

What Age Can I Retire? A Financial Independence Reality Check

A worked example with real numbers: test what age you can retire, what monthly spending fits, and when a full retirement calculator is the better next step.

CALCULATOR

**Financial Independence
Planner**

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ARTICLE

**what age can i retire fi-
nancial independence**

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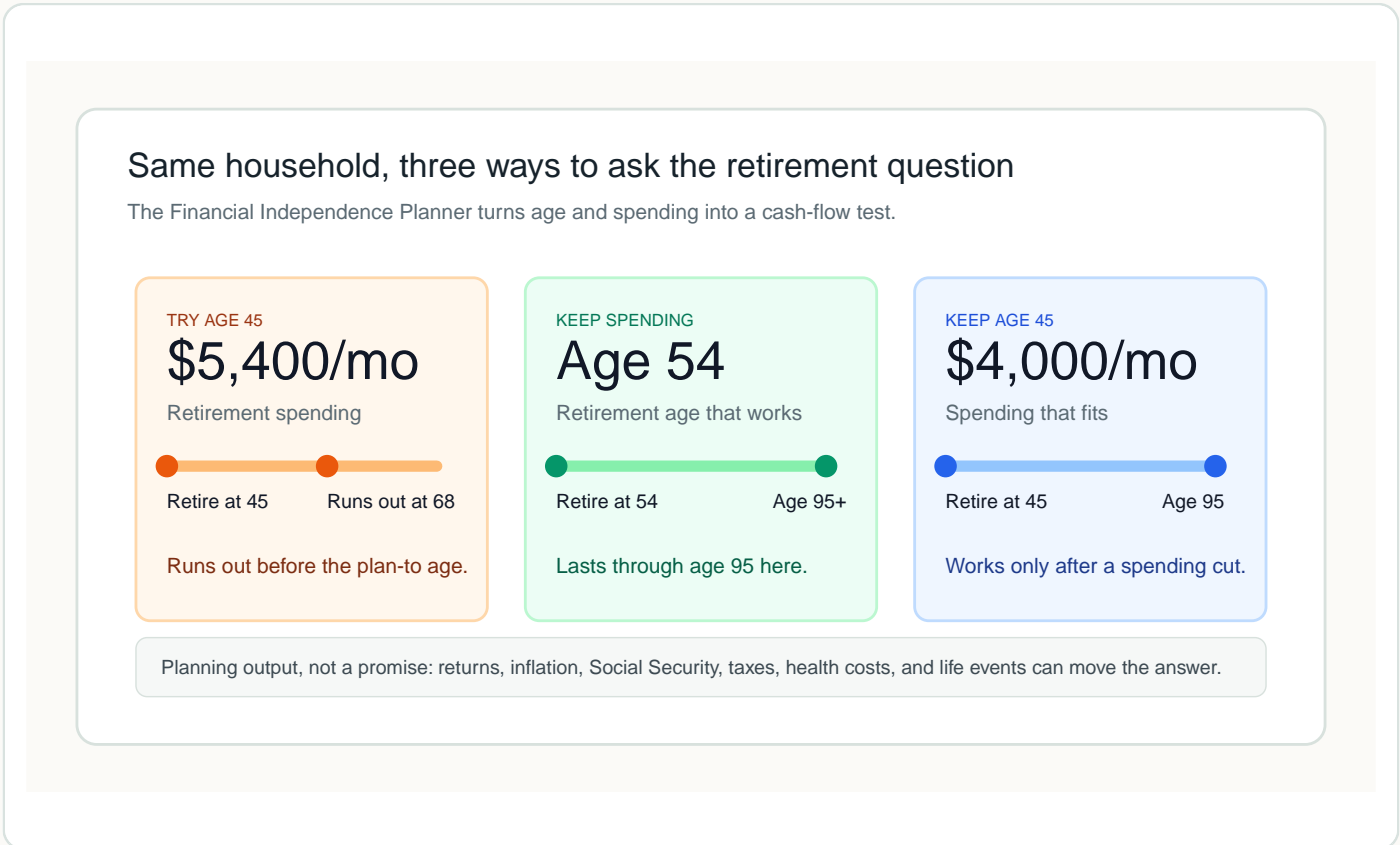
If I stopped working at this age and kept this monthly spending, would the money last?

In one sample plan, the answer was uncomfortable. A 32-year-old with \$200,000 invested, saving \$4,000 per month, and planning to spend \$5,400 per month in retirement could not retire at 45 under the starting assumptions. The money lasted to about age 68, not the age-95 planning horizon.

The same household had two cleaner options:

- Keep the \$5,400/month spending goal and move retirement to about age 54.
- Keep age 45 and lower retirement spending to about \$4,000/month.

That is the point of a financial independence calculator. It should turn a dream date into a testable tradeoff.



Short Answer

Financial independence means your investments and planned income can support your spending without a paycheck. For an early retirement plan, the two questions most people need first are:

1. What age can I retire with this monthly spending?
2. What monthly spending works if I retire at this age?

The **Financial Independence Planner** is designed for those two questions. It uses the same mature cash-flow engine as the Retirement Calculator, but labels the workflow around early retirement and plain-English "retire at" choices.

The Scenario We Tested

Here is the sample household:

Input	Assumption
Current age	32
Target retirement age	45
Plan-to age	95
Current invested savings	\$200,000
Monthly contribution before retirement	\$4,000
Contribution increase	2% per year
Retirement spending	\$5,400/month in today's dollars
Inflation	3%
Social Security estimate	\$1,500/month at age 67
Other income	\$1,500/month rental income from age 35 to 90
Return assumptions	75/20/5 before retirement, 40/50/10 after retirement

Open the [prefilled age-45 scenario in the planner](#) to start with the assumptions above, then map the age, savings, spending, Social Security, and rental income to your situation.

What the Planner Says

At age 45, the portfolio is projected to be about \$1.76 million before withdrawals begin. That sounds large. But the retirement is also long: 50 years from age 45 to age 95.

With \$5,400/month spending in today's dollars, increasing with inflation, the plan runs out around age 68.

That does not mean age 45 is impossible for everyone. It means this age-45 version needs a lever:

Version	Result
Retire at 45, spend \$5,400/month	Runs out around age 68
Retire at 50, spend \$5,400/month	Runs out around age 85
Retire at 54, spend \$5,400/month	Lasts through age 95, with about \$1.36 million projected at the end
Retire at 45, lower spending	About \$4,000/month lasts to age 95 in this scenario

The key is that the calculator is answering the question you actually highlighted. If the left side says "Retire at 45," the headline should judge the age-45 plan first, then show the age or spending that would make the plan work.

Why the 4% Rule Is Helpful but Not Enough

The 4% rule is a starting point: withdraw 4% of the portfolio in the first retirement year, then adjust that dollar amount for inflation. Schwab describes it as a rule of thumb for a 30-year retirement, not a personalized spending plan.

Early retirement stretches the timeline. Vanguard notes that people pursuing financial independence may need a much longer horizon than a traditional 30-year retirement, plus attention to costs, diversification, and flexible spending.

That is why the planner should not stop at "annual spending times 25." It should show the cash flow:

- How much is invested when work stops?
- How many years must the portfolio support?
- Which income starts later, such as Social Security or rental income?
- What happens when inflation raises the dollar amount of spending?
- Does the plan survive the full planning horizon?

The Two Calculator Buttons That Matter Most

A financial independence planner should answer the user's next question directly:

User question	Calculator should solve
"What age can I retire with this spending?"	Retire age
"What can I spend if I retire at 45?"	Monthly spending
"What happens if I plan to age 95 instead of 90?"	Funding horizon

The other financial independence terms, such as lean, coast, or fat financial independence, can be useful later. They should be opt-in learning paths, not the first screen's main result. Most people want the plain-English answer first.

What Changes the Answer

The retirement age can move a lot when any one assumption changes.

- **Monthly spending:** This is usually the biggest lever. In the sample plan, lowering spending from \$5,400 to about \$4,000 makes age 45 work.
- **Savings rate:** More monthly investing before retirement gives the portfolio more fuel.
- **Return assumption:** A higher return can make the answer look earlier, but it also adds risk if the return is too optimistic.
- **Inflation:** Higher inflation makes a fixed lifestyle more expensive each year.
- **Income after work stops:** Social Security, pension income, rental income, or part-time work can reduce portfolio withdrawals.
- **Plan-to age:** Planning to 95 is more conservative than planning to 85, especially for a retirement that starts in your 40s.
- **Big events:** Home purchases, college costs, medical costs, family help, or long-term care can change the path.

When to Use This Planner vs. the Retirement Calculator

Use the [Financial Independence Planner](#) when your main question is:

- What age can I retire?
- What monthly spending works if I retire at this age?
- How does changing age, spending, savings, or return assumptions move the answer?

Use the [Retirement Calculator](#) when your main question is broader retirement income strategy, such as Social Security timing, a traditional retirement date, detailed cash-flow planning, or a deeper scenario simulation. The two tools intentionally share the same planning foundation so improvements to one can help the other.

For withdrawal-rate background, read [Is the 4% Rule Still Safe in 2026?](#). If your retirement date comes before Social Security starts, read [Can I Retire at 62 and Delay Social Security Until 70?](#) for a bridge-year example.

Make the Example Your Own

Start from the article assumptions, then test a few versions against your situation:

1. Change **Retire at** from 45 to 50, 52, 54, and 55.
2. Put **Retire at** back to 45 and lower monthly spending until the plan lasts to 95.
3. Turn on simulation if you want to see how bad market timing could change the answer.
4. Save the version that feels realistic, not just the version that looks best.

Sources

- Vanguard: [Early retirement and the 4% rule](#)
- Schwab: [The 4% Rule: How Much Can You Spend in Retirement?](#)
- Social Security Administration: [retirement age and benefit reduction](#)
- Investor.gov: [compound interest calculator](#)

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