

Senior discounts: popular, but under fire

Do the swelling ranks of seniors deserve a price break when younger generations are struggling more?

By Margaret Price, *Correspondent* / April 15, 2012



In this October file photo, residents from The Village at Penn State enjoy a happy hour before dinner in the lounge in State College, Pa. With boomers swelling the ranks of seniors, can restaurants and other businesses continue to afford to offer senior discounts?

Gene Puskar/AP/File

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Everybody likes a discount, especially Christine Pursley. "If they're offered, I want them," says the [St. Augustine, Fla.](#), retiree, who capitalizes on deals ranging from early-bird restaurant specials to "senior discount" days at grocery and department stores.

Savings from senior discounts "really add up," says Barbara Rudder, a retiree from [New York City](#), who pays half price for her weekly trips to [New Jersey](#) via public transportation and takes advantage of lower prices at many hotels, museums, and movie theaters.

Although cherished, senior discounts are under fire. Some critics wonder why older generations deserve a price break when younger generations are struggling more. There's also the question of affordability: Will businesses keep cutting prices for seniors as hordes of baby boomers push into their 60s?

"This is a huge influx of people," notes Margaret Lynn Duggar, a consultant in [Tallahassee, Fla.](#) "It's one thing if [senior discounts] apply to just 5 percent of the population, and another if you're talking about 35 percent."

Could senior-discounting go the way of the blue-plate special or dish night at the movie theater? "I can't imagine that five years from now any senior discounts will still be available," says Ken Dychtwald, founder of Age Wave, an [Emeryville, Calif.](#), consulting firm specializing in the mature market. "It's silly to give the most affluent segment of our society [an age-based] discount."

Senior discounts vary widely, with some offered as early as age 50. The size of the discounts also varies, with 10 percent about average. And they apply to a broad array of products and services, from groceries and property taxes to cellphone service and skydiving.

Many ski resorts let people ages 70 and older ski free of charge, says David Smidt, president of SeniorDiscounts.com, an online directory based in [Albuquerque, N.M.](#) "I even found a Cadillac dealer in [Texas](#) offering senior discounts."

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