



The Associated Press-NORC
Center for Public Affairs Research

HOW WELL CAN COMMUNITIES SUPPORT AGING AT HOME?

Overall, more people think their local area is doing a good job than a poor job meeting the needs of older adults when it comes to many services, including health care, healthy food and nutrition, social activities, transportation, and in-home supports, according to a new study from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Crucially, however, it finds that non-white adults and those in lower-income households hold more negative evaluations of how well their community provides many of these services.



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An overwhelming majority of adults in America would prefer to receive any ongoing living assistance they may need at home or with a loved one.¹ This study asked the public to evaluate their local area on many aspects of what makes a community capable of supporting adults aging at home. It investigates which groups have greater access to these types of support, finding key differences by age, race and ethnicity, income, and urbanicity. It also explores the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these supports and evaluates differences in which groups have recovered more than others.

Three Things You Should Know

About The Long-Term Care Poll on
Community Support

Among Adults Age 18 and Older:

- 1) 46% think their local area does a good job meeting older adults' needs for health care, but white adults are more likely to think so than non-white adults (52% vs. 37%).
- 2) 34% are unsure about the access to home health aides for older adults in their community, including 26% of those age 60 and older and 38% of those age 18-59.
- 3) 53% feel that their local area has mostly or completely recovered from the pandemic, though white adults are more likely than non-white adults to say so (59% vs. 44%).

¹ The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. (May, 2021). "Long-Term Care in America: Americans Want to Age at Home." <https://www.longtermcarepoll.org/project/long-term-care-in-america-americans-want-to-age-at-home>.

Looking specifically at health care services, more than half of all adults think their local area does a good job providing access to pharmacies, primary care doctors, urgent care, and dental and vision care for older adults. But, non-white people are less likely than white people to think their area does a good job.

Much of the public, though, expresses uncertainty about how well their area is meeting the needs of their community's older adults. In particular, there is a great deal of uncertainty around the availability of health care services like mental health supports and home health aides. Uncertainty about the availability of these and other health care services is especially high among those age 18-59, and while this group might not yet need assistance related to aging, many of these adults will find themselves providing care to an aging loved one in the coming years.²

Help from trusted personal networks is also critical to aging at home, and most adults report having people outside their household whom they can rely on for help when they need it, like when they are sick, for emotional support, or for other minor emergencies. However, those with lower incomes are less likely to have a large group of trusted people to turn to outside their home.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted many aspects of society and continues to do so. During the current phase of the pandemic, just 53% describe their local area as mostly or completely recovered, and even fewer think places of worship, businesses, or civic organizations specifically have recovered. Non-white adults, those with lower incomes, and those living in urban areas describe lower levels of recovery in their local area. Coupled with poorer access to health care and smaller trusted networks, the study underscores the greater difficulties these groups face aging at home.

The AP-NORC Center conducted this study with funding from The SCAN Foundation. The survey includes 1,071 interviews with a nationally representative sample of adults living in America using the AmeriSpeak Panel®, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Interviews were conducted between June 10-14, 2021, via web and phone in English. The margin of sampling error is +/- 4.2 percentage points.

Other key findings include:

- Eighty-two percent of adults have at least a few trustworthy people outside their home whom they can rely on for help, but 10% have just one person they can turn to and 8% have none.
- Those living in urban areas are less likely to count on neighbors (11%) than those living in suburban (19%) or rural (20%) areas as people they can trust for help.
- Those living in urban areas are more likely than those in rural areas to think their area does a good job meeting older adults' needs for transportation (46% vs. 29%).
- More think their local area is doing a poor job than a good job providing older adults with access to affordable housing (32% vs. 26%).
- Adults in households earning \$100,000 or more are more likely to think their area does a good job with healthy food and nutrition than those in households that make less than \$50,000 (53% vs 39%).
- At least half do not know about the availability of services like in-person safety checks (54%); crisis hotlines for mental health support (51%); or government agencies to help find needed services (50%).

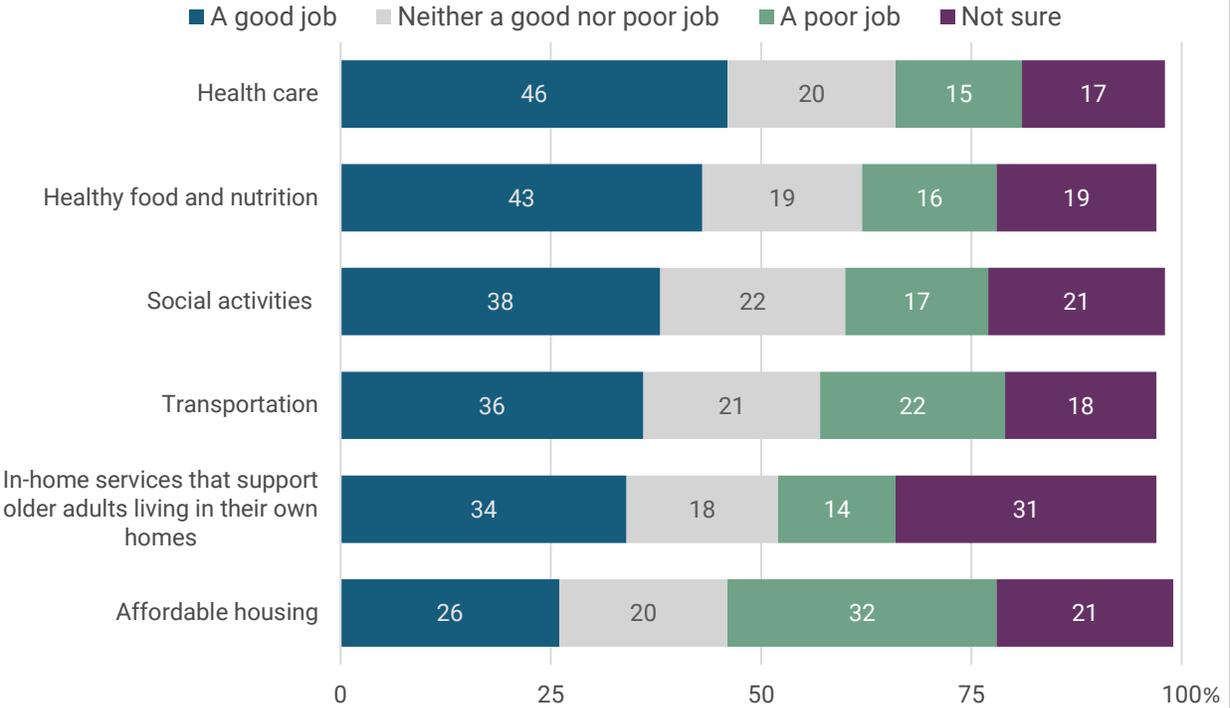
² <https://acl.gov/ltc/basic-needs>

- Compared to white adults, non-white adults are less likely to think their area does a good job providing access to high-quality grocery stores (55% vs. 72%); places of worship (56% vs. 73%); and Wi-Fi (39% vs. 55%) to people like them.
- White adults are more likely than non-white adults to describe places of worship (54% vs. 41%) and businesses (47% vs. 34%) in their local area as mostly or completely recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Those living in rural areas are more likely than those living in urban areas to describe businesses (49% vs. 35%) and civic organizations (40% vs. 26%) in their area as mostly or completely recovered from the pandemic.
- Thirty-six percent feel that their area has opportunities for residents of all ages and backgrounds to connect to discuss important civic issues, and 37% feel the same about opportunities to participate in decision-making bodies like community councils or committees.
- Non-white adults are more likely than white adults to think their area does a poor job providing opportunities to discuss civic issues (27% vs. 16%) or participate in decision-making bodies (26% vs. 15%).

THOUGH MOST FEEL THEIR AREA DOES A GOOD JOB PROVIDING SERVICES THAT WOULD HELP OLDER ADULTS AGE AT HOME, NON-WHITE AND LOWER-INCOME PEOPLE ARE LESS LIKELY TO THINK SO.

Overall, more adults think their local area is doing a good job than a poor job meeting the needs of older adults when it comes to health care, healthy food and nutrition, social activities, transportation, and in-home services that support those living in their own homes. Affordable housing is one exception: more think their area is doing a poor job than a good job meeting this need. Still, information on these services isn't widespread—about 1 in 5 are not sure how well their area provides these services to older adults.

More people think their area is doing a good job than a poor job meeting needs of older adults.



Question: In general, do you think the area where you currently live does a good job, a poor job, or neither a good nor poor job meeting the needs of older adults for...?
Source: The AP-NORC Long Term Care Poll conducted June 10-14, 2021, with 1,071 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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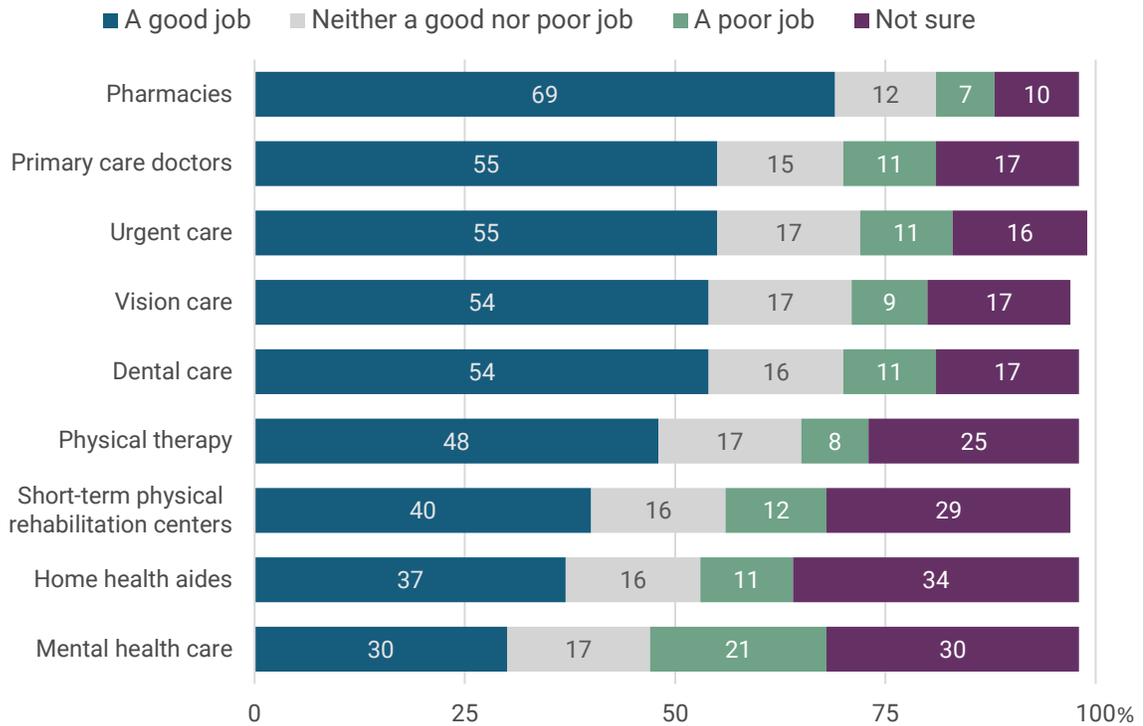
Adults under age 60—many of whom may provide care to an aging loved one in the future—have less familiarity with how well their community meets the needs of older adults: across nearly all of these services, they are more likely than those age 60 and older to say they are not sure.

Other demographic differences also emerge on specific services. Adults in households making \$100,000 or more are more likely to think their area does a good job with healthy food and nutrition than those who make less than \$50,000 (53% vs. 39%). Those living in urban areas are more likely than those in rural areas to think their area does a good job meeting older adults’ needs for transportation (46% vs. 29%). Additionally, 52% of white adults think their area does a good job meeting needs for health care compared to just 37% of those who are non-white.

Looking at specific health care services, more adults think their area is doing a good than poor job providing access to a variety of services, especially pharmacies, primary care doctors, physical therapy, dental care, and urgent care. However, many are unsure, particularly when it comes to home health aides, mental health care, and short-term rehabilitation centers.

More people think their area is doing a good job than a poor job providing health care services for older adults.

Percent of adults



Question: Do you think the area where you currently live does a good job, a poor job, or neither a good nor poor job of providing access to each of the following for older adults?

Source: The AP-NORC Long Term Care Poll conducted June 10-14, 2021, with 1,071 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

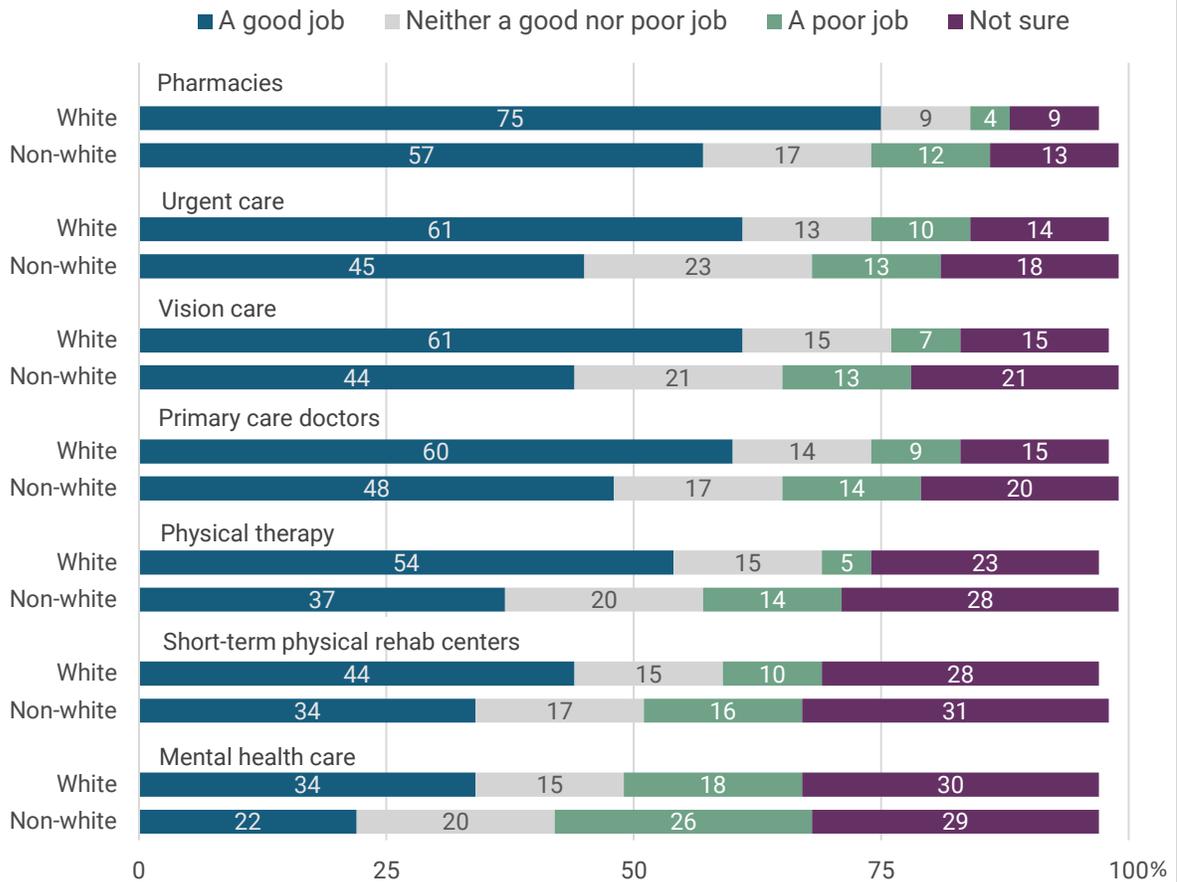


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There are differences by race across a range of these health care services, with white adults more likely than non-white adults to think their area does a good job providing access to many of them even though uncertainty is similar for both groups.

White adults think their area does a better job providing health care services for older adults than non-white adults.

Percent of adults



Question: Do you think the area where you currently live does a good job, a poor job, or neither a good nor poor job of providing access to each of the following for older adults?

Source: The AP-NORC Long Term Care Poll conducted June 10-14, 2021, with 1,071 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

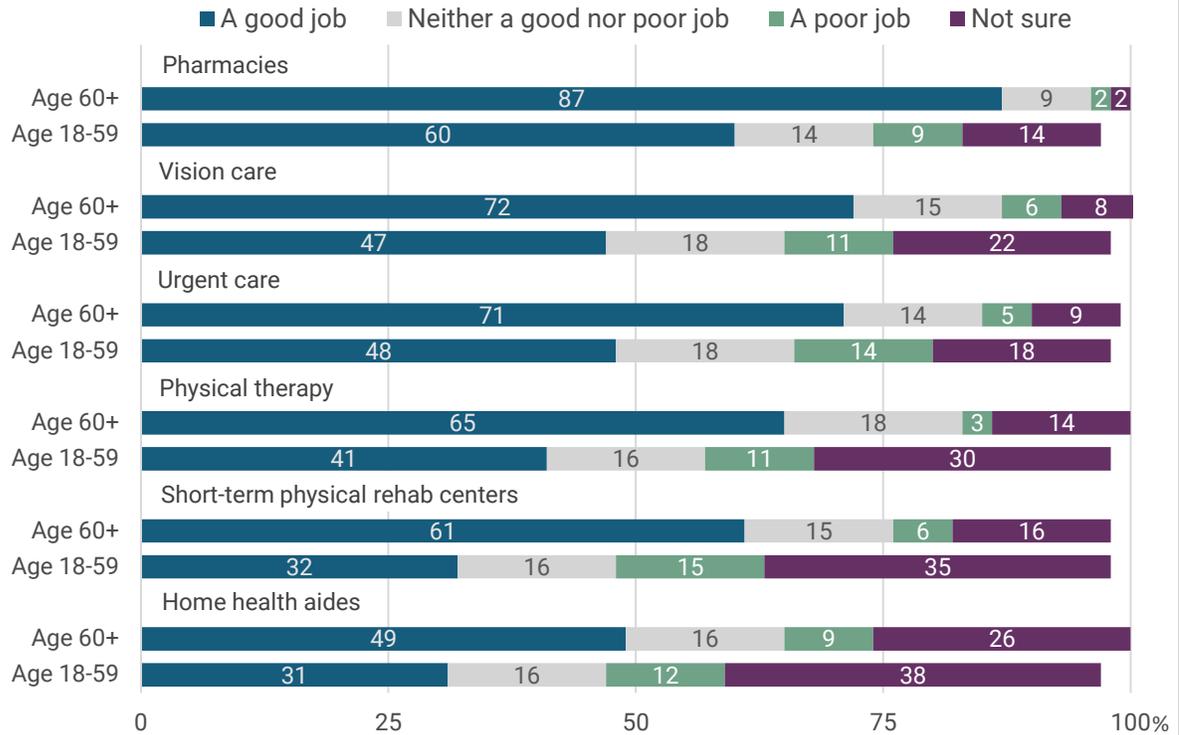


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Those age 60 and older have generally positive evaluations of the availability of health care services in their area, and they are more likely than those age 18-59 to think their area does a good job when it comes to most health care services. But, once again, adults age 18-59 are more likely to express uncertainty about whether these services are available at all compared to those age 60 and older.

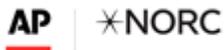
Older adults are more aware of services in their area, and are more likely to think their area does a good job providing access to them.

Percent of adults



Question: Do you think the area where you currently live does a good job, a poor job, or neither a good nor poor job of providing access to each of the following for older adults?

Source: The AP-NORC Long Term Care Poll conducted June 10-14, 2021, with 1,071 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

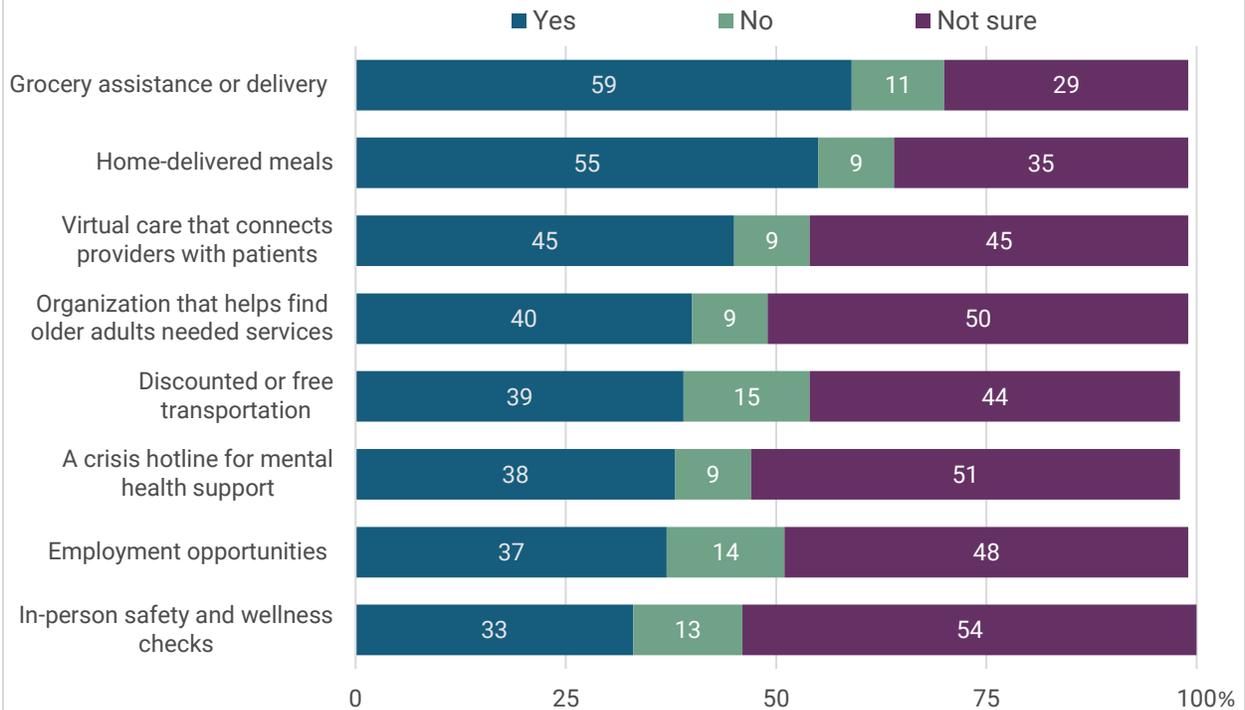


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Access to dental care varies by income: 59% of those in households earning \$50,000 a year or more think their area does a good job providing dental care compared to 49% of those who make less than \$50,000.

When it comes to specific services for older adults that might help them age at home like grocery delivery, virtual care, wellness checks, or affordable transportation, there is widespread uncertainty about their availability. At least half do not know about the availability of services like in-person safety checks, crisis hotlines for mental health support, or government agencies to help find needed services. But, more than half report that their area provides grocery assistance or delivery and home-delivered meals.

Many adults are unsure about which services for older adults are available in their area.



Question: To the best of your knowledge, are each of the following services for older adults available in the area where you currently live, or not?

Source: The AP-NORC Long Term Care Poll conducted June 10-14, 2021, with 1,071 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



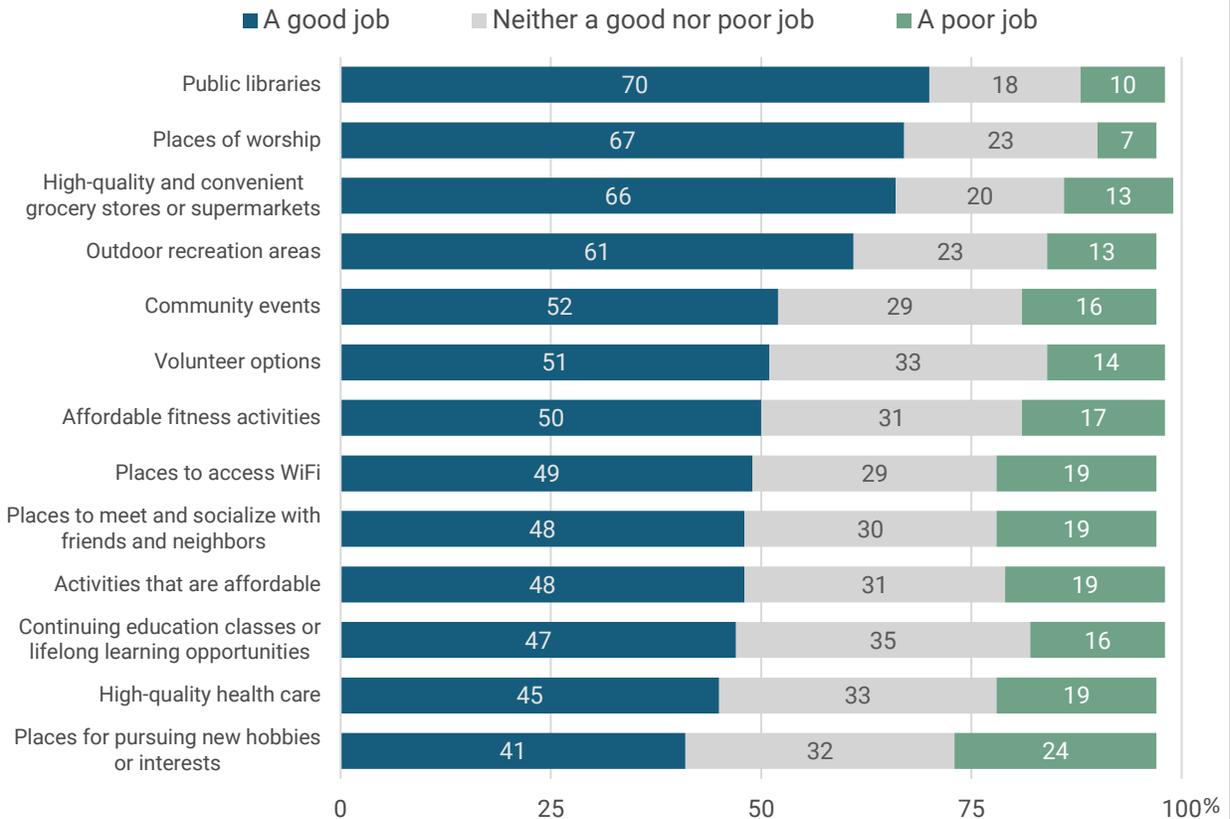
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Those age 60 and older are more likely than those age 18-59 to report that their area provides home-delivered meals (72% vs. 47%); grocery store assistance or delivery (69% vs. 55%); and government or community help to find older adults the services they need (49% vs. 36%). And those in urban areas are more likely to have discounted or free transportation than those in rural areas (48% vs. 30%).

WHILE THE PUBLIC GENERALLY THINKS THEIR LOCAL AREA DOES A GOOD JOB PROVIDING ACCESSIBLE SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES TO PEOPLE LIKE THEM, NON-WHITE ADULTS ARE LESS LIKELY TO THINK SO.

Overall, most adults think the area where they live does a good job providing access to social activities services such as public libraries, places of worship, and high-quality, convenient grocery stores. This is true for both older and younger adults. More than half of adults overall also think their area does a good job providing access to outdoor recreation areas, community events like parades and festivals, and volunteer options. However, fewer think the same about continuing education classes, high-quality health care, and places for pursuing new hobbies or interests.

Many Americans say the areas where they live do a good job of providing services to people like them.



Question: Do you think the area where you currently live does a good job, a poor job, or neither a good nor poor job making each of the following accessible to people like you?

Source: The AP-NORC Long Term Care Poll conducted June 10-14, 2021, with 1,071 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

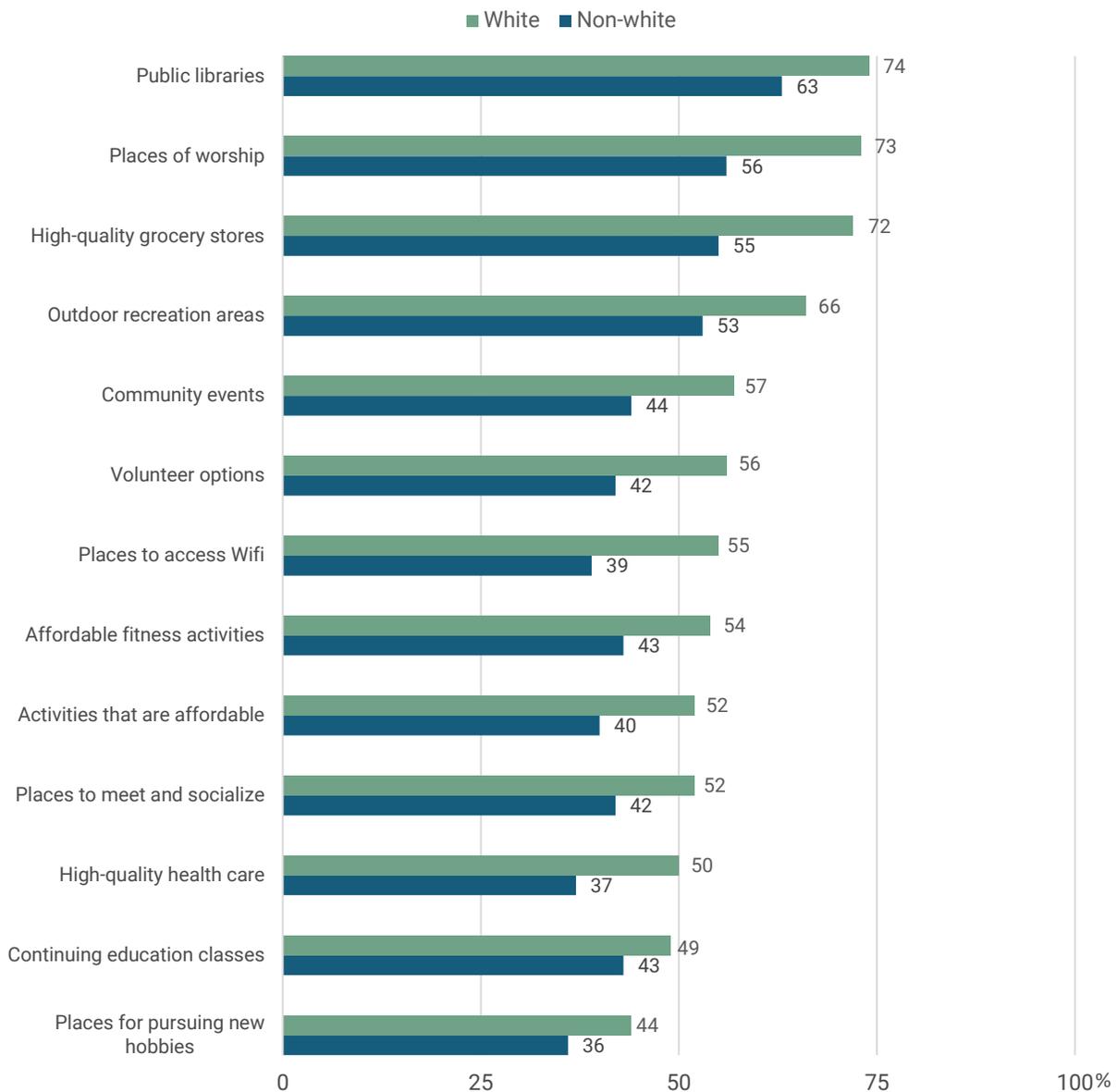


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Compared to white adults, non-white adults are less likely to think their area does a good job providing affordable activities, high-quality health care, places to socialize, places for pursuing new hobbies, affordable fitness activities, outdoor recreation areas, high-quality and convenient grocery stores, volunteer options, places of worship, community events, public libraries, and places to access Wi-Fi. The differences are even more pronounced when considering access to high-quality grocery stores, places of worship, and accessible Wi-Fi.

Non-white adults are less likely than white adults to think that their area does a good job providing accessible services.

Percent of adults who say their area does a good job



Question: Do you think the area where you currently live does a good job, a poor job, or neither a good nor poor job making each of the following accessible to people like you?

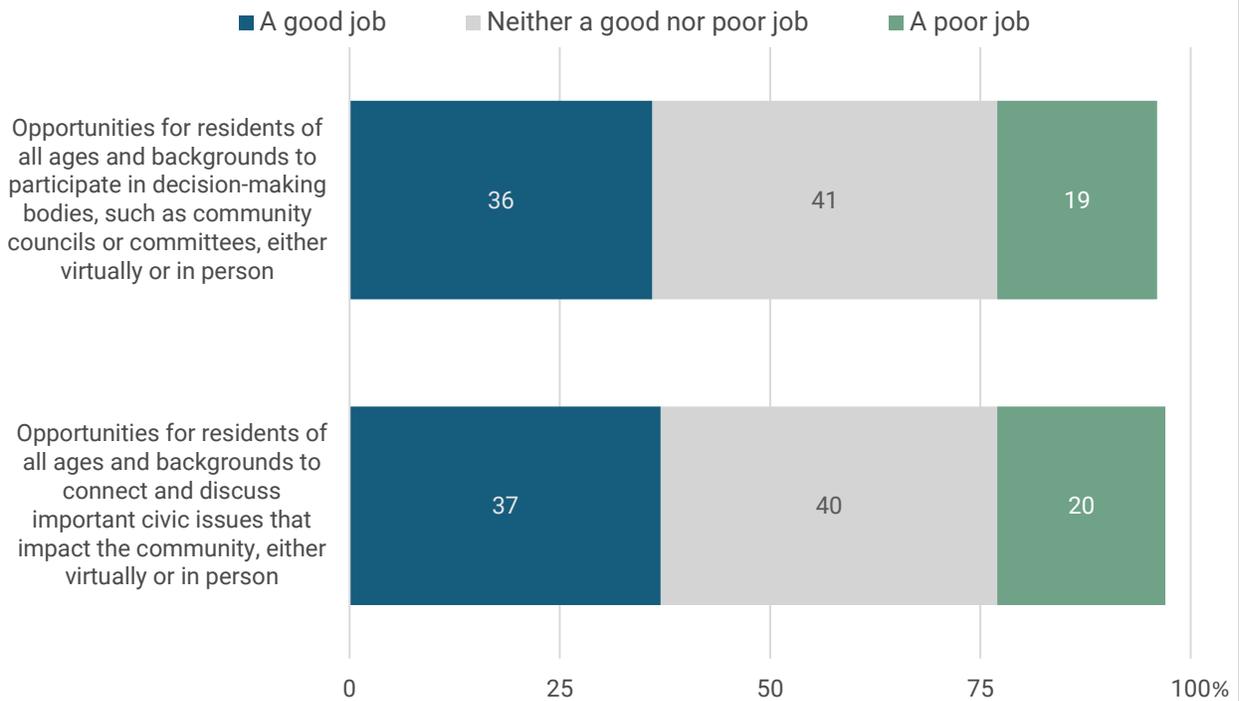
Source: The AP-NORC Long Term Care Poll conducted June 10-14, 2021, with 1,071 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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The public is less enthusiastic about civic opportunities in their area. Just over one-third feel that their area has opportunities for residents of all ages and backgrounds to connect to discuss important civic issues, and a similar number feel the same about opportunities to participate in decision-making bodies like community councils or committees. Few think their area does a poor job providing these opportunities, though the most common response is a neutral sentiment.

Just over one-third think their area is doing a good job of providing opportunities for civic engagement.



Question: Do you think the area where you currently live does a good job, a poor job, or neither a good nor poor job of providing each of the following?

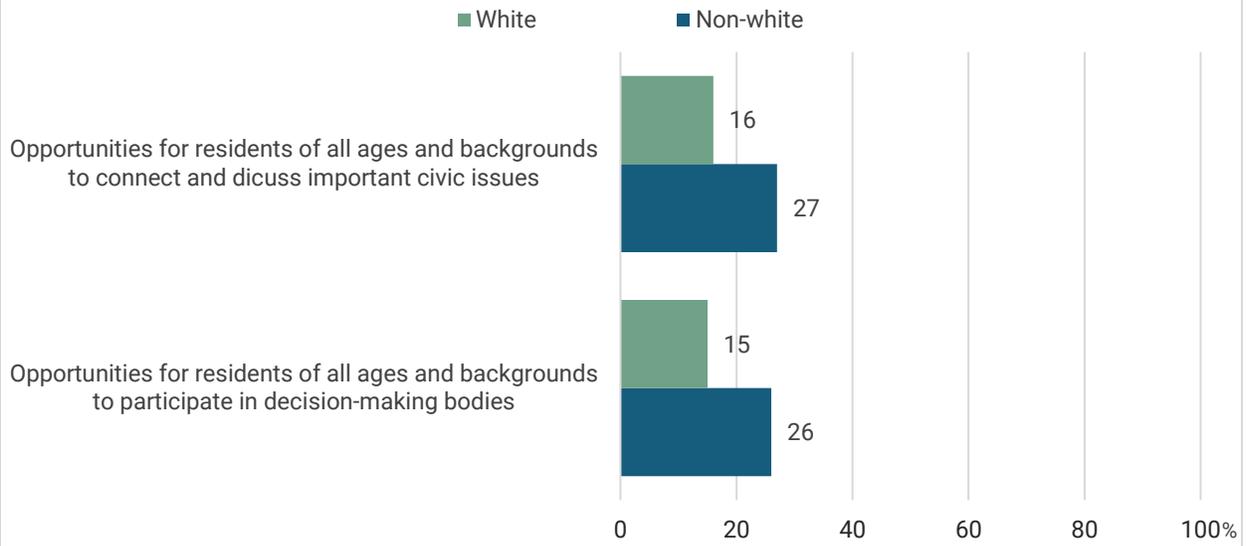
Source: The AP-NORC Long Term Care Poll conducted June 10-14, 2021, with 1,071 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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Differences by race once again emerge, as non-white adults are particularly likely compared to white adults to think their area does a poor job of providing opportunities for civic engagement.

Non-white adults are more likely to think their area does a poor job providing civic engagement opportunities.



Question: Do you think the area where you currently live does a good job, a poor job, or neither a good nor poor job of providing each of the following?

Source: The AP-NORC Long Term Care Poll conducted June 10-14, 2021, with 1,071 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

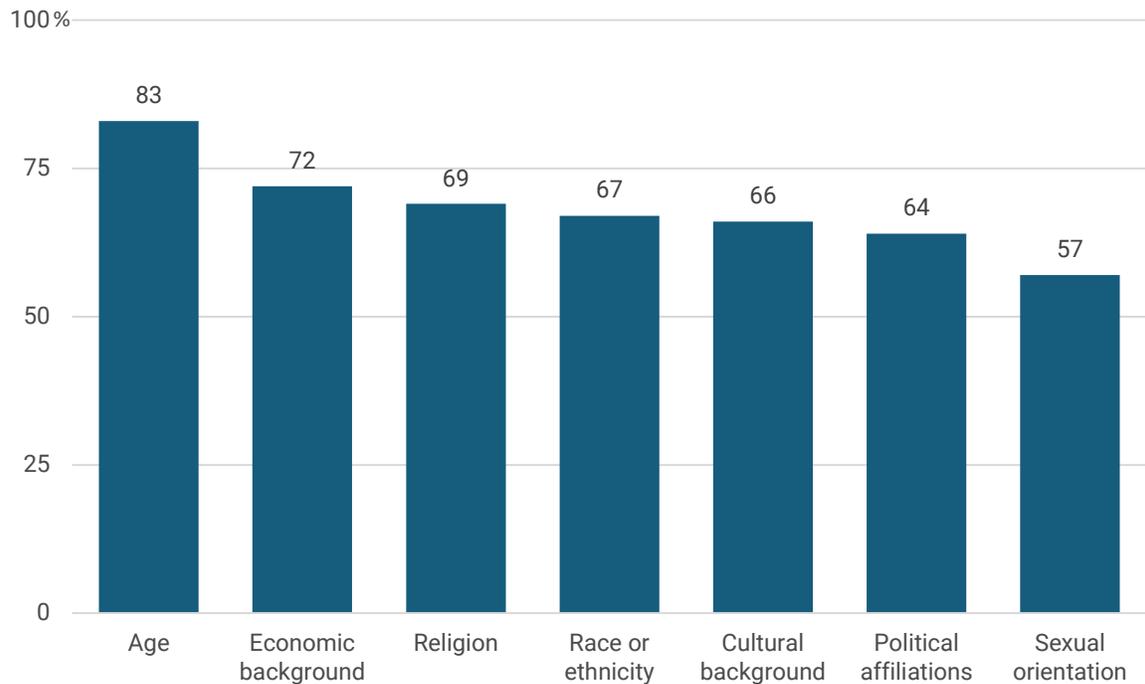


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Most say they live in diverse areas when it comes to race, political affiliation, religion, and cultural background. This is particularly true when it comes to age and economic background.

A majority of the public say they live in a diverse area across a variety of measures.

Percent of adults



Question: Would you say that the area where you currently live has a diverse population with regard to each of the following, or not?

Source: The AP-NORC Long Term Care Poll conducted June 10-14, 2021, with 1,071 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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Those living in urban and suburban areas are more likely than those in rural areas to report that their area is racially diverse (75% and 70% vs. 51%). Older adults, meanwhile, are more likely to report that their area has a religiously and economically diverse population. Seventy-eight percent of adults age 60 and older describe their area as religiously diverse and 80% as economically diverse, compared to 64% and 69% of those age 18-59, respectively.

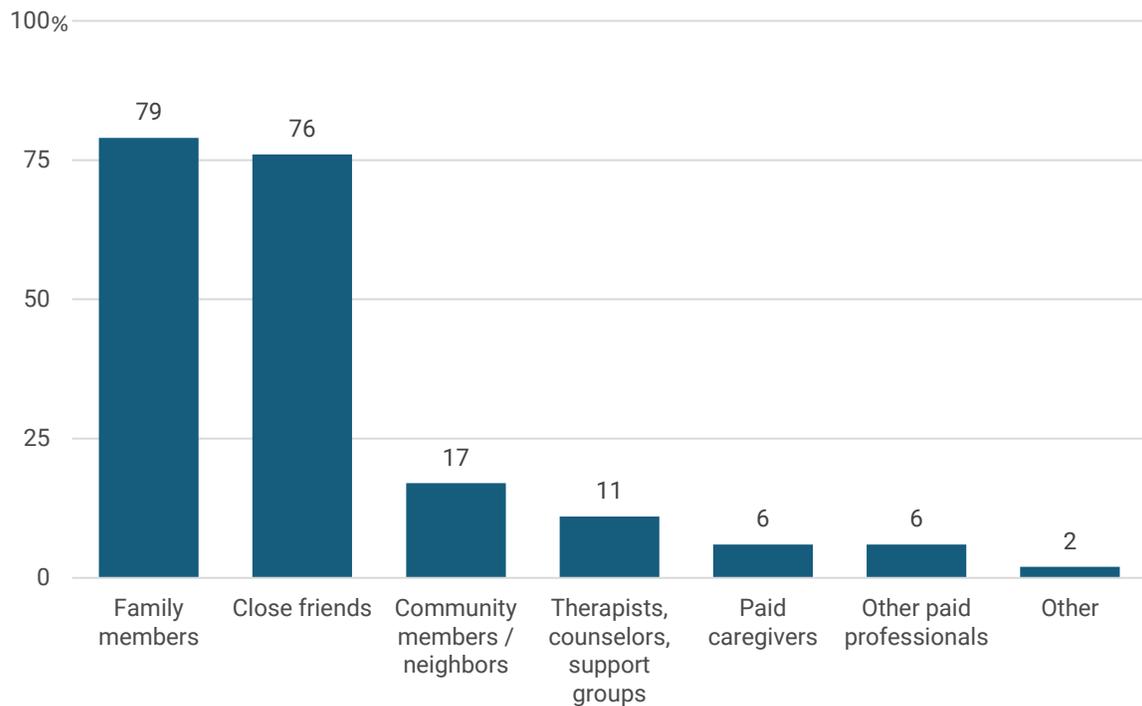
THOUGH MOST PEOPLE—INCLUDING OLDER ADULTS—HAVE AT LEAST A FEW PEOPLE THEY CAN RELY ON FOR HELP, SOME GROUPS ARE MORE LACKING IN PERSONAL SUPPORT OUTSIDE THE HOME THAN OTHERS.

In addition to accessible services and activities, personal support is also critical to aging at home. Most of the public (82%) reports having at least a few trustworthy people they can rely on for help, but 10% have just one person they can turn to and 8% have none. Those in households earning less than \$50,000 a year are less likely to have a few or many trustworthy people outside their home than those in higher-earning households (77% vs. 87%).

For nearly 8 in 10, a family member or a close friend is one of the trusted people outside their household. Fewer count neighbors, therapists or support groups, paid caregivers, or other paid professionals, as part of their trusted network.

Family and close friends are the most common trusted sources of support.

Percent of adults with at least one trustworthy person outside their household



Question: How would you classify the trustworthy (person/people) outside of your household whom you could go to for help? (Select all that apply.)

Source: The AP-NORC Long Term Care Poll conducted June 10-14, 2021, with 1,071 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



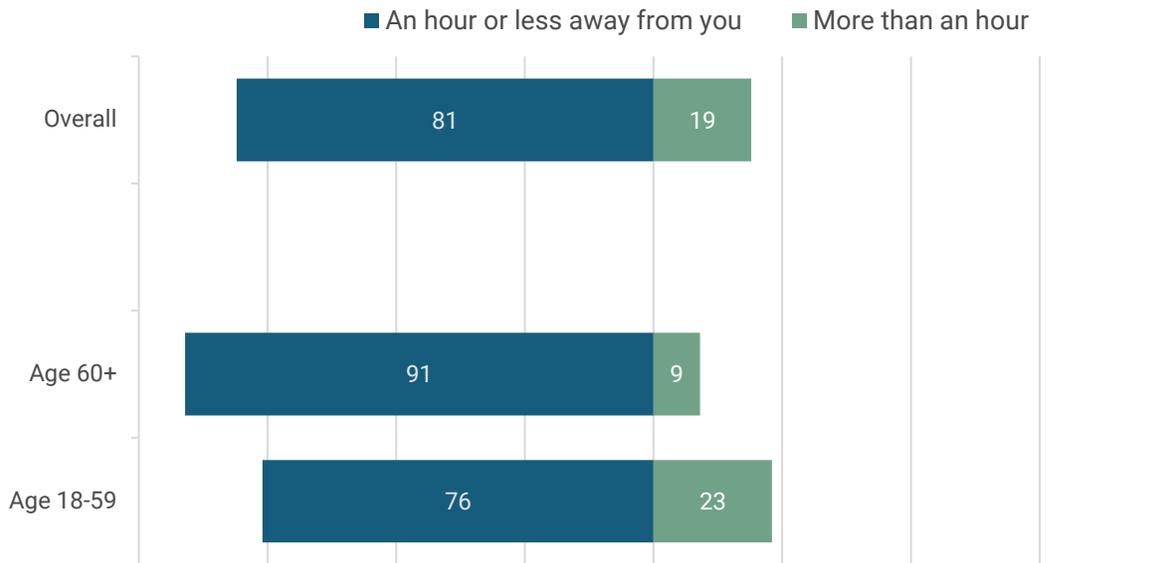
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Those age 60 and older are more likely than those age 18-59 to rely on community members or neighbors (26% vs. 13%) and on other paid professionals (12% vs. 4%). Those living in urban areas are less likely to count on neighbors (11%) than those living in suburban (19%) or rural (20%) areas. And those with disabilities are more likely to count on therapists, counselors, or support groups (17% vs. 8%).

For most adults, their most trusted person outside of their household lives close by. Eighty-one percent say their most trusted person lives less than an hour away, but 19% say they live more than an hour away. Having trusted people close by is important for aging at home, and 91% of adults age 60 and older live less than an hour away from their most trusted person compared to 76% of those age 18-59.

Most adults live close to their most trusted person, and those age 60 and older are more likely to live close by.

Percent of adults with at least one trustworthy person outside their household



Question: Thinking about the most trusted person outside of your household whom you could go to for help, how near or far away does that person live?

Source: The AP-NORC Long Term Care Poll conducted June 10-14, 2021, with 1,071 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



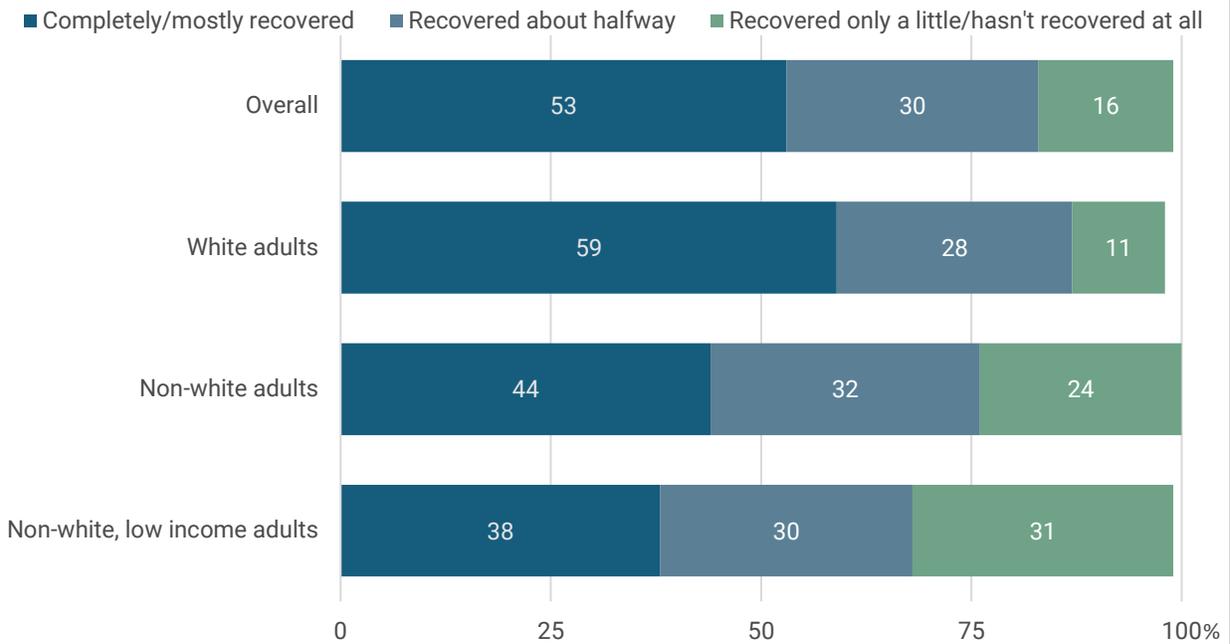
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When it comes to relationships with neighbors, 70% report that they are unchanged since before the COVID-19 pandemic and 13% describe them as stronger. However, 17% of adults feel that their relationships with their neighbors are weaker than they were before the pandemic.

NON-WHITE AND LOW-INCOME ADULTS AND THOSE IN URBAN AREAS ARE MORE LIKELY TO DESCRIBE THEIR LOCAL AREAS AS STILL RECOVERING FROM THE PANDEMIC.

At this stage of the pandemic, about half of adults describe the area where they live as mostly or completely recovered, but about one-third think it has recovered only halfway, and 16% think it is only a little or not at all recovered. Adults who are non-white and low-income report lower levels of recovery compared to white adults. Those who are both non-white and low income are even less likely to report that their area has recovered.

Non-white, low income adults are less likely than others to describe their area as mostly or completely recovered from the pandemic.



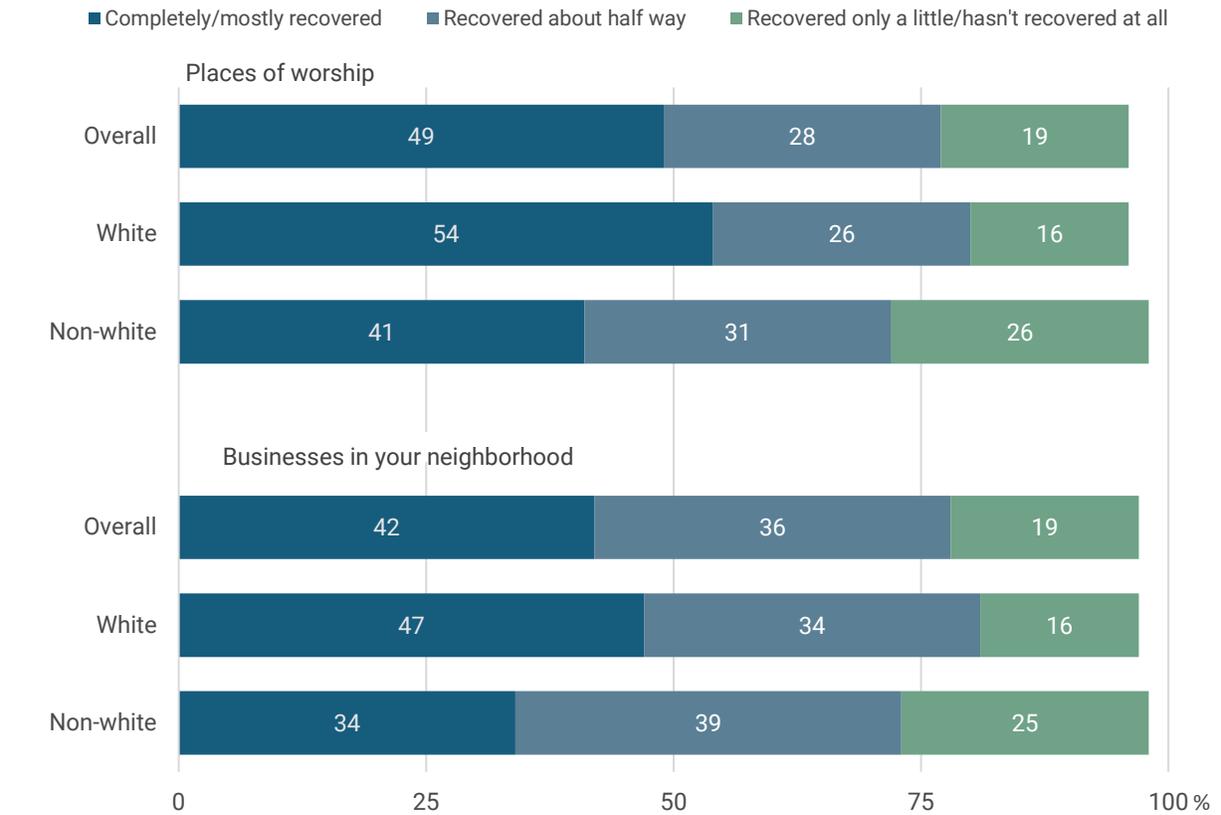
Question: What best describes how the area where you live is recovering from the pandemic? Would you say your area has...
Source: The AP-NORC Long Term Care Poll conducted June 10-14, 2021, with 1,071 adults age 18 and older nationwide



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When it comes to specific institutions in their area, about half of adults report that places of worship have mostly or completely recovered, about 4 in 10 say the same about businesses in their neighborhoods, and about 3 in 10 say so about civic activities and organizations. White adults are more likely than non-white adults to feel that businesses and places of worship in their area have mostly or completely recovered from the pandemic.

Non-white adults are less likely than white adults to report that local institutions have recovered from the pandemic.



Question: For each of the following, please rate how much it has recovered in the area where you live since the beginning of the pandemic.

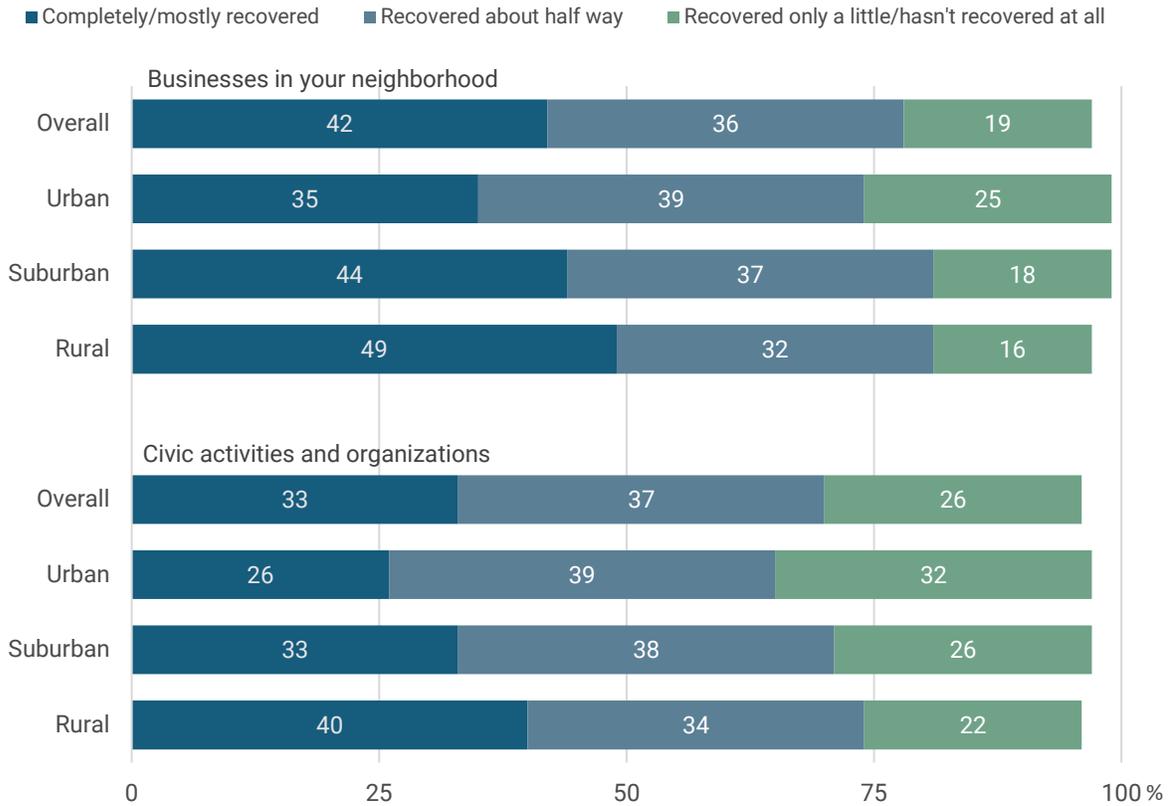
Source: The AP-NORC Long Term Care Poll conducted June 10-14, 2021, with 1,071 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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In addition, residents of urban areas are less likely than those in rural areas to report that civic activities and organizations and businesses in their neighborhoods have recovered. Suburban residents fall in the middle.

Those living in urban areas are less likely to describe aspects of their area as mostly or completely recovered than those in suburban or rural areas.



Question: For each of the following, please rate how much it has recovered in the area where you live since the beginning of the pandemic.

Source: The AP-NORC Long Term Care Poll conducted June 10-14, 2021, with 1,071 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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STUDY METHODOLOGY

This study, funded by [The SCAN Foundation](#), was conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Data were collected using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, a monthly multi-client survey using NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face to face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings. Of note for this study, the panel would also exclude recipients of long-term care who live in some institutional types of settings, such as skilled nursing facilities or nursing homes, depending on how addresses are listed for the facility. Staff from NORC at the University of Chicago, The Associated Press, and The SCAN Foundation collaborated on all aspects of the study.

Interviews for this survey were conducted between June 10 and June 14, 2021, with adults age 18 and older representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,071 completed the survey—1,036 via the web and 35 via telephone. Interviews were conducted in English. Respondents were offered a small monetary incentive (\$3) for completing the survey.

The final stage completion rate is 16.0%, the weighted household panel recruitment rate is 19.1%, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 75.0%, for a cumulative response rate of 2.3%. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level including the design effect.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any non-coverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study-specific sample design. Poststratification variables included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and education. Weighting variables were obtained from the 2021 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over.

Topline data and reports are available at www.longtermcarepoll.org. For more information, email info@apnorc.org.

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ABOUT THE SCAN FOUNDATION

The SCAN Foundation is an independent public charity dedicated to creating a society where older adults can access health and supportive services of their choosing to meet their needs. Our mission is to advance a coordinated and easily navigated system of high-quality services for older adults that preserve dignity and independence. For more information, visit www.TheSCANFoundation.org.

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