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## AUSSIE SENIORS EMBRACING THEIR EMPTY NESTS

*Seniors are enjoying newfound financial and social freedom after their children move out of the family home, although many 'Boomerang Children' are moving back in*

Becoming empty nesters is a huge milestone for Australian seniors, but while some seniors may initially experience mixed feelings about their children leaving home, most are embracing the new-found freedom it affords them according to a new study released today by the Australian Seniors Insurance Agency.

The *Empty Nesters* report is the fourteenth instalment of *The Australian Seniors Series* – an ongoing national study investigating the shifting attitudes and concerns affecting Australia's over 50s. This chapter explores how Australian seniors feel about their children leaving the family home from an emotional, financial and social perspective.

Although more than half (51.4%) of seniors say they were happy after their children first left home, one in four (41.1%) admit they were sad at the development. Perhaps unsurprisingly, mothers are more affected by their children leaving than fathers. Male seniors are more likely to say they felt happy when their children moved out (61.3% vs 42.8%) while female seniors were more likely to be upset (49.4% vs 31.4%).

No matter the initial reaction, however, most seniors eventually embrace with their empty nester status. In fact, the majority (74.2%) of seniors say they ended up enjoying the extra time at their disposal, their financial position changed for the better (67.8%) and they felt a new sense of freedom (62.5%) after their children first moved out of home.

Seniors aren't finding it hard to fill the hours that were once spent on family matters, either. After their children left home, more than half (59.6%) of seniors say they were able to spend more time on their hobbies and interests. These included taking up sports (28.2%) joining clubs or societies (17.5%), getting a pet (14.2%) or undergoing further study (12.4%).

Similar proportions also said they were spending more time socialising with friends (47.0%), eating out (46.9%) and exercising more (41.3%).

Elisabeth Shaw, CEO at Relationships Australia NSW said: "For many Australian seniors, becoming empty nesters is a bittersweet moment. On the one hand, parents are proud to see their children make their way in the world; however, the lack of day-to-day contact after years of living under one roof can be a difficult transition.

"Happily, this research says that most seniors soon find they have plenty to do once the children have flown the nest. Seniors can embrace old interests, social events and friendships that may have been put on the backburner while they were busy with the family, or even take up entirely new hobbies with their extra time and, in many cases, improved financial situation.

"It's encouraging to see seniors are using their free time to improve their health, with the research showing 30.8% of seniors who took up sports or exercise began walking more, while others are furthering their study, most commonly in the arts and humanities."

Seniors are also taking advantage of the extra space in their homes, with three in ten (30.4%) seniors who stayed in the family home saying they turned their children's rooms into space where they can indulge in their hobbies or interests.

Among these seniors, 15.3% say they gained financial benefit from this change, primarily through offering their services on a freelance basis and selling their collectibles and creations, earning an average of \$2,584 in the last 12 months from indulging in their hobbies/interests.

Chief Marketing Officer and Australian Seniors Insurance Agency spokesperson, Simon Hovell, said: "Our research shows that Australian seniors are embracing their new-found freedom and looking on the bright side when it's time for their children to leave home. "Seniors are quick to embrace new opportunities, and many of them are proving this by approaching their empty nests with entrepreneurial flair. We found that Australian seniors who have turned their children's rooms into either space for short-term accommodation or a place to indulge their hobbies and interests are earning an incredible combined total of \$1.1 million each year."

However, not all empty nesters stay that way. Almost a third (32.3%) of seniors have experienced 'boomerang children' who left home but ended up moving back in, most commonly for financial reasons (39.5%) or due to relationship issues like a break up (31.8%).

These boomerang children occasionally bring an entourage with them – 19.1% of these seniors say their boomerang children brought home their partners, while one in eight (12.7%) say they brought their own children with them.

More than two-thirds (67.2%) of former empty nesters say they felt happy when their children moved back home while close to a quarter (24.2%) say they felt relieved. However, one in seven (14.9%) claim they were stressed and one in 10 (10.3%) say they were frustrated when their children moved back in.

"Parents want the best for their kids and are likely to welcome their 'boomerang children' back into the family home. This can force seniors to make sacrifices that often go unnoticed by the returning child. However, as long as they're willing to help out around the home and are respectful of their parents, there's no reason why seniors and their adult children can't continue to live together happily," Ms Shaw added.

For some seniors, having their children move home is a blessing in disguise. One in five (20.9%) former empty nesters say their relationship with their boomerang child improved after they returned home, primarily because they had more time to spend together (57.3%).

You can view the full findings of the report here: [\[insert link\]](#)

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### **Further findings from the research**

- Similar proportions of seniors say the worst things about their children moving out of home are missing having them around the house (60.0%), having less frequent contact (58.9%) and worrying about how they are going (56.0%), while close to half (49.2%) say not being able to talk to their children face-to-face.
- On a more positive note, many seniors say the best thing about their children moving out of home is having the place to themselves (58.1%), while more than two in five say it is having a quieter (42.6%) and cleaner (41.4%) home.
- The large majority (74.2%) of seniors say they enjoyed the extra time at their disposal, while similar portions say their financial position changed for the better (67.8%) and have felt a new sense of freedom (62.5%) after their children first moved out of home.
- Almost three in five (59.6%) seniors say they were spending more time on their hobbies/interests after their children left home.
- Similar proportions say they were spending more time socialising with friends (47.0%), eating out (46.9%) and exercising more (41.3%).
- More than half (55.3%) of seniors say their travel habits have changed after their children first moved out of home. Of these, the overwhelming majority (92.3%) say they have travelled more frequently, while close to three-fourths (72.5%) say they have travelled for longer periods rather than for shorter periods.
- When it comes to finances, close to seven in 10 (69.5%) seniors say they had more disposable income after their children first moved out of home, while similar proportions say they spent more money on themselves (52.2%) and felt less guilty about it (56.0%). More than two in five (44.7%) say they generally spent money more freely after their children first moved out.
- The large majority (78.7%) of current empty nesters say their children typically visit them during the Christmas/New Year holiday periods, bringing with them their partner (79.2%) and child/children (66.4%) to visit. Close to nine in 10 (87.1%) say they typically feel delighted when their children visit them for the holidays while almost three in 10 (29.3%) feel grateful.
- Close to one in five (19.1%) former empty nesters say the typical monthly household spending increased by less than 10% since their children moved back home, while more than a third (36.3%) estimate an increase of between 10%-20%.
- More than two in five (42.2%) former empty nesters feel they have made sacrifices in order to accommodate their children moving back home.

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### **About Australian Seniors Insurance Agency**

Australian Seniors Insurance Agency was established in 1998 to provide cost effective insurance solutions for the mature Australian Market, a market too often ignored. Australian

Seniors Insurance Agency offers car, home, travel, funeral, pet and accident insurance for Australians over 50.

### **About the 'Australian Seniors Series'**

In order to explore the emotional, social and financial impact of becoming empty nesters on Australian seniors, CoreData surveyed online 1,000 typical Australians over 50 years old across the nation in September 2018. The sample collection employed soft quotas to monitor representativeness of the Australian senior adult population.

Hard quotas by state were also employed to ensure all the main states were represented with sufficiently robust samples in the research: NSW = 200, VIC = 200, QLD = 200, WA = 200, Remaining states/territories = 200.