

C1-C2 Worksheet: The Rise Of Unretired Seniors - 08 May 2026

Article

A recent Associated Press report on older Americans returning to work points to a quiet but revealing shift in the meaning of retirement. After decades in hospitals, universities and businesses, some seniors have found themselves going back into paid work not because they want a second career, but because savings have failed to keep pace with rent, food and healthcare costs. Many are turning to app-based gig work - driving, pet care, laundry services or delivery - because it allows them to fit work around their health, energy and family commitments. The old image of retirement as a clean break is beginning to wear thin.

For some, the return to work is not entirely bleak. Flexible jobs can help older adults stay engaged, meet strangers, keep up with technology and hold on to a sense of usefulness. But that freedom can also mask a precarious reality. Gig workers often have to pay out of pocket for petrol, insurance and repairs, while lacking paid leave, reliable hours or conventional job protection. What looks like autonomy may, under closer scrutiny, amount to a fragile compromise between dignity and necessity. Seniors who once expected security are now having to weigh up income, exhaustion and risk.

The trend raises broader questions about how societies are redefining old age. If people live longer but cannot afford to stop working, retirement becomes less a life stage than a privilege. At the same time, many older people do not want to be written off as economically or socially irrelevant. The challenge is to build systems that allow seniors to contribute without forcing them to patch together unstable incomes. Unretirement may open up new forms of participation, but it also exposes how easily the promise of later-life freedom can break down.

True/False

Decide if each statement is True (T) or False (F).

1. The article suggests that some older Americans are returning to work because living costs have outpaced their savings.
2. The writer presents gig work as a perfect solution with no disadvantages for seniors.
3. Flexible app-based jobs are described as allowing some older workers to organise work around health and family needs.
4. The article says all unretired seniors are mainly looking for a second career.
5. The second paragraph suggests that apparent freedom can hide insecurity.
6. The writer argues that older people should be written off as economically irrelevant.
7. The final paragraph presents retirement as something that may increasingly depend on financial privilege.
8. The article implies that unretirement reveals both resilience and weakness in current social systems.

Phrase Match

Match the phrases (1-10) to the correct definitions (A-J).

Phrases (1-10)	Definitions (A-J)
1. going back into	A. to start using or relying on something
2. keep pace with	B. to keep something rather than lose it
3. turning to	C. to become less convincing or effective
4. fit work around	D. to stop working properly or collapse
5. wear thin	E. to pay directly with one's own money
6. keep up with	F. to return to an activity or situation
7. hold on to	G. to consider different options carefully
8. pay out of pocket	H. to arrange work so it matches other needs
9. weigh up	I. to move or improve at the same speed as something
10. break down	J. to stay level with new information or change

Synonym Match

Match the words (1-10) to the correct synonyms (A-J).

Words (1-10)	Synonyms (A-J)
1. revealing	A. unstable
2. commitments	B. advantage
3. bleak	C. examination
4. precarious	D. grim
5. autonomy	E. telling
6. scrutiny	F. self-respect
7. compromise	G. insignificant
8. dignity	H. obligations
9. privilege	I. concession
10. irrelevant	J. independence

Use the new language

Please choose 5 words or phrases and make your own sentence using the new word or phrase.

Discussion Questions

Student A

1. Do you know anyone who has continued working after retirement age?
2. Would you prefer to stop working completely one day, or keep a small amount of work?
3. What kinds of jobs might suit older workers best?
4. Does flexible gig work sound freeing or stressful to you?
5. What would make later life feel dignified and secure?
6. Why might some older people want to stay socially active through work?
7. How should families support older relatives who still need to earn money?
8. Is retirement still a realistic goal for most people where you live?

Student B

1. Is unretirement mainly a sign of personal resilience or social failure?
2. Should gig platforms offer stronger protections to older workers?
3. How might ageing societies need to rethink the boundary between work and retirement?
4. Does flexible work preserve autonomy, or does it normalise insecurity?
5. Should governments prioritise pensions, affordable housing or healthcare to reduce later-life work?
6. What might cities look like if many more people in their seventies and eighties remain economically active?
7. Does society undervalue older workers until it needs their labour again?
8. Is the traditional idea of retirement becoming obsolete?

Answer Key

True/False: 1=T, 2=F, 3=T, 4=F, 5=T, 6=F, 7=T, 8=T

Phrase Match: 1=F, 2=I, 3=A, 4=H, 5=C, 6=J, 7=B, 8=E, 9=G, 10=D

Synonym Match: 1=E, 2=H, 3=D, 4=A, 5=J, 6=C, 7=I, 8=F, 9=B, 10=G

Example sentences with the phrases

1. After several years away, she is going back into teaching part-time.
2. Wages have not kept pace with the rising cost of rent.
3. Many retirees are turning to flexible work to supplement their income.
4. He tries to fit work around his medical appointments.
5. The promise of total freedom can wear thin when the bills arrive.
6. It is hard for some older workers to keep up with new apps.
7. She wanted to hold on to her independence for as long as possible.
8. Gig workers often have to pay out of pocket for fuel and repairs.
9. Before accepting the job, he had to weigh up the physical demands.
10. A weak pension system can break down under demographic pressure.