

Fine-Tune Your  
**RETIREMENT  
WITHDRAWAL  
STRATEGY**

# THREE EASY STEPS

can help you determine if you are on track for a sustainable retirement.

1

Calculate Your Retirement Income Need.

2

Calculate Your Surplus of Shortfall.

3

Understand and Choose Your Retirement Solution.

1

## Calculate Your Retirement Income Need.

Calculate your monthly expenses and consider categorizing them into essential and non-essential well in advance of retirement.

### What are your expenses?

Retirement expenses include everything from housing, food and utilities to transportation, taxes and medical expenses. Remember, it's important to take inflation and increased costs into consideration — especially in regard to medical visits/procedures which may increase with age.

### What are your lifetime income sources?

The most common sources of lifetime income streams outside of retirement savings (i.e., 403(b), 401(k), IRAs, etc.) include:

- Social Security (visit [SSA.gov/MyAccount](https://www.ssa.gov/MyAccount) to access your statement)
- Annuities, pensions and other lifetime income

### What is your retirement income need?

To identify your monthly retirement income need, simply subtract your monthly lifetime income sources from your retirement expenses (essential and non-essential):



$$\text{Retirement Expenses} - \text{Lifetime Income Sources} = \text{Retirement Income Need}$$

If the expenses are more than your lifetime income, this figure is your retirement income need (i.e., the amount of expenses that you will not be able to cover with your lifetime income). This is the amount of additional retirement income needed from your retirement savings (i.e., employer-sponsored 403(b) and 401(k) plans, IRAs and personal savings) to maintain your current standard of living.



### RULE OF THUMB

For a quick estimate, financial planners suggest replacing **70%–90%** of your final working year's income, but knowing your actual expenses is preferable.<sup>1</sup>



**To increase the likelihood your retirement savings will last your lifetime,** it's critical to prepare a sustainable retirement withdrawal strategy. Take time before retirement to accurately calculate your retirement income need. You will also need to identify your retirement surplus or shortfall to fully assess if you are financially prepared for retirement. **GuideStone can help** you evaluate your retirement income need and develop a personalized retirement solution that works best for you.

## 2 Calculate Your Surplus of Shortfall.

In order to calculate your surplus or shortfall, knowing your sustainable withdrawal rate is **particularly important**. If you withdraw too much during retirement, you could run the risk of depleting your assets before the end of your life (longevity risk).

### Examples of Withdrawal Rates

In order to develop a sustainable strategy, you need to calculate a monthly sustainable withdrawal amount. The withdrawal rates shown below are, based on your age at retirement, the maximum amount that should be withdrawn per year. If you are married, the youngest spouse's age should be referenced.<sup>3</sup> Based on the appropriate rate listed below, calculate a sustainable withdrawal amount from your retirement savings (i.e., employer-sponsored 403(b) and 401(k) plans, IRAs and personal savings, such as investment accounts, savings accounts and CDs).

Retirement Age	Sustainable Withdrawal Rate
59 or less	3.50%
60-65	4.00%
66-69	4.50%
70 and over	Greater of 5% or RMD

 **NOTE:** Asset sustainability using these rates is not guaranteed. Proper asset allocation also plays a critical role.

$$\left[ \text{Retirement Savings Balances} \times \text{Applicable Sustainable Withdrawal Rate} \right] = \text{Sustainable Withdrawal Amount}$$

### Do you have a surplus or shortfall?

Subtract your earlier calculated retirement income need from your sustainable withdrawal amount. If this number is negative, then you have a **shortfall**, meaning your retirement income need is not completely covered by your sustainable withdrawal amount. Before proceeding, you may need to consider:

1. Reducing your retirement expenses starting with non-essential expenses
2. Contributing more to your retirement savings plans before retirement
3. Working longer, and perhaps even into retirement
4. Reviewing your retirement income solutions

If this number is positive, then you have a **surplus**, and your sustainable withdrawal amount completely covers your income need. You're able to move forward to Step 3 to determine the appropriate withdrawal solution(s).

## HOW LONG CAN I EXPECT TO LIVE?

For those reaching age 65 today:

 A man can expect to live, on average, until age **84.2**

 A woman can expect to live, on average, until age **86.8<sup>2</sup>**

## 3 Understand and Choose Your Retirement Solution.

How to use a systematic withdrawal to receive retirement income from your employer-sponsored plans, IRAs and/or personal savings:

### Systematic Withdrawal

This option provides flexible income that you can change at any time. Payments are sent to you on a regular basis (such as monthly). You retain responsibility for investing your retirement account balance. Using the calculated sustainable withdrawal rate helps you establish an adequate withdrawal payment per month. Each year, you can increase your withdrawal amount to adjust for inflation (if needed). Keep in mind that, depending on market volatility and/or if you withdraw more than a sustainable amount, you increase your longevity risk.

**GuideStone is here to help** you with your retirement planning needs. Understanding your retirement income need, your surplus or shortfall and available withdrawal solution can help you develop an appropriate withdrawal strategy and minimize the risk of outliving your assets. Plan ahead and protect your financial future by making informed withdrawal decisions.

**FOR A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR RETIREMENT WITHDRAWAL STRATEGY,** turn to the back page for a working example.

 TO LEARN MORE ABOUT RETIREMENT INCOME WITHDRAWAL STRATEGIES that are right for you, contact GuideStone at **1-888-98-GUIDE** (1-888-984-8433).



## TO DETERMINE YOUR WITHDRAWAL STRATEGY ►



### EXAMPLE

A married couple, both age 64, looking to retire immediately, has **\$170,000** in his 403(b) and **\$100,000** in her IRA for a **combined savings of \$270,000**.

They establish that their monthly essential expenses are **\$3,700** and monthly non-essential expenses are **\$100**, making **total retirement expenses \$3,800**.

Their lifetime income source is as follows: They are scheduled to receive retirement income of **\$2,800 at age 64** (\$2,100 for Social Security and \$700 for her pension).

Alternatively, if they waited one year, their retirement income would increase to **\$3,100 at age 65** (\$2,275 for Social Security and \$825 for her pension).

Their sustainable withdrawal rate is **4%**, since they are within the 60–65 sustainable withdrawal rate age band.

## 1 Calculate Your Retirement Income Need.



First, they calculate their retirement income need of \$1,000.

Retirement Expenses	\$3,800
– Lifetime Income Sources	\$2,800
<b>Retirement Income Need</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>

## 2 Calculate Your Surplus of Shortfall.



Second, they calculate their shortfall of **\$100**.

Subsequently, they decide to wait one year to retire at at age 65, which increases their Lifetime Income Sources from \$2,800 to \$3,100. Then they calculate their retirement income need of \$700 as well as their surplus of \$300.

Retirement Income Need	\$1,000
– Sustainable Withdrawal Amount	\$900
	<small>(4% of \$270,000 divided by 12)</small>

**Shortfall** **\$100**  
(Unsustainable)

Retirement Expenses	\$3,800
– Lifetime Income Sources	\$3,100

<b>Retirement Income Need</b>	<b>\$700</b>
– Sustainable Withdrawal Amount	\$1,000
	<small>(4% of \$300,000 divided by 12)</small>

**Surplus** **\$300**  
(Sustainable)

Please note, in addition to working a year longer, they continue to contribute to the 403(b) and IRA, resulting in increased savings of \$270,000 to \$300,000. Although this example doesn't show expense increases, you should consider that expenses can increase due to inflation when choosing your withdrawal strategy.

## 3 Understand and Choose Your Retirement Solution.



Now that their retirement income need of \$700 has been calculated, they develop a solution to meet their preferences/needs.

They have \$300,000 available for a systematic withdrawal to cover their \$700 monthly essential and non-essential retirement needs. They use a sustainable withdrawal rate of 4% with results in a monthly withdrawal of \$1,000 -- more than enough to cover the \$700 -- and is an appropriate rate for their time horizon and financial assets in this example.

**CONCLUSION:** The solution provides adequate income to maintain their standard of living, reduces longevity risk, provides liquidity for non-essential and unplanned expenses and increases their opportunity to leave legacy assets for their beneficiaries.

<sup>1</sup>John Waggoner, How Much Money Do You Need to Retire?, AARP, (2021), [aarp.org/retirement/planning-for-retirement/info-2020/how-much-money-do-you-need-to-retire.html](https://aarp.org/retirement/planning-for-retirement/info-2020/how-much-money-do-you-need-to-retire.html).

<sup>2</sup>Social Security Administration: 2022 Life Expectancy Data, accessed January 24, 2023, [SSA.gov/planners/lifeexpectancy.html](https://ssa.gov/planners/lifeexpectancy.html).

<sup>3</sup>Sustainable withdrawal rates based on summary of research by Kitces' sustainable withdrawal rate research and models.

- 20 Years of Safe Withdrawal Rate Research, Michael Kitces, March 2012.
- The Extraordinary Upside Potential Of Sequence Of Return Risk In Retirement, Michael Kitces, February 2019



**NOTE:** In this example, the couple is most concerned about longevity risk and would like their lifetime income to meet essential retirement expenses; they also desire money to be available for non-essential expenses.

