



Wednesday, June 25, 2008

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Older Workers Find 'Encore Careers' Helping Others

 June 18, 2008 04:46 PM ET | [Emily Brandon](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

The most common jobs for people who work after age 65 are in the [retail industry](#). But a [survey](#) released today says that baby boomers are changing that stereotype by finding jobs that not only pay the bills but provide personal meaning and have a social impact.

A telephone survey by the MetLife Foundation, Civic Ventures, and Peter D. Hart Research Associates found that almost 10 percent of those between the ages of 44 and 70 are already in "encore careers" that provide them with a sense of purpose and accomplishment—a figure the researchers estimate translates to between 5.3 million and 8.4 million older workers. Typical fields include education (30 percent), healthcare (23 percent), government (16 percent), nonprofit organizations (13 percent), and for-profit businesses that serve a public good (9 percent).

The primary reasons for choosing one of these jobs later in life are to stay active, productive, and challenged, and to keep learning. But workers also cited the need for income and health benefits. Most of the people in such second careers are professionals, managers, and white-collar workers.

"There's a deep desire to serve, but most people can't afford to do it for nothing," says Marc Freedman, founder and CEO of the think tank Civic Ventures and author of the book *Encore: Finding Work That Matters in the Second Half of Life*. "Purpose is as important for them as income."

Among the 90 percent of people not in these "encore careers," roughly half want to take it easy with a traditional retirement, especially if they are older and have health problems. The other half say they're interested in finding an enriching job but worried about levels of pay and benefits—and that these jobs won't provide the flexibility desired for family time, care-giving responsibilities, or leisure pursuits.

About three quarters of workers in encore careers said the flexibility, pay, and benefits were adequate. But 41 percent of people with interesting second careers said that the need to learn new technologies and skills or go back to school for certifications was a hurdle, and about a third expressed concern about the loss of seniority or status that comes with a new job helping others.

Here's a list of [job websites](#) to help you find an "encore career."

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