

Can intergenerational cooperation defeat climate change?

28 March 2017

Older adults are powerful allies in addressing climate change, according to "Gray and Green Together: Climate Change in an Aging World," the latest edition of *Public Policy & Aging Report* (PP&AR) from The Gerontological Society of America (GSA).

Research shows that [older adults](#) are at risk for the effects of [extreme weather events](#) and climate change; but they are also a potential resource for climate action. The new PP&AR highlights ways that this demographic can meet the [climate change challenge](#) on behalf of themselves, their descendants, and the population at large.

Bucknell University professor and GSA Fellow Michael A. Smyer, PhD, played a central role in organizing the new publication. He currently is a Civic Innovation Fellow at Stanford University's Hasso Plattner Institute of Design (the d.school), where he is combining human-centered design, gerontology, and climate communication strategies to engage older [adults](#) on climate change.

"This is a timely issue of PP&AR," Smyer said. "Older adults represent a growing and largely untapped resource on climate action. The articles represent a range of views about that resource and how to engage them."

The first steps older adults can take are individually oriented, the PP&AR demonstrates. For some, it is driving less; for others, it is having an energy audit; for someone else, it is saving energy by washing clothes in cold water.

Eventually, several articles contend, older adults need to exert leadership in their families and communities—making sure that local, state, and federal office holders understand that they are concerned about climate change and taking actions that will contribute a better future for future generations.

"Importantly, however, the authors do not see older adults solely as victims of [climate change](#) but also as leaders of [climate](#) action," Smyer said. "The time is now for that action—those 60 and above have time, talent, and a desire for a sense of purpose as they reap the benefits of their longevity bonus."

More information:

academic.oup.com/ppar/issue/27/1

Provided by The Gerontological Society of America

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