

Improving consumer decision-making about retirement housing

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Funded by



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Executive summary

Background

The objective of this project was to identify what kind of information is available to older Victorians when choosing a retirement village; and to determine how easily, or not, this information is able to be compared across different information sources and different village types. We then sought to determine how useful the available information is for consumer decision-making processes.

We also investigated older consumers' understanding of and satisfaction with various aspects relevant to retirement village living, including contractual features, before and after they move into a retirement village. This project therefore aimed to review the information resources currently available for older Victorians regarding retirement village options, to ascertain deficiencies in these resources and how these deficiencies potentially affect consumer choice.

Funding to undertake this research was received from the Consumer Policy Research Centre (CPRC) Research Pathways Program. Additional funding was provided by Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria (RRVV). The results of this project are intended to provide material to help inform the review of the Victorian *Retirement Villages Act 1986* announced by the Victorian Government in 2019.

Research project

The research project consisted of a desktop review of online resources, an online survey and community events to provide the opportunity for those who had difficulty in accessing the internet (or with no internet access) to fill out a hardcopy paper form of the survey.

This report contains the results of the desktop review as well as analysis of the quantitative and qualitative (open-ended response) data arising from the survey.

Key findings

An online survey was distributed to the memberships of the partner organisations, and promoted through their networks, in addition to three face-to-face community events for those without internet access.

- 950 people responded to the survey, with an average age of 77.
- The majority reported having a long-term lease or a loan/license agreement (51% and 15% respectively) while 20% had strata title ownership. These figures are different from the ones reported by Consumer Affairs Victoria (2019) who identified that approximately 74% of retirement village units were occupied on a loan-lease or loan-licence basis and 16% on a freehold basis. It is possible that the difference between these results may be due to potential confusion about tenure types. Further follow-up would be required to determine this definitively.
- In terms of the usefulness of various information sources, none of the nominated resources were rated by more than 50% of respondents as being extremely or very useful in helping participants make decisions about choosing retirement villages. The top information sources which were extremely/very useful were retirement village information days or tours (50%), followed by current retirement village residents (44%), searching the internet for information (44%) and receiving information from family or relatives (41%).
- Only 21% of respondents thought Consumer Affairs Victoria's website or brochure and other online forums or reviews were extremely or very useful.

- Only 34% of respondents rated financial or legal advice as very or extremely useful when choosing a retirement village. This suggests many may not have sought such advice; or did not value it highly in their decision-making.
- 18% of respondents were concerned with the quality of contracts, and many had difficulty understanding them because of the way they were written (difficult terminology, complex legalese, long and unnecessary clauses).
- The lack of standardised contracts made it extremely difficult for residents and legal/financial professionals to compare contracts across different retirement villages. Perhaps not surprising then, many legal professionals contacted by residents were unable to understand the contracts or to understand the implications of the contracts.
- Only 42% of survey respondents considered they understood their retirement village information/documentation extremely or very well. And while 45% reported moderate understanding, 13% rated their level of comprehension as low, that is, slightly/not well.
- In terms of retirement village features, most respondents placed high importance on the quality and maintenance of the village unit, location, safety and security and were satisfied with these features.
- Qualitative responses revealed, however, that village maintenance is often ad hoc and, in many cases, sub-par. It is also clear that many residents have experienced difficulties with owners/managers in terms of their ambiguous attitudes towards fixing buildings and communal areas.
- Residents were more aware of entry and ongoing costs than service and exit costs; but found it harder to compare cost delays at exit, the sharing of capital gains and the cost of additional services, suggesting a number of deficiencies in the way this information is made available to residents or how these costs are communicated.
- The majority of respondents considered exit costs very important, although 36% of respondents were somewhat or very dissatisfied with these costs, and 30% were somewhat or very dissatisfied with the overall package of entry fees, ongoing fees and exit costs.
- It is difficult for residents to have clear ideas about how much reinstatement/refurbishment costs will be when leaving retirement villages because of ambiguity/lack of clarity in contracts around these cost features.
- Dissatisfaction with certain costs may well be a reflection of residents' understanding; as the majority of respondents reported that their understanding of exit costs, costs of unit reinstatement or refurbishment on leaving a retirement village, sharing of capital gains or losses, and the time taken to receive exit payments on departure was low. The least understood was consumer protection in case of a dispute.
- Some aspects of retirement village life caused marked dissatisfaction, such as onsite managers and reputation of village operators, as well as village maintenance. Overall, however, most respondents were satisfied with their decision to enter a retirement village.
- In contrast, a relatively high 19% of respondents were somewhat or extremely dissatisfied. The qualitative data adds weight to these findings, indicating that some residents felt "trapped" and unable to leave their villages, due to their legal contracts – in particular the high exit/refurbishment costs and the time taken to receive exit payouts.

Discussion

These results provide a comprehensive account of what it is like as an older Victorian consumer to navigate the complicated maze of information resources and incomprehensible retirement village contracts currently in existence. It is clear that the decision-making process in this regard is not straightforward: in fact, it is considerably complex. The results indicate that many consumers do not understand the implications of the information they access or the contracts they sign, despite their assurances that they do.

In this respect, the large number of qualitative responses lends considerable weight to the quantitative findings, by highlighting older consumer voices – and in some instances, showing that the quantitative data is not always as definitive as it first appears.

This project shows clearly that the information resources provided by Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) about retirement villages are not meeting people's needs and do not provide the clarity they are meant to provide; given more than 50% of respondents rated the website/brochures as either slightly or not useful at all, and only 20% rated the CAV website or brochure and other online forums or reviews as useful.

Despite confidentiality assurances to respondents, it may well be that as residents they fear possible backlash from their involvement in this survey. As such, the results may underestimate dissatisfaction with features and costs of retirement villages and aspects of the decision-making process. Certainly, anecdotally, some of the participants at the community events expressed reluctance to be completely candid when responding to a survey about a place they call 'home'. This was also evident in the work conducted previously for RRVV (see Malta, Williams & Batchelor 2017). Providing the opportunity to speak one-on-one might serve to circumvent this reluctance and allow people to respond more frankly.

Recommendations

The results were reviewed by the Steering Group with their expertise as advocates for older Victorians, or as older Victorians themselves. The following recommendations are put forward for consideration:

- Improve consumer financial literacy (ensure a consumer-friendly retirement fees calculator is enhanced and readily available).
- Establish an independent rating authority who can then provide a directory of retirement housing options with a search function.
- Simplify and shorten (10 pages) retirement village contracts, making them easy to read, understand and compare – including using common terminology. Operators should be legally bound to provide contracts written in plain language for lay persons to understand them fully. Government intervention in simplifying a contract format will help consumers to compare different retirement villages and make informed choices.
- Legislate to ensure a six-month money-back guarantee when exiting villages. This will provide residents with an assurance about the return of their investment.
- Legislate to ensure mandatory training for onsite managers of retirement villages is implemented, as well as an industry-wide code of conduct.
- Fund regular consumer information sessions with a panel of experts – including legal, financial and consumer representatives – to provide an overview of the complexity of the information currently available as well as common contract features for consumers to be aware of.
- Clarify what constitutes 'reinstatement', 'refurbishment' and 'replacement', to help residents understand what they will be responsible for when leaving the villages. Citing examples of refurbishment costs based on different lengths of stay paid by the past residents in the contracts (or other documentation) may help prospective residents understand what to expect.
- Require operators to provide sufficient explanations/justification for all fee increases.
- Require operators to clarify in contracts exactly who is responsible for village maintenance.
- Require each village to have a standardised, comprehensive 'Village Handbook' providing total information about costs and maintenance, and local rules and regulations which are adhered to.
- Develop and mandate independently delivered education/training for all on-site staff including managers, particularly regarding dispute resolution. Include ethics training for sales personnel to ensure honest and accurate information is provided to all prospective residents.
- Ensure a clear, standardised series of documents is designed and hosted on CAV's website and made publicly available in libraries, support services, and other community and social support services.
- Leveraging the lived experiences of existing residents could be a valuable tool for consumer advocacy bodies and regulators in addressing the information gaps currently highlighted in this report.
- Conduct more research in the form of focus groups or one-on-one interviews with older Victorians to: (i) provide a more detailed exposé of this complex area and (ii) capture the views of those who do not have access to the internet.

Research team

This research was conducted by Dr Sue Malta and Dr Maho Omori, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, the University of Melbourne, in conjunction with Associate Professor Tim Kyng, Macquarie University.

Dr Sue Malta is a sociologist and chief investigator of this project; and has extensive experience as a researcher focusing on the care and wellbeing of older adults. She previously worked at the National Ageing Research Institute (NARI) where she and her colleagues conducted the only independent research about Victorian retirement village residents' experiences of contracts and outcomes for the advocacy organisation RRVV in 2016-2017. The report of this research was tabled and presented at the State Government inquiry into retirement village living. Dr Malta was then invited to participate in the Consumer Law Action Centre's Expert Forum on Retirement Housing in June 2017. More recently in her role at the University of Melbourne she worked with the Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG) to develop an Action Plan for older and prematurely aged people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness (The Homelessness Action Plan) under the Aged Care Diversity Framework for the Commonwealth Department of Health.

Dr Maho Omori is a sociologist and researcher with expertise in ageing and health. She previously worked at NARI on a project about residential aged care.

Associate Professor Tim King is an academic actuary situated at Macquarie University. He has been involved in researching retirement village projects for the past five years. Tim and his team at Macquarie University have created the online Retirement Village Calculator that helps consumers compare different retirement village options by simplifying different fees down to a single monthly cost.

Funding bodies

Consumer Policy Research Centre (CPRC)

CPRC is an independent, not-for-profit, consumer think-tank established by the Victorian Government in 2016 and launched in 2017. It undertakes consumer research independently and in partnership with others to inform evidence-based policy and business practice change. Working closely with policymakers, regulators, academia, industry and the community sector, CPRC's vision is to deliver a fair outcome for all consumers.

Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria (RRVV)

RRVV Inc acts as a representative body for its Victorian members currently living in retirement villages. It provides education, advice and advocacy and aims to contribute to policy debate regarding the issues affecting retirement village residents. RRVV is an independent organisation funded by resident membership fees. It was established in 2006 and represents approximately 40,000 village residents across Victoria. It has a member base of 7000.

Governance

This project was overseen by a Steering Group consisting of eleven members: the research team, members from each of the funding organisations (CPRC, RRVV), and representatives from consumer advocacy organisations Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG) and COTA (Council on the Ageing) Vic. Other research experts (now retired), and consumer members (one each from HAAG, COTA Vic and RRVV) were included to ensure that the consumer voice was represented. See Appendix 1 for details.

Ethics

Ethics approval for a minimal risk project was sought and received from the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health (MSPGH) Human Ethics Advisory Group (HEAG) on 5th September 2019 (project ID: 1955240.1).

Background

Retirement villages are governed in Victoria by the *Retirement Villages Act 1986*. Incoming residents are provided with 'accommodation and services' for a fee determined by the village owners who may be not-for-profit or commercial organisations. The consumer decision regarding retirement housing is complex.

For those who can afford it, many retirement villages offer a bewildering range of options. The 2016-2017 Parliamentary Inquiry into the Retirement Housing Sector, for instance, highlighted the difficulties faced by consumers, as the information available is complex and hard to compare across entities (Parliament of Victoria 2017). It is made more complex by the range of contracts available: leasehold, licence or strata title. There are many deficiencies in the current system, which expose consumers to the risk of unfair contract clauses; misleading information provided by sales staff; excessive charges and ongoing fees; and difficulties with the quality/transparency of financial statements.

The peak bodies representing registered owners and operators encourage offering consumers greater choice, and advocate that all potential residents be required to seek legal advice (and in some cases, financial advice) before signing a contract. However, not all advocacy bodies support this, as the complexity and variety of these contracts make it very difficult for consumers to make a fully informed decision.

Some jurisdictions, such as Victoria and Queensland, require owners and operators to present key facts in a standardised format to facilitate comparison between offers. This has increased the volume of paper that consumers can collect – but it is unclear how easily this information is accessed, what the quality of information is, how much consumers comprehend before deciding; and, indeed, at what stage in the process a decision is made.

The research project goes to the heart of one critical aspect of the various legislative reviews which are currently or have recently been undertaken in other States (South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia): the information consumers need from owners and operators and the gaps in accessible/understandable consumer information. This research project was therefore undertaken to investigate what kind of information was available and able to be compared by older Victorians when choosing a retirement village. It also sought their levels of understanding about, and satisfaction with, various aspects of the information relating to retirement village living, including contractual features.

Research project

The research project consisted of a number of components, which will each be described in turn:

- Desktop review of online resources
- Online survey
- Community events

Desktop review

A computer desktop review was undertaken to determine the kinds of online information readily available and accessible to consumers regarding retirement village living. A 'naïve' search approach was implemented, designed to mimic that carried out by an uninformed, novice consumer.

To this end, the search terms "retirement", "retirement living" and "retirement village" were used in a Google search. Screenshots were then collated of the first 10 pages of results generated (see Figure 1).

The majority of the Google search results produced pages of private developer or organizational units available for sale. With the exception of generic financial retirement advice from Australia Super Funds and generic consumer advice from Consumer Affairs Victoria, the balance of websites were advertising platforms for the sale of retirement units.

Online survey

The survey was developed in consultation with the members of the Steering Group (see Appendix 1). The central questions which governed the survey's design concerned the following:

- What information resources are currently available?
- How usable is the information provided and what deficiencies are there?
- How do these deficiencies affect consumer choice/decisions?
- At what stage in the choice process do consumers make a decision?
- What factors provide the impetus for the consumer decision (eg, available information, village tour, connection to staff, friends already living there etc)?

The survey consisted of 31 questions in total (see Appendix 2). The design of the questions included a mix of response types, such as Likert scales ranging from 0 – 4, where 0 = extremely important, 4 = not at all important (for example); yes/no answers; tick box questions; and open-ended qualitative questions. The survey included a number of demographic questions, including age, gender (sex), length of time living in retirement villages and the reasons for moving into one.

Scales of self-rated confidence in using the Internet were included to assess the correlation, if any, between the available information sources and levels of comprehension.

The online survey targeting retirement village residents was available for six weeks, from September 23rd until November 4th, 2019. During this period the survey link was uploaded on the RRVV and HAAG websites and distributed widely by email throughout professional and personal networks by the researchers and other Steering Group members.

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Search Page 1: 1st site on page</p> <p>Search for "Retirement"</p> | <p>Downsizing Retirement Villages Melbourne https://www.downsizing.com.au/property/retirement-villages/vic/melbourne</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Downsizing is a platform for Retirement Village advertising and offers no detailed information.  |
| <p>Search Page 1 2nd site on page</p> <p>Search for "Retirement"</p> | <p>Downsizing For Sale or Rent https://www.downsizing.com.au/property/vic/melbourne</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2nd listing is again Downsizing, a platform for real estate agencies and offers no specific older residential information or advice.  |

Figure 1: Screenshot example of Google search using the search term "Retirement"

Online survey

The researchers also contacted community member-based organisations such as U3A and local bowling clubs, to promote the survey among their members. In addition, flyers (~5,000 advertising the online survey as well as the community events) were distributed to a number of metropolitan retirement villages, covering a range of geographic areas and village types. Respondents were eligible to participate if they were: English-speaking Victorian residents, aged 50 years and older, and currently residing in a retirement village.

To ensure privacy and confidentiality – and to encourage candid responses – the survey was anonymous and no individual or particular retirement village was identifiable from the responses. All survey responses were collected and managed in Qualtrics (an online survey platform) and IP addresses were not tracked. Data was exported into an Excel database and a preliminary analysis was undertaken, which informed the interim report. A number of gaps were identified and additional data analysis was deemed appropriate. The data was therefore uploaded into Stata (Version 16) and cross-tabulations and a number of associations were investigated. These are highlighted where appropriate in the report.

Qualitative data

A number of multiple-response survey questions also provided the opportunity for participants to provide written feedback (items were labelled as ‘Other’). The number of responses to these questions varied but, where possible, they are included throughout the report. It was not always possible to categorise definitively the number of responses received, as some responses cut across a number of different questions/themes.

The final survey question gave respondents the space and opportunity to provide more in-depth, qualitative feedback regarding the kind of information that would have been helpful to them when considering moving into a retirement village. Despite the wording of the final question, many respondents took the opportunity to provide broader feedback about various aspects of retirement village living and decision making generally, which was not necessarily related to information per se.

The qualitative data was uploaded into QSR NVivo (Version 12) and analysed thematically (Braun & Clark 2006) using the survey questions to determine baseline categories in order to structure the data. Coding/sub-coding was then carried out to allow original themes to develop. Codes were independently checked to ensure validity. These qualitative responses, and those from the multiple-item questions, supplement the statistical data and lend weight to the findings. They also allow the views and experiences of older Victorian consumers to be documented. As such, these responses will be used throughout this report to illustrate concepts, as appropriate.

Community events

For those who had difficulty in accessing the internet (or had no internet access) or preferred completing the survey in person, three community events were held at two different locations: two in a Melbourne CBD location and one in an outer Melbourne suburb. Flyers advertising these events were distributed widely via the researchers and Steering Group networks. Requests for paper forms of the survey were received by direct telephone calls and emails, which were then posted out to potential respondents. Data from the paper surveys were uploaded into Qualtrics and NVivo as appropriate and combined with the electronic survey data.

Anecdotal evidence

A number of emails and phone calls/messages were received by community members wishing to provide additional feedback regarding their experiences. These responses were compiled and have also been included where relevant throughout this report.

Results

Overall 950 surveys were received consisting of 920 online surveys and 30 hard copy surveys.¹ It is not possible to provide a response rate due to the nature of online survey distribution which limits tracking ability. Further, as the sample is based on a convenience sample (those who self-selected to participate rather than on a randomly-generated probability sample), we cannot calculate the sampling error. That said, such a large response means we can infer what the results mean. In probability sampling, for instance, a sample population of 10,000 with a response rate of approximately 750 to 1,067 participants would be considered robust and would generate a 90 to 95% confidence level in the data, with a $\pm 3\%$ margin of error (Sue & Ritter 2012).

The number of responses to the survey in this relatively short period of time (six weeks) therefore indicates a strong level of community interest in the topic and that responses are indicative of community feelings.

The final survey question generated 697 qualitative responses, representing 73% of the overall sample. This is an unusually high written response rate and serves to illustrate the significance of this topic and the importance of providing the opportunity for survey participants to provide feedback.

Overall, four main thematic codes were identified, covering factors associated with costs and fees, contracts, owners/operators and issues to do with management/staff. Other minor themes ranged from village maintenance responsibilities, information about services/conditions, legal or professional advice and so on. Sub-coding then allowed these thematic codes to be broken down further. These themes were not mutually exclusive as there was some overlap across different themes.

Demographics

Respondents ranged in age from 50 to 99 years. While the average age was 77 years, the vast majority were aged between 70 – 89 years (82%, see Table 1).

Table 1: Age of respondents

| Age range, years | Number (%) |
|------------------|------------|
| 50-59 | 11 (1%) |
| 60-69 | 109 (12%) |
| 70-79 | 453 (48%) |
| 80-89 | 325 (34%) |
| 90+ | 43 (5%) |

More men completed the survey compared to women (52% versus 48%) which is surprising given there are more older women than older men in the population generally (see Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017). Over 60% of respondents lived with their partners. The length of time residents had been living in retirement villages varied, ranging from less than one year to more than 10 years (Figure 2).

1. Note: Not all respondents answered every question, therefore, the number of overall responses (N) for individual questions varied. In addition, the number of responses to each component of the multi-item questions also varied (n).

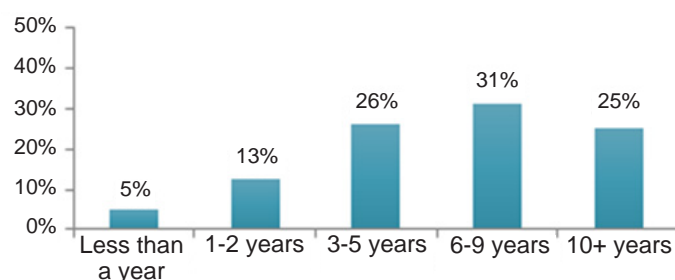


Figure 2: Length of time living in a retirement village (N = 945)

Over half the survey participants had lived in a retirement village for 6 or more years (56%); and the majority (84%) reported they planned to live in a retirement village for the rest of their lives. In terms of health, most respondents self-rated their health as very good or good (73%); while very few (2%) considered they were in poor health (see Figure 3).

In regards to income, 41% of respondents reported their source of income consisted of a mix of superannuation and government pensions or allowances, followed by those who identified as self-funded retirees with superannuation/other wealth/investment income (30%). While a quarter of all respondents (25%) received government pensions, a small number (1%) continued to be employed part time.

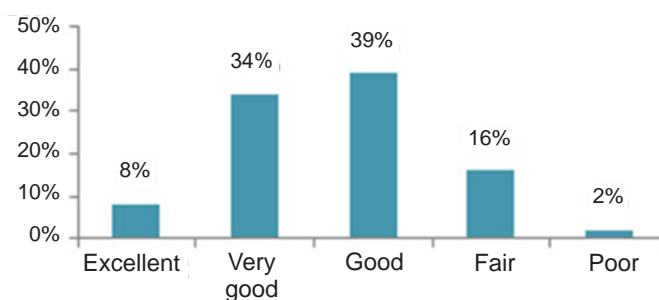


Figure 3: Respondents' self-rated health (N = 948)

Reasons for moving

Respondents were asked why they moved from their previous home into a retirement village. Five options were provided, which were not mutually exclusive, so that respondents could nominate multiple reasons if applicable (see Figure 4).

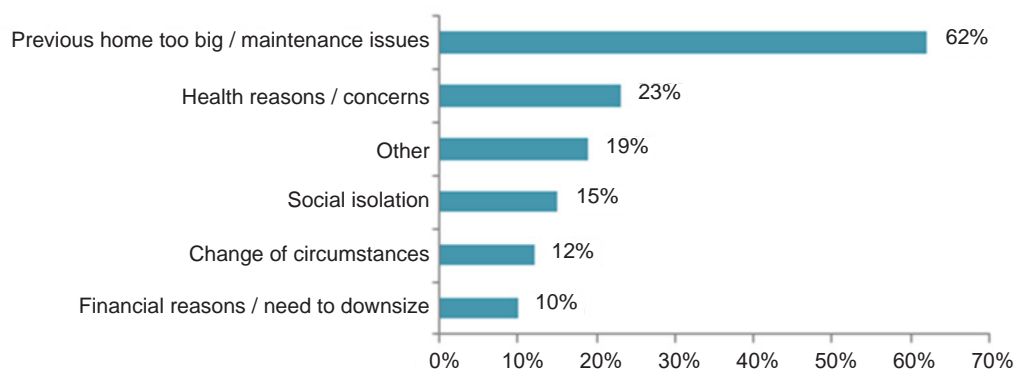


Figure 4: Respondents' reasons for moving (multiple reasons apply)

As Figure 4 shows, the most common impetus for respondents to move was that their previous home was too large (62%), followed by health reasons/concerns (23%). Thematic analysis of the free-text 'Other' responses cited by participants (n=172) elaborated on a number of these push/pull factors.

The most cited text-based reason motivating the move to a retirement village environment was the need for future planning:

“So that I could pay off my mortgage and set myself up financially for retirement”

“[I was] planning ahead for future decrepitude” and “...to have control over my future”

For others it was because they had no close family support to rely on for their future (presumably care) needs:

“As a woman with no children I wanted to make my own decision regarding my future living arrangements, my choice was driven by a very specific 'ageing in place' idea”

For others, moving presented the opportunity to be close to family members:

“...to be near my two younger children and their families, grandchildren and anticipation of help as I age”

“Death of husband, family wanted me near them as I grew older”

Additional reasons for moving included positive aspects of communal living, such as the lifestyle and the secure environment:

“Attracted by the lifestyle - Security - Safety of the house when away for long breaks - ease of living in event of one partner having to go into full time care (Which has happened)”

“Stairs and the prospect of the neighbour's major renovation would mean we would be living in a construction zone for at least two years. Also the retirement village provides excellent security and social events”

Our previous research and that of others supports these findings, and indicates that future concerns about safety and social isolation are often the strongest motivating (push) factors for people to move into communal living facilities (Malta et al. 2018; Stimson & MCrear 2004). Interestingly, only 10% of respondents rated financial reasons/the need to downsize as reasons for moving into retirement villages.

Who decides?

Respondents were asked who was involved in selecting the retirement village they moved into, and whether they made the decision alone and/or with input from others. Seven options were provided, ranging from (1) self, (2) spouse/partner, (3) family member(s) and so on. Once again, the options were not mutually exclusive, so that respondents could nominate multiple options, if applicable (see Figure 5).

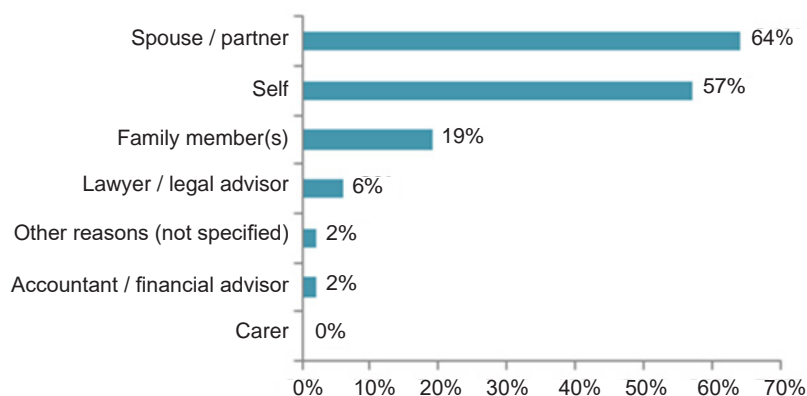


Figure 5: Personnel involved in decision to move into a retirement village

As would be expected, most decisions were made by or with spouses or partners, or people decided for themselves or in conjunction with their family member(s). Professional personnel such as lawyers/legal advisors and/or accountants/financial advisors were rarely involved in respondents' decision to move to a retirement village (6% and 2% respectively). However, it was clear that a small number of respondents consulted a wide range of people, including professionals as well as family member(s) to help them make their decision. None of the survey respondents selected the 'carer' option, perhaps reflecting the relatively good self-reported health of this cohort (refer to Figure 3).

The following section looks at the different information resources that respondents reviewed to help them make the decision to move into a retirement village.

Information sources used in decision-making and their usefulness

While for many older Australians using the internet regularly is fairly commonplace, there are some who still have difficulty doing so or who do not have access (see Malta & Wilding 2018 for discussion) and the results of the survey reflect this. For instance, of 945 respondents to this question, 799 (85%) reported they were either very or somewhat confident using the internet, and 91 (10%) reported little or no confidence. These numbers are low in terms of the overall sample. However, as the sample was weighted to those who completed the survey online it does not reflect the views of those who do not have digital access. In 2019, for instance, the results of the Australian Digital Inclusion Index showed that adults aged 65+ were the least digitally included population group (Thomas et al. 2019: 16-17). Such a scenario is problematic for older Australians, given that much of the information regarding retirement villages and, indeed, various government agencies, is provided electronically.

In keeping with this theme, we asked what kind of information resources respondents used to help them choose a retirement village and the usefulness of these resources for their decision-making processes, including information they were able to source from various internet sites. We nominated 15 such information resources, ranging from lawyers/legal advisors, retirement village information days and tours, to online forums/reviews and so on. Respondents were asked to rate each resource on a 5-point Likert scale, with responses then reclassified into three overall categories ranging from 'extremely/very useful', 'moderately useful' or 'slightly useful/not at all useful'. Figure 6 shows responses (%) for the usefulness of each of the information sources across the three categories (the number of responses across each of the categories varied and were not mutually exclusive; percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number). A sixth category – "did not use" – was analysed separately.

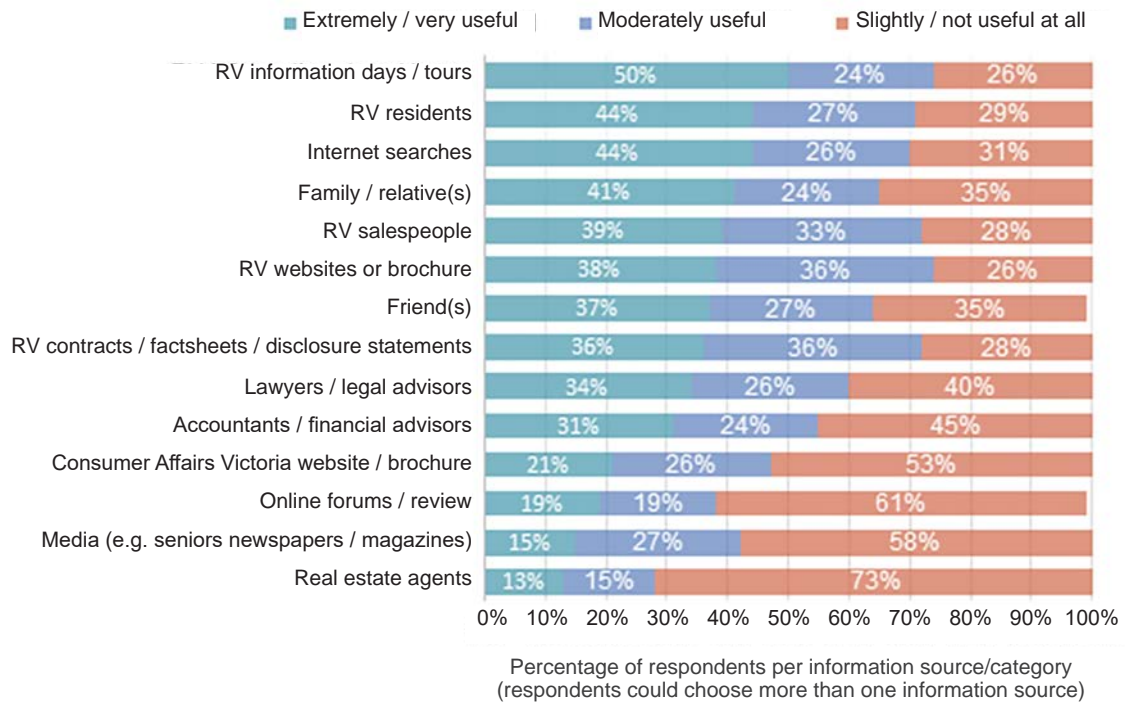


Figure 6: Usefulness of various information sources to the decision-making process

Overall, the results of this question were not encouraging. None of the information sources were rated by more than 50% of respondents as being extremely or very useful in helping participants make decisions about retirement villages. The top information sources which were extremely/very useful were retirement village information days or tours (50%), followed by current retirement village residents (44%), searching the internet for information (44%) and receiving information from family or relatives (41%).

Only 13% regarded real estate agents as extremely/very useful, with the majority of respondents (73%) rating them as slightly/not at all useful as a source of information about retirement villages. This result is not unexpected, given that retirement village owners/operators generally handle the purchase/sale/transfer of leasehold units and/or use their own selling agents, and only those residents who own 'strata title' units are at liberty to engage community-based real estate agents. In addition, 61% of respondents rated the information about retirement villages which was available from online forums/reviews as slightly or not at all useful. The results of our desktop review supported this finding, as the majority of websites appeared to consist of advertising platforms for the sale of retirement units.

In terms of seeking legal or financial advice, only 34% who responded to this question found the information provided by lawyers and legal advisors as extremely/very useful, and 40% perceived their information as slightly or not useful at all. The results were even stronger for accountants/financial advisors, with 45% of respondents rating their advice as not at all or slightly useful (see Figure 6).

This is an important finding, as the website of the consumer regulator, Consumer Affairs Victoria, contains a number of facts about retirement villages and how to choose one, and recommends consumers seek the following advice:

You must look carefully at the contract and rules of the retirement village you are considering. Before signing, take all documents to a legal practitioner and/or financial advisor who understands the implications of retirement village contracts

(CAV Website, Accessed Jan 10, 2020)

Prospective residents of retirement villages are therefore being encouraged by government to seek advice from legal practitioners and/or financial advisors in order to protect themselves, but most people do not find this information very useful when they do seek advice. It is also notable that only 21% of respondents considered Consumer Affairs Victoria's website/brochures as extremely or very useful, and a further 53% rated them as slightly or not useful at all. It is therefore feasible that many respondents did not learn from, understand or follow the advice of Consumer Affairs Victoria. The implications of this result are worrying and warrant further investigation and are explored further in the report. There is also the question of the availability (and accessibility) of such information in hard copy formats, given that many older Victorians do not have access to electronic means.

Some text responses to this question indicated that the reasons for not seeking professional guidance could be related to the perceived inadequacies of the advice currently provided by such personnel:

"...even solicitors don't seem to understand this contract"

"We are told to seek legal advice but the lawyers aren't familiar with retirement village law"

"Our legal advisers didn't seem to fully understand the legal implications"

"Accountant was no hope"

These findings were further reinforced by participants' text-based responses regarding the information they received from sales people or operators before they moved into retirement villages. Most of these experiences were negative, revealing there was little transparency in sales talks or that they were not necessarily truthful:

"Be careful of salespeople. Record every word they say. Don't necessarily choose a village because the owner has a good reputation... There is still a lot of corporate speak going on. We would have liked more transparency and accountability"

"There was a vast difference between Sale pitch and how the village actually runs"

"More factual and honest information from the sales person"

"More consistent information between agent and operator - facts and promises made were not always congruent"

Only three responses were positive, with one participant commenting that "honesty and approachability is crucial".

Some people sought and received what they considered to be useful, independent, professional advice from some older adult advocacy organisations such as RRVV, HAAG and COTA Vic to inform their decision-making:

"I received a 30 question list from COTA and it was the single most valuable aid I received. Their advice helped a lot too"

Further text-based comments indicated that some respondents undertook their "own assessment" by personally visiting "multiple villages", while others sought information from "independent [unspecified]" third parties before deciding which village to move to. It was also clear that having friends and acquaintances who already lived in retirement villages provided some survey participants with valuable information about village life and also acted as a pull factor in their decision-making, for example:

"At least 7 friends in residence prior to my entry so I had a very pleasant move"

"I went on the quality of the unit and its proximity to my son's house and discussions I had with friends who already lived there"

"Important to compare and assess the satisfaction level of long-term residents"

Based on these responses, leveraging the lived experiences of existing residents could be a valuable tool for consumer advocacy bodies and regulators to help address the information gaps highlighted in this report.

Comparing housing options and retirement village features

We then asked respondents whether they had compared other housing options before making the decision to move into a retirement village. We provided three 'Yes' response options to choose from (which were not mutually exclusive) and a fourth response for those who did not compare any housing options (see Table 2). Those who did not undertake comparisons were redirected to skip this survey question. Due to the number of different combinations, it is not possible to calculate overall frequencies for each response option. However, the proportions of responses (% , in descending order) are provided.

Table 2: Comparison of different housing options

| % | Options |
|-----|--|
| 70% | Yes, I compared different retirement villages |
| 33% | Yes, I compared retirement villages with other types of housing |
| 29% | Yes, I compared different options within a particular retirement village |
| 14% | No, I did not compare any housing options |

While it is notable that two-thirds of respondents compared different retirement villages before making a decision about which one to live in, the results also indicate that 30% did not. This finding suggests that consumers should be made more aware of the need to compare a range of villages before making a commitment.

Those who chose the 'Yes, I compared retirement villages with other types of housing' option were then directed to an additional question asking them what other types of housing they considered, such as 'home ownership', 'living with family', 'aged care', 'rental housing' and so on. The most frequent housing options respondents compared with retirement villages included home ownership (with a home care package (HCP) when needed) at 49%, followed by the 'Other' category (38%), which asked them to specify in words (see Figure 7). We received 63 text responses indicating that survey participants had considered alternative means of housing such as purchasing/downsizing or moving to smaller houses/units, apartments, single-level townhouses, serviced apartments or independent living complexes. A further three responses indicated respondents wished to 'stay' in their existing housing or move into 'normal' housing, i.e., not live in a retirement village:

"Wouldn't have even considered a retirement village if there were more options for buying smaller, single level houses in my local community"

Together these results suggest that a good number of respondents may not have relocated to retirement villages if there had been other, smaller-sized, accessible and affordable housing options available.

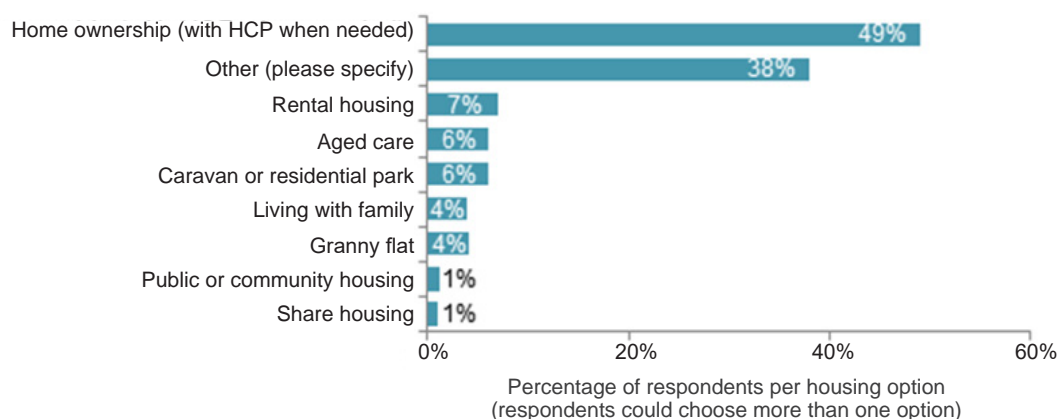


Figure 7: Housing options compared with retirement villages prior to moving in

A number of comments however, showed that the housing options outlined in Figure 7 were not applicable to respondents (95) or that retirement village living was the only option considered (43), as illustrated by the following quotes:

“No other consideration except to buy a unit in a retirement village”

“I only looked at retirement villages”

“I was determined to go into a village”

We then explored which village features were important or not to older Victorians when choosing a retirement village. We provided a list of 18 features, which respondents rated on a 5-point Likert scale. This scale was reclassified into three categories ranging from extremely important to not important at all. Figure 8 shows the importance of each of the information sources across the three response categories (%).

Retirement village features which were considered extremely/very important to respondents were the quality of the village unit (93%), safety and security (85%) and location (84%); followed by village maintenance and emergency support (both 79%). In contrast, only 32% of survey participants reported vacancy/occupancy rates of villages as extremely/very important to them and while one-quarter (25%) considered the average age of existing residents extremely/very important, 38% stated it was slightly or not at all important (see Table 5 for further analysis and discussion).

Text-based responses indicated that “honesty” of the owners and management was extremely important when considering a village, as was “a general feeling of goodwill among the current residents”. Cost considerations were also raised:

“Affordability of purchase price and ongoing fees. Also knowing who would be responsible for maintenance costs of unit”

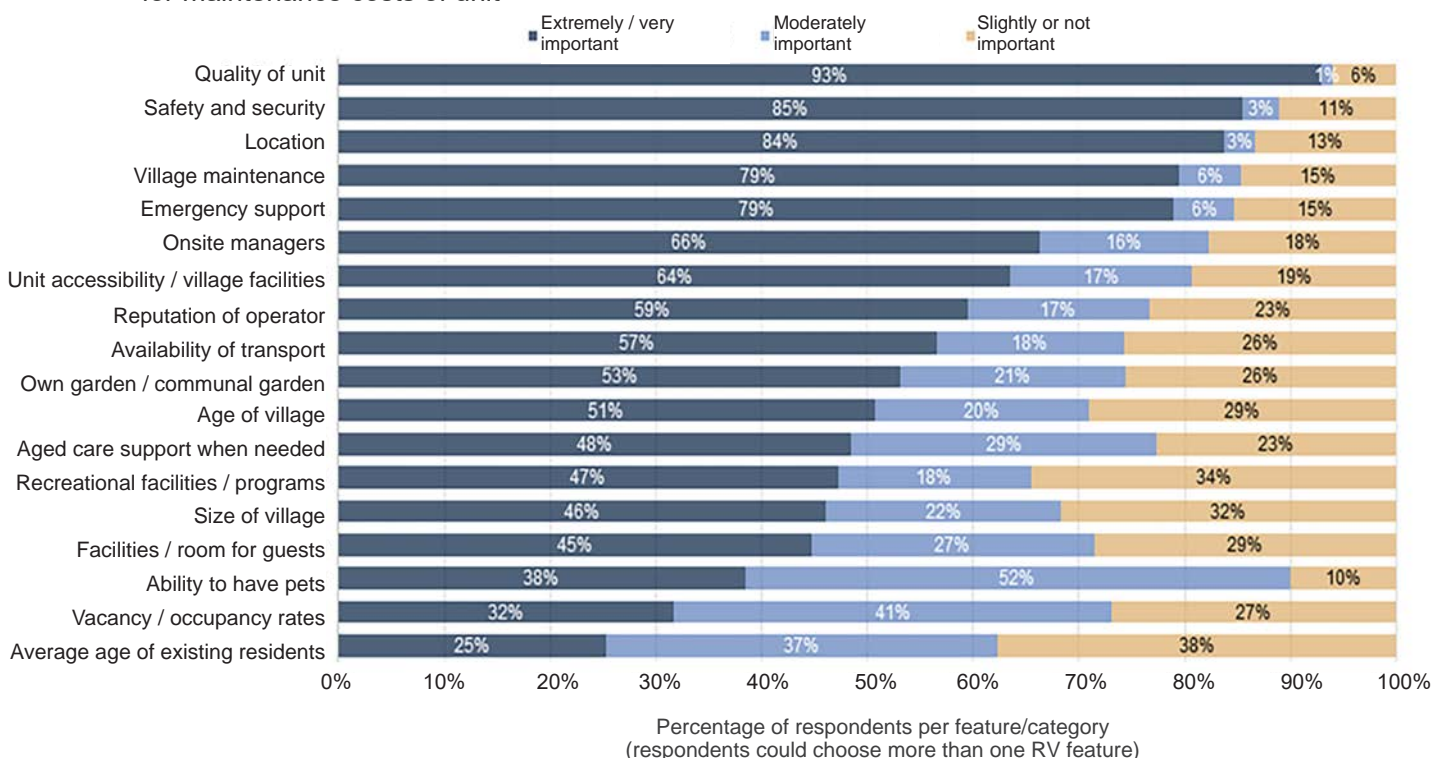


Figure 8: Importance of various village features when choosing a retirement village to live in

We then asked respondents how easy it was to compare these retirement village features prior to choosing a village to live in. Figure 9 shows the responses (%) for each of the nominated features across three categories: ‘very/somewhat easy’, ‘neutral’ (neither easy nor difficult) or ‘very/somewhat difficult’.

In general, the majority of respondents found comparing information about 13 of these retirement village features was relatively easy, ranging from location, quality of unit (>80%), and availability of transport through to safety and security and emergency support (>70%). Quality of unit and location, which rated as the most important features when choosing a retirement village (refer Figure 8), were also rated as the easiest features to compare by more than 80% of respondents (Figure 9).

It is interesting to note that, while 79% of survey participants considered village maintenance as an extremely/very important village feature (see Figure 8) just over 50% considered it a feature which was very or somewhat easy to compare (see Figure 9). A further 18% of respondents rated it as very/somewhat difficult to compare.

Five other features—onsite managers, aged care support when needed, the reputation of operators, vacancy/occupancy rates and the average age of residents—were considered by half, or less than half, of survey participants to be very or somewhat easy to compare (≤50%) and by ~20% of respondents to be very/somewhat difficult to compare.

Some of the qualitative survey responses provided additional insight into participants' experiences. Respondents felt that an overall register of villages should be published, which would help prospective residents to understand the differences between villages, and others highlighted that disclosure documents should be standardised, which clearly has not been done to date:

“[S]pecifying the major costs, types of contracts and amenities to [be able to] filter out unsuitable [village] types”

“Some form of uniform disclosure from the various operators [should be available] so you could more readily compare different villages”

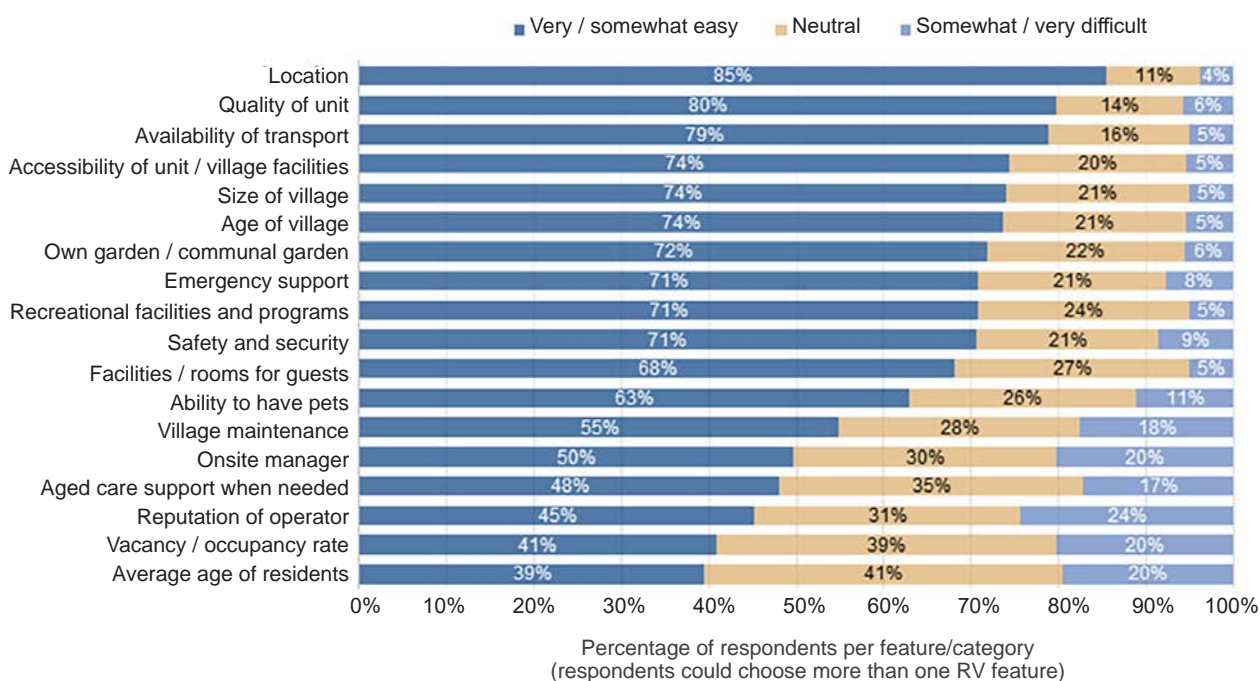


Figure 9: Ease of comparing various retirement village features prior to choosing a village to live in

In terms of the age of existing residents, additional responses provided insight into why this information is important to some prospective clients in the decision-making process:

“Average age of residents [was] older than I thought... ”

“If we had known the age of residents it would have definitely put us off”

“I was lied to about the average age of the residents. I was floored when I found out how old most people are!”

Based on comments such as these, additional analyses were conducted to see whether there was any association between the age of incoming residents and their views about the age of existing residents.

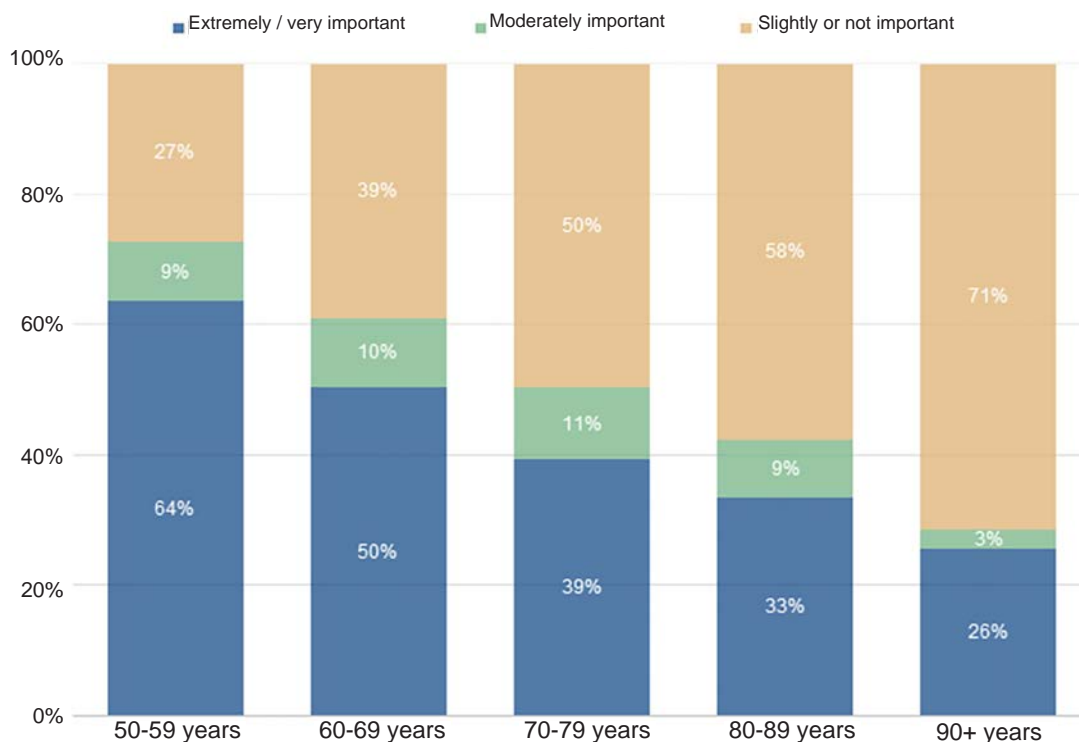


Figure 10: Relative importance of age of existing residents

As can be seen from Figure 10, the importance of other residents' ages decreased relative to survey participants' personal age. That is, the age of other residents appears to be extremely or very important to younger retirement village residents (64%, for those aged 50-59 years in particular); whereas for older residents (those aged 80-89 years, and 90+ years) the age of other residents is only slightly or not important at all (58% and 71% respectively). Findings such as these highlight the benefits of providing this information, particularly for younger prospective residents, as highlighted above, as it might serve to circumvent some of the discomfort as expressed in the previous quotes.

Other text responses indicated that prospective residents hope to develop 'mutual' social support or comradeship or to seek shared interests with other residents once they move into a retirement village, as this quote illustrates:

"[Retirement village name omitted] have a very comprehensive monthly event calendar. It openly encourages exercise and socialisation plus other activities all at no cost to residents. Afternoon tea is supplied daily at no charge with happy hour once a week with nibbles and wine free for one hour. None of these are compared from village to village... yet are so important to the ongoing health and well-being of all residents. We believed that all villages were the same. In our lease village in [suburb omitted] it is the opposite, there is no activities coordinator. All is run by volunteer over 80-year-old residents. Nothing is free and no attempt is made [by management] to improve the health and well-being of their beautiful clients... [so] there are a number of very isolated people. Health and well-being far outweigh monthly service charges. This is an area that needs far greater scrutiny and comparison when choosing a village"

As the Baby Boomer cohort (those born between 1946 and 1966) continues to age, larger numbers of older Victorians will be retiring and looking to downsize, and perhaps to seek the social support and companionship that congregate living communities are purported to provide. This will result in an expected increase in numbers moving into retirement villages. As such, providing information about the age of fellow residents may become an increasingly salient feature over time, as will the need to encourage social participation and engagement among residents.

Some of the information that survey participants highlighted they would like to have available to them, including age of existing residents, may be deemed as commercially sensitive for owners/operators to disclose. However, its importance to prospective residents cannot be underestimated. A range of such information should therefore be easily accessible and included in village information packs provided to all potential residents.

Cost considerations of retirement village decision-making

The importance of various financial costs when choosing a retirement village was also explored in the current survey (see Figure 11). Ongoing costs such as maintenance/service charges were extremely/very important to 83% of respondents, as were upfront (entry) costs (81%), followed by exit costs (75%) and the time taken for departing residents to receive exit payments from owners/operators (72%).

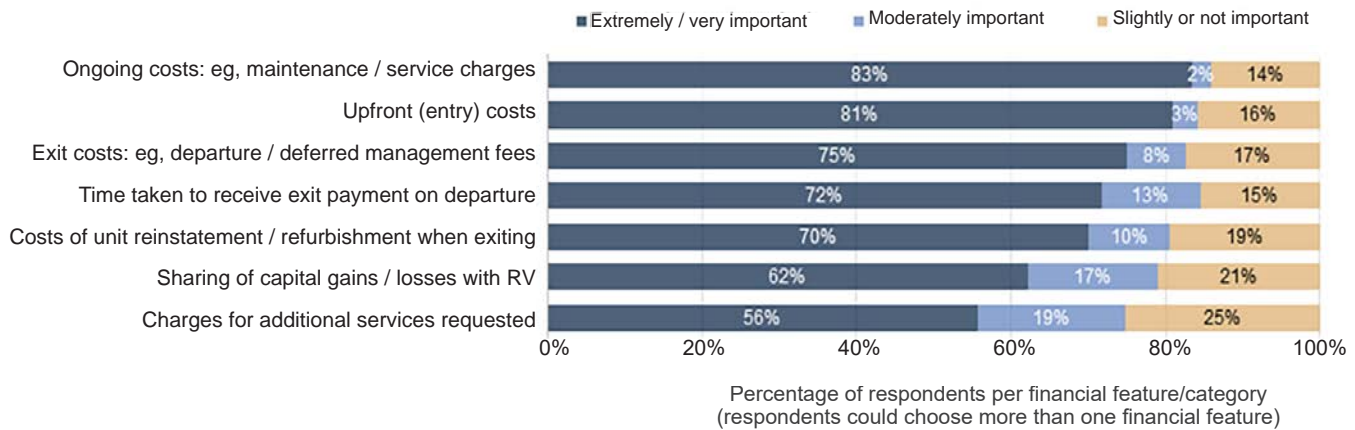


Figure 11: Importance of various financial costs when choosing a retirement village

We then asked prospective residents how easy it was to compare these various retirement village cost features when deciding which village to relocate to. Figure 12 shows the combined response categories that were reported as 'very/somewhat easy', 'neutral' and 'somewhat/very difficult'.

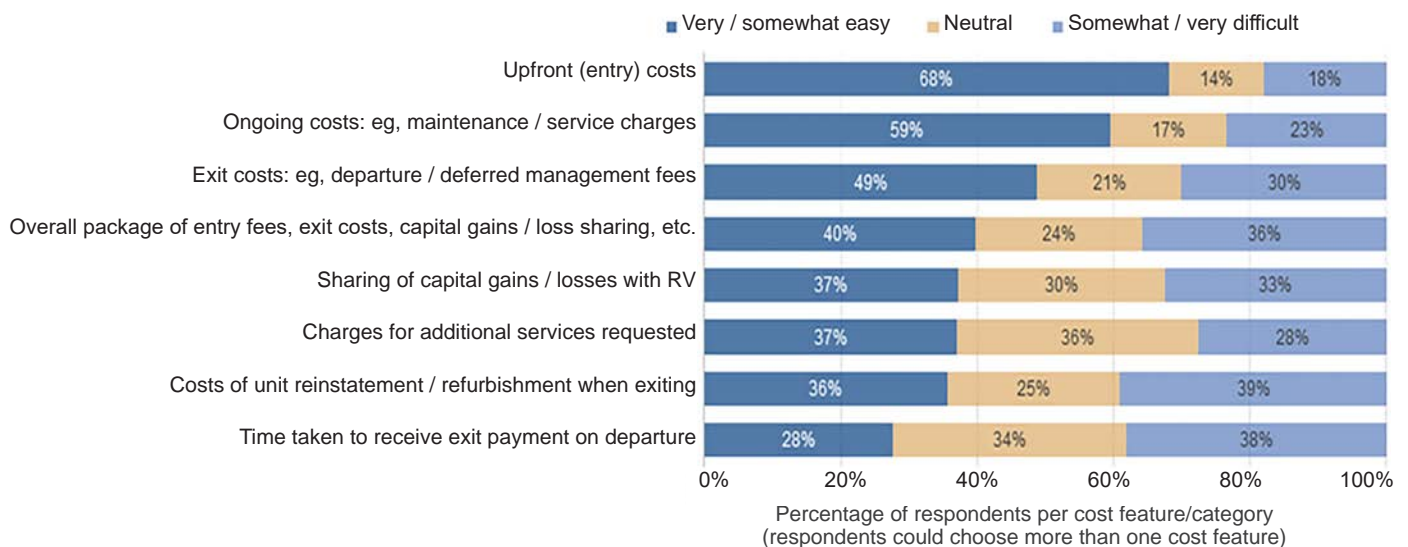


Figure 12: Ease of comparing various financial costs when choosing a retirement village

Overall, six of the cost features were rated by less than 50% of respondents as being very/somewhat easy to compare. In contrast, 30% of respondents or more rated five cost features as somewhat or very difficult to compare across villages – four of which were related to leaving villages, and one related to the overall package of fees (from entrance to exit).

Among these five cost features, the costs associated with reinstating/refurbishing units and the length of time taken to receive exit payments were the most difficult to compare (39% and 38% respectively), despite their relative importance to approximately two-thirds of respondents (refer Figure 11). In comparison, upfront (entry) costs were seen by respondents as being the easiest to compare (68%), followed by ongoing costs (59%).

It is acknowledged that providing accurate estimates of costs associated with leaving a village is difficult as, on the whole, these costs are time-dependent (ie, contingent on how long residents live in the village) and are subject to change over time due to a number of factors. These factors can consist of a changeover of owners and the resultant changes to contract terms which can occur, amongst others. However, the survey findings suggest a large gap in the information supplied/available to prospective residents, with the potential to cause much uncertainty at a time of considerable stress. Prospective and current residents have a right to reasonably expect retirement villages to disclose clear and accurate information.

In addition, consideration needs to be given to providing more equitable safeguards for residents in the event of owner changeovers, as this event can significantly impact on the health and wellbeing of residents. This is particularly so for those who are older and who have limited economic means to accommodate changes to their contracts:

“Change of ownership, of village, has changed everything for the worse by a very large extent. Would never have had any dealings with the present owners, if I'd had a choice”

Understanding contracts and tenure arrangements

Respondents were then asked two questions relating to how well they understood documentation such as fact sheets and disclosure statements, as well as their village contracts, prior to signing. Of the respondents who answered the first question (N=709), less than 50% considered they understood their documentation extremely or very well (42%). And while 45% reported moderate understanding, 13% rated their level of comprehension as slightly/not well (see Figure 13).

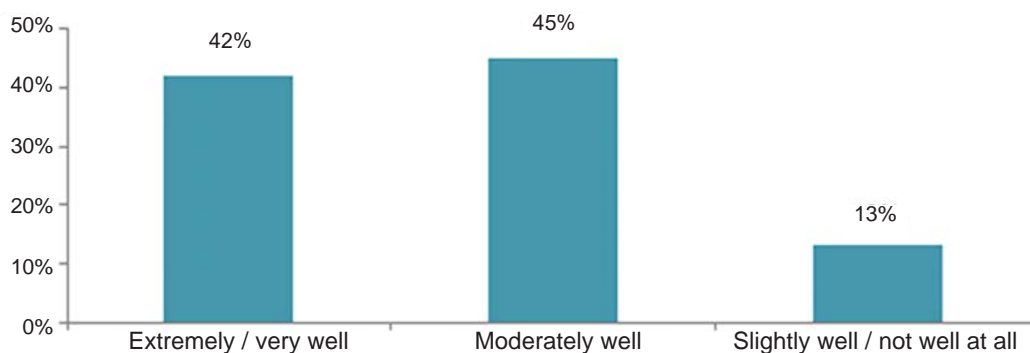


Figure 13: Level of understanding of documentation such as fact sheets and disclosure statements before signing contract

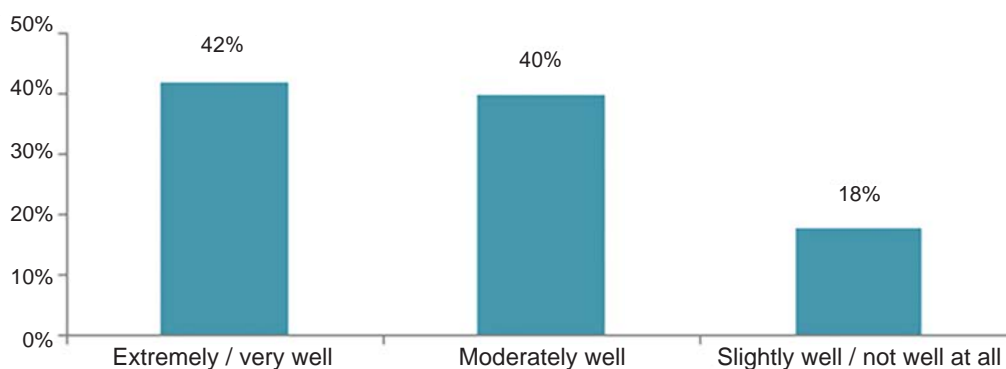


Figure 14: Level of understanding of contract before signing

Confirming the results of the preceding question, 42% of respondents (N=888) who answered the second question said they understood their contracts extremely/very well prior to signing. Eighteen percent said they only slightly understood their contracts or did not understand them well at all (n=161) (see Figure 14). Reflecting this lack of understanding (and the importance of this matter), 107 respondents (15.4%, n = 697 overall) raised concerns about contract matters in the open-ended question at the end of the survey.

These qualitative responses indicated that the results are more nuanced than they first appear. One of the major themes identified concerned difficulties with documents – disclosure documents and contracts particularly – with many participants commenting they should be made simpler and clearer as they were too difficult to understand, and that more explanation or clarification of contract details especially was required. For instance:

- “An on-line comparison chart against which to assess the merits of the options”
- “Some form of uniform disclosure from the various operators so you could more readily compare different villages”
- “[We need] an overall register of villages specifying the major costs, types of contracts and amenities to filter out unsuitable types and to make comparisons”
- “Clearer comparisons between villages, standard contract conditions to support comparison, clearer monetary comparisons, clearer consumer protection and advice, comparison of types of retirement village with positive and negative aspects. Until you are in a village you don't know the questions you need to ask!”

In terms of contracts, the following quotes provide an illustration of the difficulties expressed by respondents:

- “The village owners being more upfront with ongoing maintenance costs, even whilst we do not actually own the unit, we are responsible for all repair cost to fixtures and fittings within the unit. The owner is not responsible for anything, even our solicitor failed to properly advise on that aspect”
- “Simple contract, more detailed information in plain wording, found it difficult to understand”
- “Would have preferred more factual info, not so much misleading marketing puffery”
- “A clear description of the type of contract [is needed]. We pay an upfront fee from which a certain percentage is deducted each year for five years and the remainder is paid out on exit. This is not a lease or ownership or a rental. So what is it?”

To understand these responses further, the survey then asked whether respondents had received help to enable them to understand their retirement village contracts or other documentation. Nine response items were provided ranging from lawyers/legal advisors to community help services (items were not mutually exclusive, therefore response rates varied for each item) (Figure 15).

Overall, the results indicated that less than half the respondents (48%) received advice from lawyers/legal advisors, 17% from retirement village operators or salespersons and less than 10% sought advice from finance professionals.

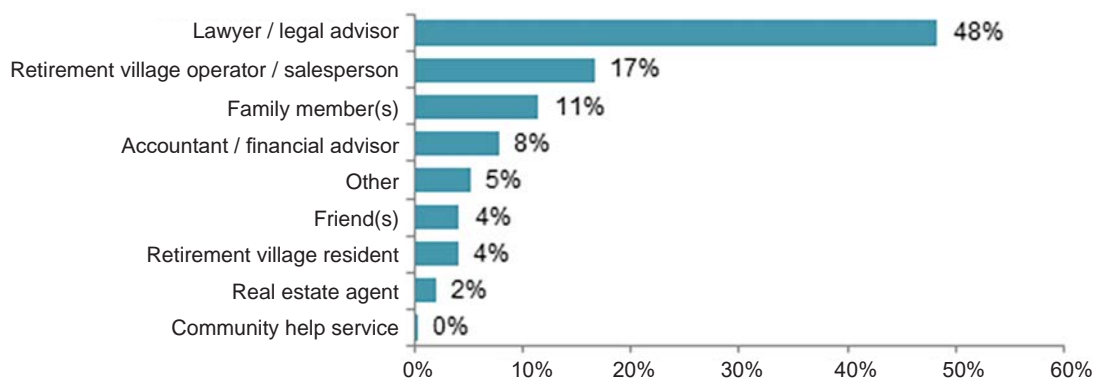


Figure 15: Help with understanding retirement village contracts/documentation

This result is disconcerting, given that CAV and advocacy bodies such as COTA, HAAG and RRVV advise purchasers to seek guidance from legal or financial personnel before signing contracts. Likewise, while some participants acknowledged that prospective residents should engage the services of a lawyer, a number of survey participants did seek advice, but our qualitative data revealed that some found such legal/professional assistance not particularly helpful.

Indeed, they felt these professionals were either not familiar with the complicated nature of retirement village contracts or had difficulty understanding them fully, as illustrated by these text responses:

“Unfortunately didn’t understand the contract well enough... was seduced by living near the sea... and anxious to move in... have lived to regret the consequences”

“Fact sheets weren't available at that time. [I] did use a lawyer but they don't really seem to understand Retirement village contracts”

“[It was] difficult to find [a] solicitor who understands these contracts. [And] Sales personnel say whatever it takes to make [a] sale”

The results of the other response items (Figure 15) were even lower, ranging from 11% for receiving help from family members down to 2% from real estate agents.

It is clear from these results that contracts and disclosure documents need to be simplified and standardised far more than has been done to date. The changes that were implemented as a result of the 2014 retirement village reform (see CAV 2019; pp 19) appear not to have addressed residents’ understandings of contracts or a number of other issues highlighted by the results of this survey (see further for more in depth discussion on this point).

In addition to an overhaul of contracts, the need for the development of a comprehensive education program aimed at legal and financial representatives is compelling, given their lack of understanding and appreciation of the complexities of retirement village contracts. Addressing both these issues (simplifying/standardising contracts and disclosure documents, and developing appropriate education pathways for legal/financial representatives), will go a long way to ensuring that older Victorian consumers can receive timely, effective, and appropriate advice about retirement village contracts and information which is understandable, comparable (across different village types) and is not cost prohibitive.

A further question asked residents whether they were aware of a number of factors associated with their daily living within their retirement village at the time of choosing a retirement village (see Figure 16).

Our qualitative data analysis highlighted that respondents would have wanted to know how resident committees work with management and how much residents can participate in decision-making on everyday matters. It seems roles and responsibilities of resident committees are ambiguous in some retirement villages and dispute resolution can be difficult. These factors are highlighted in the following comments:

“The role, power and responsibilities of the Resident's committee and how this committee works with Management”

“Voting rights on village issues”

“Lack of control residents have over facilities that we pay to maintain”

“Dispute resolution has been difficult and distressing. Clearer information about the process would have saved a lot of worry... [managers and consumers need] extra training in this area”

“Resident committees can become [difficult] if individual residents cannot agree on particular issues. It seems more guidelines in this area would be helpful”

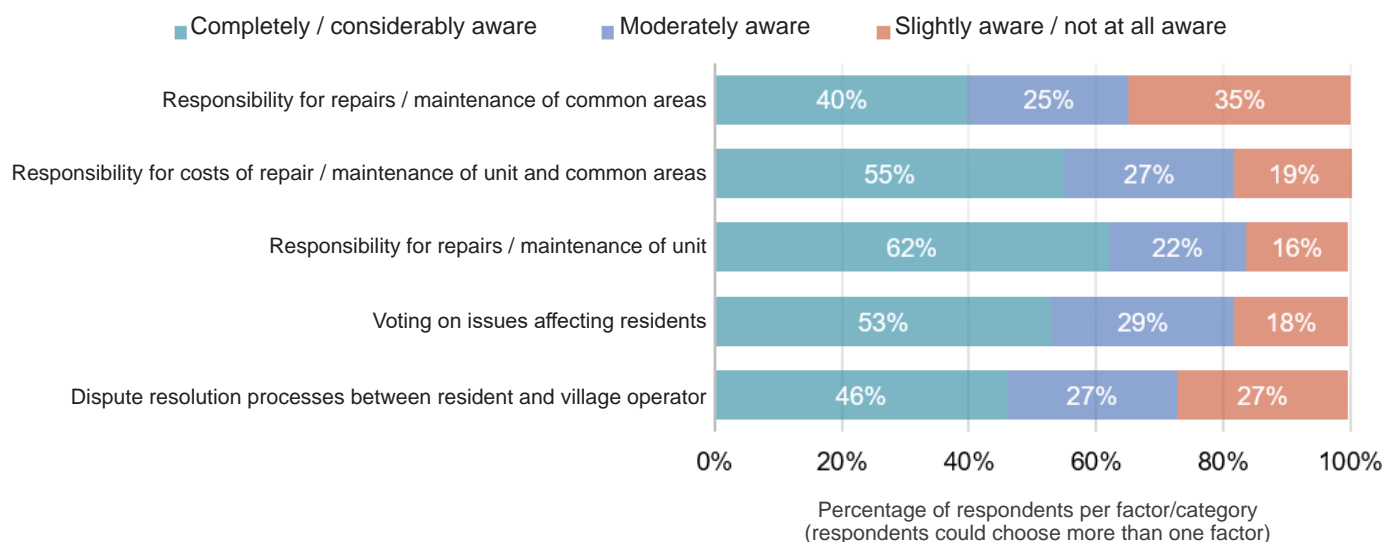


Figure 16: Awareness of factors related to everyday living

The next question asked respondents about how well they understood various contract features when they were choosing a retirement village (contract features were not mutually exclusive). Response options consisted of a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from extremely well understood to no understanding, which were then combined into three categories as illustrated in Figure 17.

Upfront (entry) costs were extremely/very well understood by 71% of respondents. In contrast, other costs are not so well understood, with the majority of respondents reporting moderate or lower understanding about charges for additional services requested, exit costs, the time taken to receive exit payments on departure, the costs of unit reinstatement or refurbishment, and sharing of capital gains or losses.

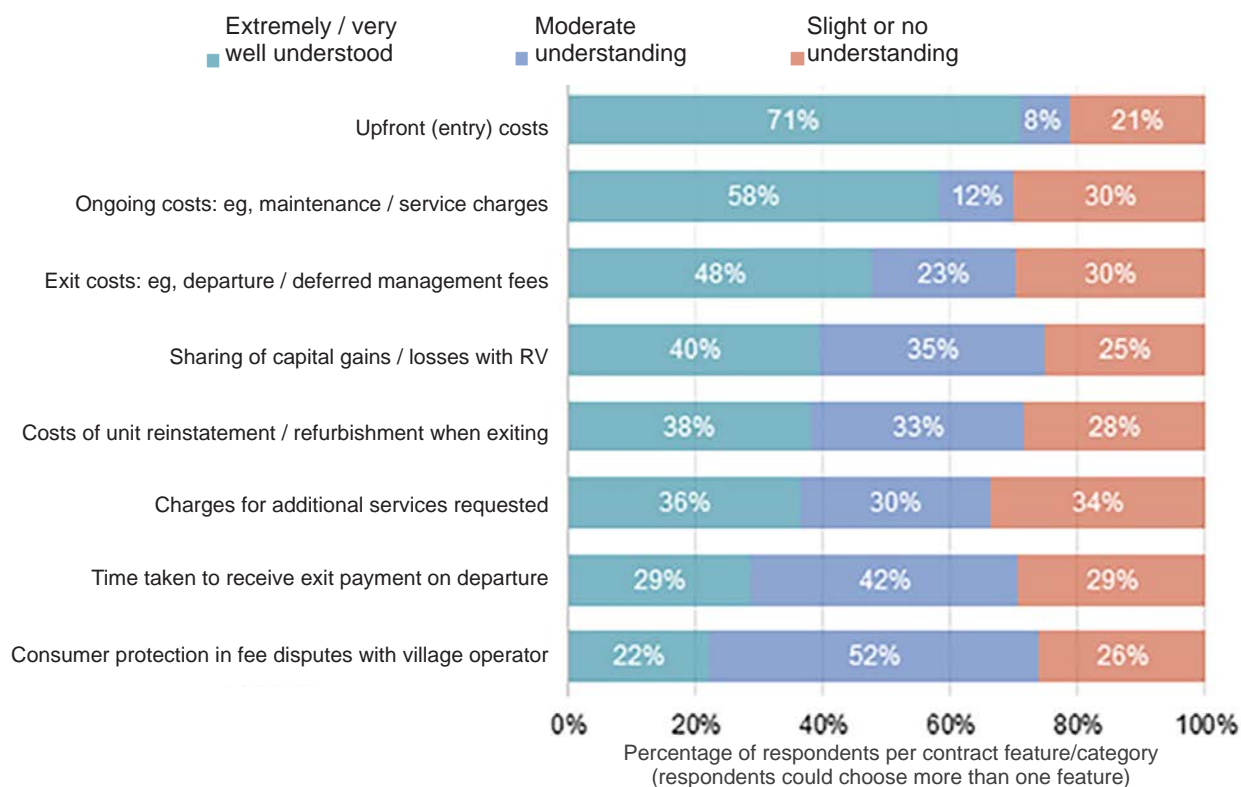


Figure 17: Understanding of contract features when choosing a retirement village

How consumers are protected when there are fee disputes with retirement village operators is also not clear, as only 22% of survey participants understood this feature extremely/very well, 52% moderately well, and 26% of respondents had slight or no understanding at all. It is not surprising there is such a gap about contract features in prospective residents' knowledge – as the results in Figure 15 and the open-text responses indicate, just under half of respondents had help from lawyers to understand contracts and other documentation, and that when advice about contracts is sought it lacks expertise, or is perceived to be conflicted.

The ownership/tenure arrangements of survey respondents are outlined in Figure 18 (below). Just over half live in retirement villages with a long-term lease arrangement (51%), while 15% have a loan/license agreement. These figures are different from the ones reported by Consumer Affairs Victoria (2019) who identified that approximately 74% of retirement village units were occupied on a loan-lease or loan-licence basis and 16% on a freehold basis.

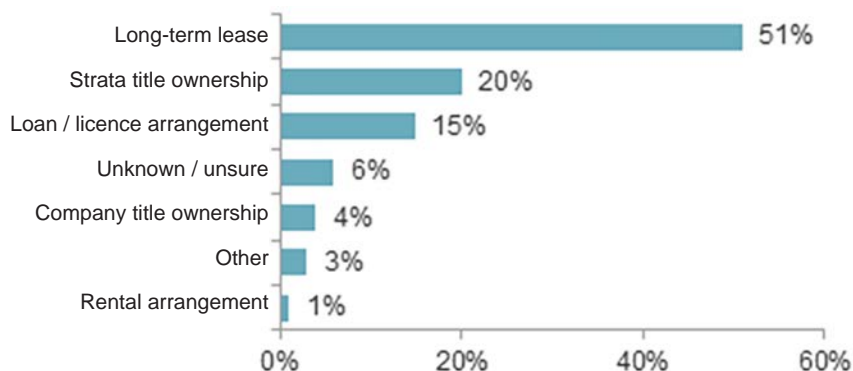


Figure 18: Type of retirement village tenure arrangement (N = 879)

It is possible that the difference between these results may be due to respondents' confusion about tenure types. As Cradduck and Blake (2012a;b) suggest, this confusion may arise because residents do not (i) realise that retirement village tenure is not the same as home ownership (or the 'land tenure system') with which they are familiar; or that (ii) the fees associated with retirement villages are not the same as those of strata title complexes (see Cradduck & Blake 2012a;b). Further follow-up would be required to determine this definitively.

Following this question, the survey then asked respondents to rate their satisfaction levels with each of the following retirement village features once they became residents (see Figure 19).

Despite many of the issues highlighted thus far, the majority of respondents were either very or somewhat satisfied with many of the 'lifestyle' features of their retirement village. The highest satisfaction rates concerned the physical location of individual retirement villages (94%), the quality of the individual retirement units (dwellings) (84%), as well as the safety and security of retirement villages, and the availability of nearby transport (both 81%). These features were also rated by survey respondents as important when they were choosing a retirement village (see Figure 8).

In contrast, there were a number of retirement village features which were rated as unsatisfactory (ie, survey participants were somewhat or very dissatisfied) once they became residents. These were onsite managers (26%), the reputation of the village operator (24%), and village maintenance (18%). The availability of aged care support (17%) and current vacancy/occupancy rates (16%) continued to be an issue for current residents, despite their relative importance to the decision-making process prior to becoming residents (see Figure 8).

Many qualitative comments were received regarding management of retirement villages. All comments related to the quality of village and resident management, and overall they questioned the competency of managers. For example, respondents were dissatisfied with the quality of management and the knowledge and skills of managers in their villages. The comments implied that a power imbalance existed between management and residents, and there was ambiguity regarding roles and responsibilities of on-site managers.

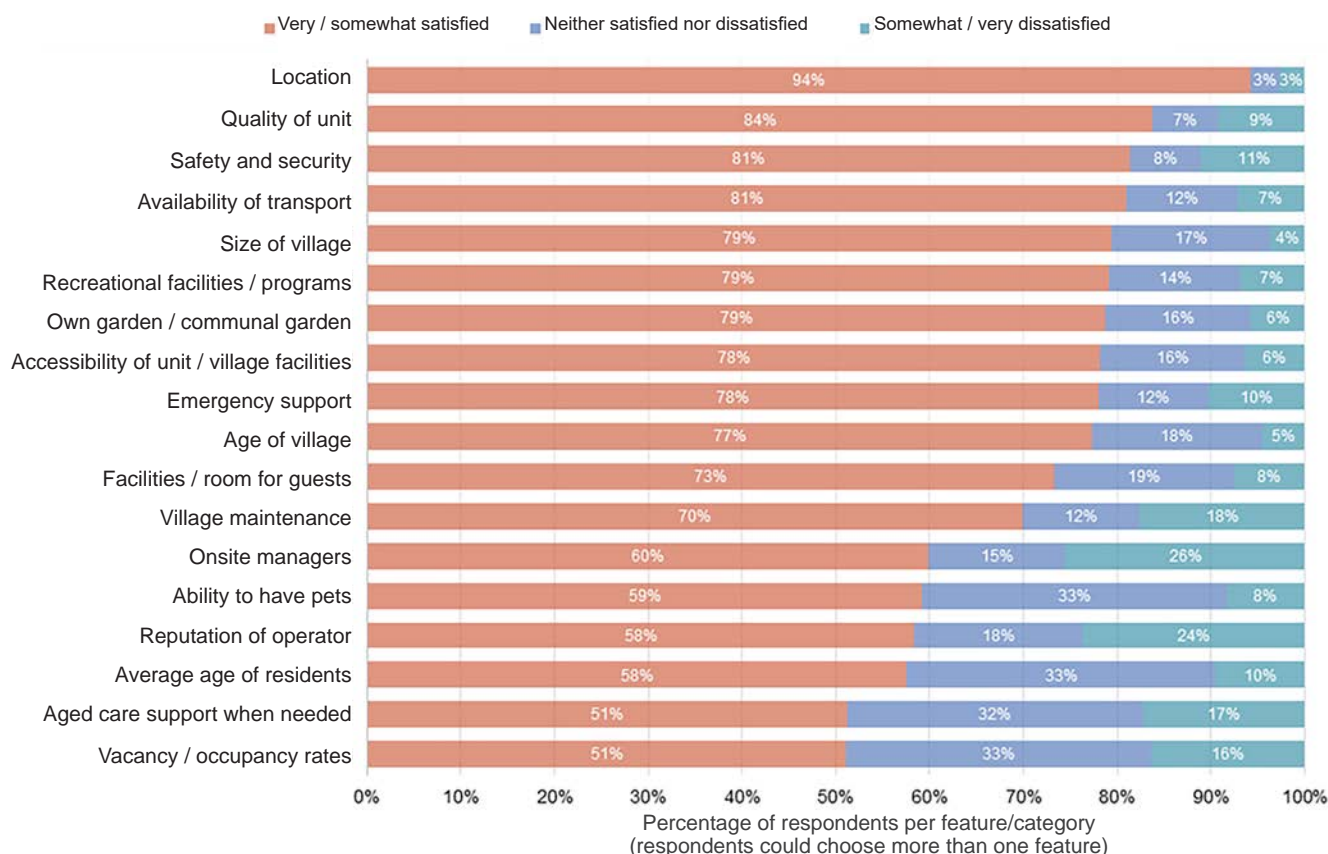


Figure 19: Satisfaction with retirement village features once a resident

The previous research by Malta and colleagues reinforces this finding and highlights that such an imbalance constrains residents' ability to address issues of concern (see Malta et al. 2018). In addition, comments about the lack of quality or competence of on-site managers suggest that more education and training for staff is necessary. Comments included the following:

“Each village should have a comprehensive 'Village Handbook' giving total information about costs, maintenance and local rules and regulations which are then adhered to. Rules, regulations, costs can only be changed at meetings of all residents. The Management Committee at my village is dictatorial and unrepresentative of the residents; the only election since I have been here was an example of "Rotten Borough" elections. Communications are made to selected people and not to the whole community”

“[We need] more accurate information re the management team and owners of the village. [I am] very disappointed with the general attitude of management towards residents, their obvious lack of ability/experience to successfully run the facility, a distinct difficulty with transparency and a clearly increased propensity towards aged care rather than independent residents”

“The fact that part of my front garden was dug up to accommodate a car parking area which I was not told about when I first put a deposit on the house and nothing was in the contract about it”

“Had I known more about the power structure I may have reconsidered my move into a retirement village”

Sixty-one qualitative comments were also received in relation to retirement village owners/operators. Twenty-five of these responses related to their responsibility over running villages, including maintenance and management. The comments highlighted the ambiguity of the operators' roles in management and their lack of interest in taking care of residents' quality of life. Moreover, fourteen respondents mentioned that it would have been helpful to know operators' future plans, for example, future expansion of the villages or a long-term village maintenance plan.

Thirteen respondents wished they had known that owners could change, as they were not aware of this fact. Change in ownership resulted in a change in contracts. These residents now live in retirement villages under altered contracts, which are different from the ones they initially signed, and this has caused a sense of anger and insecurity:

“...[it should] be made mandatory by law [that residents are] to be made aware that the Village could be sold, changing so much of what I came here for. Certainly would not have moved here knowing that the current owners would have anything to do with it”

“[I would have liked to have known that] ...the Village could be sold without any consultation with residents & that the new owners could change so many things, making what is offered to residents virtually unrecognisable. This has left many disappointed & very unhappy - this is not what we bought into”

“The Truth and nothing but the truth. I would never have come anywhere near this place [otherwise]. Why was I charged double the deferred [management fee than] a couple that came in one year later? Top manager said ‘we have different contracts in the village!’ I just cannot believe that they get away with it and I don’t have enough money to fight them or I would. Even people in this village are horrified at what has happened to me”

Other respondents mentioned the importance of knowing the operators themselves, including their history and reputation, their financial transparency and accountability. Mandatory training of owners/operators and managers would go a long way to establishing relationships with residents. Taking the time to communicate plans for change and refurbishment or change of ownership, has previously been highlighted as an effective strategy in alleviating resident stress (see Malta et al. 2018) and was one of the recommendations that came out of the Parliament of Victoria Inquiry into the Retirement Housing Sector in 2017.

In terms of contract costs, the level of resident satisfaction with various costs since moving in is highlighted in Figure 20. Most respondents indicated they were very/somewhat satisfied with the upfront costs they pay when relocating to a retirement village (77%). This result corresponds with their high level of self-reported understanding of this contract cost (71%; see Figure 17). A similar agreement can be seen between resident satisfaction with ongoing costs (65%) and their relatively high level of understanding of these costs (58%; see Figure 17). The highest levels of dissatisfaction were reported in relation to exit costs and the costs of reinstating or refurbishing a unit when leaving, with 36% of respondents somewhat or very dissatisfied with these costs.

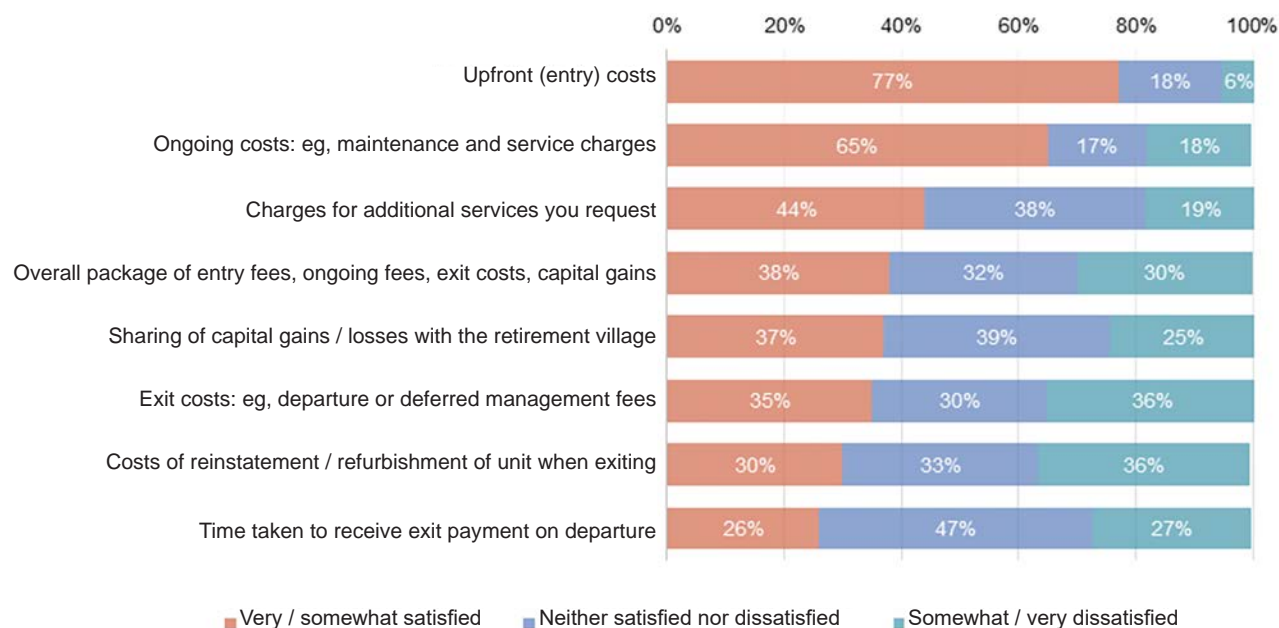


Figure 20: Level of satisfaction with various retirement villages costs once a resident

Qualitative responses provide more nuance to these results, indicating resident dissatisfaction with some costs, particularly those relating to ongoing service fees:

"THEY" told me the service fee would only "ever" go up with the CPI - that didn't happen. "They" changed the rules and I had no say in the matter. My plan was I could always pay the service fee if it went up with CPI, as I am on the pension and the pension goes up [along] with the CPI. But...

"One simple fact sheet with Unit Cost, Monthly Maintenance cost, Exit Fees & delay in settlement. [And a] guarantee about weekly costs which have risen to an exorbitant level"

"Increases in fees outside CPI" and "greater clarity regarding 'inside and outside' maintenance costs"

It is clear that residents do not receive enough information to alleviate their ongoing concerns. As one resident noted "more information about what is [actually] covered in ongoing maintenance" would be welcomed by many and should be a minimum requirement for effective management of all villages.

Exit requirements for retirement villages

The survey then asked respondents if they had to pay a departure fee, such as a deferred management fee, upon leaving their village. Of the 864 responses to this question, 82% responded 'yes', and 8% responded 'no'. Worryingly, 10% of respondents did not know, indicating a lack of transparency and clarity in contracts and documentation.

Table 3: Awareness of departure fee payments

| % | Options |
|-----|---|
| 89% | Before moving into retirement village |
| 9% | After moving into retirement village |
| 1% | When decided to sell unit / leave the village |
| 1% | Unsure / don't know |

We then asked when residents became aware they would have to pay departure fees upon exiting their village, and provided four options for them to choose from. As can be seen from the results presented in Table 3, the vast majority knew about this cost before they relocated to the village.

We next asked respondents how they had been informed they would have to pay a departure fee. There were 11 different responses to choose ranging from retirement village factsheet/disclosure statements, through family member(s), or the village operator/salesperson, amongst others. Responses were not mutually exclusive and respondents could choose more than one option. The results are presented in Table 4 (there were 238 non-responses for this question).

Table 4: Source of information regarding departure fee payments

| % | Options |
|-----|-------------------------------------|
| 75% | RV contract |
| 50% | RV factsheet / disclosure statement |
| 44% | Lawyer / legal advisor |
| 36% | RV operator / salesperson |
| 7% | RV resident |
| 6% | Accountant / financial advisor |
| 5% | Family member |
| 3% | Friends |
| 3% | Other |
| 2% | Real estate agent |
| 0% | Community help service |

The results show there were four main avenues for residents to find out about departure fee payments. These were the retirement village contract (75%), followed by the retirement village factsheet/disclosure document (50%), legal professionals (44%), and the village operator/salesperson (36%). The remainder of the categories had a frequency of 7% or less, illustrating that the four highlighted avenues are the main sources of knowledge distribution.

Given that only 50% of respondents found the information about departure fee payments in factsheets and disclosure statements suggests these documents are either not widely available or that the information they contain is not clear. Furthermore, retirement village salespeople act as one of the main information sources for prospective residents (see Figure 6), yet only 36% of residents say they learned about departure fees through these salespeople.

These findings are a cause for ongoing concern as it means that unbiased, consumer-focused information is relatively unavailable or not easily accessible – suggesting that older Victorian consumers are less well informed than is beneficial for their future decision-making processes. This issue needs addressing and in a timely manner, if the results of the current Victorian Retirement Village Act review are to be communicated as widely as possible.

Other qualitative comments indicated “the process” of exiting retirement villages is not very well understood, regardless of overall resident satisfaction levels. For example, some respondents thought it would have been helpful to know more about *how long* it would take to resell their units or to receive exit payments and what the process of ‘refurbishment’ actually involved (see earlier).

Qualitative data revealed ambiguity/uncertainty of cost features. For instance, 152 respondents (16% of total responses) mentioned they would have wanted to know more detailed information about costs involved in retirement village living, particularly exit fees (deferred management fees and refurbishment/reinstatement/replacement costs) and ongoing maintenance fees (including fee increases).

Some comments pointed out the ambiguity in meanings of replacement versus refurbishment in contracts that can be rewritten by retirement village owners. It was clear that residents felt they have little control over re-selling (or re-leasing) their units and this causes much anxiety:

“To be aware that it might take years to sell the unit, by which time my asset might be worthless after having to continue to pay maintenance fees [until] after unit [is] sold”

“Details with respect to the ability to sell my unit on the open market”

“Clarification about exit procedure and refurbishment responsibilities”

“[We need to know] an actual departure fee, not a percentage of the sale. It will now cost over \$200,000 to leave & does not leave enough to repurchase”

“I did not actually realise the unit update and refurbishment would be at the cost of the owner of the unit, not out of the fees lost when the unit is vacated. This is an additional cost against the estate which I had not realised. I thought it came out of the extra 2% the estate will be required to pay after the 36% will be taken after 6 years. So in effect the estate will lose 38% PLUS the cost of refurbishment. That does now appear an EXORBITANT amount and I believe should be reviewed”

“The [amount] of... time [it takes] the operator... to repay exit fees. Which [makes] a move to other accommodation very stressful and [we have] no control over the process. Circumstances change and there should be a better process to enable an exit to occur in a timely fashion”

“Although I knew about exit fees and ongoing costs I don’t think I was in right frame of mind to realise the impact these fees have”

These comments provide a brief snapshot of the difficulties and the stressors faced by many retirement village residents, despite the satisfaction with a number of retirement village lifestyle features.

At the end of the survey, respondents were then asked to provide their overall level of satisfaction regarding their decision to move into a retirement village, with response options ranging from extremely satisfied to extremely dissatisfied (see Figure 21).

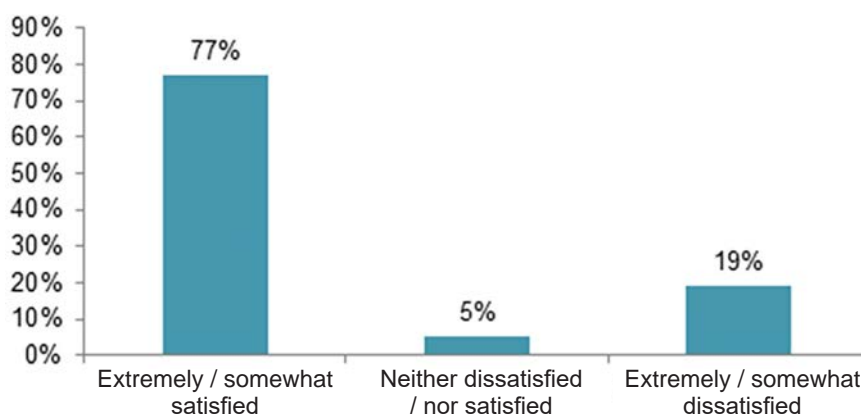


Figure 21: Overall satisfaction level with decision to live in a retirement village (N = 713)

Three-quarters of the sample (77%, n=544) were extremely or somewhat satisfied. Breaking these results down, however, shows that just over half of those who responded to this question were actually extremely satisfied (51%). In contrast, 19% (n=134) were extremely or somewhat dissatisfied. Unpacking the reasons why this level of overall satisfaction is so low could shed some valuable insights into the drivers of this result. It is also interesting to note that there were 237 non-responders to this question (n = 713 overall).

Retirement village living: A trap for older consumers?

Some of the underlying reasons for this low level of overall satisfaction may centre on what some respondents have termed a feeling of being “trapped”:

“Our operator/owner is not interested in the people in the village, [we’ve] been here 9 years and still no promised centre, completely feeling trapped and annoyed, would lose too much money if we left”

“Leaving would be detrimental to our finances as the deferred payment is so high so we are trapped here”

“How financially difficult it is to leave if unhappy. There is *no choice* but to stay if not financially able to relocate” [emphasis added]

“The amount of % paid to the organisation on selling, as well as paying for the refurbishment of the unit, having to move out of the unit 2 weeks before settlement even though you have paid the monthly payment due, all these costs combined can be substantial and makes it difficult to move on”

“I WANT OUT OUF HERE BUT CANNOT AFFORD ANYTHING AND THIS IS NOT RIGHT... WE ARE BEING DONE BADLY” [emphasis in the original]

In 2014, changes to the Victorian *Retirement Villages Act 1986* meant that village owners were bound to provide ‘factsheets’ to prospective residents, as well as more detailed disclosure statements and to use standardised contracts. These changes were meant to help ensure consumers were better informed about the intricacies of retirement village contracts and associated fees.

In reality, however, consumers appear to be as confused as ever and severely disadvantaged, as described by COTA Victoria:

[W]e have come to expect (or accept) that retirement village contracts will financially disadvantage a person over time... Residents should have the freedom to leave a retirement village without compromising their long-term financial security and care choices as they age. The entrapment and exploitation of some older residents through current, legal financial models is unconscionable and must change.

(COTA Vic Website, accessed Jan 10, 2020)

As such, Consumer Affairs Victoria is conducting a review of the Act, with the aim of ensuring a fairer system and clearer, more equitable contracts.

We conducted additional analyses to see if there were any differences in the knowledge gained over the time period by newer residents compared to those who were residents before these changes were instituted. We analysed whether satisfaction with living in retirement villages was different for those residents who had entered prior to these changes being instituted (≥ 5 years) and those who had entered after these changes were instituted (< 5 years).

A small number of associations were found between the length of residency in the retirement village and some variables such as village features, financial features and comparing information, as well as satisfaction with features and costs (see Table 5).

As an example, those who were shorter-term residents (< 5 years) rated the reputation of the operator more highly than longer-term residents (≥ 5 years), and the result was statistically significant ($Z = -2.1$, $p < 0.02$).

Table 5: Association between length of time in village and survey responses

| Options | > 5 yrs | < 5 yrs | SD | Z | p* |
|--|---------|---------|------|------|------|
| <i>Important RV features</i> | | | | | |
| Reputation of operator | 58% | 69% | 0.05 | -2.1 | 0.02 |
| Own garden / communal garden | 62% | 49% | 0.05 | 2.5 | 0.01 |
| Average age of existing residents | 21% | 28% | 0.04 | -1.7 | 0.05 |
| <i>Important financial features</i> | | | | | |
| Delays in exit payment on departure | 72% | 63% | 0.05 | 1.8 | 0.03 |
| <i>Comparing RV features information</i> | | | | | |
| Average age of resident | 78% | 67% | 0.05 | 2.2 | 0.01 |
| <i>Satisfaction with RV features since moving in</i> | | | | | |
| Age of village | 77% | 86% | 0.04 | -2.4 | 0.01 |
| <i>Satisfaction with RV costs since moving in</i> | | | | | |
| Sharing capital gains / losses with RV | 34% | 44% | 0.05 | -1.9 | 0.03 |

*p < 0.05 = statistically significant

**p < 0.01 = highly statistically significant

Overall, Table 5 shows that across the vast number of variables in this survey there were very few statistically significant differences between the two sub-populations. These results indicate that the standardised contracts, information and disclosure statements which were purportedly instituted in Victoria in 2014, have made very little difference to levels of understanding of retirement village features and costs over time. In fact, however, it appears that contracts are yet to be standardised as they can range from 40 pages to 100 pages long; although CAV does, however, provide a template for factsheets and disclosure statements. Standardised, simplified – and shortened – contracts should be made mandatory.

These results indicate the level of in-depth and far-reaching reform of the Victorian Retirement Villages Act which is required, to ensure that older Victorian consumers are no longer disadvantaged by the incomprehensible and overly complicated documents currently available.

Discussion

Based on this survey it appears that many older Victorians feel they have little choice but to enter retirement villages, as there is a lack of safe, small, accessible and affordable housing for older adults, apart from entry into aged care.

The following quote sums up what some of the respondents have realised over their time of residency – that with the new home care support packages available to individuals, staying at home in the community and maintaining (building) equity in personal housing stock is more financially beneficial in the long term, and might well be better in terms of their mental health and wellbeing:

“We were disappointed with the lack of managerial skills at [the Retirement Village] and the deficiencies of the Victorian Government Retirement Villages Act 1986 in guarding the interests and welfare of retirees. Our conclusion is that if possible you should retain equity in your *own home* for as long as you can manage; seek a location close to services and your preferred cultural location and arrange for home support as needed [emphasis added]”

Our findings revealed that not all information sources currently available were used or thought to be useful by older Victorian respondents. Information sources that involved direct communication such as retirement village open days or tours, and advice from family, relatives, friends and other retirement village residents were more useful than retirement village websites, brochures, factsheets and online reviews. Very few respondents used the Internet to search for information and reported that Internet searches were not useful to them – this finding was supported by our online review which found a preponderance of industry-based advertisements which appeared to drown out any comprehensive consumer-focused information which would have been more beneficial.

Legal or professional advice was sought by respondents and, while it was rated useful by some, the proportion was small (about 30%). This is surprising, as evidence indicates how complex retirement village contracts are, which would appear to make seeking such advice invaluable. Indeed, it is recommended by CAV and retirement villages themselves that prospective residents seek such advice before making a commitment to move in.

Part of the reason for such a low rate of access to legal advice may well be due to the complexity of the contracts and the costs of obtaining that advice. Furthermore, such advice is generally unavailable, as very few legal/financial professionals have expertise within this specialised area, as highlighted in the Parliamentary Inquiry (Parliament of Victoria 2017), and reflected in the qualitative responses to the survey.

Strategies to ensure this occurs in the future will need to be implemented. It may well require legislation to ensure that contracts are simplified and standardised and that, overall, less paperwork is required, so that for those with limited funds, seeking legal or professional advice is not necessarily precluded. Discoverable information sources independent of operator-mediated information, improved financial literacy, better consumer support and education, could also be addressed.

Particular retirement village features are more important than others and have a big impact on decision-making. Based on our findings these were village location, maintenance, safety and security, emergency support and, particularly, the quality of the unit. Respondents sought and compared information about these features in order to select the best retirement village for themselves and the vast majority were satisfied with the features that were important to them.

Sixty-six percent of those surveyed rated onsite managers as important; however, 26% were unsatisfied with their onsite managers. Mandatory training and a code of conduct may improve this satisfaction rate.

The findings further highlight that some features such as onsite managers, could be difficult to compare across retirement villages. This may well be because accessing managers at different villages involves visiting in person and talking to managers directly. Given that on-site managers play an important role in supporting residents' quality of living, including coordinating their maintenance needs, it is important that retirement village owners and operators consider ways that consumers can access information about what and how managers can assist them prior to moving into a retirement village.

It is striking to compare the perceived importance of cost features and how well they were understood when choosing a retirement village. A majority of respondents considered most of the cost features to be very or extremely important to their decision making. However, not many respondents understood some of the features very well. In particular, less than half the respondents had good understandings of 'exit costs' (48%), 'costs of reinstatement/refurbishment of unit when exiting' (38%) and 'time taken to receive exit payment on departure' (29%).

These findings emphasise the urgent need to simplify contracts and to help improve financial literacy (that is, understanding cost contractual features properly) among older Victorian consumers prior to moving into a retirement village. This is especially important given the, usually, substantial nature of these costs and the delays to consumers of receiving exit payments when exiting villages.

In addition, qualitative responses indicated that some respondents had experienced a continuous increase in ongoing maintenance fees above CPI without notification or explanation. Such increases had impacted their finances, particularly for those who relied on government pensions to support their living.

It is not clear from the results whether survey respondents fully understand their ownership/tenure arrangements. As other research suggests, many prospective residents do not comprehend that retirement village tenure is different from home ownership; or that retirement villages fees are not the same as fees associated with strata title developments (see Cradduck & Blake 2012a;b). Additional mixed-methods research could shed light on this discrepancy.

It is clear that contracts and disclosure documents need to be simplified and standardised far more than has been done to date. The changes that were implemented as a result of the 2014 reform (see CAV 2019; pp 19) appear not to have addressed residents' understandings of contracts or a number of other issues highlighted by the results of this survey.

In addition, the need for the development of a comprehensive education program aimed at legal and financial representatives is compelling, given their lack of understanding and lack of appreciation of the complexities of current retirement village contracts. Addressing both these issues (simplifying/standardising contracts and disclosure documents, and developing appropriate education pathways for legal/financial representatives) will go a long way to ensuring that older Victorian consumers can receive timely, effective, and appropriate advice about retirement village contracts and information which is understandable and comparable (across different village types) and is not cost prohibitive.

Strengths and limitations of the study

There are a number of limitations to consider when interpreting the results of this study.

Older consumers who do not have access to the Internet, or who live in rural or remote areas with little or no internet access or those who do not speak or write English were under-represented in this study. Only 30 hard copy surveys were returned. The fact that the majority of the results (920) were generated via an online survey therefore skews the results towards older consumers confident in using the Internet. Arguably, this sample could, therefore, be more situationally-aware than those who completed the paper survey, due to the sheer volume of information available on the Internet.

That said, the online desktop review highlights that much of the information readily available using a standard search engine is generated by advertising platforms selling retirement units. This highlights the need for further research including the best ways of educating this age cohort and their families and trusted advisors.

There were limitations in this research resulting from time and funding constraints. A more comprehensive and data rich result might have been achieved given (i) a longer time frame and (ii) by utilising additional research methods, such as focus groups and/or one on one interviews with older Victorian consumers.

Overall, however, a sample size of 950 respondents highlights the interest – and importance – of this subject to older Victorian consumers, and provides credible evidence about their information needs.

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Appendix 1: Steering Group

Membership:

- Lead researcher and project manager: Dr Sue Malta, University of Melbourne
- Research assistant: Dr Maho Omori, University of Melbourne
- Associate researcher: Associate Professor Tim Kyng, Macquarie University
- Consumer Policy Research Centre members: Ms Lauren Solomon, CEO, Ms Emma O'Neill, Research and Policy Director
- Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria (RRVV) representative: Mr Lawrie Robertson, President
- Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG) representative: Ms Fiona York, CEO
- Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria representative: Ms Alexia Huxley, Policy and Communications Manager
- Project advisors: Dr Nick Jans, UNSW Canberra; and Dr Jean Tinney, ex-National Ageing Research Institute
- Consumer representatives: Ms Del Stitz, Ms Julie King, Ms Rosemary McIndoe

Chair and administrative support:

- Steering group meetings chaired by Dr Sue Malta and hosted by HAAG (where possible)
- Administrative support provided by Drs Omori and Malta

Appendix 2: Survey



Improving consumer decision-making about retirement housing.

Who is conducting this survey?

Researchers from the University of Melbourne have been funded by the Consumer Policy Research Centre (CPRC) and Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria (RRVV) to undertake an independent research project to find out what information people use and the impact this information has on their decision to relocate to a retirement village, or not.

What is this survey about?

The aim of the survey is find out what information is readily available, how easy it is to understand, and how accurate the information is regarding availability, housing contracts, services and fees and so on.

You can complete this survey if you:

- ✓ *Live in Victoria*
- ✓ *Are aged 50 years and older*
- ✓ *Are English speaking*
- ✓ *Currently live in a retirement village*

The information you provide will be used to provide input into Consumer Affairs Victoria review of the *Victorian Retirement Village Act 1986*.

Please note:

- You do not have to complete this survey if you do not want to
- Your participation is completely voluntary.
- Fill in the questions you feel comfortable answering
- This survey is anonymous. The researchers or CPRC or RRVV have no way of identifying who has completed each survey and it will not be possible for you to be identified in any report or publication of this work
- By completing the survey you are giving your consent to take part in the survey and for the researchers to compile reports/publications of the results
- Data from this study may also be used in future research projects that are closely related to the current project or in the same general area of research as this current project
- The survey should take no more than 30 minutes to complete

The survey begins with some demographic questions, followed by some questions which you can just answer 'Yes/No', or tick a box, and other open-ended questions where you can type/write your answers.

This survey will now close on 30th October 2019.

Any questions?

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact members of the research team below:

- Dr Sue Malta susan.malta@unimelb.edu.au
- Dr Maho Omori maho.omori@unimelb.edu.au

AT THE END OF EACH QUESTION, PLEASE CLICK ON THE RIGHT ARROW TO PROCEED TO THE NEXT QUESTION.

1. What is your age in years?

2. What is your gender?

Male

Female

Other / Prefer not to say

3. Do you currently live with another person in the retirement village?

Yes

No

4. Which of the following best describes your income?

Self-funded with superannuation / other wealth / investment income

Government pension or allowance

Mix of superannuation and government pension

Employed part-time

Other

5. How long have you lived in a retirement village?

Less than 1 year

1 - 2 years

3 - 5 years

6 - 9 years

10+ years

6. Do you plan to live in a retirement village for the rest of your life?

Yes

No

Don't know / maybe

7. How would you describe your health?

Excellent

Very good

Good

Fair

Poor

8. How confident are you using the Internet?

Not confident at all (1)

Not very confident (2)

Neutral (3)

Somewhat confident (4)

Very confident (5)

9. Why did you move from your previous home? Please select all that apply to you

Major health change / concern about future health / reduced mobility

Previous home was too big / maintenance became too burdensome

Change of circumstances: eg, death of spouse or partner / divorce or separation

Social isolation / need to mix with people of a similar age

Financial reasons: eg, need to sell family home / downsize to cheaper accommodation / release home equity

Other (please specify): _____

10. Who was involved in selecting the retirement village? Please select all that apply to you.

Myself

Spouse / partner

Family member(s)

Carer

Accountant or financial advisor

Lawyer or legal advisor

Other

11. When choosing a retirement village, how useful were each of the following information sources in helping you make your decision?

Scale: Extremely useful (1); Very useful (2); Moderately useful (3); Slightly useful (4); Not at all useful (5); Not applicable, as I did not use this information source (6)

Retirement village websites or brochures

Retirement village information days or tours

Retirement village contracts / factsheets / disclosure statements

Retirement village salespeople

Consumer Affairs Victoria website or brochures

Internet searches

Online forums or reviews

Accountants or financial advisors

Lawyers or legal advisors

Media (eg, seniors news-papers and magazines)

Real estate agents

Family/relatives

Friend(s)

Retirement village residents

Other (please specify):

12. How important to you was each of the following features when choosing a retirement village?

Scale: Extremely important (1); Very important (2); Moderately important (3); Slightly important (4); Not at all important (5)

Location

Recreational facilities and programs

Availability of transport

Facilities / room for guests

Reputation of the operator

Village maintenance

Onsite managers

Safety and security

Emergency support

Quality of unit

Accessibility of unit / village facilities: eg, wheelchair access, flat surfaces etc

Ability to have pets

Own garden / communal garden

Average age of existing residents

Vacancy / occupancy rates

Size of the village

Age of the village

Availability of aged care support when necessary

Other (please specify):

13. How important to you was each of the following financial features when choosing a retirement village?

Scale: Extremely important (1); Very important (2); Moderately important (3); Slightly important (4); Not at all important (5)

Upfront (entry) costs

Ongoing costs: eg, maintenance or service charges

Charges for additional services you request

Sharing of capital gains/ losses with the retirement village

Exit costs: eg, departure or deferred management fees

Costs of reinstatement / refurbishment of unit when exiting

Time taken to receive exit payment on departure

14. Which of the following housing options did you compare before choosing a retirement village? Please select all that apply to you.

Yes, I compared different options within a particular retirement village

Yes, I compared different retirement villages

Yes, I compared retirement villages with other types of housing

No, I did not compare any housing options

Skip To: Q17 If Which of the following housing options did you compare before choosing a retirement village? Ple... = Yes, I compared retirement villages with other types of housing

Skip To: Q18 If Which of the following housing options did you compare before choosing a retirement village? Ple... = No, I did not compare any housing options

15. What other types of housing did you consider? Please select all that apply.

Home ownership (with home care package when necessary)

Caravan or residential park

Granny flat

Living with family

Share housing

Rental housing

Public or community housing

Aged care

Other (please specify) _____

16. How easy was it to compare information about the following features of retirement villages?

Scale: Very easy (1); Somewhat easy (2); Neutral (3); Somewhat difficult (4); Very difficult (5)

Location

Availability of transport

Recreational facilities and programs

Facilities / room for guests

Reputation of the operator

Village maintenance

Onsite managers

Safety and security

Emergency support

Quality of unit

Accessibility of unit / village facilities: eg, wheelchair access, flat surfaces etc

Ability to have pets

Own garden / communal garden

Average age of residents

Vacancy / occupancy rate

Size of the village

Age of the village

Availability of aged care support when needed

17. How easy was it to compare information relating to the following costs of retirement villages?

Scale: Very easy (1); Somewhat easy (2); Neutral (3); Somewhat difficult (4); Very difficult (5)

Upfront (entry) costs

Ongoing costs: eg, maintenance and service charges

Charges for additional services you request

Exit costs: eg, departure or deferred management fees

Sharing of capital gains/ losses with the retirement village

Costs of reinstatement / refurbishment of unit when exiting

Time taken to receive exit payment on departure

The overall package of entry fees, ongoing fees, exit costs, capital gains / loss sharing etc

18. Did you read other documentation (such as fact sheets and disclosure statements) before signing the contract?

Yes

No

Unsure / Don't know

Skip To: Q22 If Did you read other documentation (such as fact sheets and disclosure statements) before signing t... = No

Skip To: Q22 If Did you read other documentation (such as fact sheets and disclosure statements) before signing t... = Unsure / Don't know

19. How well did you understand other documentation (such as fact sheets and disclosure statements) before signing the contract?

Extremely well (1)

Very well (2)

Moderately well (3)

Slightly well (4)

Not well at all (5)

20. How well did you understand the retirement village contract before signing it?

Extremely well (1)

Very well (2)

Moderately well (3)

Slightly well (4)

Not well at all (5)

21. Did someone help you understand the retirement village contract and/or other documentation (such as fact sheets and disclosure statements)? Select all that apply to you.

Lawyer or legal advisor

Accountant or financial advisor

Real estate agent

Family member(s)

Friend(s)

Retirement village resident

Retirement village operator or salesperson

Community help service

Other (specify who): _____

22. When you were choosing a retirement village, how aware were you of the following factors related to your everyday living?

Scale: Completely aware (1); Considerably aware (2); Moderately aware (3); Slightly aware (4); Not at all aware (5)

Whether you could vote on issues affecting residents

Who was responsible for repairs and maintenance of the unit

Who was responsible for repairs and maintenance of common areas

Who was responsible for costs of repairs and maintenance of the unit and common areas

The process for resolving any disputes between you and the village operator

23. When you were choosing a retirement village, how well did you understand the following contract features?

Scale: Extremely well (1); Very well (2); Moderately well (3); Slightly well (4); Not well at all (5)

Upfront (entry) costs

Ongoing costs: eg, maintenance and service charges

Charges for additional services you request

Exit costs: eg, departure or deferred management fees

Sharing of capital gains/ losses with the retirement village

Costs of reinstatement / refurbishment of unit when exiting

Time taken to receive exit payment on departure

Consumer protection in the event of a dispute with the village operator over fees

24. Below is a list of current ownership or tenure arrangements available in retirement villages. Please indicate which one best describes your arrangement, if known.

I own the unit via strata title

I own the unit via company title

I have a long-term lease over the unit

I have a loan/license arrangement

I have a rental arrangement

I don't know / I'm not sure

Other (please specify): _____

25. Since moving into the retirement village, how satisfied have you been with the following features?

Scale: Very satisfied (1); Somewhat satisfied (2); Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (3); Somewhat dissatisfied (4); Very dissatisfied (5)

Location

Availability of transport

Recreational facilities and programs

Facilities / room for guests

Reputation of the operator

Village maintenance

Onsite managers

Safety and security

Emergency support

Quality of unit

Accessibility of unit / village facilities: eg, wheelchair access, flat surfaces etc

Ability to have pets

Own garden / communal garden

Average age of residents

Vacancy / occupancy rates

Size of the village

Age of the village

Availability of aged care support when necessary

Other (please specify):

26. Since moving into the retirement village, how satisfied have you been with the following costs?

Scale: Very satisfied (1); Somewhat satisfied (2); Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (3); Somewhat dissatisfied (4); Very dissatisfied (5)

Upfront (entry) costs

Ongoing costs: eg, maintenance and service charges

Charges for additional services you request

Sharing of capital gains/ losses with the retirement village

Exit costs: eg, departure or deferred management fees

Costs of reinstatement / refurbishment of unit when exiting

Time taken to receive exit payment on departure

The overall package of entry fees, ongoing fees, exit costs, capital gains / loss sharing etc

27. Will you have to pay a departure fee (eg, a deferred management fee) when you leave the retirement village?

Yes

No

Unsure / Don't know

Skip To: Q33 If Will you have to pay a departure fee (eg, a deferred management fee) when you leave the retirement... = No

Skip To: Q33 If Will you have to pay a departure fee (eg, a deferred management fee) when you leave the retirement... = Unsure / Don't know

28. When did you find out you have to pay a departure fee?

Before moving into the retirement village

After moving into the retirement village

When I decided to sell my unit / leave the retirement village

Unsure / Don't know

29. How did you find out you have to pay a departure fee? Please select all that apply.

Retirement village factsheet / disclosure document

Retirement village contract

Lawyer or legal advisor

Accountant or financial advisor

Real estate agent

Family member(s)

Friend(s)

Retirement village resident / neighbour

Retirement village operator or salesperson

Community help service

Other (please specify): _____

30. Overall, how satisfied are you now about your decision to move into a retirement village?

Extremely dissatisfied (1)

Somewhat dissatisfied (2)

Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied (3)

Somewhat satisfied (4)

Extremely satisfied (5)

31. Please describe in your own words, what information you think would have been helpful to you when considering moving into a retirement village.



Participants Information and Support

Thank you for your participation in this survey.

If you are not satisfied with the services at your retirement village, you can submit your complaints to:

Email: consumers@justice.vic.gov.au

Phone: 1300 558 181

Or visit the CAV website for further information:

www.consumer.vic.gov.au

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If any of the questions asked in this survey raise issues of concerns for you, please contact the support network **Beyond Blue** who will be able to help you. Alternatively, please see your local doctor for assistance.

Phone: 1300 224 636

24 hours / 7 days per week

Or visit the **Beyond Blue** website for further information:

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/national-help-lines-and-websites>

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We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.
Your response has been recorded.

Appendix 3: Raw survey data (quantitative responses only)

Q1 – Age (Excel file)

Q2 - What is your gender?

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|---------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Male | 51.51% | 494 |
| 2 | Female | 48.38% | 464 |
| 3 | Other / Prefer not to say | 0.10% | 1 |
| | Total | 100% | 959 |

Q3 - Do you currently live with another person in the RV?

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|--------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Yes | 60.61% | 580 |
| 2 | No | 39.39% | 377 |
| | Total | 100% | 957 |

Q4 - Which of the following best describes your income?

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|--|--------|-------|
| 1 | Self-funded with superannuation / other wealth / investment income | 29.93% | 284 |
| 2 | Government pension or allowance | 25.29% | 240 |
| 3 | Mix of superannuation and government pension | 40.89% | 388 |
| 4 | Employed part-time | 1.05% | 10 |
| 5 | Other | 2.85% | 27 |
| | Total | 100% | 949 |

Q5 - How long have you lived in a RV?

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Less than 1 year | 5.08% | 48 |
| 2 | 1 - 2 years | 12.80% | 121 |
| 3 | 3 - 5 years | 25.82% | 244 |
| 4 | 6 - 9 years | 31.32% | 296 |
| 5 | 10+ years | 24.97% | 236 |
| | Total | 100% | 945 |

Q6 - Do you plan to live in a RV for the rest of your life?

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|--------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Yes | 83.51% | 790 |
| 2 | No | 2.64% | 25 |
| 3 | Don't know / maybe | 13.85% | 131 |
| | Total | 100% | 946 |

Q7 - How would you describe your health?

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|-----------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Excellent | 7.81% | 74 |
| 2 | Very good | 34.49% | 327 |
| 3 | Good | 38.82% | 368 |
| 4 | Fair | 16.46% | 156 |
| 5 | Poor | 2.43% | 23 |
| | Total | 100% | 948 |

Q8 - How confident are you using the Internet?

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Not confident at all | 2.85% | 27 |
| 2 | Not very confident | 7.07% | 67 |
| 3 | Neutral | 5.17% | 49 |
| 4 | Somewhat confident | 43.08% | 408 |
| 5 | Very confident | 41.82% | 396 |
| | Total | 100% | 947 |

Q9 - Why did you move from your previous home? Please select all that apply to you

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|---|--------|-------|
| 1 | Major health change / concern about future health / reduced mobility | 16.19% | 216 |
| 2 | Previous home was too big / maintenance became too burdensome | 43.78% | 584 |
| 3 | Change of circumstances: eg, death of spouse or partner / divorce or separation | 8.62% | 115 |
| 4 | Social isolation / need to mix with people of a similar age | 10.42% | 139 |
| 5 | Financial reasons: eg, need to sell family home / downsize to cheaper accommodation / release home equity | 7.35% | 98 |
| 6 | Other (please specify): | 13.64% | 182 |
| | Total | 100% | 1334 |

Q10 - Who was involved in selecting the RV? Please select all that apply to you.

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|---------------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Myself | 37.72% | 536 |
| 2 | Spouse / partner | 42.51% | 604 |
| 3 | Family member(s) | 12.88% | 183 |
| 4 | Carer | 0.00% | 0 |
| 5 | Accountant or financial advisor | 1.48% | 21 |
| 6 | Lawyer or legal advisor | 4.29% | 61 |
| 7 | Other | 1.13% | 16 |
| | Total | 100% | 1421 |

Q11 - When choosing a RV, how useful were each of the following information sources in helping you make your decision?

| Question | Extremely useful | Very useful | Moderately useful | Slightly useful | Not at all useful | Not applicable, as I did not use this information source | Total |
|---|------------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--|-------|
| RV websites or brochures | 5.97% | 21.15% | 25.69% | 12.19% | 6.21% | 28.79% | 837 |
| RV information days or tours | 8.25% | 24.15% | 15.90% | 10.80% | 6.07% | 34.83% | 824 |
| RV contracts / factsheets / disclosure statements | 8.43% | 20.32% | 28.50% | 13.14% | 9.17% | 20.45% | 807 |
| RV salespeople | 8.39% | 25.65% | 29.31% | 15.72% | 8.75% | 12.17% | 846 |
| CAV website or brochures | 1.95% | 4.43% | 7.68% | 6.90% | 8.72% | 70.31% | 768 |
| Internet searches | 4.80% | 19.82% | 14.65% | 10.73% | 6.57% | 43.43% | 792 |
| Online forums or reviews | 1.18% | 4.20% | 5.39% | 7.49% | 9.59% | 72.14% | 761 |
| Accountants or financial advisors | 3.02% | 8.67% | 9.20% | 7.10% | 10.25% | 61.76% | 761 |
| Lawyers or legal advisors | 6.24% | 14.14% | 15.92% | 13.76% | 10.45% | 39.49% | 785 |
| Media (eg, seniors newspapers, magazines) | 0.78% | 5.22% | 11.10% | 11.88% | 11.88% | 59.14% | 766 |
| Real estate agents | 0.92% | 2.10% | 3.54% | 4.06% | 13.50% | 75.88% | 763 |
| Family/ relatives | 6.61% | 16.26% | 13.60% | 11.56% | 8.13% | 43.84% | 787 |
| Friend(s) | 6.44% | 15.57% | 15.96% | 11.71% | 9.14% | 41.18% | 777 |
| RV residents | 7.10% | 20.92% | 17.31% | 11.96% | 6.85% | 35.87% | 803 |
| Other (please specify): | 6.76% | 6.76% | 0.34% | 1.35% | 2.36% | 82.43% | 296 |

Q12 - How important to you was each of the following features when choosing a RV?

| Question | Extremely important | Very important | Moderately important | Slightly important | Not at all important | Total |
|--|---------------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------|
| Location | 45.06% | 38.65% | 13.37% | 2.02% | 0.90% | 890 |
| Recreational facilities and programs | 13.75% | 33.45% | 34.50% | 12.00% | 6.29% | 858 |
| Availability of transport | 25.17% | 31.38% | 25.75% | 10.11% | 7.59% | 870 |
| Facilities / room for guests | 13.30% | 31.39% | 28.59% | 14.00% | 12.72% | 857 |
| Reputation of the operator | 23.68% | 35.77% | 23.33% | 8.37% | 8.85% | 836 |
| Village maintenance | 29.36% | 50.06% | 14.68% | 2.77% | 3.12% | 865 |
| Onsite managers | 27.01% | 39.22% | 17.77% | 8.29% | 7.70% | 844 |
| Safety and security | 49.04% | 36.45% | 11.14% | 2.47% | 0.90% | 889 |
| Emergency support | 43.22% | 35.75% | 15.29% | 4.25% | 1.49% | 870 |
| Quality of unit | 51.63% | 41.26% | 6.09% | 0.56% | 0.45% | 887 |
| Accessibility of unit / village facilities etc | 29.05% | 34.49% | 19.33% | 11.92% | 5.21% | 864 |
| Ability to have pets | 22.96% | 15.50% | 10.02% | 10.26% | 41.26% | 858 |
| Own/communal garden | 23.83% | 29.30% | 25.54% | 10.15% | 11.17% | 877 |
| Average age of existing residents | 5.69% | 19.67% | 37.68% | 15.52% | 21.45% | 844 |
| Vacancy / occupancy rates | 8.44% | 23.28% | 26.90% | 17.01% | 24.37% | 829 |
| Size of the village | 11.35% | 34.74% | 31.70% | 11.58% | 10.64% | 855 |
| Age of the village | 13.56% | 37.15% | 29.01% | 11.08% | 9.20% | 848 |
| Availability of aged care support when necessary | 19.21% | 29.29% | 22.69% | 12.48% | 16.33% | 833 |
| Other (please specify): | 17.55% | 5.85% | 3.19% | 1.06% | 72.34% | 188 |

Q13 - How important to you was each of the following financial features when choosing a RV?

| Question | Extremely important | Very important | Moderately important | Slightly important | Not at all important | Total |
|---|---------------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------|
| Upfront (entry) costs | 39.91% | 40.91% | 15.94% | 1.67% | 1.56% | 897 |
| Ongoing costs: eg, maintenance or service charges | 41.64% | 41.75% | 14.17% | 1.88% | 0.55% | 903 |
| Charges for additional services you request | 25.23% | 30.37% | 25.23% | 9.70% | 9.46% | 856 |
| Sharing of capital gains/ losses with the RV | 34.05% | 28.11% | 21.00% | 7.35% | 9.49% | 843 |
| Exit costs: eg, departure or deferred management fees | 44.59% | 30.41% | 17.45% | 5.18% | 2.36% | 888 |
| Costs of reinstatement / refurbishment of unit when exiting | 41.11% | 28.99% | 19.48% | 5.66% | 4.76% | 883 |
| Time taken to receive exit payment on departure | 39.54% | 32.14% | 15.49% | 5.90% | 6.94% | 865 |

Q14 - Which of the following housing options did you compare before choosing a RV? Please select all that apply to you.

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|--|--------|-------|
| 1 | Yes, I compared different options within a particular RV | 19.35% | 268 |
| 2 | Yes, I compared different RVs | 46.43% | 643 |
| 3 | Yes, I compared RVs with other types of housing | 21.88% | 303 |
| 4 | No, I did not compare any housing options | 12.35% | 171 |
| | Total | 100% | 1385 |

Q15 - What other types of housing did you consider? Please select all that apply.

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|--|--------|-------|
| 1 | Home ownership (with home care package when necessary) | 42.18% | 286 |
| 2 | Caravan or residential park | 5.01% | 34 |
| 3 | Granny flat | 3.10% | 21 |
| 4 | Living with family | 3.83% | 26 |
| 5 | Share housing | 1.03% | 7 |
| 6 | Rental housing | 5.90% | 40 |
| 7 | Public or community housing | 1.18% | 8 |
| 8 | Aged care | 5.16% | 35 |
| 9 | Other (please specify) | 32.60% | 221 |
| | Total | 100% | 678 |

Q16 - How easy was it to compare information about the following features of RVs?

| Question | Very easy | Somewhat easy | Neutral | Somewhat difficult | Very difficult | Total |
|--|-----------|---------------|---------|--------------------|----------------|-------|
| Location | 59.86% | 25.59% | 10.68% | 2.70% | 1.17% | 852 |
| Availability of transport | 47.45% | 31.44% | 16.13% | 4.15% | 0.83% | 843 |
| Recreational facilities and programs | 33.29% | 37.49% | 24.07% | 3.35% | 1.80% | 835 |
| Facilities / room for guests | 34.59% | 33.50% | 26.82% | 3.40% | 1.70% | 824 |
| Reputation of the operator | 17.15% | 27.98% | 30.54% | 15.57% | 8.76% | 822 |
| Village maintenance | 19.60% | 35.30% | 27.51% | 12.75% | 4.84% | 847 |
| Onsite managers | 21.85% | 27.85% | 30.01% | 13.45% | 6.84% | 833 |
| Safety and security | 33.06% | 37.46% | 20.93% | 6.54% | 2.02% | 841 |
| Emergency support | 35.09% | 35.69% | 21.44% | 4.79% | 2.99% | 835 |
| Quality of unit | 43.81% | 35.95% | 14.40% | 3.93% | 1.90% | 840 |
| Accessibility of unit / village facilities: eg, wheelchair access, flat surfaces etc | 38.86% | 35.44% | 20.22% | 3.53% | 1.95% | 821 |
| Ability to have pets | 39.11% | 23.74% | 26.08% | 3.81% | 7.26% | 813 |
| Own garden / communal garden | 39.42% | 32.41% | 22.49% | 2.90% | 2.78% | 827 |
| Average age of residents | 12.84% | 26.54% | 40.99% | 10.74% | 8.89% | 810 |
| Vacancy / occupancy rate | 14.21% | 26.56% | 38.90% | 12.09% | 8.23% | 802 |
| Size of the village | 37.94% | 36.00% | 20.85% | 2.91% | 2.30% | 825 |
| Age of the village | 37.70% | 35.86% | 20.93% | 3.55% | 1.96% | 817 |
| Availability of aged care support when needed | 20.47% | 27.54% | 34.74% | 10.05% | 7.20% | 806 |

Q17 - How easy was it to compare information relating to the following costs of RVs?

| Question | Very easy | Somewhat easy | Neutral | Somewhat difficult | Very difficult | Total |
|---|-----------|---------------|---------|--------------------|----------------|-------|
| Upfront (entry) costs | 31.13% | 36.90% | 13.94% | 14.18% | 3.85% | 832 |
| Ongoing costs: eg, maintenance and service charges | 22.21% | 37.26% | 17.11% | 17.23% | 6.19% | 824 |
| Charges for additional services you request | 11.89% | 25.03% | 35.54% | 20.78% | 6.76% | 799 |
| Exit costs: eg, departure or deferred management fees | 19.71% | 29.08% | 21.17% | 21.53% | 8.52% | 822 |
| Sharing of capital gains/ losses with the RV | 13.87% | 23.33% | 30.26% | 22.19% | 10.34% | 793 |
| Costs of reinstatement / refurbishment of unit when exiting | 13.07% | 22.56% | 25.28% | 25.03% | 14.06% | 811 |
| Time taken to receive exit payment on departure | 10.66% | 16.88% | 34.39% | 22.08% | 15.99% | 788 |
| The overall package of entry fees, ongoing fees, exit costs, capital gains / loss sharing etc | 12.78% | 27.05% | 24.32% | 22.70% | 13.15% | 806 |

Q18 - Did you read other documentation (such as fact sheets and disclosure statements) before signing the contract?

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|---------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Yes | 79.98% | 711 |
| 2 | No | 11.36% | 101 |
| 3 | Unsure / Don't know | 8.66% | 77 |
| | Total | 100% | 889 |

Q19 - How well did you understand other documentation (such as fact sheets and disclosure statements) before signing the contract?

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|-----------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Extremely well | 9.17% | 65 |
| 2 | Very well | 33.29% | 236 |
| 3 | Moderately well | 45.42% | 322 |
| 4 | Slightly well | 8.60% | 61 |
| 5 | Not well at all | 3.53% | 25 |
| | Total | 100% | 709 |

Q20 - How well did you understand the RV contract before signing it?

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|-----------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Extremely well | 7.88% | 70 |
| 2 | Very well | 34.23% | 304 |
| 3 | Moderately well | 39.75% | 353 |
| 4 | Slightly well | 10.47% | 93 |
| 5 | Not well at all | 7.66% | 68 |
| | Total | 100% | 888 |

Q21 - Did someone help you understand the RV contract and/or other documentation (such as fact sheets and disclosure statements)? Select all that apply to you.

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|---------------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Lawyer or legal advisor | 48.27% | 685 |
| 2 | Accountant or financial advisor | 7.89% | 112 |
| 3 | Real estate agent | 2.04% | 29 |
| 4 | Family member(s) | 11.49% | 163 |
| 5 | Friend(s) | 4.16% | 59 |
| 6 | RV resident | 4.02% | 57 |
| 7 | RV operator or salesperson | 16.63% | 236 |
| 8 | Community help service | 0.28% | 4 |
| 9 | Other (specify who): | 5.21% | 74 |
| | Total | 100% | 1419 |

Q22 - When you were choosing a RV, how aware were you of the following factors related to your everyday living?

| Question | Completely aware | Considerably aware | Moderately aware | Slightly aware | Not at all aware | Total |
|---|------------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|-------|
| Whether you could vote on issues affecting residents | 21.75% | 24.26% | 26.65% | 11.16% | 16.17% | 878 |
| Who was responsible for repairs and maintenance of the unit | 22.15% | 31.16% | 28.65% | 11.30% | 6.74% | 876 |
| Who was responsible for repairs and maintenance of common areas | 30.14% | 32.19% | 21.58% | 9.93% | 6.16% | 876 |
| Who was responsible for costs of repairs and maintenance of the unit and common areas | 21.70% | 33.07% | 26.64% | 12.51% | 6.08% | 871 |
| The process for resolving any disputes between you and the village operator | 14.56% | 25.46% | 25.11% | 17.43% | 17.43% | 872 |

Q23 - When you were choosing a RV, how well did you understand the following contract features?

| Question | Extremely well | Very well | Moderately well | Slightly well | Not well at all | Total |
|---|----------------|-----------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|-------|
| Upfront (entry) costs | 31.30% | 39.51% | 21.34% | 4.81% | 3.05% | 853 |
| Ongoing costs: eg, maintenance and service charges | 22.01% | 36.07% | 30.09% | 6.79% | 5.04% | 854 |
| Charges for additional services you request | 12.00% | 24.37% | 33.85% | 15.01% | 14.77% | 833 |
| Exit costs: eg, departure or deferred management fees | 18.63% | 29.13% | 29.72% | 13.21% | 9.32% | 848 |
| Sharing of capital gains/ losses with the RV | 13.97% | 25.64% | 25.27% | 14.22% | 20.90% | 823 |
| Costs of reinstatement / refurbishment of unit when exiting | 12.81% | 25.38% | 28.32% | 18.10% | 15.39% | 851 |
| Time taken to receive exit payment on departure | 8.66% | 19.88% | 29.39% | 17.07% | 25.00% | 820 |
| Consumer protection in the event of a dispute with the village operator over fees | 6.86% | 15.16% | 26.11% | 17.45% | 34.42% | 831 |

Q24 - Below is a list of current ownership or tenure arrangements available in RVs. Please indicate which one best describes your arrangement, if known.

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|--|--------|-------|
| 1 | I own the unit via strata title | 20.14% | 177 |
| 2 | I own the unit via company title | 3.98% | 35 |
| 3 | I have a long-term lease over the unit | 51.42% | 452 |
| 4 | I have a loan/license arrangement | 15.24% | 134 |
| 5 | I have a rental arrangement | 0.80% | 7 |
| 6 | I don't know / I'm not sure | 5.80% | 51 |
| 7 | Other (please specify): | 2.62% | 23 |
| | Total | 100% | 879 |

Q25 - Since moving into the RV, how satisfied have you been with the following features?

| Question | Very satisfied | Somewhat satisfied | Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | Somewhat dissatisfied | Very dissatisfied | Total |
|--|----------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------|
| Location | 80.37% | 13.90% | 3.04% | 1.99% | 0.70% | 856 |
| Availability of transport | 58.47% | 22.47% | 11.88% | 4.47% | 2.71% | 850 |
| Recreational facilities and programs | 48.54% | 30.57% | 14.00% | 3.73% | 3.15% | 857 |
| Facilities / room for guests | 42.33% | 30.92% | 19.14% | 4.40% | 3.21% | 841 |
| Reputation of the operator | 26.06% | 32.28% | 17.96% | 12.91% | 10.80% | 852 |
| Village maintenance | 29.07% | 40.81% | 12.44% | 12.67% | 5.00% | 860 |
| Onsite managers | 32.46% | 27.35% | 14.63% | 12.72% | 12.84% | 841 |
| Safety and security | 48.14% | 33.26% | 7.56% | 8.14% | 2.91% | 860 |
| Emergency support | 46.90% | 31.11% | 11.70% | 5.61% | 4.68% | 855 |
| Quality of unit | 47.90% | 35.78% | 7.11% | 7.34% | 1.86% | 858 |
| Accessibility of unit / village facilities: eg, wheelchair access, flat surfaces etc | 43.79% | 34.32% | 15.50% | 3.91% | 2.49% | 845 |
| Ability to have pets | 39.78% | 19.34% | 32.56% | 2.57% | 5.75% | 817 |
| Own garden / communal garden | 43.91% | 34.84% | 15.51% | 3.46% | 2.27% | 838 |
| Average age of residents | 24.70% | 32.81% | 32.93% | 6.54% | 3.03% | 826 |
| Vacancy / occupancy rates | 20.59% | 30.46% | 32.55% | 9.99% | 6.41% | 811 |
| Size of the village | 44.42% | 35.05% | 16.81% | 1.92% | 1.80% | 833 |
| Age of the village | 41.01% | 36.31% | 18.09% | 3.50% | 1.09% | 829 |
| Availability of aged care support when necessary | 23.02% | 28.14% | 31.55% | 7.92% | 9.38% | 821 |
| 53 Other (please specify): | 9.65% | 9.65% | 32.46% | 5.26% | 42.98% | 114 |

Q26- Since moving into the RV, how satisfied have you been with the following costs?

| Question | Very satisfied | Somewhat satisfied | Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | Somewhat dissatisfied | Very dissatisfied | Total |
|---|----------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------|
| Upfront (entry) costs | 39.56% | 36.98% | 17.69% | 4.30% | 1.47% | 814 |
| Ongoing costs: eg, maintenance and service charges | 25.52% | 39.25% | 16.89% | 12.52% | 5.83% | 823 |
| Charges for additional services you request | 17.62% | 25.93% | 37.80% | 12.39% | 6.26% | 783 |
| Sharing of capital gains/ losses with the RV | 12.74% | 23.67% | 38.75% | 13.26% | 11.57% | 769 |
| Exit costs: eg, departure or deferred management fees | 12.17% | 22.21% | 29.86% | 19.57% | 16.19% | 797 |
| Costs of reinstatement / refurbishment of unit when exiting | 9.18% | 21.01% | 33.33% | 19.75% | 16.73% | 795 |
| Time taken to receive exit payment on departure | 8.17% | 17.65% | 46.77% | 12.78% | 14.62% | 759 |
| The overall package of entry fees, ongoing fees, exit costs, capital gains / loss sharing etc | 10.94% | 26.72% | 31.93% | 16.03% | 14.38% | 786 |

Q27 - Will you have to pay a departure fee (eg, a deferred management fee) when you leave the RV?

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|---------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Yes | 82.54% | 714 |
| 2 | No | 7.98% | 69 |
| 3 | Unsure / Don't know | 9.48% | 82 |
| | Total | 100% | 865 |

Q28 - When did you find out you have to pay a departure fee?

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|---|--------|-------|
| 1 | Before moving into the RV | 89.39% | 640 |
| 2 | After moving into the RV | 8.66% | 62 |
| 3 | When I decided to sell my unit / leave the RV | 0.56% | 4 |
| 4 | Unsure / Don't know | 1.40% | 10 |
| | Total | 100% | 716 |

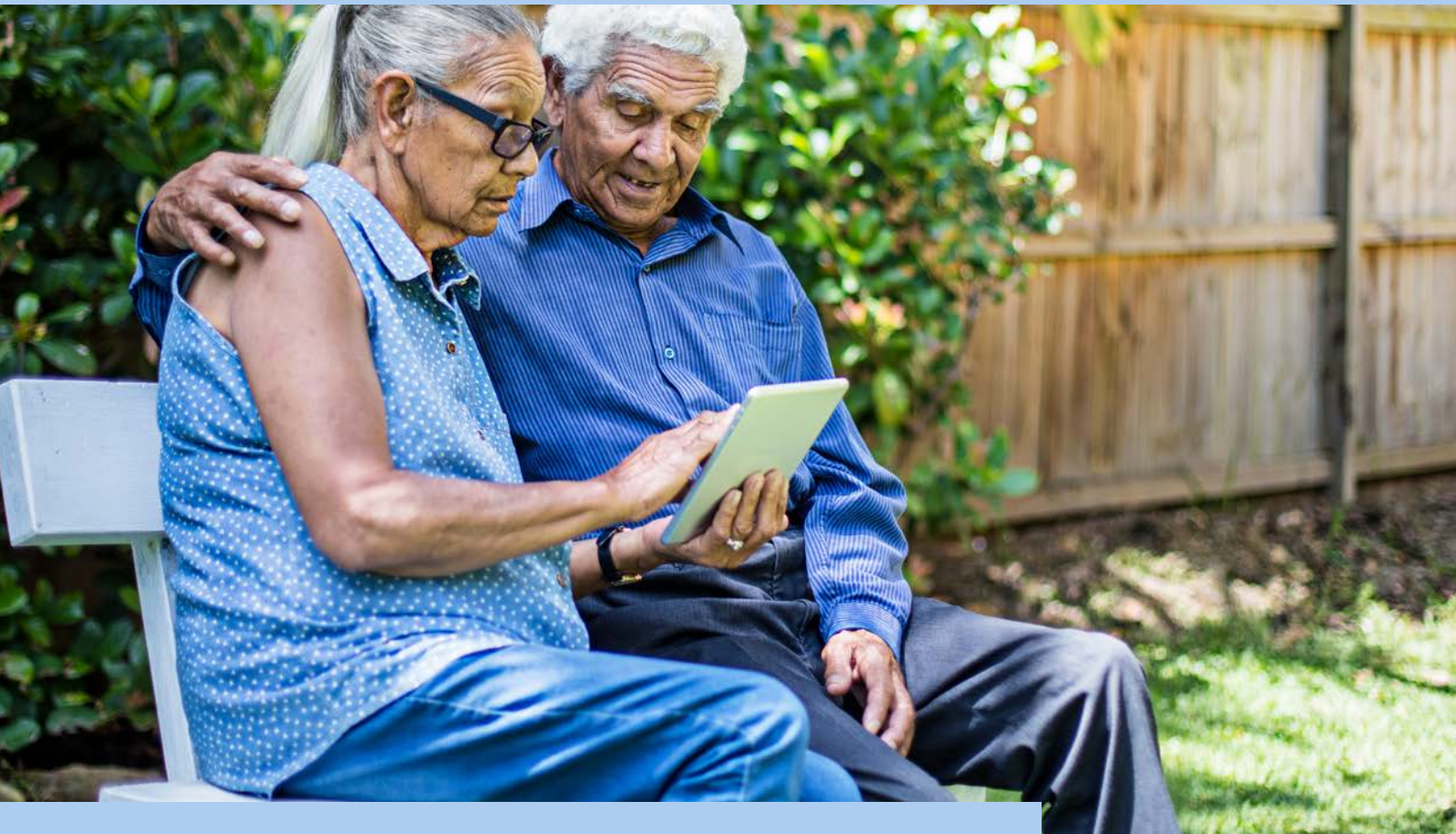
Q29 - How did you find out you have to pay a departure fee? Please select all that apply.

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|----|------------------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | RV factsheet / disclosure document | 21.68% | 356 |
| 2 | RV contract | 32.52% | 534 |
| 3 | Lawyer or legal advisor | 18.88% | 310 |
| 4 | Accountant or financial advisor | 2.50% | 41 |
| 5 | Real estate agent | 1.04% | 17 |
| 6 | Family member(s) | 2.38% | 39 |
| 7 | Friend(s) | 1.22% | 20 |
| 8 | RV resident / neighbour | 3.05% | 50 |
| 9 | RV operator or salesperson | 15.53% | 255 |
| 10 | Community help service | 0.00% | 0 |
| 11 | Other (please specify): | 1.22% | 20 |
| | Total | 100% | 1642 |

Q32 - Overall, how satisfied are you now about your decision to move into a RV?

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|------------------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Extremely dissatisfied | 9.96% | 71 |
| 2 | Somewhat dissatisfied | 8.84% | 63 |
| 3 | Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied | 4.91% | 35 |
| 4 | Somewhat satisfied | 25.53% | 182 |
| 5 | Extremely satisfied | 50.77% | 362 |
| | Total | 100% | 713 |





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