



BRAIN HEALTH THEN AND NOW: ADULTS AGES 40-PLUS

January 2024

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INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

AARP has fielded more than a dozen surveys to explore the experiences and opinions of American adults ages 40 and older on brain health topics. AARP's survey research has explored the relationship between brain health and sleep, social engagement, mental well-being, physical activity, nutrition, music, and most recently, hearing.

The first survey was fielded in 2015 and was general in nature while the most recent 2023 survey was on brain health and hearing. This recent survey included several of the same questions that were part of the original survey to see if anything has changed in the eight years since the original survey fielded.

This report includes a comparison between 2015 and 2023 data for the same survey questions, among two different nationally representative samples of adults ages 40-plus.



Executive summary

Among adults ages 40-plus, most of the responses to the repeated survey questions were the same or similar in 2023 compared to 2015. There were several notable differences, however.

- In 2023, slightly fewer adults rate their brain health as excellent or very good (56% vs. 61%).
- Slightly more adults in 2023 are at least somewhat concerned that their brain health or mental sharpness will decline in the future (78% vs 73%).
- Many more adults are regularly taking vitamins or supplements in 2023 compared to 2015 (67% vs. 52%).
- Fewer adults in 2023 are pursuing a purpose in life (33% vs. 39%) or engaging in mindfulness activities (10% vs. 29%).
- For the situations that would greatly encourage someone to engage in brain-healthy activities, fewer adults in 2023 said a major illness related to brain health would be encouraging (56% vs. 64%). Additionally, fewer adults said they would be encouraged to pursue brain-healthy activities if their own memory was declining (49% vs. 56%).

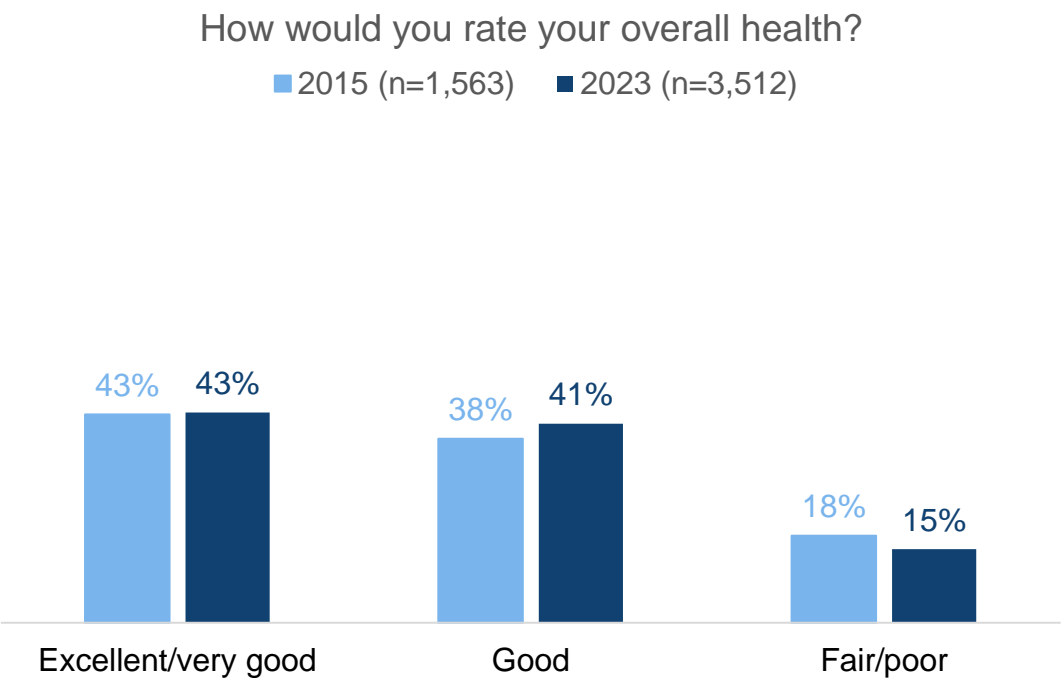




DETAILED COMPARISONS

The overall health rating among adults ages 40-plus was virtually unchanged from 2015 to 2023.

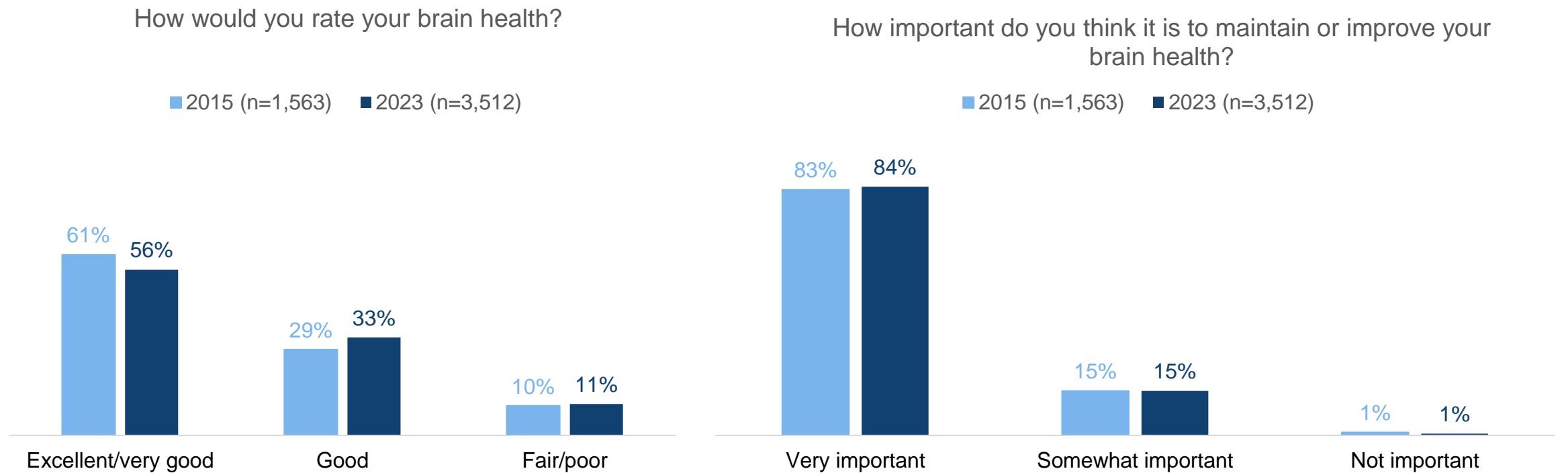
In 2023, over four in 10 (43%) adults ages 40 and older said their overall health was excellent or very good, consistent with the 2015 results.



How would you rate your overall health?

Slightly fewer adults ages 40-plus rate their brain health as excellent or very good in 2023.

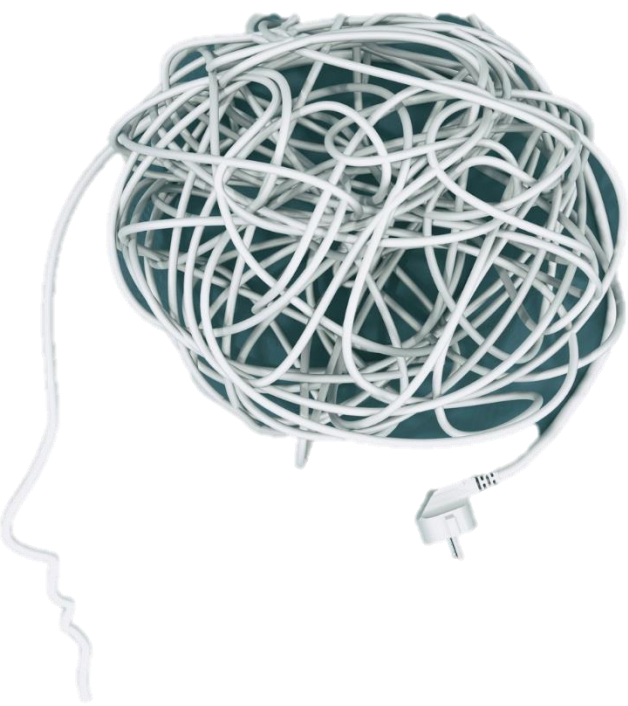
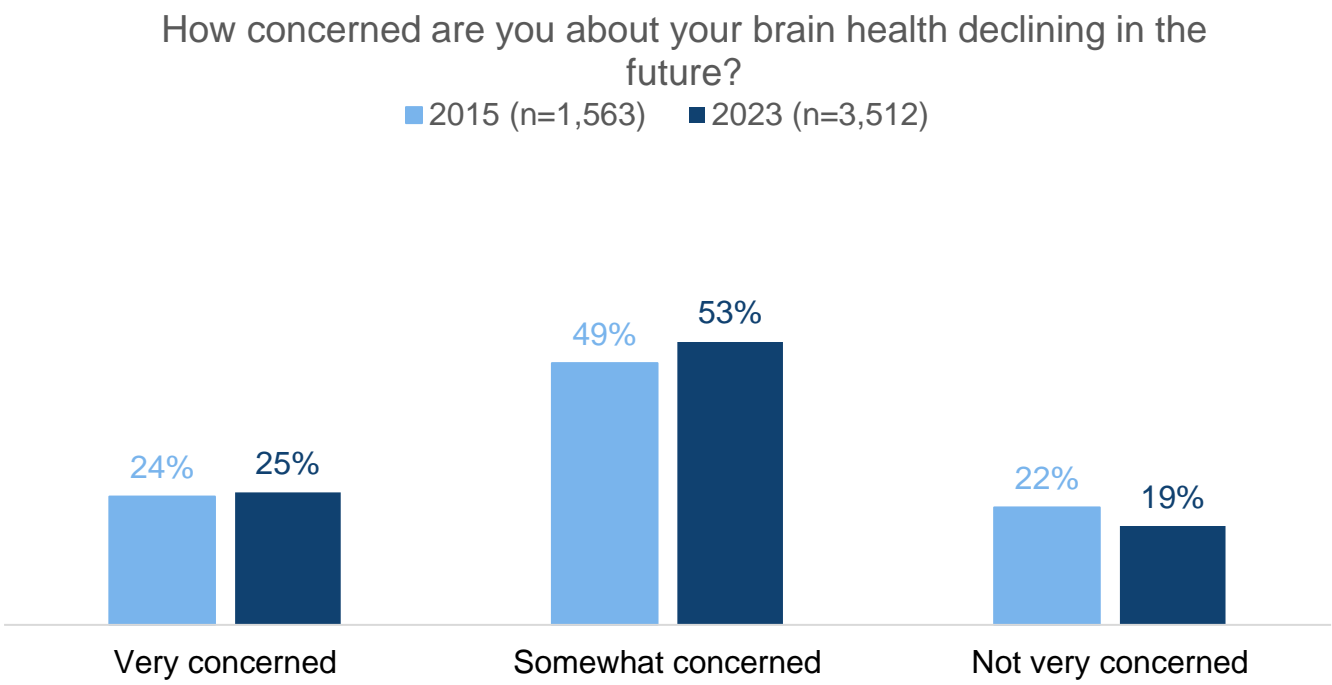
More than half (56%) of adults ages 40-plus said their brain health is excellent or very good which is 5 percentage-points lower than the 2015 rating (61%). Over eight in 10 (84%) adults feel that it is very important to maintain or improve their brain health, virtually unchanged since 2015.



How would you rate your overall brain health?
How important do you think it is to maintain or improve your brain health?

More adults in 2023 are worried about future brain health decline.

Slightly more adults ages 40-plus in 2023 compared to 2015 are at least somewhat concerned about a decline in their brain health in the future (78% vs 73%).



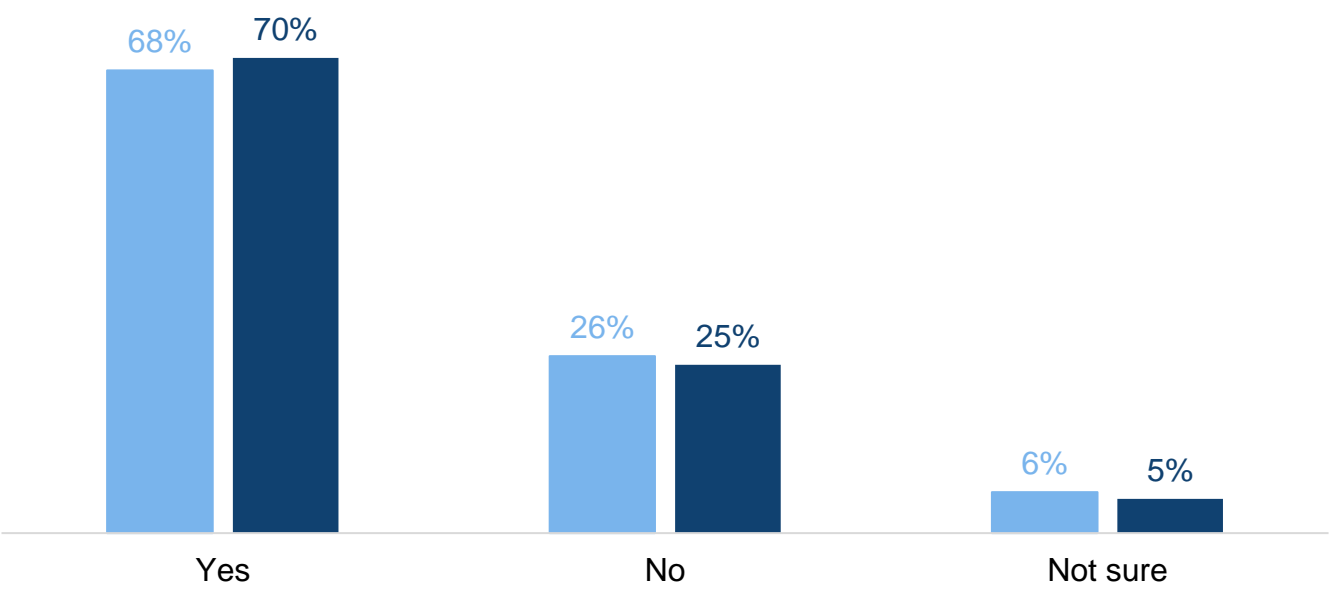
How concerned are you, if at all, about your brain health declining in the future?

Most adults ages 40-plus know someone who has or had dementia.

Virtually unchanged since 2015, seven in 10 (70%) adults know someone who has or had dementia or another condition causing cognitive decline.

Do you know someone who has, or had, dementia such as Alzheimer’s disease or another condition causing cognitive decline?

■ 2015 (n=1,563) ■ 2023 (n=3,512)



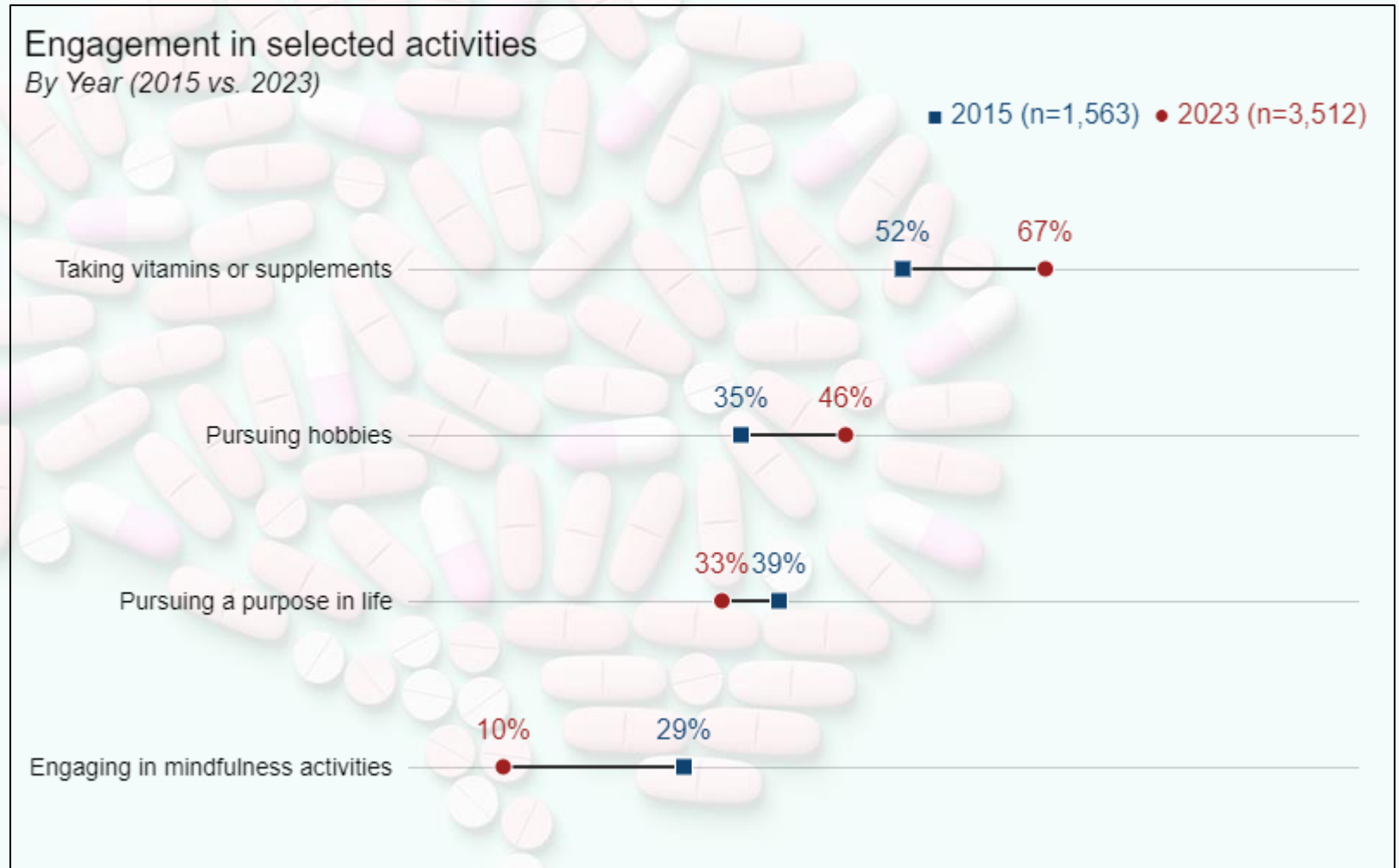
Do you know someone who has, or had, dementia such as Alzheimer’s disease or another condition causing cognitive decline?

Adults ages 40-plus in 2023 are more likely to take vitamins or supplements.

Compared to 2015, significantly more adults ages 40-plus in 2023 said they regularly take vitamins or supplements (67% vs. 52%). Additionally, more adults said they are pursuing hobbies (46% vs. 35%) and fewer are pursuing a purpose in life (33% vs. 39%) or engaging in mindfulness activities (10% vs. 29%).

The percentages who volunteer to help others (29% vs. 27%) and play a musical instrument (13% each) has remained largely unchanged between 2015 and 2023 (not shown in chart).

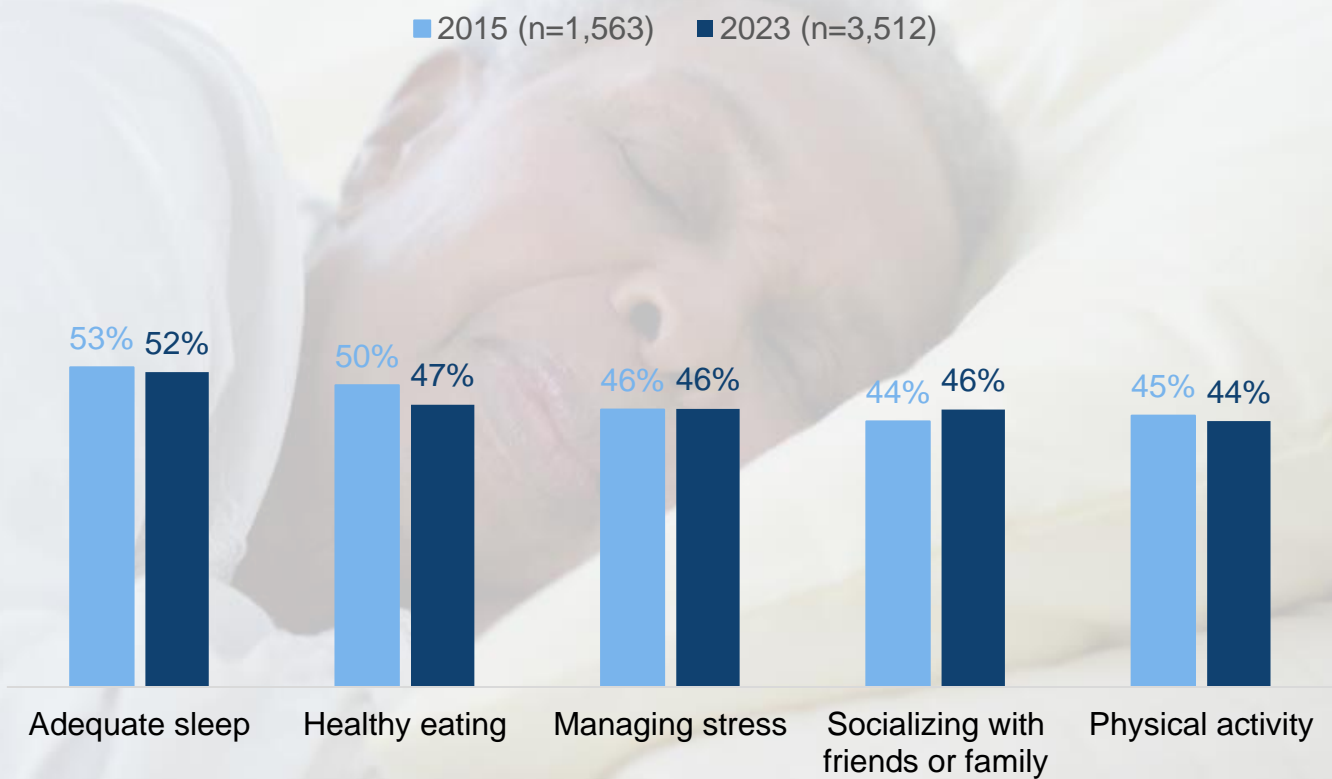
Which of the following activities do you regularly do?



Knowing activities are good for the brain would encourage many adults to engage in the six pillars of brain health.

No notable differences emerged between 2015 and 2023. About half of adults indicated they would be greatly encouraged to engage in brain-healthy activities with the knowledge that these activities may improve their brain health.

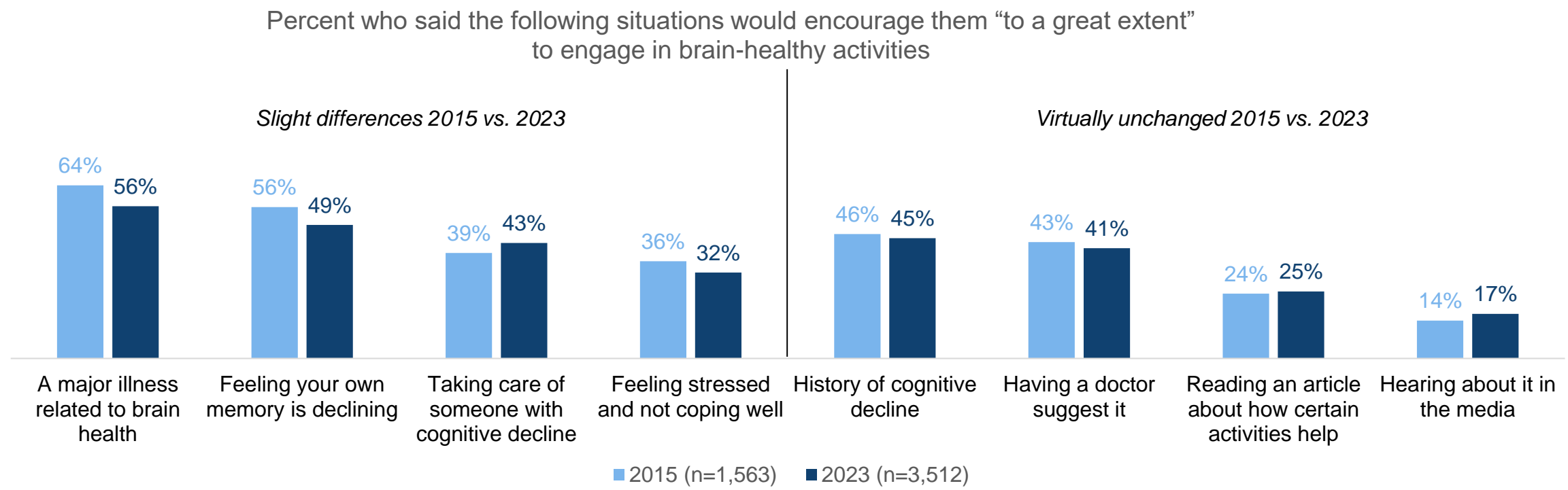
Which of the following activities would you be greatly encouraged to engage in, or engage in more often, if you knew it was shown to improve brain health?



Suppose you were told that each of the following activities listed below was shown to improve brain health. How does know this encourage you to engage in, or engage in more, in the following activities? Greatly encourages, somewhat encourages, doesn't encourage me much, doesn't encourage me at all.

In 2023, several personal situations are less likely to encourage engagement in brain-healthy activities.

In 2023, over half (56%) of adults ages 40-plus said a major illness related to brain health would encourage them to engage in brain-healthy activities. In 2015, however, nearly two-thirds (64%) said the same thing. Fewer adults in 2023 said a decline in their own memory would encourage them to pursue such activities (49% vs. 56%).





IMPLICATIONS

Implications

In 2023, slightly more adults ages 40-plus are concerned about future decline in their brain health or mental sharpness than were those ages 40-plus in 2015. This highlights the need to raise awareness that engagement in certain brain-healthy activities can aid in the preservation of future brain health.

There was a sharp increase in the percentage of adults who regularly take vitamins or supplements. The many reasons people take vitamins or supplements were not identified in either the 2015 or the 2023 survey. However, a previous document released by the Global Council on Brain Health showed there is little evidence that supplements are beneficial specifically for brain health. This increase in supplement use represents an opportunity to provide information to adults to ensure they are taking vitamins and supplements for the right reasons (e.g., evidence of a deficiency).

Fewer adults report pursuing a purpose in life in 2023 compared to 2015. Research shows that having a sense of purpose in life lowers dementia risk and potentially benefits cognitive aging. The connection between a sense of meaning or purpose in life and cognitive health may not be well understood, representing another opportunity to raise awareness.





Percent of holdings	125.00
Percent of expenses	200.00

Finance Pay
Credit

Expenses	Other	Shares	Interest
\$ 2,564.00	\$ 154.00		
\$ 1,556.00	\$ 342.00		
\$ 2,564.00	\$ 256.00		
\$ 14,898.00	\$ 1,256.00		
\$ 668.00	\$ 1,478.00		
	\$ 254.00		
	\$ 369.00		
	\$ 741.00		
	\$ 4,850.00		

METHODOLOGY

Methodology (2023)

- **Objectives:** The purpose of this study is to understand brain health and hearing issues from the point of view of adults ages 40 and older.
- **Methodology:** Online nationally representative survey via Ipsos (formerly GFK) KnowledgePanel®, with sample targeting panelists age 40 or older.
- **Qualifications:** Age 40 or older.
- **Sample:** Ipsos (formerly GFK) KnowledgePanel®, n=3,512.
- **Interviewing Dates:** May 16–27, 2023.
- **Weighting:** The data are weighted for the 40 and older population according to the 2022 March Supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS); language proficiency benchmarks are obtained from the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS).
- **Questionnaire length:** 20.8 minutes (median).
- **Margin of error:** Total sample: ± 1.7 percentage points.



Methodology (2015)

- **Objectives:** The purpose of this study was to understand attitudes and behaviors about brain health as well as self-perceptions of one's own brain health.
- **Methodology:** Online nationally representative survey via GFK's (currently Ipsos) KnowledgePanel®, with sample targeting panelists age 40 or older.
- **Qualifications:** Age 40 or older.
- **Sample:** GFK (currently Ipsos) KnowledgePanel®, n=1,563.
- **Interviewing Dates:** September 16-28, 2015.
- **Weighting:** The data was weighted by age, gender, race, ethnicity, employment status and income.
- **Margin of error:** Total sample: ± 2.7 percentage points.



About AARP

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With a nationwide presence, AARP strengthens communities and advocates for what matters most to the more than 100 million Americans 50-plus and their families: health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also produces the nation's largest circulation publications: AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org/about-aarp/, www.aarp.org/español or follow [@AARP](https://twitter.com/AARP), [@AARPenEspañol](https://twitter.com/AARPenEspañol) and [@AARPadvocates](https://twitter.com/AARPadvocates) on social media.

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This research was designed and executed by AARP Research