

SOLO AGING



Cabinet on Aging

April 8, 2026

Who is solo aging?

What are the worries?

What are the benefits?

What are the policy implications?

What don't we know?

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The Project

HRSA funded › MCD Global

- CARE2 Collaborative
- PEACE ECHO out of UNH
- Digital resources



The Project

| Data collection method | Total individuals |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Focus groups (7 sessions) | 34 |
| Key informant interviews | 4 |
| Key informant surveys | 47 |
| Website pilot | 11 |
| TOTAL persons engaged | 96 |

An elderly man with short grey hair, glasses, and a mustache stands in a room. He is wearing a grey zip-up sweater over a light blue collared shirt. The room has white walls with several framed pictures, including a drawing of a cat and a larger abstract painting. A window is visible on the left. In the foreground, there are various items on a surface, including a framed photo of a woman, a potted plant, and some papers.

Who is solo aging?

Do you feel you are aging without close family or partner support for decision-making, socialization, hands-on care, or other aspects of daily life? This might be due to geographic or emotional distance or due to limited social or familial networks.

Who is solo aging?

25.8% of older adults 65+ live alone (2022 data)

28% of older adults 55+ live alone and are childless (2018 data)

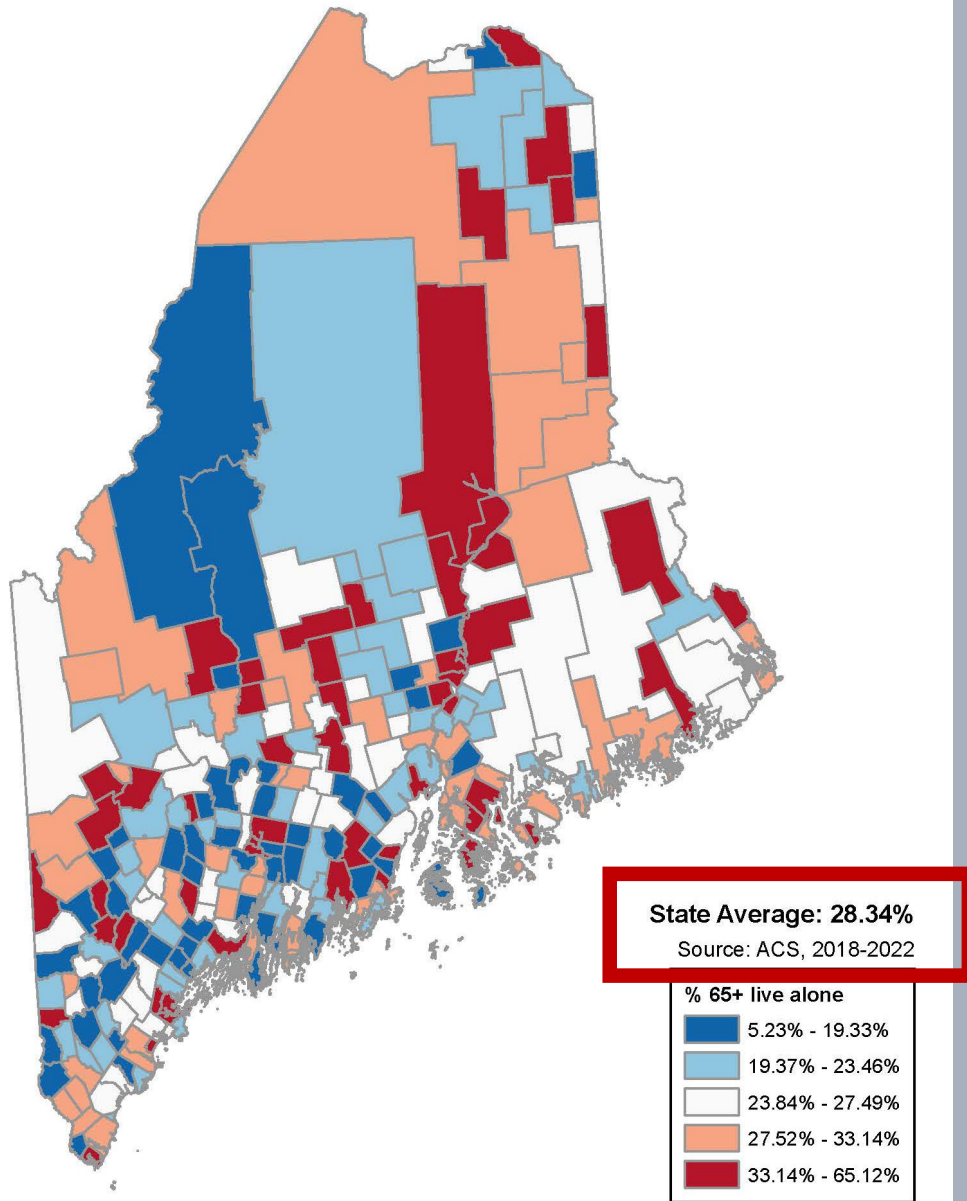
17% of baby boomers have no adult children
(2024 data)

43% of women 75+ live alone (vs 24% of men)
(2021 data)

1. <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/older-adults-in-the-united-states.html>
2. [US Census data \(2018\)](#)
3. Mather Institute. (2024). Flying solo: Experiences of older adults who are aging alone. Mather Institute.
4. [US Census data \(2022\)](#)



Percentage of Population Age 65+ Years who Live Alone



State average
28.34%



Map generated 12/2024 by The Healthy Aging Data Report Team at Gerontology Institute, University of Massachusetts Boston
To see more Healthy Aging Data Reports go to www.healthyagingdatareports.org | Research supported by the Point32Health Foundation

Who is solo aging?

- Solo for long period vs newly solo
- No family or estranged from family



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All worried about similar things, however





What are the worries?

What are the worries?

- **Fear of falling or getting hurt**
- **Health declines requiring moving**
- **Medical procedures requiring transportation or hands-on care**
- **Social disconnection**
- **Not having a surrogate decision-maker**
- **Finances**



What are the worries?

Planning for late life and end-of-life

- **Concern about end-of-life decisions and care**
- **Several had already expressed end-of-life wishes**
- **Don't want to “be a burden”**





What are the benefits?

What are the benefits?

- **Feeling self-reliant**
- **Liberating**
- **Doing what I want**
- **Prefer doing some things by myself**



Technology

A woman with long, wavy brown hair and glasses is seated at a table, looking down at a smartphone held in her hands. She is wearing a dark blue short-sleeved shirt with white polka dots and a silver watch on her left wrist. The table in front of her has several papers and a smartphone. In the background, there is a white vase, a red vase, and a framed picture on the wall. The word "Technology" is overlaid in large white text across the center of the image.

A photograph showing a male doctor in a white lab coat and stethoscope sitting and talking to an elderly woman with short white hair and glasses. The woman is wearing a red cardigan over a light-colored top. They are in a clinical setting with large windows in the background. The text "Provider knowledge" is overlaid in white on the image.

Provider knowledge

Policy Implications

A photograph of a man in a grey and black hoodie and glasses, leaning forward and pointing his right hand towards a white garage door. The garage door is partially open, revealing a dark interior. The man is standing in a backyard with a wooden fence and a brick wall visible. The text "Policy Implications" is overlaid in large white font across the center of the image.

Policy Implications – just a few

Demographics

- › Older women (e.g., Farmingdale)
- › Remoteness

Surrogate decision making

- › Naming an entity as a decision maker is not allowed

The need for data to understand risks of SA

- › No data are collected on *solo aging*
- › Living alone is the only proxy we have

Healthcare conversations

- › Solo agers report not being asked about living alone
- › Many risks for post-operative care, end-of-life care



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The website

Landing page



Solo Aging Resource Center

Solo Aging Home

Solo Aging Resources ▾

Solo Aging Topics ▾

Solo Aging Demographics

Conversation Guide

About Us

Contact Us



Your place for information about **Solo Aging**

The Solo Aging Resource Center provides research-based resources, definitions, conversation guides, and planning tools for people who are aging alone and the health and social service providers who serve them.



Resources



Solo Aging Resource Center

[Solo Aging Home](#)

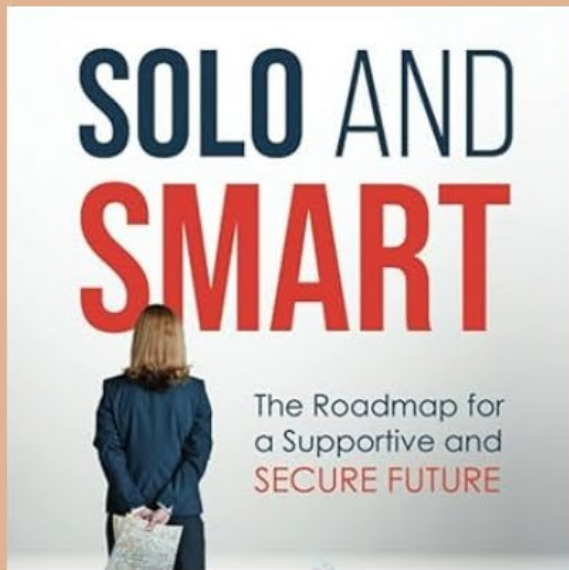
[Solo Aging Resources](#) ▾

[Solo Aging Topics](#) ▾

[Solo Aging Demographics](#)

[More](#) ▾

The information on this site was gathered from an exploratory project on solo aging that included conversations with 34 solo agers in Maine during 2025. [You can view and download the final project report here.](#)



[Books on Solo Aging](#)



[Videos on Solo Aging](#)



[Academic Articles Related to Solo Aging](#)



[Mainstream Media Articles on Solo Aging](#)

Topics



Solo Aging Resource Center

Solo Aging Home

Solo Aging Resources ▾

Solo Ag

What do you want to know more about?

Click on the links below to access the individual topic pages

- [What qualities do solo agers associate with solo-ness?](#)
- [What are solo ager concerns?](#)
- [Are there benefits to solo aging?](#)
- [How are solo agers connecting with others?](#)
- [What technology supports solo aging?](#)
- [Are solo agers planning for the future?](#)

Topics



tasks can seem too intimate to ask just anyone for help.

"If I fell down on the floor there's no way I could get up."

Mental Health and Well Being

Many solos noted the negative impact isolation can have on one's mental well being. They expressed concern that prolonged isolation could lead to depression. These worries were separate from concerns about not having care support and instead centered on the lack of emotional comfort or social connection.



Pets

Pets provide comfort and support, especially for people living alone. Solos are worried about who would care for their pet if something were to happen to them. Other concerns include not being able to bring their pets if they needed to move. Continuing to care for a pet is a major



Demographics



Solo Aging Demographics

Percentage of older adults (aged 65+) living alone, by state (top 10 county/town)*

Maine

Overall 28.3% of Mainers aged 65+ report living alone

Source: Health Aging Data Reports (2018-2022)

New Hampshire

Overall 25.5% of New Hampshire residents aged 65+ report living alone

Source: Health Aging Data Reports (2018-2022)

Vermont

Overall 46.2% of Vermonters aged 65+ report living alone

Source: US Census Bureau (2019-2023)

| Town | Percentage Living Alone | Town | Percentage Living Alone | County | Percentage Living Alone |
|-------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Farmingdale | 65.1% | Hart's Location | 88.0% | Windham County | 50.2% |
| Blue Hill | 56.9% | Bartlett | 42.4% | Washington County | 48.0% |
| Waldoboro | 50.9% | Sandwich | 41.2% | Rutland County | 47.3% |
| Fairfield | 50.4% | Jefferson | 41.1% | Bennington County | 46.1% |
| Randolph | 49.7% | Farmington | 40.5% | Chittenden County | 46.1% |
| Naples | 48.6% | Gilmanton | 40.2% | Franklin County | 45.5% |
| Augusta | 45.9% | Warren | 39.5% | Windsor County | 45.4% |
| Detroit | 45.8% | Conway | 39.5% | Addison County | 38.5% |
| Palmyra | 45.8% | Lisbon | 38.1% | | |
| Newfield | 45.4% | Marlborough | 38.0% | | |

*based on data availability

Conversation Guide

Do you live alone?

Describe your network of family, friends, acquaintances

- How many?
- Do they know each other (open network)?
- What is the network range? (i.e., reach)
- How diverse is it?
- Is it functional?

Network size

How integrated are you in your network?

- How often do you see or interact with people in your network?
- How involved are you with community organizations & programs?
- How close and involved are you with family and friends (and is the involvement to your liking?)

Network engagement

Is your network supportive of you?

- Do you get the emotional support you need or want?
- Do you get the personal care that you need or want?
- Do you get the information you need and want when you need it?
- Do you get the help you need or want with making decisions?

Network support

More to learn

- **Policy implications**
- **Communities with very high rates of people living alone**
- **Gender and solo aging**
- **Programs for solo agers**
- **Reducing risks for solo agers – health, extreme weather, social health**
- **Interface with healthcare – who is asking about living alone?**

Thank you!

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