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**2023 Senior Living Resident
Dining Experience Study**

Summer 2023



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The Study

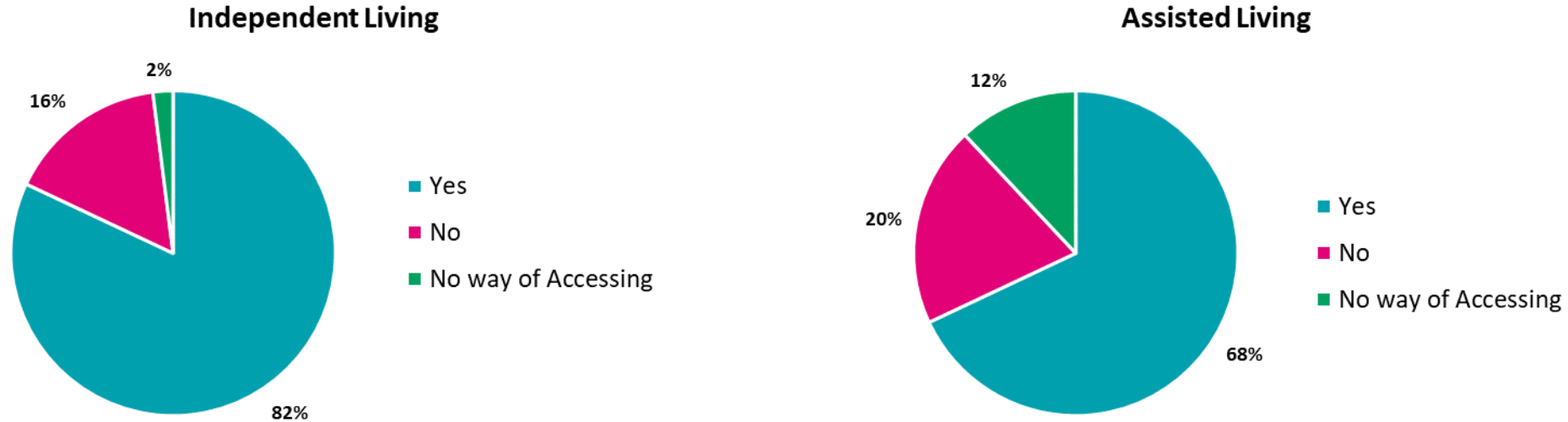
In August of 2023 Link-age Connect conducted a study on the Dining Experience of those older adults who reside in either Independent or Assisted Living within Senior Living Communities.

The study was conducted via an electronic and paper survey probing various aspects of the Dining Experience including the dining room itself, the servers/waitstaff, the food taste and quality, and the menu.

In many cases we have broken the data down by responses of Independent and Assisted living Residents in order to better highlight preferences and opinions of each group. The following is a summary of the findings of this study as well as key takeaways from the data gathered.

The Menu

We asked if the residents knew how to access menu information, offerings and changes in their community...



Opportunity – Consider hosting a lunch and learn for Assisted Living Residents, and possibly family members to educate and walk these residents through how to access this information.

And Independent Living Residents Definitely look at the dining experience in their community differently and expect more as 66% of them would like to see the menus changing WEEKLY as opposed to 42% of Assisted Living Residents wanting weekly menu changes.

The Meal

We asked the residents to rank characteristics of the meal in order of importance; Food Served at the Proper Temperature, The overall Taste of the Food, The Plate Presentation/visual appeal of the meal, and The Nutritional Value of the Meal. The OVERALL results...

#1 – The Overall Taste of the Food

#2 – Food Served at the Proper Temperature

#3 – The Plate Presentation/visual appeal of the meal

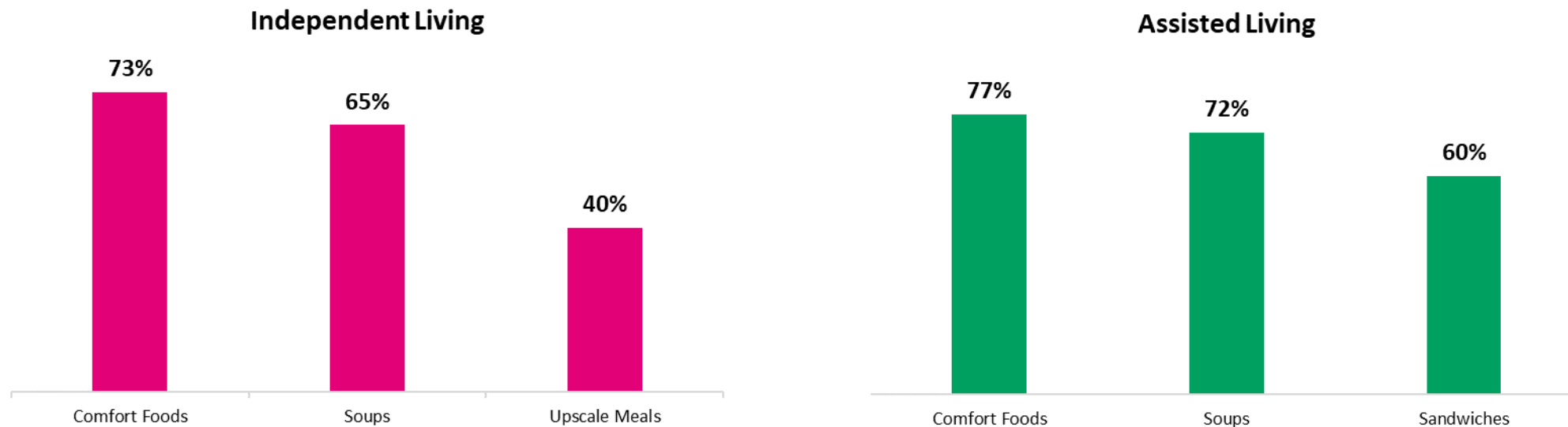
#4 – The Nutritional Value of the Meal

Responses did vary slightly between I/L and A/L residents; I/L residents, nutritional Value came in at #3 and for the A/L residents Food Served at the Proper Temperature came in at #1.



The Cuisine

We asked the residents what type of cuisine they prefer. These are their top 3...



Opportunity – Consider taking a poll of your residents to determine the favorites in the comfort food and soup categories and adjust your menu based on these findings.

Note: Percentages will not add up to 100% as they were asked to check ALL that apply.



The Dining Room

We asked the residents to pick their TOP THREE in order of importance regarding the physical space of the dining room. Again, Independent Living and Assisted Living Residents differed slightly on their choices...

Independent Living

#1 – The Cleanliness

#2 – The Temperature

#3 - The Acoustics

Assisted Living

#1 – The Cleanliness

#2 – The Aesthetics

#3 - The Acoustics

Opportunity – Take the time to make certain that staff is well trained on speaking clearly and at a volume that can be heard by all residents to overcome not so optimal acoustics.

Opportunity – Take the time to move around your dining room, making sure that all diners can easily navigate with people seated, with or without a walker.



The Service

We asked the residents to rank aspects of the service in the dining room. When it comes to this topic, both Independent Living and Assisted living Residents completely agree on the TOP THREE...

That the Servers are:

1. **Knowledgeable** about the menu and the options
2. **Attentive** to their needs
3. **Respectful** and courteous to them

Opportunity – Incentivize your servers for consistently excelling in these three areas.

82% of both I/L and A/L residents we polled prefer to have table service with wait staff in a dining room over other options such as buffet service, counter order, grab-n-go, and room service delivery.



Eat with the same folks or shake it up a bit?

We asked the residents if they prefer to eat with the same person/people every/most meals or different people. Here there is a vast difference between I/L and A/L...

Independent Living

47% Prefer to eat with the same

29% Prefer to eat with different

Assisted Living

71% Prefer to eat with the same

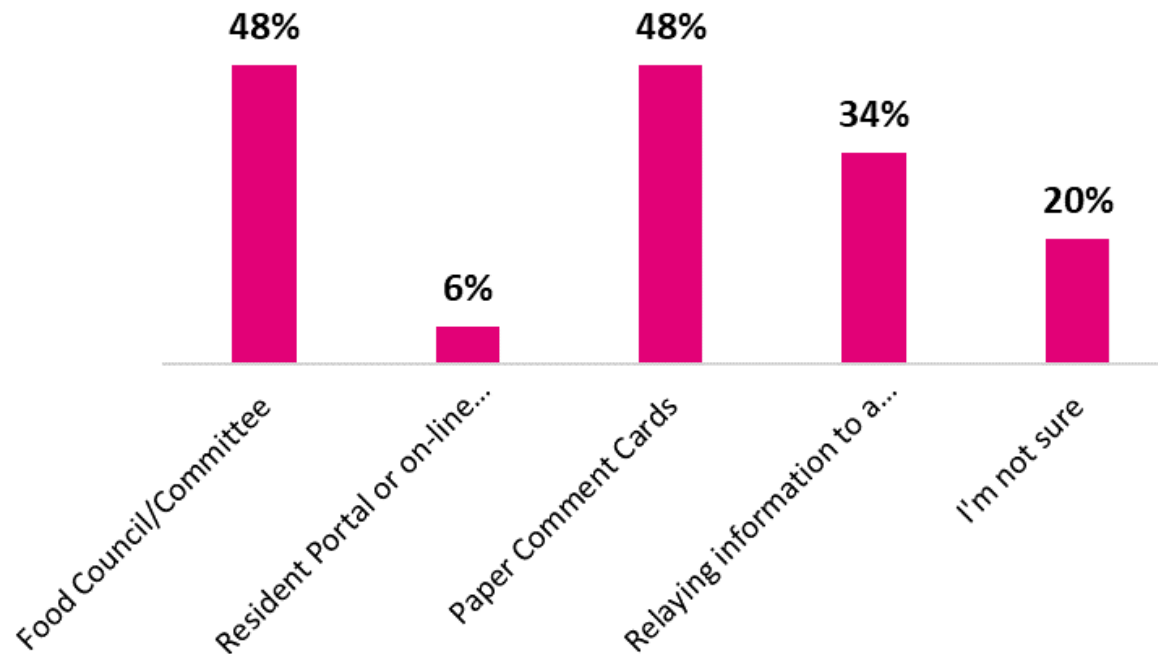
17% Prefer to eat with different

20% of Independent Living Residents prefer to pick their meals up and eat in their residence, while only 5% of Assisted Living Residents prefer to eat this way.



How are communities gathering feedback?

We asked what methods their community use for them to communicate feedback regarding their dining experience, preferences, culinary team, etc.



Opportunity – Create and deploy procedures for recording and evaluating all verbal input from residents on their dining experience.

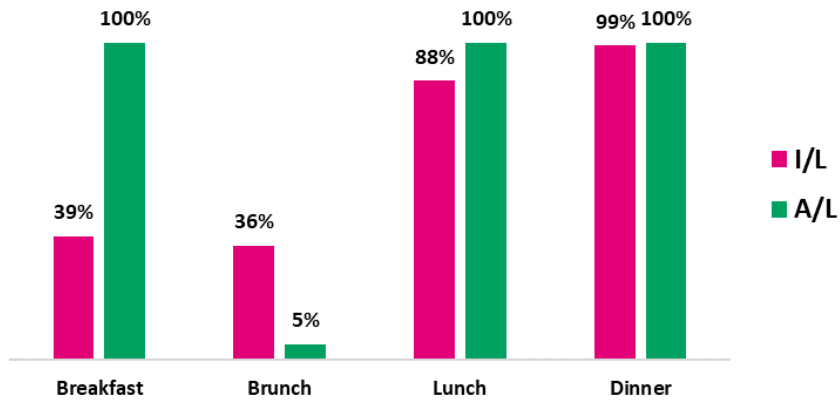
Worth noting that several people commented on feedback they have given, and nothing was done about it.



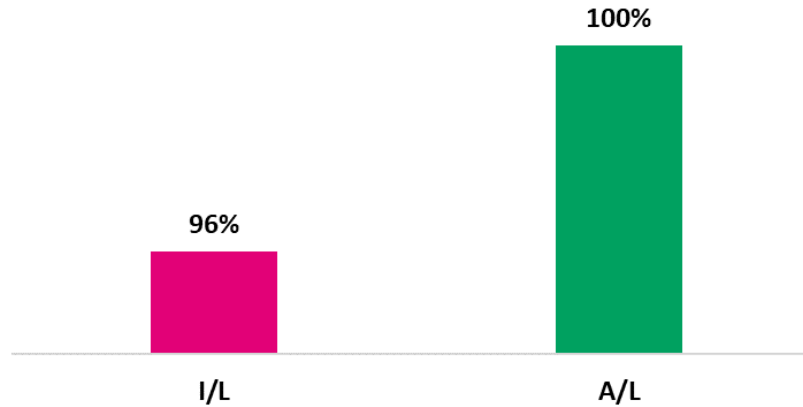
Meals and who is eating

We asked what meals are offered, if they are included in the monthly fees and how often they are eating them...

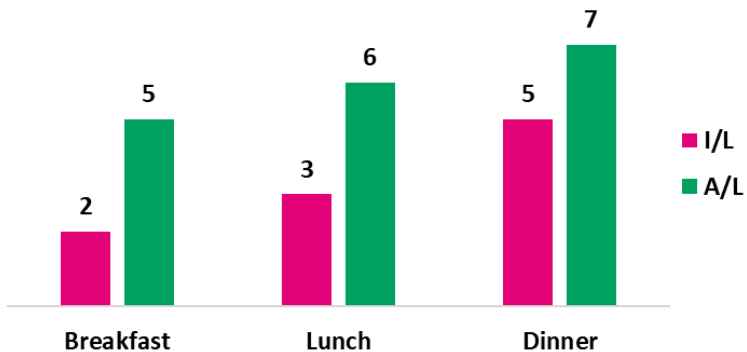
Meals Offered by the Community



Meals Included in Monthly Fees



Average Number of Times Weekly Eating Meals Offered



Opportunity – If you are spending time planning and executing Themed Meals, ask your residents how important they really are and if they even want them.

Specialty/Themed Meals are not so important, as both I/L and A/L gave them a 3, on a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being VERY Important and 0, not important at all)



What is MOST Important?

We asked the residents to rank areas of the dining experience in order of importance, 1= MOST important.

BOTH I/L and A/L had exactly the same order of importance...

1. The Food – Quality, taste, temperature & appearance
2. The Service – Server, timeliness of meal delivery, attentiveness of staff
3. The Menu – Variety, Seasonal offerings, ethnic options, special dietary needs
4. The Social Aspect – Dining with others, friends and family from outside the community welcomed, Holiday meals
5. The value for my money



Incentive to eat in a community setting more

We asked what would incentivize them to eat in the main dining room more often...

This was an open ended free-form text question; the answers below represent those that had the overall theme, but not EXACTLY these words used.

Independent Living

32% The Quality and Taste of the Food

11% The Menu

9% The temperature of the Dining Room

Assisted Living

33% The Quality and Taste of the Food

16% Friends

11% Better Service

Opportunities – Consider a “Meal Pal” program or “Bring a Friend Back” promotion.
Gather deeper insights on your residents around their definition of “good taste” and “good quality”.

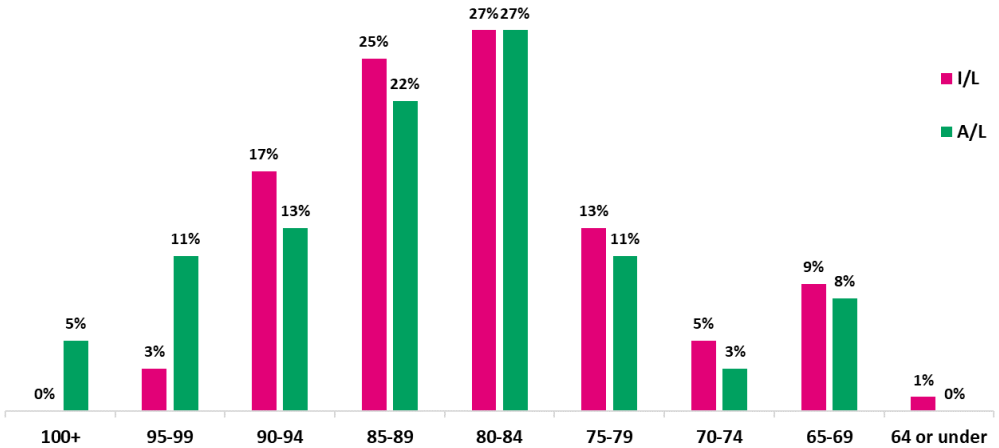
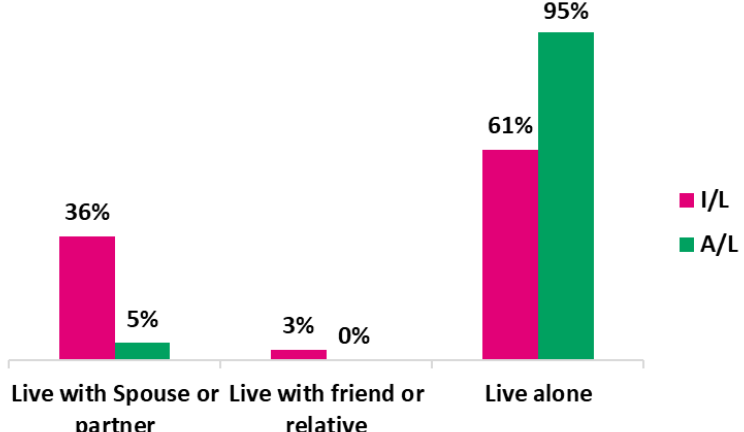
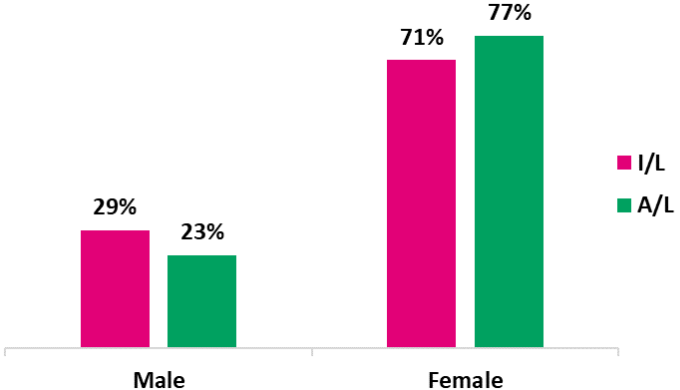
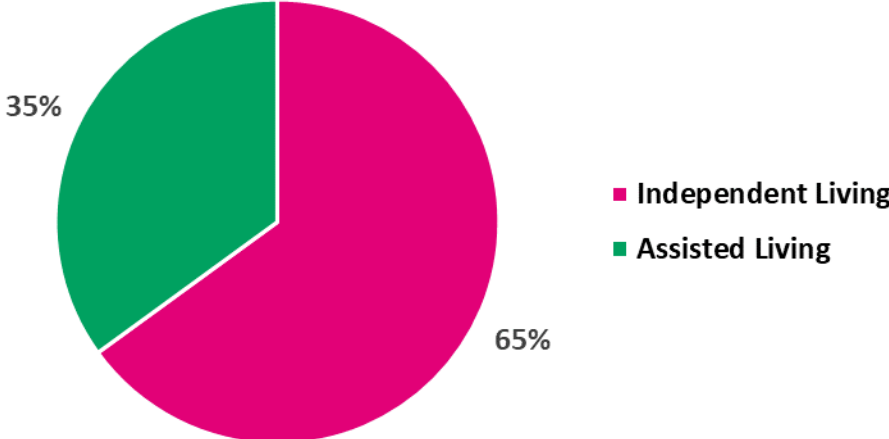




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Demographics

Our Respondents





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Senior Living Resident Dining Experience Opportunities

Categories we probed included the menu, the cuisine, the dining room, the service, how they submit feedback, the meals offered, what types they prefer and how often they are eating in the dining room.

- Consider hosting a lunch and learn for Assisted Living Residents, and possibly family members to educate and walk these residents through how to access this information.
- Consider taking a poll of your residents to determine the favorites in the comfort food and soup categories and adjust your menu based on these findings.
- Take the time to make certain that staff is well trained on speaking clearly and at a volume that can be heard by all residents to overcome not so optimal acoustics.
- Take the time to move around your dining room, making sure that all diners can easily navigate with people seated, with or without a walker.
- Incentivize your servers for consistently excelling in these three areas: Knowledge about the menu, attentiveness to resident needs and being respectful and courteous to residents and co-workers.
- Create and deploy procedures for recording and evaluating all verbal input from residents on their dining experience.
- If you are spending time planning and executing Themed Meals, ask your residents how important they really are and if they even want them.
- Consider a “Meal Pal” program or “Bring a Friend Back” promotion.
- Gather deeper insights on your residents around their definition of “good taste” and “good quality”.

All attendees of today’s Dining Event will receive a complete summary of this study via email within the next week. For questions about this study contact Sue Viox, Executive Director of Link-age Connect – sviox@linkageconnect.com

