Prescience 2030: The next wave

Expert opinions on the future of financial well-being and retirement benefits

Transamerica℠

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Introduction

The employee benefits landscape is rapidly evolving. That's why it was imperative for the Prescience 2030 panel to include experts who focus on next-level workplace benefits programs and who understand the powerful economic, cultural, and technological forces now impacting them. Perhaps more importantly, along with extensive experience in workplace retirement and financial well-being programs, the panelists participating in Prescience 2030 bring an insider's view of what may lie ahead.

Transamerica's Prescience research seeks to establish a vision for retirement and financial well-being programs by year-end 2030. The research was conducted using a systematic, interactive forecasting method that relies on a panel of experts. Known as the Delphi method, it is widely used for business applications.

This report, *Prescience 2030: The next wave*, is based on the first of two polls in the 2030 series, conducted in August 2025 and followed up with an in-depth discussion among key participants. Of more than 300 experts invited to participate, 53 responded to the initial poll on financial well-being with a sub-group joining the subsequent discussion. We think you'll find their insights interesting and useful as you take on the next wave in the evolution of employee benefits.

Workplace benefits and the rising tide of artificial intelligence

💬 **"Anything automated and simplified is beloved. AI is making this happen. I see plan sponsors, participants, and the advisors who work with them leveraging it more every day."**

Robin Green, WinMore Plans

From plan design and communications to litigation and fiduciary protection, panelists anticipate a wave of artificial intelligence (AI) applications to sweep through the employee benefits ecosystem.

Hyper-personalized financial guidance

By analyzing employee data, AI-driven platforms can tailor financial advice and recommendations to each employee's financial situation and goals. Personalization will help employees make informed decisions about their retirement savings and financial wellness. For example, content related to emergency savings or budgeting may be directed to a participant who has taken multiple retirement plan loans or withdrawals.

Retirement plan platforms will use hyper-personalized, AI-generated content based on employee behavior to guide employees in financial wellness decisions.

94%
agree or strongly agree

Optimizing retirement plan design

Retirement plan design could also benefit from AI benchmarking, with algorithms analyzing workforce demographics and characteristics to tailor retirement plans, making them more effective for the workforce and more attractive to potential employees.

AI will provide powerful tools to help plan sponsors conduct benchmark comparisons to remain competitive.

97%
agree or strongly agree

Investment decisions

AI tools will likely impact investment menus, but the extent of the impact is not yet clear. While acknowledging AI's ability to make recommendations based on market trends, investment option analysis, and plan goals, panelists were divided on how it could play out. Even in the absence of consensus, it is reasonable to expect AI to play an increasing role in shaping the future of financial wellness and retirement planning, potentially improving personalization, optimization, risk management, and employee engagement.

AI will be integral to plan sponsors' investment array decisions.

👍 **56%**

agree or strongly agree

Predicting and mitigating fiduciary risks

AI's ability to apply predictive analysis, document review algorithms, employee communication reviews, and more may help identify potential risks and provide recommendations to mitigate them. This proactive approach will likely help plan sponsors manage fiduciary responsibilities more effectively and may reduce the likelihood of litigation.

Most employers will use AI to help identify potential fiduciary risks that could lead to ERISA litigation.

👍 **66%**

agree or strongly agree

Financial wellness and education programs

It's clear from the survey that financial wellness programs will continue to be important in the workplace. Non-retirement-related benefits such as health savings accounts (HSAs), emergency savings funds, and student loan benefits will continue to play a part in helping employees meet their financial needs.

Less clear is whether participants will rely more on professional advice and/or technology to make financial choices.

79%
agree or strongly agree

To optimize their plan design, employers will take steps to help employees address their non-retirement-related financial needs.

56%
agree or strongly agree

It will be more important to provide a "do-it-for-me" approach than it will be to teach financial literacy.

Retirement benefits as a competitive edge

Competition for talent in the workforce continues. Panelists believe retirement benefits can help meet the challenge and that they are likely to feature prominently in hiring discussions.

87%
agree or strongly agree

Optimizing the design of the retirement savings plan can help an employer attract hard-to-find talent in a competitive labor market.

69%
agree or strongly agree

Retirement plan benefits will be front and center in hiring discussions with candidates.

Investing and fund lineups

How fund lineups may change

By December 31, 2030, Prescience panelists expect fund lineups to include investments that previously were considered higher-risk options.

Investments that will be more prominent by year-end 2030:

Fund option	Percentage who agree or strongly agree
Collective investment trusts (CITs)	84%
Managed accounts	68%
Built-in lifetime income options	72%
Private market investments	88%
Alternative investments	72%

> "We're going to see more use of cryptocurrencies, but that doesn't mean the results will be good. It's really a question of how these things will be implemented and in what form the growth of their usage will come."
>
> **Joshua Dietch**, NMG Consulting

When queried about the role cryptocurrencies may play in years ahead, panelists acknowledged the transformative potential of cryptocurrencies and the blockchain technologies allowing them. But they recognize the challenges and uncertainties associated with adoption and regulation of these riskier investments.

Litigation and legislation

> "If the algorithm that recommended the investments is incorrect, who do you sue? The concepts we're working with were created in the 1960s and 1970s and the environment we have now is totally different. And the changes are not over."

Marcia Wagner, Wagner Law Group

Many on the Prescience 2030 panel expect ERISA litigation to increase by the end of 2030, and that regulatory delays related to landmark legislation like the SECURE Act and SECURE 2.0 will discourage innovative solutions.

Panelists were asked to rank factors they believe will be primary drivers of ERISA litigation. Due diligence and fiduciary concerns top the list.

Factors in ERISA litigation by year-end 2030

Rank	Litigation Topic
1	Due diligence and fiduciary process
2	Fund lineup or investment policy
3	Disclosures
3	Fees and expenses
5	Use of forfeitures
6	Retirement outcomes

73% agree or strongly agree

There will be an increase in ERISA litigation.

94% agree or strongly agree

Delayed Department of Labor and Treasury guidance on landmark legislation will be a major obstacle to plan sponsor adoption of innovative solutions.

Conclusion

The technology tsunami has reached the world of workplace benefits, including retirement plans and financial wellness — and more is coming. How it reshapes our environment and impacts plan sponsors and participants is yet to be determined.

The first poll of Prescience 2030 revealed predictions that may help plan sponsors and providers meet the challenges ahead, such as:

- The use of AI informed by individual behaviors to deliver the right financial wellness tools to each employee
- The potential to apply AI tools for plan benchmarking and to identify fiduciary risks

Still, it raised significant questions:

- In light of rapid changes, how will governmental and regulatory oversight agencies stay up-to-date?
- If AI recommendations don't produce desired results, where would legal liability fall?
- Will the current rules-based environment of benefits law be replaced by a principles-based framework?
- How might this shift affect regulatory agencies, fiduciaries, advisors, and others who work with workplace benefits?

Regulators' roles are likely to change in response to the evolving landscape, as are the roles of plan advisors, fiduciaries, and others serving the industry. Shifting away from rules will shine a spotlight on the principles and motivations of everyone involved. And participants in the follow-up discussion are fine with that.

There is little question among Prescience panelists that significant changes are coming, but how they will play out remains to be seen. These issues will be explored further in our next Prescience 2030 poll.

"I don't think we ought to be ambivalent about AI. It is coming, and it will have a huge, disruptive effect on the participants in these plans and their employment. I don't think it's just a value-add. I think it could potentially change the very complexion of what we're trying to do with retirement plans and financial wellness."

Nevin Adams, JD

"Leadership in the retirement plan industry is unlike what you see in other industries. There's always going to be a bad guy out there. But by and large, I see an industry jam-packed full of people who recognize that our work really helps our brothers, our sisters, our cousins, our aunts, our uncles, and our neighbors. It's very personal and we care."

Robin Green, WinMore Plans

"The value we bring as human beings and financial professionals are our principles and the judgment that comes from them."

Marcia Wagner, Wagner Law Group

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