

# 2026 Northwestern Mutual Planning & Progress Study

## General Population and Market Data

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### *Wave 3 – Financial Independence*

#### Background

The 2026 Planning & Progress Study is a research series from Northwestern Mutual which explores US adults' attitudes and behaviors toward money, financial decision-making, and the broader issues impacting people's long-term financial security.

#### Methodology

The Harris Poll conducted a total of 4,375 online interviews among the General Public and an oversample of 13 different US markets between January 5<sup>th</sup> and January 21<sup>st</sup>. Data were weighted to be representative of the US general population.

#### *Criteria for Choosing Market Oversample Locations*

A diverse range of markets served by Northwestern Mutual were selected for oversampling, varying in size and geographic location, to provide a snapshot of similarities and differences observed across cities.

***California and Los Angeles are included in the report as standalone market breakouts but were not oversampled; all other market-level results reflect oversampled data.***

#### Interpreting the Results

- Percentages may not always add up to 100% because of computer rounding or the acceptance of multiple answers.
- Data was tested at the 90% & 95% confidence level.
  - A capital letter (A, B, C, etc.) signifies a statistically higher percentage at 95% confidence level than the subgroup referenced.
  - A lowercase letter (a, b, c, etc.) signifies a statistically higher percentage at 90% confidence level than the subgroup referenced.
  - ***Please Note: When the sample size is below 100, results will not be included.***

<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Q2630. Do you currently consider yourself financially independent?</b>	<b>3</b>
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<b>Q2632R1. At what age did you become or do you expect to become financially independent?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Q2633. Do you believe achieving financial independence is easier or harder today than it was for previous generations?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Q2634. How financially independent do you currently feel from your parents (meaning you could support yourself without them if needed)?</b>	<b>5</b>

**Base: All Respondents**

Q2630. Do you currently consider yourself financially independent?

	Total 2026 (A)	Tampa Bay (B)	Portland (C)	Dallas (D)	Wash DC (E)	Chicago (F)	Atlanta (G)	Minneapolis (H)	Indy (I)	San Fran (J)	MKE (K)	San Diego (L)	Baltimore (M)	Detroit (N)	LA (O)	Cali (P)
<i>Base</i>	4,375	357	324	404	381	421	379	338	323	366	322	322	336	369	190	376
Yes	72%	67%	65%	66%	68%	71% cljLM	69%	66%	63%	65%	66%	63%	62%	68%	78% BCDEgHIJKLMN	76% BCDEgHIJKLMn
No	28%	33% OP	35% fOP	34% OP	32% OP	29%	31% op	34% OP	37% FOP	35% fOP	34% OP	37% FOP	38% FOP	32% Op	22%	24%

**Base: Not Financially Independent**

Q2631. How confident are you that you will become financially independent someday?

	Total 2026 (A)	Tampa Bay (B)	Portland (C)	Dallas (D)	Wash DC (E)	Chicago (F)	Atlanta (G)	Minneapolis (H)	Indy (I)	San Fran (J)	MKE (K)	San Diego (L)	Baltimore (M)	Detroit (N)	LA (O)	Cali (P)
<i>Base</i>	1,164	111	109	134	109	117	124	106	117	120	97	112	129	112	41	83
<b>SOMEWHAT/VERY CONFIDENT (NET)</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>57% bhn</b>	<b>63% BCHN</b>	<b>60% BcHN</b>	<b>60% BcHN</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>59% bhN</b>		<b>59% bHN</b>	<b>63% BCHN</b>	<b>44%</b>		
Very confident	16%	13%	10%	16%	25% BCNP	18%	24% bCnP	15%	18%	18%		25% bCNP	17%	13%		
Somewhat confident	41%	31%	37%	41% h	38%	42% h	37%	28%	33%	41% h		34%	45% bHiN	31%		
<b>NOT AT ALL/NOT VERY CONFIDENT (NET)</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>56% dEFGjIMP</b>	<b>53% EfgMP</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>57% dEFGjLMP</b>	<b>49% p</b>	<b>41%</b>		<b>41%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>56% dEFGJLMP</b>		
Not very confident	26%	36% GIP	27%	28%	24%	26%	22%	34% gIP	30%	29%		23%	28%	38% EfGkLP		
Not at all confident	17%	20% M	26% dEFJM	15%	12%	13%	18% m	22% ejM	19% m	12%		18% m	9%	18% m		

\*Results with less than 100 responses are omitted.

**Base: All Respondents**

Q2632R1. At what age did you become or do you expect to become financially independent?

	Total 2026 (A)	Tampa Bay (B)	Portland (C)	Dallas (D)	Wash DC (E)	Chicago (F)	Atlanta (G)	Minneapolis (H)	Indy (I)	San Fran (J)	MKE (K)	San Diego (L)	Baltimore (M)	Detroit (N)	LA (O)	Cali (P)
<i>Base</i>	4,375	357	324	404	381	421	379	338	323	366	322	322	336	369	190	376
0-17	3%	2%	5% bDEGijlO	1%	2%	4% D	2%	4% Dgo	2%	2%	3% d	2%	3%	3%	1%	3% o
18-25	27%	21%	25%	26%	28% bj	25%	28% b	29% Bj	29% bj	22%	27%	29% Bj	31% BfJn	24%	34% BcFJN	31% BfJn
26-34	13%	8%	10% m	17% BCgHjM	14% BM	14% BM	11% M	11% M	12% M	11% M	13% M	13% bM	6%	14% BM	17% BcM	15% BcM
35-45	12%	12%	14%	13%	13%	13%	12%	10%	14%	19% BdefGHikLmN	13%	11%	14%	12%	16%	16% h
46-55	9%	7%	9%	11% o	8%	9%	11% o	7%	9%	10%	9%	9%	9%	11% o	5%	8% o
56-65	10%	14% cDEfghIJMnoP	10%	8%	6%	9%	9%	9%	6%	9%	10% i	10% i	8%	10%	7%	8%
65+	5%	9% CDegnoP	4%	4%	5%	6%	5%	5%	7%	6%	6%	6%	7%	5%	4%	4%
66-75	4%	7% CdeghOP	3%	4%	4%	5%	4%	3%	6% op	5%	5%	5%	5%	4%	2%	3%
75+	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%
I do not expect to become financially independent	20%	25% kIOP	23% P	20% p	23% oP	20% p	22% P	24% oP	22% P	21% P	19%	19%	24% oP	21% P	15%	14%
<b>MEAN</b>	<b>37.1</b>	<b>41.7 CDEFGHIJKLMNOP</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>36.1</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>37.7</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>36.5</b>	<b>38.8 eOP</b>	<b>37.8</b>	<b>37.2</b>	<b>37.5</b>	<b>37.9</b>	<b>34.9</b>	<b>35.9</b>

**Base: All Respondents**

Q2633. Do you believe achieving financial independence is easier or harder today than it was for previous generations?

	Total 2026 (A)	Tampa Bay (B)	Portland (C)	Dallas (D)	Wash DC (E)	Chicago (F)	Atlanta (G)	Minneapolis (H)	Indy (I)	San Fran (J)	MKE (K)	San Diego (L)	Baltimore (M)	Detroit (N)	LA (O)	Cali (P)
<i>Base</i>	4,375	357	324	404	381	421	379	338	323	366	322	322	336	369	190	376
<b>EASIER (NET)</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>22% bCK</b>	<b>21% Ck</b>	<b>22% bCK</b>	<b>24% BCHKLmn</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>22% Ck</b>
Much easier	7%	6%	4%	7%	9% Chl	7%	8% c	5%	7%	6%	6%	5%	7%	7% c	11% bCHjkl	9% Ch
Somewhat easier	13%	11%	10%	15% ckno	13%	15% cknO	16% bCKmNO	12%	12%	13%	10%	12%	11%	10%	8%	13% O
<b>ABOUT THE SAME</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>23% j</b>	<b>25% JI</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>23% j</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>HARDER (NET)</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>62% fG</b>	<b>67% DEFGnp</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>64% FG</b>	<b>60% G</b>	<b>65% eFG</b>	<b>65% deFG</b>	<b>65% deFG</b>	<b>61% G</b>	<b>59% g</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>59%</b>
Somewhat harder	29%	31%	30%	35% FGp	32%	28%	27%	33% g	33%	37% FGP	33%	30%	31%	32%	32%	28%
Much harder	27%	31% Dg	37% DEFGIJN	22%	26%	27%	25%	30% D	28%	28%	32% DeG	35% DEFGijN	30% D	27%	28%	30% D

**Base: All Respondents**

Q2634. How financially independent do you currently feel from your parents (meaning you could support yourself without them if needed)?

	Total 2026 (A)	Tampa Bay (B)	Portland (C)	Dallas (D)	Wash DC (E)	Chicago (F)	Atlanta (G)	Minneapolis (H)	Indy (I)	San Fran (J)	MKE (K)	San Diego (L)	Baltimore (M)	Detroit (N)	LA (O)	Cali (P)
<i>Base</i>	4,375	357	324	404	381	421	379	338	323	366	322	322	336	369	190	376
<b>FULL/MOSTLY INDEPENDENT (NET)</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>62% b</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>62% b</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>62% b</b>	<b>66% B</b>	<b>66% Bim</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>61% b</b>	<b>65% b</b>	<b>66% B</b>
Fully independent	44%	38%	46% b	40%	43%	44%	41%	45% b	42%	43%	48% Bdgn	43%	41%	40%	46%	47% b
Mostly independent	17%	16%	13%	20% C	17%	18%	19% c	17%	17%	19% c	18%	23% BChi	18%	21% bC	18%	19% c
<b>SOMEWHAT/FULL DEPENDENT (NET)</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>27% K</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>29% hKI</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>27% K</b>	<b>27% K</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>26% k</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>30% cehKLn</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>29% K</b>	<b>26% k</b>
Somewhat dependent	17%	17%	16%	20% K	17%	23% bcehiKL	20% K	17%	17%	18% k	12%	15%	21% K	19% K	25% bcehiKL	22% KI
Fully dependent	8%	10% FNOP	7%	9% Fnop	7%	4%	7%	6%	7%	8% Fp	7% f	6%	9% FNOP	5%	4%	4%
<b>NOT APPLICABLE</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>19% DFgJLMOP</b>	<b>17% DFjImOP</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>16% dOP</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>13% OP</b>	<b>15% OP</b>	<b>18% DFjIMOP</b>	<b>12% o</b>	<b>15% OP</b>	<b>12% o</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>15% OP</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>8%</b>