



NORTH AMERICA INSIGHTS

FEBRUARY 2025

New paths to progress

Making financial success accessible
for underbanked consumers



Contents

- 3** Foreword
- 4** Executive summary
- 5** Methodology
- 6** **Part 1:** Understanding Underbanked consumers
- 10** **Part 2:** Supporting Underbanked consumers in meaningful ways
- 13** **Part 3:** Tailoring opportunities to nuanced needs
- 16** **Part 4:** Gaining insight into distinct Underbanked personas
- 22** **Part 5:** Building a better future
- 24** Opportunities to collaborate

Foreword



For more information,
contact:

Troy Dennis

Senior Vice President,
Core Products
troy.dennis@mastercard.com

David Lago

Director,
North America Financial Inclusion
david.lago@mastercard.com

Amanda Fraga

Vice President,
North America Insights
amanda.fraga@mastercard.com

Dana Farber

Director,
North America Insights
dana.farber@mastercard.com

A staggering 36 million North American (NAM) consumers—12% of the population—are underbanked, navigating their financial lives with a bank account but without access to essential credit tools like credit cards. Longstanding financial inequities have limited these individuals' access to financial education and growth. However, Underbanked consumers are committed to a better future, with 66% seeking more financial knowledge and 65% looking to financial institutions to help address financial inequities. With a growth-oriented mindset and a market size representing \$1.6 trillion in buying power, we have a meaningful opportunity to positively impact consumers lives.

Recognizing a gap in support for the Underbanked, we uncovered emerging trends reshaping consumers' lives and the societal context in which they operate. This diverse population could include a well-educated immigrant in biotech, a student overcoming generational systemic barriers, an entrepreneur building a business while living with family, and a middle-class Millennial, the first in their family to invest for retirement. Within this diversity and cultural transformation, we identified subgroups with distinct attitudes, revealing unique potential ready to be unlocked.

- Technological acceleration has changed the way we live, work and spend; Underbanked consumers skew young with strong representation of Gen Z who comfortably incorporate AI and other technologies in their daily habits and workplace dynamics.
- With innovation and business creation bringing new modes for financial interaction and inclusion, Underbanked consumers are embracing open banking and will be ready for more change. Open banking functionality and installment options offer the opportunity to harness cutting-edge technology to provide access to alternative credit scoring, short-term credit and improved cash flow.
- Many Underbanked consumers are leading the way in key societal shifts like mental health. For example, Underbanked individuals are more likely to focus on mental health, as it is directly linked to their financial health, compared to their banked counterparts.

Amidst these transformative shifts, addressing Underbanked opportunities requires a nuanced understanding of their evolving behaviors. Financial inclusion for the Underbanked is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Building these relationships includes addressing five key values: Trust, Access, Usage, Health and Education. Through our groundbreaking Powering Prosperity framework, we have identified three distinct personas within the Underbanked population, each with unique aspirations, needs, and challenges. These personas enable us to tailor more targeted solutions and communications within the key value areas, effectively meeting the diverse needs of this group.

The reality is, supporting Underbanked consumers changes lives. As an industry, we have a moral obligation to help these individuals achieve greater financial success and a real shot at making a meaningful difference. Working together, we can shape a brighter future for everyone as we expand the path to greater inclusion.

Troy Dennis

Senior Vice President,
Core Products

Executive Summary

1

Building trust is the key to unlocking Underbanked potential

Underbanked consumers have a fighting spirit, they are propelled by an ambition to become financially stable and are cautiously looking for help. 65% would like financial institutions to help address financial inequities, yet more than half also feel taken advantage of by the financial system. Building trust will require efforts like more personal interaction, genuine connections, low-fee services, leveraging technology, and building community partnerships.

2

Debit products offer an entry point for additional products and cross-sell

85% of Underbanked consumers rely on debit cards, a significantly higher rate than the general population, presenting a unique opportunity for financial growth. By helping this underserved group transition to credit, we can facilitate new possibilities for financial access. Cash-back promotions are especially attractive to 70% of Underbanked consumers, while retail points and rewards align with their lifestyle, boosting appeal. With more education on the benefits of credit cards and personalized strategies for maximizing them, the Underbanked can unlock greater financial freedom and stability.

3

Heavy personal burdens make health initiatives imperative

Underbanked individuals carry significant responsibilities, such as living with non nuclear families and overrepresentation of neurodiversity and physical disabilities in their households. Many have fewer resources that need to stretch farther. Stress and anxiety weigh on them, which is why Underbanked consumers prioritize their mental health more than most, and nearly half have a near-term personal goal to improve their mental health (39% higher than the total population). As a result, we have a critical role to play in developing targeted resources.

4

Education can help overcome generational cycles

The financial uncertainty for some Underbanked consumers stems from childhoods of poverty – 64% lived in households of low socioeconomic brackets as children, vs. 46% among the total U.S. The cycles persist with lack of intergenerational wealth transfer and limited access to education, both formal and financial. However, many are still young and exhibit optimism. They are pursuing education and professional growth at rates 2x higher than the general population, and two out of three are seeking more financial knowledge to gain control over their personal situation. In this context, we have a vital role to play in providing resources and educational opportunities that empower these individuals to achieve greater financial stability.

5

The variety we see in the Underbanked community represents unique opportunities

Genuinely connecting with Underbanked consumers amidst our constantly evolving cultural landscape requires a nuanced approach. Our research highlights three personas who comprise 18 million of the strongest Underbanked prospects. Each persona has distinct lifestyles, attitudes, and priorities within the Underbanked population – some are more tech forward, dynamic, and focused on growth, others are cautious and seeking control, still others are practical, positive, and looking to learn. These unique personas illuminate three paths forward to better support Underbanked consumers with tailored approaches.

An intersectional approach

Our Powering Prosperity methodology is grounded by foundational inputs that capture the breadth of society, including values, lifestyles, changing priorities, past challenges, and future goals. Analysis of behavioral data such as income, savings, category spend, and media habits are layered on to create a comprehensive, culturally-grounded framework.

We administered a 35-minute online, nationally representative survey in both the U.S. and Canada. Data include N=802 Underbanked consumers (those who use checking or savings accounts but do not currently use a credit card) and N=8,470 Banked consumers (those who do currently use a credit card).

The sample includes those ages 16+ and is census-balanced by generation, gender, and ethnicity, in the U.S. and Canada. The comprehensive sample provides invaluable insights into the emerging trends that will shape preferences and behaviors in the years to come. The data is linked to behavioral modeling that is constantly refreshed and enables precision marketing.

The detailed, comprehensive, and culturally motivated methodology means the findings about Underbanked consumers, including the Underbanked personas, are future-proofed and dynamic, not solely based in present attitudes and behaviors.





1
Understanding
Underbanked
consumers

A large, young, and diverse audience

Underbanked consumers can be found in every corner of the economy. From small towns to urban areas, classrooms to construction sites, contracted jobs to gig work, they are striving, achieving and making incremental gains. At the same time, some find themselves uncertain and unsure of which way to turn. This is a diverse group with a wide range of individual needs.



Underbanked people comprise nearly 1 in 8 NAM consumers, highlighting a substantial market. This cohort represents an addressable market of 36 million individuals and \$1.6 trillion in buying power in the U.S. alone.



Gen Z and Millennials dominate the category. The Underbanked audience skews heavily toward younger consumers, the majority (68%) are under 43, 1.6x higher than their representation in the U.S. total.



The Underbanked community is multifaceted.

Women (61% vs. 52%*), Black Americans (25% vs. 11%), Hispanic Americans (19% vs. 16%) and LGBTQIA+ individuals (14% vs. 10%) are all prominent in the Underbanked population.

*All comparisons throughout this paper are versus the total North American (NAM) population unless specified otherwise



Living arrangements are diverse among the Underbanked. 26% live with non-nuclear family (2.1x higher than total) and 53% are unmarried (1.7x higher than total). Their homes are more densely populated than average – 55% live with three or more people (vs. 40% among total), 15% with five or more people (vs. 9% among total).



Underbanked consumers carry a high degree of responsibility. A higher percentage live in homes with children (34% vs. 31%), neurodiverse individuals (27% vs. 12%) and people with physical disabilities (15% vs. 9%). 17% are primary caregivers for aging loved ones (vs. 15% among total).



Many face financial uncertainty. With low combined annual household incomes (\$30k in the U.S., \$37k CAD in Canada) and low investable assets (\$11k in the U.S., \$17k CAD in Canada), Underbanked individuals have little or no cushion to fall back on when life goes awry.



Breaking generational cycles, but they feel unseen

51%

feel the world is not fair

1 in 2

Claim financial services do not
serve their unique needs
(21% higher than total)



The challenges faced by Underbanked consumers often started with the generations before them as the result of historic inequities and discrimination. 36% of the Underbanked population say they lived in middle-class or higher socioeconomic environments growing up, and only 32% do now, which contrasts with the overall trend of economic growth over generations. (In total, 54% of North Americans grew up middle-class or higher vs. 64% today)

This group has faced instability and often does not have confidence that it will change. 52% are not confident in their job stability (26% higher than total) and 45% worry they will be less financially stable in the future (11% higher than total).

Underbanked individuals also have less opportunity for intergenerational wealth transfer. Just 25% believe they will receive any type of inheritance, and only 6% believe the amount will be more than \$100,000.

Optimism for the future

One of the most striking characteristics of Underbanked consumers is their willingness to work toward achievement despite societal or situational setbacks. These consumers want to pursue opportunities for growth and betterment.

Underbanked consumers are taking matters into their own hands by staying clear eyed about their situations, and pursuing an array of personal and career aspirations, including:

- **Pursuing education.** Underbanked individuals see academic achievement as an important step toward a better future. They are 2x more likely than total to want to further their education and 2x more interested in earning a certificate relevant to their career development within the next 5 years.
- **Improving and sustaining mental health.** Nearly half have a personal goal to improve their mental health (47% vs. 34% among total) and an almost equal number say they focus on being present in the moment.
- **Continuing to drive forward.** 66% of Underbanked consumers agree they "...live life fluidly, taking things day by day" (vs. 60%). 57% say they have had to fight for their opportunities for financial achievement (vs. 46%).
- **Finding opportunities for growth.** 66% want more financial knowledge (vs. 68%). 18% are interested in starting a small business, 76% higher than the general population.



2

Supporting
Underbanked
consumers in
meaningful ways

Building strong connections

Underbanked consumers want greater financial education, planning, and access to relevant products. Yet their past experiences have left them skeptical of financial institutions. Mastercard approaches partnerships with Underbanked consumers with the intention of creating long-term relationships and a path forward. Building these relationships includes addressing five key values: **Trust**, **Access**, **Usage**, **Health**, and **Education**.

55%

Feel taken advantage of by the financial system (vs. 39%)

Trust

Underbanked consumers feel financial institutions are against them and believe it's up to these institutions to repair the bond. 65% believe financial institutions have a responsibility to address inequities (vs. 59%) and 64% feel their financial situation is impacted by forces outside of their control (vs. 56%), even more pronounced for female Underbanked consumers. Clear communication, convenience, simplicity, strategies for credit improvement, low prices, and low fees can all help repair trust.

58%

Often struggle to make ends meet (vs. 34%)

Access

Underbanked consumers need support to break the generational cycle of disadvantage to achieve lasting financial stability. Only 22% rate their current socioeconomic status higher now than when they were growing up (vs. 38% among total) and 29% feel they have declined (vs. 18% among total). Better access to in-person and personalized financial service options will help Underbanked individuals break cycles to grow and sustain their wealth.

70%

Say cash back would be the most important credit card benefit (vs. 62%)

Usage

Card usage could unlock a host of benefits and added convenience to simplify the complex lives of the Underbanked. More than one in four have a near-term goal to build credit (77% higher than total). However, 52% say current reward options don't feel relevant to their lifestyle (vs. 29% among total), retailer rewards or non-travel points could be a better fit. Many also doubt they would monitor and maximize credit card benefits (54% vs. 40% among total). Transitioning from debit to credit will require education and a mindset shift to help Underbanked consumers maximize benefits and rewards.

**SUPPORTING
UNDERBANKED
CONSUMERS IN
MEANINGFUL WAYS**

57%

Tend to be anxious about situations outside their control (vs. 50%)

66%

Want more financial knowledge (vs. 68%)

Health

The emphasis on mental health in society is expanding, along with the recognition that all dimensions of health are intrinsically linked. 83% of all consumers (not only Underbanked) agree that when it comes to physical, mental and financial health, "you can't have one without the other."¹ Underbanked consumers place an even higher premium on mental health – 49% say it is their #1 health priority vs. 37% among total – and could use support from institutions to address this priority.

Education

Underbanked consumers understand, both rationally and viscerally, that lack of access may have limited their financial opportunities. The majority have strong interest in more financial education. They want to learn about the financial system, as well as products and services that can help them thrive.

Both personally and generationally they have had less exposure to formal education. Only 27% of Underbanked Gen Z and Millennials have a college degree while 36% of their parents achieved a college degree (compared to 69% of Banked Gen Z and Millennials and 60% of their parents). Despite limited access, 21% of Underbanked Gen Z and Millennials are still in school.



¹ Mastercard Health and Wellness Exploration, June 2023.



3

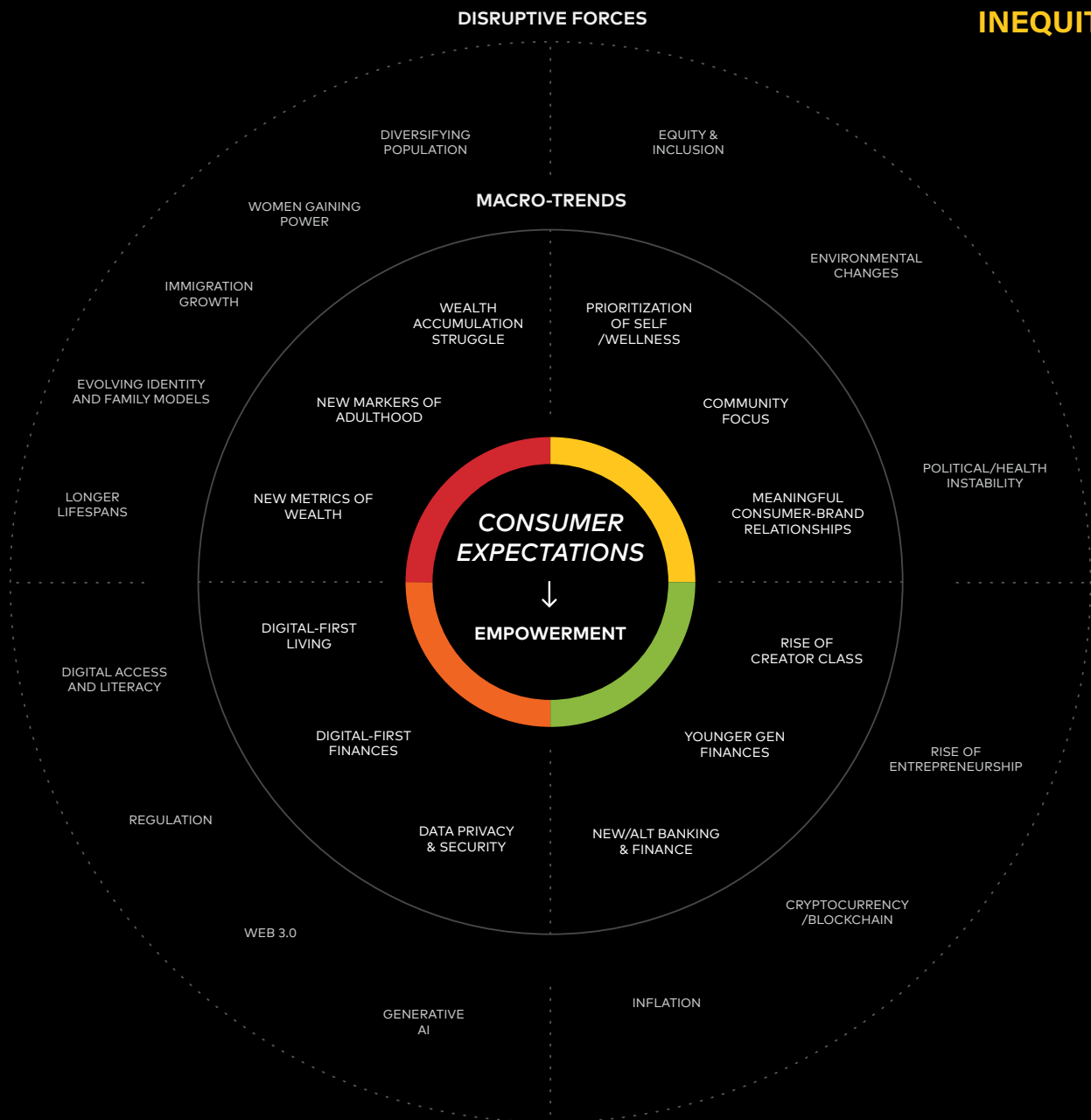
Tailoring
opportunities to
nuanced needs

**TAILORING
OPPORTUNITIES TO
NUANCED NEEDS**

Transformations in society, culture, technology, and economics are shaping our current era. Traditional expectations and assumptions about our world and our lives can no longer capture the full range of human complexity. Mastercard developed the human-centered Powering Prosperity research framework, grounded in the comprehensive analysis of these transformational shifts in North America, to support innovation relevant for tomorrow's consumers.

**DEMOGRAPHIC AND
LIFESTAGE SHIFTS**

**SOCIAL SHIFTS
AND INCREASED
AWARENESS OF
INEQUITIES**



**TECHNOLOGICAL
ACCELERATION**

**ECONOMIC
VARIABILITIES**

Four disruptive forces create an imperative for change

The Powering Prosperity framework explores four key areas of societal transformation to identify communities where the changes are most evident. For instance, the increasing economic power of diversifying populations introduces new opportunities for businesses and communities to thrive in a more inclusive environment. The digital world offers new ways to interact, access information, and transact, particularly for younger generations.

Analyzing these trends enables strategic focus on these dynamic areas, ensuring business efforts are aligned with the most promising opportunities for sustainable growth and development.

1

A society beyond demographic labels: Demographics alone are no longer sufficient for defining economic power.

Families with historically lower generational wealth are showing increased interest in financial growth, with more planning to open an investment account in the next 12 months compared to those with higher generational wealth.¹

2

Profit meets purpose: Political, global, and environmental forces heighten awareness of wellness, community impact, and inequity.

Among Americans, 45% agree that rising awareness of social injustice has made health and wellness more important.²

3

The future is now: Generative AI and Web 3.0 are changing the way we live, work, and spend in increasingly unpredictable ways.

With the limitless applications of AI, 46% of Gen Z leans more on AI than on their managers. As younger generations take over the workplace, the role AI plays will only increase.³

4

New roads to success: Innovation, risk-taking, and business creation bring along new modes of banking that lead to transformative change.

48% of Underbanked consumers use open banking, 21% higher than the general population.

¹ Mastercard, Inspiring Growth, February 2022; Mintel Reports, Life Stages in Financial Services in 2022.

² Pursuing Prosperity, October 2022.

³ [Forbes](#), 46% Of Gen Z Leans More On AI Than Their Manager, Says New Study, July 2024.

A young man with dark, curly hair, wearing glasses and a blue and white striped long-sleeved shirt, is focused on a tablet computer. He is also holding a device with a white cord that loops around his head. The background is a blurred workshop or classroom setting with wooden beams and other people. The overall tone is professional and educational.

4

Gaining insight
into distinct
Underbanked
personas

Three distinct personas expand opportunities

The Powering Prosperity research framework captures the spirit and unique needs of tomorrow's future consumer by characterizing them into eight high-growth communities. These eight personas together make up 80% of the North American population and illuminate previously overlooked dimensions of the population.

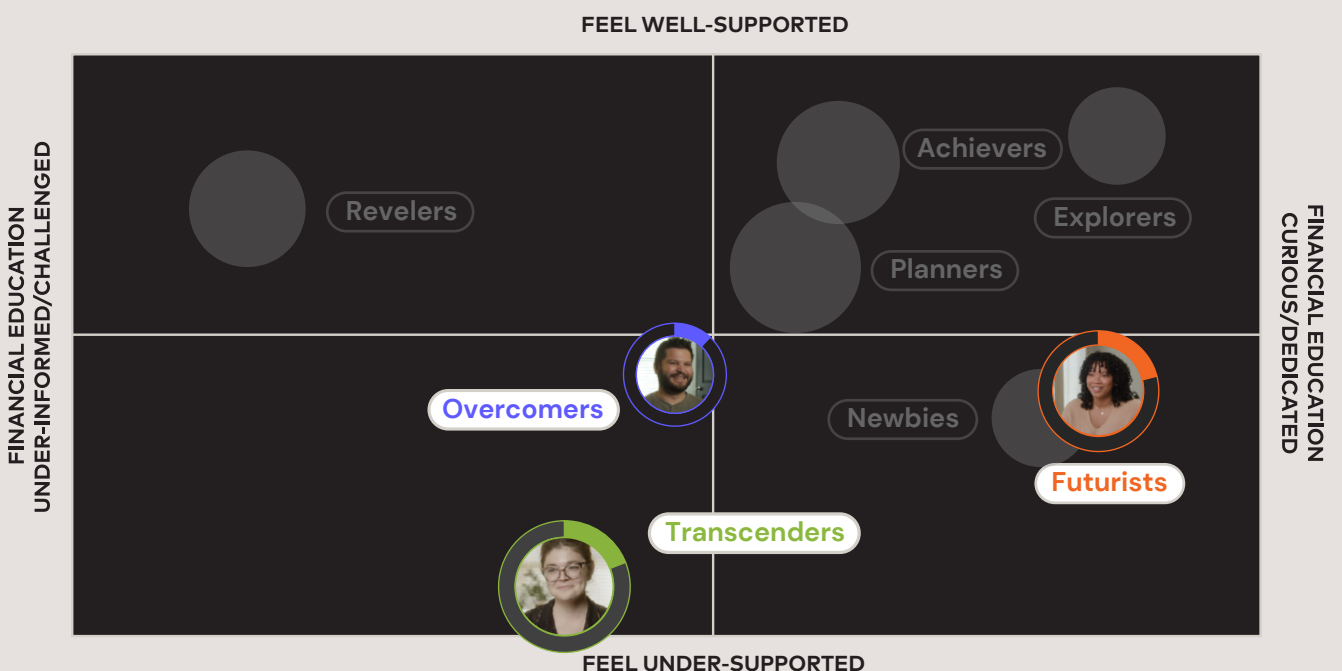
Through a Powering Prosperity lens, Underbanked consumers are viewed as a multi-dimensional, complex population with a range of needs and interests. The map below shows all groups plotted by their financial curiosity (the x axis) and how supported they feel by current financial systems (the y axis).

Three personas in particular capture the largest incidence and populations among Underbanked consumers and offer distinct ways to support and innovate for them. These personas are the **Futurists**, **Overcomers**, and **Transcenders**. As the map illustrates, they all need better financial tools and guidance to move beyond mere survival to thrive. Yet their unique perspectives and needs can inspire tailored product development, messaging, and strategies that will have the most effective, broad impact.

Futurists: Tenacious creators manifesting their passions and financial goals into reality – 21% are Underbanked.

Overcomers: Curious pragmatists with higher incomes than other Underbanked personas, who stay focused on the journey over the destination – 12% are Underbanked.

Transcenders: Fighters for equity and access, who are looking for balance while confronting their financial challenges –19% are Underbanked.



UNDERBANKED FUTURISTS

Tenacious creators manifesting their passions and financial goals into reality.



Charting their own paths with faith in the American dream, they aim to stay positive and find creative solutions to life's challenges, even though it's not always easy.

They are driven and ambitious and use tech-forward products and solutions. They have high trust in companies, are relatively spontaneous purchasers, and take pride in the brands they purchase and use.

Finances are top of mind, and they seek advice about investing, crypto, financial basics, and entrepreneurialism. They want education that will help them with their future planning and are open to credit cards and rewards.

OPPORTUNITIES AMONG UNDERBANKED FUTURISTS

- Strong credit candidate with high interest in rewards
- Receptive to novel, cutting-edge products and ideas
- Primed for tech-forward tools and services

MOTIVATED BY SELF GROWTH

- Open to new ideas, learning and experiences
- Goals and ambition define their identity (+31%)

UNIQUE PERSONALITY TRAITS

**Adventurous
Driven**

Leisure Activities & Interests



DRIVEN TO IMPROVE THEIR FAMILY SITUATION

- Live in large households, carrying many responsibilities
- Renters who often struggle to make ends meet
- Households can represent marginalized populations

Single, never married	Live with extended family	Caring for aging loved one
+149%	+149%	+62%

Lifestyle Traits: Working-class moms, moms of grade school kids, young and hip

EMBRACE CHANGE

- +59% more likely to be **early tech adopters**
- High representation of small/medium business owners, creators
- Burdened by debt (e.g., student loans, personal loans), but ambitious and willing to embrace risk to gain financial benefits

EAGER FOR FINANCIAL LITERACY

More likely than average to be interested in learning about:

Financial planning	Investment advice	Financial basics	2x more likely to be interested in novel financial products (crypto, NFTs)
+62%	+39%	+113%	

- Highest interest in financial products overall, particularly in financial planning and investment tools
- Highest interest in credit card rewards
- More likely to feel digital payment methods are the future (use tap for payment, QR codes, digital wallets)

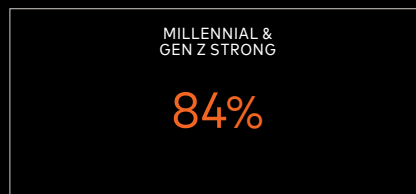
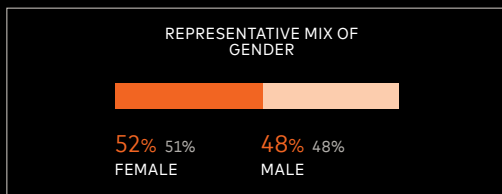
FREE SPENDERS

- After necessities, spend leftover money on:
 - Self improvement**
 - Electronics**
 - Fashion**
- More likely to spend beyond means
- Have confidence in companies and brands

- +42% more likely to be **open to credit card fees**
- +38% more likely to **use digital wallets**
- +39% more likely to **want a provider with easy-to-use app**
- +167% more likely to **see financial education as a reason to select a new financial provider**

	USD
HH Income (Median)	\$25k \$73k
Individual Income (Median)	\$19k \$51k
HH Investable Assets (Median)	\$19k \$106k

DEMOGRAPHICS



STRONG REPRESENTATION OF
DELAYED LIFE STAGES, RISK TAKERS, NEURO DIVERSITY, CREATORS

When relevant on this page, Gen Pop or Census data shown in gray. "+" indicates the amount by which the persona over-indexes vs. Gen Pop reference data.

UNDERBANKED OVERCOMERS

Focused on the journey over the destination.



Overcomers are practical, curious, and open to exploring new ideas. They are also highly compassionate and connected to their communities.

Overcomers have been through a lot, so they know how to get things done and manage setbacks. They are highly confident about future job and financial prospects.

They look for products that are easy to use and will help them thrive every day. They also seek guidance toward financial security and eventual retirement.

OPPORTUNITIES AMONG UNDERBANKED OVERCOMERS

- Open to helpful products they could use on a daily basis
- Have confidence in their futures and need support that will help them level up
- Interested in practical, long-term planning

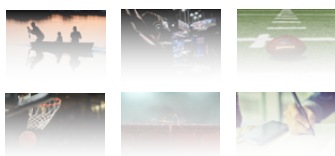
READY TO BE INSPIRED

- Regularly seek out new experiences
- Take things day by day; have enough time to fit everything in (+17%)

UNIQUE PERSONALITY TRAITS

Modest	Opinionated
Cautious	Open-minded
Direct	Tolerant

Leisure Activities & Interests



EXPANDING HORIZONS

- Constantly exploring new topics, seeking new experiences, and thinking about the world
- Currently lower education level (46% have high school degree or less, 2.9x more than NAM population), but motivated to learn and get more formal education

Unmarried, living with partner	Live with children	Interested in children (do not have them currently)	Interested in furthering education
+95%	+47%	+103%	+157%

Lifestyle Traits: Working-class moms

EAGER TO CONNECT

97% agree

"it is easy to speak to people whether they know them or not" (1.6x more than NAM population)

- Feel energized being around others and making friends
- Prioritize clear communication in product choices (+83%)

MOMENTUM TOWARDS A STRONGER FINANCIAL FUTURE

More likely than average to be interested in learning about:

Financial basics	Security	Risk assessments	Cryptocurrencies	Entrepreneurship
+95%	+39%	+41%	+43%	+115%

- Strong confidence in their financial future
- Have fought to make financial progress (+83% more than NAM population)

PRAGMATIC APPROACH

- Spend more on basics like:

- Grocery
- Retail
- Fashion

- Appreciate the comfort of not owning a lot of things

35% of their income goes to housing (1.4x more than NAM population)

+20% more likely to agree

cash back would be the most important credit benefit

+77% more likely to

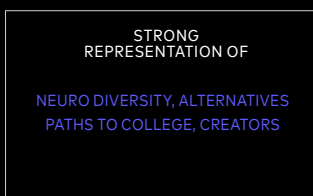
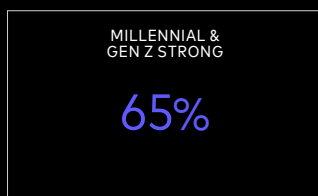
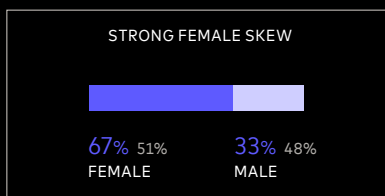
show interest in easy-to-use apps

+53% more likely to

be interested in cards that offer experiences

	USD
HH Income (Median)	\$40k \$73k
Individual Income (Median)	\$23k \$51
HH Investable Assets (Median)	\$18k \$106k

DEMOGRAPHICS



When relevant on this page, Gen Pop or Census data shown in gray. "+" indicates the amount by which the persona over-indexes vs. Gen Pop reference data.

UNDERBANKED TRANSCENDERS

Fighters for equity and access, despite facing financial challenges.



Transcenders are struggling. They have fought for their financial opportunities yet feel taken advantage of and are unsure of what to do next. Their burdens can feel taxing, but they are determined to take care of their mental, emotional, and financial well being.

They are interested in financial solutions around credit and investing that will help them find control and balance. Their susceptibility to stress makes them good candidates for easy-to-use products, and those that can provide concrete value such as cash back.

OPPORTUNITIES AMONG UNDERBANKED TRANSCENDERS

- Well-suited for mental health initiatives
- Most receptive to simple products that feel familiar
- Need help strengthening their futures with strategies like credit building

SEEK SIMPLICITY

- Looking for balance and ways to live better
- Passionate about their personal interests and finding more time for them
- Need to carve out alone-time, prefer spending time with old friends to making new ones

Leisure Activities & Interests

UNIQUE PERSONALITY TRAITS

Cautious

Determined

EQUITY EVANGELISTS

- 74% believe "everyone should have access to the same opportunities" (1.4x more than NAM population)
- Motivated to make positive change through their work
 - Strong identity representations, including through cultural heritage, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation or disabilities

WORKING TOWARD FINANCIAL EQUILIBRIUM

More likely than average to be interested in learning about:

Financial health	Financial basics	Entrepreneurship	Household management
+34%	+79%	+165%	+59%

- +119% more likely to have credit building as a near-term goal
- Currently feel card rewards are not relevant to their lifestyle or interests
- Avoid risks to make their financial situation predictable
- Continually fighting for financial opportunities, and striving to earn more and spend less

DELAYING LIFE STAGES

- Have delayed big life moments because of tenuous financial realities (2.2x more than NAM population)
- Concerned about career stability, often working in sales, labor or the service industry
- Working on their mental health to help cope with the stressors of life

Live with extended family	Neurodiversity represented in household	Physical disability represented in household	Anxious about what is outside of their control
+153%	+252%	+106%	+72%

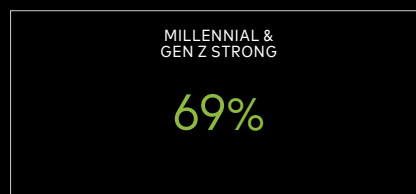
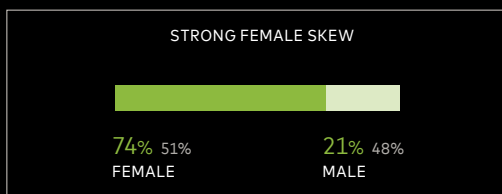
Lifestyle Traits: Working-class moms, moms of grade school kids and moms of preschool kids

LIMITED RESOURCES

- Spend most of their money on essentials:
 - 43% on necessities
 - 33% on housing
 - 29% have student loans (1.3x more than NAM population)
 - Go the extra mile to read reviews and search out the best prices
 - Despite being deal-seekers, still often spend beyond their means
- +24% more likely to agree **cash back would be the most important credit benefit**
 - +46% more likely to **use BNPL**
 - +37% more likely to **feel home ownership costs are too high to afford**
 - High barriers to fees, so would prioritize providers with the lowest fees

	USD
HH Income (Median)	\$24k \$73k
Individual Income (Median)	\$16k \$51k
HH Investable Assets (Median)	\$10k \$106k

DEMOGRAPHICS



STRONG REPRESENTATION OF

NEURO DIVERSITY, DELAYED LIFE STAGES, ALTERNATIVE PATHS TO COLLEGE

When relevant on this page, Gen Pop or Census data shown in gray. "+" indicates the amount by which the persona over-indexes vs. Gen Pop reference data.

Implications for meeting the needs of the Underbanked

The challenges faced by Underbanked Futurists, Overcomers, and Transcenders may be similar, but their perspectives and approaches differ. These differences in point of view, goals, and needs shape how each Underbanked persona receives information. The interpretations of Trust, Access, Usage, Health, and Education shift by persona, with some values resonating more or less.



UNDERBANKED FUTURISTS

- Most trusting in companies (among these three personas)
- Greater access to resources, such as higher expectations of inheritance
- High interest and use of tech-forward products
- Strong investment in working on their mental health
- Drive and ambition to seek out novel products and personal growth



UNDERBANKED OVERCOMERS

- Low to moderate trust
- Most confident in what they have been able to overcome with the hope for future job and financial security
- High proportion of students with ambitions for more education



UNDERBANKED TRANSCENDERS

- Greater propensity to feel taken advantage of, leading to significantly eroded trust in institutions
- Highest interest in credit building and repair
- Face most anxiety and greatest interest in mental health improvement
- Unsure about their future — nearly 80% say they are struggling financially with little control over their finances



5

Building a
better future

Opportunities to make a difference

Helping Underbanked consumers move to greater financial well being begins with customized services and products that appeal to their lifestyles and support their aspirations.

NEEDS OF THE UNDERBANKED POPULATION

OPPORTUNITIES FINANCIAL PARTNERS CAN PROVIDE

Trust

Underbanked consumers crave reliable information and guidance that supports the many burdens they, and their households, are carrying.

- Straightforward, personalized, and empathetic communication
- Easy-to-understand products
- Actions that consider and support overall household well being

Access

Generational cycles and historic inequities have hindered wealth and education for Underbanked consumers who need support to break these cycles and reach their goals.

- Tools, like payment apps, to ease their transition into the digital economy
- Guidance and products to help consumers organize and take charge of their financial lives, like budgeting apps or spreadsheet templates
- In-person and online availability of products and services

Usage

Convenience and rewards can support their everyday needs and better prepare them to face challenges.

- Reduced barriers to entry with low fees and 0% APR
- Easy ways to transition from debit to credit, like credit-building debit cards
- Card programs with cash back, wide merchant acceptance, and easy-to-use payment options
- Hassle-free digital experiences
- Support for managing and repairing credit, like 'payment due' alerts

Health

Overall health is directly connected to financial wellness, and mental health is a particularly strong priority.

- Innovations and collaborations around mental healthcare, such as free financial management tools for mental healthcare providers to offer to their clients
- Advice on ways to make small steps toward better financial health
- Promotion of holistic health and well being

Education

Gaps exist in both formal and financial education that can be addressed with help budgeting, saving and investing.

- Support for students and education initiatives
- Free, comprehensive, easy-to-use tools and resources for financial education

Opportunities to collaborate

Mastercard is proud to collaborate with financial institutions and other brands to expand the range of financial resources for all Underbanked consumers. We are committed to enhancing financial inclusion for consumers throughout North America. We support these efforts with dedicated programs, including vast partnership opportunities such as providing data and hosting workshops and events for marginalized communities, cobranding sites with educational content, collaborating on conceptualization that incorporates these insights for new product constructs, leveraging products from other innovative partners, and more.

-
- 1** [The Centre for Inclusive Growth](#) promotes equitable and sustainable economic advancement and fosters financial inclusion globally. It sponsors independent research, implements scalable global programs and cultivates an empowered community of thought leaders and action-oriented individuals.
 - 2** [In Solidarity](#) is an initiative to harness our culture of decency and build on our longstanding efforts to advance inclusion and equality. Access to and use of digital financial services foster economic opportunity and help improve lives by reducing social inequity and supporting global economic growth. We strive to not only bring people into the digital economy, but also through ensuring our technology and products foster growth and prosperity for everyone, everywhere. Our work goes beyond philanthropy and includes activities to support financial inclusion through commercially viable products and services that promote long-term sustainable growth for individuals and small businesses, which, in turn, support the long-term success.
 - 3** [Master Your Card](#) is a community empowerment program working in conjunction with industry partners. It promotes inclusion of underserved communities by providing resources, enhancing financial literacy, and facilitating access to electronic payments technology.
 - 4** [Digital Doors](#) helps small businesses to reach new audiences, boost revenue, and drive scale using the latest digital tools and resources.
 - 5** Mastercard's [Portable Benefits](#) partnership with Stride offers secure, convenient, and affordable benefits to non-W2 workers, and [HealthLock](#) offers safeguards against healthcare fraud and billing errors for consumers. Mastercard's network partnerships offer support for portable healthcare benefits, providing innovative ways to help consumers, partners, and institutions prevent fraud, enhance accessibility, and streamline healthcare payments.

We hope these insights and programs inspire you to join us in using the power of economic advancement to foster a more just and equitable society.

