

Blue Hill  
Brooklin  
Brooksville  
Castine  
Deer Isle  
Penobscot  
Sedgwick  
Stonington  
Surry



## Community Assessment Regional Data Summary

Age-Friendly Coastal Communities (AFCC) is a regional initiative coordinated by Healthy Peninsula that includes Blue Hill, Brooklin, Brooksville, Castine, Deer Isle, Penobscot, Sedgwick, Stonington, and Surry.

- Between October 28 and December 31, 2017, AFCC conducted a survey of the nine communities to learn what is working in our area to support healthy, active, engaged aging and to identify areas for improvement.
- 1000 surveys were mailed to a randomized selection of homes across the 9 towns and an electronic survey was widely distributed through e-mail lists, partner agencies, and social media. In addition, hard copies were distributed in various locations (libraries, town offices) and events (Senior Coffeehouse, happy hours, movie screenings, and more).
- A total of 765 residents responded to the survey. Most respondents (62%) think of the region (either the Blue Hill Peninsula or Deer Isle/Stonington) as their community, rather than just their town. However, a significant minority (28%) think of their town as their community and 10% say that “it depends.” Clearly, people in the area are deeply attached to both the region and to their individual communities.
- A complete report of the survey results is available from Healthy Peninsula (<https://healthypeninsula.org/>). Results from this assessment will guide the creation of a community-driven action plan, ready to launch in late 2018.

### Key Findings about the Age-Friendly Coastal Communities 9-Town Region:

- 1) The median age of respondents is 67. Many (51%) are retired but some continue to work in retirement. Almost half (47%) of respondents work full-time, part-time, or seasonally.
- 2) Less than half (42%) have lived in the area 20+ years but even newcomers want to age in the area. Ninety percent said it was important to remain in the community; 82% want to age in their current home. People look forward to spending time with friends (77%) and staying active in the community (56%). Despite the desire to stay, 83% said changes are needed to make our region an ideal place to age and 10% worry about being socially isolated in old age.
- 3) The factor most likely to influence a decision to relocate is the availability medical care, services, or facilities, followed by the desire to live closer to family or friends and the need for transportation.
- 4) Most people use the post office (94%), town office (85%), library (69%), and parks/walking trails (67%). The lack of, or poor condition of, sidewalks and lack of parking were the most frequently cited barriers to using town amenities.

**AGE-FRIENDLY COASTAL COMMUNITIES seeks to enhance the lives of all people who live in the nine-town region that includes Blue Hill, Brooklin, Brooksville, Castine, Deer Isle, Penobscot, Sedgwick, Stonington, and Surry, with a special focus on older adults, by:**

- Advising the town select boards, as well as the community at large, about policy and infrastructure changes that will make our towns more livable;
- Creating partnerships between and among organizations to enhance existing services;
- Encouraging volunteers and organizations to create programs and services that are needed to inspire residents to age safely and independently in our communities and to be as active in the social, economic, and civic life of the community as they want to be.

- 5) 72% said it is easy to find information about community events, services, and resources. The most popular places to look for information are TV, family and friends, church, online, and the Weekly Packet/Castine Patriot/Island Ad-Vantages.
- 6) Most people (71%) are as social as they want to be. They visit with family and friends (78%), go to restaurants (77%), enjoy exercise or sport (53%), and volunteer (43%).
- 7) Significantly, 29% of respondents are socially isolated. The top barriers to social contact are: event times (47%), no one to go with (42%), and distance (31%). The risk for social isolation is greatest for men and for the 28% who live alone.
- 8) Home ownership is common; 90% of respondents own their homes. 38% of respondents live in homes 50 or more years old, houses whose age makes them more likely to need modification and repair. Poor insulation was the most commonly cited barrier to keeping a home warm enough in winter, followed by the cost of heating fuel.
- 9) Access to trustworthy, affordable home repair contractors and help with seasonal chores are top needs cited by respondents across the region.
- 10) 56% of respondents spend time volunteering and an additional 12% would like to find meaningful volunteer opportunities.
- 11) Most people (95%) drive themselves to the places they need and want to go. A minority get rides from family and friends (14%) or walk (24%). People who live on the Blue Hill Peninsula or Deer Isle/Stonington know they must travel distances to access medical services, do errands, and enjoy social opportunities. People were willing to travel farthest for medical appointments and less likely to be willing to travel 10+ miles for errands and socialization. Driving at night, the cost of operating a car, the need for public transportation, and discomfort asking for rides are common barriers to getting around.
- 12) 79% of people said they have all the health care services they need. More than one-quarter (26%) of respondents had fallen in the past year and 35% have concerns about falling. To address their concerns, people are most likely to exercise, rearrange furniture, and improve lighting; they are least likely to have looked for information about fall prevention or taken a fall prevention class.
- 13) Most (57%) have Advance Care Directives, however 30% of those who do not are interested in getting help to complete one.
- 14) Almost all the respondents (98%) are able to get enough food. People most commonly get food from the supermarket (96%), farmer's market (47%), and their own gardens (45%).

**“Dearth of frequent, affordable public transportation impacts all ages and affects employability, socialization, access to services, etc.”**

**“Would like to see a list of qualified handymen for the elderly that the town offices would provide.”**

**“Would love more walking paths for seniors, adult ed classes, pool.”**

**“Need the state to step up to provide property tax relief.”**

Survey respondents

## Conclusions:

- AFCC will build on the accomplishments of the Thriving in Place Downeast partnerships and on the community strengths of each town and the entire region to meet the needs identified in this assessment.
- Older residents of the Blue Hill Peninsula and Deer Isle/Stonington are a tremendous resource; they volunteer and are eager to help craft solutions that will make the area more livable for people of all ages.
- Although many respondents said they feel respected and included, almost half (46%) do not. AFCC will promote opportunities for people to be as involved as they want to be in all aspects of life in their regional and individual town communities.

A program of Health Peninsula and its community partners

## For more information:

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