



The Empowered Australian Report 2026

A snapshot of Australians' financial
priorities, pressures and advice needs



Contents

Welcome to our 2026 report	3
Concerns stretch from the kitchen table to the global economy	4
Goals range from making ends meet to getting ahead	6
A big pool of information, a small circle of trust	8
Australians are open to advice, but (still) constrained by cost	10
Advice is about more than investment returns	12
The turning point: when do Australians seek advice?	13
Looking ahead	15



Welcome to our 2026 report

This year, Australians are feeling significant financial pressure. Concerns stretch from day-to-day living through to the economy at home and abroad, and many Australians are worried about their financial future.

Against that backdrop, it is perhaps no surprise that Australians are interested in guidance when it comes to managing and growing their money. But, there is a paradox: Australians are open to more support with their finances, yet for many that support feels financially out of reach.

That's why we continue to support accessible financial advice, and we are encouraged by recent strides to make financial advice available to more Australians. Financial advice makes a difference to lives and financial futures, and we believe more people should be able to benefit from it. This is especially the case as more Australians reach retirement, on a road that is less linear, and more unique to each person, than ever before.

Now in its third year, the report also gives insight into how Australians are seeking help with their finances, and who they trust when they do. While Australians have a multitude of options at their fingertips, it's professional expertise that they're putting their confidence in.

We hope you find this portrait of how Australians are thinking about their finances and their future insightful and helpful.

Three key findings

We surveyed 2058 Australians and this is what they told us:

Financial worries are widespread:

Australians report an average of nine financial concerns, with concerns about the global economy significantly increasing since our last survey.

Day-to-day costs remain a significant concern: 76% of Australians are worried about the cost of living, and 69% are worried about inflation.

Australians believe in affordable financial advice: Most Australians support, and would be open to, affordable financial advice

Concerns stretch from the kitchen table to the global economy



Australians' financial concerns are widespread, extending from household budgets to economic conditions at home and abroad.

Cost of living tops the list, with 76% of Australians saying it is a concern for them.

Inflation and recent global events follow at 69%, while housing affordability ranks fourth at 65%.

Concerns about the global economy (63%) and Australian economy (62%) are also weighing on Australians' minds.

Geopolitical tensions are a concern for 60% of Australians, followed by the state of international politics (59%) and interest rates in Australia (55%). Since our last survey, concerns have risen across almost every comparable category.

Financial confidence is also being tested:

About one in five Australians believe their financial situation will be worse in 12 months' time.

Twenty-two per cent are concerned about their finances over the short term and the same proportion are concerned about their finances over the long term.

These concerns are held most strongly among women and renters.

Concerns stretch from the kitchen table to the global economy

A breakdown of Australians' financial concerns

Key: ■ Previous survey ■ Latest survey

The financial concerns that have grown since our last survey



Who's most worried about the long term?



Who's most worried about the short term?



Goals range from making ends meet to getting ahead



It's not just financial concerns that are widespread, Australians also report a broad range of financial goals, ranging from managing everyday expenses to building long-term financial security.

Most Australians (69%) have at least one short-term goal they expect to achieve within three years or less. These include paying bills on time, building an emergency fund, increasing their salary, paying off credit card debt, investing for the first time and managing money through retirement.

Over one in three (38%) have goals they specifically expect to achieve within three to five years, including growing their super balance, having money left over each month, paying off other debts (excluding mortgages and credit cards) and improving their credit rating.

More than half (54%) of Australians are working towards a goal they expect to achieve in five to 11 years. These goals include saving or investing for retirement, making financial preparations for retirement, paying off a home loan, saving to buy a property, saving for children, saving to help family members, paying off a loan on an investment property and managing an inheritance effectively.

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a denim jacket over a blue shirt, is smiling and petting a small, fluffy, light-colored dog in a doorway. The doorway is framed by dark wood, and the wall to the right is also wood-paneled. A white door handle and a black door lock are visible on the wood paneling. Sunlight is streaming in from the doorway, creating a warm, golden glow. The dog is standing on a patterned rug.

Goals range from making ends meet to getting ahead

The breadth of these goals highlights the complexity of Australians' financial lives, and the competing pressures and priorities they're juggling in 2026. Whether the focus is managing today's expenses or preparing for retirement, Australians are balancing short-term needs with long-term ambitions, at a time when the pressures of the cost of living and housing are mounting.

Australians with a financial adviser are more likely to:



Have financial goals



Be thinking long term



Be confident they will have enough money to retire



Be confident in managing their finances

A big pool of information, a small circle of trust

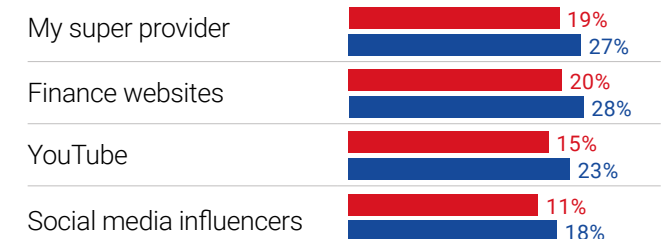


Against a backdrop of broad concerns and goals, Australians draw on a wide range of sources when making financial decisions. Online channels are playing an increasingly significant role, particularly among younger Australians.

Among those under 40, finance websites (such as Investopedia), YouTube and social media influencers saw some of the biggest increases in usage since the previous survey. Superannuation providers also became a more commonly used source of financial information among younger Australians.

The sources gaining ground among under 40s since our last survey

Key: ■ Previous survey ■ Latest survey



A big pool of information, a small circle of trust

While information is in abundance online, and use of digital sources particularly among younger people is on the rise, trust is concentrated among family members, professional advisers, financial institutions and government sources. In addition, use of financial advisers as a source of advice or guidance has increased since our last survey, and financial advisers continue to stand out as one of the most used and trusted sources.

Who do Australians trust?

Source used	% who trust
Partner / spouse	82%
Financial adviser	80%
My family member(s)	75%
My superannuation / investments provider	73%
Government finance websites (e.g. moneysmart.gov.au)	72%
Another professional (e.g. accountant, solicitor)	70%
My bank	64%
My friend/s	53%
Finance websites (e.g. Investopedia.com)	48%
AI (e.g. Claude, ChatGPT, Perplexity)	38%
Podcasts	38%
YouTube	37%
Social media influencers (e.g. fin-fluencers)	37%
Newspapers / magazines	37%
Other social media groups/pages (i.e. not influencers)	30%
Online news sites/apps	27%



Australians are open to advice, but (still) constrained by cost



A significant proportion of Australians are interested in and open to the financial advice and professional guidance that helps them make progress towards their financial goals. However, when it comes to engaging a financial adviser, cost remains a significant constraint.

Most Australians who are open to advice would consider it if it was reasonably priced, but affordability is the biggest reason Australians have never used a financial adviser. This has been a consistent finding since we first began this research in 2023.

The demand for financial advice is also reflected in Australians' expectations of their super fund. Seventy-three per cent of Australians would like their fund to

offer financial advice, up from 63% in the previous survey. Fifty-two per cent would like their super fund to help them find a financial adviser in their area, a two percentage point increase from the previous survey.

There is also strong demand for practical support from super funds. Eighty-one per cent would like their super fund to suggest ways to grow their super, up from 73% in the previous survey.

Australians are open to advice, but (still) constrained by cost



36% of Australians without a financial adviser don't access advice because it's unaffordable.



72% of Australians open to receiving advice are likely to consider it if it were at a reasonable cost to them.



88% of Australians believe advice should be accessible to all.



Advice is about more than investment returns



This year's findings suggest that expertise is a driving reason financial advisers are perceived as worthwhile.

The top five reasons Australians see an adviser are

- 63%** They have better knowledge than I do
- 39%** I want to make sure I'm doing the right thing
- 32%** I feel more confident with them making decisions for me
- 30%** It saves me time
- 23%** My financial situation is complex so it's reassuring to receive financial advice

The findings also suggest a shift in what Australians value from financial advice. While better investment returns and having everything in one place featured as prominent drivers in the previous edition of this research, both have become less important over time. This year, Australians are placing greater value on expertise, confidence and reassurance.

Overall, this data shows that financial advice is being increasingly valued for the confidence and peace of mind it can provide. While investment performance remains important, Australians are placing greater value on understanding their options, navigating complexity and feeling reassured that they're making informed financial decisions. In an environment of growing financial pressure and uncertainty, that confidence may be one of the most valuable outcomes advice can deliver.

The turning point: when do Australians seek advice?



There are a range of reasons Australians decide to seek financial advice, from major life and financial milestones to prompts from the family, friends and professionals around them.

The leading reason Australians with a financial adviser decided to seek advice is the thought of retirement, followed closely by a positive change in their financial situation.

Of those Australians who have a financial adviser, 44% regret not seeking advice earlier, while 48% believe they sought advice at the right time.

For Australians without a financial adviser, their top three motivators for seeking advice are a positive change in their financial situation (30%), thinking about retirement (25%) and receiving an inheritance (23%). Coming in at fourth, 22% of Australians would be motivated to seek advice if their financial situation changed for the worse.

The profile of Australians with a financial adviser

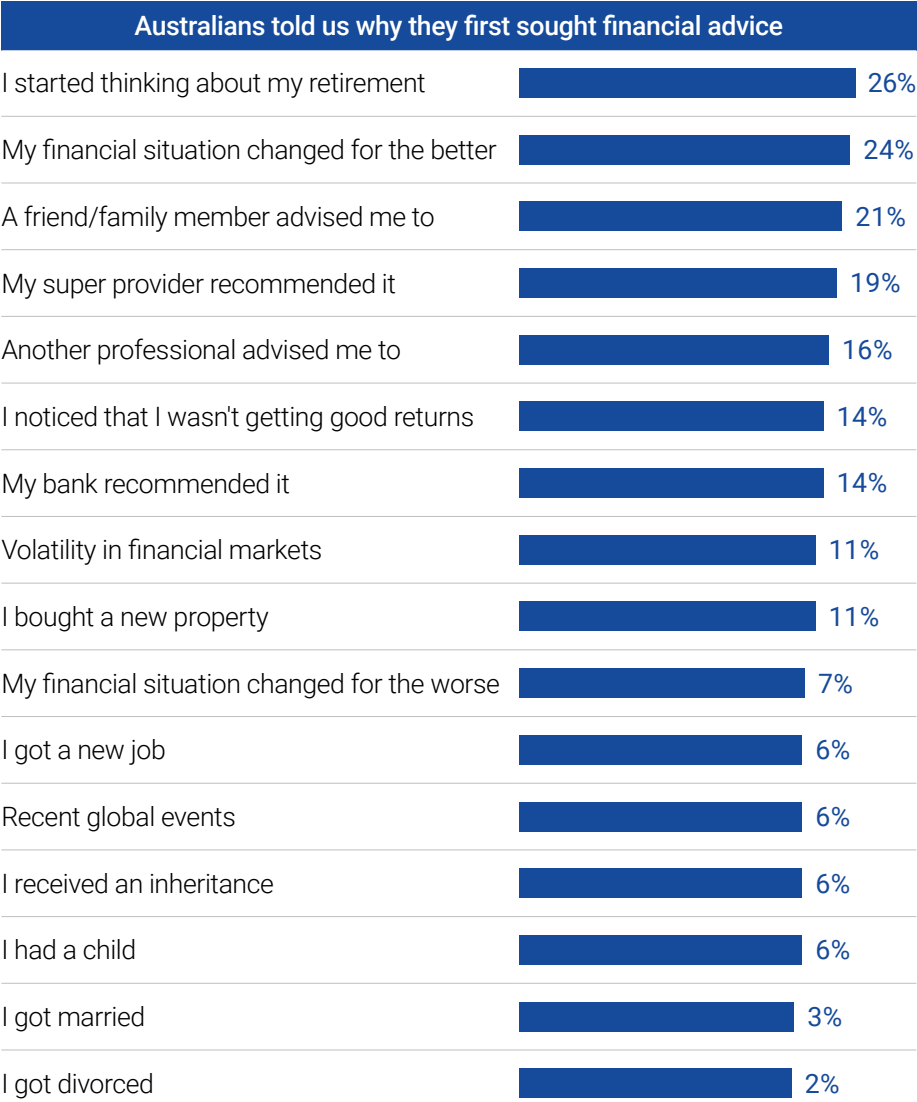
Age ranges

Less than 50 years old	50-59	60+
70%	11%	19%

The gender breakdown

Male	Female
61%	39%

The turning point: when do Australians seek advice?



These findings highlight the role financial advice can play at every stage of life. Whether you're navigating a major life event or preparing for what's ahead, a financial adviser can help you make decisions with greater confidence and clarity.



Looking ahead

The findings in this report point to a clear challenge: Australians are navigating growing financial pressures and are open to financial advice to guide them, but many still see it as out of reach.

At CFS, we believe financial advice should be more accessible and continue to advocate for the choice and solutions that help more Australians get the guidance they need to make informed financial decisions.

Ultimately, wealth and retirement are rarely shaped by a single decision. They are the result of a lifetime of choices, challenges and opportunities. Financial advice should be accessible for a range of those circumstances, to help Australians make decisions for their future with confidence and clarity.



CFS resources for advisers and members

1. Explore our advice options

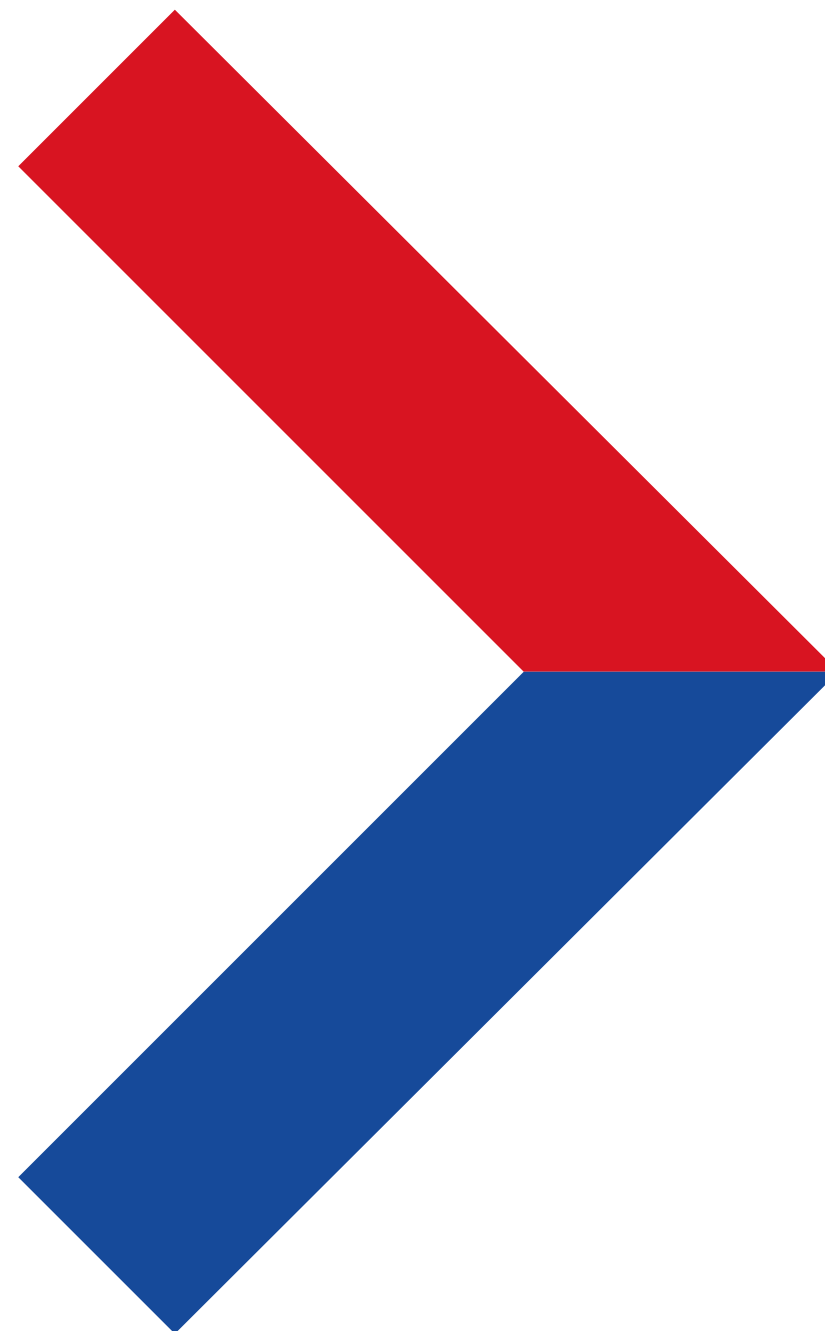
From simple questions to full financial plans, [learn more](#) about how CFS supports Australians seeking financial advice.

2. Learn about how we support advisers

Our 10x program is designed to help advisers solve challenges, drive growth, and best serve their clients. Find out more [here](#).

3. Resources for advisers and clients

We provide insights to CFS members and advisers regularly to help with super strategies, plus developments in the regulatory, economic and investment environment. You can view adviser resources [here](#) and member resources [here](#).



This study was commissioned by CFS and conducted with 2058 Australians online in April 2026. Respondents were Australians aged 18+ who are decision makers and hold a superannuation, or pension/annuity (non government) or investments account.

Information in this report is provided by Avanteos Investments Limited ABN 20 096 259 979, AFSL 245531 and Colonial First State Investments Limited ABN 98 002 348 352, AFSL 232468 (Colonial First State or CFS). Where we mention 'we', 'us' or 'our', we mean CFS. The CFS Group consists of Superannuation and Investments HoldCo Pty Limited ABN 64 644 660 882 (HoldCo) and its subsidiaries, which includes CFS. This report may include general advice but does not consider your individual objectives, financial situation, needs or tax circumstances. You should obtain a Product Disclosure Statement (PDS) for the relevant financial product on www.cfs.com.au. You can find the target market determinations (TMD) for our financial products at www.cfs.com.au/tmd, which include a description of who a financial product might suit. You should read the Financial Services Guide available online for information about our services. This information is based on current requirements and laws as at the date of publication. Published as at October 2026. This presentation cannot be used or copied in whole or in part without CFS's written consent. Copyright ©2026 All rights reserved Colonial First State Investments Limited ABN 98 002 348 352, AFSL 232468. 32581/1026