the podium and thanked Councils for the opportunity to appear before them.

Councils were provided with a brief history of the Town and County via a short film by Peter Murphy featuring Paq'tnkek, European settlers (Acadians, Heirely, black loyalists, Scottish Highlanders, St. F.X. University, Congregation of Notre Dame, Sisters of St. Martha, Father Moses Coady/Jimmy Tompkins (Cooperative Movement) and others.

He noted they were attempting to capture as much of the area in a short time-frame, while trying to highlight what is offered in the locally with the idea of continuing with new short-films of the area.

Barry MacKenzie noted that this is a snapshot of the things that are being done at the Antigonish Heritage Museum.

Mayor Laurie Boucher thanked Barry MacKenzie and he responded to questions from Council, confirming that the intent is to focus on various areas of Antigonish.

At 6:19 Barry MacKenzie concluded his presentation and vacated the podium.

### **People for an Antigonish Recreation Centre (PARC)**

Dr. Jane Howard and Adam Baden-Clay introduced themselves at the podium and provided Councils with details on a feasibility study for a proposed recreation centre on behalf of PARC.

The delegates expanded on their conversations with other community members and ongoing discussion and meetings for the development of a recreation centre for the community. They noted discussions included representation from all voices and town and county recreation departments, noting a common thread and shared belief in healthy lifestyles and appealing and attracting newcomers.

Adam Baden-Clay flagged comments from various documents supporting a community centre, noting they are proposing to build on existing assets and remove gaps and barriers that currently exist.

The delegates presented their Vision.

The delegates who then responded to questions from Councils and concluded their presentation with thanks from Mayor L. Boucher and Warden Owen McCarron. The delegates vacated the podium at 6:47 PM

### **Antigonish Regional Emergency Measures Organization (AREMO) Update – Blaise MacDonald**

Blaise MacDonald, AREMO Director, took to the podium, introduced himself noting he would be providing a status update.

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Blaise MacDonald spoke on the collaboration with EMO and a regional approach for comfort centres and emergency shelters.

A PowerPoint presentation was made, along with comments on recent training that staff, RCMP, fire departments, and ST. FX. University have taken part in.

Blaise MacDonald expanded on the training and exercises that were held and partnerships with various stakeholders from within the community.

Details were provided on existing and proposed comfort and emergency centres. He noted Memorandum's of Understanding have been developed and are being reviewed.

Council was advised that over \$400,000 in funding for generators was approved for this region.

Blaise MacDonald stated the need for comfort and emergency shelters for the area and recommend that the Town and County approve the adoption of twenty-two (22) comfort centres and two (2) emergency centres as presented.

At 7:22 PM Blaise MacDonald concluded his presentation and called for questions from Council.

Brief discussion took place, and it was noted that there is an existing emergency management agreement in place between the Town, County and St. F.X. University.

Warden Owen McCarron thanked Blaise MacDonald for his presentation and thanked him for his efforts to date.

Mayor Laurie Boucher reiterated the Warden's comments.

The meeting was adjourned.

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Warden Owen McCarron

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Mayor Laurie Boucher

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Glenn Horne, CAO

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Jeff Lawrence, CAO

Assessing the needs, strengths, opportunities, and challenges to Antigonish becoming an age-friendly community



A report produced with and for the Antigonish Aging Well Together Coalition and Community Links

Dr. J. Adam Perry, St. Francis Xavier University

Tatianna Beresford, St. Francis Xavier University/Queen's University

In collaboration with the Antigonish Aging Well Together Coalition and Community Links

About the authors

**J. Adam Perry** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Adult Education at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. He is interested in questions related to informal learning and community life.

For further information about this project, contact Adam at [aperry@stfx.ca](mailto:aperry@stfx.ca).

**Tatianna Beresford** is a Master's student in Aging and Health with the School of Rehabilitation Therapy at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. She worked as a research assistant on this project. Her interests include aging, transportation equity, and gender.

June 2023

St. Francis Xavier University

Antigonish, Nova Scotia

This research was conducted in partnership with the Antigonish Aging Well Together Coalition and funded by a Change Lab Action Research Initiative (CLARI) Grant

## Executive Summary

*Assessing the needs, strengths, opportunities, and challenges to Antigonish becoming an age-friendly community* aimed to gather information and identify existing strengths, opportunities, and challenges to Antigonish Town and County becoming an age-friendly community.

This report draws from data derived from one survey and two conversation circles with older adults in Antigonish Town and County. It also draws from interviews with practitioners from various disciplines who work with older adults in the region. This project is grounded in the concept of “age-friendly communities” (Golant, 2014; Lui, et al., 2009; Menec et al., 2011). Perceived as a public health approach to promoting and supporting successful aging (Jeste et al., 2016), the concept has gained a lot of political currency in the past 15 years, particularly in Canada (Rootman et al., 2021). The main idea informing the concept of age-friendly communities is the need to establish accessible social and physical environments that are supportive of active and independent living for older adults. In doing so, communities will become more able to address the challenges of an aging population. In turn, communities who adopt an age-friendly approach will support the development of environments that are conducive to allowing older adults to age in place, and to contribute to community life, and to experience a higher quality of life. The age-friendly approach is divided into eight domains of interest: **outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, respect and social inclusion, social participation, communication and information, civic participation and employment opportunities, and community support and health services**. These domains of interest form the backbone of this project.

In this report we provide an overview of results for each of the eight domains. Then, we divide the eight domains into two separate categories: infrastructural domains (outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, community support and health services) and social domains (respect and social inclusion, social participation, communication and information, civic participation, and employment opportunities). **Overall, we found that older adults in Antigonish generally have a negative opinion of the domains that we have categorized as ‘infrastructural’, but that they have a generally positive opinion of domains that we have categorized as ‘social’.** We further analyze these perceptions in relation to three distinct demographic variables: age, education, and income. The report concludes with a summary of findings and recommendations.

## Introduction

Funded by a Change Lab Action Research Initiative (CLARI) Grant, this project evolved as a partnership between Dr. Adam Perry (St. Francis Xavier University) and the Antigonish Aging Well Together Coalition. The Antigonish Aging Well Together Coalition consists of a group of people representing agencies and organizations that serve older adults in the Town of Antigonish and the Municipality of the County of Antigonish. It is one of several aging well coalitions in Nova Scotia supported by Community Links. The group meets monthly to share information and discuss opportunities (webinars, conferences, calls for grant funding, etc.) to better serve older adults in our community. Membership is open and includes representatives from Nova Scotia Health, both municipalities, local non-profit organizations, and the Pictou-Antigonish Library. Approximately twelve organizations actively participate in monthly meetings. Community Links is a province-wide organization that supports the establishment of age-friendly, inclusive communities in Nova Scotia by linking individuals and organizations to promote needed changes. The Town of Antigonish has recently included fostering an age friendly community in its strategic plan. Both the Town and County and associated institutions have also recently developed accessibility plans that will overlap with future age-friendly initiatives (Municipality of the County of Antigonish, 2022; Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library, 2022; UPLAND Planning + Design & RHAD Architects, 2023). In response, this partnership project was initiated to assess the needs, strengths, and challenges to becoming an age-friendly community.

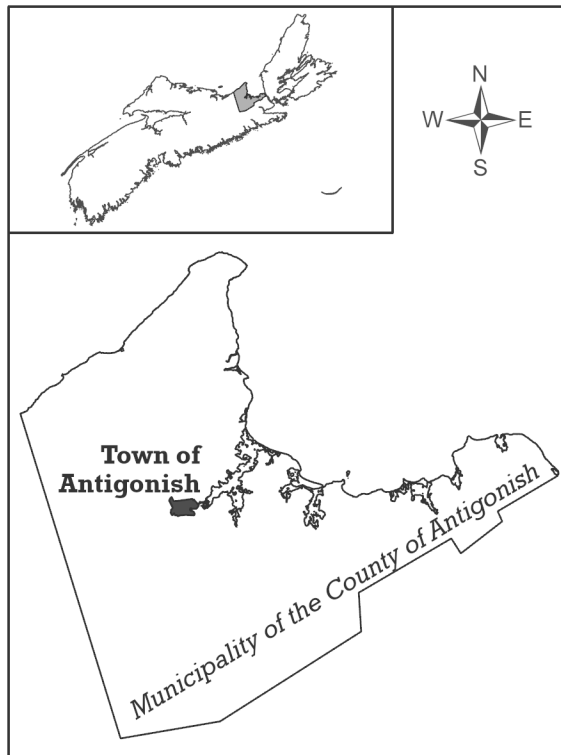
The age-friendly community movement is particularly important in the context of Atlantic Canada, which has the highest proportion of older adults relative to the population than any other region in the country (Statistics Canada, 2022). Nova Scotia also has the highest rates of disability of all provinces in Canada, with over 40% of older adults with at least one disability (Statistics Canada, 2017). Rural areas in Atlantic Canada with rapidly aging populations, such as Antigonish and its surrounding areas, have additional challenges in supporting older adults to age in place and to live an independent and active lifestyle (Keating et al., 2013; Neville et al., 2016). For example, within a rural context, it may not be easy to age in place as individuals are further apart and obtaining services, like groceries, may require travelling longer distances than those in urban areas. However, a typical feature of rural communities is close relationships with those in the community who strive to help one another, making this a possible strength in becoming an age-friendly community (Russell et al., 2021). Developing and implementing age-friendly policies will have a major impact on older adults' physical and mental health, as well as their sense of identity and belonging (Holstein et al., 2011).



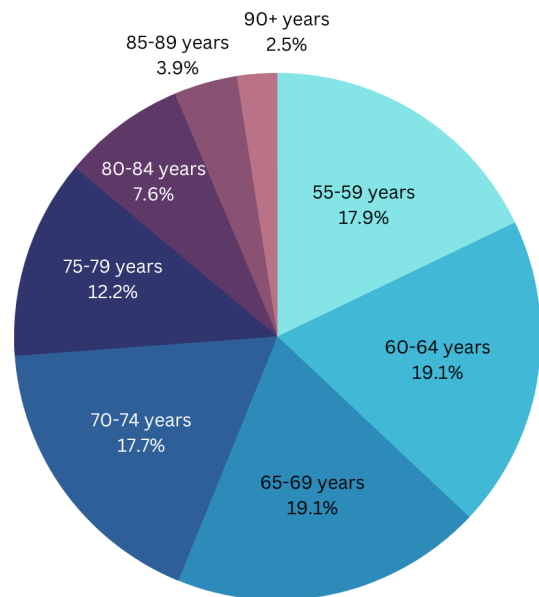
The objective of the study was to hear from older adults and relevant stakeholders in order to identify the strengths, opportunities, and challenges to the Antigonish region becoming an age-friendly community. The expectation was that these insights could inform ongoing discussions among community leaders and among older adults themselves.

## Community Profile

Antigonish County is located in the Northeastern corner of Nova Scotia and lies on the coasts of the Northumberland Strait and St. Georges Bay. The county is comprised of one town (the Town of Antigonish, colloquially referred to as 'Town'), one municipal district (the Municipality of the County of Antigonish, colloquially referred to as 'County'), and one First Nations community (Paq'tnkek Mi'kmaw Nation). This project was focused on the administrative divisions of Town and County (see map of Antigonish County for boundaries). As of July 2022, the county had a total population of 20,629 (Statistics Canada, 2023). The population of the Town of Antigonish was 4,774, and the population of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish was 15,855. The median age in Antigonish county was 45.3 in 2022, which was slightly higher than the provincial average of 44.9. Of the 20,629 residents of the county, 7,960 (38.5%) were older adults (55 years and older). The corresponding pie chart shows the distribution of older adults by age categories.



Antigonish County



Distribution of Older Adults by Age in Antigonish County

## Methods

Data collection for the project took place between October 2022 and February 2023.

We incorporated one survey, two conversation circles, and stakeholder interviews.

The survey targeted older adults in the Antigonish region. The purpose of the survey was to collect information regarding older adults' perceptions of how the region is faring with regards to the eight age-friendly domains. We also included demographic questions (detailed below). A total of 307 older adults responded to the survey. This is a very strong participation rate. Survey respondents are anonymous.

The conversation circles also targeted older adults in the Antigonish region. We held two conversation circles, one at the People's Place Library in Antigonish and one at the St. Andrews Community Centre in St. Andrews, Antigonish County. For these, we had several tables, each with several participants, a facilitator representing the project, and a scribe. There was one main facilitator for each event (Celeste Gotell from the Coalition hosted the event in Antigonish and Adam Perry hosted the event in St. Andrews). We provided light refreshments, and participants were invited to discuss their experiences in relation to each of the eight age-friendly domains. These conversations were not audio recorded. Names and other identifying information were not collected. We had a total of 30 participants.

The one-on-one interviews targeted age-friendly stakeholders, such as service providers from various areas of practice. We interviewed stakeholders that represented each of the eight domains. In order to maintain stakeholder confidentiality, in this report stakeholders are numbered (e.g. "Stakeholder 1", "Stakeholder 2"). We interviewed 10 stakeholders.

Note that p values<sup>1</sup> have been included throughout in order to show the statistical significance of each analysis. Analyses that are statistically significant are marked with an asterisk.

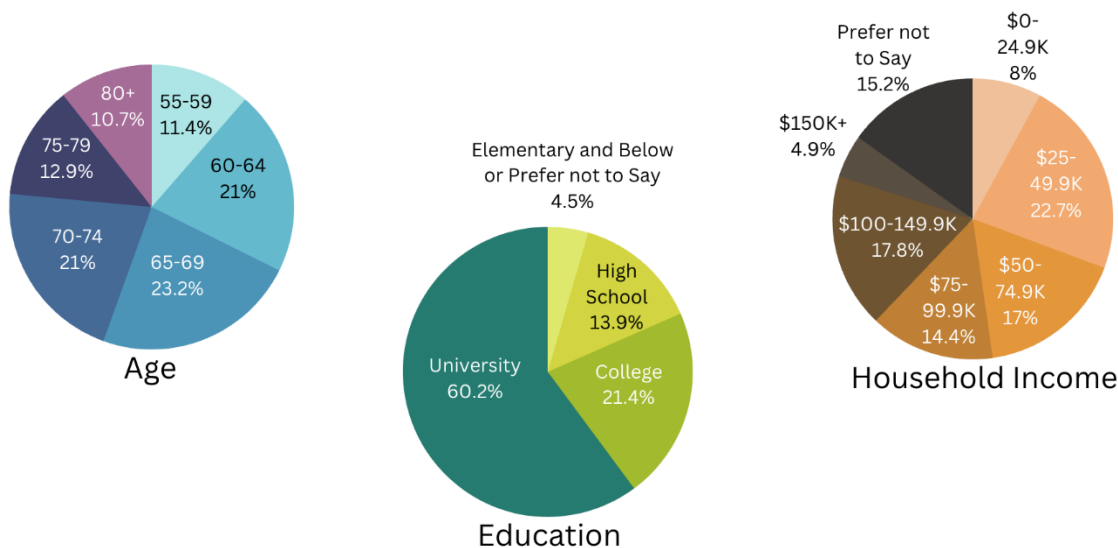
The project received Research Ethics Board approval from St. Francis Xavier University.

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<sup>1</sup> Probability Values (P values) are considered a standard tool in quantitative research to calculate the statistical significance of a given analysis (Naham, 2017).

## Demographics

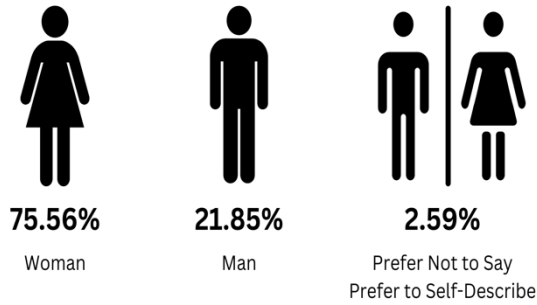
The three most significant demographic variables were age, household income, and education.



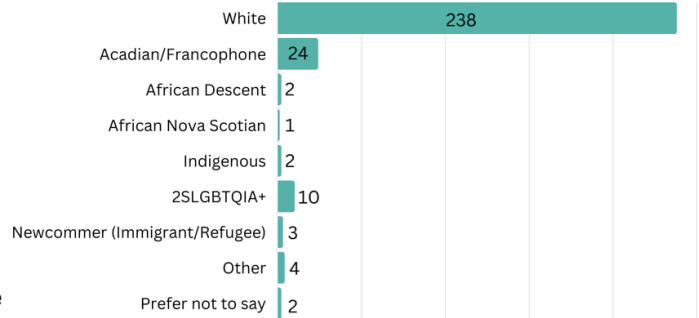
With regards to age, 65% of our survey respondents were between the ages of 60 and 74 (60-64 = 21%; 65-69 = 23.2%; 70-74 = 21%), respondents between 55-59 make up 11.4% of the sample, and 24% of the sample is 75+ (75-79 = 12.9%; 80+ = 10.7%). With regards to household income per annum (This number represents gross household income and does not necessarily take into account the number of people residing in the household), 22.7% of respondents (the largest share), were between \$25,000 - \$49,900. The next three categories are more or less equally represented (\$100,000 - \$149,000 = 17.8%; \$50,000 - \$74,900 = 17%; \$75,000 - \$99,000 = 14.4%). Smaller portions of the respondents reported less than \$24,900 (8%) or more than \$150,000 (4.9%), and a fairly significant portion of respondents chose "prefer not to say" (15.2%). Overall, the demographic numbers in these two categories (age and household income) are variously distributed, meaning that we have good representation from all categories.

With regards to education, the largest share of respondents reported having some university education (60.2%), followed by a college education (21.4%), followed by a high school education (13.9%). A smaller portion of the sample (4.5%) reported either elementary education or below or preferred not to say. The higher representation of university-educated respondents could be related to the fact that Antigonish is a university town, as it is home to St. Francis Xavier University. It is likely that this number would be differently distributed in another region of the province.

## Gender

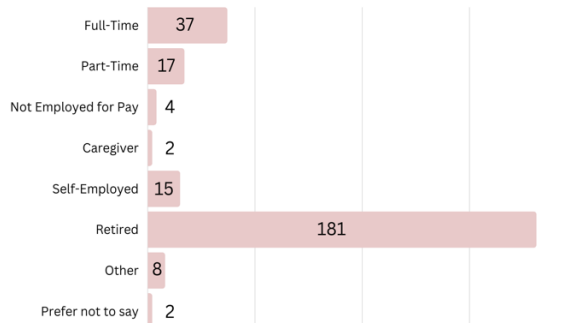


## How Respondents Identify

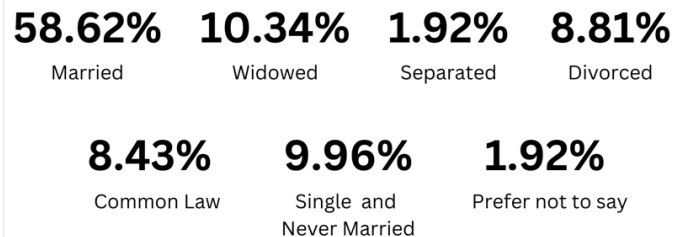


Other demographic data we collected include gender (75.6% women; 21.9% men; 2.6% prefer not to say or prefer to self-describe), race/ethnicity identification (77.5% white), employment status (58.9% retired; 12.1% full time), marital status (58.6% married; 10.3% widowed), and town vs. county residency (66.1% county, 21.8% town). For those who live in the county, the vast majority live within a 20-minute drive from town (86.5%), with the majority of those within 5 minutes from town (colloquially known as 'the Fringe'). We also asked about sexual identity and immigration status, but neither of these categories produced significant numbers.

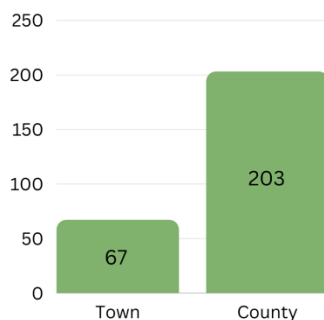
## Employment Status



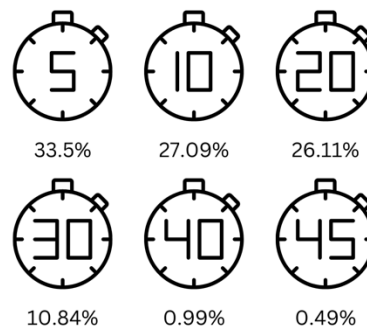
## Marital Status



## Town or County?



## Distance from Town



We did not collect demographic information during the conversation circles.

We have identified the following limitations to the study based on the demographic data collected in the survey:

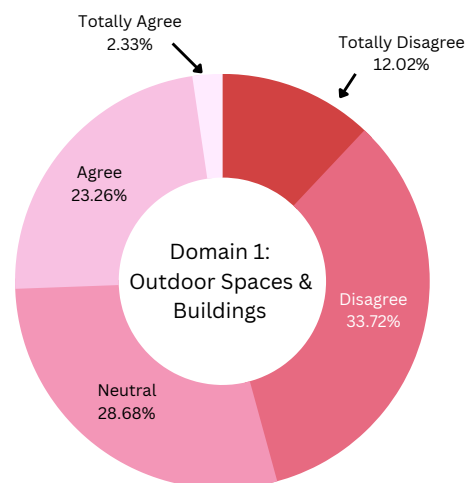
- One limitation of the study is that we did not collect demographic information on disability status or chronic disease. However, we know from previous research that 41% of older adults in Nova Scotia report having at least one disability (Statistics Canada, 2017), and we may deduce that this would be true for our sample as well. As a way to offset this limitation, we were able to capture important details about the experiences of older adults with disabilities from the stakeholder interviews. Future research should explore how an age-friendly approach could support those experiencing cognitive or physical frailty. There is some evidence examining how age friendly policies may impact the lives of older adults with disabilities in urban communities (Herman et al., 2021), yet less is known about this in rural communities.
- Another limitation is that we were not able to capture significant data from Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, and other racialized members of our community, including immigrants and refugees. This is important information to gather for future studies as we know that race and racism are important social and structural determinants of health (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2022), and while we are beginning to know more about how these may intersect with age-friendly community planning (Neville et al., 2018; Syed et al., 2017), less is known about this experience in rural communities.
- A further limitation is that we were not able to capture significant data from older adults who identify as members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Future research is needed to examine these experiences in relation to the age-friendly domains in our community. There is some evidence examining how age friendly policies may impact the lives of older adults who are members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in urban communities (Herman et al., 2021), yet less is known about this in rural communities.

## Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

A component of healthy aging includes accessing the services needed to thrive. Infrastructural accessibility, the focus of the outdoor spaces and buildings domain, is essential to that. This domain focuses on walkable sidewalks, pathways and trails that are well maintained, good accessibility to and within public buildings, and services within walking distance from home.

### Survey Results

The survey asked participants to rate their agreement with the following statement, **“My community is accessible for a walker or wheelchair and welcoming to persons with a wide range of abilities.”** The overall opinion of this domain was negative with just over 45% of participants responding with, “totally disagree” or “disagree.”  $p < 0.001^*$



### Conversation Circle Highlights

The main focuses of this domain in the conversation circles centered around the overall lack of publicly accessible washrooms, a lack of attention to acoustics in many buildings in the town and county, and a general positive outlook of the trails and parks in the town and county.

### Stakeholder Interview Highlight

“Look at Mount Cameron. They cannot walk to town safely. Why has nobody noticed that they are not connected and done something with the sidewalk? In Sylvan Valley there’s a huge senior’s complex, but they can’t walk safely into town. There’s no connecting sidewalk. If they want to walk into town to meet a friend, they can’t do it without having to worry about being hit by a car.” – Stakeholder 8

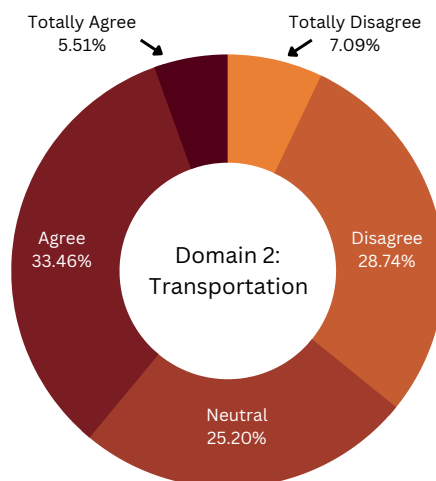
## Transportation

In rural communities, access to transportation is vital for ensuring successful aging through decreasing social isolation. The transportation domain emphasizes the need for proper infrastructure to promote and maintain healthy aging. This includes good roads and light traffic flow, prompt snow removal, vans or shuttle buses available, wheelchair accessible transportation available, and affordable and accessible taxis.

### Survey Results

The survey asked participants to rate their agreement to the following statement, **“Community transportation options and driving conditions meet a variety of needs across persons with a wide range of abilities.”** Opinions were mixed for this domain.

$p = 0.407$



### Conversation Circle Highlights

Participants most often highlighted the inconvenient hours of the Antigonish Community Transit system, the inconvenience of booking Dial-a-Ride services by at least 1 pm the day before, and the increasing cost of taxis in the town and county.

### Stakeholder Interview Highlight

“The statistics say that aging in place is best for everybody. So, the greatest need for that, and for people really affected by poverty, which are a lot of the seniors, is access to transportation, so that they can maintain a quality of life.”

– Stakeholder 5

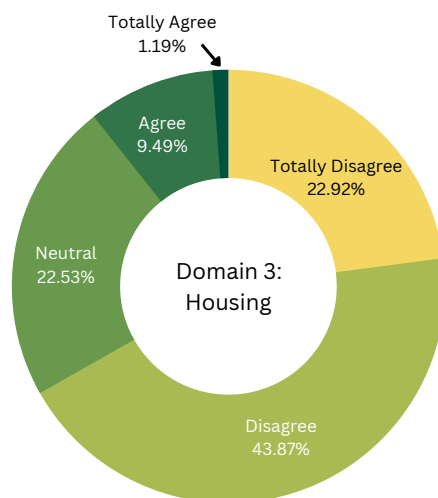


## Housing

Housing is not only a need, but a right. Dependable and affordable housing is vital for healthy aging. This domain includes availability of affordable apartments and independent living options, availability of affordable housing, availability of assisted living options, and proximity of housing to services.

### Survey

The survey asked participants to rate their agreement to the following statement, **“The housing situation is affordable, appropriate and meets a variety of needs across the community.”** Nearly 70% of participants responded with “totally disagree” or “disagree” indicating a negative opinion of the housing in Antigonish Town and County.  $p < 0.001^*$



### Conversation Circle Highlights

One of the overall most discussed highlights of both conversation circles was the lack of affordable housing in Antigonish town and county. Similarly, the accessibility within and around houses was brought up a number of times. As a possible solution to affordability, the concept of co-housing or companion housing for seniors was proposed.

### Stakeholder Interview Highlight

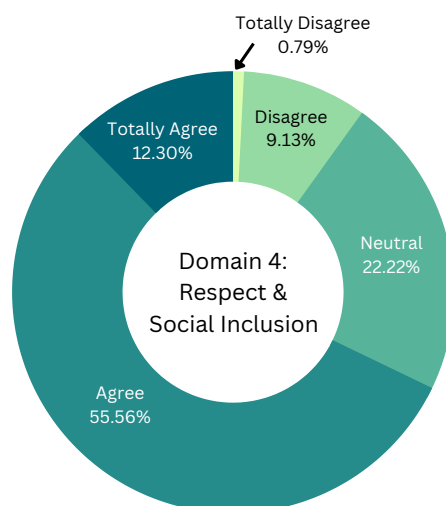
“The seniors out in the county are looking to move in and they can't afford to move in. That's a big issue. They have to sell what they have. Before they can move into town to afford housing.” – Stakeholder 1

## Respect & Social Inclusion

Feeling included and respected not only makes an individual feel good, but also supports good mental health. Feeling respected as an older adult can be hard in certain communities. This domain includes respect, kindness and courtesy across the generations as well as events and awards that recognize the contributions of older adults.

### Survey

The survey asked participants to rate their agreement to the following statement, “**There are opportunities to feel included in activities in the community.**” Only about 30% of participants disagreed or were neutral to this statement, indicating a significant positive outlook toward this domain.  $p < 0.001^*$



### Conversation Circle Highlights

As the second most discussed point of both conversation circles, participants regarded Antigonish town and county as fairly inclusive and respectful. However, they also highlighted that segmentation based on other factors (i.e., race and gender) was present.

### Stakeholder Interview Highlight

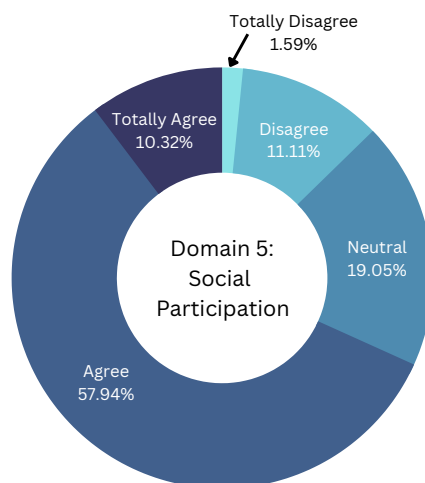
“It’s just because we don’t understand or necessarily respect people who are coming from a generation that’s different from our own. And so, providing an opportunity to show that everybody has something to give really builds that respect, and it helps people to build friendships across generations.” - Stakeholder 7

## Social Participation

Social participation is essential for decreasing the occurrence of social isolation. Participation keeps the body and brain active, decreasing the risk of neurocognitive disorders. This domain emphasizes opportunities for physical recreation or sports (including spectator sports), cultural events (including music and theatre), and non-physical recreation, such as bingo, darts, etc.

### Survey

The survey asked participants to rate their agreement to the following statement, **“There are opportunities to meet people. Activities and events are varied and are accessible.”** Over 70% of participants agreed or totally agreed with the statement, indicating a positive opinion of this domain.  $p < 0.001^*$



### Conversation Circle Highlights

Participants highlighted that though the People’s Place Library is the best resource and source for information, overall the advertising for events in the town and county is quite poor. As well, participants discussed how participation in events in the town and county was negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Stakeholder Interview Highlight

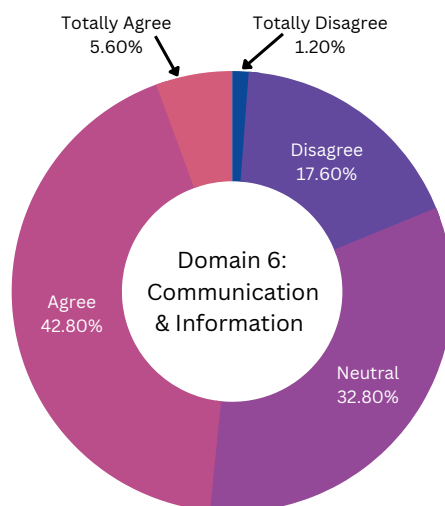
“There are so many little aspects of your well-being that can be benefited if people are choosing to and can access recreation; but for older adults, I feel that the social part changes a lot.” – Stakeholder 9

## Communication & Information

Staying in the know helps decrease social isolation for older adults. Having ways to communicate with peers at a distance is also vital for healthy aging. This domain includes information about events on bulletin boards as well as access to training on how to use computers and the internet.

### Survey

The survey asked participants to rate their agreement to the following statement, **“Printed and digital information is easy to access, is written in understandable language, and the font size is easy to read.”** About 50% of participants agreed with the statement indicating mixed opinions about the communication and information domain.  $p < 0.001^*$



### Conversation Circle Highlights

Since the town and county no longer has a consistent, hard copy local newspaper, there needs to be a “one stop information shop” for news and events. This is especially important for those who do not have access to reliable internet service or do not have strong technological literacy skills.

### Stakeholder Interview Highlight

“We put up posters on our bulletin board. So, people actually come in and see that information. So, that's really important, because, you know, technology is a barrier for people.” – Stakeholder 10

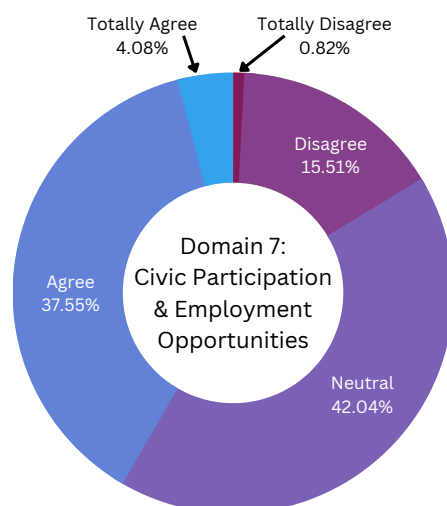
## Civic Participation & Employment Opportunities

Having a means to support others and make a difference fosters positive mental health and creates an environment that supports healthy aging. This domain includes recognition and appreciation for the work of older volunteers, opportunities for paid employment, opportunities to be politically active, and opportunities to contribute to community life.

### Survey

The survey asked participants to rate their agreement with the following statement, **“There are meaningful opportunities to interact with younger generations and others in the community.”** A similar proportion of participants agreed with the statement as those that were neutral toward it, indicating modifications are needed in this domain.

$p < 0.001^*$



### Conversation Circle Highlights

While volunteering is huge and a very important activity in the town and county, participants expressed feeling pressured to volunteer as they were one of few volunteers in their respective organization. This led to participants highlighting the need for intergenerational interaction in volunteering.

### Stakeholder Interview Highlight

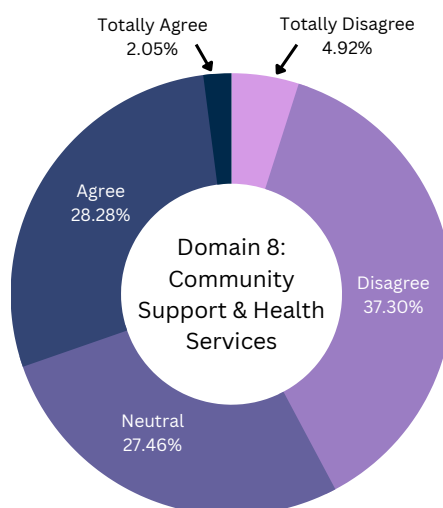
“Volunteering is huge. I do feel there's a need to support our volunteers more because there's a lot of burnout in volunteers.” – Stakeholder 9

## Community Support & Health Services

Knowing community and health services are there when needed creates a sense of security that is vital for healthy aging. This domain focuses on caring and responsive health professionals, provision of home care support, and access to affordable meal programs.

### Survey

The survey asked participants to rate their agreement to the following statement, **“When needing access to community and health services, these services are available and easy to access.”** Over 40% of participants disagreed with this statement which is consistent with the highlights of the Conversation Circles.  $p = 0.008^*$



### Conversation Circle Highlights

Much like the rest of Nova Scotia, participants are feeling the effect of the healthcare crisis. Participants highlighted a lack of physicians, the absence of an after-hours or walk-in clinic, and the general accessibility of health and community services.

### Stakeholder Interview Highlight

“People aren't getting their services; they're not getting basic services if they need them for things like, home care. It's just not available.” – Stakeholder 3

### Infrastructural Domains vs. Social Domains

In our analysis of participants’ perceptions of the eight domains derived from the survey data, it became clear that there was a distinction emerging between those domains that we identify here as ‘infrastructural’ and those that we identify as ‘social’. **Infrastructural domains are those domains that are more related to physical and organizational infrastructures. Social domains are those domains that are more related to civic and community life.** We find that these categories are helpful when assessing the challenges and opportunities facing the Antigonish region in becoming an age-friendly community. Table 1 clarifies which domains we combined to create these two overarching categories.

Infrastructural Domains	Social Domains
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Transportation Housing Community Support and Health Services	Respect and Social Inclusion Social Participation Communication and Information Civic Participation and Employment Opportunities

Table 1

In what follows, we offer an analysis of these two categories in relation to three demographic variables collected as a part of the survey: **age, level of education, and income.**

## Infrastructural Domains

Tables 2, 3 and 4 represent an average of the four survey questions associated with the infrastructural domains. The questions are as follows:

- **OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS:** My community is accessible for a walker or wheelchair and welcoming to persons with a wide range of abilities.
- **TRANSPORTATION:** Community transportation options and driving conditions meet a variety of needs across persons with a wide range of abilities.
- **HOUSING:** The housing situation is affordable, appropriate and meets a variety of needs across the community.
- **COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND HEALTH SERVICES:** When needing access to community and health services, these services are available and easy to access.

Overall, survey respondents have a negative impression of the region's infrastructural domains across all variables. The only variation that we encountered is related to income in so far as the negative impression increases with increased income.



***Crosstabulation with Participant Age (Table 2)***

Structural Domains	Age						
Likert Scale	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80+	Grand Total
Totally Disagree	15.73%	8.37%	3.08%	4.35%	1.09%	0.00%	5.03%
Disagree	50.15%	46.61%	38.22%	34.64%	35.81%	32.48%	39.37%
Neutral	34.12%	41.99%	51.01%	51.89%	58.73%	56.78%	49.40%
Agree	0.00%	3.03%	7.69%	5.61%	4.37%	10.74%	5.47%
Totally Agree	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.51%	0.00%	0.00%	0.73%
Grand Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

$p = 0.044^*$

Main Finding:

- The overall perception of the region's infrastructural domains is negative (44.4% including both Totally Disagree and Disagree) regardless of respondents' age.

***Crosstabulation with Participants' Education Level (Table 3)***

Structural Domains	Education				
Likert Scale	Elementary and Below or Prefer Not to Say	High School	College	University	Grand Total
Totally Disagree	19.12%	5.38%	2.33%	5.49%	5.03%
Disagree	33.82%	32.37%	32.34%	43.84%	39.37%
Neutral	47.06%	58.37%	57.31%	44.41%	49.40%
Agree	0.00%	3.98%	8.02%	5.06%	5.47%
Totally Agree	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.19%	0.73%
Grand Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

$p < 0.001^*$

## Age-Friendly Communities Antigonish

### Main Finding:

- The overall perception of the region's infrastructural domains is negative (44.4% including both Totally Disagree and Disagree) regardless of respondents' education level.

### *Crosstabulation With Participants' Household Income (Table 4)*

Structural Domains	Income							
Likert Scale	\$0-24.9K	\$25K-49.9K	\$50K-74.9K	\$75K-99.9K	\$100K-149.9K	\$150K+	Prefer Not to Say	Grand Total
Totally Disagree	4.56%	9.75%	2.75%	1.40%	2.98%	4.89%	6.71%	5.03%
Disagree	39.65%	37.72%	41.07%	40.68%	47.60%	41.85%	27.44%	39.37%
Neutral	41.40%	49.87%	41.58%	48.70%	46.12%	53.26%	65.85%	49.40%
Agree	14.39%	2.66%	14.60%	4.21%	3.31%	0.00%	0.00%	5.47%
Totally Agree	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.01%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.73%
Grand Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

$p = 0.735$

### Main Finding:

- The perception of the region's infrastructural domains decreases with higher household income. The higher the income among survey respondents, the more negative the perception of the region's infrastructural domains.

## Social Domains

Tables 5, 6 and 7 represent an average of the four survey questions associated with the social domains. The questions are as follows:

- **RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION:** There are opportunities to feel included in activities in the community.
- **SOCIAL PARTICIPATION:** There are opportunities to meet people. Activities and events are varied and are accessible.
- **COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION:** Printed and digital information is easy to access, is written in understandable language, and the font size is easy to read.
- **CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES:** There are meaningful opportunities to interact with younger generations and others in the community.

Overall, survey respondents have a positive impression of the region's social domains across all variables. The only variations that we encountered are related to age and income. With regards to age, positive impressions increase with increased age. With regards to income, positive impressions also increase with increased income. The latter finding indicates that older adults with lower incomes feel less socially connected to the community than those with higher incomes. We did an additional crosstabulation analysis of age in relation to income. We found that generally, income decreases with older age. As well, we found most low-income participants (\$0-\$24.9k per annum per household) were in the 80+ age category (24%). This income in relation to age analysis suggests that, even though positive impressions of the social domains seem to increase with age, the oldest of the older adults in the Antigonish region, in particular those at the lower end of the income spectrum, may be the most vulnerable to social isolation.

*Crosstabulation with Participants' Age (Table 5)*

Social Domains	Age						
Likert Scale	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80+	Grand Total
Totally Disagree	0.00%	0.00%	0.80%	0.00%	0.89%	0.00%	0.31%
Disagree	10.79%	7.89%	8.28%	18.57%	6.55%	8.05%	10.32%
Neutral	66.54%	48.99%	50.80%	29.74%	47.03%	40.66%	46.18%
Agree	22.68%	43.12%	35.35%	48.85%	41.06%	45.79%	40.28%
Totally Agree	0.00%	0.00%	4.78%	2.84%	4.46%	5.49%	2.91%
Grand Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

$p = 0.612$

Main Finding:

- The overall perception of the region's social domains is positive (43% including both Totally Agree and Agree) regardless of respondents' age. Note that generally, positive impressions of the social domains increase with respondents' age.

*Crosstabulation with Participants' Education Level (Table 6)*

Social Domains	Education				
Likert Scale	Elementary and Below or Prefer Not to Say	High School	College	University	Grand Total
Totally Disagree	5.66%	0.00%	0.89%	0.00%	0.31%
Disagree	11.32%	10.80%	11.71%	9.69%	10.32%
Neutral	60.38%	57.96%	34.75%	47.14%	46.18%
Agree	22.64%	31.25%	49.99%	39.44%	40.28%
Totally Agree	0.00%	0.00%	2.66%	3.73%	2.91%
Grand Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

$p = 0.003^*$ 

Main Finding:

- There is moderately positive perception (40%) (Agree category only) of the region's social domains regardless of education levels.

*Crosstabulation with Participants' Household Income (Table 7)*

Social Domains	Income							
Likert Scale	\$0-24.9K	\$25K-49.9K	\$50K-74.9K	\$75K-99.9K	\$100K-149.9K	\$150K+	Prefer Not to Say	Grand Total
Totally Disagree	4.28%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.31%
Disagree	18.72%	14.21%	12.68%	6.16%	6.65%	0.00%	10.40%	10.32%
Neutral	49.21%	52.57%	40.55%	41.79%	40.45%	50.00%	51.96%	46.18%
Agree	19.78%	33.22%	43.31%	44.35%	49.79%	50.00%	37.64%	40.28%
Totally Agree	8.02%	0.00%	3.46%	7.69%	3.11%	0.00%	0.00%	2.91%
Grand Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

 $p = 0.035^*$ 

Main Finding:

- There is moderately positive perception (40%) (Agree category only) of the region's social domains regardless of income. Within this category, however, positive impressions increase with increased income, with 20% of low-income respondents (below \$25k) reporting a positive perception compared to 50% of high-income respondents (above \$100K) reporting a positive perception.

## Summary

### *Infrastructural Domains*

The infrastructural domains deal with questions surrounding how older adults' needs are considered in the physical and environmental infrastructures that make up a community, including housing, health care, transportation, and communication services. Older adults' perceptions of the infrastructural domains are important to document as these domains have major implications for older adults' inclusion in public life and spaces. Overall, survey respondents have a negative view of the infrastructural domains, suggesting that the Antigonish region could do a better job of developing the physical and environmental infrastructure required to becoming a community that is responsive to the needs of older adults. This is an important finding, as we know that physical environments and access to health services are both major factors that determine individual and population health (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2022).

The negative perspectives communicated through the survey were also prevalent among the stakeholders interviewed, and stakeholders raised the issues of ageism, and in particular how it intersects with ableism, a number of times in relation to the infrastructural exclusion of older adults from the community. Stakeholder 8, who works in the area of ageing and mental health, talked about ageism and ableism as forms of discrimination that are normalized, and which continue to be acceptable in society. This stakeholder discussed how there is an unspoken assumption that everyone moves through the community in the same ways, and as a result, the exclusion of older adults from the physical environment has become an unspoken norm.

"We've got lots of physical and environmental barriers in this town. People who are experiencing them are often framed as a problem and a cost. So, it's viewed from a resource perspective."

– Stakeholder 3

With the stakeholder interviews, the topic of sidewalks in particular highlighted the problem of physical and environmental barriers for older adults, emphasizing how ageism intersects with ableism, or the discrimination and oppression against those with disabilities (Bogart and Dunn, 2019). Forty percent of older adults in Nova Scotia have at least one disability (Statistics Canada, 2017). As such, attending to the problems of ageism and ableism should be of significant concern when considering improvements to the infrastructural domains for older adults. Stakeholders 4 and 8 in particular discussed how the general lack of connecting sidewalks, the absence of sidewalks in areas predominantly inhabited by older adults, and unsafe sidewalk infrastructure for

wheelchairs are all major concerns that need to be addressed when considering age-friendly community planning.

“There should be spaces to walk and roll. There should be spaces where a person can walk beside a person in a wheelchair. There is nowhere in Antigonish where we can do that. There is nowhere.”

– Stakeholder 4

In addition to the issues related to the built environment discussed above, transportation was regarded as a major barrier to the Antigonish region becoming an age-friendly community. There is limited public transportation, meaning that older adults must rely on private transportation, often over long distances.

“If you don't have a vehicle here, or a family to take you around, you're really out of luck. One of the big things with the public transportation that exists currently is that it's only available from nine to five. So, you couldn't go anywhere in the evening. It's difficult to be spontaneous.”

– Stakeholder 3

“If you think about the distance to amenities such as the hospital or the grocery store, as that distance becomes bigger, transportation becomes more challenging, or more expensive if it's a taxi.”

– Stakeholder 2

That being said, Antigonish Community Transit does have a fixed bus route on weekdays (excluding evenings) and door-to-door service (requires a reservation 24-hours in advance). The service does currently have accessible vehicles. While stakeholders and respondents recognized that this is an essential service, limited access arose in the stakeholder interviews as negatively affecting quality of life and reducing access to necessary services, such as groceries and medical appointments.

“I think what exists has been really helpful. But it's not necessarily focused on just the aging population. It is trying to serve a broad population. And it doesn't necessarily go to a lot of places. It doesn't necessarily open a lot of opportunities.”

– Stakeholder 2

The lack of access to accessible transit during evenings and weekends is especially onerous for those older adults with disabilities, as during these times they may be reliant

on ambulance services or other privately organized transportation to access to medical and other services.

“Older adults with disabilities are trapped in their homes. They can’t go out at night because there’s no transit. They have to take an ambulance sometimes to the hospital because there’s no transit.”

– Stakeholder 4

When we integrate the lenses of ageism and ableism to the infrastructural aspects surrounding the discussion of aging in place or of aging well, the built environment and transportation arise as crucial domains on which to focus attention, especially for those older adults who experience social isolation as a result of a mobility disability.

Access to affordable and accessible housing also arose as an important barrier to becoming an age-friendly community. There is a sense that there is limited affordable housing, and what housing does exist is not accessible. This is particularly an issue for older adults in rural parts of the region with limited incomes for whom it can be difficult to move to town to be closer to amenities.

“A couple I know live out in the county and live in a mobile home. He’s 83 and has heart trouble. They are talking about moving to town. They don’t have a lot of income. That’s a big issue. They have to sell what they have before they can move because there is no affordable housing.”

– Stakeholder 1

While big issues such as the built environment, access to transportation, and housing dominated our discussions, many of the complaints captured in the conversation circles in particular could be described as smaller everyday environmental barriers, or more subtle exclusions, with a lack of access to accessible washrooms in the region taking precedence. This is important, as it highlights how even those older adults who do not identify as having a disability experience age-related exclusions in their daily interactions with the infrastructural domains. One conversation circle participant for example discussed how he used to visit different beaches around the county but stopped going because of a lack of access to washrooms. The lack of accessible washrooms contributes to older adults’ social isolation as they may feel unwelcome in public spaces.

“It’s not just about having accessible washrooms. It’s about having access to public washrooms spaced properly throughout so people can get there quickly, because incontinence is a huge, huge issue in terms of whether people go out in public and



whether people engage in social events. A lot of people won't go somewhere if they don't know that there's a bathroom that they can use."

– Stakeholder 2

The issue of washroom accessibility is one that raises questions with regards to both private spaces (such as restaurants and stores) and public spaces (such as libraries, churches, outdoor trails, and beaches). Both the conversation circles and the stakeholder interviews discussed how only a few private businesses have accessible washrooms, how the library only recently made their washrooms accessible to wheelchairs, and how while churches may be otherwise accessible to those with mobility disabilities, they generally do not have accessible washrooms. Signage and communication related to accessible washrooms was also raised as a concern, as even if these are available (such as at the People's Place Library), older adults may not always be aware of their location.

The fact that Antigonish is a rural community also came up as presenting its own unique barriers with regards to these domains, housing and transportation in particular. Looking at older adults' experiences of the infrastructural domains through the lens of ageism and ableism as they intersect with rurality may help us to understand why these domains are experienced so negatively across the board. Most of our survey and conversation circle participants were residents of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish.

### ***Social Domains***

The perception of social connectivity is important to document because the social circumstances of older adults, for example social inequities, access to social supports, and regular social engagement, can greatly impact the health of older adults. For example, higher levels of social vulnerability have been found to be associated with higher rates of mortality (Andrew et al., 2008). Stakeholder 2, who works in the area of mobility and aging, stresses the need to focus on reducing loneliness among older adults in order to improve health outcomes:

"Social isolation has huge health implications. We need healthcare providers to people with social sources within the community. It could be prescribing meetings with friends, or trying to connect people with what exists within the community."

– Stakeholder 2

We also know that social isolation among older adults is a challenge in rural communities. This was summarized by Stakeholder 3, who works in the area of older adult mental health:

“The social isolation of older adults, because of ageism, has a distinct look in rural communities, especially in Nova Scotia, where we have such pronounced population aging that’s informed by things like outward migration and people going away for school and work.” – Stakeholder 3

However, despite the challenges associated with social isolation and rural communities, we found that respondents from the Antigonish region have a generally positive view of those domains that we characterize as the social domains. While we must be mindful of how social isolation intersects with the infrastructural domains above, such as access to transportation and safe sidewalks, these findings suggest that there is relatively strong social connectivity and engagement among older adults in the region. Services such as the People’s Place Library and the Antigonish County Adult Learning Association offer spaces and opportunities for older adults to come together and be social with other older adults and other members of the community. Stakeholder interviews emphasized how for those older adults who are more physically active, The Antigonish 55+ Games in 2019 energized a whole cohort of older adult volunteers in the community. This is evident from the increased interest in pickleball among older adults across the region. In the words of Stakeholder 8 whose role it is to support local volunteers:

“They’re incredible. They do their own training; they do any fundraising. They are ready to do anything for the pickleball community.” – Stakeholder 8

In the stakeholder interviews, the topic of increasing and enhancing community recreational activities arose as a central theme. For example, Stakeholders 8 and 9, who organize recreational activities in the region, discussed the importance of developing community recreational hubs in outlying communities, such as St. Andrews or Arisaig, so that older adults can recreate in their own communities, without having to travel to town. Of all the recreational and social activities discussed in the stakeholder interviews, pickleball was the most frequent, as older adults are self-organizing in both town and county around this activity. In the words of Stakeholder 9:

“Pickleball is emerging as a very popular activity for older adults, especially. It’s an activity that is welcoming to a lot of abilities. It’s an awesome way to get moving and a huge way to socialize.” – Stakeholder 9

That being said, some stakeholders are concerned that a focus on physical recreational activities such as pickleball excludes those older adults with physical disabilities and state a need to develop recreational opportunities for differently abled older adults. With this in mind, Stakeholder 9 discussed how current initiatives are under way to develop more

inclusive recreational programming for older adults, such as accessible multi-sport programs that would include things like cards and washer toss, in both town and county community centres. In recent years, The People's Place Library on Main Street has developed into an important hub for older adult recreation, offering community-based programming such as a knitting circle and a monthly older adult Community Café. Stakeholder 10, a representative from the library stated:

"We have a knitting circle that meets every Wednesday. Not to generalize, but it does attract a lot of older adults, women especially." – Stakeholder 10

It is important to emphasize, however, that opportunities for socializing are always contingent on the facility with which older adults are able to navigate the infrastructural domains, discussed above. One stakeholder in particular expressed the need to offer more programming online as a way to reach older adults who may have trouble leaving their homes as a result of a disability or lack of access to transportation. The COVID-19 pandemic provided some opportunities to test out this format, with some success. In the words of Stakeholder 10:

"When everything shut down, we did the knitting circle online. It was interesting. For a lot of people, it was an opportunity to learn how to use Zoom. One of the ladies, her grandchildren set it up for her so she could use it. There is still one person that does it online because she can't get here in person." – Stakeholder 10

Stakeholders also recognize the important contributions that older adults make to the Antigonish community through volunteerism. Stakeholder 1, who is the chair of a community organization board, for example, discussed the importance of tapping into the skills and experience that older adults bring to their community service.

"A lot of older adults have worked in a job for 30-40 years, and they want to do something different, and they've always wanted to help other people. Passion is extremely important; and knowledge and skills to go with the passion. It's a winning combination." – Stakeholder 1

Many of the volunteerism examples from the stakeholder interviews were related to community-based governance. In the words of Stakeholder 7, who is the executive director of a small non-profit:

"I would say that our most involved board members, the ones who are able to do the most between meetings, or who are able to think about the issues that we need to address tend to be seniors who have a lot of experience to bring to the table. We've

got a new board chair this year who is an older adult and is probably the most involved board chair that I've worked with. I really appreciate that, because there is such a wealth of experience that we haven't had in a long time." – Stakeholder 7

Stakeholders also discussed the importance of older adult volunteering on a smaller everyday scale. Stakeholder 1 gave the example of a woman in her 80s who decided to volunteer in a community garden associated with community housing:

"We've had seniors that moved into town and that had to give up their gardens in the county. They lived in the county all their life and were missing their gardens, so they got involved in the community garden. There is one woman who is well into her 80s and is quite a gardener, so that is really nice." – Stakeholder 1

However, there was a sense among conversation circle participants in both Antigonish and St. Andrews that older adults in the community carry a heavy burden with regards to civic participation, as they feel that they are overly represented on volunteer boards and other leadership roles. Burnout was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and stakeholders noted how civic participation among older adults has not yet rebounded and discussed the need to engage younger adults.

"Unfortunately, with the pandemic, a lot of older adult groups never really did come alive again. They no longer exist." – Stakeholder 9

This has major implications for community-based engagement not only among older adults themselves but for the community more generally. Burnout among this population, with regards to governance in particular, can result in a broader decline of grassroots initiatives and community-led services, of which the Antigonish region has a rich history. In the words of Stakeholder 1:

"With COVID, a lot of older seniors stopped going out. We've lost board members because of that. It's a huge worry for the engagement of communities. If you don't have strong community organizations, you don't have a strong community. It is just so important." – Stakeholder 1

Importantly, the survey data suggests that positive perceptions of the social domains decreased with lower incomes, leading us to speculate that there is higher social vulnerability among older adults in the region with lower socioeconomic status. The finding suggests that the region's lower-income older adults are more socially isolated than those older adults with more financial stability. Worryingly, the majority of lower-income participants (24%) were in the 80+ age category, meaning there is a relationship

between older age, income status, and vulnerability to social isolation. This is particularly concerning because it highlights how social vulnerability, and the negative health consequences associated with it (Andrew et al., 2008), are exacerbated by poverty in our region. This is an important finding as it aligns with what we already know about how income and social status are crucial factors that determine individual and population health and health inequities (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2022). The People's Place Library has recently partnered with the Antigonish Coalition to End Poverty to start the Antigonish Community Fridge and Pantry, which is housed in the library, and which is available to all community members. While not specifically targeting older adults, the success of this initiative speaks to the need for the community to address the issue of poverty. Stakeholder 1, who volunteers as an anti-poverty and accessible housing advocate, said:

"We've had a number of older adults that are coming our way through the anti-poverty coalition. We are looking at eradicating poverty for all demographics and we know that there a lot of seniors who do struggle." – Stakeholder 1

This aligns with other stakeholder perspectives on how poverty intersects with social engagement. For example, Stakeholder 7, who organizes educational programming for older adults in the region discussed how poverty interferes with older adults' ability to engage with social engagement opportunities, even if those opportunities are free of charge.

"We do have a lot of people who are experiencing food insecurity. And since the food bank is only open for like a day a month or something, those kinds of things will often stop people from coming if they need to access basic life necessities first." – Stakeholder 7

## Recommendations

### *Community-based Recommendations*

- **Expanding the Reach of the Antigonish Aging Well Together Coalition.** Given the relative strength of the region's social domains as discussed above, we recommend that Community Links and the Antigonish Aging Well Together Coalition be intentional with regards to expanding its reach. We suggest that these groups build their network of older adults throughout the region, engage older adults in a process of asset mapping, and to develop grassroots strategies for community-led age-friendly development.
- **Collaborate with Municipal Partners.** We suggest that Community Links and the Antigonish Aging Well Together Coalition present the findings of this research project to the senior staff and both municipal councils, and to work collaboratively with municipal partners to promote the development of an age-friendly community.

### *Recommendations for Government*

- **Endorse the Report in Principle.** We recommend that both municipalities endorse the report in principle.
- **Appoint an Age-Friendly Advisory Working Group.** We recommend that both municipalities appoint an age-friendly advisory working group comprised of both councillors and staff to meet with the Antigonish Aging Well Together Coalition to review the findings of this research project and to produce actionable items based on our recommendations.
- **Adopt the Age-Friendly Framework.** We recommend that both municipalities explore the option of accessing funding through the age-friendly community planning stream and continue to promote healthy aging and support initiatives to improve the lives of older adults in the region. Adopting an age-friendly framework and working collaboratively with organizations like the Ageing well Together Coalition are essential for future decisions on services, recreation, housing, and the built-environment.
- **Review Capital Plans.** We recommend that both municipalities review their 5-year Capital Plans to include funding to build new sidewalks as well as the on-going

maintenance of existing sidewalks. Particular attention should be paid to building sidewalks in areas where many older adults live (such as Mount Cameron), and to connecting existing sidewalks. We also recommend that public spaces such as The Landing are accessible to those with mobility disabilities. We further recommend that the municipalities continue to provide and increase their financial support for accessible and affordable housing, and improvements to transportation services.

- **Improve Transit.** This domain requires on-going financial commitment from several government jurisdictions, including municipal, provincial, and federal. We recommend that the Province, the Municipalities and Antigonish Community Transit Society (ACTS) work together collaboratively to develop a more robust and responsive accessible transit system that better reflects the needs of residents. The recent review undertaken of the Fixed Bus Route by ACTS will inform and assist in developing strategies for improving transportation for older adults, particularly those with mobility disabilities. Two main concerns identified include improved access to bus transit on evenings or weekends, and extended hours and convenience of the dial-a-ride service.
- **Re-establish Seniors' Safety Coordinator.** We recommend that the municipalities, in collaboration with the provincial government, explore the possibility of re-establishing the position of a Seniors' Safety Coordinator for the region. In several municipalities this position is co-funded by the municipality, with a \$25,000 annual grant provided by the province. This person's role is essential to support older adults who require services (i.e., transit, housing, accessible health services).

### ***Recommendations for Local Businesses***

- **Build More Accessible Washrooms.** Not all of the build environment and accessibility issues addressed in this report are the responsibility of the municipal government. This is especially true of accessible washrooms, as these are often located within retail and business establishments. We recommend that the Community Links and the Antigonish Aging Well Together Coalition partner with the Antigonish Chamber of Commerce to discuss this issue in order to apply for provincial accessibility funding to help address some of these issues.

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