

RETIREMENT WEALTH ADEQUACY ACCORDING TO BENCHMARKS

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Abstract: Based on two representative benchmarks, permanent income (*PI*) and permanent consumption (*PC*), this study examines the adequacy of retirement wealth among pre-retirees who are currently employed. It compares the determinants of retirement wealth adequacy according to two benchmarks under various definitions of retirement wealth: broad, intermediate, and narrow wealth. Analysis using the Survey of Consumer Finances shows significant differences in the proportion of pre-retirees with adequate wealth according to benchmarks and wealth definitions. The important determinants of retirement wealth adequacy are fairly consistent regardless of the benchmarks and wealth definitions. The crucial determinants include planned retirement age, subjective risk tolerance, and ownership of defined-benefit plans and non-financial assets.

retirement wealth adequacy; housing wealth, permanent income; lognormal forecasting model

: D31, J26, H31

I. INTRODUCTION

Financial planning for retirement has become a major concern for many Americans in recent years given the rapidly aging working population and the expectation of financial insolvency in Social Security. Typically, pre-retirees wonder whether they will have enough money to live comfortably after retirement. That is, having enough wealth for retirement has been one of the most important issues in an aging society, and thus evidence on retirement wealth adequacy is of particular interest given this economic and policy environment.

There is no universally accepted definition of wealth adequacy. Moreover, evaluating the adequacy of wealth accumulation is difficult since it requires a standard or a benchmark against which observed behavior can be measured. In previous studies, the adequacy of retirement wealth is analyzed in relation to an absolute or a relative benchmark. The absolute benchmark generally refers to a poverty threshold.¹ Although the poverty threshold is a standard measure that is widely used in public policy, it is a limited and is an arbitrary benchmark of wealth adequacy or optimality of savings (Love *et al*

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II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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III. EMPIRICAL MODEL

3.1. Simple Life Cycle Model

conditions is derived as (C_n, C_{n+1}) to maximize lifetime utility under certain

$$\frac{C_{n+1}}{C_n} = \frac{1+r}{1+\rho}^{-\frac{1}{\epsilon}} \quad (1)$$

This equation shows that the future consumption increment depends on real return (ρ) and the elasticity of substitution (ϵ)

³ Therefore, this study develops an extended form of the replacement ratio approach to evaluate the adequacy of retirement wealth. From a theoretical economic perspective, the replacement ratio approach is less appealing than a life cycle-dynamic programming approach, as it ignores the utility theory and behavioral responses to uncertainty. However, the replacement ratio is a measure that is more robust and less subjected to distortion by the differences in modeling approaches (Valdez and Chernih, 2003). It is also a popular model among retirement planning practitioners and can be seen as a relatively tractable approximation to the life cycle model (Moore and Mitchell, 1997, 2000).

One key issue in the replacement ratio is how the pre-retirement income used in the denominator should be defined.⁴ To estimate the replacement ratio for each household, the current study adopts two types of measures for pre-retirement income: permanent income (

$$j \quad j \quad j \quad j \quad j \quad j$$

$$i \geq i \quad i$$

$$POI_i = \frac{n_{po}}{n_{pr}} \times PRI_i$$

n_{po}

n_{pr}

$$BRR_i = \frac{POI_i}{PRI_i}$$

$$PRR_i = \frac{A_R}{PRI_i}$$

$$A_R = \frac{TRW}{PVIFA \cdot (1+r)}$$

$$FS = \sum_{j=1}^n A_j \cdot FVAD_{I_j}$$

4.1.1. Defined Benefit Wealth (DBW) and Defined Contribution Wealth (DCW)

4.1.2. Social Security Wealth (SSW)

4.1.3. Financial Wealth (FW) and Non-financial Wealth (NFW)

$$I_j = \exp(m_j + Z \cdot s_j / \sqrt{n}) - 1$$

PI

PC

Table 1
Households with Adequate Retirement Wealth According to Benchmarks and Wealth Definitions

	<i>Benchmark</i>		<i>Test for difference</i>	
	<i>PI</i>	<i>PC</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Broad wealth	55.71	63.85	-29.68	<0.0001
Intermediate wealth	49.39	56.93	-28.49	<0.0001
Narrow wealth	41.76	49.54	-28.98	<0.0001

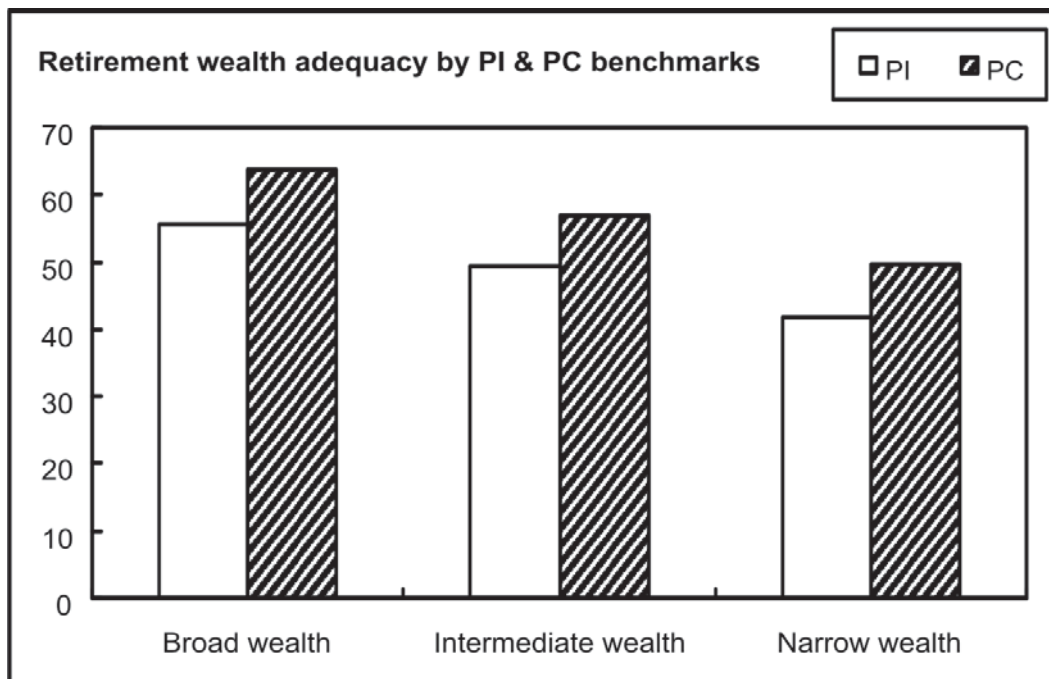


Figure 1: Retirement Wealth Adequacy According to Benchmarks and Wealth Definitions

Table 2
Three Adequacy Groups According to Wealth Definitions

<i>Adequacy groups according to PI and PC benchmarks</i>			
	<i>A: consistent adequacy</i> <i>PI: adequate,</i> <i>PC:adequate</i>	<i>B: inconsistent adequacy</i> <i>PI: inadequate,</i> <i>PC: adequate</i>	<i>C: consistent inadequacy</i> <i>PI: inadequate,</i> <i>PC: inadequate</i>
Broad wealth	55.71	8.13	36.15
Intermediate wealth	49.39	7.54	43.07
Narrow wealth	41.76	7.78	50.46

Notes: No observation of “adequate” for PI benchmark and “inadequate” for PC benchmark.

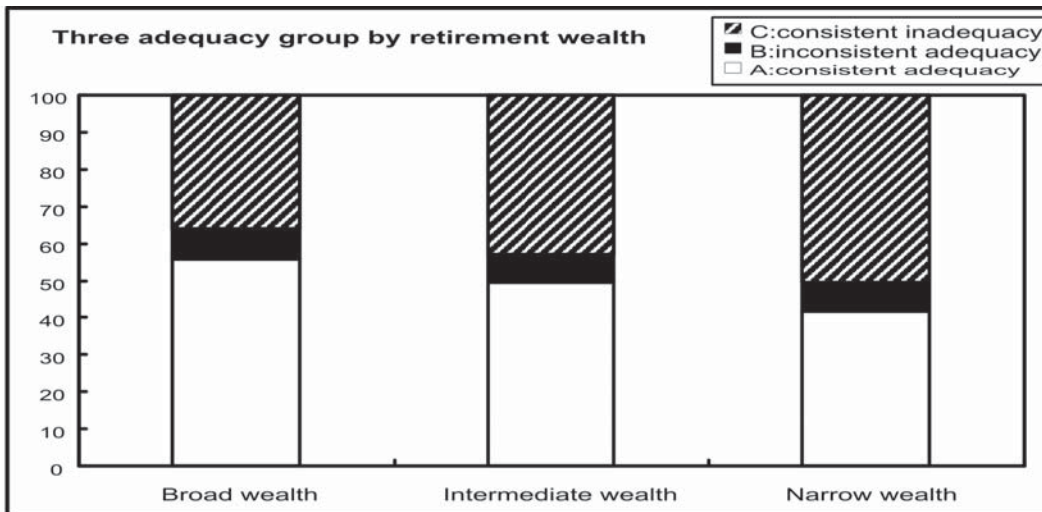


Figure 2: Three Adequacy Groups According to Wealth Definitions

Table 3
Summary of Adequacy Measures According to Three Adequacy Groups

Adequacy measures	Total (n = 1,991) mean	Adequacy group			Pr>F
		A: consistent adequacy PI:adequate, PC:adequate	B: inconsistent adequacy PI:inadequate, PC:adequate	C: consistent inadequacy PI:inadequate, PC:inadequate	
<i>Broad wealth</i>					
		n=1,251	n=107	n=633	
DBW (defined-benefit wealth)	134,785	209,486	59,771	36,546	0.0003
DCW (defined-contribution wealth)	220,369	321,568	132,535	84,180	<0.0001
SSW (Social Security wealth)	372,656	365,904	381,607	381,047	0.0470
FW (financial wealth)	271,270	396,107	112,724	114,563	<0.0001
NFW (non-financial wealth)	1,046,968	1,651,073	255,125	294,177	<0.0001
TRW (total retirement wealth)	2,046,048	2,944,139	941,762	910,513	<0.0001
AR (annualized retirement wealth)	150,320	223,038	61,394	58,266	<0.0001
PRR1 (replacement ratio using PI)	1.37 (0.83)	1.98	0.78	0.55	<0.0001
PRR2 (replacement ratio using PC)	1.57 (0.94)	2.28	0.93	0.61	0.0001
PRI1 (pre-retirement PI)	102,031	99,525	80,005	110,846	<0.0001
PRI2 (pre-retirement PC)	92,621	90,792	67,835	101,016	<0.0001
<i>Intermediate wealth</i>					
		n=1,157	n=105	n=729	
DBW (defined-benefit wealth)	134,785	229,362	66,124	38,352	<0.0001
DCW (defined-contribution wealth)	220,369	346,678	165,906	85,059	<0.0001
SSW (Social Security wealth)	372,656	363,271	385,014	381,254	0.0669
FW (financial wealth)	271,270	432,489	101,832	116,061	<0.0001
NFW (non-financial wealth)	929,418	1,667,549	200,153	210,660	<0.0001
TRW (total retirement wealth)	1,928,498	3,039,350	919,030	831,387	<0.0001
AR (annualized retirement wealth)	142,227	232,031	60,589	53,539	<0.0001
PRR1 (replacement ratio using PI)	1.28 (0.76)	2.00	0.77	0.53	<0.0001
PRR2 (replacement ratio using PC)	1.46 (0.85)	2.31	0.92	0.59	<0.0001
PRI1 (pre-retirement PI)	102,031	101,164	78,662	107,116	<0.0001
PRI2 (pre-retirement PC)	92,621	92,417	66,627	97,408	<0.0001
<i>Narrow wealth</i>					
		n=1,041	n=105	n=845	
DBW (defined-benefit wealth)	134,785	263,875	63,803	38,893	<0.0001
DCW (defined-contribution wealth)	220,369	378,873	210,326	90,733	<0.0001
SSW (Social Security wealth)	372,656	361,847	375,243	381,203	0.1101
FW (financial wealth)	271,270	485,671	107,456	119,091	<0.0001
NFW (non-financial wealth)	811,868	1,783,119	96,808	118,313	<0.0001
TRW (total retirement wealth)	1,810,949	3,273,386	853,635	748,232	<0.0001
AR (annualized retirement wealth)	134,135	252,347	55,679	48,398	<0.0001
PRR1 (replacement ratio using PI)	1.19 (0.68)	2.11	0.74	0.50	<0.0001
PRR2 (replacement ratio using PC)	1.36 (0.76)	2.43	0.87	0.55	<0.0001
PRI1 (pre-retirement PI)	102,031	104,058	75,659	104,420	<0.0001
PRI2 (pre-retirement PC)	92,621	95,190	64,979	94,759	<0.0001

Notes: median in parenthesis

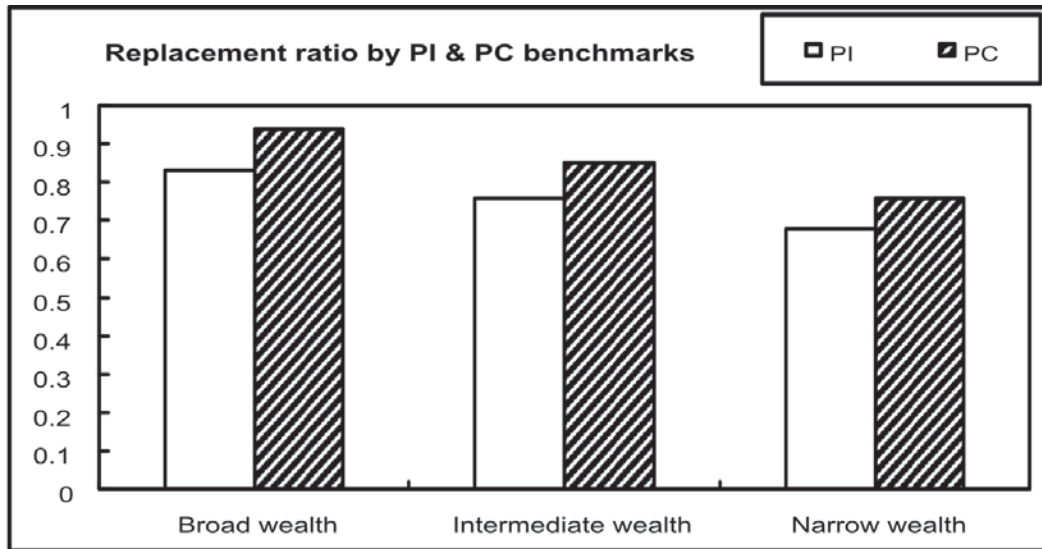


Figure 3: Replacement Ratio According to Benchmarks and Wealth Definitions

Notes: Figure is based on the median replacement ratio

Table 4
Characteristics of the Three Adequacy Groups

Characteristics	Total (n=1,991) mean	Adequacy group			Pr>F or Pr>Chi- square
		A: consistent adequacy PI:adequate, PC:adequate	B: inconsistent adequacy PI:inadequate, PC:adequate	C: consistent inadequacy PI:inadequate, PC:inadequate	
Broad wealth					
		n=1,251	n=107	n=633	
Age (years)	50.28	49.84	50.51	50.92	0.1130
Planned retirement age (years)	64.12	65.12	63.46	62.73	<0.0001
Anticipated life expectancy(years)	31.71	32.51	31.48	30.52	<0.0001
Couple(%)	69.00	69.96	69.66	67.38	0.0305
Single(%)	31.00	30.04	30.34	32.62	
White(%)	76.36	76.89	77.18	75.35	0.2044
Non-white(%)	23.64	23.11	22.82	24.65	
College education(%)	63.65	63.59	60.69	64.42	0.1359
≤ High school(%)	36.35	36.41	39.31	35.58	
Good health(%)	85.11	86.76	86.57	82.23	<0.0001
Fair or poor health(%)	14.89	13.24	13.43	17.77	
Expect inheritance(%)	15.24	16.10	9.96	15.10	<0.0001
Not expect inheritance(%)	84.76	83.90	90.04	84.90	
Spend≥income(%)	35.06	35.10	32.89	35.50	0.3712
Spend<income(%)	64.94	64.90	67.11	64.50	
High risk taking(%)	23.87	25.68	27.01	20.38	<0.0001
Not taking a high risk(%)	76.13	74.32	72.99	79.62	
Have a DB pension(%)	25.88	29.10	31.82	19.59	<0.0001
Not have a DB pension(%)	74.12	70.90	68.18	80.41	
Have a DC pension(%)	24.61	22.13	28.18	27.63	<0.0001
Not have a DC pension(%)	75.39	77.87	71.82	72.37	
Have non-financial assets(%)	35.09	42.96	31.50	23.77	<0.0001
Not have non-financial assets(%)	64.91	57.04	68.50	76.23	

contd. table 4

	Intermediate wealth				
		n=1,157	n=105	n=729	
Age (years)	50.28	49.87	50.63	50.69	0.6701
Planned retirement age (years)	64.12	65.27	63.58	62.90	<0.0001
Anticipated life expectancy(years)	31.71	32.75	30.98	30.63	<0.0001
Couple(%)	69.00	69.82	70.07	67.87	0.1061
Single(%)	31.00	30.18	29.93	32.13	
White(%)	76.36	76.82	77.66	75.60	0.2644
Non-white(%)	23.64	23.18	22.34	24.40	
College education(%)	63.65	62.57	64.45	64.75	0.0866
≤ High school(%)	36.35	37.43	35.55	35.25	
Good health(%)	85.11	86.15	87.70	83.46	0.0002
Fair or poor health(%)	14.89	13.85	12.30	16.54	
Expect inheritance(%)	15.24	15.63	15.34	14.77	0.5114
Not expect inheritance(%)	84.76	84.37	84.66	85.23	
Spend≥income(%)	35.06	34.24	37.17	35.64	0.1702
Spend<income(%)	64.94	65.76	62.83	64.36	
High risk taking(%)	23.87	26.10	23.87	21.32	<0.0001
Not taking a high risk(%)	76.13	73.90	76.13	78.68	
Have a DB pension(%)	25.88	29.18	33.26	20.81	<0.0001
Not have a DB pension(%)	74.12	70.82	66.74	79.19	
Have a DC pension(%)	24.61	21.91	25.70	27.51	<0.0001
Not have a DC pension(%)	75.39	78.09	74.30	72.49	
Have non-financial assets(%)	35.09	45.17	32.05	24.06	<0.0001
Not have non-financial assets(%)	64.91	54.83	67.95	75.94	
Narrow wealth					
		n=1,041	n=105	n=845	
Age (years)	50.28	49.71	50.50	50.72	0.1293
Planned retirement age (years)	64.12	65.53	63.73	63.02	<0.0001
Anticipated life expectancy(years)	31.71	33.03	31.61	30.63	<0.0001
Couple(%)	69.00	69.80	70.73	68.07	0.1122
Single(%)	31.00	30.20	29.27	31.93	
White(%)	76.36	76.39	78.80	75.96	0.2227
Non-white(%)	23.64	23.61	21.20	24.04	
College education(%)	63.65	62.81	63.49	64.38	0.2967
≥ High school(%)	36.35	37.19	36.51	35.62	
Good health(%)	85.11	86.37	87.07	83.76	0.0006
Fair or poor health(%)	14.89	13.63	12.93	16.24	
Expect inheritance(%)	15.24	15.09	18.89	14.79	0.0120
Not expect inheritance(%)	84.76	84.91	81.11	85.21	
Spend≥income(%)	35.06	34.43	35.03	35.60	0.5063
Spend<income(%)	64.94	65.57	64.97	64.40	
High risk taking(%)	23.87	26.75	24.84	21.34	<0.0001
Not taking a high risk(%)	76.13	73.25	75.16	78.66	
Have a DB pension(%)	25.88	31.55	24.49	21.41	<0.0001
Not have a DB pension(%)	74.12	68.45	75.51	78.59	
Have a DC pension(%)	24.61	20.77	30.89	26.81	<0.0001
Not have a DC pension(%)	75.39	79.23	69.11	73.19	
Have non-financial assets(%)	35.09	49.39	30.88	23.90	<0.0001
Not have non-financial assets(%)	64.91	50.61	69.12	76.10	

Table 5
Logistic Analyses of Retirement Wealth Adequacy According to PI and PC Benchmarks

Variable	Broad Wealth			Intermediate Wealth			Narrow Wealth					
	PI	PC	PC	PI	PC	PC	PI	PC	PC			
intercept	Coeff. -6.2654	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. -5.8610	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. -6.4976	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. -6.0539	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. -7.2723	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. -6.6154	Sig. <0.0001
age	Coeff. -0.0496	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. -0.0489	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. -0.0469	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. -0.0454	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. -0.0563	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. -0.0541	Sig. <0.0001
retirement age	Coeff. 0.1253	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. 0.1229	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. 0.1236	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. 0.1198	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. 0.1356	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. 0.1290	Sig. <0.0001
anticipated life exp.	Coeff. 0.0062	Sig. 0.2350	Coeff. 0.0074	Sig. 0.1656	Coeff. 0.0093	Sig. 0.0730	Coeff. 0.0081	Sig. 0.1210	Coeff. 0.0105	Sig. 0.0466	Coeff. 0.0096	Sig. 0.0665
couple	Coeff. 0.0783	Sig. 0.5240	Coeff. 0.0708	Sig. 0.5716	Coeff. 0.0404	Sig. 0.7418	Coeff. 0.0323	Sig. 0.7928	Coeff. -0.0258	Sig. 0.8379	Coeff. 0.0033	Sig. 0.9789
black	Coeff. -0.3183	Sig. 0.1036	Coeff. -0.3337	Sig. 0.0869	Coeff. -0.3184	Sig. 0.1091	Coeff. -0.3324	Sig. 0.0881	Coeff. -0.1862	Sig. 0.3681	Coeff. -0.1654	Sig. 0.4059
hispanic	Coeff. 0.5761	Sig. 0.0127	Coeff. 0.6593	Sig. 0.0073	Coeff. 0.5684	Sig. 0.0117	Coeff. 0.6206	Sig. 0.0079	Coeff. 0.4983	Sig. 0.0272	Coeff. 0.5002	Sig. 0.0269
asian & other	Coeff. 0.2778	Sig. 0.2694	Coeff. 0.2814	Sig. 0.2779	Coeff. 0.3348	Sig. 0.1777	Coeff. 0.2967	Sig. 0.2386	Coeff. 0.3185	Sig. 0.2024	Coeff. 0.1376	Sig. 0.5763
college	Coeff. 0.0313	Sig. 0.8000	Coeff. -0.0755	Sig. 0.5517	Coeff. -0.0349	Sig. 0.7765	Coeff. -0.0808	Sig. 0.5144	Coeff. 0.0104	Sig. 0.9341	Coeff. -0.0520	Sig. 0.6745
good health	Coeff. 0.1647	Sig. 0.3113	Coeff. 0.2351	Sig. 0.1521	Coeff. 0.0398	Sig. 0.8071	Coeff. 0.1287	Sig. 0.4287	Coeff. 0.0278	Sig. 0.8684	Coeff. 0.0692	Sig. 0.6730
expect inheritance	Coeff. 0.0855	Sig. 0.5309	Coeff. -0.0384	Sig. 0.7828	Coeff. 0.0110	Sig. 0.9343	Coeff. -0.0125	Sig. 0.9267	Coeff. -0.0574	Sig. 0.6708	Coeff. -0.0466	Sig. 0.7291
spend≥income	Coeff. 0.0285	Sig. 0.8116	Coeff. 0.0446	Sig. 0.7154	Coeff. -0.0480	Sig. 0.6853	Coeff. 0.0393	Sig. 0.7426	Coeff. -0.0076	Sig. 0.9500	Coeff. 0.0488	Sig. 0.6834
high risk taking	Coeff. 0.2710	Sig. 0.0186	Coeff. 0.2814	Sig. 0.0180	Coeff. 0.3244	Sig. 0.0042	Coeff. 0.2850	Sig. 0.0134	Coeff. 0.3395	Sig. 0.0027	Coeff. 0.3136	Sig. 0.0057
have a DB plan	Coeff. 0.5882	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. 0.7267	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. 0.5028	Sig. 0.0001	Coeff. 0.6398	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. 0.6543	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. 0.6649	Sig. <0.0001
have a DC plan	Coeff. -0.1677	Sig. 0.1642	Coeff. -0.0750	Sig. 0.5433	Coeff. -0.1241	Sig. 0.3013	Coeff. -0.1103	Sig. 0.3608	Coeff. -0.1950	Sig. 0.1108	Coeff. -0.0553	Sig. 0.6473
have non-financial assets	Coeff. 1.2929	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. 1.1802	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. 1.4388	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. 1.3302	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. 1.7414	Sig. <0.0001	Coeff. 1.5543	Sig. <0.0001
chi-square	340.6692	Sig. <0.0001	294.1350	Sig. <0.0001	379.7280	Sig. <0.0001	329.5695	Sig. <0.0001	473.0694	Sig. <0.0001	400.4206	Sig. <0.0001
concordance	73.6		72.8		74.5		73.3		76.9		75.0	

Notes: Bold is significant at $p < 0.05$ or less.

Notes

1. A multiple poverty threshold such as twice the poverty threshold has been used in several studies (Love *et al* *et al*

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et al

et al

$m_j s_j I_j$

Those in age 40 to 70 are more likely to have stable occupations and labor income, and have 'comfortable retirement' as one of their financial goals. Additionally, while most previous studies related to this topic focused 'older generation' than the sample of this study, this study extended to include this mid-aged group the previous study excluded. Several studies related to this topic also included this mid-age group (e.g., Wolff, 2006, aged 47-64; Engen, Gale, & Uccello, 2005, aged 25-62; Yuh, Montalto, & Hanna, 1998, aged 35-70).

8. A summary of sample characteristics is presented in Appendix Table 2.

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Appendix

Table 1
Projected Rates of Return by Lognormal Forecasting Model

<i>Asset category</i>	m_j	s_j	I_j
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Note: I_j th percentile of each asset based on data from Ibbotson Associates (2005)

Table 2
Summary of Sample Characteristics (n = 1,991, 2004 SCF)

<i>Variable</i>	n	%
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