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About 30 per cent of young adults polled are not confident in managing debt, a new survey by Citi Foundation and Singapore Management University (SMU) has found.

The survey collected responses from 1,068 individuals aged between 18 and 30. It aims to understand the factors influencing financial wellness, including financial literacy, among young adults in Singapore.

This will show how resilient they are in withstanding financial challenges, especially in the light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, and the disruptions it can cause, SMU said on Monday.

Such resilience is also vital amid the changing financial landscape and job market, it added.

The survey found that respondents had higher scores in areas like saving, borrowing, budgeting, digital literacy and consuming, but did worse in areas like earning, investing, financial technology, insurance and understanding risk.

It also found that 33 per cent of the respondents are not confident in managing debt. Nearly 20 per cent also find it difficult to make ends meet.

But in terms of planning for retirement, the vast majority of respondents, at 97 per cent, have already started the process. This is probably due to the availability of the Central Provident Fund (CPF) system, and the awareness raised around it, SMU noted.

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Nearly all respondents also said that they would find it easy to arrange for emergency purchases. But 22 per cent noted that they would find it difficult to arrange for emergency cash.

Assistant Professor Aurobindo Ghosh, head of the financial inclusion, wellness and resilience survey research project, said: "Financial wellness and financial resilience are key factors of personal and professional development goals that are catalysed by financial inclusion. "Individuals with working financial knowledge and thus sufficient financial wellness and resilience at an early stage can make more informed economic decisions and judgments vis-a-vis the aggregate population."

Those with a higher score in the survey were also less likely to fall for financial scams, the project revealed.

Young adults across various disciplines of study showed a difference in their financial wellness and resilience scores. For instance, respondents from disciplines such as business, and information and digital technology, have a greater likelihood of having higher percentile scores than those from disciplines like art, design and media and dentistry.

SMU president Lily Kong said: "The survey findings are an important reference for various stakeholders to formulate intervention measures for different young adult groups to level up their financial literacy, and beyond that, strengthen their financial resilience."

Prof Ghosh, who is also programme director and principal investigator of research for the Citi Foundation-SMU financial literacy programme, added that through this ongoing research, the project seeks to produce a comprehensive quantitative measure of participants' financial wellness and resilience.

This can be the benchmark for future improvements and help researchers to study the relationship among the various components of financial wellness, he said.