

Solo aging and independent living: What to know and how to help prepare

By: Mike Woelflein 8/3/2026



More Americans are facing — and embracing — solo aging. Here's what to consider as you plan for independent living in those solo years.

Whether by circumstance or by choice, more U.S. adults are living on their own as they age. And this goes beyond the housing situations that we usually think about when it comes to independent living: Today's solo agers are typically unmarried (they could be divorced, widowed, or have remained single) and don't have kids or live far away from their kids and other relatives. According to AARP, approximately 24 million Americans age 50 and older are solo agers, representing about 21% of the 50-plus population. Recent research suggests this population continues to grow as people live longer, marry later, experience gray divorce, remain childfree, or choose to maintain independent lifestyles.¹

"With the perception that health and longevity is within reach for many of us, it's great to approach aging with optimism. Advances in health and wellness, the increase in single households, and growing opportunities to connect socially into our later decades make this the best time ever to age solo, and to age well," says Dede Raskas, who advocates for aging clients as a senior lead business execution consultant and executive director in Wells Fargo Clearing Services, LLC. While many are embracing the freedom that can come with solo aging, it can also present a new set of challenges for independent living that need to be considered as you plan your financial future.

"Many solo agers tend to put off planning or assume aging in place will be an option for the long term," Raskas says. That may or may not be realistic — and your ability to embrace independent living might depend on how well you plan for solo aging. Raskas shares five strategies to help you make sure you're ready.

Start planning now. Everyone should make plans for solo aging and independent living, even if that's not a current goal. "Living alone can happen to people who don't expect it," Raskas says. Planning ahead for things like caregiving, including financial caregiving, can help you maintain your choices as you age — which is connected to your overall life satisfaction. Your plans can also help protect your legacy and charitable endeavors if something happens to you.

Raskas says, consider long-term care insurance if you don't have it. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that about one-in-five Americans turning age 65 today will have long-term care costs exceeding \$200,000.² Consider future health and caregiving costs regardless of your current health status. Plan for a long and healthy life but think through possible scenarios that could affect your quality of life should cognitive or physical challenges emerge in your later years.

Build your advisor circle. You should start working now to create long-term relationships with a number of professional advisors. They can help guide your plans for independent living and help you make sure that your wishes are met as you age. Your list should include financial and legal advisors to help manage and protect your financial accounts and post-death directives and beneficiaries. You should also include health care professionals and local aging resources in your community.

Your network should also include trusted friends, so make sure you keep your social connections strong. "You want to create a community of people for connection and emotional support before you need them," Raskas says. In addition, studies show that having a strong social network can help protect individuals from scams and financial exploitation. It is important to have trusted people in your life you can call upon to discuss financial decisions. Financial exploitation and scams targeting older Americans are a huge problem today, and bad actors specifically target those who may not have support and strong connections.

Invest in health and wellness. "Every minute or dollar you invest in your health can pay dividends as you age," Raskas says. "When we think of independent living, we hope for years with good health. A healthy lifestyle won't guarantee good health, but it tends to increase happiness and raise your chances of staying independent as you age," Raskas says. Join a health club, increase walking, buy a bike, play pickleball or tennis — whatever brings you joy and helps maintain fitness.

Embrace lifelong learning. Keeping your mind sharp is equally important when it comes to independent living. Explore personal and professional topics of interest. "A focus on lifelong learning can keep you socially engaged," Raskas says. "It may also improve your memory and stave off early dementia." You could consider working longer for fulfillment and purpose, whether it's within your current business, for charity, or even exploring something else you always wanted to do.

Keep up with technology. This can help you maintain social connections and keep in touch with friends across the globe. Playing brain games online can help keep you sharp. Technology can also help you live independently longer. It's likely that digital assistants and other emerging AI tools will advance rapidly in the not-too-distant future and help us solve some of the challenges of aging.

“Everybody wants to be an active, independent ager,” Raskas concludes. “It’s a wonderful time in history to have those dreams around independent living. Don’t plan against those dreams, but to do it well, you should take the time to think about — and get ready for — the realities that can come with solo aging.”

1. “More Older Adults Are Living Alone. Is That a Good Thing?” AARP, November 10, 2025
2. “Long-Term Services and Supports Reform ASPE REPORTS,” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, January 16, 2025

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