



Changing local communities to improve quality of life

older Australians' wishlists

National Seniors
AUSTRALIA

March 2023

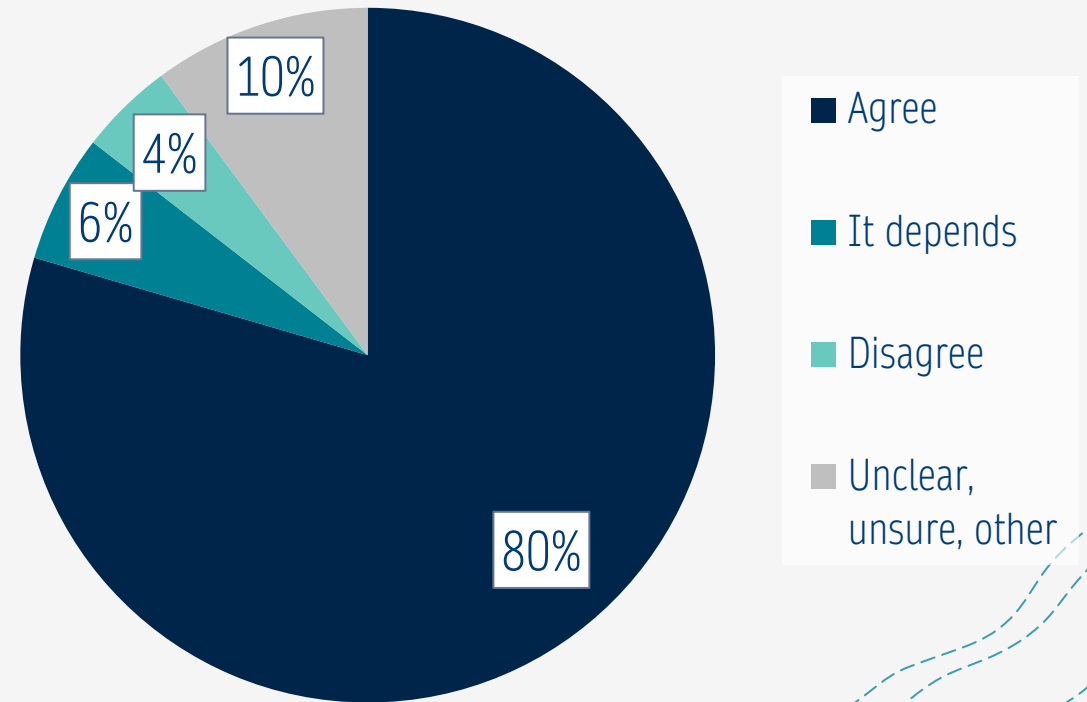


Older Australians & community survey

- + In 2022 National Seniors Australia surveyed thousands of Australians aged 50 and over about their communities and quality of life
- + What they said can improve local communities for older residents
- + This document can help local councils focus efforts when engaging with older residents about changes they need

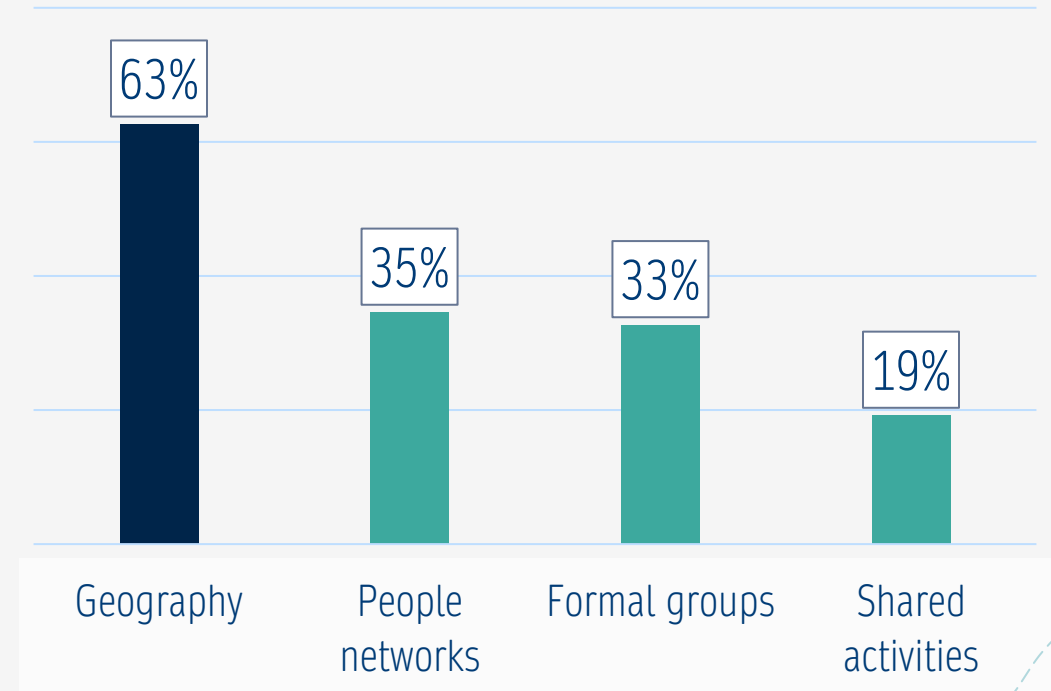
Community participation is valued

- + We asked older Australians if they thought participating actively in the community can improve a person's quality of life
- + Of the 3019 people who responded, four fifths agreed
- + They value connection, meaning, belonging and staying active



Community is most often geographic

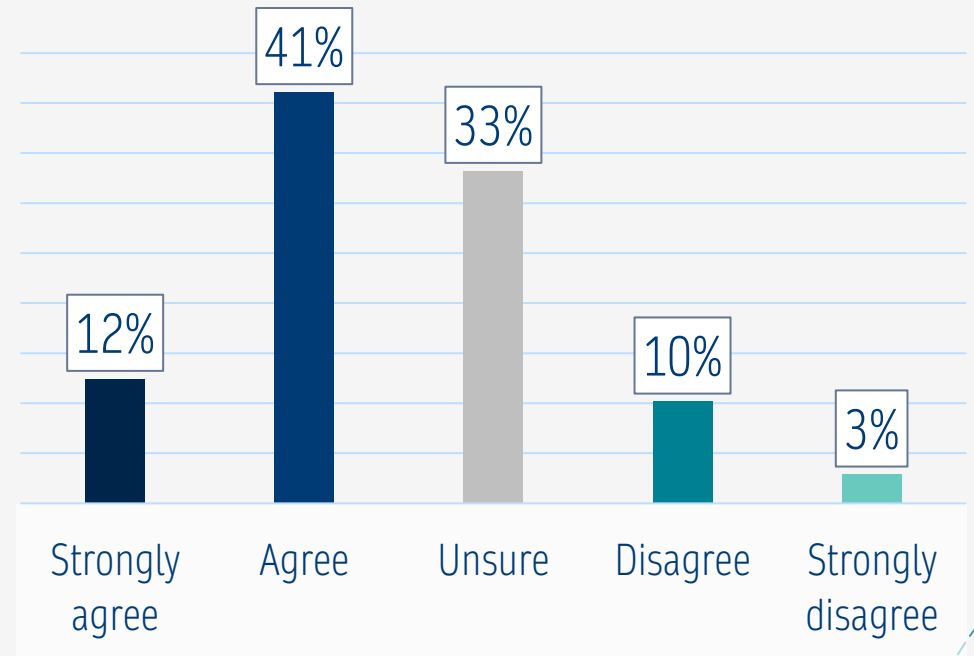
- + We asked older Australians to define their community(-ies) and many found this difficult
- + Of 1510 people who defined one or more, over three fifths used a geographic definition – e.g. town, suburb, housing complex, region
- + Local areas matter to many older people



Communities offer good quality of life

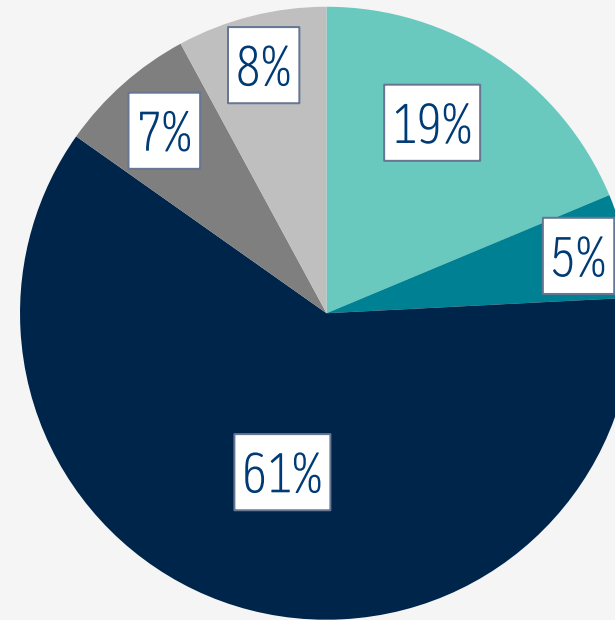
sort
of..

- + We asked older Australians if their community offered older people a good quality of life
- + Of the 3433 people who answered, just over half agreed, but a third were unsure
- + Older people's relationships with their communities vary in quality



Communities need improvement

- + We asked older Australians what needs to change in their community to improve their quality of life
- + Of the 2406 people who responded, three fifths (1458 people) suggested changes



- Satisfied with community
- Ambiguous (possibly satisfied)
- Suggestions for improvement
- Community is irrelevant or hard to change
- Unsure or not applicable

Local councils can effect change

- + We grouped the suggestions into a 15 theme wishlist
- + Most but not all wishes are relevant to local governments, and what follows is tailored for that
- + Commenters hail from diverse LGAs, so councils should use this wishlist to guide consultations with their older residents about key issues

Wish #1 Transport and pathways

accessible, regular, safer, cheaper public transport

transport assistance for medical appointments & less mobile people

frequent community buses or reliable, subsidised taxis



well-maintained, safer footpaths

stronger scooter & skateboard regulation



more walkways & bikeways

better roads, slower local traffic, less parking congestion

local activities in lieu of better transport

“My community needs better public transport. There are no taxis, no buses for those who cannot drive.”

“more frequent public transport connecting us to our nearest capital city; a faster connection; and a safe connection”

“with more renters / more units there's more cars in the street and just getting out of my driveway is an increasing hazard!”

“Better transport options that are affordable and available when needed and convenient.”

“Advertise what is available within walking distance, & explain if there are people who can transport those in need.”

“Footpaths have become dangerous for older people, following the introduction of bikes, scooters and skate boards. I think there are older people who no longer venture out because it's too risky”

“Community bus would be great as I can't walk to bus stop.”

“Better footpaths - too many chances to fall even with a walker”

“Transportation for older members - eg recently I had 5 visits to hospital in a month - ambulance services to the closest regional town and hospital are very good - but, how do I get back to my small town, 40kms away”

“installation of protected bicycle paths (not just painted lines on the sides of extremely dangerous roads)”

Wish #2 Accessibility

understanding the needs of older people with disabilities

accommodation of less visible disabilities

access to community facilities

accessible parking, buildings, public areas and toilets

low cost activities for older disabled people

improved supports for older people and their dependents including NDIS



“Understanding what older people with a disability require”

“More done for disabled to visit nature reserves etc”

“More disability equipment in public spaces”

“handrails, elevators, larger print”

“There needs to be more awareness of the ravages of ageing: we go slower, are less nimble but still mostly have our faculties. Long queues are anathema to me. I can't stand for long and these are a fact of life: it impacts on what I can do.”

“Wheelchair ramps and paths (made with recycled plastic!) onto beaches and into parks. Good for [people] with prams too.”

“Understanding of hearing loss and acceptance and willingness to alter some of their communication styles”

“More low cost fitness activities for the mobility impaired.”

“More disability parking and someone checking that people aren't using disability permits when they have no one disabled in the vehicle!!!”

“More places to be wheelchair friendly. More bathroom facilities to be wheelchair friendly. eg. can open and close the facilities door unaided. Not needing to wait until a member of the public to assist”

“We care full time for our brain injured son (40 yr old) - lack of services for him impact on the quality of our life.”

“The facilities used for most meetings are not suitable for purpose. Because these facilities are often older buildings that that are hired for small cost and used by lots of groups. Tables and chairs have to be put in place and put away by the more able bodied after an activity. Many with mobility problems start not attending as they feel they are not pulling their weight.”

Wish #3 Information & communication

wider advertising of programs and services for older people

advertising methods that actually reach older people

digital technology training for seniors

more face to face assistance, less online help

professional liaison officers to assist older people

better phone and internet service



“Not knowing what is available is most annoying. I had some idea when the local paper was delivered, but that has ceased.”

“Assemble all relevant information in one well-advertised location.”

“more mobile and internet coverage”

“Better advertising what is available for the older community would be great. I do not know where to look or ask to find out what is going on.”

“in my closest regional town there are so many inexpensive and free activities that most people don't know about, for example all that the local libraries offer. Which is a shame.”

“Our council is very active but still think educating older people in technology use is vital.”

“Access to services - face to face support.”

“The support offered needs to be more readily available taking into account the skills or lack of skills those needing them have. The thought of going through the process and being made feel like an idiot because you do not have current IT knowledge is really off putting. Then to be rejected on some stupid technicality”

“People centered management, not an overload of corporate speak letters. Staff with appropriate qualifications to deal with older people”

“one stop shop for the aging to get advice and referral”

Wish #4 Health services

better health

more locally available doctors, nurses, GPs, specialists and other health professionals

more local health services and facilities

more affordable and bulk-billed health services

better quality health services

better funding for health services

end to COVID

end to COVID restrictions



“The only changes perhaps we could have are specialists monthly visits perhaps. This would suffice when you are no longer able to drive or have a minimum limit you are able to drive.”

“Doctors in a small rural town such as mine can be a concern but know this is the same everywhere”

“My only issue is the lack of medical support. A lack of dr, dentist, physio, OT etc. we need to travel about an hour to get these services.”

“There is a need for a local hospital”

“we need a chemist, a doctor”

“Once covid goes away then our community will come back”

“improvements to the health system ”

“Better health services”

“Better provision for health for the elderly”

“Covid has made meeting face to face more difficult”

“More affordable healthcare.”

“Decent funding of health services”

“present mandates are making things more unfriendly and dividing communities”

Wish #5 Local facilities

more local facilities and services, regularly maintained

community centres and seniors centres

pools, sporting and cultural facilities

places to shop, eat, drink and meet up

garbage and recycling services

banks and postal services

education options for young and old



"It would be good to have a local Seniors Hub [...] that is a community meeting point that offers a wide range of services, activities etc."

"Council needs to look after community centres much much better, to the older citizens this is sometimes the only outing they have or feel safe and comfortable in"

"There needs to be a excess 'rubbish' (eg, old furniture, excess household items, etc) collected a few times per year."

"Better facilities such as mail posting boxes."

"There aren't many retail outlets, bars or restaurants or theatres etc in my local area."

"A cafe down near the river where people can gather & chat would be great."

"More cultural and art facilities and infrastructure"

"If numbers increase as in our sewing group we have to limit numbers for safety reasons and finding a venue for another time is impossible as older buildings do not have power points, facilities to store common tools and easy access. Men get to have a men's shed we need a woman cave for our many different crafting hobbies."

"Stop banks closing branches, forcing me to drive a 30KM round trip to the nearest branch each week just to do my banking"

"Pool, tennis courts and other recreation all unable to be used as they need repairing."

"the availability and affordability of quality education from preschool to university/TAFE and throughout life"

Wish #6 Activities & socialising

more activities for older people

accessibly scheduled activities

free or low cost activities



activities for different ages and groupings of older people

opportunities for older people to socialise together

emotional support for isolated people



measures to counter loneliness

“More seniors activities. Not easy to find locally”

“Free or heavily subsidised activities for Seniors”

“more friendships”

“more senior inclusive free events”

“I feel older people are sometimes stuck at home as there isn't always good close transport to take them places they may like to go and not always age appropriate things to do.”

“more weekend activities for the older workers to participate in”

“Greater connection opportunities needed. Chance to participate as groups and do things / travel”

“I would like to mix with people in my age group.”

“An increase to the number of community social activities offered would improve my quality of life”

“Neighbourhood Buddy system- people sign up to be a neighbour buddy that looks out for those over 65 or having disabilities - Once a month afternoon catch up”

“More care for single, older people who live alone.”

Wish #7 Housing

more local available housing

affordable housing

housing security

end homelessness

diverse retirement living options locally

caring management of retirement villages & lifestyle resorts

enforcement & review of housing bylaws



“People cannot find accommodation for the elderly. More funds need to be allocated to delivering accommodation for elderly people.”

“The homeless need to be housed and cared for.”

“Being able to stay in my community. As I don't own my apartment I will need to find more affordable accommodation when I retire ”

“Suitable, affordable community housing options. New community-focused housing options; shared resources”

“Rentals for seniors need to be examined and made more accessible”

“More rentals that are suited to older people and are affordable.”

“The opportunity to purchase a home is almost impossible ”

“It worries me that there are so few options for older people I know who do not own a home and who basically can't ever afford to stop working because they wouldn't be able to afford to pay their rent in the private market.”

“I think the Government needs to look at how us seniors are treated and exploited by residential park owners.”

“Build fewer high rise buildings. If there is vacant land in the area fill it with a retirement village.”

“I would like to see an Over Fifties Retirement Village here. There are many, like me, who need to downsize but do not want to leave the area.”

“I wish I was able to have bigger dogs stay with us, which is not allowed”

“Body corporate bylaws to be enforced”

Wish #8 Aged care

quality, caring residential aged care facilities

quality, caring home care services

shorter waiting lists for care

support to transition to aged care

more local aged care services and facilities

respite care for carers

easier access to home and garden help



“Better care in nursing homes and more home care packages for those who need it.”

“Better availability of home care packages. Increased aged care facilities.”

“put more money into aged care”

“I think in my community, Aged Care Services offered through the Council are good but could definitely be improved. For example: my Council offers no transport service for hospital visits etc. which makes travel for hospital appointments during the recovery period extremely difficult, especially when public transport is out of the question. At home care provided by the hospital is very good but does not last for long enough - the attitude seems to be 'we will look after you for a strictly limited time period, then it is up to you'. Without a supportive family, managing alone can be very difficult.”

“Assistance available - garden”

“Greater opportunity for seniors to transition from independent living to assisted living then to care.”

“Easily accessible home help needed to keep those who decide to stay living in their home.”

“the availability of more in-home support services.”

“National government's preference to run 'one size fits all sizes' programs really cripples the implementation of aged care support among many other community support programs. Our local council has some good programs but funding is always short term and often good programs are not extended or developed.”

“Council should help with home maintenance”

“Help with shopping for people who are not old enough to access aged care support services.”

“More help for people who need it without waiting on a 12 month waiting list”

“Respite care for carers”

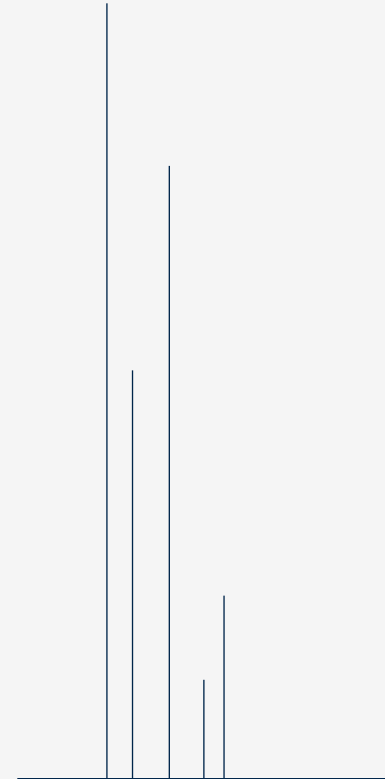
Wish #9 Development & population

residents' needs before tourists and developers

control local population growth (limit or expand)

limit high density property development

more mixed housing options



“I think the township and surrounds is getting too big and losing the cohesiveness needed for a thriving community life.”

“Our village is under threat from redevelopment and this has a lot to do with residents unsure with the future of our lives.”

“local community environs are being redeveloped in favour of attracting younger folks and tourists”

“Maintain services by population growth”

“Our council concentrates on the income of money from tourists and schoolies. Old folk do not count.”

“Reducing the traffic congestion and keeping the development of new housing estates to a minimum. There are too many people in our area and the roads, hospitals and other facilities are starting to suffer as a result.”

“The over-development of living spaces with the resultant crowding must be addressed.”

“Suburbs should be planned with a mix of housing sizes.”

Wish #10 Green spaces & environment

more public parks and other green spaces

outdoor facilities including seating

stop development that damages biodiversity habitat

support clean development including renewable energy

action on climate change, biodiversity, pollution

better street maintenance



“parks with facilities”

“The addition of exercise equipment in parks and reserves, and denser tree plantings to improve heat control and the environment in general”

“Even more park benches would be a great improvement.”

“Little more local government support for the upkeep of the local environment”

“In my community we have no decent walking areas to go out walking all you can do is walk around when you here of other communities have lakes, reserves etc to walk around. I love walking but there no incentive to go out as I get tired of just walking the streets”

“perhaps community gardens”

“More Dog parks, and beach areas with large off-lead areas, and lights (if it's hot I would like to sit out in the evening). more dog-friendly eateries and shops (good on you Bunnings! and cafes that put water bowls in their outside seating areas)”

“Greater effort by relevant authorities in making ‘green’ energy more widely available at a reasonable price would be welcome.”

“More community activities to reduce greenhouse gases and provide a better future for our children.”

“A change in attitude by local Council towards true community consultation with a focus on environmental and climate issues in lieu of unnecessary overdevelopment.”

“We need to become less conservative as a community because we are missing so many opportunities to tackle issues that confront us like climate change, the environment, quality of life, and sustainability. We have just had a new council elected and the dominant group there is determined to wind back the gains we have made in these areas, such a shame.”

Wish #11 Crime & public safety

stricter measures to tackle crime in the local community

reduce property crimes, youth crime, drug use, disturbance

end domestic violence, home invasions, muggings

better policing

safer environments and homes

feeling safe going out at night

fairer justice system



"security can be issue with break and enter crime and juvenile stealing of cars."

"Increased security. Many people in my town (myself included) will not go out at night for fear of damage to vehicles and home intrusion. This is however, a very complex issue that doesn't just affect Senior Australians."

"Reduction of pub and neighbour noise. Removal of graffiti from surrounding properties."

"remove/jail those responsible for the vandalism, theft, drug related behaviour, arson and domestic violence"

"The crime rate is awful. Young people out at night vandalising our golf course, stealing cars, breaking into homes."

"Better honest policing"

"Stopping male violence"

"reduction in alcohol and drug controlled crime and nuisance"

"[need to improve] The Youth Justice System, built on the fears and punishing attitudes we have to our young people, particularly First Nations children - a third of our population."

"Feeling safe in your community is still something that is required. Not happy about walking at dusk or later by myself"

"Safety in our own homes."

"More community policing, perhaps Volunteer 'Trouble Spotters'."

"Create safe environments."

Wish #12 Money & discounts

control cost of living increases

more income support and concessions for older people

financial support to enable seniors to volunteer

increased funding for services and facilities that support older people

empathy for those who are struggling financially



"Good if council could significantly reduce rates for pensioners."

"Seniors card holders getting the same medical concessions as pension card holders."

"There appears to be a gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots', such that there is little empathy for those of us with financial limitations"

"Not having much money you can't do a lot of things with the community as outings etc are hard to afford when on pension. You even have to limit how you afford how much to spend on m/tea & lunch"

"Rent capped at less than 30% of the single pension."

"Some recompence for volunteer work, that saves government from paying in the first place ... everyone wants help, but then they want more help, and before you know it you are using limited finances to do volunteer work."

"To give Seniors further discounts on major bills"

"More funding given to the senior citizens organisation"

"More Pensioner Concessions or vouchers for foodstores, taxis, entrance fees eg Zoo and Museums, Theatres etc I can't afford treats, and am lucky family / friends will pay for me sometimes"

"They lack facilities and programmes for older people too due to finances"

"What we need is funding for more projects"

"alas there is a huge shortage of funding to look after small rural towns. More money is spent on the main city dwellers and rural [area] is left with second rate everything."

Wish #13 Job opportunities & effort

employment opportunities for older people

part time and casual work options

jobs for locals not outside contractors

encouragement to volunteer

effort from others to participate



“More employment opportunities valuing experience and gained expertise.”

“The acceptance of older people in the paid workforce.”

“More involvement by others. I have too many just observing or participating in social events arranged for them. They are not always prepared to share the workload.”

“More emphasis on employment opportunities for locals of all ages as it once used to be, rather than mainly sub contracting staff and companies from outside of our district. This system is NOT saving money, rather it is costing money with huge inefficiencies.”

“Give seniors more opportunities to help out with part-time work”

“Encourage community members to participate where possible. I think that when we get back to a relatively normal lifestyle, older, retired and semi-retired people need to be encouraged to volunteer again.”

Wish #14 Attitudes & local culture

less ageism

understanding of older people's contributions and needs

respect, selflessness and care for others

community spirit

neighbourliness

slower pace

a community reflective of older people's values (though these vary and conflict)



“education of people to encourage and ensure respect for all people”

“Greater awareness of older people and willingness to engage with them”

“Live in rural city. People coming from larger places bringing their stresses but not the advantages”

“people being kinder and more patient; watching out for each other”

“Improved perceptions about the value that older people have to offer”

“Less parochialism”

“The pace of life has to slow down. Everyone wants to do everything and they want to do straight away not wait and earn it.”

“Stop ghosting older persons, like their ideas are stupid and don't fit with current society ideas.”

“foster interactions between people and groups of diverse backgrounds”

“Less diversity. More religion.”

Wish #15 Better government

grassroots involvement of older constituents

consulting older people more

transparency and honesty

proactive attention, funding and action for older people

no corruption, obstruction and ineffectiveness

less government control



“governments at all levels play an important role in ensuring that community groups have the resources they need to allow older members to participate.”

“Much more focus by all levels of government and respect is needed. But I have no confidence that this will happen in my life time”

“They need to have some seniors advise them on what WE need”

“greater local involvement”

“stop the rot at the top”

“Better public service”

“A local council that cares about their constituents, our council doesn't”

“more legitimate engagement and consultation with my demographic”

“Shire engagement and honesty when working with residents.”

“Less government interference, more funds”

More information

+If you would like to discuss these topics or the survey further, contact the National Seniors Research Team at research@nationalseniors.com.au