



Where We Live, Where We Age:  
**Home is at the Heart of Older Adults' Well-Being**



Communities greatly influence their residents' quality of life and are fundamental to people living happier, healthier lives. Communities are places where residents build relationships with friends and neighbors, healthcare providers, community organizations, schools, and businesses. Given the impact communities have on residents' long-term well-being, particularly for older adults, they should include features that allow people of all ages to thrive, age with dignity, and offer choices in how and where residents want to live.

Housing is a key community feature, important for supporting residents' well-being and path for aging in place, or the ability to live in one's own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably as one ages. Every community should ensure that residents of all ages and abilities have access to appropriate housing that supports their changing needs, especially older adults. It is extremely important for communities to provide affordable and well-located housing options that foster successful aging in place.

The 2021 Home and Community Preferences Survey, reveals that housing is a key factor for 50-plus adults when considering where to live. Nearly half of 50-plus adults say they would actually relocate to a different community to have more affordable housing options (45%) and housing choices that fit their changing needs as they age (41%).

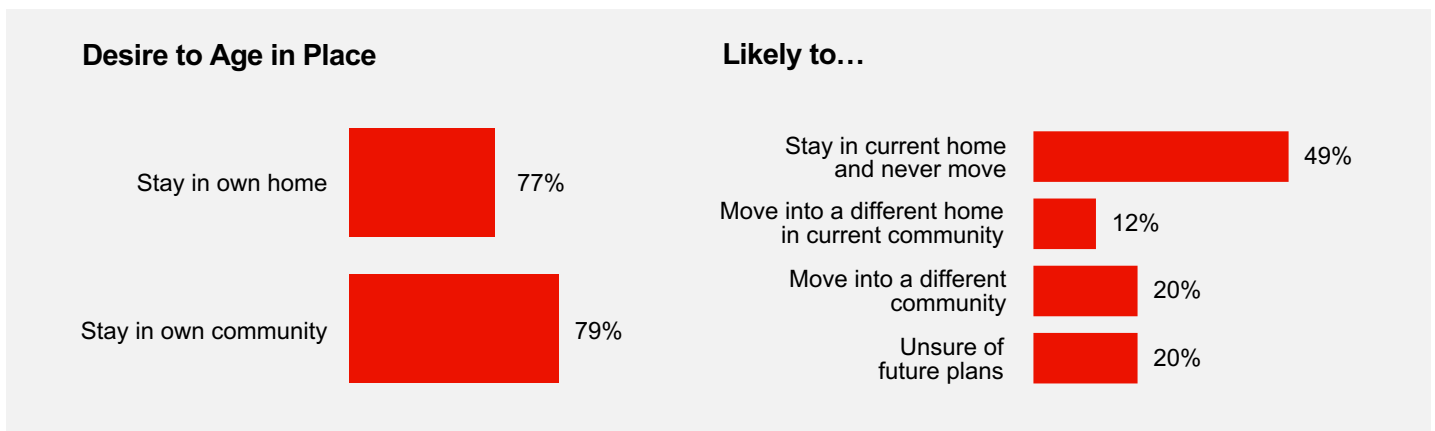
*"The home is central to individual and community well-being and should support our lives both today and into the future. While the majority of Americans want to live independently in their homes as they age, we expect that by 2030, our nation will face a severe shortage in accessible and affordable housing to meet the needs of 1 in 5 Americans who will be over the age of 65 in our country."*

– AARP Future of Housing Initiative

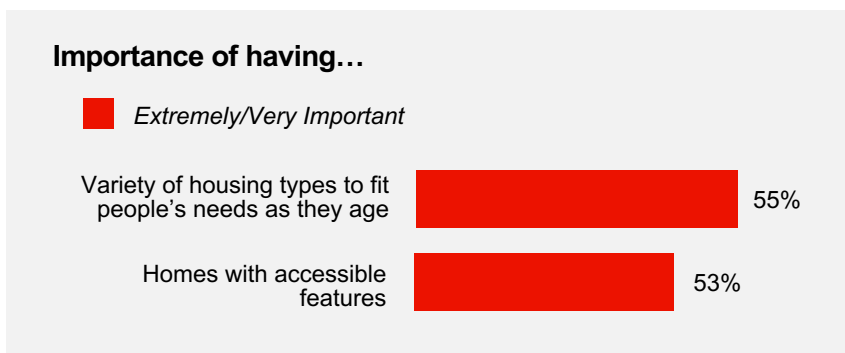




The survey reinforces the notion that older adults want to continue living independently in their community and their own homes for as long as possible. Nearly four in five 50-plus adults want to remain in their own homes (77%) and communities (79%) throughout their life. Further, three in five (60%) are actively making lifelong plans to stay in their community, either in their current home (48%) or a different home (12%). Communities need to make aging in place a reality for older adults by providing housing options that are suitable for adults as they age and that includes things like home modification and maintenance services as well as homes with universal design features.



Most adults are homeowners, and many will need to update their homes to allow them to age in place. About two-thirds (63%) of adults 18-plus across the nation own their home and 82% of these homeowners live in single-family homes. Homeownership is even higher among adults 50-plus. Having housing stock that supports peoples' changing needs as they age is also important to older adults. More than half place high importance on having a variety of housing types that fit people's needs as they age such as homes that have accessible features like no-step entries and wider doorways (53%), smaller single-family homes, multifamily homes, and apartments (55%).

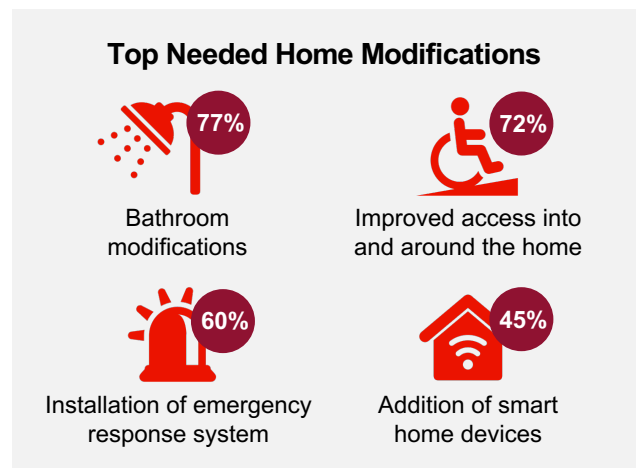


Homeownership is even higher among adults 50-plus, with 79% owning their home, and 84% living in single-family homes.





A third (33%) of all 50-plus adults believe they will have to make some home modifications to their current residence to make it suitable for aging in place. The most cited modifications are bathroom changes (77%), improved access into and around the home (72%), installation of a medical emergency response system (60%), and addition of smart home devices, for example, a voice-activated home assistant, doorbell camera, or smart appliances (45%). More than three in five older adults believe that having trustworthy and affordable home repair contractors (76%) as well as home repair services specifically for older adults and those with limited incomes (61%) are very important to have in their community to ensure that people can continue to live independently as they age.



Moreover, older adults believe it is important for communities to have affordable homes that are located near essential services and include features and technologies that support independent living. Three in five 50-plus adults believe it is important to have affordable housing options for people of all income levels (62%) and that are located close to key services like grocery stores and healthcare facilities (63%). In-home technology is another feature that can foster living independently. Many older adults say it is important to have access to reliable and affordable in-home high-speed internet (76%) that can support technology like smart appliances, voice-activated home assistants, and doorbell cameras.

### Importance of having...



*Extremely/Very Important*



In an effort to remain in their current communities, 50-plus adults would consider alternative housing options such as accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and home-sharing arrangements that could help them achieve their aging in place goals.

Although most older adults do not currently have ADUs on their property, many would consider building or living in one. The presence of ADUs is very low—only 4% of adults 50 and older report having an ADU on their property. However, a far higher percentage of 50-plus adults say they would consider building an ADU on their property (28%).



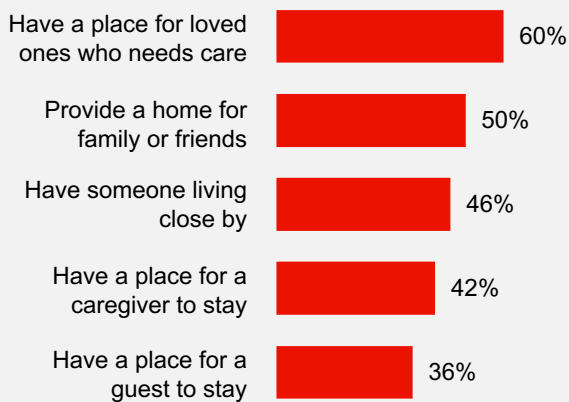
One in six (16%) 50-plus adults are caregivers for an older loved one, and 38% say the person they are caring for lives with them.

The predominant factors that would motivate 50-plus adults to build an ADU on their property are to have a place for a loved one who needs care (60%) and to provide a home for family members or friends in need (50%). Other motivating factors for older adults are to have someone living close by (46%) and to have a place for a caregiver (42%) or a guest (36%) to stay. More than four in ten (46%) 50-plus adults are providing care for an older adult who is living on their own, and more than half (56%) say they are concerned about this person being able to remain living on their own. Almost another quarter (22%) believe they will be caregivers at some point in the future.

On the other hand, more than seven in ten (71%) 50-plus adults say they would not build an ADU on their property simply because they do not see a need for one. Other factors that inhibit older adults from building an ADU are the construction costs (53%), not wanting the responsibility of being a landlord (43%), and incurring a potential increase in property taxes (42%).

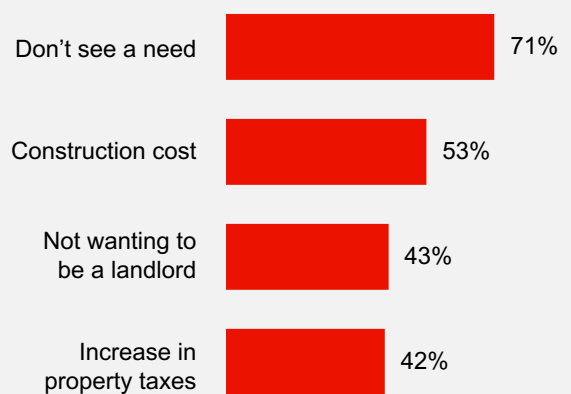
### Top Reasons for Building an ADU

■ Major Factor



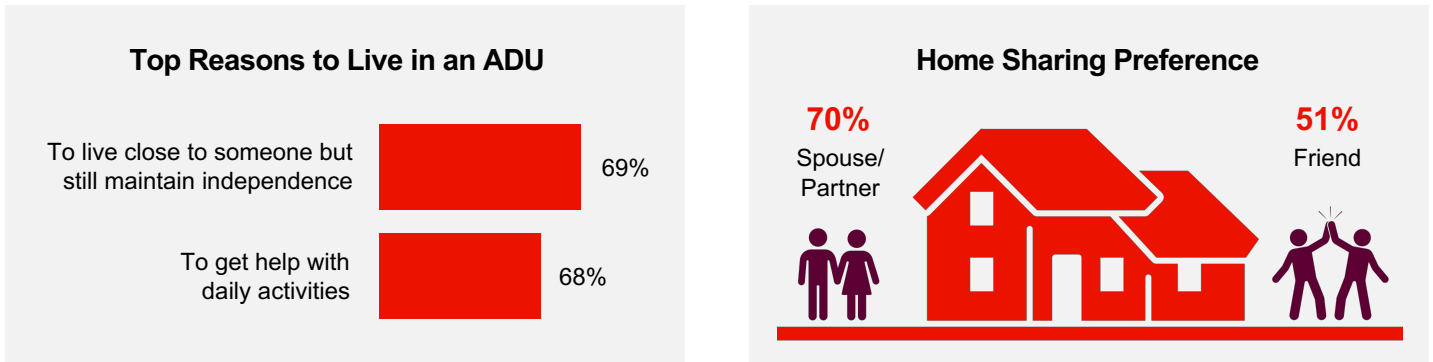
### Top Reasons for Not Building an ADU

■ Major Factor





Many older adults, including those who would not build an ADU on their property, are open to living in an ADU or even sharing their homes, if it meant that they could continue to live independently at home for as long as possible. Almost seven in ten say they would consider living in an ADU to live close to someone while maintaining their independence (69%) or to get help with daily activities (68%). Likewise, 70% of adults 50-plus would consider sharing their home with a family member other than a spouse or partner, and about half (51%) would consider sharing their home with a friend.



## Implications

People, particularly older adults, have a strong desire to stay in their homes and the communities where they have spent years making connections and commitments to homes, friendships, community organizations, and local social ties. To support this desire, communities must work towards providing housing options that are affordable, appropriate, safe, and well-located for all residents regardless of age, physical ability, or income. Working with local realtors, home builders and contractors is a good avenue for communities to ensure that residents have access to home maintenance and modification services as well as housing choices that could include things like universal design features making it possible for them to age in place.

To further support peoples' aspirations for aging in place, communities should promote and facilitate alternative living options like ADUs and home-sharing arrangements as these are things that people would consider, especially as they grow older and may need some help. Educating residents on the benefits of these alternatives could motivate more people to participate in these types of living arrangements. Moreover, advocating for legislation and policies that support the construction of ADUs such as easy permitting processes and tax breaks or incentives could increase the adoption of this housing option. Connecting residents with home-sharing arrangements through local sources like community newsletters or social media could be another effective way to help residents continue to live in their homes and communities as they age.

Given the overwhelming desire of older adults to age in place, it is imperative for communities to provide suitable housing and relevant resources so that their residents, particularly older adults, can successfully continue to live and thrive in their communities.

## Methodology

Data for this study was collected via an online survey of 2,826 adults age 18 and older. The survey was fielded from June 9th to July 6th, 2021, by NORC using its online AmeriSpeak Panel that is representative of the U.S. population. The data were weighted by age, gender, Census region, race/ethnicity, income, and education to benchmarks from the February 2021 Current Population Survey (CPS). Additionally, the data were weighted by AARP membership using statistics from the AARP membership database. The data for this report are based largely on 1,320 survey respondents age 50 and older.



For more information on the survey and methodology, contact authors: Joanne Binette ([jbinette@aarp.org](mailto:jbinette@aarp.org)) and Fanni Farago. For media inquiries, contact [media@aarp.org](mailto:media@aarp.org).

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