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# SHATTERING STEREOTYPES

HOW TODAY'S WOMEN OVER 50 ARE  
REDEFINING WHAT'S POSSIBLE  
ON-SCREEN, AT WORK AND AT HOME



Nielsen Diverse Intelligence Series  
March 2021

# FOREWORD

It's been said that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. But history has shown that when the world falls apart, women—including “women of a certain age”—often absorb the brunt of that fallout. Case in point: We find ourselves in the midst of Women's History Month 2021, celebrating the enormous strides and achievements women have made. Simultaneously, we're seeing alarming news about COVID's regressive effects on gender equality.

These stories tend to focus on women of childbearing age. But the hand that rocks the cradle is not always that of a new mom. While the challenges younger women face should not be minimized, those of another critical group, women over the age of 50, are too often missing.

Women over 50 are more active, more ambitious and more influential now than ever. We run companies, march for human rights and work daily to advance our communities, our families and our bottom lines. While the 40-50-year-old sandwich generation struggles to balance the needs of aging parents and young kids, women over 50 are sometimes managing a triple decker club of responsibility for elders in their final years, grown children and grandchildren.

Despite the pressures of such demands, the 50-plus woman is staying in the workforce longer. She's not merely taking a seat at the table, she's increasingly at the head of it. Look no further than the first female Vice President of the U.S., Kamala Harris. UPS CEO Karen Tomé came out of retirement to run a company critical to our lockdown lifestyles and there has also been progress in Hollywood—from the recent Golden Globe win of comedic powerhouse Catherine O'Hara to the acclaimed directorial debut of Regina King.

While turning 50 was a moment to reflect on who I am, it also gave way to a fuller, richer awareness of what I am still becoming—which is more confident and ready than ever to apply my wealth of experience, skills and talents in meaningful ways. The 50-plus woman is successfully redefining these years as her new prime time. But while my peers and I embrace our ever-expanding sense of possibility, a search for ourselves on-screen betrays our near invisibility. Forward-thinking content creators and brands know that must change.

In the pages that follow, we show where key opportunities lie and how overlooking “women of a certain age” means undervaluing not only our influence in society, but ultimately your own brand's potential. Women over 50 are just getting started, so pay attention and stay tuned.



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# CHANGING THE NARRATIVE FOR ALL WOMEN OVER 50

The women turning 50 this year may have watched *The Golden Girls* when they came of age, but their own experiences are shaping up to be quite different from what they saw on-screen back then, and they're looking for content to reflect that.

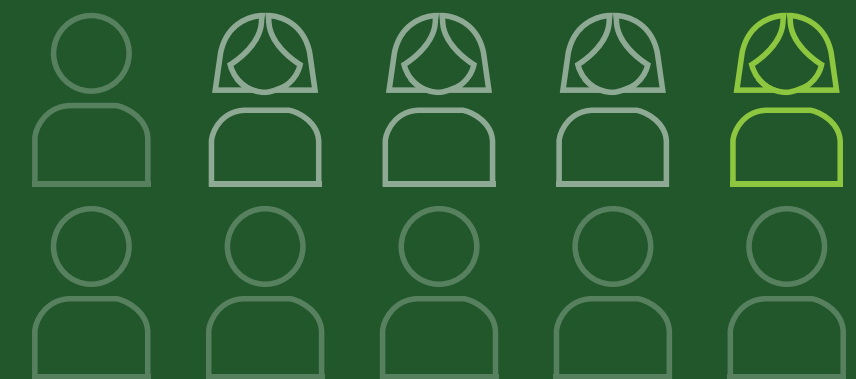
When it comes to representation on TV, Gracenote Inclusion Analytics show that men are on-screen more than women (62% screen time vs. 38%), even though women make up more than half of the U.S. population. But for women over age 50, who represent 20% of the population, the share of time on-screen plummets to just 8%.

The television industry has a valuable opportunity to expand how women 50 and above are represented—in both ads and content—in ways that capture the varied experiences of what many women in this life stage consider their prime.



38%  
TIME ON-SCREEN  
FOR WOMEN

WOMEN OVER 50 REPRESENT 20% OF THE POPULATION BUT THEIR **SHARE OF TIME ON-SCREEN IS ONLY 8%.**



Source: Gracenote Inclusion Analytics, 2019

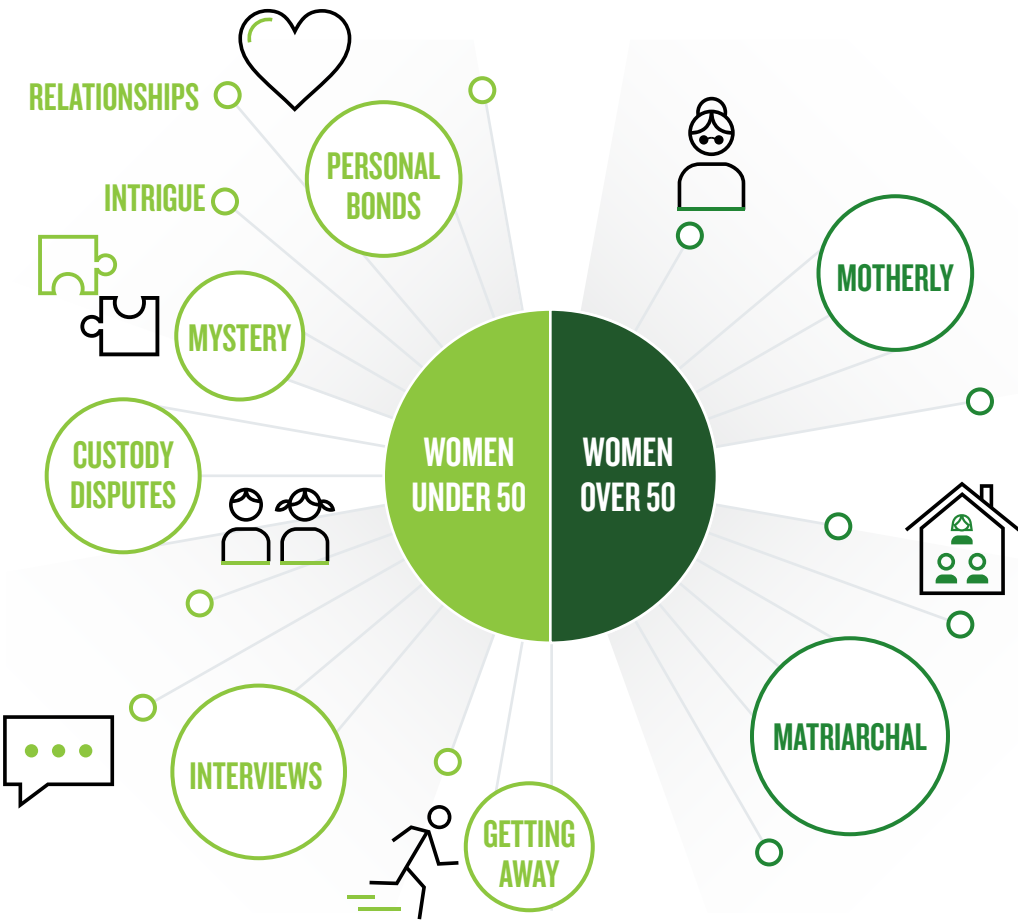


# MISREPRESENTED AND UNSEEN

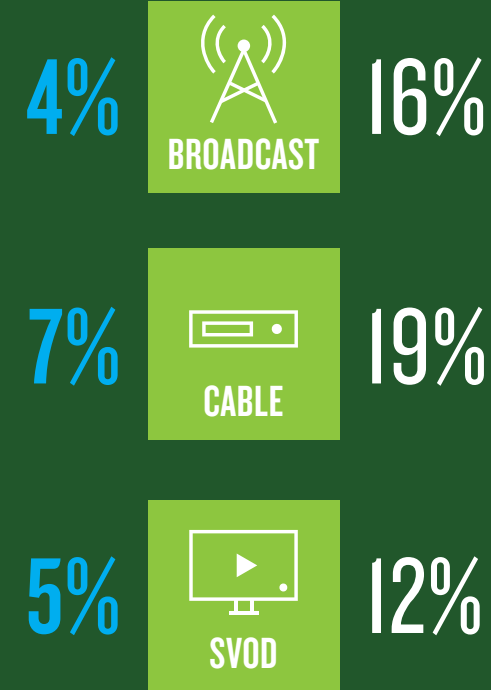
In the world of TV programming, middle-aged women are largely absent, and when they are present on-screen, they most often appear in stereotypical roles. Reflective of the ageism in many parts of our media culture, we found that when women over 50 are cast in shows, the stories often center around matriarchal and motherly themes. Conversely, in shows that have high female representation, but where none of the female cast members were over 50, the top themes were intrigue, getting away, mysterious situations, interviews and custody disputes. Women 50+ rarely see themselves in content, and when they do, they often find a reflection of a woman that doesn't match their multi-faceted relevance or reality.

While women 50+ make up less than a quarter of the viewing population, they are 60% less likely to see themselves in programming than they are walking around town. Among the top shows on cable last season, viewers were nearly 3x more likely to see a man over age 50 than a woman in the same age group. Additionally, our data shows that when men and women over 50 are present on-screen, they're often not seen together. In fact, half of the top 100 shows on cable had at least one man over 50, but less than one-third cast at least one woman over 50.

## AGE MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN CASTING WOMEN ON TELEVISION



## SHARE OF CAST IN THE TOP 15 PROGRAMS



WOMEN OVER 50 ARE **60% LESS LIKELY** TO SEE THEMSELVES IN PROGRAMMING.



# WHAT WOMEN 50+ WANT ON-SCREEN

## HEALTHY COMPETITION

Most-viewed programs include Sunday Night Football, red-carpet events, talent competitions and all-star *Jeopardy* specials.



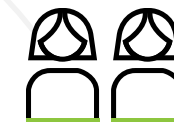
## INCLUSIVE CASTS

Last year, the top 10 broadcast primetime programs featured diverse leading cast members. Across these most watched series, women averaged a 46% share of screen.



## FAN FAVORITES

The top 10 list for Black women and Afro-Latinas over 50 reflected the loyalty of supportive fans with the most-watched series dominated by weekly NFL kickoffs, talent competitions and primetime dramas with Black female leads.



## HER UNIQUE STORY TOLD

The top broadcast shows among female same-gender spouses and partners over age 50 included *All Rise* and *Tommy*, both featuring lead characters that are lesbians.



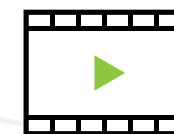
## STORIES OF THE HEART

Spanish-language talent shows, awards shows and telenovelas were the most popular program types on broadcast TV for Hispanic women 50+.



## NEWS SHE CAN TRUST

Asian women over 50 watched the most news programs, compared with their counterparts across other racial and ethnic backgrounds.



## COMFORT CONTENT

Non-Hispanic White women over 50 did not have a news series among their most-viewed broadcast programs of 2020. This suggests that when White women are tuning in, they are looking for entertainment to escape the day's headlines.

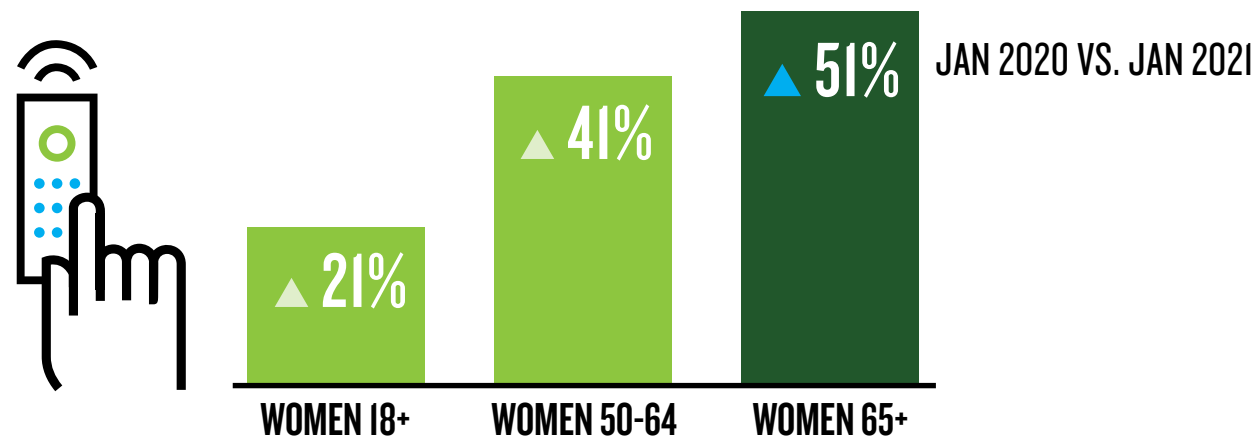
WOMEN OF COLOR AGE 50 AND OLDER ARE **KEY DRIVERS OF WEEKLY NFL RATINGS.**



# STREAMING FOR WOMEN 50+

Women over 50 are using connected devices to discover streaming content that looks different from audiences overall. Not to be overshadowed by their younger counterparts, women over the age of 65 increased their internet-connected device usage during primetime by 51% by January 2021, a year-over-year increase that outpaced women 50-64 and women overall.

## PRIMETIME INTERNET-CONNECTED DEVICE USAGE



Source: National TV Audience Measurement - Primetime Internet Connected Device Usage, January 2020 vs. January 2021

Women 65+ were streaming *Virgin River* and *Grace and Frankie* as recently as February—programs that you won't find anywhere else in the Streaming Top 10, and that haven't had new seasons drop since 2020. In recent weeks, women 50-64 started *Firefly Lane* and kept up demand for titles like *Bridgerton*, *The Crown* and *Great British Baking Show*. But women 50-64 also pulled hits like *Ozark* and *WandaVision* into their Top 10.



## TOP STREAMING PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN 50+

Rank	Age 50-64	Age 65+
1	Firefly Lane	Firefly Lane
2	Bridgerton	The Crown
3	Crime Scene: Vanishing	Grace and Frankie
4	Behind Her Eyes	Longmire
5	Longmire	Bridgerton
6	The Crown	Behind Her Eyes
7	WandaVision	Virgin River
8	The Great British Baking Show	Bosch
9	Ozark	The Great British Baking Show
10	The Crew (Series)	The Crew (Series)

Source: Nielsen SVOD Content Ratings (Amazon Prime, Disney+, Hulu, and Netflix), Nielsen National TV Panel, U.S. Viewing through Television, February 15 -21, 2021



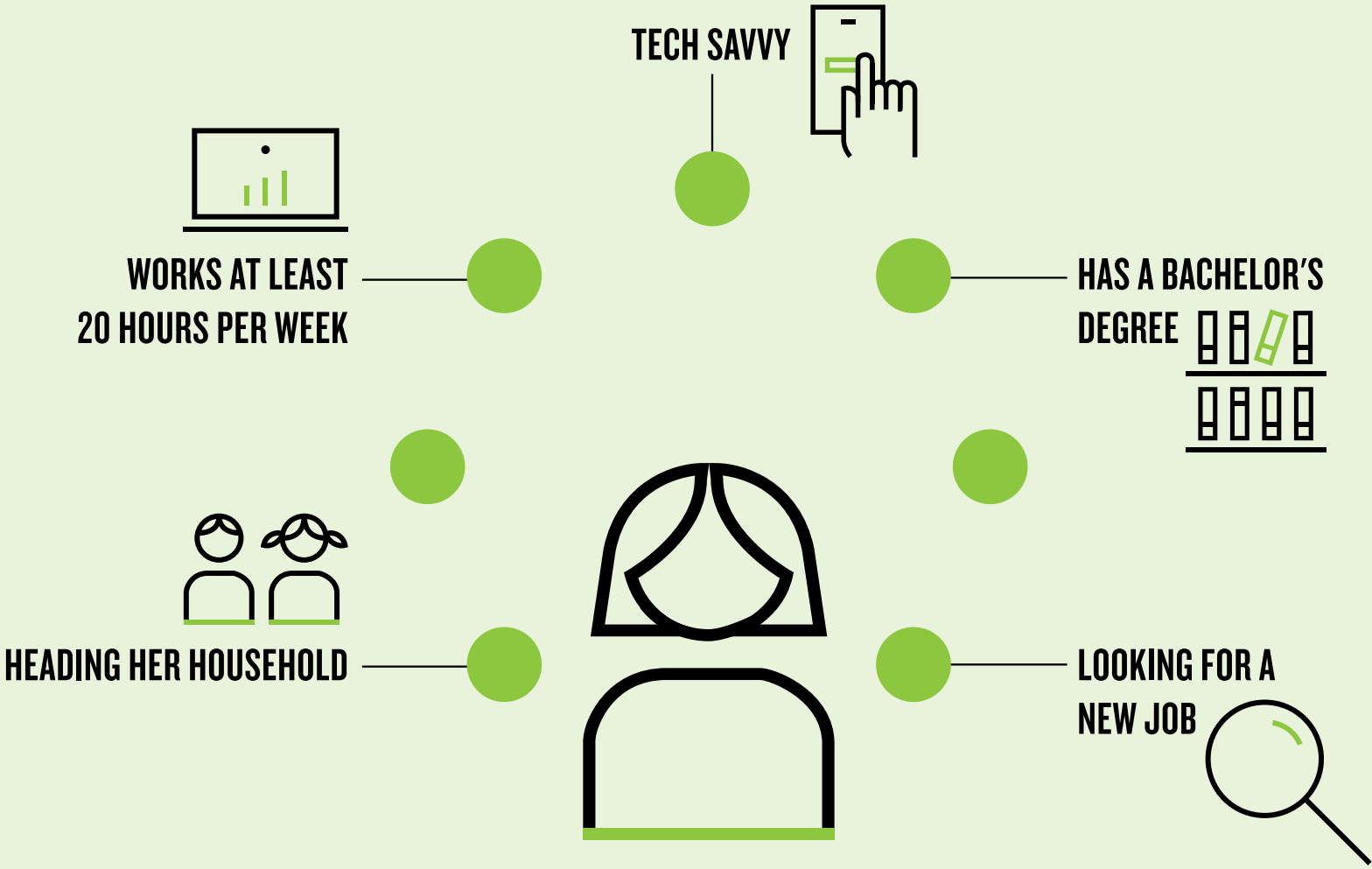
# SPOTLIGHT: TODAY'S SUPERWOMAN

## WHO SHE IS

She's running her household, working more than she was 10 years ago and embracing her spending and earning potential. Of all female-led households in 2020, more than half are led by women 50-64 years old.

She is a caretaker and a breadwinner, with 62% of Hispanic women, 59% of Native American women and 61% of Black women over 50 being the grandparent of a child under 18. Not quite ready for retirement, these economic contributors showed an 11% increase in the past two years, taking jobs with at least 20 hours a week.

While we find that women 50-64 are experienced and increasingly educated, those attributes often aren't enough to translate to upward career mobility at this age. In the last 12 years, although the number of women aged 50-64 with a bachelor's degree increased from 27% to 34%, only 3% experienced the expected boost in professional or managerial jobs, perhaps because of ageism. Not surprisingly, given that trend, more than 11% of women 50-64 reported that they would be looking for a new job.



Sources: Nielsen National Universe Estimates - Women 50-64, 2008 vs. 2020  
 Nielsen Scarborough USA+ Release 1, 2020

WOMEN 50+ ARE JUGGLING DEVICES THAT CAN KEEP PACE WITH THEM ON THE GO.

70%  
OWN A  
SMARTPHONE



10%  
OWN A  
SMARTWATCH





# SPOTLIGHT: DOLLARS & \$ENSE

Why is it time to rethink the value of what women over 50 bring to the table? Besides tremendous buying power, she has a broad sphere of influence. Today's modern matriarch is caring for multiple generations amid shifting economic conditions, often extending responsibilities beyond her own household to those of adult children, aging parents and others in her circle. Women of color in this age group are more likely to be married professionals with multiple children in their homes.<sup>1</sup>

Her influence doesn't stop with her family. Women over 50 are using their earnings to provide support across generations. And they are more likely to have a higher household income and to outspend their younger counterparts by more than \$200 million in key categories.<sup>2</sup>

Last year, women over 50 spent nearly \$800 million across 25 categories, compared to \$608 million for women 18-34 and \$680 million for women 35-49.

However, income disparities exist, particularly among transgender women in this age group, who are almost twice as likely to make less than \$35,000, compared with women over 50 in general.

<sup>1</sup> Nielsen Scarborough USA+ Release 1, 2020  
<sup>2</sup> Nielsen Buyer Insights - 12/30/2019-11/30/2020, excluding Travel categories

## WOMEN 50+: LIKELIHOOD TO HAVE TWO CHILDREN AT HOME

ASIAN	BLACK	HISPANIC
13%	22%	30%
MORE LIKELY	MORE LIKELY	MORE LIKELY



## REDEFINING WEALTH

Two investment strategies: multicultural and multi-focused

Women over 50 have varying investing priorities. For many Black, Hispanic and Native American women 50+, strong ties to family and community dictate a targeted investment approach focused on charitable channels closer to home. For other women 50+, investing looks more traditional, featuring stocks and 401ks.

Asian and White women over 50, however, are focusing investments both in their stock portfolios and non-profits. Asian women 50+ most often donated to support the arts and social welfare initiatives while White women 50+ supported veteran and political organizations.

Prioritizing investments, retirement and other income tools are important for women 50+ to embrace in order to build financial longevity. But the many diverse women over 50 are defining their financial legacy by funding family and community needs ahead of individual assets.

## WOMEN 50+: INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

HISPANIC	NATIVE AMERICAN OR ALASKA NATIVE	ASIAN	WHITE	BLACK
HEALTHCARE/ MEDICAL 	MILITARY/ VETERANS 	ARTS/ CULTURAL 	MILITARY/ VETERANS 	HEALTHCARE/ MEDICAL 
RELIGIOUS 	SOCIAL CARE/ WELFARE 	SOCIAL CARE/ WELFARE 	POLITICAL 	RELIGIOUS 



# AFTERWORD

Women over 50 want more. They are watching weekly primetime shows that feature women like them—who are embracing these years as a prime time of life. Diving deeper into streamed content, women over 50 are watching more original programs that give them visibility across genres. Content creators should tap into this loyal and diverse audience who are looking to cheer on their favorite teams and contestants, indulge in nostalgia and romance, and keep up with the latest feature films.

As women over 50 gravitate towards programming that is more inclusive of their stories, advertisers can also engage them by investing in these programs. These women bring both significant spending power and a multigenerational sphere of influence that can impact a brand's bottom line today and tomorrow.

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## SOURCES:

1. Nielsen Inclusion Analytics
2. Nielsen National TV Measurement
3. Nielsen Scarborough R 1 2020 USA+
4. Nielsen Buyer Insights

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## ABOUT NIELSEN

Nielsen Holdings plc (NYSE: NLSN) is a leading global data and analytics company that provides a holistic and objective understanding of the media industry. With offerings spanning audience measurement, audience outcomes and content, Nielsen offers its clients and partners simple solutions to complex questions and optimizes the value of their investments and growth strategies. It is the only company that can offer de-duplicated cross-media audience measurement. Audience is Everything™ to Nielsen and its clients, and Nielsen is committed to ensuring that every voice counts.

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