

Empty Nesterdom: Attitudes and Behaviors of Current and Soon-To-Be Empty Nesters

October 2016

<https://doi.org/10.26419/res.00165.001>

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September 2016

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About Life Reimagined

Life Reimagined was launched by AARP in 2014 as a personal guidance system to help people navigate transitions, pursue their goals, dreams and purpose in life. Through groundbreaking online programs and tools, and powerful live experiences, today Life Reimagined helps people discover new possibilities in life. Begin reimagining at www.lifereimagined.org.

About AARP

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, with a membership of nearly 38 million that helps people turn their goals and dreams into 'Real Possibilities' by changing the way America defines aging. With staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP works to strengthen communities and promote the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare security, financial security and personal fulfillment. AARP also advocates for individuals in the marketplace by selecting products and services of high quality and value to carry the AARP name. As a trusted source for news and information, AARP produces the world's largest circulation magazine, AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to political campaigns or candidates. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org or follow @aarp and our CEO @JoAnn_Jenkins on Twitter.

Executive Summary

To uncover perceptions, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors of empty nesters, Life Reimagined commissioned a survey. This report presents findings about current empty nesters (whose last child moved out within the last 5 years) and soon-to-be empty nesters (whose last child will move out within the next two years) who are at least 40 years old and have a child who is at least 17 years old.

The following are key findings from the survey:

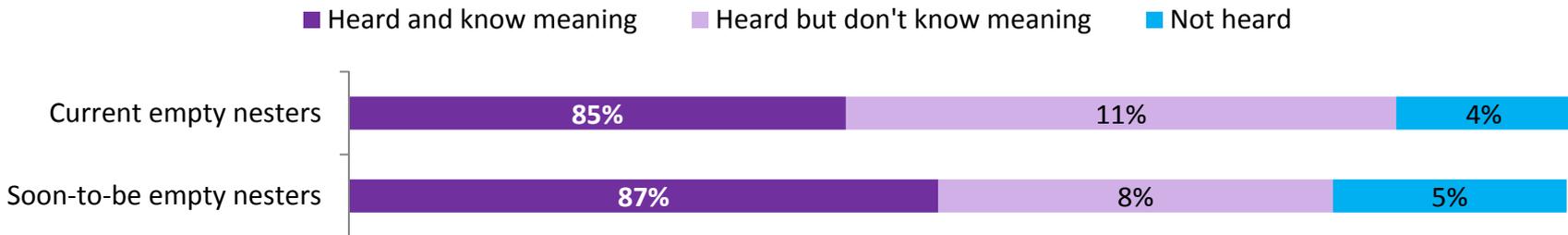
- The term “Empty Nester” is widely understood and disliked by few.
- Soon-to-be empty nesters experience a wide range of emotions. They worry most about their children and missing their children, but it gets easier over time.
- Adjusting to life as an empty nester does not take as long as anticipated.
- Not only do they quickly become comfortable, but empty nesters are also satisfied with their experience.
- Empty nesters do not do as many things as they anticipate.

The online survey was fielded by Morar Consulting, under the direction of mBooth, from August 12-21, 2016. Survey data was weighted using estimated population incidence levels for each segment and sub-segment obtained through the recruitment/screening process. The segments are current empty nesters (whose last child moved out within the last 5 years), soon-to-be empty nesters (whose last child will move out within the next two years), and boomerang/former empty nesters (who was previously an empty-nester but at least one child has now moved back in).

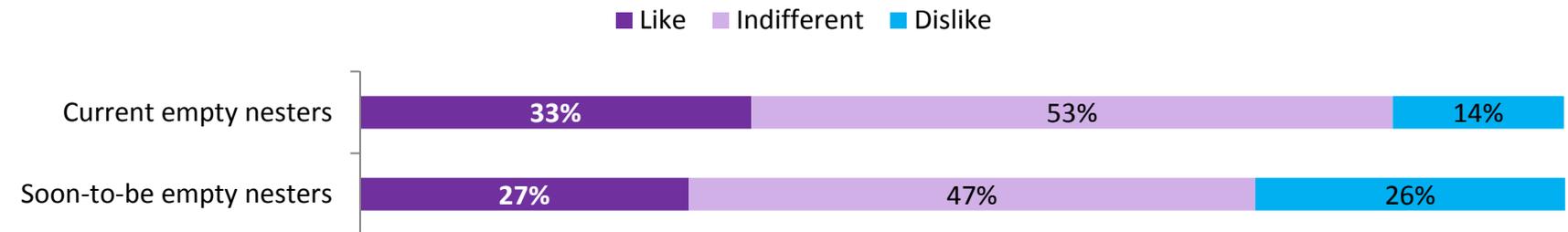
The term “Empty Nester” is widely understood.

- High proportions of current empty nesters (85%) and soon-to-be empty nesters (87%) say they have heard the term “empty nester” and know what it means.
- Roughly half are indifferent about the term (53% of current empty nesters and 47% of soon-to-be empty nesters). While a third of current empty nesters (33%) and a quarter of soon-to-be empty nesters (27%) like it, future empty nesters are more likely than current ones to dislike the term (26% vs. 14%).

Familiarity With Term “Empty Nester”

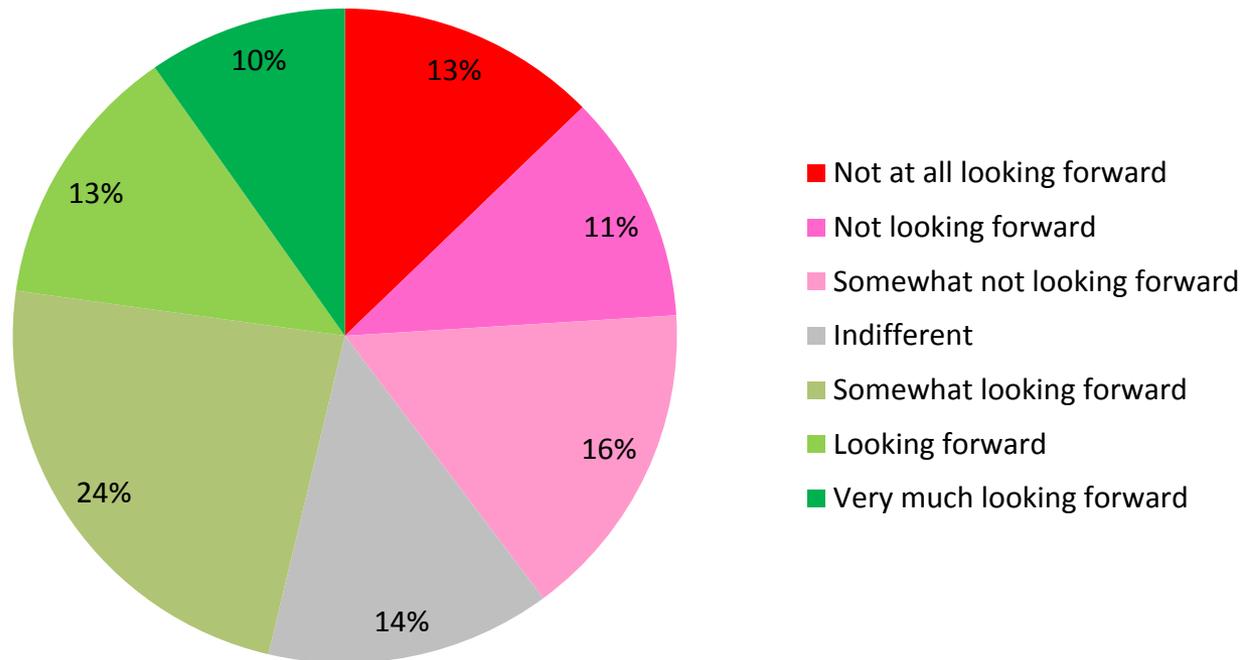


Appeal of Term “Empty Nester”



Future empty nesters are unsure about life without kids at home.

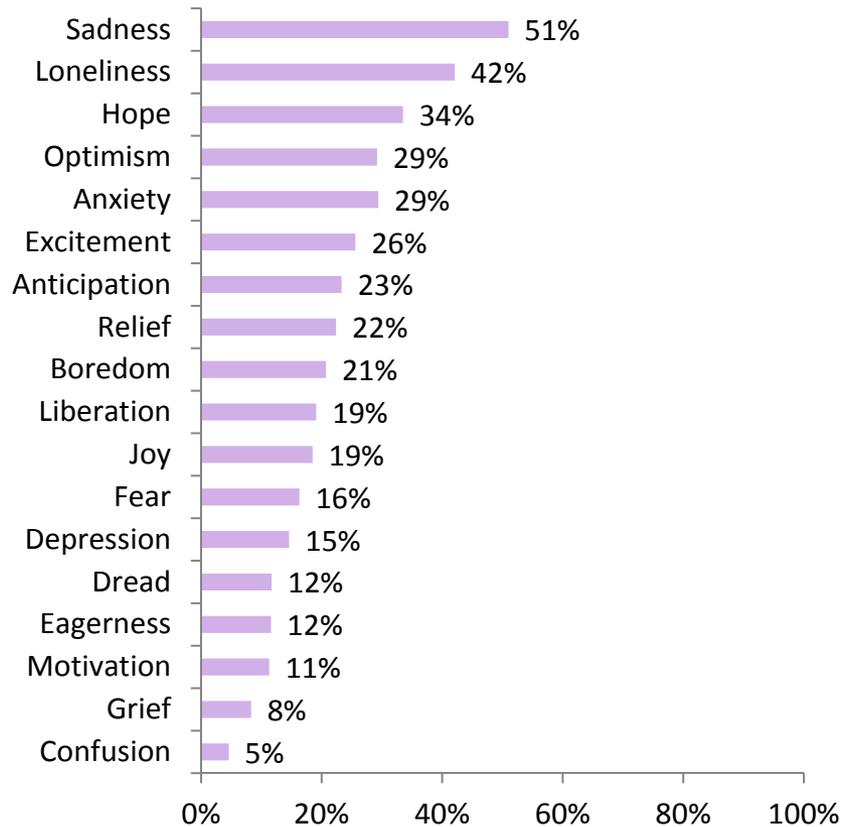
- Less than a quarter of soon-to-be empty nesters (23%) are looking forward or very much looking forward to becoming an empty nester. In fact, just over half (53%) are only somewhat looking forward to it, indifferent about it, or somewhat not looking forward to it.



Soon-to-be empty nesters experience a wide range of emotions.

Emotions

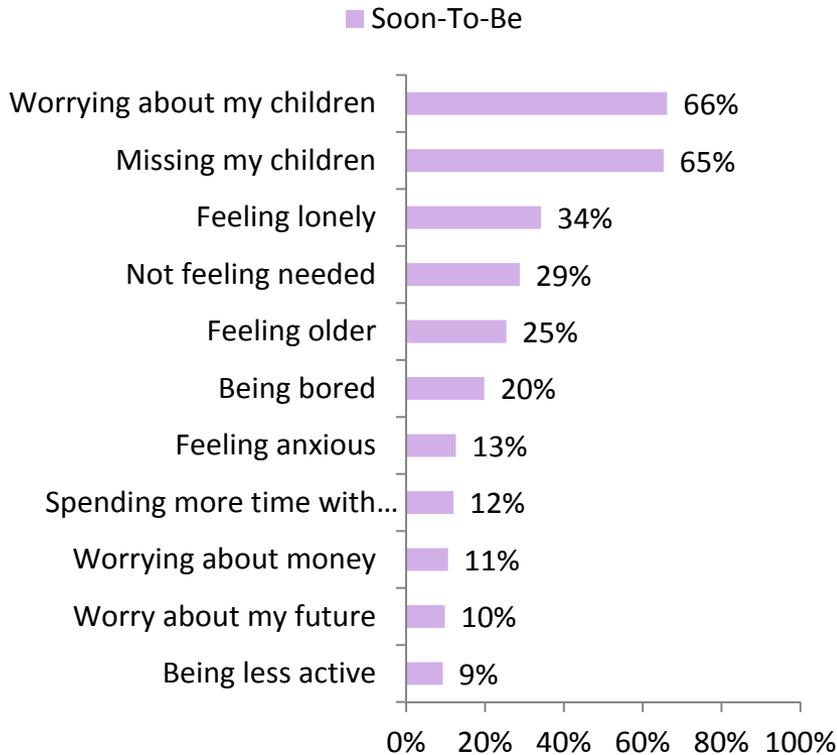
■ Soon-To-Be



- When soon-to-be empty nesters think about their last child moving out, half feel sad (51%), a plurality feel lonely (42%), and nearly a third feel anxiety (29%).
- However, soon-to-be empty nesters feel positive emotions as well, including about a third who feel hope (34%), and nearly as many who feel optimism (29%) and excitement (26%).

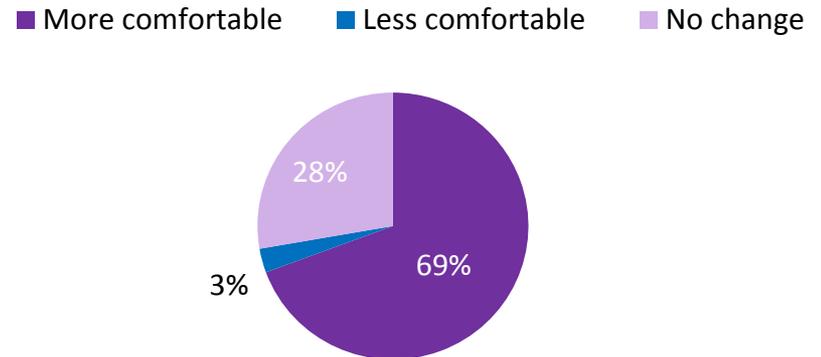
Soon-to-be empty nesters worry most about their children and missing their children, but it gets easier over time.

Worries



- When soon-to-be empty nesters think about their child moving out, most worry about their children (66%) and about missing their children (65%).
- Most current empty nesters (69%) say they have become more comfortable with being an empty-nester over time.
- Even though soon-to-be empty nesters worry, most (76%) hope their children do not move back home one day.

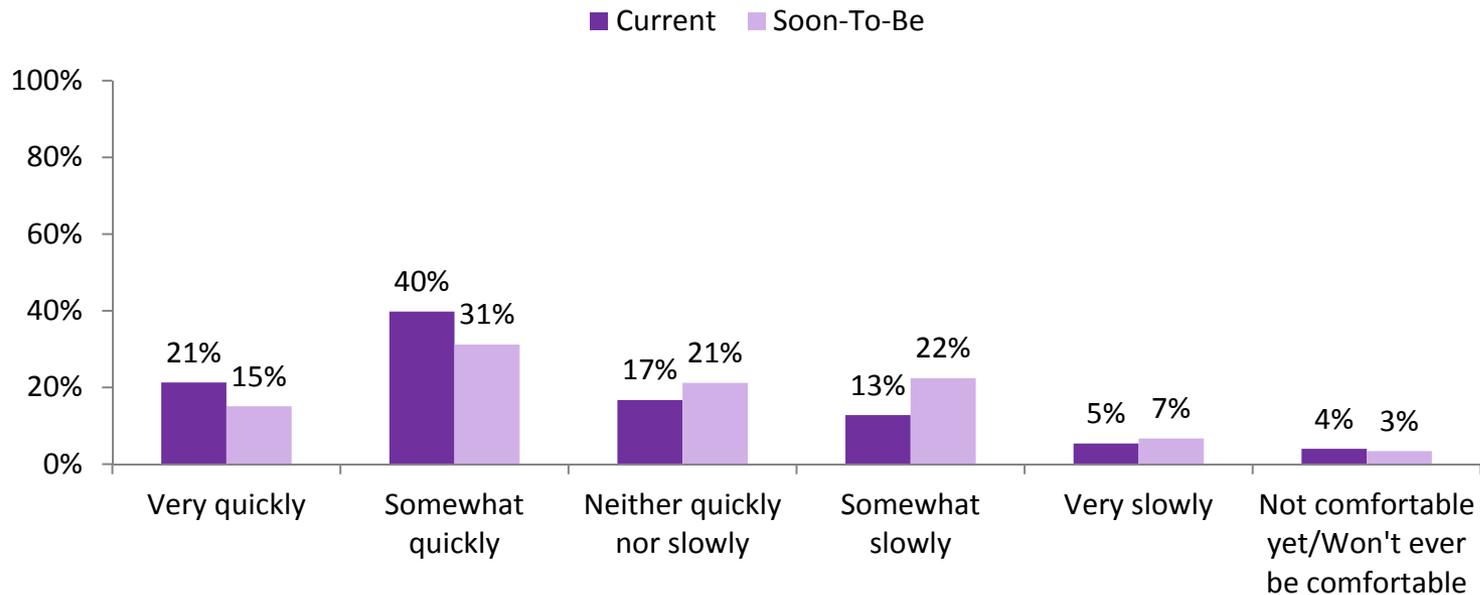
Change in Feelings Over Time About Being an Empty Nester (among current empty nesters)



Adjusting to life as an empty nester does not take as long as anticipated.

- While less than half (46%) of soon-to-be empty nesters anticipate adjusting quickly to having no children in their home, more than half (61%) of current empty nesters report adjusting quickly.
- In fact, nearly three quarters (74%) of current empty nesters say it took them six months or less to adjust – whereas only 64% of soon-to-be empty nesters anticipate becoming comfortable in this amount of time. Moreover, 16% of soon-to-be empty nesters anticipate needing more than a year to adjust, while only 9% of current empty nesters report it took them that long.

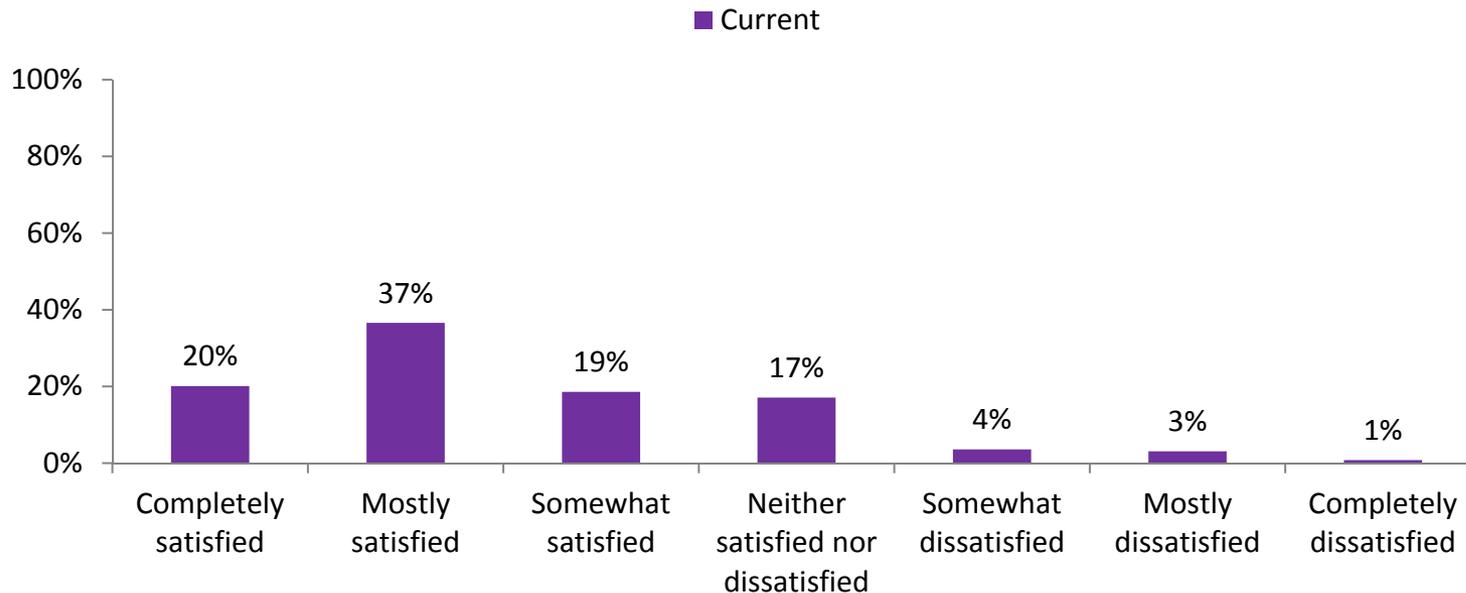
Adjustment to Being Comfortable Being an Empty-Nester



Not only do they quickly become comfortable, but empty nesters are also satisfied with their experience.

- Three quarters of empty nesters (75%) are satisfied with their experience, including over half who are mostly or completely satisfied (57%).

Level of Satisfaction with Being an Empty Nester



Empty nesters do not do as many things as they anticipate.

- Nearly half of soon-to-be empty nesters expect to travel more (48%), while just over a quarter of current empty nesters report doing so (27%). Similarly, more soon-to-be empty nesters anticipate taking up new hobbies or activities (36%) than do so (13%).

	Done by Current Empty Nesters	Expect to Do by Soon-To-Be Empty Nesters	Gap
Travel more	27%	48%	21 percentage pts
Take up a new hobby or activities	13	36	23 percentage pts
Spend more time going out and socializing with friends	16	34	18 percentage pts
Reconnect with spouse/significant other	16	32	16 percentage pts
Redecorate	16	26	10 percentage pts
Lose weight	7	25	18 percentage pts
Participate in community service or volunteer projects	6	18	12 percentage pts
Downsize homes	11	17	6 percentage pts
Make new friends	8	16	8 percentage pts
Repurpose a child's room	19	16	
Retire	19	15	
Return to school/ take classes/learn new skills	2	12	10 percentage pts
Move to a new city/town	9	11	2 percentage pts
Move homes	7	10	3 percentage pts
Make a career change	3	9	6 percentage pts
Start a new business	2	5	3 percentage pts
End a relationship with significant other	4	4	