



Harry's Take

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Life Expectancy Facts for Retirement Planning

Today at birth, the average woman can expect to live to age 79.45, or 5.31 years longer than the average man at age 74.14. Why the difference? There's a long list. In rough order, men take bigger risks, have more dangerous jobs, are more likely to get heart disease and at younger ages, are heavier, commit suicide more often, are less socially connected, and tend to avoid doctors and health screenings. Overall, people are living 5.5 years longer than 50 years ago in 1974. And people who have a positive outlook on life tend to live 7.5 years longer than those who don't, according to Katharine Esty, author of [Eightysomethings](#). That means the happiest people need to be saving even more for retirement.

The average person actually retires at age 63, not the official age of 65. The difference at that point is only three years; women are expected to live about another 21 years and men another 18. That means the average man retiring will live to be 81 and the average women 84. That's longer than most suspect and is why the most-often-quoted, "normal" life expectancies of ages 74 and 79, respectively, are misleading. And note that the average woman is three years younger than her male partner and lives three years longer. So, she lives on average six years after he dies, typically.

We all have to plan for longer lives as we approach retirement... But the truth is this: the longer you live, the longer you tend to live! To really get this, just go to a nursing home to see that they are dominated by women!

It used to be you had to use life expectancy at age five to get a better read, as more people died in early childhood in the “good old days.” Not anymore. The chart below shows the life-expectancy difference between men and women is now 5.22 years at age five vs. 5.31 at birth, or very little... That’s real progress!

Female Life Expectancy Advantage Declines the Longer We Live

Age	Male Life Expectancy	Female Life Expectancy	Change
0	74.14	79.45	5.31
5	74.81	80.03	5.22
20	75.20	80.25	5.05
50	77.85	81.75	3.90
65	81.05	84.06	3.01
70	82.75	85.35	2.60
75	84.83	86.97	2.14
80	87.31	88.95	1.64
85	90.24	91.42	1.18
90	93.70	94.47	0.77

Source: https://www.health.ny.gov/health_care/medicaid/publications/docs/adm/06adm-5att8.pdf

The important statistics come later in life, especially as we start saving the most for retirement from around age 50 forward. At age 50, the average man will live to be 77.85; for women, it’s 81.75, a 3.9-year difference. At age 60, the difference falls to 3.15 years; for age 65 it’s 3.01, 70 it’s 2.60, 75 it’s 2.14, 80 it’s 1.64, 85 it’s 1.18, and by age 90, it’s only 0.77 years.

Maybe it’s time for you to sit down with your spouse and get more precise about your retirement scenario. Look at your family histories. In my case, I have to add to my wife’s expectations substantially for that reason alone. She had one relative who died at age 104, and then only because he fell and cracked his skull... and he was a man! My wife is slightly younger than me, as is typical, and with her family’s enviable longevity we need to save more than normal to provide for her.

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Got a question or comment? You can contact us at info@hsdent.com.