

*The*  
NATIONAL  
CENTER *on*  
WOMEN  
& AGING



# National Center on Women & Aging's 2002 National Poll Women 50+

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*Initial findings, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2002*

*1,001 midlife and older women share their  
views*



## 2002 National Poll Women 50+: A Benchmark

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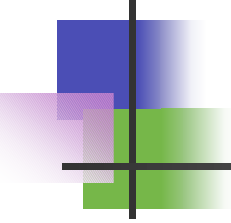
- This study was designed specifically for midlife and older women to voice their opinions on personal and public matters. It serves as a benchmark for future research.



## Study Design

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- 1,001 women
- Age 50 and older
- 20-30 minute telephone interview
- Cooperation rates were very high (98% among those qualified)
- Overview



## Sample Demographics

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- 31% in their 50s
- 33% in their 60s
- 28% in their 70s
- 9% 80+
- Mean = 66
- 57% married
- 24% widowed
- 15% divorced/separated
- 4% never married
- A majority Caucasian (83%), 10% African-American, 2% Latina, 1% Asian-American, 4% not specified
- 45% High School graduate or less, 55% Some college or more

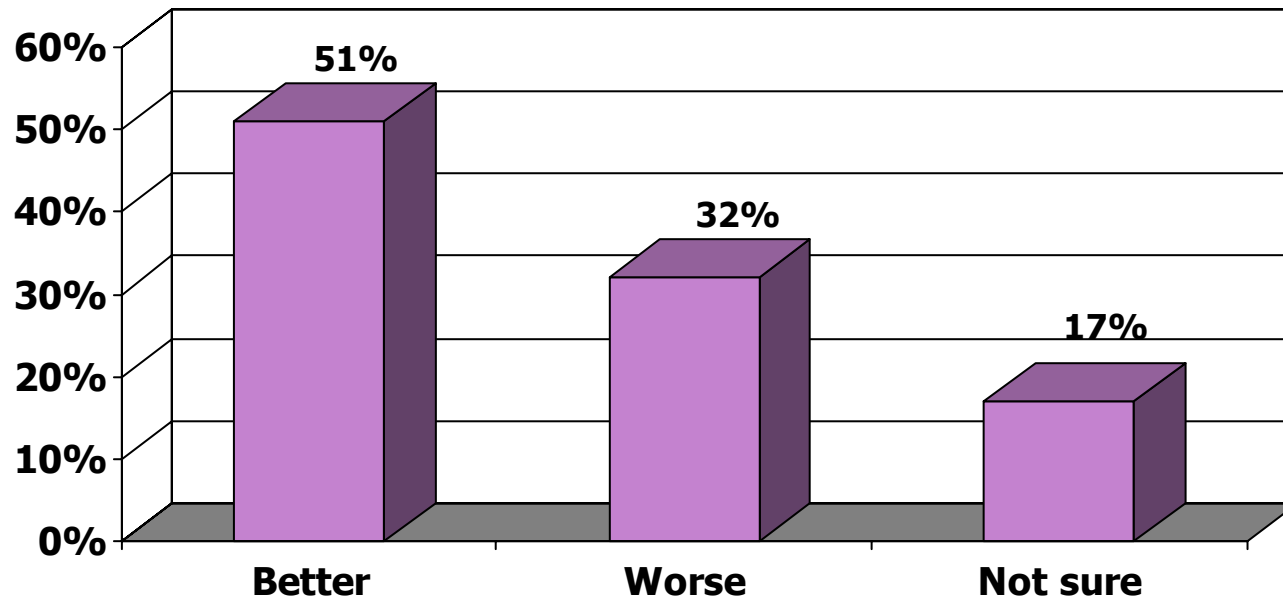


# Some Surprises

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## Experience with Aging

*...Is getting older better/worse than you expected?*





# Pleasures

Coded verbatim responses

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- Enjoy the most:
  - Friends and family, 29%
  - Hobbies, 28%
  - Travel, vacations, 14%
  - Exercise, sports, 9%



# Worries, Concerns

Coded verbatim responses

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- Main concerns, worries:
  - Own health, 29%
  - Personal finances, 19%
  - Well being of family, children, grandchildren, 15%
  - Nothing, do not worry, 10%



# Who says aging is better?

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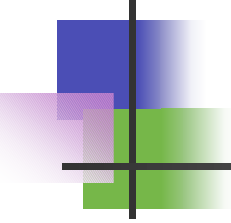
- Married
- More educated
- Working
- Healthy
- Are saving money



## Who says it is worse?

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- Less educated
- Low income
- Have health limitations

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- Age is not what differentiates women
  - Instead, finances and health are major influences on experiences and attitudes

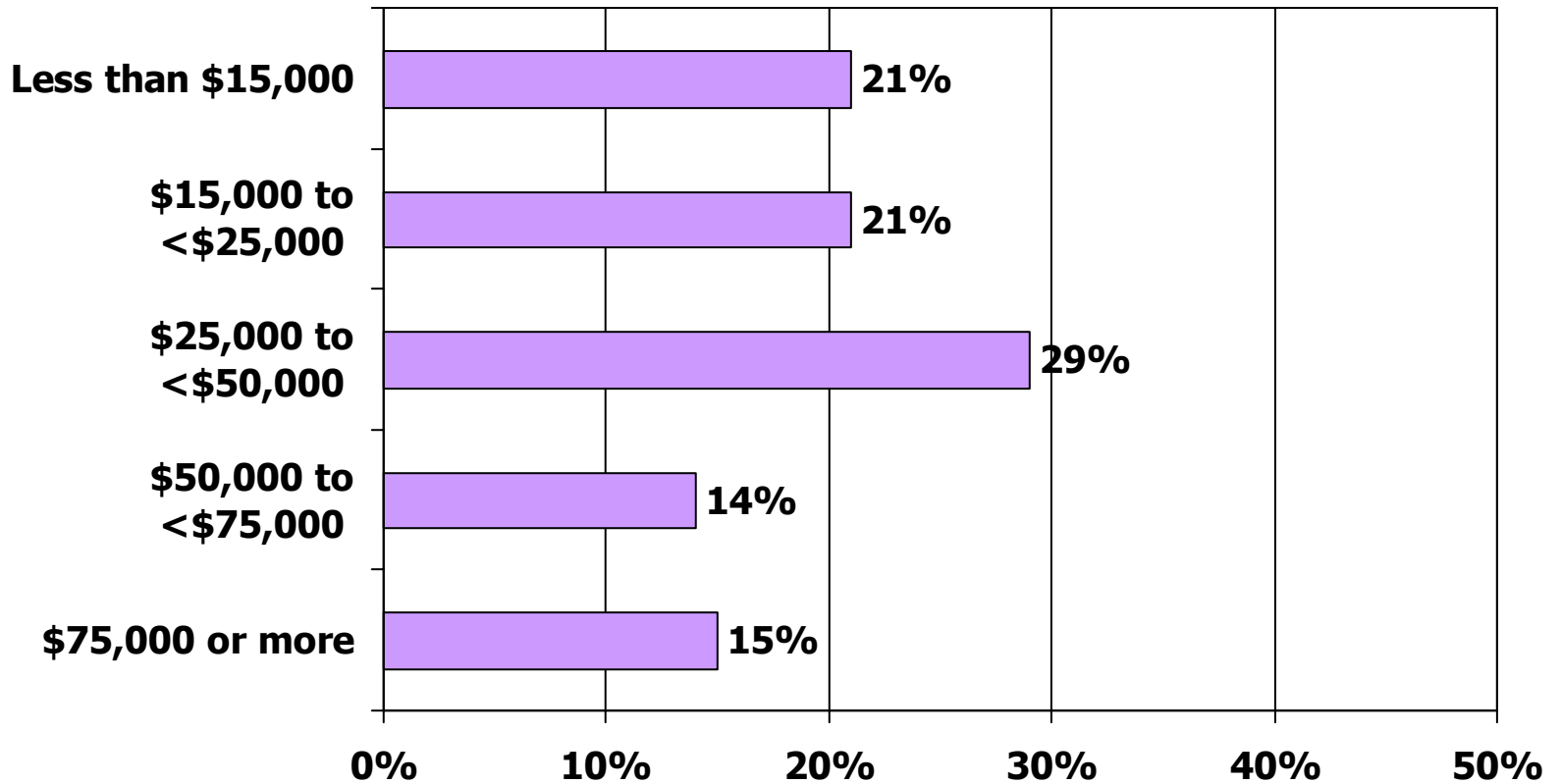


## Personal Finances

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1. Income levels
2. Difficulty affording necessities
3. Saving behavior
4. Where they will stand in next several years
5. Advice to share

## Income Levels of Sample



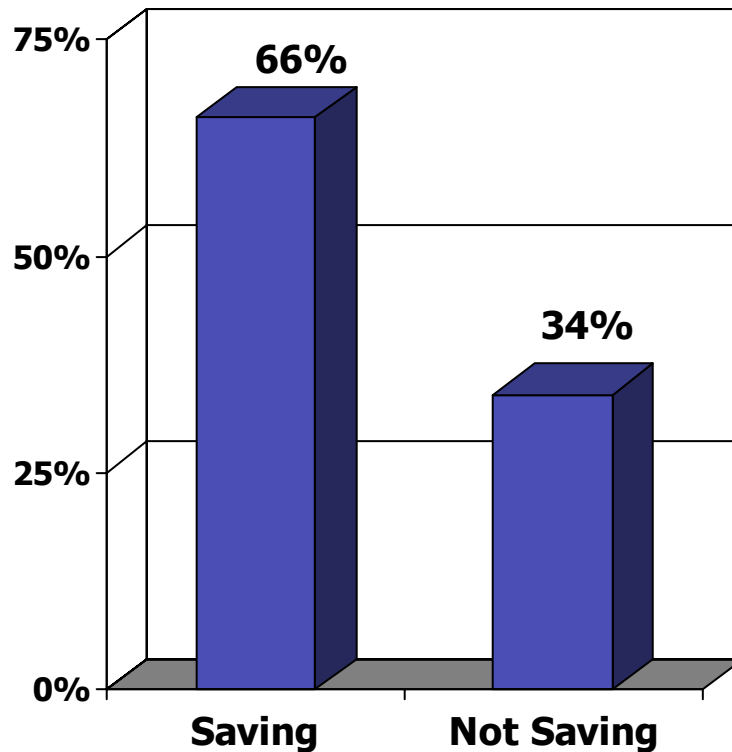


## Difficulty Paying for Necessities

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	<i><b>% w/difficulty</b></i>
Prescriptions	30%
Health insurance	27%
Health care	24%
Home maintenance	20%
Energy (heating, fuel, electric)	19%
Property taxes	19%

# Are Midlife and Older Women Saving Money?



Of those saving...

- 32% saving for retirement
- 29% say they are saving for general needs/ nothing specific
- 16% saving for emergencies



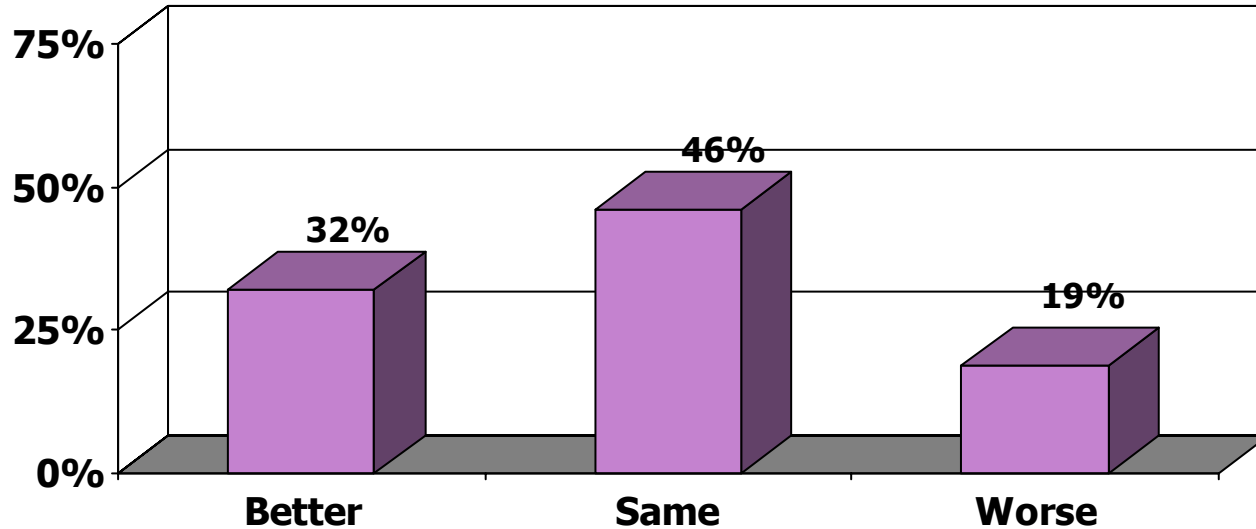
## Why Saving is Difficult

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	<u><i>% Agree</i></u>
<b>It is too hard to know how to invest the money I save.</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>I have enough saved for my future needs.</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>I don't have enough income to cover my expenses and have nothing left to save.</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>No retirement plan is offered at my work.</b>	<b>19%</b>

## Expectations for Financial Future

*...do you think your financial situation 5-10 years in the future will be better, the same, or worse than it is now?*





# Why Future Finances will be Better/Worse

Coded verbatim responses

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- Why finances will be BETTER:
  - Reduced needs, simple living, 16%
  - Economy will improve, 14%
  - Pensions, other income expected, 12%
  
- Why finances will be WORSE:
  - Cost of living increases while income is fixed, 20%
  - Drug, health care costs, 7%
  - Economic downturns, 6%



## Lessons Learned about Money Management

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- Watch your spending
- Start early, save
- Avoid credit cards
- Create a budget and stick to it

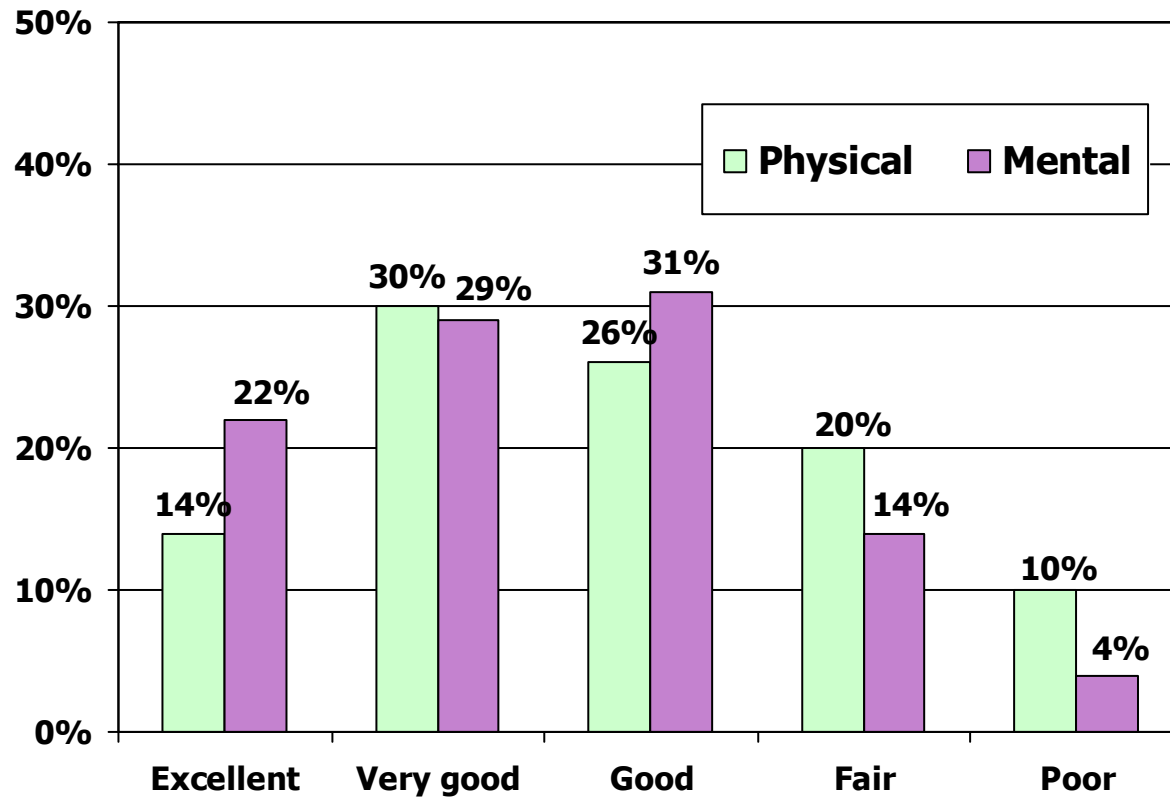


# Health

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1. Health status and limitations
2. Potential need for caregiver

# Health Status





## These women are staying active

Coded verbatim responses

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### *How do you stay active?*

- Walking or other exercise, 59%
- Social interaction, 21%
- Work, 20%
- Many volunteer



# Health Limitations

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**% of those w/limitation  
(N=318, 32%)**

<b>Exercising</b>	<b>77%</b>
<b>Doing housework</b>	<b>66%</b>
<b>Working</b>	<b>61%</b>
<b>Shopping</b>	<b>47%</b>
<b>Driving</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Personal care</b>	<b>13%</b>



## Availability of a Caregiver

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- Most often, a husband was cited as potential caregiver ~ 41%
  - A daughter also was listed frequently ~ 33%
  - Sons were identified less often ~ 22%
  - Other relatives or friends also available
- One-quarter (25%) had not talked with their husband
  - 19% had not talked with their daughter
  - One-third (33%) had not talked with their son

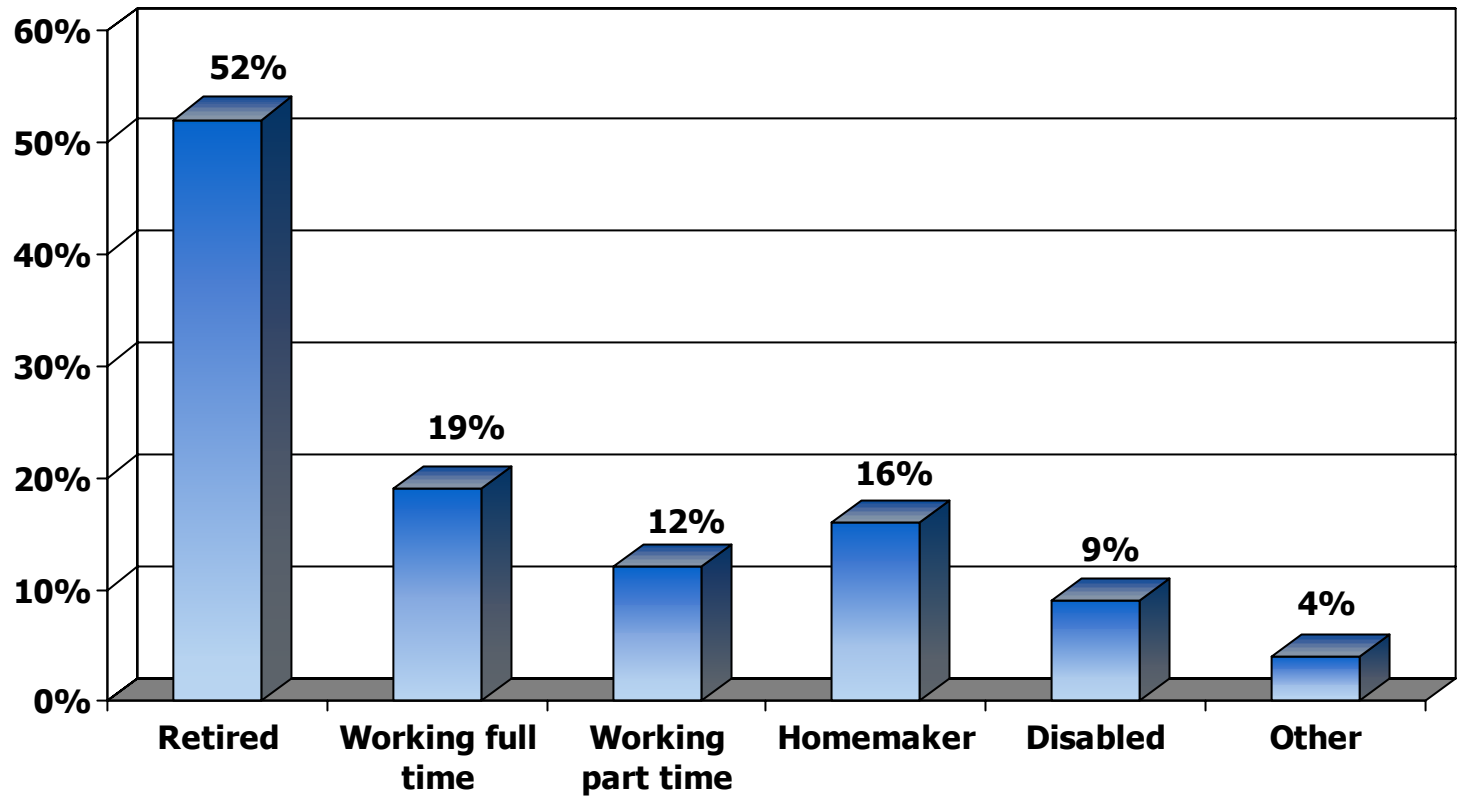


# Employment

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1. Current work status
2. Expectations for retirement
3. Perceived difficulties finding work

## Current Work Status





## Plans/Attitudes Toward Future Work

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Some plan never to retire:

- Most women 70+ who are still working
- 1/4 of those 50-69

40% say it is likely they will need to return to work

If returning to work is required:

- 30%, no chance they could find suitable employment
- 17%, low likelihood
- 25%, very confident about finding a good job



## Why Returning to Work Would be Easy/Difficult

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- Finding a post-retirement job seen as difficult:
  - too old
  - health limitations
  - age discrimination
  
- Finding a post-retirement job seen as easy:
  - have skills, experience
  - opportunities in field usually available



# Attitudes toward Policy Issues

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# 10 Public Policy Issues of Importance to Older Women

	<b>% Extremely Important</b> (5 on 5-point scale)
<b>1. Making prescription drugs more affordable</b>	<b>84%</b>
<b>2. Curing cancer</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>3. Eliminating poverty among older women</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>4. Improving availability/ affordability of child and elder care</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>5. Cleaning our air and water, or natural resources</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>6. Supporting public education</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>7. Reducing age discrimination in employment</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>8. Increasing older women's access to good jobs</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>9. Developing more affordable housing options</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>10. Expanding job training</b>	<b>49</b>



# Listening to Older Women

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## One of three questions:

Older women in this country do not have enough\_\_\_\_\_.

The greatest contribution that older women make to this country is\_\_\_\_\_.

The one thing that would most improve the lives of older women in this country is\_\_\_\_\_.



The greatest contribution that older women make to this country is\_\_\_\_\_.

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“Determination to make things better than what they were, which they learn through experience and sharing experience with younger women.” 62, NJ, married

“Our experience in management of the home, our job, and childcare.” 69, PA, divorced

“Still being active and giving something back to your family, church and community.” 72, PA, divorced



## 4 Key Lessons Offered

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1. Stay as active as you can, not just physically, but mentally and socially.
2. Be a saver. Savers are found in all income brackets, at all ages.
3. Live within your means.
4. Keep the connections to family, friends, and community alive and strong.



## Study Implications

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- Financial well-being
- Health and well-being



# Study Implications

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- Financial well-being:
  - Pensions
  - Jobs
  - Money management



## Study Implications

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- Health and well-being:
  - Good health care
  - Affordable health insurance
  - Out-of-pocket costs

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