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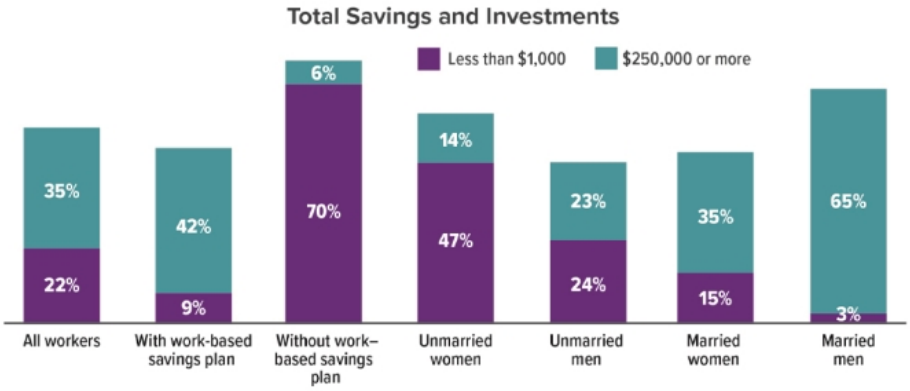
56 million

The number of American private-sector workers who don't have access to a work-based retirement savings plan, representing nearly half of all private-sector employees.

Source: Pew Charitable Trusts, 2025

A Comfortable Retirement May Be in Jeopardy for Certain Workers

In early 2026, the percentage of American workers who were confident they would have enough money to live in retirement was at the lowest level since 2017 (61%), and perhaps for good reason. Just 38% said their overall financial well-being was very good or excellent, a drop of six percentage points from 2025, while 58% said that debt was negatively affecting their ability to save for retirement, up from 49% the previous year. Workers who appeared to be most at risk were women and those who did not have access to a work-based retirement savings plan. Even in the lowest-risk category — those who were married — women were at a significant disadvantage compared with men.



Source: Employee Benefit Research Institute, 2026

Grocery Games: Can You Outsmart the Supermarket?

After several years of persistently elevated inflation, many shoppers still feel defeated when they check out at the grocery store. Over the 12 months that ended August 2026, prices for food at home rose a modest 2.2%, measured by the consumer price index (CPI). Unfortunately, the prices of some types of food have risen much more than others.[1]

Food prices are prone to volatility, in part because the crops grown to feed people and livestock are vulnerable to pests, extreme weather, and disease. One prominent example is the price of ground beef, which spiked 7.2% over the 12 months ended August 2026, and nearly 29% over the previous three years, with little relief in sight.[2] Despite record prices, consumer demand for beef remained strong in 2026, while the U.S. cattle herd shrunk to a 75-year low due to drought and soaring feed, transportation, and processing costs.[3]

Setting a budget for groceries can help control your spending, but unpredictable price hikes can make it difficult to stay on track. Here are a few shopping strategies that could help stretch your food budget.

1. Sign up for loyalty programs, then make stores compete for your business.

Many of the specials found in weekly ads require membership in the store's club program. So even if it feels like overkill, it may be worthwhile to download membership apps, check for the most valuable promotions, and access digital coupons or "personalized" deals before you make a list and decide where to shop.

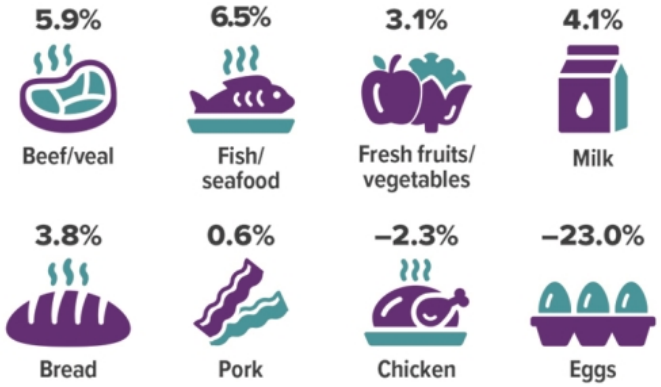
If you're concerned about your data being tracked and/or sold, you may be able to turn off tracking by store apps by adjusting the privacy and security settings in your smartphone.

2. Stock up when the price is right.

Grocery stores often rotate advertised specials for beef, chicken, and pork, so you may want to plan meals around sale-priced cuts and buy extra to freeze for later. In fact, freezing can be used to extend the shelf life of many other foods (such as bread or fruit) that might otherwise go bad before they can be eaten.

Buy extra nonperishable foods, such as rice, pasta, dried beans, canned goods, and frozen fruits and vegetables when they are on sale. You might also save money if you buy essentials in bulk at a membership store that requires an annual fee, but only if you can resist the temptation to overspend on unnecessary items and excess food that ends up going to waste.

12-month change in CPI prices, August 2026



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2026

3. Choose more affordable private-label products.

Without the high costs of research and development, marketing, and advertising associated with name brands, store brands can offer savings for consumers and higher profit margins for retailers. For this reason, most large grocery chains sell at least two levels of store brands — a basic value brand and a premium line — and some also have distinctive "organic" or "natural" product lines. A few grocery retailers stock their shelves almost entirely with their own private labels.

One study found that consumers can save 25% to 30% on their grocery bills by purchasing private-label products instead of name brands.[4] Another bonus for shoppers: More competition from private labels puts pressure on national brands to keep their regular prices low and/or to run sales promotions.

As of March 2026, private-label products accounted for about 24% of food and beverage sales in the United States.[5] Most consumers are willing to make some sacrifices to save money, but now there seems to be a more positive perception of the value and quality offered by private labels than there used to be in the past. In one 2026 survey, about 85% of consumers said the quality is generally as good as or better than the national brands.[6]

1–2) U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2026

3) *Chicago Tribune,* July 10, 2026

4–5)*Consumer Reports,* 2026

6) McKinsey, 2026

Common Obstacles Affecting Retirement Planning

Your vision for an ideal retirement may not be the same as someone else's. However, there are several common obstacles that you should consider addressing when planning for your retirement.

Market risk

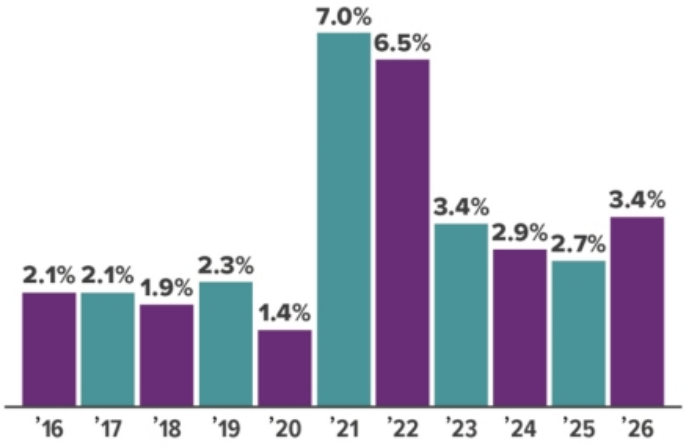
Different types of investments carry different risks. Sound retirement planning involves understanding these risks and how they can influence your available income in retirement.

Investment or market risk is the risk that fluctuations in the securities market may result in the reduction and/or depletion of the value of your retirement savings. Stocks are typically most susceptible to market risk, although bonds and other investments can be affected as well. Market risk can significantly impact retirement plans, affecting retirement savings and income strategies. Because all investments involve some level of risk, it's important to be aware of how much volatility you can comfortably withstand before you select investments.

Inflation

Inflation can cause the purchasing power of a dollar to decline over time, due to the rising cost of goods and services. The need to outpace inflation doesn't end at retirement; in fact, it becomes even more important. For instance, if you're living on a fixed income, you may need to adjust the amount of withdrawals you take from retirement savings just to keep up with rising costs. Otherwise, you may have less buying power in the later years of your retirement because your income doesn't stretch as far.

Annual U.S. Inflation Rates (2016–2026*)



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics *through August

Taxes

The effect of taxes on your retirement savings and income is an often-overlooked but significant aspect of retirement income planning. Taxes can eat into your income, significantly reducing the amount you have available to spend in retirement.

Taxes can impact your available retirement income, especially if a significant portion of your savings and/or income comes from tax-qualified accounts such as pensions, traditional 401(k)s, and traditional IRAs, since most, if not all, of the income from these accounts is subject to income taxes. Understanding the tax consequences of these investments is important when making retirement income projections.

Health-care expenses

At any age, health care is a priority. When you retire, however, you will probably focus more on health care than ever before. Staying healthy is your goal, and this can mean more visits to the doctor for preventive tests and routine checkups. There's also a chance that your health will decline as you grow older, increasing your need for costly prescription drugs or medical treatments.

Despite the availability of Medicare coverage, you'll likely have to pay for additional health-related expenses out of pocket. You may have to pay the rising premium costs of Medicare optional Part B coverage (which helps pay for outpatient services) and/or Part D prescription drug coverage. You may also want to buy supplemental Medigap insurance, which is used to pay Medicare deductibles and copayments and to provide protection against catastrophic expenses that either exceed Medicare benefits or are not covered by Medicare at all. Otherwise, you may need to cover Medicare deductibles, copayments, and other costs out of pocket.

Long-term care may be needed when physical or mental disabilities impair your capacity to perform everyday basic tasks. As life expectancies increase, so does the potential need for long-term care.

Paying for long-term care can significantly impact retirement income and savings, which can be of particular concern to married couples. While not everyone will need long-term care, ignoring the possible necessity of such care and failing to plan for it can leave you or your spouse with little or no income or savings if long-term care is needed.

All investing involves risk, including the possible loss of principal, and there is no guarantee that any investment strategy will be successful.

Financial Lessons from Football

If you're a football fan, you know that not every game ends with a win. But you keep cheering on your team, believing that things will turn around next week. Managing your finances calls for that same commitment. Here are three football-inspired lessons that can help you tackle your financial challenges.

Review your game plan

You haven't saved enough for retirement...or for college. Your investments aren't performing as well as you had hoped. Your credit card debt is spiraling. You've been blindsided by unexpected expenses.

When your finances hit a rough patch, don't be tempted to throw in the towel or make quick, ill-informed decisions. Instead, do what your team would do: call a timeout and review your game plan. What is or isn't going well, and why? Maybe it's time to rethink your overall financial strategy to account for changes in your personal life, the economy, or market conditions.

Focus on fundamentals

Big plays are important, but so is steady execution. Even seasoned players need to focus on game fundamentals that can help them lay the groundwork for opportunities and better prepare for setbacks.

One important financial fundamental is your budget. Once you know exactly how much money is coming in and how much is going out, you should be able to identify what plays to call to get your finances back in shape. Other fundamentals include:

- Setting clear, actionable financial goals with specific time frames
- Having an emergency fund to avoid tapping long-term savings for unexpected expenses
- Revisiting your time horizon and tolerance for risk when implementing an investment strategy



Maybe it's time to rethink your overall financial strategy to account for changes in your personal life, the economy, or market conditions.

Make adjustments

Football teams make adjustments throughout the game. You can't always anticipate what will go wrong, but you can make changes as you go along. As you begin to make forward progress, keep the momentum going by regularly reviewing and fine-tuning your own game plan to balance competing priorities. Soon you should be better prepared to handle the challenges that stand between you and your financial goals.

All investing involves risk, including the possible loss of principal, and there is no guarantee that any investment strategy will be successful.

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