

Older American Attitudes Toward Mobility and Transportation

We are pleased to share these findings from survey research conducted November 28 – 30 interviewing 404 U.S. adults age 65 years of age and older on the topic of mobility and transportation. The findings are projectable to the target population within a sampling error of ± 4.9 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Detailed findings follow.

HIGHLIGHTS

Not surprisingly, mobility and independence are of high importance to senior citizens, particularly as they get older. Older Americans want to maintain their independence for as long as they can and worry that they will be stranded and unable to get around when they are no longer able to drive.

Importantly, senior citizens recognize the role that public transportation plays in maintaining their quality of life. They believe that public transportation offers mobility and access to the things they need in everyday life, providing older Americans with the freedom they seek. This sentiment is even more pronounced when thinking about driving alone at night with the majority of senior citizens saying "... public transportation is a better alternative to driving alone, particularly at night."

While most older Americans do not currently use public transportation in their community, they report a much higher likelihood of using it if it were more readily available and/or addressed the needs of seniors.

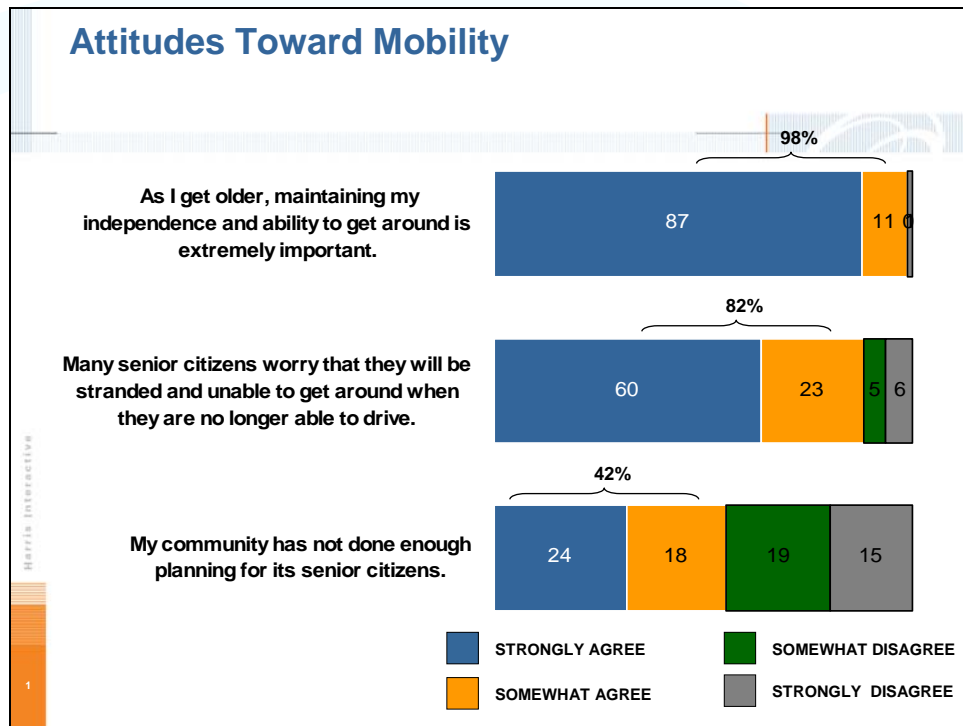
ATTITUDES TOWARD MOBILITY

Older Americans place a high importance on their mobility and worry about being stranded when they are unable to drive (82% agree).

There is nearly universal agreement (98%) among older Americans that maintaining a sense of independence and mobility is extremely important. Notably, seniors are very intense in their stance on this issue with fully 87 percent saying they strongly agree with the statement, "As I get older, maintaining my independence and ability to get around is extremely important." Only on percent voice disagreement. While both men and women place a high importance on independence and mobility, women are more likely to strongly agree with the statement.

Given this strong sense of independence, it is not surprising to find that most seniors (82%) worry that, as they get older, they will be unable to get around. Three-in-five (60%) “strongly agree” with the statement “Many seniors citizens worry that they will be stranded and unable to get around when they are no longer to drive,” while one-quarter (23%) voice softer support to this statement saying they “somewhat agree.” Only eleven percent (11%) do not believe that many seniors worry about being stranded when they are unable to drive.

Interestingly, seniors who report that public transportation is not available in their area are significantly more likely to agree (89%) with the statement that “many senior citizens worry that they will be stranded and unable to get around when they are no longer able to drive.”

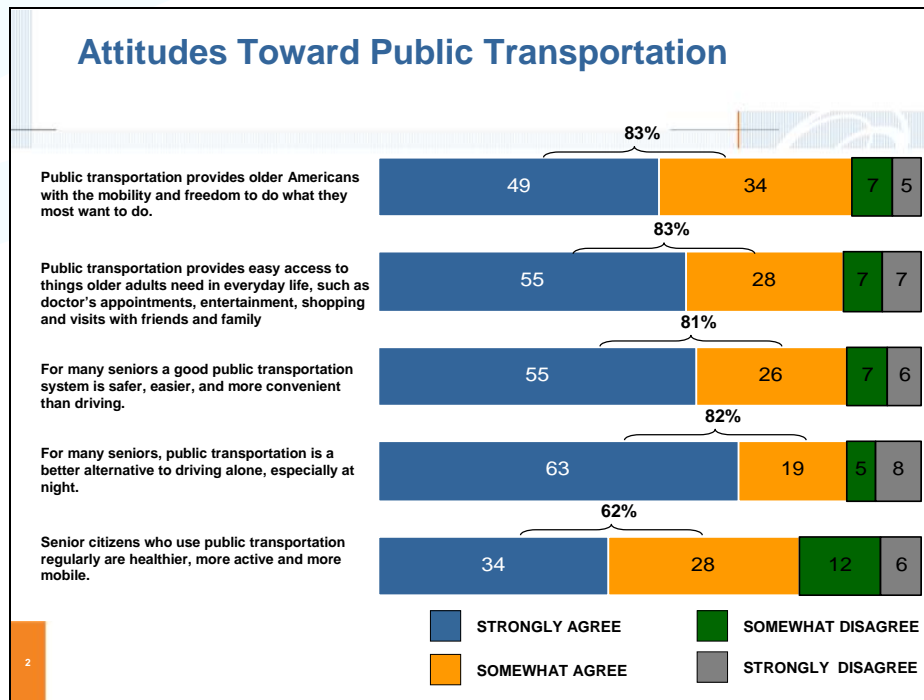


While older Americans show concern about future mobility, attitudes toward community planning varies. Two-in-five (42%) agree that “my community has not done enough planning for its senior citizens” while one-third (34%) disagree with the statement. One in five (20%) have no opinion.

ATTITUDES TOWARD PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Most older Americans are in agreement that public transportation enhances their quality of life. Four in five older adults (83%) agree that public transportation provides them with the mobility and freedom to do what they most want to do, with almost half (49%) voicing strong agreement. One in ten (12%) do not believe that public transportation provides older Americans with mobility and freedom to do what they most want to do.

The majority of older Americans (83%) also agree that “public transportation provides easy access to things older adults need in everyday life, such as doctor’s appointments, entertainment, shopping and visits with friends and family” with more than half (55%) voicing strong agreement; fourteen percent disagree. Older women are more likely than their male counterparts to agree that public transportation provides easy access to things older adults need.

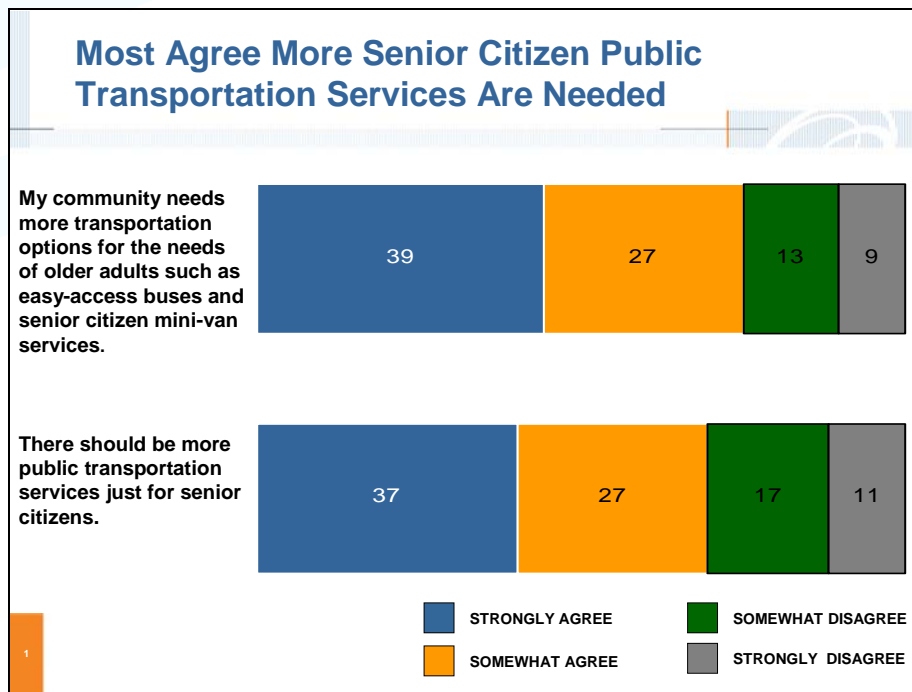


Perhaps one of the greatest benefits that public transportation provides older Americans is the ability to get around, particularly at night. Eight out of ten older Americans (82%) believe that “for many seniors, public transportation is a better alternative to driving alone, particularly at night” and almost two-thirds (63%) strongly agree with this point of view. Approximately one in ten (13%) do not believe that public transit is a better alternative to driving alone.

Seniors also link public transportation usage to better health and mobility. Two-thirds (62%) of older Americans agree that “senior citizens who regularly use public transportation lead more healthier more active, mobile in their daily life” with one-third (34%) voicing strong agreement with the statement. Eighteen percent disagree with the statement. Those more likely to say that they strongly agree tend to be women and those who have used public transportation in the past month.

THE NEED FOR MORE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Most older adults desire more public transportation that specifically addresses the needs of senior citizens. Two-thirds (66%) of older Americans believe that “their community needs to provide more transportation options for older adults such as easy-access busses and senior citizen mini-van services.” Much of this support is strong with two in five (39%) strongly agreeing with the need for more transportation options and 27 percent voicing soft agreement. One-quarter (22%) do not believe that the community needs to provide more focused transportation options for its older citizens.

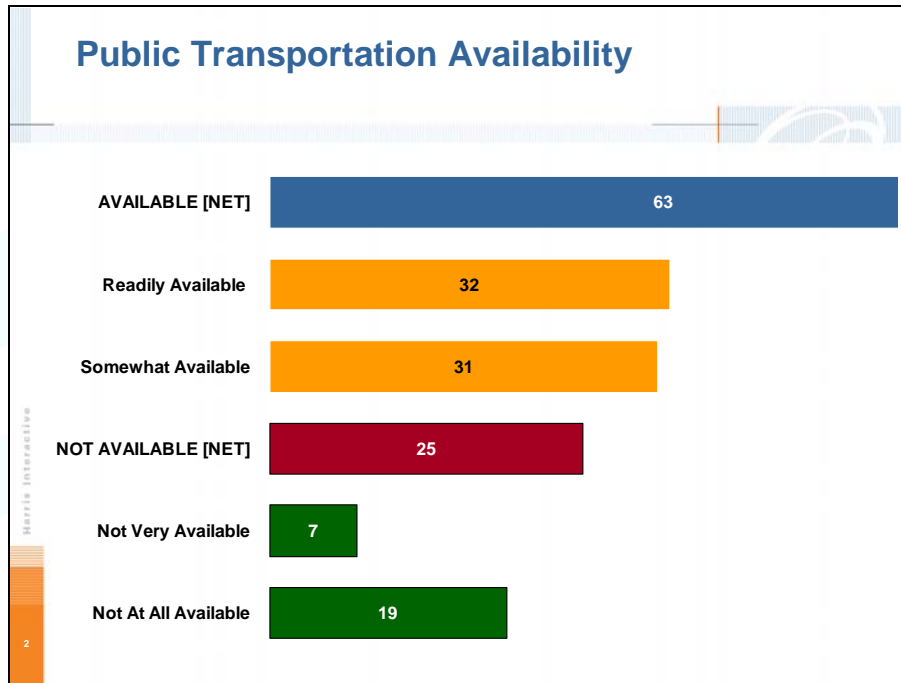


When asked about public transportation services just for senior citizens, a large number of seniors say they are unaware of such services. Nearly half of older Americans are unaware (45%) of public transportation services just for senior citizens in their community. An equal number (46%) are aware of such services

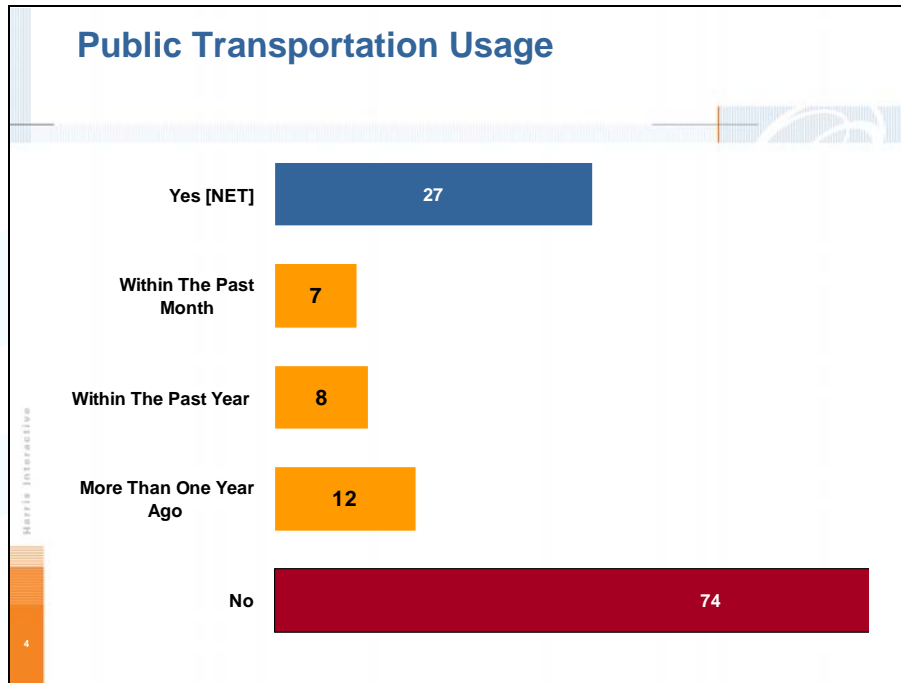
While half of seniors are aware of public transit services available for older adults, many of them want more of these services. In fact, when asked, 64% of seniors say they agree that “there should be more public transportation services just for senior citizens.” Two-fifths (37%) “strongly agree” that there should be more senior-focused public transportation services with 27% saying they “somewhat agree”; one-fourth (27%) disagree.

AVAILABILITY AND USAGE OF PUBLIC TRANSIT

Most older Americans have never used public transportation but are aware of its availability in their area. Almost two-thirds (63%) say that public transportation is available in the community or region where they live while 25 percent report a lack of public transit services.



Most seniors have never used public transit services in their community. Three in four (74%) report that they have never used the public transportation services in their community or region in which they live. About one-quarter (27%) say they have used local public transit – 7% within the past month, 8% within the past year but not in the past month, and 12% more than one year ago. Not surprisingly, those less likely to report using public transit tend to live in small towns or rural areas with no public transportation services available in their locale. Half (55%) of those who say that public transportation is readily available in their community report never having used public transportation.

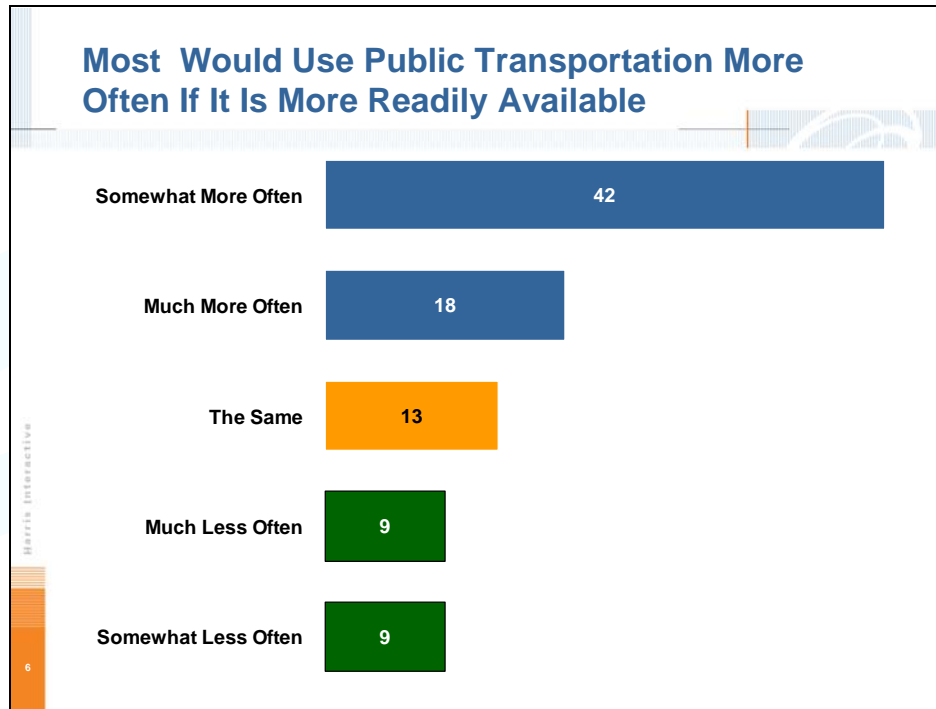


Seniors say they don't use public transportation more often largely because they already drive (69%) to their destination or because public transportation is not available (17%), too inconvenient (7%) or doesn't reach the desired destination (3%).

While many seniors personally don't use public transportation, the majority (57%) agree that "today, older Americans are using public transportation services such as buses and mini-vans for their travel needs." However, much of this agreement is soft as one-quarter (26%) say they "strongly agree" with the statement and one-third (31%) only "somewhat agree"; fourteen percent disagree. One-fourth (26%) say they do not know.

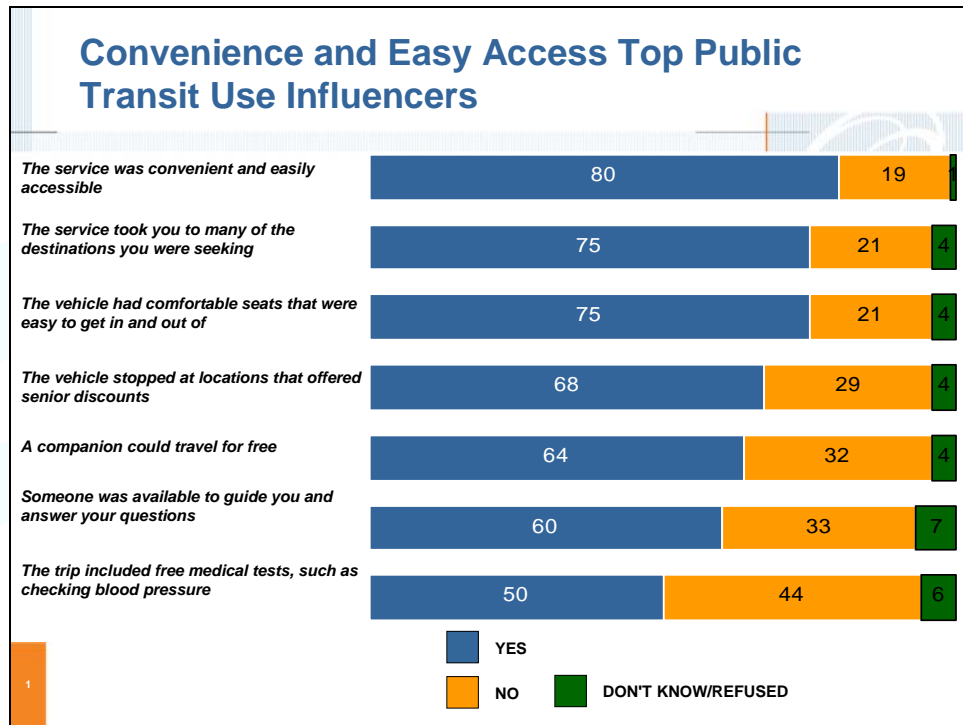
OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE USAGE

If public transportation were more readily available, most older Americans (73%) would ride it just as much or more than they currently do. When asked if public transportation were more readily available, three fifths (60%) say they would use public transportation more often of which nearly a fifth (18%) say they would use public transportation "much more often."



Seniors would consider using public transportation on a more regular basis if:

- it was convenient and easily accessible (80%)
- the services were more comfortable and took them to many of the destinations they were seeking (75%)
- the stops were at locations that offered senior discounts (68%)
- their companion traveled for free (64%)
- there was a guide available to answer their questions (60%)
- free medical tests were included with the trip (50%)



Methodology

Harris Interactive® conducted the telephone survey on behalf of the American Public Transportation Association between November 28 and 30, 2005 among 404 U.S. adults aged 65 and over. Figures for region, age and gender were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the actual population. Participants were selected and screened using targeted sampling techniques. The margin of error for a sample of this size is +/- 4.9% at a 95% confidence level.