

**LIVABLE COMMUNITIES FOR ALL AGES:  
INTERNATIONAL PLANNER ENGAGEMENT SURVEY AND BEST PRACTICES  
RESULTS OF A GLOBAL SURVEY OF PLANNERS**

**Prepared by:**

Timothy D. Van Epp, FAICP, Chair, APA International Division, Project Director  
Stephanie K. Firestone, Senior Strategic Policy Advisor, AARP International, Project Manager  
Dr. Mildred Warner, Professor, City and Regional Planning, Cornell University  
Xue Zhang, Ph.D. Candidate, Regional Science, Cornell University  
Greyson Clark, Urban Planner, Arup

**September 24, 2018**

As part of the APA Divisions Council initiative on Aging and Livable Communities, the International Division of APA partnered with AARP, Arup and Cornell University to conduct an international survey of planners to raise awareness about techniques, tools and best practices for planners seeking to promote age friendly planning in the US and internationally. The international survey, conducted in fall 2017, explored planners' incorporation of Livable Communities for ALL Ages (LCA) principles. The survey garnered responses from 559 planners from 33 countries including the US, Australia and New Zealand, Europe, Canada and the Global South (Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East). The survey contained over 70 questions about local governments and planners' motivations, actions, and barriers to incorporate LCA considerations in planning. The survey also assessed the effectiveness of practices and strategies to engage planners in LCA approaches.

This article highlights survey results and some case studies that were developed as part of the project. We have presented these results at a range of global venues –webinars on World Planning Day in Nov 2017 and for the International Federation on Ageing and the World Health Organization in February 2018, and sessions at the APA NPC18 in April 2018 and the International Federation on Ageing's 14<sup>th</sup> global conference in Toronto in August 2018.

**Highlighted Survey Results**

First, the survey asked why a local government that they work with made LCA a part of their practice; in other words, what were their motivations. The top two responses were the substantial growth in the aging population and the need to better serve this segment of the population, and that it was a priority identified during a community planning process. These findings illustrate the importance of educating local leadership about the fact and the implications of rapid population aging in their communities, as well as the significance of engaging the community in discussions about planning that addresses these challenges.

The survey measured eight actions that communities have taken to advance LCA. The two most common were: "performance of a walkability accessibility assessment", and "incorporation of LCA in major plans". Interestingly, the third most common action, "the adoption of an actual policy directly improving the quality of life for aging residents", has a significantly higher percentage among non-US respondents; understanding the root causes of this discrepancy will require further investigation.

We assessed the extent to which LCA was incorporated into eleven areas of planning practice. The top three areas of LCA incorporation are "parks and public space", "community planning", and "community and health services". The two lowest rankings are in "resilience", despite the fact that we know older adults are among the most vulnerable populations in natural disasters, and in "economic development", though more respondents in Europe reported LCA incorporation in economic development plans than respondents from other countries. This latter finding alludes to a barrier to great opportunity for local communities; for example, in the US, more than 80% of household wealth is held by people over 50 and this age group generates more than half of US consumer spending.

Next, we asked what facilitates planners engaging in a LCA approach to their work. Among the seven facilitating practices measured, "support from colleagues" was highest by far, followed by "workplace policies that encourage an all-ages approach" and then "periodic focus group interactions with an aging population". Noteworthy is that the latter workplace practice actually ranked highest in Australia and New Zealand. Finally, among eight strategies for engaging more planners to plan LCA, the top two effective were "engaging elected officials, legislators to talk about LCA", and "hosting training or seminars on planning LCA".

We found that motivations and facilitating practices have the largest impact on actions, and that barriers do not prevent action. Planners recognize but understand how to overcome barriers. This survey helps us understand how to move forward.

AARP's more in-depth presentation and analysis of the survey results, the full LCA report is attached to this article; it will also be published in AARP's *The Journal* and in the APA International Division's *Interplan* newsletter, in the near future.

### **Best Practices**

Our work also lifted up case studies of best practice from around the world. Case studies were solicited from survey respondents and from Arup's global network of built environment professionals. Initial nomination was completed through an online form. The research team then contacted the planners who worked on the most promising examples. This conversation provided additional information about the project (description, narrative, lessons learned), collect images, and further developed the best practice. One-pagers about the project were developed. Arup's full report on LCA best practices and their associated slide show can be downloaded at this link: <https://arup.sharefile.com/d-sd74e6da4e6042b9b>

In addition, Arup is working with APA's David Morley to host the LCA best practices research online in APA's Research Knowledge Base. APA has two initiatives related to our work: 1) APA webpage visitors can submit "user stories" which could focus on the topic of aging; and 2) the "Age-Friendly Communities" collection is a resource for planners, which will include our survey results and Arup's best practices document. The "Age-Friendly Communities" collection should be live sometime in 2019.

**Final Report:**  
**LIVABLE COMMUNITIES FOR ALL AGES:**  
**INTERNATIONAL PLANNER ENGAGEMENT AND BEST PRACTICES**

***Funding by:***

A Research Grant from the APA Divisions Council to the APA International Division

***Submitted on:***

September 2018

***Prepared by:***

Timothy D. Van Epp, FAICP, Chair, APA International Division, Project Director  
Stephanie K. Firestone, Senior Strategic Policy Advisor, AARP International, Project Manager

Cheryl Lampkin, Senior Research Advisor, PRI 50+ Research, AARP

Michael Amabile, Senior Planner, Arup

Greyson Clark, Urban Planner, Arup

Dr. Mildred Warner, Professor, City and Regional Planning, Cornell University

Xue Zhang, Ph.D. Candidate, Regional Science, Cornell University

## **PRELIMINARY BACKGROUND**

### **Grant Purpose**

This grant relates to the Divisions Council initiative, *Aging and Livable Communities*, and seeks to: (1) broaden the consideration of awareness building techniques, tools and best practices for planners from the US-focused research of APA's earlier efforts under this initiative to those that can be gleaned from researching internationally; and (2) extend the benefits of this work from US planners working domestically to planners based in the US or overseas that work internationally, including of course International Division (ID) members.

### **Research Objectives**

#### *Awareness building*

The following considerations could be accomplished with a fact sheet to send to all planners with details of aging population, how aging impacts people mobility and their needs, etc.:

- To understand what measures will successfully raise awareness among planners and their colleagues, i.e., how do we get planners to “play?”
- To understand what tools/resources planners need to help them advocate with decision-makers, on the importance of infusing aging considerations into local planning and policy-making.
- An additional objective is to raise awareness among a limited group of planners, simply by virtue of their participation in the research.

#### *Tools*

The above needs assessment will help us to understand what diagnostic/other tools and resources, e.g. guides and manuals on inclusive design or designing for aging, that might offer technical solutions to arm planners with, in order for them to successfully undertake this work (e.g., good

demographic data/projections; understanding of the implications of these projections, i.e., diverse housing supply, transportation, safety and security).

### *Best practices*

Examples of local planning for aging successes. Note that we do not want planners to limit themselves because they do not have the authority to do X/Y in their geopolitical context. Therefore our questions should get at both what planners can do as well as how they can influence; for example:

- Actions/activities within planning context (Note: While planning contexts vary, it may be helpful contextually to ask about systemic challenges/barriers that limited what they could do and how they may have overcome them.)
- Planner-led/initiated convening of stakeholders/collaboration
- Externally initiated collaboration with planners

### **Research Methodology and Schedule**

The overall 10-month project schedule will extend from the summer of 2017 through the summer of 2018. The methodology will be carried out in four phases, as follows:

#### PHASE 1

1. Start work upon grant award. (by 1 Aug 2017)
2. Identify the most promising countries and cities to focus more in-depth research on awareness building, tools and best practices. (by 1 Sep 2017)
3. Identify the most promising awareness building approaches, tools and best practices to focus further research and preparation efforts. (by 1 Oct 2017)

#### PHASE 2

4. Conduct the in-depth research on the selected countries/ cities and the most promising awareness building approaches, tools and best practices. (by 1 Dec 2017)
5. Fully develop and prepare the selected awareness building approaches, tools and best practices. (by 1 Feb 2018)

#### PHASE 3

6. Prepare and present a webinar on the findings of Tasks 1-4 above. (by 1 Mar 2018)
7. Using the webinar experience, prepare and present the findings at an NPC 2018 session or facilitated discussion. (by 24 Apr 2018)
8. Finalize findings in a report and article to the DC. (by 1 Jun 2018)

#### PHASE 4

9. Using the NPC 2018 experience, prepare and present the findings at other venues through our project partners.
10. Otherwise, implement the findings of the project.

## **DISSEMINATION AND ENGAGEMENT OF THE REPORT'S FINDINGS (AARP LEAD)**

We began our collaboration in 2017 by engaging a core team that included: Tim Van Epp, Chair, APA-ID; Dr. Mildred Warner, Professor, Cornell University; Michael Amabile, Senior Planner, ARUP; and was led by Stephanie Firestone, Senior Strategic Policy Advisor, AARP International. We then expanded our reach to include an advisory committee of approximately twenty planners from across the U.S. and around the world, who provided thoughtful guidance, gave us feedback as we developed our survey, and helped to disseminate the survey and follow-up work to colleagues.

In November 2017 we participated in World Town Planning Day, presenting a webinar that provided an overview of livable communities for all ages and the need for a multigenerational approach, made a connection with Sustainable Development Goal 11 on human settlements, emphasized the significance of cross-sector collaboration, and alerted the audience to next steps in this project. The webinar was recorded and posted on the APA website, with links from other GPN partners. The webinar and links also provided a call to action for planners around the world to respond to our survey, as well as a request for planners with good practices in age-friendly planning to submit these via a case study form; this collection of good practices was managed by Arup.

After development of the survey instrument by AARP, with extensive input from the above partners, we went live in mid-November and kept the survey open through the end of 2017. We received submissions from nearly 600 planners in 33 countries and AARP proceeded to analyze the results, which were presented for all participants as well as for regional subgroups (e.g., U.S., Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand); a smaller subgroup comprised of Global South countries was not statistically significant but provided some interested insights that were shared through presentations.

Findings from the survey have been shared in a number of venues. Stephanie presented initial findings on an international webinar sponsored by the International Federation on Ageing and the World Health Organization in February. Stephanie and Mildred presented more fleshed out findings at the APA NPC18, and Michael presented a sample of good practices; this presentation included some live polling that provided additional reflections from largely U.S. planners. Stephanie worked with colleagues at the UN to organize a June High Level Political Forum side event in NYC around planning for aging populations and presented some of the findings there. Stephanie then presented the findings in a workshop on planning age-friendly communities, at the International Federation on Ageing's 14<sup>th</sup> global conference in Toronto in August. Finally, Stephanie and Michael will present the research findings and global good practices at the AARP Livable Communities conference in North Carolina this fall. And Stephanie and Mildred are considering developing an issue brief based on the findings later in the year.

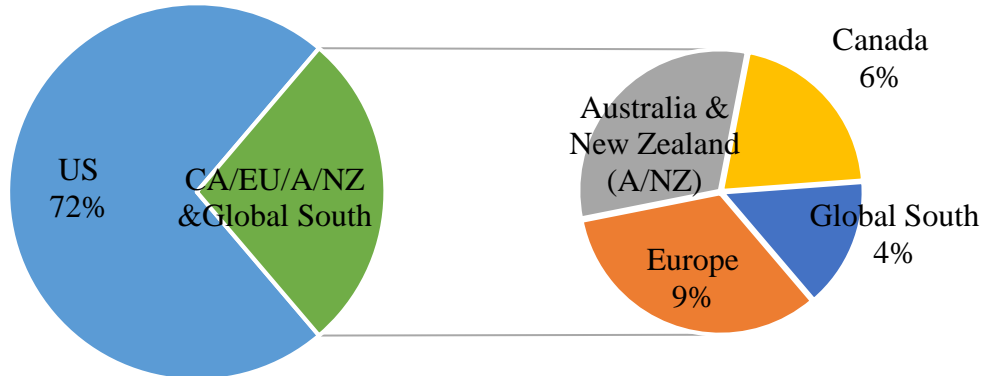
## RESULTS OF A GLOBAL SURVEY OF PLANNERS (CORNELL LEAD)

### Survey summary

In fall 2017, AARP, the APA International Division, Arup international consulting firm, and Cornell University conducted an international survey of planners' incorporation of Livable Communities for ALL Ages (LCA)<sup>1</sup> principles. The survey was distributed through partner organizations and professional networks of planners, and reached planners from 33 countries. The survey contained over 70 questions about local governments and planners' motivations, actions, barriers to incorporate LCA considerations in planning. The survey also measured facilitating practices and effective strategies to engage planners in LCA approaches.

The survey garnered responses from 559 planners of which 72% were from the US, 9% from Australia and New Zealand, 9% from Europe, 6% from Canada, and 4% from Global South (Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East). In the US, survey respondents represent smaller and less urban communities compared to other countries. According to AARP's livability indicators, US respondents to the LCA survey are from places with better livability in health, neighborhood, transportation, opportunity, and engagement but lower rankings on housing than US counties overall<sup>2</sup>. The majority of survey respondents from the US and Canada/Europe/Australia/New Zealand are from the public sector, while respondents from the Global South are more likely to be from the private sector. Most respondents have worked as a planner between 5 to 20 years.

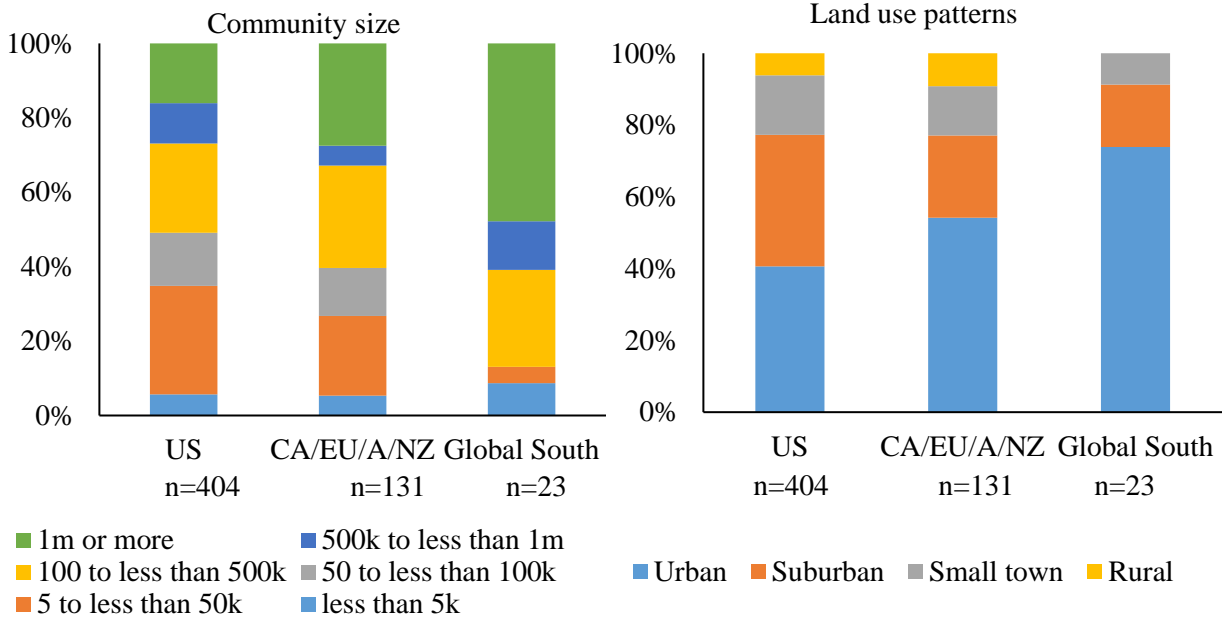
**Figure 1A Respondents by Country (N=559)**



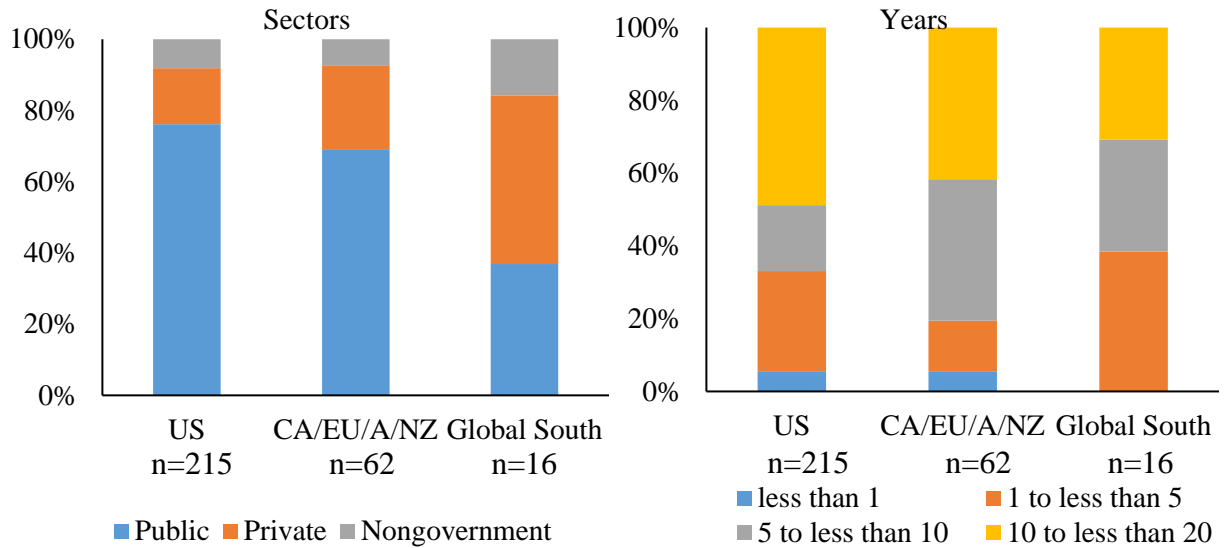
<sup>1</sup> Livable Communities for ALL Ages (LCA) are communities that are intentional about being great places for people to grow up AND grow old, by ensuring appropriate physical infrastructures (housing, transportation, built environment, access to healthy foods) and social infrastructures (i.e., health care, support services, engagement opportunities) for residents throughout an expanding lifecourse. Sometimes LCA is referred to by other names such as Age-friendly Communities or Lifelong Communities.

<sup>2</sup> AARP livability indicators data can be found at (<https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/>)

**Figure 1B Respondents by community size and land use patterns**



**Figure 1C Respondents by Sector and Years of Experience**

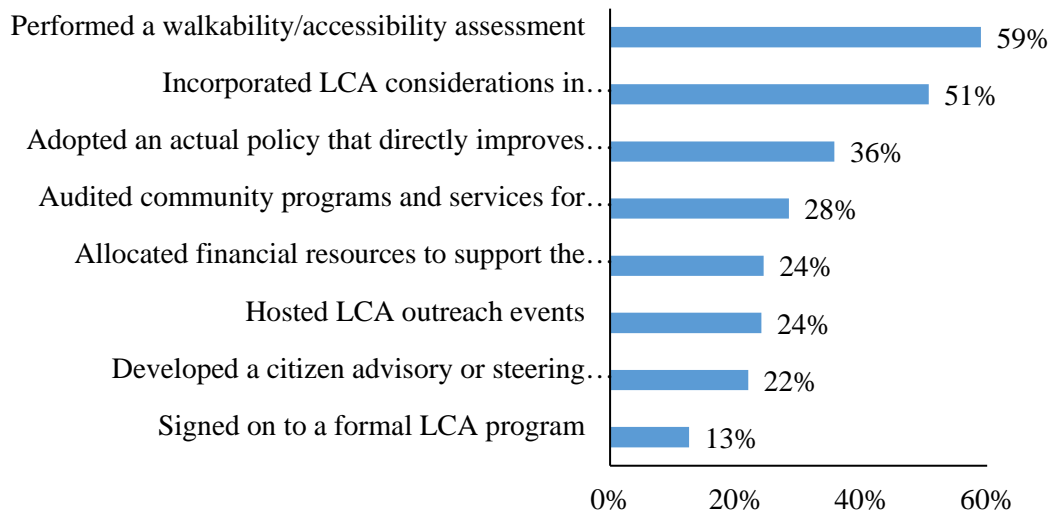


**Data**

**Actions**

The survey asked respondents to indicate actions taken to advance LCA. On the eight actions measured, more than half of planners reported the top two actions as "performance of a walkability accessibility assessment (59%)", and "incorporation of LCA in major plans (51%)". The third most common action, "the adoption of an actual policy directly improving the quality of life for aging residents (36%)", has a higher percentage among non-US respondents (66%). The bottom action is to sign on to a formal LCA program (13%), such as WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities, or join a national or regional network.

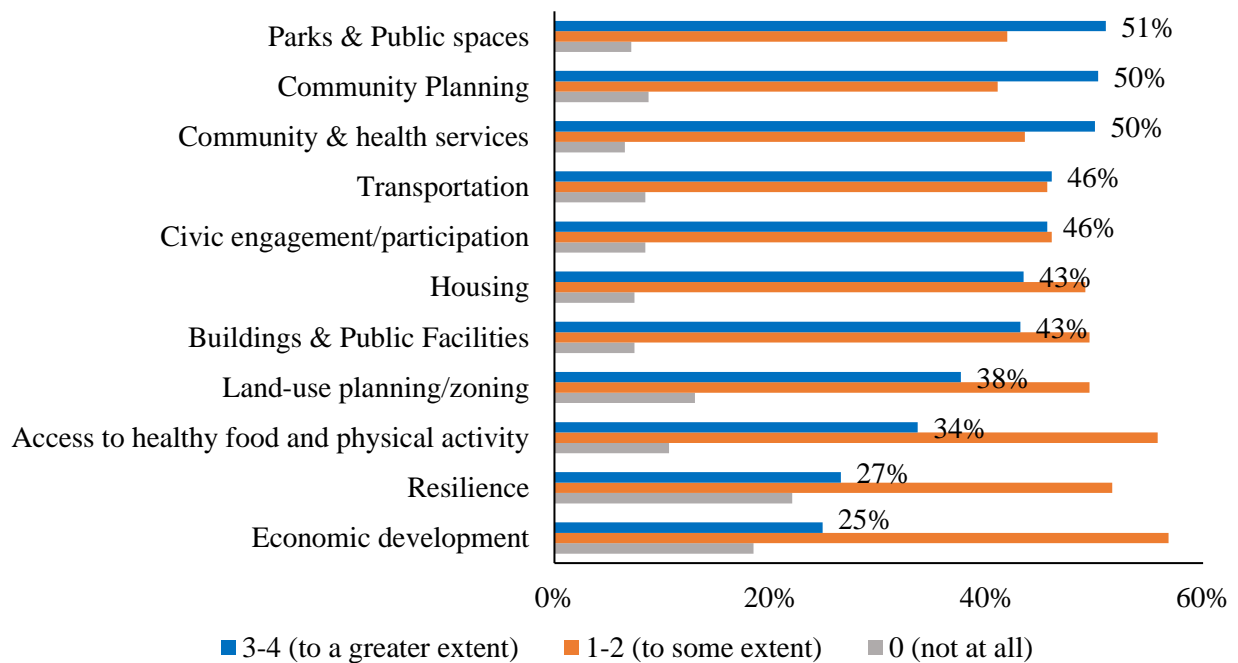
**Figure 2 Actions taken to advance LCA**



***LCA Incorporation***

The survey examined the extent of incorporation of LCA in eleven planning areas. The top three areas of LCA incorporation are "parks and public space"(51%), "community planning (50%)", and "community and health services (50%)". The lowest rankings are in "economic development (25%)" and "resilience (27%)", which suggests these are areas that need more planning attention. However, in Europe more respondents reported LCA incorporation in economic development plans than respondents from other countries.

**Figure 3 LCA incorporation in planning practices**





### ***Motivations and barriers***

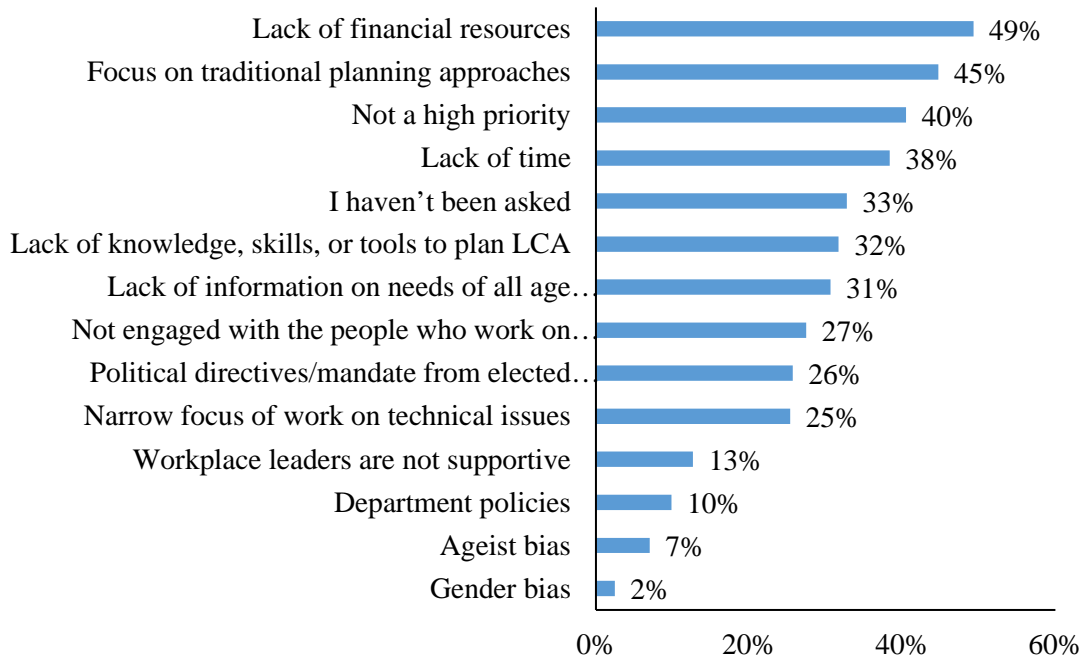
The survey included questions on motivations and barriers for planning LCA. The highest motivations are "growth in aging population (72%)" and "community planning priority (50%)". The lowest motivation is "pressure from business leaders (3%)" and "an incident such as an older pedestrian fatality at a dangerous crosswalk (10%)". Top and bottom motivations are consistent across countries. While "Policy opportunity (40%)" is a high-ranking motivation in the US, Canada, and Europe, it is a lower motivation in Australia/New Zealand. In Europe, respondents ranked "national/regional policy mandates (20%)" as their second motivation, while planners from other countries ranked it eighth or ninth out of eleven motivations. However, Europe ranked much lower on "local grassroots advocacy (35%)".

**Table 1 LCA motivations (N=225)**

Motivations	(%)	Ranking by country			
		US	Canada	Europe	A/NZ
Substantial growth in aging population and need to better serve this segment of the population	72	1	1	1	1
Priority identified during a community planning process	50	2	2	3	3
A policy window that presented an opportunity (e.g., comprehensive/transportation/pedestrian planning process)	40	3	4	4	9
Local grassroots advocacy around an issue	35	5	3	8	2
Building on interest or expertise of staff	34	4	7	7	4
Policy/ies (at national/regional/local/company level) that mandate this perspective	20	9	9	2	8
An opportunity to leverage a project or program already underway	20	6	5	5	5
A new funding or programmatic opportunity	19	7	6	6	7
Pressure from local officials	17	8	8	9	6
An incident such as an older pedestrian fatality at a dangerous crosswalk	10	10	10	10	11
Pressure from business leaders	3	11	11	11	10

Among the fourteen barriers, "lack of financial resources (49%)" is the most common barrier limiting planners' engagement in LCA. The second most common barrier is a "focus on traditional planning approaches (45%)". Two other common barriers are "not a high priority (40%)" and "lack of time (38%)". Respondents from Canada reported "lack of time" twice as often as other countries. Across all respondents, only two percent reported gender bias is a primary barrier, and only 7% reported ageist bias limiting their engagement in planning LCA. In Europe, 40% of planners reported "Political directives/mandates from elected officials" as a primary barrier, while only a quarter of respondents in the overall sample reported this. Similarly, European respondents were more likely to indicate "department policies" as a barrier (20%) compared to only 10% in the overall sample.

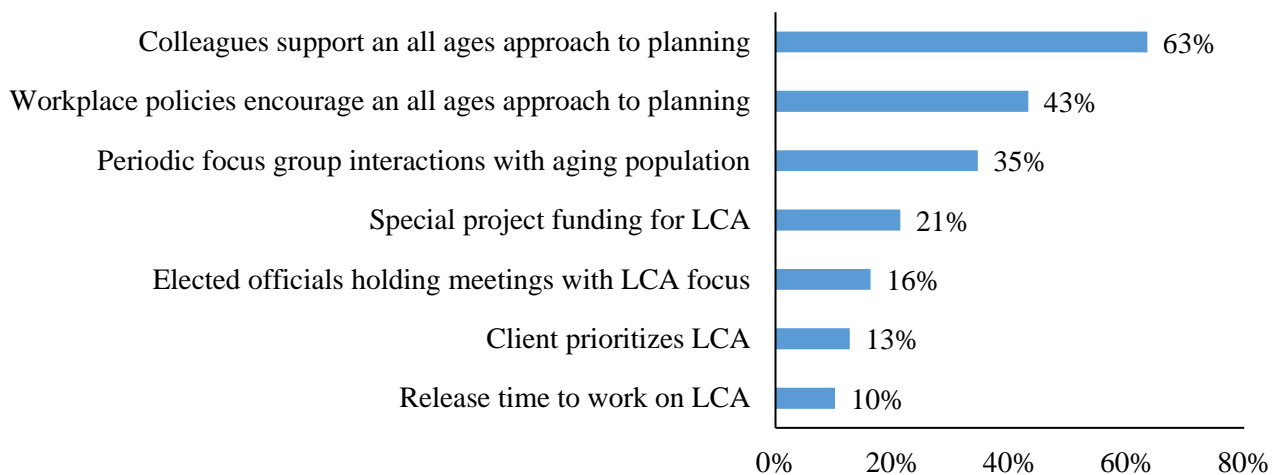
**Figure 4 LCA barriers**



***Facilitating practices and strategies of engagement***

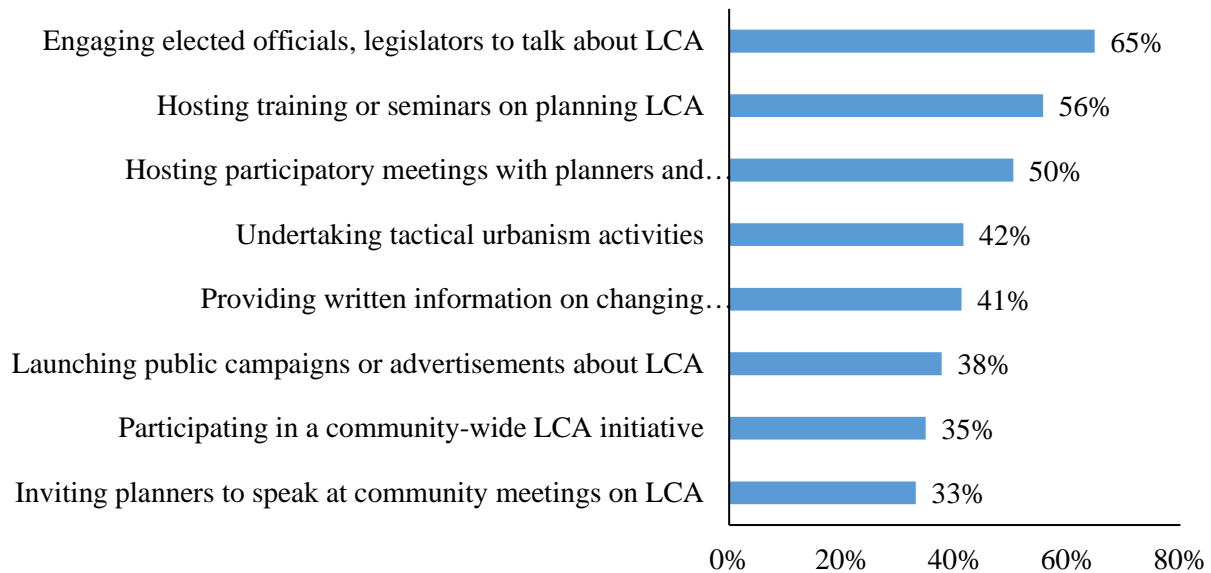
Practices and strategies facilitating individual planners to engage in an LCA approach were also measured. Support from colleagues (63%), and workplace policies (43%) were the most common followed by "periodic focus group interactions with aging population (35%). More planners in Europe (27%) than other countries (10%) indicated that they are given "release time to work on LCA".

**Figure 5 Facilitating practices**



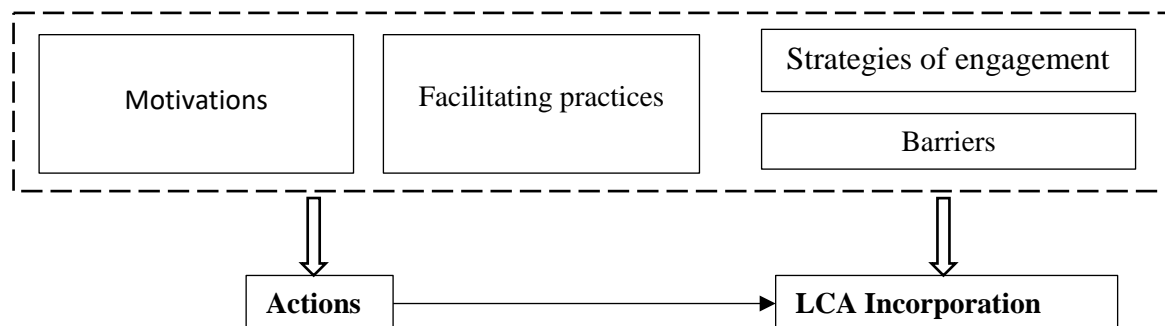
The survey measured the effectiveness of eight strategies to encourage more planners to engage in LCA. The top two effective strategies are "engaging elected officials, legislators to talk about LCA (65%)", and "hosting training or seminars on planning LCA (56% overall, 75% in Canada)". Only a third of planners reported that "inviting planners to speak at community meetings on LCA (33%)" and "participating in a community-wide LCA initiative (35%)" are effective to engage more planners. The effectiveness of other strategies varies across countries. For example, in Europe sample, 65% of respondents indicated that "undertaking tactical urbanism activities" is effective, compared to 42% in the overall sample. Also, half of the European planners reported "launching public campaigns or advertisements about LCA", while only 38% planners selected this strategy in the overall sample.

**Figure 6 Strategies of engagement**



## Results

We found that motivations and facilitating practices have the largest impact on actions and barriers do not prevent action. Planners recognize but understand how to overcome barriers.



This survey helps us understand how to move forward. We make the following recommendations:

- Educate planners/decision makers on the substantial growth in aging population and its implications in their community.
- Actively engage the local community in planning processes.

- Advocate for policies that mandate an all- ages perspective in planning
- Help the business community realize the economic benefits of planning for all ages.
- Leverage colleagues’ support for an all-ages approach to planning

## **BEST PRACTICES (ARUP LEAD)**

The methodology used by Arup to research, prepare and curate best international practices relating to planning for livable communities for all ages was carried out in the following steps:

- Best practice identification from two main sources
  - Some survey respondents recommended a best practice for the research team to consider
  - Arup global network of built environment professionals identified international examples
- The initial nomination was completed through an online form. The nominator provided initial information, including the contact info of a planner associated with the project.
- Research team contacted the planners who worked on the most promising examples. This conversation was to unearth additional information about the project (description, narrative, lessons learned), collect images, and further develop the best practice.
- Arup prepared a best practice one-pager about the project.
- Contact person for each project reviewed and commented on the one-pager, allowing for additional refinement.

The full report on LCA best practices and an associated slide show can be downloaded at this link:

- <https://arup.sharefile.com/d-sd74e6da4e6042b9b>

In addition, the LCA Team is working with APA’s David Morley to host the LCA best practices research online in APA’s Research Knowledge Base. APA has two initiatives related to our work:

- APA webpage visitors can submit “user stories.” Some of these user stories could be related to aging, but user story submissions would not be restricted to the topic of aging; this is a broader initiative at APA.
- “Age-Friendly Communities” collection which would be a resource for planners. One item in the collection could be our best practices document.

David Morley anticipates the “Age-Friendly Communities” collection will be live sometime in 2019.

## **RESOURCES**

- APA Aging in Community Policy Guide:  
[https://planning-org-uploaded-media.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy\\_resources/policy/guides/pdf/agingincommunity.pdf](https://planning-org-uploaded-media.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy_resources/policy/guides/pdf/agingincommunity.pdf)
- AARP Livability Index:  
<https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/>
- AARP Where We Live Communities for All Ages Book Series:  
<http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2016/where-we-live-communities-for-all-ages.html>