



2024 She's the Difference: The Wildcard of the 2024 Election

AARP Survey of the 2024 Likely Electorate

About this survey

She's the Difference is AARP's ongoing research series exploring the priorities and concerns of women age 50 and over — a critical voting demographic. Since 2019, AARP has worked with top-rated political pollsters from both sides of the aisle to conduct in-depth quantitative and qualitative research to explore — and explain — the mindset, attitudes, fears, and hopes of women voters ages 50 and up.

For this research project, Echelon Insights, in collaboration with GBAO, conducted a survey on behalf of AARP to understand the opinions of voters in the 2024 likely electorate (LE), and in particular, women LE voters aged 50 and older. A non-probability online survey of 3,380 voters in the likely electorate nationwide, was conducted between January 10 and January 24, 2024. Data from women contained in this report were collected from 2,001 women likely electorate voters age 50+, including 410 Black women LE voters age 50+, 353 Hispanic/Latina women LE voters age 50+, and 338 AAPI women LE voters age 50+. The margin of error for voters overall is ± 2.6 percentage points and the margin of error for women voters age 50+ is ± 3.0 percentage points.

Women Voters 50+ Are Biggest “Wild Card” In 2024

Women aged 50+ have not yet made up their minds about the 2024 election. Ideologically diverse, these women share common concerns about the economy, our nation’s political divides, and the overall future of the country, echoing findings from our Fall 2023 focus groups.

Given that women 50+ have consistently been the largest voting bloc by age and gender in the last four national elections¹, their importance in the upcoming election cannot be overstated.

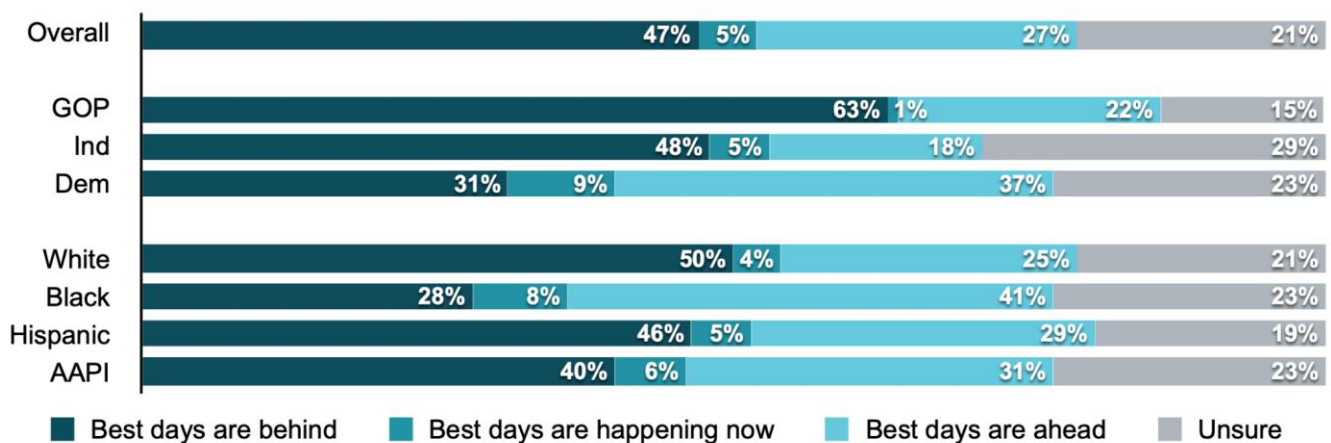
KEY FINDINGS

1. Women voters aged 50+ have serious worries about the future of our country, including economic concerns and fears about political division.

- Seven-in-ten (70%) women 50+ think the country is on the wrong track, and only 27% believe America’s best days are ahead. Troublingly, nearly half (47%) think the best days are behind us.
- When they are asked to choose the two biggest issues facing the country today, cost of living tops the list (38% say it is a top issue), followed by immigration (32%), threats to democracy (20%), and political division (16%).
- Only 28% of women 50+ expect the economy to improve over the next year, while a plurality (42%) expect the economy to get worse.
- Women 50+ are not convinced that the coming year will bring greater stability to our country, with only 19% saying they think things will become more stable, while 46% think they will become less so. Among those who believe the country will become less stable, when asked what factors are most strongly driving this instability, the top responses chosen were government dysfunction (63%), the economy (58%), political division and partisanship (55%), crime (55%), and the situation at the southern border (53%).

Q. Would you say that the United States’ best days are ahead of it, behind it, or are they happening now?

Responses of Women Voters 50+



¹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2023/07/12/voter-turnout-2018-2022/> (See: 2016–2022 Validated Voters Detailed Tables)

2. While some women 50+ feel slightly more upbeat about their own personal circumstances, many have serious concerns about their financial security.

- Women 50+ feel a mix of emotions about their own personal lives, ranging from satisfied (39%) and happy (38%) to stressed (34%) and worried (32%). Women voters aged 50–64 are more likely to say they feel stressed than women aged 65+ (42% vs. 27%, respectively), and less likely to feel secure (15% vs. 29%).
- While many say that their lives are meeting or exceeding their expectations when it comes to the amount of time they get to spend with family, with friends, and on things they enjoy, nearly half (48%) say their own personal financial situation is falling short of what they expected at this point in their lives. Six in 10 Black women 50+ (60%) and 55% of Hispanic women 50+ say their personal finances are falling short.
- Given the choice between 20% more money or 20% more time, the majority (61%) of women 50+ say they would choose more money.
- Only 19% of women voters 50+ think their own financial situation is more secure today than one year ago, while nearly half (48%) think it has become less secure. When asked how they think they will be doing a year from now, half (51%) of women voters 50+ say they are not confident they will be better off financially.
- One key driver of economic worry for women 50+ is fears about retirement security. Among women 50+ who are currently employed, more than half (54%) are not confident they will have enough money to retire and stop working at the age they would like to. Among those currently retired, a plurality (45%) report feeling less secure financially than a year ago, and 41% say they are not doing as well financially as they thought they would be at this point in their lives.

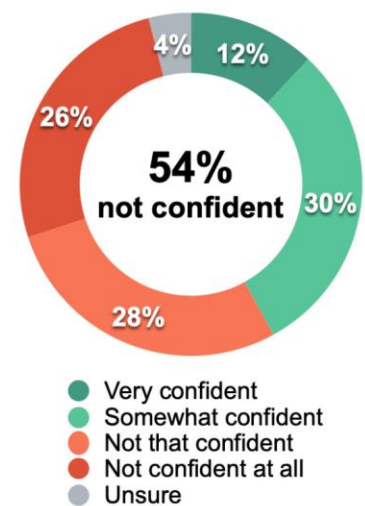
Q. Compared to how you expected your life to be at the age you are now, for each of the following, would you say it is exceeding your expectations, meeting your expectations, or falling short of your expectations?

Responses of Women Voters 50+



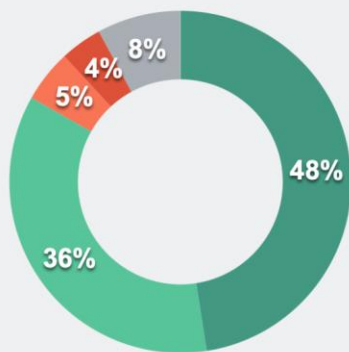
Q. Looking ahead to the future, how confident are you that you will have enough money to retire and stop working for money at an age that you'd like?

Responses of Women Voters 50+ who are Currently Employed



3. Many women 50+ feel pulled by a wide range of demands, including caring for aging parents or their own partners and spouses, and are looking to policymakers for leadership.

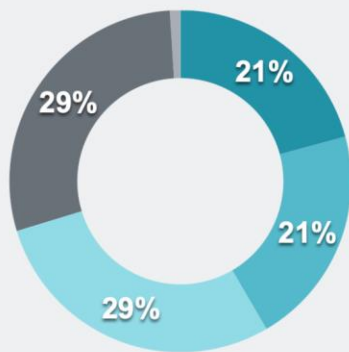
- Over seven-in-ten women aged 50+ say they either are currently providing (21%) or have provided care in the past (50%) to an adult loved one, whether a parent, partner/spouse, or adult child.
- Among those who are currently providing unpaid caregiving support, more than a third (36%) are also still in the workforce, including 19% with full-time jobs.
- While a slim majority of women voters 50+ (53%) say they believe individuals and families should be responsible for providing care for themselves and older family members, they also overwhelmingly see a need for elected officials to provide more support. More than eight-in-ten (84%) of women voters 50+ say that “elected officials should do more to support the unpaid caregivers providing care for older family members who need assistance to live independently in their homes and communities,” with agreement being particularly strong among women 50+ who are or have been a caregiver themselves.
- Additionally, 80% of voters overall and 85% of women voters 50+ think elected officials should expand services to help keep seniors living independently in their own homes.
- Nearly nine-in-ten women 50+ (87%) would support making paid family leave benefits available to family caregivers, including 55% who *strongly* agree with this view.



84% of women voters 50+ agree

“Elected officials should do more to support the unpaid caregivers providing care for older family members who need assistance to live independently in their homes and communities.”

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Unsure



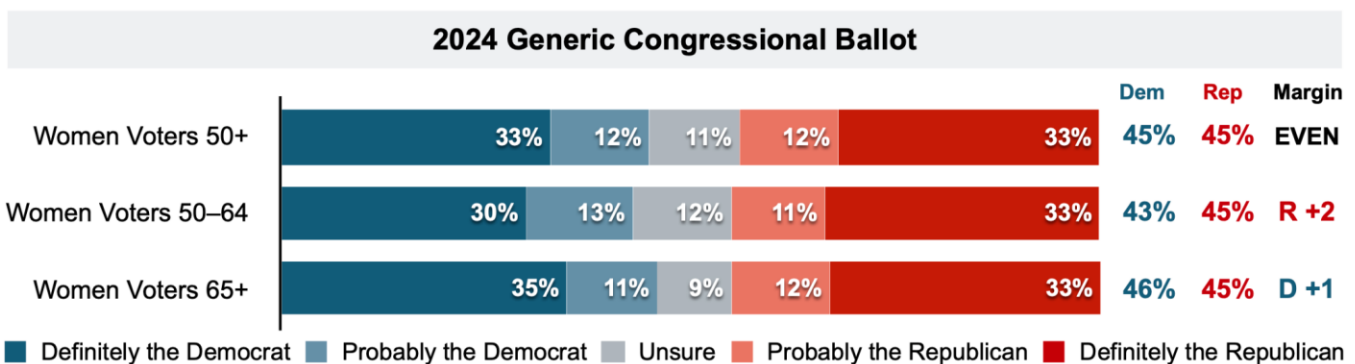
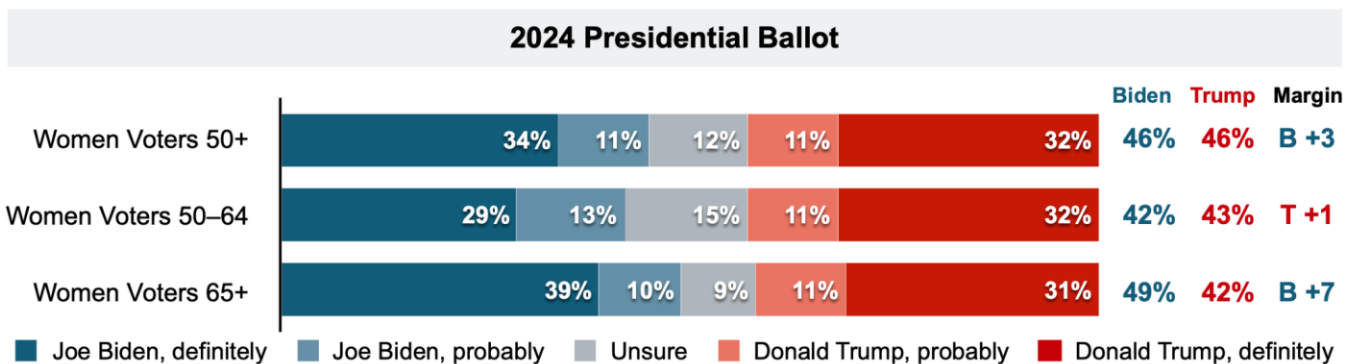
71% have been family caregivers

Providing unpaid care for an adult child, parent, partner or spouse who is ill, frail, elderly, or has a disability

- Currently a family caregiver
- Formerly a caregiver, in the past 5 years
- Formerly a caregiver, more than 5 years ago
- Have never been a family caregiver
- Unsure

4. Women voters aged 50+ are deeply dissatisfied with our political leaders and believe their own voices aren't being heard. They worry about the coming election and are closely divided between the two parties.

- These voters are likely to say they are not being heard by leaders — 65% of women voters 50+ say they think local elected officials don't listen to the views of people like them, and 75% feel that way about political leaders in Washington.
- Over half of women voters aged 50+ disapprove of the job President Biden is doing (56%), though Biden very slightly edges out former President Donald Trump in a head-to-head matchup, earning 46% of the vote to Trump's 43%. Biden does especially well among women 65+, winning this group over Trump by a 7-point margin; women aged 50-64 are particularly likely to say they are undecided (15%).
- Women voters 50+ split right down the middle on the generic Congressional ballot question, 45-45. Here, there is little difference between women aged 50-64 (who break for Republicans by 2 points) and women aged 65+ (who break for Democrats by 1 point).
- Women 65+ are especially likely to think the result of the 2024 presidential election will “really make a difference to them personally” (82%), compared to 69% of women aged 50-64.
- When asked to choose from a list of different emotions they might be feeling about the upcoming 2024 election, a plurality say “worried”, with 48% of women 50+ saying this describes their feelings.

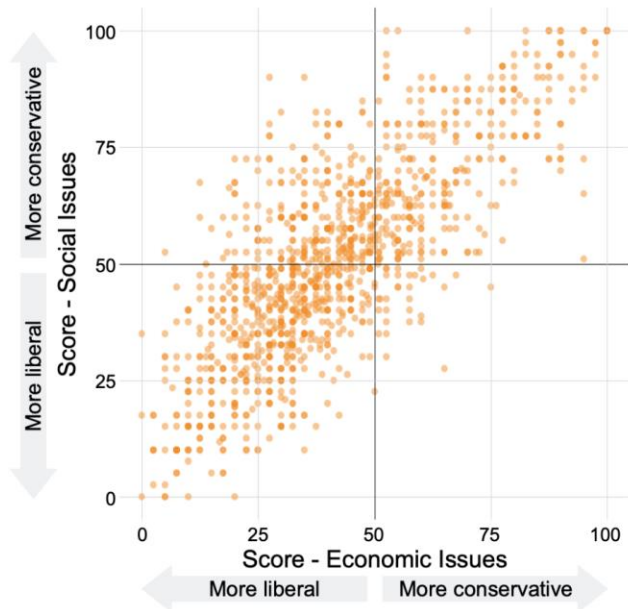


5. Women voters aged 50+ are not a monolith and hold a wide range of viewpoints.

- Women aged 50+ are not often at the political extremes, and many are centrist in their viewpoints. When analyzing their ideological views on social issues and economic issues based on how they respond to a series of questions presenting contrasting stances, we find that nearly half (47%) of women voters 50+ fall near the ideological center, compared to 36% of men voters aged 50+.

Political Ideology Quadrants: Comparing Voters 50+ by Gender

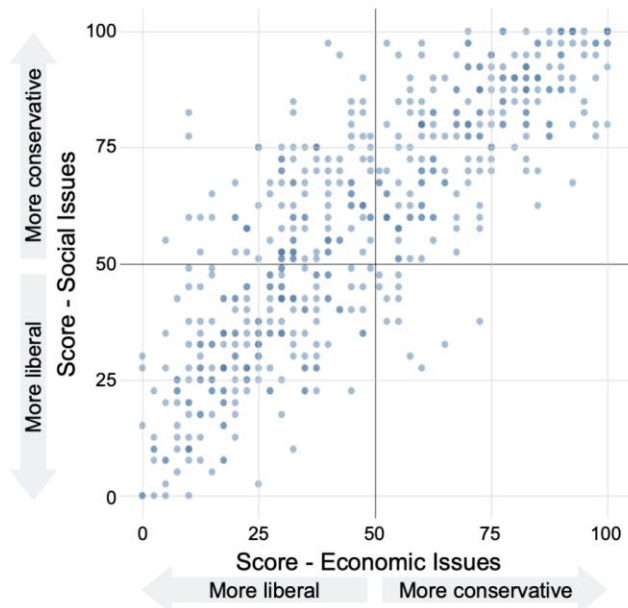
Women Voters 50+



19%	37%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socially Conservative • Economically Liberal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socially Conservative • Economically Conservative
41%	3%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socially Liberal • Economically Liberal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socially Liberal • Economically Conservative

47% Near Center
(Score 25–75 on Social AND Econ.)

Men Voters 50+



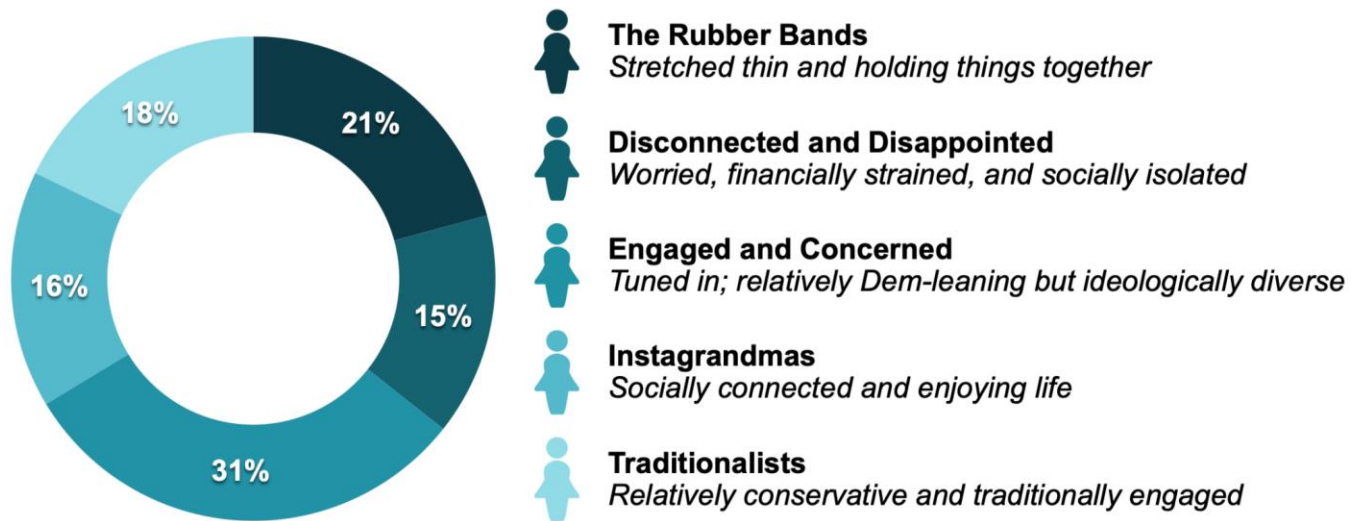
18%	49%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socially Conservative • Economically Liberal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socially Conservative • Economically Conservative
32%	1%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socially Liberal • Economically Liberal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socially Liberal • Economically Conservative

36% Near Center
(Score 25–75 on Social AND Econ.)

6. Women aged 50+ do not fit into any one stereotype, and have a wide range of lifestyles and feelings about their own circumstances.

This research asked women voters 50+ an extensive series of questions about their daily activities, demographics, and feelings of satisfaction with different aspects of their lives. After conducting a cluster analysis on the responses, the research identified five key clusters of women voters 50+.

Cluster Analysis: Five Groups of Women Voters 50+



○ **The Rubber Bands (21% of women voters 50+)**

- Holding it all together, but stretched thin - this group tends to be younger (generally under age 65), racially and ethnically diverse (only 47% are white, non-Hispanic), employed (most are employed either full-time or part-time), and are the most likely to have children under age 18 in their home.
- They are the most likely to currently be caregivers, or to have provided caregiving to an adult loved one in recent years. Around 4 in 10 either are or have been a caregiver to an aging parent in the past five years.
- They express high levels of stress and worry, are more likely than most other clusters to describe themselves as “exhausted” (28%), but also often choose words like “happy” to describe their lives and are quite connected to family and friends.
- They are the most likely cluster to name cost-of-living as a top issue (50%) and are the most pessimistic about the economy (53% think it will get worse over the next year). Most are not confident that they’ll be able to retire when they’d like (56%).
- This cluster has the highest disapproval of President Biden (61%), but is not necessarily a right-leaning group; on the congressional ballot, they break for Democratic candidates by three points, and on the presidential head-to-head, they break for Biden over Trump by two points. However, they are the least likely to say the outcome of the presidential election will make a difference to them personally.

- **Disconnected and Disappointed (15% of women voters 50+)**
 - Feeling unsteady in the present and down about the future - this group tends to also be younger (generally under age 65), lower-income (41% earn less than \$30,000/year). Most are not currently in the workforce. Among those who are employed, this cluster has the highest percentage of service industry employees (32%).
 - This group is the most socially isolated. Almost none report participating in a social club or playing sports or games with others on a somewhat regular basis. They are the least likely cluster to say they see or speak to family or friends regularly. Only 20% say they see friends in person on at least a weekly basis. Nearly half (49%) say they never attend religious services of any kind, by far the highest of any cluster.
 - They are also among the most likely to describe themselves as “stressed” (48%) and “worried” (43%), as well as “exhausted” (28%) and “lonely” (27%). Relative to other groups, few think of themselves as happy (22%) or satisfied (21%). They are also by far the most likely to say that things have fallen short of their expectations, such as their overall enjoyment of life (52%), personal health situation (51%), and especially their personal finances (64%). And while they are the group most likely to say the amount of time they get to spend on things they enjoy falls short of their expectations (46%), they are far and away more likely to choose having more money (75%) instead of more time if given the option.
 - This cluster breaks for Republicans on the Congressional ballot by seven points and on the presidential ballot, they break for Donald Trump over Joe Biden by a 2-point margin.

- **Engaged and Concerned (31% of women voters 50+)**
 - These women are mostly aged 65+ and are largely white (82% white, non-Hispanic). This cluster also has the highest proportion of women who have a bachelor’s degree or higher (42%).
 - Of all of the clusters, this group is the most likely to say they are “worried” about the upcoming presidential election (54%) and are the most likely to say that the result of the election really will make a difference to them personally (83%).
 - This is the most pro-Biden cluster, with Biden defeating Trump among these voters by a 12-point margin, and with Democratic congressional candidates holding a 7-point lead. This group also identifies slightly more often as Democratic (44%) than Republican (37%).
 - Despite their partisan lean, they are fairly ideologically diverse, with 39% describing themselves as conservative, 30% as moderate, and 30% as liberal. Their views on policy issues range from fairly progressive on issues like abortion and guns to fairly conservative on issues like policing and immigration.

- **Instagrandmas (16% of women voters 50+)**
 - These women aged 50+ are feeling pretty great about life; the top words they use to describe themselves are “happy” (55%) and “satisfied” (46%). Of all the groups, they are most likely to say their overall enjoyment of life is meeting or exceeding their expectations.
 - They are among the most upbeat about their own personal situation as well as the state of the economy. Most (55%) are confident they’ll be better off financially in a year, and this cluster has the highest household income (40% earn \$75,000/year or more).
 - A majority (51%) report having used Instagram within the last week, though they are no more likely than most other clusters to report posting about *political issues* on social media.
 - More likely, they are sharing glimpses into their active lives. They are by far the cluster most likely to exercise or go to the gym at least weekly (64%) and to describe their lives as “busy” (42%). They are the most likely to go out to restaurants, engage in cultural activities like visiting museums or attending concerts, and to travel.
 - This cluster is also deeply connected to family. They are the most likely to see their own children (66%) and grandchildren (44%) at least weekly, and very few (20%) feel they get to spend less time with their family than they had expected.
 - Politically, while some 43% identify themselves as conservative, this group is evenly divided on the Presidential race, giving Biden just a slim 1-point advantage. They also divide right down the middle on Congressional races, 44-44.

- **Traditionalists (18% of women voters 50+)**
 - These women are all over the age of 65, are the most likely to be white (85% white, non-Hispanic), and are the most likely to say they attend religious services at least once a week (35%).
 - This cluster is the most politically conservative and the most likely to report having voted for Trump over Biden in 2020. They break for Donald Trump by a 5-point margin on a 2024 ballot, and for Republican congressional candidates by a 9-point margin over Democrats.
 - On social and cultural questions, they are among the most likely to prefer more traditionalist or conservative positions. By far, this cluster is the most likely to report watching Fox News regularly (41%) and to be in a household with someone who serves or has served in the military.
 - While they are among the most likely to say they have voiced an opinion publicly about a political candidate or issue, they are the least likely to say they have voiced an opinion about a news story or local issue. And it is quite certain they were voicing their views offline, as more than 8 in 10 say they rarely (35%) or never (50%) post about political or social issues on social media.

METHODOLOGY

Echelon Insights, in collaboration with GBAO, conducted a survey on behalf of AARP to understand the opinions of voters in the 2024 likely electorate (LE), and in particular, women LE voters aged 50 and older. The survey was fielded online from January 10–21, 2024 in English using non-probability sampling.

The final sample included 3,380 respondents, with a base sample of 2,047 voters in the likely electorate nationwide. The base sample included 668 women LE voters age 50+, and an oversample of a general group of women LE voters age 50+ achieved a total of 1,041 women LE voters age 50+ *before* separate, additional oversamples of 313 Black women LE voters age 50+, 310 Hispanic/Latina women LE voters age 50+, and 337 AAPI women LE voters age 50+. In total, in the final sample (base sample and all oversamples combined), there were 2,001 women LE voters age 50+, including 410 Black women LE voters age 50+, 353 Hispanic/Latina women LE voters age 50+, and 338 AAPI women LE voters age 50+.

The sample was drawn from the Cint/Lucid and PureSpectrum sample exchanges based on demographic and regional quota targets derived from data on the population of voters in the likely 2024 electorate. Of the respondents in the final sample, 3,127 were matched to the L2 voter file to confirm their voter registration status. In order to achieve a larger oversample of AAPI women voters 50+, 253 AAPI women 50+ were included who self-identified as registered voters but for whom a voter file match was not possible.

For quality control purposes, respondents were disqualified during the survey if they selected “Yes” on all four questions about receiving government benefits (since adults who receive all four represent only 0.1% of the US adult population), and respondents were removed from the sample if they answered more than one-third of the questions they were asked in less than one-third of the median response time per question. Measures were also taken to prevent or remove duplicate responses.

The sample was weighted to reflect modeled turnout and demographic characteristics of voters in the 2024 LE population based on a probabilistic model that incorporates US Census Bureau demographic estimates and L2 voter file data. Weighting dimensions for likely voters included gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, region, turnout probability, and 2020 presidential vote choice (based on 2020 election results), as well as gender by age, age by education, gender by education, race by education, and women by race/ethnicity. The oversamples of women voters age 50+ were weighted down to their proportions in the LE voter population.

Calculated as it would be for a random sample and adjusted to incorporate the effect of weighting, the margin of sampling error for the overall sample is ± 2.6 percentage points. The MOE is ± 3.0 percentage points for women voters age 50+, ± 5.4 percentage points for Black women voters age 50+, ± 6.4 percentage points for Hispanic/Latina women voters age 50+, and ± 5.6 percentage points for AAPI women voters age 50+. This estimate of precision does not account for other potential sources of error that can occur in online surveys with non-probability samples, such as non-coverage due to the survey being conducted online.

Political Ideology Quadrants Analysis

In the survey, respondents were shown a series of 20 paired, contrasting statements — with one statement in each pair representing a traditionally more conservative stance and the other a more liberal stance — and asked to indicate which statement in each pair they agreed with more, using a Likert scale with the following response options: Strongly agree with Option 1, Somewhat agree with Option 1, Somewhat agree with Option 2, Strongly agree with Option 2, Unsure.

The order in which respondents saw the statements was randomized. Ten of the paired statements focused on social issues, and the other 10 focused on economic issues. The paired statements and full responses to each question can be found in the survey topline (QSocial1 – QSocial10, and QEcon1 – QEcon10).

A score was calculated based on their responses to the paired statements about social issues, and a separate score was calculated based on their responses to the paired statements about economic issues.

To calculate each score, responses to each question in the series were assigned a value as follows:

- 0 - Strongly agree with [Liberal statement]
- 1 - Somewhat agree with [Liberal statement]
- 2 - Unsure
- 3 - Somewhat agree with [Conservative statement]
- 4 - Strongly agree with [Conservative statement]

These values were used to calculate the sum of a respondent's responses to the series of questions on social issues, and separately, their responses to the series of questions on economic issues. To calculate a respondent's score for each series on a scale of 0 to 100, the respondent's sum was divided by the maximum possible sum (40) for each series.

A respondent who strongly agreed with all 10 of the liberal statements in a series would have a score of 0, and a respondent who strongly agreed with all 10 of the conservative statements in a series would have a score of 100.

The quadrant charts show a scatter plot where the score on economic issues is on the x axis, and the score on social issues is on the y axis, with each axis at 50 to delineate the quadrants. If a respondent's score was less than 50, they more often agreed with liberal stances, and if a respondent's score was greater than 50, they more often agreed with conservative stances.

Cluster Analysis of Women Voters Aged 50+

A k-means cluster analysis was performed to segment women voters aged 50+ into five distinct groups based on demographic characteristics, their reported activities/lifestyle, and their feelings about their life. The following variables were used in the cluster analysis:

- Age
- Race/ethnicity
- Educational attainment
- Household income
- Community type
- Employment status
- Marital status
- How often they do various activities: see their own parents; see their own children; see their own grandchildren; talk to family members on phone or video chat; travel to visit family; spend time with their friends in person; talk with friends on the phone or video chat; volunteer for a cause they care about; meet up with a social club (like a book club or hobby group); play sports or games with others; do a cultural activity like see a movie, concert, or museum; go on vacation or travels for leisure; go out to a restaurant for a meal; exercise or go to the gym; visit a doctor or medical practitioner
- Words they use to describe their life (Q. Which of the following words describe how you feel about your own life these days? Choose all that apply.)
- How their life compares to their expectations in terms of their overall enjoyment of life, their own personal health situation, their own personal finances, the amount of time they get to spend with family, the amount of time they get to spend with friends, the satisfaction they get from the work they do or have done, and the amount of time they get to spend on things they enjoy (Q. Compared to how you expected your life to be at the age you are now, for each of the following would you say it is exceeding your expectations, meeting your expectations, or falling short of your expectations?)