The New Retirement Reality

Why clarity matters for employees — and what it means for workforce planning in Ireland

A study of retirement readiness, income clarity and life after work in Ireland

A summary of research findings from the joint Amárach Research study for The Financial Planning Standards Board Ireland (FSPB Ireland), IOB, LIA and Retirement Planning Council of Ireland (RPCI).

May 2026

Contents

01

About the research: The National Position on Retirement Readiness and Workplace Impact in Ireland

This report presents findings from two national surveys conducted by Amárach Research: an employee survey of 1,200 working adults and an employer survey of 500 decision makers across private, public and not-for-profit organisations.

The programme was commissioned by FPSB Ireland, IOB, LIA and the Retirement Planning Council of Ireland to examine both the financial readiness for retirement and broader preparedness, including lifestyle, transition and life after work.

02

Executive Summary:
Why Retirement Clarity Now Matters for the Modern Workforce

Irish employers are facing a growing workforce planning challenge: employees are delaying retirement, often not by choice but due to financial uncertainty. While pension participation has improved, participation does not mean preparedness, and understanding has not kept pace.

Employees are saving, but many do not know what those savings will deliver as income in retirement. Without that clarity, decisions about when they can retire, whether they can afford to and how to plan for life after work remain uncertain.

This has direct implications for employers. Delayed and unpredictable retirement timelines affect workforce planning, succession, productivity and employee wellbeing. Financial uncertainty is no longer just a personal issue, it is a workplace issue.

A clarity-first approach helps employees understand what their savings mean at different retirement ages, enabling more confident decisions and giving employers greater visibility and predictability in workforce planning.

What changes with a clarity-first approach

A clarity-first approach helps people understand what their savings mean at different retirement ages, supports more confident decision making and gives employers clearer visibility on workforce planning. Facilitating access to trusted financial planners turns participation into genuine preparedness.

Employers are already seeing the effects – delayed transitions, reduced visibility on retirement timelines and the impact of financial stress on performance. This is not simply a retirement issue, but a workforce planning challenge.

The opportunity is clear. Retirement readiness should be treated as a core element of workforce strategy, not a late-stage or optional support.

Employers are not being asked to provide financial advice, but to enable access to trusted, structured financial planning support that helps employees translate savings into clear retirement outcomes.

Embedding retirement clarity into workplace wellbeing strategies can improve confidence, reduce financial stress and support more predictable, voluntary retirement transitions – benefiting both employees and organisations.

Appetite for support:

72% of employees believe employers should support the transition to retirement and **60%** would welcome the opportunity to work with a professional for help with retirement planning. Among employers, 57% agree they have a role and **63%** would welcome external specialist support, although only **32%** currently offer a retirement planning programme. Auto-enrolment has fixed the participation challenge by ensuring people are saving, but it has not solved the understanding challenge. Many employees still lack the clarity or confidence to engage with long-term decisions, which underlines the need for support that evolves beyond basic enrolment and provides simple pathways and timely guidance.

The Clarity gap:

Employees would like to retire at around **60**, expect closer to **65** and many anticipate working to **70**. Half expect to work part-time in retirement for income.

The Confidence paradox:

74% say they manage day-to-day money well, yet **79%** feel financially unprepared for retirement. **52%** worry about funds lasting through retirement

---

Understanding matters:

35% of employees with a pension do not understand their company scheme. **45%** say they do not understand retirement planning.

Employer perspective: from insight to impact:

Only **31%** of employers believe employees are financially ready to retire. At the same time, **77%** of employers say financial problems reduce productivity, highlighting how financial uncertainty is already affecting workplace performance. Only **32%** believe employees are prepared for retirement in a broader sense beyond finances, highlighting a significant gap in lifestyle and transition readiness.

These findings point to a broader shift in how retirement is impacting organisations:

- Retirement delays are becoming structural, not occasional
- Workforce planning is less predictable without retirement clarity
- Financial stress is impacting day-to-day performance and engagment
- Employees are actively looking for employer supported guidance
- Existing pension structures are not delivering understanding on their own

03

Foreword by FPSB Ireland:

Participation Is Not Preparedness — the Missing Piece Is Understanding Income, Not Just Contributing to a Pension

Across Ireland, significant progress has been made in encouraging pension participation. Automatic enrolment and increased awareness mean more people are now saving for retirement than ever before.

However, this research highlights a critical next challenge: participation is not the same as preparedness.

From our perspective across the financial planning profession, the central issue is no longer whether people are saving – it is whether they understand what those savings will deliver. Many employees remain unclear about the level of income their pension will provide in retirement, and whether it will be sufficient to support the lifestyle they expect.

This gap between saving and understanding has important consequences. Without clear visibility of future income, individuals cannot make informed decisions about contribution levels, retirement timing or long-term financial security. As a result, many experience uncertainty and delay key decisions, contributing to the growing disconnect between when people hope to retire and when they believe they realistically can.

This is not only a financial issue. Retirement is a significant life transition, involving changes in routine, identity, purpose and social connection. Even where financial provision exists, a lack of planning in these areas can affect confidence, wellbeing and overall readiness.

For employers, the implications are increasingly visible. Uncertainty around retirement timing affects workforce planning, succession and employee wellbeing. When individuals remain in the workforce because they feel financially unprepared – rather than by choice – it can create challenges for both the individual and the organisation.

Employers are uniquely positioned to help address this challenge. Their role is not to provide financial advice, but to enable access to trusted, professional financial planning support. Structured guidance helps individuals translate pension savings into meaningful income projections and align financial decisions with personal goals.

Financial planning plays a critical role in building this clarity. It brings structure to complex decisions, connects long-term goals with practical outcomes, and provides a framework that can adapt as circumstances change. Importantly, it also supports greater confidence and reduces the stress associated with financial uncertainty.

This research reinforces the importance of integrating retirement planning into broader workplace wellbeing strategies. When employees are supported to plan earlier and more effectively, they are better equipped to make informed, confident decisions about their future.

The organisations that act early in this space will not only improve outcomes for their employees, but also gain greater predictability in workforce planning, stronger engagement, and more sustainable career transitions.

Retirement readiness is not a single moment – it is a process. Strengthening understanding is the next step in that journey.

Emer Kirk, CEO, Financial Planning Standards Board (FPSB) Ireland

04

Retirement Readiness: A Clear Gap Shaping Workplace Decisions

Employer Insights

Employers can see how limited retirement clarity affects focus, progression and wellbeing. Many are open to structured supports that help employees plan more confidently. The opportunity is to start earlier and make clarity a normal part of career support, without asking employers to give financial advice.

Just

31%

of employers believe employees **are financially ready for retirement.**

Top reasons:

lack of planning / awareness

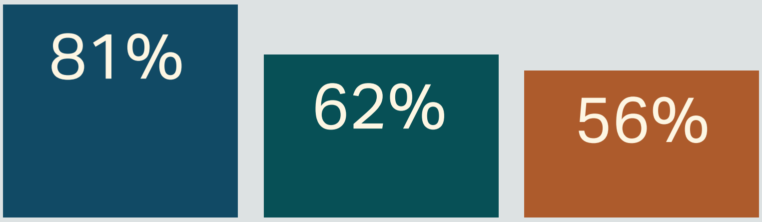
inadequate pension provision

Just

32%

of employers believe that employees are prepared for retirement in a broader sense. That is **beyond the financial** and includes **lifestyle changes.**

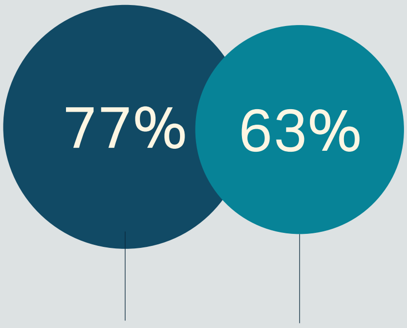
Priority areas for effective retirement prepardness:



financial planning

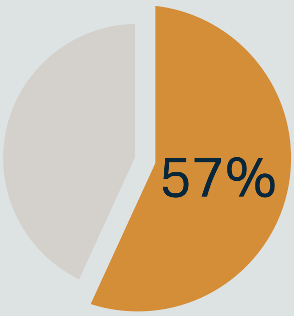
managing free time

planning for social engagements after work



agree financial problems reduce productivity

would welcome external specialist support



believe they have a role supporting employees in retirement transition, with larger orgs most likely

offer a retirement-planning programme

offer these supports **1–5 years** from retirement

cite main reason for providing this course is employee preparation and support for retirement

It is also interesting to note a clear divide exists between large employers and SMEs, with larger organisations far more likely to provide pension schemes **(74% vs 50%)**, retirement planning programmes **(61% vs 16%)** and access to professional financial support **(70% vs 46%)**. This leaves SME employees at a disadvantage in preparing for retirement.

Employee Insights

Employees manage day-to-day finances well, but many lack clarity about what their savings will mean in retirement. This uncertainty influences decisions about delaying transitions or working longer.

Just

21%

are financially prepared
(10% among 55–64s).

Top reasons for unpreparedness:

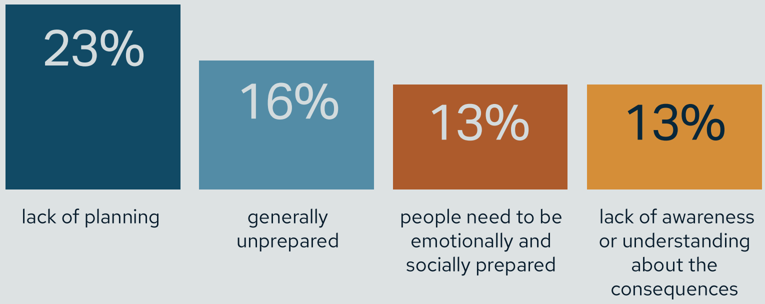
Just

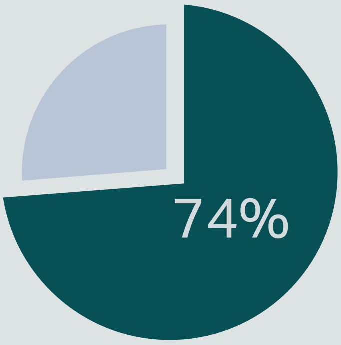
28%

are prepared in the
broader lifestyle sense.

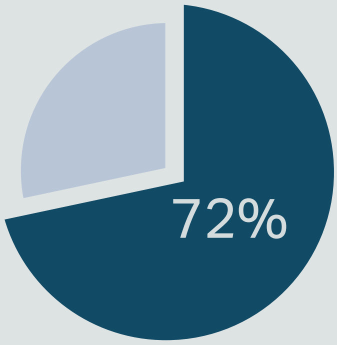
Many employees cite emotional, social and lifestyle readiness as key gaps, separate from financial savings or pension provision.

Top reasons for unpreparedness:

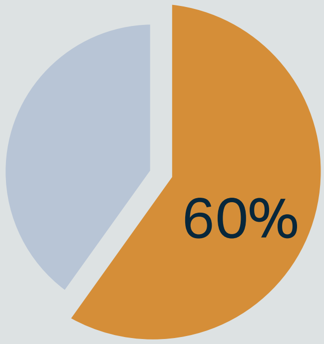




believe they manage **day-to-day finances well**



believe employers **should support the transition to retirement**



would welcome **working with a professional** to plan for retirement

> *"Knowledge is empowering. With the right support and guidance, individuals gain the clarity and confidence to plan and prepare for their future. Sometimes, a single conversation can be the first step toward long-term financial wellbeing."*
>
> **— Mary O'Dea, CEO of IOB**

05

The Retirement Reality: Why Confidence Today Does Not Equal Preparedness Tomorrow

Employees report strong confidence in day-to-day money management, but this confidence drops sharply when they look further ahead. Many are unsure how to choose the right financial products, how to plan for retirement or what their savings will provide as income. More than half of respondents say they would like to know more about managing their money, signalling a clear desire for guidance rather than a lack of engagement. Confidence also falls when employees think about how they will live in retirement, not just how much income they will have.

Short-term capability vs long-term uncertainty

The survey highlights several areas where confidence drops sharply when employees look ahead.
This is the **Employee Retirement Confidence Paradox.**

Many keep putting off planning for retirement, even when they feel in control of day-to-day finances. **74%** believe they manage day-to-day money well.

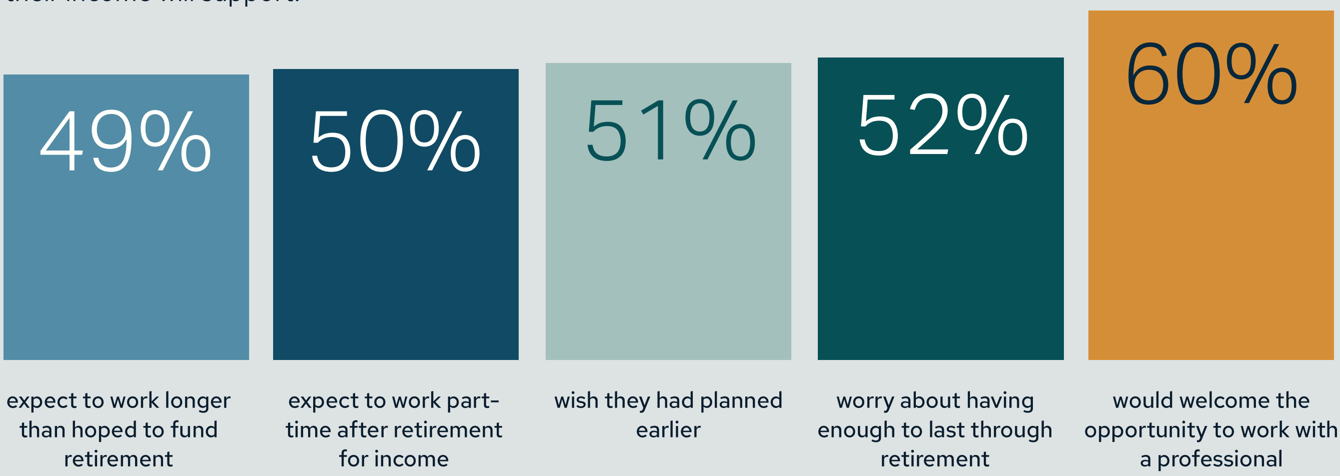
Confidence in being able to manage financially in retirement is significantly lower, particularly among those aged **55–64**, where confidence drops to **41%**.

45% of people do not understand retirement planning, and **35%** do not understand their company pension scheme.

These findings show that the barrier is not willingness - it is clarity.

How people feel about managing money today

When thinking about retirement specifically, employees express uncertainty about what is achievable and what their income will support:



06

Financial Wellbeing: A Growing Opportunity for Employers

Integrating financial clarity supports into existing wellbeing and HR initiatives can improve confidence, strengthen engagement and help create more predictable career transitions.

Employers are not starting from scratch. Many already recognise how financial strain shows up at work, from reduced focus to delayed transitions. At the same time, employees are actively looking for more clarity and support. This creates a natural alignment: employers want engaged, future ready teams; employees want guidance that helps them plan confidently.

The key insights shaping the wellbeing case:

Together, these insights highlight a clear opportunity. Financial clarity enables people to plan earlier, make informed choices and approach retirement with greater confidence. This is not about providing financial advice. It is about offering access to trusted guidance that supports personal resilience and helps organisations plan transitions more effectively. Helping employees plan early for both income and lifestyle improves wellbeing and gives employers greater predictability around retirement timing.

07

Closing the Retirement Readiness Gap: Shared Roles, Practical Actions

Retirement readiness is no longer a late-career conversation. It is a workforce strategy issue — influencing productivity, wellbeing, career progression and the predictability of exits. When employees lack clarity, they delay retirement for financial reasons. When they have clarity, transitions become confident, voluntary and better aligned with business needs.

Employees want clarity, employers want certainty, and the building blocks already exist. The most effective approach is structured early and rooted in simple, accessible financial understanding.

01 Foundations: Start with Financial Understanding for all Staff Early

Early financial understanding builds long-term resilience. Helping employees develop good habits - budgeting, regular saving and translating pensions into future monthly income - strengthens wellbeing, reduces financial stress and encourages employees to think about long-term life goals.

Employer impact:
Fewer financial driven delays, better engagement, more predictable career timelines.

02 Mid-life review: Connect Lifestyle Goals with the Money Needed to Fund Them

Between 45-55, employees benefit most from structured, goals-based financial planning. This is when they can picture the life they want in retirement and match it to the savings required.

Employer impact:
More informed decisions about timelines, improved retention planning, fewer last-minute adjustments.

03 Transition Programme: Prepare for Lifestyle, Purpose and Income

A strong retirement is not just a financial event, it is a lifestyle shift. Transition programmes help employees clarify income needs and prepare for new routines, identity and purpose. Ideally this should be done 3-5 years out from retirement.

Employer impact:
Smoother exits, stronger succession pipelines, reduced risk of financial-driven extensions.

> *"With the right structures and access to high-quality financial guidance, employers are well placed to make a real difference to how people prepare for retirement. Strengthening retirement planning, particularly across SMEs, can significantly improve long-term financial confidence for employees."*
> **— Joanne Keane, CEO LIA**

Suggested targets for employers:

Predictable workforce planning -

Clarity creates certainty. Employers gain visibility on who is likely to retire and when - reducing succession challenges and operational risk.

Higher engagement and wellbeing -

Financial stress is one of the biggest drains on focus. Employees who understand their finances are more productive, present and confident.

Smoother, voluntary retirement decisions -

Well prepared employees retire on time and on their terms, avoiding last-minute extensions that disrupt budgets, teams and progression paths.

What Employees Can Do to Make This Easier

A simple annual routine helps employees turn retirement planning into something understandable and actionable.

In 60 minutes, employees should:

01 download their latest pension statement

02 convert it into a monthly income at retirement age

03 list the lifestyle they want (home, health, time, travel)

04 compare lifestyle with income and adjust contributions if needed

05 book a professional review if a gap remains

Small, repeated actions build strong financial understanding and confidence.

> *"Retirement is a human transition as well as a financial one. If people plan the numbers but neglect the life they want or need to lead, they potentially delay both. Purpose and income go hand in hand. Build both early, and retirement becomes a confident choice, not a forced delay."*
>
> **— Laura Farrell, CEO of Retirement Planning Council of Ireland (RPCI)**

08

Supports Already Exist

There are established communities to support employees effectively.

The employer role is simple: facilitate access to the right supports at the right time that help employees prepare for retirement financially and plan for a healthy life after work.

Retirement Planning Council of Ireland -

Provides retirement transition programmes that address purpose, routine and relationships alongside financial clarity.

IOB -

Provides specialist education that equips financial services professionals with the knowledge and skills to provide sound financial advice.

LIA -

Ireland's centre of excellence for the education and professional development of financial professionals.

FPSB Ireland -

Sets and upholds professional standards for financial planners in Ireland, including certifying CFP(R) professionals and promoting ethical, competent financial planning practices.

QFAs and CFP® professionals -

Help individuals prepare for retirement by translating pension contributions into clear income outcomes, using modelling tools and workplace clinics to support planning, with pension provider statements as a practical starting point.

Together these organisations and professionals support:

- Clear, plain English pension education.
- Midlife financial reviews.
- Retirement income modelling and structured planning.
- Workplace clinics and referral pathways.

These supports turn retirement readiness from a last-minute challenge into predictable, planned transition.

The Opportunity for Employers

The infrastructure exists. The standards exist. The demand exists – among both employers and employees. What remains is integration: weaving financial clarity into workplace wellness strategies so retirement becomes a planned, confident transition rather than a delayed uncertain one.

www.rpc.ie

www.lia.ie

www.iob.ie

www.fpsb.ie