



The Allure Aging Survey



62%
of women
and
61%
of men

think they look
younger than other women
or men their age.

Thirteen percent of women would consider an eye lift—by a doctor, not an antigravity gizmo, as model Claudia Mason wears (left). Crepe duvetyn jacket, watch, and goggles by Michael Kors. Makeup colors: Chubby Stick Shadow Tint for Eyes in Fuller Fudge and Long Last Lipstick in Red Red Red by Clinique. These pages: Hair, Teddy Charles of Orlo Salon; makeup, Romy Soleimani; manicure, Sheril Bailey. Set designer: Mary Howard. Model: Adam Pearl. Fashion editor: Paul Cavaco. Details, see Shopping Guide.

The pressure to look young has never been greater—and the ways to do so are exploding. Find out who feels happiest about aging, who's having the best sex, and who's most judgmental about Botox. By Danielle Pergament

Attention, people born in 1982: Everyone wants to be you. The results from the first *Allure* survey on aging are in, and the age respondents told us they wish they were, on average, is 31. And when it comes to wrinkles, age spots, and our daily imperceptible march toward looking old, you know what's garnered more positive numbers than being 31? Being an African-American woman. If you are, we learned, you don't really worry about how aging will affect your looks, and you're far more likely to believe that women get sexier as they get older.

These findings were just the beginning of our exploration of attitudes about aging. The topic—getting older, looking younger—is a more pervasive one in our country's collective consciousness. Think about it: In 2011, we spent \$2.3 billion on anti-aging skin-care products. That same year, we also forked over \$10.4 billion on cosmetic surgery. Almost 6 million syringes were filled with Botox and shot into lines and wrinkles. The phrase “anti-aging” has become part

of our lexicon. And what's more, the word “cougar” is now officially recognized by the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* as an “older woman seeking a sexual relationship with a younger man.”

We asked a nationally representative sample of 1,000 women and 1,000 men to share their thoughts on anything and everything to do with aging. Are we growing old gracefully, or are we fighting it every step of the way? Do we care? Should it matter? Or perhaps we've all attained enlightenment and now see inner beauty alone, untouched by surface wrinkles? Kidding! In fact, 78 percent of the respondents said they think women are under more pressure to look young today than they were ten years ago.

There's a reason for that. “The problem is nobody wants to fit in this category of ‘old,’” says Nancy Etcoff, an assistant clinical professor of psychology at Harvard. “It has a lot of connotations: that you're disengaged or sexually inactive or cognitively impaired.” Perhaps this explains our willful decision to see ourselves as young. On average, we think we look younger than our

Who would consider anti-aging injections or plastic surgery?

42%
of women

18%
of men

Who's aging best?

Our favorite role models for aging gracefully are an elegant, talented woman and a graying, charming man. (Incidentally, Meryl Streep is 12 years older than George Clooney.)



Meryl Streep, 63



George Clooney, 51

The Good Fight

The battle against aging takes many forms: Women are most likely to use moisturizer (**65 percent**) and color their hair (**47 percent**). And the older they get, the more likely they are to apply an anti-aging cream: **35 percent** of all women use them.

Who uses anti-aging cream?

37%
of Hispanic women

36%
of white women

25%
of African-American women

Who stays out of the sun to prevent aging?

39%
of women

19%
of men

Half of all women

say their biggest worry about advancing in years is feeling less attractive. (Nearly a third of men have the same fear.)

The Aging Continuum

At what age are men and women most sexy? When are they considered old—and what happens in between? Here, a timeline of the average ages that survey respondents said people hit key milestones.

WOMEN:

Are Most Sexy at
30 Are Most Beautiful at
30

Start to Show Signs of Aging at
41

Stop Looking Sexy at
53

Are Considered Old at
55

25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60

MEN:

Are Most Sexy at
33 Are Most Handsome at
34

Start to Show Signs of Aging at
43

Stop Looking Sexy at
58

Are Considered Old at
59

partners, we think we look at least as good—or even younger—than our parents did when they were our age, and as we get older, we push back the age at which we think a person looks sexy. Hey, if putting it off works for you, we're not here to judge. We're just reporting the facts. So here's where we are, America. Sit back, relax, and crack open the retinol.

Battle of the Sexes

Sometimes, surveys produce surprising, heartening results. Other times, well, they confirm your worst suspicions. We noticed some of the latter when comparing attitudes toward women and men. To get it over with: The majority of people seem to think that men get sexier as they get older, but less than half of us think the same is true for women. Let's call it the Harrison Ford effect: On average, men's "most sexy" age is a good three years older than women's "most sexy" age. A man isn't considered old until he's 59, which is four years later than

We asked what words respondents associate with gray hair: When it's on women, the top answer was "old." But answers two and three were more uplifting: "wise" and "confident." When it's on men, the top answer was "distinguished."

when a woman is considered old. Twenty-nine percent of people say women need to look young to be successful at work, as opposed to only 15 percent who say the same is true of men. And men are harsher judges of women; on average, men believe

a woman is her most beautiful at 29, while women think a woman is most beautiful at 31. (Though 66 percent of African-American men believe that women get sexier as they get older, compared to 48 percent of white men.) So it may not be surprising that 56 percent of women are worried about the physical signs of aging but only 34 percent of men are.

Although the double standard is alive and well, at least we cop to it.

31%

of women say looking older makes them self-conscious between the sheets. Only 15 percent of men have the same hang-up. But overall, when asked if sex gets better with age, 57 percent of people said yes (yes, yes!).

Surgery Confessions

Women who've had anti-aging injections or surgery are curiously selective about whom they tell:

They're more likely to confess to many friends and family members (29 percent) than to their romantic partner (21 percent) or even their best friend (21 percent).

Lucky bastards:

66%

of men say they're not worried about looking older.

18%

of women fear turning into their mother; 11 percent of men fear turning into their father.

Republicans would be less likely than Democrats to vote for a politician who'd had anti-aging injections or plastic surgery.

41%

of women think they look younger than their mother did at their age. Forty-three percent of men think they look younger than their father at their age.

The Perfect Age

What age do you want to look?

The answer differs depending on your ethnicity. Among Hispanic women, the age was the youngest: 26. White women and African-American women picked 33 as their ideal.

The vast majority of men and women think everyone is harder on women. And 84 percent of men and 91 percent of women say that women are under more pressure to look young than men.

The Dating Game

Hallelujah! Fifty-seven percent of you say sex gets better as you get older!

Hang on. Maybe we shouldn't bust out the Barry White just yet. Sex may get better, but for heterosexual women, there are fewer and fewer people to have it with. Here's how it adds up: A lot of old men date young women. Young men date young women. And

37
Average age at which both women and men start using an anti-aging cream.

older women get short shrift. Asked if they were attracted to women their own age, only a third of male baby boomers said yes.

But let's get back to sex. Women in their 60s are *less* likely to say that they don't like to show their bodies in sexual situations because of the signs of aging than women in their 30s, 40s, and 50s are. And 36 percent of millennial guys (in other words, men aged 18 to 29) agree with the statement "Cougars are hot." So here's to you, Mrs. Robinson...and Ms. Lopez.

Racial Matters

Going over the data from 73 survey questions is not a task for the far sighted. We pored over spreadsheets. We went blind staring at numbers that were so tiny, they could have been written on a single grain of rice. And every once in a while, a number would jump out. One such was 64. That's the percentage of

Are cougars hot?
31% of men under 45 said yes.
21% of men 45 and over said yes.

African-American women who are not worried about the physical signs of aging. And this led us to another, and another, and another, all proving how comfortable African-American women are with aging. Eighty-one percent of African-American women think they look younger than other women their age. A full 65 percent

said they have no intention of considering anti-aging treatments or procedures in the future (versus 58 percent of white women and 46 percent of Hispanic women). African-American women think a woman stops looking sexy around the age of 64—that's about *ten years* past the sexy expiration date given by the rest of respondents.

"The status and cultural esteem for older people is very high in the African-American community," says Steven Wallace, a professor of community health sciences at UCLA and a leading (continued on page 267)

Signs of Aging

Once you're past the days of being carded, what reveals your age most?

For Women

Wrinkles: **33%**
Sagging face: **14%**
Gray hair: **12%**
Wrinkled, veiny hands: **11%**
Sagging neck: **10%**
Sagging breasts: **6%**
Dark spots: **2%**

For Men

Gray hair: **24%**
Thinning hair: **16%**
Wrinkles: **14%**
Sagging muscles: **11%**
Sagging face: **8%**
A paunch: **7%**
Wrinkled, veiny hands: **6%**

Young Love

People generally like to look younger than they are—but the reasons depend on whom you ask.

• **Women (70 percent)** are more likely than men (**56 percent**) to connect youth with self-esteem.

• **Men (20 percent)** are more likely than women (**14 percent**) to say looking young is key to landing a romantic partner.

• **More fortysomething men (43 percent)** than women (**27 percent**) say looking fresh-faced (and -bodied) is key to looking sexy.

1/2

of Americans think they look younger than their high-school classmates.

Chalk this up to unsurprising:

43% of men are older than their romantic partners.
16% of women are.

Let's hear it for the Clintons!

Both Bill and Hillary made the list of public figures who are aging well.

Inside the Survey: An email invitation to our questionnaire was sent in October 2012 to a random, census-balanced sample of men and women, 18 to 69 years old, across the U.S. Participants completed the survey online, and the data was stored on a secure server. A total of 2,000 responses were collected: 1,000 men and 1,000 women. Allure partnered with Penn Schoen Berland for sample, data collection, and tabulations. The margin of error is +/- 3 percent.

Though the real thing involves a scalpel, not a glorified headband, 14 percent of women would consider a neck lift. Leather jacket and dress by Sportmax. Leather-and-plastic shoes by Michael Kors. Makeup colors: Glam'Eyes Quad Eye Shadow in Sweet Smoulder and Lasting Finish by Kate Lipstick in 105 by Rimmel London. Photographed at Babies "R" Us, Union Square, New York City. Details, see Shopping Guide.



87%

of people think women have more pressure to look young than men do.