



# Retirement 2.0: how seniors are turning passion into pay cheques

Retirees are turning experience into income streams from consulting, homestays, writing and social ventures

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At 65, Vijaya Chakravarty thought she was ready to retire. After a long career as a landscape designer, the idea of slowing down seemed natural. But retirement, as the 72-year-old writer and nature educator says, turned out to be less of an ending and more of a reinvention.

Today, retirees like Chakravarty are moving beyond quiet sunset years and turning decades of experience into second income streams. From homestays and startups to writing, consulting and social ventures, the post-60 phase is increasingly becoming one where passion also pays.

For Vijaya, the shift began during the pandemic. Armed with years of landscape expertise and a little "digital aid" from her granddaughter, she started conducting webinars. "Some people pay me, some don't," she said, but the hobby quickly became work.

She soon returned to writing, her first love. Her work drew commissions, advances and royalties from organizations such as the National Book Trust, not-for-profits and government bodies. She also leads nature trails for schools and organizations.

Her relationship with money has evolved too. "I'm more careful with money now. Earlier, I had a free flow of money. Now I spend on upskilling, managing my money flow from sales, and keeping costs tight."

Having "invested well" during her working years, Vijaya sees her current earnings as a bonus rather than a necessity. "I've stopped saving for my children because they are doing well. My earnings now are for my grandchildren," she said, adding that she would rather spend on their experiences like wildlife sanctuary visits.

## Hosting a homestay

At 83, John V. Abraham lives in a house that doubles up as both a home and an income source. A former civil engineer and project manager who spent decades working in municipal approvals and construction, John returned to Kerala at 60. In 2007, he built a three-storey structure specifically designed for the "off and on" occupancy model of a homestay.

"The house is in my custody most of the time, and I get almost the same income as a rental," John explained.

By using the upper floors for guests visiting for holidays or weddings, he has built a self-sustaining ecosystem. Unlike his earlier years, when he relied primarily on bank interest, his homestay income and appreciation in land value now allow him to remain financially independent.

## Startup grit

Sameer Kapoor's post-retirement journey reflects the realities of "sweat equity". Along with a group of senior corporate friends, he launched a video

## Post-retirement ventures for passion and profit

Seniors are using decades of professional experience to build unique, secondary income streams. From homestays to NPOs, this is the chapter where passion can make a pay check.

**Category 1:**  
**The 'survival' retiree**

Seniors relying on secondary income for daily survival with a minimal nest egg.

- Primary goal:** Capital preservation. You cannot afford market volatility because this money is for your daily needs.
- Investment strategy:** Stick to short-term, low-risk instruments
- Recommended tools:** Bank fixed deposits, recurring deposits, low-duration debt funds

**Category 2:**  
**The 'secure' retiree**

Seniors with a secure pension or nest egg where secondary income is a "bonus" surplus.

- Primary goal:** Impact, and wealth creation for the next generation
- Strategy:** 50-50 rule
- 50% for passion:** Reinvest in your own ventures, NPOs, or charitable causes close to heart
- 50% for growth:** Invest in tax-efficient Hybrid Funds, offering balanced equity exposure for wealth creation without the extreme volatility.



**VIJAYA CHAKRAVARTY (72)**  
Nature educator

"I'm more careful with money now. Earlier, I had a free flow of money. Now I spend on upskilling, managing my money flow from sales, and keeping costs tight."



**JOHN V. ABRAHAM (82)**  
Homestay owner

"I get almost the same income as a rental, allowing me to be financially independent without dipping into core savings."



**SAMEER KAPOOR (66)**  
Advisor and social sector consultant

"Make sure you have one source of income that allows your family to maintain their lifestyle protected."



**THOMAS MATHEW (72)**  
Care home founder

"I spent all my retirement funds on building a care home as an investment. My principle for retirement is an independent life."



**MALTI JASWAL (62)**  
Founder of Inspiring Seniors Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation

"Liquidity matters more than ever; flexibility is key. Keep the model lean and scalable, not capital-heavy."

archival startup that documented students' extracurricular activities. Despite their professional experience, the business entered a prolonged "burn" phase. "We had the capacity of running a sprint, and we had actually entered a marathon," Sameer recalled. Eventually, the founders had to pivot as spending began eating into savings.

But he kept experimenting and moved into social sector management, helping set up rural hubs and launching Village Square, focused on bringing positive rural stories to urban audiences.

His guiding principle stemmed from a strategy built decades earlier: securing an independent income source before taking risks. "Make sure you have one source of income that allows your family to maintain their lifestyle protected. Don't ever compromise on that," Sameer said.

By safeguarding his family's lifestyle through earlier property investments, he says he earned the "freedom to experiment" in his 60s.

## Leaving a legacy

Thomas Mathew spent 42 years in the shipping industry in West Asia. Returning to India as a widower in 2019, his retirement principle was simple: live independently without burdening his children.

While researching senior care homes, Thomas became aware of the "abandonment" stigma attached to such facilities. That prompted him to build something focused on dignity, care and independence.

Thomas converted his ancestral property in Kerala into Grace Maniyattu Homes (GMH) an assisted living care home, which is a dual-wing assisted living facility with more than 15 rooms. "I ended up spending all my

retirement funds on construction... now I see it as an investment," he said.

Though returns are still evolving, the project offers him both personal security and an active decision-making role. He has also partnered with a hospital for routine check-ups and engaged a consultancy to support administration. "This ensures this project is equipped to take care of my medical needs as well," he added.

Thomas admitted that one of his biggest financial mistakes during his working years was poor accounting discipline. He relied heavily on fixed deposits before moving into real estate.

## A social startup

At 62, Malti Jaswal heads Inspiring Seniors Foundation, a not-for-profit entity focused on healthy and purposeful ageing. It works to create awareness and structured opportunities for seniors to stay intellectually,

socially and emotionally engaged while contributing to society.

Initially funded through her savings and family support, the foundation shifted to a subscription model in April and is exploring partnerships, impact funding and CSR support. While it focuses on volunteer engagement, Jaswal noted that many retirees are actively seeking to monetize their skills.

"Let's just segment them, the immediate retirees, they would definitely want a second source of income because let's say they have 25-30 years going by today's life span. So, they're worried whether the savings will be enough or not. Getting paid for your professional work also has a sense of worth attached to it. But the ones who are in their 70s or 80s are not looking for monetization because they already feel that they have done enough. Unless they are hard-pressed for money," she explained.

Discussing retirees without pension support, Jaswal said many avoid reverse mortgages and instead supplement monthly expenses through tuitions, coaching, consulting and other forms of work. "This trend is growing because you have so much time on hand and nothing to do with your knowledge and experience. For seniors to monetize skills is not a very straightforward and easy route... There is a need for reskilling," she said.

## The new blueprint

Retirement, for many, is no longer an exit—it is a pivot. Building a post-retirement income stream often requires a combination of financial caution, flexibility and purpose. "Liquidity matters more than ever; flexibility is key. Keep the model lean and scalable, not capital-heavy. Partnerships can multiply impact. Avoid chasing scale too early as stability precedes growth. And most importantly, financial decisions must align with life-stage priorities, not past habits," said Jaswal.

For seniors who generate a second income, how that surplus is managed depends largely on their financial foundation. Amol Joshi, founder of PlanRupee Investment Services, categorized retirees into two groups.

The first is the "survival" retiree with a minimal nest egg. Such retirees, he says, should focus on low-risk instruments like fixed deposits, recurring deposits and short-duration debt funds.

The second group includes retirees with a secure pension or financial cushion. For them, secondary income becomes a tool for philanthropy, legacy-building or passion projects.

He suggests splitting the surplus equally between personal ventures and tax-efficient hybrid funds.



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