



FACT SHEET SOURCES & METHODS

SUPPORTING SOCIAL CONNECTION FOR OLDER ADULTS: PET ASSISTANT PROGRAMS

OLDER ADULTS ARE AT HIGH RISK OF SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS.

- A. **“1 in 4 seniors live alone”** is from the 2023 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living (ACL), Tabulations of American Community Survey Demographic and Household Data 2021. Release date: 3/6/2023. Data are for 50 state + DC and for adults age 60 and above. Tabulations were produced from the 1-Year Public Use 5% Microdata Sample (PUMS) file. Available here: <https://agid.acl.gov/>
- B. **“56% of Meals on Wheels home-delivered meal clients live alone”** is from the ACL 2022 National Survey of Older Americans Act Nutrition Program Participants Frequency tables. Release date: 03/06/2023. Available here: <https://agid.acl.gov/>
- C. **“1 in 3 adults age 60+ feel lonely”** is from a special data file request from a September 2018 AARP Research report by A. Oscar and C. Thayer titled *Loneliness and Social Connections: A National Survey of Adults 45 and Older*. Estimate calculated by Meals on Wheels America and is for adults ages 60 and older living in the United States. Available here: https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/surveys_statistics/life-leisure/2018/loneliness-social-connections-2018.doi.10.26419-2Fres.00246.001.pdf
- D. **“The negative consequences of social isolation include...”** is from our 2023 report, *Effective Solutions to Address Social Isolation and Loneliness Through Meals on Wheels*. Available here: https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/docs/default-source/research/effective-solutions-to-address-social-isolation-and-loneliness-through-meals-on-wheels_june-2023_full-report.pdf

PETS PROVIDE OLDER ADULTS WITH VITAL SOCIAL CONNECTION.

- E. **Pets improve the physical and mental health of their human caregivers...**
 - a) **“Improved cardiovascular health”** is a finding from the American Heart Association. Available here: <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-bond-for-life-pets/pet-owners>
 - b) **“Increased physical activity”** is from:
 - Thorpe RJ, Kreisle RA, Glickman LT, Simonsick EM, Newman AB, Kritchevsky S. Physical activity and pet ownership in year 3 of the Health ABC study. *J Aging Phys Act.* 2006;14(2):154-168. doi:10.1123/japa.14.2.154. Available here: <https://journals.humankinetics.com/view/journals/japa/14/2/article-p154.xml>
 - Stanley IH, Conwell Y, Bowen C, Van Orden KA. Pet ownership may attenuate loneliness among older adult primary care patients who live

alone. *Aging & Mental Health*. 2014;18(3):394-399.
doi:10.1080/13607863.2013.837147. Available here:
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13607863.2013.837147>

- c) **“Increased opportunities for human interaction”** is from the report, Dog ownership, health and physical activity: a critical review of the literature. Available here:
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1353829206000062?via%3Dihub>
 - d) **“Stronger community connections”** is a specific reference to higher social capital paired with this citation. The finding is from an international study conducted in collaboration with Waltham Petcare Science Institute. Available at:
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352827317300344>
- F. The following findings are from our 2022 Pets Comparison Study, Meals on Wheels America and Arizona State University (internal document).
- a) **“100% believe their pet brings happiness to their life”**
 - b) **“100% feel that their pet is a member of their family”**
 - c) **“98% say their pet makes them feel less lonely”**
 - d) **“97% say their pet comforts them when they have bad feelings”**
 - e) **“96% feel their pet makes them healthier”**
 - f) **“Clients with pets reported higher social engagement with family and friends than clients without pets”**

SENIORS STRUGGLE TO CARE FOR THEIR ANIMAL COMPANIONS.

- G. **“The most needed services are pet food, vaccinations, nail trimming and assistance in lifting food”** is a finding that combines the most needed services from the following reports:
- a) 2023 Meals on Wheels Pet Programming and Client Needs Assessment. Available here: https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/docs/default-source/research/pet-programming-and-client-needs-assessment_final-report.pdf?sfvrsn=29c0b03b_2
 - b) 2022 Pets Comparison Study, Meals on Wheels America and Arizona State University (internal document)
- H. The following findings are from our 2021 Meals on Wheels Pet Programming and Client Needs Assessment. Available here: https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/docs/default-source/research/pet-programming-and-client-needs-assessment_final-report.pdf?sfvrsn=29c0b03b_2
- a. **“1 in 2 clients reported being unable to access either preventative or sick/emergency veterinary care”**
 - i. **“45% were unable to get preventative care for their pets”**
 - ii. **“22% were unable to get sick or emergency care for their pets”**

- b. **“The primary barriers to accessing veterinary care are cost and transportation”**

SENIOR PET OWNERS CAN FACE IMPOSSIBLE CHOICES

- I. The following findings are from our 2021 Meals on Wheels Pet Programming and Client Needs Assessment. Available here: https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/docs/default-source/research/pet-programming-and-client-needs-assessment_final-report.pdf?sfvrsn=29c0b03b_2
 - a. **More than 1 in 5 reported going without food themselves to feed their pets.**
 - b. **29% have gone without necessities for themselves – such as medical care, paying bills, utilities – to provide for their pets.**

MEALS ON WHEELS PET PROGRAMS KEEP OLDER ADULTS AND THEIR PETS TOGETHER

- J. **“1 in 2 clients have no one outside of Meals on Wheels to help them with their pets”** is a finding from findings are from our 2021 Meals on Wheels Pet Programming and Client Needs Assessment. Available here: https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/docs/default-source/research/pet-programming-and-client-needs-assessment_final-report.pdf?sfvrsn=29c0b03b_2
- K. **“44% of Meals on Wheels Members provide pet services”** is from the Meals on Wheels America 2023 Member Benchmarking Survey, conducted by Meals on Wheels America in Spring 2023. Report summary will be available in 2023.
- L. **“97% of clients say that Meals on Wheels support makes it possible to keep their pet”** is from our Meals on Wheels Loves Pets 2021 Client Outcome Surveys (internal document).

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