



**National Institute on  
Retirement Security**  
Reliable Research. Sensible Solutions.

# Retirement Insecurity 2026

## Americans' Views of Retirement

September 8, 2026

# Agenda

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- Logistics
- Speaker Introductions
- *Retirement Insecurity 2026* Conversation
- Q&A



# Logistics

- Attendees in listen-only mode.
- Submit questions via Q&A function throughout presentation.
- Recording in progress.
- Replay will be available at [www.nirsonline.org.events](http://www.nirsonline.org.events)



# Speakers

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**Dan Doonan**  
NIRS Executive Director



**Barb Butrica**  
NIRS Research Director

# NIRS Public Opinion Polling

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- Since 2009, NIRS has conducted a nationwide public opinion poll every two years with Greenwald Research, a national polling firm that specializes in financial security and economic attitudes.
- These polls provide a consistent, longitudinal measure of how Americans feel about retirement, pensions, Social Security, and related topics.
- The biennial NIRS polling consistently reveals a high degree of concern about retirement security.
- Each poll adds questions on emerging issues (e.g. crypto, AI in 2026).

# Study Methodology

- Survey conducted by Greenwald Research
- Information collected from online interviews between October 24, 2025 and November 14, 2025
- 1,203 respondents aged 25 and older
- Final data were weighted by age, gender, and income to reflect the demographics of Americans aged 25 and older



# Key Finding

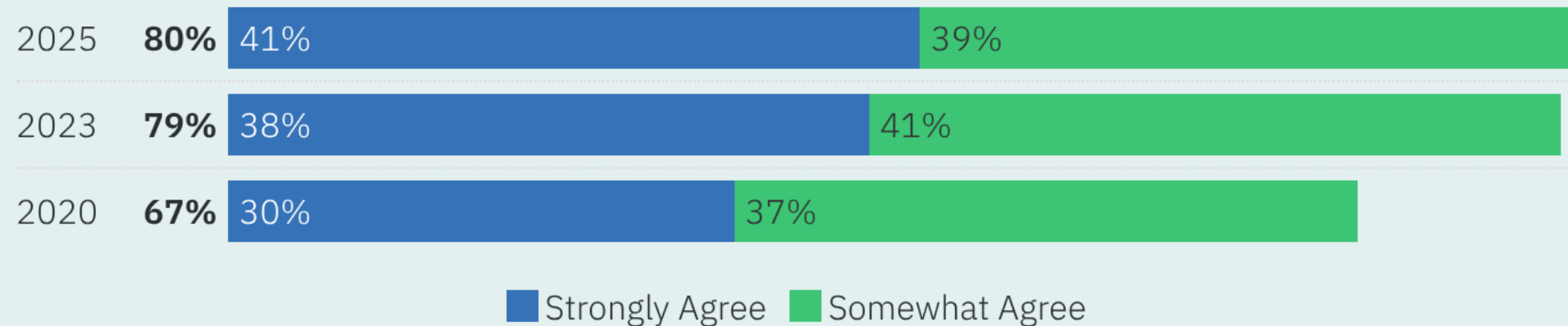
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**Americans Increasingly  
View Retirement Insecurity as a National Crisis**

# A growing share of Americans say the U.S. is facing a retirement crisis

**Figure 1: 80% say U.S. faces retirement crisis, up from 67% in 2020.**

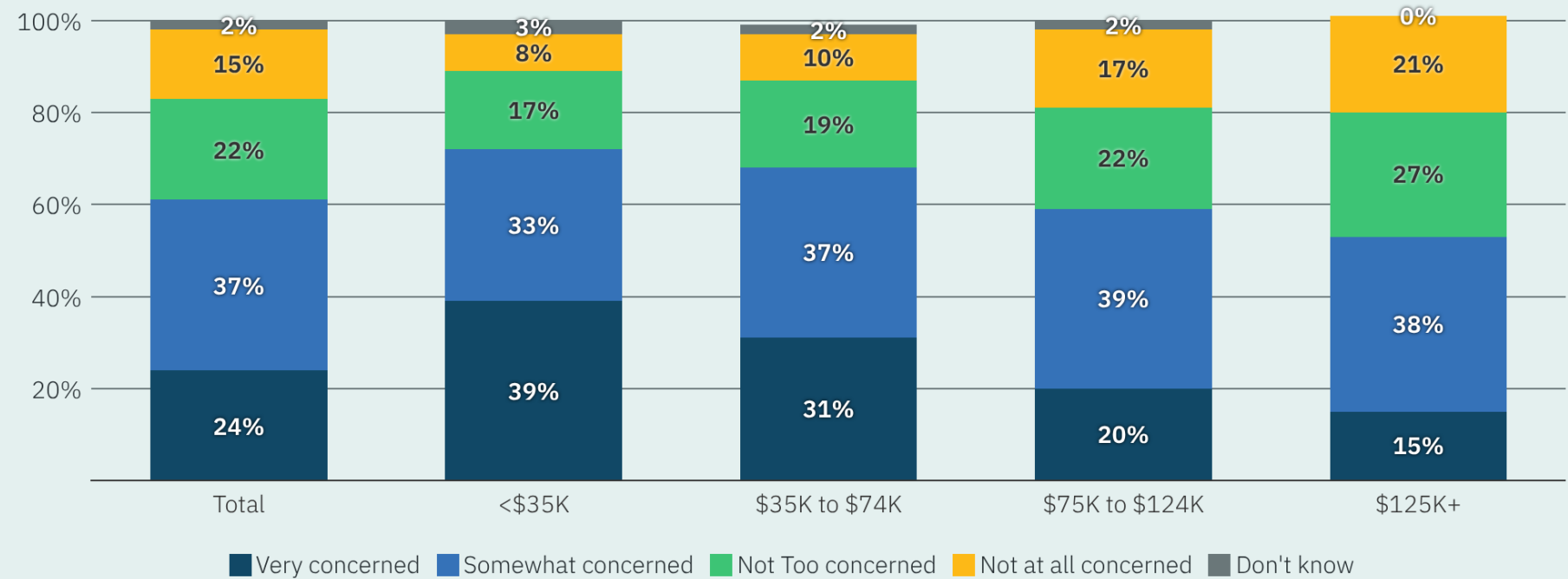
To what extent do you agree or disagree that America is facing a retirement crisis?



# Retirement security concerns are widespread, especially among low-income Americans

Figure 2: Retirement security concerns are widespread especially among low-income Americans.

How concerned are you that you won't be able to achieve a financially secure retirement?

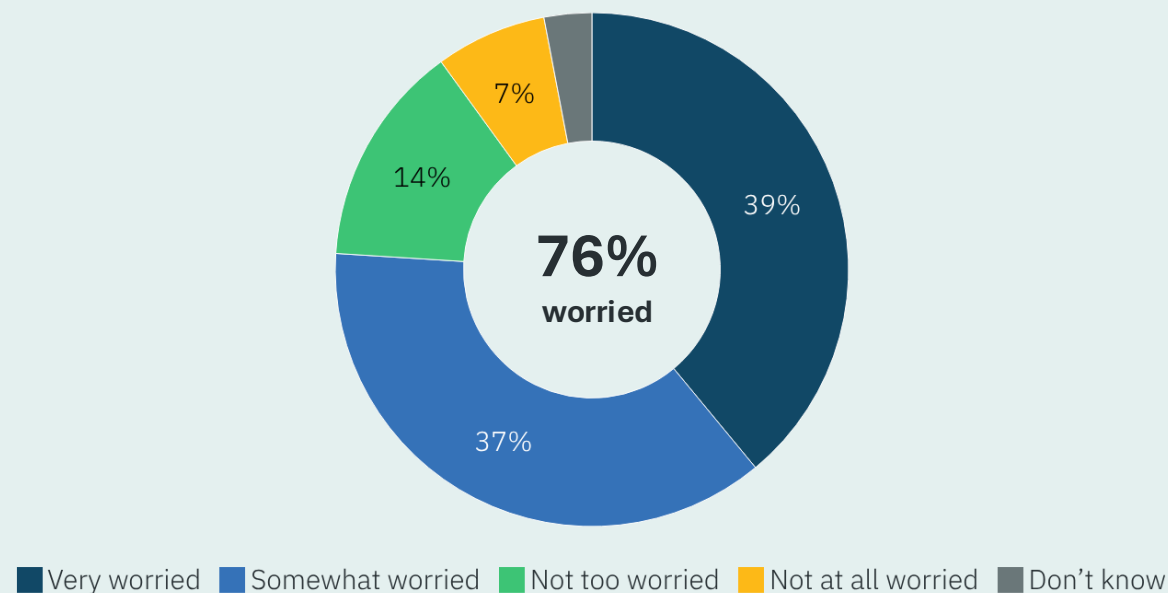


# Majority of Americans are worried about possible cuts in Social Security benefits if Congress doesn't take action

**Figure 4: Most Americans are worried about Social Security cuts.**

As things stand, the Social Security trust fund is projected to run short of money by 2032. If no action is taken, it will only be able to pay about 80% of the benefits it has promised, resulting in about a 20% cut in payments to retirees and disabled workers.

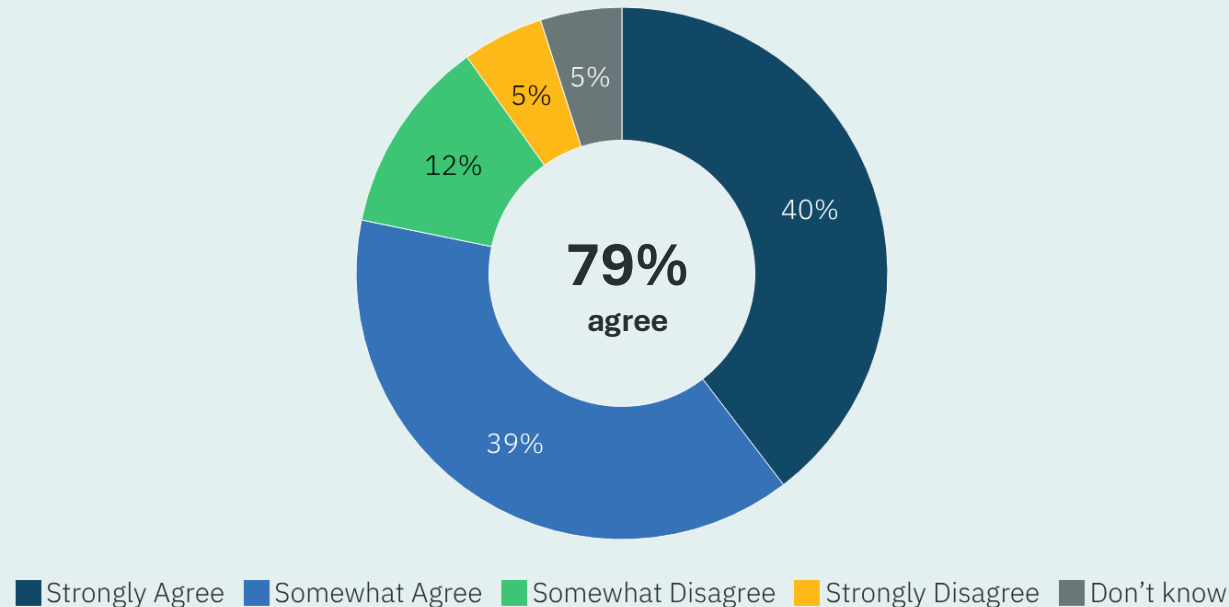
How worried are you about this possibility?



# Americans feel that they cannot save enough for retirement on their own

**Figure 5: More than three-fourths of Americans say the average worker can't save enough on their own for secure retirement.**

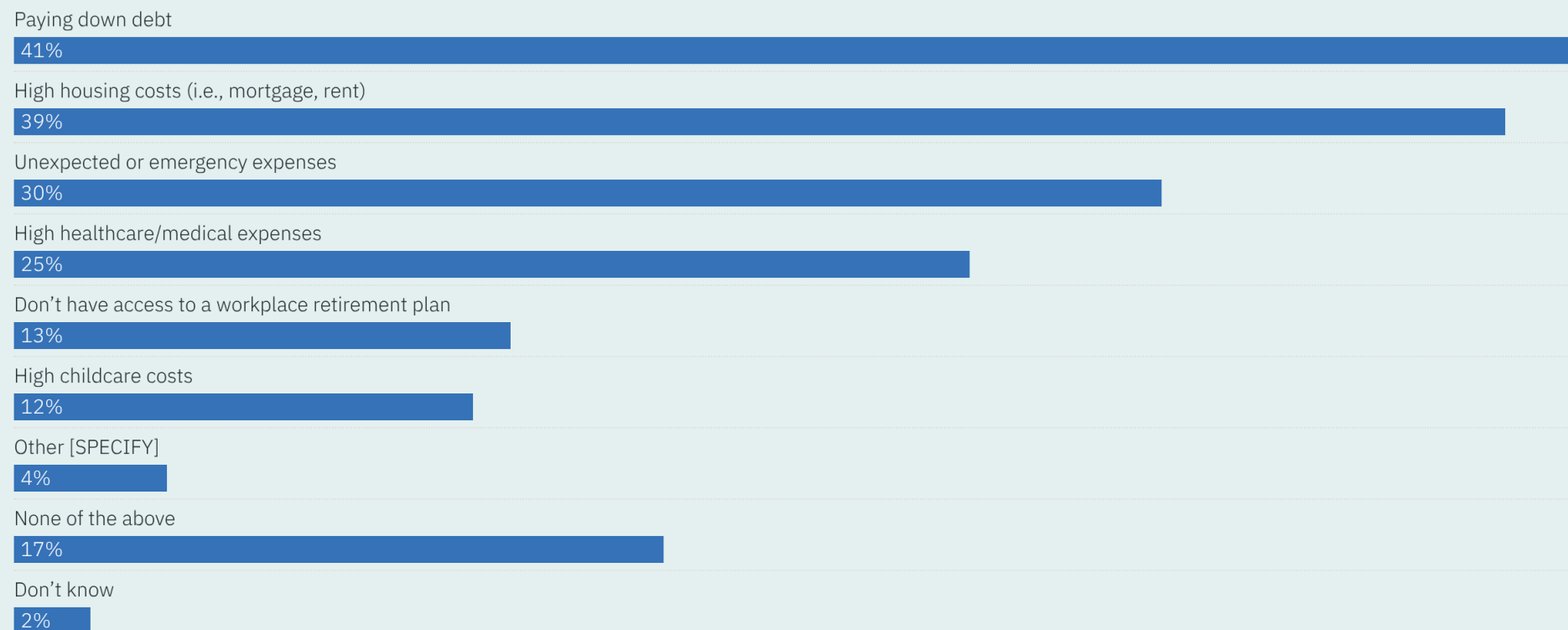
To what extent do you agree or disagree that the average worker cannot save enough on their own to guarantee a secure retirement.



# Workers cite multiple obstacles that prevent them from saving more on their own

**Figure 6: Multiple factors are preventing Americans from saving more for retirement.**

Are any of the following preventing you from saving more for retirement? Please select all that apply. [Among those not retired]



# Key Finding

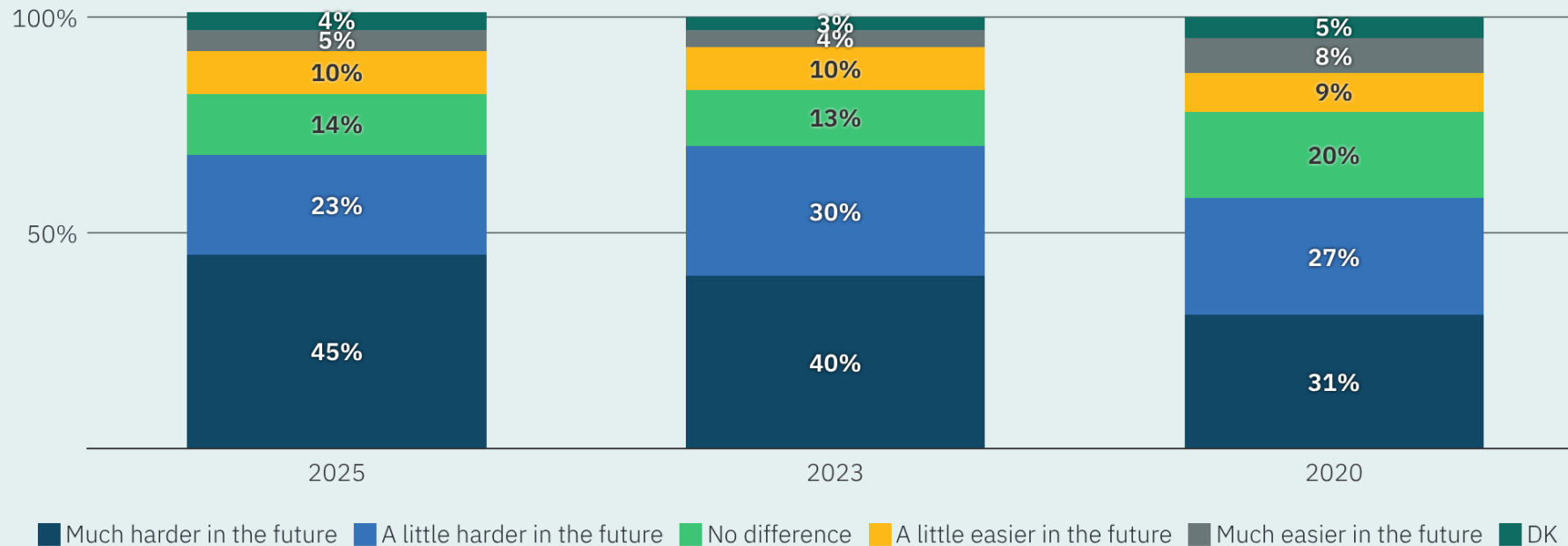
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**Americans Say Preparing for Retirement  
is Becoming Harder and  
Expect Policymakers to Do More**

# Americans increasingly feel that preparing for retirement is difficult

**Figure 9: A growing share of Americans expect preparing for retirement to be much harder in the future.**

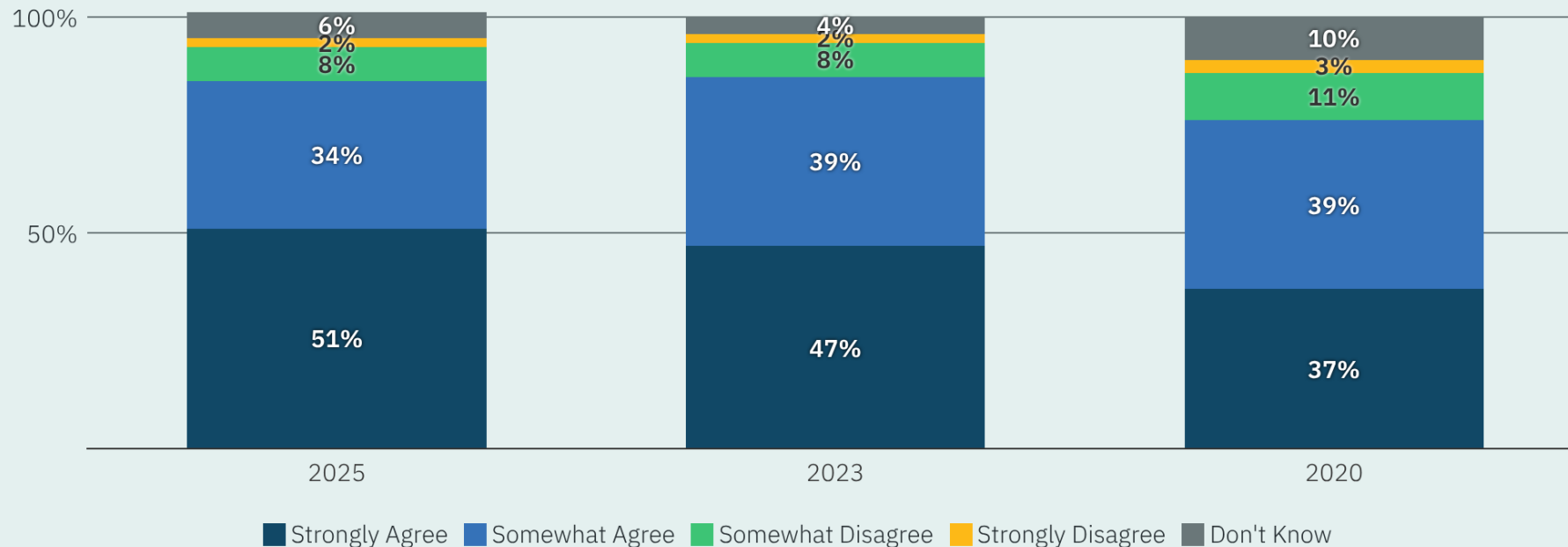
Do you feel that – compared to today – it will be easier or harder for Americans to prepare for retirement in the future, or will there be no difference?



# Americans believe policymakers should make retirement security a higher national priority

**Figure 11: Strong agreement is growing that retirement should be a higher priority with Washington leaders.**

To what extent do you agree or disagree that leaders in Washington need to give a higher priority to ensuring more Americans can have a secure retirement?



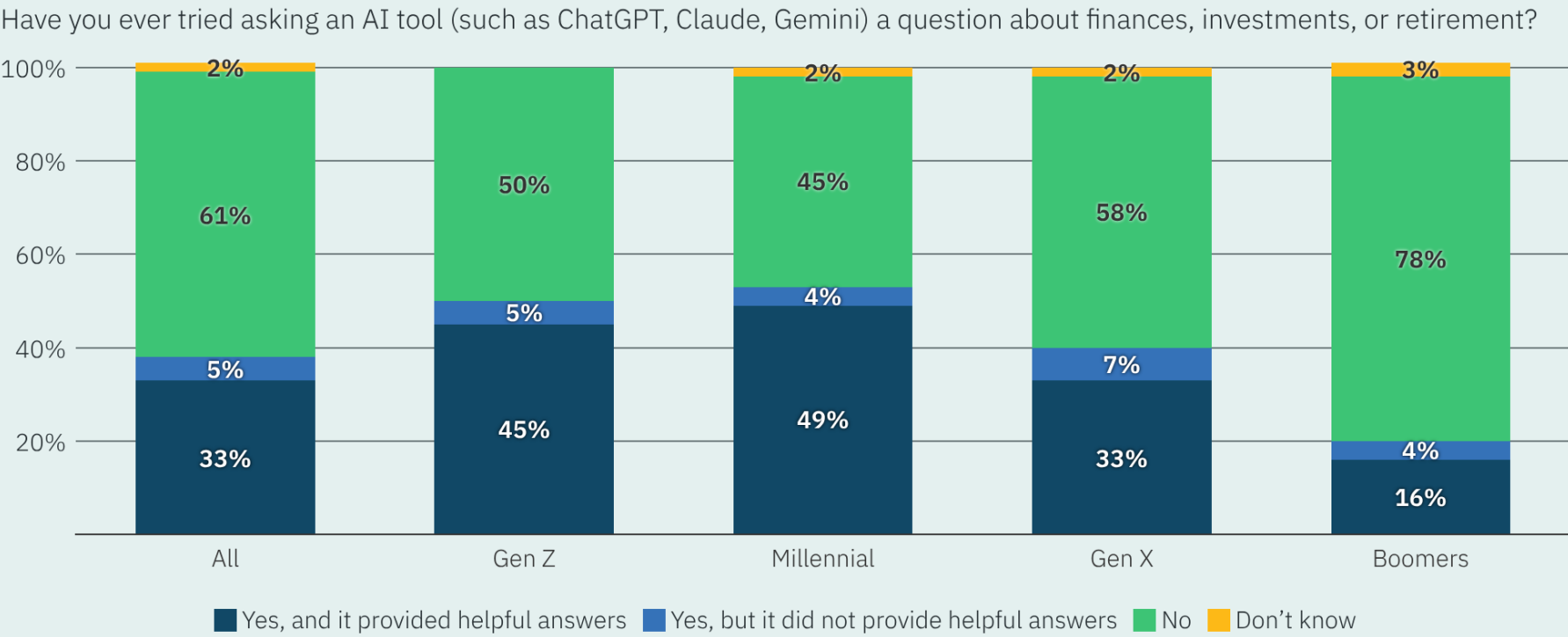
# Key Finding

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**Americans are Embracing AI  
But Remain Cautious About Using It for  
Financial and Retirement Decisions**

# Most Americans are not using AI for finances, investments, or retirement

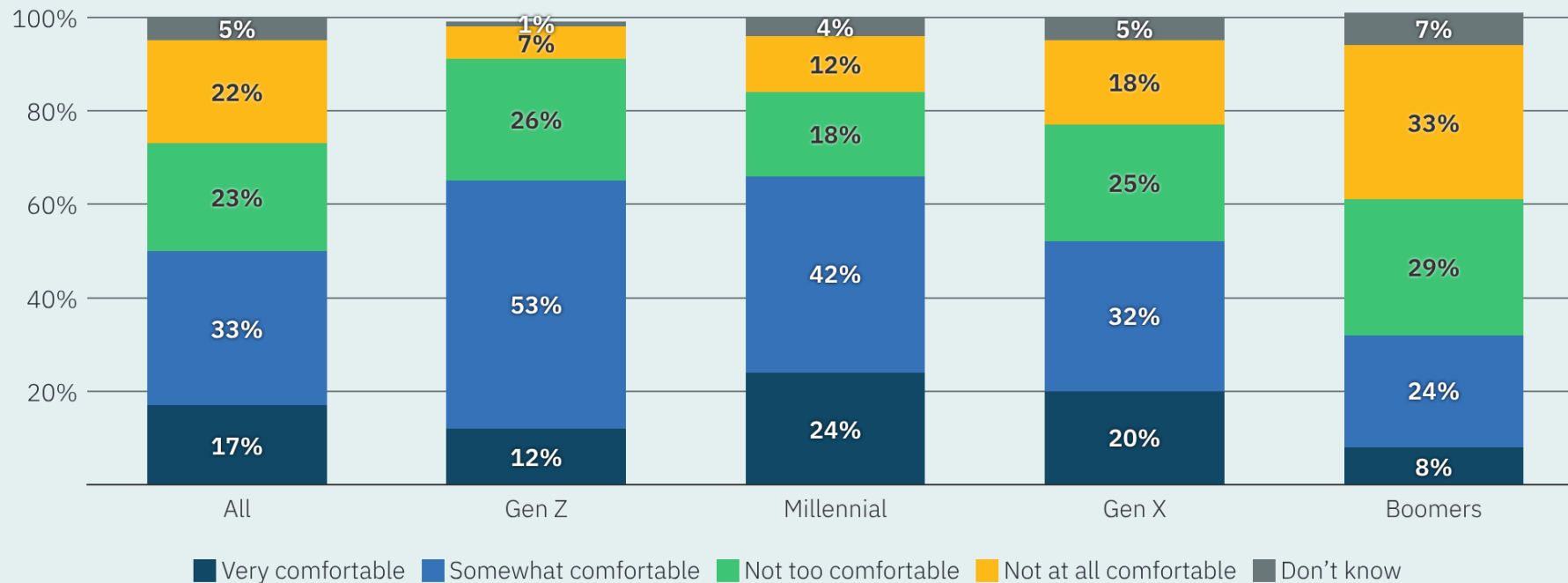
**Figure 14: Most, Boomers especially, are not using AI for finances, investments, or retirement.**



# Americans are split on the idea of AI playing a role in the delivery of financial advice

**Figure 15: Americans are split on AI for financial advice, with large generational differences.**

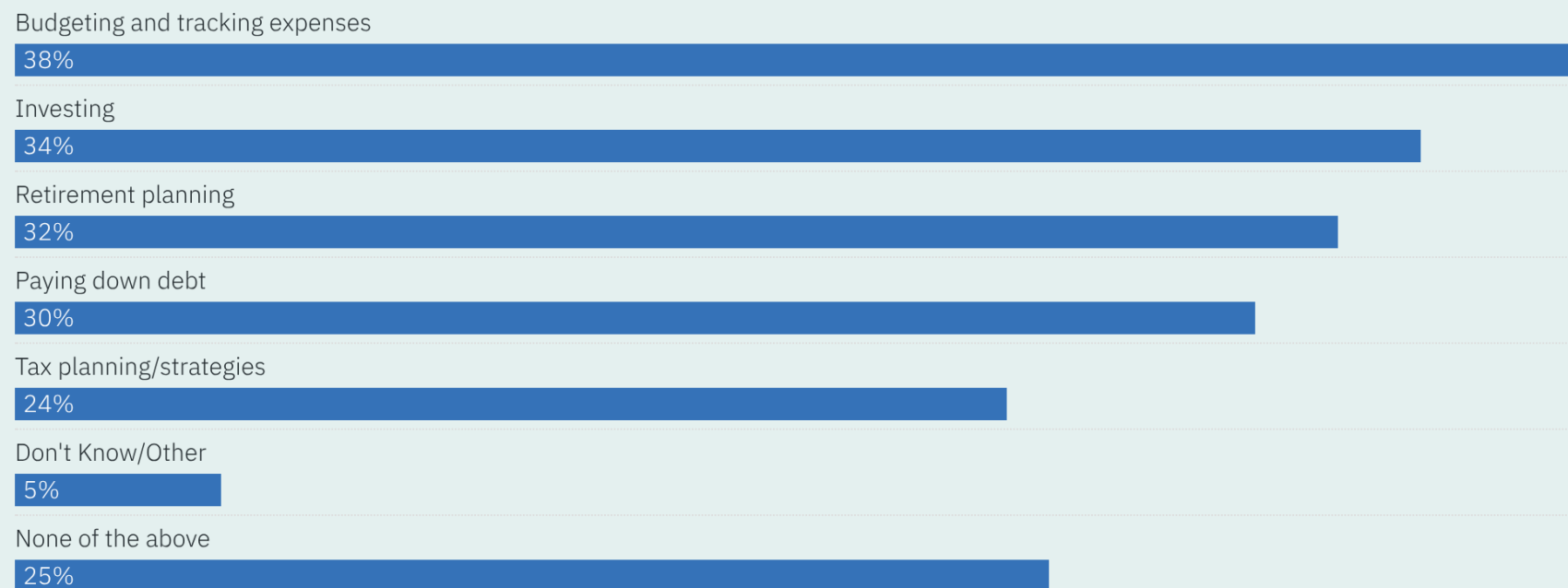
How comfortable are you with the idea of AI playing a role in the delivery of financial advice?



# Americans appear open to using AI as a resource on various financial topics

## Figure 16: There is at least some interest in using AI for a variety of financial topics.

Which of the following financial topics would you be most interested in getting help with from AI tools? Please select all that apply.



# Key Finding

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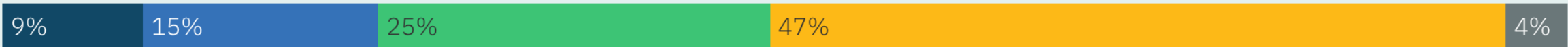
**Americans are Guarded About  
Cryptocurrency and Alternative Investments  
in Retirement Plans**

# Most Americans are unfamiliar with alternative investments

**Figure 17: The majority of Americans are unfamiliar with alternative investments.**

How familiar are you with the following types of alternative investments?

Cryptocurrency



Real estate investment trusts (REITs)



Private equity



■ I have this type of investment ■ Very familiar ■ Somewhat familiar ■ Heard of, but not familiar ■ Have never heard of

# Americans have mixed views on cryptocurrency in retirement plans; the majority view it as risky

**Table 2: Americans have mixed views on cryptocurrency in retirement plans; the majority view it as risky.**

**Do you favor or oppose employers offering cryptocurrency as an investment option in a workplace retirement savings plan?**

|                 |     |
|-----------------|-----|
| Strongly favor  | 6%  |
| Somewhat favor  | 20% |
| Somewhat oppose | 20% |
| Strongly oppose | 33% |
| Don't know      | 21% |

**How risky do you think it would be to allow cryptocurrency as an investment option in a workplace retirement savings plan?**

|                  |     |
|------------------|-----|
| Very risky       | 46% |
| Somewhat risky   | 31% |
| Not too risky    | 10% |
| Not at all risky | 2%  |
| Don't know       | 10% |

# Key Finding

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**Americans Lack a Clear Understanding of  
What It Takes to Be Financially Prepared  
for Retirement**

# Many Americans' retirement savings fall short of what they think they need

**Table 3: Many Americans' retirement savings fall short of what they think they need.**

Needs: If you were to guess, how much money do you think you need to save by the time you retire in order to have a financially secure retirement? [Among those not retired]

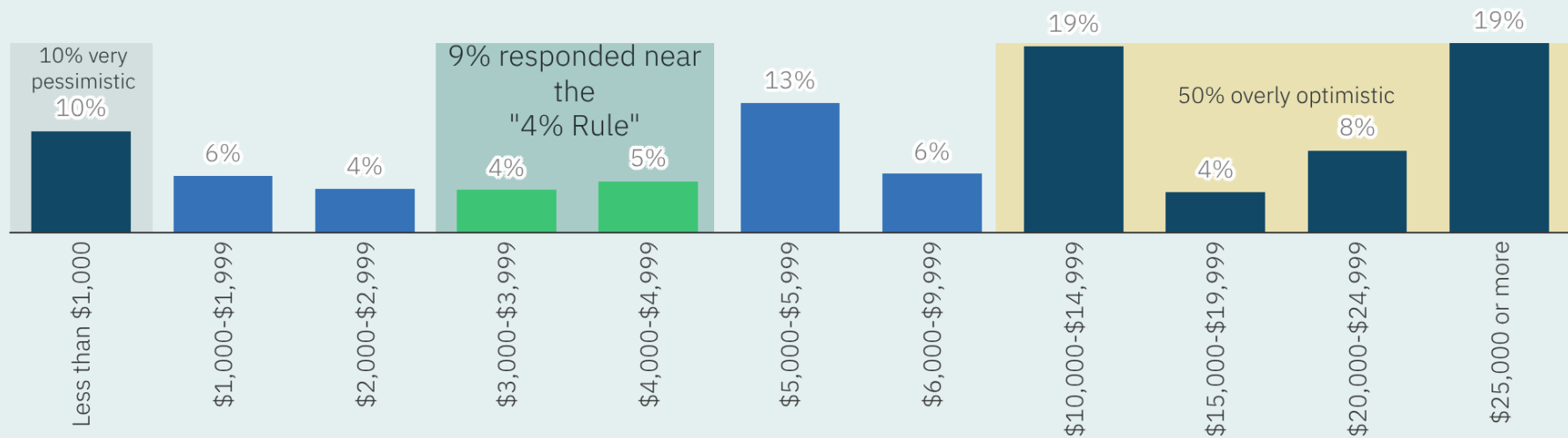
Savings: Approximately how much have you saved for retirement/did you have saved at retirement? [Among those not retired/Among those retired]

|                            | How much do you need? | All: How much retirement savings do you have? | Gen X: How much retirement savings do you have? |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Less than \$100,000        | 9%                    | 47%                                           | 42%                                             |
| \$100,000 to \$249,999     | 6%                    | 15%                                           | 15%                                             |
| \$250,000 to \$499,999     | 16%                   | 11%                                           | 14%                                             |
| \$500,000 to \$749,999     | 12%                   | 6%                                            | 9%                                              |
| \$750,000 to \$999,999     | 11%                   | 4%                                            | 3%                                              |
| \$1,000,000 to \$1,999,999 | 21%                   | 5%                                            | 8%                                              |
| \$2,000,000 or more        | 14%                   | 4%                                            | 4%                                              |
| Don't know                 | 12%                   | 8%                                            | 4%                                              |

# Many Americans have overly optimistic retirement income expectations

**Figure 18: Many Americans have overly optimistic retirement income expectations.**

If you were to retire at age 67 with \$100,000 in retirement savings, how much income do you think you would be able to draw annually from that savings throughout your retirement? [Among those under age 67 and not retired]



Additional context: 50% expect to be able to draw \$10,000 or more per year throughout retirement from a \$100,000 nest egg at age 67. With 6% post-retirement returns, \$10,000 withdrawals would only last to age 82 (15 years). 77% of females and 68% of males, aged 67 and of average health, are expected to live past age 82. Annual withdrawals of \$25,000 would not last until age 72.

# More than half of Americans report waiting until age 30 or later to begin saving for retirement

**Table 4: More than half of Americans, especially those with low incomes, waited until at least their 30s to save for retirement, putting them at a disadvantage.**

At what age did you start saving for retirement? Your best guess is fine. [Among those who ever had retirement savings]

|          | Total |  | <\$35K | \$35K to \$74K | \$75K to \$124K | \$125K+ |
|----------|-------|--|--------|----------------|-----------------|---------|
| Under 25 | 20%   |  | 7%     | 19%            | 22%             | 23%     |
| 25-29    | 17%   |  | 11%    | 15%            | 19%             | 18%     |
| 30-34    | 18%   |  | 14%    | 13%            | 19%             | 21%     |
| 35-39    | 10%   |  | 6%     | 11%            | 9%              | 13%     |
| 40-44    | 8%    |  | 15%    | 10%            | 8%              | 6%      |
| 45-49    | 4%    |  | 4%     | 4%             | 3%              | 5%      |
| 50+      | 12%   |  | 25%    | 15%            | 10%             | 8%      |
| Not sure | 11%   |  | 18%    | 13%            | 10%             | 6%      |

# Key Finding

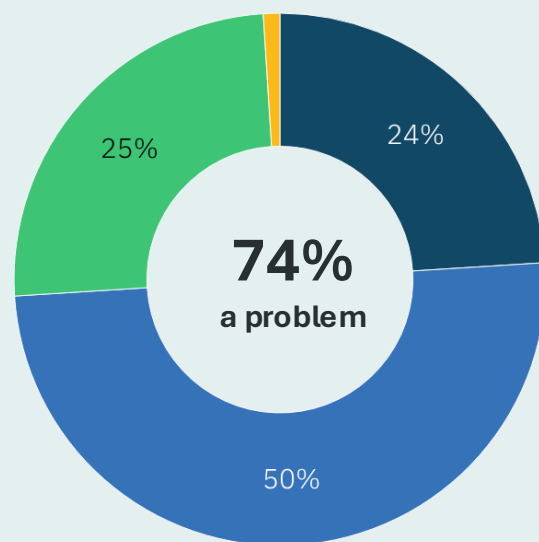
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**Debt Continues to Limit Americans' Ability to  
Save for Retirement**

# Many Americans have debt, and most who do say it is a problem

**Figure 20: The majority of Americans say debt is a problem; only 25% say it's not a problem.**

How would you describe your level of debt?  
[Among those with debt]

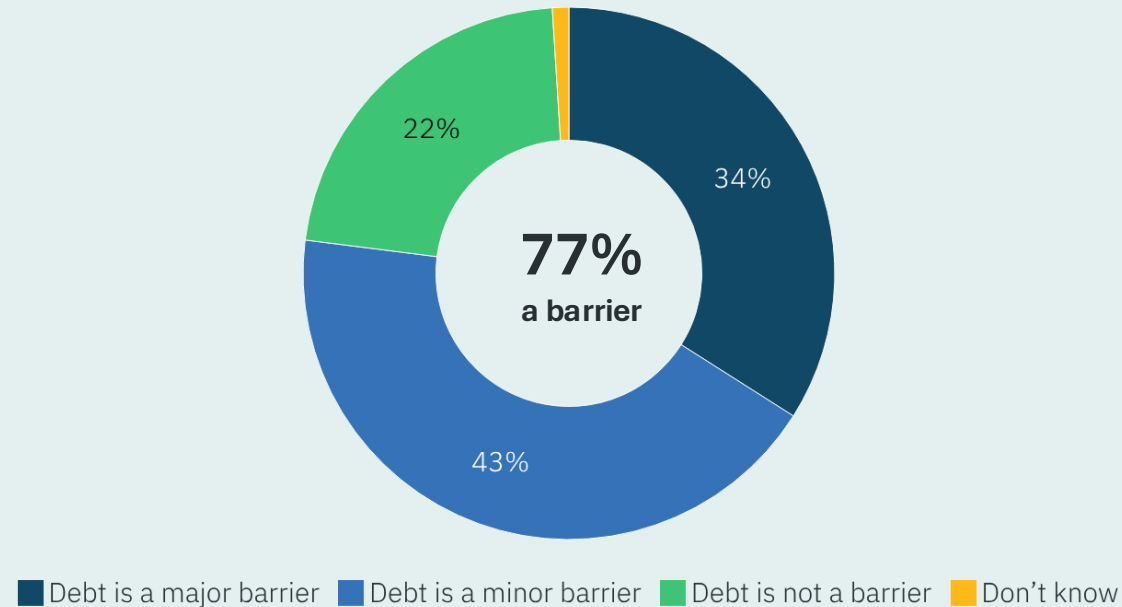


■ A major problem ■ A minor problem ■ Not a problem ■ Don't Know

# The majority of working Americans with debt say that it is a barrier to saving for retirement

**Figure 21: Debt is a barrier to retirement savings for more than three-fourths of working Americans.**

To what degree does debt prevent you from saving as much as you believe you should be saving for retirement? [Among those with debt and not retired]



# Key Finding

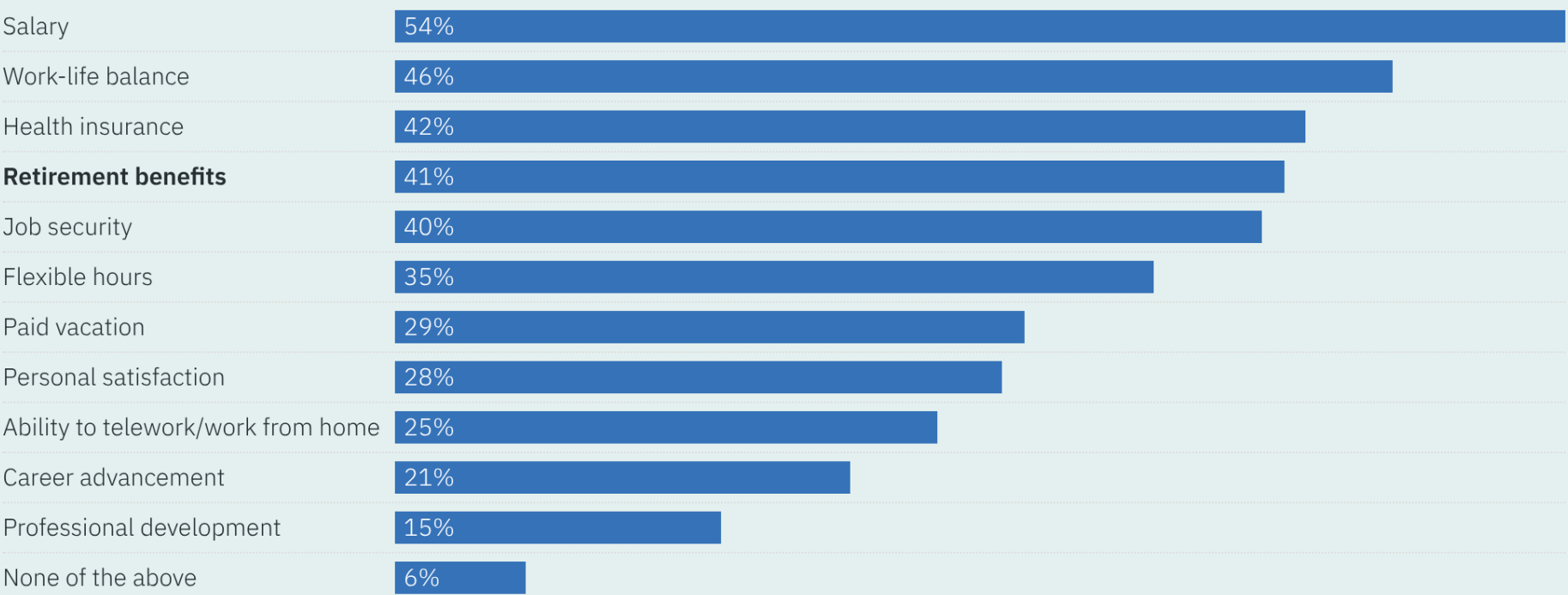
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**Retirement Benefits are Increasingly Important,  
and Americans Continue to Value  
Pension Benefits**

# Retirement benefits are among workers' top growing job priorities

**Figure 23: Retirement benefits are among workers' top growing job priorities.**

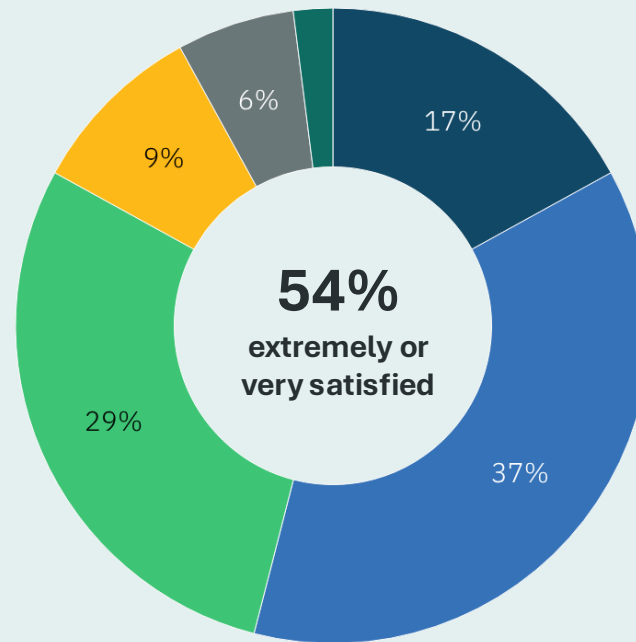
Which of the following job features, if any, have become more important to you personally over the past year? Please select all that apply. [Among those not retired]



# Yet only about half of workers are satisfied with their retirement benefits

**Figure 24: Only about half of workers are satisfied with their retirement benefits.**

How satisfied are you with the retirement benefits your employer provides? [Among full-time workers]

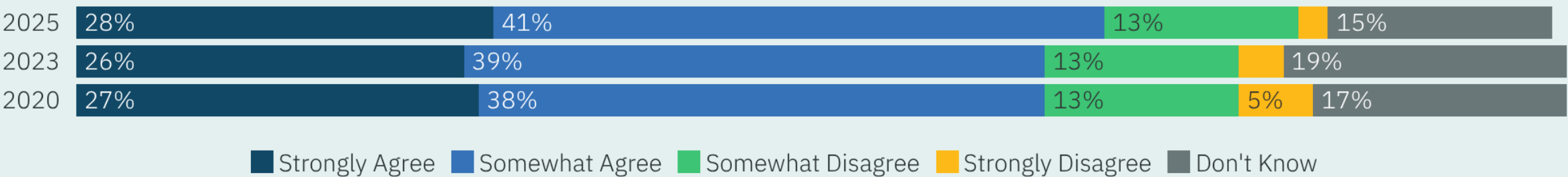


■ Extremely Satisfied ■ Very Satisfied ■ Somewhat Satisfied ■ Not Too Satisfied ■ Not at All Satisfied ■ Don't know

# Americans continue to favor pensions over defined contribution plans for achieving retirement security

**Figure 27. 69% say pensions are better than 401(k)s for helping workers achieve retirement security.**

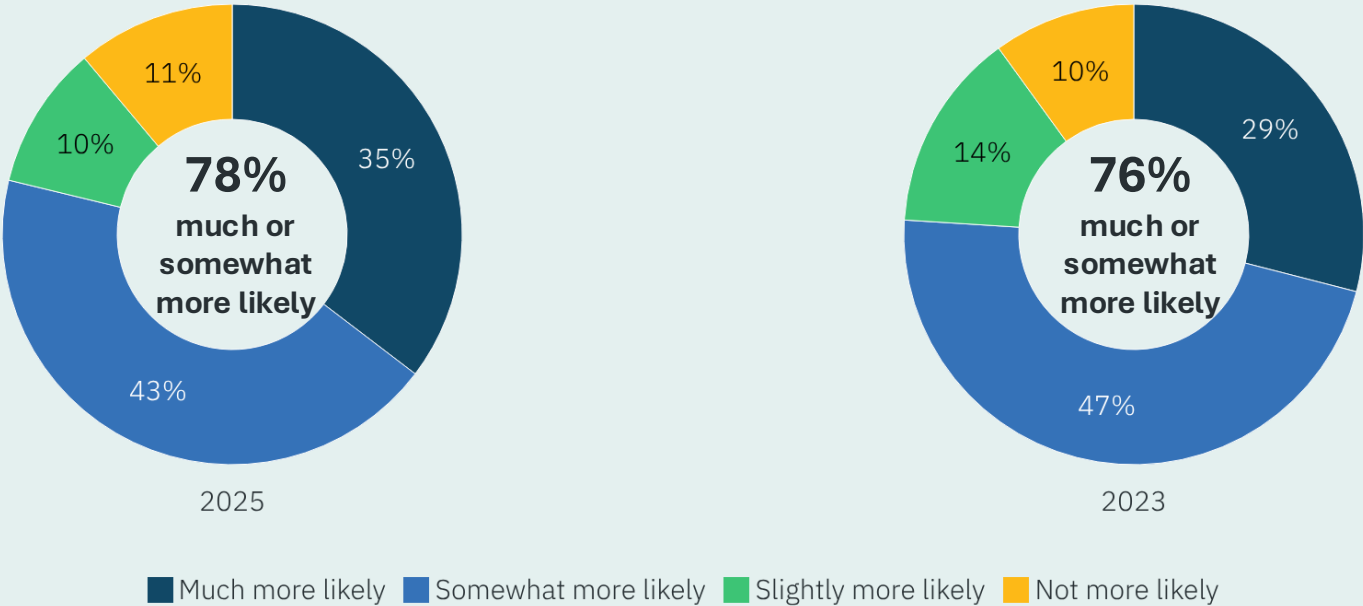
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Pensions do more to help workers achieve a secure retirement as compared to retirement savings plans such as 401(k)s.



# Most workers with pensions say they'd be much or somewhat more likely to leave their jobs without them

**Figure 29. A growing share of workers with pensions say they'd be much more likely to leave without them.**

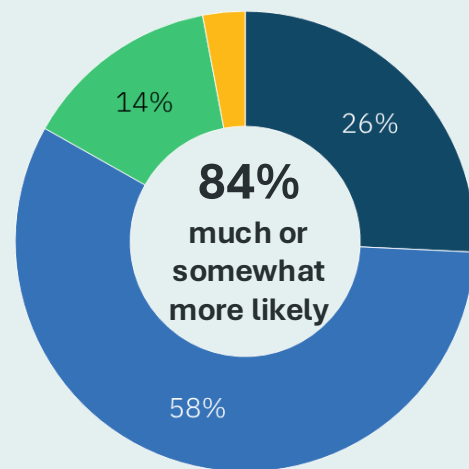
All other factors equal, if your current employer did not provide a traditional pension plan as part of the retirement benefits, would you be more inclined to leave the company if another job opportunity came up? [Among full-time workers with pensions]



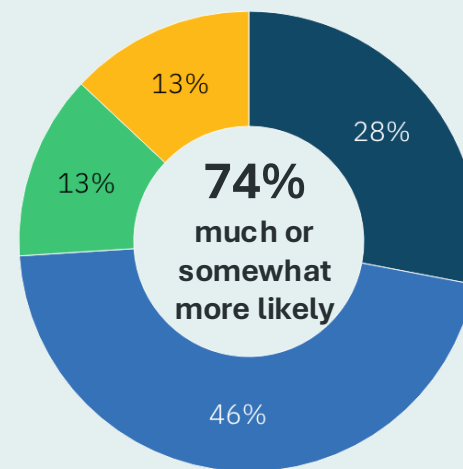
# And workers without pensions say they'd be much or somewhat more likely to stay in their jobs with them

**Figure 30. A growing share of workers without pensions say they'd be more likely to stay with them.**

All other factors equal, if your current employer provided a traditional pension plan as part of the retirement benefits, would you be more likely to stay at the company longer even if another job opportunity came up? [Among full-time workers w/o pensions]



2025



2023

■ Much more likely ■ Somewhat more likely ■ Slightly more likely ■ Not more likely

# Coming in October

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**NEW** Research: What Do Americans Think About Social Security?

**NEW** Podcast Episode: Retirement Insecurity 2026

*Featuring Doug Kinkaid, Greenwald Research*



# Questions?



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