



SOCIETY FOR  
WOMEN'S HEALTH RESEARCH

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**Society Survey Finds Older Women Most Likely to  
Participate Again in a Medical Research Study**

**Washington, DC** – A recent survey by the Society for Women's Health Research found that most women 50 and older who had participated in a medical research study would likely take part in a study again.

The findings, based on a survey of 1,017 American women, show that 66 percent of women who had participated in a study would definitely or probably participate again.

“It is encouraging that of the older women who had participated in a study, that more than half would consider taking part in another one,” said Phyllis Greenberger, M.S.W., president and CEO of the Society. “It is important women of this age group are included in medical research studies because there is a great need for health information on this population.”

As the number of older Americans grows and life expectancy for women increases, specific information about disease prevention, diagnosis and treatment will be especially important for this population, Greenberger added.

“The statisticians tell us that people over age 65 make up 20 percent of the U.S. population,” said Sherry Marts, Ph.D., scientific director of the Society. “Of that older segment, women are more likely than men to have chronic illnesses like heart disease and diabetes. Yet most of what we know about those diseases has come from studies of men younger than 70. Researchers are now working to fill this gap in our knowledge, and to do that they need women volunteers for their studies.”

The survey also revealed that less than 12 percent of women 50 and older had ever taken part in a study. Respondents were asked if they had ever participated in a medical research study, as a healthy volunteer in an observational study, a patient in a clinical trial, or as a participant in a long-term study.

Primary reasons given by older women for being hesitant to participate, whether or not they had previously participated in a study, include: do not have the time, too risky, not interested or don't believe in it, not healthy enough, too old, or that they are not sick. The respondents also said their participation could depend on the type of study.

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Other new research out of RAND Health, suggests that elderly people (men and women) are underrepresented in cancer clinical trials. The investigators, led by Joy H. Lewis, D.O., concluded that recent federal policy to expand Medicare to cover clinical trials will not solve the problem of the underrepresentation of the elderly, since the restrictive protocol exclusions in medical studies can keep seniors out. These findings were published in the April 1 issue of the Journal of Clinical Oncology.

“It is true that protocol restrictions for specific studies may keep some seniors out of medical research, and these restrictions may be in place for a variety of reasons,” said Marts. “Strides have been made over the last few years to try to encourage that all populations are represented appropriately in medical research. I hope researchers will continue to work to find ways to appropriately include seniors, so that we can learn more about their specific needs.”

Marts also emphasized that people do not have to be ill to participate in research, and that there are many studies looking for healthy volunteers to determine ways to prevent chronic illness or to minimize risk factors for disease.

James Simon, M.D., Ph.D., clinical professor at George Washington University’s School of Medicine and Health Sciences, said investigators need to continue to make participation less of a hassle for women, particularly older women.

"The participation of women of all ages and races is needed and appreciated," Simon said, who also is the medical director at the Women’s Health Research Center in Laurel, Md. “It is important that researchers continue to strive to make studies accessible, better explain the risks and benefits, and ensure participation isn’t burdensome to a potential volunteer; as well as educate women so they can make the best decision for themselves as to whether or not they want to participate."

The Society is striving to empower women of all ages, races and ethnicities to become more involved in their own health and affect the health of future generations, through its *Some Things Only a Woman Can Do* campaign. For more information call 1-877-332-2636 toll-free, or visit [www.WomanCanDo.org](http://www.WomanCanDo.org). Materials are available in English and Spanish. Special information for women over 65 is also available.

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*International Communications Research conducted the survey of 1,017 females age 50 or older, from January 24 to February 11. The poll was conducted through a single-stage random-digit-dialing sample of telephone households. The poll has a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percent at a 95 percent level of confidence.*

*The Society for Women’s Health Research is the nation’s only not-for-profit organization whose sole mission is to improve the health of women through research. Founded in 1990, the Society brought to national attention the need for the appropriate inclusion of women in major medical research studies and the resulting need for more information about conditions affecting women. The Society advocates increased funding for research on women’s health, encourages the study of sex differences that may affect the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease, and promotes the inclusion of women in medical research studies. Visit the Society’s Web site at [www.womens-health.org](http://www.womens-health.org) for more information.*