2021 HOME AND COMMUNITY PREFERENCES SURVEY: A NATIONAL SURVEY OF ADULTS AGES 18-PLUS

October 2021
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WHERE PEOPLE ARE TODAY
My State of Mind, Health, and Lifestyle at Home during the Pandemic

• In general, adults are in good mental and physical health despite the coronavirus pandemic.

• Home has become a hub for people during the pandemic. Many people are choosing to spend more time at home, working remotely, shopping and socializing online.
Most adults – regardless of age – are in good health.

Fifty percent of adults describe their physical health as excellent or very good, while only 15% say it is fair or poor. There is no real difference between younger and older adults. However, 29% of unmarried adults ages 50 and older have a disability compared with 16% of younger adults.

**How is your health?**

- Excellent: 13%
- Very good: 38%
- Good: 34%
- Fair: 13%
- Poor: 2%

**Do you have a disability?**

- Yes: 16% (18-49), 29% (50+)
- No: 84% (18-49), 71% (50+)

Q49. In general, is your health...? Base: Total Respondents

Q51. Does any disability, handicap, or chronic disease keep you from participating fully in work, school, housework, or other activities? Base: Does not have a spouse or partner
Older Americans are more concerned about COVID-19.

In the past year, 59% of adults ages 50 and older have been extremely or very concerned about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, compared with 42% of adults ages 18-49.

Q38. How concerned were you about the coronavirus impacting you or your family during the past year? Base: Total Respondents
Remote working, homeschooling and shopping online are some ways Americans adjusted to the pandemic.

- People in most households sheltered at home or stockpiled supplies, while nearly half worked remotely or made online purchases.

- While 41% went outside for exercise less often, 31% did so more often, and 18% joined exercise classes online.

- Thirty-nine percent of adults ages 18-49 and 21% of those ages 50 and older homeschooled or supervised the instruction of a child or grandchild.

Q39. Have you or anyone in your household done any of the following due to the coronavirus? Base: Total Respondents
The pandemic is encouraging online activities.

Someone in your household has participated in the following online.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Used a video chat to connect with friends and family</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used social media to connect with friends and family</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointments or consultations with a doctor or other health professional</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious services</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board or committee meetings</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise classes</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social activities such as book clubs or happy hours</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community meetings</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College classes</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult education or personal enrichment classes</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than 6 in 10 Americans, regardless of age, are connecting with friends and family with video chats and social media apps because of the pandemic.

Adults ages 50 and older are more likely than younger adults to attend online religious services (40% vs. 29%).

Q41. Have you or anyone in your household participated in the following online activities due to the coronavirus? Base: Total Respondents
Some feel less connected with their community.

Overall, 62% say there is no change in how connected they feel to their community since the coronavirus outbreak, but 28% report feeling less connected. Older Americans are more likely to say the pandemic has had no effect on their attachment to their community than younger adults. In fact, among those ages 18-24, 42% say they feel more detached from their community since the start of the pandemic.

Since the coronavirus outbreak, how connected do you feel to your community?

- More connected now
- Less connected now
- The same

![Graph showing the distribution of responses to the question: Since the coronavirus outbreak, how connected do you feel to your community?](image)
More than a third of adults often feel isolated, lonely, or left out.

Younger adults are also more likely to report feelings of isolation or loneliness. Fifty-six percent of adults ages 18-24 say they lack companionship, 63% say they often or sometimes feel left out, and another 63% feel isolated. In comparison, 49% of adults 65 never lack companionship or feel isolated, and 46% never feel left out.

Q53. How often do you feel the following? Base: All respondents

Among all adults:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack companionship</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel isolated from others</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel left out</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My home

Many adults have features in their residence that would support them as they age. But many also believe home modifications will be necessary to accommodate their own future needs or those of loved ones.
Most Americans are homeowners of a single-family house.

Eighty percent of adults ages 50 and older own their home and 51% have no mortgage. Among adults ages 18-49, 50% own their home and 38% rent. Seventy-seven percent of the younger homeowners are paying off a mortgage.

Q20. Which of the following types of homes best describes where you currently live? Base: Total Respondents
Q21. Do you own or rent your residence? Base: Total Respondents
Q22. Do you currently have a mortgage on your residence or is your residence fully paid for? Base: Total Respondents
Many expect to need modifications in order to age at home.

Of those who anticipate needing modification:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modification</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Already have this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modifying the bathroom</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making access easier with ramps, chairlift or elevator, or wider doorways</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Installing a medical emergency response system</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding smart home devices</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving lighting outside the house</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving indoor lighting</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving home internet</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putting an addition on the house for a live-in caregiver</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putting a bedroom, bathroom, and kitchen on the main floor</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thirty-four percent anticipate needing some type of modification to their home so that they or a loved one will be able to remain home if they need physical assistance when they get older, and 39% do not think they will need to make any adjustments to their home. Twenty-seven percent aren’t sure if such changes will be necessary.

The most needed modifications would be in the bathroom, such as adding grab bars, handrails, a higher toilet, non-slip tile, or no-step shower. Nearly as many anticipate making the home more accessible. Few expect to make major structural changes to their home, such as putting an addition on the house or adding rooms on the main living floor.

Q24. Do you think you will need to make the following types of modifications or improvements to your residence ... Base: Will need to make modifications to residence
My household

Most adults live in a household with two or more generations.
Most Americans live with at least one other person.

Eighty-three percent of adults live in a household with at least one other person, and 30% live with three or more other people. Just 17% of American adults live alone. Sixty percent of adults are married or living with a partner.

Q47. Besides you, do you have any of the following people living in your household? Base: Total Respondents
Thirteen percent of Americans are currently family caregivers.

A family caregiver is someone who provides care for an adult loved one who is ill, frail, elderly, or has a physical, mental, or emotional disability. This care may include helping with personal needs like bathing or dressing, meals, household chores, shopping, transportation, managing medical care or finances, or even visiting regularly to see how they are doing.

Thirteen percent of Americans are currently providing care to a family member. Among those, 39% are providing care to a person who lives with them in their household.

Q58. Are you currently a family caregiver providing this kind of help for free to an adult loved one to help them take care of themselves? Base: Total Respondents
Q59. Where does the person you care for live? Base: Is a caregiver
My community

People live in a variety of communities and most people get around by driving themselves.
Americans are just as likely to live in small towns, residential suburbs, and mixed-use suburbs.

Thirty-eight percent of adults live in a suburban area, while 33% live in small towns or rural areas and 28% reside in cities. There isn’t a significant difference between adults ages 18-49 and those ages 50 or older when it comes to where they live.

Q71. Which best describes the community where you live? Base: Total Respondents
Most Americans, regardless of age, get around by car.

A large majority of Americans drive themselves, including 70% of adults ages 85 and older. While people residing in cities are more likely to use public transportation or walk, 84% of urbanites also get around by car.

Q13. How do you usually get around your community for activities including shopping, visiting the doctor, running errands, or other things? Base: Total Respondents
WHERE PEOPLE WANT TO BE TOMORROW
My aspirations for my home and community

Adults have a strong desire to stay in their current home and community, regardless of changing needs. However, relocation could be a consideration if their home or community doesn't meet their needs.
Most adults want to stay put as they age.

Two-thirds of adults want to stay in their current community as long as possible, and nearly as many would prefer to keep living in their current home.

I’d really like to stay in my current residence for as long as possible.

![Pie chart showing the percentage of respondents agreeing or disagreeing about staying in their current residence for as long as possible. The majority agrees, with 63% agreeing and 22% disagreeing.]

I’d really like to remain in my community for as long as possible.

![Pie chart showing the percentage of respondents agreeing or disagreeing about remaining in their community for as long as possible. The majority agrees, with 67% agreeing and 18% disagreeing.]

Q3. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the statement: “What I’d really like to do is remain in my community for as long as possible.” Base: Total Respondents

Q4. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the statement: “What I’d really like to do is stay in my current residence for as long as possible.” Base: Total Respondents
Regardless of what they want, many expect to have to relocate.

In the future, how likely is it that you will move into:

- A typical community: 44% Very/somewhat likely, 33% Not too/not at all likely, 21% Live there now
- An active adult community: 33% Very/somewhat likely, 66% Not too/not at all likely
- A continuing care community: 32% Very/somewhat likely, 67% Not too/not at all likely

- Thirty-four percent of adults do not expect to ever move, while 18% think they may relocate to a different house and 29% think they may need to move to a different community.

- A third of adults say it’s likely that they’ll move to an active adult community or neighborhood for people ages 55 and older, and another third anticipate the necessity of a nursing home or assisted living facility.

- More than 4 in 10 expect to move to a typical community or neighborhood where anyone of any age can live. And a fifth are already living in such a community.

Q6./Q7./Q8. When you get older, how / How likely do you think it is that you will move to a … ? Base: Total Respondents
Most would prefer assistance at home from both paid professionals and family or friends.

In the case of illness or disability, the optimal arrangement for two-thirds of Americans would be a mixture of family and professionals to help them remain in their home. About half would be willing consider just family or friends, and another half would be happiest with a nurse or personal care aide to provide care in their home. Few would prefer an assistant living or nursing home.

Of these arrangements, how much each is preferred:

- A combination of family and paid help provides care in my residence: 65%
- Family and/or friends provide all care: 51%
- A nurse or a personal care aide provide care in my residence: 48%
- An assisted living facility: 25%
- A nursing home: 10%

Q18. If you had a chronic illness or disability in the future [as an older adult]..., which of the following living arrangements would you prefer? Base: Total Respondents
Independence and cost are the top criteria in choosing a new home.

If you moved, what would influence your choice of a new home?

- **A home that help me live independently as I age**
  - Major factor: 50%
  - Minor factor: 32%
  - Not a factor: 17%

- **The cost of maintaining my current residence**
  - Major factor: 44%
  - Minor factor: 36%
  - Not a factor: 20%

- **A home that is easier to maintain**
  - Major factor: 39%
  - Minor factor: 37%
  - Not a factor: 24%

- **A smaller home**
  - Major factor: 23%
  - Minor factor: 38%
  - Not a factor: 38%

- **A larger home**
  - Major factor: 18%
  - Minor factor: 28%
  - Not a factor: 53%

Q11. If you were to consider moving out of your current residence, how much of a factor would the following be in your decision to move? Base: Total Respondents
Safety and affordability are the top criteria in choosing a new community.

What would influence your choice of a new community?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Major factor</th>
<th>Minor factor</th>
<th>Not a factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safer area</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower cost of living</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More affordable housing</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closer to family</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better housing choices</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better health care facilities</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better recreational activities</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different climate</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better opportunities for social interaction</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better job opportunities</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternatives to driving</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse population</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q12. If you were to consider moving out of your current community, how much of a factor would the following be in your decision to move? Base: Total Respondents
My openness to alternative housing options

Many adults would consider sharing their home or alternative housing options to support their desire to age in their current community.
Most adults would consider sharing their home with a relative or friend, but most do not consider that to be an optimal living arrangement. Seventy percent would prefer to live on their own as they age.

Q31. As you grow older, would you consider sharing your home with…? Base: Total Respondents

Would you consider sharing your home with:

- A family member or members, not including a spouse: 69%
- A friend: 54%
- A stranger, someone I do not know: 6%
An accessory dwelling unit (ADU) is a smaller, independent residential dwelling unit located on the same lot, but independent of the primary dwelling unit. Only 4 percent currently have an ADU on their property. If space were not an issue, 26% would consider building an ADU on their property and 34% would not. Thirty-nine percent are unsure.

Q28. For each of the following reasons, choose whether it is a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason for building an ADU on your property or purchasing a property with an ADU. Base: Has or would have an ADU.
Most who don’t want an ADU don’t see the need.

Q29. For each of the following reasons, choose whether it is a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason for not building an ADU on your property or a property that you might purchase.

Base: Does not have an ADU on their property
My location preferences

People have a strong preference for living in communities that welcome residents of all ages.
Most people want to stay in the same type of community as they age.

The urbanity of the location where adults want to live when they get older largely aligns with where they live now, further supporting the desire of people to age in place. Residents of rural areas and small towns in particular desire to stay in the same type of community. But most urbanites would like to leave the bustle of the city behind and relocate to the suburbs or the country.

When older, want to live in:

- A small town or a rural area
- A suburban area
- An urban area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Live in small town or rural area now</th>
<th>8%</th>
<th>14%</th>
<th>78%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Live in suburbs now</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live in a city now</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q10. [Thinking about your future years as an older adult, what / What] type of location would you most prefer to live in? Base: Total Respondents
As they age, many adults want to live where all ages are welcome.

In the future, how likely do you think you will move into:

- **A typical community or neighborhood where anyone of any age can live**
  - Very/somewhat likely: 44%
  - Not too/not at all likely: 33%
  - Live there now: 21%

- **An active adult community or neighborhood for people ages 55 and older**
  - Very/somewhat likely: 33%
  - Not too/not at all likely: 66%

- **A continuing Care Community for people who can live independently or need assisted living or a nursing home**
  - Very/somewhat likely: 32%
  - Not too/not at all likely: 67%

Q6/Q7/Q8 When you get older, how likely do you think it is that you will move to a … ? Base: Total Respondents
My needs and wants

When thinking about what is most important to have in their communities, adults primarily value features that foster good health, promote street safety, and provide opportunities for community engagement.
Access to healthy food and quality health care are priorities.

Communities that feature healthy options – access to nutritious food, opportunities for exercise, and excellent health care quality – are most appealing. Convenience and affordability are also priorities.

Q14. How important is it for you personally to have the following in your community right now? Base: Total Respondents

Important to have in community now

- Convenient grocery stores with affordable health food: 76%
- Convenient high-quality health care: 74%
- Well-lit crime-free parks: 73%
- Safe trails and paths to walk, run, and bike: 62%
- Public buildings and space accessible for people with disabilities: 58%
- Convenient affordable parking accessible for people with disabilities: 55%
- Walkable downtown area with local businesses: 49%
- Ample public seating in parks, along sidewalks, around public buildings: 48%
- Farmers markets: 46%
High importance is placed on safe streets.

Nearly everyone gets around by car, with most (88%) driving themselves, 25% driven by someone else, and 15% using a taxi or ride-share. Most adults place a lot of importance on safe and well-maintained streets.

Q17. How important is it for you personally to have the following in your community right now? Base: Total Respondents

- Well-maintained streets: 80%
- Easy to read traffic signs: 75%
- Well-lit, accessible, and safe streets and intersections: 70%
- Safe and enforced speed limits: 69%
- Sidewalks in good condition and accessible for the disabled: 64%
- Clearly marked pedestrian crossings with audio and visual signals: 59%
- Clearly marked dedicated bike lanes: 41%
Few adults are isolated or lonely.

More than 6 in 10 adults rarely or never feel isolated, lonely, or left out. Most have a relative or friend they can call if needed.

Q53. How often do you feel the following? Base: Total Respondents
Q54. If you were in trouble, do you have friends or family who can help you at any time of the day or night? Base: Total Respondents
Opportunities for community engagement are important for many.

Having well-lit safe parks for residents to gather with friends and neighbors is an important community feature to 73% of adults. Many also say it is important to have other prospects for gathering with members of the community.

Q33 and Q35. How important is it for you personally to have the following in your community right now? Base: Total Respondents

- Opportunities for all residents to participate in community councils or committees: 50%
- Opportunities for all residents to discuss important civic issues that impact the community: 49%
- Venues to socialize or pursuing new hobbies and interests: 45%
- Opportunities for residents of different ages to share knowledge, history and expertise: 42%
Equal treatment and access for all residents is an important community feature.

Linked to feelings of community and belonging is the acceptance of all residents regardless of gender, age, race and ethnicity, or sexual orientation. And most find it important to make the community accessible for residents with physical disabilities.

Q14 and Q37. How important is it for you personally to have the following in your community right now? Base: Total Respondents

- Equal treatment of all residents regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, or sexual orientation: 71%
- Public buildings and spaces that are accessible to people of different physical abilities: 58%
- Convenient, affordable public parking that includes parking for people with disabilities: 55%
Methodology

- **Objectives**: To understand adults’ preferences with regards to their homes and communities.

- **Methodology**: Online/phone survey via NORC’s AmeriSpeak Panel with oversampling panelists African-American/Black, Hispanic, Asian American Pacific Islander, and LGBTQ+ groups

- **Qualifications**: General population sample of U.S. adults ages 18+

- **Sample**: NORC’s AmeriSpeak Panel, n=2,826 (web, n=2,687; phone, n=139)

- **Interviewing Dates**: June 9, 2021 – July 6, 2021

- **Weighting**: Calculated using panel base sampling weight and external population totals

- **Questionnaire length**: 25 minutes (median duration)

- **Confidence Interval**: Total sample: ± 2.58%
About AARP

AARP is the nation’s largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members and offices in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families, with a focus on health security, financial stability, and personal fulfillment. AARP also works for individuals in the marketplace by sparking new solutions and allowing carefully chosen, high-quality products and services to carry the AARP name. As a trusted source for news and information, AARP produces the nation’s largest circulation publications, AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org or follow @AARP and @AARPadvocates on social media.

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Headquartered in downtown Chicago, NORC works in over 40 countries around the world, with additional offices on the University of Chicago campus, the DC metro area, Atlanta, Boston, Silicon Valley, and San Francisco. Please visit www.norc.org for more information.
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This research was designed and executed by AARP Research

This deck, annotated survey, fact sheets and methodology report can be accessed at www.aarp.org/livablesurvey2021