



Shared ownership: strengthening *financial resilience* for workers and unlocking *value* *creation* for investors

As Americans are living longer than ever before, many are facing a core challenge of longevity: ensuring they have sufficient financial resources and resilience to live longer, healthier, and more financially secure lives. Shared ownership – extending equity participation to all employees – is a scalable solution that can help address this challenge by broadening access to one of the most significant pathways to wealth creation: stock ownership. In turn, broad-based employee ownership plans can deliver better business outcomes for the companies that implement them by increasing alignment between employees and the businesses they help build.



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The state of financial resilience in the U.S. challenges Americans' ability to live longer, more financially secure lives

In 2025, total U.S. household wealth reached [a record \\$176.3 trillion](#), supported by strong momentum in equity markets and rising real estate values. Yet despite this growing prosperity, the distribution of that wealth remains uneven. Wealth concentration in the U.S. has grown steadily for decades, and in the third quarter of 2025, it reached a new record: the [top 1% of households held 32% of total household wealth](#) while the bottom [50% held only 2.5%](#).

The disconnect between aggregate wealth and individual financial security underscores a core challenge of longevity: ensuring that longer lives are supported by sufficient household-level financial resources and resilience.

The state of retirement preparedness further highlights this challenge, as many Americans lack sufficient savings to support a longer retirement. Manulife John Hancock's 2025 [Financial Resilience and Longevity report](#) found that 50% of U.S. workers surveyed said their retirement savings were behind schedule. Moreover, many working Americans have limited retirement savings, with a significant portion reporting [less than \\$1,000 set aside](#). In addition to a lack of personal retirement savings, access to employer-sponsored retirement plans remains uneven, particularly among lower- and middle-income workers.

As life expectancy increases, the gap between lifespan and financial preparedness is becoming more pronounced. Improving financial resilience requires scalable solutions that help workers build wealth over time, while supporting better alignment between lifespan, health span, and financial well-being, so that individuals can live longer, healthier, and more financially secure lives.

How does employee ownership improve financial resilience?

"Americans are living longer, but too many aren't financially prepared for the years ahead. While U.S. household wealth has reached record levels, that prosperity isn't reaching every individual in ways that support long-term security. This growing gap between longevity and financial resilience is one of the defining challenges of our time. We need practical, scalable solutions to help more people participate in wealth creation. At Manulife Wealth & Asset Management, we see shared ownership as a powerful lever to help close this gap. It can give workers a greater stake in the value they help create, while also strengthening engagement and performance. That's why we've committed to a multi-year partnership with Ownership Works to advance a model that benefits workers, companies, and investors alike."



Paul Lorentz, President & CEO,
Manulife Wealth
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Why shared ownership matters in a longevity-driven economy

Shared ownership and longevity: building a stronger foundation for long-term financial resilience

For many workers, access to equity ownership remains limited, making shared ownership an important mechanism to broaden participation in long-term wealth creation.

Broad-based ownership – extending equity participation to all employees at a company – can provide workers with access to one of the most significant pathways to wealth creation: stock ownership.

The connection between employee ownership and financial resilience is meaningful. Employee ownership helps address a structural barrier that contributes to financial insecurity and the U.S. wealth gap – unequal participation in equity markets. The bottom half of [U.S. households hold 34% stock ownership, compared with 95% of households in the top decile](#) – equating to \$620 billion in stock ownership for the bottom 50% compared with \$29 trillion for the top 1%.

From a longevity perspective, expanding access to wealth-building mechanisms is critical. Financial resilience enables individuals manage health costs more effectively, navigate career transitions, and maintain quality of life over longer lifespans.

Shared ownership and company performance: a tool to reinforce engagement and value creation

Broad-based employee ownership plans can create better business outcomes for the companies that implement them. Alignment between employees and the businesses they help build is strengthened when employees have a meaningful stake in company performance outcomes. This alignment can boost engagement and motivate employees to think and act like owners. This is especially relevant at a time when employee engagement in the U.S. is at a [10-year low](#), with only 31% of employees engaged at work. Early data from Ownership Works finds that more than 75% of companies with a broad-based ownership plan saw improvements in engagement scores.

Fostering more engaged, ownership-minded teams can also drive improved company financial performance. Gallup reports that engaged teams drive [18% higher sales, 23% higher profitability, and 21-51% lower turnover](#). Shared ownership can therefore contribute to both workforce engagement and long-term value creation. This alignment is particularly important in a longevity context, where sustained productivity and workforce engagement over longer careers are increasingly essential.

Partnering with Ownership Works to advance shared ownership

Recognizing the intersection between employee ownership, financial resilience, and long-term economic participation, we established a multi-year partnership with Ownership Works, a nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering economic well-being through shared ownership at work. Our partnership aims to support Ownership Works' 2030 goal of generating at least \$20 billion of wealth for workers outside the C-suite and creating hundreds of thousands of new employee-owners. It's jointly supported through the Manulife Longevity Institute and Manulife Investment Management's private equity program.

The Manulife Longevity Institute: how shared prosperity can help build financial resilience

The [Manulife Longevity Institute](#) is a global platform focused on driving action to help people live longer, healthier, and more financially secure lives. Broad-based employee ownership aligns with this mission by expanding access to equity ownership, one of the most significant pathways to wealth creation. By enabling individuals to build financial buffers, grow savings, and improve retirement readiness, shared ownership can strengthen financial resilience and support better outcomes across longer lifespans.

"I'm coming back from my very first maternity leave. I gave birth to our first daughter... this is a life-changing amount of money. I could send her to college, we could get rid of all of our debt."

RBMedia employee

Manulife Investment Management's private equity program: aligning economic incentives to create better business outcomes

In our view, shared ownership can be a powerful lever in long-term value creation within private equity. We believe shared ownership can increase alignment between employees, management teams, and investors to drive operational excellence, boost employee engagement and retention, and strengthen company performance over time.

Through Manulife Investment Management's private equity program, 13 of our investment partners have committed to implementing the Ownership Works model. Our co-investment team has also invested alongside several of these partners in businesses where shared ownership was a core lever of the value creation strategy. While these are active investments, early performance outcomes reinforce that expanding ownership opportunities to employees can help drive better business outcomes and support long-term investment performance.

To support the advancement of shared ownership across the private equity industry, our private equity team has integrated shared ownership considerations into its investment process. This includes:

- Embedding shared ownership considerations into due diligence for primary fund commitments
- Encouraging General Partners (GPs) to adopt broad-based employee ownership models at their portfolio companies
- Monitoring awareness and adoption of shared ownership across our GP base through our annual sustainability monitoring activities

We also leverage our role as a limited partner to help elevate shared ownership within the institutional investing space. By engaging with our core GP relationships, we seek to promote the benefits of shared ownership. This is further supported by our role on the Ownership Works Limited Partners Leadership Council, on which Scott Garfield, Senior Managing Director, Private Equity, Manulife Investment Management, serves as an advisor to elevate Ownership Works' mission and expand shared ownership across the institutional investment space. In a longevity-driven economy, these approaches can help ensure that value creation is more inclusive and sustainable over the long term.

The Ownership Works model

Ownership Works supports its partners in implementing shared ownership in portfolio companies. The organization's direct support takes the form of three reinforcing components: broad-based plan; culture of ownership; and financial well-being.

1. Broad-based plan

Ownership Works helps model broad-based plans for its partners that meet the following guidelines:

- Include all full-time employees
- Offer free equity grants that are incremental to existing compensation and do not require employees to use their own money to purchase equity shares
- Target meaningful and motivational payouts to employees (typically 6-12 months of salary at exit)
- Leverage a simple, synthetic equity pool structure that pays out at a liquidity event, with the opportunity for interim distributions or dividends at the discretion of the company

2. Culture of ownership

Ownership Works helps companies foster a culture of ownership where employees feel, think, and act like owners, enabling employees to:

- Understand the business and know how to drive value
- Feel trusted to shape improvements and believe their input matters
- Believe their well-being matters to the company
- Demonstrate ownership values and behaviors in their daily work and embed them into company processes

3. Financial well-being

Ownership Works encourages and supports companies to identify the financial well-being needs of their workforce and design employer-driven initiatives such as employee hardship funds, emergency savings accounts, financial education, or others to help employees:

- Reduce financial stress and attain financial stability so they can show up at work with an ownership mindset
- Strengthen financial capabilities that enable them to achieve short- and medium-term financial goals
- Leverage ownership payouts to build long-term security and wealth, including planning for retirement and other long-term financial goals

Through its mission of fostering economic well-being and creating thriving workplaces, Ownership Works has helped thousands of workers build savings and wealth through shared ownership at work

Since its launch in 2022, Ownership Works has [made significant progress](#) toward its 2030 goal.

192 companies with shared ownership programs	>\$16.5B wealth generated for workers outside the C-suite	80% of employee-owners realizing wealth are lower- and moderate-income
278,000 new employee-owners	\$2.2B paid out to tens of thousands of workers from liquidity events to date >\$14.3B in future projected payouts to workers from programs under way	34% of employee-owners realizing wealth are people of color

While these outcomes can be measured by the number of workers reached and the wealth generated, the Ownership Works model takes a holistic view, supporting companies as they implement financial well-being programs that help employees understand, plan for, and build long-term wealth through equity ownership. These programs may include connecting employees with financial coaches, resources, and tools, such as small loans, emergency funds, and banking services on a low- or no-fee basis. By emphasizing a culture of financial wellness, the Ownership Works model further reinforces the importance of financial resilience.

“The company offered financial coaching as part of our benefits package... in the span of a month my credit score went up 40 points, allowing me to buy a house.”

- Employee at C.H.I. Overhead Doors

Advancing shared ownership at scale

Through our partnership with Ownership Works, we’re helping to advance economic well-being through shared ownership at work. Manulife Longevity Institute’s broader mission of helping people live longer, healthier, and more financially secure lives, while also strengthening our private equity strategy by linking inclusive ownership models to long-term value creation and better business outcomes.

“Our partnership with Manulife reflects a belief that’s guided Ownership Works since day one – that shared ownership creates better outcomes for everyone. When workers have a meaningful stake in what they help build, they show up differently, companies perform better, and wealth-building opportunities reach across the economy. Having partners like Manulife who understand the connection between shared ownership, financial resilience, and long-term value creation is how we turn a powerful idea into lasting, large-scale change for workers and the companies they help build.”

Anna-Lisa Miller,
Executive Director of Ownership Works

To learn more about Ownership Works and the ways in which your organization could partner with them, please visit <https://ownershipworks.org/>

To learn more about the Manulife Longevity Institute and how we are driving action on helping people live longer, healthier, and more financially secure lives, please visit www.manulife.com/longevity.

Important disclosures

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Manulife Investment Management

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