Scoring Solutions

FICO® Score Credit Insights

Spring 2026 edition

White paper

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About the Report

FICO® Score Credit Insights: trends and intelligence for the credit economy

For more than 30 years, FICO has led the way in financial inclusion and credit risk innovation. Today, 90% of top U.S. lenders use the FICO® Score, and we continue to set the standard for objective, data-driven insights that empower smarter lending decisions and promote consumer financial health.

The FICO® Score Credit Insights report is a biannual publication designed to be the definitive source for credit score benchmarks and insights into the U.S. credit economy. Drawing from proprietary analytics of quarterly credit data and a FICO-sponsored consumer survey, this report delivers a comprehensive view of U.S. consumer credit health, awareness, and behaviors — both above and below the surface.

This edition features:

- **Macro and segmented trends** in FICO® Score averages and distributions, with statistical stratification by product, geography, and credit segment
- **Insights into payment hierarchy and behavioral drivers** that influence credit health and scores
- **Trends impacting credit scores** (e.g., student loans)
- **Consumer perspectives** on credit literacy and credit activity, helping to contextualize the data with real-world sentiment
- **Forward-looking trends** to watch — equipping lenders, investors, and policymakers with the foresight to adapt strategies in a dynamic credit landscape
- **Market trends** in mortgage, auto, bankcards, and personal loans

This report is more than a benchmark — it's a strategic resource. It reflects FICO's mission to help every consumer better understand their credit journey and support the financial ecosystem with the tools and insights needed to drive inclusive, responsible growth.

Executive Summary

Credit market signals selective growth opportunities as consumer segmentation creates pathways for responsible expansion

The average FICO® Score declined to 714, continuing a gradual trend over the past year. The change is primarily driven by the resumption of student loan repayment and reporting — a shift that is now showing signs of stabilization as delinquency patterns level out across most product categories. Despite this modest decline in the average score, overall consumer credit health remains historically strong. Nearly half of consumers (48.1%) now have FICO Scores of 750 or higher, up from 43.3% in 2019. This means more consumers qualify for lower interest rates and the most competitive credit offers.

Key findings:

- **Student loan impact cycle completing:** The full-year effects of student loan reporting and repayment resumption continued, with delinquencies remaining at historic highs.
- **Delinquency trends display uneven recovery patterns:** Delinquency rates stabilized or improved across most product categories. Mortgage delinquencies, however, rose steadily toward pre-pandemic levels.
- **K-shaped credit landscape reshapes market:** Score distributions reflect ongoing divergence between a historic 48.1% of consumers now scoring 750+, and lower score segments increasing toward pre-pandemic levels. This market reality renders “average consumer” strategies increasingly obsolete and creates opportunities for both premium offerings and inclusive financial solutions.
- **Gen Z defying conventional wisdom:** Despite alternative product availability and growth, Gen Z is opening credit card accounts at higher rates than any other generation and now shows card usage patterns similar to Millennials. This challenges assumptions that younger consumers are avoiding traditional credit products.

Market summary assessment: Credit markets show signs of resolution to multiple recent uncertainties, with most product categories reestablishing baselines while mortgage trends remain in transition. As delinquency patterns stabilize across most categories, institutions have clearer visibility into market segments for portfolio planning. And with historic consumer credit health increases (48.1% scoring 750+), consistent payment hierarchy patterns, and stabilizing risk indicators, business leaders find themselves operating within a market context where some previous unknowns now offer more observable trends to empower strategic planning.

Strategic context: While the average FICO® Score decreased over the last year, deeper analysis of trends across segments and products offers insight for financial institutions to apply sophisticated risk assessment approaches to both optimize portfolio performance and grow responsibly. The unprecedented level of consumers demonstrating strong credit health, combined with payment consistency across product categories, enables more precise risk differentiation — supporting data-driven strategy refresh opportunities across the full credit spectrum. Mortgage markets present a more complex picture at present — and with delinquencies continuing an upward trajectory toward pre-pandemic levels, this sector requires ongoing vigilance during this period of continuing market transition. Financial institutions can leverage advanced scoring methodologies to capitalize on opportunities in stabilized product categories while exercising appropriate caution in mortgage lending.

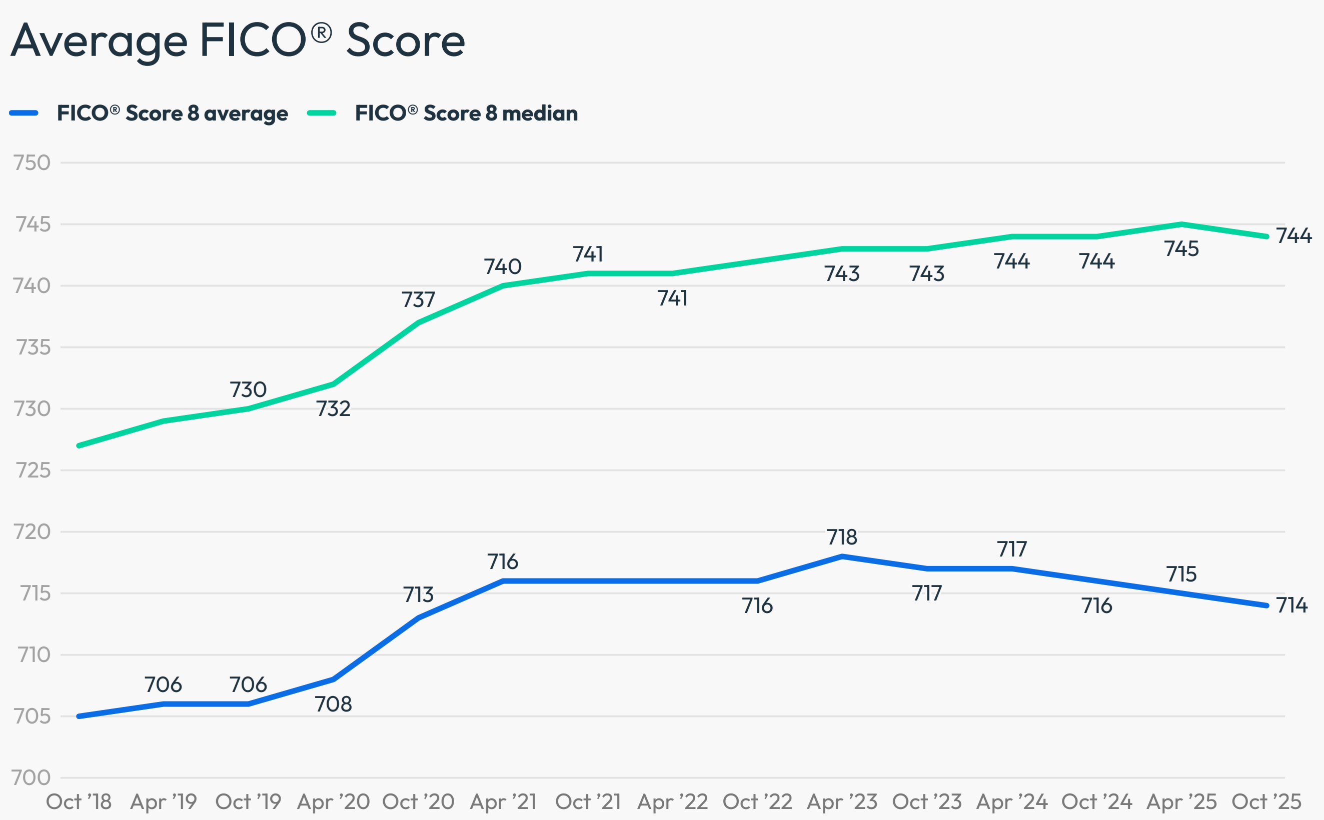
Average FICO® Scores, delinquency trends, and more can be accessed directly with the FICO® Score Credit Insights Lab.

FICO's role: As these insights inform industry conversations, FICO remains positioned to support strategic implementations through core credit scoring capabilities and complementary analytical tools. Our ongoing dialogue with industry leaders centers on how enhanced precision in risk assessment — whether through established scoring methodologies or advanced segmentation approaches — enables institutions to execute their strategic vision while maintaining portfolio quality and expanding access responsibly.

FICO® Score Credit Insights Analysis Report

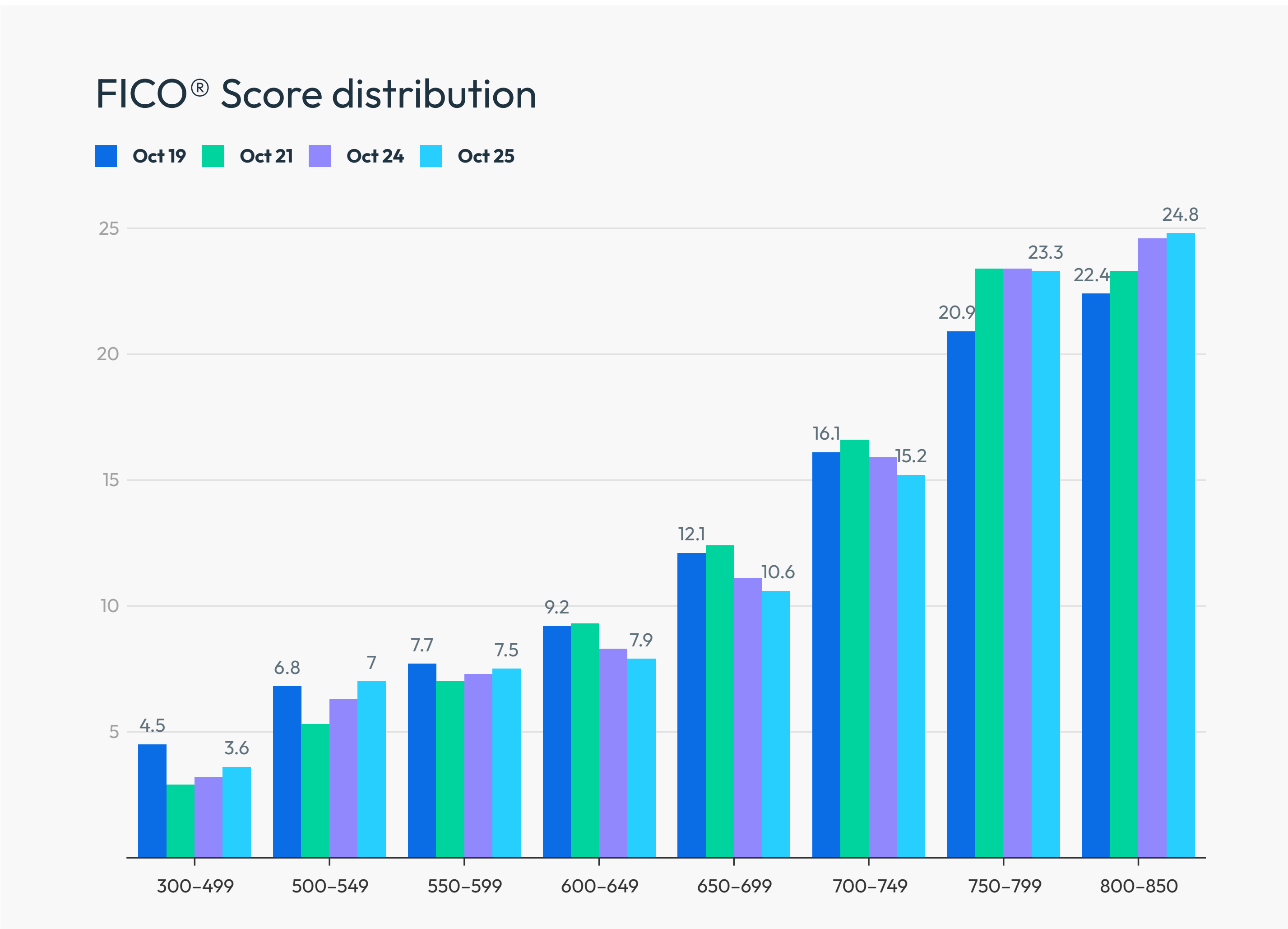
Average FICO® Score decreases to 714 from 715 in April 2025

The average FICO® Score declined one point since we last reported in April 2025, and two points year over year versus October 2024. The change in average FICO Score for all of 2025 is attributable to two primary factors: the resumption of student loan delinquency reporting and a slight uptick in mortgage delinquency rates. The median FICO Score also dropped one point, to 744, between April 2025 and October 2025.



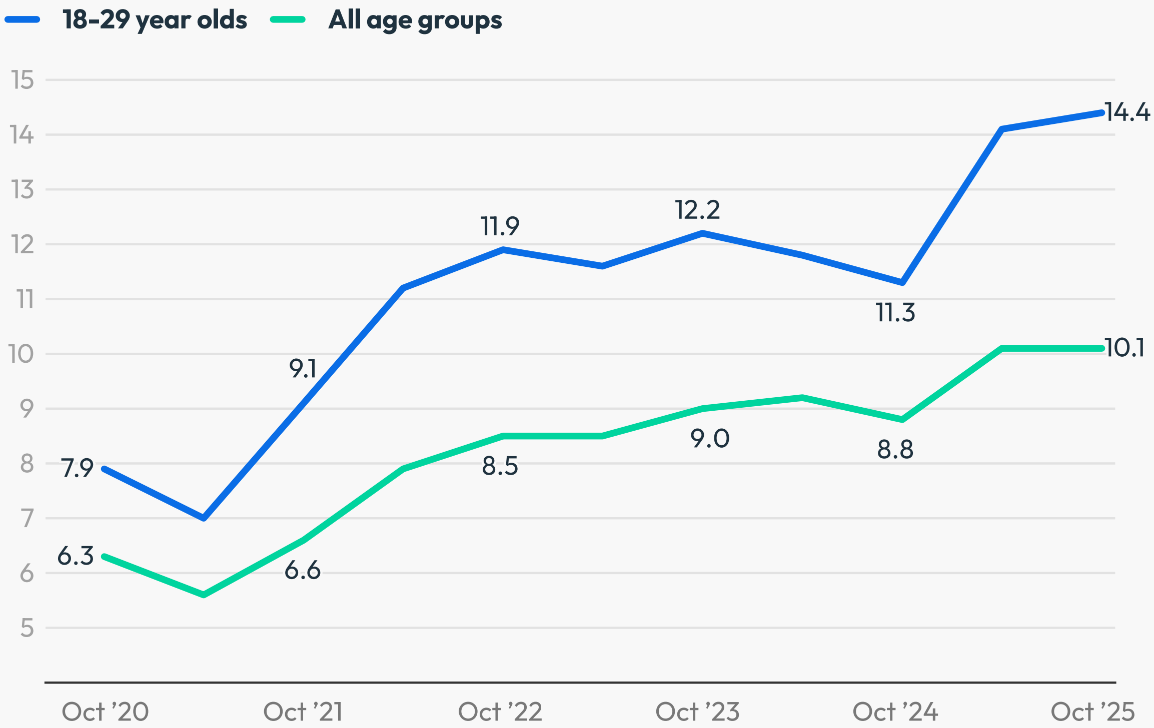
Continuing the trend observed in April, hollowing of the middle of the score distribution continued, exhibiting further bifurcation as more consumers are scoring in the highest and lowest ranges. While the proportion of consumers in the lowest score ranges (below 600) continues moving back towards pre-pandemic levels, the highest score ranges (750+) increased from 43.3% of the scorable population in October 2019 to 48.1% in October 2025.

Even with score fluctuations throughout the pandemic and recovery, approximately three-quarters of consumers remain either in the same score band or within one score band (as defined in the graph below) in October 2025 compared to October 2019. Only 1 in 10 consumers have experienced a significant movement of 3 or more score bands in either direction over this period. This stability mirrors score migration patterns from 2013 to 2019, suggesting notable resilience in consumer credit profiles. Despite unprecedented economic disruption and evolving credit reporting practices, score migration patterns have remained relatively consistent with more benign economic periods.



Overall, 10.1% of consumers have a 50-point or more decrease in their score from October 2024 to October 2025. However, the proportion of 18–29 year olds that have seen a 50-point decrease in their score rose to 14.4%. This is likely due to ongoing issues with student loan repayment.

% of population with 50+ point score decrease year-over-year

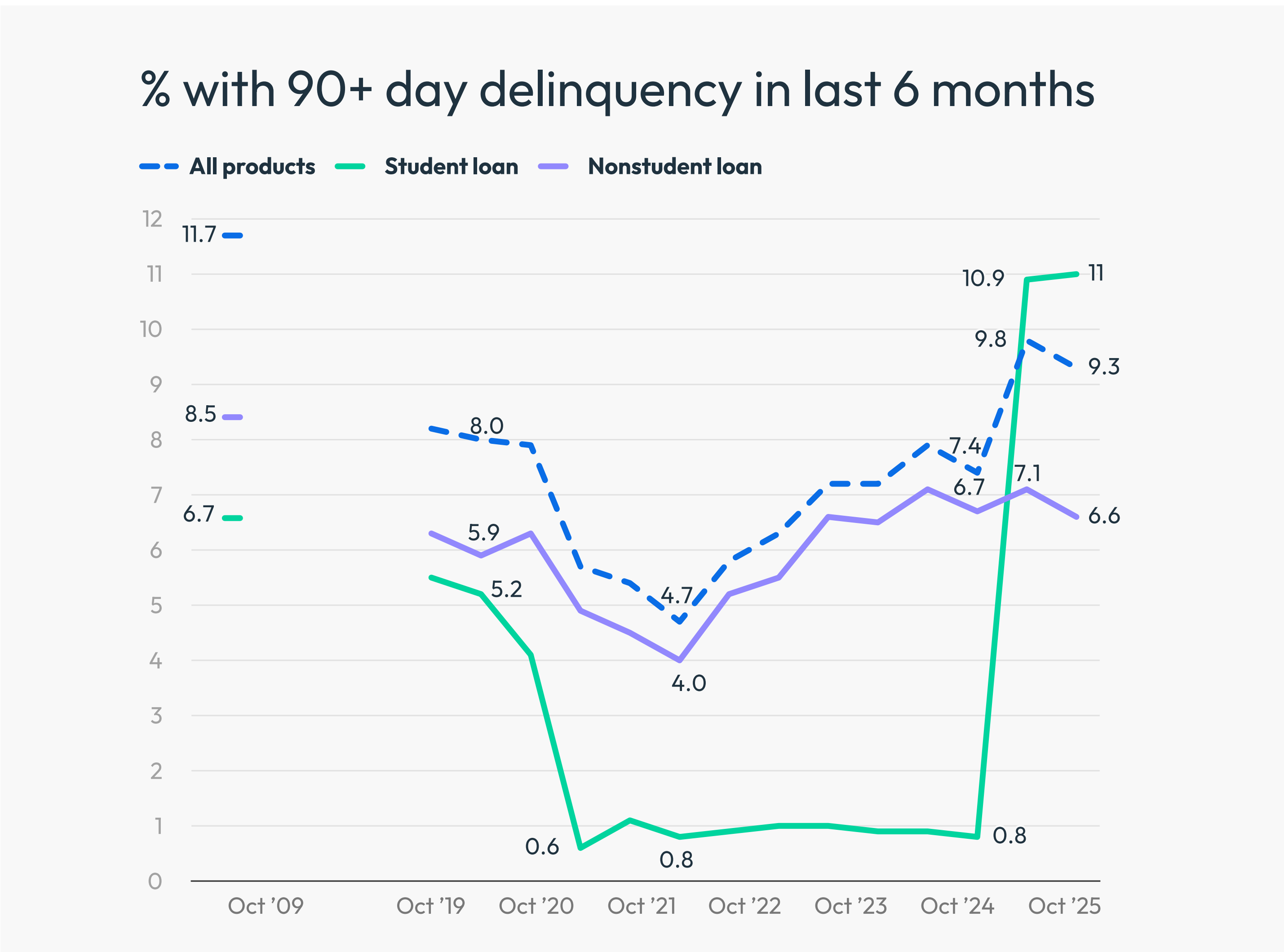


FICO® Score 8 is the score version used in all analysis for this report, unless indicated otherwise. All of the data in this report focuses on consumers who have a valid FICO® Score. While not technically the definition of Gen Z across all time periods shown, 18–29 year olds were chosen to define Gen Z because consumers can't have a credit report until they are 18 years old and 18–29 is very close to the age group of Gen Z in 2025. Additionally, for an apples-to-apples comparison, it is important to keep the age groups consistent across time rather than go strictly by the generations. It would not be appropriate to produce data for Gen Z in 2019 and compare those figures to Gen Z in 2025, because those consumers have six more years of potential credit experience in 2025 vs 2019.

Student loan delinquency is leveling after initial jump in early 2025

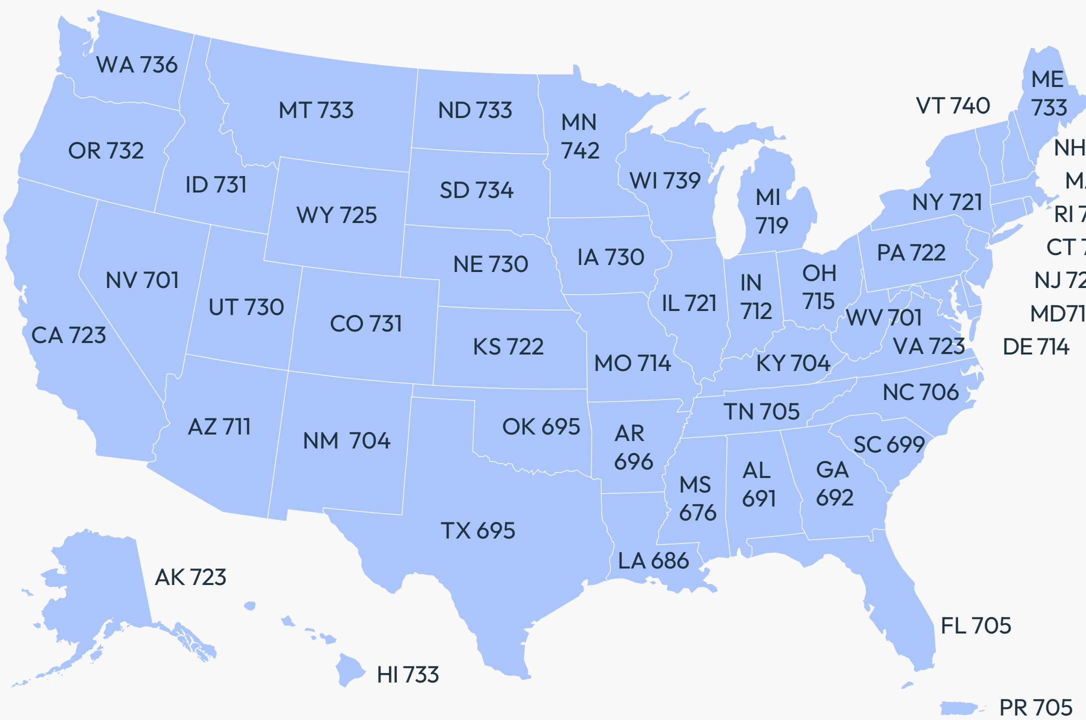
It has been two years since student loan repayment resumed and one year since the U.S. Department of Education's "on-ramp" period ended. Nearly one-third of student loan borrowers with a payment due (7.1 million consumers) have a new delinquency reported on their credit file, causing a 62-point drop in their score on average since January 2025. Approximately 5% of student loan borrowers (1.1 million consumers) are still in an in-between status: No new delinquency has been reported on their credit file, but payments are due. Some of these consumers could be waiting for approval for income-based repayment plans or some other type of deferment. The remaining population of student loan borrowers (13.8 million consumers) have no delinquency and made at least one student loan payment in the last year.

After severe delinquency on student loans took a big jump in April due to resumption of delinquency reporting, there was only a 0.1% increase in student loan delinquency between April and October 2025. Severe delinquency on non-student loan products decreased in October 2025 to 6.6% from 7.1% in April 2025.



Average FICO® Score by State

October 2025



Payment hierarchy

The payment hierarchy for October snapshots mirrors what was reported for April.

1. **Auto, which consumers are 20% more likely to pay than mortgage**
   For consumers with open autos and mortgages, the auto 90-day-plus delinquency rate in 2023 to 2025 was 2.9%, while the mortgage figure was 3.4%.

2. **Mortgage, which consumers are 48% more likely to pay than personal loan**
   For consumers with open mortgages and personal loans, the mortgage 90-day-plus delinquency rate in 2023 to 2025 was 6.3%, while the personal loan figure was 9.4%.

3. **Personal loan, which consumers are 69% more likely to pay than bankcard**
   For consumers with open personal loans and bankcards, the personal loan 90-plus-day delinquency rate in 2023 to 2025 was 12.3%, while the bankcard figure was 20.9%.

4. **Bankcard, which consumers are 38% more likely to pay than student loan**
   For consumers with open bankcards and student loans, the bankcard 90-plus-day delinquency rate in 2023 to 2025 was 13.7%, while the student loan figure was 18.9%.

5. **Student loan**

Auto and mortgage are secured products associated with tangible assets essential to one's quality of life, so they are higher in the payment hierarchy. Auto remains higher than mortgage in the payment hierarchy.

The auto finance industry's approach to delinquency management contributes to this consistent ranking. Repossession represents a last resort for lenders — one that typically follows a multi-month process involving billing statements, late payment notifications, default notices, and multiple opportunities for borrowers to cure delinquency or arrange alternative payment terms. Industry data suggests that repossessions occur, on average, only after more than four months of consumers being unable to fulfill their financial obligations, and that more than 99% of financed vehicles remain with borrowers. This underscores why auto consistently ranks at the top of the payment hierarchy — consumers recognize both the asset's importance and the collaborative efforts lenders make to help them remain in their vehicles.

The remaining products are unsecured products and fall lower in payment hierarchy. One reason why personal loan is higher than bankcard is that consumers typically have fewer personal loans than bankcards, so even if a consumer misses payments on one credit card, they will still often have access to another credit card.

Many consumers may not have prioritized student loans over the last two years, because the forbearance and on-ramp periods meant that many borrowers hadn't made payments since 2020 (or ever, if they opened their student loan after 2020) and were unfamiliar with the process of paying, the lack of consequences of nonpayment, and servicing issues. With the federal government potentially beginning collections and wage garnishments on defaulted student loans in the future, we will be monitoring whether student loans remain at the bottom of the payment hierarchy going forward.

In the table on the next page, we see how each product's payment hierarchy ranking has shifted over time. CARES Act reporting standards meant that federal student loan delinquencies were not reported from March 2020–January 2025, causing the student loan-related shift seen below. Otherwise, bankcard is generally at the bottom of the payment hierarchy among the remaining four products, while auto is consistently at the top of the payment hierarchy except for the pandemic period, where accommodations enabled student loans to overtake auto in payment hierarchy.

Outside of pandemic-era accommodations, the relative ranking of products has remained remarkably stable over two decades.

Total pop rank	2005–2007	2010–2012	2015–2017	2020–2022	2023–2025
1	Auto	Auto	Auto	Mortgage	Auto
2	Mortgage	Personal loan	Personal loan	Student loan	Mortgage
3	Personal loan	Mortgage	Mortgage	Auto	Personal loan
4	Student loan	Bankcard	Bankcard	Personal loan	Bankcard
5	Bankcard	Student loan	Student loan	Bankcard	Student loan

Using auto and the 2023–2025 time period as an example, the score (for high scoring consumers) is calculated as of October 2023. The population is focused on consumers with auto finance accounts that were originated as of October 2023 or earlier.

The auto 90+ delinquency rate is the number of consumers who have a 90+ days past due delinquency on an auto from November 2023–October 2025 divided by the number of consumers with an active auto as of October 2025. The auto finance loans in question need to have originated in October 2023 or earlier. This is similar for other products and time periods.

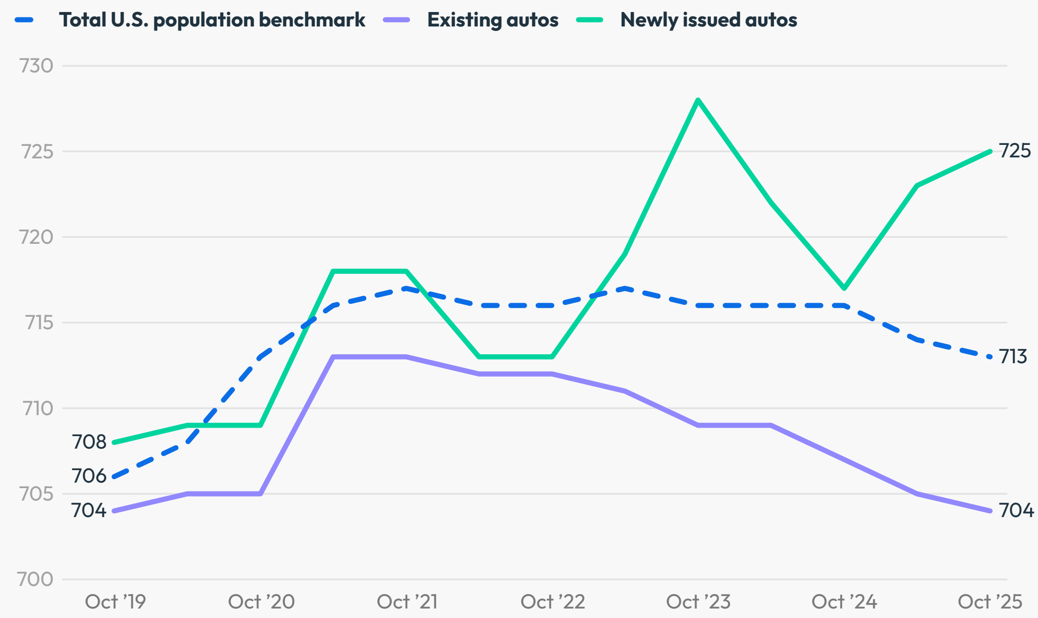
FICO® Score for auto borrowers drops to pre-pandemic level

The average FICO® Score for newly issued auto finance loans has increased to 725 after many fluctuations over the past two years. Lower risk borrowers likely have been planning their vehicle purchases around the volatile rate environment, possibly leading to higher score borrowers not opening as many new auto loans in 2024 (and therefore lowering the average score last year). According to the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (US), the average rate on a 60-month new car loan increased rapidly as the Federal Reserve raised the funding rate. Average auto loan rates hit nearly 8% in early 2024 and stayed there for many months, finally dropping back under 7.5% in 2025. The average FICO Score for existing auto finance loans has been on a downward trend since peaking in April 2021, and has now dropped back to the pre-pandemic score of 704. The 4-point difference between newly issued and existing auto finance loans in October 2019 has widened to a 21-point difference in October 2025.

If you are interested in keeping an eye on the historical trends of average FICO® Score for newly issued and existing autos, check out the FICO® Score Credit Insights Lab.

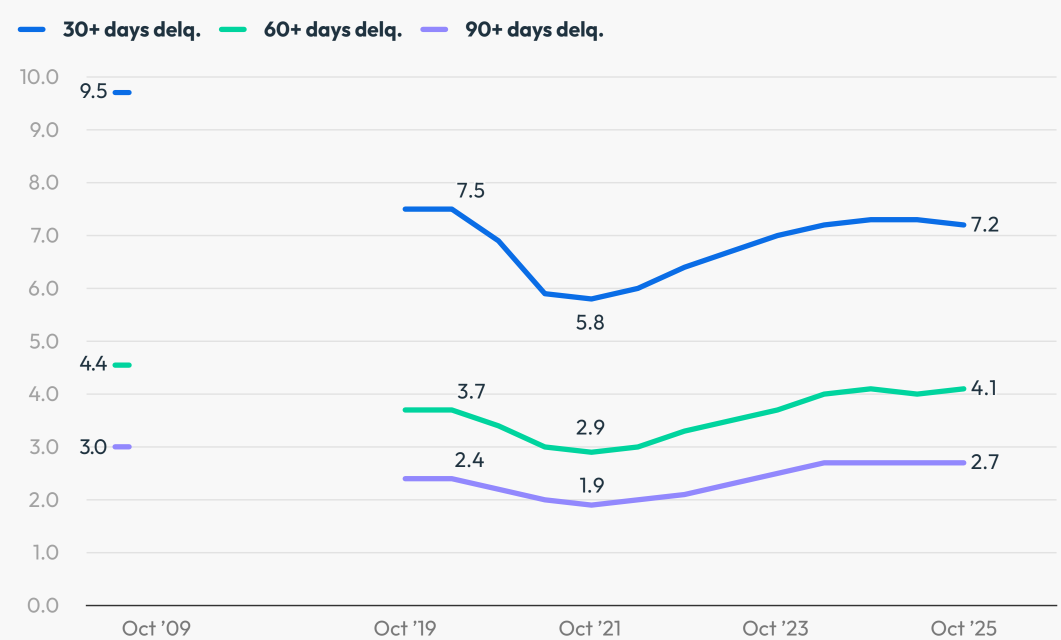
We refer to 2019 as a pre-pandemic benchmark, because the pandemic in 2020 led to anomalies in credit reporting and behaviors, due to payment accommodations and government stimulus.

Average FICO® Score over time



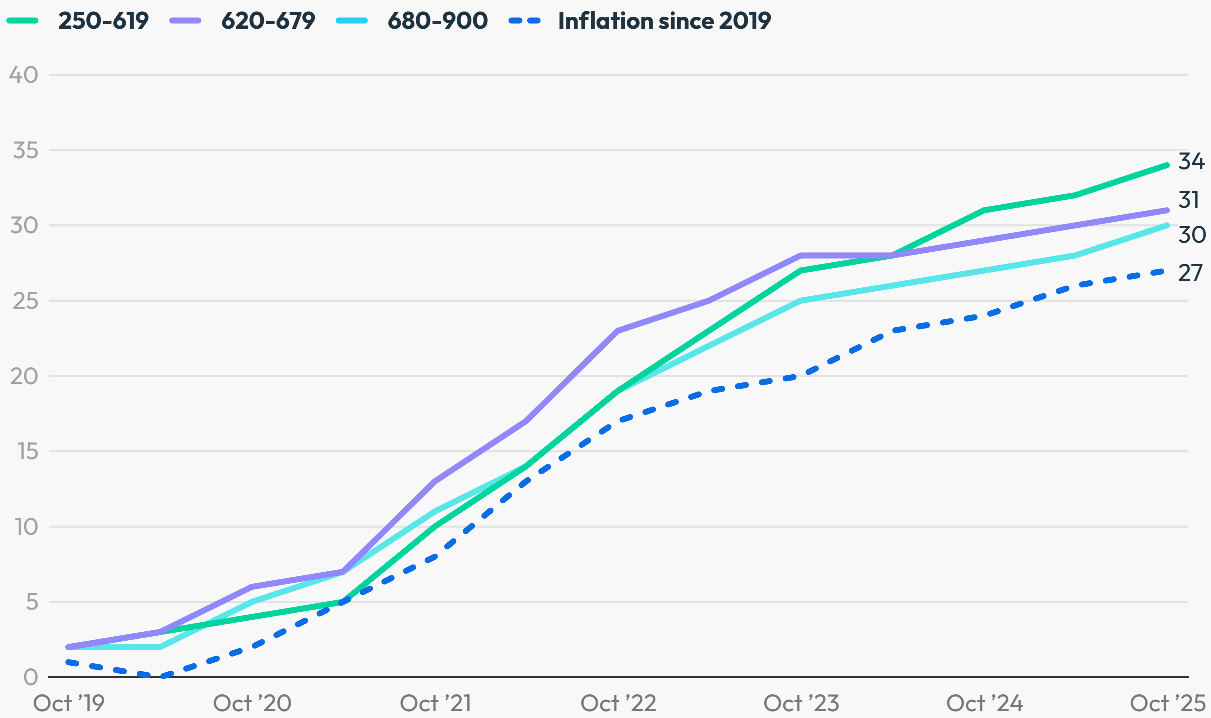
Auto finance loan delinquency rates have remained stable over the past 18 months. The 30-day-plus delinquency rate of 7.2% remains below the pre-pandemic delinquency rate of 7.5%. Yet the 60-day-plus and 90-day-plus delinquency rates are slightly higher than October 2019, showing ongoing stress on consumers to keep up with their payments (60+: 4.1% in October 2025 vs. 3.7% in October 2019, 90+: 2.7% in October 2025 vs. 2.4% in October 2019.)

% Delinquency on auto loans in last year



The difference in financed balance for auto continues to rise over time and has risen faster than overall inflation. Disruptions in the supply chain plus higher demand for vehicles affected car price inflation during the pandemic and peaked in 2022. The impact of rising prices and having to take on larger loans was felt across all FICO® Score bands starting in April 2021. New and used car prices have stabilized over the past two years according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics but remain significantly higher than before the pandemic price surge. We can see that auto finance balances have also started to level off as the slopes of the lines in the chart below have flattened compared to the steep increase from 2021 to 2023.

% change in auto finance balances since 2019



FICO® Score 8 is used for all analysis in this report pertaining to auto. The score for existing autos is the score calculated as of October in that year. The score for newly issued autos is the score calculated as of July in that year, so that newly issued autos can be identified from August–October of that year. The definition of "existing" and "newly issued" is similar for the other products in this report.

The auto delinquency rates above calculate the number of consumers who have a 30+/60+/90+ days past due delinquency on an auto in the past year divided by the number of consumers with an auto. This is similar for the other products in this report.

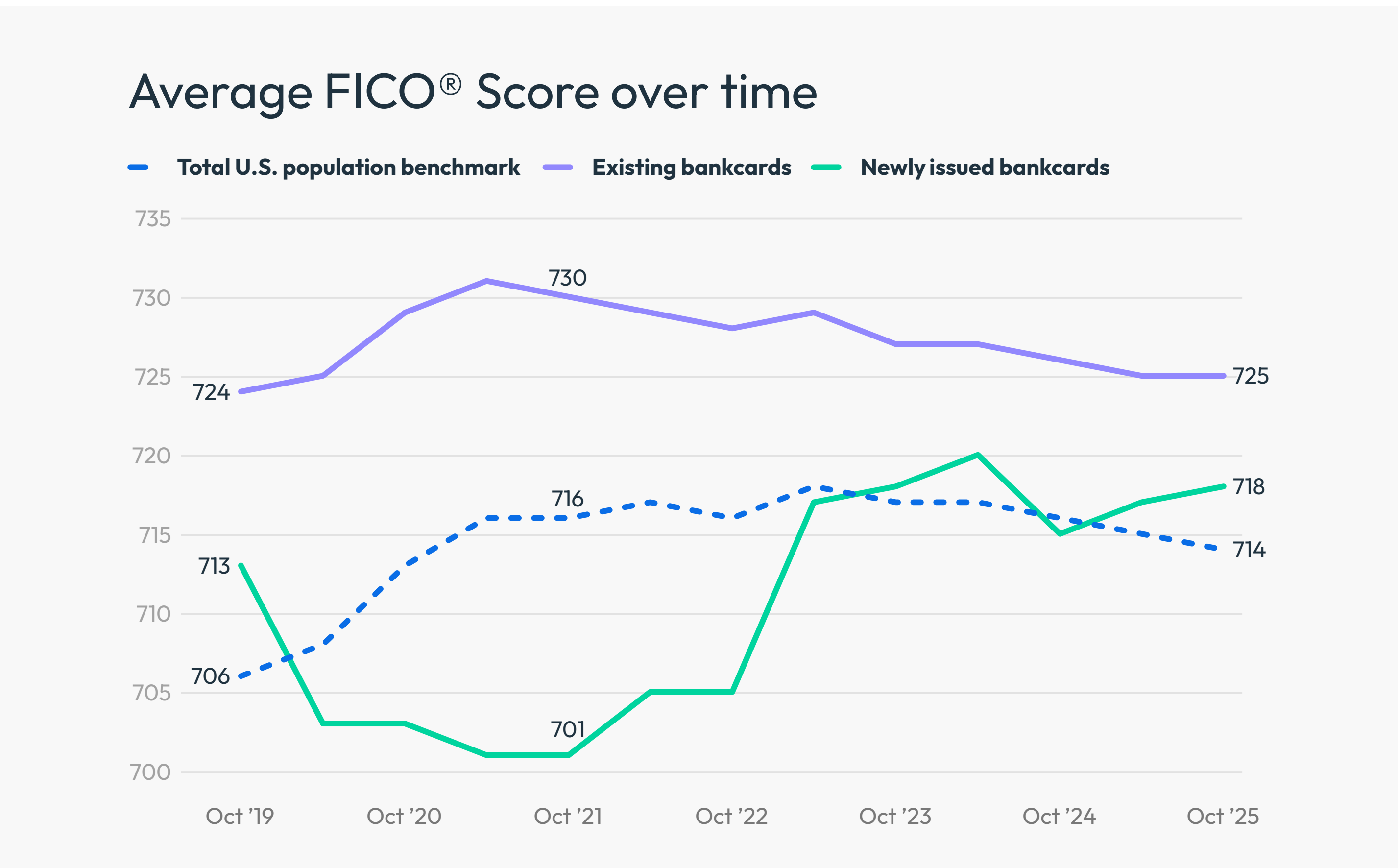
Auto finance balances are calculated by identifying the population of consumers with an open auto finance loan in a given score range, and then taking the average of each consumer's sum of all balances on open auto finance loans. The % change in auto finance balances is then the percent difference in balance between that year's average balance and October 2019's average balance. This is similar for the other products in this report.

Inflation data is sourced from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index data.

FICO® Score for bankcard borrowers stabilized while usage and delinquency rates flatten

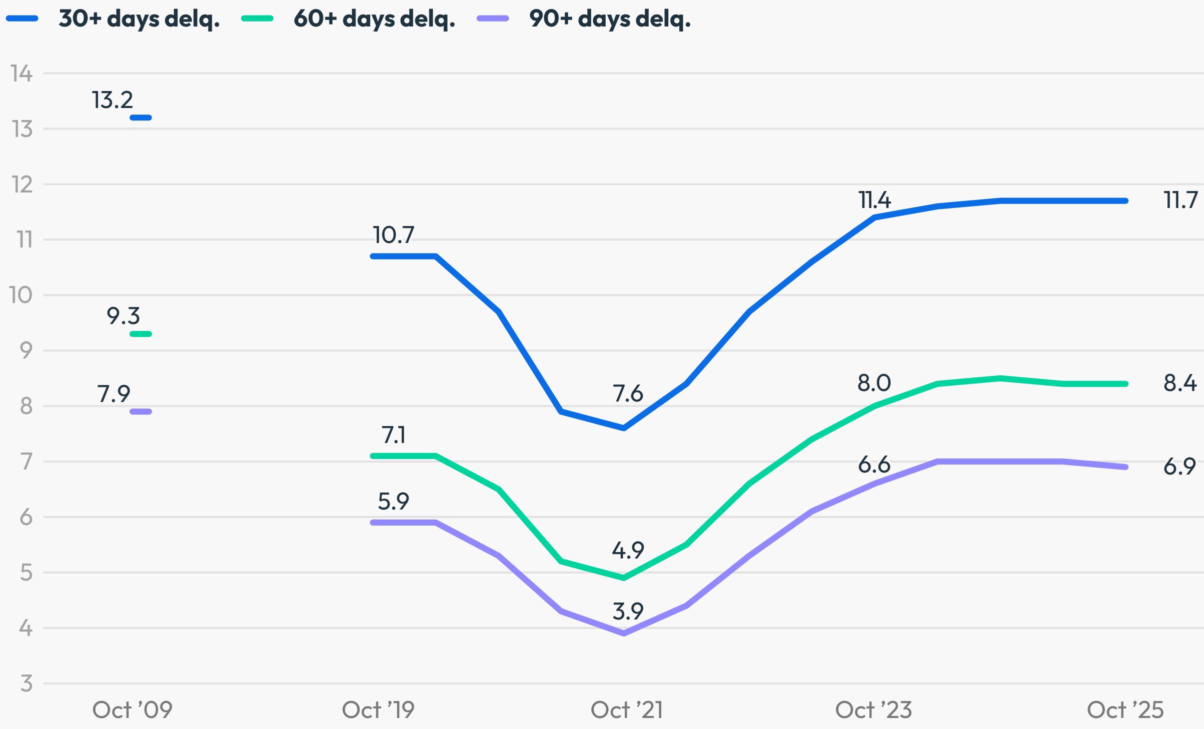
After a period of post-pandemic normalization, bankcard credit performance has stabilized — reflecting the impact of tighter underwriting and disciplined account management alongside improving consumer financial management.

The average FICO® Score for newly issued bankcards at 718 remains elevated above the 2019 average of 713 following strategic recalibration by issuers. Credit card issuers implemented significant changes to originations strategies in late 2022 after delinquency rates climbed sharply coming out of the pandemic. The average FICO Score for existing bankcards has trended downward in parallel with the national average, landing at 725 in October 2025. Additional trend analysis and segmentation options are accessible through the FICO® Score Credit Insights Lab.



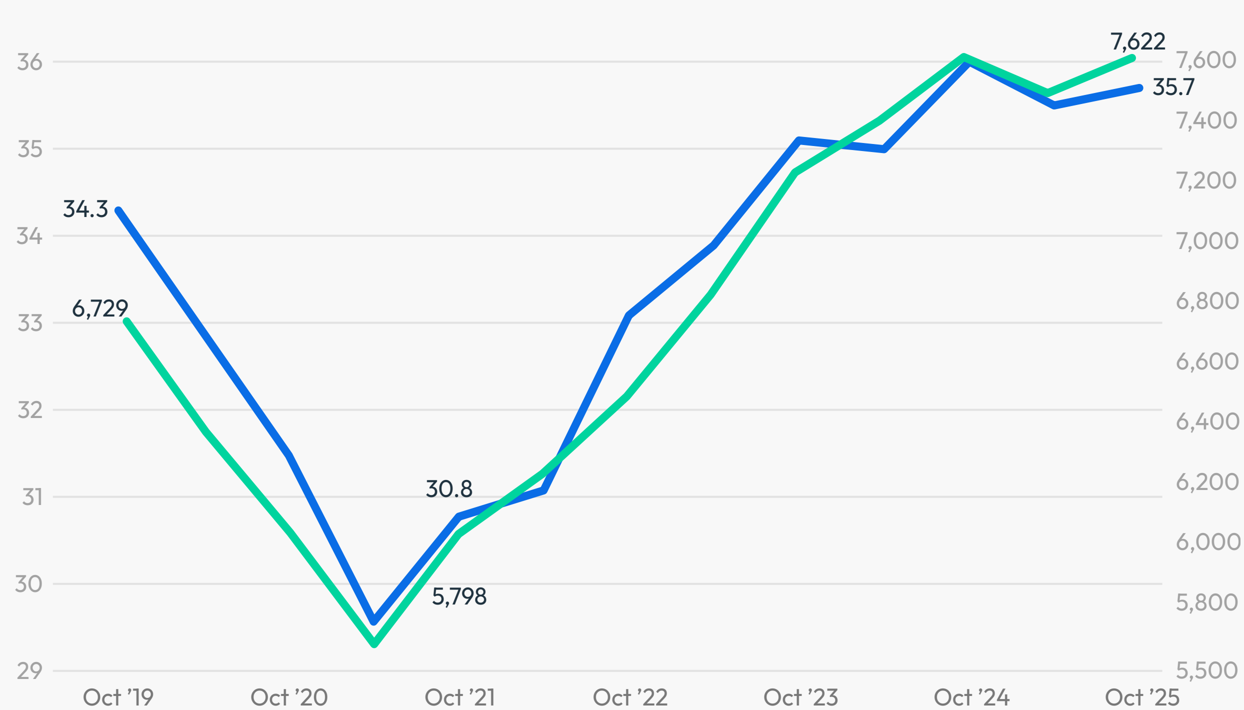
As economic reopening accelerated inflationary pressures, bankcard delinquency rates surpassed pre-pandemic rates by early 2023. Swift adjustments to underwriting and account management strategies helped arrest the upward trajectory. All delinquency rates have remained stable since April 2024 (30-day-plus delinquency rate = 11.7%, 60-day-plus delinquency rate = 8.4%, 90-day-plus delinquency rate = 6.9%).

% with bankcard delinquent in last year



The trendlines for bankcard utilization and average balance mirror the delinquency patterns. Utilization dropped sharply early in the pandemic as consumers used stimulus checks and enhanced cash flow to pay down balances. By early 2023, utilization and average balance had surpassed levels seen in October 2019 and continued rising until October 2024. Both average balance and utilization have since plateaued at $7,622 and 35.7%, respectively. This stabilization mirrors delinquency trends, indicating that consumers are successfully managing elevated revolving debt loads without proportional increases in payment stress.

Average credit card utilization & balances over time

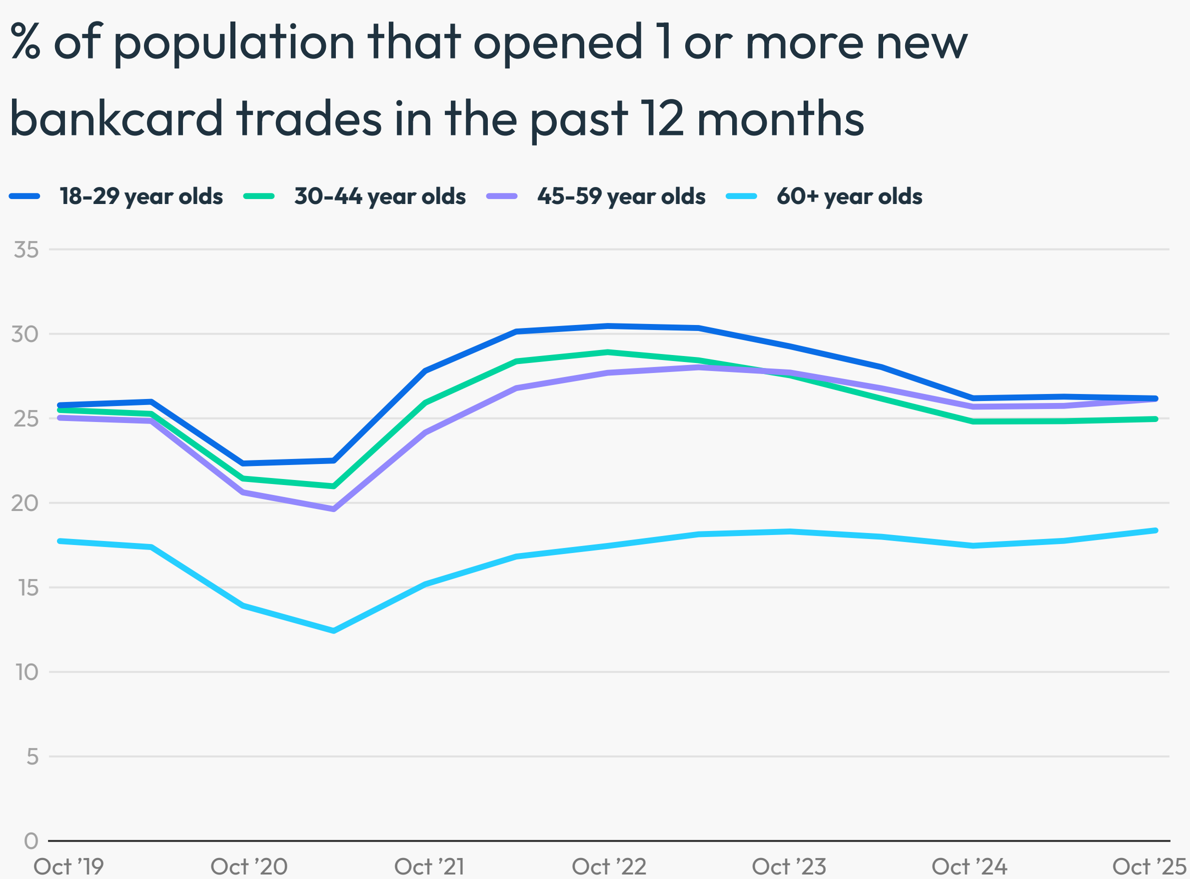


FICO® Score 8 is used for all analysis in this report pertaining to bankcard. The score for existing bankcards is the score calculated as of October in that year. The score for newly issued bankcards is the score calculated as of July in that year, so that newly issued bankcards can be identified from August–October of that year. The definition of "existing" and "newly issued" is similar for the other products in this report. The bankcard delinquency rates above calculate the number of consumers who have a 30+/60+/90+ days past due delinquency on a bankcard in the past year divided by the number of consumers with a bankcard. This is similar for the other products in this report. Credit card utilization is calculated by taking the average of each consumer's sum of all credit card balances divided by credit limits on open revolving accounts. Credit card balances are calculated by taking the average of each consumer's sum of all credit card balances on open revolving or open-ended accounts, for those with an open revolving or open-ended account.

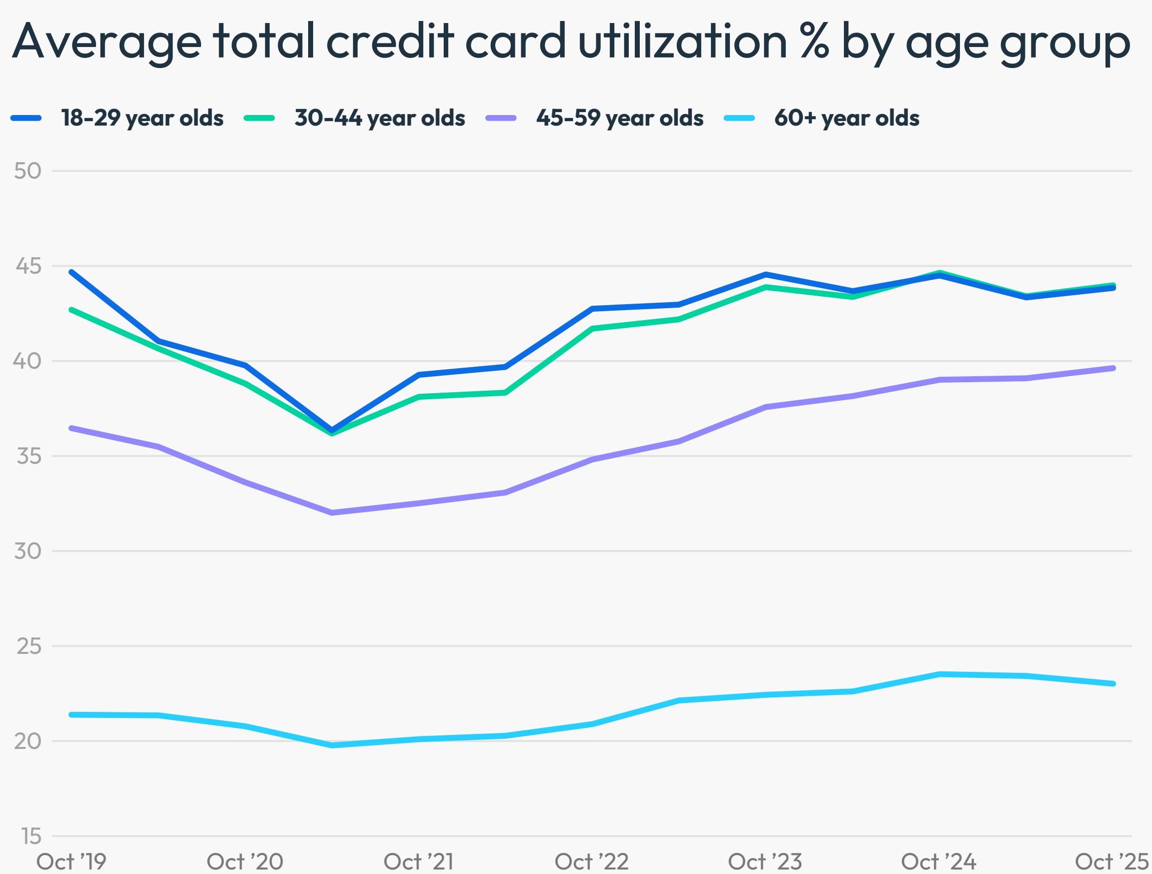
Gen Z continues to open new credit cards and utilize them similarly to their Millennial counterparts

Despite the proliferation of alternative credit products — particularly buy now, pay later options — traditional bankcard account origination continues its upward trajectory.

Market speculation suggests Gen Z has shifted away from traditional credit cards in favor of alternative lending products. The data tells a different story: A higher percentage of Gen Zers open new bankcards than any other age group, which in reality positions them as the most active cohort in traditional credit card adoption.

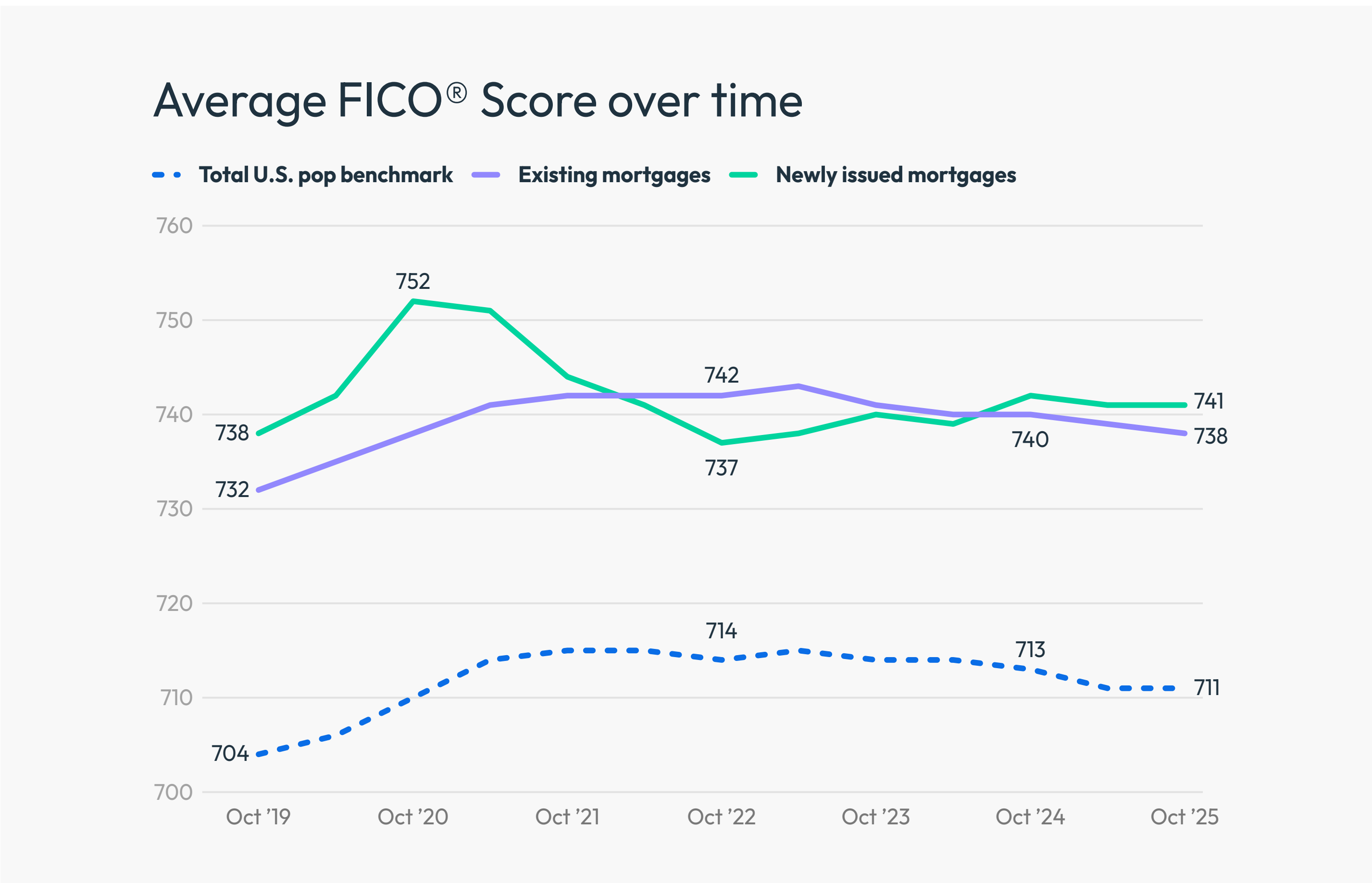


Beyond account opening, Gen Z demonstrates parallel utilization patterns to Millennials. Utilization for both age groups has remained flat and synchronized at ~44% since October 2023, returning to similar levels as pre-pandemic.

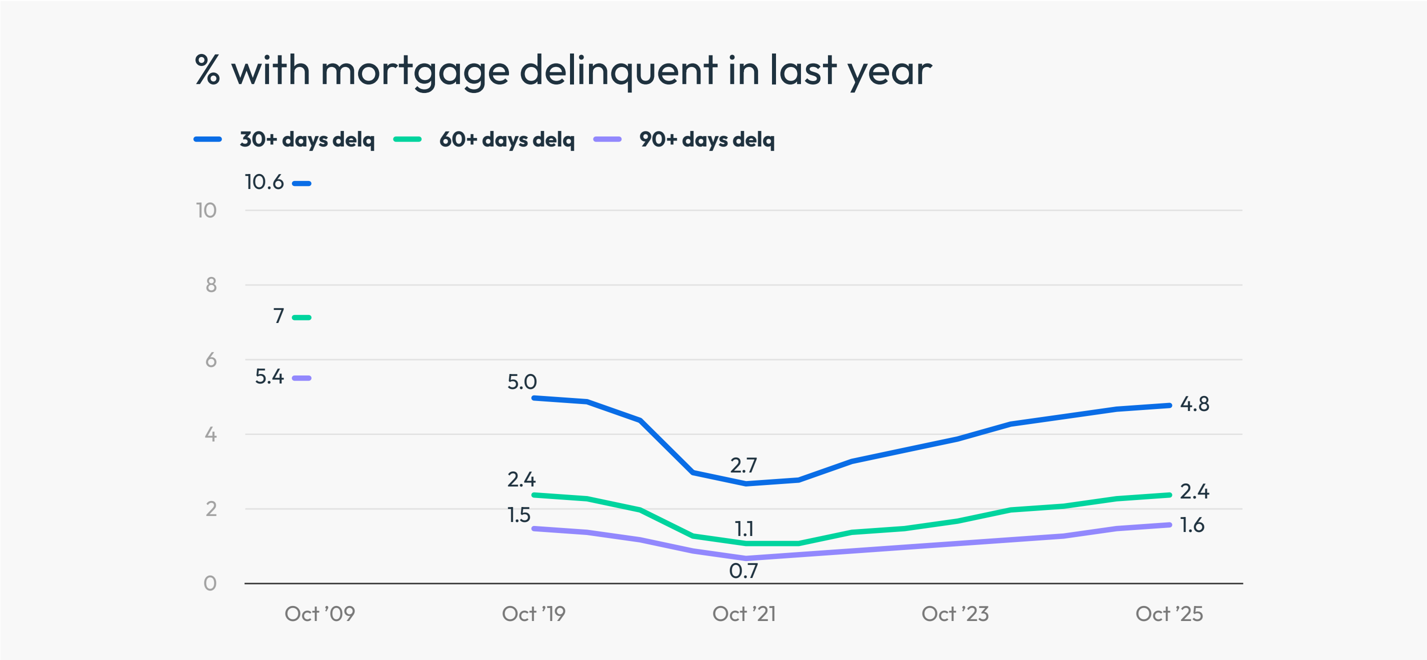


Average scores for mortgage held steady while delinquency rates have risen steadily

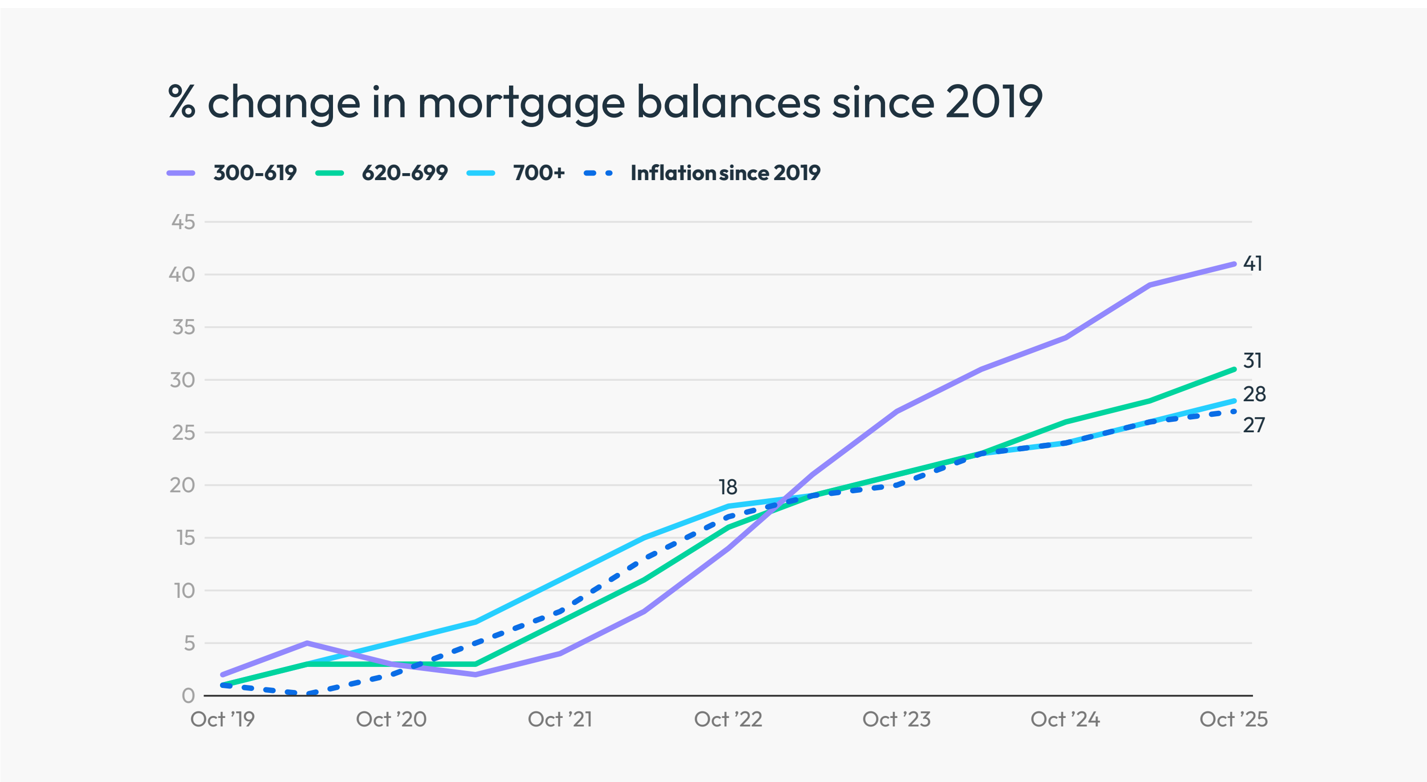
The average FICO® Score for newly issued mortgages has stabilized in the past 12 months after volatility during and after the pandemic. The refinance boom that lasted from Q2 2020–Q4 2021 brought a lot of existing homeowners back to the table to lock in historic low rates, leading to a much higher than normal average FICO Score as the mix of applicants changed significantly during that time for newly issued mortgages. The average FICO Score for existing mortgages has trended similar to the national average but is consistently ~28 points higher. Historical trends on the average FICO Score for newly issued and existing mortgages are also available on the FICO® Score Credit Insights Lab.



Unlike other product types where delinquency rates have leveled off, delinquency rates for mortgage continue to rise. In October 2025, the 30-day-plus delinquency rate rose to 4.8%, ticking closer to the rate in October 2019 of 5.0%. The 60-day-plus delinquency rate met the October 2019 level of 2.4%, and the 90-day-plus delinquency rate exceeded the 2019 rate landing at 1.6%. While these rates are nearly double the rates from October 2021, the rate of increase has slowed. This trend appears to reflect the fact that mortgage delinquency rates took longer than other credit and loan types to reach pre-pandemic norms, because home price appreciation earlier this decade helped consumers avoid delinquency by leveraging home equity and refinance opportunities.



Mortgage balances continue to increase as well, with higher home prices for first-time homebuyers or those existing homeowners that are having to move. Many markets throughout the U.S. are seeing home prices coming down from their 2022 highs, according to the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA).

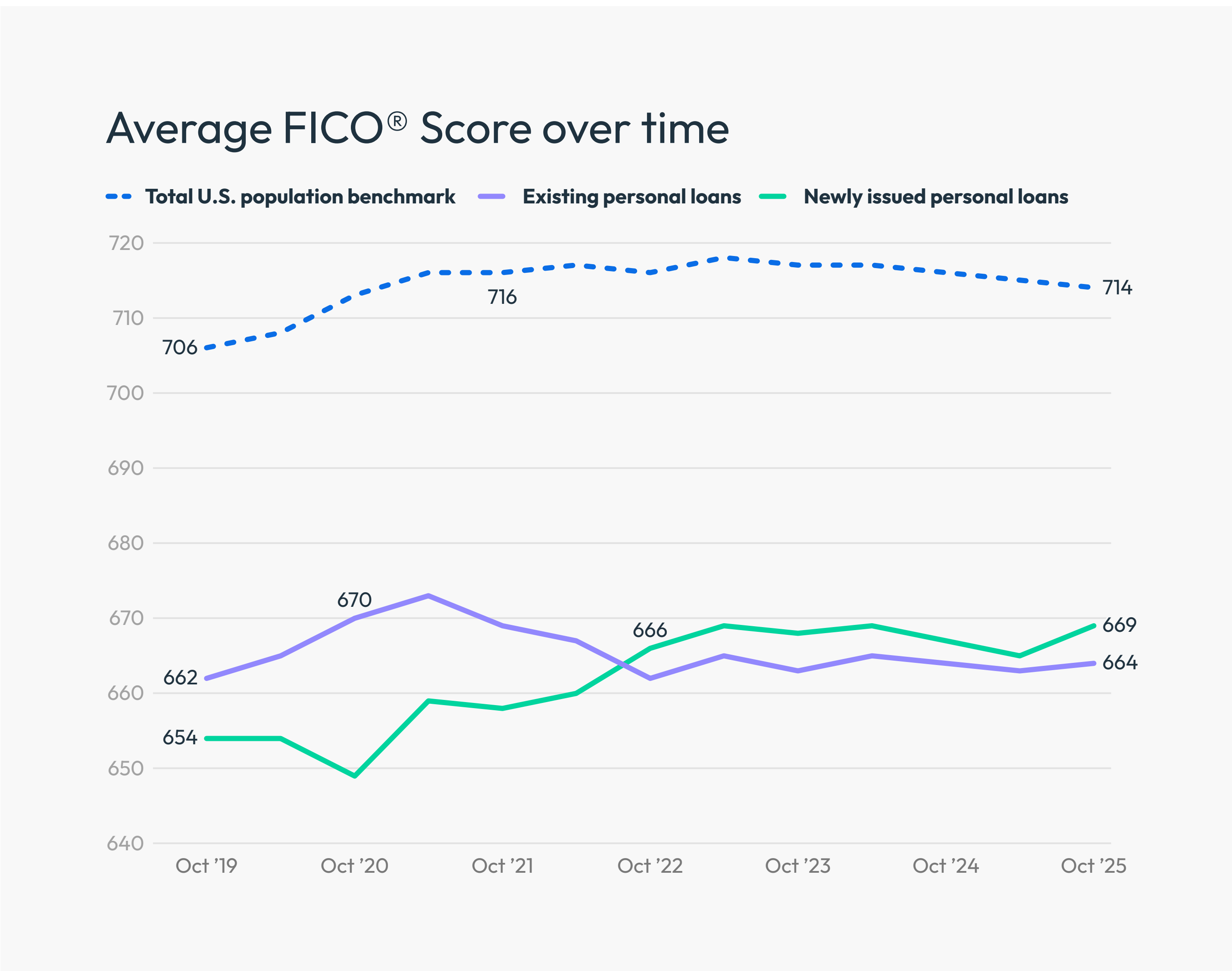


Classic FICO® Score is used for all analysis in this report pertaining to mortgage. The mortgage delinquency rates above calculate the number of consumers who have a 30+/60+/90+ days past due delinquency on a mortgage in the past year divided by the number of consumers with a mortgage. This is similar for the other products in this report. Mortgage balances are calculated by identifying the population of consumers with an open mortgage loan in a given score range, and then taking the average of each consumer's sum of all balances on open mortgage loans. The % change in mortgage balances is then the percent difference in balance between that year's average balance and October 2019's average balance. This is similar for the other products in this report.

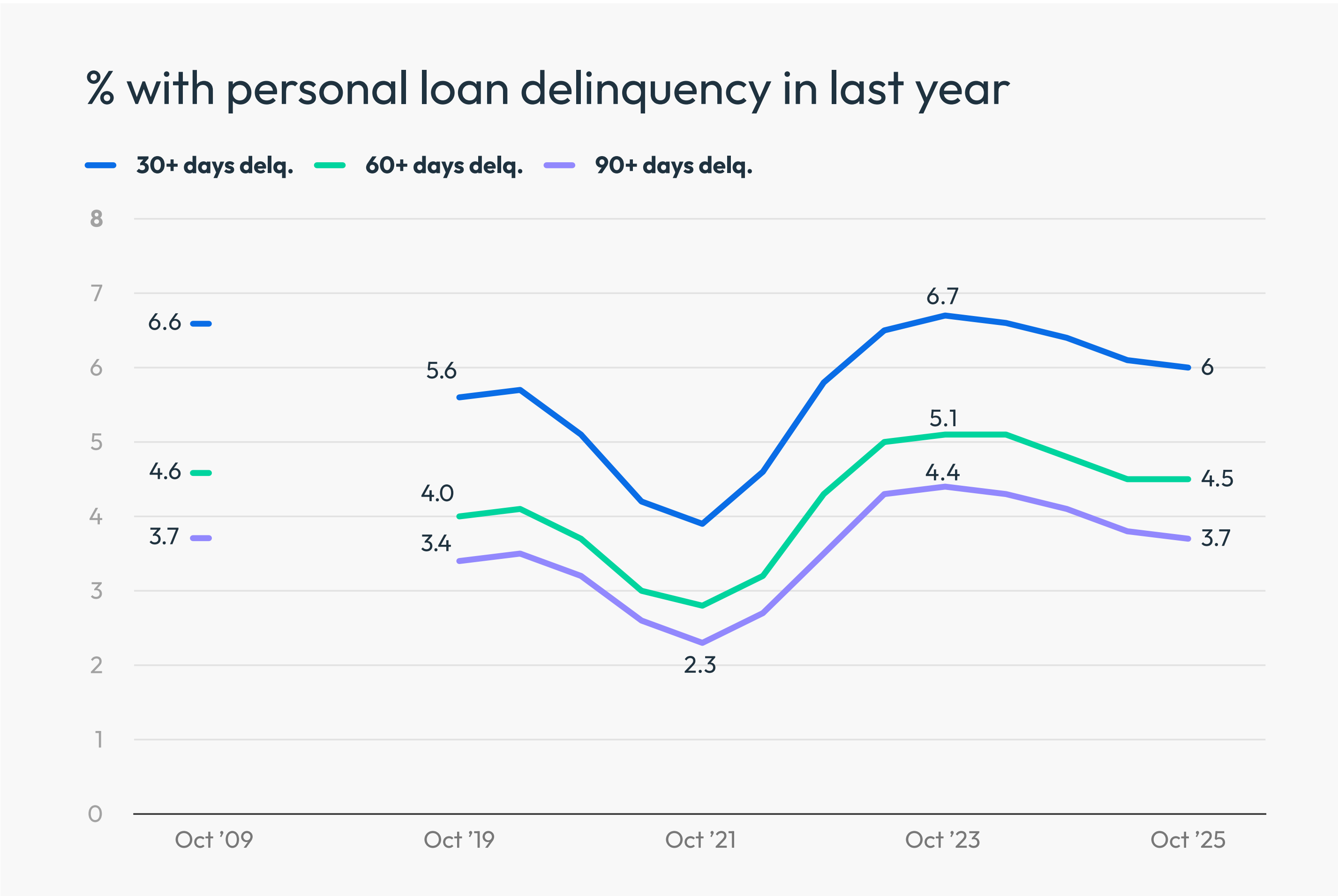
FICO® Scores for personal loan borrowers remain stable as delinquency rates fall

Personal loan credit quality has demonstrated remarkable resilience amid market expansion. The average FICO® Scores for newly issued personal loans and existing personal loans have remained at 669 over the past three years, while existing personal loan portfolios have held steady at 664. This consistency signals a critical market dynamic: The sector's substantial growth trajectory has not compromised underwriting standards — a phenomenon that stands in stark contrast to historical lending cycles where expansion has at times correlated with credit quality deterioration.

The persistent 50-point gap between personal loan borrowers (664) and the national average FICO® Score (714) has remained structurally consistent, with both metrics following parallel trajectories — rising and plateauing in tandem. For deeper analysis, the FICO® Score Credit Insights Lab provides interactive access to these trends with customizable views by industry, account lifecycle, and time.



Delinquency rates for personal loans peaked in October 2023 and have all dropped considerably since then, suggesting improved risk selection and tighter underwriting across the market. The 30-day-plus delinquency rate has fallen 10.4%; the 60-day-plus delinquency rate dropped 11.7%; and the 90-day-plus delinquency rate is down 15.9% over the two-year time period. Personal loan is regularly ahead of bankcard in the payment hierarchy, so it is unsurprising to see these delinquency rates decreasing as bankcard delinquency has leveled off.

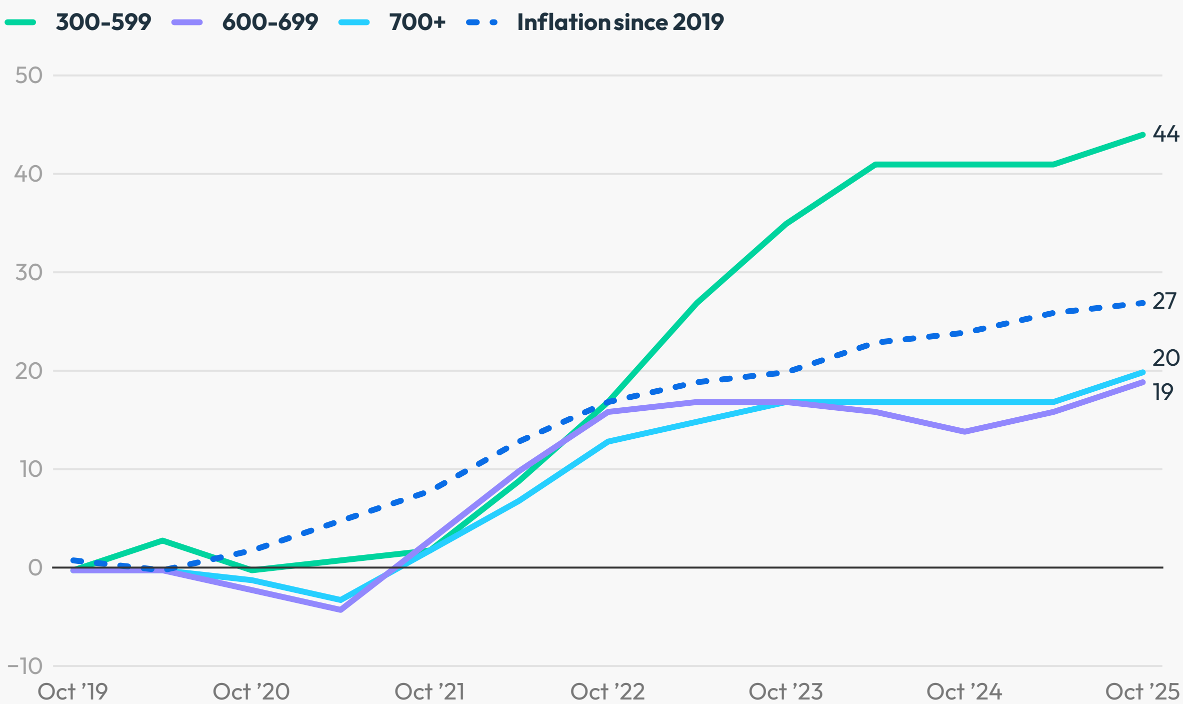


Personal loan demand revealed distinct risk-tier behaviors during recent inflationary period. After steep balance increases across all segments coming out of the pandemic, consumers with FICO® Scores 600 and above plateaued their borrowing despite rising inflation — suggesting these borrowers either accessed alternative financing sources or exercised restraint in discretionary borrowing.

In stark contrast, consumers with FICO® Scores from 300–599 continued advancing their personal loan balances until April 2024 at rates significantly exceeding inflation. This divergence points to fundamentally different financial pressures and borrowing constraints across the credit spectrum.

Higher-risk consumers likely faced limited credit alternatives during inflationary periods, making personal loans a critical financing vehicle. The timing of the April 2024 plateau among low-scoring borrowers marks a notable inflection point, potentially reflecting either lender tightening, borrower capacity limits, or shifting economic conditions that warrant continued monitoring.

% change in personal loan balances since 2019



FICO® Score 8 is used for all analysis in this report pertaining to personal loans. The score for existing personal loans is the score calculated as of October in that year. The score for newly issued personal loans is the score calculated as of July in that year, so that newly issued personal loans can be identified from August to October of that year. The definition of "existing" and "newly issued" is similar for the other products in this report.

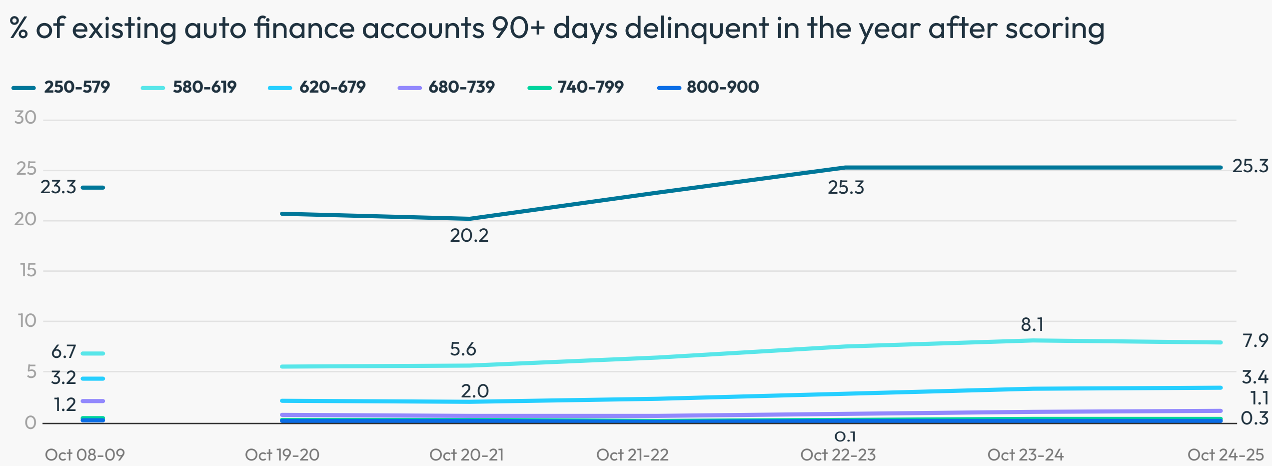
The personal loan delinquency rates above calculate the number of consumers who have a 30+/60+/90+ days past due delinquency on a personal loan in the past year divided by the number of consumers with a personal loan. This is similar for the other products in this report.

Personal loan balances are calculated by identifying the population of consumers with an open personal loan in a given score range, and then taking the average of each consumer's sum of all balances on open personal loans. The % change in personal loan balances is then the percent difference in balance between that year's average balance and October 2019's average balance. This is similar for the other products in this report.

Delinquency by score for each industry

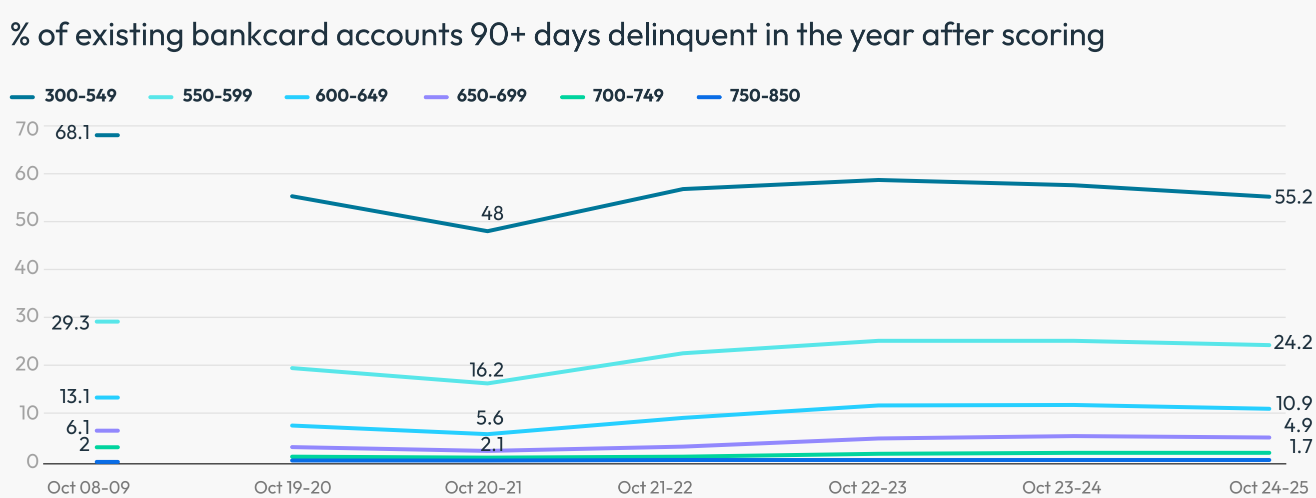
Auto using FICO® Auto Score 8:

While the overall 90-day-plus delinquency for auto finance accounts one year after scoring has risen slightly, the rate for lower scoring consumers (<620) is flat to down. The increase in delinquency is coming from the 620+ score groups.



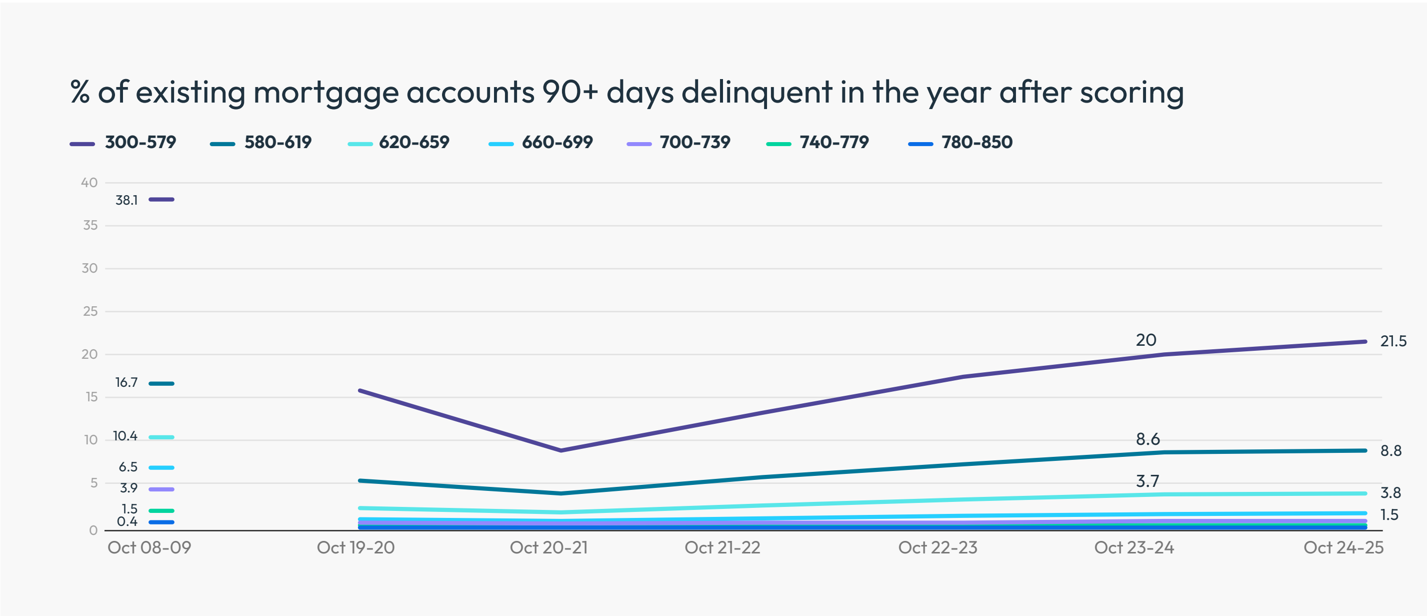
Bankcard using FICO® Score 8:

The 90-day-plus delinquency rate in the year after scoring for bankcard has decreased for all FICO® Score bands, most notably for consumers with scores <600.



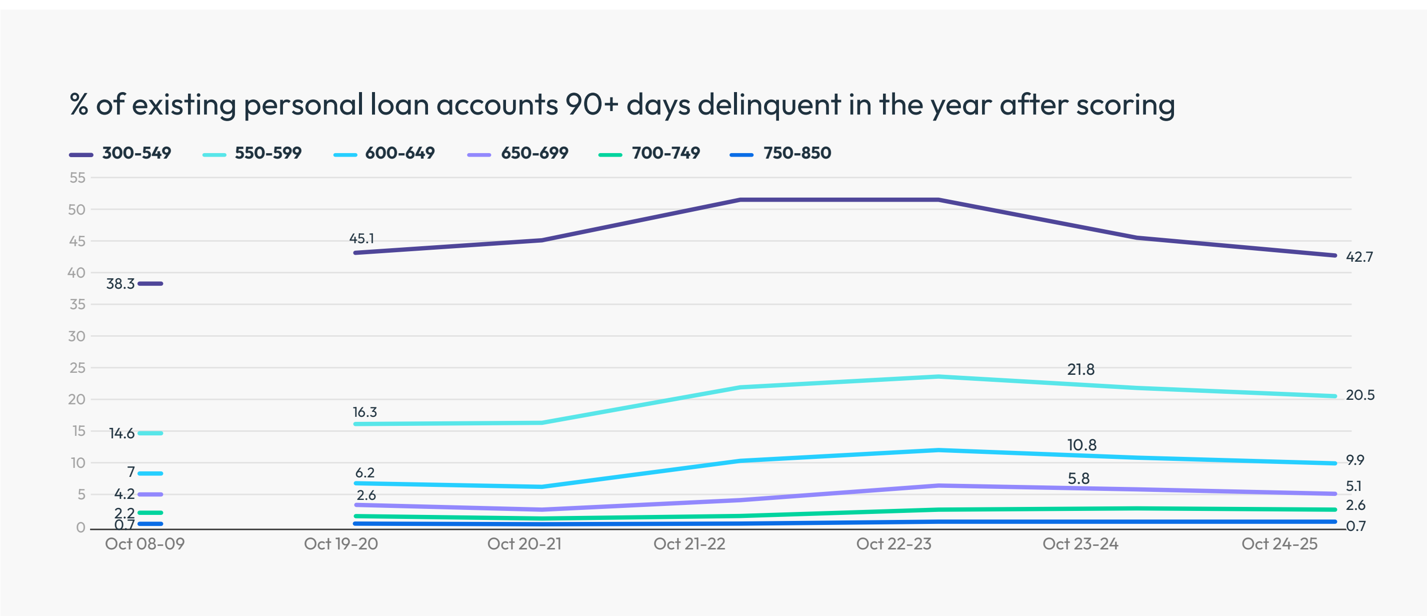
Mortgage using FICO® Score 5:

The 90-day-plus delinquency rate in the year after scoring for mortgage has increased for consumers with FICO® Scores <700. The rate increased most significantly for consumers with a score <580, up 7.5% compared to the rate in October 2024.



Personal loan using FICO® Score 8:

The 90-day-plus delinquency rate for personal loans is decreasing across all FICO® Score ranges. For consumers with a FICO Score <550, the rate has dropped 17.1% over the last two years.



Using auto finance and the October 24 to October 25 time period as an example, the score is calculated as of October 2024. The population is focused on auto finance accounts that were originated as of October 2024 or earlier. The % of accounts 90+ days delinquent is the percent of auto finance accounts (originated as of October 2024 or earlier) that went 90+ days delinquent from November 2024 to October 2025. Then each line in the graph represents consumers who fall into a particular score range as of October 2024. This is similar for other products and time periods.

Conclusion

The overall credit health of American consumers is potentially on the trajectory to improve, but many consumers may struggle with affordability. Delinquency rates have leveled off for all products other than mortgage, and nearly half of consumers with a FICO® Score are now in the 750+ segment. This is a great opportunity for lenders as the pool of low-risk consumers has grown markedly over the past couple of years.

While the average FICO® Score remains near historical highs at 714, lower scoring consumers have shown they are more likely to be impacted by higher interest rates, higher prices caused by inflation, and affordability challenges. On the other hand, more consumers are now scoring in the highest score ranges as an increasing number of consumers maintain healthy credit behaviors, such as paying their bills on time, keeping credit card balances low, and monitoring their credit.

While uncertainty persists for some segments, the economy could benefit others. Price increases have slowed while interest rates have come down, and we will continue to monitor the affordability of housing and autos. The average FICO® Score captures historical performance, and evolving economic factors may impact future credit score trajectories.

Report methodology

The data used for this report is based on a nationally representative sample of millions of consumer credit files spanning multiple time periods from one of the national consumer reporting agencies. Some of the variables shown in this report are also used in FICO® Scores.

FICO® Consumer Credit Study

Consumer survey insights summary, spring 2026 edition

Credit scores are America's universal financial language

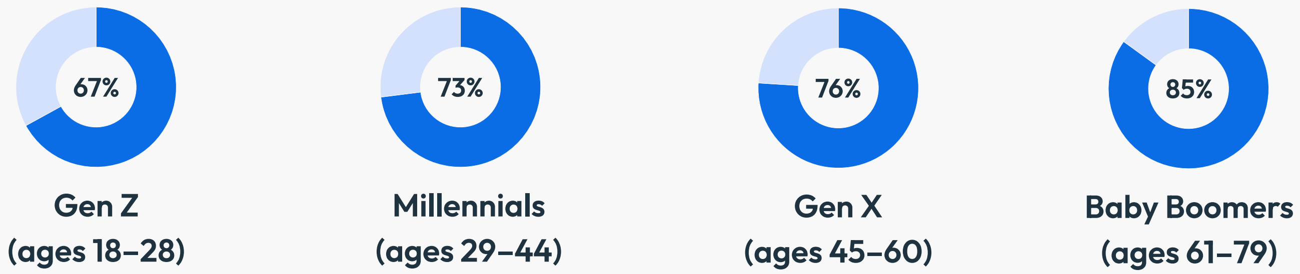
Credit scores have emerged as the definitive measure of financial health, with more Americans than ever embracing their scores as a fair representation of their overall financial well-being. This marks a fundamental shift in how consumers view and interact with their credit profiles across all generations.

The credit score confidence transformation

Americans are demonstrating unprecedented confidence in credit scores as their financial compass.

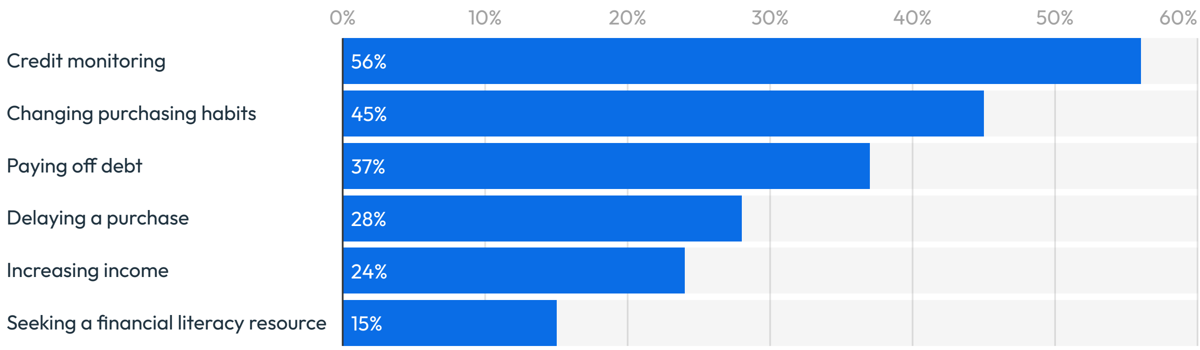
76% agree their credit score fairly represents their overall financial health — having increased from 70% two years ago.

Gen Z (ages 18–29) agreement sits at 67%. While this trails other generations (73% of Millennials ages 30–45, 76% of Gen X ages 46–61, and 85% of Baby Boomers ages 62–80), it still reflects that nearly 7 in 10 younger adults consider their credit score to be a fair representation of their financial well-being.



Credit monitoring has emerged as the #1 reported financial improvement tactic across all age groups (56%) — ranking higher than changing purchasing habits (45%), paying off debt (37%), delaying a purchase (28%), increasing income (24%), or seeking a financial literacy resource (15%).

Most common financial improvement strategies across all age groups



Gen Z reports 3.5x higher credit-related anxiety levels than Baby Boomers

Gen Z reports experiencing significantly higher levels of credit-related anxiety compared to older generations, creating a distinct emotional landscape around financial health.

- **60% of Gen Z report credit score anxiety** compared to just 17% of Baby Boomers — a 3.5x difference that represents the widest generational gap in financial stress
- **50% of Gen Z avoid checking scores due to fear** versus only 11% of Baby Boomers, highlighting the emotional burden younger consumers carry around their credit profiles
- **Credit anxiety decreases steadily with age:** 53% Millennials, 43% Gen X, 17% Baby Boomers — suggesting that experience and financial maturity help reduce credit-related stress over time

Despite their anxiety, Gen Z remains highly active in credit markets. FICO® Score Credit Insights analysis shows Gen Z opens credit cards at higher rates than any other generation, while maintaining utilization rates identical to Millennials at ~44%. Additionally, 38% of Gen Z respondents report they would likely open new credit cards as a financial cushion — the highest rate among all generational groups.

This combination of high credit activity and elevated emotional stress creates unique challenges for this demographic. Gen Z's pronounced anxiety levels, paired with their heavy credit engagement, suggest they would benefit from targeted approaches that address psychological barriers while providing better education around credit management. Understanding this generational difference in credit-related stress can inform more targeted and empathetic approaches to serving younger consumers who represent the future of the credit market.

Continuous credit score monitoring offers American consumers peace of mind

77% agree that being able to monitor their credit score gives them peace of mind.

- While the rates vary some by generation, more than 7 out of 10 Gen Z consumers agree that despite their reported anxiety around the idea of checking it, **continuous monitoring actually has a calming effect.**

Credit score knowledge gaps create education opportunities

Fundamental misconceptions persist across all generations, revealing critical education needs. With the close linkage between mental and emotional health to credit score monitoring, it is as important as ever for consumers to not just know their score — but to understand it.

- **72% incorrectly believe or are unsure as to whether carrying small credit card balances helps scores** — a misconception that could lead to unnecessary interest payments and suboptimal credit utilization strategies
- **2 out of 3 wrongly assume income affects credit scores** — a fundamental misunderstanding common across all age groups, which prevents consumers from recognizing that credit improvement is achievable through behavioral changes like on-time payments and low utilization, not higher paychecks
- **While 70% report checking their credit scores multiple times per year, 1 in 5 incorrectly assumes that it will negatively impact their score to do so**

Credit access remains core financial concern

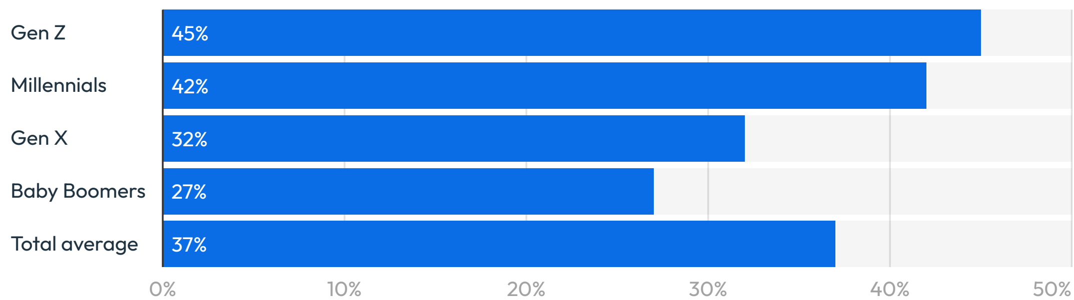
Credit scores are deeply connected to Americans' sense of financial confidence and control. And while some market conditions improved, confidence in credit accessibility continues to drive consumer decision-making.

- 70% say their credit score affects how confident they feel about their financial future
- 70% also say their credit score impacts their comfort in making major life decisions
- 41% worry insufficient credit access blocks financial goals — persistent across generations — demonstrating the ongoing demand for responsible credit expansion solutions

Credit monitoring goes beyond an annual checkup — especially among Gen Z and Millennials

The traditional once-a-year credit score check is becoming obsolete as younger generations transform credit monitoring into a regular financial wellness practice. 70% of Americans report checking multiple times per year (76% Gen Z, 72% Millennial, 66% Gen X, 64% Baby Boomer), with many now choosing to monitor monthly rather than annually.

Monthly credit score monitoring rates by generation

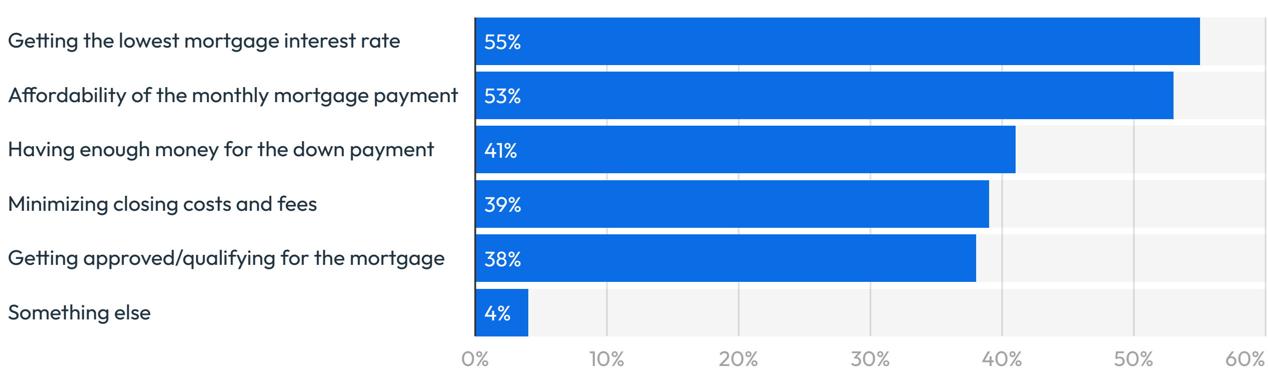


Interest rate sensitivity drives strategic thinking on credit application timing

With affordability top of mind, three-quarters of Americans say they factor interest rates into their credit application timing, with 29% saying they won't apply unless rates drop to a certain point. This level of strategic thinking represents an advanced understanding of how credit costs affect long-term financial health.

When applying for a mortgage, Americans indicated their focus is on optimization rather than simply access — reflecting a maturing approach to credit utilization.

Top priorities when applying for a mortgage



Bottom line: Credit scores as financial North Star

Americans have embraced credit scores as a strong financial health indicator, with engagement reaching new heights across all demographics.

However, the data reveals a critical opportunity: Foundational knowledge gaps persist universally in what makes for strong credit score health. This presents both a challenge and tremendous opportunity for targeted financial education that can transform existing engagement into more informed financial decision-making, particularly among digitally native generations who will define the future of American credit health.

And with 60% of Gen Z experiencing credit-related anxiety — 3.5x Baby Boomers — and 70% of all Americans reporting that credit scores affect their confidence in their financial future, the psychological impact of credit health cannot be ignored.

The encouraging finding that 77% of consumers gain peace of mind through continuous credit monitoring points to a clear pathway forward: Combining regular credit monitoring with comprehensive financial education can simultaneously reduce anxiety while building knowledge. This dual approach — providing both the reassurance of ongoing visibility and the empowerment of understanding — offers the potential to transform credit management from a source of stress into a tool for financial confidence and mental well-being across all generations.

About the survey:

This survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of FICO from February 2–4, 2026, among 2,059 U.S. adults ages 18 and older. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within +/- 2.7 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest. For complete survey methodology, including weighting variables and subgroup sample sizes, please contact press@fico.com.

FICO® Scores and how FICO can help

As credit conditions grow more complex, lenders need greater precision, transparency, and confidence in their decisioning. Expanding access to credit today requires more than adjusting thresholds. It requires explainable, data-driven strategies that balance opportunity with risk.

FICO enables this through responsible innovation that strengthens decisioning at scale. Through the **FICO® Score Credit Insights Lab**, financial institutions can test and evaluate advanced scoring strategies in a controlled, analytics-driven environment before deployment. Tools such as the Inclusion Opportunity Explorer allow lenders to model how score layering and alternative data can responsibly expand approvals while maintaining portfolio performance and regulatory confidence.

Within this framework, scoring innovations such as FICO® Score XD and UltraFICO® Score provide applied approaches for evaluating consumers with limited or thin credit histories. By incorporating additional, compliant data signals, these scores help institutions assess applicants who may fall just outside traditional approval criteria without compromising transparency or risk discipline.

This decisioning infrastructure is reinforced through **FICO Impact**, which aligns FICO's analytics leadership with efforts to strengthen financial literacy, understanding, and trust across the credit ecosystem. Programs such as **Score A Better Future®**, **FICO® Score Open Access for Credit & Financial Counselors**, the **Educational Analytics Challenge**, and **Lenders Leading Financial Inclusion** support education, adoption, and long-term system resilience.

At the consumer level, myFICO® complements this ecosystem by giving individuals direct access to their FICO® Scores, credit education, and monitoring tools, helping translate institutional decisioning into greater transparency and engagement for consumers.

Together, these capabilities reflect FICO's commitment to connecting innovation with accountability, enabling a credit system that is more resilient, more transparent, and better positioned for sustainable growth.

Explore how inclusion can be a catalyst for both business growth and community impact.

Learn more at

www.fico.com/empowerment

www.fico.com/ficoscorecreditinsightslab

FICO® SCORE

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