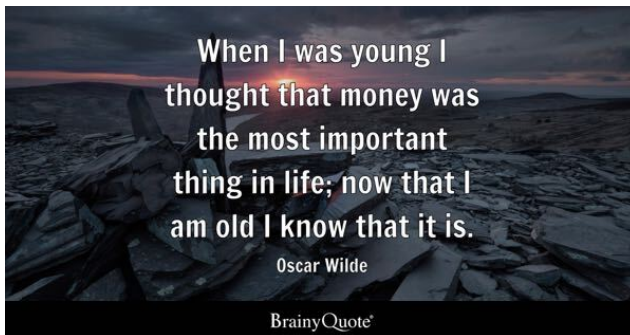


RETIREMENT PLANS THAT “CLEARLY” WORK FOR YOU.



Prizant Group

WHEN GODS WISH TO PUNISH US, THEY ANSWER OUR PRAYERS - Oscar Wilde



Oscar Wilde's statement is of tremendous value. When he says, "When the gods want to punish us, they answer our prayers," he is saying something about our unconsciousness. We are not aware of what we are doing, we are not aware of what we

are asking, we are not aware of what we are praying for.

The old saying "**Be Careful What You Wish For**" has never been more appropo. Investors pined for higher interest rates on their savings, but now are first ones to complain about high borrowing costs for homes, autos, and personal/business loans. Critics, on

both sides of the aisle, demand a Federal solution to the Mexican Border crisis, but these same people bemoan the lack of available labor in the agricultural, service, hospitality, and manufacturing sectors. The Republican Party fought to overturn Roe v. Wade for 50 years and lo and behold, they haven't won an election of consequence since then! My



grandfather fought for the Bolsheviks in the Russian Revolution as a way to end the pogroms against the Jews. Once Lenin ordered the murder of Trotsky, he realized that Lenin was really replacing the Romanoff Dynasty. Thus, he deserted his command in the Black Sea and made his way to the U.S. to join the rest of his family. My middle son (Ethan) had a cushy marketing job at Johnson & Johnson with a laid-back LA style. Nonetheless, he constantly complained about money (it's **ALWAYS ABOUT THE MONEY**) and took a position at McKinsey Consulting. Now, he longs for the days of less travel, team accountability instead of personal, and humane mentorship. People want promotions and higher compensation, but with that, comes increase stress, longer hours, management headaches, focus on personal productivity, and greater expectations. In the 1930's, the Italians wanted a strong leader after the disaster of World War I. Thus, the rise of the fascist leader Benito Mussolini (a.k.a. IL DUCE-He called himself the Duce, from the old Latin word dux "chief" or "boss"). He had a party behind him, of course, the Fascists). The Italians certainly were not alone in their desire for stability and strong government. They had kindred spirits in Francisco Franco (Nationalist Spain) and Adolf Hitler (National Socialists). Fascism was on the rise due to the instability caused by WWI and the Bolshevik (Communist) Revolution in Russia. In the last decade, the rise of authoritarian regimes at the expense of Republic Democracy is chilling. [Authoritarianism](#)

In the wake of World War I, Italian dictator Benito Mussolini began his slow and inexorable rise to power. He created Italy's Fascist Party, became prime minister and eventually took full control of the country's day-to-day decision making. Those decisions, of course, had consequences, and Mussolini liked to take credit for everything that went right in Italy, even when it didn't go that well at all. He was particularly fond of saying he was responsible for successful, large-scale public works projects, such as the railroad system.

In fact, there's an old saying about Mussolini that goes something like

this: "Mussolini made the trains run on time." In other words, even dictators have their good points. Sure, fascism is an often brutal model of efficient government, full of poverty and corruption, but hey, at least the trains were newly punctual [source: Cathcart].

And if you think I am talking about years gone past, Wrong Oh Dog Breath as take a gander at this link. [Italian Fascism](#)



Financial pundits have been "Waiting for the Other Shoe To Drop" for the last two years. A surge in inflation, higher interest rates, reduced household savings, skyrocketing auto prices, sparse housing inventory, tech layoffs, bond sell-offs, and the S&P 500 being propelled by the

Magnificent Seven:

[Meta Platforms \(META\)](#)

[Nvidia \(NVDA\)](#)

[Amazon \(AMZN\)](#)

[Apple \(AAPL\)](#)

[Alphabet \(GOOGL\)](#)

[Microsoft \(MSFT\)](#)

[Tesla \(TSLA\)](#)

[Mag 7 Stocks](#)

With a major recession in the rear view mirror (barring some cataclysmic event), the economic future looks encouraging. Interest rates are back to historical levels [Interest Rates](#) where the cost of capital is reasonable and investors can receive an acceptable "risk-free" rate of return. Inflation has significantly moderated to where consumers are no longer in shock. [Inflation](#) Job growth nationally is stronger than expected with little expectation of a slowdown. [Jobs](#) There are plenty of obstacles to smooth sailing namely consumer credit card debt reaching a cool trillion dollars [Credit Card Debt](#), lack of affordable housing for first-time buyers, the morass of student loan obligations

[Magnificent Seven-Movie](#)

A MILLION ISN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE If you're expecting to live long after you retire, you better save up.

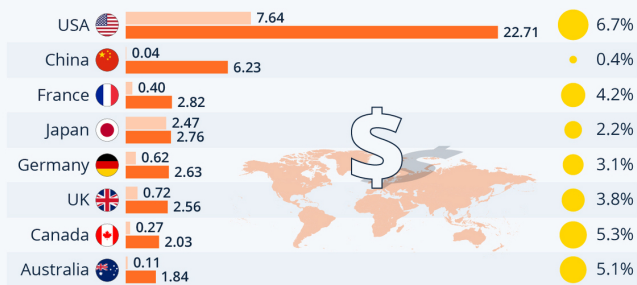
According to an analysis by GoBankingRates, a million dollars in savings would last less than 15 years in Hawaii, Massachusetts, California and New York. States where your savings would last the longest (22+ years) are Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Alabama.

(SOURCE: GOBANKINGRATES.COM)

The Number of Millionaires Has Skyrocketed

Number of millionaires (in millions) and share of the population in 2022*

2000 2022 Share of the population in 2022



* Selection of countries with high numbers of U.S. dollar millionaires in 2022.
Source: UBS - Global Wealth Report 2023



statista

Million \$

As a child of the 50"s, millionaires were few and far between. A million dollars really meant something and the saying "**You Look Like A Million Bucks**" was considered quite the compliment. The overriding goal of American capitalism was to accumulate that magic number. How you did that was entirely up to you!

Marry A Millionaire

The grim fact is that retirement savings are lagging so far behind even the \$1 million mark,.

Per Vanguard (and they should know!)

Here is the woesome 2022 data on Average/Median 401(k) Balances by Age.
Balances

AVERAGE

Under 25 \$5,236

25 to 34 \$30,017

35 to 44. \$76,354

45 to 54. \$142,069

55 to 64. \$207,874

65 and older \$232,710

MEDIAN

Under 25 \$1,948
25 to 34 \$11,357
35 to 44 \$28,318
45 to 54. \$48,301
55 to 64 \$71,168
65 and older. \$70,620

As a devout pessimist and one who understands numbers, I look askance at "Averages" and believe "Median" is a more accurate indicator. Truth be told, neither one is overly encouraging in this case! In an effort to promote greater retirement savings (Heaven Knows We Need It!), here is savvy advice from NerdWallet [Nerd](#)

Average 401(k) contribution rates

How much are you putting into your 401(k)? The IRS sets contribution limits for 401(k) accounts, or the maximum amount you can add to your account in a given year. Those contribution limits are \$23,000 in 2024 (\$30,500 for those age 50 or older).

Most people don't contribute the max – only 15% of Vanguard plan participants did in 2022 – and most of those investors were older, made more money, and had been with their employer for longer compared with those who contribute less.

Even if you made the maximum contribution every single year and posted double-digit investment returns — both of which are highly unlikely — it would take nearly 20 years to hit a million. That makes it unfair and fruitless for, say, a 25-year-old to compare their 401(k) balance with the average for savers of all ages.

If you want to beef up your balance without maxing out your 401(k), one way to do it is to contribute at least enough to get the employer match if there's one offered. About half, 49%, of Vanguard's plans had an employer match.

To get their employer 401(k) match, employees had to first put in an average of 6.8% of pay; the median required contribution to get a match was 6%, which means half of plans required more than that, and half required less.

Average employee contribution: 7.4% of pay.

Median employee contribution: 6.4% of pay.

Average 401(k) match

Average employer contribution: 4.5%

Median employer contribution: 4%

We at The Prizant Group live in the retirement plan world of "Would've,

Could've, Should've" responses from our participants that are nearing, at, or past the Normal Retirement Age (NRA) of 65. And if current trends continue, our successors will hear it from Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z, Gen Alpha. Unless there is a radical shift in the retirement plan design (**Federally Mandated or Employee Demand Driven**) akin to the path IBM has taken the future looks bleak. ([IBM Cash Balance Plan](#))

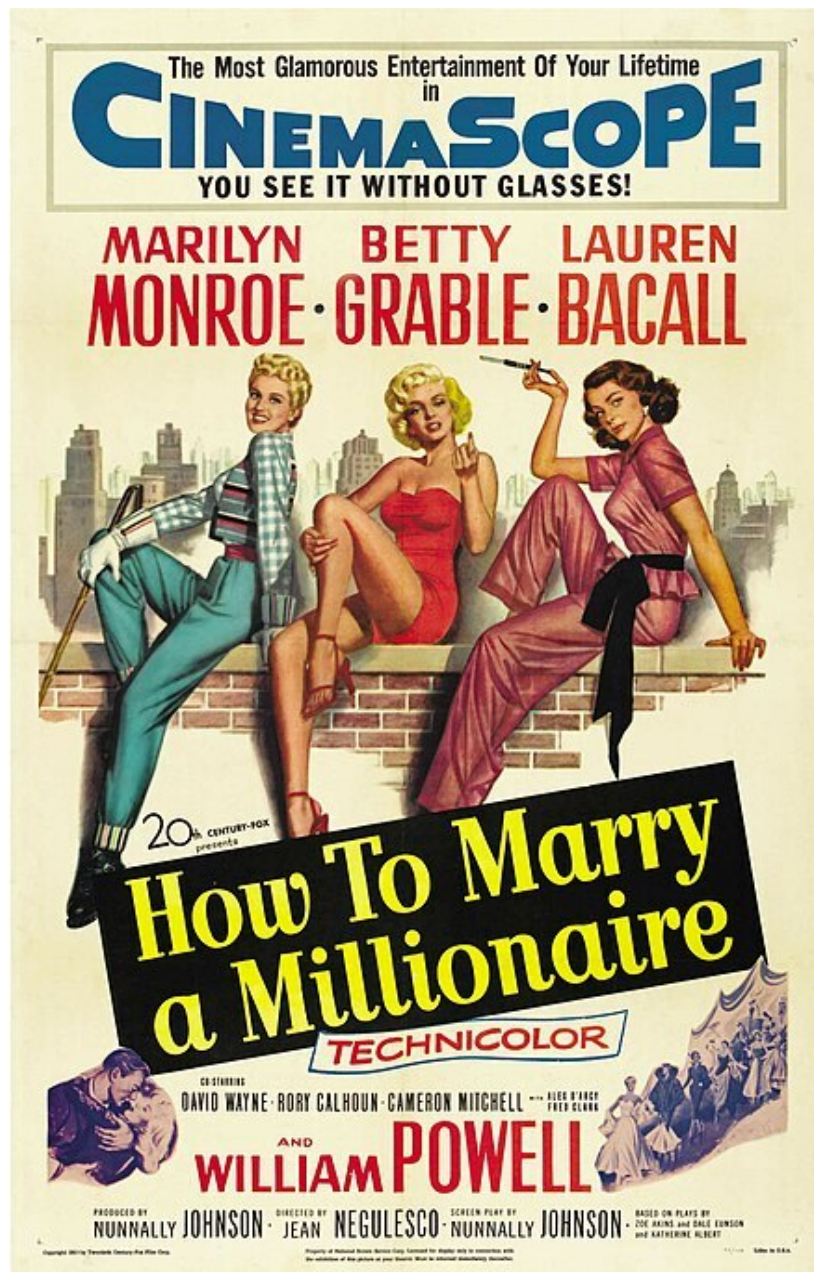
I will close this Missive with the quite appropriate "Million Dollar Baby" by Alice Cooper [Million Dollar Baby](#)

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