



MIRROR/MIRROR: AARP SURVEY OF WOMEN'S REFLECTIONS ON BEAUTY, AGE AND MEDIA™

September 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive summary

- Most women feel some pressure to live up to today's beauty standards. Media in general and social media are driving forces in this pressure.
- And now with the availability of filters and editing tools, the pressure to be perfect increases, specifically among younger women.
- All that said, perhaps the most positive learning from this study is that women have great empathy for each other, an innate understanding of what each are going through.
- And with each passing year they are able to become more resistant to outside pressures and more true to themselves.
- This is why it is not surprising that regardless of age, women overwhelmingly support inclusive media and advertising and feel that authenticity, in media and in themselves, is extremely important.

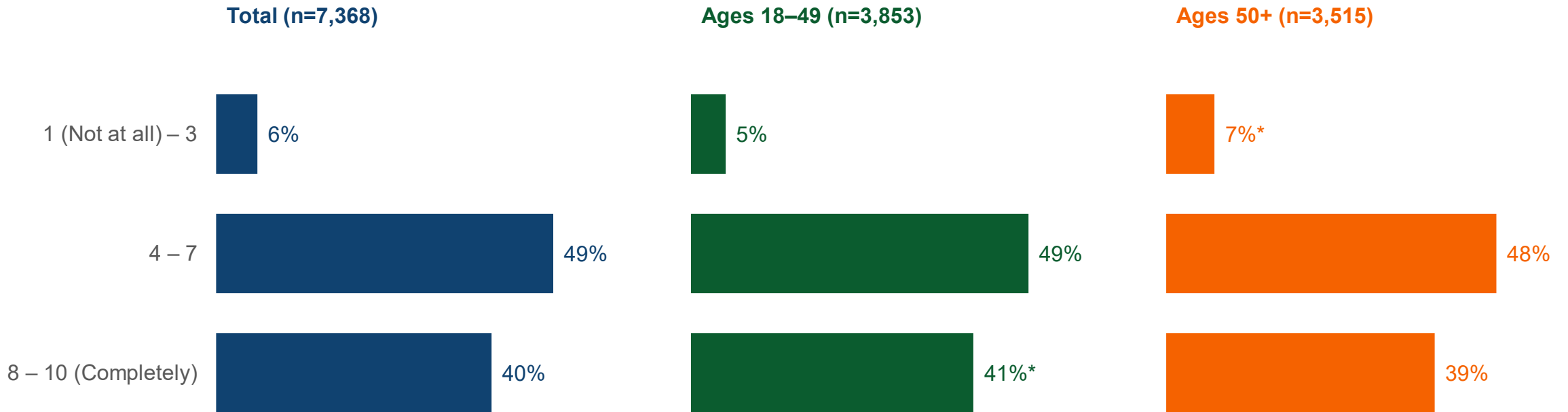




BEAUTY PRESSURES

Regardless of one's age, most women feel beauty standards are changing.

How much beauty standards for women have changed in the past 5–10 years (1 = not at all, 10 = completely)
 Among all women, total and by age range



Q2. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not at all and 10 being completely, how much have the standards that define beauty for women changed in the past 5-10 years?

Base: All women

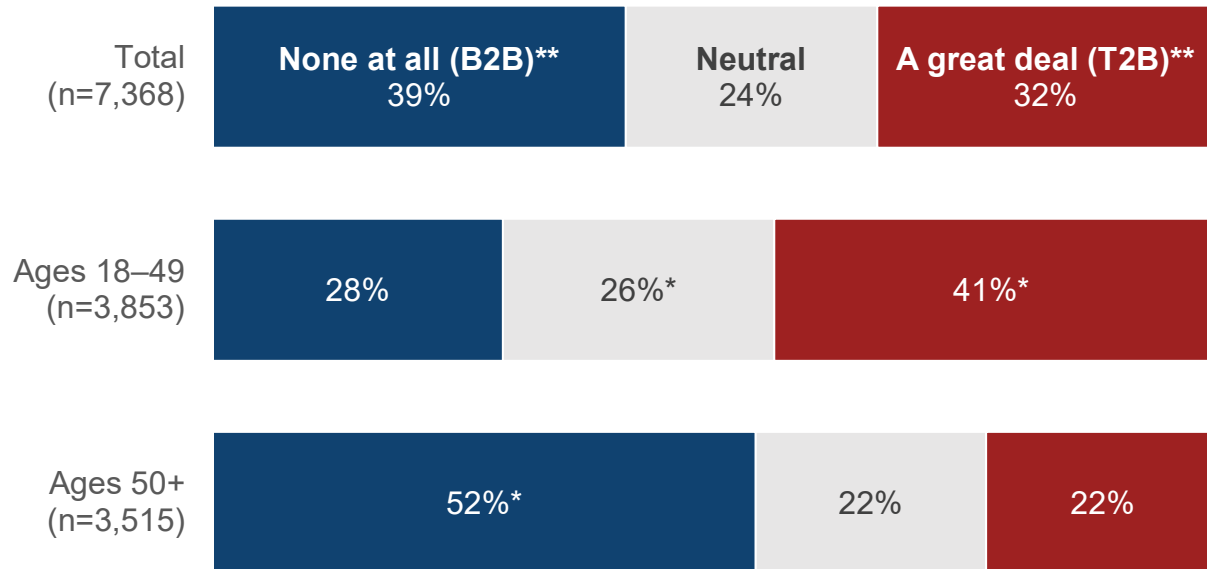
Note: Sums may not equal 100% due to rounding and/or skipped responses online

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* Indicates a significant difference between segments at a 95% confidence level

This has left some women, especially those younger, feeling pressure to keep up.

Degree of pressure felt to meet beauty standards
Among all women, total and by age range



** Top 2 box, Bottom 2 box

Q30. What degree of pressure do you feel to meet a certain set of beauty standards? 5-point scale; anchored.
Base: All women



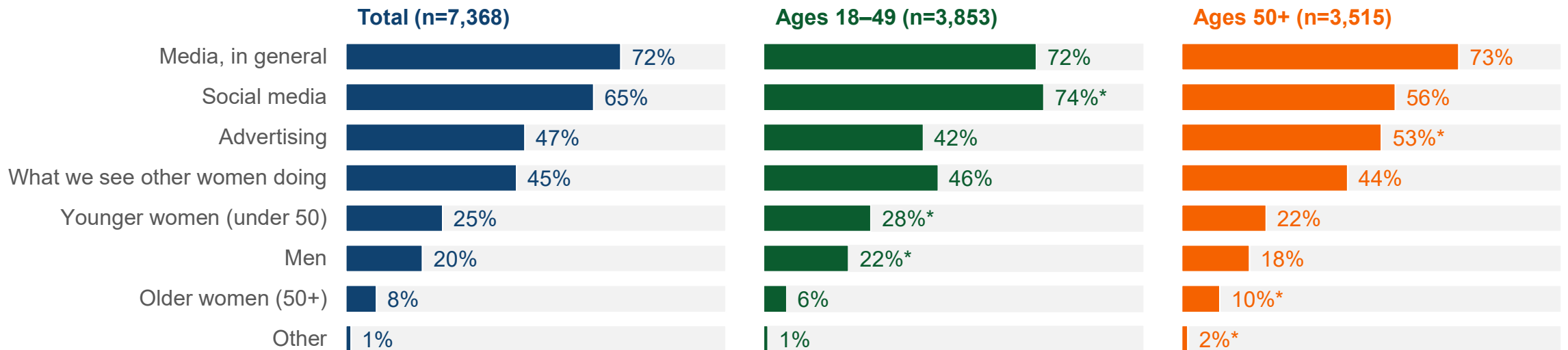
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Media, social or general, play a large role in dictating the beauty standards women feel the need to meet.

Women in their 20's feel more pressure from men (29%) than those older (19%). Younger women feel significantly more pressure from social media (74%) than older women (56%).

Influencers of beauty standards for women
Among all women, total and by age range



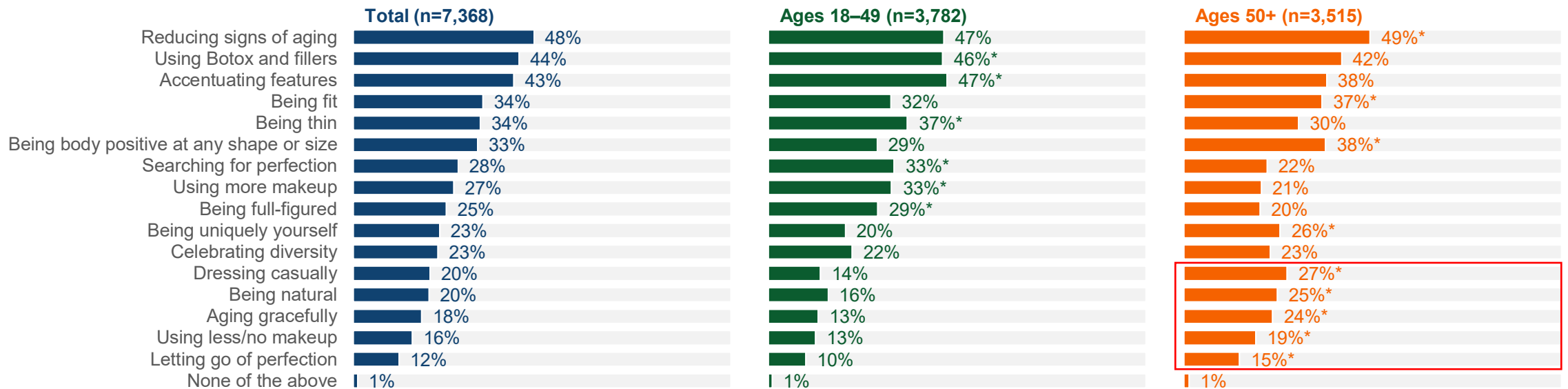
Q5. Who do you feel dictates beauty standards for women? In other words, who has the greatest influence?
Base: Total answering

* Indicates a significant difference between segments at a 95% confidence level

Most common beauty pressures include anti-aging and enhancements to be more perfect.

Older women are significantly more likely than younger women to acknowledge some beauty standards that allow for the more natural, realistic aspects of aging.

Most popular beauty standards currently
Among all women, total and by age range



Q4. Reviewing the list below, please indicate which of the following beauty standards you believe are most popular today.

Base: All women

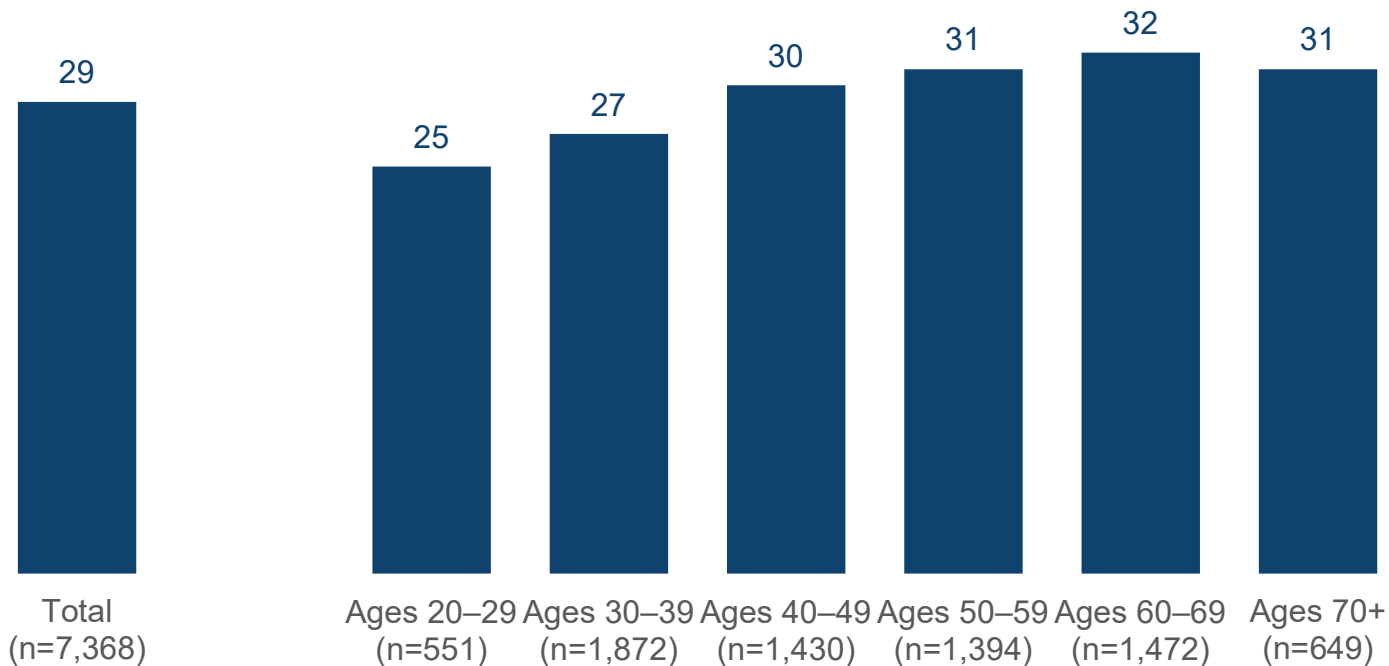
Note: Sums may not equal 100% due to rounding and/or skipped responses online

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Women recognize younger women are held to a higher beauty standard than others.

Average age that women are held to a higher beauty standard than other women

Among all women, total and by age range (decade)



Collectively, on average, women believe age 29 is when women are held to a higher beauty standard than women of other ages.

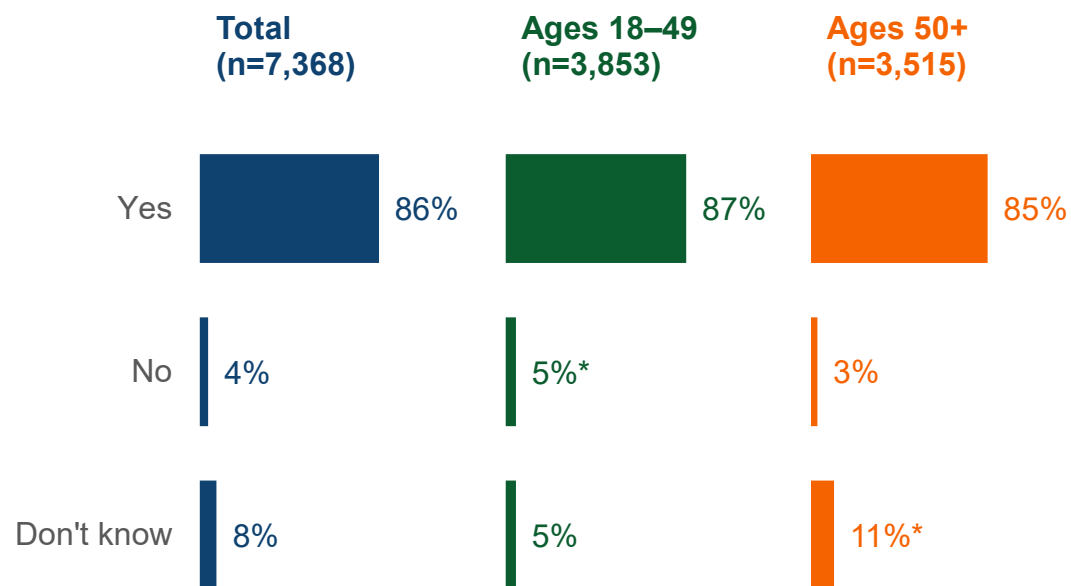
Q31. What age women do you think are held to a higher beauty standard than women of other ages?

Base: All women

And the inception of filters is not helping matters.

The vast majority of women believe filters are used in media with the majority viewing filters as distorting/negative when it comes to how women present themselves or how advertisers present women to others.

Belief about whether filters are used in media
Among all women, total and by age range

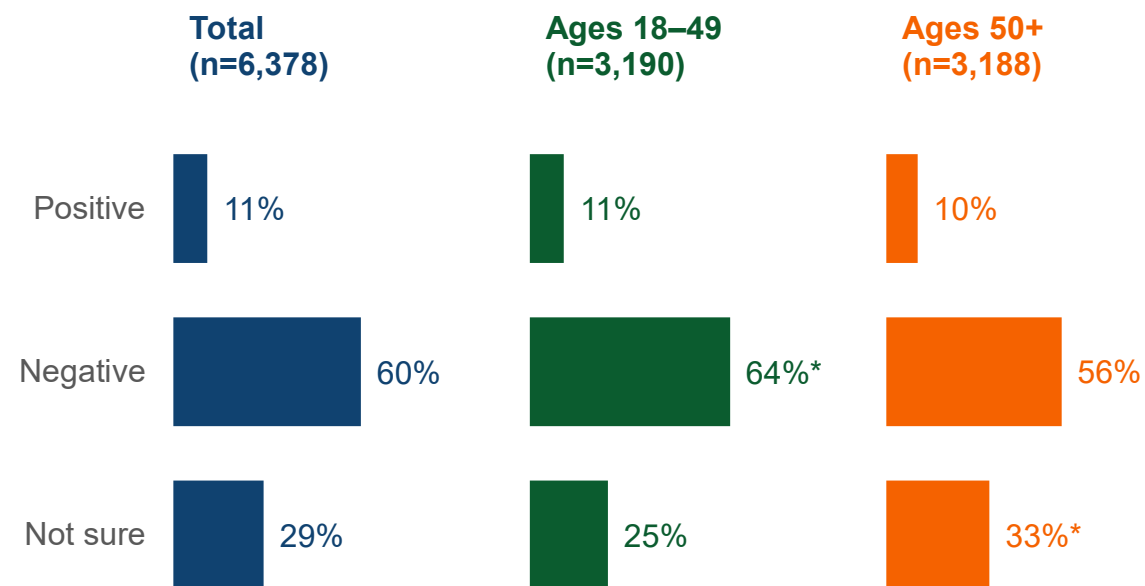


Note: Sums may not equal 100% due to rounding and/or skipped responses online

Q25. In general, do you believe advertisers and social media influencers are using filters and editing tools to alter how women appear in a photograph or video to improve how they look?

Base: All women

Views about use of filters
Among women aware of filters, total and by age range



Note: Sums may not equal 100% due to rounding and/or skipped responses online

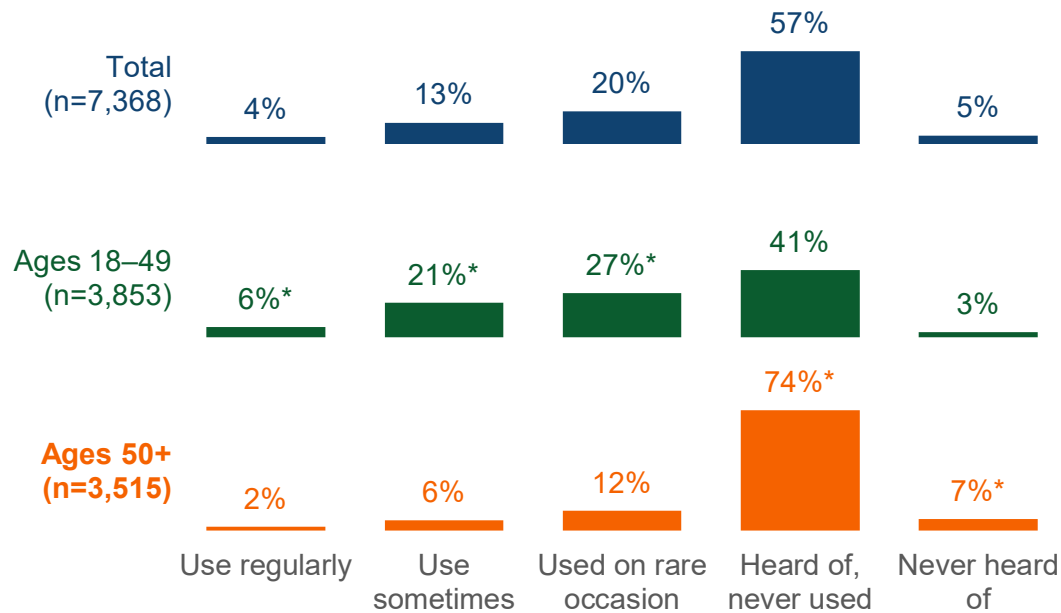
Q26. Do you view the use of filters and editing tools as being enhancing/positive or distorting/negative, when it comes to how women present themselves, or how advertisers present women to others?

Base: Aware of filters

That said, more than one-third of women have used filters or editing tools to improve how they look online or in photographs.

More than half of those 18-49 have tried them (54%) compared to 20% among those 50-plus. Among non-users, interest is low.

Familiarity and use of filters
Among all women, total and by age range

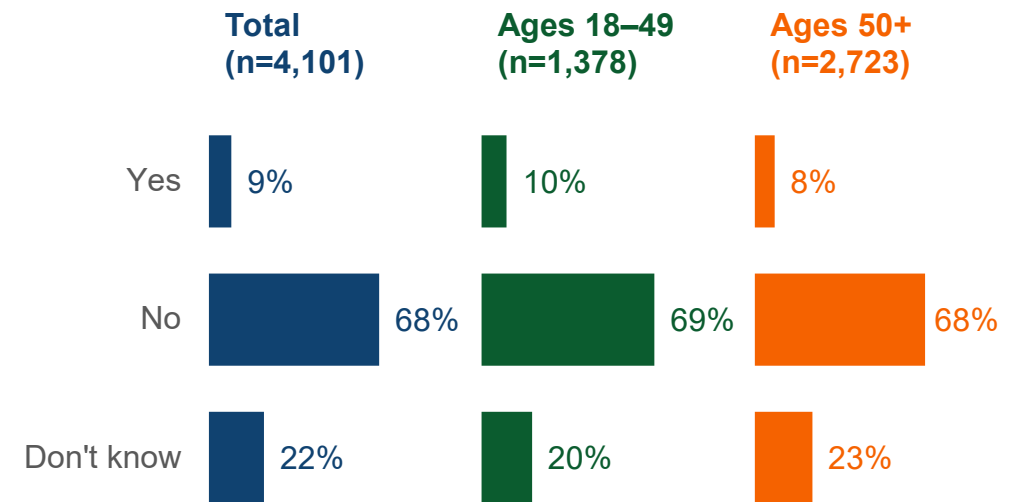


Note: Sums may not equal 100% due to rounding and/or skipped responses online

Q23. How familiar are you with the filters and editing tools that are available today to alter how you appear in a photograph or video? They can be used to soften your look, make your eyes appear larger, lighten or darken your skin tone, etc.

Base: All women

Interest in using filters
Among women who don't use filters, total and by age range



Note: Sums may not equal 100% due to rounding and/or skipped responses online

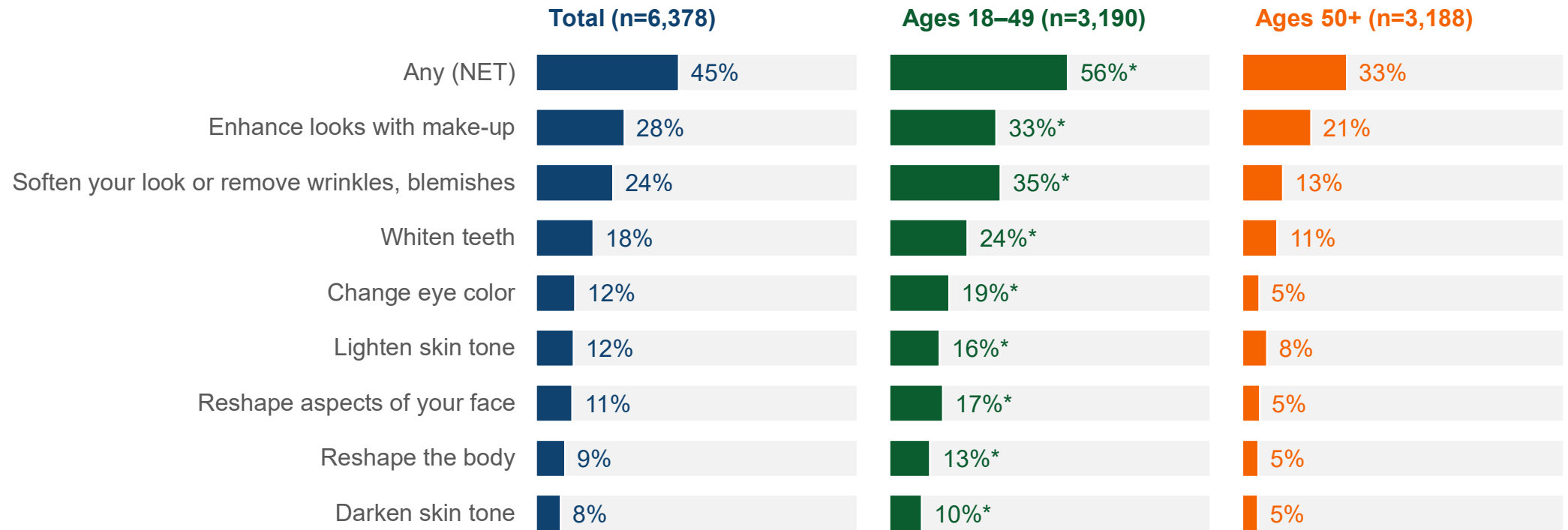
Q27. If you knew how to use a filter or editing tool to alter the way you appeared to others, either in a photograph or video, with the intent of improving your looks, would you?

Base: Never used filters

A variety of filters are being used, especially among those 18-49.

All filters are aimed at enhancing/improving women's looks.

Percent who have used the following types of filters or editing tools
Among women who are aware of filters or editing tools, total and by age range



Q24. What is your familiarity with the following types of filters or editing tools?
Base: Aware of filters

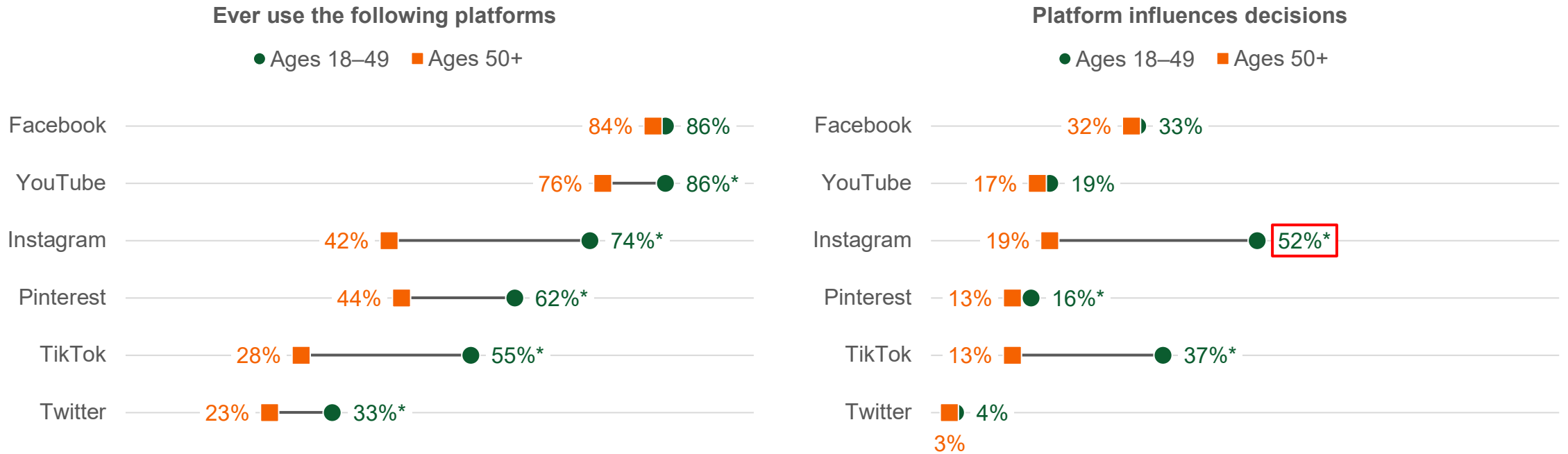
* Indicates a significant difference between segments at a 95% confidence level

Almost half of all women indicate social media has some influence on their beauty choices, but which one varies by age.

Those 18-49 are more likely to be influenced by Instagram than other platforms. Among those 50-plus, their use and reliance on Instagram is far less, as they tend to look toward Facebook more so than other platforms.

Percent who use and are influenced by the the following social media platforms
 Among women who engage in social media and indicate it influences their beauty choices, by age range

Influenced by Social Media: 45% of women



Q11. How often do you engage with the following social media platforms?
 Base: All women (18-49: n=3,853; 50+: n=3,515)

Q12. And which social media platforms tend to influence your beauty choices the most, inform or inspire you to look a certain way, if any?
 Base: Uses and influenced by social media (18-49: n=2,108; 50+: n=1,246)

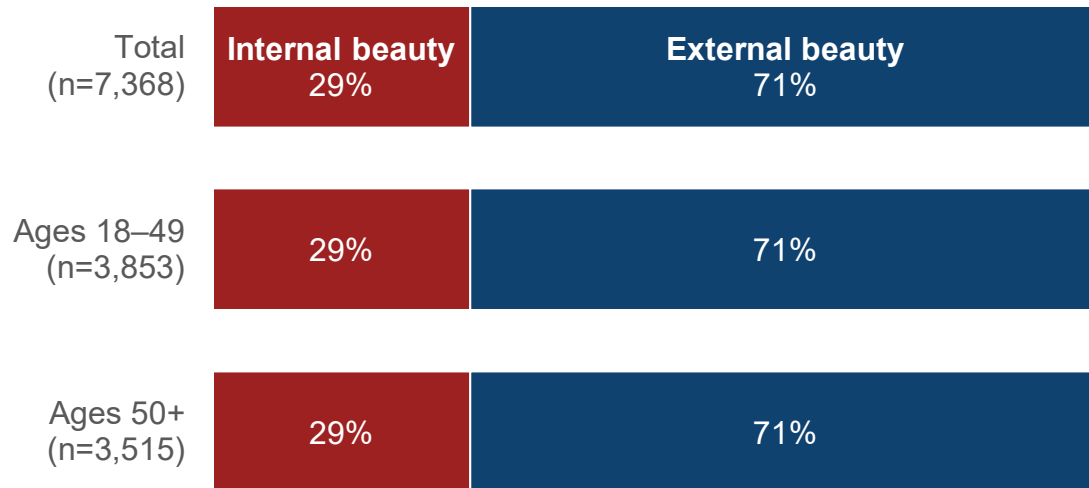


OVERCOMING PRESSURES

The good news is, most women look inward to define their beauty despite their perception that they are more often judged based on their external beauty.

Older women are more likely than younger women to measure their beauty on their own sense of self versus comparing themselves to others.

The outside world evaluates women's beauty on...
Among all women, total and by age range

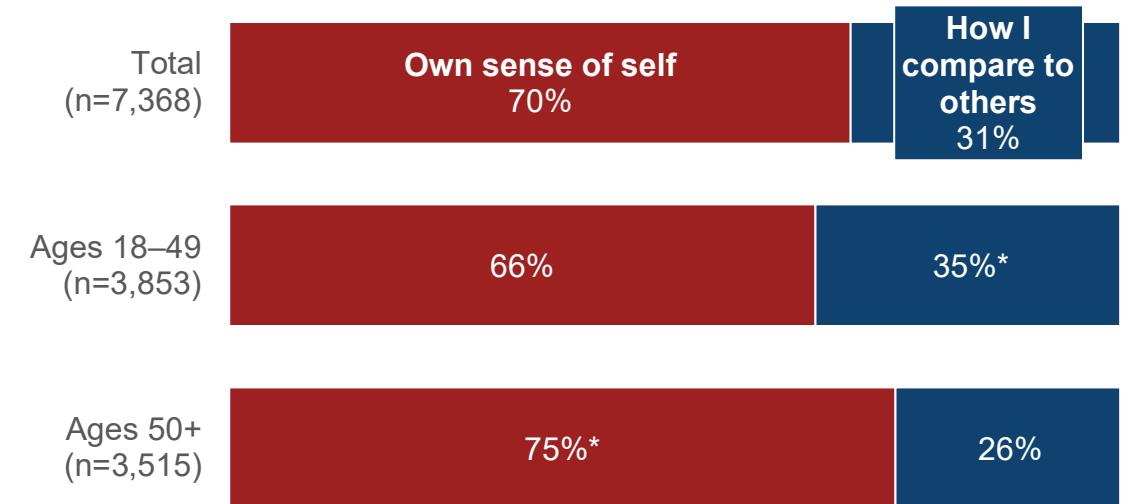


Note: Sums may not equal 100% due to rounding and/or skipped responses online

Q28. Now, switching up the conversation just a bit. In general, when people (men, women, old, young) evaluate a woman's beauty, what percent of it do you believe is based on the woman's internal versus external beauty?

Base: All women

Evaluation of their own beauty is based on...
Among all women, total and by age range



Note: Sums may not equal 100% due to rounding and/or skipped responses online

Q29. Thinking about how you evaluate, or measure, your own beauty, what percent do you base it on your own perception of yourself versus a comparison of yourself to external images of women that you see?

Base: All women

Women are more likely to look to other women (friends, moms, strangers on the street) for inspiration and not so much to advertising or celebrities.

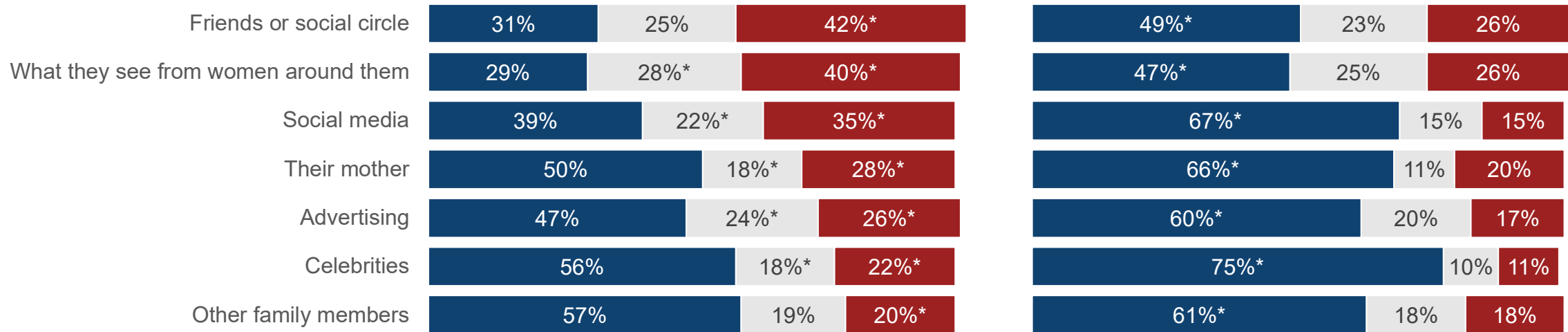
Younger women are more influenceable than older women, regardless of the potential source of influence.

Influence of the following on personal beauty or grooming choices
Among all women, by age range

■ None at all ■ Neutral ■ A great deal

Ages 18–49

Ages 50+



Note: Sums may not equal 100% due to rounding and/or skipped responses online

Q10. On a scale of 1 to 5, with one being none at all and 5 being a great deal, how much influence do each of the following have on your personal beauty or grooming choices?

Base: All women (18-49: n=3,583; 50+: n=3,515)

** A great deal = 4,5; None at all = 1,2.

The pandemic gave some women permission to relax and forgo their standard beauty practices.

This is more commonly seen among women who worked in an office.

Beauty routine changes pre and post the pandemic
Among all women

Beauty Routine	Prior to Pandemic	Post Pandemic	Variance
<i>Base: Total Women 18+</i>	7368	7368	
Any (NET)	91%	88%	-3%
Colored/highlighted my hair	46%	35%	-11%
Wore makeup	52%	44%	-8%
Manicured my nails	35%	30%	-5%
Waxed	19%	14%	-5%
Massages	13%	9%	-4%
Styled my hair	48%	44%	-4%
Cut my hair	51%	48%	-3%
Lash extensions	5%	4%	-1%
Hair extensions	5%	4%	-1%
Facials	9%	8%	-1%
Botox	3%	3%	0%
Fillers	2%	2%	0%
Followed a skin care routine	36%	42%	6%

Q8A. Prior to the pandemic, which of the following did you do on a regular basis as part of your beauty or personal grooming routine?

Q8B. Which of the following do you do on a regular basis as part of your beauty or personal grooming routine today?

Base: All women

Beauty routine changes pre and post the pandemic
Among total working women

Beauty Routine	Prior to Pandemic	Post Pandemic	Variance
<i>Base: Total Working Women 18+</i>	5024	5024	
Any (NET)	62%	49%	-13%
Dressed up (e.g., tailored clothing, dress, slacks, skirts)	35%	22%	-13%
Wore full makeup	39%	27%	-12%
Styled hair	47%	36%	-11%
Wore high heels	12%	5%	-7%
Not applicable/not working prior to the pandemic	5%	0%	-5%
Not applicable/primarily worked from home	8%	18%	10%
None of the above	23%	31%	8%

Q9A. Still thinking about prior to the pandemic, which of the following best represents how you used to regularly dress, most of the week, to go to work?

Q9B. Thinking about now, which of the following best represents how you dress, most of the week, to go to work?

Base: All working women

Authenticity means being true to yourself, living without self-judgement, being in the moment and uniquely you, not trying to impress others.

Wearing what makes you feel good

“Dress in a way that you feel good without regard to judgement.”

*“You dress in a way that makes you feel unselfconscious and comfortable and confident. **You like the person you see in the mirror.**”*

*“Dressing the way you feel dressing through emotions and **dressing to your spirit.**”*

*“Dressing in a way that **suits one’s personality.**”*

Being yourself

*“Being authentic means **being true to yourself** and love how you look.”*

*“To be myself and accept how God has made me and **love who I am.** I am beautiful inside and out.”*

*“Being authentic is being your true self. **You do not hide who you are in fear of what others with think about you.**”*

*“It means to be you. To be **whoever you want to be at the moment.**”*

Not worrying what others think

*“**Not trying to fit a mold.** Dressing how I want versus what others want.”*

*“Being authentic to me is **not looking for others outside of myself to feel validated** whether it is from looks, personality or just culture in general.”*

*“Means **thinking for myself based on the values instilled in me** and not what others say or do.”*

*“**Being yourself without caring what others think** or how they perceive you.”*

Being natural

*“Complete **natural state** is what makes a person feel like their best self.”*

*“Natural beauty pictures **with[out] filters, no makeup.**”*

*“Being natural, **not to change too much** like extensions, wearing too much makeup, no botox and cosmetic surgeries to look better.”*

*“It means being natural and **letting your true beauty be seen.**”*

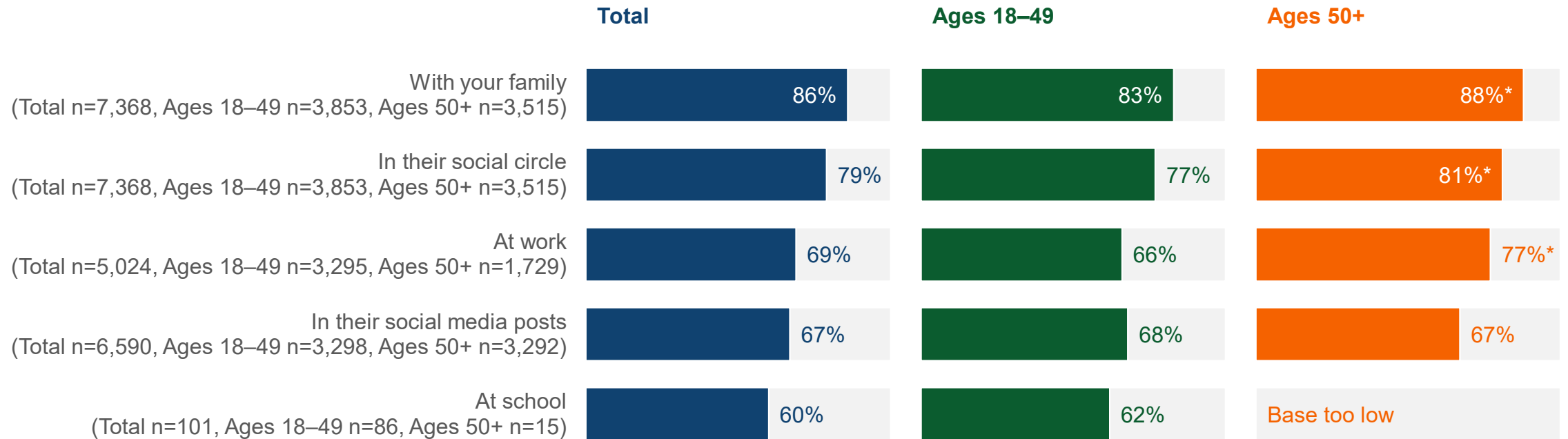
Q15A. Now let's talk about what it means to be authentic. What does being authentic mean to you, in terms of your appearance? Open-end

Base: All women

Most women feel they are showing up authentically in all parts of their life.

Older women are slightly more likely to show up authentically than those younger.

Average percent of time women show their authentic self in each situation
Among all women, total and by age range



Q17. Thinking about how you present yourself to those around you, what percent of the time are you showing them your authentic self?

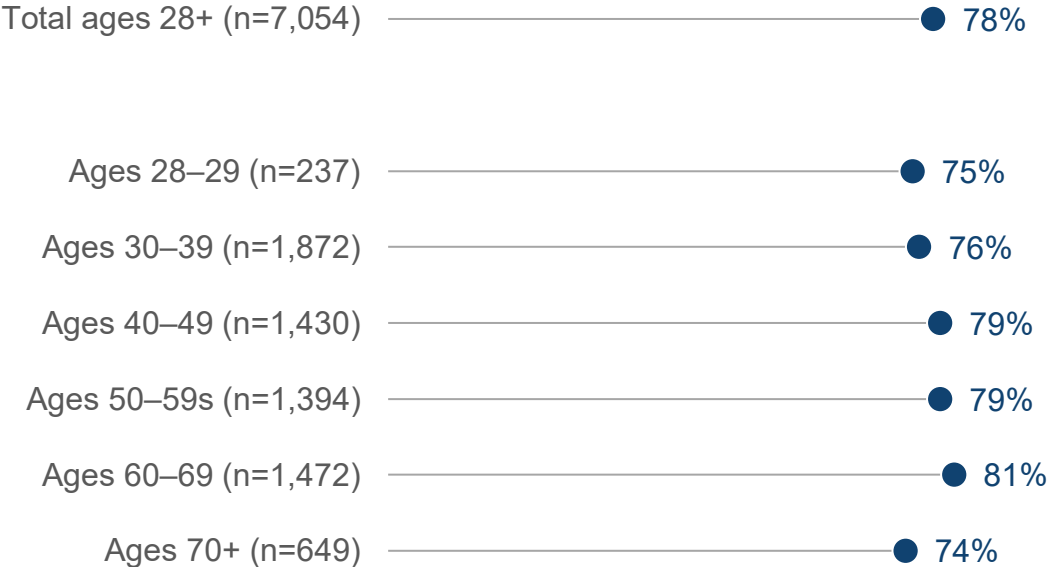
Base: All women answering

* Indicates a significant difference between segments at a 95% confidence level

But women are growing all the time and believe most women truly come into their own authentic self at age 42, on average.

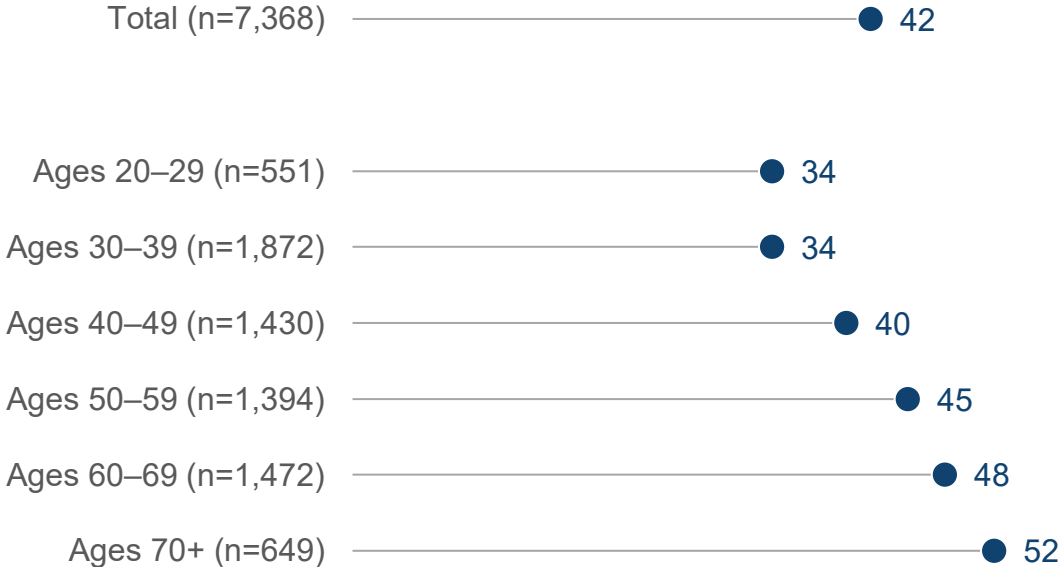
The variances in age of authenticity across the decades indicates that women may be chasing it for a while, but not forever.

Percent who feel they are able to be more their authentic self now than 5–10 years ago
Among women ages 28+, total and by age range (decade)



Q21. Do you feel you are able to be more your authentic self now, compared to 5-10 years ago?
Base: Women 28+

Average age when women are able to be their most authentic selves
Among all women, total and by age range (decade)



Q22. At what age do you believe women settle into their own skin and become comfortable with their beauty, allowing them to be most authentic?
Base: All women

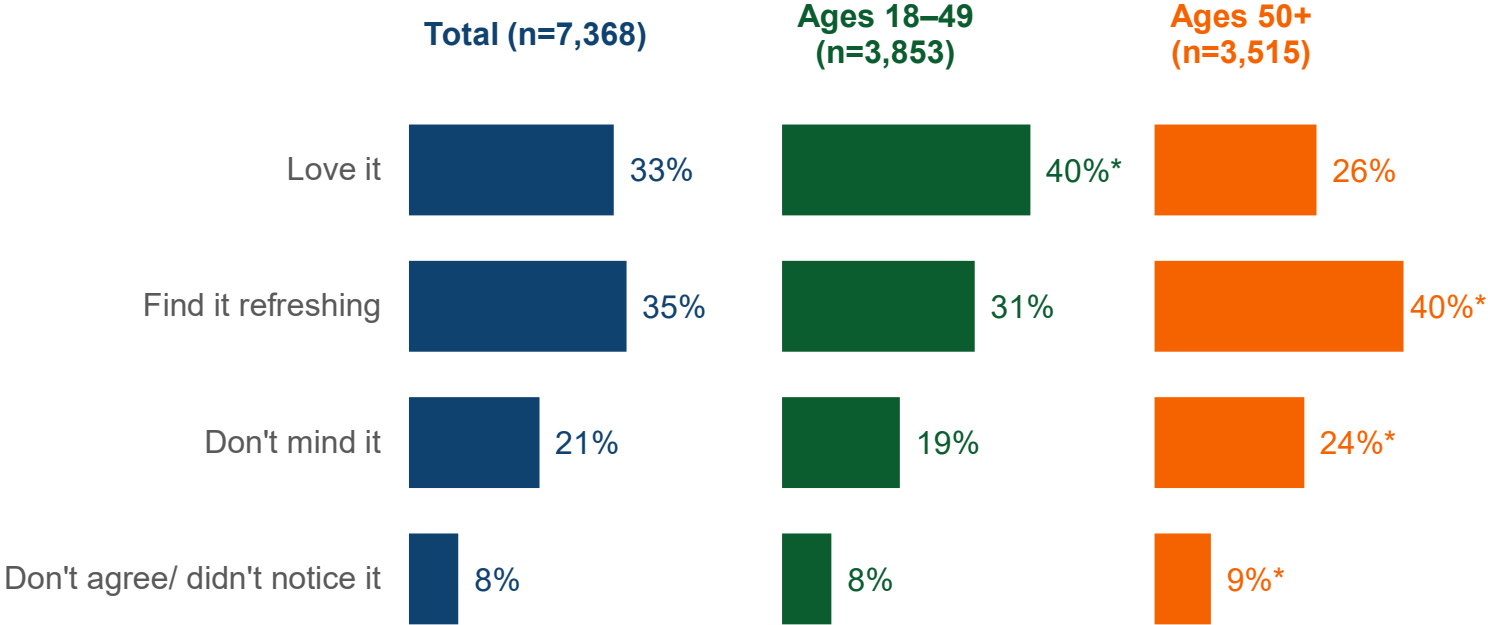


DIVERSIFYING MEDIA AND ADVERTISING

The majority of women feel positively about the inclusivity movement in media, ensuring women of all shapes, sizes, and skin tones are included.

Younger women are more vocally positive than those older.

Feelings about diversity and inclusion in media
Among all women, total and by age range



Q6. There has been a movement in the past several years to show women of all ages, shapes, sizes, skin tone, etc. in media and advertising. This creates greater inclusivity for all women. How do you feel about this change in how women are presented?

Base: All women

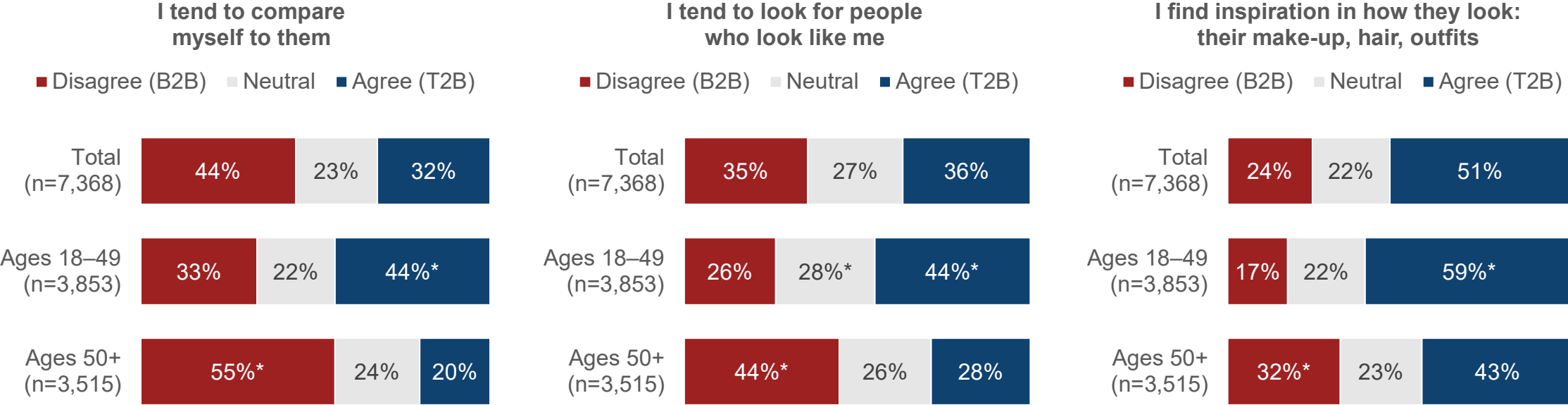
Note: Sums may not equal 100% due to rounding and/or skipped responses online

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While half currently find inspiration in how women are presented in media and advertising, half do not.

Younger women are more than twice as likely as older women to compare themselves to how women are presented in media.

Feelings about the presentation of women in media
Among all women, total and by age range



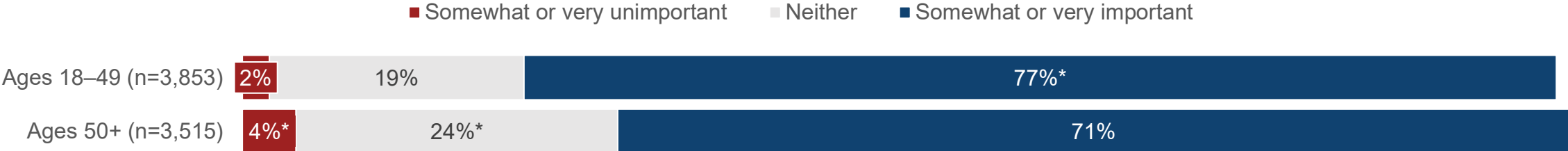
Q13. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the statements below?
When I see women presented in media and advertising...?
Base: All women (Total: n=7,368; 18-49: n=3,853; 50+: n=3,515)

Note: Sums may not equal 100% due to rounding and/or skipped responses online
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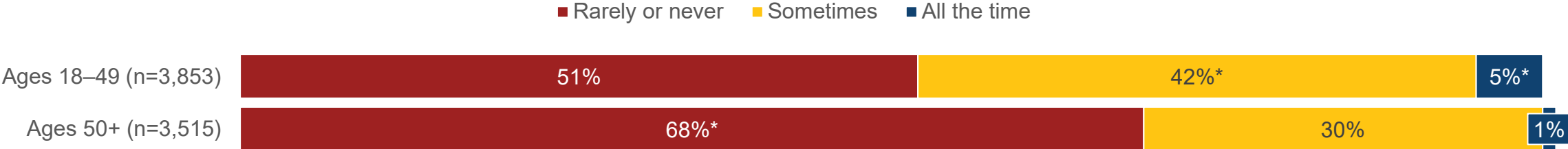
Women want authenticity in media and advertising. However, few see themselves in it.

Older women are significantly less likely to see themselves in today’s media and advertising, potentially making them feel less valued or seen.

Importance of women being presented authentically in media
Among all women, by age range



Percent who see themselves in today's media
Among all women, by age range



Q18. How important is it to you that women be presented authentically in media and advertising?

Q19. Do you ever see yourself in the women that media and advertising are presenting today?

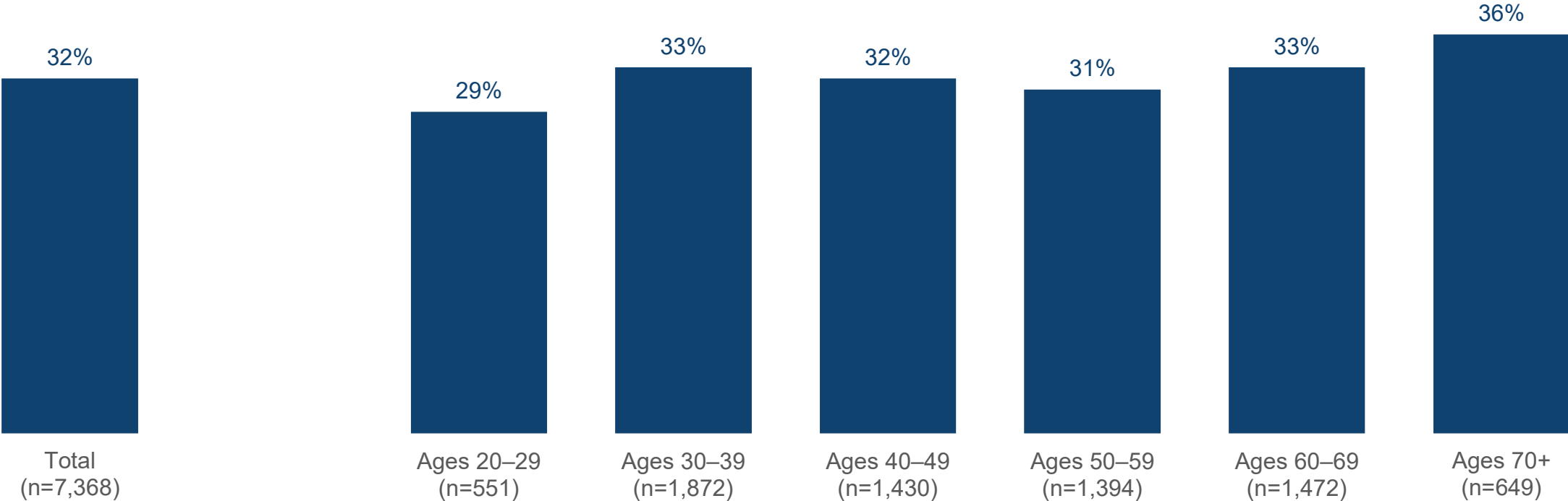
Base: All women

Note: Sums may not equal 100% due to rounding and/or skipped responses online

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Women of all ages believe women 50-plus are rarely presented authentically in media and advertising.

Percent of time older women are presented authentically in media
Among all women, total and by age range (decade)

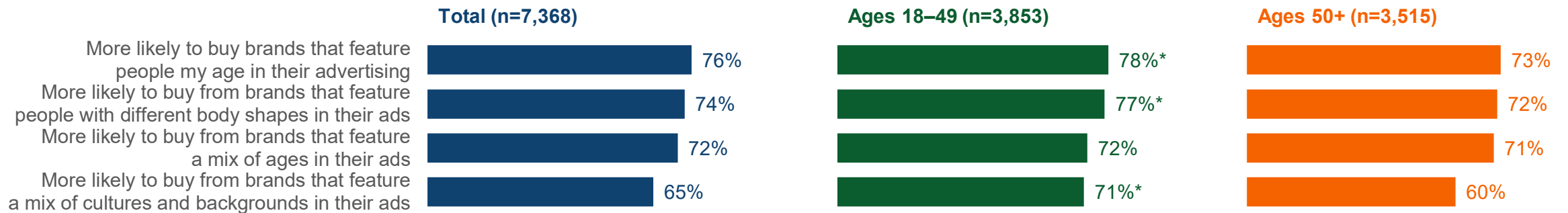


Q15C. And thinking just about older women, those ages 50 and older, what percent of the time are they presented authentically in media and advertising?

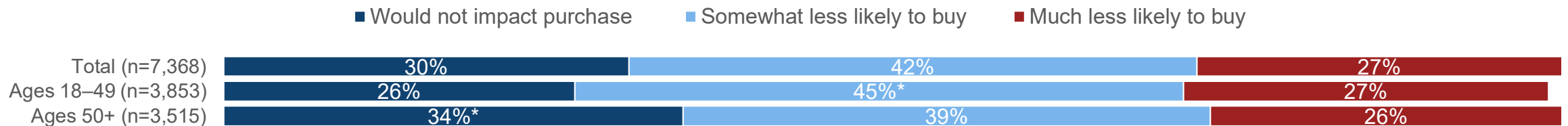
Base: All women

How a company portrays women matters. Ignoring or misrepresenting women can negatively impact its business.

Percent who agree the following statements
Among all women, total and by age range



Impact of advertising on future purchases
Among all women, total and by age



Q20. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement below.
Base: All women \

Note: Sums may not equal 100% due to rounding and/or skipped responses online

Q20BB. If a brand you typically buy presented advertising that you felt ignored or mis-represented you, how would that impact your likelihood of buying that brand in the future?

Base: All women



IMPLICATIONS

Implications

- Women of all ages feel pressure to be seen as beautiful, despite their growing sense of self-confidence and self-love. A major shift in how women are presented in media would go a long way at reducing this pressure.
- Until the outside world catches up, an opportunity exists for younger women to learn from older women; how to push back on the pressure for perfection and be comfortable in their own skin. Ted Talks, Mentorships, and other kinds of community engagements could get this conversation started.
- In addition, more care is needed to mitigate the negative effects of editing tools and filters. Though women are using them, it is in an effort to keep up, not because they view them as a positive.
- There is an authenticity gap in how media portrays women which can have financial implications for brands and marketers. Testing ads and campaigns with their target audience to probe issues of authenticity before they are launched may help close this gap.





METHODOLOGY

Methodology

- **Objectives:** To examine women’s perception of beauty, age, media, and the relationships between them.
- **Methodology:** Survey administered in English and Spanish by NORC; online and by telephone.
- **Qualifications:** AmeriSpeak Panel®, women ages 18 and older (includes non-probability sample sources from Dynata and Lucid).
- **Sample:** 7,368 women ages 18+ (3,782 18–49 and 3,586 50+), including oversamples of 2,088 Black/African Americans, 1,972 Hispanic Americans, and 1,974 Asian American/Pacific Islanders (AAPI).
- **Interviewing Dates:** November 2 - 30, 2022
- **Weighting:** Includes a base weight to correct for disproportionate probabilities of selection, nonresponse adjustments, and sample balancing to Census benchmarks on age, education, race/ethnicity, and geographic population distributions.
- **Questionnaire length:** 20 minutes.
- **Confidence Interval:** Total sample: $\pm 2.5\%$
- **Report consultation:** Interloq



APPENDIX

About AARP

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With a nationwide presence, AARP strengthens communities and advocates for what matters most to the more than 100 million Americans 50-plus and their families: health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also produces the nation's largest circulation publications: AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org/about-aarp/, www.aarp.org/español or follow [@AARP](https://twitter.com/AARP), [@AARPenEspañol](https://twitter.com/AARPenEspañol) and [@AARPadvocates](https://twitter.com/AARPadvocates) on social media.

About NORC

NORC at the University of Chicago conducts research and analysis that decision-makers trust. As a nonpartisan research organization and a pioneer in measuring and understanding the world, NORC has studied almost every aspect of the human experience and every major news event for more than eight decades. Today, NORC partners with government, corporate, and nonprofit clients around the world to provide the objectivity and expertise necessary to inform the critical decisions facing society. Please visit www.norc.org for more information.

About Interloq, LLC

Interloq provides innovative market research solutions to help brands, marketers and business leaders collect and harness the power of data to drive fast insights and decisions about their business. Nimble and efficient, we do things quickly without the drag of sizeable unneeded bureaucracy. Our primary consultants have been conducting market research for over two decades while always remaining on the pulse of modern technology to inform our research methods. Interloq is proud to be a woman-owned business based in Dallas, Texas. To learn more, visit www.Interloq.com.



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This research was designed and executed by AARP Research