

**2015 Survey on Brain
Health: A Survey
Among Hispanic/Latino
Adults Age 40+**

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The bottom of the page features a decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping, wavy lines in white and red, creating a sense of movement and depth against the solid red background.



2015 Survey on Brain Health: A Survey Among Hispanic/Latino Adults Age 40+

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Background and Methodology

AARP conducted a study among adults age 40+ to understand how important brain health is to the 40+ population as well as what activities they were currently doing to maintain or improve their brain health. This study also sought to learn ways in which AARP and its partners can engage with the public in promoting brain health and provide information and education on topics that are most relevant to them.

To that end, a nationally representative survey of 1,563 adults age 40+ was conducted online from September 18-28, 2015 using GFK's KnowledgePanel®. Additional interviews were conducted to reach 542 Hispanic/Latino adults, 518 African American/Black adults, and 362 Asian adults. This report presents the results for 542 Hispanic/Latino 40+ adults. A Spanish language survey was available for Hispanic/Latino respondents who chose to complete the survey in their native language. A report of the results for the general population, African-Americans, and Asians can be found in separate documents. The data is weighted to reflect Current Population Survey and American Community Survey benchmarks. The margin of error for the Hispanic/Latino sample is +/- 4.2%.

How Important Is Brain Health?

Virtually all adults across all demographic groups believe it is important to maintain or improve brain health. Nearly nine in ten Hispanic/Latino adults believe it is *very* important. Additionally, over seven in ten Hispanic/Latino adults are concerned about their own brain health declining in the future. While all groups agree maintaining brain health is very important, women tend to show more concern about decline than men.

Self-perceptions of brain health are high both for Hispanic/Latino adults and for the general population. In fact, like the general population, Hispanic/Latino adults in this study rated their brain health higher than their overall health (38% rate their overall health as *excellent* or *very good*; 60% rate their brain health as *excellent* or *very good*). Individuals with more education and income tend to have higher perceptions of their brain health.

Like the general population, most Hispanic/Latino adults have not noted any significant changes in their mental functioning; however, a sizeable portion has already noticed some level of decline. For example, four in ten (38%) of Hispanic/Latino adults age 40+ and half of Hispanic/Latino seniors (age 65+) reported their ability to remember things has decreased over the last five years. The average age in which Hispanic/Latino respondents noticed this decline was 49 years old which is six years younger than the general population average age of 55 years old.

When it comes to the ability to focus or pay attention, two and a half times as many Hispanic/Latino adults report a decrease vs. an increase in this ability (26% decrease vs. 10% increase).

Conversely, more than one-third of 40+ Hispanic/Latino adults reported that their level of wisdom and knowledge has increased over the last five years. In addition, more Hispanic/Latino adults have noticed an increase vs. a decrease in the ability to solve problems (19% increase vs. 11% decrease) or make decisions (18% increase vs. 12% decrease). These trends parallel the trends seen in the general population.

Comparing demographic groups, younger Hispanic/Latino adults (age 40-49) are more likely than seniors to report an increase in abilities related to problem-solving, decision-making abilities, and wisdom/knowledge.

Engagement in Brain Healthy Activities

A wide variety of activities are seen as important to brain health by Hispanic/Latino 40+ adults. Sleep, diet, exercise, and stress management are perceived as *very important* by seven in ten or more. Socializing, learning new things, reading, and pursuing a life purpose are believed to be *very important* by six in ten or more (see Table 1). Compared to the general population, Hispanic/Latino adults believe more of the activities are *very important* to brain health. Unlike the general population, Hispanic/Latino adults most commonly perceive that sleep is the most important activity for brain health. For the general population, however, the most commonly reported activity is challenging the brain with games, puzzles or other activities. Additionally, the intensity of importance is higher among Hispanic/Latino and African American adults.

Table 1
Importance of Various Activities

	% Very important	% Somewhat important	% Not very important	% Not at all important
Challenging the mind with games, puzzles, or other activities	54	38	6	2
Exercising your body	71	26	2	1
Taking vitamins or supplements	43	42	12	2
Eating a healthy diet	72	24	3	1
Getting enough sleep	79	20	1	*
Managing stress effectively	69	26	3	1
Volunteering or helping others	35	44	17	3
Socializing with friends or family	60	33	5	1
Watching the news	26	36	29	8
Watching educational programs	37	50	10	2
Taking educational classes	37	44	17	2
Trying new activities	44	43	9	3
Learning new things	63	30	5	2
Pursuing hobbies	43	45	10	2
Reading	66	29	4	*
Pursuing a purpose in life	62	31	5	1
Playing a musical instrument or singing	23	40	28	8
Engaging in mindful activities such as meditation, yoga, or prayer	49	35	12	2
Play online games designed for brain training	32	39	21	6

Just over three-quarters of Hispanic/Latino 40+ adults say they currently engage in activities they think are good for their brain health. This is a smaller percentage than the general population, African Americans, and Asians but it still represents a large majority. For the general population, women and older adults are more likely to indicate they engage in brain healthy activities but this trend is not evident for Hispanic/Latino adults. Among those who do not engage in any brain healthy activity, the most common reason is *“I don’t have enough time”*.

When asked about a list of activities they may or may not currently engage in, a majority of Hispanic/Latino adults say they socialize with their friends/family, read, ensure they get enough sleep, eat a healthy diet, and exercise (see Table 2).

When looking specifically at activities engaged in for brain health, the most commonly reported activities for Hispanic/Latino adults are getting enough sleep, exercise, reading, and eating a healthy diet. While 40 percent of the general population reported that they engage in

games/puzzles specifically for brain health, which was the most commonly reported brain-healthy activity for the general population, only 30 percent of Hispanic/Latino adults reported they engage in games/puzzles specifically for brain health.

Table 2
Activity Engagement

	% engage in activity	% engage in activity because they think it's good for their brain
Challenging the mind with games, puzzles, or other activities	40	30
Exercising your body	58	38
Taking vitamins or supplements	47	26
Eating a healthy diet	54	34
Getting enough sleep	57	40
Managing stress effectively	36	20
Volunteering or helping others	19	8
Socializing with friends or family	57	22
Watching the news	44	18
Watching educational programs	33	17
Taking educational classes	9	4
Trying new activities	24	10
Learning new things	39	21
Pursuing hobbies	25	10
Reading	57	36
Pursuing a purpose in life	32	14
Playing a musical instrument or singing	11	5
Engaging in mindful activities such as meditation, yoga, or prayer	28	15
Play online games designed for brain training	20	12

While a majority engage in at least one brain healthy behavior, there does appear a gap exists between the importance placed on a behavior and the actual percentage of adults who engage in that behavior. For example, like the general population, almost all Hispanic/Latino adults believe exercise is important to brain health yet only about six in ten (58%) currently exercise (see Table 3).

Table 3
Percent Important vs. Percent Who Engage in the Activity

	% Important (very + somewhat)	% engage in activity
Challenging the mind with games, puzzles, or other activities	92	40
Exercising your body	97	58
Taking vitamins or supplements	85	47
Eating a healthy diet	96	54
Getting enough sleep	99	57
Managing stress effectively	95	36
Volunteering or helping others	79	19
Socializing with friends or family	93	57
Watching the news	62	44
Watching educational programs	87	33
Taking educational classes	81	9
Trying new activities	87	24
Learning new things	93	39
Pursuing hobbies	88	25
Reading	95	57
Pursuing a purpose in life	93	32
Playing a musical instrument or singing	63	11
Engaging in mindful activities such as meditation, yoga, or prayer	84	28
Play online games designed for brain training	71	20

In order to examine engagement in AARP's five pillars of the brain health, the list of activities was collapsed into one of five categories to match the five pillars of brain health. Results indicate that most adults engage in an at least one activity under one of the five pillars.

1. **Learning More** -Nearly nine in ten (88%) Hispanic/Latino adults engage in at least one activity under this pillar (e.g., challenging the mind, watching educational programs, trying new activities, learning new things, etc.). A higher percentage (93%) of adults in the general population engages in at least one activity under this pillar.
2. **Eating Right** – Just over half of Hispanic/Latino adults eat a healthy diet.
3. **Managing Stress** – Just over seven in ten of Hispanic/Latino adults say they engage in at least one activity under this pillar (get enough sleep, manage stress effectively, or engage in mindful activities such as yoga, meditation, or prayer).
4. **Being Social** – Six in ten Hispanic/Latino adults engage in at least one activity under the Being Social pillar (volunteer/help others or socialize with friends and family). A higher percentage (69%) of adults from the general population engages in this pillar.
5. **Keeping Fit** – Just under six in ten (58%) engage in physical exercise.

How knowledgeable are adults when it comes to factors affecting brain health?

Most Hispanic/Latino adults, like adults from the general population, believe they are at least somewhat familiar with the effect diet, physical activity, and sleep may have on their brain health. However, intensity is lacking with only about one-third reporting they are *very familiar*. Furthermore, a minority of Hispanic/Latino adults are familiar with the effect medications (both over-the-counter and prescription), anesthesia, and hospitalization may have on their brain health.

What would drive behavior change?

Similar to the general population, the top brain-healthy activities that Hispanic/Latino adults are likely to engage in if they knew it would improve brain health are: getting adequate sleep, eating a healthy diet, managing stress effectively, socializing with friends or family, engaging in physical activity, and challenging the brain. Again, when asked what activity they would be most likely to do, challenging the brain garnered the highest percentage.

Hispanic/Latino women are more likely than Hispanic/Latino men to say they would be likely to challenge the mind with games/puzzles, take vitamins or supplements, and volunteer to help others. With the exception of watching the news, seniors (age 65+) are less likely than younger adults to say they would be encouraged to engage in brain healthy activities (e.g., sleep, diet,

exercise, manage stress, etc.) This trend by age for Hispanic/Latino adults is opposite of the trend by age for the general population.

Adults were also asked the extent to which various situations would encourage them to engage in brain healthy activities. Situations that happen to them personally are the most likely to encourage engagement. Just over six in ten (62%) of Hispanic/Latino adults say that a major illness or chronic disease related to brain health would encourage them to engage in brain-healthy activities and a similar percentage (59%) said that their own memory declining would encourage them. This trend is consistent with the trend seen for the general population.

What types of information are 40+ adults most interested in?

The top two information sources for advice on brain health are family or friends and health care providers. Hispanic/Latino adults are more likely to turn to their family or friends compared to the general population. Fewer Hispanic/Latino adults currently use pharmacists, nutritionists, health food stores, or social media/discussion boards but over six in ten say they would consider these sources. However, a higher percentage of Hispanic/Latino adults seek advice from health food stores, social media/discussion boards, and nutritionists compared to the general population.

Most Hispanic/Latino adults are at least somewhat interested in learning about how the following activities are related to brain health (see Table 4). Interest is highest with regard to how sleep (89%), eating a healthy diet (89%), and learning new things (88%) are related to brain health. There was less interest in medications relative to the other activities (see below). However, the interest in how medications are related to brain health is the highest for seniors (70%) compared to those ages 40-49 (62%) and those ages 50-64 (53%).

Table 4
Interest in Learning About the Following Brain Healthy Activities

	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Not very interested	Not at all interested
Eating a healthy diet	58	31	7	4
Managing stress	50	36	9	3
Sleep	66	23	6	3
Engaging in physical exercise	53	33	9	4
Being connected to others (socializing)	32	40	21	6
Learning new things	45	43	7	4
Nutritional supplements	36	40	16	7
Medications	22	39	25	11
Challenging your mind through mental exercises	50	35	9	5

Conclusions

Brain health is a very important issue to Hispanic/Latino 40+ adults. This study, along with other AARP studies, has found staying mentally sharp a concern as people age. While most adults have not seen a decline in their mental abilities, a sizeable portion has noticed a decrease in their ability to remember things. Additionally, most Hispanic/Latino adults are concerned about their own brain health declining at some point in the future. AARP research has consistently shown that adults have a strong desire to remain independent as they age. Maintaining a healthy brain is a key component to ensuring independence as one gets older.

Most Hispanic/Latino adults engage in at least one activity shown to improve brain health; however, there is substantial room for improvement as only about half of adults engage in protective behaviors such as a healthy diet or exercise and many believe challenging the brain with games/puzzles is the most important activity. While Hispanic/Latino adults place less emphasis on activities that challenge the mind compared to the general population, most Hispanic/Latino adults are interested in learning more about challenging the mind as it relates to brain health in addition to how sleep, eating a healthy diet, and learning new things relate to brain health. This presents an excellent opportunity for AARP and its partners to connect with the public and educate as they are eager for information and appear committed to this issue.