

# GLOBAL WELLNESS INSTITUTE AGING WELL INITIATIVE

WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH AGING WELL?  
VIEWS FROM LEADING EXPERTS



GLOBAL WELLNESS  
INSTITUTE™

AGING WELL INITIATIVE

# PREFACE

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The Global Wellness Institute (GWI) Aging Well Initiative is a groundbreaking effort dedicated to understanding and addressing the unique wellness needs of individuals aged 50+. As the global population of those 50+ continues to grow at an unprecedented rate, there is an urgent need to focus on their

specific wellness-related requirements and preferences. This initiative aims to provide a comprehensive platform to explore, share, and promote innovative practices, products, and designs that enhance the overall well-being of the 50+ demographic.



# INTRODUCTION

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We asked a range of experts who had all studied aspects of aging demographics and aging well to answer one simple question in order to frame the trends we need to consider for 2026 and beyond. Our experts came from Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, Singapore, India, Australia, Indonesia, and Thailand. We purposefully set out to use a wide range of expertise and geographies to build a broad view of what people might mean by “aging well” and the trends around it.

Each expert was given 15 minutes to discuss the following question with one of our Aging Well Initiative committee members through a very open and short discussion to explore what themes came to mind and their own focus: **Aging well is a growing focus of discussion and interest globally. How do you interpret it, and what related trends and developments do you find interesting?**

What follows includes a brief summary of the discussions, the key points raised in each interview, and “one thing I found most interesting” from each of our Aging Well Initiative committee members.

We hope this white paper offers some insights into the breadth of our conversations about the challenge in understanding how the world’s largest-ever population of older people are aging and will age. This paper also acts as the first in a range of studies and points of view that will come from our initiative in 2026.

**HOW DO YOU INTERPRET AGING WELL, AND WHAT RELATED TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS DO YOU FIND INTERESTING?**

# SUMMARY:

## 6 TRENDS FROM THE INTERVIEWS

1

### INTEGRATION OF BRAIN AND BODY HEALTH

A strong emerging theme is the equal focus on cognitive and physical health for aging well. Holistic approaches to bringing together mental stability, routine, and brain health are becoming as important as physical fitness.

“

The story of aging is being rewritten, as a narrative not of loss but of potential.”

–Colin Milner, *International Council on Active Aging*

“

The idea that routines are the key to staying cognitively solid is something we are seeing much more about. Mental stability and agility are now talked about as much as physical elements.”

–Susan Bell, *Australian market researcher*

2

### AGING WELL AS A SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE

Aging well involves happiness, freedom, socializing, and reclaiming autonomy, with emotional well-being just as valued as physical health. The reduction of responsibilities enables people to pursue personal fulfillment and relationships.

“

Aging well is interpreted as just being happy. . . . Responsibility becomes looser, so there is more chance to be self-focused.”

–Iwan Murty, *Indonesian researcher*

“

The preoccupation with tracking and quantifying every aspect of life is not the choice of older people. . . . Instead, they are telling us, ‘No, it is about living [in] the moment.’”

–Drago Djourov, *Asian aging researcher*

# 3

## GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETAL ROLE IN SUPPORT AND LONGEVITY

Governments are grappling with the financial implications of a society being able to age well. Policy and public health initiatives are vital, as seen in Japan’s approach wherein government programs actively support health maintenance and social engagement. Aging well needs systemic support beyond individual efforts.

“Aging well needs such government initiatives and a population of people who understand that preparation must be a whole-life focus.”

–William “Bill” Hall, Ipsos Health, Tokyo

“We should not be surprised . . . the trend of a growing aging population has been known for decades. Now the reality is how to cope and support and build on this long-term trend to help those aging today and tomorrow.”

–Jerry Huguet, Bangkok-based demographer



# 4

## WELLNESS AS SELF-CARE AND SOCIETAL ADAPTATION

Wellness is framed as preventing, not just curing, sickness and maintaining the ability to do as one wants. Societal structures, environments, and care facilities need to adapt to aging populations' desire for autonomy and dignity. Aging well requires the individual and their personal wellness goals to be considered and aided by the whole structure of society.

“ We have not and are not building the world for an aging society. . . . Too often, the loss of sight, and backs and other wellness issues are not really the result of aging rather than the result of many and wrong short-term fixes to self-care.”

*–Trevor Gore, UK expert on self-care*

“ Being more person-centric is the goal of governments, carer organizations, and societ[ies], but that takes a lot of work.”

*–Paddy Bryans, Australian retired industry executive*



# 5

## FINANCIAL PREPAREDNESS AND THE WEALTH DIVIDE

Financial security greatly influences how people experience aging. There is a distinct divide in which wealthier older adults access more wellness opportunities, while others face barriers to living well. Early planning and targeted services are needed.

“The wealth divide is extremely important. . . . Are we talking about those of wealth . . . or . . . those of little or no private funding? . . . Health is of course fundamental to aging well . . . . But if someone is obese, for example, that has an economic impact and should change expectations and hopes of aging well. How much change is often an economic factor, as those [with] little wealth will struggle harder to cope with overcoming such issues.”

–Kim Walker, Australian marketing adviser in Asia

“The realization of all those decades ahead makes thinking about aging well difficult.”

–Aki Kubo, Japanese retirement and aging well author

# 6

## PURPOSE, ENGAGEMENT, AND MEANINGFUL ACTIVITY

Purpose-driven engagement and continuing to do activities one loves contribute to a meaningful life in older age. Concepts like Japan’s *ikigai* emphasize joy in detail and staying active in small but fulfilling pursuits. A comprehensive perspective illustrates that aging well is about creating a life filled with purpose, connection, and joy, supported by integration of the availability of health resources, community, and a financially supportive environment.

“In exploring what “living best” means, we discovered it means finding joy in the details and modest ingenuity to enjoy life. For example, I have a neighbor who is now retired and totally engrossed with achieving a perfect grass lawn. It has become his own test for aging well. Doing something in extreme detail gives him purpose he can see. ”

–Dominic “Dom” Carter, Australian age tech entrepreneur in Japan

“Aging well is not only about living longer; it is about living better.”

–Andrea Leja, Canadian authority on aging well

These trends reflect a holistic view of aging well, highlighting a blend of physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and financial dimensions. We have included some example quotes from experts that emphasize that aging well is multifaceted.

WHAT OUR EXPERTS SAID—  
**SUMMARY NOTES  
FROM EACH  
INTERVIEW**

# SUSAN BELL

## DIRECTOR OF SUSAN BELL RESEARCH

Sydney-based market researcher and one of Australia's leading retirement experts:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/suebell/>

We are all going to live longer—well, mostly. The majority of people now expect to live to be 80–90 years old. In the past, living long did not always mean living well. It often meant long years of failing health. But that is changing.

The thing is that the idea of living and aging well is a societal issue as much as a personal behavior and is also more about both body and brain health. It is not just about staying physically strong.

In recent years, there seems to have been more and more emphasis on neuroscience and brain health. I am hearing and reading more about things like “the seven habits of cognitively aging well.” Things like getting up at the same time every day to encourage discipline and routine. The idea that routines are the key to staying cognitively solid is something we are seeing much more about. Mental stability and agility are now talked about as much as physical elements.

Governments like Australia are struggling with a population that expects to live longer, be in good shape, and have the financial ability to take care of themselves, only receiving health care when needed; they face

this conundrum: living longer, but how can we afford it? So while the broader population is generally aware that they should live longer than previous generations, are they preparing for the realities?

Yes, we are seeing more awareness about things like better diets helping people live healthy, longer lives. But developing health and lifestyle services is both a government and a personal responsibility, and people need to be thinking about and preparing younger for their aging years. Getting people in their 40s to start saving to afford longer lives and undertaking better habits is a hard message to get across.

At the same time, we are seeing more people over 60 focused on physical health as some badge of good aging. Hence the rise and focus on the very fit people in their 80s or marathoners that are 80+ as the new heroes. So while images of “over-performing” older people have always been around as a sort of novelty, now the continuing focus on such images leads people to think this is normal and expected. This can be a good thing, but it also increases the pressure to be physically fit, which might create a risk of self-disappointment.

# IWAN MURTY

## CEO OF RESEARCH AND BUSINESS (RB) CONSULTING

Indonesian market researcher who, in recent years, has conducted Indonesia's first in-depth look into its increasing older population:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/iwan-murty-00360711/>

Surprising fact: By 2030, Indonesia will have 60 million people over 60, roughly over 20 percent of the population. The country is seen by the world and by its own population as a “young country,” and therefore, the increasing number of older people is often overlooked. But attention to issues around aging and, in particular, the health of older people, is increasing.

In Indonesia, aging well is interpreted as just being happy.

When children become independent, there is a sense of relief: “I am kinda free.” Now people can do what they always wanted to do. Or at least some version of that becomes possible. Responsibility becomes looser, so there is more chance to be self-focused. We often hear that people in their 50s and 60s think back to their high school lives as their best years, with the most freedom, and they want to replicate that feeling. People see the key to aging well as having the opportunity to live life again: to socialize more and wider, to travel—whether big travel or just day trips—and also to be able to take small risks.

At 15, you “were in charge” of your life, and at 55, you are again.

The issue is that businesses prioritize over-the-counter pharmaceuticals and vitamins for younger demographics, often overlooking aging populations as a current concern.

Personal care in general, which increasingly involves both beauty applications and internal solutions, is acknowledged as something that will be important for aging well. A personal belief in the self and self-presentation are issues that are reported as possible areas for aging well focus, but again, marketers will say it is just easier to target the young. There is not enough coverage in local media and reporting of global trends as they apply to “young, underdeveloped” markets. Consequently, in those markets, there are fewer reference points and understanding of what is possible, what actions to take, etc.

**PEOPLE SEE THE KEY TO AGING WELL AS HAVING THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIVE LIFE AGAIN.**

# WILLIAM (“BILL”) HALL

## PRESIDENT OF IPSOS HEALTH JAPAN

Based in Tokyo and considered one of the foreign experts on Japanese health trends:

The Japanese government sees a distinction between being older, healthy, and active and being old and comfortable just lying in bed. The difference between healthy longevity and just living longer is highly topical.

Thirty percent of Japan is now 65+; the median age in 2026 will be 50. Japan is the first major country to reach such figures. Trying to keep healthy and active is a popular goal, both for the government and for individuals. Coping with aging in a more personal and active way is offering many opportunities—from the growth of “walking shoes” that act as guides while undertaking walking and hiking and offer opportunities to keep people’s knees healthy and agile to supplements being the biggest growth area at 7-Eleven stores. Demand is increasing for elevators and escalators in stores and homes to help with mobility and accessibility. The introduction of stair lifts is a growing business. All this is driven by a need to aid well-being and agility among older adults.

And agility is also a key part of social interaction—getting out of the home and doing things. Isolation is a growing killer in Japan, where 4 to 5 million households are made up of single people. Simple options are opening up. Karaoke events are booming,

where friends and strangers gather to sing, entertain, and share. All good in reviving the karaoke market, especially when it offers 1,500 yen (\$US 12) all you can drink and mixing with people, which is a key to aging well.

Similarly, a surprising number of men in their 60s are re-forming their high school bands.

Government policies, like all companies having to arrange full annual health care checks for many years, has helped build longevity and also healthier aging, such as early cancer diagnosis and the 80/20 oral care policy behind annual dental checkups, with the goal being to ensure that at 80 years of age, Japanese people still have at least 20 of their own teeth—supported again by mandatory free annual dental checkups after 75.

Aging well needs such government initiatives and a population of people who understand that preparation must be a whole-life focus.

# TREVOR GORE

## TRUSTEE OF THE SELF-CARE FORUM

UK-based expert on self-care and the role of pharmacies in supporting that opportunity:

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Wellness means different things to different people. Self-care is basically about wellness—not curing but prevention. It should be framed by the question, Can you do what you want to do? which is in itself a key to measuring aging well.

Resilience, one key to aging well, is stronger in older adults than in younger people—but everyone needs to work at it. For those over 60, wellness is not really about themselves but, rather, about society. We have not built

and are not building the world for an aging society. The desire to be seen as still capable, as still having the ability to do things, pushes many elderly to try to emulate youth without enough thought to self-care to prepare for a world that expects and respects youth. Too often, the loss of sight, falling injuries, knee and back injuries, etc. are not really about aging and are more often about too many or wrong short-term fixes instead of long-term self-care.

Medicine has become a “what will you die of” measure rather than something focused on the prevention of ill health and loneliness.

The difference between male and female interpretations of aging well is significant. Women often equate wellness with beauty and maintaining their appearance and their ability to maintain their attitude of staying young. Men equate wellness with fitness and the ability to be seen as young. We see the real difference between the sexes when one aging partner falls to real ill health. Statistically, the male partner is most likely to leave the relationship—self-focused—whereas the female partner will stay and care for their partner, feeling that they can still cope.



# KIM WALKER

## MENTOR, AUTHOR, AND BUSINESS ADVISER

Bangkok-based Australian who was a pioneer of reexamining the aging population and business opportunities through his “Silvers” marketing advisory company two decades ago:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/kimbwalker/>

The wealth divide is extremely important to understand with aging populations and the idea and opportunity of wellness. In any discussion, in every country, we need to ask: Are we talking about those of wealth, as in those who have an income that allows financial independence and little or no relying on government support? Or are we talking about those with little or no private funding for aging?

Health before real post-life is fundamental factors to aging well. Obesity is a key filter of expectations and the hope of aging well. Our bodies’ histories of self-abuse, from smoking to consumption to not maintaining exercise regimes. All of this colors your wellness and goals for aging well, and the factors of wealth, physical maintenance, emotional preparedness, and loneliness are often very different depending on financial situations.

My experience of decades of trying to get my “Silvers” business running across Asia taught me a lot about aging and companies’ interest in providing aging-well solutions, the top of which is a conundrum of the 30-something brand manager being asked to reach the 60+ potential customers. Too often, they can only

see the aging population as people trying to put off death rather than people trying to lead more active, more social, and more refreshed lives.

If I were reopening Silvers, I would be more direct and target companies answering an immediate need, such as with aids or devices—areas like age tech that target the possibility of recovering and maintaining rather than improvement because that is what the marketers understand. Too often, the aging wellness interpretation is more about aging in place, coping with difficulty, and recovering rather than building aging wellness with a focus on the future.

**OBESITY IS A KEY FILTER OF EXPECTATIONS AND THE HOPE OF AGING WELL.**

# DOMINIC (“DOM”) CARTER

## CEO OF THE CARTER GROUP

An Australian with 20 years’ experience in Japan building a market research agency and, more recently, age-tech companies based on real market understanding:

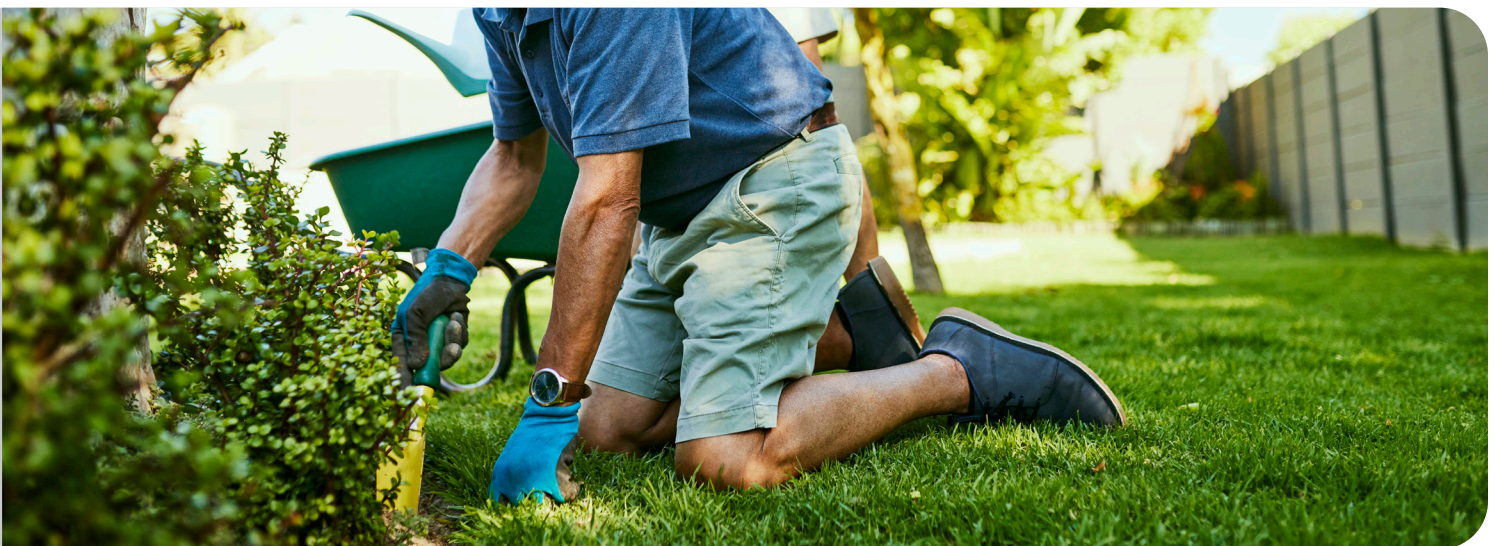
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/dominiccarterjapan/>

A simple guide to aging well: “Be who you want to be based on how you want to look, how you want to act, and feel how you want to feel.” It is also maintaining capabilities as long as possible.

In Japan, this is encompassed in the idea of *ikigai*, often misunderstood in the West as a means of identifying goals and purpose on a higher level. In reality, it means “my reason for getting up in the morning.” Embedded in the Japanese mentality and lifestyle for those older than 60 and the life stages leading to that period, it really has been a whole-of-life emphasis in being engaged in the thing you enjoy.

In exploring what “living best” means, we discovered it means finding joy in the details and modest ingenuity to enjoy life. For example, I have a neighbor who is now retired and totally engrossed with achieving a perfect grass lawn. It has become his own test for aging well. Doing something in extreme detail gives him purpose he can see.

The Japanese have a saying, *pin pin korori*, which sums up the attitude to aging well and means “living it hard till you die.” Don’t think about being old; just keep living, getting on with life, and living it as well as possible.



# JERRY HUGUET

## RETIRED, EX-DIRECTOR, UNITED NATIONS DEMOGRAPHICS SE ASIA

Now retired in Bangkok, Huguet has spent decades studying the demographics of Southeast Asia and offering predictions for the aging population.

Regarding aging, the growing proportion in nearly all countries in Asia is older people.

We should not be surprised in any way by this. Demographers have known and expected for over 40 years what the trend would be and that countries from the already aging, like Japan, to those that are perceived as having “young” populations, like India and Vietnam, would be aging rapidly by now. We also knew that there would be a focus on aging as opposed to longevity. So why the surprise now? Because marketers have been too lazy to look at the data.

The fact is that governments are generally elected for three to five years and are terrible at seeing long term and building for it. Financially, governments are reluctant to consider the need for real changes to help their people have an aging-well structure, as they associate aging mostly with pensions and, therefore, welfare and, therefore, expenditure with little return.

The result is that the best way to prepare to age well is seen as active work lives. More productivity by individuals should then lead to better wealth accumulation. The reality is, though, that schooling has better prepared populations for better aging. Progressive

governments need to be educating students at all school levels on how to prepare for aging and retirement. Aging well cannot happen if there is no lifetime preparation, especially for most Asian cultures, in which the introduction of “modern” diets, the lack of exercise, education, and not enough focus on the future prevents people at all ages and all life stages from aging well.

We need to get younger people focused on more obvious science-based evidence regarding aging well. This includes a stronger focus on direct health issues, including how smoking reduces longevity and quality of later life. This need is greater in developing countries. For example, too often we see younger people focused on career or just getting a job without realizing how their actions will affect their own aging well. Issues around housing also affect future wellness, such as where to live, how to live, and the role of home technologies such as indoor flushing toilets as major key factors in having a chance to live well are often not explained enough.

# PADDY BRYANS

## RETIRED CEO OF RSL LIFECARE

Sydney-based marketer who at time of our interview had just retired as CEO of RSL Lifecare, one of Australia's leading organizations in the age care home industry:

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Age care reform is just being introduced to the Australian market after years of discussion. It is long overdue but will lead to huge changes in financial responsibility and change in the age care industry. This is due to renewed focus on the idea that aging well is all about being person focused. This then leads to more individual choice in housing and to lifestyle choice being mandatory.

All the more complicated is that the elderly population is moving from the “silent generation,” who were and are more comfortable in putting up with anything, to boomers, who are more self-focused and used to meeting individual expectations. More personal-centric solutions and guidelines are now expected in any area of health and aging well. For example, food and dining experiences are now much more varied and are expected to meet personal tastes and personal beliefs about aging-well preparedness.

Meanwhile, social interaction and connection opportunities are now seen as key to better lifestyle and aging experiences, as well as longevity opportunity. Care facilities, retirement homes, and general home life for

aging populations are now expected to also be about greater opportunities to learn and to have experiences with others. Similarly, the emphasis on general health maintenance; physical strengthening and building; and the use of structured facilities such as gyms, park exercise clubs, and instructor-led programs has exploded in recent years as a key aging-well necessity.

“Built for form” initiatives reflect facilities, housing, and lifestyle options based on personal needs are changing. Services and expectations among the middle-aged from 50–70 and the older populations in their desire to live both longer and healthier are being affected. This has meant a revised look at all aspects of daily technology, housing, etc. to be functional and easy to use while also good design. For example, toilets with ease of use while not looking bad or implying users are “losing physical control” are now key tools for coping and aging well.

# NATALIE YAN-CHATONSKY

## CEO OF FULL TIME LIVES

Sydney-based doctoral student and consultant designing digital services for healing the aged and women: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nat-yc/>

How to transition well has become a key theme. The trend has shifted in the past decade from a “retirement focus,” with a hard line in the sand of life, to one in which individuals will approach the older life stages with individual goals and timelines. This has led to very different experiences for women who have been caring for others. For example, the biological shifts, such as menopause, that happen to women at the same time they move from caring for children to caring for even older parents and grandparents while also possibly preparing for their own and/or their partner’s retirement places multiple barriers to preparing for and undertaking an aging-well personal approach to life. These financial, physical, and menstrual pressures all affect mental stress.

For men, this time of getting ready for retirement has led to an increased desire to prove the body is coping. The boom in men taking up bicycling in the past 20 years, for example, has been tied to physical and social connection needs being met as their life changes.

This is all part of the difficulty humans have in dealing with change and a new and different life stage. The loss of partners through health or breakdown of relationships only adds to the strain of change. And planning, being alone, financial stress, and mental and physical well-being lead to recognizing the need to form a different type of life, especially among women.

Aging well needs to take in all these changes while dealing with expectations of changes and discussion of health span and lifespan, which are now increasingly talked about as two totally different things. In the US, for example, there is ample evidence of people living longer but in poorer health or lifestyle conditions, something we see in most developed countries. This leads to increased dependency on others, whether family or the government, and therefore more strain.

Divorce seems to be slowing in these countries as well, but the question is whether this is a result of the high costs of separation or an anomaly of changed attitudes among today’s 60- to 70-year-olds. Again, this puts a strain on the idea of aging well that is often overlooked. Staying together may be financially more practical, but at what cost to mental wellness? When someone gets sick, women are more likely to stay and care for their partner. Men are more likely to leave and not care. How these trends affect aging well needs much more exploration.

The good news is that greater recognition and discussion of the systemic barriers to aging well at the academic, government, and business levels is happening.

# KAORI YATSU

## DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC PLANNING AT BBDO JAPAN

Based in Tokyo and, for 20 years, a leading authority in research about how mothers' behavior is changing and, more recently, how they are moving into 60+ age groups:

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Getting old and healthy, both mentally and physically, is a subject of increasing interest in Japan, which has the world's oldest population. Physically, there is a gap between life expectations and actual age—a problem of the 10-year gap between what is seen as healthy and what is realistic and socially normal. The sad awareness that you will have 10 years of living unwell is a societal and personal outcome of having old age but not enough preparation for it. Dementia, for example, is an ever-increasing fact and serves as evidence that “you can't live healthy till the end.” With an estimated 10 percent or more of the population already suffering from dementia or pre-dementia indicators, the older population is more than aware that longevity does not mean aging well.

On the positive side, there are more and more dementia clinics opening and more good news stories, such as the dementia cafe—a cafe that only employs people with dementia—which has been well publicized and very successful. Of course, when you go to one, you have to accept whatever you are served, as the serving staff members often forget or confuse orders. This sort of activity does, however, allow

dementia sufferers to feel hope and the public to understand the issue.

Among staying well trends has been the boom in supplements for eyes, memory, and many other factors, with heavy exposure via TV. This is important because TV is not only the most popular news medium in the country but also the most trusted. Similarly, more coverage of walking, gyms, hiking, the Japanese walking trend, and forest bathing on TV programming is also encouraging living well.



Over 10 years ago, we saw increasing trends for people over 50 to move from the suburbs to the inner city in Tokyo, Osaka, and other major areas. This is driven by changes in housing costs and availability of entertainment options, as well as health options. The result is a boom in serviced housing for wealthier people, with lots of companies entering the category, such as major corporations like Mitsui, Mitsubishi, and Benesse. Again, this is all driven by TV advertising (the most watched medium), and such condo and apartment buildings increasingly have wellness facilities.

The drive for self-sufficiency is strong, whether for self or for caring for aging parents. Keep in mind that most women who are 60 or older have both their own and their husband's 80-something mother to care for and at least one 100-year-old or older grandmother.

The need to be active and to keep parents and grandparents active is seen as key to aging well. So too is connection, with daily chats in person or online meaning that for a 60-something, actively staying well is time consuming for all parties.



# AKI KUBO

## CHAIRMAN OF TAG JAPAN

Career advertising executive and author of books and articles on how Japanese people need to prepare financially and mentally for retirement: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/akikubo/>

There are negative and positive sides to Japan's aging population. The negative financial aspect driving what is aging well comes from the fact that people have not thought through or prepared for being "retired" for 40 to 50 years, which is now becoming the norm. Yes, they were prepared for 20+ years of living off savings and pensions, and most Japanese people have good retirement savings by global standards, but the realization of all those decades ahead makes thinking about aging well difficult.

But there are many more positive aspects. Until recently, people would put together a realistic bucket list of five to six items to achieve after retirement. Now they are more likely to have 10 to 20 items on their list with more knowledge of how many active years they will have. It helps that there are an increasing number of stories of people succeeding with their lists, and of living well enough to get more done. Staying fit in your

60s is the smartest investment people can make to enjoy extended lives.

(Note: Aki recently retired himself and, having taken up marathon running in his late 50s, is now competing in the triathlon in Hawaii every year in the over 60 category.)

Keeping networks active is equally important to maintain "social fitness" and is a key part of aging well. But it has to be consciously worked on and planned, just as you plan and train for a marathon. In connection with this, staying positive makes a huge difference but is also something you have to train for.

Why do Japanese live well longer? Foreigners often think it is diet, but the reality is that most Japanese don't eat sushi regularly. Maybe it is the tea? In fact, no one knows really, but perhaps discipline is the big difference maker.

# SANTOSH DESAI

## CEO OF FUTUREBRANDS

Based in New Delhi and one of India's most famous social commentators:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/santosh-desai-8073105/>

The mental model of aging has changed in India. There used to be a clear model of aging: Start big, then slow fast. By 40, people traditionally had started a stage of life where children had grown up, work was settled, and they could look forward to things slowing down.

Aging well in itself was not a focus. Now, though, taking care of yourself and being a full person at any age is of more importance. And there is a clear focus on taking care of the self. The over 40s have changed from “job done” to there is more to do with life. Of course, this is in part driven by the rising awareness that so many Indians now living longer, (12 percent of Indians are now over 60, so over 140 million).

We see this in the greatly increased focus on travel and on women doing things with friends and on their own, discovering new facets to their lives, with the internet offering more access to the greater world. Changes that we have seen in other markets are now defining more of the middle classes of India.

Aging well in terms of health, exercise, and diet are of course becoming more topical, but the real change comes from increasing ways to find pleasure, self-improvement, and expanding of the self. The “surplus” of added years and increased incomes, and what those incomes can buy, gets deployed in new ways of expanding, such as in the boom in play-reading groups, which are groups like book clubs, but people gather to read out plays or movie scripts, living what was once only imagined.

And of course, as in all markets where living longer and trying to live independent lives longer are we see the growth of more retirement home situations. People seek independence or semi-independence, not to escape traditional care from children but to start living separate lives.



# COLIN MILNER

## CHAIRMAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON ACTIVE AGING

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Imagine a society in which older adults live longer and better, not retreating from life but embracing it. A society in which vitality replaces decline, mobility replaces dependence, and older adults are viewed not as a burden but as a force for contribution. Envision a population that influences markets rather than being influenced by them—a demographic sought after not just by pharmaceutical or insurance companies but by designers, innovators, and storytellers.

If this shift were to occur, and it is occurring, it would redefine the fundamentals of how individuals, organizations, and governments perceive the human life course. It would move us from a reactive model of aging, one focused on managing decline, to a proactive model that celebrates possibility.

Because the truth is, aging well isn't a mystery. It's an equation we already know how to solve.

Today, we understand that lifestyle choices, movement, nutrition, rest, connection, environment, and purpose can dramatically change our trajectory. Science tells us that the average American spends 12.4 years in poor health, mostly at the end of life, the widest

gap between lifespan and health span among 183 countries. But that number isn't destiny. It's a variable, and variables can be changed.

In fact, most people define healthy aging not by the absence of disease but by the presence of ability—being able to do what you want, when you want, with whom you want. This, the World Health Organization now says, is the true measure of healthy aging: functional ability. And this idea, that health is about function, not just the absence of disease, is transforming everything.

It's reshaping education, positioning lifelong learning as the new currency of aging well. It's reshaping housing, as communities evolve from care-based institutions to purpose-driven, wellness-centered ecosystems. It's reshaping finance, as insurers and investors discover that health span, not just lifespan, drives long-term stability. It's reshaping the workforce, as aging talent becomes the key to resilience in a world with shrinking youth populations.

It's reimagining mobility, as autonomous vehicles promise independence to those who once feared losing their keys. It's reshaping technology, as wearables, exoskeletons, genetic insights, and biometric tools

transform data into empowerment, helping individuals take charge of their health and longevity. Meanwhile, voice-activated technologies are emerging as companions, combating loneliness and fostering connection. It's even reshaping food, as chefs and clinicians collaborate to make nutrition both delightful and medicinal.

It is reshaping caregiving too. As older adults live longer and healthier lives, the role of traditional caregivers will evolve into that of a lifestyle coach, someone who guides, motivates, and supports rather than managing decline. The very idea of care is shifting from dependency to empowerment.

Health care itself is being rewritten. The older consumer is increasingly in control, tracking health through technology, monitoring key indicators, and minimizing physician visits until their devices say it's time. It's a quiet revolution, a move from disease care to

wellness, from intervention to prevention, from reacting to illness to sustaining vitality.

In this new model, technology doesn't replace human touch; it restores autonomy. It gives older adults agency over their bodies, their choices, and their futures. And in doing so, it challenges every institution, from medicine to marketing, to catch up with a generation that is no longer waiting to be cared for but is choosing to live well.

All of this points to a single truth: The story of aging is being rewritten, as a narrative not of loss but of potential. The question is not whether we can live better, longer. We already can. The question is whether we're willing to embrace science, innovation, and imagination to make it happen. Because when we do, it will not only extend our years but will transform how humanity understands worth, wisdom, and time itself.



# ANDREA LEJA

## FOUNDER OF THRIVE LIFESTYLE & DEVELOPMENT GROUP INC.

A leading Canadian authority shares her thoughts on health care and policy integration in Canada and its connection to aging well: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/andrealeja/>

In Canada, the conversation around aging well is deeply intertwined with the structure of our universal health care system. While many nations rely heavily on private care or pension-driven models, Canada's publicly funded system creates both an opportunity and a challenge: How do we move beyond reactive medical care to a more integrated, proactive, and holistic model that supports well-being in every dimension of life?

Aging well is not only about living longer; it is about living better. As our population ages, it has become increasingly clear that health care alone cannot sustain quality of life. We need a coordinated ecosystem that brings together housing, primary care, community programs, and social supports—all anchored in prevention, connection, and dignity. The most promising developments are those that blur the boundaries between health and home, recognizing that the environments in which we live profoundly shape our longevity, mobility, and sense of purpose.

Across Canada, a growing movement is shifting from illness management to preventive and person-centered care. One powerful example is the rise of social prescribing—a practice in which health care

providers connect older adults to nonclinical supports like art classes, walking groups, or volunteer opportunities to address loneliness, depression, and isolation.

This approach recognizes that wellness is relational and that social connection is as vital to health as medication or diet. It also reflects a deeper understanding that aging well depends on the interconnection of body, mind, and community.

Policy innovation is beginning to follow suit. Provinces are exploring models that integrate home care, long-term care, and primary health services into more seamless systems of support. Instead of viewing aging as a health care burden, these frameworks position it as a continuum of living—through which independence and care can coexist. Municipalities are also embracing age-friendly planning, creating walkable neighborhoods, accessible transit, and wellness hubs that help older adults remain active and socially engaged within their communities.

The built environment is becoming an extension of the health care system itself. Housing design, neighborhood planning, and community development are increasingly

recognized as determinants of health. Universal design, adaptive homes, and multigenerational living options allow older Canadians to remain in place safely and comfortably, reducing strain on hospitals and care facilities while enriching community life. When design and policy align, we create conditions for autonomy and belonging—not dependency and isolation.

Technology is also playing a transformative role in this integration. Telehealth, remote monitoring, and digital wellness tools have expanded access to care, particularly for rural and remote populations. Yet technology must enhance, not replace, the human element of care.

The future of aging well in Canada will depend on finding balance, pairing innovation with empathy and efficiency with the deep human need for connection and trust.

Ultimately, Canada’s health care advantage lies not just in access but in integration. By bridging medical systems with community, housing, and design, we can redefine what it means to age well—not as a medical journey but as a life journey. The goal is not simply to extend years but to enrich them: fostering independence, purpose, and joy at every stage of life. In this way, aging well becomes not a policy outcome but a collective act of care and imagination.



# YI (“SHERRY”) ZHANG, PHD

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, EXTERNAL STRATEGY & PARTNERSHIPS FOR PRICE LAB,  
BUCK INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH ON AGING AND FOUNDER, GENOPALATE, INC.**

Aging well will soon be defined not by chronological age but by metabolic resilience—our body’s capacity to generate energy efficiently, adapt to stress, and recover from disruption. Scientific wellness now allows us to measure and modulate this resilience in real time through multi-omic, nutritional, and digital data.

For decades, longevity science focused on lifespan. The next decade will focus on energy span—how long we sustain muscle strength, cognitive clarity, and mitochondrial vitality. Advances in genomics, metabolomics, and continuous glucose or HRV tracking are revealing individualized nutrition strategies that stabilize metabolism and delay biological aging. Nutrition will evolve from general guidance to precision metabolic therapy.

Menus informed by a person’s genotype, microbiome, and circadian rhythm—what I call bio-intelligent dining—will integrate with movement and light programs to optimize mitochondrial function, muscle synthesis, and emotional well-being. Senior living communities and health systems can lead this shift by turning their dining rooms and wellness programs into living laboratories. Small, rapid “micro-trials” on protein timing, chrono-eating, or NAD<sup>+</sup> support can produce

measurable gains in gait speed, mood, and energy within weeks.

The future of aging well is metabolic, measurable, and personalized—with every meal and every movement becoming an experiment in extending human vitality.



# NANCY GRIFFIN

## THE HOST OF THE *GLOWING OLDER* PODCAST

I interpret aging well as actively maintaining physical, cognitive, emotional, and social health throughout later life. Ageism is a huge detriment to aging well. Having adopted negative perceptions of aging from society and culture, most of us see aging as an inevitable decline. The effects of internalized ageism are profound and multifaceted, impacting an individual's mental, physical, and social well-being. It has been proven to increase depression, anxiety, stress, and inflammation and to reduce engagement in healthy behaviors.

People with negative views of aging also have a shorter life expectancy, with studies showing a lifespan seven and a half years shorter than those with positive attitudes.

Social health refers to the aspect of well-being that arises from our relationships, our sense of belonging, and how connected we feel—feeling seen, supported, valued, and understood. Social health expert Kasey Killam, MPH, states in her book *The Art and Science of Connection: Why Social Health Is the Missing Key to Living Longer, Healthier, and Happier* that better social connection is linked with lower risk of heart disease, stronger immune response, better cognitive function, fewer depressive symptoms, and longer lifespan.

An older adult may eat well and exercise regularly yet still experience the harmful effects of social isolation. According to the US Surgeon General, loneliness can increase the risk of premature death as much as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.

In a world of longevity quick fixes and biohacking extreme measures, aging well comes down to the basics. My 30 years in the spa industry have educated me on the core elements of a healthy lifestyle. When I was a graduate student at Cornell Hotel School in the mid-1990s, the spa industry primarily consisted of “destination spas” like Rancho La Puerta in Tecate, Mexico, and New Age Health Spa in Neversink, New York. These properties focused on the basics of healthy living:

- Eating healthy, nourishing food
- Engaging in physical activity in natural settings
- Learning effective stress management techniques like meditation and mindfulness
- Building deep social connections with like-minded individuals

These are the biohacks that are proven to contribute to aging well.

“Conscious aging is becoming more aware of our tendencies and habits that we have been carrying and getting rid of what no longer serves us,” according to Ron Pevny, author of *Conscious Living, Conscious Aging: Claiming the Gifts of Elderhood*. “It means becoming an elder with rich and empowering possibilities.”:

- Being intentional in all our decisions
- Getting in touch with our deepest yearnings
- Creating a lifestyle that supports our personal fulfillment

Practicing mindfulness, the act of staying aware in the present moment, is fundamental to overcoming internalized ageism and becoming a conscious elder. When you are mourning the past and fearing the future, you miss out on the joys of later life.



# DRAGO DJOUROV

## MANAGING DIRECTOR OF DD MARKET RESEARCH

Based in Singapore and nearing 20 years in Asian market research, Djourov has undertaken a number of new research projects in the past two years into the lives of older people in Japan and Asia: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/dragodjourov/>

There has never been a better time to think about aging well. All sorts of organizations like the World Health Organization are looking at the new realities of aging populations, but we think we have noticed a few key things happening with older people that are maybe not talked about enough:

- The perception of time seems to change.
- Rather than being worried about time running out, they tell us they are calming down a bit and taking things slow.
- They are not so much getting caught up with retirement as a time to “do something,” “as is often” reported in the media.
- Instead of “must do,” their lives are more about taking their time, experimenting, and finding out what suits them.

Aging well is not about rushing but about being a bit more mindful of enjoying life while also being a bit more playful.

Fundamentals like financials, housing, and security are definitely seen as the things that hold older people back, but we also discovered that they feel they are putting too much pressure on themselves.

We often hear talk of people becoming like children in their older years. But we don’t do enough to encourage that; we don’t give them the opportunities and permission to do that.

The preoccupation with “quantity of life” within the recent focus on longevity, along with the perception that people should be tracking everything, every aspect of health, and so on, does not match what we hear people really want, which is best summed up by one Japanese person we interviewed: “No, it is about the moment.”

**AGING WELL IS ABOUT ENJOYING LIFE WHILE ALSO BEING A BIT MORE PLAYFUL.**

# ONE FINAL THOUGHT—CHRIS HENRY

## HOST OF *ART 2 AGING* PODCAST

After a career as a Canadian news journalist, Chris now hosts the *Art 2 Aging* podcast and has interviewed dozens of experts on all aspects of the aging world. We told him about this project, and he has invited us to share what we learned on his show:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/chris-henry-3b235877/>

Diet, exercise, and sleep. They are the three things that keep getting mentioned across all the experts I have talked to about aging well. Strip away the fancy stuff, the trends, and the new and the departed ideas, and those three things are at the core.

Aging well is a bit like becoming a golfer. You get hooked on wanting to have the perfect stroke and play the perfect shot. But for all the books, the videos, the individualized coaching, and the new techniques and tools, it all comes back to the three things that make a golfer and make us age well: grip, stance, balance.

Get a grip on the reality of aging.

Take a stance to enjoy it.

Keep some balance in your basics: diet, exercise, sleep.



# WHAT WE FOUND SURPRISING

We asked our Aging Well Initiative members to note the one point of interest that stood out from the interviews.

## **WILLIAM MYERS (CHAIR, AGING WELL INITIATIVE)**

The experts seem to agree that aging well is not just about longevity or physical health but about happiness, autonomy, and social connection. The shift from tracking every metric to simply “living in the moment” reflects a profound change; older adults value emotional fulfillment and purpose as much as medical wellness.

## **ANDREA LEJA**

The most surprising insight was how clearly aging well depends on integrated systems—housing, health care, community, and design working together—rather than medical care alone. The report underscores that policy success will be measured by functional ability, prevention, and social connection, not longevity alone.

## **NANCY GRIFFIN**

Unlike Japan and other countries outlined in this report, the US government is not grappling with the financial implications of an aging society and is instead actively tearing down public policy and health initiatives. Millions will be losing health insurance coverage due to increasing costs, overcrowding emergency rooms for care, and navigating aging with little to no support.

## **DAVE MCCAUGHAN (VICE-CHAIR, AGING WELL INITIATIVE)**

Aging well does not mean longevity, or living longer, or looking good for your age. It might do for some. It does not mean tracking or paying attention to smart device metrics or comparisons with norms. Sure, those things will be important for many but not most. Although we saw differences in countries like Japan and the US and Indonesia, what stands out is the consistency with which people in their older decades just want to enjoy life and need a more integrated set of support systems from governments, society, and personal connections to just have the chance to enjoy the current and next stage of life.

## INITIATIVE CHAIR

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