



Women and Retirement Planning



Women face special challenges when planning for retirement, so it's important they make retirement planning a priority.

All investing involves risk, including the possible loss of principal, and there can be no assurance that any investment strategy will be successful.

**There is no assurance that working with a financial professional will improve investment results.*

Women often face special challenges when planning for retirement. Because their careers may be interrupted more often to care for children or elderly parents, women may spend less time in the workforce and earn less money than men in the same age group. As a result, their retirement plan balances, Social Security benefits, and pension benefits are often lower. In addition to earning less, women generally live longer than men, and they may face having to stretch limited retirement savings and benefits over many years.

To meet these financial challenges, women need to consider making retirement planning a priority. Consider the following tips to help yourself or the women in your life plan ahead.

Begin saving now

To help improve your chances of achieving a financially comfortable retirement, start with a realistic assessment of how much you'll need to save. If the figure is substantial, don't be discouraged — the most important thing to consider is to begin saving now. Although it's never too late to save for retirement, the sooner you start, the more time your investments have to potentially grow.

The chart below shows how just \$2,000 invested annually at a 6% rate of return might grow over time:

Age you begin saving for retirement:	Amount you could save by age 65:
20	\$451,016
30	\$236,242
40	\$116,313
50	\$49,345
60	\$11,951

Note: This is a hypothetical example of mathematical principles, is used for illustrative purposes only, and does not reflect the performance of any specific

investment. Results assume reinvestment of all earnings. Fees, expenses, and taxes are not considered and would reduce the performance shown if they were included. Actual results will vary.

Save as much as you can — you have many options

If your employer offers a retirement savings plan, such as a 401(k) or a 403(b), consider enrolling as soon as possible and contribute as much as you can. It's easy to save because your contributions are deducted directly from your pay, and some employers will even match a portion of what you contribute. If your employer offers a pension plan, find out how many years you'll need to work for the company before you're vested in, or own, your pension benefits. Women struggling to balance work and family sometimes shortchange their retirement savings by leaving their jobs before they become vested in their pension benefits. Keep in mind, too, that because your pension benefits will be based on your earnings and on your years of service, the longer you stay with one employer, the higher your pension is likely to be.

Most employer-sponsored plans allow you to choose from several investment options (typically mutual funds). If you have many years to invest or you're trying to make up for lost time, you may want to consider growth-oriented investments such as stocks and stock funds. Historically, stocks have outperformed bonds and short-term instruments over the long term, although past performance is no guarantee of future results. However, along with potentially higher returns, stocks carry more risk than less volatile investments. *A good way to get detailed information about a mutual fund you're considering is to read the fund's prospectus, which can be obtained from the fund company. It includes information about the fund's objectives, expenses, risks, and past returns.* A financial professional can also help you evaluate your retirement plan options.*

Save for retirement — no matter what

Even if you're staying at home to raise your family, you can — and should try to — save for retirement. If you're married and file your income taxes jointly, and otherwise qualify, you may open and contribute to a traditional or Roth IRA as long as your spouse has enough earned income to cover the contributions. Both types of IRAs allow you to make contributions of up to \$6,000 in 2019 (up from \$5,500 in 2018), or, if less, 100% of taxable compensation. If you're age 50 or older, you're allowed to contribute even more — up to \$7,000 in 2019 (up from \$6,500 in 2018).

Plan for income in retirement

Do you worry about outliving your retirement income? Unfortunately, that's a realistic concern for many women. At age 65, women can expect to live, on average, an additional 20.6 years.¹ In addition, many women will live into their 90s. This means that women should generally plan for a retirement that will last at least 20 to 30 years. Women should also consider the possibility of spending some of those years alone. According to recent statistics, 33% of women age 65 and older are widowed, 16% are divorced, and 34% live alone.² For married women, the loss of a spouse can mean a significant decrease in retirement income from Social Security or pensions.

So what can you do to help ensure you'll have enough income to last throughout retirement? Here are some tips:

- Estimate how much income you'll need. Use your current expenses as a starting point, but note that your expenses may change by the time you retire.
- Find out how much you can expect to receive from Social Security, pension plans, and other sources. What benefits will you receive should you become widowed or divorced?
- Set a retirement savings goal that you can work toward, and keep track of your progress.
- Save regularly, save as much as you can, and then look for ways to save more — dedicate a portion of every raise, bonus, cash gift, or tax refund to your retirement savings.

- Consider how you can help protect yourself and your family from potentially substantial long-term care expenses. By planning ahead, you could help preserve your choices for care and may avoid becoming a burden on your family.

What's your excuse for not planning for retirement?

I'm too busy to plan

Perhaps you're so wrapped up in balancing your responsibilities that you haven't given retirement planning much thought. That's understandable, but if you don't put retirement planning at the top of your to-do list, you risk shortchanging yourself later on. Staying focused on your goal of saving for a comfortable retirement is difficult, but if you put yourself first, it could pay off in the end.

My spouse takes care of our finances

Married or not, it's critical for women to take an active role in planning for retirement. Otherwise, you may be forced to make important financial decisions quickly during a period of crisis. Unfortunately, decisions that are not well thought through often prove costly later. Preparing for retirement with your spouse could help ensure that you're both provided for, and pave the way to a comfortable retirement.

I'll save more once my children are through college

Many well-intentioned parents put their own retirement savings on hold while they save for their children's college education. But if you do so, you're potentially sacrificing your own financial well-being. Your children have many options when it comes to financing college — loans, grants, and scholarships, for example — but there's no such thing as a retirement loan! Why not set a good example for your children by getting your own finances in order before contributing to their college fund?

I don't know enough about investing

Commit to spending just a few minutes a day learning the basics of investing, to help you become knowledgeable. And remember, you don't have to do it by yourself — a financial professional will be happy to work with you to set retirement goals and help you choose appropriate investments.



If you're self-employed or own a small business, look into retirement savings options tailored to your needs, including individual 401(k) plans, Keogh plans, SEP plans, and SIMPLE IRAs and 401(k)s.

Sources:

¹ NCHS Data Brief, Number 328, November 2018

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Aging, *A Profile of Older Americans: 2017*

IMPORTANT DISCLOSURES

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