



Alignment Health's Fifth Annual Survey Finds Seniors Falling Further Behind: Aging in Place Challenges Continue to Rise as Support Gaps Widen

September 10, 2026

Key indicators worsened in 2026, including aging in place challenges, support gaps, and medical debt

ORANGE, Calif., Sept. 10, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Ninety percent of seniors report at least one factor affecting their health, independence or access to care, according to the newly released *2026 Social Threats to Aging Well in America* survey from Alignment Health, conducted in partnership with Ipsos. The fifth annual study finds that the challenges threatening healthy aging are worsening, reinforcing concerns that the systems supporting older Americans are struggling to keep pace with growing needs. The study reports that aging-in-place challenges, including concerns about independence and physical limitations, increased 4 percentage points year over year, while support gaps and medical debt also rose, highlighting continued pressure on seniors' ability to remain healthy and independent.

"Our findings reinforce what older adults have been telling us for years: healthy aging is about much more than what happens during a doctor's visit," said Dr. Ken Kim, chief medical officer at Alignment Health. "This year's results show that many seniors continue to face challenges related to maintaining their independence, accessing care and managing financial pressures. These findings reinforce that maintaining health and independence depends on much more than their medical care alone."

For the third consecutive year, seniors identified aging in place challenges (i.e., difficulty maintaining independence, remaining safely at home, or managing physical limitations), healthcare access (i.e., difficulty finding care, obtaining appointments, or accessing providers) and economic instability (i.e., concerns about affording healthcare and basic living expenses, medical debt, and rising costs) as the three greatest threats to healthy aging. More than one-quarter of seniors reported skipping needed medical care during the past year, and more than half reported experiencing stress or anxiety.

The study examined nine social barriers to aging well: aging in place challenges, economic instability, access to healthcare, transportation, lack of support, mental health, loneliness, cultural barriers and food insecurity. Respondents were also asked about the services and benefits they would be most likely to use if offered through their health plan.

Key Findings

The survey identified several significant trends affecting seniors nationwide:

- 90% of seniors report at least one social barrier affecting their health, well-being or access to care.
- 68% face aging-in-place challenges that affect their ability to remain safely and independently in their homes, making it the most commonly reported barrier, up four percentage points from 2025.
- 62% experience barriers to accessing needed healthcare services, including long waits for medical appointments.
- 54% cite economic instability, while 16% carry medical debt and 22% are uncertain they can cover future medical expenses.
- 38% lack sufficient support systems, a four-point increase from 2025.
- 57% experienced stress or anxiety in the past 12 months.

Skipping Healthcare Due to Social Challenges

The findings suggest social and economic challenges are increasingly affecting healthcare engagement. More than one-quarter of seniors (26%) reported skipping needed medical care during the past year. Among them, 57% cited access-related barriers as a reason for missing care. Notably, 34% cited aging-in-place challenges, a seven-point increase from 2025, suggesting that difficulties maintaining independence are increasingly preventing seniors from getting the care they need.

Seniors Seek Support Beyond Traditional Healthcare

The research also found strong interest in benefits and services that address social needs alongside medical care.

Seniors expressed the greatest interest in personalized wellness recommendations based on their medical history and information shared with their health plan (59%), followed by 24/7 access to doctors by phone or video (57%). Nearly one-half would use help paying for groceries (49%) or fresh food delivery (47%), while 43% would use a personal medical safety alert system and 42% would use memory exercises or other memory care support.

Not All Communities Prioritize the Same Supports

The survey also identified differences in the types of services seniors find most valuable across states. Surveyed seniors in North Carolina and Nevada expressed significantly greater interest in financial support services than seniors nationally. More than one-half of surveyed seniors in North Carolina reported they would use help paying rent, mortgage or utilities (52% vs. 44% nationally) and help paying for gas for their car (54% vs. 42% nationally). Surveyed seniors in Nevada reported similarly elevated interest in both services (54% and 49%, respectively). In North Carolina, surveyed seniors also expressed greater interest in services that support aging at home, including home safety modifications (50% vs. 39% nationally) and memory-care support (54% vs. 42% nationally).

The complete *2026 Social Threats to Aging Well in America* survey can be accessed here: alignmenthealth.com/survey2026

About 2026 Social Threats to Aging Well in America

This is the fifth consecutive year that Alignment Health has studied the social and environmental factors affecting U.S. seniors' health, and the third year in a row it has partnered with Ipsos, one of the world's largest market research and polling companies. The nationwide survey polled more than 2,200 Americans age 65 and older. The survey was offered in English and Spanish and is representative of the national senior population across key demographic characteristics.

About Alignment Health

Alignment Health is championing a new path in senior care that empowers members to age well and live their most vibrant lives. A consumer brand name of Alignment Healthcare (NASDAQ: ALHC), Alignment Health's mission-focused team makes high-quality, low-cost care a reality for its Medicare Advantage members every day. Based in California, the company partners with nationally recognized and trusted local providers to deliver coordinated care, powered by its customized care model, 24/7 concierge care team and purpose-built technology, AVA®. As it expands its offerings and grows its national footprint, Alignment upholds its core values of leading with a serving heart and putting the senior first. For more information, visit www.alignmenthealth.com.

Media Contact

Jerry Slowey

publicrelations@ahcusa.com