

**Q1 U.S. MIDDLE-INCOME FINANCIAL  
SECURITY MONITOR™ (FSM™)  
APRIL 2024**

# A QUARTERLY TRACKING POLL OF MIDDLE-INCOME AMERICANS' FINANCIAL MOOD



Primerica's first quarter 2024 Middle-Income Financial Security Monitor™ found that middle-income Americans remain evenly split when it comes to their outlook on their personal finances as the rising cost of necessities and credit card debt continue to take a toll.

Less than a quarter (21%) of these households believe they will be better off financially in the next year, with more than a quarter (28%) saying they will be worse off and a third (37%) saying they will be about the same. In addition, two-thirds (67%) say their income is falling behind the cost of living, and less than a quarter (19%) believe the American economy will be better off a year from now.

## HOW ARE FAMILIES DOING FINANCIALLY?

- **Middle-income Americans are split in their assessment of their personal finances.** Exactly half (50%) rate their finances as excellent or good, with nearly half (49%) rating them as not so good or poor. While this assessment is not as positive as it was one year ago, it shows a negative trend line is leveling off.
- **Families are increasingly concerned about credit card debt.** More than a third of middle-income Americans (38%) are more concerned about credit card debt compared to a year ago. Those who feel this way say they are spending less overall (71%, up 9 points from December), looking at additional income sources (32%, up 6 points) or considering debt consolidation (16%, also up 6 points).
- **Managing credit card debt continues to be difficult.** A majority (60%) of middle-income Americans who are unable to make their full credit card payment each month find managing this debt difficult. In addition, more than a third (36%) say they are using their cards more frequently, a two-point increase from December's holiday shopping season. Still, nearly a quarter (24%) say they don't have any credit card debt, a two-point increase over the same time period.



## DO MIDDLE-INCOME AMERICANS FEEL THEIR FINANCIAL EDUCATION PREPARED THEM FOR ADULTHOOD?

- **Most feel schools failed to provide a proper financial education.** About two-thirds (66%) of middle-income Americans say their education did not adequately prepare them to manage their finances as adults. Nearly half (49%) say that it did not prepare them well at all, with a third (33%) saying it prepared them very or somewhat well.
- **Younger generations more likely to find financial education lacking.** A majority of those under age 65 say their financial education fell short, with the youngest age brackets expressing the highest levels of dissatisfaction, including 73% of those ages 18-34, 69% of those ages 35-49, and 65% of those ages 50-64.
- **Men over age 65 feel more positively about their financial education.** This demographic represents the only one where a majority (61%) say their upbringing did a good job preparing them to manage their finances in the future. Notably, a majority (57%) of women in the same age group feel the opposite, siding with the younger generations.
- **Majority say their education didn't include teaching of financial basics.** Middle-income Americans say schools did not prepare them for tasks such as doing taxes (71%), paying back student loans (67%), taking out and paying back loans (64%), or setting a household budget (59%).

## WHAT ARE MIDDLE-INCOME FAMILIES DOING TO SECURE THEIR FINANCIAL FUTURES?

- **Majority of households continue to take steps to address persistent inflation.** Among adults who say their income is falling behind the cost of living, nearly three-quarters (74%) are cutting back on non-essential purchases such as eating out and entertainment and nearly half (46%) are cutting back or pausing saving for the future.
- **Middle-income Americans are saving less for retirement.** More than a quarter (27%) of respondents plan to contribute less money to their retirement savings this year, a seven-point increase over the past two years. Meanwhile, more than half (60%) don't believe they are saving enough to retire comfortably.
- **Most middle-income Americans merge finances with their partner after marriage.** About three-quarters (73%) of married Americans merge their finances with their partners, a fifth (20%) keep their finances separate from their partner, and less than a tenth (7%) say they do something else. College-educated women show a higher tendency to keep their finances separate from their partners (64% merge, 21% separate, 15% something else).

## HOW ARE FAMILIES FEELING ABOUT THE OVERALL ECONOMY?

- **Majority of middle-income Americans remain pessimistic about the state of the economy.** Overall, nearly half (46%) believe the economy will be worse off a year from now, with the remaining half divided among those saying it will be better off (19%), about the same (17%) or that they're not sure (18%).
- **Rising cost of necessities remains an issue.** The vast majority (88%) of middle-income Americans say recent increases in food prices have impacted them and their family. Individuals report having to buy cheaper options for similar products (68%), buy less food (54%), change their eating habits (48%), use coupons more frequently (37%), and buy more in bulk (30%).

## ARE FAMILIES EQUIPPED WITH THE FINANCIAL INFORMATION THEY NEED?

- **Majority grasp financial basics but not complexities.** Overall, more than three-quarters (78%) feel confident in making sound financial decisions without outside help, particularly when it comes to financial fundamentals like building good credit (85% confident), paying down credit card debt (84%), and creating and following a financial budget (78%). However, they continue to express less confidence when it comes to more complex financial matters, including setting up a retirement account such as a 401(k) or Individual Retirement Account (IRA) (61% confident), buying life insurance (59%), and investing in stocks (45%).
- **Lack of time, anxiety main drivers in lack of financial planning.** More than a quarter (29%) say they don't contribute to a savings account, follow a budget, contribute to an investment account, or set a financial budget each month. Anxiety (32%) and not having time (19%) continue to be cited as the biggest challenges people have tracking their financial information.

## TOPLINE TRENDS DATA:



	MAR. 2024	DEC. 2023	SEPT. 2023	JUN. 2023	MAR. 2023	DEC. 2022	SEPT. 2022	JUN. 2022	MAR. 2022
<p>How would you rate the condition of your personal finances? (Reporting "Excellent" and "Good" responses.)</p> <p>Analysis: Respondents remain split on their assessment of their personal finances.</p>	50%	50%	49%	50%	52%	53%	53%	54%	60%
<p>Overall, would you say your income is...? (Reporting "Falling behind the cost of living" responses.)</p> <p>Analysis: Concern about meeting the increased cost of living dropped over the past year.</p>	67%	68%	72%	71%	72%	72%	75%	75%	67%
<p>Do you have an emergency fund that would cover an expense of \$1,000 or more (for example, if your car broke down or you had a large medical bill)? (Reporting "Yes" responses.)</p> <p>Analysis: The percentage of Americans who have an emergency fund that would cover an expense of \$1,000 or more has remained steady over the past year.</p>	62%	60%	62%	61%	58%	59%	60%	61%	62%
<p>How would you rate the economic health of your community? (Reporting "Not so good" and "Poor" responses.)</p> <p>Analysis: Respondents' rating of the economic health of their communities has gotten worse over the past year.</p>	60%	57%	55%	54%	59%	53%	55%	58%	52%
<p>How would you rate your ability to save for the future? (Reporting "Not so good" and "Poor" responses.)</p> <p>Analysis: A significant majority continue to feel it is difficult to save for the future.</p>	67%	73%	71%	71%	73%	74%	73%	72%	66%
<p>In the past three months, has your credit card debt...? (Reporting "Increased" responses.)</p> <p>Analysis: Credit card debt has remained steady over the past year.</p>	34%	35%	34%	33%	33%	39%	37%	29%	25%

Learn more at [www.primerica.com/public/our-impact.html](http://www.primerica.com/public/our-impact.html)

### About Primerica's U.S. Middle-Income Financial Security Monitor™

Polling was conducted online from March 6-11, 2024. Using Dynamic Online Sampling, Change Research polled 1,206 adults nationwide with incomes between \$30,000 and \$130,000. Post-stratification weights were made on gender, age, race, education and Census region to reflect the population of these adults based on the five-year averages in the 2021 American Community Survey, published by the U.S. Census. The margin of error is 3.1%.