



Generation Z

Banking Habits

Survey Report

2025



Summary

The DCU 2025 Banking Habits Survey was conducted to understand the banking behaviors, preferences, and awareness of credit unions among U.S. teens and young adults. The survey, fielded online from February 28 to March 31, 2025, was aimed to gather insights into financial education, banking choices, and attitudes toward emerging technologies in banking of the Generation Z population.

The survey reveals a significant interest among young Americans in financial education and secure, technologically advanced banking services. While traditional banks remain popular, there is growing awareness and interest in credit unions, especially when their benefits are clearly communicated.

The report details how respondents manage their finances, with the practice of tracking spending and credit scores common across all groups. Significant gender and income disparities in contributions to retirement accounts and stock market investments are evident. The majority believe schools should be responsible for financial education, followed by banks and family/friends.



Banking Preferences and Features

Security remains the top priority for banking customers, followed by mobile banking capabilities and physical branch accessibility. Features such as 24-hour support, financial education, and waived ATM fees have less influence over bank choice.



Credit Union Knowledge and Membership Considerations

There is a large information gap related to credit union membership requirements. Uncertainty or perceptions about eligibility criteria affect respondents' likelihood to consider credit unions. Awareness of credit union benefits, such as better interest rates and financial protections, is higher among those more educated about personal finance.



AI and Technology in Banking

Respondents who support AI integration in banking emphasize benefits like improved customer support, personalized financial services, and operational efficiency. Conversely, opponents express distrust in AI systems, concerns about security, and a preference for human interaction, highlighting a division in consumer attitudes toward emerging banking technologies.

AI assistants are relied on for customer support, automated money counting, faster banking processes, and enhanced security measures. However, some respondents caution about the risks of AI, emphasizing the need for human oversight.

Methodology

The survey included 1,298 respondents aged 13 to 28 from across the United States, representing various U.S. regions, with the largest proportions from the South (38%) and West (24%). Key states include California (12%), Texas (9%), Florida (7%), New York (6%), and Illinois (4%). The sample consists of 51% women and 49% men, all being Generation Z (100%) and a range of education levels from less than high school (26%) to postgraduate degrees (4%). Household incomes vary, with 56% earning less than \$50K annually.

Key Findings

Financial Education

About 41% of respondents feel either extremely or very educated regarding personal finance topics such as budgeting, credit scores, 401K contributions, loans, and investing. When asked who should provide personal finance education, 61% indicated schools, 21% banks, and 17% family or friends.

Among employed respondents (58%), common ways to manage financial health include tracking and budgeting spending (63%), monitoring credit scores (56%), contributing to retirement accounts (31%), hiring financial advisors (20%), and investing in the stock market (22%). Notably, males and higher-income groups tend to contribute more to retirement accounts and invest more frequently than females and lower-income groups.

TABLE 1
How currently employed respondents contribute and manage their financial health

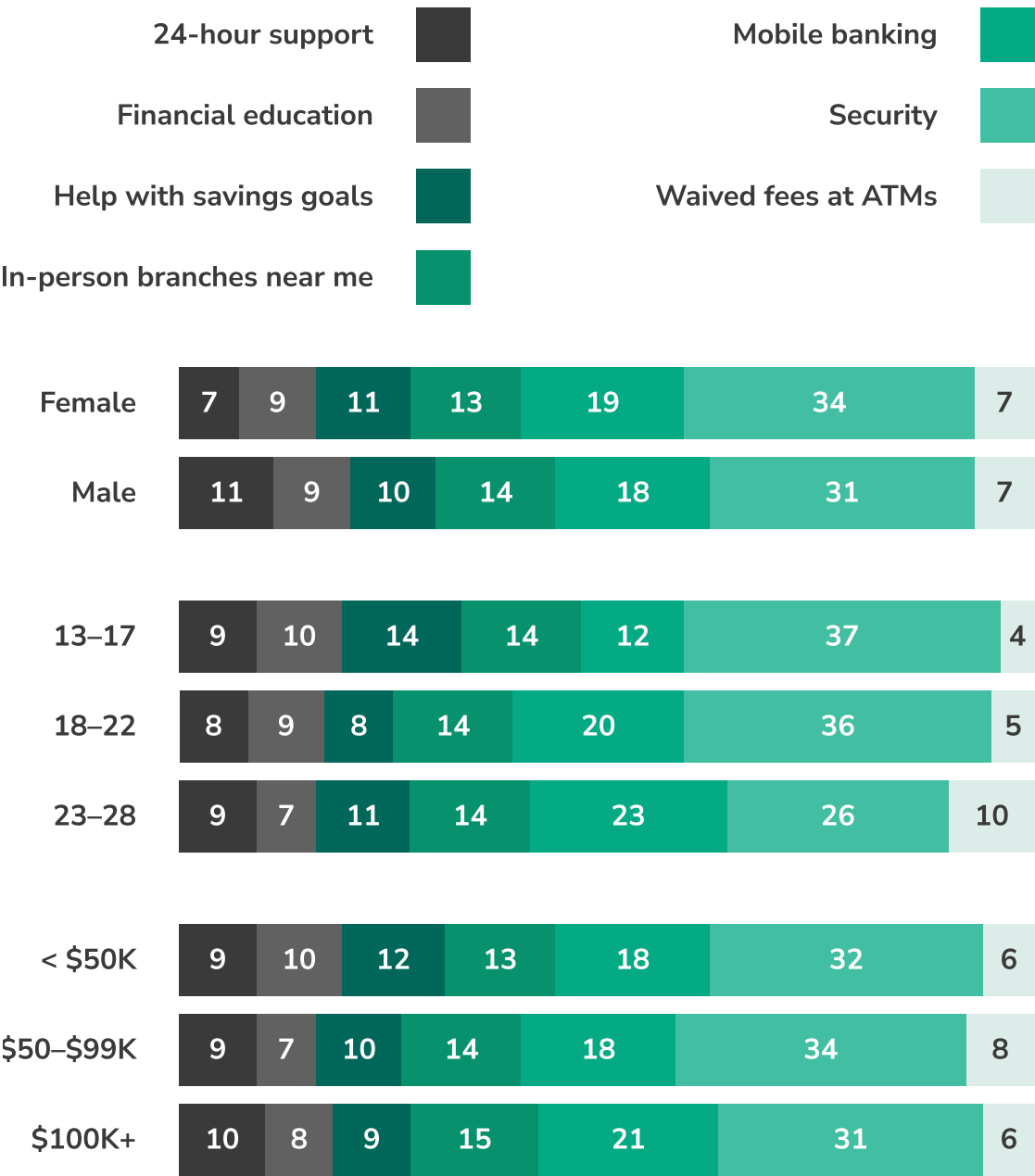
	Gender		Surveyed Ages			Household Income Summary		
%	Female	Male	13–17	18–22	23–28	<\$50K	\$50–\$99K	\$100K+
Contribute to an IRA, employer-sponsored 401(k), or other retirement account	↓ 31	↑ 45	↓ 24	↓ 34	↑ 46	↓ 31	↑ 46	↑ 51
Hire financial advisors or planners	20	20	20	19	21	↓ 17	24	24
Invest in the stock market	↓ 22	↑ 39	↓ 19	30	↑ 36	↓ 25	36	↑ 43
Track and budget spending (either manually, through your bank, or other third-party tool)	63	63	↓ 53	64	66	↓ 60	↑ 70	65
Track credit score	56	59	↓ 42	56	↑ 64	↓ 51	↑ 65	67
Other (please specify)	1	2	4	1	2	↑ 3	1	0
Not currently employed	4	3	↑ 9	3	↓ 1	↑ 4	0	3
Base	n=361	n=397	n=81	n=235	n=442	n=400	n=236	n=110

Banking Preferences

Most respondents bank with national banks (32%), followed by local/regional banks (24%), and local/regional or occupation-based credit unions (12%). When choosing or evaluating their bank, respondents ranked security as the most important feature, followed by mobile banking and proximity of in-person branches. Other features like 24-hour support, help with savings goals, financial education, and waived ATM fees were ranked lower in priority.

TABLE 2

Top ranked features when choosing a bank/at current bank



Credit Union Awareness and Interest

One-third (33%) of respondents are extremely or very likely to consider joining a credit union instead of a traditional bank. Awareness of credit unions varies: 38% knew credit unions typically offer better interest rates, 31% knew they provide the same financial protection as banks, and 28% were aware that members become part owners of the institution. However, 33% indicated they did not know any of these facts. After learning about these features, 59% reported being extremely or very likely to consider switching to a credit union.

TABLE 3A

What respondents knew about credit unions before taking the survey

Note: Respondents could select multiple options

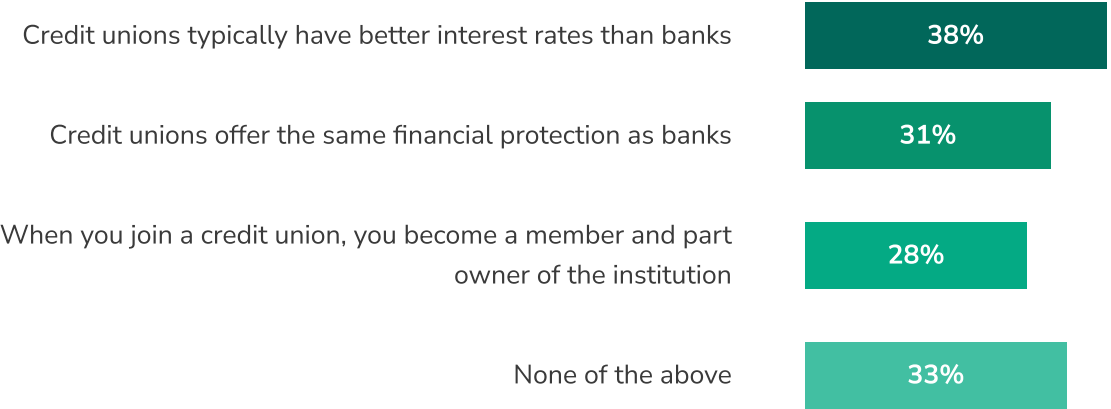
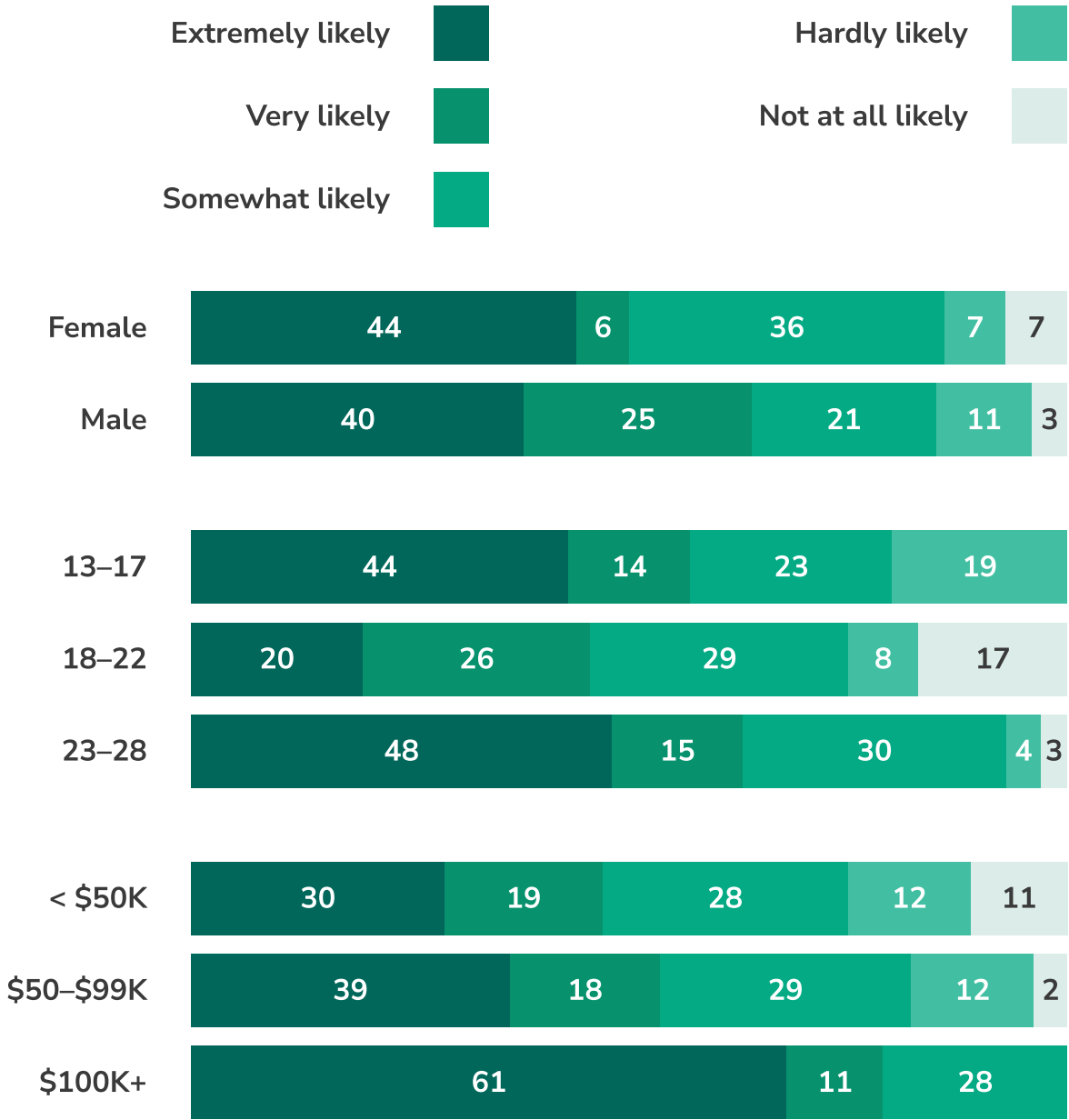


TABLE 3B

How likely respondents are to consider switching to a credit union after learning about the benefits

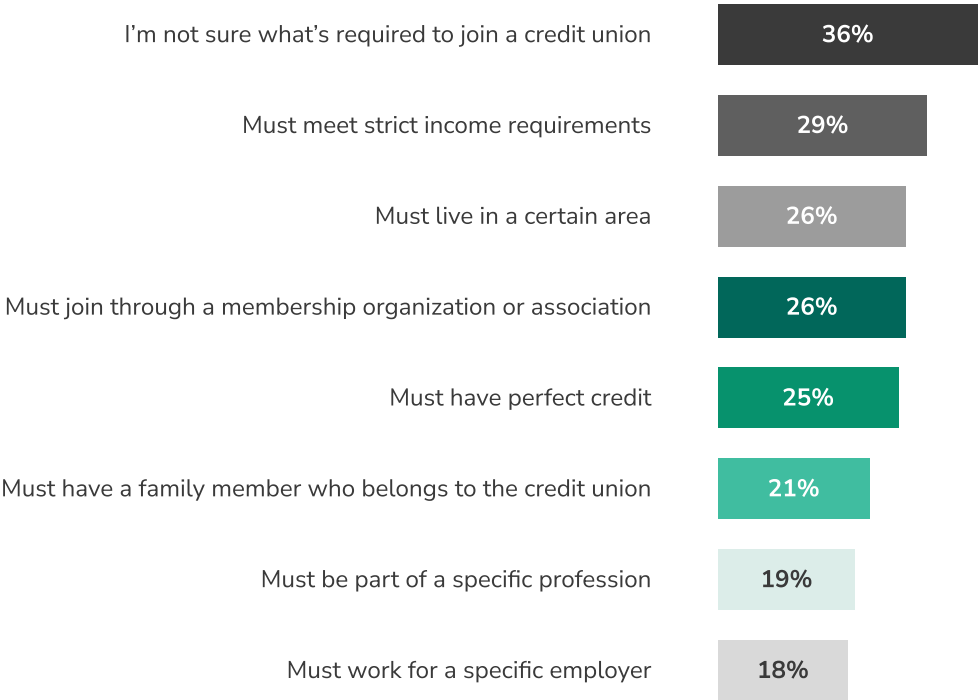


Respondents hold various beliefs about requirements to join credit unions, with some misconceptions. For example, many are unsure about the requirements, and some incorrectly believe strict income requirements, through associations, or specific professions are mandatory for eligibility. These beliefs vary by gender, age, education, and income levels.

TABLE 4

What respondents believe is required to join a credit union

Note: Respondents could select multiple options



Future Banking Preferences and Technology

Regarding technology use, 54% of respondents would like their financial institution to utilize technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) to improve online experiences, while 46% would not. Those in favor cited reasons including faster and better help, easier navigation, and more efficient services. Those opposed expressed concerns about trust in AI, preference for human interaction, and security risks. Examples of desired AI applications include AI-powered customer support chatbots, personalized financial advice, and automation of routine tasks.

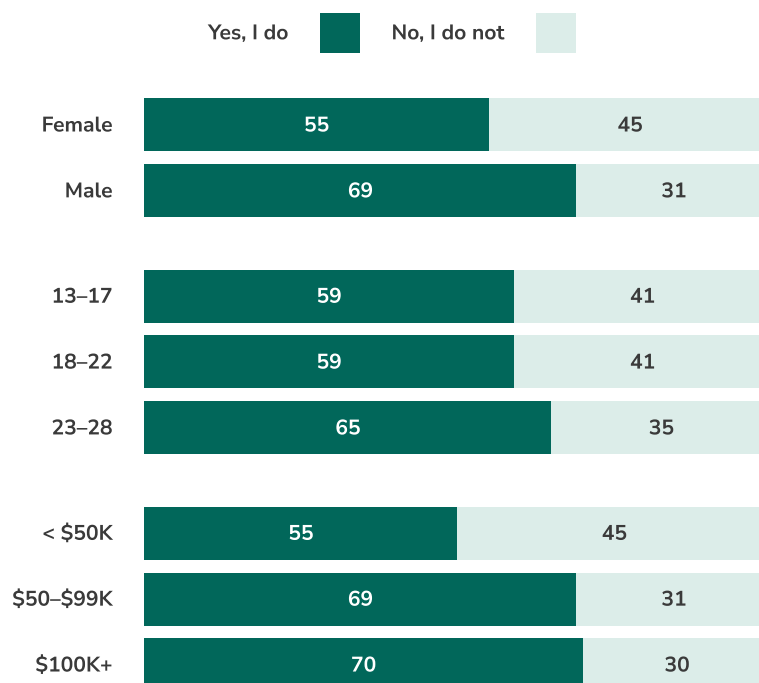
Outlook on the Economy and Personal Finances

The survey also explored respondents' outlook on the economy and personal finances for 2025. Positive feelings about the economy and personal finances correlate strongly with higher levels of financial education. Those who feel extremely or very educated about personal finance are more likely to feel positive about their financial situation and the economy overall,



TABLE 5

Respondents asked if they feel positively about their finances for 2025



Conclusion

The DCU 2025 Banking Habits Survey provides a comprehensive view of how Generation Z in the United States approaches personal finance, banking preferences, and emerging technologies. The findings reveal that young consumers are increasingly interested in financial education and secure, tech-driven banking solutions, yet face gaps in awareness—especially regarding credit union membership and benefits. Security, mobile banking, and branch accessibility are top priorities, while features like financial education and waived ATM fees are less influential in choosing a bank. The survey also highlights notable disparities across gender and income in financial behaviors such as retirement contributions and investing.

As technology continues to reshape banking, attitudes toward AI integration remain divided, with some respondents valuing enhanced support and efficiency, while others express concerns over security and the importance of human interaction. These insights offer valuable guidance for financial institutions and educators aiming to better serve Generation Z. By addressing knowledge gaps, promoting financial literacy, and integrating advanced technology with a focus on security, organizations can empower young adults to make informed financial decisions and meet their evolving needs.

Survey insights were collected by DCU through a Researchscape survey fielded between February 28 and March 31, 2025, among 1,298 teens and adults aged 13-28. This report was generated by ResearchStory, an analytical and narrative engine from Researchscape International. For questions about this or other research, please contact Researchscape at +1-888-983-1675 or visit their website, <http://www.researchscape.com/>