Reality Bites: Gen X is Nearing Retirement and More than Half Don't Believe They'll be Financially Ready When the Time Comes, According to Northwestern Mutual Planning & Progress Study

Office Space: Nearly half (48%) of Gen X'ers expect to work in retirement,mostly out of necessity

Risky Business: Half of Gen X'ers (50%) say they've placed too much emphasis on building wealth without dedicating enough to protecting their assets

Dazed & Confused: Gen X'ers have significantly less clarity than Boomers+ on how market volatility, inflation, taxes, and healthcare costs could impact their financial plans

Before Sunrise: 35% of Gen X'ers say uncertainty about finances keeps them up at night at least once a month

Stand By Me: 33% of Gen X'ers work with an advisor compared to 43% of Boomers+

MILWAUKEE, Sept. 9, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- The oldest members of Generation X turn 60 in 2025 and many in the "middle child" generation find themselves hurtling closer to their retirement years with deep uncertainties about the state of their finances. The latest findings from Northwestern Mutual's 2025 Planning & Progress Study reveal that more than half (54%) of Gen X'ers – born between 1965 and 1980 – think they won't be financially prepared for retirement when the time comes.

The study also finds Gen X'ers think they'll need$1.57 million to retire comfortably –$310,000 more than the "magic number" national average. When Gen Xers who have saved something for retirement were asked how much they have saved as a multiple of their current annual income, the #1 answer (17%) was 2x.

Amount Gen X'ers have saved as a multiple of their current annual income	
Less than 1x my income	14 %
1x	7 %
2x	17 %
3x	14 %
4x	9 %
5x	6 %
6x	4 %
7x	4 %
8x	3 %
9x	1 %
10x	6 %
More than 10x my income	8 %
Not sure	7 %

"Many Gen X'ers are juggling responsibilities on both ends, supporting aging parents while still helping their children," said Jeff Sippel, chief strategy officer at Northwestern Mutual. "So, they're feeling the pressure of being part of the sandwich generation.

They're also the first generation to truly feel the impact of the move from defined benefit plans to defined contribution plans. All of this puts more of the burden of financial planning on their shoulders. That's where a comprehensive financial plan custom-built by a trusted advisor can make a real impact. It can help Gen X'ers get clarity on what they need as they head toward their retirement years and put a realistic gameplan in place to get there."

Reality Bites: Gen X'ers think outliving their savings is significantly more likely than being able to leave an inheritance

More than half (56%) of Gen X'ers think it's likely they'll outlive their savings as compared to 40% of Boomers+, according to the research. It's not surprising, therefore, that Gen X'ers express the most concern about being able to afford retirement. They're also the least likely among all generations to say they expect to leave an inheritance.

Financial milestones people are most concerned about being able to afford	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers+
Retirement	36 %	**57 %**	41 %
Having long-term care protection in place	26 %	34 %	38 %
Paying off my mortgage	24 %	25 %	18 %
Leaving an inheritance	19 %	19 %	25 %

Expect to leave an inheritance	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers+
Yes	32 %	**26 %**	30 %

"The nature of support is changing," said Sippel. "Parents are living longer and that's compelling Gen X to provide more extended financial assistance than Boomers did with their parents. Plus, Gen X's children need more support with the cost of college, child care, health care, and housing all going up. Gen X is feeling the pinch, and we see it in the data."

Dazed & Confused: Gen X'ers are less sure of themselves as financial planners when compared to Boomers+

The research finds that Gen X'ers have significantly less clarity than Boomers+ on a range of issues in their financial lives, including how inflation and taxes could impact retirement, strategies to address healthcare and long-term care needs, and more.

Understanding and clarity around factors that could impact financial plans	Gen X	Boomers+
I have a good understanding of how inflation could impact my retirement and have factored that into my financial plans.	53 %	66 %
I have a good understanding of how taxes could impact my retirement and have factored that into my financial plans.	49 %	62 %
I have a good understanding of how potential drops in the stock market could impact my retirement and have factored that into my financial plans.	51 %	60 %
I have a plan to address healthcare costs in retirement.	45 %	65 %
I have enough life insurance protection in place to take care of my loved ones if something happened to me.	48 %	51 %
I will have enough to leave behind an inheritance or gift to loved ones and/or charitable causes I care about.	39 %	57 %
I know how much money I will need to retire comfortably.	42 %	54 %
I have a plan to address long-term care needs in retirement.	35 %	43 %

I have planned for the possibility that I could outlive my savings.	36 %	41 %

Risky Business: Gen X'ers are prone to a common blind spot

Half (50%) of Gen X'ers say they've had a financial blind spot when it comes to managing their finances – they feel they've placed too much emphasis on building wealth without dedicating enough to protecting their assets. The numbers for Boomers+ who say the same are significantly lower – 35%.

Common financial blind spot	Gen X	Boomers+
Placed too much emphasis on building wealth/growing assets without dedicating enough to protecting assets	50 %	35 %

"Growth without protection can leave people vulnerable," said Sippel. "Especially as you get older, safeguarding what you've built is just as critical as continuing to build. A holistic plan should account for both."

Office Space: Planning to continue working

Nearly half (48%) of Gen X surveyed are planning to continue working during their retirement years, or already are. Less than one third (30%) of Boomers+ say the same.

Most Gen X'ers working or planning to work in retirement say they will continue to work out of necessity – to be in a position to afford retirement. A third (34%) say it will be part-time at a different job, and a quarter (24%) say it will be full-time at a different job.

Plan to continue working during retirement (or already are working in retirement)	Gen X	Boomers+
Yes	**48 %**	30 %
No	25 %	56 %
Not sure	27 %	14 %

Reasons why people plan to continue working during retirement (or are already working in retirement)	Gen X	Boomers+
Continue to feel useful / stimulated	49 %	61 %
Need the additional income to be able to afford retirement	**56 %**	46 %
Want the additional income to fund my preferred retirement lifestyle	45 %	48 %
Meet new people / be part of a community	22 %	24 %
Pursue a new or more fulfilling career	13 %	9 %

Before Sunrise: Financial uncertainty is keeping Gen X'ers up at night

More than a third (35%) of Gen X'ers say uncertainty about finances keeps them up at night at least once a month, while for Boomers+ it's 14%.

One thing weighing on the minds of roughly half of Gen X'ers is whether Social Security will be there for them when they qualify for it. That question is neck-and-neck with, "How much will I need to retire comfortably?" among the most important retirement issues for Gen X'ers. And it clearly stands apart from how Millennials and Boomers+ are thinking about Social Security.

"Burning questions" about retirement planning most important to people	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers+

How much money will I need to retire comfortably?	47 %	48 %	32 %
Will Social Security be there when I qualify for it?	39 %	**47 %**	20 %

Additionally, the research shows that Gen X'ers trail Boomers+ across a range of health, wealth, and wellness issues.

Currently in a strong state	Gen X	Boomers+
Relationship with family	78 %	88 %
Job stability	74 %	85 %
Friendships	73 %	82 %
Mental health	72 %	89 %
Physical health	71 %	75 %
Finances	52 %	68 %

Stand By Me: Fewer Gen X'ers get professional financial advice than Boomers+

Gen X'ers are less likely than Boomers+ to have sought professional help for their finances. The survey finds that 33% of Gen X'ers currently work with an advisor – 10 percentage points lower than the 43% of Boomers+ who do the same.

Work with a financial advisor	Gen X	Boomers+
Yes	**33 %**	43 %

"A financial advisor can bring structure and strategy to what otherwise might feel overwhelming," said Sippel. "For Gen X, who are navigating a complex mix of responsibilities and goals, that kind of support can make the difference between feeling lost and feeling empowered."

About the 2025 Northwestern Mutual Planning & Progress Study

The 2025 Planning & Progress Study was conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of Northwestern Mutual among 4,626 U.S. adults aged 18 or older. The survey was conducted online between January 2 and January 19, 2025. Data are weighted where necessary by age, gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, marital status, household size, household income, and propensity to be online to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population. A complete survey methodology is available.

About Northwestern Mutual

Northwestern Mutual has been helping people and businesses achieve financial security for more than 165 years. Through a comprehensive planning approach, Northwestern Mutual combines the expertise of its financial professionals with a personalized digital experience and industry-leading products to help its clients plan for what's most important. With nearly $700 billion of total assets[i] being managed across the company's institutional portfolio as well as retail investment client portfolios, more than $38 billion in revenues, and $2.4 trillion worth of life insurance protection in force, Northwestern Mutual delivers financial security to more than five million people with life, disability income and long-term care insurance, annuities, and brokerage and advisory services. Northwestern Mutual ranked 109 on the 2025 *FORTUNE* 500 and was recognized by *FORTUNE®* as one of the "World's Most Admired" life insurance companies in 2025.

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