



The Role of Budgeting Apps **in Personal Finance**



ACADEMYBANK

About Academy Bank

At Academy Bank, we realize that financial wellness is your gateway to great moments. We're the simple banking solution that provides easy access to funds and know-how.

Academy Bank's corporate headquarters are located in Kansas City, Missouri and retail banking locations are found in Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, and Arkansas. We provide a wide range of financial solutions to businesses and individuals, including commercial and small business lending, treasury management, and mortgage services.

We feature the latest banking technologies, including Smart ATM and Interactive Teller Machine video banking, because we are always searching for ways to provide a better banking experience for clients. With a branch network of more than 70 banking centers and counting, we grow our deposits organically, one person, one household, and one business at a time.

To further empower our customers, we offer **My Finance360**, an innovative financial management tool that provides a new perspective on money management. With real-time insights, smart budgeting, and automated savings, My Finance360 helps you take control of your finances with ease — all seamlessly integrated into your banking experience.

Introduction

Effective money management is a cornerstone of financial stability, yet many people struggle with budgeting, tracking expenses, and setting financial goals. With the rise of digital solutions, budgeting apps have become an increasingly popular tool for managing personal finances. However, while these apps offer convenience and financial insights, their effectiveness varies based on user adoption, habits, and financial literacy.

This whitepaper explores how individuals approach budgeting, the role of budgeting apps in financial management, and the challenges users face when managing their money.

Methodology

The survey was fielded online in February 2025 with more than 300 active participants. The age breakdowns of our respondents were as follows: 16.8% were 18-29 years old, 35.2% were 30-44 years old, 30.8% were 45-59 years old, and 17.2% were 60+ years old.



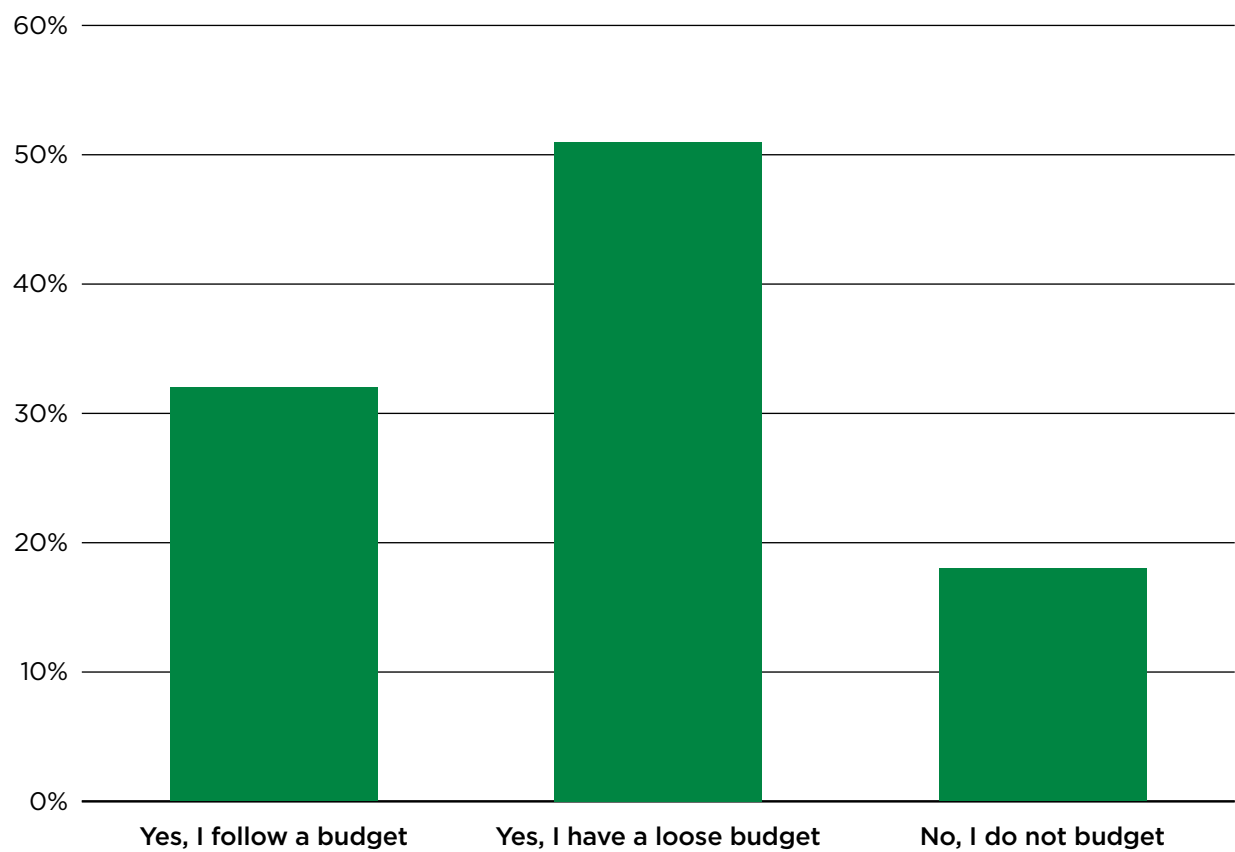
Financial Confidence and Budgeting Habits

Understanding how individuals perceive their financial management skills is crucial in evaluating the role of budgeting apps. Our survey found that:

- 42.4% of respondents feel **very confident** in managing their personal finances.
- Another 46.3% feel **somewhat confident**, meaning that nearly 89% of respondents felt some form of confidence in managing their personal finances.
- Just over 10% of respondents felt **not very confident** (9.6%) or **not very confident at all** (1.7%).

Along with a high percentage of respondents who felt confident managing their finances, a majority (83.1%) also reported following a budget to some extent. These results are consistent with [existing research](#) supporting the relationship between budgeting and positive financial practices.

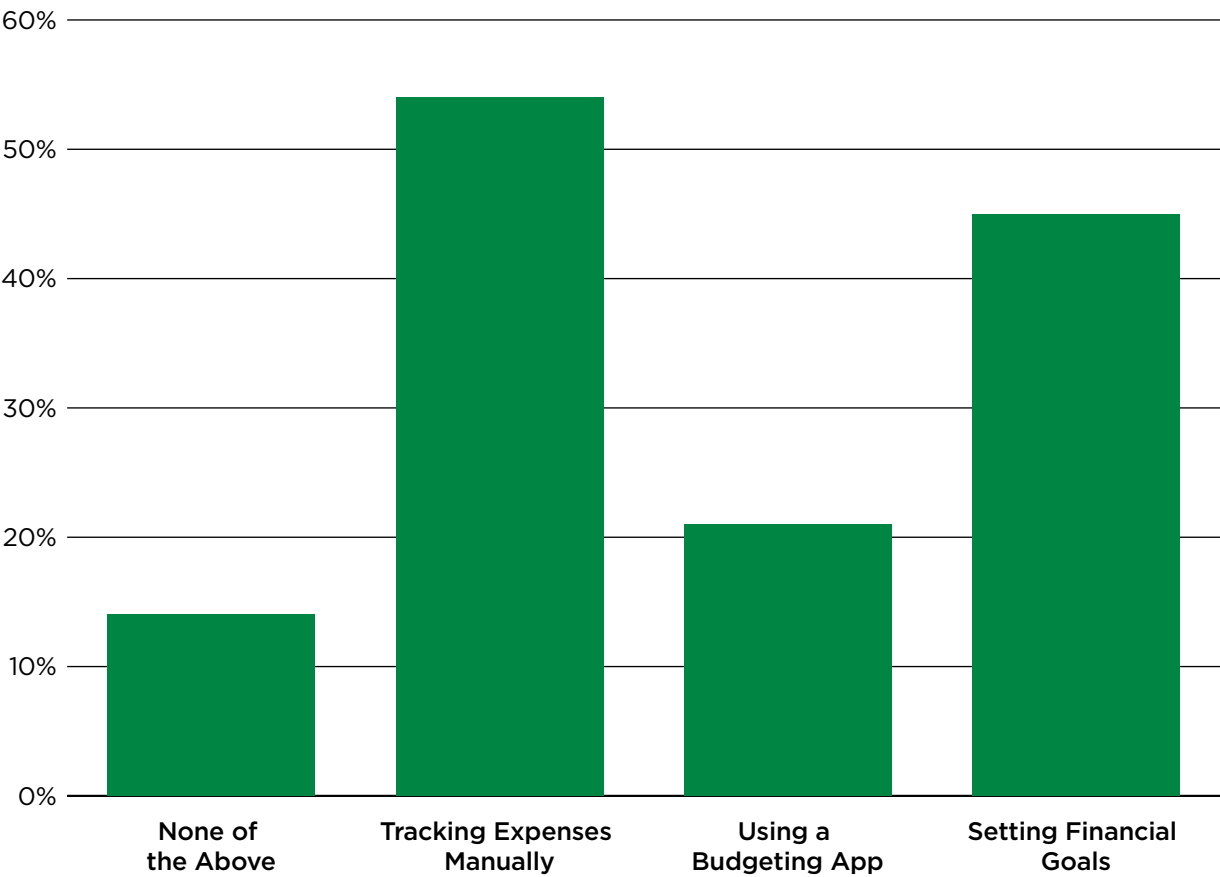
Do You Currently Follow a Budget?



Budgeting Strategies and Tools

Our survey moved forward with the respondents who reported following a budget of any kind — whether a loose budget or a strict budget — to learn more about their preferred budgeting strategies and tools. Tracking expenses manually (53.8%) and setting financial goals (45%) were the most popular budgeting strategies, followed by using a budgeting app (20.9%).

What Budgeting Strategies Do You Use? (Select all that apply)



These results reflect the percentage of respondents who selected each option, as they were invited to select all that applied to their situation, leading to a cumulative total exceeding 100%.

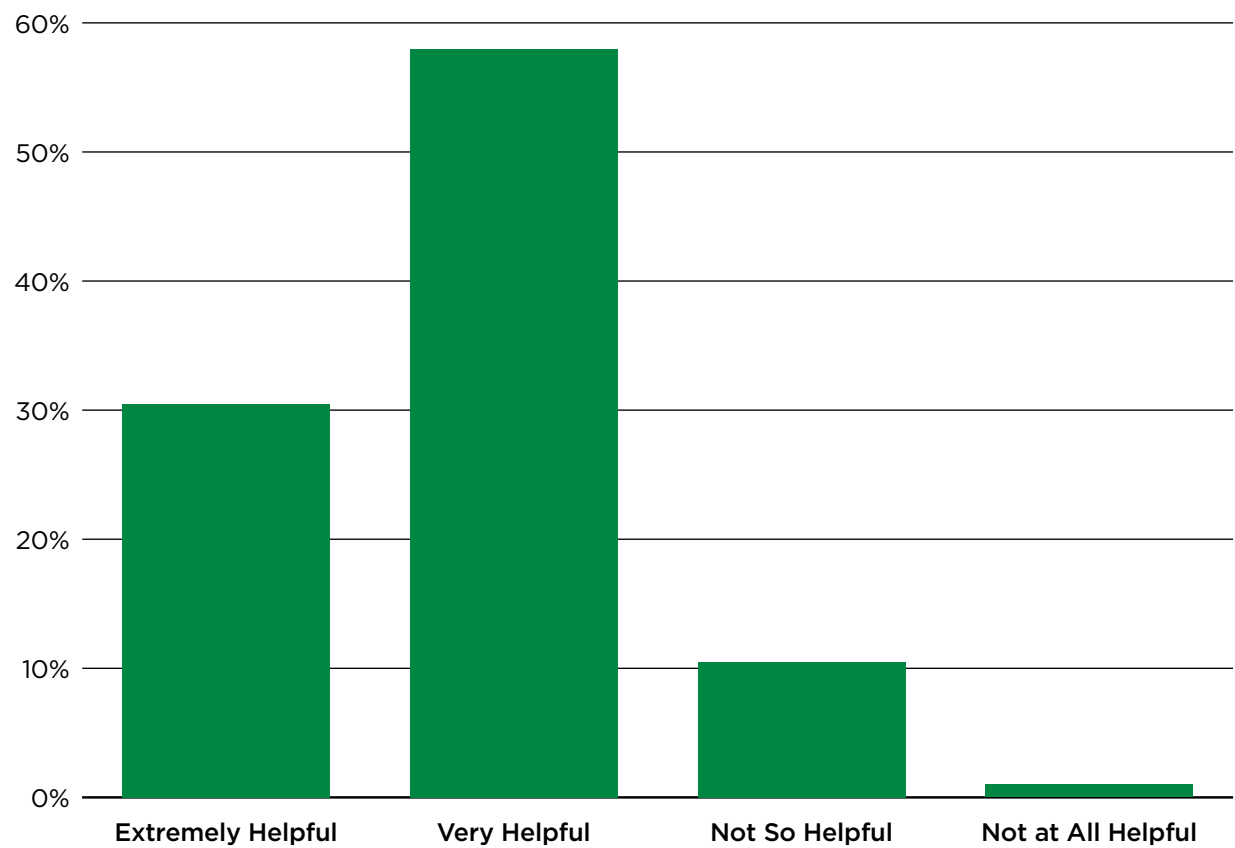
Adoption of Budgeting Apps

Our survey found that 45.3% of respondents use some form of digital tool or app to manage their finances, while 54.7% perform their budgeting offline. However, based on the number who reported using a budgeting app in the prior question, we can infer that 24.4% are using a non-app online tool while the other 20.9% are specifically using budgeting apps.

Among those who use budgeting apps, 47.7% rely on apps provided by their bank, while 29.4% use third-party apps like YouNeedABudget (YNAB) or RocketMoney. Another 22.9% use both apps provided by their bank and third-party apps.

When it comes to utility, budgeting apps are widely regarded as effective, with more than 88% of users finding them **very helpful** or **extremely helpful**. This suggests that for those who do adopt budgeting technology, the benefits are significant.

How Helpful Do You Find the Apps or Tools You Currently Use?

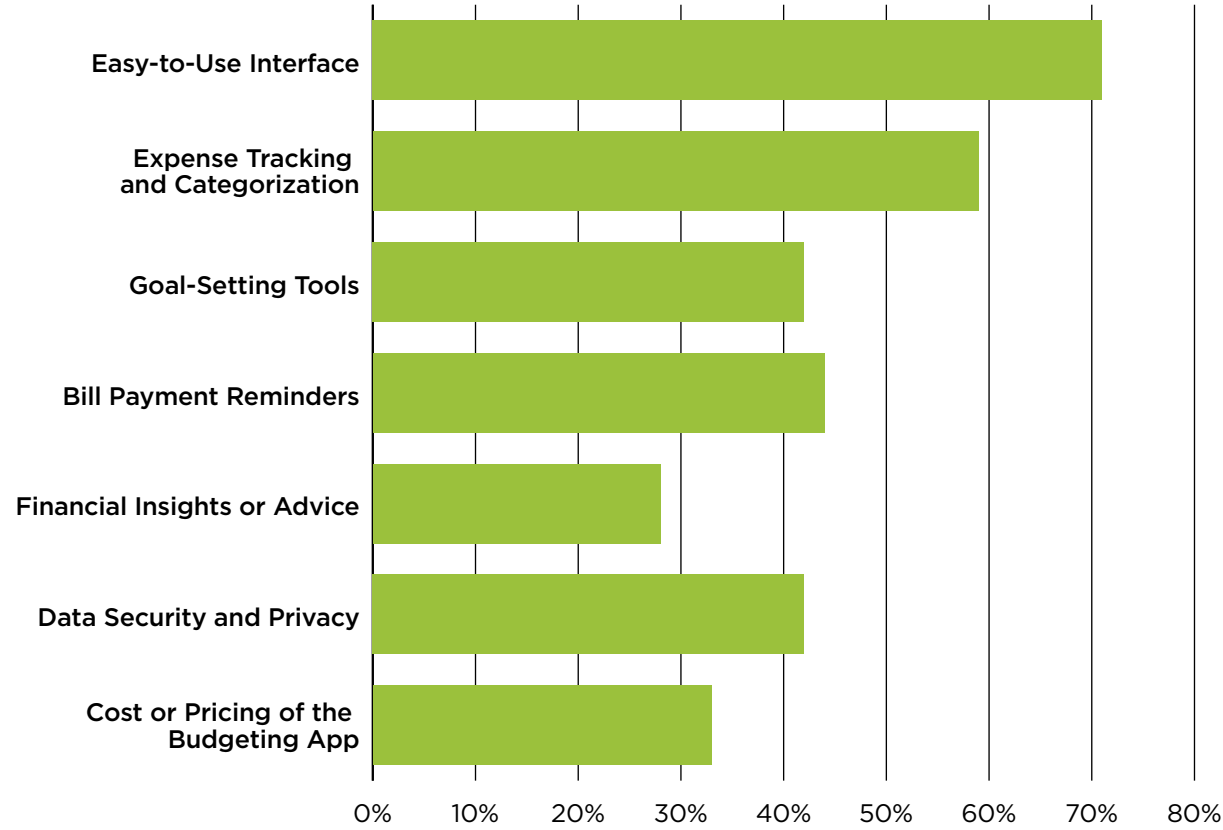


Important Budgeting App Features

For those who use budgeting apps, nearly 80% of respondents reported using them at least weekly (50%) if not daily (29.9%). Another 13.6% use their budgeting apps monthly, and only 6.5% use the apps less than once a month. These results indicate that budgeting apps play a key role in financial management, with most users engaging with them frequently for day-to-day expense tracking and planning.

As budgeting apps have become a regular part of financial management for people, certain features stand out as particularly valuable. Here are the features that our respondents reported as most important when using budgeting apps:

When Using Budgeting Apps, What Is Important to You? (Select all that apply)



These results reflect the percentage of respondents who selected each option, as they were invited to select all that applied to their situation, leading to a cumulative total exceeding 100%.

Besides an easy-to-use interface, which was ranked most important, the expense tracking and categorization feature was predictably important as well, given our previous results indicating that more than 50% of budgeters use expense tracking as a major strategy.

Budgeting Challenges and Financial Goals

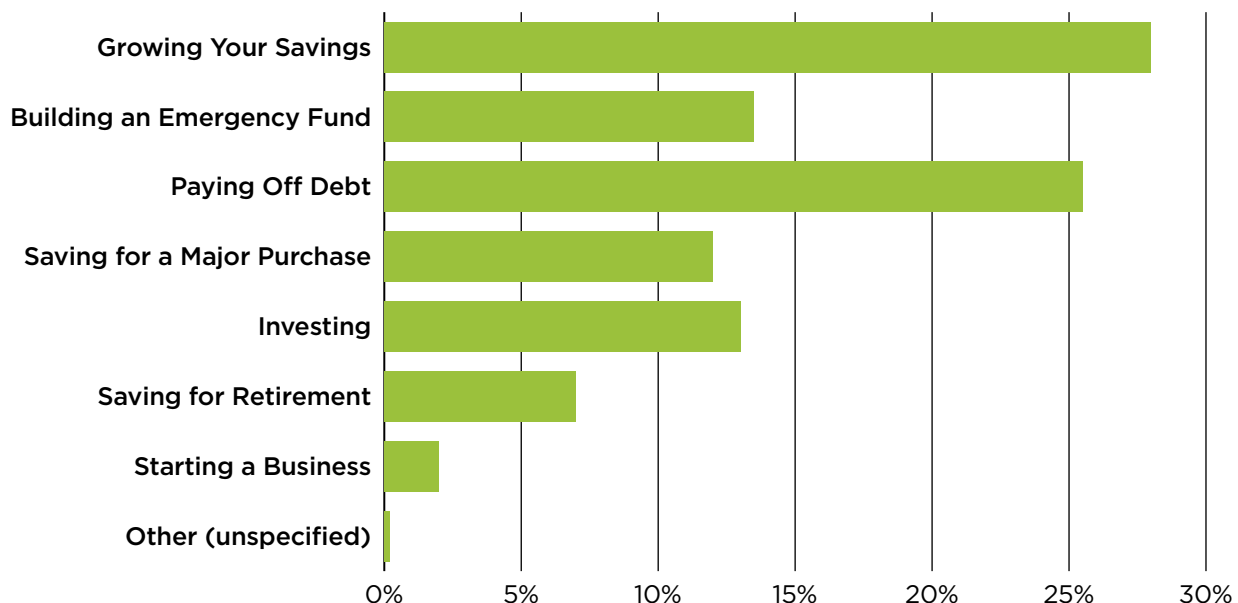
Despite the availability and widespread adoption of budgeting tools, some of our survey respondents reported that they continue to struggle with managing their finances. When invited to select all budgeting challenges that applied to them, more than half (55.9%) cited **overspending** as a major challenge — highlighting how self-discipline and mindful spending remain significant hurdles in financial management, even with helpful digital tools.

This suggests that while budgeting apps can track expenses, they may not always curb impulsive purchases or help users stick to their financial plans.

While overspending was the most common challenge, other reported budgeting challenges included irregular income (30%), lack of financial knowledge (27.6%), difficulty tracking expenses (23.7%), or something else (5.3%).

For budgeting apps to be truly effective, they must not only help users track spending, but also provide solutions tailored to overcoming financial obstacles while working toward their financial goals. When asked to select their primary financial goal for the next year, here's what our survey respondents shared:

What Is Your Primary Financial Goal for the Next Year?



Without effective strategies to manage spending and navigate income fluctuations, achieving financial goals like saving, investing, or debt repayment becomes significantly harder. By addressing these obstacles, budgeting apps have the potential to go beyond simple expense tracking and become essential tools for financial growth.

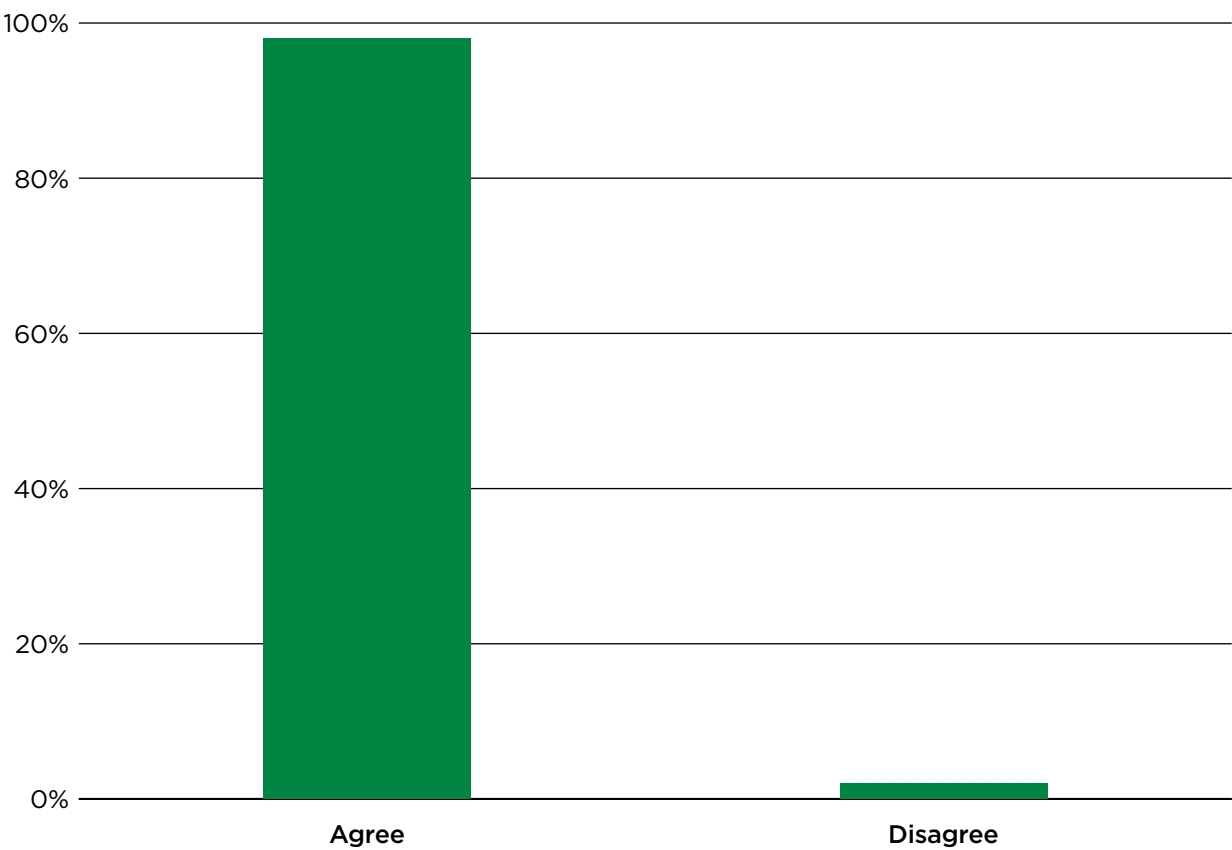
The Impact of Budgeting on Financial Success

Finally, we had one last question for our respondents.

Would you agree or disagree with this statement? “Budgeting helps me work toward achieving my financial goals.”

With an overwhelming majority of votes, 98% of our respondents agreed that budgeting helps them work toward their financial goals. Only 2% disagreed with the statement.

Would You Agree or Disagree With This Statement?
“Budgeting helps me work toward achieving my financial goals.”



Conclusion

Our findings indicate that, while budgeting apps have become an essential tool for many people, financial management is still a complex challenge. Most of our survey respondents expressed confidence in their ability to manage their finances, and most follow some form of a budget.

But challenges like overspending, irregular income, and lack of financial knowledge persist — suggesting that budgeting apps alone are not a cure-all for financial struggles.

The data also reinforces the strong connection between budgeting and financial success. With 98% of respondents agreeing that budgeting helps them achieve their financial goals, it's clear that structured money management plays a critical role in long-term financial well-being.

Budgeting apps, when designed with the right features — such as intuitive interfaces, expense tracking, and goal-setting tools — can support users in staying on track. However, for these tools to be truly transformative, they should also look to address budgeters' biggest challenges and support them in developing lasting financial habits.

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These findings reinforce that while consumers recognize the importance of budgeting, many still lack the right tools to manage their finances effectively. Banks and fintech providers that prioritize intuitive, feature-rich budgeting solutions stand to capture a growing market demand, and that is driving our development of this type of digital experience.

– **Jodi Vickery**
Chief Digital Officer

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While budgeting apps can be valuable, true financial success requires a combination of the right tools, knowledge, and support. By providing resources that promote financial literacy and encourage smarter money management, Academy Bank aims to empower people to build a strong foundation while achieving their financial goals.

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