

New Report From the 2025 Retirement Confidence Survey Finds Black Americans With Lower Financial Means, Burdened by Higher Incidences of Lower Incomes, Assets and Problematic Debt

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(Washington, D.C.) – A new research report, “2025 Retirement Confidence Survey: A Closer Look at Black Americans,” published today by the Employee Benefit Research Institute and Greenwald Research, found that Black Americans, on average, report higher incidences of lower incomes and assets coupled with higher likelihoods of problematic debt. At the same time, lower-income Black Americans are more likely to feel confident about their retirement prospects and feel as knowledgeable about financing their day-to-day finances as their non-Black counterparts.

The 35th annual Retirement Confidence Survey (RCS) measured attitudes of American workers and retirees about issues surrounding retirement. This year, the RCS also included an oversample of Black Americans to allow for a closer analysis of the challenges that they face in saving and preparing for retirement. The 2025 RCS surveyed a total of 2,767 Americans ages 25 or older and was conducted from Jan. 2 – Feb. 3, 2025. The survey general population sample of 2,047 Americans consisted of 1,042 workers and 1,005 retirees, plus the oversample of 720 non-Hispanic Black or African American respondents (resulting in a total of 520 Black workers and 481 Black retirees).

“We found that Black Americans reported disproportionately lower financial resources, and that impacts how they feel about retirement and financial security. Furthermore, Black retirees were more likely to say that their retirement lifestyle was worse than expected and that they had to retire earlier than planned because of a health problem or disability,” explained Craig Copeland, director, Wealth Benefits Research, EBRI. “Still, there are some modifications in the financial system that could help improve their prospects, such as more help balancing competing financial priorities, like debt reduction, supporting family and building long-term savings. In addition, Black Americans are more likely to want help from financial advisors with figuring out their life insurance needs and creating a will or estate plan.”

Key findings in the new report include:

- Confidence in having enough money to live comfortably in retirement increases with income regardless of race. While confidence was lower for all Americans at lower incomes, Black Americans with incomes of less than \$35,000 and \$35,000–\$74,999 were more likely to be confident than non-Black Americans. There was not a difference in confidence among those with incomes of \$75,000 or more.
- The wealth gap between Black Americans and non-Black Americans remains even as income rises. Non-Black Americans were more likely to report having savings of \$100,000 or more at each income level compared with Black Americans.
- Black Americans with higher incomes were more likely to consider debt to be a major or minor problem for their household than non-Black Americans. For those with incomes of \$75,000 or more, 63% of Black Americans considered debt a problem for their household compared with 45% of non-Black Americans. As a result, Black Americans in the same income groups were more likely to say debt is impacting their ability to save for retirement or to live comfortably in retirement.
- Black Americans with higher incomes were less likely to have personally saved for retirement. For those with incomes of \$75,000 or more, 77% of Black Americans report having saved for retirement compared with 87% of non-Black Americans.
- What help Americans are hoping for when they look for a financial advisor has some clear differences by race. Black Americans were more likely to be looking for help in reducing debt, figuring out life insurance needs and

creating a will or estate plan than non-Black Americans, while non-Black Americans were more likely to be looking for help in figuring out if they have saved enough for retirement.

- Between three-quarters and nearly 90% of Americans, depending on their income, either somewhat or strongly agreed that they feel knowledgeable about managing their day-to-day finances, with only differences by race of those with middle incomes. While the share of Americans agreeing that they feel knowledgeable about managing savings and investments for the future is lower than for day-to-day finances, among those with the lowest incomes, Black Americans are more likely to feel knowledgeable than non-Black Americans. There are no differences by race among the two higher income groups.
- Black retirees were more likely to have retired earlier than planned. Among those who did retire earlier than planned, Black retirees were more likely to have done so because of a health problem or disability (44% of Black retirees vs. 32% of non-Black retirees).
- Black retirees were more likely to have worked for pay after they retired than non-Black Americans. Among those who did work for pay after retiring, Black retirees were more likely to have done so because they needed money to make ends meet (66% of Black retirees vs. 35% of non-Black retirees).
- Black retirees were more likely to say that their retirement lifestyle is worse than expected. Black retirees were also less likely to say that they are able to spend money how they want within reason and they were more likely to say that their overall expenses in retirement are higher than expected.

“Overall, Black Americans view retirement similarly to others with comparable financial means. For example, middle- and upper-income Black Americans were just as likely to feel knowledgeable about managing their day-to-day finances and saving and investing for the future. However, Black Americans, on average, have lower financial means. They were more likely to report higher incidences of lower incomes and assets as well as higher likelihoods of problematic debt,” said Lisa Greenwald, CEO, Greenwald Research. “The RCS has consistently shown that Americans with lower incomes report feeling less confident about their retirement prospects. However, having debt is also one of the largest indicators of individuals not being able to save, build wealth, and live comfortably in retirement. Despite these challenges, Black Americans are still optimistic for their futures, as shown by their high levels of retirement confidence across the income spectrum.”

The 35th annual RCS report focusing on Black Americans can be viewed by visiting www.ebri.org/retirement/retirement-confidence-survey.

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(MEDIA NOTE: Email Ron Dresner at dresner@ebri.org to receive the RCS summary report. Suggested Citation: 2025 Employee Benefit Research Institute/Greenwald Retirement Confidence Survey).