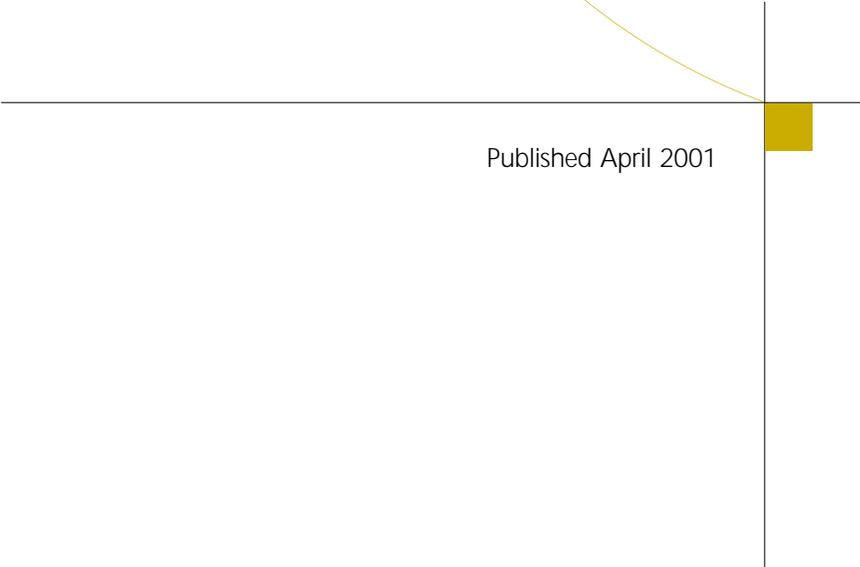
A decorative graphic in the top left corner features a large yellow square, a smaller red square at its bottom right corner, and thin black lines extending horizontally and vertically from the red square.

# Can We Talk?

## Families Discuss Older Parents' Ability to Live Independently... Or Do They?

A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner features a thin black horizontal line, a thin black vertical line, and a small yellow square at their intersection.

Published April 2001



Can We Talk?  
Families Discuss Older Parents' Ability To Live Independently  
. . . Or Do They?

Data Collected By International Communications Research (ICR)

Report Prepared By Linda L. Barrett, Ph.D., AARP

AARP  
601 E Street NW  
Washington, DC 20049  
<http://research.aarp.org>  
©Copyright AARP, April 2001  
Reprinting with Permission

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization for people 50 and over. We provide information and resources; advocate on legislative, consumer, and legal issues; assist members to serve their communities; and offer a wide range of unique benefits, special products, and services for our members. These benefits include *AARP Webplace* at [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org), *Modern Maturity* and *My Generation* magazines, and the monthly *AARP Bulletin*. Active in every U.S. state and territory, AARP celebrates the attitude that age isn't just a number -- it's about how you live your life.

## Acknowledgements

This research was conducted on behalf of the Independent Living – Long Term Care strategic initiative. We would like to acknowledge the contributions made by several people throughout the research process. Elinor Ginzler and Lauren A. Jones worked closely with Linda L. Barrett to craft the research questions addressed in this study. ICR Research, Inc. collected and tabulated the data. Eunice Cash compiled previous research from the AARP Research Information Center and arranged to borrow materials that are not in our collection. Elsie Strother and Barbara Ruffin provided administrative assistance. Dr. Ada-Helen Bayer provided management review of the final report. For more information contact Linda L. Barrett, Ph.D., AARP Knowledge Management, Strategic Issue Research, (202) 434-6197.

**Can We Talk?  
Families Discuss Older Parents' Ability to Live Independently  
. . . Or Do They?**

Executive Summary	3
I. Introduction	6
II. Characteristics Of Adult Children And Older Parents	7
a. Parental Residence	
b. Frequency Of Contact	
c. Thinking About Older Parents' Ability To Live Independently	
III. People Who <i>Think And Talk</i> About Older Parents' Ability To Live Independently	10
a. Thinkers and Talkers	
b. How Often?	
c. Taking The Initiative	
d. Perceived Benefits	
e. Types Of Advice	
IV. People Who <i>Think But Do Not Talk</i> About Older Parents' Ability To Live Independently	16
a. Silent Thinkers	
b. Reasons For Not Talking	
V. People Who <i>Do Not Think</i> About (Older Parents') Ability To Live Independently	19
a. Types of Non-thinkers	
b. Non-thinkers Who Plan Ahead In Case	
c. Taking The Initiative	
d. Types Of Advice	
e. Reasons For Not Talking About Older Parents' Ability To Live Independently Among Silent Non-thinkers	
VI. Thinking About (Older Parents') Getting Older	24
a. Will Parents' Aging Effect Adult Children?	
b. Perceptions Of How Parents' Aging May Affect Adult Children	
c. Are Parents Withholding Information?	

VII. Scenario	27
VIII. Conclusions And Recommendations	29
References	
Annotated Questionnaires	

## Executive Summary

During February-March, 2001 we conducted two companion surveys. These surveys were designed to examine whether adult children and older parents talk with each other about the parents' ability to live independently as they get older. We asked people who do talk about this issue what they perceive to be the benefits of having such conversations, and what advice they would give another adult child or older parent about starting such a conversation. When people said they do not talk about independent living issues with their family counterpart, we asked them why they have not talked about this issue. This summary highlights the key findings from this research.

Thinking about parents' getting older is on the minds of most adult children and older parents (88% of adult children and 75% of parents). Between one half and two thirds (67% of adult children and 50% of parents) think about the effect the parents' getting older may have on the adult children. More than half of the adult children (54%) think their parents will need their help but less than three in ten older parents agree (27%). A substantial proportion of adult children and older parents (75% of adult children and 69% of parents) also think about the parents' ability to live independently as they get older.

We call people (in both generations) who think about the parents' ability to live independently as they get older "thinkers." Thinkers are sub-divided into those who talk about the issue with their counterpart and those who do not talk about the issue with their counterpart. Among those in both generations who think about the parents' ability to live independently, about two in three (67% of adult children and 64% of parents) say they have talked with their counterpart about independent living. We call them "thinkers and talkers". Thinkers and talkers most often say they have this conversation a few times a year (44% of adult children and 35% of parents). Among thinkers and talkers, both adult children and older parents see themselves as often being the one who begins the discussion in their family (39% of adult children and 50% of parents). Nearly equal proportions of adult children and older parents say they have an on-going dialog about the parents' ability to live independently (30% of adult children and 27% of parents).

Thinkers and talkers in both generations say "knowing what to do" when the situation arises is an important benefit derived from having a conversation about independent living (43% of adult children and 55% of parents). Fewer (23% of adult children and 10% of parents) say "peace of mind" is a benefit. Thinkers and

talkers in both generations advise others to communicate about these issues and encourage them to bring it up themselves, to be open, honest, and have good communication (51% of adult children and 43% of parents). Fewer note the importance of planning (11% of adult children and 14% of parents).

We call adult children and older parents who think about the parents' ability to live independently, but *do not talk* about it "silent thinkers." Silent thinkers cite "no need" as a primary reason for not talking about the parents' ability to live independently (47% of adult children and 40% of parents). Silent thinkers say such things as "parents are young / healthy" or that "the plans are already established" (older parents say "I / we are young / healthy" or "already made plans").

One quarter (25%) of adult children say they do not think about their parents' ability to live independently as they get older and nearly three in ten (29%) of older parents agree they do not think about getting older themselves. We call these people "non-thinkers." Non-thinkers are also subdivided into two categories: those who "talk in case" the parent needs assistance to live independently and "silent non-thinkers" who do not talk about the parents' ability to live independently as they get older.

Equal proportions of adult children and older parents who are non-thinkers say they have talked with their counterpart to plan ahead in case the parent needs assistance to live independently (29% of adult children and 29% of parents). Among the approximately three in ten non-thinkers who plan in case the older parent needs assistance to live independently, older parents say they are more likely to initiate the conversation than their adult child(ren) are. Non-thinkers (in both generations) who talk in case the parents need assistance advise their counterparts to recognize the importance of communication when discussing independent living issues.

Equal proportions of adult children and older parents are silent non-thinkers. Seventy percent of the non-thinkers in both generations say they do not talk about the parents' ability to live independently. Silent non-thinkers say the primary reason for not talking is that there is no need (48% of adult children and 44% of parents). The primary reason they do not perceive a need is that they have already established their plan and feel they are prepared.

When presented with a hypothetical situation about an older woman named Mary, who is experiencing difficulty walking and going up and down stairs, 49 percent of the adult children and 43 percent of the older parents think Mary should tell both her adult son and daughter about the situation.

Adult children would advise the Mary to communicate with others about her situation (35%) and to relocate (30%). Older parents would advise Mary to do the same things, but in different proportions. Nearly four in ten older parents (38%) advise her to relocate and one quarter (24%) advise her to communicate with others about her situation.

It is encouraging to learn that about seven in ten people interviewed (75% of adult children and 69% of older parents) in this study report thinking about the parents' ability to live independently as they get older. This finding indicates there is an opportunity to raise the level of awareness about this issue with the remaining 25 to 30 percent of adult children and older parents who do not think about independent living issues. There is also an opportunity to encourage the approximately one in three adult children and older parents who think about parents' ability to live independently as they get older but do not talk about it to do so. One way to do this is to share the perceived benefits reported by adult children and older parents who do think and talk with those who do not talk as an incentive to begin the conversation.

The literature on aging families also suggests a variety of techniques professionals working with these families can use. These include interventions for strengthening later life families through educational programs and through engineering social and environmental factors.

## I. Introduction

Our previous research (Barrett, 1998) showed that adult children and older parents share a common understanding of what living independently means to the older generation. We also found that although most adult children and older parents thought it would be “easy” or “very easy” to talk to their adult child or parent about the parents’ ability to live independently, few said they had ever “talked with (their counterpart) about what it would take for you (them) to continue to live independently”. We wondered why adult children and older parents do not talk with each other about the parents’ ability to live independently. We also wondered what advice those who do talk would give others to encourage them to have these conversations.

This report integrates the findings from two new omnibus surveys. In one survey, we interviewed adult children about whether they think about their parents’ ability to live independently, whether they communicate with their parents about this issue, and what advice they would give to other adult children about communicating with their parents regarding their independent living<sup>1</sup>. In the second survey, we interviewed older parents about whether they think about their own ability to live independently, whether they communicate with their adult children about this issue, and what advice they would give to other parents about communicating with their adult children regarding independent living.<sup>2</sup>

The data from adult children were collected through telephone interviews conducted with a nationally representative cross section of 1,431 adults between the ages of 30 to 64 years who have at least one living parent age 65 years or older.<sup>3</sup> The telephone surveys were conducted between February 9 and February 20, 2001. The data from older parents were also collected from a nationally representative cross section of 1,010 adults ages 65 or older that have a least one adult child between the ages of 30 and 64 years of age.<sup>4</sup> This telephone survey was conducted between February 9 and March 4, 2001.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> All adult children interviewed are between the ages of 30 to 64 years and have at least one living parent age 65 years or older. This represents 69,100,000 of the U.S. population with these characteristics.

<sup>2</sup> All older parents interviewed are 65 years of age or older and have at least one living adult child between the ages of 30 to 64 years. This represents 27,200,000 of the U.S. population with these characteristics.

<sup>3</sup> With a sample this size, 95 times out of 100 the results will be within a range of  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points.

<sup>4</sup> With a sample this size, 95 times out of 100 the results will be within a range of  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points.

<sup>5</sup> International Communications Research (ICR) of Media, PA conducted these interviews as part of an *EXCEL* Omnibus survey. *EXCEL* is a national twice-weekly telephone omnibus service designed to meet the standards of quality associated with custom research studies. Each *EXCEL* survey uses a fully-replicated, stratified, single-stage random-digit-dialing sample of telephone households. The data were weighed to provide nationally representative and projectable estimates of the adult population.

## II. Characteristics Of Adult Children and Older Parents

More than half (53%) of the adult children who were interviewed have one parent living who is at least 65 years old, and 47 percent of the adult children have two or more parents who meet the same criteria.<sup>6</sup> Among the older parents in our study, almost nine in ten (89%) have two or more adult children age 30 or older, and eleven percent have one adult child who is at least 30 years old. Among older parents who have more than one adult child, three-fourths (76%) have both sons and daughters, 12 percent have only sons and 13 percent have only daughters.

### a. Parental Residence

The majority of adult children and parents in our study say the older generation lives in their own home. Few report the older parent lives in the adult child's home, or in another relatives home. Few adult children say their parents live in an assisted living facility, nursing home, or someplace else (See Table 1).<sup>7</sup>

**Table 1: Parents' Residence**

*Base: All adult children interviewed who are between the ages of 30-64 years with at least one living parent age 65 or older. All parents interviewed who are at least 65 years of age or older with at least one adult child between the ages of 30-64 years of age.*

	Adult children (n = 1431)	Parents (n = 1010)
In their own home	82%	90%
In adult child's home	9	4
In other relative's home	3	2
In an assisted living facility	2	--
In a nursing home	2	--
Some place else (unspecified)	2	6
Refused	*	*

Source: ICR Research, Inc., Excel Omnibus Survey, February-March, 2001

Questions KI-1b: Where (do your parents/does your parent) currently live? Read list

PI-1c: Where do you currently live? Read list

<sup>6</sup> We used the phrase two or more parents since some people have step-parents in addition to birth parents.

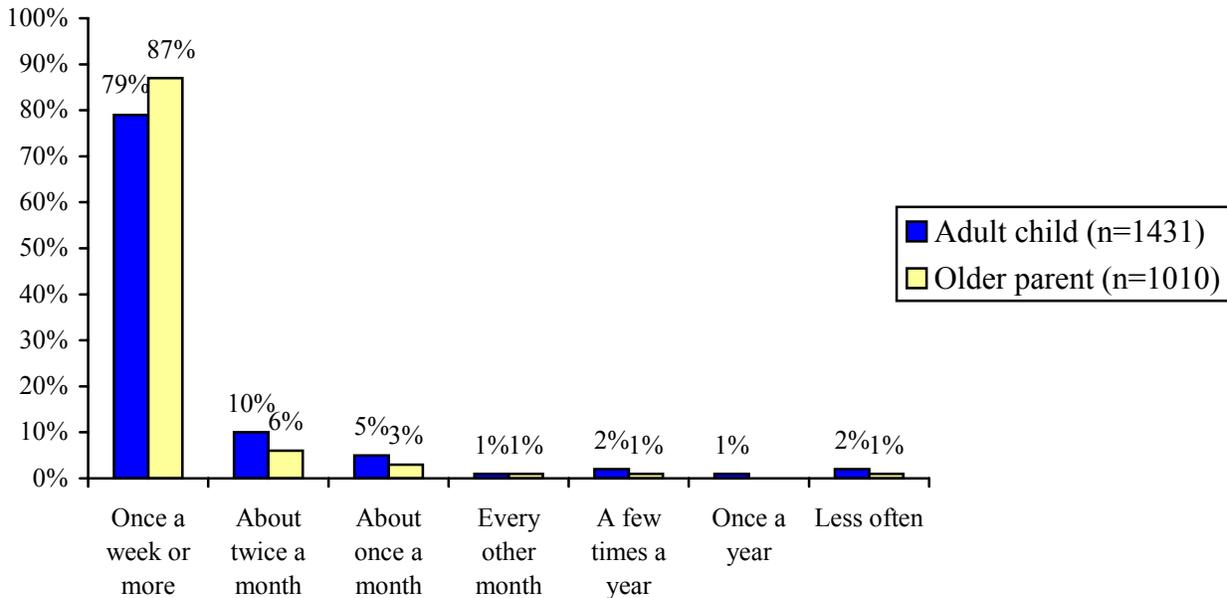
<sup>7</sup> Since the *EXCEL* only contacts people living in the community, older parents who currently live in assisted living facilities, nursing homes, or other types of institutions are not included in this study.

## b. Frequency Of Contact

Older parents are more likely than adult children to say they visit once a week or more with their counterpart.<sup>8</sup> Adult children are more likely than older parents to say they visit with their counterpart about twice a month. This difference may be accounted for by the fact that older parents are more likely to have adult children than adult children are to have older parents (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Frequency Of Contact**

*Base: All adult children interviewed who are between the ages of 30-64 years with at least one living parent age 65 or older. All parents interviewed who are at least 65 years of age or older with at least one adult child between the ages of 30-64 years of age.*



Source: ICR Research, Inc., Excel Omnibus Survey, February-March, 2001  
 Questions KI-2: How often do you talk with your parent(s)?  
 PI-2: How often do you talk with your adult child(ren)?

<sup>8</sup> In this report, any differences between the two groups (adult children versus parents) are significant at the  $\alpha = .05$ , this means that 95 times out of 100, we would not expect these results by chance.

**c. Thinking About Older Parents' Ability to Live Independently**

Adult children are somewhat more likely than older parents to think about their (parents') ability to live independently (See Table 2).

**Table 2: Proportion Who Think About Parents' Ability To Live Independently**

*Base: All adult children interviewed who are between the ages of 30-64 years with at least one living parent age 65 or older. All parents interviewed who are at least 65 years of age or older with at least one adult child between the ages of 30-64 years of age.*

	Adult children (n = 1431)	Parents (n = 1010)
Yes	75%	69%
No	25%	29%
Do not know	1	2
Refused	1	1

Source: ICR Research, Inc., Excel Omnibus Survey, February-March, 2001

Questions: KI-3: Do you ever think about your parents' ability to live independently as you get older?

PI-3: Do you ever think about your ability to live independently as you get older?

### III. People Who Think and Talk About Older Parents' Ability To Live Independently

#### a. Thinkers and Talkers

Approximately three-quarters of adult children and older parents who think about parents' ability to live independently talk with their counterparts about the parents' ability to live independently as they get older (See Table 3).

**Table 3: Proportion Who Think and Talk About Parents' Ability To Live Independent**

*Base: Adult children interviewed who are between age 30-64 with at least one parent age 65+ who think about their parents' ability to live independently. Older parents interviewed who are age 65+ who have at least one adult age 30-64 and who think about their own ability to live independently.*

	Adult children (n = 1073)	Older parents (n = 720)
Yes	67%	64%
No	32%	36%
Refused	1%	1%

Source: ICR Research, Inc., Excel Omnibus Survey, February-March, 2001

Question KI-4: Some adult children talk with their parents about their parents' ability to live independently as they get older. Do you talk with your parent(s) about their ability to live independently as they get older?

PI-4: Some parents talk with their adult children about their ability to live independently as they get older. Do you talk with your adult child(ren) about your ability to live independently as you get older?

Among adult children with two or more parents who talk with their parents about their ability to live independently, 47 percent say they talk with their parents equally about these issues, 47 percent say they talk with their mother more than their fathers, and only 6 percent say they talk with their fathers more than their mothers.

Among older parents who have at least one son and daughter between the ages of 30-64, six in ten say they talk with their sons and daughters equally about their ability to live independently. Three in ten (31%) say they talk with their daughters

more than their sons. Only ten percent say they talk with their sons more than their daughters about their ability to live independently.

**b. How Often?**

Adult children are more likely than older parents to say they talk with their counterpart a few times a year about their parents’ ability to live independently. There are no significant differences between the proportion of adult children and the proportion of older parents who selected a given response in any of the other response categories (See Table 4).

**Table 4: Thinkers and Talkers Frequency of Discussion  
In the Past Year  
About Parents’ Ability To Live Independently**

*Base: Adult children interviewed who are between the ages of 30 – 64 who thought about and talked to their parents in the past year about their parents’ ability to live independently. Parents interviewed who are age 65 or older who thought about their ability to live independently and talked to their adult children about independent living during the past year.*

	Adult Children (n = 709)	Older parents (n = 454)
Once a week	9%	11%
About twice a month	7	7
About once a month	13	16
Every other month	7	6
A few times a year	44	35
Once a year	12	13
Less often	7	5
Don’t know	1	7
Refused	*	*

Source: ICR Research, Inc., Excel Omnibus Survey, February-March, 2001

Question: KI-4a: In the past year, how often have you talked with your parent(s) about their ability to live independently? (Read list)

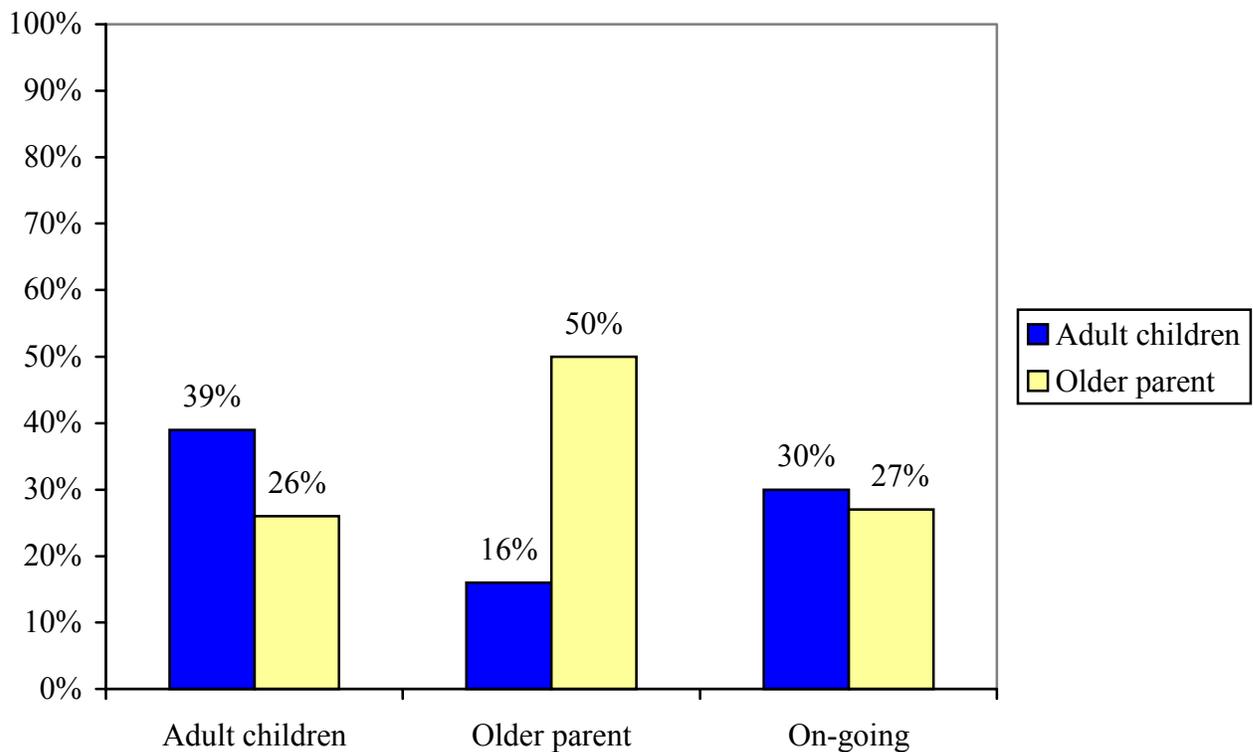
PI-4a: In the past year, how often have you talked with your adult child(ren) about your ability to live independently? (Read list)

### c. Taking The Initiative

Among thinkers and talkers, adult children are more likely to say they initiate the conversation than do their parents. Conversely, among this same group of thinkers and talkers, older parents are more likely to say they initiate the conversation than their adult children. Nearly equal proportions of adult children and older parents who are thinkers and talkers say they have an on-going dialog about the parents' ability to live independently (See Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Thinkers And Talkers - Taking The Initiative**

*Base: Adult children interviewed between 30-64 years with at least one parent who say they think about their parents' ability to live independently and talk with their parents about this issue. Older parents interviewed between 65+ years with at least one adult child 30-64 years who say they think about their ability to live independently and talk with their adult children about this issue.*



Source: ICR Research, Inc., Excel Omnibus Survey, February-March, 2001

Questions KI-4b: Who usually brings this topic up for discussion? (adult children n = 709)

PI-4b: Who usually brings this topic up for discussion? (older parent n = 454)

**d. Perceived Benefits**

Adult children and older parents who think about the parents’ ability to live independently and who talk with each other about the parents’ ability to live independently perceive the same top three benefits of having this conversation: “knowing what to do,” “peace of mind,” and “planning ahead.”<sup>9</sup> However, adult children and older parents choose the top three benefit categories to greater or lesser degrees (See Table 5). For example, a greater proportion of older parents select the benefit “knowing what to do” compared to adult children.

**Table 5: Thinkers and Talkers - Perceived Benefits Of Talking To Parents’ About Their Ability To Live Independently**

*Base: Adult children interviewed between 30-64 years with at least one parent who say they think about their parents’ ability to live independently and talk with their parents about this issue. Older parents interviewed between 65+ years with at least one adult child 30-64 years who say they think about their ability to live independently and talk with their adult children about this issue.*

	Adult children (n = 709)	Older parents n = (454)
Knowing what to do	43%	55%
Peace of mind	23	10
Planning ahead	15	5
Keep communication open	4	4
Make them aware of aging	3	3
Closeness between us	1	3
Other	9	11
No benefit	3	4
I get their opinions / feelings	--	5
They need to know	--	2
Don’t know	6	8

Source: ICR Research, Inc., Excel Omnibus Survey, February-March, 2001

Questions KI-4bb What are the benefits of having this conversation with your parent(s)?

(Record verbatim)

PI-4bb What are the benefits of having this conversation with your adult child(ren)?

(Record verbatim)

<sup>9</sup> The percentages do not add to 100% in tables reporting the results of open-ended questions because a respondent’s answer may fit into more than one category.

By comparing the type of comments adult children and older parents made with regard to “knowing what to do”, we can see there is a high degree of correspondence between what the two groups mean by this phrase (See Table 5a).

**Table 5a: Thinkers and Talkers - “Knowing What To Do”**

Adult children say it means:	Older parents say it means:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I know what their wishes are / what they want (33%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They know what my / our wishes are (37%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everyone knows what will happen (8%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everyone knows what will happen / what to expect / where things stand (15%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I know what to do (4%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They know what to do / how to help (6%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowing best options (2%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowing best options (2%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other knowing what to do (1%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other knowing what to do (&lt;1%)</li> </ul>

The second most frequently identified benefit of having these conversations is “peace of mind”. Adult children identify this benefit more frequently than do older parents. “Peace of mind” refers to such things as (See Table 5b):

**Table 5b: Thinkers and Talkers - “Peace Of Mind”**

Adult children	Older parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make sure they’ll be okay (9%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My children will take care of me / us (3%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They know they can rely on us / we will help (8%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I know they love / care and are concerned for me / us (2%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My / their peace of mind (3%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My / their peace of mind (2%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Let them know I love and care for them (2%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Let them know I / we will be okay (2%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other peace of mind (2%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other peace of mind (3%)</li> </ul>

The third most frequently identified benefit of having these conversations is “planning ahead / for future / being prepared”. Adult children identify this benefit more frequently than do older parents (15% vs. 5%).

### e. Types Of Advice

Adult children and older parents who think and talk about the parents’ ability to live independently generally agree on the type of advice they would give to others who desire to start such a conversation (See Table 6).

**Table 6: Thinkers And Talkers Offer Advice**

*Base: Adult children interviewed between 30-64 years with at least one parent who say they think about their parents’ ability to live independently and talk with their parents about this issue. Older parents interviewed between 65+ years with at least one adult child 30-64 years who say they think about their ability to live independently and talk with their adult children about this issue.*

	Adult children (n = 709)	Older parents (n = 454)
Communication	51%	43%
Planning	11	14
Be sensitive / respect their feelings	5	--
Take an interest in them	4	--
We should take care of them	2	--
Do research	2	1
Raise children wisely, teach morals, ethics	--	4
Have a good relationship with them	--	2
No advice	4	5
Other	10	13
Don’t know	19	25
Refused	1	2

Source: ICR Research, Inc., Excel Omnibus Survey, February-March, 2001

Questions KI-4c: What advice would you give to another adult child about how to start talking with their parents about planning for their parents future? (Record verbatim)

PI-4c: What advice would you give to another parent about how to start talking with their adult children about planning for their own future?

However, adult children are more likely than older parents to identify communication as a factor in talking with parents about the parents’ ability to live independently as they get older. When adult children and parents refer communication, they say such things as: “bring it up yourself,” “just talk about it,” “be open, honest, and have good communication.”

It is interesting to note that some adult children say wait for parents to bring the topic of independent living up while some older parents say wait for your adult child to bring it up (See Table 6a).

**Table 6a: “What Thinkers And Talkers Say About Communication”**

Adult children	Older parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring it up yourself, just talk about it (21%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring it up yourself / just talk about it (19%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be open / honest / have good communication (16%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be open / honest / have good communication (13%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask what they want / listen to them (12%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell them what I / we want / how we feel (8%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell them you love, care and are concerned for them (2%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wait until children bring it up (&lt;1%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring it up a little / slow at first (1%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring it up a little / slow at first (&lt;0%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wait until parents bring it up (1%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell them you love, care and are concerned for them (&lt;1%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask about health / health issues (1%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask about health / health issues (&lt;1%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other communications (4%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other communications (6%)</li> </ul>

#### **IV. People Who *Think But Do Not Talk* About Older Parents’ Ability To Live Independently**

##### **a. Silent Thinkers**

Three-quarters (75%) of the adult children in our survey say they think about their parents’ ability to live independently. Among these adult children, almost one third (32%) say they do not talk with their parents’ about their ability to live independently. Similarly, almost seven in ten (69%) older parents say they think about their ability to live independently, and more than one third (36%) say they do not talk with their adult children about living independently. We call these people “silent thinkers”.

## b. Reasons For Not Talking

We asked silent thinkers why they do not talk with their counterparts about the parents' ability to live independently. Silent thinkers identify the same top two reasons for not talking – there is no need, and poor communication. A greater proportion of adult children compared to older parents identify each of these reasons for not talking about the ability of the parents to live independently (See Table 7).

**Table 7: Silent Thinkers Reasons For Not Talking**

*Base: Adult children between the ages of 30-64 years who were interviewed and who think about parents' ability to live independently but do not talk with their parents about independent living issues. Parents interviewed who are age 65+ who think about their ability to live independently, but do not talk with their adult children about independent living issues.*

	Adult children (n = 358)	Older parents (n = 264)
No need	47%	40%
Poor communications	25	19
They are / I am independent	11	9
Don't think about it	7	7
They're rich / financially stable	3	--
Don't want to be a burden	--	4
Children are unable to care for me	--	2
They have their own family	--	2
Live far away	--	2
Other	11	14
Don't know	9	12
Refused	1	1

Source: ICR Research, Inc., Excel Omnibus Survey, February-March, 2001

Questions KI-4d: Why don't you talk about this topic with your parent(s)? (Record verbatim)

PI-4d: Why don't you talk about this topic with your adult child(ren)? (Record verbatim)

Following are examples of what silent thinkers mean when they say there is “no need” to discuss independent living issues (See Table 7a).

**Table 7a: Silent Thinkers Say There Is No Need To Talk About Parents’ Ability To Live Independently As They Get Older**

Adult children	Older parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents are healthy / young (17%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hasn’t gotten to that point yet (11%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hasn’t gotten to that point yet (9%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No need (unspecified) (10%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Already established / prepared (6%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I / we are young / healthy (9%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sibling has assumed responsibility (5%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Already established / prepared (8%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No need (unspecified) (4%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I / we are capable of doing this ourselves (5%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lives with me / another relative now (3%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I live with my children / another relative now (1%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent remarried a younger person who will assume responsibility (2%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other no need (2%)</li> </ul>

Almost two in ten adult children who are silent thinkers say their parents are young or healthy. About one in ten say the situation has not gotten to that point yet and even fewer say they have already established their plans.

Among older parents who are silent thinkers, nearly one in ten say it has not gotten to that point yet, or say they are still young or healthy. Only seven percent say they have already established their plans.

## V. People Who Don't Think About (Older Parents') Living Independently

### a. Types Of Non-thinkers

One quarter (25%) of adult children and almost three in ten (29%) of older parents interviewed say they do not think about the parents' ability to live independently as they get older. We call them "non-thinkers". Non-thinkers are sub-divided into two categories: those who plan in case the parents' need assistance living independently and silent non-thinkers.

Instead of asking non-thinkers to make a connection between thinking about the future and talking about the issue of independent living, we posed a question to them based on the premise that some people want to plan ahead in case they (parents) need assistance to live independently. Then we asked these respondents whether or not they ever talked with their counterpart about what they want to do if they need assistance to live independently.

### b. Non-thinkers Who Plan Ahead In Case

Equal proportions of adult children and older parents are non-thinkers who do talk and plan ahead in case parents' need assistance to live independently (Table 8).

**Table 8: Planning Ahead "In Case"  
Parents Need Assistance To Live Independently**

*Base: Adult children interviewed age 30-64 years who have at least one parent age 65+ and who said no, don't know, or refused to answer if they ever think about their parents' ability to live independently as they get older. Older parents interviewed age 65+ who have at least one adult child age 30-64 and who said no, don't know, or refused to answer if they ever think about their ability to live independently as they get older.*

	Adult children (n = 358)	Older Parents (n = 290)
Yes	29%	29%
No	70	70
Don't know	1	1

Source: ICR Research, Inc., Excel Omnibus Survey, February-March, 2001

Question KI-5: Some people want to plan ahead in case their parents need assistance to live independently. Have you ever talked with your parent(s) about what they want to do if they need assistance to live independently?

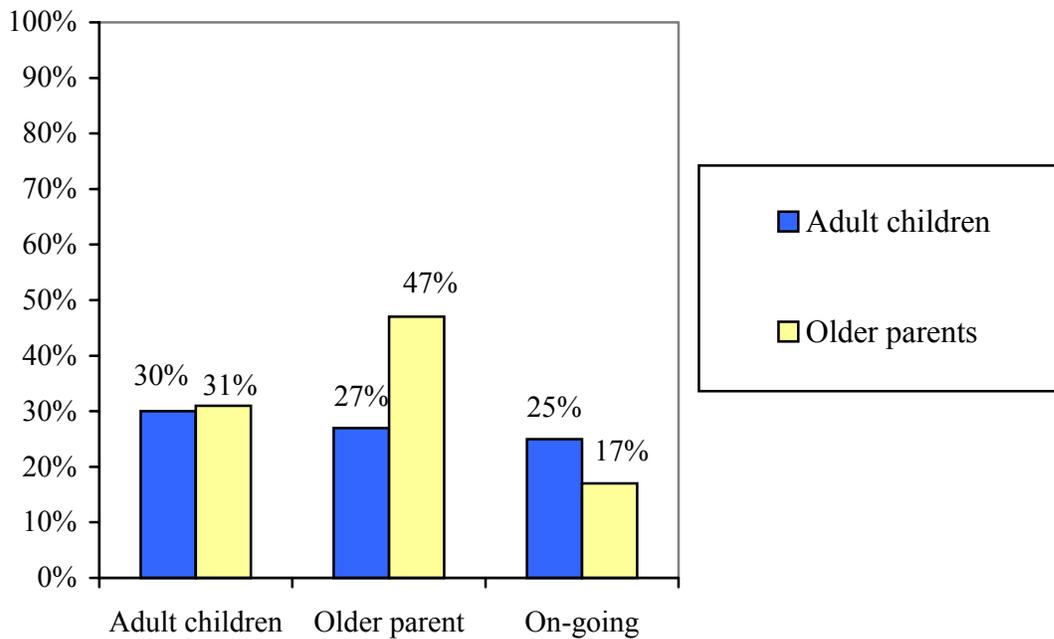
PI-5: Some people want to plan ahead in case they need assistance to live independently. Have you ever talked with your adult (child)ren about what you want to do if you need assistance to live independently?

### c. Taking The Initiative

Among the approximately three in ten non-thinkers who plan in case the older parent needs assistance to live independently, older parents say they are more likely to initiate a discussion about their ability to live independently than their adult children are (See Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Non-thinkers Planning Ahead “In Case” Parents’ Need Assistance To Live Independently**

*Base: Adult children interviewed age 30-64 years who have at least one parent 65+ and who say they do not think about their parents’ ability to live independently but can relate to a more abstract question about planning ahead. Older parents interviewed at least 65+ who have at least one adult child 30-64 years and who say they do not think about their ability to live independently but can relate to a more abstract question about planning ahead.*



Source: ICR Research, Inc., Excel Omnibus Survey, February-March, 2001

Question KI-5a: Who usually brings this topic up for discussion? (adult children n = 107)

PI-5a: Who usually brings this topic up for discussion? (older parent n = 86)

**d. Types Of Advice**

Non-thinkers who plan in case the parent needs assistance offer the same types of advice in roughly the same proportion as thinkers and talkers. Like thinkers and talkers, these non-thinkers emphasize the importance of communication (See Table 9).

**Table 9: Types of Advice Offered By Non-thinkers Who Plan Ahead In Case**

*Base: Adult children interviewed between 30-64 years who have at least one parent 65+ and who say they do not think about parents ability to live independently but can relate to a more abstract question about planning ahead just in case. Older parents interviewed age 65+ who have at least one adult child 30-64 years and who say they do not think about their ability to live independently but can relate to a more abstract question about planning ahead just in case.*

	Adult children (n = 107)	Older parents (n = 86)
Communication	34%	39%
Plan	13	17
No advice	4	3
Other	19	29
Don't know	32	18
Refused	1	3

Source: ICR Research, Inc., Excel Omnibus Survey, February-March, 2001

Questions KI-5b: What advice would you give to another adult child about how to start talking with their parents' about planning for their parents' future?

PI-5-b: What advice would you give to another parent about how to start talking with their adult children about planning for their own future?

It is interesting to note that almost one in three of the adult children do not know what advice they would give, and nearly one in five of the older parents agree they do not know what advice they would give either.

Communication refers to such things as: “just talk to them,” “be open, honest, and direct,” “tell them what you want / what your wishes are.” The following tables provide examples of what non-thinkers say about communication (See Table 9a and 9b).

**Table 9a: What Non-thinkers Who Plan Say About Communication**

Adult children (n = 107)	Older parent (n = 86)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Just talk to them (20%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Just talk to them (25%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be open / honest / direct (16%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell them what you want / what your wishes are (8%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other communication (4%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other communication (7%)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be open / honest / direct (6%)</li> </ul>

**Table 9b: What Non-thinkers Who Plan Say About Planning**

Adult children	Older parent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start early (7%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan their financial future (5%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan their financial future (6%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start early (3%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure they have insurance (1%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure they have insurance (1%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other planning (3%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other planning (8%)</li> </ul>

**e. Reasons For Not Talking About Older Parents Ability To Live Independently Among Silent Non-thinkers**

Seven in ten adult children do not think about parents’ ability to live independently as they grow older, and do not talk to their parents about this issue. Similarly, seven in ten older parents who do not think about their ability to live independently as they grow older also have not talked with their counterpart about independent living (See Table 8).

The most frequently mentioned reason among silent non-thinkers for not talking is that neither generation perceives a need to do so. Among the adult children who see no need, approximately one in ten say they have already established their plans (13%) or that their parents are young and healthy (12%). Almost one in five of these older parents (18%) say they already have plans and twelve percent say the

are young and healthy and therefore have not talked about independent living needs (See Table 10 and 10a).

**Table 10: Silent Non-thinkers Reasons For Not Talking About Parents Ability To Live Independently**

*Base: Adult children interviewed age 30-64 years who have at least one parent age 65+ and who do not think about their parents' ability to live independently but plan just in case they need assistance. Older parents interviewed age 65+ who have at least one adult child age 30-64 years and who do not think about their ability to live independently, but plan just in case they need assistance.*

	Adult children (n = 242)	Older parents (n = 202)
No need	48%	44%
Poor communication	22	17
They're / I or We are independent	7	13
They're rich / financially stable	3	2
Don't think about it	2	5
Live far away	1	2
Don't want to be a burden	--	5
Children are unable to care for us	--	4
They have their own problems	--	4
Other	10	10
Don't know	10	11

Source: ICR Research, Inc., Excel Omnibus Survey, February-March, 2001

Questions KI-5c: Why don't you talk about this topic with your parents(s)? (Record verbatim)

PI-5c: Why don't you talk about this topic with your adult child(ren)? (Record verbatim)

**Table 10a: No Need To Talk About Parents Ability To Live Independently As They Get Older**

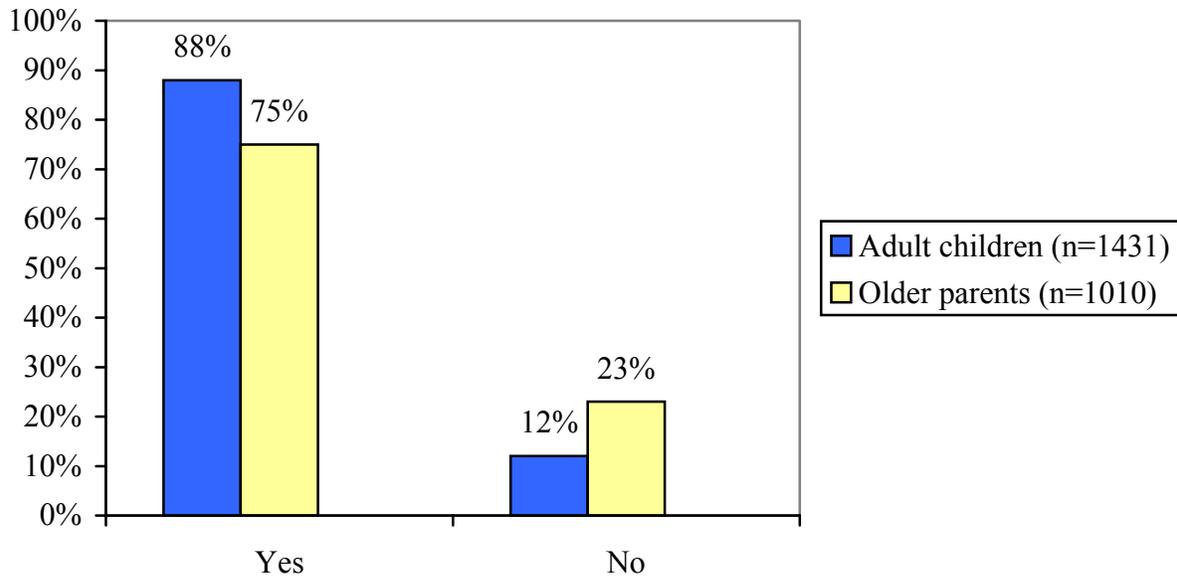
Adult children	Older parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Already established / prepared (13%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Already prepared / established (18%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents are young / healthy (12%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I / we are healthy / young (12%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sibling has assumed responsibility (8%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hasn't gotten to that point yet (7%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hasn't gotten to that point yet (5%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No need (unspecified) (3%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No need (unspecified) (4%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I live with my children / another relative (2%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent in nursing home / assisted living facility (2%)</li> </ul>	

## VI. Thinking About (Older Parents’) Getting Older

We asked all adult children whether they think about their parents’ getting older, and we asked all older parents whether they think about getting older themselves. Most older parents and adult children think about the parents’ aging. However adult children are more likely to think about their parents getting older than older parents are to think about themselves getting older (88% vs. 75%). Older parents are more likely to say they do not think about themselves getting older than adult children (See Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Proportion of Respondents Who Think About (Parents’) Getting Older**

*Base: All adult children between the ages of 30-64 years with at least one living parent age 65 or older. All parents at least 65 years of age or older with at least one adult child between the ages of 30-64 years of age.*



Source: ICR Research, Inc., Excel Omnibus Survey, February-March, 2001

Questions KI-6: Do you ever think about your parent(s) getting older?

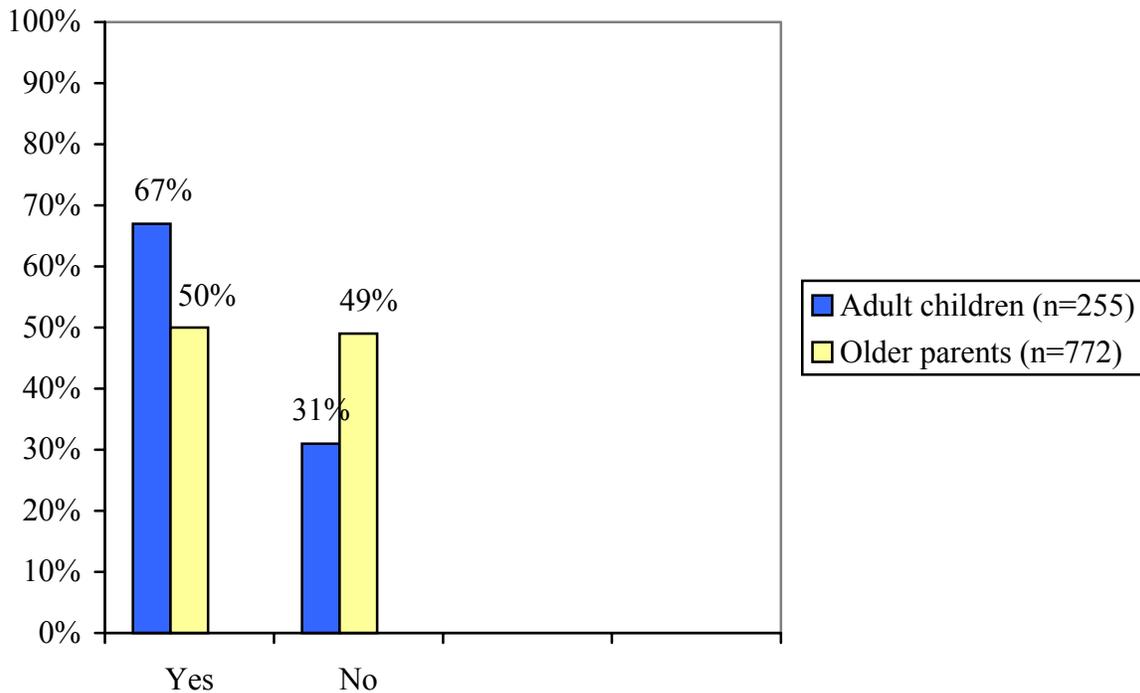
PI-6: Do you ever think about getting older?

### a. Will Parents' Aging Effect Adult Children?

Among those who say they think about (parents) getting older, two-thirds (67%) of adult children and half (50%) of older parents think about how the parents getting older may affect the adult children (See Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Proportion Who Think About (Parents) Getting Older And The Effect It Might Have On Their Adult Children**

*Base: All adult children interviewed who are between the ages of 30-64 years with at least one parent age 65+ who think about their parents' getting older. All older parents interviewed who are at least 65+ years old and have at least one adult child age 30-64 and who think about getting older.*



Source: ICR Research, Inc., Excel Omnibus Survey, February-March, 2001

Questions KI-6a: When you think about your parent(s) getting older, do you ever think about how their aging might affect you?

PI-6a: When you think about getting older, do you ever think about how your getting older might affect your children?

## b. Perceptions Of How Parents' Aging May Affect Adult Children

Adult children and older parents who think about how the parents' aging may affect their adult children are likely to think the parents will need their children's help. Adult children are more likely to think their parents will need their help than do parents themselves (See Table 11).

**Table 11: Perceptions of How Parents' Aging May affect Adult Children**

*Base: All adult children interviewed between the ages of 30-64 years with at least one living parent age 65 or older who think about how their parents' aging may affect them. All parents interviewed at least 65 years of age or older with at least one adult child between the ages of 30-64 years of age who think about how their aging may affect their adult children.*

	Adult children (n = 881)	Older parents (n = 390)
Parents will need child	54%	27%
Health related concerns	12	6
I will miss them or similar emotions (adult children)	11	12
They will worry or are concerned (older parents)		
Financial concerns	11	4
More responsibility on me / my adult child(ren)	7	6
I am / They are getting older (loss of freedom)	4	2
They do not live close to home	3	1
Lifestyle changes	2	--
I do not want to be a burden	--	6
I won't be there to do things for them	--	4
Plans in progress	--	2
Other	9	19
Don't know	6	16
Refused	1	--

Source: ICR Research, Inc., Excel Omnibus Survey, February-March, 2001

Questions KI-6b: Please tell me how you think your parent(s) getting older might affect you.  
(Record verbatim)

PI-6b: Please tell me how you think your getting older might affect your child(ren).  
(Record verbatim)

### c. Are Parents' Withholding Information?

We asked all adult children interviewed if they ever suspected that their parent(s) needed help but did not tell them. About two thirds (68%) of the adult children in this study do not suspect their parents need help and are not asking. Three in ten do suspect their parent(s) have needed help but did not tell them.

## VII. Scenario

To capture everyone's opinion about an independent living situation, we created a scenario about a hypothetical woman named Mary. The scenario was as follows: Mary is a 65-year old widow with two adult children, one son and one daughter. Mary lives alone in her two-story home. She has arthritis that makes walking and going up and down stairs painful. Her pain is getting worse and she thinks she may need help bathing and using the stairs.

When we asked both of our groups who Mary should tell, they overwhelmingly say that both adult sons and daughters should be told (See Table 12).

**Table 12: Who Mary Should Tell?**

*Base: All adult children interviewed between the ages of 30-64 years with at least one living parent age 65 or older. All parents interviewed at least 65 years of age or older with at least one adult child between the ages of 30-64 years of age.*

	Adult children (n = 1431)	Older parents (n = 1010)
Both adult son and daughter	49%	43%
Adult son only	8	7
Adult daughter only	26	23
Someone else	7	12
Don't know	3	6
Refused	1	1

Source: ICR Research, Inc., Excel Omnibus Survey, February-March, 2001

Questions KI-7a: Who should Mary tell about her situation?

PI-7a: Who should Mary tell about her situation?

However, a greater proportion of adult children compared to older parents say Mary should tell both her adult son and her adult daughter (49% vs. 43%). Although few older parents say Mary should tell someone else, they are more likely to say this than adult children (12% vs. 7%).

Finally, we asked our sample of adult children and older parents what advice they would give Mary. Adult children and older parents identified the same top three pieces of advice they would give Mary. However, they prioritized their pieces of advice in different order. More than one in ten (13% and 15%) do not know what advice to give Mary.

**Table 13: Advice For Mary**

*Base: All adult children interviewed between the ages of 30-64 years with at least one living parent age 65 or older. All parents interviewed at least 65 years of age or older with at least one adult child between the ages of 30-64 years of age.*

	Adult children (n = 1431)	Older parents (n = 1010)
Communication	35%	24%
Relocate	30	38
Seek help	26	18
Modify / renovate home	4	2
Research options	3	--
Do what she can the best she can	--	5
Assess needs / know what she wants	--	2
Do things to make life easier	--	2
Get close to God	--	2
No advice	2	3
Other	10	8
Don't know	13	15
Refused	1	--

Source: ICR Research, Inc., Excel Omnibus Survey, February-March, 2001

Questions KI-7b: What advice would you give Mary about dealing with her situation?

PI-7b: What advice would you give Mary about dealing with her situation?

## VIII. Conclusions and Recommendations

Most adult children and older parents think about the parents' getting older (88% of adult children and 75% of older parents). A substantial proportion of adult children and older parents also think about the parents' ability to live independently (75% and 69%) and the effect the parents' getting older may have on the adult children (67% and 50%). More than half of the adult children (54%) think their parents will need their help but less than three in ten older parents agree (27%) that they will need their children's help.

Among those who think about parents' ability to live independently, two-thirds of the adult children and older parents say they talk about the issue. Of the one-third who do not talk four or five out of ten adult children and older parents (40-47%) say there is "no need". The most frequently mentioned reasons for "no need" are that parents are healthy and young, and that circumstances have not gotten to that point yet.

Initially we were somewhat surprised that these surveys showed adult children and older parents were more likely to talk with their counterpart than was shown in previous AARP surveys (Barrett, 1998). We compared how the questions were asked in the two sets of surveys and we found that the questions were worded differently, and set in different contexts. For example, in the earlier research we asked "Have you ever talked with your adult (child/children or parents) about what it would take for (you / them) to continue to live independently?" This question appeared directly after we asked the respondent to explain what independent living means to them (in the case of the parent) or to their parents (in the case of the adult child). In the current research, we asked "Do you ever think about your (or your parents) ability to live independently as they get older?" We believe these shifts may have resulted in different findings.

Nonetheless, surveys such as these provide a snapshot of people's opinions at one point in time. The findings suggest there may be an opportunity to raise the awareness of independent living issues among the approximately 25 to 30 percent of adult children and older parents who say they do not think about parents' ability to live independently as they grow older. Another opportunity may be to encourage the approximately one third (32% of adult children and 36% of older parents) of people who think about, but do not talk about parents' aging, to do so. Giving permission to both groups to raise the issue without waiting for the other to do so may encourage family members to initiate discussions about parents' ability

to live independently early - before there is an immediate need and the topic becomes a highly charged emotionally issue.

Current literature on aging and the family identifies several different approaches to strengthening families as they face the challenges and opportunities presented by the later stages of the life cycle. While the purpose of this report is not to critique this literature, this information can be highly useful to those who are designing and developing programs promoting independent living in the later years.

Two major models described in the literature are the prevention and promotion models of intervention. Although there are many differences between these two approaches, they share a common goal of strengthening the family as a functional unit. The following brief description draws heavily upon the work of Smith (1999).

Two strategies for accomplishing the goal of strengthening families involve education and environmental engineering. Educating families as they age involves increasing the competency of their members or the family system by using educational techniques for developing new skills, influencing attitudes, providing insights and / or new knowledge.

Four types of educational programs have been successfully used with aging families. These include psycho-educational support groups, family life education, guided family reminiscence, and structured family enrichment.

- Psychoeducational support groups help participants develop coping strategies, re-think their family situation, express negative feelings and obtain supportive materials by providing a combination of factual information and counseling.
- Family life education programs offer an opportunity to reach older family members who are often reluctant to use social service or mental health programs. These programs need to reflect the characteristics of their primary audience so that they are relevant to participants and their phase in the family life cycle.
- Guided family reminiscence programs help people work through unresolved issues in their life, reinforces their life skills, and helps support their personal growth by educating family members about normal role changes that occur with aging.
- Structured family enrichment programs are based upon the idea that families can draw upon their life experiences as a resource for growing through this stage of life.

The second strategy, engineering the social and environmental factors, involves “the creation of conditions, settings, and physical arrangements and facilities that reduce family stress and set the stage for optimal family functioning” (Smith, 1999: 387, and L’Abate, 1990). This approach contains two major strategies. These strategies including providing families support services that families are willing to use and conducting advocacy on behalf of aging families.

The purpose of this brief summary is to indicate the variety of ways that programs and services can support the needs of aging families including the perceived need to talk about the ability to live independently in the later years - before the need arises.

## References

- Allen, Katherine R., Rosemary Blieszner, and Karen A. Roberto  
2000 Families in the Middle and Later Years: A Review and Critique of Research in the 1990s. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 62 (November 2000): 911-926.
- Aquilino, William S.  
1999 Two Views of One Relationship: Comparing Parents' and Young Adult Children's Reports of the Quality of Intergenerational Relations. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61 (November 1999): 858-879.
- Barrett, Linda L.  
1998 *Independent Living: Do Older Parents and Adult Children See It The Same Way?* Washington, D.C.: AARP, AARP Connections for Independent Living Program.
- L'Abate, L.  
1990 *Building Family Competence: Primary and secondary prevention strategies.* CA: Sage.
- Luescher, Kurt and Karl Pillemer  
1998 *Intergenerational Ambivalence: A New Approach to the Study of Parent-Child Relations in Later Life.* *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60 (May 1998): 413-425.
- Sandberg, Jonathan G.  
1999 "It Just isn't Fair": Helping Older Families Balance Their Ledgers Before the Note Comes Due. *Family Relations*, 48, 177-179.
- Smith, Gregory C.  
1999 "Prevention and Promotion Models of Intervention for Strengthening Aging Families" Chapter 23, Pp 378-394 in Michael Duffy (ed) *Handbook of Counseling and Psychotherapy with Older Adults.* New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

## Annotated Questionnaires

**AARP**  
**ADULT CHILD AND OLDER PARENT EXCEL INSERT**  
**ADULT CHILD (30-64) QUESTIONS**

**Ask respondents 30-64 years of age**

KI-1. How many parents do you have that are age 65 or older? (Interviewer Note: If respondent asks say, “We are talking about parents who are currently living”)

1	30%
2	27
3	43
R	1

ASK IF KI-1 = 1

KI-1a. Would that be your father or mother?

1	Father	30%
2	Mother	71

NOTE IN ALL FOLLOWING QUESTIONS: IF KI-1=1 USE “PARENT”. IF KI-1=2 USE “PARENTS”

KI-1b. Where (do your parents/does your parent) currently live? (Read list)

1	In their own home	82%
2	In your home	9
3	In another relatives home	3
4	In an assisted living facility	2
5	In a nursing home	2
6	Some place else (Do Not Specify)	2
R	Refused	*

KI-2. How often do you talk with your parent(s)? (Read List)

1	Once a week or more	79%
2	About twice a month	10
3	About once a month	5
4	Every other month	1
5	A few times a year	2
6	Once a year	1
7	Less often	2
D	Don't know (Do Not Read)	*
R	Refused (Do Not Read)	*

\* Less than .05%

\*\* Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

KI-3. Do you ever think about your parents ability to live independently as they get older?

1	Yes	75%
2	No	25
3	Don't know (Do Not Read)	1
R	Refused (Do Not Read)	1

IF KI-3 = 2, D, R SKIP TO KI-5.

ASK IF KI-3 = 1

KI-4. Some adult children talk with their parents about their parents ability to live independently as they get older. Do you talk with your parent(s) about their ability to live independently as they get older?

1	Yes	67%
2	No	32
R	Refused (Do Not Read)	1

ASK IF KI-1=2 AND KI-4=1

KI-4aa. When you talk with your parents about their ability to live independently do you talk with your father more, your mother more, or both your parents equally?

1	Father more	6%
2	Mother more	47
3	Both equally	47
D	Don't know (Do Not Read)	*
R	Refused (Do Not Read)	*

ASK IF KI-4 = 1

KI-4a. In the past year, how often have you talked with your parent(s) about their ability to live independently? (Read List)

1	Once a week or more	9%
2	About twice a month	7
3	About once a month	13
4	Every other month	7
5	A few times a year	44
6	Once a year	12
7	Less often	7
D	Don't know (Do Not Read)	1
R	Refused (Do Not Read)	*

\* Less than .05%

\*\* Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

ASK IF KI-4=1

KI-4b. Who usually brings this topic up for discussion?  
(DO NOT READ)

1	I do	39%
2	My parents do	26
3	On-going dialog between us (both respondent & parent)	30
D	Don't know (Do Not Read)	4
R	Refused (Do Not Read)	1

ASK IF KI-4=1

KI-4bb. What are the benefits of having this conversation with your parent(s)?  
(Record verbatim) (Probe for Clarity) \*\*\*

Knowing what to do	43%
Peace of mind	23
Planning ahead for future/being prepared	15
Keep lines of communication open	4
Make them aware of aging	3
Closeness between us	1
Other	9
No benefit	3
Don't know	6

ASK IF KI-4=1

KI-4c. What advice would you give to another adult child about how to start talking with their parents about planning for their parents future?  
(Record verbatim) (Probe for Clarity) \*\*\*

Importance of Communication	51%
Importance of Planning	11
Be sensitive/respectful of their feelings	5
Take an interest in them	4
We should take care of them	2
Do research	2
Other	10
No advice	4
Don't know	19
Refused	1

SKIP TO KI-6.

\* Less than .05%

\*\* Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

\*\*\* Numbers do not add to 100% due to multiple responses

ASK IF KI-4=2

KI-4d. Why don't you talk about this topic with your parent(s)?

(Record verbatim) (Probe for Clarity) \*\*\*

No need	47%
Poor Communication	25
They're independent	11
Don't think about it	7
They're rich/financially stable	3
Other	11
Don't know	9
Refused	1

IF KI-3=1 SKIP TO KI-6

KI-5. Some people want to plan ahead in case their parents need assistance to live independently. Have you ever talked with your parent(s) about what they want to do if they need assistance to live independently?

1	Yes	29%
2	No	70
D	Don't know (Do Not Read)	1
R	Refused (Do Not Read)	1

ASK IF KI-5=1

KI-5a. Who usually brings this topic up for discussion?

(DO NOT READ)

1	I do	30%
2	My parents do	31
3	On-going dialog between us (both respondent & parent	25
D	Don't know (Do Not Read)	14
R	Refused (Do Not Read)	*

\* Less than .05%

\*\* Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

\*\*\* Numbers do not add to 100% due to multiple responses

ASK IF KI-5=1

KI-5b. What advice would you give to another adult child about how to start talking with their parents about planning for their parents future?  
(Record verbatim) (Probe for Clarity)\*\*\*

Importance of communication	34%
Importance of planning	13
Other	19
None/no advice	4
Don't know	32
Refused	1

ASK IF KI-5=2

KI-5c. Why don't you talk about this topic with your parent(s)?  
(Record verbatim) (Probe for Clarity)\*\*\*

No need	48%
Poor Communication	22
They're independent	7
They're rich/financially stable	3
Don't think about it	2
Live far away	1
Other	10
Don't know	10

ASK ALL

KI-6. Do you ever think about your parent(s) getting older?

1	Yes	88%
2	No	12
R	Refused (Do Not Read)	1

ASK IF KI-6=1

KI-6a. When you think about your parent(s) getting older, do you ever think about how their aging might affect you?

1	Yes	67%
2	No	31
R	Refused (Do Not Read)	*

\* Less than .05%

\*\* Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

\*\*\* Numbers do not add to 100% due to multiple responses

ASK IF KI-6a=1

KI-6b. Please tell me how you think your parent(s) getting older might affect you?  
(Record verbatim) (Probe for Clarity) \*\*\*

They will need care	54%
Health related concerns	12
Emotion-I will miss them	11
Financial concerns	11
More responsibility on me	7
I am getting older	4
They do not live close to home	3
Lifestyle changes	2
Other	9
Don't know	6
Refused	1

ASK IF KI-6=1,2

KI-6c. Have you ever suspected that your parent(s) needed help but did not tell you?

1	Yes	31%
2	No	68
D	Don't know (Do Not Read)	*
R	Refused (Do Not Read)	*

ASK ALL

KI-7. Now I am going to describe a person's living situation. Then, I will ask you some questions about it.

Mary is a 65-year old widow with two adult children, one son and one daughter. Mary lives alone in her two-story home. She has arthritis that makes walking and going up and down stairs painful. Her pain is getting worse and she thinks she may need help bathing and using the stairs.

\* Less than .05%

\*\* Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

\*\*\* Numbers do not add to 100% due to multiple responses

KI-7a. Who should Mary tell about her situation? (Interviewer Note: If respondent asks if they have to choose one say, “You may select more than one”)

READ RESPONSES – RECORD ALL THAT APPLY

1	Tell her adult son (only)	8%
2	Tell her adult daughter (only)	26
3	Someone Elsie (Specify)	7
D	Don't know (Do Not Read	3
R	Refused (Do Not Read)	1
	Tell both son and daughter	49

KI-7b. What advice would you give Mary about dealing with her situation? \*\*  
(Record verbatim) (Probe for Clarity) \*\*\*

Communication	35%
Relocate	30
Seek help	26
Modify/renovate house	4
Research/consider options	3
Other	10
No advice	2
Don't know (Do Not Read)	13
Refused	1

\* Less than .05%

\*\* Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

\*\*\* Numbers do not add to 100% due to multiple responses

**AARP**  
**ADULT CHILD AND OLDER PARENT EXCEL INSERT**  
**PARENT (65+) QUESTIONS**

**Ask of people age 65+ years or older:**

PI-1. How many adult children, age 30 or older, do you have?

0 (Skip to next section)	14%
1 One	10
2 2 or more	76
R Refused (Skip to next section)	*

ASK IF P1 = 2

P1-a. Of your children aged 30 or older, do you have all sons, all daughters or both sons and daughters

1 Sons	12%
2 Daughters	13
3 Both sons and daughters	76
R Refused (Do Not Read)	*

ASK IF PI-1 = 1

PI-1b. Is this adult child a son or a daughter?

1 Sons	44%
2 Daughters	55%
R Refused (Do Not Read)	1

ASK ALL

PI-1c. Where do you currently live? (Read List)

1 In your own home	90%
2 With your (child/children)	4
3 With another relative	2
4 Some place else (Do Not Specify)	6
R Refused (Do Not Read)	*

\* Less than .05%

\*\*Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

NOTE: FOR ALL QUESTIONS: IF PI-1=1 USE "CHILD". IF PI-1=2 USE "CHILDREN"

PI-2. How often do you talk with your adult child(ren)? (READ LIST)

1 Once a week or more	87%
2 About twice a month	6
3 About once a month	3
4 Every other month	1
5 A few times a year	1
6 Once a year	*
7 Less often	1
D Don't know (Do Not Read)	*
R Refused (Do Not Read)	*

PI-3. Do you ever think about your ability to live independently as you get older?

1 Yes	69%
2 No	29
D Don't know (Do Not Read)	2
R Refused (Do Not Read)	1

ASK IF PI-3 = 1, ELSE SKIP TO PI-5.

PI-4. Some parents talk with their adult children about their ability to live independently as they get older. Do you talk with your adult child(ren) about your ability to live independently as you get older?

1 Yes	64%
2 No	36
R Refused (Do Not Read)	1

ASK IF PI-1a =3 and PI-4=1

PI-4aa. When you talk with your adult children about your ability to live independently, do you talk with your adult sons more, your adult daughters more, or do you talk with your sons and daughters equally?

1 Sons more	10%
2 Daughters more	31
3 Both equally	59
D Don't know (Do Not Read)	*
R Refused (Do Not Read)	*

\* Less than .05%

\*\*Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

ASK IF PI-4 = 1

PI-4a. In the past year, how often have you talked with your adult child(ren) about your ability to live independently? (READ LIST)

1 Once a week or more	11%
2 About twice a month	7
3 About once a month	16
4 Every other month	6
5 A few times a year	35
6 Once a year	13
7 Less often	5
D Don't know (Do Not Read)	7
R Refused (Do Not Read)	*

ASK IF PI-4 = 1

PI-4b. Who usually brings this topic up for discussion?  
(DO NOT READ)

1 I do	50%
2 My child(ren)	16
3 We have an on going dialog (both respondent & adult child)	27
D Don't know (Do Not Read)	7
R Refused (Do Not Read)	*

ASK IF PI-4 = 1

PI-4bb. What are the benefits of having this conversation with your adult child(ren)? \*\*  
(Record verbatim) (Probe for Clarity)

Knowing what to do	55%
Peace of mind	10
I get their opinion/feelings	5
Planning ahead for future	5
Keep lines of communication open	4
Make them aware about aging/repercussions of aging	3
Closeness between us	3
They need to know	2
Other	11
No benefits	4
Don't know	8

\* Less than .05%

\*\*Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

\*\*\* Number may not add to 100% due to multiple responses

ASK IF PI-4 = 1

PI-4c. What advice would you give to another parent about how to start talking with their adult children about planning for their own future? \*\*

(INTERVIEWER NOTE:) We're talking about the parent's future

(Record verbatim) (Probe for Clarity)

Communication	43%
Planning	14
Raise child wisely (teach morals, ethics)	4
Have a good relationship with children	2
Do research	1
Other	13
No advice	5
Don't know	25
Refused	2

SKIP TO PI-6.

ASK IF PI-4 = 2.

PI-4d. Why don't you talk about this topic with your adult child(ren)? \*\*

(Record verbatim) (Probe for Clarity)

No need	40%
Poor communication	19
I/we are independent	9
Do not think about it	7
Don't want to be burden	4
Children unable to care for us	2
They have own family	2
Live far away	2
Other	14
Don't know	12
Refused	1

SKIP TO PI=6 IF PI-3=1

PI-5. Some people want to plan ahead in case they need assistance to live independently.

Have you ever talked with your adult child(ren) about what you want to do if you need assistance to live independently?

1 Yes	29%
2 No	70
D Don't know (Do Not Read)	1
R Refused (Do Not Read)	*

\* Less than .05%

\*\*Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

\*\*\* Numbers may not add to 100% due to multiple responses

ASK IF PI-5 = 1

PI-5a. Who usually brings this topic up for discussion?

I do	47%
My child(ren)	27
We have an on going dialog (both respondent & adult child)	17
D Don't know (Do Not Read)	7
R Refused (Do Not Read)	2

ASK IF PI-5=1

PI-5b. What advice would you give to another parent about how to start talking with their adult children about planning for their own future? \*\*

(INTERVIEWER NOTE:) We're talking about the parent's future

(Record verbatim) (Probe for Clarity)

Communication	39%
Planning	17
Other	29
No advice	3
Don't know	18
Refused	3

ASK IF PI-5 = 2

PI-5c. Why don't you talk about this topic with your adult child(ren)?

(Record verbatim) (Probe for Clarity)

No need	44%
Poor communication	17
I/we are independent	13
Don't want to be burden/bother them	5
Do not think about it	5
Children unable to care for us (poor/handicapped)	4
They have own problems	4
Live far away from children	2
I/We are rich/financially stable	2
Other	10
Don't know	11
Refused	*

\* Less than .05%

\*\*Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

\*\*\* Numbers may not add to 100% due to multiple responses

ASK ALL

PI-6. Do you ever think about getting older?

1 Yes	75%
2 No	23
R Refused (Do Not Read)	1

ASK IF PI-6 = 1

PI-6a. When you think about getting older, do you ever think about how your getting older might affect your child(ren)?

1 Yes	50%
2 No	49
R Refused (Do Not Read)	1

ASK IF PI-6a = 1

PI-6b. Please tell me how you think your getting older might affect your child(ren)?  
(Record verbatim) (Probe for Clarity)

Taking care of me/us	27%
Emotionally – they will worry	12
Health related concerns	6
Emotionally – they will miss us	6
I don't want to be a burden for my children	6
More responsibility on them	6
Financial concerns	4
I won't be here to do things for them	4
Plans in progress	2
Loss of freedom, they are getting older too	2
Other	19
Don't know	16

ASK ALL

PI-7 Now I am going to describe a person's living situation. Then, I will ask you some questions about it.

Mary is a 65-year old widow with two adult children, one son and one daughter. Mary lives alone in her two-story home. She has arthritis that makes walking and going up and down stairs painful. Her pain is getting worse and she thinks she may need help bathing and using the stairs.

\* Less than .05%

\*\*Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

\*\*\* Numbers may not add to 100% due to multiple responses

PI-7a. Who should Mary tell about her situation? (Interviewer Note: If respondent asks if they have to choose one say, “You may select more than one”)

READ RESPONSES – RECORD ALL THAT APPLY

1	Tell her adult son (only)	7%
2	Tell her adult daughter (only)	23
3	Someone Elsie (Specify)	12
4	Both son and daughter	43
D	Don't know (Do Not Read)	6
R	Refused (Do Not Read)	1

ASK ALL

PI-7b. What advice would you give Mary about dealing with her situation? (Record verbatim) (Probe for Clarity) \*\*

Relocate	38%
Communication	24
Seek help	18
Do what she can the best she can	5
Modify/renovate house	2
Assess needs know what she wants	2
Do things to make life easier	2
Stay Independent	2
Get close to God	2
Other	8
No advice	3
Don't know (Do Not Read)	15

\* Less than .05%

\*\*Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

\*\*\* Numbers may not add to 100% due to multiple responses