SHE’S THE DIFFERENCE: THE POWER OF OLDER WOMEN VOTERS

December 2019

The Harris Poll
Harris Insights & Analytics LLC, A Stagwell Company

AARP
Real Possibilities
Key Findings

Women voters ages 50 and older have strength in numbers going into the 2020 election, but there’s still ample opportunity to make an impression on their vote

- Nearly all (95%) are likely to vote in the 2020 election and 40% plan to vote early or by mail
- Nearly 7 in 10 haven’t made up their mind on who they’ll vote for in 2020

Dissatisfied with national leadership, they’re ready for change and looking for leaders with empathy and experience

- Over half (55%) have an unfavorable opinion of national leadership
- They give leaders failing grades on dealing with issues that matter most to them and their families like rising healthcare costs
- Majorities would prefer an experienced candidate over one that brings fresh perspective; ethical and trustworthy are top qualities women voters 50+ think are important for leaders
- Nearly half (47%) feel they do not have a voice in the political process

Leaders need to bring women into the conversation on affordable healthcare, it is the leading national issue for women voters ages 50 and older

- Nearly 4 in 10 cannot afford to pay for their healthcare
- Nearly 3 in 10 have had to skip medical care because it was too expensive
- Nearly 7 in 10 feel older people pay too much for healthcare compared to others
Key Findings Continued

Politicians should think about how they can boost older women voters’ confidence in the economy and access to affordable healthcare

- Women are more likely to say the economy is on the wrong track (48%) compared to men (35%), and only 24% of women say their personal financial situation will improve in the next 12 months vs. 38% of men
- Lack of confidence in the future of the economy is negatively affecting their personal outlook on retirement (46%)
- Nearly 1 in 3 (29%) say “Affording the healthcare I need has negatively affected my well-being”

At the end of the day, women voters ages 50 and older want a future in which all can thrive, but they’re concerned about the world they’ll leave behind

- 81% worry about the world that they may leave behind (vs. 70% of men)
- America’s standing in the world was the #1 value that women thought was most endangered
- Making sure all people can afford the healthcare they need was the #1 thing women 50+ wanted to leave behind for future generations
The power of the women 50+ vote is very strong for 2020

They will have the opportunity to enact change

Voting in the next election:

95% Likely

87% Very likely

Intensely motivated across the board:

- Older women in particular are very likely to vote: 91% ages 65+ vs. 84% ages 50–64
- Also very likely to vote: 87% African American women, 85% Hispanic women

Not waiting to vote until election day:

- Overall, 40% of women voters 50+ plan to vote early or by mail
- African American (44%) and Hispanic (50%) women are particularly likely to vote early or by mail
But today, their vote is still very much up for grabs

* Warren? Trump? Bloomberg?

Buttigieg? Biden?

69%

Haven’t made up their mind on who they’ll vote for in 2020

74% African American women

70% Hispanic women

If the 2020 election were held today…

• 17% of women voters 50+ aren’t sure if they would vote for Donald Trump, the Democratic nominee, or someone else (compared to 12% among men)

• 44% of women voters 50+ who consider themselves independents would be undecided

• 21% of women voters 50+ who consider themselves Republican aren’t sure they would vote for Trump

* Top 5 Democratic Nominees shown on slide
50+ women voters are informed and influential in their communities

Which of the following, if any, have you done in the past 12 months?

- Regularly read local and national publications:
  - 35%
- Regularly read local and national publications via the internet:
  - 30%
- Regularly consume other media (e.g., news broadcasts):
  - 39%
- Written or called any politician at the local, state, or national level:
  - 14%
- Attended a public meeting on town or school affairs:
  - 11%
- Served on a committee or as an officer for a local organization:
  - 8%

20% for Women 65+

26% of female voters are influential*

*Have participated in at least 3 civic or current issue activities
But leaders need to find a way to reach women voters 50+ directly

Women voters ages 50 and older are leaning on third party sources more than direct candidate communications for voting decisions

Sources of Information to Inform Voting Decisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News/Talk shows (TV, radio, online)</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends and Family</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentions or discussions in the media</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public meetings or discussions</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentions of the candidate in conversations w/ colleagues/peers, word of mouth</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts/Academics in politics</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press releases/Press conferences from the candidate</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications, correspondence, or publications from the candidate, including online communication</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate website</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where do you get your information to inform your voting decisions?
Women voters ages 50 and older give leaders failing grades on dealing with issues that matter most to them and their families.

55% Have an unfavorable opinion of national leadership*

Elected Officials Report Card
Key Women’s Issues 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High costs of healthcare &amp; prescription drugs</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opioid epidemic</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prices rising faster than income</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College affordability and student debt</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future of the Social Security system</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rising housing costs</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% Giving elected officials a failing grade

Do you have an unfavorable or favorable opinion of the following?  
*Simple average of Congressional Republicans, Congressional Democrats, and President
They don’t trust social media companies they feel threaten the well-being of society, but trust big tech that serves the home

Nearly 4 in 10 older women voters say Facebook and Twitter have a negative impact on society (38%)

Women are skeptical of social media companies’ impact on data privacy, fake news, and the political system:

- Are not responsible with personal data (63%)
- Don’t prevent the spread of false information (58%)
- Have too much influence in the political system (50%)

Instead, they’re more trusting of tech companies that serve the home and family:

- Microsoft (73%)
- Amazon (73%)
- Apple (68%)
- Netflix (69%)
- vs. fewer who trust Facebook (41%) Twitter (31%)

Social Media Companies…

vs. fewer who trust Facebook (41%) Twitter (31%)
Instead, they’re looking to leaders with local values, empathy, and experience

Women voters ages 50 and older are more favorable towards local leadership and institutions that help others:

- 83% Women voters ages 50 and older are more favorable towards local leadership
- 58% My Local Government
- 52% My State Government
- 53% My Member of Congress

Top qualities women voters 50+ think are important for leaders:

- Ethical: 39%
- Intelligent: 30%
- Trusted: 36%
- Cares about people like me: 26%
- Competent: 28%

45% would prefer an experienced candidate over one that brings fresh perspective (32%)

70% think the country would benefit with more women in corporate leadership
Leaders need to tap into the older women voters’ mindset on healthcare

Healthcare is so important to older women voters that when asked what type of world they want to leave future generations, **affordable healthcare** was a higher priority than peace, hunger, racial equality, and climate change.

**Most Important Issues to Women Voters 50+**

- **Healthcare** (39%)
- **Immigration** (29%)
- **Terrorism / National Security** (24%)
- **Guns** (22%)
- **Climate** (21%)

vs. only 31% for Men 50+ (immigration was top issue)
Especially for rural and Hispanic older women voters

% of women voters 50+ who say healthcare is the most important issue facing the country today

- Urban: 35%
- Suburban: 38%
- Rural / Small Town: 47%
- African American: 39%
- Hispanic: 43%
Because today, women are the family CHO (chief healthcare officer)

Women voters 50+ are carrying the weight of their family’s healthcare responsibility

- **89%** Sole or joint healthcare decision maker in the family
  - 58% are sole decision maker

- **57%** Prioritize the health of their family over their own

- **65%** “If I didn’t manage the health of my household, it wouldn’t get done”

vs only 53% of Men 50+
Older women voters are impacted the most by rising healthcare costs

Forcing women voters 50+ to do things they never planned on…

- Skipping medical care because it was too expensive (26%)
- Going into debt because of high medical costs (14%)
- Putting their own care at risk to prioritize the health of a loved one (14%)
- Rationing Rx medications due to high costs (13%)
- Sacrificing care to choose a less expensive insurance plan (12%)
Rising health costs have negative effects on well-being

Nearly two-thirds of older women voters say insurance does not adequately cover mental health issues, and nearly one-third say affording their healthcare has negatively affected their well-being.

Women voters 50+ say it’s time to break the stigma and start talking about mental health.

For many of them, it’s a deeply personal issue.

Implication for Politicians | It’s time to address mental health for 50+

"Society doesn’t pay enough attention to the psychological well-being of older generations" 81%

"I wish people my age were more open to discussing mental health issues" 68%

"There is a stigma for older people who have mental health issues" 66%

"I could have used more emotional support last year" 47%

"I often feel lonely or isolated" 34%

74% African American women

75% Hispanic women

vs only 33% of Men 50+

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AARP RESEARCH
The well-being of older women who care for loved ones is especially at risk, and they’re searching for better services from employers.

The majority of female caregivers are stressed out and feeling isolated:

- 91% agree “Family caregivers who also work get burnt out at both ends”
- 86% agree “I frequently worry about the welfare of my loved ones”
- 70% agree “Caregiving is hard and only family caregivers get it”
- 63% agree “I often find it hard to rest mentally and physically”
- 60% agree “I feel like I’m facing everything on my own”
- 57% agree “I never have enough time in the day”

- 40% of women voters 50+ would switch jobs to work at a company that provided better policies for family caregivers

- 52% of African American female voters
- 47% of Hispanic female voters

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Overall, older women voters are looking for solutions that prioritize patient health over profits

Women think older people are more disadvantaged by rising healthcare costs
- Nearly 7 in 10 (68%) feel **older people pay too much** for healthcare compared to others
- Over 8 in 10 (85%) say **those with pre-existing conditions should not have to pay more**

**2 in 3 (65%)** have an unfavorable opinion of Rx drug companies

They blame the prioritization of profits over patient health for rising health care costs...
- 53% **drug companies charging too much**
- 47% **health insurance companies prioritizing profits over patient’s health**
- 26% **waste, fraud, and abuse**
And they have a cautious outlook on the economy compared to their male counterparts

Women voters ages 50 and older have a more skeptical outlook on the economy compared to men

- **Women are wearier than men on the economy** — Women are more likely to say the economy is on the wrong track (48%) compared to men (35%)

- **More women feel the economy isn’t working for them personally** — Women are more likely than men to say the economy is not working for them personally: 37% of women vs. only 23% of men

- **Men are more optimistic about their personal financial situation than women** — Only 24% of women say their personal financial situation will improve in the next 12 months vs. nearly 4 in 10 men (38%)
But not all older women voters feel the same about the economy

African American women voters ages 50 and older are much less likely to say the economy is working well for them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The American economy is on the wrong track</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy is not working well for me personally</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But African American and Hispanic women are also more optimistic

African American and Hispanic women are more likely to think their personal financial situation will improve (29% and 27%, respectively, vs. 24% overall)
Suburban women voters ages 50 and older have the brightest economic outlook

But some issues hit suburban women voters 50+ especially hard:

- They are most likely to give elected leaders failing grades on college affordability and student debt (36%)

- They are most likely to say the opioid epidemic has affected their well-being in a negative way (20%)
Lack of confidence in the economy is dragging down retirement outlook

Older women voters’ lack of confidence in the economy affects their personal outlook on retirement

- Men are much more confident overall than women that they will live comfortably in retirement (62% of men vs. 47% of women)
Politicians should start thinking about how they can empower women’s confidence in the economy

Today, the majority of women ages 50 and older give elected officials a D/F grade on their ability to handle key economic indicators:

- Future of Social Security (73%)
- Prices rising faster than income (69%)
- Rising housing costs (64%)
- Medicare coverage (58%)
- The threat of a recession (51%)

Nearly half (47%) feel they do not have a voice in the political process

Lack of confidence in Social Security is driving down women’s overall confidence to retire

- 74% say they’re not confident because Social Security is not enough to make ends meet (and 74% of women currently or plan to rely on Social Security as they get older)

Health care costs are dimming retirement prospects too

- 33% are not confident about retirement because their health care costs are very expensive

Caregivers are especially worried about their personal finances

- Nearly 7 in 10 (67%) female caregivers frequently worry about their financial situation
Because older women voters want to leave a better world for future generations

I want to leave a world in which…

- All people can afford the healthcare they need (50%)
- No one goes hungry (45%)
- Nobody lives in fear of violence (42%)
- People of all races and ethnicities are treated equally (34%)
- Climate change has been solved (24%)
But they are concerned about America’s standing in the world

While 80% think their generation has done good things for the country, older women voters are equally worried about the future for younger generations.

Values, rights, and institutions women voters 50+ feel are most endangered are:

- America’s standing in the world (35%)
- Women’s right to choose (26%)
- Racial equality (24%)
- The right to bear arms (22%)
- Freedom of speech (20%)
- Personal responsibility (20%)

“I worry about the world that I may leave behind”
2020: Who will be the difference?

Their voice is strong: Nearly half (46%) feel they have a voice in the political process.

They’re showing up: Over 9 in 10 are likely to vote, of which 87% are very likely to vote.

They are ready for some positive change: Nearly half (48%) say the American economy is on the wrong track and more than half (55%) have an unfavorable opinion of national leadership.

There is still an opportunity to make an impression: 7 in 10 haven’t made up their mind on who they’ll vote for in 2020.

She will be the difference.
### METHODOLOGY REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey sponsor</th>
<th>AARP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey/Data collection supplier</td>
<td>The Harris Poll (Harris Insights &amp; Analytics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population represented</td>
<td>U.S. registered voters ages 50+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample size</td>
<td>3,151. Respondents were quotaed by race and Hispanic ethnicity</td>
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<td>Sample size for key subgroup</td>
<td>N=1,924 female voters ages 50+</td>
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<td>Mode of data collection</td>
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<td>Type of sample (probability/non-probability)</td>
<td>Non-Probability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Start and end dates of data collection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Margin of sampling error for total sample</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margin of sampling error for key subgroups</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Weighting

The data are weighted to the U.S. population ages 50+ by education, gender by age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, marital status, census division, household income, household size, and employment status to population benchmarks from the March 2018 Current Population Survey (CPS). Hispanic respondents are also weighted by language proficiency to benchmarks from the 2015 Pew Research Center Hispanic Trends Survey. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online. Raked weights are estimated using Random Iterative Method (RIM) weighting.

Contact for more information

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