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# The Experiences of U.S. Adults Who Don't Have Children

*57% of adults under 50 who say they're unlikely to ever have kids say a major reason is they just don't want to; 31% of those ages 50 and older without kids cite this as a reason they never had them*

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## About Pew Research Center

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## How we did this

Pew Research Center conducted this study to better understand the experiences of two groups of U.S. adults who don't have children: those ages 50 and older, and those younger than 50 who say they are unlikely to ever have children. It explores their reasons for not having children or being unlikely to do so, the perceived pros and cons of not having children, and the impact of not having children on their relationships.

Most of the analysis in this report is based on a survey of 2,542 adults ages 50 and older who have never had children and 770 adults ages 18 to 49 who don't have children and say they are not too or not at all likely to have them. The survey was conducted April 29 to May 19, 2024. Most of the respondents who took part are members of the Center's American Trends Panel (ATP), an online survey panel that is recruited through national, random sampling of residential addresses. This survey also included an oversample of adults ages 50 and older who have never had children from Ipsos' KnowledgePanel, another probability-based online survey web panel recruited primarily through national, random sampling of residential addresses.

Address-based sampling ensures that nearly all U.S. adults have a chance of selection. The survey is weighted to be representative of the U.S. adult population by gender, race, ethnicity, partisan affiliation, education and other categories. Read more about the [ATP's methodology](#).

The report also includes an analysis comparing the demographic characteristics and economic outcomes of adults ages 50 and older who do not have children with those of parents in the same age group. The data for this analysis comes from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2021 and 2022 [Surveys of Income and Program Participation](#) (SIPP).

Here are the questions we asked [adults ages 50 and older](#) who don't have children and [adults younger than 50](#) who don't have children and say they're unlikely to have them, along with responses, and the [survey's methodology](#).

## Terminology

In this report, we do not use the terms “childless” or “child-free” to refer to adults who don’t have children. The [Associated Press Stylebook](#), a resource we use often, recommends against using these terms.

In the survey findings featured in Chapters 1-3, references to adults who do not have children include those who indicated they have never been a parent or guardian to any children, living or deceased, including biological or adopted children.

In the analysis of government data in Chapter 4, references to those who do and do not have children include those who have or have not had biological children.

References to college graduates or people with a college degree comprise those with a bachelor’s degree or more education. “Some college” includes those with an associate degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree.

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## The Experiences of U.S. Adults Who Don't Have Children

*57% of adults under 50 who say they're unlikely to ever have kids say a major reason is they just don't want to; 31% of those ages 50 and older without kids cite this as a reason they never had them*

The U.S. fertility rate [reached a historic low in 2023](#), with a [growing share of women ages 25 to 44 having never given birth](#).

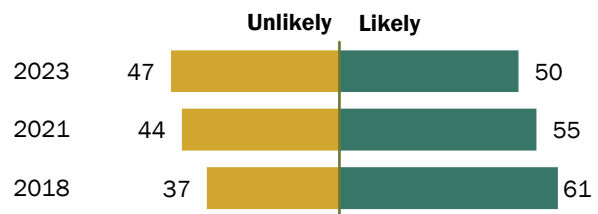
And the share of U.S. adults younger than 50 without children who say they are **unlikely to ever have kids** rose 10 percentage points between 2018 and 2023 (from 37% to 47%), according to a [Pew Research Center survey](#).

In this report, we explore the experiences of *two groups of U.S. adults*:

- Those ages 50 and older who don't have children
- Those younger than 50 who don't have children and say they are unlikely to in the future

### Growing share of adults under 50 say they're unlikely to ever have kids

Among adults ages 18 to 49 who don't have children, % saying they are \_\_\_ to have children in the future



Note: Figures include those who say they are very/somewhat likely versus not too/not at all likely to have children. Shares of respondents who didn't offer an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 7-27, 2023. "The Experiences of U.S. Adults Who Don't Have Children"

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**About four-in-ten of those in the older group (38%) say there was a time when they wanted to have children.** A smaller but sizable share (32%) say they never wanted children, and 25% say they weren't sure one way or the other. Few say they frequently felt pressure to have children from family, friends or society in general.

**Reasons for not having children – or being unlikely to ever have them – differ between the older and younger groups.** The top response for those ages 50 and older is that it just didn't happen. Meanwhile, those in the younger group are most likely to say they just don't want to have kids. Women younger than 50 are especially likely to say they just don't want to have children (64% vs. 50% of men in this group).

**Majorities in both groups say not having kids has made it easier for them to afford the things they want, have time for hobbies and interests, and save for the future.** In

the younger group, about six-in-ten also say not having kids has made it easier for them to be successful in their job or career and to have an active social life.

**Still, majorities in both groups say *parents* have it easier when it comes to having someone to care for them as they age.** Large shares in both groups say having a fulfilling life doesn't have much to do with whether someone does or doesn't have children.

These are among the key findings from a new Pew Research Center survey of 2,542 adults ages 50 and older who don't have children and 770 adults ages 18 to 49 who don't have children and say they are not too or not at all likely to have them. The survey was conducted April 29 to May 19, 2024.

**Jump to read more about:**

- [Reasons adults give for not having children](#)
- [Perceived pros and cons of not having children](#)
- [Relationships and caregiving among adults without children](#)
- [Demographic and economic characteristics of adults 50 and older without children](#)

## Reasons for not having children

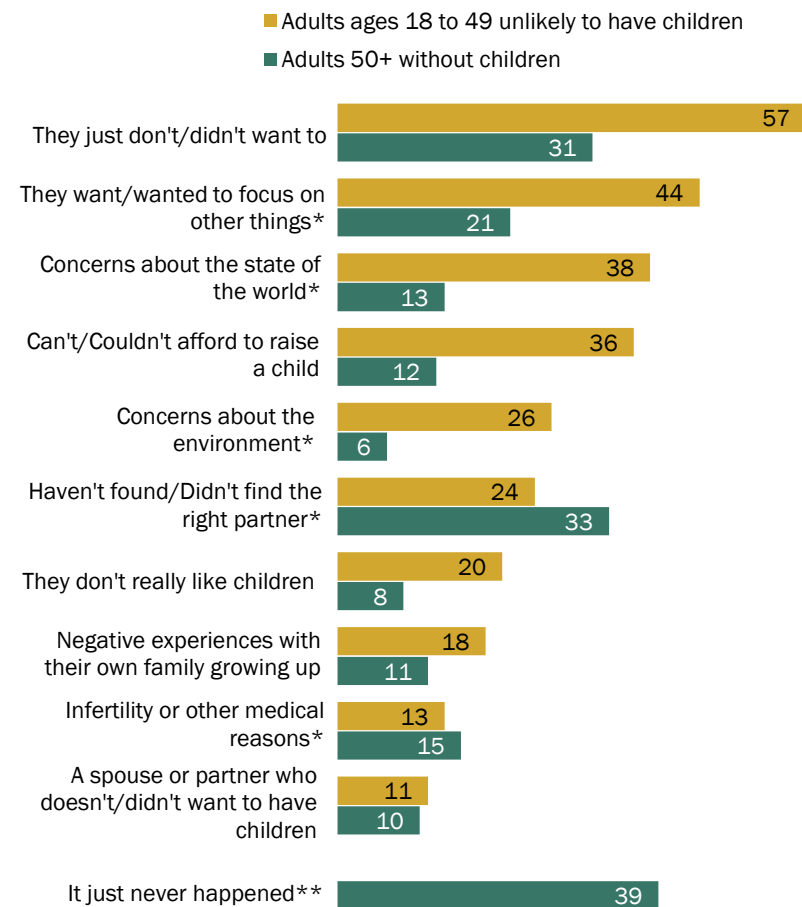
The study explores reasons U.S. adults give for not having children, among those ages 50 and older who haven't had kids and those under 50 who say they're unlikely to ever become parents.

By margins of at least 10 points, those in the younger group are more likely than those ages 50 and older to say each of the following is a major reason:

- They just don't want to have children (57% in the younger group vs. 31% in the older group)
- They want to focus on other things, such as their career or interests (44% vs. 21%)
- Concerns about the state of the world, other than the environment (38% vs. 13%)
- They can't afford to raise a child (36% vs. 12%)
- Concerns about the environment, including climate change (26% vs. 6%)
- They don't really like children (20% vs. 8%)

### Younger and older adults' reasons for not having children differ widely

Among adults who don't have children, % saying each of the following is a **major reason** they are unlikely to have/did not have children



\* Refer to topline for full question wording.

\*\* Asked only of adults ages 50 and older without children.

Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children. Other response options included "Minor reason" and "Not a reason."

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don't have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024. "The Experiences of U.S. Adults Who Don't Have Children"

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In turn, a larger share of those in the older group say a major reason they didn't have kids is that they didn't find the right partner (33% vs. 24% of those in the younger group).

There are no significant differences between the two groups in the shares pointing to infertility or other medical reasons (their own or their spouse's or partner's) or to a spouse or partner who didn't want to have children as major reasons.

Among those in their 40s, 22% say infertility or other medical reasons are a major factor in why they're unlikely to ever have children. About one-in-ten of those ages 18 to 39 (9%) say the same.

## The impact of not having children

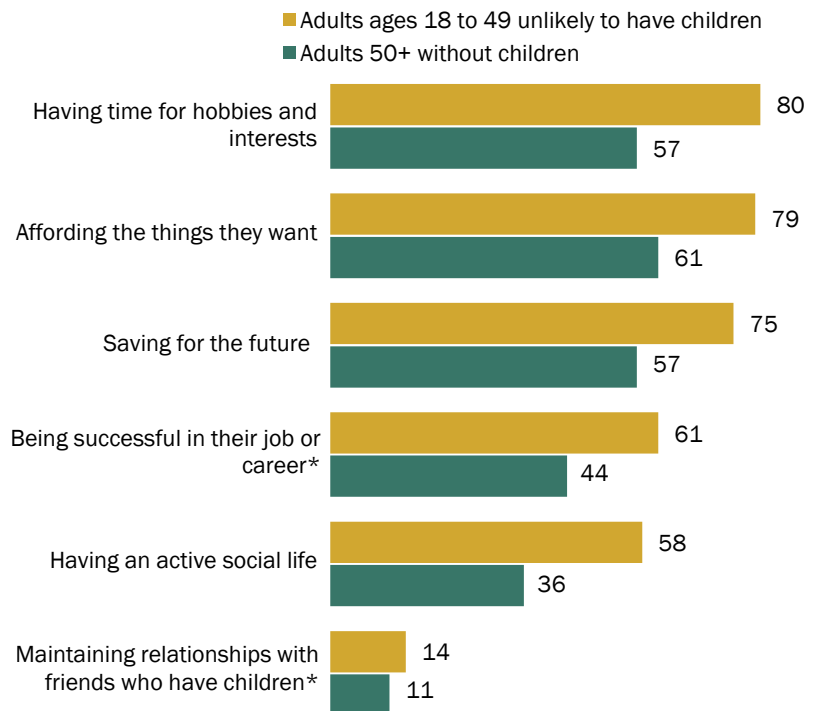
Majorities of adults ages 50 and older who don't have kids and those under 50 who say they're unlikely to do so see some benefits to not having children.

But by margins ranging from 17 to 23 points, those in the younger group are more likely than those ages 50 and older to say each of the following has been **easier for them** because they don't have children:

- Having time for hobbies and interests (80% in the younger group vs. 57% in the older group)
- Affording the things they want (79% vs. 61%)
- Saving for the future (75% vs. 57%)
- Being successful in their job or career (61% vs. 44%, among those who don't indicate this doesn't apply to them)
- Having an active social life (58% vs. 36%)

### Among adults under 50 who say they're unlikely to have children, large majorities see financial and lifestyle advantages to not being parents

Among adults who don't have children, % saying each of the following is *easier* for them because they don't have children



\* Based on those who didn't indicate this does not apply to them.

Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children. Figures include those who say it has been somewhat/a lot easier. Other response options included "Somewhat harder," "A lot harder" and "Neither easier nor harder."

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don't have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024. "The Experiences of U.S. Adults Who Don't Have Children"

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## The impact at work

We also asked those who are employed about the impact not having children has had on their work lives.

Experiences are mixed. For example, 45% of those in the younger group and 35% of those in the older group say they've had more opportunities to network outside of work hours because they don't have kids. At the same time, about a third in each group say they've been expected to take on extra work or responsibilities, and many also say they've been given less flexibility than those who have children.

## Worries about the future

The survey also asked adults ages 50 and older without children about certain concerns they may have *as they age*.

About one-in-five or more say they worry *extremely or very often* about:

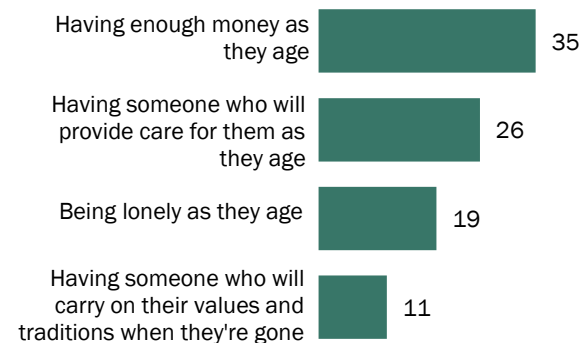
- Having enough money (35%)
- Having someone who will provide care for them (26%)
- Being lonely (19%)

A smaller share (11%) say they frequently worry about having someone who will carry on their values and traditions when they're gone.

In [a separate survey](#), 46% of parents ages 50 and older said they frequently worry about having enough money as they age. Smaller shares said the same about having someone who will provide care for them as they age (20%), having someone who will carry on their values and traditions (17%) and being lonely as they age (15%).

## About 1 in 4 adults 50 and older without children say they frequently worry about who will care for them as they age

Among adults ages 50 and older who don't have children, % saying they worry about each of the following *extremely/very often* when thinking about the future



Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children. Other response options included "Sometimes," "Rarely" and "Never."

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don't have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024.

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## How the survey findings do – or don’t – differ by gender

For the most part, the experiences of adults without children and the reasons they give for not having them **don’t vary much by gender**. This is the case across both age groups.

Still, there are some questions on which men and women without kids differ considerably.

Among those ages 50 and older, women are more likely than men to say:

- Being successful in their job or career has been easier because they don’t have children (50% among women vs. 39% among men).
- They felt pressure to have children from society in general at least sometimes when they were younger (42% vs. 27%).

Among those ages 18 to 49, women are more likely than men to say each of the following is a major reason they’re unlikely to have children:

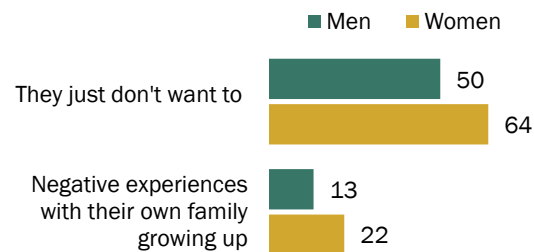
- They just don’t want to (64% vs. 50%)
- Negative experiences with their own families growing up (22% vs. 13%)

Women in the younger group are also more likely than their male counterparts to say the topic of whether they’ll have children comes up in conversation with their friends at least sometimes (41% vs. 26%).

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### Most women under 50 who don’t have kids say a major reason they’re unlikely to have them is they just don’t want to

*Among adults ages 18 to 49 who don’t have children and say they are unlikely to have them, % saying each of the follow is a **major reason** they are unlikely to have children*



Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children. The survey asked about 10 possible factors; only those with a statistically significant difference between men and women are shown. Other response options included “Minor reason” and “Not a reason.”

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don’t have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024.

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## Demographic and economic differences between adults 50 and older with and without children

In addition to the survey findings, this report includes an analysis of government data to show how the demographic characteristics and economic outcomes of adults ages 50 and older who don't have children differ from those ages 50 and older who are parents.

Among adults in this age group, those who don't have children are less likely to have ever been married. They are *more* likely to have a bachelor's degree or more education. This difference in educational attainment is especially pronounced among women.

Older women who don't have children have higher median monthly wages than mothers. The opposite is true among older men; those without children tend to earn less than fathers.

## 1. Reasons adults give for not having children

Among U.S. adults who don't have children, those ages 50 and older have mixed views on whether they *ever wanted* to have them in the first place. And their reasons for never having kids differ from those given by younger adults who say they're unlikely to have them.

The top reason cited by those ages 50 and older is that it just never happened. Adults ages 18 to 49 are most likely to say they just don't want to have children. These younger adults are also more likely than those in the older group to point to things like wanting to focus on other things, the state of the world or the environment, and financial concerns as major reasons they're unlikely to have kids.

### Views on wanting children

About four-in-ten adults ages 50 and older who never had children (38%) say there was a time when they wanted to have them. About a third (32%) say they never wanted to have children, while a quarter say they weren't sure whether or not they wanted to do so.

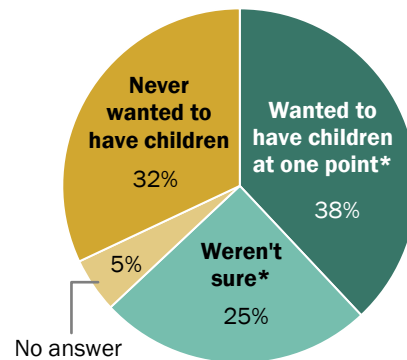
There are no differences between men and women on this question.

But among women, those with at least a bachelor's degree are more likely than those with less education to say they never wanted to have children (34% vs. 27%). There are no differences by education among men.

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### About a third of adults ages 50 and older who don't have children say they never wanted to have them

*Among adults ages 50 and older who don't have children, % saying they ...*



\* Refer to topline for full wording.

Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don't have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024.

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## Reasons adults ages 50 and older didn't have children

Adults ages 50 and older were asked to indicate how much each of 11 reasons factored into why they did not have children.

About four-in-ten (39%) say a major reason they didn't have children is that **it just never happened**.

About a third say a major reason is that they **didn't find the right partner** (33%) or that they **just didn't want to have children** (31%).

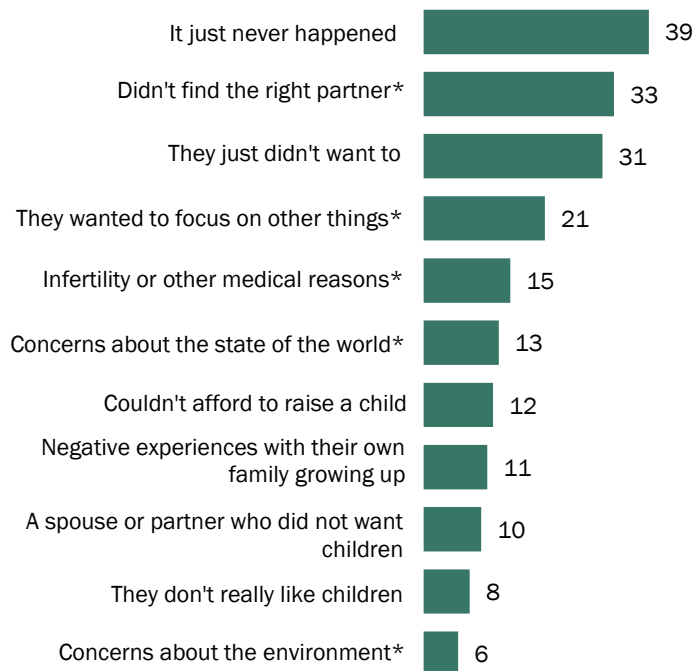
About one-in-five or fewer point to different reasons, including wanting to focus on other things, like their job or other interests (21%), and infertility or other medical reasons affecting them or their spouse or partner (15%).

The reasons adults ages 50 and older give for not having children vary greatly by whether or not they *ever* wanted to have kids.

About half of those who *wanted* children at one point but never had any (51%) say it just never happened, compared with 20% of those who *never wanted* kids. They're also more likely than those who never wanted children to say not finding the right partner (41% vs. 21%) and infertility (25% vs. 5%) are major reasons they never had children.

### About 4 in 10 adults 50 and older who don't have children say a major reason is that it just never happened

Among adults ages 50 and older who don't have children, % saying each of the following is a **major reason** they did not have children



\* Refer to survey topline for full question wording.

Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children. Other response options included "Minor reason" and "Not a reason."

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don't have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024. "The Experiences of U.S. Adults Who Don't Have Children"

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Unsurprisingly, a majority of those who say they never wanted to have kids (77%) say it's because they just didn't want to. About one-in-five or more say a major reason is that they wanted to focus on other things (37%), they don't really like children (22%), concerns about the state of the world, other than the environment (20%), or negative experiences with their own family growing up (18%).

### **Differences by gender**

For the most part, men and women ages 50 and older do not differ in the reasons they give for why they never had children. The differences that do exist are modest.

About four-in-ten men in this group (41%) say a major reason is that it just never happened, compared with 36% of women. Men are also more likely than women to point to concerns about the state of the world (15% vs. 10%) and not being able to afford to raise a child (14% vs. 9%).

And about one-in-five women (18%) say infertility is a major reason they didn't have children, while 12% of men say the same.



## Differences by education

Among adults ages 50 and older who don't have children, those with a bachelor's degree or more education are more likely than those with some college or less education to say each of the following is a major reason they didn't have children:

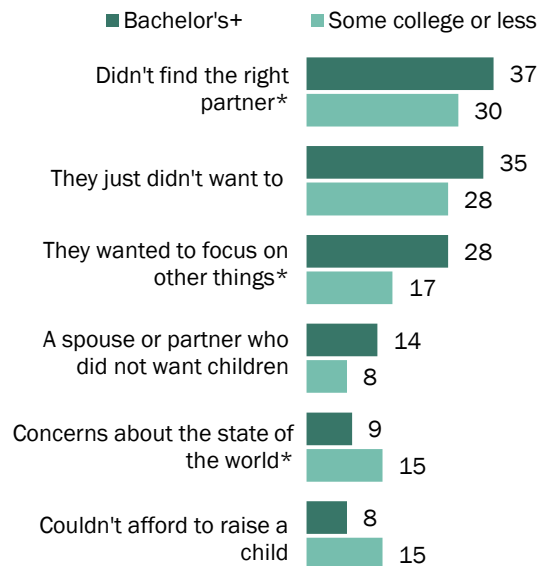
- They didn't find the right partner (37% of those with at least a bachelor's degree vs. 30% of those with some college or less)
- They just didn't want to (35% vs. 28%)
- They wanted to focus on other things (28% vs. 17%)
- A spouse or partner who didn't want children (14% vs. 8%)

Those with a postgraduate degree are especially likely to say they wanted to focus on other things: 34% say this is a major reason they didn't have children, compared with 24% of those with a bachelor's degree only.

In turn, those with some college experience or less education are more likely than those with at least a bachelor's degree to say concerns about the state of the world, other than the environment (15% vs. 9%), and not being able to afford to raise a child (15% vs. 8%) are major reasons they didn't have children.

## Reasons for not having children among adults 50 and older vary by education

Among adults ages 50 and older who don't have children, % saying each of the following is a **major reason** they did not have children



\* Refer to survey topline for full question wording.

Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children. The survey asked about 11 possible factors; only those with a statistically significant difference by education level are shown. Other response options included "Minor reason" and "Not a reason." "Some college" includes those with an associate degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don't have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024.

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## Reasons adults under 50 are unlikely to have children

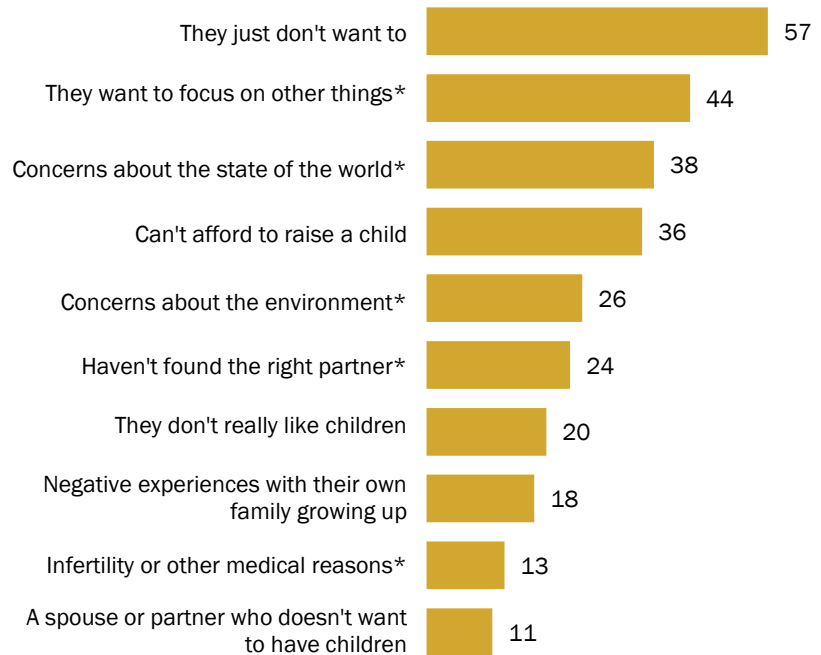
When asked why they are unlikely to have children, the top answer for adults younger than 50 is that **they just don't want to**. Over half of these adults (57%) say this is a major reason, much higher than the share of adults 50 and older who say the same (31%).

Similarly, by differences of 12 to 25 percentage points, those in the younger group are more likely than those ages 50 and older to say each of the following is a major reason they are unlikely to have children:

- They want to focus on other things (44% vs. 21% in the older group)
- Concerns about the state of the world (38% vs. 13%)
- They can't afford to have a child (36% vs. 12%)
- They don't really like children (20% vs. 8%)

### A majority of adults under 50 who say they're unlikely to ever have children say they just don't want to

Among adults ages 18 to 49 who don't have children and say they're unlikely to have them, % saying each of the following is a **major reason** they are unlikely to have children



\* Refer to survey topline for full question wording.

Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children. Other response options included "Minor reason" and "Not a reason."

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don't have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024. "The Experiences of U.S. Adults Who Don't Have Children"

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And adults under 50 are about four times as likely as those ages 50 and older to say concerns about the environment, including climate change, are a major reason (26% vs. 6%).

## Differences by gender

Among adults ages 18 to 49, women and men cite many of these factors at similar rates. But there are two items that women are more likely than men to point to as a major reason they are unlikely to have kids: they just don't want to (64% vs. 50%) and negative experiences with their own family growing up (22% vs. 13%).

## Differences by age

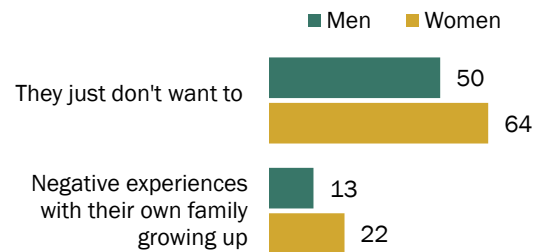
Adults ages 18 to 39 are particularly likely to cite certain reasons they are unlikely to have children, when compared with adults in their 40s:

- They want to focus on other things (51% of those 18 to 39 vs. 27% of those 40 to 49)
- Concerns about the state of the world, other than the environment (43% vs. 25%)
- They can't afford to raise a child (41% vs. 22%)
- Concerns about the environment (30% vs. 14%)

The one reason adults ages 40 to 49 cite more than those under 40 is infertility or other medical reasons. About two-in-ten adults in their 40s who are unlikely to have children (22%) say a major reason is infertility, compared with 9% of those under 40.

## A majority of women under 50 who say they are unlikely to ever have children say it's because they just don't want to

Among adults ages 18 to 49 who don't have children and say they are unlikely to have them, % saying each of the following is a **major reason** they are unlikely to have children



Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children. The survey asked about 10 possible factors; only those with a statistically significant difference between men and women are shown. Other response options included "Minor reason" and "Not a reason."

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don't have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024.

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## 2. Perceived pros and cons of not having children

Among U.S. adults ages 50 and older who never had children, majorities say achieving certain things in life – such as having a fulfilling life, or a successful career – don’t have much to do with whether someone has children. At the same time, many say not having children has made some aspects of life easier for them.

### General impact of not having children

Majorities of adults ages 50 and older who don’t have children say a person’s ability to do each of the following doesn’t have much to do with having kids:

- Have a fulfilling life (66%)
- Have a successful job or career (64%)
- Have an active social life (56%)

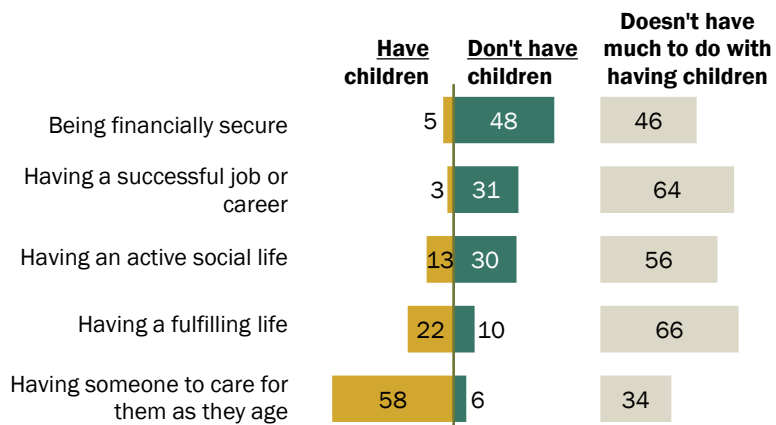
And about three-in-ten say people who *don’t* have children have it easier when it comes to having a successful job or career (31%) and having an active social life (30%).

Much smaller shares say people who *do* have children have it easier in these areas.

A sizable share of adults 50 and older who don’t have children (48%) say people who don’t have kids have it easier when it comes to being financially secure. Still, a similar share (46%) say this doesn’t have much to do with whether someone has children.

### Most adults ages 50 and older who don’t have children say having job success and a fulfilling life don’t have much to do with whether someone has children

Among adults ages 50 and older who don’t have children, % saying people who \_\_\_ have it *easier* when it comes to each of the following



Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children. Share of respondents who didn’t offer an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don’t have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024. “The Experiences of U.S. Adults Who Don’t Have Children”

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When it comes to having a fulfilling life, 22% say people who *do* have children have it easier, while 10% say this is easier for people who don't have children.

The one area where a majority of older adults without children see a clear advantage for parents is in having someone to care for them as they age. About six-in-ten (58%) say people who *do* have children have it easier in this regard.

## Personal impact of not having children

When asked how not having kids has impacted certain aspects of *their own lives*, majorities of those ages 50 and older say it's made each of the following easier:

- Affording the things they want (61%)
- Having time for hobbies and interests (57%)
- Saving for the future (57%)

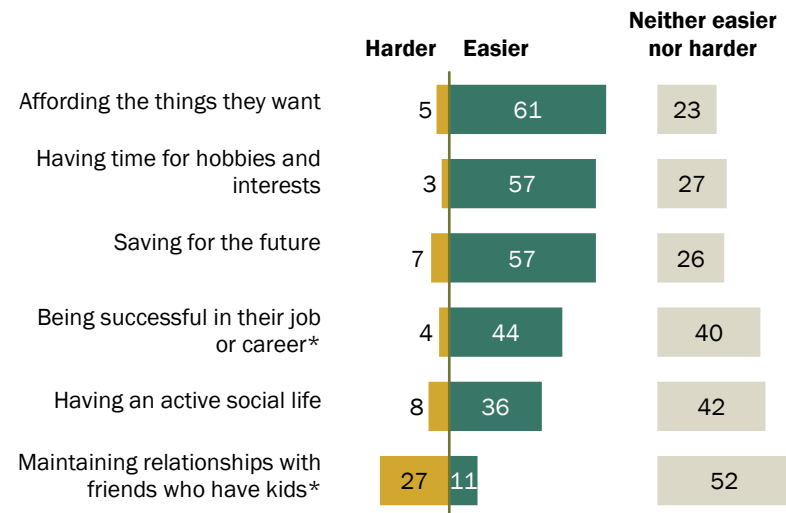
Smaller but substantial shares say not having children has made it easier for them to be successful in their job or career (44% among those who don't indicate this doesn't apply to them) and to have an active social life (36%).

About a quarter (27%) say not having children has made it *harder* for them to maintain relationships with friends who

have kids (among those who don't indicate this doesn't apply to them). About half (52%) say not having children hasn't made this easier or harder.

### Majorities of adults 50 and older who never had kids think this has helped them when it comes to finances and having time for hobbies

*Among adults ages 50 and older who don't have children, % saying that, overall, the fact that they don't have children has made each of the following \_\_\_ for them*



\* Based on those who didn't indicate that this doesn't apply to them.  
 Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children. Figures include those who say it has been somewhat or a lot easier or harder. Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer or who said they are not sure are not shown.  
 Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don't have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024. "The Experiences of U.S. Adults Who Don't Have Children"

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## Differences by gender

Half of women ages 50 and older who don't have children say this has made it easier for them to be successful in their job or career, compared with 39% of their male counterparts (among those who don't indicate this doesn't apply to them). In turn, men are more likely to say not having children hasn't made this easier or harder.

Women are also more likely than men to say not having children has made it easier for them to save for the future (60% vs. 54%).

In contrast, women are more likely than men to say not having children has made it *harder* for them to maintain relationships with friends who have kids (30% vs. 24% among those who don't indicate this doesn't apply to them). Still, roughly half in each group say not having children hasn't made this easier or harder.

## Experiences in the workplace

Some employed adults ages 50 and older without kids say this affects their work life in both positive and negative ways.

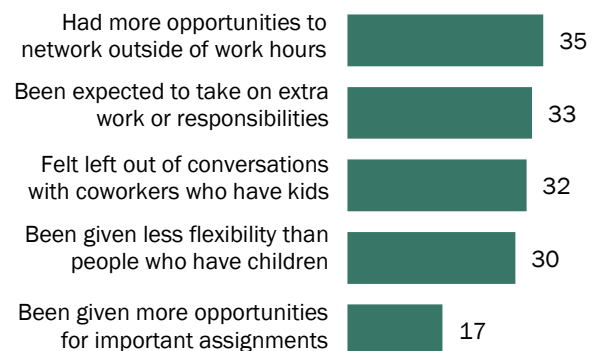
For example, 35% say they've had more opportunities to network outside of work hours because they don't have kids. But a third say they've been expected to take on extra work or responsibilities. And about three-in-ten say they've been given less flexibility than people who have children (30%) and have felt left out of conversations with coworkers who have kids (32%).

A smaller share (17%) say they've been given more opportunities for important assignments because they don't have children.

Majorities say they haven't had these experiences in the workplace due to their not having children.

### Employed adults ages 50 and older who don't have children say not having kids has advantages, disadvantages at work

*Among employed adults ages 50 and older who don't have children, % saying each of the following has happened to them at work because they don't have children*



Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don't have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024.

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### Differences by gender

Employed women ages 50 and older who don't have kids are more likely than their male counterparts to say each of the following has happened to them at work because they don't have children:

- Been given less flexibility at work than people who have children (38% vs. 26%)
- Felt left out of conversations with coworkers who have children (38% vs. 28%)

There are no differences by gender on the other items.

### Differences by age

Among employed older adults without children, those in their 50s tend to see more of an impact at work than those ages 60 and older. About four-in-ten of those in their 50s say each of the following has happened to them because they don't have children:

- Been expected to take on extra work or responsibilities (40% vs. 24% of those ages 60 and older)
- Been given less flexibility than people who have children (38% vs. 21%)

### Worries about the future

Shares ranging from 19% to 35% among adults ages 50 and older who don't have children say they worry about each of the following *extremely or very often*:

- Having enough money as they age (35%)
- Having someone who will provide care for them as they age (26%)
- Being lonely as they age (19%)

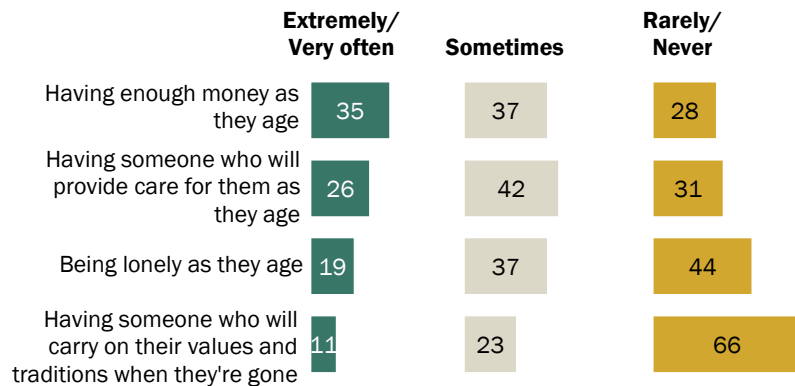
Majorities say they worry about these things *at least sometimes*.

A far smaller share (11%) say they frequently worry about having someone who will carry on their values and traditions when they're gone. About a third (34%) say they worry about this at least sometimes.

In a separate survey, 46% of parents ages 50 and older said they frequently worry about having enough money as they age. Smaller shares said the same about having someone who will provide care for them as they age (20%), having someone who will carry on their values and traditions (17%), and being lonely as they age (15%).<sup>1</sup>

## Concerns about finances, caregiving, loneliness and passing down values are not frequent among adults 50 and older with no kids

Among adults ages 50 and older who don't have children, % saying they worry about each of the following \_\_\_ when thinking about the future



Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children. Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don't have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024. "The Experiences of U.S. Adults Who Don't Have Children"

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### Differences by gender

About a third (34%) of women ages 50 and older who don't have children say they frequently worry about having someone who will provide care for them as they age. By comparison, 20% of their male counterparts say the same.

There are no gender differences when it comes to worries about having enough money, being lonely, or having someone who will carry on values or traditions.

### Differences by age

Financial concerns are more common among adults without children in their 50s and 60s than among those ages 70 and older. About four-in-ten of those ages 50 to 59 (42%) and 60 to 69 (38%)

<sup>1</sup> This question was asked of 3,122 respondents who had previously indicated they are the parent or guardian of a child of any age and who said yes to the following question in a survey conducted May 13-19, 2024, using the American Trends Panel: "Have you ever been a parent or guardian to any children, living or deceased, including any biological or adopted children?"



say they frequently worry about having enough money as they age. About a quarter of those 70 and older (24%) say the same.

## Pros and cons of not having children, according to younger adults who say they're unlikely to have kids

We asked some of these same questions of adults younger than 50 who don't have kids and say they're not too or not at all likely to have them in the future.

Majorities in this group say the fact that they don't have children makes almost all aspects of life we asked about easier for them, with three-quarters or more saying it makes it easier for them to:

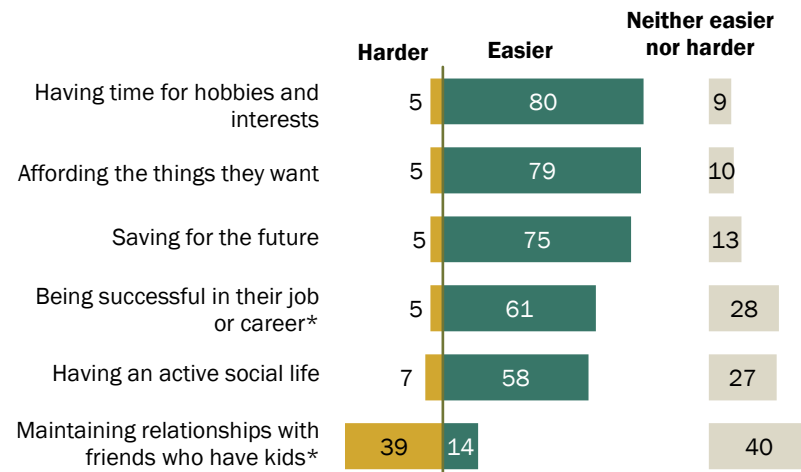
- Have time for hobbies and interests (80%)
- Afford the things they want (79%)
- Save for the future (75%)

About six-in-ten say not having children makes it easier for them to be successful in their job or career (61% among those who don't indicate this doesn't apply to them) and have an active social life (58%).

In turn, a sizable share of these adults (39%) say not having kids has made it *harder* for them to maintain relationships with their friends who have children (among those who don't indicate this doesn't apply to them). A similar share (40%) says not having kids hasn't made this easier or harder.

### Majorities of adults younger than 50 who say they are unlikely to ever have children report that not having kids makes many aspects of life easier for them

Among adults ages 18 to 49 who don't have children and say they are unlikely to have them, % saying the fact that they don't have children makes each of the following \_\_\_\_ for them overall



\* Based on those who didn't indicate that this doesn't apply to them.  
 Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children. Figures include those who say it has been somewhat or a lot easier or harder. Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer or who said they are not sure are not shown.  
 Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don't have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024. "The Experiences of U.S. Adults Who Don't Have Children"

We also asked adults under 50 who don't have children and say they're unlikely to have them about the **general impact** of not having kids. About half or more of these adults say people without kids have it *easier* when it comes to:

- Being financially secure (66%)
- Having an active social life (55%)
- Having a successful job or career (53%)

Like older adults without kids, most adults in this younger group (71%) say having a fulfilling life doesn't have much to do to whether someone has children.

When it comes to their **experiences in the workplace**, employed adults under 50 who say they're unlikely to have children also report a mix of positives and negatives related to their not having kids.

- 45% say they've had more opportunities to network outside of work hours.
- 39% say they've been given less flexibility than people who have children.
- 35% say they've been expected to take on extra work or responsibilities.
- 28% say they have felt left out of conversations with coworkers who have kids.
- 19% say they have been given more opportunities for important assignments.

### 3. Relationships and caregiving among adults without children

A majority of U.S. adults ages 50 and older who don't have children say not having kids hasn't had much of an impact on their personal relationships. And for the most part, they report that they rarely, if ever, felt pressure to have children when they were younger. Similarly, majorities of adults under 50 who say they are unlikely to have children say they rarely, if ever, talk about having kids with family or friends.

#### The impact of not having children on relationships

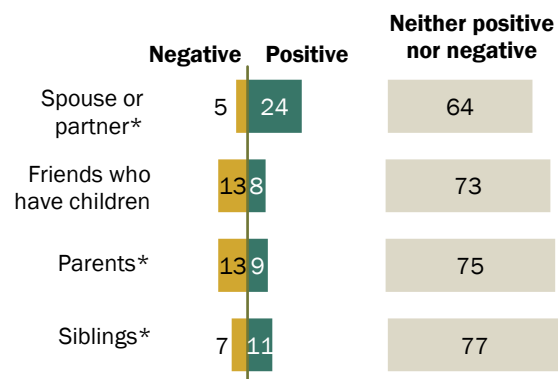
Among adults ages 50 and older, large shares say not having children has had *neither a positive nor a negative impact* on their relationships with their spouse or partner (64%), their friends who have children (73%), their parents (75%), and their siblings (77%).<sup>2</sup>

About a quarter of married or partnered adults without children (24%) say not having kids has had a *positive impact* on their relationship with their spouse or partner. This is larger than the shares who see a positive impact on the other relationships we asked about.

Those ages 50 and older who *never wanted to have children* are especially likely to say not having kids has had a positive impact on their relationship with their spouse or partner. Some 36% say this, compared with 17% of those who say they wanted to have children at some point, and 23% of those who say they weren't sure if they wanted children.

#### Majorities of adults ages 50 and older without children say not having kids hasn't impacted their relationships

Among adults ages 50 and older who don't have children, % saying that, in general, not having children has had a \_\_\_ impact on their relationship with each of the following



\* These questions were only asked of respondents who indicated they are married or partnered, have living parent(s) or sibling(s) respectively.

Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children. Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Figures include those who say the impact was very or somewhat positive or negative.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don't have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024.

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<sup>2</sup> The item about a spouse or partner was only asked of those who are married or in a committed relationship (whether they are living with their partner or not). The items about parents and siblings were only asked of respondents who indicated they have at least one living parent or sibling, respectively.

## Pressure to have children

Majorities of adults ages 50 and older who don't have children also report that they rarely or never felt pressure to have kids from a spouse or partner, friends, family, or society.<sup>3</sup>

Still, about a third say they felt pressure to have children *at least sometimes* from:

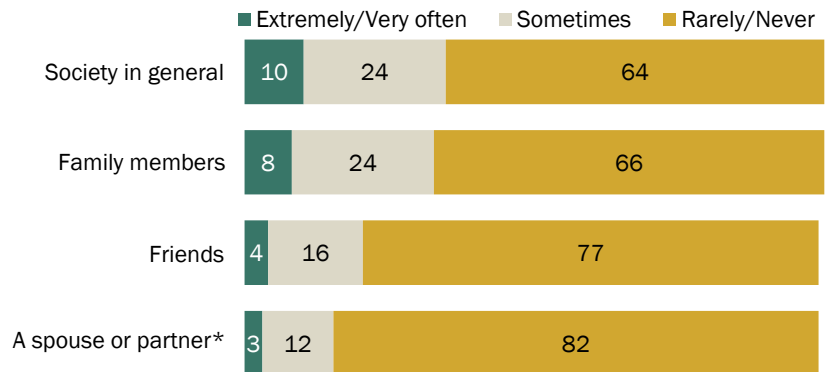
- Society in general (34%)
- Family members (32%)

Smaller shares say they felt pressured at least sometimes by:

- Friends (20%)
- A spouse or partner (15%)

### For adults ages 50 and older without children, pressure to have kids was more likely to come from family and society than from friends or partners

Among adults ages 50 and older who don't have children, % saying that, when they were younger, they felt pressure to have children \_\_\_\_ from each of the following



\* Based on those who have ever had a spouse or partner.  
 Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children. Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.  
 Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don't have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024. "The Experiences of U.S. Adults Who Don't Have Children"

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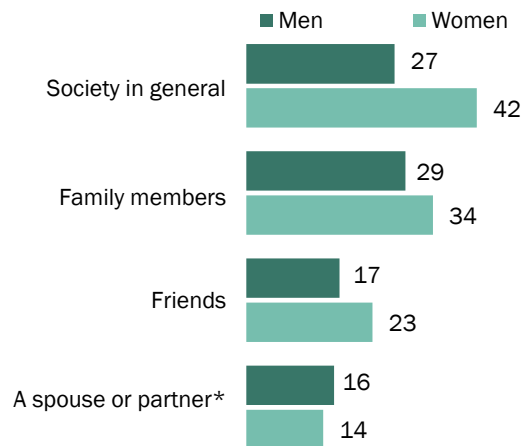
<sup>3</sup> Share who felt pressure from a spouse or partner are based on those who didn't indicate they've never had a spouse or partner.

Among adults ages 50 and older who don't have children, women are especially likely to say they felt pressure from society to have children. About four-in-ten (42%) say they felt this pressure at least sometimes, compared with 27% of men.

Similarly, women are more likely than men to say they faced pressure from family or friends. There are no gender differences when it comes to pressure from a spouse or partner (among those who have ever had a spouse or partner).

### About 4 in 10 older women who don't have kids say they felt pressure from society to have children

Among adults ages 50 and older who don't have children, % saying that, when they were younger, they felt pressure to have children **at least sometimes** from each of the following



\* Based on those who have ever had a spouse or partner.  
 Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children. Response options also included "rarely" and "never."  
 Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don't have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024.  
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## Relationships with nieces and nephews

Adults ages 50 and older who don't have children often have close relationships with family members in younger generations.

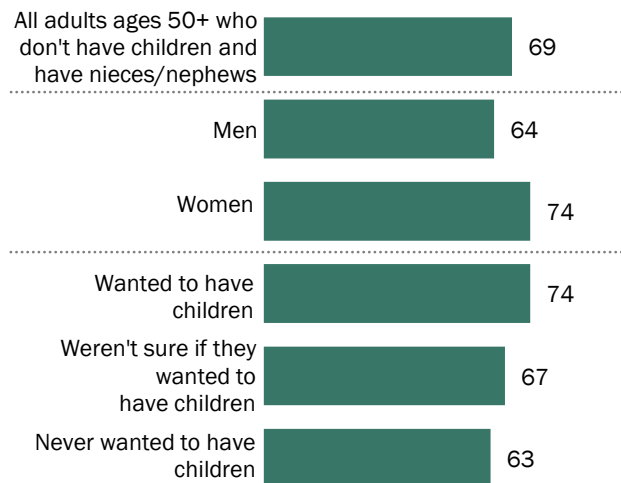
Among those 50 and older who don't have children but do have nieces or nephews, 69% say they feel close with at least one niece or nephew. Only 11% of adults in this age group who don't have children indicate that they don't have any nieces or nephews.

Women are more likely than men to say they are close with at least one niece or nephew (74% vs. 64%). Still, large shares of both groups say this.

Among adults 50 and older who don't have children and say they wanted to at some point, 74% report they're close with at least one niece or nephew. This is larger than the shares of those who weren't sure if they wanted to have kids (67%) and those who never wanted to have kids (63%).

### A majority of adults ages 50 and older who don't have children are close with at least one niece or nephew

*Among adults ages 50 and older who don't have children and have nieces or nephews, % saying they feel close to at least one niece or nephew*



Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children. Response options included "Yes, one," "Yes, more than one" and "No, I don't feel close to any of my nieces and nephews." Respondents who indicated they do not have any nieces or nephews (11% of the sample) were not included in this analysis. Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don't have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024.

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## Providing care for aging parents

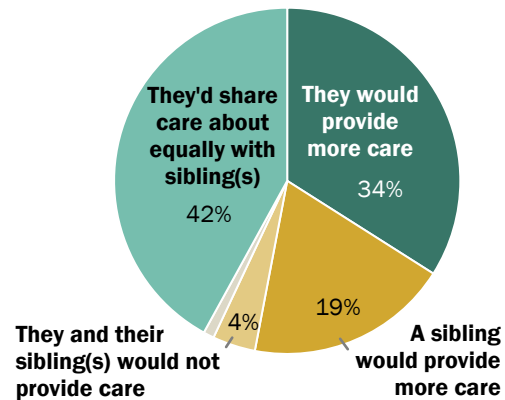
We also asked adults ages 50 and older who don't have children about providing care for their own parents. Specifically, we asked those with one or more siblings and at least one living parent who would provide more care if their parent needed it.

- 34% say they would provide more of the care.
- 42% say they would share caregiving responsibilities about equally with siblings.
- 19% say a sibling would provide more of the care.

Women are more likely than men to say they would provide more care than their siblings (40% vs. 30%).

### About a third of older adults without kids say they, rather than a sibling, would provide more care for their parents

*Among adults ages 50 and older who don't have children and have at least one living parent and sibling, % saying \_\_\_ if their parent(s) needed help caring for themselves*



Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children. Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer shown but not labeled.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don't have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024.

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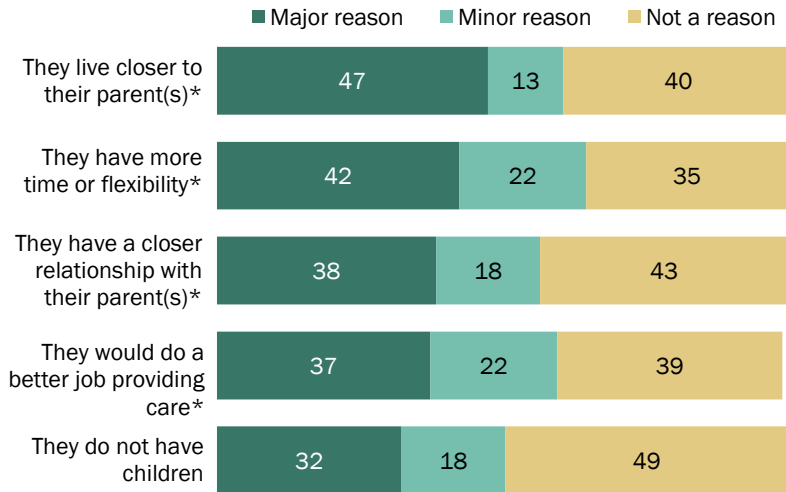
When we asked those who said they would provide more care than their siblings about why that might be, not having children didn't stand out as a top reason.

Adults without children are more likely to say **living closer to their parents** is a major reason they would provide more of the care than to say it's because they **don't have kids**.

There are no other statistically significant differences in the reasons adults who don't have children say they would take on more of the care. They are equally likely to point to things like having more time or flexibility or being able to do a better job than their siblings as they are to say it's because they don't have kids.

**Not having kids is *not* a top reason some adults 50 and older without children would provide more care than their siblings would if a parent needed it**

*Among adults ages 50 and older who don't have children and who say **they would provide more care for their parent(s) than a sibling would**, % saying each of the following is a ...*



\* Full question wording included "than your sibling(s)."  
 Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children. Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.  
 Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don't have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024. "The Experiences of U.S. Adults Who Don't Have Children"



## How often younger adults talk about having children

We asked adults under 50 who don't have children and say they're unlikely to have them about how often the subject of having kids comes up in conversations with family and friends.

A majority say whether they'll have children *rarely or never* comes up in conversation with their spouse or partner (among those who are married or in a committed relationship), their friends, or their parents (among those with a living parent).

Still, about a third of these adults say the topic comes up *at least sometimes* with their spouse or partner (34%) and their friends (32%).<sup>4</sup> About three-in-ten (28%) say it comes up at least sometimes with their parents.

### Differences by gender

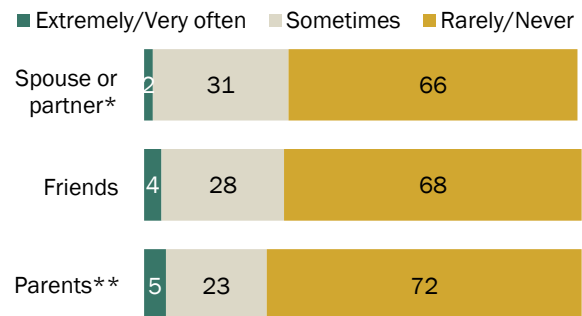
Among adults under 50 who don't have children and say they're unlikely to ever have them, women are more likely than men to say whether they'll have children comes up at least sometimes in conversations with their friends (41% vs. 26%). There are no significant gender differences in shares saying it comes up in conversations with their spouse or partner or with their parents.

### Differences by age

Among those who are married or partnered, adults under 40 are twice as likely as those ages 40 to 49 to say whether they'll have children comes up at least sometimes with their spouse or partner (40% vs. 20%).

### A majority of adults under 50 who don't have kids say whether they'll have them rarely or never comes up in conversation

Among adults ages 18 to 49 who don't have children and say they're unlikely to have them, % saying whether they'll have children comes up in conversation \_\_\_ with each of the following



\* Asked of respondents who indicated they are married or partnered.

\*\* Asked of respondents who indicated they have at least one living parent.

Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children. Shares of respondents who didn't offer an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don't have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024.

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<sup>4</sup> The shares who say this topic comes up at least sometimes may not add to the shares who say "extremely/very often" and "sometimes" as shown in the chart due to rounding.

Similarly, 37% of those under 40 say the topic comes up at least sometimes with their friends, compared with 20% of those 40 to 49.

## Friends and children

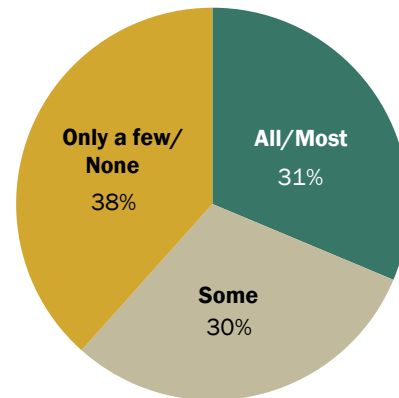
About four-in-ten adults under 50 who don't have children and say they are unlikely to have them (38%) say only a few or none of their close friends have children or are planning to have them one day.

Similar shares say all or most (31%) or some of their friends (30%) have children or are planning to have them.

Those under 40 are more likely than those ages 40 to 49 to say only a few or none of their friends have children or are planning to (44% vs. 23%).

## Many adults under 50 who say they're unlikely to have children know friends who have kids or plan to have them

*Among adults ages 18 to 49 who don't have children and say they're unlikely to have them, % saying \_\_\_ of their close friends have children or are planning to have children someday*



Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children. Share of respondents (<0.5%) who didn't offer an answer is not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don't have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024.

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## The impact of not having children on dating

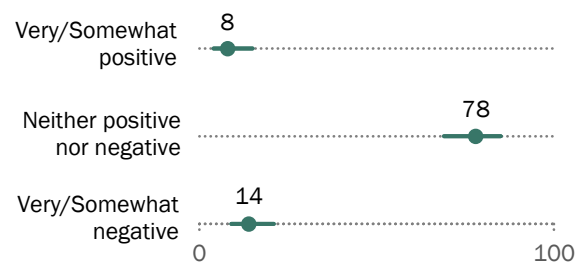
We asked adults under 50 who don't have children and are not in a committed relationship about their dating life, if they indicated they are looking to date.

About eight-in-ten of these adults (78%) say the fact that they're unlikely to have children has had neither a positive nor a negative impact on their dating life.

There is no statistical difference between the shares saying it's had a positive (8%) or a negative impact (14%) on their dating life.

### 78% of single adults under 50 who say they're unlikely to have kids report that this hasn't impacted their dating life

*Among adults ages 18 to 49 who don't have children, are not married or partnered, and are looking to date, % saying the fact that they're unlikely to have children has had a \_\_\_ impact on their dating life\**



\* There were 187 responses to this question, with an effective sample size of 83 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.8 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50%. Note: Based on those who have never had biological or adopted children. Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Lines surrounding data points represent the margin of error for each estimate.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults who don't have children conducted April 29-May 19, 2024.

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## 4. Demographic and economic characteristics of adults 50 and older without children

One-in-five U.S. adults ages 50 and older have never had children, according to Pew Research Center analysis of government data.<sup>5</sup>

Not having children is more common among adults in their 50s and 60s than those in their 70s. Today, 23% of adults in their 50s and 22% of those in their 60s have never had children, compared with 15% of those in their 70s. (The data doesn't go back far enough to allow us to analyze how these figures have changed over time).

This chapter looks at how adults ages 50 and older who haven't had children compare with parents in the same age group in terms of their demographic and economic characteristics.

Among the key findings:

- Adults without children are less likely to have ever been married.
- Women without children are more likely than mothers to have a college degree and to be employed.
- Adults without children (both married and unmarried) are better off than parents in terms of median wealth and retirement savings.

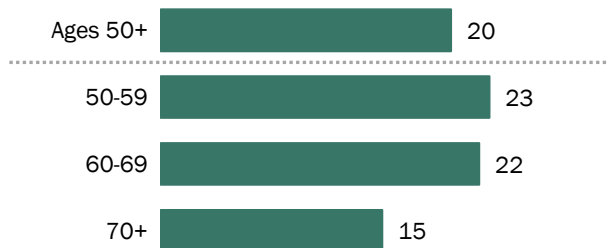
### Educational attainment

Among adults ages 50 and older, those who don't have children are more likely than parents to have a four-year college degree. This is mostly driven by higher levels of educational attainment among women without children.

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### Adults in their 50s and 60s are more likely than those ages 70 and older to have never had children

*% of adults in each age group who have never had biological children*



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 2021 and 2022 Survey of Income and Program Participation. "The Experiences of U.S. Adults Who Don't Have Children"

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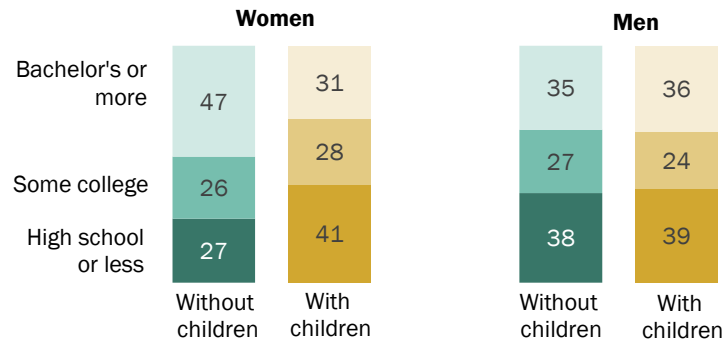
<sup>5</sup> In this analysis, "children" refers to biological children only. Refer to Methodology section for more details.

Almost half of women ages 50 and older who don't have children (47%) have at least a bachelor's degree; this compares with 31% of mothers in this age group. In turn, 41% of mothers have a high school diploma or less education, compared with 27% of women who have never had children.

Women without children are also more likely than men without children to have a college education: 35% of men ages 50 and older without children have a four-year degree. Older men with and without children are about equally likely to have a bachelor's degree or more education.

### Among women 50 and older, those without children are more likely than mothers to have a college education

*% of adults ages 50 and older whose highest level of education is ...*



Note: Based on those who have had or have never had biological children. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 2021 and 2022 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

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## Marital status and living arrangements

Adults ages 50 and older who have never had children often have different family and living arrangements than parents in their age group. Particularly, adults without kids are less likely to be married and more likely to live by themselves.

While there are differences in the marital status of both men and women without children when compared with their counterparts who are parents, the difference is more pronounced among men.

About three-quarters of fathers ages 50 and older (73%) are married, compared with 43% of men in the same age group who don't have children.

Among women ages 50 and older, 57% of mothers are married, versus 41% of women in this age group who don't have children.

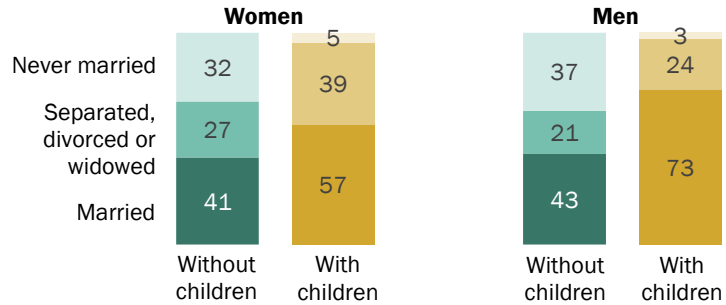
The share of older adults without children who have never been married is 37% for men and 32% for women. By comparison, just 3% of fathers and 5% of mothers in this age group have never been married.

When it comes to living arrangements, about two-thirds of parents ages 50 and older (66%) live with a spouse or partner. This is true of 46% of older adults without kids.

In turn, adults who have never had kids are nearly twice as likely as parents to live alone (37% vs. 20%). Adults without children are also more likely to be living with at least one of their own parents (7% vs. 2% of those who have children).

### Adults 50 and older without children are less likely to be married or to have ever been married

% of adults ages 50 and older who are ...



Note: Based on those who have had or have never had biological children. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

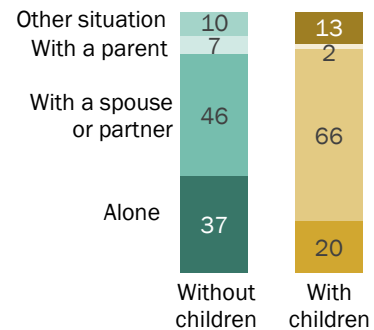
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 2021 and 2022 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

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### 37% of adults 50 and older who don't have kids live alone

% of adults ages 50 and older who live ...



Note: Based on those who have had or have never had biological children. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 2021 and 2022 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

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## Employment, wages and wealth

Many adults ages 50 and older are no longer working.

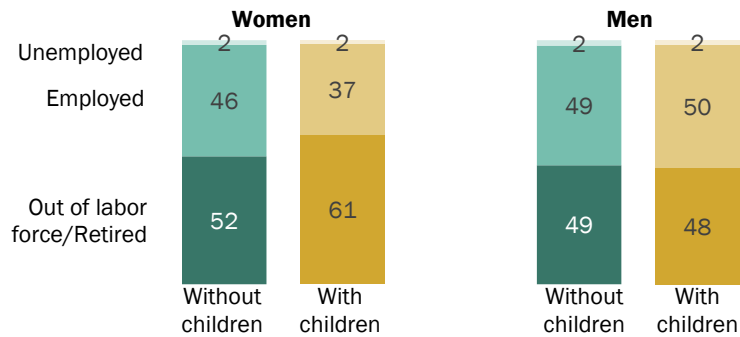
Among women in this age group, those who don't have children are more likely than mothers to be employed (46% vs. 37%).

That difference is driven by a gap among women ages 65 and older: 21% of women in this age group who don't have children are employed, compared with 14% of those who are parents. The difference in employment status among women ages 50 to 64 is not significant.

Men ages 50 and older with and without children are about equally likely to be employed (50% vs. 49%).

### Among women 50 and older, those without children are more likely than mothers to be employed

% of adults ages 50 and older who are ...



Note: Based on those who have had or have never had biological children. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 2021 and 2022 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

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Among employed women, those without children *earn more* than mothers (\$4,232 vs. \$3,407 in median monthly wages). The opposite is true among employed men: Those without children *earn less* than fathers (\$4,392 vs. \$5,292 in median monthly wages).

Overall, among those ages 50 and older, adults without children have *lower household incomes* than parents do. But this differs by marital status.

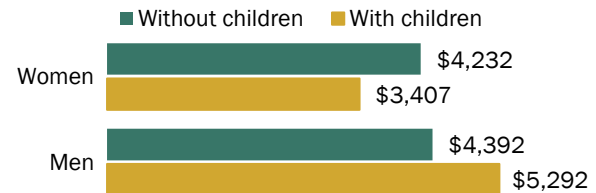
Among unmarried adults (including those living with a partner they're not married to), those who don't have children have *higher monthly household incomes* in addition to *higher net worth* and *larger retirement accounts* when compared with those who are parents. For married adults, the pattern is similar, except for on household income.

Financial outcomes also differ by gender among those who are not married.

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### Among older adults, men without kids earn less than fathers, but women without children out-earn mothers

Median monthly wages of employed adults ages 50 and older, in 2022 dollars



Note: Based on those who have had or have never had biological children.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 2021 and 2022 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

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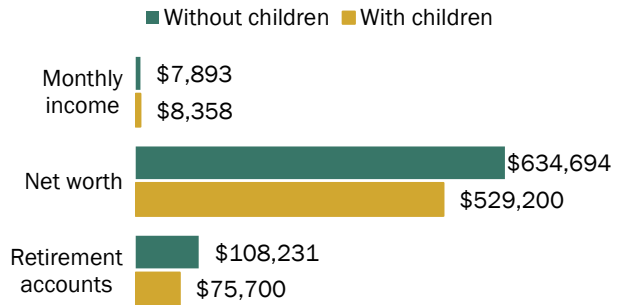
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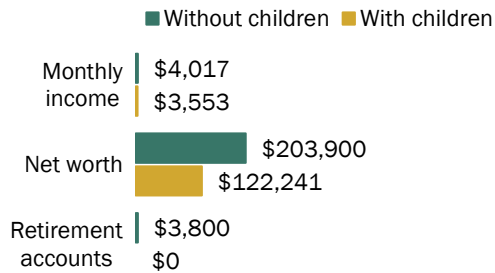
- **Among unmarried men,** those with and without kids have similar levels of income and retirement savings. But men without children have higher net worth than fathers.
- **Among unmarried women,** those without children do better than mothers when it comes to their monthly household income, net worth and retirement savings.

**Married and unmarried older adults without kids have higher net worth and larger retirement savings than parents**

*Median household \_\_\_\_ among **married** adults 50 and older, in 2022 dollars*



*Median household \_\_\_\_ among **unmarried** adults 50 and older, in 2022 dollars*



Note: Based on those who have had or have never had biological children.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 2021 and 2022 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

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## Methodology

### The American Trends Panel survey methodology

#### Overview

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. Panelists participate via self-administered web surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access at home are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish. The panel is being managed by Ipsos.

Data in this report is drawn from ATP Wave 147, which was conducted from April 29 to May 19, 2024, among a sample of U.S. adults who have never had children and are unlikely to have children in the future. The sample was comprised of 8,826 panelists who had previously indicated that they did not have children and, for those under 50 years old, had also said they were unlikely to have children in the future. At the start of the survey, respondents were screened and considered eligible for inclusion if they confirmed that they had never been a parent or guardian to any children, living or deceased, including biological or adopted children. To be considered eligible, respondents under 50 also had to say that they were not too or not at all likely to have children in the future. Of the 7,304 respondents who completed the screening questions, there were 3,312 who were eligible and went on to complete the full survey, including 1,779 respondents from the ATP and an additional 1,533 from Ipsos' KnowledgePanel (KP). The survey has a response rate of 82% (AAPOR RR3).<sup>6</sup> The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 2%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged on to the survey and completed at least one item is 1%.

Weighting and analysis were performed separately for respondents ages 18 to 49 and those 50 and older. The margin of sampling error for the sample of 770 respondents ages 18 to 49 is plus or minus 5.3 percentage points. The margin of sampling error for the sample of 2,542 respondents ages 50 and older is plus or minus 2.4 percentage points.

#### Panel recruitment

The ATP was created in 2014, with the first cohort of panelists invited to join the panel at the end of a large, national, landline and cellphone random-digit dial survey that was conducted in both English and Spanish. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in 2015

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<sup>6</sup> The response rate is calculated as the number of eligible completes over the sum of eligible completes, breakoffs and nonrespondents, where it is estimated that 46% of nonrespondents would have been eligible if they responded.

and 2017, respectively. Across these three surveys, a total of 19,718 adults were invited to join the ATP, of whom 9,942 (50%) agreed to participate.

In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to address-based sampling (ABS) recruitment. A study cover letter and a pre-incentive are mailed to a stratified, random sample of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service’s Delivery Sequence File. This Postal Service file has been estimated to cover as much as 98% of the population, although some studies suggest that the coverage could be in the low 90% range.<sup>7</sup> Within each sampled household, the adult with the next birthday is asked to participate. Other details of the ABS recruitment protocol have changed over time but are available upon request.<sup>8</sup>

We have recruited a national sample of U.S. adults to the ATP approximately once per year since 2014. In some years, the recruitment has included additional efforts (known as an “oversample”) to boost sample size with underrepresented groups. For example, Hispanic adults, Black adults and Asian adults were oversampled in 2019, 2022 and 2023, respectively.

Across the six address-based recruitments, a total of 23,862 adults were invited to join the ATP, of whom 20,917 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. Of the 30,859 individuals who have ever joined the ATP, 11,897 remained active panelists and continued to receive survey invitations at the time this survey was conducted.

### American Trends Panel recruitment surveys

Recruitment dates	Mode	Invited	Joined	Active panelists remaining
Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014	Landline/ cell RDD	9,809	5,338	1,389
Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015	Landline/ cell RDD	6,004	2,976	831
April 25 to June 4, 2017	Landline/ cell RDD	3,905	1,628	404
Aug. 8 to Oct. 31, 2018	ABS	9,396	8,778	3,839
Aug. 19 to Nov. 30, 2019	ABS	5,900	4,720	1,385
June 1 to July 19, 2020; Feb. 10 to March 31, 2021	ABS	3,197	2,812	1,438
May 29 to July 7, 2021; Sept. 16 to Nov. 1, 2021	ABS	1,329	1,162	731
May 24 to Sept. 29, 2022	ABS	3,354	2,869	1,448
April 17 to May 30, 2023	ABS	686	576	432
	<b>Total</b>	<b>43,580</b>	<b>30,859</b>	<b>11,897</b>

Note: RDD is random-digit dial; ABS is address-based sampling. Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves or who did not complete an annual profiling survey are removed from the panel. Panelists also become inactive if they ask to be removed from the panel.

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<sup>7</sup> AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. “AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling.”

<sup>8</sup> Email [pewsurveys@pewresearch.org](mailto:pewsurveys@pewresearch.org).

The American Trends Panel never uses breakout routers or chains that direct respondents to additional surveys.

### **Sample design**

This survey was designed to cover the population of noninstitutionalized persons ages 18 and older living in the U.S., including Alaska and Hawaii, who have never had any children and are unlikely to have any in the future. All active ATP members who previously said in Wave 133 (fielded in August 2023) that they did not currently have any children, including any living outside their household, and were either 1) 18 to 49 years old and not too or not at all likely to have children in the future, or 2) 50 years old or older were invited to participate in this wave.

The ATP was supplemented with oversamples of adults ages 50 and older who previously reported that they did not currently have any children living either inside or outside of their household. Initially, an oversample composed of Hispanic, non-Hispanic Black and non-Hispanic Asian KP panelists and further stratified by gender was drawn, and a total of 242 were invited to participate an initial soft launch. Because eligibility rates for this oversample were lower than anticipated, no additional cases in this sample were invited. Instead, a new oversample – consisting of adults of any race, ages 50 and older and with no children, stratified by education and gender – was drawn. KnowledgePanel respondents in the final data include both those from the initial soft launch and the second oversample.

Because the group of potentially eligible adults who were sampled is broader than the target population, respondents were asked screening questions at the beginning of the survey to confirm their eligibility. Respondents were only considered eligible if they said they had never been a parent or guardian to any children, living or deceased, including any biological or adopted children. Additionally, respondents who were under 50 years old were only considered eligible if they also said they were not too likely or not at all likely to have children in the future.

KP respondents who screened ineligible for the main survey were asked a subset of demographic questions needed for weighting purposes and are only considered to have completed screening if they answered both the screening and demographic question sets.

### **Questionnaire development and testing**

The questionnaire was developed by Pew Research Center in consultation with Ipsos. The web program was rigorously tested on both PC and mobile devices by the Ipsos project management team and Pew Research Center researchers. The Ipsos project management team also populated

test data that was analyzed in SPSS to ensure the logic and randomizations were working as intended before launching the survey.

### **Incentives**

All respondents were offered a post-paid incentive for their participation. ATP respondents could choose to receive the post-paid incentive in the form of a check or a gift code to Amazon.com or could choose to decline the incentive. Incentive amounts ranged from \$5 to \$15 depending on whether the respondent belongs to a part of the population that is harder or easier to reach. Differential incentive amounts were designed to increase panel survey participation among groups that traditionally have low survey response propensities.

Ipsos operates an ongoing modest incentive program for KnowledgePanel to encourage participation and create member loyalty. The incentive program includes special raffles and sweepstakes with both cash rewards and other prizes to be won. Typically, panel members are assigned no more than one survey per week. On average, panel members complete two to three surveys per month with durations of 10 to 15 minutes per survey. An additional incentive is usually provided for longer surveys.

### **Data collection protocol**

The data collection field period for this survey was April 29 to May 19, 2024. Postcard notifications were mailed to a subset of ATP panelists with a known residential address on April 29.<sup>9</sup>

ATP invitations were sent out in separate launches: soft launch and full launch. Sixty ATP panelists were included in the first soft launch, which began with an initial invitation sent on April 29. After reviewing the first soft launch, a minor change was made to the screening question “Have you ever been a parent or guardian to any children, living or deceased, including any biological or adopted children?” The original question asked about “legal” guardianship and included a reference to stepchildren. Sixty panelists were included in the second soft launch, which began with an initial invitation sent on May 2. The second soft launch confirmed that the updated program was working as it should. The ATP panelists chosen for both soft launches were known responders who had completed previous ATP surveys within one day of receiving their invitation. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking sampled ATP panelists were included in the full launch and were sent an invitation on May 3.

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<sup>9</sup> Postcard notifications are sent to 1) panelists who have been provided with a tablet to take ATP surveys, 2) panelists who were recruited within the last two years, and 3) panelists recruited prior to the last two years who opt to continue receiving postcard notifications.

KP invitations were sent out in separate launches: soft launch and full launch. A total of 242 KP panelists were included in the first soft launch, which began with an initial invitation sent on April 29. After the first soft launch, the same wording edit was made to the parental status screening question and the sample design for KP panelists was changed (refer to the Sample Design section). A total of 245 panelists were included in the second soft launch, which began with an initial invitation sent on May 9. The second soft launch confirmed that the updated program was working as it should. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking sampled KP panelists were included in the full launch and were sent an invitation on May 10.

All panelists with an email address received an email invitation and up to three email reminders if they did not respond to the survey. All ATP and KP panelists who consented to SMS messages received an SMS invitation and up to three SMS reminders.

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### Invitation and reminder dates, ATP Wave 147 – ATP sample

	<b>Soft launch 1</b>	<b>Soft launch 2</b>	<b>Full launch</b>
Initial invitation	April 29, 2024	May 2, 2024	May 3, 2024
First reminder	May 6, 2024	May 6, 2024	May 6, 2024
Second reminder	May 9, 2024	May 9, 2024	May 9, 2024
Final reminder	May 11, 2024	May 11, 2024	May 11, 2024

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### Invitation and reminder dates, ATP Wave 147 – KP sample

	<b>Soft launch 1</b>	<b>Soft launch 2</b>	<b>Full launch</b>
Initial invitation	April 29, 2024	May 9, 2024	May 10, 2024
First reminder	May 12, 2024	May 12, 2024	May 12, 2024
Second reminder	May 15, 2024	May 15, 2024	May 15, 2024
Final reminder	May 18, 2024	May 18, 2024	May 18, 2024

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### Data quality checks

To ensure high-quality data, the Center’s researchers performed data quality checks to identify any respondents showing clear patterns of satisficing. This includes checking for whether respondents left questions blank at very high rates or always selected the first or last answer presented. As a

result of this checking, three respondents were removed from the survey dataset prior to weighting and analysis.

## Weighting

This survey was weighted in a multistep process that accounts for multiple stages of sampling and nonresponse that occur at different points in the survey process. First, each panelist begins with a base weight that reflects their probability of selection for their initial recruitment survey. These weights are then rescaled and adjusted to account for changes in the design of ATP recruitment surveys from year to year. Base weights for KP respondents were provided by Ipsos.

Because there are no benchmarks for the population of U.S. adults without children, weighting parameters were based on the full set of ATP members who were potentially eligible for inclusion in the sample prior to any screening. First, the base weights for all ATP members who responded to the 2023 Annual Profile Survey (ATP Wave 133) were calibrated to align with the population benchmarks in the accompanying table to create a *full-panel weight*.

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### American Trends Panel weighting dimensions for full-panel weight

Variable	Benchmark source
Age (detailed)	2022 American Community Survey (ACS)
Age x Gender	
Education x Gender	
Education x Age	
Race/Ethnicity x Education	
Black (alone or in combination) x Hispanic	
Born inside vs. outside the U.S. among Hispanics and Asian Americans	
Years lived in the U.S.	
Census region x Metropolitan status	
Volunteerism	
Party affiliation x Voter registration	2022 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation x Race/Ethnicity	2023 National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS)
Frequency of internet use	
Religious affiliation	

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on noninstitutionalized adults. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total U.S. adult population.

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This full-panel weight was then used to compute weighting benchmarks for the universe of adults who met the criteria for being included in the sample. Weighting was performed separately using separate targets for respondents ages 18 to 49 and those ages 50 and older.

#### *Respondents ages 18 to 49*

For ages 18 to 49, weighting parameters were calculated based on all ATP members who said in Wave 133 that they did not have any children and were not too likely or not at all likely to have children in the future. These parameters include age, gender, education, race/ethnicity, place of birth, years lived in the U.S., identification as Black (alone or in combination), census region, metropolitan status, frequency of internet use, religion, party affiliation, voter registration and volunteerism.

For respondents in this group who completed the screening questions, including those who screened ineligible, the full-panel weight was then calibrated to align with the parameters listed above and trimmed at the 2nd and 98th percentiles to reduce the loss in precision stemming from variance in the weights. This trimming is performed separately among non-Hispanic Black, non-Hispanic Asian, Hispanic and all other respondents.

#### *Respondents ages 50 and older*

For ages 50 and older, weighting parameters were calculated based on all ATP members who said in Wave 133 that they did not have any children. These parameters include race/ethnicity by gender, age by gender, education by gender, age by education, race/ethnicity by education, born inside vs. outside the U.S. among Hispanics and Asian Americans, years lived in the U.S., identification as Black (alone or in combination) by Hispanic ethnicity, census region by metropolitan status, frequency of internet use, religion, party affiliation by race/ethnicity, and party affiliation by voter registration.

Because this group includes both ATP and KP respondents, base weights for respondents from each sample were rescaled and combined to account for the inclusion of multiple samples and their designs. The combined base weight was then calibrated to align with the parameters listed above and trimmed at the 2nd and 98th percentiles to reduce the loss in precision stemming from variance in the weights. This trimming is performed separately within cells defined by the cross classification of gender by education.

After the weighting was performed for screener respondents from both age groups, individuals who screened ineligible were removed from the data, with no further weighting adjustments.

Sampling errors and tests of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey.

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**Sample sizes and margins of error, ATP Wave 147**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Unweighted sample size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
Ages 50+	2,542	2.4 percentage points
Ages 18-49	770	5.3 percentage points

Note: This survey includes oversamples of respondents ages 50 and older. Unweighted sample sizes do not account for the sample design or weighting and do not describe a group's contribution to weighted estimates. Refer to the Sample design and Weighting sections above for details.

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Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

## Dispositions and response rates

### Final dispositions, ATP Wave 147

	AAPOR code	ATP	KP	Total
Completed interview	1.1	1,779	1,533	3,312
Logged on to survey; broke off	2.12	6	36	42
Logged on to survey; did not complete any items	2.1121	3	37	40
Never logged on (implicit refusal)	2.11	169	1,258	1,427
Survey completed after close of the field period	2.27	0	0	0
Completed interview but was removed for data quality	2.3	0	3	3
Completed interview but was removed for ineligibility		6	4	10
Screened out	4.7	1,434	2,558	3,992
<b>Total panelists sampled for the survey</b>		<b>3,397</b>	<b>5,429</b>	<b>8,826</b>
Completed interviews	I	1,779	1,533	3,312
Partial interviews	P	0	0	0
Refusals	R	6	36	42
Non-contact	NC	0	0	0
Other	O	0	3	3
Unknown household	UH	0	0	0
Unknown other	UO	172	1,295	1,467
Not eligible	NE	6	4	10
Screen out	SO	1,434	2,558	3,992
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,397</b>	<b>5,429</b>	<b>8,826</b>
Est. eligibility rate among unscreened: $e = (I+R)/(I+R+SO)$		55%	38%	46%
AAPOR RR1 = $I / (I+P+R+NC+O+UH+UO)$		91%	53%	69%
AAPOR RR3 = $I / (I+R+[e*UO])$		95%	74%	82%

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### Cumulative response rate as of ATP Wave 147

	ATP	KP	Total
Weighted response rate to recruitment surveys	11%	11%	11%
% of recruitment survey respondents who agreed to join the panel, among those invited	71%	61%	65%
% of those agreeing to join who were active panelists at start of Wave 147	45%	26%	33%
Response rate to Wave 147 survey	95%	74%	82%
<b>Cumulative response rate</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>2%</b>

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## Secondary data methodology

The analysis in Chapter 4 of this report is based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2021 and 2022 [Survey of Income and Program Participation](#) (SIPP). The population represented in the SIPP is the civilian noninstitutionalized population living in the United States. It is a nationally representative survey that focuses on the income of U.S. households and their participation in government programs. The SIPP also collects extensive data on many factors of economic well-being, and it includes a comprehensive section on fertility history, which we use to identify individuals who have ever had biological children and those who have not.

The SIPP is a longitudinal survey that interviews participants multiple times over a four-year period. Each household in the SIPP is interviewed at yearly intervals over this four-year period. The reference period for the interview questions is the preceding twelve-month calendar year. In this analysis, we use only information relative to the twelfth reference month, as it is the most recent measure.

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