



Today's Money, Tomorrow's Wealth

Where investing ranks among
women's financial priorities—
and why moving it up matters

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Methodology

This study is based on an August 2026 online survey of 1,200 U.S. adults ages 25–45 with a target household income of \$75,000 or more. Respondents included both men and women and were asked about their current financial priorities, investment behaviors, attitudes, and barriers to investing. Information as of August 2026 and is subject to change.

Introduction

Our finance pictures are a window into our priorities, anxieties, realities, and dreams. More than just money management, finances reveal the life we live now and the life we aspire to next—and managing finances involves a delicate dance between the two. We’re tackling rent while saving for a down-payment; splurging on special occasions while investing in retirement funds; keeping cash on hand while exploring how we can make that cash go further in the future.

In this financial dance between now and next, women and men are taking different steps. Women’s financial pictures are anchored in current realities, with paying down debt, reducing living expenses, and building an emergency fund as their top three priorities. Men, on the other hand, are disproportionately focused on their financial horizon: investing tops men’s financial priority list yet doesn’t make women’s top 10. And while paying down debt is on men’s minds, women are nearly 2X more likely to name debt as a priority than are men (45% vs. 28%, respectively).

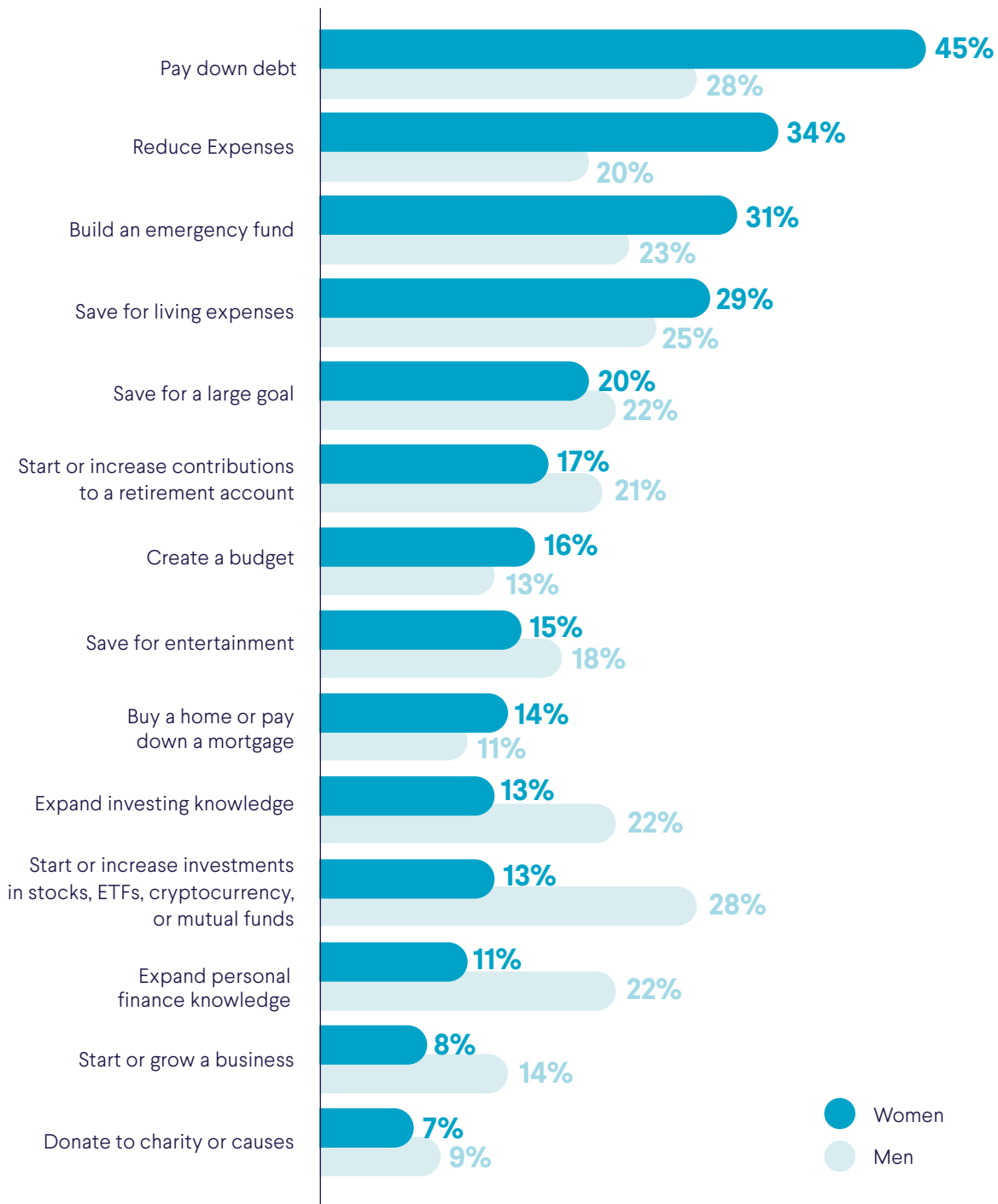
While both approaches have merit, the emphasis on near term needs and building a financial foundation may leave less room for long-term investing. In an economic climate where wage growth consistently trails behind inflation, a lack of focus on long-term investment may limit opportunities to build wealth over time. “Investing is a necessary step every woman can take to build a strong financial future,” says Liz Thomas, Chief Market Strategist at SoFi. “It doesn’t have to be complicated to be effective, and you don’t need to have it all figured out – nobody really does. A healthy financial plan includes the money you’re using today and the money you’re putting away for tomorrow. With some patience, a little bit can go a long way toward your goals over time.”

**Investing tops
men’s list of
financial priorities
yet ranks 11th on
women’s list.**



Financial Priorities: Women vs. Men

Q: In thinking about the coming year, which of the following represent your financial priorities? Please select up to 3.





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–Liz Thomas, Chief Market Strategist, SoFi



To understand why women are less likely to focus on investing, we first must understand their mindset around money and the reasons they hesitate to invest. Our study revealed that women's inclination to favor the financial present stems from their role as financial first responders and their confidence in

both the stock market and whether retirement is a reality for them at all. Furthermore, their varying financial needs and motivations require solutions that are diverse and adaptable to their unique circumstances—not a one-size-fits-all solution that treats women as a single monolith.

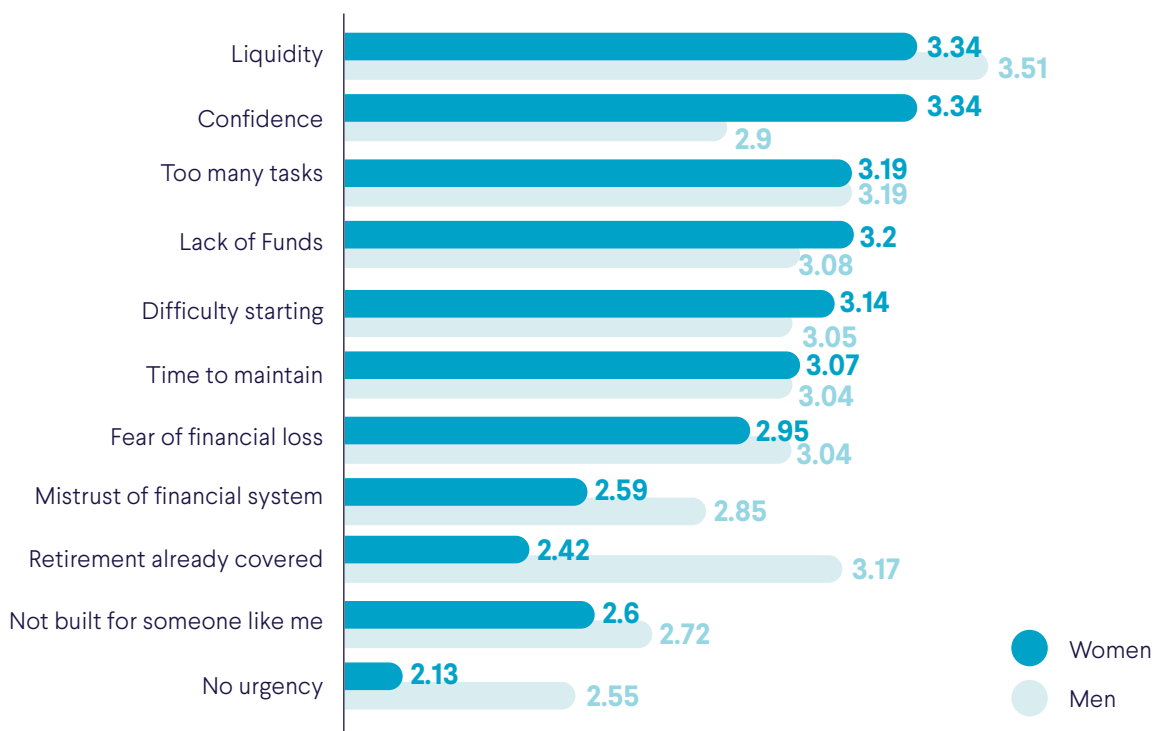
1 Financial First Responders

Women's hesitation to invest is often a pragmatic response to the economic realities they navigate daily. Women are many times the financial first responders of the household. Especially for women in mid-career, growing workplace responsibilities and household demands can leave less time and energy for investing.

U.S. time-use data reinforce this broader context. In 2025, women spent an average of 4.8 hours per day on leisure and sports activities, compared with 5.6 hours for men—a difference of 48 minutes per day. Women also spent more time on household activities: 2.8 hours on days they performed those activities, compared with 2.1 hours for men.¹

Biggest Barriers to Investing / Men vs. Women

Investment barriers rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “a low barrier” and 5 being “a high barrier”



1. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Time Use Survey, 2025 Results (2026). U.S. population estimates; household-activity figures reflect people who performed those activities.

This “boots on the ground” reality demands immediate problem-solving and, crucially, liquidity. Backing this up, women say their biggest barrier to investing is “keeping extra money easily accessible in case I need it” (tied with not understanding the stock market, which we explore in The Confidence Conundrum). Furthermore, having “too many tasks” ranks fourth on women’s lists of why they don’t invest, or invest more. When a woman’s primary financial directive is ensuring the family has cash on hand for emergencies, childcare logistics, and daily survival, allocating additional money to investments may feel counterintuitive.

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It’s worth noting that liquidity and being time-strapped aren’t gender-specific barriers to investing. Men also name liquidity as a top reason they don’t invest more, and having too many tasks is second on their list. However, while women and men face the same barriers to investing, they respond differently. Men are keeping cash on hand and navigating the daily grind while *also* investing in their future—their number one financial priority—whereas women, as previously pointed out, are more likely to use extra funds to pay down debt, securing their financial foundation. Further proving this point: When asked what they would do with extra money after paying for essentials such as rent, bills, and groceries, 6% of women said they would actively invest it, compared with 18% of men.



2 The Confidence Conundrum

Women's role as financial first responders isn't the full story as to why they invest less. Women admit they aren't entirely sure about the inner workings of the stock market—which makes them less confident about putting their money into it. Unlike men, who don't see their knowledge of the stock market as a major hurdle for investment (it comes in #8 on their list), women say it's a principal concern, ranking it right alongside liquidity as a top investment barrier.

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Furthermore, women are also statistically less likely than men to say they are confident in managing self-directed investing. On a scale of 1 to 5, their confidence in self-directed investing is 2.71 as compared to 3.71 among men. This isn't to say women aren't investing at all. In fact, women are relatively on par with men in having *some kind* of in-

vestment account (83% of women have one vs. 93% of men). However, they are far less likely to engage in self-directed investing, with only 40% of women saying they make self-directed investments vs. 63% of men.

Investment Confidence by Gender

Confidence scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "not confident" and 5 being "highly confident"

Day-to-day finances

3.52

3.91

Saving for retirement

3.05

3.73

Self-directed investing

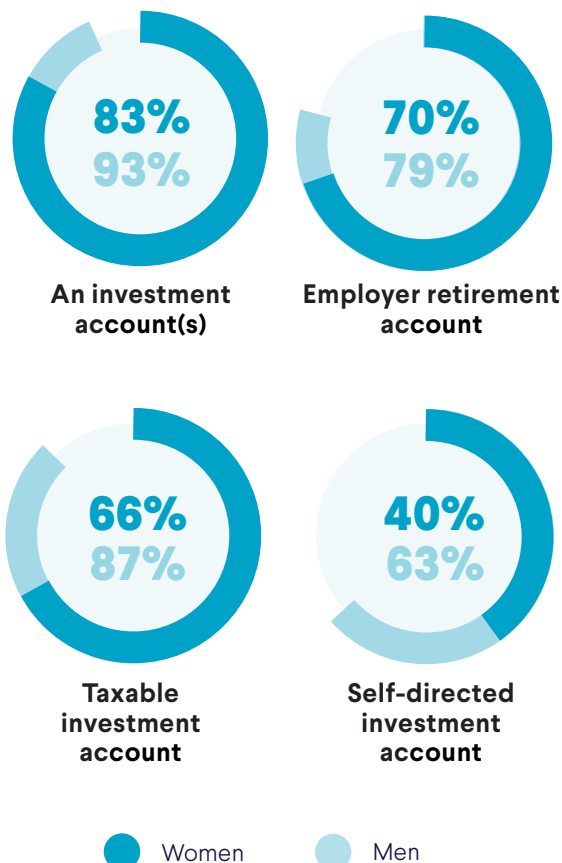
2.71

3.71

● Women's confidence
● Men's confidence

Investment Accounts by Gender

Percentage of women vs. men who report having each type of account



Interestingly, while 70% of women are investing in an employer retirement account, such as a 401K, women are also actively questioning whether they may have the finances to retire *at all*, which may play into their investment mindset. This mindset

could create a self-fulfilling prophecy, where skepticism about retirement worsens women's willingness to invest, therefore reducing their chances to accumulate the wealth needed to retire. Whereas more than half of men (56%) say they are "highly confident" in their ability to retire, only one-quarter of women (26%) feel the same. Instead, nearly half of women (44%) report low confidence in their ability to retire, 2X more than men who have low confidence (22%). In fact, the most significant divergence in investment barriers between men and women lies in their retirement optimism—not in their understanding of the stock market, or their confidence in managing retirement accounts. A top three reason men don't invest more is because they feel their current retirement strategy has them covered. For women, this barrier comes in second to last.

Women report being less confident in their ability to retire *at all*, which may play into their investment mindset. This mindset may contribute to women's reluctance to invest outside of employer-sponsored retirement accounts.

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In many ways, women's uncertainty in their retirement future is statistical realism. It's well-documented that women earn roughly 83 cents for every dollar men make, a wage gap that costs the average woman hundreds of thousands of dollars over the course of her career.² When factoring in longer average life expectancies, higher lifetime healthcare costs, and years spent out of the workforce for caregiving, women face a much steeper climb to retirement security.^{3 4 5 6}

2. Fry, R., & Aragão, C. (2025, March 4). *Gender pay gap in U.S. has narrowed slightly over 2 decades*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/03/04/gender-pay-gap-in-us-has-narrowed-slightly-over-2-decades/>

3. Bajtelsmit, V. L. (2024). The implications of gender differences in retirement plan investment patterns. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4976887>

4. Kallestrup-Lamb, M., & Marin, A. O. K. (2024). Lifetime healthcare expenditures across socioeconomic groups. *BMC Public Health*, 24. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-20209-1>

5. Fine, C. (2026, May 14). Women's retirement confidence lags men's. *Bizwomen*. <https://www.bizjournals.com/bizwomen/news/latest-news/2026/05/womens-retirement-confidence-lags-mens.html>

6. Employee Benefits Security Administration. (n.d.). *Women and retirement savings*. U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ebsa/about-ebsa/our-activities/resource-center/publications/women-and-retirement-savings>

3 Investment-Forward Leaders

It's important to acknowledge that not all women lack investment confidence—after all, women aren't a single monolith, so they shouldn't be treated as such when it comes to their finances. Nearly one-third of women (31%) consider themselves confident or highly confident in their stock market knowledge (a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale). This “investment-forward” psychographic is already actively leaning into future-focused investment plans and stands out in three ways.

First, they rate their ability to save for retirement and their ability to manage self-

directed investments markedly higher than women with lower confidence in the stock market. Second, they are far more likely to be the primary investors of their household. Finally, they are more likely than women with lower stock market confidence to have self-directed investments (56% vs. 29%, respectively) and advisor-managed investments (32% vs. 19%).

For this cohort, the challenge isn't getting them to start; it's providing them with the tools they need to support their investment activities.

Women's Self-Rated Investment Ability

Confidence scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “not confident” and 5 being “highly confident.”
Investment-forward women rate their confidence in the stock market as a 4 or 5;
Investment-conservative women rate their confidence in the stock market as a 1 or 2

3.42

2.84

Ability to manage saving for retirement

3.27

2.35

Ability to manage self-directed investing



Investment-forward women

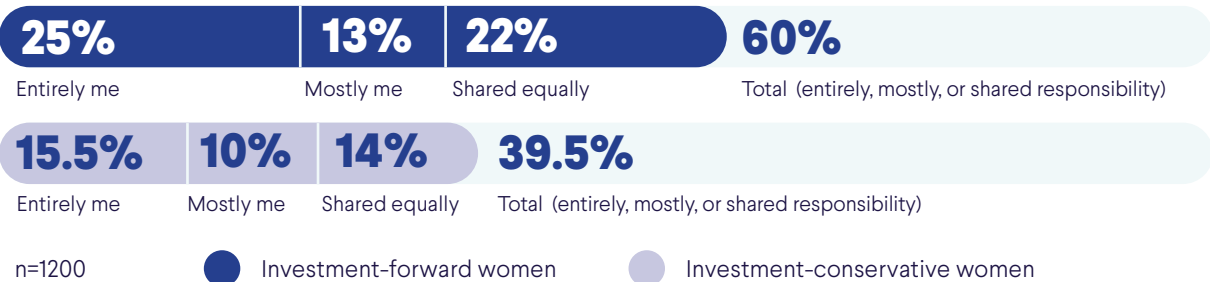


Investment-conservative women

Primary Investors of Household

Q: Who is primarily responsible for managing investment accounts shared by you and your partner?

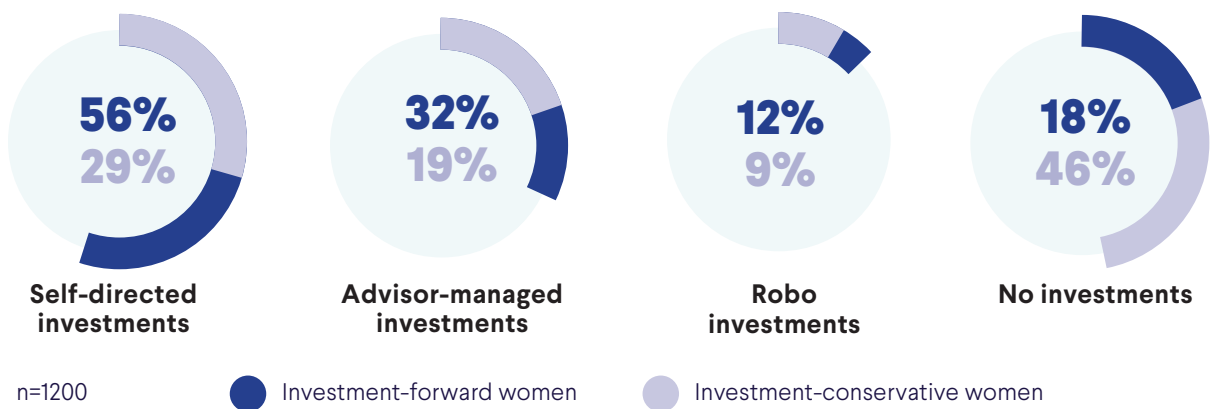
Investment-forward women rate their confidence in the stock market as a 4 or 5;
Investment-conservative women rate their confidence in the stock market as a 1 or 2



Women's Current Investments

(excluding employment-sponsored retirement plans)

Investment-forward women rate their confidence in the stock market as a 4 or 5;
Investment-conservative women rate their confidence in the stock market as a 1 or 2



81%

of investment-forward women have investments outside of an employer retirement plan. Among investment-conservative women, this percentage drops to just over half (54%).

4 Breaking Down the Female Monolith

Beyond investment-forward leaders, women represent a wide range of financial psychographics with diverse priorities and anxieties. However, they are too often treated as a single demographic with identical financial needs and fears. To truly close the wealth gap and encourage women to invest, financial organizations need to meet women where they are in their lives to get their money right. Simply put, women need a financial environment that makes investing feel like something they can seamlessly fit in with the rest of the life they are already managing—not take them away from it.

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Breaking down the female monolith also requires recognizing that, when women do enter the market, their approach to investments showed distinctive impacts. Research has found that women investors have achieved higher investment returns than men in certain contexts. The data suggests that women prefer thorough research, broad asset allocation, and a more disciplined approach to portfolio management than men.^{7 8}

Of course, the critical opportunity for the financial industry today is to activate the majority of women who are not investment-forward leaders and who are still heavily committed to their current financial realities rather than their financial futures. This is where SoFi is changing the paradigm. By recognizing that women represent multiple financial psychographics, SoFi's ecosystem is uniquely positioned to cater to both the investment-forward woman and the more reluctant, pragmatic investor.

7. Barber, B. M., & Odean, T. (2001). Boys will be boys: Gender, overconfidence, and common stock investment. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 116(1), 261–292. <https://doi.org/10.1162/003355301556400>; Fidelity Investments. (2021). 2021 *Women and Investing Study*. Fidelity Investments; Stewart, N. (2018). *Are Women Better Investors Than Men?* Warwick Business School.

8. Past performance is no guarantee of future results.

SoFi's Multifaceted Financial Solutions

For Financial First Responders:

Women shouldn't have to choose between keeping money accessible and building for the future. For those balancing demanding careers, caregiving, and limited time, automated investing tools like SoFi's robo advisor offered by SoFi Wealth LLC provides a hands-off way to invest toward their goals while reducing the manual lift of active trading. SoFi Coach, a free, AI-powered financial guide built into the SoFi app, provides members with personalized money guidance 24/7. Meanwhile, SoFi Bank, N.A. offers High-Yield Savings and features like savings Vaults that can help women organize money for immediate needs—such as an emergency fund or childcare expenses—while earning interest on their savings.

For Women Navigating the Confidence Conundrum:

For investment newcomers who feel less confident navigating investing on their own, SoFi Financial Planners from SoFi Wealth LLC can help members clarify their financial picture, develop a personalized strategy, and map out long-term goals. SoFi Plus members can unlock unlimited access to financial planning sessions. SoFi Exchange-Traded Funds (ETFs) provide exposure to several stocks, bonds, commodities, and more, all at once with one purchase. Fractional shares can also lower the barrier to entry, allowing women to invest in select stocks with as little as \$5.

For Investment-Forward Leaders:

For women who are already actively investing and looking to deepen their participation, SoFi Securities provides a range of self-directed investing options, including individual stocks, ETFs, IPOs, options, and alternative investments. These tools give investors greater flexibility and choice, with access to sophisticated strategies as they pursue their long-term wealth building goals.



Conclusion

Women's financial priorities are anchored in the realities they manage every day, and that focus on building a strong foundation has real value. But as Liz Thomas notes, a healthy financial plan includes both the money you're using today and the money you're putting away for tomorrow. Right now, that balance tips heavily toward today: investing ranks 11th on women's list of financial priorities, while it tops men's. Women feel less confident in how to invest, particularly in self-directed investing, and far fewer women than men feel highly confident they'll be able to retire (26% vs. 56%). This can cause them to hesitate on investing outside of employer retirement accounts—or investing at all.

While investment-forward women are already deepening their participation in the market, the opportunity lies in meeting the

needs of all women, including the many who feel less confident investing on their own. Some are wary of tying up money they may need; others are simply unsure where to start. And investment-savvy women are looking for financial services that keep pace with them. What they all need are ways to invest that fit alongside the life they're already managing, with products and services that meet them where they are.

SoFi recognizes women aren't a monolith and doesn't take a one-size-fits-all approach to investing. Through a range of products and services, SoFi provides the guidance and tools to help women get their money right and bank on their futures—no matter what they are navigating in the now.

About SoFi

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