



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR
FINANCIAL EDUCATION

Partnering for Financial Well-Being

Quick Takeaways

The Effect of Financial Literacy and Financial Education on Downstream Financial Behavior

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Primary Purpose: To conduct a meta-analysis to understand why some studies show strong effects of financial literacy and others weak or no effects.

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Key Findings

- The amount and timing of financial education matters. When it comes to attempts at building financial literacy to shape behavior, education that closely precedes a financial decision has more impact.
- Educational interventions and financial literacy as measured to date are only weakly linked to behaviors. Moreover, in studies that measured financial education effects on both knowledge gains and behavior, effects of financial education delivered through interventions were much less than education in comparable domains, such as workplace education or career counseling.
- Findings from past investigations merit revisiting. Different types of studies have yielded such disparate results – more varied than science would predict – that we must question to what extent those differences stem from widely varying research designs and analyses.