



# **AARP Wyoming Legislative Issues Survey: Utilities**

October 2002

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# **AARP Wyoming Legislative Issues Survey: Utilities**

**Report Prepared  
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AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization for people 50 and over. We provide information and resources; advocate on legislative, consumer, and legal issues; assist members to serve their communities; and offer a wide range of unique benefits, special products, and services for our members. These benefits include AARP Webplace at [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org), *AARP Modern Maturity*, and *My Generation* magazines, the monthly *AARP Bulletin*, and a Spanish-language newspaper, *Segunda Juventud*. Active in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP celebrates the attitude that age is just a number and life is what you make it.

### **Acknowledgements**

Many AARP staff contributed to this study. Special thanks go to AARP staff including: Rita Inoway, Wyoming State Director; Tim Summers, Wyoming Associate State Director; Coralette Hannan, State Affairs; Van Ellet, State Affairs; Jennifer Sauer, Knowledge Management; Anita Stowell-Ritter, Knowledge Management; Gretchen Straw, Knowledge Management; and Darlene Matthews, Knowledge Management. Anita Stowell-Ritter and Jennifer H. Sauer, AARP Knowledge Management, wrote the report. Jennifer Sauer, Knowledge Management, managed all aspects of the project. For more information, contact Jennifer Sauer at (202) 434-6207.

## Background

This report explores the opinion of Wyoming AARP members about their utilities. Specifically, members rate priority of the Wyoming Public Service Commission to ensure both the quality of utility service and the affordability of utility rates for residential customers. Members also rate the quality of their utilities. This report is part of a larger survey of 1,117 Wyoming AARP members conducted between July and August 2002. The full questionnaire is contained in the Appendix to this report.

## Highlights

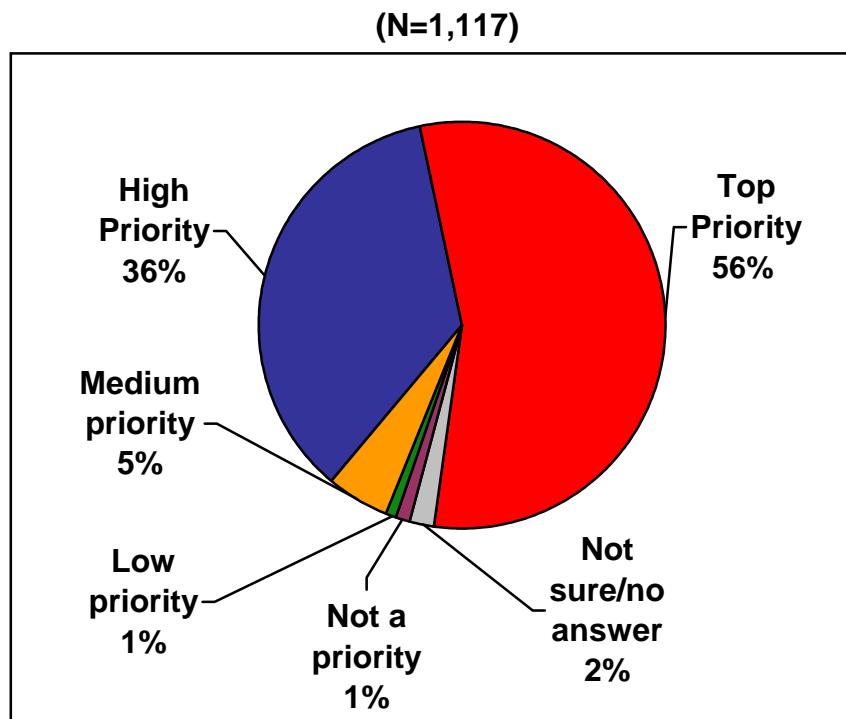
- More than nine in ten Wyoming AARP members say it should be a top (56%) or high priority (36%) for Wyoming's Public Service commission to ensure high quality service and affordable utility rates for all residential consumers.
- More members rate each utility services listed in the survey as 'good' rather than 'excellent' – almost half rate four of the five utility services listed as 'good'.
- Electric and gas receive generally good ratings from Wyoming members – about three-quarters or more say their electric and gas company provide 'good' or 'excellent' quality service.
- Members' give their cable company the poorest rating for service quality. Almost half rate the quality of service from their cable company as 'poor' or 'fair'.
- Members' are somewhat displeased with their local and long-distance telephone service. Almost one quarter rate the quality of services from their local telephone company (22%) and cable company (27%) as 'fair', and about one in seven or less rate each utility company's service as 'poor'.

## Findings

**Nearly all Wyoming members believe that it should be a priority for the Wyoming Public Service Commission to ensure high quality service and affordable rates.**

AARP members in Wyoming were asked to rate how much of a priority it should be for the Wyoming Public Service Commission to ensure high quality service and affordable utility rates for all residential customers. More than nine in ten Wyoming members say that ensuring high quality service and affordable rates for all residential customers in the state should be a top or high priority for the Wyoming Public Service Commission.

### **Priority for the Wyoming Public Service Commission Ensuring High Quality Service and Affordable Rates**



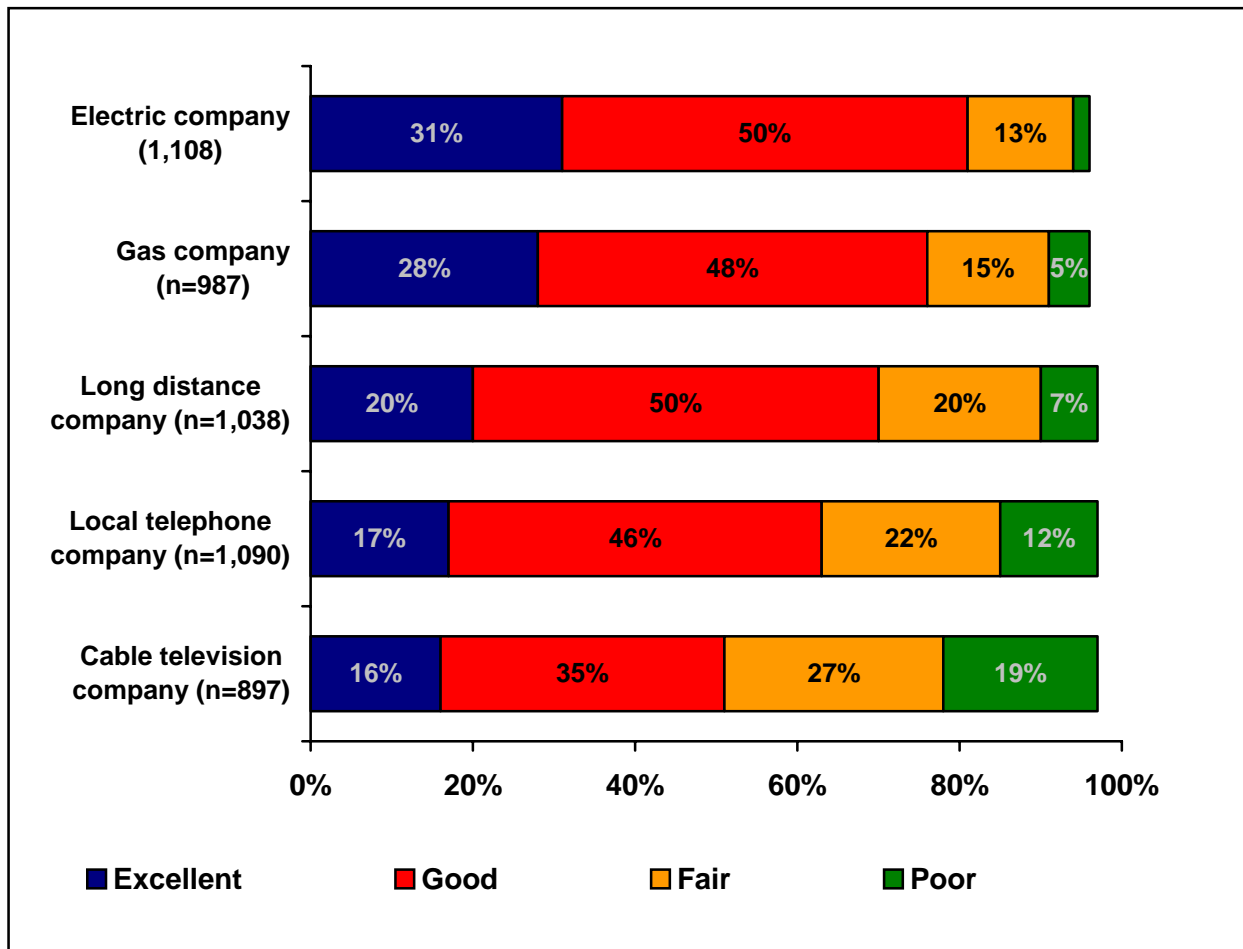
\* Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

More members age 60 and over indicate that ensuring quality service and affordable rates should be a top priority than those younger (50-59 47%; 60-74 59%; 75+ 62%). Further, members living in areas with some urban population are more likely than those in non-urban areas to report it should be a top priority (63% vs. 53%).

**Wyoming AARP members are inclined to rate the quality of their utility services as ‘good’ rather than ‘excellent’.**

While a significant proportion of members in Wyoming say the quality of each utility service is ‘excellent’, more members are inclined to rate the quality of these services as ‘good’. However, with respect to ‘excellent’ quality of service, members rank their electric company first and their gas company second. Cable companies rank last in term of quality of service. However, one in five (20%) report they do not use cable television at all. (See Annotated survey in Appendix for percentage of respondents who say they “do not use” each of the utility services listed in this survey).

**Wyoming Members’ Rating of Utility Service Quality<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> Percentage are based on those who use a particular service. Categories where percentages are not shown represent less than 5 percent of the members.

## Conclusions

The majority of Wyoming AARP members believe that the Wyoming Public Service Commission should make it a top or high priority to ensure the quality of service and affordable rates to residential customers in the state. While half of the members rate each utility as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’, more members check the ‘good’ category indicating they are not seeing exceptional quality in any of the utility services tested in this survey. Furthermore, there are distinct variations in quality across utilities – members rate electric and gas companies far better in terms of quality service than the local telephone company or the cable company.

## Methodology

This report is only one part of the larger survey and report entitled *2002 Wyoming AARP Legislative Issues Survey*. The full survey is a mail survey of 1,117 Wyoming AARP members that addresses their concerns and opinions about a number of concerns and legislative issues including prescription drugs, long-term care, and utilities. This report summarizes weighted overall findings for the utility questions covered in the survey.

AARP conducted the *Wyoming AARP Legislative Issues Survey* in July through August 2002. A sample of 2,000 AARP members in Wyoming, proportionally stratified by three age segments—50 to 59, 60 to 74, and 75+, was selected from AARP’s membership database. Each sampled member was contacted about the survey in four ways: a pre-notification postcard, the survey itself, a reminder postcard, and a second survey. Fifty-nine percent of the sampled Wyoming members returned surveys by the late-August cut-off date, providing 1,116 useable surveys for analysis. Thus, the survey has a sampling error of plus or minus three percent.<sup>2</sup> Survey responses were weighted to reflect the distribution of the age segments in the member population of Wyoming. Due to rounding of the weights, the final number of cases for the weighted dataset is 1,117.

Throughout the report, statistics representing member responses are reported in percentages. In some instances, percentages are small and may not seem to represent a significant proportion of members, yet when projected to the total Wyoming membership the actual number of people may be substantial. As of July 2002, the number of member households in Wyoming was 51,209, which results in approximately 83,471 members in the state.

For more information about this study, contact Jennifer Sauer, AARP Knowledge Management, (202) 434-6207.

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<sup>2</sup> This means that in 95 out of 100 samples of this size, the results obtained in the sample would fall in a range of 3 percentage points of what would have been obtained if every AARP member in Wyoming age 50 or older had been surveyed.



**Appendix I**  
**Annotated Questionnaire**

## 2002 AARP Wyoming Legislative Issues Survey

**DIRECTIONS:** For each survey item below, check the box that best represents your opinion.

**Respondents n=1,117 AARP members; Response Rate = 59%;  
Sampling Error =  $\pm 3.0\%$  Responses are weighted by age.**

(Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding or multiple responses. A “\*” means less than 1%.)

### Personal Concerns

**1. Below is a list of concerns that have been expressed by people age 50 and older. Please rate your own level of concern about each item using a 5-point scale where 1 means you are "not at all concerned" and 5 means you are "extremely concerned."**

	Extremely Concerned			Not At All Concerned		<i>No Response</i>
	5	4	3	2	1	
a. Having adequate information on Medicaid, the government health insurance program for low income people	31%	21%	27%	10%	10%	2%
b. Providing care or financial support for a parent, grandchild or other relative	23%	22%	24%	15%	13%	3%
c. Having Medicare as a base for retirement health coverage	61%	21%	10%	4%	2%	2%
d. Avoiding consumer fraud	62%	20%	10%	4%	2%	2%
e. Having Social Security as a base for retirement income	57%	20%	14%	4%	3%	2%
f. Finding affordable, high quality health insurance	65%	17%	9%	4%	4%	2%
g. Staying in your own home as you get older	64%	20%	8%	3%	3%	2%
h. Staying physically fit/maintaining a healthy diet	60%	25%	10%	2%	2%	1%
i. Having high quality long-term care for you or a family member	58%	23%	11%	3%	3%	2%
j. Making sure your pension benefits and/or retirement savings are safe and secure	79%	11%	5%	2%	2%	1%
k. Finding work in retirement	12%	17%	28%	16%	25%	2%

1. *(continued)* Below is a list of concerns that have been expressed by people age 50 and older. Please rate your own level of concern about each item using a 5-point scale where 1 means you are "not at all concerned" and 5 means you are "extremely concerned."

	Extremely Concerned		3	Not At All Concerned		No Response
	5	4		2	1	
l. Dealing with the loss of a close family member	27%	20%	28%	13%	10%	3%
m. Having access to affordable prescription drugs	68%	17%	8%	3%	3%	2%
n. Having consumer protections in health care insurance plans	61%	22%	9%	3%	2%	2%
o. Becoming ill or disabled	54%	21%	17%	4%	2%	2%
p. Keeping your family safe from acts of terrorism and violence	45%	21%	20%	7%	5%	2%
q. Protecting your right to privacy	60%	22%	12%	3%	1%	1%
r. Avoiding business practices that are unfair or fraudulent	62%	20%	12%	3%	2%	2%

## Long-Term Care

**Long-term care** is care for people of all ages who are frail, ill, or disabled and need help with daily activities, such as getting dressed, bathing, preparing meals, or eating. This help could be provided at home, in the community (coordinated by a local senior center), or in a nursing home on a regular basis for long periods of time.

2. Have you or any member of your family needed long-term care within the LAST five years?

%

21 Yes

75 No → **SKIP TO QUESTION 4**

1 Not sure → **SKIP TO QUESTION 4**

3 No response

3. How easy or difficult was it for you or a family member to find long-term care services? (n = 238 respondents who say they or a family member needed long-term care services in the last five years)

<b>Finding long-term care:</b>	<b>Very Easy</b>	<b>Somewhat Easy</b>	<b>Somewhat Difficult</b>	<b>Very Difficult</b>	<b>No Response</b>
a. <b>in the community</b> or within a reasonable distance from your home	32%	40%	21%	5%	2%
b. that was <b>affordable</b>	11%	31%	32%	22%	4%
c. <b>when</b> it was needed	25%	35%	29%	8%	4%

**4. How likely is it that you or any member of your family (that is your spouse, parents, children, siblings, or grandparents) will need long-term care within the NEXT five years?**

- %
- 24 Very likely
- 25 Somewhat likely
- 31 Not very likely
- 9 Not at all likely
- 10 Not sure
- 2 No response

**5. Do you have the following services in your community or within a reasonable distance from your home?**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>No Response</b>
a. Nursing home care	92%	4%	3%	1%
b. Home-delivered meals (through local senior center or Meals on Wheels)	90%	4%	4%	2%
c. Assisted living facility or a facility that provides housing, usually in an apartment-like setting, meals, and personal care services such as help bathing or dressing	79%	9%	10%	1%
d. Home health care such as a nurse or physical therapist who makes home visits	81%	5%	13%	1%
e. Housekeeping or help with daily chores	61%	10%	27%	2%
f. Adult day care center (a center that offers health and social programs for older persons who need some supervision)	52%	18%	28%	2%
g. Senior center that coordinates home and community based long-term care services	58%	9%	31%	2%
h. Transportation for the elderly	83%	6%	9%	2%

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>No Response</b>
i. Hospice (in-home supportive care for the terminally ill)	69%	9%	20%	3%
j. In-home personal care (help with activities like bathing and dressing)	64%	7%	28%	2%
k. Respite care (care-giver relief and support)	42%	10%	46%	2%

**6. How much do you think staying in a nursing home in your community would cost each MONTH if you had to pay the entire cost all by yourself?**

- %
- 1 Less than \$1,000 per month
  - 7 \$1,000 but less than \$2,000 per month
  - 18 \$2,000 but less than \$3,000 per month
  - 37 \$3,000 but less than \$4,000 per month
  - 13 \$4,000 but less than \$5,000 per month
  - 5 \$5,000 or more per month
  - 19 Not sure
  - 1 No response

**7. How much do you think staying in an assisted living residence in your community would cost each MONTH if you had to pay the entire cost all by yourself?**

- %
- 3 Less than \$1,000 per month
  - 18 \$1,000 but less than \$2,000 per month
  - 26 \$2,000 but less than \$3,000 per month
  - 14 \$3,000 but less than \$4,000 per month
  - 5 \$4,000 but less than \$5,000 per month
  - 3 \$5,000 or more per month
  - 30 Not sure
  - 2 No response

**8. About how much do you think a ONE-DAY visit from a skilled nurse in your community would cost if had to pay the entire cost all by yourself?**

- %
- 5 Less than \$50 a day
  - 32 \$100 a day
  - 17 \$200 a day
  - 5 \$300 a day
  - 2 \$400 a day
  - 1 \$500 or more a day
  - 37 Not sure
  - 2 No response

**9. About how much do you think a ONE DAY visit from a home-health aide to help with bathing and dressing would cost if you had to pay the entire cost all by yourself?**

<u>%</u>	
19	Less than \$50 a day
29	\$100 a day
9	\$200 a day
2	\$300 a day
*	\$400 a day
*	\$500 or more a day
39	Not sure
2	No response

**10. Which care option would you prefer for yourself or a family member needing long-term care?**

<u>%</u>	
13	Have family and friends provide all the care at home
43	Have care such as a home health aide, delivered meals, etc. provided at home
29	Have care provided in a residential facility, such as assisted living, where housing, food, and personal care (help with bathing and dressing) are provided for residents
2	Have care provided in a nursing home
13	Not sure
1	No response

**11. If you or a family member became ill or disabled and needed long-term care, how important would it be to you to be able to stay at home as long as possible, even if it meant you would have to contribute more to the cost of your care?**

<u>%</u>	
67	Very important
22	Somewhat important
4	Not very important
*	Not at all important
5	Not sure
1	No response

**12. Wyoming's 40 senior centers are the initial source of contact for individuals and families considering community based long-term care services. Senior centers typically provide the elderly and disabled in the community with the following services: the coordination of home-health services, visits by home-health aides, home delivered meals, transportation, caregiver support, personal grooming, and respite services. State funding for senior centers has remained relatively unchanged over the past decade while the number of seniors in Wyoming has steadily increased.**

**12. (continued) Do you support or oppose the state of Wyoming significantly increasing funding to senior centers for the delivery of home and community based long-term care services even if it means allocating more money from the state's general fund?**

%  
67 Strongly support  
24 Somewhat support  
3 Somewhat oppose  
1 Strongly oppose  
4 Not sure  
1 No response

### Prescription Drugs

**13. In the past 12 months, have you or a family member bought a prescription drug?**

%  
94 Yes  
6 No  
\* Not sure  
\* No response

**14. Do you get any help in paying for prescription drugs from insurance or other health coverage?**

%  
69 Yes  
30 No  
1 Not sure  
1 No response

**15. In the past 12 months, has paying for prescription drugs been a major problem, a minor problem, or not a problem for you?**

%  
18 A major problem  
35 A minor problem  
47 Not a problem  
1 No response

**16. In the past 12 months, approximately how much have you and your family spent, each month, out of your own pocket for prescription drugs?**

%  
10 Less than \$10 per month  
24 \$10 but less than \$50 per month  
23 \$50 but less than \$100 per month  
20 \$100 but less than \$200 per month  
16 \$200 but less than \$500 per month  
3 \$500 or more per month  
3 Not sure  
1 No response

**17. How concerned are you and your family about being able to afford the cost of needed prescription drugs over the next two years?**

- %
- 45 Very concerned
- 31 Somewhat concerned
- 16 Not very concerned
- 6 Not at all concerned
- 1 Not sure
- \* No response

**18. Many people face difficult decisions when buying prescription drugs. In the past 12 months, have you or a family member done any of the following?**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>No Response</b>
a. Delayed getting a prescription filled because you didn't have enough money to pay for it?	14%	81%	2%	3%
b. Taken less medicine than your doctor prescribed to make it last longer?	16%	80%	2%	3%
c. Cut back on items such as food, fuel, or electricity to be able to afford a prescription drug?	9%	86%	2%	3%
d. Ordered your prescription drugs by mail or Internet because they cost less?	28%	68%	1%	3%
e. Gone without a prescription because of the cost of the drug?	14%	82%	1%	3%
f. Traveled to Canada, Mexico, or another country to purchase prescription drugs because they cost less?	7%	89%	1%	3%

**19. How important is it to you that the state of Wyoming makes prescription drug costs more affordable to low-income persons?**

- %
- 74 Very important
- 20 Somewhat important
- 2 Not very important
- 2 Not at all important
- 1 Not sure
- 1 No response



**20. Would you support or oppose implementing a prescription drug assistance program in Wyoming for low-income persons even if it requires new state funding?**

- %
- 55 Strongly support
- 31 Somewhat support
- 5 Somewhat oppose
- 3 Strongly oppose
- 5 Not sure
- 1 No response

**Utilities**

**21. Please rate the quality of your utility services listed below.**

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Not Sure	Do not use this utility service	No Response
a. <u>Long distance</u> telephone company	19%	46%	19%	6%	1%	7%	1%
b. <u>Local</u> telephone company	17%	45%	22%	11%	1%	2%	2%
c. Electric company	31%	49%	13%	2%	1%	1%	4%
d. Gas company	24%	42%	13%	4%	1%	12%	3%
e. Cable television company	13%	28%	22%	15%	1%	20%	2%

**22. Currently, the Wyoming Public Service Commission determines and sets utility rates, oversees utility services to ensure reliable and high quality services, and monitors the earnings of most utilities doing business within the state. Recently, consumers in Wyoming have experienced increases in gas and electric utility rates. These increases have affected some citizens more than others. How much of a priority should it be for the Wyoming Public Service Commission to ensure high quality service and affordable utility rates for all residential customers?**

- %
- 56 Top priority
- 36 High priority
- 5 Medium priority
- 1 Low priority
- 1 Not a priority
- 1 Not sure
- 1 No response

## About You

*The following questions are for classification purposes only and will be kept entirely confidential.*

### 23. Are you male or female?

<u>%</u>	
49	Male
49	Female
3	No response

### 24. What is your age as of your last birthday? Mean = 65.9 years

<u>%</u>	
33	50-59
41	60-74
22	75+
4	No response

### 25. What is your current marital status?

<u>%</u>	
63	Now married
20	Widowed
12	Divorced
1	Separated
2	Never married
3	No response

### 26. What is the highest level of education that you completed?

<u>%</u>	
8	Less than high school
24	High school graduate or equivalent
39	Some college or technical training beyond high school
12	College graduate (4 years)
15	Post-graduate or professional degree
3	No response

### 27. Which of the following best describes your current employment status?

<u>%</u>	
31	Employed or self-employed <u>full-time</u>
10	Employed or self-employed <u>part-time</u>
51	Retired and not working
4	Other such as homemaker
1	Unemployed and looking for work
3	No response

**28. Do you have access to a personal computer at home, at work, or some other place?**

%  
61 Yes →  
34 No  
5 No response

**28a. If YES: Do you have access to the Internet or the ability to use online services such as America Online (AOL)?**  
(n = 573 respondents who have access to a computer)

84% Yes    12% No    2% Don't know    3% No response

**29. Are you Hispanic, Spanish, or Latino?**

%  
3 Yes  
91 No  
1 Don't know  
5 No response

**30. What is your race?**

%  
94 White or Caucasian  
\* Black or African American  
\* Asian  
2 Native American or Alaskan Native  
0 Hawaiian or Pacific Islander  
4 No response

**31. What is your 5-digit zip code? WRITE IN YOUR ZIP CODE** \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

**32. What was your annual household income before taxes in 2001?**

%  
7 Less than \$10,000  
17 \$10,000 to \$19,999  
18 \$20,000 to \$29,999  
14 \$30,000 to \$39,999  
10 \$40,000 to \$49,999  
16 \$50,000 to \$74,999  
10 \$75,000 or more  
9 No response

**Thank you** for completing this survey. Please use the postage-paid envelope and return it to State Member Research, AARP, 601 E Street, NW, Washington, DC 20049, by **August 23, 2002.**