**The Grey Divorce and Why It Is Growing**   
by Laura Petherbridge

*A person and person sitting on a couch

Description automatically generated"Laura, my 66-year-old mom, just told me that she and my dad are getting divorced. I'm in shock. They have been married for thirty-nine years. Why? What are they thinking?"*

This daughter can't fathom her parents getting divorced in their senior years. However, it's not that atypical. Baby Boomer couples are divorcing at astounding rates.

*"Research has found that boomers﻿ born between 1946 and 1964﻿ ﻿ are divorcing more than any other generation. ﻿A new analysis of divorce data from 1990 to 2021 released in July by Bowling Green State University's National Center for Family and Marriage Research found that divorce rates for those aged 45 and over rose during that period, while rates dropped for those younger than 45. The most significant increase in divorce rates was among people 65 and older: The rate tripled from 1990 to 2021. 1 in 4 divorces were among those age 65 or older."​​﻿*

While we may be surprised to discover that an older generation is choosing to split, the bigger question is why.

Between online research and my observation after 30 years in divorce ministry, here are the top reasons:

* **People are living longer.** While this is good, it's also causing us to rethink our lives. Older generations viewed being 66 as nearing the end of life. No longer. Today, it's viewed more as midlife or, at the very least, "still young."
* **It's been miserable for a long time.**Many have remained in a bad marriage without doing work to improve it. After the kids become adults, go to college, or get married, the couple faces issues that have been swept under the rug for 30 years. It's not uncommon that they no longer enjoy being with each other, and without distractions from the kids, they want out.
* **The stigma is gone.** In previous generations, people stayed together because it was embarrassing to get divorced. That's no longer the case. Adults do not view leaving a spouse as shameful, but rather, "I deserve to be happy."
* **The abuse is no longer tolerable**. If a spouse has remained in an abusive marriage due to fear or the desire for the kids to have an intact home, that spouse may feel they now have the tools or support to leave the marriage.
* **Women have more money**. In past generations, men made substantially more income than women did. Therefore, a woman may have felt she couldn't leave. The income opportunities have increased for women, which has given them the freedom to divorce.
* **The retirement of one spouse**. When one spouse is now home all the time and the other is still working, it can change the couple's dynamics. If the marriage was already on shaky ground, this could push it over the edge.
* **Pornography and infidelity have invaded the marriage**. We often assume that pornography only affects the younger generation, but that is inaccurate. Many senior women discover their spouse has been addicted to porn for some time. This breaks the trust and foundation of the marriage, and if the husband refuses to stop, it can cause the union to crumble.
* **God is gone**. Older generations viewed their vows before God as a sacred act of commitment. With the USA's growing trend to turn away from God, faith, Church, or holiness, many find no reason to stay committed to marriage. There is no accountability to others and no healthy fear of doing something wrong. They don't believe there will be consequences to their actions.
* **I feel young again**. For a season, my husband worked in a senior community in Florida. It was shocking to see the difference in how people acted compared to the same-aged seniors in my hometown. Because the setting strongly encouraged a "party atmosphere," the seniors took on the persona of teenagers. They wanted to feel young again. While it provided great fun for them, I also noticed a negative side. As they lost their inhibitions and ran toward the fountain of youth, there was a significant increase in alcohol consumption and flirtation with those who weren't their spouse. Suddenly, a very faithful spouse of forty years was looking at a new man or woman on the dance floor and desiring him/her to be more "fun" than the "old spouse." For many, the move to a senior community went from being a great experience to a disaster.
* **The Church doesn't address real marital problems**. For many years, I have tried to get church leadership to understand the unique issues people face today and how they differ from previous generations. These complexities include seniors.
* **It's a second marriage**. A whopping 86% of baby boomers born between 1957 and 1964 were **remarried** by age 46. This union usually created a stepfamily. And stepfamilies are more complicated than first-time marriages. A high remarriage rate among older populations is likely contributing to the gray divorce phenomenon, as the divorce rate is higher for remarried couples than first-time marriages. Put simply, research shows that more marriages equate to higher divorce rates, with over 60% of second marriages and 70% of third marriages ending in divorce.

To read the original post: <https://www.thesmartstepmom.com/post/the-gray-divorce-what-is-happening>

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