



Mature Market Institute

How Old is Old?
MetLife Mature Market Poll on Attitudes about Age
Zogby International
July 2005

The MetLife Mature Market Institute® commissioned Zogby International to conduct a telephone survey to determine what age Americans believed was old, and how old they wish they were. The Mature Market Institute is MetLife’s information and policy resource center on issues related to aging, retirement, long-term care and the mature market. Staffed by gerontologists, the Institute provides research, training and education, consultation and information to support MetLife, its corporate customers and business partners.

How old is old?

Age Selected	Overall	Age Group			
		18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
<30	1.0%	3.9%	.7%		
31-40	2.2%	4.1%	3.6%		
41-50	5.5%	14.1%	6.6%	1.3%	
51-60	6.6%	10.7%	6.7%	7.2%	2.1%
61-70	19.2%	29.6%	18.8%	17.8%	13.1%
71-80	32.3%	17.9%	36.1%	37.4%	31.3%
81-90	18.4%	11.4%	14.0%	23.5%	28.3%
91-100	9.6%	6.7%	11.2%	7.0%	11.4%
Not sure	5.3%	1.5%	2.3%	5.7%	13.7%

As might be expected, as age increases so too does the choice of an age as being “old.” Thirty percent of those under 30 say 61 to 70 is old, while more than two in three 50 to 64 year olds say over 71 is old. Almost six in ten over age 65 say over 71 is old. No one 65 and older thinks 41 to 50 is old.

A plurality (32%) of all respondents say an age between 71 and 80 is “old.” About half as many say either an age between 61 and 70 (19%) or an age between 81 and 90 (18%) is old. Less than one in ten say an age between 41 and 60 is old. Five percent are not sure.

Men are much more likely than women to say an age under 60 is old (22% men vs. 8% women). In fact, men (4%) are four times as likely as women (1%) to say an age between 31 to 40 is old and more than twice as likely to say 41 to 50 is old (10% men vs. 4% women). On the other hand, women are almost twice as likely as men to say that 81 to 90 is old (24% women vs. 13% men) and to say that 90 to 100 is old (12% women vs. 7% men).

Parents (8%) are twice as likely as non-parents (4%) to say 41 to 50 is old, while non-parents (20%) are more likely than parents (16%) to say 81 to 90 is old. In general, single respondents are more likely than married respondents to choose a younger age as “old,” while married respondents are more likely to choose an older age as “old.” Twice as many married (11%) as single respondents (5%) say 90 to 100 is old, while nearly twice as many single (9%) as married (5%) respondents say 41 to 50 is old.

Whites are slightly more likely than African Americans and Hispanics to choose a younger age as “old.” More than one in four African Americans (26%) and Hispanics (29%) say that 61 to 70 is old compared to 17% of whites who think so.

Republicans are slightly more likely to choose a younger age as “old” than are Democrats or independents. More than two in five (41%) independents say 71 to 80 is old, compared to 29% of Democrats and 31% of Republicans who say that. Democrats are more likely than either Republicans or independents to say that 80 to 91 and 91 to 100 is old.

Respondents living in the west (37%) are the most likely to say that 71 to 80 is old, while southerners (23%) are the most likely to say that 61 to 70 is old. Easterners are more likely than those in the other regions to say that 41 to 50 is old (8% east; 5% central and west; 4% south) and that 51 to 60 is old (10% east; 8% west; 6% south; and 5% mid-west). Southern (11%) and mid-west (13%) respondents are more likely than the other two regions to say 90 to 100 is old.

How old do you wish you were?

Age Selected	Overall	Age Group			
		18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
<21	13.2%	22.3%	16.8%	7.7%	3.1%
21-30	35.4%	62.9%	40.0%	23.5%	13.6%
31-40	16.7%	2.4%	23.4%	17.2%	13.5%
41-50	11.2%	3.2%	14.1%	10.3%	13.0%
51-60	6.4%	1.6%	.6%	21.0%	5.3%
61-70	5.3%		.5%	11.3%	15.1%
71-80	2.5%			.4%	15.5%
81-90	1.0%				6.1%
91-100	0.2%				.6%
Not sure	8.1%	7.7%	4.7%	8.4%	14.0%

Overall, one in three (35%) wish they were somewhere between 21 and 30, with another 17% wishing they were between the ages of 31 and 40. Just over one in ten (11%) wish they were between 41 and 50, and 13% wish they were less than 21 years old. Eight percent are not sure.

Eighteen to twenty-nine year olds are the most satisfied with their current age, or close to it, as 63% say they wish they were some age between 21 and 30. Two in five (40%) 30 to 49 year olds wish they were 21 to 30, nearly twice as many of that age group who wish they were 31 to 40 (23%). Fifty to sixty-four year olds are closely divided between wishing they were 21 to 30 (24%) or 51 to 60 (21%), and respondents 65 and older are closely divided in wishing they were between the ages of 21 to 50 and 61 to 80

Men (57.1%) are more likely than women (40.8%) to wish they were an age under 30. One in five women (20%) wish they were between 31 and 40, compared to 13% of men who wish that. Women (8%) are twice as likely as men (4%) to wish they were between 51 and 60.

Parents are more likely than non-parents for every age bracket below 50 to say they wish they were that age. Single respondents are more likely than either married or divorced/widowed/separated respondents to wish they were in one of the younger age brackets. Half of singles wish they were between 31 and 40.

Half (50%) of Hispanics wish they were 21 to 30, compared to 34% of whites and 29% of African Americans who wish that. Whites (13%) are nearly twice as likely as African Americans (7%) to wish they were between the ages of 41 and 50, while African Americans (12%) are twice as likely as whites to wish (6%) they were between 51 and 60.

Independents (44%) are the most likely to wish they were 21 to 30, while Democrats and Republicans (12% each) are more likely than independents to wish they were 41 to 50.

Westerners (42%) are the most likely to wish they were between 21 and 30, while southerners (16%) are the most likely to wish they were less than 21. Easterners (20%) are slightly more likely than the other regions to wish they were between the ages of 31 and 40.

These questions were included in a national telephone survey of likely voters conducted by Zogby International June 20 through June 22, 2005. The target sample is 1,000 interviews with approximately 55 questions asked. Samples are randomly drawn from telephone lists. Zogby International surveys employ sampling strategies in which selection probabilities are proportional to population size within area codes and exchanges. Weighting by region, party, age, race, religion, and gender is used to adjust for non-response. The margin of error is +/- 3.2 percentage points. Zogby International's sampling and weighting procedures also have been validated through its political polling: more than 95% of the firm's polls have come within 1% of actual election-day outcomes.

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