

entrata



2026 Entrata *Resident Pulse*

How renters are redefining money,
homeownership, technology,
and the good life



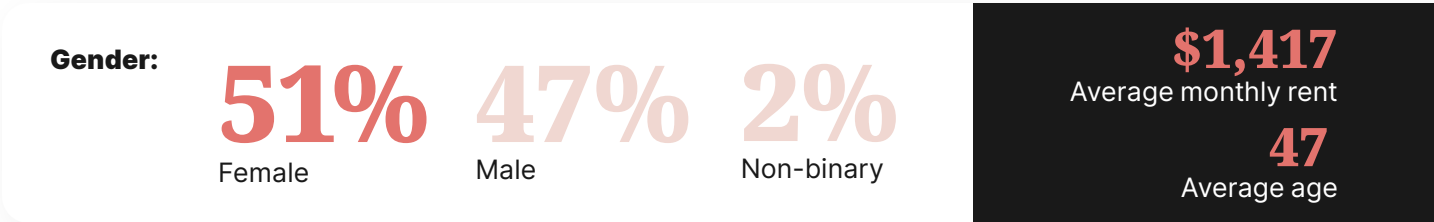
Executive Summary

In August 2026, Entrata® partnered with YouGov to survey 2,068 renters. The survey covered a wide range of topics related to their spending habits on where to live, where to eat, what wealth means to them, what media they consume (and how they consume it), and how their work situation has evolved.

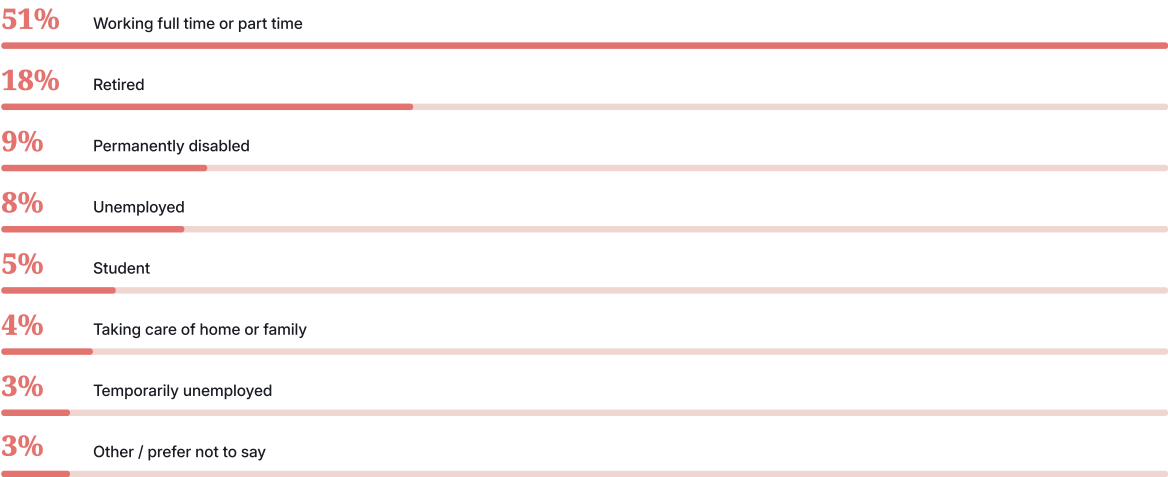
The findings reveal a renter population reshaping financial success and the American Dream. While **61%** still want to own a home, their immediate priorities lie elsewhere: **58%** are actively building emergency funds, compared to just **20%** saving for a down payment. This shift cuts across generations, fundamentally altering how renters approach wealth-building, everyday spending, and technology. Technology is also emerging as a major generational dividing line, particularly regarding how different age groups adopt and trust AI.

Renter profile

The average renter surveyed was roughly 47 years old, split fairly evenly between female (**51%**) and male (**47%**). The large majority (**83%**) live in conventional apartment communities and pay on average \$1,417 in rent each month. More than two-thirds (**68%**) have a household income under \$100,000; nearly half of respondents (**45%**) consider themselves working class, while **32%** claim to be middle class, with very few (**7%**) claiming to be upper middle class to wealthy. When it comes to education, **38%** have at least a four-year degree—with **15%** having completed post-graduate work. Just over half of respondents were employed full-time or part-time (**51%**), while **18%** were retired and **5%** were students.



Employment Status:



Socioeconomic status



Income



After digging into the data, **four distinct renter segments emerged**: Confident Intenders (**37%, n=778**), younger renters who are actively saving and the most enthusiastic AI adopters (this segment skews toward the South and, demographically, includes a higher share of Black and Hispanic respondents); Stretched Aspirers (**24%, n=496**), young Millennial, budget-constrained renters who still aspire to own; Uncertain Renters (**17%, n=338**), who have fragmented financial priorities and are concentrated in Gen X and the Northeast; and Lifestyle Renters (**22%, n=456**), consisting of Boomers and the Silent Generation/retirees who are comfortable renting long-term, maintain traditional media habits, and are the least engaged with AI.



These segments describe how renters in the survey think about money, technology, and homeownership. They are a lens for understanding resident needs, not a basis for marketing, leasing, screening, or pricing decisions about individual renters.

Renter segments:

37%

Confident Intenders

24%

Stretched Aspirers

17%

Uncertain Renters

22%

Lifestyle Renters



Confident Intenders



- **Living and renting.** See renting as temporary. Homeownership is a central aspiration and major life goal.
- **Financial behavior.** Actively saving for homes, education, businesses, and family milestones. They are long-term planners and are less likely to prioritize cash savings over growth-oriented investments.
- **Meaning of success.** Success means owning a home, career advancement, entrepreneurship, and wealth creation. Having a family is also in their picture of success.
- **Personal habits.** They are highly engaged, ambitious, and future-focused. Confident intenders balance entertainment and technology with financial goals and are the most enthusiastic AI adopters who view AI tools as productivity and growth enablers.



Stretched Aspirers

- **Living and renting.** This group still has aspirations of home ownership, but affordability pressures make the path feel more challenging. As a result, they are focused on practical trade-offs.
- **Financial behavior.** Stretched aspirers are less likely to set aside money for savings regularly, but carefully manage budgets and competing priorities. They are more likely to delay purchases and adjust spending rather than aggressively pursue wealth-building.

- **Meaning of success.** Success is centered on quality of health, financial freedom and work-life balance, alongside traditional markers of success, including purchasing a home, traveling, and investments.
- **Personal habits.** They are busy multitaskers who enjoy streaming, but also appreciate physical music media. AI has had no noticeable impact on their day-to-day lives, and they're more likely to give it up for free than take money to do so.



Uncertain Renters

- **Living and renting.** Homeownership remains possible rather than definite for this group. Their hesitation may reflect competing priorities or reluctance to make the necessary lifestyle trade-offs.
- **Financial behavior.** Financial priorities are fragmented in this group. Some prioritize saving while others pay down debt. This is the segment least likely to identify what others might consider everyday luxuries as essential.
- **Meaning of success.** Success is less tied to homeownership than other groups. For many, income alone does not determine if someone is 'rich'. Material purchases do not equal success, but they do appreciate the ability to travel.
- **Personal habits.** They eat fewer meals at home and lean toward convenient dining options, including fast casual and international. While they use AI for practical tasks, they are more uncertain about its impact on productivity.



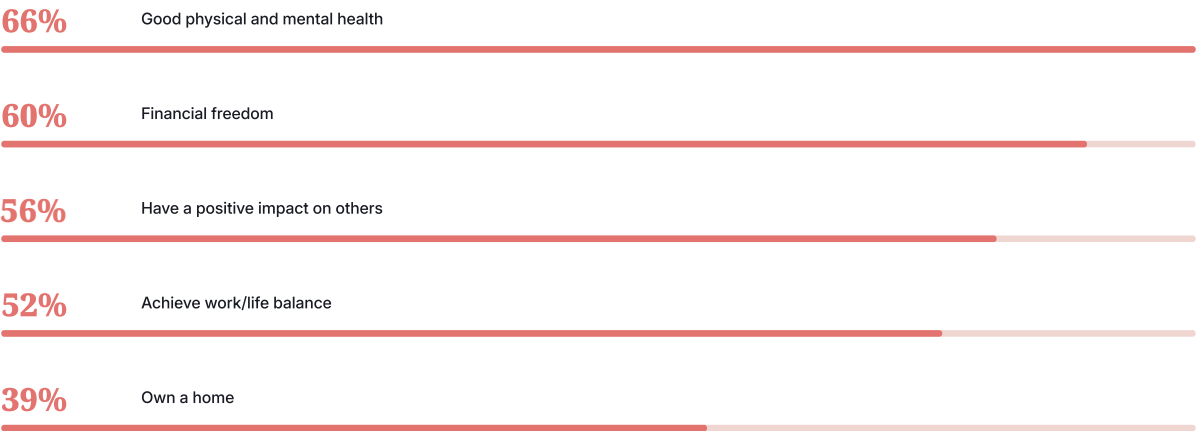
Lifestyle Renters

- **Living and renting.** Lifestyle renters are comfortable with renting as a long-term lifestyle, often benefiting from relatively low housing costs. Homeownership is not a central aspiration.
- **Financial behavior.** They are focused on financial stability and preservation and want to be debt-free. While some save more regularly, others are often constrained by medical expenses. They favor cash savings and retirement accounts as long-term investments and have made few recent changes to their spending.
- **Meaning of success.** Success is less defined by income or owning a home and more focused on their physical and mental health and having a positive impact on others.
- **Personal habits.** They have more traditional media consumption and technology habits, favoring news, cable, and radio. They use AI rarely, see limited impact on their lives, and are generally unwilling to pay for it.

Financial priorities vs. financial realities

When asked to define what success means to them, respondents were more focused on mental health and financial freedom rather than material possessions like purchasing a home or a new car. For them, success isn't only about how much money you make. Renters are focused on good physical and mental health (**66%**), having a positive impact on others (**56%**), and achieving work/life balance (**52%**).

Top-5 ways renters define success



That's not to say that money isn't important. Nearly two-thirds of respondents noted that achieving financial freedom is what would make them feel successful. Other signs of success include career achievements and having a family, garnering **38%** and **37%**, respectively. Priorities are slightly different for younger respondents, as Gen Z places more emphasis on home ownership than their older counterparts, with **66%** of Gen Z renters still believing home ownership is part of the American Dream compared to just **14%** of Boomers.

Renters also set a high bar for what it means to be wealthy: when asked what annual income they would consider "rich," \$1 million or more was the most common response, selected by **30%** overall.

Purchases that define success

While one third of respondents noted that purchases don't define success, purchasing a home, traveling, and having money to invest can be viewed as signs of success. Having a guaranteed income and being debt-free would make respondents feel financially secure. Signs of success and financial security were not mutually exclusive, with home ownership and having \$100,000 in investments also indicative of success.

Purchases That Define Success



No purchase defines success	32%
Purchasing a home	21%
Investing	19%
Traveling	16%
Other	12%

Homeownership not guaranteed

Certain life milestones that in previous decades were a given for most, now feel out of reach for many renters. This includes homeownership, retiring when you're ready, and paying off debts.

Sixty-one percent of renters would like to own a home, but **24%** find it to be unattainable, with **22%** stating no desire to own a home. **Renters will trade lifestyle for a down payment**—to a certain extent. Among those who still have a desire to own a home, the most common activities they will sacrifice are travel (**47%**), eating out (**46%**), and purchasing a new car (**44%**). Older renters (Gen X, Boomers, and Silent Generation) are decidedly less willing to alter their lifestyle significantly to save enough money to purchase a home.

Realities of home ownership:

61%

still want to own a home

24%

who see homeownership as unattainable



Whether or not to purchase a new home is a polarizing topic amongst generations. Two-thirds of Gen Z renters still view home ownership as part of their American Dream as opposed to just **14%** of Boomers and the Silent Generation (half of whom indicated they had no desire to own a home at all). Ironically, it is Millennials (**28%**) and Gen X (**27%**) are the most likely to view homeownership as unattainable, more than both Gen Z and Boomers/Silent Generation.

A generational divide:

66%

of Gen Z view homeownership as part of the American Dream

50%

of Boomers and the Silent Generation have no desire to own a home

With homeownership feeling out of reach, renters are spending their money on items and experiences that help them live in the present, while being better prepared for the future.

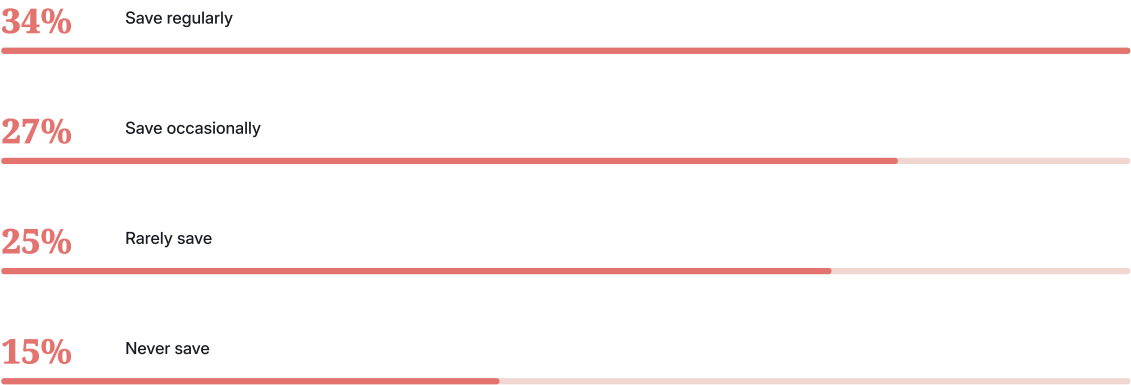
Renters Are Saving, But Rising Costs Make It Harder

Despite pressure on household budgets, **34%** of renters say they save regularly and another **27%** save occasionally. Gen Z stands out as the most consistent savers, with **48%** putting money away regularly. When asked what they would do with an additional \$10,000, nearly one-third (**32%**) of renters say they would pay down debt, while Gen Z is more likely than other generations to invest the money.

For those struggling to save, the biggest obstacles are high living costs (**71%**) and low income (**67%**), followed by rent and housing costs (**49%**). The pressure is particularly pronounced in the South, where **59%** identify rent as an impediment to saving. Renters are responding by adjusting their everyday spending, including eating out less (**53%**), shopping sales (**43%**), and seeking out less expensive brands (**40%**).



How often renters save



What renters are saving for:

58%
are saving for an
emergency

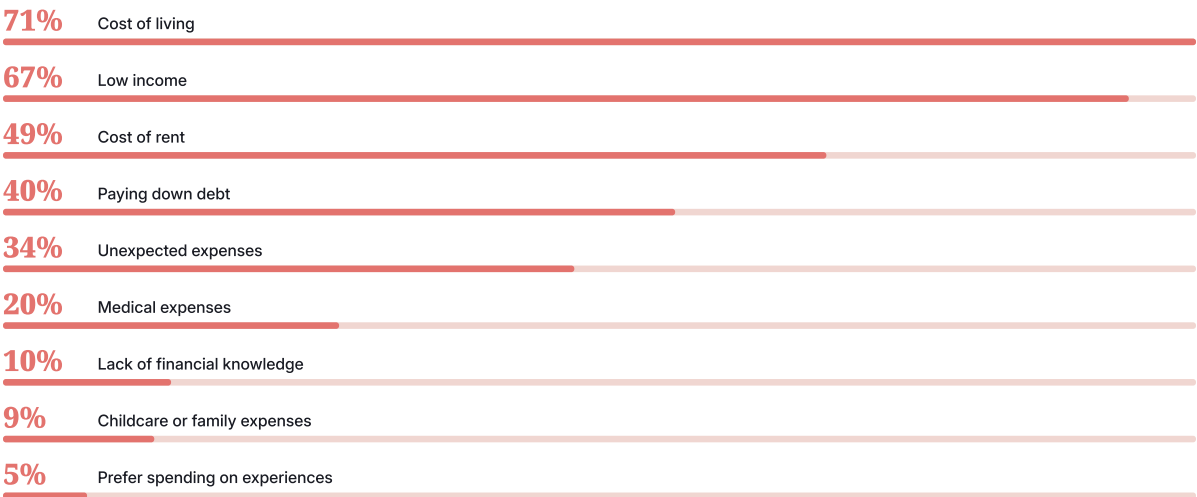
20%
saving for a home

Increasing living costs squeeze renter budgets

High living costs (**71%**) and low income (**67%**) are the highest barriers to start saving—whether that be for a new home, retirement, travel, etc.—followed by rent and housing costs (**49%**). Renters in the South are feeling even more of a crunch as **59%** of these individuals noted that the cost of rent was a savings inhibitor. In response to these harsh economic conditions, renters are taking steps to cut spending in a number of areas, including eating out less (**53%**), shopping sales (**43%**) and seeking out cheaper brands (**40%**) to make up the difference.



What’s stopping renters from saving

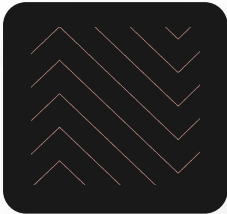


High-speed internet is non-negotiable

Even as renters look for ways to cut costs, digital connectivity has become difficult to sacrifice. High-speed internet is considered essential by **60%** of renters, far ahead of video streaming (**31%**), music streaming (**27%**), and shopping or retail subscriptions (**25%**). When asked to identify the one luxury they could not live without, **41%** choose high-speed internet.

Media habits, however, vary considerably by generation. Boomers and older renters consume more than five hours of media per day on average, compared to 2.4 hours among Gen Z, with older generations spending more time watching cable and satellite television while Gen Z primarily streams. Netflix is the most popular streaming service overall, with **57%** of respondents subscribing, and is the clear favorite among Gen Z and Millennials, while Gen X and Boomers prefer Amazon Prime.

57% of respondents
subscribe to Netflix.



High-speed internet access is both the luxury renters can’t live without and would be hardest to give up.

Netflix is the most popular streaming service with **57%** of respondents subscribing. It is also the clear favorite for Gen Z and Millennials, while Gen X and Boomers prefer Amazon Prime.

AI adoption, trust, and use among renters

AI use reveals another significant generational divide among renters. Roughly one-third use AI tools at least daily, while another third have never used them. Adoption is considerably higher among younger renters, with **45%** of Gen Z using AI at least daily compared to **17%** of Boomers and older renters, **40%** of whom have never used AI tools. Among those who use AI, ChatGPT is the most commonly cited tool at **55%**, followed by Gemini at **40%**.

Research (**55%**), education (**38%**), and writing (**34%**) are the most common uses for AI, but regular use does not necessarily translate to trust. Only **6%** of AI users would trust the technology for financial advice, compared to **55%** who would turn to a financial advisor, while **43%** say they would not trust AI with professional decisions at all.

Younger renters are nevertheless more likely to see tangible value in the technology. While **42%** of AI users overall say it has improved their productivity, that figure rises to **58%** among Gen Z compared to **26%** among Boomers and the Silent Generation. That value is especially apparent among younger users: **24%** of Gen Z AI users say they would not give up AI for a year for any amount of money, compared to **13%** of AI users overall. Across all AI users, another **30%** say it would take at least \$5,000 to give it up for a year.

AI adoption is a mixed bag:

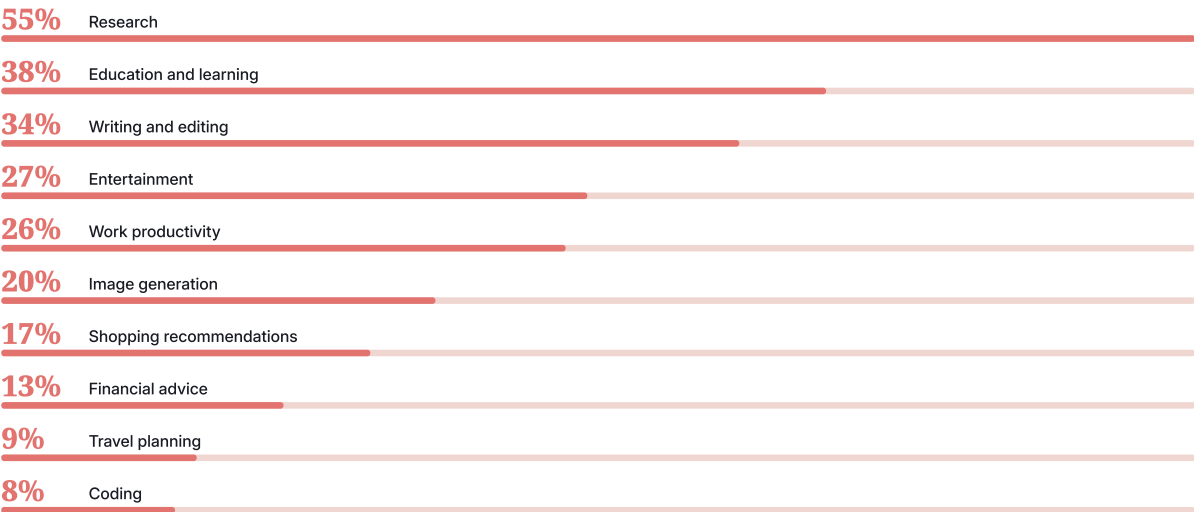
50%

of renters use AI at least once a month

29%

of renters who have never used AI

Most common AI use cases:



Conclusion

The 2026 Entrata Resident Pulse paints a picture of a renter population that is redefining what it means to live well, feel financially secure, and plan for the future.

For many renters, traditional markers of success are being replaced, or at least supplemented, by more immediate priorities. Financial freedom, physical and mental health, work/life balance, and meaningful experiences matter alongside milestones like homeownership. And while a majority of renters would still like to own a home, rising living costs and other financial pressures are forcing many to reconsider when, or whether, that goal is attainable.

At the same time, renters are making deliberate choices about where their money goes. They are eating out less, shopping sales, switching to less expensive brands, and looking for ways to save. Yet some expenses have become increasingly difficult to classify as optional. High-speed internet, streaming services, and other forms of digital connectivity have become embedded in everyday life.

Technology is also creating a new dividing line among renters. Younger generations are incorporating AI into their daily routines at significantly higher rates and are more likely to see tangible value from it. But adoption does not automatically equal trust. Renters remain selective about where they are comfortable relying on AI, particularly when money or other important decisions are involved.

Perhaps most importantly, the findings show why renters cannot be treated as a single, uniform audience. Confident Intenders, Stretched Aspirers, Uncertain Renters, and Lifestyle Renters are approaching money, technology, homeownership, and the future from very different starting points.

For the multifamily industry, understanding those differences will become increasingly important. The resident experience of the future will need to account for renters who are saving aggressively for their next chapter as well as those who see renting as the chapter itself. It will need to serve residents who expect technology to make everyday life faster and easier while maintaining options for those who prefer a more traditional experience.

The common thread is value. As renters navigate higher costs, changing aspirations, and rapidly evolving technology, they are becoming more intentional about what deserves their time, attention, and money. For owners and operators, understanding how different residents define that value provides an opportunity to build experiences that better reflect how people actually want to live.

Turn renter insights into better experiences, with Entrata.

Request a demo today.



Appendix

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Research Methodology

A national look at the attitudes and lifestyles of apartment renters

Aug 17–31

FIELD DATES, 2026

Online

INTERVIEW MODE
Online Interviews

10 Min

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW (LOI)

n=2,068

TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE

RESPONDENT QUALIFICATIONS

US

Nationally representative sample

Adults 18+

Age qualification

Live in: Apartment buildings/
complexes OR Luxury apartment
communities OR Condos/townhouses

Housing qualification

SAMPLE BY GENERATION

n=366

Gen Z

SAMPLE BY REGION

n=463

Northeast

n=620

Millennial

n=404

Midwest

n=558

Gen X

n=762

South

n=524

Boomer+

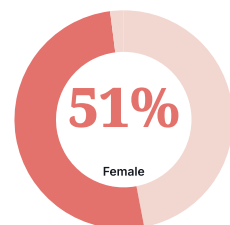
n=439

West

Renter Profile

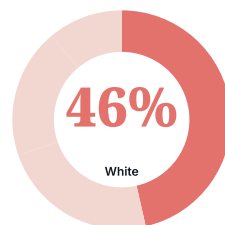
Half of renters are employed at least part-time while about one in five are retired. More than two-fifths have completed post-secondary education.

GENDER



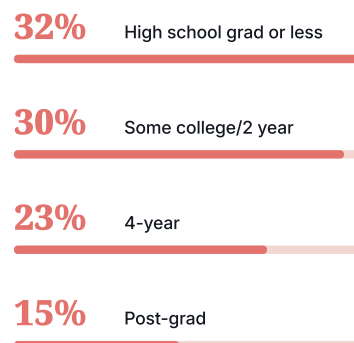
- Male 47%
- Female 51%
- Non-binary 2%

RACE

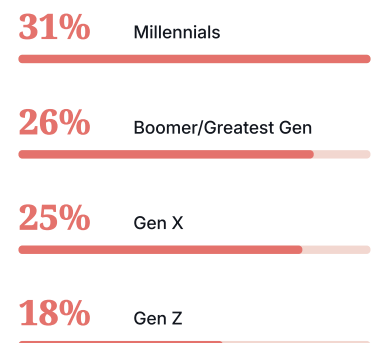


- White 46%
- Black 23%
- Hispanic 19%
- Others 11%

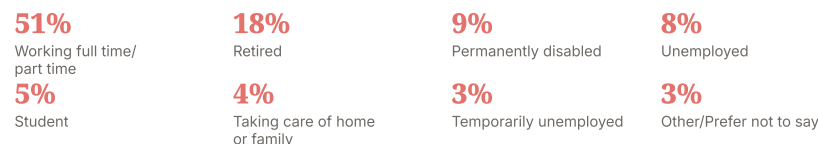
EDUCATION



GENERATION



EMPLOYMENT STATUS



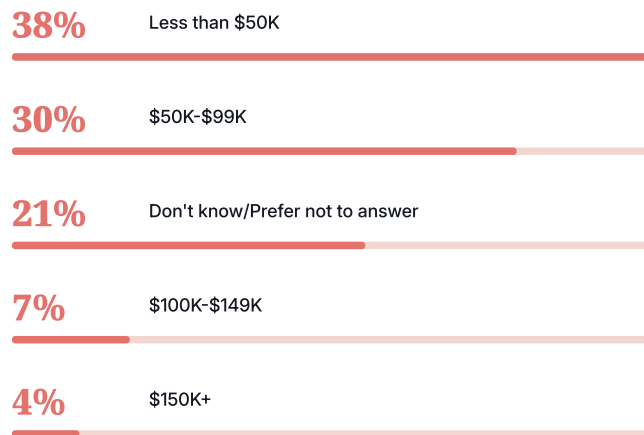
AVERAGE AGE

47
years old

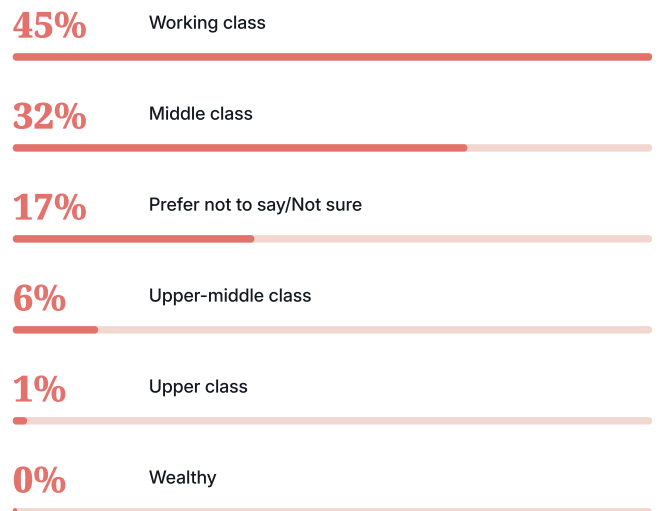
Most renters have a household income under \$100K and identify as working or middle class.

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HOUSEHOLD INCOME

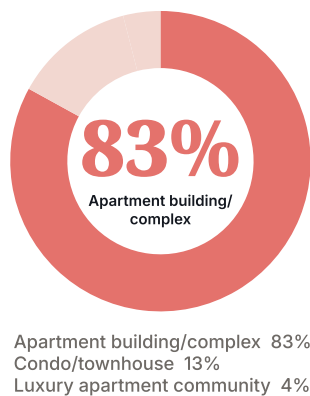


SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

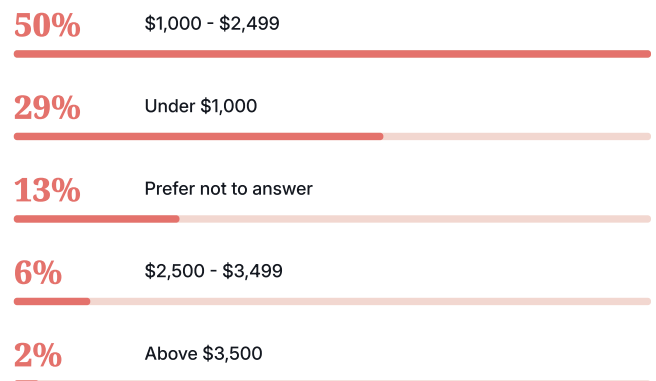


Most renters live in apartment buildings, with average monthly rent of \$1,417, excluding utilities. Nearly three-quarters have no children under 18 at home.

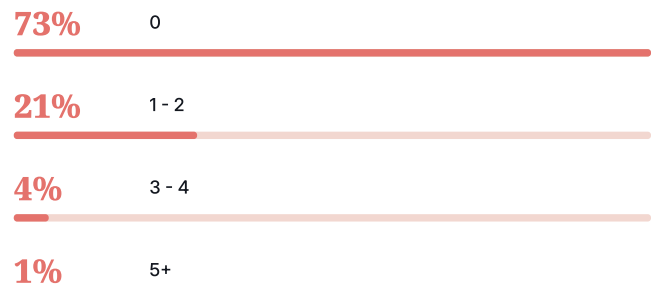
TYPE OF HOUSING



PRICE OF RENT · MEAN: \$1,417 / MONTH



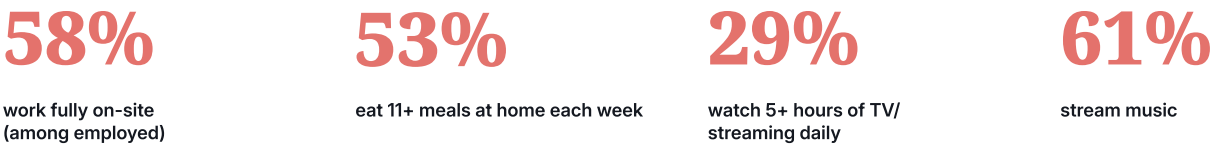
OF CHILDREN UNDER 18 IN HOUSEHOLD



Base: Total (n=2,068)

Key Insights

Renters are balancing daily responsibilities with their media consumption:



AI is becoming more embedded in younger renters’ routines, but usage doesn’t translate into trust:



Financial security is rooted in stability, led by guaranteed income and being debt-free:



Success is defined more so by purpose and financial freedom than material items:

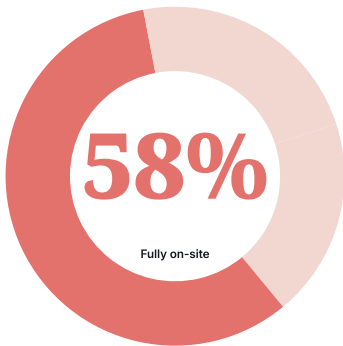


Lifestyle Work & Meals

Work · Meals · Everyday Luxuries · Media Consumption

On-site work is most common across generations, especially among Gen Z.

Around two-thirds of hybrid workers spend up to half of their working hours at home.



71%

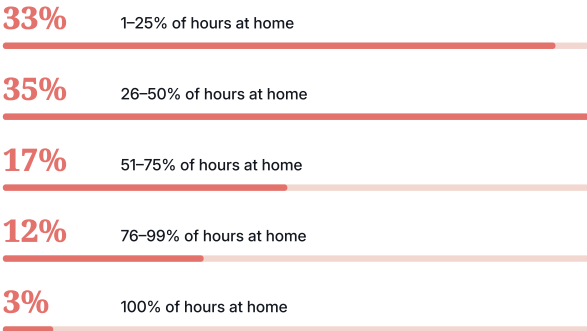
of Gen Z work fully on-site
highest of any generation (Millennial 52%, Gen X 56%, Boomer+ 61%)

66%

of Midwest renters work fully on-site
highest region (vs. 54% in the Northeast)

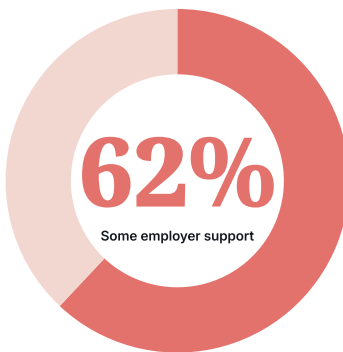
68%

of hybrid workers spend 1-50% of their hours working from home



Most remote and hybrid workers receive some employer support for working from home. Across generations, workers favor a 10% salary increase over a four-day week.

Home eating habits are broadly similar across generations, with just over half eating 11 or more meals at home each week.



35% equipment only
6% stipend only
21% both
38% neither

59%

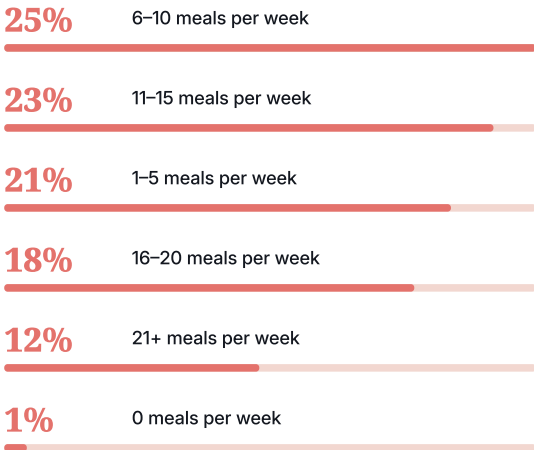
prefer a 10% salary increase
7% say this choice does not apply to them

34%

prefer a four-day work week

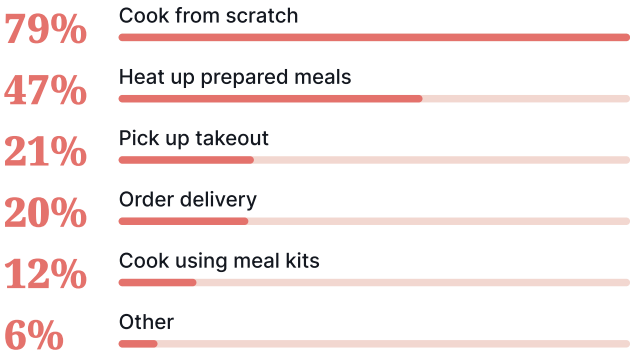
53%

eat 11 or more meals at home each week



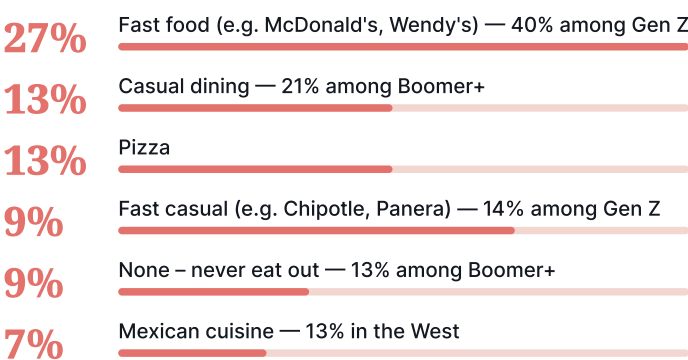
Meal Preparation

Cooking from scratch is most common, particularly among renters in the South and Northeast.



Dining Out

Fast food is renters' top restaurant choice, especially among Gen Z. Boomers+ lean more to casual dining.



Purchases Under \$100 That Improved Life

Internet, phones and food stand out among purchases under \$100 that renters say improved their life.

Internet

Phone

Food

Groceries

Shoes

Coffee

Books

Streaming Services

ChatGPT

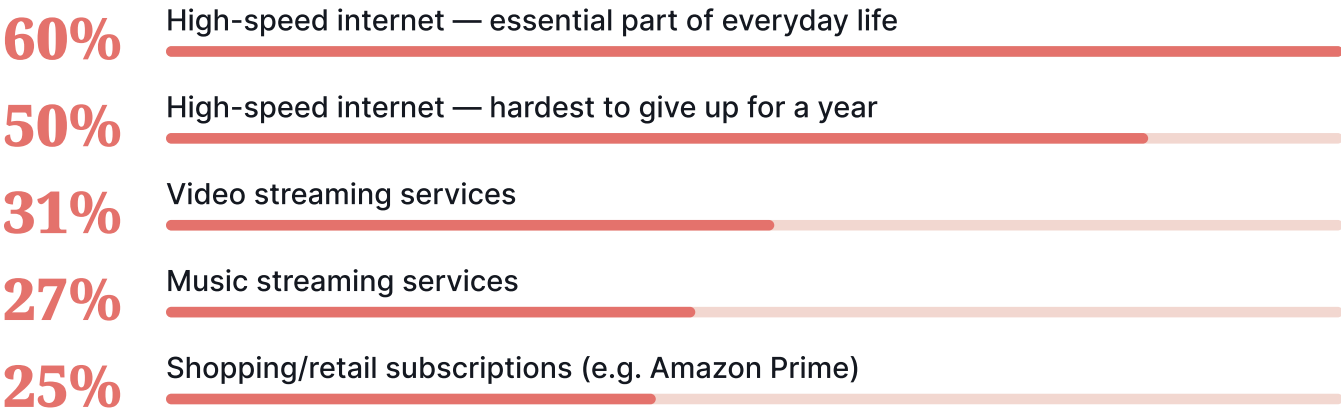
Air Fryer

Spotify

Fan

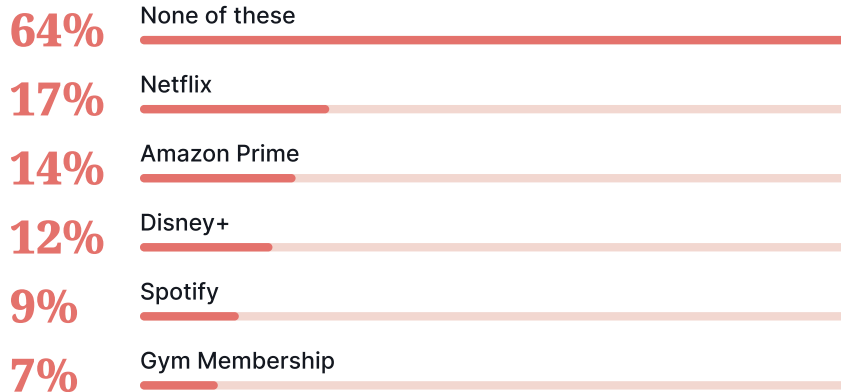
Everyday Luxuries

High-speed internet stands out as the most essential everyday luxury and the hardest to give up.



Subscription Cancellation Due to Rising Costs

Most renters have not cancelled any of the listed subscriptions or memberships because of rising costs.



Streaming/Internet vs. Free Rent

A month of free rent offers greater value than free access to streaming or internet across generations and regions.

62%

Free rent (1 month)

24% would also value free streaming for one year (14% overall priority).

62%

Free high-speed internet (1 year)

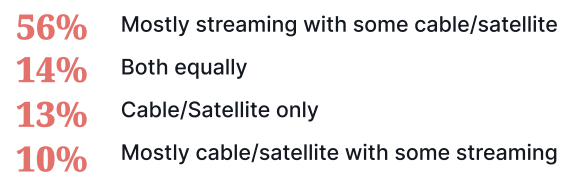
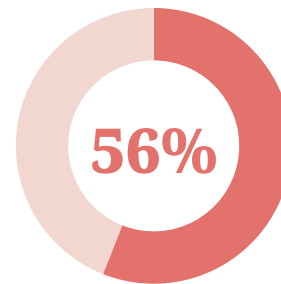
Media Consumption: TV/Video

TV and streaming consumption increases with age. Most Gen Z watch two hours or less a day.



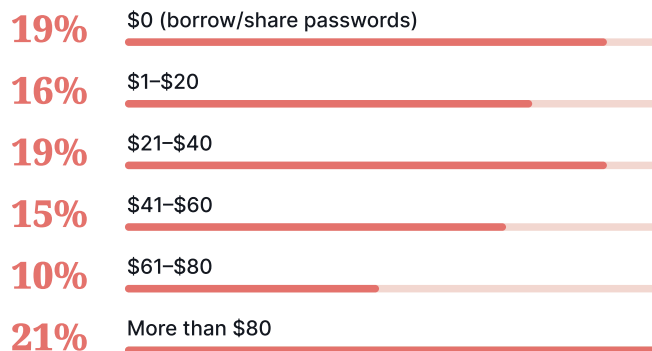
TV/Video Viewing Method

Over half of renters who watch TV or video use streaming exclusively, while Boomers+ lean more on cable.



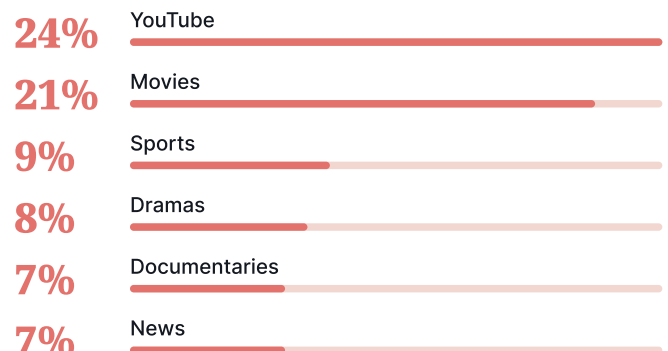
Monthly TV/Video Spending

Older renters spend more on TV and streaming, while younger renters keep costs low.



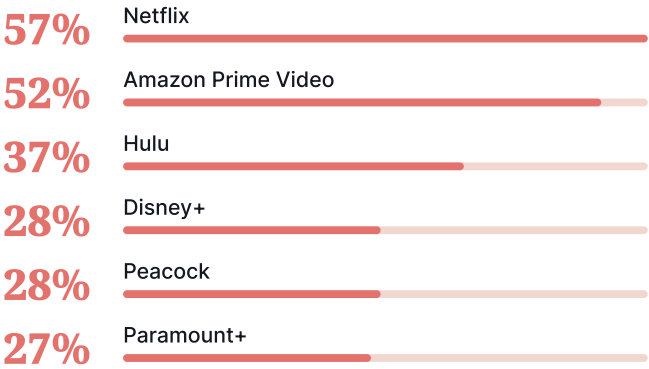
TV/Video Content

YouTube is the top viewing choice for younger generations, while movies are the most common choice overall.



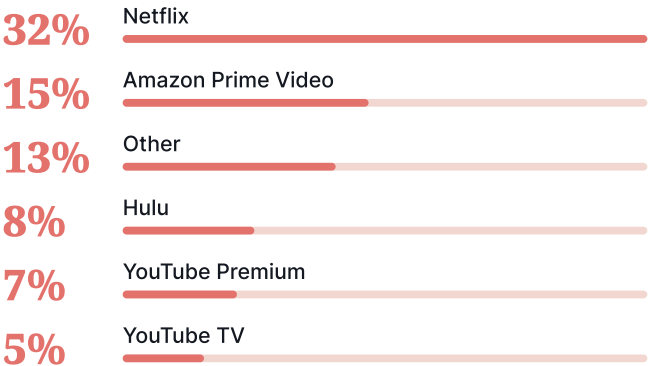
Streaming Services Used

Netflix leads overall, but use varies by generation, with Amazon Prime Video taking a strong second.



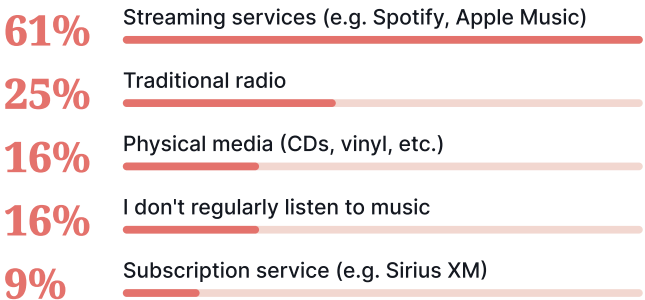
Streaming Service Used Most Often

Netflix is the clear favorite among younger renters, while Gen X and Boomers+ are more evenly split.



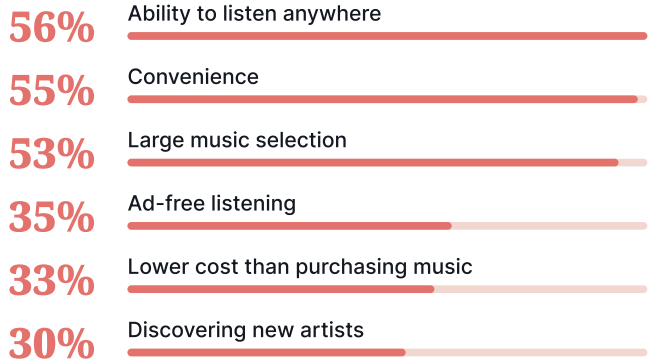
Music Source

Streaming is the main way renters listen to music, especially younger generations.



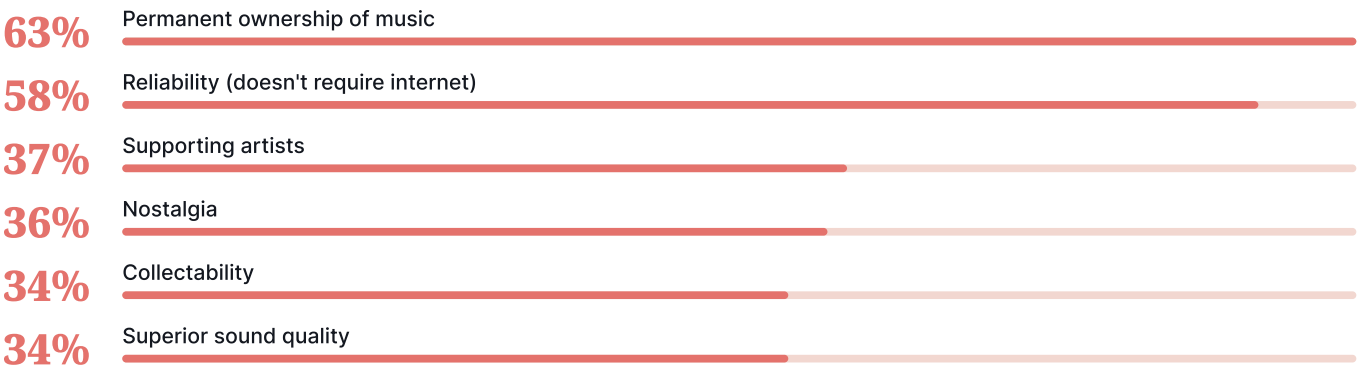
Reasons Stream Music

Appeal centers on easy access to music, convenience and having a large selection.



Reasons Use Physical Media

Permanent ownership and reliability are the main reasons for choosing physical music formats.



Usage of AI

AI Usage Frequency by Generation

AI usage is more frequent among younger renters, while Boomers+ are more likely than younger generations to have never used AI.

19%

Gen Z have never used an AI tool — the lowest rate of any generation

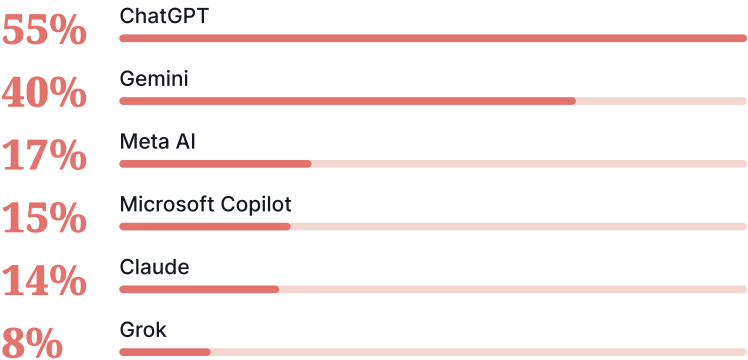
Frequency follows the same pattern: 45% of Gen Z use AI daily or more often, compared with far fewer Boomer+ renters.

40%

Boomer+ have never used an AI tool — more than double the Gen Z rate

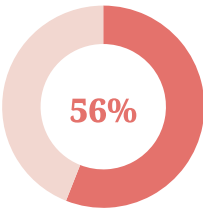
AI Platforms

ChatGPT is the most commonly used AI platform, particularly among Gen Z.



Paying for AI

Most AI users do not currently pay for premium AI services and would not consider it. Among Gen Z, **28%** currently pay — versus just **5%** of Boomer+.



- 22% No, but would consider it
- 16% Yes, currently pay
- 6% Not sure

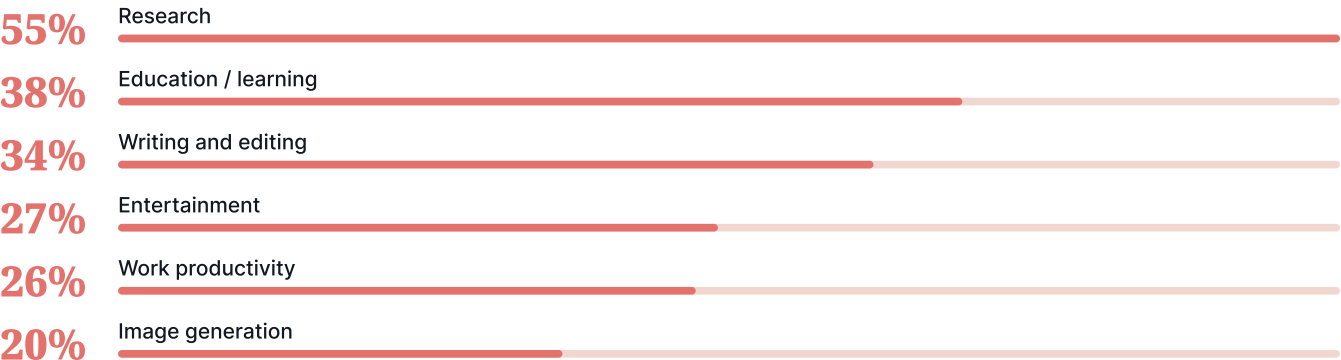
AI Activities

Resume writing stands out among practical AI tasks, with younger renters more likely to use AI across the board.



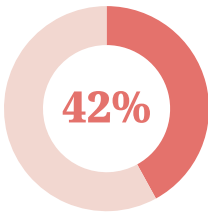
Primary Use of AI

Research is the most common use of AI, while younger renters are more likely to use it for self-expression.



AI Productivity

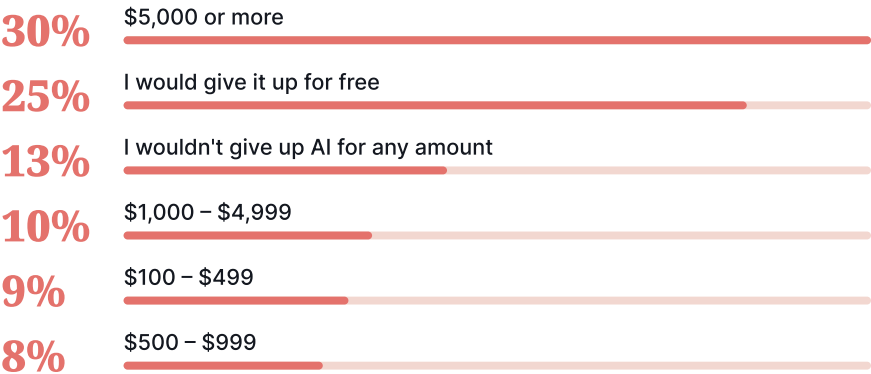
Two in five AI users say it has improved their productivity, with Gen Z and Millennials most likely to report a boost. **58%** of Gen Z AI users report a productivity boost — more than double the **26%** of Boomer+.



- 38% No noticeable impact
- 15% Not sure
- 5% Less productive

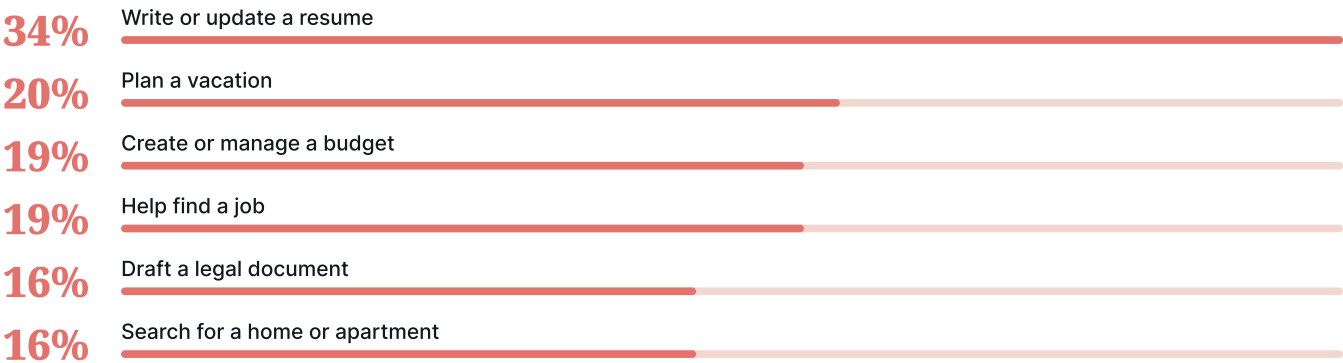
Price of Giving Up AI

Around three in ten AI users would need at least \$5,000 to give it up for a year.



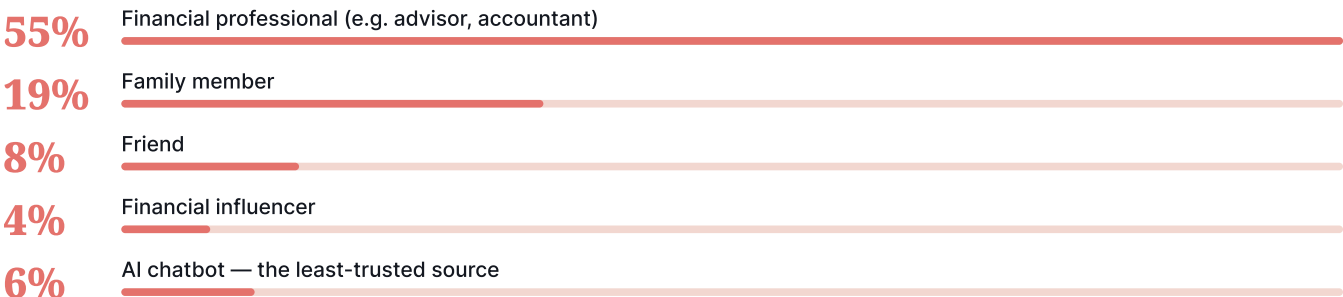
Trust in AI

Trust in AI is limited for higher-stakes decisions, like choosing investments and negotiating.



Trust in Financial Advice

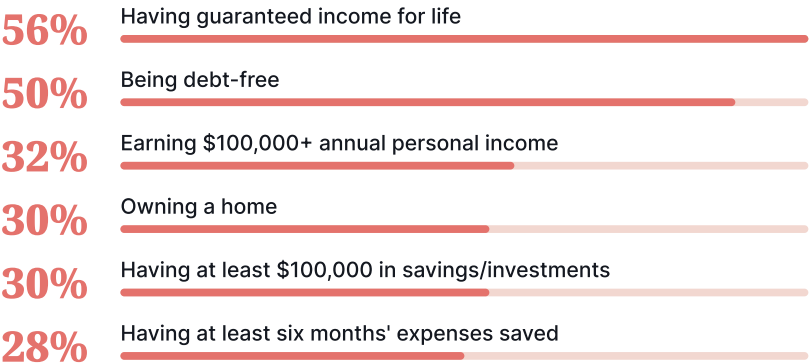
When it comes to financial advice, there is very low trust in AI. More than half of renters trust a financial professional most.



Finances

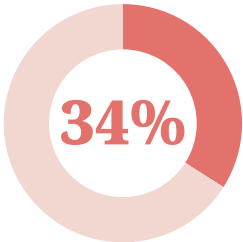
Financial Security

Guaranteed income and being debt-free are most important to financial security overall.



Saving Habits

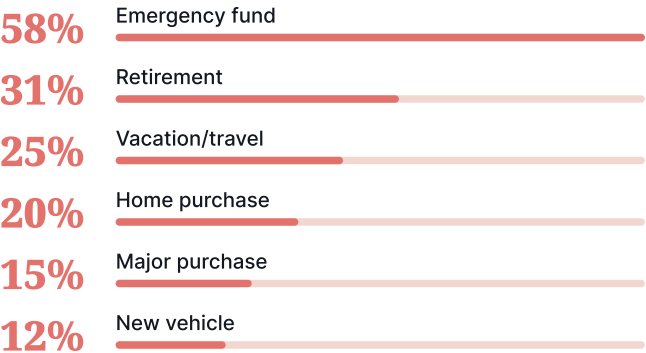
One-third of renters save regularly, with Gen Z more likely to do so than older generations. **48%** of Gen Z renters save regularly (highest); only **27%** of Gen X renters do



48% Gen Z — save regularly (highest)
27% Gen X — save regularly (lowest)

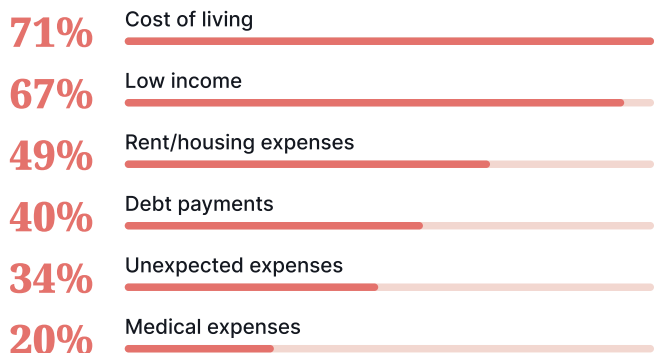
Saving Goals

Building an emergency fund is the most common savings goal for renters, while younger renters save more for other goals.



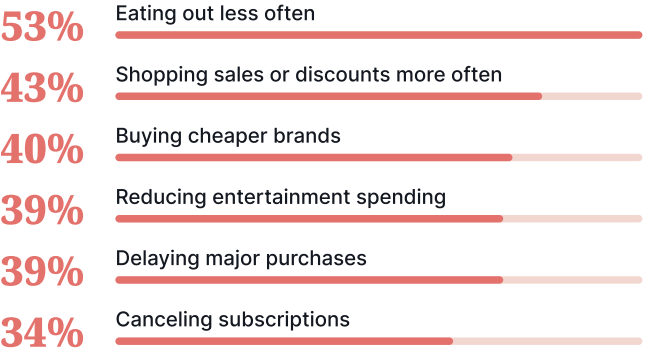
Barriers to Saving

High living costs and low income are the biggest barriers to saving, with housing expenses close behind.



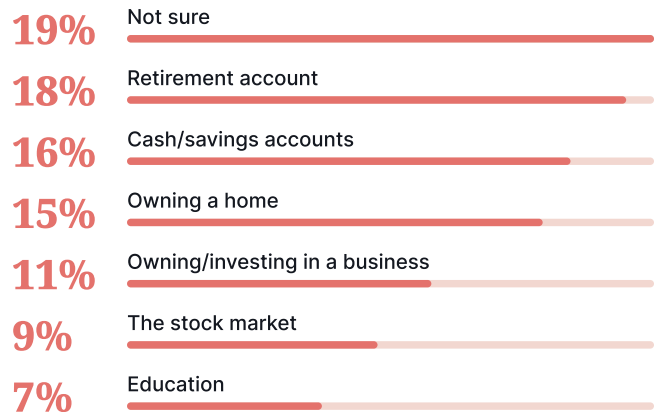
Spending Changes

Most renters are cutting back across everyday spending, most often by eating out less.



Best Long-Term Investment

Renters are divided on the best long-term investment, with around one in five unsure.



First Spend with \$10,000

Paying down debt would be renters’ top priority if they received \$10,000. Gen Z is the one generation most drawn to investing it instead.



Meaning of Success

Personal Definitions of Success

Health and financial freedom are the top measures of success for all. Younger renters also weigh homeownership and career achievement.

Success Through Purchases

Younger renters are more likely to tie purchasing a home and investments to success, while older renters are less likely to feel purchases define success.



21%

Purchasing a home — more closely tied to success among younger renters

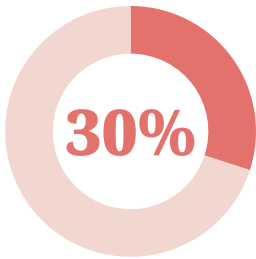
Investments 19% · Traveling 16% · Renting or purchasing a high-end apartment 4%

32%

None of these purchases — more common among older renters

Perceptions of Wealth

An annual personal income of \$1M+ is the most common threshold for being considered “rich.” Northeastern renters set the bar highest: **36%** say \$1M+.



36% Northeastern renters set the bar at \$1M+ (highest of any region)

Out of Reach Milestones

Homeownership feels most out of reach, particularly among Western renters.



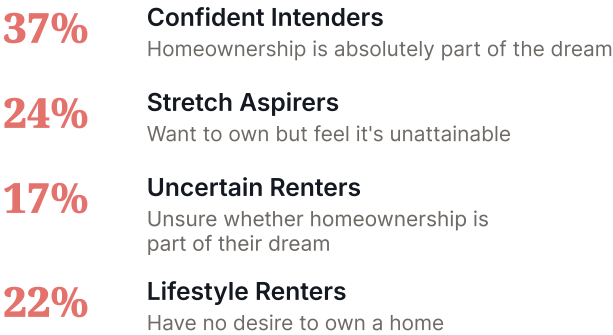
The Dream of Homeownership

Homeownership Dream

Homeownership is a goal for **61%** of renters, though around a quarter feel it is unattainable.

Homeownership Trade-offs

Travel, dining out and a new car are the main things renters would give up to buy a home.





Confident Intenders

entrata

Homeownership is absolutely part of the dream

Young Gen Z/Millennial renters, working full-time, families with children under 18, living in the South.

Living & Renting

See renting as temporary. Homeownership is a central aspiration and major life goal.

Financial Behavior

Actively saving for homes, education, businesses and family milestones. Long-term planners.

Meaning Of Success

Success means owning a home, career advancement, entrepreneurship and wealth creation.

Personal Habits

Highly engaged, ambitious and future-focused. Balance entertainment and technology with financial discipline.



Stretched Aspirers

Want to own but feel it's unattainable

Tend to be young Millennial, White renters.

Living & Renting

Still aspire to homeownership, but affordability pressures make the path feel more challenging.

Financial Behavior

Less likely to set aside money for savings regularly. Carefully manage budgets and competing priorities.

Meaning Of Success

Success is centered on quality of health, financial freedom and work-life balance.

Personal Habits

Busy multitaskers who enjoy watching streamed video and appreciate physical music media.



Uncertain Renters

Are unsure whether homeownership is part of their dream

Uncertainty is most pronounced among Gen X and Northeastern renters.

Living & Renting

Currently pay \$100 more for their monthly rent than the average renter. Homeownership remains ambiguous.

Financial Behavior

Financial priorities are fragmented in this group: some would prioritize saving while others would not.

Meaning Of Success

Success is less tied to homeownership. For many, income alone does not determine if someone is successful.

Personal Habits

Eat fewer meals at home and lean toward convenient dining options, including fast-casual.



Lifestyle Renters

Have no desire to own a home

Eat fewer meals at home and lean toward convenient dining options, including fast-casual.

Living & Renting

Comfortable with renting as a long-term lifestyle, often benefiting from relatively low housing costs.

Financial Behavior

Focused on financial stability and preservation; they want to be debt-free.

Meaning Of Success

Less defined by income or owning a home and more focused on physical and mental health.

Personal Habits

Traditional in their media and technology habits, favoring news, cable and radio.