

HOPE INSIDER

An initiative of  OPERATION HOPE

Bringing you our research, analysis, and insights into the world of financial inclusion

Third-Quarter Survey Results: Clients Look to Financial Basics to Overcome Uncertain Times

In the third quarter of **The HOPE Insider**, Operation HOPE's nationwide survey, over 1,200 clients shared their sentiments on current and future economic conditions, as well as their personal financial situations. The results show a significant increase in respondents who consider themselves as living paycheck to paycheck as well as those struggling to cover the cost of everyday goods like groceries. These uncertain times have led clients to lean into the financial tactics they've learned to keep a sense of hope and empowerment.

Here are five key findings:

1. More respondents than ever before say they are worse off financially

Forty four percent of clients say they are doing worse now than they were a year ago. This is a nine-percent increase from the beginning of this year and also from this time last year. This quarter also saw the highest number of clients living paycheck to paycheck, at 79%, which is a five-percent increase from the beginning of this year and also from this time last year.

2. Hopefulness demonstrates impact of participating in a financial literacy program

Despite the bleak landscape, it's important to note that nearly three-fourths of respondents say they are somewhat or very hopeful their financial wellbeing will increase over the next year (74%). Although this is a six-point drop from last quarter, it is still a very significant amount. To give context, a recent survey by Discover Personal Loans of 1,500 adults across the country showed that only 38% said they believe their financial situation will get better in the year ahead.

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It's not guaranteed, but I'm hopeful that the steps I'm taking now will start to pay off within the next year. With even basic necessities contributing to rising expenses, it's difficult to make any predictions for at least the next six months.

The fact that the majority of respondents remain hopeful amid such uncertain times speaks to the influence of being in a program that helps them navigate this path. There is a sense of empowerment that we have consistently heard from our clients since inception of this survey, which is additionally demonstrated in our [Q3 National Impact Report](#), showcasing a variety of ways our clients shift their money mindsets to impact their financial habits.

3. Stress over affording groceries has increased, leading some to “Buy Now, Pay Later” services

Two-thirds (67%) of participants say food and groceries have become more difficult to afford in the past three months. This is a notable eight-point increase from last quarter. Housing (55%), transportation (45%), and medical care (34%) remain more difficult to afford at consistent percentages with last quarter.

Additionally, the “cost of everyday goods” is the factor that respondents say most impacted their lives over the past three months, at 38%.

Feeling the stretch in their wallets, two in five respondents say they have used a “Buy Now, Pay Later” (BNPL) service, such as Afterpay, Affirm or Klarna, for purchases in the past three months (42%) and nearly half (46%) say they will consider it in the next three months for items like groceries. Although these services provide a short-term, debt-free option for those who are budgeting attentively, almost half of our clients worry that their credit score will be negatively impacted down the road (47%).

Currently, our clients are using these services less than the national average, but track in alignment with future intentions, according to a recent survey by LendingTree of 2,000 U.S. consumers. They report 49% have used a BNPL service and 47% plan to use one in the next six months.



I am most optimistic about my ability to keep hope alive because of my willpower to stay out of debts, pay my bills on time and adjust accordingly to deal with the cost of living during this uncertain time we are going through.

4. The future of affordable housing seems uncertain

Nearly a quarter (24%) say the cost of housing as a renter or homeowner is the factor they are most worried about in the next three months, with 86% say they are somewhat or very concerned about the cost of housing in their community. Over a third (36%) say they considered purchasing a home in the last 12 months but found it unaffordable.

This has led to a decrease in hope for affordable housing prices over the next year, with only 38% saying they are somewhat or very hopeful—a six-point drop from last quarter.

5. With cost of living up, job satisfaction drops

Those who say they are somewhat or very satisfied with their current employment has decreased over the last half of year: 53% in Q1 vs 45% in Q3. This could be attributed to the fact that 80% say their income is not keeping up with the rising cost of living. In fact, 57% say their personal debt levels increased over the last three months—this is a nine-percent increase from the first quarter of this year.



I'm not ignoring the pressure, but I'm also not letting it define me. I'm optimistic because I'm approaching it with a plan, not panic. Every system I build is part of the bigger picture—that picture is starting to look like freedom.

Clients will need to remain hopeful that their work/career will improve over the next year (78% say they are), since their certainty in the economy is depleting: 79% say they are not confident the U.S. economy will remain stable in the next 12 months, a seven-percent decrease in confidence from last quarter.

Operation HOPE clients feel the burden of the economy similar to the rest of the nation, but one difference remains true: the individual coaching and financial wellbeing tools are making a difference in how they navigate the uncertainty and plan for their future.