

WELLNESS & THE INTERIOR ENVIRONMENT

EFFECTS OF DESIGN IN OLDER ADULT CARE SETTINGS

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine how the interior design of an older adult care setting affects residents' socialization habits, safety, and perception of spaces. Using an online survey for participants over eighteen years of age, we asked different questions regarding existing amenities available within older adult care facilities, preferred amenities, socialization habits, safety concerns, and respondents' perception of spaces with different design characteristics. Results of the survey show that different factors within the interior environment, such as differing amenities, the presence of vegetation or artwork, and both visible and invisible safety alert systems and equipment, all have a large impact on how residents and non-residents perceive these types of spaces and interact with their environment and each other.

RESULTS

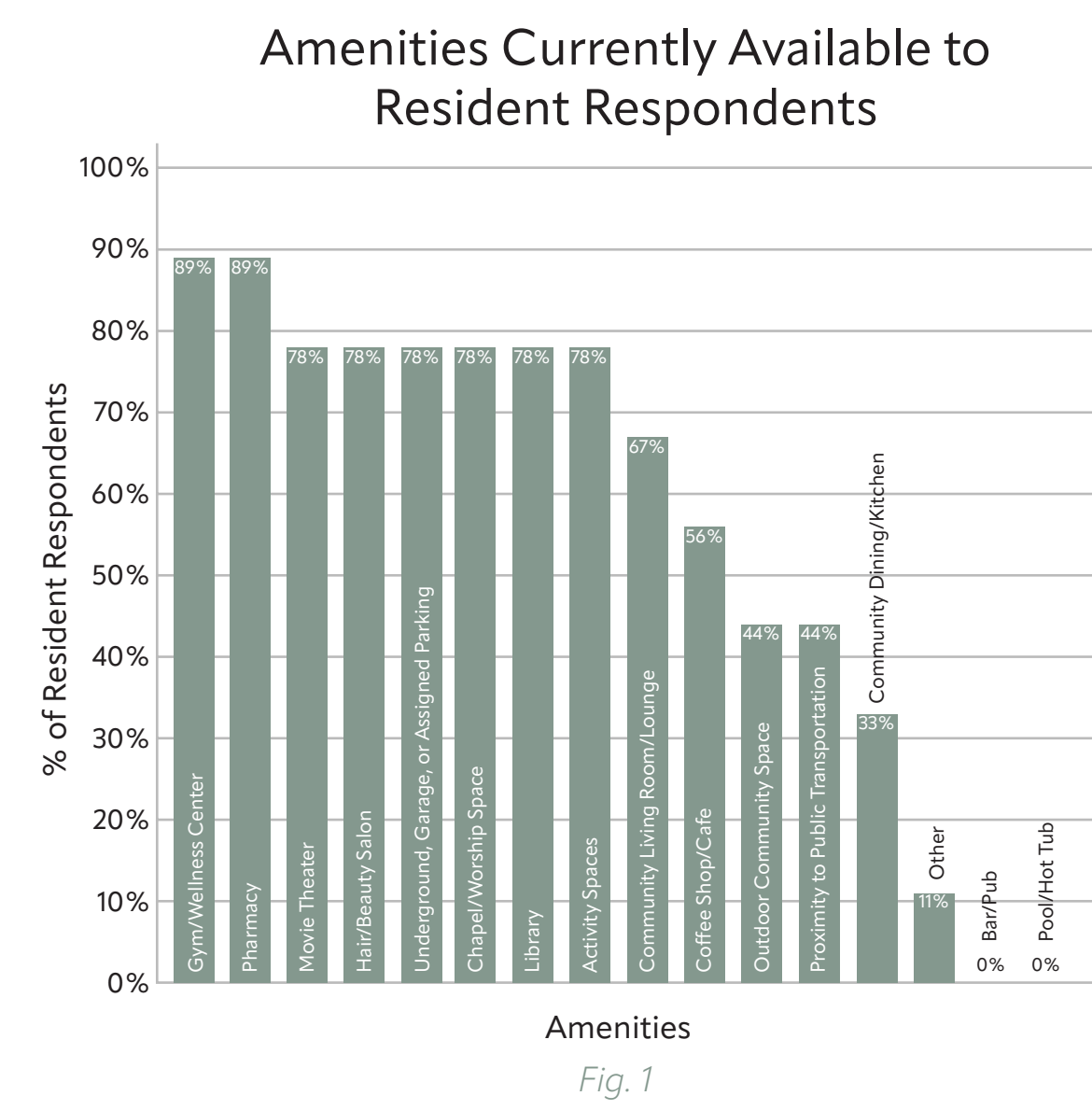


Fig. 1

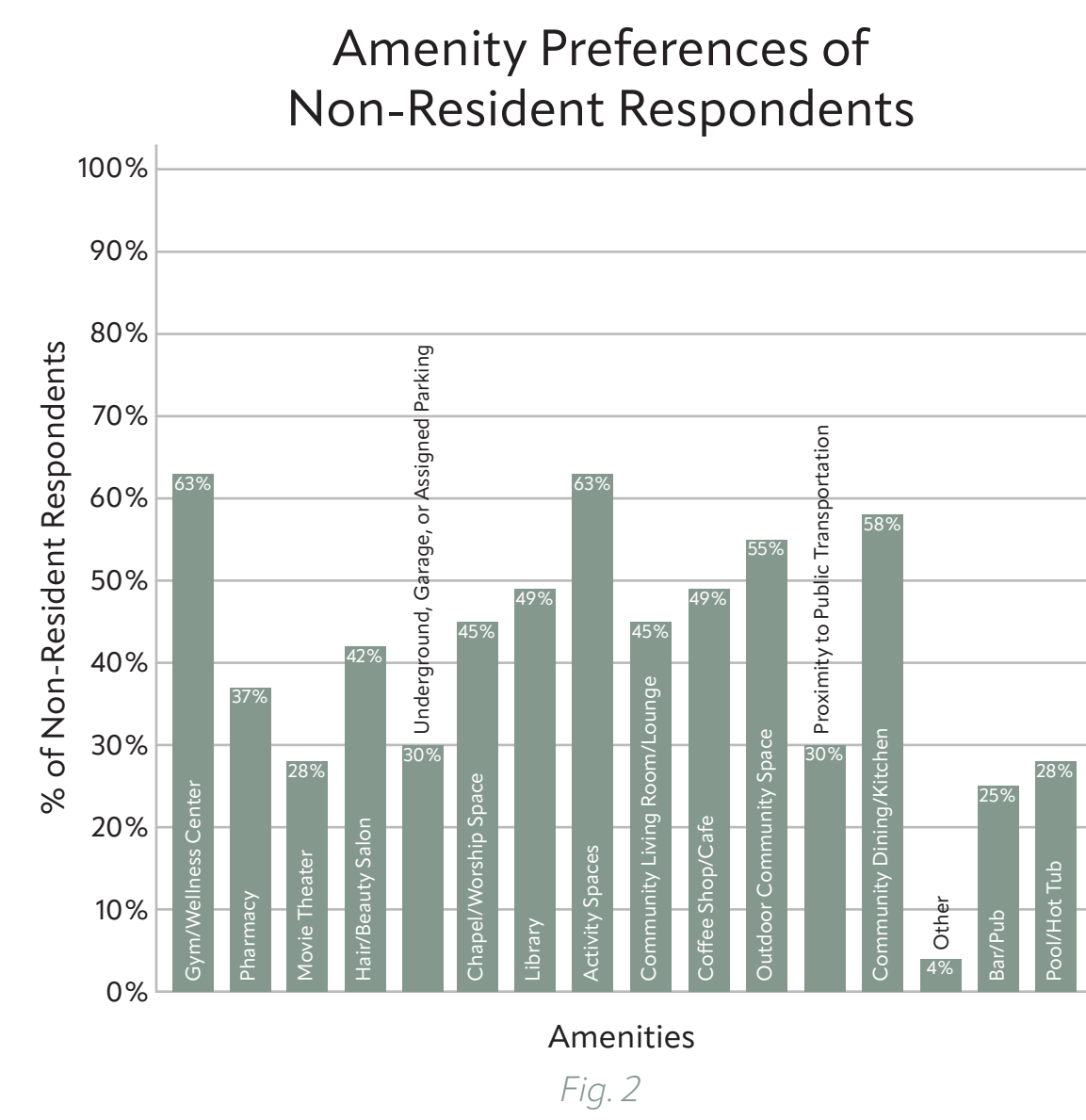


Fig. 2

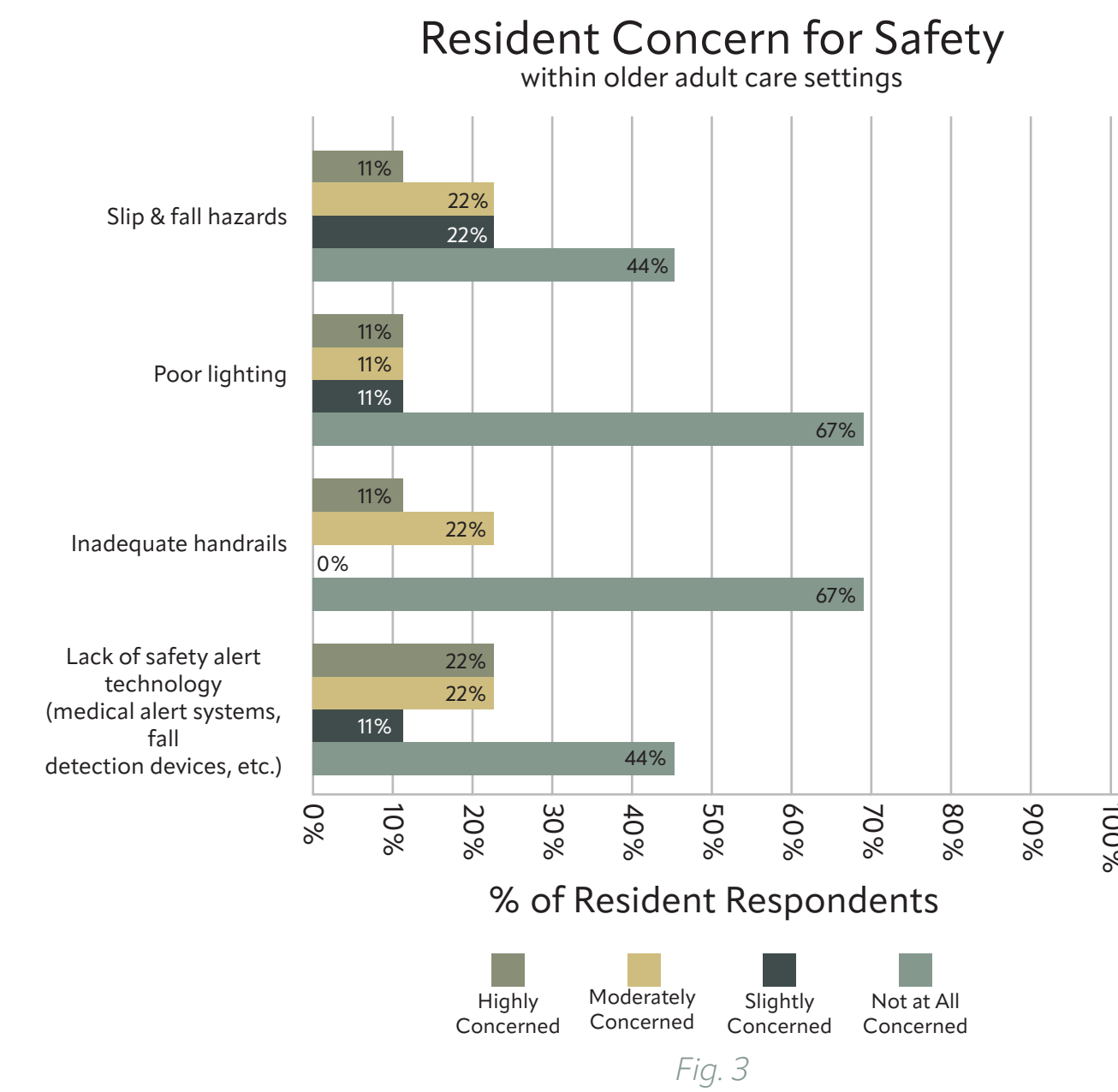


Fig. 3

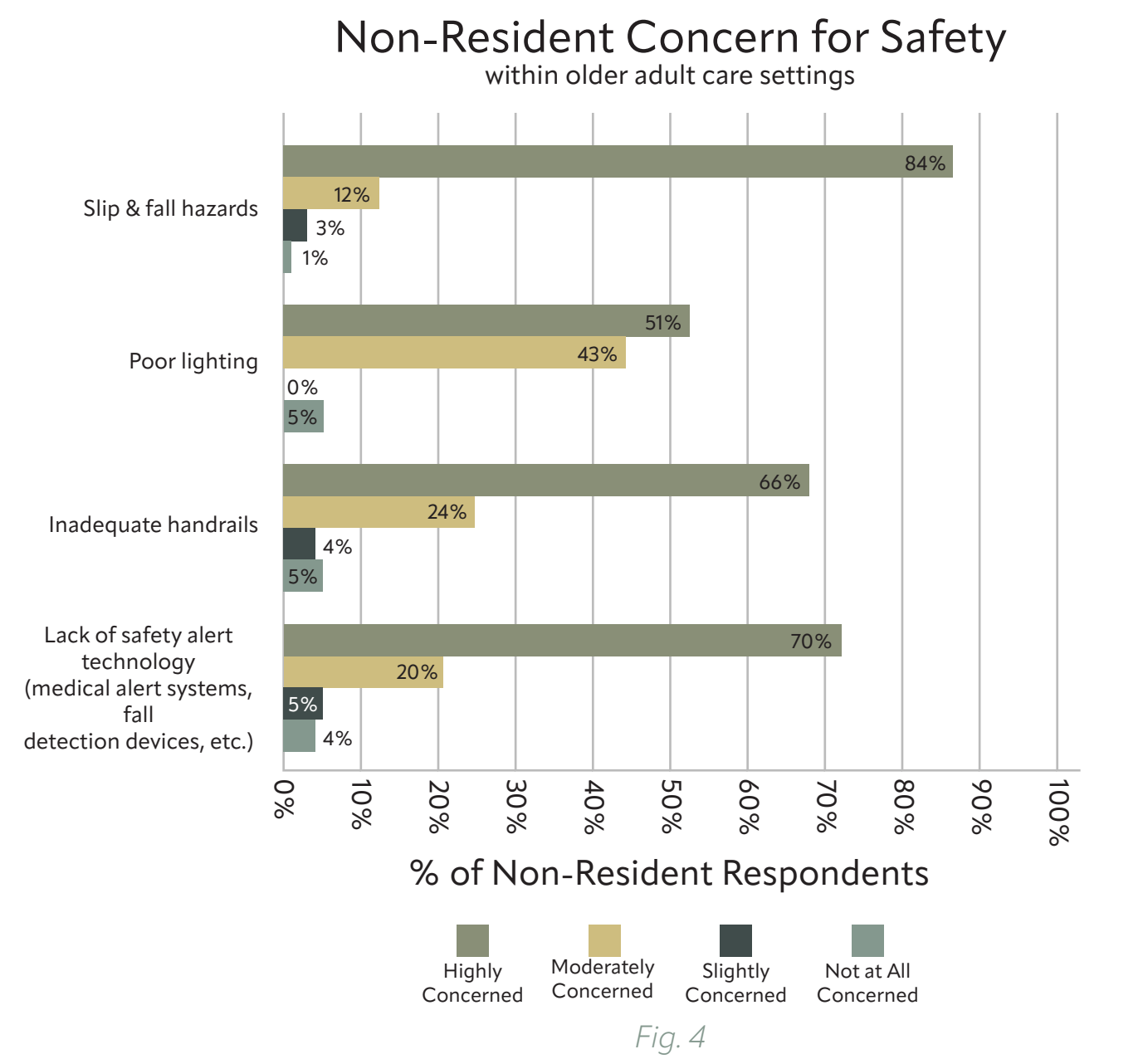


Fig. 4

Impact of Design on Perception for Residents within older adult care settings

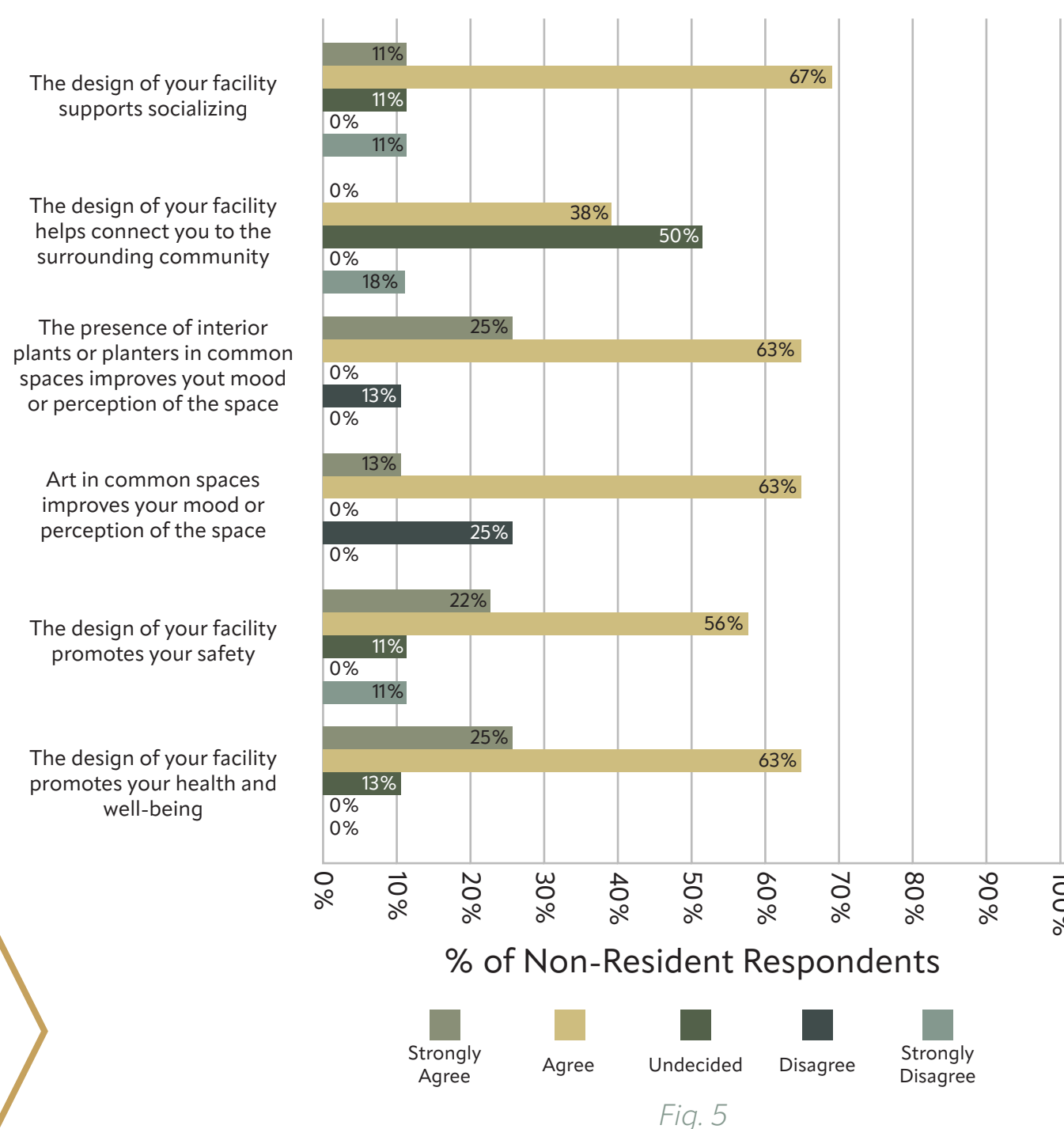


Fig. 5

Impact of Design on Perception for Non-Residents within older adult care settings

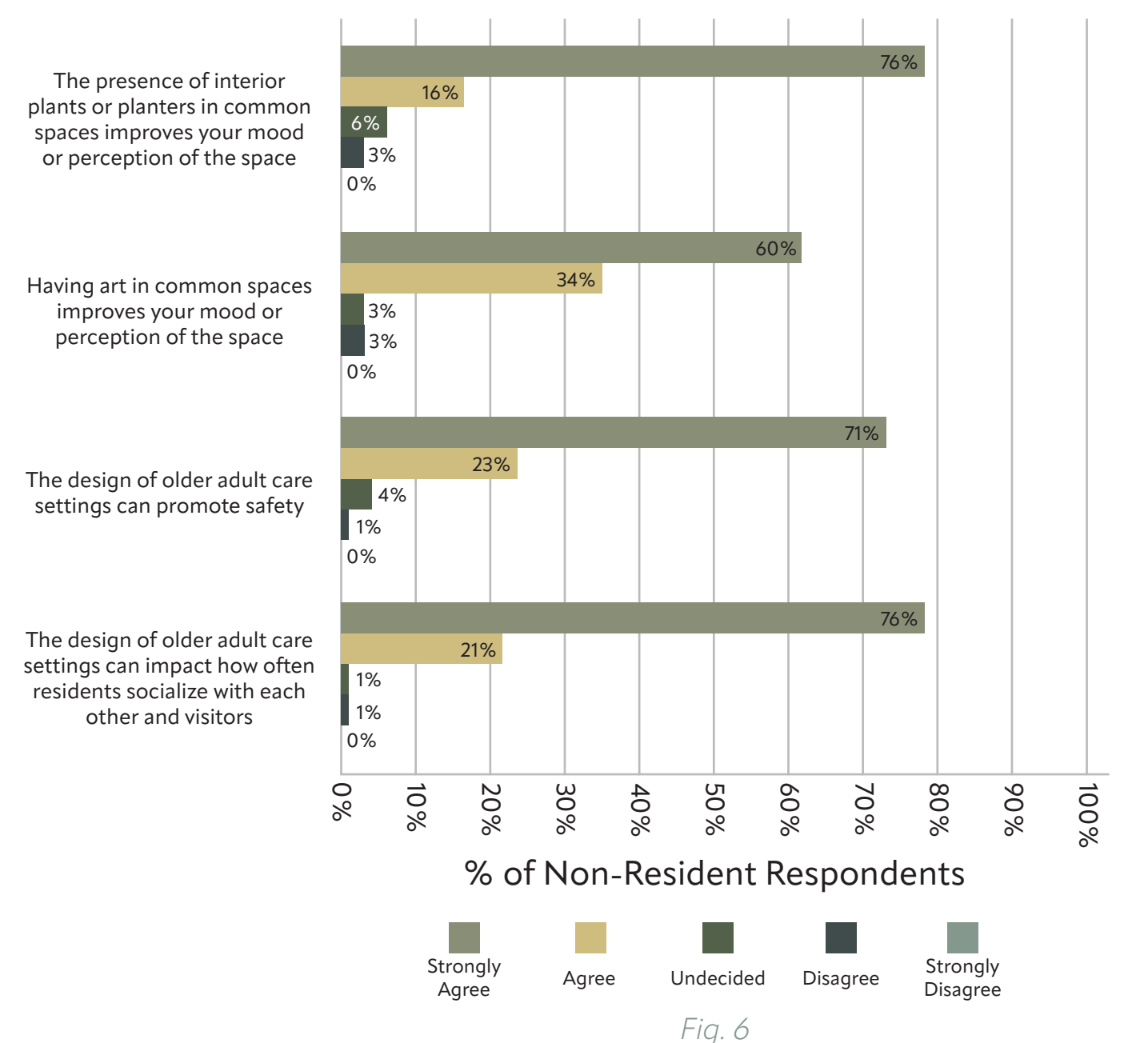


Fig. 6

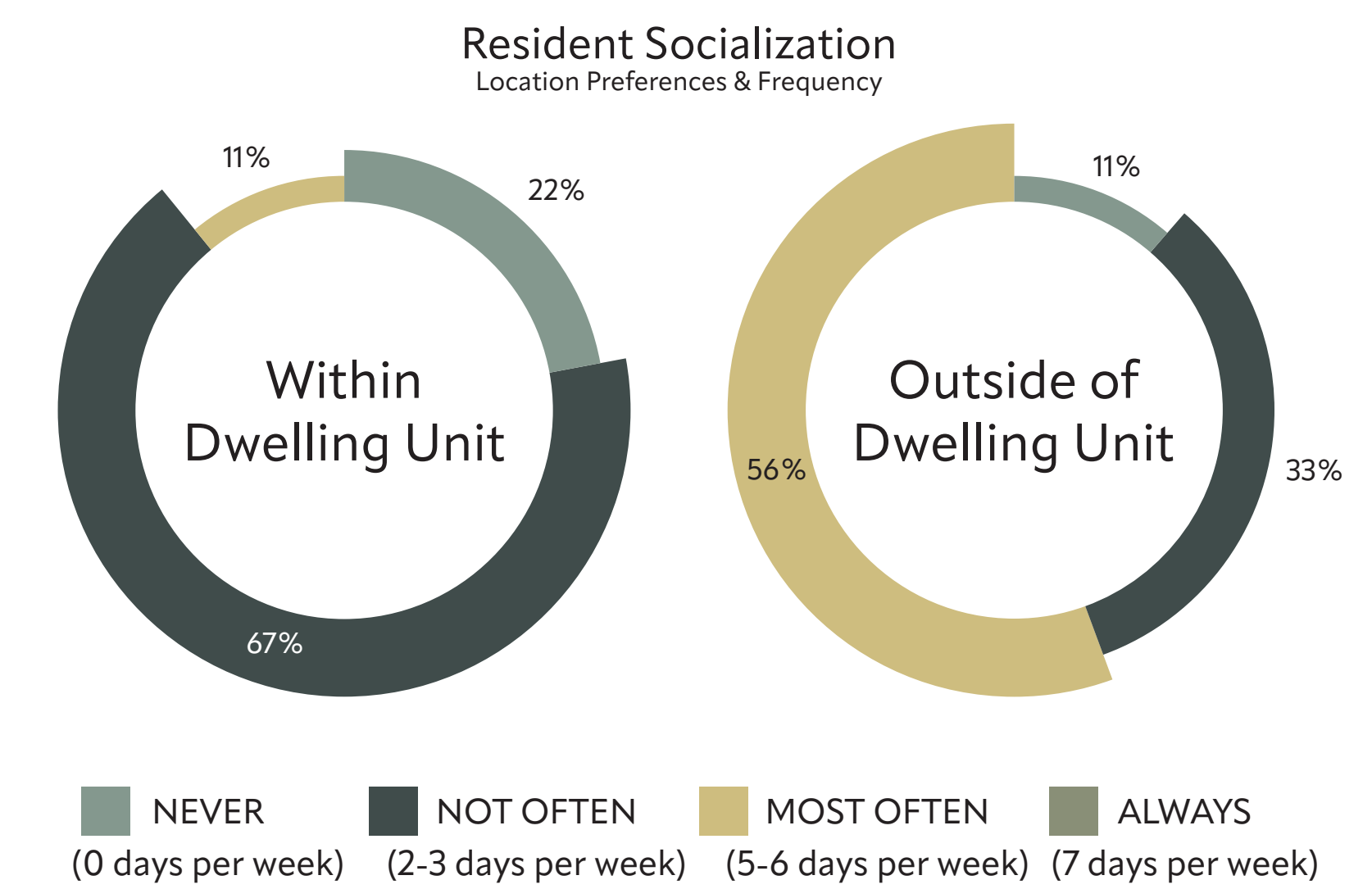


Fig. 7

REVIEW OF LIT

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

- "A key concept of universal design is to provide accessibility without stigmatization, by integrating accessibility features such that they benefit all users while going essentially unnoticed" (Carr et al., 2013 p. 2).
- "The elderly dealing with changed capacity, reduced ability and increased needs require the same accommodations and compensations in late life that they found in earlier years. Homes must provide solutions that address these distinctions in capacity, ability and need for daily living" (Demirbilek, & Demirkan, 2004, p. 361).

DIVERSITY & SOCIAL INCLUSION

- "Conducive social realms within the elderly facilities are vital to increase the quality of their wellbeing" (Mohammad et al., 2016, p. 114).
- "Needed are community social and recreational centres that are accessible to the elderlies, have suitable facilities, can be frequented on a daily or weekly basis, give opportunities for meeting and interactions with more people. A social and recreational centre should offer various activities for the visitors including the elderly groups" (Mohammad et al., 2016, p. 117).

ENVIRONMENT

- "For the great majority of human existence, human biology has been embedded in the natural environment" (Frumkin, 2001, p. 235).
- "Horticultural therapy (HT) and exposure to gardens has been shown to have positive benefits for the elderly. Indoor gardening has been reported to be effective for improving sleep, agitation, and cognition in dementia patients" (Detweiler et al., 2012, p. 101).

AMENITIES & RESOURCES

Of amenities currently accessible to resident respondents, the most common include a pharmacy (89%) and a gym/wellness center (89%). On the other hand, non-residents responded that an activity space (63%) and gym/wellness center (63%) were their top preferred amenities for themselves or a loved one in an older adult care setting.

SOCIALIZATION

Resident respondents most often preferred to socialize outside of their dwelling or apartment (56%), and that these residents were much more likely to meet up and socialize in spaces such as a bar/pub (29%), coffee shop/café (22%), or activity space (22%). Of these three spaces, residents are most likely to have access to an activity space (78%) or a coffee shop/café (56%).

SAFETY

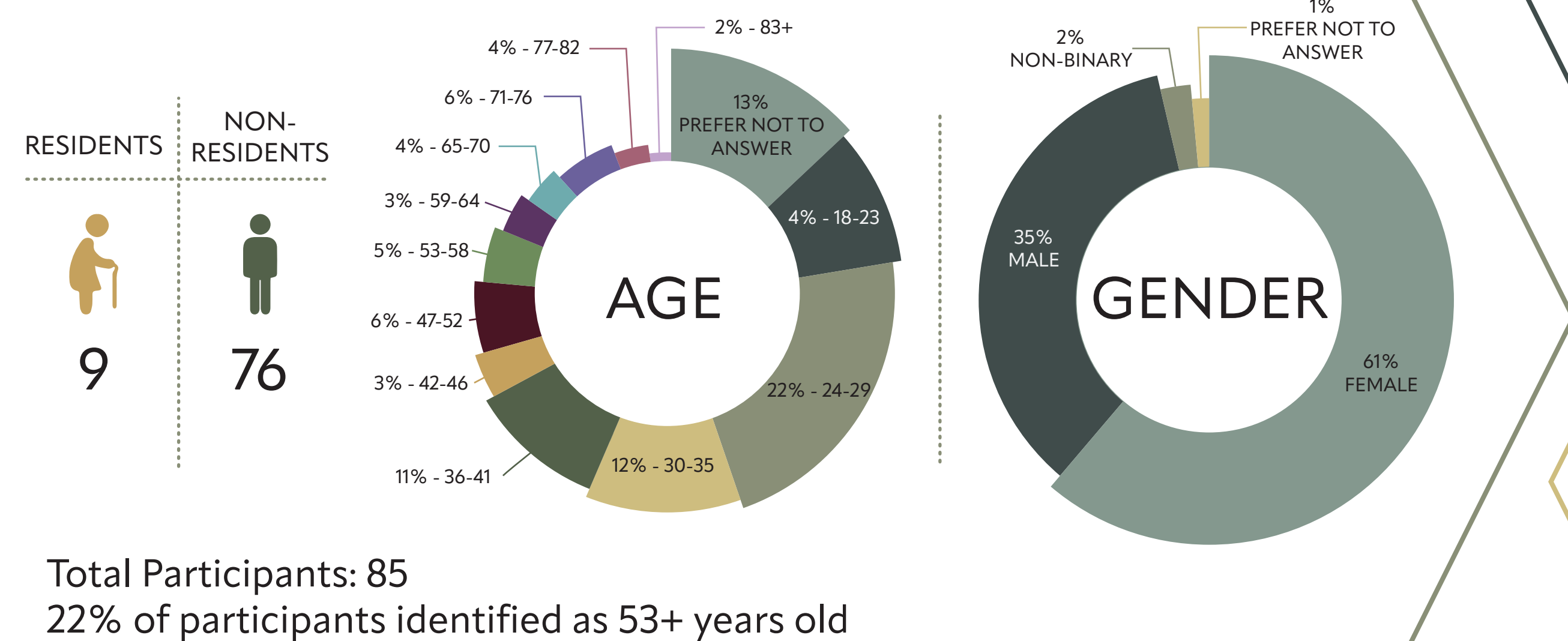
Surprisingly, non-residents showed a much higher level of concern for all four safety risk categories (Slip & fall hazards, 84%; Poor lighting, 51%; Inadequate handrails, 66%; Safety alert technology, 70%), while residents were primarily concerned about a general lack of safety alert technology (22%).

DISCUSSION

After reviewing the data, we can consider how the findings would affect the interior design of an older adult care facility. The results of our survey, accompanied by the literature reviewed, indicate that **incorporating nature in the built environment**, both directly and indirectly, can have positive impacts on resident health and perceptions of the space. In addition, incorporating both visible and invisible **safety alert systems will improve residents sense of safety and freedom, allowing residents to be independent**. Other than encouraging health and independence, the **design should also include various amenities that foster residents' preferred modes of socialization**, whether they be through structured activities or casual interaction, in both public and private settings.

METHODS

The methodology of this research included an online survey that was distributed to staff and residents of older adult care facilities within the Fargo area as well as the general public through social media. The survey included questions with a Likert scale, fill-in-the-blank, rank order, and choose-all-that-apply options for a total of 16 questions for participants to complete. The survey was open for a total of 14 days.



Total Participants: 85
 22% of participants identified as 53+ years old

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