



HomeAdvisor
Insights Forum

AGING IN PLACE SURVEY REPORT

October 2015

Prepared by Marianne Cusato, HomeAdvisor's Housing Expert and Professor of Practice at University of Notre Dame's School of Architecture

In partnership with the National Aging in Place Council



Home Matters: Preparing for America's Aging Population

HomeAdvisor's Aging in Place Survey Underscores the Demand for Aging-Related Home Resources

Only a small number of the 78 million baby boomers entering or approaching retirement are preparing their homes to accommodate them in their later years. Information and resources are necessary to raise awareness about aging-in-place home modifications and to educate both homeowners and home professionals.

HomeAdvisor, a leading online marketplace connecting homeowners with trusted home service professionals, surveyed nearly 250 professionals in the company's pre-screened and customer-rated network who specialize in remodeling, universal design and disability projects to gain insight into how homeowners are planning for senior living. Specifically, the 2015 survey focused on how homeowners are improving or modifying their homes to ensure that they will be able to age in place (i.e., safely, independently and comfortably remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible).

HomeAdvisor's survey findings highlight the projects that will be most important to homeowners as they prepare to age in their homes. Further, the findings suggest that, while a small number of homeowners are already planning ahead, the majority may benefit from the help of informed home service professionals -- professionals who can increase awareness and address the needs of a growing population wishing to age in place.

Here are some highlights from the survey:

- Fifty six percent of the homeowners who hired a professional for an aging-related home improvement project were **younger than 65 years old, while 10 percent were younger than 50 years old.**
- **Seventy three percent of homeowners contacted a home service professional on their own behalves.** When a homeowner did not personally reach out to a professional, the homeowner's **daughter** made the call **16 percent** of the time.
- **Home automation systems** are increasing in popularity among those wishing to age in place. **Forty nine percent** of home technology installation customers **installed home automation systems.**
- **Education is needed** to help homeowners and professionals alike understand and access the many resources available. While **74 percent of home professionals surveyed felt prepared to explain the benefits** that may be available to help their customers pay for long-term services and support, **only 17 percent were familiar with all of the Medicare/Medicaid benefits** available for in-home services and care.

America's largest cohort.

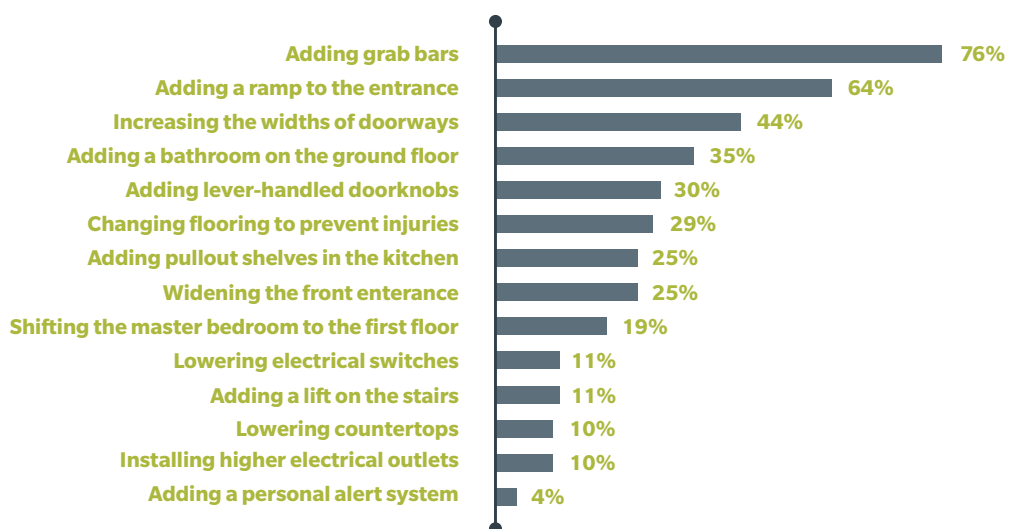
Americans are getting older, and most want to stay in their homes as they age. According to the U.S. Census Bureau the number of U.S. residents 65 or older will grow from 35 million in 2000 to nearly 73 million in 2030 -- and the number of people 85 and older will increase from 4.2 million in 2000 to nearly 9 million in 2030 ¹. What's more, the National Association of Home Builders now estimates that over 70 percent of homeowners completing a remodeling project are making aging-related improvements for themselves, or their parents ².

Daughters and younger homeowners are arranging home modifications.

Future-thinking homeowners appear to be purchasing aging-in-place-ready homes or renovating their homes to add these features at a younger age than might be expected. Fifty six percent of those reported to have hired a professional for an aging-related project were younger than 65 years old, while 10 percent were younger than 50 years old.

According to the HomeAdvisor home service professionals surveyed, 73 percent of homeowners contacted them on their own behalves. When a homeowner did not personally reach out to a service professional, the homeowner's daughter made the call. In fact, the survey indicated that daughters are five times more likely to initiate contact than sons.

Most frequently completed projects for homeowners looking to age in place





Grab bars, ramps and doorways are the most prevalent projects.

Home service professionals reported that grab bars and entrance ramps are the most commonly completed projects representing the needs both of people in wheelchairs (ramps and wider doorways) and those with balance, strength or mobility concerns (grab bars, levers and softer flooring). In fact, these projects represented 76 percent and 64 percent of completed projects, respectively.

Home automation systems are the most frequently requested tech project.

Many homeowners are interested in hiring a home service professional to install home-related technology to help them age in place. According to the home service professionals surveyed, of the homeowners who installed technology tools to age in place, 49 percent of homeowners installed home automation systems while 14 percent of homeowners purchased assistive technology (e.g., automatic countertops or shelves) and 10 percent requested in-home health or activity monitoring (e.g., heart rate tracking and fall monitoring).

While it was beyond the scope of this survey to assess the age of aging-in-place customers requesting technology-related projects, it may be worth exploring this issue as smart home technologies become increasingly ubiquitous.

Now is the time for homeowners and professionals to get informed and prepared.

We have a solid understanding of what an increasingly aging population needs to safely and comfortably remain in their homes – and we know that millions of aging Americans intend to age in place. It's a good start, but we've also learned that increased awareness and education are necessary to help homeowners and home professionals fully understand and access the breadth of resources available to them.

“ Too many of us wait until we reach a health or financial crisis to plan for getting older,” says Marty Bell, Executive Director of the National Aging in Place Council. “We plan our careers, we plan to send our children to college, we plan our vacations, but we don't plan to age. And yet the evidence is there that those who do accept they are going to get older and make plans in advance have a considerably better later life. ”

Sixty percent of survey respondents report that aging-related projects have represented less than 10 percent of their total workload in the last 12 months, and 25 percent of the respondents report that aging-in-place projects represented between 10-25 percent of their total projects. Additionally, 74 percent of professionals surveyed did not experience a year-over-year change in the volume of aging-in-place service requests, while 20 percent of professionals did see a year-over-year increase. These numbers indicate that we still have time to prepare for the millions of U.S. residents planning on aging in place in the coming years.



Furthermore, while 74 percent of respondents felt prepared to explain monetary benefits that may be available to help their customers pay for services and support related to aging in place, just 17 percent were familiar with all of the Medicare/Medicaid benefits available for in-home services and care. And, while 75 percent of surveyed professionals used household walk-throughs to educate their customers, just 38 percent provided marketing materials specifically regarding home improvement and modification options for aging in place, just 33 percent were familiar with the term Universal Design (designing products, homes and environments to meet the needs of people with disabilities), and just 25 percent were aware of the National Association of Home Builders Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist program (CAPS).

These numbers suggest that, as we prepare for homeowners to age in place in the future, better-informed home service professionals could do a great service to homeowners -- as well as homeowners' daughters and other caretakers -- in helping them find and access resources to make the best possible home modifications and improvements.

Conclusion.

Where we live defines how we live. How we prepare for aging in place has financial, social and physical implications. More resources are needed to educate both professionals and homeowners to raise awareness and understanding of available programs and options for those wishing to age in place. The more information we are able to share -- and the sooner we begin to better educate both citizens and professionals -- the more poised we will be as a nation to increase the quality of life for our loved ones and ourselves.



Universal Design Checklist

If you are aging or have a physical disability, you might need to adjust your home to accommodate special needs. Here are some projects to consider:

- ✓ Put down floors with a nonslip surface, such as textured stone or linoleum, to prevent the risk of falls, which goes way up with age.
- ✓ Create counters at multiple heights in the kitchen so that you have the option to sit or stand when preparing meals.
- ✓ Change doorknobs to lever-style handles, and swap out knobs for handles on kitchen and bathroom cabinets.
- ✓ Increase the amount of light in the home, including task lighting and general room illumination.
- ✓ Install comfort-height toilets, which are seventeen to nineteen inches off the ground. The extra few inches of height puts less stress on the back and knees when you're getting on and off.
- ✓ Put grab bars in the shower during a bathroom renovation, or at least include the framing necessary for installation, which you can do at a later date.
- ✓ Make the doors at least thirty-four inches wide and eliminate thresholds between rooms to eliminate trip hazards and facilitate movement with a wheelchair or walker.
- ✓ Install remote controls for blinds and window coverings, as well as lights.
- ✓ Look for a clear five-foot-wide area in the kitchen big enough for a wheelchair to turn around in.
- ✓ Look for at least twelve to eighteen inches of clearance next to the handle side of doors to make them easier to open.
- ✓ Plan for showers with a curbless entry (zero threshold is the technical term) to minimize tripping or to make accessible in a wheelchair.

From *The Just Right Home: Buying, Renting, Moving- or Just Dreaming- Find Your Perfect Match!*

By Marianne Cusato
with Daniel DiClerico
Workman Publishing, 2013

How Are Homeowners Aging in Place?



HomeAdvisor pros share the top projects they are completing to help homeowners remain safe, independent and comfortable in their homes.



56% of the homeowners who hired a professional to help them prepare to age in place were **younger than 65**

73% of homeowners contacted a professional **themselves**

When they didn't their daughter was most likely to, doing so **5 times more often** than sons

Most Popular Projects

Three in four homeowners added grab bars

64% added a ramp to the entrance True Cost \$1,536

44% increased the widths of the doorways

One in three homeowners added a bathroom on the main floor True Cost \$9,250

30% added lever-handled doorknobs

29% changed the flooring to prevent injuries True Cost \$6,034

19% shifted the master bedroom to the first floor

One in ten homeowners lowered the electrical switches True Cost \$201

www.homeadvisor.com

About Marianne Cusato:



Marianne Cusato is HomeAdvisor's Housing Expert and a Professor of Practice at University of Notre Dame's School of Architecture. Recently selected by Fortune Magazine as one of the Top Women in Real Estate, Cusato is a designer, author, and lecturer whose work speaks to the ever-changing needs of homeowners striving to balance the practical requirements of economy and durability with the desire to love where we live.

Appendix:

- This report was compiled based on data from HomeAdvisor.com, a survey conducted on behalf of HomeAdvisor through Survey Monkey, and cost information from HomeAdvisor's True Cost Guide.
- HomeAdvisor project data is based on the number of service requests submitted through HomeAdvisor.com from August 3, 2014-August 3, 2015.
- This survey was conducted among 237 U.S. professionals profiled for remodeling and disability tasks, of whom 186 complete aging-in-place tasks for homeowners.
- Project cost data is based on project cost information submitted through HomeAdvisor.com from April 4, 2008-March 1, 2015.

Works Cited:

1. Bipartisan Policy Center. (February 2013). Housing America's Future: New Directions for National Policy. http://bipartisanpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/default/files/BPC_Housing%20Report_web_0.pdf
2. National Aging in Place Council (2015). CAPS Remodelers: Helping Clients Stay in the Home They Love. <http://www.ageinplace.org/Practical-Advice/Housing/article/CAPS-Remodelers-Helping-Clients-Stay-in-the-Home-They-Love>
3. Baker, Anne. National Association of Home Builders (2015). Housing Trends for Baby Boomers: New Features Keep Pace with this Active Generation <http://www.nahb.org/en/research/Design/housing-trends-for-baby-boomers.aspx>
4. Cusato, Marianne & DiClerico, Dan. (2013). *The Just Right Home: Buying, Renting, Moving-or Just Dreaming-Find Your Perfect Match!* (1st ed.) New York, NY: Workman Publishing.