Northwestern Mutual Personal Prosperity Index

Year-End Results 2026

Sourcing Information:

The Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company – Milwaukee, WI

Background & methodology

BACKGROUND

The **Northwestern Mutual Personal Prosperity Index (PPI)** gives voice to what prosperity means for everyday Americans – financially and beyond. The PPI is based on an equally-weighted average of responses to six survey items:

1. Have enough money for the basics, plus some extra
2. My life is very full
3. Have a lot of love in my life
4. Usually feel happy and content
5. Have tools and practices to help me feel at peace
6. Enjoy (or enjoyed) my work / career / being a stay-at-home spouse or partner

Index scores range from 0-100 and take into account the full range of response options across the six survey questions (four-point scales ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*).

Source: The Harris Poll, *Northwestern Mutual 2026 Personal Prosperity Index Pulse 2*, Q3 2026.

FIELD PERIOD

The survey was conducted online from August 25 to September 3, 2026.

CONDUCTED BY

The Harris Poll on behalf of Northwestern Mutual.

SAMPLE

2,000 U.S. adults, ages 18+.

WEIGHTING

The data were weighted to be representative of the U.S. adult population by gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, education, marital status, employment, household size, household income, and political affiliation.

Executive summary

71

Prosperity ticks upward

The PPI rose to 71 out of 100, up three points from 68 at mid-year, even as six in 10 say the national economy, political climate, and cost of necessities have worsened.

9 pts

The generational gap widens

The generational prosperity gap widened from 6 to 9 points since mid-year, driven largely by a 4-point increase among Boomers+ (72 to 76), while Gen Z remained essentially unchanged (66 to 67).

30%

Job anxiety continues to be widespread

Three in 10 (30%) working Americans are concerned about losing their job in the next six months, rising to 40% of Gen Z workers.

66%

The value of human connection in the era of AI

Two-thirds (66%) of Americans say activities that help them feel connected to others are worth the financial costs, even when they strain the budget.

+9

The prosperity premium persists

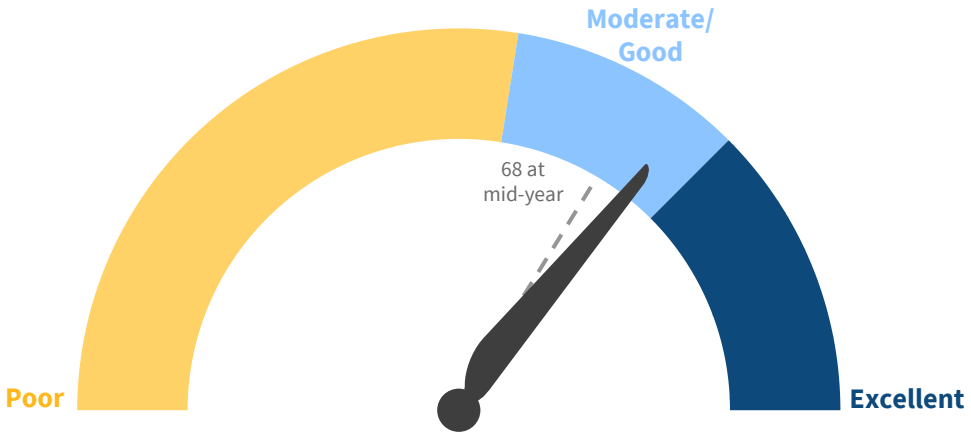
Americans who work with a financial advisor score nine points higher on the PPI than those who don't (77 vs. 68), and the advantage holds even for Americans with less than $1 million in investable assets.

Source: The Harris Poll, *Northwestern Mutual 2026 Personal Prosperity Index Pulse 2*, Q3 2026.

Prosperity rises, even as the world feels increasingly uncertain

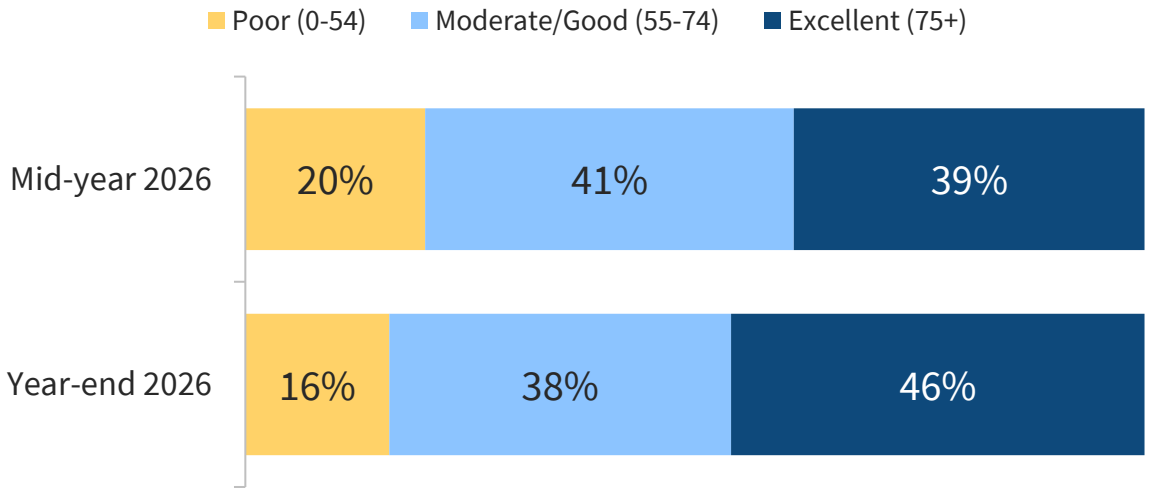
The overall PPI score rose to 71 out of 100, up three points from 68 at mid-year. This places the average American in the “moderate/good” prosperity range (55-74).

2026 YEAR-END AVERAGE PPI



71
out of 100

DISTRIBUTION OF PPI SCORES



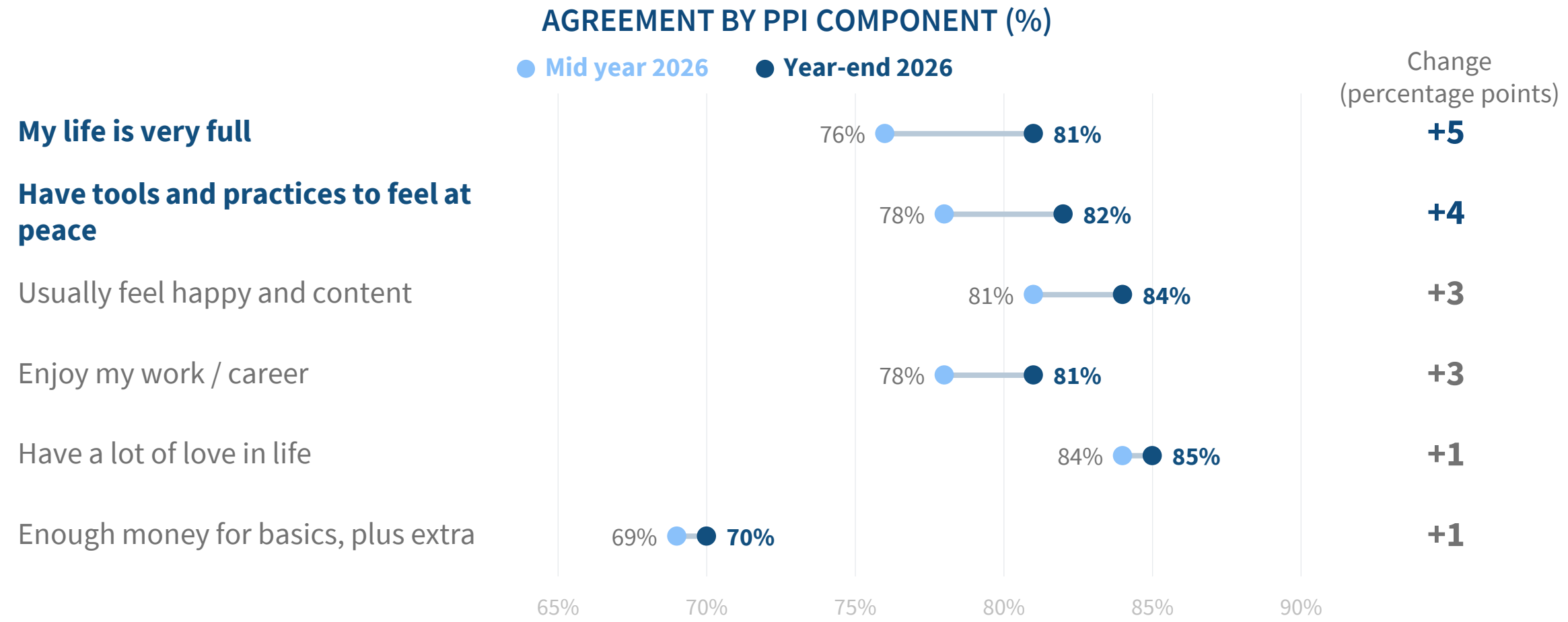
77%
feel prosperous today, up from 73% at mid-year.

34%
feel more prosperous than six months ago; 19% feel less.

Source: The Harris Poll, *Northwestern Mutual 2026 Personal Prosperity Index Pulse 2,* Q3 2026 (n=2,000) | Ipsos, *Northwestern Mutual 2026 Personal Prosperity Index Pulse 1*, Q2 2026 (n=2,391)
PPI Index: The PPI is an equally-weighted average of responses to six survey items (Q4), scored 0–100. Q4. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your life?
Q5. Overall, how prosperous do you feel today?
Q6. Do you feel more or less prosperous today than you did six months ago (March 2026)? | Q7. You responded that you feel more prosperous today than you did 6 months ago (March 2026). Please explain in a few sentences why you feel more prosperous today.

American resiliency amid uncertainty

Agreement increased across all six components of the Index, with the largest gains in feeling that life is full and having the tools and practices to feel at peace.



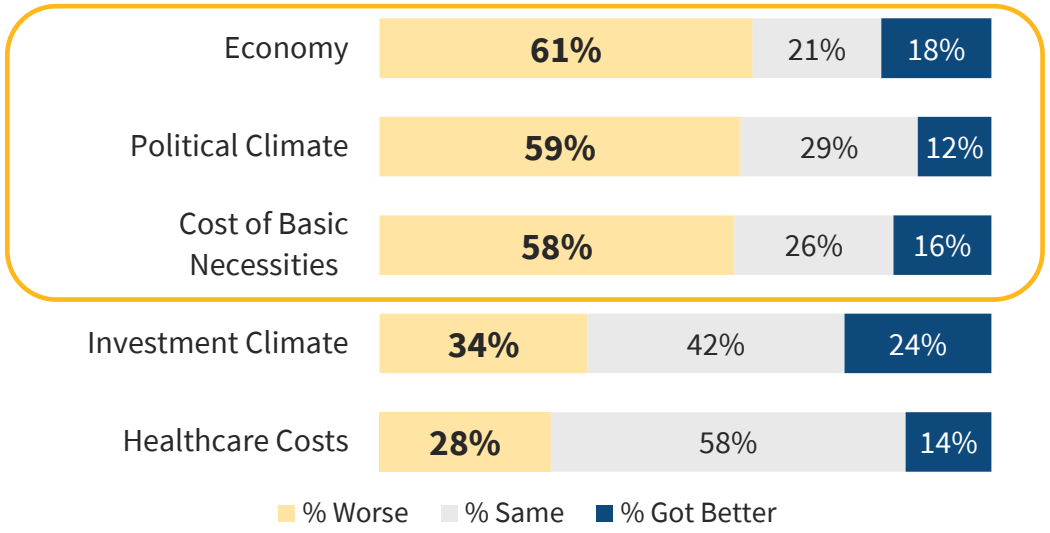
Source: The Harris Poll, Northwestern Mutual 2026 Personal Prosperity Index Pulse 2, Q3 2026 (n=2,000).
Q4. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your life?

Finding wellbeing outside the portfolio

At a time when Americans' confidence in forces outside of their control remains low, they are rallying to find contentment, peace, and joy in their lives.

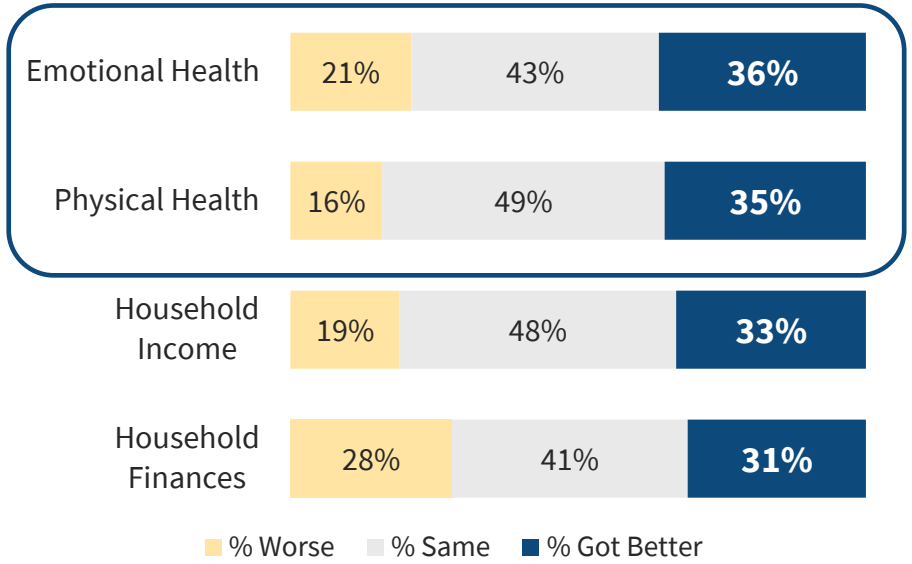
CHANGE OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS

ANXIETY



Americans continue to feel the weight of forces outside their control, with six in 10 saying the national economy, political climate, and cost of basics have worsened over the last six months.

OPTIMISM

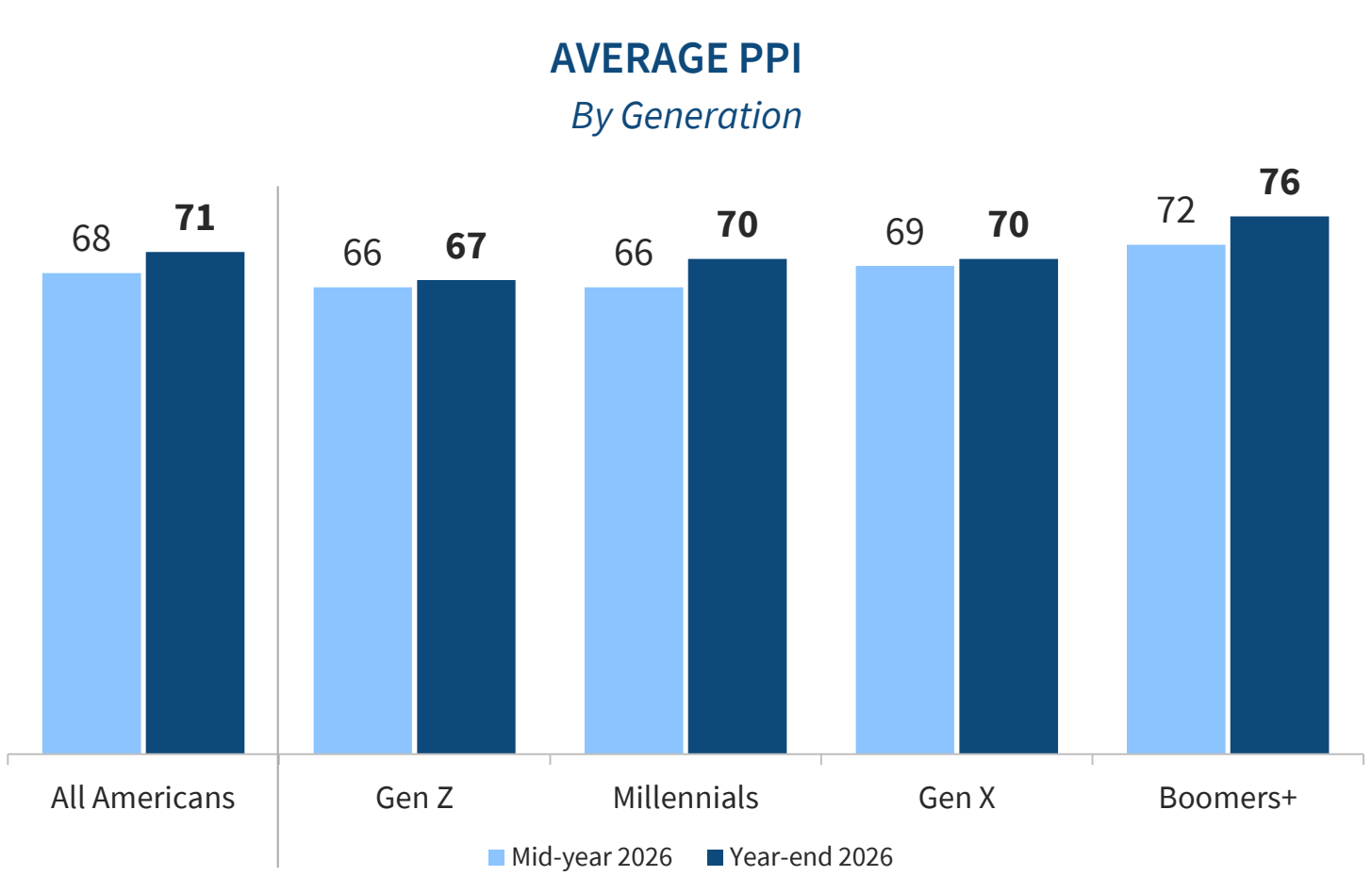


Yet Americans report modest gains in emotional and physical health. Among those feeling more prosperous than six months ago, the top reason is being happy with life and accepting it as it is (27%).

Source: The Harris Poll, *Northwestern Mutual 2026 Personal Prosperity Index Pulse 2*, Q3 2026 (n=2,000).
Q8. How have each of the following changed, if at all, during the past 6 months (between March 2026 and now)?

The generational prosperity gap

Prosperity continues to increase with age, and the generational gap is widening.



Boomers+ vs Gen Z

9-point PPI gap

Up from 6 points at mid-year

WHERE BOOMERS+ PULL AHEAD COMPARED TO GEN Z
(% TOTAL AGREE)

83% vs. 64% +19 % pts
Enough money for basics, plus extra

91% vs. 78% +13 % pts
Usually feel happy and content

88% vs. 79% +9 % pts
Have a lot of love in life

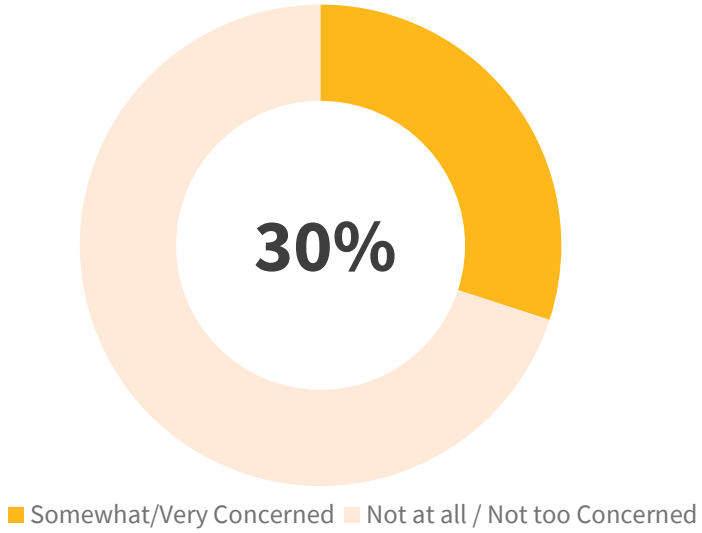
85% vs. 77% +8 % pts
My life is very full

Source: The Harris Poll, *Northwestern Mutual 2026 Personal Prosperity Index Pulse 2*, Q3 2026 (n=2,000; Gen Z n=292, Millennials n=434, Gen X n=514, Boomers+ n=760).
PPI Index: The PPI is an equally-weighted average of responses to six survey items (Q4), scored 0–100. Q4. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your life?

Job anxiety continues to be widespread

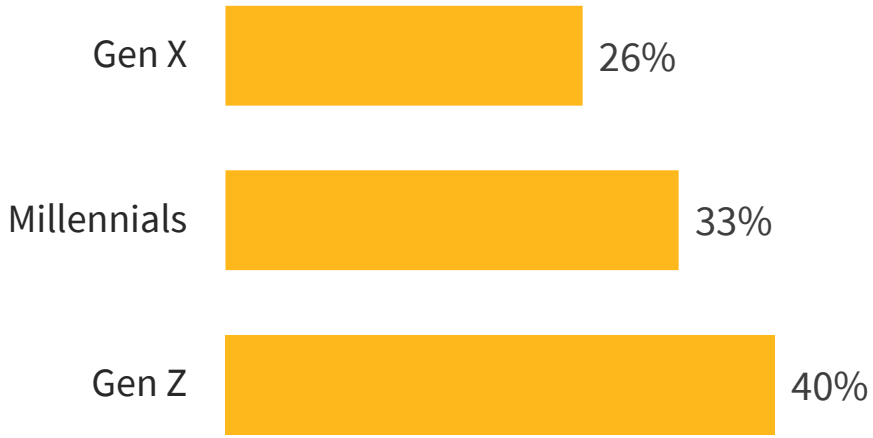
Concerned About Losing Their Job In The Next 6 Months

WORKING AMERICANS



Three in 10 (30%) working Americans say they are concerned about losing their job in the next six months.

GENERATION



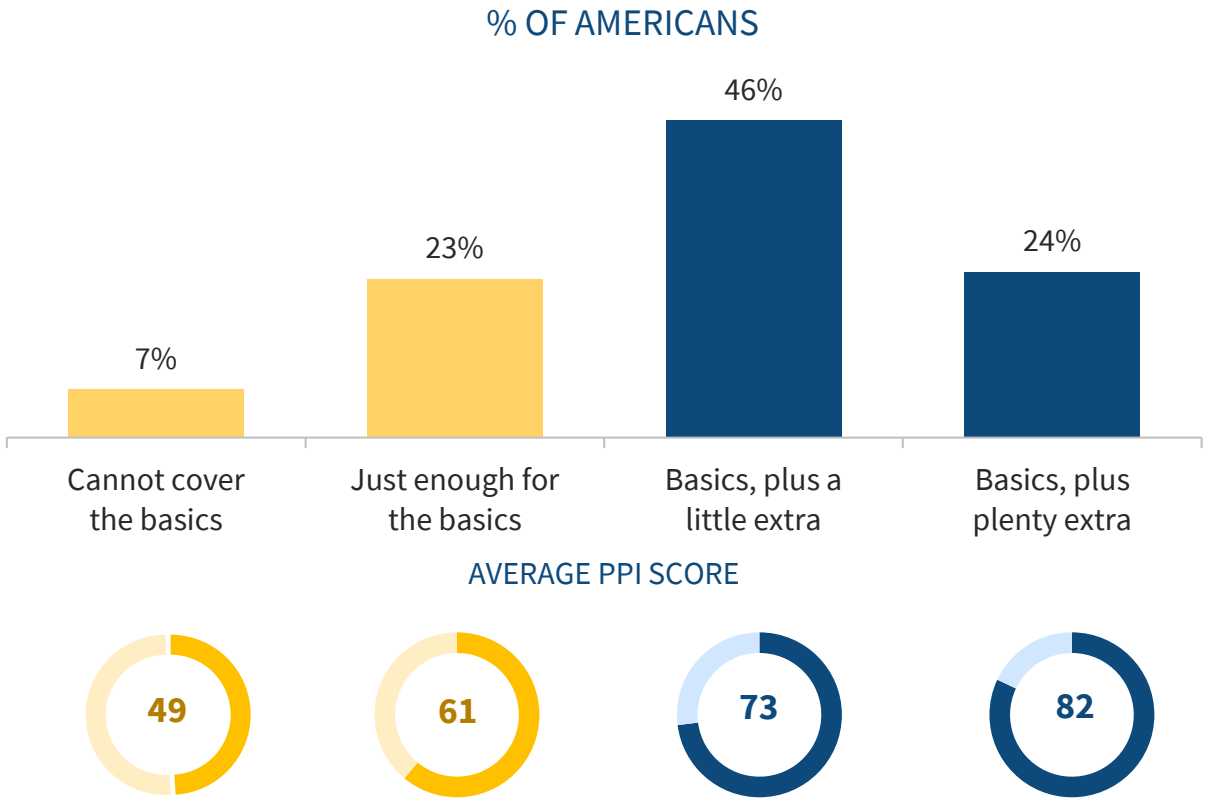
Concern is higher among younger generations, reaching 40% among Gen Z.

Source: The Harris Poll, *Northwestern Mutual 2026 Personal Prosperity Index Pulse 2*, Q3 2026 (Employed or temporarily not working n=1,127, Gen Z n=227, Millennials n=350, Gen X n=348, Boomers+ n=202)
Q13a. How concerned are you about losing your job in the next six months?

Prosperity is not rising evenly

While prosperity improved at the topline, those gains aren't distributed evenly across the population.

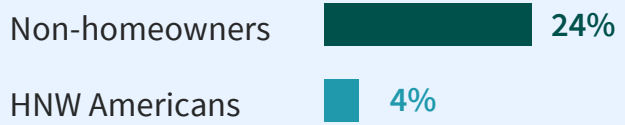
HOUSEHOLD FINANCIAL SITUATION



Lower-resource Americans are more than twice as likely to be losing ground.

FEEL LESS PROSPEROUS THAN 6 MONTHS AGO

SHARE IN "POOR" PPI RANGE



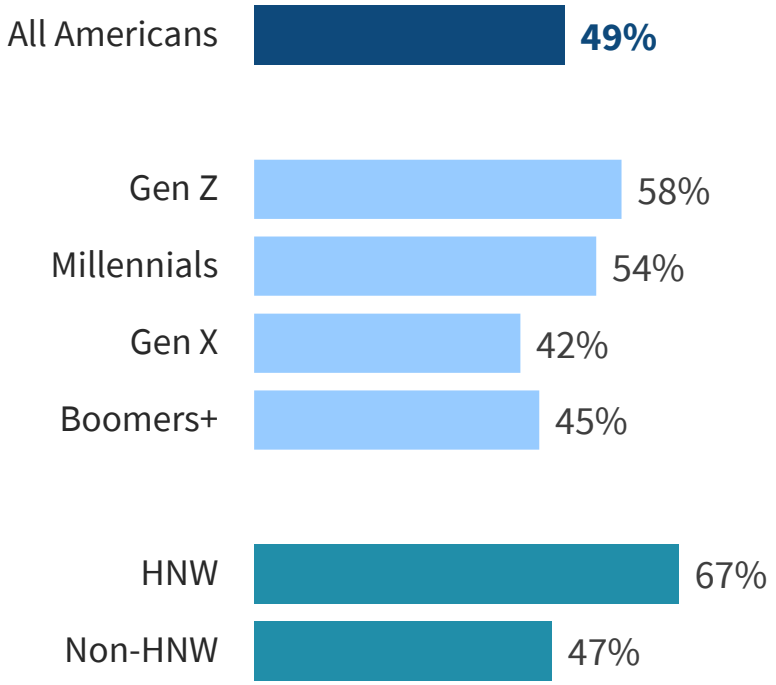
Source: The Harris Poll, Northwestern Mutual 2026 Personal Prosperity Index Pulse 2, Q3 2026 (n=2,000).
Q6. Do you feel more or less prosperous today than you did six months ago (March 2026)?
Q17. Which one of these statements best describes your household's current financial situation?
PPI Index: The PPI is an equally-weighted average of responses to six survey items (Q4), scored 0–100. Q4. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your life?

The value of human connection in the era of AI

Two-thirds of Americans say activities that help them stay connected are worth the financial costs, even when they strain the budget.

GATHER IN PERSON AT LEAST WEEKLY

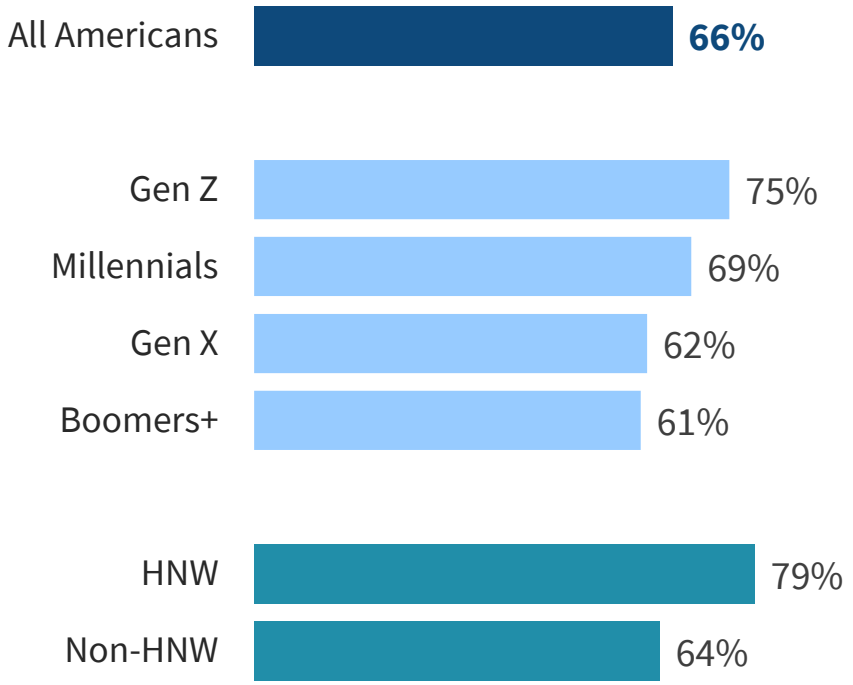
% of respondents



Nearly half of Americans gather in person with people outside their family at least once a week.

CONNECTION IS WORTH THE COST

% agree

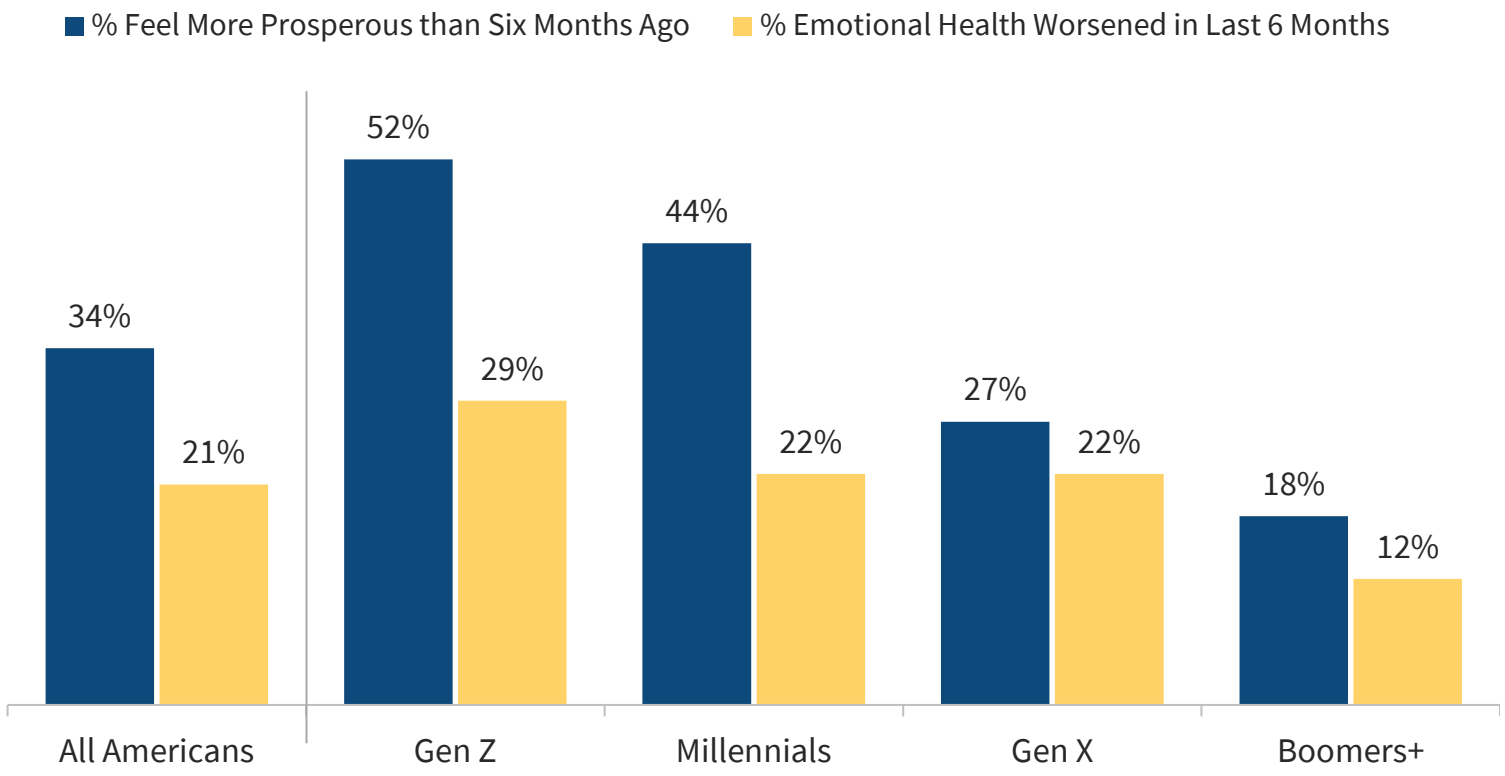


The willingness to pay for human connection cuts across age and wealth — but Gen Z and high-net-worth Americans feel it most.

Source: The Harris Poll, *Northwestern Mutual 2026 Personal Prosperity Index Pulse 2*, Q3 2026 (n=2,000).
Q22. On average, how often do you participate in in-person activities or gatherings (e.g., team/individual sports, board games, social clubs, trivia leagues) that help you connect with people outside of your immediate family?
Q24. How much do you agree or disagree with the statement? "Activities that help me feel connected to others are worth the financial cost, even when they strain my budget."

Gen Z: The most momentum but also the most emotional strain

Gen Z is the only generation where more than half feel more prosperous than six months ago, yet they also report the most emotional strain.



52%

of Gen Z feel more prosperous than six months ago, vs. 34% of all Americans.

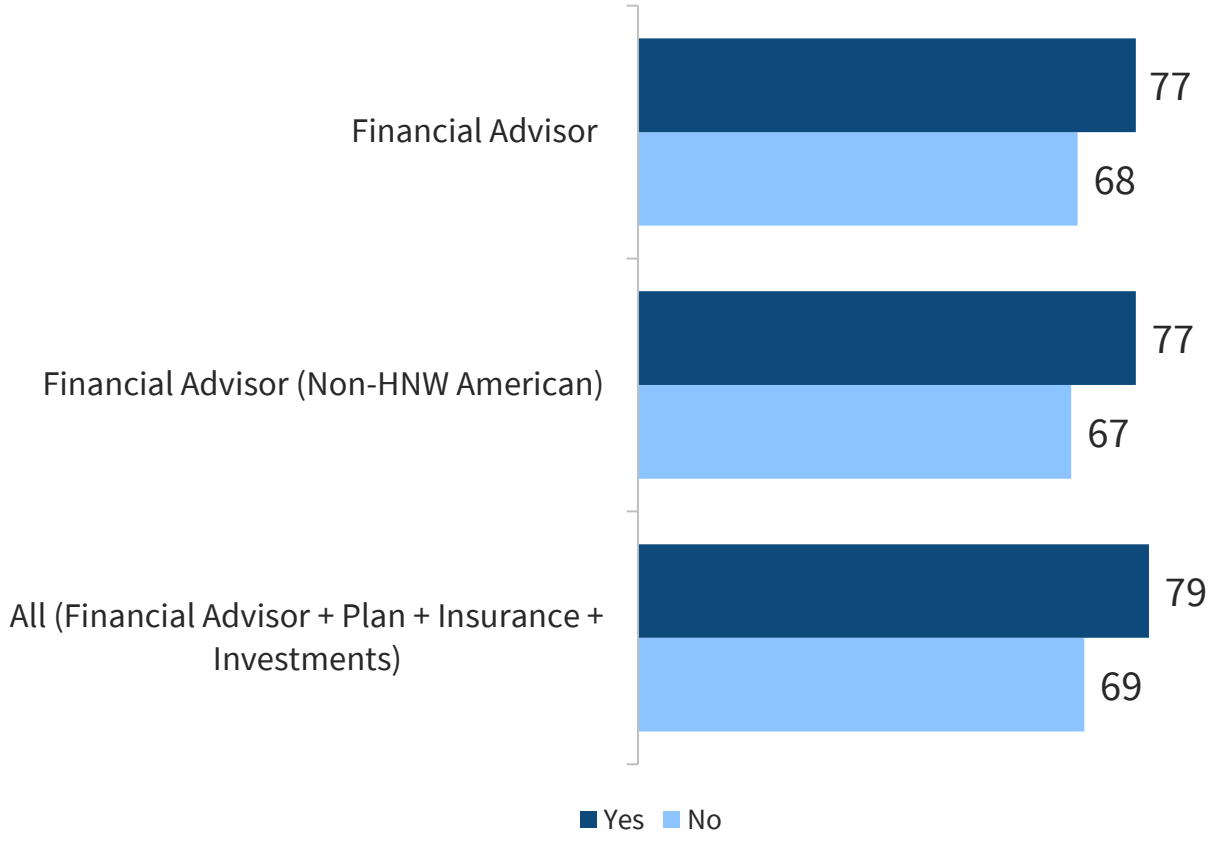
29%

of Gen Z say their emotional health worsened over the last six months, the highest of any generation.

Source: The Harris Poll, *Northwestern Mutual 2026 Personal Prosperity Index Pulse 2*, Q3 2026 (n=2,000, Gen Z n=292, Millennials n=434, Gen X n=514, Boomers+ n=760)
Q6. Do you feel more or less prosperous today than you did six months ago (March 2026)?
Q8. How have each of the following changed, if at all, during the past 6 months (between March 2026 and now)?

Planning and advice are linked to a prosperity premium

AVERAGE PERSONAL PROSPERITY INDEX



+9 pts

Working with a financial advisor is linked to a 9-point prosperity premium — and the advantage holds even for Americans with less than $1M in investable assets (+10).

+11 pts

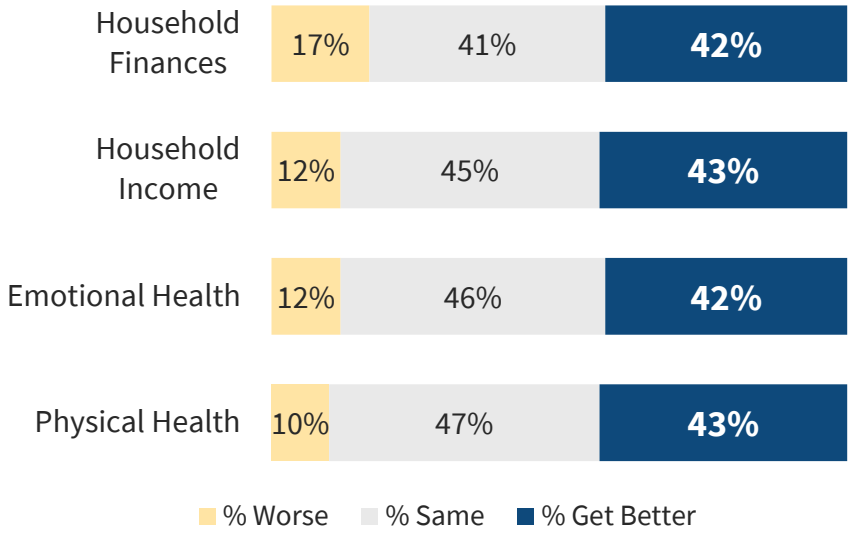
Those with the full picture — an advisor, plan, insurance, and investments — score 79, an 11-point premium over those without an advisor.

Source: The Harris Poll, Northwestern Mutual 2026 Personal Prosperity Index Pulse 2, Q3 2026 (n=2,000, Work with Financial Advisor n = 597, With a financial advisor and <$1M n=182, Have all professional support featured n=333).
PPI Index: The PPI is an equally-weighted average of responses to six survey items (Q4), scored 0–100. Q4. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your life?

Expectations looking ahead

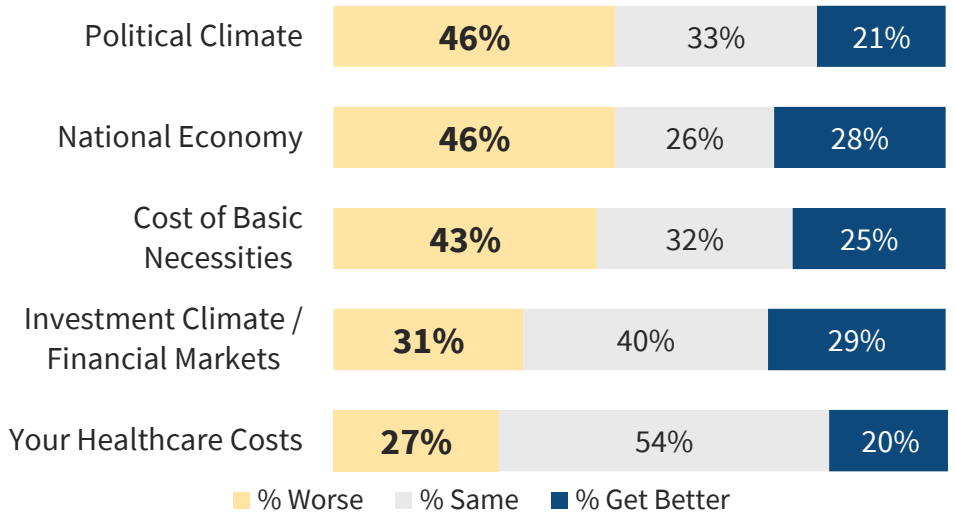
EXPECTED CHANGE OVER THE NEXT SIX MONTHS

OPTIMISM



Americans are optimistic about the potential for improvement in their personal lives.

ANXIETY



Although, similar proportions are pessimistic about macro factors.

Source: The Harris Poll, Northwestern Mutual 2026 Personal Prosperity Index Pulse 2, Q3 2026 (n=2,000).
Q11. Next, how do you expect the following to change, if at all, over the next 6 months (between now and March 2027)?