



do your thing



ING Sense of Us 2026.

'No worries'? Not quite.
How Australians are finding control
while feeling the pinch.

About this report.

ING's Sense of Us Report is a national survey conducted every three years that aims to understand Aussies' modern money habits.

The Sense of Us study answers what Aussies care about – their goals, challenges, habits and quirks – in relation to their money mastery.

Survey dates and sample sizes

- **2021 Report:** conducted in February 2021, comprising a sample of 1,054 Australians aged 18 years and older.
- **2023 Report:** conducted in March 2023, sampling 2,073 Australians aged 18 years and older.
- **2026 Report (Part 1):** conducted online between 26 February and 11 March 2026, with a nationally representative sample of 2,045 Australians aged 18 years and older.
- **2026 Report (Part 2):** conducted online between 10 and 20 April 2026, with a nationally representative sample of 2,075 Australians aged 18 years and older.

ING and YouGov conducted a second study (Part 2) to understand the impact unfolding events in the Middle East in March 2026 may have been having on people.

So when we say 'Australians' or 'Aussies' in this report, we're referring to Australian adults aged 18 and over who responded to the survey to help us understand how people are feeling about things at the moment. Findings we discuss in this report are subject to standard sampling tolerances and the inherent limitations of survey-based research.

These studies were conducted online by YouGov on behalf of ING, where the figures have been weighted to project a nationally representative sample of Australians aged 18 years and older. Where data references behaviour or sentiments in the past 12 months, this refers to the 12-month period prior to taking the survey.

About ING

ING changed the way Australians bank 27 years ago by launching the country's first digital-led branchless bank. ING now offers Australians home loans, transactional banking, superannuation, credit cards, personal lending, insurance and wholesale banking services.

ING at a glance

Australia's #1 bank 2026.

Awarded by Forbes.



Australia's most recommended bank.

According to RFI Global's Consumer Atlas Survey, July–December 2025 (n=29,246) when compared to customers of the 10 largest ADIs operating in Australia amongst AFR customers.

Australia's 5th largest main financial institution (MFI).

With 5% market share according to RFI Global's Consumer Atlas Survey, July – December 2025 (n = 29,246).



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Executive summary.

How Australians are investing in life and living in 2026.



The past few years have reshaped the Australian consumer. Sustained disruptions including COVID-19, war and macroeconomic volatility have shaped our outlook and behaviour. According to Sense of Us 2026, we're now more pragmatic, adaptive and self-directed, with a stronger sense of control over our lives.

While pressures such as inflation, interest rates and global uncertainty continue to dominate headlines and weigh heavily, the findings suggest there's a divide between broad global factors, and the financial setbacks that are within our individual control.

According to ING's 2026 Sense of Us research, people surveyed reported they are now focusing on what they can influence, from how they spend and save to how they prioritise what truly matters most.

And let's be honest, the last few years have taught us a little here.

However, this shift in mindset isn't evenly felt across the population. Younger Australians are leading the positive outlook, with Gen Z (82%) and Millennials (74%) significantly more likely to feel optimistic about the year ahead than Gen X (52%) and Baby Boomers (49%).

But across all generations, this doesn't signal a retreat from ambition – quite the opposite.

Success is no longer defined by a single path or milestone that has been drafted by generations or policymakers before us. Instead, Australians are actively deciding what progress looks like for them and allocating their money accordingly.

Traditional markers like home ownership still matter but they now sit alongside a more personal definition of value. One that prioritises flexibility, experiences and a stronger sense of agency. We're making more deliberate trade-offs, balancing financial realities with a clear intent to protect the parts of life we value most.

And this has shifted the role of money too.

It's increasingly being used as a tool to support truly living, not just long-term security. Australians aren't simply riding out economic pressure. They are making conscious decisions to shape a life that feels worthwhile today.

That tension between external pressure and personal control is what defines the current Australian consumer. It's often a delicate dance but when you understand what really matters the decisions become much easier to understand.

Matt Bowen

Head of Consumer & Market Insights



The 2026 outlook

People are adapting, not waiting.



- After years of disruption, Australians accept that major global events are largely uncontrollable.
- In response, they are focusing on what is within their control, particularly when it comes to personal finances and lifestyle decisions, showing greater self-reliance.

We're building momentum through every day 'small wins'.



- Despite ongoing cost of living pressure, optimism remains.
- Australians are managing money through repeatable, practical behaviours such as budgeting carefully, seeking value, using loyalty programs, managing subscriptions and juggling multiple apps.
- These tools help build a sense of control and resilience.

The money playbook is being rewritten for the modern day.

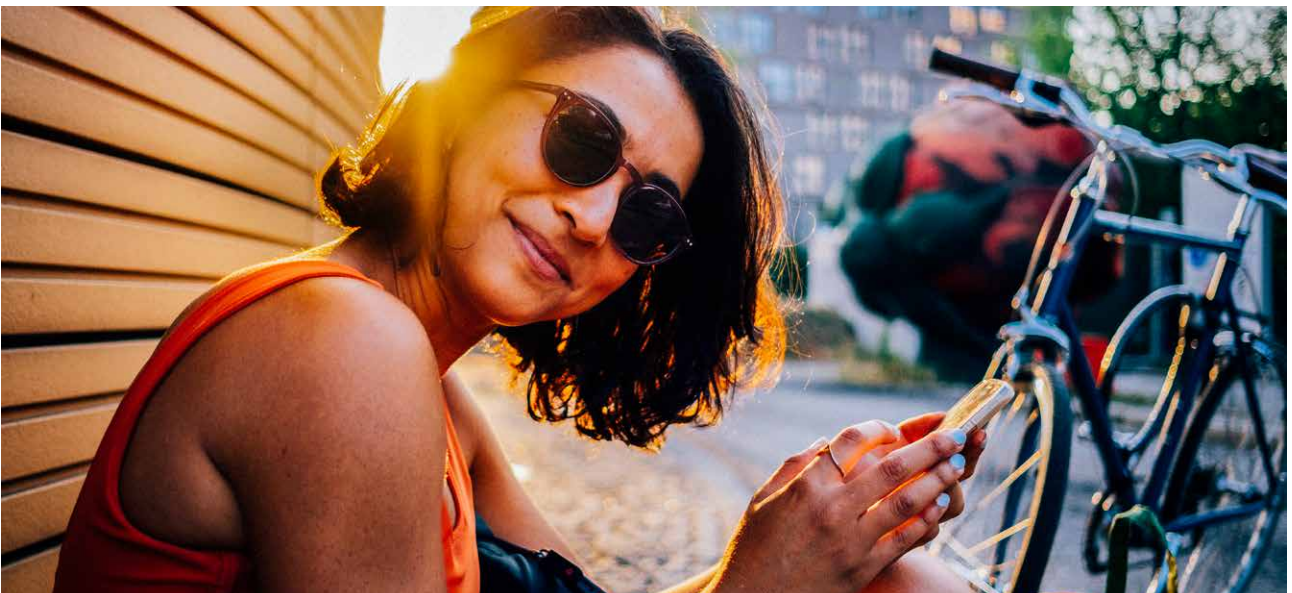


- Younger generations are favouring new investment strategies and diverse income streams, prioritising agility over old notions of stability.
- This fuels innovation and creates intergenerational shifts in how wealth is built and managed.

Spending is more intentional and increasingly about joy.



- While pressure remains, Australians are deliberately protecting spend on what brings meaning and joy, such as travel, experiences, wellness, and connection.
- This has contributed to a growing 'joy economy', even amid tighter financial conditions.



Report.

Under pressure but feeling good: the mindset powering Australia's optimism.

Despite global uncertainty and ongoing cost pressures, Australians are still looking ahead with optimism. Not because they believe the challenges will disappear but more that people are actively reprioritising what 'success' looks like – putting more of their money (and time) into connection, security and experiences.

These figures highlight the pervasive financial challenges being faced:

- Cost of living (83%), unexpected expenses (49%) and inflation (48%) were the top financial issues preventing people from reaching their 2025 goals.
- Older Aussies (Baby Boomers: 91%, Gen X: 93%) reported being more affected by cost of living than younger generations (Millennials: 79%, Gen Z: 69%).
- And while two-thirds of respondents (64%) said they feel positive about the year ahead in 2026, other aspects like motivation (28%), health (26%), confidence (22%) and fear of failure (15%) are shaping outcomes too.

But despite these pressures:

- Gen Z (82%) and Millennials (74%) are leading the positive outlook by being significantly more likely to feel positive than Gen X (52%) and Baby Boomers (49%).

Aussies' goals continue to be aligned.

2023

Top common goals.

Sense of Us 2023 found we wanted to live life to the full after COVID-19.

45% saving money

31% Travel

26% spending time with family & friends

24% having more fun



2026

Top priorities.

Sense of Us 2026 found our goals are still aligned despite economic pressures.

45% saving money

31% Travel

35% spending time with family & friends

28% having more fun



And so, the picture is clear. Although economic pressure has built over the past three years, the Australian spirit of resilience amid adversity is shining through. People remain upbeat and are choosing to invest in their favourite pastimes, their physical and emotional wellbeing, and make a conscious effort to find moments for themselves and for connection.



Our desire to travel is optimism in action.

There is no more clear demonstration of the mindset shift.

- 73% of people surveyed are planning to take a holiday in 2026, a slight decrease from 77% in 2023, with trips to connect with relatives or family remaining the most popular holiday choice.
 - And despite global events affecting travel routes, it hasn't dampened our ambition. There was no change from March 2026 to April 2026 (both 31%) on Aussies saying that travel is a priority leisure goal for them this year.
- And when asked, \$3,562 was the average amount Australians expect to spend on holidays annually in 2026.
- We found that younger Aussies responding to the survey were more likely (61%) than older respondents to expect to spend more on holidays this year compared to last.

And as budgets tighten, our travel preferences are shifting.

- Europe continues its status as most desired destination (24%, up from 18% in ING's Sense of Us 2021), especially for younger generations (Gen Z: 38%, Millennials: 35% vs Gen X: 21% and Baby Boomers: 25%).
- Travel destinations a little closer to home are gaining popularity, with Southeast Asia and Oceania also seeing modest growth over the past three years.
- Domestic travel such as weekend road trips (20%) and city trips (19%) are highly common, and cruises continue to remain popular with Aussies (11% from 10% in 2023).

Aussies' most common money-saving travel tactics

14%

Book through online travel agents.



16%

Are travelling domestically instead of internationally.



15%

Wait for sales to book flights and hotels.



Travel is more than just one of the top goals Aussies work toward on a yearly basis. And although our vacations may be a little shorter or a little closer, Aussies are still setting aside a few dollars to embark on an adventure.



The confidence economy: why small financial wins matter more than ever.

Financial confidence is less about big money decisions and more about small, repeatable wins. The survey showed us people are making daily, deliberate choices by joining loyalty programs, hunting for sales and taking sustainable actions to save money.

And it's this everyday control that's building momentum for financial stability.

Groceries: A battleground for cost control.

Groceries have clearly become a growing item within the household budget and an area where Aussies have made deliberate choices over the past few years.

Findings from people surveyed showed:

- 88% reported an increase in grocery costs in the past year, with people reporting an average of \$169 being spent on groceries each week, up from an average of \$162 in 2023. This relatively modest increase compared to broader grocery inflation could suggest Australians are actively adjusting their behaviour to manage costs, from switching to more affordable cuts of meat, to exploring alternative protein sources and making more deliberate sources at the checkout.

How Aussies are saving at the checkout

1 in 5

Are willing to swap any product for a cheaper version to boost their savings.

55% have also said they've changed dietary habits to cut costs.



83%

Are taking measures to reduce their weekly outgoing.

By proactively shopping at cheaper supermarkets (31%) or buying products in bulk (26%).



But...

There are limits to our compromises.

With shoppers least likely to substitute meat and fish (27%), tea and coffee (27%).



Loyalty programs: a deliberate strategy to stretch every dollar.

Brand loyalty is being put to the test like never before as Australian shoppers look for deliberate ways to stretch their shopping budgets a little further.

Loyalty programs are now a deliberate financial play for Aussies

85%

The percentage of respondents who have signed up for and are actively engaging monthly (70%) with these programs.



\$255

The estimated approximate national average of stored value per member across loyalty programs.



Gen Z

Is the generation least likely to be part of a loyalty program (76%).

Compared to Millennials (84%), Gen X (88%) and Baby Boomers (90%).



Online shopping: a double-edged sword for Aussie wallets

The digital marketplace has firmly cemented itself in Australian life. However, the data reveals a paradox. The hunt for value is strong but the online experience isn't always a win for the wallet.

- 86% of Aussies surveyed regularly engaged in online shopping and reported to have spent an average of \$290 each month. While nearly half (46%) believe they save money shopping online, a significant 49% of respondents don't feel like they're saving money due to delivery costs.
- Even more tellingly, nearly a third (31%) admit they actually spend more online than they would in a physical store.
- 9% intend to shop online and buy items as they need them, regardless of sales.

While the popularity of online shopping is undeniable, the spending is far from reckless. The data supports the view that an 'always on' sales mindset is fundamentally reshaping the retail experience.



Ethical savings: sustainability is no longer just values-led

The sustainability conversation in Australia has clearly evolved. What was once driven by pure altruism has shifted to something more pragmatic. People still believe in the cause but increasingly they expect it to deliver financially as well.

- People reported they are actively engaging in sustainable practices in 2026 (82%) with the desire to save money remaining a significant factor (40%)
- 'Environmental concern' as a driver to adopt sustainable practices is lower at 27% in 2026.

Ease of access, product innovation and new government policy is helping build sustainable decisions into everyday household management (like energy-efficient appliances and solar).

Aussies this year also reported they'll prioritise energy-efficient appliances (29%) and are installing or planning to install solar panels (26%).

Sustainability adopters reported they expect an average saving of \$98 per month through investment in sustainable and ethical products and solutions.

Other sustainable behaviours respondents reported in the past year

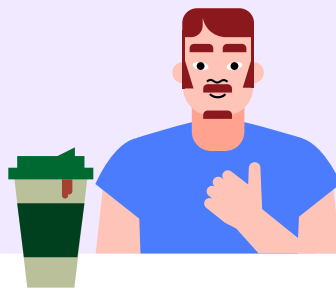
46%

say they're recycling more than last year to be more sustainable.



36%

are using reusable alternatives.



35%

have reduced energy or water use through everyday behaviour.



The money game has changed: introducing Australia's new financial playbook.

The money playbook isn't broken. But it has evolved. Younger generations surveyed are responding with investment appetite, income diversification and new rules for stability. While older generations are embracing digital money management tools and savings tactics.

Investing remains a priority

Accessibility to financial literacy information, education and the proliferation of digital tools are enabling access to wealth building strategies that were once locked away from previous generations.

Exploring investing opportunities such as ETFs or shares, alongside savings were also reported as key in boosting income and wealth.

- 30% of Aussies surveyed reported they are likely to invest in shares or ETFs in the next 12 months.
- 46% of Gen Z and 43% of Millennials responded they are likely to invest in shares or ETFs in the next 12 months.
- Investing remains a prevalent goal despite a volatile economic environment, with one in five Aussies who answered saying that investing was one of their top financial goals for 2026 (19% April 2026 vs 24% March 2026), aligning with 20% in ING's Sense of Us 2023.
- Maximising income and growing savings was reported as the main reason for investing, according to 59% of current and 59% of future investors.
- 33% of respondents cite preparing for retirement and another 31% cite taking advantage of current market conditions. Younger Aussies reported they are now more engaged with their retirement and superannuation funds, making higher contributions when compared to their older counterparts who were surveyed (Gen Z: 46%, Millennials: 47% compared to Gen X: 36% and Baby Boomers: 16%).

Investing no longer seems to be a niche activity but a mainstream consideration for individual wealth building.

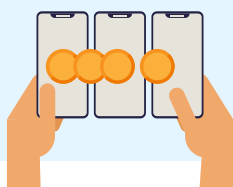
A digital-first approach to banking

Australians are also diversifying where they store their savings by actively using multiple banking apps as they look to get the most out of their money and accumulate small wins along the way.

Aussies are using multiple banking apps

62%

Of Australians use multiple banking apps (with 52% using 2-3 apps).



26%

Use multiple apps for the purpose of high-interest savings.



The widespread adoption of multiple banking apps demonstrates that it's returns over convenience, as Aussies look to maximise returns on every dollar.



Diversifying income streams

For younger generations surveyed, entrepreneurship has emerged as the next step in their savings journey, reflecting a broader trend towards seeking multiple income streams and flexibility.

More Aussies are embracing entrepreneurship

12%

The percentage of Aussies who identified starting their own side hustle or business as a personal goal for the next 12 months.



Younger generations

Are significantly more inclined towards entrepreneurship with 19% of Millennials and 15% of Gen Z respondents aiming to start a side hustle or business.

Compared to Gen X (10%) and Baby Boomers (3%).

This goal is particularly strong among younger generations, who reported they view investing as a contributor to their income stream:

27% Millennials

25% Gen Z

17% Gen X

7% Baby boomers

Traditional financial markers of a stable employment and steady income have clearly been challenged. Young Aussies responded they are now seeking agility and multiple avenues in a bid to accelerate their financial growth and enjoy lifestyle flexibility.



Housing aspirations: a different climb of the ladder

Young Australians surveyed responded that they're not done (yet) with home ownership and also don't want to be paying rent into the void for all eternity. Property ownership still holds a firm place as a major goal as they actively build their future.

But while home ownership remains strong overall, the rising costs are changing timelines and forcing alternative approaches.

Aussie living arrangements

1 in 3

The number of Aussies (34%) who reported they have plans to change their current living situation in the next 12-24 months.



10%

Plan to rent.



7%

Plan to buy a home on their own.



7%

Plan to buy a home with family.



4%

Plan to 'rentvest'.

Rentvesting is when you rent where you want to live but buy and investment property where you can afford.

Here's what it looks across all generations.

Aussies who plan to...	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Rent	29%	15%	15%	7%
Rentvest	7%	5%	3%	1%
Buy solo	12%	11%	6%	2%
Buy with others (friend or family member)	17%	13%	5%	2%



The trust divide

People are shifting away from the traditional financial milestone goals.

Findings of the survey revealed there is an emerging intergenerational divide between where people get financial literacy information and who they speak to or ask for advice.

This new playbook also redefines financial advice, with a notable move towards digital and AI channels and a nuanced intergenerational dialogue around money.

Where Aussies get their financial info

Only 13%

The percentage who rely on family and friends for financial advice.



Gen Z

Are significantly more open (12%) to gaining understanding through digital and AI channels.

Compared to Millennials: 7%, Gen X: 4% and Baby Boomers: 1%.

30%

Of Gen Z and 17% of Millennials are most likely to argue with their parents about money.



Australia's joy economy: investing in what really matters.

Australians are actively making space (and budget) for personal enjoyment, turning 'small luxuries' into a mainstream category of consumer spend.

The survey research shows that Aussies continue to prioritise spending on themselves and their wellbeing with exercise, entertainment and hobbies non-negotiables in a modern world.

Aussies enjoy a diverse range of hobbies

13%

Enjoy watching
live sports.



12%

Enjoy nature and being
in the great outdoors.



12%

Enjoy cooking
and baking.



11%

Enjoy
gaming.



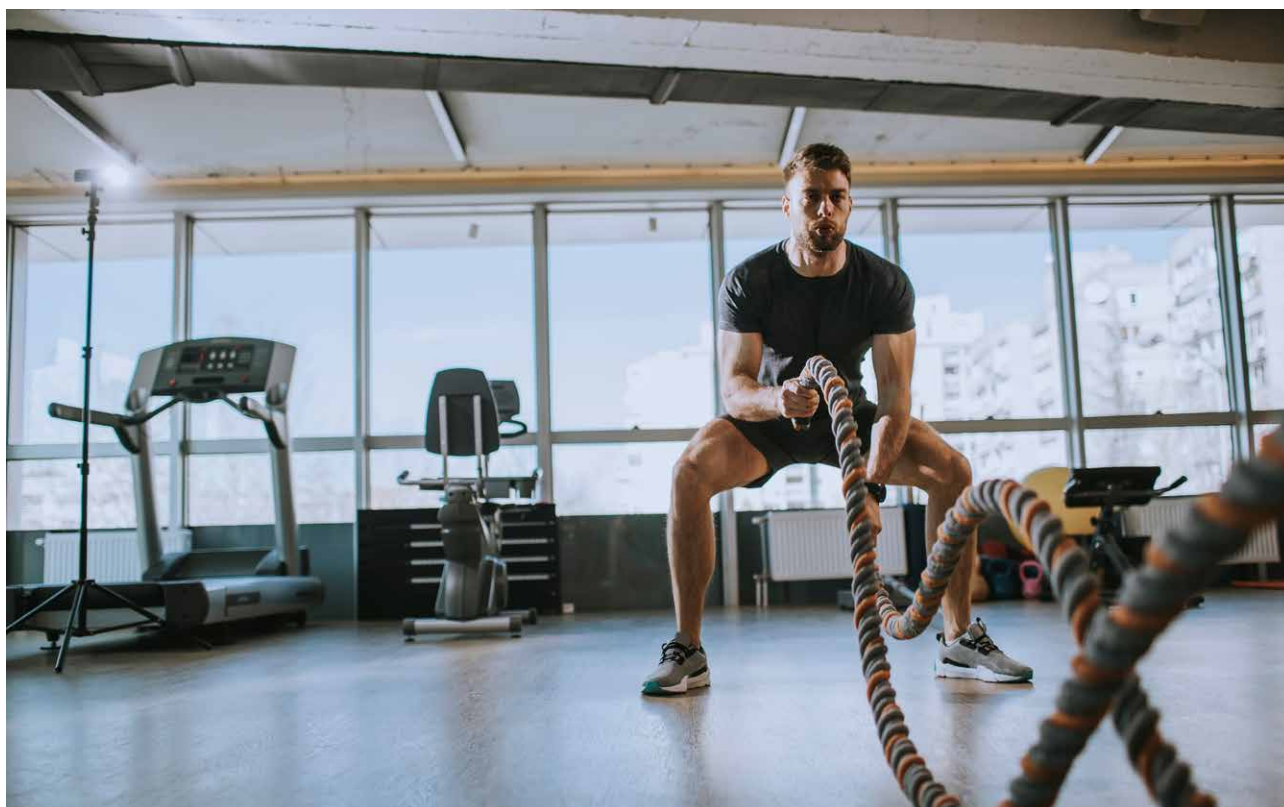
11%

Enjoy
gardening.



10%

Enjoy sport
and exercising.



Self-reported spending patterns reported by people surveyed show:

Time with friends & family.

Among those who prioritise time with friends and family, respondents reported allocating around \$169 per month on average (approximately \$2,029 per year per person). On average, men reported spending around \$60 more per month than women (\$204 compared to \$143).



Wellness practices.

Among respondents who prioritise wellness activities, people surveyed reported spending around \$115 per month on average (approximately \$1,376 per year per person). On average, men reported spending around \$23 more per month than women (\$127 compared to \$104).



Watching live sports.

For those who prioritise attending live sports, respondents reported spending around \$93 per month on average (approximately \$1,121 per year per person). Baby Boomers reported lower monthly spend compared to younger generations (Baby Boomers: \$55 vs Millennials: \$112 and Gen X: \$88).



Note: These suggested estimates are based on self-reported responses only

These figures paint a clear picture: Australians value their relationships, personal passions, and wellbeing just as much as their financial standing.

Another non-negotiable for a majority of Aussies surveyed was their use of subscription services including health, wellbeing, streaming and household entertainment.

- More than three in four (78%) Aussies reportedly paid for at least one subscription service in 2026.
- On average, Australians spend \$136 on their paid subscriptions each month, suggesting a total spend of approximately \$1,637 per person annually.
- Younger generations tend to spend more on subscriptions, with Gen Z averaging \$178 and Millennials \$174 per month, compared to Gen X at \$101 and Baby Boomers at \$82.

Yet, despite the high volume of subscriptions held among Aussies, the majority of respondents reported they are exploring cost-saving measures in this space.

- A notable 26% of Aussies are happy to give up subscriptions to save money for holidays, highlighting them as a flexible budget item.
- A significant six in ten (60%) Aussie subscription holders admit to sharing their subscriptions with others, with:
 - over two in five (43%) sharing them with people in their households
 - one in six (17%) even sharing with those outside of their household.

This commitment to experiences and wellbeing, even amid financial tightening, underscores a collective belief that true wealth comes from encompassing meaningful connections and personal fulfilment.



Conclusion.

Cost of living pressures, inflation and global uncertainty continue to dominate the national conversation, placing pressure on household finances. But according to our research, Australians are adapting by adjusting how they spend, save and prioritising what matters most to them.

The findings suggest a more adaptive, pragmatic and self-directed approach to managing money:

- Confidence is built through small wins
- Money is managed more actively and digitally
- Traditional goals remain but pathways are evolving
- Spending is increasingly aligned to personal meaning.

In 2026, financial confidence seems to be less about broader economic conditions and more about how individuals feel about their own day-to-day money decisions.





do your thing