AXA Better Life Index

Uncovering Singaporeans’ journeys towards a better life

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What does having a “better life” mean to Singaporeans? At AXA, we are committed to building a stronger and safer society by empowering people to live better lives. Beyond traditional insurance protection, we are continuously striving to serve as an encouraging partner in our customers’ lives, and we want to play a part in helping them build the self-belief needed to actualise their goals and achieve a better life on their own terms.

Financial well-being and career success are often top-of-mind when we think about building better lives for ourselves and our families, and we have observed financial well-being becoming an increasingly growing concern for Singaporeans. That led us to wonder if financial well-being is indeed how a “better life” is being defined, or if there is more to it.

The rise of new societal characteristics such as an ageing population, longer life expectancies, and the growing sandwich generation mean that achieving and maintaining financial well-being will take up more attention of Singaporeans in the years to come. Comprehensive protection against financial emergencies will also become increasingly important. For instance, in our Better Beyond Survey conducted in 2018, we found out that despite 9 in 10 Singaporeans thinking they would contract a critical illness before they turn 65, only 52% were insured against critical illness. At the same time, 6 in 10 Singaporeans said their savings would not last more than a year if they had to stop working due to critical illness.

To gain a closer look into our current and future customers’ definition of a “better life” and understand how we can support them in overcoming their challenges faced in achieving their goals, we commissioned Nielsen to conduct a research study, the AXA Better Life Index, in June 2019, which surveyed 1,008 Singaporeans across 4 generations (Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, and Baby Boomers). Beyond measuring life satisfaction and happiness, we sought to understand how Singaporeans of each generation are shaping up and leading their own purposeful life journeys through the AXA Better Life Index.

The AXA Better Life Index is the first index to assess the overall journey towards a better life among Singaporeans. We hope this report will inspire every Singaporean to know that they can achieve their goals and live a better life.
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What does living a “better life” mean to Singaporeans?

One of the key components of understanding Singaporeans’ life journeys involves taking a deeper look at how they feel about their current lives, and the elements that they feel can make their lives better. This was done by asking Singaporeans across the 4 generations to describe what they perceive to be a “better life” for them.

To Singaporeans, having a “better life” mostly revolved around financial independence, health, and having enough for daily expenses. A happy family and personal happiness came after these two, implying that Singaporeans may be more realistic and less emotional when thinking about improving their current lives.

- Financial independence: 25%
- Be healthier: 25%
- Enough money for daily expenses: 16%
- Have a happy family: 12%
- Be happy: 11%
- Work-life balance: 9%
- Wealth/asset accumulation: 8%
- Quality time with family: 8%
- Enjoy life: 7%
- Good income: 7%
What does living a “better life” mean to each generation?

- **Gen Z**
  - 1995 - 2001
  - (18 - 24 years old)

- **Millennials**
  - 1980 - 1994
  - (25 - 39 years old)

- **Gen X**
  - 1965 - 1979
  - (40 - 54 years old)

- **Baby Boomers**
  - 1954 - 1964
  - (55 - 65 years old)
“A better life means being able to afford things I want without having to think too much of it.”

The generation that is still discovering life, Gen Z are either still in school or have recently entered the workforce. Their definitions of a “better life” reflect the typical challenges of young adulthood, revolving around financial independence. Many mention the desire to become financially independent, or to be able to earn enough money for their own expenses. Unlike other generations, Gen Z are more focused on themselves in describing a “better life”. This is presumably reflective of their life stage and their lack of dependents. Enjoyment is a recurrent theme, with some of their primary concerns being “enjoying life and feeling happy”, living “a less stressful life”, and having “more money to spend and enjoy”.

“A better life is…

- To be financially independent: 26%
- To have enough money for daily expenses: 18%
- To be happy / have happiness: 18%
- To have better health / be healthier: 14%
- To have a less stressful life: 12%
**MILLENNIALS | 25 - 39 years old**

“A better life means to not worry about my job, pay more attention to my health, and spend more time with family and friends.”

To Millennials, a “better life” translates to achieving their financial goals, and being able to pay more attention to their health. They appear to be the most driven generation, aspiring to “have a job that they love” and looking to make an impact in their own lives and the lives of others.

Compared to Gen Z, Singapore’s Millennials also equate a “better life” with financial independence, but more in terms of financial stability and being able to cope with increasing expenses. As they undergo major life transitions, from singlehood to getting married or having children, Millennials are facing increasing work and family responsibilities. They also highlight the importance of work-life balance and being “happy at work” as key elements to have a better life, which is unlike other generations.

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**A better life is...**

- **27%** To be financially independent
- **21%** To have better health / be healthier
- **13%** To have enough money for daily expenses
- **13%** Work-life balance
- **13%** To have a happy family

“Fulfilling dreams of a stable career and building own family.”

“Stable income, healthy family, work-life balance..”
A better life means taking care of my family and looking after my health.

Gen X tend to be family-oriented and highly value their family members’ happiness and well-being. They want to be able to meet the needs and wants of their families and make them happy, by taking care of their elderly parents and younger children financially, physically and emotionally. In addition to fulfilling their family’s needs, they also prioritise their own health, and being financially self-sufficient for their own retirement.

Being healthy and happy and having a loving family to share experiences with.

Able to retire with enough retirement funds.

Having enough money for comfortable living.

A better life is...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>To have better health / be healthier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26%</td>
<td>To be financially independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17%</td>
<td>To have enough money for daily expenses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11%</td>
<td>To have a happy family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9%</td>
<td>To be happy / have happiness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“A better life means being able to live a fulfilling life.”

For Baby Boomers, consisting of mostly retirees, happiness for themselves and their families is central to a “better life”. This generation values freedom to do the things they want to do at this stage in their life, such as having the “time to do voluntary work” and to “travel without financial restraint”. At the same time, they place importance on “protecting the family’s happiness and well-being in the long run”.

A better life is...

- To have better health / be healthier: 28%
- To be financially independent: 22%
- To have enough money for daily expenses: 16%
- To have a happy family: 12%
- To be happy / have happiness: 12%

“Better health and not be a burden to family.”

“Live better than ever. Freedom to do what you like...”

“Health and financial security till death.”
Uncovering Singaporeans’ aspirations: AXA Better Life Index

As we progress along our life journeys, we may not set aside time to question ourselves. “Am I in the right direction? Do I have a purpose or goal in life? Which milestone am I at? What are my struggles and how can I overcome them?” Considering the multitude of factors contributing to a “better life” for each generation, the AXA Better Life Index is designed to inspire Singaporeans to reflect on their current life situations – including their purposes, goals and struggles, and overall progress in leading a fulfilling life.

The index framework was designed based on the concept of a journey with 3 key milestones - Realisation, Empowerment and Achievement - and the scores provide us with an indication as to where Singaporeans are in leading a purposeful life journey.

1. **REALISATION** (Self-awareness)
   - Whether Singaporeans have well-defined purposes and life goals.

2. **EMPOWERMENT** (Self-belief)
   - Whether they are clear about the steps they need to take to achieve their goals, and the confidence they have to achieve these goals.

3. **ACHIEVEMENT** (Progress)
   - Amount of progress they have made on their goals, and the level of satisfaction with their progress.
The overall AXA Better Life index score is 50.4 and it is calculated from the equally weighted sum of the 3 components (Realisation – 58.5, Empowerment – 47.8, and Achievement – 45.0). This shows that Singaporeans are striving to bridge from a fair to a good life. We have observed Singaporeans:

- Set clear short-term goals, but need to do more in defining their long-term aspirations in life.
- Are less confident about reaching their short-term and long-term goals due to factors like financial stress and insufficient emotional support.
- Are not satisfied with their current progress in reaching their goals.
In this year’s survey, we sought to uncover the progression of each generation towards a better life, and attempt to explain the differences. Our findings have shown that Singaporeans are generally aware of their life purposes and goals. Millennials are the most ambitious generation who rated the highest for realisation, empowerment and achievement. They are conscious of their goals and believe in striving hard to attain more in life. In contrast, Gen Z, Gen X, and Baby Boomers scored lower across the 3 sub-indices, with Baby Boomers having the lowest scores. There is still work to be done before each generation achieves their “better life”. Singaporeans need to overcome multiple obstacles surrounding their health, wealth, happiness and relationships before they can feel empowered to achieve their aspirations.

AXA Better Life Index 2019 - Scores across generations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Gen Z</th>
<th>Millennials</th>
<th>Gen X</th>
<th>Baby Boomers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Realisation</strong></td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empowerment</strong></td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Achievement</strong></td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Having a purpose in life guides decisions, shapes goals, and creates meaning in life. In this section of the study, we sought to understand whether Singaporeans felt a clear sense of purpose in their lives, and if they aspired to achieve it by defining both short-term and long-term goals for themselves.

7 in 10 Singaporeans aspire to fundamentally live a life with good health, a happy family and achieve financial freedom. Although there is an internal drive for them to be happy, health, family and wealth form their main aspirations in life.

Defining purpose and setting goals to achieve them

“To stay healthy and care for people I love”  
– Gen X

“To be successful and have a happy family”  
– Millennials

“Save lots of money so that I can travel the world...”  
– Gen Z

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have a purpose in Life</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being Healthy</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy Family</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Freedom</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Happy</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Security</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Singaporeans’ goals: health, wealth, personal enjoyment, happiness, relationships, and community engagement

Among these six categories, health and wealth take precedence over happiness and relationships in Singaporeans’ top short-term and long-term priorities.

- Gen Z and Millennials have high regard for money in their short-term and long-term goals while Gen X and Baby Boomers are concerned about their health in the long run.
- Even with health and wealth on top of their minds, Singaporeans acknowledge that happiness and connection to others are still crucial factors to realise a better life.
- Across generations, “happiness in the family”, “to be happy and healthy”, and “continue to connect with friends and family” have been indicated as important to them.
- On the other hand, only 1 in 10 Singaporeans consider community engagement a priority in their lives.
- While a majority of Singaporeans have both short-term and long-term goals, a portion may not have clearly defined timelines to achieve them.
- Overall, most Singaporeans said they have a purpose in life and short-term goals but fewer have long-term goals. There are some disparities between their purposes in life, and their current short-term and long-term goals.
- While having good health and making their families happy are their top purposes in life, wealth-related goals such as wealth accumulation and financial protection take a higher priority in their top short-term and long-term goals.

Will setting clear timelines help us to be more focused in achieving our goals?
Most of us focus more on short-term goals. Would having more long-term goals help us better plan our life journey?
Community engagement ranks low in our life priorities. What can we do to promote a more connected and inclusive society?
Empowerment captures the level of confidence Singaporeans have in achieving their “better life”. This confidence is the result of their commitment to achieve their goals, and their personal experiences overcoming struggles and obstacles in doing so. In this study, we found that Singaporeans need to be empowered in a few key areas of their lives, considering the struggles that they face.

What can empower Singaporeans to live a better life?
Singaporeans lack confidence in achieving their goals

While most Singaporeans are clear about the steps they need to take to achieve their goals, there is significant potential for improvement in Singaporeans’ confidence to achieve their goals.

Singaporeans experience financial struggles which affect their emotional well-being

Despite health being the top goal for most Singaporeans, financial struggles stand out as their biggest obstacle in achieving their goals. Increasing cost of living and the inability to save enough money are mentioned as the top barriers in achieving both short-term and long-term goals.

Finance-related stress factors may also be affecting Singaporeans' emotional well-being, as well as their ability to find work-life balance in the short-term. The lack of financial protection also comes up as a top concern in the long-term.

Top 5 struggles in achieving short-term goals:

- 58% Increasing cost of living
- 41% Unable to save enough money
- 33% Hard to find work life balance
- 30% Job insecurity
- 28% Emotional and mental stress

Top 5 struggles in achieving long-term goals:

- 51% Increasing cost of living
- 35% Unable to save enough money
- 29% Job insecurity
- 29% Hard to find work life balance
- 26% Not enough financial protection

What can we do now to ensure that we are setting aside enough money for the long-term, so that finances take up less of our worries?
Singaporeans need support across different aspects of their lives

Our findings from this study indicate that support in the form of financial, physical, or emotional aspects are all needed to help Singaporeans navigate and overcome the struggles and obstacles they face in pursuing their goals.

Across short-term and long-term goals, better saving habits, financial planning, and financial protection can provide a safeguard to help Singaporeans have greater peace of mind to pursue other non-financial goals.

Besides physical health, emotional support has also emerged as one of the main areas where Singaporeans may desire support. Across the top factors of empowerment, many mentioned needing more self-belief, family support and care, as well as mental health.

### Top 5 areas of empowerment to help achieve short-term goals

- **45%** Better saving habits
- **44%** Self-belief
- **43%** Support from family / friends
- **41%** Better mental health
- **40%** Physical health

### Top 5 areas of empowerment to help achieve long-term goals

- **48%** Better saving habits
- **44%** Financial planning
- **42%** Physical health
- **39%** Support from family / friends
- **39%** Self-belief
Achievement

What are Singaporeans’ progress in achieving their aspirations?

In measuring the achievement index score, we sought to understand how satisfied Singaporeans feel in their progress towards their goals. The achievement score was the lowest across the 3 sub-indices. This indicates a strong need for Singaporeans both in taking firm steps towards their goals, and feeling satisfied with their levels of achievements.

**Only 6 in 10 Singaporeans are happy with their current lives**, and an even lower proportion say they are fulfilled in their achievements, relationships, and other aspects of life.

- **59%** are happy with their current life
- **50%** feel fulfilled in their achievements, relationships, and other aspects of life

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**Something to think about...**

*How can we better achieve our aspirations in life, to feel more happy and fulfilled?*

*Is fulfillment too dependent on finances?*
Singaporeans have low perceived achievement of their goals

To fulfill a better life, Singaporeans need to find a middle ground between their extrinsic and intrinsic goals while striking a good balance between health, wealth, relationships and community involvement. Singaporeans also appear to be very dissatisfied with their level of achievement, in both short-term and long-term goals.

Considering the obstacles described in attaining their goals, empowering Singaporeans to better plan for their financial goals, while ensuring peace of mind in the face of increasing cost of living is key to alleviate top-of-mind concerns. This would also enable Singaporeans to focus more on progressing towards their other goals, such as in the areas of health, relationships, and emotional well-being.

47% are satisfied with the achievement of their short-term and long-term goals
Financial stability and well-being: choosing a balanced pursuit

In this study, we have discovered the aspirations of Singaporeans across each of the 4 generations – health, family, and happiness generally form the top goals of Singaporeans, along with wealth-related goals such as financial independence, financial protection and wealth accumulation. However, when considering the struggles and obstacles in their lives, financial worries seem to be top-of-mind for everyone. These obstacles potentially obscure Singaporeans’ ability to pursue their most important aspirations with peace of mind, and may explain the lack of confidence and perceived progress in achieving them.

Singaporeans also seem to place a relatively low priority on community involvement, entrepreneurship and financial knowledge. Are Singaporeans spending too much time and effort securing financial stability, to the extent of missing out on their most important purposes in life? Would a more balanced pursuit help Singaporeans attain more fulfilment and well-being in the long run?

What areas of well-being are most important to Singaporeans?

When it comes to well-being, Singaporeans value physical and spiritual well-being the most, above financial and emotional well-being. Social well-being is viewed as the least important.

Our results have indicated that having goals skewed towards financial security may potentially cause an imbalance of physical, spiritual and mental well-being in the long run, as demonstrated in the amount of dissatisfaction in goal achievement, and financial obstacles being seen as top barriers for Singaporeans. For improved well-being, Singaporeans should aim to set a holistic and sustainable range of goals to cover the different aspects of well-being.

**Something to think about...**

Is it possible to plan for a more worry-free life in terms of finances, so that we can pursue other goals for a more balanced life?
Empowering Singaporeans across generations

A closer look at each generation.
Gen Z – how can they be empowered to better define their goals?

Gen Z’s life purpose revolves around being happy, having less to worry about, and living life to the fullest. They show the largest disparity between their aspirations and the perceived realities of their future. Despite their aspirations, Gen Z’s goals and obstacles still revolve around achieving financial independence and overcoming financial concerns.

Almost 5 in 10 Gen Z experience emotional and mental stress due to fear of failure and lack of self-belief. Being at the stage where they may still be largely dependent on their families and have yet to enter the workforce, this generation will need help in defining their ideal futures, and require support systems in place to ensure they are able to pursue their purpose of living life to the fullest.

**Something to think about...**

Is the lack of self-belief and the disparity between life purpose and realities imposing on Gen Z’s ability to define their goals in the long run?

**How is Gen Z doing?**

- 43% are happy with their current lives
- 40% feel fulfilled in their current lives

**What struggles do they face more than other generations?**

- 40% Emotional and mental stress
- 40% Fear of failure
- 33% Lack of self-belief

**Top 5 factors of empowerment**

- Support from family/friends
- Financial planning
- Resilience
- Self-belief
- Better saving habits
Keeping up with the Millennials – what support do they need with their evolving goals?

From this study, we have observed a maturing shift in millennials’ aspirations and the obstacles they face. As this generation enters middle adulthood and accordingly turn their attention to more mature goals, Singaporean millennials appear to have progressed beyond old stereotypes of being self-indulgent, or being unable to work hard.

The top goals of millennials now include maintaining their health, financial stability, and family relationships. This signals an evolution in the support they may need.

While they may face more “grown up” challenges such as increasing cost of living, difficulty in saving enough money, and finding work-life balance, almost 7 in 10 Millennials still have the confidence and self-belief that they can overcome their struggles. They also have a clear understanding of their need to be empowered across 3 dimensions: self-motivation, financial management and savings, as well ask physical and mental well-being.

Top 3 struggles

- Increasing cost of living
- Unable to save enough money
- Hard to find work life balance

Top 5 factors of empowerment

- Better saving habits
- Financial planning
- Courage
- Self-belief
- Physical health
What’s next for Gen X and Baby Boomers?

Despite approaching pre-retirement and late adulthood, the study has shown that many Gen X and Baby Boomers do not feel they have attained their life goals. In addition, 1 in 2 Baby Boomers said they did not have any long-term goals. Among those who had goals, only 4 in 10 were satisfied with their progress.

Many Singaporeans in both generations are still worried about funding their retirement and supporting their families, due to increasing costs of living and not wanting to be a burden to their family. Are these worries impeding their outlook in life, and ability to plan for retirement?

Having a balance of both emotional and financial factors such as a positive outlook in life, proper retirement planning, and good health are crucial for both Baby Boomers and Gen X Singaporeans who will enter pre-retirement in the next decade.

54% of Gen X say they have long-term goals

49% of Baby Boomers say they have long-term goals

Top 3 struggles

- Increasing cost of living
- Unable to save enough money
- Job insecurity

Top 5 factors of empowerment

- Better saving habits
- Physical health
- Financial planning
- Mental health
- Self-belief
**Highlights**

1. While not all Singaporeans plan out their short-term and long-term goals, health, wealth and happiness are generally prioritised in life.

2. Millennials are the most driven generation in realising their purposes and goals in life. They are also the most optimistic in attaining the goals they have set for themselves.

3. Finances appear to be the greatest barrier for Singaporeans, from feeling empowered to achieving their goals. Dissatisfaction with the achievement of their goals mainly come from perceived high cost of living, and not being able to save at desired levels, which may in turn present stressors and affect their emotional well-being.

4. Singaporeans need support in building better timelines for all their goals. Since financial issues are their main concern, having good financial planning is key to achieve their goals in the future.

5. To fulfill a better life, Singaporeans need to find a middle ground between their extrinsic and intrinsic goals while striking a good balance between health, wealth, relationships and community involvement.

**Research methodology and statement**

All the data and conclusions of this report are based on the findings of the 2019 survey, conducted by Nielsen in Singapore on behalf of its client AXA.

Implemented in June 2019, the survey aimed to understand Singaporeans’ perceptions of a better life, and to evaluate the overall journey towards a better life among Singaporeans. Nielsen conducted a large-scale online quantitative survey of 1,008 Singaporean respondents.

The survey results do not necessarily reflect the views of the client. The survey results represent only the basic situation of the population at the time of survey and only serve the purposes of the current research. The Nielsen Consumer Insights Research team designed the survey and refined its opinions to inform the market, industry and general readers. Nielsen is not legally responsible for the data and opinions contained in this report.