

# Executive summary

By Princeton Survey Research Associates International

**M**ost leading-edge baby boomers are ready for careers of service, now *and* in retirement, according to the MetLife Foundation/Civic Ventures *New Face of Work Survey*. The survey finds that this group of boomers, age 50 to 59, is thinking seriously about giving back to their communities, as are their contemporaries who are just a few years older.

The relationship between work and retirement isn't what it used to be, i.e., mutually exclusive. This new survey of Americans age 50 to 70 finds that they do not expect to, or want to, put their feet up and not work at all in retirement, a finding consistent with earlier research.

**Findings expose a vein of baby boomer commitment to service that stretches from now through the end of their lives.**

Fully half of all adults age 50 to 70 (50%) say they are interested in taking jobs now or in the future to help improve the quality of life in their communities. Leading-edge baby boomers are especially interested, with six in 10 (58%) indicating they would consider taking jobs now or in the future that would serve their communities. Twenty-one percent say they are *very interested* in taking a paying job in one of seven types of organizations or programs<sup>1</sup> that serve their communities, and 37 percent say they are *somewhat interested*.

This interest in finding good work does not stop at the crossroads of retirement. Half of all Americans age 50 to 70 (49%) say it is important that work in retirement help the community in specific ways. Once again, the leading-edge baby boomers are especially interested in careers of service, with 60 percent saying it is important that work in retirement serve the community and those in need.

These two findings break new ground, highlighting the broad interest among Americans age 50 to 70—and especially among leading-edge baby boomers—in giving back to their communities through work now and through work in retirement. Despite critiques suggesting baby boomers are self-centered and focused on material things, these findings expose a vein of commitment to service that stretches from now through the end of their lives.

These are among the key findings from a new nationwide, representative telephone survey of 1,000 adults age 50 to 70 in the continental United States, conducted March 7 through April 11, 2005, by Princeton Survey Research Associates International. For results

<sup>1</sup> The seven types of organizations cover: education; health care; helping those in need; working with youth; civic activism; arts and culture; and the environment. The complete list of organizations is in Table 2 on page 34 and in Question 15 in *Appendix C: Final topline results*, page 58.

based on total sample, the overall margin of sampling error is plus or minus three percentage points. A more detailed description of the survey methodology is included in Appendix B of this report (page 50).

There is overwhelming interest in finding specific types of work in retirement that would serve the community and people in need. Among Americans who may work in retirement (53% of all adults age 50 to 70):

- More than three-quarters (78%) are interested in working to help the poor, the elderly, and other people in need.
- Fifty-six percent are interested in dealing with health issues, whether working in a hospital or with an organization fighting a particular disease.
- Fifty-five percent are interested in a teaching or other educational position.
- And 45 percent say they are interested in working in a youth program.

The survey asked those who indicated they plan to work in retirement to be very specific about what jobs they think they would do. The open-ended responses vary enormously, with two out of the three jobs mentioned most often qualifying as good work. Ten percent mention retail jobs, but 8 percent mention working in education and another 8 percent mention working in social services. Other research suggests that the nation is facing a shortage of professionals in many of these jobs helping others, including nursing and teaching.<sup>2</sup>

But Americans age 50 to 70 are under no illusion that, getting such a job would be easy. Altogether, 39 percent say they think it would be easy to find such a job, but only a fraction of them (12%) think it would be *very easy*. And nearly half say they think it would be *difficult* (31%) or *very difficult* (17%) to obtain such employment.

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After working lives that stretch 35 years and more, why would Americans age 50 to 70 want to continue working?

The incentives are varied, from personal satisfaction to the need for additional income, from the desire to help their community to the desire to help those in need. Four aspects of work are *very important* to most adults age 50 to 70 who are considering working in retirement:

- Six in 10 (59%) say staying involved with other people is *very important* in attracting them to a job in retirement.
- Fifty-seven percent say the job giving them a sense of purpose.
- About half (52%) say the job providing additional income.
- And nearly half (48%) say the job providing the opportunity to help improve the quality of life in their community.

There are substantial differences between men and women about what might attract them to work in retirement, particularly among the leading-edge baby boomers. For example, 70 percent of female boomers say it is *very important* that a job in retirement “gives you a

<sup>2</sup> For example, for information on the nursing shortage see [www.bhpr.hrsa.gov/healthworkforce/reports/improject/default.htm](http://www.bhpr.hrsa.gov/healthworkforce/reports/improject/default.htm). For information on teachers see [www.recruitingteachers.org/channels/clearinghouse/becometeacher/121\\_teachershort.htm](http://www.recruitingteachers.org/channels/clearinghouse/becometeacher/121_teachershort.htm).

sense of purpose,” compared with only 48 percent of male boomers. And more boomer women than men (50% vs. 28%) say the opportunity to help people in need is a *very important* characteristic attracting them to a job in retirement.

Americans age 50 to 70 are acutely aware of laws and policies that hamper work in retirement. More than 80 percent—including majorities of Republicans and Democrats—support each of several changes to remove obstacles, with many *strongly* supporting the changes.

**Majorities of Republicans and Democrats support changes to remove obstacles that hamper work in retirement.**

- Fully six in 10 Americans age 50 to 70 (60%) *strongly* support giving a tax credit to older Americans who work in schools or social services.
- About half (48%) *strongly* support increasing funding for those Americans who go back to school or who get training to prepare for work in schools or social services.
- Forty-six percent *strongly* support a grant or tax credit for Americans over age 50 who spend a year in training for community service or actually working in a job in public or community service.

Americans age 50 to 70 are ready now to pitch in and help with the challenges facing their communities, whether those challenges are in the area of education, health care, or caring for those in need. With leading-edge baby boomers out in front, these Americans are interested in the possibility of finding work, now and in retirement, that would allow them to work in organizations committed to repairing and strengthening their communities. ■

# Three fast facts

## 1 Half of all Americans age 50 to 70 want work that helps others.

***A full 50 percent are interested in taking jobs—now and in retirement—that help improve quality of life in their communities.***

What kind of work do those 50 to 70 want to do? Two out of the three types of work mentioned most often were good work jobs in education and social services.

***Baby boomers*** are ahead of the curve: 58 percent of those age 50 to 59 are interested in these “good work” jobs, with 21 percent saying that they’re very interested.

## 2 Second careers in the retirement years are about people, purpose, and community.

***Americans planning to work in traditional retirement years will pursue second careers that provide income. They also have a high level of interest in work that helps improve their community. But two other motivations are vitally important:***

59 percent say staying involved with other people is very important in attracting them to a job in retirement.

57 percent say it’s very important that the job give them a sense of purpose.

***Women boomers*** top the list: 70 percent of females age 50 to 59 say it is very important that a job in retirement give them a sense of purpose.

## 3 Many think it won’t be easy to find second careers doing good work and strongly support public policy changes to remove obstacles.

***Nearly half (48%) of Americans age 50 to 70 think it may be difficult or very difficult to find good work.***

48 percent strongly support increasing funding for Americans who go back to school or who get training to prepare for work in schools or social services.

46 percent strongly support a grant or tax credit for Americans over age 50 who spend a year in training for community service or actually working in a job in public or community service.

***Tax credits*** are desirable: 60 percent strongly support giving a tax credit to older Americans who work in schools or social services.