

The Pulse

Younger Workers Look to Employers for Retirement Help



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Younger employees are placing greater responsibility on employers to help them prepare for retirement, according to J.P. Morgan Asset Management's 2026 Defined Contribution Plan Participant Survey. Among Gen Z participants, 86% said employers have at least some responsibility to help employees save for retirement. That view was shared by 76% of Millennials, 71% of Gen X, and 61% of Baby Boomers.

Expectations follow a similar generational pattern when the questions become more specific. More than three-fourths of Gen Z participants agreed that employers should provide financial education and decision-support resources and coaching to support retirement planning, compared with 70% of Millennials, 66% of Gen X, and 56% of Boomers. These expectations suggest that plan design features — such as automatic enrollment, target-date funds, and simplified investment menus — may be increasingly important to younger participants.

A Growing Workplace Role

The results point to an evolving view of the employer-sponsored plan. For many younger workers, access to a retirement account alone may no longer satisfy expectations. They also appear to want clearer explanations, simpler decisions, and more support in understanding how plan features work.

That support can take several forms. Well-designed plan features, for example, may help reduce the number of decisions participants face. The survey found that 96% of participants who were automatically enrolled viewed the experience positively, while 97% said the same about automatic contribution escalation. Target-date funds also received favorable marks from 90% of respondents.

The findings suggest employers could address some of that demand through broad-based resources, including digital tools, group education, and communications from human resources or benefits teams. Meanwhile, 53% of participants said their employers offer a financial wellness program, and 71% considered such programs extremely or very important.

Expectations Meet Uncertainty

The demand for help comes amid considerable uncertainty. Only 48% of participants were highly confident about how much to contribute, and just 39% felt confident navigating plan investment options — underscoring the value of well-designed defaults like target-date funds. More than half said they were willing to spend time planning for retirement but didn't know where to begin.

J.P. Morgan surveyed 1,716 defined contribution plan participants and 512 retirees. The findings suggest that as younger generations become a larger share of the workforce, retirement support may increasingly be viewed as a central part of the benefit rather than an optional addition.

Sources: <https://am.jpmorgan.com/content/dam/jpm-am-aem/global/en/ri-ppsr-2026.pdf>

Material connection - Retirement Plan Advisory Group, <https://www.rpag.com>

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