



TO: Interested Parties
FR: Jason Box; 3W Insights
DA: June 29, 2021
RE: U.S. Attitudes About Investing in Aging Services for Older Adults

The following is an assessment of our findings from a national survey of U.S. adults, conducted for LeadingAge, on perceptions of how older adults are treated in the United States. The online survey of 800 Americans ages 18 and over was fielded June 15-20, 2021, and has a margin of error of +/- 3.5%. The margin of error is larger for subgroups.

Executive Summary

Wide majorities of Americans—across every age category, racial group, gender, and location—believe there is a real problem with how we treat older adults, see a prominent role for the government to resolve these problems (in fact, strongly believe elected officials have failed seniors), and strongly assert that more public investments must be made—now—to properly support our nation’s older adults.

Key Findings

- 1) **Vast majorities of Americans believe how we treat seniors in this country is a problem.** Despite the fact that more than nine in ten Americans believe “older Americans should have the support and resources they need to lead a fulfilling life” (91%), fewer than half of all Americans agree (46%) that “older adults are treated well in the United States.” Just one in three rural Americans agree that we treat seniors well (32%), as do just one in three women (36%).
- 2) **Americans say older adults deserve better.** Nearly nine in ten (85%) agree that “every American has a right to receive a basic level of housing, health care, and essential support regardless of age.”
 - a. And the same percentage (85%) agrees that now is “the right time to think about building a better system for our seniors.” Agreement with these statements is higher than 80% for every primary subgroup measured.
 - b. When asked on what issues the President and Congress should be focused on in the next few months, nearly one in five believe they should be focused on “improving care and services for seniors” (18%). In addition, 34% say our government should be focused on improving health care.

- 3) **An overwhelming percentage of Americans feel the government has failed to support older adults**—and those who care for them—by ignoring and underfunding America's aging services for decades” (83% agree).
 - a. This issue is not just important to seniors (85% of whom agree); in fact, the groups who are most passionate in their views that seniors have been failed by Washington include 18-29 year olds (84% agree), those who have been consumers of aging services for themselves or a family member (86%), and rural Americans (85%).
 - b. And 82% of those 18-29—the group farthest away from having to think about senior care and services—agree that the government “must make a bigger investment in services and care for seniors.”

- 4) **Americans strongly agree that the government has a prominent role to play here** – more than four in five U.S. adults agree that the government “has an important role in ensuring that seniors are taken care of” (89%) and that it “must make a bigger investment in services and care for seniors” (86%).
 - a. Just one in five Americans (22%) agree that “the amount of money the government spends on older people is too high,” disabusing those critics who argue that as a country we spend too much on seniors.
 - b. And just 17% of those 45-64, 17% of those who live in the suburbs, 16% of rural Americans, and 15% of women believe we spend too much on older adults.

- 5) **Nearly all Americans believe that support from government must take the form of greater public investments**—investments in:
 - a. “Affordable home care services to help older adults with essential needs like bathing and dressing, medication management, transportation, and basic daily chores” (89% support);
 - b. “Housing and support for low-income older adults to address the shortage and waiting lists that lead to homelessness, instability, and skipping meals and medicine to pay rent” (86% support);
 - c. “Broadband internet to ensure equitable access for older adults who need this basic utility for telehealth and other care services and to fight social isolation” (83% support).
 - d. **Support for these investments is incredibly high, regardless of race, age, or where people live.**

- 6) **Support for greater investment in services for older adults is bipartisan.**
 - a. While more than nine in ten Democrats agree now is the time to think about fixing this system (91%), so do 83% of Independents and 80% of Republicans.
 - b. Only 14% of Republicans, 13% of Independents and 31% of Democrats agree that “the amount of **money the government spends on older people is too high.**”
 - c. And 92% of Democrats, 84% of Independents and 80% of Republicans agree “the government must make a bigger investment in services and care for seniors.”