

US Retirement and Education Savings

National policies that have created or enhanced tax-advantaged savings accounts have proven integral to helping Americans save for retirement and other long-term goals. Assets earmarked for retirement represent more than one-third of US households' financial assets and, adjusted for inflation, retirement assets per household are more than nine times what they were a half century ago. Because many Americans use mutual funds in tax-advantaged retirement accounts, ICI studies the US retirement market; the investors who use 401(k) plans, IRAs, 529 plans, and other tax-advantaged savings vehicles; and the role of mutual funds in the retirement and education savings markets. At year-end 2025, individual account-based retirement savings were 68% of the total US retirement market, and mutual funds managed 44% of those account-based retirement assets.

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The US Retirement System Has Many Components

American households rely on a combination of resources in retirement, and the role each type of resource plays has changed over time and varies across households. The traditional analogy compares retirement resources to a three-legged stool, with resources divided equally among the legs—Social Security, employer-sponsored retirement plans, and private savings. A better analogy, however, is to think of Americans’ retirement resources as a five-layer pyramid. Unlike the legs of a stool, pyramid layers need not be the same size.

Americans’ Multi-Tiered Retirement Resources

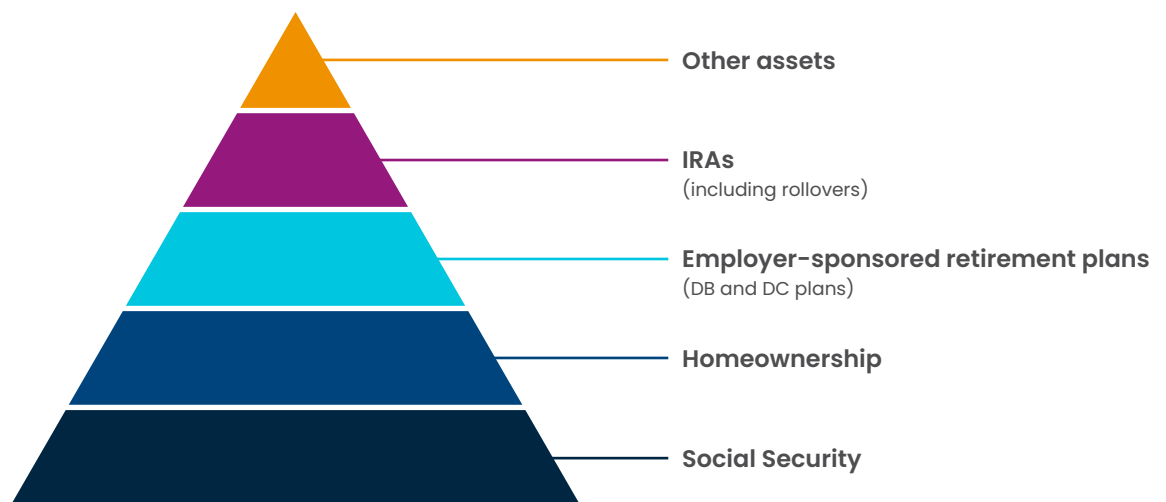
The retirement resource pyramid has five layers, which draw from government programs, compensation deferred until retirement, and other savings (Figure 8.1):

- » Social Security
- » Homeownership
- » Employer-sponsored retirement plans, comprising private-sector and government employer plans, including both defined benefit (DB) and defined contribution (DC) plans
- » Individual retirement accounts (IRAs), including rollovers
- » Other assets

Together, these resources have broadly enabled recent generations of retirees to maintain their standard of living in retirement, though the use of each layer differs by household. For example, the composition of households’ retirement resources varies with income. Lower-income households tend to rely more on Social Security, reflecting the fact that Social Security benefits replace a higher share of pre-retirement earnings for workers with lower lifetime earnings.

FIGURE 8.1

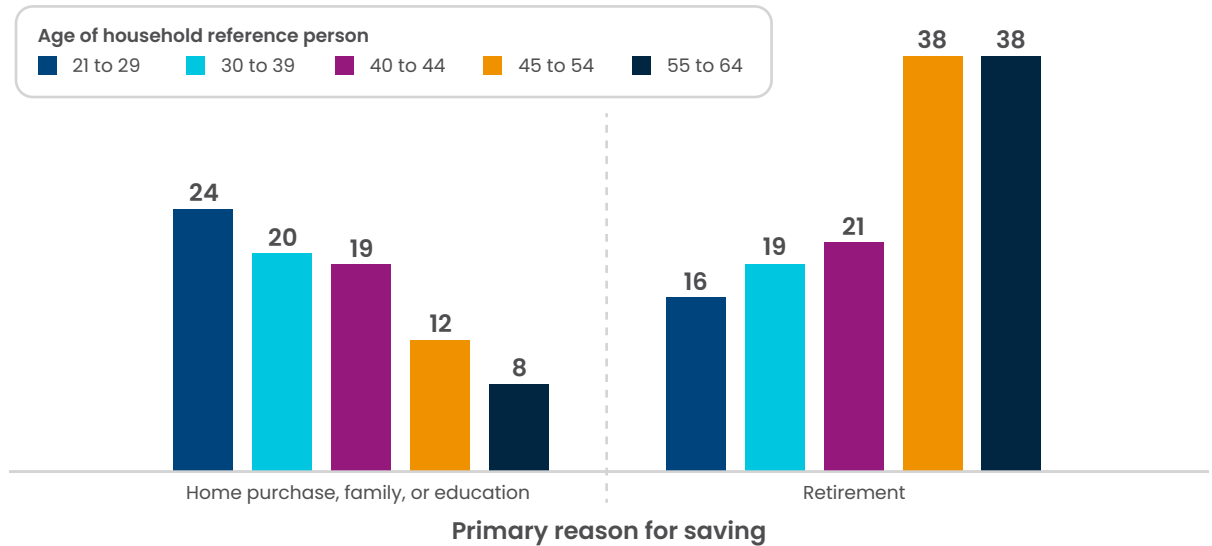
US Households Rely on Multi-Tiered Retirement Resources



Source: Investment Company Institute, *The Success of the US Retirement System*

The amount and composition of retirement resources also change with age. Younger households are more likely to save primarily for a home purchase, family, or education (Figure 8.2). By contrast, older households are more likely to save primarily for retirement, as many have already reached their other savings goals. The tendency of younger workers to focus less on saving for retirement is consistent with economic models of life-cycle consumption, which predict that most workers delay saving for retirement until later in their careers, when they typically have higher earnings.

FIGURE 8.2
Primary Reason for Household Saving Changes With Age
 Percentage of households by age of household reference person, 2022



Source: Investment Company Institute tabulations of the 2022 Federal Reserve Board Survey of Consumer Finances

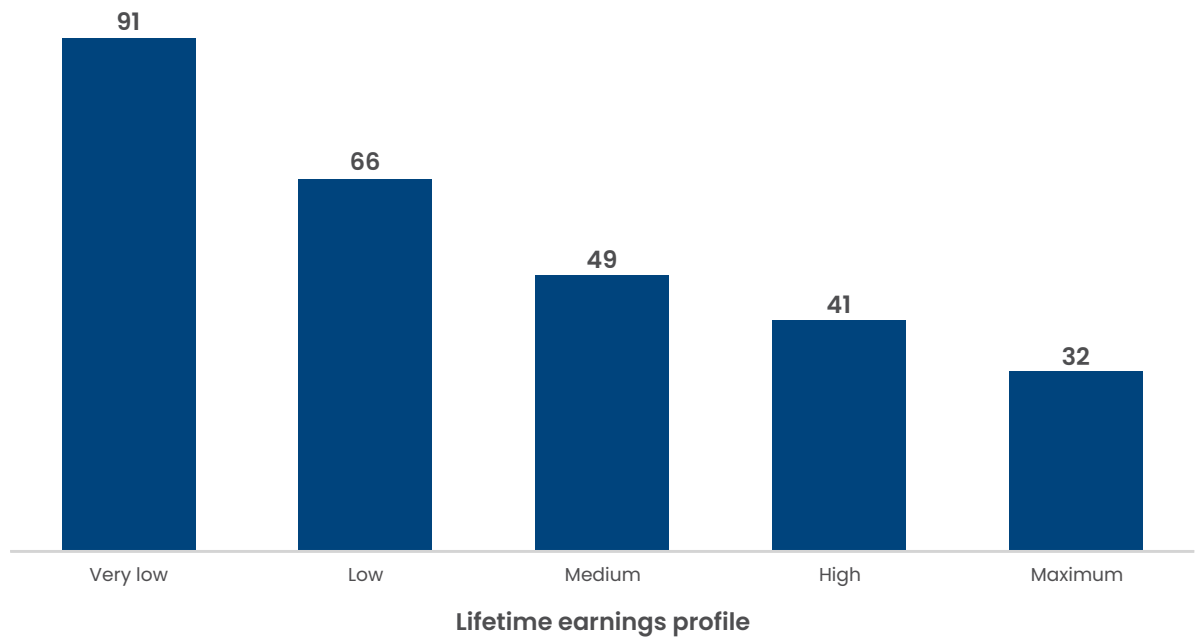
Social Security, the base of the US retirement resource pyramid, is a substantial component of retiree income and the primary source of income for lower-income retirees. Social Security benefits are funded through a payroll tax equal to 12.4% of earnings of covered workers (split equally between employers and employees) up to a maximum taxable earnings amount (\$176,100 in 2025). The benefit formula is highly progressive, with benefits representing a much higher percentage of earnings for workers with lower lifetime earnings.

By design, Social Security is the primary means of support for retirees with low lifetime earnings and a substantial source of income for all retired workers. Using Social Security Administration lifetime earnings profiles, ICI estimates that, for very low earners born in 1959 who claim benefits at the normal retirement age (66 years and 10 months), first-year Social Security benefits will replace 91% of inflation-indexed lifetime earnings, on average (Figure 8.3). That replacement rate drops to 66% for low-income workers and then declines more slowly as lifetime earnings increase. Even for workers who earn Social Security’s maximum taxable earnings amount every year, Social Security benefits are projected to replace a considerable portion (32%) of earnings.

FIGURE 8.3

Social Security Benefit Formula Is Highly Progressive

Average scheduled Social Security replacement rates for workers born in 1959 by Social Security Administration scaled worker lifetime earnings profile, percent



Note: The replacement rate is the ratio of first year Social Security benefits to the worker’s final 35 years of inflation-indexed earnings. Replacement rates are for workers claiming benefits at the normal retirement age (66 years and 10 months). The maximum earnings profile earns Social Security’s maximum taxable earnings amount in each year they work.
Sources: Investment Company Institute and Social Security Administration

Homeownership is the second most important retirement resource after Social Security for many households. Older households are more likely to own their homes, more likely to own their homes without mortgage debt, and more likely to have small mortgages relative to the value of their homes if they do still have mortgages. Retired households typically benefit simply by living in their homes rent-free.

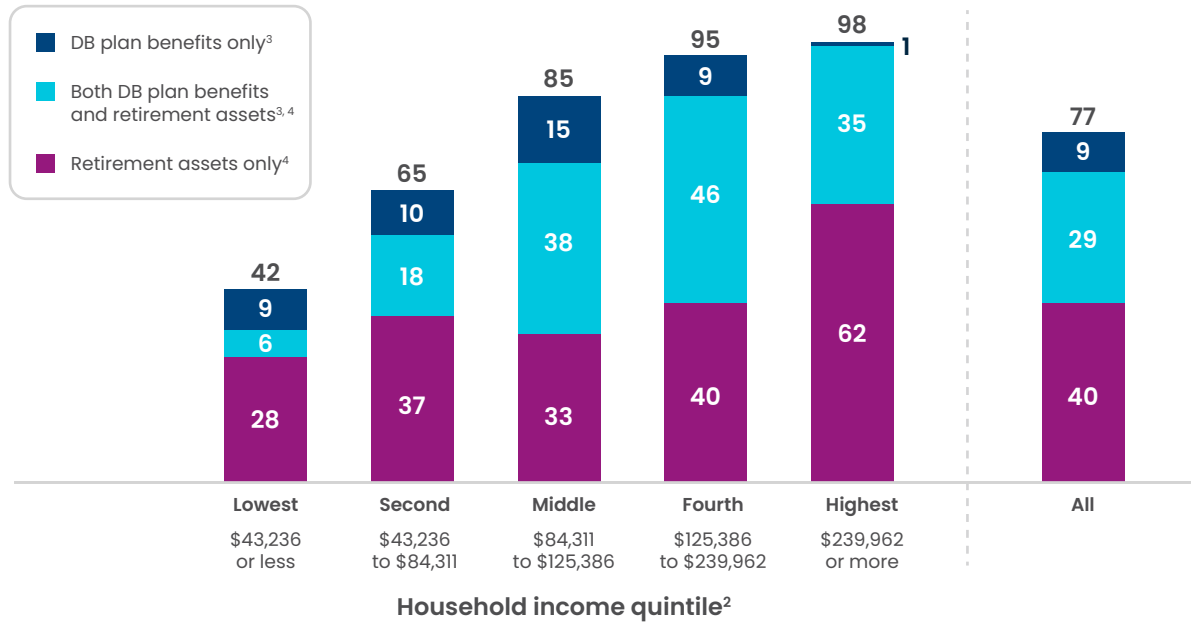
Employer-sponsored retirement plans and IRAs, which complement Social Security benefits and are important resources for households regardless of income or wealth, increase in importance for households for which Social Security replaces a smaller share of earnings. In 2022, more than three-quarters of near-retiree households had accrued benefits in employer-sponsored retirement plans—DB and DC plans sponsored by private-sector and government employers—or IRAs (Figure 8.4).

Finally, although less important on average, retirees also rely on **other assets** in retirement. These assets can be financial—including bank deposits, stocks, bonds, and registered funds owned outside employer-sponsored retirement plans and IRAs. Other assets can also be nonfinancial—including business equity, investment real estate, second homes, and consumer durables (long-lived goods such as vehicles, household appliances, and furniture). Higher-income households are more likely to have large holdings of assets in this category.

FIGURE 8.4

Near-Retiree Households Across All Income Groups Have Retirement Assets, DB Plan Benefits, or Both

Percentage of near-retiree households¹ by income quintile,² 2022



¹ Near-retiree households are those with a head of household aged 55 to 64, and a working head of household or working spouse.

² Income is household income before taxes in 2021.

³ Households currently receiving DB plan benefits and households with the promise of future DB plan benefits, whether from private-sector or government employers, are counted in this category.

⁴ In this figure, retirement assets include DC plan assets (401(k), 403(b), 457, thrift, and other DC plans), whether from private-sector or government employers, and IRAs (traditional, Roth, SEP, SAR-SEP, and SIMPLE).

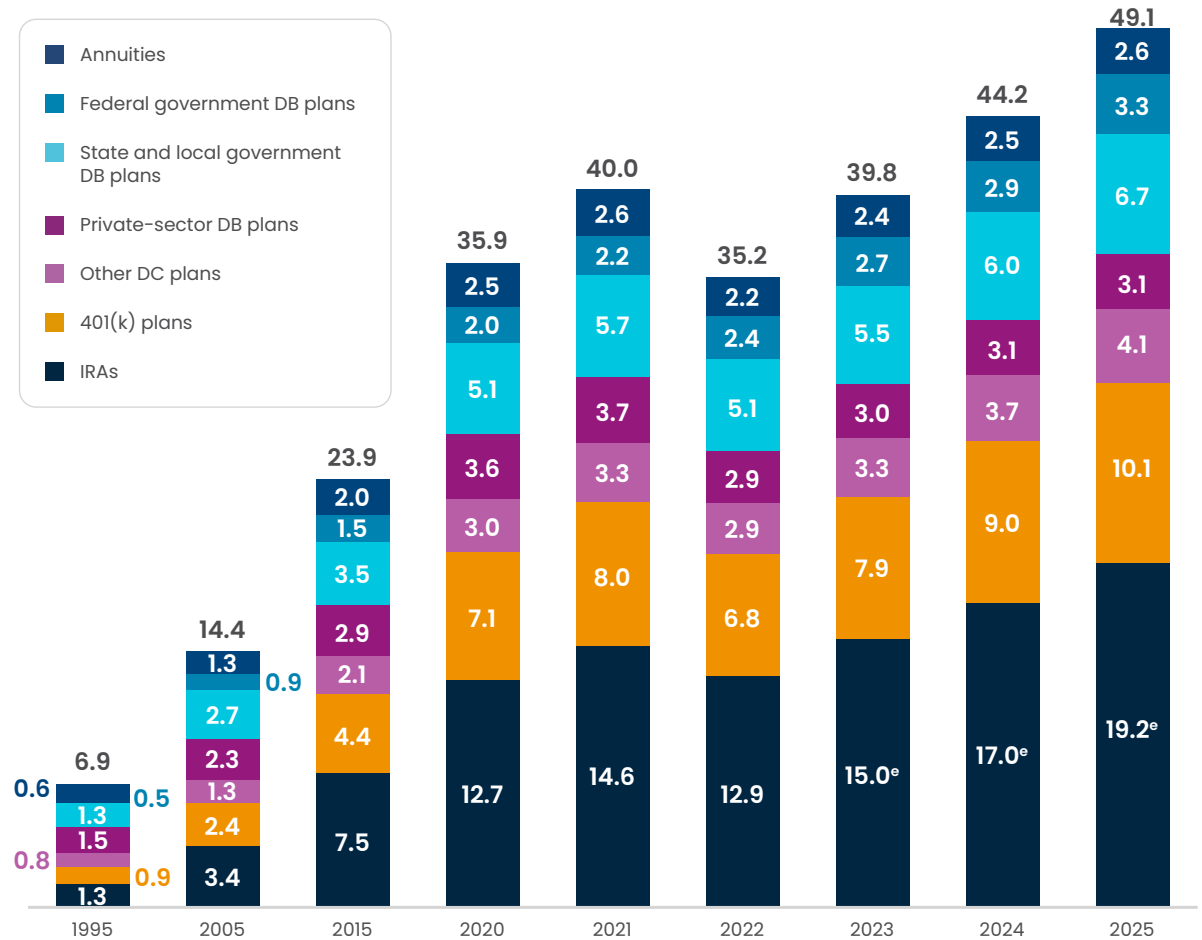
Source: Investment Company Institute tabulations of the 2022 Federal Reserve Board Survey of Consumer Finances

US Households Have Accumulated a Significant Retirement Nest Egg

Employer-sponsored retirement plans, IRAs (including rollovers), and annuities play an important role in the US retirement system, with assets earmarked for retirement representing more than one-third of US households’ total financial assets at year-end 2025.

US households had \$49.1 trillion earmarked for retirement at year-end 2025 (Figure 8.5)—up 11% from year-end 2024. The largest components of retirement assets were IRAs and employer-sponsored DC plans (including 401(k) plans), which together represented 68% of all retirement market assets at year-end 2025. IRAs and DC plans had 44% of their assets invested in mutual funds at year-end 2025 (Figure 8.15). In addition, US households had \$1.4 trillion in variable annuity (VA) mutual fund assets held outside retirement accounts. Retirement assets have grown significantly over the past five decades, even when adjusted for inflation and growth in the number of households in the United States. At year-end 2025, average assets earmarked for retirement per household, adjusted for inflation, were more than nine times their level at year-end 1975.

FIGURE 8.5
US Retirement Market Assets
 Trillions of dollars, year-end



^e Data are estimated.

Source: Investment Company Institute. For a complete list of sources, see Investment Company Institute, "The US Retirement Market, Fourth Quarter 2025."

While US households manage individual account-based savings (DC plans and IRAs), traditional DB plans promise to pay benefits in retirement typically based on salary and years of service. However, some DB plans do not have sufficient assets to cover promised benefits that households have a legal right to expect. Unfunded liabilities are a larger issue for government DB plans than for private-sector DB plans. As of year-end 2025, unfunded liabilities were 28% of benefit entitlements for state and local government DB plans, 18% of benefit entitlements for federal government DB plans, and 3% of benefit entitlements for private-sector DB plans.

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Quarterly Retirement Market Data

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The US Retirement System Produces Robust Income Replacement in Retirement

In retirement, most Americans maintain spendable income that is a high percentage of the spendable income they had in their late 50s, according to a study by ICI economists analyzing tax data. The study, which followed Americans who were aged 55 in 2000 until they were aged 72 in 2017, also finds that most retirees get substantial amounts of both Social Security benefits and retirement income—that is, distributions from employer-sponsored retirement plans, annuities, and IRAs. Indeed, at every age through age 72, the typical individual maintained more than 90% of the inflation-adjusted spendable income they had, on average, from age 55 through age 59. Spendable income is the income available after paying taxes and contributing to retirement accounts.

Lower-income Americans typically had higher spendable income replacement rates. Individuals were ranked by their average total income from age 55 to age 59 and split into 20 groups, or ventiles. At age 72, the median replacement rate was 103% for lower-income individuals (third ventile), 93% for middle-income individuals (10th ventile), and 84% for higher-income individuals (18th ventile) (Figure 8.6). A similar pattern by ventile is seen throughout the replacement rate distribution. At the 75th percentile, replacement rates were well above 100% for lower-income ventiles. At the 25th percentile, the relationship between replacement rates and income was less pronounced, with ventiles 4 through 16 all around 70%.

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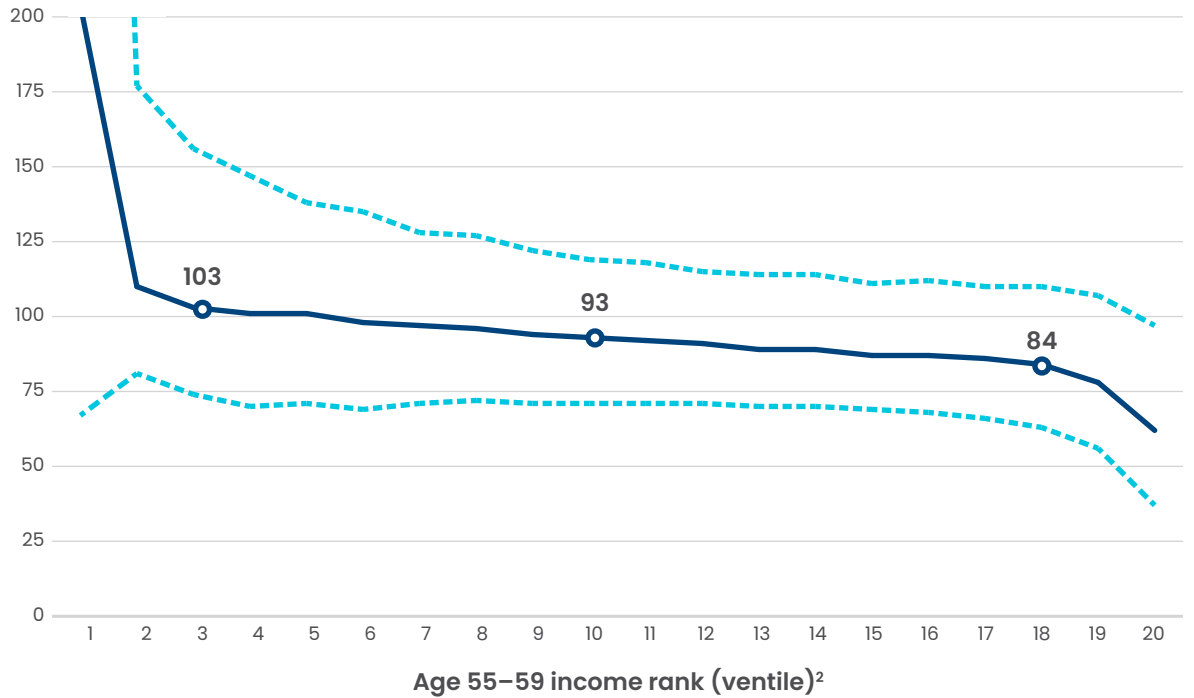
Income From Retirement Plans

www.ici.org/income-from-retirement-plans

FIGURE 8.6

Lower-Income Individuals Tend To Replace Higher Percentages of Income in Retirement

Spendable income replacement rate¹ at age 72



¹ The replacement rate is spendable income at age 72 as a percentage of average inflation-adjusted spendable income between ages 55 and 59. Spendable income is the income available after paying taxes and contributing to retirement accounts. For married individuals, spendable income is per capita (that is, spendable income for the couple divided by two).

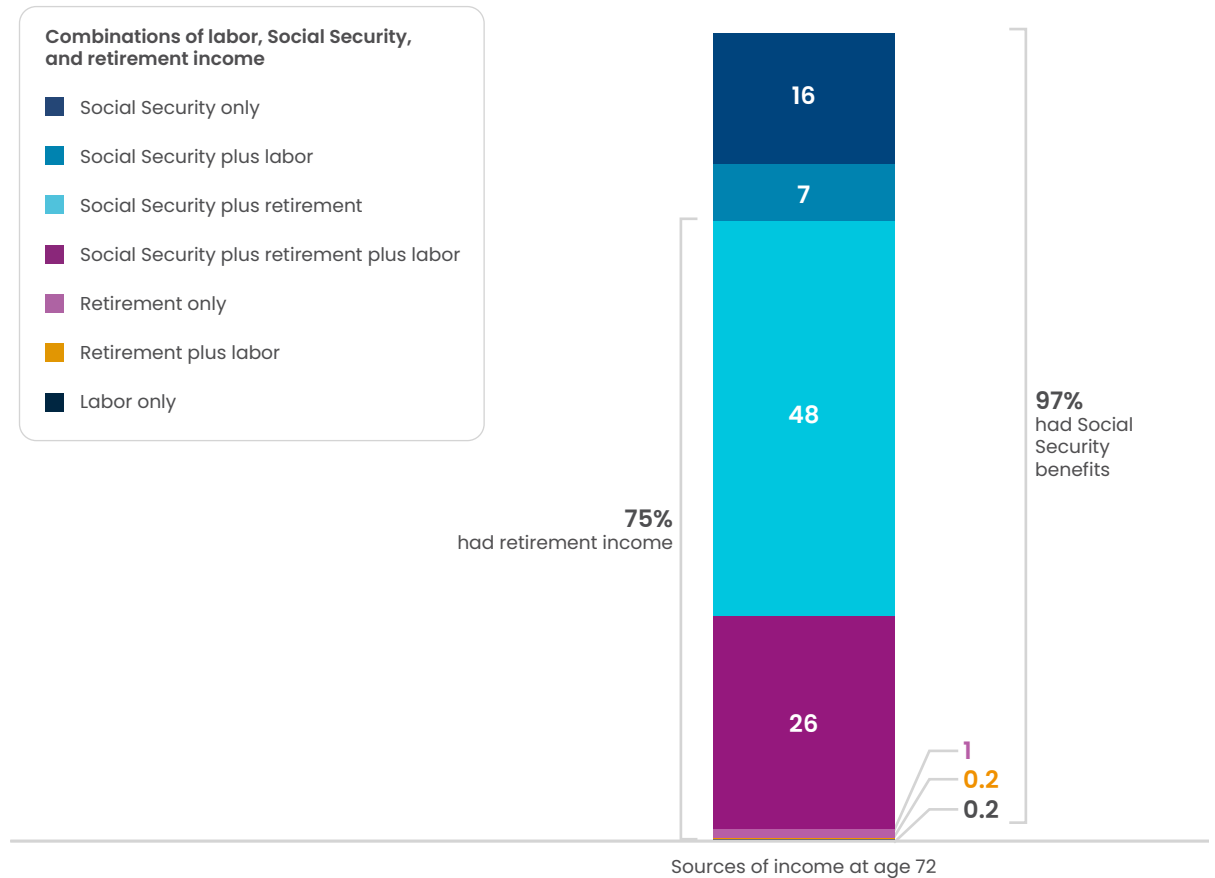
² Individuals were ranked by their average total income from age 55 to age 59 and split into 20 groups, or ventiles.

Note: The median replacement rate for individuals in the lowest income group was 204% at age 72, and the 75th percentile replacement rate was 604%. The sample consists of Americans aged 55 at year-end 2000 who were alive at year-end 2017 (when they were age 72).

Source: *When I'm 64 (or Thereabouts): Changes in Income from Middle Age to Old Age*, available at www.ici.org/income-from-retirement-plans

In addition to Social Security benefits, the study found that the vast majority of American retirees had income from employer-sponsored retirement plans, annuities, and IRAs. At age 72, either directly or through a spouse, 97% received Social Security benefits and 75% received retirement income (Figure 8.7). Nearly half (48%) had Social Security benefits and retirement income (but no labor income), and more than one-quarter had all three.

FIGURE 8.7
Most Americans Had Non–Social Security Retirement Income at Age 72
 Percentage of Americans at age 72



Note: The sample consists of Americans aged 55 at year-end 2000 who were alive at year-end 2017 (when they were age 72). Retirement income is income from DB and DC pensions, annuities, and IRAs. Individuals are classified as having a given income type if they received it either directly or through a spouse.

Source: *When I'm 64 (or Thereabouts): Changes in Income from Middle Age to Old Age*, available at www.ici.org/income-from-retirement-plans

Defined Contribution Plans Play an Increasing Role in Retirement Saving

DC plans provide employees with a retirement account funded with employer contributions, employee contributions, or both, plus investment earnings or losses on those contributions, less withdrawals. Assets in employer-sponsored DC plans have grown faster than assets in DB plans over the past three decades, increasing from about one-third of total DC and DB plan assets in 1995 to more than half by year-end 2025.

A Closer Look: 401(k) Plans Are the Most Common DC Plan

At the end of 2025, employer-sponsored DC plans—which include 401(k) plans, 403(b) plans, 457 plans, the federal Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), and other private-sector DC plans—held an estimated \$14.2 trillion in assets (Figure 8.5). With \$10.1 trillion in assets at year-end 2025, 401(k) plans held the largest share of employer-sponsored DC plan assets; 403(b) plans—which are similar to 401(k) plans and are offered by some education and nonprofit organizations—held another \$1.5 trillion in assets.

With 92% of 401(k) plan participants in plans offering employer contributions, 401(k) plans are a powerful saving tool (Figure 8.8). DC-owning individuals agree that payroll deduction makes it easier to save and that the tax treatment of DC plans is a big incentive to contribute. The typical 401(k) plan offers a full assortment of investment options generally including domestic equity funds, international equity funds, domestic bond funds, and target date funds. The vast majority (83%) of DC-owning individuals agree that their plan offers a good lineup of investment options.

401(k) Plan Participants' Asset Allocation Varies With Participant Age

The vast majority of 401(k) plan participants embrace investing in equities—whether through equity funds, balanced funds (including target date funds), or company stock. According to research conducted by ICI and the Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI), 97% of 401(k) participants held at least some equities in their 401(k) accounts at year-end 2023 (Figure 8.8).

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The ICI/ISS MI Defined Contribution Plan Profile

www.ici.org/research/defined_contribution_plans/401ks/the-iciiss-defined-contribution-plan-profile

FIGURE 8.8

401(k) Plans Offer Powerful and Convenient Saving and Investing

401(k) plans:

- Nearly **70 million** active participants
- \$10.1 trillion** in assets at year-end 2025
- 57%** of 401(k) plan assets invested in mutual funds
- 29** investment options, on average
- Typically including domestic equity funds, international equity funds, domestic bond funds, and target date funds¹

401(k) participants:

- 92%** are offered employer contributions
- 97%** have investments in equities²
- 71%** have invested in target date funds¹
- 77%** have access to plan loans

DC-owning individuals:

- 92%** agree that payroll deduction makes it easier for them to save
 - 82%** agree that the tax treatment of their retirement plan is a big incentive to contribute
 - 83%** agree that their employer-sponsored retirement plan offers them a good lineup of investment options
-

¹ Funds include mutual funds, collective investment trusts, separate accounts, and other pooled investment products.

² Equities include equity funds, company stock, and the equity portion of balanced funds. The Investment Company Institute classifies balanced funds as *hybrid* in its data.

Sources: Investment Company Institute, The US Retirement Market (www.ici.org/research/statistics/quarterly-retirement-market-data); The ICI/ISS MI Defined Contribution Plan Profile (www.ici.org/research/defined_contribution_plans/401ks/the-iciiss-defined-contribution-plan-profile); EBRI/ICI 401(k) Database (www.ici.org/Research/Defined-Contribution-Plans/401ks/EBRIICI401kInvestorDatabase); US Household Views on Retirement Savings (www.ici.org/research/defined_contribution_plans/us-households-views-on-retirement-savings)

The composition of the asset allocation of 401(k) participants' accounts also varies with participant age. For example, at year-end 2023, 401(k) plan participants in their twenties had a much higher allocation to target date funds (70% of their 401(k) plan balances) than those in their sixties (36%) (Figure 8.9). And older 401(k) plan participants had much higher allocations to fixed-income investments (bond funds, GICs and other stable value funds, and money funds) compared with younger 401(k) plan participants. All told, younger participants allocate more of their portfolios to equities compared with older participants. At year-end 2023, participants in their twenties had 90% of their 401(k) assets invested in equities, on average, while those in their sixties had 61% of their 401(k) assets invested in equities. Furthermore, younger 401(k) plan participants were more likely to have high concentrations in equities in their accounts compared with older participants.

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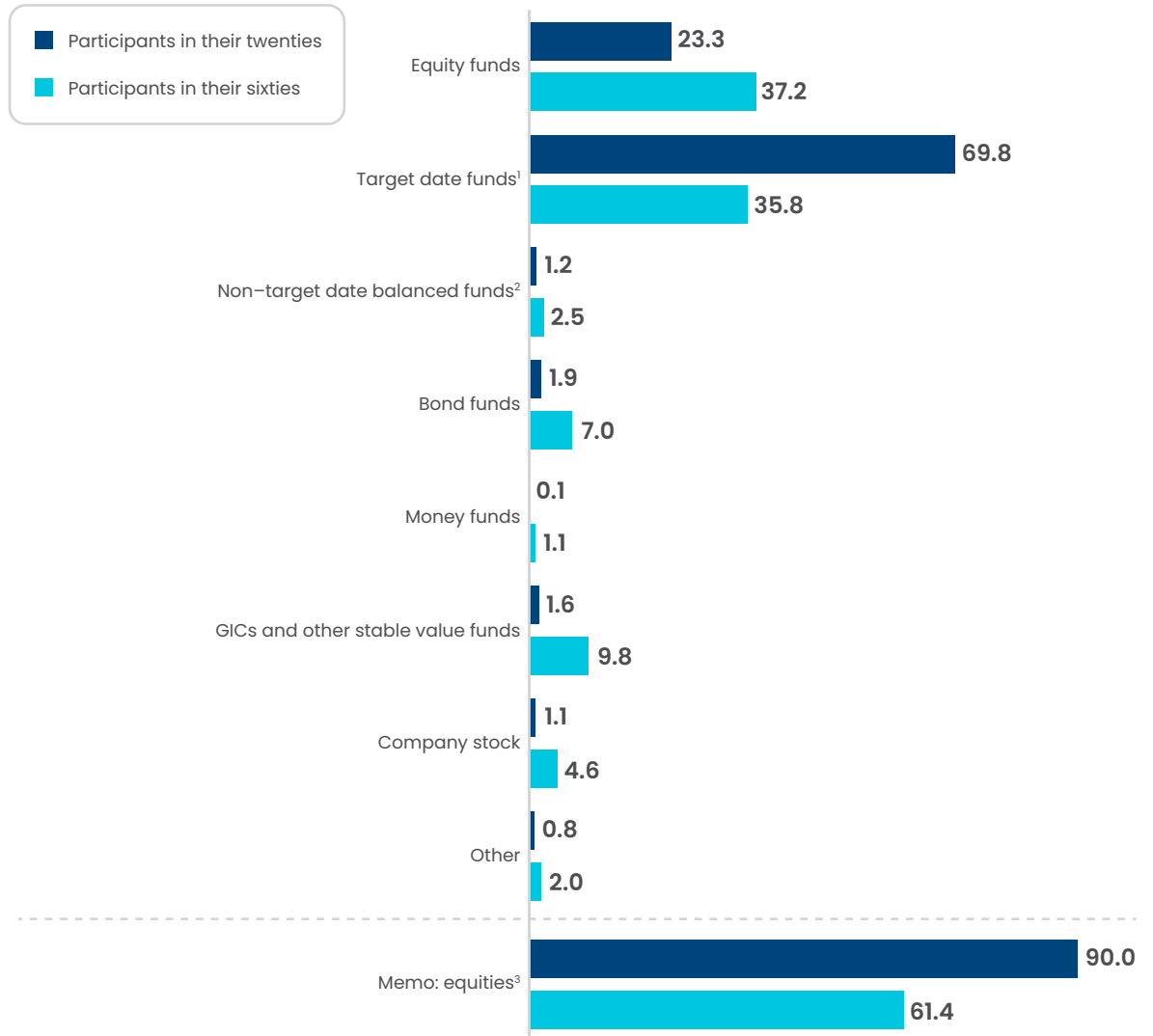
US Households' Views on Retirement Savings

www.ici.org/research/defined_contribution_plans/us-households-views-on-retirement-savings

FIGURE 8.9

Average 401(k) Asset Allocation Varies With Participant Age

Average asset allocation of 401(k) account balances, percentage of account balances, year-end 2023



¹ A target date fund typically rebalances its portfolio to become less focused on growth and more focused on income as it approaches and passes the target date of the fund, which is usually included in the fund's name.

² The Investment Company Institute classifies balanced funds as *hybrid* in its data.

³ Equities include equity funds, company stock, and the equity portion of balanced funds.

Note: Funds include mutual funds, bank collective trusts, life insurance separate accounts, and any pooled investment product primarily invested in the security indicated. Percentages are dollar-weighted averages.

Source: Tabulations from EBRI/ICI Participant-Directed Retirement Plan Data Collection Project. See *ICI Research Perspective*, "401(k) Plan Asset Allocation, Account Balances, and Loan Activity in 2023."

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EBRI/ICI 401(k) Investor Database

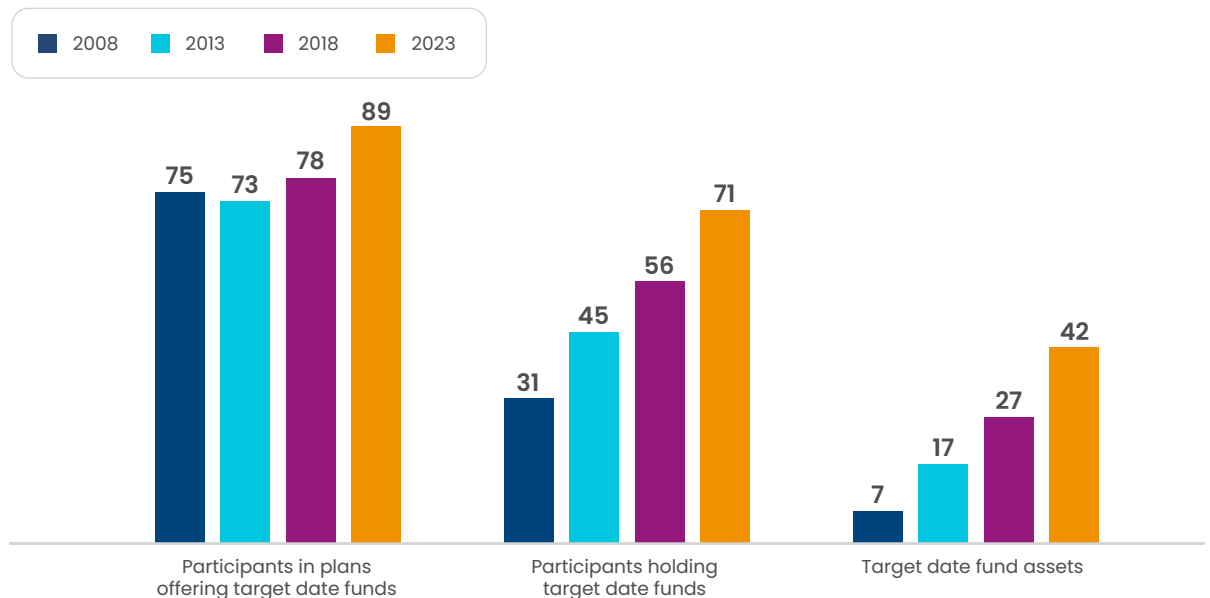
www.ici.org/Research/Defined-Contribution-Plans/401ks/EBRIICI401kInvestorDatabase

Target Date Funds Are Widely Available and Frequently Used

A target date fund follows a predetermined reallocation of assets over time based on a specified target retirement date. Typically, the fund rebalances its portfolio to become less focused on growth and more focused on income as it approaches and passes the target date, which is usually indicated in the fund's name.

The offering and use of target date funds in 401(k) plans have increased in recent years. Target date funds—including target date mutual funds, target date collective investment trusts (CITs), and other pooled target date investments—have risen from 7% of 401(k) plan assets at year-end 2008 to 42% at year-end 2023 (Figure 8.10). Participant use of target date funds has also increased—at year-end 2023, 71% of 401(k) plan participants held target date funds.

FIGURE 8.10
Target Date Funds' Rising 401(k) Market Share
Percentage of total 401(k) market, year-end



Note: A target date fund typically rebalances its portfolio to become less focused on growth and more focused on income as it approaches and passes the target date of the fund, which is usually included in the fund's name. Funds include mutual funds, bank collective trusts, life insurance separate accounts, and other pooled investment products.

Source: Tabulations from EBRI/ICI Participant-Directed Retirement Plan Data Collection Project. See *ICI Research Perspective*, "401(k) Plan Asset Allocation, Account Balances, and Loan Activity in 2023."

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Quick Facts on Target Date Fund Use in Retirement Plans

www.ici.org/system/files/2025-12/25-ici-quick-facts-target-date-funds-retirement.pdf

401(k) Plan Loans Can Offer a Safety Valve in Times of Need

Most 401(k) plan participants do not borrow from their plans, although the majority have access to plan loans. The percentage of 401(k) plan participants with loans outstanding has been trending down in the wake of changes to plan rules regarding hardship withdrawals since 2019 and special COVID-related access during 2020. Analysis of EBRI/ICI 401(k) data finds that only 12% of DC plan participants had loans outstanding and outstanding loan balances among participants with loans averaged 9% of the remaining 401(k) account balance at year-end 2023. US Department of Labor data indicate that outstanding loan amounts were 1% of 401(k) plan assets in 2023.

IRAs Are a Significant Part of US Retirement Savings

IRA assets totaled \$19.2 trillion at year-end 2025, accounting for 39% of US retirement market assets (Figure 8.5). Mutual funds were 39% of IRA assets at year-end 2025 (Figure 8.11), and nearly 60 million US households (42%) owned IRAs in 2025.

The first type of IRA—known as a traditional IRA—was created under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) and is the most common type of IRA. IRAs provide all workers with a contributory retirement savings vehicle, and, through rollovers, give workers leaving jobs a means to preserve the tax benefits and growth opportunities that employer-sponsored retirement plans provide. Roth IRAs, first available in 1998, were created to provide a contributory retirement savings vehicle on an after-tax basis, with qualified withdrawals distributed tax-free. In addition, policymakers have added employer-sponsored IRAs (SEP IRAs, SAR-SEP IRAs, and SIMPLE IRAs) to encourage small businesses to provide retirement plans by simplifying the rules applicable to tax-qualified plans.

Traditional IRA-owning households access a full array of investment options, with 72% reporting they held mutual funds and 38% indicating they held ETFs in their traditional IRAs (Figure 8.11). More than 70% of traditional IRA-owning households have a strategy to manage income and assets in retirement. Typically, these strategies have many components, such as reviewing asset allocations, determining their retirement expenses, developing a retirement income plan, setting aside emergency funds, and determining when to take Social Security benefits.

Roth IRA-owning households also access a full array of investment options, with 71% reporting they held mutual funds and 42% indicating they held ETFs in their Roth IRAs (Figure 8.11). Roth IRA-owning households skew younger than traditional IRA-owning households.

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The Role of IRAs in US Households' Saving for Retirement

www.ici.org/researchiras/the-role-of-iras-in-us-households'-saving-for-retirement

FIGURE 8.11

IRAs Play an Important Role in US Households' Retirement Saving

IRAs

- Nearly **60 million** US households own IRAs
- \$19.2 trillion** in assets at year-end 2025
- 39%** of IRA assets invested in mutual funds

Traditional IRA-owning households:

- \$15.9 trillion** in assets in traditional IRAs
- 72%** have mutual funds in their traditional IRAs
- 38%** have ETFs in their traditional IRAs
- 61%** have rollovers from employer-sponsored retirement plans in their traditional IRAs
- The three most common primary reasons for rolling over were:
 - 25%** wanting to consolidate assets
 - 19%** not wanting to leave assets behind at the former employer
 - 15%** wanting more investment options
- 72%** have a strategy to manage income and assets in retirement
- 62 years old** is their median age

Roth IRA-owning households:

- \$2.4 trillion** in assets in Roth IRAs
 - 71%** have mutual funds in their Roth IRAs
 - 42%** have ETFs in their Roth IRAs
 - 65%** have a strategy to manage income and assets in retirement
 - 51 years old** is their median age
-

Sources: Investment Company Institute, The US Retirement Market (www.ici.org/research/statistics/quarterly-retirement-market-data); The Role of IRAs in US Households' Saving for Retirement (www.ici.org/research/iras/the-role-of-iras-in-us-households-saving-for-retirement)

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The IRA Investor Database™

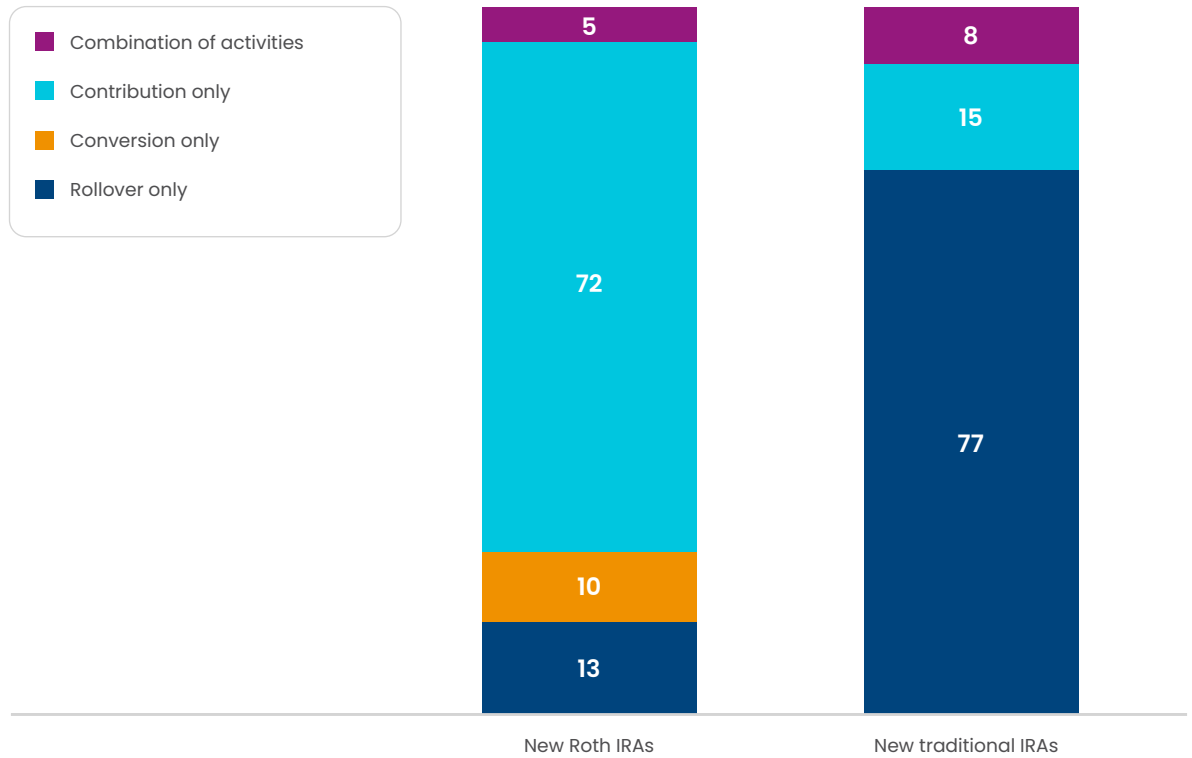
www.ici.org/research-iras/the-ira-investor-database

Analysis of the IRA Investor Database—which contains information on millions of IRA investors—finds that contributions are more important for opening new Roth IRAs, while rollovers are more important for opening new traditional IRAs. In 2023, 72% of new Roth IRAs were opened solely with contributions, while 77% of new traditional IRAs were opened only with rollovers (Figure 8.12).

FIGURE 8.12

New Roth IRAs Are Often Opened With Contributions; New Traditional IRAs Are Often Opened With Rollovers

Percentage of new IRAs opened in 2023 by type of IRA



Note: New IRAs are accounts that did not exist in The IRA Investor Database in 2022 and were opened by one of the paths indicated in 2023. The calculation excludes IRAs that changed financial services firms. The samples are 0.2 million new Roth IRA investors aged 18 or older at year-end 2023 and 0.2 million new traditional IRA investors aged 18 to 74 at year-end 2023.

Source: The IRA Investor Database™ (www.ici.org/research-iras/the-ira-investor-database)

Traditional IRA-owning households generally researched the decision to roll over money from their former employers' retirement plans into traditional IRAs. Traditional IRA-owning households with rollovers cite multiple reasons for rolling over their retirement plan assets into traditional IRAs. The three most common primary reasons for rolling over were to consolidate assets, not wanting to leave assets behind at the former employer, and wanting more investment options (Figure 8.11).

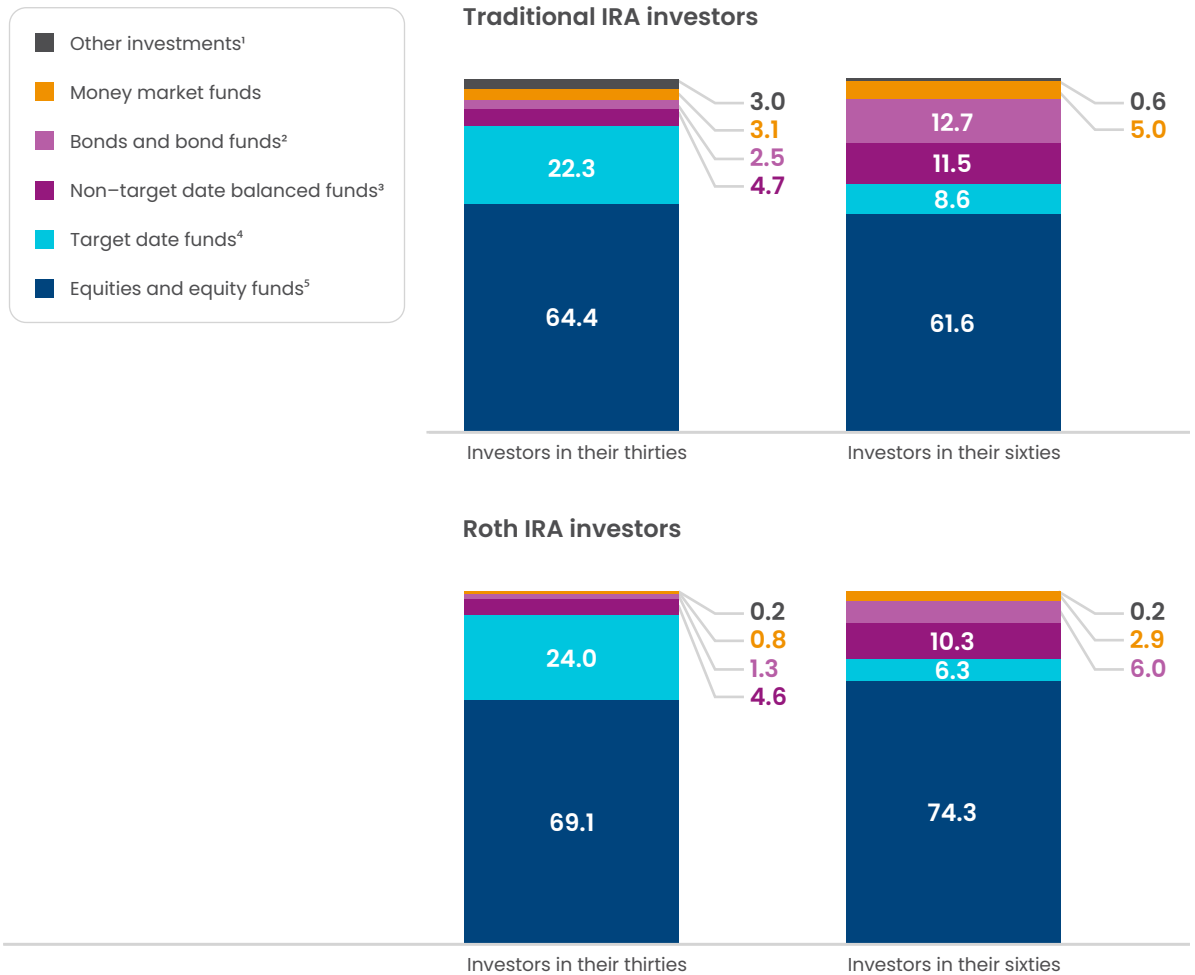
IRA Portfolios Often Reach Toward Equity Investments

As with 401(k) plan assets, a majority of IRA assets are invested in equities, and younger IRA investors tend to have a larger share of their assets invested in equities, equity funds, and target date funds than older investors. Older IRA investors tend to be more invested in bonds, bond funds, and non-target date balanced funds (Figure 8.13). Roth IRA investors display a similar pattern of investing by age compared with traditional IRA investors, although in all age groups, Roth IRA investors tend to have higher allocations to equities and equity funds and lower allocations to bonds and bond funds.

FIGURE 8.13

Average IRA Asset Allocation Varies With Investor Age

Average asset allocation of IRA balances, percentage of assets, year-end 2023



¹ *Other investments* includes certificates of deposit and unidentifiable assets.

² Bond funds include bond mutual funds, bond closed-end funds, and bond ETFs.

³ The Investment Company Institute classifies balanced funds as *hybrid* in its data.

⁴ A target date fund typically rebalances its portfolio to become less focused on growth and more focused on income as it approaches and passes the target date of the fund, which is usually included in the fund's name.

⁵ Equity funds include equity mutual funds, equity closed-end funds, and equity ETFs.

Note: Percentages are dollar-weighted averages.

Source: The IRA Investor Database™ (www.ici.org/research-iras/the-ira-investor-database)

IRA Withdrawals Are Rare Until Required by Law Later in Life

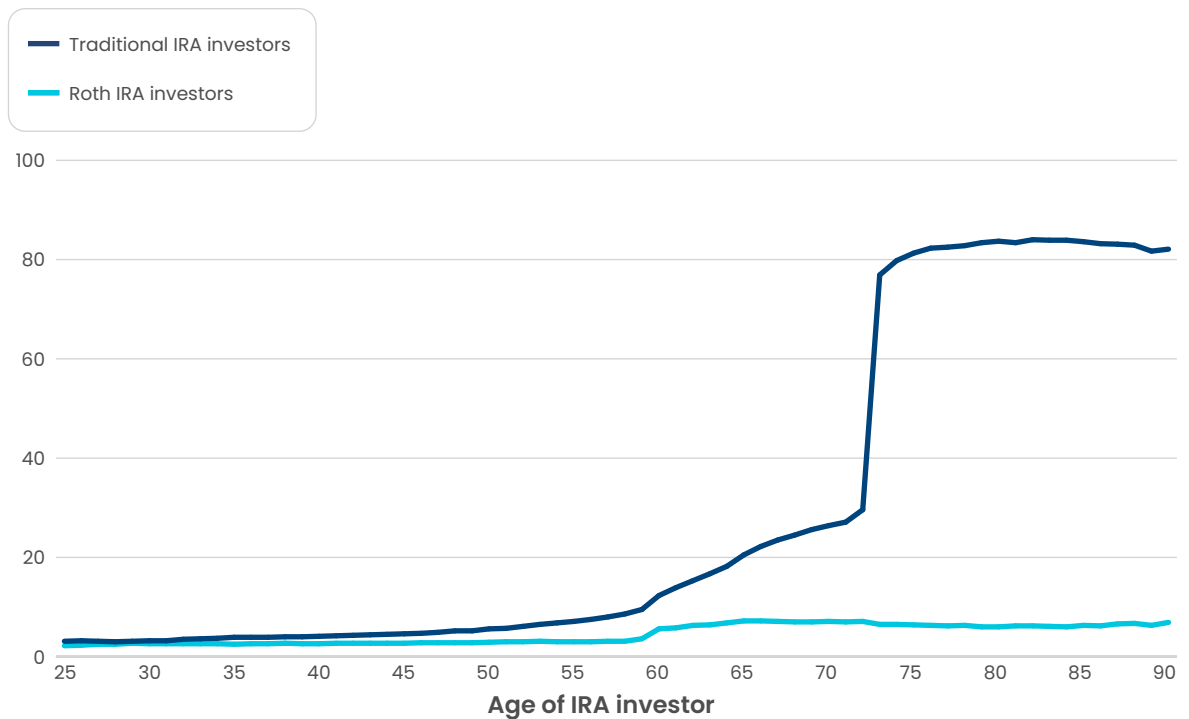
Withdrawals from IRAs tend to occur later in life, often to fulfill required minimum distributions (RMDs) under the law. An RMD is calculated as a percentage of the IRA balance, based on remaining life expectancy. Older traditional IRA owners generally must withdraw at least the minimum amount each year or pay a penalty (historically, RMDs began at age 70½, but this age increased to 72 in 2022 and 73 in 2023). In addition, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) waived RMDs for 2020.

Withdrawal activity is lower among younger traditional and Roth IRA investors, likely related to early withdrawal penalties for distributions taken by individuals younger than 59½ (Figure 8.14). Withdrawal activity rises for investors in their sixties (where withdrawals are generally penalty free) and increases substantially for traditional IRA investors at the RMD age (73 in 2023). The withdrawal rate does not increase after age 70 for Roth IRA investors, who are not subject to RMDs during the owner's lifetime.

FIGURE 8.14

Roth IRA Investors Rarely Take Withdrawals; Traditional IRA Investors Are Heavily Affected by RMDs

Percentage of IRA investors with withdrawals by type of IRA and investor age, 2023



Note: The samples are 6.5 million traditional IRA investors aged 25 to 90 at year-end 2023 and 4.8 million Roth IRA investors aged 25 to 90 at year-end 2023.

Source: The IRA Investor Database™ (www.ici.org/research-iras/the-ira-investor-database)

The Role of Mutual Funds in Retirement Savings

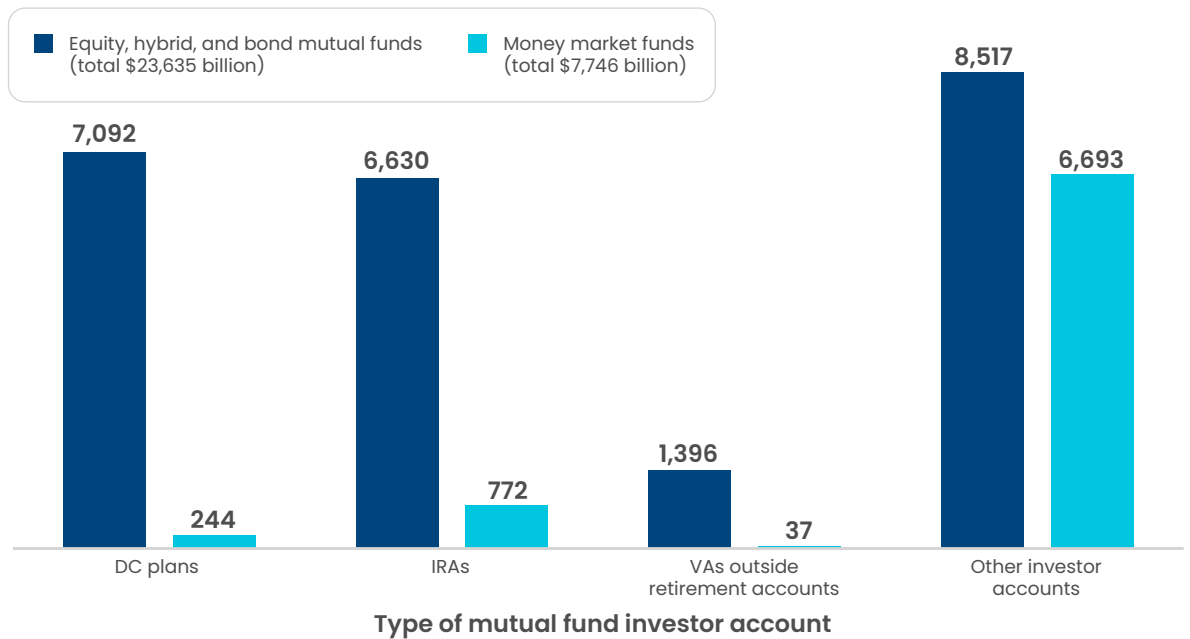
Mutual funds play a major role in employer-sponsored DC plans (such as 401(k) plans) and IRAs. At year-end 2025, mutual funds accounted for 52% of DC plan assets and 39% of IRA assets (Figures 8.5 and 8.15). Investors held similar amounts of mutual fund assets in both DC plans (\$7.3 trillion) and IRAs (\$7.4 trillion) (Figure 8.15).

Mutual fund assets held in DC plans and IRAs represent a large share of mutual fund assets overall, and long-term mutual fund assets in particular (Figure 8.15). The \$14.7 trillion in mutual fund retirement assets made up 47% of all mutual fund assets at year-end 2025. DC plans and IRAs held 58% of equity, hybrid, and bond mutual fund assets, but only 13% of money market fund assets. Another \$1.4 trillion held in long-term VA mutual funds outside retirement accounts represented another 6% of long-term mutual fund assets.

FIGURE 8.15

Substantial Amounts of Retirement Market Assets Are Invested in Long-Term Mutual Funds

Assets, billions of dollars, year-end 2025



Source: Investment Company Institute. See Investment Company Institute, "The US Retirement Market, Fourth Quarter 2025."

Mutual Funds Also Play a Role in Education Savings

In 2025, 13% of households that owned mutual funds cited education as a financial goal for their fund investments (see Figure 7.3), and 15% of mutual fund-owning households have 529 plans. Nevertheless, the demand for education savings vehicles has been moderate since their introduction in the 1990s, partly because of their limited availability and partly due to investors' lack of familiarity with them. The Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001 (EGTRRA) enhanced the attractiveness of two education savings vehicles—Section 529 plans and Coverdell education savings accounts (ESAs)—by making them more flexible and allowing larger contributions. The 2006 Pension Protection Act (PPA) made the EGTRRA enhancements permanent. The Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act of 2010 extended the EGTRRA enhancements to Coverdell ESAs for two years; the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 made these enhancements permanent. The Setting Every Community Up for Retirement Enhancement Act of 2019 (SECURE Act) expanded the types of education costs that are covered by 529 plans. The SECURE 2.0 Act of 2022 allowed Roth IRA rollovers of a limited amount of 529 plan assets starting in 2024.

Assets in Section 529 savings plans were \$576.7 billion as of year-end 2025, up 15.2% from year-end 2024. As of year-end 2025, there were 16.9 million 529 savings plan accounts, with an average account size of approximately \$34,200.

Households Saving for College Tend To Be Younger

In 2025, as a group, households saving for college through 529 plans, Coverdell ESAs, or mutual funds or ETFs held outside these accounts tended to be younger—about half (51%) were younger than 45 (Figure 8.16). Households saving for college had a range of educational attainment levels. Overall, 64% had completed college, 19% had an associate's degree or some college experience, and 17% had a high school diploma or less. These households also represented a range of incomes, with 34% of households saving for college having household income of less than \$100,000. Finally, these households typically had children (younger than 18) in the home.

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FIGURE 8.16**Characteristics of Households Saving for College**Percentage of US households saving for college,¹ 2025

Age of household survey respondent

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| Younger than 35 | 23 |
| 35 to 44 | 28 |
| 45 to 54 | 22 |
| 55 to 64 | 14 |
| 65 or older | 13 |

Education level of household survey respondent

| | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| High school diploma or less | 17 |
| Associate's degree or some college | 19 |
| Completed college | 32 |
| Completed graduate school | 32 |

Household income²

| | |
|------------------------|----|
| Less than \$50,000 | 18 |
| \$50,000 to \$99,999 | 16 |
| \$100,000 to \$149,999 | 16 |
| \$150,000 to \$199,999 | 16 |
| \$200,000 or more | 34 |

Number of children in home³

| | |
|---------------|----|
| None | 44 |
| One | 24 |
| Two | 21 |
| Three or more | 11 |

¹ Households saving for college are households that own education savings plans (Coverdell ESAs or 529 plans) or that said paying for education was one of their financial goals for their mutual funds or ETFs.

² Total reported is household income before taxes in 2024.

³ The number of children reported is children younger than 18 living in the home.

Source: Investment Company Institute Annual Mutual Fund Shareholder Tracking Survey
