



Beyond Expectations:
Unveiling Senior Living
Consumer Demands for 2024



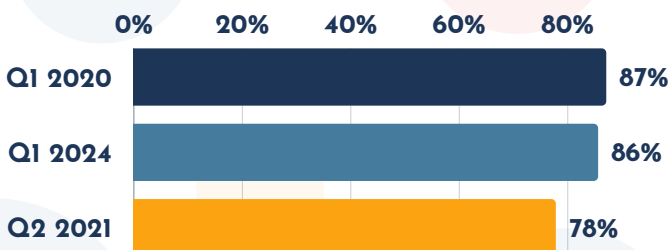


Introduction

Senior Living Preferences: Impact on Community Success and Resident Satisfaction

With so many options for senior living these days, it's important to understand what really matters to older adults and their families when choosing a home. At **A Closer Look**, we've seen how things like quality of care, available amenities, how engaged the staff are, and of course, cost, all play a big role. These factors don't just affect how happy residents are – they impact how much peace of mind families have, and ultimately, how well a community does in terms of keeping rooms filled and staying financially healthy.

The senior living industry often faces challenges in meeting the evolving needs of prospective residents and their families on topics like affordability and quality of care, all of which impact occupancy. The current occupancy rate for senior housing properties averaged **85.6% in Q1 2024**, down from the pandemic occupancy high of **87.1% in Q1 2020**, but significantly improved from the all-time industry low of **77.8% in Q2 of 2021**, post-pandemic.^[1]



1. <https://seniorhousingnews.com/2024/04/04/senior-housing-occupancy-rate-inches-closer-to-pre-pandemic-levels/>

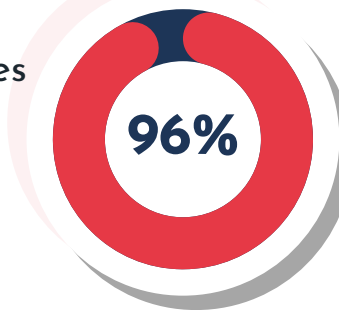


The industry is also grappling with persistent staffing shortages, which pose a significant challenge. In the United States, **99%** of nursing homes and **96%** of assisted living facilities are facing severe staffing shortages. Since March 2020, the nursing home sector has seen a reduction of approximately **235,000** employed workers.^[2]

Staffing Shortages:



99% of nursing homes in the United States are facing severe staffing shortages.



96% of assisted living facilities in the United States are facing severe staffing shortages.

Workforce Reduction:

235,000

Workers Lost in the Nursing Home Sector **Since March 2020**



2. <https://agentblog.nationwide.com/commercial-insights/specialty-care/staffing-shortages-create-challenges-for-senior-living-facilities/>



To quantify the impact of various factors on consumer preferences and decision-making in the senior living sector, we commissioned this Senior Living Consumer Demands Report. Our goal is to provide actionable insights into how factors such as cost, care quality, amenities, and staff engagement affect consumer satisfaction, community selection, and ultimately, the success of senior living providers.

Building on our comprehensive study from 2023, this year's report provides not only current insights but also valuable year-over-year comparisons. This longitudinal perspective allows us to track evolving trends and preferences in the senior living market.

This report aims to explore:

- The frequency and nature of interactions with senior living communities
- Key factors influencing community selection
- Consumer expectations regarding services and amenities
- The impact of staff quality on resident satisfaction
- Perceptions of cost and payment options
- Attitudes towards alternative care options
- Desired improvements in senior living communities





Methodology

To gain comprehensive insights into senior living preferences and their impact on consumer behavior, we conducted a survey of 733 respondents, with 522 having recent direct interaction with a senior living community. This study focused on their experiences with and perceptions of senior living options. The survey consisted of multiple-choice questions and covered various aspects of the senior living decision-making process and experience.



733

Respondents Surveyed



522

Had Recent Direct Interaction
with a Senior Living Community

Our 2024 survey replicates many key questions from our 2023 study, allowing for direct year-over-year comparisons on critical metrics such as likelihood of moving to a senior living community, cost perceptions, and payment expectations. We also collected new insights for 2024. This multi-year approach enables us to identify both persistent trends and emerging shifts in consumer attitudes.



Key Findings

Our analysis of the survey data revealed several important insights about senior living preferences and trends:

- Most respondents (**71.2%**) have recently interacted with senior living communities, showing strong market interest
- While phone calls and in-person tours remain popular, digital engagement methods are gaining traction
- Quick follow-up by communities significantly impacts potential residents' decisions
- Cost and location are the top factors influencing community selection
- Care management and memory care are the most valued services
- Staff behavior and engagement heavily influence perceptions of communities
- Diversity in staff and residents is becoming increasingly important to prospective residents and their families
- Fewer people are considering moves to senior living communities compared to our 2023 study
- Perceptions of assisted living costs have remained stable year-over-year
- More people expect to use personal funds to pay for senior living expenses, continuing a trend observed in our 2023 study
- Alternative care options like in-home care or living with family are gaining popularity

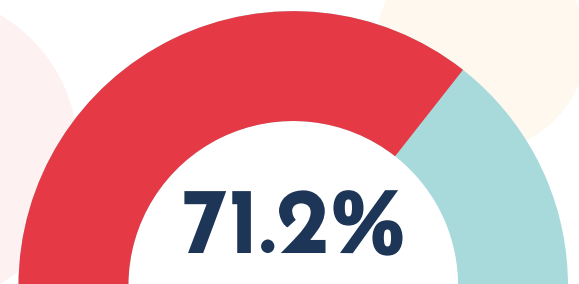


These findings highlight the challenges and opportunities facing senior living communities as they strive to meet evolving consumer expectations. The following sections explore each of these areas in detail, offering actionable insights for providers to enhance their services and appeal to potential residents.

Detailed Findings

1. Engagement with Senior Living Communities

A striking **71.2%** of respondents have contacted or toured a senior living community in the past year, signaling robust market interest. This high engagement rate presents both significant opportunities and intense competition for senior living providers. With nearly three-quarters of respondents actively exploring options, the data underscores a growing demand for these services, likely driven by demographic shifts and changing attitudes towards senior care.



The substantial interest, however, comes with its own set of challenges. Potential residents and their families are likely considering multiple options, making it crucial for communities to differentiate themselves in a crowded market. To capitalize on this interest, providers must prioritize their marketing and outreach efforts. Every interaction with a potential resident or family member should serve as an opportunity to showcase unique value propositions, whether through specialized care services, innovative amenities, or a particularly engaging community atmosphere.

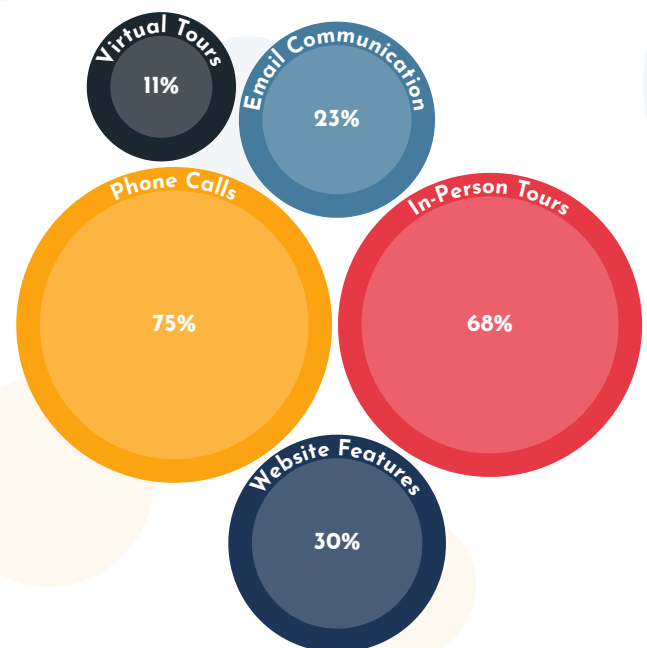


This high engagement rate indicates that communities should be prepared for a constant stream of inquiries and tours. This necessitates well-trained staff and efficient processes to handle increased interest. Communities that quickly and effectively respond to this demand gain a significant competitive advantage.

The data also reflects broader demographic trends, as the aging baby boomer population fuels demand for senior living options. As this trend continues, we can expect to see further evolution in the types of services and amenities that seniors and their families prioritize. Communities that can adapt to these changing needs while offering unique, high-quality experiences are likely to thrive in this dynamic and growing market.

2. Methods of Contact

Digital engagement is reshaping how seniors and their families connect with living communities, though traditional methods still dominate the landscape. Our survey reveals a multi-channel approach to community engagement, with **30.1%** of respondents using website features, **23%** using email, and **10.8%** participating in virtual tours. Despite this digital shift, phone calls (**74.8%**) and in-person tours (**68.4%**) remain the most popular methods of contact, highlighting the enduring importance of personal interaction in the senior living decision-making process.





This evolving mix of communication channels reflects the diverse preferences of today's seniors and their families. The persistence of traditional contact methods underscores the need for well-trained staff who can effectively handle phone inquiries and conduct in-person tours. Similarly, staff must be equipped to respond promptly and professionally to email inquiries, which represent a significant portion of initial contacts.

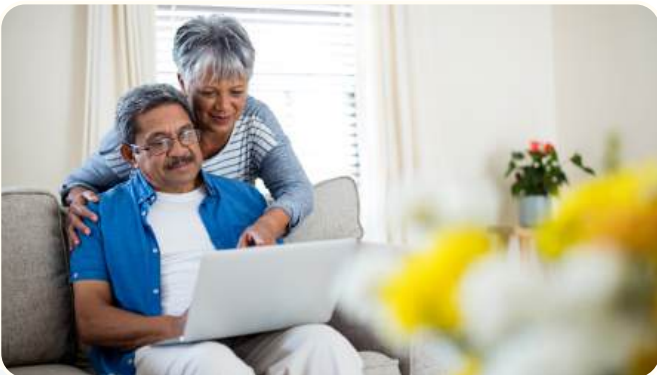
The growing use of digital methods indicates that senior living communities need to invest in user-friendly websites with features like chat functions, detailed information pages, and high-quality virtual tour capabilities. They should also ensure their email communication is prompt, informative, and personalized. These digital tools, including email, can serve as a crucial first step in the decision-making process, allowing potential residents and their families to gather information and narrow down their options before making direct contact.





As technology adoption among seniors continues to grow, and as more digital-savvy families begin inquiring about senior living for their parents, an even greater shift towards digital-first communication strategies should be expected in the coming years. This includes not only website features but also email communication to bridge the gap between traditional and fully digital methods. The key to success will likely lie in balancing these digital innovations, including email, with the personal touch that many seniors and their families still value highly.

Moreover, the multi-channel nature of engagement suggests that communities should strive for consistency across all touchpoints. Whether a potential resident reaches out via phone, email, visits in person, or engages online, they should receive the same high-quality information and positive experience. This cohesive approach to communication, integrating both traditional and digital methods including email, can help build trust and credibility throughout the decision-making process.

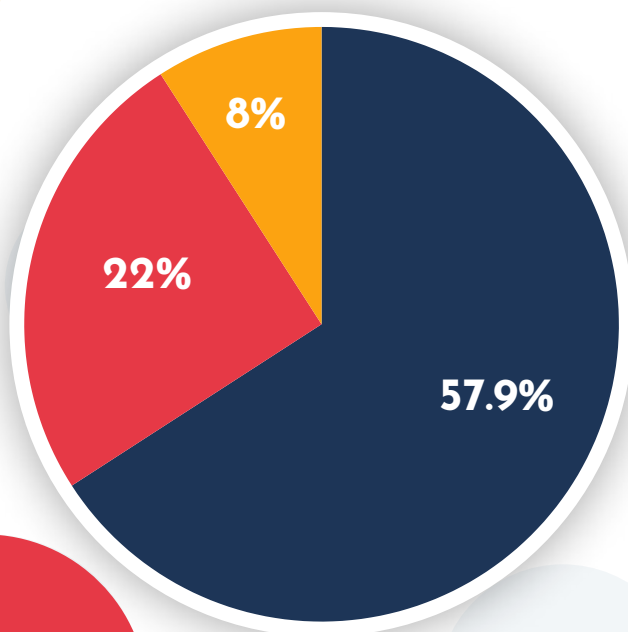




3. Follow-up Communication

The importance of prompt follow-up in capturing potential residents is evident from our survey results. A majority of communities (**57.9%**) demonstrated commendable responsiveness by following up within 24 hours or one business day. This quick response time is crucial in an industry where decisions often involve emotional factors and time sensitivity.

However, there's significant room for improvement, as **22%** of respondents reported follow-up within 48 hours, and alarmingly, **8%** reported no follow-up at all. In a competitive market, these delays or lack of follow-up represent missed opportunities and potential loss of residents to more responsive communities.



- Within 24 Hours
- Within 48 Hours
- No Follow-Up





The data suggests that implementing a systematic, prompt follow-up process could be a significant competitive advantage. Communities might consider leveraging Customer Relationship Management (CRM) technology to ensure no inquiry falls through the cracks and to track the entire communication process with potential residents.

Moreover, the quality of follow-up is as important as its timeliness. Staff should be trained not just to respond quickly, but to provide valuable, personalized information that addresses the specific needs and concerns expressed during the initial contact.

It's also worth noting that different contact methods may require different follow-up strategies. For instance, an inquiry through a website form might warrant an immediate automated response followed by a personal contact, while a phone call might be best followed up with another call or an email summarizing the conversation.

By prioritizing prompt, personalized, and consistent follow-up communications, senior living communities can significantly enhance their chances of converting inquiries into residents, ultimately driving occupancy rates and business success.

Prompt Follow-Up

Tools like CRMs can boost conversion rates and provide a competitive advantage.



Personalized Response

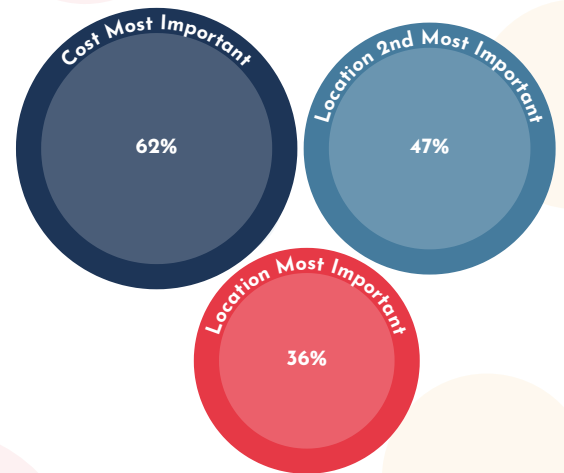
Follow-up tailored to each prospective resident enhances chance of conversion.





4. Key Factors in Community Selection

Our survey reveals a complex decision-making process when it comes to selecting a senior living community, with cost and location emerging as the top priorities. A substantial **62%** of respondents ranked cost as the most important factor in their decision-making process. Location was the second most critical factor, with **35.8%** ranking it as most important and **47.2%** as the second most important.



These findings highlight the delicate balance families must strike between finding quality care and managing financial constraints. The primacy of cost in the selection process underscores the need for communities to clearly communicate their value proposition. Transparent pricing structures and detailed breakdowns of included services can help potential residents and their families understand the full scope of what they're paying for.

Location's high ranking as a selection factor highlights the desire of many seniors to remain close to family, friends, and familiar surroundings. For communities, this emphasizes the importance of highlighting proximity to family, healthcare facilities, or cultural attractions in their marketing materials.

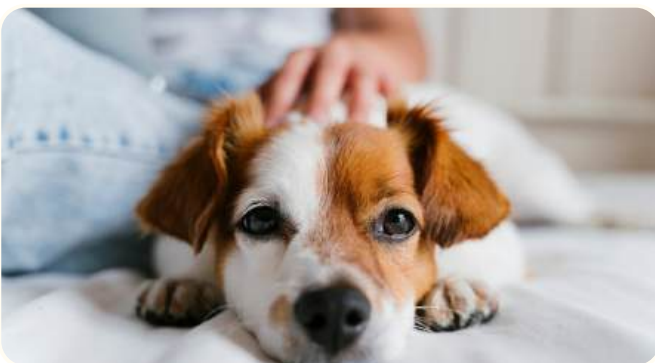
While cost and location topped the list, other factors such as care quality, amenities, and staff engagement also played significant roles in the decision-making process. This suggests that while communities may not be able to change their location, they can differentiate themselves through exceptional care, innovative programs, and a warm, engaging atmosphere.



Interestingly, pet-friendliness was ranked as least important by 71.3% of respondents. While this suggests it's not a primary concern for the majority, it could be a decisive factor for a significant minority. Communities might consider offering pet-friendly options as a way to differentiate themselves without necessarily making it a core feature of their offering.

Ranked as least important by: 71.3% of respondents

These findings suggest that senior living communities need to strike a balance between affordability, desirable location, and high-quality services to appeal to the broadest range of potential residents. Communities that can effectively communicate their value proposition in terms of cost, highlight their convenient location, and showcase their quality of care and amenities are likely to be most successful in attracting and retaining residents.





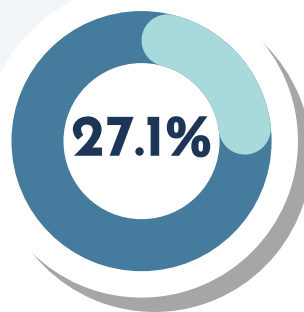
5. Essential Services in Senior Living Communities

Care and medicine management emerged as the top priority, with **31%** of respondents ranking it as the most important service. Memory care followed closely at **27.1%**, reflecting the growing awareness of cognitive health issues among seniors. On-site therapy was also highly valued, with **13.3%** ranking it as most important and **26%** as the second most important.

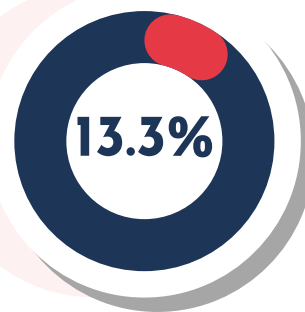
Top Priority Services:



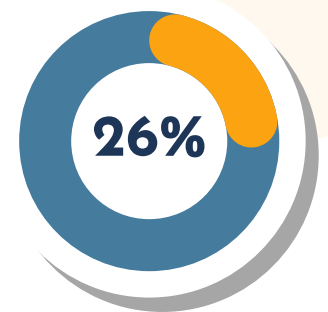
Care and Medicine Management



Memory Care



On-Site Therapy (Ranked 1st)



On-Site Therapy (Ranked 2nd)

Interestingly, amenities like movie theaters and swimming pools showed a polarized response. While **22.6%** ranked them as most important, **28.4%** considered them least important. This split suggests an opportunity for communities to differentiate based on their target demographic's preferences.

Polarized Preferences for Amenities (e.g., Movie Theaters, Swimming Pools):

Most Important: **22.6%**

Least Important: **28.4%**



The survey also revealed that incontinence care and laundry/housekeeping services, while important, were not top priorities for most respondents. Only **0.5%** ranked incontinence care as most important, while **5.6%** prioritized laundry/housekeeping services.

Incontinence Care & Laundry/Housekeeping Services:

Incontinence Care: **0.5%**

Laundry/Housekeeping Services: **5.6%**



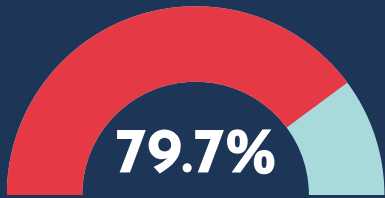
These preferences highlight the evolving expectations of senior living residents and their families. Communities that excel in these areas may find themselves at a competitive advantage. However, the diversity of priorities suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach may not be effective. This diverse range of priorities underscores the need for senior living communities to offer flexible service packages that can be tailored to individual needs and preferences.



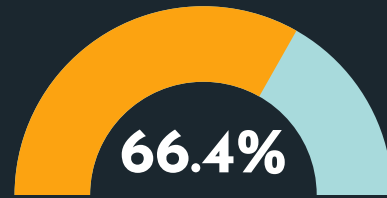


6. Staff Considerations

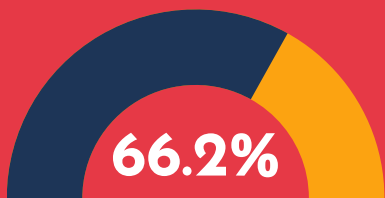
The importance of staff in shaping the senior living experience cannot be overstated. An overwhelming **79.7%** of respondents cited staff demeanor and engagement with residents as the most crucial factor. This was followed by the ratio of staff to residents (**66.4%**) and staff qualifications (**66.2%**). The availability of 24-hour nursing staff was also highly valued (**62.8%**).



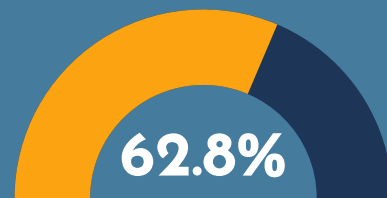
Prioritized staff demeanor and engagement.



Valued the staff-to-resident ratio.



Highlighted staff qualifications.



Emphasized 24-hour nursing availability.



These findings underscore the human element in senior care. While state-of-the-art facilities and cutting-edge amenities are valuable, it's the day-to-day interactions with staff that often define a resident's experience. Communities should prioritize staff training programs that emphasize empathy, engagement, and professional development.

The high importance placed on staff-to-resident ratios suggests that potential residents and their families are concerned about the level of individual attention available. Communities might consider highlighting their staffing levels and personalized care approaches in their marketing materials.

The strong emphasis on staff qualifications **(66.2%)** indicates that families are looking for assurance of professional, high-quality care. This could be an area for communities to differentiate themselves by showcasing their staff's expertise, certifications, and ongoing training programs.

The high value placed on 24-hour nursing staff availability **(62.8%)** reflects the desire for round-the-clock professional care. This is particularly important for residents with chronic health conditions or those who may need emergency assistance at any time. Overall, these findings suggest that investing in a well-trained, engaged, and sufficient staff could be one of the most effective ways for senior living communities to attract and retain residents.





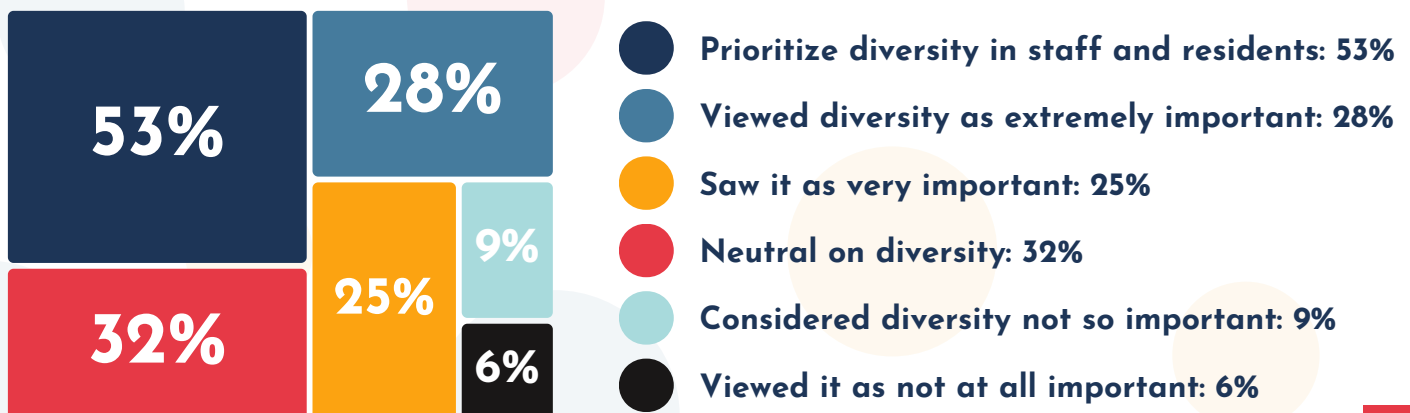
7. Diversity in Senior Living Communities

Our survey revealed a growing emphasis on diversity, with **52.7%** of respondents considering diversity in staff and residents important or very important. Specifically, **28.1%** viewed it as extremely important, and **24.6%** as very important. This trend reflects broader societal shifts towards recognizing and valuing diversity.

For senior living communities, this presents both a challenge and an opportunity. Communities that can create a diverse, inclusive environment may find themselves appealing to a broader range of potential residents. This could involve not just ethnic and cultural diversity, but also diversity in terms of life experiences, interests, and abilities.

However, it's worth noting that **31.9%** of respondents were neutral on this issue. Additionally, **9.1%** considered it not so important, and **6.4%** viewed it as not at all important. This suggests that while diversity is increasingly important, it may not be a deciding factor for all potential residents. Communities should strive for inclusivity while also focusing on other key factors that drive decision-making.

The Importance of Diversity in Senior Living Communities



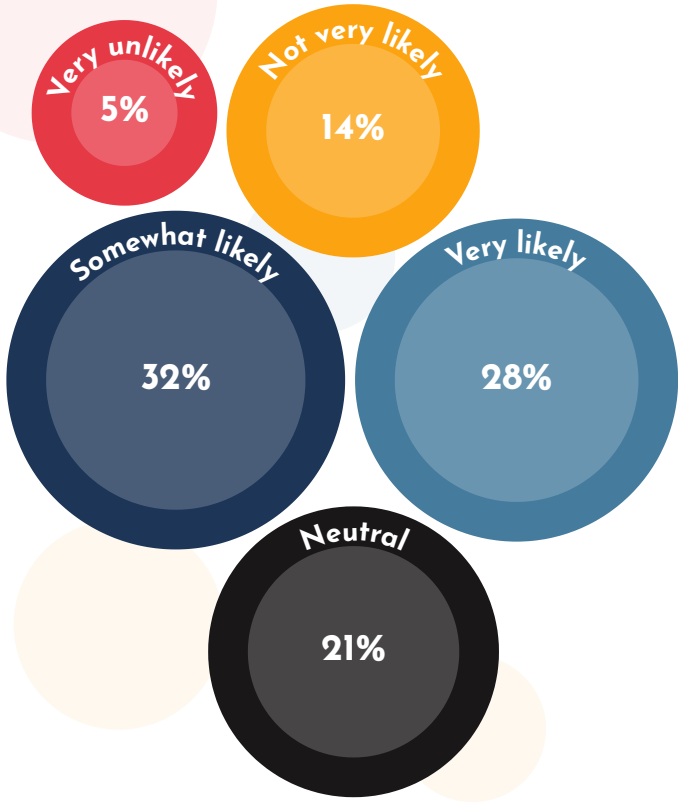
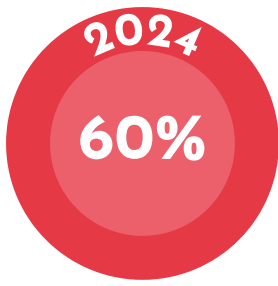
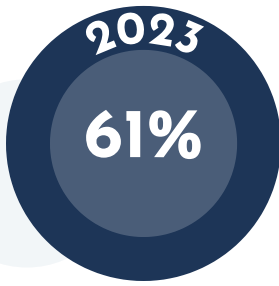


8. Likelihood of Moving to a Senior Living Community

Our year-over-year comparison revealed a slight decrease in the likelihood of moving to a senior living community. In 2024, **59.5%** of respondents indicated they or someone they know were likely to consider such a move, down from **61%** in 2023.

Breaking this down further, **27.9%** were very likely and **31.6%** were somewhat likely to consider moving to a senior assisted living community in the near future. However, **21%** remained neutral, while **14.2%** were not very likely and **5.3%** were very unlikely to consider such a move.

59.5% were likely to consider moving to a senior living community in 2024, down from 61% in 2023.





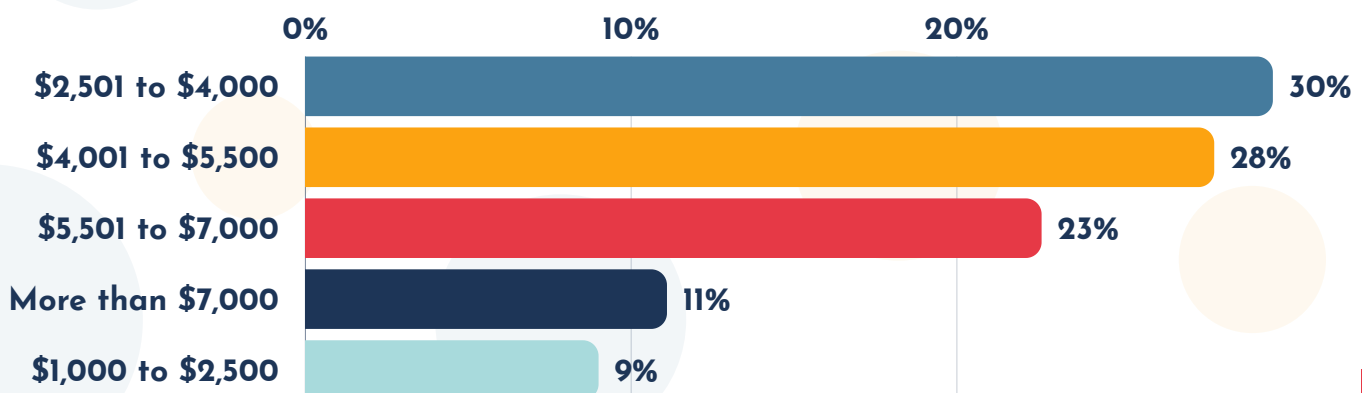
While this decrease is small, it could signal a shift in attitudes towards senior living options. It may reflect growing interest in aging-in-place solutions or alternative care arrangements. For senior living communities, this trend underscores the need to clearly communicate their value proposition and the benefits of community living.

The data also suggests an opportunity for communities to address common concerns or misconceptions that might be deterring potential residents. This could involve more transparent communication about costs, care quality, and lifestyle benefits.

9. Perceived Costs of Assisted Living

Perceptions of assisted living costs remained stable year-over-year. In both 2023 and 2024, **58%** of respondents estimated between \$2,501 and \$5,500 per month.

Our survey provided more detailed insights into cost perceptions. **29.7%** of respondents expected monthly costs between \$2,501 and \$4,000, while **27.9%** anticipated costs between \$4,001 and \$5,500. A significant portion (**22.6%**) expected higher costs between \$5,501 and \$7,000, and **11.1%** anticipated costs exceeding \$7,000. Only **8.9%** expected costs to be as low as \$1,000 to \$2,500.





This consistency in perception presents both challenges and opportunities for senior living communities. On one hand, it suggests that pricing strategies aligned with these expectations may be well-received. On the other hand, it indicates that efforts to educate the public about the true costs and value of senior living have not significantly shifted perceptions.

Communities may need to refine their messaging around costs, perhaps by breaking down the value provided by various services and amenities. Transparency in pricing and clear explanations of what's included could help potential residents better understand the cost structure.

10. Payment Expectations

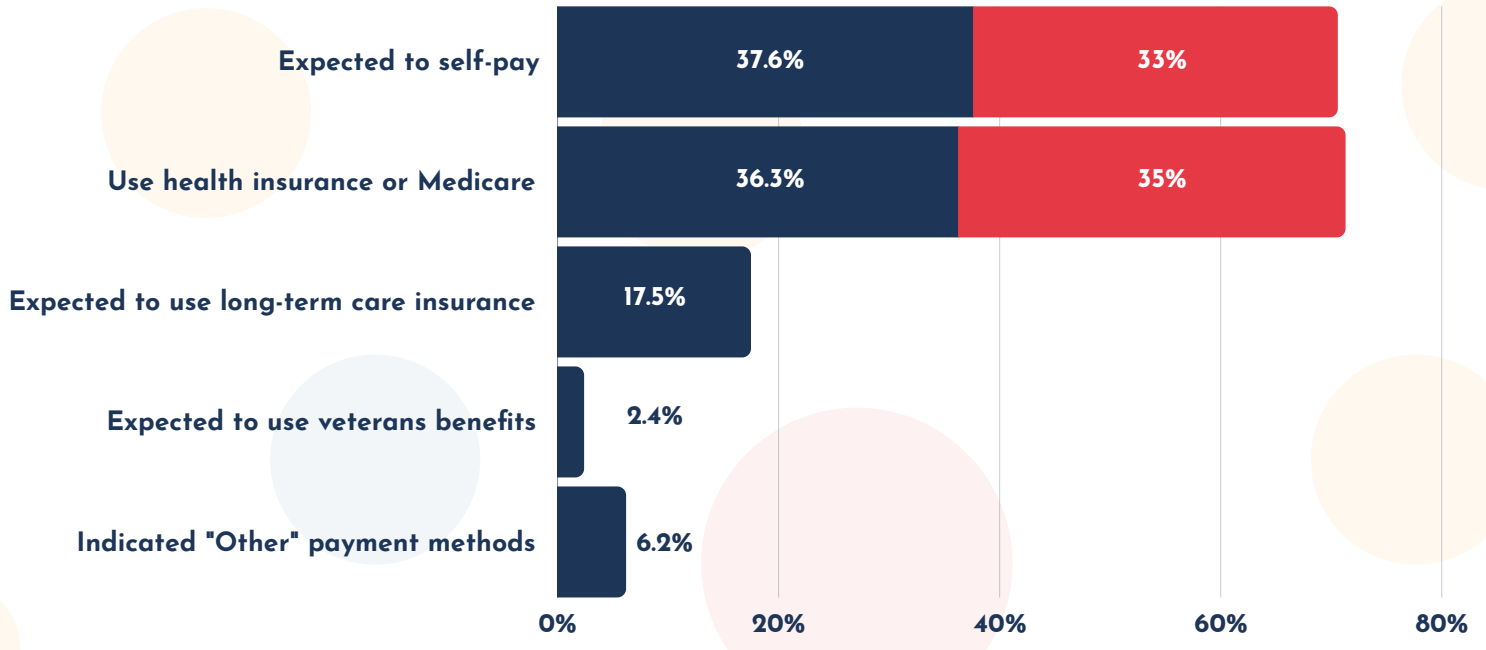
Our survey revealed a slight increase in the expectation of using self-pay for senior living expenses. In 2024, **37.6%** of respondents expected to self-pay, up from **33%** in 2023. Expectations for using health insurance or Medicare also saw a small increase, from **35% to 36.3%**.

Additional insights into payments revealed **17.5%** of respondents anticipated using long-term care insurance, while only **2.4%** expected to use veterans benefits. Notably, **6.2%** indicated "Other" payment methods. Many respondents indicated a need to combine multiple payment options to afford senior living costs, underscoring the financial complexity of this decision.





■ In 2024 ■ In 2023



This shift towards self-pay expectations could reflect growing awareness of the limitations of Medicare and other insurance programs in covering long-term care costs. It may also indicate a need for more education about payment options and financial planning for senior living.

For communities, this trend suggests an opportunity to provide more robust financial planning resources and guidance. Partnerships with financial advisors or the development of in-house expertise could help potential residents navigate the complexities of funding their senior living experience.

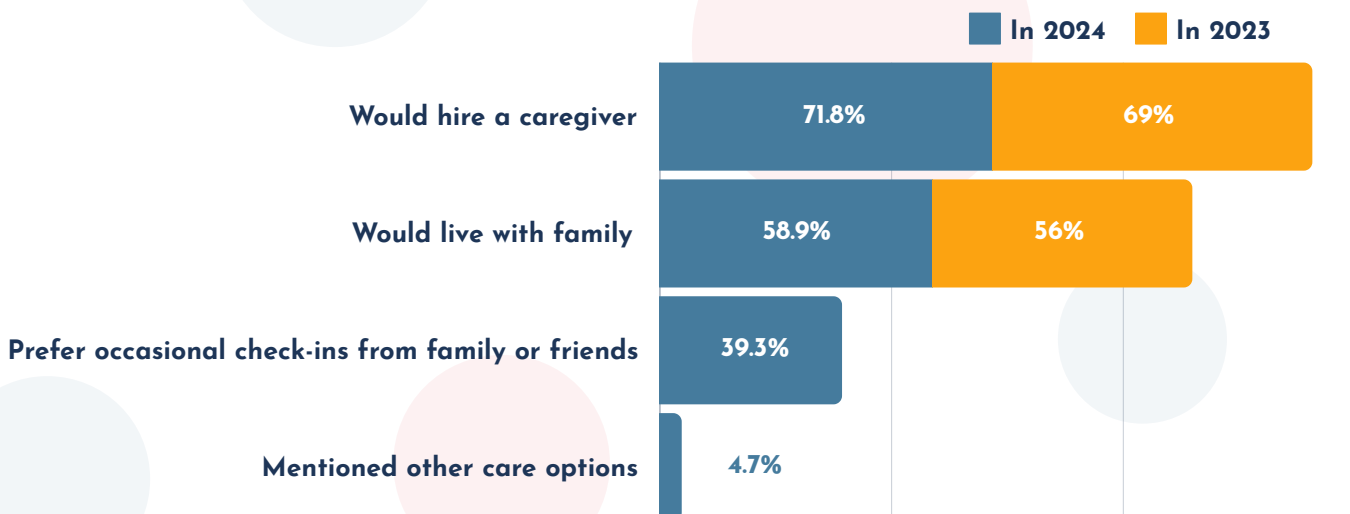




II. Alternative Care Options

We observed a growing openness to alternative care options. The consideration of hiring a caregiver increased from **69%** in 2023 to **71.8%** in 2024, while the option of living with family rose from **56%** to **58.9%**.

Our survey provided more detailed insights into alternative care preferences. **71.8%** of respondents would consider hiring a caregiver or Home Health Agency, while **58.9%** would consider living with a family member. Additionally, **39.3%** were open to doing the best they could with occasional check-ins from family, friends, or neighbors. **4.7%** mentioned other options, including daytime activities.



This trend presents a clear challenge to traditional senior living communities. It suggests that potential residents are increasingly aware of and interested in options that allow them to remain in familiar environments.



To compete, senior living communities may need to emphasize unique benefits, such as 24/7 professional care, social engagement opportunities, and the ability to maintain independence while receiving necessary support. Communities might also consider developing hybrid models with elements of home care or creating transitional programs to ease the move from home to community living.

12. Desired Improvements and Innovations

Respondents provided a wealth of suggestions for improvements in senior living communities. Key themes included enhanced staff training, improved cleanliness, more diverse and engaging activities, better dining experiences, and increased technology integration.

These suggestions offer a roadmap for innovation in the senior living industry. They indicate that while basic care needs are crucial, residents and their families are increasingly looking for a higher quality of life and a more engaging, stimulating environment.

Communities that can successfully implement improvements in these areas may find themselves at a competitive advantage. This could involve investing in staff development programs, reimagining activity calendars, upgrading dining services, or integrating smart home technologies to enhance resident comfort and independence.





CHARTING THE FUTURE: ADAPTING TO EVOLVING SENIOR LIVING PREFERENCES

The senior living landscape is undergoing a significant transformation, driven by changing demographics, evolving consumer expectations, and technological advancements. Our survey reveals a complex picture of senior living preferences in 2024, marked by a desire for high-quality, personalized care balanced against concerns about cost and a growing interest in alternative care options.

For senior living communities, these findings underscore the need for adaptability and innovation. Success in this evolving market will likely hinge on the ability to provide transparent, flexible pricing models, deliver exceptional, personalized care, and create engaging, technology-enabled living environments. Moreover, the emphasis on staff quality and diversity highlights the ongoing importance of the human element in senior care.

Ongoing research and adaptation will be crucial as the senior living industry continues to evolve. By staying attuned to changing consumer preferences and proactively addressing emerging trends, senior living communities can position themselves to meet the needs of current and future residents, ensuring both their own success and the well-being of the seniors they serve.





Ready to enhance your communities' appeal?

A Closer Look provides insights to help you understand prospective residents' needs and improve your senior living offerings. Our comprehensive solutions include market analysis, mystery shopping, turnkey feedback systems, and independent studies to give you a competitive edge in the evolving senior care landscape.

CONTACT US TODAY