

State of Teen Financial Literacy 2026



This report is based on 161,900 survey responses from students who participated in one of Everfi's high school financial education courses between June of 2025 and February of 2026.

Hundreds of thousands of students participate in Everfi's digital financial education programs each year. These programs—free to schools and sponsored by partner corporations, foundations, and individuals—are used across the country; from elementary school through high school; and in rural, suburban, and urban schools.

For Financial Literacy Month, Everfi reviewed survey responses from juniors and seniors who participate in our financial education programs for insights into the state of teen financial literacy. Using pre-course survey responses, we can get a picture of young people's financial habits,

attitudes, and preparedness as they approach adulthood and increasing financial independence.

Consistent with previous reports, in 2026 we find that most students have at least some engagement with the financial system or plan to soon, but many students report feeling underprepared to manage their money.

We also look at students' attitudes, plans, and preparedness related to higher education and investing, areas that can set young people up for financial independence and well-being in the future. In these areas, we also find students eager to participate but underprepared to tackle significant financial decisions.

As a group, students are eager for more financial education. Almost all students say that today is the right time—or too late!—for them to learn more about managing their money. And most believe that financial education can help them toward financial success in the future.



Financial Engagement and Money Management

High school juniors and seniors are preparing for adulthood and taking steps towards financial independence. Around half of students report that they already have a bank account (savings or checking) and a quarter have a credit card. Among those who don't, the majority plan to open these accounts within the next year.



Financial Product	Have one now	Plan to have within a year
Savings Account	45%	48%
Checking Account	49%	40%
Credit Card	21%	53%

These rates of financial product use are similar to previous years. This year's cohort might be slightly behind in opening accounts—last year 47% of young people already had a savings account, 51% for checking—but combined numbers for having and planning to open accounts are unchanged.

Despite the majority of young people already engaged or planning soon to engage with the financial system, most students describe themselves as at best somewhat prepared to manage these products responsibly.

Financial Task	Not or a little prepared	Only somewhat prepared
Set up and follow a budget	23%	36%
Managing checking and savings account balances	22%	35%
Check credit score and maintain good credit	29%	33%

While nine in 10 young people have or plan soon to have a savings or checking account, more than half say that they are not at all, just a little, or only somewhat prepared to set up and follow a budget (to manage spending and saving) or to manage savings and checking accounts (such as checking the balance and monitoring spending and income).

This gap between plans and preparation is particularly stark for credit cards. More than half of juniors and seniors say that they plan to open a credit card in the next year—in addition to the 21 percent who already have a credit card—but six in 10 of those same students say that they are at most somewhat prepared to check their credit score and maintain good credit. Three in 10 of those students (29%) describe themselves as just a little or not at all prepared. This is a deepening of the pattern we saw last year, when two in 10 students (22%) said they were unprepared.

With so much of modern banking taking place away from bank branches and physical checkbooks or even credit cards, it's important that students are also able to manage their money safely using more modern financial products. About half of high school juniors and seniors surveyed say that they currently use mobile banking apps and peer-to-peer payment apps. Another third of these students plan to start using these products within the next year. These rates of product usage are similar to last year, with a slight increase in plans to use mobile banking apps in the near future.



Financial Product	Have one now	Plan to have within a year
Mobile banking app	51%	36%
Peer-to-peer payment app	48%	32%

As with more traditional financial products, while many students use or plan to use mobile banking and peer-to-peer payments, many also describe themselves as un- or under-confident that they can use these services safely.

Financial task	Not or a little prepared	Only somewhat prepared
Recognize money related scams	20%	32%
Safely using peer-to-peer payment apps	21%	35%

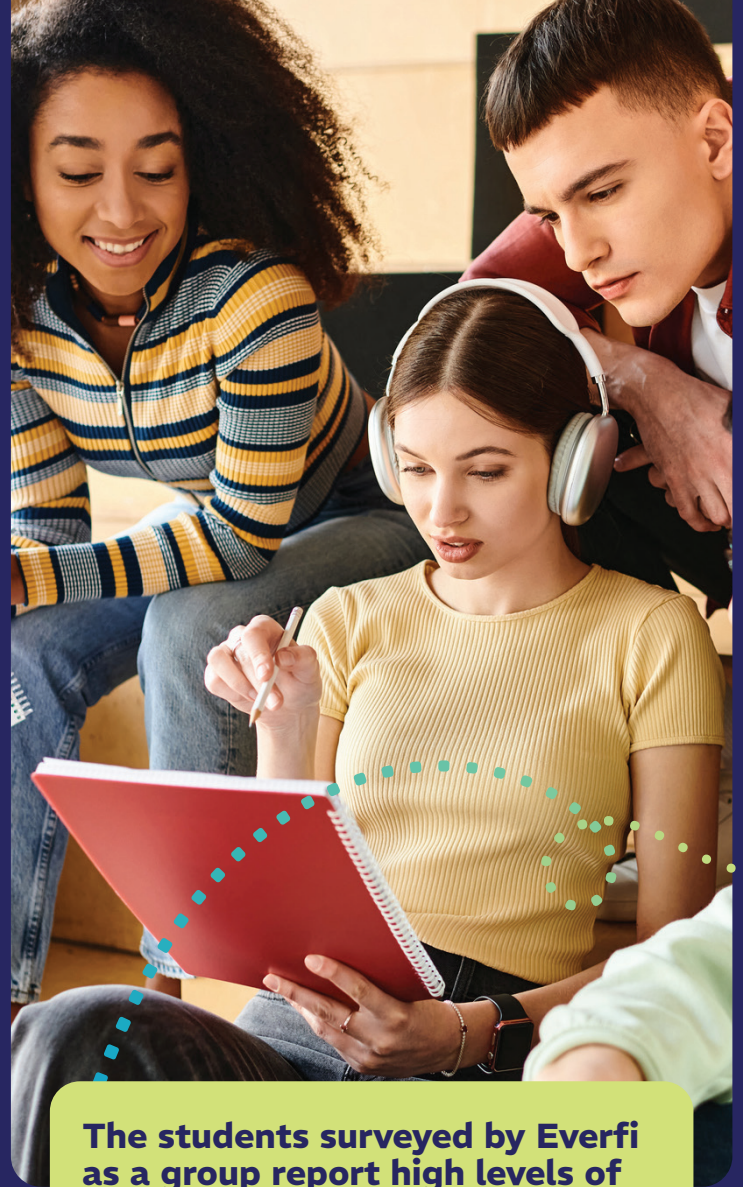
This lack of confidence in safely managing money using mobile tools—which is similar to responses reported in previous years—leaves young people vulnerable to both innocent errors and not-so-innocent scams, putting their money at risk.

Building for the Future

Pursuing higher education and investing in the stock market remain two of the most important ways to build financial stability and financial well-being for the future. Among students surveyed by Everfi, enthusiasm for both higher education and investing is high, but as with basic financial management, there are gaps between plans and preparedness.

Most high school juniors and seniors—71 percent—told Everfi that they plan to pursue an associate or bachelor’s degree immediately after completing high school. Fewer report having a plan for financing that degree. A quarter of students say that they do not know how they will pay for college. A similar share of students—27 percent—say they will use federal student loans to pay for college. In recent years, approximately 60 percent of bachelor’s degree candidates used federal student loans at some point during college, pointing to a significant difference between the number of young people who are planning for student loans and those who are likely to rely on them at some point.

The decision to use loans to pay for higher education is an important one. A college degree still has positive returns for many students in terms of increased employment rates and earning potential, compared to high-school-only peers. But with a shifting student loan landscape and uncertain job market, it is important that students plan carefully for borrowing.



The students surveyed by Everfi as a group report high levels of un- and under-preparedness for managing loans.

Student Loan Task	Not or a little prepared	Only somewhat prepared
Filling out a FAFSA form	42%	32%
Calculate how much to borrow	50%	29%
Evaluate Loan offers	50%	36%
Develop a plan for repaying loans	50%	34%



Across the college-paying lifecycle, from applying for loans to repaying loans, more than seven in 10 high school juniors and seniors say they are un- or under-prepared.

These low levels of preparedness paired with the gap between the share of students who think they will use federal student loans, and those who are likely to do so constitute a significant challenge for the cohort of young people just entering adulthood.

Looking further into their futures, many young people say that they plan to invest when they are older. Half of students described themselves as quite or extremely likely to invest in the future, and an additional 34 percent said that they are somewhat likely to invest one day.

Like more foundational personal finance topics, investing is an area where students could use more information and education. Three in 10 young people (31%) say that financial investing is quite or extremely intimidating, and an additional 39 percent say it is somewhat intimidating.

Students also report having fewer family conversations about investing, compared to other financial topics.

Family Financial Conversation Topics	Never	Occasionally or sometimes	Often or always
Financial investing	20%	59%	21%
General money management	10%	50%	40%
Paying for College	13%	50%	37%

Young people are most likely to report at least occasionally talking to their family members about general money management topics, with nine in 10 students reporting that they have these conversations. In contrast, 20 percent of students say they've never talked with family members about investing, and about the same share (21%) report having these conversations frequently.

Role of Financial Education

As in previous years, survey responses from high school juniors and seniors uncover a real gap between what students plan to do and what they say they are prepared to do. This gap points at an important role for financial education, starting early and continuing as an important part of students' preparation for adulthood and increased financial independence.



The good news is that young people agree. When asked if they think it is the right time for them to learn about personal finance, three quarters of students agree that it is.



Is it the right time to learn about personal finance ?

It's way or a little too early	5%
It's the right time	75%
It's way or a little too late	20%

Just five percent of students say that it's too early for them to learn about personal finance. For most, the time is right now, as they are preparing for life after high school and making significant financial decisions. The rest of the cohort (20%) say that if anything it is too late; they would have liked to start learning about these topics earlier.

Students also see the value of financial education. More than three quarters of students (78%) say that learning about personal finance can improve their lives a lot or a ton, and an additional 17 percent say it will improve their lives at least some.



About This Report

This report is based on survey responses from students who participated in one of Everfi's high school financial education courses between June 2025 and February 2026.

The surveys used in this analysis were administered before students took the course (pre-course surveys) and reflect students' habits and attitudes prior to participating in the education programs. The approximate number of high school juniors and seniors included in the sample set by topic was: Financial Education 133,000; Modern Banking 1,900; Financing Higher Education 13,000, and Investing 14,000.

