



How Age-Friendly are Communities in Manitoba?

Summary of a Survey of Manitoba Municipalities

*Age-Friendly Communities
support people to age safely,
enjoy good health and to
continue to participate fully
in their community*



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In 2008, the Centre on Aging at the University of Manitoba conducted a survey to determine where communities currently stand in terms of age-friendliness from the perspective of local (municipal) government. The survey addressed a number of aspects of age-friendliness, such as housing, transportation, activity programs and so forth. The questions focused on whether particular programs or services are available in the community and, if so, what role the municipal government plays in administering and funding them. This summary provides a brief overview of the findings from the Age-Friendly Communities Survey.

Manitoba has 198 municipalities. Surveys were sent to the Mayors or Reeves of all of these municipalities and they (or a delegate, such as the Chief Administrative Officer) were asked to complete the Age-Friendly Communities Survey. Individuals from rural municipalities with more than one community in it were asked to complete the survey for one of these communities.

We received back completed surveys for 129 communities (65 percent of all surveys sent out). The high response rate allowed us to examine responses for the province as a whole, as well as by type of municipality (rural municipality, village, town, and city). There are currently 118 rural municipalities, 20 villages, 51 towns, and 9 cities in Manitoba. Of those, 72 rural municipalities, 16 villages, 34 towns, and 7 cities responded to the survey.

We also divided communities by the proportion of seniors living there – those that, based on Canada Census data, have less than 14 percent of the population age 65 or over, those that have from 14 to 19 percent of the population age 65 or over and those that have 20 percent or more of the population age 65 or over. This allowed us to see if the programs or services available depend on whether, proportionally, there few or many seniors in a community.

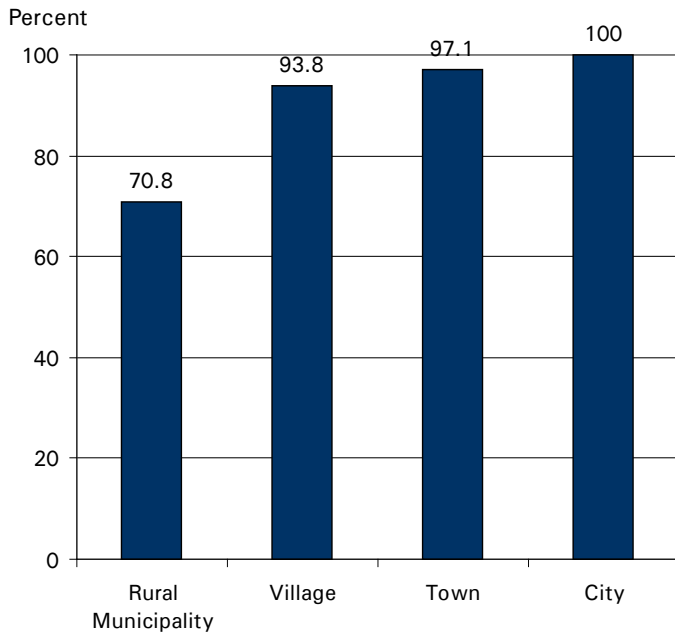
The Most Age-Friendly Aspects

Communities in Manitoba have many age-friendly features. Aspects that are present in the majority of communities include the following:

- ☑ The majority (over 80%) of villages, towns and cities have support services for seniors (e.g., snow removal, lawn care, etc.).
- ☑ In the area of transportation, the majority of municipalities reported that some form of public transportation is available, as well as transportation to and from medical appointments in their community and to other communities. The majority of municipalities also have transportation for individuals with disabilities, such as Handi-van.
- ☑ A variety of recreation programs are available for seniors in most communities, including local parks or walking/biking trails, and recreation programs specifically for seniors.
- ☑ Congregate meal programs are available in most communities and so are programs where meals are delivered to individuals' homes.

- ☑ Volunteer opportunities for seniors are also available in the majority of communities, with volunteers being officially recognized for their contribution in most communities.

The percentage of municipalities that have recreation programs specifically for seniors



- ☑ In most communities, there is no education and information for seniors about financial fraud, nor are there programs or services for socially isolated seniors (e.g., friendly visiting, telephone check-ups). Moreover, only a small proportion of communities indicated that elder abuse/neglect identification or prevention programs are available.

- ☑ The lack of policies/guidelines that benefit seniors was evident in all municipalities, regardless of municipality type or proportion of seniors, with a minority of communities indicating that: seniors serve in an advisory role, and community consultations and planning processes specifically include seniors.

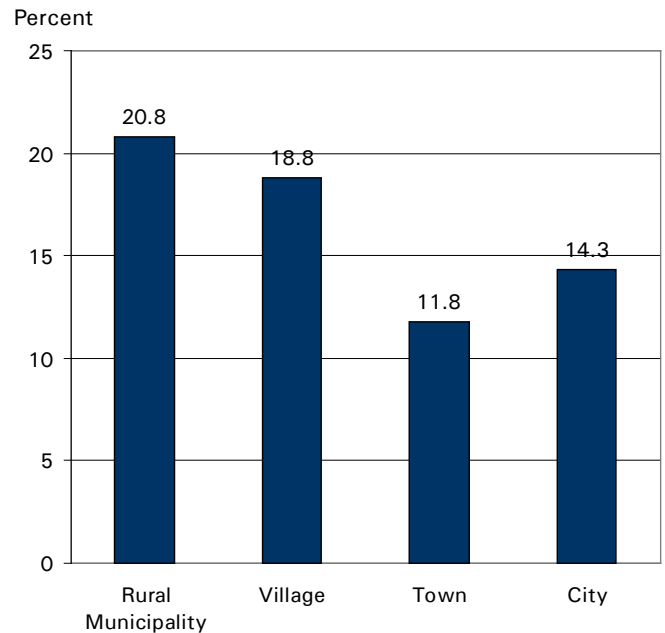
- ☑ A minority of communities indicated that zoning requirements support the development of active seniors' communities (e.g., density level, lots per acre).

The Least Age-Friendly Aspects

Areas where communities generally are not as age-friendly pertain to information/advocacy, public safety/emergency services, and policies and guidelines that benefit seniors. Specifically:

- ☑ A minority of communities reported that official, written information and public telephone answering systems are adapted to the needs of seniors, and relatively few communities indicated that seniors' advocacy services are available.

The percentage of municipalities that have official written information adapted to the needs of seniors



The Percentage of Seniors in the Community Makes a Difference

Municipalities are clearly responsive to the percentage of seniors in the community; as the percentage of seniors increases, age-friendly features increase as well. Noteworthy is that this pattern is evident throughout the responses to the questionnaire, both in areas where most communities are quite age-friendly, as well as in areas where most communities are not as age-friendly.

For example, 68.2% of communities with less than 14% of the population age 65 or over reported having recreation programs specifically for seniors, compared to 94.6% of communities with 20% or more of their population age 65 or over. Similarly, 6.8% of communities with less than 14% of the population age 65 or over reported having seniors' advocacy services, compared to 16.1% of communities with 20% or more of their population age 65 or over.

The Type of Municipality Makes a Difference

We examined responses for four types of municipalities: rural municipalities, villages, towns, and cities. Differences emerged across these four types for most of the questions. Overall, and not surprisingly given their population base and geographic dispersion, RMs had fewer age-friendly features than villages, towns, and cities.

Conclusion

As is the case across Canada, Manitoba's population is aging. It is therefore becoming increasingly important to ensure that communities are as age-friendly as possible. The Age-Friendly Communities Survey has identified some of the strengths and gaps in age-friendliness in terms of the programs and services that are available in Manitoba communities. As such, it can help to inform areas that need to be addressed in the future.

The full report is available at the website listed below. Further information on the Age-Friendly Communities, Community-University Research Alliance can also be found on that website. The Age-Friendly Communities Alliance is a larger program of research on age-friendliness. The present survey is one of the projects conducted.

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/centres/aging>

SUMMARY OF THE REPORT:
Age-Friendly Communities in Manitoba:
Report on Survey Findings

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