

Financial Literacy Month Survey Results

CREATED FOR
Equifax by BCW

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Background & Methodology

Background

Over the past several years, Equifax has fielded a financial literacy study to the general public to gain a better understanding of U.S. consumers' financial attitudes and behaviors. These include their personal finance knowledge, their general financial behaviors, their use of and attitudes regarding credit, and their outlook moving forward.

Methodology

In partnership with BCW, Equifax fielded a 10-minute online survey of 1,014 U.S. adults between the dates of April 1, 2022, and April 4, 2022. Sample is nationally representative based on age, gender, race/ethnicity, and region.

Personal Finance Knowledge

Personal Finance Knowledge Summary

Many U.S. Consumers give themselves good grades regarding their basic financial knowledge, as 54% give themselves either an “A” or “B” grade.

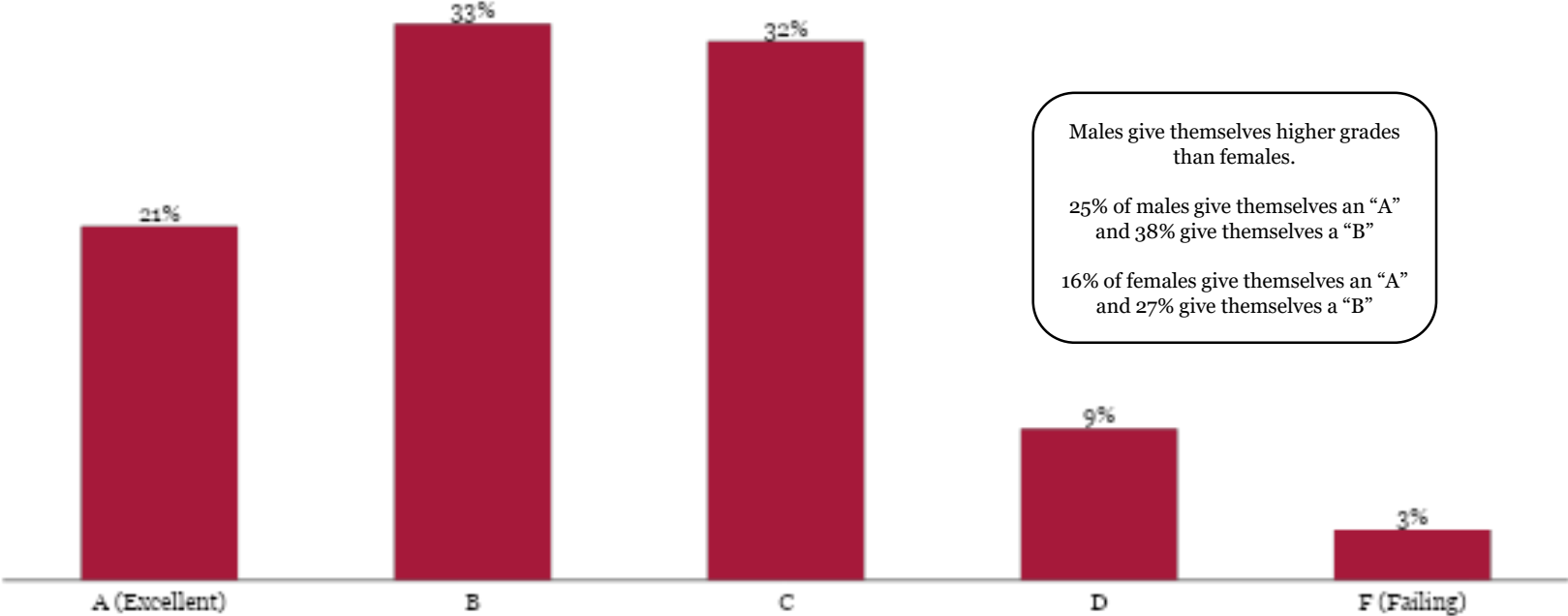
- 32% give themselves a “C” grade
- Additionally, males gave themselves higher grades than females.

While just over half (52%) of U.S. Consumers did not take a finance course in high school, the vast majority (87%) believe that it should be a requirement to graduate.

- More U.S. Consumers from younger generations, particularly those ages 18-24 and those ages 25-44, have taken a personal finance course in high school compared to older generations.

One in three U.S. Consumers (33%) grade themselves a “B” for their own basic level of financial literacy and about one in five (21%) grade themselves an “A”

Financial Literacy Grade (N=1,014)

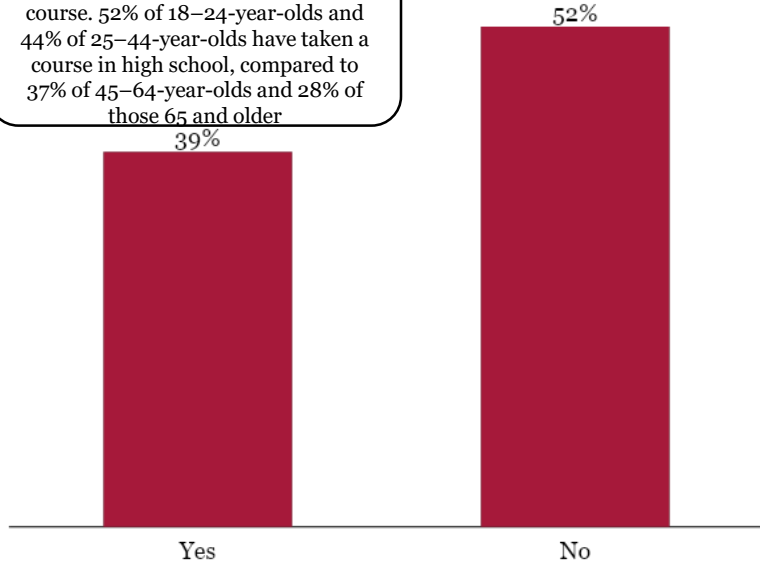


Q1: How would you grade your own level of basic financial literacy? (Base = Total)

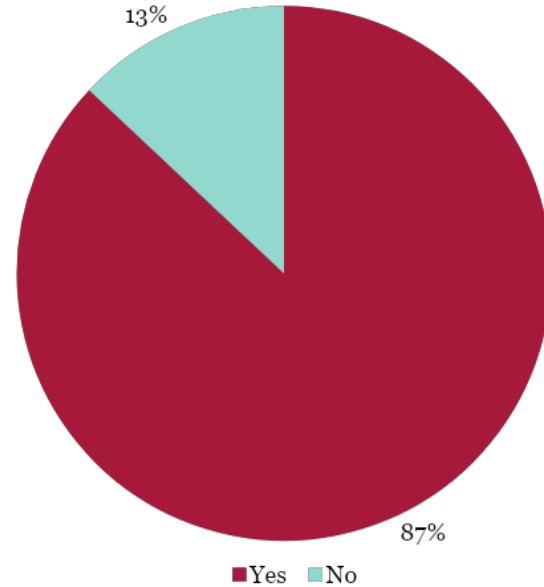
Over half (52%) of respondents did not take a personal finance course in high school, but the vast majority (87%) believe it should be a requirement to graduate

Personal Finance Course Taken in High School (N=1,014)

More U.S. Consumers in younger generations have taken a finance course. 52% of 18–24-year-olds and 44% of 25–44-year-olds have taken a course in high school, compared to 37% of 45–64-year-olds and 28% of those 65 and older



Should a Personal Finance Course be Required to Graduate High School? (N=1,014)



Q2: Did you take a personal finance course in high school or college? (Base = Total)
Q3: Do you think personal finance should be a required course to graduate high school (Base = Total)

Financial Behaviors

Financial Behaviors Summary

Over two-thirds of U.S. Consumers (68%) have created a budget in the last 12 months and most (56%) have stuck to it.

- Those who don't have a budget feel as though they can manage their finances without one or they don't have enough money to make a budget worthwhile.

Most U.S. Consumers (59%) have an emergency fund, and nearly two-thirds (62%) of those who don't report that they don't have money left over at the end of the month.

When between paychecks, U.S. Consumers are most likely to cut back on expenses (40%) and use money from checking/savings accounts (44%), but about one in five U.S. Consumers (19%) do not change their financial habits at all between paychecks.

- Additionally, U.S. Consumers' biggest financial concerns are being unable to live debt-free, having an emergency fund, paying their bills, and retirement.

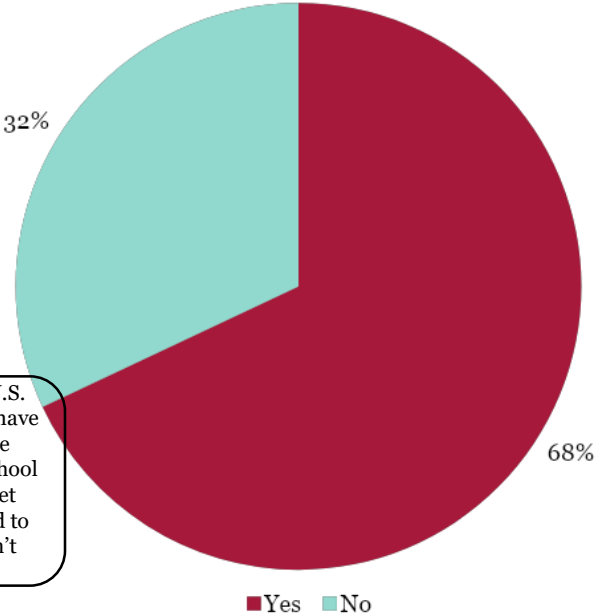
52% of U.S. Consumers are saving for retirement, typically by using savings accounts and contributing to a 401k each pay period.

- Among those not saving for retirement, nearly two-thirds (61%) report a lack of extra income to put aside is a reason they aren't saving, while many already in retirement are no longer saving for it.
- Over half (58%) of U.S. Consumers are worried about how they will afford to retire

U.S. Consumers are most likely to put this year's tax refund in savings (32%), or they will use it to pay bills (28%) or debts (25%).

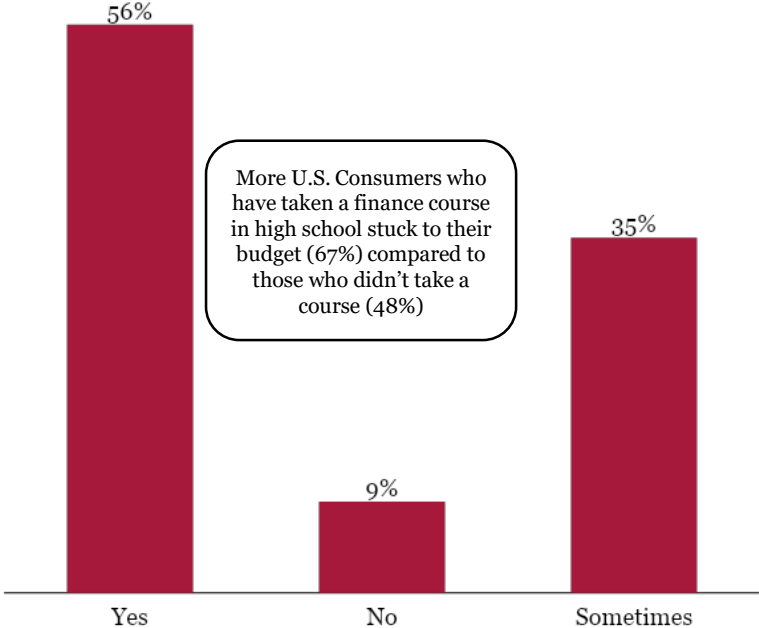
Over two-thirds (68%) of U.S. Consumers created a budget in the last 12 months, and most of them have stuck to it

Created a Budget Within the Last 12 Months (N=1,014)



Notably more U.S. Consumers who have taken a finance course in high school created a budget (82%) compared to those who didn't (60%)

Stick to Budget Month-Over-Month (N=691)

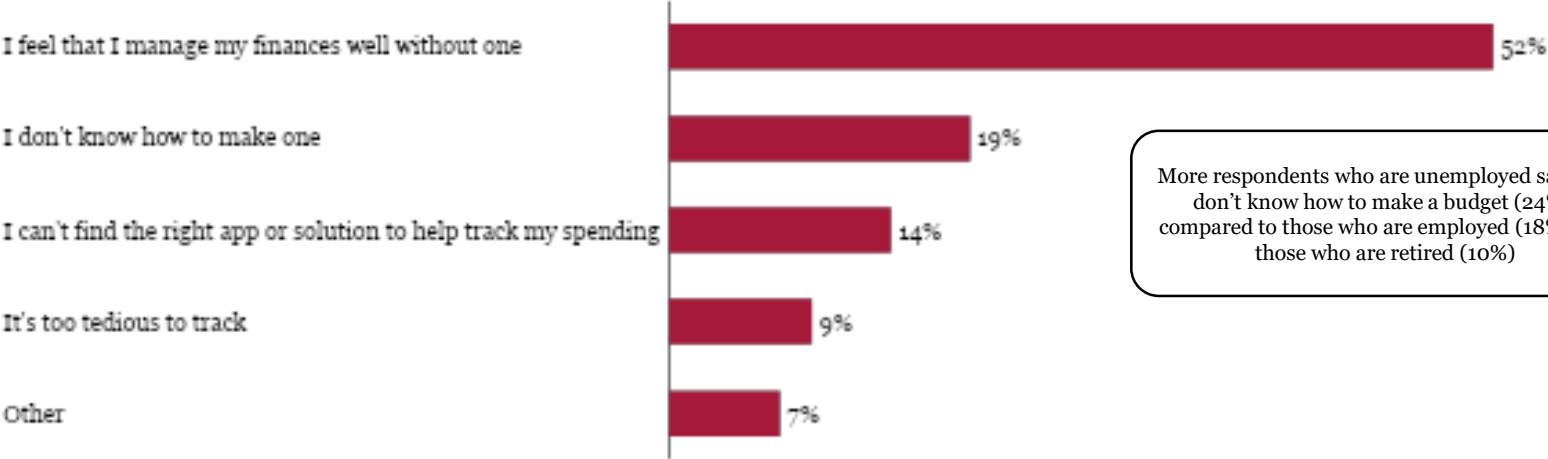


More U.S. Consumers who have taken a finance course in high school stuck to their budget (67%) compared to those who didn't take a course (48%)

Q4: Have you created a budget for yourself or your household in the last 12 months? (Base = Total)
Q4a: Do you stick to your budget month-over-month? (Base = Have Created Budget)

Over half (52%) of respondents who haven't created a budget in the last 12 months haven't done so because they believe they can manage without one

Reasons for Not Creating a Budget (N = 323)



More respondents who are unemployed say they don't know how to make a budget (24%), compared to those who are employed (18%) and those who are retired (10%)

Other Responses

"I have no money to manage."

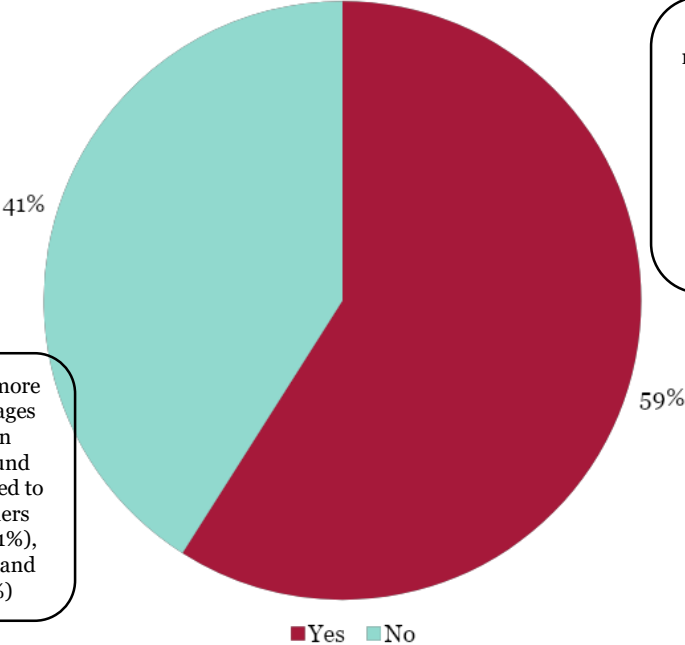
"I haven't really thought about it to be honest."

"I don't feel that it is necessary."

Q4b: Why haven't you created a budget? (Base = Haven't Created Budget)

Many U.S. Consumers (59%) have an emergency fund, but over half (62%) of those who don't have an emergency fund also don't have money left over at the end of the month

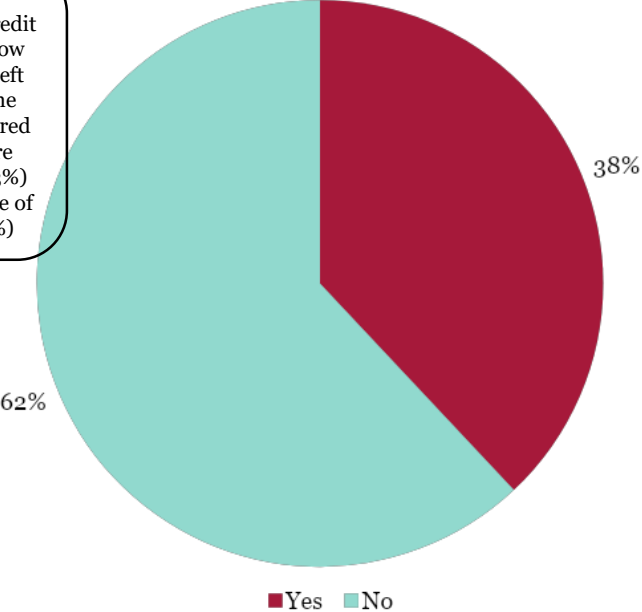
Emergency Fund (N = 1,014)



Significantly more respondents ages 65+ have an emergency fund (72%) compared to U.S. Consumers ages 18-24 (61%), 25-44 (53%), and 45-64 (59%)

Money Left Over at the End of the Month (N = 411)

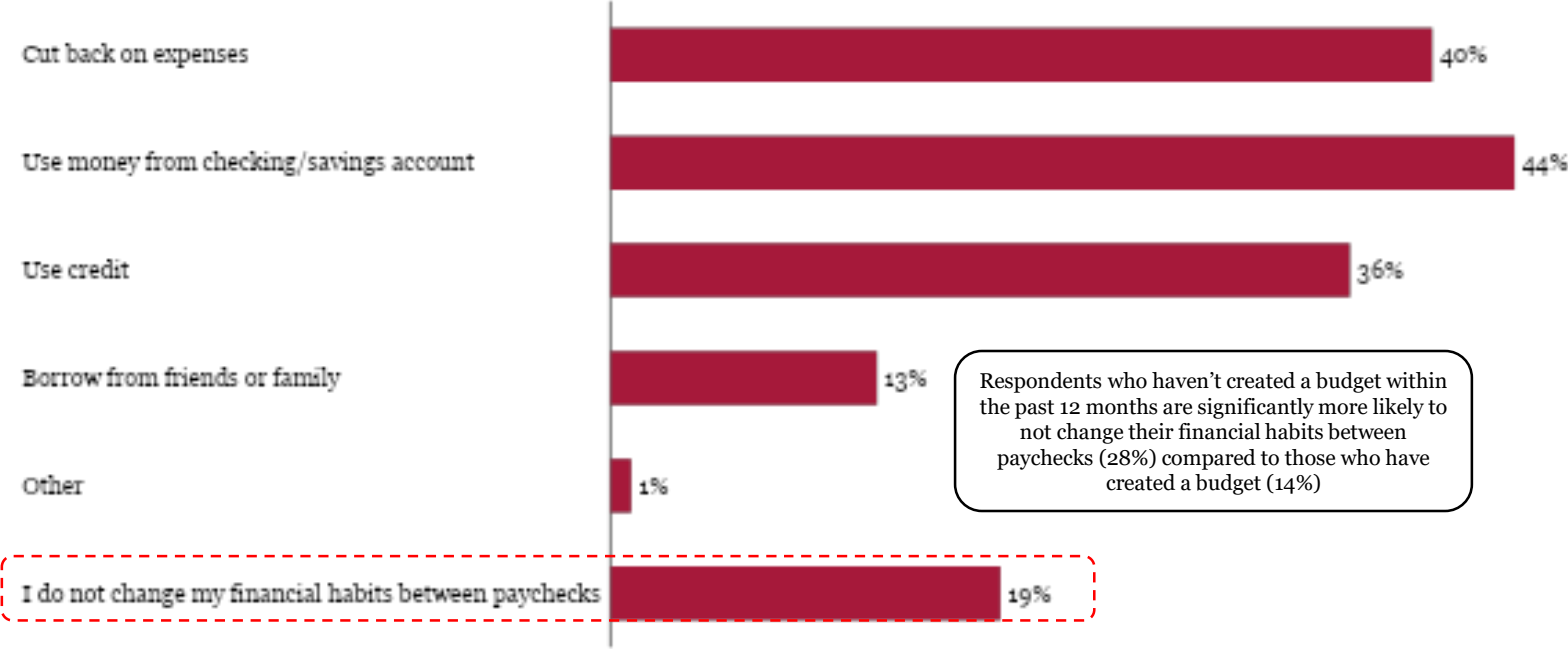
Notably more respondents with a credit score of 550 and below do not have money left over at the end of the month (77%), compared to those with a score between 651-750 (53%) and those with a score of 751 and above (42%)



Q5: Do you have an emergency fund? (Enough money saved to cover at least three months of living expenses.) (Base = Total)
 Q5a: Do you have money left over at the end of every month? (Base = Do Not Have Emergency Fund)

Between paychecks, U.S. Consumers are most likely to use money from checking/savings accounts (44%) and cut back on expenses (40%); about one in five (19%) do not change their financial habits when between paychecks

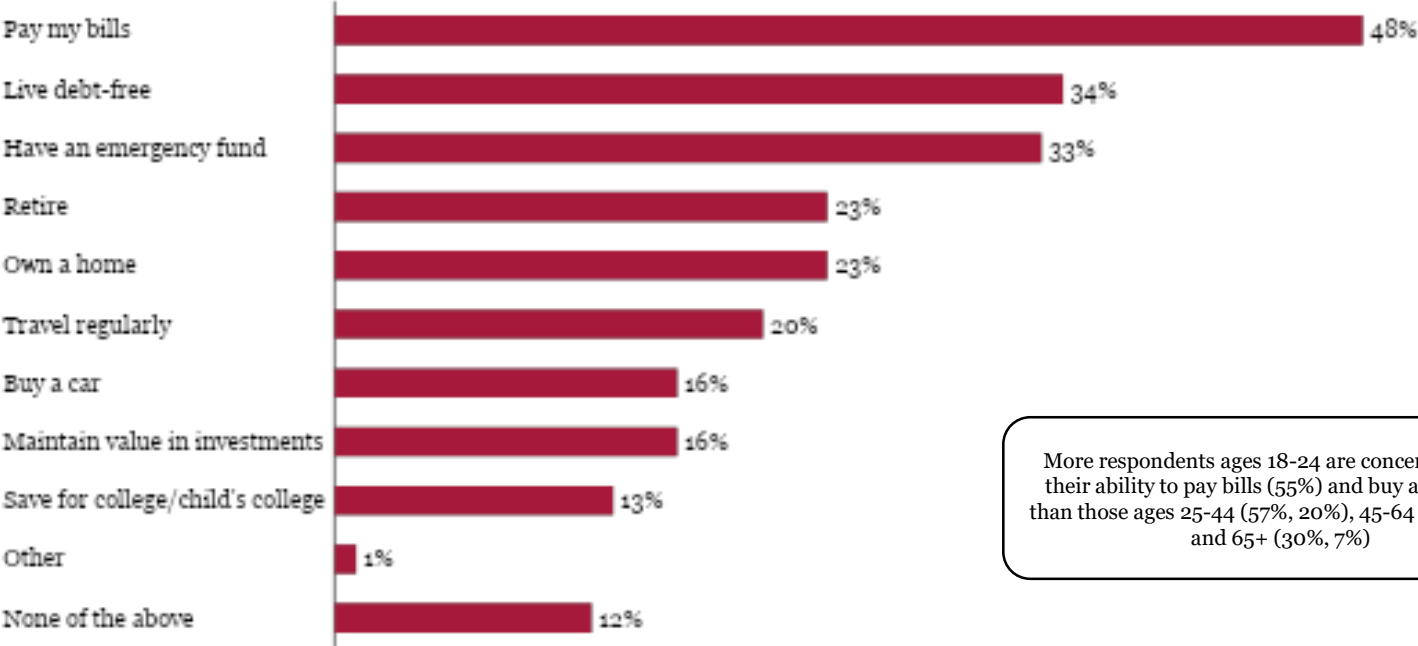
Behavior Between Paychecks (N = 1,014)



Q6: Which are you most likely to do when in between paychecks? Please select all that apply. (Base = Total)

U.S. Consumers' biggest financial concerns are being unable pay bills, live debt-free, have an emergency fund, and retire or own a home

Biggest Concerns When it Comes to Finances (N = 1,014)

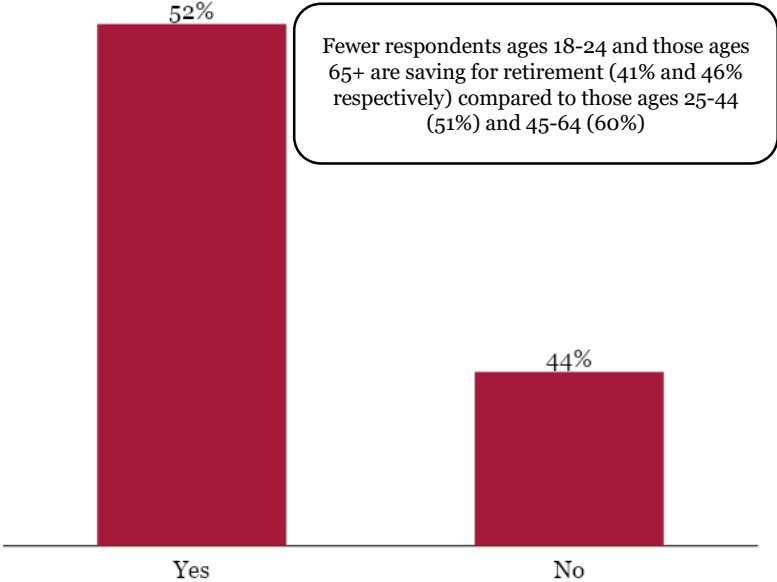


More respondents ages 18-24 are concerned about their ability to pay bills (55%) and buy a car (26%) than those ages 25-44 (57%, 20%), 45-64 (45%, 14%), and 65+ (30%, 7%)

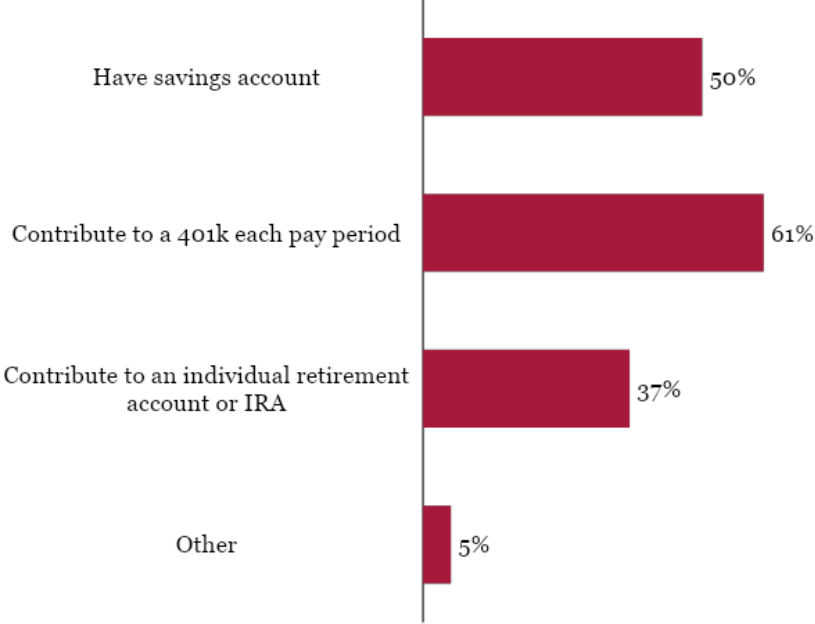
Q7: Of the following, what is/are your biggest concern(s) when it comes to your finances? Please select all that apply. I am unable to... (Base = Total)

Over half (52%) of U.S. Consumers are saving for retirement, typically by using savings accounts and contributing to a 401k each pay period

Saving for Retirement (N = 1,014)



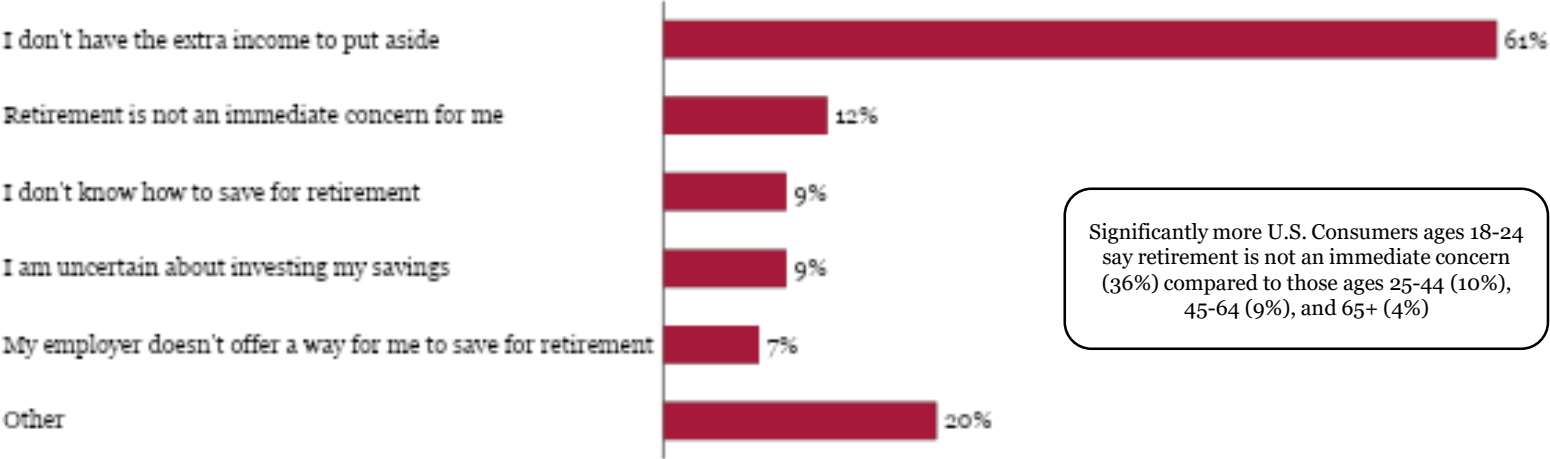
Retirement Saving Methods (N = 529)



Q8: Are you currently saving for retirement? (Base = Total)
Q8a: How are you saving for retirement? Please select all that apply. (Base = Saving For Retirement)

Over half (52%) of U.S. Consumers are saving for retirement, typically by using savings accounts and contributing to a 401k each pay period

Reasons for Not Creating a Budget (N = 449)



Significantly more U.S. Consumers ages 18-24 say retirement is not an immediate concern (36%) compared to those ages 25-44 (10%), 45-64 (9%), and 65+ (4%)

Other Responses

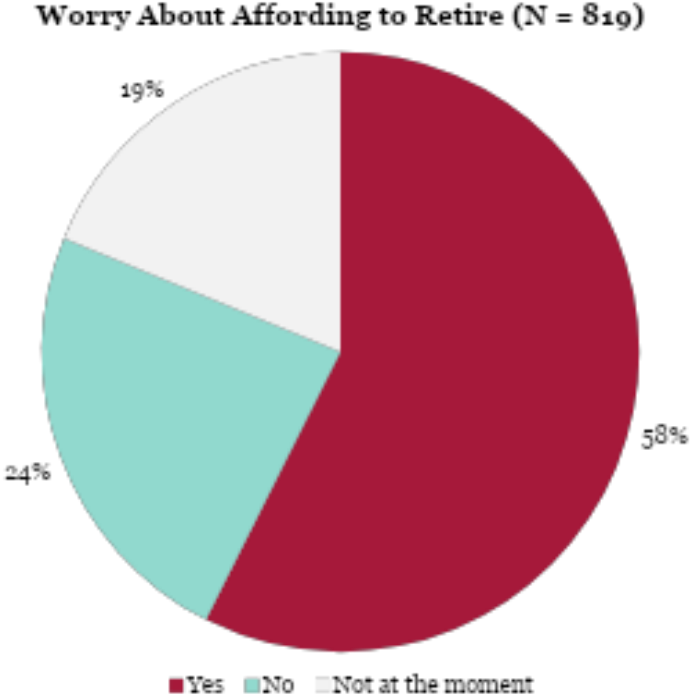
“Already retired and living on fixed income.”

“I am retired.”

“Retired now.”

Q8b: Why aren't you saving for retirement? Please select all that apply. (Base = Not Saving For Retirement)

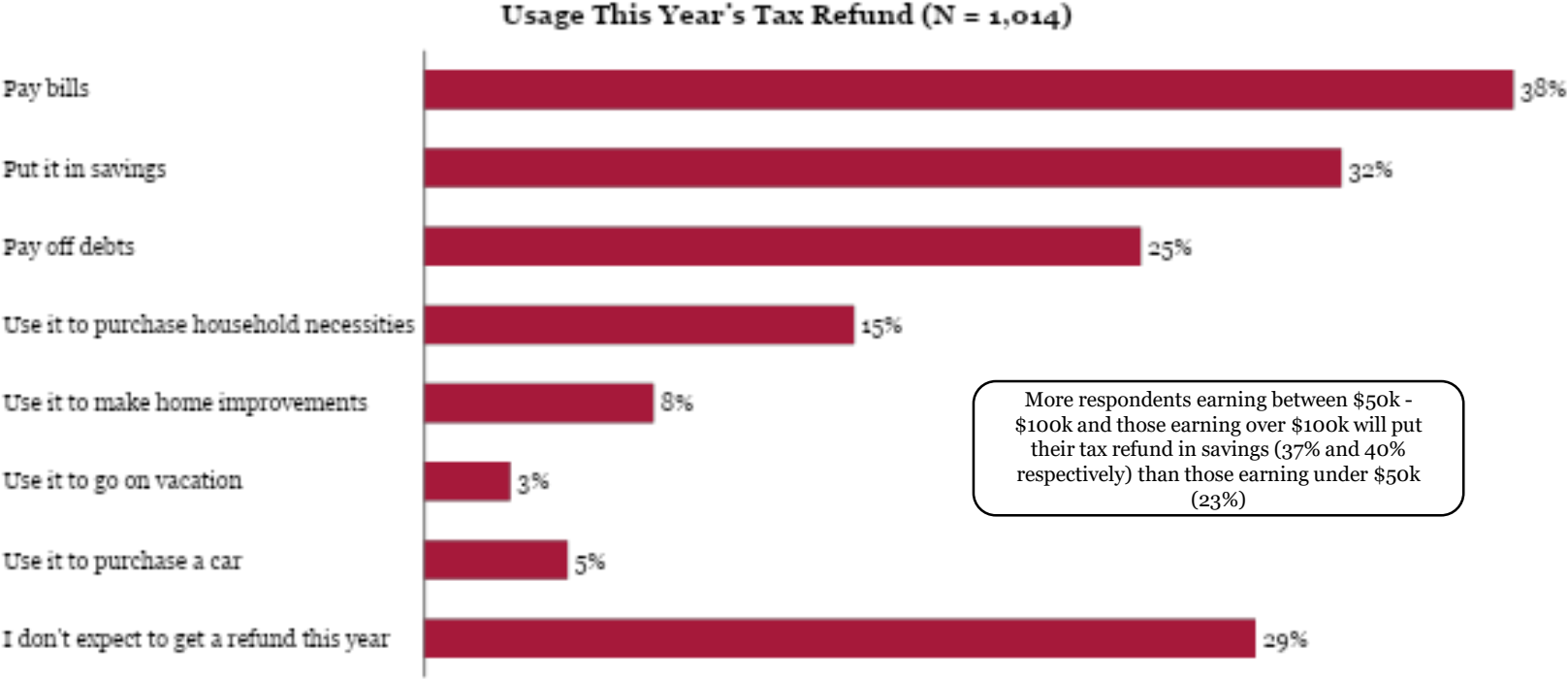
58% of respondents are worried about affording to retire and 19% are not worried now, indicating that it could become a concern in the future



More U.S. Consumers with sole financial decision responsibility or shared responsibility are worried about affording to retire (56% and 47% respectively) than those who are not very involved or not involved at all (43%)

Q9: Are you worried about how you will afford to retire? (Base = Respondents Who Are Not Retired)

U.S. Consumers are most likely to use this year's tax refund to pay bills (38%), put it in savings (32%), or pay off debts (25%)



Q26: What do you plan to do with your tax refund this year? Please select all that apply. (Base = Total)

Credit Attitudes & Behaviors

Credit Attitudes & Behaviors Summary

Almost one-third (29%) of U.S. Consumers say they have a credit score over 750, and 26% have a credit score between 651 and 750.

- Those with financial literacy scores of A or B are more likely to have a credit score of 751+ than those with a score of C (38% vs. 23%, respectively). The gap closes with credit scores of 651 – 750 for those with either an A or B vs. C (29% vs. 27%, respectively).
- Over half of respondents are paying their bills on time every time (65%) and paying off debt (55%) in an effort to improve their credit score. However, one in six (17%) are not taking any steps to improve their credit score.

Almost half (45%) of U.S. Consumers check their credit scores at least once a month, typically from free websites, like Credit Karma (51%), their credit card company (36%) or from their bank or credit union (31%).

More than half of U.S. Consumers (60%) have checked their credit report within the last week or month, with most people (56%) saying they checked their report to confirm the information is correct.

- Additionally, about half of respondents feel it is important to check their credit reports and scores regularly to closely monitor for any changes (57%), help better protect against theft or fraud (45%), and to know their scores/reports for financial decisions (43%).

About one in four (27%) U.S. Consumers have had their identity stolen, which has prevented individuals from getting approved for a credit card (20%), obtaining a low interest rate for a loan (19%) and for turning on utilities in a new apartment or home (18%).

- Among those who have yet to experience identity theft, almost half (44%) would not know what to do if the event were to happen.

29% of respondents have a credit score of over 750, and 26% have a credit score between 650 and 750

Credit Scores (N = 1,014)

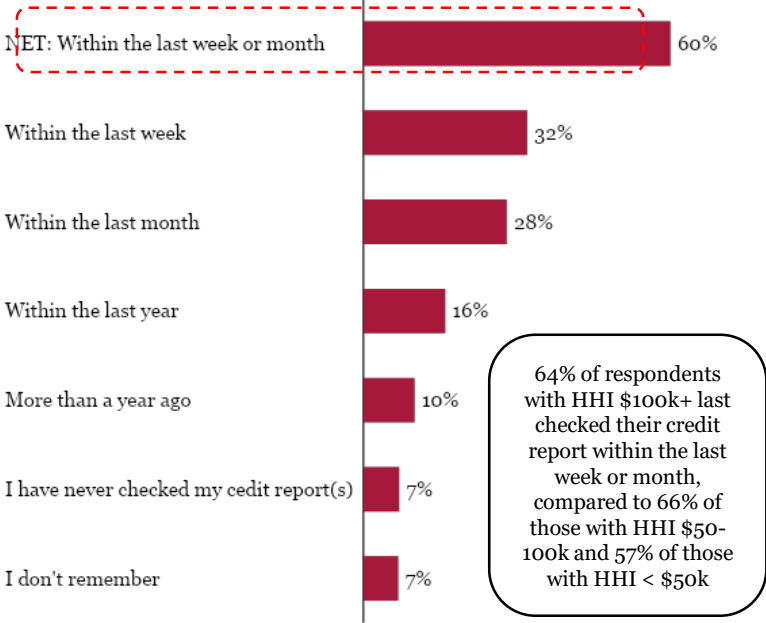
Those with financial literacy scores of A or B are more likely to have a credit score of 751+ than those with a score of C (38% vs. 23%, respectively)



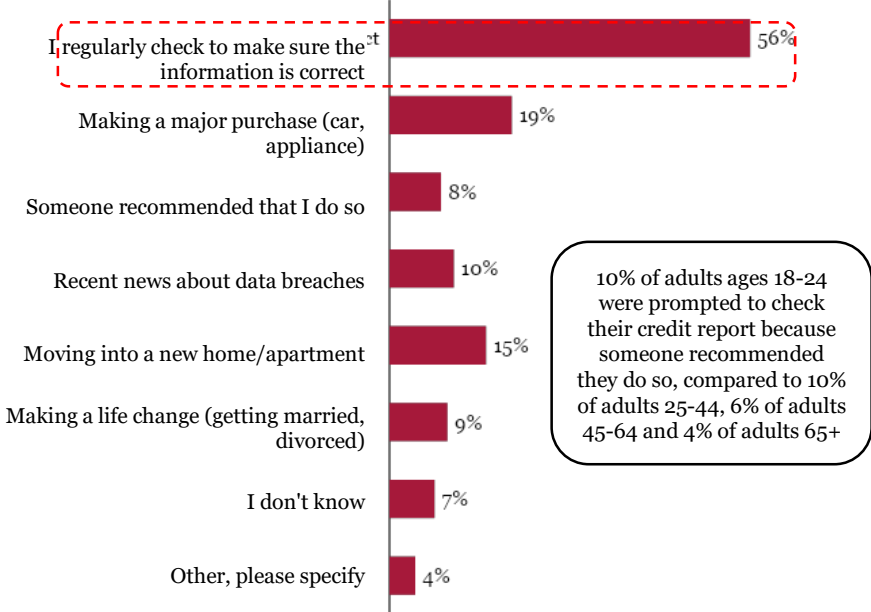
■ 550 and below ■ 551-650 ■ 651-750 ■ 751 and above ■ Prefer not to answer ■ I don't know

Three in five (60%) U.S. Consumers have recently checked their credit report, and over half (56%) regularly check their credit report to make sure the information is correct

Last Checked Credit Report(s) (N = 1,014)



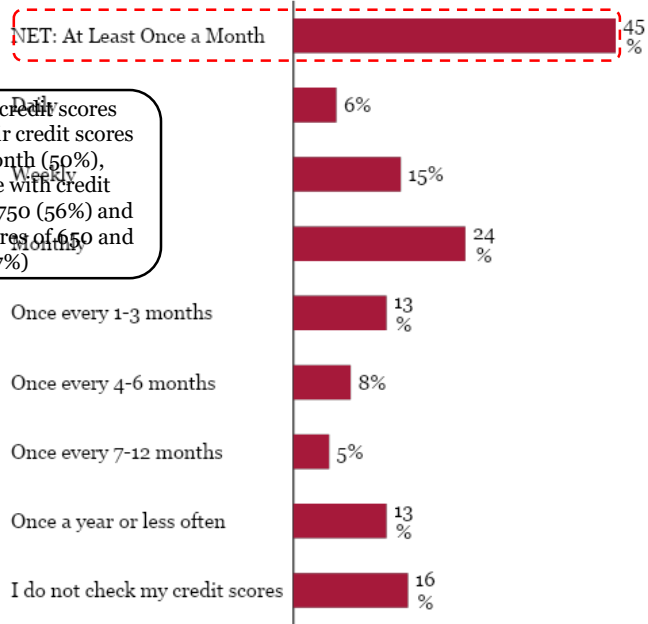
Reason(s) for Checking Credit Report(s) (N = 878)



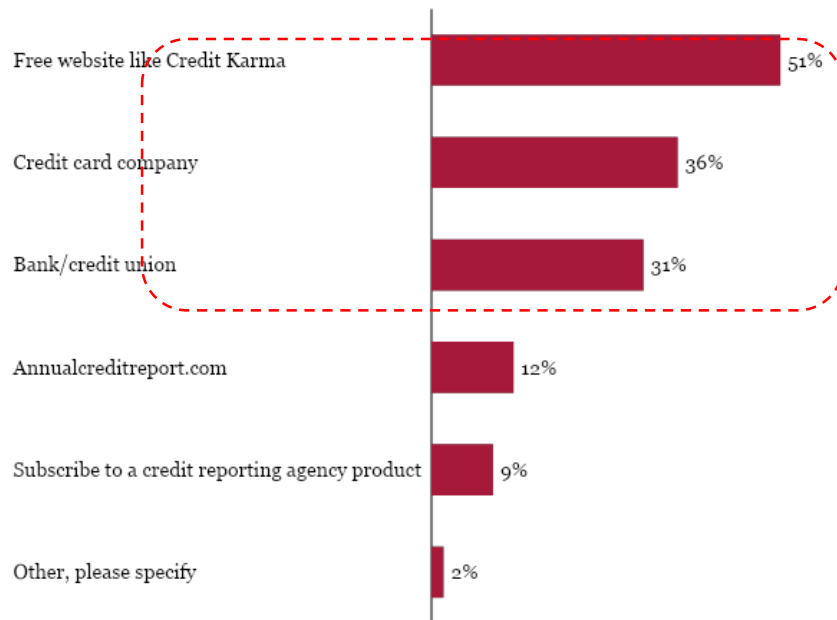
Q11: When did you last check your credit report(s)? (Base = Total)
 Q11a: What prompted you to check your credit report(s)? (Base = Checked credit report)

Almost half (45%) of U.S. Consumers check their credit scores at least once a month, often from free websites such as Credit Karma (51%), from credit card companies (36%), or from banks/credit unions (31%)

Frequency of Checking Credit Score(s) (N = 1,014)



Source(s) for Checking Credit Score(s) (N = 854)

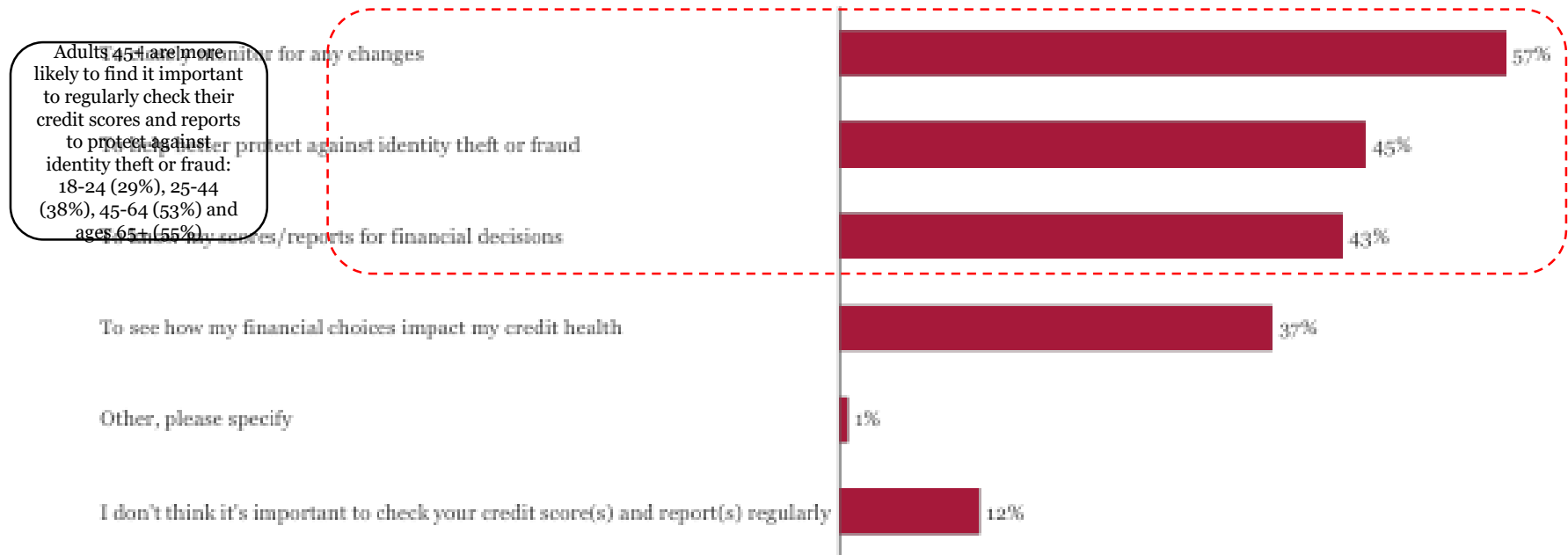


Q13: How often do you obtain credit scores? (Base = Total)

Q14: What source(s) do you use to obtain your credit score(s)? (Base = Checked Credit Score)

Most U.S. Consumers find it important to regularly check their credit scores and reports to monitor for changes (57%), help protect against identity theft (45%), and to know their scores or reports for financial decisions (43%)

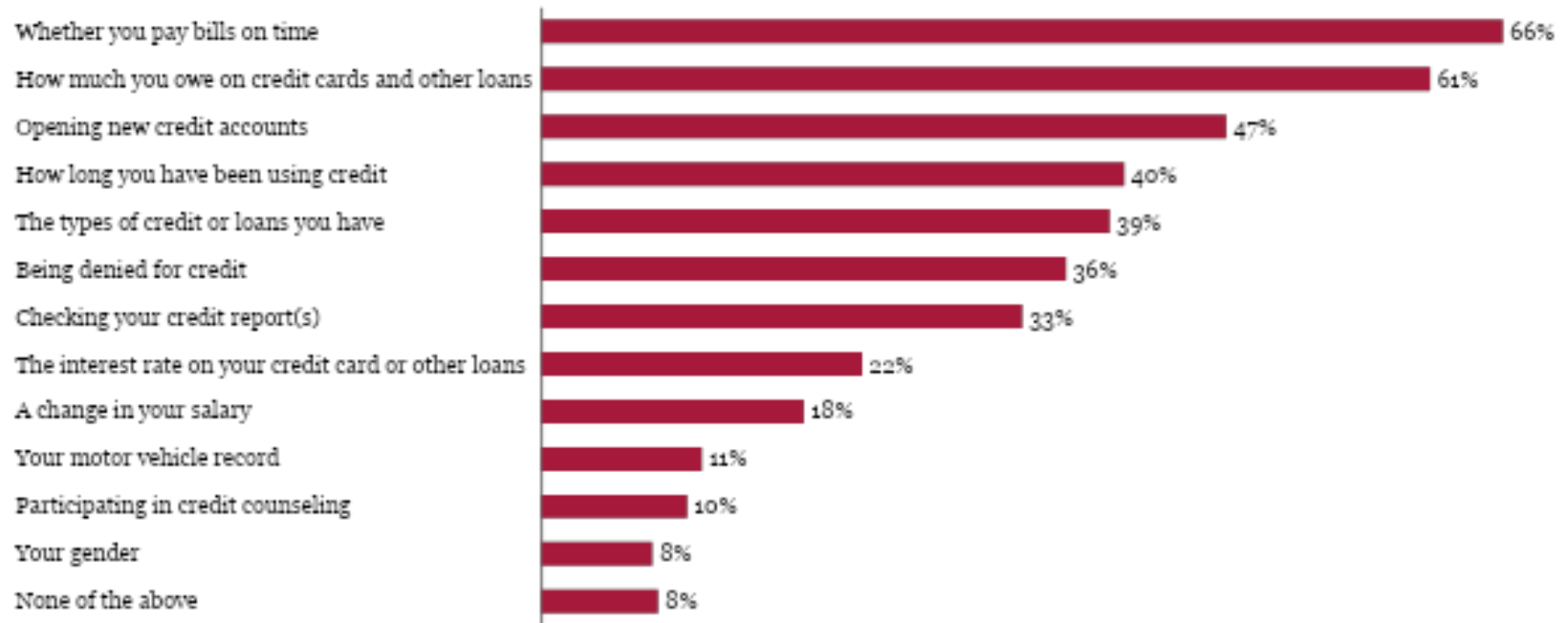
Importance in Checking Credit Scores & Reports Regularly (N = 1,014)



Q18: Why do you think it's important to check your credit score(s) and credit report(s) regularly? (Base = Total)

Most U.S. Consumers believe that paying bills on time (66%), debt on credit cards and loans (61%), and opening new credit accounts (47%) affect credit scores

Belief That the Following Factors Affect Credit Scores (N = 1,014)

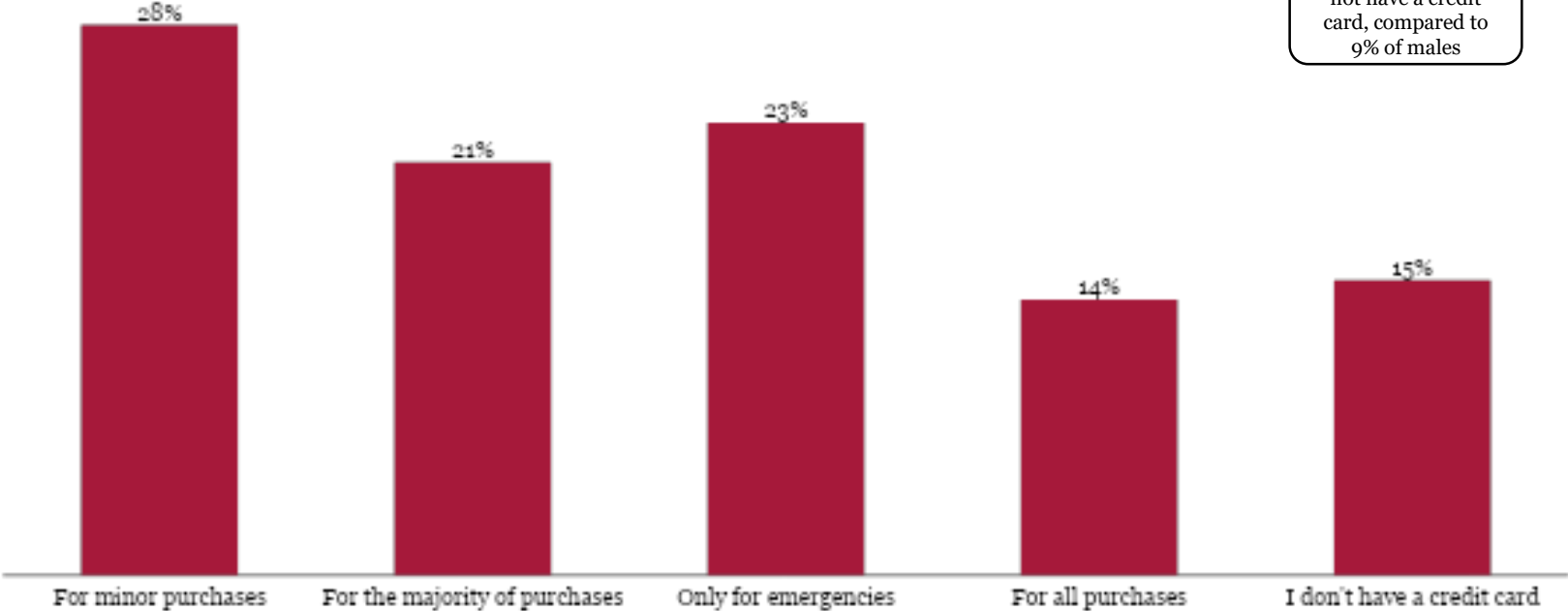


Q16: To the best of your knowledge, which of the following factors affect credit scores? (Base = Total)

One in five (21%) U.S. Consumers use a credit card for most of their purchases and 14% use a credit card for all purchases, while 15% don't have a credit card at all

Credit Card Behavior (N = 1,014)

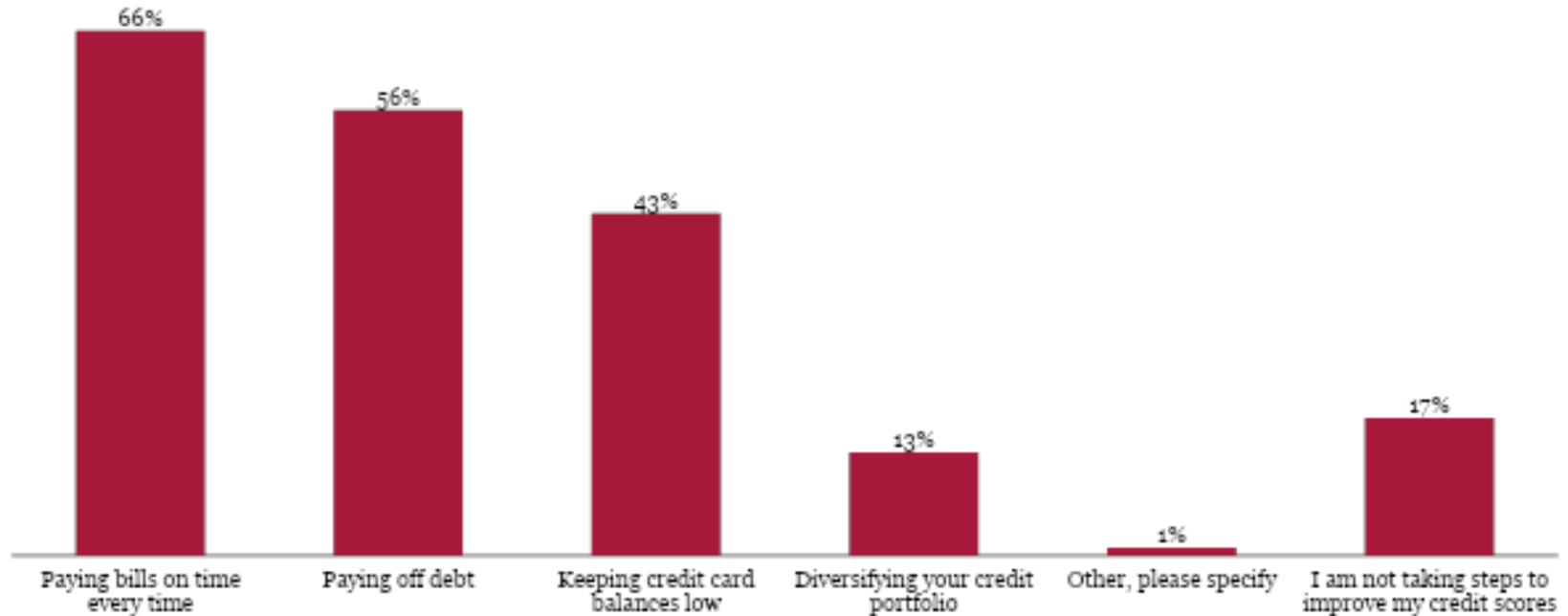
21% of females do not have a credit card, compared to 9% of males



Q19: Which of the following best describes your use of credit cards? (Base = Total)

More than half of respondents are paying their bills on time every time (66%) and paying off debt (56%) to help improve their credit score; however, one in six (17%) people are not taking any steps to improve their credit score

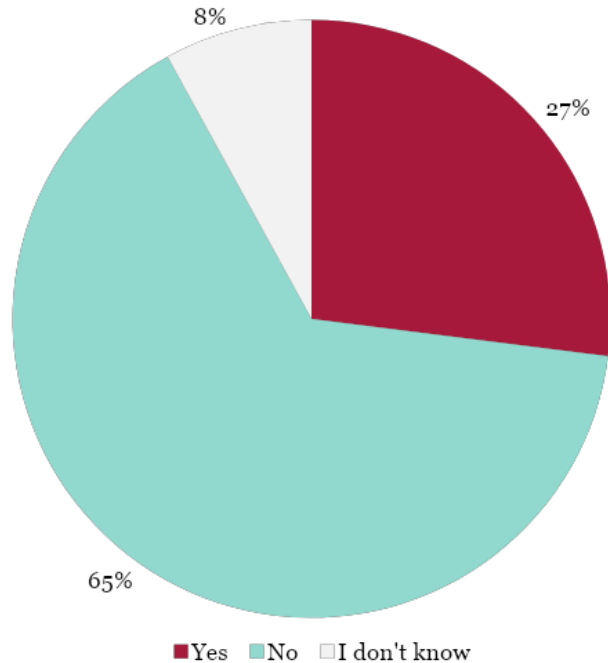
Steps Taken to Improve Credit Score (N = 1,014)



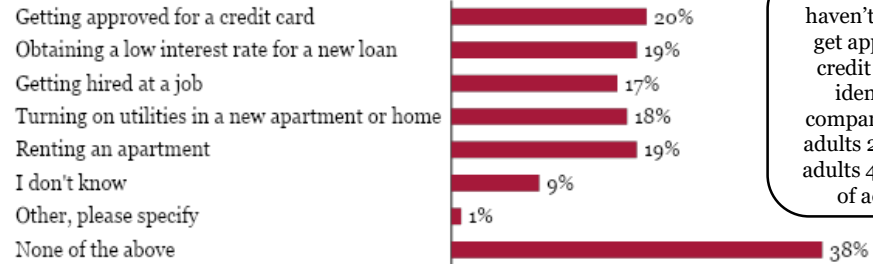
Q17: What steps are you taking to improve your credit scores? (Base = Total)

About one in four (27%) U.S. Consumers have experienced identity theft, leading to multiple financial consequences and about half (44%) of those who haven't experienced identity theft feel they wouldn't know what to do if their identity was stolen

Victim of Identity Theft (N = 1,014)

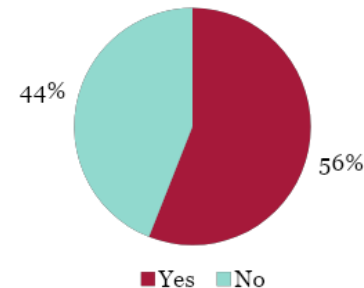


Identity Theft Prevented the Following (N = 277)



28% of adults 18-24 haven't been able to get approved for a credit card due to identity theft, compared to 25% of adults 25-44, 18% of adults 45-64 and 9% of adults 65+

Would Know What to do in the Event of Identity Theft (N = 660)



67% of males say they would know what to do in the event of identity theft, compared to 47% of females

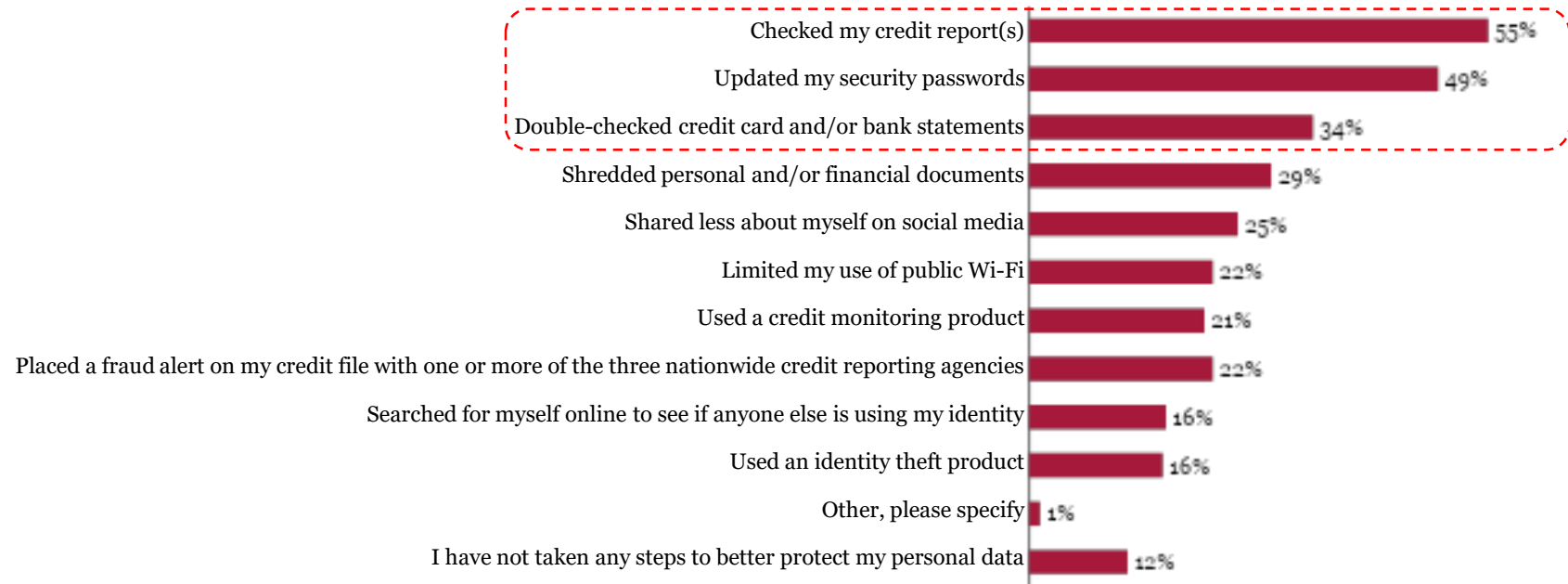
Q20: Have you ever been a victim of identity theft? (Base = Total)

Q20a: Has an identity theft ever prevented you from any of the following? (Base = Identity Theft Victim)

Q20b: Do you think you'd know what to do in the event of identity theft? (Base = Have never been an Identity Theft Victim)

U.S. Consumers are conscious about having their personal data stolen, with 55% checking their credit report, 49% updating their security passwords, and 34% checking bank and credit card statements

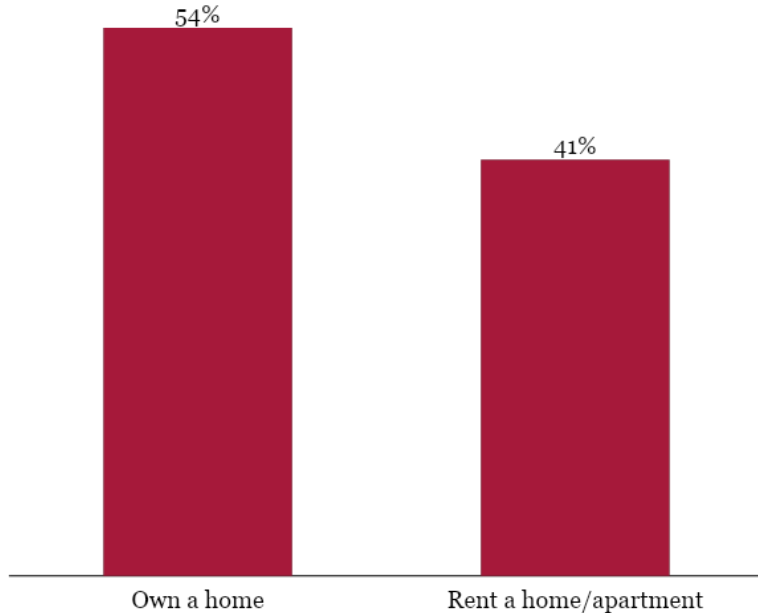
Steps Taken to Protect Personal Data Over Past 12 Months (N = 1,014)



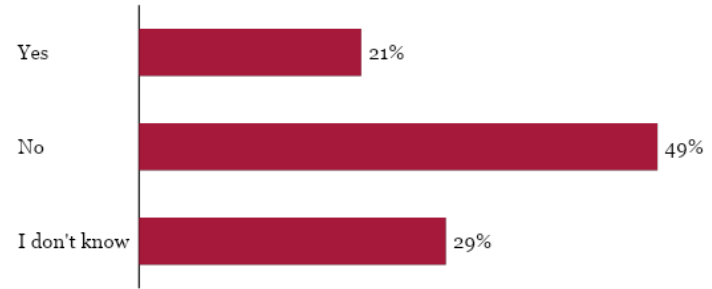
Q21: Which of the following, if any, have you done to better protect your personal data over the past 12 months: (Base = Total)

41% of U.S. Consumers are renting and just under half (49%) do not report their rental data to a financial institution

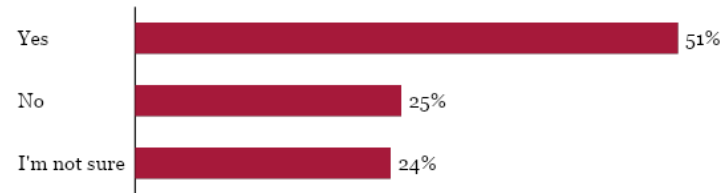
Type of Residence (N = 1,014)



Reporting Rental Data (N = 412)



Belief that it is helpful to have rental payment information included on credit reports and factored into credit scores (N = 324)



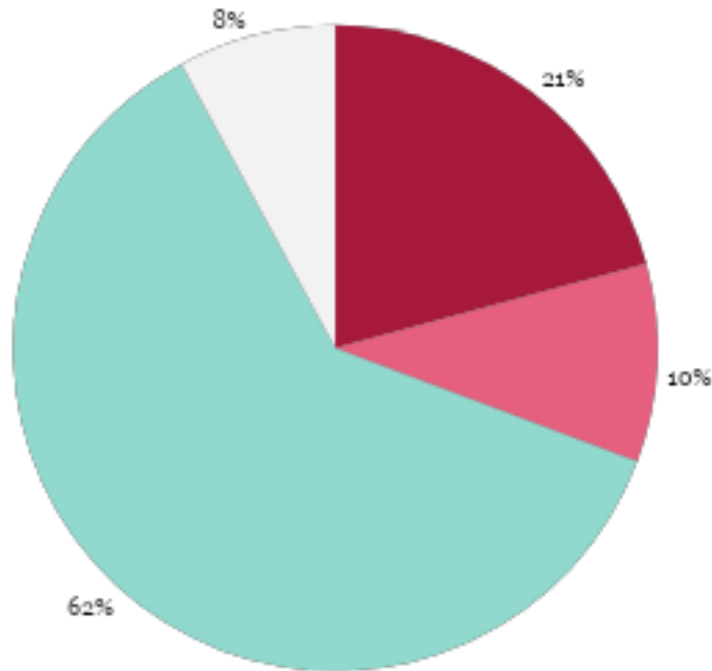
Q10: Do you currently...? (Base = Total)

Q10a: Are you or your landlord currently reporting your rental data (i.e. monthly payments) to any financial institution? (Base = Rented a home or apartment)

Q10b: Do you think it would be helpful to have your rental payment information included on your credit reports and factored into credit scores? (Base = Rented a home or apartment and not currently reporting rental data to financial institution or don't know)

About one in three (31%) U.S. Consumers have utilized a credit lock or freeze to protect their credit report(s), while three in five (62%) have never used a credit lock or freeze

Placed a Credit Lock or Freeze on Credit Report(s) (N = 1,014)



Yes, a Credit Lock: Locking your credit report(s) prevents certain access to your credit report(s) by certain third parties and generally uses mobile-enabled tools for identity authentication

Yes, a Credit Freeze: Prevents certain access to your credit report(s) by certain third parties and generally uses user credentials for identifying authentication

No

I don't know

Adults under 45 are more likely to have utilized a credit lock: 18-24 (33%), 25-44 (29%), 45-64 (13%) and ages 65+ (9%)

Q12: Have you ever placed a credit lock or credit freeze on your credit report(s)? (Base = Total)

Future Outlook

Future Outlook Summary

One in five U.S. Consumers (21%) feel positively about the 2022 economic outlook; conversely, one in three (36%) have a negative outlook

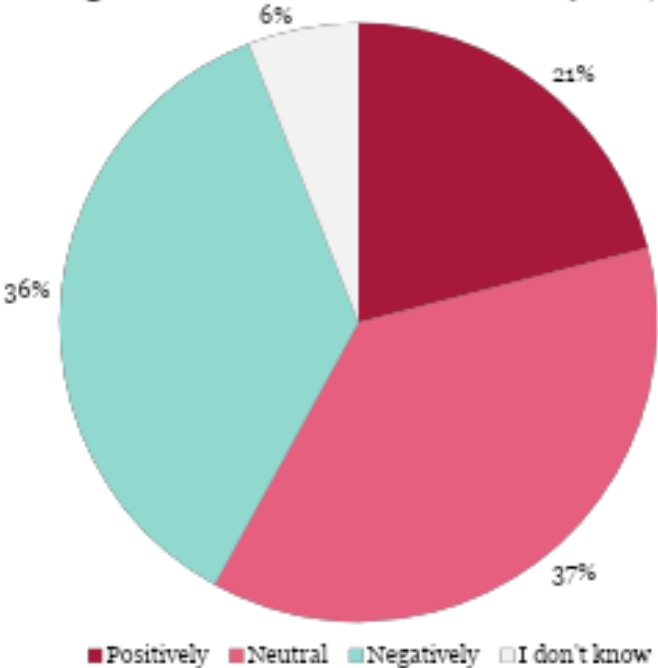
- Males are more likely to feel positive about the 2021 economic outlook compared to females (25% to 18%, respectively)

U.S. Consumers are split on alternative data with 1 in 3 not in favor of alternative data another 1 in 3 unsure if they are in favor of alternative data usage

- Among those in favor, utility payments (77%) are the most desired alternative data source

One in five (21%) U.S. Consumers feel positive about the 2022 economic outlook, while one-third (36%) feel negative

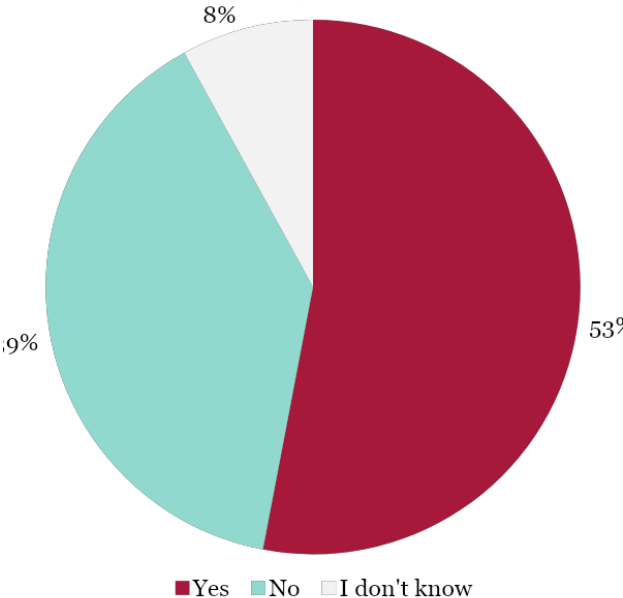
Feelings About 2022 Economic Outlook (N = 1,014)



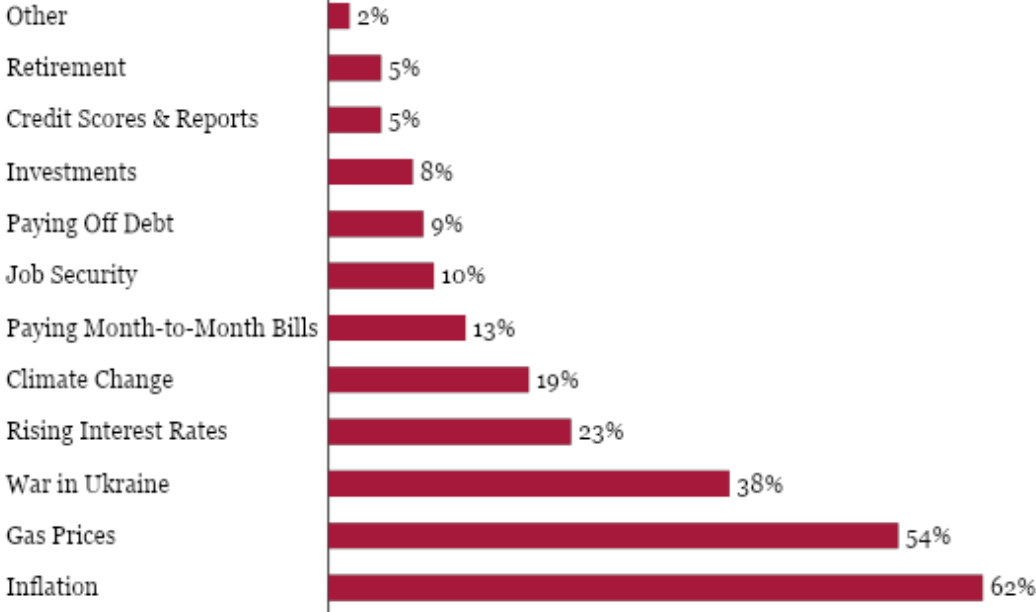
One quarter (25%) of males feel positive about the 2022 economic outlook, compared to one in five (18%) females

Over half (53%) of U.S. Consumers are concerned about the on-going effect of COVID-19 on their financial situation, however additional areas of concern are coming into play for 2022 as well.

Concern about on-going effect of COVID-19 on financial situation (N = 1,014)

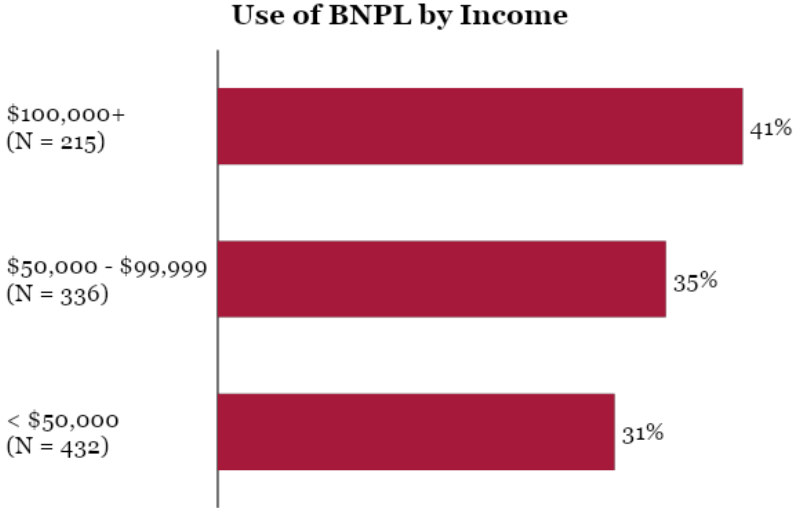
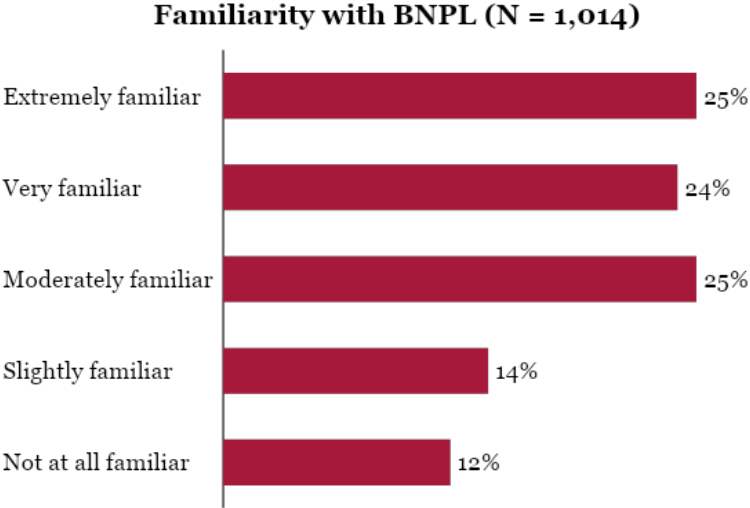


Additional factors of concern impacting financial situation (N = 1,014)



Q23: Are you concerned about the on-going effect of coronavirus (COVID-19) on your financial situation? (Base = Total)
 Q24: Which other factors are you concerned about impacting you financially in 2022? (select up to three) (Base = Total)

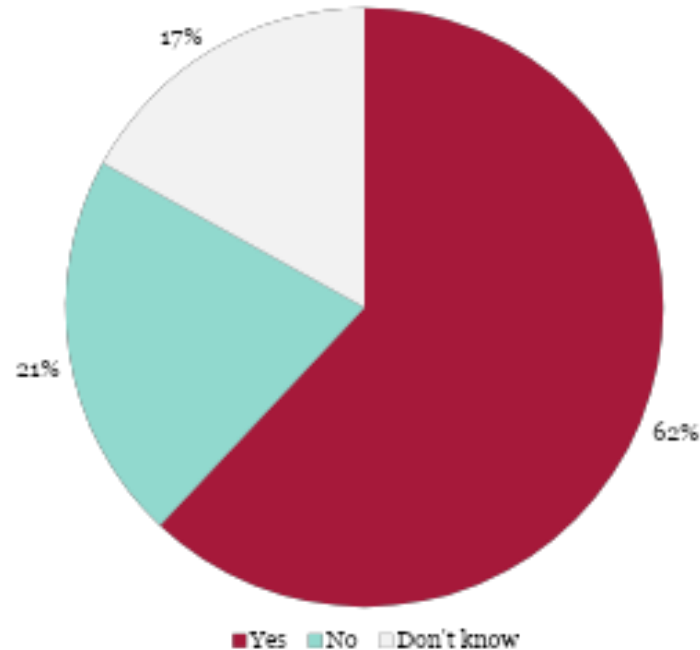
Nearly half (49%) of U.S. Consumers are extremely or very familiar with Buy Now, Pay Later financing and those with higher incomes are more likely to have used it



Q27: How familiar are you with the term Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL)? (Base = Total)
Q29: Have you taken advantage of Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) financing? (Base =<50k, 50k-99k, 100k+)

Over half (62%) of U.S. Consumers believe the nationwide credit reporting agencies are a good source for financial information, however, almost one in five (17%) report they didn't know if they were a good source

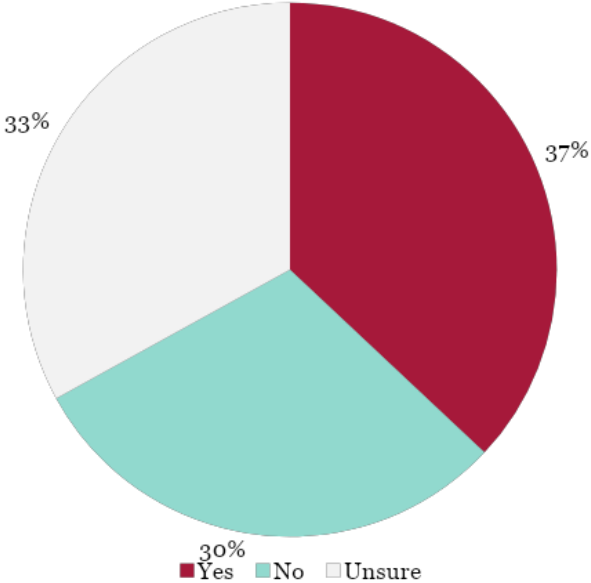
View of Credit Reporting Agencies as Good Source of Financial Information (N = 1,014)



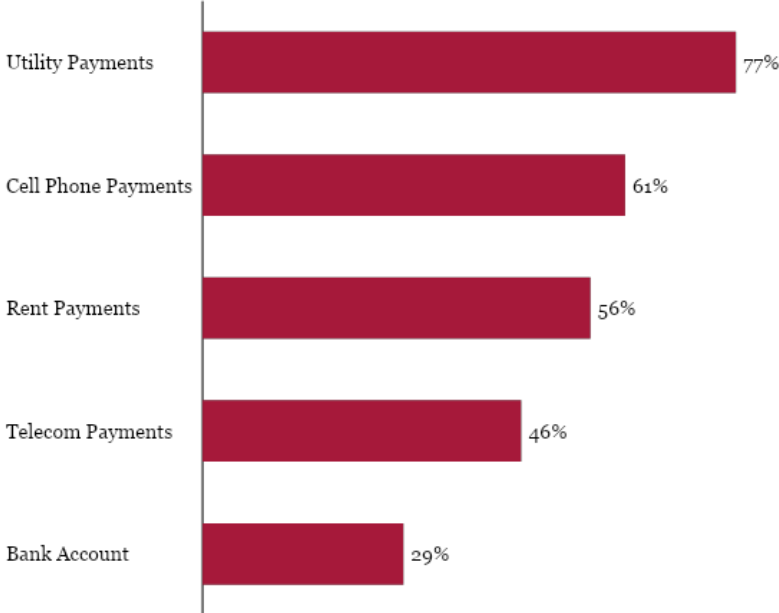
Younger age groups have more of a negative perception of the credit reporting agencies (Answering No):
Ages 18-24 (27%), 25-44 (22%), 45-64 (18%) and ages 65+ (18%)

Only about one-third (30%) of U.S. Consumers are against including alternative data, however, another one-third (33%) of respondents are unsure, perhaps due to lack of awareness

View of having alternative data (i.e., utility, rent) used in credit score calculation (N = 1,014)



Alternative data that should be included (n = 371)



Q31: Are you in favor of having alternative data (i.e., utility, rent, cell phone payments) incorporated in your credit score's calculation? (Base = Total)
Q31a: If yes, what payment history are you in favor of being included...(select all that apply) (Base = Alternative Data in favor)

2021 vs. 2022 Responses

Noted Changes from 2021 to 2022 Survey Results

Behavior between paychecks *(slide 13)*

- Our team noted a **9 point increase** in respondents using **credit** between paychecks (36%) compared to 27% in 2021.

What is/are your biggest concern(s) when it comes to your finances? *(slide 14)*

- In 2021, the top response was “living debt free” with 36%, however in 2022, we saw that the top answer was **“paying bills” with 48%** (a **19 point increase from 2021** when “paying bills” only received 29%)

Worry about affording retirement *(slide 17)*

- Saw a **5 point increase** from 2021 to 2022 in number of U.S. Consumers worried about **affording retirement** (58% in 2022)

Victim of Identity Theft *(slide 28)*

- There was a **7 point increase** in those reporting being the **victim of identity theft (27%) in 2022** compared to 20% in 2021.

Protecting personal data within last 12 months *(slide 29)*

- Noted an **8 point increase** in **checking credit report(s) in the last 12 months** from 47% in 2021 to **55% in 2022**.

Use of Credit Lock/Freeze *(slide 31)*

- We saw an **8 point increase** in consumers using **Credit Lock/Credit Freeze** from 23% in 2021 to **31% in 2022**.

Feelings about 2022 Economic Outlook *(slide 34)*

- For 2022, we saw a **12 point decrease** in positive **outlook for the year** (21%) compared to 33% in 2021.

View of CRAs as good source of financial information *(slide 37)*

- Overall, there was a **10 point increase** in respondents answering **“yes” to viewing CRAs as a good source of financial information (62%)** compared to 52% in 2021.

Audience Distribution

Audience Distribution

Total
N = 1,014

Audience	%	N
Gender		
Male	49%	492
Female	50%	508
Age		
18-24	12%	123
25-44	37%	372
45-64	33%	331
65+	19%	188
Ethnicity		
White/Caucasian	65%	664
Black/African American	15%	151
Hispanic/Latino	13%	131
Asian/Pacific Islander	4%	41
Income		
Low: Under \$50k	43%	432
Medium: \$50-\$99k	33%	336
High: \$100k+	21%	215

Audience	%	N
Employment		
Employed	61%	619
Unemployed	17%	177
Retired	19%	195
Region		
Northeast	23%	238
Midwest	27%	271
South	29%	294
West	21%	211
Financial Literacy Score		
A or B	54%	540
C or Lower	44%	447
Financial Decision Making Role		
Solely Responsible	60%	606
Equally share responsibility	29%	299
Not very involved/Not involved at all	10%	109

Audience	%	N
Credit Score Range		
Low: 650 and below	31%	323
Medium: 651-750	26%	263
High: 751 and above	29%	293
2022 Economic Outlook		
Positive	21%	218
Neutral	37%	372
Negative	36%	363
Taken Personal Finance Course		
Yes	39%	398
No	52%	526
Created Budget in Last 12 Months		
Yes	68%	691
No	32%	323

About Equifax

At Equifax (NYSE: EFX), we believe knowledge drives progress. As a global data, analytics, and technology company, we play an essential role in the global economy by helping financial institutions, companies, employers, and government agencies make critical decisions with greater confidence. Our unique blend of differentiated data, analytics, and cloud technology drives insights to power decisions to move people forward. Headquartered in Atlanta and supported by more than 13,000 employees worldwide, Equifax operates or has investments in 25 countries in North America, Central and South America, Europe, and the Asia Pacific region. For more information, visit [Equifax.com](https://www.equifax.com).