



Supported by Office for Ageing Well



Government of South Australia
SA Health

Dining Co Project

Report prepared for Office for Ageing Well

June 2021





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Prepared by	ACH Group
Prepared for	Office for Ageing Well
Project Manager	Dr Edoardo Rosso Product Co-design Manager

22 Henley Beach Rd
MILE END, 5031
p: (08) 8159 3600
e: erosso@ach.org.au

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the development, implementation and evaluation of the Dining Co Project.

The Dining Co. Project was supported by Office for Ageing Well, SA Health, and it was run between July 2020 and June 2021 by ACH Group in collaboration with the City of Onkaparinga and the two local dining venues: Becks Bakehouse and Jimmy Deane's Bistro at South Adelaide Football Club (SAFC). The Dining Co. Project was also supported by local community groups, service providers and older people, including the Onkaparinga Dementia Friendly Alliance.

The project's broad objective was to co-design age-friendly dining spaces and/or experiences in local neighbourhoods which are inviting, welcoming, inclusive, accessible to all and which support meaningful engagement.

1.1 Project overview

The Dining Co. project fits with the shared belief of ACH Group and Office for Ageing Well (and all other stakeholders) that meaningful connections can support older people to age well in their local communities and, therefore, are a key strategic priority when looking at ageing in place.

ACH Group sought to look at alternative ways – from an aged care provider's point of view – to increase the capacity of older people to build meaningful connections within their community. This refers to focussing not necessarily on the services themselves or solely on the service recipients, but to trying to interact with some of the networks, mechanisms, strengths and opportunities that may make an area 'a better place to age in'.

Being able to go out to eat and drink is one of the aspects of living in a community that can foster social connections. However, instead of trying to encourage older people to go out using a more traditional, 'social service' approach (e.g., a typical organised social group delivered by an aged care provider), the project sought to look at some of the deeper systemic issues that can contribute to making a place 'better to live in for older people'. Instead of focussing exclusively on the older people themselves, the project tried to work with local businesses to increase their capacity to understand and to respond to the needs and preferences of older people in their neighbourhood.

Building on the idea that neighbourhoods where there are inviting/appropriate/friendly possibilities to eat out for people of all ages may provide increased opportunities on which human relationships can then be built, the Dining Co Project provided an occasion to coach, mentor, and support two local venues that expressed interest in championing age friendliness (and age-friendly customer service) in their community.

In doing so, the project also aimed to challenge the inherent ageism that often affects the ability of older people to interact with the community in a typical, stereotype-free way.

1.2 Public value

While the project refers to promoting meaningful community connections, it promoted ageing well in other ways. For example:

- Tackling ageism – by putting emphasis on living well for people of all ages and through growing a life-course perspective by using action research and co-design methodologies.
- Supporting health – by promoting nutritious meals and reducing social isolation among older people.
- Increasing accessibility – through growing the capacity of the local community to enable participation of older people.

The project also provided the opportunity to work directly with a council and some local businesses to ‘test-drive’ the recently-created Age Friendly Customer Service Guidelines (available at: <https://agefriendlyservices.sa.gov.au/>). These guidelines offer businesses general information, tips and tricks around 5 areas of age-friendly customer service: leadership, diversity, accessibility, dignity and participation. The guidelines also include a self-assessment tool for customer-facing staff, which we are using in the project. The Age Friendly Customer Service Guidelines were developed by Office for Ageing Well in 2019 in consultation with customer service staff and older people – but were not specifically tailored for restaurants or eating establishments.

1.3 Project background, purpose and objectives

ACH Group was invited by Office for Ageing Well to submit a proposal for a project focussed on local dining targeting people who are vulnerable to social isolation. Potential ideas were discussed in early 2020. It was agreed that ACH Group would apply for funding to design and pilot the Dining Co Project. This project aligns strongly with and progresses the Age Friendly SA Strategy to support older South Australians to age well in their local communities, through meaningful connection and contribution to the community in which they live. It is also aligned with key priorities that inform South Australia’s Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025.

The key objective of the project was to involve older people in the co-design of innovative dining experiences that may promote increased participation of older people vulnerable to social isolation in the life of their local neighbourhoods. The project aimed to:

- Co-design age-friendly dining spaces/experiences in local neighbourhoods which are inviting, welcoming, inclusive, accessible to all and which support meaningful engagement.
- Build a replicable and scalable model of collaboration between aged care services and business partners to support older people to engage in meaningful dining opportunities in their local community.

Concurrent supporting outcomes include:

- Increased social connectedness for older people, e.g., connecting people to local dining venues and businesses.
- Enhanced cross-sectoral networks that increase local capacity to support age-friendly communities, including aged care service providers and the business community.
- New opportunities for older people to actively shape services that support ageing well in their local community.

- Increased capacity of the community to understand and respond to the needs of older people through the adoption of SA's Age Friendly Customer Service Guidelines.

1.4 Project plan

The project comprised seven phases: planning; co-design; promotion; capacity-building; pilot; evaluation and reporting. Figure 1 summarises the details of the project plan.

TASKS	2020						2021						
	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
PLANNING													
Background research and project scoping													
Identify potential partner businesses and older community members in the target area													
Establish reference group													
Engage all stakeholders													
CO-DESIGN													
Co-design Neighbourhood Dining Club model in partnership with older people (target group), dining businesses and any other stakeholder as required													
Design project evaluation plan													
Develop any additional partnerships to promote participation both internal and external to ACH Group													
Develop all promotional materials													
PROMOTION													
Identify appropriate levels of promotion of the Age Friendly Customer Service Guidelines in the local community and with relevance to the project													
Promote Age Friendly Customer Service Guidelines to local businesses													
CAPACITY-BUILDING													
Pilot a regular early evening Neighbourhood Dining Club at 2 dining venues for 6-8 weeks (incl. pre-participation assessments re: evaluation)													
home options; hosted social connection between participants													
Consider the development of hosted and curated opportunities for social connections, including intergenerational													
Support target group to regularly attend the Neighbourhood Dining Club													
Undertake post participation assessments													
Complete an evaluation report and share with stakeholders as appropriate													
EVALUATION													
Complete final project report for Office for Ageing Well													
FINAL REPORT													

Figure 1: Summary of the project plan

The pilot region is in the City of Onkaparinga, on Adelaide's southern fringe, about 40 kilometres from the Adelaide CBD (Fig 2). The City of Onkaparinga was chosen for this project for a range of reasons, including that: It is home to nearly one third (approx. 27%) of the whole customer base of ACH Group (including 2 residential facilities, 5 retirement living villages, 2 health and home support services). ACH group had also a positive and strong working relations with Council and strong alignment with Council's ageing strategy.



Figure 2: The pilot region

2.0 CO-DESIGN AND PILOT

The co-design process brought together a varied and wide-reaching partnership, including older people who live in the local community, local dining businesses and/or community organisations, local and state government.

The approach involved a multi-layered engagement strategy that aimed to ‘start broad’ and then focus on key aspects that would emerge from the first consultation phases, and following that, using these to drive the conversation with local older adults to understand what an age-friendly meaningful dining experience would look like for them (Fig. 3).

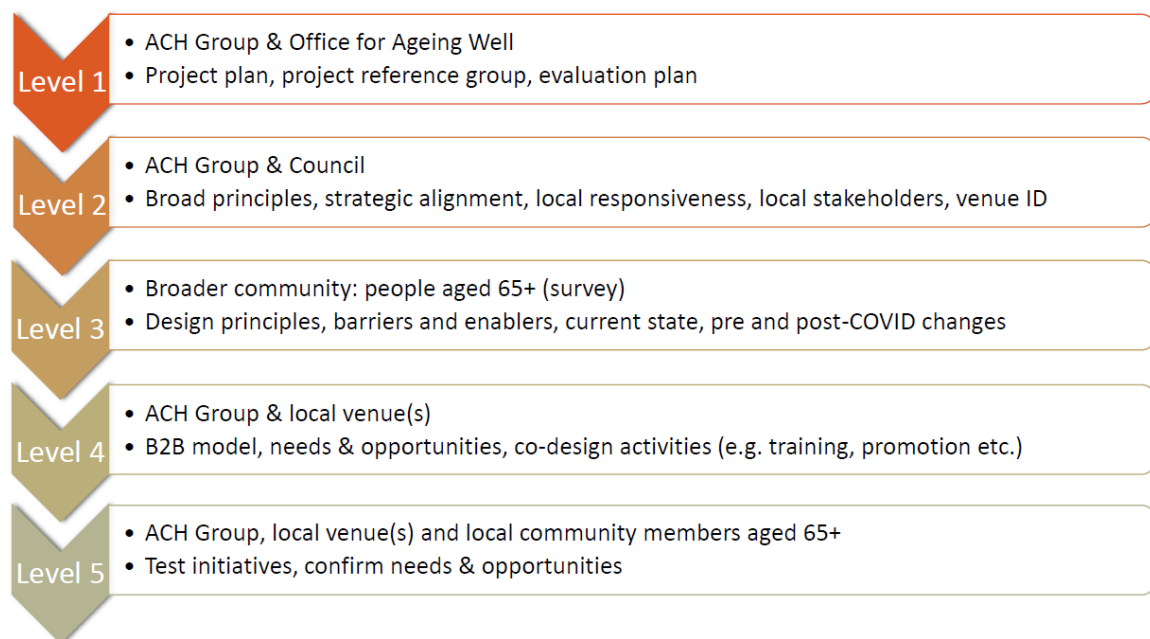


Figure 3: Engagement strategy and co-design approach

The co-design process included numerous activities designed to have an informed conversation with the various stakeholders, especially those who will ultimately be affected by the changes that the project may bring about – that is the venues and local older people. Co-design activities occurred between August 2020 and January 2021 and often overlapped with one another.

Early on, several meetings with Council were held to identify potential venues. Then, we conducted some introductory meetings with the venues to make sure they understood what the project was about and had the opportunity to clarify any aspect before we formally recruit them to the project.

We then started a series of workshop-style discussions with the venues to identify a current state, strengths and opportunities for the future.

In the meantime, we ran a statewide online survey of about 3,000 people aged 65+ to start testing key assumptions and principles, as well as a community survey in the local area – targeting local people through local networks and using also hard copy questionnaires. Council also conducted a series of focused conversations with several of their local social groups building on some of the insights from the surveys.

The following activities were two community workshops that aimed to test and validate the key insights gathered until then, and to identify some potential innovative actions to implement during the pilot.

Finally, we 'went back to the drawing board', bringing the result of this whole consultation process back to the venues and supporting them to design and bring to life some of the options brought about through the co-design process. These options were, in the end, trialled during six weeks between March and April 2021.

2.1 Venue selection

The process started with defining key parameters of the project (with Office for Ageing Well) and with achieving 'buy-in' from Council. The connection with Council was important for many reasons, for example to promote the concept, test ideas and develop a more refined understanding of the local community. Importantly, connecting with Council facilitated further local connections, including with potential dining venues to include in the project.

Early on, several meetings with Council to identify potential venues were held. In collaboration with the City of Onkaparinga's On Business arm (the council's business development department), the project identified some broad inclusion/exclusion criteria and five potential dining venues that could be interested participating in the project, based on:

- Existing customer base (e.g., do they cater for older people?).
- Willingness to consider changes to their business model to better respond to the need of older people.
- Accessibility
- Affordability
- Existing business relationships with Council.
- Inclusive approach and community mindset.

The initial five venues were:

- Agatha's, 1 Gawler St, Port Noarlunga
- Hortas, 2 Saltfleet St, Port Noarlunga
- Becks Bakehouse, 25 Clarke St Port Noarlunga
- Port Noarlunga Hotel, 2 Gawler St Port Noarlunga
- Jimmy Deane's Bistro, 1 Lovelock Dr, Noarlunga Downs (South Adelaide Football Club)

Following correspondence and interviews with venue managers, Becks Bakehouse and Jimmy Deane's Bistro (South Adelaide Football Club) were selected and included in the project.

Becks Bakehouse and Jimmy Deane's Bistro share important similarities and differences. Both venues have a broad clientele that includes older customers. Jimmy Deane's is an indoor bistro serving mainly lunches and dinners. Becks Bakehouse is a busy café with indoor seating and a large outdoor dining area, catering mainly to the morning and lunch crowds.

Following initial contact with the venue, we started a series of workshop-style discussions with the venues to identify a current state, strengths and opportunities for the future. An agreed approach was developed for the continuation of the project. This included:

- Determine 'current state':
 - Describe what being age-friendly looks like today at the venue (e.g. senior card discounts, senior menu, accessibility, special promotions/connections with retirement villages etc.).
 - Map pre- and post-COVID strengths and gaps/opportunities.
- Explore opportunities:
 - Map strengths that may help in championing age friendliness (e.g. social program, function rooms, connections with schools or other groups, staff, technology, local amenities etc.).
 - Explore Existing resources and link them to own objectives and strengths – i.e., Seniors Card partnership and Age Friendly Customer Service Guidelines.
- Familiarise management with Age Friendly Customer Service Guidelines, resources, tips and self-assessment tool: <https://agefriendlyservices.sa.gov.au/>
- Familiarise management with Seniors Card program and opportunities: <https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/family-and-community/seniors/seniors-card/business-partners>
- Baseline assessment of the venue's strengths using the self-assessment tool included in the Age Friendly Customer Service Guidelines.
- Identify areas of improvement and possible strategies and tools.
- Describe what success may look like – e.g., '*what are your objectives with regards to older community members and the current state of your venue?*'
- Design appropriate course of action and indicators of success – e.g. '*what can ACH Group do to help you?*'

2.2 Community survey

In September and October 2020, the project ran two surveys of people aged 65+ to start testing the principles behind the South Australian Age Friendly Customer Service Guidelines, and to start establishing a 'playing field' about broad preferences, barriers and enablers of older people going out to eat and drink. This included trying to understand changes pre and post introduction of COVID-19 restrictions. This comprised an online statewide survey and a community survey using both online and hard copy questionnaires in the City of Onkaparinga.

2.1.1 Statewide survey

The online statewide survey engaged the Ageing Well Feedback Network, a group of over 3,000 older South Australians (Appendix 1). It yielded 293 responses – about 10% - and some of the most interesting findings include:

- The percentage of those who used to go out for a sit-down meal once a week or more had nearly halved with COVID-19, however this was not the case for those who used to go out for any kind of refreshment (e.g. coffee, tea, ice cream etc.) once a week or more.
- There was a widespread preference to go out for lunch as opposed to dinner (only about 20% of respondents preferred to go out for dinner, over 60% preferred lunch and over 15% indicated 'other' options).
- About half of respondents wanted to go out more often to eat or drink.

- In general, the top five things that would make it more appealing for people to go out more often were:
 1. Feeling safer about COVID
 2. Having more money
 3. Venues serving more healthy options
 4. Venues being more age friendly
 5. Having more people to go out with

2.1.2 Community survey

The community survey asked very similar questions as the statewide survey, but it targeted local older people who were identified as vulnerable to loneliness and who were clients of Council-run social support activities. This included 619 survey questionnaires, 173 of which were sent by email and 446 of which by post. The community survey yielded 210 responses (Appendix 2).

The survey results were very consistent with the statewide survey, with the main differences referring to the most critical things that would make it more appealing for people to go out more often. In the Council area, these were all rated very closely to one another and were:

- Restaurants and cafes being more age friendly
- Restaurants and cafes offering more healthy food and drinks
- Having more people to go out with
- Enjoying better health
- Having support/help with transport
- Feeling safer about COVID-19
- Having more disposable income
- Being more mobile

More examples were provided via an additional question, asking respondents: ‘*Is there anything else that you find important about the places you love to go to?*’ (Fig. 4).

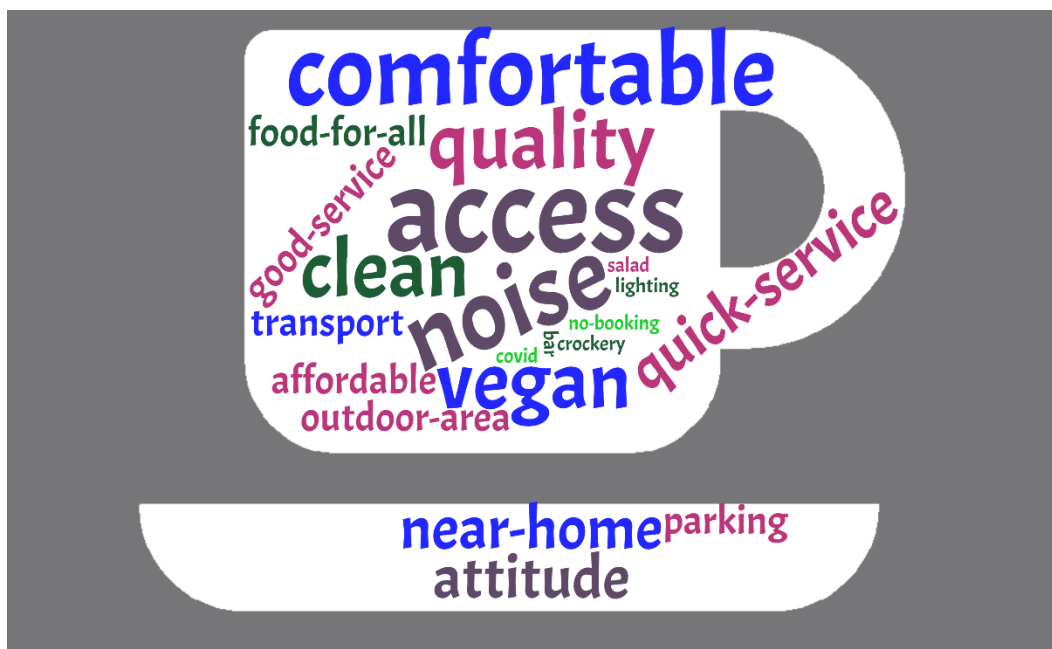


Figure 4: Visual summary about additional aspects that respondents found important in dining venues (community survey)

When asked to identify the most important things that respondents found important in venues they loved to go to, the following were the top-ten answers:

1. The quality of the food is great.
2. Staff are clean, neat and dressed appropriately.
3. The dining area is clean, comfortable and I can move around easily.
4. There are plenty of food choices for people of all ages and stages.
5. Staff are well trained, competent and experienced.
6. Staff have a positive attitude towards older people.
7. All amenities are very accessible.
8. There are always affordable options.
9. I trust staff to help me if I need something out of the ordinary.
10. A discount is available to Seniors Card holders.

2.3 Community workshops

Two workshops were held in November 2020 at South Adelaide Football Club with members of the local community aged 65+, including several who lived with dementia. The workshops were promoted through council networks and local community organisations, including the Onkaparinga Dementia-Friendly Alliance.

The workshops aimed to better understand what an aged-friendly meaningful dining out experience looks like for the local community, as well as to test and validate the key insights gathered through the surveys, and to identify some potential innovative actions to implement during the pilot in early 2021.

The workshops were promoted locally through existing networks including:

- The two venues
- Council (including libraries and community centres, online and mailout)
- South Adelaide Football Club
- Onkaparinga Dementia Friendly Alliance
- Dementia Australia
- ACH Group

The workshops involved 20 older community members, some whom living with dementia or caring for someone living with dementia. The workshops lasted approximately two hours (each) and explored several themes through four guiding questions:

- Q1 *Have we missed anything?* (e.g., survey findings were shared with participants)
- Q2 *I would go out more if...*
- Q3 *What does a meaningful product look like for you?*
- Q4 *Would you go to participation events of this kind once a year?*

Through these workshops, eight domains of an age-friendly meaningful dining experience were identified, comprising: Menu, Affordability, Dementia Awareness, Venue, Feeling Welcome, Social Initiatives, Deals and Special Offerings, and Assistance.

For each of these domains, priorities and examples were identified. Figure 5 summarises the eight domains (in white), the priorities (in dark bold font) and relevant examples (in dark font).

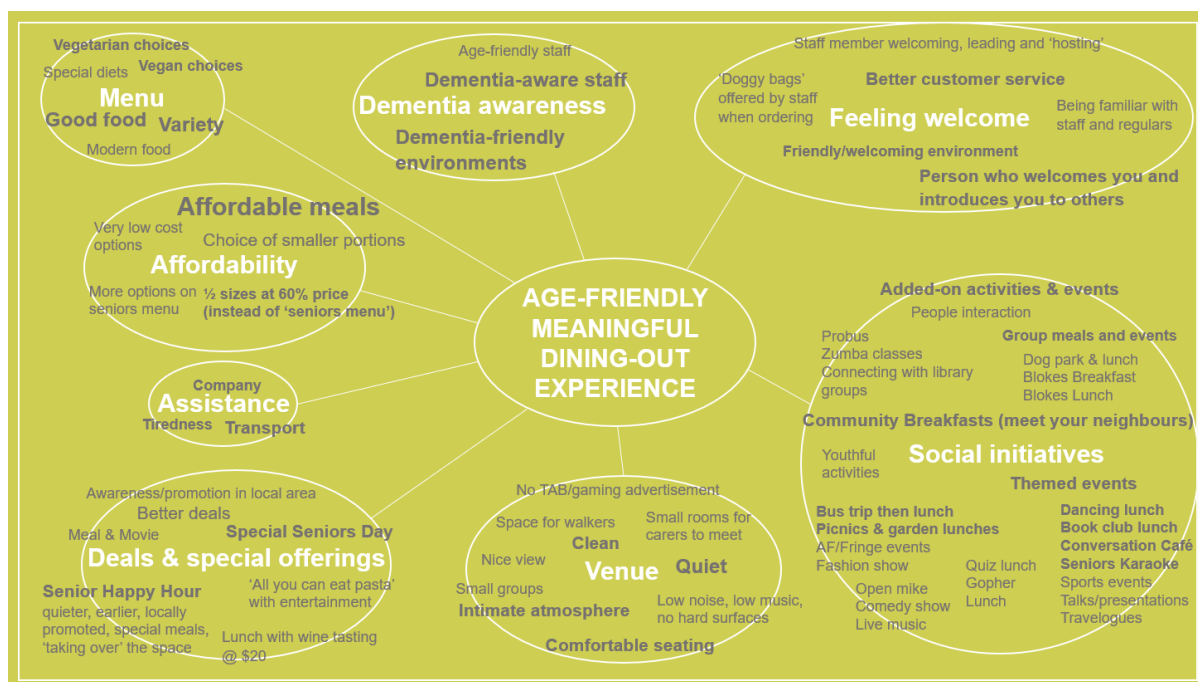


Figure 5: Eight domains (in white), priorities (in dark bold font) and examples (in dark font) of an age-friendly meaningful dining out experience

2.4 Pilot

The results of the surveys and the community workshops were brought back to the venue managers in early 2021.

The venue managers were then supported to design several changes that addressed the results of the community consultation and aimed to create inviting, welcoming, inclusive and accessible age-friendly dining spaces/experiences which would support meaningful engagement.

Each venue chose to implement initiatives that were feasible and manageable from a business perspective and, while the initiatives differed, they shared the common goal to improve the age-friendliness of the dining experience provided.

The initiatives implemented during the pilot are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Initiatives implemented by participating venues, City of Onkaparinga, March-April 2021

Domains	Becks Bakehouse	Jimmy Deane's Bistro
Menu; Affordability; Deals & Special Offerings	Wednesday morning coffee and cake deal Thursday breakfast and coffee deal Friday 10% off lunch deal	Daily seniors lunch menu 10% off regular menu for people aged 65+ Special coffee and cake offer
Dementia Awareness	Dementia awareness training for manager and some staff	Dementia awareness training for managers
Social Initiatives		Organised group meals (partnership with community organisations and groups)
Venue		Main door kept open for ease of access

		Clearer messaging on main door Review of toilet and access signage to improve access for people living with dementia
Feeling Welcome	Staff offer table service for older people instead of them having to collect their orders by themselves	Targeted welcome/greeting for patrons, providing them with a visual, spatial and auditory orientation of the bistro space

The pilot was promoted extensively in the local community through a marketing campaign led by ACH Group and supported by Council. This included posts on social media, articles on newsletters and magazines, and the creation of a promotion asset that was used at the venues (e.g. stickers and posters) and on two distinct flyers (i.e., one to be used in the venues themselves and one to be distributed in other parts of the community, for example libraries, community centres and local ACH Group services. When going to one of the two venues, customers would be greeted with flyers reciting:

This venue is part of the Dining Co. Project, an initiative supporting age friendly eating out experiences. The purpose of the Dining Co. Project is to co-design all ages friendly dining experiences with you, the patron.

Eating out should be inviting, inclusive and accessible, and it should support meaningful social connections, so that people of all ages can participate in their local community.

The flyers also gave examples of the steps that the venues were taking to become more age-friendly, and it asked customers to provide feedback through a survey.



Figure 6: Marketing asset

The venues were also supported to educate staff and to inform customers about the project through a script and other information for staff developed by ACH Group’s marketing team.

3.0 SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

The evaluation was conducted in partnership with Flinders University in April and May 2021.

3.1 Aim of the evaluation

The evaluation aimed to understand the impact of age-friendly initiatives in the two dining venues from the perspective of older customers and the dining venue themselves. It followed through three lines of inquiry:

1. What changed for the two dining establishments after participating in the pilot?
2. What were the dining experiences of older customers? What contributes positively or negatively to their dining experiences?
3. How may dining out help older people feel more connected to other people or their community?

The first two lines of inquiry are interrelated and shed light on what age-friendly dining may mean from the perspective of both older customers and dining venues. The third line of inquiry is a broader one and it concerns the relationship between dining out and social connectedness. It relates back to the purpose of the Dining Co. Project—to promote social connectedness for older people through dining out in age-friendly dining spaces.

The evaluation results can help dining establishments understand the impact and feasibility of age-friendly initiatives. They provide an understanding of the customer experience and some locally relevant insights on the relationship between dining out, social capital and connectedness among people aged 65 and over. The results will inform future iterations of the Dining Co. Project (e.g., scalability) and will provide insight to inform public policy on ageing well in South Australia.

3.2 Methodology

The methodology was designed to answer the key three research questions (see section 3.1) and was approved by Flinders University's Human Research Ethics Committee (project ID 4130).

Importantly, the evaluation does not seek to compare the impact of age-friendly initiatives at the two venues. Rather, it aims to understand the factors that might contribute to age-friendly dining and social connectedness for older customers.

The methodology aimed to gather information about the point of view of three groups of stakeholders: the dining venues themselves, the older customers, and the researchers of another research project (Project E.A.T. – Everyone At the Table) run by Flinders University at one of the two dining venue at the same time of the Dining Co. pilot.

3.2.1 Dining venues

Three semi-structured interviews lasting about 30 minutes were conducted with key staff at the dining venues. These interviews explored the age-friendly initiatives taken at each venue and examined the staff's perspectives about their feasibility and impact. The staff interviewed played key roles in the dining venues and could comment on the business, staff, and customer aspects of the pilot.

3.2.2 Older customers

To understand different aspects of their dining experience, older customers (aged 65 and over) who went to the two venues during the Dining Co. pilot were asked to complete two surveys: a Customer Experience Survey (Appendix 3) and a Social Connectedness Survey (Appendix 4). The Customer Experience Survey aimed to understand the experiences of older customers at the dining venues; the Social Connectedness survey explored their perspectives on the relationship between dining out and feeling socially connected. Participants could choose to complete one or both surveys.

The surveys were distributed at the dining venues mainly in hard copies by the staff. A small number of surveys was completed via an online portal and verbally conducted by a member of the Dining Co. research team at Becks Bakehouse.

To complement the surveys, informal observations of older customers dining at the two establishments were also conducted. The observations informed the background physical, sensorial and social contexts of the customers' dining experiences. This includes customers' movement through and use of the dining spaces, and level and quality of their interactions with other people in the venues. Examples include customers' ease of movement, reactions to the noise levels, interactions with staff and enjoyment of meals and company.

Four observations sessions were conducted by a research team member over the six-week pilot, on different times and days of the week.

3.2.3 Other stakeholders

Besides the older customers and the dining venues, the evaluation gathered data from another research project concurrently run at Jimmy Deane's Bistro. This refers to Project Everyone At the Table (E.A.T.). This project was approved by Flinders University's Human Research Ethics Committee (project ID 8620) and it explored the effect that eating together on a weekly basis may have for reducing social isolation and loneliness in individuals over the age of 65 years. Participants of Project E.A.T. attended an organised shared lunch once a week over a 12-week period. The 12-week period overlapped with the Dining Co. pilot. Interviewing Project E.A.T. researchers on their observations about the venue's age-friendliness and the impact of organised group dining on their participants helped to contextualise the Dining Co. pilot data (and relates directly to the second and third research questions).

One semi-structured interview was conducted with a key Project E.A.T. research team member. Participation was voluntary and informed consent was taken prior to the interview.

3.3 Results

3.3.1 What changed for the dining venues

The venues welcomed the pilot as an opportunity to improve the way they cater to their older customers, particularly as they already had many older customers in their clientele.

Managers at both venues shared how the experience primarily impacted their staff. It made the staff more aware of their interactions with older customers and the needs of this group. For Becks Bakehouse, this meant offering older customers to bring food out to their table instead of simply giving them buzzers to collect the orders themselves. For Jimmy Deane's Bistro, this meant engaging with older customers beyond generic greetings, making them feel welcome and initiating conversations. While the venue staff were already aware of the need to be welcoming towards older customers prior to the Dining Co. Project, pilot initiatives such as participating in dementia training and reviewing the protocol of how

customers are greeted helped to increase staff awareness and confidence about catering to older customers.

Becks Bakehouse did not see a significant increase in older customers during the pilot. Jimmy Deane's Bistro, instead, recorded a surge in older customers at lunch time, with older customers showing particular interest in the coffee and cake specials, and using the 10% discount for lunch consistently.

Notably, the Dining Co. pilot was a small step for the venues in developing an age-friendly mindset. When asked what age-friendliness meant for them, staff at both venues highlighted the symbiotic relationship between older customers and venue success. Age-friendliness was about connecting with and catering to the older customers and their community, building relationships with them, and having them come back and spread the word to others. Both venues expressed interest in implementing more changes post-pilot to improve the dining experience of older customers. These include physical venue aspects such as noise reduction in particular areas for both venues, and improved toilet accessibility at Becks Bakehouse. Both venues plan to refine and continue offering deals for older customers. For Jimmy Deane's, staff and service remain essential, and they explore having a greater staff presence and continued feedback system for customers.

3.3.2 Dining experience of older customers

The dining experiences of older customers was explored through data from the informal observations, the Customer Experience Survey and the interview with the Project E.A.T. team member. The first two datasets provided insight into the experience across different types of older customers, while the third pertained specifically to older customers participating in Project E.A.T. (e.g., an organised group dining and social initiative at Jimmy Deane's Bistro).

The informal observations provided a helpful context to analyse the survey and interview data on customer experience. The observations were conducted during the day, when diners were having breakfast, lunch or coffee/tea. Dinners, which were not served at Becks Bakehouse, were not observed.

While the noise levels at the venues varied, older customers were generally able to converse relatively comfortably. At Becks Bakehouse, the outdoor area was less noisy than the indoor area. Both venues seemed accessible for older customers. Ample parking was available and there were no steps at the venues. Even on a crowded day, older customers were able to get around the venue and to the bathroom and counter. With Becks Bakehouse having both indoor and outdoor seating, their outdoor counter allowed older customers to order and collect their food without having to enter the smaller indoor space.

The interactions between staff and older customers were friendly and occurred mainly over the counter when orders were made. At Jimmy Deane's Bistro there were additional touchpoints when older customers entered the venue and were served their food. In these moments, staff engaged further with the customers and asked them about their dining experience. At Becks Bakehouse, the staff-customer interactions were mainly at the counter when customers came to order and collect their food.

A total of 49 older customers completed the Customer Experience Survey, 37% (18) from Becks Bakehouse and 63% (31) from Jimmy Deane's Bistro. Of these, 37% identified as male while 57% identified as female. Most of respondent went to the venue with another person or as part of a private group; about a quarter went alone or as part of an organised group. The majority of the customers had lunch at the venues.

Overall, the customers had a positive experience at the venues, with 83% being very likely to dine at the establishment again and 84% giving a Net Promoter Score (NPS) rating between 8 and 10 (with 10 indicating the highest likelihood to recommend the venue to someone else). Customers loved the quality, range and price of the food across both venues. They found the service quick and good, and the staff friendly and helpful. They also liked the cleanliness, ambiance and parking accessibility of the venues. The key points for improvements referred to a quieter environment, comfortable seating, more frequent cleaning and more menu items with affordable options for seniors.

In terms of dining status, older customers who dined alone, with another person or with a private group had a better experience overall, compared with those who were part of an organised group. The fact that organised groups imply many people seating together could have affected their experience of the noise levels at the venue. The NPS scores were also lower for participants in an organised group. For the seven participants who gave an NPS score of 7 and below, noise, accessibility and cleanliness/comfort of the venue were the main points of concern. These results point to the importance of venue characteristics in older customer satisfaction of venues.

The experiences of older customers who were part of an organised group were further explored through Project E.A.T. The interview with a Project E.A.T. researcher provided insights into the participants' experiences and the perspectives of Project E.A.T.'s researchers about Jimmy Deane's Bistro.

Overall, the Project E.A.T. participants had a positive dining experience. A few said they had difficulty hearing as it was too noisy and loud, but this was quickly improved by the venue staff who turned the music off or down. Participants liked the outdoor views and had no problems accessing or getting around the venue. However, one person with a walker lacked a space to put it conveniently. Participants provided mixed feedback about the food. They found the menu a little limited, possibly because they went to the same venue for lunch on the same day of the week over 12 weeks. The customers loved the staff and the interactions with them. With the staff being quite young, participants were impressed with their enthusiasm.

3.3.3 Dining out and social connectedness

The evaluation explored how dining out may help older people feel more connected to other people or to their community. This was explored drawing on the Social Connectedness Survey with older customers, the interview with a Project E.A.T. researcher, as well as the observations at the venues.

The social interactions observed at the venues took place mainly within the older diners' own groups. The interactions occurred with the people they went to the venue with, whether with another person, with a private group (e.g., friends and family) or with an organised group. Those who went to the venue alone were observed to be keeping mostly to themselves, absorbed in an activity such as reading. During the observations, very few organic interactions occurred between diners who were from different groups or did not know each other. While uncommon, there were a few fleeting conversations that started due to the interactions between pets or across tables.

The interactions between older diners and staff were friendly but generally minimal. They occurred at key touchpoints such as the taking of orders, delivering/collection of food, cleaning of tables, and entry/exit of customers. Certain customers who were possibly regulars had lengthier conversations with the staff. The busyness and capacity of the venues also affected the amount of interaction between older customers and staff. During periods

when the venues were quieter, the staff could engage more frequently and at a greater length with the customers. The opposite happened when the venues got more crowded and busier.

Besides the organic interactions at the venues, organised group dining was an opportunity for social interactions to form among older people and a sense of connectedness to develop. For example, the 12 Project E.A.T. participants did not know each other prior to the group lunch initiative. They also did not have any common interest or affinity. Over the course of a few weeks, they gradually got to know one another, to the point that there would barely be a quiet moment over lunch. The Project E.A.T. researcher confirmed that most participants enjoyed the experience and made some friendships and connections with each other. There was also a desire among participants for a weekly or monthly informal catch-up to continue, and to keep in touch after the 12-week period. The organised group dining experience of Project E.A.T. demonstrates the potential for forging connections across strangers at an age-friendly or suitable venue. Organised groups appear to be suitable to enhance social connectedness amongst older people through dining out. Important factors for consideration would be the noise levels and variety of menu options.

A total of 53 customers completed the Social Connectedness Survey, 53% (28) from Becks Bakehouse and 47% (25) from Jimmy Deane's Bistro. These customers had a positive experience at the venues, with 86% being very likely to dine at the establishment again. When asked to rate the venue's age friendliness on a 1-5 scale, 94% gave a rating of 4 or 5.

The Social Connectedness Survey also asked the older customers whether dining out can help promoting social connectedness. This was asked through four questions pertaining to both themselves and other people:

1. On a scale of 1-5, do you think that going to an age-friendly dining venue can help people maintain/develop social relationships?
2. On a scale of 1-5, do you think that going to an age-friendly dining venue can help you maintain/develop social relationships?
3. On a scale of 1-5, do you think that going to an age-friendly dining venue can help people feel connected to the community?
4. On a scale of 1-5, do you think that going to an age-friendly dining venue can help you feel connected with the community?

For all the questions, more than 80% of participants rated either 4 or 5, with each question showing similar responses. This indicates that participants believed that dining at age-friendly venues could improve social relationships and community connectedness both for themselves and other people.

Females gave higher ratings for their venue experience and social connectedness. Participants who found the venue age-friendly were also satisfied with the venue and would go back again. Participants who agreed that dining out helped to develop/maintain social relationships for others or keep others connected to the community also felt the same for themselves.

A few participants shared experiences they had of natural, random connections and conversations with strangers. These conversations were sparked by a mention of common topics, observations or through encountering other diners' pets. They were facilitated by the social nature of the venue. However, a few highlighted the challenge of making connections, with one saying "*only if you go out of your way*" to develop social relationships. Another mentioned that "*dining alone even if [at an] age friendly venue [is] not connecting anyone to*

community” and that “*an organised event could [help] develop some social relationships*”. Taken together, these comments show how social connectedness can be facilitated to some extent by age-friendly venues but may also rely on ‘chance’ and opportunities.

3.4 CONCLUSION

Overall, the Dining Co. Project was successful in assisting the two participating venues to gain a stronger understanding about age-friendliness and age-friendly customer service. It was also successful in enabling ACH Group to develop an approach that can be adapted, translated and/or scaled to other venues and other areas, and that, as such, may further assist ACH Group to strengthen and develop its community connections.

In the next few weeks, ACH Group will consider how to continue, scale and/or build on the Dining Co. Project to strengthen its presence in communities. While no formal decisions have been made, there is an interest in continuing to work with the project partners and to explore opportunities to further leverage the positive results and the excellent relationships developed during Dining Co.

Working with the dining venues throughout the project provided ACH Group with the opportunity to develop and test a new approach to connecting with businesses. It also reinforced existing connections between the community and the participating venues, and it created new opportunities for one of the venues to broaden its services scope. Both venues took important steps to become more aged-friendly and, following the project, have a more refined understanding of the needs and preferences of the older local community members.

The initiatives implemented through the project and pilot brought about positive changes for the staff, who became more aware to the needs of older customers and confident in engaging with them. The older customers surveyed were satisfied with their experience at the venues and found that the venues have several age-friendly aspects (e.g., food, staff and venue characteristics). Certain aspects of the dining experience emerged as more important in affecting the experience of older customers, including the noise levels, accessibility and cleanliness/comfort of the venues.

Reflecting on the relationship between dining out and social connectedness, the pilot evidenced that age-friendly dining venues can contribute to building social connectedness for older people. The results indicated that older people see dining venues as places for maintaining/developing social relationships and feeling connected to the community. With most of the interactions happening within the older diners' own groups or with their dining companions, these interactions help to strengthen their existing relationships. On the other hand, the interactions with staff, while important, are more fleeting and transactional. They can be enhanced with greater staff attention to customer relationships, and gradually built over time.

For older people to be more socially connected to others or to their communities, however, age-friendly dining venues alone may be insufficient. Natural, spontaneous interactions and new connections with other diners tend to be infrequent and to rely on conversation sparks. Nonetheless, some of the organised group experiences recorded at Jimmy Deane's Bistro demonstrate that these connections can be made more intentional and that it is feasible to attempt to build connections between strangers with nothing in common at an age-friendly venue. To improve the customer experience for organised group dining, the aspects of noise, accessibility and staff need to be considered.

'Dining Co.' Project

September 2020

The 'Dining Co.' Project is a partnership between ACH Group and Office for Ageing Well, SA Health and it is supported locally by the City of Onkaparinga.

The project seeks to increase opportunities for older people who may experience social insolation to engage in local community activities. 'Dining Co.' aims to bring together local restaurants, service providers and older people to co-design age-friendly dining experiences which are inviting, welcoming and inclusive, and which support meaningful engagement at the community level.



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Government
of South Australia

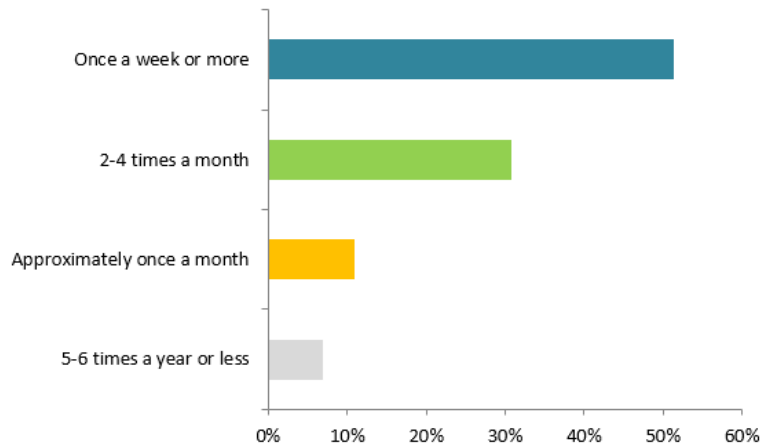
SA Health

Community survey (September 2020)

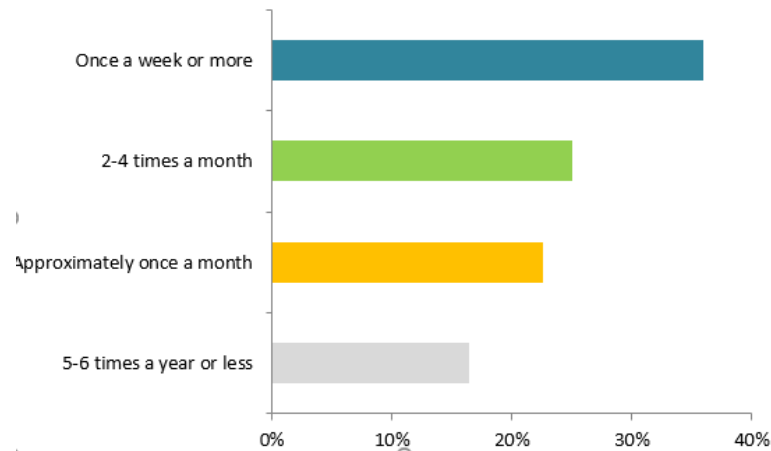
293 Responses

How often do you usually go out to eat or drink, including simple refreshments (e.g. coffee, tea, ice cream etc.)?

Before COVID-19

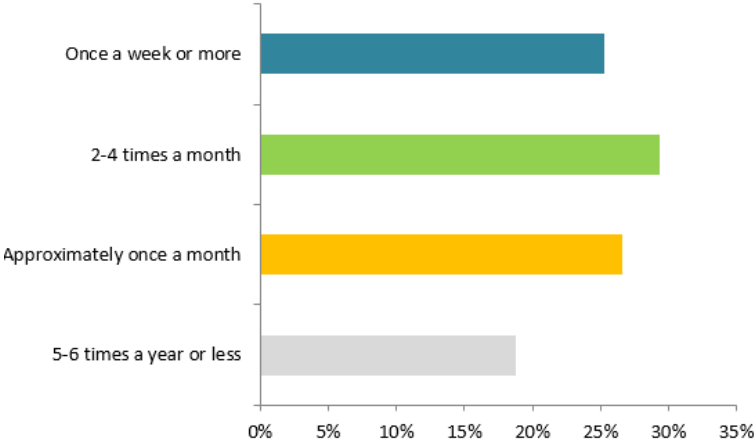


After COVID-19

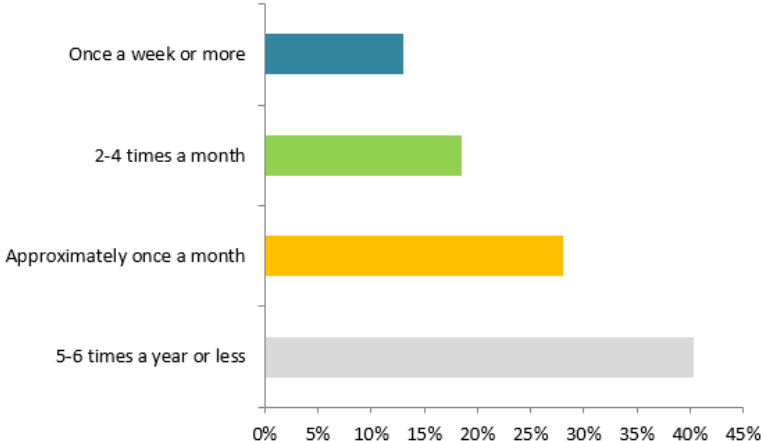


How often do you usually go out for a sit-down meal?

Before COVID-19

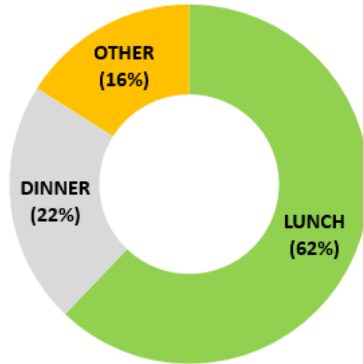


After COVID-19

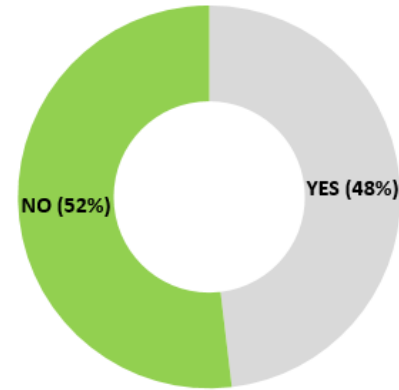


Time preference and current satisfaction

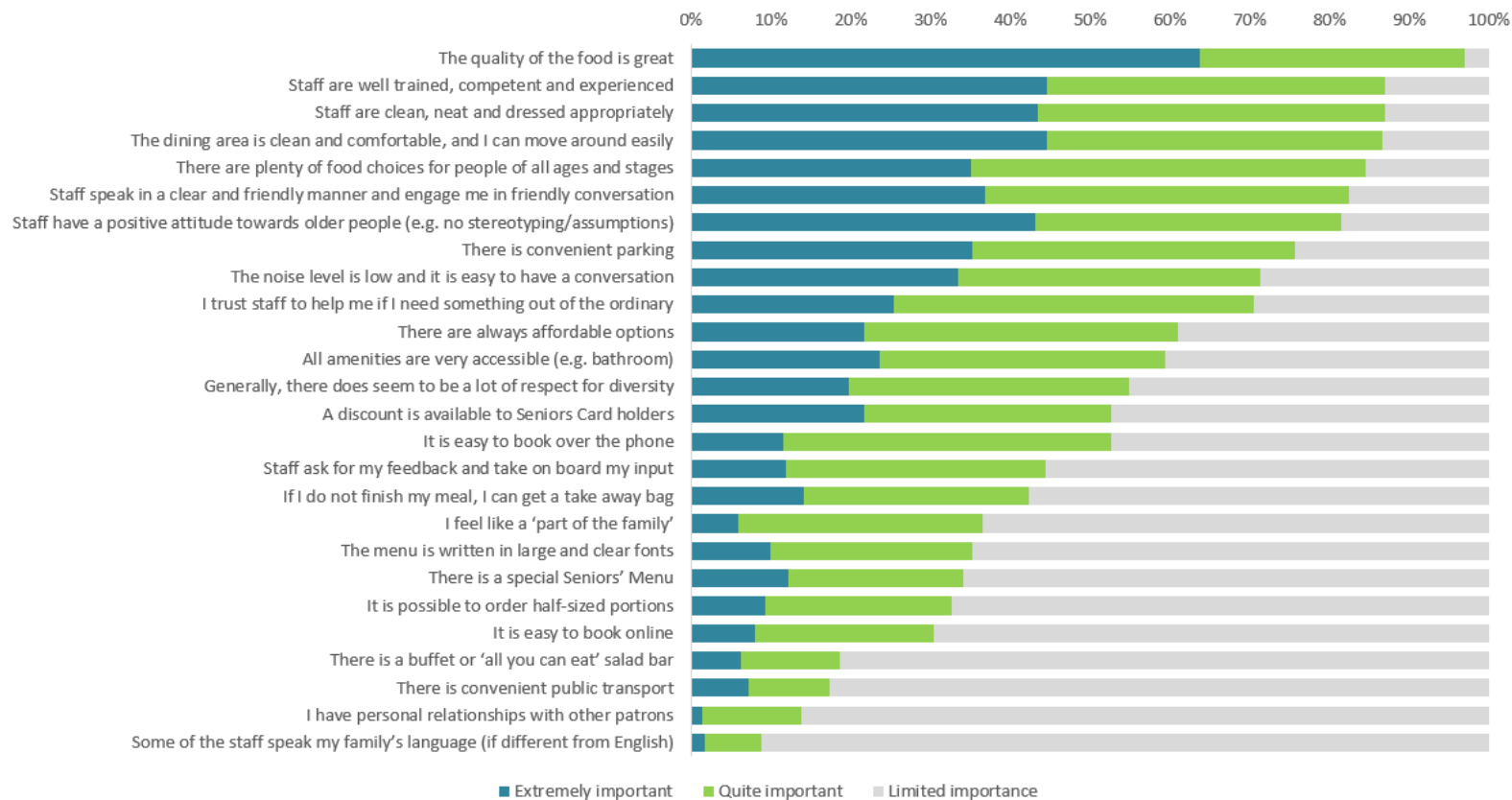
What time of the day do you prefer to go out to eat or drink, including simple refreshments (e.g. coffee, tea, ice cream etc.)?



Would you like to go out more often to eat or drink, or are you satisfied with how often you are currently going out?

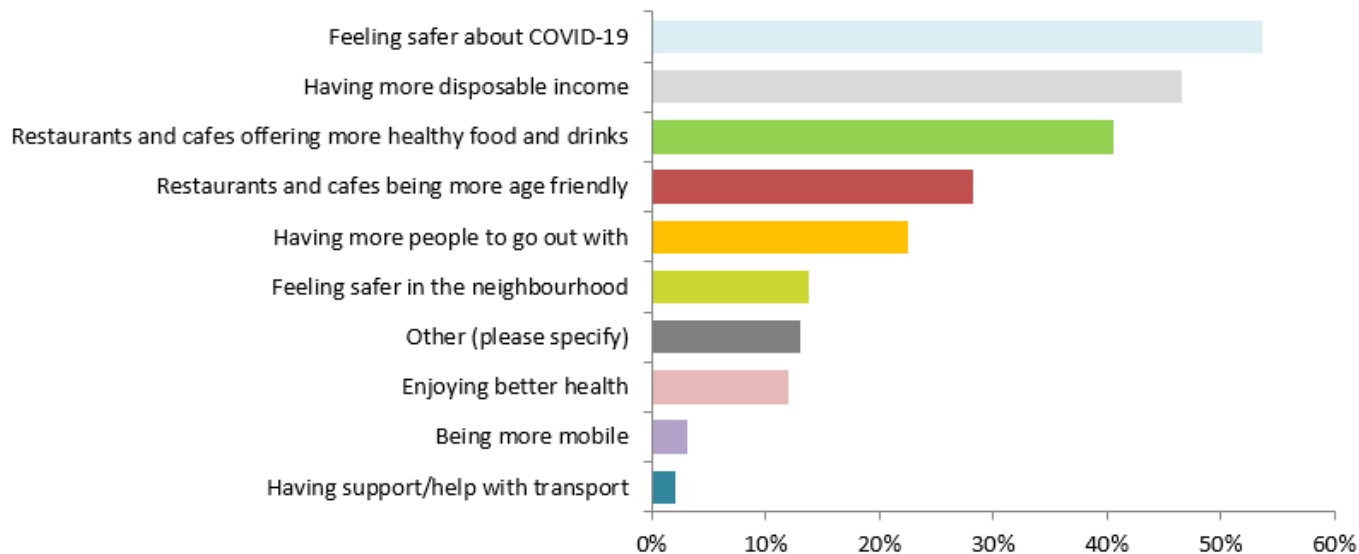


Thinking of restaurants and cafes that you love to go to, how important are the following things?



Is there anything else that you would rate as 'extremely important' when choosing a restaurant or café?

In general, is there anything that would make it easier or more appealing for you to go out to eat or drink?





Dining Co. Project

City of Onkaparinga

Survey conducted by City of Onkaparinga

October 2020

Supported by Office for Ageing Well



SUPPORTED BY



The 'Dining Co.' Project is a partnership between ACH Group and Office for Ageing Well, SA Health and it is supported locally by the City of Onkaparinga.

The project seeks to increase opportunities for older people who may experience social isolation to engage in local community activities. 'Dining Co.' aims to bring together local restaurants, service providers and older people to co-design age-friendly dining experiences which are inviting, welcoming and inclusive, and which support meaningful engagement at the community level.

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619 survey questionnaires were sent to older people who live in the City of Onkaparinga and are on the database of the Council's Active Ageing team
173 survey questionnaires were sent by email
446 survey questionnaires were sent in paper copies by post

210 responses were received.

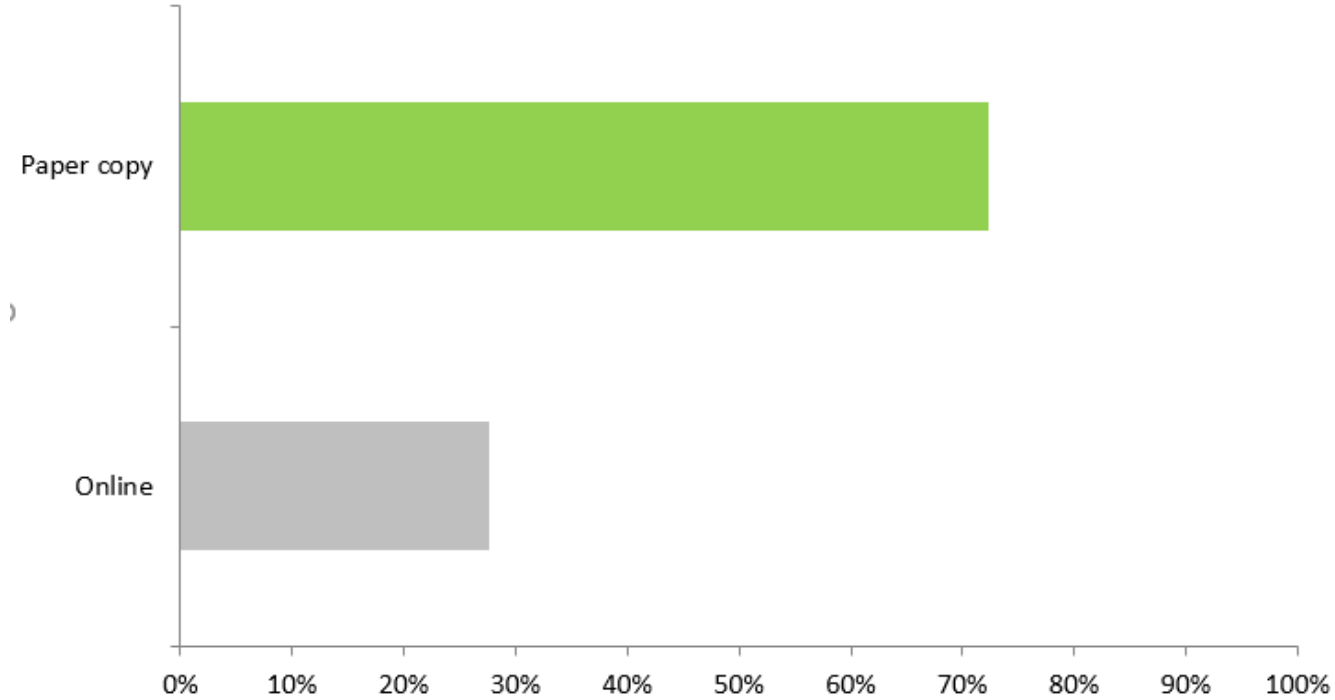
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How did you complete the survey?

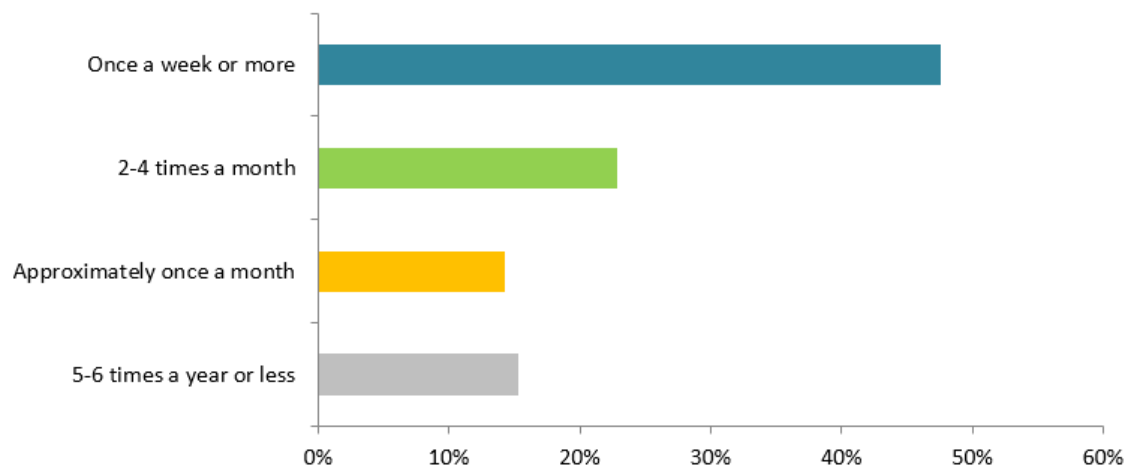


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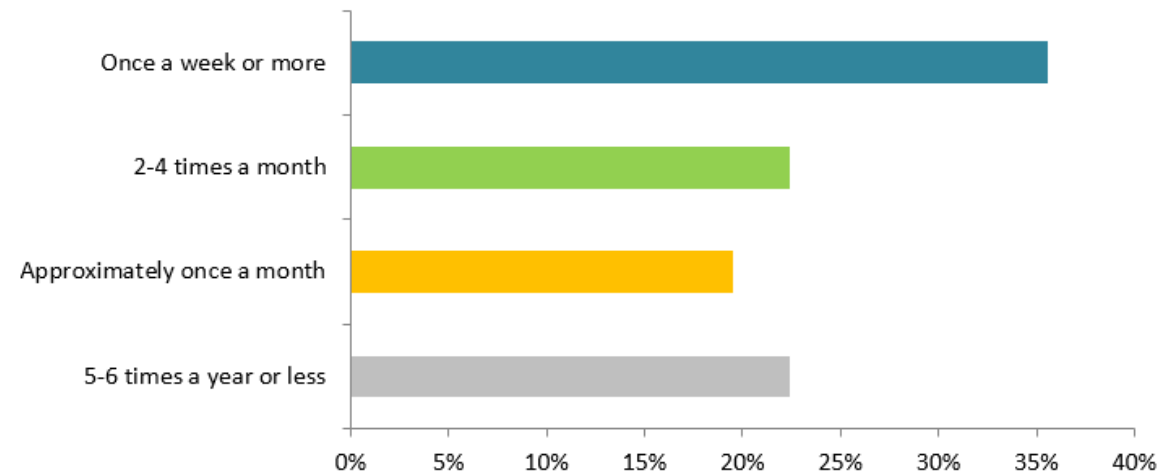


How often do you usually go out to eat or drink, including simple refreshments (e.g. coffee, tea, ice cream etc.)?

Before COVID-19



After COVID-19



Supported by Office for Ageing Well

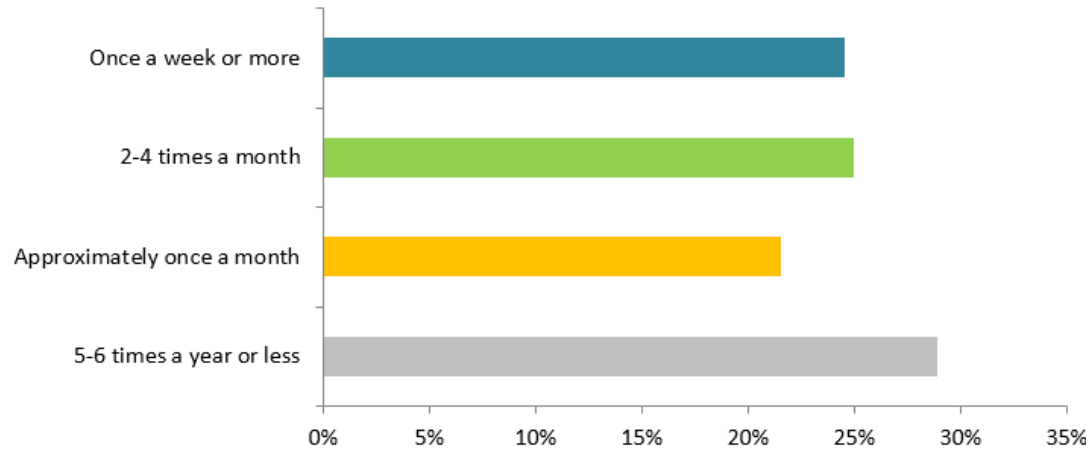


SUPPORTED BY

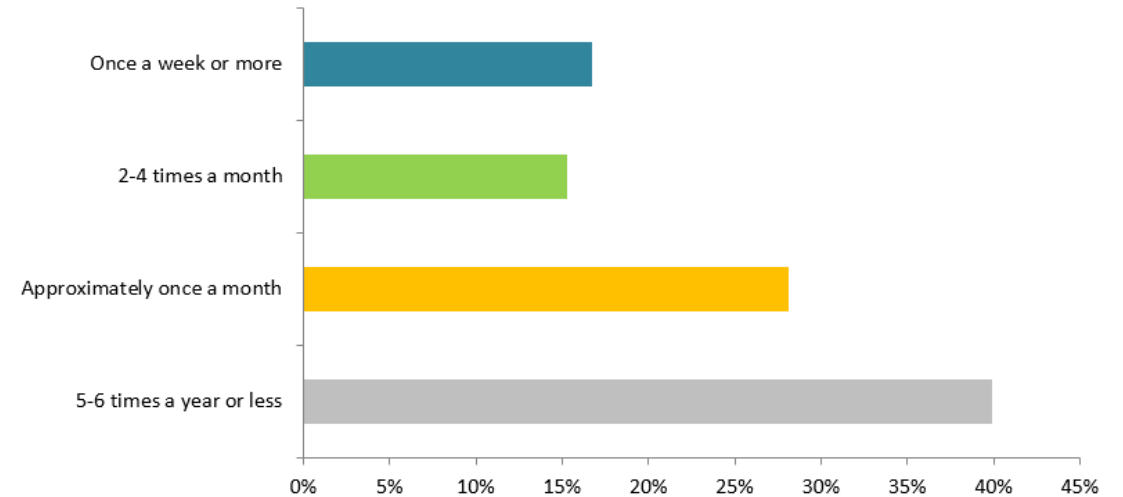


How often do you usually go out for a sit-down meal?

Before COVID-19



After COVID-19

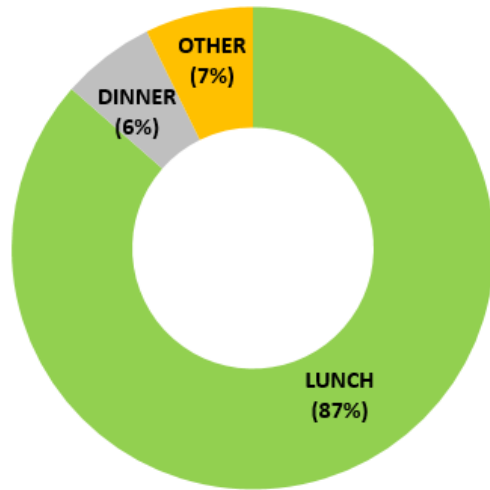


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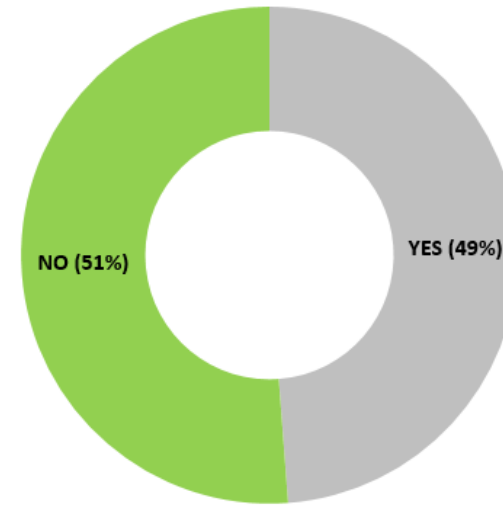


Time preference and current satisfaction

What time of the day do you prefer to go out to eat or drink, including simple refreshments (e.g. coffee, tea, ice cream etc.)?



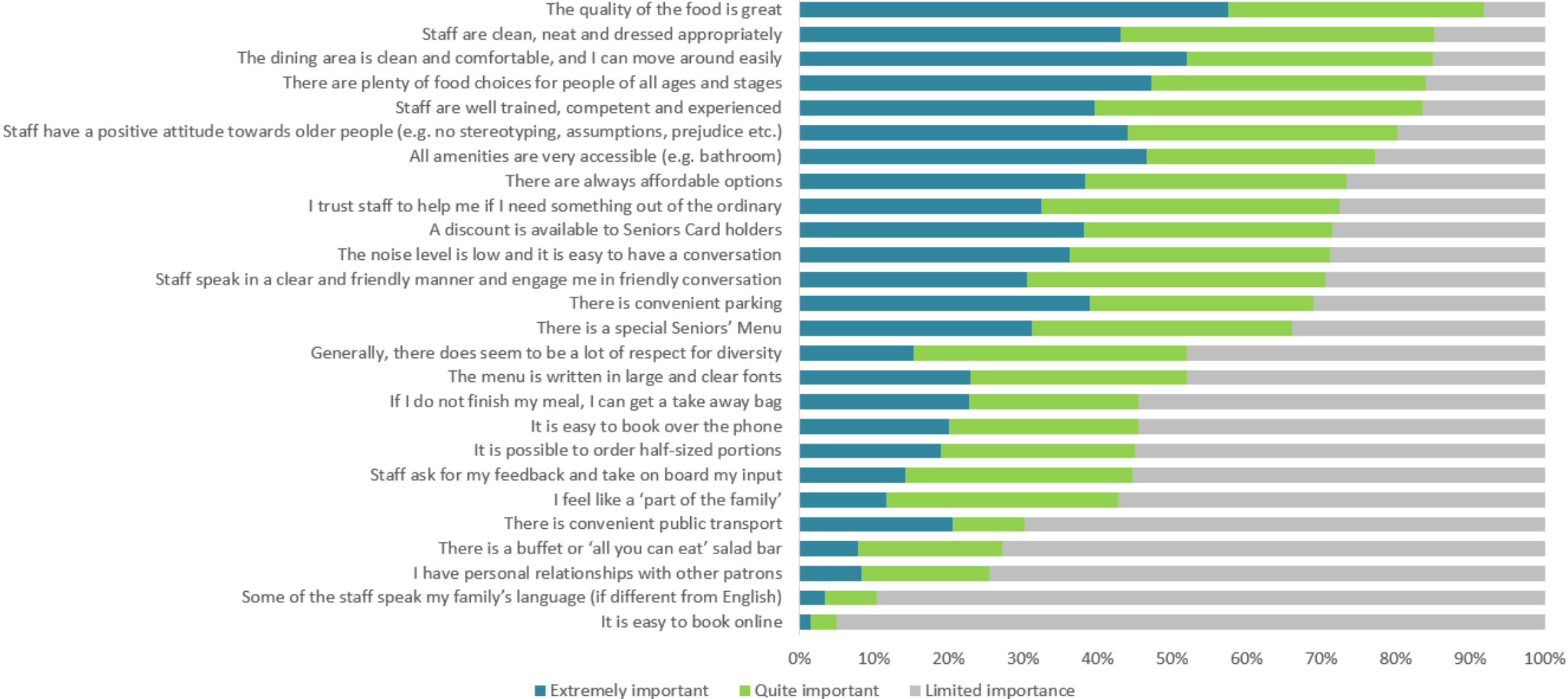
Would you like to go out more often to eat or drink?



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Thinking of restaurants and cafes that you love to go to, how important are the following things?



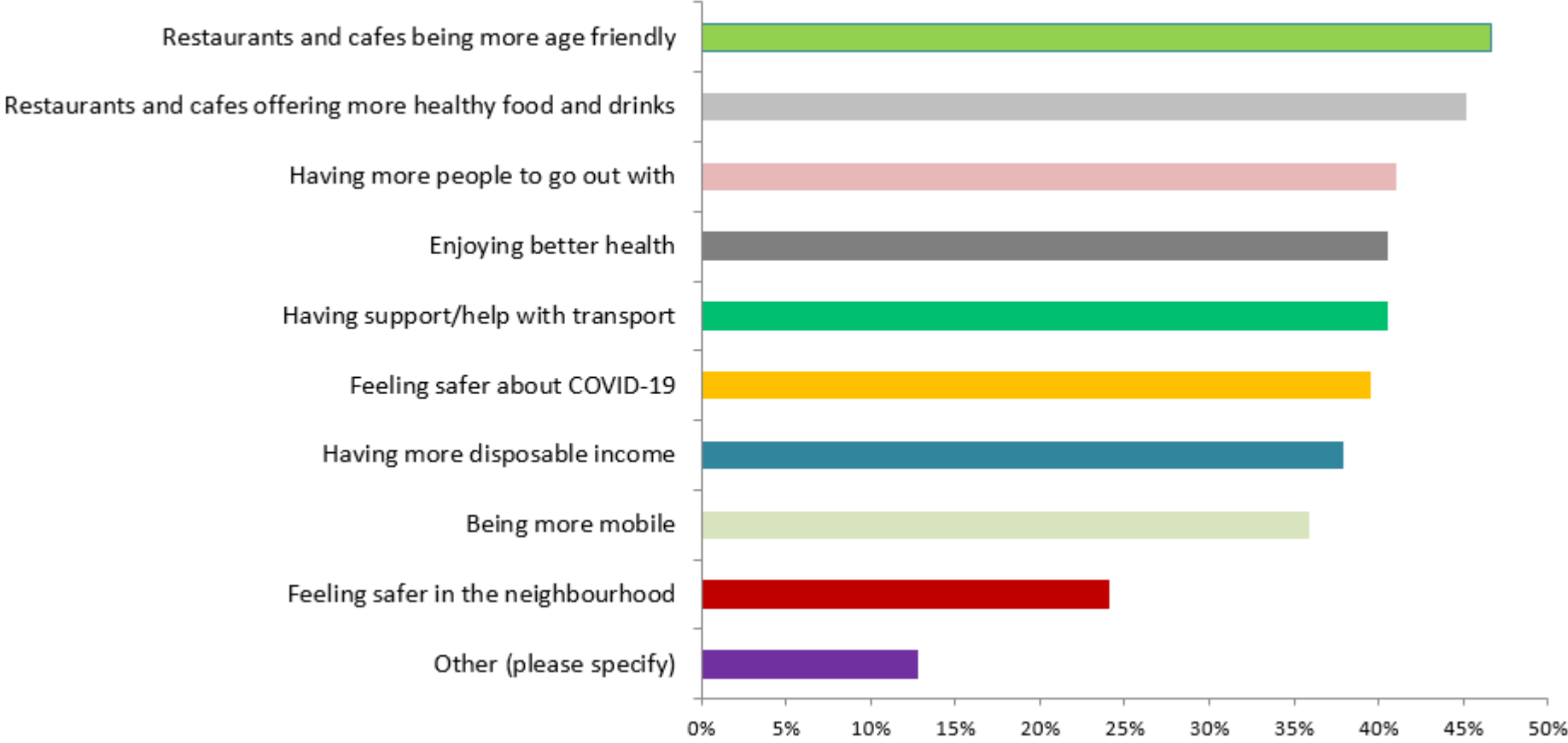
Is there anything else that you find important about the places you love to go to?



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In general, is there anything that would make it easier or more appealing for you to go out to eat or drink?



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Other?



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Other?

“I wanted to put breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner, supper!! Group bookings are sometimes not very friendly. There are too many at a table. Smaller tables would be better. People who can move should be encouraged to get up and move to another table after main course. Everyone should be encouraged to talk to someone they do not know. Often, people sit with their already known friends, and make no effort to chat to anyone else. People such as volunteers, need to encourage this mixing. Name tags are better if they are large enough to read. People who know names, should try to repeat them as often as possible”.

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Thank you



Good Lives for
Older People



Good Lives for
Older People

Dr Edoardo Rosso
Product Co-design Manager

22 Henley Beach Road Mile End SA 5031
PO Box 646 Torrensville Plaza, Torrensville SA 5031

T 08 8159 3600

M 0437 615 656

E erosso@ach.org.au

www.achgroup.org.au

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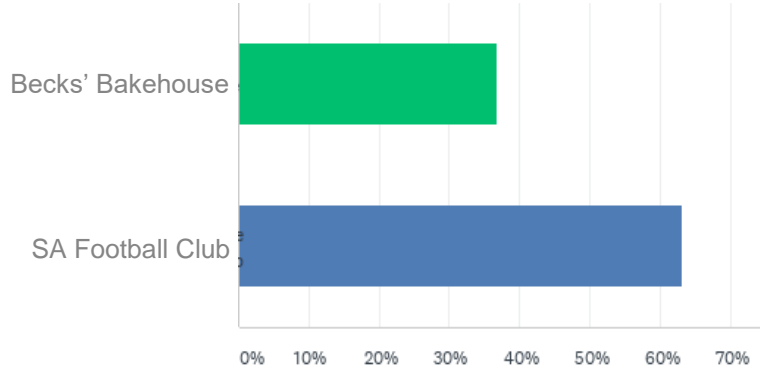


Dining Co Project Evaluation Customer Experience Survey

Monday, May 24, 2021

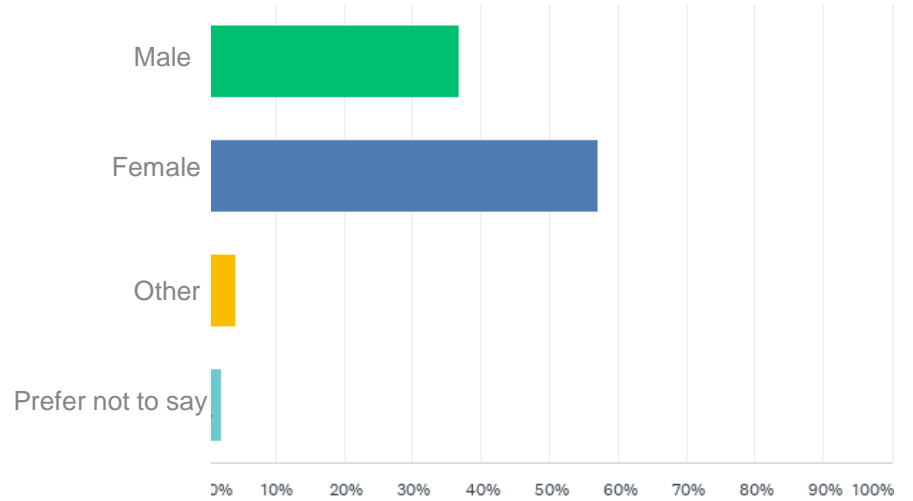
Q3: What venue do your responses refer to?

Answered: 49 Skipped: 2



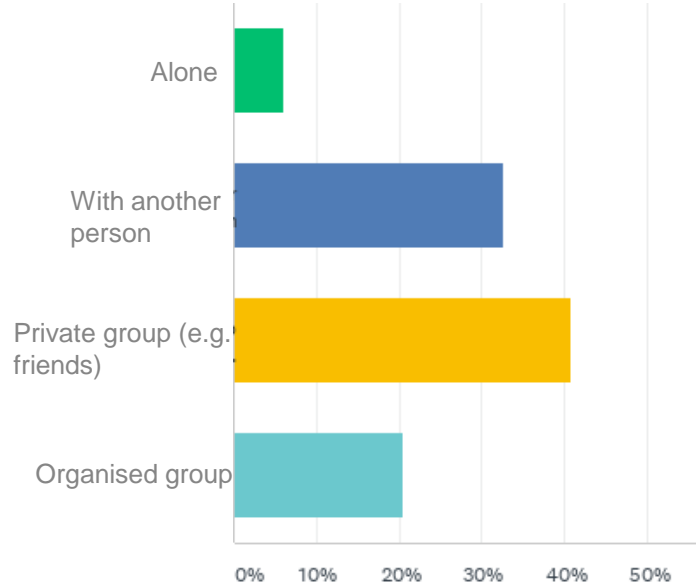
Q5: Gender

Answered: 49 Skipped: 2



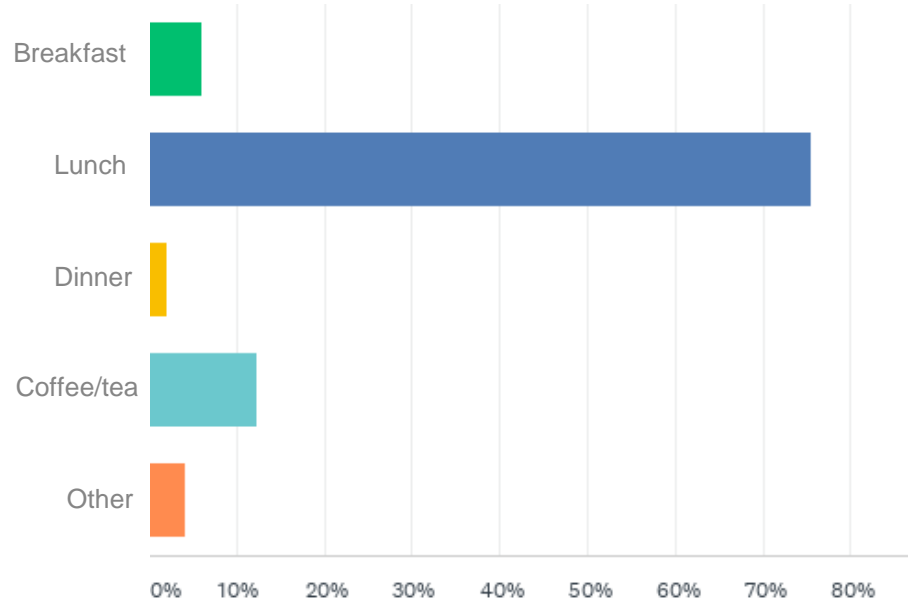
Q6: Dining status

Answered: 49 Skipped: 2



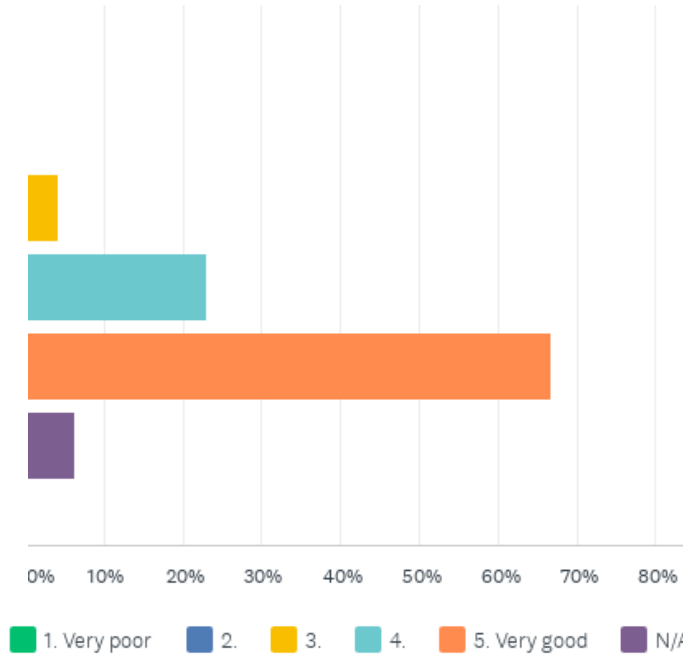
Q7: What did you have at the dining venue?

Answered: 49 Skipped: 2



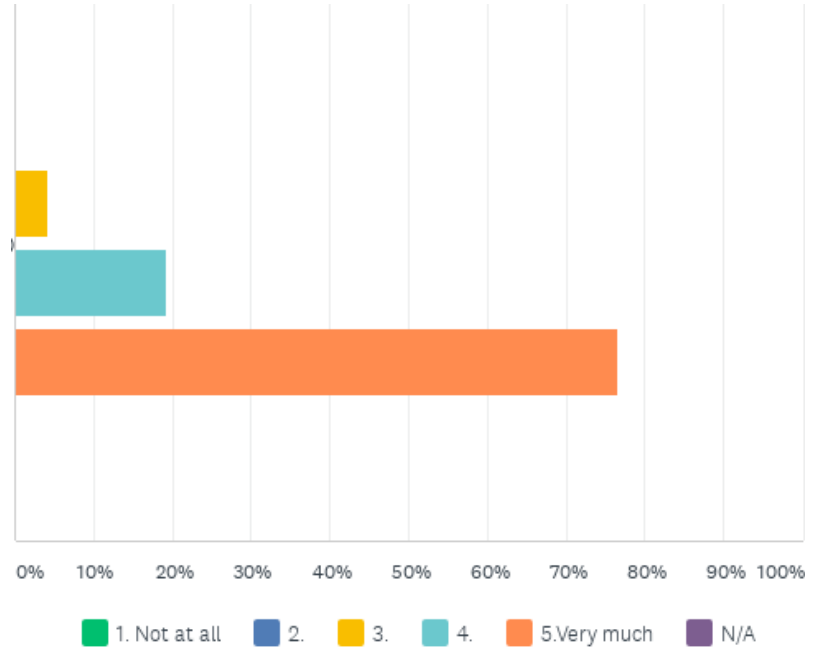
Q8: How was the quality of the food?

Answered: 48 Skipped: 3



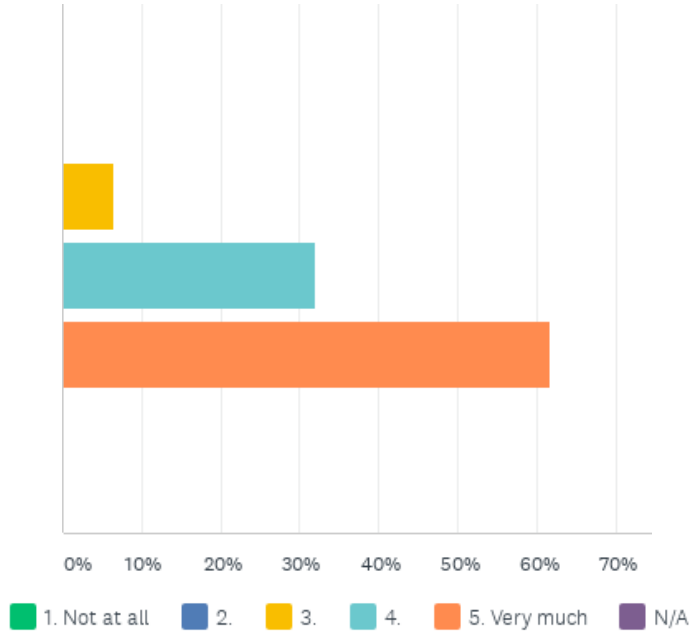
Q9: How appropriate were the food choices for people of all ages?

Answered: 47 Skipped: 4



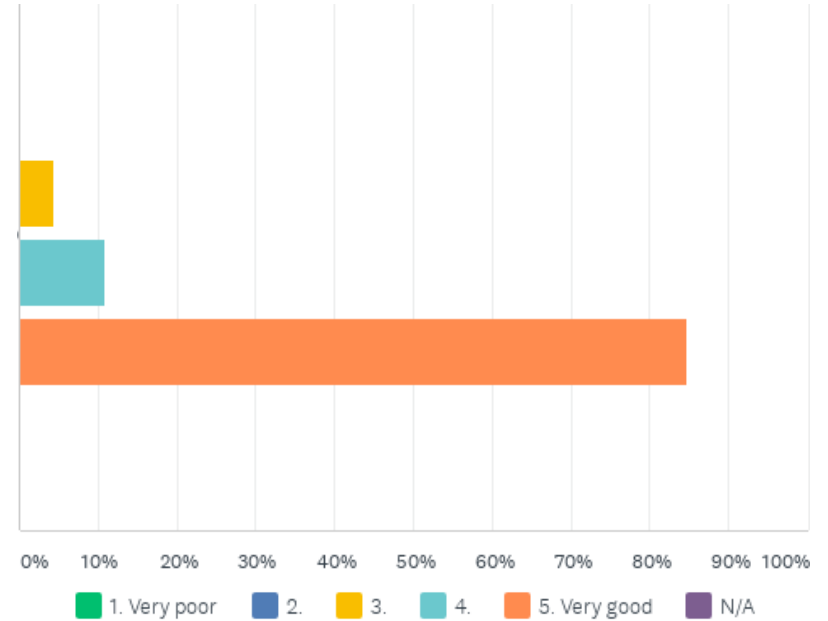
Q10: How affordable were the options on the menu?

Answered: 47 Skipped: 4



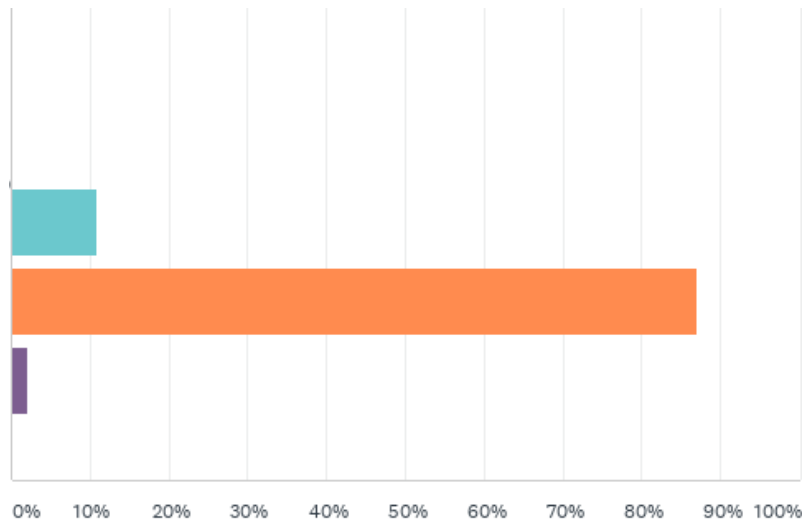
Q12: How would you rate the staff attitude towards older customers?

Answered: 46 Skipped: 5



Q13: Did the staff make you feel welcome?

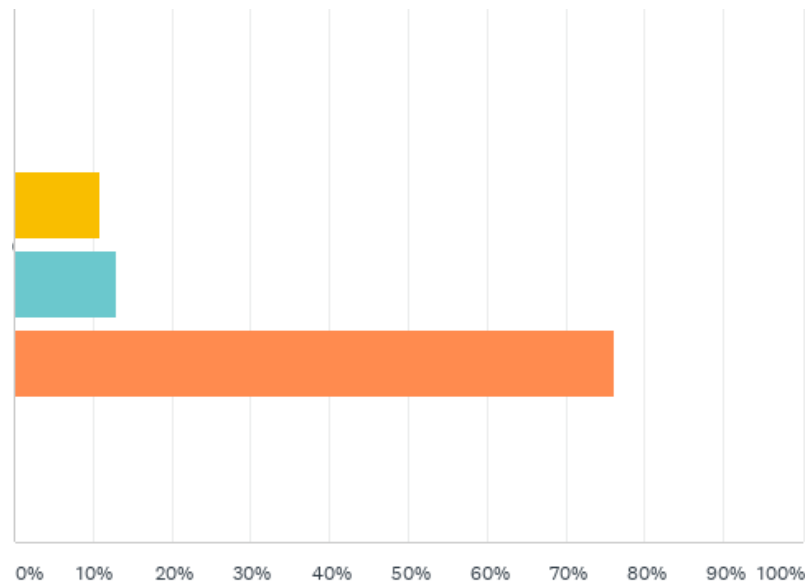
Answered: 46 Skipped: 5



1. Not at all 2. 3. 4. 5. Yes, absolutely N/A

Q14: How clean/neat/appropriately dressed was the staff?

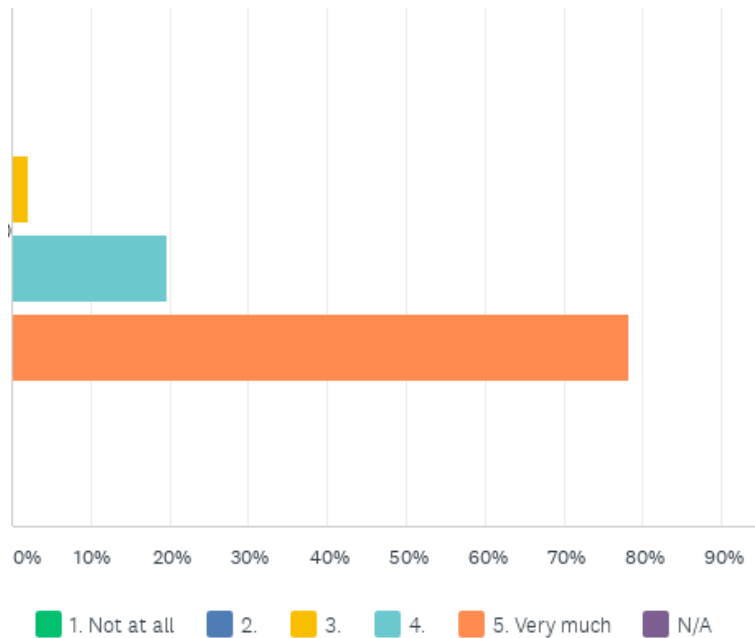
Answered: 46 Skipped: 5



1. Not at all 2. 3. 4. 5. Very much N/A

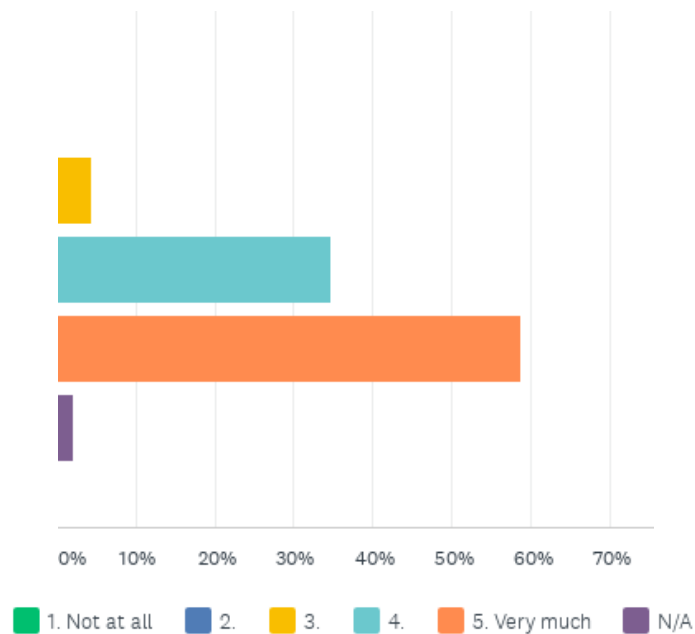
Q15: How well-trained, competent and experienced did the staff seem?

Answered: 46 Skipped: 5



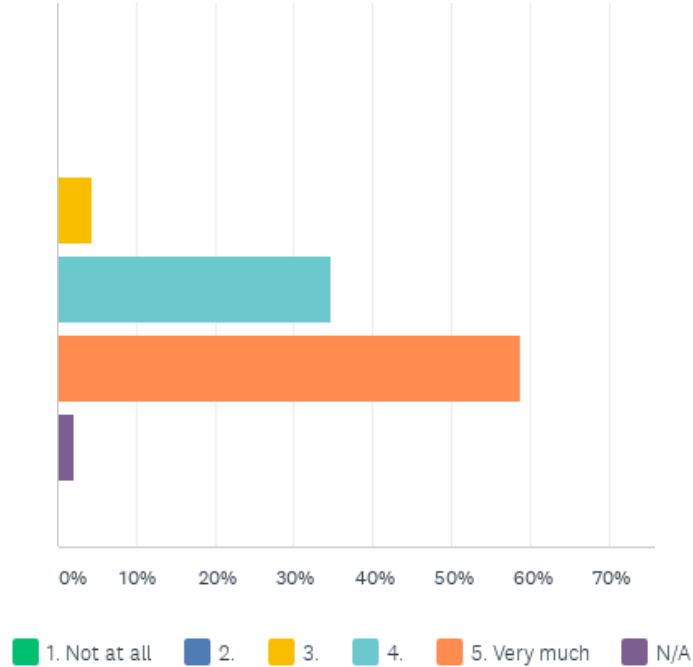
Q16: How much were your individual food needs and preferences met (e.g., food and dietary choices, portion sizes)?

Answered: 46 Skipped: 5



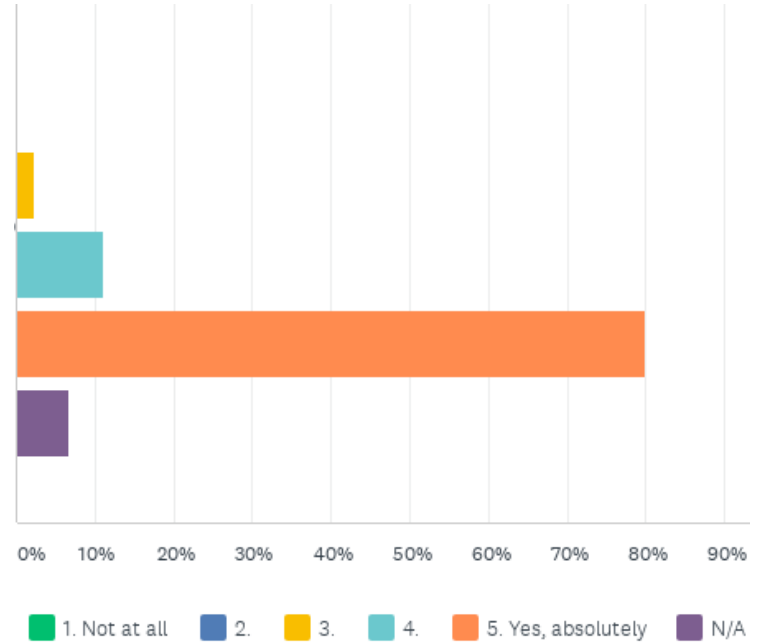
Q17: Did the staff speak clearly and in a friendly manner?

Answered: 46 Skipped: 5



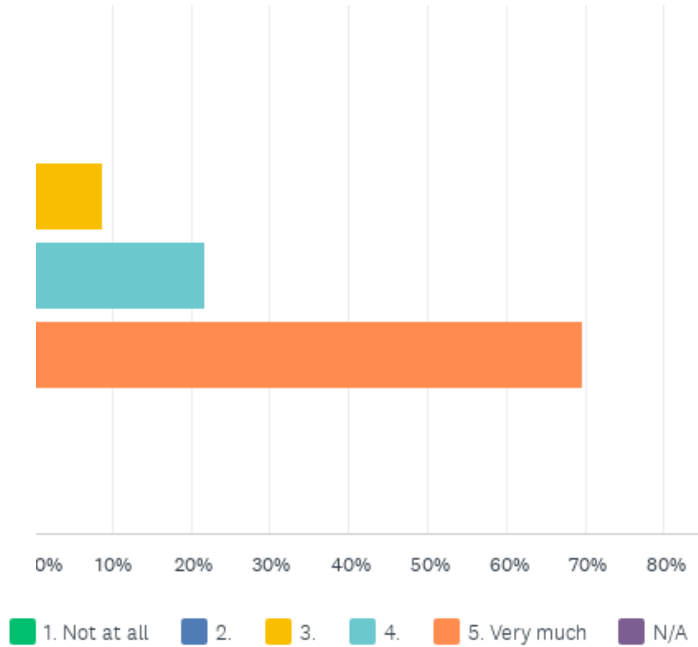
Q18: Did the staff seem respectful of diversity (e.g., ethnicity, language, religion, gender, sexuality)?

Answered: 45 Skipped: 6



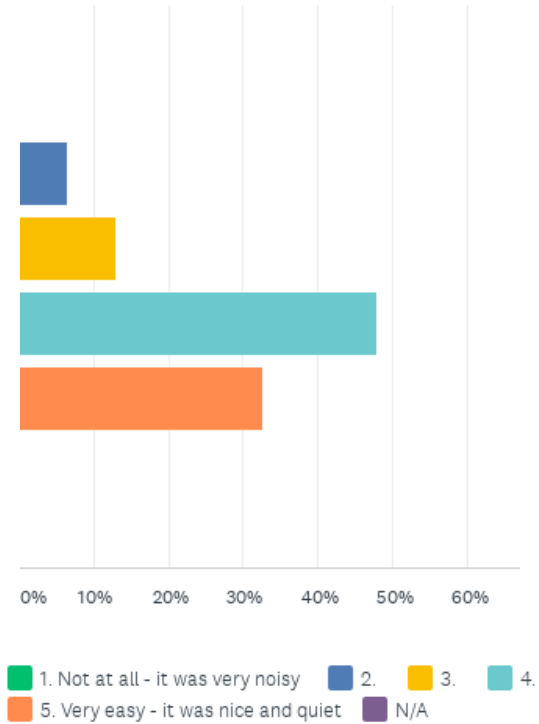
Q19: How clean and comfortable was the dining area?

Answered: 46 Skipped: 5



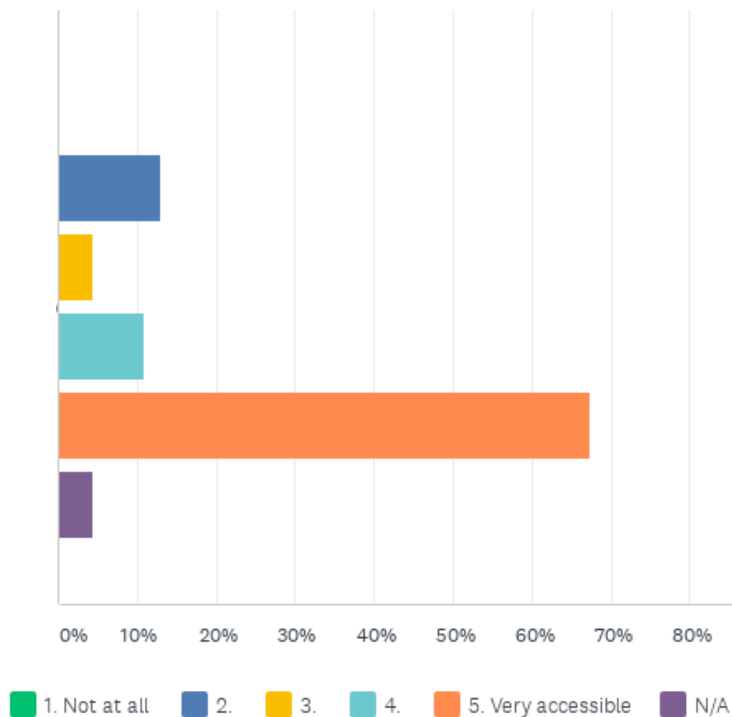
Q20: How easy was it to have a comfortable conversation due to noise?

Answered: 46 Skipped: 5



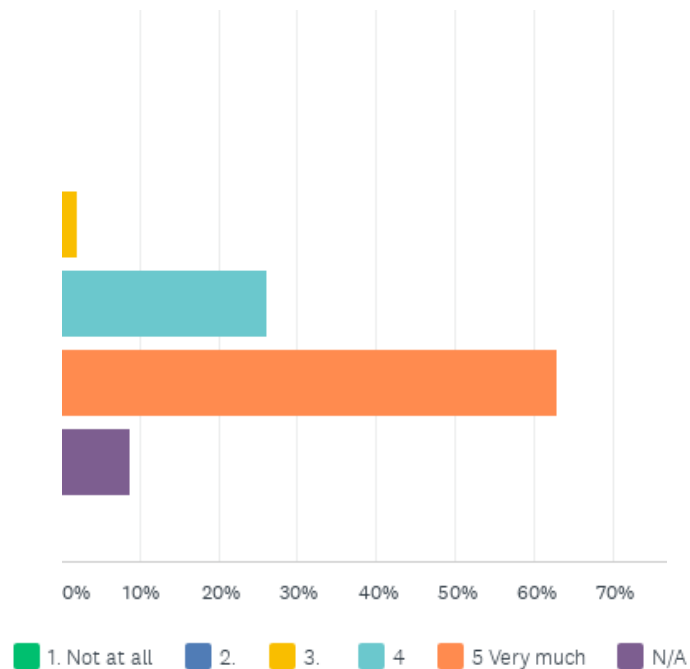
Q21: How accessible were the bathroom and other amenities?

Answered: 46 Skipped: 5



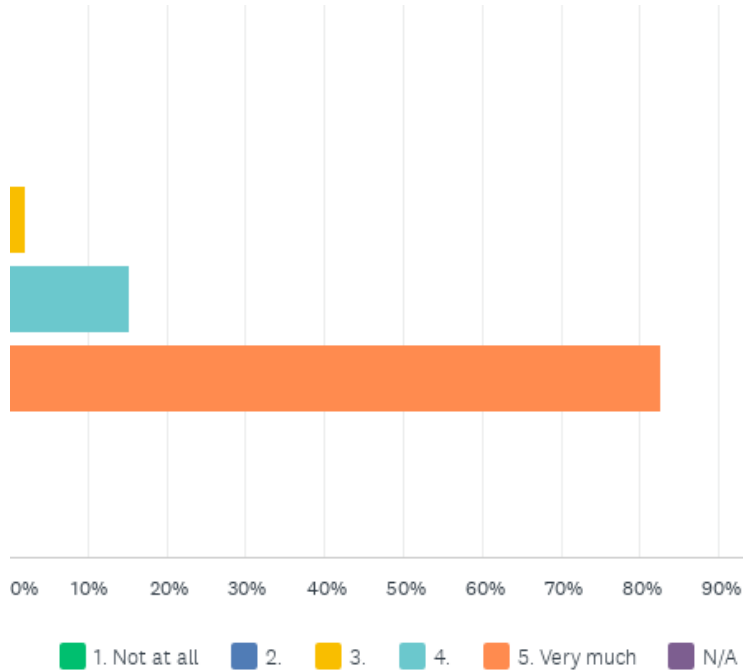
Q22: How much do you feel your feedback was welcomed?

Answered: 46 Skipped: 5



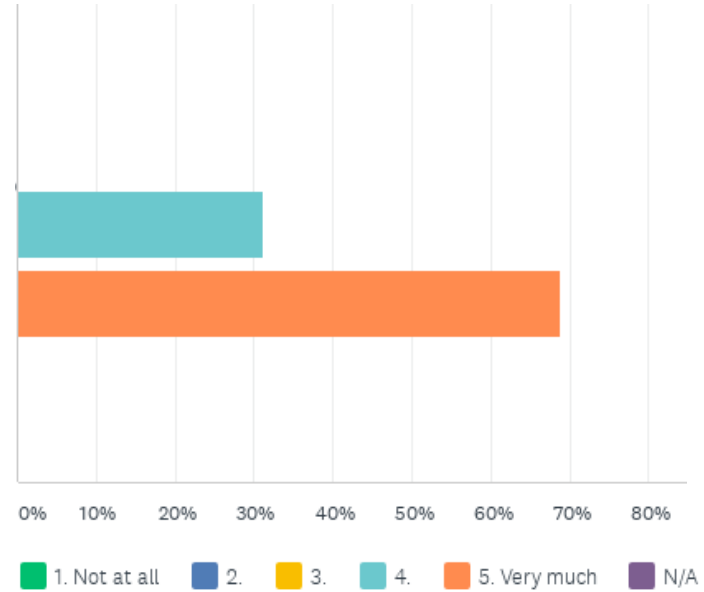
Q23: How likely are you to dine at this establishment again?

Answered: 46 Skipped: 5



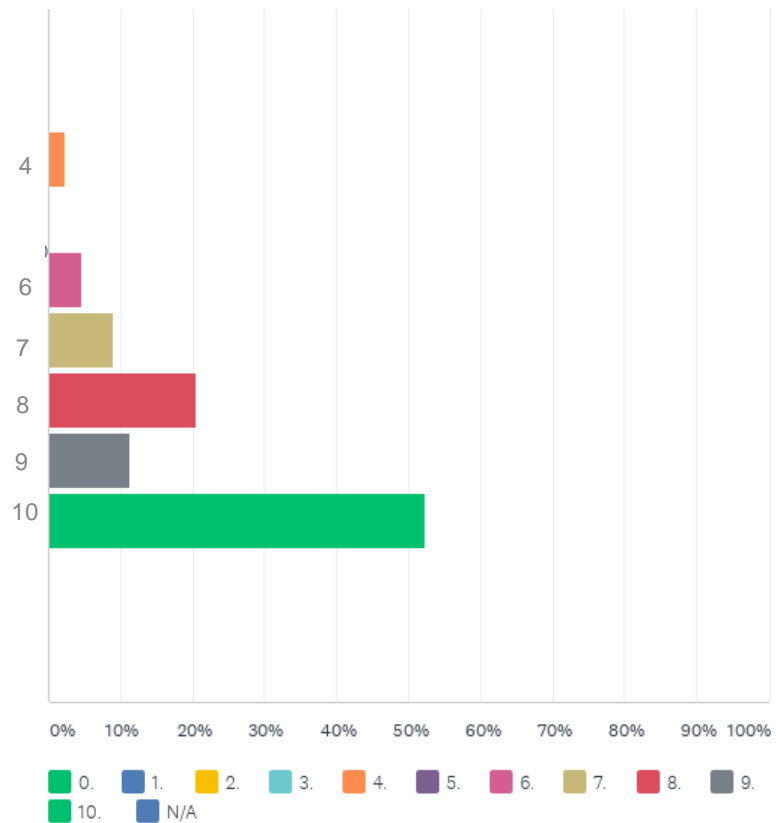
Q24: How satisfied are you with this establishment overall?

Answered: 45 Skipped: 6



Q27: Overall, how likely are you to recommend this establishment to someone else? (NPS - 0 is 'NOT AT ALL LIKELY' and 10 is 'ABSOLUTELY LIKELY')

Answered: 44 Skipped: 7

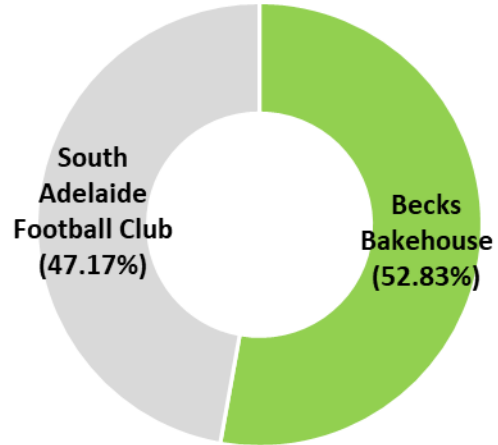


Dining Co Project Evaluation Social Connectedness Survey

Monday, May 24, 2021

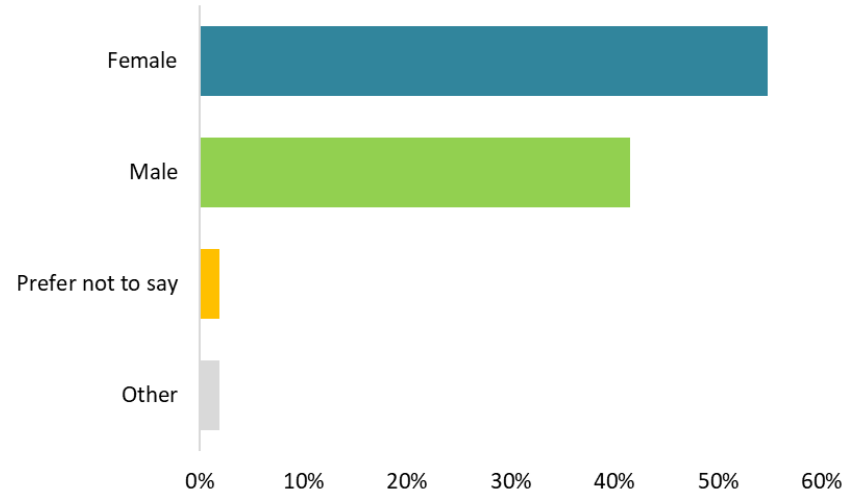
Q3: What venue do your responses refer to?

Answered: 53 Skipped: 1



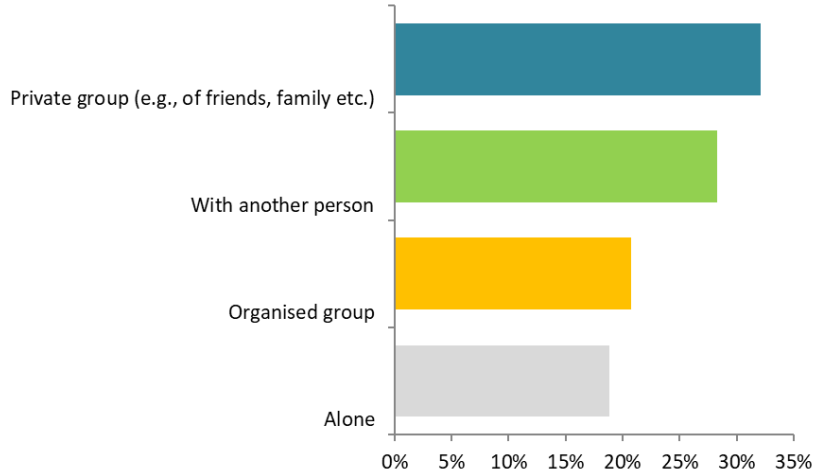
Q5: Gender

Answered: 53 Skipped: 1



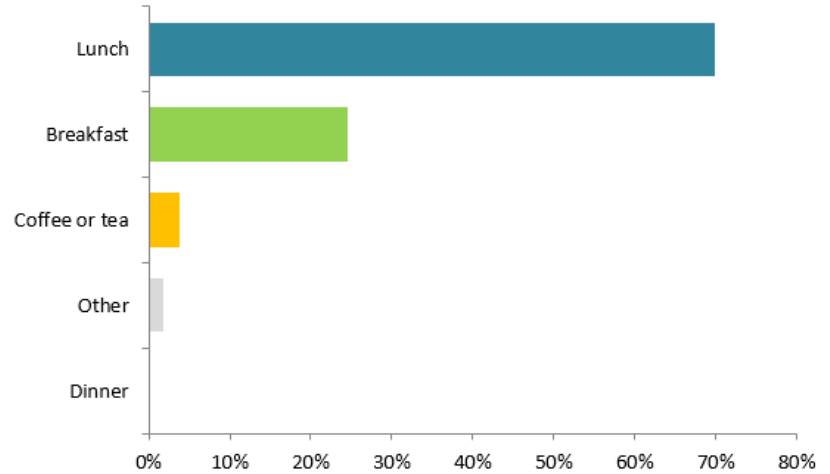
Q6: Dining status

Answered: 53 Skipped: 1



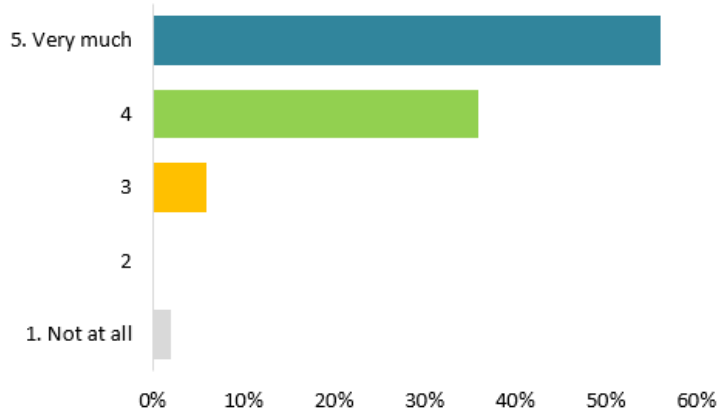
Q7: What did you have at the dining venue?

Answered: 49 Skipped: 2



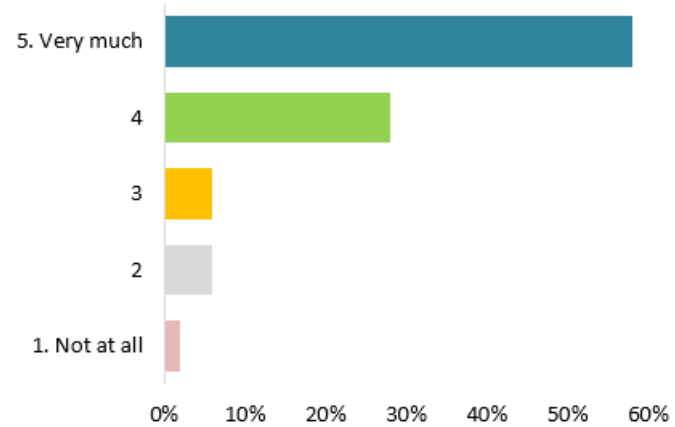
Q8: How satisfied are you with this establishment overall?

Answered: 50 Skipped: 4



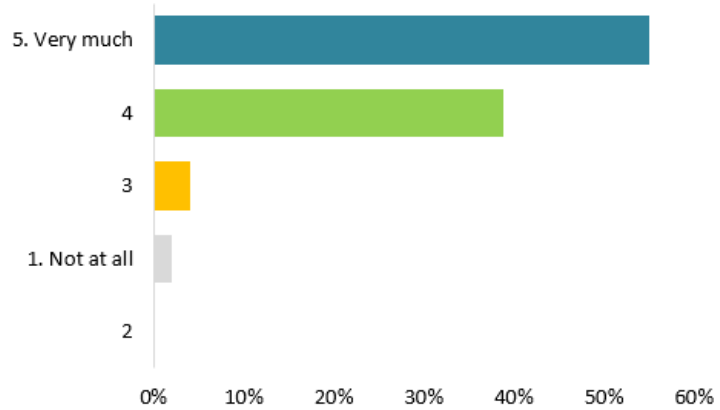
Q9: How likely are you to dine at this establishment again?

Answered: 50 Skipped: 4



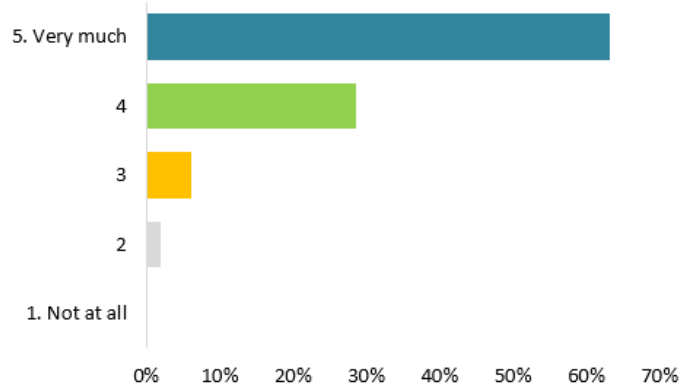
Q10: How age-friendly do you find this establishment overall?

Answered: 49 Skipped: 5



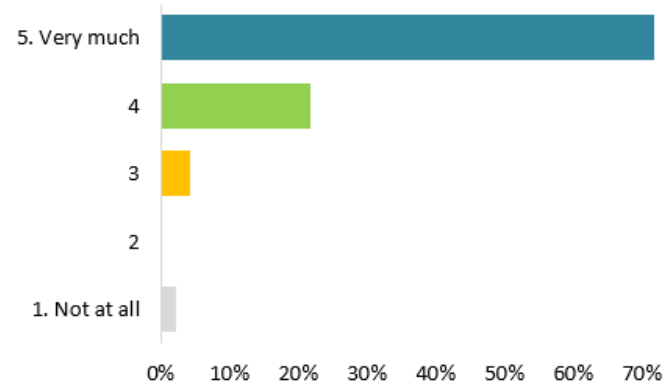
Q11: Do you think that going to an age-friendly dining venue can help people maintain/develop social relationships?

Answered: 50 Skipped: 4



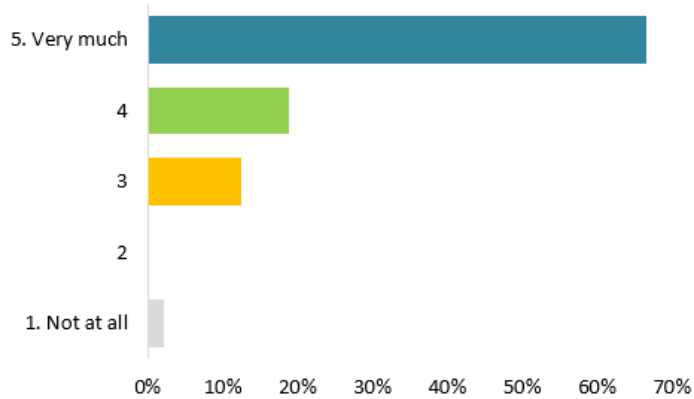
Q12: Do you think that going to an age-friendly dining venue can help *you* maintain/develop social relationships?

Answered: 46 Skipped: 5



Q13: Do you think that going to an age-friendly dining venue can help people feel connected to the community?

Answered: 49 Skipped: 5



Q14: Do you think that going to an age-friendly dining venue can help *you* feel connected with the community?

Answered: 46 Skipped: 8

