Standard Life
For the life we live
Bringing retirement into focus 2025
For financial advisers only

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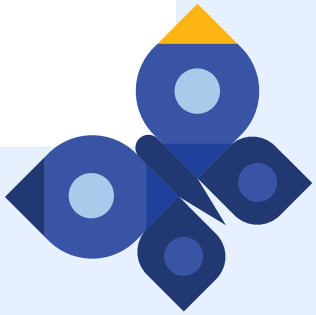
Introduction

One of the enduring challenges in how retirement is understood, and supported, is that it is still too often viewed through the lens of ageing rather than agency. Our research points to that clearly. Almost half (46%) of adults agree that retirement is something that just happens and they'll think about it at that time, a pattern that has remained broadly consistent over time. Too often, retirement is seen as a passive transition associated with stepping back or simply reaching a certain age, rather than a stage of life people can actively shape through the choices they make. When retirement is framed in these terms alone, it can remain something people know matters, but struggle to bring into focus in a way that feels personal. It becomes harder to build the kind of ongoing engagement that supports real readiness.

Too often, retirement is seen as a passive transition associated with stepping back or simply reaching a certain age, rather than a stage of life people can actively shape through the choices they make.



That matters all the more in a world where people are living longer, financial pressures remain immediate and uncertain, and the responsibility for shaping later life security increasingly sits with the individual. Ireland is moving quickly towards a million retiree society, with more than 860,000 people already over 65 and around 30,000 joining them every year. While wealth levels are rising, much of that wealth is tied up in property – ill suited to providing the income, flexibility and confidence people need in later life.

The start of MyFutureFund marked an important step forward in widening active engagement with retirement saving in Ireland. But beginning to save is only part of what being retirement ready requires. It doesn't remove the deeper challenge identified in this report: helping people connect saving with a second life they can picture, understand and actively plan for.

It's this deeper readiness challenge that Standard Life has long worked to bring into focus. Through Second Life, we continue to champion a more

relatable view of retirement; one that recognises it not as an end point, but as a transition to life lived on your own terms. This life stage needs the right mindset and support, to bring greater choice, flexibility, and possibility. As a soon-to-be retiree in our research put it "You don't want to exist, you want to be able to live".

Our Second Life approach is shaped by what we continue to learn through Standard Life's Voice of the Retiree research, drawing on more than 16 years of listening to people's experiences of planning for, moving into, and living through retirement. This insight continues to inform our understanding of feeling retirement ready and the solutions we develop for advisers to help more people get ready for their best second lives with greater clarity.

By looking at readiness through financial, social, and mindset indicators, the framework offers a fuller picture of where support can make the greatest difference. Financial planning remains fundamental, but better retirement outcomes are not shaped by financial decisions alone. They're also determined by whether people can picture the future they are planning for, whether they feel confident enough to engage with the choices ahead, and whether the support around them today will help them achieve, and enjoy, the second life they envision.

This year's edition of Bringing retirement into focus uses this framework to explore how ready for retirement people in Ireland are today. It continues to look at where feeling ready is strengthening, where gaps remain, and what the findings mean for financial advisers supporting clients on their journeys to and through retirement.

The value of planning and advice runs through every chapter of this report. We know that when people can picture a second life worth planning for, they are far more likely to engage with the choices that support it. I hope this report continues to help start and sustain conversations that move retirement from the background into sharper focus, and I look forward to continuing our partnership with advisers to help more people see retirement not simply as something they reach, but a second life they can enjoy on their terms.

Head of Distribution
Alan McCarthy

About the research

Bringing retirement into focus 2025 draws on Standard Life's ongoing Voice of the Retiree research, which explores how people in Ireland are thinking about retirement, how ready they feel for it, and the factors shaping both.

The report combines two complementary programmes of research.

Quantitative

Standard Life's Retirement Pulse provides a broad quantitative view of retirement attitudes, behaviours, and readiness across Ireland, allowing us to track change over time and examine how perspectives differ across age, gender, geography and engagement with financial advice.

Research overview

Sample: 5,356 adults, 18+, across four waves of fieldwork in 2025. The sample was quota controlled to be representative of the national population.

Method: Online surveys
Conducted on behalf of Standard Life by 3Gem Research.

Qualitative

Alongside this, our Second Life qualitative research adds depth to the picture. Through focus groups, we have conversations with people approaching retirement and those already living it, exploring the realities behind the research. Building on 2024 research in Connacht and Munster, in 2025 we extended our focus to Dublin and the Rest of Leinster to better understand how local context – community, culture and resources, shape attitudes to retirement, planning and readiness.

Research overview

Sample: Eight groups of four to six adults aged 55+ across Dublin and the Rest of Leinster. Half yet to retire and half already retired, including groups with couples and single participants.

Method: Focus groups
Conducted on behalf of Standard Life by Red C Research.

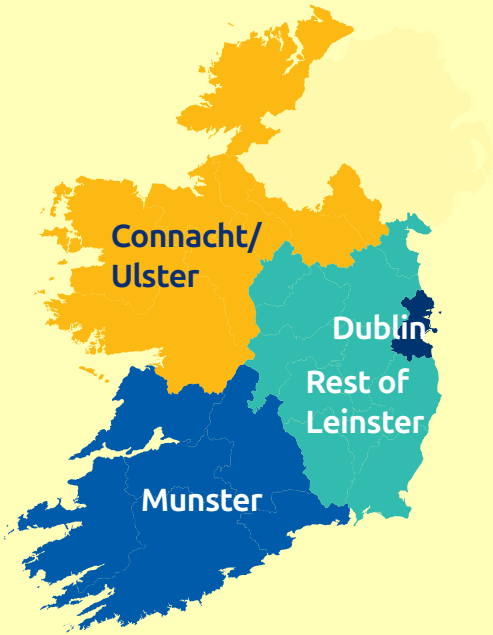
Our sample:

5,404 adults

spanning four generations

1. **Gen Z** (18-29)
2. **Millennials** (30-45)
3. **Gen X** (46-61)
4. **Baby Boomers** (62-79)

...and four regions:



Key findings

Financial

1 in 3	Just 33% know how much they'll need to live comfortably in retirement. Uncertainty about what "enough" looks like remains one of the biggest barriers to financial readiness, even among those actively saving.
7% decline	Financial readiness among working adults has fallen from 37% to 30% since 2021.
2 x	Those who receive regular advice are almost twice as likely to feel positive about their finances and confident that they're making the most of their pension.

Social

21-point gap	Social readiness is significantly higher among retirees than working adults, showing that confidence often strengthens through experience.
1 in 3	34% of working women say they feel socially unprepared for retirement (compared with 27% of men), highlighting greater pre-retirement uncertainty rather than lower eventual readiness.
69% vs 62%	In retirement, women overtake men in social readiness.

Mindset

42%	Fewer than half of adults say they look forward to retirement. While retirement remains appealing to many, optimism has become more muted over time.
1.5 x	Adults who feel positive about their finances now are almost 1.5 times more likely to look forward to retirement than those currently feeling anxious about money. Mindset readiness is built on financial confidence.
2 in 5	Around 2 in 5 adults are concerned they will not be able to retire, reflecting persistent uncertainty about whether money will last.

Retirement readiness

With average life expectancy in the early 80s, many people will now live the reality of a 25-year retirement. At Standard Life, we know that this takes planning beyond finance. Built on years of our Voice of the Retiree research, speaking with people across Ireland about their retirement beliefs, expectations and experiences, the insights point to three key indicators of a fulfilling retirement: financial, social, and mindset readiness.

Financially ready

The clarity of knowing what you have, what you need, and how your income will support the life you want.

Socially ready

The sense of belonging in your community, nurturing the relationships that bring you happiness, and knowing you'll have the support you need now and in the future.

Mindset ready

Taking time to reconnect with hobbies and interests outside of work. To give you a sense of purpose and redefine your identity in this golden time of life.

These indicators are grounded in how people themselves, both yet-to-retire and retired, describe a more fulfilling retirement.

In our focus groups this year, participants described each indicator in their own words, reflecting on money, connection, identity, and life beyond work.

Financially ready

"I suppose when you say the word retirement it would give me more flexibility in my life. But you have to be able to afford it. I want to enjoy my retirement and keep the lifestyle I have now."

"You have security, you're able to clear the bills without any headaches and are not stressed at all about finances. It's being able to live the same lifestyle or as close to."

Socially ready

"It's a connection to friends and family and hobbies that you have that you continue with them or find new ones. But the most important thing is that you pick up the phone to someone or meet someone for a walk or coffee so you don't feel isolated. That would be a real fear for me."

"You'd want to be able to get out and bounce off people and have a laugh and share common interests, so that you can feel a part of a community or it's going to be a new community you're going to be seeking out because your work community, you're going to lose that."

Mindset ready

"I would say mentally alert and that is connecting with people. That you have your interests but feeling alert means you're aware of who you are, the type of person you are, and that means that you're very happy with your mindset."

"Mindset and socially, they are things that are harder to be sure about. How do you know whether you are ready like that? There's no test you can do. It's not like the financial one where somebody can work out, well you have this much so therefore you're financially ready."

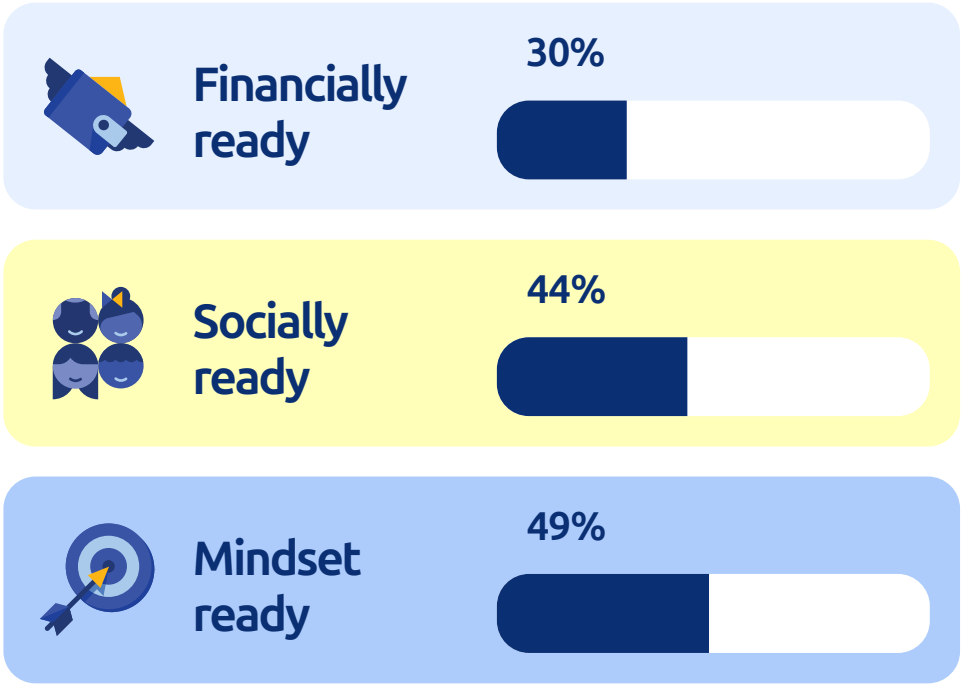
For some, financial readiness feels easier to assess than the mindset or social sides of retirement.

Despite playing a major role in how people experience retirement, these aspects can be harder to define. This is why we continue to speak about and support Second Life planning. Tools like the Second Life questionnaire help people reflect and put words to the parts of readiness that can be difficult to define.

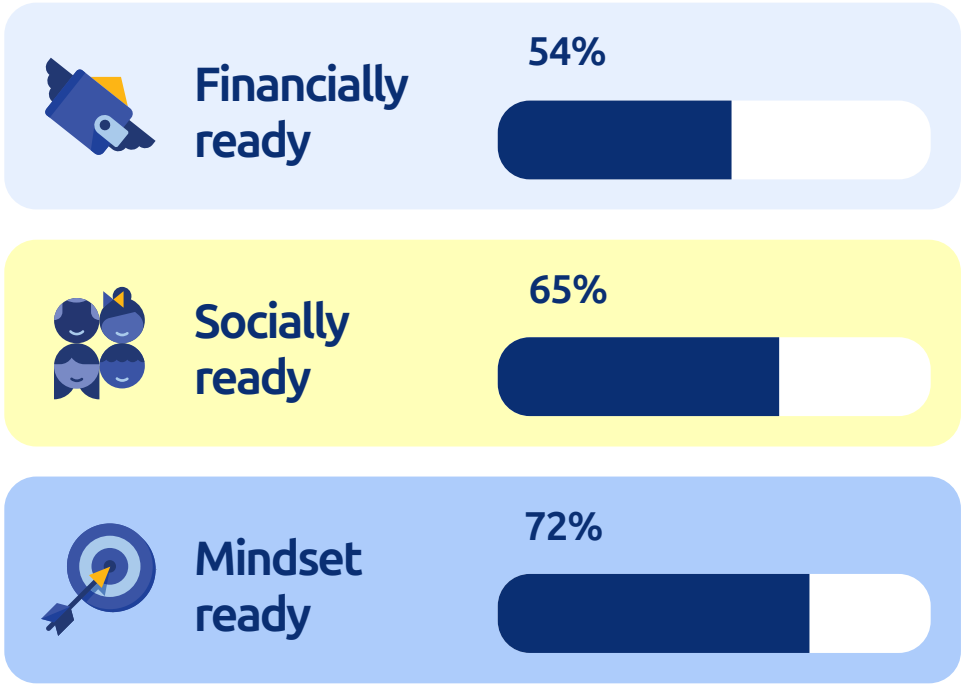
How ready are we?

Across Ireland, readiness is not experienced evenly. Throughout this report we explore why that is and what's changed over time.

Working adults



Retired adults



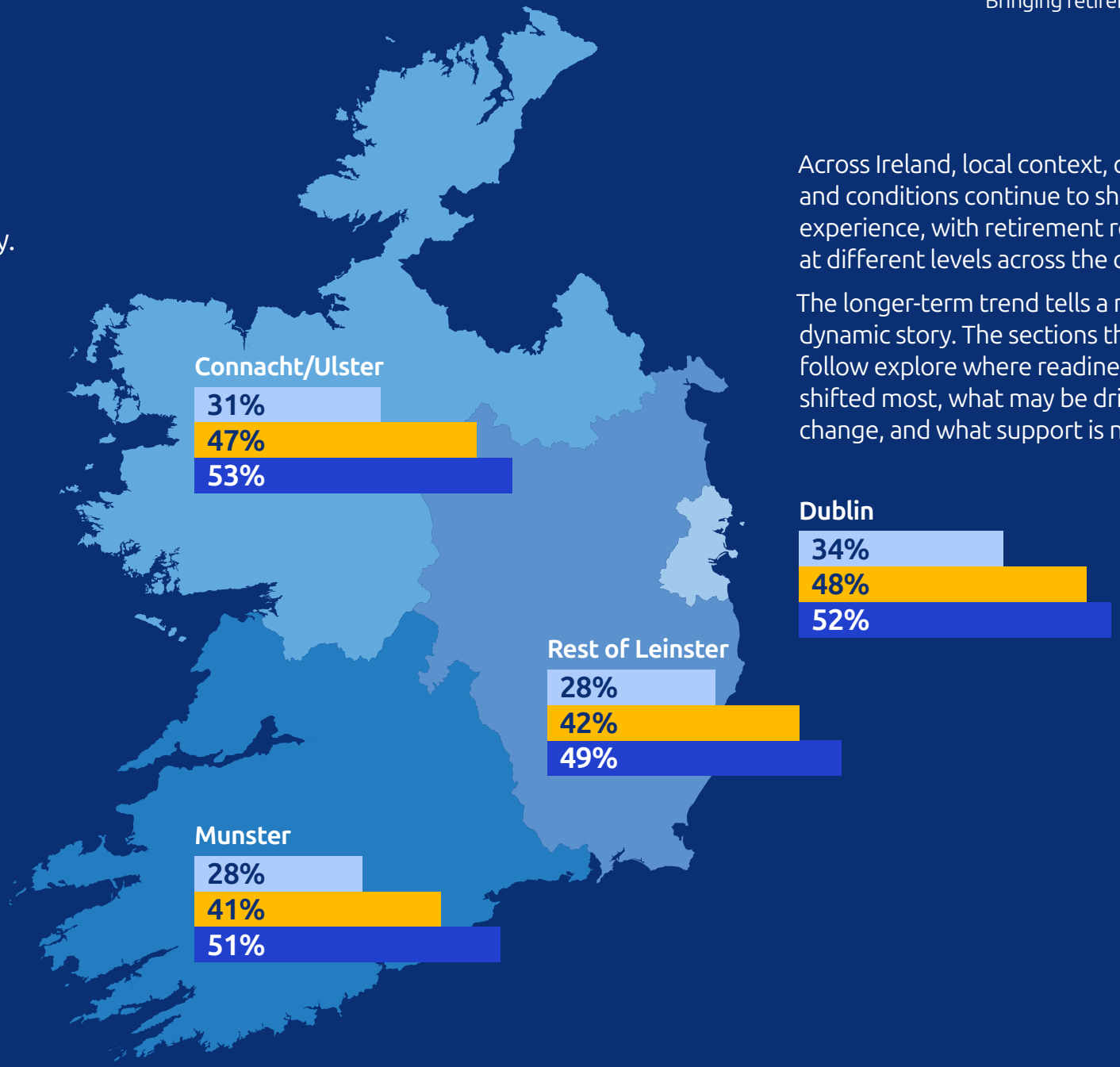
Adults already living in retirement continue to say they felt more ready for retirement across all three measures than those still working, with the biggest gaps in mindset and social readiness. That may partly reflect the benefit of hindsight and perspective that comes with lived experience.

Nationally, financial, social, and mindset readiness differs between those still working and retirees who have the benefit of hindsight.

Regional readiness

Readiness is also shaped by geography.

- Financially ready
- Socially ready
- Mindset ready



Across Ireland, local context, community, and conditions continue to shape the experience, with retirement readiness at different levels across the country.

The longer-term trend tells a more dynamic story. The sections that follow explore where readiness has shifted most, what may be driving that change, and what support is needed.

Financial readiness

Financial readiness is the cornerstone of retirement readiness. It influences not just when people can retire, but how they live when they do – the choices they have, the trade-offs they face, and the extent to which retirement feels secure or uncertain. It's not simply about whether people recognise the importance of retirement planning. It's about whether they feel clear on what retirement will require, confident in what they're building, and if they're able to prioritise planning alongside the pressures of everyday financial life. On this measure, readiness varies, influenced by many factors. Across this chapter, we look at how that variance plays out across gender, generation and geography, and where advice makes the greatest difference.

I know how much I'll need to live comfortably

The proportion of adults who feel confident they know how much they'll need to live comfortably in retirement.

33%
National average
+1pp vs 2024

34%
Working
+1pp vs 2024

45%
Retired
+6pp vs 2024

At a glance

The proportion of adults who feel/felt financially ready for retirement.

31%
National average
+2pp vs 2024

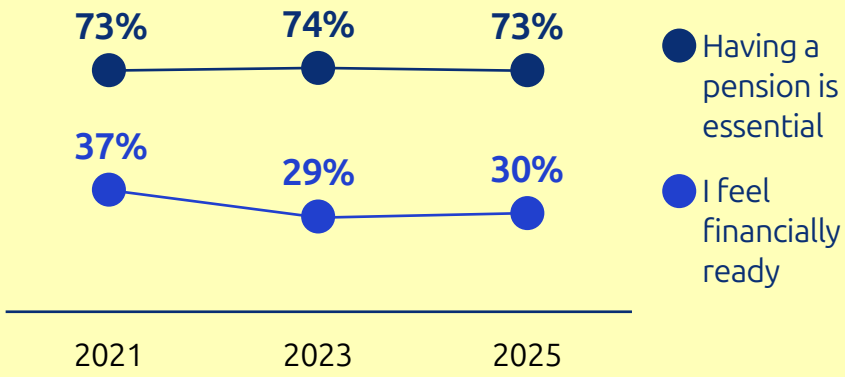
30%
Working
+1pp vs 2024

54%
Retired
+5pp vs 2024

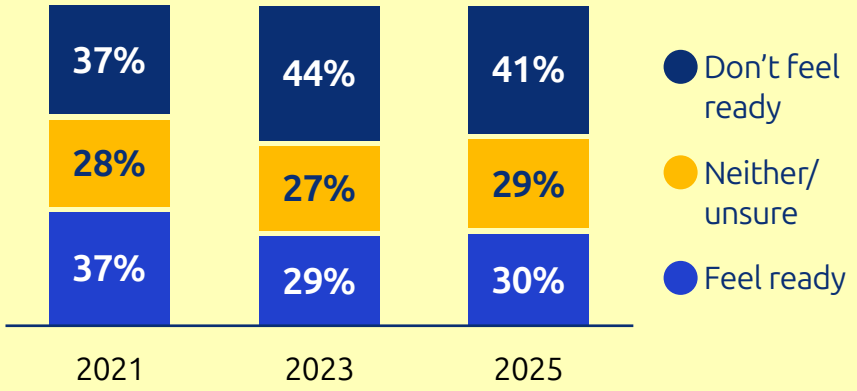
In recent years, Standard Life's research has pointed to a clear tension: while the importance of having a pension remains widely recognised, confidence in making the most of it, and in feeling financially ready, has not kept pace.

This is most visible amongst working adults. In 2021 views were evenly split on financial readiness. 37% felt financially ready, 37% did not. By 2025, that balance had shifted, with just 30% feeling financially ready while 41% did not.

Belief in pensions remains strong, but financial readiness has not kept pace



Sentiment is shifting towards uncertainty



Readiness looks different on the other side of retirement.

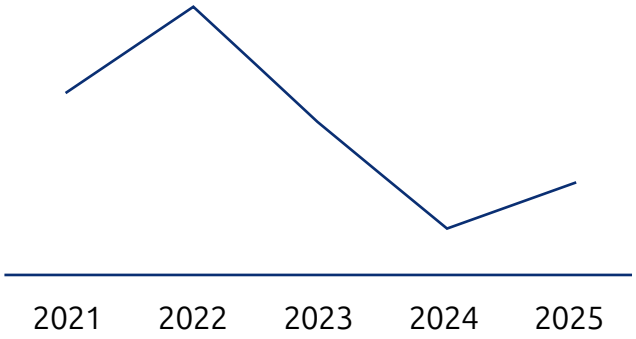
By contrast, retirees are more likely to say they felt financially ready when retiring, but that view is shaped by hindsight. Behavioural science tells us that people often look back on past decisions based on how things have turned out. Many retirees we spoke with are happy in their retirement; we can use that perspective to reduce the sense of un-readiness felt by those approaching it.

At the same time, the movement over recent years shows how exposed feelings of readiness can be to the conditions in which people enter and experience retirement.

In 2022, 67% of retirees agreed they had felt financially ready, that fell to 43% in 2023, before recovering to 54% in 2025. The dip coincided with a period where high inflation

and cost pressures weighed heavily on households across Ireland. Consumer prices rose by 8.2% in December 2022 and 4.6% by December 2023 before settling in 2024. For some, those early months in retirement may have unfolded against a far more demanding cost backdrop than expected, weakening their sense of financial readiness.

Consumer price index 2021–2025



People believe in pensions. They're less sure what "enough" looks like

Across recent years, belief in the need for a pension has remained strong. A clear majority continue to see it as fundamental to the retirement they plan on living. But beyond that conviction, the picture becomes less clear.

Far fewer feel clear on what that pension will need to deliver to provide the life they want in retirement, and fewer still feel confident that they are making the most of it. Since 2022, only around a third of adults have agreed that they know how much they will need in their pension to live comfortably in retirement, while two in five don't know. Among those working, confidence that they're making the most of their pension has also declined from 46% in 2023, to 42% in 2025.

The challenge of defining enough

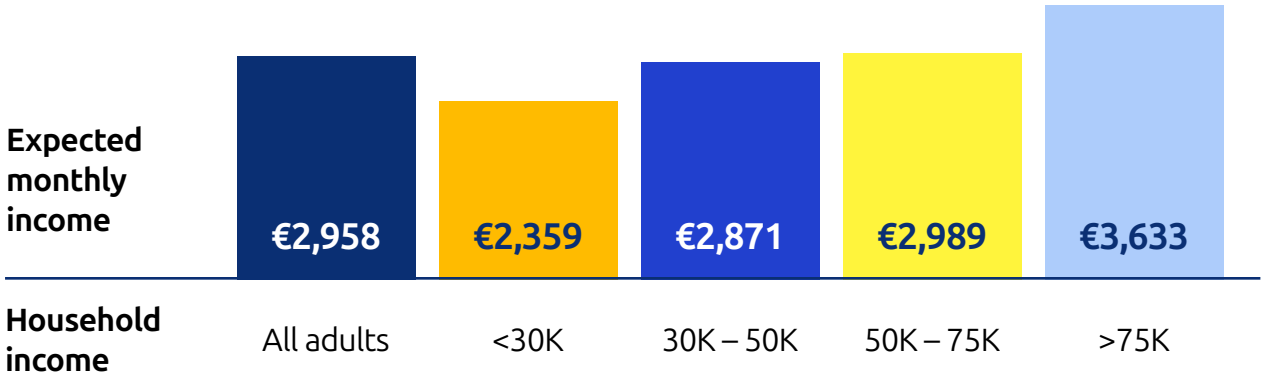
Knowing what enough looks like has never been easy. Today, that judgment sits within a more complex reality. We are now planning for a 25-year retirement, living longer in mid-life, in less settled household dynamics, and a less predictable later life.

In Ireland, life expectancy at 65 is now measured in decades rather than years (18.3 years for men, and 21 years for women according to the latest CSO Life data). The challenge is not just estimating retirement costs but understanding how long they may need to be covered.

In our 2025 research, on average, respondents estimated they would need around €2,009 per month (after tax) to cover essentials in retirement, and €2,958 to cover essentials plus discretionary spending. As may be expected, the averages increased based on current income levels, showing higher earners expect to require higher income in retirement.

On average adults expect €2,958 per month to cover essentials and discretionary expenses. Expectations increase in line with current household income levels.

Household income



As pensions gain a stronger foothold in Ireland, advisers' conversations are shifting. The focus is moving beyond why saving matters to what saving will mean for life in retirement. As the 25-year retirement becomes the new reality, clients are asking a question that carries more weight: "Will I be OK?".

Longer retirements, rising costs and less predictable futures mean confidence can no longer rest on broad assumptions or one-off decisions. Advisers can help clients translate savings into clear, income-first plans that reflect real monthly needs, balance security with flexibility, and give people permission to enjoy their money, not just protect it.

Advice in focus

Most people don't need to be convinced of the importance of saving for retirement. They need help making it feel real.

Before moving straight to numbers, create space for clients to reflect on what they want their later years, their second life, to look like. The Second Life Questionnaire can help bring retirement from the abstract into focus, giving advisers a stronger foundation for shaping an income-first plan and clearer answers on whether they will be OK.

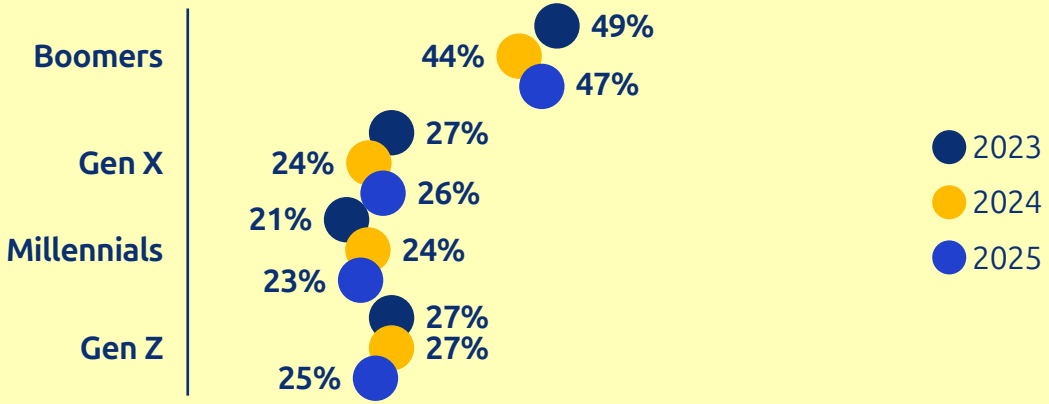
Financial readiness doesn't develop equally across the population.

It's shaped by a range of influences with clear differences evident across generation, gender, geography, and engagement with advice. By exploring these differences, we can help identify where confidence is lower, pressure is greater, and where tailored support can have the greatest impact.

Financial readiness is not building through adult life in the way we might expect.

What stands out in recent years is not simply that older generations feel more ready for retirement, it's how little financial readiness appears to progress before then. Across the last three years, Gen Z, Millennials, and Gen X have remained at a similar level to each other with around a quarter in each group describing themselves as financially ready for retirement. A more meaningful lift appears much later in life, among Boomers, who are consistently more likely to feel ready. Time alone does not seem to create confidence. Instead, financial readiness appears to remain under pressure through much of adult life and only starts to mature at a time when there may be less opportunity to shape it.

Readiness stalls, with a meaningful lift only later in life.

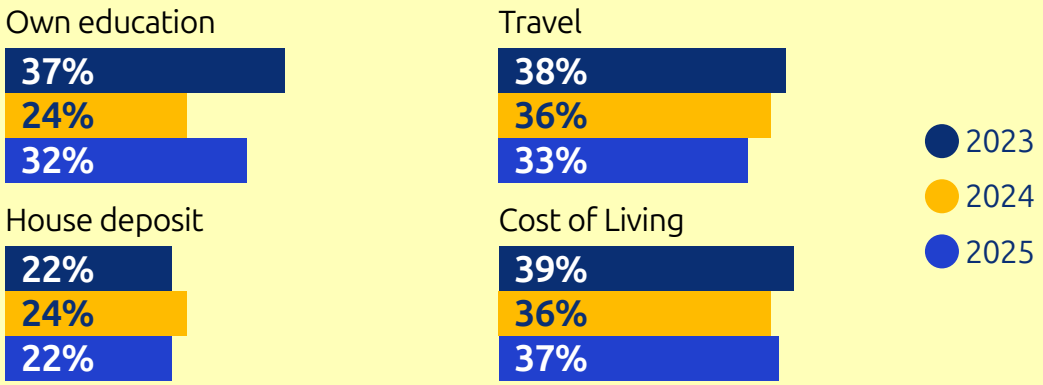


A closer look shows how different pressures, priorities, behaviours and support preferences are shaping readiness at each stage of adult life.

Gen Z

Gen Z's financial priorities are still shaped by establishing independence, coping with the cost of living, funding education, travel, and a future home deposit. Yet this is not a generation closed off to pensions or financial guidance. In 2025, 3 in 5 (60%) agreed that having a pension is essential and 53% described themselves as frequent savers. 1 in 5 had used AI for personal financial advice, while 13% had met with a financial adviser within the last 12 months. The issue is not willingness to seek help but turning early information-seeking into clearer financial action.

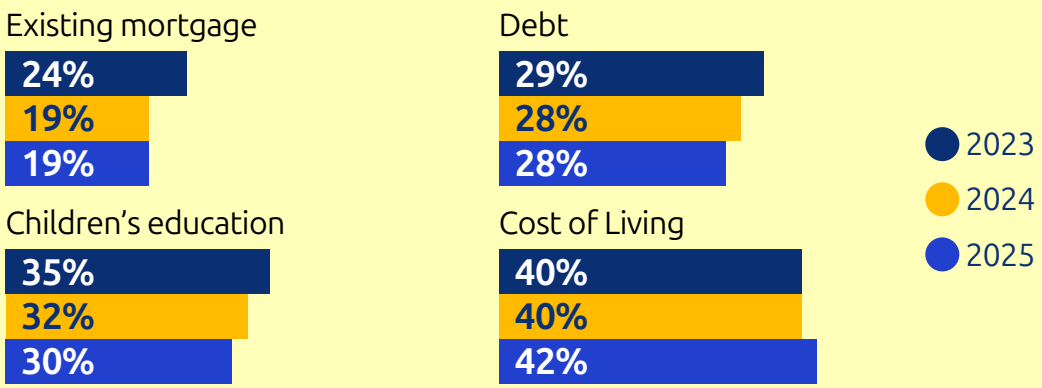
Gen Z: Financial priorities continue to reflect early adult life.

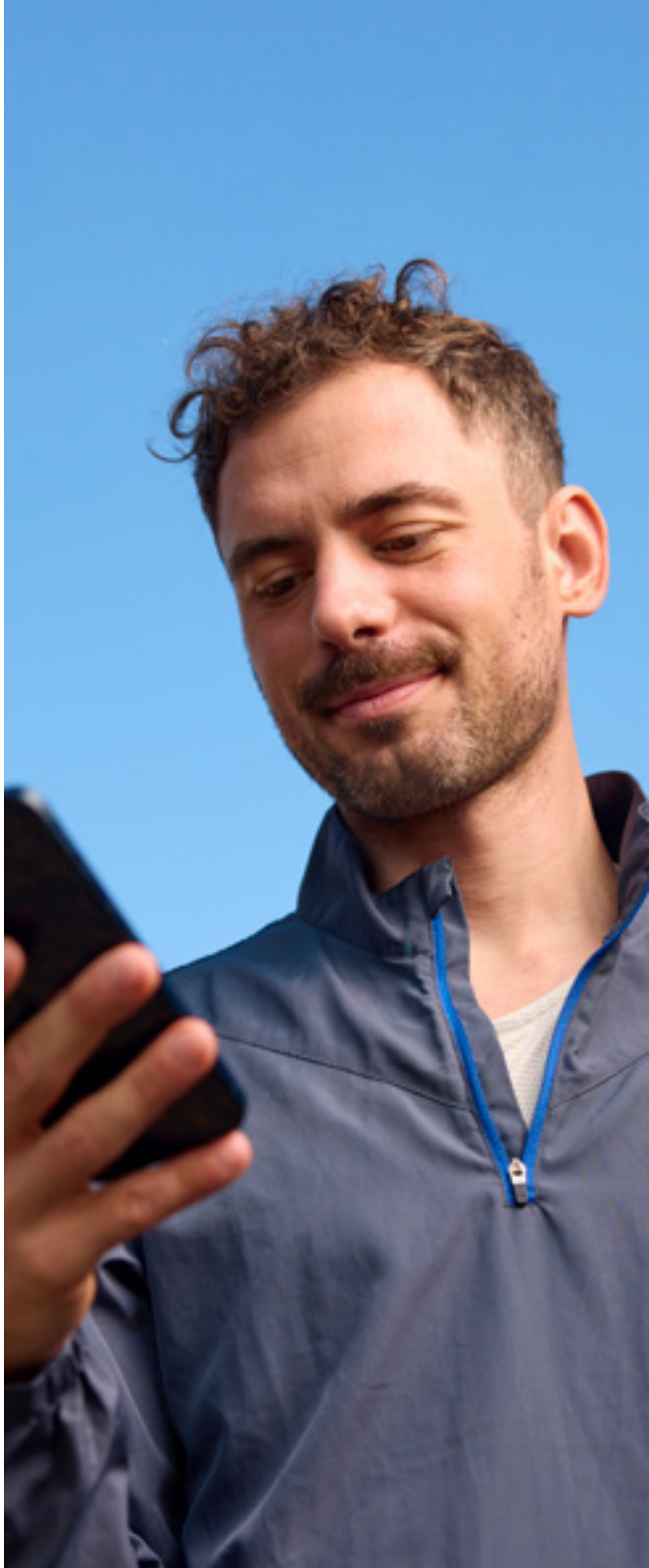


Millennials

For Millennials, retirement is moving closer, but for many, it's arriving on top of everything else life is asking of them right now. In recent years, this generation has balanced cost-of-living pressure with debt repayment, childcare, children's education and housing demands. This might help to explain why belief in pensions is not yet translating into stronger readiness. In 2025, 71% agreed that having a pension is essential and 52% described themselves as frequent savers, yet only 2 in 5 (40%) felt confident they were making the most of their pension. They also gave the highest estimate of any generation for the monthly income they expected to live comfortably in retirement, at around €3,155. This is a generation open to retirement planning. The challenge is moving intent to confident, sustainable action. They would benefit from conversations that help move savings behaviour into a clear plan that builds confidence that they're doing enough and are funding the lifestyle they have in mind.

Millennials: the mid-life squeeze persists, led by cost-of-living pressure

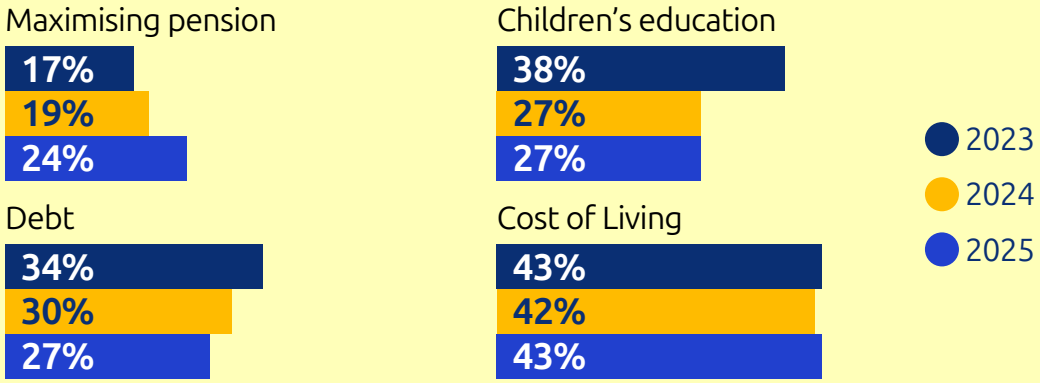




Gen X

Over recent years, retirement planning has moved more firmly up the agenda for Gen X. Those prioritising 'maximising a pension' rose from 17% in 2023 to 24% in 2025. 'Use of advice' is also rising, with more seeking a one-off consultation about retirement planning (from 26% in 2024 to 31% in 2025) while those taking advice from time to time to support their retirement planning also edged up (from 21% in 2024 to 24% in 2025). This shift is happening before other pressures have eased. Children's education, for example, remained a priority for 27% of this generation in both 2024 and 2025. Where Gen X once expected a reprieve in outgoings as dependants gained independence, many now support adult children for longer. With no clear end point to competing financial priorities, Gen X expects one of the highest monthly living costs in retirement. On average, they estimate needing just over €3,070 a month to live comfortably. For some, the task is not just getting ready for retirement but doing so while still helping family in both directions.

Gen X: as family and stability pressures have eased, pensions have moved further in focus.



For many, the nest isn't emptying

For some in Gen X, an empty nest around retirement is becoming less likely. Children are not always financially independent by the time retirement starts to feel real, so support for adult children may still be part of the picture, whether through housing, education or day-to-day costs. CSO Census data shows this is becoming more common. The share of 25–29-year-olds living with parents has risen from around one in four in 2011 to one in three in 2022. More broadly, around 1 in 4 (23%) of 25–34-year-olds were living at home in 2022, up from 17% in 2011. This affects financial readiness as for some, being ready is not only about what they will need, but what they still need to give.

"You never know what's going to happen them (adult children) down the road and they're still living at home. Will they need more money? Will they suddenly say they need to do a master's or, even in 10 years' time, if they have partners or if their children can't afford to move out, will they want to live here? It's getting harder nowadays to know that your children are financially independent and ready to go."

Voice of Retiree focus group participant.

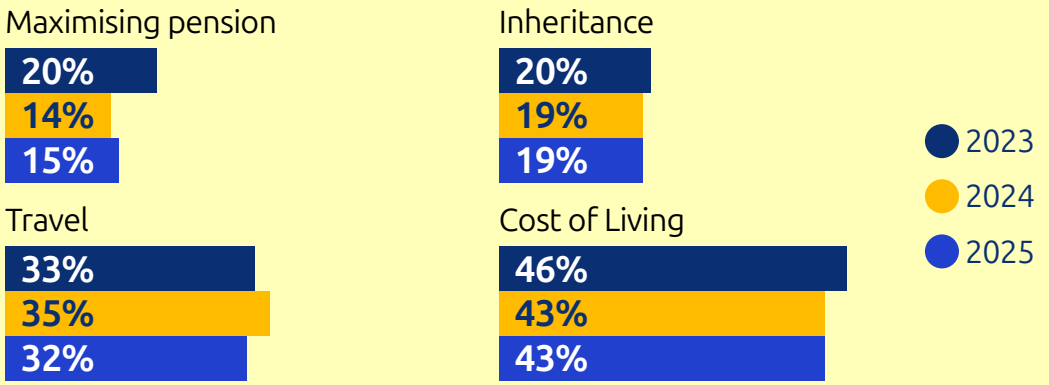
Boomers

For Boomers, retirement is no longer an event in the future but is becoming, or has already become their lived experience. In 2025, 47% described themselves as financially ready, ahead of every other generation. That still leaves more than half who don't feel ready, including 27% who actively say they feel unprepared.

There are clear signs of stronger planning engagement. Boomers are also more likely to say a pension is essential (78%), to say they keep up to date with how it's performing, and to feel confident that they're making the most of their pension (62%). However, being engaged is not the same as feeling fully ready and less than 2 in 5 (39%) say they know how much they will need in retirement.

So, while financial readiness among Boomers may be stronger, social and mindset readiness still need to be tackled. The task is no longer only about building up pension wealth, but about turning it into an income that feels sustainable, flexible and right for the second life they want to live.

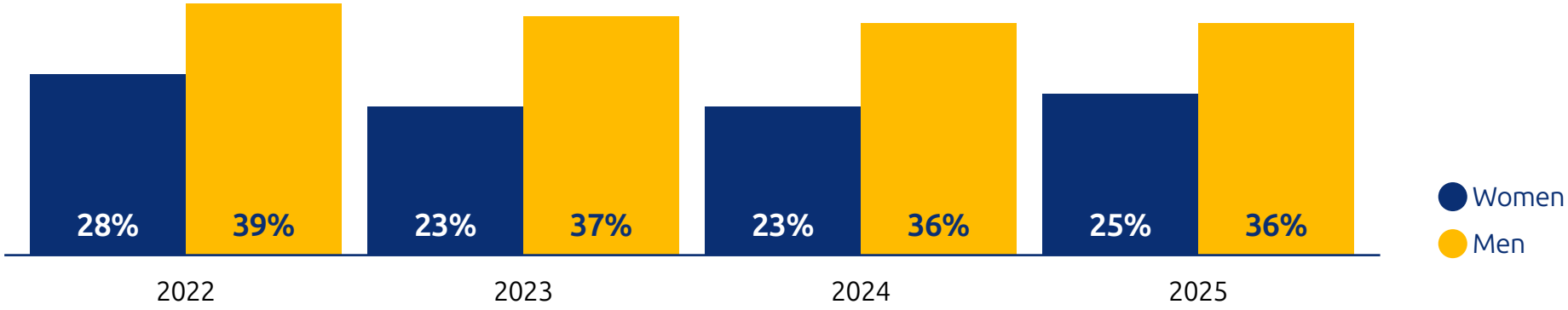
Baby Boomers: cost-of-living pressure grows but long-term priorities remain important.



Gender

A persistent gender gap, shaped by pressure not apathy

The gender gap has proved hard to close



Since 2022, the gender gap in financial readiness has remained stubbornly in place. Men have broadly maintained their position over the period with readiness easing slightly from 39% in 2022 to 36% in 2025. For women, the pattern has been more volatile as readiness fell from 28% in 2022 to 23% in 2023 and 2024, before recovering modestly to 25% in 2025. Despite this recent improvement, the overall gap has yet to narrow.

The wider financial context helps explain why progress has been limited. Over time, women have remained less likely to feel positive about their finances and more likely to feel anxious when thinking about them, suggesting that financial pressure is felt more often and intensely. That pressure is also linked to the priorities women are more likely to carry. In recent years, women have been more likely to prioritise immediate financial demands such as coping with the rising cost of living, children's education and mortgage commitments. Men by contrast, were more likely to prioritise longer-term goals, particularly maximising their pension. The difference is not just sentiment; it points to differences in financial bandwidth, with many women needing short-term stability before longer-term planning feels feasible.

Advice in focus

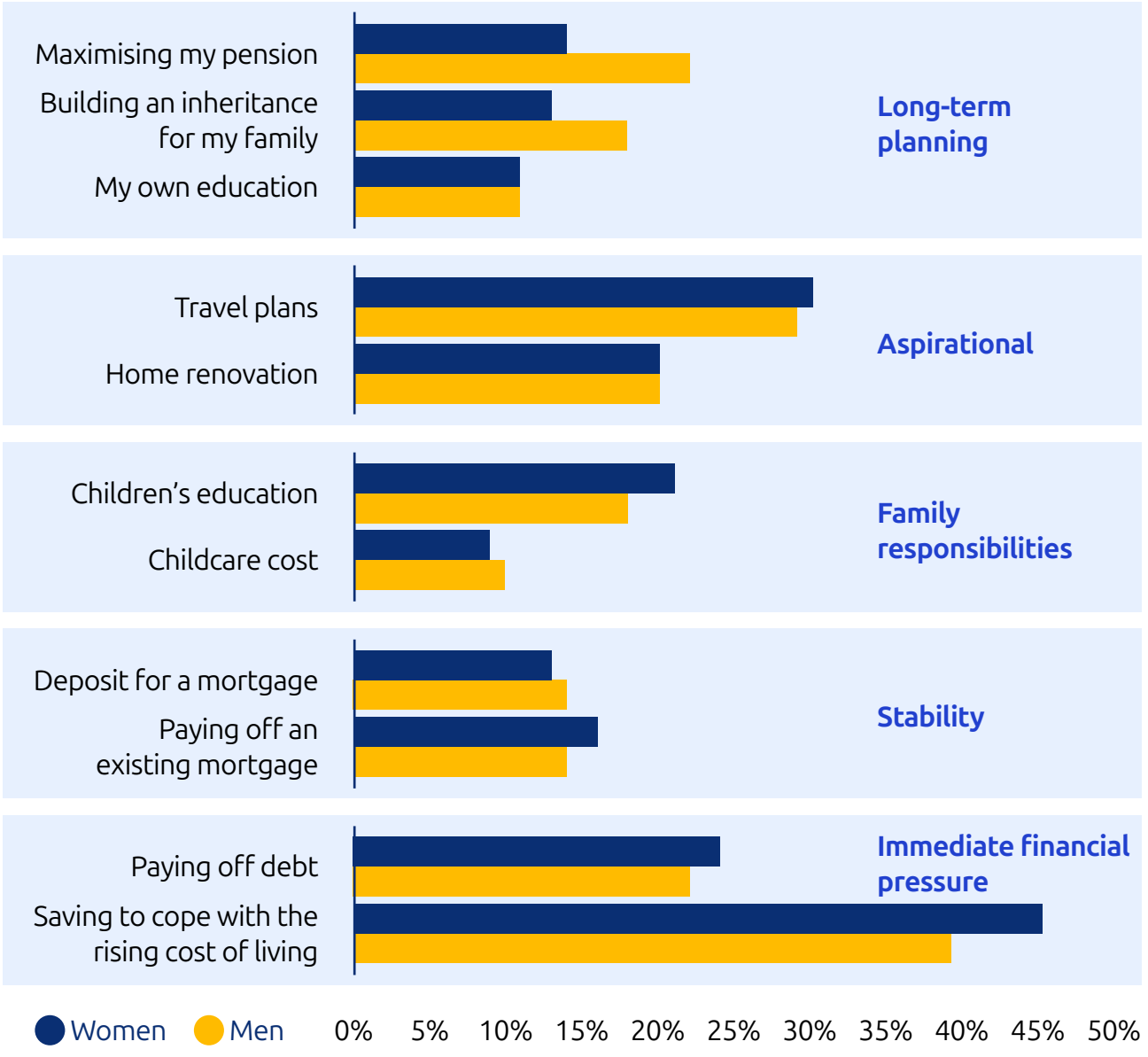
"No matter how busy you are, you should always have time for yourself during the day."

Richard Hogan, The Ultimate Guide for Women and Pensions.

Busy lives can make it difficult to prioritise the future, even when its importance is well understood. When headspace is limited, financial planning can feel like just another demand.

The adviser opportunity: The Ultimate Guide for Women and Pensions podcast is an accessible resource clients can dip into in their own time. A blend of practical insights and relatable, entertaining discussion, each episode aims to support women to create better conditions for their future self, one step at a time.

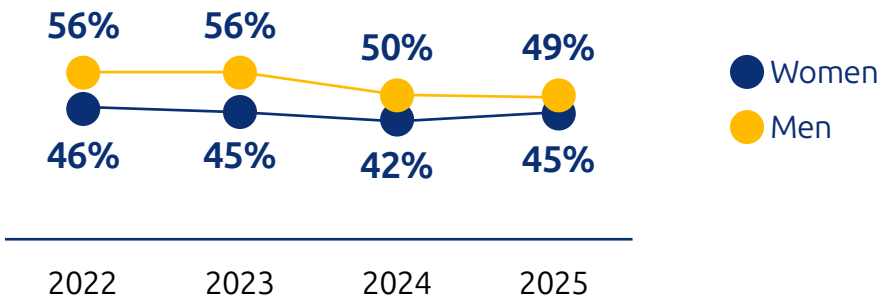
Financial priorities reveal a gender gap in financial bandwidth



The divide also appears in how women and men engage in planning. Men remain more likely to say they keep up to date with how their pension is performing, although that behaviour has slightly decreased over time, falling from 54% in 2022 to 50% in 2025. Women have become slightly more engaged on this measure, from 43% to 46% over the same period. Staying closer to pension performance has not translated into stronger confidence over time.

On knowing how much they will need in retirement, men continue to feel more assured than women, despite confidence sliding from 40% in 2022 to 37% in 2025. For women, it remains lower again, with 29% feeling clear on what they'll need, down from 33% in 2022. Asked whether they feel they're making the most of their pension, the same divide appears. Women continue to report lower confidence than men. The gap has narrowed not because women have moved forward, but because men's confidence has dipped.

I feel confident I'm making the most of my pension



This confidence dip has resulted in a growing concern amongst men around whether retirement will be achievable. The proportion reporting concern that they will not be able to retire has risen from 33% in 2022 and 2023 to 36% in 2024 and 37% in 2025. Among women, that concern has remained persistently high throughout, at around 40% throughout the same period.

Geography

In a country the size of Ireland, it can be easy to assume the retirement landscape is broadly the same.

The research suggests otherwise. Where you live tends to shape your everyday financial life, so it makes sense that it also shapes retirement readiness. When we track the regions over time, it becomes clear that readiness has not moved in the same way everywhere.

Dublin continues to lead on financial readiness, despite dropping from a particularly strong position in 2022. In 2025, a third (34%) of adults here felt financially ready for retirement. That compares with 31% in Connacht/parts of Ulster and 28% in both Munster and the rest of Leinster (outside of Dublin).

Dublin also records the lowest levels of unpreparedness, at 37%. That confidence is reflected elsewhere in the research. Across 2022 to 2025, adults in the capital are consistently less likely than other regions to say they're prioritising saving to cope with the cost-of-living, and more likely to cite maximising their pension as a current financial priority (21%, in 2025 up from 17% in 2023 and 2024). They believe they will be able to live comfortably off their pension (38%, from 36% in 2024). They also anticipate the highest average monthly amount needed in retirement at €3,176, which makes sense considering Dublin has the highest disposable income per person in the country, at €33,889, 12% above the state average. (CSO County Incomes and GDP 2024).

The rest of Leinster (outside of Dublin) shows the clearest sustained strain, moving from parity (37% ready, 37% unprepared) to notably weaker readiness from 2022 onwards, with unpreparedness holding at 47% for the past three years. Looking at the wider picture helps to explain why.

Saving to cope with the cost-of-living pressure has remained consistently high here, ranging from 42% to 45% across 2022 to 2025, while pension prioritisation, although improving, has started from a lower base (from 11% of adults in 2022, to 18% in 2025). Taken together, this appears to be a region where immediate financial pressure is proving harder to shake.

Munster's data points to a region under increasing pressure, rather than one lacking long-term intent. While financial readiness has slightly decreased over time, retirement planning remains in view, even as more immediate financial demands weigh heavily. 47% of adults here cite coping with the rising cost of living as a top priority, the highest of any region and up from 29% in 2024. At the same time, pension focus has edged forward, with the share prioritising maximising their pension rising from 13% in 2023, 15% in 2024 to 16% in 2025.

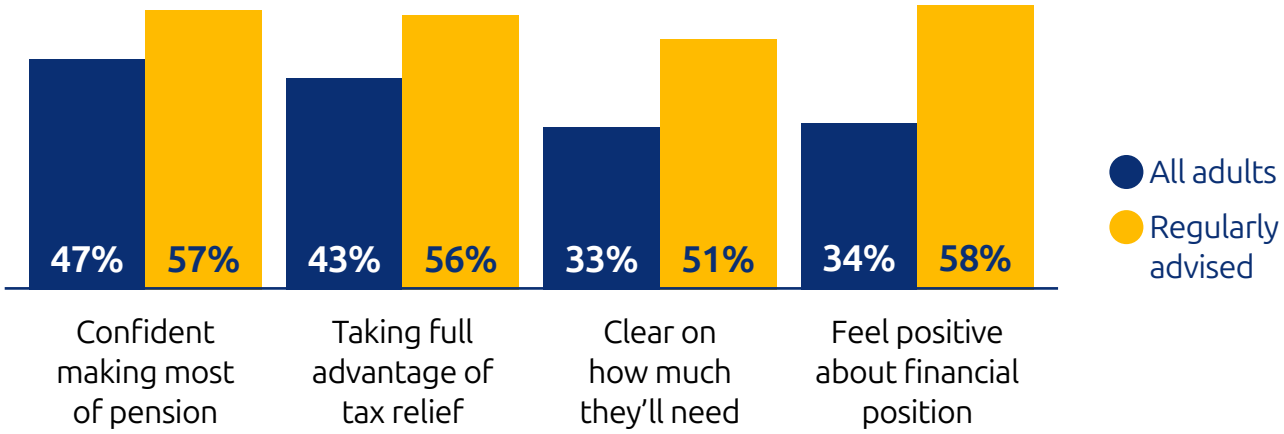
Connacht/Ulster presents the least settled picture. Cost-of-living pressure has eased from an early high of 50% in 2022, to 43% in both 2024 and 2025, but that has not translated neatly into financial readiness. Readiness held relatively steady through 2023, fell back sharply in 2024, and then partly recovered in 2025. Recent data suggests confidence has improved, with 36% believing they will be able to live comfortably off their pension, up from 32% in 2024. The share of adults prioritising maximising their pension has also risen, from 12% to 17%.

Where people live shapes their financial reality – from differences in the cost of living to how quickly areas recover from economic pressures. It's no surprise, then, that financial readiness varies by region. Tailoring client conversations with to local experience can build a sense of understanding, relevance and confidence.

The impact of advice

The value of advice is not just in helping people make a one-off decision. It's helping them to update those decisions over time. The strongest signal in our research is among those who engage with advice on an ongoing basis. The difference is visible in some of the clearest markers of financial readiness.

Regular advice strengthens financial readiness and confidence



That same pattern is visible in pension confidence. Overall, 47% of adults say they feel confident that they're making the most of their pension. That rises to 57% among those who engage regularly with advice. On taking full advantage of the Government's tax relief on contributions, the difference is also notable: 43% among all adults, rising to 56% among those who seek regular advice.

The value of regular advice is evident not only in what people know, but how in-control they feel. In 2025, a third (33%) of adults said they know how much they'll need in their pension to live comfortably in retirement. Among those who say they speak with an adviser regularly; it rises to 51%. The impact of regular advice also carries into how people feel about their finances more broadly. While 34% of adults overall say they feel positive about their current financial position, that rises to 58% among those who engage with regular advice. The distinction here matters because improving financial readiness requires more than information alone. It also depends on bandwidth, the mental and emotional room people have to think ahead, weigh choices, and stay connected with long-term decisions over time. When that bandwidth is low, even decisions we know to be important can start to drift. Long-term planning is easier to delay, easier to second-guess, and easier to push behind whatever feels more urgent today. When bandwidth is stronger, long-term planning feels more manageable. People are more likely to feel in control, better able to engage and believe that their choices today will make a meaningful difference for their second life. The research continuously reflects the value of regular advice. Regular support provides resilience throughout life's ups-and-downs. It makes retirement feel less abstract and more manageable. At its best, retirement advice is more than a plan on paper, it's a sense of stability people carry with them. And in a retirement landscape characterised by uncertainty, that feels important.

Social readiness

At a glance

The proportion of adults who feel/felt socially ready for retirement

44%
National average
+1pp vs 2024

44%
Working
+2pp vs 2024

65%
Retired
+4pp vs 2024

Social readiness reflects the role people, routines, and support play in shaping a connected and fulfilling life beyond full-time work. At a national level, social readiness remains broadly stable year-on-year, from 43% in 2024 to 44% in 2025. Over the longer term, however, social readiness has dropped from 50% in 2022 to 44% in 2025.

The clearest and most persistent divide is between those already retired and those still in the workforce. In 2025, nearly two thirds of retirees (65%) reported feeling socially ready, compared with fewer than half of working adults (44%), a 21-point gap.

Although retirees' readiness has dipped from its 2022 peak, it has remained stable since. In contrast, social readiness among working adults has gradually declined since 2021, reaching a low in 2024 before only a modest recovery in 2025.

Retirees' consistently stronger scores suggest that social readiness is best understood as a transition challenge. Uncertainty peaks before retirement, while experience tends to strengthen confidence once retirement begins.

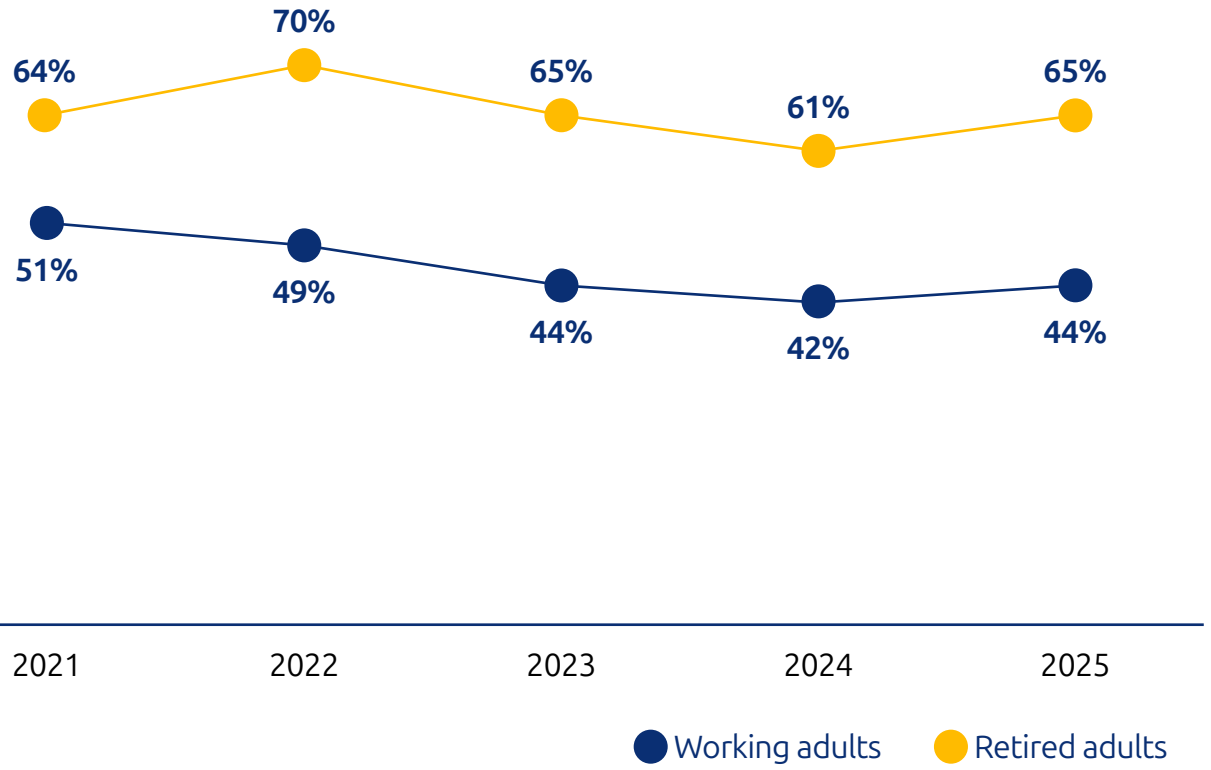
Advice in focus

Uncertainty regarding social readiness is common and often peaks for those nearing retirement. But confidence often strengthens once the transition is made. Throughout our research, retirees themselves encourage those approaching retirement to seek out others who are further ahead on their retirement journey to gain a realistic perspective.

The adviser opportunity:

- Normalise uncertainty, reassuring clients that doubts about routines, purpose or social connection are common before retirement.
- Encourage peer connection, and signpost clients to experience led support. Advisers can speak to their Business Managers about Second Life events, which give clients the chance to hear directly from Second Life mentors and gain practical reassurance and inspiration ahead of retirement.

Social readiness remains consistently higher among retirees, while confidence among working adults has declined.



Our focus group research adds another layer of insight. Participants described how Covid changed people's relationship with work, home and community. Some spoke about feeling less dependent on workplace relationships and more connected to home life and their locality. Others said the change gave them a glimpse of what a quieter life could feel like. These reflections were not all positive. For some, particularly those living alone, it also heightened concerns that retirement could feel isolating without enough hobbies, outlets or social support in place. This shift in how people relate to work is evident in CSO data, which shows that by late 2024, over a third (35%) of those in employment were working from home at least some of the time, with 20% doing so for more than half the week. At the same time, wellbeing data* indicates that reported loneliness peaked during the pandemic and declined as restrictions eased, stabilising in recent years. Loneliness has not disappeared, but it affects a consistent minority across all age groups. Longitudinal evidence from TILDA reinforces this picture, showing that loneliness in later life is neither universal nor inevitable, but shaped more by living circumstances, such as living alone or having weaker social networks, than by age itself.

Considered together, the social-readiness trend points to a period of social re adjustment rather than social decline. The pandemic appears to have sharpened awareness of the active effort needed to sustain social connection beyond the workplace. Retirement is being imagined with clearer insight into both its freedoms and its challenges, particularly around maintaining structure, filling time meaningfully and sustaining social ties.

Reflections from Voice of Retiree focus groups:

"My friend lives on her own so felt quite isolated during COVID and was afraid that retirement might be something similar if she didn't have enough hobbies or social outlets in her daily life to ensure that didn't happen."

"Covid broke the link to the office – I got used to not seeing everyone all the time – and discovered life at home."

* Central Statistics Office, Emotional well-being indicator data 2020-2025.

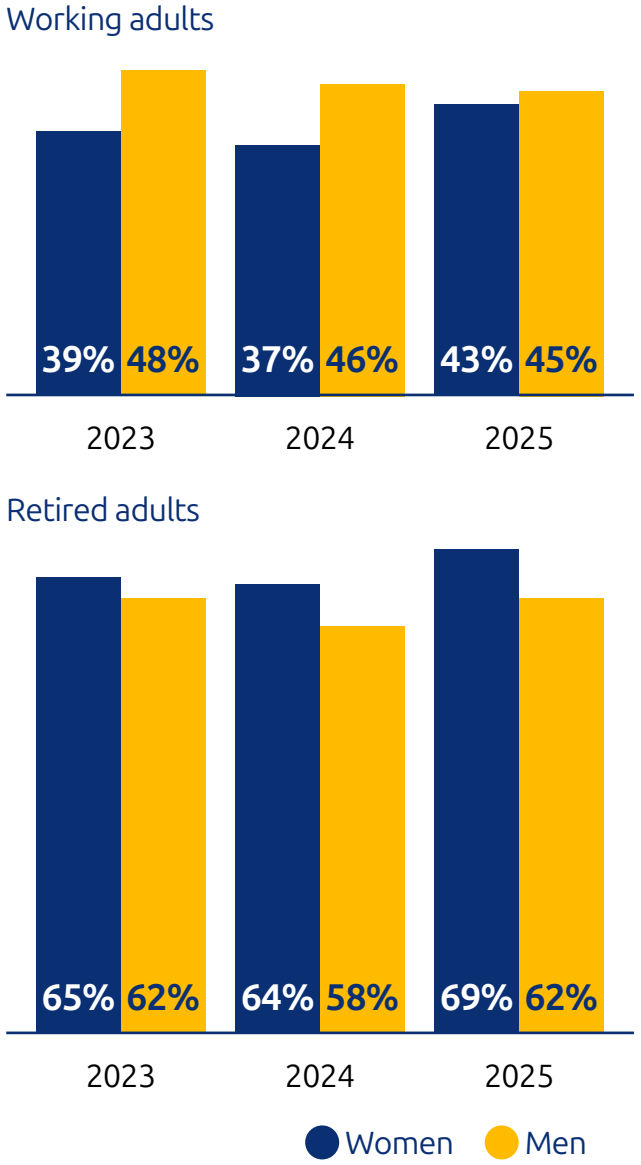
Different journeys to social readiness

The journey is not the same for everyone, with clear influences across gender, generation and geography on how socially ready we are for retirement.

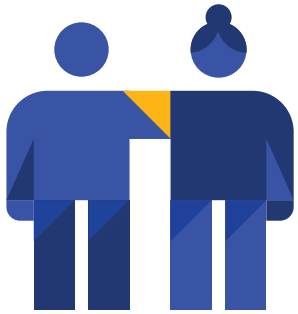
Gender

Looking at social readiness by gender highlights a more nuanced story than traditional assumptions about gender and social connection might suggest. The clearest gender gap in social readiness is not in headline readiness, but in the greater uncertainty reported amongst working women. Before retirement, women are more likely than men to say they're socially unprepared. In 2025, 34% of working women said they felt socially unprepared for retirement, compared with 27% of men.

That picture looks different once people retire. Among retirees, the gender gap eases and in recent years has often reversed, with women reporting stronger social readiness than men. In 2023, 65% of retired women said they felt socially ready, compared with 62% of retired men. The gap widened in 2024 (64% of women versus 58% of men) and again in 2025, rising to 69% of women compared with 62% of men.



Our focus group research adds context to this pattern. Among those yet to retire, social readiness was often described as a question of bandwidth. Participants spoke about the pressure of ongoing family responsibilities and the challenge of imagining life once the structure of work falls away. Men more often described work as a central source of routine, identity and social interaction. The social side of retirement feels abstract and difficult to make room for. Once there, however, the retiree reflections signal a clear shift between how men and women engage with this aspect. Women were often seen as maintaining wider social networks, while some men appeared more reliant on work or their partner for structure and support. The research also suggests the type of social engagement women and men gravitate towards in retirement differs. Some men who spoke about volunteering mentioned more task-specific or independent roles, while women more often referenced group or relationship-led activities. CSO data on volunteering echoes this insight, with women more represented in community and social or charitable activity. According to this data, 29% of female volunteers volunteered in their community and 28% in social or charitable activities. Among male volunteers, 24% volunteered in their community, and 18% in social or charitable activities.



"You speak to people, that are approaching retirement, and a lot of my female friends would say to me that they would be concerned that their husbands are too dependent on them socially. And that isolation piece with hobbies that are solo hobbies, not team sports anymore. Worried about the isolation of retirement then if they're not interacting with people on a daily basis."

Voice of Retiree focus group participant.

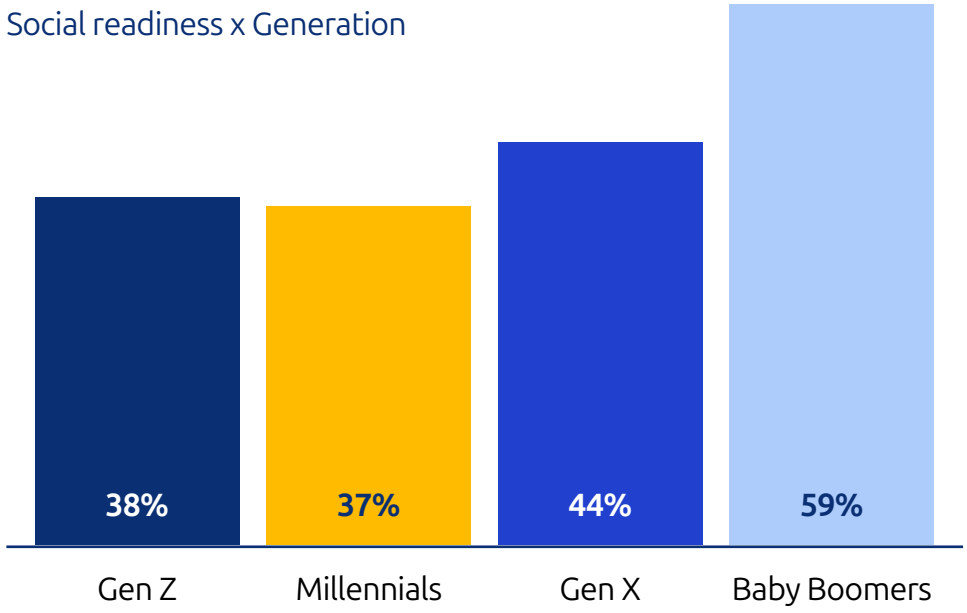
"It's very hard to work full time and having to do the housework and shopping and cleaning you can't do it all."

Yet-to-retire Voice of Retiree focus group participant.

Overall, the research suggests that gender differences in social readiness are shaped more by timing and engagement, with the practical realities of social readiness coming into focus earlier for women.

Generation

Social readiness strengthens as life pressures ease



Social readiness varies clearly by generation, reflecting differences in life stage rather than attitudes to retirement itself. Across the data, readiness tends to be lower during the main working and family building years and strengthens later in life, as pressures ease and retirement becomes more tangible.

Gen Z

Gen Z is furthest from retirement, and that distance is reflected in their sense of social readiness

In 2025, 38% said they felt socially ready, like Millennials at 37%, but well behind Gen X (44%) and Boomers (59%). That picture has remained consistent over recent years, with readiness holding at 4 in 10, while 3 in 10 have remained unprepared. For many, retirement is still too abstract to plan for socially in a meaningfully way.

Millennials

Millennials have remained the least socially ready generation in recent years

Mid-life is one of the clearest pressure points for social readiness. In both 2024 and 2025 those aged 35-44 were evenly divided between feeling ready (36%) and feeling unprepared (36%). As shown in the financial readiness chapter, this is a life stage heavily shaped by immediate financial pressure, the pursuit of stability and family responsibilities. Financially, those demands are competing with engagement with long-term saving. Socially, they limit the time and headspace needed to start building routines, relationships and interests that support life beyond work.

Gen X

A turning point between intention and practical readiness

For many in Gen X, social readiness moves from background consideration to something more tangible. In 2025, 44% felt socially ready, stronger than both younger generations, but still well behind Boomers at 59%. The age profile adds context. Readiness strengthens from 41% among 45–54s to 52% among 55–64s. This suggests the squeeze of mid-life may begin to ease from the mid-50s onwards, creating more space to invest in the relationships, routines and interests that will support their second life.

Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers have the strongest sense of social readiness

Since 2023, around 3 in 5 Boomers have said they feel socially ready for retirement, keeping them well ahead of every other generation. In 2025, the figure stood at 59%. Social readiness strengthens with age. In 2025, readiness rose from 52% among 55–64s to 61% among those aged 65+ with a similar uplift reported in 2024 (from 49% to 60%).

Geography

The geography of social readiness is changing. Local connection increasingly requires intention. The historic social readiness advantage of regional areas has narrowed, not because urban readiness has improved, but because confidence has softened in regions that once felt most secure.

In recent years, people living in regions with strong local community ties were more likely to feel socially prepared for retirement, while those living in urban areas – particularly Dublin – were less likely to report this confidence. The latest research shows that this divide has narrowed, not because social readiness has strengthened in urban areas, but because confidence has fallen back in regions that previously reported the highest levels.

Connacht/parts of Ulster

Connacht (and parts of Ulster) has historically been among the strongest regions for social readiness. From 2021 to 2023, half of adults (50%) reported feeling socially ready for retirement, reflecting established community networks and everyday social contact that often exists independently of work.

More recent research suggests that this level of confidence has declined from earlier peaks, with 47% of adults in the region reporting confidence in social readiness. Although in Connacht (and parts of Ulster) remains comparatively strong by national standards, leading the national average by 5%.

Dublin

Dublin has consistently reported lower levels of social readiness than regional areas. In 2024, 43% of adults in the capital said they felt socially ready for retirement, broadly in line with the national average but below levels previously seen in Connacht and Munster. Unlike some regional areas, social readiness in Dublin has remained relatively stable in recent years, sitting in the low 40s rather than showing a clear rise or fall.

This pattern likely reflects Dublin's younger age profile. Regional areas tend to have a higher concentration of older adults, including Baby Boomers and retirees, while the capital skews younger. As social readiness strengthens later in life, this age mix helps explain why regional areas have historically reported higher confidence.

Our qualitative research offered another possibility for the geographical influence. Many participants spoke about living in areas where you might not know your neighbours, and where social interaction might not happen as naturally as part of day to day life in rural settings. Even with an abundance of amenities available, building a sense of community was considered as something that could take real effort.

Munster

Munster, like Connacht, has historically reported strong levels of social readiness, reflecting social connections that are part of day to day life outside of work. Between 2021 and 2023, around one in two adults in the region reported feeling confident about their social readiness for retirement. Since then, confidence has declined, with 42% of adults feeling socially ready in 2024, and 41% in 2025. Qualitative feedback suggests this reflects a growing awareness of the effort required to sustain social connections once work ends, rather than a weakening of those connections

themselves. Many participants described active social lives but recognised that social engagement would need to be more intentional.

Social readiness is not declining but it is becoming more realistic.

Connacht/ parts of Ulster

From 2021 to 2023, half of adults (50%) reported feeling socially ready for retirement

Munster

Between 2021 and 2023, around one in two adults in the region reported feeling confident about their social readiness for retirement

Dublin

In 2024, 43% of adults in the capital said they felt socially ready for retirement

Rest of Leinster

In 2025, 42% of adults here felt socially ready for retirement, a 9% decline since 2022.

Mindset readiness

Retirement planning often centres on what people have, rather than how people will live. A financial plan may be in place long before retirement feels real, or within reach. Today, retirement is rarely a single decision. It's a transition people move towards over time, which is what makes mindset readiness harder to define. While the financial side of retirement can be measured on a spreadsheet, the life-change itself is harder to map out. One focus group participant captured the uncertainty directly "Mindset, that's harder to be sure about. How do you know whether you are ready like that? There is no test you can do".

I am looking forward to retirement:

42%
National average
-2 vs 2024

46%
Working
= vs 2024

Mindset readiness:

51%
National average
= vs 2024

49%
Working
= pp vs 2024

72%
Retired
+2 vs 2024

Mindset readiness is deeply personal. For many, it develops as retirement moves from the abstract to the near reality. It's often shaped by a mix of practical and personal, from income and affordability to identity, routine, and purpose in the absence of full-time work. Even where financial plans are sound, doubts about how money will stretch over time, or fear of getting the timing wrong, can impact confidence.

In our research, mindset readiness is not any one feeling. It's shaped by a combination of how positively people view retirement, how certain or uncertain they feel about what lies ahead, and how confident they are in their ability to navigate the change and live with purpose. This chapter explores each of these facets in turn and how they're experienced by gender, generation, geography and with the support of regular advice.

Outlook: Do I look forward to retirement?

2 in 5 look forward to retirement positively

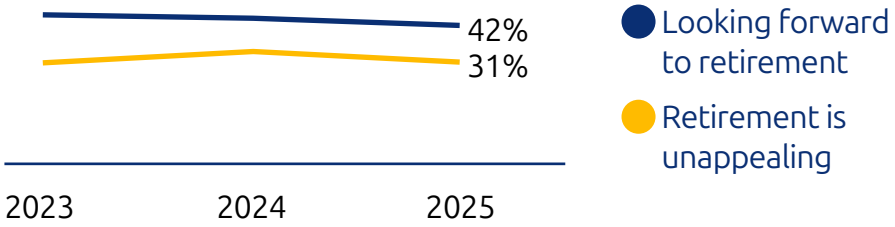
If mindset readiness is about how people feel towards retirement, the national outlook remains moderately optimistic. Across the last three years, around 2 in 5 adults in Ireland have said they look forward to retirement. In 2023, optimism was at 45% and decreased slightly to 42% in 2025. While this isn't a dramatic shift, it does suggest that the outlook has become a little more muted over time. Retirement hasn't lost its appeal, but neither has it gained conviction.

This is clearer when compared to the share who continue to say the idea of retirement isn't appealing. In 2023, 31% agreed with that statement, rising to 34% in 2024, before returning to 31% in 2025. So, while many look forward to retirement, a persistent third of the population remains unconvinced by the idea.

Over the last three years, the number of adults who look forward to retirement has decreased slightly, while the proportion who find the idea unappealing has remained consistent.

This underlines why mindset readiness matters. It's not enough for retirement to sound good in theory; people need to be able to picture it in a way that feels meaningful and sustainable.

Attitude to retirement remains mixed



Advice in focus

A positive attitude towards retirement often coexists with hesitation about acting on it. Advisers will recognise this as clients who "like the idea" of retirement but remain reluctant to make clear decisions. It often reflects unresolved questions about lifestyle, timing or identity. Recognising this can help advisers pace conversations and focus on confidence building rather than acceleration.

Clarity: Can I imagine what my Second Life will actually look like?

For many people, retirement is something they plan for financially long before they can fully picture what it might look like. One reason for this is that the idea of later life itself is changing.

Recent research by Red C* suggests over-55s today feel more optimistic about ageing, with 74% saying they have a positive outlook, while 67% feel younger than their actual age. Our focus groups echoed this shift. People spoke about wanting more from their second life than their parents may have expected. They're not approaching retirement expecting to fade quietly into the background. As one participant admitted:

"Actually we're the older generation now when we get to that stage and it's kind of hard to wrap your head around that".

That contrast matters. Later life may be viewed more positively, but that doesn't automatically make retirement easier to picture, prepare for, or adapt to.

Longevity has quietly rewritten the script of retirement, turning it into a substantial life stage, often spanning 25 years. Yet many of the reference points people draw on still belong to an older model of winding down. This mismatch can shape how people feel about retirement and how they plan for it. This is where the human side of financial planning is significant. Helping clients picture what their retirement could look and feel like, not just what it will cost, can make planning easier to engage with. Behavioural science** supports this with evidence that when people can better imagine their future selves, they're more likely to act in support of that future.

Confidence: Will I be okay?

One of the most enduring retirement worries is the fear of not having enough. Over the last three years, around 2 in 5 adults have been concerned they will not be able to retire, pointing to a persistent unease about whether savings will be enough, and will last long enough. Additionally, around 3 in 10 have continued to neither agree nor disagree to this concern, suggesting that for many, funding retirement remains not just a source of concern, but something they have yet to feel clear about. As discussed in our financial readiness chapter, that uncertainty is intensified by the emerging practicalities of longer lives and for some, by family support that continues well into later life.

These fears do not necessarily remove the appeal of retirement, but they do undermine confidence. Even where people have begun planning, uncertainty about future income, unexpected costs or the ability to maintain independence over time can keep retirement at arm's length. From a mindset perspective, fear rarely shows up as outright opposition. More often, they show up as hesitation: waiting, deferring, or feeling "not quite ready yet". This helps explain why a consistent minority struggle to fully engage with the idea of retirement, even while recognising its importance.

* Red C Research, A generation redefined: The overlooked power of 55+
** Cambridge University Press, "Don't stop thinking about tomorrow: Individual differences in future self-continuity account for saving", Judgment and Decision Making.

Advice in focus

Framing for headspace

In the financial readiness chapter, we saw that people who feel clearer about their finances are far more likely to engage positively with retirement. This insight extends beyond the numbers. When clients feel financially overwhelmed, they often lack the mental bandwidth to engage with longer-term planning, even when they understand its importance.

Regular guidance can help restore that headspace, not only by clarifying the plan, but by reinforcing that decisions are not final and can evolve over time. Framing retirement as a series of regular reviews, rather than a single decision point, reduces perceived risk and makes engagement feel safer.

The adviser opportunity: Position retirement as an evolving plan built through ongoing reviews. Establishing from the outset that plans, like life, will require adaptations, and that change is expected, helps clients engage more openly and build confidence gradually.

Identity: Who am I if not my career?

For many people, work provides far more than income. It offers structure, purpose, status and a sense of who they are. Stepping away from it, can therefore be disruptive and significantly impact the transition into retirement.

This was particularly evident in focus group discussions, where some participants described a sudden loss of identity once work ended. As one participant explained:

"When I worked, I was a manager. I had responsibility and I had people working for me. I was someone. I had my own office, and then suddenly, I'm a nobody. So, for many years I felt I was important, but the day I walked out, I was just Joe Bloggs. That's it."

Voice of Retiree focus group participant.

Where work has been the main source of routine and recognition, the adjustment to retirement can feel abrupt. For others, particularly those who have experienced more flexible or episodic working patterns, the transition can feel more familiar.

Mindset readiness is not universally about stopping work. For some it's about changing pace. For others, it's about replacing the role work once played, finding new sources of structure, purpose and belonging that make retirement feel like a continuation of life, a second life.

Guidance: Do I feel supported enough?

Throughout the research, the clearest pattern is that when people feel more secure financially, retirement becomes easier to plan for, and easier to engage with emotionally. In that sense, financial readiness and mindset are closely linked. This came through clearly in our focus groups.

As one participant acknowledged:

"If you're coming from being financially ready, your mindset is already kind of kicking in anyway and that helps you. You're in the right headspace."

That sense of being in the right headspace feels particularly important when planning for a longer, less predictable phase of life. The research suggests financial readiness does more than reduce pressure. It creates space for people to think ahead, to make decisions, and to imagine the possibilities ahead.

The numbers reinforce the link between money and mindset. Over the last three years, the clearest divide in mindset is not by gender, generation or geography, but by financial confidence. In 2025, almost six in ten (57%) of adults who felt positive about their financial position said they were looking forward to retirement, compared with four in ten (39%) among those who felt anxious about money. Financial confidence does not guarantee readiness, but it strongly shapes how people feel about approaching retirement.

Advice plays a key role in this, not just by supporting mindset, but by strengthening the financial foundations that underpin it. Those receiving regular advice are more likely to feel positive about their financial position (41% vs 32% among those unadvised) and have greater clarity on how much they'll

need to live comfortably in retirement.

As the financial readiness chapter shows, people are more likely to feel financially ready for retirement when they can engage with their pension in a practical way, are clear on what 'enough' looks like, and have confidence in the plan to get there. The mindset story builds on this. The ability to revisit plans, adjust expectations and course-correct over time reduces the perceived risk of retirement. It makes retirement feel less like a one-shot decision and more like a manageable transition.

Guidance also matters in a broader sense. Throughout our qualitative research, people wanted a range of resources, not just financial expertise, to help them relate to their retirement as a lived experience. Often, they were looking for reassurance and relatable inspiration: how others adjusted, filled their time, and what helped them make the transition well.

As one participant put it:

"Go to those with a similar mindset and I'd ask 'What did you do? How come you're so happy? How do you fill your time?"

Advice in focus

Experience led resources, such as Standard Life's Retirement Chats, offer this kind of perspective, sharing real stories from recent retirees about how they approached and adapted to life after work. Search the Retirement Hub for access to this content and more.

Gender

Men are more likely to feel uncertain about retirement before it begins.

Before retirement, men and women are broadly similar in how likely they are to look forward to retirement. Across 2023 to 2025, both sit in the low-to-mid forties on looking forward to retirement, with women slightly ahead in 2023 and 2024 before men move narrowly ahead in 2025.

However, men are consistently more likely to also describe the idea of retirement as unappealing. This suggests men have a more mixed relationship with retirement.

This difference becomes more pronounced in how retirement is experienced. Women are more likely to report a positive experience of retirement.

In 2024, 88% of retired women said they were happy with life in retirement, compared with 80% of men. In 2025, that pattern held at 88% versus 81%.

Focus group insight helps to explain why.

Participants said that women are often more used to that reduced hours or a less fixed relationship with full-time work, making adjusting to retirement more familiar. For many men, the shift from structured work can feel more abrupt with a sudden break from routine and sense of identity.

As one man put it:

"I thought I'd enjoy less work to do and less things to stress about but I don't, I'd rather be a lot busier than I am".

Rather than embracing a complete stop to structured work, some men spoke about wanting to reintroduce this.

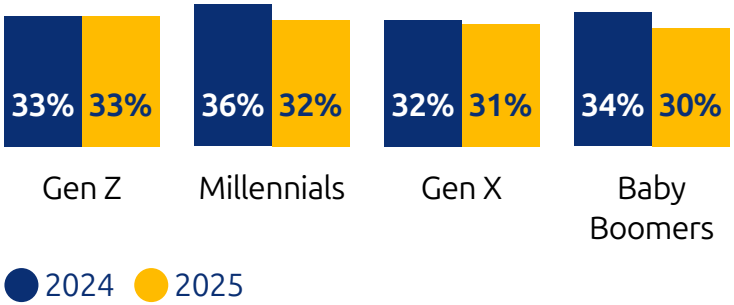
"I do a little bit of online training, mainly AI just to try to re-educate myself and reintroduce myself to maybe part-time work at some stage."

Generation

As you might expect, with retirement further away, it tends to feel less emotional for younger generations. However, while younger adults may feel less drawn towards the idea of retirement, they're not more likely to dismiss the idea of it altogether. Over the last three years, Boomers are consistently the most likely to say they're looking forward to retirement, at 52% in 2023, 46% in 2024 and 50% in 2025. Gen Z sits lowest overall at 40% in 2023, 45% in 2024 and 39% in 2025, while Millennials remain more muted at 43% in 2023 and 40% in both 2024 and 2025.

Yet, when asked whether the idea of retirement is unappealing, the gap is far less pronounced. In 2025, roughly a third of adults across all generations say the idea of retirement is unappealing. That pattern was much the same in 2024.

The idea of retirement isn't appealing



Geography

Over the last three years, the regional pattern suggests retirement has tended to feel less positive in Dublin than elsewhere, although that gap has narrowed over time.

The difference was clearest in 2023, when Dublin was the least likely region to say it was looking forward to retirement (40%), compared with all other regions. Adults in the capital were also most likely to say the idea of retirement was unappealing at that time.

By 2025, that outside-Dublin gap has softened. Dubliners are almost as likely as those in Connacht/part of Ulster to say they're looking forward to retirement (44% and 43% respectively), while those in the rest of Leinster and Munster lag slightly (40% and 41% respectively). On whether retirement felt unappealing, Dublin dipped to 31%, but Connacht/part of Ulster and Munster rose to the same level (31%), with the rest of Leinster at 32%.

Outlook alone only tells part of the story. Our qualitative research suggests geography matters because it shapes how easy retirement is to picture and relate to. In particular, participants consistently contrasted life in the city with life in more rural communities, highlighting different ways retirement is visualised, supported and experienced by region.

Dublin: opportunity alongside pressure

For participants living in Dublin, retirement was often discussed in two ways. On the one hand, higher living costs, expensive lifestyles and ongoing family support obligations were seen as factors that could make retirement harder to plan for and commit to. Work was also more likely to be described as a central source of structure, purpose and social connection, making the transition away from it feel more disruptive.

On the other hand, many Dublin based participants highlighted practical advantages. Access to transport, services and amenities was seen as supporting independence and activity later in life. For some, city living offered something less tangible but equally important: a sense of visibility and being surrounded by life. As one participant noted:

"I can see people the whole time. That's very important to me. You'd want to feel you're still belonging to a society."

Beyond Dublin: city vs town and rural life

Beyond the capital, the contrast participants most often made was less "Dublin versus everywhere else" and more city life versus life in regional towns and rural communities. Many associated this with a slower pace, stronger everyday familiarity and a sense of local connection. Participants spoke about the role of local clubs, community groups and informal networks in sustaining purpose and connection beyond work. In some places, lower living costs were also seen as making retirement feel more manageable in practical terms.

However, these advantages were not universal, and experiences varied by locality. In more rural settings in particular, participants pointed to risks of isolation, limited public transport and greater reliance on cars, all of which could make retirement harder to navigate.

Advice in focus

Clients picture retirement through the lens of where they live, whether that's the energy of the city or the convenience of their local community. In practice, this means anchoring retirement conversations in everyday context.

- Try starting with place based questions (what life looks like for them locally, what do they currently access that gives them purpose, structure?)
- Tailoring discussions to local realities: cost pressures, transport, services, community ties.
- Acknowledging informal supports, such as clubs, volunteering or shared local knowledge, that help retirement feel more navigable.

The adviser opportunity: Starting with real life, how and where clients live, gives advisers clearer signals early on and can unlock rich insight. It opens more natural conversations, surfaces what truly matters without forcing it, and reduces guesswork. When plans reflect the person, trust builds faster, and conversations become easier to move forward.

Voice of the retiree

Looking after their mind is of increasing importance for retirees today

Our findings on mindset readiness show the conditions needed to picture a good retirement, and retirees themselves remind us that living it well also requires an active, healthy mind. Health, including cognitive health, is top-of-mind for those approaching retirement. In 2025, 72% of retirees said they felt mentally ready for retirement, specifically considering activities needed to keep their brain active, compared with 47% of those not yet retired. This measure increases with age, rising from 37% of 18–24-year-olds to 63% of 55–64-year-olds, to 70% of those aged 65+. The value of protecting brain health, keeping active in life becomes important as people move closer to and through retirement.

Advice from retirees for those earlier on the journey

Each year, we ask retirees what advice they have for those behind them that might help them with the right frame of mind. What comes through time and again is not a call for perfect preparation, but broader preparation.

Start saving early, even if the amount feels small.

Plan for your health as well as your wealth.

Talk to friends for ideas. If there's someone who's living it and you know you share a similar mindset, go and ask them about it. What did they do, how they're filling their time, and what keeps them happy.

Don't wait until retirement to build your hobbies, interests and friendships. Stay active. Remember that you are more than your job.

Conclusion

There has been a clear shift in how retirement is being talked about in Ireland in recent years. More people are engaging with pensions, and the topic of retirement planning has moved firmly into the mainstream. But that shift in awareness hasn't yet changed the conversation in a meaningful way.

Our research shows this is where the real readiness challenge now sits. We see this consistently over time: as awareness improves, uncertainty doesn't necessarily fall away.

While many people recognise that saving for retirement matters, retirement itself often remains abstract. This makes it harder for people to define what enough looks like, picture the life they want, and act with confidence.

Retirement decisions do not hinge on one calculation, but on a personal judgement about what feels like enough — enough income, enough security, enough purpose, enough connection. That judgement sits at the heart of readiness, and it's often where people hesitate.

Financial readiness remains central. Only a minority feel financially ready, and only around a third know how much they will need to live comfortably in retirement. The challenge is not belief in pensions but turning saving into a clear understanding of future income, choices and security. Bringing retirement into focus shows that these concerns are not separate from how people today think and feel about retirement. Uncertainty about routine, purpose, identity, relationships and belonging — they are all connected. When retirement feels vague it becomes harder to define what "enough" looks like, and harder to engage fully with planning.

This is where the role of advice matters. Not simply helping clients understand their pension but helping them work through the decisions that information alone cannot resolve and connecting financial plans to the reality of how they want to live.

Because a 25-year retirement changes what it means to be ready and requires a different kind of conversation. At Standard Life, we're helping advisers lead a more complete conversation about retirement, one that reflects how people really live today, not just the numbers on paper.

On the next page, explore the A-B-C of retirement readiness — practical tools and prompts across **Advice**, **Broader planning** and **Conversations** to support more meaningful client discussions.

Head of Distribution
Alan McCarthy

The A-B-C of retirement readiness.

Our industry has a legacy perception of being complicated and this can put clients off fully engaging. At Standard Life, we believe this can be simplified to the A-B-C of modern retirement readiness.

The framework:

Financially ready

The clarity of knowing what you have, what you need, and how your income will support the life you want.

Socially ready

The sense of belonging in your community, nurturing the relationships that bring you happiness, and knowing you'll have the support you need now and in the future.

Mindset ready

Taking time to reconnect with hobbies and interests outside of work. To give you a sense of purpose and redefine your identity in this golden time of life.

The how:

A

Advice — being confident in the value it brings to clients

The value of advice has been clearly demonstrated in this report. Those who engage with ongoing advice are more likely to feel positive about their finances, confident in their pension decisions and clearer about what retirement will require.

B

Broader planning

For advisers, the opportunity is to support clients more broadly: not only in building pension pots, but in building readiness across financial, social and mindset dimensions.

C

Conversations — financial planning is not a 'one and done'

Retirement planning is far from a 'one and done' session. No sooner is the plan set then life happens, taking a new turn, throwing up something good, like that family trip, or not so good, that we hadn't expected. For the life we live we need to keep retirement conversations real, evolving, and grounded in how clients actually live.

To bring the Bringing retirement into focus insight to life in your client conversations, we've summarised the key findings and created a set of practical prompts and tools aligned to the A-B-C of retirement readiness.

Scan here for your Adviser action guide or speak to your Business Manager for a printed copy.

Standard Life

For the life we live

For financial advisers only.

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