



What's Age Got To Do With it?

An independent survey conducted by Durham Business School and personal development programme Age with Attitude into the Attitudes of mid-life women in modern society

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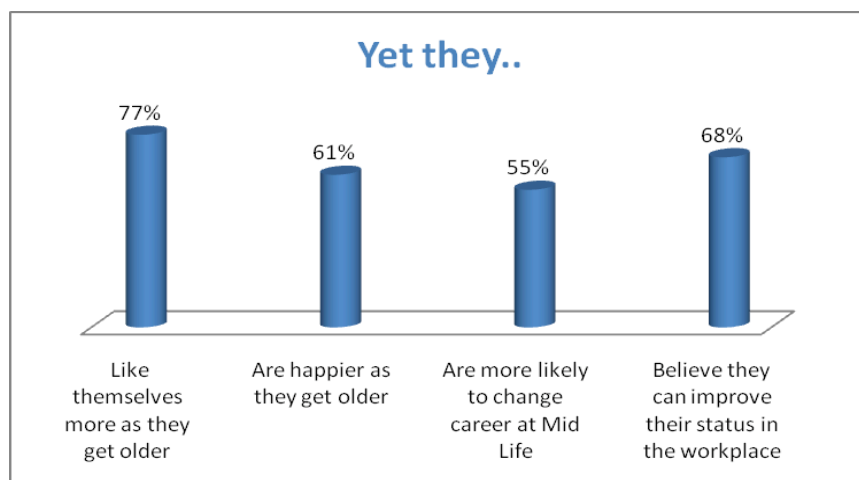
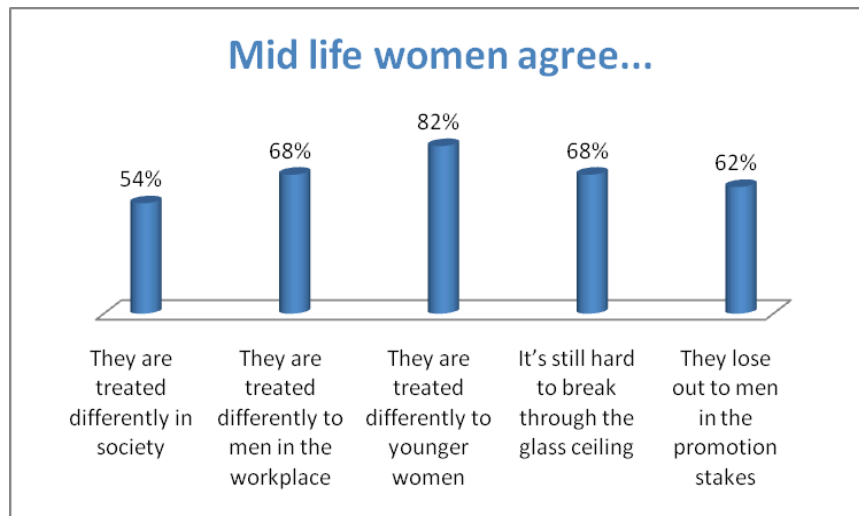
Research Summary

During the period March-April 2010, Durham Business School and Age with Attitude conducted an anonymous online survey which explored the attitudes of 40+ women across the UK from all sectors. Participants were invited to answer a range of questions about their own beliefs about mid-life as well as those portrayed by the media.

Over 130 women answered the survey of whom

- 63.4% being married
- 31.5% having had no children
- 63% being aged 46 – 55.
- 43.1% were self-employed,
- 41.5% were employed
- 29.3% earning over £60,000

Main Findings



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What was particularly surprising was how positive the women were about themselves despite a massive 82% feeling that they are treated differently to younger women in the workplace. There is a real contradiction here between how they are seen by society and how they see themselves. This is an important difference in perception.

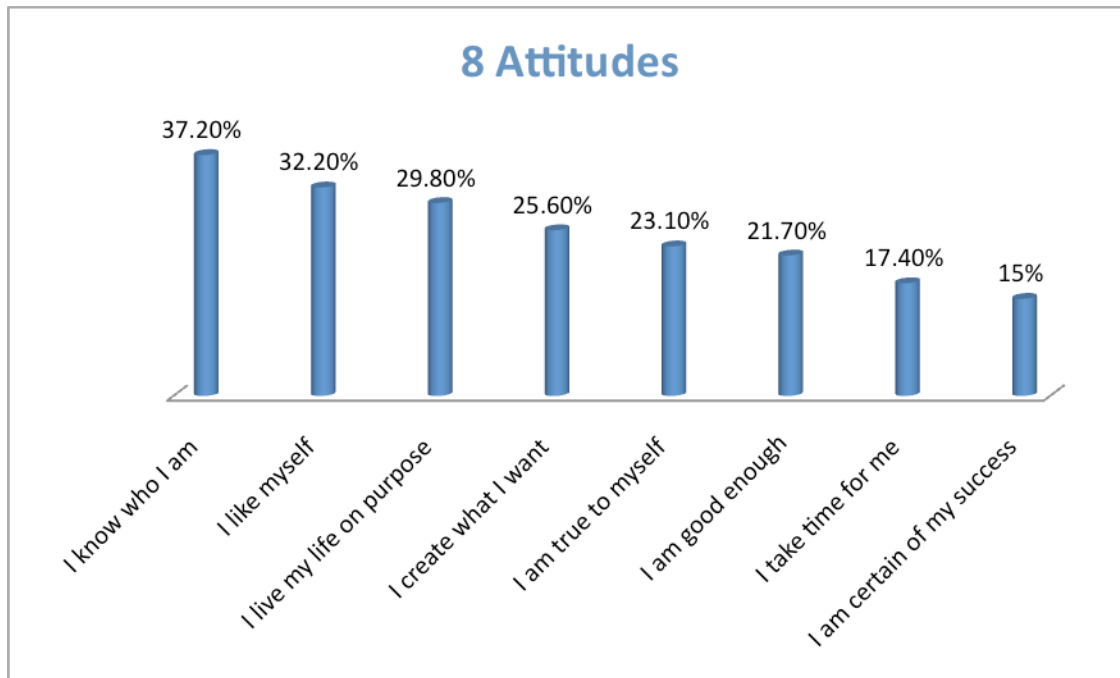
When questioned what the key challenges were in their lives, the highest results showed 58% felt a lack of time to re-focus was the biggest issue, with 53% felt being myself was a key challenge.

At work, 74% felt their key advantage was experience, with 52% feeling they could be themselves. This is a contradiction with the key challenge above.

For organisations, the key impact of this research is how to leverage the experience and enthusiasm of older women in the workplace much more effectively. It's a golden and money saving opportunity that is being missed at the moment.

The 8 Attitudes of Midlife Women

The key to the understanding the opinions of those surveyed is to understand their attitude to midlife. For this, the 8 attitudes to midlife were taken from recently published book 'Still 25 Inside' (£12.99, Rodale) and the responses plotted against the various attitudes. This shows that mid-life women are more likely to know who they are as a person but far less likely to be confident of their own success.



Other findings from the research

- The majority of women considered 'role models' by the panel were in the media or politicians
- When given the opportunity to write down their own views, there were many positive phrases used by the panel including 'Confident, being myself, experience, comfortable in own skin, Knowledge and drive, wisdom, self-awareness'
- Negative comments were also invited and these included 'aging, discrimination, illness, tired, creaking, past it, time running out, less energy, competing with ambitious younger people, health, aches and pains, financial, wrinkles!
- 27.6% of this group felt that 50 – 54 was considered as over the hill in business

Quote from Lindsey Agness, founder of Age with Attitude

"I was pleasantly surprised with the general positive views the women held about midlife and this was contrary to the views often portrayed in the media, that midlife women are over the hill and lacking in the confidence or ambition to achieve their goals. Having said that, it is clear that whilst these barriers to success may not be as prevalent in the minds of the women in the survey, they are very real in society and as a result are holding many women back from achieving their true potential.

We are starting to see a shift in the balance of power in the boardrooms of many large organisations with women hopefully taking on a more prominent role in senior positions in the coming years. What this research says to me is that these women have the desire and motivation to achieve success in later life but don't always have the skills and techniques to harness this ability. The thought is there but they often fall down when it comes to converting that thought into action. With the right guidance and a more welcoming society, I predict that midlife women will have a much more prominent and long-standing role in future society."

Quote from Dr Julie Hodges, Durham Business School

"It is good to see that midlife women like themselves more and are happier as they get older. However, this research shows that there are still key issues which midlife women are facing in the world of work and which need to be addressed by employers. The research has an impact for organizations particularly in the current economic climate where organizations may be cutting themselves short by not using the experience and knowledge of midlife women. This is true in the public as well as the private sector and is certainly evident in the new coalition cabinet where there are very few women".

Final thoughts from Lindsey Agness, founder of Age with Attitude

This research shows what mid-life business-women have suspected for some time. Experienced and motivated woman are being passed over for younger women and men. This has a massive cost implication for organisations who are training others to do the work that their mid-life female employees can already do, and do better. In the current climate of cost cuts this presents a major opportunity for all organisations and especially those in the public sector.

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