



INTERNATIONAL
FOOD INFORMATION
COUNCIL FOUNDATION

Funded by

AARP Foundation®

2017 FOOD & HEALTH SURVEY

OLDER ADULTS: A PICTURE OF HEALTH AND HARDSHIP

Older adults are highly motivated to achieve better health, and are more likely to adopt healthy eating behaviors compared to their younger counterparts. But this overall motivation doesn't translate into better health outcomes for all, especially the lower income aging population. This demographic faces barriers that lead them to lag behind in the pursuit of good health.

The Health-Driven Generations

Older adults are more confident about their food choices. Like other age groups, they encounter a lot of conflicting information about which foods to eat but are much less likely to doubt their choices as a result. Nearly two-thirds of younger Americans (61%) report that they doubt their food choices because of conflicting nutrition information while less than half (47%) of Americans over 50 report this doubt.

They also use fewer information sources to make their decisions. Boomers report using roughly two out of a list of 14 sources for information on what foods to eat and avoid, while millennials report using approximately three out of the 14 sources.



An Apple a Day

Older adults are more likely to adopt and maintain healthy eating behaviors. More than eight in ten (84%) Americans over the age of 50 try to eat more fruits and vegetables, while only three-quarters (76%) of younger Americans do the same.

Americans over the age of 50 may also be more nutrition savvy than their younger counterparts. This group is more likely than younger Americans to be able to name specific foods associated with the health benefits that they seek. Nearly two thirds (60%) of Americans ages 50 to 80 were able to name a food or nutrient associated with their desired health benefit, as opposed to half (49%) of those under 50.

Health Disparities

The biggest differences among older adults lie along socioeconomic lines. Low income older adults report poorer health, higher BMI and higher rates of diabetes and stress.

Low income older adults also have unique health priorities. This subgroup is more likely to prioritize

extra income for groceries, or to cover expenses for medication and health care. Those with higher income are more likely to save or invest the money. Also, if given an extra four hours per week, low income older adults are more likely to use it to catch up on sleep or rest. Those with higher incomes are more likely to spend extra time with friends and family.

Use of nutrition information is also linked to income. Compared to their wealthier counterparts, low income Americans ages 50 to 80 report lower use and familiarity with nutrition education tools like USDA's Myplate graphic. This group is also less likely to use nutrition information when eating out.

