2026 NFP U.S.

Retirement Trend Report

How financial pressure, complexity and human connection are reshaping retirement readiness.

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A Letter from Stephen and Jessica

This year's findings reveal a persistent disconnect between access and outcomes in retirement planning. While retirement plans, investment tools and financial resources remain widely available, 69% of employees do not feel confident they will retire comfortably, 72% report being off track in their retirement savings goals and 46% say they are deprioritizing retirement savings or unable to save at all.

Behind these numbers is a broader reality. Today, dollars intended for retirement are competing directly with basic living expenses like housing, transportation and food. For employees who are behind on saving, this is not a matter of ignoring the future. In most cases, they are doing the best they can with what they have to get through the week or the month.

At the same time, the responsibility for retirement has shifted. What was once supported by pensions is now largely dependent on individual savings and decision-making, with 401(k) plans serving as the primary retirement options for most employees. While access to plans and tools has expanded, it has also made retirement more complex and, for many, less clear.

One thing remains consistent: when it comes to their financial future, people trust people. Whether they need clarity, reassurance or direction, employees are far more likely to engage with a real person whose guidance is personal and relevant to their situation.

This applies across the workforce. From employees who may not typically have access to financial guidance, to those managing more complex financial decisions, the need is the same: clear, practical support that helps them move forward.

For plan sponsors, this changes the role of retirement programs. It is no longer enough to offer access. The focus must shift to helping employees understand what is available and how to use it in a way that makes sense for their lives.

The findings in this year's report reflect how employees are navigating retirement today, in an environment where rising costs, job security and day-to-day financial pressures are shaping real, everyday decisions**. It's not about getting every employee to a specific number or percentage, but about helping them make decisions that feel realistic, informed and achievable.**

After all, when employees feel more confident in their financial decisions, especially those affecting long-term stability, it can improve focus, engagement and overall wellbeing — outcomes benefiting the organization, its people and the individuals they serve.

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*Respondent data as of 2026.

Key Takeaways

69%
of employees lack confidence in their ability to comfortably retire.

46%
of employees are deprioritizing or unable to save for retirement.

72%
of employees' savings are off-track.

41%
of those aged 55 or older intend to rely on Social Security as their primary income.

84%
of employees say they would or might engage in one-on-one **56% who say they are likely to do so.**

89%
of employees trust financial advisors offered by their employer a fair amount.

51%
of employees report being offered access to a consultant or advisor.

64%
of employers find 401(k) or 403(b) plans helpful as an investment option.

About 1 in 4 employees are not aware of investment options beyond 401(k).

About 1 in 4 of employees are unaware of resources offered by employer.
(up from about 1 in 5 in 2025)

Retirement Readiness

Employee Sentiments, Progress and Use of Resources

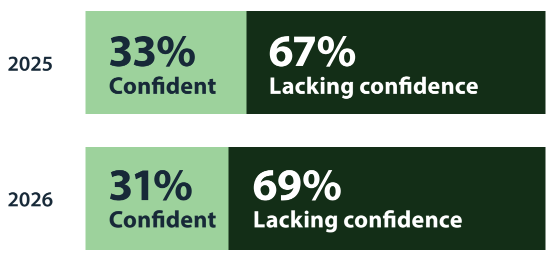
Retirement readiness is shaped by a combination of financial pressure, access to resources and how employees perceive their ability to make progress. For employers, understanding how these factors interact provides important context for how employees plan, engage and make progress toward retirement.

Retirement Preparedness

Declining Confidence in a Challenging Environment

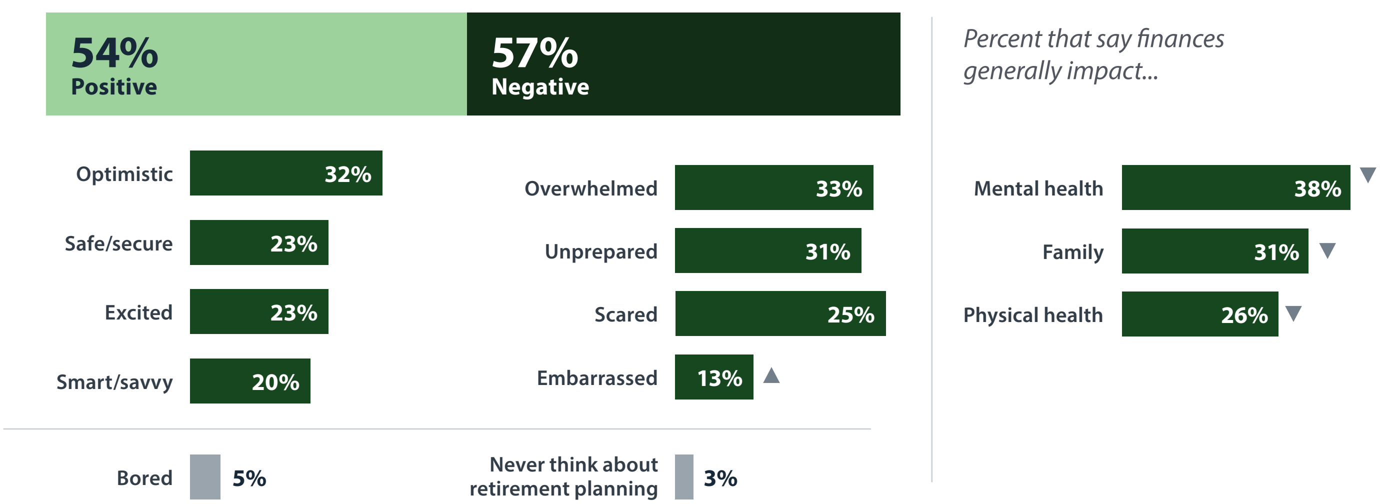
Confidence in retirement preparedness remains low, with more than two-thirds of American workers unsure they will be able to retire comfortably. That uncertainty is shaping how they engage with planning, while immediate financial pressures are limiting their ability to act. For many, essential expenses like housing, car payments, healthcare and everyday costs are taking precedence over long-term retirement savings.

Confidence in Ability to Achieve a Comfortable Retirement



Financial strain continues to affect employees beyond retirement planning, with tangible impacts on mental health, family dynamics and physical wellbeing. While these figures have declined year over year, the shift may well reflect a growing normalization of financial stress rather than any meaningful improvement in wellbeing.

Feelings Elicited in Retirement Planning



With confidence low, uncertainty high and financial stress becoming normalized, it is not surprising that retirement progress has stalled.

Note for Arrow Indicators:
▲ Gray up arrows indicate a significant increase compared to 2025.
▼ Gray down arrows indicate a significant decrease compared to 2025.
These arrows appear next to statistics throughout the report to show year-over-year trends.

Financial Pressure Is Reshaping Retirement Behavior

Retirement planning is increasingly influenced by immediate financial realities. While more than half of employees report actively saving, a significant portion are either deprioritizing retirement or unable to save at all.

Retirement Planning Mindset

Set aside the recommended percentage from my salary for retirement savings each month and hope it will be enough	30%
Prioritize saving for retirement and save more than what is recommended each month to maximize my retirement savings	25% ▼
Save for retirement here and there, but it's less of a priority than having enough money to buy/do what I want now	18%
Avoid thinking about retirement or saving for it	7%
Focused on current financial challenges and not thinking about the future and retirement savings	6%
Don't make enough money to save for retirement at all	12%
Don't know what benefits/services are available to me to help me begin to plan for retirement	2%

> **It goes without saying that retirement planning largely hinges on income and assets, and therefore the ability to save. For many, retirement is not being ignored, it is being postponed. Employees are struggling to balance finite income against rising costs. As a result, retirement savings is often the line item left out.**

Retirement savings progress reflects this shift. Just 28% of employees report being on track in 2026, down from 32% in 2025, while those off track have increased to 72%.

Movement within the data also reflects this decline in confidence, with fewer employees identifying as "somewhat" or "very" on track and more falling into "not too" or "not at all" on track. This helps explain a broader shift in mindset.

Retirement Savings Progress

	On track	Off track
2025	32%	68%
2026	28% ▼	72% ▲

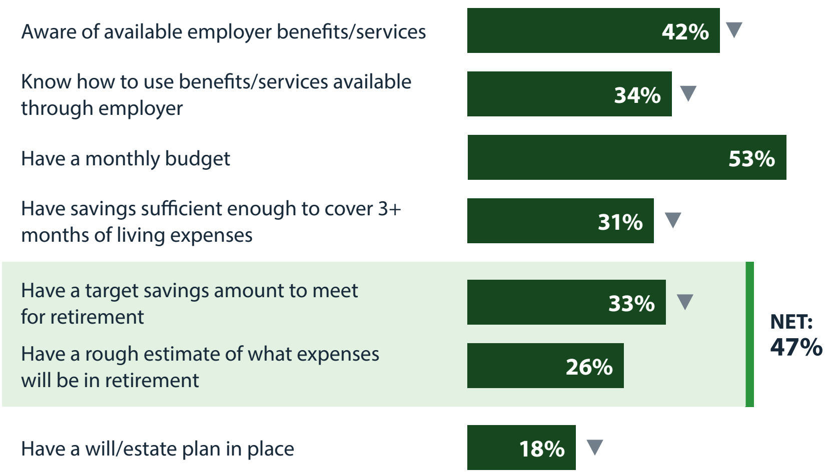
> **Employees are not opting out of planning. Instead, they've adjusted their expectations based on what feels feasible today.**

Progress Remains Limited and Unclear to Many Employees

With only a small portion of employees reporting they're on track for retirement, and with many lacking clarity on what "on track" even means, employers have an opportunity to provide clearer guidance, helping employees define realistic goals and understand the steps needed to achieve them through more personalized support.

This need is reinforced by declining awareness and understanding of employer-sponsored resources, with just 42% of employees aware of available benefits and services and 34% knowing how to use them, down significantly from 55% and 44% last year. Even where resources are available, limited awareness and understanding are contributing to inconsistent engagement, leaving many employees without the guidance needed to translate participation into meaningful progress.

Financial Preparedness



> **Another gap has clearly emerged between intention and understanding. While employees may be participating in savings programs, fewer have defined targets, estimated retirement expenses or have a clear sense of how much they need.**

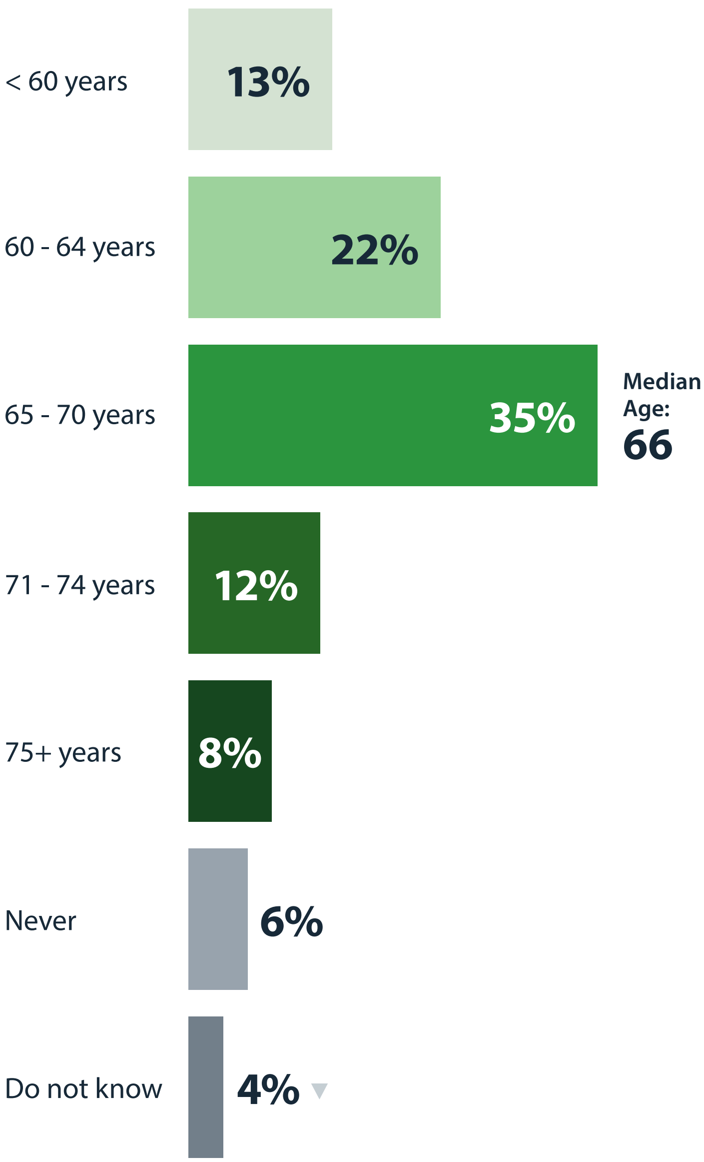
At best, many have a general plan but not necessarily a specific number for retirement. Some have savings goals or income streams in mind, but without a more concrete understanding, it can become difficult to measure progress or adjust behavior, potentially reinforcing a cycle of uncertainty and inaction.

Beyond savings targets, some employees indicate they either do not know when they will retire or do not expect to retire at all. In an environment defined by ongoing uncertainty and inconsistent savings patterns, that ambiguity is shaping not only how employees plan but also what they expect retirement to look like.

While many of these challenges are shaped by broader financial realities, they also highlight a clear opportunity for employers to support employees more effectively.

> **Improving awareness, simplifying access and connecting employees to guidance can help bridge the gap between participation and meaningful progress.**

Anticipated Age of Retirement



Growing Reliance on Social Security Signals a Risk Shift

Expectations for retirement income have shifted this year, with reliance on Social Security as a primary source of income increasing, while expectations around income from investment and retirement accounts are declining.

> **This trend is even more pronounced among older employees, with 41% of those age 55 and older indicating they expect to rely on Social Security as their primary source of income, a shift that moves in the opposite direction of what would typically support long-term financial security.**

Anticipated Main Source of Income in Retirement

		By age: < 35	35 - 54	55+
Investment/Retirement accounts (e.g., 401(k), 457, IRA, etc.)	**31%** ▼	36%	29% ▼	26%
Social security	**24%** ▲	12%	22% ▲	41% ▲
Savings accounts (not including 401(k) / investment accounts)	**16%**	23%	16%	7%
Part-time work	**11%**	12%	12%	9%
Pension	**8%**	8%	9%	7% ▼
Sale of a home/property	**4%**	6%	4%	2%
Other	**1%**	0%	0%	1%
Not sure	**6%**	4%	8%	6%
Investable assets (IA) held:		**52% < $100K**	**61% < $250K**	**58% < $250K**

This also introduces risk, as Social Security may not provide sufficient income for retirement needs, particularly as employees approach retirement with limited assets and fewer opportunities to adjust their savings strategy.

For employers, reinforcing the role of personal savings and helping employees understand how those savings translate into income can strengthen retirement planning and help close the gap between expectations and outcomes, particularly as employees approach retirement.

Employees Trust Humans with Their Money

When it comes to their money, employees continue to place the highest levels of trust in people, particularly spouses, family members and friends. These personal networks are not only widely trusted but also among the most commonly used sources for financial guidance.

This stands in stark contrast to AI-based tools, which are both less trusted and less frequently used, with many employees expressing limited confidence in digital sources for retirement planning. Of note, 15% have not consulted any resource for retirement planning in the last year at all.

Resources Leveraged and Degree of Trust

	Use:	Trust: Completely/ a lot	Trust: A fair amount	Trust: Not much/at all
Family	**39%**	47%	35%	18%
Friends	**31%** ▲	30%	45%	25%
Financial Consultant/Advisor Offered by Employer	**34%** ▼	48%	41%	11%
Spouse/Partner	**24%**	65%	26%	9%
Independent Financial Consultant/Advisor	**22%** ▼	40%	38%	22%
Collateral Shared by Employer	**25%** ▲	36%	49%	15%
Collateral Shared by Financial Institutions / Investment Banks	**18%** ▲	30%	45%	26%
Social Media/Influencers	**18%**	14%	22%	64%
Traditional News Media	**15%** ▼	17%	36%	46%
Non-Traditional News Media	**14%**	15%	31%	55%
AI-Based Search Engine (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini)	**8%**	19%	27%	54%
AI-based tools designed to provide retirement guidance (e.g., apps like Empower, Waterlily, etc.)	**6%**	18%	33%	49%

Financial professionals represent another highly trusted source of guidance, yet engagement does not always reflect that trust. Advisors offered through employers and independent consultants are viewed as credible sources for retirement planning, but usage has declined year over year.

This disconnect between trust and engagement suggests that while employees value professional guidance, barriers such as access, awareness and perception may be limiting broader utilization, reflecting an opportunity to better connect employees with the human support they are inclined to trust.

These barriers are further reflected in concerns around conflicts of interest, fear of scams or financial loss and a lack of understanding, all of which continue to shape how employees engage.

For some employees, retaining control over financial decisions is a priority, further limiting reliance on external guidance. At the same time, use of employer-provided advisors and resources has declined, reinforcing the gap between availability, trust and actual engagement.

Trust in Employer-Offered Resources

	Financial Consultant/ Advisor Offered by Employer	Collateral by Employer
Have used	**33%** ▼ *(vs.40% in 2025)*	**25%** ▲ *(vs 20% in 2025)*
Trust	**50%** *(vs. 50% in 2025)*	**33%** *(vs 33% in 2025)*

Common barriers and misconceptions

Conflicts of Interest

" They work on commission and may not have my best interests in mind."

Prefer to Take Control

" I only trust myself with my money."

Lack of Knowledge

" Don't know enough about any of it to put much trust in any one person."

Fear of Scams/Losing Money

" I'm too afraid to get ripped off by them."

Taken together, these findings point to a clear opportunity for employers. While trust in financial professionals remains strong, improving how those resources are communicated, positioned and delivered can help reduce hesitation and increase engagement.

> **By focusing on clarity, transparency and access, employers can better connect employees with the guidance they are already inclined to trust, increasing engagement with available resources today and making better use of the retirement programs they already offer.**

Employer Offerings

Investment Tools, Education Efforts and Engagement Strategies

Employer offerings play a central role in shaping how employees engage with retirement planning. How investment options are structured, how education is delivered and how employees are engaged ultimately determine whether available resources translate into meaningful progress toward retirement.

Employer-Sponsored Plans Are Widely Available and Not Fully Utilized

Access to employer-sponsored retirement plans remains high, with the majority of employees offered at least one investment option. Participation and contribution levels remain inconsistent though, despite broad access to employer-sponsored plans. With many employees either not enrolled, not contributing or unaware of additional options beyond traditional plans, access alone is not translating into meaningful engagement or progress toward retirement.

Access to and Usage of Retirement Investment Solutions

Investment solutions:	Offered:	Contributing: (Among those aware of solutions being offered by employer) – Enrolled, contributing	Enrolled, not contributing	Not enrolled
401(k) or 403(b)	68% ▼	78%	12%	10%
HSA (Health savings account)	47%	51%	15%	34%
Pension plan	35%	66%	18%	17%
Simple IRA	32%	53%	16%	31%
Employee stock ownership plan	27%	57%	20%	23%
Profit sharing plan	24%	N/A		
Non-Qualified Deferred Compensation Plan	19% ▲	44%	20%	35%
457(b) or 457 (f)	18%	53%	24%	23%
Employers offering 1+ investment solution(s)	87%			

Key: Enrolled, contributing; Enrolled, not contributing; Not enrolled

This pattern reflects a broader trend seen throughout the report: access to retirement resources is high, but engagement and understanding remain inconsistent. As a consequence, meaningful progress remains elusive.

Access to and Helpfullness of Retirement Investment Solutions

Investment solutions:	Offered:	Helpful: (Extremely/very)
401(k) or 403(b)	68% ▼	62%
HSA (Health savings account)	47%	51%
Pension plan	35%	64%
Simple IRA	32%	53%
Employee stock ownership plan	27%	60%
Profit sharing plan	24%	61%
Non-Qualified Deferred Compensation Plan	19% ▲	49%
457(b) or 457 (f)	18%	54%

About 70% of employees contribute to more than one investment option.

About 1 in 4 employees are not aware of any investment options offered beyond a 401(k).

Despite this, employees generally view employer-sponsored investment options as helpful. Across a range of plan types, a majority of employees report that these options support their retirement planning, suggesting that the issue is not the quality or perceived value of available tools. Instead, the difficulty lies in how these offerings are understood, accessed and ultimately used.

This extends beyond employer-sponsored plans. Regardless of age, there are significant declines across commonly held investment optionss, alongside a notable increase in employees reporting they are not utilizing any additional investment options at all. This trend persists even among those approaching retirement, reinforcing that the challenge is not limited to plan availability, but reflects broader disengagement from long-term financial planning.

Other Investment Solutions Held

		By age: < 35	35 - 54	55+
Life insurance	**41%** ▼	46% ▼	40% ▼	37% ▼
IRA	**27%** ▼	28% ▼	26% ▼	27% ▼
Roth IRA	**21%**	27%	19%	19%
Annuity	**14%**	16%	14%	11% ▼
SEP IRA	**3%**	3%	3%	2%
Other	**2%** ▼	1%	2%	4%
None	**34%** ▲	23% ▲	35% ▲	43% ▲

Complexity Limits Engagement

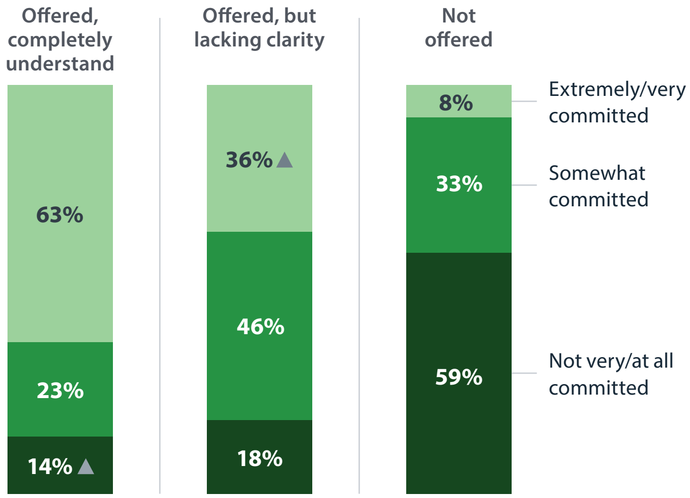
As we've seen, engagement challenges are not driven by a single factor, but by a combination of awareness gaps, limited understanding, behavioral barriers, financial limitations and increasing complexity.

This is not unique to retirement planning. As employee benefits have expanded over time, organizations have faced similar challenges, where increased choice and flexibility can make it more difficult for employees to navigate options and make informed decisions. In response, employers have increasingly focused on simplifying communication, guiding decision-making and providing more personalized support to improve engagement and outcomes.

When done effectively, these efforts not only increase utilization but also help employees better recognize and appreciate the value of the benefits being offered. This is reflected in how employees perceive their employer's commitment to retirement preparation, which increases meaningfully when investment options are both offered and clearly understood and declines when clarity is lacking.

Employer's Commitment to Retirement Preparation

(By Employer Offering of Investment Solutions and Employee Understanding of Options)

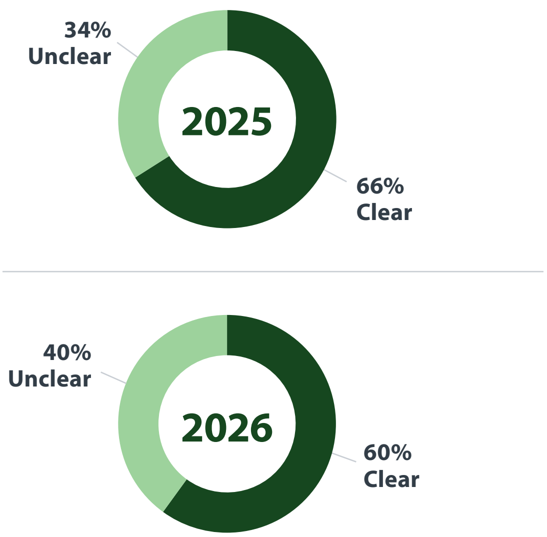


Resources Most Likely to Demonstrate Employer Commitment

1. Online tools/services
2. 1-on-1 meetings with consultants/advisors
3. Online educational resources

Only a portion of employees report fully understanding the investment options available to them. For many, the experience is partially understood or mostly confusing. Again, as with employee benefits, employees who fully understand their options are significantly more likely to actively manage and contribute to their accounts.

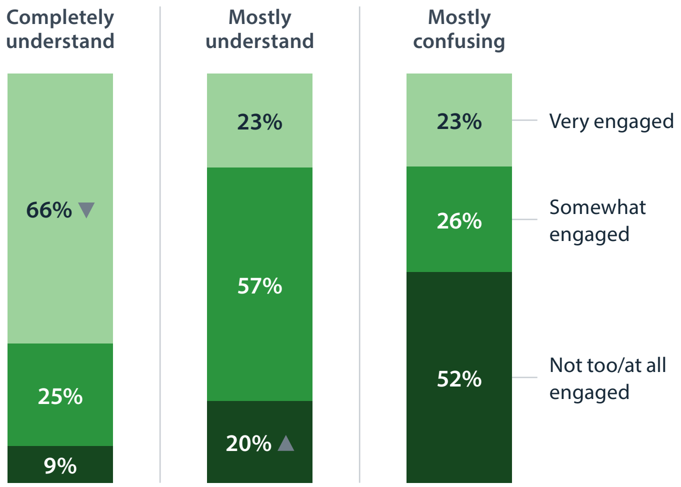
Comprehension of Investment Solutions



This relationship extends beyond perception and into behavior, as employees who report a clear understanding of available options are significantly more likely to engage with account management tools, while confusion corresponds with lower levels of engagement.

Engagement in Account Management

(By Employee Understanding of Options)



Among employees who are aware of available resources, engagement tends to increase, though usage remains inconsistent across formats. Advisor interactions, while highly valued, occur less frequently than other resources, suggesting that impact is not driven by frequency alone.

Access to and Usage of Retirement Planning Resources

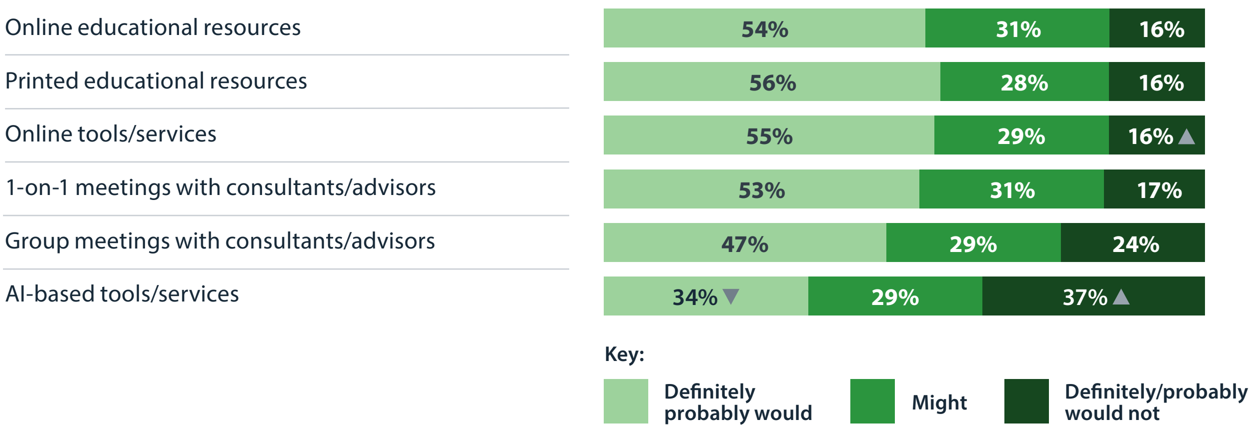
Resources:	Offered:	Leveraging: (Among those aware of resource being offered by employer) Every month+	Every few months	Every six months	Less than every six months/never
Online tools/services	42% ▼	16%	30%	25%	29%
Printed educational resources	42%	13%	28%	22%	37%
Online educational resources	40%	15%	28%	24%	32%
1-on-1 meetings with consultants/advisors	38%	12% ▼	23%	24% ▲	41%
Group meetings with consultants/advisors	36%	13% ▼	24%	20%	44%
AI-based tools/services	21%	18%	27%	25%	29%
Employers offering 1+ resource(s)	70%				

Key: Every month+ · Every few months · Every six months · Less than every six months/never

Nearly one in four employees are unaware of the resources offered by their employer (up from nearly one in five in 2025).

Employees express a strong willingness to engage with a range of retirement planning resources. Across online tools, educational materials and one-on-one meetings, more than half indicate they would likely use these offerings, with many others remaining open to engagement. This reinforces that the barrier is not interest, but how effectively that interest is converted into consistent, meaningful action.

Likelihood to Use Retirement Planning Resources



> **Together, these findings reinforce a consistent theme throughout the report: as complexity increases, clarity declines, limiting engagement and meaningful progress, even as employee willingness to participate remains strong.**

One-on-One Guidance: Hands Down, the Most Valued Resource

Among the range of retirement planning resources available, one-on-one meetings with financial professionals stand out as the most impactful. While employees express a willingness to engage across multiple tools and formats, personalized guidance is consistently rated as more helpful than digital or group-based alternatives.

Access to and Helpfulness of Retirement Planning Resources

	Offered:	Helpful: *(Extremely/very)*
Online tools/services	42% ▼	51%
Printed educational resources	42%	48%
Online educational resources	40%	54%
1-on-1 meetings with consultants/advisors	38%	62%
Group meetings with consultants/advisors	36%	53%
AI-based tools/services	21%	46% ▼

Access to this type of support is also relatively widespread. While engagement remains inconsistent, awareness appears to be an important driver of utilization. A majority report meeting with a financial professional at least periodically, reinforcing that these interactions are not only valued, but actively used.

51%
of employees say their employer offers access to a consultant/advisor.

This distinction highlights an important dynamic — while many resources can support retirement planning, one-on-one guidance is uniquely effective in helping employees navigate complexity, build confidence and translate intent into action. Despite this, a range of barriers continue to limit broader engagement with financial professionals. These barriers are not driven by a single concern, but reflect a mix of financial constraints, uncertainty around value and hesitation rooted in trust and understanding. As a result, increasing access alone may not be sufficient. Employers may also need to better communicate the value of personalized guidance and help employees understand how it can support their financial goals.

Inhibitors to Meeting with Financial Planning Consultants/Advisors

Don't have/make enough money to invest	24%
Don't think it will make a difference in my financial future	24%
Think they'd be primarily focused on selling me something	22%
Worry I'll incur fees if I talk to a financial planner	20%
Not sure what they do or how they could help me	19%
Don't think they would give helpful advice based on my unique needs	18%
Embarrassed about my progress with planning/saving for retirement	18%
Doing enough on my own/don't need advice	16%
Worry about the security of my financial information/data	16%
Don't know who to contact/meet with	15%
Other	5%

> **While barriers to engagement remain, the factors that motivate employees to meet with financial professionals are clear. Group sessions can help build awareness and introduce available resources, but one-on-one interactions consistently outperform in areas that require personalization, including goal setting, contribution planning and investment decision-making.**

Notably, this dynamic extends even to employees who are initially hesitant to engage. Among those not open to meeting with a financial professional, personalized interactions show significantly higher potential to shift interest across a range of planning needs. This reinforces the role of personalized guidance not only in supporting engaged employees, but in reaching those who might otherwise remain disengaged.

Motivators to Meeting with Financial Professionals

	Among those open to meeting with professional:		Among those NOT open to meeting with professional:	
	Group	1-on-1	Group	1-on-1
Improving awareness of resources/tools	57%	53%	44%	48% ▲
Understanding what benefits/services are available to me	56%	58%	43%	50% ▲
Understand other considerations (e.g., tax/estate planning)	51%	56%	41%	52% ▲
Using the resources available to better manage my finances	51%	60%	43%	52% ▲
Understanding how much I should be regularly setting aside	44%	64%	38%	53% ▲
Selecting investment options	43%	61%	37%	56% ▲
Understanding where I stand relative to my peers	42%	49%	37% ▲	47% ▲
Setting goals based on my specific needs and income	37%	67%	36%	57% ▲
Other	4%	6% ▲	11% ▲	20% ▲

When positioned effectively, personalized guidance can serve as a critical bridge between awareness and action, helping employees make more informed decisions and improving the overall effectiveness of employer-sponsored retirement programs.

Importantly, employees are open to engaging with this guidance across a range of formats. Whether in-person, virtually or over the phone, interest has increased across all channels, reinforcing that accessibility and flexibility play a key role in driving engagement.

Preferred Methods for Meeting with Financial Planning Consultants/Advisors

(Among those open to meeting with financial professional)

	Group Meetings	1-on-1
In-person, at my workplace	67% ▲	64% ▲
Virtual meeting	54%	57% ▲
Phone call	40%	63% ▲

> **Personalized guidance is not just another available resource, but one of the most effective ways to drive meaningful engagement. Connecting employees to trusted, one-on-one support can help bridge the gap between intention and action, ultimately improving both individual outcomes and the overall effectiveness of retirement programs.**

New for 2026

Managed Accounts: High Interest, Incomplete Engagement

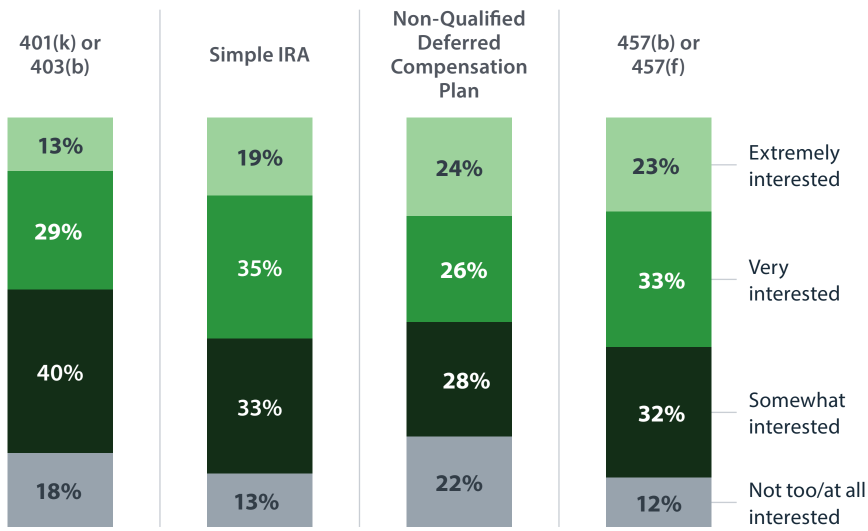
Managed accounts are increasingly available across employer-sponsored retirement plans, with a meaningful portion of employees reporting current usage. This comes at a time when many employers have already invested in tools and resources that remain underutilized, limiting their impact and leaving employees less prepared than they could be. In this context, managed accounts may offer a more accessible way to translate available resources into consistent action, particularly for employees who are less likely to actively engage on their own.

Across plan types, a majority indicate that these solutions are offered, and many are actively utilizing them as part of their retirement strategy.

Interest in managed accounts seems steady, with a notable portion of employees expressing at least some level of interest across different plan structures. While not universal, this suggests a continued openness to professionally managed investment approaches within employer-sponsored programs.

Moving forward, greater clarity around how managed accounts are positioned and understood is recommended. While access and usage are already established, aligning employee perception with how these solutions are intended to work may be key to realizing their full value within employer-sponsored retirement programs.

Interest In Managed Employer-Sponsored Accounts
(Among those whose employers offer account management, but for which they do not leverage it)



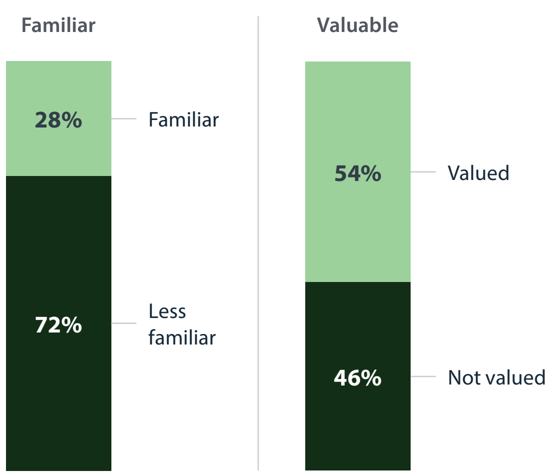
New for 2026

Retirement Income: High Perceived Value, Low Familiarity

Awareness of retirement income solutions remains limited, even as perceived value is relatively high. While a majority of employees are not familiar with these products, many still recognize their potential role in supporting retirement income.

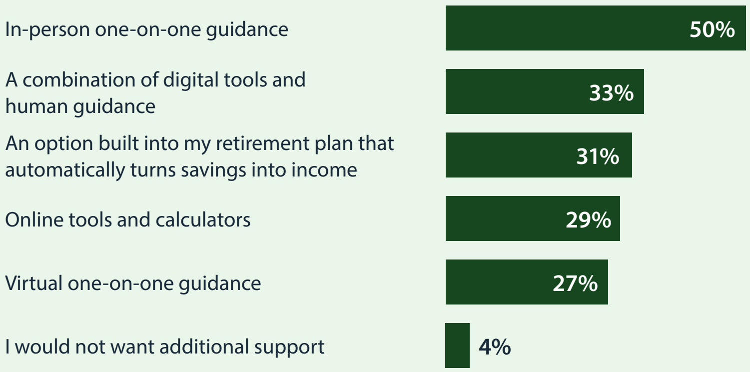
The distinct difference between familiarity and perceived value suggests that employees are open to these solutions, but lack the understanding needed to confidently evaluate or adopt them. As with other areas of retirement planning, how these solutions are introduced and explained is key to driving engagement.

Awareness and Perceptions of Retirement Income Products



When asked how they would prefer to explore retirement income options, employees overwhelmingly (and quite consistently) favor one-on-one guidance. In-person interactions rank highest in terms of preference, followed by a combination of digital tools and human support. While tools and solutions may be available, employees remain more likely to engage when they are supported by personalized, contextual guidance.

Interest In Tools to Transition to Retirement Income Products



> **Improving awareness of retirement income solutions – and pairing education with personalized guidance – may help employers better connect available tools to employee needs. Employer support of more informed decisions and clear retirement projections is key to improving retirement outcomes.**

The Role of Employers: From Access to Action

Turning Retirement Programs into Outcomes

A consistent pattern has emerged — access to retirement resources is high, but engagement and understanding remain inconsistent.

For employers, the opportunity is not to add more solutions, but to make existing ones easier to understand, access and act on.

1. **Simplify and Clarify Offerings**

   What's happening: Employees are often unsure what's available or how different options work together.

   Action: Streamline how retirement benefits are presented and communicated, focusing on clarity over complexity. Help employees understand not just what is available, but how each option supports their goals.

2. **Prioritize Awareness and Education**

   What's happening: Awareness gaps continue to limit engagement, even when resources are widely available.

   Action: Increase visibility of available resources through consistent, targeted communication. Reinforce key messages over time and ensure employees know how and when to access support.

3. **Connect Employees to Personalized Guidance**

   What's happening: One-on-one guidance is the most effective driver of engagement and decision-making.

   Action: Make personalized guidance easy to access and actively connect employees to trusted financial professionals. Position one-on-one interactions as a core part of the retirement experience, ensuring employees have access to support that is both credible and actionable.

4. **Reduce Friction to Drive Action**

   What's happening: Employees express a willingness to engage, but action does not consistently follow.

   Action: Simplify decision-making by guiding employees toward clear next steps. Use prompts, nudges and timely engagement opportunities to help translate intent into meaningful progress.

5. **Align Tools, Support and Outcomes**

   What's happening: Tools and solutions exist but are not always fully utilized or understood.

   Action: Ensure that digital tools, managed solutions, and advisory support work together to reinforce understanding and decision-making — connecting employees not just to resources, but to the expertise needed to use them effectively.

Closing Perspective

Employers play a critical role in bridging the gap between access and action. By combining clear communication with access to trusted guidance, organizations can help employees make more informed decisions while strengthening the overall impact of their retirement programs.

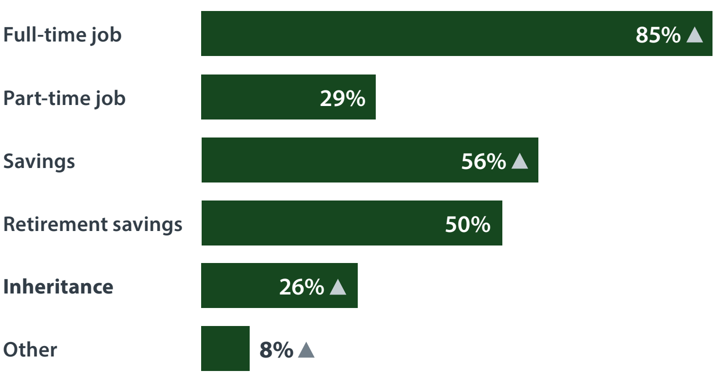
It's worth remembering that when employees are supported with clarity, guidance and access to the right resources, retirement becomes less of an abstract goal and more of a plan they can actively move toward.

About the Data

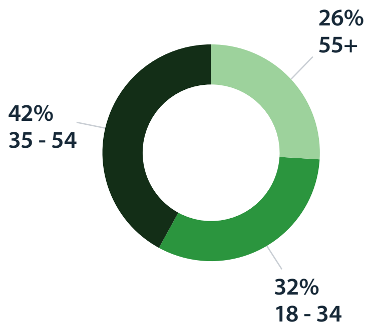
The 2026 NFP U.S. Retirement Trend Report is based on findings from NFP's 2026 Retirement Participant Trends Survey, conducted in partnership with Empatix. The findings are based on a survey of 1,000 U.S. working adults aged 18 and older involved in financial planning decisions for their household. Participants represented a mix of full-time, part-time and contract workers, with broad representation across age, gender, income, geography, employer size and employer type. Note that due to rounding, some charts may not add up to 100%. Additionally, many charts reflect data from multiple-response questions and are therefore not intended to total 100%.

Employee Profile: Demographics

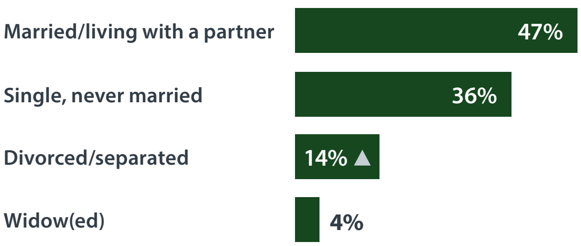
Income Sources



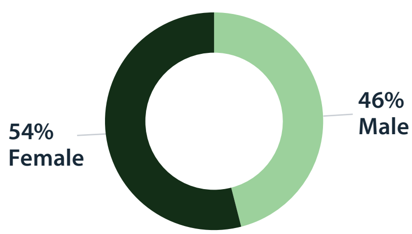
Age



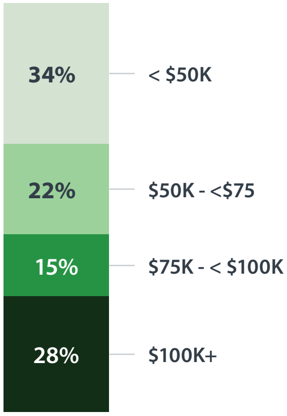
Marital Status



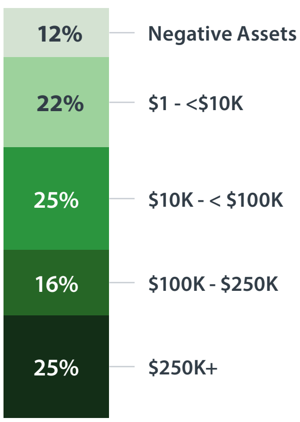
Gender



Household Income



Assets



Employment Status

Employed full time	87% ▲
Employed part time	13% ▼
Other (contract, self-employed, military)	2%

Job Description

White collar: Office, cubicle, or other professional, desk-based environment, including remote	38%
Grey collar: Typically interact in-person with customers and/or the public in a non-office setting	34%
Blue collar: Requires physical labor/skilled trade	23%

Employer Size

0 - 9	7% ▼
10 - 49	17%
50 - 99	14%
100 - 499	20%
500 - 999	14%
1,000 - 4,999	14%
5,000+	14%

Industry

Healthcare	17%
Retail and Wholesale Trade	13%
Construction	10%
Education	7% ▼
Manufacturing	6%
Financial Services	6%
Professional Services	6%
Hospitality	6%
Government/Public Entity	5%
Agriculture, Food and beverage	4%
Transportation/Trucking	4%
All Other (Real Estate, Agriculture, Media, Life Science, etc.)	16%

About Stephen Jans

Stephen is the national practice leader and managing director of Wealth Management and Financial Education at NFP, and brings over 30 years of experience in the financial services industry to his role. A seasoned leader and strategic advisor, Stephen is known for his ability to guide companies, clients and individuals through complex financial landscapes. Stephen's leadership is marked by a deep commitment to service, integrity and results.

Stephen has been instrumental in shaping national financial education initiatives and delivering customized wealth management solutions that align with both organizational goals and personal aspirations. His approach emphasizes education, empowerment and long-term planning, helping clients make informed decisions that support financial wellbeing.

He holds Securities Series 6, 63, and 65 registrations through Kestra Investment Services, LLC, along with Life, Accident and Health Insurance licenses.

About Jessica Espinoza

As NFP's national practice leader and managing director of Retirement Advisory, Jessica Espinoza directs strategy, leads operations and oversees the investments for NFP's retirement business nationwide.

Since joining NFP in 2006, Jessica has played a key role in shaping the firm's investment philosophy and service model. She began her career in client service, which provided a strong foundation in plan design, compliance, and investment menu construction. She later led retirement operations in the Atlantic region. Jessica also serves on NFP's Global Retirement Investment Committee.

A graduate of the Robert H. Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland, Jessica holds a FINRA Series 7 General Securities Representative license and is a Registered Investment Advisor. She is also a CFA Charterholder. Jessica has been recognized by the National Association of Plan Advisors as one of the Top Women Advisors from 2017 through 2023, and as one of NAPA's Top Plan Advisors Under 40 in 2019 and 2020.

About NFP

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