

HSBC Life HNW Legacy Planning

Bridging the intentions-action gap



HSBC Life | Opening up a world of opportunity

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About this survey

The big picture

Life insurance has emerged as a preferred legacy planning tool for high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs), surpassing wills and trusts. This is the key finding of our first annual survey examining the legacy planning and wealth transfer landscape across Asia and the Middle East.

It underlines just how quickly life insurance has grown as an indispensable tool to preserve and grow wealth as part of holistic estate planning in recent years. What also stands out is which segment is the most enthusiastic – the young.

This bodes well for future industry growth as these next generation HNWIs age, cement and regularly evolve their legacy plans. Our data reinforces third party projections for high life insurance take-up, with the Asia Pacific market set to be worth \$1.6 trillion by standardised written premiums in 2029, up from \$1.09 trillion in 2020. (1)

However, while there is growth, there is also a big gap. Nearly six in 10 of our surveyed HNWIs do not have any legacy planning in place at all, and the number rises steeply among the Greater China markets of mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, plus the UAE.

Our survey of a little over 900 respondents across nine markets in Asia and the Middle East reveals that of their \$9.9 billion in combined net wealth, \$5.8 billion is currently without a legacy plan. It is, in effect, unsecured.

Our surveyed HNWIs are not just inadequately futureproofing their wealth but also missing out on potential wealth diversification and upside. In this report, we take a close look at what is holding them back and how they can overcome it.

The data demonstrates the solid foundations the industry has to build on and the key role that advisors play. The research consistently highlights how open respondents are to advice and the high value they place on turning to trusted human sources for this.

I hope this report provides you with many actionable insights into the socio-economic drivers influencing HNWI behaviour, plus the strategies that will help them to secure their legacies more effectively.

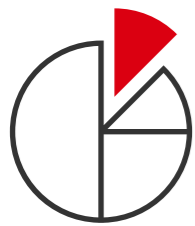
I would like to thank all the HNWIs who took part in this survey. You have helped to articulate why legacy planning is important and the increasingly critical role that life insurance is playing. It is now clear what steps the industry needs to take next to ensure wider and deeper adoption of both.



Edward Moncreiffe
Chief Executive Officer
Insurance
HSBC Group



Key findings



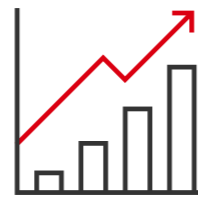
There is an intentions-action gap in legacy planning

While nearly three-quarters of HNWI's report high knowledge of legacy planning and intend to follow through, many are not doing so, with nearly six out of 10 not having a legacy plan in place, creating a \$5.8 billion vulnerability in their combined \$9.9 billion net wealth.



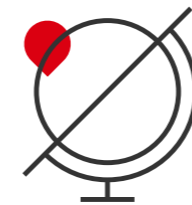
Life insurance is the #1 legacy tool above wills and trusts

One in four HNWI's consider life insurance their top choice for legacy planning, surpassing wills, which are preferred by one in five. Younger HNWI's are leading this trend, with one in three under 40 prioritising life insurance as their primary legacy planning tool.



Market volatility trumps family for legacy planning

Concern about macro-economic and financial volatility is the leading factor driving legacy planning. It is four times more influential than marriage and three times more powerful than the birth of children or grandchildren.



International financial centres are essential to legacy planning

More than nine out of 10 HNWI's are using or strongly considering at least one international financial hub for wealth or legacy needs, with Hong Kong, Singapore and the UAE at the forefront. This signals growing sophistication as HNWI's seek the highly rated institutions based there for diversified solutions.



HNWI's are still looking for the human touch

The three most influential sources of information for legacy planning are people (spouses/partners, dedicated relationship managers and independent financial advisors), with more than four in 10 HNWI's turning to each of these trusted human sources compared to three in 10 for technology-driven research.

Chapter 1: An intentions-action gap

In brief

- ▶ Six out of 10 HNWI do not have a legacy plan, putting their wealth at risk
- ▶ While nearly three-quarters of HNWIs say they feel knowledgeable about legacy planning, their intentions do not readily translate into action, creating an intentions-action gap. This gap is most pronounced in Greater China markets and among those at the lower end of the HNWI wealth spectrum
- ▶ The average age to start legacy planning is 45, with wealthier HNWIs starting earlier

Legacy planning is becoming imperative given Asia is right in the middle of the largest intergenerational wealth transfer in its history.

A total of \$5.8 trillion will pass from one generation of HNWI and ultra-high-net worth (UHNW) individuals to the next through to 2030. (2) HNWIs will account for \$2.4 trillion of this.

Why are the legacy planned figures not higher?

Our data shows that this is because of crucial omissions in respondents' overall knowledge base, even if they self-report good knowledge.

More than three-quarters of respondents agree or strongly agree that insurance offers superior privacy and confidentiality compared to other tools (77%), with a further three-quarters saying the same thing about its certainty and speed of payout (73%).

But at the same time, more than half say they do not have enough information about how to use it for one of its key benefits – wealth transfer (57%).

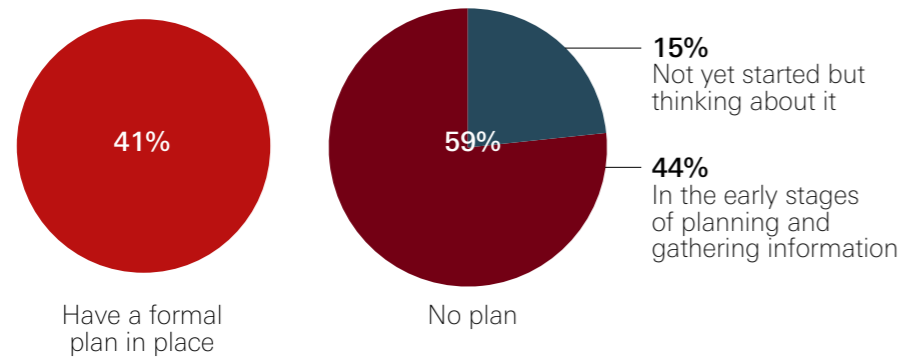
And as Daisy Tsang, Chief Executive Officer, HSBC Life Hong Kong and Macau, says, "There are many reasons why legacy planning often remains on the back burner, even for the most informed individuals. HNWIs have demanding schedules and there are many intricacies in the co-ordination of multifaceted estates.

This may leave them lacking in confidence or feeling a loss of control over their future," Tsang adds.

"This is where professional advisors come in, helping them to navigate complexity, deliver tailored counsel and provide strategic guidance to align wealth preservation objectives."

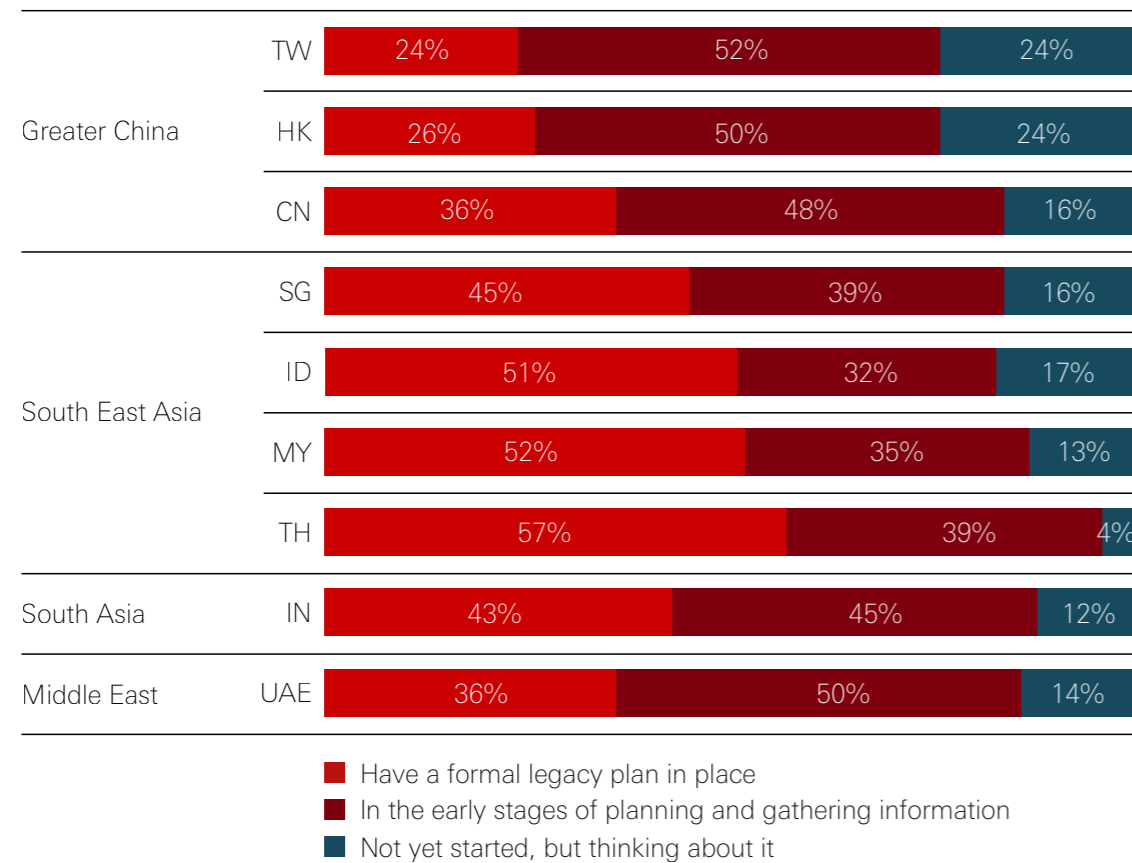
The legacy planning gap

More than half of HNWI do not have a legacy plan, putting their wealth at risk



The geography of legacy planning

There is a pronounced gap between how planned HNWI are in Greater China and South East Asia



Figures rounded to the nearest percentage

Base: All HNWI individuals (908)
QA2: To what extent have you formally started your legacy and wealth transfer planning?

A regional divide

Legacy planning in Asia demonstrates clear regional differences. At the high end of the legacy planning spectrum are the South East Asian markets of Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. At the other end are the Greater China markets of Hong Kong, mainland China and Taiwan.

Greater China's lower planning levels start from a lower self-assessed knowledge base. Surveyed respondents in all three markets rate their legacy planning knowledge below other Asian ones.

HNWIs across the Greater China markets are also more minded to delay for a few more years before taking action. As such, nearly two-thirds of those in mainland China who are thinking about legacy planning do not intend to actively start formalising the process for at least three years.

Lower levels of legacy planning across Greater China are well documented.

A recent HSBC Private Bank report, *Family-owned businesses in Asia: harmony through succession planning*, came to exactly this conclusion. (3) This survey of HNWI and UHNW Asian entrepreneurs found that legacy plans are often put on the back burner because of a cultural aversion to talking about death for fear of hastening it.

But there are signs of change in mainland China at least, driven by rapid economic change and an estimated \$2.98 trillion intergenerational wealth transfer through to 2033. (4)

As Henry Hu, Chief Executive Officer, HSBC Life China, explains: "We're at a crucial juncture, transitioning from the generation that made their wealth as the country started to become a market economy after 1978 to one that has never known any different.

These two generations have profoundly different attitudes," he adds.

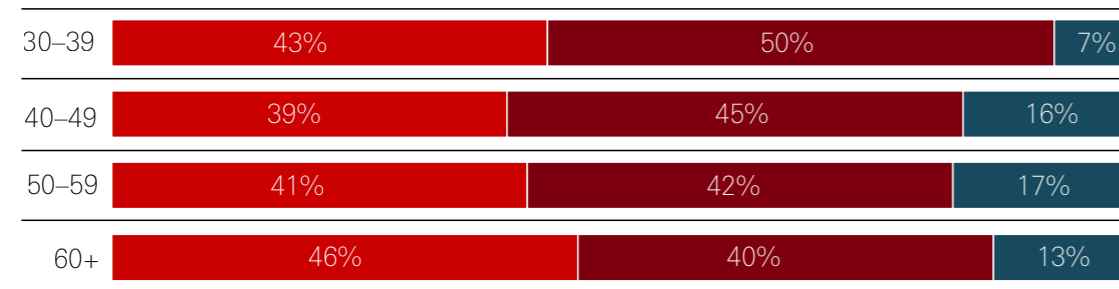
"Younger HNWIs, especially in sectors like tech, are far more knowledgeable. They also view life insurance as a means to accumulate more wealth in addition to the legacy planning benefits, so it's becoming more mainstream."

By contrast, respondents in the UAE, Indonesia and Malaysia have a much greater sense of urgency, in part driven by strong GDP and rising incomes. At least three-quarters plan to start the formal process within the next two years (93%, 88% and 77% respectively).

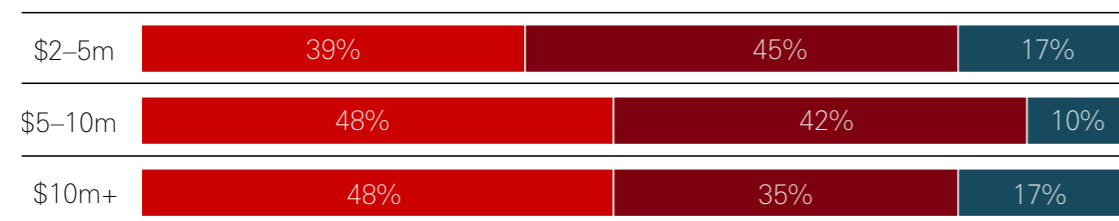
Legacy planning by sub-groups

Legacy planning has moved from niche to mainstream but large gaps remain

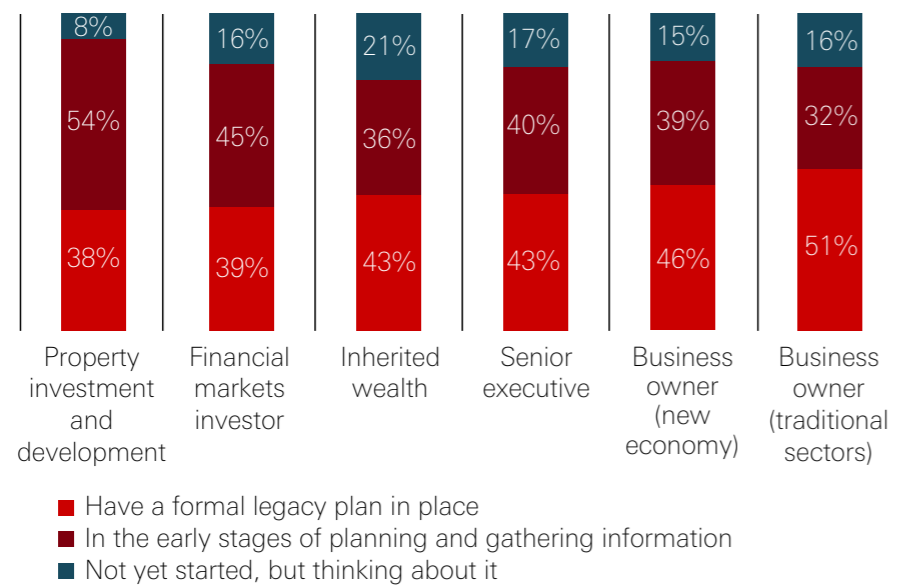
Age: The young drive momentum, while the old remain exposed



Wealth: Even UHNWIs often lack a formal plan



Sources of wealth: Those who inherit wealth lag behind in starting to plan



Figures rounded to the nearest percentage

Base: All HNW individuals (908)
QA2: To what extent have you formally started your legacy and wealth transfer planning?

Youthful drivers, lagging inheritors

Who is most likely to have a legacy plan, the young or the old? On the surface, the answer to this question might seem obvious.

But the reality says otherwise. More than half of the over 60s do not have a legacy plan. It is the youngest who are the most engaged overall.

More respondents in the 30 to 39 group are gathering information compared to the other three, indicating continuing momentum in legacy planning. Indeed, across all our markets, the average age when respondents start to plan is 45.

A recent HSBC report, *The Rise of Multi Retirements* also found that attitudes to retirement are changing. (5) More than half of its survey respondents considered 47 the ideal age to take a first mini-retirement of six to 12 months.

Among our respondents, certain markets are also driving the trend to plan earlier.

At the forefront are Malaysia and the UAE where 82% and 75% of respondents, respectively, say they began their legacy planning before they turned 50. Last is Taiwan, where 40% did not start legacy planning until they were over 50.

Attitudes towards legacy planning are also shaped by sources of wealth. Business owners are the most prepared in terms of legacy planning, while people who inherited wealth are the slowest to get started.

One reason is because HNWI who have inherited wealth rank last among our respondents in terms of self-rated knowledge: 60% compared to 77% for new economy business owners at the other end of the scale.

Another possible reason is because business founders feel a more personal connection to the revenues their firms generate. This awareness of where the money comes from and a sense of ownership over it segues more naturally into stronger views about who to bequeath it to.



Overall, planning for wealth transfers is happening earlier in life. Greater access to information and news coverage of high-profile family disputes are two big prompts to action. Life insurance is really benefitting from this, not least because the confidentiality it provides policy holders lessens the prospect of disagreement among beneficiaries.

Swapan Khanna

Head of Strategy and Business Development, Insurance HSBC Group

Chapter 2: The key drivers for legacy planning

In brief

- ▶ Economic volatility is the chief catalyst pushing HNWI from passive consideration to active legacy planning: it is three times more influential than the birth of children or grandchildren and four times more powerful than marriage
- ▶ Access to professional advice is the main driver prompting the youngest HNWI to begin their legacy journey, with professional advisors becoming an increasingly important factor in legacy planning decisions for all HNWI that move towards formal planning
- ▶ Managing succession is a key planning driver for business owners worried about handling key person risk

Volatility outweighs all

Our research overturns many of the perceived wisdoms about the role which conventional milestones play in prompting legacy planning action.

One chief finding is that traditional factors such as age or lifestyle milestones are far less likely to drive our respondents' legacy plans forward. Instead, the key driver, by some margin, is concern about economic or financial markets volatility.

This applies to survey respondents no matter whether they are currently at the planning stage (45%) or already have a plan in place and are looking to optimise it (48%).

Concerns about volatility shoot up, especially when people start to gather information. It shows that the further respondents move along their legacy planning journey, the greater their concerns about volatility become.

By geography, fear of volatility as a legacy planning trigger is most pronounced in three markets – mainland China, Taiwan and Thailand (51%, 50% and 49% respectively).

Mainland China's financial markets have been especially prone to big swings as the country moves up the income curve, including recent years. For example, the CNI A-share Index, which covers the 300 most liquid stocks on the Shanghai and Shenzhen Stock Exchanges, lost nearly one-quarter of its value during 2022 and 2023 before rebounding 10.35% in 2024. (6)

Then there is the property market. Lianhe Ratings Global estimates that mainland China's property sales accounted for only 53% of their 2021 peak at the end of 2024 after "an unprecedented and prolonged industry consolidation." (7)

Harpreet Bindra, Chief Executive Officer, HSBC Life Singapore, says that prolonged volatility



Volatility is rising and there's a whole cocktail of risks keeping people up at night - from divergent interest rate policies, to geopolitical tensions, concerns about an AI bubble and other potential macro-economic shocks.

William Chan
Global Chief Investment Officer and Head of Investment Hub, Insurance HSBC Group

across multiple asset classes is focusing minds across mainland China. "There's a growing awareness of the need to replace speculative investments in property and stock with far more diversified planning, focusing on wealth preservation as much as creation," he comments.

The uncertainty that volatility generates also emphasises the need for constant planning reviews. And indeed, HNWIs say that volatility remains a source of anxiety even after they have a plan in place. By profession, new economy entrepreneurs top the list for feeling concerned (53%), potentially because industry disrupters worry more than others about being disrupted.

As such, Bindra adds that, "Legacy planning should never be considered a one-off event. Circumstances change whether that be in an individual's own life or the wider financial markets.

It's important to hold regular reviews and ensure that plans are not only up-to-date, but also fit evolving financial and personal goals," he notes.

Concerns around volatility eating into their wealth is one reason why seeking advice from a professional features highly among our respondents as a legacy planning prompt at each stage of the journey, from unprepared to prepared. The impact advisors have is already apparent, even among those who have yet to start, sitting in third place as a legacy planning prompt (29%).

This factor then moves up to second place as a legacy planning prompt for those in the planning stage (36%). It then gains another few percentage points for those who have a plan (40%).

This underscores just how much professional advisors matter in the decision-making process. As Winky Cheng, Chief Operating Officer, Insurance, HSBC Group, says, "Their ability

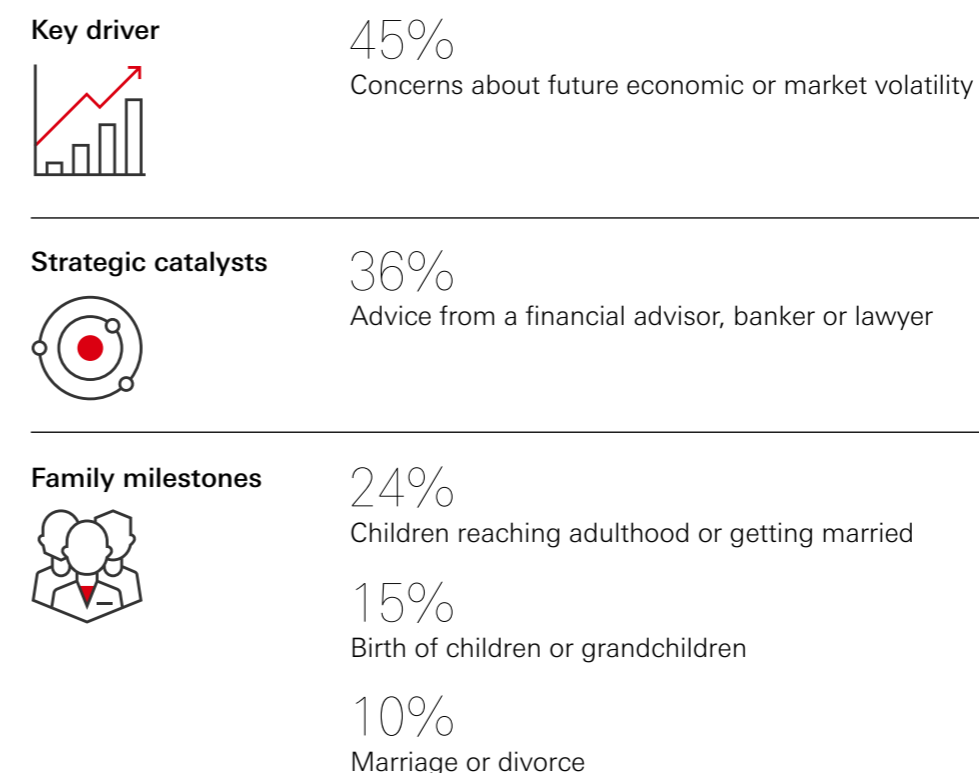
to explain the benefits, personalise solutions and bring clarity to complex situations helps respondents to avoid getting stuck at key points along their legacy journey."

It is one likely reason why the youngest respondents cite professional advisors as the primary factor prompting them to kickstart their legacy journey in the first place (52% of the 30-39 age group).

By geography, professional advisors also feature most strongly as planning prompts across four markets – mainland China, India, Singapore and the UAE. This, in turn, reflects increasing demand for advice in some of the world's fastest growing life insurance markets.

The key legacy planning prompts

Volatility is the chief legacy planning driver and accelerator



Base: All HNW individuals (908)
QA3: Which of the following have been the primary triggers for you to start (or seriously consider) legacy planning?



Managing business succession

For business owners, our data highlights how succession is a key influence for taking legacy planning action, coming up first for new economy entrepreneurs and second, after volatility, for those in traditional sectors.

And there is a clear interplay with volatility here too. The desire to secure a smooth business succession and minimise the impact of destabilising external forces sit hand in hand.

Together, they not only motivate HNWIs to optimise their legacy plans but also to use life insurance to manage 'key person' risk – i.e plan for how their companies, and families will endure once they are no longer around.

As Angela Chan, Chief Distribution Officer, HSBC Life Hong Kong, notes, "Asia has a disproportionate number of first generation entrepreneurs compared to the rest of the world. They're navigating complex succession issues for the very first time and becoming increasingly keen to explore wealth management tools like insurance."

However, as HSBC Private Bank reported in *Family-owned businesses in Asia: harmony through succession planning*, there is a big gap between intentions and actions again. The report found that while 78% of global respondents want to keep their business in the family, 52% have not planned for its future.

Once again, it is mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, which pull the overall statistic above the halfway mark. Almost two-thirds of Taiwanese and Hong Kong entrepreneurs have no plan in place and almost six in 10 across mainland China.

For our respondents with a plan, active consideration of the risks associated with the next generation do not lag far behind fears of market volatility.

Concerns about heirs mismanaging wealth is the top fear of all for traditional business owners (41%), while those who have inherited wealth worry about disputes and family conflicts derailing their plans (43%).

There are also signs of a North-South divide once again. Family related concerns are more prevalent in South East Asian markets.

This is not surprising given that extended families are not only more common in this part of the world (more than 25% of all families), but are also increasing in number in some places like Thailand and Indonesia. (8)

In Singapore and Indonesia, the chief fear is the next generation mismanaging wealth (50% and 40% respectively), while in neighbouring Malaysia the primary concern is the potential for family disputes (43%).

Risks to legacy plan

Fears are fairly evenly balanced between external and internal drivers for those who have a plan

External risk drivers

38%

Global economic or market volatility eroding wealth

31%

Future changes in tax laws eroding the value of inheritance

29%

Complexity and cost of administering the transfer plan

26%

Lack of privacy and confidentiality during the process

21%

Choosing the wrong advisor or institution

Internal risk drivers

37%

Next generation mismanaging or squandering wealth

36%

Potential for disputes among family members

32%

Heirs being unprepared or incapable of managing wealth

28%

Wealth having a negative impact on my heirs' work ethic or values

23%

Wealth being diluted or lost in future divorce settlements for one of my heirs

Base: All HNW individuals (908)
QA7: From the following list, please identify the potential risks to your legacy plan. Please select the top three risks that concern you most.

Chapter 3: Life insurance ranks #1 as a legacy solution

In brief

- ▶ Life insurance is a more popular legacy planning tool than wills and trusts
- ▶ HNWI's choose life insurance because it uniquely offers a mix of preservation/safeguarding and wealth growth
- ▶ It becomes more favoured as a legacy planning solution as HNWI's progress along their legacy journey from unplanned to planned

One key reason why life insurance has become the most popular legacy planning tool for HNWI's is because it does not simply try to protect wealth. It also offers the prospect of capital growth too.

This dual purpose is why it has eclipsed wills, a legacy planning tool that only offers one of the two attributes – protection. Our survey data shows that HNWI's want protection and growth from life insurance products in almost equal measure (53% and 47%).

"For HNWI families, wealth planning is about intention, continuity, and long-term stewardship rather than short-term outcomes," says Michael Wei, Chief Partnership Distribution Officer, HSBC Life Singapore.

"Life insurance provides a structured planning framework – offering certainty, liquidity, and control – so families can manage risk, navigate complexity across markets, and the transfer of wealth across generations."

They also require products that offer flexibility and diversification.

"HNWI's have a more global view of the world than the average investor," says Keanu Liu, Head of High Net Worth and Corporate

Distribution, HSBC Life Hong Kong. "They want to be able to easily move across asset classes and geographies so they don't end up with all their eggs in one basket."

However, while life insurance has become the cornerstone for legacy planning across Asia and the Middle East, not all markets are created equal in terms of penetration rates.

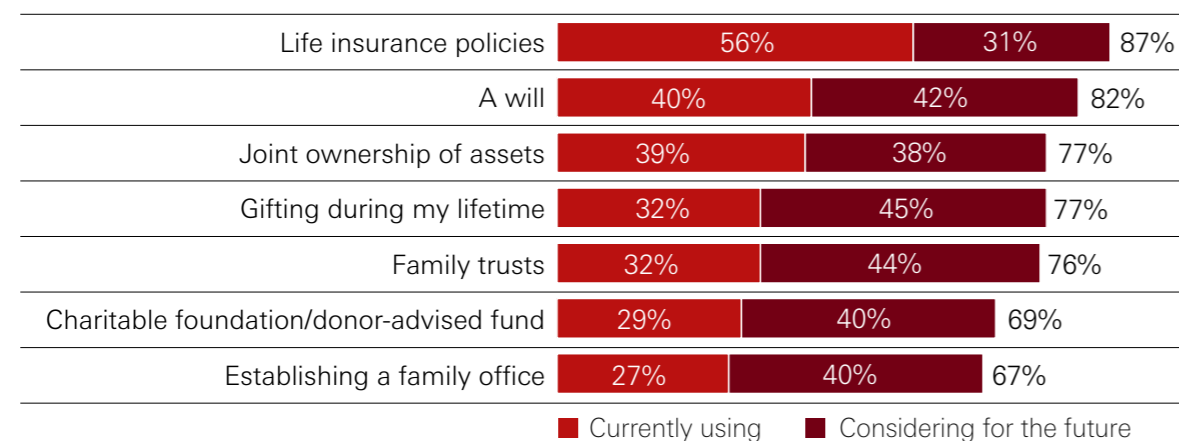
Indonesia, for example, scores highest in terms of overall adoption (66%), but sits towards the bottom end of the surveyed markets when it comes to coverage-to-investable-assets ratios (1.94x compared to a 1.99x average). This measures how much insurance someone has compared to the value of their assets.

In Indonesia's case, the lower ratio suggests that while life insurance appeals as a product, the coverage ratio per HNWI is not as deep as it could be.

The survey data further demonstrates how life insurance becomes more popular as HNWI's progress along their legacy journey. When they start out, just over three-quarters say they are either using or considering life insurance as part of their legacy planning. By the time they have a plan in place, it rises to nine out of 10.

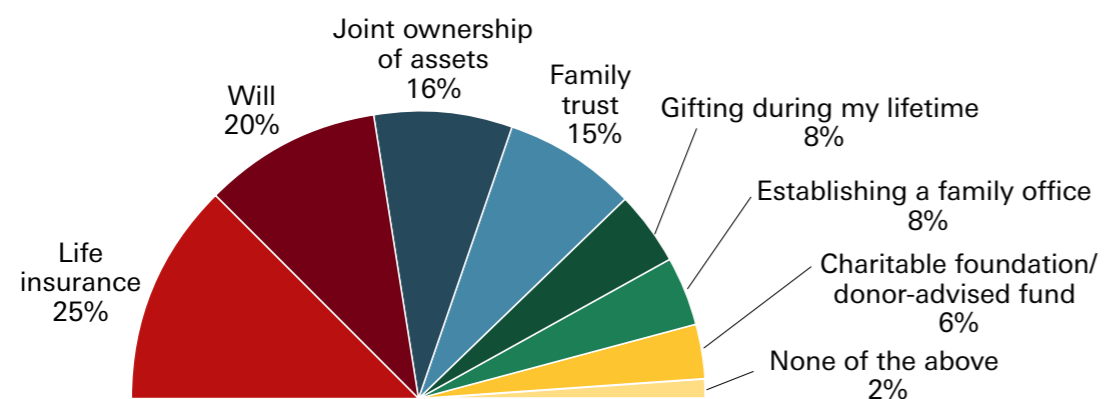
Life insurance reigns supreme

Life insurance has become even more important than a will for legacy planning purposes



HNWIs' primary legacy planning solution

One in four HNWIs consider insurance their most important legacy planning tool compared to one in five for wills



Base: All HNWI individuals (908)

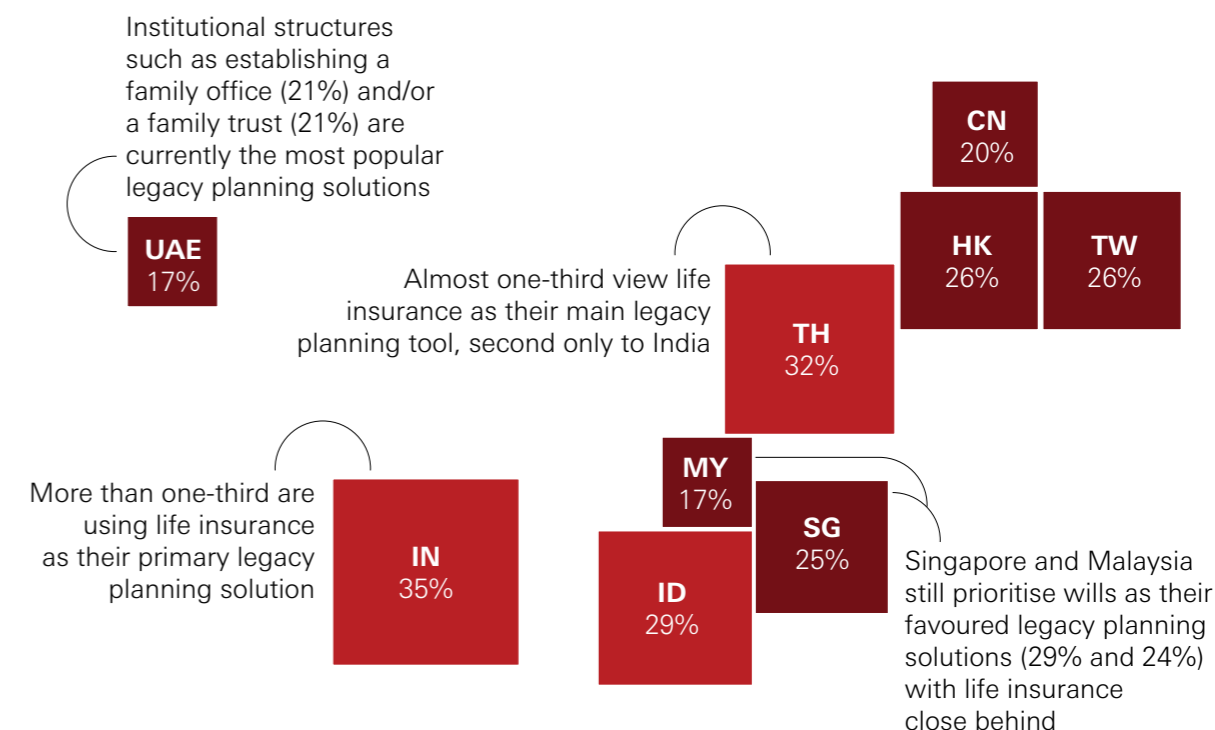
QB3A: For each of the following legacy planning solutions, please indicate which statement best describes your family's current situation. Please select one option for each row.

Base: All HNWI individuals (908)

QB3C: You mentioned using or considering multiple solutions for your legacy planning. Which of these would you consider your primary or most important legacy planning tool?

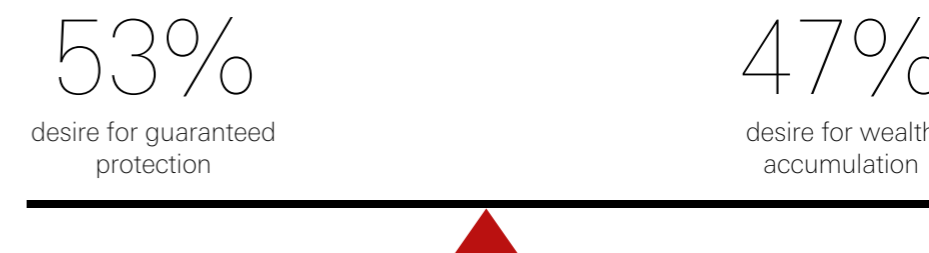
Mapping the life insurance hot spots

The percentages using life insurance as their primary legacy planning tool in each market



Why life insurance is so popular

HNWIs want policies that balance protection and wealth



Base: All HNWI individuals (908)

QB3C: You mentioned using or considering multiple solutions for your legacy planning. Which of these would you consider your primary or most important legacy planning tool?

Base: All HNWI individuals (908)

QB7: When considering an insurance policy for your legacy, what is the ideal balance between protection and growth? You have 100 points to allocate between protection and growth. How would you distribute them?



First generation wealth creators and entrepreneurs want to protect what they've achieved. They operate in industries that move at an extremely rapid pace and are acutely aware of how easy it is to be leap-frogged by a more nimble competitor.

Raj Kumar
Global Head of Customer and Partnerships, Insurance
HSBC Group

Linking legacy goals to products

What HNWIs want from a life insurance product correlates very strongly with how they define legacy in the first place. And for the largest number of respondents, legacy means providing financial security (39%), followed by de-risking (35%), and building the foundations for multi-generational wealth (32%).

As we have consistently highlighted throughout this report, HNWIs believe they will achieve financial security if they can protect themselves from market volatility. Unsurprisingly, those respondents who began their legacy journey most keen on securing a defensive shield against that volatility have the highest desire for products that offer stable growth.

As Michael Wei, Chief Partnership Distribution Officer, HSBC Life Singapore, says, "HNWIs want growth but the desire to create a shield from attacks on their wealth is very strong."

Other types of HNWIs have slightly different financial goals for legacy planning. Those who want to build multi-generational wealth as part of their business succession planning are most likely to seek products that offer maximum value and capital preservation.

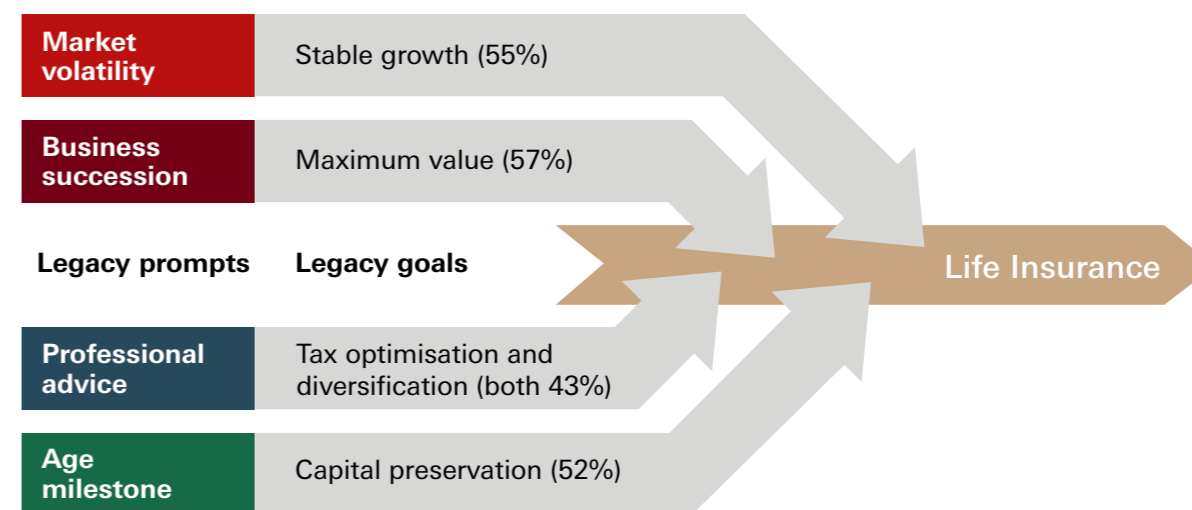
Tax also ranks highly as a requirement for HNWIs who begin their legacy journeys prompted by the professional advice they receive. This group opts for more sophisticated goals such as tax minimisation and global diversification. It suggests that they are highly receptive to strategic counsel.

Those HNWIs driven by family milestones have a strong focus on looking for products that can empower the next generation. This sub-group is also keen on capital preservation and stable growth.

Mainland China is one standout from a geographical standpoint. It is the only one of the nine markets where respondents choose ensuring their family values are carried forward and funding educational opportunities (both 32%) as one of their top three definitions of what legacy means to them.

The life insurance journey planner

The reasons why HNWIs initiate legacy planning are directly linked to their desired financial goals



Addressing what HNWIs want to achieve with life insurance from the perspective of where their wealth comes from highlights further differences between sub-groups.

New economy entrepreneurs are focused on protecting volatile gains and de-risking. As a result, they score highest for seeking capital preservation (51%) and diversification (47%).

This cohort is also the most focused on empowering the next generation to pursue their passions (34%), possibly because founding a new economy company enabled them to follow theirs.

Those who have inherited wealth prioritise stable growth (55%), focusing on steadily

growing their wealth rather than aggressively maximising it. For this sub-group, the end goal is to provide financial security for their family (51%).

Professional investors, whether in property or financial markets, share fairly similar goals to each other. Both are focused on achieving stable growth (49%).

For financial markets investors it is a mechanism they already know extremely well. Property investors, on the other hand, have a more security-focused mandate, also prioritising capital preservation (48% compared to 43% for financial market investors).

Base: All HNWI individuals (908)
QA5: How important are the following financial goals in your legacy planning?
Please select on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all important and 5 is extremely important

Chapter 4: The HNW life insurance wish list

In brief

- ▶ International financial centres are where HNWIs want to be (94%) because this is where the leading institutions are
- ▶ Healthcare is the advanced policy feature that attracts the highest interest
- ▶ HNWIs want clear communication: relationships are ultimately won or lost on the quality of individual advisors

Going offshore

While legacy planning traction is uneven among HNW respondents, the place where they want to conduct their financial affairs is not. Our research underscores an almost unanimous preference for using international financial hubs (94%), with Hong Kong, Singapore and the UAE taking the lead for preferring this approach.

The cross-border nature of HNW wealth also means that multiple international hubs are being used: 4.5 on average. This is most apparent in South East Asia where the average number is higher still (5.5 in Indonesia, 5.3 in Thailand and 5.1 in Malaysia).

Singapore attracts all three, with more than three-quarters of respondents from each market using it for financial planning. The US, on the other hand, has broad global appeal, led by Thailand, Indonesia and the UAE.

Hong Kong draws HNWIs from across Asia. It is both a primary gateway for mainland China (89%), but also a strong draw for South East

Asia, with seven out of 10 respondents from Thailand and Indonesia using it.

Tax benefits are often assumed to be the reason HNWIs look offshore. But this is not what our respondents say. Their top reason is because these locations are home to the leading institutions (44% compared to 37% for tax planning).

Kate Subak, Chief Executive Officer, HSBC Life Bermuda, says, "Offshore planning, as part of legacy planning, is no longer a niche strategy. It's driven by complex cross-border needs and a sophisticated search for stability, quality and diversification."

As such, the qualities that HNWIs want from institutions selling life insurance are ones that reassure them about the safety of their assets. The top two are a long history and high credit rating (both 45%).

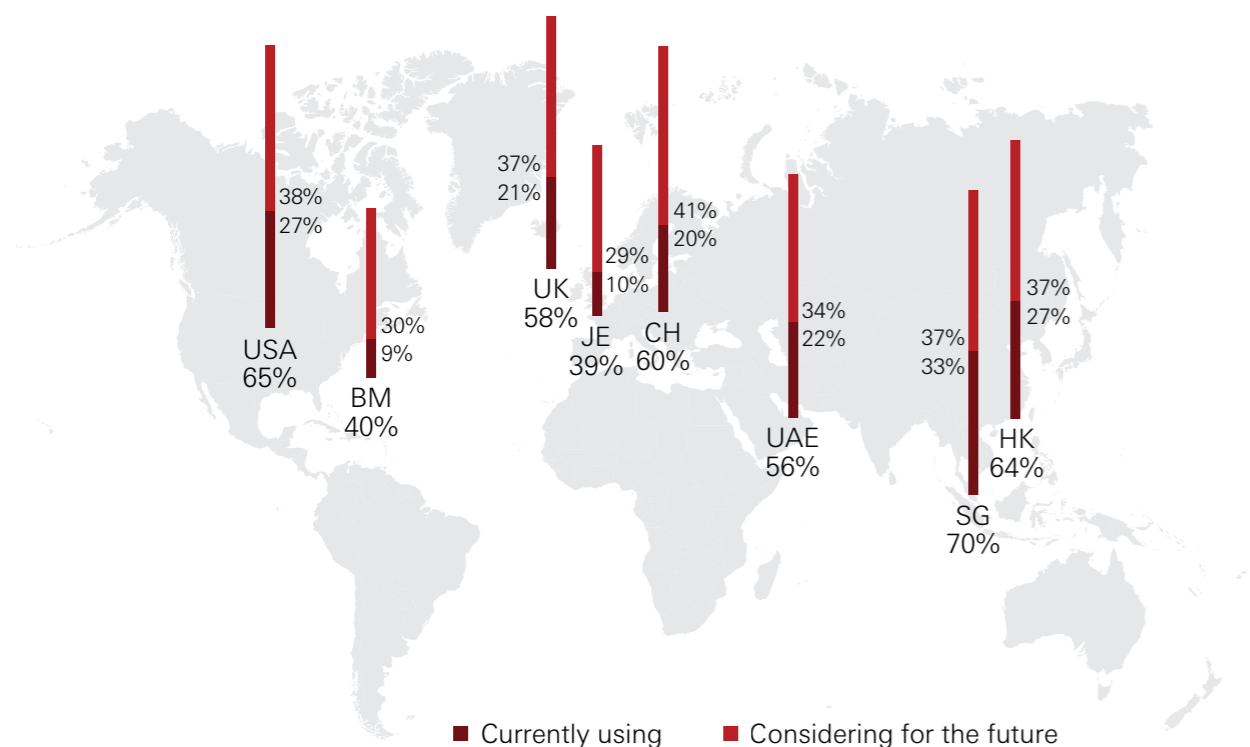
These considerations are even more pronounced among UHNWIs. They place high value on brand name (60%) and institutions that are part of a larger group (60%).



4

A global playbook for wealth and legacy planning

Diversified global assets are increasing the need for cross-border financial planning to the benefit of major international financial hubs



Figures rounded to the nearest percentage

Advanced benefits

HNWIs are clear about what they want from their life insurance policies to make them feel more tangible and valuable. Top of the list are proactive updates about how policies meet their family's needs (51%). This is followed by access to exclusive value-added benefits like health or lifestyle services (49%) and an annual review that clearly indicates growth in a policy's guaranteed value (48%).

The high ranking for healthcare is not surprising given ageing demographics across Asia Pacific, with a forecasted tripling in the over 60s between 2010 and 2050. (9) HNWIs are placing

a bigger premium on healthcare as they exert a higher burden on medical systems. They want legacy planning solutions that deal in the here and now as well as at the point of succession.

As a result, healthcare also comes top of the advanced policy features that HNWIs most want (43%), followed by simplified underwriting (42%), then legal and tax advisory (41%). What this means in practice is broad, global medical cover, plus long-term care for critical illness and the chronic diseases which the over 90s are prone to: over half will have a diagnosed non-communicable disease. (10)

The human touch

Life insurance is a people to people business. It starts off with identifying what an individual wants, then evolves into ongoing reviews of their choices over the course of a lifetime and onto the next generation.

Our survey data consistently underlines HNWIs' desire for clear advice tailored to their needs. It also shows that in an age of rapidly advancing technology and growing use of AI, they are still looking for human communication channels to receive it from, if not more so than before.

The top three sources of information for our HNWIs are their spouses and partners (45%), plus the dedicated relationship manager at their primary bank (41%) and independent financial advisors (40%).

This means that while an institution acts as a gateway to a sale, the relationship will be ultimately won or lost on the quality of the individual advisor. HNWIs say that when they are deciding who to partner with, the top two factors influencing their decision are whether the brand is globally recognised and has a long history, plus if its advisors are proactive, can anticipate their needs and bring new ideas (both 37%).

Conversely, their most significant frustrations relate to unclear communication and a disjointed client-advisor relationship. Topping the list is feeling overwhelmed by complexity and terminology that is not clearly explained to them (48%), followed by not enough focus on the family's values and non-financial goals (42%).

This desire for clarity provides advisors with an opportunity to bridge the information and action gaps highlighted throughout this report. It is particularly important in Greater China markets, which record the lowest scores in many categories, including advanced features they could benefit from like healthcare.



Clients understand the extensive benefits that life insurance offers, but their individual needs are constantly changing according to their own circumstances and the ever shifting global backdrop. So, we prioritise adapting the advice we give and innovating new solutions to match these evolving expectations.

Alison Law
Global Chief Distribution
and Customer Officer, Insurance
HSBC Group

Base: All HNW individuals (908)

QC1: For each of the following international financial hubs, please indicate which statement best describes your family's current situation. Please select one option for each row.

End note

For the HNWI's surveyed for this report, the meaning of legacy has not changed. It is as it ever was: an act of love and care towards the next generation, coupled with a desire for control over how that legacy is executed.

What has changed are the underlying circumstances. Volatility, in all its forms, has become more pronounced.

Diversifying assets as one way to counter this trend has created new challenges. HNWI's now require multi-jurisdictional solutions, primarily from offshore financial centres. And their preference is for highly rated global financial institutions to provide them.

All of these reasons explain why life insurance has risen to the top of the rankings as HNWI's preferred legacy solution. Strong interest and uptake among the youngest respondents also suggests that it will continue to solidify this status over the coming years.

Our surveyed respondents like life insurance because of its dual mandate to provide protection from volatility and opportunities to grow wealth. They also like the confidentiality aspects, combined with the speed and clarity of payouts.

However, the data also shows that only the most informed respondents understand the deeper role it plays within estate planning –

smoothing out wealth transfers by bypassing the need for a potentially lengthy and contentious probate process. This is one among a number of knowledge gaps, which are, in turn, more pronounced in some markets than others.

Across Greater China, cultural norms around death have historically held back legacy planning. But there are signs of change as a new generation of HNWI's view life insurance as much as a wealth management tool as a legacy one. In doing so, they may catch up with South East Asia and India, where it has rapidly grown in popularity in recent years.

All these gaps underline the key role that education has to play in moving HNWI's from passive to active consideration and then formal legacy planning.

But the big picture is clear: a strategic shift is underway. The findings of this report indicate that the strong momentum propelling it will continue.

Life insurance has moved from niche to mainstream. In the coming years it will become increasingly universal across Asia and the Middle East.

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About the survey



908 HNW individuals[^] in their peak planning years across nine APAC markets were surveyed on their legacy planning behaviour, objectives and attitudes.

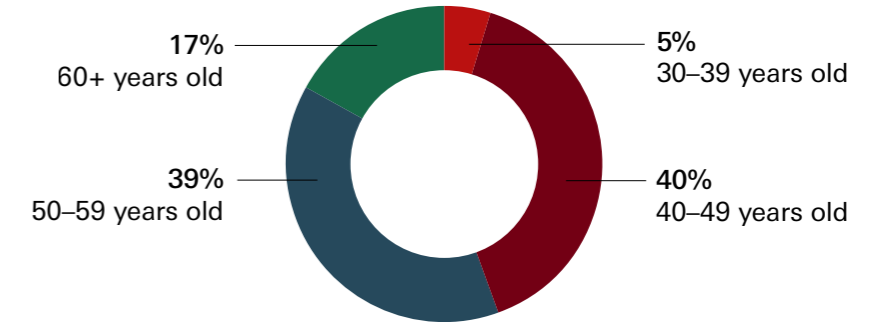
Markets surveyed		Sample size
Hong Kong	HK	101
India	IN	100
Indonesia	ID	102
Mainland China	CN	102
Malaysia	MY	100
Singapore	SG	100
Taiwan	TW	101
Thailand	TH	101
United Arab Emirates	UAE	101
Total		908

The study was conducted by Ipsos Asia Limited.

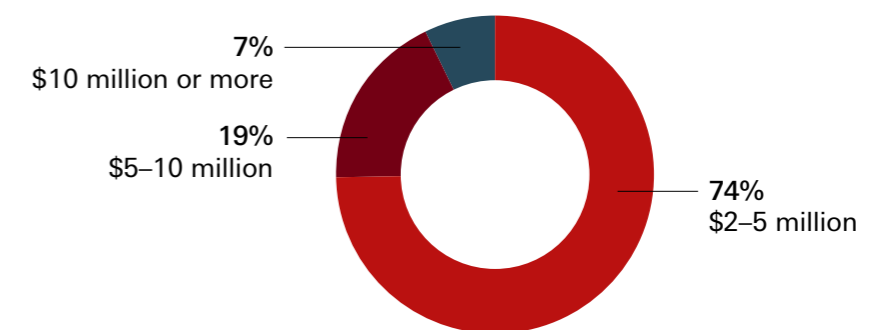
[^] HNW individuals are defined as those with investable assets of \$2 million or more, have invested in financial products themselves and are financial decision makers for themselves. UHNW individuals are defined as those with investable assets of \$10 million or more. Survey data collected from 22 Sept – 18 Oct 2025 via online access panels.

* Others – Inherited wealth: 6%, Alternative/Passion investments; 2%

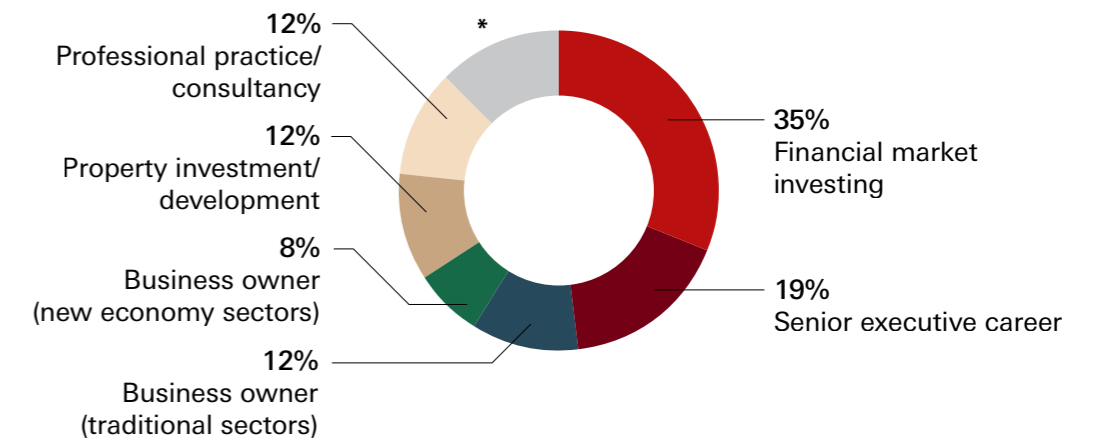
Age group



Investable assets



Primary sources of wealth



Figures rounded to the nearest percentage

About HSBC Life

HSBC Life is the brand of the insurance business of HSBC, one of the world's largest banking and financial services organisations serving customers from offices in 57 countries and territories¹ for 160 years.

Leveraging the HSBC Group's expertise and international reach, we are committed to helping our customers embrace their future with confidence. At HSBC Life, we offer a comprehensive range of products and solutions to help you to meet your protection, education, retirement, wealth growth and legacy planning needs at every stage of your life journey.

For generations, we have been putting our customers first, crafting solutions and services that are not only inspired by your unique needs but also focused on meeting them.

1. Information as of August 2025



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