



Empowered Australian Report 2025



Welcome to the Empowered Australian Report 2025

At Colonial First State (CFS), we're proud to support financial advisers and show the important role they play in the lives of their clients.

Building on last year's findings, this year's report highlights the value of advice for Australians who continue to navigate the financial challenges of higher living costs and the critical role advisers play during periods of market volatility.

We have also included actionable insights from CFS experts, contributing to our ongoing efforts to help advisers serve more clients by unlocking practice efficiencies through technology and supporting their growth through our 10x initiatives.

We hope you find this report valuable and share its findings as a testament to the important work that advisers do. Together, we can empower more Australians to make informed decisions and achieve financial freedom.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bryce Quirk'.

Bryce Quirk
Group Executive –
Distribution

Unpacking the report

The purpose of this report is to highlight the value of financial advice, reveal the barriers preventing more Australians from accessing it, and consider the steps required to overcome them.

Our research found that the cost of living continues to be the chief concern for Australians, with more than half saying they are more concerned than they were 12 months ago. Within this context, the Empowered Australian report reveals striking differences between those who receive advice and those who don't.

In last year's report we highlighted the integral role that financial advisers play in preparing their clients for retirement and giving them the confidence that they are

on track to achieve their goals. This year we found that advised Australians are significantly less likely to report that their lifestyle and wellbeing has been negatively impacted by their financial situation.

Without access to advice, many Australians continue to turn to family members for guidance. At a time when volatility in global markets is driving more Australians to engage with their superannuation, accessing professional advice has never been more important.

While affordability remains a key barrier, the demand for advice is strong, particularly among those aged 30 to 49. Our research found that 77% of Australians in their 40s would like to see advice priced according to their needs, from simple to complex. We believe this presents an opportunity for innovative practices to build scaled offerings to meet the demand from younger clients and those with simpler advice needs.

Key findings

We surveyed 2,250 Australians, this is what they told us:

Advised Australians are significantly less likely to say their financial situation has negatively impacted their mental health

Financial advice plays a critical role in periods of market volatility

Eight in 10 Australians believe financial advice should be accessible to everyone

Seven in 10 Australians believe advice should be priced according to their needs, from simple to complex

Most Australians are unaware they can use their super to pay for financial advice

One in two Australians would like their super fund to help them find an adviser in their area

Financial security and wellbeing

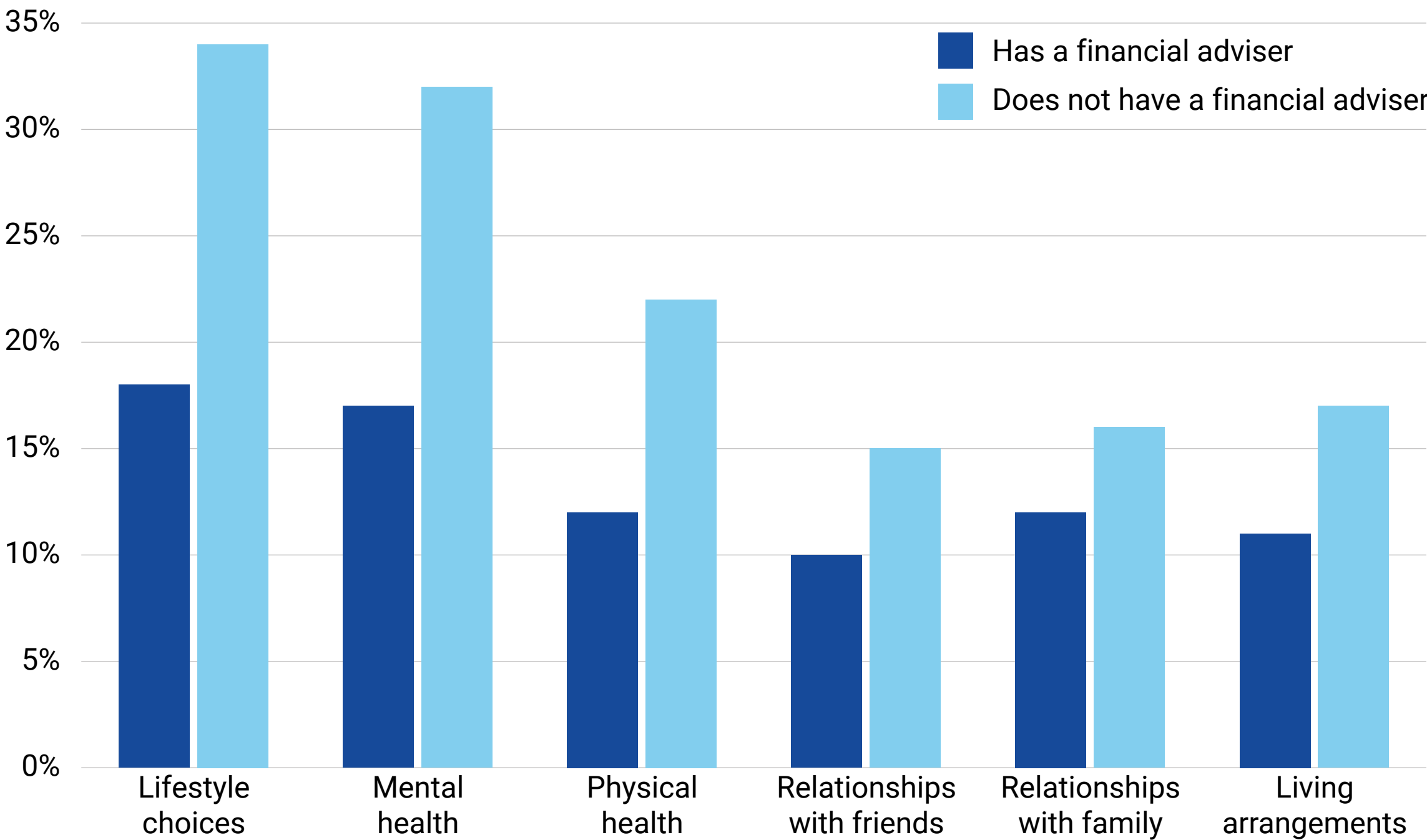
The cost of living is a top concern for almost three-quarters of Australians, with over half more concerned than they were a year ago. These concerns are having a material impact on lifestyle choices and wellbeing, with more than one in five men and more than one in three women saying their financial situation has negatively impacted their mental health.

However, those who receive advice are significantly less impacted than those who do not. This is most pronounced in lifestyle choices and physical and mental health, where those who have never received advice almost twice as likely as those who receive advice to admit their financial situation has had a negative effect.

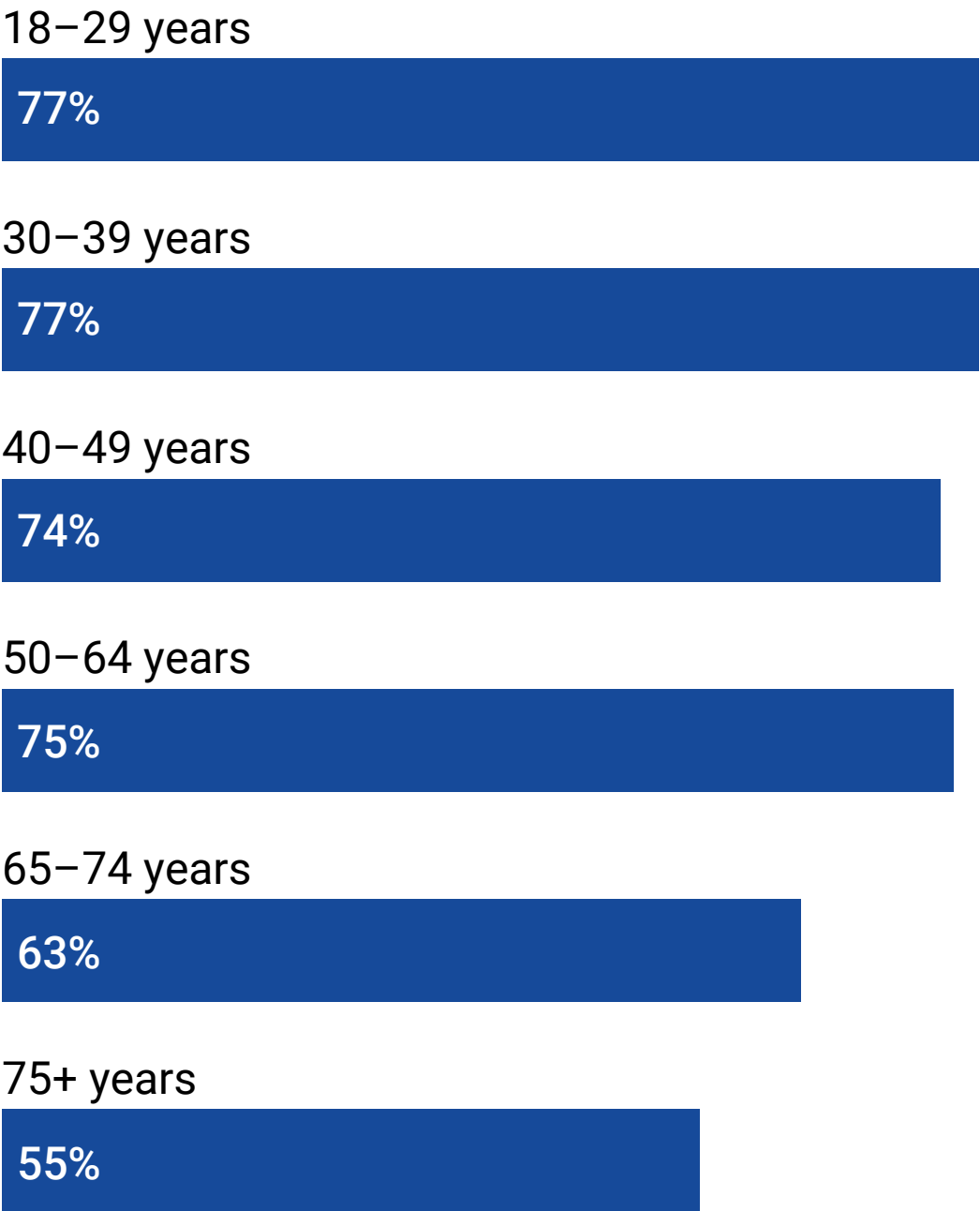
With the cost of living a chief concern, Australians are prioritising short-term financial goals. Asked which financial goals are a top priority for them, the most common response was breaking the cycle of living paycheck to paycheck.

However, those who receive advice are better prepared to cope with a loss of income. On average, advised Australians say they could cope for 10 months if they lost their job compared to 7 months for those who do not receive advice.

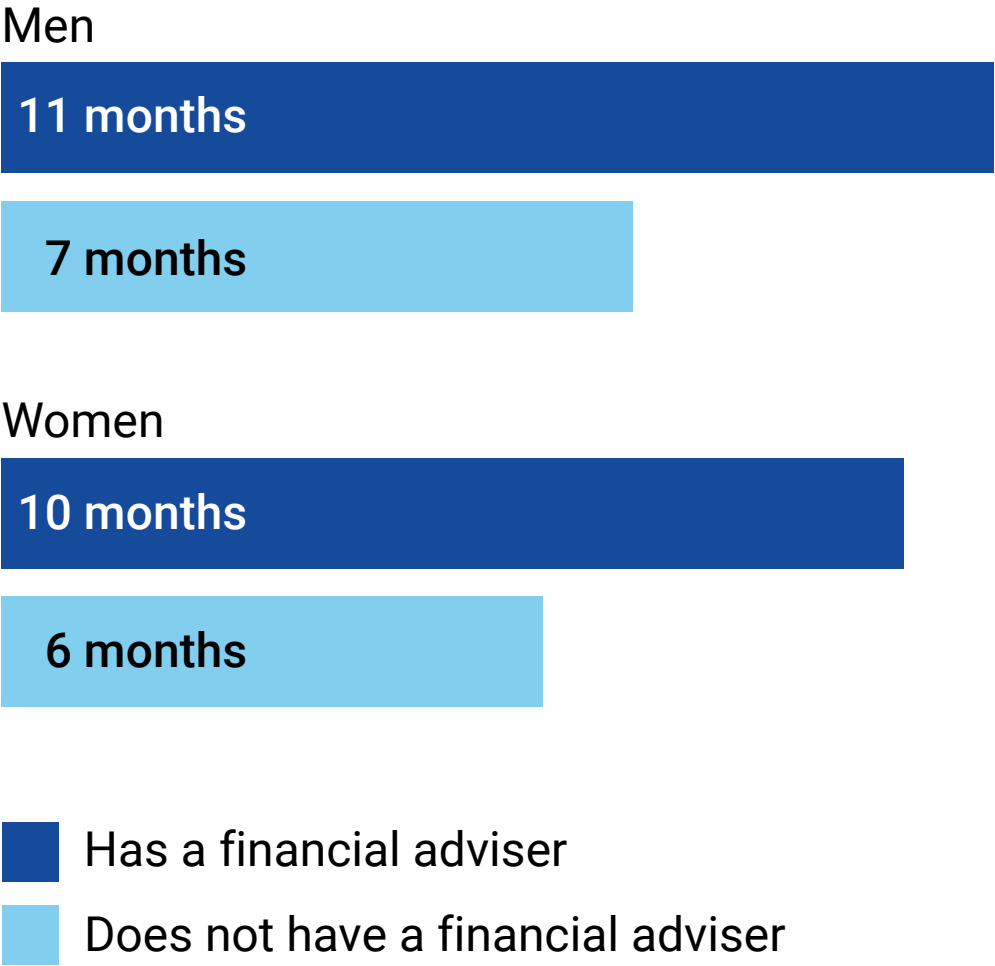
In the last year, has your financial situation negatively impacted the following?



Concerns about cost of living by age



Average time (in months) people could cope if they lost their job



Reassurance in times of uncertainty

Almost three-quarters of advised Australians (73%) and 83% of CFS advised members trust the guidance of their financial adviser more than any other source. Trust is highest among those over 50 (85%) who are more likely to have a longer relationship with their adviser.

High levels of trust are critical during periods of volatility when market fluctuations can be unsettling and drive people to seek advice from unqualified sources.

Worryingly, we found that those who do not have a financial adviser are ten times more likely than advised Australians to trust the financial guidance provided by their family more than any other source, placing them at risk of receiving inaccurate information.

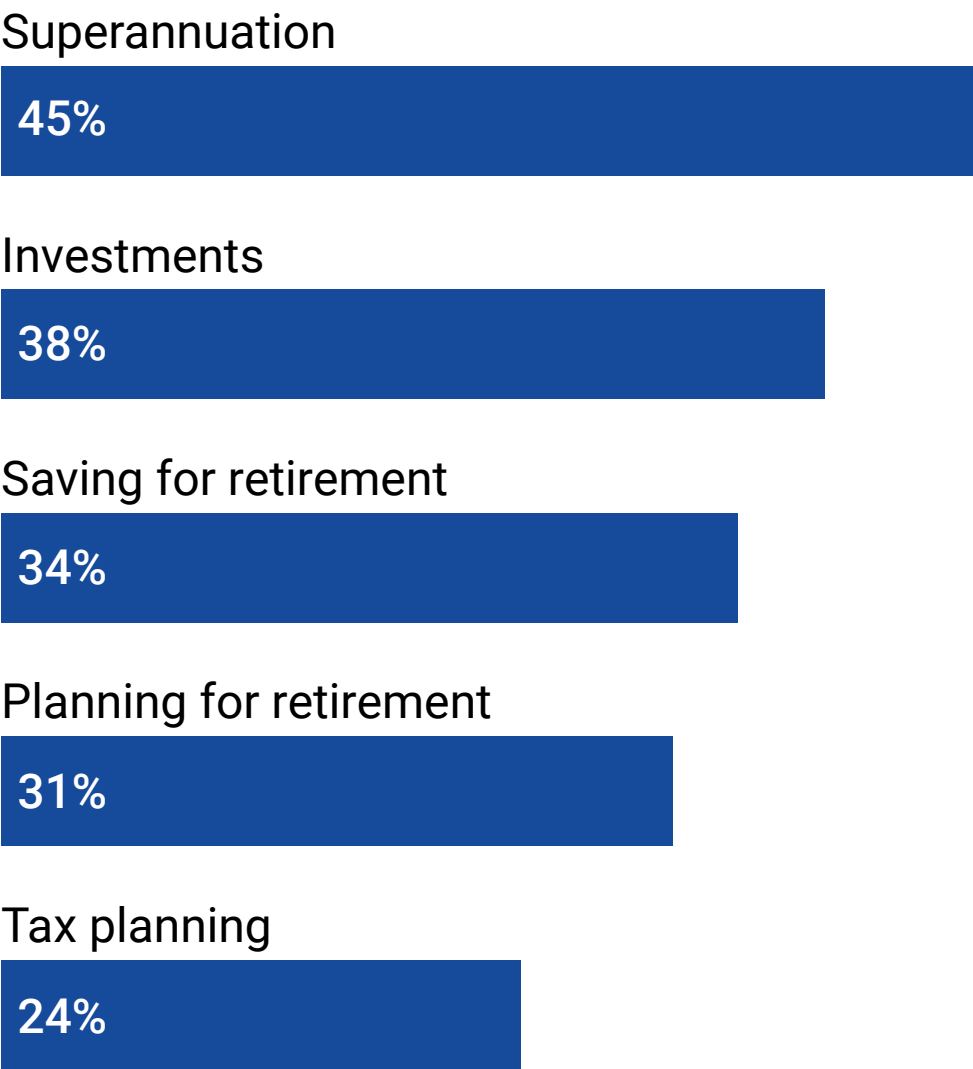
Conversely, when asked what makes having an adviser worthwhile, three of the top five reasons given relate to greater confidence – a testament to the important role advisers play in reassuring their clients.



What makes having an adviser worthwhile?



Which of the following would be most helpful to get advice on?



Expert insight

Kelly Power
CEO of CFS Superannuation

Financial advice delivers everyday benefits that extend well beyond superannuation and retirement planning.

Recent events on the world stage have triggered significant volatility in share markets. It is in times like this where having access to a financial adviser can make a huge difference to both your superannuation and your own peace of mind. Their advice is essential in tempering client reactions to market volatility and reminding them that investing for the long-term involves weathering periods of uncertainty.

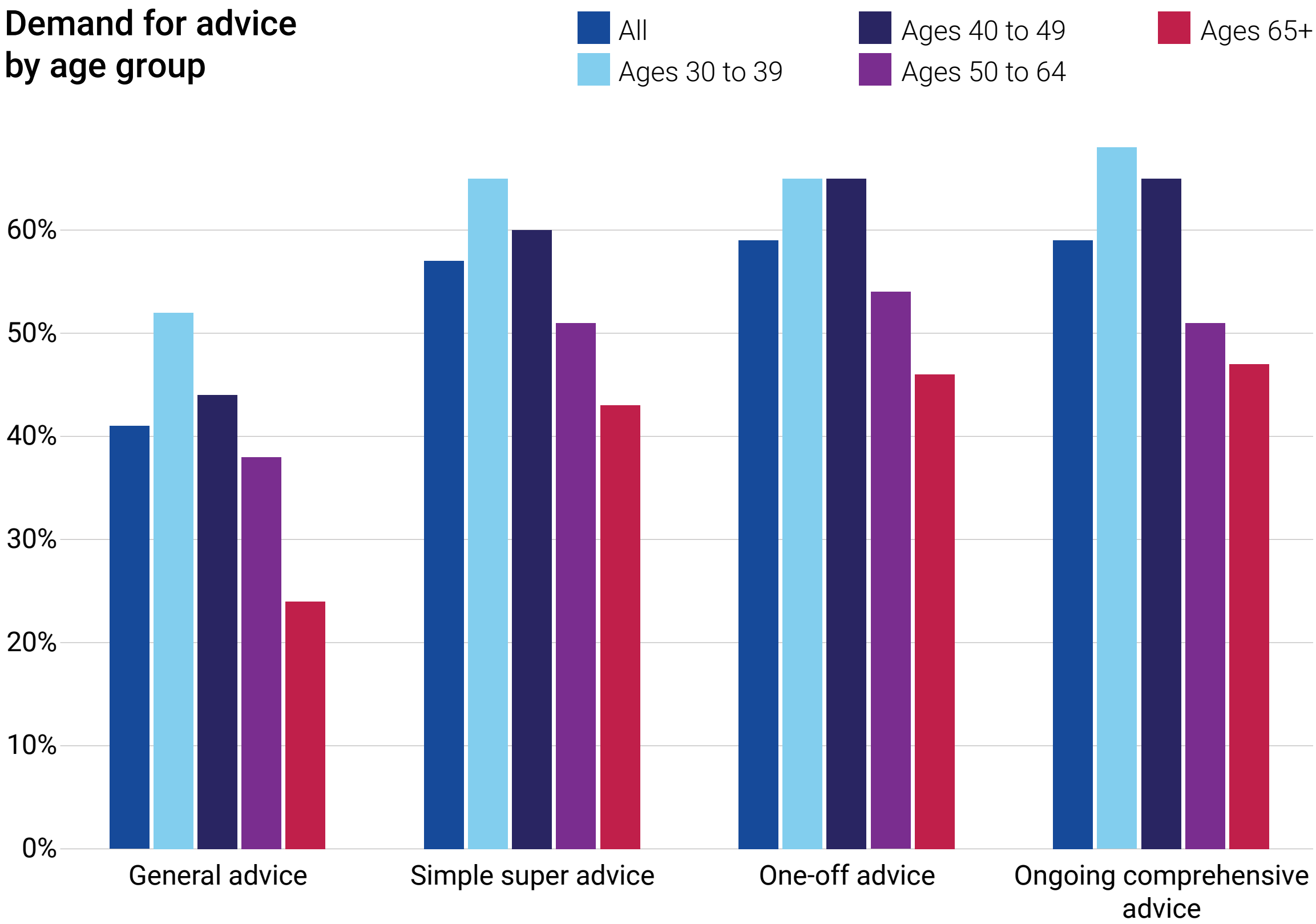


Demand for advice

The demand for advice is strong. Eight in ten Australians (82%) believe that financial advice should be accessible to all and one in two would like their super fund to help them find an adviser in their area.

Seven in ten Australians (72%) believe that financial advice should be priced according to their needs, from simple to complex. It is worth noting that one in four (26%) Australians who previously received advice say they stopped using a financial adviser because their services were no longer required, which may indicate that new advice models and pricing structures could be valuable for retaining clients.

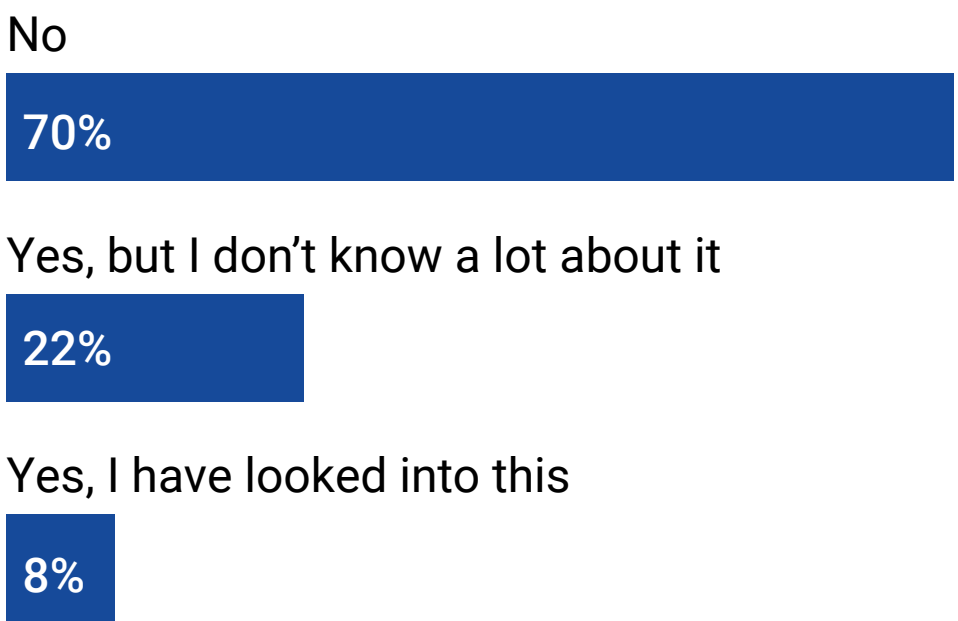
After familiarising themselves with four different types of advice, respondents were asked how appealing they were. The results show that demand for advice is strongest among those aged 30 to 49 and then continues to decrease with age. When asked to make a preference on the different types of advice available, the responses were broadly distributed, with general advice recording the lowest preference. However, when asked what they would like advice on, the most common answer among those who have never received advice was superannuation, followed by investments and savings for retirement.



Accessing advice

We found that 92% of Australians who have never received advice have little to no knowledge about using their super to pay for advice. Given that superannuation is the number one topic they want advice on, this presents a major opportunity for super funds and advisers to raise awareness about this option.

Are you aware that you can pay for financial advice using money invested in your super fund?



Expert insight

Craig Day
Head of Technical Services, CFS

If the advice relates to issues associated with how you should use your super to save for or fund retirement, the cost of that advice can be deducted from your super account.

For example, as you approach and enter retirement you can arrange for the cost of financial advice to address critical issues such as appropriate contribution levels, optimal pension account withdrawals, and investment strategies to mitigate investment and longevity risks, to be deducted from your account.

By leveraging your superannuation to pay for financial advice, you can make informed decisions about your retirement savings without impacting your immediate cash flow.



Overcoming barriers to accessing advice

Cost is the main reason one in three Australians don't use a financial adviser. However, the remaining two-thirds say they don't use an adviser because they are unable to assess the value of advice or are uncertain about how to access advice.

Among those, 34% say it costs too much for what they expect to get out of it, 18% don't know the benefits and 13% don't know the right questions to ask.

These findings indicate that more work needs to be done to educate consumers about the benefits of advice, what questions they could ask an adviser and what they should expect to receive for the fee they pay.

Overall, this reveals that while cost remains a key barrier, articulating the benefits of advice and unpacking the process clients go through with their adviser are critical.

Why don't you use a financial adviser?



Expert insight

Bryce Quirk
CFS Group Executive – Distribution

By leveraging their extensive reach and resources, super funds can play a major role in educating their members about the benefits of professional advice, particularly in navigating complex financial decisions and market volatility.

One effective way to achieve this is through targeted communication campaigns that highlight real-life success stories and the tangible benefits of advice, such as improved financial security and mental wellbeing.



Conclusion

The cost of living continues to be a chief concern for Australians, who are now experiencing the added pressures of market volatility and economic uncertainty. In this environment, the value of advice is undeniable.

At CFS we believe there are a number of actions that can be taken to make advice more accessible. The first is to educate Australians about how they can use their super to pay for advice. This knowledge will be critical for those already struggling with the cost of living and who are eager to get guidance on their superannuation.

The next action is for super funds to proactively connect members to advisers. Recent enhancements to the CFS Find an Adviser tool will ensure that members have access to professional guidance when they need it most.

Finally, we believe in supporting advice practices to develop scaled and segmented offerings for younger clients and those with simpler advice needs. By tailoring advice to meet the specific needs of different client segments, we can ensure that everyone receives the support they need to navigate these challenging times.

Through these actions, CFS aims to bridge the advice gap and help Australians achieve financial freedom.



How CFS is making advice more accessible

Find an Adviser tool

CFS has enhanced its [“Find an Adviser” tool](#) to ensure that members have access to professional guidance when they need it most. This tool helps members connect with qualified advisers in their local area, making it easier for them to access professional advice.

FirstChoice upgrades

CFS has made significant enhancements that improve the efficiency and connectivity of its FirstChoice platform. New technology developed in collaboration with Elemnta enables advisers to open multiple accounts simultaneously with secure and simple digital consent, cutting set-up time by 80%. This efficiency allows advisers to serve more clients and boost business profitability. FirstChoice has been recognised by Wealth Insights as the best value superannuation and investments platform for the last 10 years in a row.

10x Initiatives

CFS is committed to supporting advisers through dedicated services and practice optimisation initiatives. Recent 10x AI events held in conjunction with Microsoft gave advisers practical guidance on how this technology can make the advice process more efficient.

Member resources

CFS provides a range of educational resources to help members understand the benefits of financial advice and how to use their superannuation to pay for it. This includes hosting educational webinars and workshops to demystify the advice process and address common misconceptions about costs and benefits.





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