

Labor, Income, Finances, and Expectations (LIFE) Survey

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# LIFE Survey Report – January 2026

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## Executive Summary

The Consumer Finance Institute (CFI) at the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia collects data through the Labor, Income, Finances, and Expectations (LIFE) Survey. The data that the survey gathers offer insights about consumers' recent experiences in their financial lives as well as their future expectations for them personally and for the economy.

This report is part of a series that summarizes key observations from the LIFE Survey. These reports highlight insights across four primary information categories:

- **Labor** — Employment status and impediments to working
- **Income** — Past and expected future income
- **Finances** — Recent financial health and stability
- **Expectations** — Future challenges and changes in personal outlook

## Data Description

The LIFE Survey collects information from approximately 5,000 individuals each quarter. We fielded our first survey in January 2023, and this report incorporates responses gathered through the most recent survey completed in January 2026 (this survey was fielded from December 23, 2025, to January 12, 2026).

Unless otherwise noted, all the reported difference in means in the *text* are significantly different from zero (i.e.,  $p < 0.10$ ). Tabulations are found in the Appendix; references to results from previous waves of the LIFE Survey can be found in previous survey reports.

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## Data Highlights

### Labor

- The share of respondents reporting being employed was 51.9 percent in January 2026, a decrease from 54.5 percent in October 2025; the decrease was observed across a significant proportion of the respondent population, particularly in younger age ranges.

### Income

- *Net optimism about income* in January 2026 was +28.7; while this constituted a seasonally expected increase from October 2025, the most recent result is significantly lower than that in January 2025 (+37.1).

### Finances

- On a year-over-year basis, the share reporting a *significant out-of-pocket healthcare expense* and having *lost access to benefits* has increased significantly. There were no notable quarter-over-quarter changes.
- Relative to a year ago, a higher share of respondents reported having *cut discretionary spending, cut essential spending, or skipped or paid less to bill payments* in the last 12 months. These indicators increased in April 2025 and have been fairly stable since then.

### Expectations

- Year-over-year comparisons between January 2026 and January 2025 show statistically significant declines in the share of respondents with concerns about making ends meet; this year-over-year decline has been observed in four consecutive quarters.
- Among respondents who can currently pay all their bills, the share expressing concerns about making ends meet over the next six months is 18.1 percent in January 2026, significantly lower than both last quarter (21.6 percent) and last year (24.4 percent).
- In this survey, *net sentiment* typically increases between October and January and did so this year, rising from -27.6 to -20.3. This is the first time we have seen a negative *net sentiment* result in a January edition of the survey.

## Introduction

The Consumer Finance Institute (CFI) at the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia collects data through the Labor, Income, Finances, and Expectations (LIFE) Survey. The data from the survey describe consumers' recent experiences in their financial lives as well as their future expectations, both for them personally and for the economy. This report is part of an ongoing quarterly series summarizing the key observations from the LIFE Survey. To provide context, we discuss trends by comparing the current quarter to the previous quarter (i.e., quarter-over-quarter changes) as well as to the same quarter a year earlier (i.e., year-over-year changes). The following sections elaborate on the highlights noted in the Executive Summary.

We include results for the full sample and by four key demographic subgroups: age, income, gender, and race/ethnicity.

## Notes on Weighting and Methodology

The LIFE Survey is weighted to be representative of the U.S. adult population on key demographic dimensions, including age interlocked with gender, race/ethnicity, education, and census division. All previous surveys (January 2023 through October 2025) weighted the sample to population benchmarks from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year estimates. With the January 2026 survey, results are weighted using the 2024 ACS 1-year estimates. Going forward, weighting will be updated annually each January to the most recently released ACS 1-year estimates. This is a common practice for recurring surveys to maintain sample representativeness as the composition of the U.S. population evolves.

As a robustness check, we decomposed the recent changes to our key metrics into two components: Those resulting from the change in the group distributions of the population, as reflected in the updated weights (i.e., compositional effects), and those resulting from actual changes in survey responses within each demographic group (i.e., within-group effects). For most of the metrics tracked in the Survey Data Reports, practically all the quarter-over-quarter and year-over-year changes in the topline results can be attributed to within-group changes; compositional shifts, as reflected in the updated weights, account for less than 5 percent of the total changes.

For example, the year-over-year change in *net income expectations* was a decrease of 8.4 points (from +37.1 in January 2025 to +28.7 in January 2026). Decomposition analysis by age shows that compositional effects only accounted for 2.4 percent of this decline (-0.2 point), whereas within-group effects accounted for 97.6 percent

(-8.2 points). Decomposition based on other demographic variables revealed similar patterns.

The only topline result that was affected by compositional effects was *employment status*. Using the latest population benchmark increased the proportion of older respondents in our weighted results, particularly in the 66+ age range. Since that age group has a large share of retirees, the new benchmark contributed in part to a decrease in the percentage of respondents reporting being employed in the January 2026 survey (see the *Employment Status* section for details).

An overview of the weight target's effect on the demographic distribution of LIFE Survey responses be found [at the survey's methodology page](#).

## Labor — Employment Status and Impediments to Working

Respondents supplied detailed information about their current employment status and their concerns about the work environment.

### Employment Status (Tables 1–2)

In the January 2026 survey, 51.9 percent of respondents reported being *employed*, defined as having at least one type of employment: a full-time job, one or more part-time jobs, self-employment, a small business owner, or gig/freelance employment. Since January 2025, this metric has changed significantly (both increasing and decreasing) each quarter after remaining flat around 55.6 percent for surveys conducted in 2023 and 2024; over the last five quarters, the results have ranged between 58.6 percent (January 2025) and 50.8 percent (July 2025). The employment rate average across all four quarters of 2025 was 54.7 percent, which is lower than the rates in 2023 and 2024 by a statistically significant margin (**Table A**).

The decomposition of the employment status variable by age alone or by age and gender shows that the compositional effect accounts for a little over one-quarter of the employment change between October 2025 and January 2026, while the within-group effect accounts for the remaining portion. In other words, even when the effect of the compositional shift is taken into account, we continue to see a decrease in employment rate as reported by our respondents within most demographic groups. It does not appear that this volatility in employment rates has had effects on our other metrics.

We also observe in our data a significant increase in the rate of respondents who are *unemployed, looking for work*, which has risen from an 8.3 percent average in 2025 to 9.5 percent in January 2026.<sup>1</sup> The increase in the *not employed, other* category comes from an increase in retired respondents in January 2026, driven in part by the compositional change noted in the prior section.

**Table A – Share of Respondents Who Are Employed by Survey Year**

	2023	2024	2025	Jan. 2026
Employed	55.7%	55.5%	<b>54.7%</b>	<b>51.9%</b>
Unemployed, looking for work	7.2%	7.6%	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>9.5%</b>
Not employed, other (retired, student, disability, etc.)	37.1%	36.9%	37.1%	<b>38.6%</b>

Note: Bold values are statistically different than 2023 and 2024.

### Impediments to Working — Employed Respondents (Table 3)

Respondents were asked to report their level of concern about a variety of challenges that people may associate with working, including finding childcare or eldercare, exposure to illness in the workplace, access to transportation, or the stability of their job or employer.<sup>2</sup>

All work concerns decreased between October 2025 and January 2026, except *exposure to illness* (although the increase from 27.8 percent to 30.0 percent was not statistically significant). Among *employed* respondents, *exposure to illness* remained the most frequently cited concern, with *job cuts or layoffs* (24.5 percent) the second most cited.

Compared with January 2025, fewer respondents in January 2026 reported work-related concerns.

### Impediments to Working — Nonemployed Respondents (Table 4)

Nonemployed working-age respondents were asked whether they would anticipate challenges if they were to consider working in the next 30 days. These respondents were presented with the same response options as the employed respondents. We tabulate how frequently respondents who are not currently employed cite challenges

<sup>1</sup> For a number of reasons, our measure of employment status is not directly comparable to the official unemployment rate reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The survey methodologies are quite different, and not all the definitions used are the same.

<sup>2</sup> *Does not apply to me* is offered as a response to each category of challenges, in the event a given situation is not applicable to a respondent (e.g., finding childcare would not be relevant for a respondent who does not have children). Respondents who indicated that a particular topic did not apply to them are excluded from the calculations, both in the text that follows and in the data tables.

and compare the responses with those of currently employed respondents. For this comparison, we restrict the sample to respondents younger than 55.

Consistent with previous surveys, nonemployed respondents were more likely than their employed counterparts to express concerns about any of the listed impediments to working. Job stability-related concerns were the most frequently cited by this group, with *job cuts/layoffs* reported by 42.8 percent.

## Income — Expectations for Income (Tables 5–6)

Each respondent to the LIFE Survey reported their personal annual income from the previous calendar year. In the surveys conducted in 2023, income data reflected the 2022 annual personal income of respondents.<sup>3</sup> In the 2024 surveys, their income reflects their 2023 annual income, and so on. Respondents were then asked about their expectations for income in the current year compared with the previous year, reporting whether they expect their income to increase, remain the same, or decrease. This question is asked each quarter, which lets us track how the level of optimism toward income changes throughout the year. *Net optimism about income* is calculated by subtracting the percentage of respondents who expect their income to decrease year over year from the percentage that expect it to increase. A positive value indicates that respondents on balance feel more positive than negative about their income prospects. It is important to note that, in our data, net optimism about income is typically highest at the beginning of the calendar year, decreases as the year progresses, and returns to higher levels at the beginning of the next year.

As we expected to see with the start of the new year, *net optimism about income* increased from +17.4 in October 2025 to +28.7 in January 2026; in January, 39.1 percent of respondents reported expecting their income to rise against 10.4 percent who expected it to fall.<sup>4</sup>

While optimism increased as expected, the January 2026 figure was significantly lower than in January last year, particularly for respondents who are 18–25 years old or Black. In January 2025, *net optimism about income* was +37.1, the highest value observed in the history of the LIFE Survey after year-over-year increases in both 2024 and 2025. The only demographic group that was not lower year-over-year is 66+-year-olds, who are more optimistic than last year (+24.2 versus +20.5).

<sup>3</sup> In each survey, approximately 11 percent of respondents do not provide their income from the previous year. Those respondents are included in the overall measure of net optimism reported in Tables 5 and 6, but not in breakouts by income. Those respondents are also included in the tabulations for all other questions in the report, except where we report breakouts by income.

<sup>4</sup> Data tables in this report contain the last six quarters of LIFE Survey results. Results from earlier surveys can be found in previous reports or in the data downloads available on the LIFE Survey website.

## Finances — Recent Financial Health and Stability

To evaluate the health of respondents' finances, we focus on their experiences with financial disruptions, their use of financial coping strategies, and their ability to pay their monthly bills in full.

### Financial Disruptions (Table 7)

Respondents were asked to select from a list of events or experiences in the last 12 months that could be disruptive to their financial situations.<sup>5</sup> In January 2026, 48.7 percent of respondents reported experiencing at least one disruption from the list during the previous 12 months; this share has remained stable (e.g., with no statistically significant variations) since January 2024. The most commonly reported disruption was a *significant out-of-pocket nonmedical expense* (reported by 24.6 percent), followed by a *significant out-of-pocket healthcare expense* (15.1 percent), and an *unexpected rise in housing costs* (14.1 percent). The remaining disruptions were reported by less than 10 percent of respondents.

Looking at specific disruptions, the only statistically significant change we saw between October 2025 and January 2026 was from *financial loss due to natural disaster or weather event*, which decreased from 3.1 percent to 1.9 percent.

When we compare disruption experiences in January 2026 with those from January 2025 (effectively comparing disruptions experienced in the 2024 and 2025 calendar years), we see that the share of respondents reporting a *significant out-of-pocket healthcare expense* increased from 12.6 percent to 15.1 percent and *lost access to benefits programs* increased from 5.3 percent to 6.9 percent, both statistically significant changes. Three disruption types decreased year over year, including *unexpected rise in housing costs* (from 15.3 percent to 14.1 percent), *financial loss due to natural disaster or weather event* (from 4.1 percent to 1.9 percent), and *eviction* (from 2.4 percent to 1.7 percent).

### Financial Coping Strategies (Table 8)

In addition to citing financial disruptions, respondents provided information on financial coping strategies they have used at least once in the prior 12 months to “help afford monthly bill payments.”<sup>6</sup> In January 2026, 64.0

<sup>5</sup> The list of possible forms of disruption options has expanded since the first survey was fielded in January 2023, so the share of respondents experiencing any disruption has increased mechanically over the life of the survey. Therefore, this report will focus on the disruption experiences reported in surveys conducted in January 2024 and later. A full list of the response options, including items not described in this report, can be found in the data download file available on the [report's web page](#).

<sup>6</sup> Respondents could select more than one of these strategies. Please note that coping strategies as asked in the survey may have been temporary or periodic responses to stress during the prior 12 months, rather than lengthy or permanent changes to a respondent's habits. A full list of the response options, including items not described in this report, can be found in the data download file available on the [report's web page](#).

percent of respondents reported having used at least one of the listed coping strategies in the prior 12 months; this is a decrease from October 2025 and is the lowest rate we have seen since July 2023. The most commonly used strategy was *cutting discretionary spending*, reported by nearly half of respondents (45.7 percent), followed by *cutting essential spending* (23.6 percent), *borrowing from friends or family* (19.2 percent), and *paying less or skipping bills* (18.5 percent).

The overall decrease in the use of coping strategies since last quarter was distributed across most of the strategies; however, *cutting discretionary spending* (47.7 percent to 45.7 percent), *taking an additional job* (11.7 percent to 10.5 percent), and *unemployment insurance* (2.8 percent to 2.3 percent) were the only statistically significant decreases.

Compared with January 2025, a higher share of respondents in January 2026 reported having *cut discretionary spending* (45.7 percent in 2026 versus 43.8 percent in 2025), *cut essential spending* (23.6 percent in 2026 versus 22.1 percent in 2025), and having *partially paid or skipped bills* (18.5 percent in 2026 versus 16.7 percent in 2025), all showing statistically significant year-over-year increases. Fewer respondents this year reported *taking an additional job* (10.5 percent in 2026 versus 14.4 percent in 2025).

### **Ability to Pay Bills (Table 9)**

When asked about their *ability to pay all of [their] bills in full this month*, 22.3 percent of respondents in January 2026 indicated that they *could not pay some or any of their bills* at the time of the survey, a small and not statistically significant decrease from 22.9 percent in October 2025. Across demographic groups, the only statistically significant quarter-over-quarter changes were decreases in the percentage of those who *could not pay* among female respondents or age 66+.

The most recent results were, for the most part, substantially lower than the prior year.

## **Expectations — Future Challenges and Changes in Personal Outlook**

To gain insight into respondents' beliefs about their finances in the future, we asked how concerned they were about their ability to make ends meet over two time windows: in the short term (zero to six months) and longer term (seven to 12 months). Additionally, we asked them to compare their current personal outlook with the prior year in light of their personal situation, observations about the economy in their region, and events being reported in local and national news.

### **Making Ends Meet (Tables 10–12)**

Compared with October, the share of respondents concerned about making ends meet decreased in January 2026 for both the short-term (from 31.3 percent to 28.1 percent) and longer-term (from 34.6 percent to 30.5

percent) time horizons — both changes were statistically significant. The year-over-year changes from January 2025 were also statistically significant decreases, from 33.6 percent and 35.1 percent for the short-term and longer-term, respectively.

Focusing on the short-term (the next six months) concern, we see diverging changes across age ranges. Between October and January, for respondents under 56 years old, the share reporting concerns about making ends meet remained relatively flat, while that share decreased at a statistically significant level among those aged 56 and older.

Next, we examine concern about making ends meet in the short term based on respondents’ current ability to pay their bills, as discussed in the previous section. Among those respondents who can currently pay all their bills, the share expressing concerns about making ends meet over the next six months decreased to 18.1 percent in January 2026 from 24.4 percent in January 2025 and 21.6 percent in October 2025. Other than a small increase in October 2025, this metric has been trending downward since October 2024 (25.2 percent, see **Table B**).

**Table B - Share of Respondents Concerned About Making Ends Meet in the Next 6 Months: Among Those Who Can Currently Pay All Their Bills**

	July 2024	October 2024	January 2025	April 2025	July 2025	October 2025	January 2026
<i>Concerned about making ends meet in the next six months</i>	23.3%	25.2%	24.4%	23.8%	20.4%	21.6%	18.1%

**General Sentiment Changes (Table 13)**

Finally, we asked respondents whether their personal outlook or sentiment had changed since the previous year; in essence, were they generally feeling more positive, negative, or the same about the coming months compared with how they felt a year ago?

By subtracting the percentage of respondents who report feeling more negative about the months ahead from the percentage reporting feeling more positive, we determine the net change in outlook, with a positive value indicating that respondents, as a whole, have a more optimistic outlook about the future, and a negative value indicating that respondents, as a whole, are more pessimistic in their outlook. We call this *net sentiment*.

In January 2026, net sentiment was negative at -20.3, a statistically significant improvement compared with -27.6 in October 2025. All demographic groups remained negative in January, the third consecutive quarterly survey we have observed this consistency across demographic segments.

Compared with January 2025, net sentiment in January 2026 was statistically significantly lower across all demographic groups.

In **Table C**, we show the change in *net sentiment* between October and January for each of the three years of the LIFE Survey. An improvement in sentiment over that period is typical; however, the most recent period (October 2025 to January 2026) showed less improvement than the same period in the prior two years.

**Table C – October-to-January Change in Net Sentiment by Survey Year**

	October	January	Change
2023–2024	-9.8	3.0	12.8
2024–2025	-4.8	6.9	11.7
2025–2026	-27.6	-20.3	7.3

Note: Net sentiment is the difference between the percentage of respondents reporting feeling more positive about the coming months than they did at this time a year ago and the percentage reporting feeling more negative.

## Conclusion

The Labor, Income, Finances, and Expectations (LIFE) Survey was initiated in 2023 and launched publicly in 2024 by the Consumer Finance Institute (CFI) at the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. The LIFE Survey is used to collect data on topics related to CFI’s mission to better understand how people earn, spend, save, and invest, as well as how credit markets and payment systems affect the economy.

Additional information about the LIFE Survey can be found on the [Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia website](#). Resources include a description of the methodology used to collect survey data, previous publications using survey results, and downloadable data files.

CFI studies how people earn, spend, save, and invest, as well as how credit markets and payment systems affect the economy. We produce state-of-the-art, policy-relevant research available to all. Our goal is to develop insights that contribute to a healthy consumer sector, a stable financial system, and a resilient regional and national economy.

## Appendix

Table 1: Percentage of Respondents Who Are Currently Employed

	October 2024	January 2025	April 2025	July 2025	October 2025	January 2026
All Respondents	55.3%	58.6%	55.8%	50.8%	54.5%	51.9%
18–35	72.4%	76.1%	70.7%	61.2%	68.8%	66.2%
36–55	68.0%	72.9%	69.3%	64.5%	67.9%	65.9%
56–65	45.4%	46.3%	46.8%	45.4%	46.7%	44.2%
66+	15.3%	17.6%	17.1%	16.2%	16.1%	16.2%
<\$40,000	41.6%	44.5%	40.3%	39.0%	40.4%	39.2%
\$40,000–\$69,999	68.1%	70.6%	69.6%	63.3%	67.7%	64.7%
\$70,000–\$99,999	71.1%	74.8%	75.9%	71.8%	73.9%	69.6%
\$100,000–\$149,999	78.0%	79.6%	78.3%	71.8%	75.1%	70.1%
\$150,000+	79.4%	82.4%	79.2%	74.9%	81.3%	75.1%
Male	60.4%	63.5%	60.6%	55.7%	58.5%	54.0%
Female	50.5%	54.0%	51.2%	46.1%	50.7%	50.0%
White (Non-Hispanic)	53.2%	56.8%	54.5%	49.2%	52.5%	51.3%
Black	62.3%	62.2%	54.8%	50.4%	53.0%	47.7%
Hispanic	56.9%	62.4%	60.8%	55.0%	62.0%	55.9%
Other	57.6%	59.8%	57.3%	55.0%	56.9%	53.6%

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Consumer Finance Institute LIFE Survey Data

Table 2: Current Employment Rate by Race/Ethnicity and Age (January 2026)

<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Percent Employed</b>	<b>Age Distribution in Race/Ethnicity Category</b>
<b>White (Non-Hispanic)</b>	18–35	67.3%	29.7%
	36–55	65.9%	31.8%
	56–65	43.5%	16.1%
	66+	15.0%	22.4%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>51.3%</b>	
<b>Black</b>	18–35	62.2%	32.7%
	36–55	61.2%	30.4%
	56–65	40.4%	15.0%
	66+	12.3%	21.9%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>47.7%</b>	
<b>Hispanic</b>	18–35	70.7%	33.2%
	36–55	67.4%	34.4%
	56–65	45.0%	14.3%
	66+	15.4%	18.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>55.9%</b>	
<b>Other</b>	18–35	56.7%	30.1%
	36–55	67.8%	33.1%
	56–65	51.5%	15.2%
	66+	29.2%	21.6%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>53.6%</b>	

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Consumer Finance Institute LIFE Survey Data

Table 3: Net Percentage of Employed Respondents Concerned About an Issue (January 2026)

	<b>Finding or keeping childcare</b>	<b>Finding or keeping elder or senior care</b>	<b>Exposure to illness at work</b>	<b>Another shutdown impacting my employer</b>	<b>My employer's ability to stay in business</b>	<b>Access to reliable transportation</b>	<b>My employer cutting my job or laying me off</b>
All Respondents	15.9%	19.2%	30.0%	20.7%	18.7%	19.7%	24.5%
18–35	23.6%	22.2%	31.6%	26.1%	24.1%	26.5%	28.8%
36–55	13.2%	16.2%	30.8%	19.2%	16.6%	17.9%	24.3%
56–65	3.1%	18.7%	26.4%	14.8%	14.0%	8.8%	16.7%
66+	1.3%	21.3%	22.3%	8.8%	10.0%	10.7%	14.5%
<\$40,000	18.5%	21.3%	34.2%	22.8%	21.4%	28.7%	28.2%
\$40,000–\$69,999	13.4%	20.6%	30.5%	20.8%	18.7%	13.4%	23.6%
\$70,000–\$99,999	17.5%	18.3%	28.5%	20.5%	18.7%	15.1%	22.4%
\$100,000–\$149,999	13.4%	17.2%	25.7%	18.0%	16.9%	14.5%	20.0%
\$150,000+	15.0%	11.0%	16.7%	19.1%	12.4%	13.3%	21.8%
Male	14.8%	18.5%	25.1%	19.2%	16.9%	18.3%	22.6%
Female	17.1%	20.0%	35.1%	22.4%	20.7%	21.2%	26.5%
White (Non-Hispanic)	11.3%	15.9%	26.1%	15.8%	14.7%	15.2%	20.3%
Black	26.2%	26.2%	39.5%	27.4%	24.8%	29.5%	31.4%
Hispanic	23.5%	23.3%	36.4%	29.0%	27.1%	27.0%	30.4%
Other	14.3%	20.4%	29.6%	25.7%	20.4%	21.3%	29.2%

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Consumer Finance Institute LIFE Survey Data

Table 4: Net Percentage of Not Employed Respondents of Working Age Concerned About an Issue (January 2026)

	Finding or keeping childcare	Finding or keeping elder or senior care	Exposure to illness at work	Another shutdown impacting my employer	My employer's ability to stay in business	Access to reliable transportation	My employer cutting my job or laying me off
All Respondents	22.1%	26.1%	32.4%	31.2%	29.2%	37.1%	42.8%
18–35	21.9%	19.4%	32.4%	27.5%	25.5%	36.4%	40.7%
36–55	22.3%	31.3%	32.4%	34.8%	33.1%	37.7%	45.4%
56–65							
66+							
<\$40,000	22.2%	26.1%	31.9%	31.2%	30.0%	40.6%	43.8%
\$40,000–\$69,999	24.2%	35.5%	41.3%	41.4%	27.0%	24.8%	49.7%
\$70,000–\$99,999	22.4%	25.2%	36.8%	27.1%	30.1%	21.4%	20.6%
\$100,000–\$149,999	12.2%	29.0%	37.2%	33.0%	28.8%	16.2%	34.4%
\$150,000+	33.5%	19.1%	12.4%	27.1%	11.4%	6.2%	15.4%
Male	16.5%	27.1%	29.8%	35.2%	28.5%	34.3%	44.5%
Female	26.0%	25.1%	34.7%	27.9%	29.8%	39.5%	41.4%
White (Non-Hispanic)	18.9%	22.1%	29.4%	31.0%	29.7%	35.1%	43.6%
Black	23.5%	27.4%	42.5%	33.2%	30.1%	46.5%	47.5%
Hispanic	35.1%	34.1%	35.5%	33.6%	28.8%	42.2%	40.5%
Other	14.5%	31.6%	31.5%	25.6%	26.7%	28.0%	37.9%

Note: Working age is defined in this report as 18 to 55; respondents older than 55 are excluded from this table.  
Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Consumer Finance Institute LIFE Survey Data

Table 5: Net Percentage of Respondents Anticipating Higher Income in Current Year (by Survey Date)

	October 2024	January 2025	April 2025	July 2025	October 2025	January 2026
All Respondents	22.0%	37.1%	23.4%	17.0%	17.4%	28.7%
18–35	35.3%	57.3%	38.9%	21.3%	26.4%	38.5%
36–55	18.9%	34.8%	25.3%	15.9%	14.8%	27.2%
56–65	13.0%	23.0%	8.4%	12.0%	9.4%	19.0%
66+	13.4%	20.5%	7.9%	16.1%	13.9%	24.2%
<\$40,000	17.1%	35.2%	21.1%	12.8%	11.8%	27.7%
\$40,000–\$69,999	26.7%	39.7%	21.2%	18.1%	19.9%	26.6%
\$70,000–\$99,999	31.9%	35.0%	28.1%	22.7%	32.8%	33.6%
\$100,000–\$149,999	30.7%	46.2%	30.2%	30.8%	28.4%	35.1%
\$150,000+	34.1%	48.3%	32.7%	17.0%	28.8%	39.0%
Male	27.0%	43.5%	26.7%	20.7%	22.8%	32.6%
Female	17.4%	31.0%	20.3%	13.5%	12.3%	25.0%
White (Non-Hispanic)	20.4%	35.1%	21.7%	16.1%	17.9%	28.2%
Black	32.3%	51.0%	35.4%	25.0%	15.4%	34.2%
Hispanic	22.0%	37.4%	19.1%	16.5%	17.1%	28.7%
Other	19.8%	31.6%	26.8%	13.6%	17.4%	25.8%

Note: *Net optimism* about income is calculated by subtracting the percentage of respondents who expect their income to decrease year over year from the percentage that expect it to increase.

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Consumer Finance Institute LIFE Survey Data

Table 6: Respondents' Anticipated Income Changes in Current Year (January 2026)

	<b>Net optimism on income change</b>	<b>Higher than previous year</b>	<b>Same as previous year</b>	<b>Lower, but more than half of previous year</b>	<b>Less than half of previous year</b>	<b>I will probably not have income this year</b>
All Respondents	28.7	39.1%	45.9%	6.9%	3.5%	4.7%
18–35	38.5	48.8%	34.6%	7.1%	3.2%	6.2%
36–55	27.2	37.2%	46.3%	6.1%	3.9%	6.3%
56–65	19.0	31.5%	52.5%	8.1%	4.4%	3.5%
66+	24.2	33.5%	56.4%	6.9%	2.4%	0.8%
<\$40,000	27.7	38.4%	44.3%	6.6%	4.1%	6.6%
\$40,000–\$69,999	26.6	36.3%	53.1%	7.1%	2.5%	1.0%
\$70,000–\$99,999	33.6	43.0%	46.8%	6.8%	2.6%	0.8%
\$100,000–\$149,999	35.1	44.4%	45.6%	7.2%	2.1%	0.8%
\$150,000+	39.0	49.1%	39.1%	7.7%	2.4%	1.7%
Male	32.6	42.1%	44.5%	6.7%	2.8%	3.9%
Female	25.0	36.2%	47.2%	7.1%	4.1%	5.4%
White (Non-Hispanic)	28.2	37.9%	47.9%	6.4%	3.3%	4.5%
Black	34.2	43.8%	41.7%	6.1%	3.5%	4.9%
Hispanic	28.7	41.1%	41.8%	8.4%	4.0%	4.7%
Other	25.8	37.5%	45.6%	8.1%	3.6%	5.2%

Note: *Net optimism* about income is calculated by subtracting the percentage of respondents who expect their income to decrease year over year from the percentage that expect it to increase.

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Consumer Finance Institute LIFE Survey Data

Table 7: Percentage of Respondents Who Experienced a Disruption in the Prior 12 Months (January 2026)

	<b>Experienced any disruption</b>	<b>Involuntarily lost job</b>	<b>Had to relocate due to housing costs</b>	<b>Incurred a significant out-of-pocket health-care expense</b>	<b>Incurred a significant out-of-pocket non-medical expense</b>	<b>Housing cost increased unexpectedly</b>
All Respondents	48.7%	5.6%	3.8%	15.1%	24.6%	14.1%
18–35	48.1%	7.0%	5.4%	12.8%	22.3%	12.4%
36–55	54.6%	8.4%	4.3%	16.6%	27.3%	17.2%
56–65	47.4%	3.7%	3.3%	17.3%	22.8%	13.8%
66+	41.6%	0.9%	1.0%	14.4%	25.1%	11.9%
<\$40,000	55.1%	7.6%	5.5%	15.4%	24.7%	17.4%
\$40,000–\$69,999	46.5%	4.1%	2.4%	17.3%	25.3%	12.1%
\$70,000–\$99,999	44.6%	3.5%	2.1%	14.2%	27.6%	13.6%
\$100,000–\$149,999	44.8%	3.2%	2.5%	12.9%	27.4%	11.4%
\$150,000+	39.6%	5.8%	2.5%	13.4%	26.6%	7.1%
Male	45.9%	5.4%	3.5%	14.5%	23.2%	11.9%
Female	51.4%	5.9%	4.0%	15.6%	25.9%	16.1%
White (Non-Hispanic)	48.9%	5.3%	3.4%	15.8%	27.7%	13.0%
Black	48.1%	7.7%	4.4%	12.8%	15.7%	17.7%
Hispanic	47.9%	5.5%	4.4%	12.8%	20.2%	15.0%
Other	49.6%	5.3%	3.8%	17.2%	24.7%	14.5%

Note: Statistics for the full list of financial disruptions can be found in the data download available on the [LIFE Survey website](#).

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Consumer Finance Institute LIFE Survey Data

Table 8: Percentage of Respondents Using a Financial Coping Strategy in the Prior 12 Months (January 2026)

	<b>Used a coping strategy</b>	<b>Taking an additional job</b>	<b>Borrowing more from formal sources</b>	<b>Cutting discretionary spending</b>	<b>Cutting essential spending</b>	<b>Borrowing from friends or family</b>	<b>Paying less or skipping other debts or monthly bills</b>
All Respondents	64.0%	10.5%	16.4%	45.7%	23.6%	19.2%	18.5%
18–35	66.1%	16.0%	16.0%	42.1%	21.5%	26.4%	16.7%
36–55	69.3%	11.9%	20.0%	50.5%	28.7%	24.0%	25.1%
56–65	63.3%	5.8%	16.3%	47.7%	25.6%	12.1%	19.3%
66+	53.6%	4.0%	11.8%	42.3%	17.7%	7.1%	10.5%
<\$40,000	71.0%	10.7%	19.2%	49.1%	30.9%	27.2%	24.7%
\$40,000–\$69,999	66.4%	12.0%	19.2%	48.9%	21.0%	16.1%	17.4%
\$70,000–\$99,999	60.5%	11.0%	14.5%	46.6%	16.3%	10.8%	11.8%
\$100,000–\$149,999	53.3%	8.8%	11.5%	37.9%	15.6%	8.6%	13.3%
\$150,000+	44.9%	7.6%	7.0%	35.3%	11.1%	4.8%	6.3%
Male	59.6%	9.6%	14.1%	42.7%	20.7%	17.8%	16.0%
Female	68.3%	11.4%	18.7%	48.7%	26.5%	20.7%	20.9%
White (Non-Hispanic)	63.3%	9.4%	16.9%	47.8%	23.4%	18.5%	18.7%
Black	64.8%	12.7%	15.2%	39.0%	25.2%	25.2%	18.3%
Hispanic	67.7%	12.9%	16.2%	43.6%	23.4%	18.8%	18.2%
Other	61.5%	10.3%	15.9%	45.4%	23.5%	17.6%	18.1%

Note: Statistics for the full list of financial coping strategies can be found in the data download available on the [LIFE Survey website](#).

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Consumer Finance Institute LIFE Survey Data

Table 9: Percentage of Respondents Reporting Trouble Paying Bills (by Survey Date)

	<b>October 2024</b>	<b>January 2025</b>	<b>April 2025</b>	<b>July 2025</b>	<b>October 2025</b>	<b>January 2026</b>
All Respondents	25.4%	23.6%	21.6%	23.8%	22.9%	22.3%
18–35	27.7%	27.2%	23.7%	27.4%	24.0%	24.8%
36–55	30.7%	27.2%	25.9%	27.6%	28.0%	28.2%
56–65	23.7%	24.1%	20.5%	23.0%	22.7%	20.7%
66+	14.2%	11.6%	12.1%	12.7%	13.2%	10.9%
<\$40,000	34.8%	33.9%	31.7%	32.6%	31.5%	32.0%
\$40,000–\$69,999	19.6%	16.9%	16.0%	17.8%	18.1%	15.7%
\$70,000–\$99,999	12.3%	8.2%	9.5%	10.0%	11.0%	10.0%
\$100,000–\$149,999	8.1%	9.3%	7.1%	7.9%	8.0%	8.5%
\$150,000+	5.5%	6.3%	4.8%	5.8%	2.5%	4.4%
Male	21.8%	20.1%	18.3%	20.5%	18.4%	19.7%
Female	28.7%	27.0%	24.7%	27.0%	27.3%	24.7%
White (Non-Hispanic)	21.0%	20.0%	17.8%	20.2%	20.1%	20.3%
Black	36.9%	32.8%	29.9%	33.9%	32.3%	28.1%
Hispanic	33.1%	29.1%	29.3%	30.6%	26.7%	24.2%
Other	26.5%	26.5%	22.8%	23.3%	22.8%	23.3%

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Consumer Finance Institute LIFE Survey Data

Table 10: Percentage of Respondents Concerned About Making Ends Meet in 0–6 Months (by Survey Date)

	October 2024	January 2025	April 2025	July 2025	October 2025	January 2026
All Respondents	35.7%	33.6%	32.5%	30.4%	31.3%	28.1%
18–35	39.1%	39.6%	33.2%	30.9%	28.7%	28.3%
36–55	38.9%	36.4%	36.3%	33.0%	36.1%	34.3%
56–65	32.5%	31.0%	31.5%	32.7%	33.3%	27.4%
66+	27.6%	21.4%	25.9%	23.5%	26.1%	18.9%
<\$40,000	44.7%	44.1%	40.8%	39.4%	39.0%	37.4%
\$40,000–\$69,999	31.4%	25.1%	26.5%	24.2%	27.3%	23.1%
\$70,000–\$99,999	22.5%	23.8%	23.4%	21.2%	20.9%	17.4%
\$100,000–\$149,999	24.9%	20.7%	25.3%	14.0%	20.0%	17.8%
\$150,000+	27.4%	22.5%	19.9%	11.7%	17.5%	12.2%
Male	33.3%	31.2%	29.6%	26.5%	26.5%	25.0%
Female	38.0%	35.8%	35.2%	34.1%	35.9%	31.1%
White (Non-Hispanic)	33.1%	31.0%	30.0%	27.2%	29.4%	26.3%
Black	42.7%	43.1%	39.2%	36.5%	34.7%	31.9%
Hispanic	39.8%	36.2%	37.5%	38.6%	36.4%	30.9%
Other	37.1%	34.1%	31.7%	29.3%	31.0%	29.4%

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Consumer Finance Institute LIFE Survey Data

Table 11: Percentage of Respondents Concerned About Making Ends Meet in 7–12 Months (by Survey Date)

	<b>October 2024</b>	<b>January 2025</b>	<b>April 2025</b>	<b>July 2025</b>	<b>October 2025</b>	<b>January 2026</b>
All Respondents	36.3%	35.1%	36.5%	33.2%	34.6%	30.5%
18–35	38.8%	42.0%	35.9%	33.9%	32.9%	29.8%
36–55	39.7%	35.9%	40.2%	35.5%	38.6%	36.2%
56–65	32.7%	32.8%	36.7%	35.1%	36.3%	29.9%
66+	29.9%	24.7%	31.2%	26.7%	29.3%	23.3%
<\$40,000	45.4%	45.1%	44.6%	41.9%	42.5%	39.5%
\$40,000–\$69,999	31.1%	27.4%	32.1%	28.8%	30.1%	25.1%
\$70,000–\$99,999	23.3%	27.3%	27.9%	23.9%	24.6%	20.5%
\$100,000–\$149,999	27.8%	18.4%	29.6%	18.0%	22.9%	18.9%
\$150,000+	27.5%	21.1%	20.0%	13.8%	20.0%	13.9%
Male	34.2%	33.8%	33.1%	29.6%	30.3%	28.0%
Female	38.3%	36.3%	39.8%	36.6%	38.7%	32.9%
White (Non-Hispanic)	34.5%	32.5%	34.7%	30.1%	33.4%	29.2%
Black	40.3%	44.7%	44.3%	41.1%	38.1%	32.9%
Hispanic	39.0%	38.6%	38.8%	37.6%	36.8%	33.0%
Other	39.3%	34.3%	34.2%	36.3%	33.9%	31.0%

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Consumer Finance Institute LIFE Survey Data

Table 12: Percentage of Respondents Concerned About Making Ends Meet in 0–6 Months (by Ability to Pay Bills)

	Can't pay some or any bills (January 2026)	Last Survey Comparison		Year-Over-Year Comparison	
		Able to pay all bills (October 2025)	Able to pay all bills (January 2026)	Able to pay all bills (January 2025)	Able to pay all bills (January 2026)
All Respondents	63.2%	21.6%	18.1%	24.4%	18.1%
18–35	57.0%	20.6%	18.9%	33.2%	18.9%
36–55	68.9%	23.6%	20.7%	24.7%	20.7%
56–65	62.2%	21.9%	18.3%	20.0%	18.3%
66+	62.7%	20.0%	13.6%	15.6%	13.6%
<\$40,000	67.0%	26.1%	23.4%	31.9%	23.4%
\$40,000–\$69,999	58.8%	20.5%	16.4%	18.6%	16.4%
\$70,000–\$99,999	54.9%	14.9%	13.2%	21.3%	13.2%
\$100,000–\$149,999	61.4%	16.4%	13.8%	18.3%	13.8%
\$150,000+	66.9%	16.5%	9.7%	20.3%	9.7%
Male	62.6%	18.5%	15.7%	23.5%	15.7%
Female	63.7%	24.9%	20.4%	25.3%	20.4%
White (Non-Hispanic)	66.4%	19.5%	16.0%	22.1%	16.0%
Black	52.9%	24.3%	23.7%	33.6%	23.7%
Hispanic	60.9%	26.9%	21.4%	27.7%	21.4%
Other	65.4%	23.9%	18.4%	24.4%	18.4%

Note: The first column reports — for those borrowers **currently unable** to pay all their bills — the proportion who are worried about being able to make ends meet in the next six months. The remaining columns report — for those respondents indicating they **could pay** all their bills at the time of the survey date — the portion who are worried about being able to make ends meet in the next six months.

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Consumer Finance Institute LIFE Survey Data

Table 13: Change in Respondents' General Outlook Compared with 12 Months Prior (January 2026)

	<b>Net Sentiment</b>	<b>Feel More Positive</b>	<b>Feel More Negative</b>
All Respondents	-20.3	24.6%	44.9%
18–35	-10.1	28.2%	38.3%
36–55	-26.8	20.3%	47.1%
56–65	-26.1	22.8%	48.9%
66+	-20.9	27.2%	48.0%
<\$40,000	-28.9	20.0%	48.9%
\$40,000–\$69,999	-18.0	26.0%	44.0%
\$70,000–\$99,999	-8.0	34.0%	42.0%
\$100,000–\$149,999	-4.9	33.7%	38.6%
\$150,000+	-9.5	31.8%	41.3%
Male	-15.0	27.3%	42.3%
Female	-25.4	22.0%	47.4%
White (Non-Hispanic)	-21.4	24.3%	45.8%
Black	-17.1	24.7%	41.8%
Hispanic	-16.4	26.9%	43.3%
Other	-24.0	22.0%	46.0%

Note: More detail can be found in the data download available on the [LIFE Survey website](#).

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Consumer Finance Institute LIFE Survey Data