

Understanding Women 45+: The AARP Foundation's Women's Leadership Circle Research

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The AARP Foundation

The AARP Foundation is AARP's charitable organization dedicated to enhancing quality of life for all as we age. We lead positive social change and deliver value to those 50 and older with emphasis on those at social and economic risk.



The AARP Foundation

- Through its programs, AARP Foundation addresses the core issues that help older members of our society meet their health and financial needs and reduce the risk that they will fall victim to poverty and fraud.



The AARP Foundation

- Foundation programs also explore emerging trends that will affect people at risk more and more as they age. Through providing direct services, leveraging relationships, and providing information and education to both individuals and service providers, Foundation Programs play an important role in supporting the goals of the AARP Foundation.



The AARP Foundation

In 2006, collectively, Foundation programs served 2.1 million people through direct service, another 704,798 through distribution of information and resources for a total of 2.8 million served for the year.



The Women's Leadership Circle

The WLC is working to leverage the economic power and passion of women to:

- **Support and strengthen** the AARP Foundation's long-standing commitment to improving the lives of women as they age by supporting and expanding programs and service.
- **Identify and inform** the issues that affect women as they age and solidify AARP Foundation's role as an expert source of information on these issues.
- **Collaborate through partnering** with other organizations that are focused on the empowerment, security and protection of women as they age.



*Looking at Act II
Of Women's Lives*



WLC Research Goal

- identify issues that affect women as they age
- assist the WLC in enhancing the quality of life for women 50+
- concentrated on “health” and “wealth”



WLC Research Design

- Conducted by Roper Public Affairs
 - 81 in-depth in-person interviews with women 45 to 90 years old
 - National telephone survey of more than 2,500 women 45+, including oversamples of African Americans, Hispanics and Asians



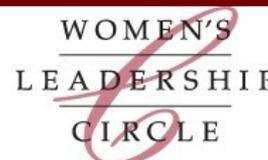
Life After 45

Two-thirds of women 45+ consider themselves happier now than they have ever been.

- 8 in 10 feel greater freedom to be themselves.
- Three-quarters feel it's a time to pursue their dreams.

I'm a lot wiser. I have more life experience, more exposure to the world. My life now is just more than I thought it would be.

(Age 58)



Liza, San Diego, Age 75



“The thing that surprises me about being in my 70’s is that it’s so much fun. . . you don’t have to play out any role – like daughter, boss, employee.”

Cathy K., New Jersey, Age 67



"I think women, just because they're chronologically a certain age, don't have to be old. Just be yourself, just do what you want to do. If you feel healthy, just do things that younger people do."

Life After 45

- “Independence” is a near mantra for women.
- Real women are real inspirations.
 - Older women are seen as role models, whether they are 45 or 85.
- Connection is critical to well being.
 - Nine in ten women say they have a network of friends or family they can depend on in a time of crisis.



Eloise, San Diego, Age 76



“My hobby circle is my safety net. It’s people with all kinds of backgrounds and ages from 40 to 83, but we’re like-minded women. You can have more emotional connection with female friends.”

Life After 45

- Divorced, Hispanic, Asian and African American women are less likely to agree they have family and friends to rely on.
- Three in ten women 45+ do worry about becoming a burden to their families, and two in ten worry that they will be alone or will have no one to take care of them when they are older.



Money Matter\$

Some women feel financially secure – even with very limited resources; others have fears; some are avoiding thinking about it.



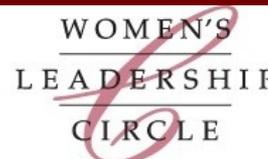
Money Matter\$

- **Taking a proactive approach to money matters is critical to women's well being**
 - **Women who are taking steps to prepare for their financial futures are happier and more optimistic about their own futures -- across every income level.**
 - **Among women who are confident about their financial security, seven in ten say they are happier now than ever – versus only 48% of women who are less confident about their financial futures.**
 - **Eight in ten see their older years as a time to pursue dreams, versus only 63% of less financially confident women.**



Money Matter\$

- What helps women feel more confident about their finances – and thus their futures?
 - Taking steps to take control of their finances, from getting professional advice, to having an emergency fund, investing part of their monthly income, or paying off credits cards monthly.



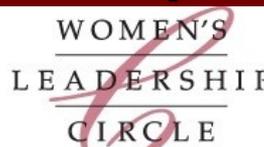
Joyce, New Jersey, Age 74



“I know a lot of women of my age range who lose their husbands and I’m really amazed but it does happen – they don’t know how to write a check. They know nothing at all about the family finances, which I think is a grave mistake for any couple because you never know which one’s going to go first.”

Money Matter\$

- Many women may have “false confidence” about their financial futures
 - Three in four women 45+ report feeling confident that they are taking the necessary steps to make themselves as financially secure *as possible*.
 - However, when looking at various aspects of their financial behavior and knowledge, many women did not appear to be doing all they could to protect themselves financially.
 - Three in ten women are worried either a “great deal” or “moderate amount” about eventually running out of money to live on. Four in ten women consider thinking about their finances depressing.



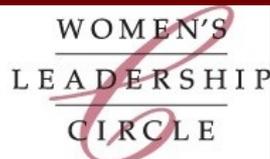
Patti, Kansas City, Age 46



“I never felt old enough to have to worry about financial security and retirement. I felt like oh, that's way down the road. Now it's feeling like a looming truck that's chasing me.”

Money Matter\$

- Despite the majority of women 45 or older who feel confident they will have enough money for their later years...
 - Only one in three say they know how to determine how much they will actually need for retirement.
 - Six in ten do not have a long-term spending plan for when they retire.
- Boomer and African American women are even less likely to feel they know what they will need for retirement or to have a plan -- as are Hispanic women.



Health

- **Most women 45+ rate their health positively – and like our look at “wealth” – women who consider themselves healthier also report being happier and more optimistic about their futures.**
 - Eight in ten women consider their health good or better. Women who feel very good or better about their health are more likely to say they are happier now than they have ever been (72% vs. 58%).
 - Interestingly, we see a link also between women who feel better about their health taking steps to take care of their finances as well – suggesting again how important it is for women’s well-being to proactively focus on these two fundamental areas of their lives.
 - Eight in ten women 45+ who describe their health as “very good” or better feel confident that they are taking the necessary steps to ensure their financial security versus only 69% of women who feel less healthy.



Health

- **Nine in ten women say they are doing all that they can to keep themselves as healthy as possible.**
 - But looking at both the survey data and listening to the women in the in-depth interviews, we learned that many women have trouble moving from “knowing” to “doing.”
 - Eight in ten women 45+ say they exercise at least once a week, but
 - two in five say that, most days, they are just too tired to exercise.
 - One third just do not like to exercise.
- ... and importantly, we hear this at even greater rates from women who rate their health less than “very good” – which perpetuates a negative cycle.

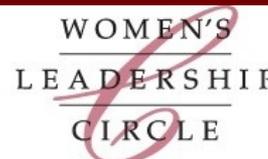
Making the time [to exercise] is a challenge. And I think you need a friend to get you out and do things. (Age 63)



Health

Exercise

- The majority of women (58%) said they were more likely to exercise if they had a friend to exercise with
 - Women in minority groups were even more likely to say having an exercise buddy would increase their exercise (64% of African American women, 62% of Hispanic women, and 67% of Asian American women)



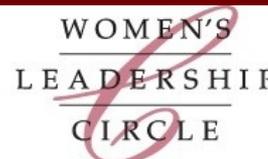
Health

- Millions of women say they face real roadblocks to taking better care of their health:
 - Nearly three in ten women overall and even more Asian and Hispanic women say caring for other people leaves them with too little time for taking care of their own health.
 - One in three women 45+ report having a health condition that affects what they are able to do in their daily life.
 - One in three feel the cost of healthcare or prescription drugs sometimes prevents them from seeing a doctor or getting treatment when they need it.



Health

- About one in three women 45+ worry “a great deal” or “moderate amount” about losing their independence if their health worsens.
 - This is an even greater concern among Hispanics (54%), Boomers (39%), women who have gone through a divorce (46%), or those with less than \$50,000 in income (43%).

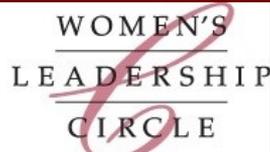


What Do Women Say About...

Where They Want To Live?

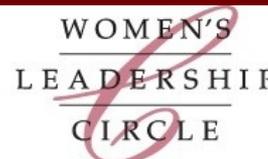
- The desire to remain independent in housing is very strong among women. One in four women 45+ worry “a great deal” or “moderate amount” that they will be forced to live someplace they do not want to live.
- As an alternative, many consider the idea of living with their women friends appealing. Four in ten say that if they were alone, they would find the idea of sharing a home with women friends to be appealing.
- Among these women nearly nine in ten consider companionship to be the major appeal, along with saving money, safety, help in case of a medical emergency, and sharing household responsibilities.

“I keep telling my friends that we all need to buy a big house with a common area downstairs and live together – not like a nursing home, but truly a place where we have communal living. (Age 57)”



Driving

- **Driving means freedom and independence for women.**
 - Driving is their way to get out of the house, see people, shop for themselves, and engage in activities – to give them the connection that is so critical to their overall well being.
 - Regardless of their circumstances, many women find driving more difficult as the years pass. For some women, driving seems more stressful, making them reluctant to drive and inhibiting their freedom.
 - Married women sometimes experience a change in their driving habits once their marital status changes. Some may find themselves suddenly driving more, or less, depending on how their lives have changed.



Gwen, New Jersey, Age 73



“If anything ever happened to my car I would be isolated. I couldn't get to the store. I like to pick out the things that I want. That makes me feel independent. I don't have to call people – “can you come here and do this? Can you come here and do that?” I have a difficult time asking for help.

Developing a Savings Habit



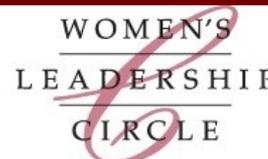
Research with Low-Income Women

- Understand women's experiences with saving
- Identify the barriers to women saving
- Identify messages that resonate with women



What we heard

In addition to difficulties caused by credit usage, women are subject to the financial problems of their families and the lack of a safety net for larger problems such as job loss and illness. They are sometimes in circumstances they did not create.



What we heard

Women who are single, divorced, and widowed are at an increased risk for financial insecurity as they age.



What we heard

Womens' lack of resources often results in limited choices for managing their money, which inhibits saving and perpetuates a cycle of spending.





Debt

- Most women had experienced credit card debt
 - Some struggling with paying off own / family member's debt
 - Some had reduced the number of credit cards they have
 - Some had rid themselves completely of credit cards as a result of debt experiences
 - Some used debit cards or "pay in advance" cards
 - Shopping provides solace in difficult times





Emotional issues

- Need for privacy
- Need for control
- Fear of the future results in focus on present
- Shame over situation
- Depression
- Sense of isolation

Saving

- Most women were not saving in a structured way for retirement
- Women that were saving, were often doing so to “treat” themselves or their family or for other short term goals





Set-backs on financial path

- **Divorced**
- **Widowed**
- **Illness/medical disability (self or spouse)**
- **Job-loss (self or spouse)**
- **Credit card debt (self or family member)**
- **Changes in benefits/loss of benefits**



“My company left me, they went bankrupt. All of a sudden I didn’t have a job, my husband didn’t have a job because 9/11 hit, and then all of our retirement, our equity, is gone We didn’t make bad choices, we had to deal with the choices that were there.”

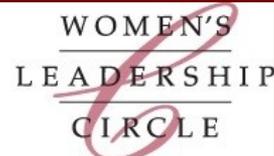




“When my husband died, he had 27 years on the same job. So he could have had, I could have had, a full pension. Now the company . . . sold to another company and they didn’t carry the pension plan over. The secretary was ... ready to send me the pension, and they said, “what are you doing?” So I get \$57 from my husband’s pension. That’s all I get from his 26 years on the same job.



“I used to do all that [saving for retirement], but I had a crisis; it was my mom. She passed away 6 years ago, and unfortunately she did not believe in insurance. The next morning I realized, how am I going to bury my mother? I had no savings account. I had just got a 401K built up where I could borrow money on it. That is where I got some of the money.”



Reconfirming the WLC's commitment

Tackle the multiple systemic issues that affect women and better help keep them on track



**Secure retirement
And health benefits**

**Job security,
placement, and
re-careering**

**Assistance
during life crises**

NEEDS

**Education
assistance**

**Debt
education**



Where to find the research?

AARP.ORG

- Looking at Act II of Women's Lives

<http://www.aarp-foundation.org/wlc/research/research.html>

- Developing a Savings Habit

www.aarp.org/savings



Women's Programs: Building on History of Service

Programs and activities designed to support WLC mission that women experience financial security, health and social well-being in a society that values them as they age:

- **Walking Programs**

- **401(k) Automaticity—work with companies employing**

 - large numbers of low income women to encourage**

 - automatic enrollment**

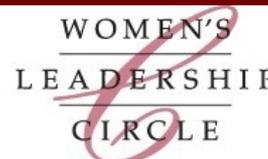
- **Other financial literacy efforts**

- **Research**



Red Hat Society Walking Pilot

- 1 year pilot to test nexus between socialization and sustainability of exercise
- 30 chapters nationwide; 25 women each
- Incentives and web support
- More than 800 chapters representing over 5,000 women applied



Next . . .

Womenvision Summit

April 12-15, 2007

The Westin La Paloma Resort & Spa,
Tucson, AZ

www.aarp.org/foundation/wlc

