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## **The Breaking News English.com Resource Book**

“1,000 Ideas & Activities For Language Teachers”

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## **Retirement age may be extended to 85**

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**21 February, 2006**

## **THE ARTICLE**

### **Retirement age may be extended to 85**

Workers may soon see a major change in the length of their working lives. An American expert on society and work said yesterday that the age at which people retire might one day be 85 instead of 65. This means the idea of early retirement may disappear completely. Stanford University biologist Shripad Tuljapurkar told scientists at a convention in the USA that modern medicine and technology will mean people will live to be much older than now. He said this would greatly reshape our image and reality of work. He added economies would not be able to support so many retired people.

Professor Tuljapurkar believes that most people living in today's industrialized societies will live to be 100. He said once scientists unlock the key to the gene that makes us age, society will change dramatically. "Some people believe we are on the brink of being able to extend human lifespan significantly...We have doubled human lifespan in the last century", he said. He has warned that many workers will discover their pension companies do not have enough money to fund their retirement. He added that dreams of early retirement will remain just dreams.

## WARM-UPS

**1. RETIREMENT:** In pairs / groups, talk about what life would be like to be retired. Write down five differences of retiring at 65 and 85 years old. Share these with your partners. What are the benefits of each retirement age? Change partners often.

**2. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

*Workers / working lives / experts / retirement / modern medicine / technology / economies / 100-year-olds / keys / genes / pensions / lifespans / dreams*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

**3. AT THE SOCIAL CLUB:** You are 100 years old. You have been retired now for 15 years. You are at the retirees social club. Talk to the other 100-year-olds about being 100. What do you do every day? What do you want to do in life? How much longer do you hope to live? Ask each other the questions normal of 100-year-olds.

**4. GOLDEN YEARS:** Talk about each of these times in our lives. What are the things we typically do during these periods? Would these things change if we lived to be much older and retired at 85 years old?

- Teenage years
- Our twenties
- Being thirtysomething
- Our 40s
- In our 50s
- 60 to 69
- Being a septuagenarian
- Over 100

**5. LONGEVITY OPINIONS:** What do you think about these opinions? Students A agree with them, Students B disagree.

- a. Scientists should never try to make us live longer.
- b. Increasing our lifespan increases problems linked to overpopulation.
- c. It's better to die naturally than take medicine to live longer and work until 85.
- d. People retiring at 85 means a much wiser and experienced workforce.
- e. A retirement age of 85 will turn us into slaves.
- f. A later retirement age is only good for pension companies.
- g. Early retirement is a basic human right.
- h. Living to be over 100 would be great.

**6. RETIREMENT:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "retirement". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

## BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| a. The retirement age may soon be 85 for university majors.        | T / F |
| b. The idea of early retirement may one day completely disappear.  | T / F |
| c. We will soon be living much longer lives.                       | T / F |
| d. Modern economies can support any number of retired people.      | T / F |
| e. Many people in the developed world could live to be beyond 100. | T / F |
| f. Geneticists will lock the key to ageing.                        | T / F |
| g. We have doubled human lifespan in the past century.             | T / F |
| h. Dreams of early retirement will remain just dreams.             | T / F |

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| a. major          | conference  |
| b. expert         | stay        |
| c. instead of     | developed   |
| d. convention     | greatly     |
| e. reshape        | rather than |
| f. industrialized | pay for     |
| g. unlock         | significant |
| h. dramatically   | change      |
| i. fund           | figure out  |
| j. remain         | specialist  |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |                                   |                                  |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. see a major change in the      | to be much older than now        |
| b. the idea of early retirement   | lifespan in the last century     |
| c. people will live               | support so many retired people   |
| d. greatly reshape our            | length of their working lives    |
| e. economies would not be able to | the brink of...                  |
| f. most people living in          | fund their retirement            |
| g. once scientists unlock the key | today's industrialized societies |
| h. we are on                      | may disappear completely         |
| i. We have doubled human          | to the gene that makes us age    |
| j. have enough money to           | image and reality of work        |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

### Retirement age may be extended to 85

Workers may soon see a \_\_\_\_\_ change in the length of their working lives. An American \_\_\_\_\_ on society and work said yesterday that the age at which people retire might one day be 85 \_\_\_\_\_ of 65. This means the idea of early retirement may \_\_\_\_\_ completely. Stanford University biologist Shripad Tuljapurkar told scientists at a \_\_\_\_\_ in the USA that modern medicine and technology will \_\_\_\_\_ people will live to be much older than now. He said this would greatly \_\_\_\_\_ our image and reality of work. He added economies would not be able to \_\_\_\_\_ so many retired people.

*instead*  
*mean*  
*major*  
*support*  
*convention*  
*reshape*  
*expert*  
*disappear*

Professor Tuljapurkar believes that most people living in today's industrialized \_\_\_\_\_ will live to be 100. He said once scientists unlock the key to the \_\_\_\_\_ that makes us age, society will change \_\_\_\_\_. "Some people believe we are on the \_\_\_\_\_ of being able to extend human lifespan significantly...We have doubled human \_\_\_\_\_ in the last century", he said. He has warned that many workers will \_\_\_\_\_ their pension companies do not have enough money to \_\_\_\_\_ their retirement. He added that dreams of early retirement will \_\_\_\_\_ just dreams.

*lifespan*  
*societies*  
*fund*  
*dramatically*  
*brink*  
*remain*  
*gene*  
*discover*

## **LISTENING**

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### **Retirement age may be extended to 85**

Workers may soon see a major change in the \_\_\_\_\_ of their working lives. An American \_\_\_\_\_ on society and work said yesterday that the age at which people retire might one day be 85 instead of 65. This means the idea of early retirement may \_\_\_\_\_ completely. Stanford University biologist Shripad Tuljapurkar told scientists at a \_\_\_\_\_ in the USA that modern medicine and technology will mean people will live to be much older than now. He said this would greatly \_\_\_\_\_ our image and reality of work. He added economies would not be able to \_\_\_\_\_ so many retired people.

Professor Tuljapurkar believes that most people living in today's industrialized \_\_\_\_\_ will live to be 100. He said once scientists \_\_\_\_\_ the key to the gene that makes us age, society will change dramatically. "Some people believe we are on the \_\_\_\_\_ of being able to extend human lifespan significantly...We have doubled human \_\_\_\_\_ in the last century", he said. He has warned that many workers will discover their pension companies do not have enough money to \_\_\_\_\_ their retirement. He added that dreams of early retirement will \_\_\_\_\_ just dreams.

## AFTER READING / LISTENING

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'life'** and **'span'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. STUDENT "RETIREMENT" SURVEY:** In pairs / groups, write down questions about retirement.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

**6. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- major
- expert
- disappear
- mean
- image
- support
- 100
- key
- brink
- doubled
- fund
- remain

## **DISCUSSION**

### STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. Do you think scientists should extend our lives?
- c. Do you think scientists are playing the role of God in increasing our lifespans?
- d. What would society be like if most people were over fifty?
- e. What do you think of 85 as a retirement age?
- f. When do you want to retire?
- g. Would you like to live to be 150?
- h. Would life be different if we knew we had to work until we were 85?
- i. What new industries would there be if we retired at 85 and lived to be over 100?
- j. Do you think scientists should unlock the key to the ageing gene?

### STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think increasing our lifespans will create more problems for society?
- d. Would you be happy to fly on an airplane piloted by an 84-year-old?
- e. If we all lived to be 120, when would middle age be?
- f. What do you think of the idea of having great great great grandchildren?
- g. Do you think retiring at 85 means you'll be very when you retire?
- h. Do you want scientists to double our lifespans again?
- i. What will happen to dreams of retirement if the retirement age is 85?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

**AFTER DISCUSSION:** Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?



## SPEAKING

**100:** In pairs / groups, talk about the pros and cons of a society having an average lifespan of 100. Use the items in the left hand column to help your conversations.

|                | PROS | CONS |
|----------------|------|------|
| Workforce      |      |      |
| Pensions       |      |      |
| Babysitting    |      |      |
| New industries |      |      |
| Crime          |      |      |
| Food           |      |      |
| Healthcare     |      |      |

Change partners / groups. Tell each other what your previous partner(s) said.  
Decide whether you would be in favor or against living to be 100 years old or older.

## **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find information about retirement ages around the world. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

**3. MY RETIREMENT:** Write down all the things you hope to do when you are retired. Compare these things with the lives of your grandparents, parents or other retired people you know. Did everyone want to do similar things when they retire?

**4. EFFECTS:** Write an essay on the effects of the retirement age on society. What will governments and companies need to change if people retire at 85 and live to be over 100? Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone write about similar things?

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F      b. T      c. T      d. F      e. T      f. F      g. T      h. T

### SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| a. major          | significant |
| b. expert         | specialist  |
| c. instead of     | rather than |
| d. convention     | conference  |
| e. reshape        | change      |
| f. industrialized | developed   |
| g. unlock         | figure out  |
| h. dramatically   | greatly     |
| i. fund           | pay for     |
| j. remain         | stay        |

### PHRASE MATCH:

- |                                   |                                  |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. see a major change in the      | length of their working lives    |
| b. the idea of early retirement   | may disappear completely         |
| c. people will live               | to be much older than now        |
| d. greatly reshape our            | image and reality of work        |
| e. economies would not be able to | support so many retired people   |
| f. most people living in          | today's industrialized societies |
| g. once scientists unlock the key | to the gene that makes us age    |
| h. we are on                      | the brink of...                  |
| i. We have doubled human          | lifespan in the last century     |
| j. have enough money to           | fund their retirement            |

### GAP FILL:

#### Retirement age may be extended to 85

Workers may soon see a **major** change in the length of their working lives. An American **expert** on society and work said yesterday that the age at which people retire might one day be 85 **instead** of 65. This means the idea of early retirement may **disappear** completely. Stanford University biologist Shripad Tuljapurkar told scientists at a **convention** in the USA that modern medicine and technology will **mean** people will live to be much older than now. He said this would greatly **reshape** our image and reality of work. He added economies would not be able to **support** so many retired people.

Professor Tuljapurkar believes that most people living in today's industrialized **societies** will live to be 100. He said once scientists unlock the key to the **gene** that makes us age, society will change **dramatically**. "Some people believe we are on the **brink** of being able to extend human lifespan significantly...We have doubled human **lifespan** in the last century", he said. He has warned that many workers will **discover** their pension companies do not have enough money to **fund** their retirement. He added that dreams of early retirement will **remain** just dreams.