

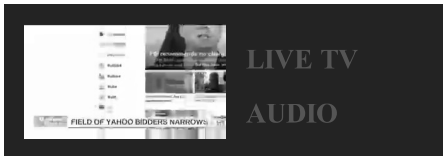
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respondents generally spent more than they earned, according to the study, which was funded by Texas Tech University. Those in the middle were able to keep their spending at about 8 percent below what they could have safely spent from pensions, investments, and Social Security.

The wealthiest fifth, meanwhile, had a gap of as much as 53 percent between their spending and what they could have spent. The authors wrote:



Retirees in the top quintile of financial wealth were spending nowhere near an amount that would place them in danger of running out of money. In fact, the average financial assets of wealthy retirees increased during this period and most retirees spent less than their income.

In other words, these affluent Americans retired and then continued to get richer. That's quite a feat when you're no longer working, particularly against the backdrop of the mediocre stock market of the early 2000s.

It's not exactly irrational for wealthy people to be cautious about spending their money. As financial planner Michael Kitces [notes](#), retirees face many risks: They could live longer than expected and then face huge health-care expenses or higher-than-expected inflation. And the market could crash again.

For now at least, wealthy boomers have a lot more money to spend than they had any right to expect in the depths of the 2008 financial crisis. But that scary experience—and the natural instincts to be conservative early in retirement—are likely to hold boomers back from spending their new wealth. Unfortunately, both for the economy and for the boomers themselves, the people benefiting most from the stock market's record high may be the most cautious about enjoying it.

Watch Next: [The Biggest Retirement Mistake People Make](#)



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