



## Country Financial Security Index Report, April 2021

Conducted by Ipsos using the probability-based KnowledgePanel®  
A survey of the American general population (ages 18+)

*Interview dates: April 9 - 12, 2021  
Number of interviews, adults: 1,015*

*Margin of error for the total sample: +/- 3.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level*

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### Americans' financial outlook is sharply up since November

**Americans are feeling much more positive about their personal financial outlook than at any time in the past 5 years!** In Q2 of 2021, more Americans are feeling good or excellent about their financial security now than they did in 2020 (62% compared to an average of 53% in 2020) and even more than at the end of 2019 (53%), before the pandemic.

This overall feeling of more financial security carries through in many other aspects of their financial health. One important outcome is that they are more likely to say they set aside money for savings or investments in the past two months (66% compared to an average of 52% in 2020).

The increased feeling of financial security in the spring of 2021 is mostly driven by Gen X (64%) and Baby Boomers (69%) rather than Gen Z (52%) and Millennials (52%). Similarly, Gen X and Baby Boomers are more likely to have set money aside for savings or investments (68% and 70%, respectively) than Gen Z or Millennials (61% among both groups).

Similar to Q4 2020, a strong majority say that they are very or somewhat confident in their ability to pay their debts to others including mortgages, car loans, credit cards, and other debt. The percentage of those who are very confident has increased by 8 points (59% now vs. 51% in Q4 2020). Gen X (84%) and Baby Boomers (95%) are more likely to be confident in their ability to pay off their debt than Gen Z (74%) and Millennials (75%).

### Half of Americans report no financial impact from COVID-19; Largest impact on Millennials and Gen Z

A majority say that COVID has not impacted their financial security in the past year (52%). The number of people who say COVID has negatively impacted their financial security in the past year has decreased to 21% from 33% in Q4 2020. Gen X and Boomers are more likely to say that their financial security has not been impacted by COVID (50% and 64%, respectively vs. 48% Gen Z and 40% Millennials).

### COVID purchases focused on keeping the home functional, fun and personal

About two in five Americans said they made a purchase during COVID that they would not otherwise have made. About one in ten Americans said they purchased supplies or equipment for a new hobby (11%), purchased new office equipment or furniture (10%), started a new digital subscription (10%), purchased electronics like a gaming system to pass the time (10%), purchased new countertop appliances for the kitchen (9%), or purchased exercise equipment (9%).





Households with children under 18 were more likely to have made a COVID purchase than those without children (50% and 36%, respectively). They were more likely to have bought office equipment or furniture (14%), started a new digital subscription (13%), bought new countertop appliances for the kitchen (13%), or brought home a new pet (10%).

About half of college graduates said they made a COVID purchase (53%). College grads were most likely to have purchased office equipment or furniture (23%), supplies or equipment for a new hobby (18%), or exercise equipment (17%).

About half of people who made a COVID purchase made purchases in more than one category. Fifty-five percent made one type of purchase, one in four made two types of purchases (24%), one in ten made three types of purchases (9%), and one in ten purchased four types or more (11%). Among those who made four or more types of purchases, most bought supplies or equipment for a new hobby (86%), new electronics (74%), a new digital subscription (70%), or office equipment or furniture (68%).

#### **When is the return to normal? Soon... perhaps by fall 2021**

About one in ten Americans say enough people are vaccinated that America can return to normal now (14%), but seven in ten say there is still progress to be made before that can happen (68%). About one in five say enough people will be vaccinated by the summer (18%) and about three in ten say enough people will be vaccinated by the fall (29%). Another one in five expect the COVID recovery to extend out into 2022 or beyond (21%) and one in six say they don't know when COVID will be under control (17%).

Gen Z and Gen X are most likely to say things will get back to normal between now and the fall (66% and 64%, respectively) compared to Millennials and Baby Boomers (56% and 61%, respectively). On the other hand, all of the older generations are twice as likely as Gen Z to say that COVID is still out of control and won't be under control until 2022 or later (24% Millennials, 20% Gen X, and 23% Baby Boomers vs. 10% Gen Z).

#### **Americans do have summer plans - freedom defined as travel**

As noted, about one in three Americans expect things to get back to normal by this summer and about two in three Americans are making big plans for the summer (64%). About one in ten Americans plan to start a home remodel or renovation (12%) or upgrade their home by buying new furniture or appliances (14%) in the next six months. A similar number, about one in ten, say they plan to go to a live show, concert, or sports event (12%).

In the next six months, nearly half of Americans plan to travel (48%); 33% say they are going on a vacation and 34% say they are traveling to visit friends or family. Of those planning to travel, 68% plan to travel within the US, and 13% plan to travel outside of the country. Millennials are most likely to say they plan to travel domestically as well as internationally.

Half of travelers say they're planning to take a road trip this summer (50%), while two in five plan to fly on an airplane (40%), and four percent plan to either travel by train or bus or take a cruise. Travelers are more likely to plan to stay at a hotel or motel (46%) than a rental home or Airbnb (19%), or their vacation/lake home (4%).



The most popular destinations for travel are the beach or lake (39%), a national park (21%), a big city (20%), or camping (19%), while visiting a historical location (15%) or an amusement park (12%) are not as popular. Households with children are significantly more likely to plan to go camping (25%) or to an amusement park (18%) than households without children (18% and 8%, respectively).

Regarding travel spending and budgeting, a majority believe they will spend about the same (53%), 14% say they will spend more than they typically do and 27% say they will spend less than they normally do. Those who say COVID has had a negative impact on their finances are significantly more likely to plan to spend less on their vacation this year (45%), while those who have come out of COVID in a better situation are more likely to say they will spend more (25%).

Gen Z (23%) is nearly twice as likely as Gen X (13%) and Baby Boomers (12%) to say they will spend more than normal. Conversely, Millennials are most likely to say they will spend less (33%), compared to 13% of Gen Z, 25% of Gen X, and 26% of Baby Boomers.

The most used resources for paying for their vacation include cash (50%), savings (48%), or credit cards (37%). About one in ten travelers say they will use credit card rewards (15%), COVID stimulus money (14%), mileage points or frequent flyer miles (14%), or their tax return (11%). Only about three percent say they will use a travel voucher.

### Personal finance habits

Half of Americans have kept the same amount they have saved for an emergency, while one in five (21%) have increased that amount. Baby Boomers are least likely to have increased their emergency savings amount (16%), compared to Gen Z (27%), Millennials (25%), and Gen X (22%). One in ten have increased their retirement savings with Millennials and Gen X most likely to do this (13% and 17%, respectively vs. 10% Gen Z and 7% Baby Boomers). Eleven percent have increased the amount they're investing in the stock market with Gen Z most likely to do so. One in five Gen Z has increased the amount they're investing in the stock market (19%), compared to 12% of Millennials, 13% of Gen X, and 6% of Baby Boomers.

Among respondents who have set aside any money for savings or investments or changed their finance habits due to the events in 2020, 57% did not use any resources for their savings or investments. Of those who used resources, 20% used a financial planner or professional planning service and 14% used a self-service investment app.

One in three Americans who use tools or resources for their savings and investments say they are moderately active investors and another one in three say they are passive investors (37%). Eleven percent say they are highly engaged investors and, conversely, 18% say they are beginner or casual investors.

Gen Z is most likely to say they are a beginner or casual investor (50%) compared to Millennials (26%), Gen X (13%), and Baby Boomers (10%). Millennials are most likely to be passive investors with two in five saying this (44%), followed by 39% of Baby Boomers, 33% of Gen X, and 19% of Gen Z.

Perhaps not surprisingly, those who say they are beginner or casual investors are more likely to have less in savings and investable assets, and those who report more active or knowledgeable investing skills are more likely to have higher amounts of savings and investable assets.

Amount of household's savings and investable assets	Beginner or casual	Passive	Moderately active	Highly engaged
Under \$50,000	55%	20%	24%	7%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	15%	17%	10%	12%
\$100,000 - \$499,999	19%	36%	30%	4%
\$500,000 - \$999,999	2%	15%	21%	31%
\$1,000,000 or more	8%	11%	16%	42%

### College education and paying for college

Among parents, a majority expect to be financially responsible for paying for their child's college education (64%). The percentage of parents who say their child will also be responsible for paying for their college education has increased to 43% from 37% in Q4 2020. Less than one-third of Gen Z parents (28%) are confident they have enough financial resources to send their children to college compared to majorities of Millennial parents (62%) and Gen X parents (79%).

Overall support for college debt reform is highest for free education for an associate's degree at community colleges (67%) followed by student loan forgiveness of up to \$10K per borrower (59%), free education at 4-year colleges for a bachelor's degree (51%) and student loan forgiveness of up to \$50K per borrower (46%).

Millennials are most likely to strongly support loan forgiveness with half of Millennials who strongly support student loan forgiveness of up to \$10K per borrower and 37% who strongly support forgiving up to \$50K per borrower. Millennials are also most likely to strongly support free education. Fifty-three percent strongly support free education at community colleges for an associate's degree and 37% strongly support free education at 4-year colleges for a bachelor's degree.

One in ten parents say they have delayed saving for their child's college education due to the debate over student debt (11%). One in four parents plan to take out loans if their child attends college (24%).

**A majority of Americans agree that if the student debt policy is reformed, a college education will be more accessible to more people (57%).** Gen Z (39%) and Millennials (38%) are more likely to strongly agree with this than Gen X (32%) and Baby Boomers (22%).

Americans are split on whether or not student loan forgiveness will stimulate the economy (33% agree that student loan forgiveness will not stimulate the economy and 34% disagree). Baby Boomers are most likely to agree that student loan forgiveness will not stimulate the economy (39%) while Millennials are most likely to disagree (43%).

Ten percent have delayed paying their student loan payments in the last year because of COVID; 35% among those who say this statement applies to them. This increases to 49% of Gen Z and 39% of Millennials.

Only about one in six Americans say student loan forgiveness would have a significant impact on their personal finances (17%). Similarly, this sentiment is highest among Gen Z (28%) and Millennials (26%).

## Annotated Questionnaire:

NOTE: All results show percentages among all respondents, unless otherwise labeled. Reduced bases are unweighted values

NOTE: \* = less than 0.5%, - = no respondents

Q1. How would you rate your overall level of financial security? Please select only one response.

	Q2 2020 (n=1030)	Q3 2020 (n=1330)	Q4 2020 (n=1015)	Q2 2021 (n=1015)
Excellent	12%	13%	15%	20%
Good	40%	40%	40%	42%
Fair	30%	31%	29%	23%
Poor	14%	68%	13%	12%
Don't know	3%	13%	3%	3%
Skip	9	10	6	1
<i>Good (net)</i>	52%	52%	55%	62%
<i>Poor (net)</i>	44%	44%	42%	34%

Q2. If you receive a windfall/bonus of \$500, what would you most likely do with the money?

	Q2 2021
Spend it	15%
Save it	58%
Pay off debt	27%
Skip	1

Q3. Over the past two months, have you been able to set aside any money for savings or investments?

	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020	Q2 2021
Yes	50%	51%	54%	66%
No	44%	44%	42%	28%
Not sure	5%	4%	3%	5%
Skip	6	7	1	1

Q4. Thinking for a moment about the money you may owe to others including mortgages, car loans, credit cards and other debt, how confident are you in your ability to pay all of these debts as they come due?

	Q2 2020 (n=1030)	Q3 2020 (n=1330)	Q4 2020 (n=1015)	Q2 2021 (n=1015)
Very confident	41%	-	51%	59%
Somewhat confident	32%	-	32%	26%
Not very confident	11%	-	7%	5%
Not at all confident	8%	-	5%	4%
Not sure	7%	-	5%	6%
<i>Skip</i>	10	-	3	1
<i>Confident (net)</i>	73%	-	83%	84%
<i>Not confident (net)</i>	19%	-	12%	9%

Q5. How has the COVID19 pandemic directly affected your feelings of financial security over the last year?

	Q4 2020	Q2 2021
COVID has not impacted my financial security in the past year	50%	52%
COVID has negatively impacted my financial security in the past year	33%	21%
COVID has positively impacted my financial security in the past year	8%	13%
I don't know	9%	12%
<i>Skip</i>	4	1

Q6. Did you make any purchases over the past year (during the pandemic) that you would not have otherwise bought?

	Q2 2021
Bought exercise equipment (i.e. treadmill, exercise bike, yoga mat, etc.)	9%
Bought countertop appliances/equipment for the kitchen (i.e. baking equipment, air fryer, etc.)	9%
Bought electronics to pass the time (i.e. gaming system, a video camera, etc.)	10%
Bought supplies/equipment for a new hobby	11%
Bought a big-ticket item just for you –(i.e. car, house, etc.)	7%
Started a new subscription to fill the time / entertain myself/my family (i.e. Disney+, cooking classes, etc.)	10%
Bought office equipment (i.e. a new desk, printer, circle light for zoom calls, etc.)	10%
Brought home a new pet	6%
None of these	60%
<i>Skip</i>	<i>2</i>

Q7. Which of the following comes closest to your opinion about the COVID19 pandemic?

	Q2 2021
COVID is under control, enough people are vaccinated, and America is able to return to normal.	14%
COVID is still out of control, but I'm confident that enough people will be vaccinated that it will be under control by this summer (June-August 2021)	18%
COVID is still out of control, but I'm confident that enough people will be vaccinated that it will be under control by this fall (September-November 2021)	29%
COVID is still out of control, and it won't be under control until 2022 or later	21%
I don't know	17%
<i>Skip</i>	<i>1</i>

Q8. If you received a third stimulus check, what have you done/plan to do with the money? Please select all that apply. (Q3 2020 question wording “If given a second stimulus check, how would you spend the money?”)

	Q3 2020	Q2 2021
Take a vacation	4%	6%
Put toward a large purchase such as a car, recreational vehicle, etc.	7%	5%
Do home remodeling/maintenance	13%	12%
Start or put toward an emergency fund	33%	18%
Invest in the stock market	5%	7%
Put toward retirement savings	11%	12%
Make a payment on credit card debt	21%	18%
Make a payment on student loan debt	6%	4%
Pay for everyday expenses including mortgage/rent, utilities, etc.	37%	25%
Purchase non-essential items such as clothes, shoes, jewelry, etc.	6%	6%
Have not received a stimulus check	13%	21%
<i>Skip</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>3</i>

Q9. Do you plan to do any of the following in the next 6 months? Please select all that apply.

	Q2 2021
Go on a vacation	33%
Travel to visit friends and/or family	34%
Start a home remodel/renovation	12%
Buy a home	3%
Buy a second/vacation home	1%
Upgrade home (i.e. buy new furniture, appliance, etc.)	14%
Buy a new car or recreational vehicle	6%
Buy new clothing/wardrobe (i.e. spending more than \$500 at one time)	4%
Go to a live show, concert, or sports event	12%
None of these	36%
<i>Skip</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Plan to travel (net)</i>	<i>48%</i>



Q10. [Asked if Q9 = Go on a vacation or Travel to visit friends and/or family] Tell us more about your travel plans for the next 6 months. Do you plan to...? Please select all that apply.

	Q2 2021 (n=541)
Travel outside of the country	13%
Travel within the US	68%
Fly on an airplane	40%
Take a road trip	50%
Travel by train/bus	4%
Stay in a hotel/motel	46%
Stay in a rental home/Airbnb	19%
Go to the beach/lake	39%
Visit a national park	21%
Visit a big city	20%
Go camping	19%
Go on a cruise	4%
Visit a historical location	15%
Go to an amusement park (i.e. Disney World, Six Flags, etc.)	11%
Visit my vacation/lake home	4%
None of these	2%
<i>Skip</i>	<i>1</i>

Q11. [Asked if Q9 = Go on a vacation or Travel to visit friends and/or family] Thinking about your travel plans in 2021, how do you think your budgeting/spending will compare to your travel expenses in a typical year?

	Q2 2021 (n=541)
I will spend more than I typically do	14%
I will spend about the same	53%
I will spend less than I typically do	27%
I don't know	7%
<i>Skip</i>	<i>0</i>



Q12. [Asked if Q9 = Go on a vacation or Travel to visit friends and/or family] What resources do you plan to use to pay for your travel/vacation? Please select all that apply.

	Q2 2021 (n=541)
Credit cards	37%
Cash	50%
Savings	48%
COVID19 Stimulus money	14%
Travel vouchers	3%
Work bonus	5%
Tax return	11%
Mileage points/flyer miles	14%
Credit card rewards	15%
Something else	5%
<i>Skip</i>	*

Q13. Have the events in 2020 caused you to change any of the following personal finance habits and, if so, how?

	More	Less	Same	N/A
Amount saved for an emergency	21%	15%	50%	13%
Amount saved for retirement	11%	11%	49%	28%
Amount saved my own/my child(ren)'s college education	4%	5%	21%	68%
Amount investing in the stock market	11%	6%	36%	47%
Pay bills on time	6%	6%	77%	9%



Q14. [Asked if Q3 = Yes or any Q13 = More] In the past year, did you use any of the following tools or resources for your saving and investments? *Select all that apply.*

	Q2 2021 (n=760)
Financial planner/ professional planning services (i.e. Northwestern Mutual, Edward Jones)	20%
Self-service investment app (i.e. Acorns, E*TRADE, Robinhood, TD Ameritrade)	14%
Financial management/ budgeting software (i.e. Quicken, Mint)	8%
Digital advisor/Robo-advisor (i.e. Betterment, wealthfront, Vanguard, STASH)	4%
Online Stockbroker (i.e. E*TRADE, TD Ameritrade, Robinhood)	12%
None of these	57%
<i>Skip</i>	<i>1</i>

Q15. Which of the following comes closest to your investment style?

	Q2 2021 (n=351)
I'm a beginner or casual investor (I typically invest a few bucks here and there)	18%
I'm a passive investor (I select my investments once and let them grow - like my 401k)	37%
I'm a moderately active investor (I manage my portfolio or am actively engaged with a portfolio manager)	33%
I'm a highly engaged investor (I have substantial investments and manage my portfolio or am actively engaged with a portfolio manager)	11%
<i>Skip</i>	<i>1</i>

Q16. [Asked if Parent] In the future, who do you think will be financially responsible for paying for the college education of any of your children? *Please select all that apply.*

	Q4 2020 (n=176)	Q2 2021 (n=200)
Myself	61%	64%
My child(ren)	37%	43%
Someone else	11%	9%
My child(ren) probably won't attend college	6%	5%
Don't have child(ren)	0%	1%
Don't know	11%	15%
<i>Skip</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>

Q17. [Asked if Q16 = Myself] When the time for college arrives, how confident are you that you will have enough financial resources to send your children to college? Would you say you are...? *Please select only one response.*

	Q4 2020 (n=109)	Q2 2021 (n=131)
Very confident	23%	30%
Somewhat confident	42%	39%
Not very confident	21%	18%
Not at all confident	10%	9%
Not sure	4%	4%
Do not have a child/children	0%	0%
<i>Skip</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Confident (net)</i>	<i>65%</i>	<i>69%</i>
<i>Not confident (net)</i>	<i>31%</i>	<i>27%</i>



Q18. To what extent do you support or oppose the following?

SUMMARY SUPPORT

	Q2 2021
Student loan forgiveness of up to \$10K per borrower	59%
Student loan forgiveness of up to \$50K per borrower	46%
Free education at community colleges for an associate's degree	67%
Free education at 4-year colleges for a bachelor's degree	51%

	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't know
Student loan forgiveness of up to \$10K per borrower	36%	23%	8%	20%	13%
Student loan forgiveness of up to \$50K per borrower	27%	19%	11%	28%	14%
Free education at community colleges for an associate's degree	43%	24%	8%	13%	9%
Free education at 4-year colleges for a bachelor's degree	27%	24%	13%	23%	12%



Q19. To what extent do you support or oppose the following?

SUMMARY AGREE

	Q2 2021
I've delayed saving for college for my children because of the debate over student debt	11% (n=200)
We plan to take out loans for my child if he/she attends college	24% (n=200)
If the student debt policy is reformed, a college education will be more accessible to more people	57%
Student loan forgiveness will not stimulate the economy	33%
I have delayed paying my student loan payments in the last year because of COVID-19	10%
If student loan forgiveness is granted, it will make a significant improvement in my financial situation	17%

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I've delayed saving for college for my children because of the debate over student debt (n=200)	4%	7%	23%	13%	33%	20%
We plan to take out loans for my child if he/she attends college (n=200)	8%	17%	32%	12%	22%	9%
If the student debt policy is reformed, a college education will be more accessible to more people	31%	26%	19%	6%	7%	9%
Student loan forgiveness will not stimulate the economy	17%	16%	21%	17%	17%	10%
I have delayed paying my student loan payments in the last year because of COVID-19	7%	3%	7%	2%	8%	72%
If student loan forgiveness is granted, it will make a significant improvement in my financial situation	12%	5%	7%	2%	8%	65%



## About the Study

This Country Financial/Ipsos Poll was conducted April 9 - 12 2021, by Ipsos using the probability-based KnowledgePanel®. This poll is based on a nationally representative probability sample of 1,015 general population adults age 18 or older.

The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, for results based on the entire sample of adults. The margin of sampling error takes into account the design effect, which was 1.10. The margin of sampling error is higher and varies for results based on other sub-samples. In our reporting of the findings, percentage points are rounded off to the nearest whole number. As a result, percentages in a given table column may total slightly higher or lower than 100%. In questions that permit multiple responses, columns may total substantially more than 100%, depending on the number of different responses offered by each respondent.

The survey was conducted using KnowledgePanel, the largest and most well-established online probability-based panel that is representative of the adult US population. Our recruitment process employs a scientifically developed addressed-based sampling methodology using the latest Delivery Sequence File of the USPS – a database with full coverage of all delivery points in the US. Households invited to join the panel are randomly selected from all available households in the U.S. Persons in the sampled households are invited to join and participate in the panel. Those selected who do not already have internet access are provided a tablet and internet connection at no cost to the panel member. Those who join the panel and who are selected to participate in a survey are sent a unique password-protected log-in used to complete surveys online. As a result of our recruitment and sampling methodologies, samples from KnowledgePanel cover all households regardless of their phone or internet status and findings can be reported with a margin of sampling error and projected to the general population.

The data were weighted to adjust for gender by age, race/ethnicity, education, Census region, metropolitan status, household income, race/ethnicity by gender, race/ethnicity by age, and race/ethnicity by education. The demographic benchmarks came from the 2019 March supplement of the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS). The weighting categories were as follows:

- Gender (Male, Female) by Age (18–29, 30–44, 45–59, and 60+)
- Race/Hispanic Ethnicity (White Non-Hispanic, Black Non-Hispanic, Other or 2+ Races Non-Hispanic, Hispanic)
- Education (High School graduate or less, Some College, Bachelor and beyond)
- Census Region (Northeast, Midwest, South, West)
- Metropolitan status (Metro, non-Metro)
- Household Income (Under \$25,000, \$25,000-\$49,999, \$50,000-\$74,999, \$75,000-\$99,999, \$100,000-\$149,999, \$150,000+)
- Race/ethnicity (White/Other Non-Hispanic, Black Non-Hispanic, Hispanic) by Gender (Male, Female)
- Race/ethnicity (White/Other Non-Hispanic, Black Non-Hispanic, Hispanic) by Age (18-44, 45+)
- Race/ethnicity (White/Other Non-Hispanic, Black Non-Hispanic, Hispanic) by Education (Some College or less, Bachelor and beyond)





## About Ipsos

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