

## **Most Wish for a Long Life – Despite Broad Aging Concerns**

Despite wide-ranging concerns about getting older, most Americans want to live longer than the current average. But not too much longer.

If it were up to them, Americans on average would like to live to be 87 years old – nine years older than current life expectancy. But there’s a limit: Just about a quarter volunteer that they’d like to live to 100 or older. And even if medical breakthroughs made living to 120 possible, most would say no thanks.

Quality of life is a major concern. One reason more people don’t want to live to 100 is that most – nearly two-thirds of adults – don’t think they could be that old and still enjoy a good quality of life. That consideration has a strong influence on desired longevity.

Top concerns about aging include poor health, being unable to care for yourself and losing mental acuity. Lack of money, being unable to travel and being a burden on others are among the mid-tier concerns, while lowest on the list are being alone and – in a very distant last place – losing your looks. Beauty clearly is just skin deep.

	Concerns about aging
Top tier:	
Losing your health	73%
Losing ability to care for yourself	70
Losing mental abilities	69
Mid tier:	
Running out of money	60
Not being able to drive/travel on own	59
Being a burden on your family	54
Winding up in a nursing home	52
Not being able to work or volunteer	49
Lower tier:	
Being alone	39
Losing your looks	22

This ABC News/USA Today poll supports a joint reporting project on longevity, “Living Longer, Living Better,” airing on ABC News programs the week of Oct. 24.

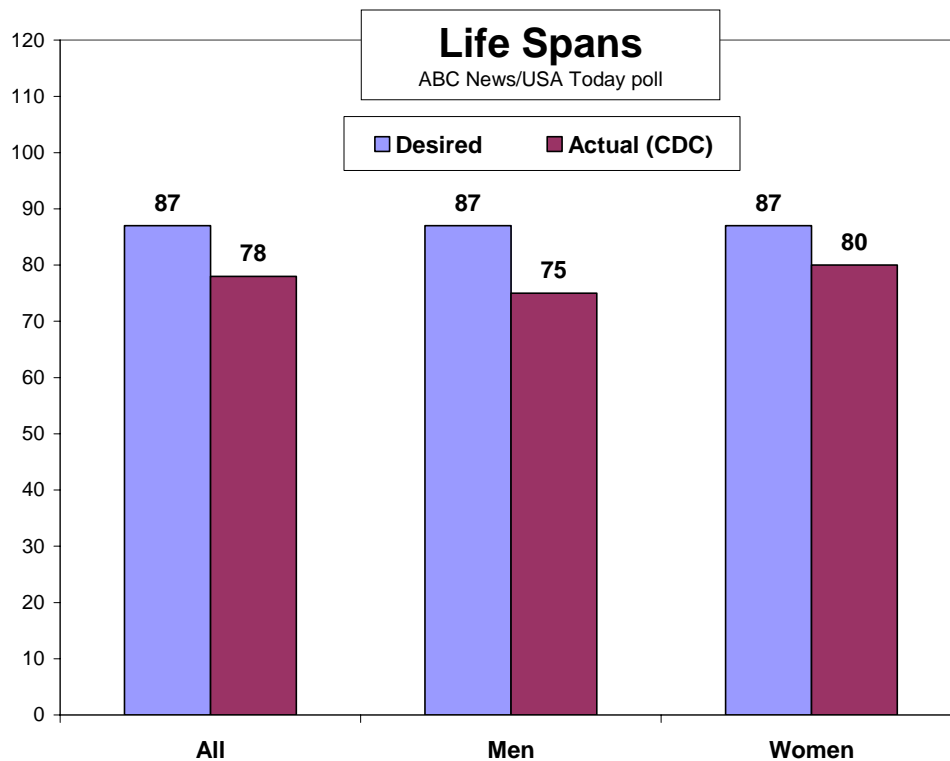
Despite wishes for longevity, aging concerns clearly are widespread: Ninety-two percent of Americans are at least somewhat concerned about at least one of the 10 items tested in this survey, and 64 percent are concerned about five or more of them.

Interestingly, seniors are less concerned across the board about aging than are those under 65 (with the exception of concerns about the ability to drive and travel independently, on which people over and under 65 rank about equally). Averaging results across the 10 items on the list, 45 percent of seniors express concern about these aging issues, compared with 57 percent of adults younger than 65. Being older apparently is less daunting than just thinking about it.

**LONG LIFE** – As noted, concerns about aging play directly into desires for longevity. Among people who think it’s very likely they could live to 100 and still enjoy a good quality of life, 56 percent indeed would like to live that long. Among those who think a good quality of life is unlikely at 100, far fewer – just 17 percent – want to see the day.

But other factors also come into play. Most people see a long life as a worthy goal: Nearly two-thirds say it’s worth it to practice moderation in order to live to 100 (being very careful about your diet, exercising regularly, not smoking and avoiding alcohol and stress). But on the other hand, Americans on average think someone becomes “elderly” at age 71. And the older at which people define being “elderly,” the longer they themselves want to live.

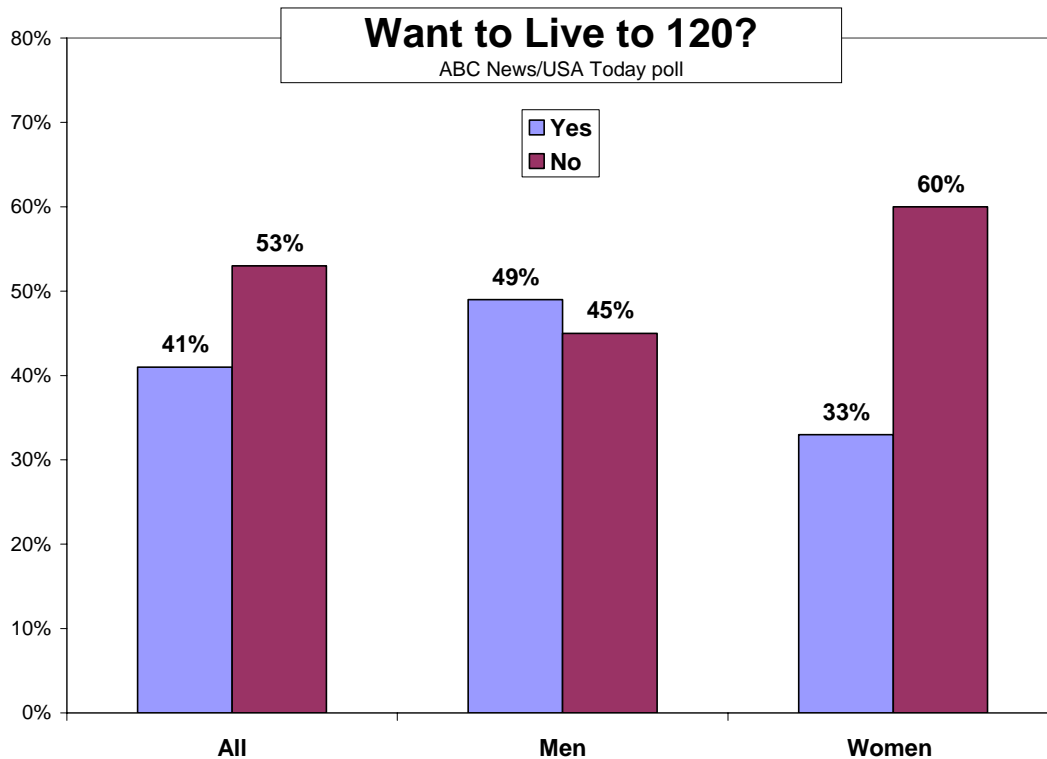
Of course there are those at the far end – even the metaphysical end – of the spectrum: Asked how long they’d like to live, seven percent in this poll say “forever.”



**SEXES** – There’s no difference in the average age men and women would like to attain – 87 for both sexes (this excludes those who want to live forever). Women, though, are

likely to come closer to the target: the Centers for Disease Control reports that life expectancy is 80 for American women, versus 75 for men. (Either is a bit better than the Psalms’ “threescore and 10,” but well short of Noah’s 950.)

Desires for an extremely long life run in the other direction: Women are substantially less apt than men to say they’d like to live to 120 if medical breakthroughs made that possible – 33 percent of women say so, compared with 49 percent of men.



There also are differences between the sexes in concerns about aging: Women are four to 12 points more likely than men to be concerned about each item tested in this survey, peaking with women’s greater concerns about running out of money. On average across these 10 items, 59 percent of women express concern, compared with 50 percent of men.

	Concerns about aging		
	Women	Men	(W-M dif.)
Losing health	78%	68	+10
Losing ability to care for yourself	75	66	+9
Losing mental abilities	73	65	+8
Running out of money	66	54	+12
Not being able to drive/travel on own	61	57	+4
Being a burden on your family	59	50	+9
Winding up in a nursing home	57	46	+11
Not being able to work or volunteer	52	47	+5
Being alone	42	35	+7
Losing looks	26	18	+8

**FINANCIAL RESOURCES** – While most are concerned about running out of money, 69 of Americans express some confidence they’ll have sufficient financial resources to live on in retirement. But – as the level of concern suggests – fewer, 30 percent, are “very confident” of it, with a 13-point gap between men and women, 37 vs 24 percent.

This confidence, naturally, is directly related to income: Nearly six in 10 people with household incomes above \$100,000 are very confident they’ll have enough money post-retirement, compared with only two in 10 of those in under-\$35,000 households.

**OTHER GROUPS** – Among other factors in views on aging, good health helps. People who report that they’re currently in excellent health (31 percent of adults) want to live longer (to an average age of 90), and are less concerned about getting older, than people whose health isn’t good. The average level of concern about aging issues is 48 percent among people in excellent health, compared with 63 percent among those whose health is not good.

People with kids at home are no more likely than those without to be worried about being a burden on their families, being alone or ending up in a nursing home. But they are somewhat more concerned about running out of money as they get older.

Youth, on the other hand, is not a strong factor. Young adults (age 29 and younger) would like to live to an average age of 87 – the same as those age 30 and up. (Even among current seniors it’s similar, 91). And young adults define “elderly” as starting at age 67, compared with 73 among people 30 and up (it’s the same among seniors).

A bigger difference is that young adults are 20 points more likely than their elders to think they can live to 100 and still have a good quality of life, 51 percent to 31 percent. It remains to be seen whether that represents greater faith in the medical technology of the future – or just the folly of youth.

**METHODOLOGY** – This ABC News/USA Today poll was conducted by telephone October 12-16, 2005, among a random national sample of 1,000 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Fieldwork by TNS of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Jon Cohen and Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollvault.html>.

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934.

Full results follow (\*= less than 0.5 percent).

1. Based on your own expectations of what old age is like, if it were up to you, how long would you personally like to live - to what age?

		-----<90-----			-----90+-----					No
	Avg.	NET	<80	80-89	NET	90-99	NET	100+	Forever	opin.
10/16/05	87 yrs	45	17	29	51	23	27	20	7	4

2. At what age do you think someone becomes elderly?

		-----<70-----			-----70+-----			No
	Avg.	NET	<65	65-69	NET	70-79	80+	opin.
10/16/05	71 yrs	33	18	16	62	37	25	5

3. How concerned are you about (ITEM) as you get older - is that something that worries you a great deal, somewhat, not so much or not at all? How about (NEXT ITEM)?

10/16/05 - Summary table

	-----Concerned-----			----Not concerned----			Did/Am	No
	NET	Grt deal	Smwht	NET	Not much	At all	(vol.)	op.
a. Losing your health	73	42	31	26	11	15	1	*
b. Losing your mental abilities	69	45	25	30	11	19	*	*
c. Losing your ability to care for yourself	70	46	25	29	13	16	*	*
d. Being a burden on your family	54	32	22	44	16	29	1	*
e. Winding up in a nursing home	52	32	20	48	16	32	*	1
f. Not being able to work or volunteer	49	23	26	49	18	31	2	*
g. Being alone	39	18	21	60	22	38	1	*
h. Running out of money	60	36	24	39	15	24	1	0
i. Losing your looks	22	8	14	77	24	53	2	0
j. Not being able to drive or travel on your own	59	30	29	40	15	25	1	0

4. How likely do you think it is that you'll live to be 100 years old and still have a good quality of life - very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely or very unlikely?

	-----Likely-----			-----Unlikely-----			Over	No
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Very	100 (vol.)	opin.
10/16/05	35	12	24	64	24	41	*	1

5. Imagine you could live to 100 or older, but you'd have to be very careful about your diet, exercise regularly, not smoke, avoid alcohol, and avoid stress. Would it be worth it, or not?

	Yes	No	Over 100 (vol.)	No opinion
10/16/05	64	34	*	2

6. How confident are you that you will retire with enough income and assets to last for the rest of your life - would you say you're very confident, somewhat confident, not so confident or not confident at all?

	-----Confident-----			-----Not Confident-----			Retired	No
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not so	Not at all	(vol.)	opin.
10/16/05	69	30	39	28	16	13	2	*
7/15/02	55	18	37	40	21	18	5	0
7/15/01	68	33	35	23	10	12	7	2
7/4/99	54	21	33	39	21	18	6	0
7/21/96	45	16	29	47	25	21	7	1

7. If medical breakthroughs made it possible for you to live to be 120 years old or even older, would you want to live that long, or not?

	Yes	No	Depends (vol.)	No opinion
10/16/05	41	53	6	1

8. How would you rate your own personal health - would you say your personal health is excellent, good, not so good or poor?

	---Excellent/Good---			---Not Good/Poor---			No
	NET	Excellent	Good	NET	Not Good	Poor	op.
10/16/05	89	31	58	11	8	3	0
4/19/05	86	30	56	14	11	3	0
5/16/04	87	31	56	13	8	5	*
10/13/03	90	35	55	10	7	3	*
8/27/97	88	35	52	12	8	4	*

\*\*\*END\*\*\*