

Fantasies and Fears: Attitudes of Adults Ages 35-Plus



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Study methodology: This random-digit-dial telephone survey of n=1,026 adults at least 35 years old was fielded by Alan Newman Research, Inc. from May 17-24, 2016. The sample, comprised of approximately 70% landline and 30% cell phones, was weighted to be representative of the U.S. population ages 35-plus. The margin of error for the full sample is +/- 3.1%.

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, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse. We advocate for individuals in the marketplace by selecting products and services of high quality and value to carry the AARP name as well as help our members obtain discounts on a wide range of products, travel, and services. A trusted source for lifestyle tips, news and educational information, AARP produces AARP The Magazine, the world's largest circulation magazine; AARP Bulletin; www.aarp.org; AARP Books; and AARP en Español, a Spanish-language website addressing the interests and needs of Hispanics. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to political campaigns or candidates. The AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. AARP has staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Learn more at www.aarp.org.

Executive Summary

For adults who are at least 35 years old, managing transitions in life can be both challenging and inspiring. While these adults have obligations and worries, they also have hopes and dreams. This report presents findings from a survey of adults ages 35-plus that was designed to explore their fantasies and fears. The following are key findings from the report.

Fantasies:

- A third find spending time with friends or family gets them most excited about the day (33%).
- If money was not a factor, most would volunteer or donate to a cause (69%) and travel the world (58%).
- Among those who are working full time and want to retire some day, most would like to travel (85%), pursue a passions (76%), and volunteer (69%) in retirement.
- Half who are working would do a different kind of job if they could (49%). The most popular types of ideal jobs for those who would switch are doing something that helps or teaches others (30%) and doing something creative or artistic (25%).

Fears:

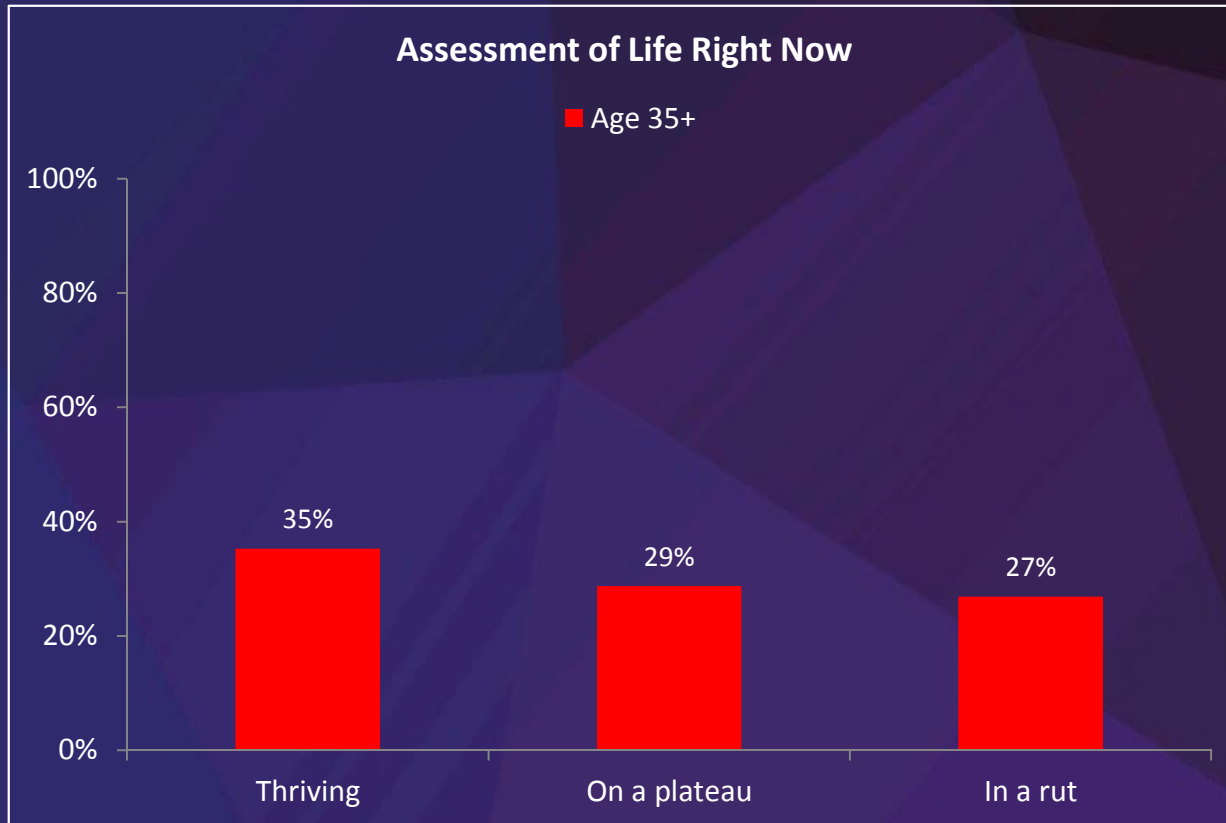
- Half are kept up at night by financial concerns (49%) and nearly as many by concerns about physical health challenges (42%). About a fifth worry about relationship issues (22%) and have worries about work (20%).
- A third feel their health will be the most important challenge they face in the next five years (34%). This is higher than the proportion who feel their most important challenge will be related to their children (13%), their work (10%), (re)discovering their purpose (9%), their home (9%), or their romantic relationships (8%).
- Over half dread having health problems (62%), losing someone they love (59%), and having less money (55%) in the next five to ten years.

Managing Transitions:

- When faced with a difficult situation, nearly 4 in 10 are most likely to make a plan (38%) while roughly a quarter are most likely to connect with others (26%). Fewer are most likely to withdraw from others (16%) or indulge themselves (8%).
- Major barriers to navigating transitions in life include having enough money (49%) and feeling overwhelmed (31%). About a fifth also cite not knowing where to begin (23%), finding helpful resources (21%), not having support from family and/or friends (21%), and not wanting to think about it (20%).

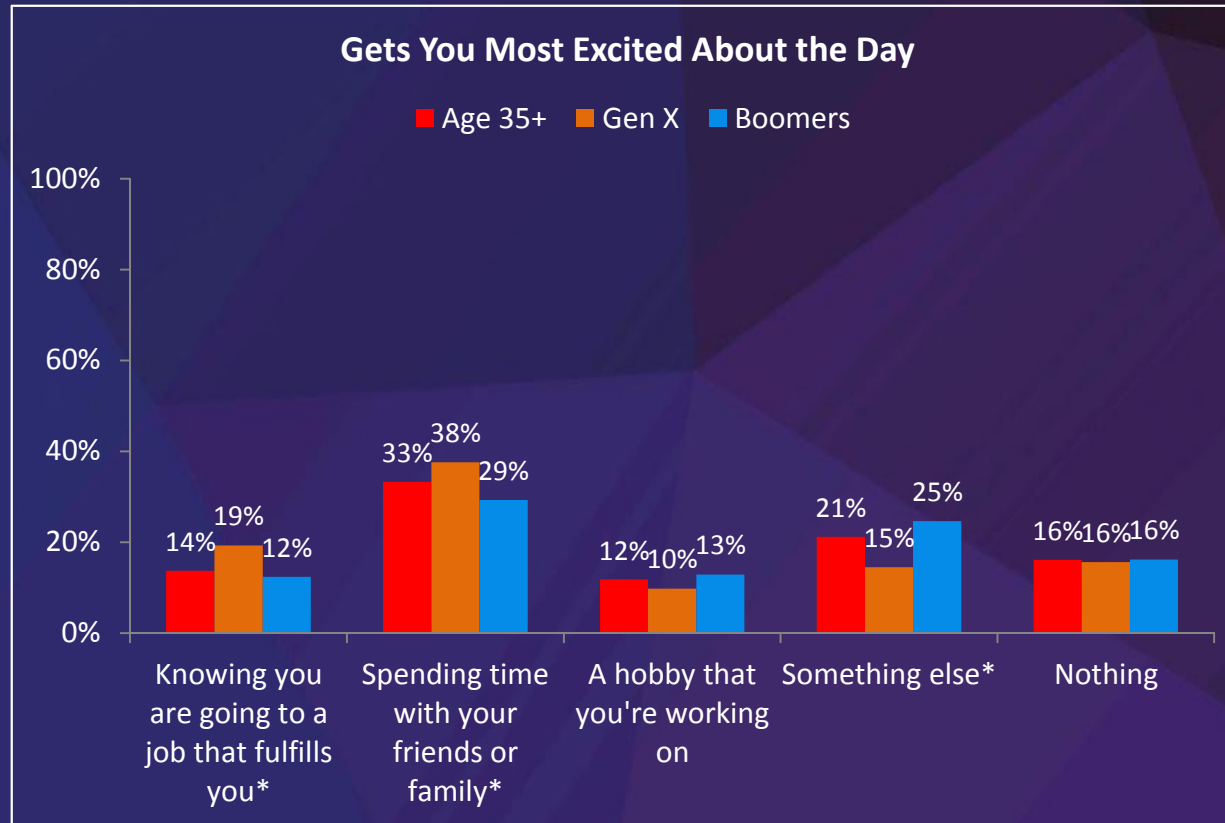
This random-digit-dial telephone survey of n=1,026 adults at least 35 years old was fielded by Alan Newman Research, Inc. from May 17-24, 2016. The sample, comprised of approximately 70% landline and 30% cell phones, was weighted to be representative of the U.S. population ages 35-plus. The margin of error for the full sample is +/- 3.1%.

Only a third (35%) of adults ages 35-plus would describe their life as thriving. The remainder are split between describing their life as being on a plateau (29%) and in a rut (27%).



Q: If you were to evaluate this point in your life, would you say you are...

A third of adults (33%) ages 35-plus feel spending time with their friends or family gets them most excited about their day. Gen Xers are more likely than Boomers to get excited by this as well as by knowing they are going to a job that fulfills them.

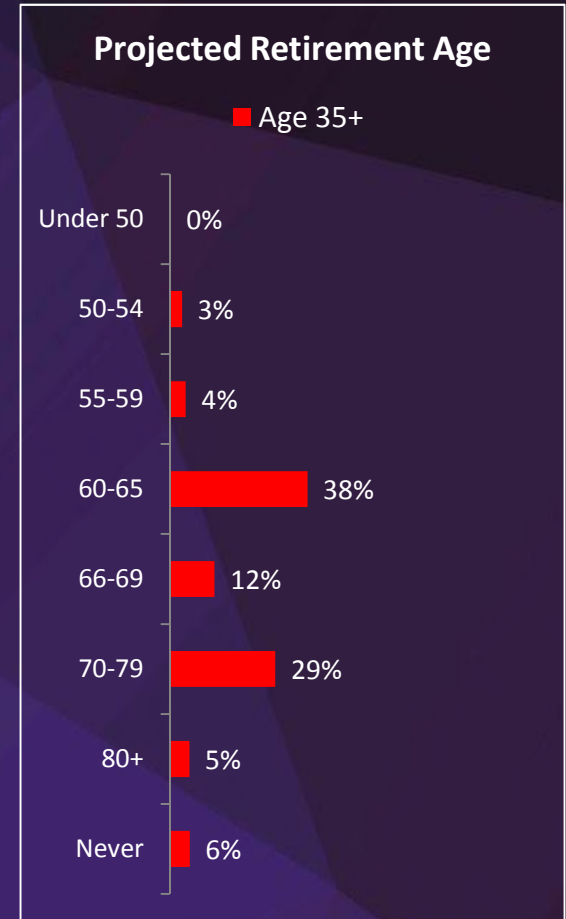
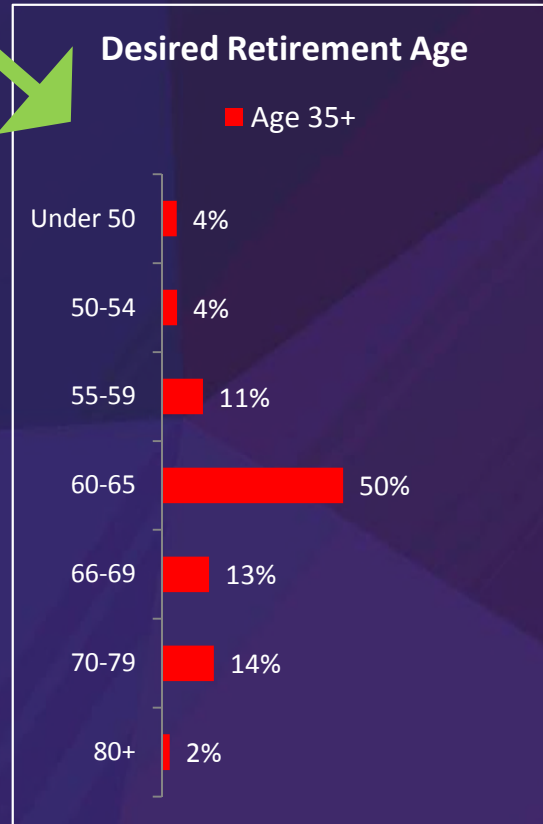
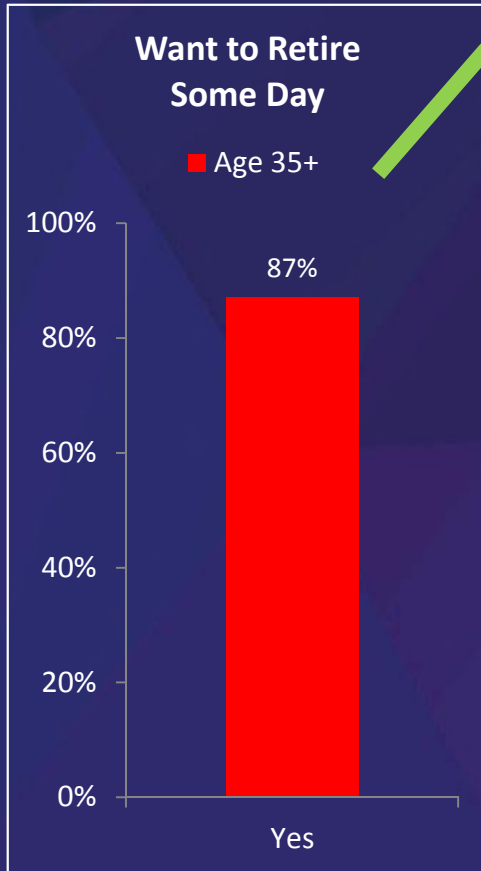


Men (18%) are more likely than women (9%) to get excited by “knowing they are going to a job that fulfills them.”

Q: When you get up in the morning, what gets you most excited about the day?

*Statistically significant difference between Gen X and Boomers at 95% confidence level

Most (87%) adults ages 35-plus who are working full time want to retire some day. However, there is a gap between the age they would like to retire and the age they think they will be able to retire.



Q: [BASE=Working full time, unweighted N=370] When you think about the future, do you want to retire some day?

Q: [BASE=Working full time and want to retire some day, unweighted N=320] At what age do you want to retire?

Q: [BASE=Working full time and want to retire some day, unweighted N=320] At what age do you think you will actually be able to retire?

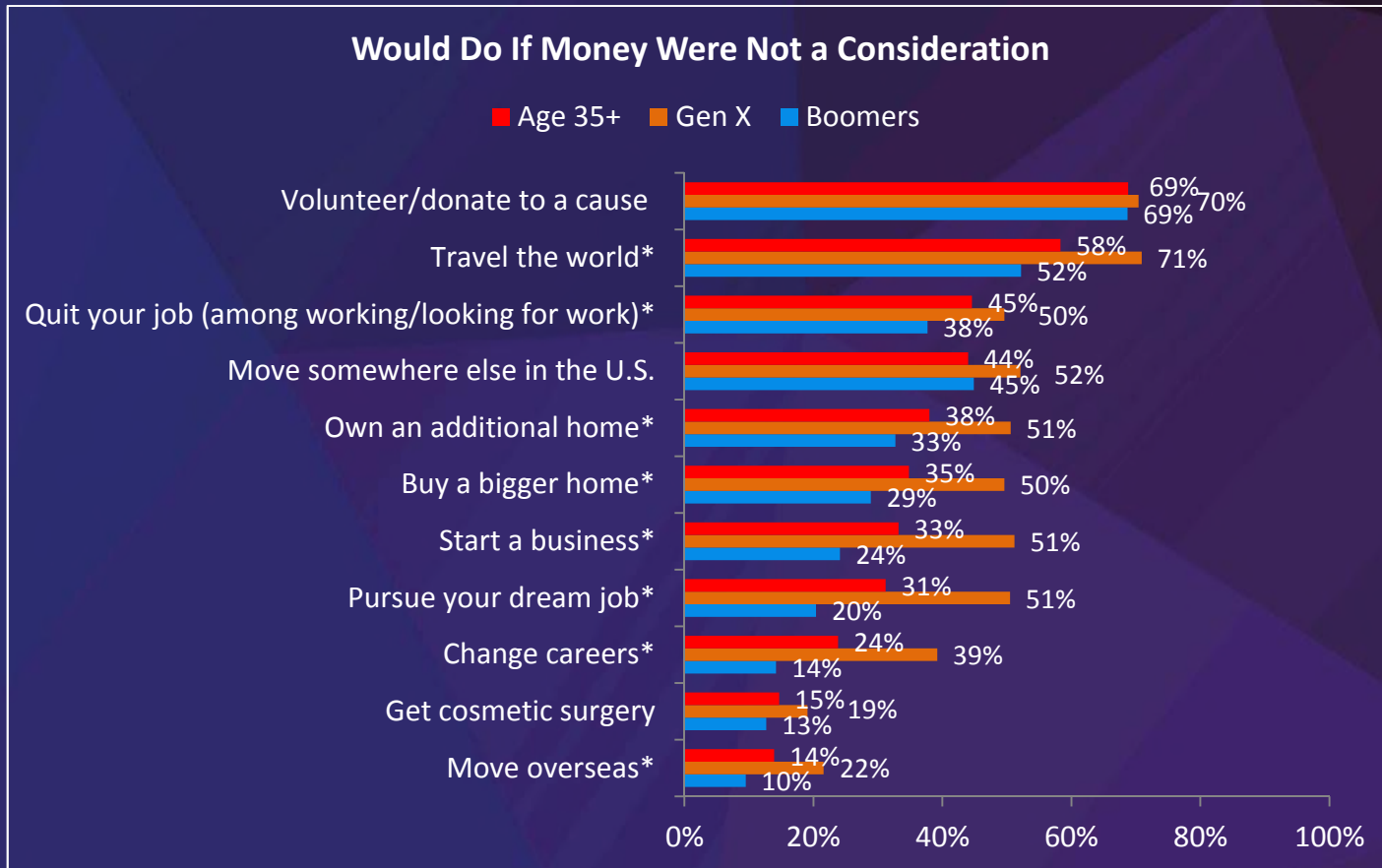
Most adults ages 35-plus who are working full time and want to retire some day would like to travel (85%), pursue a passion (76%), and volunteer (69%) in retirement.



Among adults ages 35-plus who are working full time and want to retire some day, Gen Xers (32%) are more likely than Boomers (16%) to want to start their own business.

Q: [BASE=Working full time and want to retire some day, unweighted N=320] Please tell me which of the following things you want to do if you retire.

If money was not a consideration, most adults ages 35-plus would volunteer or donate to a cause (69%) and travel the world (58%). Nearly half (45%) of those in the workforce would quit their job and a plurality would move elsewhere in the U.S. (44%). There are several differences between what Gen Xers and Boomers would do if money were not a factor.

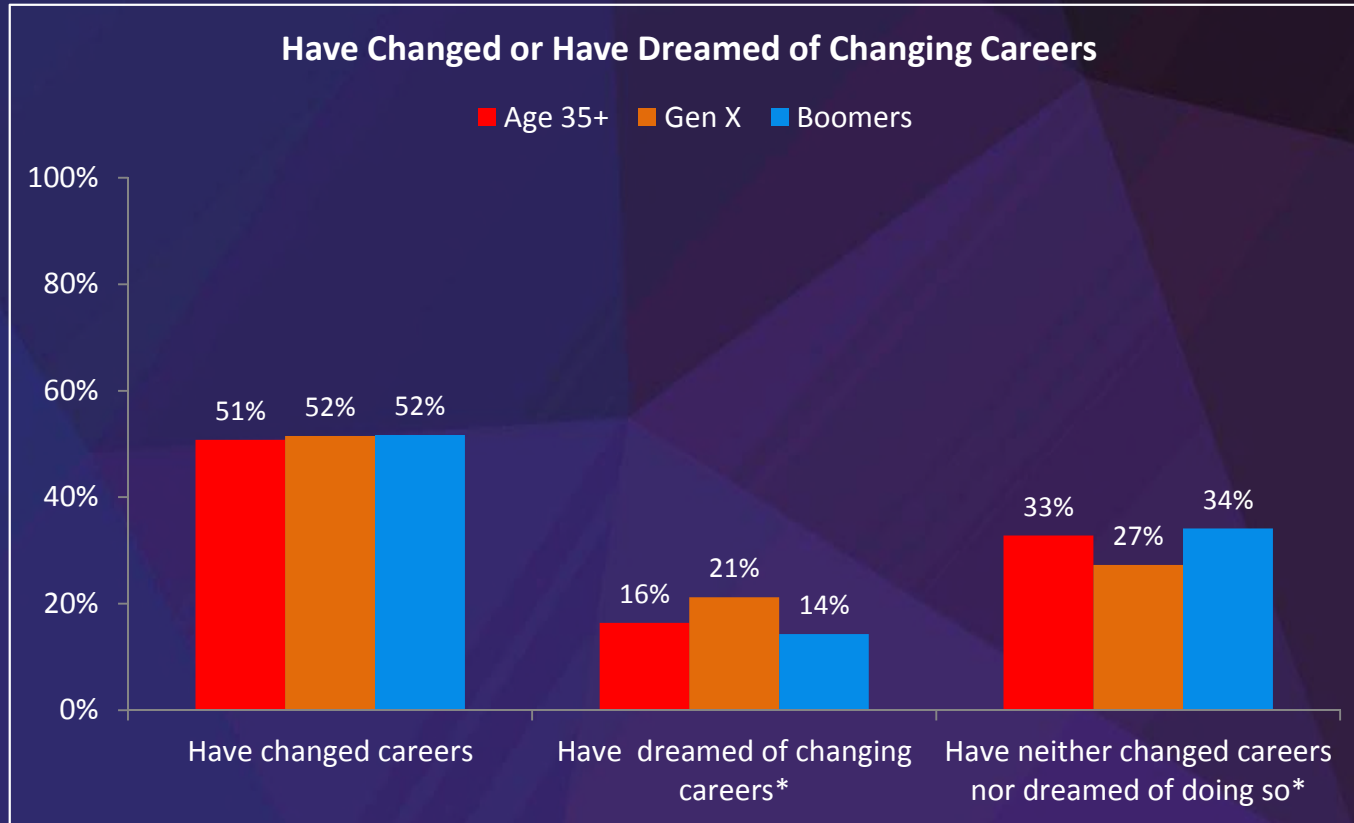


Women (23%) are more likely than men (6%) to say they would get cosmetic surgery.

Q: If money was not a consideration, which of the following would you do?

*Statistically significant difference between Gen X and Boomers at 95% confidence level

Two thirds (67%) of adults ages 35-plus have either changed careers or dreamed of doing so. Gen Xers (21%) are more likely than Boomers (14%) to have dreamed of changing careers.

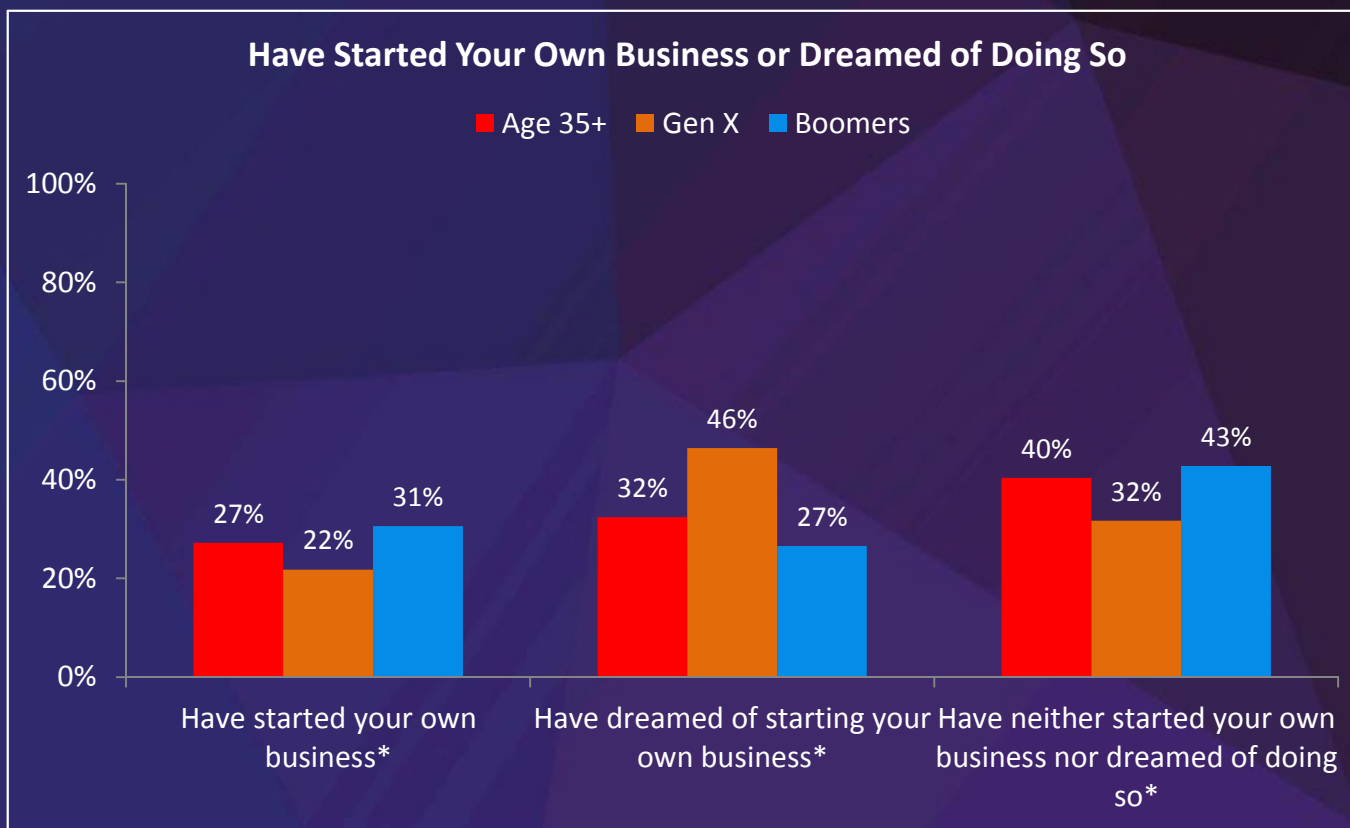


Q: Have you ever changed your career? By career, we mean the type of work that you do (rather than the company or place you work for).

Q: [BASE=Have not changed careers/DK/Refused, unweighted N=503] Have you ever dreamed of changing your career?

*Statistically significant difference between Gen X and Boomers at 95% confidence level

Over half (59%) of adults ages 35-plus have either started their own business or dreamed of doing so. Boomers (31%) are more likely than Gen Xers (22%) to have started their own business, while Gen Xers (46%) are more likely than Boomers (27%) to have dreamed of doing do.

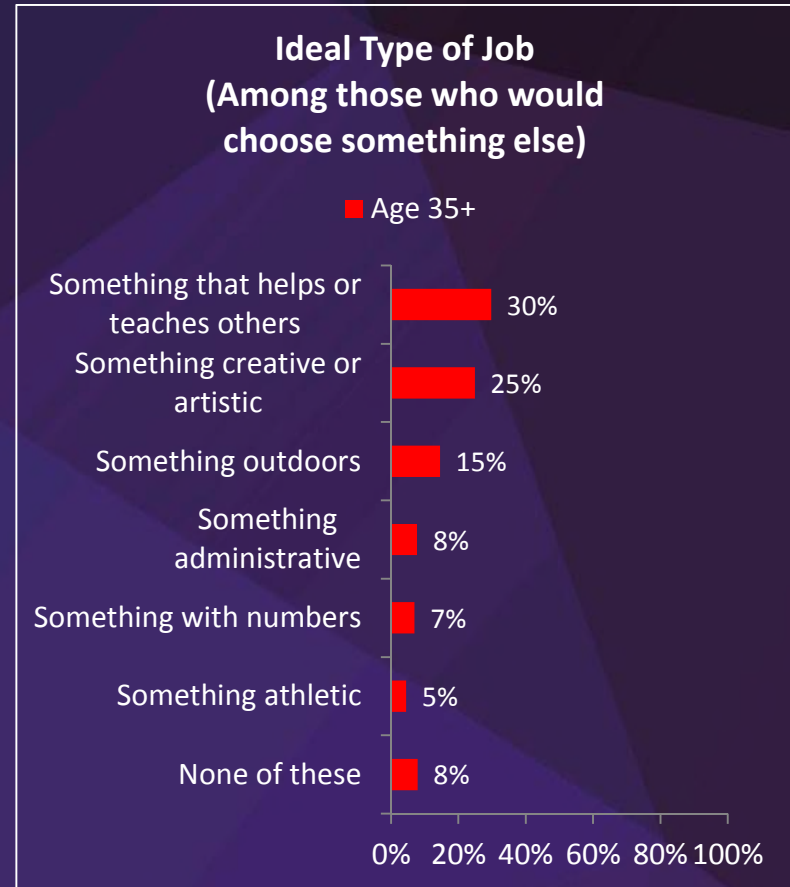
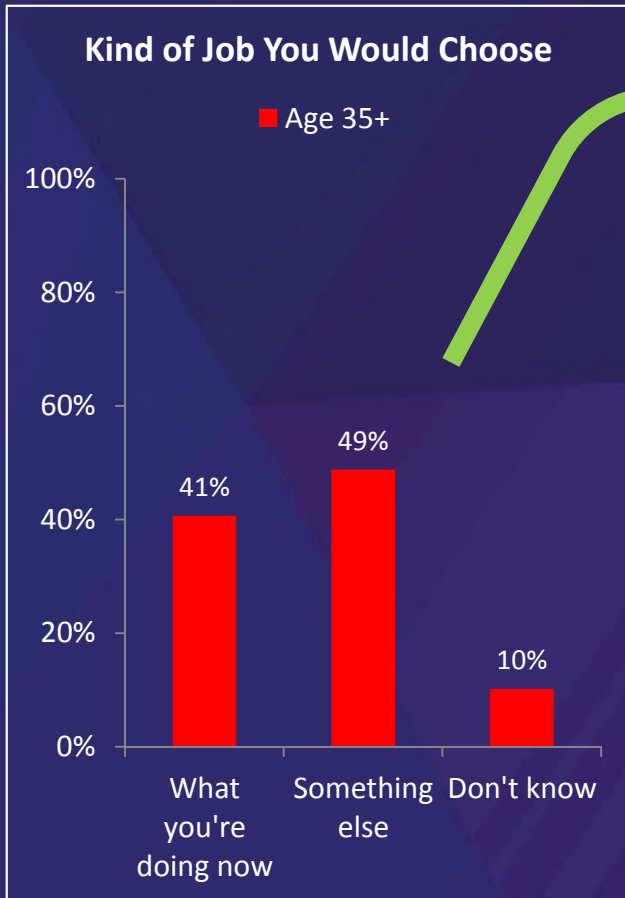


Q: Have you ever started your own business?

Q: [BASE=Have not started your own business/DK/Refused, unweighted N=742] Have you ever dreamed of starting your own business?

*Statistically significant difference between Gen X and Boomers at 95% confidence level

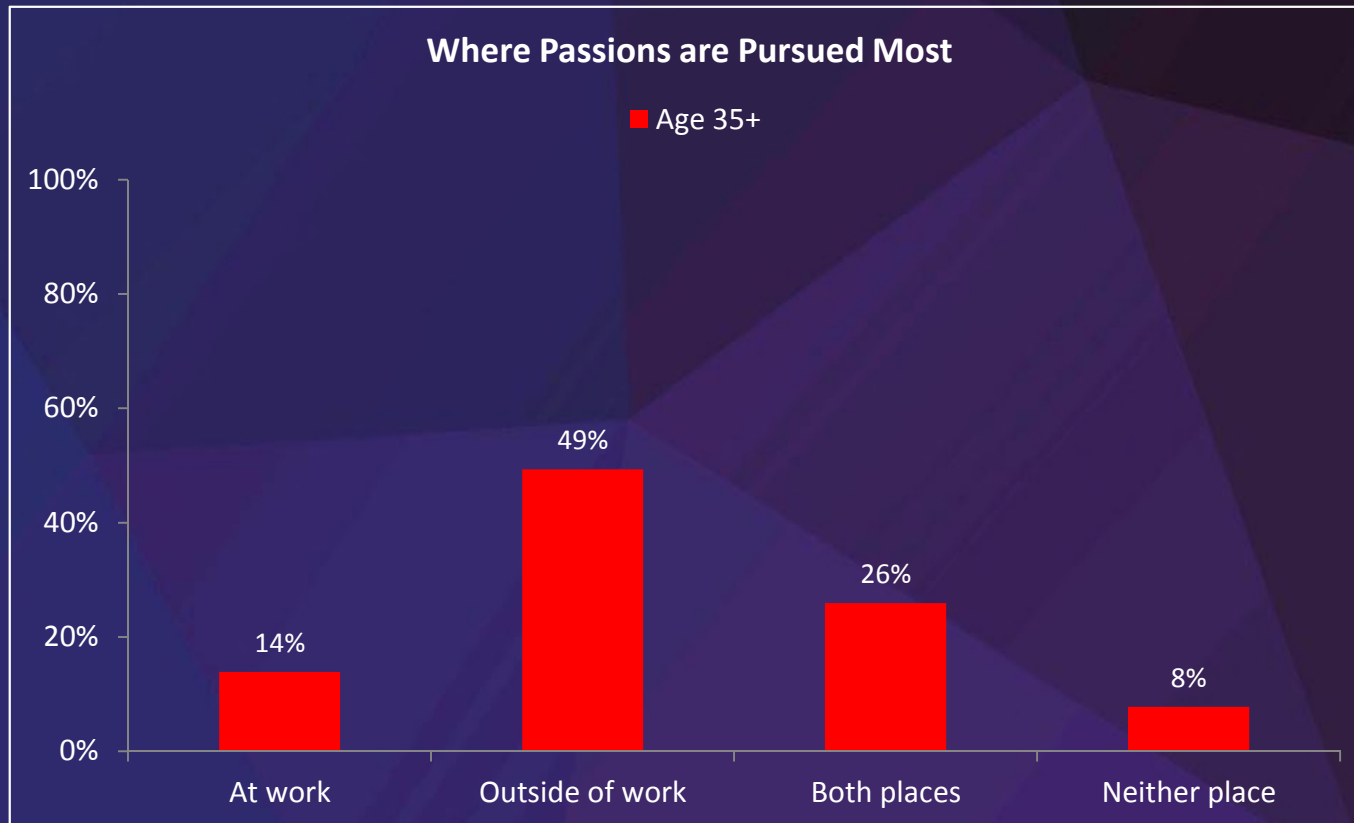
Half (49%) of working adults ages 35-plus would do a different kind of job than they are doing now if they could. The most popular types of ideal jobs for those who would switch are doing something that helps or teaches others (30%) and doing something creative or artistic (25%).



Q: [BASE=Working full time or part time, unweighted N=487] If you could do any kind of job, would you do what you're doing now or do something else?

Q: [BASE=Working full time or part time and would choose to do a different kind of job than doing now, N=236] Which, if any, of the following would be the ideal type of job for you?

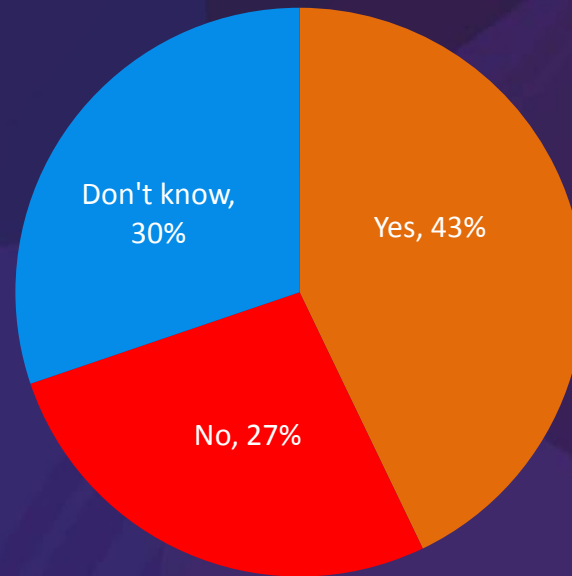
Half (49%) of adults ages 35-plus who are in the workforce pursue their passions more outside of work than at work. A quarter (26%) pursue their passions in both places, while few (14%) pursue their passions at work alone.



Q: [BASE=Working full time, part time, or looking for work, unweighted N=570] When you think about your passions, do you feel like you pursue your passions more at work or outside of work?

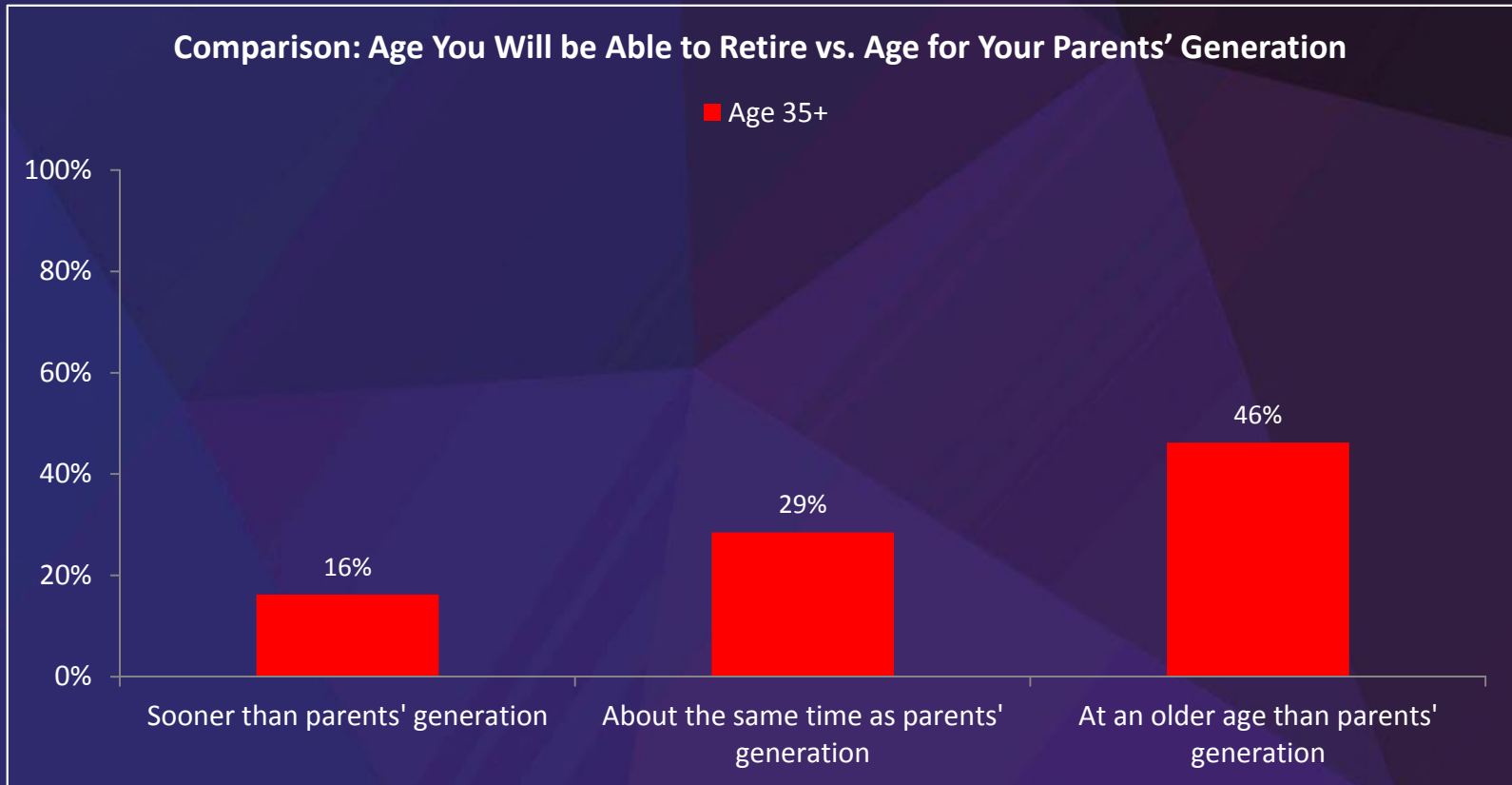
Most adults ages 35-plus believe either that their mid-life phase will be longer than generations before them (43%) or they don't know if it will be longer (30%).

Think Your "Mid-life" Phase of Life Will Be Longer Than Generations Before You



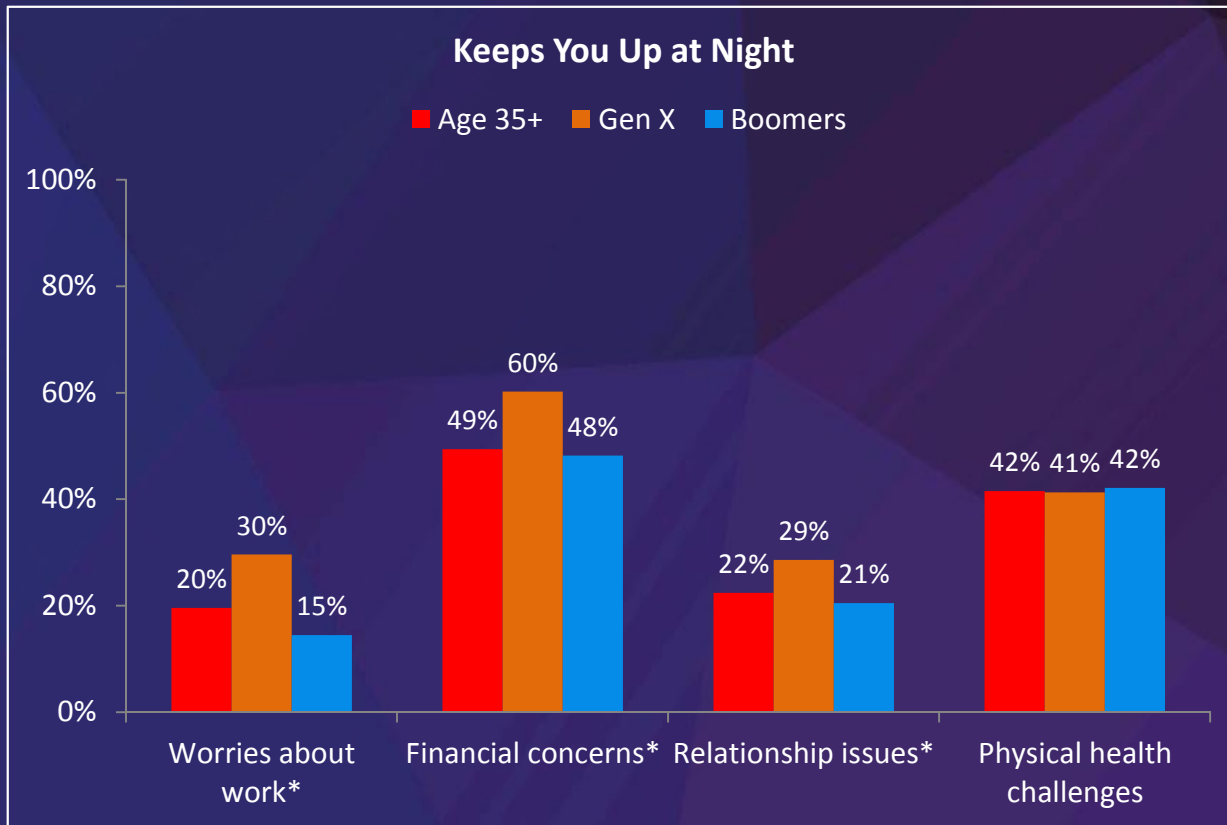
Q: Do you think your "mid-life" phase of life will be longer than the generations before you?

Few (16%) adults ages 35-plus who are working full time believe they will be able to retire at a younger age than their parents' generation. Nearly half (46%) say they will be older than their parents' generation when they retire.



Q: [BASE=Working full time, unweighted N=370] Compared with the typical age that your parents' generation retired (which was about 65 years old), do you think you will be able to retire sooner than your parents' generation, around the same time as your parents' generation, or at an older age than your parents' generation?

Financial concerns keep half (49%) of adults ages 35-plus up at night. Other worries include physical challenges (42%), relationship issues (22%), and worries about work (20%). Gen Xers are more likely than Boomers to worry about finances, relationship issues, and work.

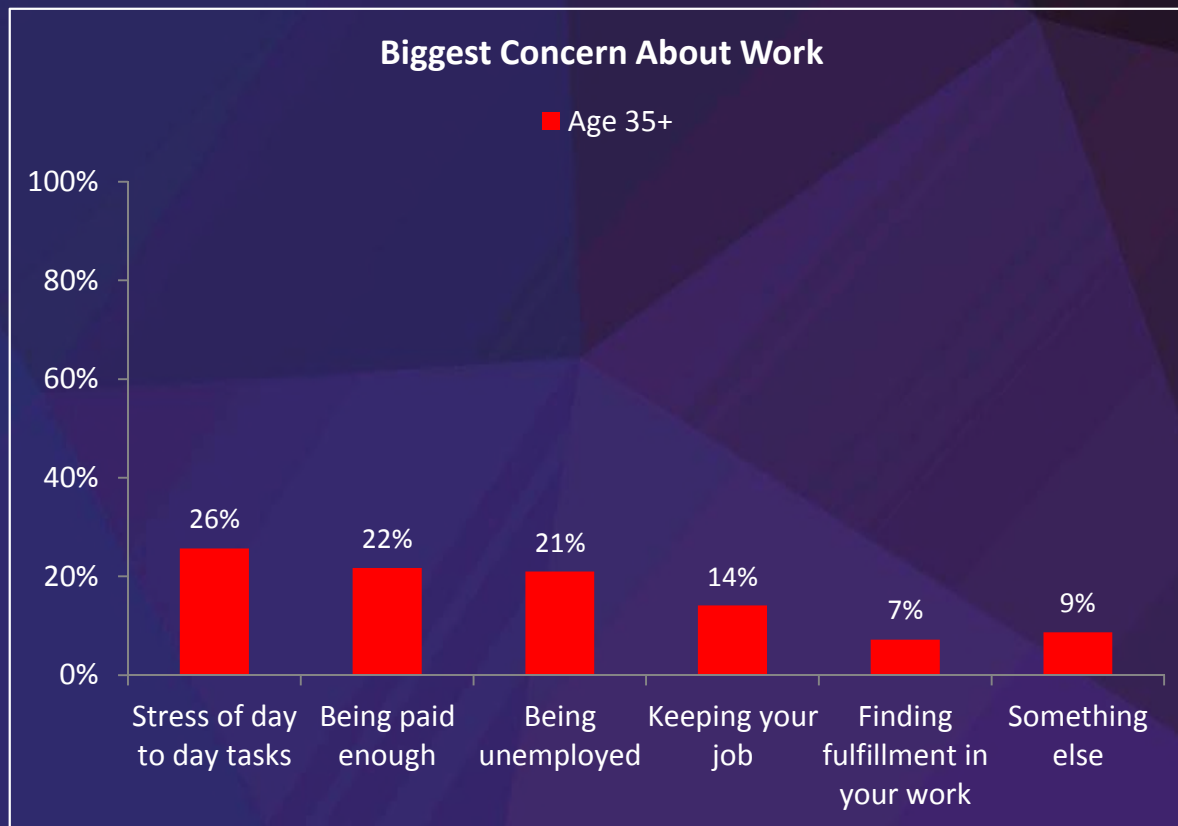


Women are more likely than men to be kept up at night by financial concerns (55% vs. 43%), relationship issues (27% vs. 18%), and physical health challenges (48% vs. 35%).

Q: When you think of all the things going on in your life, do any of the following things keep you up at night?

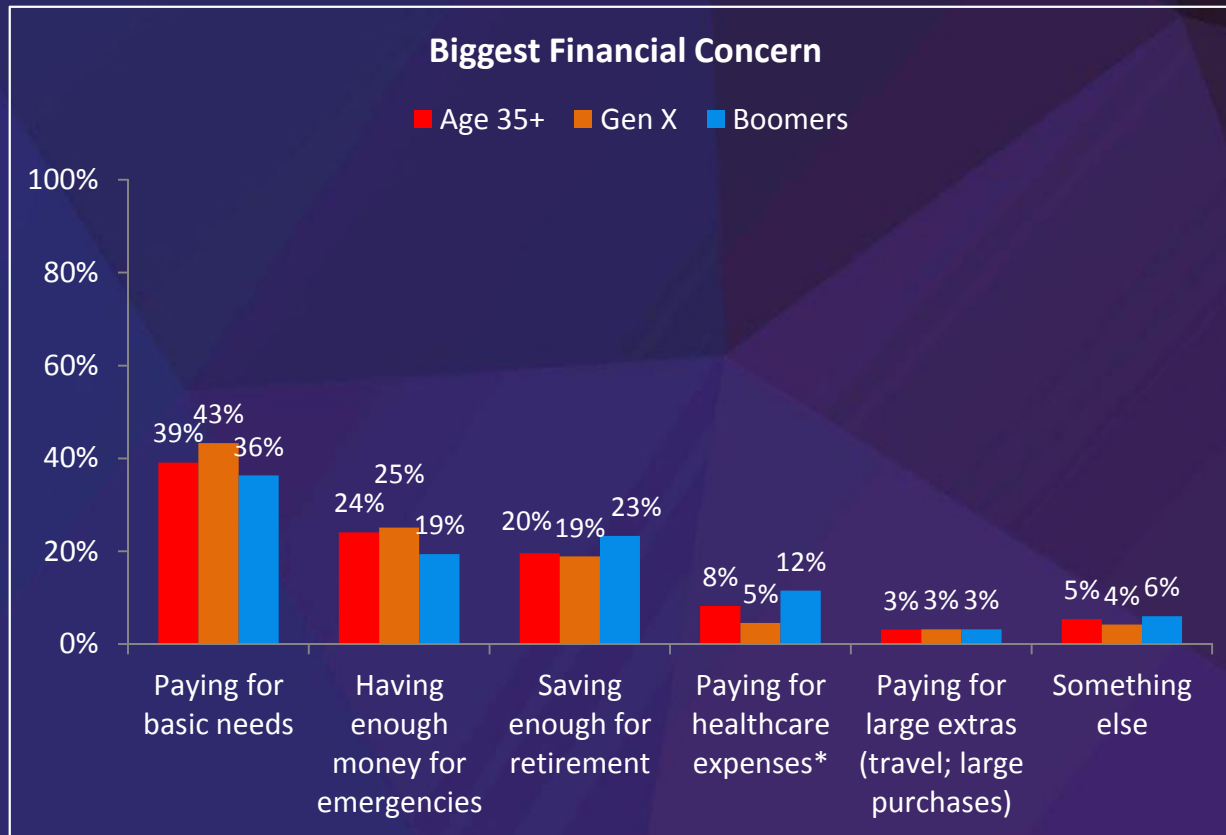
*Statistically significant difference between Gen X and Boomers at 95% confidence level

For adults ages 35-plus who are kept up at night worrying about work, the primary concern is divided between the stress of day to day tasks (26%), being paid enough (22%), and being unemployed (21%).



Q: [BASE=Worries at work keep you up at night, unweighted N=198] When it comes to work, what are you most concerned about?

For adults ages 35-plus who are kept up at night worrying about finances, the biggest concern is paying for basic needs (39%). Boomers (12%) are more likely than Gen Xers (5%) to cite paying for healthcare expenses as their primary financial concern.

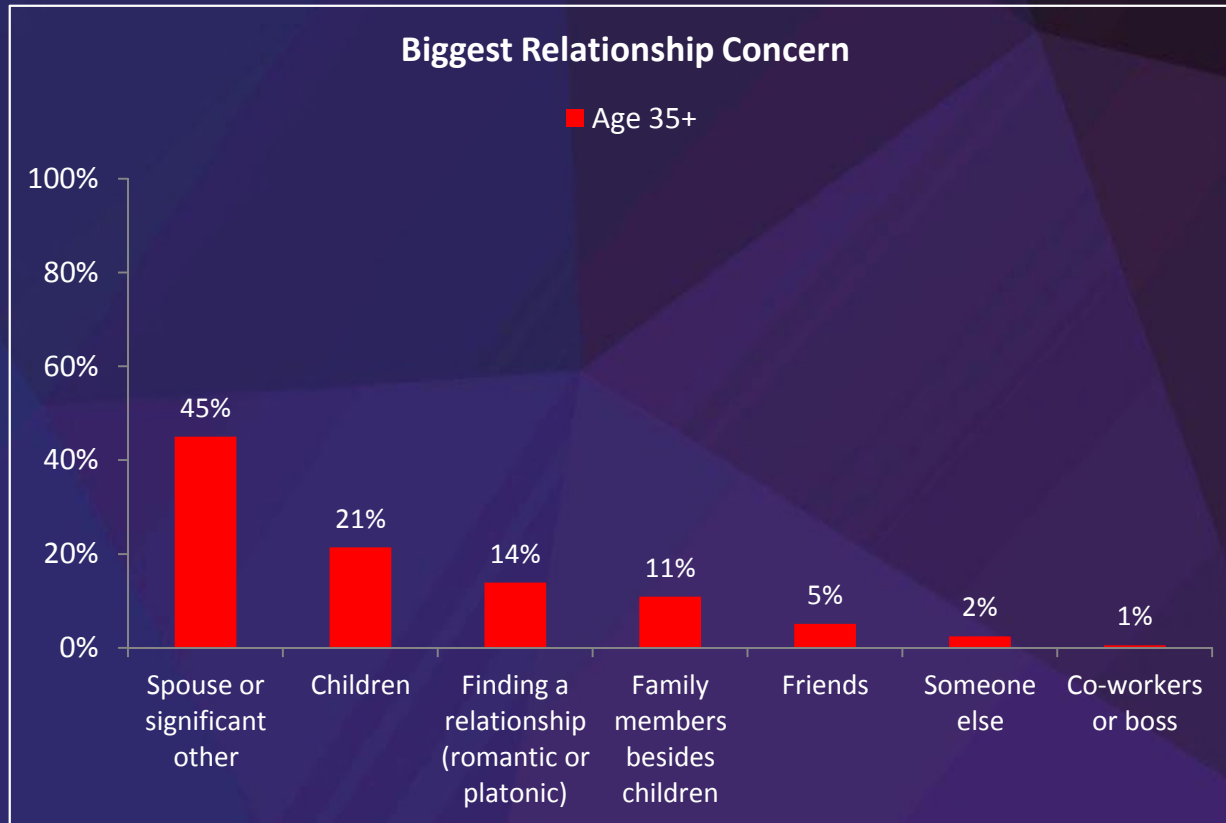


Among those who are kept up at night worrying about finances, women (44%) are more likely than men (32%) to cite paying for basic needs as their primary financial concern.

Q: [BASE=Financial concerns keep you up at night, unweighted N=519] When it comes to finances, what are you most concerned about?

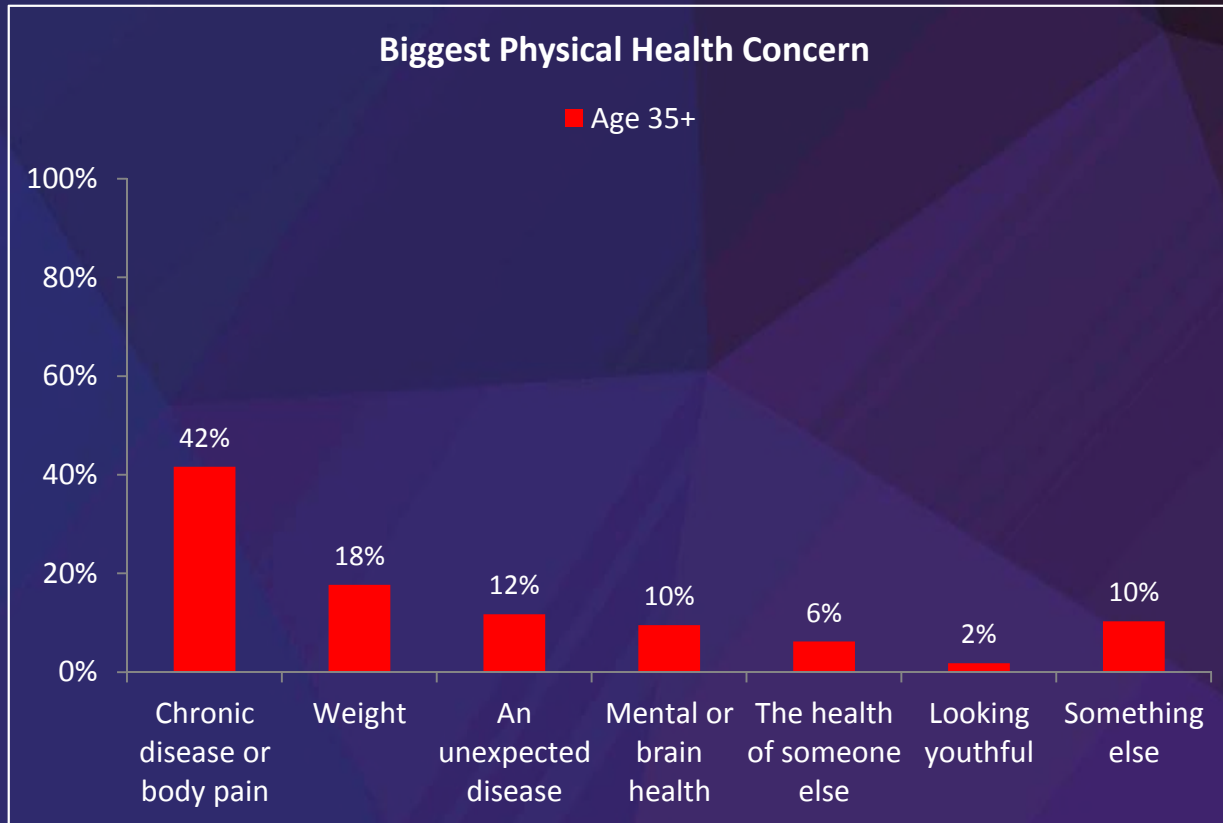
*Statistically significant difference between Gen X and Boomers at 95% confidence level

For adults ages 35-plus who are kept up at night worrying about relationship issues, nearly half (45%) worry most about the relationship with their spouse or significant other, followed by a fifth (21%) who worry most about the relationship with their children.



Q: [BASE=Relationship concerns keep you up at night, unweighted N=230] When it comes to relationships, which relationship are you most concerned about?

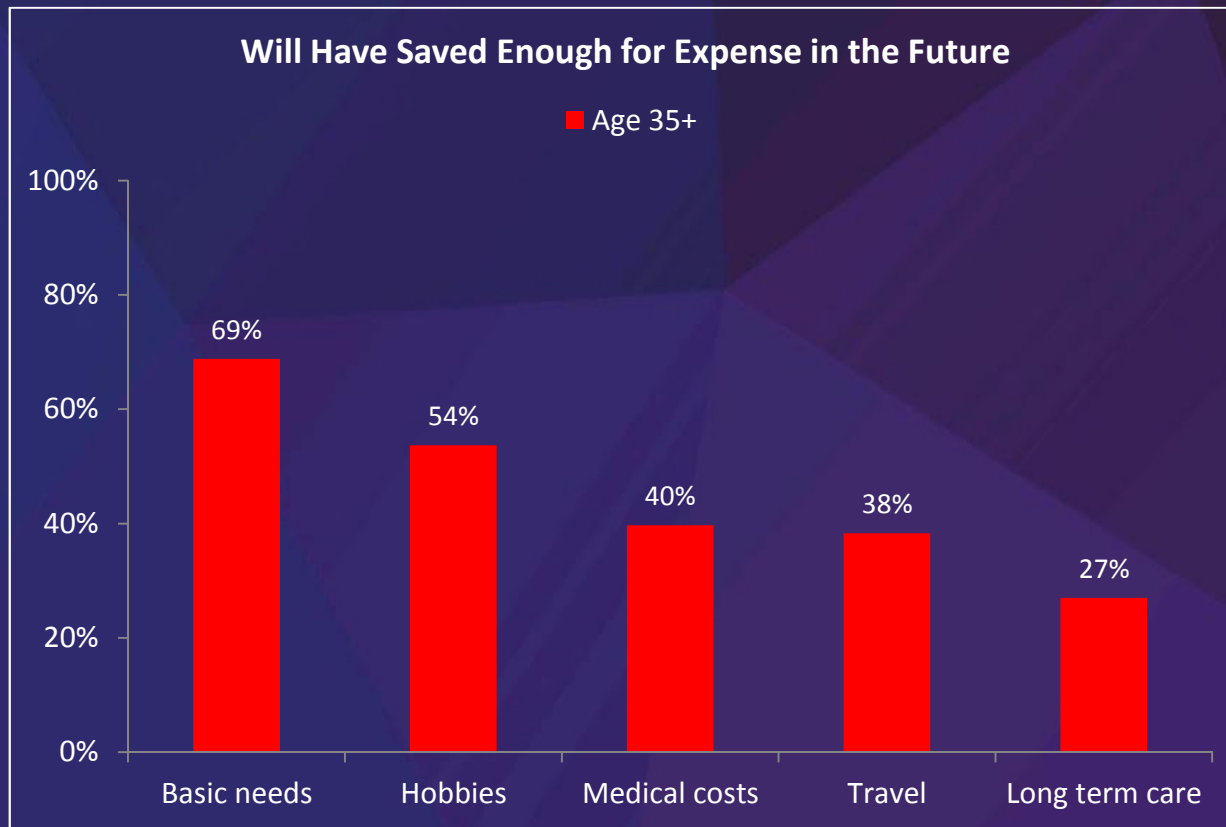
For adults ages 35-plus who are kept up at night worrying about physical health challenges, the most common primary concern is chronic disease or body pain (42%).



Among those who are kept up at night worrying about physical health challenges, men (14%) are more likely than women (6%) to cite mental or brain health as their primary physical health concern.

Q: [BASE=Physical health issues keep you up at night, unweighted N=435] When it comes to physical health, what are you most concerned about?

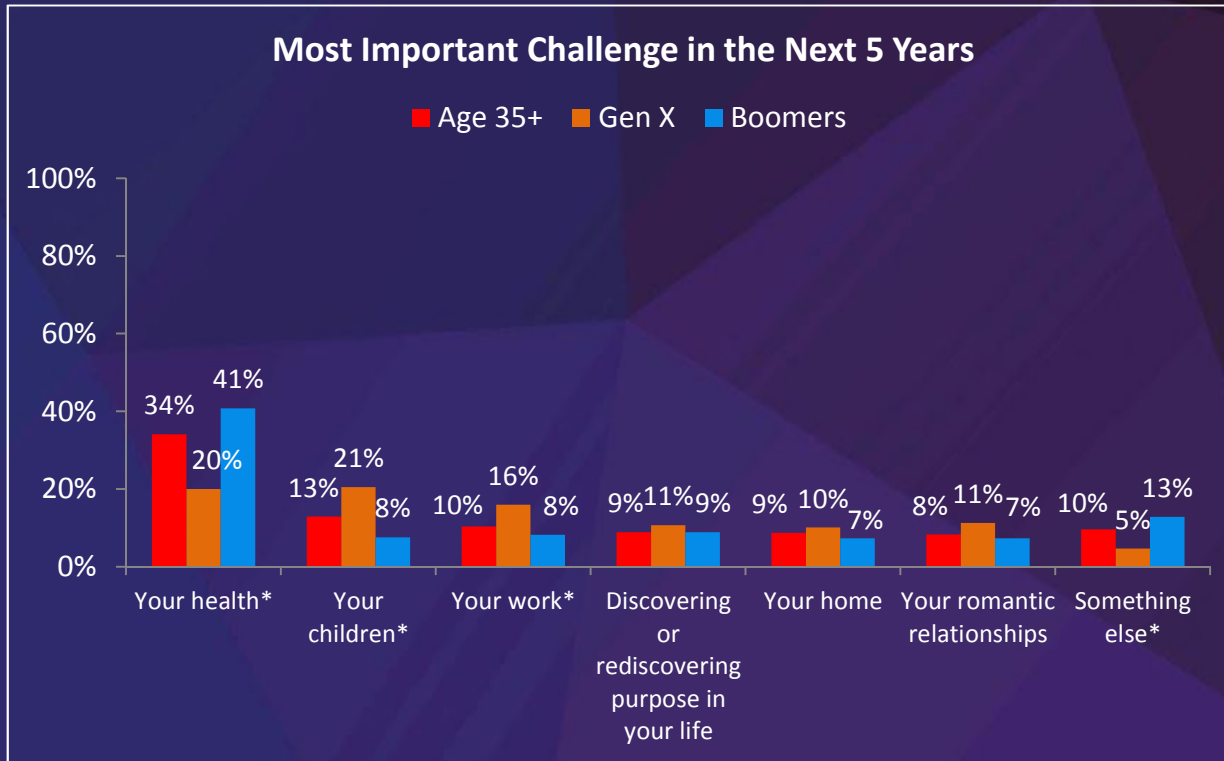
Most adults ages 35-plus (69%) feel they will have saved enough money to cover their basic needs in the future. Half (54%) feel they will have enough money to fund their hobbies. Less than half feel they will have enough money to cover medical costs (40%) or travel expenses (38%). Only about a quarter (27%) feel they will be able to cover their long term care expenses.



Men are more likely than women to feel they will have saved enough money to cover basic needs (74% vs. 64%), medical costs (44% vs. 36%), and travel expenses (45% vs. 33%) in the future.

Q: Do you feel you will have saved enough money to cover the following expenses in the future?

A third of adults ages 35+ (34%) feel their health will be the most important challenge they face in the next five years. Boomers (41%) are more likely than Gen Xers (20%) to feel this way. Gen Xers are more likely than Boomers to say their most important challenge will be related to their children (21% vs. 8%) or related to their work (16% vs. 8%).



Q: In the next five years, will the most important challenge you face be related to...? Your children – raising them or supporting them financially; Your health – maintaining your health, managing a chronic illness, or facing a major illness ; Your work – finding or maintaining a job; Your romantic relationship – starting, ending, or strengthening your marriage or romantic relationship; Your home – buying, selling, or upgrading it; Discovering or rediscovering purpose in your life; Something else

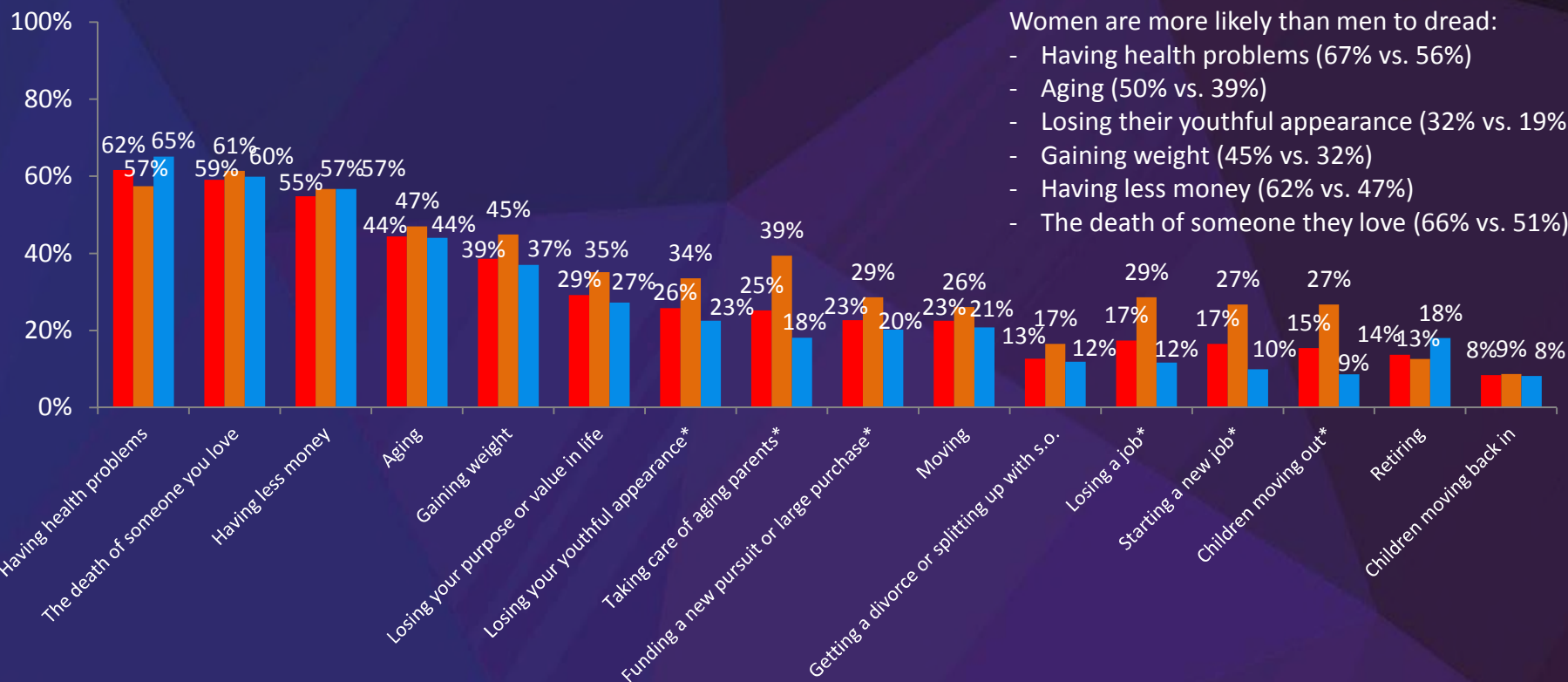
*Statistically significant difference between Gen X and Boomers at 95% confidence level

Over half of adults ages 35-plus dread having health problems (62%), losing someone they love (59%), and having less money (55%) in the next five to ten years. Gen Xers and Boomers differ on some but not all of the things they dread happening.

Dread Event Happening in the Next 5-10 Years



■ Age 35+ ■ Gen X ■ Boomers



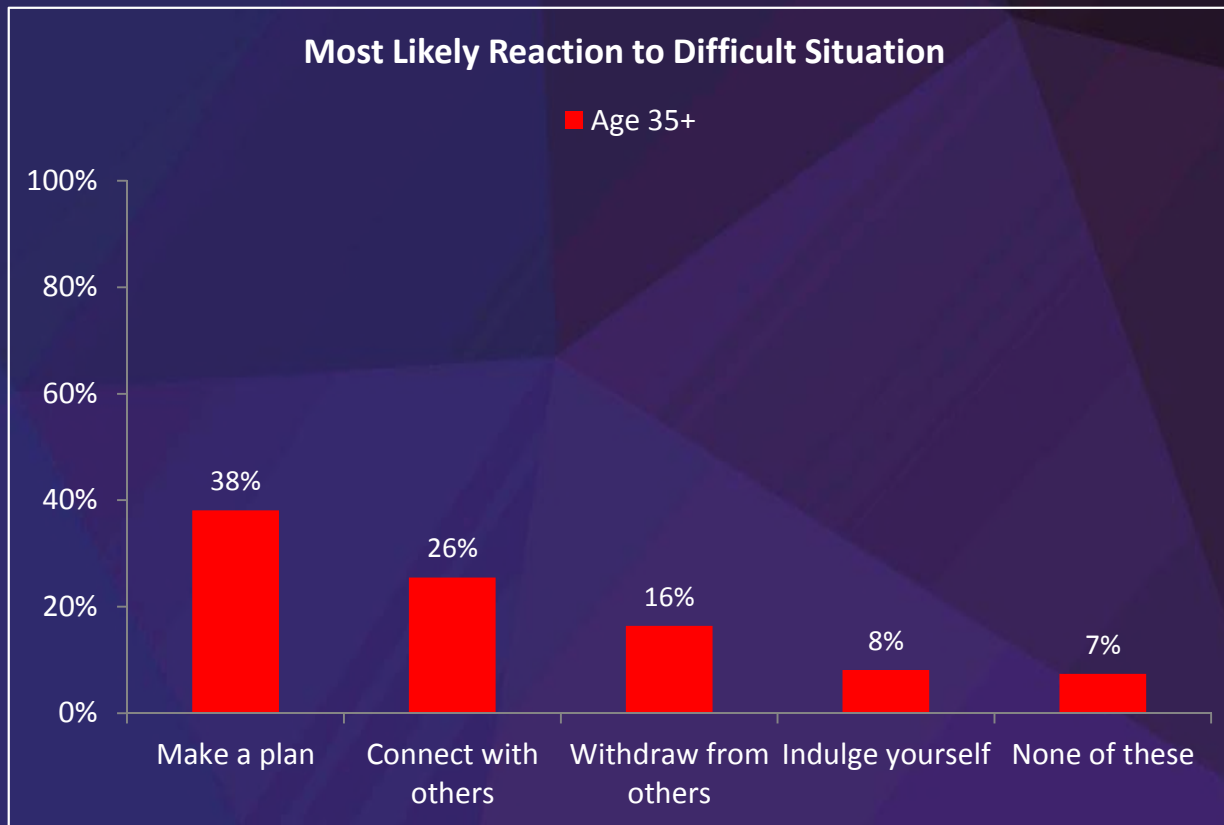
Women are more likely than men to dread:

- Having health problems (67% vs. 56%)
- Aging (50% vs. 39%)
- Losing their youthful appearance (32% vs. 19%)
- Gaining weight (45% vs. 32%)
- Having less money (62% vs. 47%)
- The death of someone they love (66% vs. 51%)

Q: Do you dread any of the following events happening to you in the next five to ten years?

*Statistically significant difference between Gen X and Boomers at 95% confidence level

When faced with a difficult situation, fewer than half (38%) of adults ages 35-plus are most likely to react by making a plan. About a quarter (26%) are most likely to connect with others, while the remainder withdraw from others (16%), indulge themselves (8%), or react in some other way.



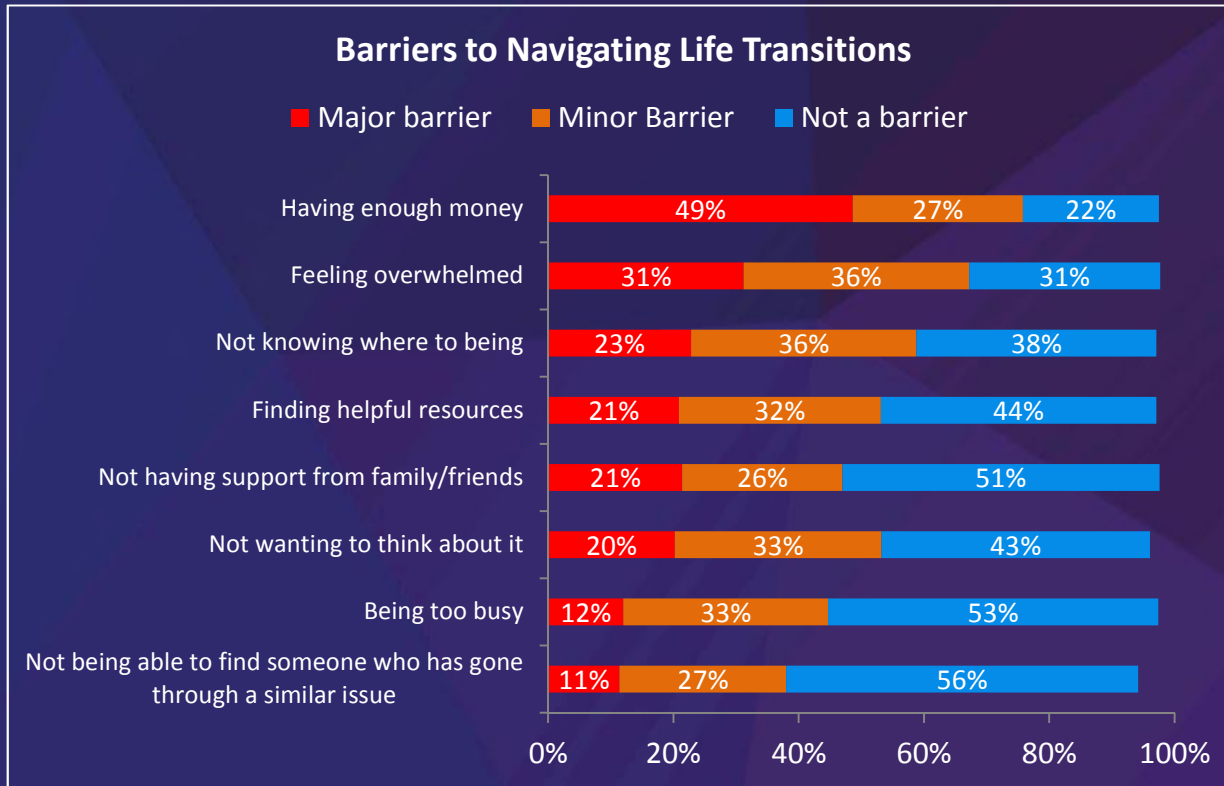
Q: When you face a difficult situation, which, if any, of the following are you most likely to do? Indulge yourself (for example, by eating, drinking, or binge watching TV); Withdraw from others (for example, sleeping or avoiding friends and family); Connect with others (for example, talking to friends, family, or a professional); Make a plan (for example, setting goals or reading helpful articles or books); None of these.

Major barriers to navigating transitions in life for adults ages 35-plus include having enough money (49%) and feeling overwhelmed (31%). About a fifth also cite not knowing where to begin (23%), finding helpful resources (21%), not having support from family and/or friends (21%), and not wanting to think about it (20%) as major barriers.



Women are more likely than men to feel the following are “major” barriers:

- Having enough money (54% vs. 43%)
- Not having support from family/friends (27% vs. 15%)
- Not wanting to think about it (24% vs. 16%)
- Not knowing where to begin (26% vs. 19%)
- Feeling overwhelmed (38% vs. 24%)



	Gen X	Boomer
Not being able to find someone who has gone through a similar issue	17%	8%
Being too busy	17%	9%
Not knowing where to begin	30%	22%

Q: Some people experience major events in life. Whether the event is positive or negative, it can be challenging to deal with. Examples of major events include getting married or divorced, getting or losing a job, moving, facing a major illness, having a parent or child move in with you, among other events. I'm going to read a list of things that may or may not be barriers to successfully navigating these transitions in life. I would like you to tell me whether you feel the item is a major barrier, minor barrier, or not a barrier for you personally when you are faced with navigating a transition in your life.