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U.S. Emergency Savings by Income

ComplexSearch Research | November 2026 edition | U.S. data for 2025

Only **21% of adults with family income under $25,000** said they had set aside three months of expenses in 2025, compared with **75% of adults at $100,000 or more**. That is a 54-percentage-point gap in the Federal Reserve's Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking, Table 27[1].

How long might someone need to build a smaller cushion? ComplexSearch modeled one month of four selected spending categories using the BLS Consumer Expenditure Surveys, 2025, Table 1101[2]. For the middle pretax income fifth, the modeled target was **$3,688**. At $200 saved per month from zero, it would take **19 monthly deposits**. That does not estimate how long adults in the survey actually took, or how many can afford to set aside $200.

Which adults have three months of savings?

Family income	Share of adults reporting three months of emergency savings
Under $25,000	21%
$25,000 to $49,999	39%
$50,000 to $99,999	55%
$100,000 or more	75%
All adults	55%

The question asked whether adults had money set aside in an emergency or rainy-day fund to cover three months of expenses if they lost their main source of income. Nationally, another 15% said they could cover the period through other means, such as borrowing, selling assets, or using other savings. The remaining 30% said they could not cover three months even through those alternatives (Federal Reserve, Savings and Investments[1]).

In the same survey, 63% said they would cover a hypothetical $400 expense using cash, savings, or a credit card paid in full at the next statement. That is not a measure of how many had $400 in savings, and the percentages for the $400 and three-month questions should not be subtracted to estimate how many adults fall between those two thresholds (Federal Reserve, Savings and Investments[1]).

1. https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/2026-economic-well-being-of-us-households-in-2025-savings-investments.htm
2. https://www.bls.gov/cex/tables/calendar-year/mean-item-share-average-standard-error/cu-income-quintiles-before-taxes-2025.xlsx

Three-month coverage was 47% in 2015, reached 59% in 2021, and was 55% in both 2024 and 2025. These annual percentages describe different survey samples, not changes for the same people who responded in 2015 (Federal Reserve emergency savings series[3]).

What would one month of selected expenses cost?

The ComplexSearch basket adds annual housing, food at home, transportation excluding net vehicle purchases, and healthcare, then divides by 12. Housing is the full BLS category, which includes items beyond rent, mortgage interest, and utilities. The basket also excludes purchases in other categories and does not explicitly budget for every debt payment or child care. It is neither a bare-minimum budget nor a recommendation.

BLS pretax income fifth	Average pretax income	Modeled one-month basket	Monthly deposit to reach the basket in 12 months
Lowest	$18,125	$2,294	$192
Second	$46,080	$3,013	$252
Middle	$78,584	$3,688	$308
Fourth	$126,349	$4,574	$382
Highest	$286,188	$6,962	$581

Inputs are group means from BLS Table 1101[2]. The middle fifth's annual inputs were $24,487 for housing, $6,002 for food at home, $12,265 for transportation, $4,602 in net vehicle purchases subtracted from transportation, and $6,099 for healthcare. That leaves a $44,251 annual basket, or $3,687.58 before rounding to the nearest dollar.

The federal surveys use different populations and income bands. The Federal Reserve reports on individual adults grouped by family income. BLS groups consumer units by pretax income. A consumer unit can be a person living independently or multiple people who share expenses. No group was matched across the surveys, and the BLS table tells us nothing about any particular Fed respondent's dollar needs (BLS consumer spending release and technical notes[4]).

How long would it take to build the cushion?

BLS pretax income fifth	Save $50/mo	Save $100/mo	Save $200/mo	Save $300/mo	Save $500/mo
Lowest	46	23	12	8	5
Second	61	31	16	11	7
Middle	74	37	19	13	8
Fourth	92	46	23	16	10
Highest	140	70	35	24	14

3. https://www.federalreserve.gov/consumerscommunities/sheddataviz/emergency-savings-table.html?mod=article_inline
4. https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/cesan_10292026.htm

Values are the number of monthly deposits, starting from zero. ComplexSearch divides the unrounded target by the fixed contribution and rounds up to the next whole deposit. The model assumes no interest, inflation, withdrawals, or skipped deposits. It does not estimate the monthly surplus available to any income group.

For the middle fifth, a 10% higher basket would raise the target to about $4,056 and take 21 deposits at $200 instead of 19. Tripling the baseline target to approximately $11,063 would take 56 deposits at $200. This three-month spending scenario is not a reconstruction of what Federal Reserve respondents counted as three months of expenses.

Methods and files

- **Observed inputs:** The Federal Reserve's 2025 SHED savings tables[1] supply the rounded self-reported survey percentages; the 2025 BLS Table 1101 workbook[2] supplies group-average spending and income. The sources refer to 2025, not 2026.
- **Derived and modeled outputs:** Percentage-point gaps are differences between published rounded shares. Spending targets apply the same basket formula to each set of BLS means. Deposit counts are deterministic scenarios, not statistical forecasts or affordability estimates. The research dataset includes the exact source inputs, calculation columns, and the sensitivity cases.
- **Reading the table:** The projected timeline is a function of target and contributions, not an estimate of how quickly richer or poorer households actually save. The figures are not tests of statistical significance.

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Report charts



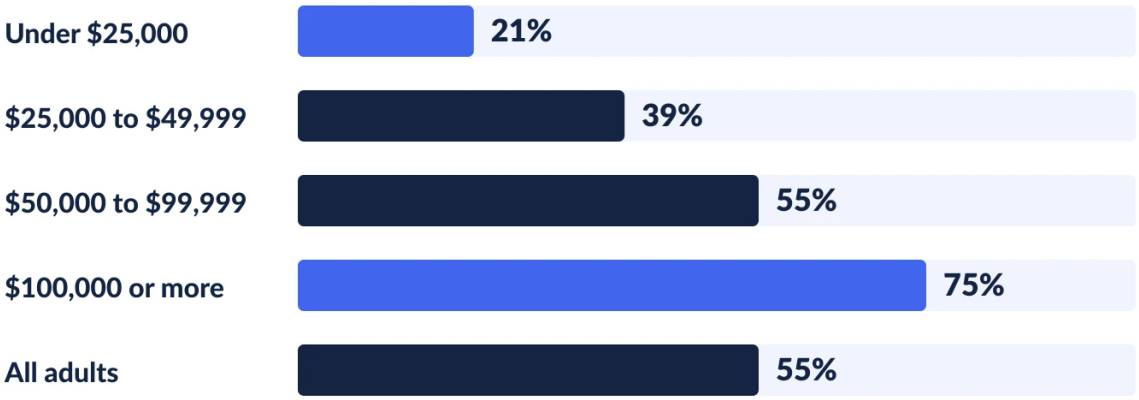
How many monthly deposits?At $200 per month, a target 10% higher takes 21 deposits instead of 19. The model does not estimate whether households can save that much.Source: BLS 2025 Table 1101 workbook, modeled by ComplexSearch ·

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Who has three months of savings?

Share of U.S. adults reporting money set aside for three months of expenses, 2025



Source: Federal Reserve 2025 Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking, Table 27.

Observed survey shares by family income band. Survey respondents are adults, not spending units.

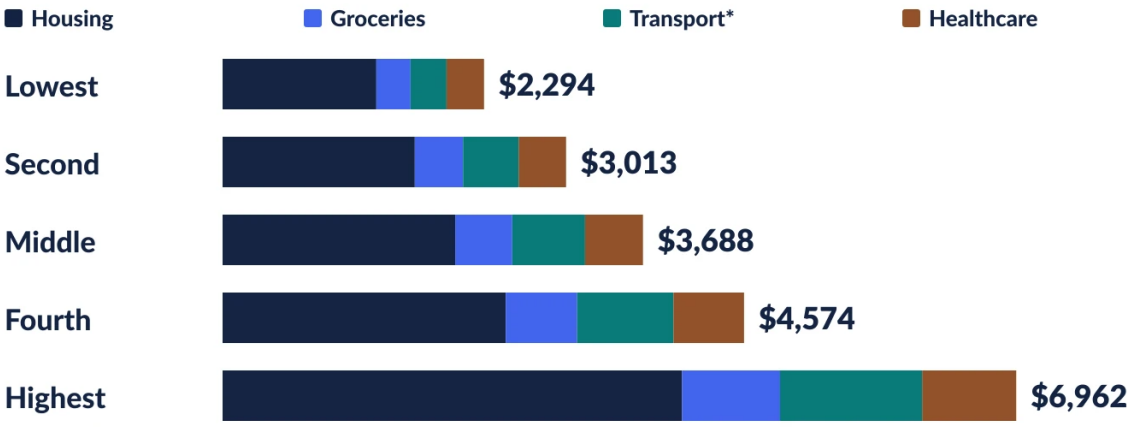
Who has three months of savings?The 54-point gap compares adults in the lowest and highest published family income bands.Source: Federal Reserve SHED, Table 27 ·

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What one month of the basket costs

Selected spending categories by BLS pretax income fifth, 2025



Source: BLS Consumer Expenditure Surveys, 2025, Table 1101. Basket modeled by ComplexSearch.

*Transportation excludes net vehicle purchases. The basket is not a minimum budget or a personal recommendation.

What one month of the basket costsThe middle fifth's basket comes to about $3,688. It covers four spending categories and is not a minimum budget.Source: BLS 2025 Table 1101 workbook ·