CFPB Financial Education Exchange

Using the CFPB financial well-being scale

January 31, 2018 | 2:00-3:00 p.m. ET

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About the Bureau

- The Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection regulates the offering and provision of consumer financial products and services under the Federal consumer financial laws, and educates and empowers consumers to make better informed financial decisions.
CFPB Financial Education Exchange (CFPB FinEx)

**CFPB FinEx**: an online and in-person opportunity to access Bureau tools and resources, and connect with the Bureau and your peers engaged in financial education.

Our goal is to help you improve the financial well-being of the people you serve.

**FinEx regional convenings:**
- Dallas, TX
- Fort Worth, TX
- Maryland
- Denver, CO
- Kansas City, MO
- Atlanta, GA
- Sacramento, CA
- Madison, WI
- St. Louis, MO
- Tacoma, WA
- Nashville, TN
- Boston, MA

**Monthly e-newsletters**

**Annual surveys**

**Number of financial educators signed up for CFPB FinEx**: 3541

**To sign up, email**

CFPB_FinEx@cfpb.gov

**Monthly webinars include:**
- Fraud prevention for older adults
- Disaster recovery and preparedness
- Resources for servicemembers
- Accessing credit scores
- Managing spending
- Debt collection resources
- Credit card spending
- Libraries as a Financial Education Resources
- Financial Coaching
- Financial Education Programs
- Serving Immigrant Populations
- Federal Financial Education Resources
- Take Control of Your Auto Loan
- Financial Rules to Live By
- Resources for Parents
- Tips for Strengthening Financial Education Curriculum
- Resources for Parents and Caregivers
- Resources for Financial Caregivers
- Measuring Financial Well-Being
- Owning a Home
- Tax Time Savings
- Your Money, Your Goals Toolkit
Financial education for adults

We help you help the people you serve. For adult financial educators, the tools here show our latest thinking on consumer financial behavior and effective financial education practices.

Featured event

Financial Well-Being Toolkit

Thursday, Jan. 31, from 2-3 p.m. ET

View details and enroll

Tools and resources to use with the people you serve

We’ve gathered our tools, worksheets, and handouts by topic. You can use these resources with the people you serve. You can also download the inventory of materials that are available.

Find it at consumerfinance.gov/adult-financial-education
Today’s topic:

Using the CFPB financial well-being scale
Financial well-being toolkit and webpage

Find it at consumerfinance.gov/practitioner-resources/financial-well-being-resources/
What is financial well-being?

A state of being reflecting a person’s ability to meet current and ongoing financial obligations, feel secure in their financial future, and make choices that allow enjoyment of life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Control over your day-to-day, month-to-month finances</td>
<td>Capacity to absorb a financial shock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of choice</td>
<td>Financial freedom to make choices to enjoy life</td>
<td>On track to meet your financial goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>Response Options</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How well does this statement describe you or your situation?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I could handle a major unexpected expense</td>
<td>• Describes me completely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I am securing my financial future</td>
<td>• Describes me very well</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Because of my money situation, I feel like I will never have the things I want in life</td>
<td>• Describes me somewhat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I can enjoy life because of the way I'm managing my money</td>
<td>• Describes me very little</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I am just getting by financially</td>
<td>• Does not describe me at all</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I am concerned that the money I have or will save won’t last</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **How often does this statement apply to you?** | |
| 1. Giving a gift for a wedding, birthday or other occasion would put a strain on my finances for the month | • Always |
| 2. I have money left over at the end of the month | • Often |
| 3. I am behind with my finances | • Sometimes |
| 4. My finances control my life | • Rarely |
| | • Never |
What is the state of financial well-being in America? The national financial well-being survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial well-being score range</th>
<th>Financial circumstances</th>
<th>Percent of U.S. adult population with scores in this range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≤ 40</td>
<td>Always struggles to pay for basic expenses</td>
<td>13% of the adult population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 to 50</td>
<td>Frequently struggles to pay for basic expenses</td>
<td>21% of the adult population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 to 60</td>
<td>Sometimes struggles to pay for basic expenses</td>
<td>30% of the adult population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 to 70</td>
<td>Rarely struggles to pay for basic expenses</td>
<td>22% of the adult population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;70</td>
<td>Never struggles to pay for basic expenses</td>
<td>14% of the adult population</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Pathways to financial well-being” findings

Bureau research suggests that financial education can help consumers improve their financial situations and ultimately, financial well-being, by helping them to improve their financial skill and financial behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial skill</th>
<th>Financial behavior</th>
<th>Financial situation</th>
<th>Financial well-being</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How you find, process, and use relevant financial information</td>
<td>Day-to-day actions you take to secure your financial life</td>
<td>The objective facts of your financial life</td>
<td>Your perceived financial security and freedom of choice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Financial Skill Scale - Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Response Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How well does this statement describe you or your situation?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I know how to make complex financial decisions†</td>
<td>• Describes me completely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I am able to make good financial decisions that are new to me</td>
<td>• Describes me very well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I know how to get myself to follow through on my financial intentions†</td>
<td>• Describes me somewhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I am able to recognize a good financial investment</td>
<td>• Describes me very little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I know how to keep myself from spending too much</td>
<td>• Does not describe me at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I know how to make myself save†</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I know where to find the advice I need to make decisions involving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>money</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **How often does this statement apply to you?**                           |                                           |
| 1. I know when I do not have enough information to make a good decision  | • Always                                |
| involving my money†                                                      | • Often                                 |
| 2. I know when I need advice about my money                              | • Sometimes                             |
| 3. I struggle to understand financial information* †                     | • Rarely                                |
| † Denotes questions that are part of the abbreviated (5-question) scale.  | • Never                                 |

* Denotes questions for which the response options are “reverse coded.”
The financial well-being scale

The scale has two parts:

- **The questionnaire:** The questionnaire contains 10 questions that capture how individuals feel about their financial security and freedom of choice; plus:
  - Question about age (18-61 or 62+)
  - Question about mode of administration (self-administered or administered by someone else)

- **Scoring worksheet:** Responses to the questions can be converted into an overall financial well-being score between 0 and 100.

Using the questionnaire and scoring sheet, you can measure financial well-being in **three steps**.
Abbreviated financial well-being scale

- There is also an abbreviated five-question version of the scale.

- It is scored in a similar way as the standard version but uses a different scoring worksheet.

- The standard version is more precise and may provide more insight into an individual’s financial well-being, but both can be used to generate a score.
Step 1: Collect responses to the questionnaire

Be sure to:

- **Test out the scale.** If you are concerned about how the people you serve might react, test it out on one or two of your clients before adopting it more widely in your practice.

- **Allow people to interpret the questions for themselves.** Don’t reword or tell people what questions mean. The design and validation of the scale is based on allowing people to determine what the questions mean for themselves.

- **Give people the choice to complete the questionnaire and assure them their responses will be kept confidential.** This will help people feel more comfortable responding honestly to the statements on the scale.

- **Try the online version.** You can complete the online questionnaire with people you serve or ask them to complete it independently and receive a score instantly.
**CFPB Financial Well-Being Scale**

**Questionnaire**

**Part 1:** How well does this statement describe you or your situation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This statement describes me</th>
<th>Completely</th>
<th>Very well</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very little</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I could handle a major unexpected expense</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. I am securing my financial future</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Because of my money situation, I feel like I will never have the things I want in life</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part 2:** How often does this statement apply to you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This statement applies to me</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Giving a gift for a wedding, birthday or other occasion would put a strain on my finances for the month</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I have money left over at the end of the month</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I am behind with my finances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My finances control my life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part 3:** Tell us about yourself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>11. How old are you?</th>
<th>18-61</th>
<th>62+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. How did you take the questionnaire?</td>
<td>I read the questions</td>
<td>Someone read the questions to me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Online questionnaire

consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/financial-well-being/
Step 2. Calculate the total response value

- Using the first page of the scoring worksheet, for each question, enter the response value (the number from 0-4 that corresponds to the client’s response) into the right-hand column.

- Add up these response numbers to get a total response value.

- This is only the total response value. It is not the financial well-being score.

- Individuals must answer all of the questions to get a score.
Step 3. Convert the total response value to a financial well-being scale score

- Using the second page of the scoring worksheet, locate your client’s total response value in the first column.

- Follow that row across to the appropriate column based on your client’s age group, and whether was self-administered or administered by someone else.

- This will give you the respondent’s financial well-being score.
Interpreting the score

You can use the score to understand the person’s current state of financial well-being and compare the person’s score to others.

Two new benchmarking tools to help place your client’s score in greater context:

- **Score ranges**: This tool provides ranges of scores and typical characteristics of people who fall in those ranges.

- **Scores for select comparison groups**: This tool provides distributions of scores for people by age and income, to help you compare a person’s score to other people of similar age and income.
Benchmarks

- The benchmarks are based on an analysis of the National Financial Well-Being Survey. The benchmarks came from using the survey dataset to analyze scores in light of many personal characteristics and situational measures.

- Key break points in Financial Well-Being Scores in the U.S. adult population formed the end points of **score ranges**. The facts listed for each range describe common challenges and successes experienced by individuals in each range.

- To create the **scores for select comparison groups** the survey data was divided into 25 age and income categories and the distribution of scores for each subgroup was analyzed.
Score ranges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>People in these ranges tend to experience the following:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VERY LOW 0-29</td>
<td>- Just 5% are certain they could come up with $2,000 for an emergency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW 30-37</td>
<td>- Few (23%) habitually save and only some (38%) have more than $250 in liquid savings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM LOW 38-49</td>
<td>- Just 12% always stay on budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM HIGH 50-57</td>
<td>- Nearly half (45%) have experience with debt collectors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGH 58-67</td>
<td>- Most (60%) have minimal savings of $250 or more, but only 30% have $2,000 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERY HIGH 68-100</td>
<td>- Almost all (80%) find it somewhat or very difficult to make ends meet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Some (32%) have had a credit application rejected or are concerned about credit rejection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- More than half (55%) have automated deposits into a savings or retirement account.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- A minority (32%) always pay off credit cards in full.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The vast majority (81%) are certain they could come up with $2,000 for an emergency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Very few (6%) have experienced a credit rejection or are concerned about credit rejection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Most have high levels of savings; 80% have $10,000 or more in liquid savings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The majority (69%) make automated deposits into a savings or retirement account.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Most (81%) have health insurance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scores for select comparison groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME GROUP</th>
<th>AGE GROUP</th>
<th>AVERAGE SCORE</th>
<th>10TH PERCENTILE</th>
<th>25TH PERCENTILE</th>
<th>50TH PERCENTILE</th>
<th>75TH PERCENTILE</th>
<th>90TH PERCENTILE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $30,000</td>
<td>Ages 18-29</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $30,000</td>
<td>Ages 30-44</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $30,000</td>
<td>Ages 45-61</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $30,000</td>
<td>Ages 62-71</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $30,000</td>
<td>Ages 72 and older</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000 - $49,999</td>
<td>Ages 18-29</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000 - $49,999</td>
<td>Ages 30-44</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000 - $49,999</td>
<td>Ages 45-61</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000 - $49,999</td>
<td>Ages 62-71</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000 - $49,999</td>
<td>Ages 72 and older</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 - $74,999</td>
<td>Ages 18-29</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 - $74,999</td>
<td>Ages 30-44</td>
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<td>68</td>
<td>79</td>
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<td>49</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000 - $99,999</td>
<td>Ages 18-29</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Should you share the score with the people you serve?

- While the score is a valuable tool to measure a person’s financial well-being, it may not always be useful to share the score with people.
- Depending on the person and the context, sharing the score could lead to a person feeling anxious or upset, or it could motivate the person.
- Before sharing the score, consider how the person might react, and whether sharing the score would help or hinder a person’s sense of financial well-being.
How can you use the scale in your work?

1. **Measure individual well-being and progress**
   
   Some practitioners track peoples’ scores and answers to each question over time to assess changes. Other practitioners compare scores for different groups of people.

   You can:
   - Administer the scale at intake and at regular intervals throughout your sessions.
   - Save individual responses and scores so that you can review changes over time and compare with others.
   - Compare the scores of the people you serve to national data and benchmarks.
How can you use the scale in your work?

2. **Facilitate one-on-one conversations**
   Financial educators have found that the scale is a helpful conversation starter about financial concerns, aspirations, and needs.

You can:
- Review the scale responses and score with the person.
- Notice when the questions make clients feel anxious and when the questions inspire confidence.
- Be prepared for people to react emotionally to some of the questions.
How can you use the scale in your work?

3. Facilitate group conversations

Some practitioners use the scale to guide group discussions in a workshop setting. Reflecting on the questions that are part of the scale helps attendees engage with financial education material more deeply.

You can:

- Ask workshop attendees to complete the scale before the workshop starts either as a handout or before coming to the workshop.
- Reference relevant scale questions for particular education topics, for example “I am concerned that the money I have or will save won’t last,” when talking about savings.
- Be aware that people may feel hesitant to share their answers with a group or may be guarded about their responses.
How can you use the scale in your work?

4. Evaluate and improve programs

Using the scale, and the scores it generates, can help you design more effective programs. Many practitioners periodically reflect on what they learn from using the scale and use this knowledge to inform their programs.

You can:

- Develop coaching prompts or materials for people based on their responses to the scale questions.
- Review educational materials to see if they align with what you have learned about the financial well-being of the people you serve.
- Reflect on how individuals’ financial well-being has changed over time based on program activities.
How can you use the scale in your work?

5. **Measure and compare programs**

Program managers, funders and individual financial educators use the scores to compare people in different kinds of programs. The standardization of the scale makes the scores comparable across individuals and over time.

You can:

- Report and share the scores of the people you serve with other programs and/or with funders (anonymously or de-identified).
- Use scores to understand how the people you serve compare with those of other organizations providing similar services or working with similar populations.
- Compare scores and responses of people being served by different programs within an organization (such as participants at different workshops).
- Compare scores to survey data. The scale is increasingly being used by researchers to assess financial well-being in large national surveys.
How can I integrate the scale with other data collection instruments?

Tips for using the scale as part of a longer data collection process or an existing questionnaire:

- **Do not pick and choose questions.** The scale questions have been carefully chosen and validated. If length is a concern, consider using the five-question version of the scale.

- **Do not change the wording.** Keep the scale questions in the same order and with the same wording as developed by the Bureau. If you make changes, your data may not be comparable to the national survey data or to data collected by other programs. Feel free to put on your own logo or to change the font or look of the survey.

- **Do calculate a score.** Calculating a score allows you to compare financial well-being for people over time and to others.

- **Do consider adding the scale to electronic data systems.** Many practitioners have added fields in their databases and client management systems to store scale responses and scores.
Tips for using the scale

- **Ask all the questions:** If you plan on using the score, it is important that you ask all the questions on the scale. Skipping even one question skews the score and provides inconsistent data.

- **Avoid judgment.** Ask open-ended questions about the person’s responses to the statements, like “Tell me more about what you are feeling,” and “Why do you feel that way?”

- **Listen and be patient and supportive.** By listening and being patient, you can help create a supportive environment for the person to share their feelings and experiences.

- **Do it first.** If possible, administer the scale to participants prior to starting a workshop. This may help participants more fully engage with workshop material.

- **Integrate with other data.** If possible, integrate the scale with your existing data collection tools, process, and systems.

- **Use the scale consistently.** Administer the scale the same way every time. This helps ensure that you are gathering a consistent set of data.
Financial well being hub

Find it at consumerfinance.gov/practitioner-resources/financial-well-being-resources/
Financial well being hub

Find it at consumerfinance.gov/practitioner-resources/financial-well-being-resources/
Financial well-being resources

Financial well-being is the ultimate goal of financial education. To help people improve their financial well-being, you first must be able to measure it.

Financial well-being describes a condition wherein a person can fully meet current and ongoing financial obligations, can feel secure in their financial future, and is able to make choices that allow them to enjoy life. It's determined by the extent to which people feel that they:
- Have control over day-to-day, month-to-month finances
- Have the capacity to absorb a financial shock
- Are on track to meet his or her financial goals
- Have the financial freedom to make the choices that allow one to enjoy life

Get started measuring financial well-being

The toolkit provides an introduction to the financial well-being scale, with instructions, case studies, and other resources.

Download the toolkit for financial educators

Measure and score financial well-being

The financial well-being scale is a free tool to help you measure your client's financial well-being.
Measure and score financial well-being

The financial well-being score provides a common metric that allows a comparison of financial well-being across people and over time.

The financial well-being scale is a free tool to help you measure the financial well-being of people you serve. The scale, which was developed and rigorously tested by The Bureau, contains 10 questions to capture how people individuals feel about their financial security and freedom of choice plus 2 questions to assist with scoring. The question wording has been tested with people of all ages. Responses to the questions can be converted into an overall financial well-being “score” between 0 and 100.

Download the user guide
Administer the questionnaire online

Use the questionnaire

1. Collect responses to the questionnaire. In order for the scale to work properly, you must not change the wording of questions or responses and the respondent must answer every question in the questionnaire.

2. Calculate the total response value. Using the scoring worksheet, add the person’s responses to find the “total response value.”

3. Convert the total response value to a Financial Well-being Scale score. On part two of the scoring worksheet, locate the total response value in the first column, then follow the row across to the appropriate column based on the respondent’s age group and how the questionnaire was administered.

Download the questionnaire and scoring worksheet: English [ ] Spanish [ ]
Measure and score financial well-being

Looking for a shorter scale?

If the standard scale is not an option due to space or time, you may use the abbreviated 5-item version of the financial well-being scale questionnaire. The scores from the abbreviated scale can be compared directly to the scores from the standard version.

Download the abbreviated questionnaire and scoring worksheet: [English](#) | [Spanish](#)

Interpret the score

Once you’ve calculated the score for someone, you can use the score to understand their current state of financial well-being and compare the client’s score to the scores of other people you serve.

The benchmarks are based on an analysis of the National Financial Well-Being Survey, a large, national survey of adults ages 18 and older in the United States. The survey included the financial well-being scale questions as well as other questions about demographic characteristics, financial situation, financial skill, and behaviors.

Financial well-being score ranges

Review score ranges and characteristics of people who fall in those ranges.

Download the score ranges

Financial well-being scores for select comparison groups

Use this tool to compare your client’s score to other people of similar age and income.

Compare the scores
Integrate the financial well-being scale into your program

The financial well-being score measures something important that other traditional measures may not capture: How clients feel about their financial situation.

By using the scale, you can:
- Measure, track, and compare the client financial well-being of people they serve
- Facilitate conversations about financial concerns, challenges, and goals that may influence or reflect financial well-being
- Evaluate and improve programs designed to enhance the financial well-being of people

Use the scale with people you serve

When you use the financial well-being scale, you get a holistic outcome metric that reflects success in consumers’ own terms and allows for variation in individual preferences and goals.

Measure client well-being and progress

Some practitioners track people’s scores and answers to each question over time to assess changes. Other practitioners compare scores for different groups of people. You can:
- Administer the scale at intake and at regular intervals throughout your sessions
- Save individual responses and scores so that you can review changes over time and compare with others
- Compare the scores of the people you serve to national data and benchmarks the Bureau created
Integrate the financial well-being scale into your program

Financial well-being: What it is and how to help

Research on financial well-being is ongoing. In the meantime, this study suggests ways that practitioners can continue to work with people to improve their well-being.

Read the report

Evaluate, compare, and improve programs

Practitioners often collect a range of data about the people they serve in order to understand their circumstances and progress. The financial well-being scale was designed to be a complement to, not a substitute for, other program metrics and outcome measures. It provides a measure that can be used as a common metric across very different types of financial capability programs and interventions.

Use financial well-being scores to:

- Report and share the scores of the people you serve with other programs and/or with funders (anonymously or de-identified)
- Discuss scores in peer networks to understand how the people you serve compare with those of other organizations providing similar services or working with similar populations
- Compare scores and responses of people being served by different programs within an organization (such as participants at different workshops)
- Compare scores to survey data. The scale is increasingly being used by researchers to assess financial well-being in large national surveys

See how other organizations use the scale

Program managers, funders, and individual financial educators use the financial well-being scale to serve their missions.

Read the case studies
Case studies

Case Study 1: How one financial coaching organization uses the scale to facilitate conversation

mpowered is a financial coaching and education organization with a staff of 18, including 11 certified financial coaches. Coaches have been using the scale since 2016.

Coaches at mpowered use the scale in one-on-one coaching sessions to facilitate conversations and measure client well-being and progress. The scale also allows mpowered’s data specialist and program director to evaluate and improve programs.

Case Study 2: How one financial coaching organization uses the scale to measure client well-being and progress

The Center for Changing Lives (CCL) is a non-profit organization that provides financial, employment, and resource development. It has 14 staff members, including two housing and financial coaches. CCL has been using the scale since 2015 and asks all coaching clients to complete the scale.

CCL uses the scale to facilitate conversations, measure client well-being and progress, and evaluate and improve programs.

Case Study 3: How one funder uses the scale to evaluate and improve programs

United Way California Capital Region (UWCCR) is a grant-making agency with 28 staff members working across several program areas. Financial coaching grants are one of six major activities under UWCCR’s financial stability program. UWCCR adopted the scale as a required tool for grantees to use and report on starting in 2017.

The scale allows financial coaching grantees to facilitate conversations and measure client well-being and progress. As a funder, UWCCR uses the scale to measure client well-being and progress, evaluate and improve programs, and compare programs in its portfolio.
Explore financial well-being scale findings

Analyzing financial well-being

There are multiple factors that affect a person’s financial well-being, some of which are within a person’s control and some of which are not. There is, however, increasing evidence that positive financial behaviors may improve people’s financial situations, which in turn may improve financial well-being. Evidence also suggests that strong financial skills and financial self efficacy— that is, confidence in your ability to achieve financial goals—can improve financial behavior.

Financial well-being in America

This report provides a first-of-its-kind view into the state of financial well-being in America.

Explore the findings

Financial skill scale

Measure how well a person has developed three key skills that apply to money decisions.

Access the scale

Pathways to financial well-being

The study points to a strong potential role for financial education in improving people’s financial well-being.

Download the study

Building blocks to help youth achieve financial capability

Understand the critical attributes, abilities, and opportunities that support the development of financial capability in young people.

Read the report

Financial Well-being of older Americans

The report describes the distribution of financial well-being scores for adults ages 62 and older.

See the scores
Upcoming Call for Financial Well-Being Research Papers

Sponsored by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB)

Researchers from a variety of disciplines and affiliations are encouraged to apply

The call for research papers seeks new and original work on Financial Well-Being research to be presented at the Bureau’s Financial Well-Being Research Symposium in the fall 2019.

- Ten researchers will receive up to $35,000 to support their proposed research, write a research paper and corresponding research brief summarizing the research, and present the findings at the CFPB’s Financial Well-Being Research Symposium. Research must utilize the Bureau’s Financial Well-Being Scale (either from the CFPB’s public use dataset or from other proprietary datasets).

- The goal of the symposium is to bring together academics, policymakers, researchers, and financial educators from across a wide range of fields and disciplines to explore the drivers of financial well-being, as well as the policy and programmatic interventions that can improve financial well-being.

1 https://www.consumerfinance.gov/data-research/research-reports/financial-well-being-scale/

Call for Papers Release Date: Mid-February 2019
Submission Due Date: Mid-March 2019
Symposium Date: Mid-November 2019, Washington DC at CFPB’s headquarters

For more information or to receive the Request for Papers when it is released, please contact Molly Brune at fwb_symposium@abtassoc.com.
Guest speaker

Anaïs González Castellano, AFC®
Bilingual Personal Finance Coach
mpowered
Lakewood, CO
Resources

CFPB financial well-being webpage:
consumerfinance.gov/practitioner-resources/financial-well-being-resources/

CFPB Resources for Financial Educators webpage:
consumerfinance.gov/adult-financial-education

To sign up for the CFPB Financial Education Exchange:
CFPB_FinEx@cfpb.gov

To sign up for the CFPB Financial Education Discussion Group:
linkedin.com/groups/CFPB-Financial-Education-Discussion-Group-5056623