

RAYMOND JAMES PRESENTS

# WORTHWHILE

Spring 2025

A publication of thoughtful insight dedicated to the life well planned.

## ~~ANTISOCIAL~~ MEDIA

GET MORE FROM  
YOUR DIGITAL  
CONNECTIONS *p14*



RAYMOND JAMES

# Letter from the editor

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## **F**inding your source of joy

The best thing we can do for ourselves is take a break to refuel from, well, life. Whether it's simple pleasures or exciting adventures, finding ways to experience joy is key. Do you find joy in the pages of a good book, a game night with friends or scrolling through social media late into the night?

For the latter, social media can offer opportunities to connect and make you feel renewed under the right circumstances, but it can also have the opposite effect if misused. In the Spring issue of WorthWhile, our [feature article](#) explores our complex digital interactions and dependency on social media, and how intent and moderation are key to helping you get more out of it.

If you don't rely on social media for a boost, maybe a concert or five-star meal is more your style. During COVID-19, if you were like many Americans, you might have found yourself more prone to nonessential purchases, contributing to the rise of "YOLO spending." Take time to read about the phenomenon behind it in our [investing](#) article.

Music can be instantly restorative, but die-hard discophiles take note: You might struggle to find the special limited edition you've been eyeing. [Vinyl](#) is making a 21st century comeback. Discover what and who's fueling its enduring popularity.

Part-time work in retirement can be energizing. However, it's important to consider the financial downsides, like [taxes](#). We'll help you weigh the pros and cons. And of course, don't forget to read about the benefits of healthy living. Never underestimate the rejuvenating power of a good round of [golf](#).

Taking a moment to read this issue might just give you that refreshing pause you deserve. We hope you enjoy every minute spent with these pages. If you do, please share your thoughts. We love hearing from our readers.

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End-of-life care decisions for a loved one are never easy, but having thoughtful conversations and documenting their wishes early can provide clarity and peace of mind for everyone involved. **p10**



Cover

### The dual nature of social media

There are two sides to social media: one that presents opportunities and potential, another that poses risks. Ultimately, it's temperance and intent that will determine which side you land on. **p14**



Investing

### Pandemic-fueled YOLO spending

You only live once. This sentiment rang truer during COVID-19, and our spending habits reflected that. How long will consumers splurge on caviar with a shrimp cocktail budget? **p20**



## Email us

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# AI in digital advertising

## THE FINE LINE BETWEEN FRIEND AND FOE

Imagine you're browsing the web and see an ad for an espresso machine – the very one you just mentioned in an online conversation.

The thought can be unsettling.... Are your devices really spying on you? Well ... sort of.

Advertisers are skilled at figuring out who you are and what

you might want. Sometimes, their accuracy can make it feel like they're right there in the room with you. The truth is, they're using sophisticated algorithms to analyze your online behavior and predict your interests.

It's all thanks to advertising technology (adtech), which advertisers

use to buy, sell and manage digital ads. When combined with artificial intelligence (AI), adtech becomes more efficient, accurate and even sometimes overly familiar.

The industry faces a crossroads: Will maximizing personalization enhance customers' experiences, or risk losing their trust?

## A NEW AGE OF ADS AND AI

The average person sees thousands of ads daily. The more relevant those ads are, the more likely customers are to remember and be motivated by them. And relevancy requires data. The latest advancements in generative AI (genAI) expand adtech's capabilities, using predictive analytics to target audiences and collecting data with every click to offer customers what they want.

Your personal data, from account sign-ups to website visits, is a digital advertiser's most valuable commodity. Advertisers use data management platforms (DMPs) to create segmented profiles, sorting you into specific audiences for targeted ads. The data used ranges from traditional demographics like age, gender and interests to more complex factors like online behavior.

AI transforms all this data into actionable insights, empowering advertisers to precisely target customers at the optimal time and place.

## THE BENEFITS

Thanks to adtech, advertisers have a better chance of reaching their intended

audience without wasting resources on uninterested leads. For customers, adtech means seeing more ads that are relevant to their interests and fewer that are not, which can greatly reduce ad fatigue.

Adtech creates a win-win: Businesses find more customers, and customers connect with what they want. But as businesses leverage advancements in data and AI to redefine customer engagement, they also generate growing concerns about security and customer trust.


## THE DRAWBACKS

People undoubtedly engage more often when ads align with their personal interests. But overly personalized ads can lead to customer wariness, resulting in increased use of ad blockers. With the rapid increase of ads and their pervasive nature, concerns about privacy and data security are also intensifying. As data becomes more valuable, its storage is more vulnerable to breaches, making protection of privacy and security ever more critical.

Moreover, people aren't always aware when their data is being collected and are even less aware of how it's being used. Customers can unknowingly share information by accepting terms and conditions or by clicking "accept" on cookie consent banners, unaware of what data is being collected, and how much. This lack of transparency can lead to a breakdown in trust, especially when advertisers use this data without customers' explicit knowledge.

## THE UNKNOWN

AI-enhanced adtech promises efficiency, personalization and many benefits for both advertisers and customers. To remain competitive and effectively reach their audiences, digital advertisers must stay ahead of emerging adtech while prioritizing the impacts of mass data collection on personal privacy and security.

But if adtech becomes too invasive, customers may ultimately reject it with their wallets. Striking a balance between innovation and public perception will be key to its future success and acceptance. 

### GENERATIVE AI SENTIMENT BY AGE GROUP

With 68% of customers believing AI advancements increase the need for trust, brands face growing challenges in building and maintaining customer confidence as technology evolves.

RANK	1	2	3
Baby Boomers	Suspicion	Anxiety	Curiosity
Gen X	Curiosity	Suspicion	Anxiety
Millennials	Curiosity	Excitement	Suspicion
Gen Z	Curiosity	Suspicion	Anxiety

Source: Salesforce State of the Connected Customer

## Worth a Look

A compendium of fresh looks and new ideas

### The final frontier of dirt

“Titanium tools. Who’s ever heard of such a thing?” the gardener thought, breaking ground after a long winter. The hand-forged tools from Dutch maker Sneeboer had been a gift from his son. “Am I supposed to be a botanist on Mars? Peacockery.” But the tools were exceptionally light, and there was no denying their looks: milky metal and walnut handles. As the hours passed transplanting annuals, the sun warmed him through and eased his joints. “Still a good kid,” the gardener thought. Dig up something different at [gardenheir.com](http://gardenheir.com).



### Bathed in fire

In tea, creating the perfect cup is a matter of degrees. In metallurgy, the same is true, as proven by the Yūgen Copper Kettle by artist Si Golraine. This stunning, functional art uses the qualities of an open flame dancing across the kettle’s copper-nickel surface to produce a distinctively colorful finish in one of six flame-painted patterns. Get heated at [eatingtools.com](http://eatingtools.com).

## Time enshrined

Inside the Capra leather watch box – constructed from the quality materials that have made the brand synonymous with handcrafted luxury – eight timepieces arrayed precisely: six Swiss, one Japanese, one Silicon Valley. Faces display hours across seven time zones, with identical minutes and seconds, excepting the one offset by 30 minutes: Newfoundland, a land apart. How long had it been? He could count it to the moment. Would she wait for his return? Only fate knew for certain. Keep track of time at [capraleather.com](http://capraleather.com).



## Inspired by stocks, bonds and beads

What do you get when you combine a jewelry maker with an investment professional? Apparently, it's stunning home lighting featuring blown glass beads, hand painted silks, collaborating suppliers and Art Nouveau influences. The Grayson lamp is reflective of the design sensibilities of sisters-in-law Susan and Caryn Kinzig, who joined talents to create the Kinzig Design studio and APKD Lampshades. Lighten up at [kinzigdesign.com](http://kinzigdesign.com).



# GET HOOKED ON — GOLF

**I**f you're not one yourself, odds are you know a golf fanatic, and their ranks are growing. A record 45 million people played golf in 2023 – 3.4 million of them for the first time, according to the National Golf Foundation.

The United States Golf Association defines an “average” golfer as someone who plays around 20 rounds a year, while an “avid” golfer plays 52, or once a week.

So, what's the big draw? What gets people so hooked on golf? Golf players get a lot of benefits from their chosen sport.

To start with, it's inherently social. Over the average four hours it takes to get through 18 holes, players have the chance to connect with friends, family and business associates, and that time can lead to lasting friendships that extend beyond the links.

It's also a psychological challenge that helps stimulate cognitive function. Golfers must master precision, patience and strategy, which can lead to increased mental resilience. Plus, spending time outdoors boosts vitamin D levels and has been shown to improve mood.

Finally, there are the physical health benefits. Golfers walk an average of six miles per round, which is great for cardiovascular health, and the practice of swinging promotes balance, flexibility and eye-hand coordination. No wonder it's known as the ideal “retirement sport.” But if you ask the folks out on the golf course, they'll tell you the main reason they play is that it's fun.

Retired or not, if you're thinking about taking a swing at golf, here are some fundamentals you should know.

## COMMON TOURNAMENT FORMATS

Golf can be played individually or in teams, and rounds or tournaments are usually arranged in one of the following ways.

### MATCH PLAY

Individual golfers go head-to-head during match play. The player who makes the best score on each hole wins that hole, and the player who wins the most holes wins the match.

- Players: Two or more
- Best for: Experienced players

### STROKE PLAY

In stroke play, individual golfers compete against the course and try to outscore each other. After 18 holes, the person with the best overall score wins.

- Players: One or more
- Best for: Experienced players

### BEST/BETTER BALL

Teams of two or more golfers play either match or stroke play. All golfers play their own ball through the round, and the best (lowest) score from each team is their score for that hole. Whichever team has the lowest score at the end wins.

- Players: Teams of two or more
- Best for: Any skill level

### SCRAMBLE

Scrambles are a great way for beginners to ease into tournament play, which is why





it's a popular format for fundraisers and corporate events. Each team member tees off on every hole. The team then selects the best shot and each member plays from that spot. The team again picks the best shot, all members play from that spot, and so on until the ball is in the cup. Scrambles are typically scored as stroke play.

- Players: Teams of two or four
- Best for: Any skill level

### ALTERNATE SHOT OR FOURSOME

Players alternate shots throughout the course. Player one hits a tee shot, player two hits the second, player one hits the third, and so on until the ball is in the cup. Players alternate tee shots – if player one tees off on one hole, player two must tee off on the next.

- Players: Two teams of two
- Best for: Experienced players

### SKINS

Each hole is worth a skin, or a predetermined value. The golfer with the lowest score on each hole wins that skin. If two players tie, the skin is carried over to the next hole. The player who earns the most skins is the winner.

- Players: Two or more
- Best for: Experienced players

### STABLEFORD

In either team or individual play, a Stableford format uses an established points system – for example, a bogey (or one point over par) is worth one point, while a birdie (one under par) is worth

three points. The player with the highest score at the end of the match wins.

- Players: Two or more
- Best for: Experienced players

### SHOTGUN START

A shotgun start isn't a tournament format per se, but a way to efficiently use the expanse of the golf course so everyone starts and ends at the same time. Each team or player starts at a different hole, and then plays through the rest. So if, for example, one team started at hole 16, they'd then move on to holes 17 and 18, and then hole 1, 2, 3 and so on.

### GOLF ETIQUETTE

People can forgive bad golf, but not bad etiquette. Here are a few important tips to help make sure you get invited back for another round.

- Be punctual. Showing up late for tee time is rude not just to your opponents, but to the folks with the next tee time.
- Walk at a reasonable speed between shots – don't hold up the players behind you.
- Never hit the ball if there's a chance it might reach the group in front of you. Safety first!
- Don't distract other golfers who are preparing to tee off or putt. Save the jokes for the clubhouse.
- Keep calm. You may feel the urge to yell, scream or even throw your club in frustration, especially as you are just learning the sport. Resist it. **W**

## 12

### GOLF TERMS TO KNOW

**ACE:** A hole-in-one

**BIRDIE:** One shot under par

**BOGEY:** One shot over par

**BUZZARD OR DOUBLE BOGEY:** Two shots over par

**EAGLE:** Two shots under par

**FAIRWAY:** The portion of a golf hole between the tee box and the green

**GREEN:** The area of closely mowed grass surrounding the hole

**HANDICAP:** A numerical representation of a golfer's skill level relative to par

**HOOK:** A shot which veers toward the golfer's non-dominant side mid-flight

**MULLIGAN:** A replayed shot

**PAR:** The number of strokes a skilled golfer should take to complete a hole, round or tournament

**ROUGH:** The long grass bordering the fairway

**SLICE:** A shot where the ball curves toward the golfer's dominant side – the opposite of a hook



## ADVANCE CARE PLANNING: a loving act

*Ensuring your loved one's end-of-life wishes are honored*

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In no circumstance is end-of-life care an easy conversation, but if you ever find yourself needing to make those tough decisions for a loved one, it's comforting to know what they want. Advance care planning helps ensure their wishes are clearly understood and respected.





A study by VITAS Healthcare found that while 56% of people reported having discussed their end-of-life wishes with family, only 35% have documented them. This can leave loved ones facing difficult decisions during an already emotional time.

By having a series of meaningful conversations and preparing the necessary documents, you can help ease the stress associated with such a responsibility.

### Advance care planning documents

The most crucial part of advance care planning is the discussions with your loved one about their choices for medical treatment at the end of their life. It's also important for them to record their preferences in legal documents that can be shared with medical professionals.

Advance directives are the documents that fall under the advance care planning umbrella, and can include:

- A living will lets you approve or decline specific medical care, even if it means death is imminent. Generally, this document can be used to decline life-prolonging treatments. In some states, it only applies under certain circumstances such as terminal illness or injury, but it's still valuable to document your wishes.
- A durable power of attorney for healthcare, also known as a healthcare proxy or surrogate, lets you appoint a representative to make medical decisions for you and specify the extent of their authority.
- A do not resuscitate (DNR) order instructs medical personnel not to perform CPR if you go into cardiac arrest or breathing ceases. There are two types of DNRs, one that is effective all the time and another that is only effective while you're hospitalized.

While a living will might not seem essential if there's a healthcare proxy, having a written document to help guide specific treatment preferences is ideal. The more information you have about your loved one's wishes, the better you can ensure those wishes are carried out.

Something to note is that advance directives can always be updated as circumstances change; don't be afraid to establish them early. A significant medical event or major family change can prompt a reevaluation at any time.



### Creating a lasting legacy

Advance care planning offers a chance for your loved one to reflect on their life and share their story with future generations. Encourage them to create videos, catalog pictures or write in journals that can be cherished and passed down. There are tools and services, like Storyworth and Remento, that make it easy to create keepsake memoir books, ensuring your loved one's memories live on.



### Advance care planning objectives

At the heart of overseeing your family member's care is respecting their choices regardless of your personal feelings. Even if you have opinions that conflict with theirs, they chose you to implement their plan because they trust you to follow it as they've outlined. This also means understanding their religious and cultural preferences, and how these will influence their end-of-life care.



The goals of advance care planning are to respect individual patient autonomy, improve quality of care and reduce overtreatment. By partnering with your loved one in preparation, you can strengthen your bond and make them feel at ease about the care they'll receive as they age.

Sadly, differing opinions about end-of-life care can make it tough for families to reach a mutual agreement about how to care for their loved one. Having advance directives in place ensures the patient's orders are prioritized.

Doctors may not always start advance care planning conversations with patients, so advance care planning tasks often are left to family members or close friends. Seeking support from others who've undergone the planning process may help. Additionally, numerous government, legal and medical resources are available – from conversation starters from the National Institute on Aging to advance directive forms by state from AARP.

### Implementing an advance care planning

The purpose of advance care planning is to be prepared to make decisions that align with your family member's values. Even with a living will, some scenarios may not be clearly outlined. If this is the case, decision-making

strategies can guide a healthcare proxy's choices.

Substituted judgement, the preferred decision-making method, involves putting yourself in the place of the person needing care and trying to choose as they would. This may mean remembering your loved one's strong opinions about a neighbor's care choices and what types of medical care they'd refuse.

The "best interests" approach, sometimes used in conjunction with substituted judgment, involves considering whether a specific treatment is in your family member's best interest; in other words, whether it improves quality of life or simply extends a condition of pain and discomfort.

When making these decisions, think about what your family member believed gave their life meaning and purpose, and whether they can still participate in those activities. This intimate knowledge, along with input from medical professionals, should guide your choices.

While the topic is uncomfortable to broach, remember that making care decisions for your family member if they're unable to do so is a loving act. With thoughtful discussions and thorough documentation, you'll be prepared to honor your loved one's requests if the time comes. **W**



**By partnering with your loved one in preparation, you can strengthen your bond and make them feel at ease about the care they'll receive as they age.**

Sources: VITAS Healthcare, AARP, BMC Palliative Care, National Institute on Aging



# Conundrum on Aisle 9

Deciding whether organic is worth the cost



There was a time when “Honey, we’re out of milk,” meant a simple trip to the nearest store to pick up a trusted brand. But today, grocery runs involve more considerations, from nutrition and cost to environmental impact, making even the savviest shopper feel overwhelmed.

Consider the decision to buy organic. The USDA defines “organic” as using sustainable farming practices without synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, GMOs, antibiotics or growth hormones. This also means you might pay 10% to 20% more for organic items compared to regular food due to higher production costs, certification fees and smaller-scale farming. But is organic worth the extra cost? It depends.

## Understanding organic food

Organic food is grown using natural, sustainable methods. Depending on the food group, splurging for its potential health benefits, taste and animal practices may be worth the cost to the consumer.

## Buying organic produce

When opting for organic fruits and vegetables, it's important to know which organic items justify the extra cost.

### The “Clean Fifteen”





Low in pesticides due to natural protective barriers like thick or inedible skins. In order of least pesticide residue:

1. Avocados
2. Sweet corn
3. Pineapples
4. Onions
5. Papayas
6. Frozen sweet peas
7. Asparagus
8. Honeydew melons
9. Kiwis
10. Cabbage
11. Mushrooms
12. Mangoes
13. Sweet potatoes
14. Watermelons
15. Carrots

### The “Dirty Dozen”

High in pesticides due to thinner or more porous skins. In order of highest pesticide residue:

1. Strawberries
2. Spinach
3. Kale, collards and mustard greens
4. Grapes
5. Peaches
6. Pears
7. Nectarines
8. Apples
9. Bell and hot peppers
10. Cherries
11. Blueberries
12. Green beans

	Health Benefits	Taste Difference	Animal Welfare
 <b>Produce</b> \$\$ - \$\$\$	Higher levels of antioxidants, less pesticides	Fresher and more flavorful	N/A
 <b>Eggs</b> \$\$ - \$\$\$	Higher omega-3s and vitamins A and E	Richer and fresher	Better animal welfare and diet (organic feed)
 <b>Dairy</b> \$\$ - \$\$\$	Higher omega-3s, less pesticides	Slightly different texture, mildly sweeter	Better animal welfare, no hormones/antibiotics
 <b>Meat/Poultry</b> \$\$\$ - \$\$\$\$	Higher omega-3s and antioxidants, less chemicals	More flavorful (more so meat than poultry)	Better animal welfare and no hormones/antibiotics

\$ Affordable    \$\$ Moderately expensive    \$\$\$ Very expensive    \$\$\$\$ Extremely expensive

**THE 21<sup>ST</sup>  
CENTURY**

**SOCIAL  
CONNECTION**

**PARADOX**

**Good or bad? With social media, it's all about how you use it**

**R**obert Frost was being wry, which as all wry people inevitably learn, can lead to misunderstandings.

In Frost's poem "[Mending Wall](#)," the narrator encourages his neighbor to reconsider the wisdom of the saying "good fences make good neighbors," wondering to himself how barriers are supposed to bring us closer. As the two men work side by side, separated by the growing order of stone, the narrator assumes his neighbor would eventually see the absurdity of their effort.

Alas, sincerity is immune to irony, and one legacy of "Mending Wall" may be its elevation of a proverb Frost rejected on principled grounds. Count this as a point for Benjamin Franklin, who published more than 150 years earlier, "Love thy neighbor as yourself, yet don't pull down your hedges."

These days, spend some time on social media and it's probably easy to understand why Franklin's take endures – maybe it is best if we hang our laundry in the back, eat with our mouths closed and share less online. Then again, Frost might have been onto something, too. In 1914, the year "Mending Wall" was published, the western world – despite an abundance of fences – set itself on fire.

## A YEARNING FOR CONNECTEDNESS

Over a century after “Mending Wall,” we find ourselves experiencing something which might seem like a paradox to both the introverted Frost and the gregarious Franklin: People are more connected than ever but feel less so. In 2023, U.S. Surgeon General Vice Admiral Vivek Murthy, M.D., released an extensive advisory statement, “Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation.”

In the introduction, he wrote that since first reporting to his post in 2014:

“People began to tell me they felt isolated, invisible, and insignificant. Even when they couldn’t put their finger on the word ‘lonely,’ time and time again, people of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds, from every corner of the country, would tell me, ‘I have to shoulder all of life’s burdens by myself,’ or ‘if I disappear tomorrow, no one will even notice.’

“It was a lightbulb moment for me: social disconnection was far more common than I had realized.

“In the scientific literature, I found confirmation of what I was hearing. In recent years, about one-in-two adults in America reported experiencing loneliness. And that was before the COVID-19 pandemic cut off so many of us from friends, loved ones, and support systems, exacerbating loneliness and isolation.”

The health effects of loneliness on individuals are profound, he continued, being associated with “a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety and premature death.” The effect on mortality is equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day, and greater than the effect of obesity and physical inactivity.

Connection and community are the promises of social media, but does it deliver? Or is social media just a new kind of wall between neighbors?

The answer is complex, and yet unfolding.

## A WINDOW TO THE BROADER WORLD

In the social media age relationships are, in some ways, much more durable than in the past. Where once careers, family and life events would cause friendships to fail due to entropy or geography, social media has helped us stay connected, even if only loosely at times.

This is good for us.

“We know that having a strong social network is associated with positive mental health and well-being,” said Mesfin Awoke Bekalu, a research scientist at Harvard’s T.H. Chan School of Public Health, in an interview with a Harvard publication. “Routine social media use may compensate for diminishing face-to-face social interactions in people’s busy lives. Social media may provide individuals with a platform that overcomes barriers of distance and time, allowing them to connect and reconnect with others and thereby expand and strengthen their in-person networks and interactions. Indeed, there is some empirical evidence supporting this.”

## THE GENERATIONAL DIVIDE, UNITED IN FACEBOOK

Younger American adults are more likely to use a particular social media platform than older Americans, with some exceptions, according to surveys by the Pew Research Center.

**78%** of adults 18 to 29 use **Instagram**, where the selfie photo is king, whereas only **15%** of adults 65 years or more used the service. **Snapchat**, another photo-focused platform, showed a similar divide, with just **4%** of older adults using the platform.

**Facebook, LinkedIn and WhatsApp** are the only major social media platforms American adults 18 to 29 were not more likely to use than were older adults.

**YouTube** is the most widely used social media platform across all age groups, with more than **93%** of adults 18 to 29 and **60%** of adults over 65 using it.

A majority of American adults across all age groups surveyed use **Facebook**, which also had the smallest divide in likelihood of use, with **75%** of adults 30 to 49 using the platform and **58%** of adults 65+ using it.

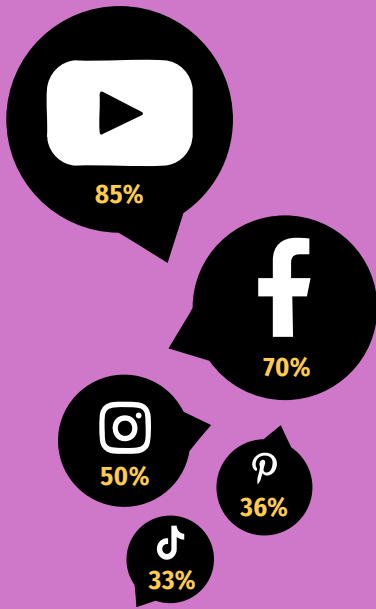
## SOCIAL MEDIA PRECURSORS

In the days before the world wide web, computer users often sought out servers hosting a bulletin board system (BBS), a program with many features that would become mainstream in the years to come like live text chatting, email, social games, asynchronous discussions and bulletins.

Eventually the BBS would be replaced by web forums, which likewise became relics in time.

## AMERICAN SOCIAL MEDIA HABITS

Percent of U.S. adults who say they “ever” use each platform:



Source: Pew Research Center, 2021

### Doomscrolling

The act of consuming social media content over an extended period of time for the purpose of amplifying sadness, anxiety or anger.



“They told me I didn’t get the job, so I ate a half pound of cheese curds and spent the night doomscrolling.”

Other researchers have also found evidence that social media can be beneficial, particularly for individuals facing isolating experiences.

Across the social media landscape, there are pockets of communities helping one another manage the complexities of life. Individuals can make connections with others experiencing medical conditions, PTSD, addiction or grief, or they can find support for new challenges, such as former foster kids struggling with the adult world soon after reaching the age of majority.

Even when the stakes are lower, social media can also support health and fulfillment. Hobbyists now have access to information and inspiration at a scale previously unimaginable. Eighteenth-century woodworking? Knitting dog clothes? Costuming? If you can imagine it, you can find it, often supported by an abundance of YouTube auteurs and niche businesses ready to ship superior-quality materials.

Even among youth there is evidence that social media can be beneficial, though public health leaders urge varying degrees of caution, and generally suggest children younger than 14 be kept away from social media.

In 2023, the U.S. surgeon general issued an advisory imploring policy-makers to take notice of evidence suggesting “a profound risk of harm to the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents,” while encouraging additional research. Around the same time, the American Psychological Association Board of Representatives released a related advisory – its first ever – encouraging a balanced approach to youth social media policy and also encouraging additional research.

The board wrote: “Using social media is not inherently beneficial or harmful to young people. Adolescents’ lives online both reflect and impact their offline lives. In most cases, the effects of social media are dependent on adolescents’ own personal and psychological characteristics and social circumstances.”

In a follow-up, Jacqueline Nesi, a member of the APA panel that published the advisory, told the APA’s magazine, *Monitor on Psychology*, “It’s important to realize there can be benefits for many teens. Teens (and adults) obviously get something out of social media. We have to take a balanced view if we want to reach teens and help them use these platforms in healthier ways.”

### THE SOCIAL POTENTIAL

Social media content feeds are created by opaque algorithms with deep insight into your life, habits, purchases and beliefs, serving an infinite trough of content and advertising designed to capture your attention, whether through joy, curiosity or rage. Soon enough, one can find oneself in a “filter bubble” of people, ideas and products that align very closely with one’s preconceptions. The only glimpse of other opinions may be from provocateurs effective at gaining attention by antagonizing an already-hostile audience.



For people who are already experiencing stresses in life, social media can amplify them. For people going through tough moments, perusing others' highlight reels of vacations, grandkids and lavish meals may make them feel even worse.

Getting a benefit to your well-being from social media is partially dependent on the platform, types of use and what users are bringing into the experience (like a history of depression, the U.S. surgeon general wrote). Other risk factors include income, gender, race and age – women and minorities experience higher levels of directed and undirected sexism and racism on social media. It's hard to opt out of content you don't want to see in social media's strange mix: Here's a post about a cat followed by a news story about a tragedy, then a photo of your college roommate's dinner, then a diatribe against your beliefs and then another picture of a cat....

Compared to more moderate use, heavy social media use of two or more hours a day is associated with "double the odds of reporting increased perceptions of social isolation compared to those who used social media for less than 30 minutes per day," per the surgeon general.

If two hours seems like a lot, several studies suggest it is actually below the daily average for a typical social media user, particularly among youth.

It's easy to say one should just avoid social media, but that's becoming increasingly unrealistic. It's often the only place to find information about local events, restaurants and community bulletins. It's also prolific; between 80% and 90% of adults of all ages use at least one social media platform, with a smaller number – but still a majority – of adults age 65+ participating. Social media is with us, whether we're particularly keen on it or not.

### **MORE SOCIAL, LESS MEDIA**

Moderation and intent are keys to helping you get more out of social media. Checking social media can be part of a healthy daily routine but using it as a time filler or to stave off a moment of boredom can end up distracting you from life's real experiences.

For a better social media experience, it may be best to embrace the social, and be cautious with the media. Bring conversations with a group of friends out of the public space of posts and comments and use a group chat, instead – plus there's no risk of your granddaughter coming across something meant for your peers. Respond and connect with friends – seek to participate, not just consume content – but avoid arguing with strangers. Also be aware that images, news articles and even comments may be produced by AI systems designed to sell you things or elicit an emotional response. If you see something on your feed that seems too good or too bad, it may be true, or it may be the work of an unknown actor trying to manipulate your feelings.

## **AMERICA'S CHARITIES NEED YOU**

One criticism of social media is that it scratches the itch for community engagement without actually encouraging participation. This is commonly known as "slacktivism." While service organizations appreciate people sharing information about their mission and fundraisers on social media, don't let that alone satisfy your community spirit. So spread the word but also lace up those boots.

Volunteering is a two-way street. The organization gets free labor, you get activity, camaraderie and a sense of accomplishment.

Also, you're needed. Volunteering is in a decades-long decline.

"America is experiencing a generosity crisis," wrote the authors of a 2023 report from the Do Good Institute within the University of Maryland School of Public Policy. The pandemic exacerbated declines in voluntarism and giving, but volunteerism has been trending downward since 2000 and the number of charitable givers has been declining since the early 2010s.

The nation's sharp cultural divide may be to blame, or it may be a symptom. It could also be nonprofits' sometimes-singular focus on giving – which is affected by macroeconomic trends – or a decline in religious participation. No matter the big picture causes, volunteering is a great way to serve both one's community and one's social health.

## THE FIRST INTERNET



The precursor to the internet as we know it was ARPANET, a project of the Advanced Research Projects Agency (now DARPA), part of the U.S. Department of Defense. Launched in 1969, ARPANET connected to four locations: the University of California Los Angeles, the University of California Santa Barbara, the University of Utah and the Augmentation Research Center in Menlo Park, California.

It would eventually span from Hawaii to the United Kingdom before it was decommissioned in 1990.

A common complaint on social media is that friends' updates are not appearing while viral content is pushed to the top. When the platform allows you to change this presentation (in Facebook, the setting to change can be found on the "Feeds" tab), you can limit your feed to just your friends and groups you follow.

## A YEARNING FOR COMMUNITY

Maintaining social wellness gets harder as we get older. Social media can be a good tool to combat that, but we know it doesn't replace old-fashioned, one-on-one visits and phone calls. In his advisory on loneliness, the U.S. surgeon general recommends people take more notice of their social needs and invest time into nurturing relationships. When you do get together with someone, it's a good habit to keep the phone in one's pocket or purse and prioritize the here and now.

Other healthy aging habits support social wellness like fitness classes, volunteering and creativity. Social media can be a good tool for finding those opportunities. And if you're feeling lonely, bring it up with your healthcare provider or faith leader – subtle physiological issues can cause people to withdraw.

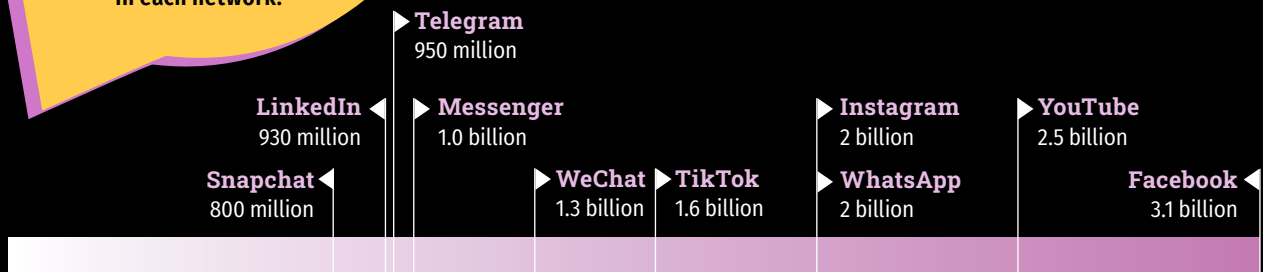
And paraphrasing the surgeon general, nobody wants to become crotchety, but life's tough, and becoming a grump is a slippery slope. We have to guard against it and work to be the kind of person we would want to share a moment with. It may not surprise you that Robert Frost, wandering around his cold New England landscapes pondering the big questions, could be notoriously crotchety.

Incidentally, Frost wrote "Mending Wall" during a stint living in Old England while feeling homesick for his pointless stone wall, his unwise neighbor and the missed opportunity to mend that wall alongside him in the spring. <sup>W</sup>

## BILLIONS AND BILLIONS SERVED

Social media is a global phenomenon largely dominated by U.S.-based providers and Meta Platforms, in particular, which among the top 10 networks owns Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Messenger.

**Monthly users active in each network:**



Source: Corporate reports and press coverage, compiled on Wikipedia

Sources: Harvard University; U.S. surgeon general; Pew Research Center; National Institutes of Health; Boston College; American Psychological Association; Mayo Clinic; Defense Advanced Projects Research Agency; The Atlantic; University of Maryland; New Hampshire Division of Parks and Recreation

# GLOBAL GIVING

*A guide to tax considerations and trusted partners*

**G**lobal giving is on the rise: According to Giving USA, contributions to international affairs have grown 21% in the past five years.

One reason for the uptick is the increased visibility of international concerns. With the wide accessibility of global information via social and news media, we're more aware of current events than ever. This connectivity, through social media's real-time depiction of crises, fosters empathy and motivation to help, encouraging support for international aid efforts.

If you've been moved by a recent global crisis and want to make a difference, there are a couple considerations that will help you make the most of your donation.

## Tax considerations

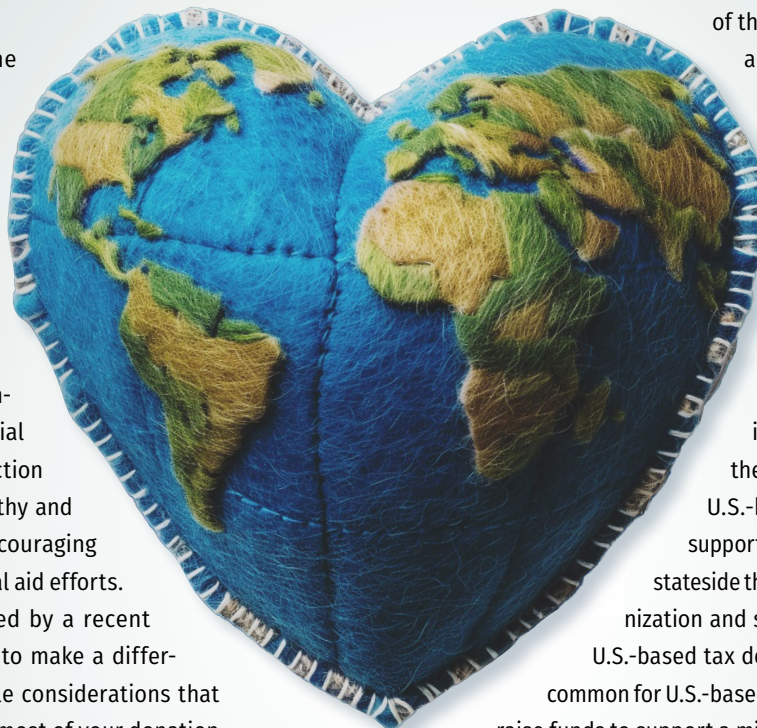
First and foremost, your donation should be driven by your passion for the causes close to your heart. But, before you make a charitable contribution to fund an international mission, it's important to understand whether your donation will be eligible for a tax deduction. Donations made directly to an organization outside of the United States are not deductible on a U.S. tax return. However, this may not matter to you, especially if you plan to take the standard tax deduction.

If you'd like your international donation to be tax deductible, there are several ways to accomplish this. One of the simplest ways is to find a U.S. nonprofit that supports the cause you care about overseas. U.S. nonprofits like United Way and American Red Cross are often top of mind.

A charity like the Center for Disaster Philanthropy is another good option that allows you to donate through community-

driven grantmaking. They track critical disasters, both domestic and international, and enable you to donate directly to them, a U.S.-based organization. One of the benefits of working with an organization like Center for Disaster Philanthropy is that your contributions are distributed according to current needs to organizations that it has thoroughly vetted.

If you have a specific foreign organization in mind, consider asking them directly if they have any U.S.-based organizations that support them. If so, you can donate stateside through the connecting organization and still take advantage of the U.S.-based tax deduction. For example, it's common for U.S.-based religious organizations to raise funds to support a mission overseas.



## Using a partner

Another way to ensure your donation aligns with your charitable pursuits and provides a tax deduction is to use a trusted partner, like Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) America. They will research your intended beneficiary and conduct the due diligence required by the IRS to validate your deduction. If you decide to use this method, weigh the pros and cons of paying the fee to have the charity certified; is it worth it for the tax deduction?

If you're not using a partner, be sure you do your own due diligence so you can have confidence that you're donating to a reputable international charity. Due diligence can entail talking to the executive director and other donors, checking for news reports and asking for financial reports.

Above all else, you want your money going to the global causes you care most about, and to feel good that you've made a difference beyond borders. **W**

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# The era of YOLO spending

*During the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans eschewed saving money in favor of living in the moment.*



**Y**ou only live once. It's a motto often used to justify adventurous, indulgent, or even risky behavior, like skydiving, enjoying a second serving of dessert, or buying a new Porsche on a used Toyota budget.

It's also become shorthand for our pandemic-era spending habits. Americans spent 32% more on nonessentials in 2022 than in 2018 – and not just because of inflation.<sup>1</sup> During the height of COVID-19, a trend emerged of treating ourselves with nonessential purchases that provided instant gratification rather than saving for a rainy day. The storm had come.

Was it because the pandemic made us realize life is short and could be cut even shorter? Was the money we saved on commuting, going out to lunch and buying

new clothes to wear to the office – not to mention those stimulus checks – burning a hole in our pockets?

Some analysts think the change in spending habits had more to do with monetary policy than existential crises. The U.S. government adopted policies to increase consumption and avoid recession, and it worked.

“The low-interest environment since the early 2000s, the massive income transfers from the federal government during the pandemic recession, plus the anxiety of lockdowns probably contributed to a sense that saving was not worthwhile and pushed consumers into a YOLO mindset,” Raymond James Chief Economist Eugenio Alemán expressed.

You only live once (YOLO) spending was at least partly fueled by an uncertain future that diminished the perceived value of saving and increased the value of spending on immediate joy and ful-

fillment. As time goes on, will those spending patterns endure?

## EPHEMERAL PLEASURES AND LUXURY GOODS

Notably, YOLO spending was less about acquiring things and more about enjoying the moment. Led mostly by young, upper-middle-class demographics, Americans bought more high-value experiences like concerts, travel and dining out, which represented a shift in consumer behavior to prioritizing memorable experiences over material goods.

Some of the biggest spending increases between 2018 and 2022 included:

- Recreational goods and vehicles (59%)<sup>1</sup>
- Alcohol for off-premises consumption (36%)<sup>1</sup>
- Food services and accommodations (27%)<sup>1</sup>

Consumer spending on entertainment supplies jumped 60.6% from 2020 to 2021.<sup>1</sup> In 2023, spending on

international travel and live entertainment increased 30% – five times the rate increase for overall spending.<sup>2</sup> Live Nation, the world’s largest entertainment company, enjoyed record sales, posting \$23 billion in 2023.<sup>2</sup>

Spending on durable goods and creature comforts also increased, with consumers springing for high-end fashion, electronics and luxury vehicles they previously might have deemed too extravagant.

### THE YOLO ECONOMY

The phenomenon of YOLO spending was just one aspect of a pandemic-inspired shift in American values that extended beyond people’s purchases and into their professional lives. Emboldened by extra money in the bank and a desire to live life to the fullest, employees from all sectors began reevaluating their career choices and seeking better work-life balance.

In 2021, more than 47 million U.S. workers left their jobs voluntarily in search of more fulfillment – a mass exodus dubbed “The Great Resignation.”<sup>1</sup> Many sought new paths entirely – including the many who followed their entrepreneurial spirit and started their own businesses – while others, having worked from home for an extended period for the first time, simply chose not to return to the office when asked to do so.

This new appetite for risk was also reflected in investor behavior, as rapid trading and speculative investments increased significantly, even as some

shifted a portion of their portfolios to more relatively stable investments. Retail investment activity also surged, with more people participating in the stock market in hopes of generating more wealth in an uncertain economy.

### BACK TO ESSENTIALS

The YOLO spending spree continued in the early months of 2024, with consumers spending \$104.2 billion more in February than the month before and personal savings dropping to 5.4% from 5.5%, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.


But as inflation continued to erode Americans’ buying power, analysts started to see a more cautious approach to spending, with people once again prioritizing saving and essential purchases over discretionary items.

In a McKinsey survey conducted in July and August of 2024, 53% of respondents said that rising prices and inflation were among their top concerns. This phenomenon is called “inflation overhang” – the idea that it takes consumers years, rather than months, to adjust to higher prices, even as inflation levels out.

And the financial services industry is seeing an increase in demand for planning, investment and savings strategies, indicating a renewed focus on financial goals in the face of continued inflation and economic uncertainties.

But while consumers demonstrated more discretion as the calendar turned to 2025, spending on travel and entertainment remained elevated, potentially

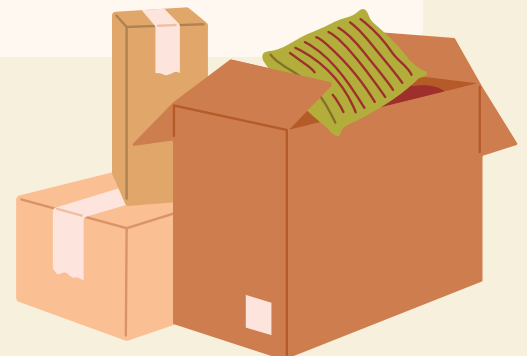
signaling a more enduring shift in U.S. consumers’ priorities toward valuing experiences.

Pandemic fears may have eased, but the fact remains: You only live once. 

## The pandemic real estate boom

Another place Americans spent their money during the pandemic was on real estate. As office buildings emptied and remote work became the new normal, many people moved from urban areas to the suburbs, searching for more space and a better environment for working from home. With interest rates – and housing inventory – at historic lows, the real estate market experienced a major boom and home prices skyrocketed. From 2020 to 2024, the median home price rose from around \$337,500 to \$420,400, an 25% increase.<sup>5</sup>

Homeowners also took advantage of sub-1% interest rates to refinance their mortgages to improve the houses they’d be spending more time in. According to a 2021 survey, 8% of Americans took a cash-out refinance, and nearly 60% of those people used the money for renovations – from kitchen remodels to pool installations and other outdoor enhancements.<sup>6</sup>



There is no assurance any investment strategy will be successful. Investing involves risk and investors may incur a profit or a loss.

<sup>1</sup>Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022). Consumer Expenditure Survey; <sup>2</sup>Live Nation (2023). Annual Report; <sup>3</sup>Federal Reserve Bank of Boston (2021). Consumer Credit Survey; <sup>4</sup>C+R Research (2023). Buy Now, Pay Later Survey; <sup>5</sup>Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis (2024). Median Sales Prices of Houses Sold for the United States; <sup>6</sup>U.S. Census American Housing Survey. (2024). Median Home Prices.



## Navigating taxes in retirement: Strategies for managing part-time income

**F**or many retirees, picking up part-time work is a great way to spend time. It keeps your mind sharp, your body active and lets you do something you truly enjoy. You can explore something new that you've always wanted to try or revisit a role from your career where you truly shined. It's also a great opportunity to mentor the next generation and share your wealth of knowledge.

Part-time jobs in retirement are a growing trend. But before you make the move, there are some key points to consider that may affect your plan – like taxes. Unless the work you choose in retirement is on a volunteer basis, you'll likely be paid. And where there's income, taxes are never far behind. If you're near the threshold of a higher tax bracket from your existing retirement income, adding an income stream could impact your tax situation in more ways than one.

In addition to increasing your tax burden on traditional retirement income streams such as IRA or 401(k) distributions, a higher tax bracket can affect other pieces of your financial picture, like taxes on investments, reduced Social Security benefits and higher Medicare premiums. By exploring some of these scenarios, you can pursue your passion without affecting your financial plan in retirement.

## A GAME OF BRACKETS

The first step in planning your strategy is evaluating how close you are to the next highest tax bracket, and whether the amount you'll bring in from your new job will be enough to push you into that next level.

If your part-time income fits within your current tax bracket, then you might not need to change anything. But if you have a well-structured retirement plan, odds are it's designed to maximize your income while minimizing your tax burden. This often means your existing income streams are already set up to stay just below the next highest tax bracket.

If that's the case, then it may be necessary to find ways to lower your overall income to avoid going over. Depending on your financial situation, there could be significant tax consequences far beyond the higher tax rate on the extra income.

## COSTS OF HIGHER INCOME

In addition to taxing traditional income at a higher rate, going up a tax bracket can cost you heavily in other areas.

- **Dividends and capital gains:** Tax rates on dividends and long-term capital gains are tied to your taxable income at rates of 0%, 15% or 20%, depending on your income level.
- **Interest income:** Savings accounts, savings bonds or other similar investments are taxed at your ordinary income tax rate. Higher income means higher taxes on interest income.
- **Net investment income tax:** High enough income can also subject you to the net investment income tax, adding another 3.8% tax on investment income, which includes interest, dividends and capital

gains. It can also disrupt tax-efficient strategies, like capital gains harvesting and Roth conversion, that you may already be using.

- **Social Security:** If your earnings exceed a set amount and you have not yet reached what the Social Security Administration considers your full retirement age, from 66 to 67 depending on your birthdate, your Social Security benefit could be reduced.
- **Medicare:** If your modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) exceeds certain thresholds, you could incur a surcharge on your Part B and Part D Medicare premiums. The surcharge for the current year is calculated using your MAGI from two years prior.
- **Health Insurance Marketplace:** If you are under 65 and not on Medicare, a part-time job could affect your ability to get healthcare subsidies on policies offered through the exchange.

It's important to remember that increasing your income in retirement can have a series of cascading effects on your tax situation, increasing what you may owe on a variety of investments and conflicting with strategies that were part of your financial plan.

## GETTING AHEAD OF IT

To ensure that your part-time work in retirement doesn't interfere with your financial plan, there are several things to consider if the additional income earned might push you into a higher tax bracket.

- **Reduce your distributions:** Unless you're only taking Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs), electing for smaller withdrawals from your 401(k),


The segment of workers 75 and older is predicted to increase

96.5%

by 2030.<sup>1</sup>

IRA or other retirement accounts could make up the difference from the added income.

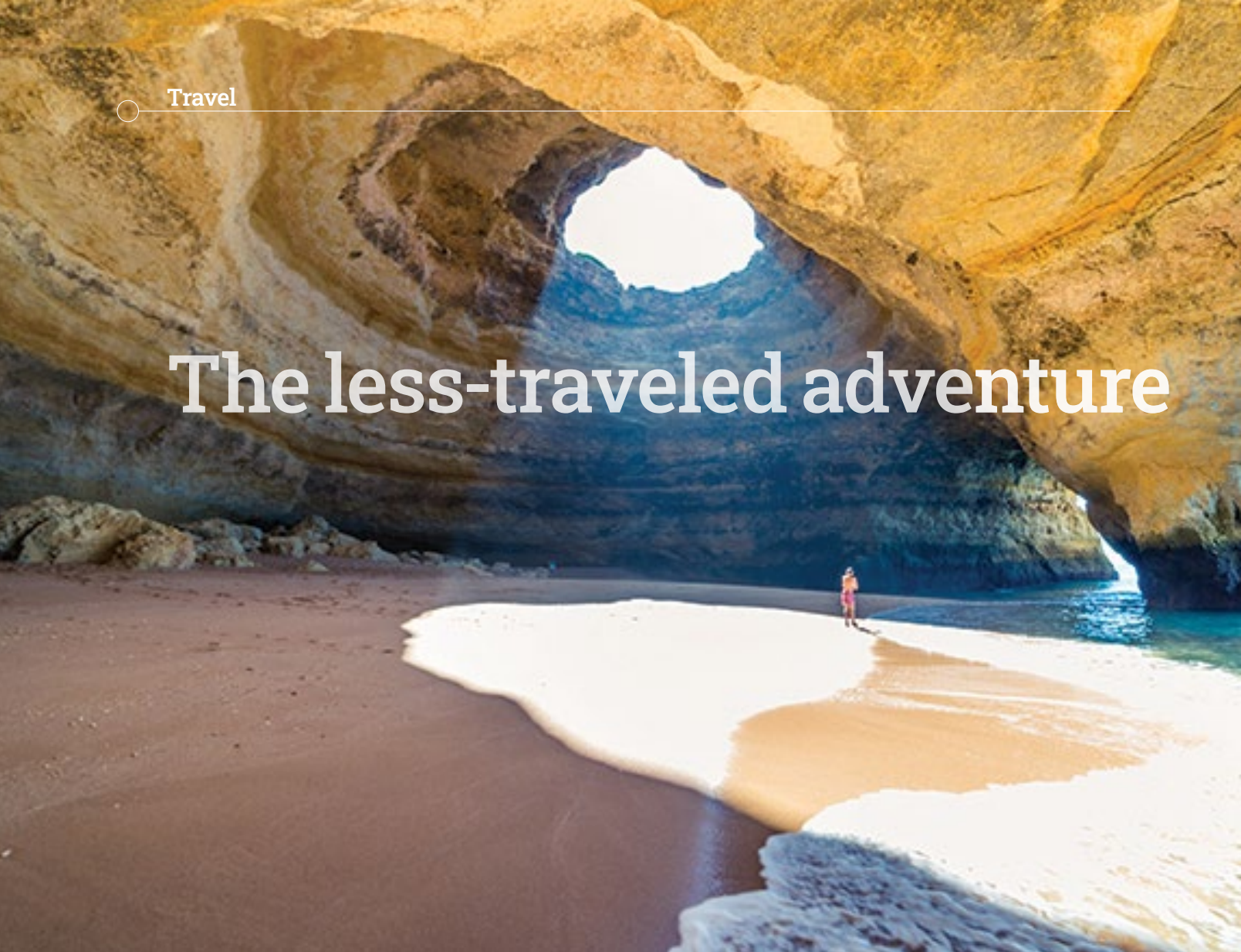
- **Take a pay cut:** This may sound strange, but if the pay from your part-time job would cost you more in taxes than the difference between your existing income and the next tax bracket, negotiate a lower salary. This could allow you to pursue a passion and keep more of your existing income streams.
- **Get creative:** There could be additional strategies that work depending on your unique financial situation. Every retirement is different, so exploring all of your options is key to finding the perfect solution for you.

Part-time work in retirement can be incredibly fulfilling and rewarding. By being mindful of potential tax implications and implementing effective strategies, you can enjoy the extra income without disrupting your financial plans. This approach helps ensure you can enjoy retirement to the fullest, both financially and personally. 

Raymond James does not provide tax advice. Please discuss these matters with your tax professional.

Sources: <sup>1</sup>U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; <sup>2</sup>Pew Research Center

# The less-traveled adventure



*Theth National Park,  
Albania*

**E**nvision experiencing the luxury of generous personal space while traveling at your own speed. By traveling to a lesser-known destination, you can explore hidden havens, peaceful paradises and spots beyond the typical tourist trails to find your next getaway experience. Here are a few roads less traveled to reignite your wanderlust and inspire your next adventure.

## **Theth National Park, Albania**

An untouched natural environment, this serene park is perfect for hiking enthusiasts interested in exploring trails that lead to the impressive 98-foot Grunas Waterfall and the crystal-clear Blue Eye of Theth. En route, visit the historic

19th century Theth Church, a charming stone-and-shingle landmark nestled amidst the dramatic mountains.

After a day of exploring the great outdoors, experience mountain village life by staying at a highly-rated guesthouse like Bujtina Polia. There, you can enjoy local cuisine and experience the warm hospitality of the Albanian people.

## **The Algarve, Portugal**

This region in Portugal is widely known for its picturesque villages and laid-back atmosphere. Beachcombing along the golden sands or exploring the rocky sea caves near Benagil Beach make for the perfect way to spend a leisurely afternoon.







The Algarve, Portugal



Tateyama, Chiba Prefecture, Japan

The Algarve is also home to charming towns and villages where you can experience local markets and the bittersweet melodies of traditional Fado music performances. For dining, O Leão de Porches and Touriga Wine & Dine offer exquisite meals with distinct local flavors. A stay at the luxurious Vila Vita Parc or the historic Bela Vista Hotel & Spa is sure to top off your experience in comfort.

### Lofoten, Norway

Known for its dramatic vistas, Lofoten is a Norwegian archipelago that offers a peaceful escape with activities like hiking, fishing and views of the Northern Lights during the fall and winter months. For true adventure-seekers, the steep hike up the 1,470 feet high Reinebringen delivers panoramic view after panoramic view of the surrounding fjords.

Accommodations like Eliassen Rorbuer and Nusfjord Arctic Resort offer cozy stays in traditional fishing cabins, and for dining, Børsen Spiseri and Fiskekrogen serve delicious local seafood guaranteed to give you an authentic taste of the region's cultural heritage.

### Tateyama, Chiba Prefecture, Japan

Tateyama in Chiba Prefecture, less than a two-hour drive from Tokyo, offers a tranquil coastal retreat. You can cycle along scenic routes with far-off views of Mount Fuji, swim in the clear waters of Takayama Bay or enjoy fresh seafood at local eateries.

Day trips to nearby landmarks like Tateyama Castle, Sunosaki Lighthouse and the cliff-clinging Daifuku-ji Temple are bound to offer a glimpse into the region's unique history.

### Grenada, Caribbean

Often referred to as the "Spice Isle," Grenada offers an idyllic retreat away from the crowds and is renowned for its pristine beaches and tropical landscapes.

Embrace the vibrant local culture by attending one of the island's many festivals or embark on a



Lofoten, Norway

spice tour to learn about the area's rich history in spice production. Another unique attraction is the Underwater Sculpture Park, where you can snorkel through crystal-clear turquoise waters to see submerged sculptures that have formed an artificial reef for marine life.

### Uyuni Salt Flat, Bolivia

As the world's largest salt flat, this mesmerizing destination provides an endless horizon that creates striking optical illusions, making for a photographer's paradise. The vast, reflective surface is particularly breathtaking during sunrise and sunset tours. Meanwhile, the clear night skies provide unforgettable stargazing experiences.

To truly immerse yourself in the local area, visit Colchani Village and learn about traditional salt harvesting methods. Look to stay at the region's unique hotels built entirely out of salt, like Hotel Palacio de Sal or Casa del Sal. [W](#)



ABOVE: Uyuni Salt Flat, Bolivia

LEFT: Grenada, Caribbean

# How vinyl got its groove back

**I**n the age of AirPods and MP3s, a growing number of people are paying more to listen to music in a less convenient way: on vinyl.

In 2023, 43 million records were sold – more than any year since the late 1980s.<sup>1</sup> In fact, record sales have been growing steadily since the early 2000s. What’s behind the 21st century vinyl resurgence, and what gives records their staying power?

It’s not just nostalgia. Sure, that may be a factor for older generations, but it doesn’t explain the throngs of record-buying Millennials and Gen Z-ers. Maybe it’s a check on our culture of distraction and the ability to skip songs – whole genres, even – with just a touch of the screen. Perhaps people are seeking a more intentional and immersive experience, one that demands our full attention and offers a tangible connection to the music.

## The experience

Aficionados say vinyl offers superior sound quality to other formats, but records have a sensory appeal that extends beyond the auditory.


Looking at an album cover – an original work of art – designed specifically for the music it accompanies creates an immersive experience that digital music can’t replicate. Flipping through your collection, maybe the art is what draws

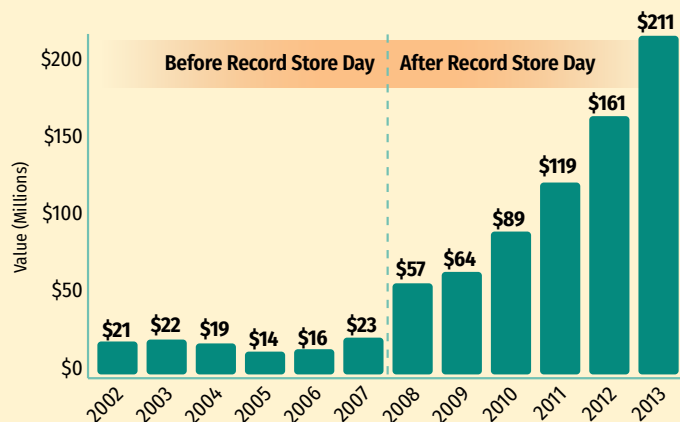
you in. But when you pull your selected record from its sleeve, place it on the turntable and gently set the needle in the groove, it becomes an intentional process that demands your participation. The music becomes the main event rather than just background noise.

## The exclusivity

Many artists release special limited-edition vinyl records that create a sense of scarcity and become prized collectors’ items. Colored vinyl, posters or other bonus materials and even digital extras not only add to an album’s appeal but increase the value of a record collection.

The demand for limited-edition and collectible vinyl continues to grow, and contemporary artists are cashing in on it. For example, Taylor Swift’s “Midnights” was available in four different-colored LP editions – Moonstone Blue, Jade Green, Mahogany and Blood Moon. Some fans may have been motivated to buy all four, as the back covers fit together to make a clock face – a literal nod to the album’s title. In the U.S., “Midnights” was the top-selling vinyl of 2022, and in 2023, Swift’s records accounted for one of every 15 sold.<sup>2,3</sup>

If Swifties are on board, it’s probably safe to say the vinyl trend isn’t going away anytime soon. 



## Record Store Day

On Record Store Day, vinyl enthusiasts gather – some lining up in the wee hours of the morning – at their local record shop to buy limited-release records and promotional items. Some analysts attribute vinyl’s resurgence to this annual event, launched in 2008 to promote independent brick-and-mortar record stores and celebrate them as hubs of local culture. The next Record Store Day is April 12, 2025.

Nature often provides us with unexpected inspiration, especially in a place as magnificent as Hawaii. It was there, on one of the many trails he explored during his time as a student, that Robert Madvin first encountered an intriguing stack of stones.

Robert was accompanied by his older brother, Andrew – also a fellow artist, who was visiting from Michigan. The two brothers found other similar stacks of stones, and learned that ancient Hawaiians would balance them upon one another as small sculptures to mark trails, holy sites and graves throughout the islands.

As a university student, Robert had already been incorporating the theme of stacking various items into his artwork. In collaboration with his brother, Robert would further this inspiration to see where it might take him.

This wasn't the first time Robert's path was influenced by his older brother. When Andrew was enrolled at the College of Creative Studies in Detroit, he asked Robert to help him with a project that involved glass. Robert was hooked on the art form and would later study glassblowing at the same school, as well as at the University of Hawai'i in Mānoa.

After completing his studies, Robert returned to Michigan to collaborate further with Andrew. Not just in terms of the work they would create, but also to establish their own studio, where the trail-inspired stone stacking idea evolved into a prominent glass sculpture series called Pohacu, for "rock" or "stone."

Each "stone" is a blown glass bubble, hollow inside and layered with various colors for texture and depth. Once cooled, these stones are ground, polished and then attached to one another with epoxy, conveying a center of gravity as they rise. The finished pieces range from about two feet to four feet in height.

"We love the variety of responses the sculptures get," Andrew tells WorthWhile. According to Andrew, some people say the stones make them feel relaxed, while others say the sculptures make them feel nervous, thinking the stones might fall. "At the end of the day, it's a concept of form and texture that teases the idea of balance," Andrew says.

To view more work, visit [axiomglass.com](http://axiomglass.com).



**"Pohacu Stacked  
Stones – Earth  
Amber" by  
Robert Madvin**  
Glass – 2019

#### **The Tom and Mary James/Raymond James Financial Art Collection**

One of Florida's largest private art collections, The Tom and Mary James/Raymond James Financial Art Collection is housed at the Raymond James Financial headquarters in St. Petersburg, Florida. The collection includes paintings, drawings, sculptures, graphics and mixed media. A portion of the collection resides at The James Museum of Western & Wildlife Art (visit [thejamesmuseum.org](http://thejamesmuseum.org)). The museum represents the culmination of Tom and Mary's more than 50 years of collecting culturally significant pieces and is a gift to the community.

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