



# WOMEN OVER 50 ARE CALLING THE SHOTS!

At the beginning of the 20th century, the average life expectancy for women was only 50.6 years. (*Berkeley.edu*) Over a century later, that number has increased by more than half. The life expectancy for women is now 80.2 years. (*statista.com*)

Women are living longer, healthier lives and dispelling the idea that aging is some sort of affliction if you're a woman past the age of thirty. They're more confident and comfortable in their skin, as they embrace the next chapters of their lives.

In a world obsessed with youth, women over the age of fifty are defying aging norms and expectations, while redefining what is possible. They've discovered midlife is not the end, but an opportunity for a new beginning. They're taking control of our lives and destiny in ways that were not possible for their foremothers.

Due to the labor shortage brought on by World War II, (from 1939 to 1945) large numbers of women began working full-time, outside of the home. These women entering the workforce not only kept businesses open but food on the table.



Smithsonian Archives

Once women became the primary breadwinners and heads of households in the absence of husbands and fathers who were fighting (and dying) in the war, the fabric of America changed forever.



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are defying aging norms...

Women were suddenly considered essential to the workforce, but even though they were deemed necessary, they weren't paid the same wages as the men who previously held those positions. Unfortunately, the fight for equal pay still goes on despite the constant efforts toward change. Equal pay issues aside, women were able to bring about other workplace changes to accommodate female employees and working mothers.

These women, the mothers of the Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), not only opened doors for their daughters but also showed them women could be self-sufficient and didn't have to settle for the status quo. As Boomers entered adulthood, there was a second wave of feminism, (the first being in the late 1800s) where women protested and fought for civil rights as well as autonomy over their lives and their bodies. These women were now becoming mothers to the next generation (Generation X born between 1965 and 1980) and the social and political landscape began to change drastically. Segregation became illegal per the Civil Rights Act of 1964, women were able to get legal abortions thanks to *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 (*it's devastating that this hard-won battle is even up for debate or discussion fifty years later!*), and in 1974 the Equal Credit Opportunity Act made it illegal to discriminate due to gender or race when it came to lending practices.



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Women from these generations—who are mostly over age fifty today—have left an indelible mark on the world. Becoming formidable barrier breakers and history-makers, many of them being the first in their families to not only graduate high school but also college. These women are the reason younger generations of women can follow their dreams or be so vocal about what they want. They are also the reason younger generations of women have a platform to continue to demand equal pay and a woman’s right to choose. Despite the bad rap women over fifty get regarding their responsibility for inflicting generational trauma—these women also taught us courage, perseverance, problem-solving skills, and self-reliance.

We can (and should) credit genetics, environment, and lifestyle as the reasons women over fifty are aging so gracefully, but it’s also because they know who they are and what they’re capable of. They also know despite what comes their way, they can and *will* survive. After all, they’ve done it before.

Today, women over fifty are continuing to blaze trails by leading in politics, commerce, and entertainment; representing a demographic that’s overlooked and often underestimated. They are changing the narrative by showing the world that women over fifty are STILL vital, vibrant, and unstoppable!