



## **Social Threats to Aging Well in America: 2023 Survey Reveals Economic Instability, Food Insecurity, Lack of Support and Transportation Access as Top Barriers to Senior Health**

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**2nd annual Alignment Health report shows 1 in 5 seniors skip needed medical care, seniors are more depressed and anxious than a year ago**

ORANGE, Calif., Sept. 07, 2023 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Economic instability, food insecurity, lack of support and transportation access are the top social barriers to senior health, according to [Alignment Health's](#) second annual **Social Threats to Aging Well in America** survey, which explores the financial, physical and emotional threats to seniors' ability to age well and live healthier, more prosperous lives.

This year's report reveals a slight shift in the top social barriers impacting senior health compared to last year. In 2022, seniors ranked economic instability, loneliness and food insecurity as their top barriers. This year, food insecurity moved up to the No. 2 spot while transportation access entered the top three. Additionally, while last year's report singled out loneliness as a top barrier, the 2023 survey asked seniors to provide insight on the importance of lack of support.

"It's no surprise to see food insecurity and transportation access among seniors' top concerns, given record inflation at the grocery checkout line, gas pumps and vehicle repair shops, as well as in the housing sector and elsewhere. Many people must choose between a roof over their head and a car to drive, food or medical care," said Dr. Adam Wolk, regional chief medical officer of Alignment Health. "Through this survey, Alignment gives seniors a voice so we can better understand and help alleviate their obstacles to health and happiness."

Alignment's 2023 survey notes that 1 in 5 seniors are skipping medical care, primarily due to lack of money and transportation. Additionally, 1 in 5 seniors say they are more depressed now than they were a year ago, and the leading cause of depression and anxiety among seniors is their health.

Highlights from the 2023 Social Threats to Aging Well in America survey include:

### **Economic Instability**

- Of the 1 in 5 seniors who skip medical care, 29% say they were worried about not having enough money to pay for needed care.
- When picking a single obstacle to health and wellness, difficulty paying for medical expenses is singled out by 1 in 5 seniors.
- 1 in 9 say they do not have the resources and support to cover medical bills in the next year and 1 in 7 (14%) carry medical debt. Half of those with medical debt have debts equivalent to at least one month of living expenses.
- The ability to pay for living expenses is a leading cause of depression and anxiety for 1 in 4 respondents.

### **Food Insecurity**

- Of those who are concerned about negative impacts to their health in the next year, nearly 1 in 5 survey respondents (19%) cite a lack of healthy food to eat – up from 15% last year.
- More than 1 in 11 say struggling to put healthy food on the table causes depression and anxiety.
- For the second consecutive year, a monthly grocery allowance ranks highest as the benefit seniors say they would use if their health insurance offered it (55%).

### **Lack of Support**

- Of those who are concerned about negative impacts to their health in the next year, nearly 1 in 5 seniors shared they had no one to help them.
- Additionally, nearly 11% of seniors who skipped needed medical care in the last year say they did so because of a lack of support.
- When asked what seniors think could prevent them from staying in their own home as they age, 26% cite a lack of support as a barrier to their ongoing independence.
- Nearly 1 in 5 seniors say they would use non-medical companionship if available to them through health insurance.

### **Transportation**

- 1 in 8 (12%) seniors cite a lack of reliable transportation as a barrier to their independence and ability to stay home as they age.
- More than 18% of seniors who skipped needed medical care in the last year say they did so because they did not have a ride.
- 2 in 5 (44%) seniors say they would use fuel assistance to and from medical appointments if available to them through

their health insurance.

### Loneliness

- Nearly 1 in 3 seniors say they frequently go two weeks or more without spending time with others — if ever.
- 1 in 5 seniors say they are lonelier now than they were a year ago.
- When asked what caused the most depression or anxiety for them in the last year, loneliness landed in the top three, impacting the mental health of nearly 1 in 5 respondents (19%).

### Mental Health

- Of those seniors who anticipate health obstacles in the next year, more than a quarter are concerned their mental health will negatively impact their physical health.
- Nearly 1 in 10 seniors cite depression and anxiety as their top health and wellness obstacles.
- The leading cause of depression and anxiety among seniors is their health (35%).

### Aging in Place

- While [93% of U.S. adults say aging in place is important to them](#),<sup>1</sup> the 2023 Social Threats to Aging Well in America survey finds that concern about losing their independence is a top cause of depression and anxiety among seniors nationwide.
- Seniors say they want and would use help to maintain their independence if health insurance offered benefits, such as:
  - Help making their homes safer (35%)
  - Personal medical safety alert system (35%)
  - In-home health care visits (34%)
  - Non-medical companion care (18%)

### About the 2023 Social Threats to Aging Well in America survey

The 2023 Social Threats to Aging Well in America survey was administered by Toluna and sponsored by Alignment Health, a Medicare Advantage company.

This survey was designed to identify challenges and concerns that prevent seniors from getting the kind of care they need, to generate discussions about seniors' needs in the U.S. and to compare results from 2023 to the benchmark survey in 2022 where applicable.

Conducted online from June 28 to July 10, 2023, the survey included a nationally and regionally representative sample of 2,601 U.S. seniors ages 65 and older, including more than 100 senior residents each in six states: Arizona, California, Florida, Nevada, North Carolina and Texas. To qualify, respondents from Toluna's research panel had to be 65 years or older, live in the United States and be able to identify the type of health insurance they had.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Toluna surveys. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in Toluna surveys (and not on the total US population), no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated. Please note that the survey's sample size and differences in year-over-year data may not represent statistical significance.

View the full report at [alignmenthealth.com/survey2023](https://alignmenthealth.com/survey2023).

### 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 is a tech-enabled Medicare Advantage company that offers more than 40 benefits-rich, value-driven plans that serve 52 counties across six states. 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<sup>®</sup>. Based in California, the company's mission-focused team makes high-quality, low-cost care a reality for members every day. 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](https://www.alignmenthealth.com).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.usnews.com/360-reviews/services/senior-tech-aging-in-place-survey>

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