



Perceptions of the amount of superannuation needed for a comfortable retirement



About ASFA

ASFA, the voice of super, has been operating since 1962 and is the peak policy, research and advocacy body for Australia's superannuation industry. ASFA represents the APRA regulated superannuation industry with over 100 organisations as members from corporate, industry, retail and public sector funds, and service providers. We develop policy positions through collaboration with our diverse membership base and use our deep technical expertise and research capabilities to assist in advancing outcomes for Australians.

We unite the superannuation community, supporting our members with research, advocacy, education and collaboration to help Australians enjoy a dignified retirement. We promote effective practice and advocate for efficiency, sustainability and trust in our world-class retirement income system.

Executive Summary

Survey results from a 2026 survey conducted for ASFA of a nationally representative sample of 1,512 Australians show that Australians generally associate a comfortable retirement with substantial superannuation balances. Two-thirds of respondents (67 per cent) believe at least \$500,000 is required, while 42 per cent believe at least \$1 million is needed.

The most common response was between \$1 million and \$2 million, indicating that many Australians perceive a comfortable retirement as requiring larger balances than what the ASFA Comfortable Retirement Standard figures suggest - \$630,000 for a single person and \$730,000 combined for a couple.

The expectations vary across demographic groups. Australians aged 25-49 are the most likely to believe that at least \$1 million is required, while those aged 65+ report lower savings expectations. Housing tenure is also an important factor, with renters significantly more likely than homeowners to believe very large retirement balances are necessary. Respondents from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds were also more likely to report uncertainty about how much is needed for retirement.



Australians generally believe substantial savings are required for retirement. Many believe more than \$1 million is needed.



Working-age Australians, 25-49, have substantially higher retirement savings expectations than those aged 65+ and 18-24.



Housing tenure appears strongly related to perceptions of retirement adequacy, with renters much more likely to believe higher amounts are needed in retirement.



Australians with a CALD background are more likely to express uncertainty about super needed and more likely to believe that at least \$2 million is needed.



1

Overview of Australians' perceptions of super balance needed for a comfortable retirement

Most Australians believe a substantial superannuation balance is required for a comfortable retirement

This research note is based on polling results from a national survey conducted for ASFA in early 2026. The survey involved a nationally representative sample of 1,512 Australian citizens aged 18 years and over.¹ Results were weighted to reflect the Australian population.

Respondents were asked how much superannuation they believed is required to achieve a comfortable retirement. Their responses were then analysed across a range of characteristics, including age, housing tenure and cultural and linguistic background.

The survey revealed considerable variation in perceptions of the level of superannuation required for a comfortable retirement. Chart 1 shows the distribution of responses across the super balance ranges. The most common response was between \$1 million and \$2 million (27 per cent), followed by \$500k and \$1 million (25 per cent). Overall, 67 per cent of respondents believed at least \$500k is required for a comfortable retirement, while 42 per cent believed at least \$1 million is needed.

¹ Based on this effective sample size, the margin of error (95 per cent confidence interval) for a 50 per cent result on the full sample is ± 2.8 per cent.

Chart 1: How much super do Australians believe is needed for a comfortable retirement



Source: ASFA national survey 2026

Compared with the ASFA Comfortable Retirement Standard lump sum figures, which estimate a comfortable retirement can be achieved with a super balance of \$630,000 for a single homeowner and \$730,000 for a couple who own their home, many respondents appear to believe larger balances are required. This suggests that perceptions of retirement adequacy may incorporate considerations beyond current expenditure benchmarks, including future housing costs, longevity and economic uncertainty.

2

Perceptions by age group

Working-age Australians have higher retirement savings expectations

Age differences are evident in perceptions of retirement savings needs. Chart 2 presents Australians' perceptions of the superannuation needed for a comfortable retirement by age group.

Chart 2: Amount of superannuation Australians believe is needed in comparison to the ASFA comfortable retirement standard by age group



Source: ASFA national survey 2026

Australians aged 25–49 are most likely to believe that retirement requires savings above the ASFA Comfortable Retirement Standard figure, with just over half nominating balances above the ASFA benchmark.

Interestingly, Australians aged 18–24 were less likely than those aged 25–49 to report a superannuation balance above the ASFA Comfortable Retirement Standard. This suggests super expectations may increase as Australians progress through their working lives and become more aware of future financial commitments and retirement planning needs.

By contrast, older Australians are more evenly distributed across the response categories. Among those aged 65 and over, 29 per cent reported support for balances above the benchmark, while similar proportions selected balances broadly consistent with the benchmark or reported uncertainty.

The results suggest that working-age Australians are more likely than retirees to believe larger retirement balances are required. This may reflect differing expectations regarding future living costs, housing affordability and economic conditions.

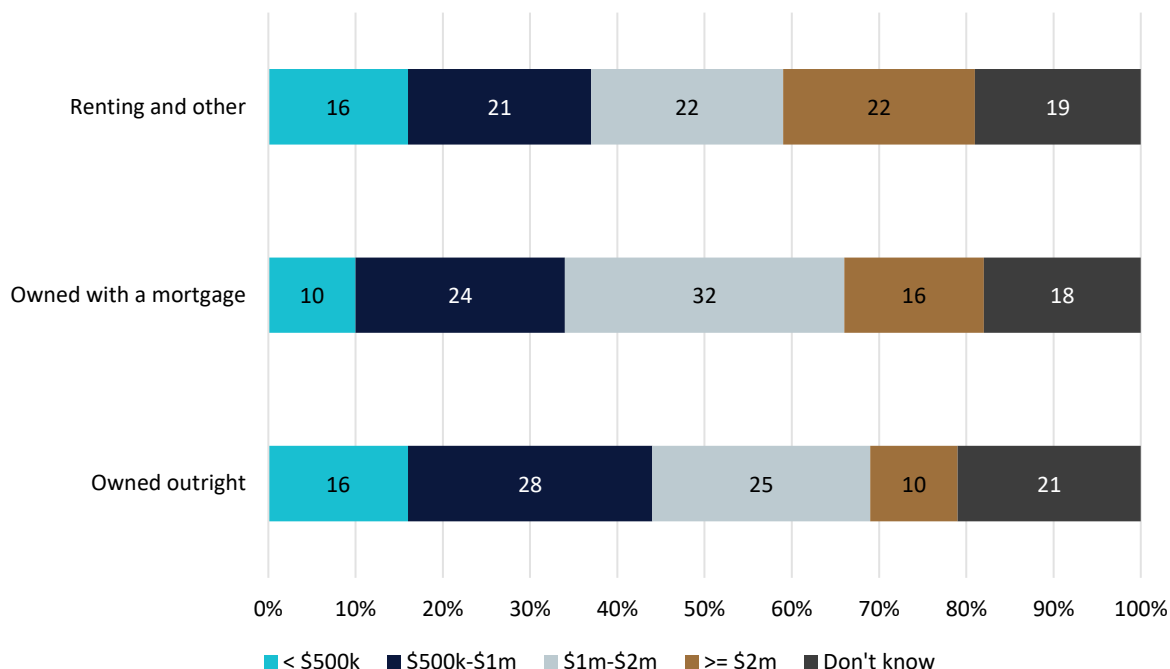
3 Perceptions by housing tenure

Housing tenure shapes perceptions of retirement adequacy

Housing tenure is associated with materially different perceptions of the savings required for a comfortable retirement. As shown in Chart 3, Australians who expect to face ongoing housing costs in retirement generally report higher retirement savings requirements for a comfortable

retirement than those who own their home outright. Arguably, this is an entirely reasonable assessment.

Chart 3: Amount of Super needed by housing tenure



Source: ASFA national survey 2026

Outright homeowners were most likely to state needing a super balance between \$500,000 and \$999,999 (28 per cent), a range broadly consistent with the ASFA Comfortable Retirement Standard. By comparison, mortgage holders were most likely to subjectively need a super balance between \$1 million and \$2 million (32 per cent), indicating higher retirement savings expectations. Mortgage holders appear to be concentrated around the "million-dollar retirement", with almost half (48 per cent) believing at least \$1 million is required.

Renters exhibited a distinct pattern. While their responses were distributed across the major categories, they were substantially more likely to want a super balance of at least \$2 million to be comfortable in retirement. More than one in five renters (22 per cent) selected the highest superannuation balance category, compared with 16 per cent of mortgage holders and 10 per cent of outright homeowners.

Taken together, the results suggest that housing tenure may play an important role in shaping perceptions of retirement adequacy. Australians who expect to face ongoing housing costs in retirement appear more likely to consider (not unreasonably) that larger savings balances are required than those who own their home outright. The findings also point to the importance of housing security, with renters more likely to believe that very large retirement balances are necessary.

While the ASFA Comfortable Retirement Standard lump sums remain an important benchmark for retirement planning, the results indicate that many Australians, particularly those without outright home ownership, believe substantially larger balances may be required to achieve financial security in retirement.

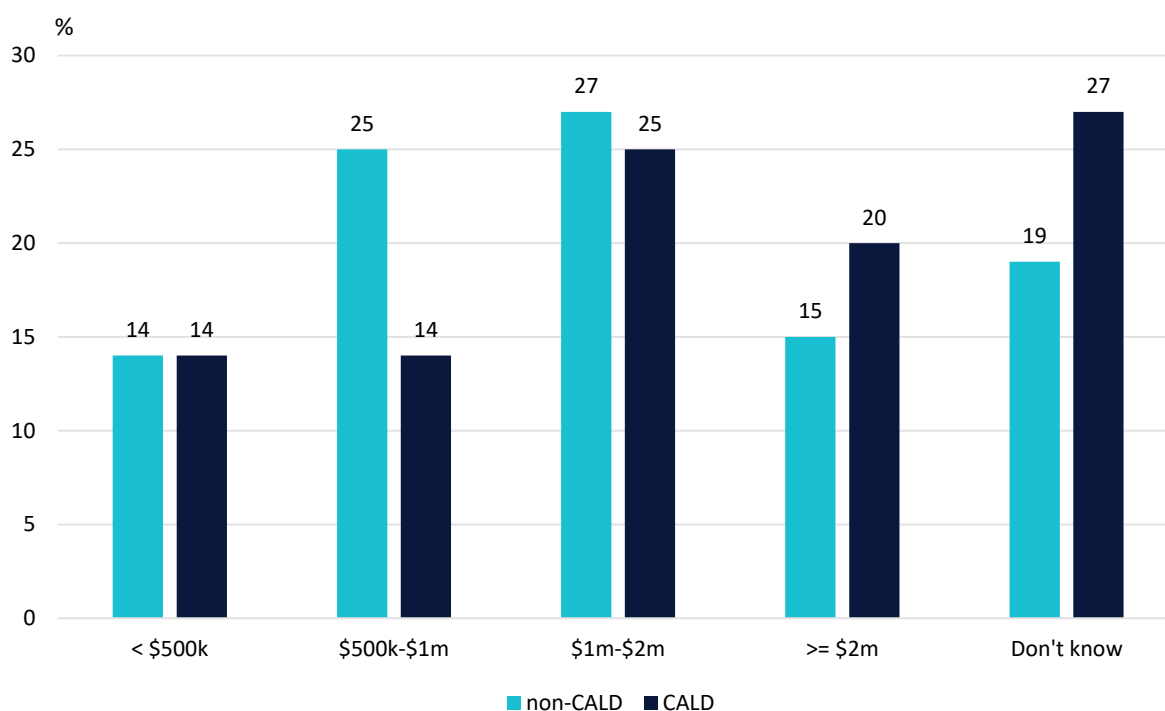
Perceptions by CALD background

CALD respondents are more likely to report uncertainty or very high retirement savings requirements

Perceptions of the superannuation required for a comfortable retirement differ between CALD and non-CALD Australians. As shown in Chart 4, CALD respondents were less likely to select the super balance between \$500,000 and \$999,999 (25 per cent compared with 14 per cent) and more likely to select either "Don't know" (27 per cent compared with 19 per cent) or savings of at least \$2 million (20 per cent compared with 15 per cent).

The results suggest that CALD respondents are less likely to select retirement savings requirements in the middle ranges and more likely either to report uncertainty or to have a very high super balance. This finding is consistent with previous ASFA research highlighting information and engagement barriers experienced by some CALD communities within the superannuation system.

Chart 4: Amount of Super needed by CALD background



Source: ASFA national survey 2026. Findings for CALD respondents are based on a smaller sample and should be interpreted as indicative rather than definitive.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that Australians broadly understand the importance of superannuation in providing a comfortable lifestyle in retirement but generally associate a comfortable retirement with super balances that are substantially higher than what the ASFA comfortable retirement standard lump sum required estimates suggest. These perceptions are particularly evident among working-age Australians, renters and mortgage holders.

Housing tenure appears to play an important role, with Australians who expect to face ongoing housing costs in retirement more likely to believe larger super balances are required. The findings also indicate that perceptions of super needed differ among some CALD Australians, who were more likely to report uncertainty about the level of savings required for a comfortable retirement and are more likely to believe that at least \$2 million is needed.

Together, the results reinforce the importance of clear and accessible retirement planning information and benchmarks to help Australians understand the level of super required to achieve their desired standard of living in retirement.

asfa