



Social Threats to Aging Well in America: New Study Reveals Economic Instability, Loneliness, Food Insecurity as Top 3 Barriers to Senior Health

August 29, 2022

National survey from Alignment Healthcare explores issues preventing seniors from accessing care, provides insights into possible solutions

ORANGE, Calif., Aug. 29, 2022 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- **Economic instability, loneliness and food insecurity** are the top three social barriers impacting seniors' access to comprehensive, affordable, high-quality health care, according to the **2022 Social Threats to Aging Well in America** survey released today by [Alignment Healthcare](#), a tech-enabled Medicare Advantage company. The inaugural study explores the financial, physical and emotional threats to seniors' ability to age well and live healthier, more prosperous lives.

Administered by Toluna and sponsored by Alignment, the study asked 2,601 adults aged 65 and older across the United States about their biggest obstacles to health care and the support they need to overcome those challenges. The study focused on environmental factors known as social determinants of health (SDoH), such as income and access to reliable transportation and healthy foods. SDoH are proven to have a far more significant impact on overall health than clinical care, [according to the National Academy of Medicine](#).

"With 10,000 adults turning 65 every day, it's more urgent than ever to understand the issues seniors face that impede their path to health, wellness and happiness," said Dr. Dinesh Kumar, chief medical and operating officer, Alignment Healthcare. "This study offers insights into those barriers and provides a window into the solutions we should consider to best address those needs. With this valuable information, we can help ensure our elders receive the attention, respect and care they need and deserve while raising expectations of what health care can be."

Highlights from the benchmark survey include:

Economic instability

- From medical debt to copays and more, survey results uncover that more than **1 in 5 U.S. seniors lists the inability to pay as their top barrier to health care in the next year.**
- **One in 10 says they do not have the resources and support** to cover medical bills, and nearly 1 in 6 carries medical debt. Of those with medical debt, **more than a quarter owe amounts equal to three months or more in living expenses.**
- One respondent wrote, "I'm going back to work at 80 years old to pay bills."

Loneliness

- According to the study, **21% of seniors rank loneliness and isolation as top factors causing stress and mental health issues.**
- Some seniors cite COVID-19 restrictions and fears for their feelings of isolation, while others are coping with deaths, relationship problems, distance from loved ones and more.
- **One in 5 seniors says they are lonelier now than they were a year ago**, and the same number says they won't have consistent companionship or in-home support in the next year.
- With 35% of seniors living alone, 1 in 5 says they would lean on non-medical companion care if available.

Food insecurity

- **Fifteen percent of seniors anticipate struggling to put healthy food on their table** in the next year.
- Food insecurity is spurred by rising costs at the checkout lane, physical difficulties in preparing meals for themselves, lack of reliable transportation and more.
- **One-third (33%) of seniors rank grocery assistance as their most important support priority.**

Transportation:

- More than 20% of respondents note the lack of reliable transportation as a problem when seeking medical care.
- One in 7 says they will not have consistent transportation to medical care in the next year.

Mental Health

- One-quarter of seniors say COVID-19 had the greatest negative impact on their mental health in the past year.
- Seniors see easier access to care (e.g., telehealth visits, transportation to medical appointments) as a benefit that could reduce stress while improving overall health.

Technology:

- One in 10 (10%) seniors says their lack of access to reliable technology — or difficulties using it — will be an obstacle to health and medical care in the next year.
- One in 7 (14%) lists technology training as a benefit they'd most like to access.

About the “2022 Social Threats to Aging Well in America” study

The online survey was conducted from July 24 to Aug. 13, 2022. It included a nationally and regionally representative sample of 2,601 seniors aged 65 and older, including more than 100 residents each in six states: Arizona, California, Florida, Nevada, North Carolina and Texas. This survey was designed to generate meaningful conversations about barriers to senior care. As this is the first Social Threats to Aging Well in America survey, it will serve as a benchmark for comparison for future results when possible and highlight differences for seniors going forward. View the full report [here](#).

About Alignment Healthcare

Alignment Healthcare is a consumer-centric platform delivering customized health care in the United States through its Medicare Advantage plans. The company provides partners and patients with customized care and service where they need it and when they need it, including clinical coordination, risk management and technology facilitation. Alignment Healthcare offers health plan options through Alignment Health Plan and also partners with select health plans to help deliver better benefits at lower costs.

Media Contact

Priya Shah
mPR, Inc. for Alignment Healthcare
alignment@mpublicrelations.com

An infographic accompanying this announcement is available at <https://ml.globenewswire.com/Resource/Download/d6d97b4c-c2df-4b74-9e45-df4a31985b3c>