



# Conducting Community Needs Assessments:

Planning for the growing older population

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# Outline of Today's Presentation:

- ▶ What is a needs assessment?
- ▶ How can a needs assessment be helpful to a Council on Aging?
- ▶ Steps in a needs assessment
- ▶ Developing data for a needs assessment



# What is a needs assessment?

- ▶ *"Needs assessment is the process of **identifying** needs, **prioritizing** them, making needs-based **decisions**, **allocating** resources, and **implementing actions** in organizations to resolve problems underlying important needs."*

- Mertens & Wilson, 2012



# How Can a Needs Assessment be Helpful to a Council on Aging?

- ▶ Provide backdrop for planning
- ▶ Achieve internal goals
- ▶ Achieve external goals

# 8 Steps for Conducting a Needs Assessment

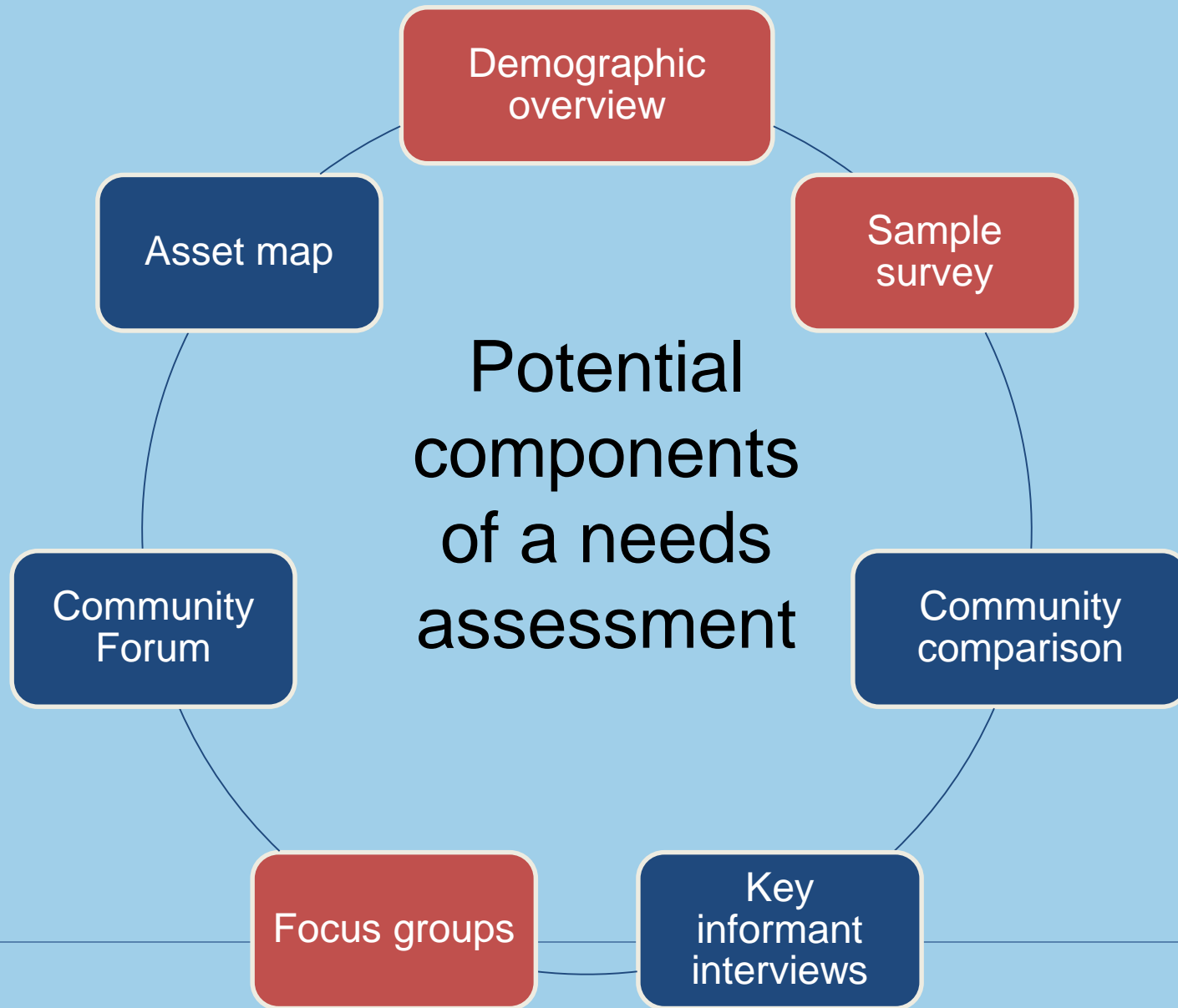




# Pre-assessment: Stage 1

- ▶ Understand WHY you are conducting a needs assessment
  - ▶ Broad and informative, or targeted to a specific goal
- ▶ Develop a roadmap and timeline for the process
  - ▶ Accept that this will change and be delayed
- ▶ Identify areas of concern or potential barriers
  - ▶ Develop strategies about how to overcome them
- ▶ Promote Awareness

# Assessment: Stage 2





# Some sources of demographic data

- ▶ U.S. Census Bureau
  - ▶ *Decennial census*
  - ▶ *American Community Survey*
- ▶ Other organizations that generate projections
  - ▶ *Donahue Institute at UMass*
  - ▶ *Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)*
- ▶ Organizations that package demographic data from these and other sources
  - ▶ *MAPC*
  - ▶ *<http://mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/data-report/explore-the-profiles/>*

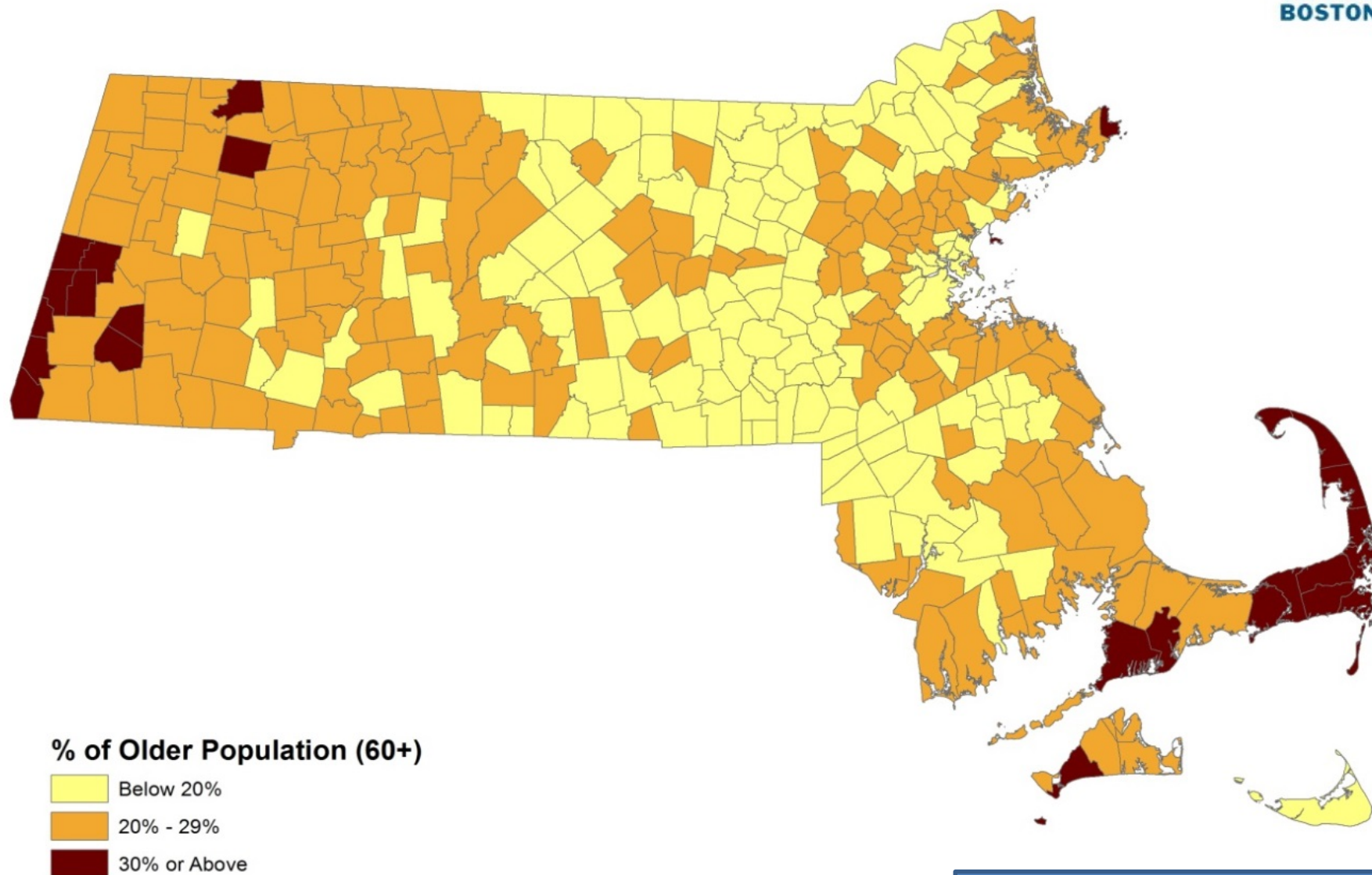





# Using demographic data

- ▶ Opportunities and examples:
  - ▶ Data from the decennial Census (latest was 2010) for every community: age, race, sex, household composition, owner occupied residence
  - ▶ Data from the American Community Survey (conducted annually). Available every year in one-year files (for the largest communities); in three year files (for medium-sized communities) and in five year files (for small communities)

# Older Population (60+) in Massachusetts, by Town in 2010 Census



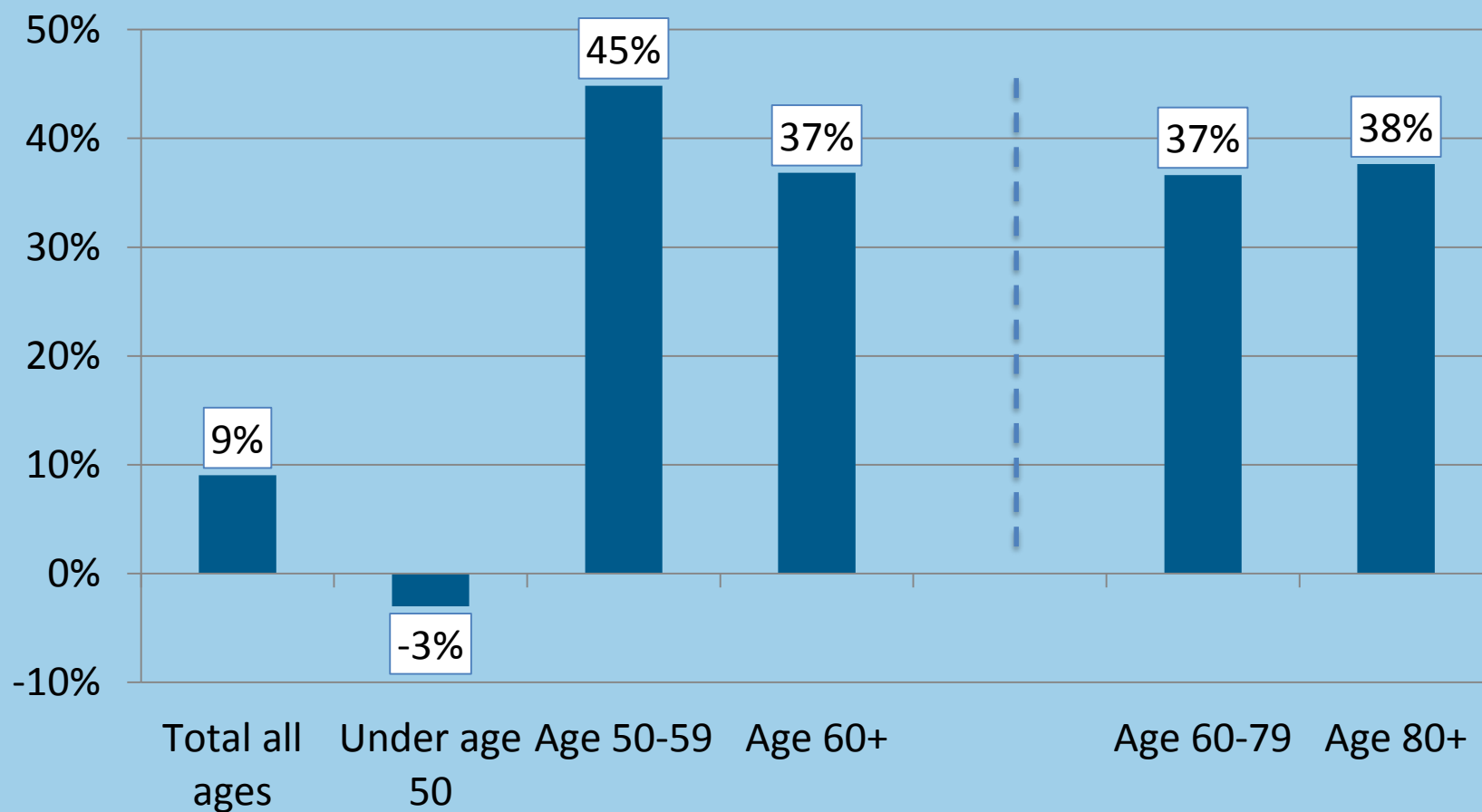
Source: 2010 Census of Population



# Growth of older population for Hingham, 2000-2010

	Population 2010	Population 2000	% growth
All ages	22,157	19,882	11%
Age 50-59	3,299	2,989	10%
Age 60-79	4,020	2,872	40%
Age 80+	1,715	828	107%

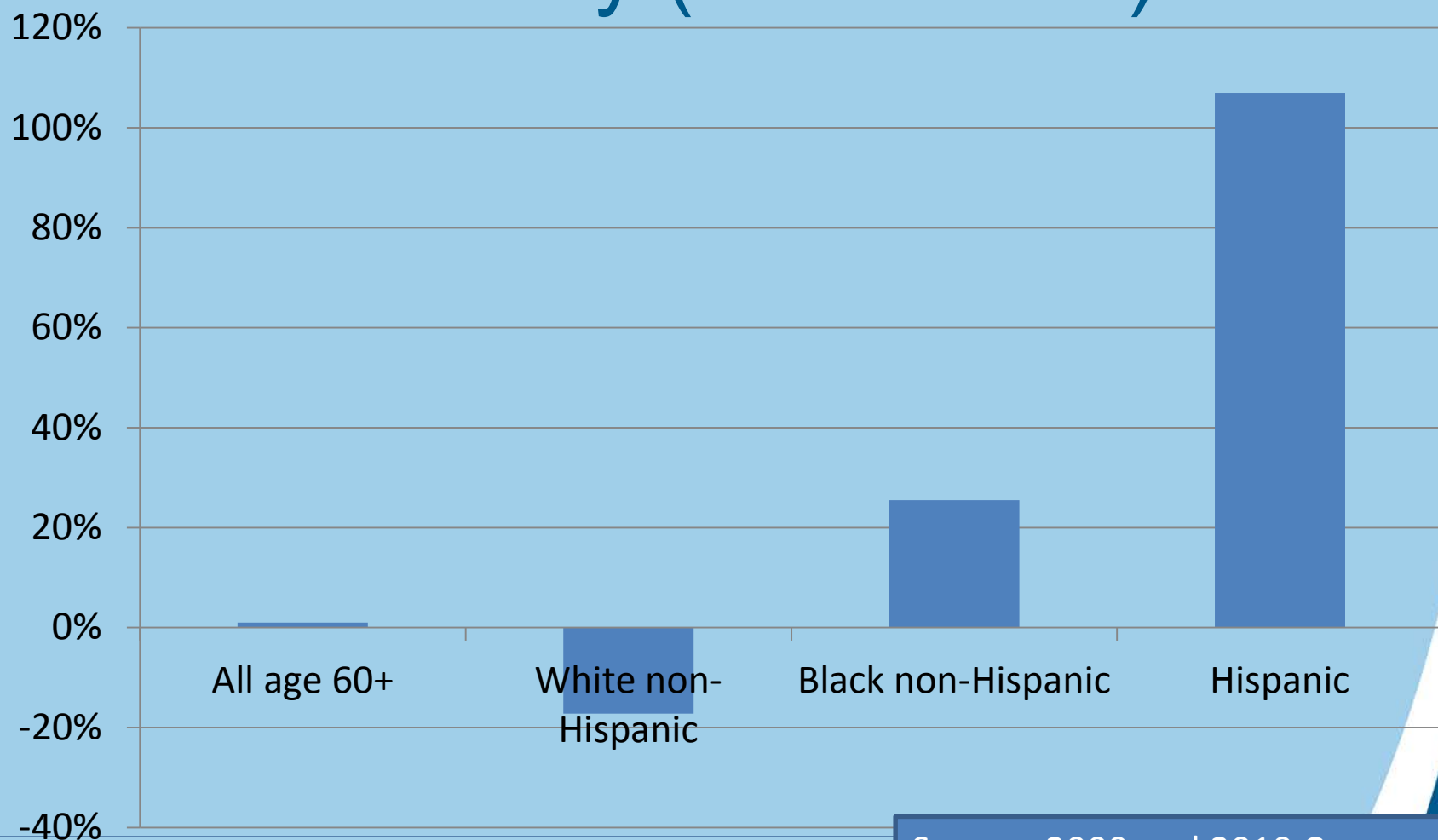
# Growth in the number of residents by age group, 2000-2010, Littleton



Source: **2010** and **2000** Census, Summary File 1, Table QT-P1

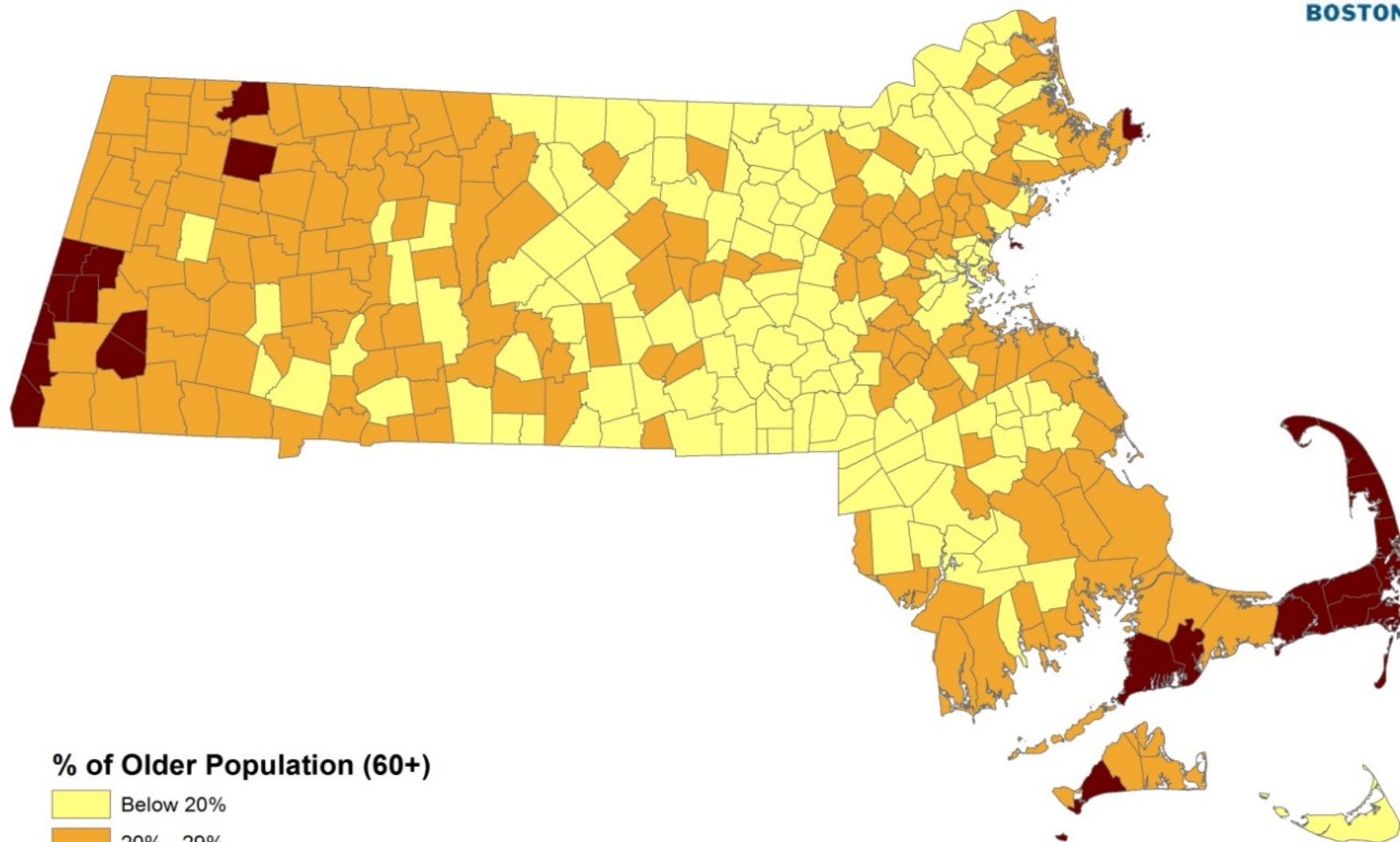


# Springfield: Change in number of residents age 60+, by race and ethnicity (2000-2010)



Source: 2000 and 2010 Census of Population

# Older Population (60+) in Massachusetts, by Town in 2010 Census



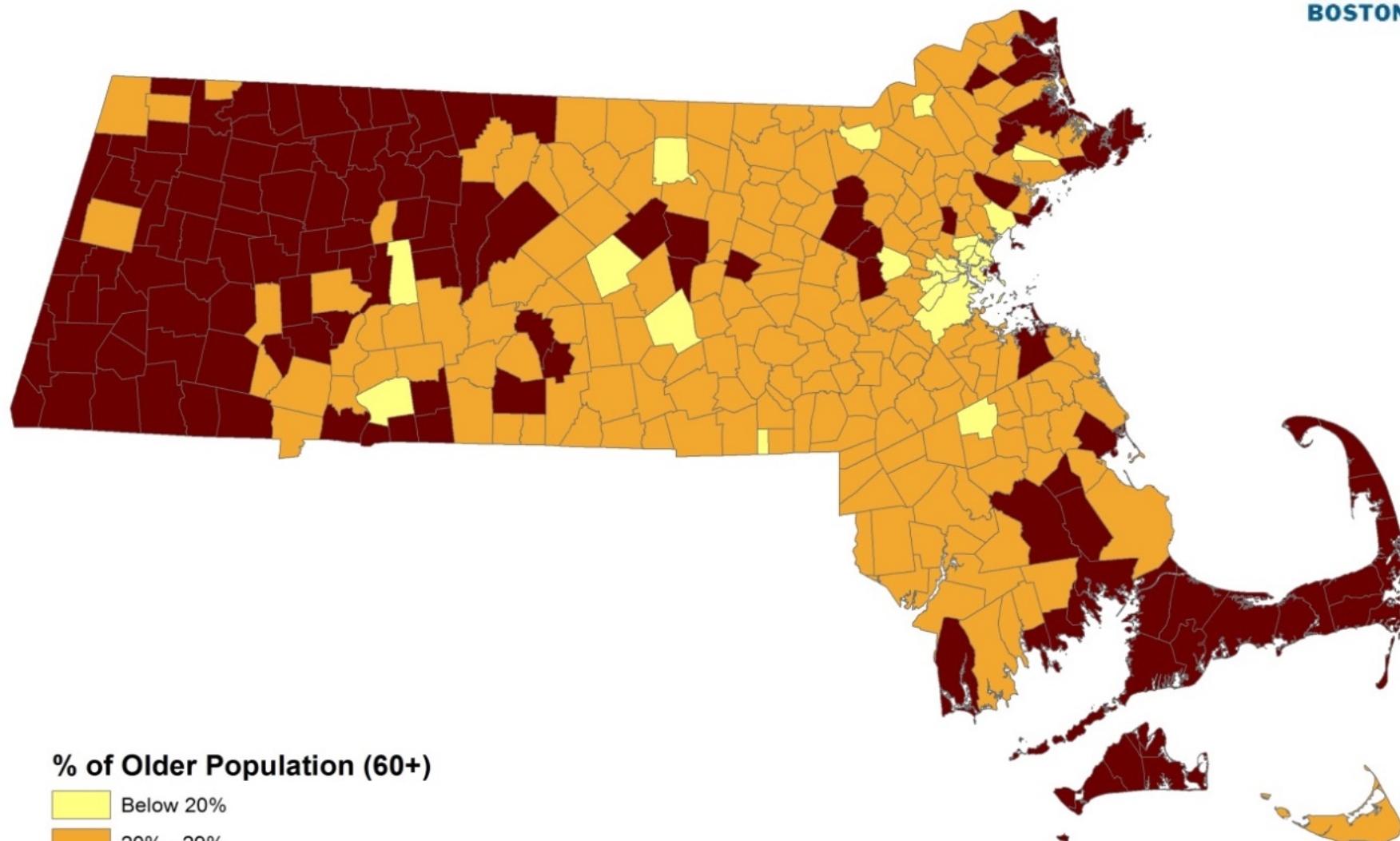
## % of Older Population (60+)



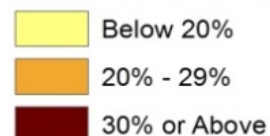
Source: 2010 Census of  
Population



# Older Population (60+) in Massachusetts, by Town in 2020 Projection

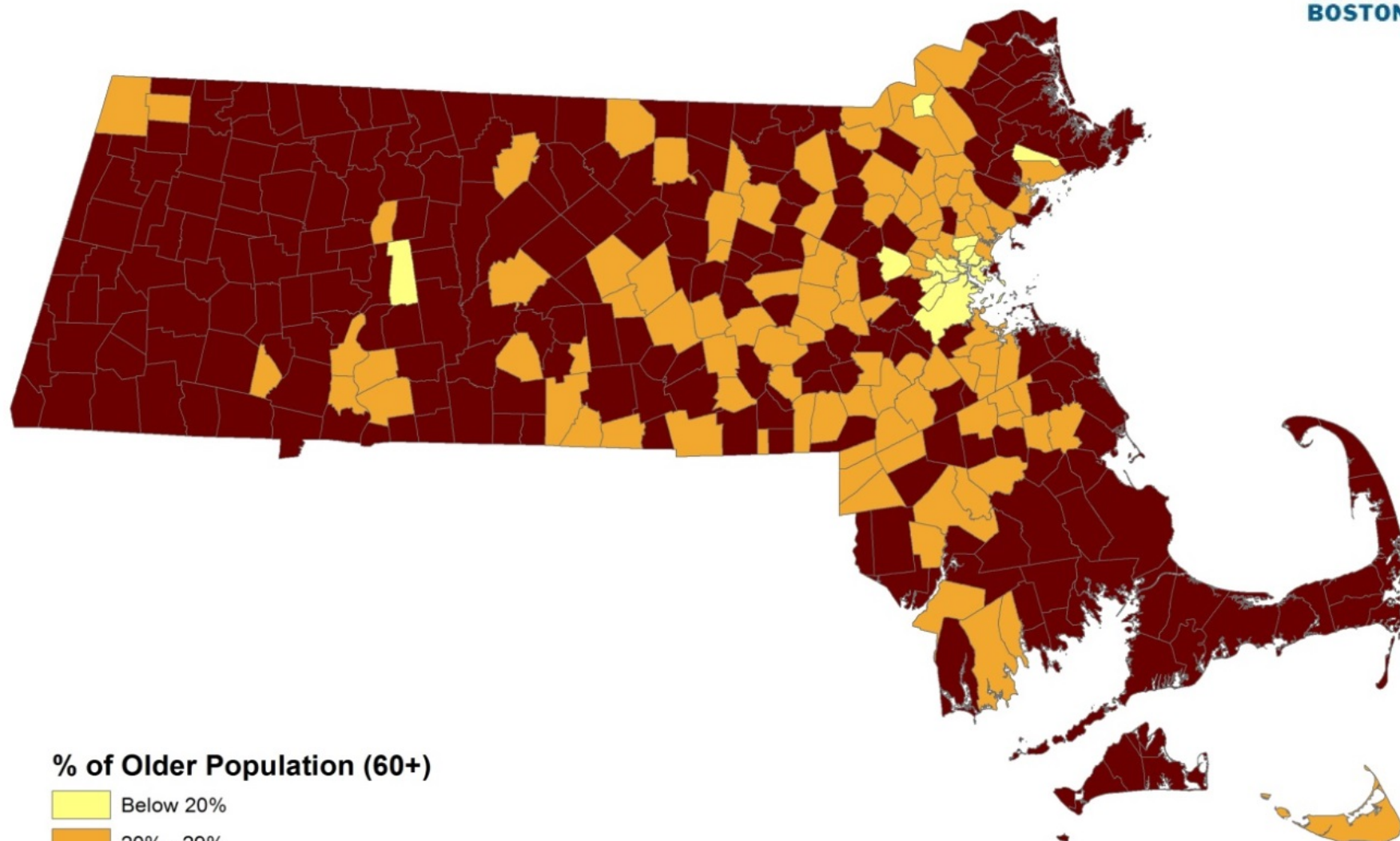


## % of Older Population (60+)

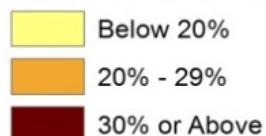


Source: Donahue Institute,  
University of Massachusetts

# Older Population (60+) in Massachusetts, by Town in 2030 Projection



## % of Older Population (60+)

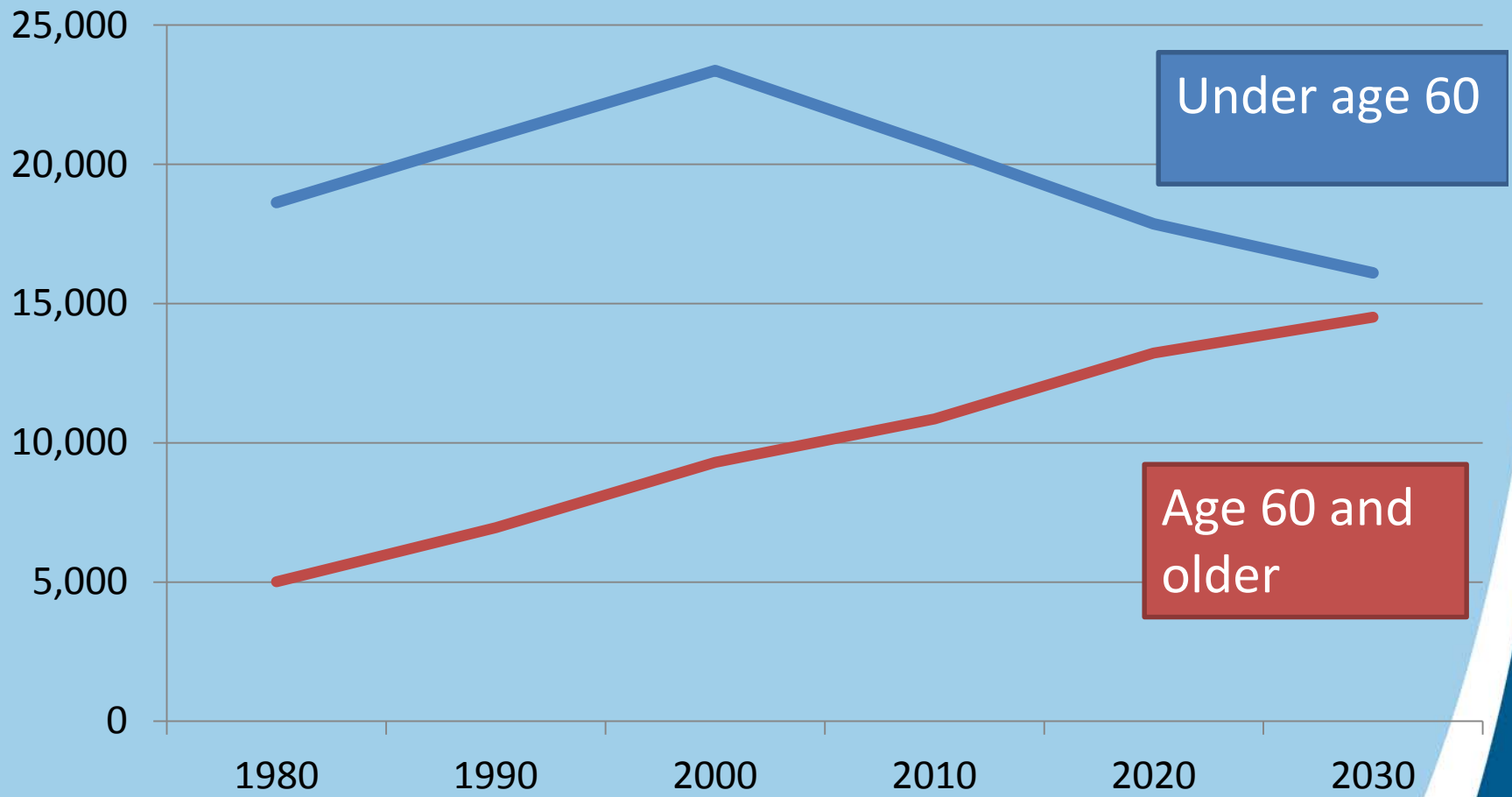


Source: Donahue Institute,  
University of Massachusetts





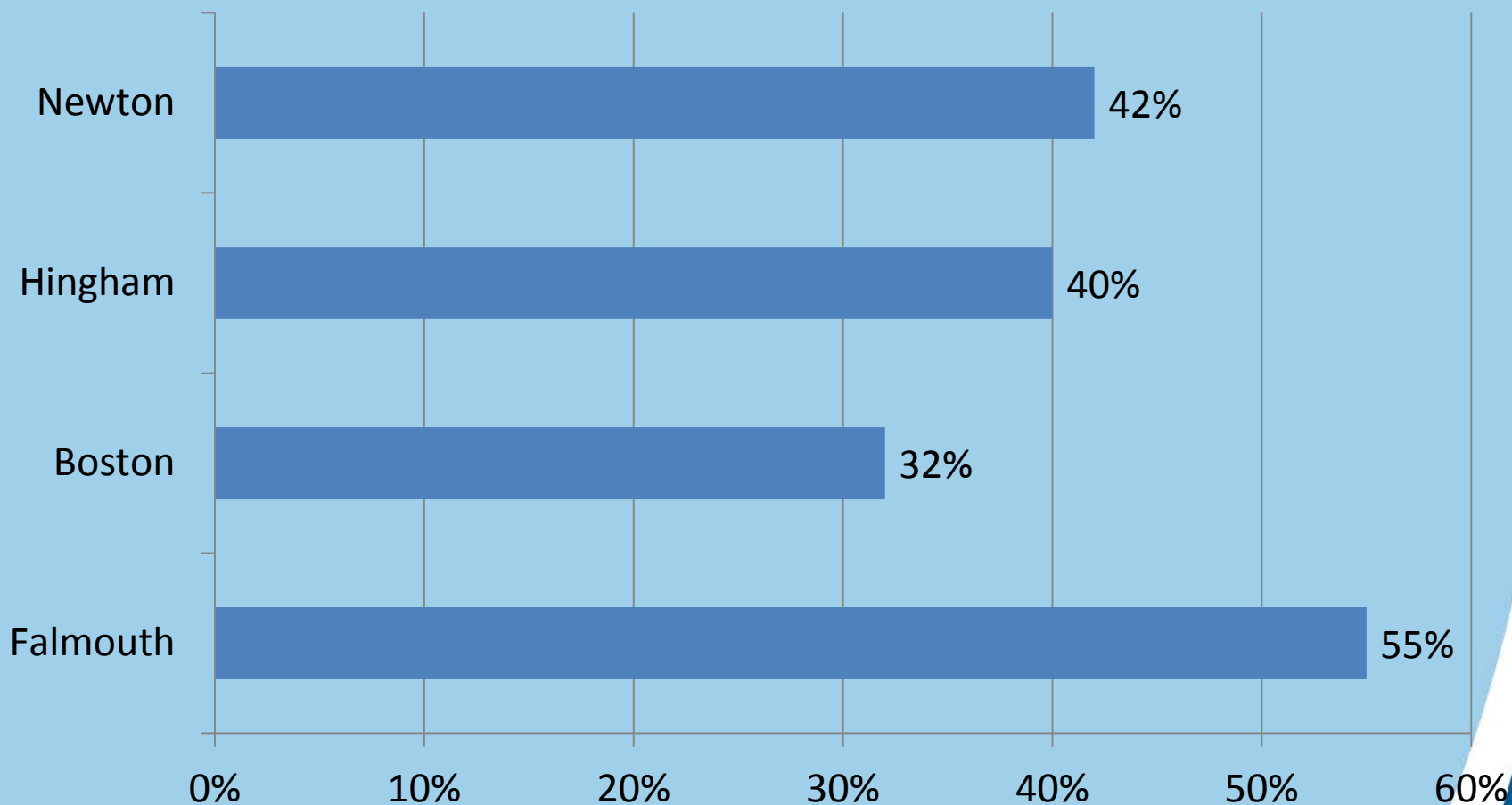
# In Falmouth, seniors are expected to make up nearly half of the population



Source: 1980-2010 Census of Population;  
Donahue Institute (2020-2030)

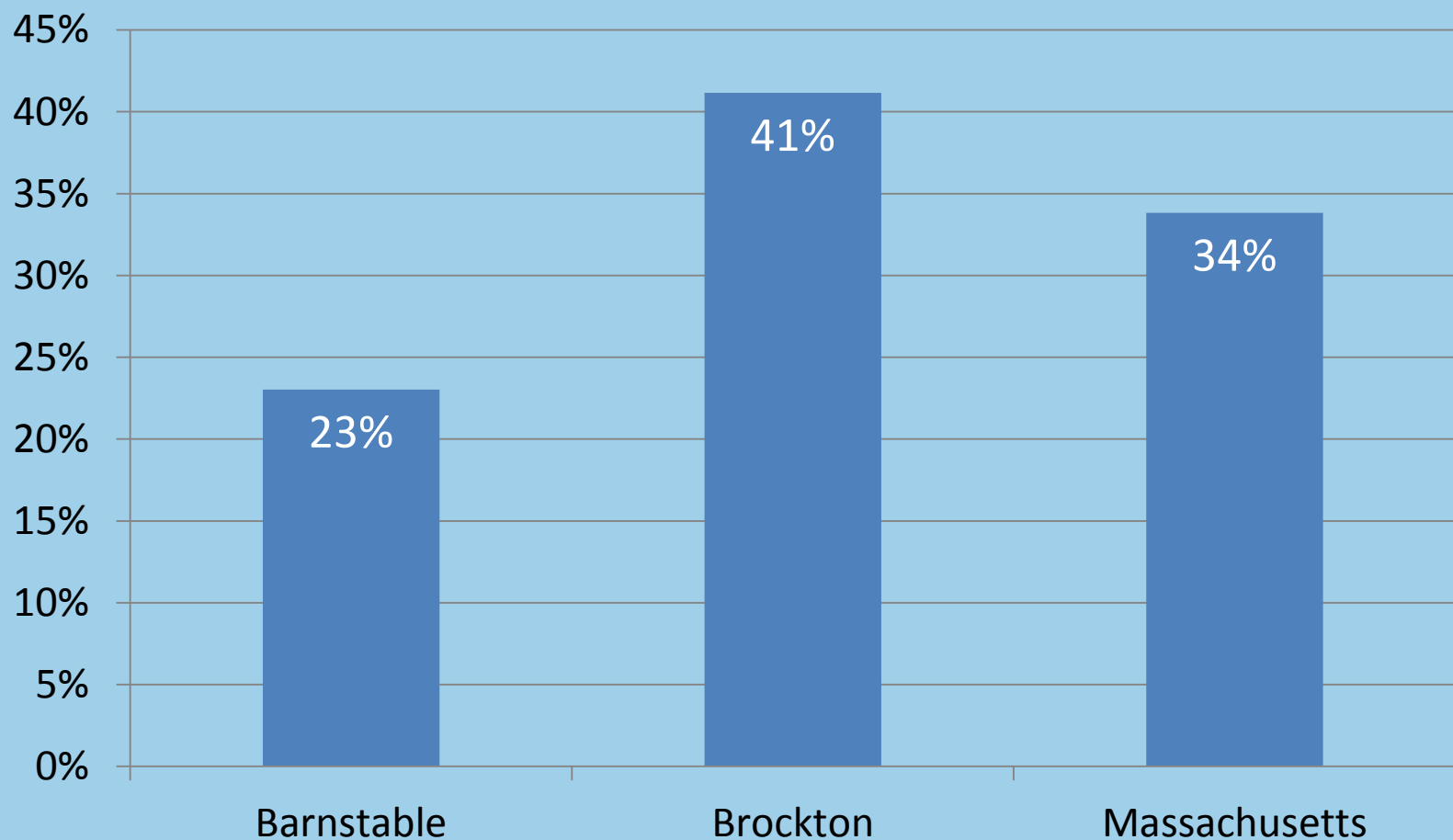
# Some features of population composition, from the U.S. Census Bureau website

# Percent of homeowners who are age 60+



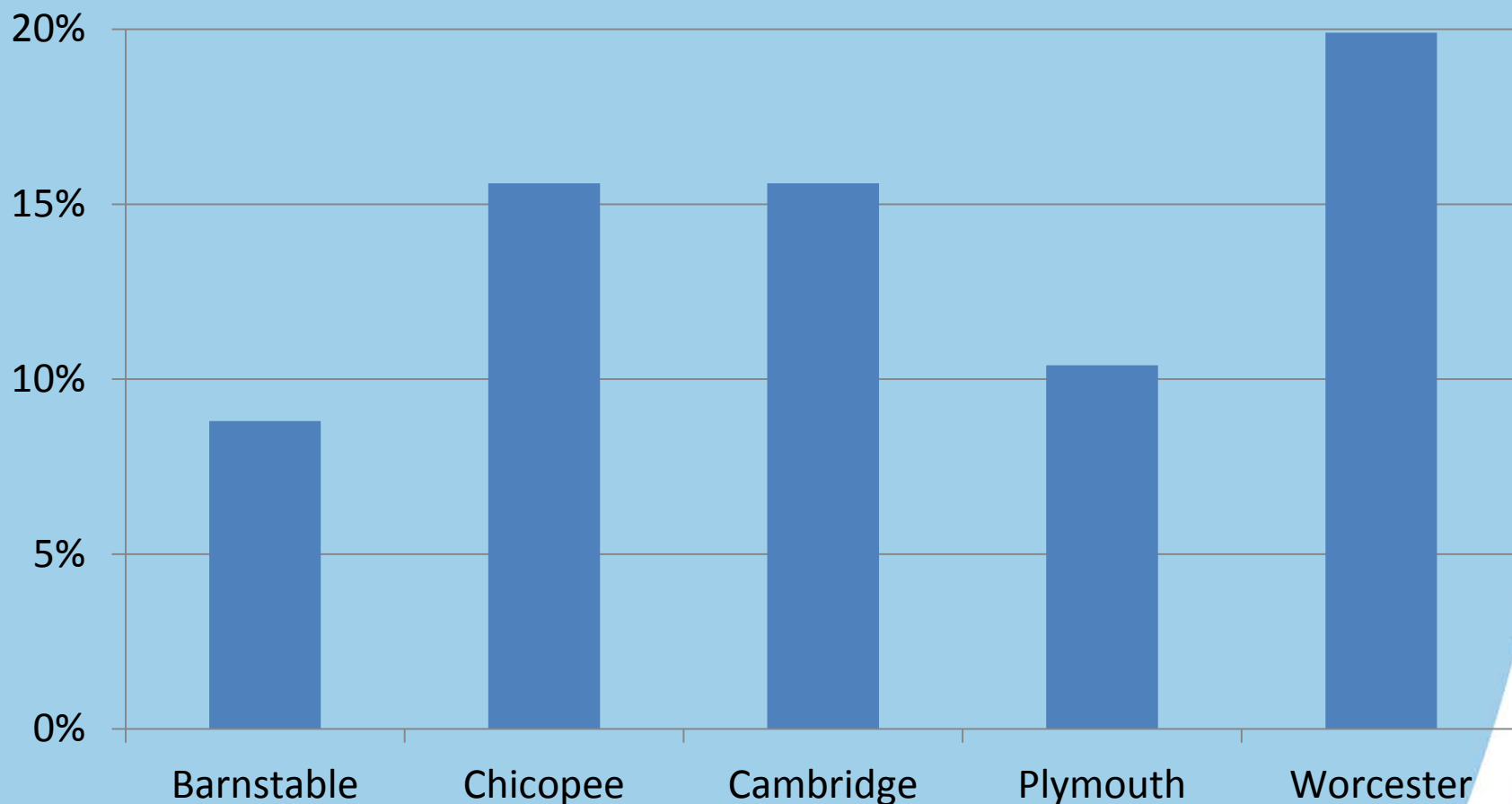
Source: 2008-12 American Community Survey

# Percentage with disability among residents age 65+





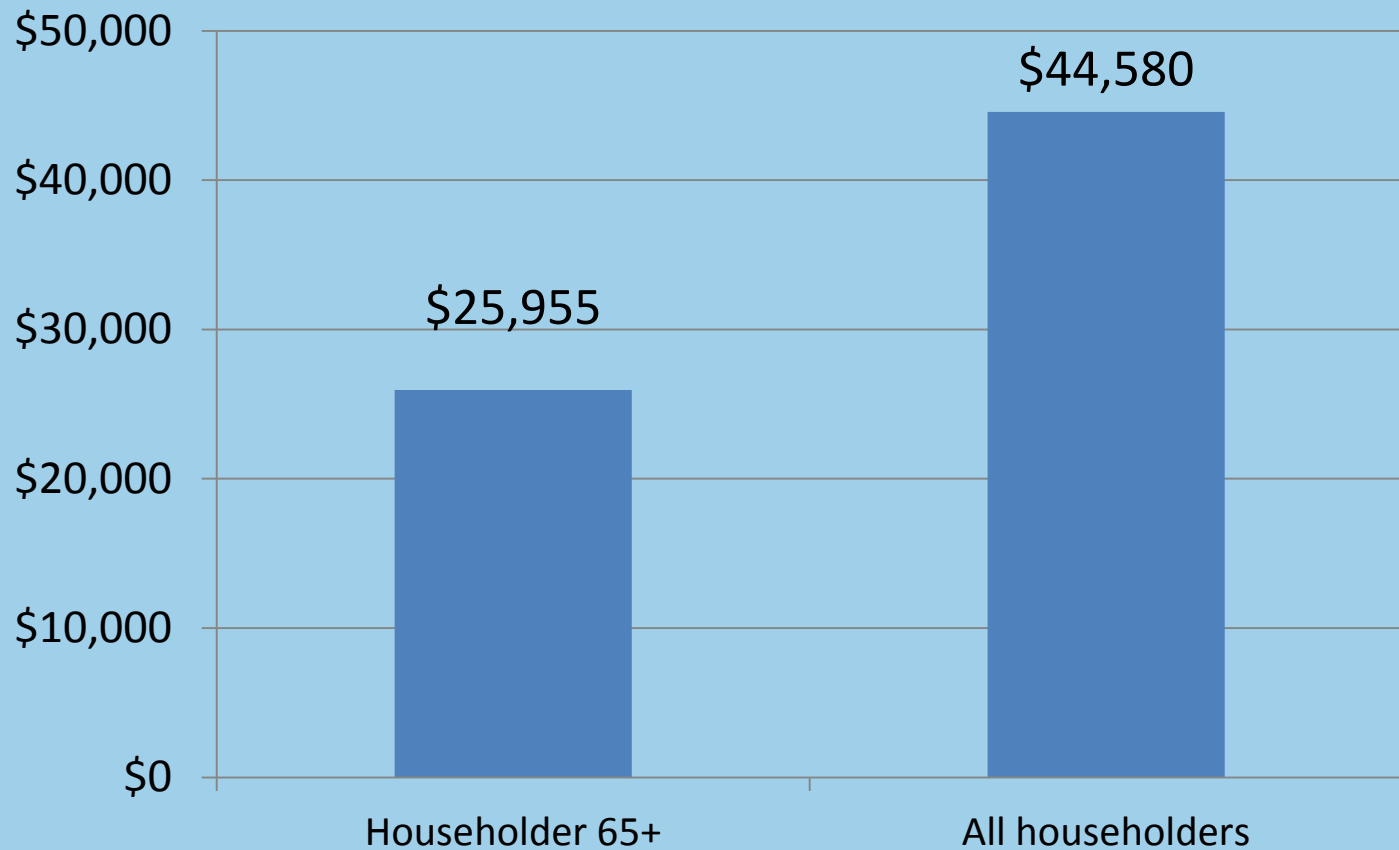
# Percentage of 65+ residents with an independent living disability\*



\*having difficulty doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping

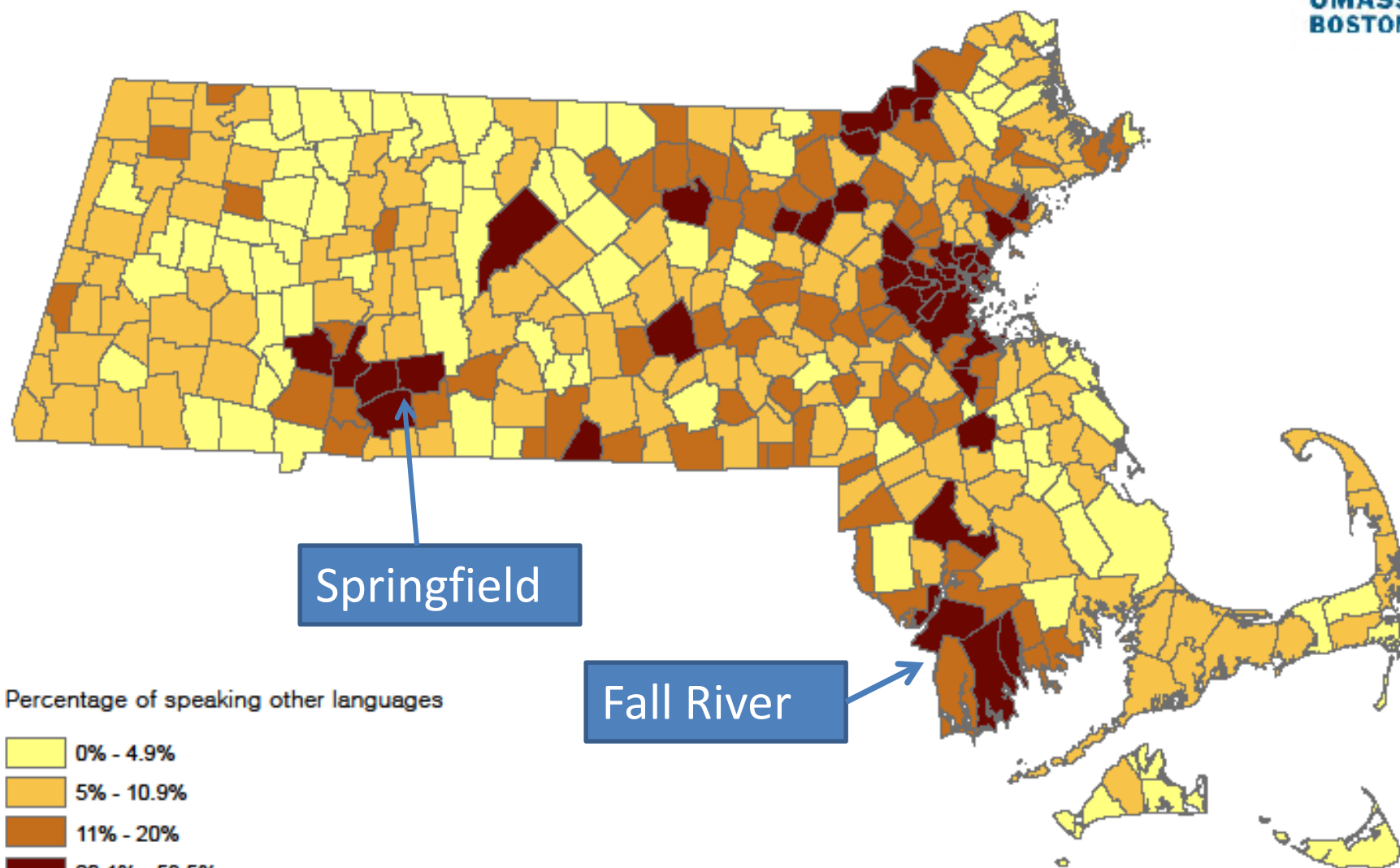
Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey

# Median household income in Worcester





# Percentage of Older Adults Age 65+ Who Speak A Language other than English (MA)



Springfield

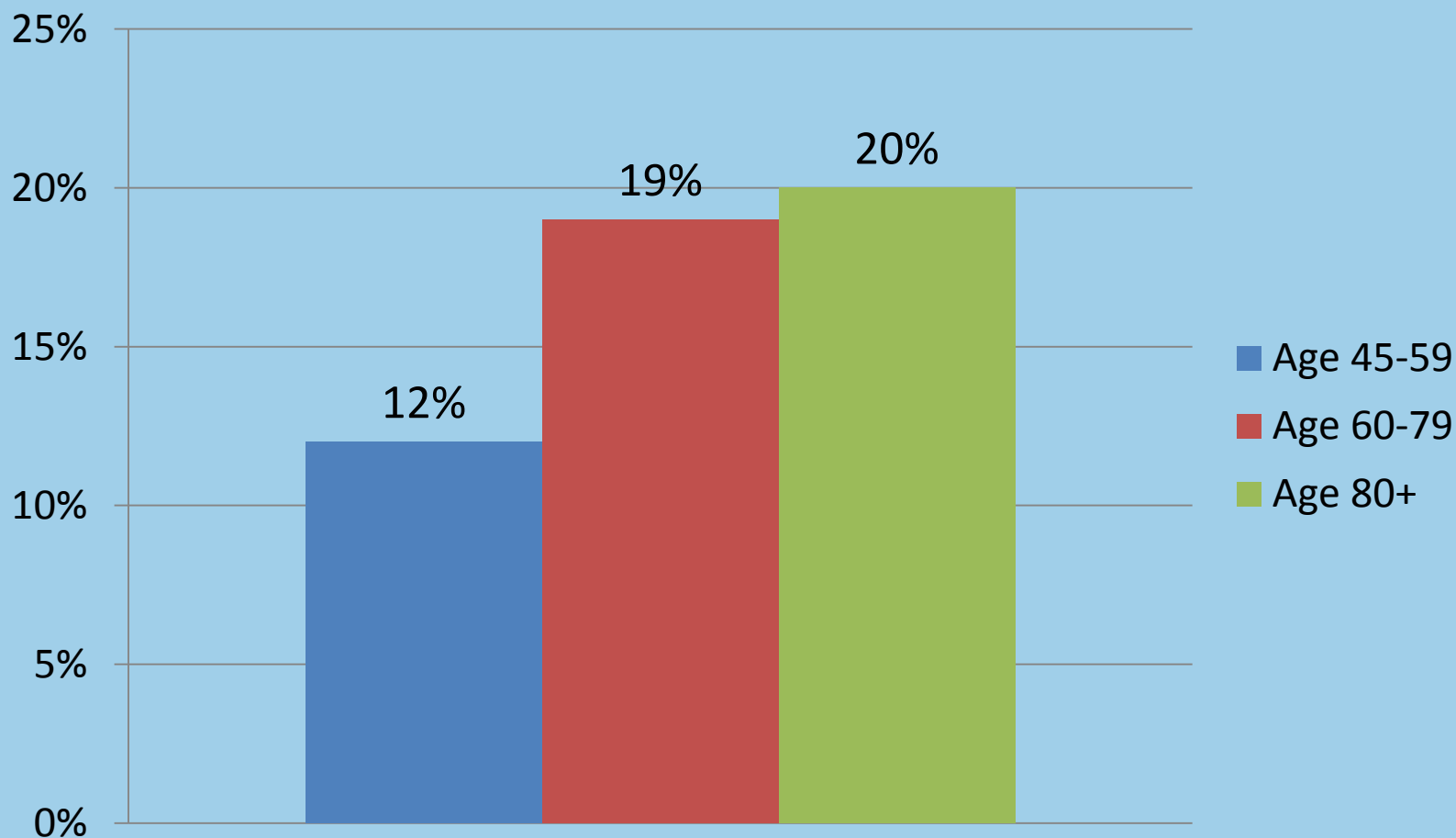
Fall River

Percentage of speaking other languages

- 0% - 4.9%
- 5% - 10.9%
- 11% - 20%
- 20.1% - 53.5%

Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey

# Percentage in Linguistically Isolated Households, Boston





# Conducting a Survey

- ▶ Establishing scope of the survey
  - ▶ What is the purpose of your assessment?
  - ▶ What information do you already have?
  - ▶ What information will you obtain some other way?
  - ▶ Prioritize your needs for information and keep your focus

# Conducting a Survey

- ▶ Creating a questionnaire
  - ▶ Harvest questions from existing questionnaires
  - ▶ Plan how you will use every question asked
  - ▶ Think about your respondents when designing the questionnaire
    - ▶ Consider typeface and white space
    - ▶ Do not make it too long
    - ▶ Ask only one question at a time
  - ▶ Pilot your questionnaire with appropriate respondents

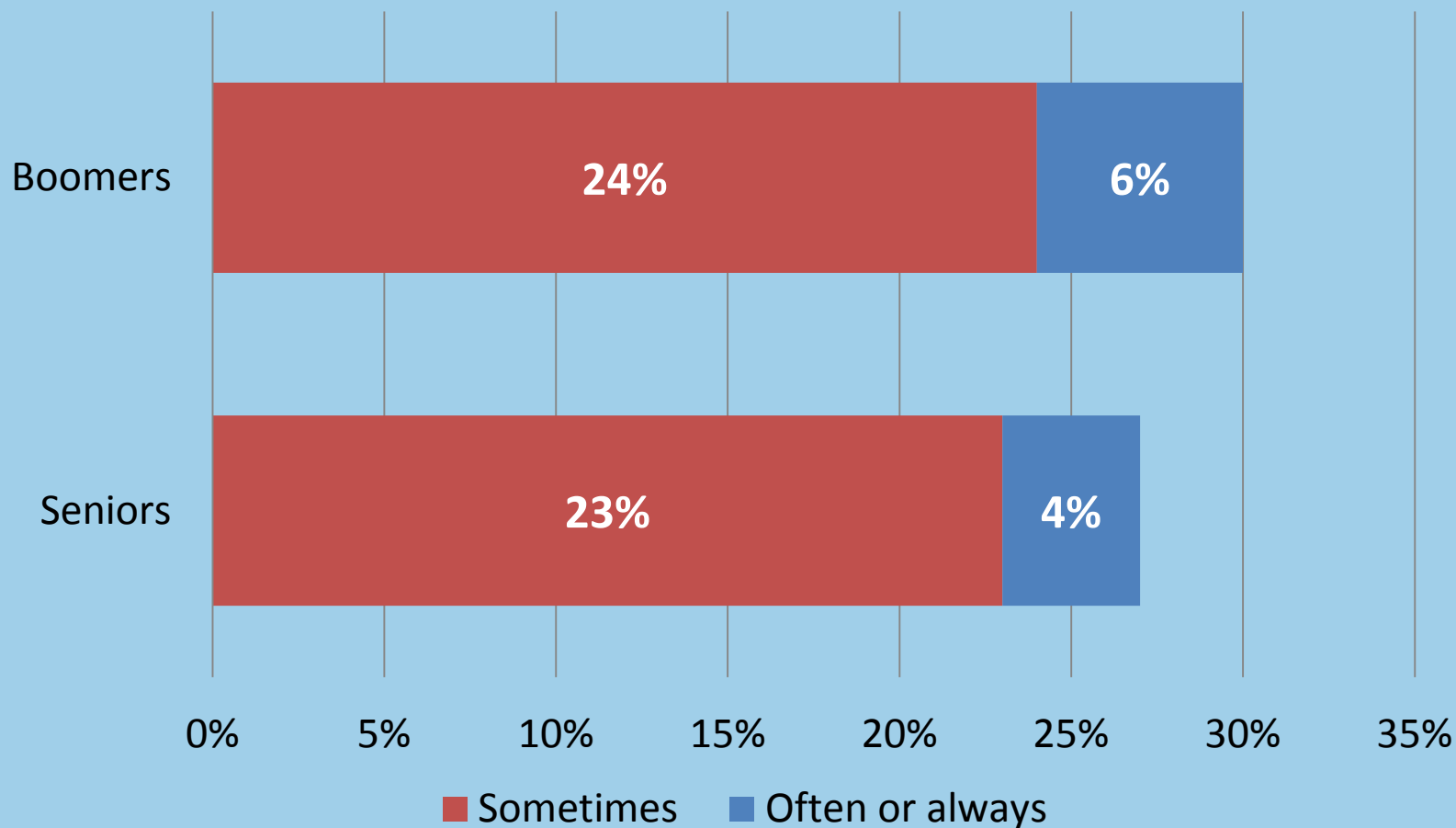
# Conducting a Survey

- ▶ Choose a means of distribution
  - ▶ Mailing or other hard-copy delivery
  - ▶ Telephone
  - ▶ Online
  - ▶ In-person
- ▶ To sample or not to sample?

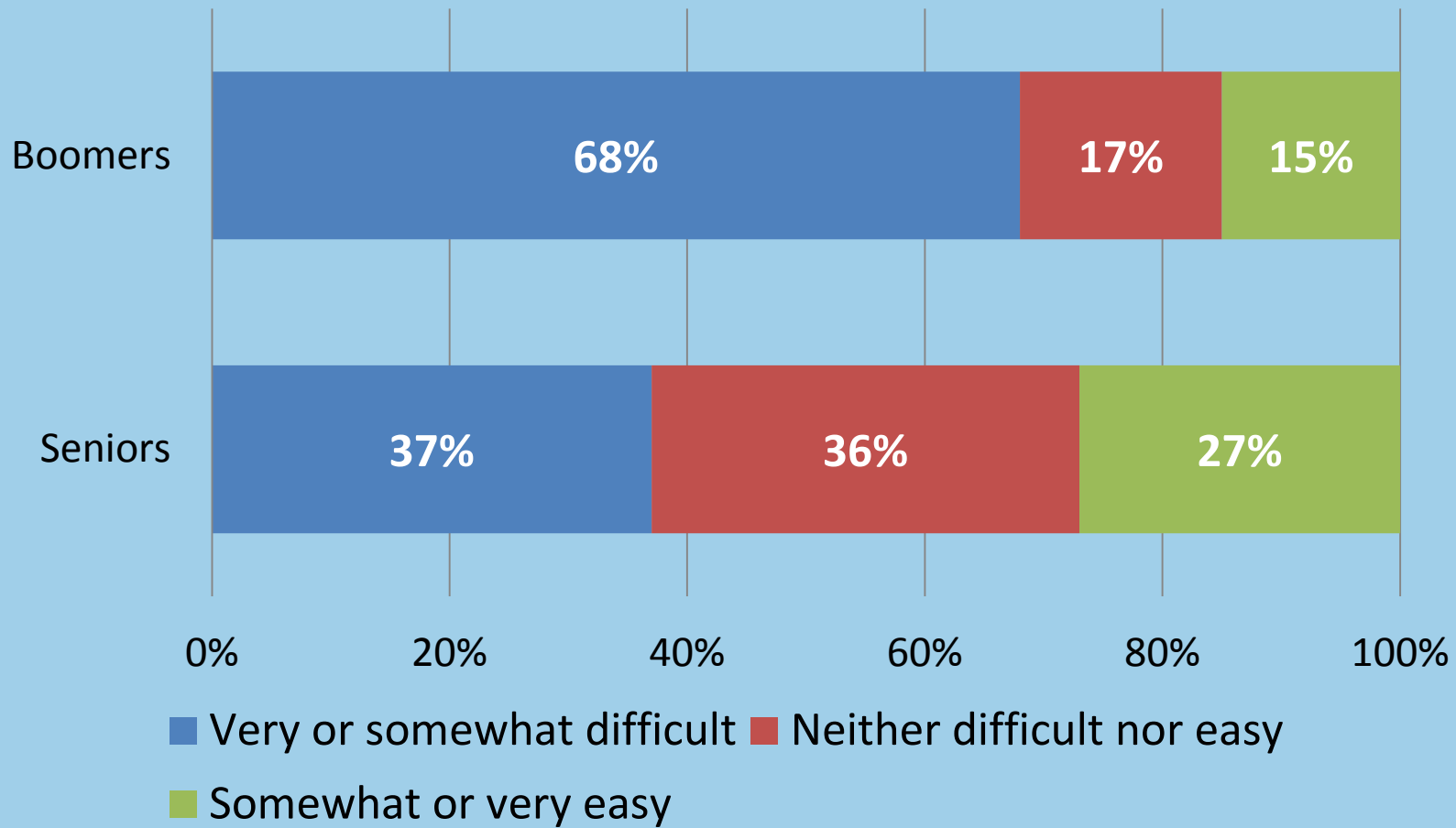
# Conducting a Survey

- ▶ From responses to data
  - ▶ Confidentiality
- ▶ Analyzing the data
- ▶ Making sense of the responses

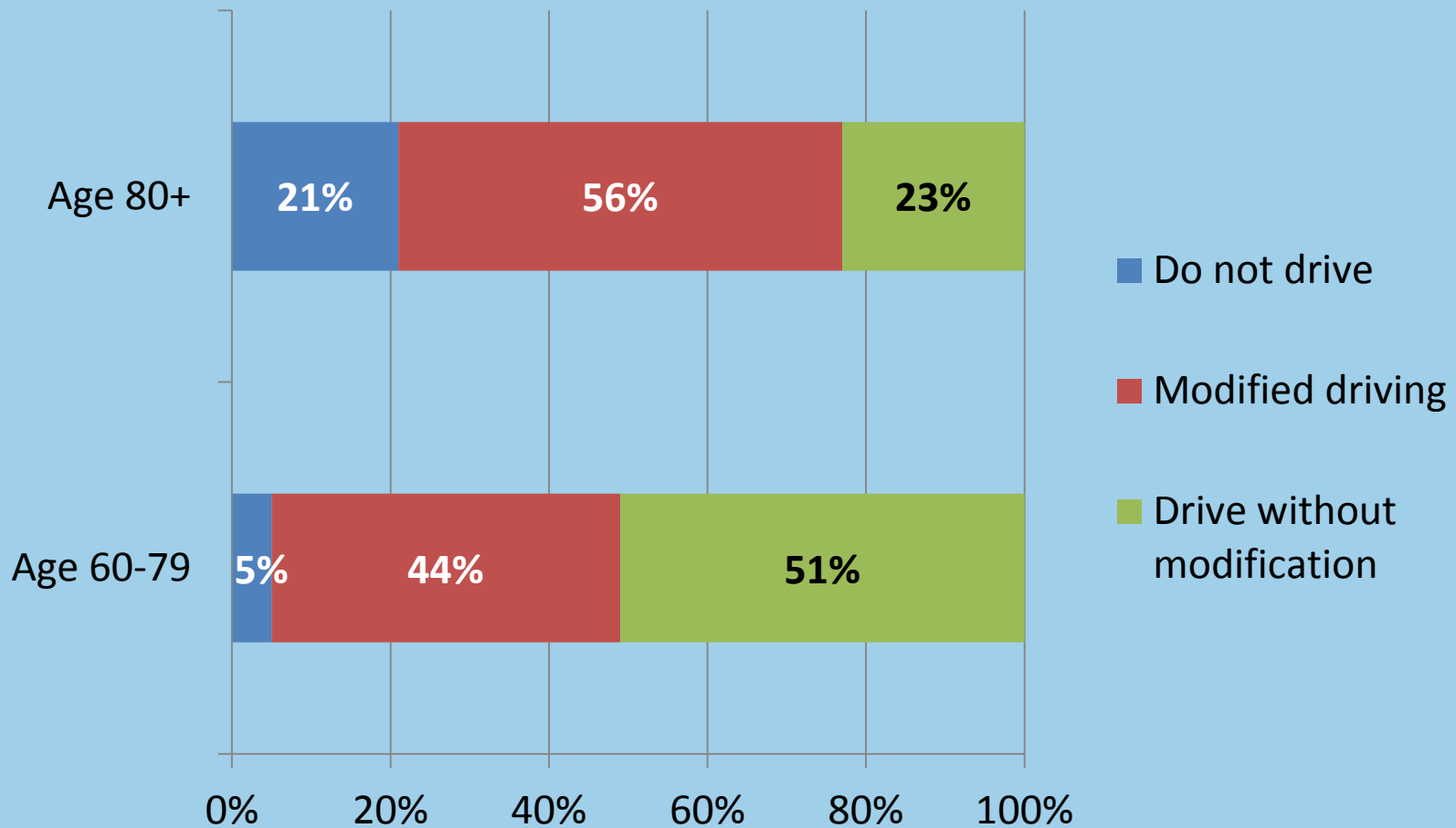
# Percentage Feeling Sad or Depressed in the Past Month



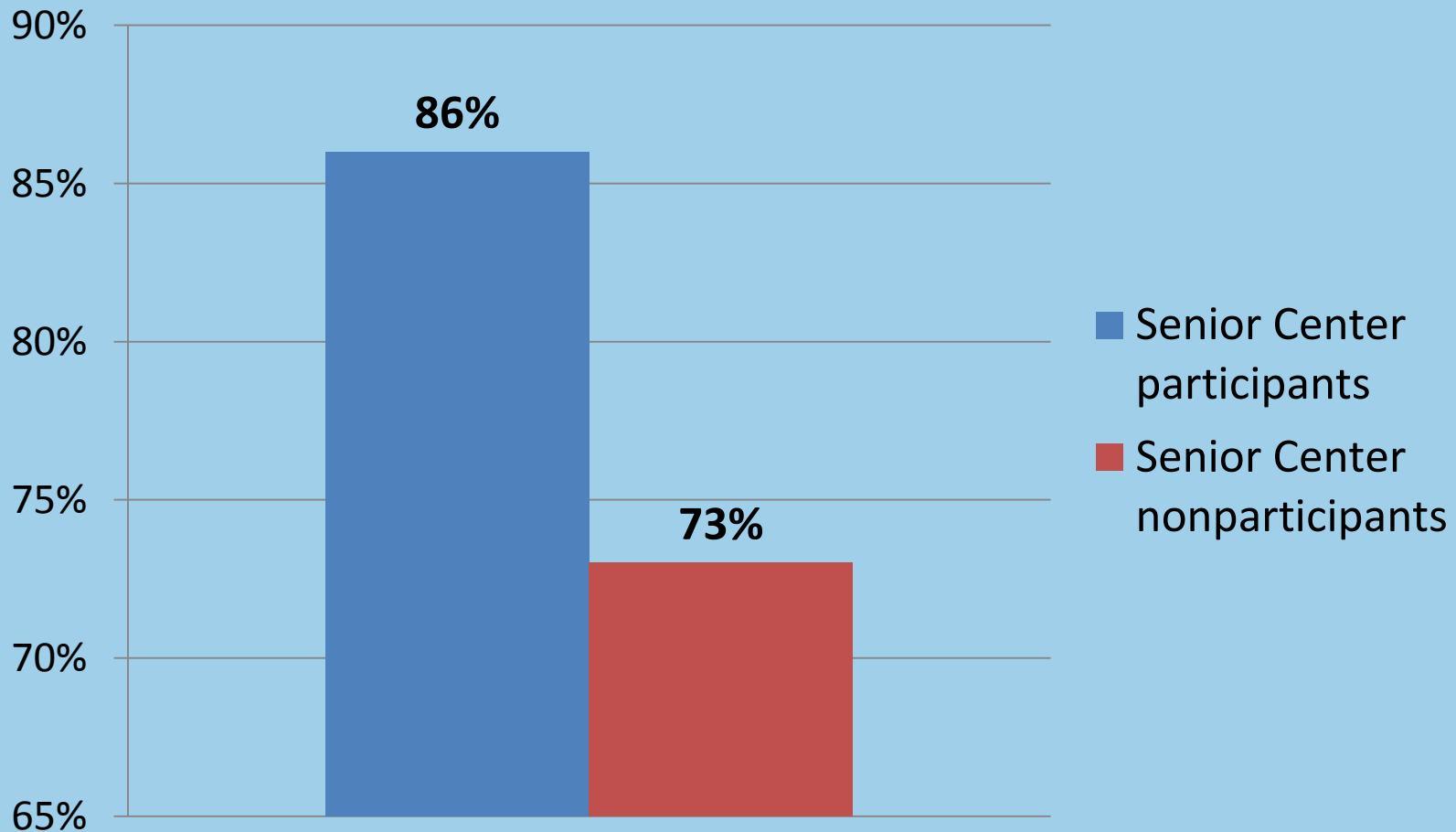
# Difficulty Providing Care for Disabled Adults (among caregivers)



# Driving Involvement

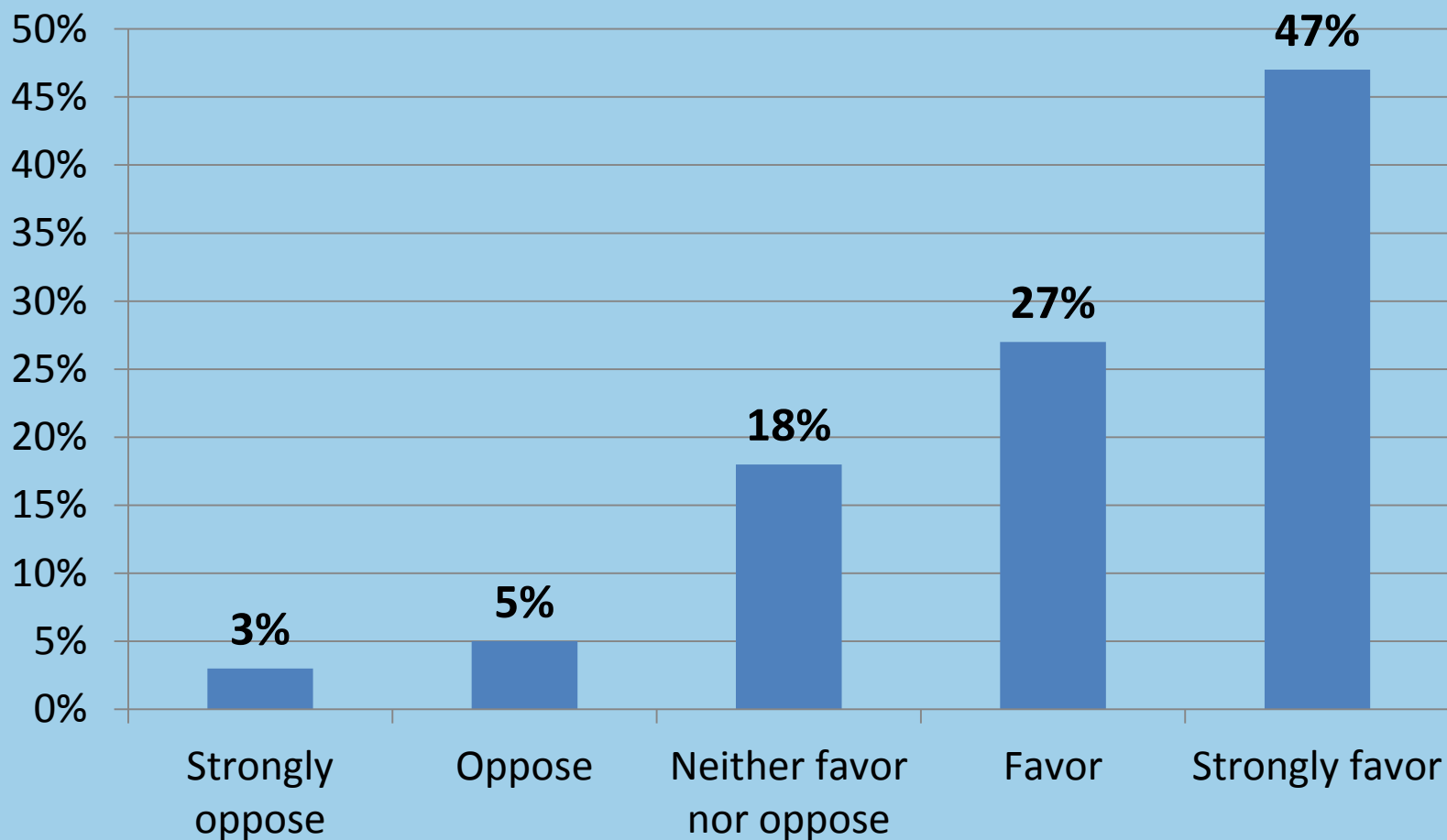


# Percentage Willing to Pay a Nominal Fee to Participate in Senior Center Programs and Activities





# Support for Tax Work-off Program in the Community (Respondents 60+)





# “What are your greatest concerns about staying in your community as you grow older?”

- ▶ “I live on \$1,317 a month Social Security check. My car is 16 years old. My house will need a new roof soon. I don’t know where I will get money for these things.” (Female, age 69)
- ▶ “How will I get around for errands and social activities when I can no longer drive?” (Female, age 52)
- ▶ “(I worry) that my spouse will die and leave me” (Male, age 82)
- ▶ “Getting mind and body to the end at the same time” (Female, age 85)



# Focus groups

- ▶ Adding depth to survey findings
- ▶ Adding life to demographic results
- ▶ Learning about special issues or difficult-to-reach populations
- ▶ Obtain input from other stakeholders, such as other Town offices or organizations
- ▶ Hearing from the community when a survey is not practical



# Organizing a focus group

- ▶ **Prepare** who, where, when, and why
  - ▶ Develop prompts and follow-ups
- ▶ Aim for groups of 6-10; sessions 60-90 minutes long
- ▶ Bring a note-taker or record the event
- ▶ Bring food
- ▶ Attempt to hear from everyone in the room
- ▶ Attempt to keep the conversation focused on the subject at hand (for the most part)
- ▶ Respect time limits
- ▶ Allow time afterward for the team to review notes and transcripts, discuss, and draw conclusions



# Focus group prompts

- ▶ NOT

- ▶ “Do you think your department works well with the Council on Aging?”

- ▶ BETTER

- ▶ “Tell me about your department’s experience with the Council on Aging”



# Post-Assessment: Stage 3

- ▶ Dissemination of results
  - ▶ Printed and/or electronic report
  - ▶ Public presentations
  - ▶ News articles
  - ▶ Fact sheet



# Concluding Thoughts

- ▶ Be clear about the PURPOSE of your assessment
- ▶ Have a detailed timeline and roadmap of the process
  - ▶ Build in extra time
- ▶ Create awareness in the community
- ▶ Consider research partners
- ▶ Determine appropriate sources of data
- ▶ Stay realistic
  - ▶ NEED versus WANT

# Thank you!

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