

CONCLUSION

The many talents of millions of Baby Boomers and members of the Silent Generation cannot remain on the sidelines in the face of so many pressing community problems, among them staggering high school dropout rates and millions of Americans who need services to live independently in their homes. Our effectiveness in engaging these extraordinary generations of Americans — meeting them where they are, sensitive to their motivations and barriers, and pulling institutional levers to encourage them to give more — will make the difference in whether our country fulfills its civic promise. A woman in our focus groups recalled the words of a past President while reflecting on America's potential, saying "And I think we're a great country because of the volunteers. President Reagan said one time, 'what would America be without volunteers?' It's so true."

We hope this report will give existing initiatives new energy, and that new efforts will be born, to engage these generations of experience in strengthening our communities, nation and world. And we hope the reflections and insights of Experienced Americans will show us that in enlisting them we not only extend the quality of their own lives, but create new hope for future generations of Americans to inherit a world better than their parent's generation found it.

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The views reflected in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of AARP.

METHODOLOGY

Peter D. Hart Research Associates conducted original research for this report. A national survey was conducted by telephone among a total of 1,012 adults between the ages of 44 and 79 from June 6 to 11, 2008. The audience interviewed includes “Baby Boomers” born between 1946 and 1964, as well as “Silent Generation” members born between 1929 and 1945.

The sample includes a representative nationwide base sample of 808 adults between the ages 44 and 79. At the 95% confidence interval, the statistical margin of sampling error associated with the base sample is ± 3.5 percentage points, although sampling tolerances for subgroups are larger.

Oversamples were conducted among 104 African Americans and 100 Hispanics, all between the ages of 44 and 79. The oversamples were weighted to their proper proportion of the population according to Census figures. The margin of error among African Americans is ± 7.3 percentage points, and the margin of error among Hispanics is ± 8.1 percentage points.

In April 2008, Hart Research conducted four focus groups among older adults who expressed some level of willingness to increase their volunteering. The groups were held in Cincinnati, Ohio and Boston, Massachusetts. This qualitative research was conducted to provide context and inform the development of the survey instrument.