

Redefining Legacy

Insights into how Americans are preparing for the future, navigating technology, and embracing change.

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The Most Comprehensive Study to Date

No longer confined to legal documents and financial wealth, estate planning has become a reflection of evolving cultural values, technological advancements, and shifting economic realities. As younger generations redefine legacy, financial uncertainty reshapes long-term planning, and AI enters the conversation, Americans are navigating estate planning in entirely new ways.

This year's Trust & Will 2025 Estate Planning Report—our most comprehensive study to date—uncovers striking trends that challenge traditional assumptions. With 10,000 respondents, we explore how estate planning intersects with financial anxiety, personal values, and even digital identity.

Key Findings

- **83% of Americans recognize the importance of estate planning—yet only 31% have a will.** Despite widespread awareness, the majority of Americans remain unprepared, with procrastination and misconceptions about wealth fueling inaction.
- **The American Dream is shifting—almost 60% of Americans don't believe in its most traditional pillar: economic opportunity.** While hard work and financial mobility once defined success, younger generations increasingly prioritize personal fulfillment, social impact, and even digital legacy over traditional wealth accumulation.
- **Estate planning is no longer just about people—62% of Americans believe pets should be treated with the same level of importance as humans in estate plans.** Younger generations lead this shift, with 69% of Gen Z believing pet care should be formally documented.
- **A growing number of Americans are choosing non-family members as their executors, trustees, and guardians.** Nearly 1 in 4 Millennials and Gen Z respondents prefer trusted friends or professionals over relatives, reflecting evolving views on family, trust, and responsibility.
- **AI's role in estate planning is gaining momentum—20% of Americans already trust AI-generated legal advice more than human attorneys, and 34% trust it the same.** Wealthier and younger Americans are leading the charge in adopting AI-driven tools for financial and legacy planning.
- **Financial anxiety is at an all-time high—49% of Americans are more concerned about their financial future than they were last year.** Surprisingly, this concern is highest not just among lower-income individuals but also among those earning between \$500K–\$1M, suggesting that wealth does not eliminate uncertainty.

Key Findings Cont.

- **Inflation has reshaped long-term planning —78% of Americans say it has made achieving their life goals harder.** From homeownership to retirement, rising costs are forcing Americans to rethink their financial futures.
- **Nearly 1 in 5 Americans (19%) believe they won't leave anything meaningful behind when they die.** This sense of legacy uncertainty is twice as common among lower-income and less-educated individuals, highlighting deep disparities in wealth-building and estate planning access. **This underscores the need to reshape estate planning—helping all Americans realize that legacy is about more than just wealth.**

At its core, estate planning is about preparing for the future and protecting what matters most. However, the future looks different for every generation. Whether it's digital legacies, financial security, or safeguarding loved ones—Americans are expanding their definition of estate planning, ensuring that their legacy is about more than just money.

This report reveals not just the numbers but the stories behind them—illuminating the challenges, motivations, and priorities shaping how Americans plan for what comes next.

Who Has an Estate Plan? A Demographic Breakdown

Despite widespread recognition of estate planning's importance, most Americans still lack essential legal documents. A will—the most common estate planning document—is held by just 31% of Americans, while only 11% have a trust. In total, 55% of Americans have no estate plan at all, leaving their wishes—and their loved ones—unprotected.

But this lack of preparedness isn't evenly distributed. Age, income, race, and gender all play a role in who is most likely to have a plan in place.

Older generations, wealthier households, and men tend to be more prepared, while younger adults, lower-income individuals, and women lag behind.

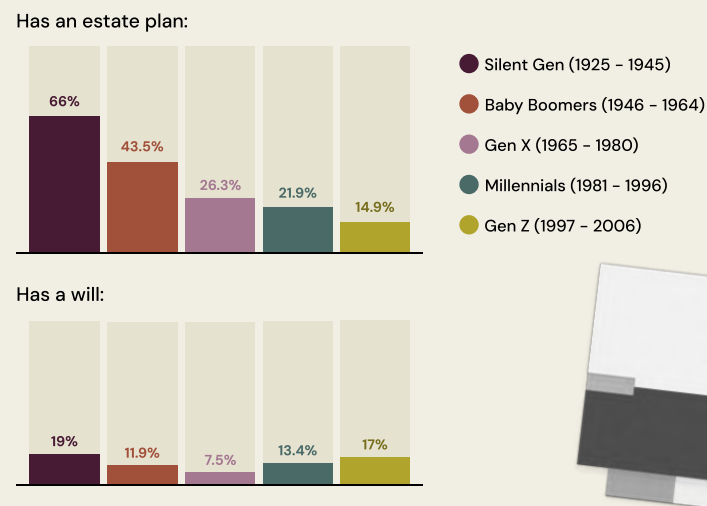
Understanding these demographic disparities sheds light on why some Americans prioritize estate planning while others put it off.

Generational Divide: Older Americans are More Prepared

Estate planning readiness increases with age, and younger generations continue to fall behind in actual preparedness.

- **Silent Generation:** 66% have a will, making them the most prepared age group.
- **Baby Boomers:** 44% have a will, still significantly higher than younger generations.
- **Gen X:** 26% have a will, slightly below the national average.
- **Millennials:** Just 22% have a will, and over 60% have no estate planning documents at all.
- **Gen Z:** Only 15% have a will, making them the least prepared generation.

Who has an estate plan by generation.



This isn't just about age—it's about perceived urgency. The majority of respondents believe estate planning should start between ages 30–39, yet the actual average age of estate plan creation is 42. Younger adults acknowledge its importance but struggle to take action, often citing procrastination or the belief that they don't yet have enough assets to warrant a plan.

Income Disparities: Higher Earners are Far More Likely to Have a Plan

Estate planning preparedness is strongly correlated with income. Among those earning \$250,000–\$499,999 per year, 74% say estate planning is ‘very important,’ the highest of any income group. In contrast, only 33% of individuals earning under \$25,000 view estate planning as ‘very important’.

This difference is reflected in document ownership. Those with household incomes over \$1M are twice as likely to have a will (66%) compared to those earning under \$25,000 (33%).

Interestingly, both income and education level influence estate planning perceptions in the same way. Higher-income individuals tend to believe estate planning should begin earlier in life, while lower-income respondents are more likely to delay it.

Similarly, respondents with lower education levels tend to push estate planning later, while those with higher education see it as a priority sooner.

- 22% of respondents with a household income over \$1M think estate planning should start between 19–29 years old VS only 13% of respondents with a household income under \$25,000.
- 26% of respondents with a doctorate degree think estate planning should start between 30–39 years old VS only 17% of those with less than a high school degree.

This data highlights a critical reality: estate planning is not just a financial tool, but a mindset. Wealthier individuals recognize its importance earlier in life, whereas lower-income and less-educated respondents tend to delay it, often believing it’s unnecessary for them.

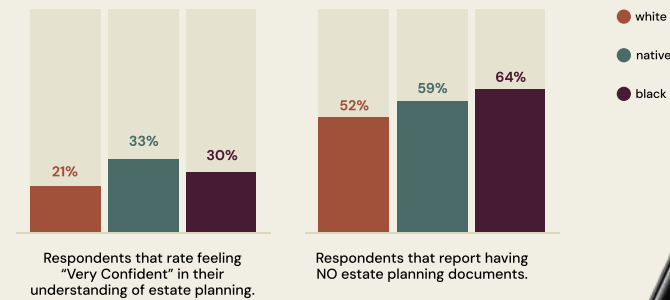
Racial Insights: Estate Planning Gaps Reflect Systemic Barriers

Estate planning adoption varies significantly across racial demographics, revealing disparities that likely stem from historical and systemic factors, financial literacy differences, and access to professional guidance.

White and Native respondents are the most likely to have estate planning documents. White individuals report the highest percentage of wills at 34%, surpassing the overall average of 31%. Native respondents have lower-than-average will ownership (29%) but the lowest percentage of individuals without any estate planning documents (51%), indicating a stronger overall adoption of estate planning tools.

In contrast, Black and Hispanic respondents are the least likely to have estate plans. 64% of Black respondents and 62% of Hispanic respondents report having no estate planning documents, significantly higher than the

The Confidence vs. Action Paradox



CALLOUT

51% of black respondents think it's 'very important' to have an estate plan vs only 46% of white respondents.

overall average. This underscores potential financial, legal, and informational barriers that have historically limited estate planning access for these groups.

Asian respondents stand out for their preference for trusts. 18% of Asian individuals have a trust, the highest percentage among all racial groups and notably above the 16% overall average. This trend suggests that among those who engage in estate planning, Asian individuals may prioritize asset protection and long-term financial structuring through trusts rather than wills.

Gender Divide: Men are More Prepared than Women

Men are more likely than women to have estate planning documents across all categories. 34% of men have a will, compared to 29% of women, and 15% of men have a trust, compared to only 9% of women. Additionally, women are more likely to have no estate planning documents at all (58% vs. 50% for men).

This disparity may stem from traditional financial roles—men are more likely to be primary earners and financial decision-makers, while women, particularly those with care giving responsibilities, may prioritize immediate family needs over long-term financial planning. However, this trend is shifting. As more women become primary earners and financial decision-makers, we may see the estate planning gender gap continue to close in the coming years.

Political Differences: Republicans are More Likely to Have an Estate Plan

Political affiliation also correlates with estate planning preparedness. 36% of Republicans have a will, compared to 31% of Democrats and 28% of Independents. Additionally, Republicans have the lowest percentage of individuals without estate planning documents (49%), whereas 58% of Independents remain unprepared.

While political ideology does not inherently determine financial behaviors, estate planning's emphasis on personal responsibility and wealth protection may resonate more strongly with conservative-leaning respondents.

Regional & Community Trends: Where You Live Matters

Suburban residents are the most prepared for estate planning, with 35% having a will and only 51% lacking any estate planning documents, outperforming both urban and rural populations.

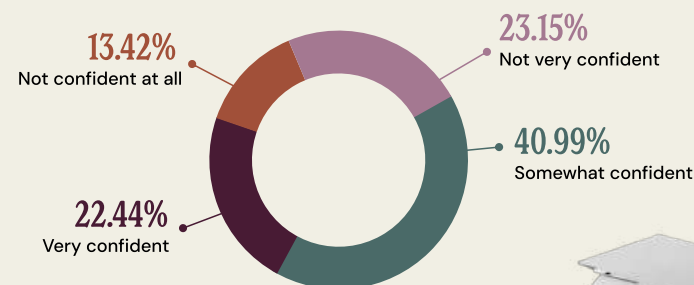
Rural communities lag behind in estate planning adoption, particularly regarding trusts—only 8% of rural respondents have a trust, compared to 13% of urban and suburban residents. Meanwhile, the West region leads in trust ownership (17%) but has the lowest percentage of wills (27%), indicating a regional preference for trust-based planning.

Confidence vs. Action: The Estate Planning Paradox

As we've seen, estate planning is widely acknowledged as important, yet many Americans remain unprepared. A significant portion of the population expresses confidence in their understanding of estate planning, but this confidence does not always translate into action. The data reveals a stark contradiction—while many individuals believe they know enough about estate planning, they still lack the necessary legal documents to protect their assets and loved ones. This gap between perceived knowledge and actual preparedness underscores a critical issue: estate planning is not just about awareness, but about taking concrete steps.

How confident are you in your understanding of estate planning and its documents?

Such as wills, trusts, and powers of attorney



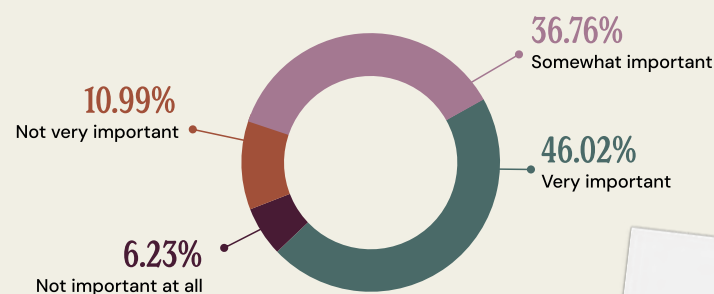
CALLOUT

Less than 1/4 of the population is very confident in their understanding of estate planning. This data highlights the need to make estate planning education more accessible for all.



How important is it to you to have an estate plan?

Either a will or a trust



CALLOUT

While the majority of respondents consider estate planning to be important, only 31% say they have a will and 55% have no documents at all.



Do Americans Really Understand Estate Planning?

Confidence in estate planning knowledge varies significantly by demographics, with certain groups expressing high levels of self-assurance despite having little or no actual preparation in place. Education plays a key role—respondents with a doctorate or higher were the most confident, with 34% stating they feel “very confident” in their understanding of estate planning. In contrast, only 18% of those with less than a high school degree reported the same. Interestingly, confidence in estate planning knowledge increases with every level of education, even though actual estate planning adoption does not always follow the same trend.

The Confidence vs. Preparedness Gap

One finding the data continues to show is that

knowledge does not necessarily translate into action. While some groups express confidence in their estate planning knowledge, many still fail to take the necessary steps to secure their legacy.

Education plays a major role in this gap. Individuals with higher education levels are significantly more likely to claim confidence in estate planning—yet they are also more likely to procrastinate.

- Among those with a doctorate or master’s degree, procrastination is the top reason for not having an estate plan—with 52% and 45% of respondents, respectively, admitting they have simply put it off.
- Conversely, those with a high school diploma or less are more likely to say estate planning is unnecessary—34% of these respondents cited a lack of perceived relevance as the reason for not creating an estate plan.

The Confidence vs. Preparedness Gap Cont.

This paradox is also evident in racial differences. Black and Hispanic respondents report higher confidence in estate planning knowledge than white respondents, despite lower rates of adoption.

- 30% of Black respondents and 28% of Hispanic respondents say they feel 'very confident' in their knowledge, compared to only 21% of white respondents.
- Additionally, 51% of Black respondents say estate planning is 'very important,' exceeding the 46% of white respondents who say the same.
- Yet 64% of Black respondents and 62% of Hispanic respondents have no estate planning documents, compared to 52% of white respondents.

This data highlights an intriguing contradiction: while Black and Hispanic respondents are more likely to report confidence in their understanding of estate planning, white

respondents are more likely to have taken action by creating wills or other documents. It could suggest that systemic barriers are inhibiting action for minority groups.

Even high-income earners fall victim to estate planning inertia. Those making \$250,000–\$499,999 per year were the most likely to cite procrastination (62%) as their primary reason for not having an estate plan. This underscores that estate planning is not just about financial resources—it is often a matter of behavioral psychology. Many individuals recognize its importance yet hesitate to take action until a major life event forces their hand.

The confidence-preparedness gap is further reflected in how often people update their estate plans. Even among those who do have an estate plan, many fail to keep it current. Younger respondents, particularly Gen Z and Millennials, are more likely to update their estate plans frequently—

- 33% of Gen Z updates annually.
- 13% of the Silent Generation updates annually.

The Confidence vs. Preparedness Gap Cont.

This suggests that younger individuals may be more aware of the need for ongoing estate planning, even if they are less likely to have a plan in place to begin with.

The key takeaway is clear: awareness and confidence alone do not guarantee action. While estate planning knowledge is essential, the data suggests that behavioral patterns, systemic barriers, and psychological roadblocks prevent many Americans from following through—even when they acknowledge its importance.

Probate Awareness: A Knowledge Gap with Consequences

Probate—the court-supervised process of settling an estate after death—is a core element of estate planning. Yet awareness of

probate varies dramatically by both generation and income level.

Older generations are significantly more familiar with probate than younger ones. The Silent Generation is 93% more likely to understand probate than Gen Z. Only 1% of the Silent Generation reported being unfamiliar with probate, compared to 14% of Gen Z respondents, who admitted they “don’t know what probate is at all.”

Income plays an equally significant role in probate awareness. Lower-income respondents are twice as likely to be unfamiliar with probate compared to higher-income individuals. Among those earning less than \$25,000 per year, 14% stated they don’t know what probate is, compared to just 6% of those earning over \$1M.

These knowledge gaps highlight a major challenge in estate planning: even among individuals who are aware of probate, many fail to plan ahead, leaving their estates vulnerable to the costly and time-consuming probate process.

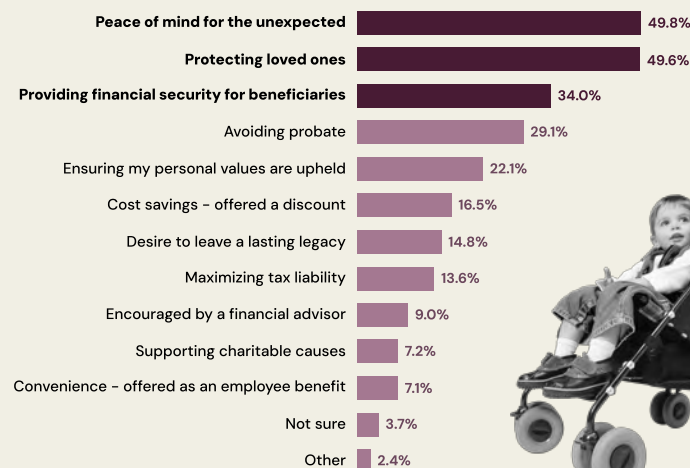
Motivators— What Drives People to Create an Estate Plan

Estate planning is often perceived as a process reserved for the wealthy, but the data reveals a far more universal motivation: love, responsibility, and peace of mind. While financial security is a factor, people are primarily driven to create an estate plan to protect their loved ones and ensure their wishes are honored.

The Top Motivators

Among the respondents who already have an estate plan, the two most cited reasons were peace of mind for the unexpected (50%) and protecting loved ones (50%)

What motivated you to create your estate plan?



These responses significantly outweigh financial motivators such as providing financial security for heirs (34%) and avoiding probate (29%). Even fewer respondents cited minimizing tax liability (14%) or desire to leave a lasting legacy (15%) as key reasons, further reinforcing that estate planning is primarily about ensuring stability for loved ones, not wealth preservation.

The Top Motivators Cont.

While charitable giving (7%) and employer-provided estate planning benefits (7%) ranked among the less common reasons for creating an estate plan, these numbers highlight an important opportunity. A meaningful percentage of individuals are already motivated by philanthropy and workplace benefits, signaling room for growth as more organizations prioritize estate planning as part of financial wellness initiatives. As awareness increases and accessibility improves, charitable giving and employer-sponsored estate plans could become even more significant drivers of estate planning adoption

The Role of Family: Parents Prioritize Protection

The presence of children significantly impacts estate planning decisions. Parents—especially those with children both over and under 18—are the most likely to prioritize estate planning.

62% of parents cite protecting loved ones as their primary motivator, exceeding the overall average of 50%, and 44% cite financial security for heirs and beneficiaries, again significantly surpassing the overall average (34%).

For parents, estate planning is not optional—it is a necessary safeguard for their children's well-being. The trend is even more pronounced for those planning to have children in the future, who place greater emphasis on accessibility, with 16% citing workplace benefits and 18% citing cost savings as primary motivators. This highlights the growing demand for affordable, employer-sponsored estate planning solutions among younger individuals preparing for parenthood.

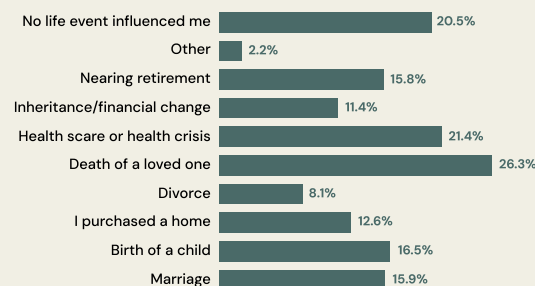
Life Events as Triggers: What Prompts People to Take Action?

While estate planning is often framed as a proactive decision, the data suggests that many people only take action after experiencing a major life event. The most common life event that prompted respondents to create their estate plan was the death of a loved one (26%).

Other key triggers include:

- Health scare or crisis (21%)
- Birth of a child (17%)
- Marriage (16%)
- Nearing retirement (16%)
- Purchasing a home (13%)
- Inheritance or other financial event (11%)

What major life events influenced your decision to create an estate plan?



LIFE TRIGGER BY INCOME LEVEL

High income earners (HHI between \$250K - \$499,999) are almost twice as likely to create their plans following marriage (33%), the birth of a child (36%), or purchasing a home (18%), all significantly exceeding the overall averages.

VS Lower income earners (Less than \$25K) are more influenced by the death of a loved one (30.9%) and health scares (28.2%).



Notably, 1 in 5 respondents (21%) reported that no single life event influenced their decision, suggesting that some individuals take a proactive approach to estate planning, while others wait for a crisis or major milestone before acting.

Generational Differences: Crisis vs. Milestone Planning

Estate planning triggers vary significantly across generations. Younger generations (Gen Z and Millennials) are more likely to create estate plans after major life milestones, such as:

- Marriage (25% of Millennials, 22% of Gen Z)
- Birth of a child (27% of Millennials, 23% of Gen Z)
- Purchasing a home (19% of Millennials, 22% of Gen Z)

These findings indicate that younger respondents view estate planning as a tool for future security rather than an immediate necessity. Older generations (Silent Generation and Baby Boomers), in contrast,

are more reactive, often creating estate plans after a personal or family crisis:

- Death of a loved one (25% of Baby Boomers, 20% of the Silent Generation)
- Health scare (18% of Baby Boomers, 17% of the Silent Generation)
- Inheritance or financial windfall (25% of Silent Generation, 23% of Baby Boomers)

This generational contrast suggests that older adults may not consider estate planning until they experience firsthand the complications of managing an estate.

Income and Estate Planning: Financial Stability as a Trigger

Interestingly, estate planning motivations also shift based on household income. Higher-income households (\$250,000–\$499,999) are nearly twice as likely as the overall population to create estate plans following marriage (33%), the birth of a child (36%) and purchasing a home (18%).

This suggests that for wealthier individuals, estate planning is often a proactive financial strategy tied to long-term wealth management. Lower-income households (under \$25,000), on the other hand, are more influenced by the death of a loved one (31%) and health scares (28%).

For these respondents, estate planning appears to be a reactive decision driven by loss or financial vulnerability rather than proactive financial planning.

Education's Influence on Estate Planning Triggers

Education level also plays a key role in estate planning behavior. Death of a loved one is the most significant trigger across all education levels, but particularly among those with less than a high school education (40% vs 26% overall) and individuals with some college, no degree (31% vs 26% overall).

Marriage and birth of a child are more likely to prompt estate planning among those with a bachelor's degree (19% and 17%) and a doctorate (23% and 19%).

This suggests that individuals with higher education levels may view estate planning as part of long-term financial planning rather than a reaction to life events.

Racial Differences in Estate Planning Triggers

Racial demographics further highlight how different communities approach estate planning. Native respondents are significantly more likely to be influenced by purchasing a home (37%) and the death of a loved one (42%). While Asian respondents were the only racial group to cite marriage as their top motivator (28%) even over death of a loved one (22%).

These findings suggest that historical and cultural values play a role in shaping estate planning priorities, with Native respondents reacting more to financial security and Asian respondents placing greater emphasis on family structure.

Surprisingly, estate planning is rarely driven by financial gain—it is a deeply personal decision rooted in love, responsibility, and major life events. Parents, in particular, place the highest importance on protecting loved ones and ensuring financial security for heirs. Younger generations are more likely to be influenced by cost and convenience, while older generations often take action only after experiencing a crisis. The data reinforces that estate planning is not just about managing wealth—it is about preparing for the unexpected, safeguarding loved ones, and ensuring one's wishes are honored.

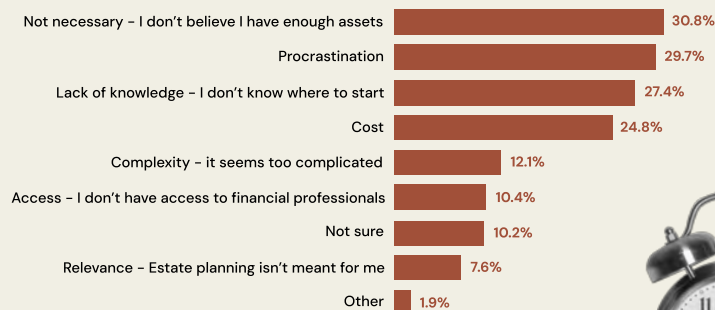
Barriers— Why Don't People Have an Estate Plan?

Despite the clear benefits of estate planning, the majority of Americans remain unprepared. The data reveals that a combination of perceived irrelevance, procrastination, financial concerns, and knowledge gaps prevent many from taking action. However, the reasons for inaction vary across income, education level, and racial groups, highlighting the behavioral and systemic barriers that shape estate planning decisions.

Perceived Irrelevance, Procrastination, and Cost

Among the respondents without any estate

What are your primary reasons for not having an estate plan?



TAKEAWAY

There is a wide range of reasons that people don't have an estate plan, but Trust & Will solves many of these barriers by simplifying the process and making estate planning affordable and accessible for all.



planning documents, the most common avoidance reasons are:

- “Not necessary—I don’t believe I have enough assets to warrant an estate plan” (31%)
- “Procrastination—I haven’t gotten around to it yet” (30%)
- “Lack of knowledge—I don’t know where to start” (27%)
- “Cost—I think it’s too expensive” (25%)

Perceived Irrelevance, Procrastination, and Cost Cont.

These responses highlight a fundamental challenge: many Americans still perceive estate planning as something only for the wealthy, rather than a necessary tool for protecting their wishes and loved ones. The procrastination factor suggests that even those who understand estate planning's importance struggle to prioritize it until it becomes urgent—a risky approach that can leave families unprotected in times of crisis.

The Role of Income and Education: Who Puts It Off and Who Feels Left Out?

Income and education level play a defining role in shaping estate planning attitudes. Higher-income households (\$150,000+) overwhelmingly cite procrastination as their top barrier, with 44% saying they “haven’t

gotten around to it yet.” This makes these respondents 83% more likely to blame procrastination compared to lower income households (24%).

Lower-income households (under \$50,000) are significantly more likely to believe estate planning is unnecessary. 33% cite “I don’t have enough assets to warrant an estate plan,” compared to wealthier households, where this misconception is far less common.

Education level follows a similar pattern. Those with a master’s or doctorate degree are the most likely to cite procrastination as their reason for inaction (49%), while individuals with a high school education or less are far more likely to believe estate planning simply “isn’t necessary” (29%).

These findings reinforce the psychological and financial divide in estate planning adoption. Higher-income and highly educated individuals recognize estate planning’s importance but often deprioritize it, while lower-income and less-educated individuals are more likely to believe estate planning isn’t relevant to them, perpetuating a cycle of inaction.

Racial Differences: Knowledge Gaps vs. Procrastination

As made evident across all the data, barriers to estate planning also vary significantly by race, with some groups struggling more with knowledge gaps while others simply put it off.

Asian (43%) and biracial (38%) respondents are far more likely to cite “lack of knowledge” as their primary reason for not having an estate plan, nearly twice as high as white respondents (26%) who cite the same reason. This suggests that education and accessibility gaps may be larger barriers in some minority communities.

White respondents, by contrast, are the most likely to say they’re simply procrastinating (33%) or that they don’t believe they have enough assets (32%)—even though they are more likely than other racial groups to actually have estate planning documents.

Black and Hispanic respondents fall in the middle, facing both knowledge gaps and accessibility concerns. They are less likely than white respondents to cite procrastination (25% and 20%, respectively) but are more likely to cite access as a major barrier. 12% of Black respondents and 13% of Hispanic respondents saying they don’t have access to trustworthy legal or financial professionals — 39% higher than the average. This suggests that, for these groups, estate planning is not just about awareness or financial readiness, but also about navigating systemic barriers to professional guidance.

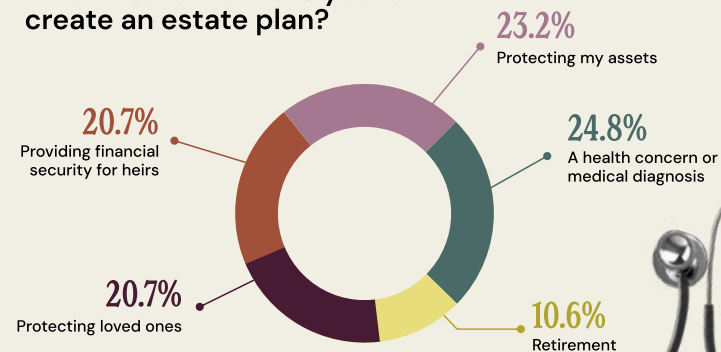
The Tipping Point: What Moves People from Inaction to Action

While barriers are significant, the data also reveals what would push non-planners to take action. When asked, “What would motivate you to create an estate plan?” the most common responses were:

- A health concern or medical diagnosis (25%)
- Protecting my assets (23%)
- Protecting loved ones (21%)
- Providing financial security for heirs (21%)

These findings reinforce that estate planning is often driven by life events rather than proactive decision-making.

What would motivate you to create an estate plan?



 CALLOUT

These findings confirm that **estate planning is a deeply personal decision, influenced by health, finances, and family priorities.** The challenge lies in helping individuals recognize that proactive planning is just as important—if not more so—than waiting until a crisis occurs.

Demographic Trends: Different Priorities Across Age, Income, and Gender

Older generations (Silent Generation & Baby Boomers) are primarily motivated by probate avoidance (28% and 22%) and health concerns (25%). This aligns with the reality that many older adults only begin estate planning when it becomes an immediate necessity.

Younger generations (Millennials & Gen Z), on the other hand, prioritize protecting assets (26%) and ensuring financial security for heirs (23%). They are also the most interested in workplace estate planning benefits (14% and 15%), signaling an opportunity for employer-provided solutions.

Higher-income households (\$500,000–\$999,999) prioritize protecting assets (67%) and minimizing tax liabilities (33%). In contrast, lower-income households (under \$25,000) are far more likely to be motivated by health

concerns (21%) and protecting loved ones (17%). This suggests that for wealthier individuals, estate planning is viewed as a financial tool, while for lower-income individuals, it is a protective necessity.

Men and women also differ in their top motivators. Women are most likely to be motivated by health concerns (26%), while men prioritize protecting their assets (26%).

These findings confirm that estate planning is a deeply personal decision, influenced by health, finances, and family priorities. The challenge lies in helping individuals recognize that proactive planning is just as important—if not more so—than waiting until a crisis occurs.

Overcoming Barriers and Closing the Estate Planning Gap

The reasons Americans don't have estate plans are as varied as the reasons they eventually create them. While some lack knowledge, others lack financial resources or access—and for many, estate planning simply feels like a “later” task. The data, however, paints a clear picture: those who wait until later often wait too long.

Addressing these barriers requires better education, accessibility, and proactive messaging. For lower-income and less-educated individuals, emphasizing the affordability and necessity of estate planning can help dispel the myth that it is only for the wealthy. For procrastinators, reframing estate planning as a way to protect loved ones today—rather than something to put off indefinitely—could be key to closing the gap.

Who Do Americans Trust to Manage Their Estate?

Estate planning is not just about drafting documents—it's about deciding who will carry out your final wishes. Who Americans choose to manage their estate reflects deep-seated values, cultural norms, and evolving generational attitudes toward trust and responsibility.

At the same time, trust is not just about naming an executor or trustee—it extends to who Americans are willing to discuss their plans with. Do people share their estate plans with loved ones? If not, why? What sparks disagreements in these conversations? These questions paint a more complete picture of

how Americans navigate trust in estate planning—not just in legal documents, but within their own families.

The Executor Divide: Younger Generations Look Beyond Family

Historically, estate planning has been a family affair, with most Americans choosing a trusted relative to act as executor or trustee. In 2025, this trend continues, with 63% of all respondents naming a family member to manage their estate. However, a generational shift is underway, signaling a growing willingness to look beyond family.

The Silent Generation is the most likely to entrust estate management to a family member (87%), reinforcing the long-standing tradition of keeping financial affairs within the family.

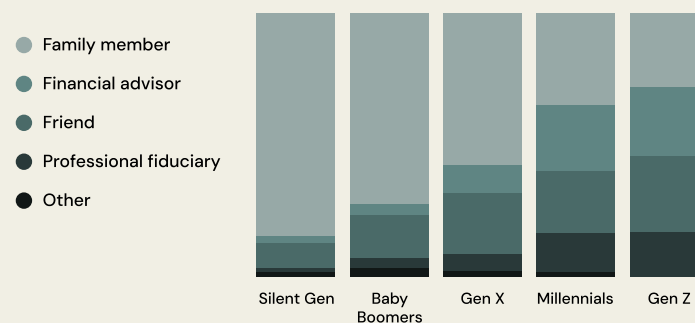
The Executor Divide: Younger Generations Look Beyond Family Cont.

Gen Z, however, is 50% less likely to choose family members (just 36%), instead turning to professional fiduciaries (26%) and financial advisors (23%)—more than ten times the rate of the Silent Generation (2%).

Millennials also show signs of this trend, with 38% opting for a professional, compared to just 4% of Baby Boomers.

This generational divergence suggests that trust in institutions may be growing among younger Americans, who view estate management as a financial task rather than a personal obligation. The digitization of financial services, declining reliance on traditional family structures, and increased financial complexity may all be contributing factors.

Who people trust to manage their estates, by generation.



TAKEAWAY

The Silent Generation is the most likely to entrust estate management to family (87%), reinforcing the long-standing tradition of keeping financial affairs within the family. Gen Z, however, is 50% less likely to choose family members (just 36%), instead turning to professional fiduciaries (26%) and financial advisors (23%)—more than ten times the rate of the Silent Generation (2%).

Gender and Trust: Men are More Likely to Choose Professionals

While women and men share many estate planning priorities, their approaches to naming an executor or trustee are notably different. Men are 69% more likely than women to select a professional (fiduciary or financial advisor), whereas women are 19% more likely to choose a family member (68% vs. 57%).

This gender-based contrast may reflect differing priorities in estate management. Women, who often take on caregiving roles, may place greater emphasis on family bonds and personal values in their selection process. Men, on the other hand, may prioritize expertise and efficiency, opting for professionals who can handle complex financial matters objectively.

Education and Urban Influence: Who Chooses Professionals?

Educational background and geographic location also shape estate management decisions.

Those with a high school degree or less are 41% more likely to choose a non-family member as their executor or trustee (25%) compared to those with a bachelor's degree or higher (18%). This suggests that individuals with less formal education may place greater trust in friends or loved ones outside their family, while those with higher education may feel more comfortable keeping estate responsibilities within the family circle.

One possible explanation is that individuals with higher education levels may have greater exposure to legal and financial systems, making them more confident in navigating estate planning within their own family,

Education and Urban Influence: Who Chooses Professionals? Cont.

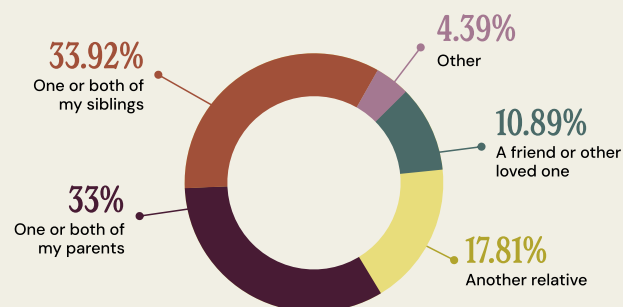
whereas those with less formal education may seek out trusted individuals beyond their immediate relatives for guidance and support.

Geographically, urban residents are the most likely to select a professional – fiduciary or financial advisor – (24%), while rural residents are the least likely (11%). The availability of legal and financial professionals in urban areas, as well as greater exposure to wealth management services, may help explain this difference.

Who Americans Trust to Raise Their Children

For parents of minor children, choosing a guardian is one of the most significant estate planning decisions they will ever make. The data reveals that immediate family members remain the overwhelming choice:

Who did you name as the guardian of your minor children in your estate plan?



INCOME MATTERS

Wealthier individuals are more than twice as likely to choose a non-family guardian. Among those earning \$250,000–\$499,999, 26% selected a non-family member—a 136% increase compared to the overall average.



- 34% name a sibling as the guardian of their children.
- 33% name one or both parents, a choice that declines with age—just 7% of Baby Boomers select parents, compared to 47% of Gen Z parents.
- 18% select another relative, such as a cousin, uncle, or aunt.
- 11% name a non-family member, signaling a small but notable group that looks outside of blood relatives for guardianship.

Who Americans Trust to Raise Their Children Cont.

Not surprisingly, as respondents age, they shift away from naming parents and toward siblings or extended family members. This reflects a natural life stage progression, as older respondents' parents are less likely to be living or physically capable of serving as guardians.

However, the 11% who choose a non-family member raise an interesting question: Are shifting societal norms, blended families, and diverse social circles reshaping traditional views on guardianship? While this number may seem small in isolation, certain groups are significantly more likely to name a non-family member as their child's guardian.

- **Wealthier individuals** are more than twice as likely to choose a non-family guardian. Among those earning \$250,000–\$499,999, 26% selected a non-family member—a 136% increase compared to the overall average. This suggests that higher-income individuals may have closer relationships with financial professionals, trusted advisors, or long-time family friends who

they feel are better equipped to provide stability and manage their children's inheritance.

- **Political ideology** plays a surprising role in guardianship decisions. Libertarians were the most likely group to choose a non-family guardian, with 33% making this selection—a 300% increase compared to Democrats (8%) and 175% higher than Republicans (12%). This suggests that those with Libertarian values, who tend to emphasize individual autonomy and personal choice, may place a stronger emphasis on selecting a guardian based on personal trust rather than familial obligation.
- **Racial differences** highlight unique cultural perspectives on guardianship. Native and Biracial respondents were 36% and 27% more likely, respectively, to name a non-family member compared to the overall average. This could indicate a greater reliance on community ties, extended social networks, or close friends who function as family within these cultural groups.

Who Americans Trust to Raise Their Children Cont.

Ultimately, while family remains the dominant choice, these shifts reflect a modern reality: trust is no longer solely defined by bloodlines, but by relationships, values, and preparedness.

The Silence Around Estate Planning: Who's Talking? Who's Not?

Estate planning is not just about who you name on paper—it's about who you trust enough to share your plans with. Despite the importance of open conversations, a significant portion of Americans never discuss their estate plans with loved ones.

Older generations are far more likely to have these discussions. 87% of the Silent Generation have shared their plans, compared to just 64% of Gen Z—a 36% difference. This trend clearly increases with age, as Baby Boomers and Gen X also outpace Millennials

and Gen Z in estate planning discussions.

This could be influenced by a variety of factors. Younger generations may feel less urgency to discuss estate planning due to fewer life milestones, such as having children or significant assets. Cultural shifts toward privacy and reliance on digital documentation might also play a role in why Millennials and Gen Z are less likely to have these conversations with loved ones.

Education also plays a key role: those with a doctorate (85%) are 23% more likely to have discussed their estate plan than those with less than a high school education (69%). Similarly, the likelihood of discussing estate plans consistently increases with each level of education.

Finally, race can impact estate planning transparency — White respondents (81%) are the most likely to have shared their plans, while Black respondents (70%) are the least likely.

Why Are Some Americans Avoiding These Conversations?

While many Americans have shared their estate plan with a loved one, nearly 20% have not, raising important questions: Why do some people hesitate to discuss their wishes? And when they do, why do these conversations sometimes lead to conflict?

One of the biggest barriers to estate planning discussions is simple procrastination. Among those who have not shared their estate plan, 40% say they intend to have this conversation in the future. However, delaying these discussions can have long-term consequences, leaving loved ones unprepared when the time comes.

Other common reasons cited include:

- Family dynamics make it difficult (24%)
- It's an uncomfortable topic (23%)
- I don't know where to start (21%)

For many, avoiding estate planning discussions is not just about discomfort—it is about preventing disputes. Even when families do talk about their estate plans, tensions can arise. While 62% of respondents who have shared their estate plans reported no conflicts, the remaining 38% have experienced disagreements, highlighting estate planning as a major source of family friction.

The most common points of conflict are:

- Asset distribution (17%)—Who gets what, and why? This is the single most common reason for disagreements.
- Executor/trustee decisions (16%)—Choosing the person responsible for managing an estate can create friction, especially if family members feel overlooked or unqualified individuals are chosen.
- Guardianship decisions (14%)—Particularly contentious among families with young children, as different relatives may have competing views on who is best suited to raise them.

Why Are Some Americans Avoiding These Conversations? Cont.

When analyzing these family disagreements through a demographic lens, certain groups are far more likely to report different topics. For example, Gen Z and Millennials are almost 7 times more likely than Baby Boomers to experience guardianship-related disputes (38% and 30% vs. 4%). Men are 67% more likely than women to report tensions over estate planning decisions, particularly regarding asset distribution and executor selection. And urban families are 58% more likely than suburban or rural families to experience disagreements of any kind, likely due to more complex family structures or financial arrangements.

Race also plays a critical role when it comes to family disagreements around estate planning: White respondents are 73% more likely to have conflict-free estate planning conversations, while 60% of non-white respondents report experiencing some level of disagreement.

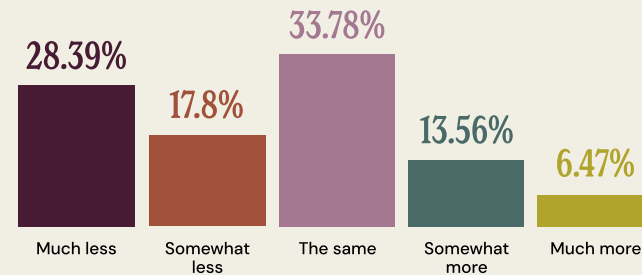
Diving even deeper, Guardianship decisions are the most contentious issue among Black (31%) and Hispanic (32%) respondents—more than double the overall average (14%)—potentially reflecting strong cultural expectations around caregiving. Meanwhile, Asian (28%) and biracial (31%) respondents report the most tension around asset distribution, possibly tied to differences in wealth transfer expectations. Among Native respondents, charitable giving (26%) is the biggest point of disagreement—more than three times the overall average (8%)—which may highlight a greater emphasis on community-focused wealth distribution

Ultimately, estate planning discussions—while essential—are not always easy. The data suggests that avoiding these conversations does not prevent conflict but by fostering transparency, families can mitigate potential disputes and ensure that their wishes are honored in a way that brings clarity rather than conflict.

Trust in Estate Planning Tools: The Rise of AI and Consumer Skepticism

As technology continues to reshape industries, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a potential disruptor in estate planning. While digital solutions promise efficiency and accessibility, public trust in AI-driven estate planning tools remains highly divided. When asked whether they would trust AI-generated estate planning advice more or less than advice from a human attorney, 20% of Americans said they would trust AI more, while 46% said they would trust it less. However, a significant portion—34%—said they would trust AI and human attorneys the same.

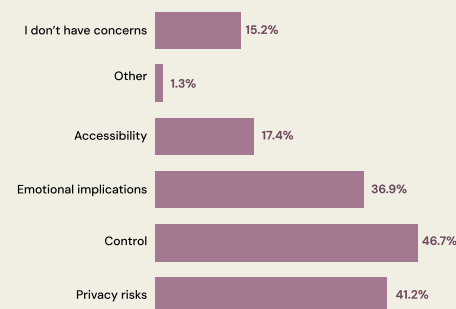
Would you trust AI-generated estate planning advice more or less than a human attorney?



TAKEAWAY

While skepticism remains, trust in AI-driven estate planning is rising. A majority of respondents trust AI the same as a human attorney, and 20% already trust it more—a number likely to grow as AI tools continue to prove their reliability.

Top ethical concerns about using AI in estate planning or managing legacies.



TAKEAWAY

As technology continues to reshape industries, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a potential disruptor in estate planning. While digital solutions promise efficiency and accessibility, public trust in AI-driven estate planning tools remains highly divided.

Trust in Estate Planning Tools: The Rise of AI and Consumer Skepticism Cont.

These results suggest that while AI is not yet a widely trusted estate planning tool, there is a growing openness to its use, particularly among younger, higher-income, and racially diverse respondents.

However, ethical concerns remain a significant barrier to adoption. When asked about the biggest ethical concerns surrounding AI in estate planning, nearly half (47%) cited “Control—AI making decisions without human oversight,” making it the top concern among respondents. Privacy risks (41%) and emotional detachment (37%) were also common concerns, highlighting the unease many feel about replacing human judgment in such a personal process.

Younger Generations are More Open to AI-Driven Estate Planning

A striking, yet potentially unsurprising, generational divide emerges when analyzing AI trust in estate planning. Gen Z is 580% more likely than the Silent Generation to trust AI-generated estate planning advice more than a human attorney (34% vs. 5%). The trend follows a predictable pattern—as age decreases, trust in AI increases. This reflects a broader generational shift in comfort with technology, where younger individuals, who have grown up with AI-powered tools, are more willing to embrace digital solutions in traditionally human-led fields.

By contrast, Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation remain overwhelmingly skeptical. Their skepticism is largely rooted in concerns about AI taking control over decisions meant for humans.

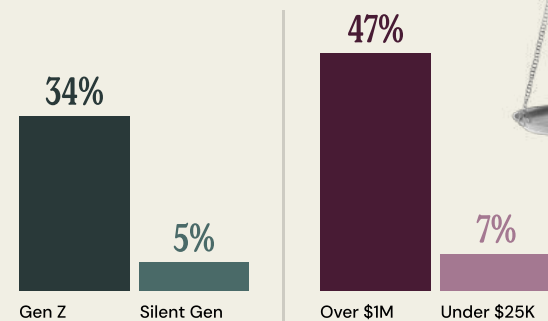
Younger Generations are More Open to AI-Driven Estate Planning Cont.

Older generations were the most likely to cite 'Control—AI making decisions without human oversight' as their top concern (Silent Generation: 60%, Baby Boomers: 52%). They were also the most likely to fear the 'emotional implications' of AI in estate planning (Silent Generation: 41%, Baby Boomers: 40%), reinforcing their belief that estate planning requires a personal touch that AI cannot provide.

The generational divide in trust even extends beyond estate planning. Millennials and Gen Z respondents were also the most likely to cite "Accessibility" as a concern about AI in estate planning (22% and 24%, respectively), showing an awareness that AI-driven solutions could potentially widen inequalities if they primarily benefit wealthier individuals.

Trust in AI vs. human attorneys

Comparing generation and household income



GENDER DIFFERENCES

32% of women say they are "much less likely" to trust AI-generated estate planning advice, compared to just 22% of men—a 45% difference. Conversely, men are 78% more likely than women to trust AI "much more."

Wealthier Households Show Greater Trust in AI for Estate Planning

Income level plays a significant role in AI trust, with higher earners more likely to trust AI either the same or more than a human. The most striking difference comes from the highest-income respondents:

- 47% of those with a household income over \$1M say they would trust AI-generated advice “much more” than a human attorney.
- By contrast, just 7% of those earning under \$25K express the same level of trust—suggesting a 570% difference in AI acceptance between the highest and lowest earners.

This trust gap may stem from wealthier individuals’ greater access to AI-powered financial tools and their familiarity with emerging technology. While high-income respondents are more likely to embrace AI, they also express heightened concerns about

accessibility (27%)—perhaps recognizing that AI-based estate planning could disproportionately benefit those with financial resources, further deepening estate planning inequalities.

While high-income individuals recognize AI’s potential, lower-income respondents (\$25K–\$100K) are more wary. This group expressed the strongest concerns about AI’s control (50%)—perhaps fearing that a lack of human oversight could disproportionately affect those with fewer legal resources. Interestingly, those earning less than \$25K were the most likely to express no concerns at all about AI in estate planning (27%), suggesting that AI-driven solutions may feel less relevant or pressing to those who are less engaged in estate planning overall.

Racial and Gender Differences in AI Trust and Ethical Concerns

Trust in AI also varies significantly by race and gender.

- White respondents are the least likely to trust AI “much more” than a human attorney (5%) and the most likely to trust AI “much less” (32%).
- Black and Hispanic respondents are the most likely to trust AI “much more” than a human attorney (both at 13%).
- Asian respondents are the least skeptical of AI-driven estate planning overall, with only 13% selecting “much less trust” compared to the average of all respondents (29%).

And when it comes to the ethical concerns around AI:

- Asian (47%) and Biracial (44%) respondents are the most likely to express concerns about privacy risks

- Black (20%) and Native (19%) respondents are the most likely to express no concerns at all about AI’s ethical implications

This suggests that historical barriers to estate planning access may influence openness to AI-driven solutions. Minority communities have often faced challenges in accessing traditional legal services, and AI may be seen as a potential equalizer, providing more affordable or unbiased estate planning resources.

From a gender perspective, women express far greater skepticism toward AI in estate planning than men.

- 32% of women say they are “much less likely” to trust AI-generated estate planning advice, compared to just 22% of men—a 45% difference.
- Conversely, men are 78% more likely than women to trust AI “much more” (8.9% vs. 5%).

Racial and Gender Differences in AI Trust and Ethical Concerns Cont.

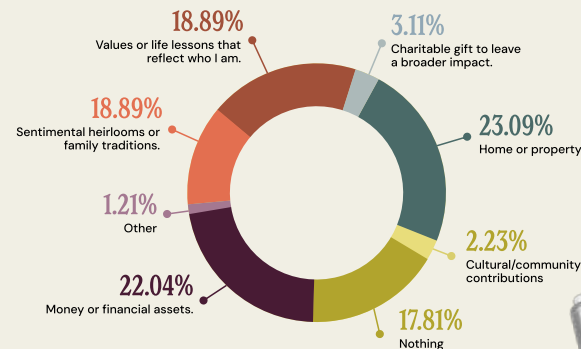
Women's concerns about AI in estate planning extend beyond trust—they are also more likely than men (39% vs. 34%) to be concerned about the emotional implications of AI replacing personal human touches. Similarly, those with children (or planning to have them) express heightened concerns about AI's emotional implications (39% vs. 36% of those without children). Estate planning is often deeply tied to family considerations, and for many parents, the idea of AI-driven decision-making may feel particularly impersonal or detached from their unique family dynamics.

Defining Legacy: What Do Americans Expect to Leave Behind?

For many, legacy is traditionally viewed through the lens of financial inheritance—passing down a home, property, or wealth to future generations. However, the data suggests that Americans define their legacy in increasingly personal and diverse ways.

While financial assets remain a key part of estate planning, values, life lessons, and sentimental contributions are just as—if not more—important to certain demographics.

The most meaningful things people believe they will leave behind.



TAKEAWAY

While responses varied in what people expect to leave behind, a surprisingly significant amount of these answers are something other than tangible or monetarily valuable items.

The most common response to “What will be the most meaningful thing you leave behind?” was a home or property (23%), followed closely by money or financial assets (22%). However, nearly one in five (19%) said that passing down values or life lessons that reflect who they are will be their most meaningful legacy—exceeding those who prioritized sentimental heirlooms (13%). Meanwhile, 17% of respondents said they don’t believe they’ll leave anything meaningful behind at all.

Generational Shifts: Legacy Beyond Wealth

The concept of legacy varies dramatically by generation. Older generations prioritize tangible assets, while younger generations focus more on values and social impact.

Silent Generation respondents are nearly twice as likely as Gen Z to say they will leave behind a home or property (28% vs. 14%). This trend steadily declines across generations, suggesting that younger people may see homeownership as less attainable or less central to their legacy.

Similarly, older generations are also more likely to expect to leave behind larger inheritances—with 28% of the Silent Generation and 24% of Baby Boomers expecting to leave between \$100,000 and \$500,000. In contrast, only 16% of Millennials and Gen Z anticipate leaving this amount.

Meanwhile, Gen Z is 50% more likely than the Silent Generation to say that passing down values or life lessons will be their most

meaningful legacy (22% vs. 15%). However, younger generations are also redefining wealth transfer, with Millennials being the most likely generation (3%) to believe they will leave behind \$5M or more—suggesting that while fewer Millennials expect to pass down large inheritances, some anticipate accumulating substantial wealth.

Gen Z is also nearly three times more likely than older generations to prioritize charitable giving. While just 3% of Millennials, Gen X, Baby Boomers, and the Silent Generation cited charitable giving as their most meaningful legacy, 8% of Gen Z did—making them 189% more likely than the generational average.

These shifts indicate that younger generations are redefining what it means to leave a lasting impact. As estate planning evolves, financial wealth is no longer the sole measure of a meaningful legacy. Instead, wealth transfer is becoming a nuanced and individualized decision—one that reflects broader shifts in financial priorities, homeownership rates, and intergenerational support.

Education and Wealth: The Privilege of Planning a Legacy

Both education and household income significantly influence how people perceive their ability to leave behind something meaningful. Those with fewer financial resources or lower education levels are far more likely to believe they won't leave anything behind, while those with greater wealth and education focus more on financial assets as their primary legacy.

Lower-income individuals are more than twice as likely as high-income individuals to say they won't leave anything behind.

- 32% of those earning under \$25K believe they will leave nothing, compared to just 13% of those earning over \$1M.
- Similarly, 40% of individuals with less than a high school diploma say they won't leave a meaningful legacy, compared to just 10% of those with a doctorate or higher.

Money and financial assets as a legacy increase significantly with both income and education.

- Only 13% of those with less than a high school diploma expect to leave behind financial wealth, while 30% of those with a doctorate do—a 131% increase.
- Higher earners follow the same trend, with higher-income households significantly more likely to cite financial assets or property as their primary legacy.

These differences extend to how much inheritance people expect to leave behind. Over half of all Americans (53%) anticipate leaving behind \$50,000 or less, with 15% believing they will leave nothing at all. However, as household income and education level increase, so does one's belief in leaving behind a larger inheritance—further reinforcing the privilege of legacy-building.

Higher-income and highly-educated individuals are also more likely to define their legacy in unique and personal ways.

Gender and Geographic Differences in Legacy Priorities

Education and Wealth: The Privilege of Planning a Legacy Cont.

33% of respondents earning over \$100K selected "other" when asked what they believe they will leave behind, a significantly higher rate than those in lower-income brackets.

Responses ranged from personal heirlooms and religious beliefs to pets and acts of service—highlighting that for those with financial security, legacy often extends beyond material wealth to deeply personal contributions.

This data suggests that financial stability and education shape not just one's ability to leave behind a legacy—but also the confidence that they will do so. Those with fewer resources may struggle to envision what they will pass on, while wealthier and more educated individuals view legacy through a broader and more personal lens.

Men and women define legacy differently, with men prioritizing financial assets and women placing greater emphasis on values.

Men are 29% more likely than women to say their most meaningful legacy will be tangible or financial assets, while women are 11% more likely to say they want to pass down values or life lessons (52% vs 41%).

This divide extends to inheritance priorities as well. Men (46%) are more likely than women (37%) to say leaving an inheritance is a core goal—a trend that aligns with their greater emphasis on financial legacy.

When looking at legacy considerations through the lens of community, urban respondents are 41% more likely than rural respondents to prioritize leaving behind money or financial assets, while rural respondents are 37% more likely than urban respondents to prioritize a home or property.

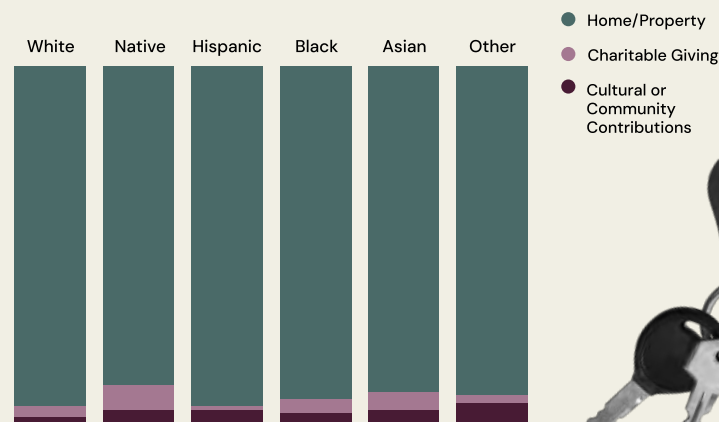
Gender and Geographic Differences in Legacy Priorities Cont.

This geographic divide suggests that urban respondents may place greater emphasis on liquid wealth transfer, while rural respondents view property as a key part of their legacy—possibly reflecting differences in homeownership rates, cost of living, and cultural ties to land.

Cultural Perspectives on Legacy: A Reflection of Values and Traditions

The way Americans define legacy varies across racial and cultural groups as well, revealing deeper ties to historical wealth distribution, familial expectations, and community values. While white respondents are the least likely to prioritize cultural or community contributions as a meaningful legacy, non-white respondents—particularly Native and Asian

Leaving property, a charitable gift, or community contribution, by race.



individuals—place greater emphasis on passing down traditions and charitable giving.

White respondents are 50% less likely than non-white respondents to prioritize cultural or community contributions. Just 2% of white respondents say this is the most meaningful thing they will leave behind, compared to 4% of Native, Hispanic, and Asian respondents and 6% of those who define their racial group as “other.” This suggests that non-white communities may view legacy as extending beyond individual wealth to include cultural preservation and collective identity.

Cultural Perspectives on Legacy: A Reflection of Values and Traditions Cont.

Charitable giving is prioritized most by Native and Asian respondents — 7% of Native respondents and 5% of Asian respondents say they want to leave behind a charitable gift, compared to the overall average of 3%. This could reflect cultural traditions of communal support, philanthropy, or religious beliefs that emphasize giving back.

Hispanic respondents are the most likely to view homeownership as their primary legacy — 26% of Hispanic respondents cite leaving behind a home or property as the most meaningful thing they will pass on—higher than any other racial group.

This data highlights how cultural experiences and systemic wealth disparities shape the way different communities define what they leave behind. For many non-white respondents, legacy is not just about wealth accumulation—

it is about family, cultural heritage, and community impact.

As estate planning becomes more inclusive, acknowledging these diverse priorities will be key to ensuring that all Americans—regardless of background—feel empowered to protect what matters most to them.

Parents and Future Parents: A Legacy Rooted in Values

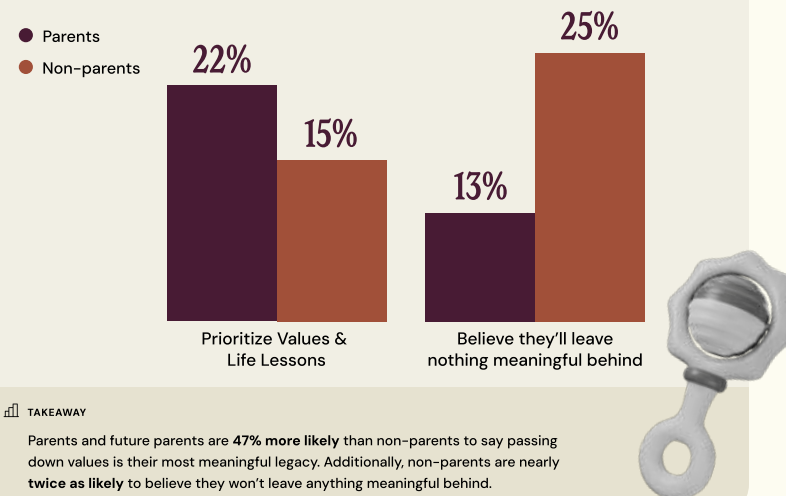
Parenthood dramatically shifts how people view their lasting impact, reinforcing the idea that estate planning is about more than just wealth—it is about preparing the next generation. Those with children, or those planning to have them, are significantly more likely to prioritize passing down values, while those without children struggle to see what they will leave behind at all.

Parents and future parents are 47% more likely than non-parents to say passing down values is their most meaningful legacy.

- 22% of parents (or those planning to have kids) prioritize values and life lessons, compared to just 15% of those without children who don't plan on having any.

This suggests that for parents, legacy extends beyond material wealth—

Parents vs. Non-parents: How they define "legacy."



it is about instilling principles, traditions, and wisdom in the next generation.

Non-parents are nearly twice as likely to believe they won't leave anything meaningful behind.

- 25% of those without children who never plan to have them say they expect to leave nothing behind, compared to just 13% of those with adult children and 10% of those planning to have children.

Parents and Future Parents: A Legacy Rooted in Values Cont.

This could reflect a perception that legacy is primarily about family and inheritance, leaving those without children feeling disconnected from traditional notions of estate planning.

These findings reinforce a larger theme in estate planning: legacy is deeply personal and often shaped by life stage. While parents focus on ensuring their children are taken care of—financially and emotionally—those without children may be searching for other ways to make a lasting impact. As estate planning evolves, there is an opportunity to help non-parents see the broader possibilities of legacy—whether through charitable giving, cultural contributions, or even ensuring their pets are cared for.

Expanding the Definition of Legacy: Digital Footprints, AI, and Privacy

As estate planning evolves, the concept of legacy is expanding beyond traditional wealth transfer. In an increasingly digital world, social media, private communications, and even AI-generated versions of ourselves are emerging as new components of a person's lasting impact. How do Americans feel about these new forms of legacy? The data reveals a generational, cultural, and financial divide in how people perceive their digital presence

after death—whether they want it deleted, preserved, or even extended through artificial intelligence.

The Rise of AI-Generated Versions of Ourselves

One of the most futuristic yet controversial advancements in digital legacy planning is the idea of AI-generated digital selves—a technology that could allow individuals to continue “communicating” with loved ones after death. The public is largely skeptical,

- Nearly half of Americans (47%) say they find the concept unsettling or unnatural.
- However, 16% of respondents say they would feel comfortable with AI replicating their persona
- Another 24% say they would consider it if it felt realistic or if their loved ones wanted it.

The Rise of AI-Generated Versions of Ourselves Cont.

Predictably, age plays a major role in acceptance of AI-driven digital legacies. The Silent Generation (71%) overwhelmingly rejects the idea, while Gen Z (36%) is the least likely to feel discomfort. Interestingly,

Financial status appears to influence comfort with AI-driven legacies. The wealthiest respondents (those earning over \$1M) are over three times more likely than low-income respondents (50% vs. 14%) to be comfortable with an AI version of themselves continuing after death.

However, education trends in the opposite direction—only 13% of those with a bachelor's degree or higher would feel comfortable with an AI-generated version of themselves, compared to 18% of those with a high school diploma or less. This suggests that higher education may contribute to more skepticism of AI-driven legacy tools, possibly due to greater awareness of AI's ethical and privacy risks.

A large gender divide emerges here as well. 52% of women reject AI-generated digital selves, compared to just 40% of men. Meanwhile, men (19%) are nearly twice as likely as women (10%) to embrace the idea.

These findings echo broader trust gaps in AI-driven estate planning (covered in Chapter 1). The same demographics who were more skeptical of AI-generated legal advice—women, older generations, and white respondents—are also more resistant to AI-driven digital legacies. This suggests that overall AI skepticism extends beyond financial matters and into deeply personal aspects of legacy and afterlife communication.

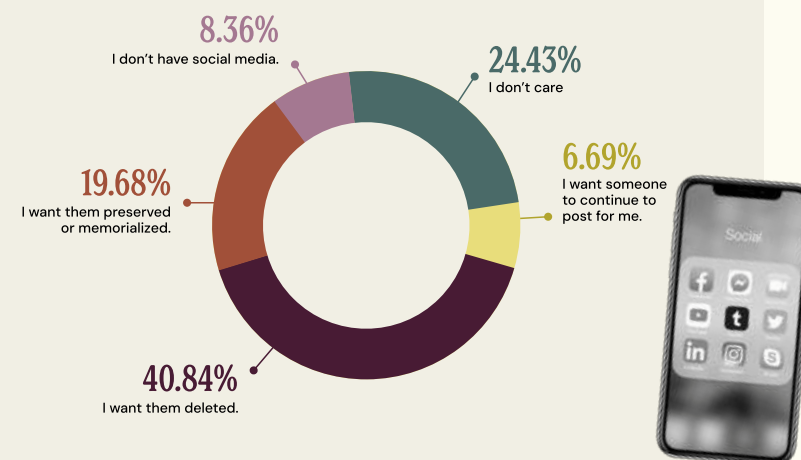
Social Media and Estate Planning: What Happens After Death?

Social media has become an integral part of modern life, but what happens to these digital footprints after death? Americans are split between wanting control over their posthumous online presence and not caring what happens to it.

- 40% of Americans want their accounts deleted.
- 24% say they “don’t care.”
- 20% want their accounts preserved or memorialized.
- Only 7% want their accounts actively maintained after death.

The desire for deletion increases with age. More than half of the Silent Generation (55%) and Baby Boomers (52%) want their accounts erased. Millennials, however, are evenly split—

What do you want to happen to your social media accounts after you die?



32% want deletion, while 32% prefer preservation.

Gen Z is the only generation where a notable portion (11%) wants their social media accounts actively maintained after death—far higher than the average and the Silent Generation (1%). This reflects a shift toward viewing digital presence as an extension of identity rather than simply an online archive.

Social Media and Estate Planning: What Happens After Death? Cont.

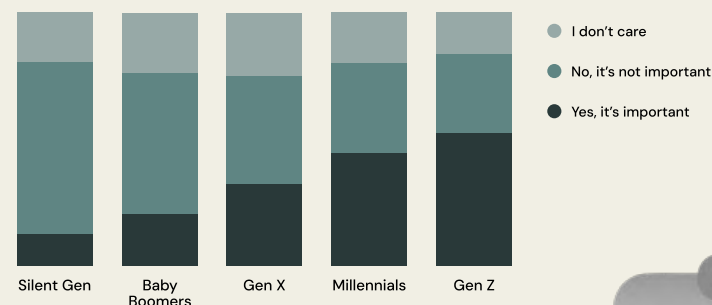
Household income also plays a role. Lower-income respondents (under \$250K) are most likely to want their accounts deleted (41%), while higher-income respondents (\$250K+) are more interested in account preservation (28%).

Racial and cultural factors shape social media afterlife preferences as well:

- White respondents (42%) are the most likely to want their accounts deleted.
- Native respondents (30%) are the most likely to want their accounts preserved, and 14% of them want someone to continue posting—double the national average.

While estate planning has long focused on physical assets, this data suggests that digital legacies now require careful consideration—especially as younger generations increasingly view their online presence as an essential part of their identity.

Do you want your emails and DMs to be private after you die?



TAKEAWAY

Older generations largely don't prioritize message privacy from family, while Millennials are split and Gen Z's stance varies, reflecting shifting privacy norms.



Privacy After Death: Should Digital Communications Stay Private?

Emails, direct messages, and texts contain deeply personal and sometimes sensitive information—but do Americans want their families to have access to them after death?

Privacy After Death: Should Digital Communications Stay Private? Cont.

The majority of Americans (45%) say it's not important to them whether their private messages are viewed posthumously. However, 32% say it's important that their messages remain private from their families, and 23% say they "don't care."

The younger you are, the more likely you are to want privacy. Gen Z (52%) is the most concerned about keeping their digital communications private, while only 12% of the Silent Generation shares this concern.

Higher-income individuals are slightly more concerned with digital privacy. 38% of those earning over \$200K, and nearly half (47%) of those earning over \$1M, say it's important their messages stay private—compared to 33% of those earning under \$200K.

Gender plays a role as well, with men (37%) more likely than women (30%) to prioritize digital privacy after death.

There are also stark racial differences in digital privacy attitudes:

- Native respondents (51%) are the most likely to say their messages should remain private.
- All non-white respondents (45%) are significantly more likely than white respondents (28%) to value digital privacy.

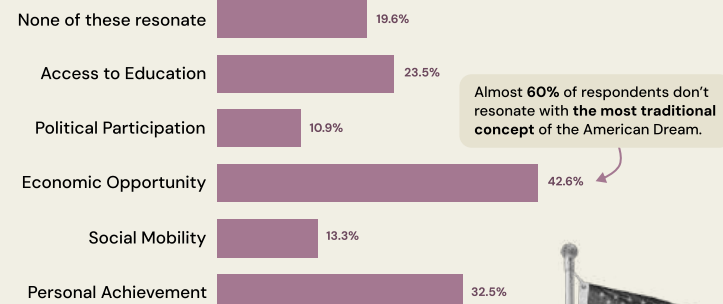
These findings suggest that for many, estate planning must now consider digital privacy rights—especially among younger generations, high-income individuals, and minority communities who prioritize keeping their personal communications confidential after death.

The American Dream: Redefined?

For generations, the American Dream was rooted in the promise of economic opportunity—the belief that hard work would lead to financial prosperity, homeownership, and upward mobility. But today, this once-dominant ideal is shifting. While financial stability remains a priority for many, new definitions of success are emerging, with Americans placing increased emphasis on personal achievement, education, and even nontraditional legacies like pet care.

At the same time, nearly one in five Americans (20%) say that none of the traditional aspects of the American Dream resonate with them. Even more striking, nearly 60% of Americans do not prioritize economic opportunity—

Which aspects of the American Dream resonate with you?



TAKEAWAY

Nearly 20% of people don't resonate with the American Dream at all, and almost 60% don't resonate with the most traditional concept of the American Dream: That hard work can lead to financial prosperity.

the belief that hard work leads to financial prosperity—as their primary vision of success. This raises an important question: if economic opportunity is no longer the defining pillar of the American Dream, what is taking its place?

Traditional vs. Modern Views: How the American Dream is Shifting

While economic opportunity remains the most common response (43%), it is far from a universal aspiration. Instead, Americans are increasingly drawn to other measures of success:

- 33% value personal achievement, emphasizing individual success and self-reliance.
- 24% believe access to education is central, seeing learning as a path to greater opportunities.
- 13% cite social mobility, highlighting a focus on breaking structural barriers rather than simply acquiring financial wealth.
- 11% say political participation is key, reflecting a shift toward civic engagement and influence.
- The Silent Generation (51%) is 65% more likely than Gen Z (31%) to prioritize economic opportunity.
- Meanwhile, Gen Z is 200% more likely than the Silent Generation to prioritize social mobility (18% vs. 6%), signaling a shift in expectations from guaranteed financial success to systemic change.
- Political participation resonates more with Gen Z (14%) than with Baby Boomers (10%) or the Silent Generation (6%), reinforcing a generational shift toward activism and civic engagement as a key component of success.

Generationally, this trend is stark:

Traditional vs. Modern Views: How the American Dream is Shifting Cont.

These shifts reveal a broader evolution in how Americans define prosperity. Rather than viewing success solely through the lens of financial gain, many, especially younger generations, are prioritizing self-growth, societal impact, and access to knowledge—a reflection of changing cultural and economic landscapes.

The Role of Education in Shaping Perceptions of Success

Education has long been seen as a stepping stone to financial security, and this belief remains strong. But its role in shaping the American Dream is even more pronounced among those who have benefited from higher education.

- Those with a doctorate (46%) are nearly twice as likely as the average respondent (24%) to say education is central to success.
- Higher-educated individuals are far more likely to resonate with economic opportunity (48%) than those with a high school diploma or less (31%).
- Conversely, Americans with less than a high school degree are more than twice as likely as the national average to say "none of these ideals resonate with me" (42% vs. 20%), indicating a sense of disillusionment with traditional success narratives.

While education is widely seen as a pathway to opportunity, those who have faced barriers to accessing it may feel disconnected from these ideals. This underscores the growing divide between those who have access to opportunity and those who feel left behind.

Political, Generational, and Cultural Divides in the American Dream

Political affiliation, race, and gender also shape views on what constitutes success:

- Republicans (36%) are 16% more likely than Democrats (31%) to prioritize personal achievement, reinforcing the party's emphasis on self-reliance and individual success.
- Democrats (30%) are 58% more likely than Republicans (19%) to prioritize access to education, highlighting a fundamental ideological divide in views on upward mobility.
- White respondents are 29% less likely than non-white respondents (excluding Asians) to resonate with social mobility (12% vs. 17%), suggesting that minority groups place greater importance on breaking systemic barriers.

- Asian respondents value social mobility the most (19%), while white respondents prioritize economic opportunity at a higher rate (44%) than non-white respondents (38%).

These disparities reflect deeper structural differences in opportunity, historical wealth distribution, and access to education, shaping how different groups view success and mobility.

A Changing Definition of Success: Beyond Wealth and Homeownership

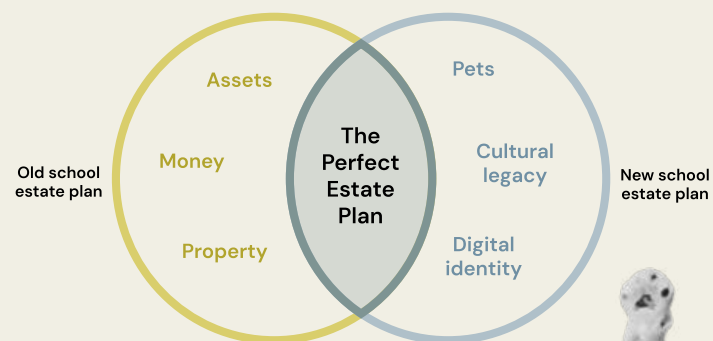
Perhaps the most striking takeaway is that Americans are increasingly prioritizing legacy in unconventional ways. Younger generations, in particular, are reshaping estate planning by extending it beyond financial assets to include pets, digital identities, and cultural impact.

A Changing Definition of Success: Beyond Wealth and Homeownership Cont.

For many, pets are not just companions—they are part of the family. Nearly 40% of Americans say they have or would appoint a guardian for their pet in their estate plan, while 14% say they have or would set aside cash for their pet's future care. This shift underscores a growing emphasis on protecting emotional bonds, not just financial assets.

This trend is particularly pronounced among younger generations, with 69% of Gen Z believing pets should be treated with the same level of importance as people in estate planning—compared to just 46% of the Silent Generation. However, this generational divide does not tell the full story. A striking 62% of all respondents—regardless of age—believe pets deserve the same level of estate planning consideration as human loved ones. This signals a widespread cultural shift in how Americans define family and responsibility in their estate plans.

The perfect estate **does** exist.



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62% of all respondents believe pets deserve the same level of estate planning consideration as human loved ones.



The American Dream, Reimagined.

With nearly 60% of Americans no longer prioritizing economic opportunity as the core of the American Dream, it is clear that success is being redefined. Personal growth, education, and societal impact are taking precedence, and estate planning must evolve to reflect these new priorities.

For estate planning providers, this means:

- Recognizing that legacy extends beyond wealth—Americans want to protect what matters most to them, whether that’s values, education, pets, or social impact.
- Meeting Americans where they are—with financial mobility feeling increasingly out of reach for many, estate planning must be made accessible to all, regardless of income or education level.

- Embracing technology and evolving priorities—as younger generations prioritize digital identities and nontraditional forms of inheritance, estate planning must expand beyond financial assets to accommodate these shifting values.

At its core, the American Dream has always been about securing a better future. But as that future is redefined, estate planning must evolve alongside it—ensuring that all Americans, no matter their vision of success, can leave behind something meaningful.

The Financial Future and the Cost of Living Crisis

As economic uncertainty and rising costs reshape financial planning, Americans are increasingly concerned about their ability to build wealth, secure their future, and leave behind a meaningful legacy. Inflation, financial instability, and shifting economic opportunities are influencing not just daily financial decisions but also long-term estate planning and wealth transfer.

Nearly half (49%) of Americans say they are more concerned about their financial future now than they were last year, underscoring a growing anxiety about personal financial security.

Inflation has made it somewhat or much harder for nearly four in five Americans (78%) to achieve their life goals. These concerns—combined with the pressures of rising costs, wealth inequality, and changing workforce dynamics—paint a complex picture of financial planning in the modern era.

Financial Anxiety and End-of-Life Concerns

Financial worries don't stop with life—they extend into how Americans think about their death. When asked about their biggest fears regarding what happens after they die, financial burdens were among the top concerns, but they were far from the only ones:

- 32% fear burdening their loved ones with financial or legal responsibilities.
- 30% worry about missing out on life experiences and moments with family and friends.

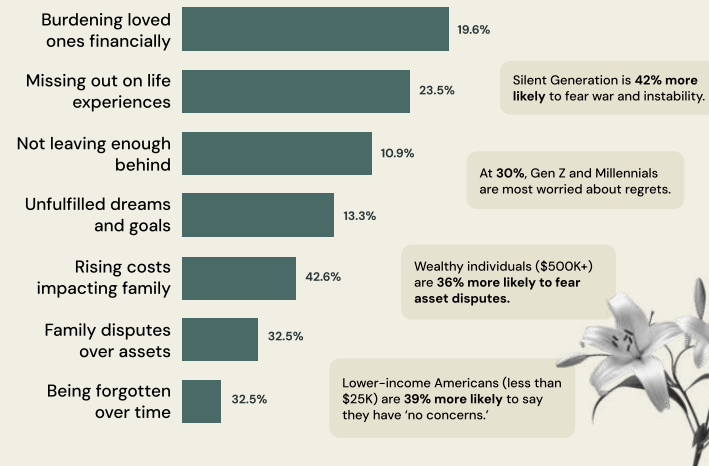
Financial Anxiety and End-of-Life Concerns Cont.

- 29% fear not leaving enough behind for their loved ones.
- 23% regret unfulfilled dreams and goals.
- 19% worry that rising costs—like healthcare and housing—will make it harder for their family to afford the future.
- 14% fear family disputes over their assets.
- 12% fear their legacy will be forgotten over time.

These concerns differ significantly by generation and financial status. Younger Americans are far more likely to express existential fears about regrets and missing out on experiences, while older generations focus more on financial and geopolitical stability:

- Gen Z (30%) and Millennials (27%) are the most worried about unfulfilled dreams and goals.
- The Silent Generation is 42% more likely than average to fear the impact of war, violence, or instability on their family's safety.

What are your biggest fears or concerns about what might happen after your death?



- Lower-income individuals (earning <\$25K) are 39% more likely than average to say they have “no concerns” at all.
- Wealthier individuals (\$500K–\$999K) are 36% more likely than average to worry about family disputes over their assets.

These findings suggest that financial security does not eliminate posthumous concerns—it reshapes them. While lower-income respondents may have fewer estate planning worries, wealthier individuals are more focused on legal complexities, inheritance disputes, and securing their family's future.

Americans' Financial Outlook: Hope or Uncertainty?

Despite these concerns, many Americans maintain a cautiously optimistic outlook about their financial future. When asked how they feel about their personal finances and long-term opportunities:

- 33% say they are “cautiously optimistic”—hopeful, but aware of challenges.
- 23% say they are “optimistic,” feeling confident about meeting financial goals.
- 19% are “neutral,” neither optimistic nor pessimistic.
- 14% say they are “pessimistic,” believing personal or systemic challenges will make financial success difficult.
- 13% are “uncertain,” unsure about what the future holds.

However, financial optimism is highly dependent on income, education, and demographics:

- 56% of those earning over \$1M feel optimistic, compared to only 14% of those earning under \$25K.
- The lower the education level, the higher the uncertainty: 31% of those with less than a high school diploma are uncertain about their financial future, compared to just 5% of those with a doctorate.
- Men (27%) are more optimistic than women (20%), while women (15%) are more uncertain than men (9%).
- Non-white respondents (26%) are more likely to be optimistic than white respondents (20%), though white respondents are more likely to be pessimistic (15%).

These findings suggest that optimism is often tied to financial security, but education and cultural perspectives also play a key role.

The Growing Divide in Financial Concern

When comparing financial outlooks year-over-year, one of the most shocking insights emerges: 49% of Americans are more concerned about their financial future than they were last year, 32% say their level of concern has stayed the same, and only 19% say they are less concerned.

At first glance, financial worry follows a predictable trend—the less you earn, the more anxious you are. However, this pattern breaks down dramatically at higher income levels:

- Among lower-income groups (earning <\$25K), 53% say they are more concerned than last year.
- Concern steadily declines with income—only 32% of those earning \$250K–\$499K are more concerned.
- But at \$500K–\$999K, financial concern jumps drastically to 71%—a staggering 122% increase from the previous bracket.

- Even among those earning over \$1M, 47% say they are more financially anxious than last year.

This unexpected reversal suggests that financial concern is not just about income—it's about volatility and risk exposure. High earners may have more assets, but they are also more affected by investment fluctuations, market uncertainty, and economic downturns.

Demographically, financial concern is also shaped by political and social factors:

- Gen Z (51%) and Millennials (52%) are the most financially anxious generations.
- Women (51%) are more financially concerned than men (45%).
- Non-white respondents (53%) report greater financial anxiety than white respondents (48%), with Native respondents leading at 60%.

These disparities highlight systemic financial pressures that vary across age, gender, and race, reinforcing the reality that economic challenges are not equally distributed.

How Inflation is Reshaping Financial Planning

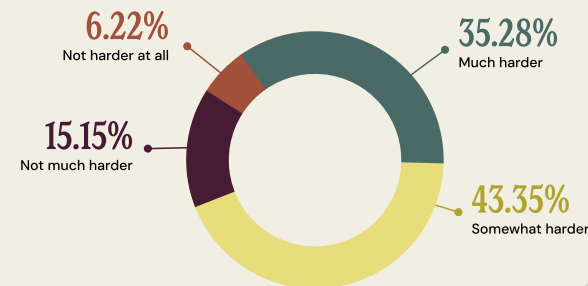
Inflation has fundamentally altered how Americans think about financial security, with nearly four in five people (78%) saying it has made their goals harder to achieve.

- 43% say inflation has made life goals “somewhat harder.”
- 35% say inflation has made life goals “much harder.”
- Only 6% say inflation has had no impact on their financial trajectory.

While inflation is a universal burden, its impact varies widely by income level:

- Gen X (40%) is the most likely generation to say inflation has made their goals “much harder.”
- Surprisingly, both low-income earners (<\$25K) and high-income earners (>\$1M) are the most likely to say inflation has made their goals “much harder” (both at 44%).

How much harder has inflation made it for you to achieve your life goals?



TAKEAWAY

Inflation has had a significant impact on respondents with nearly 4 out of 5 answering that it has made it “somewhat harder” or “much harder” to achieve their life goals.



- By contrast, those earning \$250K–\$499K are the least likely to feel impacted by inflation—only 17% say it has made their goals “much harder.”

So why are the lowest and highest earners experiencing the greatest financial strain? Lower-income Americans tend to struggle with basic cost-of-living increases (rent, groceries, gas).

How Inflation is Reshaping Financial Planning Cont.

Higher-income Americans, on the other hand, may face significant market volatility (investments, property values, and business costs). The middle-income bracket (\$250K–\$499K) appears most insulated, with stable salaries and moderate cost-of-living flexibility.

This two-pronged financial pressure means that while estate planning has traditionally focused on wealth-building, modern estate planning must also account for financial risk management.

Securing the Future in an Unstable Economy

The cost-of-living crisis is not just an economic issue—it is fundamentally reshaping how Americans think about their financial future, long-term goals, and legacy.

- Nearly half (49%) of Americans feel more financially anxious than they did last year.

- 78% say inflation has made it harder to achieve their life goals.
- Concern is not exclusive to lower-income individuals—even those earning over \$500K express record-high financial anxiety.

Financial security is no longer just about how much money you have—it's about how well you can protect it. Estate planning in today's world must adapt to the realities of inflation, economic uncertainty, and financial volatility to ensure that Americans, regardless of income, can secure their future and provide for those they love.

Conclusion: Estate Planning in a Changing America

As this report reveals, estate planning in 2025 is no longer just about wills, wealth, and inheritance—it is about legacy, financial security, and evolving societal values. The way Americans think about who they trust, what they value, and what they leave behind is rapidly shifting, reflecting economic realities, technological advancements, and generational differences.

Despite widespread recognition of estate planning's importance, significant gaps in preparedness and access remain. Financial anxiety is rising, the traditional American Dream is being redefined, and people are

looking for new ways to ensure their legacy—whether through AI, digital assets, or pet care provisions.

While some of these trends present challenges—like growing financial insecurity and procrastination—others provide a path forward. Estate planning is becoming more inclusive, more personalized, and more reflective of modern values. The challenge now is bridging the gap between awareness and action, ensuring that estate planning is accessible and meaningful for all Americans, not just the wealthy.

As we look ahead, one thing is clear: Estate planning is evolving, and the industry must evolve with it—meeting people where they are, adapting to their changing priorities, and ensuring that every American has the opportunity to leave behind something that matters.

Methodology

This study was conducted by WeAreTalker (formerly OnePoll) on behalf of Trust & Will. The survey was fielded between January 3–13, 2025, and included 10,000 U.S. adults aged 18 and older, ensuring a nationally representative sample. Respondents were randomly selected to provide a diverse range of perspectives across age, income, education, race, political affiliation, and geography. The results have been weighted where necessary to ensure demographic accuracy and reflect the current state of estate planning and financial attitudes in America.