SNAPSHOT REPORT

Building economic security across generations

Insights into how the UK is balancing housing, savings, work and retirement in 2026 based on a national survey.

Leeds Building Society | It's better to belong.

For decades, the path to financial security was relatively straightforward: build a career, buy a home, save for retirement and build wealth over time. Those ambitions have not changed. But for many people, the journey has.

Homeownership remains one of the strongest symbols of financial security in Britain. It is still seen as a foundation for stability, a way to build wealth, and an asset that can support future generations. Yet for growing numbers of people, owning a home feels harder to achieve than ever before. Many are buying later in life, while others question whether they will be able to buy at all.

As a result, financial security is becoming increasingly shaped by family circumstances. Support from parents and relatives is playing a bigger role in helping people onto the housing ladder, contributing to deposits, housing costs and savings. For those able to access it, family support can be transformative. For those without it, the gap can feel increasingly difficult to close.

At the same time, the pressures facing existing homeowners are evolving. Many people find themselves supporting both older and younger relatives – the so called 'Sandwich Generation' – helping adult children access housing while also providing financial or practical support to ageing parents. What was once a straightforward process of building personal financial resilience is, for many households, becoming a balancing act between securing their own future and supporting the people they care about.

The challenge is no longer simply accumulating wealth. It is deciding which form of wealth to prioritise or draw on, and when. Significant numbers of people report delaying retirement saving, reducing pension contributions or using savings intended for later life in order to support family members.

Housing wealth is increasingly at the centre of that story. For some families, it provides an opportunity to help loved ones and strengthen financial security across generations. For others, the demands of supporting family members are reducing savings, delaying retirement plans and creating new financial pressures of their own.

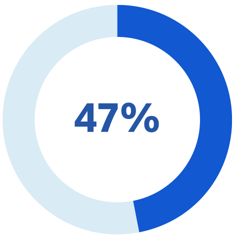
The findings explored in this snapshot report suggest the debate extends beyond helping people buy a home. It is about creating the conditions for long-term economic security throughout life: enabling more people to access homeownership, helping homeowners build resilience and wealth over time, and ensuring they can access the right support and advice as their housing, savings and retirement needs become more connected.

This snapshot report explores how people are navigating these challenges in 2026. Drawing on a nationally representative survey of more than 2,000 adults across the UK, it examines attitudes towards homeownership, saving, retirement and family support.

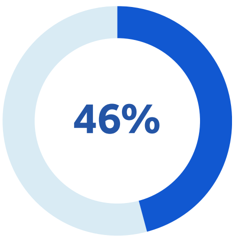
Taken together, the results offer a snapshot of a country that increasingly views housing, retirement and family finances as interconnected rather than separate issues, with decisions in one area often creating consequences for the others.

Snapshot findings at a glance

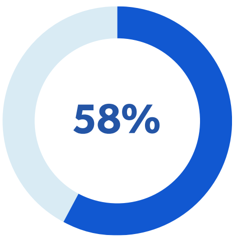
The financial security balancing act



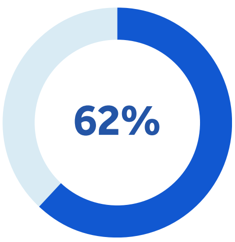
of aspiring homeowners do not expect to ever own a home



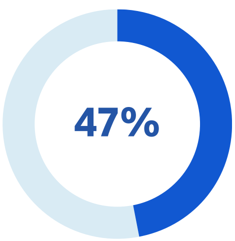
of aspiring homeowners would use pension savings towards a house deposit if allowed



of homeowners say housing wealth is essential or very important to their retirement plans



of people currently providing financial support to family believe parents are expected to help their children onto the housing ladder today



of people supporting both younger and older generations worry that supporting family could compromise their own retirement security

Across generations, housing is increasingly being asked to do several jobs at once: provide a home, build wealth, fund retirement and make it possible to financially support family members.

About the research

This report is based on a nationally representative survey of UK adults carried out between 4-7 September 2026 by Leeds Building Society Research in partnership with Verve and Pure Spectrum.

The survey of 2,020 UK adults included:

- 1,011 homeowners
- 1,009 aspiring homeowners
- 854 people supporting, or expecting to support, younger family members
- 837 people supporting, or expecting to support, older relatives
- 515 people supporting, or expecting to support, both younger and older generations

The research explored the links between housing, savings, retirement, family support and long-term financial security.

For many people, the home is becoming part of the retirement plan.

Homeownership has always been important.

But our research suggests housing is now playing a bigger role in how people think about their long-term financial future.

For many households, housing status influences confidence about retirement, resilience and financial security later in life.

Housing wealth matters

58% of current homeowners say housing wealth is essential or very important to their retirement plans.

59% expect housing wealth to contribute at least a fair amount to retirement income.

80% of homeowners aged 25-34 expect housing wealth to contribute to retirement income.

The earlier people enter homeownership, the more they expect housing wealth to support their retirement.

Confidence in retirement is far from universal

Only **56%** feel confident they will have sufficient finances to enjoy retirement.

And while homeownership rates sit around **65%** in the UK, only **44%** of people expect to own their home outright in retirement.

Retirement confidence based on current housing situation:

- Own outright: **75%**
- Own with a mortgage: **58%**
- Private renter: **49%**
- Social renter: **37%**

Retirement confidence falls as expected housing costs rise and many see homeownership and housing wealth as part of the answer.

Housing is also one of the biggest retirement concerns

When people think about retirement challenges, housing features prominently. **1 in 3** people now say the cost of housing in retirement is a concern.

Biggest retirement concerns among all respondents:

- **57%** Inflation and cost of living
- **46%** Pension income being insufficient
- **33%** Housing costs

And younger adults are even more worried, with twice as many 18-34 year olds (44%) identifying it as a retirement concern than 55-64 year olds (20%).

> The biggest divide in retirement may not be between homeowners and renters, but between those who expect housing costs and those who do not.

Getting on the ladder feels harder than ever.

People still want to become homeowners.

But their ownership journey is starting later in life and many are becoming less confident they will ever get there.

More people think they'll never own than think they will

47% of aspiring homeowners say they do not expect to be able to buy a home.

18% say they definitely expect to become homeowners and **25%** probably expect to.

The largest group of aspiring homeowners now believe homeownership is unlikely to happen for them.

Many aspiring homeowners expect to buy later in life.

Among those who expect to buy their home, their ownership journey is beginning later with the largest group expecting to buy after 40.

11% expect to buy before the age of 30.

22% expect to buy between 30 and 39.

38% expect to become homeowners aged 40 or older.

Building savings and assets remains difficult for many

37% of aspiring homeowners save nothing each month towards a house deposit.

33% save nothing towards pension savings.

26% save nothing into other savings.

For many aspiring homeowners, the challenge extends beyond buying a property. It is about building the savings and assets needed for long-term financial security.

People are willing to make major trade-offs

Deposit and affordability concerns remain abiding challenges for aspiring homeowners.

34% of respondents said better support to save for a deposit would make the biggest difference.

46% would use pension savings towards a deposit if allowed.

Over half of people aged 25-44 would do the same, despite being in the years when retirement saving is typically accelerating.

52% would accept a mortgage extending later into life if it allowed them to buy sooner.

The findings suggest many people are weighing housing ambitions against other long-term financial priorities.

Families are stepping in

As access to homeownership becomes more challenging, families are playing a bigger role in helping younger generations buy a home.

But that support is not available to everyone.

The Bank of Mum and Dad remains part of the conversation

62% of people already providing financial support to family believe parents are expected to help children onto the housing ladder today.

Among higher-income households this rises to **87%**.

Families are providing support

42% currently provide, or expect to provide, financial support to younger relatives.

Among those providing support:

29% expect to help with a house deposit.

Support is also being provided through:

- General financial support
- Savings contributions
- Education costs
- Rental support

But many people do not have access to that support

51% of aspiring homeowners say they have received no family support.

The findings suggest access to family support remains uneven, potentially shaping different housing outcomes.

Family resources are shaping financial outcomes

For some households, family wealth is helping younger generations access homeownership and begin building assets.

Of those aspiring homeowners whose parents own their own home:

61% expect to buy their home.

Of those whose parents do not own:

42% expect to buy.

The findings add to wider debates about the role family circumstance plays in shaping financial opportunity.

Many see housing wealth as supporting more than one generation

For those reaching later life with housing wealth, many are considering how it could help support both themselves and their families.

- **38%** have considered downsizing
- **19%** have considered accessing money tied up in their home
- **37%** would consider equity release to support younger family members
- **45%** would consider equity release to improve retirement income
- **34%** would consider a Retirement Interest Only mortgage

The findings suggest housing wealth is viewed as a resource that can support both retirement needs and future generations.

The generation caught in the middle

Many people find themselves helping their children build a future while also helping older relatives maintain theirs.

For this group, financial pressure is common.

Supporting family comes at a cost

78% of people supporting both younger and older generations say it places pressure on their finances.

28% say it places a great deal of pressure.

Many worry about their own future

47% worry that helping family members could affect their retirement security.

68% believe families are increasingly being expected to solve financial challenges previously addressed through earnings growth or public policy.

The hidden impact on retirement security

For many households, helping family today means making sacrifices for tomorrow.

How people are supporting younger relatives:

- **19%** have used retirement savings
- **18%** have delayed retirement saving
- **13%** have reduced pension contributions

How people are supporting older relatives:

- **16%** have used retirement savings
- **19%** have delayed retirement saving
- **11%** have reduced pension contributions

The findings suggest many households are helping family members while making trade-offs within their own finances.

In some cases, that support involves reducing retirement saving or drawing on resources originally intended for later life.

Families in the UK are increasingly supporting one another financially, often while balancing their own long-term financial goals.

What the findings tell us

The findings in this snapshot report reinforce the importance of homeownership in providing long-term financial security.

At the same time, they show that housing is connected to wider questions about retirement, savings and family support. Many of the people surveyed are balancing the financial priorities of others, while trying to plan for their own future.

Much of the public debate around housing focuses on access to homeownership. Those challenges remain important. But the research suggests people are thinking beyond the point of purchase and considering how housing costs, housing wealth and family responsibilities may affect their financial resilience over the course of their lives.

The findings also highlight the role families play in helping one another navigate financial pressures. For some, that support creates opportunities. For others, it creates difficult trade-offs between supporting loved ones today and maintaining their own long-term financial security.

The results do not point to a single intervention. Instead, they suggest that current market and policy responses need to be considered as part of a wider system in which housing access, family support, retirement security and consumer resilience increasingly interact.

Why This Matters

These findings sit alongside wider discussions taking place across government, regulators and industry about housing affordability, demographic change, retirement provision, consumer resilience and the role of housing wealth in later life.

The findings raise important questions:

1. How can housing policy increase access to ownership without raising dependence on family wealth?
2. Should later-life housing finance play a greater role in retirement planning?
3. How must policymakers think about the interaction between housing wealth and pension saving?
4. Does financial policy adequately reflect households supporting multiple generations simultaneously?

While this report does not seek to provide answers, it offers insight into how these debates are being experienced by people today, the trade-offs they are making, and where current interventions may need to recognise the links between housing, savings, retirement and family support.

For Leeds Building Society, understanding those experiences is important because they sit directly alongside the Society's role in helping people access homeownership, supporting members through changing life circumstances, and contributing evidence-led insight to conversations about later-life lending, financial resilience and appropriate consumer support.

All information correct as at the point of publication, 25 September 2026.

For further information, please contact the Leeds Building Society Press Office.

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