The Longevity Economy is the sum of all economic activity in the District of Columbia that is supported by the consumer spending of households headed by someone age 50 or older—both in the District of Columbia, as well as spending on exports from the District of Columbia to other states. This includes the direct, indirect (supply chain), and induced economic effects of this spending. (The induced impact involves the ripple effects from the spending of those employed either directly or indirectly.)

People over 50 contribute to the economy in a positive, outsize proportion to their share of the population. Despite being 28% of the District of Columbia’s population in 2013 (expected to grow to 32% by 2040), the total economic contribution of the Longevity Economy accounted for 33% of the District of Columbia’s GDP ($38 billion). This supported 44% of the District of Columbia’s jobs (0.4 million), 37% of employee compensation ($21 billion), and 36% of state taxes ($5 billion). The greatest number of jobs supported by the Longevity Economy were in health care (65,000), professional services (64,000), and accommodation & food services (42,000).

This $38 billion impact of the Longevity Economy was driven by $12 billion in consumer spending by over-50 households in the District of Columbia, or 46% of total comparable consumer spending. The categories where Longevity Economy spending accounted for the largest share of total consumer spending were health care (58%), other nondurables (51%), and financial services (49%).

People over 50 also make a significant contribution to the District of Columbia’s workforce, with 60% of people 50-64 employed, compared to 81% of people 25-49. Overall, people over 50 represent 24% of the District of Columbia’s workforce. Among employed people, 14% of those 50-64 are self-employed entrepreneurs, compared with 6% of those 25-49. Additionally, 62% of those 50-64 work in professional occupations, compared to 69% 25-49.