

Inflation Taking Its Toll on Worker Financial Well-Being

High rates of inflation in 2022 appear to be having an impact on worker attitudes toward their financial well-being.

In the recently released [Workplace Wellness Survey](#), the Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI) and Greenwald Research examined a broad spectrum of worker attitudes toward financial well-being. The survey found that between 2021 and 2022, an increasing percentage of workers were concerned about their financial well-being, were less prepared for unexpected financial events, and were increasingly stressed about their financial future.

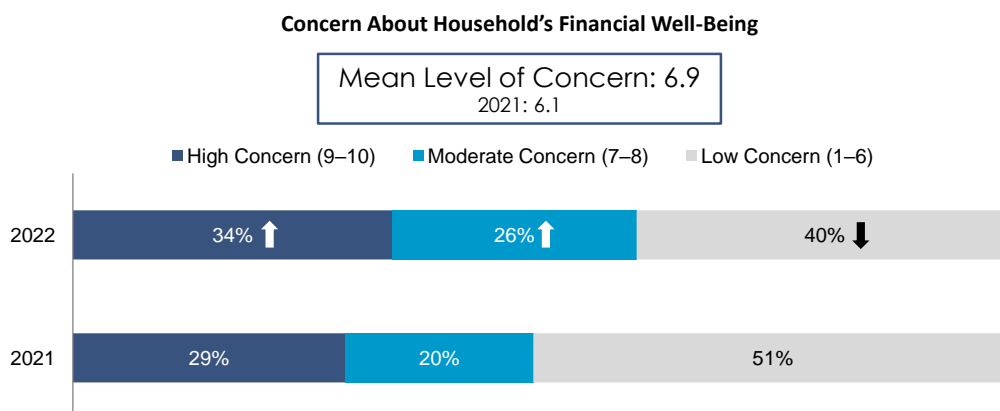
Concern about household financial well-being has increased.

- One-third (34 percent) of employees were highly concerned and one-quarter (26 percent) were moderately concerned about their household's financial well-being in 2022, up from 29 percent and 20 percent respectively in 2021 (Figure 1).
- Similar increases were not observed in questions related to emotional well-being or physical well-being.

Figure 1

One-third of employees are highly concerned about their household's financial well-being, which has increased significantly since 2021.

Please rate your level of concern about your household's financial well-being. (2022 n=1,518)

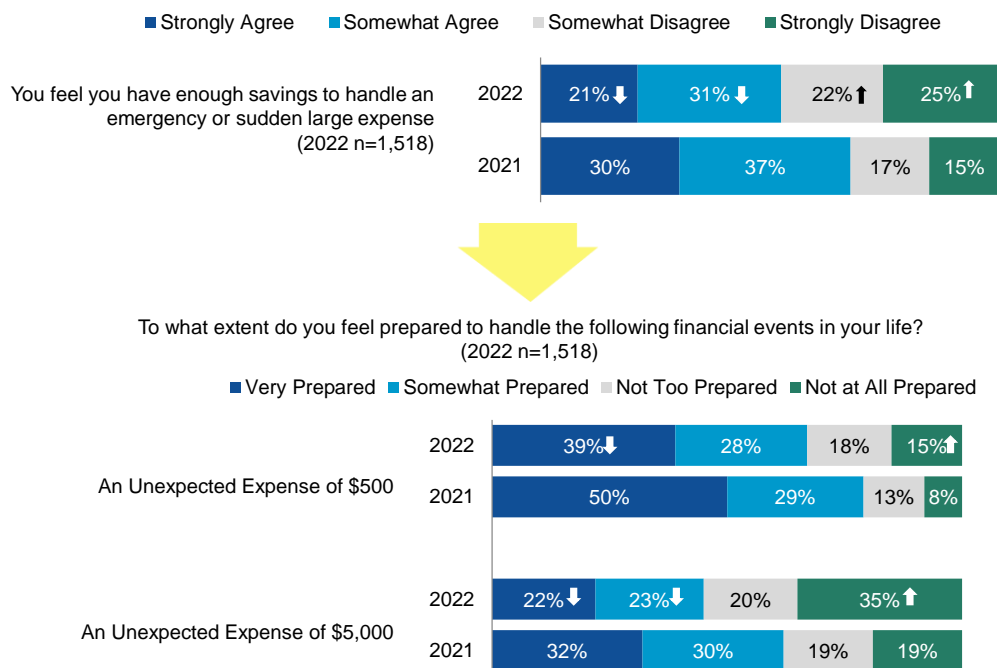


Source: Employee Benefit Research Institute and Greenwald Research, 2021–2022 Workplace Wellness Survey
Arrows=Up/Down significantly from 2021

Financial preparedness for unexpected events fell between 2021 and 2022.

- The percentage of employees reporting that they had enough savings to handle an emergency or sudden large expense fell between 2021 and 2022, as did the percentage who were prepared to handle an unexpected expense of either \$500 or \$5,000 (Figure 2).
- Most employees did not feel financially prepared for being unable to work, reducing work hours, or retiring earlier than planned, and preparedness was lower in 2022 than in 2021 (Figure 3).

Figure 2
Half of employees agree that they have enough savings to handle an emergency or sudden large expense, which is down significantly from 2021.

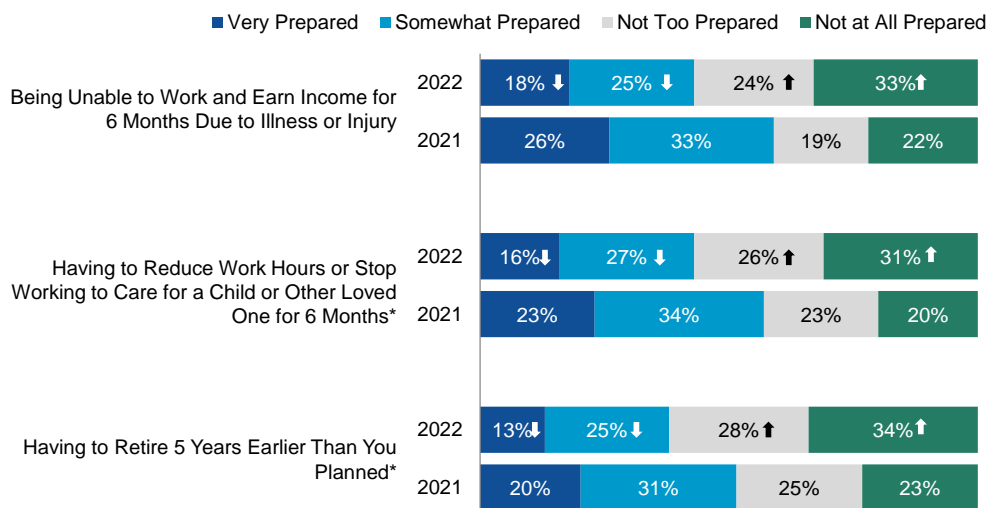


Source: Employee Benefit Research Institute and Greenwald Research, 2021–2022 Workplace Wellness Survey
 Arrows=Up/Down significantly from 2021

Figure 3

Most employees do not feel financially prepared for being unable to work, reducing work hours, or retiring earlier than planned.

To what extent do you feel prepared to handle the following financial events in your life? (2022 n=1,518)



Source: Employee Benefit Research Institute and Greenwald Research, 2021–2022 Workplace Wellness Survey
 *New or revised in 2021. Arrows=Up/Down significantly from 2021

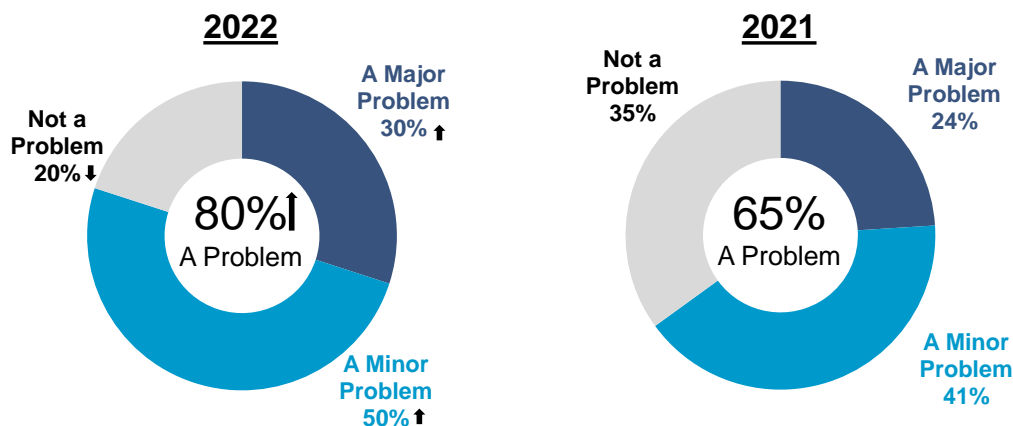
Debt is an increasing problem.

- Eighty percent of employees described their level of debt as a major or minor problem in 2022, up from 65 percent in 2021 (Figure 4).
- Nearly a third said it was a major problem.

Figure 4

Eight in ten employees describe their level of debt as a problem, which is a significant increase from 2021.

Thinking about your current financial situation, how would you describe your level of debt? (2022 n=1,518)



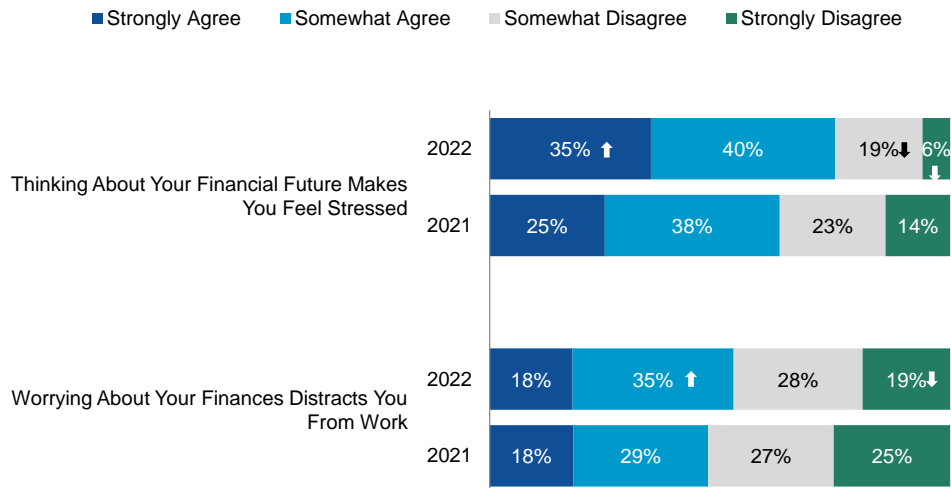
Source: Employee Benefit Research Institute and Greenwald Research, 2021–2022 Workplace Wellness Survey
 Arrows=Up/Down significantly from 2021

Employees report increasing stress over the financial future.

- In 2022, 35 percent of employees strongly agreed that thinking about their financial future makes them feel stressed, up from 25 percent in 2021 (Figure 5).
- About one-third (35 percent) of employees somewhat agree that worrying about their finances distracts them from work, up from 29 percent in 2021.

Figure 5
Three in four employees agree that thinking about their financial future makes them feel stressed.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (2022 n=1,518)



Source: Employee Benefit Research Institute and Greenwald Research, 2021–2022 Workplace Wellness Survey
Arrows=Up/Down significantly from 2021

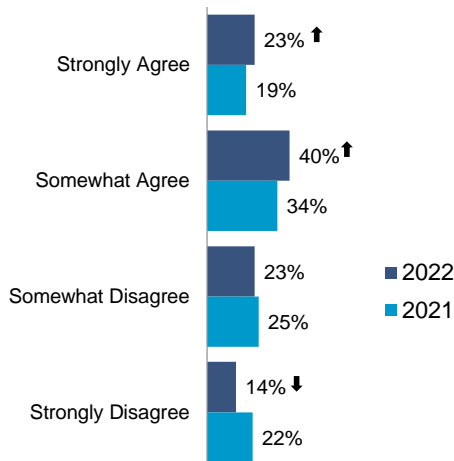
Managing multiple financial priorities is an increasing struggle.

- In 2022, 23 percent of employees strongly agreed and 40 percent somewhat agreed that they were struggling to manage multiple financial priorities at the same time, up from 19 percent and 34 percent, respectively, in 2021 (Figure 6).

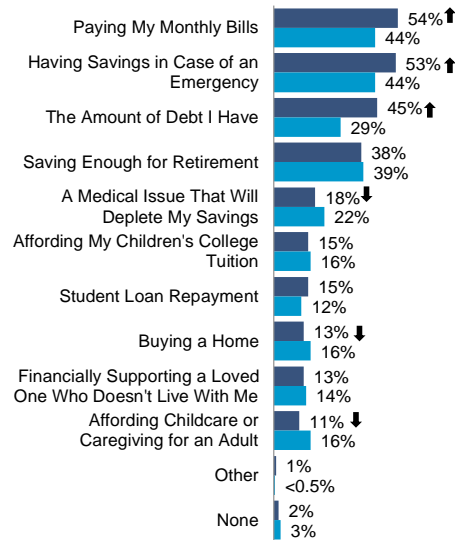
Figure 6
Paying monthly bills is the top priority among the six in ten employees who agree they struggle to manage multiple financial priorities at the same time.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (2022 n=1,518)

You struggle to manage multiple financial priorities at the same time



Of the following, which are your current top financial priorities? Select the top 3. (Maintaining financial priorities is a challenge: 2022 n=1,015)

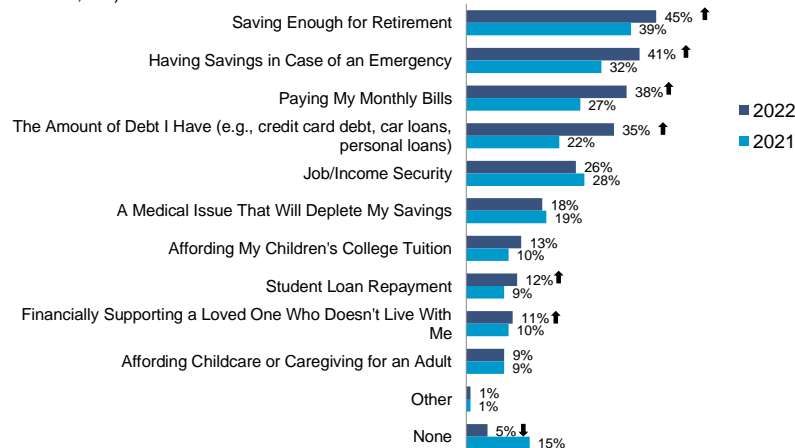


Source: Employee Benefit Research Institute and Greenwald Research, 2021–2022 Workplace Wellness Survey.
 *"Other" and "None" are not shown.
 Arrows=Up/Down significantly from 2021

- Saving enough for retirement, having savings in case of an emergency, paying monthly bills, and debt were the financial issues that caused the most stress and increased the most between 2021 and 2022 (Figure 7).

Figure 7
Saving enough for retirement and having savings in case of an emergency are the financial issues that cause employees the most stress.

Which of the following financial issues personally causes you the most stress? Select the top 3. (2022 n=1,518)



Source: Employee Benefit Research Institute and Greenwald Research, 2021–2022 Workplace Wellness Survey.
 *New question in 2022
 Arrows=Up/Down significantly from 2021

The EBRI report, “2022 Workplace Wellness Survey,” was published as the October 2022 EBRI Chartbook, and is available online [here](#).

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