

# National Survey: Middle-Income Families Settling Into a New Reality With Ongoing Cost of Living Pressure

*38% describe their relationship status with finances as 'it's complicated'*

DULUTH, Ga.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- Middle-income families' outlook on the U.S. economy and their personal finances is beginning to stabilize after years of sharp swings, according to the latest [\*\*Primerica U.S. Middle Income Financial Security Monitor™ \(FSM™\)\*\*](#) survey. The results show that lingering cost pressures and economic volatility leave households financially strained and cautious.

The latest data suggests middle-income consumer sentiment has leveled off, and families are adjusting to a prolonged period of higher prices rather than anticipating near-term relief. In fact, about half (49%) say their main financial goal for the year is simply keeping up with rising costs.

"After years of economic volatility, middle-income families appear to be settling into a new reality. They're no longer waiting for the economy to turn and instead are learning how to navigate the higher cost of living," said **Glenn J. Williams, CEO of Primerica**. "Many families want help reaching their financial goals but sell themselves short due to misconceptions that financial guidance costs too much or is only meant for those with more money. These assumptions can hold families back, even though sound advice can be especially valuable during periods of sustained economic pressure."

## **Additional key findings from Primerica's Q4 2025 U.S. Middle-Income Financial Security Monitor™ (FSM™):**

- **Families' economic outlook has leveled off:** A majority (59%) of middle-income Americans expect the U.S. economy to be worse off in the next year, while 24% expect it to improve and 12% expect it to remain the same — data that has remained largely steady over the past six months.
- **Financial stress remains unresolved for many:** More than one-third (38%) of middle-income Americans describe their relationship status with financial stress as "it's complicated," underscoring the disconnect between improving economic indicators and the day-to-day realities middle-income Americans continue to face.
- **Personal financial expectations remain mixed:** About one-third (34%) of middle-income Americans expect to be worse off financially in the coming year, while a similar share (33%) believe their situation will stay about the same — views that have remained largely unchanged over the past six months.

- **Majority delayed major purchases or expenses in 2025:** More than two-thirds (69%) of households said they had to delay a major purchase or expense in the past year, with the top two categories related to buying a car (35%) or making home repairs or improvements (35%).
- **Debt remains a top financial priority for the year ahead:** Nearly half (47%) of middle-income families say paying down debt will be one of their primary financial goals this year, highlighting how elevated balances — especially credit card debt — continue to shape household budgets.
- **Misconceptions discourage families from seeking financial guidance:** Among households that do not work with a financial professional, 37% say they don't believe they have enough money to need one, while 35% assume the cost would be too high — misconceptions that keep families from seeking help that could support their financial goals.

#### Primerica Financial Security Monitor™ (FSM™) Topline Trends Data

	Dec 2025	Sept 2025	Jun 2025	Mar 2025	Dec 2024	Sept 2024	Jun 2024	Mar 2024	Dec 2023
<b>How would you rate the condition of your personal finances?</b>									
Share reporting "Excellent" or "Good."	45%	46%	46%	48%	45%	44%	49%	50%	50%
<i><b>Analysis:</b> Respondents' assessments of their personal finances has remained the same over the past year.</i>									
<b>Overall, would you say your income is...?</b>									
Share reporting "Falling behind the cost of living"	68%	69%	65%	69%	65%	68%	66%	67%	68%
Share reporting "Stayed about even with the cost of living"	22%	24%	23%	29%	24%	26%	25%	24%	20%
<i><b>Analysis:</b> Concern about meeting the increased cost of living has increased slightly over the past year.</i>									
<b>And in the next year, do you think the American economy will be...?</b>									
Share reporting "Worse off than it is now"	59%	63%	61%	76%	55%	25%	40%	46%	53%
Share reporting "Uncertain"	6%	6%	4%	4%	9%	34%	19%	18%	9%
<i><b>Analysis:</b> The share of respondents expecting the economy to worsen over the next year has declined since the previous survey.</i>									
<b>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)?</b>									
Reporting "Yes" responses	62%	58%	60%	64%	59%	61%	63%	62%	60%
<i><b>Analysis:</b> The percentage of Americans who have an emergency fund that would cover an expense of \$1,000 or more has increased slightly over the past year.</i>									
<b>How would you rate the economic health of your community?</b>									
Reporting "Not so good" and "Poor" responses	63%	59%	59%	66%	63%	63%	58%	60%	57%

**Analysis:** Respondents' rating of the economic health of their communities has remained the same over the past year.

**How would you rate your ability to save for the future?**

Reporting "Not so good" and "Poor" responses	70%	73%	71%	71%	71%	73%	68%	67%	73%
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**Analysis:** A significant majority continue to feel it is difficult to save for the future.

**In the past three months, has your credit card debt...?**

Reporting "Increased" responses	31%	34%	31%	31%	34%	35%	30%	34%	35%
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**Analysis:** Credit card debt has decreased slightly over the past year.

## About Primerica's Middle-Income Financial Security Monitor™ (FSM™)

Since September 2020, the Primerica Financial Security Monitor™ survey has polled middle-income households quarterly to gain a clear picture of their financial situation, and it coincides with the release of the monthly HBI™ metric four times annually. Polling was conducted online from Dec. 1-4, 2025. Using Dynamic Online Sampling, Change Research polled 858 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 3.6%. For more information visit [Primerica.com/public/financial-security-monitor.html](https://Primerica.com/public/financial-security-monitor.html).

## About Primerica, Inc.

Primerica, Inc., headquartered in Duluth, GA, is a leading provider of financial products and services to middle-income households in North America. Independent licensed representatives educate Primerica clients about how to better prepare for a more secure financial future by assessing their needs and providing appropriate solutions through term life insurance, which we underwrite, and mutual funds, annuities and other financial products, which we distribute primarily on behalf of third parties. We insured over 5.5 million lives and had approximately 3.0 million client investment accounts on December 31, 2024. Primerica, through its insurance company subsidiaries, was the #3 issuer of Term Life insurance coverage in the United States and Canada in 2024. Primerica stock is included in the S&P MidCap 400 and the Russell 1000 stock indices and is traded on The New York Stock Exchange under the symbol "PRI". For more information, visit [www.primerica.com](https://www.primerica.com).

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