



Investing for a world of change

# The great wealth transfer: implications for South African advisors and the rise of the family office



**Daryll Welsh**  
Head of Product, Ninety One Investment Platform

The world is in the early stages of one of the largest wealth transfers in history. In the United States alone, an estimated US\$85 trillion will shift from Baby Boomers to younger generations by 2048<sup>1</sup>. Globally, high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs) are preparing to transfer over US\$31 trillion to heirs in the next decade, with over 1.2 million people holding US\$5 million or more in investable wealth<sup>2</sup>.

But this wealth transfer isn't just about numbers. It's about legacy, control, and the continuity of wealth across generations. And it's already transforming how wealth managers and advisors engage with clients.

In South Africa, this trend is just as relevant, perhaps more so. More than a third of South African HNWIs are over the age of 60<sup>3</sup>. That means a significant portion of the nation's wealth will be transferred in the next one to two decades. The assets they hold often involve complex trusts, offshore accounts, and private businesses, further complicating the logistics of intergenerational wealth transfer.

---

1. [Cerulli anticipates \\$124 trillion in wealth will transfer through 2048.](#)  
2. [Family Wealth Transfer 2024.](#)  
3. [Navigating the great wealth transfer in multigenerational families.](#)

## The risks of poor succession planning

A 20-year study conducted by the Williams Group<sup>4</sup>, a US-based family wealth consultancy, concluded that a staggering 70% of wealthy families globally lose their wealth by the second generation, and 90% by the third. The causes are well known: lack of planning, poor communication, and heirs who are ill equipped to manage or preserve what they inherit.

This dynamic is mirrored in South Africa, where family-run businesses and trusts often lack robust succession and governance frameworks. As a result, many advisors are faced with the growing pressure to engage not just the primary wealth holder, but their spouse, children, and trustees as well.

## The opportunity and risk for financial advisors

The shift from individual-centric to family-centric advice is no longer optional – it's a survival strategy. Advisors who fail to embed themselves in the lives of multiple generations risk losing relevance (and assets) as wealth passes to the next in line.

At Ninety One, we were early to recognise that investment platforms have a key role to play in helping advisors position for and benefit from this wealth evolution. In 2022, we launched our family office capability.

The development aimed to address the challenge in two ways:

- 1 Financial advisors could easily set up family groups online, allowing a consolidated and comprehensive overview of the family assets on a family dashboard.
- 2 We provided an incentive for investors to consolidate their family investments on a single platform and to leverage their combined scale to reduce administration fees across the entire family group.

This dual benefit of enhanced family-level reporting and pricing power makes it easier for advisors to deliver value and stay central to family decision-making over time.

---

4. [The Williams Group, Succession planning.](#)

Three and a half years on, the results speak volumes and the momentum is evident. By the end of May 2025:

4 754

families have been created.

13 125

family members are benefiting from shared pricing structures and consolidated reporting.

Total assets under advice within the families have reached R61.5 billion, with:

R49.9 billion

onshore

R11.6 billion

offshore

These numbers not only validate the market need but also reflect accelerating advisor adoption. Recognising that advisors are clearly seeing the value of this functionality, we have further invested in the online web registration of families and introduced a new streamlined digital process in April this year. On the back of these developments, 176 new families were created in May alone.

## Looking ahead

As South Africa's HNWIs begin the handover to Gen X, Millennials, and eventually Gen Z, the role of the advisor will evolve from product selector to family facilitator. Those who lean into this evolution will capture not just new business, but long-term loyalty across generations.

In that context, platforms like Ninety One IP's Family Office aren't just tools – they are essential infrastructure for the next era of wealth management in South Africa.

## Important information

All information and opinions provided are of a general nature and are not intended to address the circumstances of any particular individual or entity. We are not acting and do not purport to act in any way as an adviser or in a fiduciary capacity. No one should act upon such information or opinion without appropriate professional advice after a thorough examination of a particular situation. We endeavour to provide accurate and timely information but we make no representation or warranty, express or implied, with respect to the correctness, accuracy or completeness of the information and opinions. We do not undertake to update, modify or amend the information on a frequent basis or to advise any person if such information subsequently becomes inaccurate. Any representation or opinion is provided for information purposes only. The investments referred to in this document are generally medium- to long-term investments. Their value may go down as well as up and past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance. Fluctuations or movements in exchange rates may cause the value of the underlying international investments to go up or down. Additional information may be obtained, free of charge, at [www.ninetyone.com](http://www.ninetyone.com). Ninety One Investment Platform (Pty) Ltd and Ninety One SA (Pty) Ltd are authorised financial services providers.

36 Hans Strijdom Avenue  
Foreshore, Cape Town 8001

To reach our Ninety One unit trust team, please use  
Telephone: 0860 500 900  
Email: [utclientservicessa@ninetyone.com](mailto:utclientservicessa@ninetyone.com)

To reach our Ninety One Investment platform team, please use  
Telephone: 0860 500 100  
Email: [comcentre@ninetyone.com](mailto:comcentre@ninetyone.com)

—  
**[www.ninetyone.com](http://www.ninetyone.com)**  
Follow us on X @[ninetyone\\_sa](https://twitter.com/ninetyone_sa)