



For Immediate Release

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MFS Survey Shows Plan Sponsor Confidence Improving Dramatically

Plan Sponsor Confidence Scores a “B” in Latest MFS Workplace Retirement Readiness Indicator

BOSTON (April 7, 2026) – Findings from the annual MFS Defined Contribution Plan Sponsor Survey show that plan sponsors’ confidence in their participants being able to retire when they want has increased dramatically year-over-year. One-third of sponsors are now very or extremely confident in their participants’ ability to retire at their target age, up from just 18% one year prior. The result: a score of “B” on MFS’ proprietary Workplace Retirement Readiness Indicator.

The survey, which captures insights from 153 plan sponsors representing over \$400 billion in plan assets and nearly one million participants, also identified key trends regarding personalized advice, the demand for alternative investments, target date funds (TDFs), and active management.

Plan Sponsor Confidence is Improving; Participants Remain Skeptical

Sponsors’ growing confidence is attributed to factors such as strong contribution rates (94%), participant engagement (67%), and the effective use of tools and services (54%). Challenges remain, however, with 77% of sponsors citing current economic conditions as a major concern impacting retirement readiness.

“Economic concerns will always factor into confidence levels, but the survey responses indicate that the steps plan sponsors are taking to engage and serve participants are successfully breaking through and resonating” said Jeri Savage, Lead Retirement Strategist at MFS. “The challenge will be to continue to reinforce these efforts over time — not just with education, but with personalized advice.”

Retirement is Personal

According to the survey, 70% of sponsors believe that personalized advice is key to improving retirement outcomes. Nearly three-quarters of sponsors (74%) currently offer advice services; 62% offer direct access to personalized advice for all participants, and 37% deliver similar services via an in-plan, managed account offering.

The 2025 MFS Global Retirement Survey validates this approach to personalized advice, as 71% of participants from that survey expressed an interest in working with an advisor if their plan offered access to one.

“Plan sponsors clearly recognize the increasing demand for tailored guidance among participants, and the survey findings further emphasize the importance of providing access to advisors. Retirement is a deeply personal journey; we would encourage sponsors to evaluate whether their plans are able to meet participants’ growing expectations for access to personalized advice,” said Savage.

Alternative Strategies Not (Yet) Resonating

MFS’ survey also reveals that some sponsors remain cautious regarding alternative strategies* becoming more widely available in qualified retirement plans. A majority of sponsors currently cite little to no interest in including alternative strategies in plans, and 64% report that their participants similarly demonstrate little if any interest in the asset class. In fact, any interest appears to stem primarily from media coverage, which has prompted less than a third of plan sponsors to only provide some basic educational information at this time.

“While alternative assets may one day find their way into qualified retirement portfolios to a greater extent, today, it’s quite possible that headline hype is driving a solution in search of a problem that has yet to reveal itself in a materially significant way for participants,” Savage noted.

Accumulation is Essential

This year’s results underscore the dominant position TDFs have as a qualified default investment alternative (QDIA) option: 86% of sponsors surveyed confirmed that TDFs are the QDIA option in their plans. New to the survey this year, MFS wanted to unpack which specific risks plan sponsors hoped to address by offering TDFs. At 38%, diversification risk topped the list, followed by downside market risk near retirement (22%), behavioral risk (19%), and longevity risk (12%).

“TDF providers often tout their glidepath construction as a mechanism to manage longevity risk, but the survey shows that longevity risk isn’t in sponsors’ top three of risks they expect their TDFs to address. Sponsors therefore may want to instead emphasize diversification and downside risk management strategies, along with the glidepaths that are best positioned to meet those priorities,” Savage added.

The Role of Active Management

According to the survey, many plan sponsors are prioritizing active strategies to navigate market volatility and capitalize on investment opportunities, with 65% confirming their plans offer actively managed strategies. Of those respondents, slightly more than half believe active is a better way to implement certain strategies, while 86% say it is good practice to offer a mix of both active and passive strategies.

“The data suggests that active management continues to play a prominent role, particularly in larger plans, where sponsors are more likely to integrate active investments into their offerings. This balance between active and passive strategies underscores the flexibility and diversity that sponsors aim to provide in their DC plans when considering plan menus,” said Savage.

To view the full report, visit [MFS.com](https://www.mfs.com).

* “Alternatives” and “alternative strategies” refer broadly to private assets and digital assets.

About the survey

A quantitative, blind survey was conducted from October to November 2025 of 153 plan sponsors of varying asset sizes. All survey respondents were promised anonymity, and none are identified in the report. Plan sponsors were based in the United States and sourced through the DCIIA Plan Sponsor Institute (PSI). DCIIA, an independent third-party research provider, conducted the study. MFS was not identified as the sponsor of the study. MFS Investment Management nor its subsidiaries are affiliated with DCIIA or its the PSI. To determine eligibility to participate, industry practitioners were screened and selected if their company or institution offered a defined contribution plan (e.g., 401(k), 403(b), and/or 457) or other defined contribution plan, defined benefit plan or other non-qualified deferred compensation plan.

The ***MFS Workplace Retirement Readiness Indicator*** is based on a subset of questions from our 2026 MFS DC Plan Sponsor Survey that were indicators of higher sponsor confidence in the ability of their participants to retire comfortably. A range of points was assigned to each question (noted in parenthesis below) based on the relative importance of each question. The maximum score available is 31 points. Sponsors who answered the first question noted below as “extremely” or “very” confident had an average score of 20.1 points (A- grade). Sponsors who answered the first question below as “not at all” or “not very” confident had an average score of 14.7 points. (B-grade). The average score for all survey respondents was 16.6 points (B grade)

About MFS®

In 1924, MFS launched the first US open-end mutual fund, opening the door to the markets for millions of everyday investors. Today, as a full-service global investment manager serving financial advisors, intermediaries and institutional clients, MFS still serves a single purpose: to create long-term value for clients by allocating capital responsibly. That takes our powerful investment approach combining collective expertise, thoughtful risk management and long-term discipline. Supported by our culture of shared values and collaboration, our teams of diverse thinkers actively debate ideas and assess material risks to uncover what we believe are the best investment opportunities in the market. As of February 28, 2026, MFS manages US\$669.8 billion in assets on behalf of individual and institutional investors worldwide. Please visit [mfs.com](https://www.mfs.com) for more information.

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