

Boost Your Longevity Bonus

Planning can easily go onto the back burner when so much change is around us. Refocusing on the future helps our perspective on the present. There could be a longevity bonus ahead!

What's a longevity bonus?

Your longevity bonus is how much longer you are now expected to live than at birth.

In 2021 when the first Baby Boomers turned 75, the women were living four years longer than expected at birth, and the men 9 years. What's more, the men (on average) would live another 12 years (according to the Government Actuary) and the women an extra 14. Across both genders, that's nearly a 30% bonus increase in their expected longevity at birth.

At that age, what was ahead for them? On average, they could expect 5 more years of 'able' living, 4 'less able' (but still independent) and 4 years dependent (men 3, women 5). Some bonus!

Is it such a big deal?

The personal benefits are large. The longer we live, the longer we are likely to live and with less dependency at the end. Managing longevity as well as possible from an earlier age increases our potential to live well, longer and independently. It also prepares each of us better for further changes along the way.

For example:

- Governments have reacted slowly to the increased numbers of older people. Pressure on aged care quality is rife. Managing our longevity better increases the possibility of staying independent of aged care longer.
- Since health costs are on the rise, governments are increasingly likely to reward people for staying healthy. Planning to stay healthy may well result in a win-win bonus for us and our community.
- Staying in better shape can result in another win-win outcome, with the economy and ourselves both benefiting from longer work, volunteering, active grandparenting and many other value-adding and meaningful activities.
- By taking the view that increased longevity is an opportunity rather than a threat, our mindset will be more positive, and we will be more creative and active in our communities.

Progress in all these areas will be more rapid if governments devote more resources to increasing longevity awareness from midlife so that we all understand and seek out the opportunities for a more fruitful life. We need to push our political representatives to adopt this strategy.

It is not just the personal bonus. The longevity dividend from greater community longevity awareness means the older community may well contribute to reducing costs as well as having a better life.

Encouragingly, there's more support ahead. Many new approaches may influence longevity and wellness.

Four examples

- A treatment commonly used for Type 2 diabetes is being tested in multiple large-scale clinical trials as health-span and life-span-extending.
- A drug designed to inhibit the progress of clinical dementia seems to be effective at much lower doses than previously thought, leading to new insights on how it works.
- Hearing loss at lower levels than normally tested has been associated with declining cognitive ability, suggesting a benefit from addressing hearing loss earlier.
- Gut microbes can compensate and support an ageing body through positive stimulation. A specific chemical involved could lead to a food-based response.

What's the importance of this?

This is only a small selection of projects in the pipeline. It suggests the future of ageing could be much more positive. It would be a pity not to take advantage of what we already know so we are still around to take advantage of what these and other developments may offer.

Longevity planning helps you prepare for the future, and maybe extend your bonus!

It's a good idea to update your SHAPE Analyser results regularly - why not do one now?

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