Americans' Financial Resilience Edges Lower as Recession Concerns Rise, NerdWallet's August Financial Resilience Index Finds

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Nearly two-thirds of Americans expect a recession in the next year, while more households rely on credit to manage expenses this month despite growing cash cushions

SAN FRANCISCO--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Aug. 18, 2026-- NerdWallet Inc. (Nasdaq: NRDS), which provides trustworthy financial guidance to consumers and small and mid-sized businesses (SMBs), today published the August 2026 Financial Resilience Index, a monthly score that tracks how financially prepared Americans are to handle economic instability. The index edged down to 62.1 out of 100 this month, one point below July's all-time high of 63.1.

Last month's Index noted that July's gains might not hold if global conflict escalated – a caution that proved timely, since the survey closed just before the U.S.-Iran ceasefire unraveled. By August, conditions had grown more challenging: the conflict continued, inflation stayed high, the economy shed an estimated 23,000 jobs, and consumers kept spending despite affordability constraints.

"The one-point decline doesn't signal a major shift in Americans' financial footing, but there are signs of growing caution beneath the surface," said Elizabeth Renter, senior economist at NerdWallet. "Household finances remain relatively resilient, even as more Americans expect a recession and many plan to rely on credit this month. The contrast between how people are managing today and what they expect tomorrow is something we'll be watching closely."

Financial Resilience Index Three-Month Snapshot

Measure	August 2026	July 2026	June 2026
Financial Resilience Index Score	62.1	63.1	61.6
Feel in control of their day-to-day finances	75%	77%	76%
Confident in their ability to pay all of their bills on time this month	79%	79%	78%
Will rely on credit to manage at least some expenses	36%	33%	35%
Have enough cash on hand to cover an unexpected $1,000 expense this month	67%	65%	63%
Believe the U.S. economy will enter a recession in the next 12 months	64%	60%	62%

Younger Americans Report Lower Resilience and Greater Recession Concerns

Generation	August 2026 FRI Score	Expect a Recession	Confident Paying Bills on Time
Baby Boomers	72.5	58%	89%
Gen Xers	62.2	61%	78%
Millennials	56.8	67%	74%
Gen Zers	53.8	72%	74%

What We're Watching

There's a growing tension in household finances: The share of Americans who can cover an unexpected $1,000 expense has risen four percentage points, from 63% in June to 67% in August, even as many expect to rely on credit, suggesting households may be growing more protective of their cash as uncertainty grows. NerdWallet will track whether that pattern continues into September and whether the gap between Americans' current financial resilience and expectations for the economy widens.

Methodology

The Financial Resilience Index survey was conducted online by The Harris Poll on behalf of NerdWallet from August 4-6, 2026, among 2,086 U.S. adults ages 18 and older. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within +/- 2.7 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest. For complete survey methodology, including weighting variables and subgroup sample sizes, please contact press@nerdwallet.com.

All five questions across this survey are weighted equally to develop a composite score with a maximum value of 100.

About NerdWallet

NerdWallet (Nasdaq: NRDS) is on a mission to provide clarity for all of life's financial decisions. As a personal finance website and app, NerdWallet provides consumers with trustworthy and knowledgeable financial information so they can make smart money moves. From finding the best credit card to buying a house, NerdWallet is there to help consumers make financial decisions with confidence. Consumers have free access to our expert content and comparison shopping marketplaces, plus a data-driven app, which helps them stay on top of their finances and save time and money, giving them the freedom to do more. NerdWallet is available for consumers in the U.S. and Canada.

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