



National Health &
Aging Trends Study

how daily life changes as we age

NHATS & you

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Welcome Back and Thank You!

This year marks the 11th year of interviews for the National Health and Aging Trends Study (NHATS). We are welcoming back thousands of participants who have been an important part of this study for many years. Thank you!

We have been busy making a few important changes to the NHATS interview. We have also added a few new activities to your interview, including new vision, hearing, and memory activities. This year your interviewer is also taking special precautions and will be asking you about symptoms before entering your home and will be wearing a mask during your interview.

NHATS continues to be used widely to understand how life changes as we age. We are pleased to share with you a few new findings.



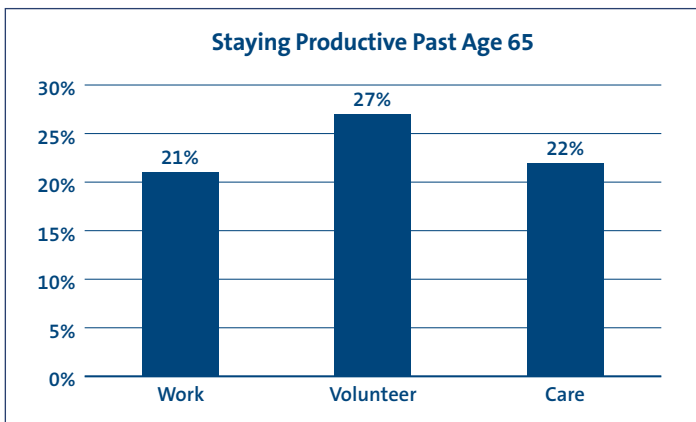
Retired . . . but Not From Life

You know some activities—like exercise—promote a healthy body. But what kinds of activities promote a healthy mind? A recent NHATS study looked at well-being for different kinds of activities—things like working, volunteering, caregiving, and social activities—and found a surprising twist. Older adults who volunteer, are physically active, or participate in social activities have higher well-being. But doing paid work, caregiving, and participating in online social activity does not appear to boost well-being. The researchers' conclusion: productive activities outside of paid work can lead to happier, and perhaps healthier, lives.



Staying Productive

We all know people over the age of 65 who still work, volunteer, or provide care to others. But how common is it to stay engaged in productive activities like these and who is more likely to do so? Recently, researchers used NHATS to answer these questions. Productive activities are more common than you might think: 21 percent work for pay, 27 percent volunteer, and 22 percent provide care to others. One of the strongest keys to staying involved is being able to drive—surprisingly, driving was even more important than health in predicting engagement in these activities.

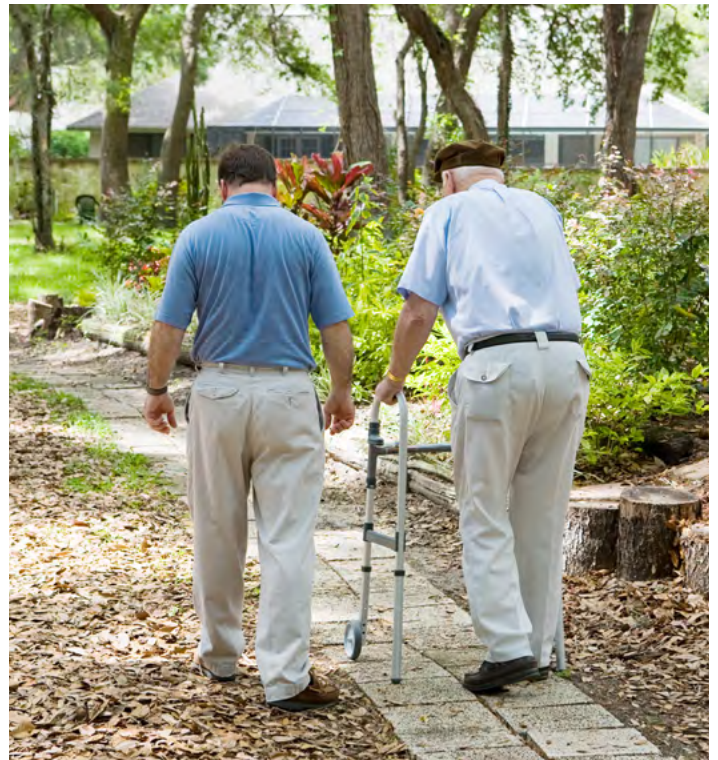


Caregiving: Accentuating the Positive

Providing care can be stressful, but research with the National Study of Caregiving (NSOC), which interviews family and friends who help NHATS participants, is drawing attention to the positive. Caregivers report that helping makes them feel closer to the care recipient, more confident in their ability to provide care, and satisfied that their loved one is well cared for. A recent report found that caregivers who receive emotional support from their friends and family and male caregivers who receive training are more likely to say they benefit from caregiving.

If You're Alone . . . You're Not Alone

As we age, our social connections change for a variety of reasons. For some, this can lead to what researchers call “social isolation,” a condition that occurs when contact with family or friends is rare. Even before the COVID-19 outbreak, about 1 in 4 older adults were considered socially isolated. Men, people with fewer years of education, and people with lower than average income are more likely to be socially isolated. The good news? Researchers are studying effective ways to keep adults engaged at any age so that social isolation can be prevented in the future.



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