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THE JOURNAL REPORT: ENCORE
When We're All 64

In about 100 days, the first of the baby boomers will turn 60. Already, this generation has given rise to minivans, Botox and two-income families. Here's a look at what might come.

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Cellphones that monitor your body temperature and sleep patterns. Cruise ships that take the place of retirement communities. "Brain gyms" where you sharpen your wits with computer games. Video autobiographies and interactive cemeteries.

The baby boom is about to enter its golden years -- and getting older will never be the same.

On Jan. 1, the first of an estimated 77 million baby boomers, those Americans born from 1946 to 1964, will celebrate their 60th birthday. Through its sheer size -- and, some would say, self-indulgence -- the generation has given rise, or given teeth, to a host of fashions and institutions that are now central to popular culture: rock 'n' roll, working moms, Earth Day, sport-utility vehicles, Botox, shacking up, Viagra and Starbucks.

THE JOURNAL REPORT


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 See the complete [Encore²](#) report.

 3 • [Journal Podcast⁴](#):

WSJ's Kelly Greene talks with Ken Dychtwald, a gerontologist and co-author of "The Power Years," on making the rest of your life a period of reinvention and personal growth -- without breaking the bank.



All of which prompts the question: What comes next?

We asked dozens of professionals across the country who track baby boomers as part of their job, from gerontologists and academics to marketers and venture capitalists. Their answers -- or educated guesses -- cover a range of products, services and lifestyles that could make aging in America more comfortable, convenient and rewarding -- not to mention entertaining.


Clearly, puzzling out boomers' wants and whims as they move into their 60s and beyond could prove a lucrative exercise. Baby boomers account for 42% of all U.S. households and control 50% of all consumer spending, or more than \$2 trillion a year, according to a 2002 study by American Demographics magazine.

Here's a look at how the boomers' movement into later life might change the economy and society.

LONGEVITY FOR SALE

Boomers are expected to live longer than any previous generation. Men who reach age 60 can expect to live 20 more years on average; women who reach 60 can expect to live an additional 23.5 years. With tremendous spending power at their disposal, boomers may well try to stay healthy by taking medical treatment into their

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own hands -- trying all sorts of continuing therapies and experimental fixes for long-term health problems.

"Longevity will be for sale," says Ken Dychtwald, a San Francisco gerontologist and consultant for the health-care and financial-services industries. "You or a loved one has a condition for which there's no cure in the U.S. But you hear there's a breakthrough cure in Germany, so you're going to write a big check to cure the disease and live longer."

Boomers tracking chronic problems also may embrace home technology that gives quick updates on fluctuating blood pressure, glucose levels, cholesterol and so forth. These tools, some of which are already in development, would allow boomers to track their conditions more effectively and seek medical attention more quickly when needed.



Mark Ulriksen

"Consumer-directed health could merge with entertainment," says Joseph Coughlin, director of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's AgeLab in Cambridge. "Companies like Philips Electronics and Comcast could enter strategic alliances to offer health services through television."

So, your computer might come with an arm cuff to let you check your blood pressure and view the results on screen. Or your cellphone, which you probably wear anyway, could automatically monitor your body temperature, sleep patterns and typical interaction with other people "to develop a trend line," says Eric Dishman, general manager and director of **Intel Corp.**'s Health Research and Innovation Group in Hillsboro, Ore.

BOOMERS BY THE NUMBERS

76.9	The estimated number of baby boomers, in millions, in the U.S.
26.8	The percentage of the nation's population made up of baby boomers
51	The percentage of boomers who are women
16.9	The percentage of boomers who are minorities
32	The number of boomers, in millions, who already are age 50 or older
20	The percentage of the population that boomers will make up in 25 years, when they will be ages 66 to 84
45,654	Average annual spending, in dollars, by boomer households
7.3	The poverty rate, in percent, for boomers in 2000, lower than for any other segment of the population
9	Number of states (California, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Texas) where more than half of all boomers live
14.2	The divorce rate, in percent, for boomers

Already, the AgeLab has developed a handheld gadget, called the "personal smart adviser," that scans bar codes in the grocery store and compares product ingredients with guidance provided by your doctor. The prototype has been tested by diabetic boomers and their caregivers. Now a consumer-products company and a grocery chain are considering commercializing it, Dr. Coughlin says.

Also expect an explosion of already-popular nutraceuticals -- natural foods, vitamins or supplements packed with health benefits, such as the arthritis treatment glucosamine, derived from shellfish shells. Then there are cosmeceuticals, or cosmetics that help rejuvenate the body, such as antiwrinkle and baldness treatments that repair the skin or hair follicles.

"The performance of these types of products will continue to improve," says Pamela Prokop, an analyst with Freedonia Group, a Cleveland marketing firm.

Ms. Prokop projects that sales of anti-aging potions and lotions will increase 8.7% annually, reaching \$30.7 billion in 2009.

WORK, TAKE TWO

A GI bill for retirement? Marc Freedman, president of Civic Ventures, a San Francisco nonprofit, wants to see a plan of that magnitude to

6.7	The divorce rate, in percent, for the pre-boomer generation, those 65 and older
12.6	The percentage of boomers who have never married
3.9	The percentage of those 65 and over who have never married
59	Percentage of boomers who voted in the 2000 presidential election
88.8	Percentage of boomers who completed high school
28.5	Percentage of boomers who have a bachelor's degree or higher

Source: MetLife Mature Market Institute

connect older people with opportunities to do good work, either as paid employees or volunteers -- and thereby "help boomers cross a great distance in lifespan and age."

Research shows great interest among baby boomers in staying productive. For example, 75% of boomers intend to keep working in retirement, a recent survey by Merrill Lynch found. But they expect to retire from their current jobs at the average age of 64 -- then launch a new career.

Some want a new job that's more personally rewarding; others want the same type of work, only on a much more flexible schedule. In their new jobs, 42% of boomers want to cycle between periods of work and leisure, according to the Merrill research. (The findings, taken from interviews with 2,300 people ages 40 to 58 last year, have a two-percentage-point margin of error.)

But how are boomers going to find those new jobs, or negotiate those new schedules? Mr. Freedman's group is helping to create a network of later-life career coaches who help boomers ease their way back into the work force.

His group has begun a "Next Chapter" initiative with libraries, community colleges and other local programs across the country, helping them set up programs and gathering spots where people nearing retirement can get "directions and connections" to help figure out their next step. As increasing numbers of boomers join self-help groups and seek counseling about later life, Mr. Freedman thinks the start-up organizations "will [turn] into established institutions that have greater heft," and that the job counselors will develop professional credentials akin to certified financial planners.

But counseling is only the first step. Once they identify what they want to do, boomers are going to demand "simpler, fast-track versions" of traditional educational programs in professions such as teaching and nursing, says Judy Goggin, Civic Ventures' senior vice president, who has been working with local organizers of Next Chapter programs.

"They aren't going to like it if someone in the administrative bureaucracy of a community college says, 'You're going to have to take this pile of coursework that we've determined 18-year-olds need to take,'" Ms. Goggin says. "It's not going to be the same as what they'd need if they were entering the field as a young person."

LIVING TOGETHER

Later life could signal a return to communal living for boomers, particularly as increasing numbers of single, divorced and widowed people seek a lifestyle that's more affordable, social and supportive.

Some groups may settle in neighborhoods where everyone shares a common interest, such as Harley-Davidson enthusiasts "who wear their leathers together and ride their bikes as long as they can," says Brent Green, a Denver marketing consultant who studies boomers. The other extreme could be "people gathering in communities they build together with the common cause of easing the aging process, right into their graves."

Sandra Timmerman, director of the MetLife Mature Market Institute, a resource center on aging in Westport, Conn., says her friends talk a lot about whether to buy a house together. "You might cook together, or have a room for a home-care worker [to stay in] if someone gets sick and needs it. You could have a chauffeur, since

so many people can't drive or have trouble at night."

Boomers have already begun to discover "co-housing developments." These neighborhoods, in which residents live in private homes but share a central "common house" with a kitchen and other service facilities, were designed for anybody interested in living communally or conserving resources, such as environmentalists. But they have become increasingly popular with older residents.

In the 82 co-housing neighborhoods that have been built since 1991, one-third of the residents are retirees, says Neshama Abraham, a co-housing consultant in Boulder, Colo. Now, one of the first such developments specifically for people 50 and older is under construction. Silver Sage Cohousing, in Boulder, includes a common building with a kitchen, dining room, library, guest rooms and a treatment room for visiting doctors, physical therapists and other health workers.

A large part of the appeal, Ms. Abraham says, is the "idea of aging in a community. A lot of people talk about aging in place, but it can be very isolating." The hope is that residents can get a lot of their medical needs on site -- and help each other more easily through crises.

On the other hand, some people may give up the idea of a house entirely. Geriatrician Lee Lindquist found through a study last fall that living on a cruise ship would cost about the same as in an assisted-living facility: \$33,260 for a year-round cruise versus \$28,689 for a year at the average assisted-living facility. (A high-end facility would cost \$48,000 or more.) The cruise would provide essentially the same services, including escorts to meals, dining, help with medicine and housekeeping -- plus "look at how much more you're getting on a cruise ship -- the midnight buffet, the pools, and you're treated as a customer, not a patient," Dr. Lindquist says.

She got the idea while on a cruise to the Caribbean with her parents. A few of the other older travelers on the ship said they had been on 20 cruises in the past year -- meaning they were living on a boat about every other week. Boomers she has interviewed say they like the notion. "Part of the appeal is that they wouldn't be with all older people," Dr. Lindquist says. "They'd be mixed in with the frat boys and newlyweds, so they would feel less like it was a nursing home."

PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY

What's likely to be one of hottest areas of research and development? Brain science, says MIT's Dr. Coughlin. "If you look at universities, it's where the huge money is going." One start-up company, Posit Science Corp. of San Francisco, already is trying to capitalize on the trend, rolling out memory-building computer games in Bay area retirement communities. The company claims that the hundreds of older people using its software in preliminary tests have the mental acuity of someone five to 10 years younger. Posit plans to have home versions of the games out by next year. Within a decade, the company hopes to kick-start "brain gyms" as well as online "cognitive-fitness centers," where seniors can play the games in a group environment, says Jeffrey Zimman, chief executive.

It's not as far-fetched as it sounds, some observers say. "Traditional physical-fitness-oriented facilities [that] understand that a significant part of the market is boomers are going to start developing places for people to go to exercise their brain function," says Mr. Green, the marketer in Denver. Although boomers could play computer games at home, "people want social reinforcement," meaning they are likely to either seek out special places to go through the games or join a Web-based service that would connect them online with other brain-exercisers.

Intel's team of social scientists is developing computerized memory aids, too. The gadgets grew out of a study, begun in 1999, "about digital entertainment that wound up being about dementia," says the company's Mr.

Dishman. As he spent time in boomer households, trying to show them what they could do with digital TV and broadband access, "they would say, 'I don't need another way to watch TV. I need help taking care of my parents,' or 'I have to figure out how to manage my diabetes.' "

So Intel shifted its focus and developed potential aids for older adults. One gadget, tested in two dozen households in Las Vegas and Portland, Ore., was designed to help people ease their fears of not recognizing a face or voice when answering the door or telephone. Intel used wireless sensor networks to collect data for four months about who visited, called and emailed the participants, and how often. The data were used to create a "solar-system display" on a TV or computer screen. Circles representing friends and family orbit around you; when you move the mouse over those circles, you see photos of the people they represent, along with the last time you spoke to them and what you talked about.

Similarly, Intel developed what designers dubbed "caller ID on steroids." When the phone rings, a nearby digital photo frame displays a picture of the caller and lists what you talked about during your last call. The "presence lamp" was also a big hit among test subjects. One of these lights is placed in the parent's house, one in the child's. When the child returns home after a visit, the light automatically goes on in the parent's house, and vice versa. The gadget lowered depression among the older adults with Alzheimer's disease by showing them their kids had gotten home safely. It also alerted a few boomers when their parents got lost on the drive home after they had dinner together.

"It was in crude prototype, and needed a lot of baby-sitting by our engineers," says Mr. Dishman. But when the trial was over, "the people said, 'No, don't take this away from me.' " Now Intel hopes that the computer makers that buy its chips will bring these products to market.

GETTING AROUND

Whatever boomers drive in future decades will be a big deal: Of the 13 cars that the average American household buys over a lifetime, seven are purchased after the head of the household turns 50, says Art Spinella, president of CNW Marketing Research, a consulting firm in Bandon, Ore.

That number could head even higher, says Rob Tregenza, transportation analyst for Minneapolis-based market researcher Iconoculture Inc., who expects many boomer couples to add a third car. They covet what he calls "aspirational" vehicles that display their personal style. Muscle cars, for instance, are starting to make a comeback. Already, **Ford Motor** Co. has revived the classic Mustang body, and "there have been rumors that GM is going to start diving into the arsenal of Camaros," he says.

While boomers want to flex their muscles on the road, they also want to be as safe as possible when doing so. Many car makers are starting to tinker with options designed for older customers, but marketable to all ages: vision enhancement, which typically uses ultrasound or infrared technology to make it easier to see at night; collision-warning systems; swivel seats, making it easier to get in and out; and heated seats in cooler climes so drivers and their passengers can use them to help bad backs.

Even with all that, boomers won't be able to drive forever. So what happens when they must quit -- but find themselves living in cul-de-sac suburbs with little public transportation? MIT's Dr. Coughlin predicts the emergence of car clubs. People who no longer drive may pool their resources to buy a car, then share it with a younger driver who serves as a chauffeur. This would be particularly attractive in college towns filled with graduate students who can't afford their own wheels.

"We do a very good job of getting older adults around [via vans and ambulances] for trips they need. We do a terrible job with trips they want," he says. "The boomers are a generation of wants. They are going to make

sure transportation is as seamless for them to get ice cream as it is to get a prescription renewed."

Already, local aging agencies are experimenting with driving pools. The Atlanta Regional Commission, for example, has sold discounted vouchers to 20 people who are at least 60 and can't drive, allowing them to hire someone they know to drive them around rather than relying on formal government programs for help. They are finding that the \$16.79 average cost "buys a trip to the doctor, plus the grocery store, drugstore and bank, instead of just the doctor. And the driver helps you in and out of the car and waits for you while you're there," says Kathryn Lawler, the project director.

LEISURE QUEST

Despite the fact that some boomers will struggle financially as they age, a sizable number are expected to have enough money to fuel the market for increasingly exotic travel. iExplore Inc., a Chicago-based adventure-travel company, already has received requests from boomers in the past year to sea-kayak the Panama Canal, take champagne flights to the North Pole, live with a Mongolian family in the Gobi Desert, walk the rainforest tree canopies of the Amazon and see the Serengeti in a hot-air balloon.

"Boomers have been in an aggressive period of accumulating assets -- homes, cars, boats," says George Deeb, iExplore's chief executive. "Now they're going to get into a period of accumulating experiences."

To that end, Dr. Dychtwald, the San Francisco gerontologist, expects to see "experience agents," a career counselor-cum-travel agent. "You could go to them and say, 'Look, I'm 57, I'm going to take a year off, and I don't know what to do. Help me with a plan,' " he says. "You might spend three months on an archaeological dig, four months living on an island."

Ironically, the onslaught of boomers could endanger a relatively new retirement institution: the country's 500-plus lifelong-learning institutes, most of them affiliated with local colleges (many are listed at www.elderhostel.org/ein/intro.asp⁵). The programs typically offer college-level courses and are open to anyone over a specific age, usually 55 or 60, regardless of previous academic experience.

But age-segregated programs could have trouble drawing boomers as members, warns Ron Manheimer, director of the North Carolina Center for Creative Retirement, a lifelong-learning institute in Asheville. His center has done extensive focus groups with local boomers, including some already attending its programs, to figure out what they're looking for. His findings: Boomers are "just so diverse in what they want," from the types of classes they'd like to see to the time segments in which they're offered -- making it hard to build a traditional course schedule that will interest a broad range of potential students.

One new approach the center is trying: a full-year program that goes into more depth than the typical semester-length or shorter course, culminating in a certificate of completion. The first experiment, the Blue Ridge Naturalist, is targeted to those wanting to better understand and appreciate the natural environment. The class is meeting Tuesday nights and in the field one Saturday each month, addressing topics as diverse as the heritage of Native Americans, folklore and the night sky.

Likewise, Boston-based Elderhostel Inc., one of the most successful providers of educational-travel programs for older adults, is trying to attract younger clients with its Road Scholar program. Rolled out last year, the program offers a series of trips with smaller groups, more free time and fewer lectures -- features that Elderhostel thinks adults in their 50s and early 60s are looking for. In the first year, 1,700 people signed up. The most popular trips: a spiritual journey through India and a look at criminal forensics.

LEGACY -- THE MOVIE

"Boomers are going to figure out really creative ways of expressing their death," possibly by producing video autobiographies, says Mr. Green, the marketer. For instance, he says he has met with an entrepreneur currently trying to figure out how to set up production studios in shopping malls where boomers can bring in their photos, home-movie footage "of when you were the prom queen" and other memorabilia, then work with a script writer to produce something akin to a Biography Channel segment.

Cemeteries are expected to go digital as well, both with records of gravestones online for genealogical research, as well as for nostalgia's sake. "We should expect to see interactive displays about people, where you can push a button and get a two-minute take on that person's life," Mr. Green says. "And that will also be captured in perpetuity on the Internet."

Boomers have a stronger need than their parents and grandparents "to leave a legacy, and it's going to be a very big business," says David Wolfe, a Reston, Va., marketing consultant who studies the older population. He recently pitched a project to Konica Minolta Holdings Inc. that would help guide boomers on their memoirs, "because a lot of this is about imaging."

What about funerals? Already, boomers are personalizing their parents' memorials, and will probably customize their own memorials in more elaborate ways, says Mark Duffey, chief executive of Everest Funeral Package LLC in Houston, a start-up company that sells independent funeral-planning services. One possibility: creative souvenirs. At a funeral he recently attended, "this guy's dad was a great cook, so he printed off his recipes, bound them up and handed out these books of all the recipes he never gave away."

Cremation has been increasing about one percentage point a year for the past decade, and that's expected to surge with the boomers, Mr. Duffey adds. Instead of having full-fledged funerals, Mr. Duffey's clients are asking, why not "a memorial service at my church, or a party at a restaurant?" he says. "There's a trend of people wanting to have this celebration, a party in honor of their friends. Once people go to a few of these, it's going to accelerate."

--Ms. Greene is a staff reporter in The Wall Street Journal's Atlanta bureau.

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