

Retirement Questions That Have Nothing to Do With Money

Preparing for retirement is not entirely financial. Your degree of happiness in your “second act” may depend on some factors that don’t come with an obvious price tag. Here are some non-monetary factors to consider as you prepare for your retirement.

What will you do with your time? Too many people retire without any idea of what their retirement will look like. They leave work, and they cannot figure out what to do with themselves, so they grow restless. It’s important to identify what you want your retirement to look like and what you see yourself doing. Maybe you love your career and can’t imagine not working during your retirement. There’s no hard and fast rule to your dream retirement, so it’s important to be honest with yourself. A recent Employee Benefit Research Institute Retirement Confidence Survey shows that 73% of workers expect to work for pay in retirement, whereas just 25% of retirees report that they’ve actually worked for pay.¹

Having a clear vision for your retirement may help you align your financial goals. It’s important to remember that your vision for retirement may change—like deciding you don’t want to continue working after all.

Where will you live? This is another factor in retirement happiness. If you can surround yourself with family members and friends whose company you enjoy, in a community where you can maintain old friendships and meet new people with similar interests or life experiences, that may be a plus. If all this can occur in a walkable community with good mass transit and senior services, all the better.

How are you preparing to get around in your eighties and nineties? The actuaries at Social Security project that the average life expectancy for men turning 67 is 84.8 years old, and the life expectancy for women turning 67 is 87.2 years. Some will live longer. Say you find yourself in that group. What kind of car would you want to drive at 85 or 90? At what age would you cease driving? Lastly, if you do stop driving, who would you count on to help you go where you want to go and get out in the world?²

How will you keep up your home? At 45, you can tackle that bathroom remodel or backyard upgrade yourself. At 75, you will probably outsource projects of that sort, whether or not you stay in your current home. You may want to move out of a single-family home and into a townhome or condo for retirement. Regardless of the size of your retirement residence, you should expect to fund minor or major repairs, and you may need to find reliable and affordable sources for gardening or landscaping.

These are the non-financial retirement questions that no pre-retiree should dismiss. Think about them as you prepare and invest for the future.

1. EBRI.org, 2025

2. SSA.gov, 2025

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