

Financial Calm, Not Wealth Accumulation, Now Key for Retirees

By Bob Graham

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Financial peace of mind is now six times more important than accumulating wealth, according to a new survey of Americans age 55 and up.

For 82% of those polled in April, financial peace of mind was their key financial goal.

The failed economy and global recession has caused Americans to adopt new expectations for their retirement, according to the SunAmerica Retirement Re-Set Study, performed by Harris Interactive.

Just one-in-five Americans at least 55 years old remains hopeful for the future, according to Jay S. Wintrob, president and CEO of SunAmerica Financial Group.

“Americans are emerging from the experience with new knowledge, new discipline and have re-set their vision of an ideal retirement,” Wintrob said in a statement.

“Americans have also proven themselves to be both resilient and resourceful,” added Wintrob, noting that 81% say they have learned important lessons regarding retirement preparation in the past several years. “They are course-correcting: intending to work longer, save more, spend less, be more disciplined and adjust their lifestyle expectations.”

Results were compared with a similar study performed in 2001.

Other key findings about today’s pre-retirees and retirees include:

Retirement is being postponed: Pre-retirees say they now intend to delay retirement by five years—from 64 to 69—triggered in part by increasing longevity, as well as the recession and financial need.

Retirement no longer means the end of work: Almost two-thirds say they would ideally like to remain productive and include some work in retirement to stay active and involved.

Unexpected multi-generational family assistance has become the new retirement wild card: Pre-retirees must balance their retirement plans with the possibility of having to support aging relatives, adult children, grandchildren and siblings. Nearly half of Americans 55 and older expect to provide this support and, in a new twist on childcare, 70% of those believe their adult children will need financial assistance.

“Emerging from the recession, Americans are beginning to define retirement differently than previous generations of retirees,” said Dr. Ken Dychtwald, gerontologist, founder and CEO of Age Wave. “Having been jolted by the last several years, Americans have adopted more realistic and pragmatic views of the possibilities before them. They now see retirement as a time for new priorities, new opportunities and new strategies for today’s challenges.”

The study reports that many felt the negative impact of the recession, with one third saying their financial assets still have not recovered to pre-recession levels and almost half (46%) saying their home is worth less now than before the recession.

This article can be found at <http://ifawebnews.com/2011/07/13/financial-calm-not-wealth-accumulation-now-key-to-retirees/>.