Worksite in Progress.

# The pathway to voluntary benefits success

Q2 2026 Report

## Growing pressure shifts priorities

MassMutual

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Q2 2026 Report

# Introduction

## After rising optimism in Q1, reality returned for working Americans* in Q2 2026. With growing costs and increased financial uncertainty, rising pressure has led to downward momentum in the WFSS. But is this a temporary retracement, or a new direction?

The Q2 2026 edition of *The pathway to voluntary benefits success* quarterly report once again examines working Americans' perceptions of financial well-being – including why the Workforce Financial Stability Score (WFSS)[sm] dropped from record highs. It is based on data from our monthly WFSS surveys, which measure working Americans' perceptions across six financial dimensions:

01 **Ability to manage expenses between paychecks**

02 **Ability to withstand unexpected expenses**

03 **Ability to help others financially**

04 **Overall net worth**

05 **Confidence in meeting longer-term goals**

06 **Likelihood of reaching personal retirement goals**

The Q2 report highlights a shift across the three specific working American segments[2] we cover: The Financially Challenged, Stable, and Healthy.

01 **Financially Challenged Americans** are struggling the most

02 **Financially Stable Americans** are more secure, but with room for improvement

03 **Financially Healthy Americans** are the most positive about their finances

[1] The MassMutual Workforce Financial Stability Score measures the changing attitudes and financial outlook of working Americans. Commissioned by MassMutual, the research began in June 2022 and is conducted online, monthly, among a nationally representative sample of 1,000 U.S. middle-market employees. For purposes of this research, MassMutual defines working Americans and middle-market employees between ages 22 and 67, working at firms with at least 25 benefit-eligible employees, with a household income of $40,000 to less than $150,000, and assets less than $300,000.

[2] Working Americans are segmented into three cohorts based on the WFSS, using a scale from 0 to 100 to indicate the overall sentiments of financial well-being: Financially Challenged – survey respondents who scored between 0 and 39, Financially Stable – survey respondents who scored between 40 and 69, and Financially Healthy – survey respondents who scored between 70 and 100.

**Q2 2026 Report**

# What you need to know

**Quarterly scores:**
Financial stability among working Americans

## Pressure builds on household finances

The WFSS softened in Q2 2026 as high costs and broader economic uncertainty place increasing pressure on working Americans. Elevated day-to-day living costs continue to shape financial behavior, driving working Americans to cut discretionary spending, seek lower-cost alternatives, and rely on credit to cover regular expenses. These headwinds are reflected in a shrinking Financially Healthy segment and growth in the Financially Challenged population. While Financially Healthy working Americans remain engaged in saving and longer-term planning, they are concerned about their mental and emotional well-being, potential future healthcare costs, and AI-related job disruption. Financially Stable working Americans try to balance longer-term goals with mounting day-to-day financial strain, while Financially Challenged working Americans remain firmly focused on meeting immediate needs with limited flexibility and subdued optimism.

**Generations up-close:**
Digging into financial well-being by generation

## Distinct financial priorities emerge across life stages

Financial well-being varies by generation, reflecting different life stages, priorities, and financial pressures. Older Gen Z leads in financial well-being, reporting the strongest financial outlook and high engagement with saving, investing, and emerging financial tools. Millennials remain financially steady, balancing immediate needs with longer-term goals, while showing increased interest in financial education and professional guidance. In contrast, Gen X faces the greatest strain, with heightened concerns across a wide range of financial and economic issues, resulting in the lowest WFSS among generations. Younger Baby Boomers show improving financial sentiment, but growing attention to retirement readiness and longer-term care needs highlights an increasing focus on securing their financial future.

**Spotlight insight:**
Perceptions and opportunities around voluntary benefits

## Voluntary benefits could help alleviate pressure

Voluntary benefits are playing an increasingly important role in financial well-being. Those enrolled in voluntary benefits* express strong appreciation for employer-offered voluntary benefits and intend to maintain coverage. Among Financially Healthy working Americans, voluntary benefits are well understood and highly valued, yet many enrolled often forget they have this coverage, creating an opportunity for greater engagement. Meanwhile, Financially Challenged working Americans are placing greater value on voluntary benefits than in the past, but persistent affordability concerns may limit their enrollment.

* Enrollment in one of the following voluntary benefits: Group Whole Life Insurance, Disability Income Insurance, Group Critical Illness Insurance, Group Accident Insurance, Group Hospital Indemnity Insurance

## Quarterly scores

# Pressure builds on household finances

The Workforce Financial Stability Score slid from a record high of 60.3 in Q1 2026 to 57.8 in Q2 2026, marking its lowest level since Q2 2025 (56.9) and the first dip since Q4 2024. This movement reflects softening across all core components of the WFSS since last quarter. While overall sentiment remains above prior-year, quarter-over-quarter movement points to mounting strain in maintaining daily stability. The decline in WFSS is reflected in shifting segment sizes, with fewer working Americans classified as Financially Healthy (-5 points vs. Q1 2026) and more as Financially Challenged (+4 points vs. Q1 2026).

Cost pressure remains a dominant force shaping financial behavior. Ability to manage expenses between paychecks dropped to 64.5, the lowest score since Q4 2022 (63.5). As of June, about 7 in 10 working Americans are concerned about rising prices on essential goods and services (68%) and gas/fuel (68%). Extending beyond necessities, nearly two-thirds (62%) are concerned about rising prices on non-essential goods and services, underscoring the impact of inflation across spending categories. Affordability pressure is likely compounded, as 39% of working Americans are concerned with job security/unemployment.

These pressures are impacting everyday behaviors. Working Americans are buying essentials as usual but limiting discretionary spending (48%), increasingly shopping for deals (e.g. looking for a sale, using a coupon, buying in bulk, shopping at discount or wholesale retailers like Walmart or Costco.) (43%), switching to lower-cost alternatives (37%), and carrying a credit card balance month-to-month to pay for essentials (22%).

At the same time, broader economic concerns have increased since January 2026, including entering/worsening economic recession (58%, +9 points), housing market stability/affordability (52%, +7 points), and global politics and relations, or geopolitics (49%, +5 points).

| | Q2 2026 AVERAGES | | vs. Q1 '26 | vs. Q2 '25 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Workforce Financial Stability Score | 57.8 | -2.5 | +0.9 |
| PRESENT | My ability to manage my expenses between paychecks | 64.5 | -1.7 | -0.7 |
| PRESENT | My ability to withstand unexpected expenses | 55.6 | -2.5 | -0.2 |
| PRESENT | My ability to help others financially | 51.4 | -2.3 | +1.2 |
| PRESENT | My overall net worth | 56.5 | -2.2 | +1.0 |
| FUTURE | Confidence household is doing what is needed to meet longer-term goals | 57.2 | -3.5 | +2.4 |
| FUTURE | Likelihood will reach personal retirement goals | 63.4 | -2.4 | +1.4 |

Quarterly scores

# Pressure builds on household finances

**Financially Healthy - strong overall, but feeling pockets of tension.**

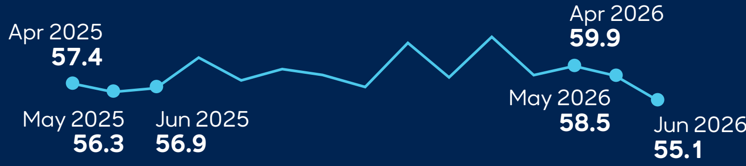
With a WFSS of 83.0 (flat vs. Q2 2025), Financially Healthy working Americans remain confident in their financial well-being, demonstrating continued engagement in saving, investing, and longer-term planning.

That said, this segment is not insulated from broader pressures. Almost 1 in 3 (32%) Financially Healthy working Americans carried a credit card balance from one month to the next this year (17% to pay for regular expenses like mortgage/rent, utilities, and groceries), and 16% increased their credit card debt. Many in this segment are changing shopping behaviors, as 37% are increasingly shopping for deals and 33% buy essentials as usual but limit discretionary spending.

In addition to rising mental/emotional well-being concerns (56%, +19 points vs. April 2025), concerns around being able to cover potential high healthcare costs in retirement and advancements in AI and automation threatening job/income are increasing (58%, +11 points and 48%, +12 points vs. April 2025, respectively).

Although the behaviors of the Financially Healthy remain forward-looking, underlying concerns can impact the more financially well-off working American households.

**Workforce Financial Stability Score by month**




**May 2026 - % describes current shopping behavior**

| | |
|---|---|
| I buy the essentials as usual, but limit my discretionary spending | 48% |
| I am increasingly shopping for deals (e.g. looking for a sale, using a coupon, buying in bulk, shopping at discount or wholesale retailers like Walmart or Costco) | 43% |
| I have switched to lower cost products/brands | 37% |
| I carry a credit card balance from month-to-month to pay for essentials | 22% |

## Quarterly scores

# Pressure builds on household finances

**Financially Stable – balancing short-term friction with long-term goals.**

The Financially Stable WFSS of 56.1 is slightly ahead of last year (+0.5 points vs. Q2 2025), though shifts in core components indicate growing strain. Reduced ability to manage expenses between paychecks (-2.6 points vs. Q2 2025), and ability to withstand unexpected expenses (-1.0 points vs. Q2 2025) suggest that short-term financial pressures are weighing more heavily on households.

This occurs as even as longer-term outlook rises. This segment saw increases across confidence doing what is needed to meet longer-term goals, and likelihood that they will reach personal retirement goals (+3.4 points and +2.0 points vs. Q2 2025, respectively). About half (51%) of Financially Stable working Americans believe they can still make progress toward long-term goals despite higher costs.

This segment continues to straddle the line between stability and vulnerability, suggesting that sustained economic pressure could push a portion of this segment into a more challenged position if conditions persist.

**Financially Challenged – limited progress as daily pressures persist.**

Financially Challenged working Americans continue to face financial constraints as their WFSS softens year over year and quarter over quarter (22.6, -0.2 points vs. Q2 2025, -0.3 points vs. Q1 2026). Eight in 10 (82%) consider themselves in a "survival mode" financial mindset, focusing on getting through the month. This can leave many feeling trapped by their current financial situation (82%). Covering everyday expenses is this segment's primary financial worry today (71%), likely fueled by elevated cost pressures.

Financial behaviors seen among this segment include carrying a credit card balance month-to-month to pay for regular expenses such as mortgage/rent, utilities, and groceries (28%), using the "Buy Now, Pay Later" option whenever possible (23%), and decreasing or stopping saving money (42%).

When it comes to forward thinking, only 10% of Financially Challenged working Americans are extremely or somewhat confident in their personal financial situation and outlook for the remainder of 2026. And 85% are very concerned or concerned about being able to save for retirement. The Financially Challenged are significantly less optimistic about their personal financial situation than other segments.

**June 2026 – concerned or very concerned about:**

| | TOTAL | CHALLENGED | STABLE | HEALTHY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rising prices on essential goods and services | 68% | 88% | 68% | 52% |
| Rising prices on gas/fuel | 68% | 86% | 70% | 52% |
| Rising prices on non-essential goods and services | 62% | 79% | 61% | 48% |

# So what?

## 1. Focus on value to relieve financial pressure

Peace of mind may no longer be sufficient for a workforce watching every dollar. Bring the math and price transparency, and position benefits as helpful toward short- and long-term financial goals, not just health emergencies. A simple, visual cost-benefit statement – for example, a monthly payroll deduction shown alongside the maximum benefit in a qualifying event – can help convert hesitation into enrollment. A short value proposition – "This is how this will help you" – can guide working Americans to the core value of each benefit. And with job security concerns rising, reinforcing benefit portability can also help increase perceived value.

## 2. Emphasize incremental steps

Some working Americans may feel overwhelmed by fully reassessing their benefits, so focus on one meaningful next action – especially for those under financial pressure, who are more likely to act when guidance is simple. For example, position group accident insurance or group critical illness insurance as a potential low-cost starting point that can help reduce a health deductible gap for employees focused on day-to-day essentials, and for employees thinking longer-term, position group whole life insurance as foundational permanent protection that can build cash value over time. The incremental entry point may lower resistance and build momentum toward fuller coverage.

## 3. Build in the credit card connection

Communications can acknowledge that some workers may be relying on credit cards to manage everyday expenses, and that out-of-pocket costs from a qualifying event might add to that burden. Lead with that shared reality – it signals the message comes from understanding employees' financial pressures, not from a transaction. From there, connect group accident insurance or group hospital indemnity insurance as a tool designed to help cover those out-of-pocket costs, which may reduce the need to finance them on credit.

## Generations up-close

# Distinct financial priorities emerge across life stages

**Older Gen Z – higher confidence, lower pressure, and active engagement.**

Older Gen Z continues to report the strongest financial outlook, with a WFSS of 65.3 (+3.5 points vs. Q2 2025) and notable gains across key measures such as confidence doing what is needed to meet longer-term goals (+5.9 points vs. Q2 2025), overall net worth (+5.2 points vs. Q2 2025), and ability to help others financially (+4.5 points vs .Q2 2025).

With lower levels of concern about rising costs (essential and non-essential goods and services, gas/fuel) compared to other generations (about 6 in 10 vs. about 7 in 10), this group has grown up in an environment of inflation and may be more accustomed to higher costs.

Still, this group is most active in many promising financial behaviors. So far this year, compared to other generations, Older Gen Z is more likely to be saving (80%), investing in the stock market (56%), or using a resource for information/discuss finances (91%). This includes using technology-first financial tools, artificial intelligence (AI) tools or resources such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini, or Microsoft Copilot (36%), and social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and LinkedIn (35%). Their lower concern around risks such as debt and unexpected expenses, as well as a longer time horizon, may suggest a mindset that is continuing to develop in terms of long-term financial trade-offs.

**Workforce Financial Stability Score Q2 2026** (vs. Q2 2025)

| OLDER GEN Z | MILLENNIAL | GEN X | YOUNGER BABY BOOMER |
|---|---|---|---|
| 65.3 | 61.5 | 51.8 | 55.5 |
| +3.5 | +1.0 | -1.0 | +3.2 |

Generations up-close

# Distinct financial priorities emerge across life stages

**Millennials – managing the everyday while planning ahead.**

Millennials continue to demonstrate steady financial performance, with a WFSS of 61.5 and the only decline being the ability to manage expenses between paychecks (-0.4 points vs. Q2 2025). They are striving to strike a balance between shorter-term and longer-term financial priorities, including covering everyday expenses, managing unexpected expenses (non-medical), and saving enough for retirement.

Cost pressures are a central concern, and Millennials appear to be actively flexing through both behavioral changes (e.g., buy essentials as usual but limit discretionary spending, increasingly shop for deals, switch to lower cost products/brands.) and use of available resources for information/discuss finances (e.g., family/friend/colleague, bank, AI tool/resource).

While they have grown more confident in their financial literacy and knowledge (71%, +10 points vs. May 2025), they also show increasing interest in learning more about finances, including budgeting, saving, investing, reducing debt, protection and insurance, preparing for retirement (76%, +7 points vs. May 2025). More millennials express that having access to financial education tools and resources to improve their financial knowledge – including budgeting, saving, investing, reducing debt, protection and insurance, and preparing for retirement – could help improve their feelings of financial well-being (40%, +7 points vs. April 2025), as could working with a financial professional (37%, +7 points vs. April 2025) This segment shows strong engagement in financial decision-making.

**Q2 2026 – WFSS COMPONENTS** (vs. Q2 2025)

| | OLDER GEN Z | MILLENNIAL | GEN X | YOUNGER BABY BOOMER |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| My ability to manage my expenses between paychecks | **69.3** +1.8 | **66.6** -0.4 | **60.0** -2.7 | **67.5** +2.4 |
| My ability to withstand unexpected expenses | **60.2** +0.2 | **59.3** +0.2 | **50.2** -1.8 | **55.2** +2.5 |
| My ability to help others financially | **59.7** +4.5 | **55.3** +1.4 | **44.8** -1.3 | **48.9** +3.5 |
| My overall net worth | **62.2** +5.2 | **59.6** +1.1 | **51.7** -0.6 | **55.0** +1.9 |
| Confidence household is doing what is needed to meet longer-term goals | **70.0** +5.9 | **62.3** +2.1 | **48.9** +0.3 | **50.1** +4.0 |
| Likelihood will reach personal retirement goals | **70.6** +2.6 | **67.2** +1.2 | **57.8** 0.0 | **59.5** +4.3 |

## Generations up-close

# Distinct financial priorities emerge across life stages

**Gen X – carrying the weight of competing priorities and economic stressors.**

Gen X stands out with the lowest WFSS (51.8) among the generations, and the only one to decrease vs. Q2 2025 (-1.0 points). This was impacted by declining ability to manage expenses between paychecks (-2.7 points vs. Q2 2025) and ability to withstand unexpected costs (-1.8 points vs. Q2 2025).

Financial emergency preparedness has weakened, with more feeling like they don't have enough money saved in their emergency fund (57%, +10 points vs. June 2025) and more indicating they do not have an emergency fund at all (17%, +6 points vs. June 2025).

Broader economic pressures also continue to intensify levels of concern, such as rising prices on gas/fuel (73%, +18 points vs. June 2025), labor shortages (42%, +11 points vs. June 2025), rising prices on non-essential goods and services (67%, +7 points vs. June 2025), and rising prices on essential goods and services (73%, +6 points vs. June 2025).

Concern is higher among Gen X than other generations across a range of financial metrics, including being able to afford both regular monthly and unexpected expenses and saving for the future and retirement. This reflects the cumulative impact of competing financial obligations.

**Younger Baby Boomers – increasingly focused on what comes next.**

Younger Baby Boomers are showing WFSS improvement (55.5, +3.2 points vs. Q2 2025), supported by gains in every financial metric. The highest gains were in confidence doing what is needed to meet longer-term goals (+4.0 points vs. Q2 2025) and likelihood will reach personal retirement goals (+4.3 points vs. Q2 2025).

Despite these gains, only 43% of younger Baby Boomers say that compared to last year, their current financial situation is better. Only 31% feel confident they are on track for retirement or long-term security, while 74% are concerned about not having enough saved for long-term care needs in retirement. Younger Baby Boomers were the most likely generation to carry a credit card balance from one month to the next (55%), and only 58% contributed to their retirement accounts since the beginning of the year.

Their top financial concerns today are split across saving enough for retirement, unexpected expenses (non-medical), and unexpected medical bills. As the group closest to potential retirement, their financial outlook is becoming more closely tied to their ability to manage their longer-term financial position.

**June 2026 – Since the beginning of the year, which of these, if any, have you used for information about or discussed finances?**

| | OLDER GEN Z | MILLENNIAL | GEN X | YOUNGER BABY BOOMER |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| My bank | 51% | 41% | 31% | 25% |
| Family member, friend, or colleague | 48% | 51% | 41% | 35% |
| Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool or resources (e.g. ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot) | 36% | 31% | 19% | 12% |
| Social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, LinkedIn) | 35% | 27% | 13% | 13% |
| Website, blog, or news source | 27% | 21% | 22% | 5% |
| My financial professional | 17% | 26% | 18% | 30% |
| A financial guidance resource provided through my employer | 17% | 16% | 12% | 13% |
| Not sure / I have not used information or discussed finances | 9% | 12% | 26% | 28% |

# Distinct financial priorities emerge across life stages

*"I am slowly building up my savings, but I am taking steps to maintain my current cost of living and not raise it even as my salary increases."*

**Financially Healthy, Older Gen Z, Female**

*"We have enough savings to last us a long while. We are stable at our jobs. We can easily pay our bills and save. The state of the country right now obviously put a little worry in us however as of right now we are exactly where we planned to be. "*

**Financially Healthy, Millennial, Male**

*"I make more than I ever have in my life. But I have no money for a down payment and no savings, because I'm paying medical bills and the cost of housing is way too high for the amount of money I make."*

**Financially Challenged, Gen X, Female**

*"Inflation has degraded my savings I was using for emergency funds. The stock market is volatile and has slowed my 401k progress. "*

**Financially Stable, Younger Baby Boomer, Male**

# So what?

## 1. Integrate voluntary benefits into older Gen Z onboarding process

Older Gen Z demonstrates an actionable enrollment opportunity: they are financially engaged; they are establishing habits they may carry for decades; and they respond to digital-first, peer-referenced messaging. Integrate voluntary benefits into the early-career employee onboarding sequence as a financial wellness decision (not simply as an HR form) with tech-driven tools like mobile calculators and short-form video content. Early enrollment among older Gen Z employees at lower rate-lock ages may drive long-term policy retention and help portfolio stability.

## 2. Build a Millennial "life event triggers" communications plan

Millennials show increased interest in financial education. Focus on improving financial acumen and being proactive rather than reactive with a life event trigger communications framework, where moments become prompts for voluntary benefits conversations. These moments can include life stages (e.g., got married, birth of a child), or related benefits transactions, (e.g., updates a dependent on file, changes a beneficiary designation). Share helpful, timely, actionable resources to increase financial knowledge and well-being.

## 3.Offer what Gen X can depend on when everyone is depending on Gen X

Gen X now registers the lowest WFSS of any generation. They are in a unique life stage where they can be facing simultaneous financial pressure from dependents at home, aging parents, career plateau concerns, and proximity to retirement (many without sufficient savings). An unexpected health event can create costs that extend well beyond medical bills, including disrupting work and caregiving responsibilities. Voluntary benefits packages that can be architected specifically to meet Gen X's unique needs can help protect against the financial ripple effects of multiple simultaneous responsibilities.

## 4. Develop a "retirement is not one decision" messaging track for younger Baby Boomers

With many concerned about long-term care costs in retirement and few feeling confident they're on track, the traditional single-decision retirement conversation may be insufficient. Develop a multi-benefit retirement readiness narrative that positions voluntary benefits as sequential financial decisions rather than a one-time enrollment choice – e.g., disability income insurance as income protection through the final earning years; group critical illness insurance to help protect retirement savings in the case of a covered critical illness; and group whole life insurance as a portable asset that can continue to build cash value beyond the employer relationship.

## Spotlight insight

# Voluntary benefits could help alleviate pressure

**Voluntary benefits play an increasing role in the feeling of financial well-being.**

About 2 in 3 working Americans (62%) say that having access to voluntary benefits somewhat or significantly improves their financial mindset. Availability and affordability of voluntary benefits paid through an employer (e.g. group life insurance or disability income insurance) is an influential part of financial well-being for an increasing number of working Americans (46%, +4 points vs. April 2025).

Additionally, more working Americans report that products can be used to supplement the gap in their insurance coverage or high deductible (e.g. help pay for expenses related to an injury, critical illness, or hospital stay) might help improve their financial well-being (24%, +6 points vs. April 2025).

As their role in financial well-being expands, voluntary benefits have also increased in perceived value. More working Americans say voluntary benefits* are very valuable or valuable (+8 to +12 points vs. April 2025).

Generally, those who enrolled in voluntary benefits** for 2026 are appreciative that their employer offers the benefit (88%) and find comfort having this coverage (86%). In fact, 86% plan to continue this coverage next year. Ultimately, voluntary benefits are seen as an increasingly important source of financial security and peace of mind, helping more working Americans feel prepared for what life may bring.

However, when thinking about sources to help choose the right voluntary benefits, only about 6 in 10 working Americans trust a benefits advisor or broker (65%), the benefits team at their employer (64%), resources through the benefit carrier (61%), and online tools and calculators provided by their employer (59%). Trust in these sources is higher among the Financially Healthy (72% - 77%) and lower among the Financially Challenged (50% - 53%).

* Value of the following voluntary benefits: Group Whole Life Insurance, Disability Income Insurance, Group Critical Illness Insurance, Group Accident Insurance, Group Hospital Indemnity Insurance

** Enrollment in one of the following voluntary benefits: Group Whole Life Insurance, Disability Income Insurance, Group Critical Illness Insurance, Group Accident Insurance, Group Hospital Indemnity Insurance

### Q2 – % has a lot/moderate influence on feeling of financial well-being

Availability and affordability of voluntary benefits you pay for through your employer (e.g., life or disability income insurance)

| Q2 2023 (JUNE) | Q2 2024 (MAY) | Q2 2025 (APRIL) | Q2 2026 (APRIL) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 31% | 40% | 42% | 46% |

### May 2026 – % significantly/somewhat improves financial mindset

Having access to voluntary benefits that you pay for through your employer (e.g. group accident insurance, group critical illness insurance, group permanent life insurance)

| TOTAL | CHALLENGED | STABLE | HEALTHY |
|---|---|---|---|
| 62% | 41% | 57% | 80% |

### April 2026 – % describe how feel about having coverage (of those enrolled in voluntary benefits* through employer for coverage in 2026)

This benefit is worth having

| TOTAL | CHALLENGED | STABLE | HEALTHY |
|---|---|---|---|
| 52% | 46% | 51% | 56% |

* Select voluntary benefits = group critical illness insurance, group accident insurance, group hospital indemnity insurance, group whole life insurance, or disability income insurance

### Spotlight insight

# Voluntary benefits could help alleviate pressure

**Voluntary benefits are well understood by Financially Healthy working Americans, though engagement lags.**

Financially Healthy working Americans are the most likely to be enrolled in at least one voluntary benefit** through their employer for coverage in 2026 (77%). Among the segments, they are also the ones to see higher value and have a better understanding of voluntary benefits. Further, 80% of Financial Healthy working Americans describe having access to voluntary benefits that they pay for through their employer significantly or somewhat improves their financial mindset.

But, the highest-trust, highest-enrolled segment has an engagement leak. Of the Financially Healthy enrolled in at least one voluntary benefit**, 61% say they often forget they have this coverage. Many (84%) say it would be helpful for their employer or policy provider to remind them about their coverage throughout the year, indicating they may be open to receive information about their benefits outside of open enrollment periods.

**Voluntary benefits gain relevance for Financially Challenged working Americans, but budget pressures drive trade-offs.**

Compared to last year, an increasing number of the Financially Challenged segment finds the availability and affordability of voluntary benefits they pay for through their employer (e.g. group life insurance or disability income insurance) is an influential part of their financial well-being (44%, +10 points vs. April 2025). More Financially Challenged working Americans say voluntary benefits are very valuable or valuable compared to last year.

However, at 58%, this segment has the lowest enrollment in voluntary benefits** through their employer for coverage in 2026. Cost may likely be a factor for this segment who is pressured to focus on the day to day and "must-haves", and less on longer-term or "nice-to-haves". When it comes to financial trade-offs, this group is almost 3 times more likely (31%) to choose what helps them most right now (even if it makes securing their financial future harder) compared to choosing what will help secure their financial future (even if it makes it harder right now) (11%). Voluntary benefits may hold increased appeal for this segment when positioned as a tool for helping navigate unexpected financial expenses as their ability to withstand them weakens.

* Value of the following voluntary benefits: Group Whole Life Insurance, Disability Income Insurance, Group Critical Illness Insurance, Group Accident Insurance, Group Hospital Indemnity Insurance

** Enrollment in one of the following voluntary benefits: Group Whole Life Insurance, Disability Income Insurance, Group Critical Illness Insurance, Group Accident Insurance, Group Hospital Indemnity Insurance

**April 2026 – % agree completely/somewhat (of those enrolled in voluntary benefits* through employer for coverage in 2026)**

I find comfort knowing I have this coverage

| TOTAL | CHALLENGED | STABLE | HEALTHY |
|---|---|---|---|
| 86% | 83% | 84% | 89% |

I appreciate that my employer offers this voluntary benefit

| TOTAL | CHALLENGED | STABLE | HEALTHY |
|---|---|---|---|
| 88% | 82% | 86% | 93% |

I plan to continue this coverage next year

| TOTAL | CHALLENGED | STABLE | HEALTHY |
|---|---|---|---|
| 86% | 83% | 84% | 89% |

I often forget that I have this coverage

| TOTAL | CHALLENGED | STABLE | HEALTHY |
|---|---|---|---|
| 55% | 40% | 55% | 61% |

It would be helpful for my employer or policy provider to remind me of this coverage

| TOTAL | CHALLENGED | STABLE | HEALTHY |
|---|---|---|---|
| 76% | 60% | 74% | 84% |

* Select voluntary benefits = group critical illness insurance, group accident insurance, group hospital indemnity insurance, group whole life insurance, or disability income insurance

# So what?

## 1. Trust is the enrollment gap's hidden driver

It can be important to have trusted sources of information about voluntary benefits options, and for some working Americans, there is a trust gap. This is not simply an education challenge. Put emphasis on visible, trust-building behaviors with employees. Well-being touchpoints, plain-language benefit explanations co-branded with the employer company, and in-person enrollment support are all strategic trust-builders that may have an enrollment conversion payoff. Access to voluntary benefits is increasingly an influential part of financial well-being. Use this momentum to shift the conversation from transaction focused to value focused engagement as another way to build credibility and trust.

## 2. From open enrollment to year-round benefits stewardship

Many Financially Healthy working Americans enrolled in voluntary benefits forget they have coverage, and they are open to year-round reminders. Create additional touchpoints per year that reinforce the benefit's value rather than an annual transaction to address the coverage-forgetting pattern. For example, connect a voluntary benefit to a timely, real-world use case by connecting group accident insurance to back-to-school sports and activity season. Voluntary benefits strategy is not just about acquisition but also about activation: converting enrolled employees from passive holders into active, engaged users who feel the value of their coverage year-round.

## 3. For the Financially Challenged, make the value feel immediately relevant

Position voluntary benefits as tools that can help employees manage unexpected financial shocks that could otherwise derail current household finances, not just future risks. For Financially Challenged workers balancing immediate needs with limited financial cushions, messaging that emphasizes how voluntary benefits can help cover out-of-pocket expenses from a covered accident, illness, or hospital stay may resonate more strongly than traditional protection-focused narratives. Lead with "how does this help me if something happens next month?" rather than "how does this protect my future?". Linking voluntary benefits to everyday financial resilience may help the message reach the workers who could benefit most.

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The MassMutual Workforce Stability Score measures the changing attitudes and financial outlook of working Americans. Commissioned by MassMutual, the research began in June 2022 and is conducted online, monthly, among a nationally representative sample of 1,000 U.S. middle-market employees.

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