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How to talk about the value of advice

- Advisors and investors have long struggled with quantifying and communicating the value of advice. Perceptions of value are often anchored in investment performance and often underestimate the benefits of financial planning, peace of mind, and time-saving.
- We surveyed investors to understand how they think about advice value and investing success. Peace of mind is the most frequently cited reason why investors seek advice.
- Investors do not have a single framework for evaluating advice value or financial success. Advisors should personalize how they communicate about value, use multiple relevant success metrics for each client and intervention, and favor simple, clear measures over complex ones.

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Introduction

What is the value of financial advice? This question is of utmost importance to financial advisors, investors, employer plan sponsors, and the financial services industry in general.

Advice value measurements enable financial advisors to surface the highest-value advice interventions and demonstrate their value to clients to retain and attract more business. Unadvised investors can use the insights to learn whether financial advice is right for them. Advised investors can feel more confident about their financial situation. Plan sponsors can use them to consider the benefits of adding financial advice to their retirement plan offerings. Finally, with the proliferation of hybrid and robo-advisor offers as well as artificial intelligence features, the financial advice industry can use them to understand its cost-to-serve models according to the value its varying services provide.

Historically, the financial advice industry has anchored the value of advice to investment performance. In 2001, Vanguard introduced the concept of Advisor's Alpha, which outlined how advisors could add value through relationship-oriented services, rather than by focusing solely on portfolio management (Bennyhoff and Kinniry, 2018).

Since then, we have expanded on these concepts and been joined by many other researchers who have taken various approaches to defining and measuring the value that advisors deliver beyond just investment performance (Blanchett and Kaplan, 2013 and 2018, Finke, 2013, Grable and Chatterjee, 2014, Kinniry et al., 2019, Pagliaro and Utkus, 2019, and Warschauer and Sciglimpaglia, 2012).

Financial advice can provide value in a multitude of ways, whether it is delivered by human advisors, digital platforms, employer plan designs, or investment products.

In this paper, we explore a model of advice that considers four sources of value: portfolio value delivered through risk-appropriate, tax-aware investments; financial planning value delivered through interventions that help investors achieve their goals; emotional value that results from the increased peace of mind that advice provides; and time value that is achieved when investors spend less time worrying about and managing their assets.

Still, much remains to be discovered about how real-world investors perceive and engage with each source. Without that insight, advice providers face challenges in measuring and communicating value effectively. This paper addresses that gap by drawing on survey data from both advised and self-directed investors to explore how advice value is understood. Based on those insights, we offer practical steps to tailor metrics to different client profiles and advice contexts.

Understanding the components of advice value

Vanguard research has previously explored the four-part framework for understanding the types of value that advisors can provide to investors (Weber et al., 2022):

- **Financial planning value** comes from helping investors achieve specific financial objectives. Advisors can engage in a myriad of financial planning strategies to ensure that investors are prepared to meet the financial challenges that they and their families may face.
- **Portfolio value** comes from building a well-diversified portfolio that generates better after-tax risk-adjusted returns net of all fees, suitably matched to the client's risk tolerance.
- **Emotional value** comes when trusted advisors help investors achieve peace of mind and the confidence in their ability to meet financial goals and challenges.
- **Time value** comes from the simple fact that advice providers perform tasks that individual investors might otherwise not have the time, willingness, or ability to perform on their own.

Financial value and portfolio value are most often delivered by the specific interventions that advice providers recommend for each investor. Emotional and time value are most often delivered when the advice provider produces, explains, and implements those interventions and ensures their follow-through. **Figure 1** shows how specific types of advice interventions and activities map to our larger value framework.

FIGURE 1

Sources of advice value

Portfolio | **Emotional**

Financial planning | **Time**

Intervention-oriented

Portfolio management

- Risk assessment
- Asset allocation
- Investment selection
- Controlling costs

Tax planning

- Tax-advantaged account usage
- Asset location
- Roth conversions
- Tax-loss harvesting

Goal planning

- Saving and spending
- Income planning
- Planning for bad outcomes
- Multigenerational planning

Process-oriented

Behavioral coaching

- Avoiding performance chasing and panic selling, nudging to stay on track
- Adjusting for changing goals
- Getting family members on the same page

Emotional support

- Instilling confidence
- Understanding life aspirations
- Being responsive

Administrative support

- Data gathering
- Summarizing/reporting
- Researching potential opportunities

Source: Vanguard.

A survey on the value of advice

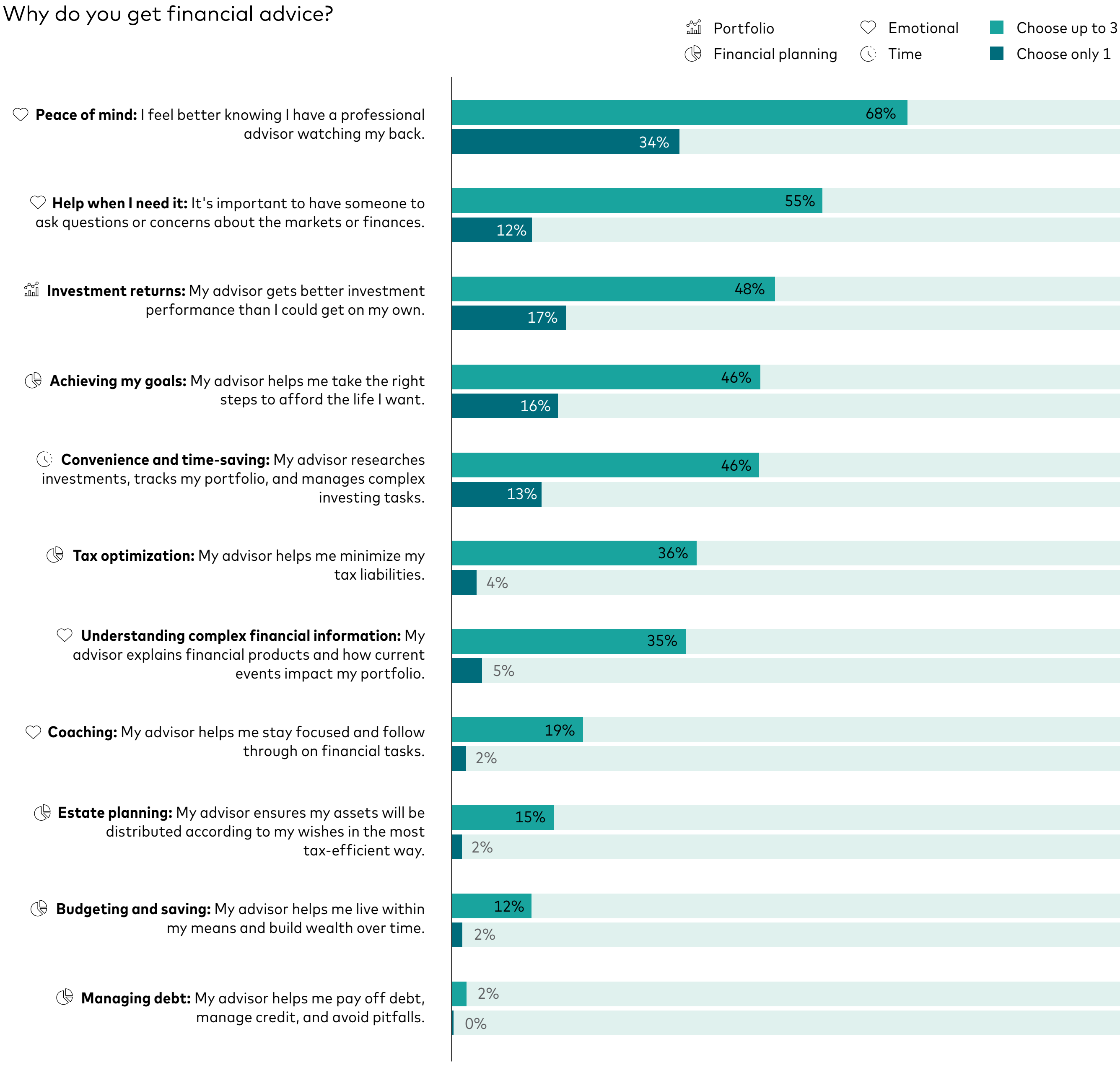
To measure clients' perceptions and preferences on how advisors communicate the value of advice, in July 2025 we conducted an online survey of more than 13,400 Vanguard investors. Our sample included both working and retired clients. Investors answered questions about why they signed up for advice and how they preferred that its value be communicated to them.

Our survey results confirmed that investors value all four sources of advice. **Figure 2** shows that, when asked why they get advice, at least half of advised respondents chose multiple responses corresponding to each of the four value buckets. When those choosing multiple answers were then asked to choose only a single reason, these four sources of value rose to the top.

Interestingly, the dominant reason is "peace of mind." It's often easy to dismiss the process-oriented aspects of advice, including the ongoing engagement that reduces stress and saves time, as secondary or intangible aspects of value. But when you think of it as the number one reason people get advice, it becomes clear that it's important to think about how all the sources of value are measured and communicated.

FIGURE 2

Peace of mind is the most important reason to get advice, but portfolio, financial planning, and time value are also important



Notes: N = 12,070. The respondent sample includes both human-advised and digitally advised clients. Figure 13 in the Appendix provides a breakdown of respondents by type of advice service.

Source: Vanguard.

Communicating advice value

Our survey results suggest best practices for demonstrating how advice can support investor success and refining advisor-client interactions.

Lesson 1: Every advisor interaction is about peace of mind.

Emotional value grows when advice is ready at the moment it is needed

Valuable advice provides clients with confidence or peace of mind regarding their financial health and their ability to meet life goals. Too often, discussions of advice value focus exclusively on the "intervention-oriented" side of our value model: delivering ever more nuanced and complex investment recommendations and financial planning strategies. However, advice value extends beyond generating additional returns. What sets advisory services apart from other investment products is that the advisory process itself creates value, offering investors greater peace of mind.

Figure 2 highlights that many investors recognize the value of advice in offering help when they need it, reinforcing the role of ongoing support in fostering peace of mind. Just as you wouldn't visit a doctor only once and expect to stay healthy forever, you can't expect a one-time financial plan to address all future uncertainties. Whether a client experiences a sudden market downturn, a change in personal circumstances, or a new financial goal, having access to timely and relevant advice can make a significant difference.

Advisors can build lasting trust by saving clients' time

Even when clients are not actively seeking guidance, the advisor's task is to proactively monitor their portfolios to know when changes are needed. Our survey responses show that emotional and time value are closely related. **Figure 3a** shows that investors experience peace of mind when they have someone they trust watching their investments and keeping them on track. **Figure 3b** shows that investors save time because they don't have to monitor their investments on their own, and that having a trusted advisor lets them spend less time worrying about their investments.

By effectively engaging investors and providing expertise through monitoring and suggesting needed changes, the advisor earns the client's trust and builds a successful long-term advisory relationship (Madamba and Utkus, 2017). Indeed, the number one attribute driving emotional value is "to know my financial plan is continuously monitored and updated" (Madamba, Pagliaro, and Utkus, 2020).

Sharing ongoing work helps clients see the full value

The actions an advisor takes behind the scenes can be as important to a client's peace of mind as direct interactions with the client. One implication for advisors is that it's important to let clients know what you are doing on their behalf. What might that look like?

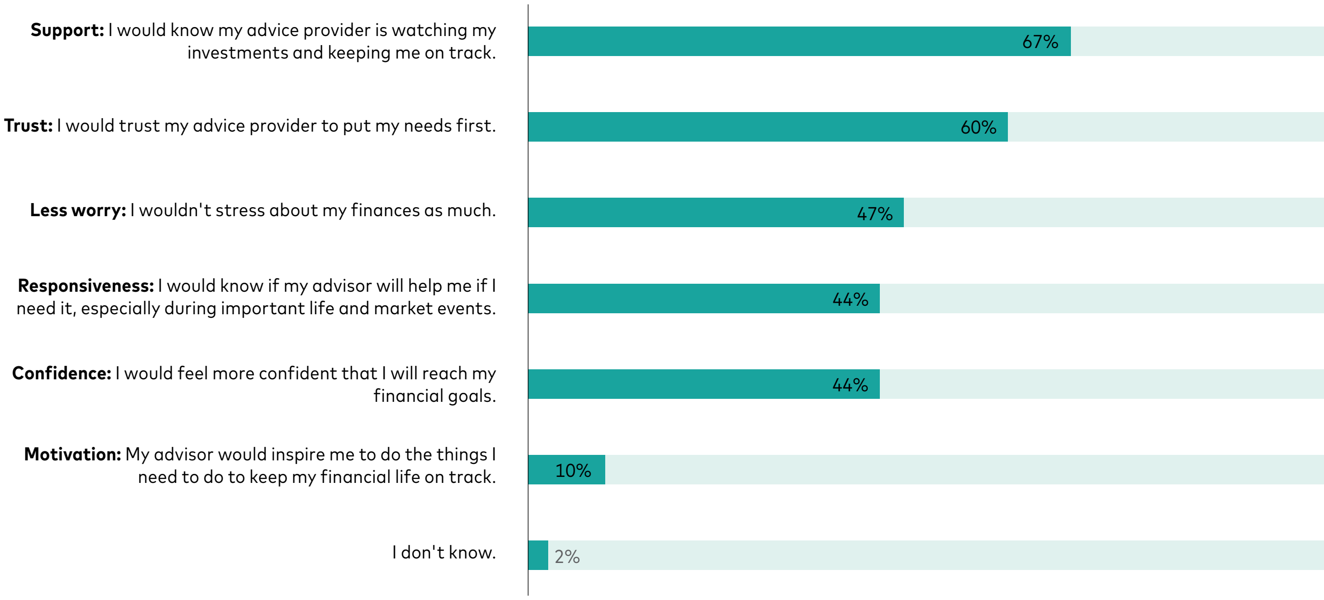
Here are a few examples:

- Nudging clients to follow through on agreed-upon planning strategies.
- Sending out a communication on a tax law change or current issue in the news, showing that you are on top of how that might affect their situation.
- Sharing a report of the times you checked their portfolio for rebalancing or tax-loss-harvesting opportunities and the actions taken (or not taken) in each instance.

FIGURE 3

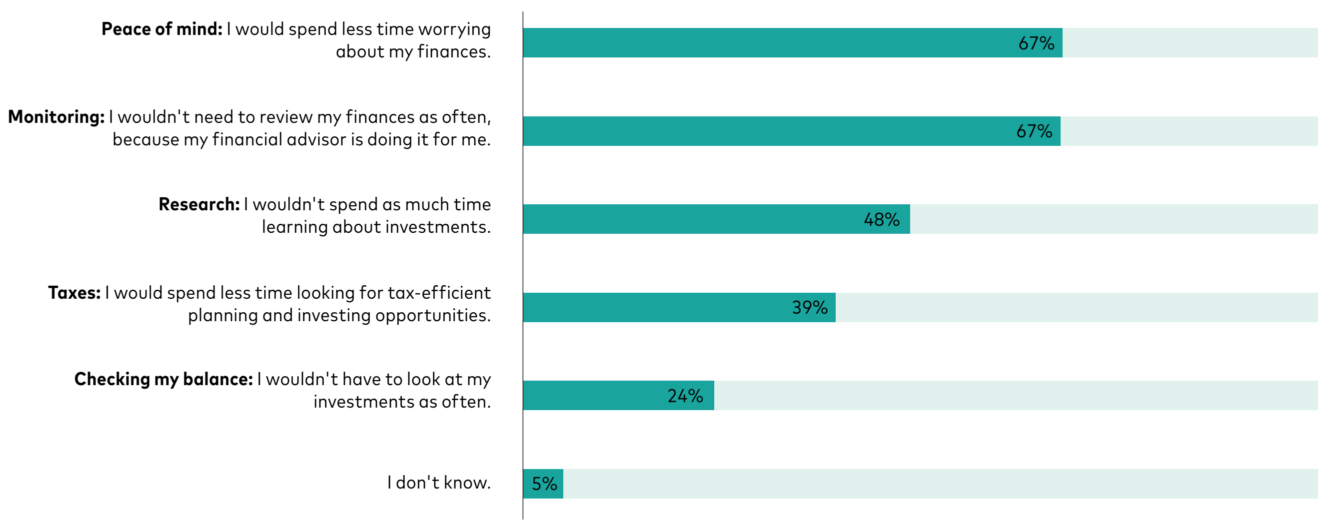
Emotional and time value are related to peace of mind and feeling supported

a. Having an advice provider can provide peace of mind for investors.
How would you experience peace of mind?



Notes: N = 13,404. Respondents could select up to three responses.
Source: Vanguard.

b. Having an advice provider can also save you time.
How would you know your advice provider is saving you time?



Notes: N = 13,404. Respondents could select up to three responses.
Source: Vanguard.

Lesson 2: Personalize your advice and the way you communicate its value.

Personalized plans drive better financial outcomes

Previous Vanguard research showed that the four sources of advice value are best achieved when the advisory service provides a financial plan tailored to an investor's situation (Weber et al., 2022).

Products, digital advice services, and human advisors can all provide advice value through personalization. Target-date funds (TDFs) offer a form of personalized investing plan based on age. Innovations such as direct indexing point to a future that includes products that can be closely tied to an investor's preferences and circumstances. Digital services can provide engaging experiences to help investors uncover and define their goals and objectives, and they can offer types of ongoing portfolio monitoring and adjustment that would not have been possible in the past. Human advisors remain the standard for listening and for uncovering needs that clients may have trouble expressing, offering emotional support when needed, and persuading investors to pursue courses of action that are in their best interest.[1]

The complexity of a client's circumstances also has a role in the amount of potential value an advice relationship can deliver. The more investors' characteristics deviate from the norm, the more they can get value from personalized solutions. For example, while some investors' multigenerational planning needs might be well-served with a simple will and appropriate beneficiary designations, others may have more complex needs, which may involve the use of trusts, strategic charitable giving, and other more advanced strategies. When investors find that their advice provider understands their needs, they will be more likely to trust the advisor's ability to deliver the results they desire and have confidence in the integrity of the advice given.

Invite the client to define success

Advisors have long realized the importance of personalization in advice, but the way success and advice value are communicated may not always reflect the diverse perspectives and preferences of individual investors. Investors' definitions of investment success and perceptions of advice value vary widely.

1 See Costa and Henshaw (2022) for a discussion of how advised investors perceive the relative strengths and weaknesses of digital versus human advisors.

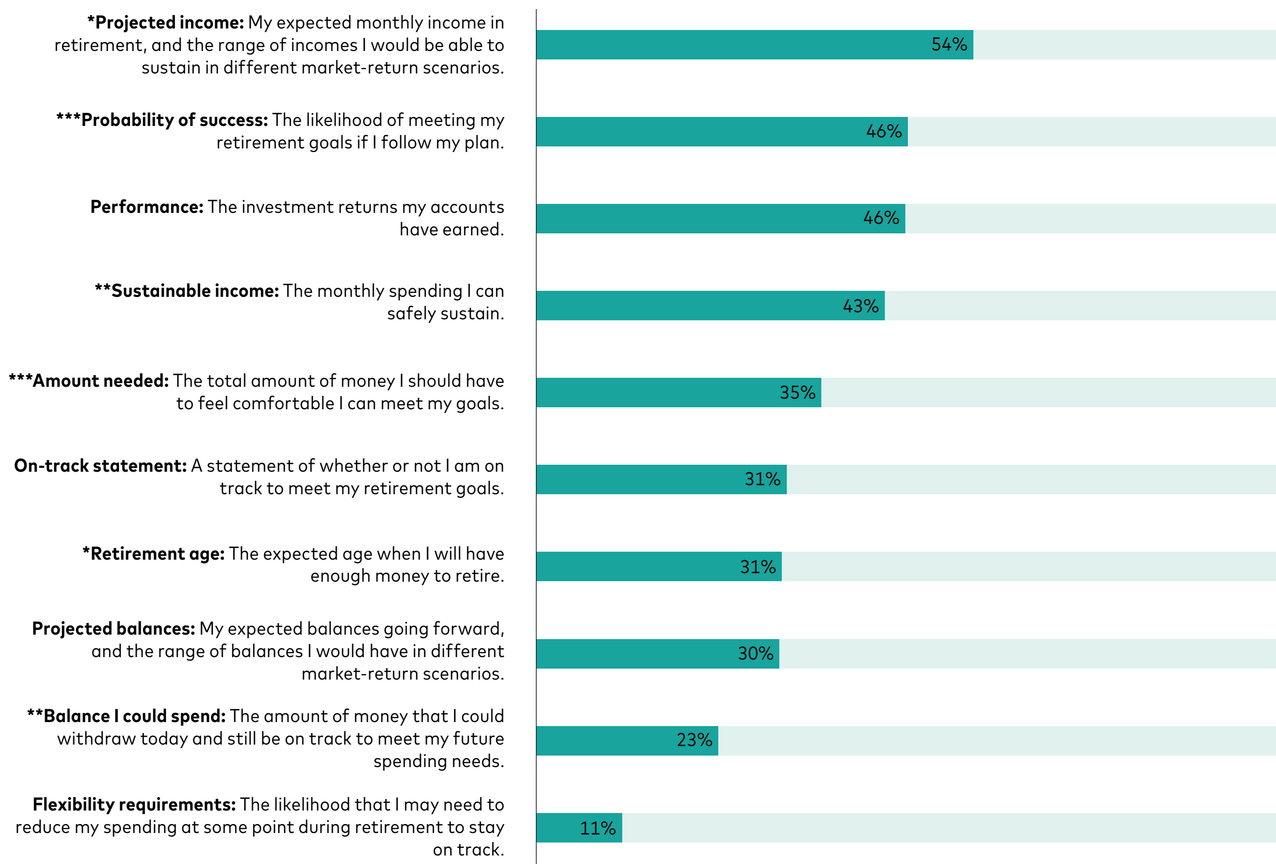
For example, when we asked clients to select up to three metrics that best reflect progress toward a successful retirement, preferences were highly dispersed: No single metric stood out, as shown in **Figure 4**. This dispersion means advice providers should ask investors how they define retirement success and tailor communication to their specific preferences. Investors clearly value a multifaceted approach, underscoring the need for personalized retirement planning conversations.

Just as patients rely on doctors to explain medical options in terms they can understand, clients depend on financial advisors to present plans and strategies in language that fits each client's perspective, rather than focusing on complex investment analysis.

FIGURE 4

No metric for retirement success is a clear favorite, suggesting the need for personalization

One common goal for investors is to be on track for retirement. Which measures would you prefer to use to see if you are being successful in this goal?



* The response was available only for investors who were not yet retired. Percentages are based on that subset.

** The response was available only for retired investors. Percentages are based on that subset.

*** The wording is that given for retired investors. A slightly different wording was used for those not yet retired.

Notes: N = 13,404. The question posed to retired investors was: "One common goal for retired investors is balancing current income against possible future spending needs and legacy desires. Which measures would you prefer to use to see if you are being successful in this goal?" Respondents were allowed to choose up to three responses.

Source: Vanguard.

Lesson 3: Choose measures carefully and explain them clearly.

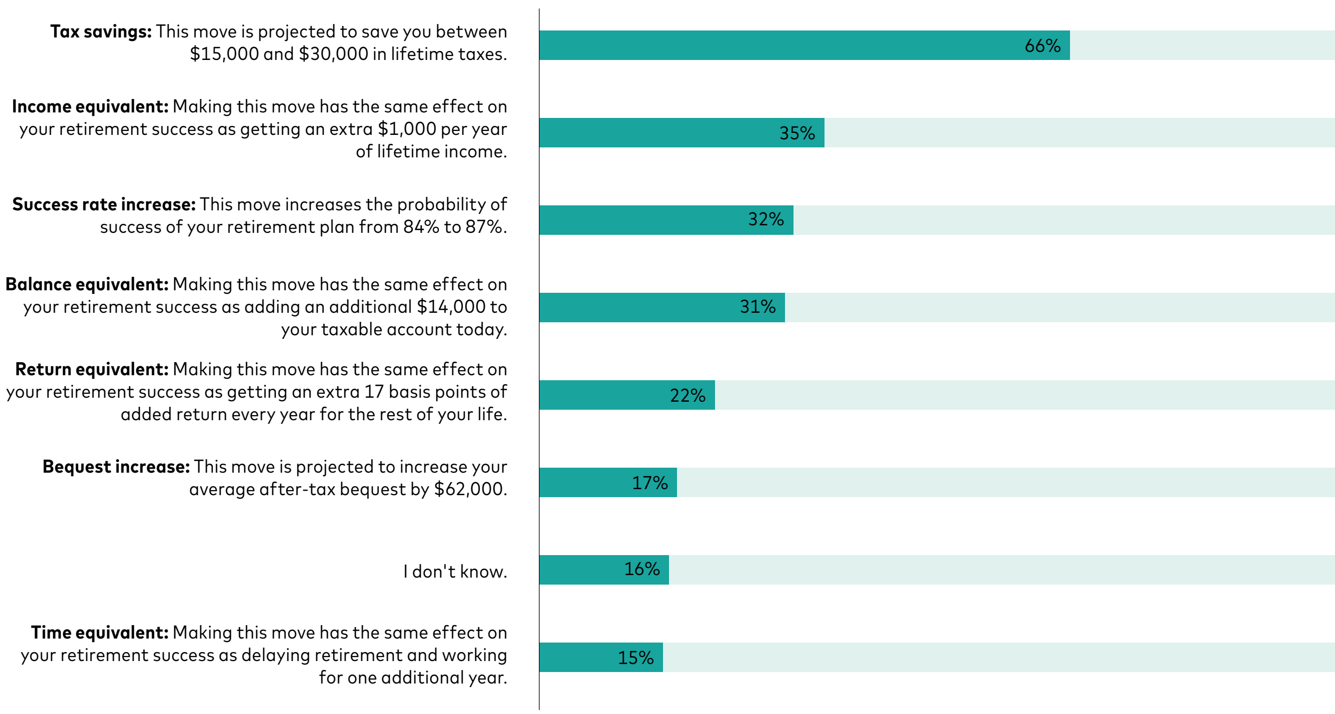
Use metrics that are relevant to each intervention

While metrics relevant to broad life goals are important to help people understand their progress and financial well-being, more targeted measures can be more effective, especially when dealing with a specific intervention.

For example, one question in our survey asked clients which type of statement (they could choose up to three) they would prefer to see if their advice provider recommended that they do a Roth conversion, that is, convert some money from a traditional IRA to a Roth IRA. As **Figure 5** shows, clients generally preferred a direct statement of projected tax savings, which makes sense, given that Roth conversions are a tax strategy. This was in contrast with responses to most of the other questions in the survey, where respondents generally ranked tax savings as a secondary concern. (Recall that in Figure 2, only 4% of respondents considered tax optimization to be the primary reason to get advice.)

FIGURE 5

When talking about a tax intervention, clients prefer a metric based on tax savings



Notes: N = 13,404. The question posed in the survey was: "Suppose your advice provider has recommended that you convert some money from a traditional IRA into a Roth IRA, which will make you pay some taxes this year in exchange for benefits in the future. Which of these statements would be the most helpful in understanding the value of following that recommendation?" Hypothetical values were used in the survey for illustrative purposes only. Respondents could select up to three responses.

Source: Vanguard.

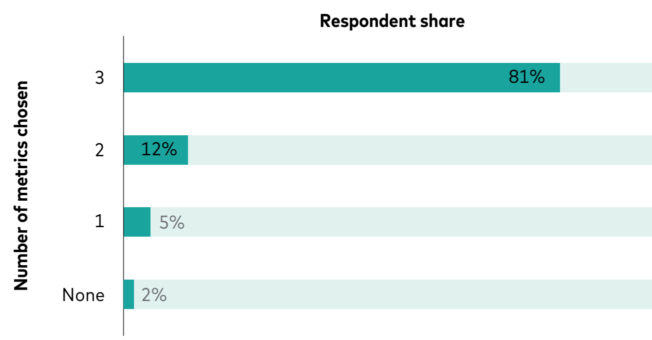
When possible, use multiple metrics

Recall that Figure 4 showed that no single retirement success metric was universally valued. That points to the importance of finding the best metric(s) for each client, but it also leads to the conclusion that multiple measures can make value clearer. On that question of preferred metrics, respondents were given the option of choosing up to three answers. We found that, overwhelmingly, most clients chose all three answers (**Figure 6**). This implies that there is no single "right answer" for how people think about success, and there are many good ones.

This is confirmed by what we saw when we asked a similar question in a different context. When we presented a specific hypothetical retirement scenario and asked about the usefulness of different ways of thinking about the ability to retire, clients broadly found all the presented statements to be either "very useful" or "somewhat useful." (**Figure 7**). This implies that in the absence of a single great metric, a number of good ones can increase the odds that at least one will speak to a particular investor's perspective.

FIGURE 6

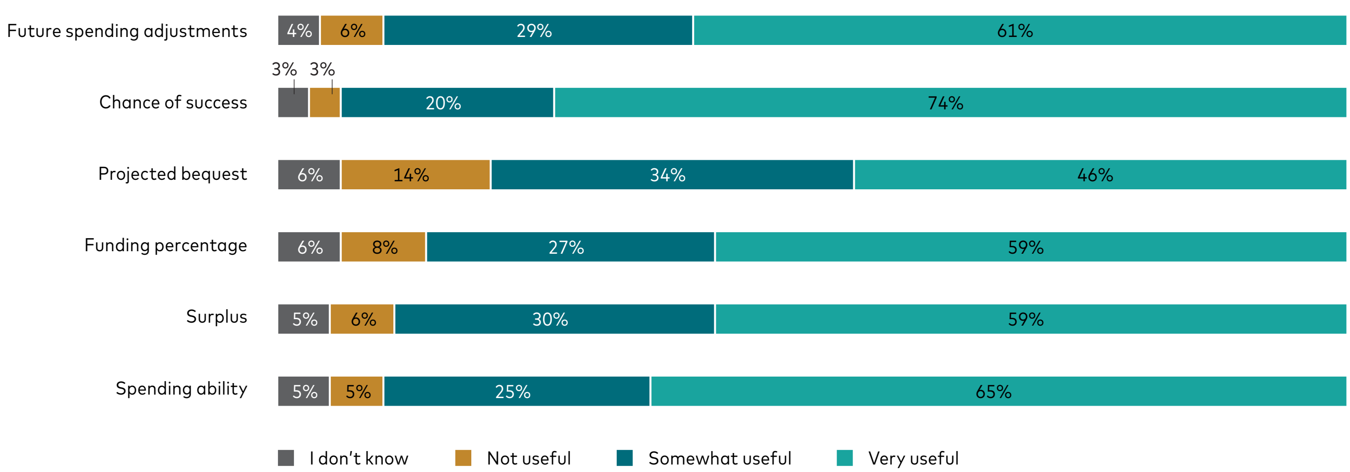
Clients prefer more metrics when discussing their retirement success



Note: "None" refers to the share of respondents who answered "I don't know."
Source: Vanguard.

FIGURE 7

Clients consider most retirement success metrics to be useful



Notes: This was the question posed in the survey: "Terry is a 70-year-old investor who is retired. He asks his advice provider how he is doing in that regard. If you were Terry, how useful would you rate these statements about your current ability to retire? Note that all of these statements are equally true, so there is no 'correct answer.' Future spending adjustments: With your current plan, there is a 5% chance that you will need to reduce your spending sometime during retirement to stay on track; Chance of success: You have a 95% chance of a successful retirement; Projected bequest: With your current plan, you are likely to leave between $2 million–$3 million as a bequest; Funding percentage: You have 223% of what you need to comfortably fund your retirement; Surplus: You currently have $440,000 more than you need to confidently fund your retirement; Spending ability: You can comfortably spend or gift an additional $37,000 per year."
Source: Vanguard.

Simple measures are better for communication

Multiple metrics exist to communicate the same strategy, and they vary in how complex or rigorous they are. While advanced measures such as Monte Carlo-based probabilities of success provide detailed insights, they can be confusing to or easily misinterpreted by those unfamiliar with them (see "A High Probability of Confusion" in the **Appendix**).

Instead, advisors can begin with simpler, more intuitive metrics, such as expected wealth. These may not capture every nuance, but they help clients understand how an intervention works and why it's valuable. Once a shared understanding is established, advisors can introduce more complex measures, carefully considering their usefulness. Rigorous metrics, including utility-based ones, are especially helpful for evaluating the effectiveness of different interventions. Advisors can use detailed metrics to identify the best intervention to improve client outcomes, while relying on straightforward metrics to discuss its benefits with clients.

Measuring advice value

Offering clear metrics can help clients recognize the value of the advice they receive, justifying its cost and time. Since advice delivers different types of value, the most meaningful metrics may vary by client. How do we go about quantifying the value of advice for a particular investor? No matter which type of value we want to measure, we propose measuring the value of advice based on a four-step process laid out in **Figure 8**.

FIGURE 8

To measure value, compare the advised alternative with a baseline

Choose your measure	Establish the baseline	Model the interventions	Measure the difference
Consider trade-offs between quality and explainability. Consider using multiple measures if helpful.	Define the counterfactual strategy for when advice isn't taken.	Assess how client outcomes improve with the suggested intervention(s).	Quantify the difference between baseline and advised outcomes. Calculate the required adjustments, such as additional income or returns, in the baseline scenario to match the financial well-being delivered by the advised alternative.

Source: Vanguard.

Measuring portfolio value: A case study of TDFs versus personalized investment portfolios

Let's apply this measurement framework to a portfolio value example. Once, participants in company retirement plans were defaulted into cash investment options. But over time, plans shifted to defaulting participants into an advised alternative: target-date funds. How much portfolio value does that shift bring?

To measure this, we could simply look at projected returns and see the projected outcomes. However, portfolio choice should also account for the risk taken and the investor's risk tolerance, not just the returns. Some investors with lower risk tolerance prefer more conservative allocations despite the possibility of lower returns, so just looking at returns would lead to the wrong conclusions. We chose to use a utility measure, which takes into account individual participant risk preferences and characteristics such as expected retirement date. We then converted the data into a basis-point-return equivalent.[2] (A basis point is one-hundredth of a percentage point.) We found that when plan defaults change from cash to TDFs, it helps many investors achieve more suitable portfolio allocations aligned with their retirement horizon and risk preference. As **Figure 9a** shows, about two-thirds of investors would get between 300 and 400 basis points of annual utility-equivalent value from using a target-date fund instead of a cash alternative.

The vast majority of employer-sponsored plans have already incorporated features that offer participants the opportunity to achieve this value.[3] Plan sponsors today are more interested in understanding the additional value that can be realized through personalized, advised managed solutions. We made the same analysis using a TDF glide path as the baseline, compared with personalized glide paths for a set of Vanguard investors who had chosen that option. As **Figure 9b** shows, nearly two-thirds of investors with personalized glide paths are projected to see utility-equivalent value in excess of 40 basis points annually, with one in four investors getting in excess of 80 basis points of value.

Of course, personalized portfolios are only one part of the value that those investors receive. They also have access to retirement planning capabilities that deliver financial value, and the peace of mind that comes from knowing that their portfolio is designed for their needs rather than based on a set of assumptions that represent a generalized, typical participant.

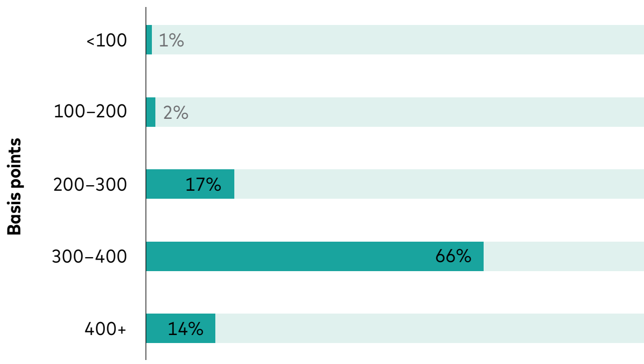
2 To measure the utility-equivalent basis points, we looked at 10,000 digitally advised Vanguard clients who supplied information about their risk preferences. We used the Vanguard Life Cycle Model to measure the utility that each investor would receive over a lifetime as a result of the glide path change—first from a 100% cash allocation to Vanguard's TDF glide path, then from that TDF glide path to the actual advised glide path that the investor received in the advised relationship. These utility numbers were calculated across 10,000 potential market scenarios for each client. We then added basis points of guaranteed return to each scenario in the baseline case until the utility of the baseline case equaled the advised alternative. This number represents the hypothetical annual fee in the advised case that would make the investor indifferent to the choice between the baseline and advised cases. Blanchett and Kaplan (2013) refer to a similar number as "Gamma equivalent alpha."

3 While 99% of employer-sponsored plans default participants into TDFs, IRAs lack such defaults, resulting in many investors remaining in cash for years and missing out on potential long-term portfolio value (Clark, 2024, and Reed et al., 2023).

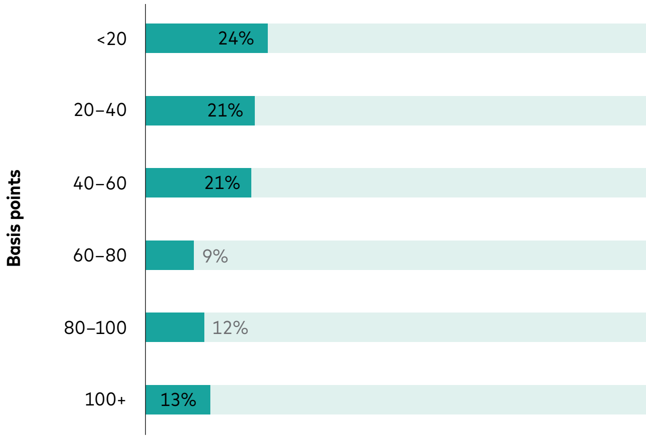
FIGURE 9

Changing from cash defaults to TDFs was a big win for investors, but most investors can get even more value with additional portfolio personalization

a. TDF value relative to cash



b. Personalized recommendation relative to a TDF



Source: Vanguard.

Measuring financial planning value: A case study of the impact of dynamic spending

We next explored the measurement of a financial planning intervention. Often, discussions of retirement spending focus on rules that assume a static dollar spending amount, adjusted for inflation each year, or spending based on a fixed withdrawal percentage from a portfolio. While these strategies can be useful defaults or rules of thumb, advisors know that more flexible approaches to asset drawdown can help people increase the usefulness of their retirement assets.

In this example, we wanted to measure the value of a strategy based on Vanguard's dynamic spending approach (Jaconetti et al., 2023). This strategy makes annual adjustments to retirement spending based on market performance. Investors spend more in strong markets and scale back in weak ones. In theory, a willingness to be flexible with spending needs allows investors to spend more during retirement when markets are favorable but prevents overspending and safeguards wealth when markets are unfavorable. Can we measure how well this works?

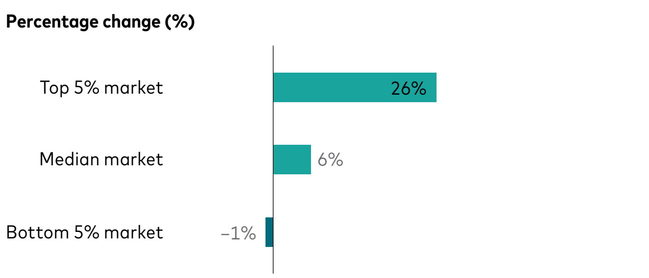
To test this, we analyzed 2,900 clients advised by Vanguard Personal Advisor Services who were approaching retirement. For our baseline, we assumed they would retire on their scheduled date with their desired spending plan, adjusted for inflation each year. Our intervention, instead of simply adjusting for inflation, adjusted the spending plan based on asset balance changes, with an inflation-adjusted increase of up to 5% each year or a decrease of up to 2.5% each year. In poor markets, expenses have a "hard floor" of 75% of the initial inflation-adjusted target. For each investor, we ran 10,000 market scenarios using the Vanguard Financial Advice Model for each method.

To quantify the value of dynamic spending, we projected each investor's spending and expected bequest under different market scenarios—poor (5th percentile), median, and excellent (95th percentile)—and then averaged the results across all investors for each scenario. As **Figure 10** shows, at the median market, both average spending and average bequest increase when the dynamic spending technique is used. In poor markets, the strategy reduces retirement spending by an average of just 1%, while helping safeguard assets and boosting expected bequest by 60%. In strong markets, it allows for a 26% lifetime spending increase while reducing the very generous bequest amounts by only 15%.

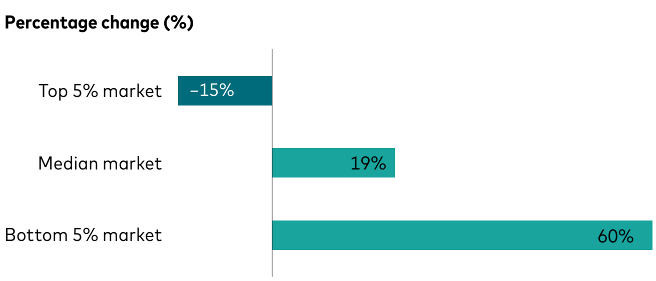
FIGURE 10

Dynamic spending increases income in good markets and safeguards assets in poor ones

a. Client average change in retirement spending



b. Client average change in expected bequest



Source: Vanguard.

Of course, these reported numbers are only in aggregate. Individual clients will experience differing results. In fact, we found that about 4% of the investors in our sample would prefer the baseline spending method to the dynamic spending alternative. It's important to measure value on an individual basis and not just assume that a rule of thumb is always appropriate. No intervention is always appropriate for everyone.

Measuring emotional and time value

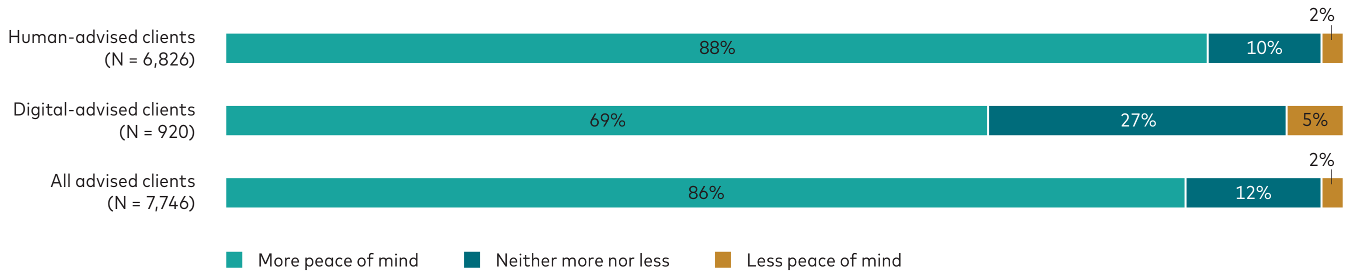
In Figure 2, we saw that our survey respondents told us that peace of mind was the number one reason that they got advice, and that time savings was also an important factor. Americans report that money is one of their top stressors (American Psychological Association, 2022). At the same time, Americans spend on average between seven and eight hours per week thinking about their finances (Sergeyev, Lian, and Gorodnichenko, 2024). Clearly, it's important to know the effect that advice can have on these important aspects of investors' lives, but it can be difficult to envision how to measure them, given their intangible nature.

How do we set up a baseline versus advised state to measure these "softer" components of value? One way to measure the emotional and time value of advice is to use a survey. Recently, Vanguard did just that (Costa, Martino, and de la Fuente, 2025). The researchers used their own survey, conducted in July 2024, to measure whether advice provides clients with peace of mind using the following question: "Compared to managing my finances on my own, having an advisor/digital advisor service gives me (a lot less, less, neither more nor less, more, a lot more) peace of mind."

As **Figure 11** shows, 86% of clients reported having more peace of mind when they worked with an advice provider. The researchers also found that advisors seem to do a better job at reducing negative emotions regarding client's finances than at increasing positive emotions.

FIGURE 11

The vast majority of investors report getting emotional value from advice



Notes: The survey question said, "Compared to managing my finances on my own, having an advisor service gives me (a lot less, less, neither more nor less, more, a lot more) peace of mind." Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Vanguard.

Conclusion

Financial advice provides value beyond portfolio management—namely, financial planning, peace of mind, and time-saving. Measuring these values requires a tailored, multimetric approach that considers client preferences and intervention specifics. Effective communication balances the use of simple, relatable metrics with the rigor of complex evaluations, ensuring that clients get the best recommendations and appreciate the full benefits of the advice they receive.

We draw from our research four lessons about how to effectively communicate to clients the value of advice.

First, when talking about what success means for clients, advisors should choose metrics that are relevant to them. For some clients, success may mean high levels of bequest. For others, it could mean not running out of money in retirement. Different goals require distinct measures.

Second, when evaluating a specific intervention, use metrics that are relevant to that intervention. For example, for Roth conversions, clients want advisors to highlight the dollar amount of tax savings instead of using a general retirement success measure.

Third, our survey shows that even for a single goal (for example, retirement), clients may be interested in multiple dimensions of success, such as projected income, probability of success, and performance, among others.

Finally, we recommend that advisors use cutting-edge techniques to measure the value of advice, while presenting the results to clients in "plain talk."

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Appendix

A high probability of confusion

When financial planners use complex metrics, it's crucial to explain them clearly to clients, even if they seem self-evident. For instance, the probability of success is a common metric used to gauge whether a financial plan is on track. However, understanding this measure can be challenging.

We aimed to understand investors' perceptions of this metric. Did they like it intuitively? Overall, they did—it was the second most popular choice for a retirement goal success metric. But did they understand it? In our July 2025 survey, we asked respondents to rate potential interpretations of an 85% success rate for a planning horizon that extends to age 100. There was no strong consensus; no response got more than 60% agreement on whether it was correct or incorrect.

An 85% success rate when planning to age 100 is excellent, because the odds of both living to 100 and running out of money are very low (**Figure 12**). However, nearly half our respondents were not comfortable with this, and two-thirds felt the success rate needed improvement.

This highlights a common challenge for advisors: convincing clients who have saved successfully for retirement that they can enjoy their savings. We are conditioned to think that 85% is a "B" and that a higher success rate is always better, but striving for a higher number can be counterproductive. Fitzpatrick (2024) even calls the probability of success a "Scrooge score," noting that a 100% success probability likely means the plan entails underspending the client's resources.

Probability of success is not a bad metric, but it is more complex than it appears. It requires careful consideration of when and with whom to use it. Providing clear explanations and pairing probability with simpler metrics can provide additional context and reduce confusion.

FIGURE 12

An 85% chance of success at age 100 is a high chance of success in a lifetime

Note: The figure illustrates the hypothetical example of a 65-year-old female investor with $1 million in taxable investments invested in 60% stocks and 40% bonds, $30,000 in annual Social Security payments, and annual expenses of $70,218.

Source: Vanguard.

FIGURE 13

Demographics of the survey sample

	Number	Percentage
Total sample	13,404	100%

Type of service (not mutually exclusive)	**Number**	**Percentage**
Vanguard human-advised clients	10,873	81%
Vanguard digital-advised clients	1,199	9%
External human-advised clients	1089	8%
External digital-advised clients	149	1%
Self-directed clients	1334	10%

Work status	**Number**	**Percentage**
Retired clients	9,745	73%
Nonretired clients	3,659	27%

Gender	**Number**	**Percentage**
Female	4,788	36%
Male	8,293	62%
Other	15	0%
Prefer not to answer	308	2%

Value of financial assets	**Number**	**Percentage**
Less than $10,000	85	1%
$10,000–$19,999	75	1%
$20,000–$49,999	139	1%
$50,000–$99,999	245	2%
$100,000–$249,999	703	5%
$250,000–$499,999	1,090	8%
$500,000–$999,999	2,230	17%
$1,000,000–$4,999,999	6,684	50%
$5,000,000 or more	732	5%

Notes: The data are from an online survey of Vanguard clients conducted in July 2025. The sample included both working and retired clients and both human- and digitally advised clients. For type of advice service, respondents could select multiple types that they pay for. For financial assets, additional response options included "Not sure" and "Prefer not to say." Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: Vanguard.

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