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Malaysian women are increasingly managing household finances, but a new survey suggests the weight of caring for children and ageing parents at the same time is taking a measurable toll on their financial security and career progression, with knock-on effects on their health and personal lives.

The findings come from [Sun Life Malaysia's Women's Wealth in Focus](#) survey, published on 10 April 2026, based on 3,001 online interviews conducted across Malaysia, Hong Kong SAR, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Vietnam in January 2026.

The Triple Penalty Of Caregiving

The survey found that 80% of Malaysian women say caregiving responsibilities are a barrier to improving their financial security. At the same time, 68% say care duties limit their ability to look after their own health, and 66% say it has affected their career progression. The report describes this as a triple penalty across financial security, physical health, and career progression, with each one making the others harder to address.

The financial sacrifices show up in specific trade-offs. The most common is cutting spending on leisure and travel, cited by 76% of respondents. Delaying retirement savings came in at 34%, and limiting investment activity at 33%.

Nine In Ten Expect To Fund Their Parents' Retirement

Expectations around supporting ageing parents add to the financial pressure. About 90% of women surveyed expect to financially support their parents' elderly care at some point. Yet only 19% are currently setting aside at least 10% of their income to prepare for it.

Six in ten respondents have also foregone medical treatment at some point to prioritise financial support for children or elderly relatives. Among those who have delayed retirement savings, options like the [Private Retirement Scheme](#) exist alongside EPF to help close the gap over time.

Women's Role In Household Financial Decisions

Despite these pressures, women are deeply involved in managing their family's money. 44% assume sole responsibility for managing daily household expenses, while 42% take sole charge of long-term investments and finances. Among those who share decisions, 52% say they have the final say, rising to 83% among female breadwinners.

Financial discipline is strong. 79% pay bills on time, 54% save regularly, and 44% track expenses. But longer-term planning is less consistent. Only 25% regularly review their insurance coverage, and just 13% seek professional advice before making financial decisions.

Better Off, But Not Prepared

59% of respondents say they are better off financially than their mothers were at the same age. Yet only 10% feel very prepared for a major unexpected financial event, and nearly nine in ten married women say their families would be financially impacted if their spouse were unable to work due to a medical reason.

Professional Advice Remains Largely Out Of Reach

Only 8% of women surveyed currently work with a financial advisor, despite the financial complexity many are navigating. Mothers are more likely to have sought advice at some point, at 28%, compared to 21% of women without children. The industry's perceived male dominance is part of what keeps that number low. 72% believe financial services is male-dominated, and one in three of those without an advisor say that perception actively deters them from seeking help.

Strong day-to-day financial habits sit alongside limited long-term planning and very little professional guidance. 52% have final say on major household financial decisions, yet professional guidance remains uncommon. At the same time, 45% of women surveyed say they want content focused on achieving a worry-free retirement, suggesting the demand for guidance is there even where the access is not.