Wye Financial Partners

Planning Your Financial Future

Wye Financial Partners
16 N Washington Street
Easton, MD 21601
Office 410-763-8543
info@wyefinancial.com
www.wyefinancialpartners.com

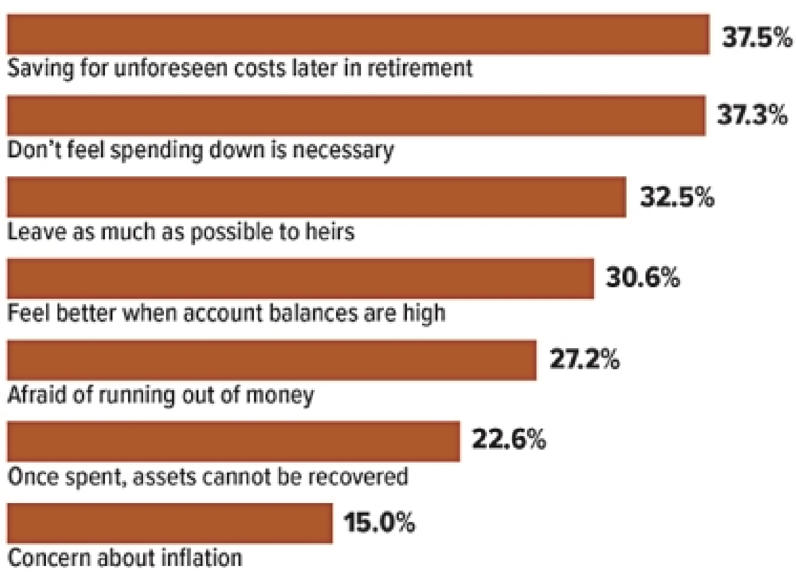
36.1%

Percentage of retirees who say they saved about the right amount for their retirement while they were working. By contrast, 45.6% saved less than they needed and only 18.3% saved more than they needed.

Source: Employee Benefit Research Institute, 2021

To Spend or Not to Spend?

About 77% of retirees between the ages of 62 and 75 plan to spend down at least some of their retirement assets. The top reasons cited include lifestyle, medical expenses and health insurance, housing expenses, and discretionary spending. The remaining 23% intend to maintain or grow their assets. Why would retirees not want to spend down the assets they've worked so hard to save? Here are the reasons they gave.



Source: Employee Benefit Research Institute, 2021 (multiple responses allowed)

Women Face Challenges in a Post-Pandemic World

The COVID-19 economic crisis tested the mettle of all Americans, particularly working mothers. Research shows that the pandemic's impacts on women have been far-reaching and potentially long-lasting. Now that the U.S. economy is picking up steam, it may be more important than ever for women to re-examine their retirement planning strategies.

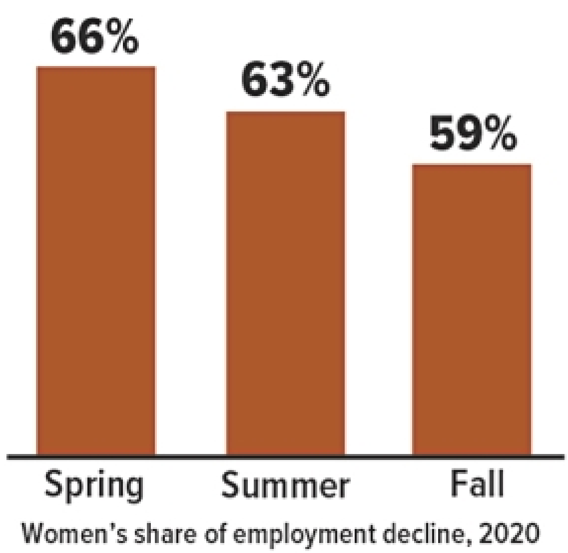
Effects of the COVID-19 Economy

The COVID-19 recession had a disproportionate impact on working women because sectors that typically employ them — including retail, hospitality, and health care — were hit harder than others. As noted in a paper released by the National Bureau of Economic Research, "Employment fell more for women compared to men at every stage during the pandemic, with the biggest gender differences estimated for married women with children." Many women were forced to cut work hours or leave jobs entirely to care for family members and supervise remote schooling activities when day cares and schools shut down.[1]

In a Pew Research study, 64% of women said they or someone in their household lost a job or took a pay cut during the pandemic, and nearly a quarter took unpaid time off for personal, family, or medical reasons. Half of women ranked their personal financial situation as "only fair" or "poor."[2]

More Than Their Share of Job Losses

Prior to the pandemic, women made up 52% of the population. Yet they represented a larger proportion of the employment decline during the spring, summer, and fall seasons of 2020.



Source: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2021

Retirement at Risk?

When it comes to retirement savings, unmarried women have the most ground to cover, according to an Employee Benefit Research Institute survey. Nearly six in 10 have less than $50,000 set aside for retirement; 31% have saved less than $1,000.[3]

Couple these statistics with the retirement planning challenges women faced even prior to the pandemic — longer life spans and lower earnings and Social Security benefits, on average — and it's apparent that women need a carefully considered retirement strategy that will help them pursue their goals.

Making Up Lost Ground

If you or a loved one need to make up lost ground, consider the following tips.

1. Save as much as possible in tax-advantaged investment vehicles, such as employer-based retirement plans and IRAs. In 2021, you can contribute up to $19,500 to 401(k) and similar plans and $6,000 to IRAs. Those figures jump to $26,000 and $7,000, respectively, if you are age 50 or older. If your employer offers a match, be sure to contribute at least enough to take full advantage of it. If you have no income but you're married and file a joint income tax return, you can still contribute to a spousal IRA in your name, provided your spouse earns at least as much as you contribute.

2. Familiarize yourself with basic investing principles: dollar-cost averaging, diversification, and asset allocation. Dollar-cost averaging involves continuous investments in securities regardless of fluctuating prices and can be an effective way to accumulate shares to help meet long-term goals; however, you should consider your financial ability to continue making purchases during periods of low and high price levels. (If you contribute to an employer-based plan, you're already using dollar-cost averaging.) Diversification and asset allocation are methods used to help manage investment risk while building a portfolio appropriate for your needs. Note that all investment involves risk, and none of these strategies guarantees a profit or protects against investment loss.

3. Seek guidance from your financial professional, who can provide an objective opinion during challenging times and may be able to help you find ways to reduce costs and save more. Although there is no assurance that working with a financial professional will improve investment results, a professional can evaluate your objectives and available resources and help you consider appropriate long-term financial strategies.

Sources: 1) National Bureau of Economic Research, 2021; 2) Pew Research Center, 2021; 3) Employee Benefit Research Institute, 2021

Is a High-Deductible Health Plan Right for You?

In 2020, 31% of U.S. workers with employer-sponsored health insurance had a high-deductible health plan (HDHP), up from 24% in 2015.[1] These plans are also available outside the workplace through private insurers and the Health Insurance Marketplace.

Although HDHP participation has grown rapidly, the most common plan — covering almost half of U.S. workers — is a traditional preferred provider organization (PPO).[2] If you are thinking about enrolling in an HDHP or already enrolled in one, here are some factors to consider when comparing an HDHP to a PPO.

Up-Front Savings

The average annual employee premium for HDHP family coverage in 2020 was $4,852 versus $6,017 for a PPO, a savings of $1,165 per year.[3] In addition, many employers contribute to a health savings account (HSA) for the employee, and contributions by the employer or the employee are tax advantaged (see below). Taken together, these features could add up to substantial savings that can be used to pay for current and future medical expenses.

Pay As You Go

In return for lower premiums, you pay more out of pocket for medical services with an HDHP until you reach the annual deductible.

Deductible. An HDHP has a higher deductible than a PPO, but PPO deductibles have been rising, so consider the *difference* between plan deductibles and whether the deductible is per person or per family. PPOs may have a separate deductible (or no deductible) for prescription drugs, but the HDHP deductible will apply to all covered medical spending.

Copays. PPOs typically have copays that allow you to obtain certain services and prescription drugs with a defined payment before meeting your deductible. With an HDHP, you pay out of pocket until you meet your deductible, but costs may be reduced through the insurer's negotiated rate. Consider the difference between the copay and the negotiated rate for a typical service such as a doctor visit. Certain types of preventive care and preventive medicines may be provided at no cost under both types of plans.

Maximums. Most health insurance plans have annual and lifetime out-of-pocket maximums above which the insurer pays all medical expenses. HDHP maximums may be the same or similar to that of PPO plans. (Some PPO plans have a separate annual maximum for prescription drugs.) If you have high medical costs that exceed the annual maximum, your total out-of-pocket costs for that year would typically be lower for an HDHP with the savings on premiums.

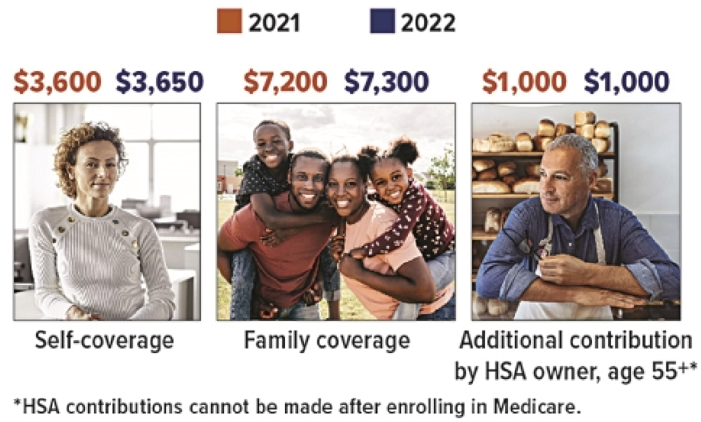
Your Choices and Preferences

Both PPOs and HDHPs offer incentives to use health-care providers within a network, and the network may be exactly the same if the plans are offered by the same insurance company. Make sure your preferred doctors are included in the network before enrolling.

Also consider whether you are comfortable using the HDHP structure. Although it may save money over the course of a year, you might be hesitant to obtain appropriate care because of the higher out-of-pocket expense at the time of service.

HSA Contribution Limits

Annual contributions can be made up to the April tax filing deadline of the following year. Any employer contributions must be considered as part of the annual limit.



Health Savings Accounts

High-deductible health plans are designed to be paired with a tax-advantaged health savings account (HSA) that can be used to pay medical expenses incurred after the HSA is established. HSA contributions are typically made through pre-tax payroll deductions, but in most cases they can also be made as tax-deductible contributions directly to the HSA provider. HSA funds, including any earnings if the account has an investment option, can be withdrawn free of federal income tax and penalties as long as the money is spent on qualified health-care expenses. (Some states do not follow federal tax rules on HSAs.)

The assets in an HSA can be retained in the account or rolled over to a new HSA if you change employers or retire. Unspent HSA balances can be used to pay future medical expenses whether you are enrolled in an HDHP or not; however, you must be enrolled in an HDHP to establish and contribute to an HSA.

1–3) Kaiser Family Foundation, 2020

Usage-Based Auto Insurance Might Provide Savings

Like everything else, the pandemic greatly impacted driving habits. Workers who once had long commutes and drove to work every day suddenly found themselves working remotely. Others were spending more time at home as the result of a job loss or reduction in hours. In fact, there was a 55% decrease in the average number of miles driven in 2020. That, coupled with a record unemployment rate, resulted in a surge in auto insurance shopping, driven by consumers looking to change their coverage or find better rates.[1]

If you are driving less than you used to, you might consider switching to a usage-based auto insurance policy that could save you money on your premiums. Usage-based policies use apps or tracking devices (telematics) to collect and monitor mileage and driving habits (e.g., speeding, acceleration, hard braking, cell phone use) to help determine rates. Usage-based policies typically provide a discount for signing up or upon policy renewal, and additional discounts are given based on safe driving performance.

If you have privacy concerns and find this type of monitoring too invasive, another option is a pay-per-mile policy, which only monitors your mileage. Pay-per-mile policies usually have a base rate and then charge an additional amount for each mile driven. In addition, you can also check with your current insurer to see if it offers a low-mileage discount, which typically only requires you to provide your car's odometer readings or maintenance records to obtain a discount.

If you are looking for other ways to save money on your insurance, consider the following additional cost-saving options.

Raise your deductible. Generally, the higher your deductible, the lower your premiums. Before you raise your deductible, though, be sure you can cover the out-of-pocket expense should an accident occur.

Take advantage of discounts. You may be eligible for one or more auto insurance discounts. For example, your insurer might provide discounts to individuals with a safe driving record, teens with good grades, or when bundling your auto policy with your homeowners insurance.

Drop unnecessary coverage. If you have an older car with limited value, it might make sense to drop your collision and comprehensive coverage, since a claim paid by your insurance company may be minimal and might not exceed what you would pay in premiums and deductibles.

Shop around. Auto insurance rates vary from company to company — sometimes significantly. Compare the various rates offered by different insurers.

1) J.D. Power, 2021