Media Release
10 November 2026

MEDIA RELEASE

BRIGHTER SUPER & INVESTMENT TRENDS 2026 RETIREMENT INCOME REPORT

Highlights

- Just 28% of pre-retirees feel prepared for retirement, down from 38% in 2025 and the lowest level in a decade.
- Retirees living comfortably fell from 58% in 2025 to 38% in 2026, while confidence in having enough money to fund retirement fell from 60% to 41%.
- Advised pre-retirees were almost twice as likely to feel prepared as those not currently open to advice (43% versus 22%), although financial circumstances also influence the results.
- Preparedness rises with super balance: 75% of pre-retirees with balances of more than $750,000 felt prepared compared with only 12% of those with less than $100,000.
- Brighter Super's Retirement Outlook Index rose from 60 to 63, while the national index fell from 58 to 49.
- Among Brighter Super retirees surveyed, 64% felt confident they could fund their retirement, up from 54% in 2025 and 23 percentage points above the national result.

Retirement preparedness falls to a decade low amid cost-of-living pressures

Just 28% of Australians approaching retirement feel prepared, a decade low, and the share of retirees living comfortably has plunged to 38% from 58% in a year, with three in four blaming the cost of living, the Brighter Super & Investment Trends 2026 Retirement Income Report has found.

The Retirement Income Report finds those who seek financial advice are more likely to make additional contributions to their super and that higher super balances are associated with greater comfort among retirees and greater preparedness among pre-retirees.

"While confidence is down among both pre-retirees and retirees, this research shows people with higher super balances feel more prepared, comfortable and confident about retirement, and super funds have a real role to play in helping members get there," Brighter Super Chief Executive Officer Kate Farrar said.

"Advice is a big part of that. People who get advice are more than twice as likely to be putting extra into their super, and the earlier they start, the more time it has to grow."

Retirees face growing financial pressure

Among retirees, those struggling to make ends meet more than tripled over the year, from 4% to 13%, and the share extremely concerned about outliving their savings tripled from 6% to 18%.

The share of retirees just covering the basics or struggling more than doubled, from 14% to 30%. Almost three-quarters (72%) named inflation and the cost of living among the biggest influences on their financial position.

Retirees' confidence in having enough money to fund retirement fell from 60% to 41%.

Confidence also tracked super balance, rising from 26% among retirees with balances of less than $100,000 to 90% among those with more than $750,000.

Super balances and advice are associated with better outcomes

The report found advised pre-retirees were more than twice as likely to be contributing more to super as those not open to advice (37% versus 15%). Among retirees, comfort rose with super

balance: 22% of those with less than $100,000 lived comfortably, compared with 91% of those with more than $750,000.

The fall in comfort was steepest among retirees with the smallest balances. The share living comfortably fell 17 points among those with less than $100,000 and 16 points among those with $100,000 to $250,000, against just 3 points for those with more than $750,000.

Among pre-retirees, only 12% of those with less than $100,000 in super felt ready, compared with 75% of those with more than $750,000.

Early planning matters

Retirees who began planning before the age of 40 were far more likely to be living comfortably (64%) than those who had not actively planned (17%).

Among pre-retirees expecting an income shortfall, those with advice were more likely to plan extra super contributions, alongside spending less or working longer.

Contributing more to super was retirees' most common response when asked what they would have done differently, cited by more than 30%.

Advised retirees were more likely to live comfortably than those not open to advice (57% versus 31%), though financial circumstances also play a part. Among recent retirees, 61% of those who took advice felt they were prepared before retiring, compared with 32% of those not open to advice. Yet 55% of all retirees said they received no guidance before retiring.

Advised pre-retirees were almost twice as likely to feel prepared as those not open to advice (43% versus 22%), and twice as likely to understand their options for accessing super well (39% versus 19%).

More than half of pre-retirees (54%) expect a retirement income shortfall. Cutting spending is now their most common plan to close the gap (49%, up from 21%). Three-quarters (75%) named inflation and the cost of living among the biggest influences on their financial position.

Investment Trends Head of Research Julian Cappe said: "After 17 years of tracking how Australians approach retirement, this year's results show financial pressure reaching people at every stage, from those still working to those already retired.

"When people expect to fall short, they are now more likely to plan to spend less than to save more."

Closing the retirement knowledge gap

Almost three in 10 pre-retirees (29%) do not know what they will do with their super when they retire, and 62% are unaware or unsure of the tax advantages offered by retirement income accounts. Among retirees not using a retirement income solution, 43% said they did not know enough to make a decision.

"With retirement preparedness, comfort and confidence falling, the findings from the research reinforce the value of advice in helping Australians understand their options, close income gaps and make confident choices for the future," Brighter Super Head of Product and Retirement Cristina Saija said.

Brighter Super members buck the national trend

The Retirement Outlook Index combines retirement preparedness among pre-retirees, confidence among retirees and both groups' satisfaction with their super fund's suitability for retirement.

While the national Index fell from 58 to a new low of 49, Brighter Super's rose from 60 to 63, driven by stronger retiree confidence.

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Almost two thirds (64%) of Brighter Super retirees surveyed felt confident they could fund retirement, up from 54% in 2025 and 23 percentage points above the national result. Satisfaction with Brighter Super's retirement suitability was also higher, at 65% among pre-retirees and 86% among retirees, compared with 55% and 73% nationally.

"Every member should understand their options and feel supported in taking their next step," Ms Farrar said.

"Our Brighter Advice Pathway brings together education, Super and Retirement Health Checks and personalised advice, helping members prepare for and navigate retirement with confidence."

Brighter Super also received the 2026–27 Epic Retirement Tick[1] for the second consecutive year, recognising its support for members before and during retirement.

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About Brighter Super

Brighter Super is a member-owned, Queensland-based superannuation fund managing more than $38 billion in retirement savings for over 340,000 members as at 30 June 2026.

With roots in Queensland's local government, energy and financial services industries and more than 60 years' experience supporting members with their retirement savings, it is the third-largest non-government financial institution* in Queensland and supports members nationwide.

Brighter Super is dedicated to being right by members' sides, empowering them to retire with confidence through trusted advice, personal service and local support. The fund is focused on delivering strong long-term returns while keeping fees low. For more information, call Brighter Super on 1800 444 396 within Australia.

*Based on assets under management of non-government financial institutions in Queensland.

About Investment Trends

Investment Trends is a specialist financial services market research organisation providing business insights and decision support information to many of the world's leading financial services organisations. We combine analytical rigour and strategic thinking with the most advanced market research and statistical techniques to help our clients gain competitive advantage. Our research coverage spans ten countries across Australia, Asia, Europe and the US. Our clients include industry regulators, leading local and global banks, investment platforms, leverage trading providers, fund managers, superannuation and pension funds, product issuers and manufacturers and financial advisory software providers.

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Methodology

The Brighter Super & Investment Trends 2026 Retirement Income Report is based on a survey of 4,007 Australians aged 40 and over, including 1,665 retirees, conducted by Investment Trends in August and September 2026. The report is the 17th annual edition and is one of the longest-running and most comprehensive study of Australians' retirement journeys.

The survey was conducted in two phases: a main industry-level survey of Australian adults sourced from a broad-based survey of the Australian adult population, supplemented by respondents from the Investment Trends opt-in panel. Results were calibrated to reflect Australian adults aged 40 and over, with a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 1.5%.

Retirees are defined by employment criteria, not an age threshold. Comparisons draw on previous surveys conducted by Investment Trends.

Australian Retirement Outlook Index

The Retirement Outlook Index combines four measures: the proportion of pre-retirees who feel very or somewhat prepared for retirement; the proportion of retirees who feel confident or very confident they have enough money to fund retirement; and satisfaction with a super fund's overall suitability for retirement among pre-retirees and retirees. Each measure ranges from 0% to 100%.

The Brighter Super Retirement Outlook Index is based on the Brighter Super & Investment Trends 2026 Retirement Income Report. Index figures for previous years were retrospectively calculated using data from the relevant Investment Trends Retirement Income Survey.

Disclaimers

[1]The Zenith CW Pty Ltd ABN 20 639 121 403 AFSL 226872/AFS Rep No. 1280401 (Chant West) Epic Retirement Tick issued 1 October 2026 is solely a statement of opinion and not a recommendation in relation to making any investment decisions. The Tick is current for 12 months and subject to change at any time without notice. Ticks from previous years are for historical purposes only. Liability is not accepted, whether direct or indirect, from use of the Tick. Full details on the Tick at www.chantwest.com.au/solutions/epic-retirement-tick/

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