

# International Expert-Conference on Human Rights of older Persons

12-13 November 2018, Vienna



# The Benefits of Learning in Later Life

12-13 November 2018, Vienna

Franz Kolland, University of Vienna

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# The rationale for lifelong learning in later life

 Federal Ministry  
Labour, Social Affairs, Health  
and Consumer Protection

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Human Rights of Older Persons

Demographic change

Higher  
educational levels

New  
scientific findings  
Benefits

Disappearance of the  
„three boxes“

# LLL2020 strategy for lifelong learning

- A key strategy that targets Austria's older population is the LLL2020. It is a key policy document which was signed by the Federal Ministry for Teaching, Art and Culture, The Federal Ministry for Science and Research as well as the Federal Ministry for Work, Social and Consumer Protection and The Federal Ministry for Economics, Family and youth.
- The basis of this strategy is the observation that through demographic development and the increased life expectancy, lifelong learning becomes a key policy strategy for supporting a high quality of life during but also beyond working life. Section 9 of this document is dedicated to "*supporting the quality of life through education in retirement.*" (LLL2020 2011, p. 2ff.)

# LLL2020 strategy for lifelong learning

The strategy aims to gradually increase older adults' participation in educational activities to at least **12 percent**. Based on this goal, different strategies regarding the quality of lifelong learning are stated in the strategy:

Educational activities should be accessible on a nation-wide basis and should be supplied by professionals.

Older people should get access to specific information and advice.

An education-promoting infrastructure for older adults, especially in the area of digitalization, is needed.

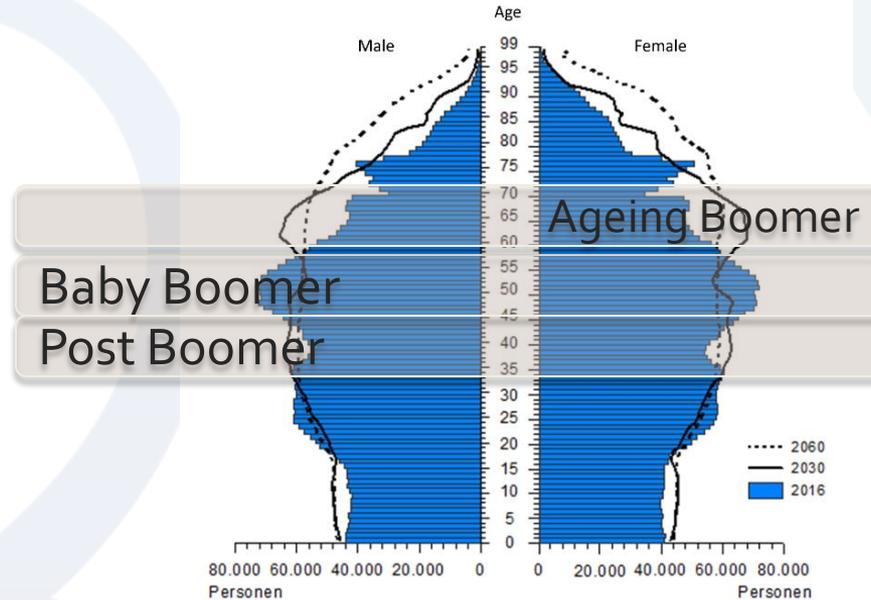
# Demographic Changes

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# Demo-Change: The Baby Boomers Grow Up

- The cohorts born in the first decades after World War II are on the basis of socio-demographic data referred to as the “Baby Boomer” generation.
- Baby Boomers are an important group in most western countries because they are numerous and entering the phase of life when morbidity is likely to become prevalent.

Age Pyramids Austria: 2016, 2030 and 2060



Age Pyramids Austria: Population Projections. Source: STATISTIK AUSTRIA,

# Baby Boomer

- Baby boomers will be ageing in a unique demographic context in which there has been a significant shift from a youth dominated age structure to one in which there are much higher percentages of people over 65.
- Baby Boomers, in general, have often been characterized in popular and scientific literature as individualistic, demanding, and focused on self-realization.

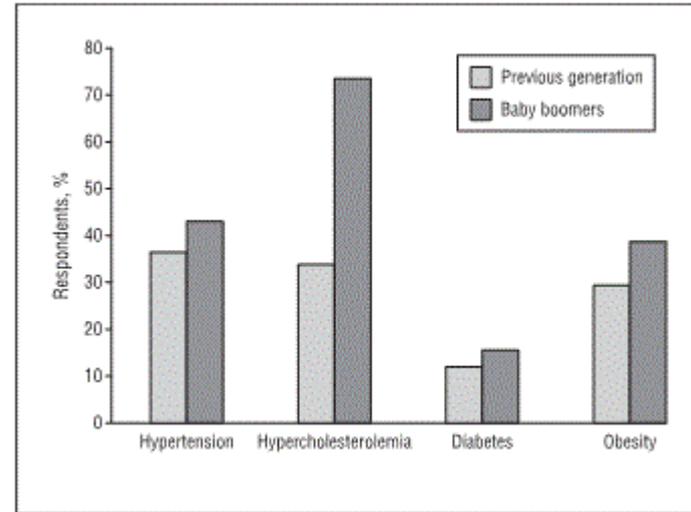
# Boomers are far less fit than their parents were

- Boomers developed their “forever young” mentality as an aversion to how their parents aged.
- They saw the grey hair, the wrinkles. They got slower and chubbier. Boomers don’t want to age the way their parents did.
- Baby boomers are among the biggest consumers of Botox and hair dye.
- But beyond the surface, it’s another story: many boomers are actually now in worse shape.
- *Whitbourne, Susan K., Willis, Sherry L. 2006. The Baby Boomers Grow Up. London: Lawrence Erlbaum.*

## The Status of Baby Boomers' Health in the US

In 2010, baby boomers made up 26.1% of the US population. The study examined the health status of aging baby boomers relative to the previous generation.

Overall health status was lower in baby boomers and the prevalence was higher for obesity, hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, diabetes.

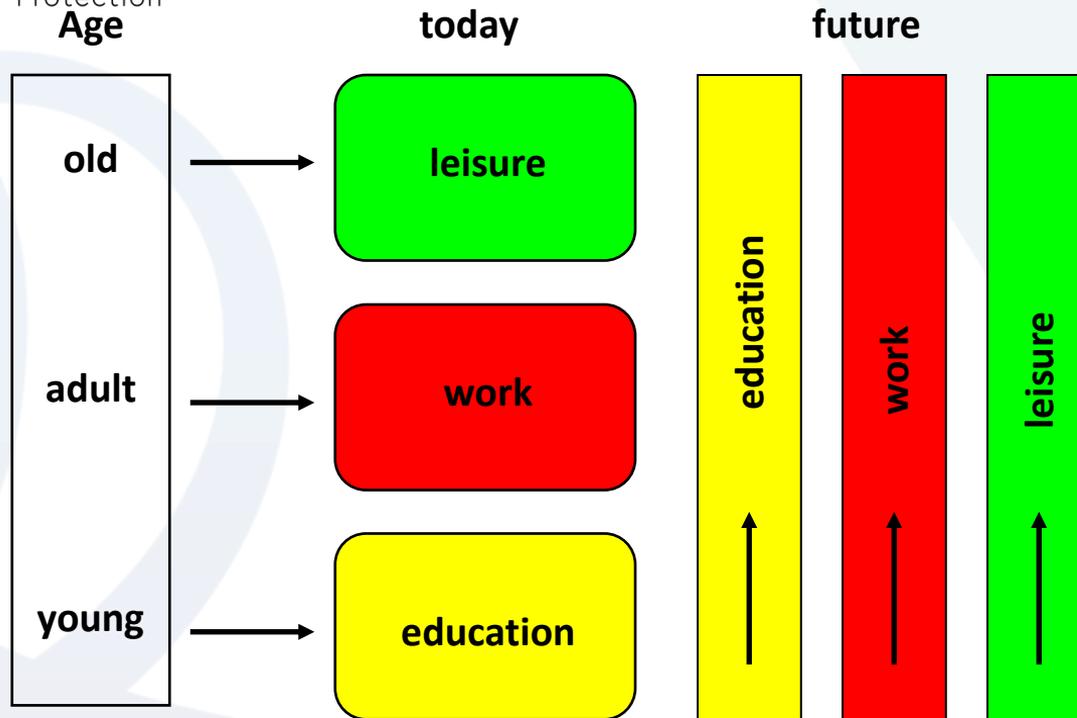


Proportion of each cohort (baby boomers and previous generation at age 46-64 years);  
*Dana E. King et al. 2013*



# Disappearance of the Three Boxes

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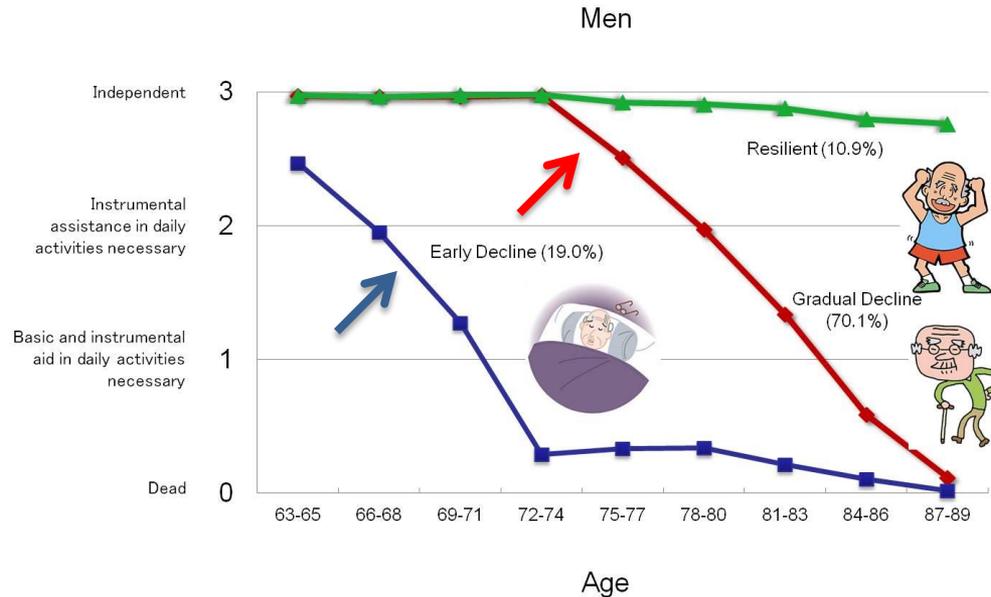
Disappearance of the „three boxes“

*Riley & Riley, 1992*

# Gerontological Reasons

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# Question: How can we prolong the period of independent living?



A 25-Year National Survey of the Japanese Elderly

# Reasons for education in later life

A resource for  
economic productivity  
social status  
individual lifestyle  
self fulfilment  
longevity

## Reasons for education in later life

- Psychology focuses on older people's abilities to learn
- Sociology emphasizes education as resource for productivity and social participation
- Political sciences are oriented towards education and civil society
- Social/Labour market policies regard lifelong learning as factor for prolonging working life

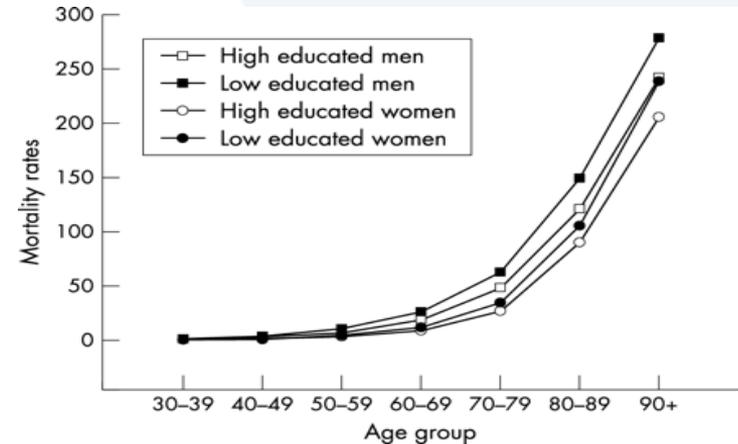
# Benefits of LLL

- Health, lower mortality
- Intellectual improvement/ stabilization
- Social inclusion

## Benefits: Lifelong learning improves health

### Positive effects of learning on **Health**

- likeliness to seek medical assistance sooner and more effectively
- recovery from diseases
- fitness and exercising
- satisfaction with health (Khaw 1997)
- level of education and mortality (Huisman et al. 2004)



# Benefits: Education and memory

## Protective role of educational level on episodic memory aging: An event-related potential study

Lucie Angel\*, Séverine Fay, Badiâa Bouazzaoui, Alexia Baudouin, Michel Isingrini

UMR-CNRS 6234 CeRCA, IFR 135, Imagerie Fonctionnelle, Université François-Rabelais de Tours, France

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of the present experiment was to investigate whether educational level could modulate the effect of aging on episodic memory and on the electrophysiological correlates of retrieval success. Participants were divided into four groups based on age (young vs. older) and educational level (high vs. low), with 14 participants in each group. Event-related potentials (ERP) were recorded while participants performed a word-stem cued-recall task. Age-related memory deficits were greater for the less educated individuals. Age differences in the ERP old/new effects were also modulated by the level of education. This study demonstrated that the effects of age on episodic memory and ERP correlates of retrieval success are smaller in participants with high educational levels than those with lower levels. These findings provide support for the reserve hypothesis and highlight the need to consider individual differences when studying cognitive and cerebral changes in aging.

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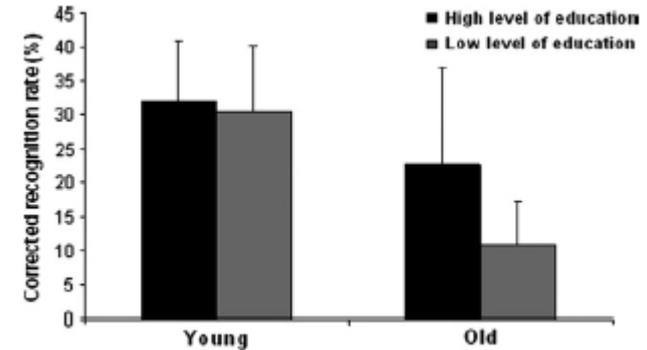
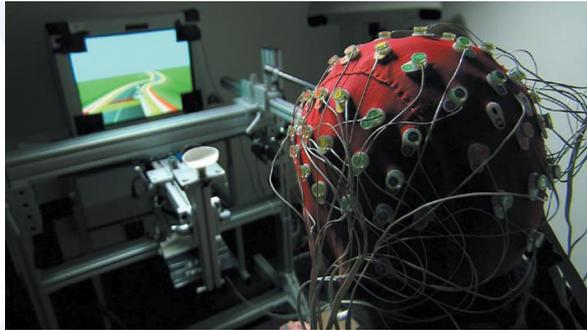


Fig. 2. Corrected recognition rate according to age and education.

## Video game training enhances cognitive control in older adults

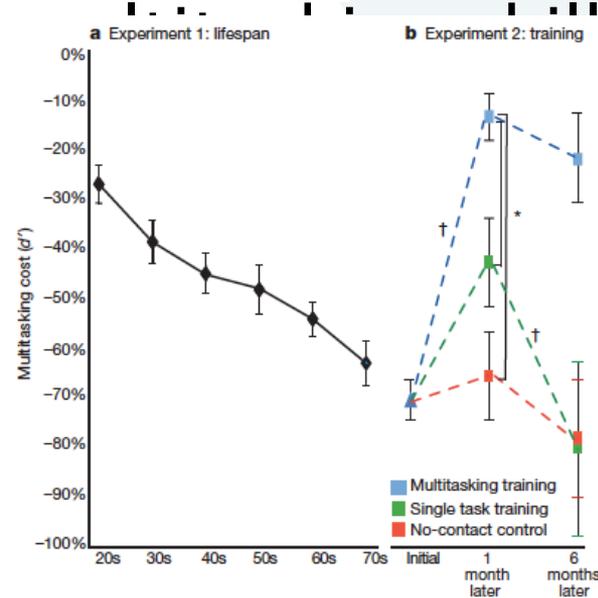
J. A. Anguera<sup>1,2,3</sup>, J. Boccanfuso<sup>1,3</sup>, J. L. Rintoul<sup>1,3</sup>, O. Al-Hashimi<sup>1,2,3</sup>, F. Faraji<sup>1,3</sup>, J. Janowich<sup>1,3</sup>, E. Kong<sup>1,3</sup>, Y. Larraburo<sup>1,3</sup>, C. Rolle<sup>1,3</sup>, E. Johnston<sup>1</sup> & A. Gazzaley<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>



NeuroRacer



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# Benefits: Social inclusion

Positive effects of learning on **Social Inclusion:**

- participation in social & political activities
- counteract risk of poverty
- improve equal opportunities
- challenge negative images of ageing (Withnall 2010)

# Outlook: Society benefits substantially

## Lifelong learning

- is relevant for the **labour market** (produce earnings)
- improves **democracy** by active participation in society
- „**spillover**“ on colleagues, family & friends
- develops **individuals** (self-esteem, confidence)
- improves **health**
- reduces educational **inequality**, esp. if directed to low skilled

# Wellbeing over the lifespan

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## A snapshot of the age distribution of psychological well-being in the United States

Arthur A. Stone<sup>a,1</sup>, Joseph E. Schwartz<sup>a,b</sup>, Joan E. Broderick<sup>a</sup>, and Angus Deaton<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY 11794-8790; <sup>b</sup>Center for Behavioral and Cardiovascular Health, Columbia University Medical Center, New York, NY 10032; and <sup>c</sup>Woodrow Wilson School and the Department of Economics, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ 08544

Edited\* by Daniel Kahneman, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, and approved April 20, 2010 (received for review March 22, 2010)

**Q.:** Why are older people on average, happier and less stressed than younger people?

**A.:** Older people have an increased ability to self-regulate their emotions and view their situations positively.

