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Planning for the Growing Older Population: Conducting Community Needs Assessments

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Community Partners

- Town of Cohasset, Department of Elder Affairs
- Town of Hingham, Department of Elder Affairs
- City of Boston, Commission on Affairs of the Elderly

We conducted needs assessments when area communities reached out to the Gerontology Institute. Preliminary meetings and introductions were conducted by Professor Jan Mutchler. The research team worked in collaboration with the towns' stakeholders throughout the process.

Goals and Objectives

- To describe the aging population of each community
- To investigate the needs, interests and opinions of mature residents relating to their aging needs for age-related services in their respective communities
- To provide recommendations to community partners and their stakeholders about how to create strong communities for older adults, based on needs assessment results
- Generate reports and other documents to be used by the Department of Elder Services, other town offices, organizations that provide services, advocates, and community members

Approaches

Key indicators for becoming a 'livable' community for older adults:

- Demographic information, including population growth
- Availability and affordability of housing suitable for aging in place
- Transportation options that allow individuals to maintain social relationships, access community amenities and needed services
- Availability of community features and services that meet people's evolving needs, including senior center services
- Social support and well-being of adults 45+, including caregiving responsibilities

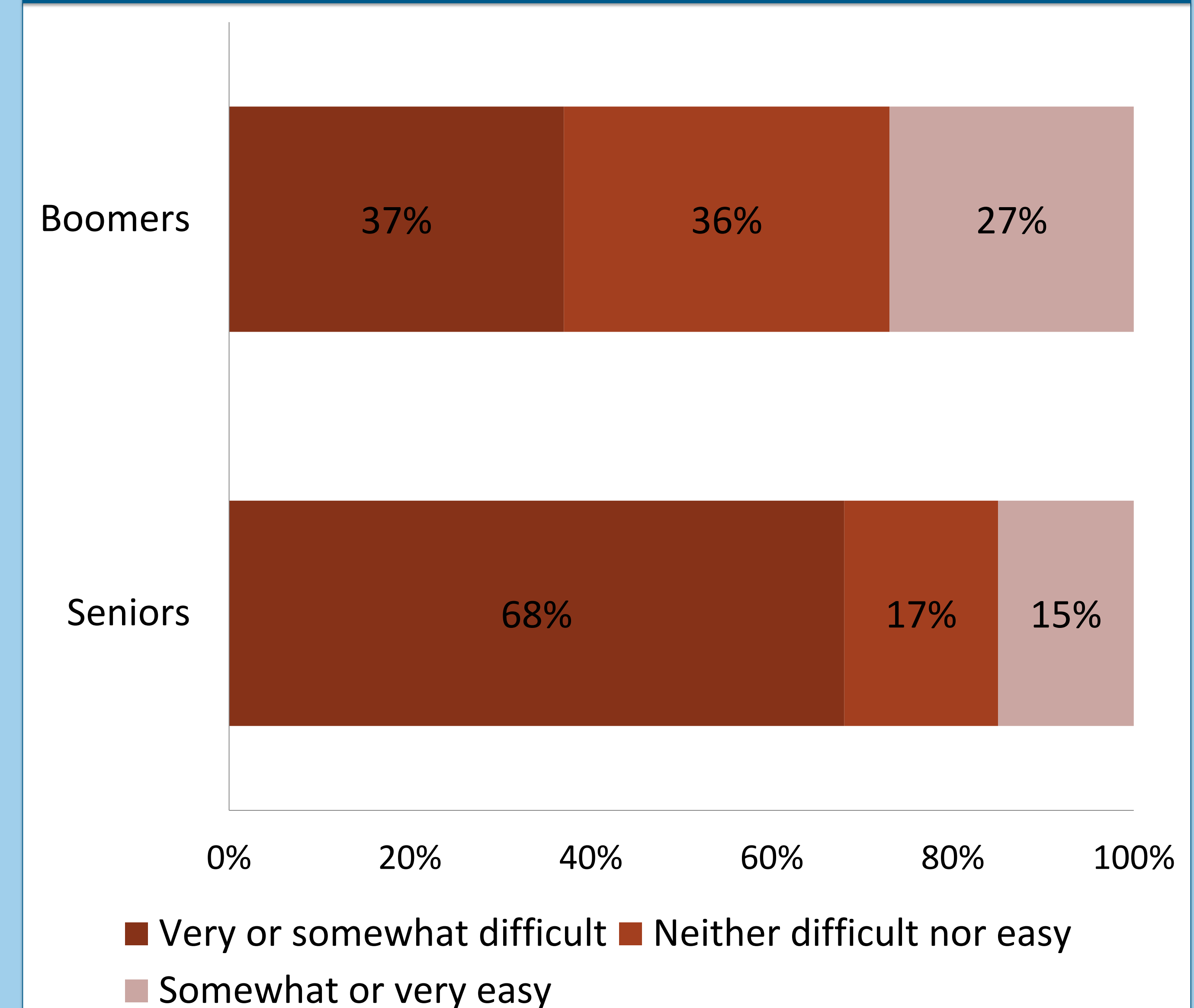
Methods

- Demographic profile
- Sample Survey
 - Boomers (45+)
 - Seniors (65+)
 - Oldest Old (80+)
- Focus groups
 - Seniors
 - Providers
- Key Informant Interviews with town leaders
- Peer Community Comparison

Example Finding

- One key finding from the Hingham Sample Survey was regarding caregiving duties
- The figure below illustrates that of the 18% of Boomers and 14% of Seniors who reported caregiving responsibilities, 37% and 68% respectively, reported some difficulty in carrying out their caregiving tasks

Caregiving Difficulty



Resources

- <http://www.umb.edu/gerontologyinstitute>
- Report example: http://www.hingham-ma.com/elder/Documents/Aging_in_Hingham.pdf