

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 2022 Administration for Community Living (ACL) American Community Survey (ACS) Demographic and Household Data, 1-Year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS). Data reflects the number of seniors living alone in 2022 who are age 60 and older. Data available in the ACL AGing, Independence, and Disability Program Data Portal (AGID), American Community Survey (ACS) Demographic and Household Data. Release date 1/30/2024. Available at: <https://agid.acl.gov/>
- B. **“59% of Meals on Wheels home-delivered meal clients live alone”** is from the 2023 Administration for Community Living (ACL) National Survey of Older Americans Act (OAA) Participants. Figures are from the responses of a nationally representative sample of clients receiving Home-delivered meals funded through Title III of the OAA (weighted data). Data obtained through special request from ACL.
- C. **“56% of older adults feel lonely”** is from Meals on Wheels America analysis of data from the 2022 Health and Retirement Study (HRS), weighted data. Based on UCLA 3 items: (How often do you feel that you lack companionship / left out / isolated from others?). Includes persons age 60 or older who reported “some of the time” or “often” to any of the three questions.
- 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>
 - 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. “41% of Meals on Wheels Members provide pet services” is from the Meals on Wheels America 2025 Member Benchmarking Survey, conducted by Meals on Wheels America.
- 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).

SUPPORT MEALS ON WHEELS PET PROGRAMS TODAY