

South India Demonstrates Strong Long-Term Financial Planning Mindset: HDFC Life's Ready for Life Index

- South India records a Ready for Life Index score of 60, close to the All India average of 59
- The region shows relatively stronger retirement planning awareness, with two in three respondents having initiated retirement planning
- Preference for tangible assets such as gold and real estate continues to shape financial behaviour
- Emergency preparedness is widespread, though adequacy and access timelines indicate scope for strengthening reserves

Hyderabad, 24th March, 2026: HDFC Life has released region-specific insights for South India from its Ready for Life Index (RLI), highlighting a region that demonstrates relatively stronger long-term orientation towards retirement planning, while maintaining distinct cultural preferences in financial decision-making.

The *Ready for Life Index 2025* is a proprietary research initiative by **HDFC Life**, conducted in partnership with **Ipsos India**. Based on **1,836 face-to-face interviews** with working men and women aged 25–55 years across metros, Tier 2, and Tier 3 cities, the study evaluates India's life readiness across four key pillars — Financial Planning, Emergency Preparedness, Health & Well-being, and Retirement Strategy.

The index aims to bridge the gap between perception and preparedness, encouraging a shift from short-term saving to structured, long-term financial planning.

The readiness index score for South India is 60, close to All India score of 59. The perception–action gap for South India is 25 points, in parallel to the national average, symbolising that the market has a well-balanced perspective in terms of financial confidence and preparedness.

The salient saving preferences in South India are similar to those found in other regions in India, with children's education, ownership of a home, and contingency planning and provisions figuring high in their lists. What makes South India stand out and distinct is the region's major preference for physical assets like gold and property.

Despite awareness about protection needs, the ownership of term insurance is relatively lower in the South. When active interest in buying term insurance is evoked, motivations seem to be led by family security, high cover affordability, and health scares or medical emergencies. In this region, barriers to adoption are more marked, with a certain perception that there are no immediate returns, it is a product which is somewhat uncomfortable to discuss, and term insurance offers little value if no claim arises.

South India leads in the ownership of emergency funds, with 60% of the respondents claiming to have kept some money aside for contingencies. However, the adequacy remains a concern, as nearly one-third of the respondents claimed that their emergency corpus would sustain them for about a month. Also, though emergency funds exist, the timelines to access them vary, with about half of the respondents claiming it would take more than 48 hours to liquidate the same.

These lessons indicate the need for building the size and liquidity of the emergency reserves to enhance resilience against unexpected financial shocks.

Retirement readiness is a relative strength for South India. About two-thirds of the respondents have already begun retirement planning. This is largely a higher percentage compared to the national average. Most importantly, a greater percentage of consumers

in the region have a better idea regarding retirement requirements. About a fifth of the respondents stated that a retirement fund of up to ₹3 crores may be required.

Gold continues to retain its prominence in the area of retirement planning as well. This reinforces the cultural factor that impacts long-term financial decisions. Although there has been progress on this point, the hope for familial support during the post-retirement years continues to exist. This indicates that the place of independent retirement planning has to be further secured.

Vineet Arora – Executive Director & Chief Business Officer, HDFC Life, elaborated more on the insights for the South zone, "South India demonstrates a forward-looking approach to retirement planning, supported by strong savings discipline and cultural preference for long-term assets. The Ready for Life Index underlines an opportunity to complement these strengths with greater awareness around protection solutions and more robust emergency reserves. With increasing longevity and changing financial responsibilities, retirement planning will become crucial to sustaining financial well-being."

About HDFC Life

Established in 2000, HDFC Life is a leading, listed, long-term life insurance solutions provider in India, offering a range of individual and group insurance solutions that meet various customer needs such as Protection, Pension, Savings, Investment, Annuity and Health. The Company has over 70 products (individual and group products), including optional riders in its portfolio, catering to a diverse range of customer needs.

HDFC Life continues to benefit from its increased presence across the country, having a wide reach with branches and additional distribution touch-points through several new tie-ups and partnerships. The count of distribution partnerships is over 500, comprising banks, NBFCs, MFIs, SFBs, brokers, new ecosystem, partners amongst others. The Company has a strong base of financial consultants. For more information, please visit www.hdfclife.com. You may also connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn.