

# Turning savings into security

BlackRock 2026

**Canada's Read on  
Retirement™ report**



# Foreword

Retirement is one of the most personal financial goals a person will ever set — and, for many Canadians today, one of the hardest to feel certain about. Financial security in retirement is not a single decision but rather thousands of them, made over decades: how much to save, how to invest, and eventually, how to spend sustainably. Helping Canadians navigate that journey, with confidence rather than guesswork, is core to why we do what we do.

For nearly two decades, BlackRock<sup>1</sup> has stood alongside Canadian pension plans, sponsors and participants to help build that confidence. In the U.S., we pioneered the target date fund in 1993, and in 2007 we brought that innovation to Canada through LifePath®. Today, BlackRock manages roughly half of all target date assets in the country — more than any other manager<sup>2</sup> — and LifePath remains the most widely available target date series on Canadian workplace platforms. It is a position we do not take lightly, and one we are proud to build on as we bring Read on Retirement™ report to Canada for the first time.

This report asks a simple but important question: Do Canadians feel secure in their retirement planning? The answer is more layered than a simple yes or no.

**Canadians are saving, and most feel good about it.** Six in ten workplace savers believe they are on track, and most retirees are confident their money will last. **But look one layer deeper, and a different picture emerges. Nearly seven in ten worry about outliving their savings.** Most struggle to understand how their savings will actually translate into long-term support once they stop working, and more than half believe they should be saving more than they currently are. Confidence, it turns out, is not the same thing as feeling secure.

That gap shifts across a working life. Early-career savers are juggling homes, families and tuition alongside retirement contributions. Gen X, the generation closest to the finish line, is the least confident of all, caught between rising costs and a shorter runway to adjust. And for those approaching or newly in retirement, the questions change, from “how much have I saved” to “how long will it last” — questions that feel far less familiar than the act of saving itself.

**What Canadians are asking for is more clarity:** fewer decisions to make alone, greater resilience and confidence that their plan can adapt as their life does. As Canadians live and work longer, the average retirement age reached a record high of 65.4 years in 2025, up from 61.6 just two decades ago, according to Statistics Canada, that need for durable, adaptable retirement solutions has never been greater.

**This is where we see the greatest opportunity ahead:** working alongside Canadians to design solutions that quietly do the work of simplifying decisions, adapting to changing needs and helping every saver grow, protect and eventually spend down what they have built, so they can retire on their own terms.

We are grateful to Canadian workers, retirees and plan sponsors who shared their experiences to make this report possible. We hope the contents within inspire continued conversations on creating retirement solutions that work for Canadians today, and for the decades ahead.



**Katherine Tweedie**  
Canada Country Head, BlackRock



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<sup>1</sup> BlackRock means BlackRock, Inc. and its subsidiaries and affiliates, including BlackRock Asset Management Canada Limited ('BlackRock Canada').

<sup>2</sup> "Canada's largest target-date fund solution by assets under management", Morningstar 2026 Canadian Target-Date Landscape, March 2026.

# About the survey

Retirement preparedness is about more than building savings. Confidence in the future is shaped by a range of factors, and for many Canadians, saving for retirement does not always translate into feeling prepared.

At BlackRock, we believe that both the amount you save and how you feel about retirement play important roles in achieving long-term financial security

Our Read on Retirement™ report explores the factors that help turn savings into security, and how retirement needs evolve across generations and stages of the retirement journey.

Retirement priorities, pressures and confidence can vary across generations, often reflecting different career stages and distances from retirement. Throughout the report, we explore how these differences shape the retirement experience across the following generational cohorts:

- **Gen Z**, 1997–2008
- **Millennials**, 1981–1996
- **Gen X**, 1965–1980
- **Boomers**, 1946–1964

The survey was conducted by Escalent, an independent research firm. A total of **1,009** Canadian workplace plan participants and **305** Canadian retirees were surveyed between May 25 and June 25, 2026.

**Workplace plan** participants were employed full-time, actively participating in an employer-sponsored capital accumulation plan (CAP) and had at least CAD \$5,000 in investable assets.

**Retirees** participated in a workplace retirement plan during their working years, with a CAP serving as their primary workplace plan at retirement. Retirement tenure varied, with 31% retired under 5 years, 25% between 5 to 10 years, 22% between 10 to 15 years, and 22% retired for 15 years or longer.

Participants could also hold a DB pension. Findings should therefore be interpreted as reflecting the experiences of Canadians whose **primary** workplace retirement savings vehicle was a CAP plan.

Throughout this report, the term “participants” refers to surveyed workplace plan participants, while “retirees” refers to surveyed retirees.

# Key findings

## Turning savings into security

Participants are making meaningful progress in building retirement savings, but feeling on track does not always mean having a clear view of what those savings may provide. As retirement moves from a distant goal to a more immediate reality, questions remain about how savings will support life after work.

1

### Economic pressures are making it harder to stay on track

Amongst participants, **77%** say higher inflation and market volatility have made it harder to stay on track with their retirement savings. These pressures are adding complexity to retirement planning and raising questions about whether today's savings will support the retirement participants expect.

2

### Canadians are saving, but are worried it won't be enough

Over half (**61%**) of participants feel on track for retirement, but **68%** say they are worried about outliving their savings. Many participants feel like they are making progress, but questions remain about future security.

3

### Generations are split on retirement confidence

Nearly three-quarters (**70%**) of Gen Z participants feel on track for retirement, compared with **51%** of Gen X participants – showing signs that confidence is shifting as retirement nears. Retirement challenges evolve over time, from competing priorities early in a career to questions about risk, timing and spending as retirement approaches.

4

### Canadians are looking for more clarity

Nearly three-quarters (**74%**) struggle to understand how today's savings will support them in the future. Canadians say they are looking for a clearer explanation of how savings will translate into spending, greater comfort through uncertain markets, and investment approaches that will evolve as their needs change.



# Confidence today, questions about tomorrow

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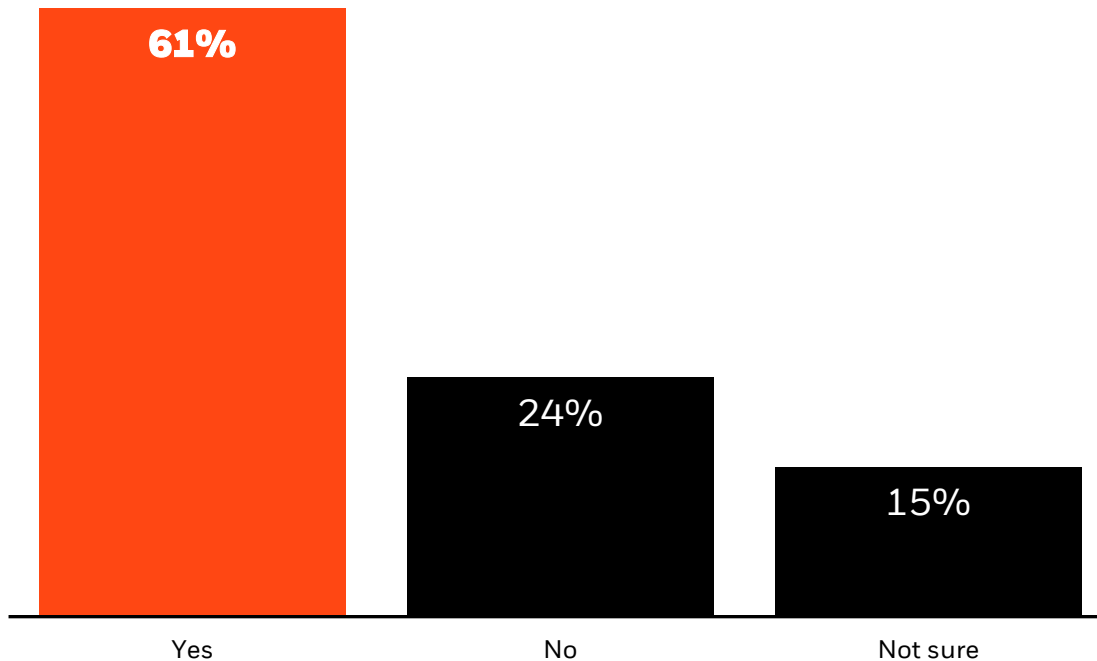
Canadian participants have made progress towards retirement, and many feel on track.

However, feeling on track does not answer some of the harder questions that emerge as retirement approaches — how long will savings last, what lifestyle will these savings support and how do personal savings, workplace plans and government benefits best work together to support retirement spending needs.

# Most participants feel on track for retirement

Participants believe they have done a good job prioritizing saving for retirement.

Are you on track with your retirement savings?



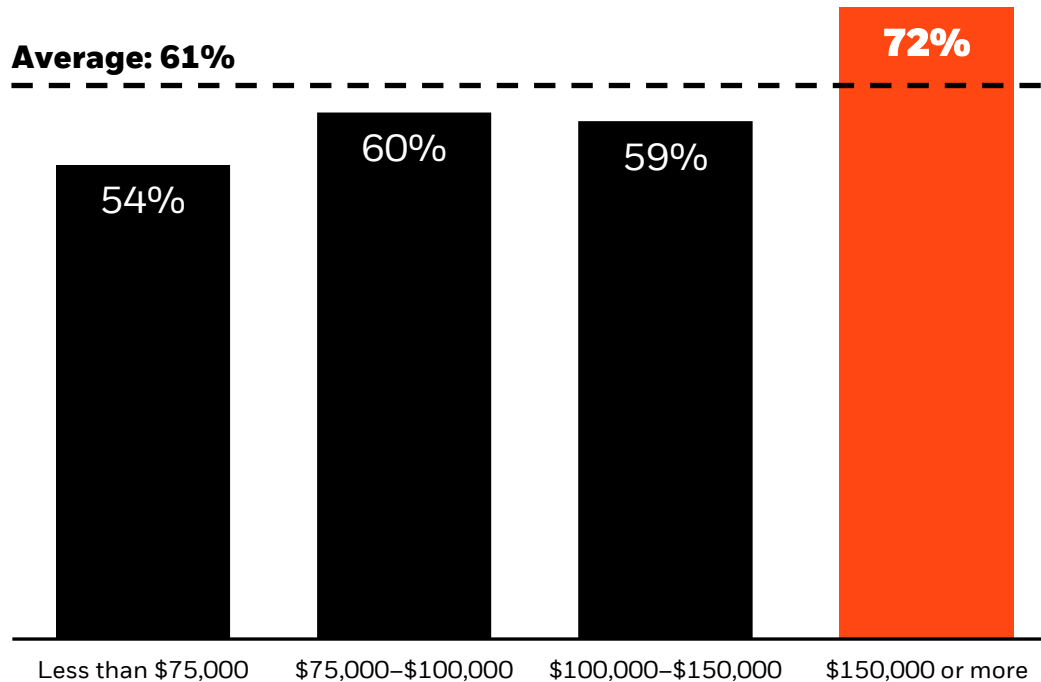
**61%**

of participants in a workplace retirement plan say they are 'on track' to achieve the lifestyle they expect. And nearly two-thirds (**65%**) say they are optimistic about their financial well-being over the next few years.

# Household income matters

Not surprisingly, participants in higher-income households are more likely to feel on track for retirement.

**Overall, are you on track with your retirement savings so that you can retire with the lifestyle you want?**



# 72%

of participants in households earning \$150,000 or more say they are on track for retirement, compared with **54%** in households earning less than \$75,000.

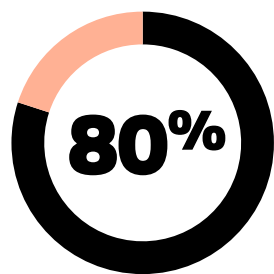
Although government benefits may replace a larger share of pre-retirement income for lower-income Canadians, confidence levels remain lower among this group. This suggests that understanding one's future retirement income can be just as important as the amount of income expected in retirement.

# Questions remain about how long savings may last

Even among participants who feel positive about retirement, questions remain. For many, the challenge is not just building savings, but understanding whether those savings can support the retirement they're planning for.

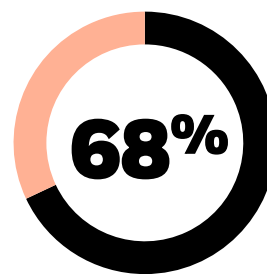
***Across all participant generations surveyed:***

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**“My generation won’t have the retirement certainty that past retirees had.”**

Canadians increasingly worry their retirement will be shaped by a larger range of risks and decisions than previous generations had to face.

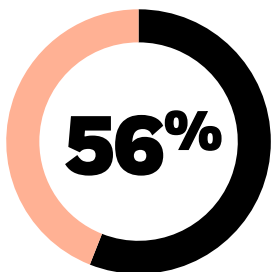


**“I worry about outliving my retirement savings.”**

Longevity remains a key concern, highlighting the need for strategies that support spending throughout retirement.

***Among participants who do not feel on track or are unsure:***

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**say they should be saving more.**

Many participants are seeking opportunities to strengthen their retirement preparedness and increase their savings over time.

## **The takeaway**

Feeling on track with today's savings is an important starting point, but it does not answer every question about future security. For many participants, retirement readiness is a two-part equation: first, a focus on building savings today, and second, understanding how those savings, along with other sources of income, can support their retirement goals.

# Canadian retirees offer some perspective

82%

**of surveyed retirees are confident their savings will support them throughout retirement.**  
As retirement becomes a lived experience, the different pieces of the retirement picture can become easier to see.

## Feeling on track is only part of the retirement picture.

Retirement outcomes are shaped by more than the size of a savings balance. How savings are invested, the mix of income sources available, and how those sources work together can all influence spending in retirement. Comparing the expectations of participants with the experiences of retirees reveals an important discrepancy: the income sources participants expect to rely on in retirement do not always align with the sources retirees report as contributing most to their retirement income.

*The table below compares participants' expectations for retirement income sources with what retirees report using in retirement today.*

| Retirement income source             | Participant expectation | Retirees report | Gap       |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Government benefits (CPP/QPP + OAS)  | 21.5%                   | 40.7%           | +19.2 pts |
| Employer sponsored accounts          | 22.5%                   | 11.4%           | -11.1 pts |
| Personal/non-workplace accounts      | 24.9%                   | 23.1%           | -1.8 pts  |
| Pension or Defined Benefit (DB) plan | 11.1%                   | 17.7%           | +6.6 pts  |
| Employment income (part-time)        | 9.5%                    | 1.2%            | -8.3 pts  |
| Real estate income/home equity       | 7.3%                    | 0.3%            | -7.0 pts  |
| Annuity                              | 3.1%                    | 1.6%            | -1.5 pts  |
| Other                                | 0.1%                    | 3.9%            | +3.8 pts  |

## The broader retirement income picture matters too.

**58%** of the retirement income reported by surveyed retirees comes from government benefits and pension income, alongside workplace savings and personal investments.

As workplace retirement arrangements evolve, future retirees may rely differently on these various sources. For participants in capital accumulation plans, this makes it increasingly important to understand how their workplace savings fit into the broader retirement income picture — and how those savings are managed as retirement approaches.

## The takeaway

Helping participants save is foundational. The opportunity is helping them see how their savings and other retirement resources can help them achieve the lifestyle they are working toward.



# Generations are split on retirement confidence

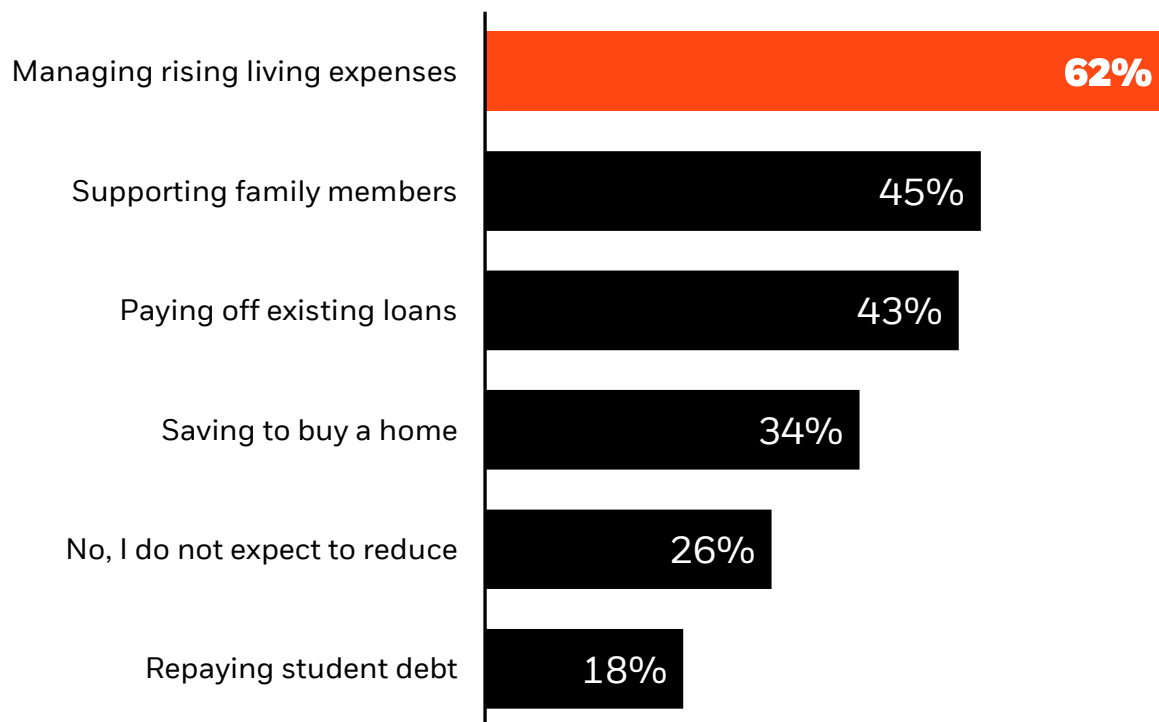
Retirement is not one decision made in a single moment. Early in their careers, participants are building foundational saving habits while managing competing priorities of where to spend their money. By mid-career, participants are balancing family, housing and debt pressures with the need to build momentum. When nearing retirement, participants face fast-approaching spending needs and increasingly important questions about timing, risk and spending plans — shifting the focus from building wealth to coordinating and sustaining spending.

While each stage brings different priorities and concerns, the survey suggests that feeling on track can look very different depending on where participants are on their retirement journey.

# The path to retirement isn't linear

Life can be unpredictable. No matter what stage of your career you are in — financial pressures, economic uncertainty and unexpected expenses can make it harder to save for retirement.

**Do you expect that you will need to contribute less to your retirement plan in the next 12 months for any of the following reasons?**

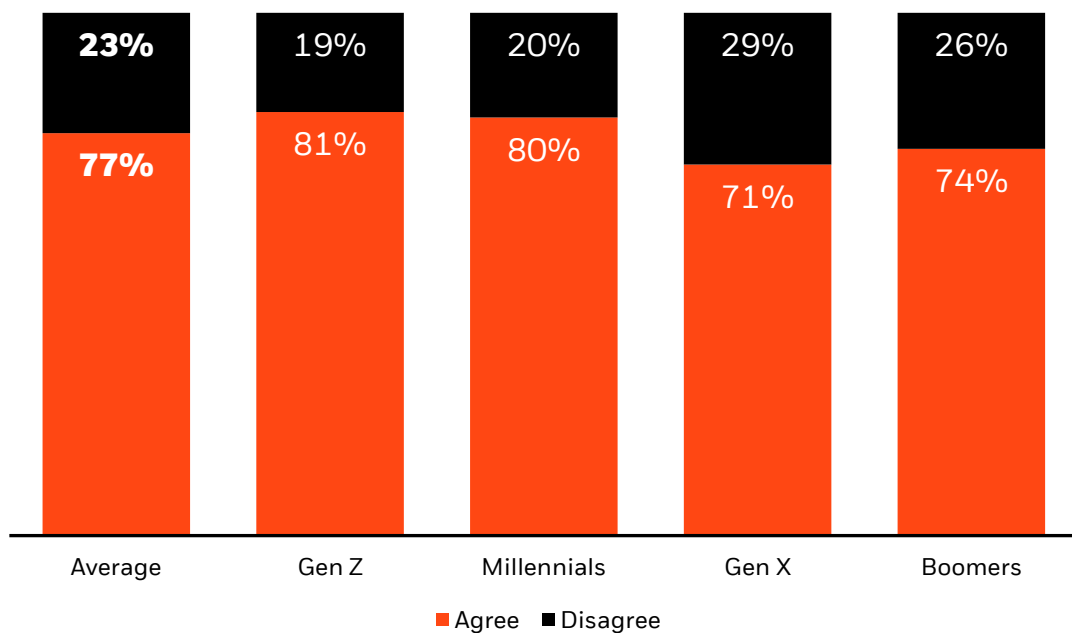


**74%**

of participants think they may need to slow their retirement contributions in the next year, with **62%** saying that rising living expenses may create financial challenges for them. Only around a quarter (**26%**) do not expect to reduce their contributions.

# Many participants are balancing today's pressures against tomorrow's security

High inflation and market volatility have made it harder for me to stay on track with my retirement savings



With many keenly focused on the current economic environment and its impact on their long-term savings, it is not surprising that

## 77%

of respondents think that high inflation and market volatility are making saving for retirement more difficult, a challenge felt most acutely by those at the earliest stage of their careers.

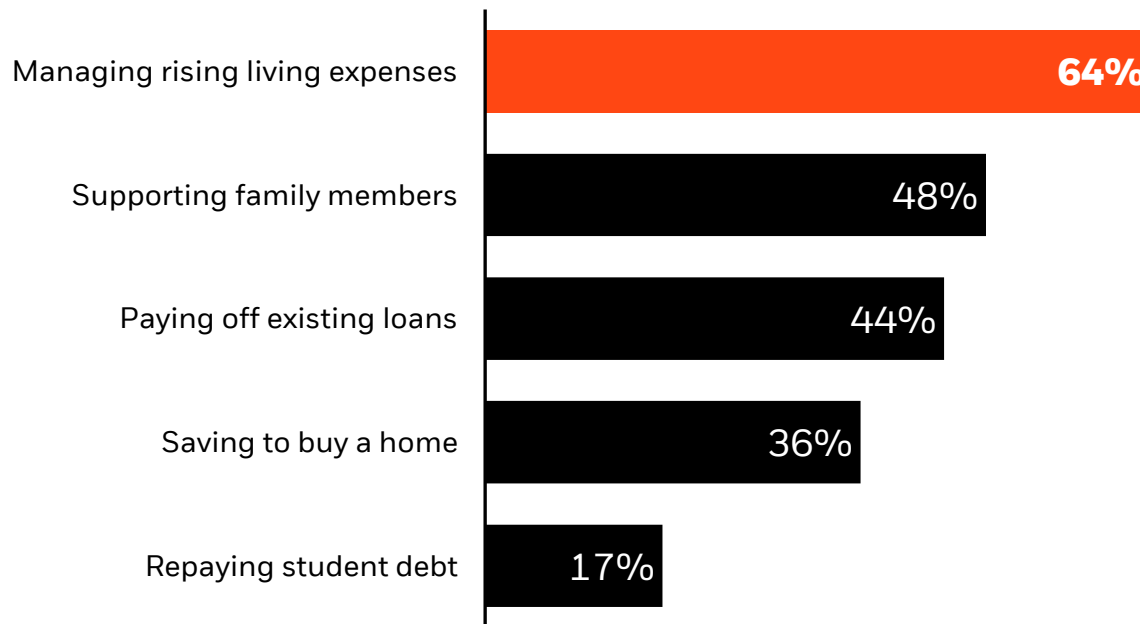
## Early career: Building momentum amid competing priorities

As the generation earliest in their careers, Gen Z participants face the greatest concentration of competing financial priorities, with **81%** expecting major planned expenses to affect their ability to save. Yet, they are also the most likely generation to feel on track for retirement, suggesting that confidence can be strongest when retirement remains a distant goal.

# Mid-career: Maintaining momentum through uncertainty

Largely represented by millennials, mid-career participants often find that the challenge shifts from starting to save, towards maintaining progress. Many are balancing saving for their retirement goals alongside housing costs, family responsibilities and rising living expenses.

## Top reasons millennials expect to reduce retirement contributions in the next 12 months

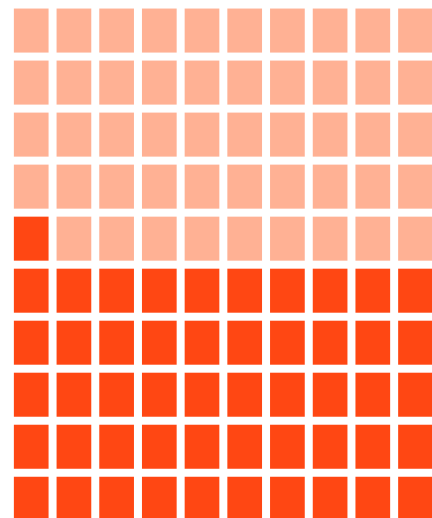


**77%**

of millennial participants expect they may need to reduce retirement contributions in the coming year.

# Uncertainty increases as the big day approaches

As retirement approaches, financial pressure intensifies, and long-held assumptions are put to the test.



Only  
**51%**

of Gen X participants  
say they are on track  
for retirement.

## Retirement doesn't always happen on schedule

Working-age plan participants are expecting to retire at age 64 but retirees in the survey say they retired closer to age 60. Although these are different groups, the findings highlight an important reality: retirement timing may not always unfold exactly as planned.

Retirees cite a range of reasons for leaving the workforce, including reaching benefit eligibility (**21%**), health-related reasons (**16%**) and job loss (**15%**), demonstrating how life events and circumstances can influence when retirement actually begins.

These findings reinforce the importance of designing retirement solutions that provide flexibility and resilience, recognizing that retirement timing and life circumstances can change in ways participants may not anticipate.

Gen X may be the closest to retirement, but only around half think they will be able to live the life they expect in their golden years.

**67%**

of Gen X participants  
say they worry  
about outliving  
their savings.

## The takeaway

Retirement readiness is not a fixed state. Confidence, priorities and financial pressures evolve throughout a participant's journey, often becoming more complex as retirement approaches. Retirement timing may be influenced by factors outside a participant's control, from health challenges to employment transitions. Investment support that adapts alongside changing needs can help participants stay on track and approach retirement with greater confidence.



3.

# What participants need to feel retirement-ready

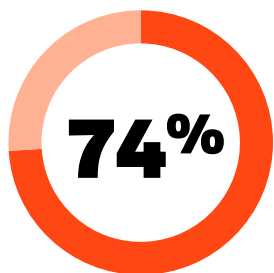
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While **61%** of participants feel on track for retirement and **80%** are satisfied with the investment options available through their workplace retirement plan, the research reveals a more nuanced challenge.

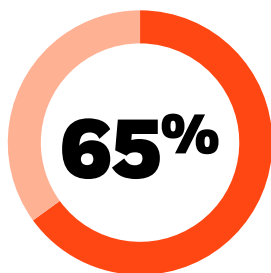
Across generations, participants expressed a desire for greater confidence that today's decisions will lead to tomorrow's outcomes. Many still struggle to understand how their savings and investments will support them in retirement, highlighting the importance of greater clarity around future outcomes, confidence through periods of uncertainty and solutions that can adapt as needs evolve over time.

# Clarity: Connecting today's savings to tomorrow's retirement

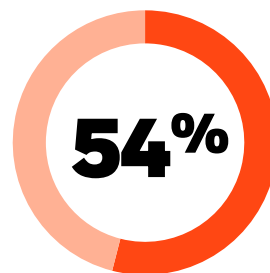
Canadian participants understand the importance of saving. Nine in ten (**91%**) say saving gives them a greater sense of confidence in their day-to-day lives, and **80%** are satisfied with the investment options available through their workplace retirement plan. The greater challenge is understanding how today's savings and investment decisions translate into the retirement outcomes they hope to achieve.



**struggle** to understand how today's retirement savings will support them in the future. Most participants are wondering how their nest egg fits into their long-term retirement plan.



are **unsure** how to calculate how much they will need to spend in retirement. In part, that's because they don't know what retirement living will look like for them.



admit they **haven't given much thought** to how their savings will support them in their retirement. Naturally, the closer participants are to retirement, the more likely they are to have given it some thought.

## Participants are looking for help to close the gap

**83%** say retirement spending and withdrawal-planning tools would be helpful, while **81%** would like greater access to a financial professional for retirement-plan guidance.

## The takeaway

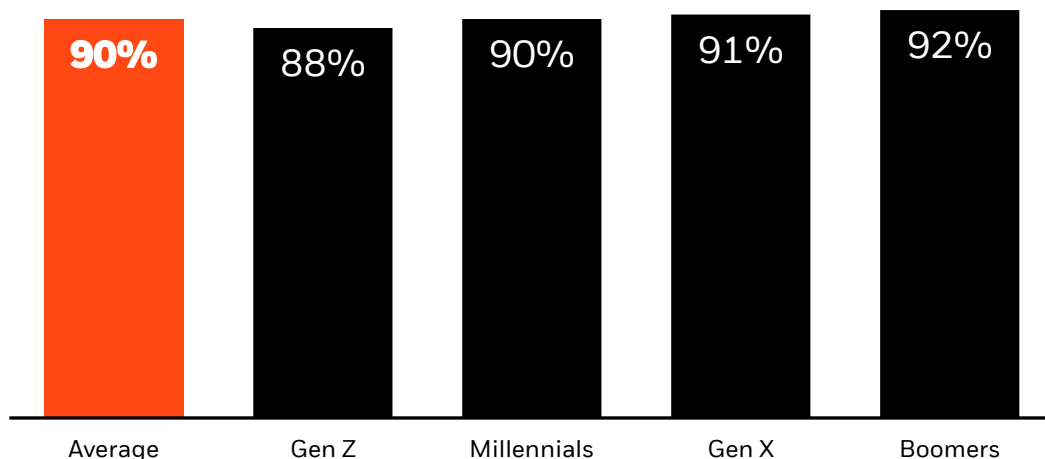
Canadians are not looking for more decisions to make. They are looking for greater confidence that the decisions they have already made are putting them on the path toward the retirement they envision.

While most participants are satisfied with the investment options available through their workplace retirement plan, many still struggle to understand how those investments, alongside their savings, support future retirement outcomes. Helping participants connect today's decisions to tomorrow's goals represents a meaningful opportunity to strengthen retirement readiness and confidence.

# Resilience: Building confidence through uncertainty

Participants recognize that uncertainty is part of investing. What they are seeking is confidence that their retirement strategy can help them navigate it. In fact, **90%** would feel more confident if their plan helped smooth financial ups and downs over time.

**“I would feel more confident in my retirement plan if I knew it was designed to smooth out financial ups and downs over my lifetime”**



## 93%

say maintaining a consistent standard of living is important.

### Confidence in outcomes drives saving behaviour

Among participants, **78%** say they would save more if they were more confident their investment strategy could help them reach their retirement goals.

## The takeaway

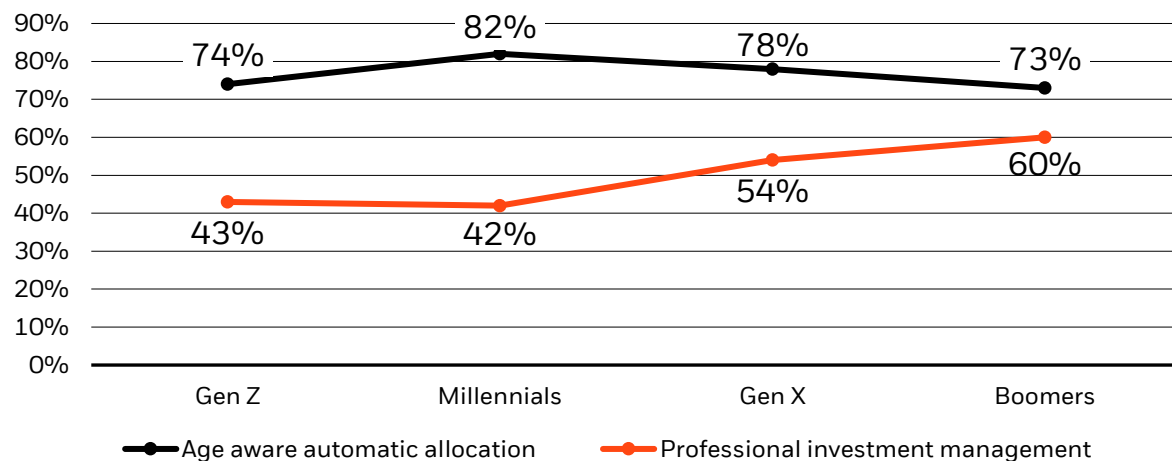
Confidence can be a powerful driver of action. When participants believe their investment strategy can help them stay on track toward their retirement goals, they are more likely to increase their retirement savings. Resilience is not about eliminating uncertainty but helping participants navigate it with confidence.

# Adaptability: An investment approach that evolves over time

As retirement draws nearer and investment risks evolve, many want their investment approach to evolve with them, rather than requiring them to continually make those adjustments themselves.

## Value investments that evolve with their life stage: 78% overall

% helpful, by generation: Gen Z, millennials, Gen X, boomers



These findings reinforce the appeal of professionally managed investment approaches, such as target date funds, which are designed to evolve automatically as participants progress toward and through retirement.

Participants are signaling that they do not want to navigate every investment decision on their own. Instead, they value solutions that can help guide them through an increasingly complex retirement journey.

Meeting these expectations has implications not only for participant communications and tools, but also for how workplace retirement investment options and defaults are designed.

# 92%

of participants would feel more at ease if their retirement investment approach evolved over time, and **78%** would find it helpful to have their assets automatically reallocated to investments appropriate for their age.

Together, these findings highlight that participants value a strategy that can evolve automatically, as needs and risks change throughout the retirement journey.



# The next opportunity for Canada's retirement ecosystem

Canada's retirement ecosystem has helped millions of participants build long-term savings. The next opportunity is to help more participants understand how those savings will help support life in retirement, and to consider where plan design, investment strategy, guidance and tools can reduce the weight placed on individuals who are navigating an already complex saving and investing landscape. The following pages explore four questions central to unlocking this opportunity:

1. Can participants translate account balances into future outcomes?
2. Do workplace retirement plans evolve with participants' needs?
3. Can the investment strategy build confidence through uncertainty?
4. Which decisions truly need to sit with the participants?

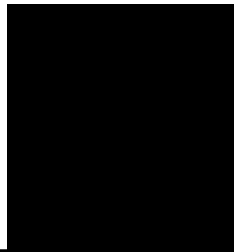
# 1. Can participants translate balances into future outcomes?

Participants can feel positive about their progress without having a clear picture of what their savings may provide: **61%** feel on track, yet **74%** struggle to understand how their savings may support their retirement lifestyle.

## The facts...

**61%**

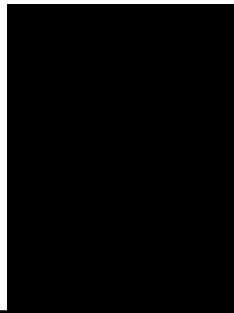
of participants think they are on track with their retirement savings.



Confidence today

**76%**

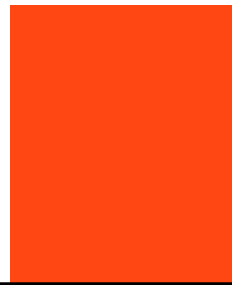
of participants are confident their money will last through retirement.



## But...

**74%**

of participants struggle to understand how savings support their retirement lifestyle.



Clarity gap

**65%**

of participants don't know how to estimate their retirement spending needs.



## The takeaway

By translating account balances into future spending, retirement programs can help improve clarity, preparedness, and decision-making. The opportunity is to make "what this means for me" as visible as the balance itself to the participant.

Education and calculators can help participants understand how different decisions, such as when to retire, how much to withdraw, and when to activate government benefits may affect their future retirement income. Investment design can complement these efforts by simplifying how accumulated savings are managed over time.

## Consider whether participants can easily understand:

- What their current savings could translate into in retirement.
- How workplace savings fit alongside other potential sources of retirement income.
- How changes in contributions, retirement timing or other assumptions could affect the outcome.

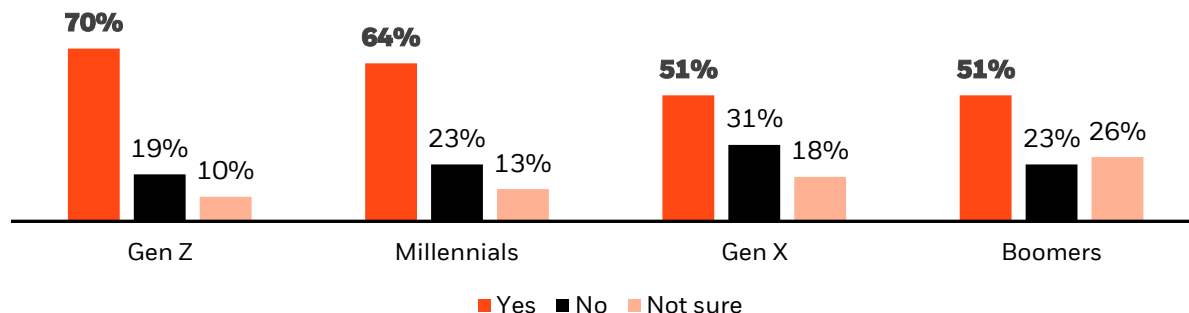
## 2. Do workplace retirement plans evolve with participants' needs?

Retirement needs do not change at one fixed date. Early-career participants are balancing competing priorities; mid-career participants are working to maintain momentum; those approaching retirement face increasingly practical questions about timing, risk and spending; and retirees must coordinate investments and income with actual spending.

At the same time, retirement does not become static once someone leaves the workforce. Even among retirees who feel confident overall, retirement often involves adapting to changing circumstances. More than half of retirees (**54%**) say the cost of living has been higher than anticipated, while **40%** say they have adjusted their spending to help their savings last.

These experiences highlight that retirement planning extends beyond accumulation and into retirement itself as spending needs, market conditions and personal circumstances continue to evolve over time.

**Overall, are you on track with your retirement savings so that you can retire with the lifestyle you want?**



**Consider whether participants receive the right support as they move through different stages of the retirement journey:**

- Building savings while balancing other financial priorities.
- Maintaining progress as circumstances and priorities change.
- Preparing for increasingly practical decisions around retirement timing, risk and spending.
- Transitioning from accumulating savings to using them in retirement.

### The takeaway

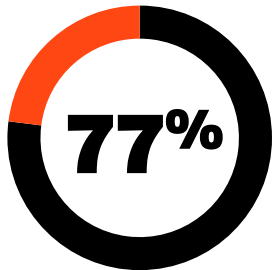
Retirement is not a destination, it is a journey marked by changing goals, risks and decisions. As participants progress through different stages of life, workplace retirement programs have an opportunity to evolve with them, helping connect savings, investments and retirement income into a more cohesive experience that supports long-term financial confidence.

# 3. Can the investment strategy build confidence through uncertainty?

Markets may be unpredictable, but retirement strategies can still be designed with uncertainty in mind. For participants, understanding how their strategy is built to navigate changing conditions can be as important as the design itself.

## The facts...

The pressure



say inflation and market volatility have made retirement saving more difficult.



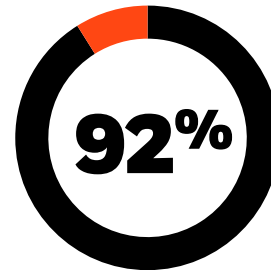
The desired experience



would feel more confident if their plan helped smooth financial ups and downs over time.



The design response



would feel more at ease if their retirement investment approach adapted over time.

## The takeaway

Participants value retirement strategies designed to navigate changing conditions. A plan built to hold steady through disruption is only half the equation — when that resilience is communicated clearly, it can turn a source of worry into a source of confidence, and confidence, as the data shows, can drive saving behaviour.

## Consider whether:

- The role of the investment strategy is clear during periods of market uncertainty.
- Participants understand how diversification and the long-term investment approach are intended to work.
- Communications explain both what the strategy is designed to do and what it cannot guarantee.
- Participants receive timely context that helps them remain focused on long-term objectives.

## 4. Which decisions truly need to sit with the participants?

Participants value being involved in their retirement planning, but that does not mean they want to manage every investment decision themselves. Many see value in having ongoing decisions, such as how much investment risk to take and how that should change over time, handled automatically or with professional support.

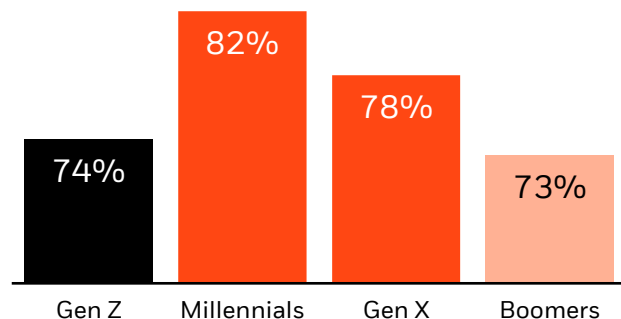
# 78%

would find it helpful to have their assets automatically reallocated to investments appropriate for their age.

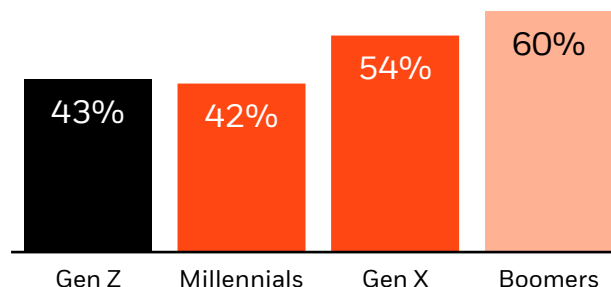
# 43%

Of Gen Z participants, **43%** prefer professional management, rising to **60%** among Boomers. This suggests that interest in professional management may increase as retirement approaches.

**Automatically reallocate my assets to more appropriate investments for someone my age.**



**When it comes to investing in my workplace's savings plan, I prefer to have a professional manage it for me.**



**Consider whether participants are being asked to make investment decisions that could instead be simplified through plan and investment design, including:**

- Determining an appropriate asset allocation.
- Deciding when and how to adjust investment risk.
- Rebalancing investments over time.
- Responding to changing market conditions.

### The takeaway

These findings reinforce the importance of retirement plan designs that combine guidance, education and age-aware investment strategies. Together, these elements can help participants navigate changing needs and risks over time, reducing the number of complex decisions placed on individuals while supporting a disciplined approach throughout the retirement journey.

# Turning savings into security

Canada's retirement ecosystem has made meaningful progress in helping participants build savings. Industry practice has long focused on helping participants accumulate savings, and our research suggests the next opportunity is helping participants make a clearer connection between their savings and the retirement security they are working towards.

**As economic pressures are making it harder to stay on track,** participants are telling us they value **clarity** about what their savings may provide, greater **resilience** in navigating uncertainty and investment approaches that can **adapt** as retirement approaches.

Meeting those expectations will require different parts of the retirement ecosystem to play different roles, from plan design and participant communications through to tools and investment management.

Within the investment component of that journey, professionally managed lifecycle strategies can help simplify investment decisions and evolve portfolio risk over time — helping participants stay focused on the long-term retirement outcome rather than continually managing the investment journey themselves.

For the retirement industry, the question is no longer simply whether Canadian participants are saving, but whether the retirement experience can help those savings carry them through the journey ahead.



# Important notes

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Source for all data: Read on Retirement™ report. October 2026.

The conclusions are intended to provide an indication of the current attitude of a sample of Canadians about retirement saving and investing and should not be relied upon for any other purpose. Please consult your record-keeper, insurance company or consultant for information pertaining to your investments.

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