

# Childfree by Choice: The Untapped Economic Power of a Rising Market



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## Key Insights from Part 1

1

Historically, young women have been portrayed as eager or even “desperate” to have children. Yet, **women are more likely than men to be childfree by choice.**

2

**The upward trend in childfree adults is driven more by a desire to remain childfree than by constraints** such as financial barriers. Many simply do not want children, even if they can have them.

3

There is a double standard in how childfree women and men are perceived. **People are often more opinionated (both POSITIVELY and NEGATIVELY) about women’s choices.**



## Key Insights from Part 2

1

Among those 55 and older, **women without children have the highest median net worth**, with \$173,800 per person. This suggests that overlooking this potentially lucrative segment could result in financial losses for businesses.

2

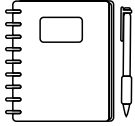
Travel is the top spending category among childfree women and DINKs (Dual Income, No Kids). Yet, **childfree women are less satisfied with the industry, and there is little perceived differentiation among travel-related companies.**

3

While some companies expand the definition of family and women's roles, **many still define women’s roles through their relationships with children (e.g., aunt).** This can inadvertently reinforce traditional gender expectations and alienate potential customers.



# Recommendations



## Key Recommendations for Businesses, Especially in Travel

1

### Consider Childfree Women as a Key Demographic

- The growing number of childfree individuals, combined with childfree women's higher spending potential, makes them an **attractive demographic**.
- Women without children have the **highest median net worth** among those aged 55+ in the U.S.
- Childfree individuals may be currently **underserved**.

2

### Travel Industry, Especially

- Travel is the **top spending category** among childfree women and DINKs.
- Married couples without children are the top spenders in the travel sector, and **82% of all travel decisions are made by women**.
- Women make up **64% of travelers worldwide**, compared to 36% for men.

3

### Identify the Unique Needs of Childfree Women

- Many young adults are choosing not to have children based on **their desire to remain childfree rather than constraints**.
- Childfree adults have unique preferences. In the travel industry, many enjoy **spontaneous trips**, avoid **school recess periods**, explore **diverse destinations**, and take **longer trips**.
- In personal finance, they may opt for **smaller homes** in locations **not dictated by school districts**, take more **career risks**, or plan for old age **without support from children**.

4

### Reconsider Marketing Strategy

- Many participants in the survey conducted as part of this project (339 adults aged 19 and older) expressed that marketing efforts are often **too generic** and personally irrelevant (both in travel & other industries).
- Campaigns targeting childfree women still often **define women's roles through their relationships with children**.
- Few companies explicitly engage the childfree identity, **a lifestyle that signals distinct value drivers**.
- Specialized offerings designed for childfree adults can potentially **enhance profitability through higher markups**.



# PART 1

## GENERAL INFORMATION

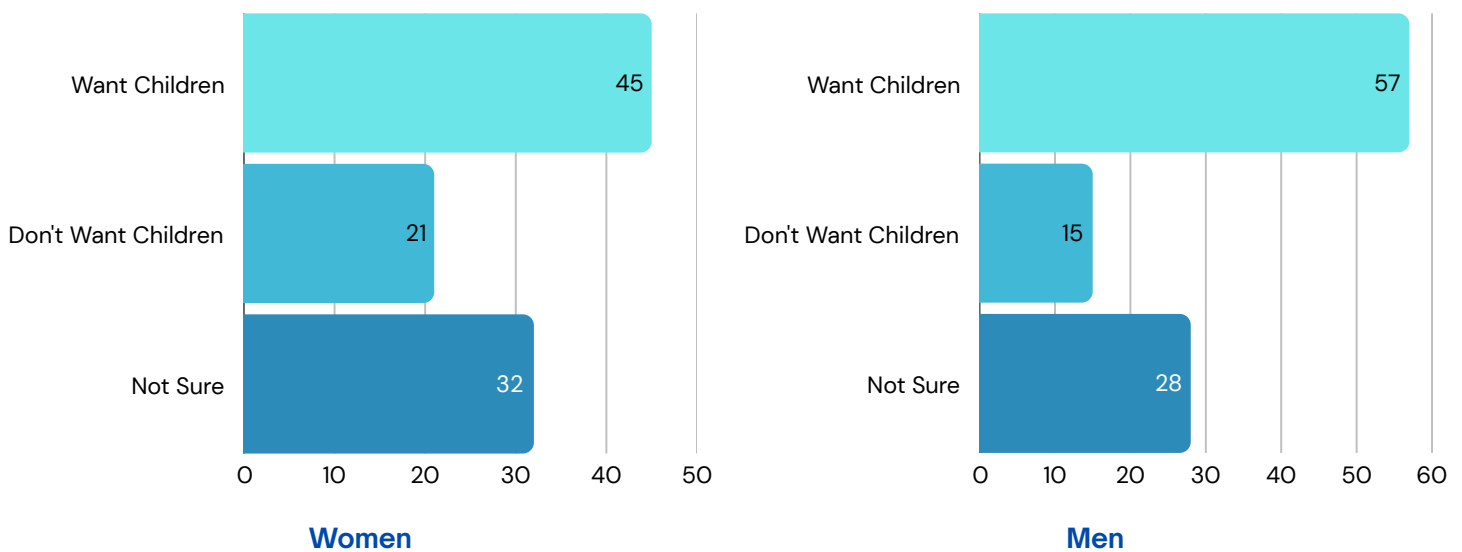


### Introduction

#### Women As “Biological Clock-Ticking Time Bombs”

Historically, the media and pop culture have portrayed young women as eager, or even desperate, to start families, driven by their “biological clock-ticking time bombs.” In 2024, however, the Pew Research Center reported that **only 45% of young women (aged 18–34) without children said they want children one day, compared to 57% of men**<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, a survey conducted as part of this research, which received 339 completed responses between December 2024 and January 2025, revealed that women are more likely than men to be childfree by choice, with **27% of Generation Z women (born in 1997-2012) choosing to remain childfree compared to 21% of Generation Z men**. These findings challenge the assumption that women are more invested in becoming parents than men.

Whether young adults (aged 18-34) without children plan to have children in the future (%)



2024 Study Conducted by Pew Research Center<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, the rise of terms like “DINKs” (Dual Income, No Kids) reflects a **broader trend of opting out of parenthood**, regardless of gender. On the other hand, despite the rising popularity of the childfree (rather than “childless”) lifestyle, those who choose this path, particularly women, often face unflattering stereotypes and political attacks. As a result, childfree movements have emerged on various platforms, protesting ideologies that promote the “traditional family” model.



"Originally developed in the 1920s to explain circadian rhythms, the concept [of 'biological clock'] was first forced onto our uterus in the 1970s in a *Washington Post* column written by a man (no surprises there)."

— Caitlin Stall-Paquet<sup>2</sup>



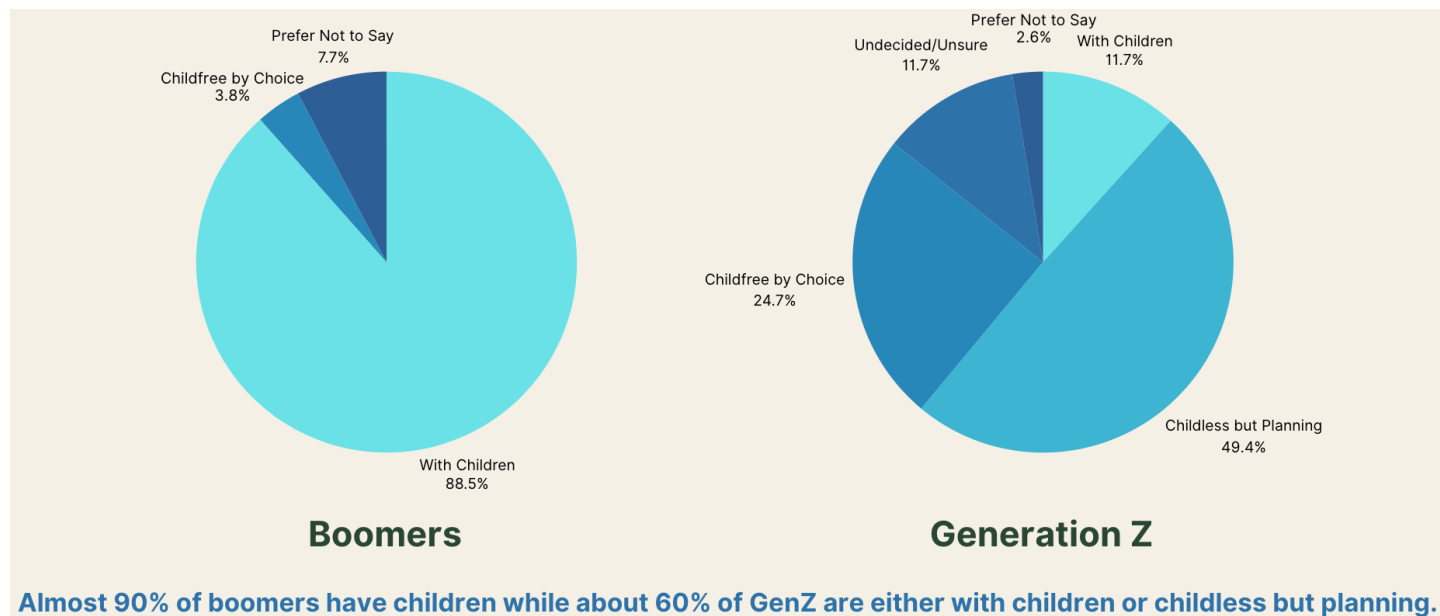
## State of Childfree Decision

### Rising Popularity of Childfree Lifestyle

As of 2022, **43% of U.S. households did not include children**, a 7% increase from 2012<sup>3</sup>. According to a 2018 report, nearly one in six Americans aged 55 and older do not have children<sup>4</sup>. These numbers are expected to grow even further, as younger generations are increasingly choosing the childfree lifestyle.

This study's survey found that **25% of Generation Z said they are childfree by choice** (excluding those who are undecided, childless but planning, or childless NOT by choice) compared to just 4% of Boomers (born in 1946-64). In other words, more people are making a conscious decision not to have children. The idea that wanting children is a universal desire has never been more untrue today.

### Parent/Childfree Status by Generation (%)



Survey Conducted Between Dec 2024 - Jan 2025

### Many Simply Don't Want Children

Fifty-six percent of non-parents under 50 years old who do not believe they will have children in the future say they **simply do not want them**. This sentiment is even more common among non-parents under the age of 40, with 60% of them expressing this view compared to 46% of those aged 40 to 49<sup>5</sup>. While financial barriers are often cited as a reason for not having children, **61% of DINKs say they could comfortably afford children**<sup>6</sup>.

These studies suggest that the decision to be childfree is **driven by a desire to remain childfree rather than by constraints**, such as resource limitations, concerns about a worsening environment, or career challenges associated with having children.

43% of U.S. households do not include children.

25% of Generation Z are childfree by choice compared to just 4% of Boomers.

56% of non-parents under 50 simply do not want children.

61% of DINKs say they could comfortably afford children.

"I want to spend my money and time elsewhere. **Raising children never appealed to me**," said one respondent in the survey conducted for this research. "I want to remain independent and not have to be responsible for another person," said another. Some embraced their right to be childfree even when it was less common. "I never wanted to be a parent. **I chose to have a tubal ligation at age 21 in 1998**," shared another participant.



"I want to spend my money and time elsewhere. **Raising children never appealed to me.**"

— Survey Respondent (Anonymous)



## Discourses Around Childfree Women

### Stigma Against Childfree Women

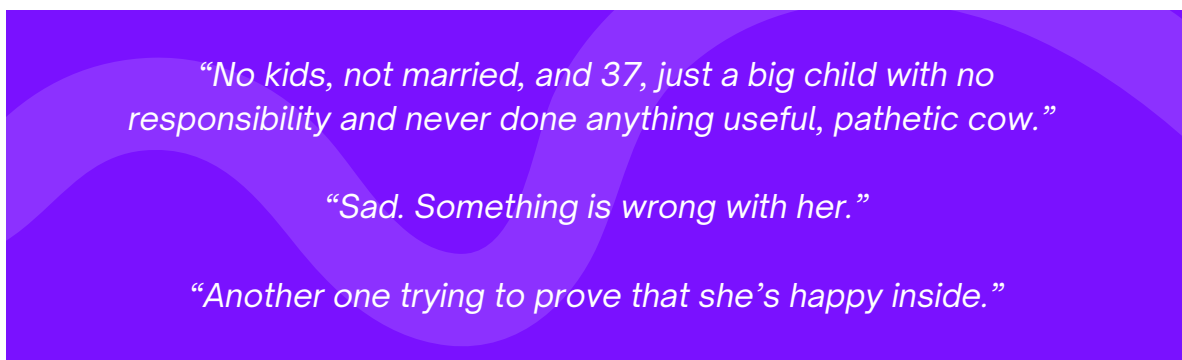
Although choosing not to have children is becoming more common, some still believe that motherhood is a woman's primary purpose in life. A 2017 study found that opting out of parenthood is not only viewed as atypical but also morally wrong<sup>7</sup>. Elizabeth Hintz, an assistant professor at the University of Connecticut told *BBC* in 2023 that even today, women face more pressure than men to follow a traditional "life script" and start a family. "Reproductive decision making has always been a burden placed on women more so than their partners," she explained<sup>8</sup>.

Some even become outraged when they encounter childfree individuals. The U.S. Vice President JD Vance said Democratic leaders are "**childless sociopaths**" who "**don't have a direct stake in this country**," *CNN* reported<sup>9</sup>. Similarly, conservative lawyer Will Chamberlain shared on X that Kamala Harris "**shouldn't be President**" simply **because she does not have biological children**<sup>10</sup>. Seven men without children have held the Oval Office, and it was never considered an issue, until Kamala Harris launched her campaign for the 2024 election<sup>11</sup>.



Will Chamberlain's Post on X

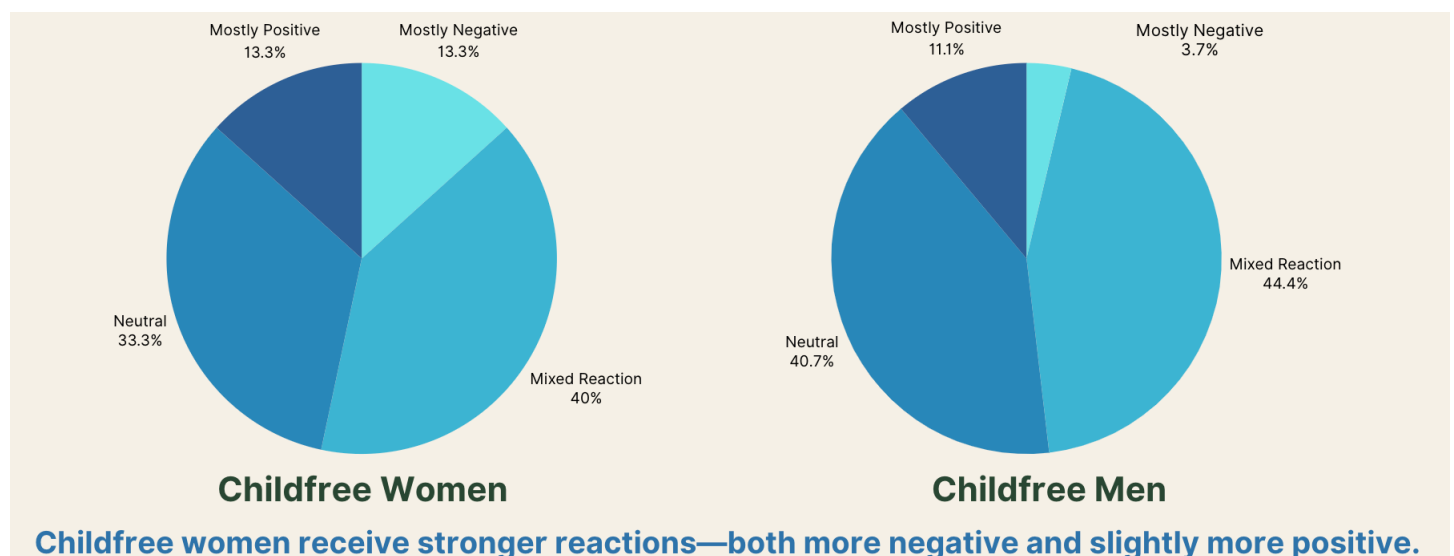
As shared in an article on *TODAY*, Emily Hart, a content creator, received hundreds of comments *per hour* after posting a reel (i.e., a short video) on Instagram with the caption, "Age 37: Never married. No kids<sup>12</sup>." Even though she was simply stating her life status without any political argument, the video received many comments questioning her character. "I woke up with hundreds of new comments, nearly all hurtful," she wrote. "From primarily men, but also women, many with Bible verses and 'kindness' in their bios, telling me every variation of 'you will die alone' and 'no one wants you anyway' that they could muster."



Comments Emily Hart Received on Instagram

## Everyone Wants a Voice in Women's Reproductive Decisions

Interestingly, **childfree women are more likely to receive both positive and negative reactions** to their choice, while childfree men tend to receive more neutral responses, according to the survey conducted for this research. This indicates that people tend to hold stronger opinions about women's reproductive choices than about men's.



“I’ve been told I’m being selfish, but **the most common response is that I’ll change my mind,**” said one childfree woman. This type of response not only assumes that the desire to become a parent is universal but also undermines childfree people’s personal choice by claiming to know more about their lives than they do themselves. “One of my male peers once told me it’s safer to stay where I am until having a child and take maternity leave. I don’t explain I am childfree by choice, but **people often assume we are planning,**” another shared.



“Seven childless men have held the Oval Office, which has long been a mere trivial historical fact, irrelevant to their political career or stature. That is until now when a woman with progressive views and a modern family took office at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.”



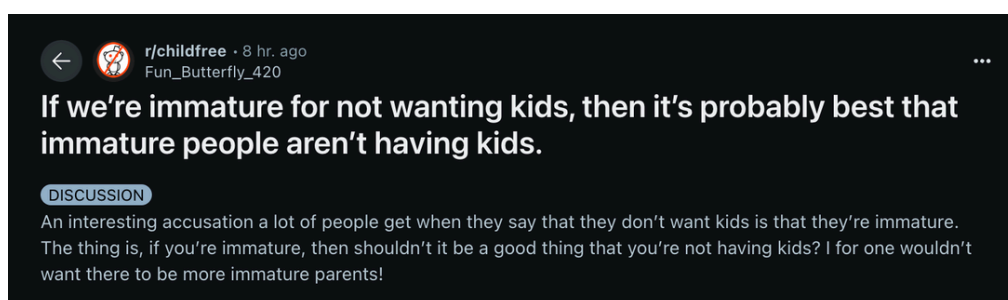
— Gemma Allen, Forbes Contributor<sup>11</sup>



## Childfree Movements

### Childfree Movements Going Mainstream

Faced with the disconnect between the reality of childfree individuals and the political and social narratives against them, many are challenging the traditional view about what a family or adulthood “should look like.” Some online spaces dedicated to this topic have gained significant traction. The *We Are Childfree* Instagram group has amassed more than 56,000 followers, while “**r/childfree**” is **one of Reddit’s fastest-growing communities, with 1.5 million members** as of 2025<sup>13</sup>.



Post on Reddit

An American comedian and actor Chelsea Handler often draws attention with her candid and comedic remarks on the topic. “**There’s no correlation between childless people and the presidency,**” she said in her Instagram reel in response to JD Vance’s remarks against Kamala Harris. “For example, our very first United States president, **Mr. George Washington didn’t have children. In fact, he had two stepchildren. That’s right. Just like someone else I know,**” she added, referring to Kamala Harris, who was then a presidential candidate facing backlash for not having biological children. As of March 2025, Handler’s post had nearly 400,000 likes<sup>14</sup>.





Chelsea Handler's Instagram Post

The hashtag “#childfree” was included in about 375,000 Instagram posts as of 2025. Some, like @childfreedoodles on Instagram, are turning this movement into a business opportunity, selling merchandise featuring comedic quotes and visuals that reflect the frustration of childfree individuals.



“Mr. George Washington didn’t have children. In fact, he had two stepchildren. That’s right. Just like someone else I know.”

— Chelsea Handler, American Comedian and Actor<sup>14</sup>



# Summary

## Challenging Parenthood as the Default

While choosing to be childfree is becoming more common, discussions around the childfree lifestyle remain largely controversial. Some still view **childrearing as a fundamental responsibility of adults**, particularly for women. While this belief can originate from traditions or well-meaning intentions, it is regularly weaponized, with childfree individuals facing criticism from political leaders and others. As a result, **what should be a personal decision is often thrust into public debate**, prompting childfree movements to push back against traditional expectations.



Every day, whether consciously or not, people undermine the decision of childfree individuals through subtle remarks, unsolicited advice, or outright criticism, **reinforcing the idea that parenthood is the default path in life.**

## PART 2

# IMPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESS



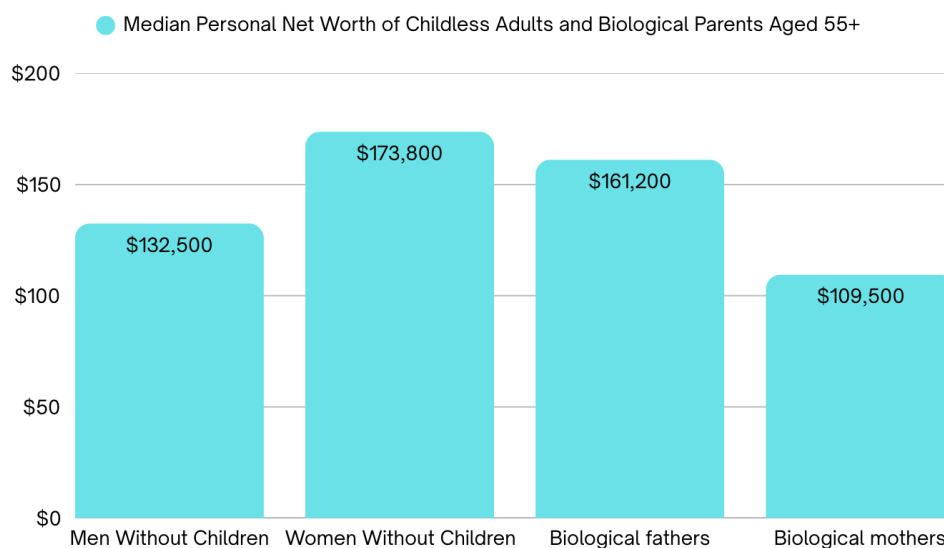
### Introduction

#### Childfree Women as an Overlooked Segment

Despite the growing popularity of childfree lifestyles, many businesses still approach adult women as if **they are, or aspire to be, mothers**<sup>15</sup>. One possible explanation is inertia—advertisers have long leaned on research suggesting that **mothers are the primary household purchasers**<sup>16</sup>. While diversity has been a much discussed topic for many years, some companies fail to explore diversity beyond gender and race or to consider the diversity within groups. Finding examples of businesses successfully addressing the unique needs of childfree women was perhaps the most challenging aspect of this research.

On the other hand, overlooking this potentially lucrative demographic could mean missing out on valuable business opportunities. Without child-rearing obligations, childfree individuals may accumulate greater wealth and have more financial flexibility for discretionary spending for their own consumption. According to the 2018 U.S. Census, **women without children aged 55 and older had the highest median net worth** (compared to others in the same age group), with \$173,800 per person<sup>17</sup>. Another study found that in 2019, **the median wealth of single, childfree women was \$65,000**, surpassing the \$57,000 for single, childfree men. In contrast, **single mothers faced a significant financial disadvantage, with a median wealth of just \$7,000**<sup>11</sup>.

#### Median Personal Net Worth of Adults Aged 55+



2018 U.S. Census



# Childfree Women's Representation

## Visibility of Childfree Women

While pop culture and media have begun embracing diverse demographics and lifestyles, a 2018 study of unmarried women without children aged 30–45 found that **48% of them felt that they were "non-existent" in advertising**. Moreover, **56% believed they were unfairly represented in TV and movies**<sup>18</sup>.

Another study identified that more than half of media articles failed to differentiate between “childless” and “childfree,” which can **obscure the agency of childfree women**<sup>19</sup>. While the term “childless” can technically apply to anyone without children, it is commonly associated with individuals who desire children but are unable to have them due to factors such as infertility or the absence of a suitable partner.

## Defining Women Through Their Relationship to Children

Corporations today are highly aware of the discourses surrounding Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Some brands have created campaigns that challenge gender stereotypes, such as detergent commercials featuring fathers instead of mothers. Others have recognized the opportunity to cater specifically to childfree women.

TD Bank Group's research identified that nearly six in 10 Canadian women without children reported having close relationships with nieces, nephews, or children of friends. In response, the bank created a strategy aimed at encouraging these women to consider saving for the children in their lives<sup>15</sup>. Similarly, Skippy's 2020 "Go To Your Skippy Place" campaign featured a "fun aunt" in one of its videos<sup>20</sup>.

While these strategies expand the definition of families or women's roles, **defining women's roles primarily through their relationships with children can inadvertently perpetuate traditional gender expectations** and alienate potential customers. Navigating this terrain is challenging for today's businesses—even well-intentioned ads can backfire, especially if business leaders and marketers do not consistently engage with the complexities of the world we live in.

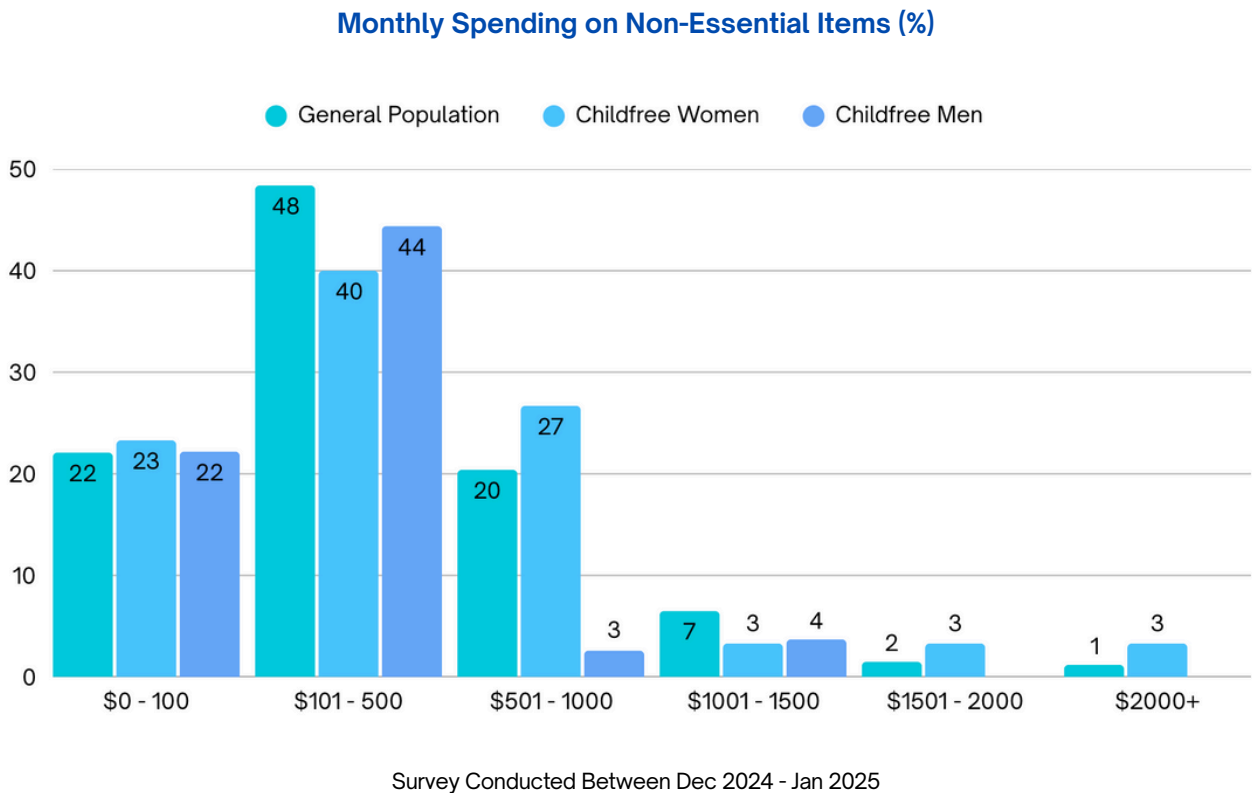


# Missed Opportunities (Focus on Travel)

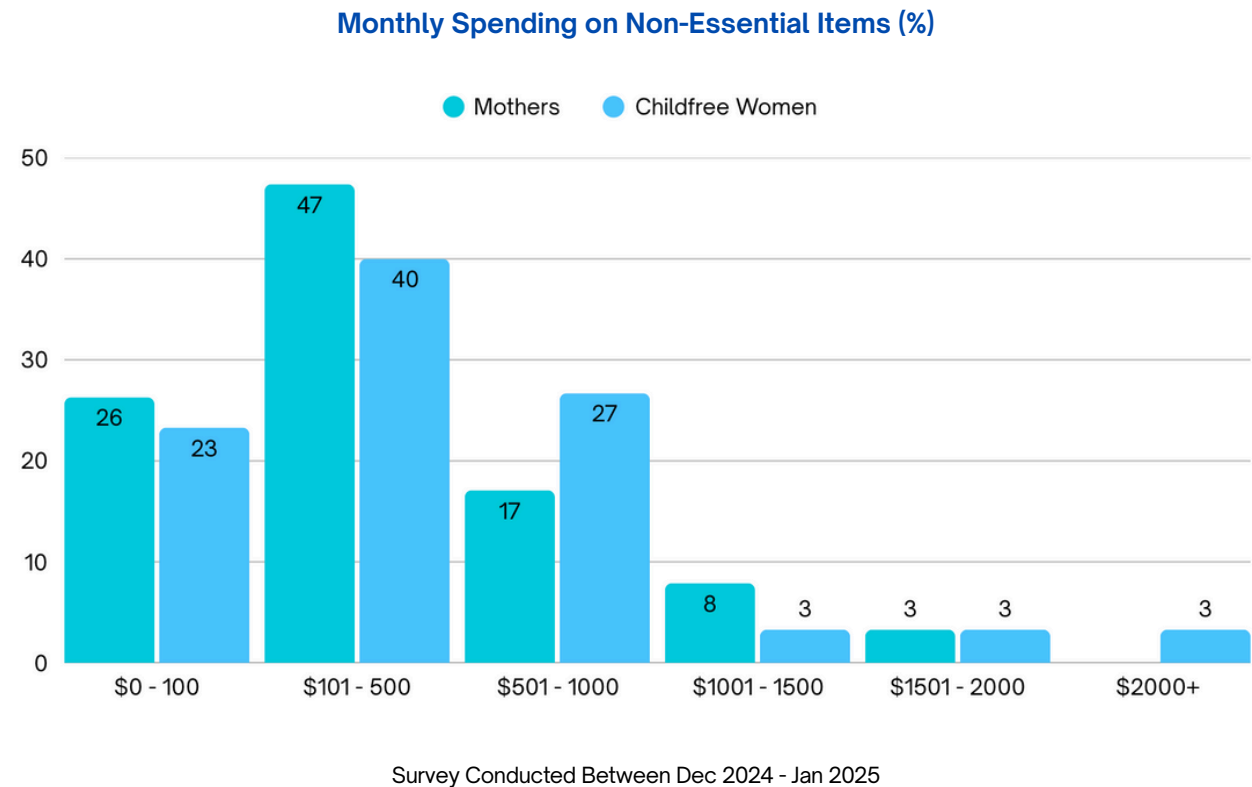
## Childfree Women as a Potentially Higher Discretionary Spending Segment

The childfree segment is growing, and these individuals potentially spend more on discretionary purchases (rather than paying for children's education, healthcare, etc.). In addition to studies suggesting that childfree

women tend to accumulate more wealth, this study’s survey found that **childfree women are more likely to be high-end spenders** (i.e., spend more than \$1,500 per month on non-essential items). Interestingly, childfree men tend to be more frugal than the general population (or childfree women), according to the same survey.



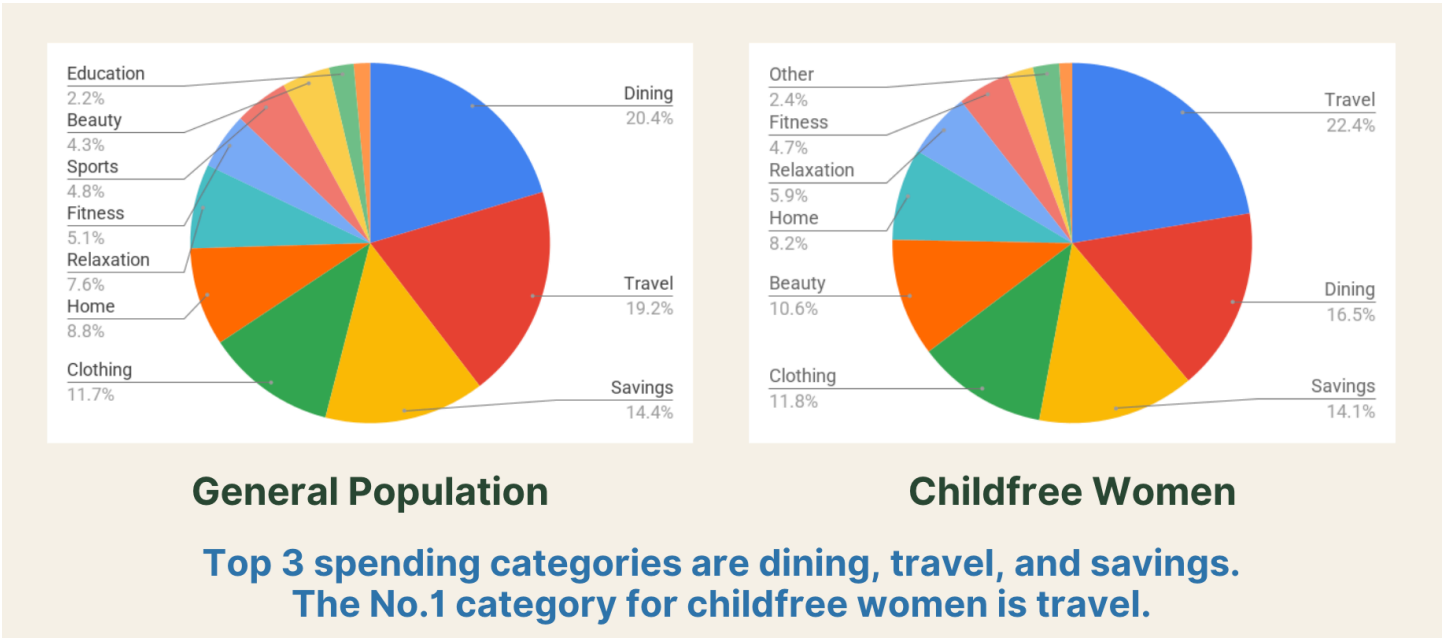
When focusing on women, mothers are more concentrated in lower spending brackets, compared to childfree women being **more evenly distributed across spending levels, including higher brackets**. Another study found that, on average, women without children spend **twice as much on beauty products, 35% more on groceries, and 60% more while abroad** than women with children<sup>15</sup>. The higher grocery spending may seem unintuitive but could be partly due to a greater preference for premium products.



## Travel is the Most Popular Spending Category Among DINKs and Childfree Women

**Married couples without children consistently lead in travel spending**, averaging \$620 in the 30 days preceding a July 2024 survey, compared to \$326 for married couples with children<sup>21</sup>. **Travel is the most common avenue (56%) DINKs allocate their disposable income alongside savings**<sup>6</sup>. This study’s survey also found that **the top spending category among childfree women is travel**. These findings suggest that the travel industry, in particular, may want to pay attention to the growing childfree sector, especially childfree women. Perhaps surprisingly, Condor Ferries reported that **women make up 64% of travelers worldwide**, compared to 36% for men<sup>22</sup>.

### Non-Essential Spending Breakdown



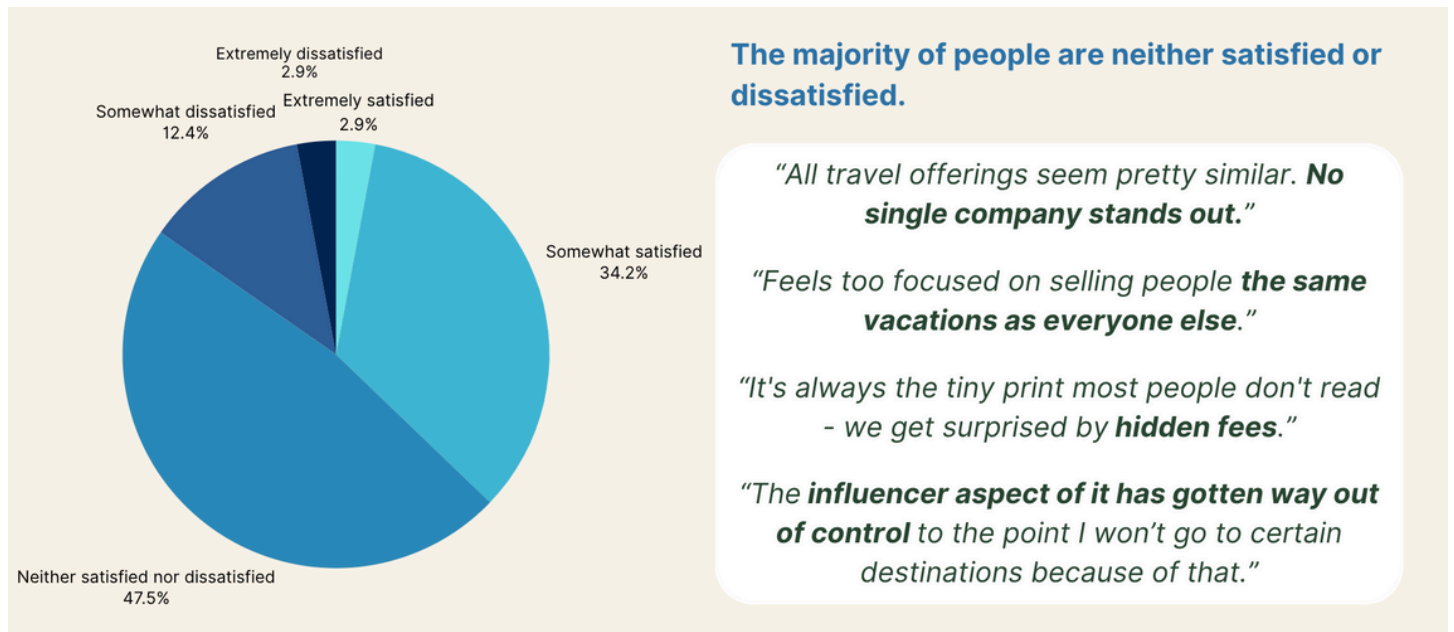
Survey Conducted Between Dec 2024 - Jan 2025

## Travel Industry is Perceived as Undifferentiated

When asked about their overall attitude toward the travel industry, almost half (47.5%) of the respondents of this study’s survey were neutral, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. While the industry was viewed more favorably than other sectors, many noted that no particular travel-related company or brand stood out, describing travel offerings as generic. “[The travel industry] feels too focused on selling people the same vacations as everyone else,” one survey respondent wrote. While companies may be tailoring their offerings, these efforts do not appear to be reflected in consumer perception. Survey respondents often cited this **lack of differentiation as a reason for their lack of emotional connection to the industry**. Many also expressed frustration with the proliferation of travel influencer marketing, which they feel often portrays vacations that are unattainable and unrelatable.

Conversations on online communities such as “r/childfree” on Reddit suggest that childfree adults have unique travel preferences. As an example, without the constraints of childcare responsibilities, many enjoy the **freedom to travel spontaneously, avoid busy school recess periods**, and explore **diverse destinations** and take **longer trips**<sup>23</sup>. Travel companies may consider these factors to differentiate themselves and attract the childfree segment.

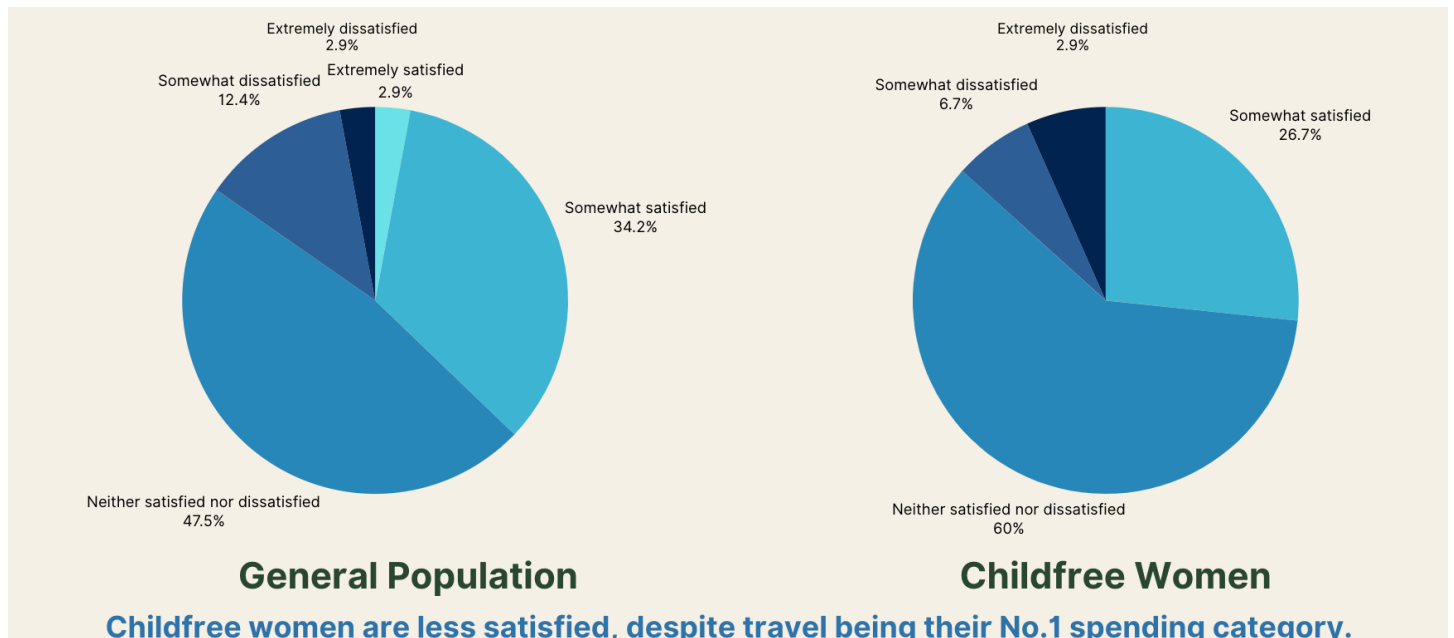
## Reaction Towards Travel Industry



Survey Conducted Between Dec 2024 - Jan 2025

Alarming, childfree women, who tend to spend their discretionary income on travel, are less satisfied with the travel industry compared to the general population. They echoed frustrations about **the lack of differentiation and targeted appeal**.

## Reaction Towards Travel Industry



Survey Conducted Between Dec 2024 - Jan 2025

## Missed Opportunity

In 2023, the travel and tourism industry contributed approximately **\$9.9 trillion** to the global GDP, accounting for **9.1% of the total GDP**<sup>24</sup>. This highlights the sector's immense scale, where even small shifts in market share can yield substantial returns. Failing to tailor offerings to high-value segments, such as childfree women,

presents a considerable **missed opportunity**—one that currently exists due to the **lack of perceived differentiation among travel-related companies** as well as **lower satisfaction rates among childfree women**.

In the United States, approximately **one in five women aged 18-34 are choosing not to have children**<sup>1</sup>. Should this trend continue (or grow even stronger as indicated by the increasing number of childfree adults), childfree women could represent as much as **10% of the total U.S. adult population** by 2075 (assuming approximately 50% of the population is women). The financial implications for the travel industry are significant, with Americans spending **\$221 billion on summer vacations alone**<sup>25</sup>. In 2024, the average American household was projected to spend \$2,843 on its summer vacation<sup>25</sup>.

While exact data on travel spending by childfree women is unclear, there are key indicators. First, **54% of affluent travelers with incomes exceeding \$250,000 are women**<sup>26</sup>. Additionally, **married couples without children are the top spenders** in the travel sector, and **82% of all travel decisions are made by women**<sup>21,27</sup>. These combined with the survey findings suggest that childfree women are likely to spend more on travel than the average consumer.

If childfree women spend at least as much as the average traveler, converting just 1% of this group could generate **a \$221 million revenue increase (i.e., \$221 billion x 10% x 1%) during the summer months in the U.S. market alone in the future** (assuming they also represent approximately 10% of the U.S. travel market). This number could be even higher, as travel is a top spending category for this demographic, and they tend to spend more on non-essential items, including travel, as discovered by the survey. Furthermore, by catering to childfree women's specific needs, companies could also convert childfree women who currently do not travel regularly.

In 2024, Americans were estimated to spend \$221 billion on summer vacations.

Married couples without children are the top spenders in the travel sector, with 82% of travel decisions being made by women.

While this estimation is significantly oversimplified and based on numerous assumptions, childfree women are a growing demographic with a propensity to spend more on discretionary items, especially travel. Brands like Virgin Voyages (with adults-only cruises) have tapped into demand for childfree spaces, though few explicitly engage the **childfree identity, which is a values-driven lifestyle distinct from general “adult” travel**<sup>28</sup>. Strategies for effectively reaching this demographic are still evolving as businesses work to better understand their needs.

Importantly, some may argue that childfree women's needs are not distinct enough to warrant niche marketing. However, even if their travel needs are not different enough from others, **addressing the frustrations** highlighted in the survey (e.g., ads being too generic or not personally relevant) and **counteracting the historical oversight** of this demographic could enhance brand perception and uncover new opportunities, especially given the lower satisfaction levels childfree women reported with current travel industry offerings.







“It doesn’t make any sense to make a key and then run around looking for a lock to open. The only productive solution is to find a lock and then fashion a key. ”

— Seth Godin, *This Is Marketing*<sup>29</sup>



## Case Studies

### Catering to Unique Financial Needs of Childfree Couples

Adults without children have unique financial needs that differ from those with children, according to Jay Zigmont, a U.S.-based financial planner. He has built his business, Childfree Wealth, by catering to this specific sector—a niche that has yet to be fully explored<sup>30,31</sup>.

Childfree couples may have greater financial flexibility since they do not bear the costs of raising children, such as college tuitions. They may also opt for smaller homes in locations not dictated by school districts. Additionally, they might take more career risks, prioritize retirement savings, forgo life insurance, or plan for old age without relying on support from adult children. Ultimately, childfree individuals are not concerned with building generational wealth, which changes the approach to personal finance, Zigmont explained, according to *CNBC*<sup>32</sup>.



“Ask your planner if your financial plan would be different without kids, and if your planner says it’s not different as a DINK, then just turn around and walk away,” Zigmont says, as reported by *The Globe and Mail*<sup>30</sup>. For childfree individuals, homeownership is often a choice rather than a necessity, especially for those who value the freedom to move around, according to him. While long-term investments are important, financial priorities may also include enhancing quality of life in the present. This could mean funding a business venture, pursuing further education, switching careers, or even taking a sabbatical—alternative forms of investment that go beyond traditional options like the stock market<sup>32</sup>. Childfree Wealth built its business on understanding these unique needs and tailoring its services for the particular goals of childfree adults.

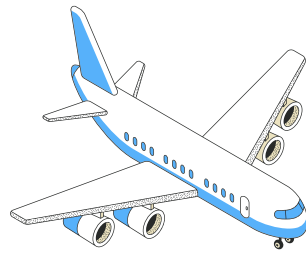
### Airlines With Child-Free Zones

Airlines such as Corendon Airlines, AirAsia X, and Scoot have introduced child-free zones on their flights<sup>33</sup>. These sections are reserved for adults aged 12 (or 16 depending on the airlines) and above, with Corendon Airlines allocating 93 seats exclusively for this offering. This is designed for **travelers without children and business professionals seeking a quiet environment**, according to Corendon Airlines’ press release<sup>34</sup>. The company also highlighted that **the introduction of the child-free zone simultaneously benefits parents with**



**children** as they can worry less about potential reactions from fellow passengers if their child is active or crying.

Although potentially controversial, introducing child-free zones aligns with consumer demand, as nearly **60% of American adults view child-free areas on public transport favorably**<sup>35</sup>. By allocating specific seating sections as child-free zones, airlines can differentiate their offerings while also charging a premium for these seats. Seating configurations are a crucial strategic factor in the airline industry, and appropriate price discrimination can result in both improved sales and customer satisfaction. As an example, in 2024, Southwest Airlines ended its 50-year old open seating model to increase profitability<sup>36</sup>. This strategic shift enables the company to create different tiers such as business class seating, which enables higher profit margins.



# Summary

## Childfree Women as a Valuable Consumer Group

Studies show that **childfree women have a higher median net worth** than other groups, with women without children aged 55 and older holding a median net worth of \$173,800 per person according to a 2018 U.S. census, the highest among their age group. Their greater wealth and spending power are also reflected in other research, including the survey conducted as part of this study. Combined with the growing trend of the childfree lifestyle that is particularly prominent among young women, this demographic represents a growing, high-value consumer segment for many businesses.

Despite this, this demographic remains underserved. Few brands explicitly engage the childfree identity, a distinct, values-driven lifestyle. In fact, **nearly half (48%) of single women without children aged 40-45 feel that they are ignored in advertising**. While some companies have begun targeting this group, **women's identities are still often framed through their relationships with children**.



The implications for the travel industry are particularly significant, as **travel is the top spending category among childfree women**. However, many childfree women feel that travel companies are largely

undifferentiated, and they are less satisfied with the industry than the average consumer. This presents a **missed business opportunity, where companies that recognize and address the unique needs of childfree women can differentiate themselves and expand their market share.**

Insights from online communities suggest that childfree adults value the **freedom to travel spontaneously**, enjoy the **flexibility to avoid busy school holiday seasons**, explore **diverse destinations**, and take **longer trips**. Furthermore, addressing childfree women's frustrations (e.g., a lack of representation, prevalent criticism of their personal choice, etc.) and the historical oversight of this group could enhance brand perception and unlock new opportunities.

## PART 3

# APPENDIX



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