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The Average American Feels They Would Need to Earn \$186K to Feel Financially Secure

Just 37% think they are likely to earn the income they need to live comfortably

NEW YORK - July 1, 2024 - On average, Americans believe they would need to earn \$186,000 annually to feel financially secure/comfortable, according to a new Bankrate survey. This is more than two times what the average full-time, year-round worker made in 2022 (\$79,209), [Census Bureau](#) data shows. To feel rich/financially free, that number rises to \$520,000, up 8% from \$483,000 last year. Click here for more information:

<https://www.bankrate.com/banking/financial-freedom-survey/>

Based on their current personal financial situation, 3 in 4 Americans (75%) say they are not completely financially secure, up from 72% in 2023. This group includes 45% who are not completely financially secure but believe they will be someday and 30% who expect they never will be. Just 1 in 4 Americans (25%) say they are completely financially secure, down slightly from 28% in 2023.

Older generations are more likely than younger generations to say they are not completely financially secure and likely never will be, with 42% of baby boomers (ages 60-78) and 37% of Gen Xers (ages 44-59) saying they feel this way, compared to 21% of millennials (ages 28-43) and only 13% of Gen Zers (ages 18-27). Younger generations are also more likely to say they are not currently financially secure but will be someday (64% of Gen Zers and 53% of millennials vs. 48% of Gen Xers and 26% of baby boomers). Overall, Gen Xers are least likely to say they are currently financially secure at 15%, compared to 24% of Gen Zers, 26% of millennials, and 32% of baby boomers.

Nearly half of Americans (46%) cite needing to earn a figure under \$100,000 per year to feel financially secure, while 43% say they would need to earn at least \$100,000. That includes 1 in 4 (25%) who say they would need to earn \$150,000 or more, 14% who say \$200,000 or more, and 7% who say earning \$500,000 or more annually would be required for them to feel financially secure.

Comparing generations, Gen Zers say they need to earn roughly \$200,000 per year on

average to feel financially secure, compared to millennials needing roughly \$199,000, Gen Xers needing roughly \$183,000, and baby boomers needing roughly \$171,000.

“Life always seems like it’d be better with just a little bit more money to spare,” said Bankrate Analyst Sarah Foster. “That’s even more true when the items Americans both need and want have been climbing in price. In the four years since the pandemic, comfort is no longer a commodity but a financial privilege, appearing to only be afforded to those wealthy enough to ‘eat’ the impact of inflation.”

Among those who have an idea of what they would need to earn in order to attain financial security, just 37% say they are likely to earn the salary needed to feel financially secure in their lifetime, including 16% who say it is highly likely. Nearly one-third (31%) feel they are unlikely to earn the annual income that they need to feel financially secure, including 17% who say it is highly unlikely. Nearly 1 in 5 (18%) think they will never be able to make that amount, while just 6% say they are already earning the annual income they need to feel financially secure.

Both higher earners and younger generations are more optimistic they will one day earn the annual income necessary to feel financially secure/comfortable. Nearly half of those earning more than \$100,000 annually (49%) feel this way compared to 34% of those earning under \$50,000 per year.

More than 3 in 5 Gen Zers (63%) think they will also earn the annual income they need to feel financially secure, compared to 50% of millennials, 31% of Gen Xers, and 17% of baby boomers. Baby boomers are more pessimistic compared to other generations, with 31% saying they will never earn the annual income they need to feel financially secure, compared to 21% of Gen Xers, 11% of millennials, and just 3% of Gen Zers.

To feel rich/financially free, on average Americans say they would need to earn about \$520,000. Almost half of Americans (49%) say they would need to earn \$200,000 or more to feel this way, while one-third (33%) say they would need to earn \$500,000 or more, and over 1 in 5 (23%) say they would need to earn \$1 million or more per year. The salary needed to feel rich/financially free rises with generation: baby boomers say they would need to earn an average of \$556,000 per year, while Gen Xers say they would need \$574,000, millennials indicate \$480,000, and Gen Zers \$461,000.

“Making more money is the secret to weathering inflation, but it’s also true that being a higher-income earner won’t automatically translate to being better at personal finance,” added Foster. “Someone with a traditional middle-class salary who always tries to save for the future, no matter how small, is destined for financial success more than an ultra-

wealthy earner who lives and spends beyond his or her means.”

(<https://www.bankrate.com/banking/savings/financial-success-survey/>)

Methodology:

Bankrate commissioned YouGov Plc to conduct the survey. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. The total sample size was 2,407 U.S. adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between May 16-20, 2024. The survey was carried out online and meets rigorous quality standards. It employed a non-probability-based sample using both quotas upfront during collection and then a weighting scheme on the back end designed and proven to provide nationally representative results.

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