

# It's <sup>(still)</sup> a Good Life

2011 Consumer Perspective

Part of an ongoing **CONER** study: The Art of the Possible

# Introduction

---

The last several years have been interesting and challenging times for U.S. consumers. Financial disasters and natural disasters have tested the American spirit. But, consumers have proven for centuries that they are resilient, and their adaptability shows through once again. So it seems like the ideal time to examine the attitudes, beliefs and aspirations that define consumers.

In our continuing series about consumer life, we'll share what we've learned about consumers today in seven categories—life outlook, health and fitness, finances, family, home, food, and leisure and travel. Please join us for a closer look at who people are today.

# The Approach

## Consumers and Life: Doner Quantitative Research

1008 online interviews\*

- 50% male, 50% female
- Ages 18-64
- National representation of regions and other demographics
- Select findings shown by generation

## Expert Interviews

- Richard Curtin, Director, Consumer Sentiment Index
- William Doherty, PhD., Professor, University of Minnesota's Department of Family and Social Science, author of *Putting Family First*

## Secondary Resources (among others)

- Centers for Disease Control
- Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index
- S&P/Case-Shiller Home Price Indices
- America's Time Use Survey, Labor Department
- Cleveland Clinic Wellness Institute
- Federal Reserve Economic Data

\*All data shown are from this proprietary study unless otherwise noted.

# *(stilla)* It's a Good Life

Consumers today feel good about life.

They find joy in things big and small and cherish the experiences that make life full. Health and fitness are important, although they may be playing a bigger role in people's minds than in practice. The growing desire to save money drives their financial perspective. Family and home life are still foundational to happiness. Food, leisure time, and travel are just a few areas that bring added pleasure and make life a little more enjoyable.

Maybe this overarching mindset is a result of what consumers have been through recently, with a new focus on what is really meaningful—the people and experiences they have in their lives.

Or, perhaps this positive outlook has been part of American culture all along.

# Facets of Life

---

1. **“Happy to Be Here”** (Life Outlook)
2. **Wellness Is a State of Mind** (Health and Fitness)
3. **Everyone Needs a Cushion** (Finances)
4. **The Responsibility and Reward of Family** (Family)
5. **The Pride of Home** (Home)
6. **Food Is Pleasure** (Food)
7. **It’s Time to Relax** (Leisure and Travel)

# “Happy to Be Here”



# “Happy to Be Here”

“Happy to be here” is the personal motto of a Boomer mom in the Midwest.  
And it’s the same sentiment we heard from many others.

*“Life is meant to be lived.”*

(Gen Y Woman, Northeast)

*“We decide to be happy.”*

(Gen Y Woman, Northeast)

*“Make the most of each day.”*

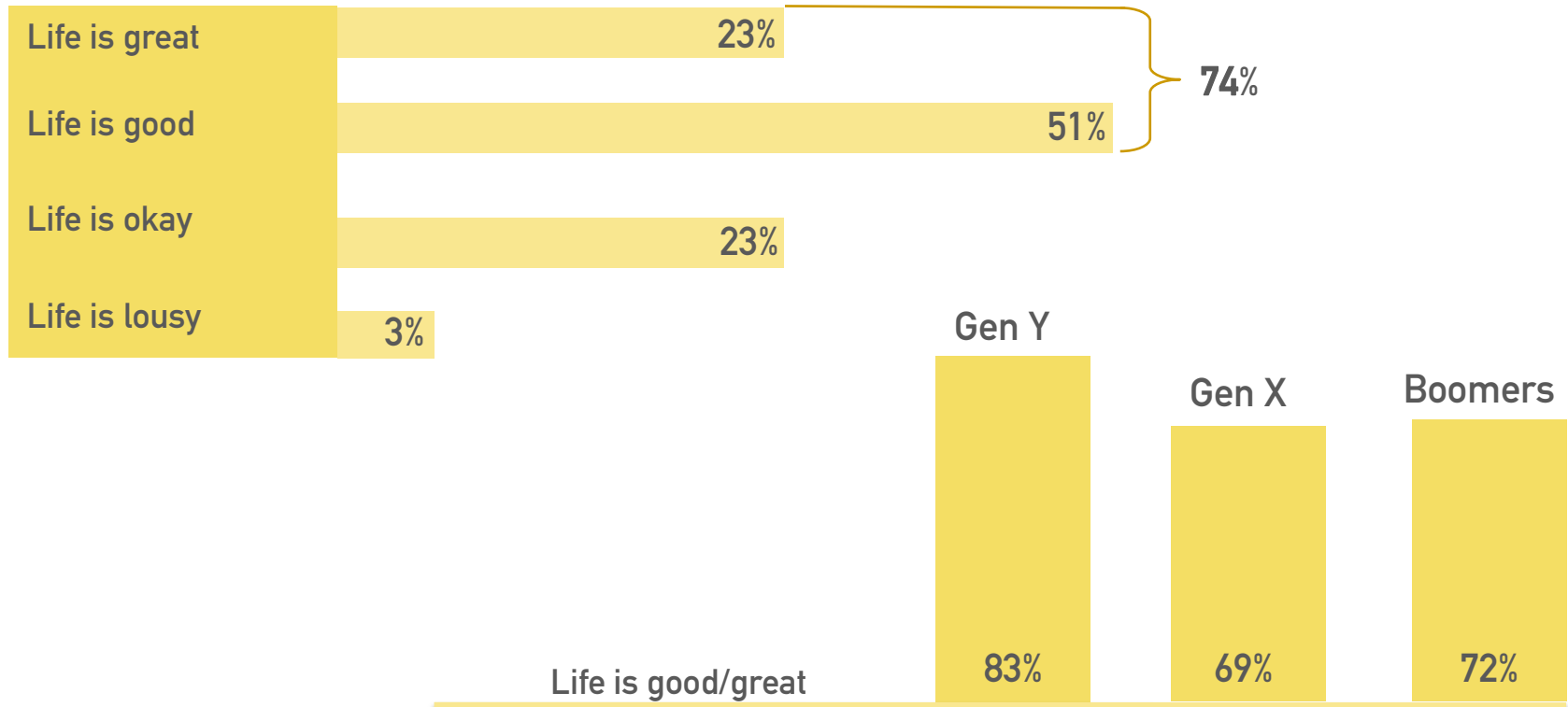
(Gen X Man, South)

*“Enjoy the best of my life.”*

(Gen X Man, South)

# “Happy to Be Here”

People believe life is good. Gen Y is the most positive, maybe because they have yet to experience some of the challenges that others have faced in recent years. Or maybe it's just part of their makeup.



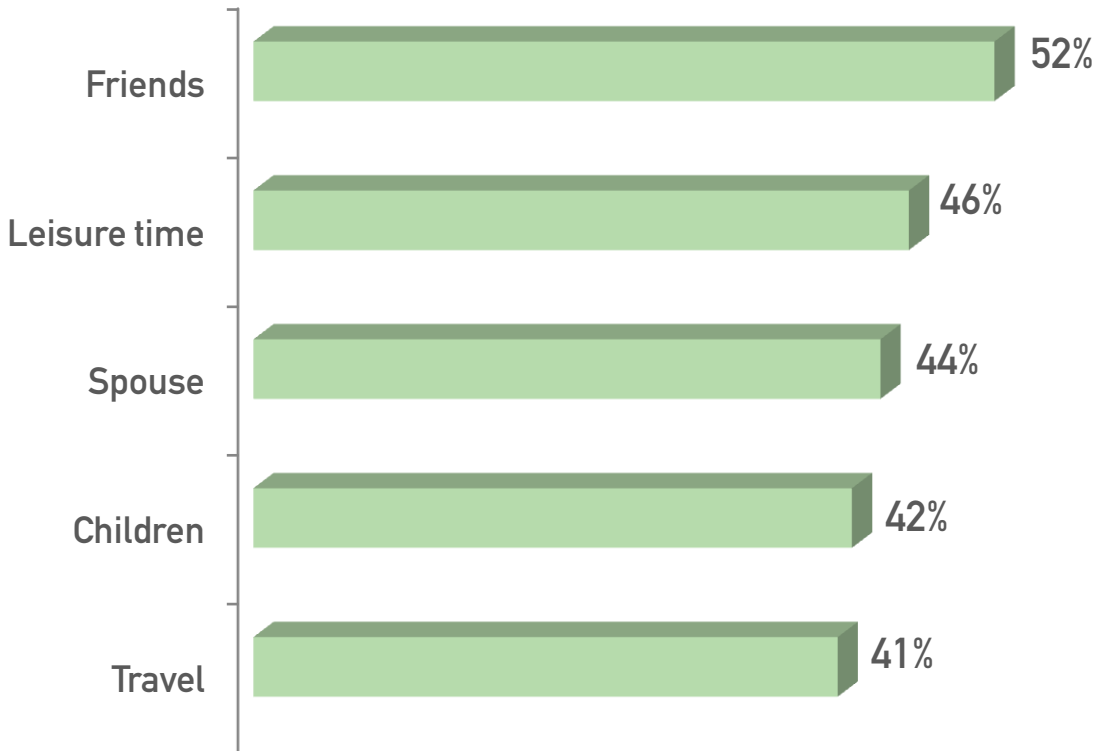
# “Happy to Be Here”

This “life is good” feeling is about today—and about the future. A majority say their best days are still to come, with the notable remainder finding good in the here and now.



That’s not to suggest that consumers are viewing life today through rose-colored glasses. Rather, they realize they have a lot of meaningful things in their lives.

## Brings Most Joy

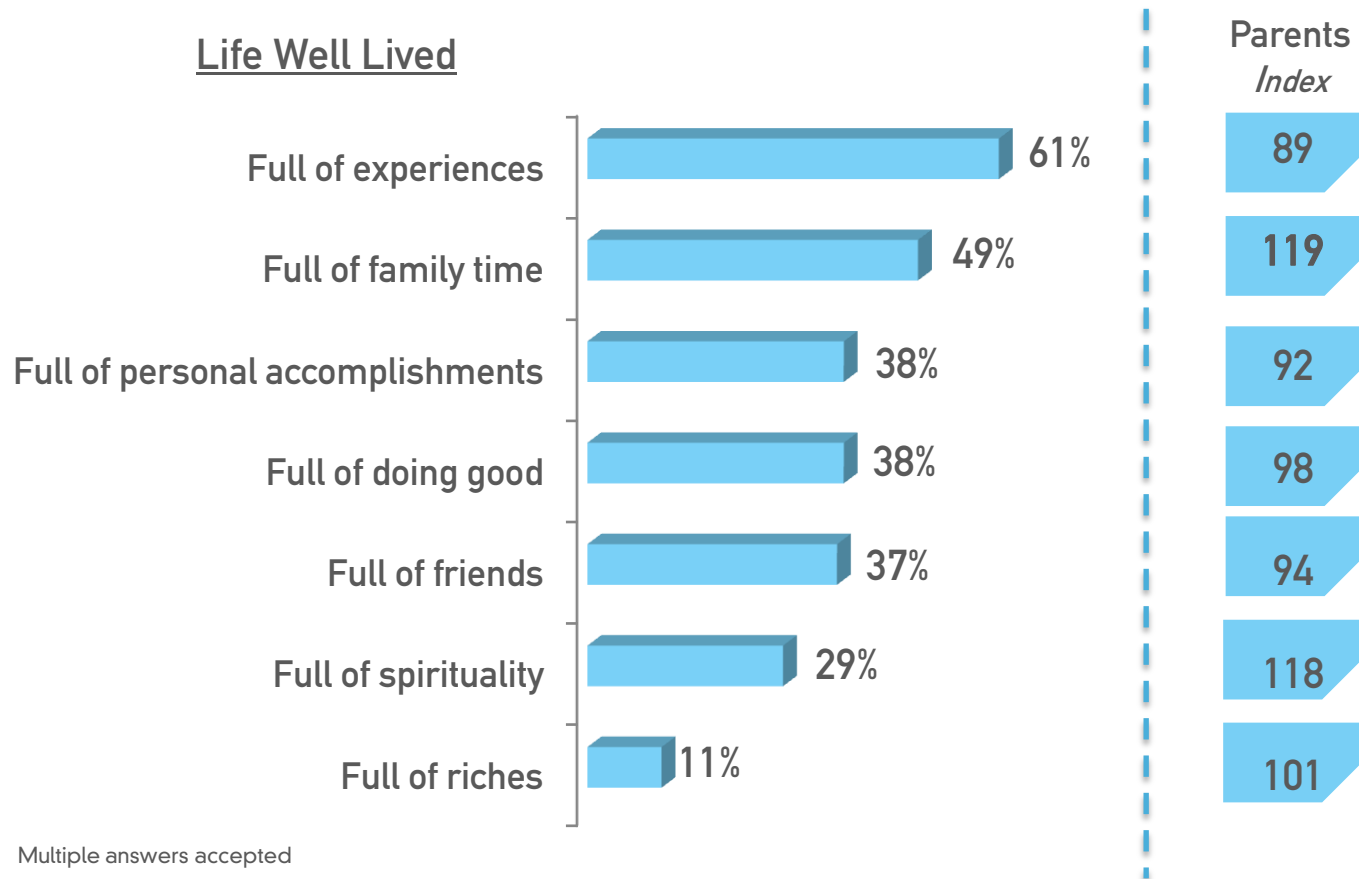


Multiple answers accepted

## Parents *Index*



So it follows that it’s the experiences people have and the time they spend with family that lead to a life well lived, more so than accomplishments or the things they own.



# “Happy to Be Here”



The quintessential American spirit is alive and well.

Most people take pleasure in life and really feel “happy to be here.”

# Wellness Is a State of Mind



# Wellness Is a State of Mind

How healthy and active are consumers? It matters who you ask.  
According to the Centers for Disease Control:

*Two-thirds of adults and nearly one in three children are overweight or obese.*

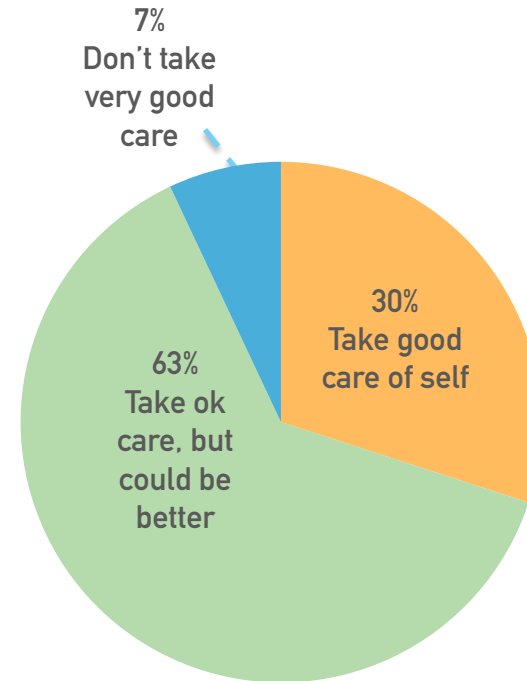


# Wellness Is a State of Mind

Despite the statistics from the CDC, many believe they are doing a pretty good job regarding their health, even though there is room for improvement. Several independent surveys report that consumers believe they are making healthy and active lifestyle choices.



(April 2011 Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index)



# Wellness Is a State of Mind

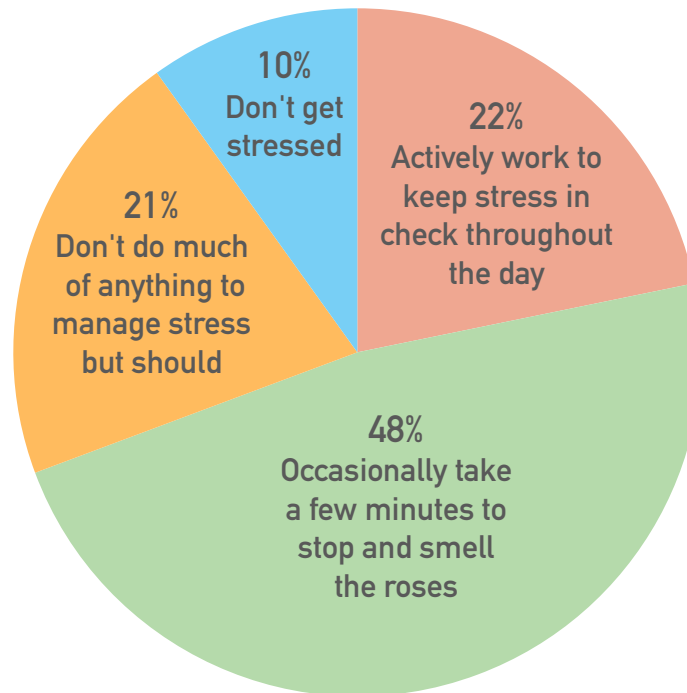
Consumers understand that healthy living doesn't just happen; it's a choice. Possibly as a result, they feel younger than their actual age.



Top two box agreement

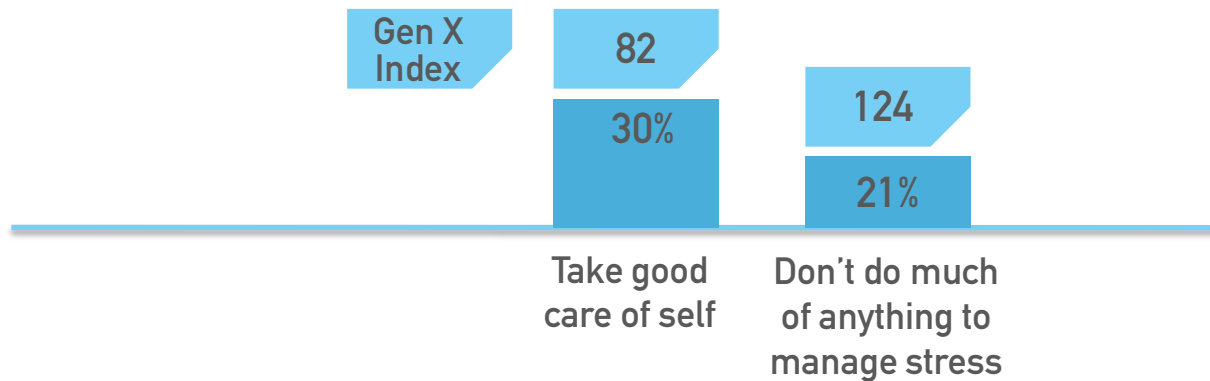
# Wellness Is a State of Mind

Part of the way in which consumers are trying to manage their health is to manage their stress—even if just occasionally.



# Wellness Is a State of Mind

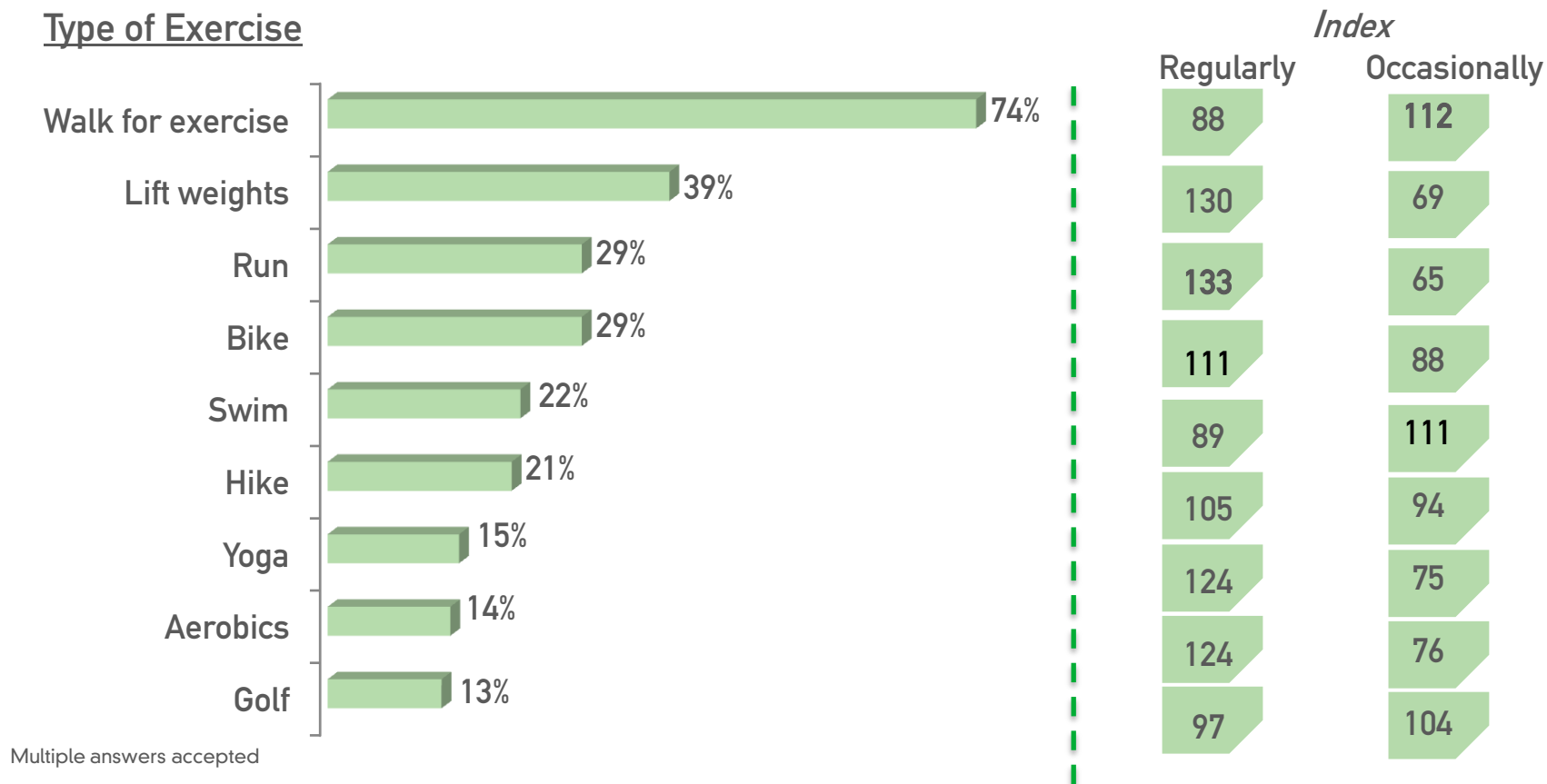
Gen X tends to be a little less positive about their health and stress management than other generations, possibly due to their lack of time to relax (shown later), given that many are busy with kids.



# Wellness Is a State of Mind

Another key contributor to living a healthy lifestyle is exercise.

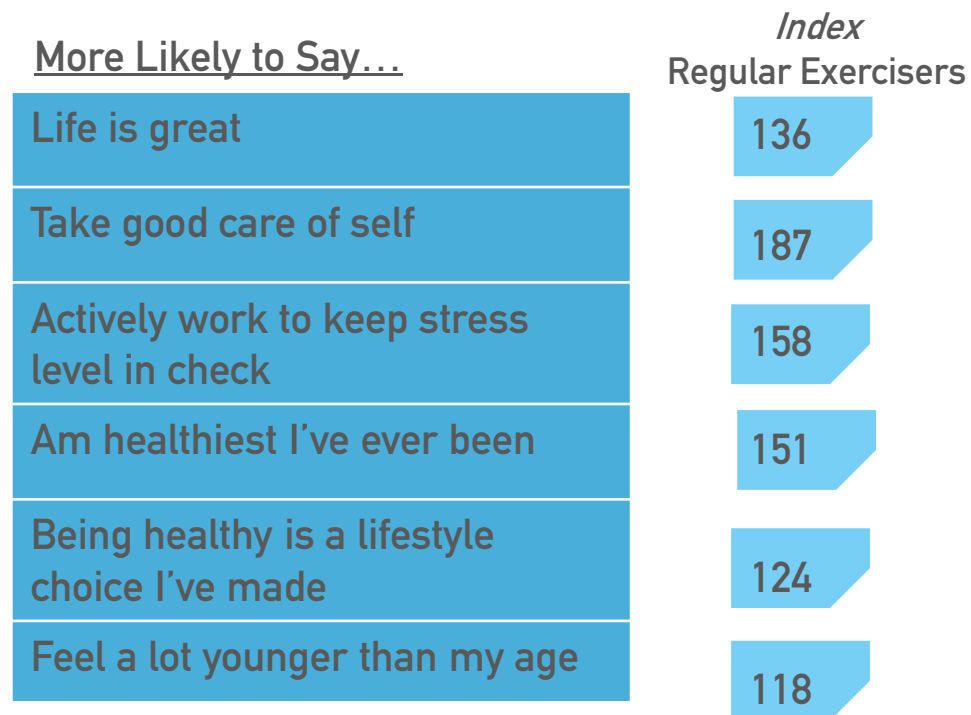
Most exercise regularly or occasionally, with each choosing different activities.



# Wellness Is a State of Mind

Clearly, there is an attitudinal link between good health and exercise, as demonstrated by key feelings which are more prevalent among regular exercisers than among consumers at large.

Which came first? Likely, they began at the same time and fuel one another on a continual basis.



# Wellness Is a State of Mind



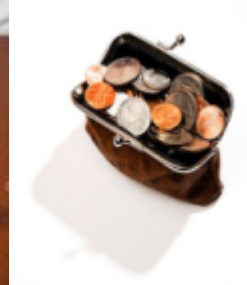
When it comes to health and exercise, consumers believe they are paying attention to this important part of their lives. So either:

- ❖ They're making strides in health and fitness, but their efforts have not yet translated into a reduction in the obesity/overweight rate,

OR

- ❖ What people believe they are doing may be different than what they are actually doing.

# Everyone Needs a Cushion



*“Save, Save, Save.”*

(Gen X Mom, South)

This may not have been the prevalent attitude toward finances five years ago, but it certainly is today.

*“Consumers now want to save more than ever. As their economic situation improves, consumers will save a greater share of their incomes. The lasting lesson from the financial crisis is that personal savings is the best defense against future economic risks.”*

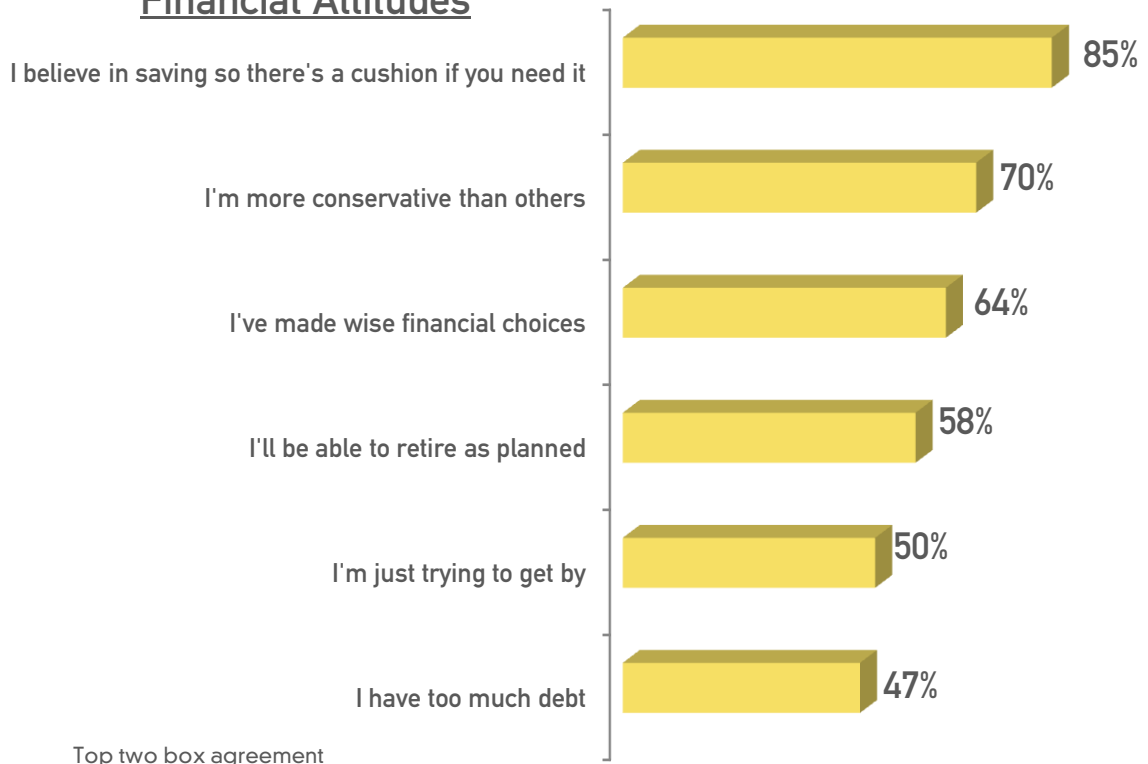
(Richard Curtin, Director, Consumer Sentiment Index)



# Everyone Needs a Cushion

The importance of saving is so top-of-mind for consumers that it is the leading attitude about finances today, yet solid financial footing still eludes some.

## Financial Attitudes

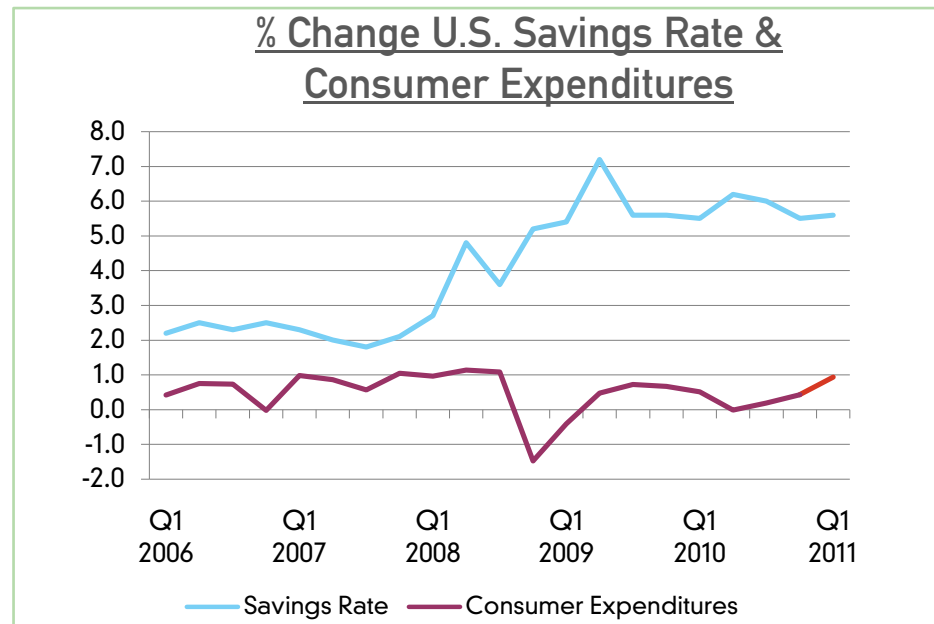


## Top 3 Financial Priorities

1. Financial stability
2. Saving for retirement
3. Getting out of debt

# Everyone Needs a Cushion

While the desire to save is strong, it's not at the exclusion of everything else. As the economy continues to improve, consumers have loosened the reigns a little. Moving forward, they will try to find ways to balance both spending and saving.



(Federal Reserve Economic Data)

# Everyone Needs a Cushion

Attitudes toward finances are similar for many people, with a few notable exceptions for Gen Y. These differences are likely because Gen Y has had less time to amass significant debt, will have more time to accumulate wealth, and lost less in the financial and home markets over the last few years.

	<i>Index</i> Gen Y
I feel I've made wise financial choices	111
I will be able to retire as planned	122
Priority on long-term planning	143
I have too much debt	85



# Everyone Needs a Cushion



Financial responsibility is now a top-of-mind responsibility.

Saving money is now an important part of the balance sheet.

Being a savvy spender now has badge value.

Welcome to the post-recession mindset.

# The Responsibility of Family and Reward



# The Responsibility and Reward of Family

*“Family has helped determine who I am and, hopefully, I have helped define them.”*

(Boomer Man, South)



# The Responsibility and Reward of Family

While often hectic, family represents one of the great joys in life.

*"They are the best part of my life. They are what make life great."*

(Boomer Mom, West)

*"A loving support group to share love and joy with."*

(Boomer Dad, Northeast)

*"A bond of love and happiness that cannot be surpassed by anything else."*

(Gen X Man, West)



# The Responsibility and Reward of Family

But with that joy comes awesome responsibility. Both moms and dads believe it is up to them to make sure their kids have good values—which they believe are the cornerstones of a happy life.

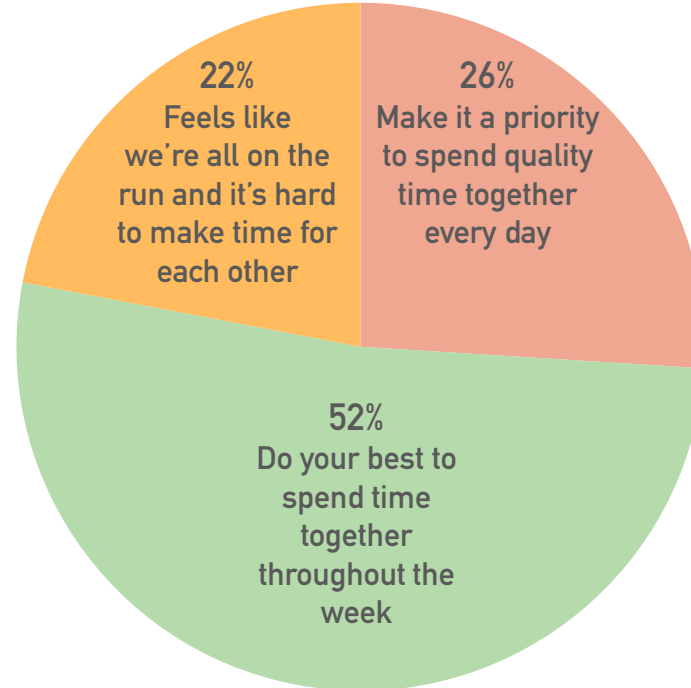
What is lowest on their list of must-have criteria? Success.

## Important for Children to Have a Happy Life

Honesty	84%
Self-Esteem	81%
Confidence	80%
Knowledge/Education	80%
Respect	79%
Success	45%

# The Responsibility and Reward of Family

While family is important, it's still tough to find quality time together every day.

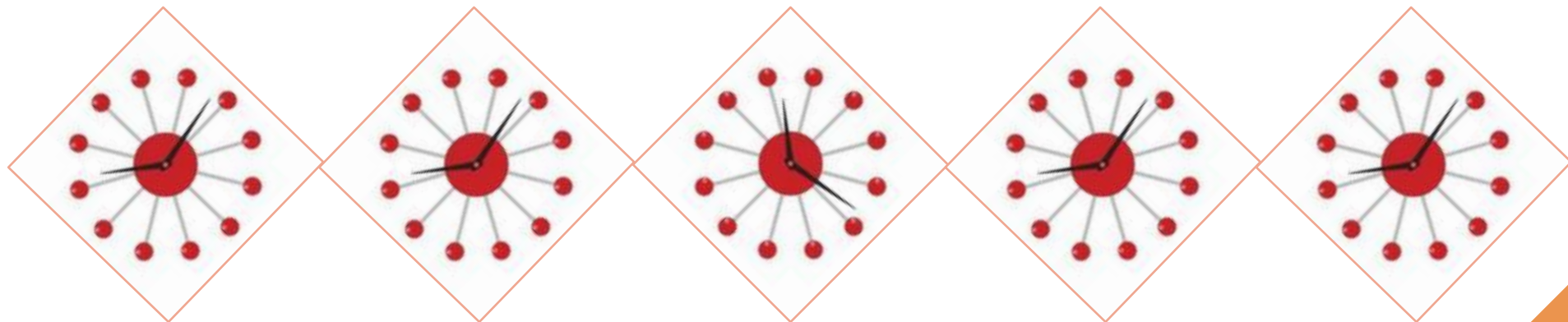


# The Responsibility and Reward of Family

The good news, though, is that according to a family expert, family time is increasing.

*“Parents are spending as much time with their children as they did three decades ago. We have seen an indication of an increased cultural awareness of the importance of high quality time with family.”*

(William Doherty, PhD., Professor, University of Minnesota’s Department of Family and Social Science, author of *Putting Family First*)



*Would Like Family  
To Do More....*

*#1 vacation*

*#2 share new experiences*

*#3 laugh*

*#4 spend time relaxing*

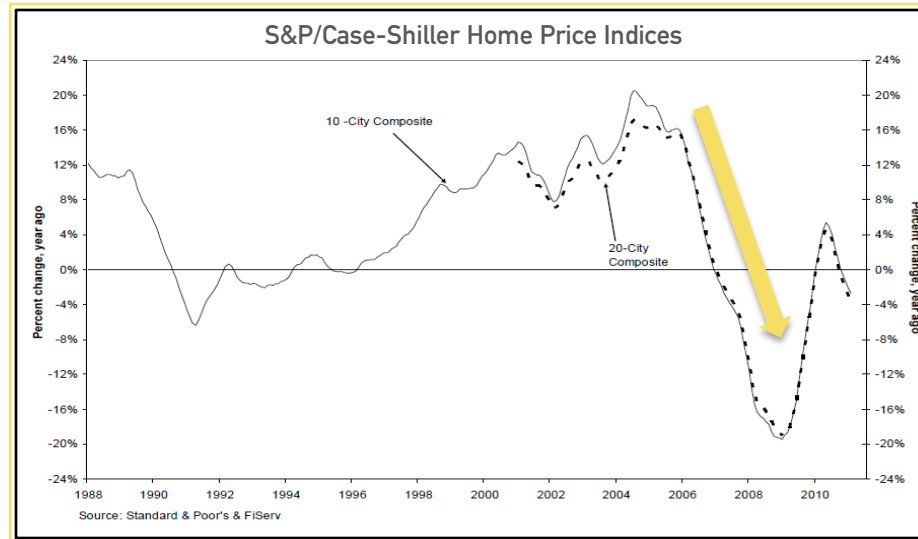
*#5 talk*

But whatever time they have together doesn't seem to be enough.

The desire for more experiences and relaxation time together is paramount to families.

# The Pride of Home

Almost everyone who owns a home has felt the sting of decreased home values.



Yet even with these substantial losses in home values, home is—and likely always *will be*—the emotional cover in people’s lives.

*“Home is where the heart is. I know it’s overused, but it’s true.”*

(Gen X Male, Northeast)

*“The place for the best things in life.”*

(Boomer Dad, Midwest)

*“A place of peace and acceptance.”*

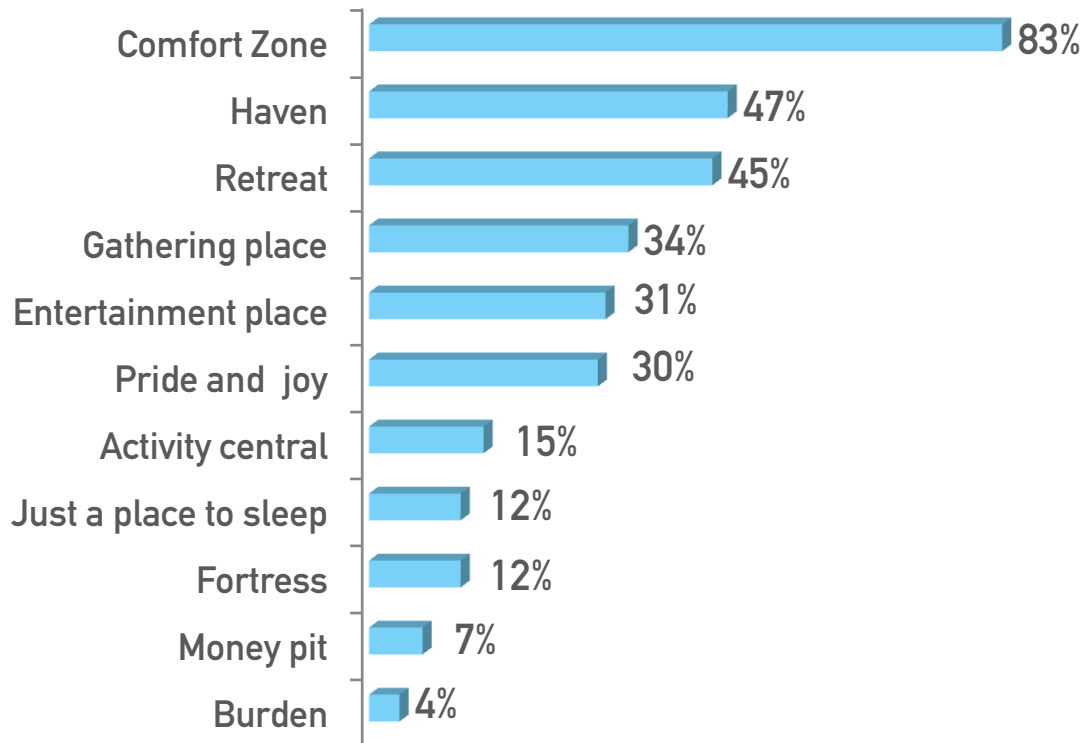
(Boomer Mom, South)

*“A happy place for my children to grow up in.”*

(Gen Y Mom, Midwest)

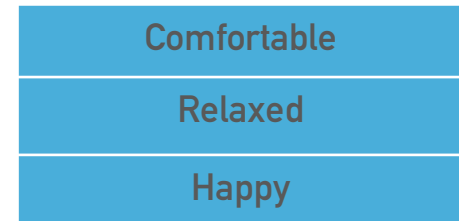
And that emotional cover is still largely positive. This is evident when looking at both what home means—and what it doesn't represent—for people today.

## Home Descriptors



Multiple answers accepted

## Top Feelings When Home



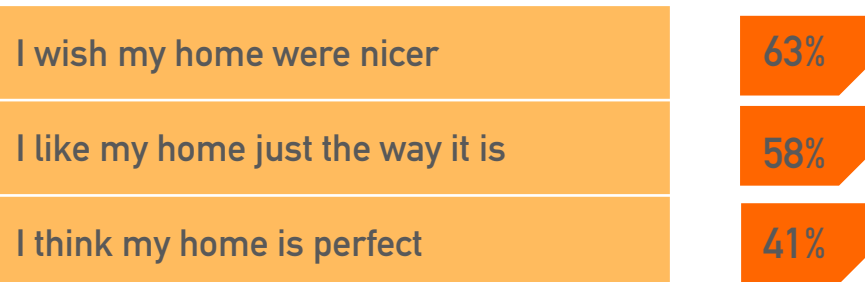
There continues to be a lot of pride and sense of self in home ownership.



Top two box agreement



Some wish their homes were a little nicer and some like their homes just the way they are.



Top two box agreement

# The Pride of Home



And even though many homeowners have lost equity in their homes, less than a quarter (22%) feel that their home “is a financial drain.”

For now, and maybe for always, the emotional value of home seems to win.

# Food Is Pleasure



Who doesn't love food?

*“One of the delights of life is eating with friends, second to that is talking about eating. And, for an unsurpassed double whammy, there is talking about eating while you are eating with friends.”*

(Laurie Colwin, Author and Food Writer)

# Food Is Pleasure

Food plays a pretty significant role in people's lives. And in large part, it's for emotional, rather than sustenance, reasons.

## Role of Food

Something that brings my family together

38%

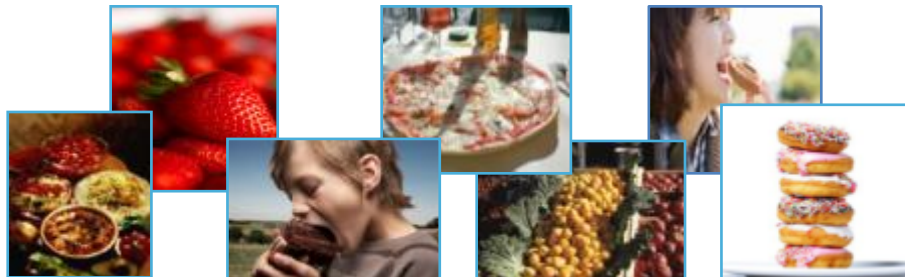
It gives me comfort

37%

One of the greatest pleasures in life

36%

Multiple answers accepted



## Food is...

*"A great part of life."*

(Gen Y Female, South)

*"What brings people together."*

(Gen X Dad, South)

*"A necessity to be enjoyed."*

(Gen X Male, Northeast)

*"The universal human language."*

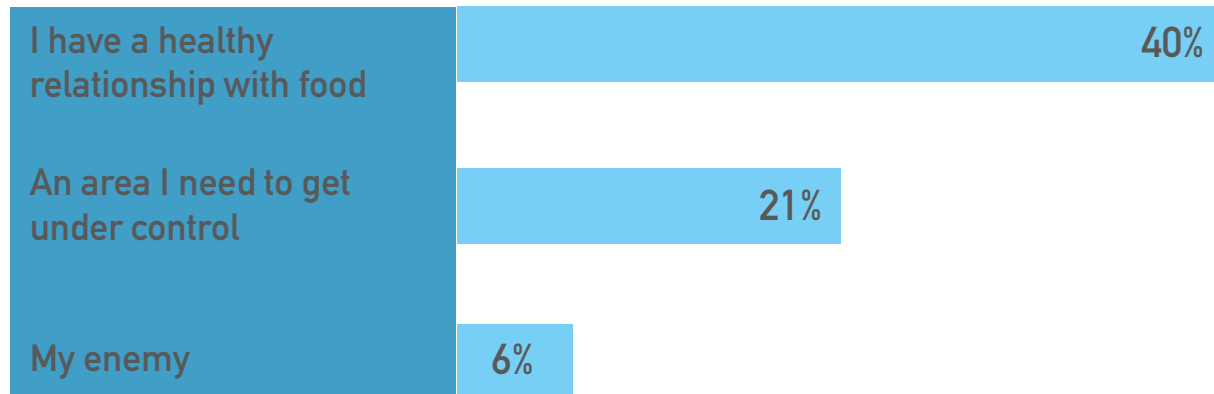
(Gen Y Woman, West)

*"One major source of entertainment for us."*

(Boomer Mom, West)

# Food Is Pleasure

About twice as many people claim to have a positive relationship with food vs. those who struggle with it.

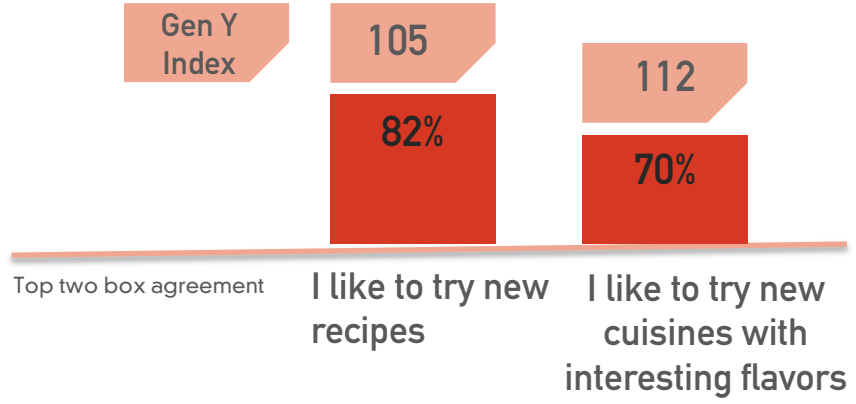
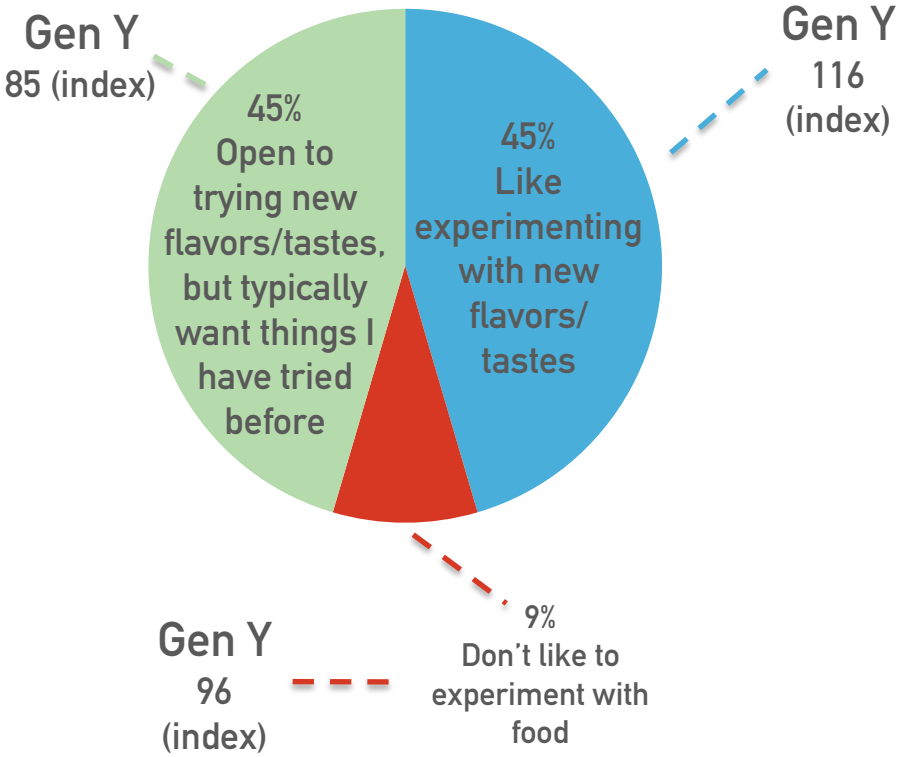


Multiple answers accepted



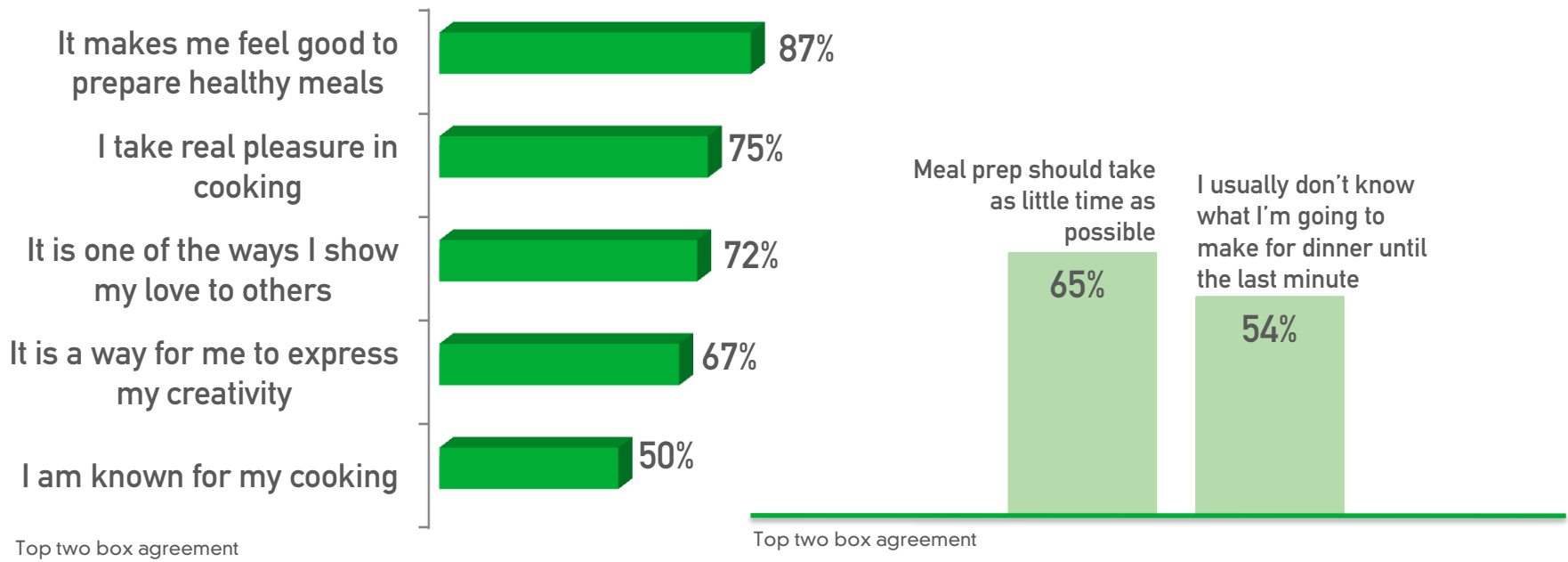
# Food Is Pleasure

Part of the pleasure in food comes from a willingness to experiment with new dishes, new flavors and new tastes, especially among Gen Y.



# Food Is Pleasure

The emotional connection to food is particularly noticeable among cooks. There is both love and creativity inherent in cooking for others. Yet, people don't want it to consume all their time.



So it follows that “don’t feel like cooking” is the leading reason people go out to eat. But it’s more than just a break. Going out is fun, whether for a treat, special occasion or simply as a social gathering, with an accent on the “social” part for Gen Y.

## Main Reason(s) for Going Out to Dinner

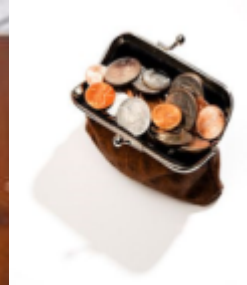


Multiple answers accepted



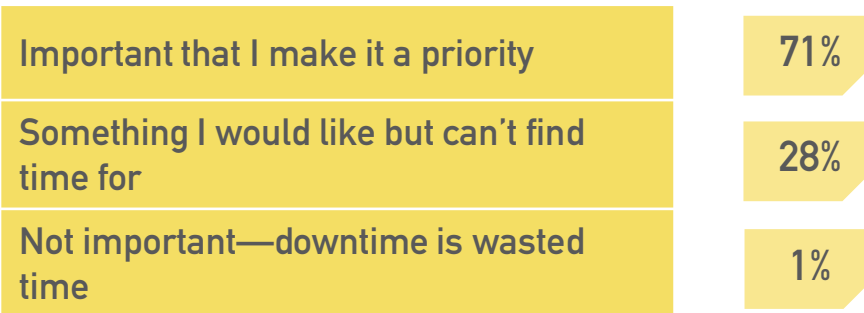
People's love affair with food continues... it really is the spice of life.

# It's Time to Relax



Part of living a good life is having time to slow down and relax—given the pace of life today.

## Importance of Relaxing/Downtime

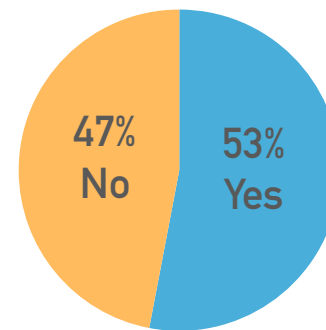


This may explain why leisure time is on the rise and now accounts for just over a third of consumers' days—the highest since measurement began in 2003.

Even though it's important, consumers are split on whether they feel that they, personally, have enough leisure time.



## Enough Leisure Time in Life Today...



# It's Time to Relax

There seems to be a direct correlation between the **importance** of leisure time and the **actual time** that consumers make for it in their lives.

Possibly linked to their life stage, Gen X doesn't seem to be able to find enough time to relax and rewind.

	Total	Important and a Priority	Would Like But Can't Find Time
Have enough leisure time	53%	68%	14%
Don't have enough leisure time	47%	32%	86%

*Index Gen X 117*

*Index Gen X 118*

So what would people do if they had an extra hour a day?

Relax and spend time with family. Maybe read a book or doze off. It'd be more laid-back activities, not high-energy ones.

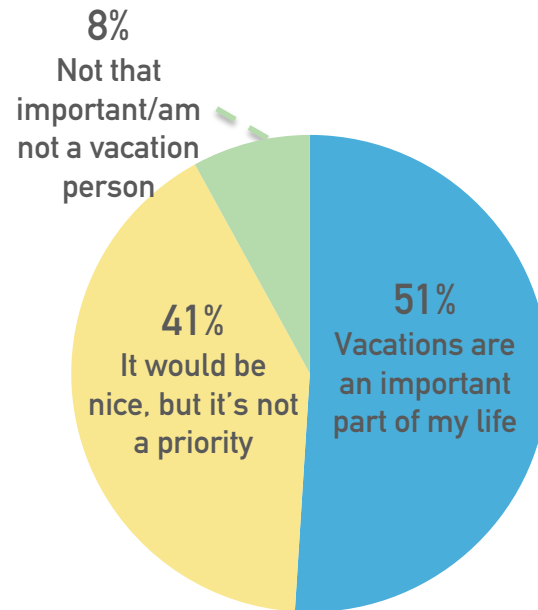
## If I Had an Extra Hour, I'd...



Multiple answers accepted

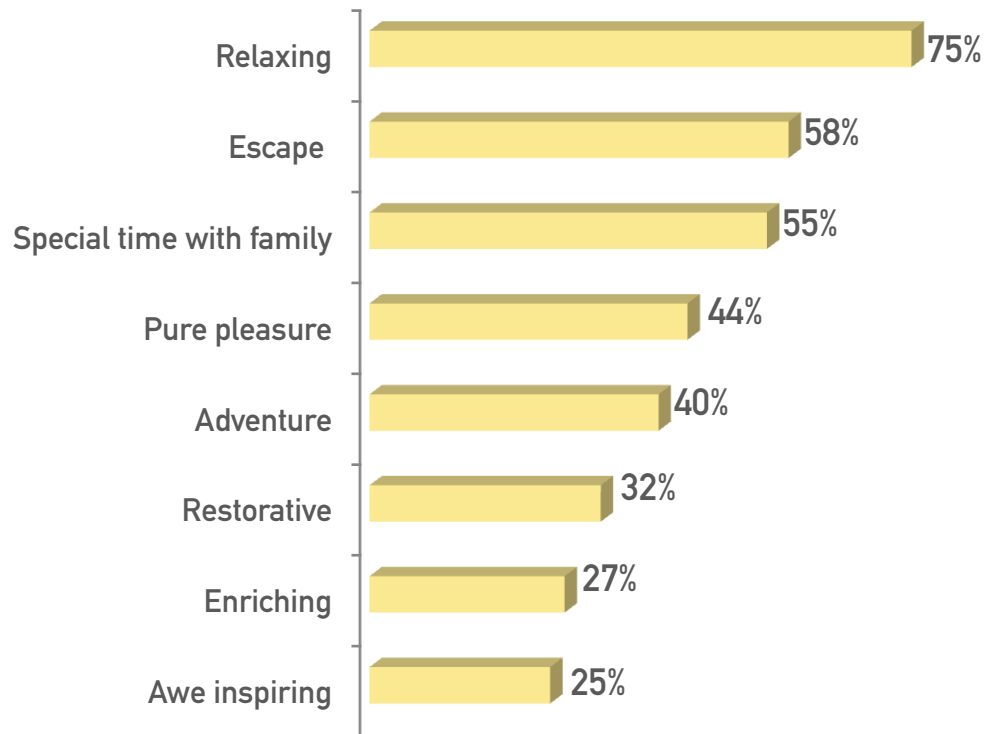


The über leisure activity—vacation—is also important to people. Even though Gen X struggles to find time for leisure activities, they feel the same as other groups about the importance of vacation time.



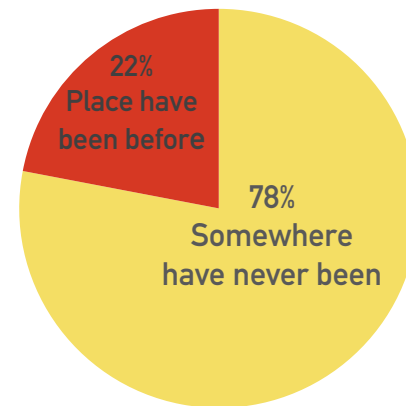
In keeping with how they choose to spend leisure time overall, consumers are most interested in taking a vacation in which they can relax. Yet, they don't want the "same old, same old" when on vacation.

## Type of Vacation Experience People Are Seeking



Multiple answers accepted

## Destination Preference





Time moves fast today.

As a result, there is a premium placed on relaxation and leisure time.

It seems to be part of our new value system.

# Five Things to Consider

1

## Show Your Own Substance

People are seeking real substance in life. Their experiences, their family and leisure time all provide meaning that makes life enjoyable today.

- ❖ Peel back the layers and display your substance. Be transparent. Show them what you stand for, what you offer and what you value.
- ❖ Demonstrate the tangible reasons consumers should connect with you. Allow them to feel the emotional rewards of that connection.
- ❖ Can you help them find time to enjoy family and life? Get to it more quickly? Make the most of it when they have it?

2

## Celebrate the Comforts and Pleasures in Life

Home and food are just two things that give consumers great comfort and pleasure. These areas of life—which are part emotion, part experience, part just pure fun—are big contributors to the positive feelings consumers have.

- ❖ Let consumers see the comfort and pleasure your brand can add to their lives. Show the emotions, experiences and/or fun that come with your brand.
- ❖ Can you help reduce stress? Add enjoyment? Make them smile or laugh out loud?

3

## Join the Quest for Wellness

People are taking greater responsibility for their health and financial wellness. Whether they are achieving their goals or simply trying to get there, consumers are taking steps to move in the right direction.

- ❖ They are looking to make smart choices. Give them the tools, products, services or offers to do so.
- ❖ Can your brand provide guidance, education or a different type of solution to make things easier? Can you aid consumers along the way to financial and/or physical well-being?

4

## Provide Value—It's Key to Surviving in Today's New Economic Reality

Savvy spending (and saving) is now part of the American psyche.

- ❖ Consumers will scrutinize every purchase; brands that provide the most value in every sense of the word will be the success stories moving forward.
- ❖ Are there tools you can provide to help them feel savvy? Can you help them get to where they want to be? Or better yet, to stay a step ahead?

5

## Embrace the Good Life

People today are pretty upbeat. Maybe they always were. Maybe they always will be.

- ❖ Remember who people are and what's important to them today. Demonstrate you “get” them.
- ❖ Likewise, demonstrate who you are and what's important to you.

# It's <sup>(still)</sup> a Good Life

2011 Consumer Perspective

Part of an ongoing **CONER** study: The Art of the Possible