

Understanding the Changing Cost of Credit

The Drivers Behind the Cost to Lenders and Borrowers

Buying a home is a major financial milestone, and mortgages can be complicated. This infographic breaks down the cost of mortgage credit — and it is important to understand the facts.

The tri-merge credit report is the industry's gold standard for comprehensive risk assessment and represents the best data available for consumers. This infographic details the cost of the Equifax component.

What Goes into an Equifax Mortgage Credit Report?

It's made up of:

Equifax performs the data collection, maintenance, and risk management on **3.5B tradelines for 245M consumers.**

Additionally, Equifax contributes:



Consumer Credit Data

+

Third-party Score Costs

The score provider contributes the algorithm, as well as compliance, education, and credit modeling.

Without the consumer credit data, there is no credit score.
Despite this, the credit score itself makes up a SIGNIFICANT portion of the total cost of credit.

The Cost Breakdown

The Equifax Mortgage Credit Report vs. Credit Scores

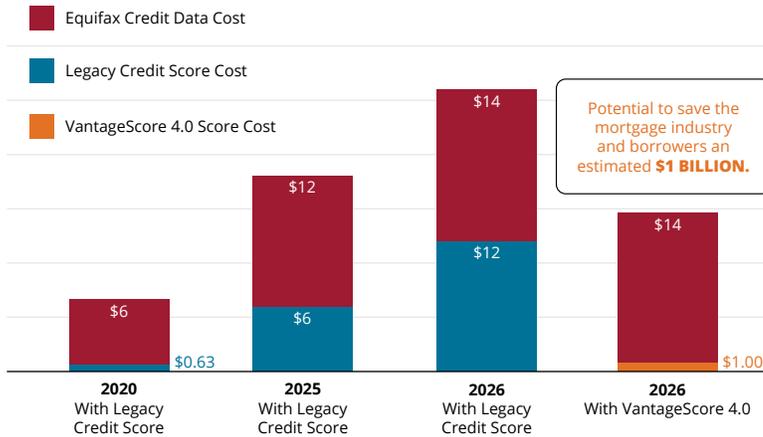
Credit score costs have grown from a negligible fraction to nearly half the report cost, while bureau increases have been minimal over six years.

Since 2020, the cost of a legacy credit score has increased

+1,800%

From 2025 to 2026, the cost of a legacy credit score increased

+100%
from **\$4.95** to **\$10+**
(plus re-issues)



The third-party score provider's share of total costs has grown from

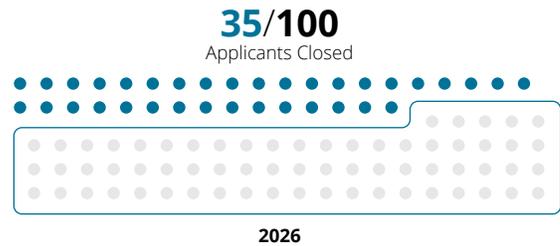
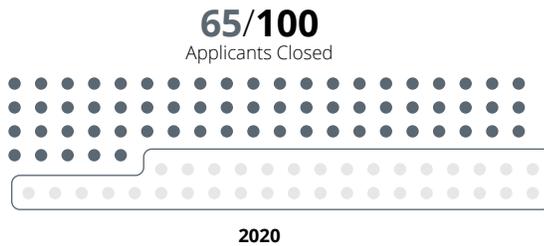
9.5% to **46%**
in 2020 in 2026*

Since 2020, the cost of a legacy credit score has surged from \$0.63 to \$12.00 (includes re-issues) — nearly eclipsing the cost of Equifax credit data.

*Most mortgages use at least three reports and scores per borrower

The "Fallout" Reality

The biggest impact to a lender's profitability is loans that don't close.



Lenders Already Have a Choice

While a tri-merge credit report is mandatory for final underwriting, lenders can choose to pull reports and scores from one, two, or all three bureaus during the shopping phase.

The Benefit: This allows lenders to control costs by verifying a borrower's credit profile up front, so they only commit to a full tri-merge once a loan is confirmed as viable.

\$1B
Savings Opportunity

VantageScore 4.0:
A Strategy for Lowering Credit Costs Is on the Horizon

The move by the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) to adopt VantageScore 4.0 marks a significant shift toward affordability that's projected to deliver a **potential \$1 BILLION** in savings to lenders and borrowers.

The Bottom Line?

The cost of credit today is driven largely by increasing legacy credit score costs, **not consumer credit data costs.**

Find more information on mortgage and housing trends at [equifax.com/business/trends-insights/mortgage-housing-trends](https://www.equifax.com/business/trends-insights/mortgage-housing-trends)

Disclaimer About Tri-merge

With the tri-merge requirement in place for all GSE mortgage loans, the exact credit score price per borrower and closed loan increases by 3x.

Sources: Freddie Mac 2025 Updates to Cost to Originate Study, ICE Mortgage Origination Data, Equifax Internal Pricing Data

Copyright © 2026, Equifax Inc., Atlanta, Georgia. All rights reserved. Equifax is a registered trademark of Equifax Inc.