



# AGELESS DESIRE: RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX IN MIDDLE AGE AND BEYOND (Ages 40-Plus)

September 2023

# Executive Summary

## There is optimism for the future.

- When compared to right now and five years ago, the highest proportion of U.S. adults ages 40-plus believe they'll be living their best life possible five years from now.

## Sex is important, but not *the most* important thing.

- Three in five agree that sexual activity is a critical part of a good relationship.
- Nearly all find financial security (97%), health (96%) and independence (96%) important, while just over seven in ten (71%) find a satisfying sexual relationship to be important. Certain life factors appear to correlate with perceived importance of sex, including:
  - **Gender.** 80% of men ages 40-plus find a satisfying sexual relationship to be important, compared to just 63% among women.
  - **Age.** Importance tends to decline with older age, with 83% of those 40–49 finding a satisfying sexual relationship important, compared to 55% of those age 70+.
  - **Health.** Those who consider themselves in excellent or good health are more likely to find sex important (73%), compared to those in fair or poor health (64%).

# Executive Summary (continued)

## **Most older adults are still sexually active, even if their sexual satisfaction is lagging or declining.**

- Two thirds have a regular sexual partner.
- Three in five had sexual intercourse over the last six months, over half (55%) had sex within the week surveyed.
- Roughly one-third engage in self-stimulation with or without a partner.
- Overall, less than half (46%) are satisfied with their current sex life. But for most, their sex life is as good as it was a decade ago.

## **A happy sex life can be cultivated.**

- Stress, a decline in health, and negative life-stage changes such as job loss have a negative impact on one's sex life, but many adults ages 40-plus believe improving their health would improve their sexual satisfaction.
- Improving health might be a particularly impactful way for men to improve their sex life.

## **Relationships can recover after infidelity.**

- The novelty of sex with someone else is the main reason for infidelity, for both men and women. After an affair, most relationships are strained but survive.

## **Men are more proactive in seeking treatment and resources for sexual well-being.**

- Among those who have a problem with sexual functioning, men are more likely to seek some type of treatment (62%) than women (42%).
- Men are more likely to seek out information about sex across a variety of sources compared to women (40% men vs. 25% women).



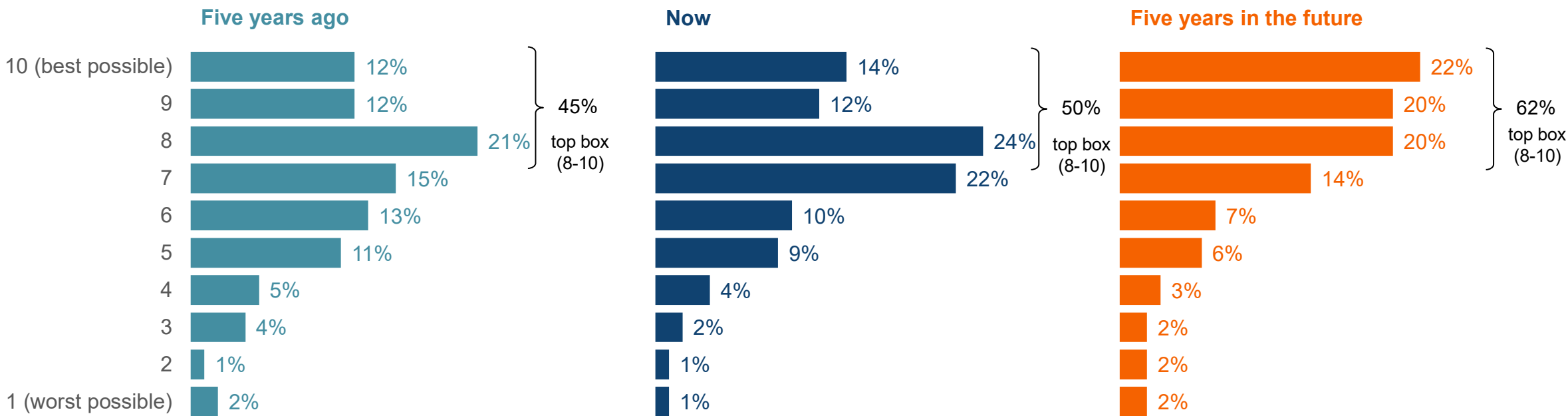


## RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX

# Older adults are optimistic about the future: More than half believe they'll be living their best possible life five years from now.

Where do you feel your life stood five years ago, stands now, or will stand five years in the future?

Among adults ages 40+

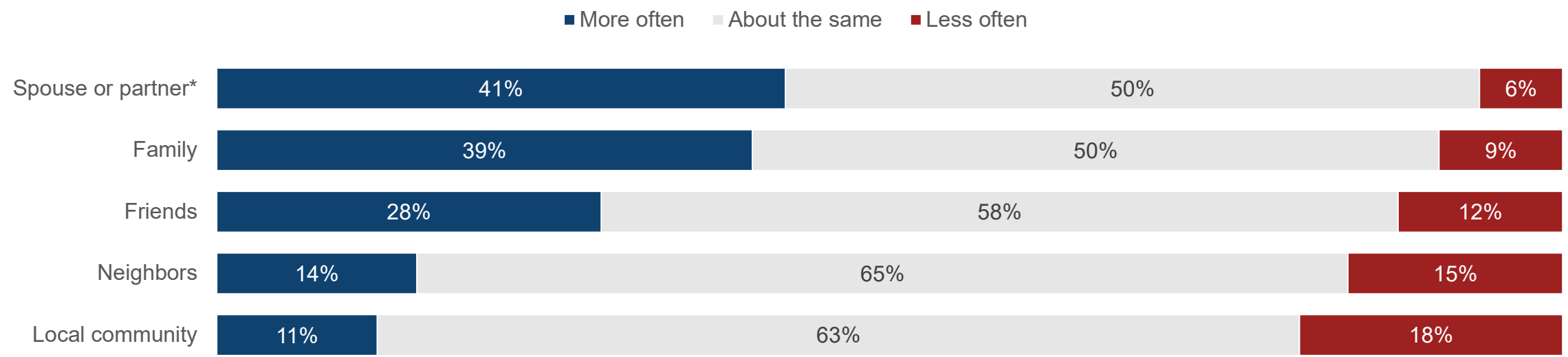


Q1. Below is a step ladder with ten steps representing the "Ladder of Life." The top step of the ladder, or "10", represents the best possible life for you. The bottom step of the ladder, or "1", represents the worst possible life for you. On which of these 10 steps of the ladder do you feel you personally stand at the present time? What about five years ago? Where do you think you will stand five years from now? (Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)

# Older adults are looking to connect more with their spouse/partner (41%) or family (39%) now compared to the past two years.

COVID appears to have had some impact on relationship beliefs — seven in 10 (70%) older adults believe “quality time/strong connections are more important now than before COVID as many seek connections with loved ones.

Change in frequency of looking to connect with the following compared to the past two years  
*Among adults ages 40+, \*spouse or partner question only asked of those who are married or partnered*



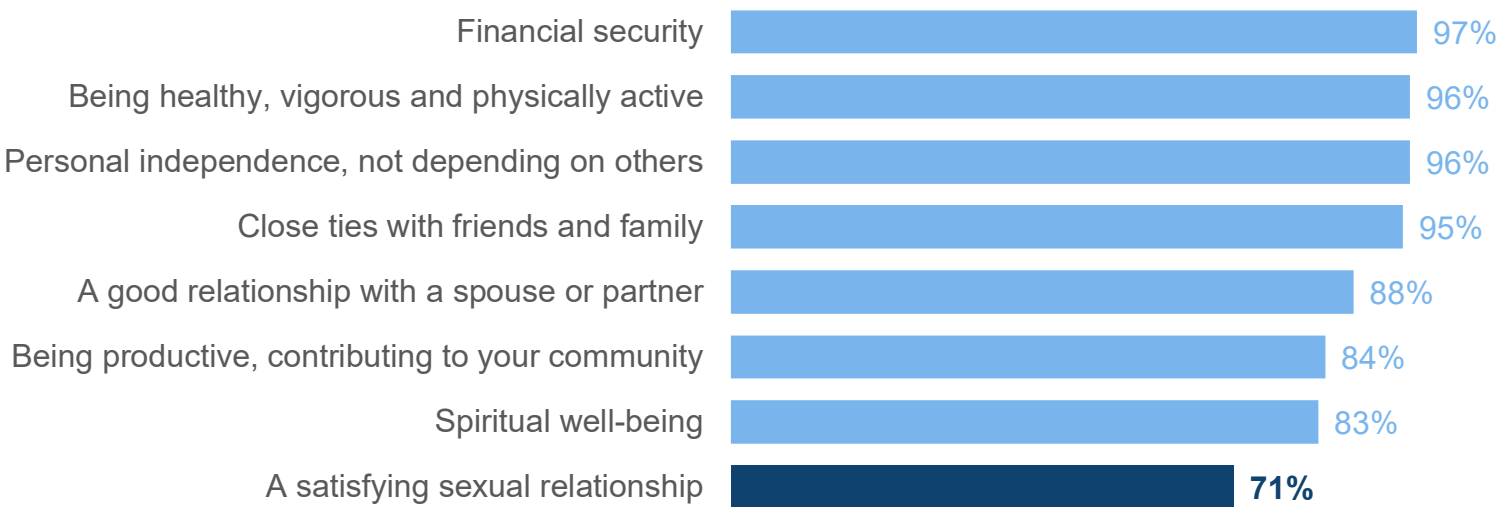
Q4. How often are you looking for opportunities to connect with the following compared to the past two years? (Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506; \*base of spouse/partner question is those who are married/partnered; n=1,640) Q5. Below are a number of statements. For each, please indicate how much the statement describes your own views. Relationships and spending quality time with loved ones are much more important to me now than before COVID-19. (Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)



# Financial security, health, and self-reliance are seen as the most important things impacting quality of life.

A satisfying sexual relationship is important to quality of life, but it does not rank above survival or social connection needs.

Percent who rate the following as very or extremely important  
*Among adults ages 40+*



## Key Takeaways:

- A satisfying sexual relationship is most important among . . .
- **Younger respondents** (83% of those 40-49 find it important, vs. 55% of those age 70+)
  - **Men** (80% vs. 63% among women)
  - Those with **a current sexual partner** (83% vs. 47% among those who don't)
  - Those who consider themselves **in excellent or good health** (73% vs. 64% of those in fair/poor health)

Q2. Listed below are some things that affect some people's quality of life. For each item below, please indicate how important it is to you personally with regard to your own quality of life. How important to you is... (Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)

# Sex is an essential element of a good relationship.

- Three in five agree that sexual activity is a critical part of a good relationship.
- Two-thirds of men agree, compared to just over half of women.
- Those over the age of 50 see it as less critical.

Percent who agree or strongly agree that sexual activity is an important part of a good relationship  
*Among adults ages 40+, total and by gender and age range*



Q13. For each of the following statements, please indicate how much you agree or disagree. (Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)

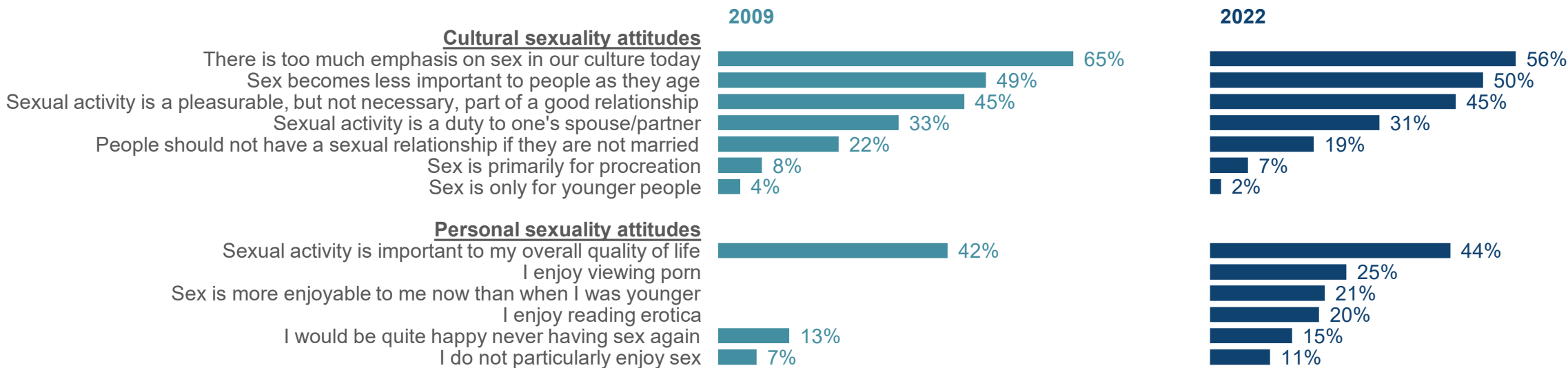
▲ indicates significant difference between comparison groups



# Attitudes about sex are mostly sex-positive.

There is some evidence attitudes are shifting: Compared to 2009, fewer believe there is too much emphasis on sex today, and two in five believe sex is important to their quality of life.

Percent who agree or strongly agree with the following statements, 2009 vs. 2022  
Among adults ages 40+



Q13. For each of the following statements, please indicate how much you agree or disagree. (Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)

Data for the years 2004 and 2009 are drawn from Linda Fisher, et al., *Sex, Romance, and Relationships: AARP Survey of Midlife and Older Adults*, Washington, DC: AARP Research, May 2010. <https://doi.org/10.26419/res.00063.001>.

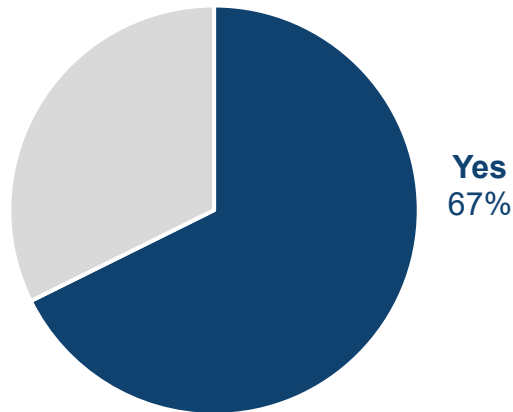


# MODERN SEXUAL BEHAVIORS

# Two-thirds report they have a regular sexual partner, just over six in 10 (63%) among those 50 and over.

Most partnerships are with someone in a similar age range. Thirteen percent (9% male, 4% female) have a sexual partner of the same-sex.

Have a regular sexual partner  
Among adults ages 40+



**65%** are married or in a long-term partnership

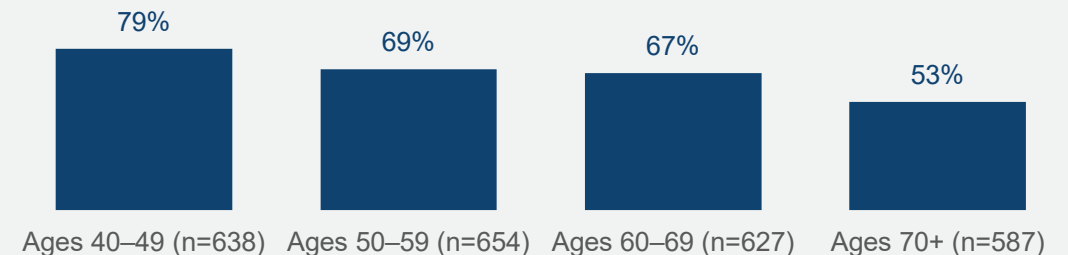
Q31. Do you currently have a regular sexual partner? (Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)

Q32. How many sexual partners do you currently have? (Base: age 40-plus and have a current sexual partner; n=1,683)

Q36. What is the sex of your [current primary/most recent] partner? (Base: age 40-plus and have a current sexual partner; n=1,821)

## Key Takeaways:

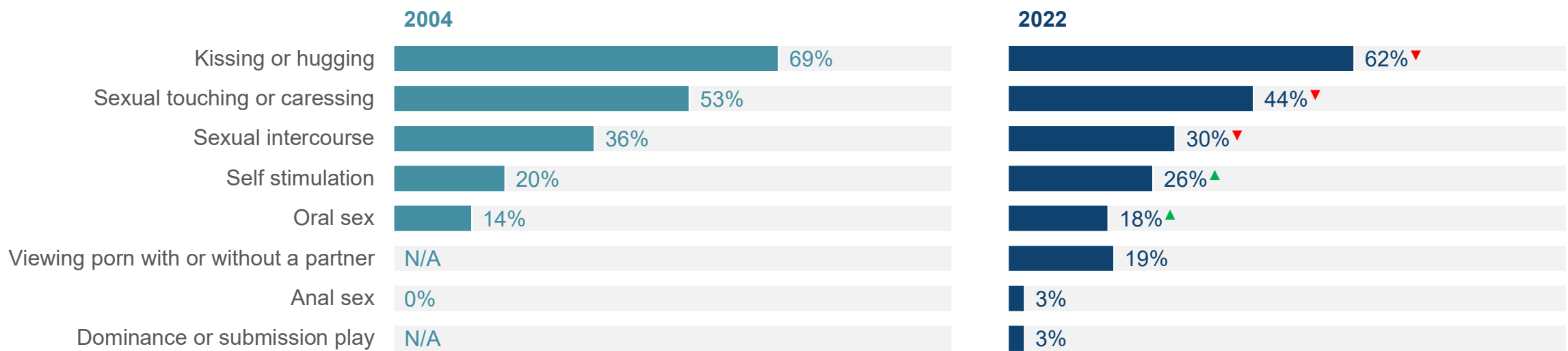
- **Men** are more likely than woman to report having a current regular sexual partner (72% vs. 63%).
- Those in **excellent/good health** are more likely than those in fair/poor health to report having a regular sexual partner (70% vs. 54%).
- Those in **heterosexual relationships** are more likely to report one sexual partner (96% vs. 80% of those in nonheterosexual partnerships).
- **Younger respondents** have the highest likelihood of reporting a regular sexual partner. Six in 10 people 50-plus report a regular sexual partner.



# Over the last two decades, frequent sexual intercourse has declined but other types of sexual activity have increased.

Kissing or hugging is the most frequent type of sexual behavior during the past six months.

Percent engaging in the following sexual activities at least weekly, 2004 vs. 2022  
Among adults ages 40+



▲ indicates significant difference between comparison groups

Q57. During the past 6 months, how often, on average, have you engaged in the following sexual activities?  
(Base: 2022 age 40-plus; n=2,506, 2004 age 45-plus; n=1,554)

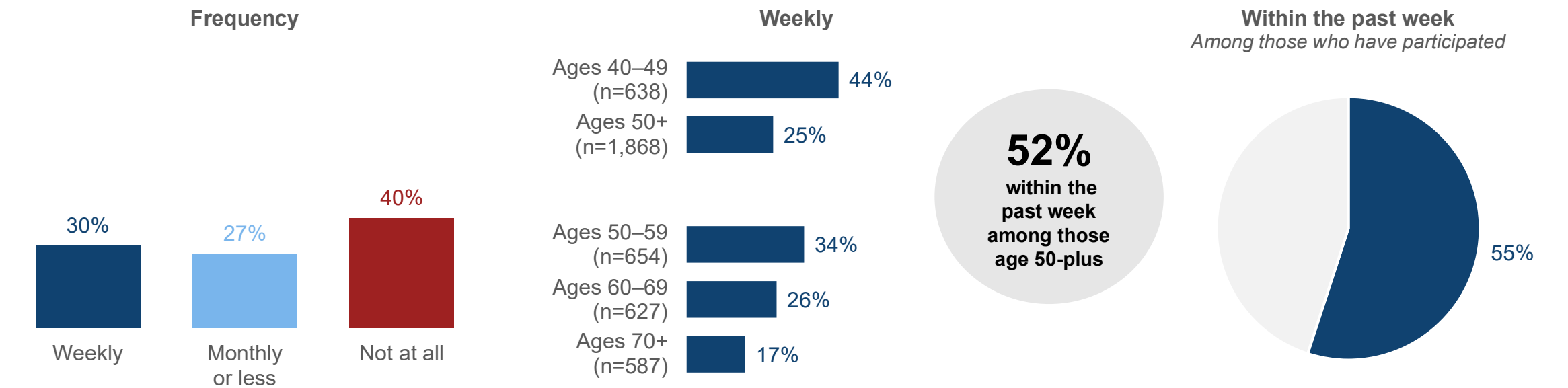
Data for the years 2004 and 2009 are drawn from Fisher, Linda, et al. Sex, Romance, and Relationships: AARP Survey of Midlife and Older Adults. Washington, DC: AARP Research, May 2010.  
<https://doi.org/10.26419/res.00063.001>.



# Three in five have had sex in the last 6 months; of those, over half have done so within the past week.

The number one factor predicting satisfaction with one’s sex life is the frequency of sexual intercourse. Most older adults are still having consistent sex, including one in six adults 70-plus who have sex weekly.

Frequency of sex  
Among adults ages 40+



Q57. During the past 6 months, how often, on average, have you engaged in the following sexual activities?  
(Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)

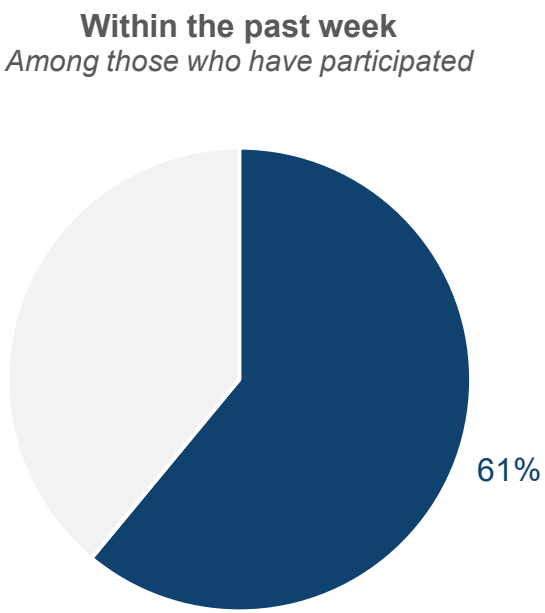
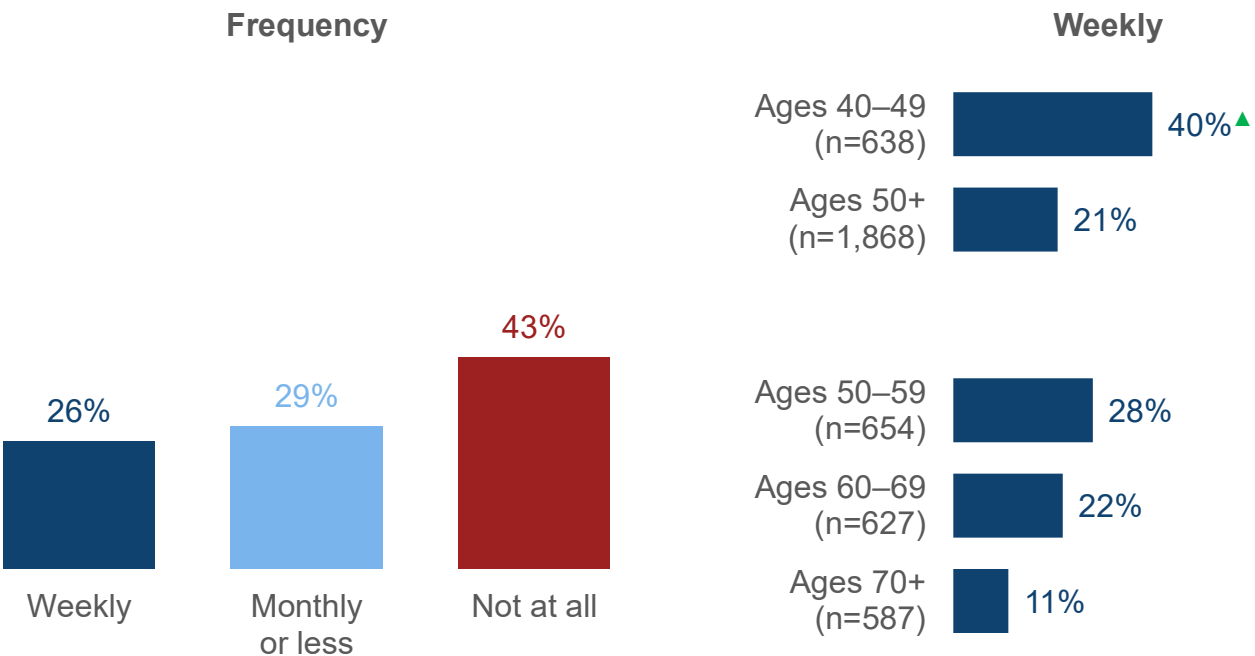
Q58. Did you do this last week? (Base: those who have participated in activity; n=1,443)

▲ indicates significant difference between comparison groups



# Over half (55%) have engaged in masturbation, i.e., self-stimulation, over the past six months, two in three have done so in the past week.

Frequency of self-stimulation  
Among adults ages 40+



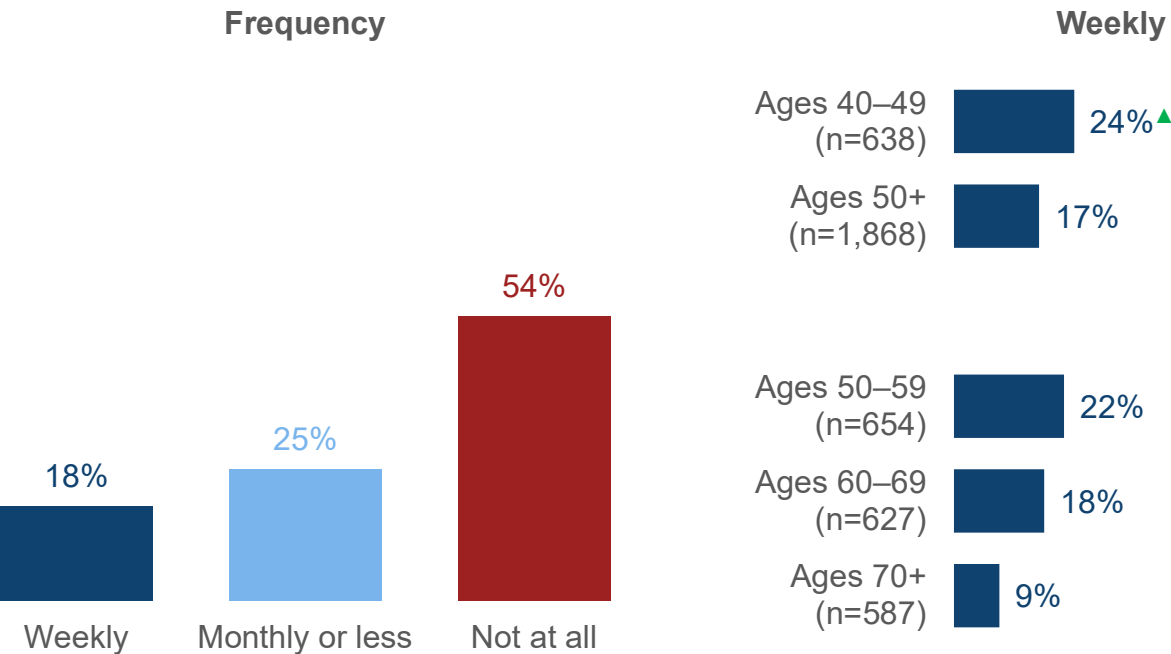
Q57. During the past 6 months, how often, on average, have you engaged in the following sexual activities?  
(Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)

Q58. Did you do this last week? (Base: those who have participated in activity; n=1,363)

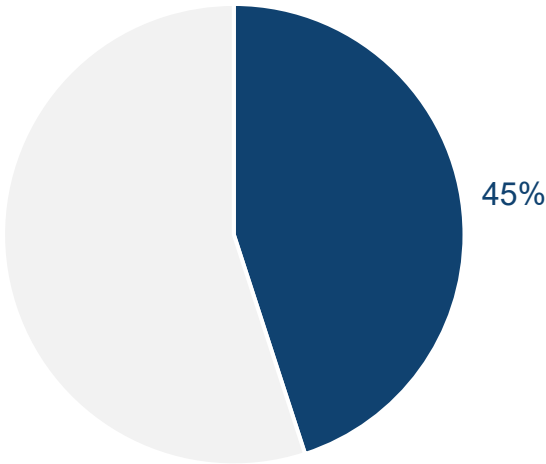
▲ indicates significant difference between comparison groups

# About one in five have engaged in oral sex weekly in the past six months, up from 14 percent in 2004.

Frequency of oral sex  
Among adults ages 40+



**Within the past week**  
Among those who have participated



▲ indicates significant difference between comparison groups

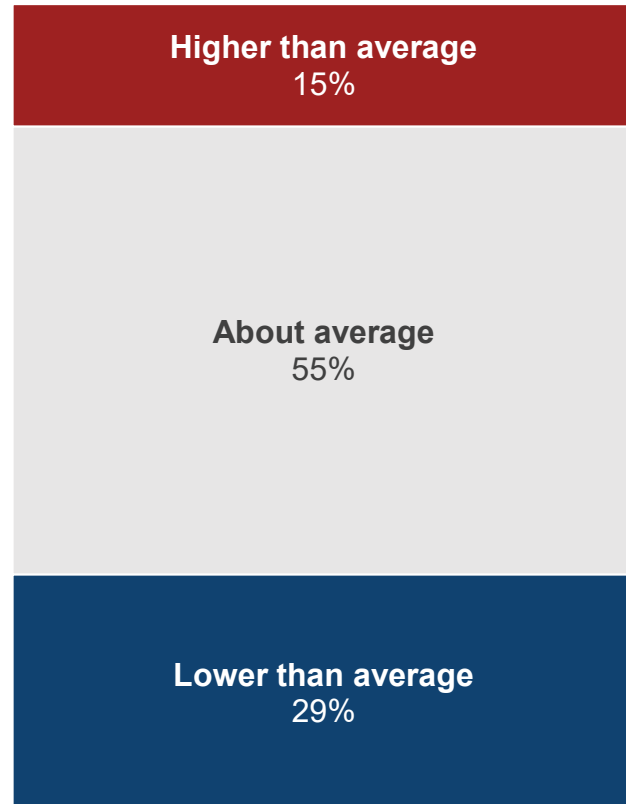
Q57. During the past 6 months, how often, on average, have you engaged in the following sexual activities?  
(Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)

Q58. Did you do this last week? (Base: those who have participated in activity; n=1,084)

Data for the years 2004 and 2009 are drawn from Fisher, Linda, et al. *Sex, Romance, and Relationships: AARP Survey of Midlife and Older Adults*. Washington, DC: AARP Research, May 2010. <https://doi.org/10.26419/res.00063.001>.

# More than half rate their level of sexual desire as about average.

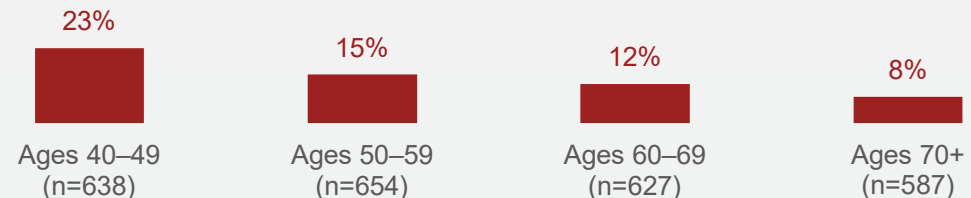
Self-reported level of sexual desire  
Among adults ages 40+



Q18. How would you rate your level of sexual desire? (Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)

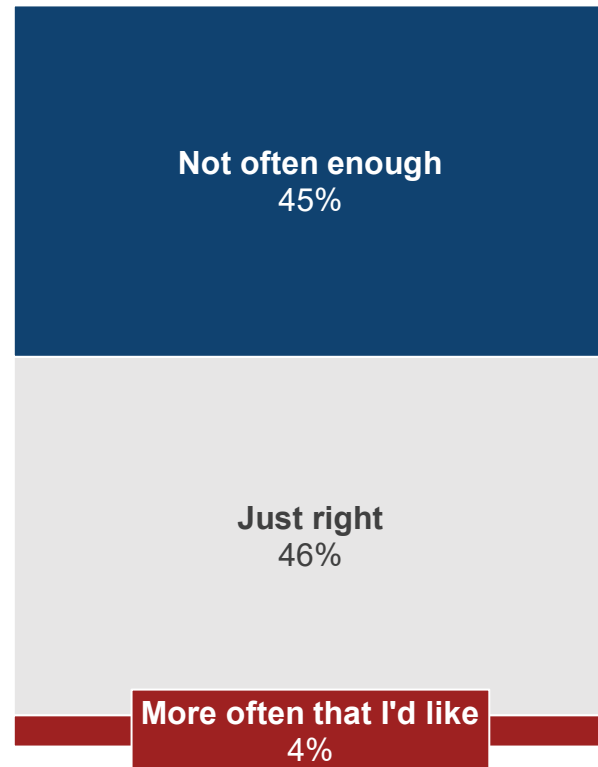
## Key Takeaways:

- **Men** are more likely than women to rate their level of sexual desire as higher than average (22% vs. 9%).
- Those identifying as **nonheterosexual** are more likely to rate their desire level as above average (33% vs. 14% among those identifying as heterosexual).
- Those with **two or more sexual partners** are more likely than those with one partner to rate their desire as above average (53% vs. 15%).
- **Women** are more likely than men to rate their level of sexual desire as lower than average (40% vs. 18%).
- **Younger respondents** are more likely to rate their desire as above average.



# About half feel they are having the right amount of sex (46%), and about half feel they are not having it often enough (45%).

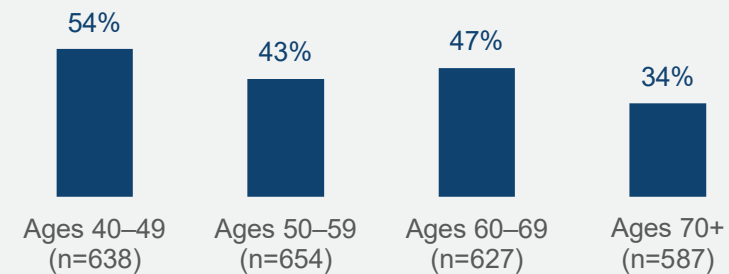
Perception of frequency of sex  
Among adults ages 40+



Q60. How do you feel about how often you have sexual intercourse?  
(Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)

## Key Takeaways:

- **Men** are more likely than women to say they're not having sex often enough (55% vs. 36%).
- **Women** are also more likely than men to say the frequency with which they're having sex is just right (51% vs. 41%).
- **Younger respondents** have the highest likelihood of saying they're not having sex often enough.



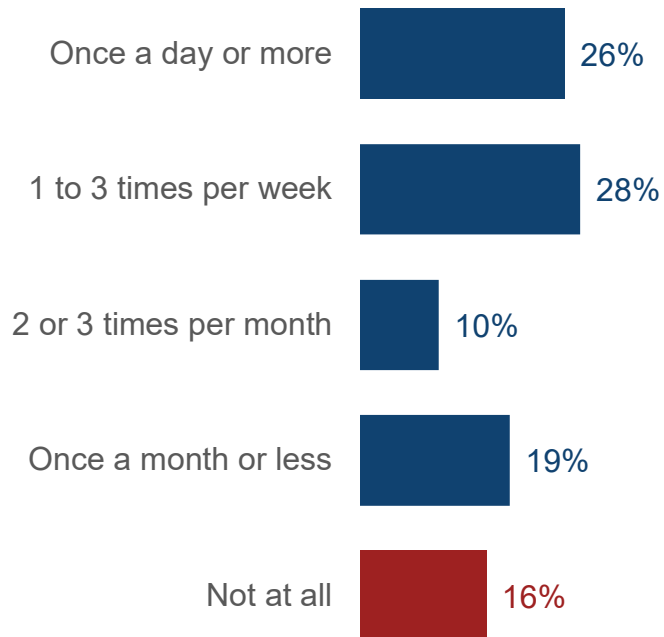


## **RISQUÉ SEXUAL BEHAVIORS**



# Nearly all (83%) report having sexual thoughts, fantasies, or erotic dreams.

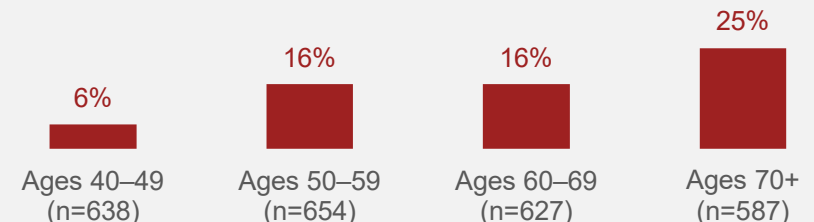
Frequency of sexual thoughts, fantasies, or erotic dreams  
Among adults ages 40+



Q19. How frequently do you have sexual thoughts, fantasies, or erotic dreams?  
(Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)

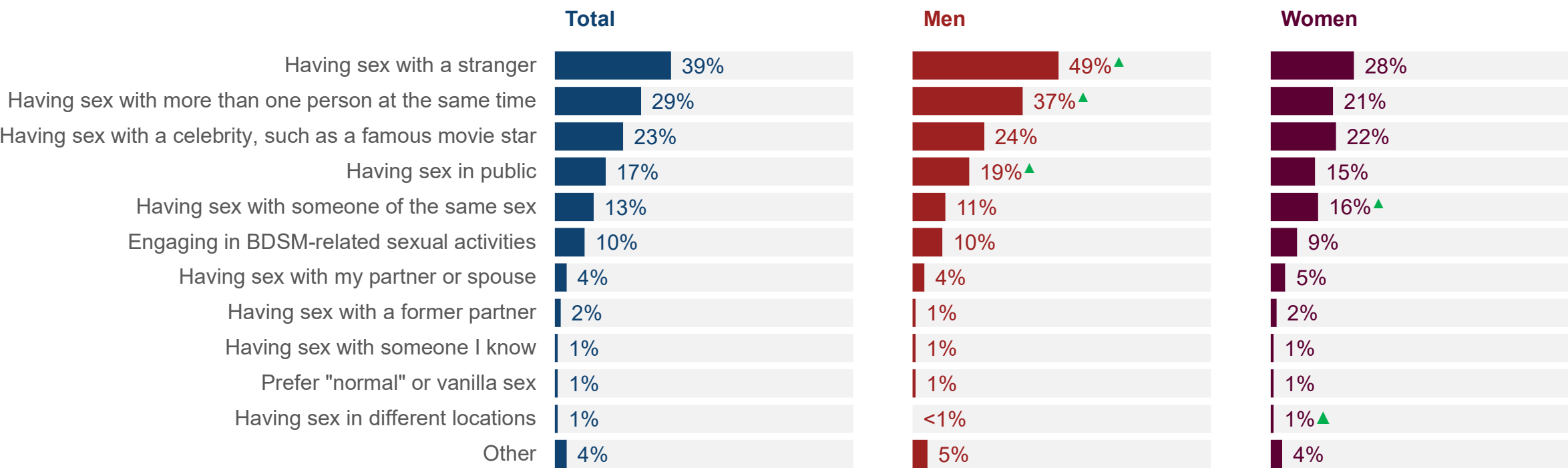
## Key Takeaways:

- **Women** are more likely than men to report not having sexual thoughts, fantasies, or dreams (24% vs. 6%).
- **Those identifying as heterosexual** are more likely to not have sexual thoughts, fantasies, or dreams (16% vs. 2% among those identifying as nonheterosexual).
- **Men** are more likely than women to report having sexual thoughts, fantasies or erotic dreams more than once a day (27% vs. 4%).
- Those 70+ have the highest likelihood of reporting not having these thoughts/dreams.



# Having sex with a stranger is the most common sexual fantasy for both men and women.

Percent who have the following types of sexual fantasies  
*Among adults ages 40+ who admit having sexual fantasies, total and by gender*



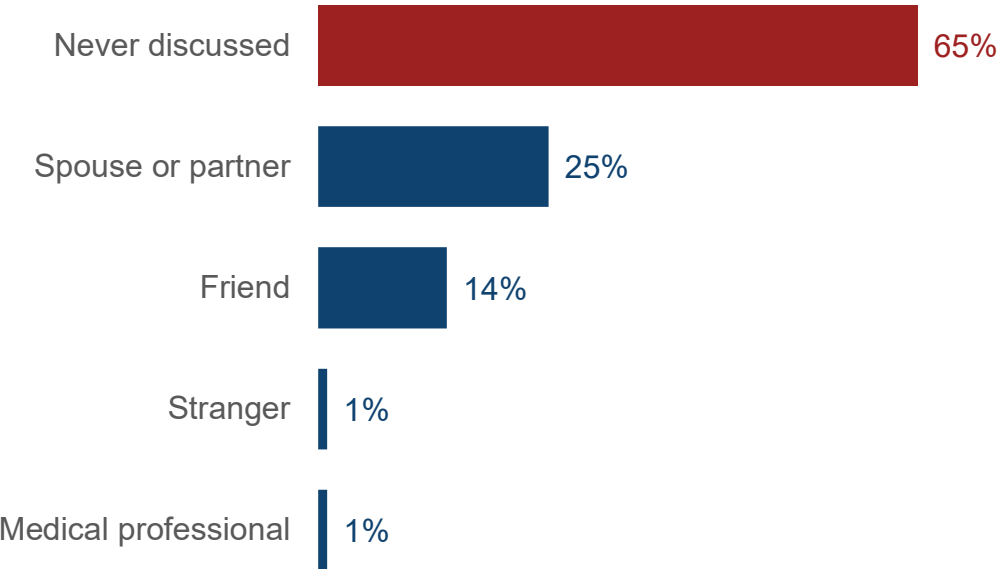
Q20. What kinds of sexual fantasies have you had? (Base: those admitting to having sexual thoughts, fantasies or erotic dreams with at least some frequency; n=2,073)

▲ indicates significant difference between gender identities

# Most sexual fantasies are kept private.

Roughly two-thirds say they haven't discussed their fantasies with others; among those who have, their spouse/partner is most common person they've discussed them with.

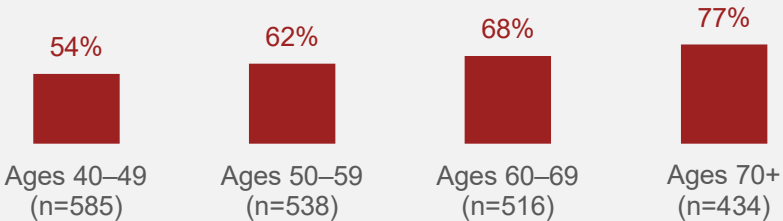
Percent who have discussed sexual fantasies with...  
*Among adults ages 40+ who admit having sexual fantasies*



Q21. Have you ever discussed these fantasies, and if so, with whom? (Base: those admitting to having sexual thoughts, fantasies or erotic dreams with at least some frequency; n=2,073)

## Key Takeaways:

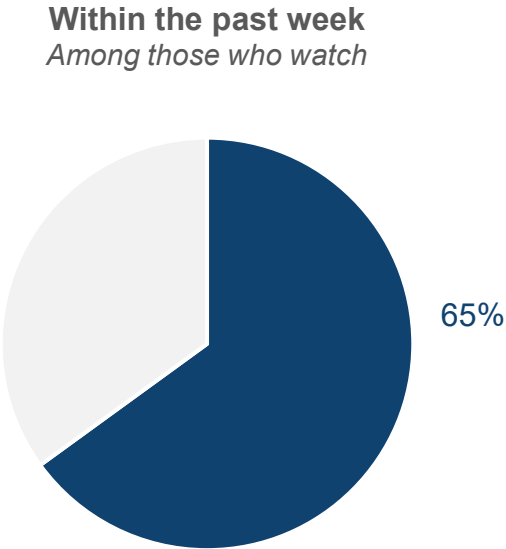
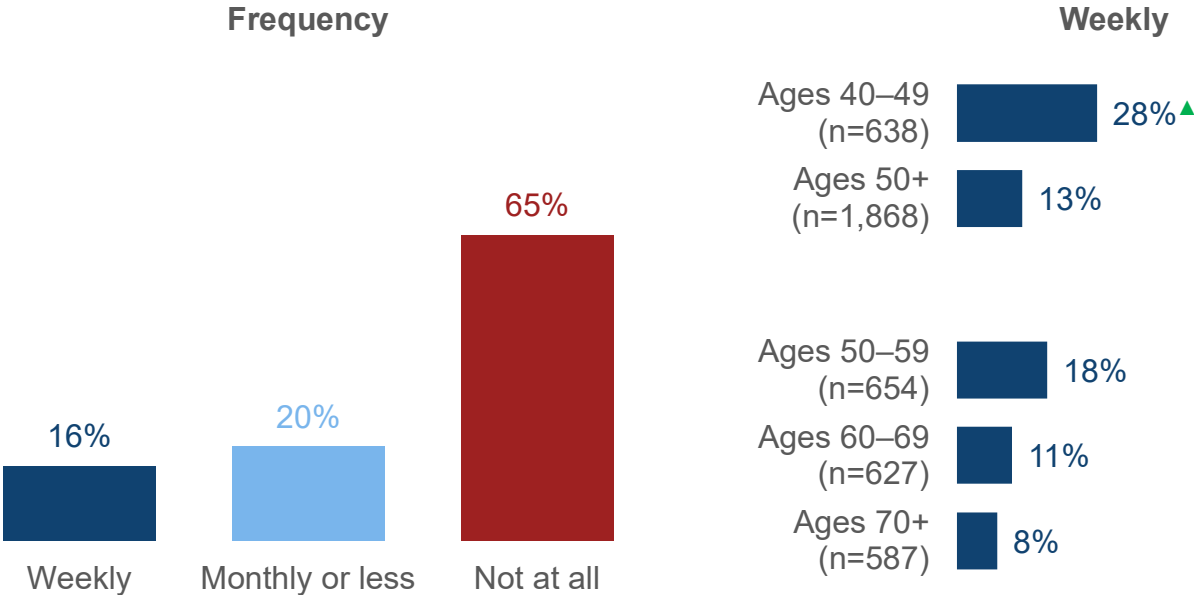
- Those **identifying as heterosexual** are more likely than those identifying as nonheterosexual to say they've never discussed their fantasies (66% vs. 42%); similarly, **those identifying as nonheterosexual** are more likely than those identifying as heterosexual to have discussed with a spouse or partner (38% vs. 24%).
- Older respondents have the highest likelihood of never discussing their fantasies.



# Roughly one in six have watched porn alone or with a partner at least weekly in the past six months.

Among those who do watch porn, two in three have watched within the past week.

Frequency of viewing porn alone or with a partner  
Among adults ages 40+



Q57. During the past 6 months, how often, on average, have you engaged in the following sexual activities?  
(Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)

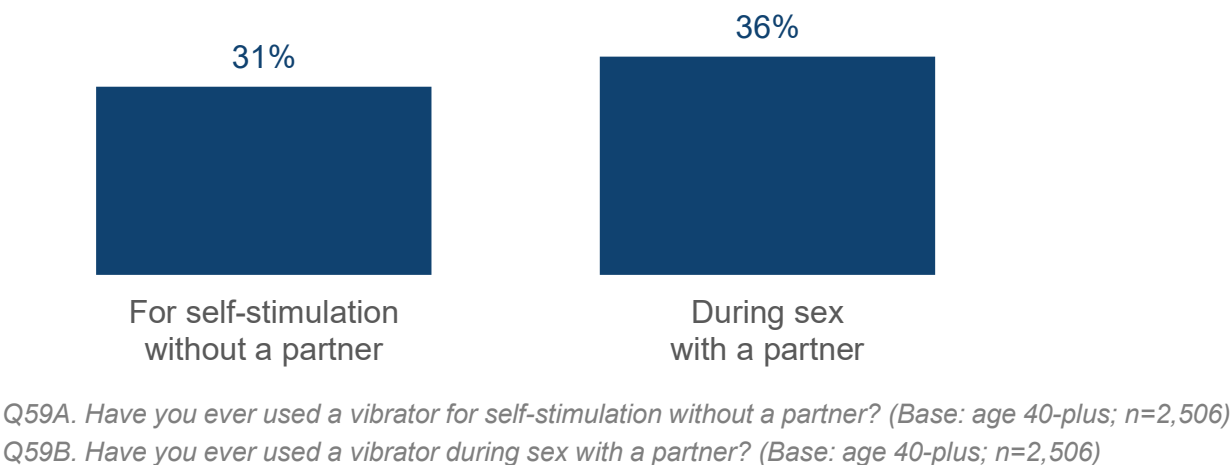
▲ indicates significant difference between comparison groups

Q58. Did you do this last week? (Base: those who have participated in activity; n=829)

# About a third of respondents report using a vibrator.

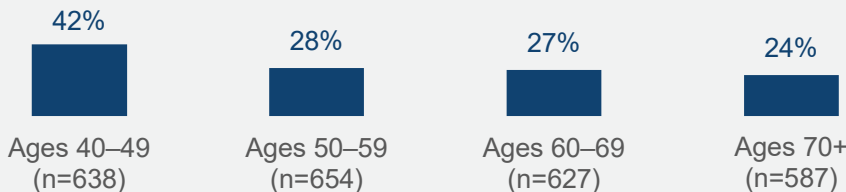
One in three say they have used a vibrator for personal enjoyment. A similar number say they have used a vibrator during sex with a partner.

Percent who have ever used a vibrator  
Among adults ages 40+



## Key Takeaways:

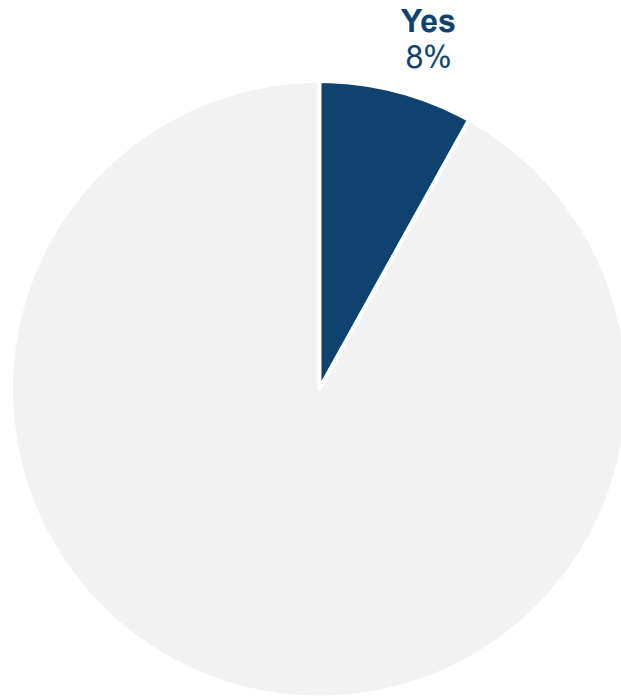
- **Women** are more likely than men to report using a vibrator for self-stimulation without a partner (42% vs. 18%).
- Those **identifying as nonheterosexual** are also more likely than those identifying as heterosexual to report using a vibrator in this way (66% vs. 28%).
- **Men** are more likely than women to report using a vibrator during sex with a partner (39% vs. 33%).
- Those **ages 40–49** have the highest likelihood compared to other age categories.





# One in twelve report having paid for sex at some point in their life.

Percent who have ever paid for sex  
Among adults ages 40+



## Key Takeaways:

- **Men** are more likely than women to report having paid for sex (16% vs. 1%).
- Those **identifying as nonheterosexual** are more likely to report having paid for sex than those identifying as heterosexual (19% vs. 7%).

Q70. Have you ever paid for sex? (Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)



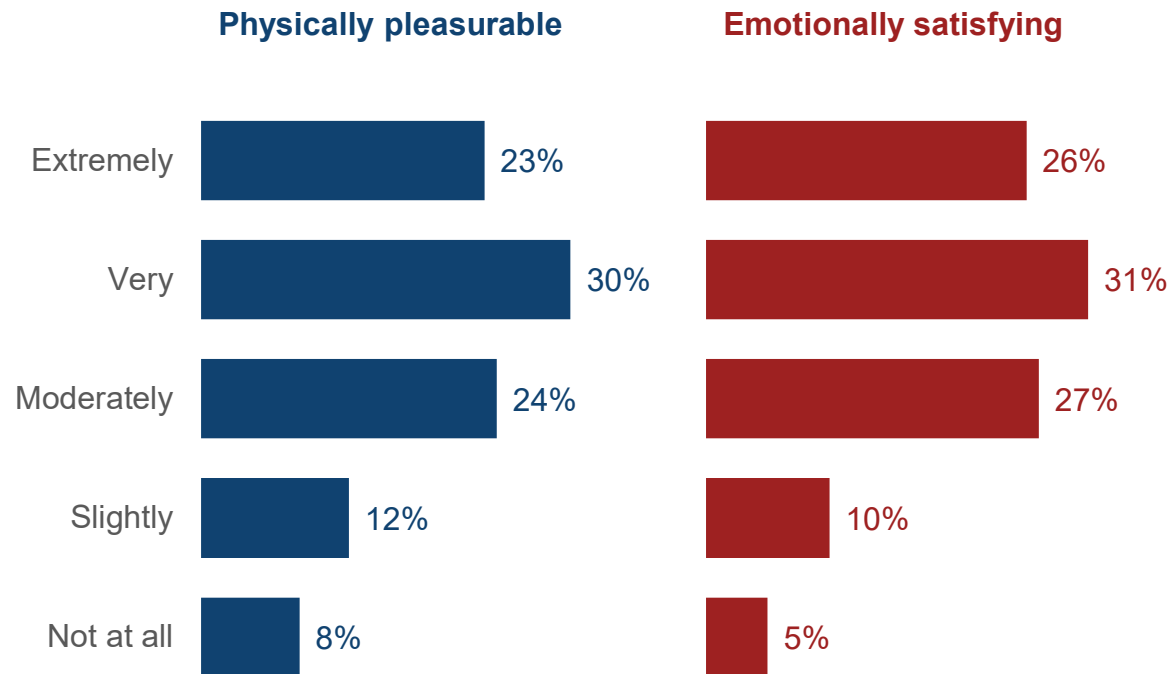
## SEXUAL SATISFACTION



# Four in five find their relationship physically pleasurable and emotionally satisfying.

Rating of relationship with their partner in the past six months

Among adults ages 40+ with a sexual partner



## Key Takeaways:

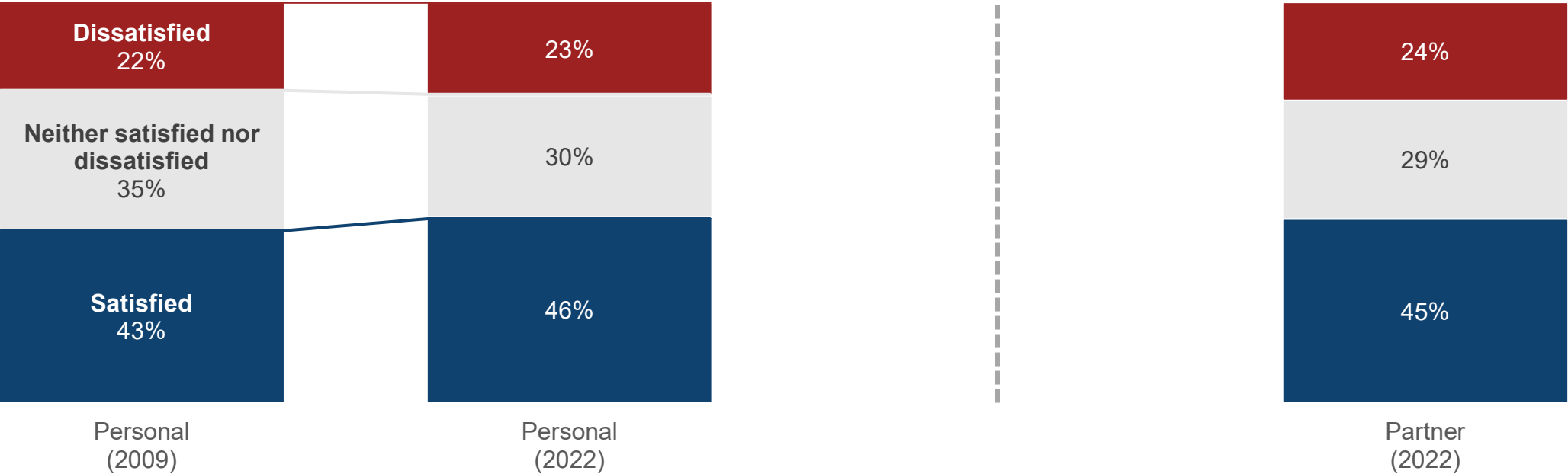
- **Men and women** give consistent ratings of how physically pleasurable their relationship has been.
- Those **not living with their sexual partner** are more likely to rate their relationship as very or extremely physically pleasurable (67% vs. 53% among those cohabitating).
- Though proportions are small, **women** are more likely than men to rate their relationship as not at all emotionally satisfying (7% vs. 4%).
- Those in **longer term relationships** are more likely to consider theirs very or extremely emotionally satisfying (62% of those in relationships of 20+ years, vs. 52% of those in relationships of five years or less).

Q45. In the past 6 months, how physically pleasurable was your relationship with your partner? (Base: has had a sexual partner in past six months; n=1,821)

Q46. In the past 6 months, how emotionally pleasurable was your relationship with your partner? (Base: has had a sexual partner in past six months; n=1,821)

# Less than half are very or extremely satisfied with their sex life; this proportion is in line with perceptions of their partner's sex life satisfaction as well.

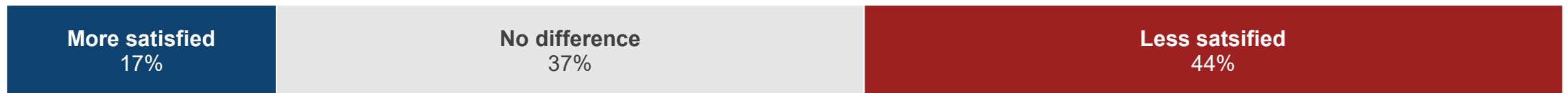
Personal satisfaction with sex life, 2009 vs. 2023, and partner's perceived satisfaction with sex life, 2023  
Among adults ages 40+



Q14. How satisfied are you with your sex life? (Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)  
Q47. How satisfied do you think your partner is with your sexual relationship? (Base: has had a sexual partner in past six months; n=1,821)

# For most, sex lives are as satisfying — or even better – than a decade ago.

Self-reported level of sexual desire compared to 10 years ago  
Among adults ages 40+



## Key Takeaways:

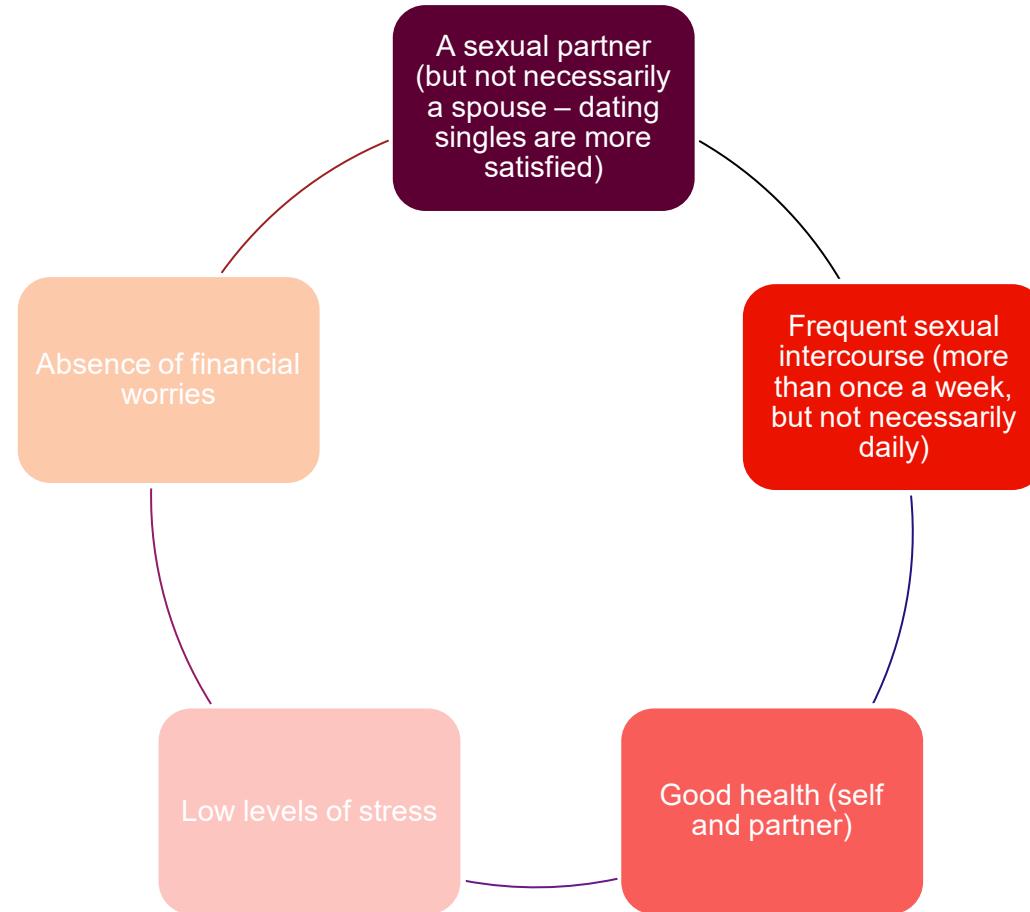
- Those **identifying as nonheterosexual** are significantly more likely than those identifying as heterosexual to report being more satisfied now (30% vs. 17%).
- Those with **two or more sexual partners** are more likely than those with one partner to report being more satisfied now (36% vs. 20%).
- Those **not cohabitating with a sexual partner** are also more likely to report being more satisfied now (41% vs. 19%).
- Men are more likely than women to report being less satisfied than they were 10 years ago (49% vs. 40%).

Q15. Are you more satisfied, or less satisfied, with your sex life than you were 10 years ago? (Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)



# A happy sex life can be cultivated.

Those who are the most satisfied with their sex life tend to have the following:



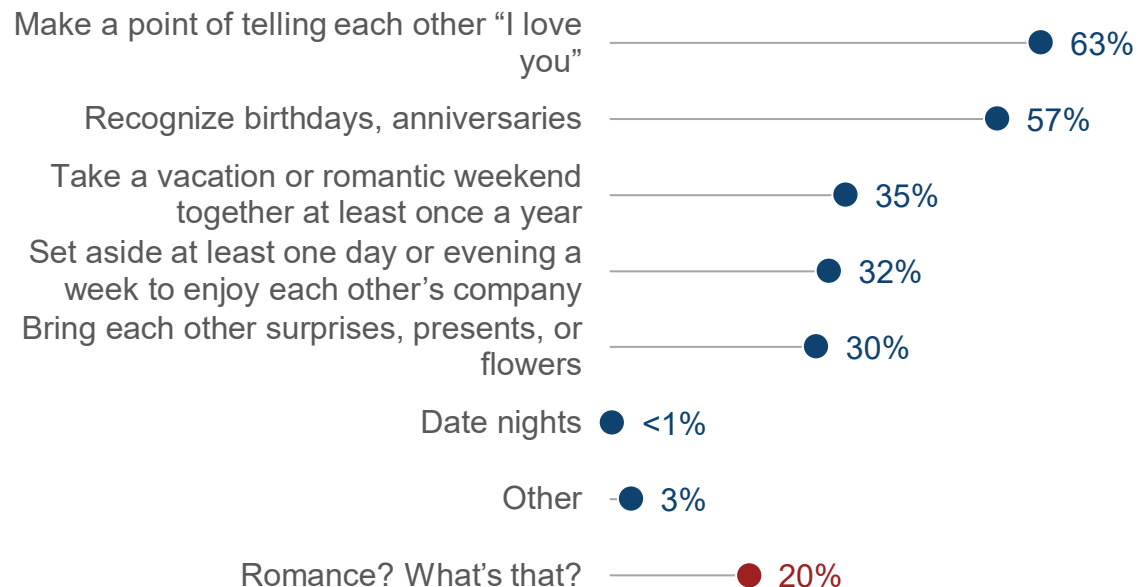


# ROMANCE AND INFIDELITY

# Saying “I love you,” and recognizing special days are the most common ways respondents keep romance in their relationship.

Findings are largely consistent across gender and age groups.

Percent who do the following to keep romance in a relationship  
*Among adults ages 40+ with a sexual partner*



Q39. How do you keep romance in your relationship? (Base: 40-plus, has had a sexual partner in past six months; n=1,821)

## Romance? What’s that?

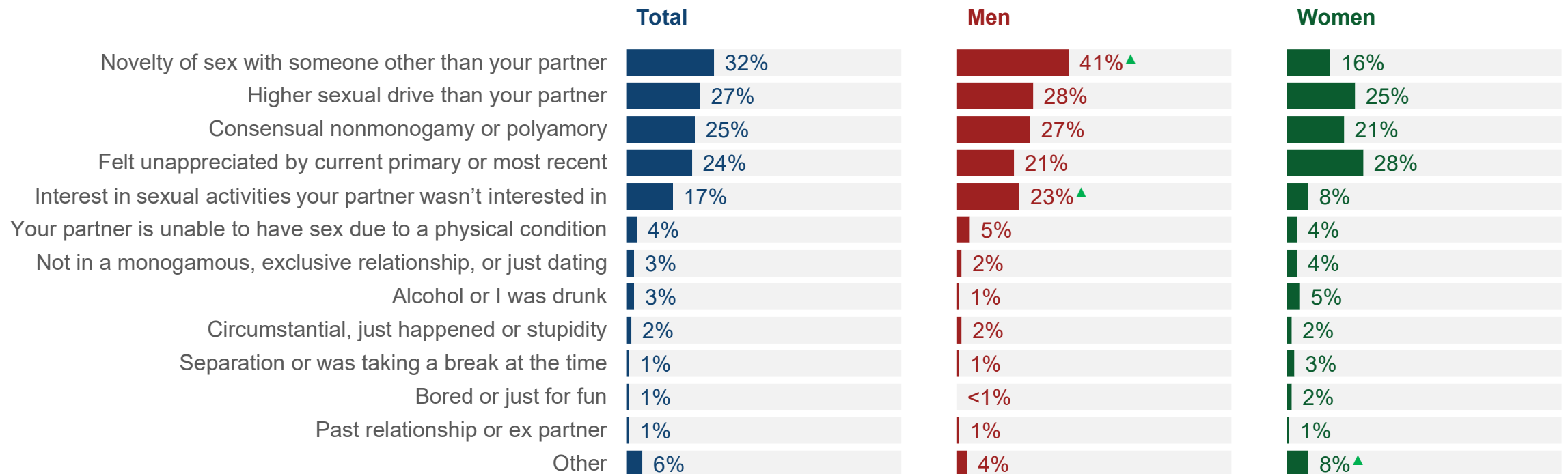
Those most likely to say “Romance? What’s that?” include:

- **Non-heterosexual** individuals (39%).
- Those with **no current sexual partner** (34%).
- Those with a **male partner** (24%).
- People who **do not exercise** (30%).
- Those who are **single and not dating** (37%).
- Those who are **divorced or never married** (31%).

# The novelty of sex with someone else is the most common reason for choosing another partner, especially among men.

Percent who engaged in infidelity for the following reasons

Among adults ages 40+ who had a sexual relationship with another partner, total and by gender



Q50. What were the reasons of having sex with another partner while in a relationship with your current primary/most recent one?

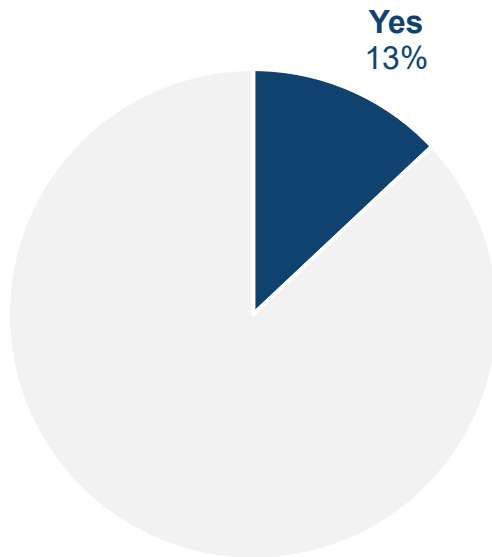
(Base: 40-plus, had a sexual relationship with another partner; n=257)

▲ indicates significant difference between gender identities

# Infidelity is the “not-so-secret” secret.

The rate of people who have been unfaithful (14%) is nearly identical to the rate of people who believe their partner was unfaithful during their relationship (13%).

Percent who believe their partner cheated on them  
Among adults ages 40+ with a sexual partner



Q53. To the best of your knowledge, during your relationship with your current primary/most recent partner did your partner have a sexual relationship with someone else other than you? (Base: has had a sexual partner in past six months; n=1,821)

Q49. During your relationship with your [current primary/most recent] partner, did you ever have a sexual relationship with another partner? (Base: 40-plus and has had a sexual partner in past six months; n=1,821)

## Key Takeaways:

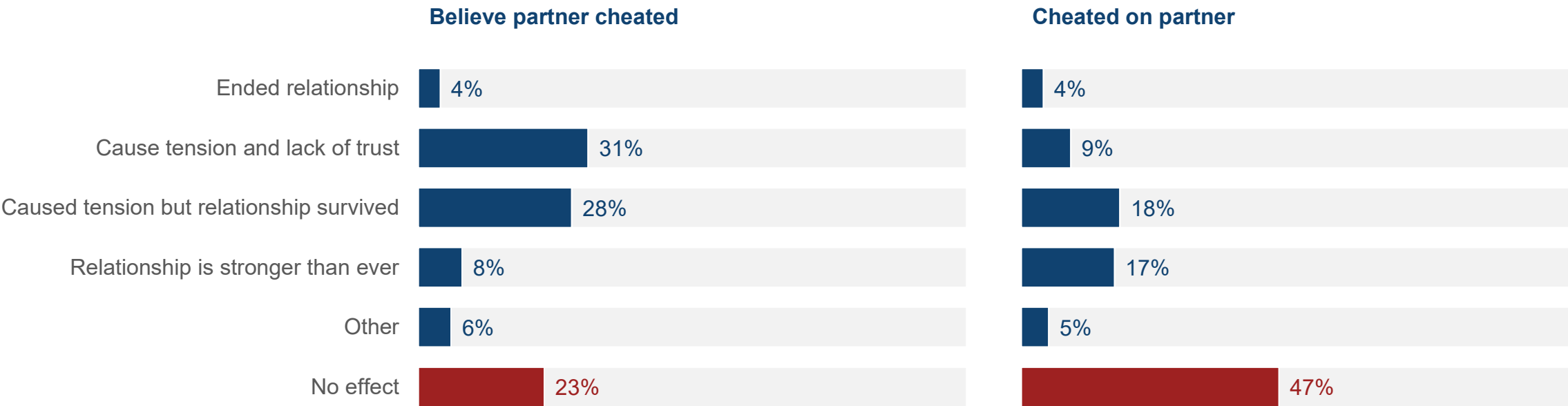
- **Men** are more likely than women to say they've had a sexual relationship with someone other than their partner (17% vs. 11%).
- Those **identifying as nonheterosexual** are more likely than those identifying as heterosexual to have had a sexual relationship with someone else (41% vs. 12%).
- **Women** are more likely than men to believe their partner has had another sexual relationship (15% vs. 11%).
- Those **identifying as nonheterosexual** are more likely than those identifying as heterosexual to believe their partner has had a sexual relationship with someone else (37% vs. 11%).
- Those **not living with their partner** are more likely than those cohabitating to have this belief (22% vs. 10%).



# After infidelity most relationships do not end.

Infidelity has a negative impact on relationships, but few end their relationship. Just under a quarter (23%) say this scenario had no impact on their relationship, while over half (59%) say it caused tension in the relationship. **Men** are more likely than women to say that there was no effect on their relationship (34% vs. 14%).

Impact of infidelity on relationship with partner  
Among adults ages 40+ who believe their partner cheated or who cheated on their partner



Q54. How, if at all, has your partner having sex with someone else other than you affected your relationship with your partner? (Base: believes partner had a sexual relationship with another partner; n=229). Q51. How, if at all, has your having sex with another partner affected your relationship with your partner? Base: had a sexual relationship with another partner while being in a relationship, n=257)

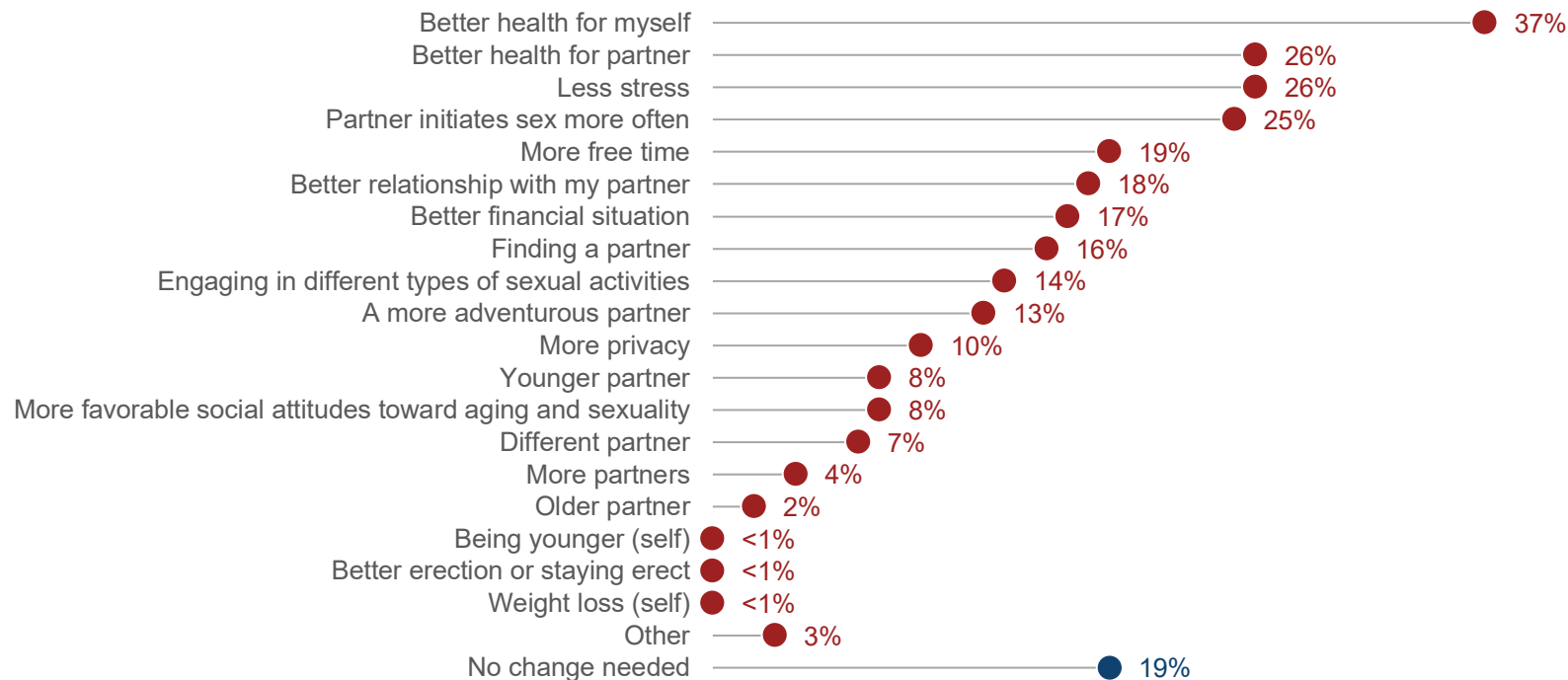


# HEALTH AND SEXUAL FUNCTIONING

# Improving one's health could be the key to a better sex life.

Four in five (85%) say their current health is at least good. Better health for me and for my partner are the top changes that respondents think might increase their sex life satisfaction.

Percent who say the following could increase their sex life  
Among adults ages 40+



Even those who consider their current health to be excellent or good cite “better health for myself” as the largest factor that would increase satisfaction.

Q17. What changes, if any, would increase satisfaction with your sex life now? (Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)

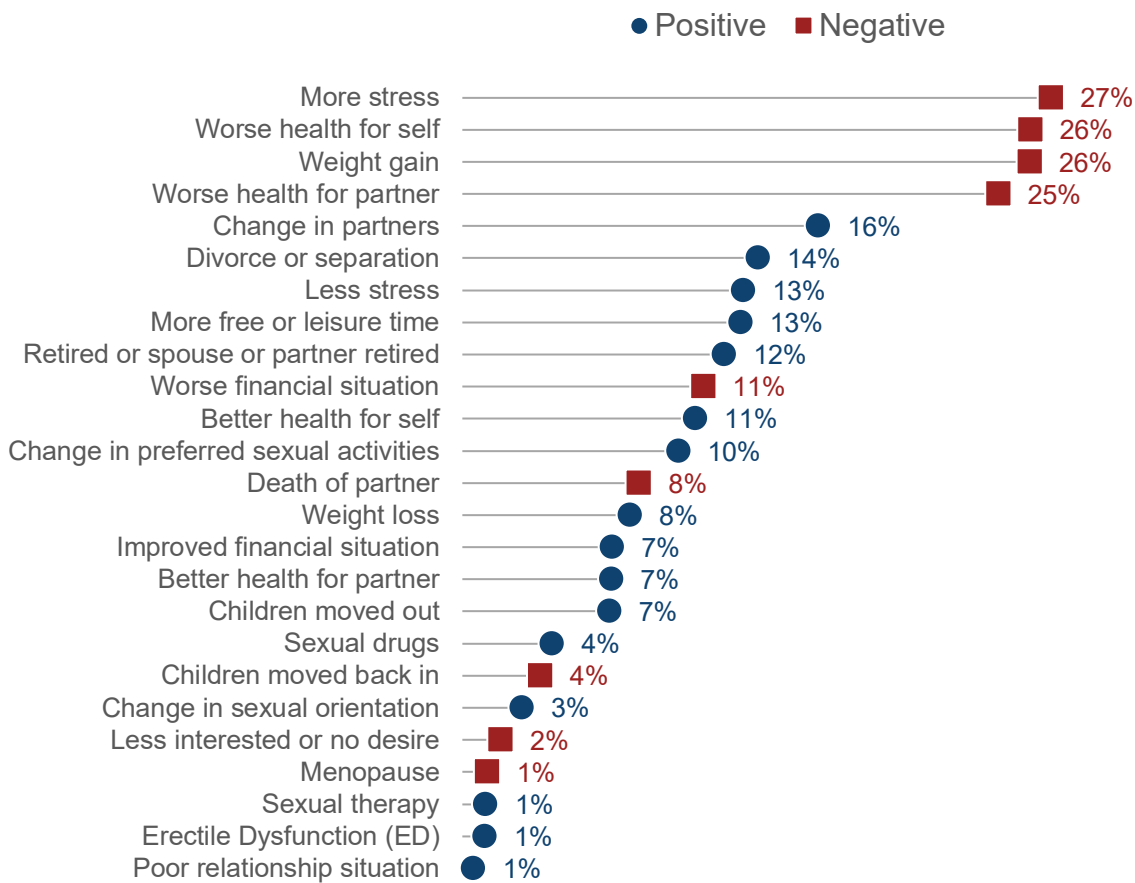
# Stress, a decline in health, and life-stage changes are the most common factors impacting one’s sexual life.

Personal life-stage changes such as divorce or retirement have a large impact on sexual life.

Respondents who are **unsatisfied with their sex life** are more likely to report being high-stress (34% vs. 18%) than those who are satisfied

Q16. What changes have affected your sexual life over the past 10 years? (Base: ages 40+ ,those reporting a change in sex life satisfaction; n=1,550)

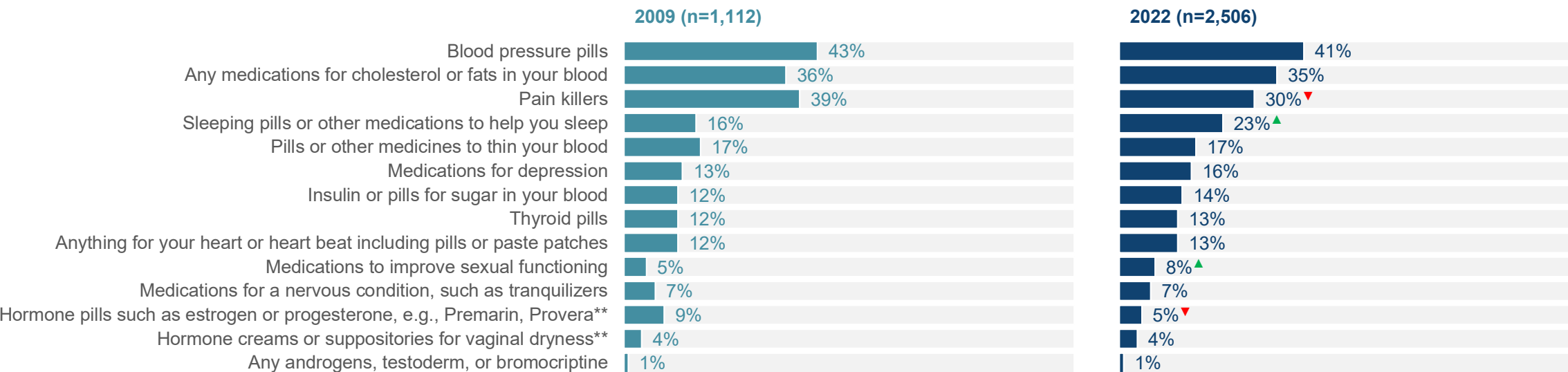
Percent who say the following factors impact their sexual life  
Among adults ages 40+ who report a change in their sexual life versus 10 years ago



# Sexual functioning can be impacted by health-related issues requiring medication.

Considering four in five (79%) have been diagnosed with a medical condition, it is not surprising that over the last decade, demand for prescriptions has remained strong or grown, particularly for drugs to manage depression, sleep issues, and sexual functioning.

Percent who use the following types of prescription drugs for medical issues, 2010 vs. 2023  
Among adults ages 40+



Q71. In the past 6 months have you taken any of the following prescription drugs? (Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)

▲ indicates significant difference between comparison groups

Data for the years 2004 and 2009 are drawn from Fisher, Linda, et al. Sex, Romance, and Relationships: AARP Survey of Midlife and Older Adults. Washington, DC: AARP Research, May 2010. <https://doi.org/10.26419/res.00063.001>.

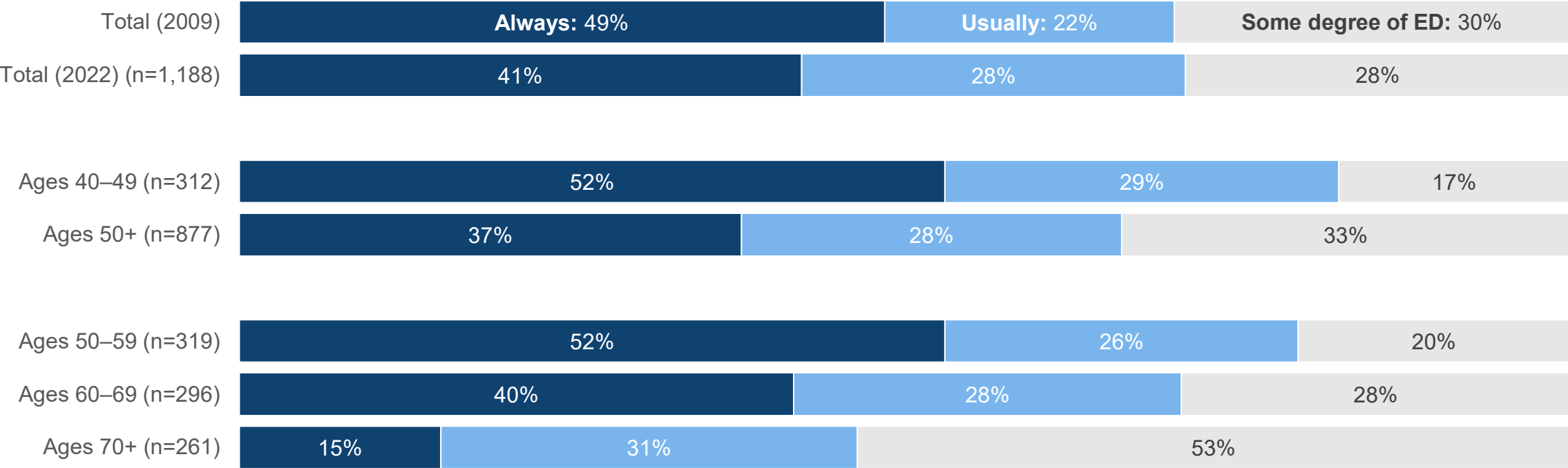


**As men and women get older, one thing doesn't change with time: their ability to enjoy erotic pleasure. Unfortunately, health issues such as diabetes, high-blood pressure, stress, and physiological changes can take a toll on sexual functioning.**



# Just over four in ten men say they are always able to get and keep an erection good enough for intercourse, down from half of men in 2009.

Frequency of being able to get and keep an erection good enough for sexual intercourse  
Among men ages 40+, total (2009 and 2022) and by age range (2022)



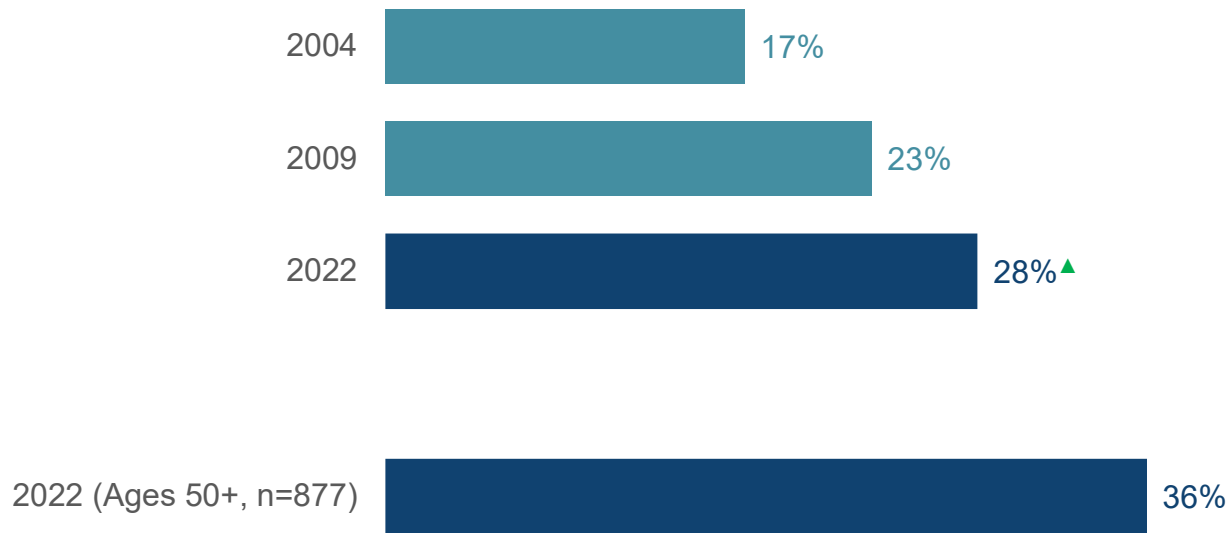
Q65. Erectile dysfunction (sometimes referred to as “impotence”) refers to being unable to get and keep an erection that is rigid enough for satisfactory sexual activity.  
How would you describe yourself? (Base: men; n=1,188)

# Just over one in four men have been diagnosed with erectile dysfunction or impotence, up significantly from past studies.

One-third of men ages 50-plus (36%) say they've been diagnosed

Diagnosed with Erectile Dysfunction or Impotence, 2004, 2009, and 2022

Among men ages 40+



Three in five men (62%) who say they have had general sexual functioning problems have sought treatment

While one in three men (34%) who have been diagnosed with Erectile Dysfunction or Impotence have sought treatment

Q10. Please indicate which of these medical conditions you have been diagnosed with. (Base: asked of men only; n=1,188)

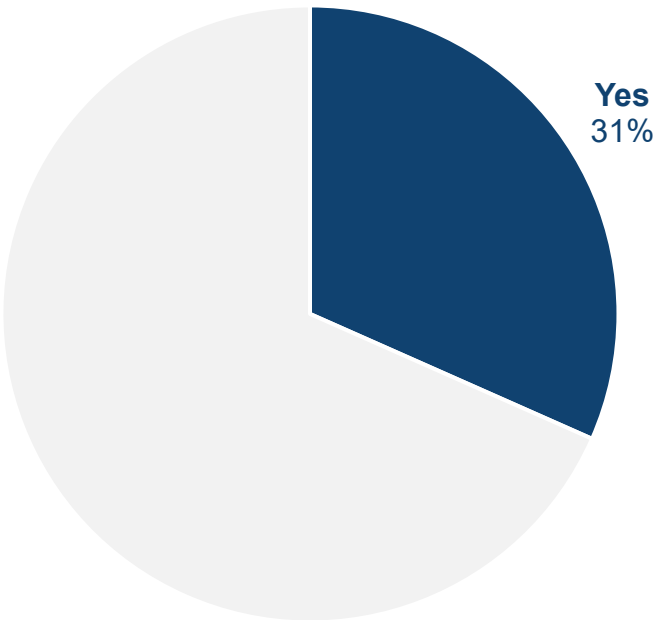
Q11. Please indicate for which of these medical conditions you are currently receiving treatment (Base: Base: those diagnosed with each)

Q66. Have you ever had any problems related to sexual functioning? (Base: men ages 40-plus; n=1,188)

▲ indicates significant difference between comparison groups

# Roughly a third report using lubricant for sexual activities.

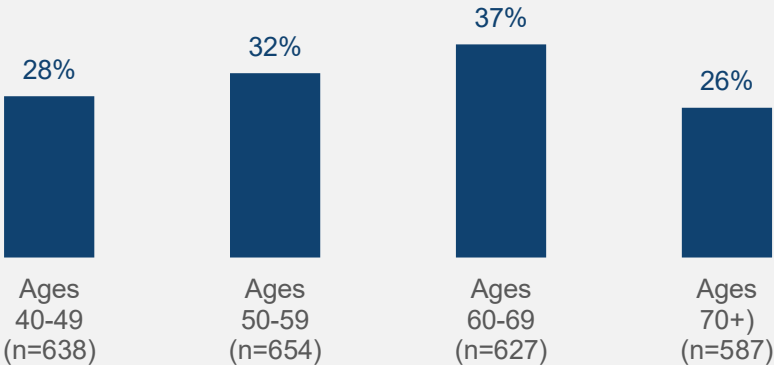
Percent who use lubricant for sexual activities  
Among adults ages 40+



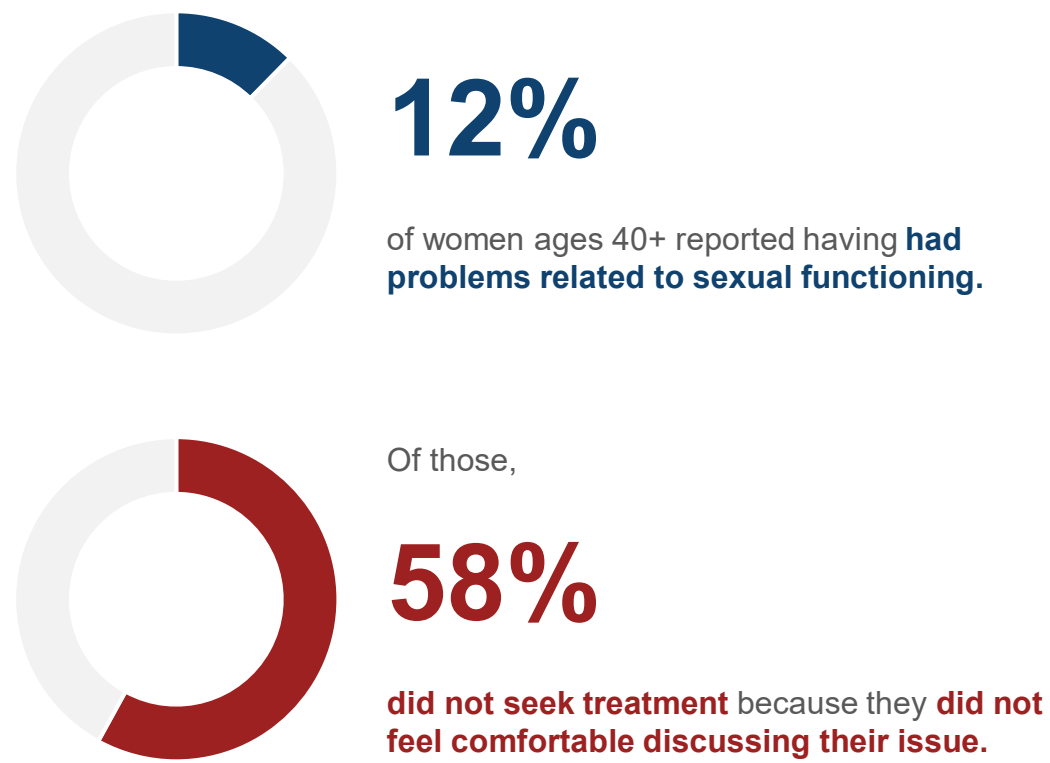
Q59. Do you currently use lubricant while engaging in sexual activities, including sexual intercourse? (Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)

## Key Takeaways:

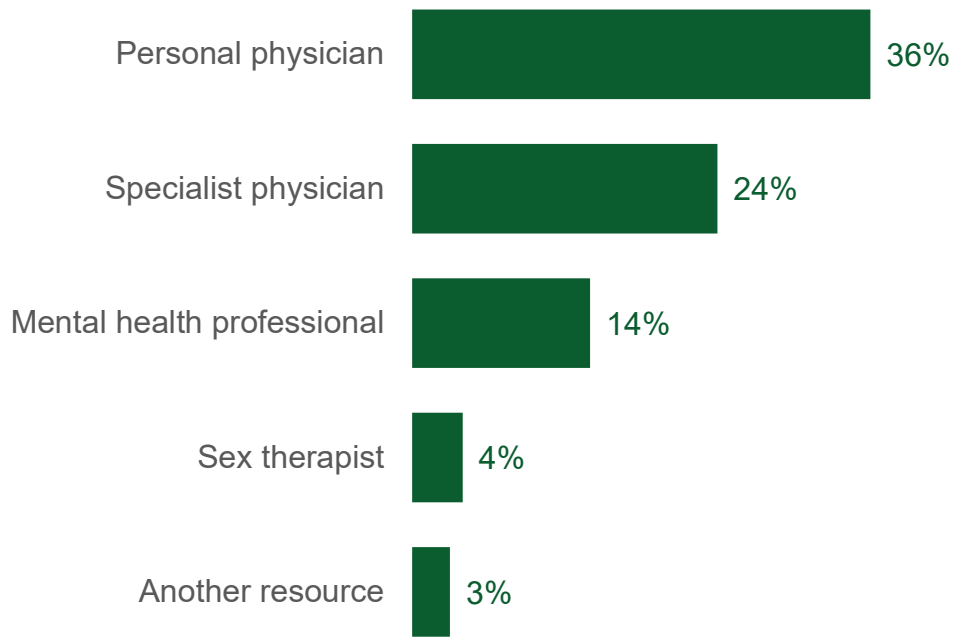
- **Women** are less likely than men to report using lubricant (27% vs. 36%).
- Those **identifying as nonheterosexual** are more likely to report using lubricant compared to those identifying as heterosexual (52% vs. 30%).
- Those **age 60-69** are most likely to report using lubricant compared to all other age categories.



# Among women reporting problems with sexual functioning, less than half sought treatment.



Resources used for sexual functioning treatment  
Among women ages 40+ who sought treatment



Q66. Have you ever had any problems related to sexual functioning? (Base: women ages 40-plus; n=1,318)

Q67. Have you ever sought treatment for any problems related to sexual functioning with any of the following? (Base: women with reported problems of sexual functioning; n=163)

Q68. Why did you not seek treatment for problems related to sexual functioning?(Base: women reporting an issue with sexual function sought treatment; n=97)





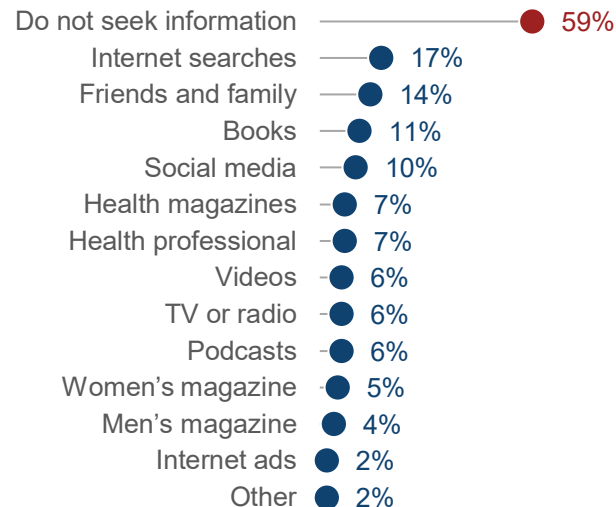
## INFORMATION SOURCES



# Most (59%) have not sought relationship info in the past year; for those who have, internet searches and friends/family are most common sources.

Sources of information about relationships used in the past year

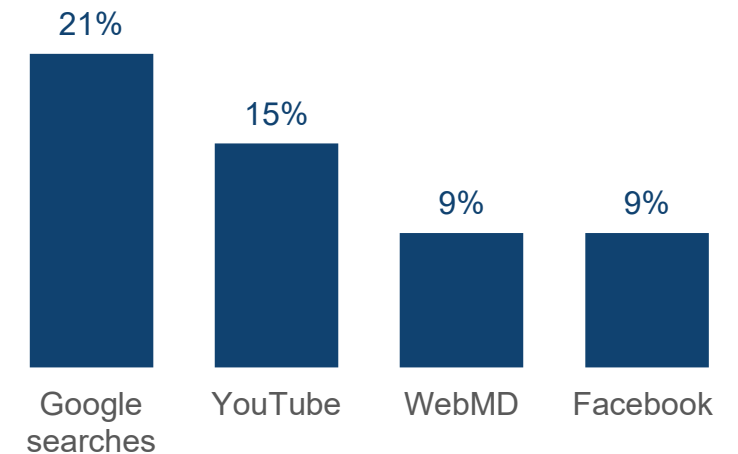
Among adults ages 40+



Those most likely to have sought relationship information in the past year include...

- Those in a **shorter-term sexual relationship** (57% of those in a relationship of less than five years vs. 37% of those in a relationship of 20+ years).
- **Younger respondents** (53% of those 40–49, vs. 38% of those 50-59, 35% of those 60-69, and 31% of those age 70+).

Among those who have turned to the internet for relationship information (n=446), top websites used include...

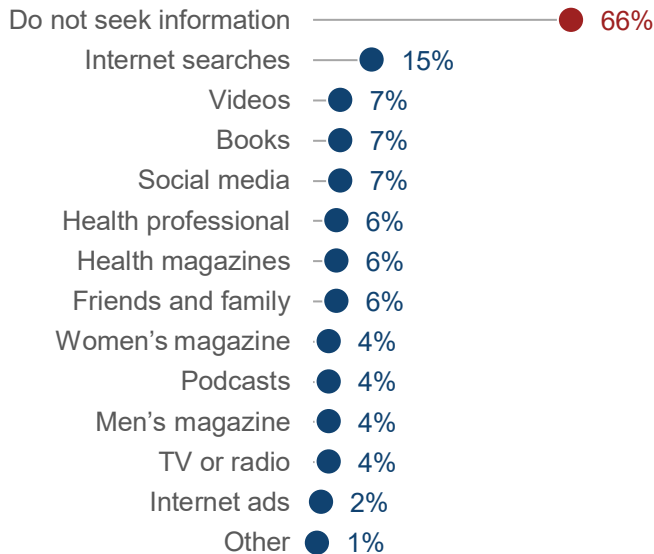


Q22. What sources have you used in the past year for information about relationships? (Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)

Q23. Can you please list the top three websites you visited most often as sources of information about relationships. (Base: those who have used internet as a relationship info resource (n=446))

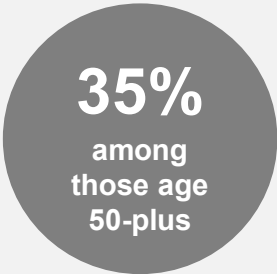
# There are few reputable sources of information about sex for those older adults who are seeking information.

Sources of information about sex used in the past year  
Among adults ages 40+

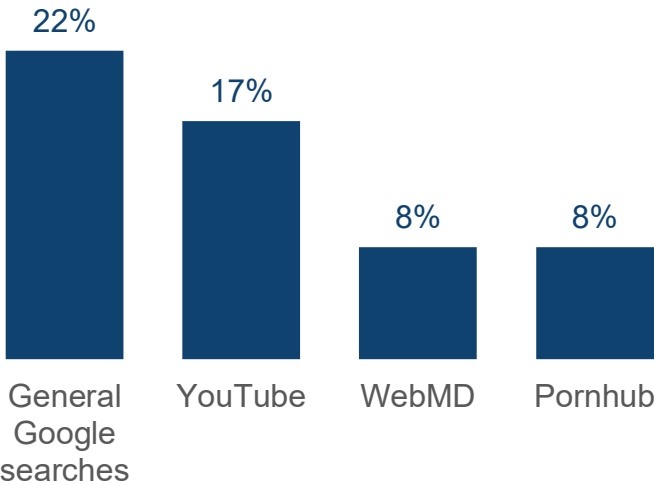


Those most likely to have sought sex information in the past year include...

- **Men** (40% vs. 25% among women).
- **Younger respondents** (40% of those 40–49, vs 32% of those 50–59, 32% of those 60–69, and 26% of those age 70+).



Among those who have turned to the internet for sex information (n=395), top websites used include...



Q24. What sources have you used in the past year for information about sex? (Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)

Q25. Can you please list the top three websites you visited most often as sources of information about sex? (Base: those who have used internet as a sex information resource (n=395))



# IMPLICATIONS



# Implications

The high optimism about the future among older adults 40-plus suggests they may be **open to exploring new or different products, experiences, and opportunities** that will enrich their well-being, personal relationships, and sex lives.

The recognition that sex is a vital component of a good relationship, coupled with predominantly sex-positive attitudes, underscores the significance of intimacy in later life. Additionally, the continued engagement in sexual behaviors and the near-universal prevalence of private sexual fantasies and thoughts among older adults highlight the ageless nature of desire. While poor health, stress, and negative life experiences can take a toll on one's sex life, **addressing factors impacting sexual satisfaction and function** may appeal to older adults.

Indeed, **educational and informational campaigns targeting older adults' interests, needs, and wants may be received positively** and have the secondary effect of fostering a more open and supportive environment for discussions on aging, well-being, and sexual health.





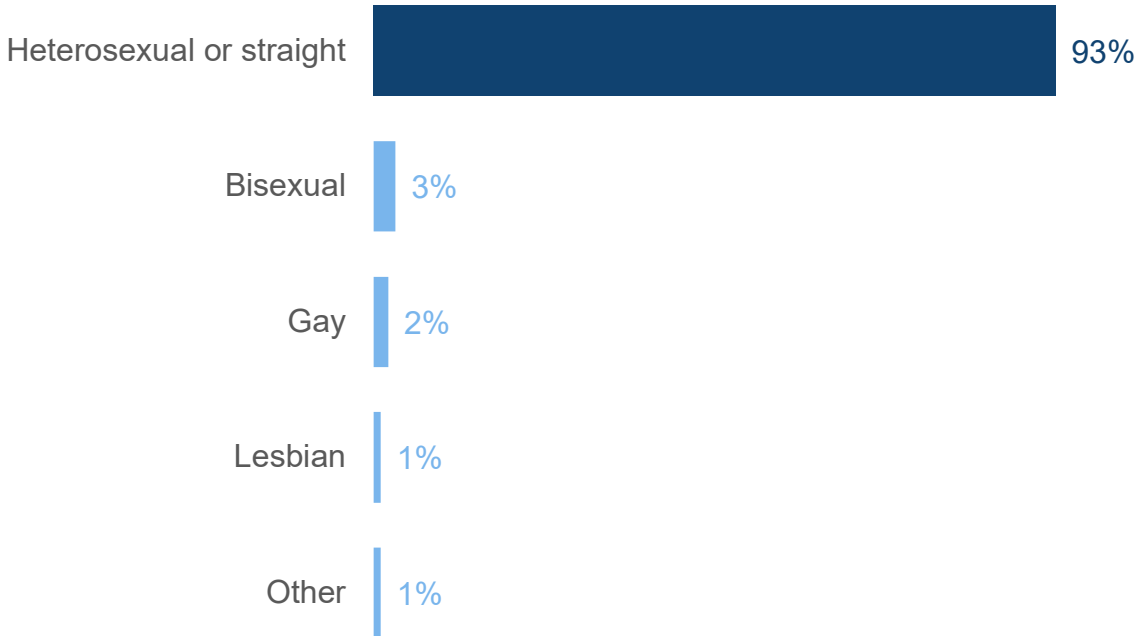


## DEMOGRAPHICS AND OBJECTIVE



# Most (93%) in this audience identify as heterosexual or straight.

Sexual orientation  
Among adults ages 40+



Those aged 75+ have the highest likelihood of identifying as straight

Percent who identify as heterosexual or straight  
Among adults ages 40+



Q27. Do you consider yourself to be... (Base: age 40-plus; n=2,506)

# Demographics

<i>Gender</i> <i>n=2,506</i>		<i>Ethnicity</i> <i>n=2,506</i>		<i>Marital Status</i> <i>n=2,506</i>	
Female	53%	Caucasian	67%	Married	58%
Male	47%	African American	11%	Divorced	17%
<i>Age</i> <i>n=2,506</i>		Hispanic	14%	Never Married	14%
40–49 (n=638)	25%	Asian	4%	Separated	6%
50–59 (n=654)	26%	Other	3%	Widowed	6%
60–69 (n=627)	25%	<i>Survey Language</i> <i>n=2,506</i>		<i>Live With Partner</i> <i>n=2,501</i>	
70+ (n=587)	23%	English	98%	Yes	66%
		Spanish	2%	No	34%

# Demographics (cont.)

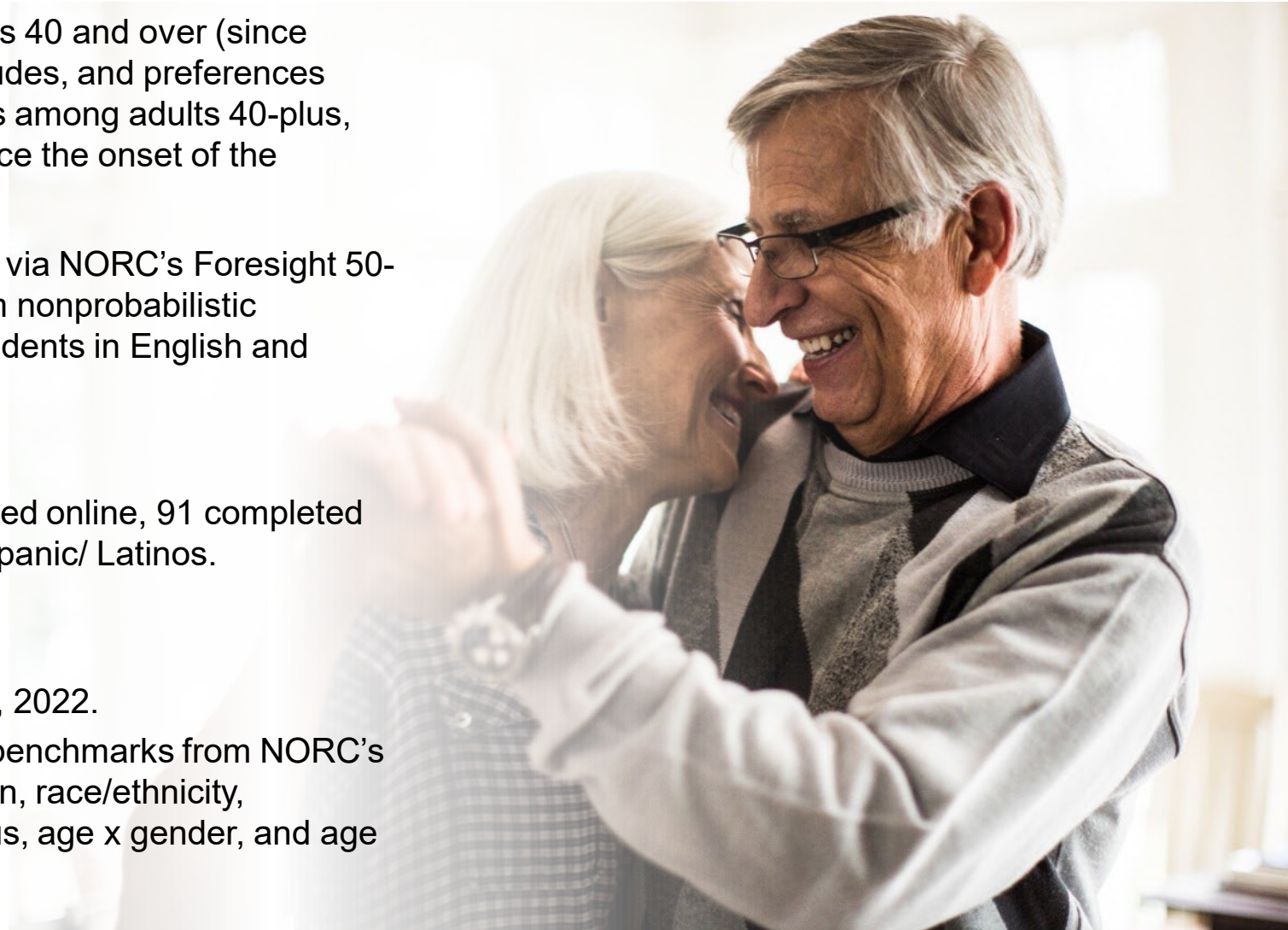
<i>Education</i> <i>n=2,506</i>		<i>Employment Status</i> <i>n=2,506</i>		<i>Income</i> <i>n=2,506</i>	
Less than HS	8%	Employed	44%	Less than \$30,000	24%
HS Graduate	30%	Retired	29%	\$30K – \$60K	26%
Tech/Some College	25%	Disabled	9%	\$60K – \$100K	23%
College Graduate	19%	Self-Employed	8%	\$100K or more	27%
Postgraduate	18%	Laid off/Looking	5%		
		Other	5%		

# Demographics (cont.)

<i>Region</i> <i>n=2,506</i>		<i>Household Size</i> <i>n=2,506</i>		<i>Home Ownership</i> <i>n=2,506</i>	
South	38%	Live alone	19%	Own	76%
West	23%	2 people	40%	Rent	21%
Midwest	21%	3 people	16%	Other	3%
Northeast	18%	4 people	13%		
		5 people	6%		
		6 people	6%		
<i>Area Type</i> <i>n=2,506</i>					
Metro Area	83%				
Nonmetro Area	17%				

# Objectives and Methodology

- **Objectives:** Track the sexual experiences of adults 40 and over (since 1999), including how perceptions, behaviors, attitudes, and preferences have changed over time. Understand relationships among adults 40-plus, assessing whether connections have changed since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Methodology:** A mix of online and phone surveys via NORC's Foresight 50-plus® Panel, supplemented with respondents from nonprobabilistic consumer panels. Survey available to U.S. respondents in English and Spanish.
- **Qualifications:** Ages 40-plus
- **Sample:** 2,506 completed surveys (2,415 completed online, 91 completed by phone) in addition to an oversample of 880 Hispanic/ Latinos.
  - Ages 40–49 n=638
  - Ages 50-plus n=1,868
- **Interviewing Dates:** November 28–December 14, 2022.
- **Weighing:** Data were weighted using population benchmarks from NORC's Current Population Survey for age, gender, division, race/ethnicity, education, housing tenure, household phone status, age x gender, and age x race/ethnicity.
- **Survey Length:** Median – 20 minutes.





# Research Overview



The overall objective of this research is to measure US adults' realities and perceptions around relationships, sex, and health and well-being, and understand how these factors impact their lives

## Methodology

- This study was conducted using a mix of online and phone surveys by NORC at the University of Chicago on behalf of AARP, using NORC's Foresight 50+® Panel (Supplemented by the AmeriSpeak® Panel for the portion of the sample that is 40–49 years old); survey results analysis conducted by MDC Research.
- Surveys available to respondents in English and Spanish.
- A total of 2,506 surveys were completed between November 28, 2022 and December 14, 2022.
  - Phone: 91 completed surveys
  - Web: 2,415 completed surveys
- Survey results were weighted to match current U.S. census data.

## Target Audience

- General population age 40+
- Oversample of Hispanic population age 40+



AARP and NORC at the University of Chicago are both Charter Members of the AAPOR Transparency Initiative, which fosters open science of survey research by acknowledging those organizations that pledge to practice transparency in their reporting of survey-based research findings.



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This research was designed and executed by AARP Research