Women Who Earn More Are Less Satisfied With Their Benefits

How employers can meet women’s workplace benefit needs at all levels of financial literacy

From money management to benefits, women report being less confident in their understanding of personal finances than men — until their incomes rise. Then women feel more positive about their financial know-how, but also less satisfied with key life choices. What can employers do to help women at all income levels feel more financially confident and free?

Strengthen Ties With Female Workers by Tailoring Benefits Education and Financial Literacy Programs for Income and Life Stage

When it comes to personal finance, women lack the same levels of confidence as men. This changes when they earn higher salaries. Women with larger incomes feel more assured in their financial knowledge, but they also express greater discontent with their choices for career, family size and employee benefits.

Women in Our Research:

- **Report lower confidence than men in their financial acumen.** This includes managing money, the financial system, how insurance works and employee benefits.
- **Show a strong willingness to learn about finances.** More than three out of five women say they actively try to learn about their finances and the financial system.
- **Serve as a solid source of household benefits.** A majority of women across income levels are the primary plan holder in their household. This is even more likely to be true for women at lower wage levels.
- **Express more confidence in their financial know-how when they earn higher salaries.** Large majorities of high-income women report they understand how insurance and benefits work.
- **Are less satisfied with benefits when they feel more confident in their financial acumen.** They also say they feel more limited in their choices for career and family.

The takeaway?

Creating programs for benefits education and financial literacy based on employee segments such as gender, life stage and income can help companies attract and retain female workers. Employers should consider leveraging AI to develop targeted resources. Doing so would lighten the burden on HR and save businesses from having to significantly alter their benefits packages.

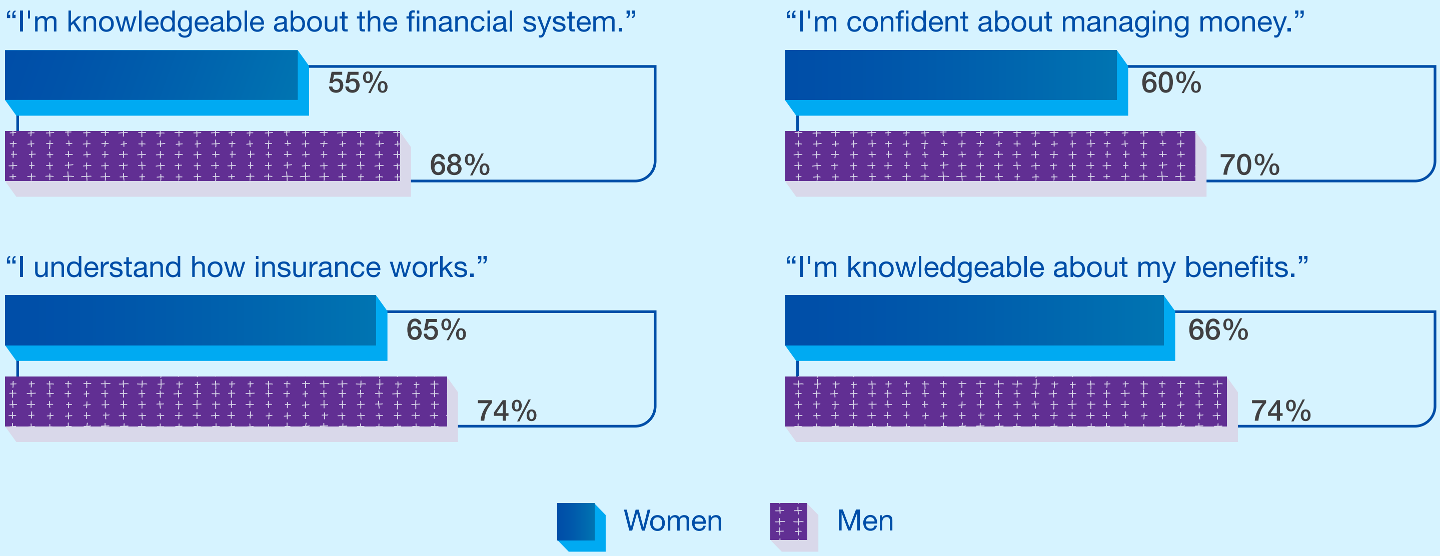
Women Are Less Confident About Money Than Men, but Should They Be?

Women lacking confidence in personal finance might seem like a stereotype. But our research shows they generally feel less savvy than men when it comes to money matters. And academic research confirms the gender gap in confidence, with data indicating women are more likely to remember negative feedback on workplace performance reviews, while men are more likely to think they're succeeding in their role and deserve a raise.[*]

Women's Confidence in Finance vs. Men's: How Large Is the Gap?

Women are less confident than men in their financial knowledge of managing money, the financial system, how insurance works and employee benefits.

Difference in Confidence Among Men and Women With Strong Financial Know-How



The Power of Benefits Education

Both women and men feel more confident in their understanding of benefits and how insurance works than they do about money management and the financial system. Employers' efforts to provide benefits education to their workers may be one driver of this finding.

* **Confidence (Or Its Absence) Is Contagious**, Caltech News, March 6, 2024.

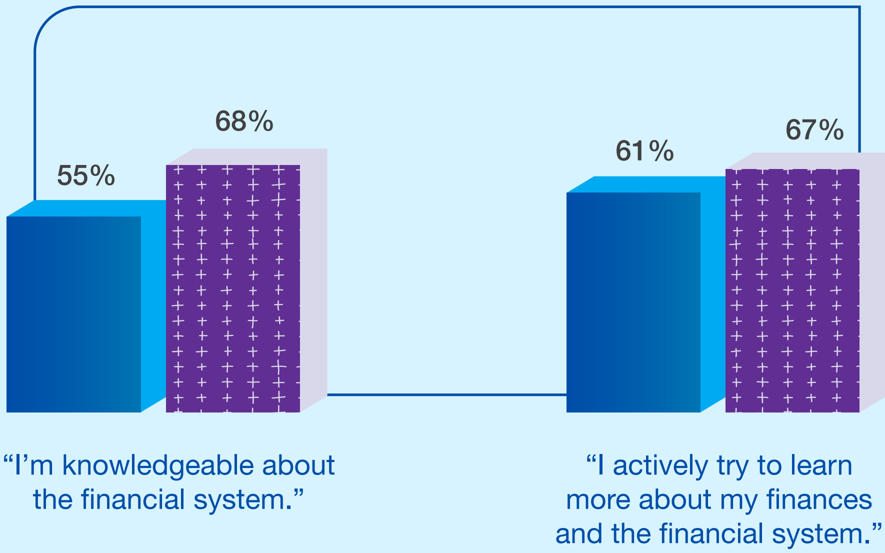
Women Should Probably Feel More Confident in Their Financial Literacy

Men feeling more assured in their financial acumen than women may not be an indicator they know more about money. While women are far less likely than men to claim financial expertise, they're nearly as likely to say they're actively learning about finances.

Learning About Finances Is Also a Woman's Game

Stated Financial Knowledge vs. Financial Learning (% agree or strongly agree)

Women Men



More than three out of five women

report trying to learn about finances and the financial system, suggesting they're hungry for information on how to manage their money.

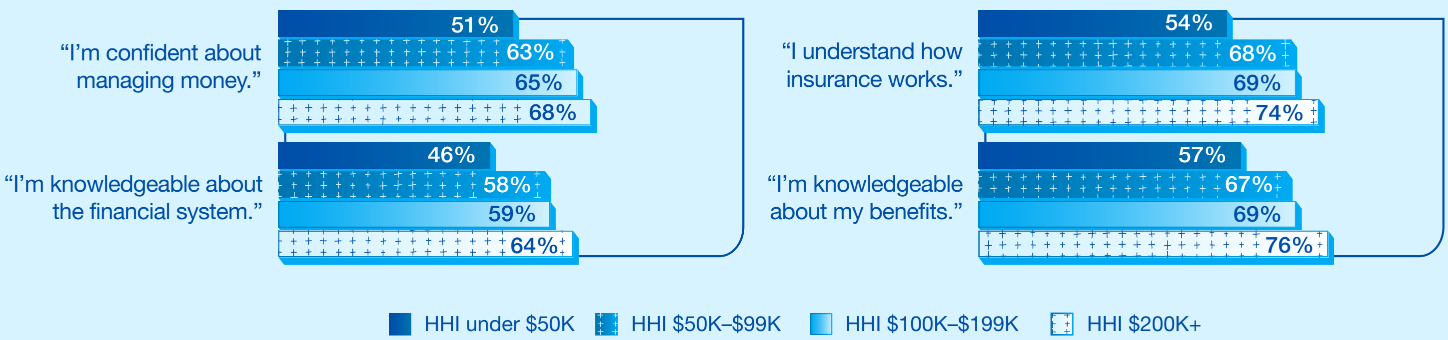
How Women's Relationship to Benefits Changes With Income

The financial knowledge gaps between women at differing wage levels revealed in the research aren't surprising. Women who earn less money have lower confidence in their financial savvy than those making higher salaries.

But lower income doesn't equate to less involvement in providing benefits to loved ones. Understanding benefits and insurance can enable women at all wage levels to make better benefits decisions, which could help employers achieve greater success with their benefits programs.

Greater Income — and Greater Financial Acumen

Women's Financial Proficiency by Household Income



19 points

That's the percentage gap between women earning less than $50K who say they're knowledgeable about their employee benefits and those making more than $200K who say the same thing.

The difference points to an opportunity for companies to ensure female employees at lower income levels have the benefits education and financial literacy resources needed to make informed decisions for themselves and their families.

Bringing Home the Benefits

A healthy majority of women across salary levels report being the primary source of benefits for their families.

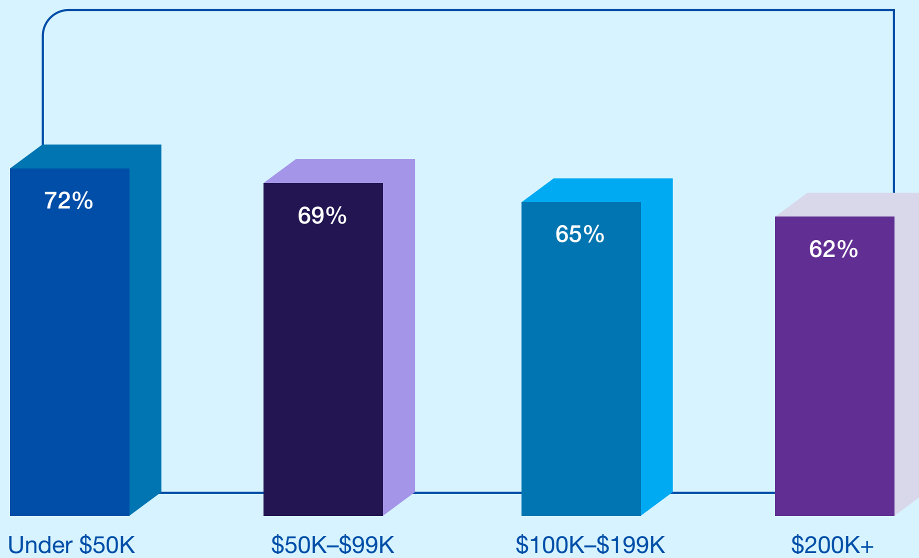
67% of women say they're the primary benefits plan provider in their household.

Women at Lower Wages Are Key to Household Benefits

The less women earn, the more likely they are to be the primary benefits plan holders within their households. Unfortunately, women with lower incomes have less confidence in personal finance. Both findings suggest the same women who serve as the bedrock of household benefits are arguably making benefits decisions without the information they need — and possibly putting family budgets at risk.

Making Less — but Still the Primary Plan Holder

Women who say they are the primary plan holder in their household (by household income)



72% of women

making under $50K per year say they are the primary benefits plan holder in their household.

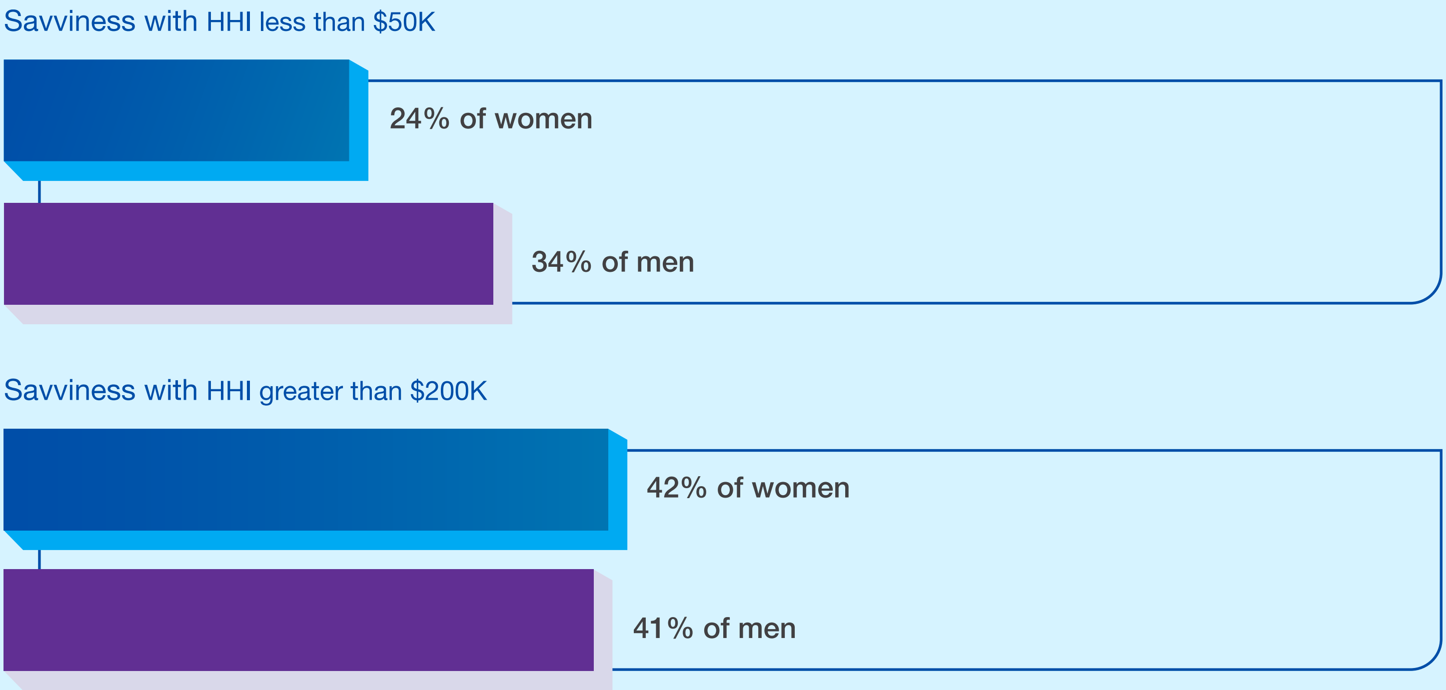
As this group reports the lowest confidence in financial matters, they would benefit from tailored education programs to help them select the right benefits for them and their families.

Rising Income, Rising Confidence — and Less Satisfaction

For women, greater confidence in their financial literacy happens at higher wages.

As Women's Wages Rise, They Report Similar Financial Savvy to Men

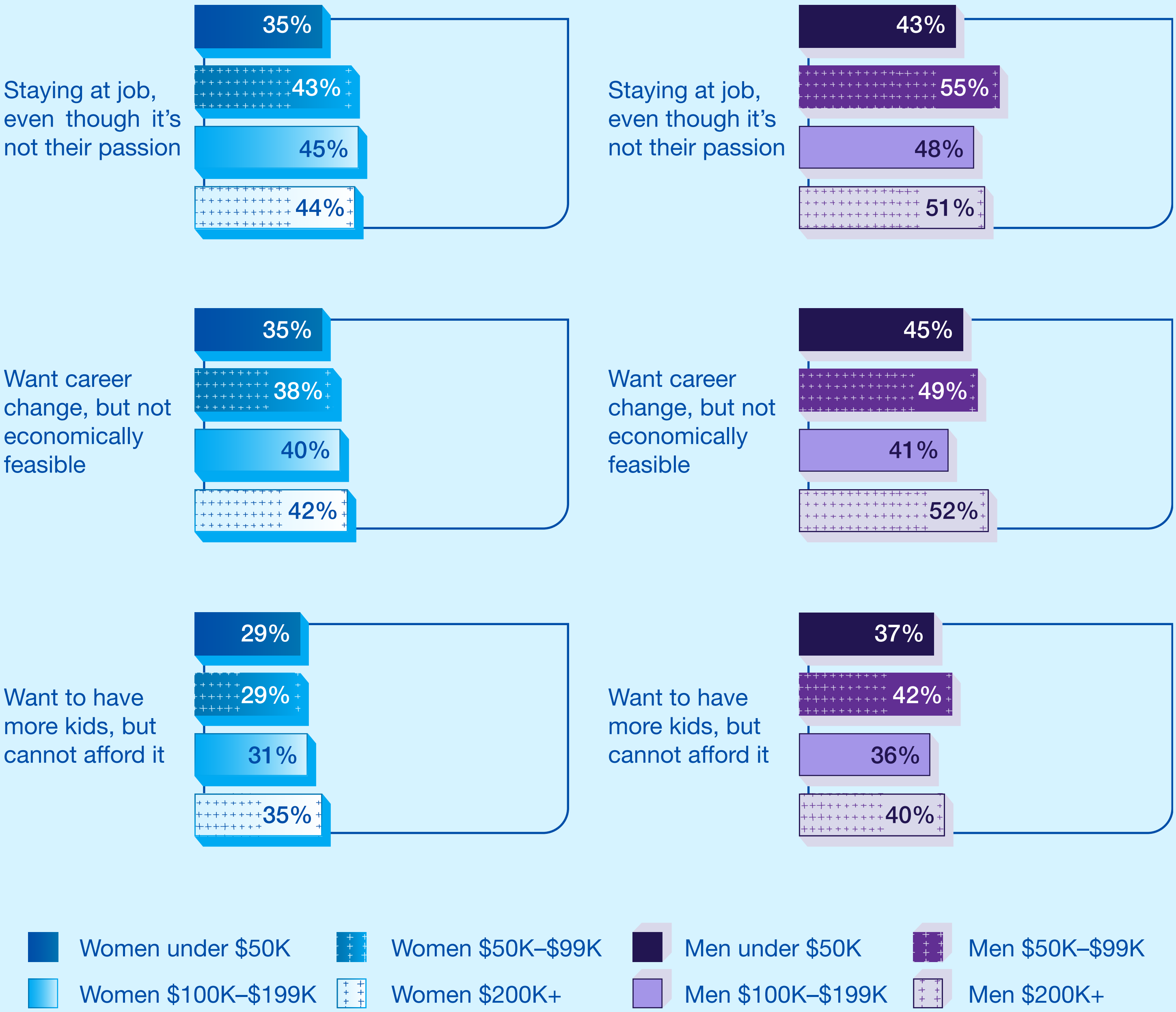
Self-Reported Savvy by Household Income



But more income doesn't leave women believing they have more options for changing jobs or growing their families.

As Salaries Get Bigger, Women Feel Options for Career and Family Shrink

Financial Attitudes Among Women and Men by Household Income



Overall, men feel more restricted in their options for career change and growing their families. But for women, a sense of limitation increases as salary and financial acumen rise.

At higher income levels, women report feeling less satisfied with their options for career shifts and the number of children they can afford.

Sentiment

"I want a career change, but it's not economically feasible."

Sentiment of 35% of women with a household income of less than $50K vs. 42% of women with a household income of more than $200K

"I want more kids, but I can't afford it."

Sentiment of 29% of women with a household income of less than $50K vs. 35% of women with a household income of more than $200K

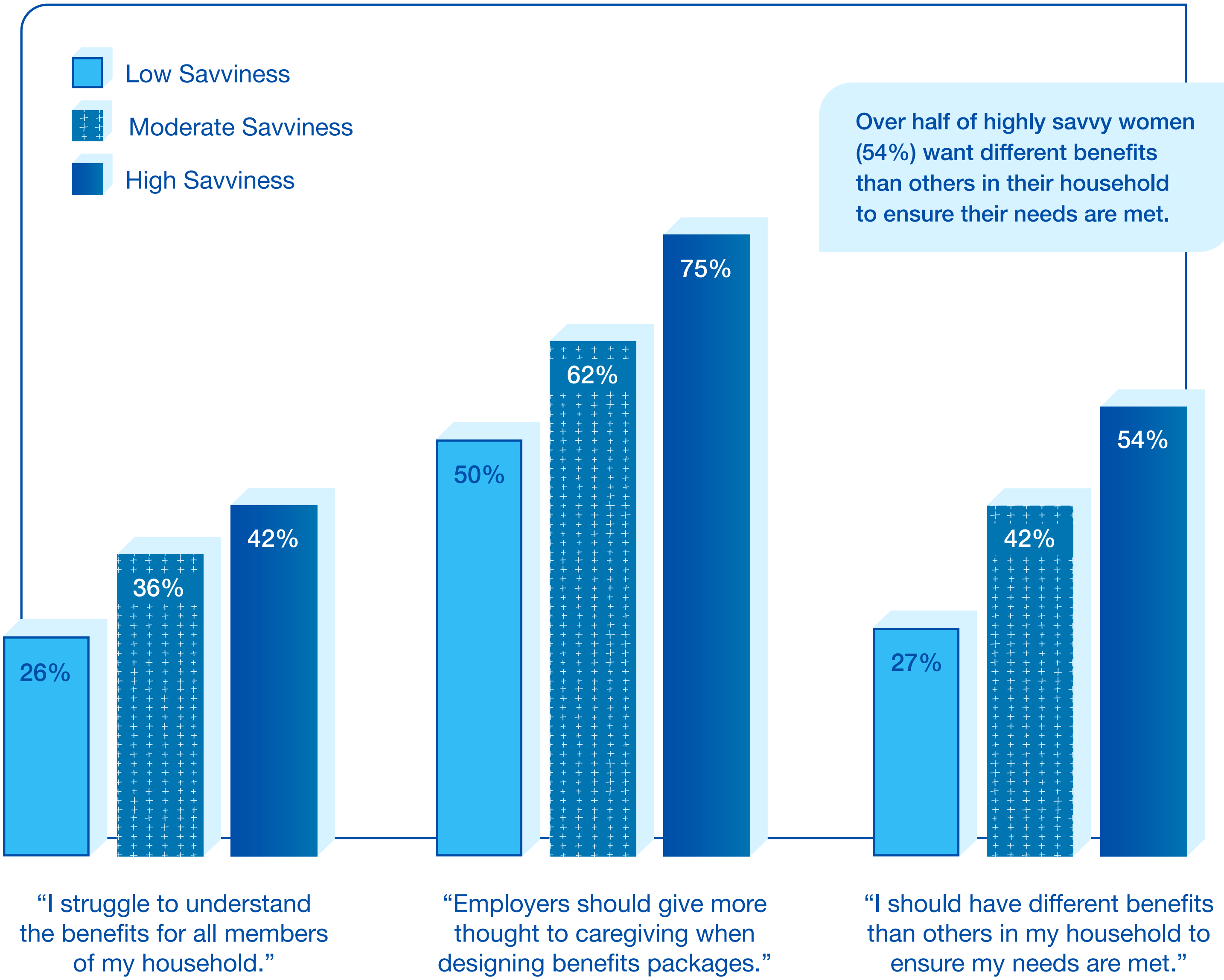
With Greater Financial Confidence Comes Greater Expectations for Benefits

Women with more financial prowess say they're less satisfied with their benefits. They're looking for more benefits education to help them understand their options. This group also wants employers to increase their focus on caregiving benefits and provide programs that meet their specific needs — which may be different than others in their household. As women who earn higher wages also tend to be those with greater financial knowledge, it's safe to say that female employees at higher salaries are probably less content with benefits.

> **"I've never heard my employer call out specific benefits for these [women's] issues, though it doesn't mean such things aren't, in a general sense, included in the benefits we do receive."**
>
> *58-year-old female earning $100K–$199K*

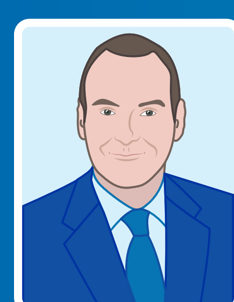
Making More Money and Less Satisfied With Benefits

Benefits Attitudes Among Women by Financial Savviness (% agree or strongly agree)



"The message for employers is that women can't be ignored as a key workforce cohort for driving growth. Ensuring female employees have benefit options and education tailored to their needs is critical for retaining and engaging them."

Justin Delaney, Senior Vice President and Associate Counsel
Marketing, External Affairs and Communications
The Standard



Summary of Findings

In the quest to retain female employees and increase their tenure with your company, women's motivation to better understand personal finance is an employer's best friend.

Data:

- Women say they're less confident in their financial knowledge compared with men but are nearly as likely to report actively working to learn about money matters.
- At all income levels, women make up an important source of employee benefits for their households. But those at lower wages struggle to understand benefits and insurance coverage, even as a significant majority are primary benefits plan holders.
- As their incomes and financial acumen increase, women become less satisfied with their options for career, family and benefits.

Why It Matters:

- **Employers can leverage women's strong inclination toward financial literacy to empower smarter benefits decisions.** Businesses should consider financial wellness resources targeted at women or the lower-cost option of starting an employee resource group centered on personal finance or on women's financial advancement.
- **Women's lower confidence in their financial knowledge poses a risk to how they perceive their benefits packages.** Offering robust, tailored benefits education is one way to ensure they understand their options, especially for programs like short term disability insurance and paid family leave, as these address specific caregiving and family-building pain points.
- **Companies have an opportunity to support high-performing female employees.** Confidence in financial knowledge correlates to higher salaries. It's likely that women in this group are high-performing team members who employers will want to retain and develop. Evaluating benefits packages to ensure portfolios meet the varying needs of all workers is a way to keep talent, including top female employees.

About the Research

On behalf of The Standard, a third-party research firm conducted a 15-minute online survey of 5,000 participants, most of whom currently receive some employee benefits.

- Fielded: ~70% women (N=3,468) and ~30% men (1,523)
- Ages: 18 – 70
- Field dates: March 10 – 27, 2025

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