HEALTHY LIVING:

A look at how Hispanic/Latino older adults are managing their emotional and mental well-being and remaining resilient through these challenging times and beyond.

An AARP Healthy Living Survey of Adults Ages 50 and Older

Hispanic/Latino older adults are more likely to rate their physical health as fair or poor and their emotional/mental health as excellent or very good; however, many had been bothered by negative feelings two weeks prior to our survey fielding.

Two in five (42%) Hispanic/Latino older adults ages 50-plus say their physical health is excellent (11%) or very good (31%). Comparatively, three in five (59%) rate their emotional health high (24% excellent, 35% very good). Similarly, three in five (61%) Hispanic/Latino older adults ages 50-plus say their mental health is either excellent (29%) or very good (32%).

However, when asked about specific emotional/mental health measures, we find a substantial portion of older Hispanic/Latino adults say they have been bothered by negative feelings and emotions. For example, over four in 10 (46%) say in the past two weeks they have been bothered by anxiety and over a third (38%) say they have had little interest or pleasure in doing things.

Recent survey reveals Hispanic/Latino older adults ages 50 and older are poised to bounce back after the pandemic has taken its toll on their mental and emotional well-being.
Along with feelings of depression and anxiety, nearly half (48%) Hispanic/Latino older adults ages 50-plus say it has been more difficult to successfully manage negative feelings like stress, anger, and sadness. However, these older adults feel optimistic about their ability to better manage negative feelings in the future, with two in five (43%) saying their ability to manage negative feelings will get better in the next six months. Regardless of whether an older Hispanic/Latino adult has experienced negative emotions in the past year or not, the majority say they would like to better manage their emotional and mental well-being by increasing their exercise (61%), eating a healthier diet (53%), and getting more rest/sleep (51%). Two in five (40%) say they would like to better manage their emotional well-being by controlling stress (40%), and one-third say they would like to better manage their negative emotions by taking vitamins or supplements (33%).

**While the majority of Hispanic/Latino older adults have been bothered by various negative emotions recently, most feel optimistic about their ability to better manage these feelings in the future.**

**How would you like to better manage emotional and mental well-being?**

- **61%** Get more regular exercise
- **53%** Eat a healthier diet
- **51%** Get more rest/sleep
Managing life through the pandemic shown to negatively impact emotional and mental well-being for many Hispanic/Latino older adults

Half (52%) of Hispanic/Latino older adults ages 50-plus say they are anxious about what may happen in the next 12 months. When asked to rate their level of anxiety about what may happen in the next 12 months, over one-third (35%) rate their level of anxiety in the medium range. Another one in six (17%) say they have a high level of anxiety about what may happen in the next 12 months. Experiences related to the COVID-19 pandemic can be seen as the primary culprit related to the high level of anxiety. A third (34%) say experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic has increased their level of anxiety.

"I started yoga. It's like it's a totally different exercise, but it's mental, psychological, emotional, spiritual, and also physical, and it's made me just kind of accept things easier. So, I think that's why if I hadn't found yoga, I think I would be in a worse situation. And it's helped me."

David, 55

Experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the Hispanic/Latino 50-plus emotionally and mentally in a variety of other ways as well. Over two in five (44%) of older Hispanic/Latino adults say experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic increased their level of concern about the future. Two in five (39%) say it has increased their level of worry in general and three in 10 (29%) say experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic increased their level of stress.

Additionally, when asked what is causing angst, many also cite personal issues such as finances, housing stability, unemployment, and health. Domestic and international issues are also attributed to higher levels of anxiety, with many older adults citing the economy and the Russian invasion of Ukraine as sources of anxiety.
COVID, housing stability, unemployment, finances, personal health issues and the economy/cost of living top cited sources of anxiety.

COVID-19 pandemic has affected level of [...] a great/some degree

While older Hispanic/Latino adults have faced emotional challenges over the past few years, they are resilient and feel they have what it takes to bounce back and thrive

Even with raised stress levels and anxiety, older Hispanic/Latino adults age 50-plus say they are resilient. When asked to rate their level of resiliency from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest), the average rating was seven. In fact, over half (54%) rate their level of resiliency as high (8, 9, or 10 out of 10) and, for the majority (65%), their level of resiliency has not changed since the start of the pandemic. Furthermore, one in five (20%) say their level of resiliency has actually increased in the past two years. Two in five (41%) rate their resiliency in the medium range (4 to 7) and only 5 percent rate their level of resiliency at 3 or lower.

Still, when asked about specific measures of resiliency, a sizable number of Hispanic/Latino older adults struggle with adapting and bouncing back when things don’t go as planned and/or during hardship. For example, a little over half (55%) say they tend to bounce back quickly after hard times. However, that means more than two in five (45%) do not bounce back quickly after hard times.
Mind over matter: For Hispanic/Latino older adults higher resiliency seems to mean a more positive outlook on aging

Regardless of where a Hispanic/Latino older adult is on individual measures of resiliency, there is a relationship between self-rated resiliency and outlook on aging for older Hispanic/Latino adults. The chart below shows the percentage of respondents who say they strongly agree with various aspects of positive or healthy aging by reported level of resiliency. We see in every measure those who say they have a high level of resiliency (8, 9, or 10 out of 10) are significantly more likely than those who say they have a medium level of resiliency (4 to 7 out of 10) to also agree they are aging well and have a positive outlook on aging. For example, over two in five (42%) older Hispanic/Latino adults who rate their resiliency high say they are aging well compared to just one in five (21%) of those who rate their level of resiliency in the medium range. Similarly, more older adults with high resiliency say they have a lot to look forward to as they age (46% vs. 17%).

“I don't really have [any] options for quitting or giving up on things, so I just see my way through any difficulties that I face... I just didn't have, you know, the option or opportunity to even consider doing anything other than continuing to do really well at work and taking care of myself ... And not falling apart. I’m doing everything to not fall apart, put energy into putting one foot in front of the other.”

Kaia, 53
Hispanic/Latino older adults who say they have a high level of resiliency are significantly more likely to also say they are aging well and have a positive outlook on their aging.

% Agree (Strongly or somewhat) — total and by age range

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total (n=357)</th>
<th>High resiliency (n=191)</th>
<th>Medium resiliency (n=148)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a lot to look forward to as I age</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am aging well</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel very optimistic about growing older and aging</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel confident about aging</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I will continue to make a difference in the world as I age</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe I will have good health as I age</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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* The number of respondents indicating low resiliency (1-3) is too small for separate analysis (n=19).

“If I focused on my attitude, I’d give myself a very high number [on the healthy aging scale]. I will say to myself, I don’t have to dwell on my health issues. I have them. I don’t dwell on them. I try not to dwell on bad things. I try to keep my family and friends close, I mean, not physically, but with Zoom and things like that. Trying to keep a good support system.”

Mary, 73
Implications

Experiencing the pandemic has had a negative emotional impact on most of us. This study illuminates where Hispanic/Latino older adults are emotionally right now and how they are managing their emotional and mental well-being. This study also demonstrates that despite the challenges to emotional and mental well-being, most Hispanic/Latino older adults say they are resilient and expect to be able to bounce back from these challenges. However, a deeper dive suggests some Hispanic/Latino older adults may benefit from help with managing their emotional and mental well-being.

Though a large portion of Hispanic/Latino older adults rate their emotional/mental well-being as excellent or very good, a third or more say recently they have been bothered by anxiety, have had little interest or pleasure in doing things, and have experienced feelings of depression or hopelessness. Furthermore, though the majority say they are extremely resilient, when asked about specific resiliency measures, the outcome paints a different picture. For example, over two in five say they aren’t able to easily bounce back from hardship. These incongruencies suggest that some older Hispanic/Latino adults may not have a full understanding of how more recent experiences are impacting their emotional and mental health.

Regardless of where a Hispanic/Latino older adult is on individual measures of resiliency, there is an interesting relationship between self-rated resiliency and outlook on aging for older Hispanic/Latino adults. Those who are more resilient are significantly more likely to feel they are aging well. This finding is crucial because one can learn how to build resiliency, which in turn suggests building a more positive attitude regarding aging which is a key determinant for healthy aging.

While it is understandable to see a decline in mental health or emotional well-being during trying times, this is not a normal part of aging. To combat possible hesitation on the part of older adults to seek help with managing their emotional health, it is important that access to mental health treatment is easy, seamless, and normalized. Ensuring mental health and emotional well-being is addressed during all medical visits is an invaluable step toward ensuring older adults receive comprehensive care.
Mental Health Resources

AARP’s Mental Health Center highlights news and resources for older adults’ mental well-being.

The Disaster Distress Helpline, provides crisis counseling at 1-800-985-5990 or text: TalkWithUs to 66746.

Methodology

The 2022 AARP February Omni was conducted online from February 24–March 1, 2022 with a total sample of 1,964 adults ages 50-plus (including oversamples of African American/Black (n = 441); Hispanic/Latino (n = 405) and LGBTQ (n = 228). This national survey was conducted using NORC at the University of Chicago’s AmeriSpeak 50+ Omnibus probability-based sample. AmeriSpeak is designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. All data are weighted by age, gender, and race according to the most recent Census population statistics. The margin of error for the Hispanic/Latino sample is ± 7.20 percent.

The 2022 AARP Healthy Living Qualitative Study was conducted from March 8–16, 2022 by ANR Marketing Research Consultants. The 25 in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted by telephone. Participants were recruited by a national recruiting company and screened to be at least 50 years old and to have a variety of demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal characteristics.

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.26419/res.00533.003