



Aging Matters

New Hampshire State Commission on Aging

New Hampshire Commission on Aging

Laurie Duff, Chair
Margaret Franckhauser, Vice Chair
Roxie Severance, Clerk

Designated Members

Senator William Gannon
Representative Janet Lucas
Representative Charles McMahon
Wendi Aultman, Dept. of Health and Human Services
Susan Buxton, Long Term Care Ombudsman
Brandy Cassada, Dept. of Safety
Richard Lavers, Dept. of Employment Security
Danielle Albert, Dept. of Labor
Sunny Mulligan Shea, Office of the Attorney General
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Governor Appointments

Beverly Bjorklund
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Carissa Elphick
Laurie Harding
Kristine Hering
Doug McNutt
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Beth Quarm Todgham
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Representative Lucy Weber

Staff

Executive Director, Rebecca Sky
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Dan Wise, Communications & Public Engagement Director

Why Do We Need a Commission on Aging?

By LAURIE DUFF and NICK TOUMPAS

Recently, a subdivision of the House Finance Committee amended a bill to zero out the budget of the New Hampshire Commission on Aging.

As a former Commissioner of the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Director of Senior Services for Easterseals NH, we understand the need to make difficult choices in crafting our state's budget. Yet our combined years of experience in both the private sector and in government lead us to suggest that repealing the Commission on Aging with its minimal budget is short-sighted in the face of the challenges and opportunities our state faces given our growing numbers of older adults.

According to the US Census, New Hampshire is the second-oldest state in the country; nearly 20% of our residents are 65 or older. By 2030, older adults will outnumber children in the state, with nearly one-third (27%) of the population aged 65 and over. By 2050, approximately 12% of the population will be 80 years or older.

New Hampshire must adapt to this demographic reality. Outdated policies, systems, and infrastructure – particularly in housing, transportation, workforce, and services that help people to age in their homes and communities – require immediate attention. Adapting will allow the state to capitalize on the strengths of its experienced and resourceful older population, benefiting our economy and communities.

The Commission, created in 2019, is a non-partisan, transparent entity whose core mission is to develop solutions. The Commission has emerged as a key facilitator and liaison between advocates and the legislature. By convening stakeholders and fostering collaboration, the Commission works to build consensus on sound policy proposals before they reach the legislature.

The Commission is a unique group –including leaders from eight state agencies and governor-appointed representatives from every county, that truly breaks down silos and brings a well-rounded perspective to aging issues. The efforts of these volunteers amplify the impact of an otherwise tiny agency with two full-time equivalent employees.

Here are examples of the Commission's efforts:

- Working across state agencies including the departments of

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May Publication Note

The ceremony honoring the 2025 Older Adult Volunteers is scheduled for mid-May.

The next edition of Aging Matters will be distributed after the ceremony date in order to allow us to share the accomplishments of these outstanding adults with our readers.

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Aging Matters Newsletter

Beth Todgham, Editor

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Why NHCOA, con't

Transportation, Health and Human Service, Military Affairs and Veteran Services, and the Governor's Commission on Disability to assess unmet human transit needs and develop strategies to make better use of transportation funding coming from a surprisingly large number of sources;

- Supporting improved options for aging in the community, which is desired by individuals and is less costly for the state than institutional care;
- Last year, forged consensus on the creation of the Certified Assisted Living Medication Assistant role to address workforce shortages within assisted living facilities while attending to quality-of-care concerns of residents.

An aging New Hampshire should be seen as more than a problem and a set of costs; it is an opportunity. Older adults today are living longer healthier lives and are more productive than ever before. Older adults are an asset to the state in the unpaid caregiving they provide; their energy and wisdom propel many volunteer efforts. And with responsive and thoughtful workplace policies, many will continue participating in the workforce.

The Legislature should retain funding for the volunteer-driven and extremely experienced Commission on Aging, a group that is laser-focused on making better use of the resources we have and preparing for a demographic future that is nearing and inevitable. As a short-term measure, cutting this tiny budget sacrifices our ability to shape that future.

Laurie Duff, chair of the Commission on Aging, is Director of Senior Services for Easterseals of New Hampshire; Nick Toumpas, who joined the Commission this fall, headed the NH Department of Health and Human Services from 2007 to 2016.

Who is My Legislator?

Use these links to find and contact New Hampshire elected officials to share your thoughts on the future of the NH State Commission on Aging.

- State Representative: <https://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/members/>
- Members of the House Finance Committee: <https://gc.nh.gov/house/committees/committeedetails.aspx?id=22>
- State Senator: <https://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/senate/memhttps://gc.nh.gov/house/committees/committeedetails.aspx?id=22bers/wml.aspx>
- Governor's Office: <https://www.governor.nh.gov/>.

Information about the NH State Commission on Aging, its initiatives and priorities - including past issues of Aging Matters can be found on their website at <https://nhcoa.nh.gov>

You're Invited To Share Your Thoughts & Ideas

New Hampshire's older adults have a story to tell and we welcome the opportunity Aging Matters gives them to share their story with others in hopes that their experiences will help, inspire and encourage someone else as we all look for answers and ideas on how to navigate the years ahead.

Please use Aging Matters as your way to share those personal experiences and your personal points of view on living in New Hampshire as an older adult.

We hope that in sharing a variety of different points of view, we are able to assist our readers in forming their own opinions.

There are two ways to send articles—or to add your name to our newsletter mailing list.

1. Email it to: NHCOAnews@gmail.com

2. Mail it to: NHCOA Newsletter, NH Commission on Aging, 117 Pleasant St., Dolloff Building, 4th Floor, Concord, NH 03301. **We look forward to hearing from you soon!**

Next NHCOA Meeting Scheduled for April 21, 2025

The next Commission meeting will be on Monday, April 21, 2025 at 10:00 AM at the NH Hospital Association, 125 Airport Road in Concord.

The public is welcome to attend. To attend via ZOOM, please access the link under the calendar tab for that date at <https://www.nhcoa.nh.gov>

Editor's Note: Jean Lewandowski, a long-time Aging Matters supporter, wrote the following letter when made aware of the Made aware of thie of the House Finance Subcommittee's action to defund the State Commission on Aging. Readers are welcome to use it for talking points and add meaningful personal details. This is an important time to advocate for our NHCOA.

Letter to the Editor:

In Support of the New Hampshire State Commission on Aging

Dear Editor:

Over 20% of New Hampshire's population is over 65. The NH State Commission on Aging helps ensure that we—the largest statewide voting bloc—are properly represented in funding and policy. It also works across agencies to enhance coordination and collaboration, increasing efficiency and decreasing redundancy.

The COA has also helped develop systems that support our ability to live in our communities as we age. For example, it advocates for zoning reforms to increase accessible, affordable housing, coordinates state-contracted services to increase financial efficiency and to increase opportunities to remain employed longer. Aging in place has proved over and over both to enrich individuals' lives and support our communities.

The financial benefits of the COA far outweigh costs. People who remain healthy and in their homes, need fewer public services. We engage in commerce and pay taxes. We contribute to the workforce both by remaining employed and by helping with childcare so parents can work. We fill important volunteer roles.

I served on the board of Engaging NH, which helped establish the COA, and now help edit its newsletter, *Aging Matters*, which is itself a valuable resource. It contains information about how to stay healthy, how to communicate with elected officials, and ways to stay engaged in our communities so more of us remain not just independent, but valuable and valued assets. I strongly urge you to allow it to continue this vital work.

Sincerely,

Jean Lewandowski, Nashua

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Housing, Workforce Efforts Discussed by State Economic Affairs Officials

The following are highlights from the March 17, 2025, meeting of the NH Commission on Aging.

Acting Chair Laurie Duff reported that the search for an executive director for the Commission has concluded. Lily Wellington, former director of volunteers for the Friends Program, a Concord-based social services organization, joins the Commission on April 4. Outgoing executive director Rebecca Sky will provide transition assistance on a part-time, temporary basis for several weeks.

After accepting the minutes of the February meeting, the Commission voted to approve the elevation of Laurie Duff as Chair of the Commission, and Margaret Franckhauser as Vice Chair, necessitated by the passing of Chair Susan Ruka.

Polly Champion, Policy Team chair, reported that the group has been following 64 bills which it identified as touching on the priorities of the Commission. The committees' hearings on all bills are largely completed; 16 of the followed bills were voted inexpedient to legislate or retained; 48 are continuing to progress through the process.

Updates on the progress of grant-funded NHCOA projects were provided first by Commissioner Carissa Elphick, who chairs the advisory group for the Community Transportation Needs Assessment (CTNA). A draft survey was being compared with recent transportation surveys to ensure that the most essential questions were being addressed. Outreach will be supplemented with stakeholder interviews in advance of the survey distribution to the public by September. Focus groups are also planned.

Community outreach prior to the development of the AgeWellNH 10-year multisector plan for healthy aging is being overseen by Molly Singer, president of Impact Consulting. She said that Phase 2 to engage stakeholders in public and private sectors is underway. Drafting of a proposed executive order from the governor is also in the works.

Singer indicated she is conducting outreach to libraries and planning tables at farmers' markets and other public events in the coming months to solicit public feedback on NH's older adult needs.

The commission heard presentations by several officials from the NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA).

Chase Hagamen, BEA's director of economic development, said a major department priority is recruiting workers as many industries and sectors

are having difficulty hiring people. He discussed how various bureaus within the department are working together, sharing data, and coordinating their efforts.

Heather Shanking, director of the Office of Planning and Development within NHBEA, provides technical assistance to municipalities on planning issues, particularly issues of housing. Her department conducts monthly webinars for local planners on specific issues; she welcomed the suggestion to include a program on aging-related issues in the future. Some of the services it offers are detailed at <https://www.nheconomy.com/office-of-planning-and-development/what-we-offer>

Shanking was asked whether the department proactively shares relevant data with lawmakers. She said the department typically responds to queries from the legislature rather than offering reports, and it does not take advocacy positions on legislation.

Commissioner Lucy Weber encouraged the BEA to convey through their presentations that older adults are not just a population with needs to be met, but as a resource for workforce expansion with appropriate age-friendly policies in place.

Andrew Dorsett, of the BEA's Housing Finance section, reviewed several programs that support affordable housing, including Invest NH and the Housing Champions program. Information about these programs is available at <https://www.nheconomy.com/office-of-planning-and-development/resources/housing-resources>

Matt Conserva, manager of the state's broadband initiatives, said BEA has administered more than \$318 million in federal funding to extend broadband access to underserved NH populations. He said the effort has reached every NH community with some broadband, but not everyone in every community has been reached. NH's effort has been cost-effective with the lowest average cost per location for broadband extensions among the states. Commissioner Weber asked if the remaining federal funding could be taken away by action in Washington.

Joe Doiron, director of Workforce Opportunity office at BEA, administers grants to build a sustainable talent pipeline to meet the state's workforce needs. He said the office's priority is to attract and assist workers needed in high-demand jobs which involves collaboration with other departments including Education and Employment Security.

NH Department of Health & Human Services Releases Roadmap 2024-2025 Mid-Year Report

Concord, NH – The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is pleased to share the [DHHS Roadmap 2024-2025 Mid-Year Report](#) and highlight the progress made to achieve the ambitious goals set out in the *DHHS Roadmap 2024-2025*. In July 2024, DHHS issued the [DHHS Roadmap 2024-2025](#), which promoted the Department's strategic goals and strategies and tactics to implement the changes necessary to achieve these goals.

Set on a foundation of three commitments – Invest in People and Culture, Promote Thriving Communities, and Improve Customer Service – the *DHHS 2024-2025 Roadmap Mid-Year Report* highlights the Department's work over the past six months to better the lives of New Hampshire residents.

“One of our key objectives in developing the annual DHHS Roadmap is to prompt us to think differently about our work,” said DHHS Commissioner Lori Weaver. “The goals of the *DHHS Roadmap 2024-2025* continue to represent a change to improve how we do business. We are focusing on embracing that change. Already six months in, the *DHHS Roadmap 2024-2025* is driving change within and across the Department, requiring us to be more effective and efficient with our funds and our work in order to better meet the needs of clients and residents.”

The *DHHS Roadmap 2024-2025 Mid-Year Report* tracks the Department's progress in implementing the commitments and initiatives in the *DHHS Roadmap 2024-2025*, including:

Comprehensive, systemic efforts to tackle some of New Hampshire's most pressing health and human services challenges such as Mission Zero and the new System of Care for Healthy Aging,

Fostering a strong internal culture and vibrant workforce through stronger recruitment and retention efforts, and

A focus on customer service that is modernizing systems and streamline processes to ensure that DHHS clients, contracted providers, community partners, and the people of New Hampshire have good experiences and outcomes.

To read the *DHHS Roadmap 2024-2025 Mid-Year Report*, please visit <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt476/files/documents2/dhhs-roadmap-2024-2025-mid-year.pdf>.

Volunteers Sought to Protect NH Consumers

Attorney General John M. Formella announced recently that his office is accepting applications for volunteers to work as Consumer Affairs Specialists in the Consumer Protection and Antitrust Bureau.

Consumer Affairs Specialists work closely with attorneys and support staff to respond to calls on the consumer protection hotline. This rewarding opportunity will provide volunteers with the chance to use their valuable life and work experiences to make a difference in the lives of New Hampshire consumers who have been victimized by unlawful business practices. Consumer Affairs Specialists are vital to the Attorney General's mission to enforce state consumer protection laws and provide callers with basic information regarding their rights and options as New Hampshire Consumers.

Adults of all ages are encouraged to apply. Volunteers will be asked to commit to 4-6 hours per week. All necessary training and mentorship will be provided. Successful candidates must pass a background check and have excellent interpersonal skills. Experience interacting with the public is a plus but is not required.

Anyone interested in learning more about this volunteer opportunity may contact the Consumer Protection and Antitrust Bureau at (603) 271-3641 or DOJ-CPB@doj.nh.gov.

Prefer a Printed Copy of Aging Matters?

The Commission on Aging has a limited ability to provide printed copies of Aging Matters to individuals who are unable to connect to the Internet to read a copy online or download it from the Commission's website. Email your request to NHCOAnews@gmail.com or send it to NHCOA Newsletter, NH Commission on Aging, 117 Pleasant St., Dolloff Building, 4th Floor, Concord 03301

April Advocacy Update

By **JUDITH JONES**, New Futures / NH Alliance for Healthy Aging Advocacy

The key question in every legislative budget year is whether funds are available to support the many important state programs and initiatives. Budget advocacy begins in February and continues through the month of June and multiple forms of advocacy are needed. This budget year is especially challenging due to decreases in state revenues and the end of one-time federal American Rescue Plan Act funds.

Currently the House of Representatives is working on its proposed budget, and this will continue until mid-April when the process heads to the Senate. This means that from March until mid-April advocates are keenly focused on House budget activity, including all House Finance Committee and Subcommittee meetings.

Many individuals and groups, including New Futures – NHAHA Advocacy attended the House Finance Committee public hearing on March 12th. Our written and oral testimony highlighted the need to ensure that older adults have access to timely services including home and community-based services through the Choices for Independence program and urged the Committee to support vital cost-effective community services including caregiver respite, meals on wheels, senior volunteer programs, congregate housing, guardianship services and access to transportation.

Public testimony before the House Finance Committee is important, but other aspects of budget advocacy require paying close attention to all House Finance Committee meetings and being prepared to take immediate action. The importance of time sensitive advocacy through our weekly email alerts is illustrated in the email alert we circulated on March 21st in response to a March 17th budget amendment initiated by a House Finance Subcommittee to eliminate the State Commission on Aging:

Urgent Advocacy is Needed to Save the NH State Commission on Aging

On March 17th a House Finance Subcommittee approved an amendment to the state budget proposal that would eliminate the NH State Commission on Aging. The Commission performs important functions including serving as the Advisory Council necessary for the State to receive vital federal Older American Act funds. Learn more about the work of the Commission at <https://www.nhcoa.nh.gov/>.

- *Please email or call Members of the House Finance Committee before April 3rd and tell them to Support the Commission on Aging and Reject this harmful amendment.*
- *Please contact the Governor's Office and let the Governor know that the Commission on Aging is Important! <https://www.governor.nh.gov/>.*

“Advocacy on behalf of the Commission on Aging is now one of our high priority areas. The advocacy action steps in our email alerts change weekly, so if you are interested in advocating for the Commission on Aging and other high priority areas, then join our nimble action oriented group at <https://new-futures.org/become-an-advocate>.”

This column is a regular feature of Aging Matters. We thank New Futures/NH Alliance for Healthy Aging Advocacy for the information they provide to keep readers informed on age-related issues at the state level.

Contact Info for NH Members of the U.S. Congress

U.S. Rep. Chris Pappas,
(202) 225-5456

<https://pappas.house.gov/>

U.S. Rep. Maggie Goodlander
(202) 225-5206

<https://goodlander.house.gov/>

U.S. Senator Maggie Hassan,
(202) 224-3324

<https://www.hassan.senate.gov/content/contact-senator>

U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen,
(202) 224-2841

www.shaheen.senate.gov/contact/contact-jeanne

Who is My Legislator?

Use this link to find and contact your:

- State Representative: <https://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/members/>
- State Senator: <https://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/senate/members/wml.aspx>

Visit your town or city's website to find contact information for your local elected officials.

RAISE YOUR VOICE!

Let us know what's on your mind and what's important to you.

Email us today!

NHCOAnews@gmail.com

Older Americans Month Webinar: Reframing to Flip the Script

Join the National Center to Reframe Aging (<https://www.reframingaging.org/>) at 1:00pm on April 15 to discuss how to flip the script on aging in recognition of this year's Older Americans Month (OAM) 2025 theme, **Flip the Script on Aging**. This year's theme focuses on transforming how society perceives, talks about, and approaches aging. It encourages us all to challenge stereotypes and dispel misconceptions. Join the National Center to Reframe Aging in honoring older adults' contributions, exploring the many opportunities for staying active and engaged as we age, and highlighting the opportunities for purpose, exploration, and connection that come with aging. This session will explore why we need to flip the script and share practical strategies for contributing to this work. **Register today** to dive into this year's OAM theme and learn how you can use strategies from the National Center to Reframe Aging to support you as you plan to celebrate OAM.

Who is Experiencing Poverty in the Granite State?

According to a newly released brief by the New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute, the most recent data from 2019-2023 shows that older adults now represent a larger percentage of the population living in poverty compared to ten years prior. During the 2019-2023 period, older adults made up around 20% of the total population living with poverty-level incomes; from 2009-2013, older adults made up half that number, at 10.1%. While the poverty rate among older adults has remained similar, more older adults are living in poverty now compared to previous years.

Explore the report at <https://nhfpi.org/resource/who-is-experiencing-poverty-in-the-granite-state>

Help Us Spread the Word!

If you like Aging Matters, please share it with your family, neighbors, friends, and colleagues and encourage them to sign up for their own copy at <https://www.nhcoa.nh.gov/>

SOUTHERN NH AHEC

SELF MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

online, in person and self directed programs

- LIVING WELL WITH CHRONIC DISEASE**
Provides skills in patient-physician partnership, community resources, medication management, and symptom management.
- WALK WITH EASE**
This program will reduce arthritis pain while increasing balance, strength and walking pace. Self Directed or with an instructor.
- LIVING WELL WITH DIABETES**
Topics covered include nutrition, exercise, medication management, and more.
- TOMANDO**
Sobre los síntomas de las afecciones crónicas, como fatiga, dolor, insomnio, estrés, problemas emocionales y mas.
- LIVING WELL WITH CHRONIC PAIN**
Covers balancing activity with rest, patient-physician partnerships, nutrition, medication, and symptom management.

Scan to learn more about our programs and find a workshop near you
<https://www.snhahec.org/upcoming-workshops.html>

**TAKE THE
ANTI-AGEISM
PLEDGE**

"I stand for a world without ageism, where all people of all ages are valued and respected. I acknowledge that ageism is harmful to me and others around me, and to our workforce, communities, and

economy. I know that the struggle to eliminate ageism will not end with a pledge, and that I must act to transform my own bias, and the bias in our institutions and systems. I will speak out against the age injustices I see, call attention to ageist language and stereotypes, and educate myself, my family, friends, co-workers and peers about the importance of being actively anti-ageist and promoting age equity in all aspects of life."

Go to <https://agefriendly.community/anti-ageism-pledge/> to add your name.

Affordable Healthcare, Social Services And Housing Among Key Needs

By **DAN WITTERS**, Research Director, Gallup National Health and Well-Being Index

Editor's Note: The research detailed below was conducted in partnership with West Health, a family of nonprofit and nonpartisan organizations focused on lowering healthcare costs and successful aging.

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Sixty percent of Americans agree that more needs to be done to improve the availability of health and social services in their community for residents to live independently as they age, according to a new study from West Health and Gallup. This sentiment is higher among women (68%) than men (52%).

The West Health-Gallup survey was conducted online June 3-18, 2024, with a nationally representative sample of 2,180 U.S. adults aged 18 and older who are members of the Gallup Panel™, a probability-based panel of about 100,000 adults living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

Need for More Affordable Housing Designed for Living Self-Sufficiently

Affordable housing intended to support living independently for older Americans is also high on the list of perceived community needs. Nearly two-thirds agree (65%, including 37% who “strongly agree”) that more is needed to help older residents live self-sufficiently. This sentiment rises to 72% among women and to 73% among those in households earning less than \$48,000 per year.

Mental Health Services Needed but Difficult to Access

Differences also exist in how Americans perceive the need for and access to physical health and mental health services in their community. About one in five (22%) see a “major need” for accessible mental health services, compared with 16% for physical health services. Nearly a third (32%), in contrast, report that physical health services are “very easy” to access, compared with just 16% who say the same about mental health services, underscoring key differences between the two.

While men and women report roughly the same sense of ease of access to mental healthcare, women are nearly twice as likely as men to say their community has a major need for mental health services (28% vs. 16%, respectively).

Implications

By 2030, the U.S. Census Bureau projects that there will be more Americans aged 65 and older (71.2 million) than under 18 (69.1 million) for the first time in U.S. history, with the older group making up nearly 21% of the total population. Along with this shift comes the need for strategic planning to accommodate new and growing demands in housing, social services and healthcare.

This unique demographic shift is the reason **Congress directed** the development of a national set of recommendations for advancing healthy aging and age-friendly communities. This research supports the federal government’s National Plan on Aging through the **Interagency Coordinating Committee on Healthy Aging and Age-Friendly Communities**. The work is done in coordination with the **National Plan on Aging Community Engagement Collaborative**, which includes three nonprofit partners: **West Health**, **The John A. Hartford Foundation** and **The SCAN Foundation**.

The National Plan on Aging comes as the majority of U.S. adults see a need in their community for more affordable housing and accessible health and social services to support long-term independent living. Potentially adding urgency to the situation is **recent research** that shows 66% of adults (including 69% of those aged 50 to 64) believe the U.S. is unprepared to care for its aging population over the next 10 years. Only 4% strongly agree the U.S. is prepared to do so.

Mental health also stands out as a major issue over the next decade. Recent research summarized in the *West Health-Gallup 2024 Survey on Aging in America* report shows Americans aged 50 and older are more likely to perceive their mental health has worsened (24%) than improved (19%) in the past three years. In addition, a majority of U.S. adults (56%) say the next generation of Americans will be “much worse off” or “somewhat worse off” than their generation when it comes to mental health and happiness. Just 16% say the next generation will have better mental health. With the perceived need for enhanced mental health social services outweighing the ease of accessing what is currently available, the importance of addressing mental health in the U.S. continues to loom large.

Source: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/649844/need-help-aging-residents-live-independently.aspx>

Why We Grow Kinder as We Grow Older

Science confirms that older adults really are more generous.

BY DON AKCHIN, The End Game

Lately I notice myself feeling more charitable towards people I usually find hard to take. Instead of being irritated by their rudeness, irrationality, or stupidity, I am inclined to offer them the benefit of the doubt. Apparently, it's not just me. Social science researchers have found that it's a common occurrence as people age.

Many studies over the past two decades have found that older adults demonstrate prosocial behavior – a less clinical term would be altruism – more frequently than younger adults. For example, Ulrich Mayr, Lewis Professor and head of the Psychology Department at the University of Oregon, found that the proportion of altruists in the population steadily **increases with age**. At age 35 it is less than 25%, and by age 55 and older, it is closer to 75%.

Other studies have confirmed this finding and expanded on it. Two researchers at the University of Zurich found that ecological concerns, an expression of concern for the entire planet, are positively related to age. Conversely, older adults were far less likely than young adults to report having a desire to be rich, and they were more likely to donate money to a charity or a cause.

I'm for Altruism

I have an opinion about altruism. I am for it. I recognize this is a controversial position, as prominent characters on the national political scene have stated publicly that caring about others is a weakness and a character flaw. I happen to believe our capacity to care for others is a key reason we're not still living in trees throwing ripe mangos at each other. Being prosocial – caring for others without expecting reward – has allowed our highly social species to survive and thrive. "It should be **baked into our DNA** to be, at the very least, cooperative," says Jane Piliavin, professor emerita of sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

But why? Why are older adults more likely than the young to give time and attention to others? Here the empirical data hits a dead end, and we enter the realm of speculation – or to use a less clinical term – informed guesses.

"You have more time," says Piliavin. Since you aren't devoting most of your day to working, she says, you have time to do more for others.

There are other theories. Alexandra Freund and Fredda Blanchard-Fields, researchers at the

University of Zurich, suggest that young people need their resources to ensure their own (and their family's) survival, whereas older adults have acquired what they need and are more likely to contribute to the well-being of future generations. Also, they say, it may have to do with the fact that older adults have a shorter perspective of the future than the young.

Brain Chemistry

Then again, maybe it's simply a matter of brain chemistry.

Mayr and his colleagues used MRI scanners to watch what happens in the *nucleus accumbens* – identified by neuroscientists as the brain's reward centers – when people observed money being transferred to themselves and to a charity. For about half the study participants (and 75% of the older participants, as noted earlier), the transfer to a charity lit up the reward centers. In other words, seeing money donated to others generated positive reactions.

The brain chemistry thesis goes one stop farther. Researchers discovered that people who are given doses of **oxytocin**, a natural hormone associated with sexual reproduction and lactation, tend to exhibit selfless, altruistic behavior. Dr. Narun Pornpattrananangkul, a researcher at the University of Otago, suggests that the increased generosity of older adults might be the result of a greater release of oxytocin in the brain.

Kindness and generosity are good things, mostly. But sometimes they can cause problems. I am thinking here of the professional scammers who prey on older adults because, as **the FBI** notes, "Seniors are often targeted because they tend to be trusting and polite."

But an increasing tendency towards generosity and caring is a net positive. "Expressing acts of kindness is good for aging well," writes columnist **Helen Dennis**. It counters stress "by boosting hormones such as oxytocin, dopamine and serotonin, a neurotransmitter that helps regulate mood."

I think of it this way: Whenever I feel like loose screws are rattling around in my brain, I tell myself it's just the oxytocin dispenser loosening up. And there's nothing wrong with a few more warm glowing feelings that come from being kind.

Don Akchin produces a weekly newsletter and a biweekly podcast about positive aspects of aging. You can read more (and get a free subscription) at <https://theendgame.substack.com/p/why-we-growkinder-as-we-grow-older>

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Making Essential Conversations Easier

Information provided by JOHN A. HARTFORD FOUNDATION

Conversations are the cornerstone of age-friendly care. Regular discussions among older adults, family caregivers and health care providers help ensure care is focused on what matters most. Starting in a timely manner is key in order to prevent pressured situations and decisions. Health care providers from all settings—including systems, hospitals, nursing homes or other care sites—are vital to ensuring that older adults and their families are comfortable discussing goals of care and able to clearly transmit that information to the entire age-friendly care team.

It is very useful to practice the “what ifs” before an event takes place and many have found that these conversations become easier once the topic of goals of care is introduced.

The resources below can help older adults, caregivers and clinicians, along with policymakers, build an age-friendly approach that ensures appropriate care when it is needed.

For Older Adults and Family Caregivers:

My Health Checklist. My Health Checklist is a practical tool for older adults to assess the most important aspects of their health: the 4Ms – what Matters, Medication, Mind and Mobility. It empowers individuals to approach every health care appointment prepared to discuss their goals, current situation and what they want to improve with confidence and clarity.

Patient Priorities Care. Patient Priorities Care helps older adults with many health conditions work with their care providers to identify health priorities and discuss what matters most, so the resulting care plan aligns with their unique goals and preferences. Clinicians can access training and tools to help patients identify and discuss their priorities.

The Conversation Project. The Conversation Project helps older adults discuss end-of-life care with important people in their lives, so their priorities are understood and respected.

FAIR Health. FAIR Health’s decision-making tool for people living with Alzheimer’s disease includes information on self-care, prescription options and care costs and educational resources like checklists, website links and additional support.

Resources For Health Care Providers and Professionals Working with Older Adults

How to Have Conversations With Older Adults About “What Matters”. The Institute for Healthcare Improvement’s conversation guide helps health care



National Healthcare Decisions Day - April 16

the conversation project

providers talk with older adults about what matters most to them, using prompts and questions that move conversations forward.

Person-Centered Outcome Measures. The National Committee for Quality Assurance’s person-centered outcome measures help care providers and older adults track progress on personal health goals based on what matters most.

Moving Forward Guides. The Moving Forward Nursing Home Quality Coalition offers practical guidance on how to uplift the goals, preferences and priorities of older adults living in nursing homes, advancing their individual care and the overall long-term care system through quality improvement and person-centered care.

Serious Illness Messaging Toolkit. This toolkit helps health care professionals talk about palliative care, advanced care planning and hospice care in a way that improves public understanding and perceptions.

Countering Ageism by Changing How We Talk About Aging. The National Center to Reframe Aging provides resources to shift public perceptions about aging by challenging ageist stereotypes and encouraging people to rethink how they talk about growing older.

National Plan on Aging Community Engagement Toolkit. The National Plan on Aging Community Engagement Collaborative supports community partners in listening to older adults about their needs to inform a national plan on aging.

Source: <https://mailchi.mp/Jhartfound/1fjnagxfxr-6673994>

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Oral Cancer Month Puts Focus on Resources for Veterans

April is Oral Cancer Awareness Month highlighting the importance of annual screening for cancers of the mouth and the back of the throat. Early detection of oral cancer is important as it can spread quickly, and early treatment works best before the disease has spread as referenced by the National Institute for Dental and Cranial Craniofacial Research at <https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/health-info/oral-cancer#helpful-tips>.

Poor oral health can affect your overall health as it can lead to cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, and other serious health conditions. It is recommended that you have an oral cancer screening at your regular dental check-up by your dentist or dental hygienist. The National Institute of Health National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research highlights information regarding older adults and oral health including oral cancer in its [oral health fact sheet](#).

U.S. Veterans are three times more likely to develop oropharyngeal cancer (occurring in the mouth and throat) than the general population according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. VA scientists have begun [a study to use artificial intelligence through an AI algorithm to assess chemo-radiation treatment response](#). In the future, this may allow a Veteran to benefit from a lower treatment intensity for their cancer. AI to Maximize Treatment for Veterans with Head and Neck Cancer

The Veterans' Freedom to Smile Initiative was launched through collaboration with NH state officials along with state and regional healthcare leaders, nonprofit organizations and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to connect underserved, qualified Veterans with free or reduced cost dental care.

Qualifying Veterans and/or those with a disability or are aging can visit *Veterans' Freedom to Smile Initiative - Oral Health Care Options for Veterans* | Department of Military Affairs and Veterans Services, *Finding Low-Cost Dental Care: Information for Caregivers* at <https://www.dmavs.nh.gov/community-based-military-programs/veterans-freedom-smile-initiative-oral-health-care-options>, or contact ServiceLink at 1-866-634-9412 to find programs they may qualify for free and/or reduced dental care.

Your Local Resources



Not sure what resources exist in your community to help with an age- or disability-related issue? Contact your local Aging & Disability Resource Center (ServiceLink) Office at (866) 634-9412, <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/programs-services/adult-aging-care/servicelink>



2-1-1 NH is the connection for NH residents to the most up-to-date resources they need from specially trained Information and Referral Specialists. <https://www.211nh.org>

Resources for Older Adults Living Alone

As we age, living alone can present various challenges, including **social isolation**, limited access to essential services, and potential health risks. Approximately **27% of U.S. adults age 60 and older were living alone** in 2020, according to the Pew Research Center, and this number is projected to increase as the baby boomer generation reaches retirement age.

As the population of older adults continues to grow, so does the **number of people who choose to live independently** as they age. The team at the National Council on Aging has provided a comprehensive guide to the various programs, services, and organizations catering to the needs of older adults living alone. By highlighting the importance of community engagement, social connections, and access to essential services, the guide demonstrates how organizations and tools help older adults successfully age in place.

View the 2025 guide at <https://www.ncoa.org/adviser/medical-alert-systems/support-for-older-adults-living-alone/>

Keep Cyber Safe This Month

Did Someone Use Your SSN Number to File Taxes? Here's What to Do

By Bureau of Consumer Protection Staff

If you're filing your taxes online this year, watch for signs of tax identity theft, like someone using your Social Security number (SSN) to file and claim a tax refund. One way you'll know is if the IRS rejects your tax return once you file. Learn to protect yourself while filing online and what to do if someone steals your tax refund.

If you use tax preparation software like TurboTax, H&R Block, TaxAct, or TaxSlayer, protect your accounts by using **two-factor authentication**. Requiring two or more credentials to log in makes it harder for scammers to get into your account, even if they get your username and password. And always file early, if you can — before anyone else files using your personal information.

But even if you're careful, someone might still **use your SSN to steal your refund**. Now, if the IRS rejects the tax return you submitted online or through a tax preparer, it could just mean missing or incorrect information. But if the IRS says there's more than one tax return filed in your name or they see income from an employer you know you don't work for, that's identity theft. Don't panic — but do act quickly to communicate with the IRS. Here's how:

- **Report it to [IdentityTheft.gov](https://www.identitytheft.gov)** using as many details as possible. The site will create an FTC Identity Theft Report, an IRS Identity Theft Affidavit, and a personal recovery plan.
- **Submit your IRS Identity Theft Affidavit** through [IdentityTheft.gov](https://www.identitytheft.gov). This tells the IRS to begin investigating your case. Or get the **Identity Theft Affidavit** (IRS Form 14039) and submit it by mail.
- **Follow the steps in your personal recovery plan** — like **freezing your credit** and **checking your credit reports** — to limit the damage identity theft causes.

Share **[IdentityTheft.gov/Steps](https://www.identitytheft.gov/steps)** with friends and loved ones to help them protect their personal information and stay ahead of identity thieves.

Source: <https://consumer.ftc.gov/consumer-alerts/2025/02/did-someone-use-your-ssn-file-taxes-heres-what-do>

Sign Over A Portion Of Your VA Benefits? Nope, That's A Scam

By Bureau of Consumer Protection Staff

Whether you served for four, ten, or twenty years, veterans pension and disability benefits might be an important — often essential — part of your life after the military. That's why scammers call, email, or message to "help" you apply for them. But what they're really after is your money. These "advisors" make promises they can't keep and charge filing fees for services that are always free through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Spot scams during the **VA benefits claims process** to avoid them.

Scammers **mask their schemes in offers to help**. That might look like an email saying you're missing out on some of your benefits and an offer to help you apply for them (for a fee, of course). But that's a scam. Ignore that email.

Some scammers charge fees for fake services like speeding up the claims process or guaranteeing you a 100% disability rating, but only the VA can determine eligibility and award benefits and services. There's no speeding up the process, and there are no guarantees.

If someone pressures you to sign over a portion of your VA benefits as payment for their help applying, say no. That's a scam. VA accredited attorneys, claims agents, and Veterans Service Organization (VSO) representatives will help you apply **for free**.

- Skip the scams and go straight to the source — the VA. Here's what to do:
- **Apply directly to VA**. They'll help you gather and develop evidence to support your initial claim for VA benefits — for free.
- **Need help? Only work with a VA accredited representative**. Use the **VA Accreditation Search tool** to confirm that the person helping you is approved by the VA.
- **Take your time**. Scammers pressure you to act fast. Slow down. Read all papers and contracts before signing anything.

If you spot a scam to steal veterans' benefits, tell the FTC at **[ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://www.reportfraud.ftc.gov)**. Then, tell **your state attorney general**.

Source: <https://consumer.ftc.gov/consumer-alerts/2025/02/sign-over-portion-your-va-benefits-nope-thats-scam>

Aging in a Changing Climate: Putting Experience Into Action

Join us for a transformative virtual summit focused on building climate resilient communities in partnership with older adults.

Climate change and extreme weather present unique challenges, and this summit will make the case for why engaging older adults is essential for effective solutions. We'll demonstrate the importance of intentionally including older residents—including those in their 80s, 90s, and beyond—in planning, developing, and deploying effective community-based responses to climate change.

This summit will connect climate experts, policy leaders, and community members to focus on practical strategies for engaging older adults in building climate resilience. Participants will gain actionable insights into creating communities that intentionally address the needs of older residents and empower them to lead and implement effective responses to climate change and extreme weather—a critical step towards achieving true age equity in climate action.

Don't miss this opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals and contribute to building a more resilient future for all. All registered attendees will receive a special discount code for 20% off the purchase of Climate Resilience for an Aging Nation.

- Tickets: General Admission: \$75/Student/Retired Person: \$50. Group Rates, Scholarships, and discounts are available upon request.
- Email Kathy Willette for more information: kwillette@mainecouncilonaging.org.
- Register at <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/ev/reg/cjqmhau>



Links to Learn More

The following is a sample of information regarding older adults that came across our desk this month. We thought our readers might find this information interesting. Please follow the links or type the URL address into your browser for the complete story.

Toolkit Offers Roadmap For Person-Centered Dementia Care Planning

The Care Planning Team of the Massachusetts Advisory Council on Alzheimer's Disease and All other Dementias released a [new toolkit](#) for people living with dementia, their families, dementia care partners and service providers.

The toolkit can be a resource for individuals and caretakers developing care plans that are person-centered and support living well with dementia.

Find the toolkit at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/dementia-care-planning-toolkit-a-resource-for-individuals-and-their-care-partners-families-and-care-providers-february-2025/download>

United Way of Greater Nashua Scam Alert Emails

Scammers are constantly finding new ways to steal money and personal information—through phone calls, emails, texts, and even social media. Every year, thousands of people fall victim to fraud, losing millions of dollars.

United Way of Greater Nashua is here to help. Sign up for free Scam Alert Email List and receive:

- Real-time warnings about new scams
- Expert tips to recognize fraud before it happens
- Resources to protect yourself and report suspicious activity

Knowledge is your best defense! Stay informed and keep yourself, your family, and your community safe.

Sign up at <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/sl/W8Jjj2p/ScamAlertsUWGN>

GET EXCITED!

2025 AGE OF CHAMPIONS

 **Saturday**
April 26th, 2025

 **From**
10:00 am - 1:00 pm

 **Hamel Recreation Center**
5 Edgewood Rd., Durham, NH

 **University of New Hampshire**
Center on Aging and Community Living
Age of Champions Health and Wellness Fair

“It’s never too soon to age well”

The Age of Champions Health & Wellness Fair is a community-oriented intergenerational wellness event, made possible by the Center on Aging and Community Living (CACL) in partnership with UNH and several vendors and sponsors from throughout the New England region. The event provides high-impact, real-world experience for UNH students about to head out to the workforce and introduces the community to informational resources, organizations that serve older adults, demonstrations, and workshops to engage participants in the joy of healthy aging. Find more information at: <https://chhs.unh.edu/center-aging-community-living/university-engagement/age-champions>