



**ACTIVITIESSTRONG**  
EXECUTIVE EDITION

# 2021: THE YEAR OF RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

AN #ACTIVITIESSTRONG EXECUTIVE EDITION WHITE PAPER

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 was the most challenging year in the history of the senior living industry. Health and safety has been the main focus of leaders as they grapple with the deadly rate of virus infections and its impact on the lives of millions of older adults, staff and their families. As the COVID-19 vaccine is being distributed this year, providers are turning their attention to one of the most devastating impacts of the pandemic: social isolation. In order to address this, the focus must be on providing meaningful resident engagement which has historically been an undervalued discipline in senior living communities.

## **PART 1**

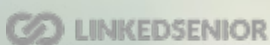
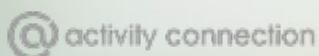
The Destructive Impact  
of COVID-19

## **PART 2**

The Current State of the  
Senior Living Industry

## **PART 3**

Current Trends and Our  
Predictions for the Future



## PART 1

# The Destructive Impact of COVID-19

Now that we have started a new year and attention is on the distribution of a vaccine, our industry needs to begin rebuilding. There are many wounds to address, including the prevalence of social isolation and staff burnout.

### **Social isolation is as bad for your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.<sup>1</sup>**

According to a study published in 2015 in Perspectives on Psychological Science which used a comprehensive literature review (1980-2014) to show how social isolation is a risk factor for mortality.

### **Staffing shortages are leading to burnout.<sup>3</sup>**

In late May, 14% of nursing homes reported having a nursing shortage and that number has remained steady according to a recent Washington Post survey of Medicare data. Furthermore, 18% of nursing homes are experiencing nursing aide shortages.

### **Nursing home residents are lonely and isolated.<sup>2</sup>**

This is according to an Altarum study from July to August 2020 of 365 nursing home residents in 36 states: 76% felt lonelier and 64% reported no longer leaving their rooms to socialize with other residents.

### **Staffing shortages mean that all residents aren't receiving meaningful engagement.**

According to a recent Linked Senior survey, 74% of resident engagement leaders say that staffing shortages are preventing them from engaging all of their residents meaningfully. As a result, many residents are experiencing a failure to thrive that is negatively impacting their health and well-being.

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1 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1745691614568352>

2 <https://altarum.org/news/survey-nursing-home-residents-reveals-deep-emotional-toll-social-isolation-under-covid-19>

3 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/12/03/nursing-home-burnout/>



# Lockdowns and Physical Distancing have made Resident Engagement Impossible...

To provide every resident with the same quality experience, our teams need to work more\*:

In Assisted Living    In Memory Care    In Nursing Homes

## NO VISITS

Communities are under lockdown with restricted visitation, so there's no outside help from volunteers or the community for resident engagement

49hrs

44hrs

48hrs

## NO GROUPS

Residents must be physically distanced for safety, so there are no group programs taking place currently

160hrs

80hrs

120hrs

## LESS TIME

Life enrichment staff have more responsibilities, and must work more to support meaningful resident engagement as well as other departments

15hrs

16hrs

16hrs

Total additional staff working hours per month:

224hrs

140hrs

184hrs

\*Linked Senior survey 04/14/2020 - 239 respondents

### Lack of Family Visits and Ability to Engage Residents are Obstacles

42% report the most challenging part of the pandemic has been that family members cannot visit residents and 27% that they can not engage residents due to quarantine<sup>4</sup>

### An Increase in One-on-One Engagement

89% of engagement was conducted through one-on-one activities as opposed to groups<sup>6</sup>

### Activity Professionals Have New Responsibilities

44% of staff say that what they fear most, or are most anxious about, is that they won't be able to relinquish new responsibilities they took on during the pandemic<sup>5</sup>

### Interdisciplinary Teamwork has doubled!

69% of staff reported getting help from other departments in providing engagement<sup>7</sup> compared to only 33% reporting this in November 2019 (n= 164).

4,5 Linked Senior Survey in October 2020, n= 580

6,7 Linked Senior survey in July 2020, n= 408

## PART 2

### The Current State of the Senior Living Industry

Through our #ActivitiesStrong initiative, we launched the first of its kind Resident Engagement Index Score (REIS) assessment to help the industry measure and manage its resident engagement strategies. **This exclusive REIS data is based on 700+ submissions** as of November 20, 2020. Corporate level responses were removed and descriptive statistical analysis was used (n=428). Electronic platforms use results focused on assisted living, skilled nursing, and memory care and used inferential statistical analysis (n=440).

When resident preference data is stored electronically, staff are:

When using electronic engagement platforms, staff are:

2 X more likely

to create individualized plans for each resident

133 % more likely

to build community and groups

162 % more likely

to report knowing if residents are engaged in programs in real-time

183 % more likely

to report they know if programs match resident preferences





## PART 3

### Current Trends and Our Predictions for the Future

“Because 2020 was the year of great reflection, 2021 must, then, be the year of great response. If the senior living industry is to evolve from a ‘need’ into a ‘want’ we must meaningfully change our mindset from providing passive wellness to facilitating self-fulfillment.

If our collective, in-place solutions for resident engagement had truly been enough prior to the pandemic, then the residents of senior living would have been largely insulated from the effects of isolation. Resident engagement is - and perhaps always has been - our great imperative. We must realize that obligation in 2021.”

**James Lee, Corporate Director of Sales  
Aventine Senior Living**

“Residents are changing every day! We need to be ready to respond to the ever-changing landscape, bingo and cookies are being replaced with iPads and wine clubs.”

**David Hopkins, Associate Executive  
Director at LCS**

## CURRENT TRENDS

The pandemic offers an incredible opportunity to rebuild the field of resident engagement. Here’s what we’re accomplishing now to make 2021 the year of resident engagement.

- Optimism!** 93% of activity and life enrichment professionals believe that resident engagement programs will come out of this pandemic either the same or stronger.<sup>8</sup>
- Leaders are Invested!** 90% of leaders believe that engagement technology is at least moderately important to their community, compared to 82% in 2019<sup>9</sup>
- Setting Goals!** An analysis of REIS data and Linked Senior client data shows that a good overall minutes of engagement goal per resident is 35 minutes per day. (However, strong variations occur by level of care, preferences and needs of the residents)
- Fighting Back Isolation!** Linked Senior has found that providers are interested in knowing if their residents are engaged and there seems to be a consensus around a target of having 85% of a senior living community population engaged.
- Benefits from One-on-One Engagement!** Providers, families and residents have learned from COVID-19 that we need to be more flexible in programming, especially in memory care. Many residents have also benefited from the increased attention in the form of 1:1 engagement and interventions. This type of individualized attention and engagement will likely remain.

<sup>8</sup> Linked Senior survey in July 2020, n= 408

<sup>9</sup> <https://in2i.com/senior-living-2020-market-report/>

## PREDICTIONS

“Senior living in 2021 may be our best yet! As the pandemic hit in 2020, I don’t think senior living or the world knew what kind of challenges were in store for us. But with the support that our staff and residents had with each other, we realized we had each other to tackle whatever came our way.

The camaraderie and creativity shown by staff and residents at our Goodworks communities lifted spirits and bonded neighbors. Fast forwarding to 2021, whatever God’s plan is for our communities, we are ready and can’t wait to tackle and celebrate the upcoming year.”

Dustin Downs  
Goodworks Unlimited



**Meaningful Engagement Helps ROI!** As the push for more and better quality engagement is addressed, providers are going to be interested in having a healthy discussion around ROI for resident engagement and that department will soon be measured on a resident and staff level. These data points will include attendance, engagement data, satisfaction, quality of life and financials (competitiveness, cost of care, length of stay).

To prevail over social isolation and make sure our residents are able to find purpose everyday, we need to prioritize consistent and comprehensive data collection with the support of technology. In the resident engagement field today, the majority of communities simply don’t collect data in this way, making it very difficult for them to quickly identify areas they need to improve in order to optimize engagement for every resident. Furthermore, providers must empower staff to work in an interdisciplinary way with tools they need to succeed in providing engagement.

**Now is the time to seize on this opportunity to rebuild our field!**

“To truly understand the value of life enrichment, we need to imagine how the senior living industry would have fared without it during 2020. During this pandemic, I believe that almost all of the positive, innovative and proud moments in senior living communities came from activity and life enrichment directors and their residents - they are essential and they are true heroes that make our industry #ActivitiesStrong.”

Charles de Vilmorin, CEO &  
Co-founder, Linked Senior

