



National Health & Aging Trends Study

how daily life changes as we age

NHATS & you

Volume 1 – Issue 13.1

May 2023

Welcome and Thank You!

Welcome to the National Health and Aging Trends Study (NHATS), a national study of the ways daily life changes as we age. Since 2011, NHATS has been providing important information about the daily lives of older adults in the United States.

This year we welcome thousands of new participants like you who are joining us for the first time in 2023. From the interviewers, study staff, and leadership of NHATS, thank you!

Adding new participants (like you) to NHATS allows the study to continue to represent the experience of all older adults across the United States—whether you have just turned age 65 or are approaching age 100. The experience of every person selected for this study is important in providing a full picture of aging in America.

As shown in “NHATS by the Numbers,” NHATS is widely used by researchers (over 6,000 to date) to understand how life changes as we age. We are pleased to share with you a few recent findings from the study.



NHATS by the Numbers

12,000+

NHATS participants to date

6,000+

Researchers using NHATS data

600+

Publications in scientific journals

200+

Journals where research is published



Trending: #HomeSweetHome

Places that offer services - whether retirement communities, independent or assisted living facilities, or nursing homes - can be an important alternative to community living. But are these places becoming more popular as the population ages?

Researchers used NHATS to look at the latest trends in housing. They found that among adults ages 70 and older, living in the community has increased, while other settings have declined. The biggest increases were observed for those ages 90 and older.



Is the Doctor Available - Online?

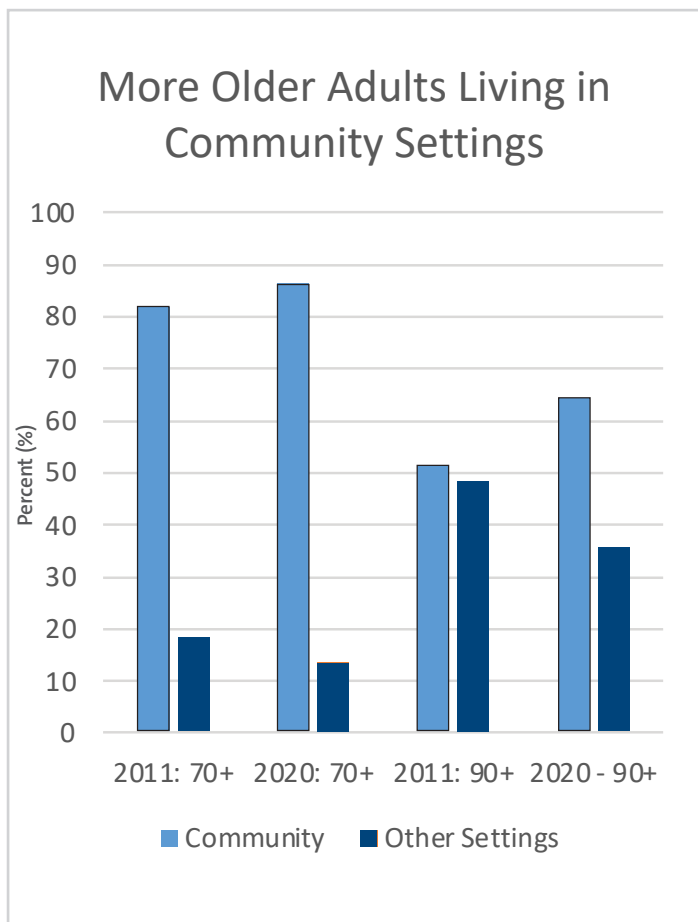
Nearly 4 in 10 older adults are going online to make health care appointments, get test results, request referrals or prescriptions, or get advice from their health care provider.

Using NHATS, researchers investigated barriers to contacting health care providers online. They found that in places without high-speed internet—sometimes called “Broadband” – older adults were much less likely to contact their health care providers online.

They concluded that extending broadband to more places might help more older adults engage in telehealth.

Going Online

Findings from NHATS show the resilience of many older adults during the pandemic. 9 out of 10 NHATS participants went online during the pandemic. Many increased or started going online to visit with family and friends, to contact medical providers, and to order groceries. And 3 out of 10 learned a new technology to make this happen.



Finding Another Route

Americans love their cars, but what if you have decided to stop driving? How do you stay connected?

Researchers investigated “alternative” modes of transportation – including getting a ride from others, walking, using public transportation and using paratransit services like a van or shuttle service for seniors or people with disabilities – and how well these options keep older adults connected.

They found that using alternative transportation methods made a difference in keeping those social connections flourishing. This can help older adults keep participating in activities they find valuable, like visiting friends and family, attending religious services, participating in clubs or organized events, and going out for enjoyment.



A Few of My Favorite Things

Maybe you love to read or go for long walks. Whatever your favorite activity, does doing that activity help you stay healthy? According to new research with NHATS it just might.

Researchers found that doing your favorite activity meant better physical function, fewer symptoms of depression, and – for some – better memory.

Top 5 Favorite Activities of NHATS Respondents

1. Walking or jogging
2. Outdoor maintenance
3. Reading
4. Other physical activity (exercise, yoga, working out, swimming, dancing)
5. Other outdoor 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.

As a follow-up to the NHATS study, we again will be interviewing family members and friends who have helped NHATS participants with their daily activities. NHATS participants can help make NSOC a success by providing contact information for family members and others who help with daily activities.

Caregiving During the Pandemic

Did the frequency of help change during the pandemic? While most caregivers reported no change, 30.5% reported an increase and 11.5% reported a decrease in the amount of help they provided during the pandemic. Those who reduced the amount of help they provided during the pandemic predominantly did so to protect their loved one from COVID-19 exposure.



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This study is sponsored by
the National Institute on Aging.