

Opinion: In truth, 60 is the new 60

By Marc Freedman

By now the story is familiar. A gray wave of aging boomers is crossing into their 60s, hitting retirement age, morphing suddenly into senior citizens, and bringing with them a new era of demographically determined dependency and despair. We're trading baby strollers for walkers and wheelchairs.

Don't believe it. The sixty-somethings headed our way will invent an entirely new stage of life – the encore years – between the end of middle adulthood and anything resembling old age and retirement. We brand them the young-old, or the working-retired. Or maybe just the oxymoronic years.

On one hand, these new-stagers are implored to hang on to their fast-fading youth – 60 is the new 40, we're told. On the other, my pharmacy offers a “senior discount” to anyone over 60. It's either clinging to lost youth or accepting premature aging.

In truth, 60 is not the new 40 any more than it is the new 90. It's the new 60. Indeed, the whole 60- to 80-year-old period is simply new territory, and the people in this period constitute a 21st-century phenomenon.

Marc Freedman is author of [The Big Shift: Navigating the New Stage Beyond Midlife](#), to be published by PublicAffairs.

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