



# Financial Literacy

## Discussion Guide

### Let's review

*At the start of each discussion, review the conversation ground rules for returning and new members alike to set the stage for active participation by all. You may want to use a timer as you go around the room. And don't forget to decide who will take notes and post a discussion recap.*

- **Be open and curious:** Everyone has a unique perspective, so be prepared to hear a different point of view. Listen first, and focus on the facts.
- **Be respectful and engaged:** Be sure that everyone has a chance to speak before adding a second comment or perspective. Encourage each other's participation.
- **Be focused and concise:** Keep the conversation centered on the issue and the brief.

**The "Table-it" Rule:** If the group has gone off-topic but the area is of interest, the group can table the conversation and save it for another time to be addressed in a different manner.

### Let's begin

- Take five minutes to review the [Executive Summary](#) for this brief. Highlight the main point of each section and key statistics.
- Each member is invited to answer the following questions in a **two-three minute reaction** to the brief:
  - Introduce yourself, and share what "lens of care" did you wear when reviewing this brief (e.g. personal, professional, community, state, nation, global)?
  - What did you find most interesting or surprising from reading the brief? What matters?

### Spread the word: facts to share during your discussion

- [Almost 80% of Americans](#) have at least one of six types of debt, including credit card balances, mortgages, auto loans, student loans, unpaid medical bills, or non-bank loans such as those from the government or payday loans. Total U.S. consumer debt was approaching [\\$15 trillion](#) in the fall of 2021.
- Annually, the [federal government spends close to \\$300 million](#) on financial literacy and education programs spanning 23 federal agencies and entities.
- According to the [U.S. Federal Reserve](#), fewer than 40% of non-retired American adults believe their savings are on track for a secure retirement, and 26% of Americans have no retirement savings at all.

## Let's discuss

*Below are questions for the group to consider and discuss, or choose your own.*

- **Community:** Did you discuss household finances and money growing up? Did you have financial literacy education in school? Do you discuss it with your children or friends?
- **Government:** What responsibility does the government have regarding addressing financial literacy? How can the multitude of government programs be measured to determine effectiveness?
- **Business:** The Treasury Department says that the private sector may be best equipped to deliver financial education. How can financial institutions and nonprofit organizations best serve the needs of the public? What is working and where are there gaps?

## Let's act

1. **Take it local.** Talk to neighbors, friends, and family and ask for their views on financial literacy. Consider hosting another conversation with community members, from students and teachers to financial professionals.
2. **Explore the impact of legislation related to financial literacy in your community.** On your state or municipality's website you can find information pertaining to financial literacy and finance education. You can search the departments, agencies, and programs related to these areas on your state's or municipality's website. You can use search words such as "financial literacy" in the search bar, or check dropdown menus.
3. **Investigate community programs** in your state or municipality. [The Council for Economic Education](#) lists state-by-state financial literacy and economic education requirements. See what courses are offered at your local high school or community college.
4. **Research your elected representatives positions** on the state of financial literacy, and their vision for how to tackle related financial challenges facing Americans and your community. You can find contact information for federal, state, and local government officials [here](#). Your state or municipality's websites will also have information to contact leaders. Try looking at the drop-down menu for a *Government* tab.
5. **Establish a relationship with your legislators.** It's easy to establish a relationship with your legislators. Start by introducing yourself. You can also learn to write to your representatives or set up a meeting with a legislator on [The Policy Circle website](#).
6. **Consider writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed on your stance on financial literacy in your local paper.** Learn how on [The Policy Circle website](#).

## Next Steps for Your Circle

- **Post a Recap:** Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present, and share planned actions from group members. Designate who will post a meeting recap on your circle page.
- **Decide your next meeting topic.** Want to discuss a related brief at your next meeting? Suggestions include:
  - [K-12 Education](#)
  - [Poverty](#)
  - [Impact Investing](#)
- **Dive Deeper into the issues.** If this is an area you would like to pursue further, consider taking possible steps to influence policy. The Policy Circle offers resources for [developing a message about your issue](#) and [organizing a petition](#) to amplify your voice and raise awareness. Don't miss our [latest events](#) that help you dive deeper on this issue and more.