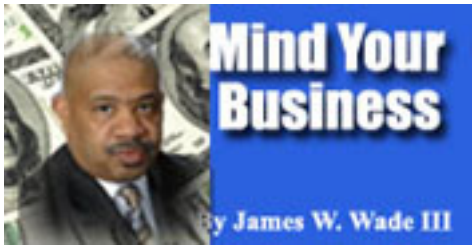


It is clear some people may have to work longer or save more to survive in today's economy. So no matter what age you decide to retire just make sure you have everything in place so while retiring you can "mind your business" as a senior.

**When will you retire?**

When I first start working, my parent's taught me to save for that rainy day. But, at my current age, I am thinking about making preparations to retire. Retirement, now, is not the old days when you could sit down at between ages 62 to 65 and be set.

These days, you have to work as long as your money dictates you work. Hopefully, you are not trying to get in a lot of debt and have enough saved to meet your financial needs.

On a recent trip toChicago, I got a chance to see how my aunts had prepared for their retirement days. They seemed too have down a science. As a child, I used to see my Aunt Wilhelmina handle all the finances for my grandparents once they got a certain age, not because she was the oldest but maybe because she was there with them and she had a great business mind.

So at what age will you walk out the door, waving good bye, to enjoy life on the couch or whatever you decide to do with your time?

Now in case you don't know, you can retire at any time between age 62 and full retirement age. However, if you start benefits early, your benefits are reduced a fraction of a percent for each month before your full retirement age.

If you start receiving retirement benefits at age 62, you will get 80 percent of the monthly benefit because you will be getting benefits for an additional 36 months. Now don't get me wrong, some people work because they want too, not because of the money.

In anything, you have pro's and con's and you must understand and do what's best for you. As a general rule, early or late retirement will give you about the same total Social Security benefits over your lifetime. If you retire early, the monthly benefit amounts will be smaller.

If you retire late, you will get benefits for a shorter period of time but the monthly amounts will be larger to make up for the months when you did not receive anything. A few of my neighbors went straight to retirement as soon as they could. You can have options, some seniors are becoming more likely to work part time job instead of sitting down.

Have you ever gone to Walmart and seen most of the greeters are seniors working just to have something to do? This is an idea for current workers who can now plan to continue to work after they are eligible for full retirement benefits.

Good planning is a factor determining what you will do when you retire. If you have rental property, it can become another source of income. Something to consider, especially if the house is free and clear.

Over the time span I have worked, it seems like many people have changed their way of thinking about retirement and have decided to work longer. I am sure a big percentage of workers will retire later than expected.

You must also think about your medical benefits and insurance as a senior. You will have to find affordable medical insurance while planning for your retirement. If you want to retire before age 65, the eligibility age for Medicare, I would suggest for you to protect yourself against the threat of high, uninsured medical costs, which can blow up the careful plans you've made for your retirement.

One benefit to a lot of things these days are being able to do them online. Those days of getting dressed up and going to a place to fill out papers are over. If you are within three months of age 65 or older and not ready to start your monthly cash benefits, you can use their online retirement application to sign up just for Medicare and apply for your retirement or spouses benefits later.

Check around for everything you are entitled too, because you can continue working and still be able to receive some benefits. The results fromGallup's annual Economy and Personal Finance Survey, conducted April 9-12 of this year, spelled it out. Overall, 26 percent of non-retirees expect to retire before age 65 with 27 percent expecting to retire at age 65 and 39 percent after age 65. The percentage that expects to retire after age 65 is up from 21 percent in 2002 and 12 percent in 1995.

Gallupalso finds a steady, although less steep, increase in the average age at which retirees actually retired from age 57 in 1991 to age 60 today. The average retirement age first reached 60 in 2004 and has generally held there since. That average should increase in future years if current nonretirees delay their retirement, as they expect to do.

Today's younger non-retirees are more optimistic about being able to retire at an earlier age than those closer to retirement. Those currently under age 40 expect to retire at age 65, compared with an expected retirement age of 68 for those aged 40 and older, a statistically significant difference.

I went to one of those sites that calculate your age and salary to tell you have much you should save each year in order to live ok with your retirement and was shocked at the amount of money needed to save each year. Try it for yourself, go to www.cgi.money.cnn.com/tools/saveyoung/index.html and put in your figures.

After checking that site, if you have realize you are behind in your retirement planning, staying in the workforce longer can dramatically improve your chances of achieving a secure retirement.

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*Comments and questions are welcome but, because of the volume of mail, personal responses are not always possible. Please note that comments or questions may be used in a future column.*