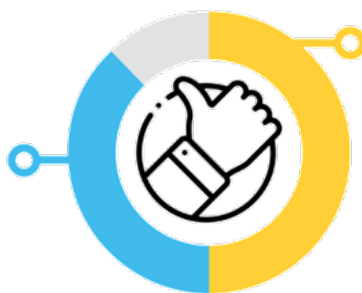


2026 CFP[®] PROFESSIONALS FINANCIAL OUTLOOK SURVEY

2026 CFP® Professionals Financial Outlook Survey

CFP BOARD

Another 38%
report their clients are
“somewhat” positive.



Half of CFP® professionals
report that clients have
a **positive** financial
outlook for 2026.

**CFP®
professionals’
and clients’
top discussion
topics:**

Political Climate



Inflation



Retirement



Top 3 Words Describing
CFP® Professionals’ Clients’ 2026 Feelings:

53%

Cautious

43%

Uncertain

36%

Optimistic



4 in 5 CFP® professionals
say their clients are confident about
realizing their long-term financial goals.

The year 2025 will not go down in the history books as a year of stability. It featured a change in political leadership in Washington, D.C., major shifts in economic policies — including increased tariffs — and the enactment of new tax laws. Meanwhile, the U.S. stock markets saw share prices rise, and the Federal Reserve began cutting short-term interest rates. In this environment, consumer sentiment varied significantly over the past 12 months. But, as the year drew to a close, at least one confidence indicator's index fell to 51 — one of the lowest levels on record.¹

Topping 2025 economic trends were elevated inflation at 3.0%², an increase in layoff activity while the unemployment rate stayed relatively low at 4.4%³ and a housing market struggling with mortgage interest rates at levels not seen in years.⁴ This fall also featured the longest federal government shutdown in history, disrupting checks for federal workers, contractors and recipients of social assistance. The government shutdown interrupted the publication of many key economic data reports, adding uncertainty to an already unsettled economic environment.

Millions of Americans depend on the expertise of financial advisors, such as CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER® professionals to develop financial plans that navigate both short-term and long-term uncertainties, enhancing overall financial well-being. The development and implementation of these plans occur through honest and open conversations between CFP® professionals and their clients. These discussions, which focus on setting goals, identifying challenges and creating a path toward better financial health, give CFP® professionals a unique advantage in understanding consumers' sentiments across the United States.

To gain insight into clients' outlook for 2026, CFP Board's Research team surveyed CFP® professionals in November 2025. The 10-question survey examined clients' sentiments, challenges and opportunities, while also exploring the types of strategies that CFP® professionals recommend. Conducted November 6-20, 2025, the survey generated responses from 541 CFP® professionals, resulting in a +/- 4.2% margin of error at the 95% confidence interval. The data collected from the survey serves as the basis of this report.

Note that the CFP Board Research team fielded the survey immediately after the 2025 off-year elections, with part of the data collection window overlapping the final seven days of the federal government shutdown.

¹ Survey of Consumer Sentiment | University of Michigan, November 7, 2025.

² 12-month percentage change, Consumer Price Index, selected categories | U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), October 24, 2025.

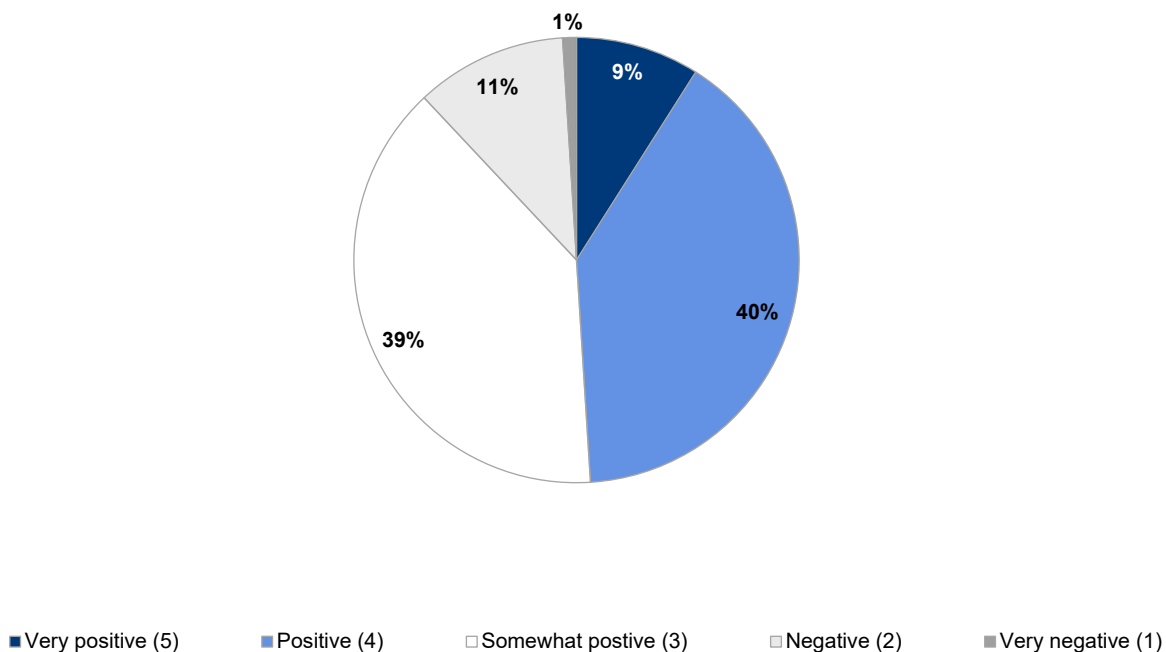
³ Civilian unemployment rate | U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), November 20, 2025.

⁴ Existing Home Sales | National Association of Realtors, November 20, 2025.

Cautious Optimism: CFP® Professionals' Clients' Financial Outlook for 2026

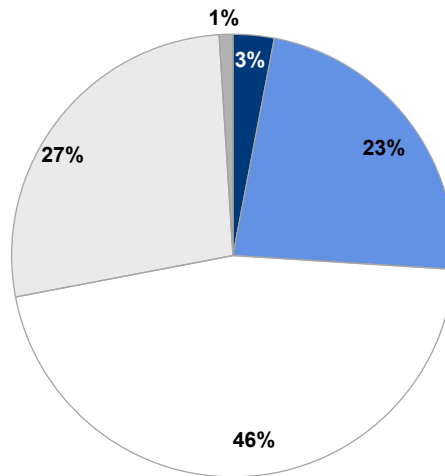
Through a year that featured broad economic and political changes, CFP® professional-advised Americans have an optimistic financial outlook for 2026. Half of CFP® professionals state that their clients have a positive upbeat financial outlook for 2026, selecting either a 4 or 5 rating on a 5-point scale. Another 39% of survey respondents indicate that their clients have a “somewhat positive” mindset for 2026. This compares to only 12% of CFP® professionals who report their clients are pessimistic about next year’s financial outlook.

Half of CFP® Professionals Say Their Clients Have a Positive Financial Outlook for 2026
(Percentage Distribution)



Despite this year's political and economic challenges, Americans' financial outlook remains relatively stable. Nearly half of CFP® professionals say their clients' financial outlook is essentially the same as last year. A quarter of CFP® professionals believe their clients are more optimistic now than they were previously, while another quarter see their clients as more pessimistic than a year ago.

Half of CFP® Professionals Say Their Clients' 2026 Financial Outlook Is Essentially the Same Compared to 2025
(Percentage Distribution)



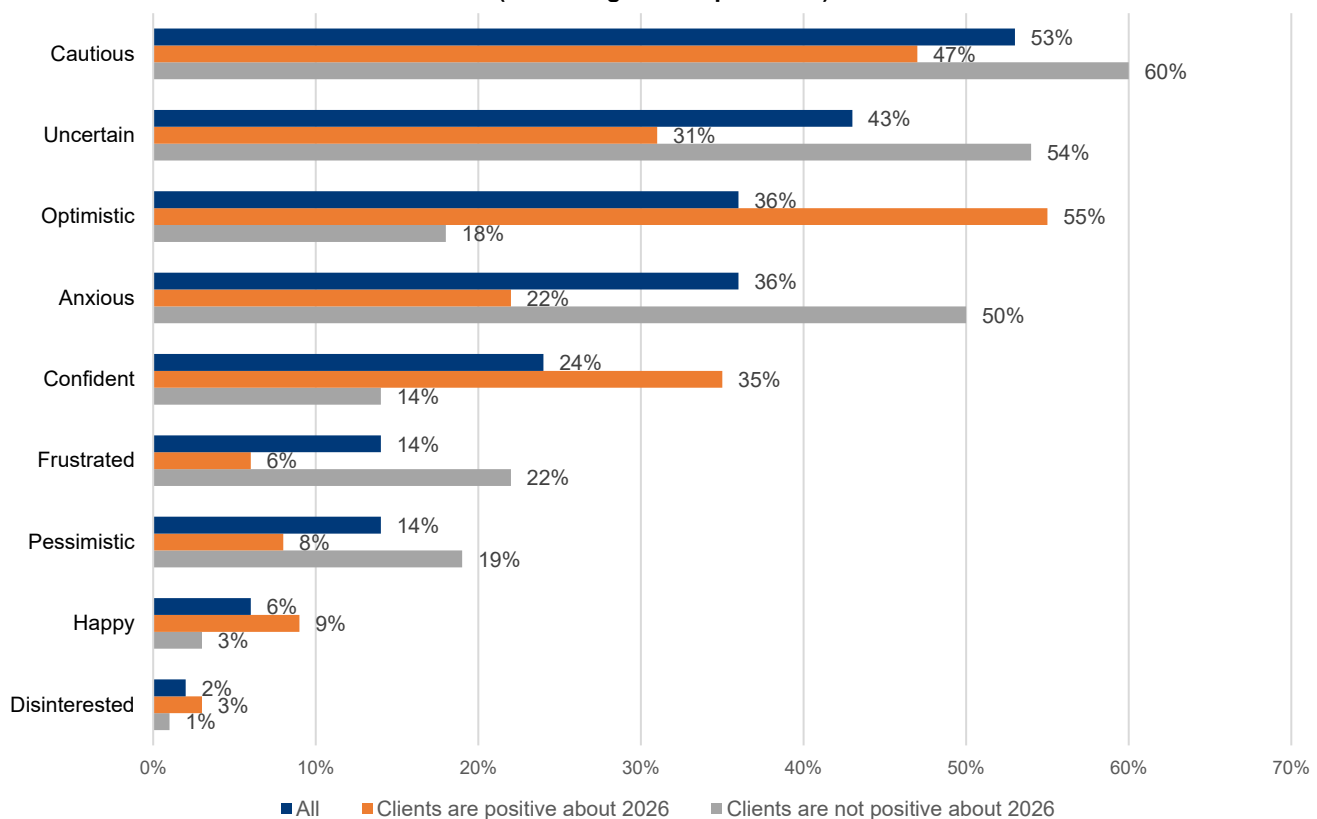
■ Much more positive (5) ■ More positive (4) □ Essentially the same (3) □ More Negative (2) ■ Much more negative (1)

Clients Split by Caution and Optimism With Their 2026 Financial Outlook

CFP® professionals use a wide variety of words to describe their clients' feelings about their 2026 financial outlook. While the majority use words reflecting the sense of unpredictability in the year ahead — cautious (53%), uncertain (43%) and anxious (36%) — responses also signal hopefulness, with 36% describing clients as optimistic and 24% as confident.

Among CFP® professionals whose clients view 2026 positively, optimism (55%) dominates. For CFP® professionals with more pessimistic clients, cautious (60%), uncertain (54%), anxious (50%) and frustrated (22%) define the prevailing sentiment.

Top Three Words That CFP® Professionals Describe Their Feelings About 2026: Cautious, Uncertain and Optimistic
(Percentage of Respondents)



Even With Short-Term Concerns, Long-Term Confidence

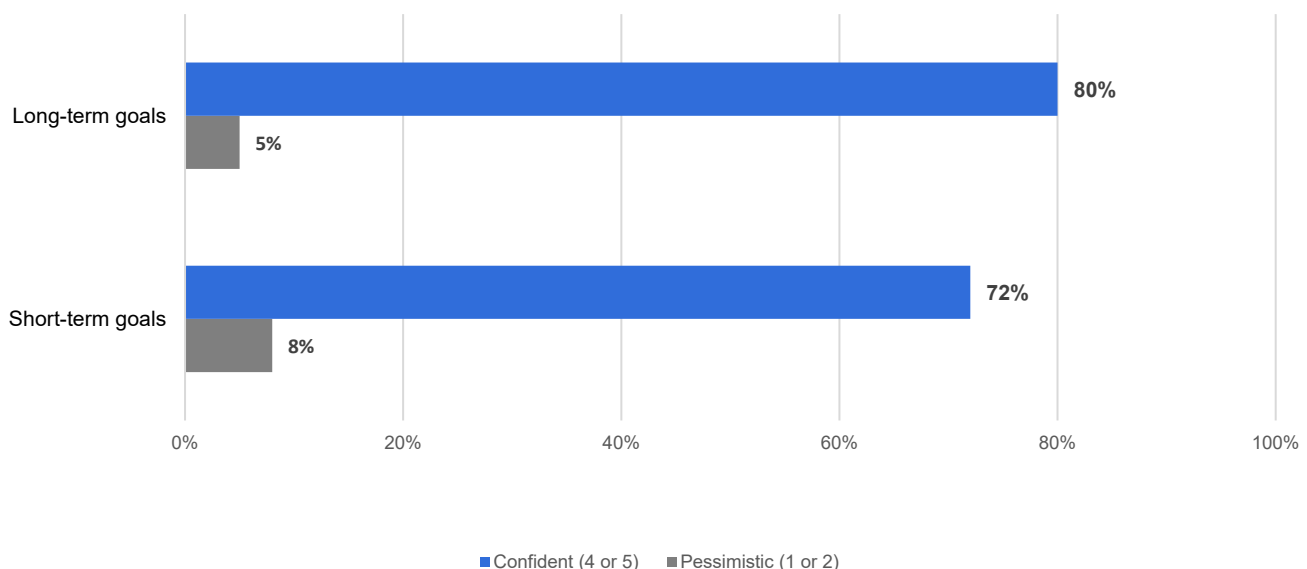
Having well-defined goals allows for the development of a personalized financial plan that can handle the curveballs that life can throw, whether they be personal, geopolitical or economic. Even through the events of the past year, most CFP® professional-advised Americans remain confident about realizing their short-term and long-term financial goals. This holds even if they are wary about the ebbs and flows of economic headwinds in the new year.

Eighty percent of CFP® professionals report that their clients are confident about achieving their long-term financial goals. At the same time, nearly three-quarters of survey respondents note that their clients are also confident about achieving their short-term financial goals.

Clients holding a positive financial outlook for 2026 are more likely to believe they will achieve both their short-term and long-term financial goals. Nine in 10 CFP® professionals who say their clients have an upbeat 2026 outlook indicate that these clients are optimistic about achieving their long-term financial goals. But even advisors whose clients are pessimistic about 2026 are likely to report their clients are confident about realizing their long-term (68%) and short-term (58%) financial goals.

4 in 5 CFP® Professionals Say Their Clients Are Confident About Realizing Their Long-Term Financial Goals

(Percentage of Respondents Rating Their Level of Confidence with 4 or 5 and 1 or 2 on a 5-Point Scale)



Even With Short-Term Concerns, Long-Term Confidence

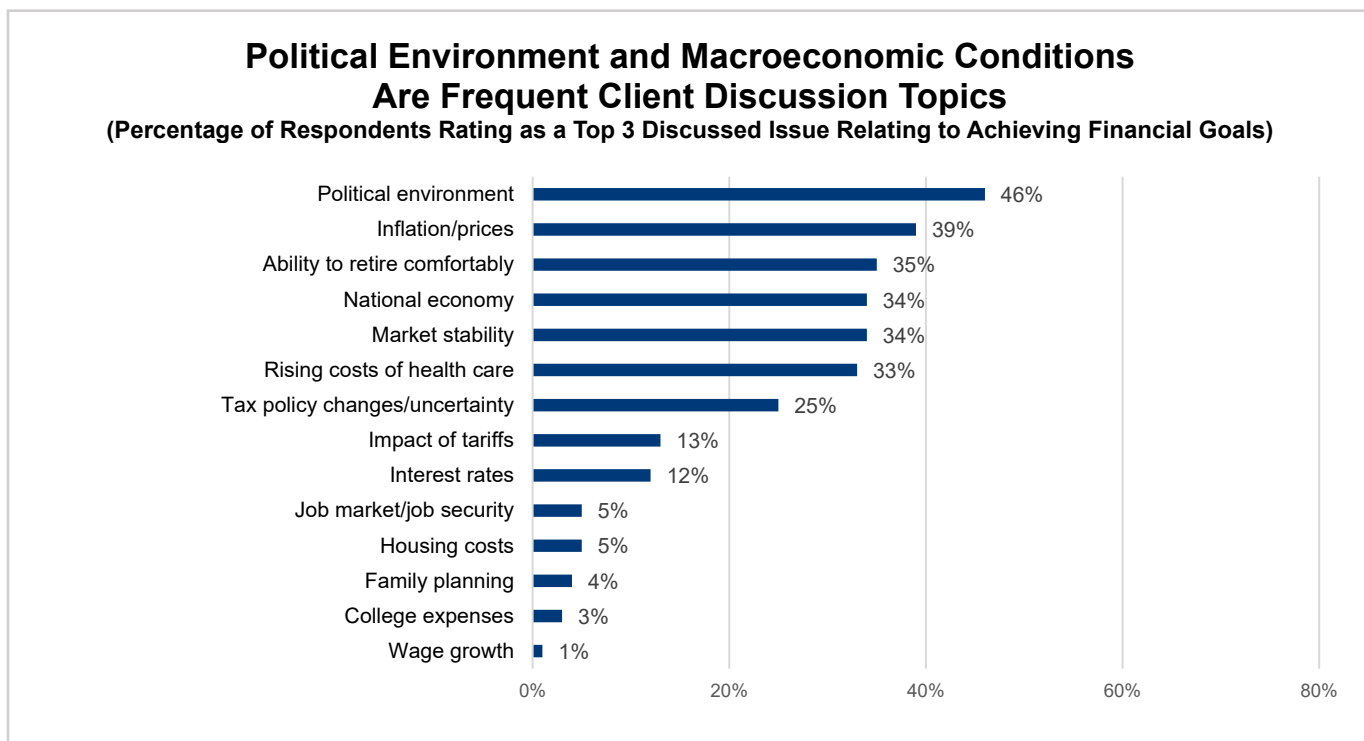
The foundation of a trusted relationship between CFP® professionals and their clients begins with open and honest conversations, during which the parties discuss life aspirations and challenges faced. These discussions focus on both personal goals and internal and external factors that could impact clients' ability to achieve these goals.

The top issue that CFP® professionals report their clients mention in relation to reaching their financial goals is the current political climate in the United States. Nearly half of CFP® professionals say that the political environment is a common topic of discussion among their clients. This percentage rises to 51% among those who describe their clients' financial outlook for 2026 as not optimistic. Possibly fueling this concern about politics are related topics such as tax policy uncertainty (25%) and the potential effects of tariffs imposed by the current administration (13%).

Many CFP® professionals also report that their clients are discussing current macroeconomic impacts on their ability to achieve their financial goals:

- Inflation/prices (39%)
- National economy (34%)
- Market stability (34%)
- Rising costs of health care (33%)
- Impact of tariffs (13%)
- Interest rates (12%)

Additionally, 35% of CFP® professionals mention that the ability to retire comfortably is a common topic in their clients' discussions.



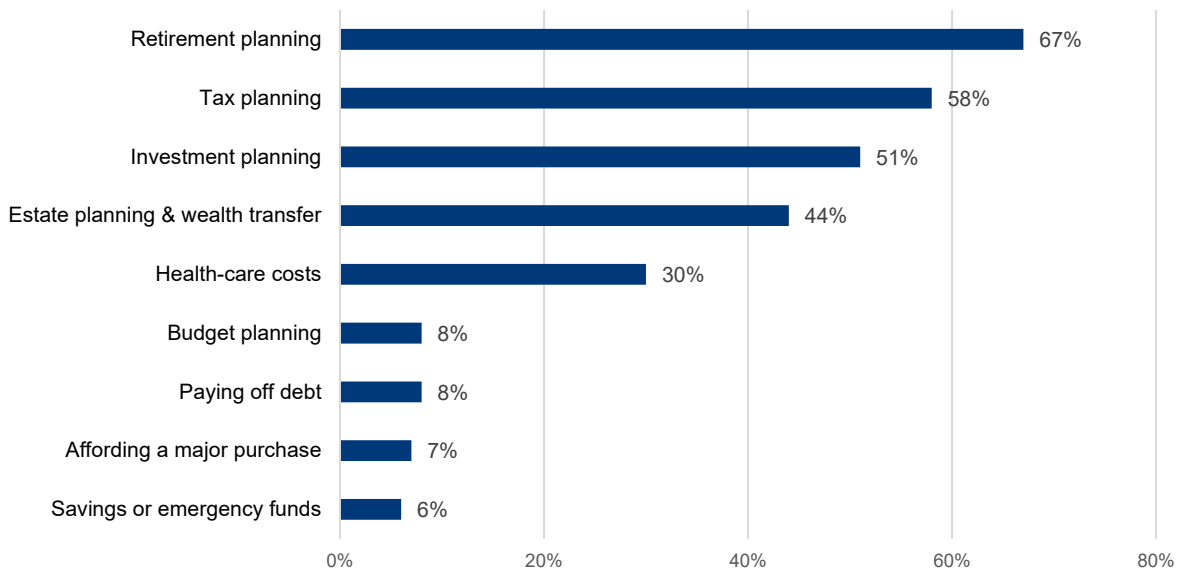
Retirement, Tax and Investment Planning Headline Personal Finance Issues Discussed

As part of the plan development, CFP® professionals and their clients discuss a plethora of strategies and tactics to realize desired short-term and long-term outcomes. CFP® professionals tend to focus their conversations on five key planning areas:

- Retirement planning (67%).
- Tax planning (58%).
- Investment planning (51%).
- Estate planning & wealth transfer (44%).
- Health-care costs (30%).

Retirement Planning and Tax Planning Are the Main Discussion Topics Clients Have With CFP® Professionals

(Percentage of Respondents Rating as a Top 3 Discussed Personal Finance Issue)



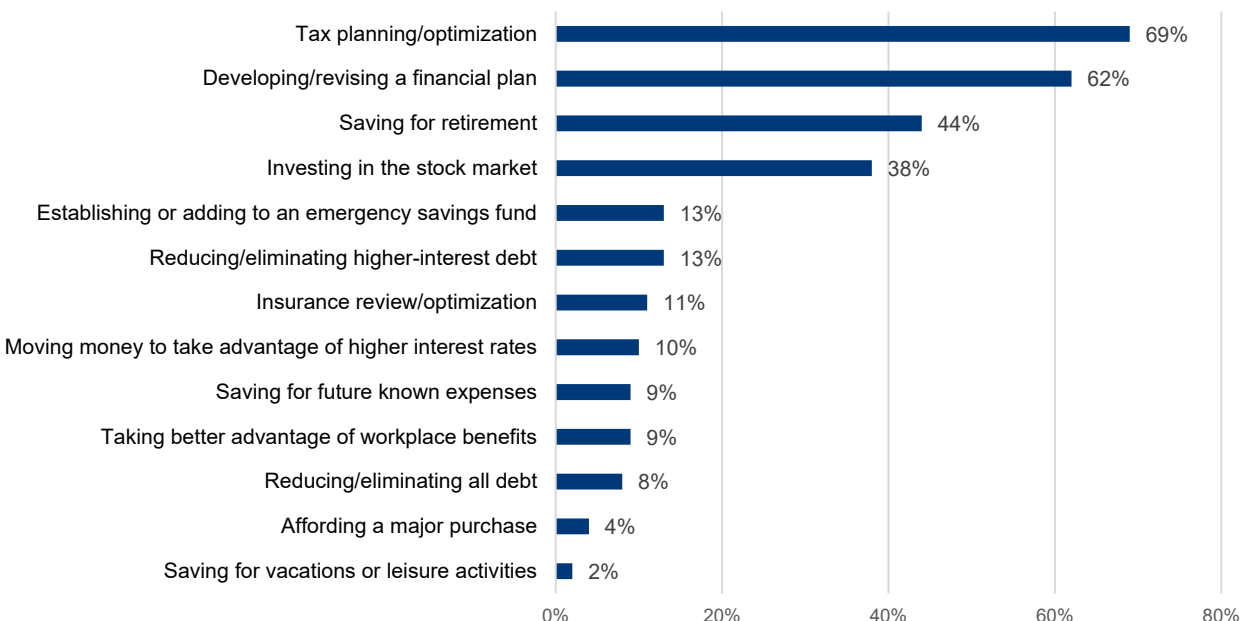
Recommended Key Strategies and Steps

CFP® professionals work with clients to craft a comprehensive financial plan uniquely tailored to their individual needs and goals. Financial planners' top recommended strategies for clients in 2026 focus on long-term well-being. Two-thirds of CFP® professionals recommend their clients follow strategies that support tax optimization (69%) and a nearly equal proportion suggest developing a (or revising an existing) financial plan (62%) in 2026. Additional top strategies among CFP® professionals focus on retirement savings (44%) and investing in the stock market (38%).

Other top 2026 financial advice from CFP® professionals includes:

- Establishing or adding to an emergency fund (13%).
- Reducing/eliminating higher-interest debt, such as balances on credit cards (13%).
- Insurance review/optimization (11%).
- Moving money to take advantage of higher interest rates (10%).

CFP® Professionals Recommend Their Clients Focus on Their Financial Plan, Tax Optimization and Retirement Savings in 2026 (Percentage of Respondents Rating Item as 2026 Top 3 Strategy)



Investment and Retirement Moves Dominate 2026 Client Plan

CFP® professionals report that clients are most enthusiastic about investing, based on their 2026 financial outlooks. Nearly half of CFP® professionals say their clients are more likely to start or increase their level of investment (selecting a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale) because of their financial outlook for the year ahead. This proportion is even higher among clients who have a positive 2026 financial outlook (57%). Conversely, only 13% of survey respondents note that their clients are less likely to increase their level of investment because of their 2026 investment.

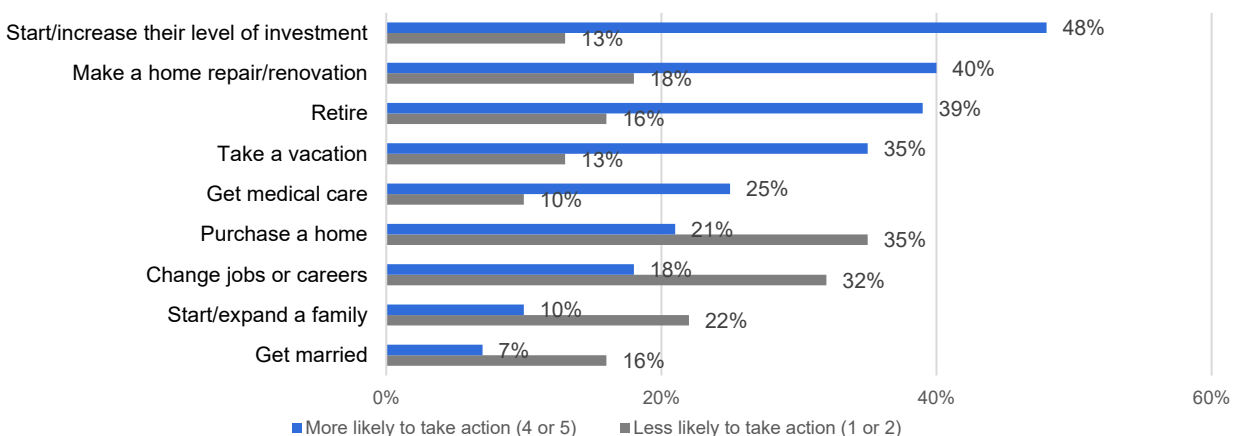
Other actions in which a greater percentage of CFP® professionals report that their clients are more likely to take (as opposed to less likely to take) due to their 2026 financial outlook:

- Make a home repair/renovation (more likely: 40%, less likely: 18%).
- Retire (more likely: 39%, less likely: 16%).
- Take a vacation (more likely: 35%, less likely: 13%).
- Get medical care (more likely: 25%, less likely: 10%).

By contrast, there are a series of actions in which a higher percentage of CFP® professionals indicate their clients' 2026 financial outlook is making them less likely (rather than more likely) to:

- Purchase a home (less likely: 35%, more likely: 21%).
- Change jobs or careers (less likely: 32%, more likely: 18%).
- Start/expand a family (less likely: 22%, more likely: 10%).
- Get married (less likely: 16%, more likely: 7%).

CFP® Professionals' Clients More Likely to Invest and Renovate Their Homes, Less Likely to Purchase a Home or Change Jobs Because of Financial Outlook (Percentage of Respondents Rating Their Likelihood to Act With 4 or 5 and 1 or 2 on a 5-Point Scale)



Five Key Themes Shaping 2026

CFP® professionals report that their clients are optimistic about their personal financial outlook for 2026, with half of respondents describing their clients as being positive and another 39% indicating that their clients were “somewhat” positive. More telling is whether an American holds an optimistic overall view for next year or is wary of what the new year may bring; those working with a CFP® professional are confident that they will achieve their financial goals.

During the survey, CFP® professionals shared comments centered around five major themes:

1. Cautious express optimism for 2026, especially as clients expect interest rates to fall next year.
2. General sense of economic uncertainty abounds, with remarks on inflation, recession risks, federal government debt levels and market volatility.
3. Political uncertainty is fueling client anxiety, with comments about the recent federal government shutdown, policy shifts, tariffs and the 2026 congressional elections.
4. Older clients are concerned about long-term financial security, focusing on health-care costs, retirement income and estate planning.
5. High-net-worth clients tend to be less anxious and more open to market volatility, while those with tighter budgets or nearing retirement are more cautious.

Americans can face whatever comes their way in the new year by working with a qualified financial advisor, such as a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER® professional. CFP® professionals are trusted resources because they follow strict competency and ethical standards. Their dedication to serving clients' best interests and their specialized training prepare CFP® professionals to help Americans navigate today's more complex landscape and achieve their financial and life goals.

On November 6, 2025, CFP Board's Research team sent a 10-question survey to randomly selected CFP® professionals nationwide. The survey generated responses from 541 CFP® professionals when it closed on November 20, 2025. The data collected from the survey, which serves as the basis of this report, is subject to a sampling error of +/- 4.2% at the 95% confidence interval.

About CFP Board

CFP Board is the professional body for personal financial planners in the U.S. CFP Board consists of two affiliated organizations focused on advancing the financial planning profession for the public's benefit. **CFP Board of Standards** sets and upholds standards for financial planning and administers the prestigious CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER® certification — widely recognized by the public, advisors and firms as *the standard* for financial planners — so that the public has access to the benefits of competent and ethical financial planning. CFP® certification is held by more than 106,000 people in the U.S. **CFP Board Center for Financial Planning** addresses diversity and workforce development challenges and conducts and publishes research that adds to the financial planning profession's body of knowledge.



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