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AARP Nationwide Survey Finds Disconnect Between Images Used in Beauty Product Ads and Women's Desire for Realistic, Authentic Depictions

Mirror/Mirror: AARP Survey of Women's Reflections on Beauty, Age, and Media™ Surveyed 2,000 U.S. women ages 21 to 72

En español / WASHINGTON, DC—Manufacturers of beauty products whose advertisements do not depict women in realistic ways, or include women of a variety of ages, may lose customers, according to the results of a new nationwide survey, released today by AARP.

“Mirror/Mirror: AARP Survey of Women's Reflections on Beauty, Age, and Media™” surveyed 2,000 U.S. women ages 21 to 72 on their perceptions of the way women are depicted in advertising and media, especially as related to age and aging, and how those depictions inform their self-image, lifestyle and purchasing decisions. AARP will issue a full report on the survey on Nov. 1.

Among the survey's key findings:

- 61 percent of women surveyed said they do not feel represented by images of women in media;
- 58 percent of women surveyed said they agreed with the statement “I am more likely to purchase products from brands that use women who look like me in their advertising;”
- Three-quarters of women surveyed said they like ads that contain women of a variety of ages and wish they saw more realistic representations of women.

“The results of this survey confirm something we've suspected all along: women want to see themselves reflected in advertising and other types of media in authentic ways and they're more likely to buy products from advertisers who use images of women who are a variety of ages,” said AARP Senior Vice President and Editorial Director Myrna Blyth.

Researchers expected they might see some discrepancies between age groups surveyed but, instead, generally found consensus, AARP said. “People often think there are differences across generations but, as we found in this survey, women are united across age groups in finding inauthentic representations of women in ads off-putting and they express a willingness to support brands that don't do that,” said AARP Executive Vice President and Chief Public Policy Officer Debra Whitman.

The new AARP survey is explored in greater detail in the current issue of Allure magazine, which the publisher has dubbed “The End of Anti-Aging” issue. Late last year, Allure announced it would no longer use the term “anti-aging” in its editorial coverage at the time. “Whether we know it or not, [the term ‘anti-aging’ is] subtly reinforcing the message that aging is a condition we need to battle,” Allure editor Michelle Lee wrote of the magazine's decision. “Growing older is a wonderful thing because it means that we get a chance, every day, to live a full, happy life.”

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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 and more than 38 million members, AARP strengthens communities and advocates for what matters most to 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 or follow @AARP and @AARPadvocates on social media.

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