

The Journal, 2023 Edition

By Peter Rundlet

Like most people working for social progress, I've been inspired to pursue the big, noble (if typical) goals like peace, equality, and freedom. But there's another, perhaps less visible goal that I've been drawn to: increasing prosperity.

Prosperity encompasses much more than wealth. It extends to such key life ingredients as health, and happiness, and strong personal relationships. Of course, having some degree of financial wealth is important to pay for the necessities that sustain us. But study after study has shown that beyond a certain threshold (often less than \$100,000), higher incomes do not bring greater happiness — or, at least, incremental increases in money do not correlate to increased happiness. Wealth or prosperity can be measured in other ways, such as in time and health, that are often of higher value. As demand for our attention heightens evermore, time becomes a scarce commodity. And as we grow older, we tend to appreciate the reality that time is not a renewable resource; it is a continuously depleting one, rendering it invaluable. Health is similar to time: we tend to take it for granted until we start to lose it.

But here is the great news: thanks to human advances — scientific, technological, and otherwise — people around the world are benefitting from living substantially longer lives. The giant leap in life expectancy is one of humanity's greatest achievements of the past century. And with decades-long increases in lifespan, we are now primed to take a new kind of leap forward — increasing *health span*. With planning, we can leverage the opportunity to live more years of our longer lives in good health. In this way, we can truly multiply our prosperity — in this case, as measured in time.

We work to promote healthy aging and protect the dignity and rights of older people everywhere.

Mission Critical Work

That is why the work we do at AARP is so important. Our mission is to empower people to choose how they live as they age, and our impact agenda guides us to promote and enhance health security, financial resilience, and social connections (all different forms of wealth, properly defined). Our founder, Ethel Percy Andrus, made clear that our social mission extends to everyone. “What we do for one, we do for all,” she said. This vision has been a touchstone for AARP International, as it seeks to shine a spotlight on the global megatrend of population aging, which now reaches all parts of the world. We work to promote healthy aging and protect the dignity and rights of older people everywhere. And we seek to learn and share the innovations in aging that originate in all parts of the world because good ideas should have no borders.

Over the past year, we have produced cutting-edge research on the Global Longevity Economy, work that revealed how in 2020 alone, people ages 50 and older contributed \$45 trillion to the global GDP, and how they are likely to contribute \$118 trillion by 2050. We released the fourth edition of the Aging Readiness and Competitiveness report (ARC 4.0), which identified real-world solutions to facilitate equitable healthy aging in low- and middle-income countries (which will be home to 80% of the world’s older people by 2050). Together with our partners, we published significant reports on:

- how international development banks, such as the World Bank, can have greater impact if they use an aging lens as they approach their work;
- digital inclusion, to ensure the online access older adults need in a digital age to support all aspects of their lives — financial, social, and health; and
- the unique economic hurdles facing older women as well as recommendations to unleash the economic potential of older women everywhere.

Beyond this, the team continued its efforts to foster a more age-friendly built environment (e.g., homes, communities, and more). We published six more case studies in our Equity by Design series, which highlights compelling innovations from around the world that advance equity and help people thrive as they age. Each case study provides guidance on how to replicate the featured innovations elsewhere.

In addition, we supported the production and launch of the National Academy of Medicine’s Global Roadmap for Healthy Longevity, and we recruited more than 100 global corporations to join our Living, Learning, and Earning Longer Initiative to promote the multigenerational workforce. Meanwhile, an AARP delegation, led by Chief Public Policy Officer Debra Whitman, played a leadership role on the international stage at the UNECE’s Ministerial Conference on Ageing to help mainstream aging in the national policies of 56 member states, in recognition of the 20th anniversary of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA). We deepened our partnerships with the United Nations, the OECD, and the World Health Organization, and our CEO, Jo Ann Jenkins, was recognized as one of the Healthy Ageing 50 — a select group of world leaders celebrated for their work to transform the world to be a better place in which to grow old.

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The Journal as Collaborative Tool

We do our best work when we work with others — sharing our ideas and learning from innovators and thought leaders in aging from across the globe. And that is why I am so pleased to share the 15th edition of *The Journal* with you now. This edition was crafted to respond to the unique times we are in. The global megatrend of population aging is increasingly highlighted in the nightly news, rising in the popular consciousness. Covid is waning, but not over, with huge implications for the future of long-term care and leaving an enduring impact on the workforce and the future of work. We invited policy makers and experts to illuminate these trends and make recommendations for the future.

In these pages, Dubravka Šuica, Vice President for the European Commission, makes a strong case for policy makers to leverage the opportunity presented by population change and describes five principles to help us reap the benefits. Diene Keita of the UN Population Fund puts a spotlight on how population aging is most rapid in the developing world, makes some fantastic recommendations about planning for it, and underscores the critical importance of data collection. German Minister Lisa Paus highlights the critical importance of caregivers and recommends ways to support them. Maciej Kucharczyk, Secretary General of Age Platform Europe, makes clear that ageism and age discrimination persist around the world and must be tackled for progress to happen in any given area. Argentinian Ambassador Maria del Carmen SquEFF echoes these points, urging a particular focus on the rights of older women.

Given the devastating impact of Covid on older people living in long-term care facilities, we asked several experts to suggest a path forward for long term services and supports. Noting the preexisting structural weaknesses in long-term care, Francesca Colombo, the Head of the Health Division for the OECD, argues that the quality of care needs to improve and that we need to do a better job recruiting and retaining caregivers in light of ever-rising need. Robyn Stone of Leading Age turns the conversation toward the United States where, she argues, long-term services and supports are broken. The sector, she says, is in need of massive transformation, particularly given that the need for care is about to explode. Finally, Philippe Seidel Leroy of Age Platform proposes that the EU adopt a new strategy for long-term care, and Emi Kiyota, of the National University of Singapore, described Singapore as a possible role model. All of these articles merit the attention of policy makers.

Also in these pages is an examination from various angles of a post-Covid world. The pandemic sent many of us home to work and it forever transformed the workplace. One silver lining was that it showed us what is possible with respect to working remotely, asynchronously, and flexibly — all of which can help older workers who want or need to work longer to stay in the workforce. AARP's Chief Operating Officer, Scott Frisch, makes a compelling case for older workers, highlighting the observation that while machines depreciate over time, older workers appreciate in value. The U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy, highlights five principles that help support the mental health and well-being of older workers

in the workplace and argues that employers have a powerful role to play in creating a culture of well-being. Those employers who work for this will create valuable returns — for their own organizations and society. Finally, Beth Truesdale and Lisa Berkman make clear that health and job quality are intertwined. Concluding their piece by presenting the fundamental characteristics of a “healthy job,” they send a concise message: change the work, not the worker.

This edition also continues our recent tradition of highlighting some of the small and scrappy organizations working to make a difference for older people in their communities. Our “Newsmakers” section features such organizations from Venezuela, Kenya, and Nepal.

Finally, we are especially proud to share this year’s Special Feature on New Zealand and that nation’s aging innovations. We spent over two weeks on the ground and came away energized — by the nation’s beauty, people, and of course, the aging-issue insights gained, which we are excited to share with you here. That section highlights many of our findings and includes an article by New Zealand’s Minister of Health, Andrew Little. And running through all of these insightful articles is an undercurrent of the nation’s uniqueness.

The Opportunity in Aging

In all corners of the world, the population is growing older. We can look forward to a future in which an increasingly larger share of the population is older. We will have more 50-year-olds, more 65-year-olds, more 80-year-olds, and more centenarians. This

shift is a testament to human progress and we can celebrate the achievement. All over the world, forward-thinking and creative people are working to plan for the future and leverage the opportunity of population aging. We are grateful to share some of their thoughts here. As we go forward, we will continue to look for the visionaries, changemakers, builders, and doers. We want to share our insights and learn from others. Together, we can create a world in which all people can live with dignity and pursue the lives they want — to prosper, in all senses of the word — as they age. ●



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