

Media Note

For immediate release
25 September 2025

Malaysians prioritise quality of life over length of life in retirement, underpinned by financial wellbeing, according to Manulife survey

Kuala Lumpur – Malaysian attitudes towards ageing and wellbeing are changing, as they increasingly prioritise a fulfilling, independent lifestyle over simply living longer, with most people saying that financial wellbeing has a direct bearing on how long they can stay mentally and physically healthy, according to new research from Manulife Malaysia.

Released today, the Malaysia section of Manulife’s 2025 Asia Care Survey (ACS), shows that 7 in 10 survey respondents say their financial wellbeing affects not just their mental and physical health, but also how long they live. The survey findings are based on responses from 1,000 Malaysians.

“In Malaysia, we’re seeing a powerful shift in how people define a good life. It’s no longer just about how long we live, but how well we live. Our role is to make decisions easier by connecting health and financial confidence, so people can live better, not just longer,” said **Vibha Coburn, CEO of Manulife Malaysia**.

Evolving meaning of longevity – “Quality over Quantity”

The ACS findings show that only a minority prioritise extending life at all costs, while the majority place greater value on maintaining health, independence and purpose.

The report shows the desired lifespan is 68 years, significantly lower than Malaysia’s average life expectancy of 76 years, highlighting that Malaysians are more focused on “adding life to years” than on “adding years to life.” This reflects a broader recognition that longevity must also be financially and emotionally sustainable, not just biologically possible.

The meaning of “healthy” changes in later life. Nearly 8 in 10 Malaysians define being “healthy” as maintaining independence and capability, according to ACS findings, while far fewer associate it purely with being disease-free.

The survey reveals how financial stress is intertwined with wellbeing. Almost half of respondents worry about running out of money before they die, and among those under 55, many believe they will not have sufficient retirement funds. More than 60% expect to rely on the public mandatory retirement scheme and public healthcare during retirement.



“When people say being ‘healthy’ is about independence, they are connecting physical wellbeing to financial security. If financial stress undermines that independence, health itself is compromised,” Coburn added.

Financial diversification needed in retirement

Although most Malaysians want a steady income in retirement, their portfolios tell another story. The survey shows that cash is king: cash makes up around half of Malaysians’ liquid assets across all age groups. While ensuring a steady income stream during retirement is considered important, asset diversification remains low on their agenda, with just 29% ranking it as a priority.

At the same time, many continue to rely on Malaysia’s public mandatory retirement scheme as their main retirement pillar, raising questions about its adequacy in the face of potentially longer lifespans.

The mismatch between aspirations and behaviour is one of the clearest gaps highlighted by the ACS 2025. While cash and the public mandatory retirement scheme provide convenience and comfort in the short term, households risk being exposed to inflation and longevity risks over the long run.

“It’s no surprise that the survey shows people wanting steady income and resilience. Yet, many Malaysians rely heavily on cash, which doesn’t foster resilience. Cash, if just left idle, will inevitably be eroded by inflation over time, leaving the retiree with less money. Working out what to do can seem daunting, but a good starting point would be to talk to an independent financial adviser who can show how to diversify, add income engines that provide recurring cashflow, and stay invested even through retirement. Remember: it is possible to turn savings into lasting staying power,” said **Jason Chong, CEO of Manulife Investments Malaysia.**

As a trusted partner in progress, Manulife Malaysia is at the forefront of redefining longevity, championing a future where Malaysians can thrive with purpose, vitality, and peace of mind. Through thought leadership and customer-centric innovation, Manulife continues to shape the conversation around health, wealth, and the evolving needs of modern Malaysians.

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