

Understanding Mobility Needs for Older Adults in Wisconsin

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16. Abstract The Wisconsin Department of Health Services predicts a 72% increase in the population aged 65 and older in the state by 2040, indicating a growing demand for alternative transportation services. To address this need and support healthy aging, this research project was conducted to gather data on the travel patterns, challenges, and recommendations of older adults, as well as the perspectives of transportation service providers in Wisconsin. Through surveys distributed to older adults, 1650 valid responses were collected from various counties and tribes, along with 103 transportation service providers participating in the survey. The findings revealed a preference for self-driving and reliance on friends and family for transportation, limited use of local public and private services, and concerns about schedule availability and route choices. The study also highlighted a potential digital divide among older adults in terms of information technology usage. These insights offer valuable recommendations to enhance transportation services for older adults in Wisconsin based on the research findings.			
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A comprehensive research project was conducted in Wisconsin to gather insights on the travel patterns, challenges, and recommendations from older adults, as well as the perspectives of transportation service providers for improving mobility for older adults. The project aimed to enhance transportation options for older individuals, considering the projected increase in Wisconsin's older population and the unique needs of this demographic.

The project included distributing two versions of a questionnaire survey, resulting in 1650 valid responses from older adults across multiple counties and tribes. Additionally, 103 transportation service providers, including transit agencies, specialized service providers, and tribal aging programs, participated in the survey. The project also involved conducting focus group meetings with older adults and transportation service providers to delve deeper into the gathered insights.

The survey findings revealed that older adults preferred driving themselves or relying on family and friends for transportation, with limited use of local public and private services, partly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Grocery shopping emerged as the primary reason for trips, followed by medical purposes. The study also highlighted a potential digital divide among older adults, with nearly half lacking internet access, while phone calls were the preferred method for requesting ride services.

Regarding satisfaction with transportation services, older adults generally expressed high ratings or had no opinion, but concerns were raised regarding schedule availability, route choices, accessibility features, coordination with healthcare providers, communication, and driver performance.

Based on the analysis of survey information and insights gathered from the focus groups, the research team presents eight recommendations to enhance transportation services for older adults in Wisconsin:

1. **Collaboration and Funding:** Foster collaboration among government agencies, community organizations, and transportation providers to leverage resources and expertise. Seek additional funding through grants and partnerships to support accessible and affordable transportation options for older adults.
2. **Coordination:** Integrate survey feedback into transportation plans and establish partnerships with clinics and hospitals. Coordinate closely with healthcare providers

to develop tailored transportation solutions for older patients. Consolidate various transportation options under one comprehensive program per county.

3. **Service Expansion:** Expand transportation options for older adults, including wheelchair-accessible choices. Increase vehicle availability, drivers, and volunteer drivers to meet demand. Adjust schedules and routes to enhance coverage, especially in rural areas and during evenings and weekends.
4. **Accessibility:** Provide reliable and free transportation for individuals with disabilities. Develop protocols and guidelines to address the physical and cognitive needs of older adults during travel. Ensure safety and comfort throughout the journey.
5. **Training:** Provide specialized training to transportation providers on age-friendly communication, assistance with mobility aids, and understanding the unique needs of older adults. Implement stringent safety measures to instill confidence in older passengers.
6. **Focus on Rural Communities:** Focus on rural small communities and ensure the availability of volunteer drivers. Foster meaningful interactions between volunteer drivers and older passengers to address social isolation. Address tax-related concerns and provide fair compensation to attract and retain qualified individuals.
7. **Marketing:** Develop targeted marketing campaigns to raise awareness about available transportation options among older adults and their families. Provide comprehensive and user-friendly information resources to address the lack of knowledge. Offer clear information on options, schedules, fares, and eligibility criteria.
8. **Technology:** Address connectivity issues by ensuring widespread availability of internet services. Provide real-time tracking and information about transportation options through user-friendly systems, apps, or websites designed with older adult input. Implement easy reservation and payment systems. Promote education on technology usage among older adults.

By implementing these recommendations, policymakers, transportation providers, and community organizations can work together to create a more inclusive, accessible, and age-friendly transportation system in Wisconsin. Further research and investigation are suggested to refine and deepen the understanding of older adults' transportation needs.

1. INTRODUCTION

Data provided by Wisconsin Department of Health Services (WDHS) show that the Wisconsin population aged 65 and older will grow by 640,000 people - an increase of 72% between 2015 and 2040. In addition, the population is rapidly aging in rural areas, especially in the northern half of the state. These counties have moderate to high rates of poverty, based on U.S. Department of Agriculture data, as well as a higher level of health concerns per County Health Rankings.

Although driving a personal vehicle will remain the preferred method of transportation for older adults in Wisconsin, around 18% of older adults in Wisconsin over the age of 65 do not drive in their daily life due to age, disabilities, and/or financial burdens. When driving is not an option, it is important to improve the transition process from driving to non-driving and ensure that mobility options are available for older adults.

Among the alternate transportation services available for older adults are: conventional public transportation (e.g., buses, light rail, subways, shuttles and trams, ferries, etc.) and paratransit services (i.e., minibuses or small vans equipped to handle wheelchairs for seniors or those with disabilities). In addition, some private and specialized transportation services such as Supplemental Transportation Programs for Seniors (STPs), and volunteer driver programs may be options in rural Wisconsin where conventional bus service is not available.

Technology has transformed transportation to better assist older adults in providing access to the services such as real-time notification of time of arrival or departure of transit/paratransit services; web and/or call center-based reservations to arrange transportation services for older adults (e.g., myride2, Ride Connection, Link for Care). More recently, online transportation network companies (TNCs) have launched pilot programs for older Americans in states with large aging populations, e.g., UberWAV, UberASSIST, Lift Hero, SilverRide; and some third-party shared ride services have also been developed for older adults through partnerships with local organizations, e.g., Freedom in Motion, GreatCall, RideWith24, GoGoGrandparent.

Despite these changes, a survey conducted by the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center reported that 40% of older adults who do not drive are deprived of activities and errands they need or enjoy. These respondents consider the existing transportation alternatives to be inadequate and not responsive to their needs, and they mostly rely on family and friends for transportation. Meanwhile, a very recent travel behavior survey for older adults in the Southeast Wisconsin region conducted by a UWM research team

showed similar trends.

Relevant literature has identified five attributes that determine whether an alternative transportation service is “senior friendly.” A senior-friendly transportation service needs to be available, accessible, acceptable, adaptable and affordable. To provide alternative transportation services that are senior friendly, research is needed to better understand how these senior-friendly attributes map to older adults’ needs.

1.1. Project Objectives

The objectives of this research are to: (1) provide the public transit community with an improved understanding of travel needs and barriers for older adults in using public transport and paratransit services; (2) examine the relevant factors and anticipated trends (e.g., new information and communication technologies) that may affect attitudes, travel patterns, and lifestyle options of older adults in Wisconsin; and (3) provide guidance on how these changes may shape Wisconsin public transport marketing strategies, operations improvements, service design, and future capital investments.

1.2. Technical Approach to Practice Research

To address elderly transportation issues and oversee the project, an advisory committee was established, consisting of various stakeholders involved in transportation planning and operation across the state. A literature review was conducted to examine successful transportation systems catering to aging communities. Additionally, two versions of a questionnaire survey were developed and distributed to older adults and transportation service providers statewide, gathering data on socio-demographic characteristics, travel behavior, challenges, transportation needs, attitudes on emerging technologies, and suggestions for enhancements. Complementing these surveys, a focus group survey was conducted to gain further understanding of the underlying issues and factors influencing the travel behavior of older adults.

1.3. Report Organization

The report is organized into six chapters, each addressing specific aspects of the project. Chapter 1 serves as the introduction, providing an overview of the project's objective, scope,

technical approach, and report organization. Chapter 2 focuses on the literature review, discussing the mobility needs among older adults, successful practices for improving elderly mobility, and conclusions and recommendations from earlier studies. Chapter 3 examines Wisconsin's aging trends and current programs, including elderly mobility programs, elderly health programs, generalized public transportation programs, and elderly outreach and education initiatives. Chapter 4 presents the results of the statewide survey, covering characteristics of respondents, current transportation service usage, awareness and preferences, opinions on service changes and emerging technologies, the impact of the Covid-19 crisis, demand trends, concerns, and suggestions. Similarly, Chapter 5 delves into focus group studies, examining the characteristics of respondents, transportation service usage, awareness and preferences, opinions on service changes and emerging technologies, the impact of the Covid-19 crisis, demand trends, concerns, and suggestions. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes the report by summarizing key findings, discussing policy implications, and offering recommendations for future work.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Mobility Needs among Older Adults

According to a report published by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), by 2040 approximately 20 percent of the population of the United States will be over the age of 65 (Gabriel, 2018). Over the next 20 years, Wisconsin's trend will be the same but with a larger share of older adults – more than 23% (*State of Wisconsin Aging Plan for Older People Federal*, 2019). So, numerous aspects must be taken into account in the planning for future older adults. Age-friendly cities have a social and physical environment that allows older persons to age comfortably and actively (Date, 2018). As the population ages, establishing effective methods to improve health and well-being is becoming a major public health concern. Daily mobility has been demonstrated to improve the well-being of older individuals by encouraging healthy and independent living (Cuignet et al., 2020). Low-income, ethnic, and older residents in inner-city areas are heavily reliant on public transportation, rely heavily on walking for transportation, and so have unique mobility requirements (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2019).

Wisconsin's existing transport infrastructure and specialized transit systems face considerable problems with baby boomer aging (Bittner et al., 2011). However, when faced with mobility limitations or the inability to travel to destinations in later life, healthy aging becomes a challenge (Han et al., 2021). As a result, it is critical that we research the travel habits of older individuals to promote healthy aging. In general, three types of variables influence travel mode choices and patterns: individual, built environment, and transportation system characteristics (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2019).

2.1.1. Individual Characteristics

Physical capacities and functions of older individuals differ from those of younger adults. Travel habits and behavior are influenced by age, and the number of daily travels and journey lengths usually decreases with age. Income also has an impact on travel since higher income groups may afford more transit alternatives and have more housing options. Gender and race also have an influence on travel needs and patterns. For instance, women may have different travel requirements due to caregiving responsibilities or safety concerns, while racial disparities in access to transportation services may result in differing travel patterns among different racial groups.

2.1.2. Built Environmental Characteristics

The built environment has an impact on how we travel, especially for forms of transportation that expose users to the public sphere, such as walking and riding on public transportation. Several studies have been conducted to investigate how the built environment influences older people's walking and physical activity. According to researchers, the level of neighborhood walkability is an essential element that influences older people's travel patterns. High residential and commercial density, diversified uses, strong street connections, and accessibility to destinations are common characteristics of walkable communities. In contrast, very low levels of walking among older individuals in the United States living in the suburbs reflect the layout and pedestrian unfriendliness of the suburban built environment (Rosenbloom, 2009). The safety of older persons' travel habits is significantly affected by crime, road accidents, and falls (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2019). The provision of safe and accessible walking infrastructure is of primary importance to older adults. Travel comfort and convenience concerns impact elderly individuals more than younger adults (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2019).

2.1.3. Transportation System Characteristics

The personal vehicle is the most popular mode of transportation for older individuals, although driving skill declines with age and is dependent on economic means (Date, 2018). While public transportation is an alternative to driving, it has a number of problems for older individuals. Compared with higher-income younger individuals, low-income older adults, particularly older women, use fewer vehicles, rely more on public transportation, and are more likely to be passengers than drivers (Date, 2018).

Although the majority of older individuals in the United States reside in suburban and rural regions, traditional public transportation options (e.g., bus, subway, rail) are not as prevalent as those in urban areas (Rosenbloom, 2009). It is noticeable that 21% of adults aged 65 and over do not drive in the United States and where driving is not an option, mobility needs of older adults become a significant problem to be addressed (Han et al., 2021). For this aging group walking is an option. Bad weather (snow and rain), health issues, and limited built facilities to walk in suburbs could be a barrier to this. Getting or requesting rides from family or friends could make older individuals feel more dependent. Considering these barriers, better mobility programs and policies should be available to improve elderly transportation.

2.2. Successful Special Programs and Policies on Improving Elderly Mobility

This sub-section provides a comprehensive literature review of special programs and policies designed to enhance elderly mobility. The focus is primarily on programs and policies implemented in Wisconsin, the United States at a national level, and other notable initiatives across Europe. By examining these selected regions, we aim to gain insights into the range of strategies employed globally to address the mobility needs of older adults.

2.2.1. Nationwide Programs and Policies

2.2.1.1. AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) network of age-friendly states was established in 2012 as an independent affiliate of the WHO Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. The sole aim of the age-friendly community is to actively work towards making one's town, city, county or state a great place to live for people of all ages, which includes the aging population.

In the United States, 49 out of 50 states have at least one city enrolled in this community, which adds up to a total of 771 communities nationwide (AARP, 2023). The action plans, in general, contain a wide range of initiatives and policies that encourage senior mobility and livability. The majority of the action plan is based on the results of community surveys identifying needs within the eight Domains of Livability that influence the health and quality of life of older adults (AARP, 2023). These eight domains include transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, health services and community support, communication and information, and outdoor spaces and buildings (AARP, n.d., 2023).

For example, the Dexter, Maine plan aimed to improve access, safety, and social interaction for older persons and community residents of all ages, as well as to encourage people of all ages to engage actively and safely in community events (AARP, 2019). Grand Island, Nebraska has spearheaded important research to build a long-term transportation strategy, as well as a long-term bike and pedestrian study that is incorporated into its age-friendly efforts (AARP, 2018b). The concept in Louisville, Kentucky calls for the community to compile a list of affordable contractors ready to give home repair services at a fair cost to older persons, as well as an intergenerational mentorship program between maintenance volunteer groups and older adults (AARP, 2016a). The Honolulu County, Hawaii plan contains measures to lobby for better sidewalks, improved walkability, truly affordable housing, accessible transit,

and increased healthcare access (AARP, 2013)., Washington, DC plans to provide paid time off for new parents and caregivers of disabled residents (AARP, 2012). California's Oakland County Focus on housing affordability and aging in place created and implemented a shared rental housing program that matches older persons with housemates, as well as disseminating information on certified home repair service providers for home safety improvements (AARP, 2018a). Tucson, Arizona promotes affordable housing for seniors through enhancing the distribution of federal grants to low-income seniors, as well as expanding housing alternatives for persons with disabilities and those who desire to age in place by giving funding for house upgrades to improve accessibility. The initiative also encourages older residents to volunteer and participate in activities to fight social isolation (AARP, 2016b). Table 2.2 illustrates the cities in Wisconsin that prioritize senior mobility needs.

Table 2.1. Cities in Wisconsin that prioritize Senior Mobility Needs (AARP, 2023)

US City	Livability Index Score
Appleton	58
Greendale	62
La Crosse	64
Madison	66
Oshkosh	56
Reedsburg	58
Sheboygan	65
Shorewood	65
Stevens Point	58
Wausau	58
Wauwatosa	60
West Bend	59

2.2.1.2. Federal Transit Administration (FTA) FY20 Mobility for All

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides financial and technical assistance to local public transit systems, including buses, subways, light rail, commuter rail, trolleys, and ferries. (FTA, n.d.-a). Since 1964, the Federal Transit Administration has worked with state and local governments to develop and improve public transportation systems by spending more than \$12 billion each year (FTA, n.d.-b). These investments have helped to modernize public transport and extend services to small and rural towns who previously had no transit opportunities.

FTA Grants also include funding for the betterment of older adults’ mobility. For example, the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority, using FTA grants will be providing better

connections to healthcare and other destinations for people with low incomes, older adults and people in New Orleans East (FTA, 2020). Metro West Regional Transit authority, MA will use grants to develop new technology to expand senior transportation using an innovative micro transit approach. Maine Department of Transportation, ME, will fill gaps in service and improve access and mobility for older adults through on demand bus services. Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada, NV, will focus on outreach and education to enable older adults to successfully navigate RTC's transit systems. Greenville Pickens Area Transportation Study (GPATS), SC, will develop a coordinated demand response software to improve mobility to vital community services for older adults, people with disabilities and others (FTA, 2020).

2.2.2. Other Programs and Policies around the World

Population ageing is a global phenomenon: almost every country in the world will see an increase in the number and proportion of older people. The number of elderly people (65+) around the globe is expected to double by 2050, from 703 million in 2019 to 1.5 billion (UN, 2020). Some examples of the countries around the world that have programs and policies that prioritize senior mobility will be presented in this sub-section, which is mainly in Europe.

2.2.2.1. *Europe*

In Europe there have been extensive studies about the aging class. Johnson, R. (Johnson et al., 2017) demonstrated in their research what measures exist in Europe at the national and EU levels that strive to enhance older people's mobility through specialized, age-friendly aspects of transportation systems. Some examples of European countries that prioritize older adult's mobility include Hungary, which allows free travel for people above age 65 on domestic routes and a largely discounted travel for retired people under 65. Hungary's village caretaker program provides a local person with a minimum 8 seat minibus to take care of needs of inhabitants. While the service include more than transport, much of the caretaker's time is spent on transport. Switzerland's rules and regulations to ensure safety on streets and adherence towards barrier freedom in public transport will promote improvement in senior mobility. The United Kingdom's resource guide for local authorities, transport solutions for older people, covers examples such as concessionary travel, accessibility planning, service integration, community transport, rural transport, access for all, walking and cycling, car use, car sharing, personal security and safety, staff training, and information provision (Johnson et al., 2017).



Figure 2.1. World Map of Age-Friendly Partner Cities (WHO, 2007)

Influencing active aging is a crucial element of mobility, especially accessible and inexpensive public transit. It is a subject that is widely discussed in various domains. The ability to travel around the city influences social and civic engagement and access to health and community services (WHO, 2007). Global Age-Friendly Cities, a guide by WHO (WHO, 2007), refers to a checklist that will meet age-friendly transportation requirements. This guide includes:

- Information – Older adults should be provided with information on how to use public transport, and the available range of transport options (i.e., legible and easily accessible timetables with detailed and clear indication about the routes of buses).
- Community Feature - Community transport services including volunteer driver and shuttle services should be available to take older people to specific events and places.
- Taxis - Affordable, comfortable, and easily accessible taxis with subsidized fares, and room for wheelchair/walking frame. Availability of courteous and helpful drivers.
- Roads - Well maintained, wide and well-lit roads with traffic calming devices, signalized and clearly marked intersections along with covered drains and clearly visible signages. The traffic has to be well regulated. Strictly enforced road rules and

well-educated drivers who follow rules.

- Driving Competence - Refresher driving courses are provided and promoted.
- Parking - Prioritized, affordable parking should be provided close to buildings for older and disabled people. Drop-off and pick-up bays close to buildings and transport stops should be provided for handicapped and older people.

2.3. Summary

In a review of literature, aging in rural geographies is relatively understudied compared with analyses of older adults and their transportation needs in urban locations. Some researchers focusing on the travel behavior of rural older adults have indicated that compared with those residing in urban areas, older adults in rural areas typically make fewer but longer trips and use transportation services less often, and they often need to travel across county borders to healthcare providers, shopping, and other activities. However, since transportation funding is often from county sources, most available public transit services are subjected to county borders that prevent rural public transport users from crossing the county borders and limit their use of transportation service. Services in rural locations are less likely to adapt to shifting needs of an aging population from both state and market actions.

3. WISCONSIN AGING TRENDS AND CURRENT PROGRAMS

3.1. Wisconsin Aging Trends

Wisconsin's population is aging, with rural areas seeing a greater rate of aging. The number of persons aged 65 and older is expected to grow by 640,000, an increase of 72% (Figure 1) between 2015 and 2040, according to the data provided by Wisconsin Department of Health Service. Northern Wisconsin, compared with other Wisconsin towns and counties, is expected to experience the most significant demographic change (Yu et al., 2019) as illustrated in Figure 3.1. By 2040, according to projections, three out of every ten inhabitants in each Northern Wisconsin county will become senior citizens (age 65 or older). Eighteen counties in Wisconsin are projected to have at least 33% of their total population aged 65 and older (Egan-Robertson, 2013). Despite the overall trend of significant population percentage growth in northern Wisconsin, it is important to note that certain large urban areas, such as Dane County with a growth of 73,091 older adults, Milwaukee County with 56,813, and Waukesha County with 46,470, will experience substantial increases in the absolute number of older adults' population.

Table 3.1. Projected Population and Increase by Age Group in Wisconsin (Egan-Robertson, 2013)

Age Group	Census 2010	Projected 2020	Percentage change (2010 to 2020)	Projected 2030	Percentage change (2020 to 2030)	Projected 2040	Percentage change (2030 to 2040)
0 to 4	358443	367375	2.49%	378340	2.98%	373940	-1.16%
05 to 24	1530305	1514625	-1.02%	1571400	3.75%	1571365	0.00%
25 to 44	1447360	1492505	3.12%	1537485	3.01%	1493595	-2.85%
45 to 64	1573564	1566645	-0.44%	1464365	-6.53%	1517370	3.62%
65 to 84	658809	929800	41.13%	1251210	34.57%	1251765	0.04%
85 and over	118505	134130	13.19%	173110	29.06%	283600	63.83%
Total	5686986	6005080	5.59%	6375910	6.18%	6491635	1.82%

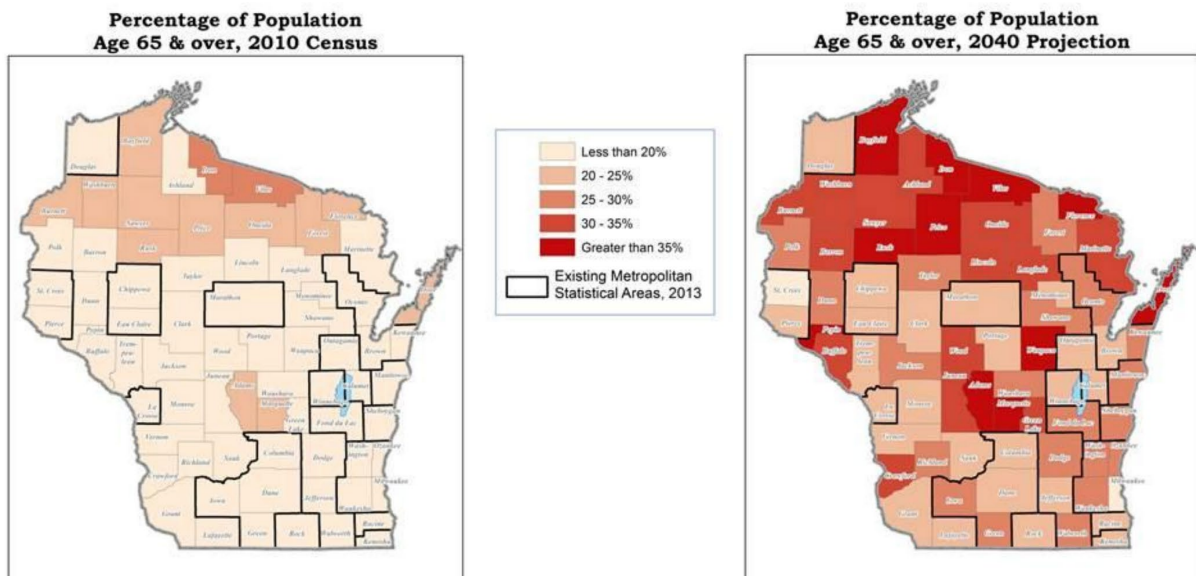


Figure 3.1. Percentage of Population Age 65 and Older by County in Wisconsin (Egan-Robertson, 2013)

3.1.1. Aging Population Challenges

Three significant challenges are faced by the aging population, namely mobility, age-related diseases, and poverty. These challenges have a profound impact on the well-being and quality of life of older adults. Mobility limitations can restrict their access to essential services and social activities, while age-related diseases pose health risks and require appropriate healthcare support. Additionally, poverty among older adults can further exacerbate these challenges, making it difficult to meet their basic needs and access necessary resources. Addressing these challenges effectively is crucial to ensuring a positive and dignified aging experience for seniors.

3.1.1.1. Mobility

By 2040, more than one in five Wisconsinites will be over age 65 (Figure 3.2). As the population of seniors grows, many of its older members—especially women and the disabled—will face serious mobility constraints, often with little family assistance (Bittner et al., 2011). Milwaukee County currently has the largest number of older adult residents in Wisconsin. Many counties with small older adult populations, especially in the northern and western regions of the state, are expected to experience rapid growth over the next few years. Counties across the state are expected to see dramatic growth in their older adult populations, often in areas where access to transportation services is constrained by low population densities.

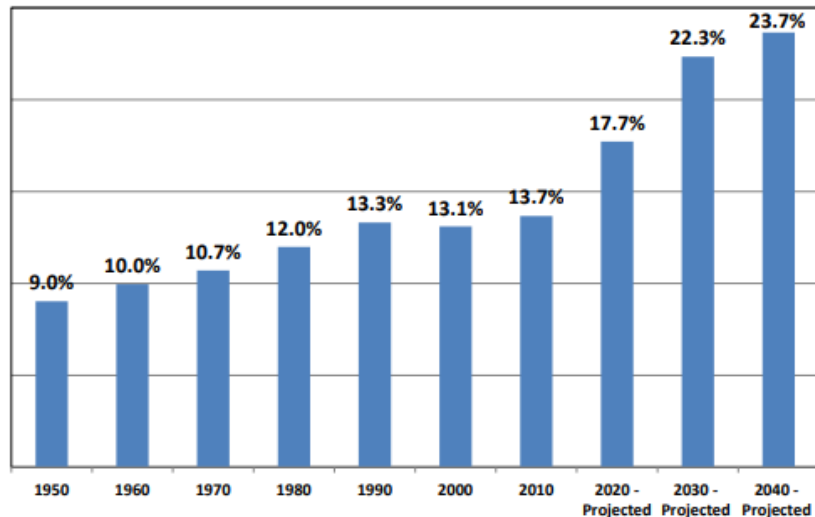


Figure 3.2. Wisconsin, Ages 65 and Older, Share of total Population (Wisconsin Department of Health Services, 2018)

Driving is a difficult task. In Wisconsin, a driver must be functionally capable of safely operating a motor vehicle to keep the license. Physical, mental, and emotional health conditions are all significant considerations for determining a driver's functional capacity to drive. Health issues might impair the judgment and expertise required to drive safely. The capacity of older adults to drive independently for necessary journeys may become less practical as they age. No/limited access to a car, no/limited access to public transportation, vast distances to destinations, cost concerns, and other health challenges are the top five mobility hurdles, in order of the most prohibitive (Yu et al., 2019). These hurdles may be preventing older individuals with mobility issues from traveling to their primary destinations, such as medical appointments, shopping for necessities, attending community or civic events, and visiting friends and family (Bittner et al., 2011).

3.1.1.2. Age Related Diseases

A variety of diseases can create physical and cognitive issues, making it more difficult to drive safely. As a person gets older, the chances of being diagnosed with one or more conditions that make it difficult to be a safe driver increases. These conditions include dementia, difficulty in vision, awareness, movement, and others such as usage of different medications. Retirement planning is crucial while transferring to older adults' life (Andrew, 2012).

According to the Alzheimer's Association, 5.3 million individuals in the United States are living with Alzheimer's disease. This equates to Alzheimer's affecting approximately 1 in 9 individuals over the age of 65 and 1 in 3 over the age of 85 (Brookmeyer et al., 2011). In

2015, 115,000 people in Wisconsin were expected to have dementia. That figure is predicted to rise to 242,000 people with dementia by 2040. The estimated increases in dementia prevalence reflect this expected growth rate. Rural communities in Wisconsin are quickly aging, with the effect being most obvious in the state's northern half. In this part of the state, the increase is expected to be faster than average. The sheer number of people affected by Alzheimer's disease is staggering.

3.1.1.3. Poverty

According to the US Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, around 7.4 percent of Wisconsinites aged 65 and up live in poverty. Seniors living in poverty are more likely to have difficulty obtaining enough transportation for obvious reasons, and even low-cost transportation services may be a financial strain. The highest poverty rates were evident mainly in rural counties in the northwest and southwest corners of the state (Wisconsin Department of Health Services, 2018).

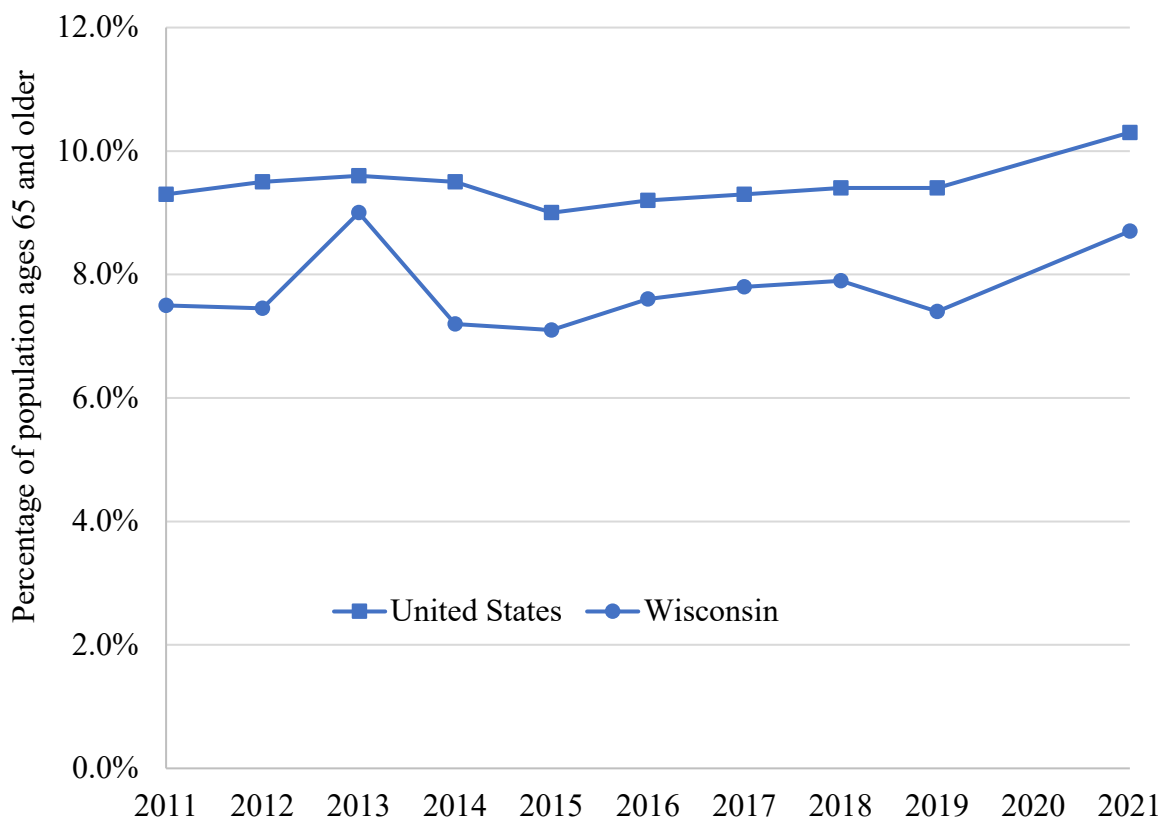


Figure 3.3. Percentage of adults ages 65 and older who live below the poverty level in Wisconsin and the United States (AHR, n.d.)

3.2. Wisconsin Generalized Public Transportation Programs

Wisconsin's public transportation systems include county-wide transit systems, multi-county transit systems, fixed-route systems, shared-ride taxis, and shuttle and inter-city services, according to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) (Figure 3.4).

These systems provide a transportation network at the county level, providing transit services to those traveling inside the county. Rusk County, Dunn County, Clark County, Grant County, Door County, Washington County, Ozaukee County, Waukesha County, Milwaukee County, Walworth County, and western Kenosha County all have their own transit systems.

Multicounty Transit systems provide transit service between two or more counties through a collaborative partnership.

In Wisconsin, fixed route services are provided along with paratransit services or a mix of paratransit and demand responsive services. Fixed route services follow a set schedule, which varies from one county or system to the next. In several counties across Wisconsin, shared ride taxi services are available. They are open to all users, although the older adults and people with impairments are the ones who use them the most. Shared ride taxis may pick up and drop off customers in route to the destination of another passenger. Typically, the service must be planned one day prior to the intended trip date. Lac du Flambeau Transit system is an example of tribal public transit that provides on-demand service operating within the local and extended areas of the Lac du Flambeau with funding provided through FHA, BIA, and WisDOT.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation offers a shuttle bus service for those in need of transportation to get to work. The service is available in Racine, Kenosha, Walworth, Milwaukee, Washington, and Ozaukee counties. Railroads in Wisconsin serve passengers through Amtrak passenger rail service and Metra. Most of the intercity travel routes in Wisconsin are daily intercity bus routes provided by Indian Trails, Lamers Bus Lines, and Jefferson Lines.

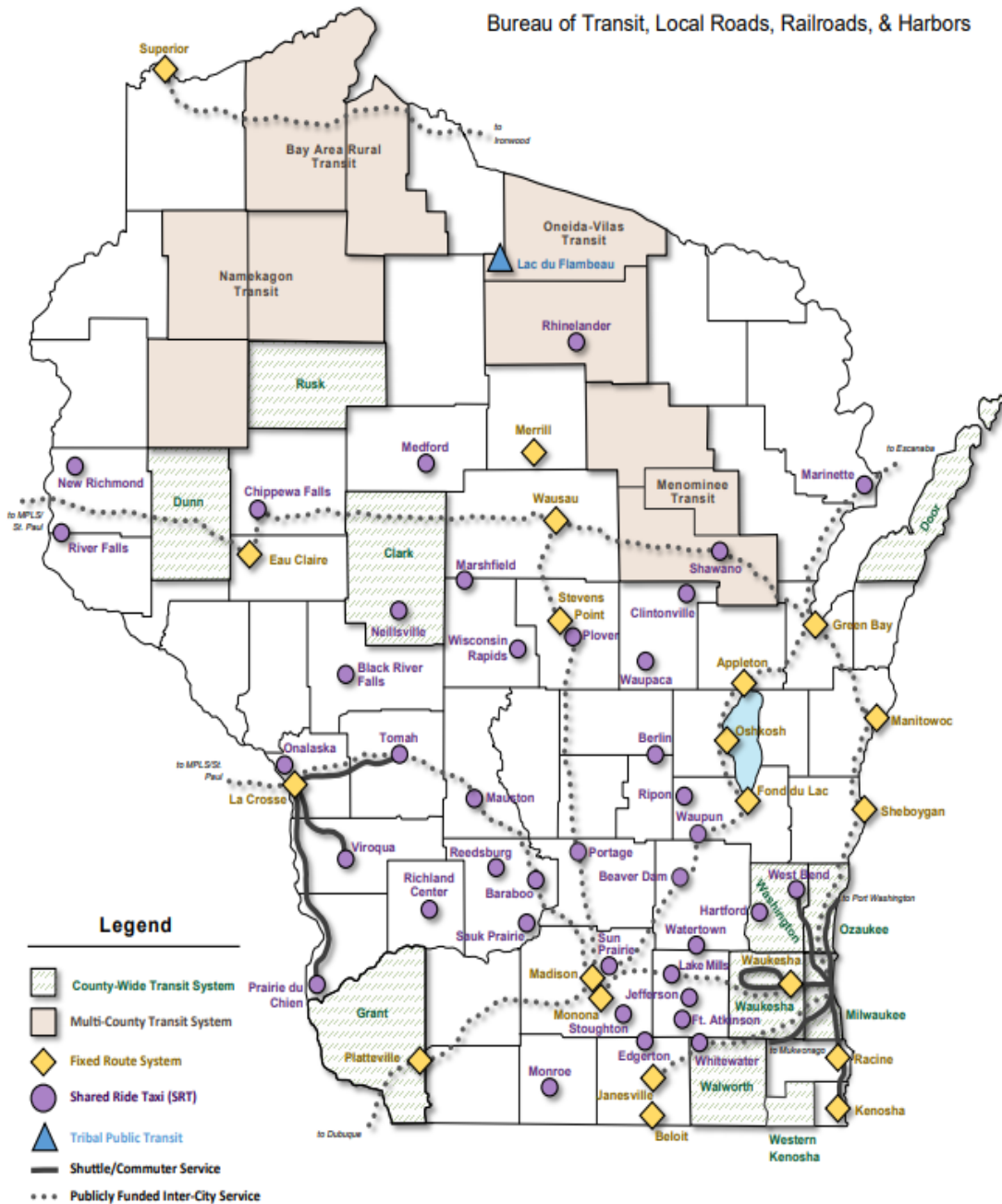


Figure 3.4. Wisconsin Public Transit System 2021 [10]

3.3. Wisconsin Mobility Programs for Older Adults

3.3.1. Specialized Transit Program

The Specialized Transportation Assistance Program (s. 85.21), Tribal Transportation for Elders (s. 85.215), Older adults and Disabled Transportation Capital Assistance Program (Section 5310/s. 85.22), and the New Freedom Initiative are the four main specialized transit programs that WisDOT administers to support older adults' mobility. Each program has its own set of objectives, processes for implementation, financing sources, and prerequisites.

The purpose of WisDOT's Specialized Transit Services is to give additional assistance to help seniors (65 and older) and Americans with disabilities overcome barriers to fully participate in society and access to basic community services. The initiative aims to provide people with disabilities with mobility options that go beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Individuals who are transportation-challenged encounter distinct problems in obtaining services, depending on whether they live in the city, the country, or the suburbs. Furthermore, the geographical dispersion of mobility-disadvantaged people makes it difficult for human assistance providers to provide transportation to their clients.

Funding is available to counties, other local government bodies, and non-profit groups. Labor, gasoline, maintenance, volunteer drivers, vouchers, and other operating costs are all included. Vehicles, equipment, and mobility management positions are examples of capital costs. There are some challenges that must be addressed while administering such programs. In Wisconsin, the share of senior citizens is increasing. Residents are increasingly opting to age in place and preserve their freedom. As a result, there is a growing demand for specialized transportation. Providing specialized transportation service is getting more difficult, especially in rural areas of the state where population density is lower, distances to services are larger, and finding paid and volunteer drivers is becoming increasingly difficult.

Possible policy and budget opportunities include increasing the funding available for specialized transit programs and reestablishing formalized coordination efforts among state agencies with transportation interests (e.g., Transportation, Health Service and Veterans Affairs) (*Wisconsin Department of Transportation Transit Assistance Programs*, n.d.).

3.3.2. Volunteer Driver Program

Volunteer transportation is an alternate shared option that has a lot of potential to serve the target community. Over 60 volunteer driving programs exist in Wisconsin (Carrie Diamond, 2020). Volunteer transportation could help older adults and people with disabilities. The Greater WI Agency on Aging Resources, Inc. conducted a survey in 2019 to identify volunteer programs in Wisconsin. In many areas, the volunteer driver program is the only transportation service available to those who cannot or do not drive. The Department of Transportation is looking at ways to improve mobility options for older adults, especially in rural areas. A volunteer driver program can be found in almost every county in the state. Volunteer drivers are a cost-effective (but not free) way to put private resources to work for the public good. Volunteer drivers provide a high level of service to some of the state's most

vulnerable individuals, usually door to door. Individuals who are unable to traverse a traditional system, those with dementia, and dialysis patients who require early morning or Saturday treatments are among them. Volunteer driver programs help bridge the gap between other modes of transportation by going where buses do not and taking trips that are too expensive to take by bus.

Volunteer Transportation Organizations (VTOs) have been around for over a hundred years. Older adults who once relied on family members or close friends to transport them now rely on VTOs. The nonprofit provides low-cost, free transportation for older adults. Older adults do not have the same economic flexibility as younger demographics. Ride hailing, bike sharing, and carsharing are all trendy and innovative methods to move those with flexible incomes from point A to B. Transportation options for older adults, who have fixed income (Social Security or other public benefits) should better fit their budgets and needs.

Volunteers play an essential role in the development of a comprehensive transportation network. Increased financing for volunteer driver programs may result in increased service coverage, particularly in areas not serviced by public transit. Furthermore, adopting volunteer driver mileage compensation schemes may help to recruit more volunteers.

3.3.3. Mobility Management Program

Mobility management is a new way of organizing and delivering integrated mobility services to clients, such as seniors, people with disabilities, low-income people, and the general public. Through a variety of transportation alternatives and services, mobility management seeks to suit unique client needs. Rather than focusing on managing the supply of a single service or mode of delivery, such as rail, bus, or van service, the mobility manager focuses on the client and finding solutions to his or her transportation problems using a range of providers, service modes, and methods (WisDOT, 2015).

Mobility managers work for a range of institutions, including aging and disability resource centers (ADRCs), local governments, transportation systems, human service and social assistance agencies, independent living centers, employment, and community development groups. Simplified transportation access, better knowledge of transportation alternatives, higher transit usage, decreased service gaps and overlap, and increased efficiency are some of the general benefits of mobility management. Mobility management can improve access to health care, jobs, social services, and amenities for those who are unable to drive (WisDOT, 2015).

Several federal and national organizations provide mobility management services or advocate for the growth of the mobility management concept. These include the Federal Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM), United We Ride, Mobility Services for All Americans (MSAA), National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM), Veterans Transportation Service (VTS) program, and so on.

Mobility management in Wisconsin unofficially began in October 2005 when the Interagency Council on Transportation Coordination (ICTC) was formed (WisDOT, 2015). Federal Transit Administration New Freedom, 5317 funding was available starting in 2008 specifically for hiring mobility managers. WisDOT continues to support the state's improved development and efficiency in mobility management techniques, as well as working to enhance understanding of the idea. In Wisconsin, however, the path that mobility management initiatives follow is a local option that is neither regulated nor imposed by WisDOT, except to guarantee project eligibility according to the appropriate funding source. Figure 5 depicts the geographical coverage of Section 5310 (Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities)-funded mobility management services in Wisconsin. It does not provide information about the coverage of mobility management services that are funded in other ways. It also excludes people who may provide mobility management services but are not classified as mobility managers.

Table 2.2. Cycle 45 (2021) 5310 Grant Awards – Mobility Management (WisDOT, 2021)

Subrecipient	Counties Served	Project Detail
Center for Independent Living – Western Wisconsin, Inc.	42 counties mostly in NW & NC Wisconsin	Call-Center; mobility management
City of Stevens Point	Portage	Call-Center; Mobility Management
County of Jefferson	Jefferson	Mobility Management services
County of Manitowoc	Manitowoc	Mobility Management services
County of Racine	Racine	Mobility Management services
County of Rock	Rock	1-on-1 & Group Travel Training
County of Rusk	Rusk	Mobility Management services
County of Sawyer / Lac Courte Oreilles’s Transit Commission	Barron, Washburn, Sawyer	Mobility Management services
Door-Tran, Inc.	Door	Mobility Management services
Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin & Upper Michigan, Inc.	Outagamie, Winnebago	Travel Training & Mobility Management
New Hope Center, Inc.	Calumet, Manitowoc	Mobility Management services
NEWCAP, Inc.	Marinette, Oconto	Mobility Management services
North Country Independent Living, Inc.	8 Counties in Northwestern	Mobility Management services
Southwest Wisconsin Community Action Program Inc.	Grant, Green, Iowa	Call-Center; Mobility Management

Wisconsin is a model in the nation for the widespread implementation of mobility management. Keys to success in Wisconsin include (WisDOT, 2015):

- Support and buy-in from the state
- Mobility management model not prescribed by the state but determined locally
- Emphasis on coordination
- State funding for specialized transportation and transit
- Mobility management infrastructure – Wisconsin Association of Mobility Managers (WAMM)

Mobility management in Wisconsin provides services such as conducting needs assessment, coordinating funding, services, or programs, developing inventory, identifying customer needs, travel training, trip planning, and so on. Community action programs, transportation providers or agencies, ADRCs/aging units, community disability and senior services and organizations, social and human service organizations or agencies, regional planning commissions, independent living centers, and the Veterans Administration (VA) are some of the organizations that provide mobility management services. Mobility Managers works under titles such as transit managers, transportation coordinators, resource specialists, administrative/clerical/transportation assistants, senior or disability benefit specialists, ADRC/Office on Aging supervisors or directors, and program coordinators. Successful mobility management techniques necessitate collaboration. Non-profits, individuals, private corporations, and government organizations are all potential partners. However, there also are substantial hurdles in the way of better mobility management. Inadequate financing, a lack of people resources, a lack of coordination and collaboration, service and jurisdictional boundaries, demographics, and information are some of the hurdles.

Educating communities about the capabilities of mobility managers may result in a larger mobility management network. The more people who learn about mobility managers, the more likely it is that they will desire one in their region. There are several instances of excellent mobility management methods throughout Wisconsin. Programs and organizations, volunteers, coordination and teamwork, technology, marketing, and training and education are all examples of effective tactics.

Beneficial approaches to mobility management for older persons include a transportation solution professional who works directly with individuals, and websites that give narration areas valuable tool for those who are unable to see or read and providing basic and clear

information. Seniors and those with impairments may be more hesitant to step out on their own. Developing attachments to mobility managers might help them feel more at ease and can act as an individual's link to the outside world (WisDOT, 2015).

3.3.4. Other Mobility Programs for Older Adults

While WisDOT-managed programs play an important role in enhancing the mobility of Wisconsin's older adults' non-drivers, other state agencies also fund and operate vital programs to achieve this aim. Although older adults make up a small percentage of some of these programs, they all contribute to the network of mobility options available to Wisconsin's aging population.

3.3.4.1. Non-Emergency Medical Transportation

The Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Program (NEMT) is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), and it provides transportation for Medicaid recipients to and from non-emergency medical appointments that they would otherwise be unable to access, using either a common carrier (e.g., taxi service) or, when necessary, special medical vehicles (SMVs). While seniors make up only a tiny percentage of Medicaid recipients, they are likely overrepresented in terms of NEMT use since they may have diminished driving capabilities and capacity to use public transportation and may require more medical transportation services than younger Medicaid recipients (Koffman et al., 2004; Yu et al., 2019).

3.3.4.2. Older Americans Act Transportation Support

In 1965, Congress passed the Older Americans Act, which provides a variety of supportive services to the older adults and their caregivers. Counseling, education, housing aid, employment, abuse prevention, and other supporting services are specified in Title III-B of the Legislation; the act also provides for funding transportation that facilitates access to other services or improves access to existing transportation services.

3.3.4.3. Medicaid Infrastructure Grants

The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 included Medicaid Infrastructure Grants. The grants support state efforts to “develop the infrastructure to support competitive employment opportunities for people with disabilities” by enhancing the comprehensiveness of back-to-work programs, improving Medicaid programs, coordinating, and integrating Medicaid and other social service providers, and improving the coordination and integration of Medicaid and other social service providers.” Even though these initiatives

do not expressly target older adults, their high rates of impairment show that they are beneficial to older workers.

3.3.4.4. Wisconsin Senior Employment Program

The Wisconsin Senior Employment Program (WISE), also known as the Senior Community Service Employment Program, is another program that aids older mobility (SCSEP). This employment training and placement program aims to place unemployed and low-income seniors (aged 55 and up, with a preference for those aged 65 and up) in unsubsidized jobs. Title V of the Older Americans Act funds the program, which is administered nationally by the United States Department of Labor and locally by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, which in turn funds non-profit organizations that provide part-time community service training and placement services.

3.3.4.5. Veterans Affairs Programs

Finally, the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs funds two programs that help veterans of all ages maintain mobility. The County Transportation Grant offers funds to counties to help them provide transportation to medical appointments with the Veterans Administration. The Disabled American Veterans, a non-profit group, runs a fixed-route vanpool service between pre-determined places and medical facilities, which is run entirely by volunteers.

3.3.4.6. Nutrition Programs for Older Adults

The Elderly Nutrition Program by Wisconsin Department of Health Services (WDHS) provides delicious and healthy food to anybody older than 60 years of age (Wisconsin Department of Health Services, 2022). This program distributes meals to those who have difficulty getting around, and for those who are still able to venture out into their neighborhoods, this program serves at gathering places such as senior centers and community facilities. Friendly drivers offer excellent, home-style, newly cooked food delivered Monday through Friday. Persons receiving a meal say it helps them continue living in their home (ADRC, n.d.). The program is provided throughout Wisconsin's counties and tribal aging units/ADRCs.

Meals on Wheels is a program that offers elders a nutritional meal, company, and constant monitoring of their health and safety. Anyone 60 or older who is essentially homebound due to an illness or disability, or the spouse of a person eligible for Meals on Wheels as described above, regardless of age or condition, is eligible for this program if an assessment determines that it is in the best interests of the homebound older individual.

Apart from ADRC there are other departments that provide meals on wheels (Meals on Wheels America, n.d.). Goodwill, Wisconsin in their programs for adults and seniors, delivers wellness checks and nutritious meals to older adults (60 years or older) on routes throughout Milwaukee County (Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Wisconsin and Metropolitan, n.d.). SSM Health, a non-profit U.S. healthcare institution, delivers nutritional midday meals to the people of Madison, Middleton, Monona and Sun Prairie (SSM Health, n.d.).

3.3.5. Examples of Wisconsin Programs

3.3.5.1. *Dane County TimeBank Transportation Project*

This program's objective is to meet the community needs of inadequately served and low-resourced people in Madison, Wisconsin (*Transportation | Dane County TimeBank*, n.d.). TimeBanks operate in 35 countries, with over 500 members in the United States (*About Timebanking | Dane County TimeBank*, n.d.-a). People who join a time bank agree to participate in a system that involves earning and using "time credits". They will receive a one-time credit if they spend an hour on an activity that benefits others. When they require assistance from others, they can spend the time credits that they have accrued. In a simple way, "Timebank members are a caring and interconnected community of people who help each other by sharing their abilities, talents, and experiences" (*About Timebanking | Dane County TimeBank*, n.d.-b).

Dane County Transportation services and local providers fill gaps in transportation services for seniors. "*The Dane County Timebank is committed to facilitating exchanges and coordinating projects through a racial and restorative justice lens*" (*About Timebanking | Dane County TimeBank*, n.d.-b). This program's values include everyone has something to contribute to the well-being of others in their community. It also fosters positive social relationships, respect for individuals, a mutually supportive social network and validation and rewards for others' work.

The benefits of a system such as this include an active participation in community-related and member-organized projects, partnerships with other community groups, diversified funding streams, multicultural membership, and the impacts of social and system changes in specific areas of activity (*Dane County TimeBank 2019-2023 Strategic Framework*, 2019).

3.3.5.2. *Lutheran Social Services - Make the Ride Happen*

Make The Ride Happen is a program of Lutheran Social Services that serves and provides centralized transportation services to older adults and individuals with disabilities in Calumet,

Outagamie, Winnebago and Waupaca counties of Wisconsin, which also covers upper Michigan (Lutheran Social Services, n.d.). The aim of this program is “to make the ride happen for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and disadvantaged communities so they can remain active and involved in their communities” (Lutheran Social Services, n.d.).

Make the ride happen program assists seniors in getting to medical appointments, grocery stores, day programs, hair salons, banks, and pharmacies. It identifies the best transportation options such as public bus, paratransit, rural and meal site transportation, or volunteer driver programs. Transportation providers and services that are frequently used by riders who call Make the Ride Happen include (Lutheran Social Services, n.d.):

- Bus Buddy assistance for any older adult who would like a companion’s help determining routes and getting comfortable riding the bus
- Valley Transit and Valley Transit II
- Rural Outagamie County Paratransit
- Calumet County Aging & Disability Resource Center volunteer drivers
- Dial-A-Ride in northern Winnebago County
- GO Transit
- Courtesy Shuttle-Outagamie County Housing Authority
- Helping Hands-Hortonville
- Bus Buddy assistance for any older adult who would like a companion’s help determining routes and getting comfortable riding the bus
- Valley Transit and Valley Transit II
- Rural Outagamie County Paratransit
- Calumet County Aging & Disability Resource Center volunteer drivers
- Dial-A-Ride in northern Winnebago County

Make the Ride Happen is a leader in mobility management explained above – a creative method to customized transportation services encompassing the elderly, disabled and low-income persons. Mobility management is focused on satisfying individual customer demands by providing a variety of transport alternatives and services; and coordination of these services and suppliers to produce a more effective delivery system for transport services.

3.4. Wisconsin Transportation Outreach and Education for Older Adults

Transportation is among the most requested support services for seniors and individuals with disabilities. One of the most difficult and frightening decisions for seniors is the transition from driver to non-driver. Planning time might help to relieve some of this stress. Getting informed about availability and eligibility to new options is very important for planning ahead. Those drivers who live outside of urban areas face a unique set of challenges in getting around without driving. They have fewer options, such as using public transportation or walking to nearby stores to get their household necessities. Ride share services can help keep one connected to family and friends. Staying social helps maintain quality of life as one ages (CDC, 2020).

Additional transportation options may be available to enable older adults to travel with independence and choice. Alternative Transportation Options include public transit (operates on a regular schedule and offers specific routes), specialized transportation or paratransit (a service for older adults and people with disabilities who are unable to use public transit), volunteer transportation (one-on-one rides in a volunteer's vehicle that can be reserved on demand), transportation with assistance (riders receive additional support at pick-up and destination), private-pay transportation (services such as taxis, Uber and Lyft that are available on demand). Among the different transportation options available, identifying the transportation assistance need is very important. For example, after a medical procedure, discussing with a physician or health care provider about the type of transportation one needs and how one's family or friends may be able to help with transportation needs can help to identify the transportation assistance that he/she needs.

Effective communication about transportation policies, eligibility and services is an important part of ensuring that older adults understand current guidelines and other transportation options. Furthermore, exchanging information is crucial in developing a uniform, comprehensive strategy to transportation challenges affecting older adults.

The Locally Developed Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan 2019 – 2023 for Juneau County and Wisconsin Department of Transportation, is a good example of outreach programs that can be conducted in every county of Wisconsin. This plan was prepared by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. The sole aim of this meeting was to have stakeholder involvement in the assessment of older adults and disabled transportation, and to provide strategies and goals to improve those transportation

alternatives (NCWRPC, n.d.). The planning meeting was attended by approximately five transportation stakeholders and many more were invited, including representatives of public, private and non-profit transportation and human services providers and users, including seniors and individuals with disabilities. Through such meetings agencies will be able to identify gaps and needs in the existing planning and coordination.

3.5. Summary

Aging is an inevitable natural phenomenon. In the United States, the number of older adults in the next several decades is anticipated to rise substantially. Wisconsin, which follows a similar pattern, will have a higher rate of aging in rural areas and the greatest substantial demographic change is predicted in northern Wisconsin. In each county in northern Wisconsin, three out of ten people (age 65 and above age) will become senior citizens by 2040. Older individuals will face aging-related challenges as they age that could make them dependent on family or friends. One of these greatest challenges involves mobility and therefore the management of senior transportation is vital. Chapter 2 findings further underscore the necessity for mobility of the elderly.

Wisconsin's generalized public transit programs provide a transportation system that spans statewide. Numerous literature searches have revealed a lack of public transit, particularly in northern Wisconsin, where the aging population is projected to be greater. When addressing senior mobility concerns, it is necessary to consider older adults' preferences to have access to secure, dependable, on-demand transportation choices for their travel needs.

Other than public transit programs, there are several other mobility programs for older adults in Wisconsin. These programs aim mainly to address the mobility needs of older adults and the population with disabilities. Some of these programs, for example, volunteer driver programs, can be found in most of the counties. Although the initiatives run by WisDOT play a key role in increasing Wisconsin's mobility of seniors, other government agencies are also funding and implementing essential programs to attain this objective. Proper planning, outreach and education strategies will bring all these programs to their full potential and can meet older adult's mobility needs.

4. STATEWIDE SURVEY

4.1. Overview

The purpose of our survey is to help improve transportation services for older adults in the state of Wisconsin. Therefore, the survey included a sample of older adults over the age of 65 who live in locations not served by regular fixed route transit in the state of Wisconsin. It was further limited to *people who need transportation assistance in their daily life, such as clients of local transportation services and meal services (meals on wheels)*, as they have had experiences using existing specialized public transportation services in their communities.

The research team conducted two types of surveys:

- Statewide questionnaire surveys for
 - **Older adults** (aged 65 and older) in suburban and rural Wisconsin where no regular fixed route bus services have been provided, and
 - **Agency personnel**: A similar survey will be given to *transportation service providers* (transit managers and drivers) who provide transportation services (e.g., bus/van, shared ride taxi, volunteer driver program, etc.) in suburban and rural Wisconsin where no regular fixed route bus services have been provided. The same survey with minor differences will also be given to *mobility managers* who focus on meeting individual customer mobility needs through a wide range of transportation options in suburban and rural Wisconsin where no regular fixed route bus services have been provided.
- Focus group surveys of a number of groups of older adults, family members/caregivers, transportation service providers, and/or mobility managers to gain additional insight into underlying issues and causes that affect travel behavior of the target groups.

The following sections in this chapter are organized as: 1) introducing the survey planning, involving five activities: survey question design; pilot testing; sample design; data collection; and data retention, 2) presenting the statewide survey results from both older adults and the service providers, and 3) briefly summarizing the chapter with some discussions from the statewide survey. Results regarding the focus group will be presented in Chapter 6. Detailed surveys of both the older adults and the service providers can be found in the Appendix.

4.2. Survey Planning

4.2.1. Decision Basis for Survey Design

For our study, a list of decisions for feedback and for keeping the proper focus of the survey included:

- **User information sources:** What methods will work best to provide information about transportation services in suburban/rural areas to current and potential users who are older adults?
- **Capabilities:** What is the level of knowledge and understanding of computer aided tools for the target group (i.e., older adults in suburban and rural Wisconsin)?
- **Travel needs and barriers:** what are the travel needs and barriers for the target group in using existing transportation services?
- **Quality of transportation service quality:** In the opinion of users, how can the quality of service be improved?
- **Priorities of Transportation service features:** In the opinion of users, what are the most important features of transportation services?
- **Impacts of COVID-19:** How have travel patterns and user attitudes changed since the onset of the pandemic and how might they change in the future?

4.2.2. Activities

This survey plan involved five activities: survey question design; pilot testing; sample design; data collection; and data retention.

4.2.2.1. Survey Design

Based on the results of the literature review, demographic analysis, discussion with WisDOT, feedback from the project advisory committee at a meeting Nov 2, 2020, we developed a list of survey topics to address. After that, survey questions were prepared for each topic. The team consulted appropriate questionnaires developed in the past as well as published questionnaires from other researchers to find appropriate questions to include in the proposed surveys.

For the statewide questionnaires, the first drafts of two questionnaires were proposed, one for older adults, one for transportation service providers, and mobility managers, with common questions in all the versions and other questions specific to each kind of respondent.

For the focus group surveys, preliminary interview guides were designed, and questions have been adjusted after the questionnaire survey.

The draft of each questionnaire and interview guide then were forwarded to WisDOT and project advisory committee members for review and were revised and finalized based on their feedback. The survey documents were also been submitted to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Institutional Review Board for review and approval of the use of human subjects.

4.2.2.2. Pilot Testing

Drafts of the questionnaire survey were pilot tested using a cognitive interviewing process. With this process, pretest respondents first completed the survey and proposed their comments and suggestions as they proceeded through each question. The investigator then followed up (by phone/on-line meeting) with each respondent for their comments/suggestions. This process offered the project team chance to assess how questions were perceived and understood, appropriateness of language and wording, and overall impressions of the survey.

4.2.2.3. Sample Design

Sampling Method

Given the resources available for the project, a stratified sample method was used in this survey. The total sample size for each survey was stratified by the five WisDOT regions (see Figure 1). Table 1 summarizes county information that has been assigned in each region, derived from the WisDOT official website.

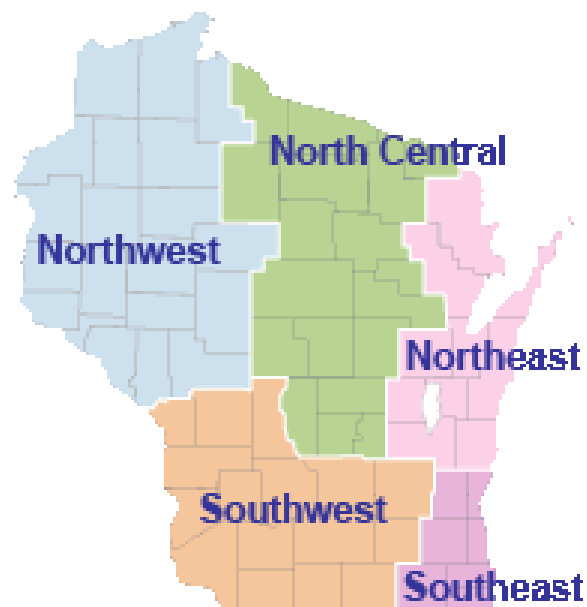


Figure 4.1. WisDOT DTSD Regions

Table 4.1. Counties by WisDOT DTSD Regions

Region	North Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southeast	Southwest
Counties	Adams, Florence, Forest, Green Lake, Iron, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Marquette, Menominee, Oneida, Portage, Price, Shawano, Vilas, Waupaca, Waushara, Wood	Brown, Calumet, Door, Fond du Lac, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Oconto, Outagamie, Sheboygan, Winnebago	Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Buffalo, Burnett, Chippewa, Clark, Douglas, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, Rusk, Sawyer, St. Croix, Taylor, Trempealeau, Washburn	Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Washington, Waukesha	Columbia, Crawford, Dane, Dodge, Grant, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Juneau, La Crosse, Lafayette, Monroe, Richland, Rock, Sauk, Vernon

Considering that the target population of this project was in suburban and rural Wisconsin, the project team excluded urban areas with regular fixed-route transit service in this survey, as shown in Table 2.

Table 4.2. Areas to be Excluded in This Study

Region	Excluded urban areas with regular fixed-route bus service
North Central	Wausau
Northeast	Green Bay, Appleton, Oshkosh, Fond du Lac, Sheboygan
Northwest	Eau Claire, Superior
Southeast	Milwaukee (county), West Allis, Waukesha, Racine, Kenosha
Southwest	La Crosse, Madison, Janesville, Beloit

After data screening, we calculated the number of aging population and demographics splits (by age and gender) of each region based on 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, as illustrated in Table 3. Such information will be used to test the representativeness of our samples from a statistical perspective in the future.

Table 4.3. Table 3. Aging Population by WisDOT DTSD Regions¹

Region	Aging Population	Population by age			Population by gender	
		65-74	75-84	85 +	Male	Female
North Central	115,527	65,564	35,390	14,573	54,812	60,715
Northeast	133,675	78,251	39,720	15,704	61,702	71,973
Northwest	110,110	64,700	32,516	12,894	52,805	57,305
Southeast	207,396	117,697	60,629	29,070	92,719	114,677
Southwest	162,914	95,940	45,873	21,101	75,501	87,413
Total	729,622	422,152	214,128	93,342	337,539	392,083

Questionnaire Sampling

For older adults: older adults over the age of 65 who live in locations not served by regular fixed route transit in the state of Wisconsin have been identified as the targets for taking the questionnaire survey. Specifically, the sample has been further limited by the concentration of people who need transportation assistance in their daily life, such as clients of local transportation services and clients of meal services (meals on wheels), as they have had experiences using existing transportation services in their communities.

Table 4.4 lists the expected number of samples from each of five WisDOT regions based on the proportionate stratified sampling method, excluding urban areas with regular fixed-route transit service in Table 4.2.

Table 4.4. Stratified Sampling Design for Older Adults

Region	Older Adults Population		Proportionate Stratified Sample	
	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
North Central	115,527	15.9	238	15.9
Northeast	133,675	18.3	275	18.3
Northwest	110,110	15.1	226	15.1
Southeast	207,396	28.4	426	28.4
Southwest	162,914	22.3	335	22.3
Total	729,622	100.0	1,500	100.0

¹ Ref: 2019 American Community Survey: 5-Year Data [2015-2019]. Urbanized areas with regular fixed-route transit services are excluded.

For Service Providers/Mobility Managers: transportation service providers (e.g., transit managers and/or drivers) and **mobility managers** from suburban and rural Wisconsin areas where regular fixed route bus services are not available were identified as the target for taking the questionnaire survey. All transportation service providers, mobility managers, and tribal transportation coordinators were invited to participate in the questionnaire survey, with invitations sent based on contact lists provided by WisDOT.

Focus Group Sampling

A subset of older adults, family members/caregivers, transit service providers (transit managers and/or drivers), and mobility managers then were asked to participate in focus group surveys (8-10 people per group). We asked respondents of the first surveys if they were willing to participate in the focus groups. The selection criteria we used for focus group survey are summarized in Table 4.5. Each focus group session was comprised of people with similar characteristics to increase the likelihood of shared experiences as well as to foster more comfortable conversation within each group.

Table 4.5. Focus Group Criteria

a) Older Adults and Caregivers					
Category	Group No.	Frequency of using transportation services	Internet Access	Health Status	Group size (# of people)
Older Adults and Caregivers	1	High	Yes	Good/Poor	6
	2	Low	Yes	Good/Poor	6
	3	Low	No	Good/Poor	4
Total					16
b) Service Providers and Mobility Managers					
Category	Group No.	Interested Topic			Group size (# of people)
Service Providers and Mobility Managers	1	Technology Usage			8
	2	Service Coordination			7
	3	Users' Satisfaction (A mix of perceived satisfied and unsatisfied)			7
Total					22

4.2.2.4. Data Collection

Questionnaire surveys were conducted from March 15 – May 20, 2021. The Older Adult Questionnaire was distributed in both printed format and online.

For the printed format, the surveys were distributed by the following ways:

- Transportation Specialist from Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources (GWAAR) helped solicit participation from the Wisconsin Aging Network. The Wisconsin Aging Network consists of staff from County Aging Units, Tribal Aging Units, and Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC). The Aging Network submitted requests for a number of paper copies of the survey. The research team then mailed the surveys to the aging network (e.g., local ADRCs) and collected them.
- Rural Public Transit/Transit Planning Program Manager and Specialized Transit Program Manager at WisDOT helped solicit participation from WisDOT recognized suburban and rural transit/mobility services. These service providers worked with the research team to draw names from their known clients and submitted requests for a number of paper copies of the survey. The research team then mailed the surveys to these local service providers and collected them.

For the online version of the survey, the research team generated custom links for different local ADRCs and service providers. The links directed survey respondents to a website hosted by professional Survey Software. Each link contained a unique identifier for each location that allowed the research team to track distribution and send targeted follow-up notifications. The research team e-mailed the links and distribution instructions to the directors of ADRCs and service providers in February 2021.

When staff from the Aging Network received printed and online versions of the survey, they primarily distributed them in the following ways: 1) Distribute the survey through Home delivered meals (staff will distribute the survey when they drop off meals, then retrieve the completed survey the next day); 2) Place the survey in a highly visible areas in local senior centers or places frequently visited by older adults, including banks, grocery stores, libraries, and clinics. Some local senior centers and libraries could designate computers with which to take the online version of the survey; 3) Distribute the survey to older adult service providers and senior housing locations, such as assisted living facility attendants; and 4) Publish a notification of the survey and its corresponding link in older adult focused newsletters.

When staff from local transit/mobility service providers received printed and online versions of the survey, they distributed the survey to the identified clients directly (e.g., in shared ride taxi or volunteer driver cars).

The research team drafted sample notifications with instructions for older adults to obtain directly a copy of the survey. These notifications could result in a high number of surveys mailed independently by older adults from around the state.

For Transportation Service Providers and Mobility Managers, the transportation service provider questionnaire surveys were distributed online between February and April 2021. Members from both the Wisconsin Association of Mobility Managers (WAMM) from the Wisconsin Public Transit Association (WIPTA) helped to solicit the survey respondents (i.e., transit managers, drivers and mobility managers) based on the selection criteria defined by the research team. The research team sent the survey link to each survey respondent in February 2021 and this link directed survey respondents to a website hosted by professional Survey Software. Each link contained a unique identifier for each survey respondent, which allowed the research team to track distribution and send targeted follow-up notifications.

Focus group surveys were conducted in April – June in 2021. The focus group surveys were conducted through group meetings suitable to the needs of the survey participants (e.g., in-person meeting, telephone call, video conference). In older adult surveys we asked about their willingness to participate in a focus group and used their responses to identify focus group members. Telephone calls and/or emails were sent to focus group participants to arrange meetings with the focus group.

Before the discussion, moderators provided information about the project and obtained consent from the participants using an informed consent form approved by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Institutional Review Board. Participants in the focus groups were asked similar questions as drafted, but the moderators had the latitude to ask adjusted or further questions based on the answers to explore individual preferences and perceptions more deeply. Field notes as well as recording devices were used to collect focus group data.

4.2.2.5. Data retention

Responses were aggregated and no individual data will be reported. Data from the two surveys will be held for three months after the completion of the project. Focus group results will not identify any individuals by name.

4.3. Statewide Survey Results

Results of the statewide survey will be presented in this subsection by two subgroups in order, the older adults and the service providers.

4.3.1. Older Adults

4.3.1.1. Overview of Returned Responses

9000 surveys were distributed, and 1571 were returned (17.5%). In addition, 79 online responses were received for a total of 1650. To ensure accurate agency matching for the returned surveys, a Registration Number unique to each survey copy was used. Efforts were made to record the agency to which the Registration Number was initially sent, allowing for proper matching. In cases where the Registration Number was torn off or not applicable, the agency was estimated based on the zip code provided in the survey.

This led to the total 1587 mapped number for older adults' responses by county (1537 from 65 counties) and tribe (50 from 5 tribes). This is 96% of the total responses because 63 could not be geocoded due to lack of information (e.g., ZIP code). Table 4.7 shows the result of this mapping process. Colors in white on map are excluded areas. It should be noted that Menominee is both a county and a tribe. The five responses were counted towards county, and the seven counties without a matched response – Juneau, Manitowoc, Marquette, Milwaukee, Richland, Sawyer, and Waukesha – were not part of the coverage area.

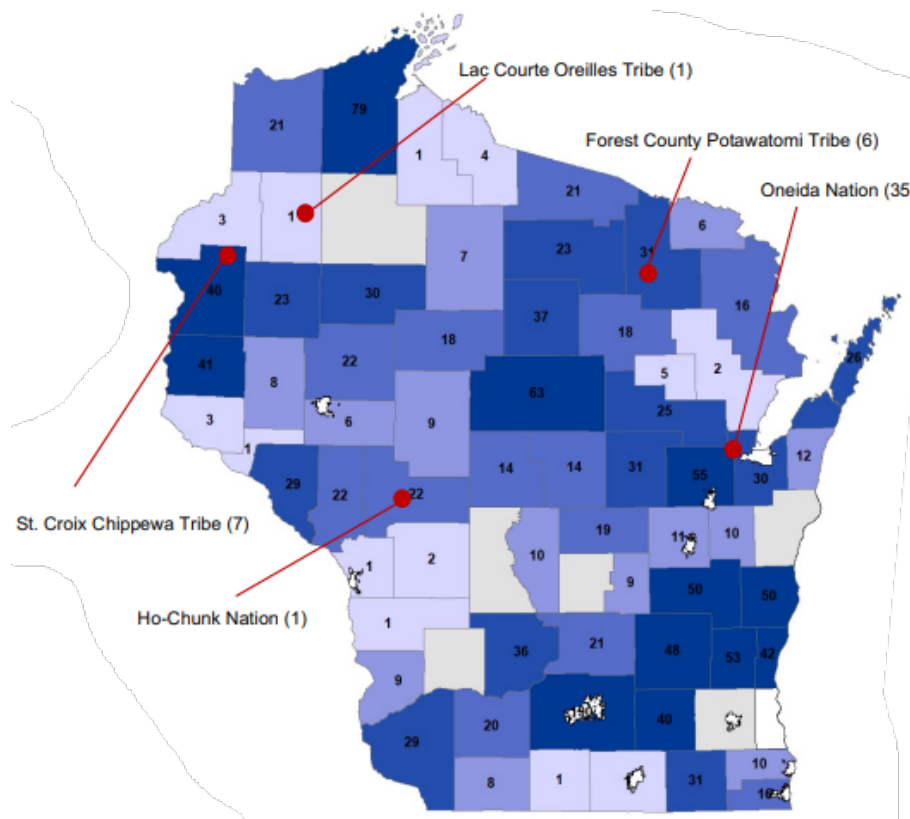


Figure 4.2. Geolocations of Survey Respondents

The sample rate by WisDOT Division of Transportation (DTSD) region was then calculated, which can be seen in Figure 4.3 and Table 4.6. Please note that in Table 4.6, the aging population is defined as adults who are at least 60 years old. However, during the survey design phase, the term "older adults" was defined as adults who are at least 65 years old, as indicated in Table 4.4, which was used to determine the number of survey copies to be sent out. It is worth mentioning that while 65 years old was typically used as a criterion for older adults, in certain areas, the age of 60 years old is commonly recognized as the qualifying age for specialized services targeting older adults.

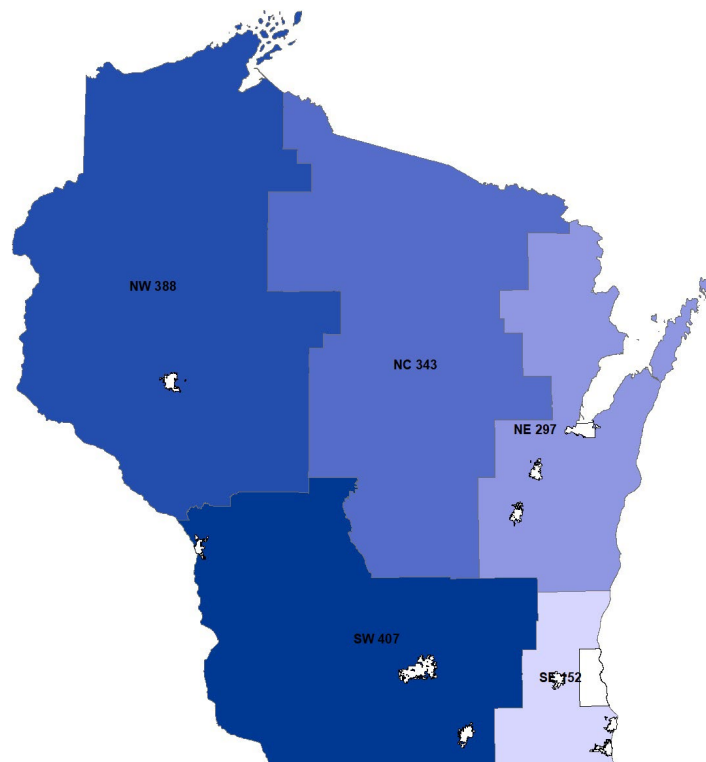


Figure 4.3. Sample Rate by WisDOT DTSD Region

Table 4.6 Sample Rate by WisDOT DTSD Region (Printed Copies)

Region	Aging Population²	# of Responses	Sample Rate (in 1/1000)
North Central	168655	343	2
Northeast	208827	297	1.4
Northwest	161439	388	2.4
Southeast	214858	152	0.7
Southwest	237087	407	1.7
Total	990866	1587	1.6

² Older adults aged 60 and above, calculated from 2015-2019 American Census Survey 5-Year Estimate Data.

The analysis on the return survey results for older adults can be classified into two major themes with several sub-themes in each: 1) socio-demographic characteristics (i.e., gender, age, annual household income, race, employment status, number of people living with, type of residence, and use of mobility device), and 2) survey topics (i.e., information technology usage, travel pattern, satisfaction with local transportation services, travel challenges and limitations, and suggestions for improvement). The rest of the subsections for older adults' survey results first present the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, and then provide the analysis of each survey topic.

4.3.1.2. Socio-demographic Characteristics

As one of the important portions of the survey questionnaire, respondents were asked about their socio-demographic characteristics, including:

- Gender
- Age
- Annual Household Income
- Race
- Employment Status
- Number of People Living With
- Type of Residence
- Use of Mobility Device

While conducting the statistical analyses, it should be noted that population and household income are calculated from 2015-2019 American Census Survey 5-Year Estimate Data for selected areas only. Older adults aged 60+ are considered for gender and age group; households with householder aged 65+ are used for household income because of data availability.

Ninety percent (1485 out of 1650 respondents) provided information regarding gender, with 995 females and 490 males. Figure 4.4 shows the comparisons between the respondents' gender distribution and the ACS 5-Year Estimate Data. Such distribution of the respondents is slightly more imbalanced than the ACS estimation data.

Ninety-one percent (1501 out of 1650 respondents) shared their age information and Figure 4.5 displays such distribution along with the ACS 5-Year estimation. One can observe that the number of respondents increases with age, which seems to be opposite to the population

distribution. A possible explanation is that the older the people, the more likely they are to share their opinions.

GENDER(1485)

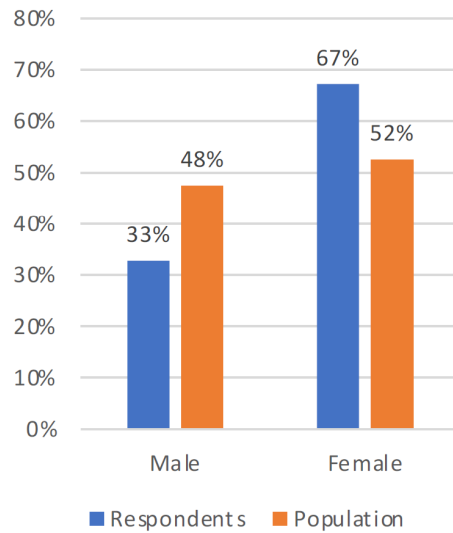


Figure 4.4. Gender of Older Adult Respondents

AGE(1501)

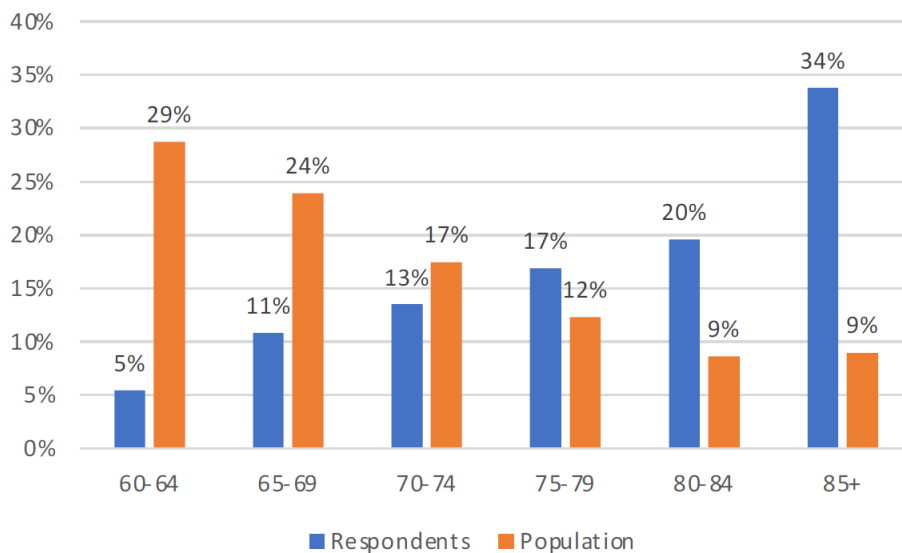


Figure 4.5. Age of Older Adult Respondents

In terms of annual household income, 1362 respondents (83%) responded to this question, among which 272 preferred not to answer. Figure 4.6 shows the distribution of income annual

household income along with the ACS 5-Year estimation. Though not showing an exact match with the ACS data, they share a common trend. Race information was obtained from 1446 respondents (88%), showing that 98% of the respondents are white (Figure 4.7), which is expected for suburban and rural areas.

ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME (1362)

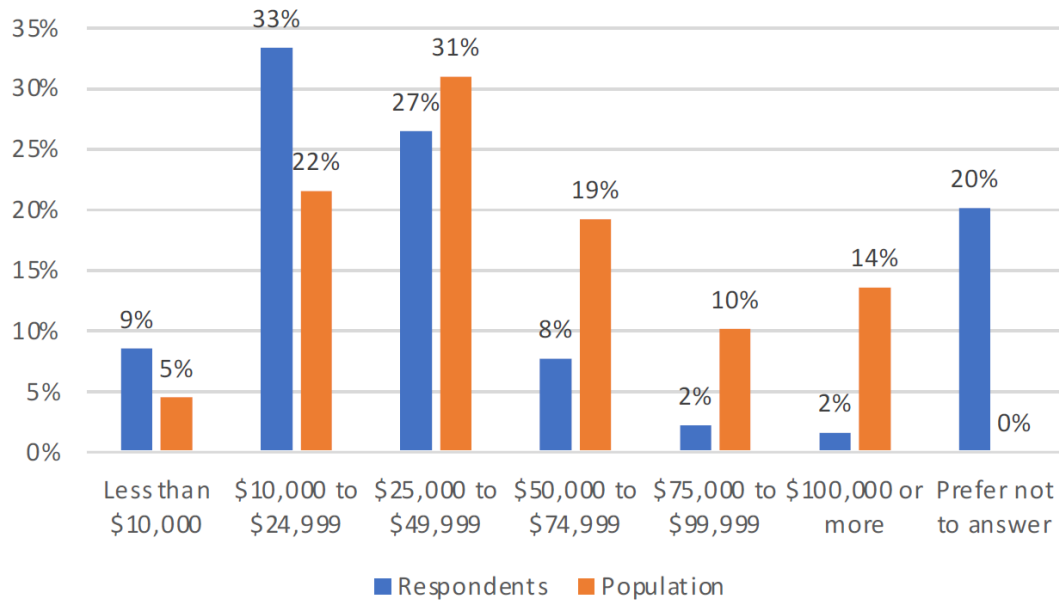


Figure 4.6. Annual Income of Older Adult Respondents

RACE (1446)

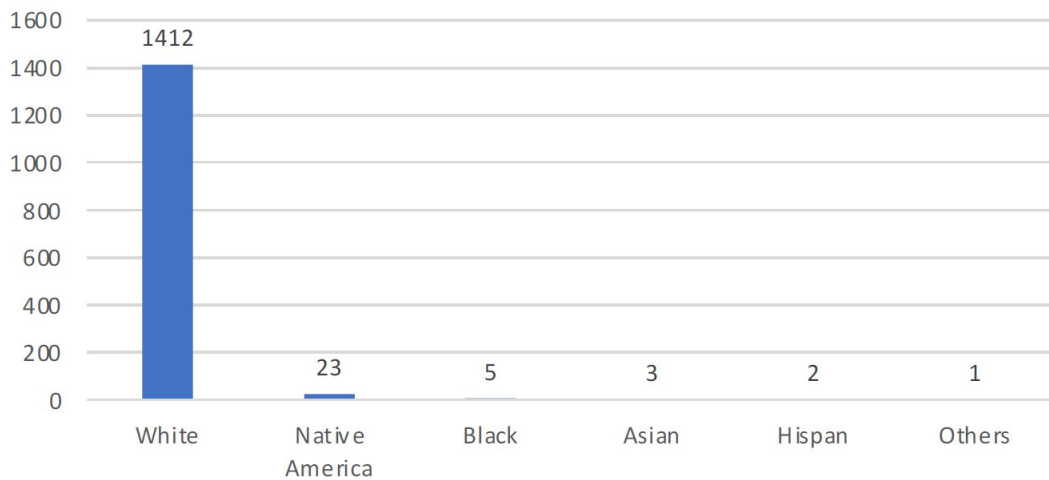


Figure 4.7. Race of Older Adult Respondents

While being asked about employment status, only 158 out of 1650 respondents shared their answers, seen in Figure 4.8. Because less than 10% of the respondents answered this question, such distribution might not reliably represent the aging population in Wisconsin. However, it should be noted that nearly half of the respondents reported as unemployed, it might also reflect that they are more likely to be impacted on mobility. Respondents were then asked about the number of people who live with the respondent, with a 90% response rate (1485 out of 1650). Figure 4.9 displays the result of this question, which can be seen that most respondents reported as living alone or only with one other person.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS (158)

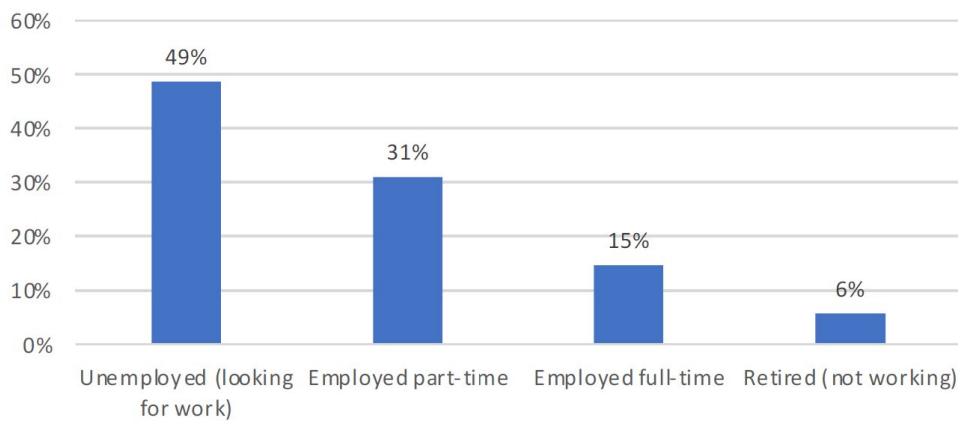


Figure 4.8. Employment Status of Older Adult Respondents

OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH (1485)

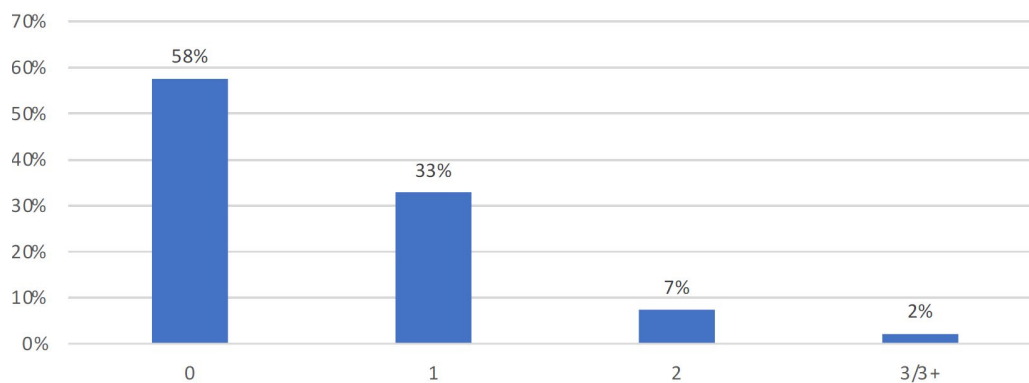


Figure 4.9. Number of People Living with Older Adult Respondents

For the type of residence by respondents, 1529 out of 1650 older adults responded (93%) and results are illustrated in Figure 4.10. Most of the respondents reported living in a home they own, with 59% of the total. Though 3% of the respondents selected “Other (please specify),” the detailed analysis shows that there might be some confusion (overlap) with other predefined options.

Last but not least, the usage and the type of mobility devices by respondents were also surveyed in the questionnaire. Ninety-three percent (1531 out of 1650 respondents) provided their answers and 798 out of these 1531 reported using personal mobility devices, which shows that walker (471 respondents), cane (375 respondents), and wheelchair (168 respondents) are the most used personal mobility devices, displayed in Figure 4.1. This also indicates more than half of the responding older adults experience physical difficulties in mobility in Wisconsin.

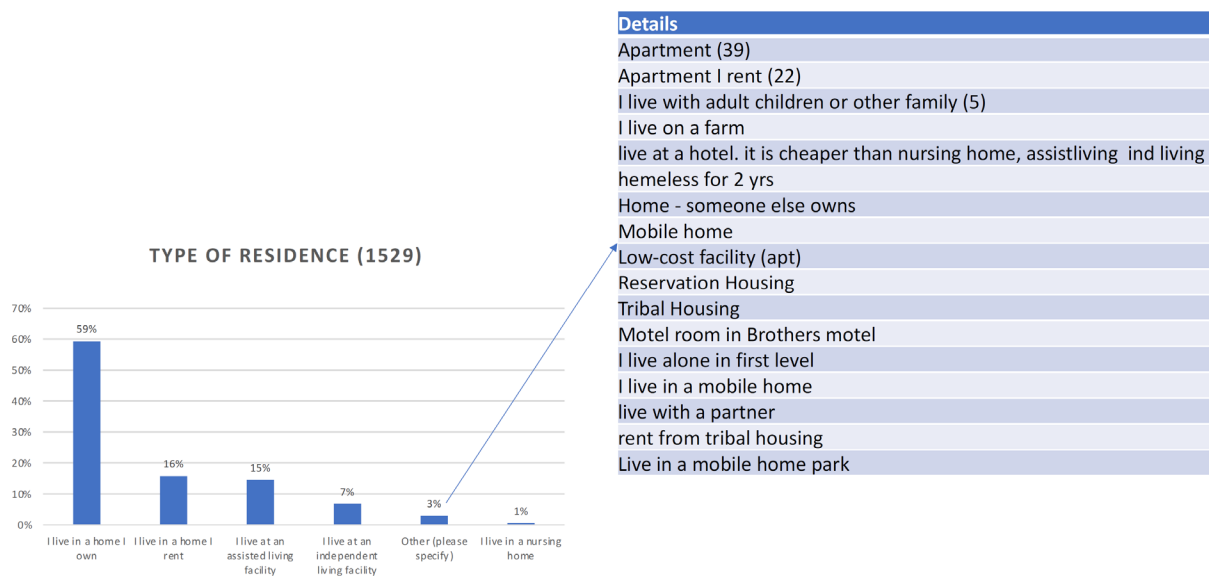
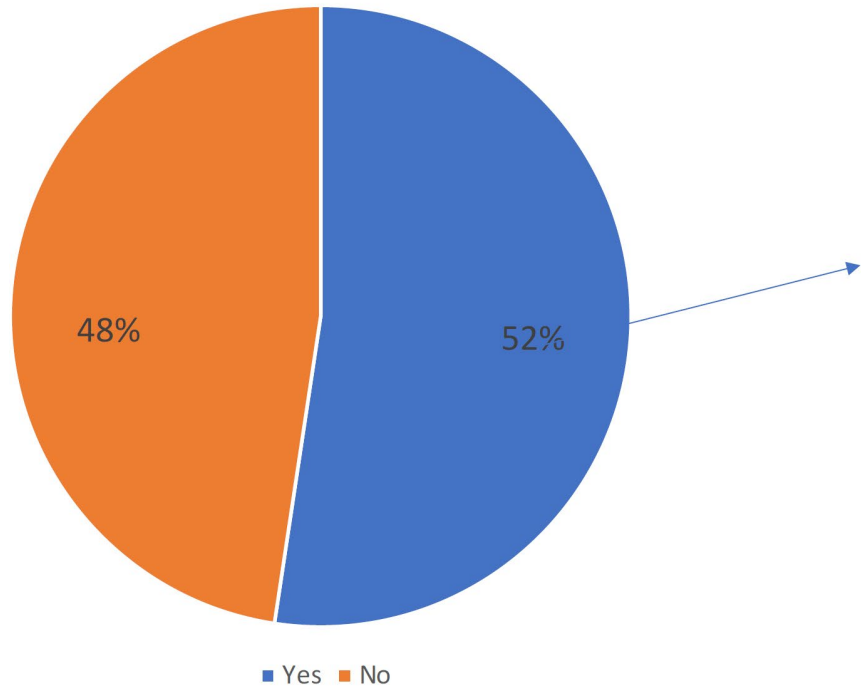


Figure 4.10. Types of Residence of Older Adult Respondents

USE OF MOBILITY DEVICE (1531)



TYPE OF MOBILITY DEVICE (798)

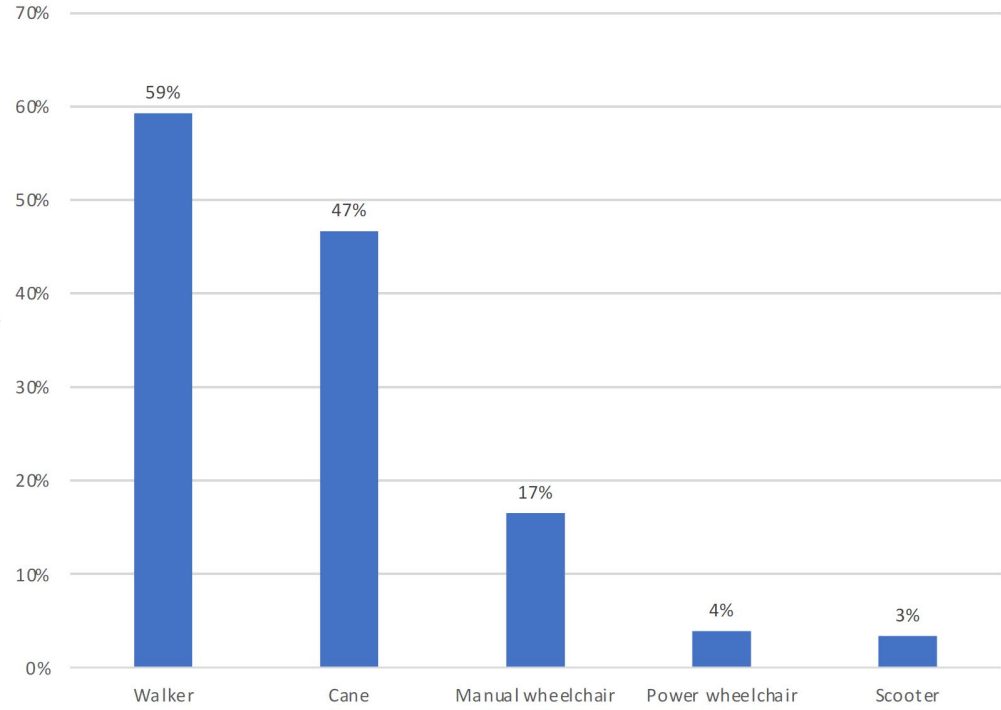


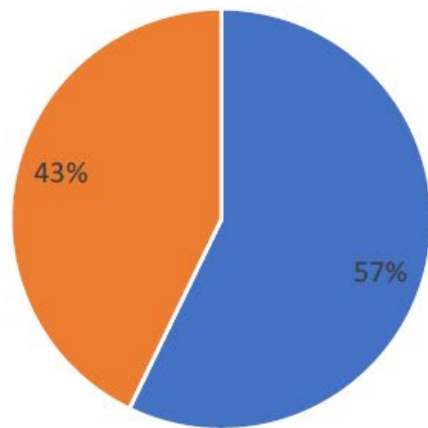
Figure 4.11. Usage and Type of Mobility Devices by Older Adult Respondents

4.3.1.3. Survey Topic: Information Technology Usage

As mentioned previously, technology has played a pivotal role in transforming transportation services, particularly in catering to the needs of older adults. It has enabled the development of innovative solutions that enhance accessibility and convenience. One notable advancement is the provision of real-time notifications, which allow older adults to stay informed about the estimated arrival or departure times of transit and paratransit services. This feature greatly aids in planning their journeys and reduces uncertainties. Thus, the first survey topic was given with a series of questions to inquire about the information technology usage by older adults.

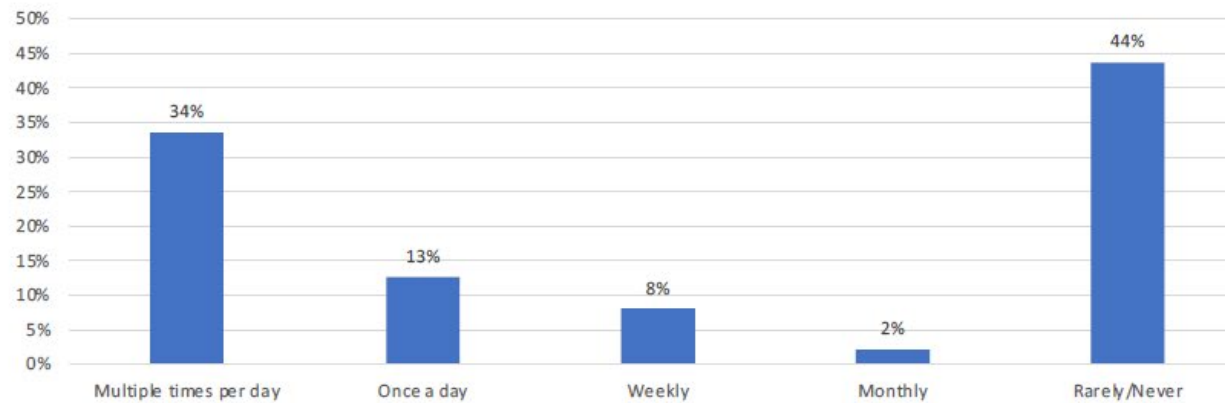
The usage of internet services was first surveyed, whose results can be found in Figure 4.12. Nearly half of the responding older adults (43%, 687 out of 1598 respondents) do not have internet access, while there is a similar percentage (44%, 625 out of 1421 respondents) being asked about the frequency of internet usage. The respondents also shared their opinions towards the easiness of internet usage, and once again nearly half of respondents (46%, 610 out of 1327 respondents) found the internet difficult to use. This might simply imply the gap between the technology development and the adoption by the older adults, which might prevent the access of older adults to the advanced functions/feature offered by the service providers.

DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO THE INTERNET? (1598)



■ Access to Internet ■ No internet

HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE THE INTERNET?(1421)



HOW EASY IS IT FOR YOU TO USE THE INTERNET? (1327)

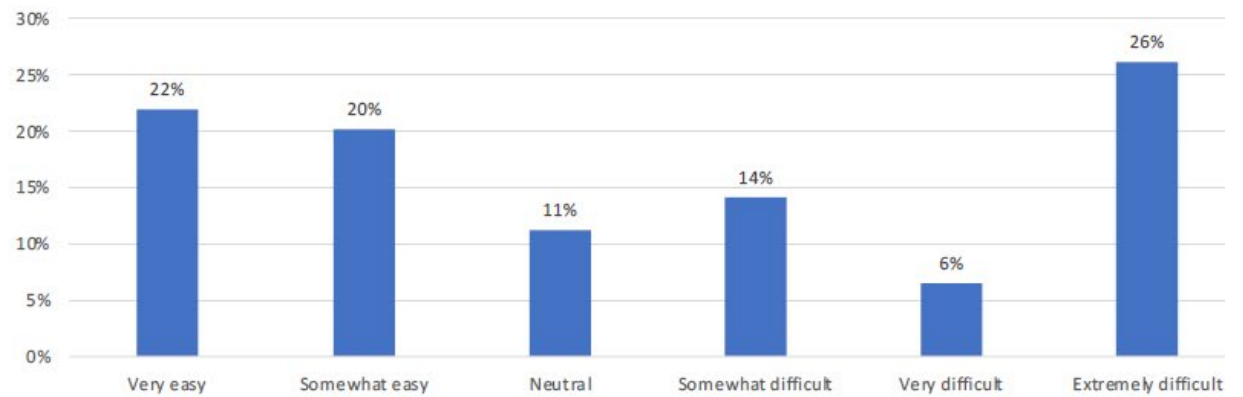
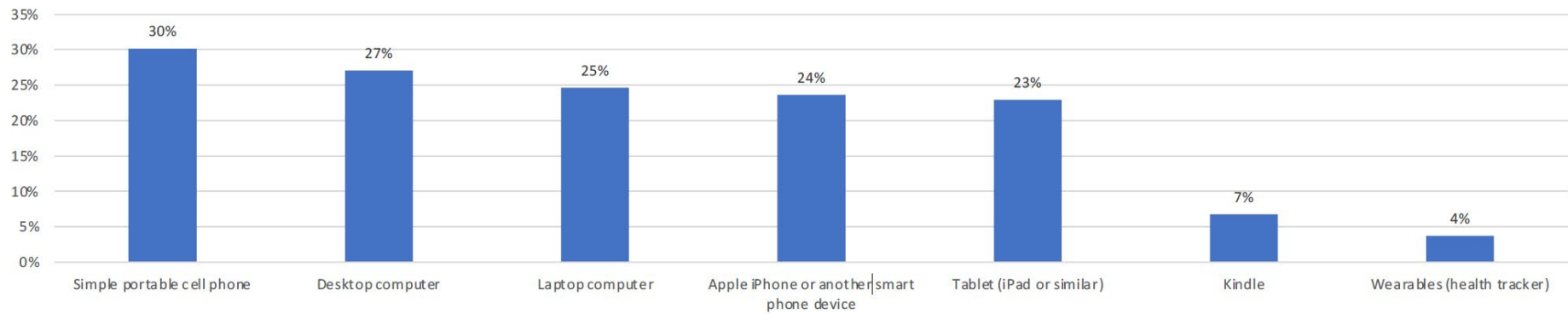


Figure 4.12. Internet Services Usage by Older Adult Respondents

Then respondents were asked about their choice of mobile devices and the extent of their usage, with 1550 and 1019 responses, respectively. The results can be found in Figure 4.13. Despite the regular usage of sending/receiving emails/messages, online shopping received the most attention by the respondents, and less than 10% of the respondents reported using the ride services. The opinions expressed by the respondents were also collected for both pre- and during COVID regarding the mobile devices usage. The general trends do not show a significant difference for almost all the predefined options.

The questionnaire then had a question asking how the respondents find information about transportation services such as bus or taxi, for which there were 1320 responses (Figure 4.14). Most of the respondents (45%, 594 out of 1320 respondents) highly relied on friends/family members. Thirty-four percent of respondents still used the old-fashioned phone book for information retrieval of the transportation services. The selection rates for other predefined options showed either the lack of effective distribution of transportation services information or the lower adoption rate of new technologies for information retrieval.



5. WHAT DO YOU USE YOUR COMPUTER/DEVICE FOR? PLEASE TELL US WHAT YOU USE IT FOR NOW AND WHAT YOU USED IT FOR BEFORE COVID-19.(1019)

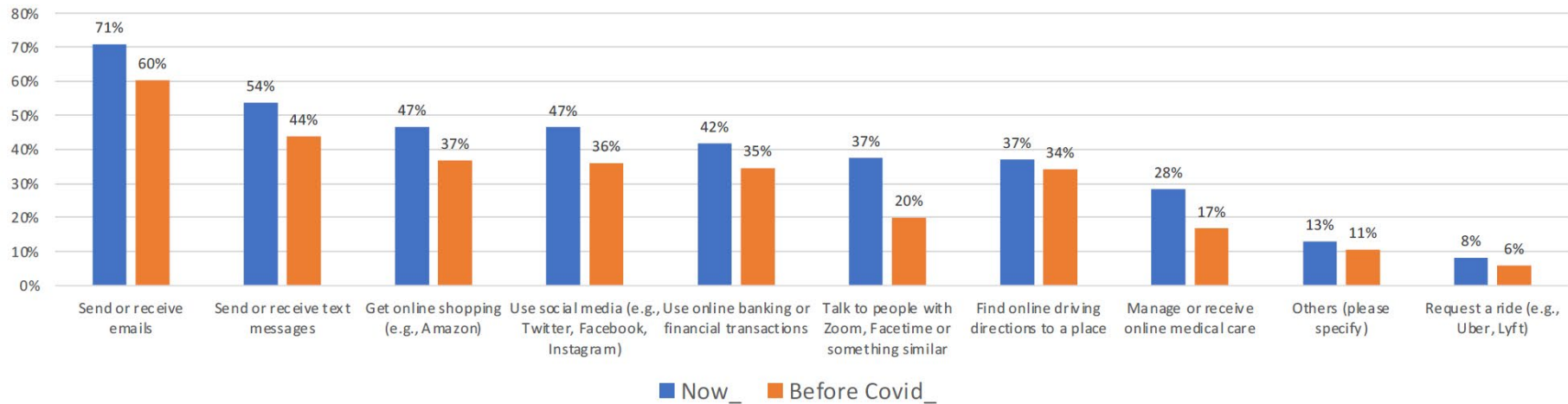


Figure 4.13. Choice of Mobile Devices and the Extent of Their Usage by Older Adult Respondents

HOW DO YOU FIND INFORMATION ABOUT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES LIKE BUS OR TAXI?(1320)

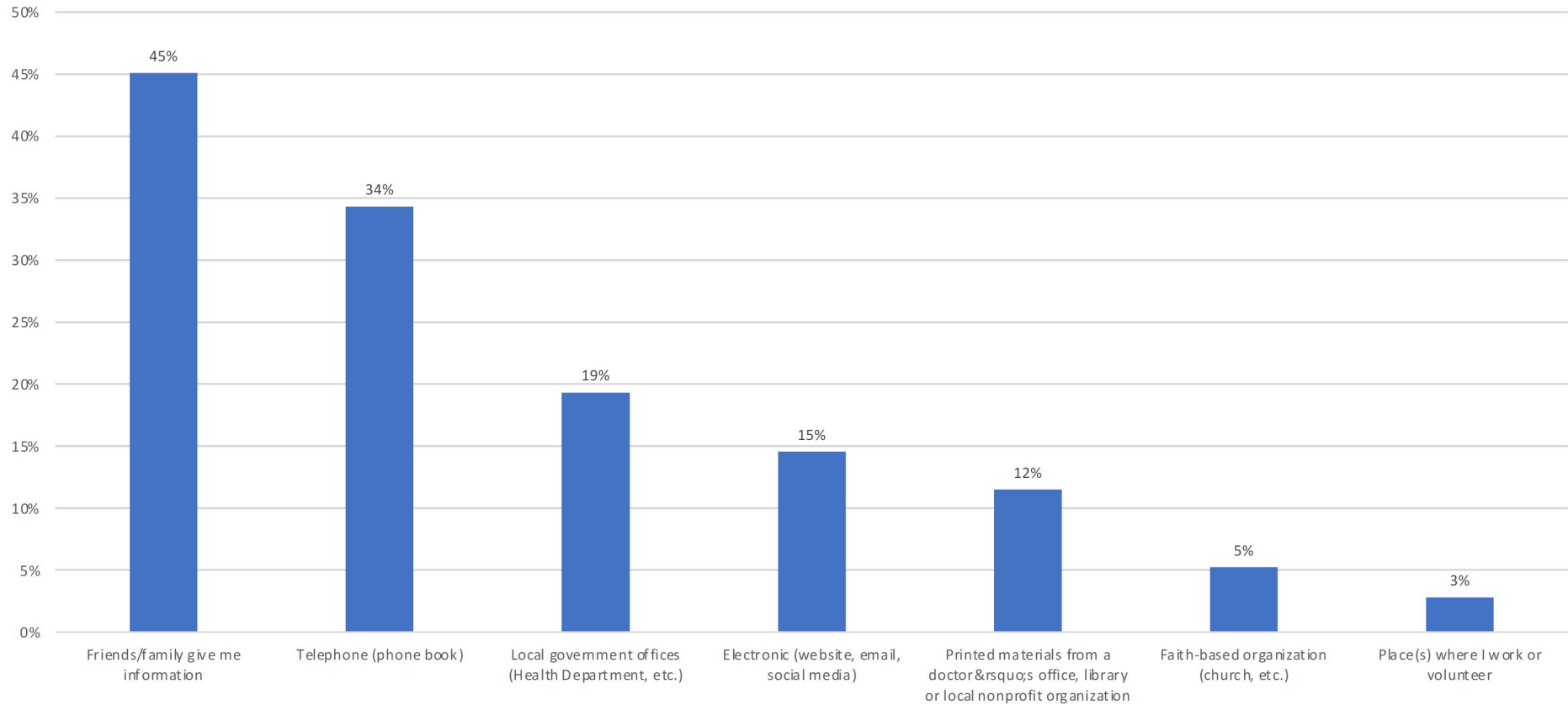


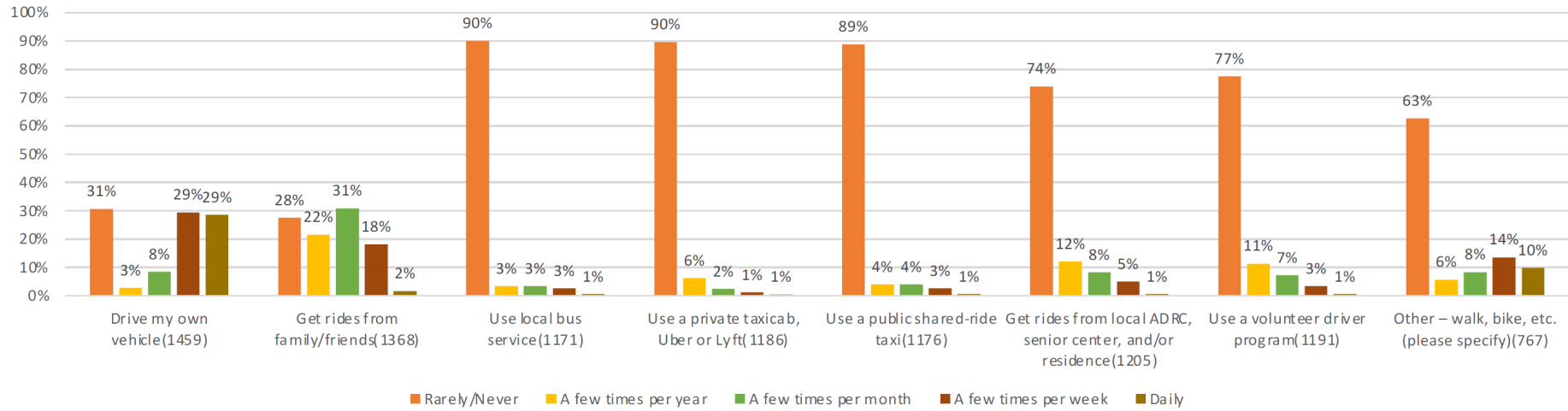
Figure 4.14. Information Retrieval for Transportation Services by Older Adult Respondents

4.3.1.4. Survey Topic: Travel patterns

The second key focus of the survey questionnaire revolved around the travel patterns exhibited by the respondents, specifically delving into their transportation mode preferences. This aspect of the survey aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the mobility choices made by older adults, shedding light on their preferred modes of transportation for various travel purposes.

The respondents were initially queried about their transportation mode preferences both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The frequency of their mode selections is visually represented in Figure 4.15, providing a comparative overview of the changes in transportation preferences amid the pandemic. The survey results clearly highlight the dominance of self-driving and reliance on friends/family for transportation among respondents. However, local public and private services were rarely used, with 70%-90% of respondents reporting infrequent or no usage. This response underscores the need to address barriers and limitations associated with local transportation options for older adults. Additionally, during COVID, there was a further decrease in participation in these services by survey participants.

BEFORE COVID-19, HOW OFTEN DID YOU...? (1594)



NOW DURING COVID-19, HOW OFTEN DO YOU...? (1572)

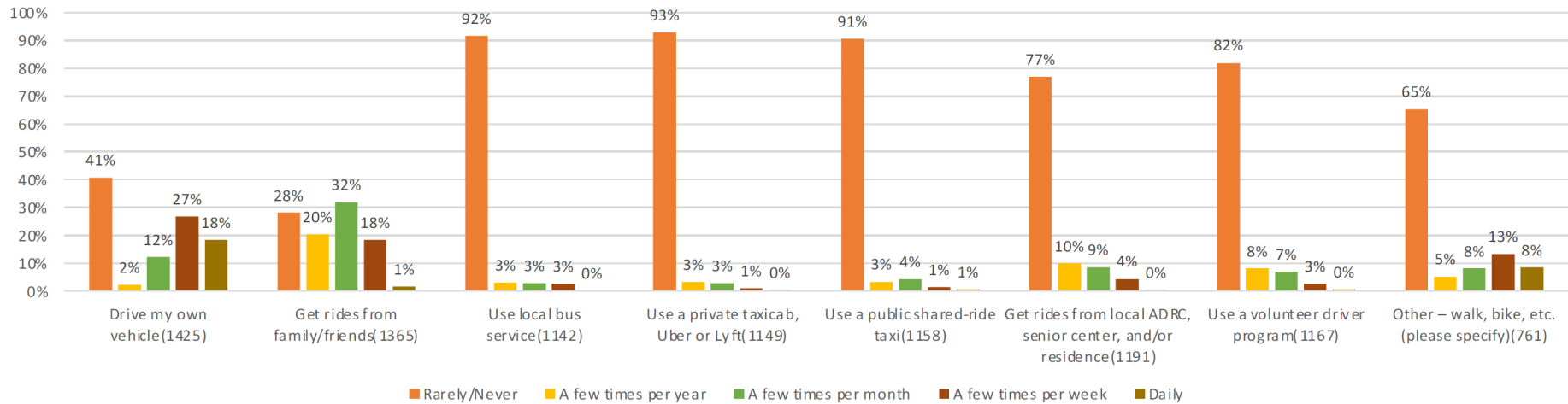
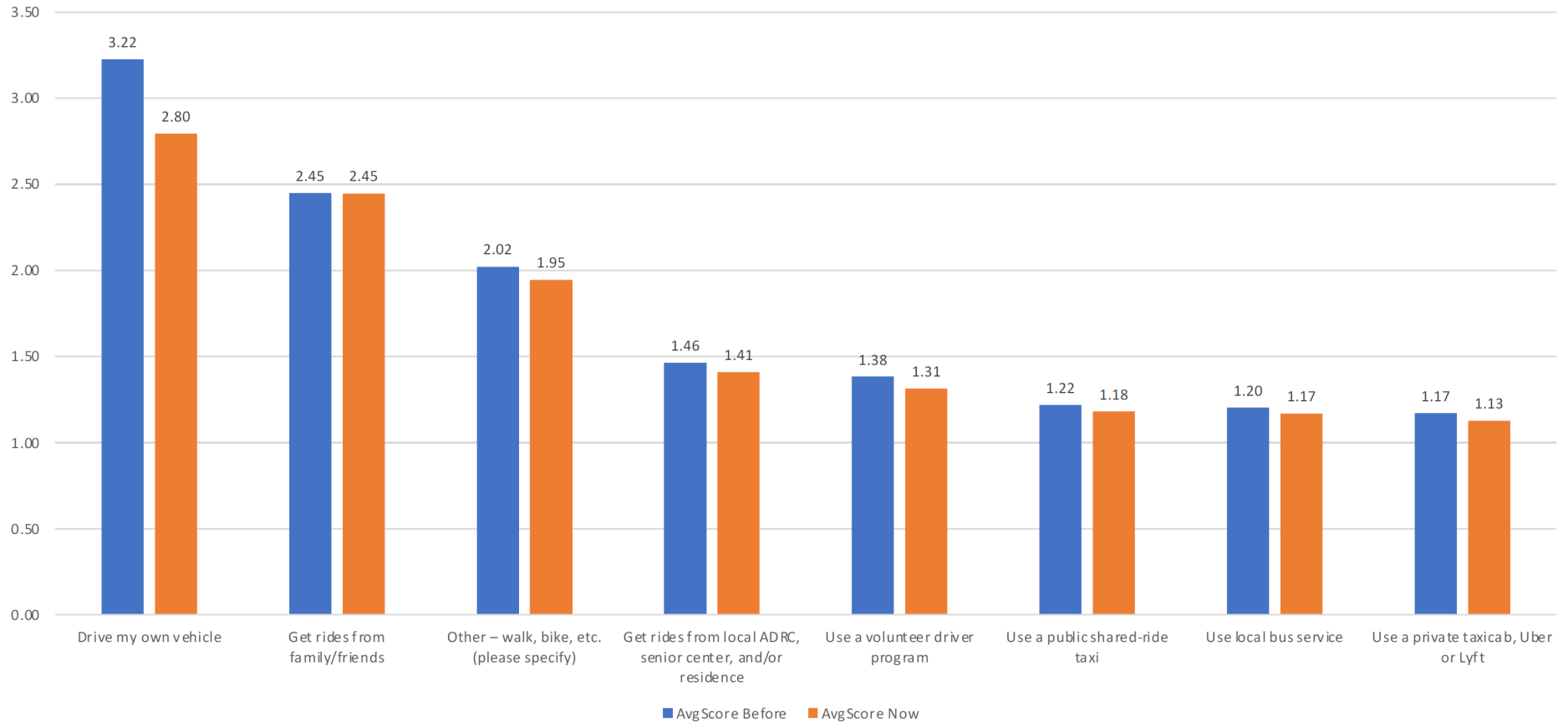


Figure 4.15. Comparative Analysis of Transportation Mode Preferences Pre- and during COVID-19 by Older Adult Respondents

Furthermore, the survey included ratings associated with each transportation mode, allowing respondents to express their preferences. Similar patterns were observed as in the previous question, with the majority of respondents expressing a preference for owning a car. Such results can be found in Figure 4.16 below.

Next, respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of travel activities by purpose and rate the importance of each activity. The results are presented in Figure 4.17. A total of 1579 responses were received for this question. It was found that groceries ranked as the most important reason for making trips, followed by medical purposes. On the other hand, travel for job or volunteer activities was rated as the least important. This finding emphasizes the need to ensure that alternative transportation options are accessible, affordable, and tailored to meet the specific needs of older adults who are unable or choose not to drive. Additionally, these findings provide valuable guidance for policymakers, transportation service providers, and community organizations in developing strategies and initiatives that address the specific mobility needs of older adults, enhance transportation options, and promote active and independent living. By understanding the preferences and priorities of older adults, stakeholders can work towards designing transportation systems and services that effectively meet their needs and improve their overall quality of life.

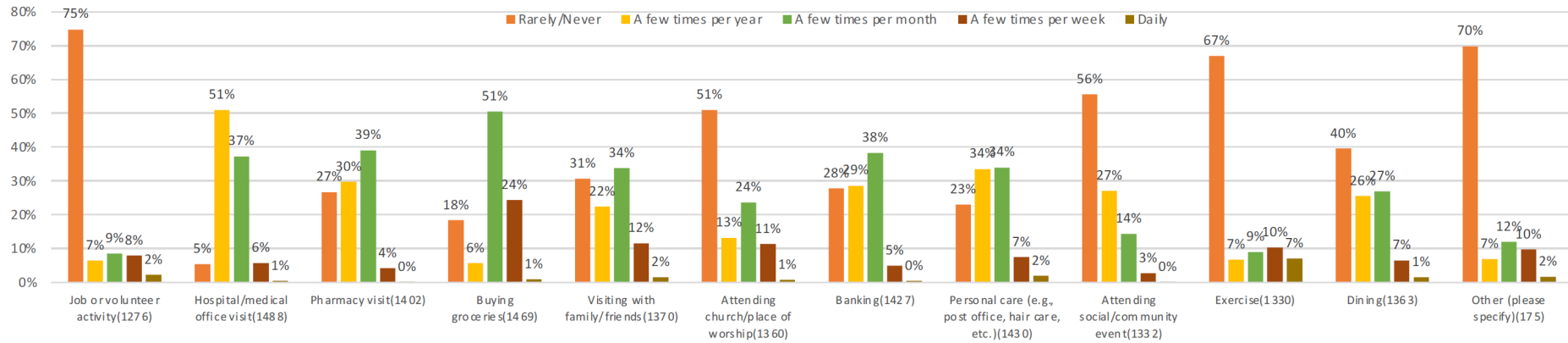
**AVERAGE SCORE COMPARISON: BEFORE & NOW COVID-19, HOW OFTEN DO YOU...?
(1594 VS. 1572)**



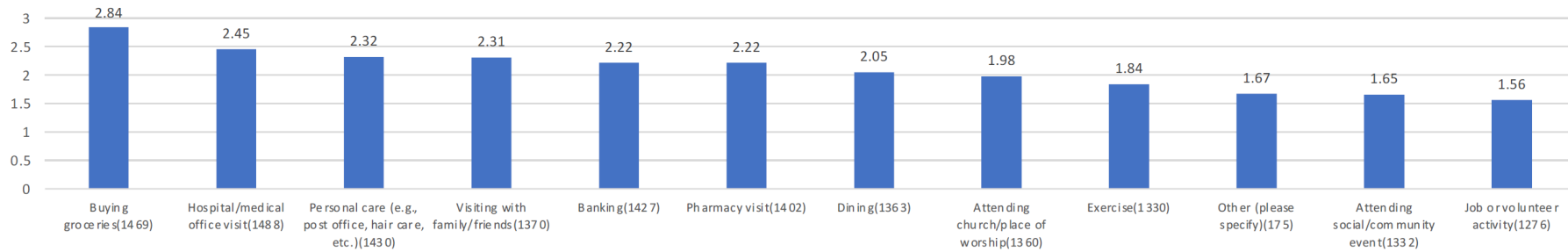
Rarely/Never	A few times per year	A few times per month	A few times per week	Daily
1	2	3	4	5

Figure 4.16. Average Score Comparison for Mode Choice: Before and Now COVID by Older Adult Respondents

HOW OFTEN DO YOU MAKE TRIPS FOR...?(1579)



AVERAGE SCORE



Rarely/Never	A few times per year	A few times per month	A few times per week	Daily
1	2	3	4	5

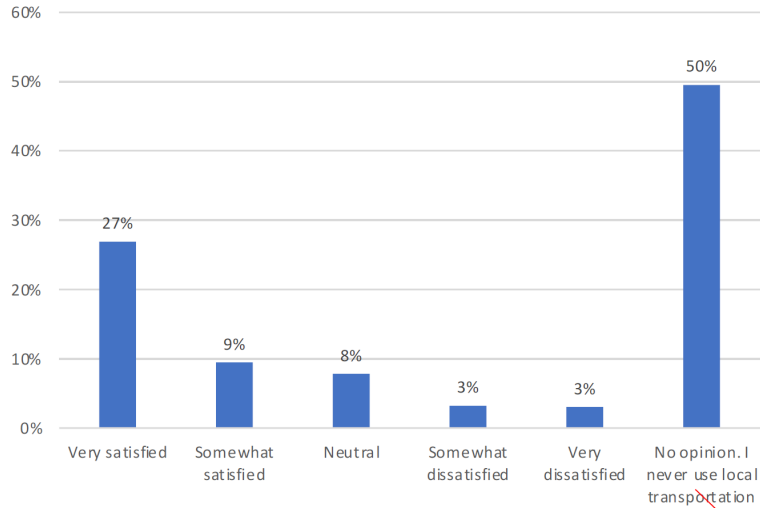
Figure 4.17. Frequency and Importance of Travel Activities by Purpose by Older Adult Respondents

4.3.1.5. Survey Topic: Satisfaction with Local Transportation Services

The third major survey topic focused on gauging the satisfaction levels of respondents with local transportation services. This section also gathered valuable insights into the key factors that influence older adults' decisions when choosing transportation options, such as driver behaviors and the availability of special features or assistance provided by the transportation services. By gathering opinions on these important aspects, the survey aimed to identify areas of improvement and understand the specific needs and preferences of older adults for accessing transportation services.

The first question within this topic investigated the overall satisfaction of respondents as users of local transportation services that they most frequently use. The corresponding results are displayed in Figure 4.18, with a total of 1532 (93%) responses received. Notably, 50% of the respondents reported having no opinion on service quality, which can be attributed to their lack of prior usage of local transportation services. This observation aligns with the findings from the earlier discussion on travel patterns among the respondents. Among the remaining respondents, 27% expressed being "Very Satisfied," while 9% claimed to be "Somewhat Satisfied," indicating a positive opinion towards the local transportation services. The same question was also posed to service providers, and the results, presented in Figure 4.18, exhibit different distribution patterns among the various attitudes. However, both sides share a similar overall trend, indicating a positive perception of the services when respondents have actually used them. In addition, it seems there are some misconceptions regarding local transportation here as 10% of respondents who answered "no opinion" actually used local transportation before (on their answers from previous questions)

IN GENERAL, HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE LOCAL TRANSPORTATION SERVICE YOU USE MOST OFTEN? (1532)



The same question from service provider's survey

IN GENERAL, HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE ATTITUDES OF YOUR CLIENTS TOWARDS TRANSPORTATION SERVICES IN YOUR COMMUNITY? (99)

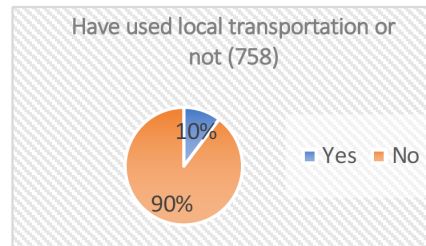
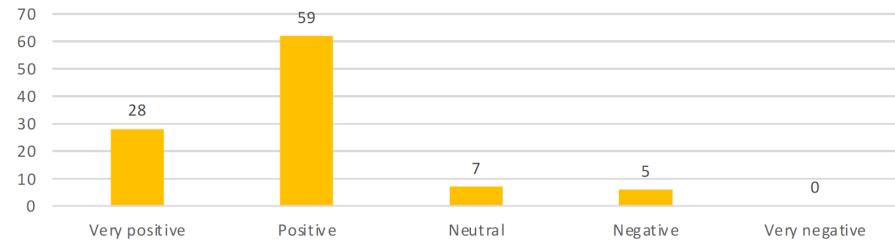


Figure 4.18. General Satisfaction with Local Transportation Services by Older Adult Respondents

Next, the respondents were asked to provide their selections of and to rate some predefined features of the transportation identified by the project team, including:

- Ride comes on time
- Ride is available at the time I need it
- Vehicle takes me to where I want to go
- There is real time information that tells me when the service will arrive
- I do not need to schedule my trip days in advance
- I can arrange my trip with an app or website
- There is “one call does it all” for all transportation service information I want to know
- There is good coordination between transportation and medical services
- There is a travel trainer who will escort and teach me about using transportation services
- The cost of the trip is affordable
- It is easy to pay for the trip by credit card or vouchers
- Vehicle is equipped with ramp or wheelchair lift
- I feel safe on the vehicle
- Vehicle is comfortable and clean
- I can carry as many bags as I need
- Language assistance is available
- Other (please describe)

The survey solicited feedback from both older adults and transportation service providers on the same question. The results are presented in Figures 4.19 and 4.20, with Figure 4.20 ranking each option based on the perspective of older adults. While there is a general consensus on most options between users and providers, there appears to be a notable discrepancy, particularly regarding “real-time information” and “wheelchair lifts.” Additionally, the survey included an open comments section where older adult respondents could provide text input on their expectations for transportation features and services. Figure 4.21 showcases these comments, which primarily fall into categories such as "driver behavior" and "special feature assistance."

HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING FEATURES OF TRANSPORTATION WHEN YOU TAKE A TRIP?(1055)

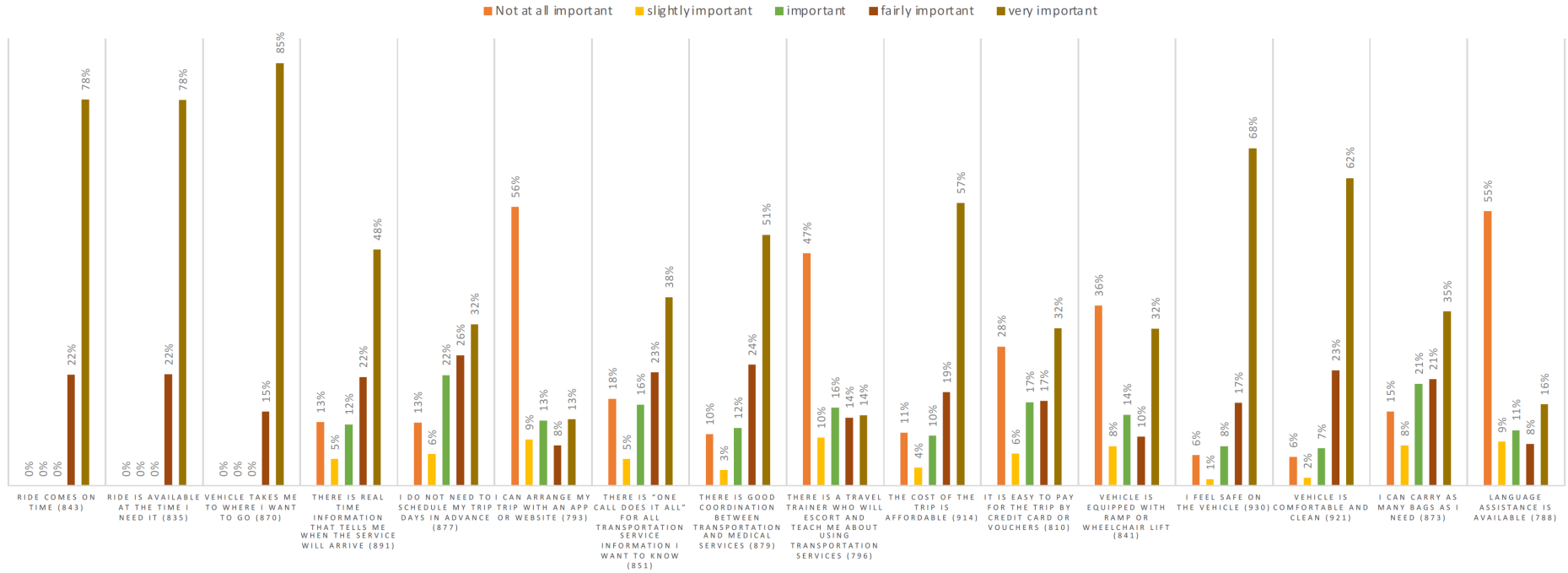
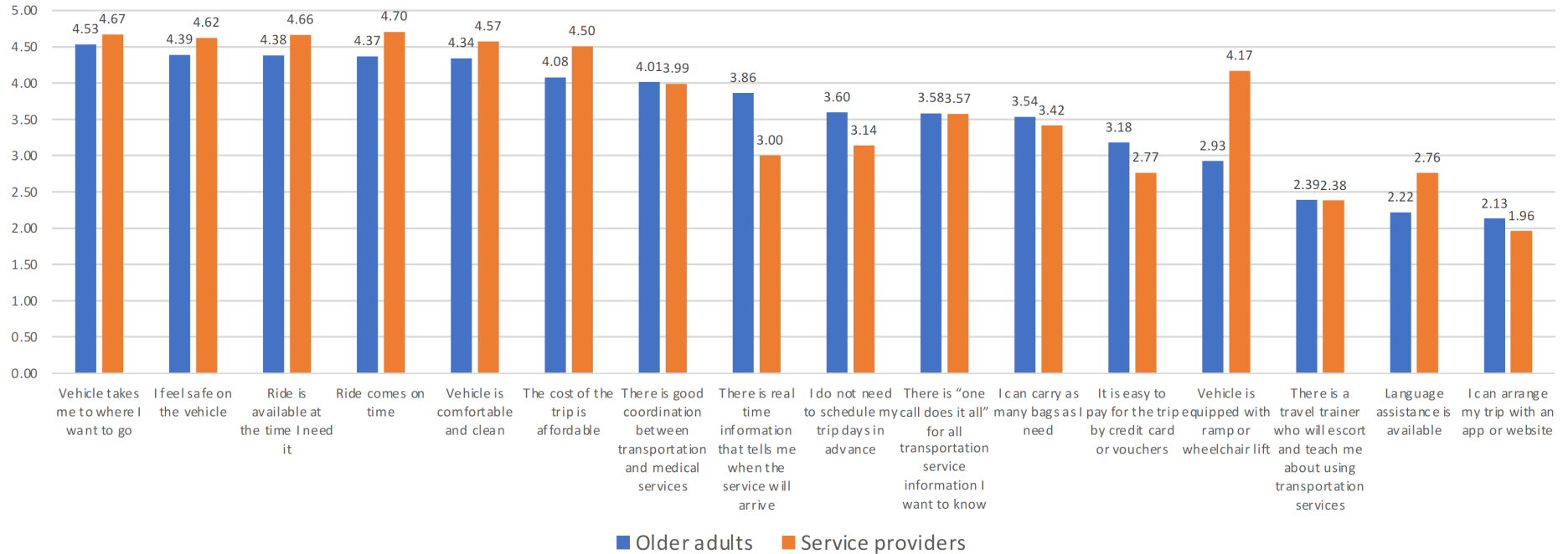


Figure 4.19. Feature Importance of Transportation (Services) by Older Adult Respondents

** The same question has been asked to both older adults and transportation service providers*

Average score Comparison: How IMPORTANT are the following features of transportation when older adults take a trip*?



1	2	3	4	5
Not at all Important	Slightly Important	Important	Fairly Important	Very Important

Figure 4.20. Average Score Comparison for Features of Transportation (Services) between Older Adults and Service Providers

Topic	Response	Topic	Response
Driver behavior (12)	Ask for more awesome drivers	Special Features/ Assistance (15)	Assistance for blind
	Bus drivers, Friendly and polite helpful.		Available restroom
	A friendly driver		Can be able to have an extra person
	Driver doesn't smell like cigarette smoke		Can hold walker lugging
	Driver is able maneuver wheelchair		Door to door as needed dialysis guidelines
	Driver is friendly and considerate of older people		Easy to get into vehicle.Assistance to and from store.
	Driver is polite and pleasant		Help getting in and get out of bus or car
	Driver is so respectful		I use the volunteer drivers through common aging
	Drivers are nice and know how to assist.		Make other stops for minor time wastes
	Drivers are professional - very nice -		More services
	Drivers are trustworthy, safe, on time		Need restaurants to deliver
	Pleasant helpful driver		Oxygen tanks
	They help me with my bags and walker on steps.		
	Need restaurants to deliver		
	Vehicle is large enough to haul one person with knee surgery		

Figure 4.21. Open Comments about the Topic of Satisfaction by Older Adults Respondents

4.3.1.6. Survey Topic: Travel Challenges and Limitations

The fourth key focus of the survey questionnaire aimed to understand the travel challenges and limitations faced by older adults. This valuable insight can help identify and address the specific barriers that hinder their mobility and access to transportation services. By gaining a deeper understanding of these challenges, appropriate strategies and interventions can be developed to enhance the overall travel experience for older adults and ensure their transportation needs are adequately met.

A total of 1,028 older adults responded to the question regarding the problems they have experienced when using or attempting to use transportation services in the last two years. The results are presented in Figure 4.22. Notably, the two most prominent complaints from older adult service users are related to schedule availability and route choice. In addition to quantitative data, qualitative feedback was also collected from the respondents, as shown in Figure 4.23. The comments provided by older adults encompass various concerns, including fear due to poor driving skills, drivers not wearing masks during the pandemic, noisy vehicles, incidents involving drivers under the influence of drugs or alcohol, drivers lacking knowledge of destinations, inadequate assistance with seat belts, dissatisfaction with smoking drivers, difficulty understanding directions, and speeding by some drivers to make up time. These comments provide valuable insights into the specific challenges faced by older adults when using transportation services.

Furthermore, respondents were asked if they have ever discontinued using transportation services due to the aforementioned problems they selected or mentioned. The results are depicted in Figure 4.24. Out of the 1,650 respondents, 49% (811 individuals) provided a response to this question, which aligns with the number of local transportation service users identified in the earlier survey topic on travel patterns. Interestingly, the data reveal that only 13% of respondents have been deterred from using transportation services as a result of these issues.

WHAT PROBLEMS HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED WHEN USING (OR ATTEMPTING TO USE) TRANSPORTATION SERVICES IN THE LAST TWO YEARS?(1028)

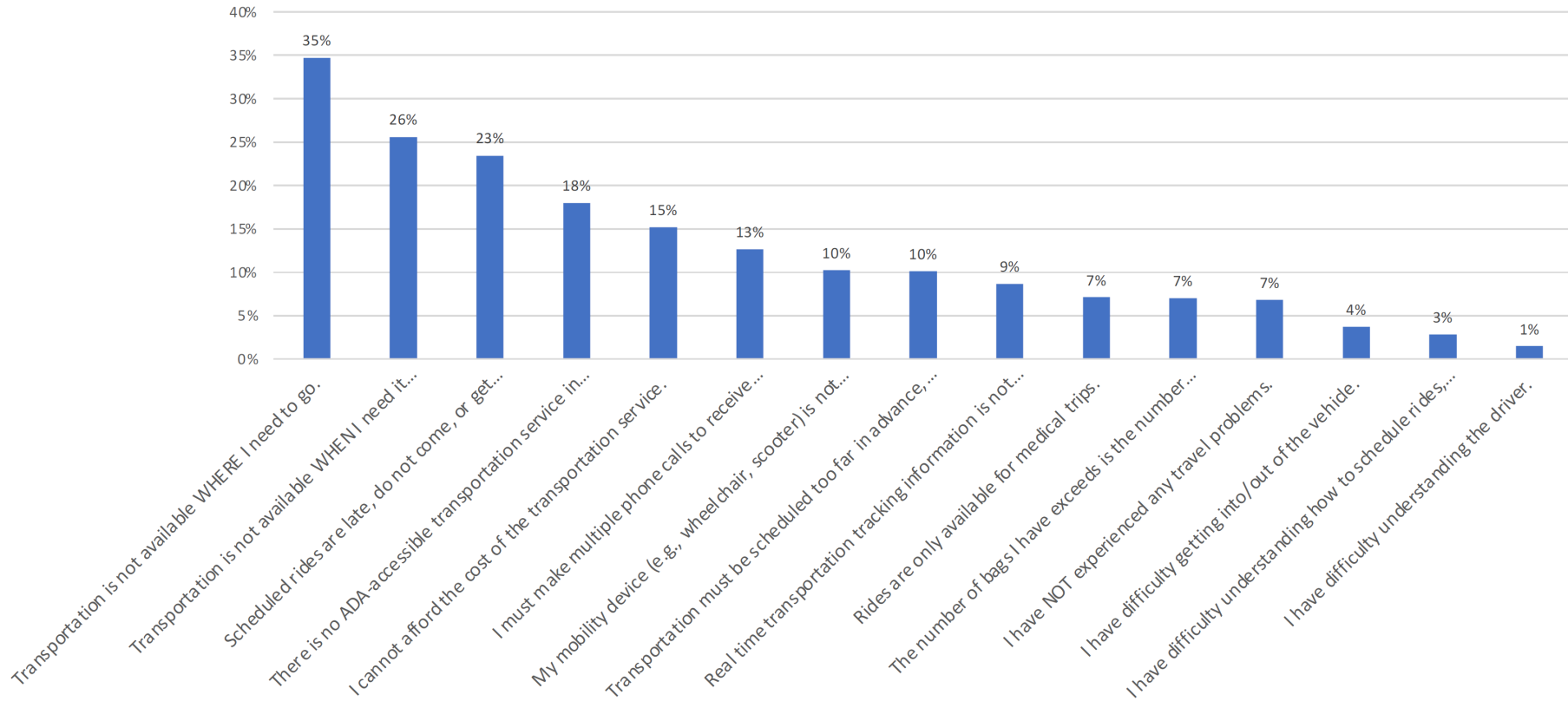


Figure 4.22. Problems Experienced by Older Adults when Using Transportation Services

Responses

Being afraid because of poor driving skills. Most of the enters are over 65. Some have poor driving behavior

Drivers on occasion don't wear masks during this pandemic

Extremely noisy vehicle - about 120db

Had one driver's skills decrease after picking me up after an appointment as he had used drugs or alcohol.

sometimes drivers don't know how to get to the destination.

The driver told me to get in and the back of the seat was he told me to put it up. There was no help with the seat belt which i asked for and he got in and drove off with out it fastened. I don't ride any place without my seatbelt and was in an accident. Reported it to the office and it didn't sound like it was a concern.

The last time i used public transportation. I did not like it because the driver smokes . I have never taken a taxi service then.

Van goes over white lines. Driver is always on phone looking on directions. Very thank to understand.

Vehicles from some drivers speed to make up time.

Figure 4.23. Open Comments about the Topic of Travel Challenges and Limitations by Older Adults Respondents

HAVE YOU STOPPED USING TRANSPORTATION DUE TO THE ABOVE PROBLEMS? (811)

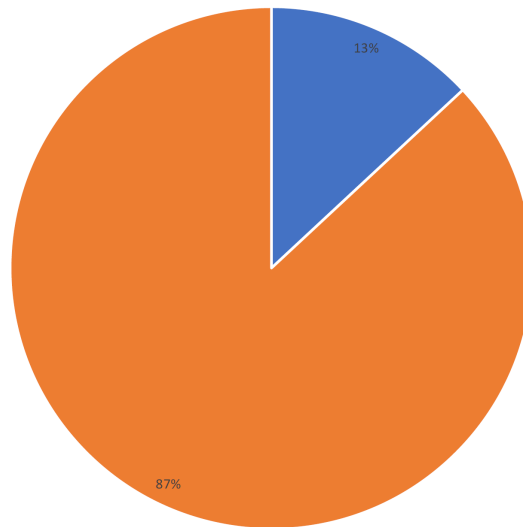


Figure 4.24. Impact of Transportation Problems on Service Usage by Older Adults Respondents

4.3.1.7. Survey Topic: Suggestions for Improvement

The last topic covered by only one question was to ask about any suggestions for improvement to the local transportation services provided to older adults. A total of 252 responses were obtained, and a wide range of text input was collected. The project team classified those suggestions into thirteen categories, with the number of responses provided in the bracket for each of the categories:

- Availability (77)
- Schedule (51)
- Ride Information (23)
- Ride Program (23)
- Affordability (21)
- Ride Quality (16)
- Assistance/Help (13)
- Reliability (8)
- Ease of Payment/Booking (6)
- Driver Behavior (6)
- Safety (5)
- Focus on people who do/cannot drive (2)
- Vehicle Tracking (1)

This topic is aimed at gathering valuable insights and suggestions to improve local transportation services for older adults. The detailed open comments on the question can be found in the **Appendix E, Links to All Other Sources**.

The suggestions provided by older adults for improving local transportation services encompass a wide range of areas. Under the category of Availability, respondents expressed the need for public buses or trains that can cross county lines, increased flexibility in destinations and tasks, more pickup and drop-off locations, and assistance in getting to the vehicle for those with mobility limitations. They also emphasized the importance of having available rides on weekends, holidays, and Sundays, as well as a smaller-scale travel option for personal and church-related activities.

Regarding Schedule, participants highlighted the challenges of scheduling in advance, especially for early or late appointments, and the need for better communication and coordination to avoid appointment cancellations. They suggested accommodating multiple stops at stores, providing emergency call-in options, extending weekend hours, and reducing the lead time required to arrange transportation.

In terms of Ride Information, older adults emphasized the importance of knowing the cost when booking a ride, better advertising and publicity for transportation services, confirmation of reservations and pickup times, and access to comprehensive information about available services, costs, and how to use them. They also recommended providing written material on transportation programs, streamlining registration processes, and offering updated information on transportation options.

Suggestions for the Ride Program included allocating more funding to expand programs, recruiting more volunteer drivers, making transportation services more accessible and affordable for all age groups, improving coordination between medical facilities and transportation services, and addressing issues related to rude drivers and limited-service hours.

In terms of Ride Quality, participants suggested using vehicles that are clean, well-maintained, and equipped with wheelchair accessibility. They emphasized the need for vehicles that are easy to enter and exit, have enough seating capacity, and are suitable for individuals with specific needs such as oxygen tanks or walkers.

Assistance and help were highlighted as crucial factors, with suggestions for fostering a helpful and supportive environment among riders and addressing the disconnection between different transportation services. Participants also emphasized the importance of reliable and punctual transportation services, ease of payment through prepayment options or digital platforms, and the need for courteous and professional drivers.

Safety concerns were also raised, with suggestions such as enforcing speed limits, providing written conduct rules for passengers, ensuring compliance with COVID-19 safety measures, and maintaining vehicles in good repair for a comfortable and secure travel experience.

Finally, under the category of Vehicle Tracking, older adults expressed an interest in receiving ride notifications via text messages to stay informed about the arrival of their transportation.

These suggestions from older adults provide valuable insights for improving local transportation services, addressing concerns related to availability, schedule flexibility, ride information, program effectiveness, ride quality, assistance and help, reliability, ease of payment and booking, driver quality, safety, and vehicle tracking. Incorporating these suggestions can contribute to enhancing transportation options and ensuring a more satisfactory travel experience for older adults in the community.

4.3.2. Service Providers

4.3.2.1. Overview of Return Responses

The format of the survey questionnaire to service providers only used the online survey by Qualtrics. Survey invitations were sent on March, 2021, and follow-up reminders were also sent in March, 2021.

A total of 103 responses were received, including 13 transit agencies³, 83 specialized service providers and mobility managers⁴, and 7 tribal aging programs⁵. It should be noted that we combined responses from specialized service providers and mobility managers together as a great number of names from the two lists overlapped. The distribution of responses can be seen in Figure 4.25.

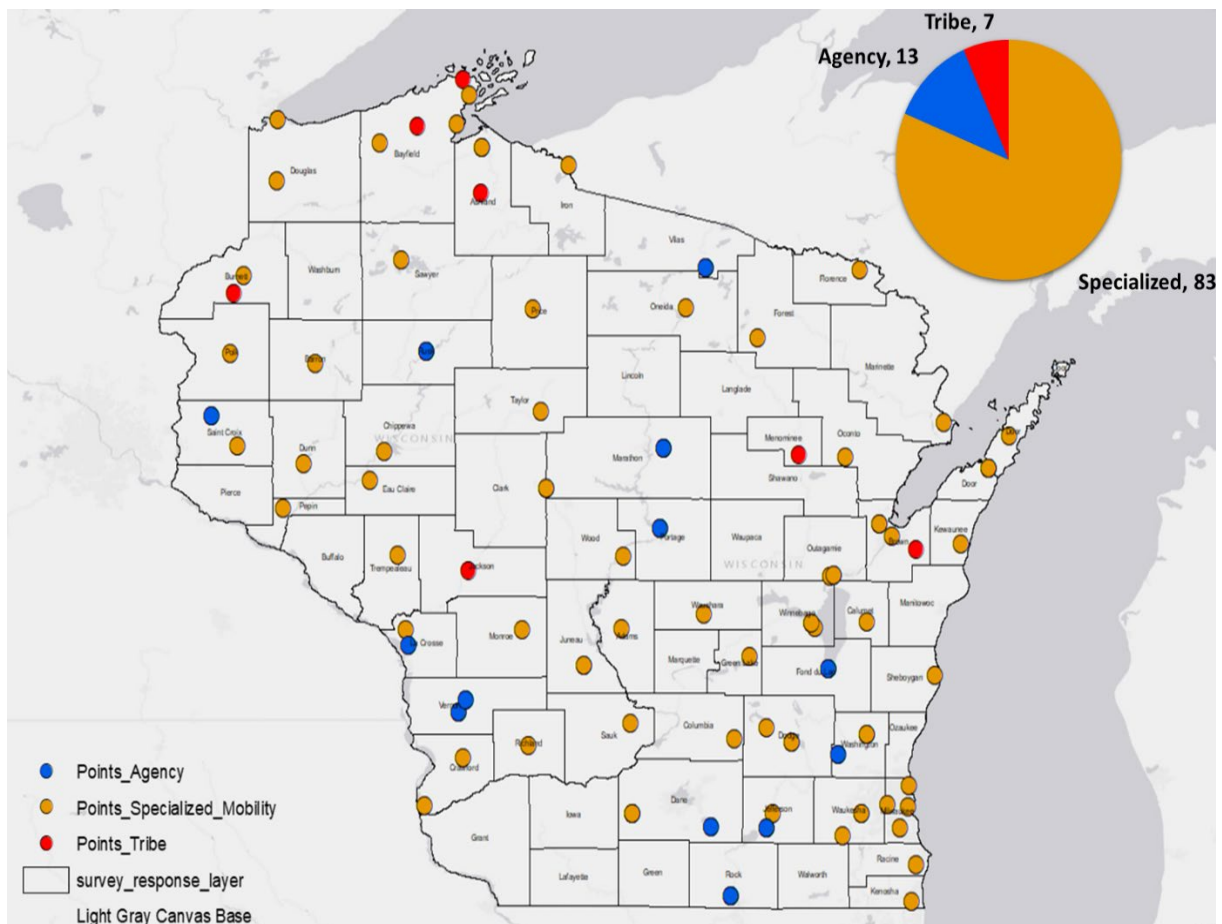


Figure 4.25. Spatial Distribution of the Responding Service Providers in Wisconsin⁶

³ Contact list from WisDOT Rural Public Transit/Transit Planning Program Manager.

⁴ Contact list from WisDOT Specialized Transit Program Manager + Wisconsin Association of Mobility Managers.

⁵ Contact list from Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources (GWAAR) Transport Specialist

⁶ Please note that some large areas, such as Milwaukee County and Fond du Lac County, have been involved for service provider service in order to understand the best practices of public transit services by such large urban areas.

Because the questionnaire for service providers was structured similarly to the one distributed to the older adults, it can also be classified into two major themes with similar sub-themes in each: 1) profiles of the responded service providers (type of primary role, type of services, and personnel/staff composition), and 2) survey topics (information technology/management system usage, travel pattern of users, perceived satisfaction from users, problems/issues in providing services and coordination, and suggestions/plans for improvement). The rest of the subsections for service providers' survey results firstly present the profiles of the respondents, and then provide the analysis of each survey topic.

4.3.2.2. Profiles of Responded Service Providers

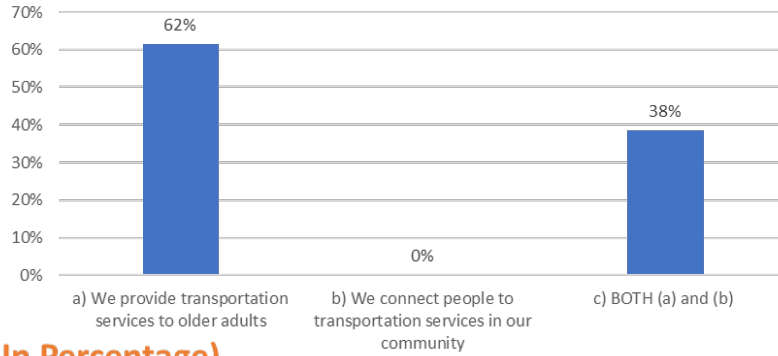
In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues from the perspective of service providers, it is crucial to examine their profiles, which encompass three key aspects: 1) the type of primary roles they fulfill, 2) the main services they offer, and 3) the composition of their personnel and staff. By delving into these aspects, we can obtain valuable insights into the unique characteristics and capabilities of service providers, enabling us to identify potential challenges and opportunities for improvement. Understanding the diverse roles, services, and personnel composition within the service provider landscape will facilitate a more informed and targeted approach to addressing the issues at hand and ultimately enhancing the delivery of transportation services to the older adults. Thus, one of the major portions in the survey questionnaire was to collect such information by asking the following three questions:

1. What is your agency's primary role in providing services for older adults?
2. What transportation service(s) do you provide?
3. Who provides the rides?

Figure 4.26 presents the findings regarding the primary roles of service providers in offering services for older adults, categorized by the type of provider. The results demonstrate that the vast majority of service providers, regardless of their specialization, acknowledge their agencies' involvement in providing services for older adults. Notably, while a few specialized mobility service providers may not specifically cater to older adults, the overall trend highlights a recognition of their responsibility towards this demographic. This underscores the commitment and dedication of service providers towards addressing the transportation needs of older adults within their respective communities.

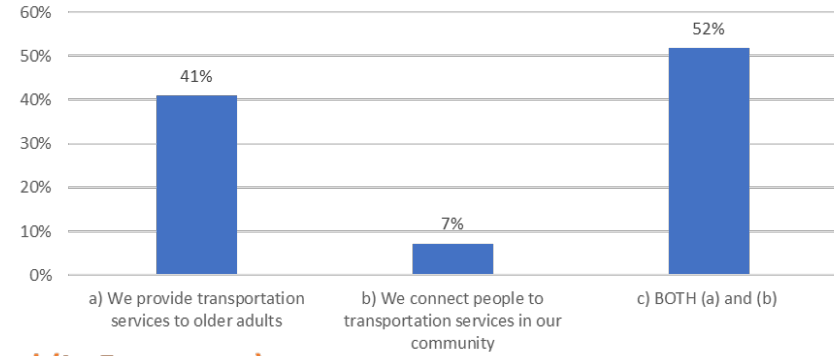
Agency (In Percentage)

WHAT IS YOUR AGENCY'S PRIMARY ROLE IN PROVIDING SERVICES FOR OLDER ADULTS? (13)



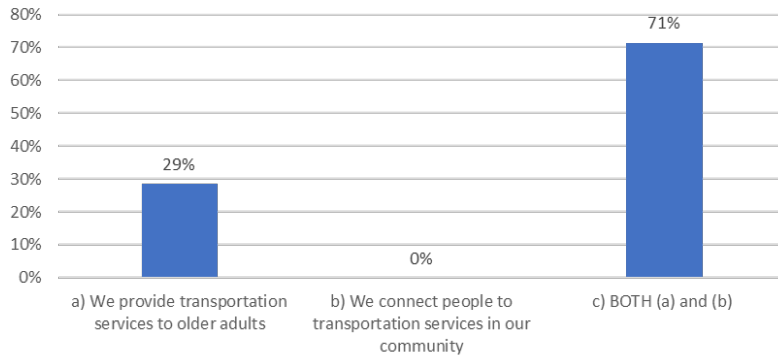
Specialized (In Percentage)

WHAT IS YOUR AGENCY'S PRIMARY ROLE IN PROVIDING SERVICES FOR OLDER ADULTS? (83)



Tribe (In Percentage)

WHAT IS YOUR AGENCY'S PRIMARY ROLE IN PROVIDING SERVICES FOR OLDER ADULTS? (7)



Total (In Frequency)

WHAT IS YOUR AGENCY'S PRIMARY ROLE IN PROVIDING SERVICES FOR OLDER ADULTS? (103)

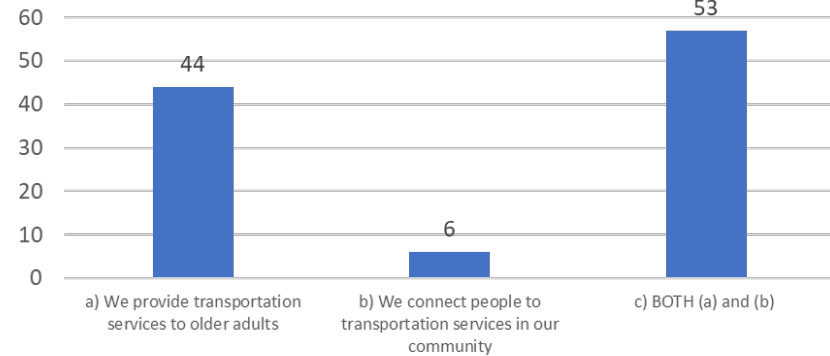
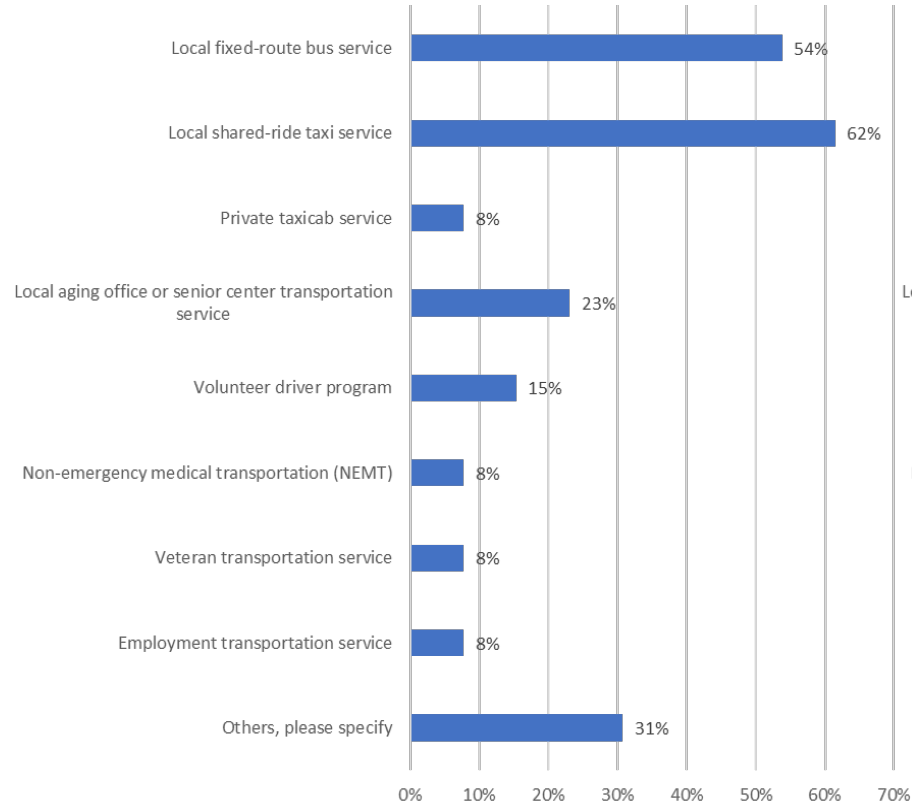


Figure 4.26. Agency's Primary Role in Providing Services for Older Adults by Service Provider Type

Agency (In Percentage)

WHAT TRANSPORTATION SERVICE(S) DO YOU PROVIDE (13)



Specialized (In Percentage)

WHAT TRANSPORTATION SERVICE(S) DO YOU PROVIDE (77)

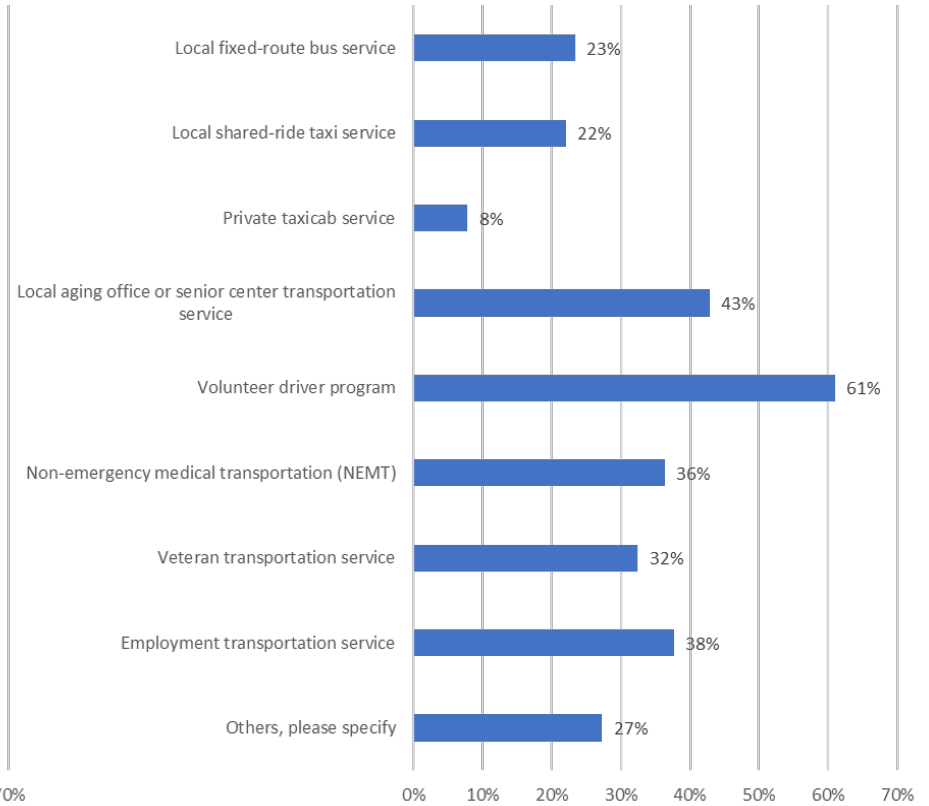


Figure 4.27. Type of Services Provided by Service Provider Type (General Transit and Specialized Mobility)

Tribe (In Percentage)

Total (In Frequency)

WHAT TRANSPORTATION SERVICE(S) DO YOU PROVIDE (7)

WHAT TRANSPORTATION SERVICE(S) DO YOU PROVIDE (97)

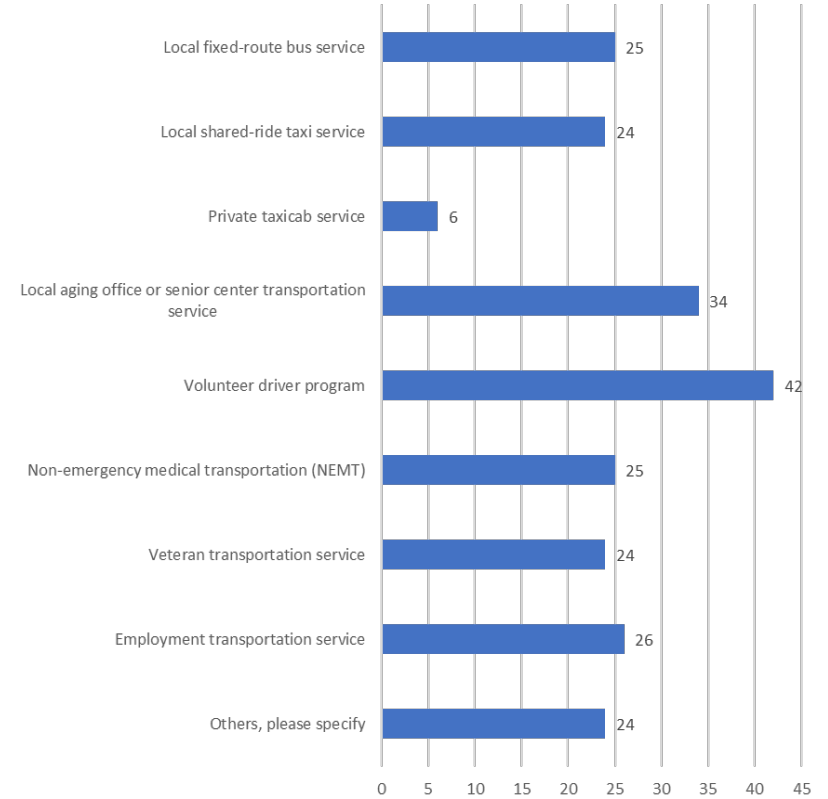
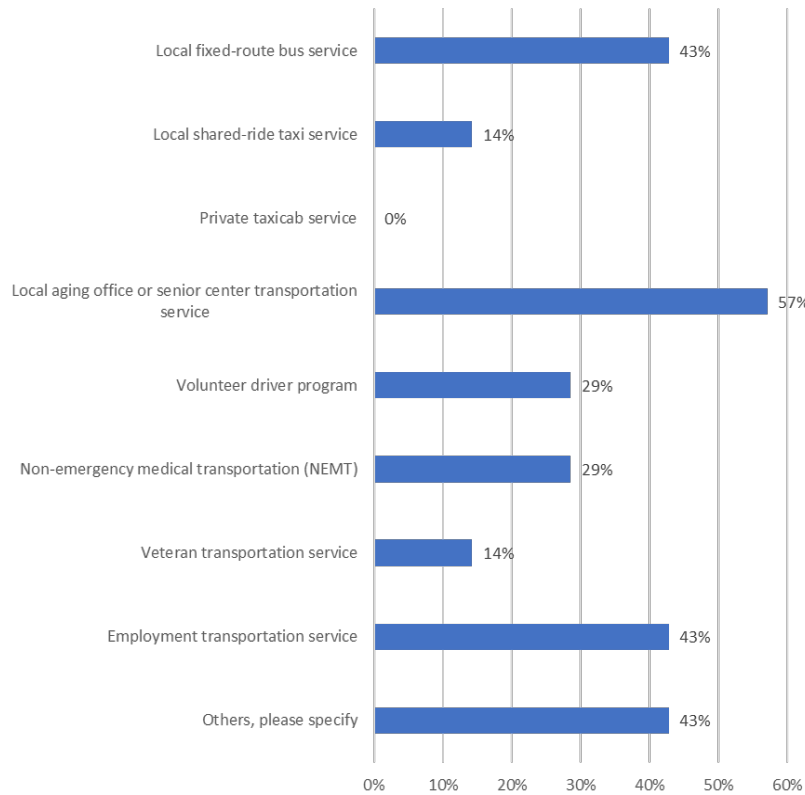


Figure 4.28. Type of Services Provided by Service Provider Type (Tribal Aging Program and Total)

Figures 4.27 – 4.28 display the results of the second question of the type of services provided by service provider (type). The survey question asked each agency to specify the transportation service(s) they provide. The responses varied among the three different types of agencies: general transit agencies, specialized mobility service providers, and tribal aging programs.

Among the general transit agencies (represented by 13 respondents), the most commonly selected services were local shared-ride taxi service, chosen by 8 respondents, and local fixed-route bus service, chosen by 7 respondents. Other selected services included private taxicab service, local aging office or senior center transportation service, volunteer driver program, non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT), veteran transportation service, and employment transportation service.

For specialized mobility service providers, which had 77 respondents, the top selected services were local fixed-route bus service and local shared-ride taxi service, chosen by 18 and 17 respondents, respectively. Additionally, a significant number of respondents selected services such as private taxicab service, local aging office or senior center transportation service, volunteer driver program, NEMT, veteran transportation service, and employment transportation service.

Last, the tribal aging programs (represented by 7 respondents) also offered a range of transportation services. The most frequently selected services among this group were local fixed-route bus service and local aging office or senior center transportation service, chosen by 3 and 4 respondents, respectively. Other selected services included local shared-ride taxi service, volunteer driver program, NEMT, veteran transportation service, and employment transportation service.

Overall, the responses highlighted the diverse array of transportation services provided by these agencies. It is evident that while there are some similarities in the types of services offered, each agency type has its own unique focus and range of offerings to cater to the transportation needs of older adults in their respective communities.

Additionally, there was also an option for service providers to provide additional information if their services were not listed. The results are shown in Table 4.7. The text input responses revealed a variety of services beyond those listed in the question. Some of the additional services mentioned included discounted taxi vouchers, fuel vouchers, vehicle purchase and

repair loan programs, and vehicle repair grant programs. Other services included ADA paratransit, non-fixed route bus services, community exploration programs for individuals with disabilities and seniors, and demand response transportation. There were also services related to door-to-door transportation for disabled individuals, wheelchair transportation, social day trips, and specialized transportation for seniors and people with disabilities.

Table 4.7. Additional Services Provided by Participated Services Providers

Transportation Services	Service Provider Type
1/2 price taxi vouchers, 1/2 price fuel vouchers, vehicle purchase and repair loan program and vehicle repair grant program	Specialized
ADA Paratransit	Specialized
Bus Service not fixed route	Specialized
community exploration for our community day program for individuals with disabilities and seniors.	Specialized
Demand Response Public Transportation for all within our service area.	Specialized
door to door transportation for disabled	Specialized
I am selecting both options for "taxi" but we do not charge a fare, all of our rides are provided on a donation basis and no one over 60 or disabled is turned away due to a lack of being able to donate.	Specialized
Microtransit Paratransit	Specialized
non-emergency medical wheelchair transportation	Specialized
Our agency works with local private taxicab companies to provide voucher rides that cost the rider 50% of the usual cost of the trip. We also offer no interest vehicle repair and purchase loans. Some unemployed or those living on SSI may qualify for a repair grant for repairs and safety issues.	Specialized
Out of Town Medical Appointments	Specialized
sell taxi tickets at 1/2 price Have a fun day and shopping day busses.	Specialized
Shopping, employment, education, recreation for seniors and disabled	Specialized
Social day trips on bus to regional events and locations.	Specialized
Social visits	Specialized
Specialized transportation for seniors and people with disabilities, both ambulatory and wheelchair accessible. Regional hospital discharge for seniors and people with disabilities, both ambulatory and wheelchair accessible. Referrals and authorizations for these services received from MCO and MA Waiver.	Specialized
Sub-grant §85.21 to rural transit system	Specialized
We contract with agencies to provide transportation for employment and medical appointment due to staff shortages.	Specialized
We deliver food from pantry to door. We provide activity transportation to local care facilities and nursing homes. Provide transportation for sheltered workshops daily.	Specialized
We provide funding for the Oneida-Vilas Transit Commission for public transportation in the two counties. Limited areas for this service.	Specialized

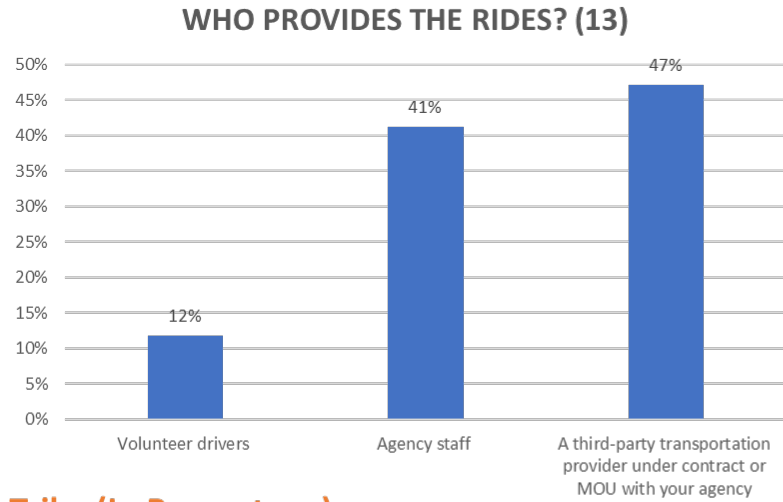
Transportation Services	Service Provider Type
We provide transportation for our nursing home residents to medical appointments and on occasion for our assisted living residents to medical appointments.	Specialized
We transportation individuals as part of a CSP program with the state	Specialized
Wheelchair vans on a call for availability basis.	Specialized
ADA paratransit service	Agency
Deviated fixed route	Agency
Express, Fixed-Route Bus Service	Agency
Paratransit service for individuals who are unable to use fixed route bus service due to a disability. The taxicab service we provide is a contracted service for individuals who are unable to utilize our other public transportation options. We also provide fixed flexible rural bus routes to certain areas of our county.	Agency

The last question for obtaining the profile information of the service provider asked about who provides the rides for the transportation services offered by the participating agencies. The responses varied among the different types of agencies and are demonstrated in Figure 4.29.

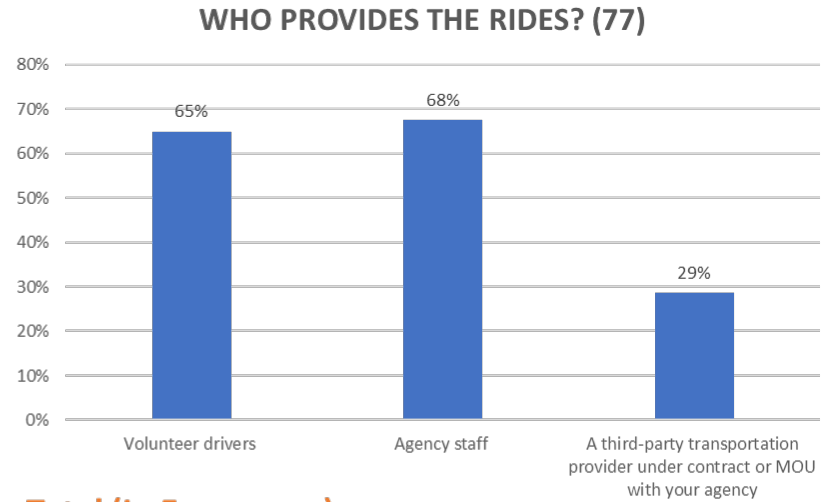
For general transit agencies, the majority of respondents (47%) indicated that the rides are provided by a third-party transportation provider under contract or memorandum of understanding (MOU) with their agency. Agency staff accounted for 41% of the responses, while volunteer drivers were selected by 12% of the respondents. Among specialized mobility service providers, both agency staff and volunteer drivers played significant roles in providing rides. The majority of respondents (68%) stated that agency staff are responsible for providing the rides, closely followed by volunteer drivers at 65%. A smaller portion (29%) indicated that rides are outsourced to a third-party transportation provider under contract or MOU. In the case of tribal aging programs, agency staff were primarily responsible for providing the rides, as indicated by 80% of the respondents. Volunteer drivers accounted for 20% of the responses, while no respondents selected a third-party transportation provider under contract or MOU.

These responses highlight the diverse approaches taken by different types of agencies in terms of who provides the rides for transportation services. While agency staff are heavily involved across all agency types, the reliance on volunteer drivers and third-party transportation providers varies. Understanding the distribution of responsibilities can help in comprehending the operational dynamics and resource allocation within each agency type.

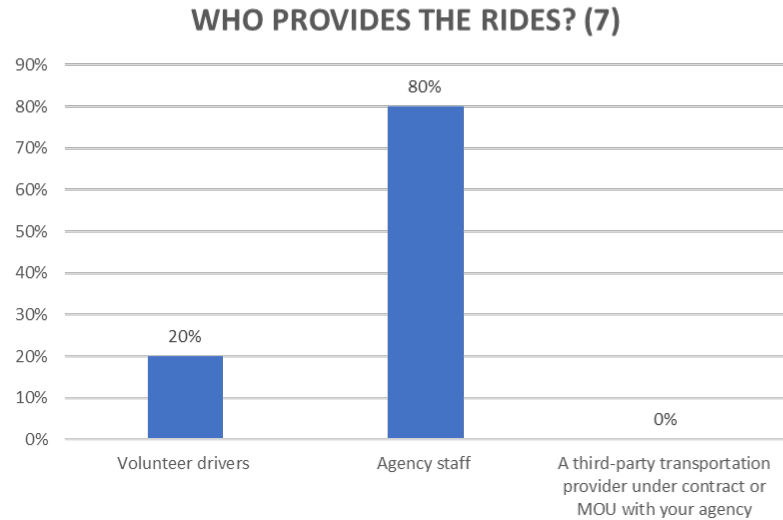
Agency (In Percentage)



Specialized (In Percentage)



Tribe (In Percentage)



Total (In Frequency)

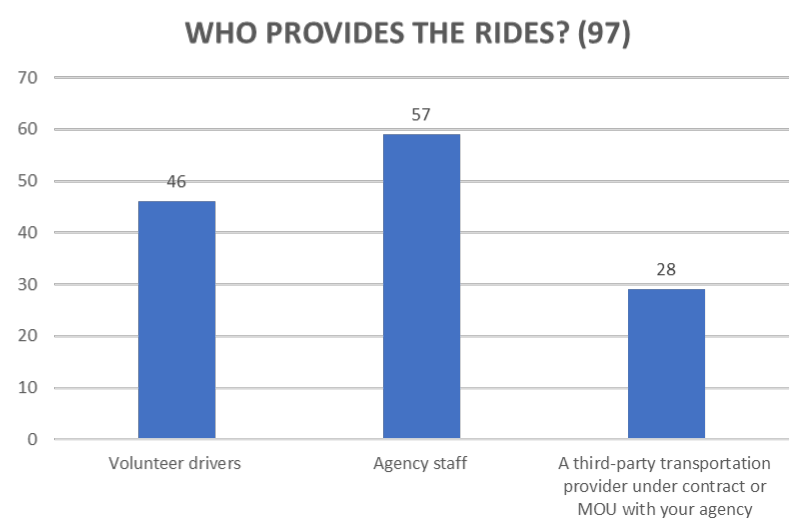


Figure 4.29. Personnel/Staff Composition for Providing Services by Different Type of Service Providers

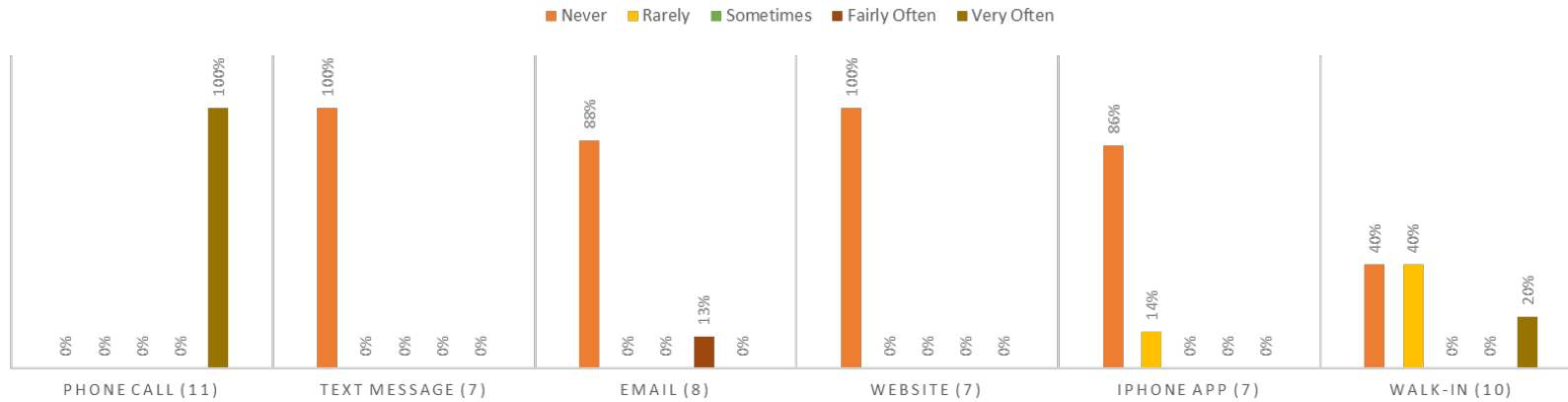
4.3.2.3. *Survey Topic: Information Technology/Management System Usage*

In order to better understand the usage of information technology and management systems in transportation services, with a specific focus on serving older adults, a series of questions were included in the survey questionnaire. By examining how clients typically book services, the lead time for bookings, confirmation timelines, software usage, and mobility management services, we can assess the benefits and limitations of these systems in catering to the needs of older adults. Additionally, the section explores how agencies share information about their transportation services with clients, providing insights into the effectiveness of communication channels for reaching this demographic. Understanding the role of technology and management systems in serving older adults is crucial for optimizing service delivery, addressing accessibility challenges, and ensuring the efficient use of resources. This section contributes valuable knowledge to enhance transportation services tailored to the unique requirements of older adult passengers.

The first question aimed to gather insights from service providers regarding the frequency of different booking methods used by their clients. The results can be found in Figures 4.30 – 4.32. Making phone calls to request services tends to be the most popular and used way. The results highlight the flexibility and adaptability of clients from tribal aging programs, who use various methods with varying frequencies. This indicates the diverse approaches employed by tribal aging program agencies to meet their clients' transportation needs. Furthermore, the survey responses revealed a relatively low internet adoption rate among older adults, as confirmed by all three types of service providers, very similar to the results from the older adult survey. It is particularly surprising that no participants from general transit agencies reported website usage by their clients for service requests. Similarly, limited usage of mobile devices, such as phone apps, was observed across all three types of service providers, which may be attributed to the absence of available mobile apps. Additional open comments were also retrieved and shown in Table 4.8. It can also be observed that some else (e.g., family, friends, medical professional, Managed Care Organization (MCO)) sometimes helps the older adults to request the services.

Agency (In Percentage)

TYPICALLY, HOW DO YOUR CLIENTS BOOK TRANSPORTATION SERVICE(S)? (13)



Specialized (In Percentage)

TYPICALLY, HOW DO YOUR CLIENTS BOOK TRANSPORTATION SERVICE(S)? (76)

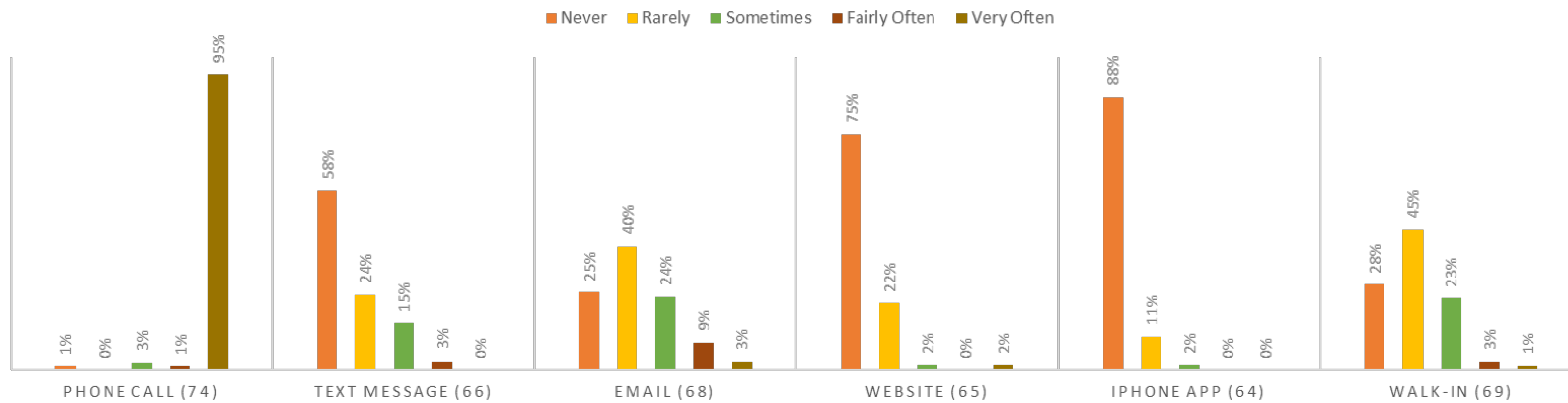
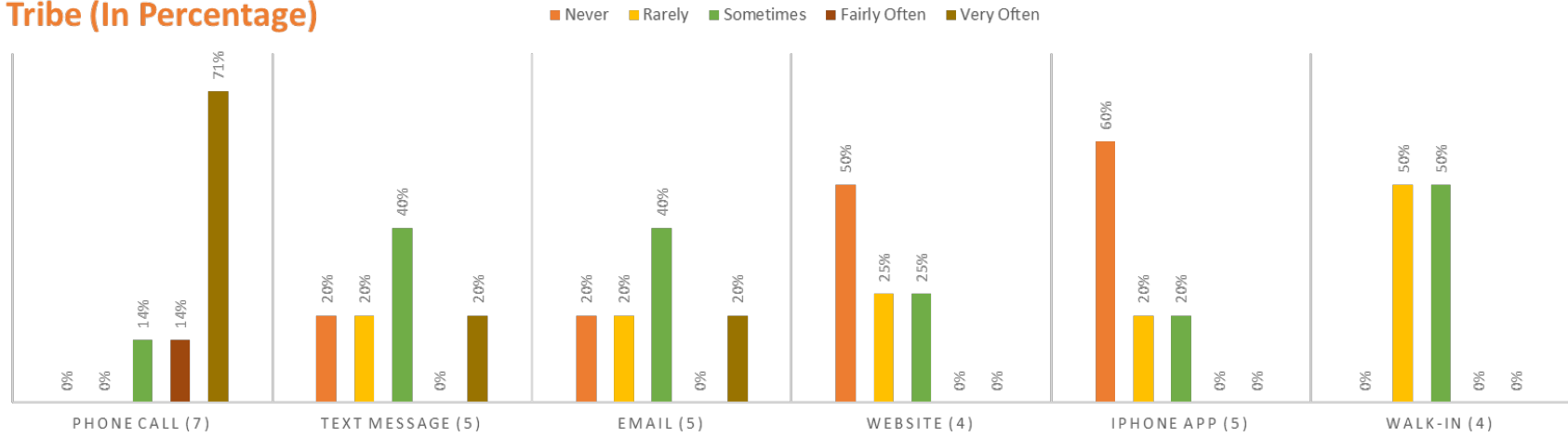


Figure 4.30. Perceived Frequency of Different Booking Methods Used by Clients (General Transit and Specialized Mobility)

TYPICALLY, HOW DO YOUR CLIENTS BOOK TRANSPORTATION SERVICE(S)? (7)

Tribe (In Percentage)



TYPICALLY, HOW DO YOUR CLIENTS BOOK TRANSPORTATION SERVICE(S)? (96)

Total (In Frequency)

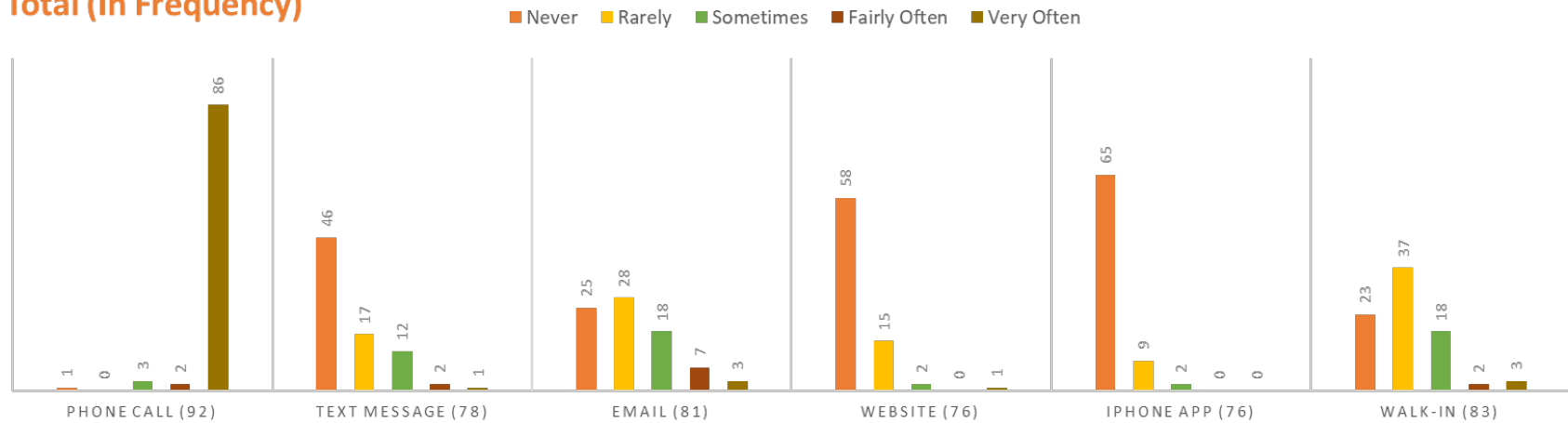


Figure 4.31. Perceived Frequency of Different Booking Methods Used by Clients (Tribal Aging Programs and Total)

Weighted Average Score

TYPICALLY, HOW DO YOUR CLIENTS BOOK TRANSPORTATION SERVICE(S)? **AVERAGE**

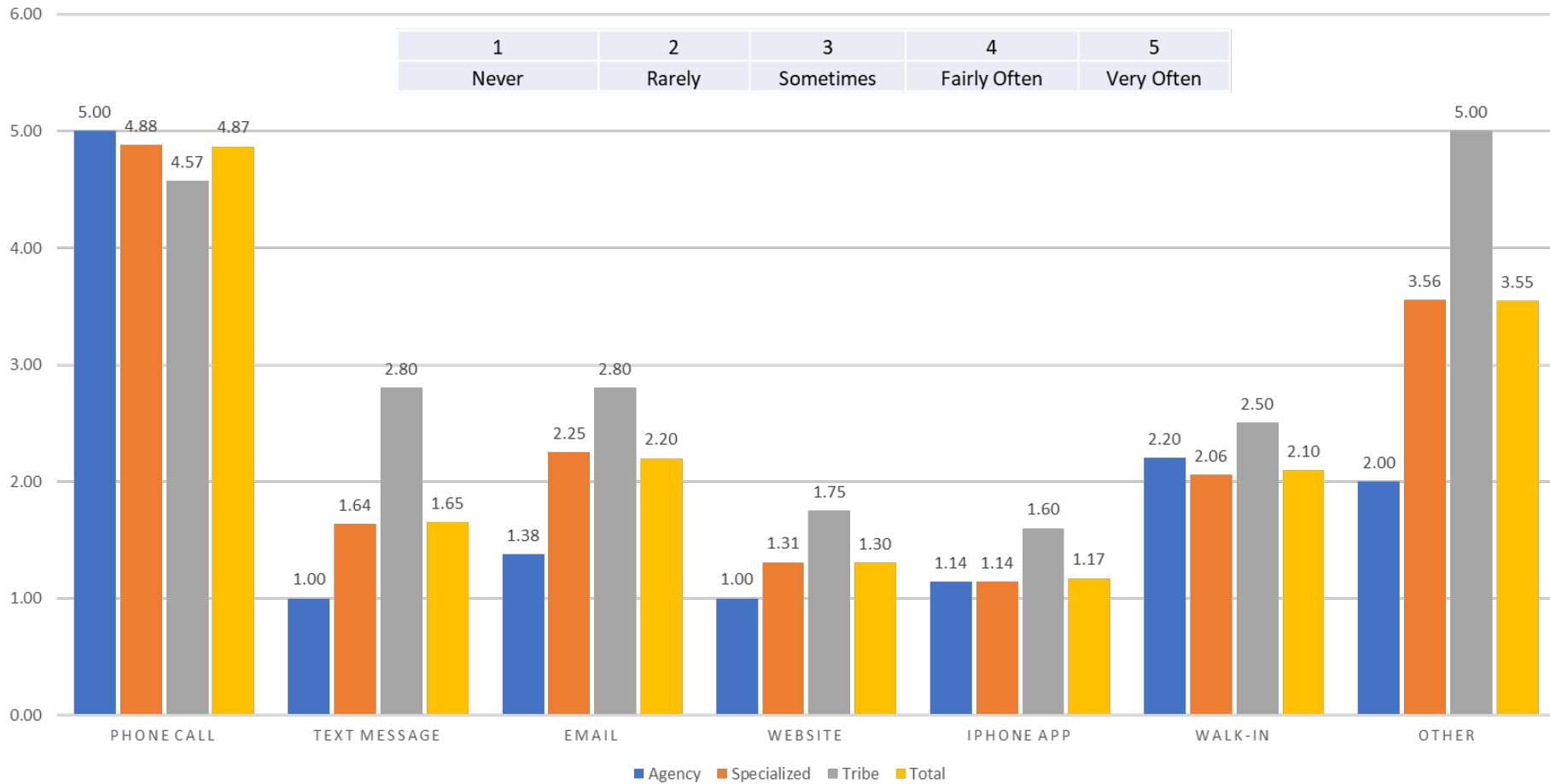


Figure 4.32. Perceived Frequency of Different Booking Methods Used by Clients (Weighted Average Score)

Table 4.8. Additional Comments to Question of “Typically, how do your clients book transportation service(s)?”

Comments	Service Provider Type
fixed route locations (bus stops)	Agency
Fixed route bus service	Agency
Paratransit rides book by phone. Fixed-route rides are not booked.	Agency
The method used to book service varies depending on the service.	Agency
We will be launching a website request service in the next few weeks and an app by end of year	Agency
Also fixed route (scheduled)	Specialized
Bus stop	Specialized
Fixed-route bus service	Specialized
I'm not really sure how they book them.	Specialized
MCO (Managed Care Organization) books	Specialized
referred from MCO or MA Waiver	Specialized
rider contacts us through hospital staff helping them to arrange rides	Specialized
They are regulars and we keep them in the book until they ask to be removed.	Specialized
Through a family member, or medical professional on occasion, and in almost all instances booking is by phone.	Specialized
through case managers	Specialized
We very rarely coordinate rides. Most often our participants use family or community members and then they arrange the rides themselves and just turn in the voucher to us after the fact for payment	Specialized

Subsequently, the survey included inquiries about the booking procedures, encompassing two key aspects: 1) the advance notice period for clients when booking the service, and 2) the typical timeframe for agencies to confirm bookings after clients make a request.

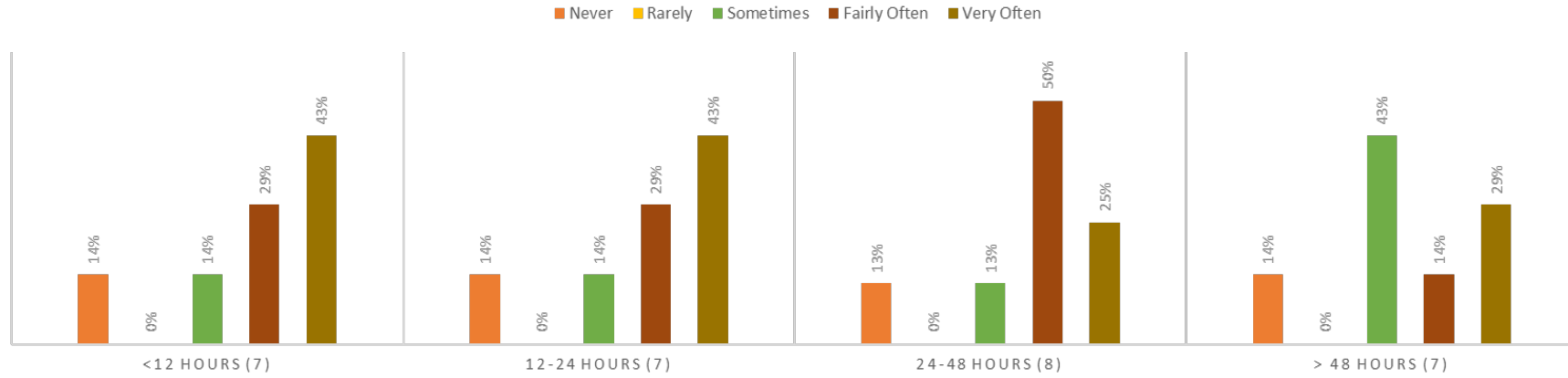
Figures 4.33 – 4.36 showcase the outcomes obtained from these questions, demonstrating the current practices among the participating public transit agencies. It can be seen from the results that people who request specialized mobility services tend to schedule their rides earlier than those using other means of transportation. This suggests that individuals relying on specialized mobility services may have specific requirements or logistical considerations that necessitate advanced planning. On the other hand, general transit service agencies reported a higher frequency of bookings made with shorter notice periods, indicating that clients using these services may have more immediate transportation needs or prefer a more flexible approach.

In terms of the time frame for confirming requests from agencies, all general transit service agencies claimed to provide instant confirmation without any delays. This real-time confirmation can contribute to increased customer satisfaction and convenience. Both specialized mobility service providers and tribal aging program agencies shared a similar practice, with specialized mobility service providers typically confirming bookings no later than the next day after the request is made by the clients. This quick response time ensures that clients can rely on their scheduled rides and make necessary arrangements accordingly.

Additional comments were provided by respondents in relation to the confirmation practice, summarized in Table 4.9. Although most of the input could be classified within the predefined options, some respondents elaborated with further explanation and details. These comments shed light on factors influencing the confirmation process, such as driver availability, the requested time frame, and the type of transportation service. They highlighted the importance of coordinating with drivers, particularly in volunteer driver programs, and the need to provide clients with driver information closer to the scheduled date. These comments provided a more nuanced understanding of the confirmation practices employed by the agencies, emphasizing the various considerations and challenges involved in ensuring smooth and reliable transportation services for clients.

Agency (In Percentage)

HOW FAR IN ADVANCE DO YOUR CLIENTS BOOK THE SERVICE? (8)



Specialized (In Percentage)

HOW FAR IN ADVANCE DO YOUR CLIENTS BOOK THE SERVICE? (63)

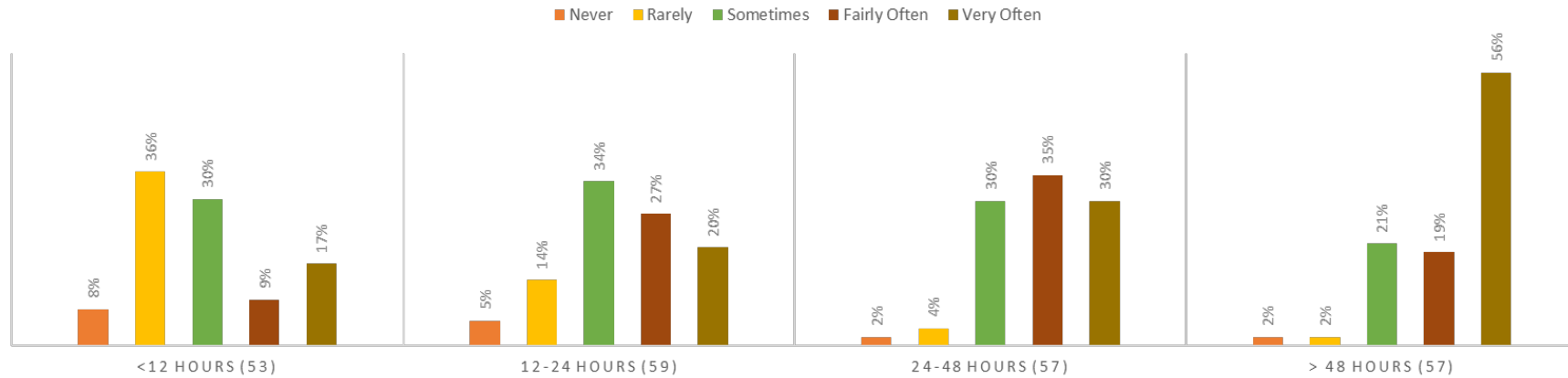
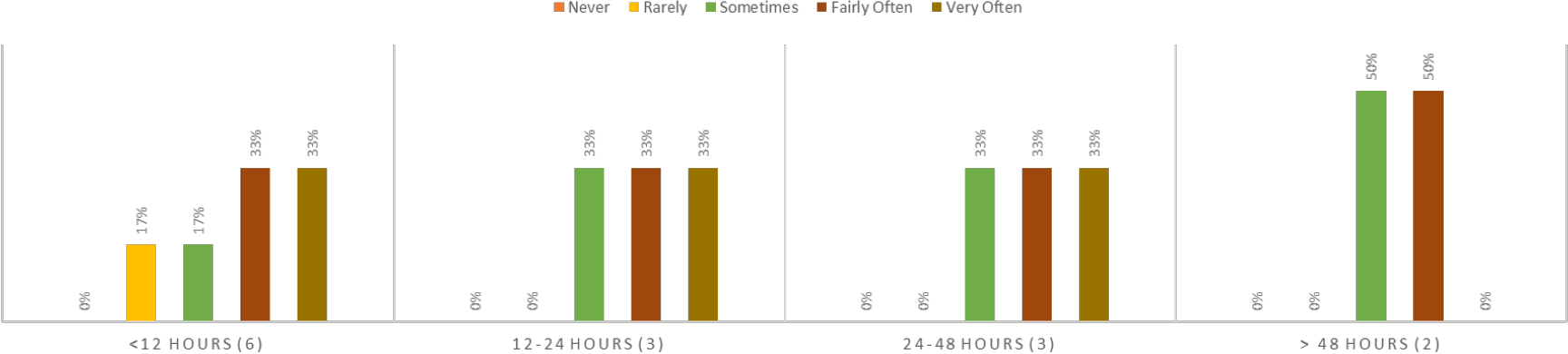


Figure 4.33. Advance Notice Period for Clients When Booking the Service (General Transit and Specialized Mobility)

Tribe (In Percentage)

HOW FAR IN ADVANCE DO YOUR CLIENTS BOOK THE SERVICE? (6)



Total (In Frequency)

HOW FAR IN ADVANCE DO YOUR CLIENTS BOOK THE SERVICE? (77)

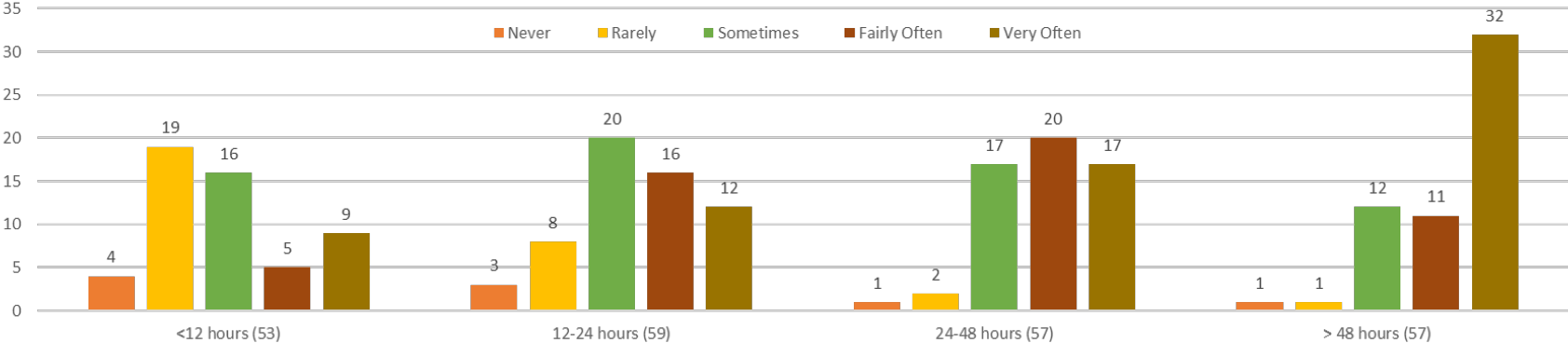
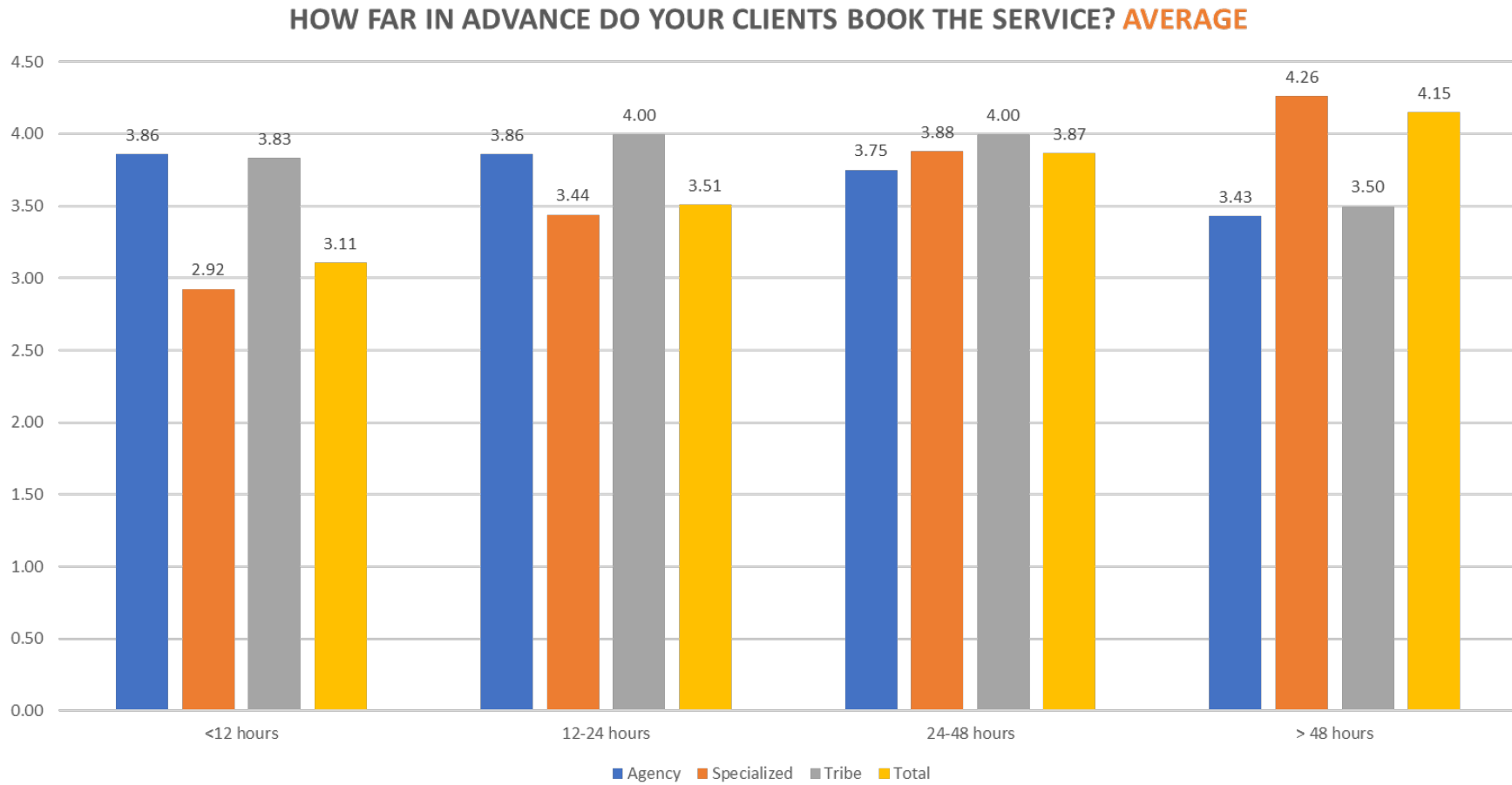


Figure 4.34. Advance Notice Period for Clients When Booking the Service (Tribal Aging Program and Total)

Weighted Average Score



1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often

Figure 4.35. Advance Notice Period for Clients When Booking the Service (Average Weighted Score)

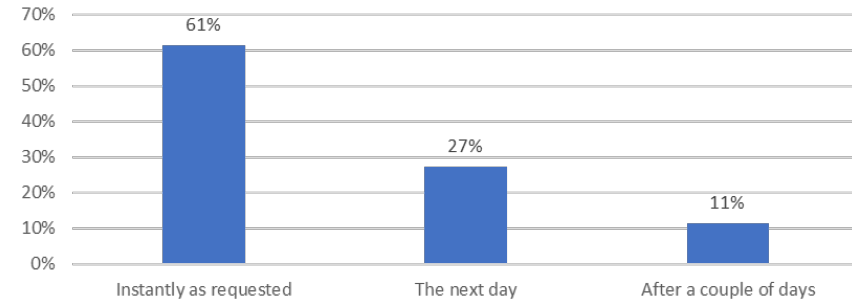
Agency (In Percentage)

TYPICALLY, HOW LONG AFTER A CLIENT BOOKS A RIDE WITH YOUR AGENCY DOES YOUR AGENCY CONFIRM THE BOOKING? (7)



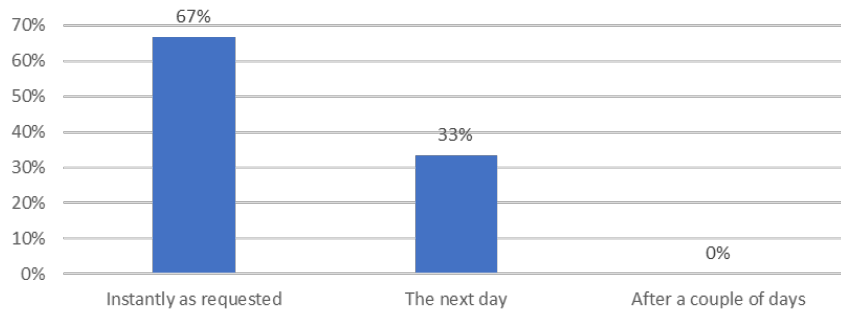
Specialized (In Percentage)

TYPICALLY, HOW LONG AFTER A CLIENT BOOKS A RIDE WITH YOUR AGENCY DOES YOUR AGENCY CONFIRM THE BOOKING? (44)



Tribe (In Percentage)

TYPICALLY, HOW LONG AFTER A CLIENT BOOKS A RIDE WITH YOUR AGENCY DOES YOUR AGENCY CONFIRM THE BOOKING? (6)



Total (In Frequency)

TYPICALLY, HOW LONG AFTER A CLIENT BOOKS A RIDE WITH YOUR AGENCY DOES YOUR AGENCY CONFIRM THE BOOKING? (57)

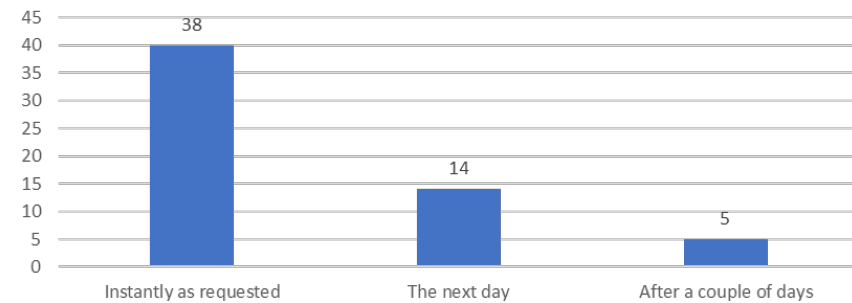


Figure 4.36. Responses to Typical Timeframe for Agencies to Confirm Bookings after Clients Make a Request

Table 4.9. Additional Comments by Respondents in Relation to the Confirmation Practice

Comments	Service Provider Type
As I said before we rarely need to find rides for our consumers. Maybe once a week just depends on what is happening. Most times they give us a few days' notice as requested and then I try to find a driver. Our consumers know that we may not be able to find them a driver so often they will call several weeks in advance, and I try to find one with a few days and get back to them	Specialized
Confirm drivers on a weekly basis. Schedule for the following week on Thus & Fri and then as they come in for that week.	Specialized
Confirmation is given immediately if it is local transport, if it is a transport that will be out of town or a lot of wait time, the person is given notice the next day.	Specialized
Day before ride normally	Specialized
A few hours	Specialized
Generally, within a few hours but occasionally is the next day	Specialized
It depends on how much notice we receive.	Specialized
Same-day rides confirmed ASAP (depending on requested time, availability, and amount of other requests). Next day rides confirmed next day or a few hours later. In Advanced Rides confirmed the day before the requested day or the day of the ride request.	Specialized
Shared Ride Taxi: Instantly, Volunteer Driver Program: Within a day	Specialized
This depends on how far in advance a client requests the ride and if a volunteer driver and/or third-party provider is available to provide transportation on that given day.	Specialized
Usually, the same day or the next day.	Specialized
Varies by the different service options. Volunteer rides need more coordination and confirmation, may be a day to several days later. Also varies on how soon the ride is needed, 24 hours versus 2 weeks away.	Specialized
Volunteer driver rides are generally confirmed on the same day but not instantly. Minibus rides are generally confirmed instantly.	Specialized
We let them know that the ride is booked but then call again to give them the information as to who the driver will be closer to the date.	Specialized
Within a couple of hours	Specialized

Next, participants were questioned about their use of software for ride scheduling. They were asked whether they employed software, the specific software used, and their recommendations or concerns about the software. The responses provided valuable insights into the landscape of software use among the participating service providers.

The use of software for scheduling was first examined, and the findings are presented in Figure 4.37. The results indicate that a majority of general transit agencies, specifically 62%, reported employing software for scheduling. In contrast, the use of software for scheduling was less prevalent among specialized mobility service providers, with 44% indicating its use, and transit service providers from tribal aging programs, with 43% using such software. Among the agencies that employed software, various software solutions were mentioned: Assisted Rides, Ecolane, PC Tran, Mediroutes, Cabmate/Arcus, RouteMatch, and SchedulesPlus/My Senior Center. Participants provided recommendations and feedback on the software they used. Positive remarks were made about Assisted Rides, Ecolane, and PCTrans, highlighting their ease of use, reliability, and responsive customer support. However, some concerns were raised about certain software, such as PC_Trans, regarding poor support and lack of web-based functionality. Overall, the responses reflect a range of experiences and opinions regarding the software used for ride scheduling, with some agencies highly recommending their chosen software solutions while others continue to explore alternatives.

According to the provided specific comments, Table 4.10 summarizes each software for ride scheduling mentioned by respondents. The results show that Assisted Rides was the most frequently mentioned software, with ten respondents recommending it. It was praised for its ease of generating reports, suitability for rural areas, and reasonable pricing. Ecolane and PC Tran were also mentioned by five respondents each and received positive recommendations. An internally built database was mentioned once and considered a beneficial solution. Mediroutes and Cabmates/Arcus, despite having some issues and problems, received a positive recommendation. Routematch, with its customization options and suitability for agencies with larger fleets, was mentioned by four respondents. Other software solutions such as SchedulesPlus, Route Coordinator, Tier, TransitExec 85.12 system, Trapeze, Volunteer Driver Program-FileMaker Shared Ride Taxi-Service, a self-developed program, and SignUp were mentioned by a few respondents and were generally recommended.

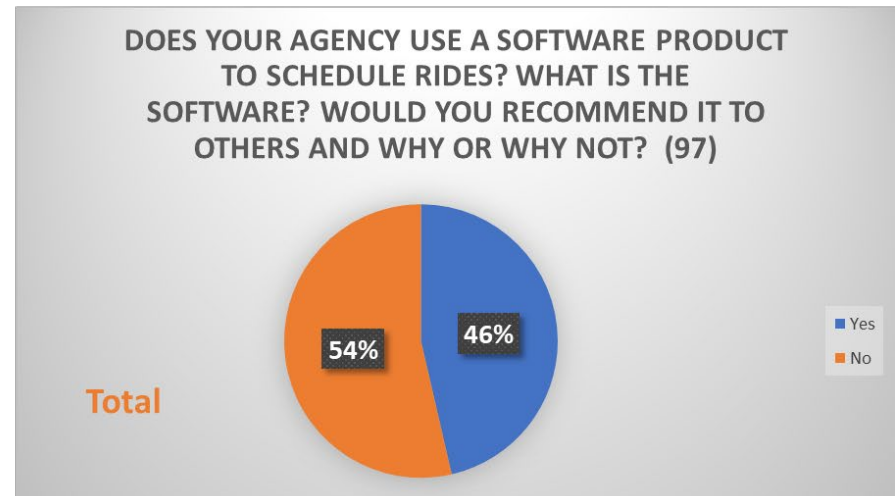
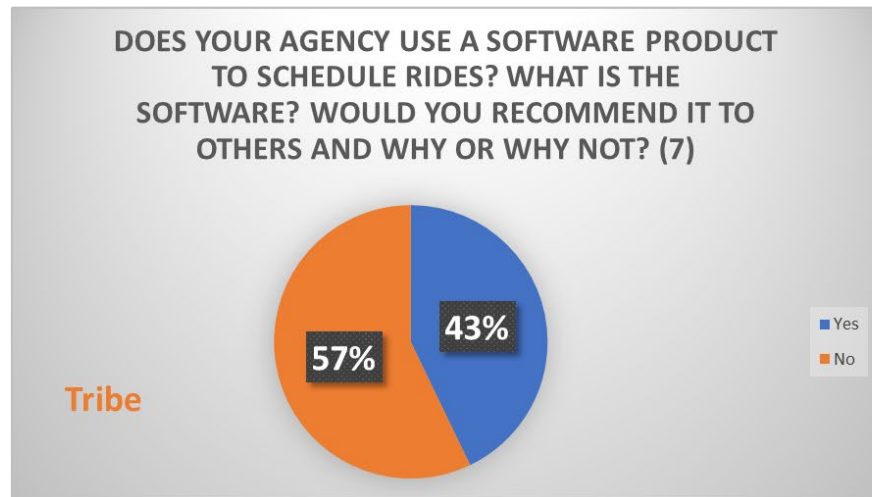
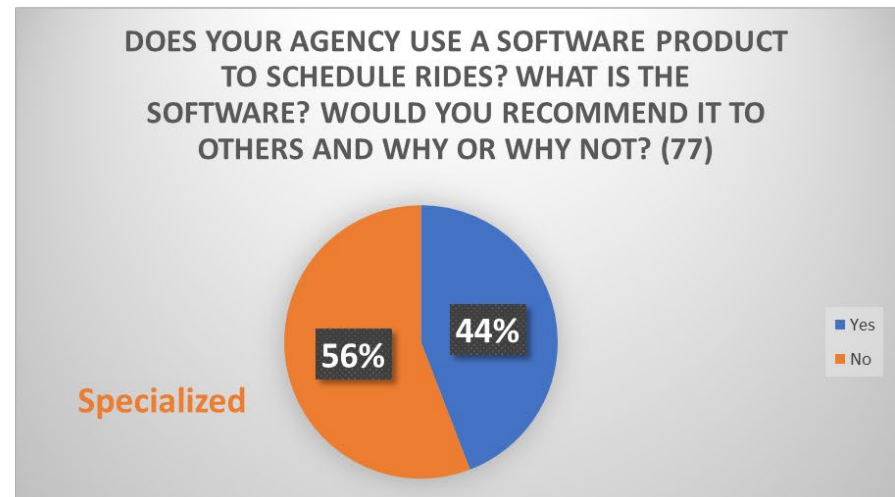
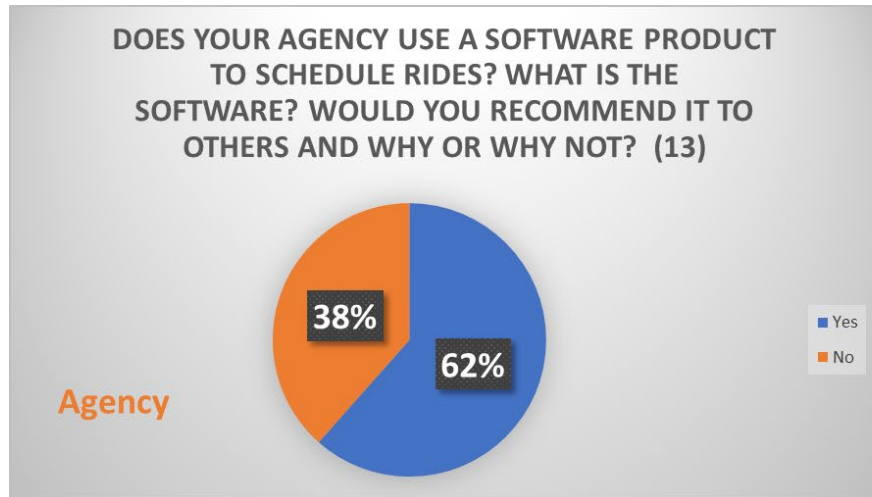


Figure 4.37. Software Usage by Agencies

Table 4.10. Summary of Each Mentioned Software for Ride Scheduling in the Survey Responses

Software	Frequency	Recommended?	Key features
Assisted Rides	10	Yes	Easy do report / rural special / price reasonable
Ecolane	5	Yes	System good
PC Tran	5	Yes	-
Internally built database	1	Yes	-
Mediroutes and Cabmates/Arcus	1	Yes	Fair share of issues and problems
Routematch	4	Yes	Larger fleet of vehicles
SchedulesPlus	1	Yes	-
Route Coordinator	1	Yes	-
Tier	1	Yes	-
TransitExec 85.12 system	1	Yes	-
Trapeze	1	Yes	App
Volunteer Driver Program-FileMaker Shared Ride Taxi-Service	1	Yes	-
self-developed program	1	Yes	-
SignUp	1	Yes	-

Then, the participants were asked about the mobility management services performed by their respective agencies, and the results are presented in Figures 4.38 - 4.39. The findings indicate variations in the types of services offered across different agency types. For general transit agencies, coordinating funding, service, and programs as well as developing an inventory of transportation services were reported by all respondents. Conducting mobility needs assessments for seniors and trip planning were mentioned by 67% of respondents, while only 33% provided training for volunteer drivers. Notably, travel training for customers and transportation marketing were not mentioned by any respondents in this group. Specialized mobility service providers predominantly engaged in coordinating funding, service, and programs (78%) and providing training for volunteer drivers (59%). Approximately half of the respondents reported conducting mobility needs assessments for seniors, trip planning, and developing an inventory of transportation services. Similar to general transit agencies, travel training for customers and transportation marketing were not mentioned by any respondents. Among service providers from tribal aging programs, 60% of respondents reported coordinating funding, service, and programs, with 40% conducting mobility needs

assessments for seniors, trip planning, and developing an inventory of transportation services. Notably, no respondents in this group mentioned providing training for volunteer drivers, travel training for customers, or transportation marketing. Overall, the findings highlight the commonality of coordination of funding and service among agencies, with variations in other mobility management services such as needs assessments and trip planning.

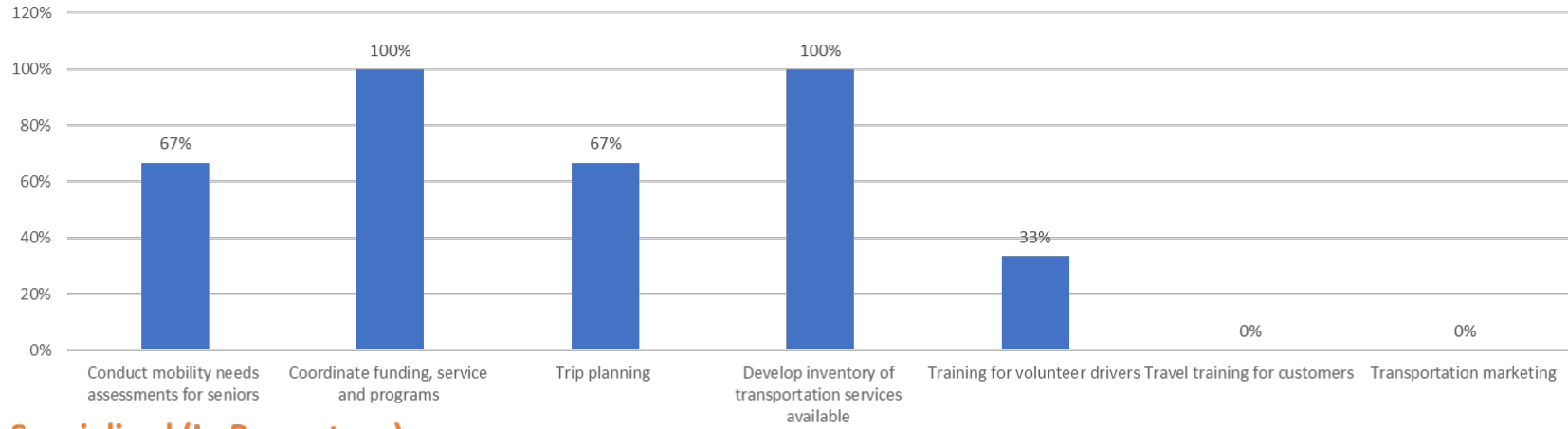
Additional comments were also provided by some participants, summarized in Table 4.11.

The comments reflect various mobility management services offered by the agencies. Results show that specialized service providers coordinate barrier removal initiatives such as bus stop improvements and technology for people with disabilities. Some participants from general transit agencies mentioned that their staff handles all aspects of mobility management as part of the transportation service, even without additional funding specifically allocated for it.

Planning and coordination efforts between municipalities and non-profits were highlighted as well. Subsidized cross-county rides and providing durable medical equipment for loan free of charge were mentioned by specialized service providers. Additionally, some participants from general transit agencies mentioned their involvement in planning, providing technical resources, and assisting in administering funding programs. Other services mentioned included consumer lending for vehicle acquisition, group training for various organizations, and providing transportation for non-emergency medical appointments both within and outside of town.

Agency (In Percentage)

WHAT MOBILITY MANAGEMENT SERVICE(S) DOES YOUR AGENCY PERFORM? (3)



Specialized (In Percentage)

WHAT MOBILITY MANAGEMENT SERVICE(S) DOES YOUR AGENCY PERFORM? (49)

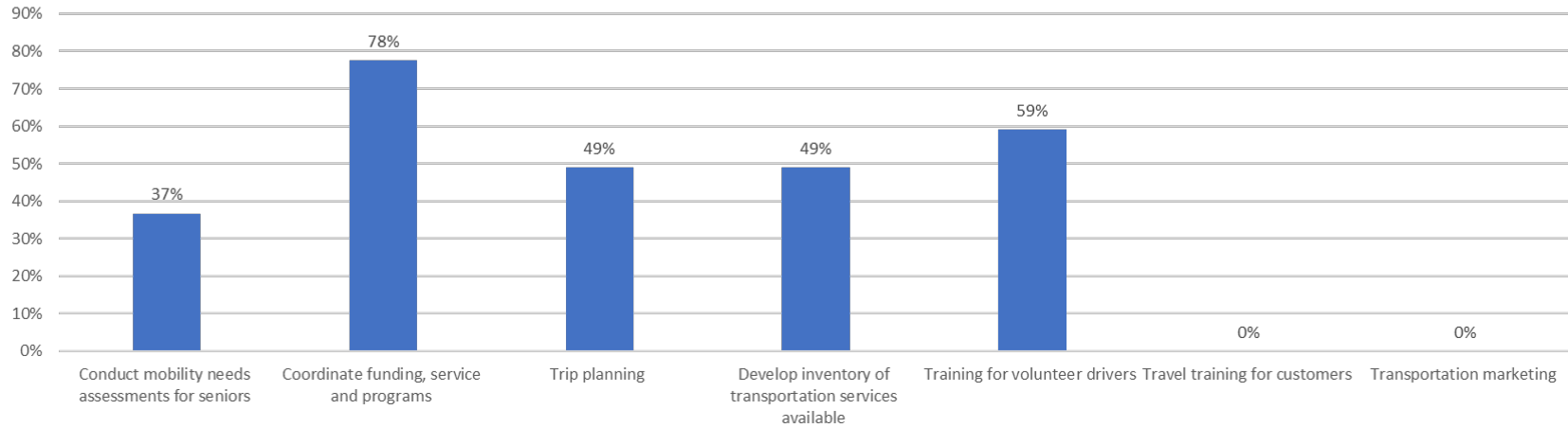
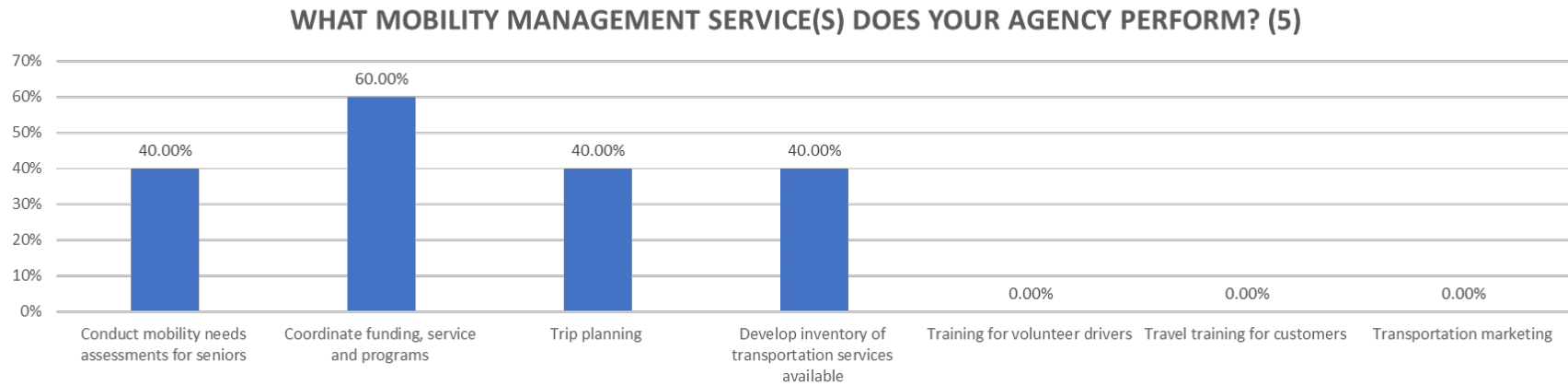


Figure 4.38. Mobility Management Services Provided by Agencies (General Transit and Specialized Mobility)

Tribe (In Percentage)



Total (In Frequency)

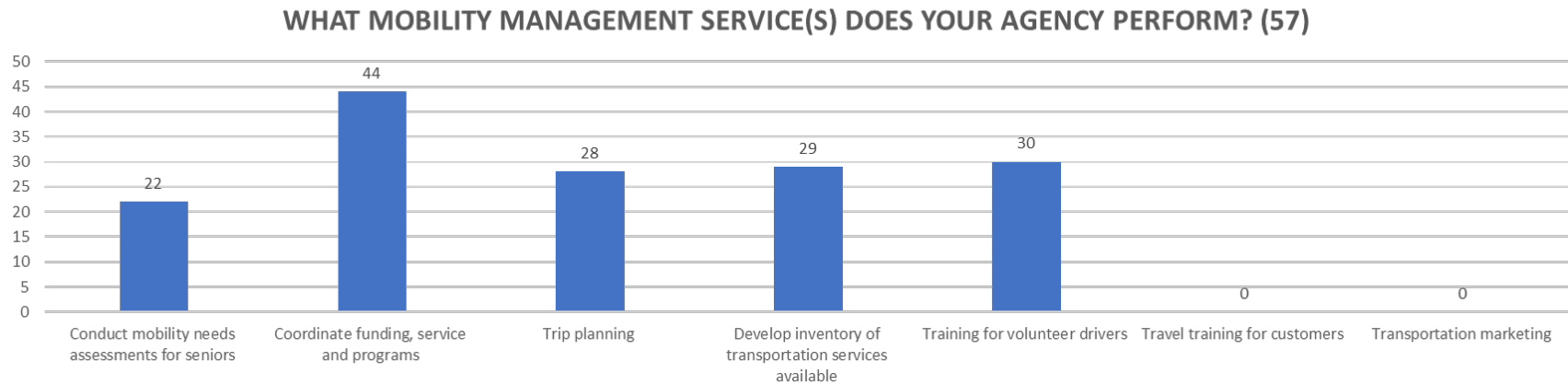


Figure 4.39. Mobility Management Services Provided by Agencies (Tribal Aging Program and Total)

Table 4.11. Summary of Additional Comments on Mobility Management Services

Comments	Service Provider Type
Coordinate barrier removal (bus stop improvements, technology for people with disabilities)	Specialized
Our staff does all of the mobility management as part of the transportation service. We receive no additional funding for it.	Specialized
Planning/Coordinating between municipalities and non-profits	Specialized
Subsidized cross-county rides.	Specialized
We offer durable medical (walkers, wheelchairs, and canes) for loan free of charge	Specialized
We provide planning and technical resources. Also, we help administer the competitive process for FTA 5310 funding.	Specialized
Wnw (Work-n-Wheels auto loan program) for clients still working and need to get to work. Consumer lending that allows retired clients to obtain small loan for vehicle.	Specialized
Group training for agencies, schools, businesses etc. Training for Volunteers is conducted by our rural supervisor, not the Mobility Manager.	Agency
Provide transportation for non-emergency in and out of town medical appointments	Agency

The last question within this topic asked participants how they share information about their agency's transportation services with their clients. The results, presented in Figures 4.40 - 4.41, highlight the various communication channels used by different types of service providers.

For general transit agencies, brochures and websites were the most common methods of sharing information, with 92% and 100% of respondents selecting them, respectively. Social media and newsletters were also used by a significant number of agencies, with 77% and 38% selecting them, respectively. Email and distribution through religious or social service organizations were less commonly used methods. Among specialized mobility service providers, brochures and websites were again popular choices, with 77% and 87% of respondents selecting them, respectively. Social media and newsletters were also commonly used, with 71% and 63% selecting them, respectively. Similar to general transit agencies, email and distribution through religious or social service organizations were less commonly

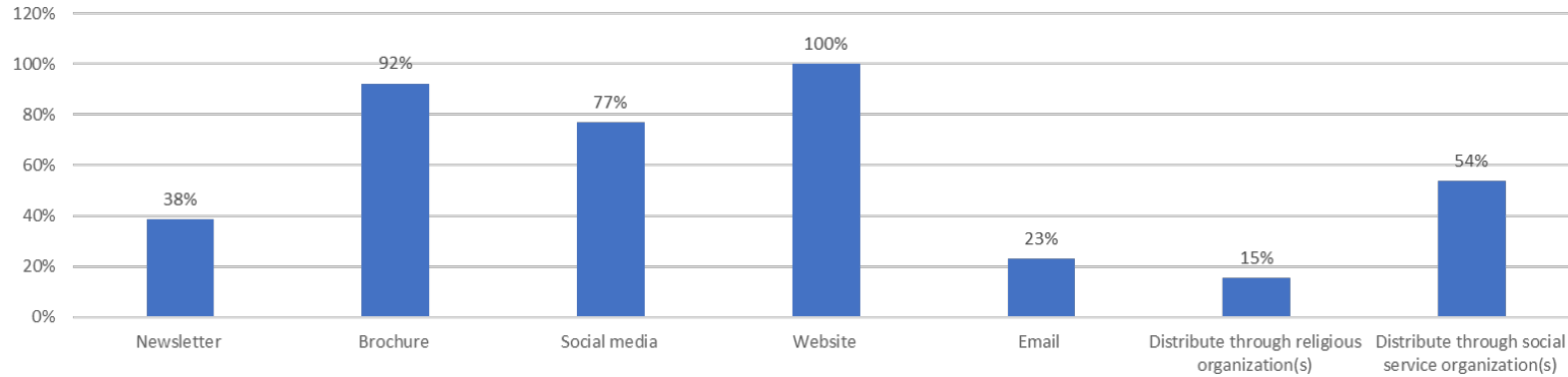
used methods. In the case of service providers from tribal aging programs, websites were the most prevalent method of sharing information, with 86% of respondents selecting them. Brochures, social media, and newsletters were also used by a significant number of agencies, with 57%, 71%, and 29% selecting them, respectively. Email and distribution through religious or social service organizations were less commonly used.

Overall, the results demonstrate that brochures, websites, social media, and newsletters are commonly employed by service providers to share information about their transportation services. These channels serve as effective means of communication to reach their respective client bases and ensure that crucial transportation information is readily accessible.

Additional comments were also collected from the respondents presented in Table 4.12. Results showed that service providers employ a variety of additional methods to share information about their agency's transportation services. These methods include advertising on the radio and in newspapers, distributing annual resource guides and directories, placing brochures at clinics and mailing them to nursing homes and assisted living organizations. Service providers also use community networks, client referrals, grocery bag stuffers, and collaborate with health and human services organizations and Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs). They engage in in-person communication and verbal discussions with family members, as well as establish partnerships with libraries, senior centers, and local newspapers. Some providers use media releases, advertisements in movie theaters, and promote their services through community presentations and education programs. They leverage other programs such as Meals on Wheels and actively participate in local organizations and agencies, while also benefiting from word-of-mouth referrals. Municipalities often feature the transportation services on their websites and provide brochures at city hall. These various strategies help ensure that information reaches the intended audience and raises awareness about available transportation services in the community. Table 4.13 provides a brief summary of the additional comments based on the categorizations by the project team.

Agency (In Percentage)

HOW DO YOU SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR AGENCY'S TRANSPORTATION SERVICES TO YOUR CLIENTS? (13)



Specialized (In Percentage)

HOW DO YOU SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR AGENCY'S TRANSPORTATION SERVICES TO YOUR CLIENTS? (83)

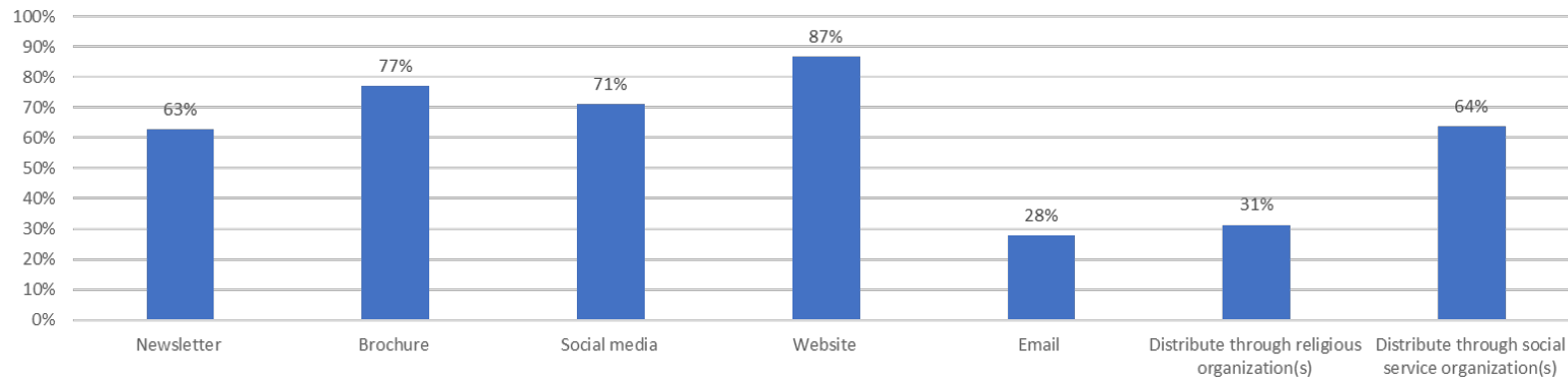
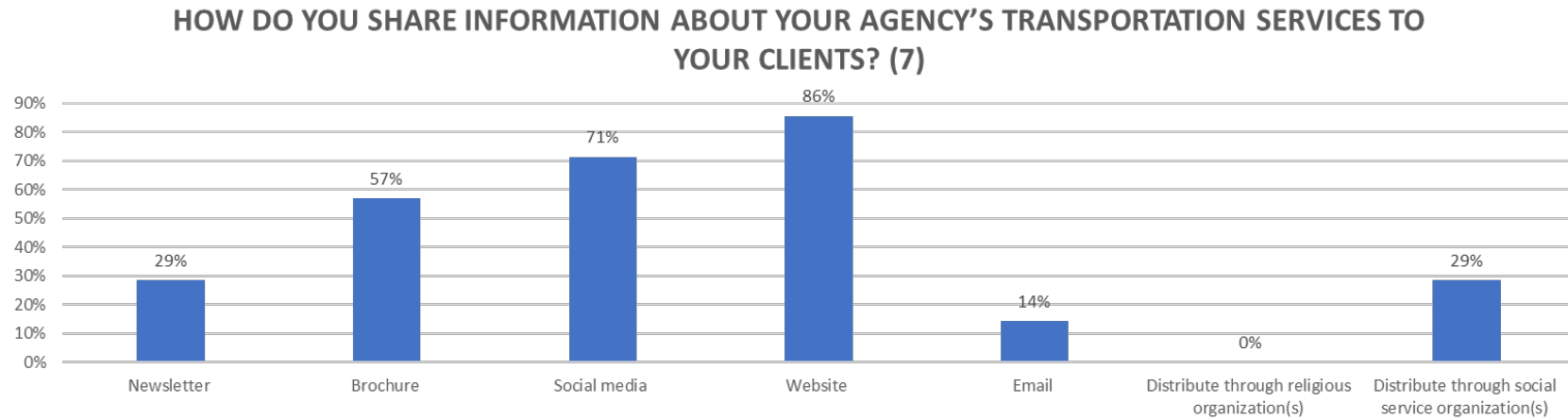


Figure 4.40. Methods of Sharing Information about Transportation Services to Clients (General Transit and Specialized Mobility)

Tribe (In Percentage)



Total (In Frequency)

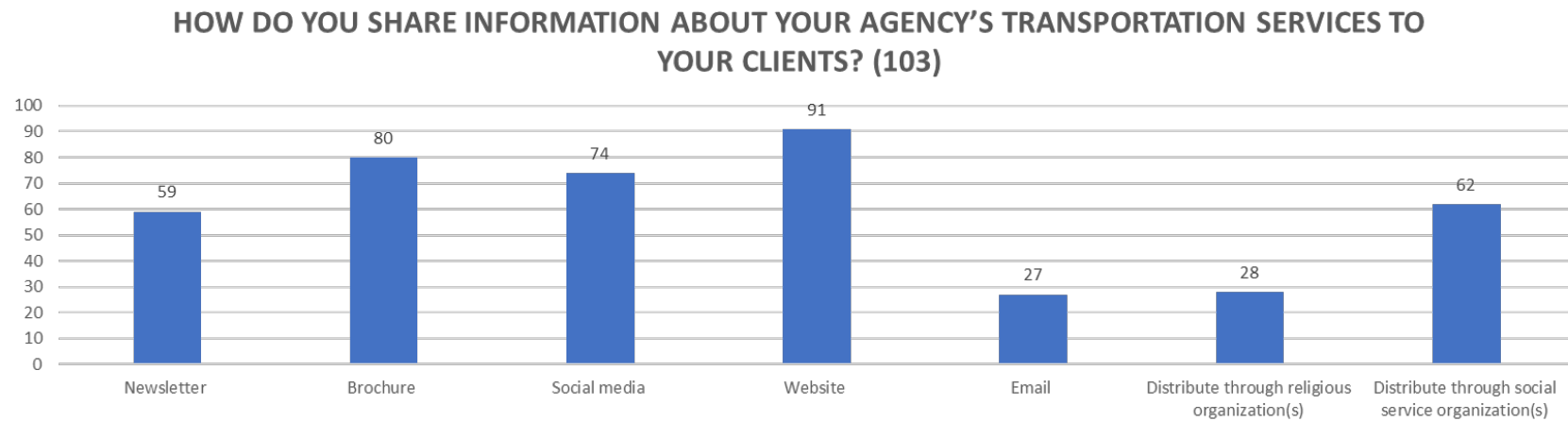


Figure 4.41. Methods of Sharing Information about Transportation Services to Clients (Tribal Aging Program and Total)

Table 4.12. Additional Comments on Sharing Information about Transportation Services

Comments	Service Provider Type
Advertisement on the radio and in papers	Specialized
Annual Edition of a Transportation Resource Guide	Specialized
Annual Senior Resource Directory	Specialized
Brochures at clinics, mailings to nursing homes and assisted living organizations.	Specialized
Community network Client referrals	Specialized
Grocery bag stuffers	Specialized
Health and human services and ADRC	Specialized
In-person and verbally with family members	Specialized
Libraries, senior centers, etc.	Specialized
Local newspaper& shoppers guide	Specialized
Media Releases, ads	Specialized
Movie theaters	Specialized
Our transport service is a fixed route, so if there are any changes, they call our main line and leave a message and often times call the driver themselves to alert them to any change if the change occurs under 12-24 hours of the change.	Specialized
Promotion in our local newspaper	Specialized
Radio Ads and Newspaper Ads	Specialized
Through community presentations and education of our service to senior stakeholders like ADRC, Senior Centers, Senior housing, senior meal sites, senior care centers, healthcare providers, other community agencies, etc.	Specialized
Through other programs such as Meals on Wheels	Specialized
We are listed in all the resource and referral guides throughout our service area. Our clients are referred to us through the Aging and Disability Resource Center and the Department of Human Services.	Specialized
We have a Senior Resource Guide that is distributed County-wide	Specialized
Whoever invites us to speak to their group or agency, we're willing. We are part of many local organizations within our city/county/state.	Specialized
With the exception of 2020 we regularly go out and do transportation information presentations at lunch meetings, Learning in Retirement classes, and at nursing homes.	Specialized
Word of Mouth and MCO's	Specialized
Word of mouth, local aging unit , We are in the process of updating our brochure.	Specialized
Municipalities also have on their website and copied brochures at city hall	Agency

Table 4.13. Summary

Type of Information Sharing	Frequency
Newspaper	3
Radio	2
Annual Senior Resource Directory	2
Health and human services and ADRC	2
Senior center	2
Word of Mouth	2
Papers	1
Brochure	1
Community network clients' referrals	1
Grocery bag stuffers	1
In-Person	1
Libraries	1
Shoppers's guider	1
Movie Theaters	1
Post cards	1
Meals on Wheels	1
Lunch meeting	1
MCO's	1
Aging unit	1

4.3.2.4. Survey Topic: Observed Travel Pattern of Users

In the older adults' survey questionnaire, information about travel patterns was collected. However, considering possible biases from samples, a similar series of questions were also included in the agency survey questionnaire. This survey topic provided the results of such returned responses. Its purpose was to analyze the percentage of clients' trip purposes, explore how health concerns affect travel, and investigate changes in transportation services due to the COVID-19 pandemic. By gathering open comments, it captured seniors' adaptations during the pandemic. The section also examined broader impacts, such as ridership, cost, revenue, and supplemental services. These insights inform service planning and decision-making to ensure reliable and responsive transportation for older adults.

The service providers were first asked about the trip purposes of their clients in a typical month. The findings revealed the percentage distribution of clients' trip purposes, presented in Figures 4.42 – 4.43. According to the responses from three different types of service providers, some interesting patterns emerged. First, responses by participants from general transit agencies indicated that job or volunteer activities were the most common trip purpose for their clients, with 61-80% of the time being selected by 45% of respondents. Hospital/medical office visits and buying groceries were also significant trip purposes, with 41-60% of the time being selected by 25% and 25% of respondents, respectively.

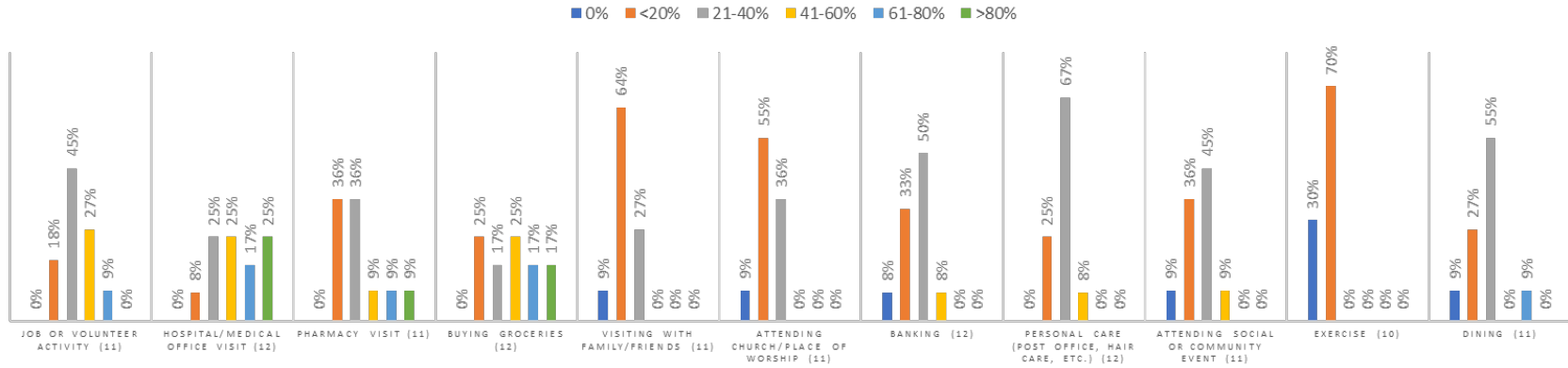
Next, responses by specialized mobility service providers showed that hospital/medical office visits were the most frequent trip purpose for their clients, with 21-40% of the time being reported by 40% of respondents. Additionally, visiting family/friends and buying groceries were also common trip purposes, with less than 20% of the time being selected by 51% and 22% of respondents, respectively.

Last, responses by participants from tribal aging program highlighted pharmacy visits as the most prevalent trip purpose for their clients, with less than 20% of the time being selected by 57% of respondents. Hospital/medical office visits and buying groceries were also significant trip purposes, with 21-40% of the time being selected by 57% and 43% of respondents, respectively. The data suggests that access to job or volunteer activities, healthcare facilities, grocery stores, and social visits are crucial for these clients.

These findings can help service providers in designing and optimizing their transportation services to better meet the needs of their clients, ensuring efficient and convenient mobility options.

Agency (In Percentage)

IN A TYPICAL MONTH, APPROXIMATELY WHAT PERCENT OF YOUR CLIENTS HAVE THE FOLLOWING TRIP PURPOSES? (12)



Specialized (In Percentage)

IN A TYPICAL MONTH, APPROXIMATELY WHAT PERCENT OF YOUR CLIENTS HAVE THE FOLLOWING TRIP PURPOSES? (80)

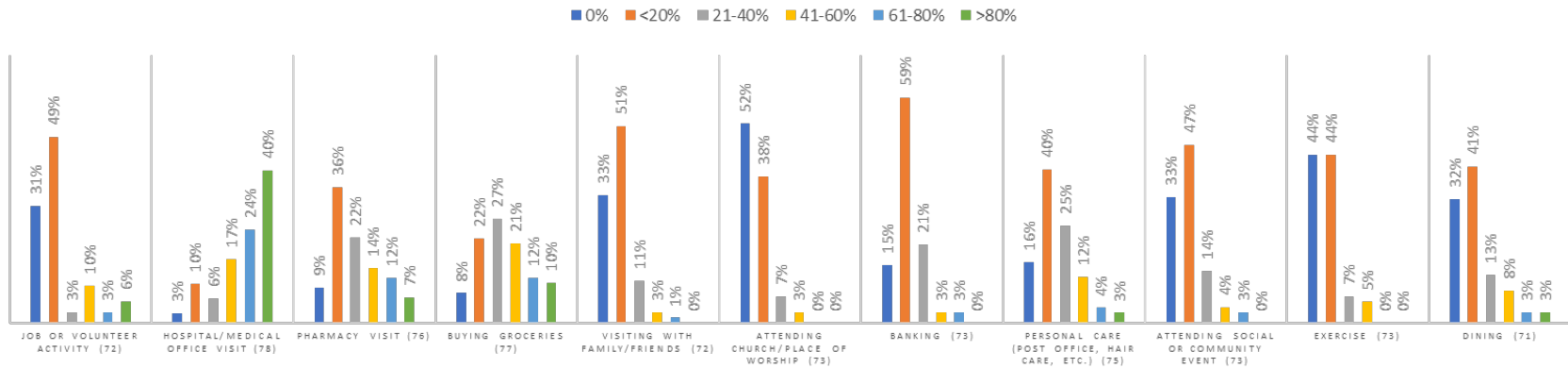
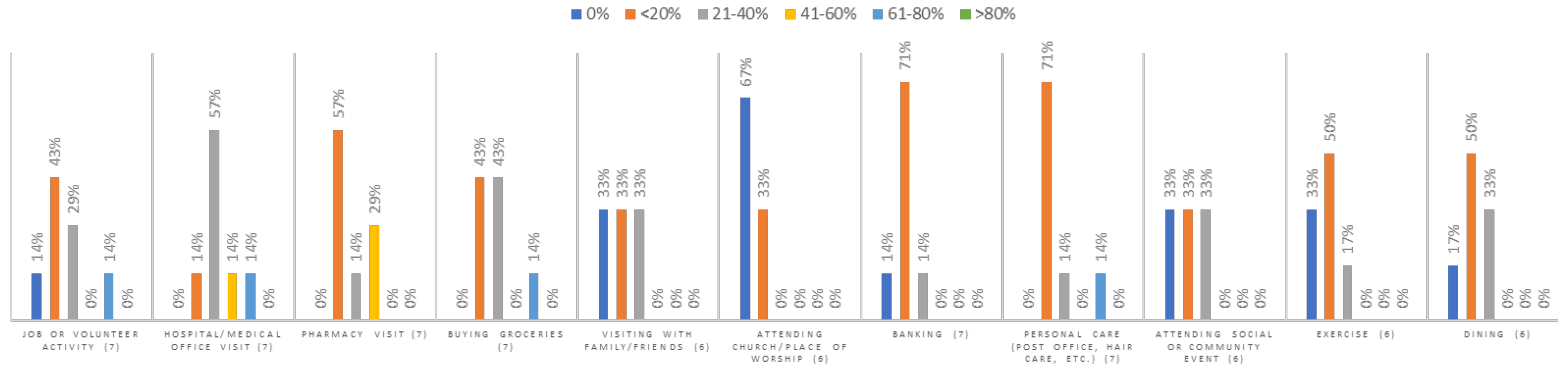


Figure 4.42. Perceived/Observed Percentage Distribution of Clients' Trip Purposes (General Transit and Specialized Mobility)

Tribe (In Percentage)

IN A TYPICAL MONTH, APPROXIMATELY WHAT PERCENT OF YOUR CLIENTS HAVE THE FOLLOWING TRIP PURPOSES? (7)



Total (In Frequency)

IN A TYPICAL MONTH, APPROXIMATELY WHAT PERCENT OF YOUR CLIENTS HAVE THE FOLLOWING TRIP PURPOSES? (99)

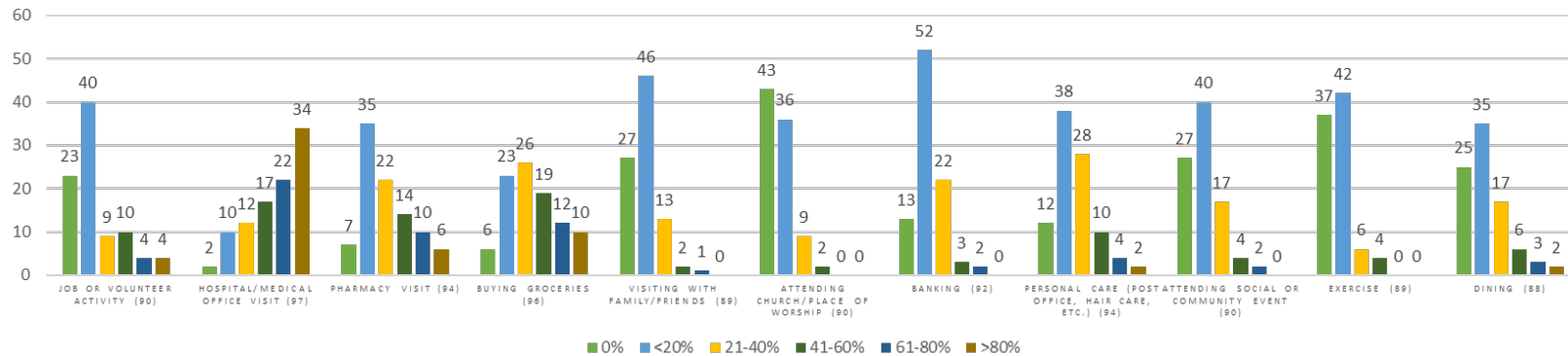


Figure 4.43. Perceived/Observed Percentage Distribution of Clients' Trip Purposes (Tribal Aging Program and Total)

Following the assessment of trip purposes, participants were further queried regarding the impact of health concerns on their clients' ability to travel. The obtained estimates are illustrated in Figures 4.44 - 4.46. These figures provide insights into the frequency with which specific health issues affect the mobility of clients.

First, participants from general transit agencies reported that their clients often experienced cognitive difficulties (36% selected sometimes), followed by substantial difficulty walking or climbing steps (27% selected fairly often). Hearing and visual impairments were less frequently reported as affecting travel, with 30% and 30% of respondents selecting sometimes for deafness or difficulty hearing and blindness or difficulty seeing, respectively. The majority of respondents indicated that their clients do not have significant health concerns affecting their ability to travel.

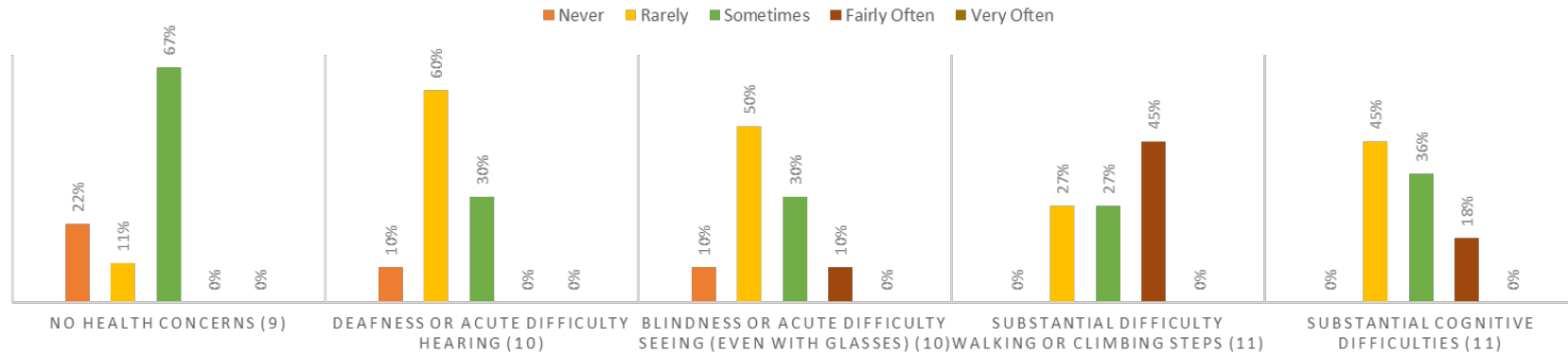
Second, specialized mobility service providers indicated that substantial cognitive difficulties were sometimes a barrier to travel for their clients, with 46% selecting sometimes. Substantial difficulty walking or climbing steps was also identified as a moderate concern, with 46% of respondents selecting fairly often. Hearing and visual impairments had a varying impact, with 41% of respondents selecting sometimes for deafness or difficulty hearing and 37% for blindness or difficulty seeing. The majority of respondents reported that their clients do not have significant health concerns affecting their ability to travel.

Last, participants from tribal aging programs highlighted that substantial difficulty walking or climbing steps sometimes affected their clients' ability to travel, with 57% of respondents selecting sometimes. Cognitive difficulties were also reported as a moderate concern, with 43% selecting sometimes. Hearing and visual impairments were less frequently observed, with 29% of respondents selecting sometimes for deafness or difficulty hearing and 14% for blindness or difficulty seeing. The majority of respondents indicated that their clients do not have significant health concerns affecting their ability to travel.

These findings provide insights into the health concerns that may impact the mobility of clients served by different types of service providers. Understanding these challenges can assist in developing targeted strategies and services to accommodate the specific needs of individuals with varying health conditions, ensuring accessible and inclusive transportation options for all.

Agency (In Percentage)

HOW OFTEN DO THE FOLLOWING HEALTH CONCERNS AFFECT THE ABILITY OF YOUR CLIENTS TO TRAVEL? (12)



Specialized (In Percentage)

HOW OFTEN DO THE FOLLOWING HEALTH CONCERNS AFFECT THE ABILITY OF YOUR CLIENTS TO TRAVEL? (80)

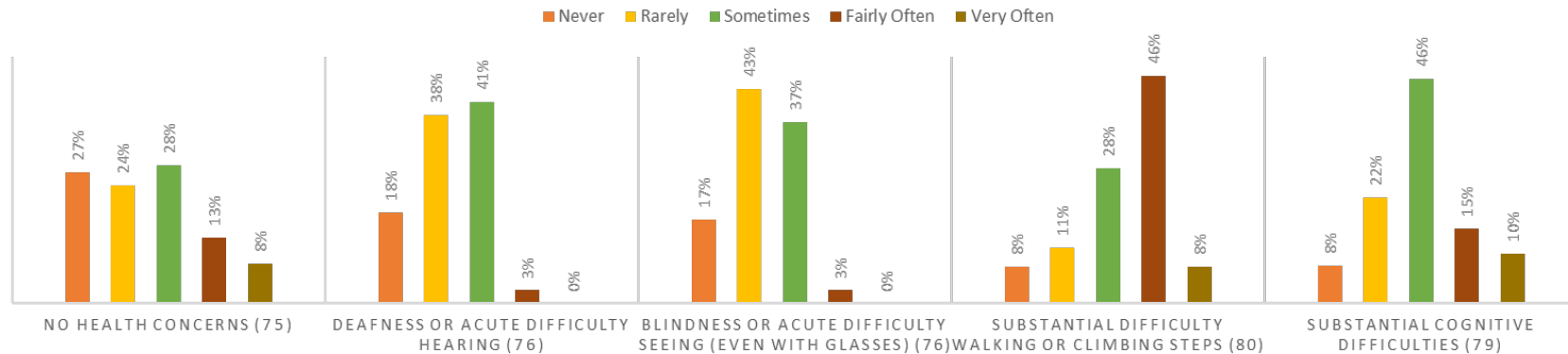
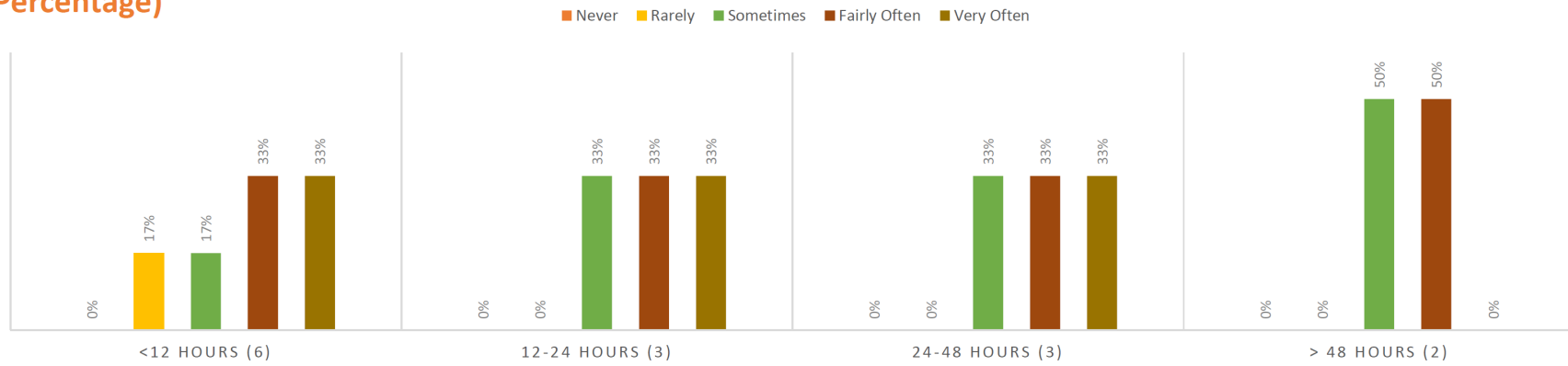


Figure 4.44. Perceived/Observed Impact of Health Concerns on Clients' Ability to Travel (General Transit and Specialized Mobility)

Q5 HOW FAR IN ADVANCE DO YOUR CLIENTS BOOK THE SERVICE? (6)

Tribe (In Percentage)



Total (In Frequency)

Q5 HOW FAR IN ADVANCE DO YOUR CLIENTS BOOK THE SERVICE? (77)

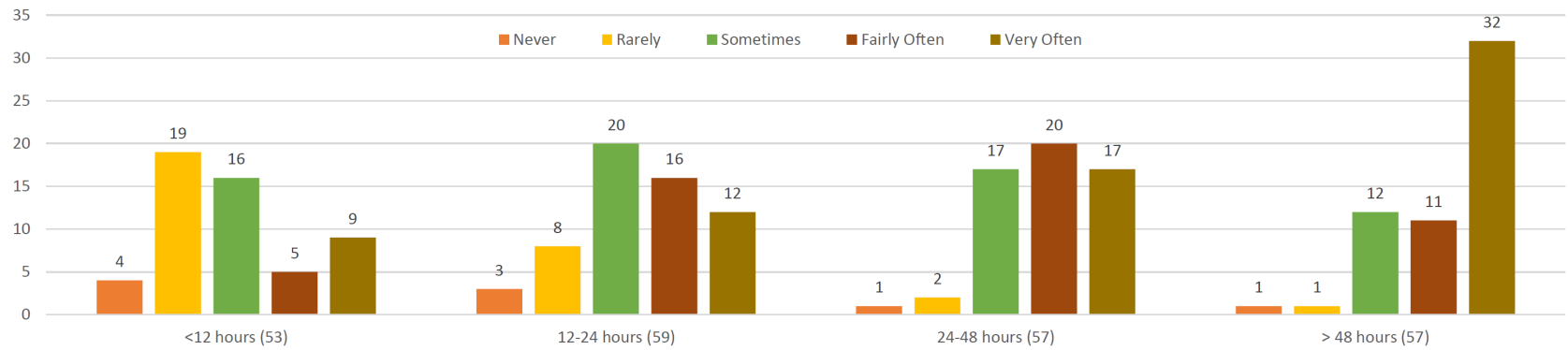
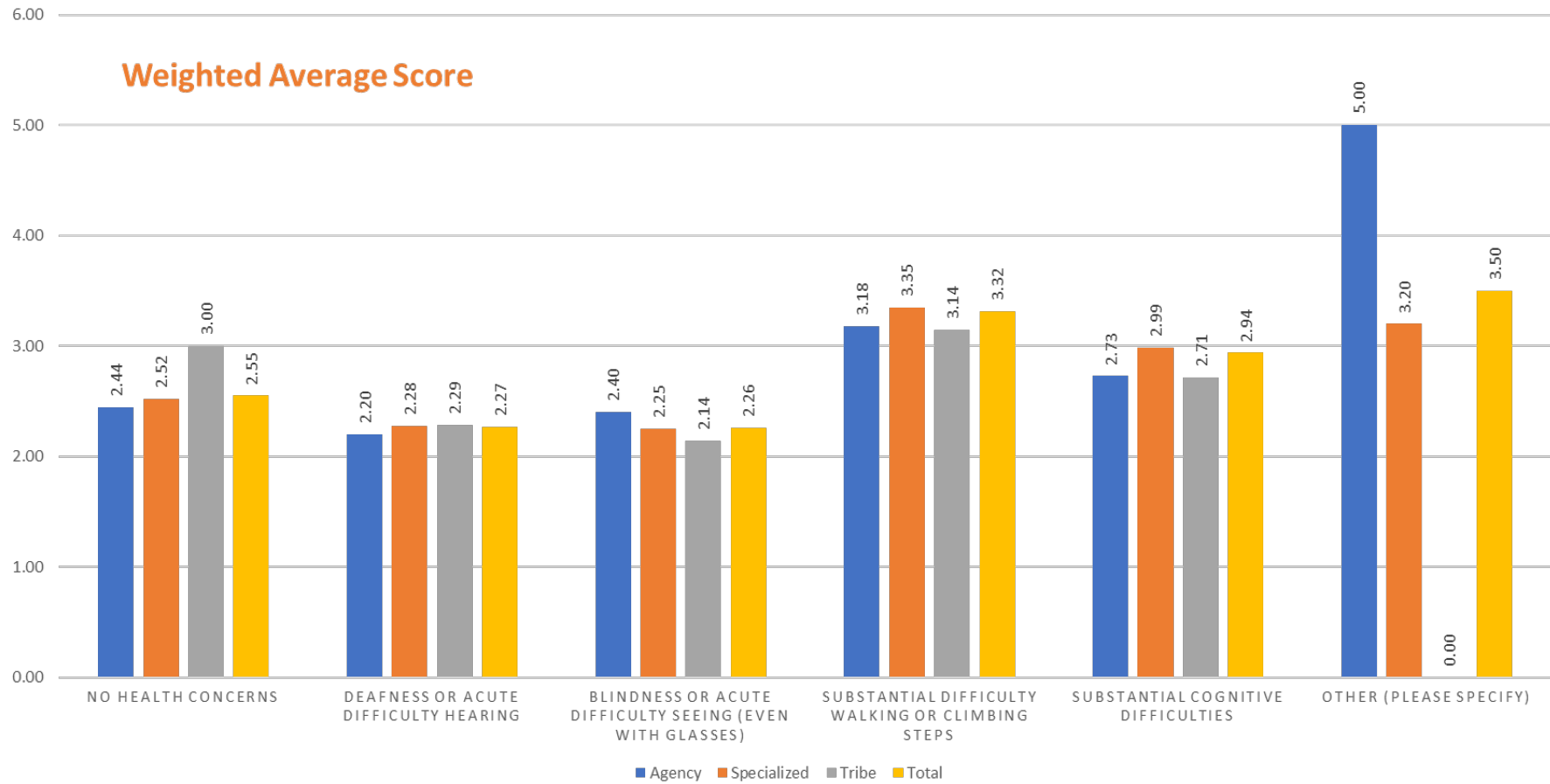


Figure 4.45. Perceived/Observed Impact of Health Concerns on Clients' Ability to Travel (Tribal Aging Program and Total)

HOW OFTEN DO THE FOLLOWING HEALTH CONCERNS AFFECT THE ABILITY OF YOUR CLIENTS TO TRAVEL?



1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often

Figure 4.46. Perceived/Observed Impact of Health Concerns on Clients' Ability to Travel (Average Weighted Score)

Two additional questions were included in the survey to gather information from agencies about their observations on the potential impact of COVID-19. The first question focused on the travel patterns of older adults and sought to understand any changes in transportation service use. The second question aimed to capture the agencies' own experiences and assess the effects of the pandemic on various aspects such as ridership, cost, revenue, and the provision of special services. The specific questions are listed below:

1. How have senior riders changed their use of transportation services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How have transportation services been changed (e.g., changes on ridership, cost, and revenue, supplement special service, etc.) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

The detailed comments have been documented and analyzed, and the link to the detailed open comments can be found in the **Appendix E, Links to All Other Sources**. Most service providers observed a decline in transportation service use by seniors, with fewer rides and a focus on essential appointments. Ridership decreases of 40% or more, or even temporary service suspensions, were common. Some seniors chose to stay home and rely on delivery services, while others depended on family or friends. Safety measures such as mask-wearing and social distancing were implemented, and seniors preferred riding with familiar drivers for security.

Transportation services have made changes, such as mask requirements, passenger limits, and suspending social outings. Essential trips and sanitation measures have become priorities. Ridership, revenue, and driver availability have decreased. Some services now offer free rides for COVID-19 vaccinations and alternative services like grocery delivery.

Financial challenges due to reduced ridership have been partially alleviated by federal funding.

4.3.2.5. *Survey Topic: Perceived Satisfaction from Users*

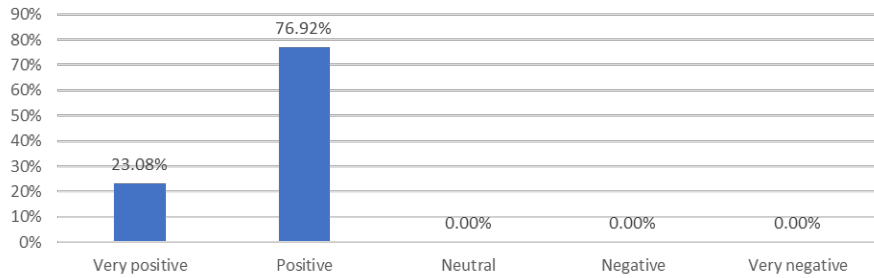
The third major survey topic delved into capturing the perspectives of service providers about service user satisfaction levels with local transportation services, as well as their opinions on important features that could benefit older adults. This section aims to gain insights from service providers about the attitudes and preferences of service users, with a specific focus on identifying key factors that contribute to overall satisfaction and identifying potential areas for improvement to better cater to the needs of older adults.

The findings regarding the perceived attitudes of clients, as reported by service providers, are presented in Figure 4.47. Overall, the prevailing sentiment towards transportation services is positive, indicating a generally satisfactory experience among service users. However, it is important to note that certain agencies within the specialized mobility services sector reported negative attitudes from their clients. This discrepancy warrants further investigation as no specific reasons were provided for these negative perceptions. To ensure high-quality transportation services for older adults, it is crucial to delve deeper into the underlying factors contributing to these findings and address any areas of concern.

Figures 4.48-4.50 illustrate the opinions on important features to older adults, which have been previously discussed in the older adult survey section (Figure 4.20). These figures reveal a consistent trend across the three types of service providers, with no significant variations observed. Detailed discussions on the disparities between the viewpoints of older adults and service providers have been provided, and as such, will not be reiterated here. However, it is worth emphasizing that these figures offer valuable insights into the areas where enhancements and improvements are necessary to better meet the specific needs and preferences of older adults in transportation services. By focusing on these important features, service providers can work towards enhancing the overall experience and ensuring that transportation services are tailored to support older adults effectively in their mobility needs.

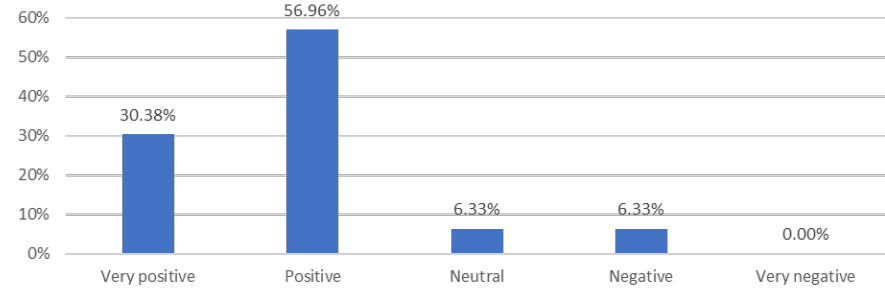
Agency (In Percentage)

IN GENERAL, HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE ATTITUDES OF YOUR CLIENTS TOWARDS TRANSPORTATION SERVICES IN YOUR COMMUNITY? (13)



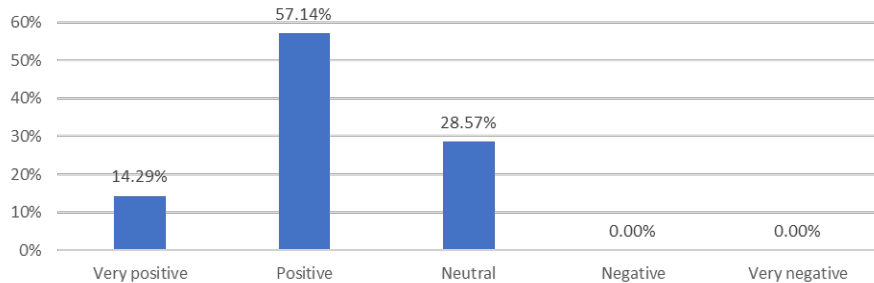
Specialized (In Percentage)

IN GENERAL, HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE ATTITUDES OF YOUR CLIENTS TOWARDS TRANSPORTATION SERVICES IN YOUR COMMUNITY? (79)



Tribe (In Percentage)

IN GENERAL, HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE ATTITUDES OF YOUR CLIENTS TOWARDS TRANSPORTATION SERVICES IN YOUR COMMUNITY? (7)



Total (In Frequency)

IN GENERAL, HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE ATTITUDES OF YOUR CLIENTS TOWARDS TRANSPORTATION SERVICES IN YOUR COMMUNITY? (99)

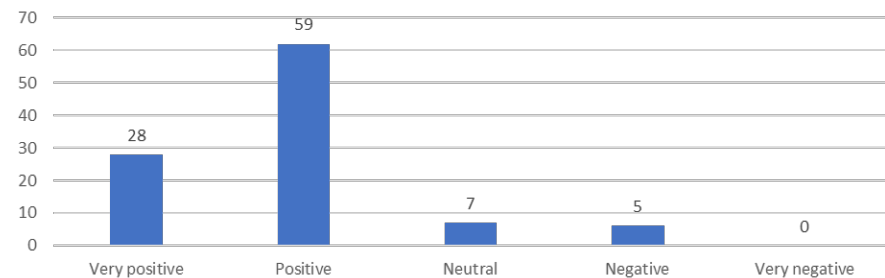
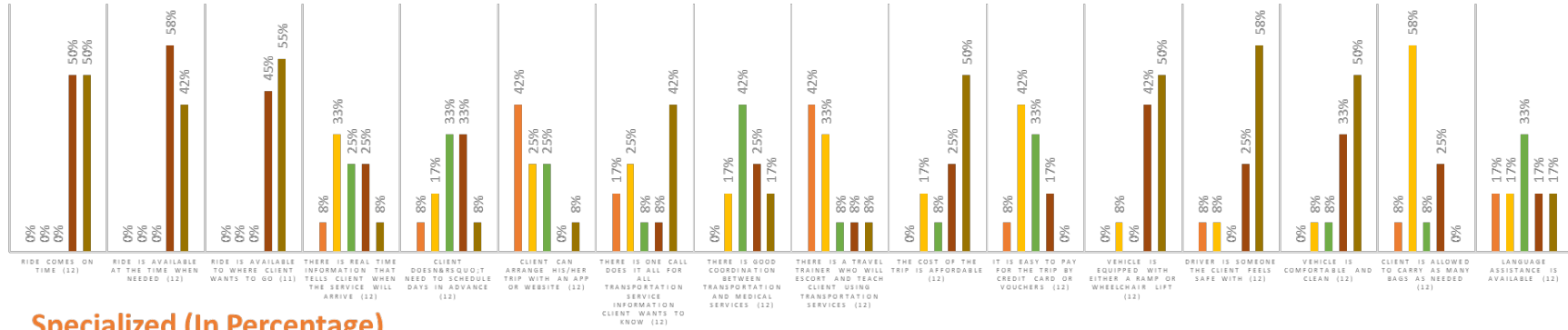


Figure 4.47. Perceived Attitudes by Clients from Service Providers

IN YOUR OPINION, HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING TRANSPORTATION FEATURES FOR SENIOR CLIENTS? (12)

Agency (In Percentage)

■ Least Important 1 ■ Important 2 ■ Important 3 ■ Important 4 ■ Most Important 5



Specialized (In Percentage)

IN YOUR OPINION, HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING TRANSPORTATION FEATURES FOR SENIOR CLIENTS? (82)

■ Least Important 1 ■ Important 2 ■ Important 3 ■ Important 4 ■ Most Important 5

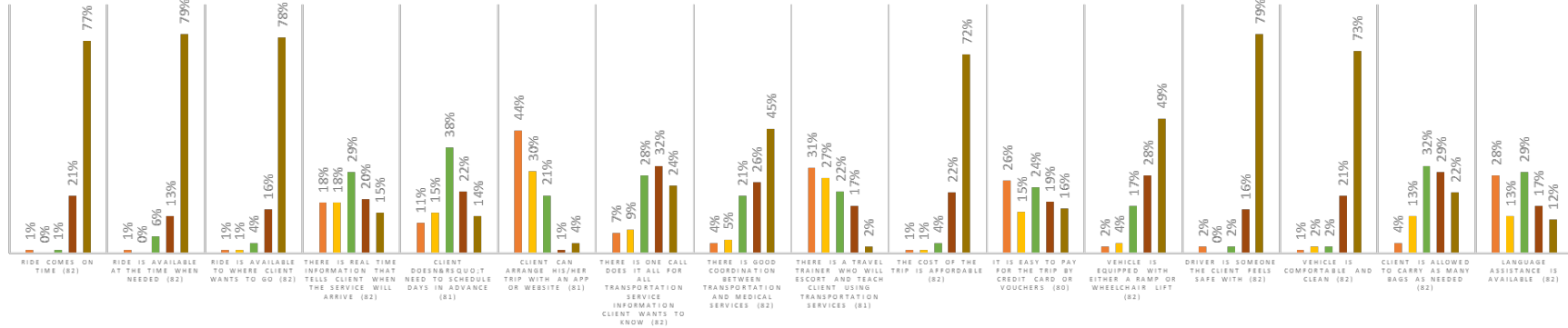
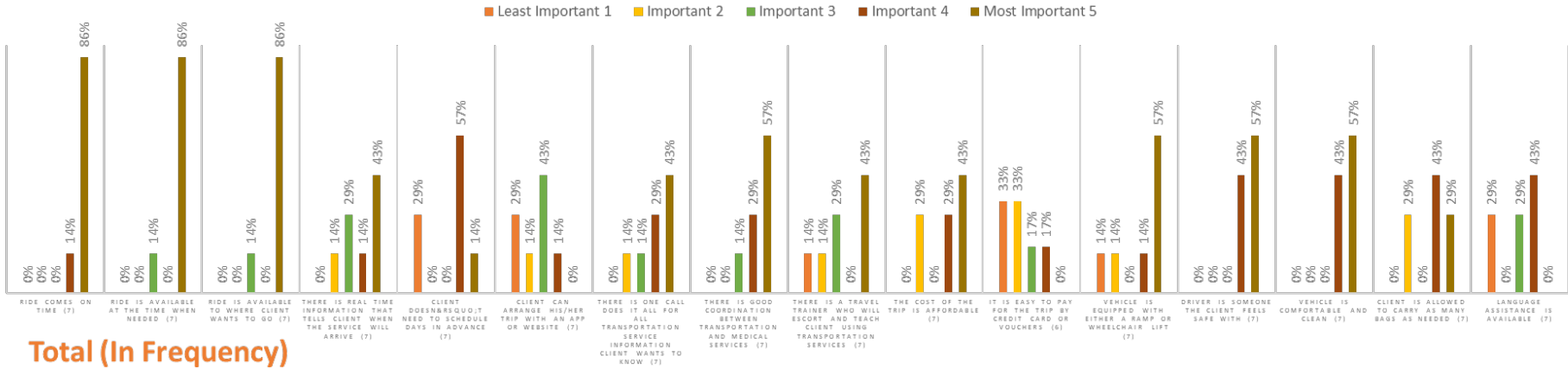


Figure 4.48. Important Features of Services to Older Adults (General Transit and Specialized Mobility)

Tribe (In Percentage)

IN YOUR OPINION, HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING TRANSPORTATION FEATURES FOR SENIOR CLIENTS? (7)



Total (In Frequency)

IN YOUR OPINION, HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING TRANSPORTATION FEATURES FOR SENIOR CLIENTS? (101)

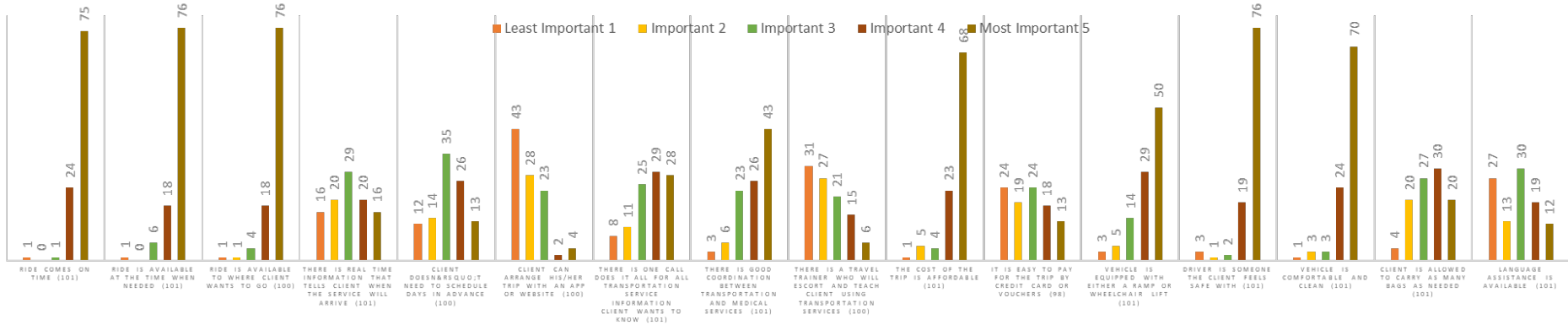
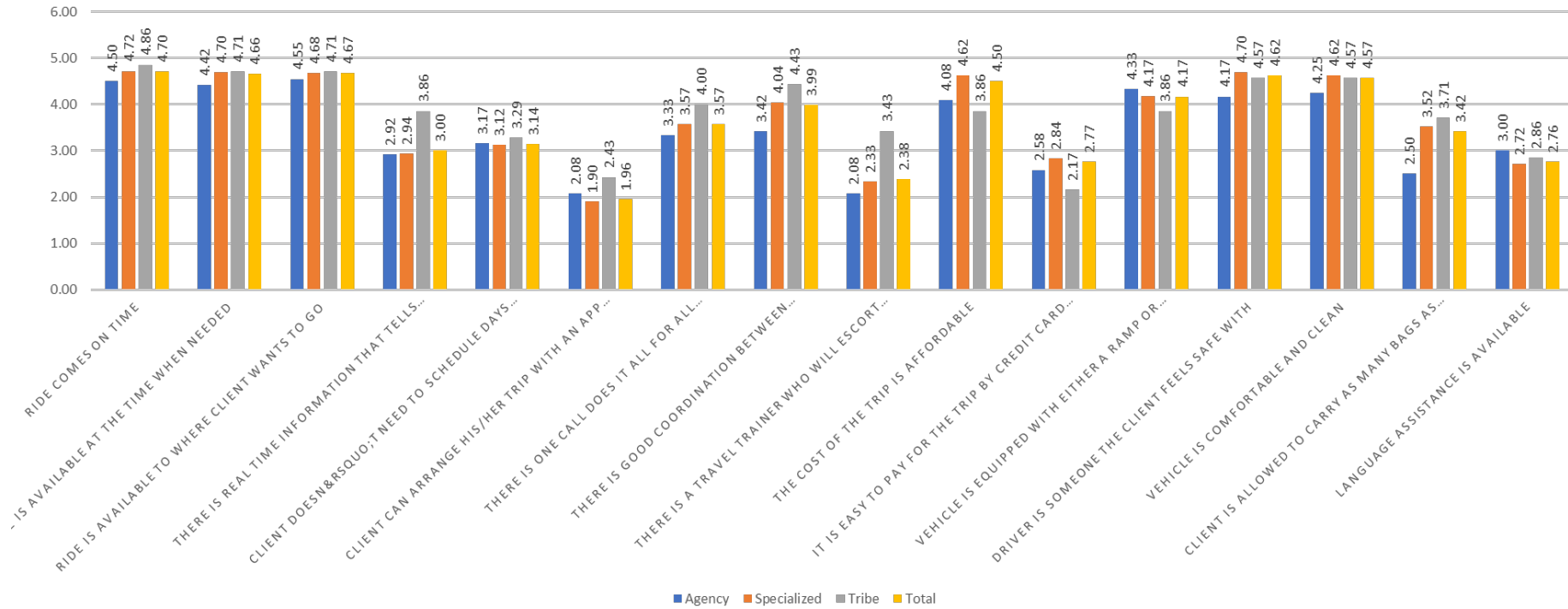


Figure 4.49. Important Features of Services to Older Adults (Tribal Aging Program and Total)

IN YOUR OPINION, HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING TRANSPORTATION FEATURES FOR SENIOR

Weighted Average Score CLIENTS? AVERAGE



1	2	3	4	5
Not at all Important	Slightly Important	Important	Fairly Important	Very Important

Figure 4.50. Important Features of Services to Older Adults (Weighted Average Score)

4.3.2.6. Survey Topic: Problems/Issues in Providing Services and Coordination

The fourth survey topic in the agency survey questionnaire delved into the challenges and issues encountered by service providers in their efforts to deliver transportation services and coordinate within their own organization or with other service providers. This section aims to identify the internal problems that service providers face, which may impede their ability to meet the needs of their clients effectively.

The results, presented in Figures 4.51 - 4.53, shed light on the key issues reported by service providers from different types of agencies. Notably, the top problems identified by the service providers can be summarized as follows, based on the criterion that more than 20% of respondents strongly agree, or more than 40% of respondents strongly agree plus agree:

For General Transit Agencies, the major concerns were a limited agency budget and a lack of available drivers. These limitations may hinder their ability to provide adequate transportation services and meet the demands of their clients.

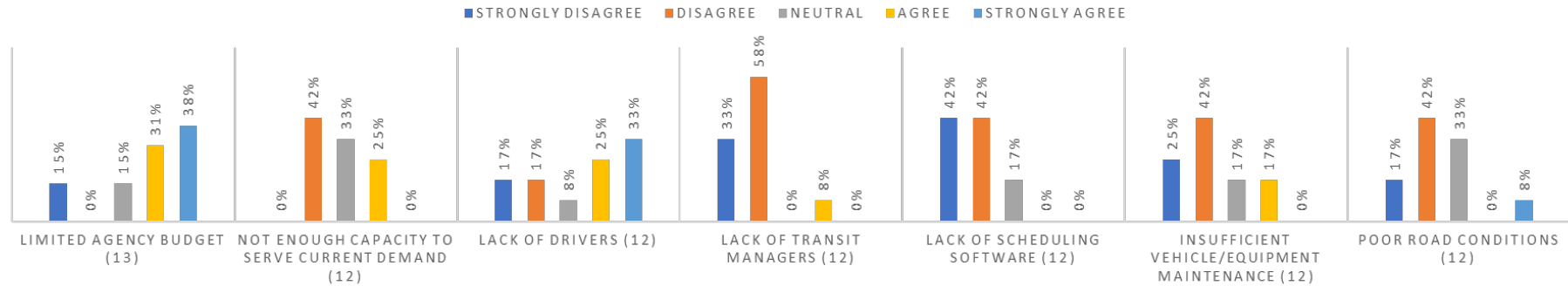
Specialized mobility service providers also faced challenges related to a shortage of drivers and limited agency budget. Additionally, they struggled with insufficient capacity to accommodate the current demand for their services. These issues may result in delays or difficulties in fulfilling transportation requests.

Service providers of tribal aging programs encountered a range of obstacles, including a shortage of drivers and insufficient capacity to meet the existing demand. They also faced challenges stemming from a lack of transit managers, poor road conditions, and limited budgetary resources. These combined factors contributed to the complexities faced by service providers in delivering transportation services to older adults and individuals in need.

Overall, the findings highlight a few recurring themes across the different types of agencies, with the lack of drivers, limited agency budget, and insufficient capacity to meet demand emerging as the most prevalent concerns. These challenges underscore the importance of addressing workforce and financial constraints, as well as improving capacity planning, to enhance the overall quality and accessibility of transportation services for older adults.

Agency (In Percentage)

WHAT PROBLEMS HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED IN PROVIDING TRANSPORTATION THAT MEETS YOUR CLIENT'S NEEDS? (13)



Specialized (In Percentage)

WHAT PROBLEMS HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED IN PROVIDING TRANSPORTATION THAT MEETS YOUR CLIENT'S NEEDS? (82)

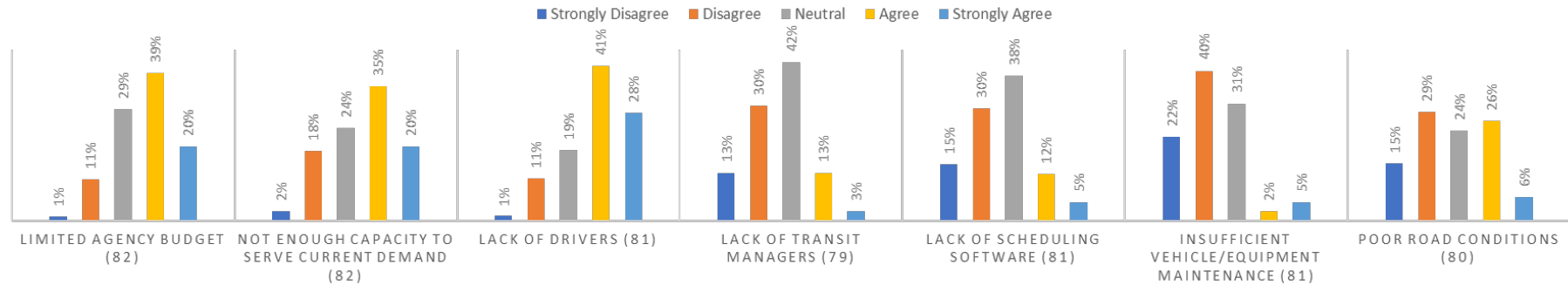
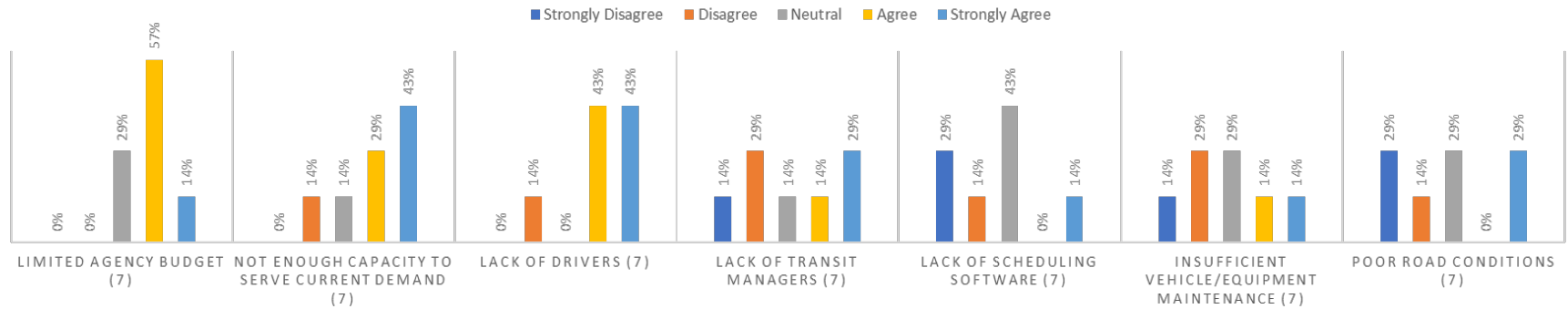


Figure 4.51. Problems Experienced in Providing Transportation to Meet Client's Needs (General Transit and Specialized Mobility)

Tribe (In Percentage)

WHAT PROBLEMS HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED IN PROVIDING TRANSPORTATION THAT MEETS YOUR CLIENT'S NEEDS? (7)



Total (In Frequency)

WHAT PROBLEMS HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED IN PROVIDING TRANSPORTATION THAT MEETS YOUR CLIENT'S NEEDS? (102)

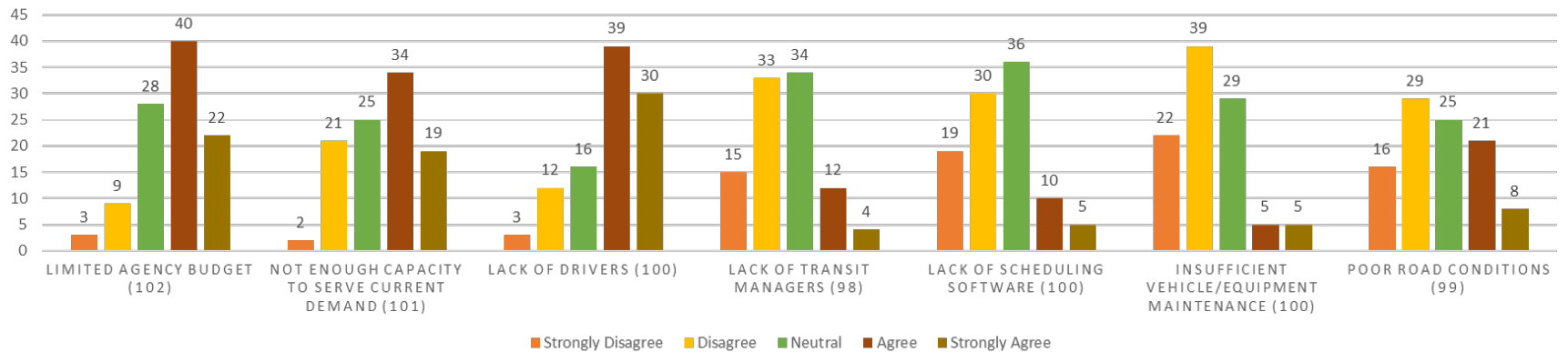
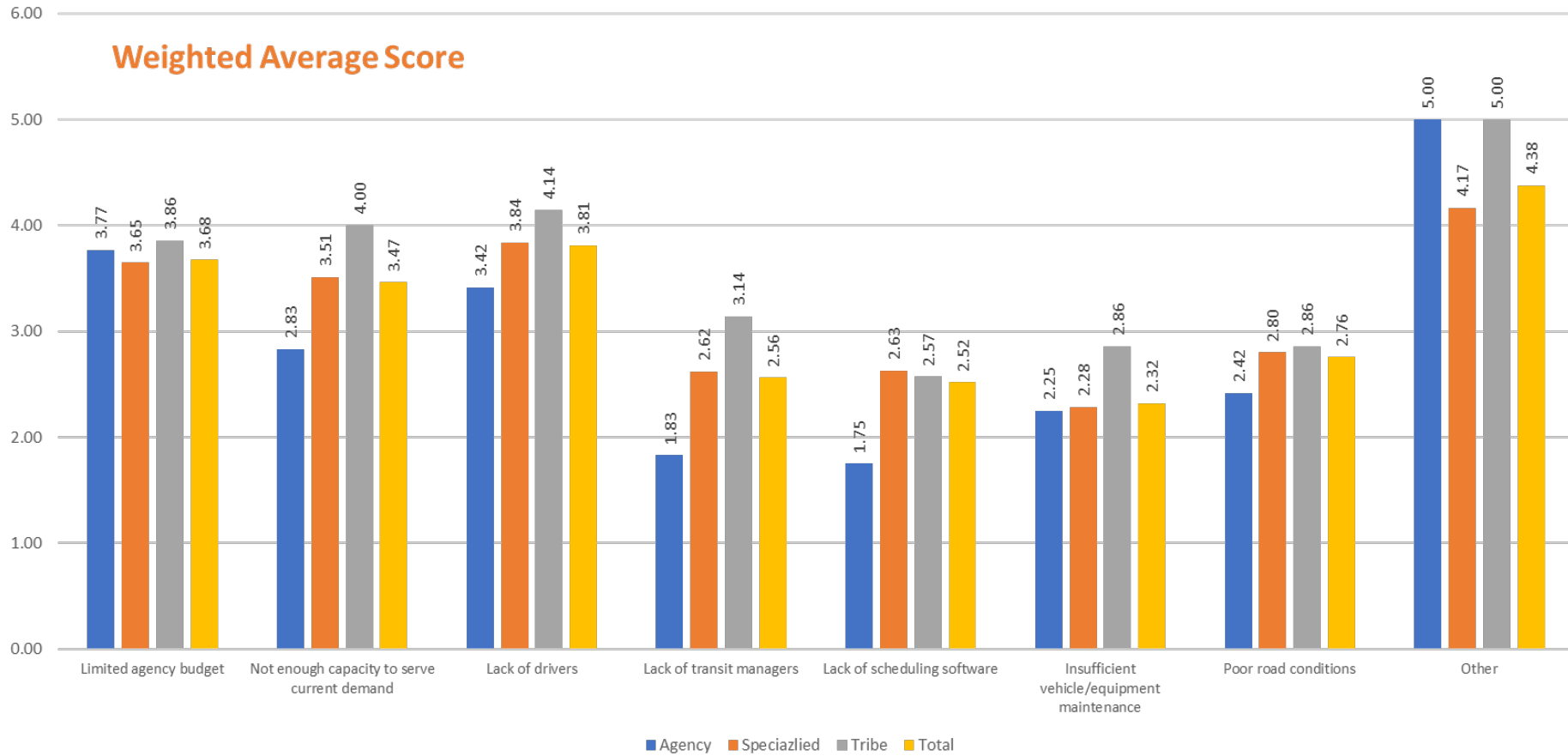


Figure 4.52. Problems Experienced in Providing Transportation to Meet Client's Needs (Tribal Aging Program and Total)

WHAT PROBLEMS HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED IN PROVIDING TRANSPORTATION THAT MEETS YOUR CLIENT'S NEEDS?



1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Figure 4.53 Average Weighted Score for Problems Experienced in Providing Transportation to Meet Client's Needs

Additional comments were also received from the participating service providers, highlighting some key challenges and issues faced in delivering transportation services (Table 4.14). These included concerns about inadequate transportation facilities, financial and geographic limitations, a lack of transportation options in rural communities, and limited vehicle availability. Service providers also mentioned the challenge of medical providers rescheduling or canceling appointments for frail elderly individuals, which can disrupt transportation arrangements. These comments shed light on the interconnected nature of transportation services and the need to address external factors that impact service delivery and accessibility for older adults.

Table 4.14. Additional Comments for Problems Experienced in Providing Transportation to Meet Client’s Needs

Comments	Attitude
Not adequate transportation facility	1 (strongly agree)
Financial and geographic silos	1 (strongly agree)
Lack of transportation offered in rural communities	2 (strongly agree, none)
lack of vehicles	1 (strongly agree)
the medical providers rescheduling/cancelling a frail elderly person appointments	1 (strongly agree)

Regarding coordination issues within their own organization or with other service providers, an open-ended question was included in the survey: "*What are the most significant transportation services coordination issues that your agency encounters?*" This question aimed to gather insights into the specific challenges faced by service providers in coordinating transportation services. The detailed comments have been documented and analyzed, and the link to the detailed open comments can be found in the **Appendix E, Links to All Other Sources**. Participants highlighted several significant transportation service coordination issues encountered by their agencies. One major challenge identified was the lack of communication and coordination between agencies and facilities, including counties, other transportation service providers, and health providers. This lack of communication hinders the seamless flow of information and coordination necessary for efficient transportation services. Funding constraints were also identified as a significant issue, as agencies struggle to purchase new buses or expand services to accommodate all individuals

in need. Limited availability and accessibility were mentioned, including a shortage of drivers, limited service areas, and inadequate transportation options for long-distance medical care or dialysis rides. Administrative factors such as territorial conflicts and regulations were cited as additional barriers that impede effective coordination efforts. Participants also emphasized the importance of knowledge and communication in addressing coordination challenges. Lack of knowledge about available transportation services among older adults and the absence of proper communication systems among service providers, older adults, and vehicle riders were highlighted as significant issues to be addressed.

4.3.2.7. Survey Topic: Suggestions/Plans for Improvement

The final survey topic in the agency survey questionnaire aimed to gather service providers' opinions and suggestions for ongoing or future improvements in transportation services. The first question within this topic asked service providers about transportation service improvements that they believe would benefit their senior clients. The results of responses to this question are presented in Figures 4.54 - 4.56.

The findings revealed key areas where service providers perceived improvements would be most beneficial to their senior clients. For general transit agencies, expanding existing services to enhance availability, implementing a centralized information service that provides comprehensive details about all available transportation options, improving guides that explain how to use local transportation services, and increasing marketing efforts for local transportation services were identified as crucial improvements.

Similarly, specialized mobility service providers emphasized the importance of expanding existing services for improved availability, establishing a one-call service that provides information about all available services and options, enhancing coordination between medical care and local transportation services, increasing marketing efforts, introducing ride vouchers or convenient payment options for regular users, and improving guides on using local transportation services.

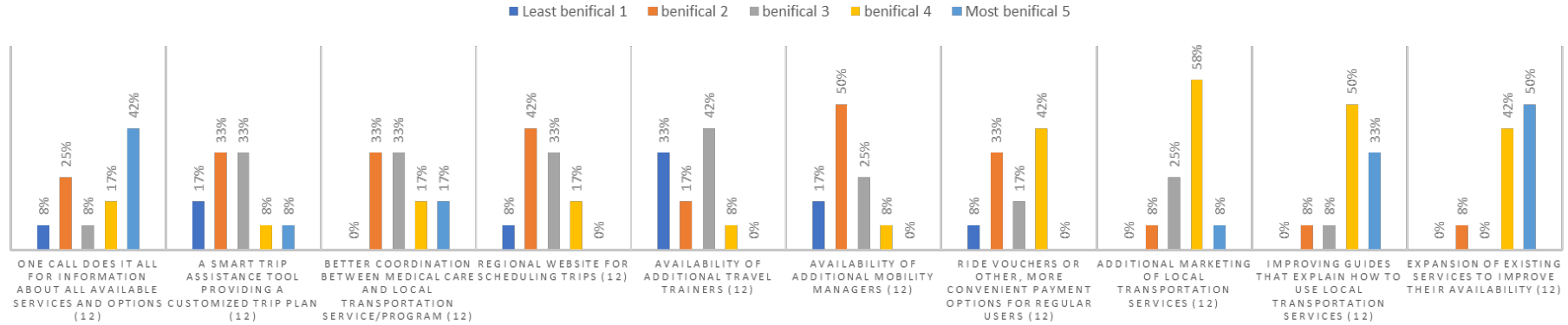
Service providers for tribal aging programs highlighted the need for a one-call service that provides comprehensive information about available services and options, expanding existing services to improve availability, better coordination between medical care and local transportation services, increasing marketing efforts, improving guides on using local transportation services, and introducing ride vouchers or more convenient payment options for regular users.

In addition to the responses, three additional comments were received. These comments emphasized the importance of marketing to aging and disability clients, the need for more drivers, and the significance of sustainable funding for transportation services.

Overall, these findings provide valuable insights into the suggestions and plans for improvements in transportation services as identified by the service providers. The identified areas for improvement could guide future initiatives aimed at enhancing the transportation experiences and meeting the specific needs of senior clients.

Agency (In Percentage)

WHAT TRANSPORTATION SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS DO YOU THINK WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO YOUR SENIOR CLIENTS? (12)



Specialized (In Percentage)

WHAT TRANSPORTATION SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS DO YOU THINK WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO YOUR SENIOR CLIENTS? (82)

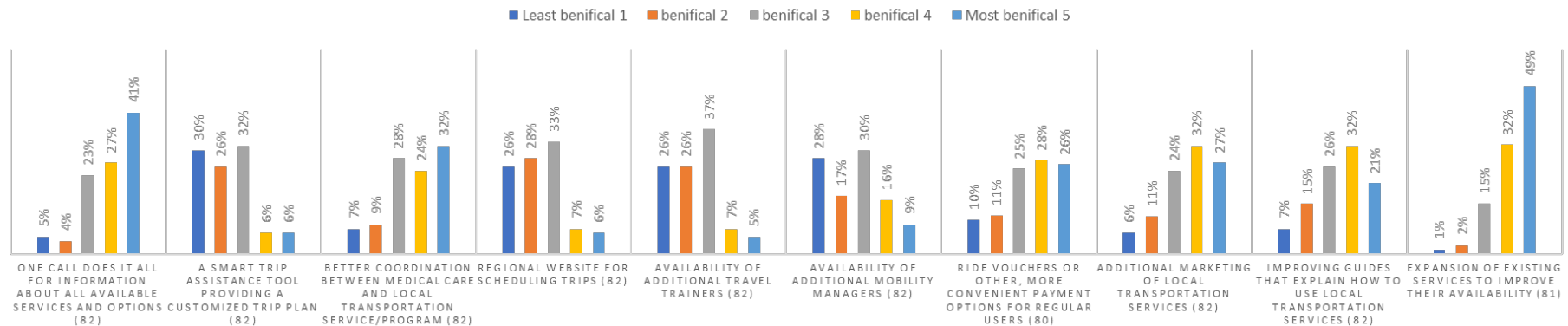
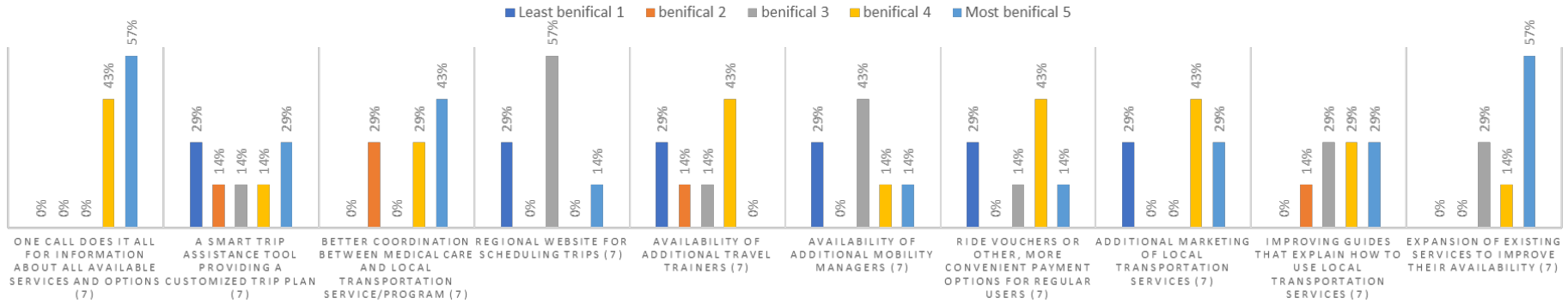


Figure 4.54. Service Improvements Beneficial to Older Adults (General Transit and Specialized Mobility)

Tribe (In Percentage)

WHAT TRANSPORTATION SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS DO YOU THINK WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO YOUR SENIOR CLIENTS? (7)



Total (In Frequency)

WHAT TRANSPORTATION SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS DO YOU THINK WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO YOUR SENIOR CLIENTS? (101)

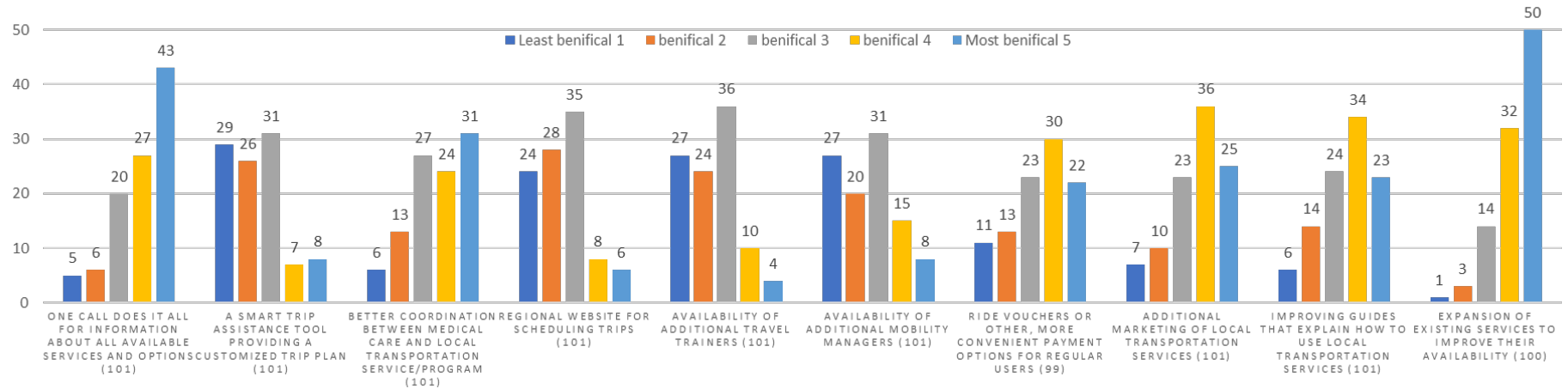


Figure 4.55. Service Improvements Beneficial to Older Adults (Tribal Aging Program and Total)

WHAT TRANSPORTATION SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS DO YOU THINK WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO YOUR SENIOR CLIENTS?

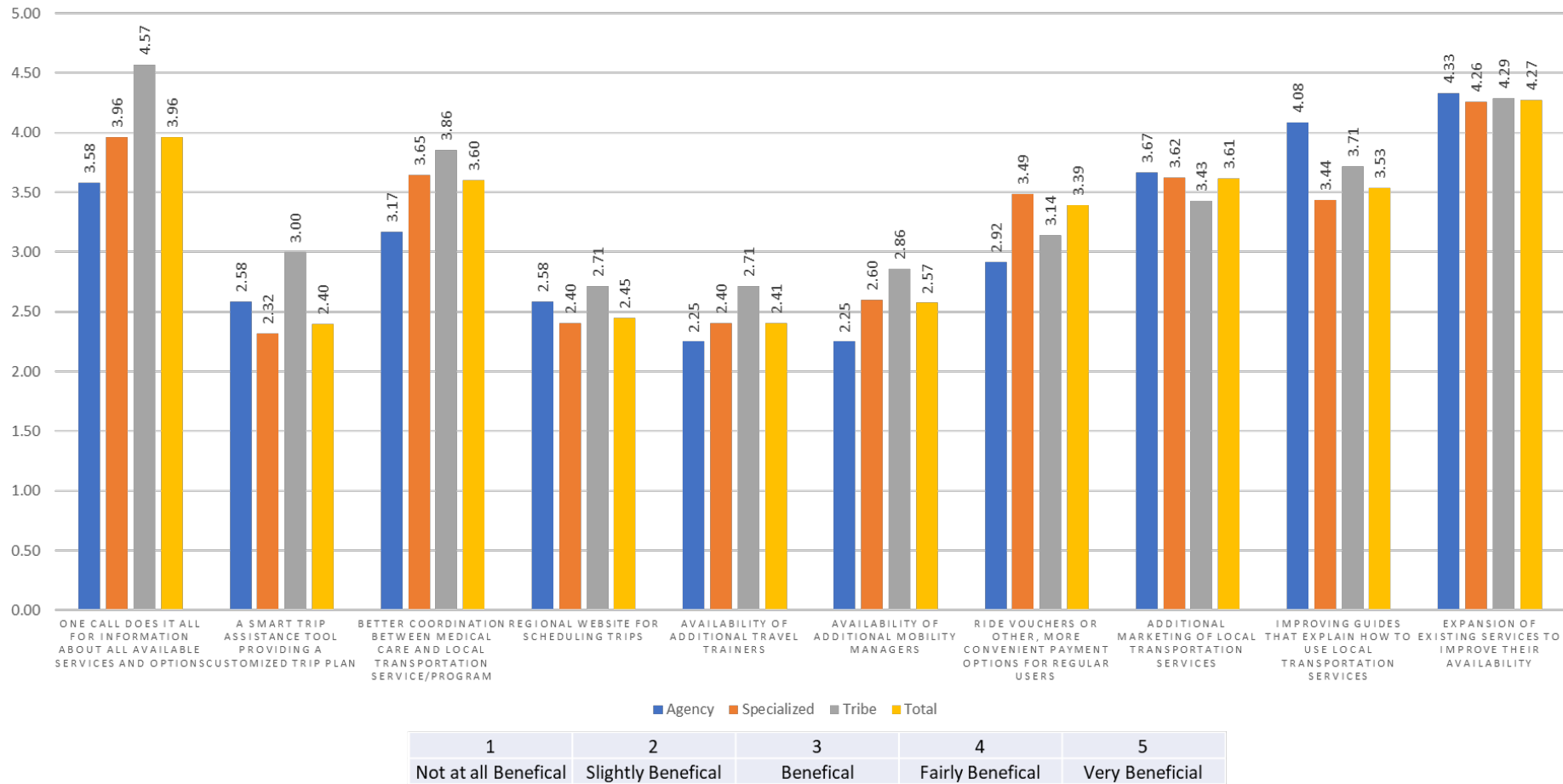


Figure 4.56. Service Improvements Beneficial to Older Adults (Average Weighted Score)

The subsequent question aimed to gather service providers' perspectives on the improvements listed above that they believed would be most readily implementable in their agency or community. This question sought to identify feasible solutions that could be effectively implemented without significant barriers or resource constraints. The results of this question, presented in Figure 4.57, provide valuable insights into the priorities and practical considerations of the service providers.

For general transit agencies, the most readily implementable improvement, as indicated by 58% of respondents, was the enhancement of guides that explain how to use local transportation services. This improvement suggests a recognition of the importance of clear and user-friendly instructions to facilitate easy access to transportation options. Additionally, 50% of respondents emphasized the need for additional marketing efforts to promote local transportation services, indicating a desire to raise awareness and increase ridership. Expanding existing services to improve availability (42%) and introducing ride vouchers or more convenient payment options (33%) were also identified as feasible improvements that could positively impact service delivery. Furthermore, 33% of respondents expressed the need for a centralized information service that consolidates all available services and options, simplifying the process for users to access comprehensive transportation information.

Specialized mobility service providers highlighted additional marketing of local transportation services (60%) as the most readily implementable improvement. This finding reflects the recognition of the importance of effective communication and outreach to reach the target audience and ensure the utilization of available services. Similar to General Transit Agencies, expanding existing services to improve availability (56%) and improving guides on how to use local transportation services (56%) were identified as feasible improvements. Respondents also emphasized the importance of introducing ride vouchers or more convenient payment options for regular users (47%) to enhance accessibility and affordability. Additionally, 44% of providers acknowledged the value of a centralized information service that streamlines access to comprehensive transportation details. Better coordination between medical care and local transportation service/program (41%) was also considered a feasible improvement, acknowledging the potential benefits of integrating transportation services with healthcare systems.

Tribal Aging Programs placed significant emphasis on the feasibility of additional marketing efforts (71%) as a readily implementable improvement. This response highlights the

recognition of the importance of outreach strategies tailored to the aging population and their specific transportation needs. Similarly, expanding existing services to improve availability (71%) was deemed feasible, underscoring the commitment to ensuring sufficient transportation options for seniors. Improving guides on how to use local transportation services (43%) was also identified as a practical step toward enhancing user experience and promoting ease of access. Better coordination between medical care and local transportation service/program (29%) was seen as a feasible improvement, indicating the recognition of the interconnectedness between healthcare and transportation services. Furthermore, the establishment of a regional website for scheduling trips (29%) was acknowledged as a potential solution to streamline the booking process and improve convenience.

Two open comment questions were included in the survey questionnaire to gather additional suggestions from service providers on the improvement of transportation services for older adults in the community and the enhancement of mobility coordination efforts in the county or service area:

1. Please list any other suggestions to improve transportation service(s) for older adults in your community.
2. Please list any suggestions to improve mobility coordination efforts in your county/service area.

These questions provided an opportunity for service providers to share their insights and recommendations beyond the predefined options. The detailed comments collected through these questions have been carefully documented and analyzed, and the link to the detailed open comments can be found in the **Appendix E, Links to All Other Sources**.

Suggestions to improve transportation services for older adults in their communities can be broadly categorized into three main areas: 1) coordination and funding, 2) service expansion and accessibility, and 3) communication, training, and marketing:

1. Participants emphasized the need for additional coordination and funding to implement necessary changes. They suggested coordinating with planning commissions to integrate survey feedback into transportation plans and improving coordination with clinics and hospitals to ensure transportation for medical appointments. Participants also proposed establishing a veteran's service vehicle to assist veterans in accessing VA facilities and seeking more support and funding from

private pay transportation companies. They highlighted the importance of securing sustainable funding and increasing state assistance for services to the disabled and elderly.

2. In terms of service expansion and accessibility, participants stressed the need to expand transportation options for the elderly, disabled, and low-income individuals. These include providing wheelchair-accessible options and increasing transportation availability in rural areas. They suggested improving coverage for weekends, evenings, and rural areas and establishing a single senior transportation option per county to reduce confusion and competition. Participants also emphasized the importance of addressing the specific needs and concerns of seniors during transportation, such as physical and cognitive variables.
3. Communication, training, and marketing were also highlighted as important areas for improvement. Participants recommended improving marketing efforts to raise awareness about available transportation options and assuring the public that public transportation is safe. They emphasized the need to address the lack of knowledge about available transportation services and improve communication with doctors' offices to accommodate seniors' transportation needs for medical appointments. Training guidelines for drivers and hiring dedicated personnel to work solely on transportation services were also suggested. Participants recognized the significance of human connections and relationships in volunteer driver services for the elderly.

For the second question related to the suggestions to improve mobility coordination efforts in their county or service area, responses included three main categories: 1) collaboration, 2) expansion and funding, and 3) marketing:

1. Collaboration emerged as a key theme, with participants emphasizing the importance of collaborating with different agencies serving older adults. They suggested working with healthcare facilities to arrange patient transportation times and collaborating with mobility managers to navigate transportation options effectively. Centralizing dispatch was also suggested to prevent duplicate trips and ensure efficient coordination. Participants emphasized the need to use volunteers more effectively between agencies and promote greater coordination across county lines.
2. Expansion and funding were identified as crucial factors for improving mobility

coordination. Participants recommended expanding services to connect with park and ride bus services, particularly in areas with limited transportation options. They expressed the need for more rural transportation at affordable prices and highlighted the importance of acquiring additional drivers, vehicles, and equipment. To support these expansions, participants suggested exploring options such as implementing regional transit authorities or dedicated funding sources. Some participants even recommended exploring funding for autonomous vehicles as a potential solution.

3. Marketing was identified as a vital aspect of improving mobility coordination efforts. Participants emphasized the importance of continuing outreach and education on transportation options to ensure that individuals are aware of the available services. They proposed providing information sessions and support to medical and assisted living facilities to better assist older adults in accessing transportation resources.

Participants also highlighted the need for accommodation in mobility coordination. They suggested adapting appointment times for seniors in rural areas to ensure convenient access to transportation services.

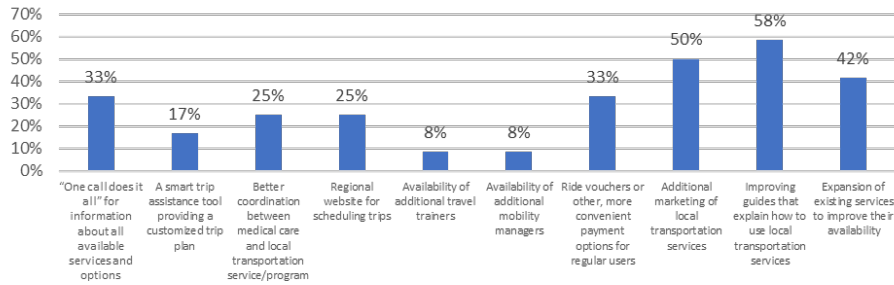
Last but not least, one additional open comment question was related to the post-COVID plan (“*What plans have you made about your services once COVID-19 is under control (whether the service will undergo permanent changes and how)?*”). The link to the detailed open comments can be found in the **Appendix E, Links to All Other Sources**. There were varying plans and considerations among organizations. Some expressed a desire to return to pre-pandemic operations, aiming to resume their services as they were before the pandemic, including increasing ridership, expanding services, and reinstating previous practices such as shared rides and transportation for multiple individuals. However, many participants emphasized the importance of maintaining the safety measures implemented during the pandemic on a permanent basis. They recognized the value of continued mask usage, enhanced sanitization procedures, and limited capacity in vehicles to ensure the ongoing safety of both passengers and drivers. Some agencies have even installed sneeze barriers or dividers as an added precautionary measure. Several participants highlighted the need for ongoing evaluation and adaptation as the situation evolves. They expressed a willingness to adjust their services based on guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), funding sources, and the evolving needs of the community. In addition, there are mentions of exploring new initiatives to improve transportation services for older

adults, including increased travel training opportunities to enhance independence, better coordination with other transportation options to provide seamless connectivity, and expanding lending programs to ensure access to mobility aids.

These findings provide valuable guidance for service providers in prioritizing and planning improvements that can be implemented effectively within their agencies or communities. By focusing on the most readily implementable enhancements, service providers can work towards addressing the needs and preferences of older adults, ultimately enhancing their transportation experience and overall well-being.

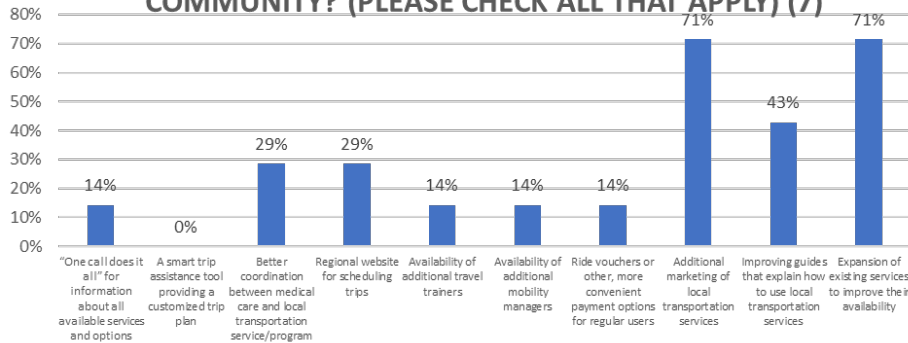
Agency (In Percentage)

AMONG THE IMPROVEMENTS LISTED ABOVE, WHICH DO YOU THINK WOULD BE MOST READILY IMPLEMENTABLE IN YOUR AGENCY OR COMMUNITY? (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY) (12)



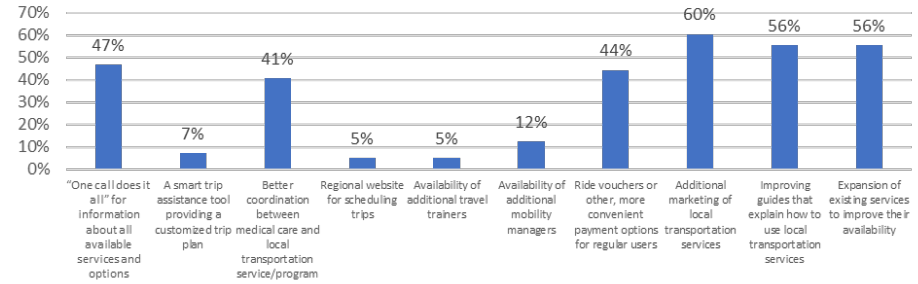
Tribe (In Percentage)

AMONG THE IMPROVEMENTS LISTED ABOVE, WHICH DO YOU THINK WOULD BE MOST READILY IMPLEMENTABLE IN YOUR AGENCY OR COMMUNITY? (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY) (7)



Specialized (In Percentage)

AMONG THE IMPROVEMENTS LISTED ABOVE, WHICH DO YOU THINK WOULD BE MOST READILY IMPLEMENTABLE IN YOUR AGENCY OR COMMUNITY? (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY) (81)



Total (In Frequency)

AMONG THE IMPROVEMENTS LISTED ABOVE, WHICH DO YOU THINK WOULD BE MOST READILY IMPLEMENTABLE IN YOUR AGENCY OR COMMUNITY? (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY) (100)

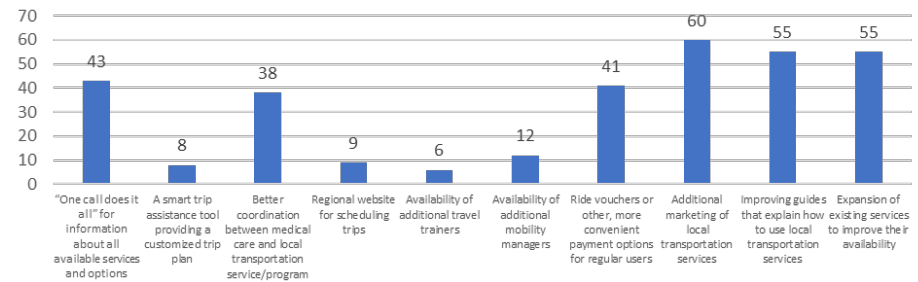


Figure 4.57. Most Readily Implemented Improvements

4.4. Summary

This chapter presented the results from both the side of older adults and the service providers within Wisconsin, primarily covering suburban and rural areas to understand the mobility needs of the older adults and the current practices by the service providers.

The survey results from older adults provided valuable insights into various aspects of transportation services. The survey received a total of 1,571 returned surveys, along with 79 online responses, totaling 1,650 responses. Efforts were made to accurately map the responses by county and tribe, resulting in 96% coverage. The survey analysis focused on socio-demographic characteristics and survey topics related to information on technology usage, travel patterns, satisfaction with local transportation services, travel challenges and limitations, and suggestions for improvement.

Regarding socio-demographic characteristics, the survey revealed that the majority of respondents were females (63%) and aged 65 or older. Income distribution and race aligned with general trends, with a significant portion of respondents reporting unemployment. Most respondents lived alone or with one other person, and a high percentage (93%) reported using personal mobility devices, such as walkers, canes, and wheelchairs.

In terms of information technology usage, the survey found that nearly half of the respondents lacked internet access, highlighting a potential digital divide among older adults. Online shopping was the most common activity, while ride services had low adoption rates. Friends and family members were the primary source of transportation information for respondents.

The survey also explored travel patterns and mode preferences. Self-driving and reliance on friends and family were dominant modes of transportation, while local public and private services had low usage rates. Groceries and medical purposes were the most important travel activities, while job or volunteer activities were rated as the least important.

Regarding satisfaction with local transportation services, approximately half of the respondents had no opinion, indicating limited usage of local services. Among those who expressed an opinion, the majority reported being very satisfied. The survey also collected feedback on specific features of transportation services, revealing a consensus on most options between users and providers, with some discrepancies related to real-time information and wheelchair accessibility.

The survey identified travel challenges and limitations faced by older adults. The most prominent issues reported were schedule availability and route choice. Comments provided by respondents highlighted concerns such as poor driver behavior, lack of mask-wearing during the pandemic, noisy vehicles, and drivers lacking knowledge of destinations. However, only 13% of respondents discontinued using transportation services due to these problems.

Last, older adults provided their suggestions for improving local transportation services. These suggestions covered various aspects, including availability, schedule flexibility, ride information, affordability, ride quality, assistance, reliability, ease of payment and booking, driver behavior, safety, and vehicle tracking. Incorporating these suggestions can contribute to enhancing transportation options and addressing the specific needs of older adults.

The survey of service providers also yielded valuable insights into their profiles and services offered. Out of 103 responses, 13 were general transit agencies, 83 were specialized service providers and mobility managers, and 7 were from tribal aging programs. The services provided varied among the different agency types, with fixed-route bus service and shared-ride taxi service being common. Personnel composition also varied, with general transit agencies relying on third-party providers, agency staff, and volunteers, while specialized mobility providers emphasized agency staff and volunteers. Service providers from tribal aging programs predominantly relied on agency staff. Understanding these profiles and services helps identify challenges and opportunities for improvement in transportation services for older adults.

Regarding information technology and management system usage, the survey revealed that phone calls were the most popular booking method, while internet and mobile app usage were relatively low. Specialized mobility service users tended to schedule rides earlier. Agencies typically provided instant confirmation for bookings, and software usage for ride scheduling was prevalent among general transit agencies, with Assisted Rides being frequently mentioned. Communication channels such as brochures, websites, social media, and newsletters were used to share information about transportation services.

The survey on observed travel patterns showed that job/volunteer activities, hospital/medical office visits, and buying groceries were common trip purposes across different agency types. Health concerns such as cognitive difficulties in walking or climbing steps varied in their impact on travel. The COVID-19 pandemic led to reduced transportation use by seniors,

focusing on essential appointments. Safety measures were implemented, and service providers experienced decreases in ridership and revenue.

Perceived satisfaction from users revealed a generally positive sentiment towards transportation services among older adults. However, some specialized mobility providers reported negative attitudes from their clients, requiring further investigation. Important features for older adults, such as on-time performance, accessibility, affordability, and safety, were consistently highlighted. These insights could guide service providers in tailoring transportation services to meet the specific needs and preferences of older adults.

Problems and coordination issues faced by service providers included a lack of available drivers, limited budgets, and insufficient capacity to meet demand. Additional challenges included inadequate facilities, financial and geographic limitations, and administrative barriers. Coordination issues involved communication gaps, funding constraints, limited availability and accessibility, and territorial conflicts. Addressing these challenges requires improving resources, capacity planning, communication, and addressing external factors impacting service delivery.

The survey findings provide valuable insights into the mobility needs of older adults and the current practices of service providers in Wisconsin. Key areas for improvement include bridging the digital divide among older adults, addressing scheduling and route limitations, enhancing real-time information and wheelchair accessibility, and overcoming challenges faced by service providers, such as a lack of drivers, limited budgets, and coordination issues. These insights can inform targeted strategies to enhance transportation services and effectively meet the specific needs of older adults.

5. FOCUS GROUP STUDIES

5.1. Overview

Three group meetings were conducted interviewing older adults, and another three group meetings with service providers. Sixteen older adults and twenty-two service providers participated in the focus group interviews. Participants were asked about the obstacles that older adults faced when using local alternative transportation services. Moreover, they were encouraged to provide recommendations for better transportation services. Last but not least, the examination of older adults' as well as service providers' perspectives encompassed the incorporation of innovative technologies such as the Internet, smartphones, and real-time vehicle location information.

Of the 16 senior individuals who participated focus group interviews, 11 were female and 5 were male, with ages varying from 62 to 87 years. All of them came from households with annual incomes lower than \$50,000. Of the 22 participating agencies, 15 agencies were administrated by a local government body (county, city, tribe) and 7 were non-profit organizations. Most interviewees from agencies occupied positions of senior management, such as transportation director, transit manager, mobility manager, transportation program coordinator, nutrition director, etc. Participating older adults and agency representatives came from a range of locations across the state, whose lists can be found in **Appendix D, Focus Group Participants**.

The chapter is organized as follows: 1) discussions of the findings from focus group meetings with older adults, 2) discussions of the findings from focus group meetings with service providers, and 3) comprehensive summary of all the findings and suggestions.

5.2. Findings from Older Adults Focus Groups

The focus group meetings with older adults covered individuals who used alternative transportation services frequently, including ADRC services, shared-ride taxis (before COVID-19), volunteer driver programs, and medical transport services such as Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT), and those who seldom used the services. Participants were asked about barriers they encountered in finding and using local alternative transportation services, as well as suggestions to better meet their travel demands. Adoption of emerging technologies such as Internet, smartphone, and real-time vehicle location information were also discussed to unfold older adults' attitudes.

The following subsections summarize all discussions from the older adults focus groups. We

categorized the discussions into four main topics, including financial barriers, accommodational issues, attitudes on emerging technologies and other topics.

5.2.1. Financial Barriers

Affordability is a crucial factor in older adults' decision-making process, as they have to prioritize expenses based on their limited incomes and resources. Participants questioned the cost disparities between different transportation providers and expressed the desire for affordable options that cater to their needs. Some participants highlighted instances where they couldn't afford transportation fees, leading to missed opportunities, such as medical appointments and other social activities. The financial barriers among older adults include:

Limited Financial Resources: Some participants mentioned that they rely on limited incomes, which can make it difficult to afford transportation costs. This limited financial capacity restricts their ability to access transportation services regularly or as needed.

Lack of Affordable Transportation Options: The participants discussed the lack of affordable transportation options in their areas, especially in rural or remote locations. Limited public transportation services or the absence of subsidized transportation programs make it challenging for individuals with financial constraints to find affordable means of transportation.

High Costs of Specialized Transportation: Participants who require specialized transportation due to mobility issues or medical conditions mentioned that these services often come at higher costs. The expenses associated with accessible vehicles or specialized equipment, such as wheelchair lifts, can be prohibitive for individuals with limited financial resources.

Financial Burdens of Additional Support: Some participants require additional assistance, such as caregivers or attendants, to accompany them during transportation due to their specific needs. The cost of hiring or arranging for such extra supports can be a financial barrier for individuals with limited funds.

Expenses for Medical Appointments: Participants mentioned the financial burden of transportation costs related to medical appointments, including frequent visits to clinics, hospitals, or specialized healthcare providers. The cumulative expenses for transportation to these appointments can add up and strain limited financial resources. Some participants also mentioned that they were covered by Medicare and Medicaid, which helps alleviate the financial burden of transportation expenses. They expressed gratitude for the coverage

provided by these programs.

From the participants' perspectives, overcoming these financial barriers would require multifaceted supports, including the availability of affordable transportation options, subsidized programs, and financial assistance to ensure equitable access to transportation for all individuals, regardless of their financial status. Such supports can be categorized as:

- **Grant Opportunities:** Seek out and apply for grants specifically aimed at improving transportation access for underserved populations. Grants can provide funding for initiatives that address financial barriers, support transportation infrastructure, or develop innovative transportation solutions.
- **Government Assistance:** Advocate for increased government funding and support for transportation services. This can involve working with local, state, and federal authorities to allocate resources towards affordable transportation initiatives, especially in underserved areas.
- **Subsidized Transportation Programs:** Implement subsidized transportation programs specifically designed for individuals with limited financial resources. These programs can provide reduced fares or discounts on transportation services, making them more affordable and accessible.
- **Non-Profit Transportation Services:** Establish or support non-profit organizations that offer transportation services at lower costs or on a sliding fee scale. These organizations can leverage funding sources, grants, and community support to provide affordable transportation options to individuals in need.
- **Volunteer Driver Programs:** Establish volunteer driver programs where community members can offer transportation assistance to those in need. This can help reduce transportation costs for individuals who require regular trips to medical appointments, grocery stores, or social activities.
- **Community Partnerships:** Foster partnerships between transportation providers, community organizations, and local businesses to develop innovative solutions. Collaborative efforts can lead to the creation of transportation programs that address financial barriers, such as discounted fares for specific destinations or delivery services for essential items.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Raise awareness about the financial barriers to transportation faced by individuals in the community. Conduct public awareness

campaigns to educate the public, stakeholders, and policymakers about the importance of affordable transportation options and the impact of financial barriers on individuals' well-being.

- **Mobility Management Services:** Develop comprehensive mobility management services that provide personalized transportation assistance, information, and resources to individuals with financial constraints. These services can help individuals navigate available transportation options, including subsidies, grants, and community programs.

In conclusion, addressing the financial barriers to transportation faced by older adults is crucial for ensuring their well-being and quality of life. The participants' perspectives shed light on the challenges they encounter due to limited financial resources, lack of affordable options, high costs of specialized transportation, financial burdens of additional support, and expenses for medical appointments. To overcome these barriers, a multifaceted approach is necessary, encompassing grant opportunities, government assistance, subsidized transportation programs, non-profit transportation services, volunteer driver programs, community partnerships, public awareness campaigns, and mobility management services. By implementing these supports, we can strive to create a more inclusive and accessible transportation system that caters to the needs of all individuals, irrespective of their financial status. Empowering older adults with affordable and reliable transportation options will not only enhance their independence and social engagement but also promote their overall well-being and ensure they can fully participate in the activities and services they require.

5.2.2. Accommodational Issues

Ensuring accessible and reliable transportation for older adults requires addressing various accommodational issues related to service availability, health and accessibility, reservation and waiting time, coordination and flexibility, communication, and driver competence. From limited service availability and insufficient frequency to difficulties in accessing ADA-compliant vehicles and coordinating different types of trips, these issues can significantly impact older adults' ability to meet their transportation needs.

5.2.2.1. *Service Availability, Frequency, and Awareness*

Accessing necessary transportation could become challenging due to the limited availability of services, particularly on weekends, which has been observed from the focus groups' discussions. In areas with few transportation options, reaching essential locations such as

veterans' services and medical facilities becomes even more difficult.

Some participants mentioned that transportation services, such as vans or shuttles, were not available on a daily basis or with sufficient frequency. This lack can be particularly inconvenient for medical appointments and other time-sensitive activities.

Some participants even mentioned that there were no public transportation services in their region. In rural areas, where public transportation options are scarce, there might be limited advertising or promotion of available services. As a result, participants may not have been exposed to information about transportation options that could meet their needs.

To address these problems, the following solutions were discussed during the focus group studies, and summarized by the project teams based on the collected opinions from the participating older adults:

- **Expand Transportation Options:** Work with local government authorities, transportation agencies, and community organizations to identify and address gaps in transportation services. This effort may involve increasing the number of routes, extending service hours, and exploring innovative transportation solutions such as on-demand or flexible transit options.
- **Improve Service Frequency:** Advocate for increased frequency of transportation services, especially during peak hours or times when older adults are more likely to require transportation. This solution can reduce waiting times, enhance convenience, and provide more flexibility for older adults to plan their trips.
- **Enhance Awareness:** Implement outreach and education campaigns to raise awareness among older adults about available transportation services. This increased awareness can involve distributing informational brochures, hosting community workshops, leveraging local media channels, and collaborating with senior centers or community organizations to disseminate information effectively.

5.2.2.2. Health and Accessibility

In terms of health and accessibility, participants highlighted issues with finding ADA compliant vehicles, difficulties with wheelchair accessibility, and the lack of available NMET services. Some had not specifically requested ADA compliant vehicles and expressed uncertainty about how to do so. One participant mentioned that they have found accessible transportation through family members who have modified their vehicles to accommodate

their needs.

Passengers with other specific needs also noted some specific challenges. For example, restrictions on eating in vehicles can pose difficulties for individuals with medical conditions that require immediate food intake. Moreover, inadequate assistance for passengers with mobility devices, such as wheelchairs or walkers, makes it harder for them to access and use transportation services. Especially, volunteer drivers for transportation services may not be able to handle wheelchairs due to physical limitations. One participant shared a situation that when they did not require a wheelchair or lift, they faced issues with cramped vehicles and discomfort during transportation. Other cases included help with carrying bags and navigating through appointments.

To address these health and accessibility problems, the following suggestions were considered:

- **Improve Accessibility:** Ensure that transportation services and vehicles are equipped with appropriate accessibility features, such as ramps, lifts, and designated spaces for mobility aids. Conduct regular maintenance and inspections to ensure these features are functional and meet the needs of older adults with varying abilities.
- **Provide Training:** Train transportation staff, including drivers and support personnel, on how to assist older adults with mobility challenges. This training can include guidance on safely assisting individuals with mobility aids, providing support during boarding and disembarking, and creating a respectful and inclusive environment for older passengers.
- **Enhance Safety Measures:** Implement safety protocols and measures to address older adults' concerns. These measures may include regular vehicle inspections, driver background checks, and safety training for drivers to ensure a secure transportation experience. Display safety information and emergency contact details prominently in vehicles and transportation facilities.
- **Coordinate with Healthcare Providers:** Collaborate with healthcare providers to ensure that transportation services align with the specific health needs of older adults. This collaboration may involve establishing partnerships to provide medical transportation for appointments, coordinating pickup and drop-off locations with healthcare facilities, and ensuring appropriate seating and comfort during transit.

5.2.2.3. Reservation and Waiting Time

Concerns about reservation and waiting time were also frequently mentioned during the discussion. Older adults are often required to schedule their transportation needs well in advance, for example three days, which can limit their flexibility and spontaneity. This scheduling can be particularly problematic for medical appointments or social activities that may have unpredictable durations or last-minute changes. Older adults may feel restricted in their ability to make impromptu plans or adjust their schedules accordingly.

Some participants expressed frustration with the uncertainty and waiting time associated with advance reservations. Delays or inconsistencies in transportation services can lead to longer waiting times for older adults, causing inconvenience and potentially impacting their overall well-being. Waiting for scheduled transportation can be especially challenging for those with health conditions or limited mobility.

Increased transportation capacity is suggested to ease these problems. Capacity limitations of transportation should be assessed and addressed, particularly during peak hours or in areas with high demand. This increased capacity may involve adding more vehicles or drivers to the fleet, optimizing routes and schedules, or collaborating with additional transportation providers to meet the needs of older adults.

5.2.2.4. Coordination and Flexibility

Older adults also expressed a need for transportation services that offer flexibility for scheduling and destinations. They mentioned wanting the ability to make spontaneous trips or travel to places beyond their immediate area, such as visiting friends or going shopping in nearby towns. Limited flexibility can restrict their mobility and limit their social interactions or access to necessary resources.

Older adults often require transportation for both medical and non-medical purposes. However, coordinating these trips can be challenging. Medical trips, such as doctor's appointments or visits to healthcare facilities, may have specific time constraints and scheduling requirements. On the other hand, non-medical trips, such as grocery shopping or social outings, may have different timing and priorities. Coordinating these different types of trips can be complex, especially if older adults rely on different transportation services or if there are limited options available for each type of trip.

Some older adults also talked about round trips. Some transportation services may have

limited availability for return trips or require separate reservations. This limitation can result in older adults facing challenges in securing transportation for their return journey, leading to inconvenience and potential scheduling conflicts.

To address these coordination problems, several strategies were discussed:

- **Integrated Transportation Services:** Developing integrated transportation services that cater to both medical and non-medical trips can simplify coordination for older adults. This strategy could involve partnerships between healthcare providers, community organizations, and transportation providers to offer comprehensive transportation options that meet various needs.
- **Flexibility in Round Trip Reservations:** Transportation services should consider offering flexible round-trip options, allowing older adults to reserve transportation for their return journey at the same time as their initial trip, thus eliminating the need for separate reservations and ensuring continuity in transportation services.
- **Information and Communication:** Enhancing communication channels and providing clear information to older adults on available transportation options, scheduling procedures, and any coordination support can alleviate confusion and improve coordination. Examples include dedicated helplines, user-friendly websites, or outreach programs to inform older adults about transportation services.

5.2.2.5. Communication

Some participants expressed challenges communicating with service providers or drivers. Participants mentioned instances where they had difficulty communicating their specific needs or destinations to transportation service providers, such as taxi drivers or rideshare drivers. Such communication challenges can lead to confusion and potentially result in incorrect drop-off locations or delays, especially in areas that may be difficult to locate.

Older adults with hearing or speech impairments may face additional communication barriers when using transportation services. In situations where drivers rely heavily on verbal instructions or when the driver and passenger need to communicate during the ride, individuals with hearing or speech difficulties may struggle to effectively convey their needs or understand the driver's instructions.

To cross this barrier, training programs were suggested for transportation service providers, including drivers and customer service staff, to enhance their communication skills when

interacting with older adults. This training can focus on active listening, patience, and understanding specific needs. Such training could ensure that transportation providers have mechanisms in place to accommodate passengers with hearing or speech impairments. Examples are training drivers in basic sign language or providing written communication tools and resources.

5.2.2.6. Driver Competence

Older adults have concerns about the competence and reliability of transportation drivers. They rely on drivers to navigate safely, follow traffic rules, and provide assistance if needed. Issues such as aggressive driving, speeding, improper vehicle maintenance, or inadequate training of drivers can raise safety concerns for older passengers.

One suggestion is that transportation providers implement training programs that specifically address the needs and concerns of older passengers. Topics could include educating drivers about the aging process, common physical and cognitive challenges faced by older adults, and appropriate techniques for assisting and communicating with them effectively.

5.2.3. Attitudes on Emerging Technologies

Older adults' experience and challenges with using electronic devices, such as smartphones, tablets, and computers, and the internet to arrange travel were discussed. Some participants highlighted the convenience and benefits of using electronic devices for finding bus routes and arranging local trips, especially when there was real-time vehicle tracking information on an online map. Some were able to use smart devices on their own, while others relied on their family members for assistance. Participants also shared that online services such as internet banking could avoid frequent trips and save money.

On the other hand, challenges such as technical proficiency, communication issues, and physical limitations were also acknowledged. Lack of proficiency in using computers or small phones was a problem among technologically challenged individuals. Inconsistent cell phone signals in rural areas could hinder reliable electronic communication. Additionally, physical impairments such as vision problems were identified as another barrier to using electronic devices, particularly when encountering small text on websites or in applications.

Furthermore, functions and applications of emerging technologies such as real-time information, "one call does it all" systems, matching schedules, and payment systems were discussed.

5.2.3.1. Real Time Information

The participants had varying opinions on the usefulness of real-time information about vehicle location, with some considering it important for trust and reliability, while others found it less significant. Some participants felt that such information was not necessary because the transportation service they used was consistently on time and communicated any delays. However, some others expressed the importance of knowing the vehicle's location and having some flexibility in pickup/drop-off times, given their experiences with unreliable transportation services, such as when vehicles didn't show up or dropped passengers off at the wrong locations. It is especially important for medical appointments where late arrival may cause appointments to be canceled.

5.2.3.2. "One Call Does It All" System

Some interviewees expressed frustration with receiving multiple calls from different numbers and preferred a single contact number for scheduling trips. The participants generally saw the potential usefulness of a centralized system for coordinating transportation services, simplifying the process and providing greater convenience for users. Such a system was thought to be beneficial for individuals who use multiple transportation agencies, eliminating the need to contact different numbers or entities, providing various repeat information, and waiting for callbacks. A few participants expressed some skepticism but would be willing to give a unified system a try.

5.2.3.3. Matching Schedule

Participants emphasized the importance of a travel service that could accommodate their schedules effectively. They mentioned factors such as flexibility, ridesharing, and the need to coordinate appointments and caregiving responsibilities. Some expressed skepticism about finding a service that consistently met their scheduling needs, while others mentioned the importance of arranging travel after having appointments or plans in place.

5.2.3.4. Payment System

The participants appreciated the flexibility and voluntary payment options offered by the transportation services.

Check/Monthly bill: Several participants mentioned using checks to pay for transportation services. They received monthly statements or bills and wrote a check to cover the cost. This method allowed them to make payments on a regular basis.

Punch Card System: Some mentioned using a card system where they purchased cards and used them as a form of payment for shared ride cabs. They were able to keep track of the balance on the card and replenish it as needed, often using a check for payment.

Voluntary Payment: Some were in voluntary payment systems where individuals could choose how much they wanted to pay for the transportation services. There is no bill sent, and individuals have the flexibility to contribute an amount they can afford, even as low as one dollar.

5.2.4. Other Topics

During the survey conducted amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of the COVID-19 on older adults' transportation choices was explored. Alongside addressing the challenges and suggestions previously discussed, participants also addressed the potential benefits that ideal transportation services could offer.

5.2.4.1. *Impact of COVID-19*

The participants acknowledged the limitations on transportation services imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Shopping trips were disrupted, and participants expressed a desire for a return to normalcy once the pandemic subsided. Some mentioned relying on friends or occasional outings to obtain groceries. Respondents also agreed that ride sharing could improve efficiency and expressed no concerns about sharing a ride although they thought some people may have reservations about it. While COVID-19 protocols have impacted ride sharing, they hope that ride sharing can resume in the future.

5.2.4.2. *Potentials Benefits of Transportation*

Participants discussed how the ideal transportation programs they suggested would benefit them and improve their lives. Improved Meal Options: Participants mentioned that having access to restaurant delivery services would provide them with a greater variety of meals and the opportunity to enjoy freshly cooked food. This access would enhance their dining experience and allow them to have meals they enjoy, including home-cooked dishes.

Convenience and Ease: The availability of delivery services for meals and other items would eliminate the need for participants to cook or go out for groceries. This would provide convenience, particularly for individuals with physical limitations, making it easier for them to access essential items and reduce the need for additional assistance.

Social Interaction: Participants expressed a desire for more social interaction and the

opportunity to visit friends or go to places like grocery stores. Having reliable transportation would enable them to engage with the community, see other human beings, and enjoy outings to places they currently cannot easily access.

Increased Independence: Access to transportation services would enhance participants' independence by allowing them to go out on their own terms, visit friends, explore new places, and have a sense of freedom and autonomy.

Overall, the ideal transportation programs discussed would benefit participants by improving their meal options, increasing convenience and ease of access to essential items, facilitating social interaction, and enhancing their overall independence and quality of life.

5.3. Findings from Service Providers

The focus group meetings with service providers centered on the challenges of providing transportation services to older adults. The discussions highlighted the importance of coordination among transportation services to enhance the transportation experience for older adults. Additionally, attitudes towards emerging technologies were explored. The discussions were categorized into three subsections: service coordination, accommodational issues, and attitudes on emerging technologies.

5.3.1. Service Coordination

This section delved into the critical aspect of service coordination, drawing insights from in-depth discussions held with service providers during multiple in-person focus group sessions. The input gathered from these discussions sheds light on the advantages, expectations, and suggestions related to service coordination in the context of enhancing transportation services for older adults. Service providers unanimously acknowledged the significance of coordination among transportation services in optimizing resources, expanding access, catering to diverse needs, delivering value to callers, and fostering fruitful partnerships. By pooling their efforts, organizations can efficiently use available resources, ensuring a greater reach and impact on the older adult community. Moreover, coordinated services provide a broader range of transportation options, particularly beneficial in areas with unique circumstances or limited choices. The findings highlight the importance of collaboration at various administrative levels to enhance service coordination and ultimately improve the transportation experience for older adults.

5.3.1.1. Advantages

Service providers agreed that coordination among transportation services could enhance transportation experience for older adults in maximizing resources, increasing access, serving diverse needs, providing value to callers, and fostering partnerships:

- **Maximizing resources:** Coordinating services allows organizations to make their resources go further. By collaborating and avoiding overlaps and territorial instances, funds can be used more efficiently to serve a greater number of older adults.
- **Increased access:** Coordinated services provide more options and rides to older adults. This coordination is particularly beneficial in areas with unique circumstances, such as being close to urban centers or having a rural population. The goal is to expand access and reach individuals who currently have limited transportation options.
- **Serving diverse needs:** Different organizations have different limitations and target demographics. By coordinating services, a wider range of needs can be addressed, ensuring that various age groups, including those under 60, receive appropriate transportation assistance.
- **Value for callers:** Having multiple transportation options adds value for individuals who reach out for assistance. Coordinated services, including cross-county transportation and mobility management, ensure that callers receive appropriate referrals and support based on their specific needs.
- **Partnership opportunities:** Coordinating with other organizations and agencies allows for partnerships and collaboration on unique programs or initiatives. Examples include using drivers from other organizations and exploring innovative approaches to staffing challenges.

5.3.1.2. Expectations

The examples of excellent collaboration discussed in the meeting include:

- **One-stop shop:** Having a centralized resource guide or phone number where individuals can access transportation information and receive referrals to appropriate services. This centralized option ensures that older adults have a single point of contact and do not have to navigate multiple agencies to find the help they need.
- **Transparent information sharing:** Collaborating organizations should have a clear understanding of each other's services and limitations. Transparency is crucial to avoid confusion and prevent individuals from being passed around without finding the

right solution for their transportation needs.

- **Seamless navigation:** Making the process as easy and seamless as possible for older adults, who may find transportation options confusing or overwhelming. By providing upfront and honest information, individuals can feel confident in knowing their options and accessing the appropriate transportation services.
- **Coordination of services:** Striving to coordinate rides for individuals using multiple services or agencies. This means not only providing information but also actively arranging transportation on their behalf, leveraging different resources to ensure that no one is left unserved.
- **Addressing specific regional needs:** Recognizing and addressing unique regional circumstances, such as cross-county transportation or connections to neighboring states. Collaborating with nearby counties and agencies can help facilitate transportation solutions for specialized care or travel beyond local boundaries.

The ideal collaboration focuses on providing accurate information, coordinating rides effectively, filling gaps in services, ensuring transparency between organizations, and prioritizing the ease and comfort of older adults in accessing transportation solutions.

5.3.1.3. Suggestions

Good coordination requires fostering a collaborative mindset, promoting flexibility within existing rules, advocating for equal funding and resources across communities, and finding ways to overcome territorial limitations to ensure seamless transportation services for all individuals in need. Regarding the administrative level that would make the most sense for improving coordination and collaboration in transportation services, the participants provided various perspectives:

- **State oversight:** Participants acknowledged the importance of state-level involvement for overseeing and coordinating transportation services. They suggested that the state could provide a framework or guidelines for coordination efforts, ensuring consistency and simplicity across regions.
- **Regional approach:** Many participants suggested a regional focus, grouping counties together to facilitate closer collaboration. They emphasized the need for collaboration within the local community, then expanding to the county level and further out to regional areas. Regions could be determined based on factors such as geographic proximity, shared transportation needs, or healthcare access.

- Starting at the local level: Some participants emphasized the need to begin at the local level, establishing solid collaborations within the community and then expanding to the county and regional levels. They highlighted the importance of building relationships and fostering cooperation within a smaller geographic area before scaling up.
- Customization based on regional needs: Considering the diversity of regions within a state, participants suggested tailoring the coordination approach to the specific needs of each region. Factors such as the location of hospitals or the overall transportation landscape could be considered when determining the best fit for a particular region.

Overall, the participants recognized the need for multi-level collaboration, involving local, county, regional, and state entities. The specific administrative level that would make the most sense depends on factors such as geographic proximity, shared transportation needs, and existing regional collaborations.

5.3.2. Accommodational Issues

During the meeting, participants engaged in extensive discussions covering various crucial aspects related to providing transportation services to the community. One significant area that garnered attention and deliberation was the topic of accommodation issues. Recognizing the importance of ensuring accessible and inclusive transportation for all individuals, including older adults, the discussions explored challenges and potential solutions regarding physical accommodations, mobility aids, and other factors that contribute to a seamless and accommodating transportation experience. This section delves into the insights and recommendations gathered from these discussions, shedding light on the essential considerations and steps necessary to address accommodation issues effectively. By prioritizing accessibility and inclusivity, transportation services can better serve the diverse needs of the community and enhance the overall transportation experience for all individuals.

5.3.2.1. Disseminating Information

During the discussions, participants emphasized the challenges associated with disseminating accurate information to diverse demographics through various communication channels. Concerns were raised about riders who have expectations of additional services beyond established guidelines, making last-minute requests, and identifying additional destinations after reservations have been made. The importance of adhering to rules and guidelines to maintain order within the transportation system was strongly emphasized. Effective

marketing and education initiatives were also highlighted as crucial elements to ensure that people have a clear understanding of the available services. Furthermore, some participants shared positive experiences of drivers going above and beyond their duties to provide exceptional service. The discussions also addressed misconceptions about eligibility criteria and free services, as well as the confusion caused by different fee structures across counties. These considerations underscore the importance of addressing communication challenges, enhancing clarity, and ensuring equitable access to transportation services for all individuals within the community.

5.3.2.2. Users' Attitudes

In terms of the perceived users' attitudes, participants identified several key factors that play a crucial role in enhancing people's attitudes towards transportation services. Among these factors were strong relationships with drivers, the importance of on-time services, and sufficient passenger capacity. However, concerns were raised about the limited frequency of buses, which often resulted in long waits and missed connections for passengers. Anecdotes were shared about individuals who missed important appointments due to bus delays, underscoring the impact of such issues on people's lives. Additionally, the lack of weekend service, particularly for religious activities, emerged as a significant concern among the participants. These insights highlight the need for improving service frequency, reliability, and accommodating the community's diverse needs to ensure a positive and inclusive transportation experience for all.

5.3.2.3. On-Demand Services and Other Needs

Participants in the discussion also highlighted various issues related to on-demand transportation services. One concern raised was the occurrence of missed rides due to impatience or miscommunication among riders. Effective communication between drivers, dispatchers, and riders was emphasized as crucial to address these challenges and ensure a seamless experience. Additionally, the meeting recognized the importance of providing transportation options for individuals who do not qualify for Medicaid, such as those on Medicare, who face affordability issues for transportation to medical appointments. These discussions shed light on the need to find solutions that make transportation more accessible and affordable for all individuals in need.

5.3.2.4. Overall Enhancements

The meeting underscored several key areas that require attention to enhance people's attitudes

towards transportation services. Among the identified areas were the need for increased funding, expanded service hours, better communication, and improved program oversight. It was recognized that leadership, oversight, and funding play crucial roles in improving transportation programs. By allocating adequate resources, extending service hours to accommodate various needs, improving communication channels, and implementing effective program oversight, the aim is to enhance the overall quality and accessibility of transportation services. These measures will contribute to improving people's attitudes and satisfaction with the available transportation options.

5.3.3. Attitudes on Emerging Technologies

5.3.3.1. *Expectations*

The focus group meeting noted that the current transportation services for older adults mainly rely on phone systems, logbooks, and paper-based processes. While some agencies have adopted dispatching systems or voice-over IP phones, there is limited coordination and integration between different departments and agencies.

The participants expressed the following needs and suggestions for technological tools that could enhance their daily work and improve transportation services for older adults:

- **Coordinated System:** There is a need for a coordinated system that brings together different transportation services, such as local bus services, shared ride taxis, volunteer driver programs, and medical transportation. This system should facilitate coordination among agencies, break down barriers between departments and counties, and allow efficient use of drivers and vehicles.
- **Real-Time Travel Information:** A comprehensive travel information system that provides real-time updates on available transportation options would be helpful. This system should offer personalized travel plans to users, considering their schedule, budget constraints, and individual travel limitations. Features could include reservations for travel, either through a centralized "one call does it all" system or a website/app.
- **Payment System:** Incorporating a payment system into the technological toolset would be beneficial. Options could include credit card payments or top-up payments to streamline the financial aspects of transportation services.
- **Compatibility and Integration:** Any new technological tool should be compatible with existing systems, such as dispatching software or voice-over IP phone systems, to

ensure smooth integration and avoid duplication of efforts.

- **Data Sharing and Collaboration:** Agencies should consider sharing data and collaborating with each other to avoid redundant data entry and streamline communication. Integration with existing programs, such as SAMS (Supports and Services Management System), used by ADRCs, could be explored to improve efficiency and reduce administrative burdens.
- **Personal Communication and Customer Service:** While technological tools can provide efficiency gains, the importance of personal communication and customer service should not be overlooked, especially for older adults and people with disabilities. It is crucial to address anxiety and provide reassurance by maintaining personal interaction and ensuring clear communication about transportation services.
- **Training and Support:** In order to successfully implement new technological tools, agencies should provide training and support both to staff members and older adults to overcome barriers related to technology adoption. Patient and comprehensive training can help older adults become comfortable with using new tools and increase their willingness to embrace technology.

5.3.3.2. Barriers

In considering the implementation of new technological tools, it is important to acknowledge the reservations expressed by some participants about potential challenges. These concerns primarily are the cost of investment and the requirement for reliable internet connectivity, particularly in rural areas. Therefore, it is crucial to consider affordability and accessibility and the need to overcome infrastructure limitations when introducing technological solutions. By addressing these barriers proactively, it becomes possible to ensure that technological advancements in transportation services are inclusive and beneficial for all individuals, regardless of their location or socioeconomic circumstances.

5.4. Summary

Both focus group meetings with older adults and service providers offered valuable insights into challenges within current transportation services, attitudes towards emerging technologies, and suggestions for enhancing transportation services.

The focus group meetings with older adults explored their experiences and perspectives on alternative transportation services. Participants discussed barriers they faced in accessing and

using these services, with a particular focus on financial constraints. Limited financial resources, a lack of affordable options, high costs of specialized transportation, and expenses related to medical appointments were identified as key financial barriers. To address these challenges, the participants suggested various solutions, such as seeking grants, advocating for government assistance, implementing subsidized transportation programs, supporting non-profit transportation services, establishing volunteer driver programs, fostering community partnerships, conducting public awareness campaigns, and developing comprehensive mobility management services. Accommodational issues related to service availability, health and accessibility, reservation and waiting time, coordination and flexibility, communication, and driver competence were also discussed. The participants highlighted the need for expanded transportation options, improved service frequency, enhanced awareness, accessibility features, training for staff, safety measures, coordination between transportation and healthcare providers, flexibility in reservations, better communication channels, and driver competence training. Additionally, the attitudes of older adults towards emerging technologies, such as smartphones and real-time vehicle tracking, were examined, highlighting both the benefits and challenges associated with their use. Overall, the discussions emphasized the importance of addressing financial and accommodational barriers, as well as embracing emerging technologies, to create an inclusive and accessible transportation system for older adults.

The focus group meetings with service providers also discussed the challenges and potential solutions for providing transportation services to older adults. Service coordination emerged as a crucial factor in enhancing transportation experiences for older adults, with benefits including maximizing resources, increasing access, serving diverse needs, providing value to callers, and fostering partnerships. The discussions emphasized the need for coordination at multiple levels, including state oversight, regional approaches, and local collaborations. Accommodational issues were also explored, including disseminating accurate information, addressing users' attitudes towards services, accommodating on-demand needs, and enhancing overall service quality. The participants highlighted the importance of funding, expanded service hours, better communication, and improved program oversight to enhance transportation services. The attitudes towards emerging technologies were examined, with a focus on the need for a coordinated system, real-time travel information, a payment system, compatibility and integration, data sharing and collaboration, personalized communication, and training and support. While recognizing the potential benefits, participants also discussed

barriers such as cost and internet connectivity in rural areas, emphasizing the importance of considering affordability, accessibility, and infrastructure limitations when implementing technological solutions.

Both older adults and service providers shared several common themes and priorities regarding transportation services for older adults. Both groups recognized the importance of service coordination to enhance transportation experiences, maximize resources, and increase access for older adults. They also acknowledged the need to address accommodational issues such as disseminating accurate information, improving communication, accommodating on-demand needs, and enhancing overall service quality. Additionally, both groups recognized the potential benefits of emerging technologies in improving transportation services, including the need for a coordinated system, real-time travel information, payment systems, data sharing and collaboration, and personalized communication. In order to enhance transportation services for older adults, it is crucial to focus on enhancing service coordination, improving accommodation-related issues, embracing emerging technologies, and addressing financial constraints.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the research conducted to gather insights into the travel patterns and challenges faced by older adults in Wisconsin, as well as the perspectives of transportation service providers. The project successfully collected 1650 valid questionnaire responses from older adults across the state, representing at least 65 counties and 5 tribes. Additionally, 103 transportation service providers participated in the survey, including transit agencies, specialized service providers, and tribal aging programs. The research team also conducted three focus group meetings with older adults and three with transportation service providers to further explore the gathered insights.

The findings of the study revealed that older adults in Wisconsin prefer driving themselves or heavily relying on family and friends for transportation, with limited use of local public and private services. The COVID-19 pandemic further decreased participation in public services. Grocery shopping emerged as the primary reason for trips among older adults, followed by medical purposes, while travel for work or volunteer activities was considered the least important.

The study also uncovered a digital divide among older adults, with nearly half of the respondents lacking internet access. This divide highlights the need to address connectivity issues and ensure widespread availability of internet services to bridge the digital gap among older adults. Furthermore, phone calls were identified as the preferred method for requesting ride services, indicating the importance of alternative booking methods suitable for older adults' preferences and needs.

Regarding satisfaction with local alternative transportation services, older adults generally expressed high ratings or had no specific opinion. However, concerns were raised regarding schedule availability, route choices, accessibility features, coordination with healthcare providers, reservation flexibility, communication, and driver performance. These areas require attention and improvement to enhance the overall transportation experience for older adults in Wisconsin.

Based on the analysis of survey information and insights gathered from the focus groups, the research team presents the following eight recommendations:

1. **Collaboration and Funding:** Collaborate with relevant government agencies, community organizations, and transportation providers to leverage resources and expertise in addressing the specific needs of older adults. Seek additional funding through grants, partnerships, and innovative mechanisms. Advocate for increased federal support and state assistance for accessible and affordable transportation options.
2. **Coordination:** Work with planning commissions to integrate feedback from surveys into transportation plans. Establish partnerships and dedicated transportation services with clinics and hospitals. Coordinate closely with healthcare providers to develop tailored solutions for older patients. Consolidate various transportation options under one comprehensive program per county.
3. **Service Expansion:** Expand transportation options for the elderly, disabled, and low-income individuals, including wheelchair-accessible choices. Increase the availability of vehicles, drivers, and volunteer drivers to meet the demand. Enhance coverage for weekends, evenings, and rural areas by adjusting schedules and routes.
4. **Accessibility:** Provide reliable and free transportation for individuals with disabilities. Develop protocols and guidelines to address seniors' physical and cognitive needs during travel. Ensure safety and comfort throughout the journey.
5. **Training:** Provide specialized training to transportation providers on age-friendly communication, assistance with mobility aids, and understanding the unique needs of older adults. Implement and promote stringent safety measures to assure older adults of their safety.
6. **Focus on rural communities:** Focus on rural small communities and ensure the availability of volunteer drivers. Foster meaningful interactions between volunteer drivers and older passengers to address social isolation. Provide fair compensation and address tax-related concerns to attract and retain qualified individuals.
7. **Marketing:** Develop targeted marketing campaigns to raise awareness about available transportation options among older adults and their families. Provide comprehensive and user-friendly information resources to address the lack of knowledge. Offer clear information on options, schedules, fares, and eligibility criteria.
8. **Technology:** Address connectivity issues by ensuring widespread availability of internet services. Provide real-time tracking and information about transportation options through user-friendly systems, apps, or websites, such as a "one call does it

all" system. Implement easy reservation and payment systems. Promote education on technology usage among older adults.

Though further thorough and deeper investigations are still suggested, implementing these recommendations will no doubt contribute to the enhancement of transportation services for older adults in Wisconsin. By addressing the specific challenges and needs identified in this research project, policymakers, transportation providers, and community organizations can work together to create a more inclusive, accessible, and age-friendly transportation system that promotes the well-being and independence of older adults throughout the state.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A. Advisory Committee Members

Organization	Name	Contact Info
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Northwest RPC	Sheldon Johnson Executive Director	sjohnson@nwrpc.com

* Representing state government

Appendix B. Template of Statewide Survey Questionnaire (Older Adults)



2021 Wisconsin Older Adult Transportation Service Survey



SURVEY REGISTRATION NO:

RESPONDED BY:

Dear Wisconsin Senior Resident,

Greetings! The University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation need your help to **better understand and address the mobility needs of Wisconsin’s older adults**. Residents throughout Wisconsin are sharing input and we ask that you join them by taking the provided survey. **Please fill in the survey and return it promptly** using the enclosed postage paid reply envelope, by **dropping it off** at your county Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC), your **senior center**, or by giving it to your **meal service or transportation service driver**.

The survey will ask:

- 1) *how you use information technology;*
- 2) *how you travel;*
- 3) *how satisfied you are with your travel;*
- 4) *your travel challenges and limitations;*
- and
- 5) *your suggestions for improvements in Wisconsin’s transportation services.*

It should take about **fifteen minutes or less** to complete, and you can skip any questions you don’t want to answer. Information collected will be kept confidential, and survey responses will be combined to give general overall results.

If an online survey is more convenient to you, please go to [tiny.one/olderadults](#) and skip this printed survey.

At the end of the survey, you may provide your name and contact information if you choose to volunteer for a follow-up focus group survey. Your names and contact information will be stored separately from study data, and all individual responses will be deleted at the end of the project. If you don’t want to be contacted, you may skip this section.

Please return your completed survey without delay to ensure that your voice is heard. Your participation may have a lasting impact on your community and lead to better transportation services. We greatly appreciate your contribution!

2021 Wisconsin Older Adult Transportation Service Survey

1

1. Do you have access to the Internet?

- I do not have access to the Internet
- I have limited access to the Internet at home
- I have access to the Internet at home, but do not use it because I am worried about its security
- I have access to the Internet at home and use it regularly
- I have access to the Internet only outside the home

2. How often do you use the Internet?

- Multiple times per day
- Once a day
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Rarely/Never



3. How easy is it for you to use the Internet?

- Very easy
- Somewhat easy
- Neutral
- Somewhat difficult
- Very difficult
- Extremely difficult



4. Which of the following do you use? (Check ALL that apply)

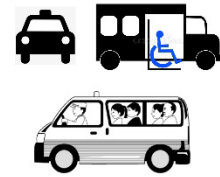
- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Desktop computer | <input type="checkbox"/> Tablet (iPad or similar) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Laptop computer | <input type="checkbox"/> Kindle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Apple iPhone or another smart phone device | <input type="checkbox"/> Wearables (health tracker) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Simple portable cell phone | <input type="checkbox"/> None |

5. What do you use your computer/device for ? (Check ALL that apply for **NOW** and **BEFORE COVID-19**)

	Now	Before COVID
Send or receive emails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Send or receive text messages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Find online driving directions to a place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use online banking or financial transactions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Get online shopping (e.g., Amazon)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Instagram)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Request a ride (e.g., Uber, Lyft)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manage or receive online medical care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Talk to people with Zoom, Facetime or something similar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. How do you find information about transportation services like bus or taxi?

- Friends/family give me information
- Telephone (phone book)
- Printed materials from a doctor's office, library or local nonprofit organization
- Faith-based organization (church, etc.)
- Others (please specify)
- Electronic (website, email, social media)
- Local government offices (Health Department, etc.)
- Place(s) where I work or volunteer



2

7. BEFORE COVID-19, how often did you...?

	Rarely/Never	A few times per year	A few times per month	A few times per week	Daily
Drive my own vehicle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Get rides from family/friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use local bus service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use a private taxicab, Uber or Lyft	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use a public shared-ride taxi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Get rides from local ADRC, senior center, and/or residence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use a volunteer driver program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other – walk, bike, etc. (please specify): <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. NOW during COVID-19, how often do you...?

	Rarely/Never	A few times per year	A few times per month	A few times per week	Daily
Drive my own vehicle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Get rides from family/friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use local bus service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use a private taxicab, Uber or Lyft	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use a public shared-ride taxi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Get rides from local ADRC, senior center, and/or residence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use a volunteer driver program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other – walk, bike, etc. (please specify): <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. How OFTEN, if ever, do you make trips for...?

	Rarely/Never	A few times per year	A few times per month	A few times per week	Daily
Job or volunteer activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hospital/medical office visit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pharmacy visit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Buying groceries	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visiting with family/friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attending church/place of worship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Banking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal care (e.g., post office, hair care, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attending social/community event	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exercise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dining	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please describe) <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. In general, how SATISFIED are you with the local transportation service you use most often?

- Very satisfied 😊
- Somewhat satisfied 😊
- Neutral 😐
- Somewhat dissatisfied 😞
- Very dissatisfied 😞
- No opinion. I never use local transportation

11. How IMPORTANT are the following features of transportation when you take a trip?

	Least Important	1	2	3	4	5	Most Important
Ride comes on time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ride is available at the time I need it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vehicle takes me to where I want to go	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is real time information that tells me when the service will arrive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not need to schedule my trip days in advance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can arrange my trip with an app or website	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is "one call does it all" for all transportation service information I want to know	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is good coordination between transportation and medical services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is a travel trainer who will escort and teach me about using transportation services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The cost of the trip is affordable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is easy to pay for the trip by credit card or vouchers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vehicle is equipped with ramp or wheelchair lift	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel safe on the vehicle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vehicle is comfortable and clean	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can carry as many bags as I need	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Language assistance is available	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Others (please specify) <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3

12. What **PROBLEMS** have you experienced when using (or attempting to use) transportation services in the last two years? (Check ALL that apply in the)

Transportation is not available WHERE I need to go. <input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation is not available WHEN I need it (evenings, weekends, etc.). <input type="checkbox"/>	Scheduled rides are late, do not come, or get cancelled. <input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation must be scheduled too far in advance, cannot accommodate changes to my needs. <input type="checkbox"/>	I must make multiple phone calls to receive transportation service. <input type="checkbox"/>
Real time transportation tracking information is not available. <input type="checkbox"/>	Rides are only available for medical trips. <input type="checkbox"/>	There is no ADA-accessible transportation service in my community. <input type="checkbox"/>	The number of bags I have exceeds is the number allowed by the transportation service. <input type="checkbox"/>	I have difficulty getting into/out of the vehicle. <input type="checkbox"/>
I cannot afford the cost of the transportation service. <input type="checkbox"/>	My mobility device (e.g., wheelchair) is not allowed on the service vehicle. <input type="checkbox"/>	I have difficulty understanding the driver. <input type="checkbox"/>	I have difficulty understanding how to schedule rides, how to pay for them, or other basic service details <input type="checkbox"/>	I have NOT experienced any travel problems. <input type="checkbox"/>

Others (please describe)

13. Have you **STOPPED** using transportation due to the above problems?

Yes No

14. What **SUGGESTIONS** do you have to improve transportation services?

[Large empty text box for suggestions]

15. Please tell us about yourself

Gender

Age

Race

Number of people living with you

Your Zip Code

18. Which of the following best describes your residence?

I live in a home I own I live in a home I rent

I live at an independent living facility

I live at an assisted living facility

I live in a nursing home

I live with adult children or other family

Other (please specify)

16. What is your employment status?

Employed full-time

Employed part-time

Unemployed (looking for work)

Retired (not working)

Other (please specify)

19. Do you use a mobility device when travelling?

Yes No



17. What was your annual household income last year, before taxes?

Less than \$10,000 \$10,000 to \$24,999

\$25,000 to \$49,999 \$50,000 to \$74,999

\$75,000 to \$99,999 \$100,000 or more

Prefer not to answer

20. If you answered "YES," What type of mobility device do you use?

Walker

Cane

Manual wheelchair

Power wheelchair

Scooter

Others (please specify)

21. If English is not your first language, please tell us what it is?

22. In a future part of this study, we will be holding one-hour round table discussion to gain a better understanding of your ideas on transportation problems and improvements. These will be held via a call-in or online meeting. Each participant will receive a \$20 gift card as compensation. Would you be willing to participate in one of these discussions?

Yes No

23. If YES, please provide:

Name

Email

Phone

Please feel free to ask assistance from your local ADRC or senior center should you have any questions when you fill out the survey.

You can also reach out our survey coordinator: Anne Lupton, email: sandhill7564@gmail.com




THANK YOU!

Please return it using the enclosed postage paid reply envelope, by dropping it off at your county Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) and senior center, or by giving it to your meal service or transportation service driver.

Appendix C. Template of Statewide Survey Questionnaire (Service Providers)



Default Question Block

2021 Wisconsin Older Adult Transportation Service Survey

Dear Wisconsin Transportation Service Provider or Mobility Manager,

Greetings! The University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee is conducting a study sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to better **understand and address the mobility needs of Wisconsin’s older adult residents**. As part of this study, we are conducting a survey of this population who live in areas not served by regular fixed-route transit. This survey will sample older adults who have used other types of transportation services or who currently have meals delivered or need deliveries due to mobility limitations or income status.

At the same time, we are also conducting a survey of transportation service providers and mobility managers who assist older adults and therefore understand how they learn about and use transportation services.

This survey will ask:

- 1) How older adults use transportation services;**
- 2) How older adults use information technology;**
- 3) Transportation service gaps and limitations, and**
- 4) Suggestions for future improvements in Wisconsin’s transportation services.**

The survey should take **fifteen minutes** or less to complete. **Your survey responses will be used to inform decision-making at the state and county**

level to improve transportation options. Information collected will be kept confidential and survey responses will be combined to give general overall results. We will request names, agency/employer, and contact information because we may follow up with you to clarify your responses. Your names and contact information will be stored separately from study data, and all individual responses will be deleted at the end of the project. If you don't want to be contacted, you may skip this section.

Please **contact Anne Lupton** at sandhill7564@gmail.com should you **have any questions** when you fill out the survey. Your timely completion of this survey will ensure that your voice is heard and may have a lasting impact on your community. We greatly appreciate your contributions.

Respectfully,

Jie Yu, Ph.D. (Project PI)
Assistant Professor
Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering
University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, WI53211
yu22@uwm.edu

1. What is your agency's primary role in providing services for older adults?

- a) We provide transportation services to older adults
- b) We connect people to transportation services in our community
- c) BOTH (a) and (b)

2. What transportation service(s) do you provide? (Please check ALL that apply)

- Local fixed-route bus service
- Local shared-ride taxi service

- Private taxicab service
- Local aging office or senior center transportation service
- Volunteer driver program
- Non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT)
- Veteran transportation service
- Employment transportation service
- Others, please specify

3. Who provides the rides? (Please check ALL answers that apply)

- Volunteer drivers
- Agency staff
- A third-party transportation provider under contract or MOU with your agency
- Others, please specify

4. Typically, how do your clients book transportation service(s)?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
Phone call	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Text message	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Email	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Website	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
iPhone app	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Walk-in	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)					
<input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Typically, how far in advance do your clients book the service?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
<12 hours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12-24 hours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24-48 hours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
> 48 hours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Typically, how long after a client books a ride with your agency does your agency confirm the booking?

- Instantly as requested
- The next day
- After a couple of days
- Others, please specify

7. Does your agency use a software product to schedule rides?

- Yes
- No

What is the software? Would you recommend it to others and why or why not?

8. What mobility management service(s) does your agency perform? (Please check ALL that apply)

- Conduct mobility needs assessments for seniors
- Coordinate funding, service and programs
- Trip planning
- Develop inventory of transportation services available
- Training for volunteer drivers
- Travel training for customers
- Transportation marketing
- Others, please specify

9. How do you share information about your agency's transportation services

to your clients? (Please check ALL that apply)

- Newsletter
- Brochure
- Social media
- Website
- Email
- Distribute through religious organization(s)
- Distribute through social service organization(s)
- Others, please specify

10. In a typical month, approximately what percent of your clients have the following trip purposes?

	0%	<20%	21-40%	41-60%	61-80%	>80%
Job or volunteer activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hospital/medical office visit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pharmacy visit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Buying groceries	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visiting with family/friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attending church/place of worship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Banking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal care (post office, hair care, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	0%	<20%	21-40%	41-60%	61-80%	>80%
Attending social or community event	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exercise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dining	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)						
<input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. How often do the following health concerns affect the ability of your clients to travel?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
No health concerns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Deafness or acute difficulty hearing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Blindness or acute difficulty seeing (even with glasses)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Substantial difficulty walking or climbing steps	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Substantial cognitive difficulties	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)					
<input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. In your opinion, how **IMPORTANT are the following transportation features**

for senior clients? (1=least important and 5=most important)

	1	2	3	4	5
Ride comes on time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ride is available at the time when needed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ride is available to where client wants to go	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is real time information that tells client when the service will arrive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Client doesn't need to schedule days in advance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Client can arrange his/her trip with an app or website	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is "one call does it all" for all transportation service information client wants to know	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is good coordination between transportation and medical services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is a travel trainer who will escort and teach client using transportation services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The cost of the trip is affordable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is easy to pay for the trip by credit card or vouchers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vehicle is equipped with either a ramp or wheelchair lift	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Driver is someone the client feels safe with	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vehicle is comfortable and clean	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Client is allowed to carry as many bags as needed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Language assistance is available	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	1	2	3	4	5
Other (please specify):					
<input style="width: 250px; height: 40px;" type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. In general, how would you rate the **attitudes of your clients towards transportation services in your community?**

- Very positive
- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative
- Very negative
- I don't know

14. What **PROBLEMS have you experienced in providing transportation that meets your client's needs?**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Limited agency budget	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not enough capacity to serve current demand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of drivers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of transit managers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of scheduling software	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Insufficient vehicle/equipment maintenance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Poor road conditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. What transportation service improvements do you think would be beneficial to your senior clients? (1=least beneficial and 5=most beneficial)

	1	2	3	4	5
“One call does it all” for information about all available services and options	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A smart trip assistance tool providing a customized trip plan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Better coordination between medical care and local transportation service/program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regional website for scheduling trips	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Availability of additional travel trainers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Availability of additional mobility managers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ride vouchers or other, more convenient payment options for regular users	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Additional marketing of local transportation services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	1	2	3	4	5
Improving guides that explain how to use local transportation services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expansion of existing services to improve their availability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify): <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; width: 100%; margin-top: 5px;"></div>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. Among the improvements listed above, which do you think would be most readily implementable in your agency or community? (Please check ALL that apply)

- "One call does it all" for information about all available services and options
- A smart trip assistance tool providing a customized trip plan
- Better coordination between medical care and local transportation service/program
- Regional website for scheduling trips
- Availability of additional travel trainers
- Availability of additional mobility managers
- Ride vouchers or other, more convenient payment options for regular users
- Additional marketing of local transportation services
- Improving guides that explain how to use local transportation services
- Expansion of existing services to improve their availability

17. How have **senior riders** changed their use of transportation services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

18. How have **transportation services** been changed (e.g., changes on ridership, cost, and revenue, supplement special service, etc.) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

19. What plans have you made about your services **once COVID-19 is under control** (i.e., whether the service will undergo permanent changes and how)?

20. Please list any **other suggestions** to improve transportation service(s) for

older adults in your community.

21. What are the most significant transportation service **coordination issues** that your agency encounters?

22. Please list any **suggestions** to improve mobility coordination efforts in your county/service area.

23. In a future part of this study, we will be holding **one-hour round table discussion** to gain a better understanding of your ideas on transportation problems and improvements. These will be held via a **call-in** or **online** meeting. Would you be willing to participate in one of these discussions?

Yes

No

Please tell us about yourself

Name

Title

Agency Name

Email

Telephone

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Appendix D. Focus Group Participants

Older Adults		
Gender	Age	County (estimated)
Female	69	Ozaukee
Male	83	Outagamie
Female	81	Outagamie
Female	62	Kewaunee
Male	67	Monroe
Female	66	St. Croix
Female	> 60	Bayfield
Female	85	Outagamie
Female	72	Jefferson
Female	71	Washburn
Male	66	Bayfield
Male	81	Marathon
Female	82	Waupaca
Female	72	Dane
Female	72	Trempealeau

Service Providers		
Title	Agency	County/Entity
Director	ADRC of Vilas	Vilas
Director	Taylor County Commission on Aging	Taylor
Assistant Transportation Director	SWCAP-LIFT	Iowa
Director	ADRC of Florence County	Florence
Nutrition Director	Ho-Chunk Nation	Tribe
Transit Manager	Oneida Public transit	Tribe
Assistant Transit Manager	Bad River Tribal Transit	Tribe
Community Services Coordinator	ADRC of St. Croix County	St. Croix
Director	ADRC of Eagle Country - Prairie du Chien Office	Crawford
Executive Director	Door-Tran	Door
Executive Director	Interfaith Caregivers of Washington County	Washington
Fleet Coordinator	Missing	Washington
Mobility Coordinator	Central Transportation	Portage
Director	ADRC of Eagle Country-Sauk County office	Sauk
Transportation coordinator	Mile Bluff Medical Center	Juneau
Transportation Program Coordinator	North Country Independent Living	Douglas
Fiscal Manager	Wheels of Independence, Inc.	Wood
Transportation Director	Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa	Tribe
Unit Manager	Fox River Industries/Disabilities Services, Inc.	Green Lake
SVS Program Manager	RSVP of Rock County	Rock
ADRC Manager	ADRC of Oneida County	Oneida
Transit Manager	City of Fond du Lac Transit	Fond du Lac

Appendix E. Links to All Other Sources

Link to the detailed open comments to the questions in older adults' survey questionnaire:

https://panthers-my.sharepoint.com/:x:/r/personal/dahaihan_uwm_edu/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B5963B59D-B6C1-43A1-8C20-467FB89AC57B%7D&file=Open%20comments_0617.xlsx&action=default&mobileredirect=true

Link to the detailed open comments to the questions in service providers' survey

questionnaire: [https://panthers-](https://panthers-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/yu22_uwm_edu/EVvY2uEJAZRJpLye6A0le2UBtrvfsACoQCMmyfNqYJ5mMA?e=GabV2Y)

[my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/yu22_uwm_edu/EVvY2uEJAZRJpLye6A0le2UBtrvfsACoQCMmyfNqYJ5mMA?e=GabV2Y](https://panthers-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/yu22_uwm_edu/EVvY2uEJAZRJpLye6A0le2UBtrvfsACoQCMmyfNqYJ5mMA?e=GabV2Y)

Appendix F. Survey Distribution Instructions

Dear [***name of service provider**],

Greetings! The University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation need your help to **better understand and address the mobility needs of**

Wisconsin’s older adults. We are conducting a statewide survey of older adults in rural areas who have transportation difficulties.

[*** special instruction for service providers who serve multiple areas** (e.g., In this packet, we have provided a total of **500** printed surveys for your agency. Considering the counties, please help distribute **60** printed copies in Lincoln County, **50** printed copies in Langlade County, **240** printed copies in Marathon County, and **150** printed copies in Wood County.)]
[***exclusion of urbanized areas** (e.g., Appleton City, which is an urbanized area, should be excluded.)]

We suggest the following procedure.

- Pick a **typical** day of the week to begin distribution. Continue until your supply is used up.
- Surveys should be given only to persons **over the age of 60**.
- Distribute surveys to your clients who use your transportation service or meals on wheels on the survey day.
- If possible, they can fill out the survey on the vehicle or when distributed and collected by the driver.
- Offer to pick up the surveys the next time they are visited,
- Or they can also mail them directly.
- Or they can do an online survey by going to tiny.one/olderadults and skip this printed survey.

The survey should take less than **fifteen minutes** to complete. Information collected will be kept confidential, and survey responses will be combined to give general overall results. Once your senior clients complete this survey, **we ask them to return it promptly** using the **enclosed postage paid reply envelope**, by dropping it off at your county Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC), or by giving it to the meal service or transportation service driver.

Attached please find a completed survey sample for reference if your senior clients have any questions when they fill out the survey.

If you have any questions, please **contact** our **survey coordinator** [***name**] at [***email address**]. She can also help If anyone needs language assistance or larger format forms.

We greatly appreciate if you could help **mail back** the completed surveys by [***date**].

Thanks for your time!

University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, WI 53211