

Quick Takeaways

APLUS Wave 4:

Adult Fiscal Competency: An Analysis of Financial Behavior During the Transition to Adulthood

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Primary Purpose: To examine emerging adult financial behavior as a decision-making process leading to adult thriving, which is defined as satisfying relationships, personal achievement, and fiscal competency.

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Key Findings

- There are few differences between sociodemographic groups in terms of achievements.
- While there were no differences in employment status, men were earning significantly more than women: Only 27 percent of women but 45 percent of men were earning over \$60,000 annually.
- In terms of financial capability and differences in knowledge, agency and behavior, men scored higher than women both in what they knew and their confidence in what they knew, and reported better financial behaviors in some areas.
- Participants from lower-socioeconomic status (SES) families felt less control over their finances, less confident about their finances and report less healthy financial coping behaviors despite having been on par with their peers in past data.
- Well-being was relatively stable and high among participants, with a striking increase in financial well-being consistent across sociodemographic groups.
- Well-being was significantly correlated with financial capability, particularly financial self-confidence. Employment status also is strongly correlated with well-being.
- Fewer young adults were receiving financial support from parents and family at Wave 4. Those who were, including those from higher-SES backgrounds, reported lower well-being compared to their peers.
- Finances were a bigger threat to goals for historically more vulnerable populations: non-white participants, those from lower-SES families and those whose parents hadn't attended college.
- Nearly one-third of participants had student loans to repay at Wave 4. Repaying loans was their highest financial priority.
- Ethnic minorities, those from lower-SES families and first-gen participants were more likely to be carrying student loan debt and were more negatively affected by it.
- While participants from lower-SES families noted financial strain as a key barrier, participants cited issues related to navigating repayment as more challenging than lack of finances.
- Participants with difficulty repaying student loans were less effective problem solvers in general.

- Financial resources are an important but not exclusive factor in successful repayment.