

Voice of the American Workplace

Lost in translation: When clarity builds trust

Key findings summary

This year's **Voice of the American Workplace** survey explores the shifting expectations and disconnect between employers and employees in today's workplace. The findings offer actionable insights to inform plan decisions, revealing how employee financial stress, job uncertainty and evolving expectations are influencing engagement and retention.



Racing to meet increasing challenges

Employers are facing a variety of hurdles, handling internal and external pressures amid a tightening labor market and rising benefit costs.

What we found

Employers increasingly recognize financial stress as a leading barrier to employee wellbeing. Eight in ten report that employees are seeking support with financial worries, and, in response, nearly nine in ten have made reducing financial stress a top priority.

What this means for your business

Despite rising financial stress, retirement engagement is increasing. With 49% of employees now maximizing their 401(k) match (up from 38%), now is the time to examine plan design enhancements such as auto-enrollment, auto-increase and stretch match strategies.



Seeking stability in uncertain times

American workers are facing a longer and more uncertain path to financial security, increasing their need for stability, clarity and dependable support from their employers.

What we found

Timelines for reaching major financial goals, including retirement, have shifted. Just a few years ago, many employees expected to retire around age 55; today, that expectation has moved closer toward 59.

What this means for your business

This shift, along with growing anxiety about long-term financial security, is increasing demand for solutions that provide greater certainty. Guaranteed lifetime income is gaining momentum, with 92% of employees expressing interest in it as a way to protect against the risk of outliving their savings.



Finding common ground

While there is pressure felt by both companies and workers, trust and collaboration can be built upon for a stronger employer–employee relationship.

What we found

While 81% of workers say their benefits are communicated well, over half still feel overwhelmed by the number of options and admit they don't fully understand or maximize what's available. At the same time, seven in ten employers report that employees repeatedly ask the same benefits-related questions.

What this means for your business

This gap presents a clear opportunity. Nearly nine in ten workers want clear, plain-language communication, free of HR jargon. By simplifying how benefits are communicated, employers can improve engagement and reinforce existing trust—84% of employees already believe their employer's financial programs serve their best interests.

As a trusted partner for what's ahead, we believe these findings equip our industry with research-driven insights and solutions to evolve retirement and reimagine how we support better financial outcomes for US workers.

#VOTAW

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Voice of the American Employer Survey was conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of Franklin Templeton from November 7 to 20, 2025. All 1,004 respondents, based in the United States, are classified as employers, defined as having at least some influence over company benefits and/or hiring at organizations with over 100 employees. Respondents represent a mix of industries, company size, role, age and race. Findings from 2023 and 2024 reference studies of similar natures that were conducted among 1,000 and 1,002 respondents of the same qualifications by The Harris Poll on behalf of Franklin Templeton from November 6 to 17, 2023 and November 25 to December 6, 2024.

The Voice of the American Worker Survey was conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of Franklin Templeton from November 7 to 19, 2025, among 2,000 employed US adults. All respondents had some form of retirement savings. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no estimate of theoretical sampling error can be calculated. Findings from previous years reference studies of similar natures that were conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of Franklin Templeton. Those studies are from October 16 to 28, 2020, among 1,007 employed US adults, from October 28 to November 15, 2021, among 1,005 employed adults, from October 17 to October 27, 2022, among 1,000 employed adults, from November 9 to November 21, 2023, among 2,001 employed adults and from November 27 to December 10, 2024, among 2,018 employed adults.

This material is provided for general informational purposes only and should not be considered individualized investment advice, a recommendation or a solicitation to adopt any investment strategy. It does not constitute legal or tax advice. Franklin Templeton accepts no liability for losses arising from use of this material. Always consult a qualified professional or your own independent financial professional for personalized advice or investment recommendations tailored to your specific goals, individual situation and risk tolerance.

Franklin Templeton is not affiliated with The Harris Poll, Harris Insights & Analytics, a Stagwell LLC Company.



(800) 342-5236
[franklintempleton.com](https://www.franklintempleton.com)