Managing Your Money in Retirement

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MANAGING YOUR MONEY IN RETIREMENT
How to see your financial needs are met

1. Define what you need. A reasonable place to begin is what you currently need each month to pay the bills. While spending on trips and entertainment declines with age, rising medical costs could push your monthly expenses higher. The big risk is needing long-term care in a nursing home.

2. Add up what you have. Social Security and employer pension benefits can help pay your monthly expenses. Then there’s your savings and your house. You can draw an income out of these assets, hold them as reserves, or leave them to your kids or charity.

3. Decide what to do. If you can pay the bills and are well-insured, have enough assets, or can accept the consequences of a bad medical or financial shock, you don’t have to do anything. If not, the primary options are to change the way you use your savings or house, return to work, or tighten your belt.
Everyday expenses

To stay in your house, drive the same car, and remain active in your community, you don’t need as much income as you did while working.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORKSHEET</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How much do you need each month?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How much for a surviving spouse (if married)?</td>
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It’s tempting to ignore your needs down the road. But when tomorrow comes your needs will be there.

Low-income households need an income closer to what they had while working.

High-income households often see a sharper cut in taxes and saving. They also have more “discretionary expenditures” they could cut, if need be.
WHAT YOU NEED

Medical bills

Medical bills are something you can’t do without. Medicare pays much of the cost. But you are responsible for premiums, deductibles, copays, and items that Medicare doesn’t cover. Medicaid policies, offered by private insurers, cover many but not all of these costs. The big exception is long-term care.

Medical expenses are rising. In twenty years, health-care expenses in today’s dollars, not including long-term care, could triple. Could you offset this rise in health care costs with cuts in other expenses? If not, how much more income would you or a surviving spouse need?

Health care costs generally rise over time and as you age – figure about 6% a year above inflation.

The long-term care dilemma

One in four Americans age 65 is expected to spend at least one year in a nursing home, at a cost of about $75,000 a year – and this cost is NOT covered by Medicare.

Medicaid, the government program for the poor, DOES cover long-term care – for those with very low income and assets.

You can buy private long-term care insurance. But the cost is high — about $200 a month for a policy bought at age 65 that pays up to $60,000 a year.

WORKSHEET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional monthly income for medical costs in your 80s</th>
<th>$</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long-term care insurance, if you choose to buy it</td>
<td>$</td>
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</table>
Social Security

Social Security benefits are especially valuable. It’s rarely enough to support your current lifestyle. But the benefits keep up with inflation, and the checks keep coming as long as you live.

Other sources of income tend to dry up over time. So as you age, Social Security benefits generally become increasingly important.

While Social Security has a shortfall, nearly all proposals to cut benefits protect people 55 and over.

Worksheet

| How much you get from Social Security:  | $ |
| How much your surviving spouse would get (it’s the higher benefit): | $ |
Employer pensions

Many households entering retirement today still get a traditional employer pension, which provides an income that keeps coming as long as you live. Most private employer pensions, however, are not inflation-proof. If prices rise 3 percent a year, in twenty years that pension benefit will buy barely half what it can today.

So enter how much you and your survivor get from employer pensions.

- The wife is usually the survivor.
- Survivors usually get either nothing or ½ of their spouse’s pension.
- Inflation could further cut that benefit.
- If you have any other monthly income, such as rents, add that as well.

Then take stock, for now, of what you need, what you have, and your monthly shortfall or surplus.

Take stock, for now, of your monthly income and expenses.

Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT YOU NEED:</th>
<th>YOU</th>
<th>YOUR SURVIVOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyday expenses</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More for medical insurance</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term care insurance?</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL (a):</strong></td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>WHAT YOU HAVE:</th>
<th>YOU</th>
<th>YOUR SURVIVOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Security</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer pensions</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other monthly income</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL (b):</strong></td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MONTHLY INCOME SHORTFALL/SURPLUS

**TOTAL (c) MINUS TOTAL (a):** $   $
WHAT YOU HAVE

401(k)/IRA savings

Now it’s time to make decisions, first about your savings. Using savings to finance retirement is hardly straightforward:

SAVINGS HAVE TWO COMPETING USES:
• You can draw an income out of your savings to maintain your lifestyle.
• You can hold your savings as reserves—deposits or buy insurance, to protect your lifestyle. [note: Another competing use is to leave a bequest to your children or charities.]

HOW SAVINGS ARE USED CAN INCREASE RISK:
• Using stocks to boost your investment income comes with the risk that a downturn will reduce their value.
• The more income you draw out of your savings, the greater the risk you will outlive your savings.

THESE ISSUES ARE INTERCONNECTED:
• The less your risk: from medical care costs, financial shocks, or outliving your savings—the less reserves you need and the more income you can draw.
• Long-term care typically comes at the end of life. So if you hold reserves to cover the cost of long-term care, you could use the income those reserves produce—income above inflation—for everyday expenses.

2 ways to draw a monthly income from savings earmarked to produce income

Draw out about $400 a year ($33 a month) with little risk that the amount you draw, adjusted for inflation, will ever fall sharply.

Buy an annuity that pays about $500 a year ($42 a month), adjusted for inflation, as long as either spouse is alive—but funds used to buy an annuity can never be used for anything else.

Preserving your principle and earning above the rate of inflation might seem like the only safe bet, but there are reasonably safe ways to draw down your savings over the course of your life.
**Home equity**

Most households entering retirement own their home, and the equity in their home—the value of the house less any remaining mortgage—is often greater than their 401(k)/IRA savings. Widowers often downsize, as they typically need more income and don’t need or can’t afford a larger house. Many needing extended nursing home care sell their house, which they no longer need, to pay the bill.

Individuals and surviving spouses, especially, can use home equity to pay for long-term care.

**The most powerful ways to tap home equity**

- **Downsizing.** Moving to a less expensive house 1) adds to your retirement savings; and 2) reduces your ongoing housing expense. Moving is also easier, physically and socially, now than when you’re older.

- **A reverse mortgage.** A reverse mortgage is a new, unfamiliar, and somewhat complicated arrangement. But it 1) allows you to stay in your house for the rest of your life; and 2) provides tax-free income.
WHAT TO DO

Lay out a plan that meets your needs

The example below illustrates the process.

A couple has a $350 monthly income shortfall, and projects a $450 shortfall for the survivor, but has a house worth $120,000 and $55,000 in savings.

• They decide to downsize. After $15,000 in selling and moving costs, they purchase a condo for $100,000, add $55,000 to savings, bringing their savings to $120,000. Down sizing also cuts their housing expenses $200 a month.

• They decide to use $60,000 of savings for income, drawing down $200 a month, and hold $60,000 as reserves.

• This plan results in a $50 monthly surplus and a $50 shortfall for the survivor. The couple plans to cover that shortfall along with rising medical costs, from savings held in reserve and any income those reserves produce.

The plan maintains the couple’s standard of living — now and in the future. But they would be hard pressed to pay for long-term care.

Making a plan often means making a choice for income now or income in the future.
If you don’t have enough

Things to consider if you can’t pay the bills or the risks are too great:

• **Tighten your belt.** If you adopt a lower cost of living today, you reduce the risk of a much sharper decline tomorrow, when you’re older, poorer, and less able to adjust.

• **Return to work to conserve your resources.** Jobs can be harder to find and have less status than jobs you held in the past. But each year you don’t touch your savings 1) your savings grow and 2) your savings won’t have to stretch as far. So your income from savings should be about 5-8 percent more.

**Change the way you use your savings or house.** Not many retirees today downsize early in retirement, draw down their savings, or buy annuities. But each has advantages that might suit your needs.

If you need long-term care and can’t afford a nursing home, will you rely on your family or run down your assets? If your income from savings falls, how might you reduce your expenses in the least painful way?

Have a plan should things go badly

If you can pay the monthly bills for the rest of your life and are well-insured or can bear the risks you face, you have options. You can:

• Spend more freely and buy more things that you like.
• Give more to charity or your children.

• Invest your surplus savings in stocks and other assets that are risky, but have high expected returns. If things go well, you can spend more, give more, or leave more to your children. If not, you have the peace of mind that your needs will still be met.
Do it now

What you do makes a difference.
So make a plan:
- Think and act long term, which we don’t naturally do.
- Plan for your survivor, which means thinking about death (and making a will)
- Assess your risks realistically, and have a plan if things go badly.

If it’s in your plan:
- Move to a less expensive home.
- Adopt a disciplined drawdown strategy or buy an annuity—something most people resist.
- Accept less status on the job.
- Give up things that you think you “can’t do without.”

The quicker you act, the more secure your retirement will be.