

chime®

talker  
research

---

Trend Report 2026

# The Rewards Gap


Americans deposit 68% of their income into their checking account. Only 26% get meaningful rewards from it. This report is about that gap — and why it exists. Talker Research and Chime examine how Americans bank, focusing on the experiences, expectations and frustrations of 2,000 people with a bank account. At a time when costs are rising and people expect more from their money, do they feel like they're getting enough from their bank?

Low expectations have shifted behavior, training consumers to seek rewards anywhere but their bank. That disconnect helps explain why a majority believe traditional banking needs a major overhaul, and why many polled say rewards are the No. 1 most important factor when deciding who they will primarily bank with in the future.

# Key Takeaways

The average American places

 **68%** of their annual income into their checking account, yet only

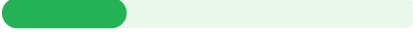
 **26%** get meaningful rewards from that account

**63%**

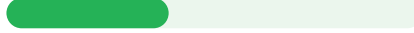
of Americans believe the best banking rewards are reserved for people with high balances

**55%** of Americans believe traditional banking needs an overhaul

**30%**

  
are not familiar with the fact that some bank accounts offer rewards with no annual fees

**39%**

  
say rewards are the No. 1 most important factor when deciding who they will primarily bank with in the future

**59%** would cancel or downgrade their credit card if their checking account offered comparable rewards

# The Illusion of Loyalty

The average American has been with their bank for nearly two decades (**17.6 years**).

But that relationship isn't built on satisfaction — it seems to be built on inertia. This is especially notable given how important checking accounts are to Americans' everyday financial habits.

## The average American:

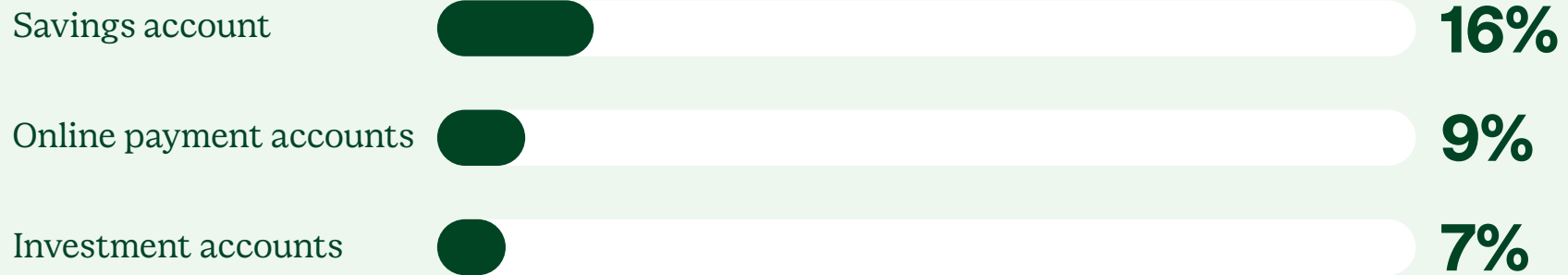


of their monthly spending  
via checking/debit



of their income into  
their checking account

## The rest of their income goes into:



## Though the use of these accounts are frequent:



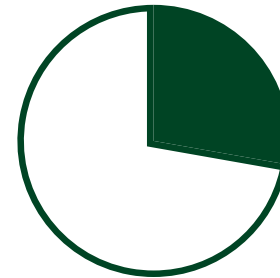
## The tenured relationships appear to be largely passive:

Even though many are unhappy with how their bank rewards them for their deposit loyalty, about a third of Americans (36%) have never considered switching banks. This suggests that a large number are unaware that there are better banking options out there.

**36%** have never considered switching banks

# The Awareness Gap

Nearly  
**one in three**  
Americans (30%) don't know that some bank accounts even offer rewards with no annual fees.



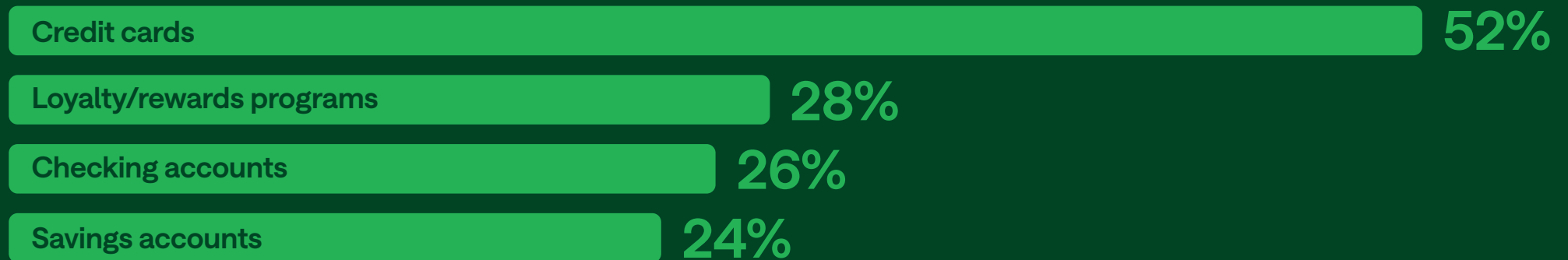
And another  
**28%** have no idea what interest rate their savings account even earns.

The gap isn't just in what banks offer.  
It's in what people know is available to them.

# Rewards are coming from elsewhere

Instead of relying on their bank accounts, twice as many Americans turn to credit cards for meaningful rewards, over checking or savings.

## Where Americans get meaningful rewards



The account holding most of their money is the last place Americans look for rewards.

Notably,

**28%** believe their checking account should be the primary source of meaningful financial rewards – a sign that Americans are still conditioned to associate rewards with traditional credit products rather than the account they use the most.

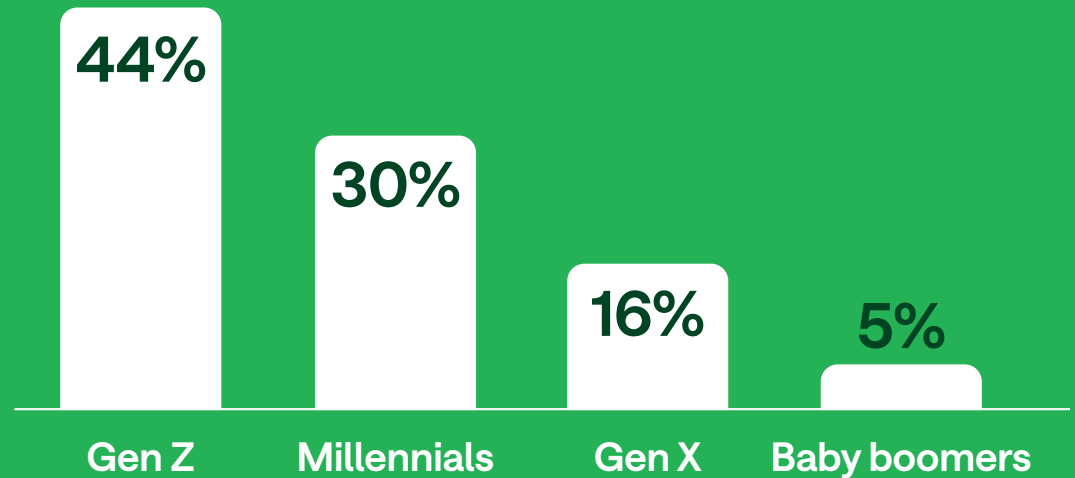
# The “Premium” Divide

Many Americans believe meaningful banking benefits are reserved only for those with higher balances or premium accounts:

**63%** believe the best rewards go to high-balance customers.

But the deeper story isn't about what people want — it's about what they've learned to accept.

“ I expect to pay for rewards and benefits: ”



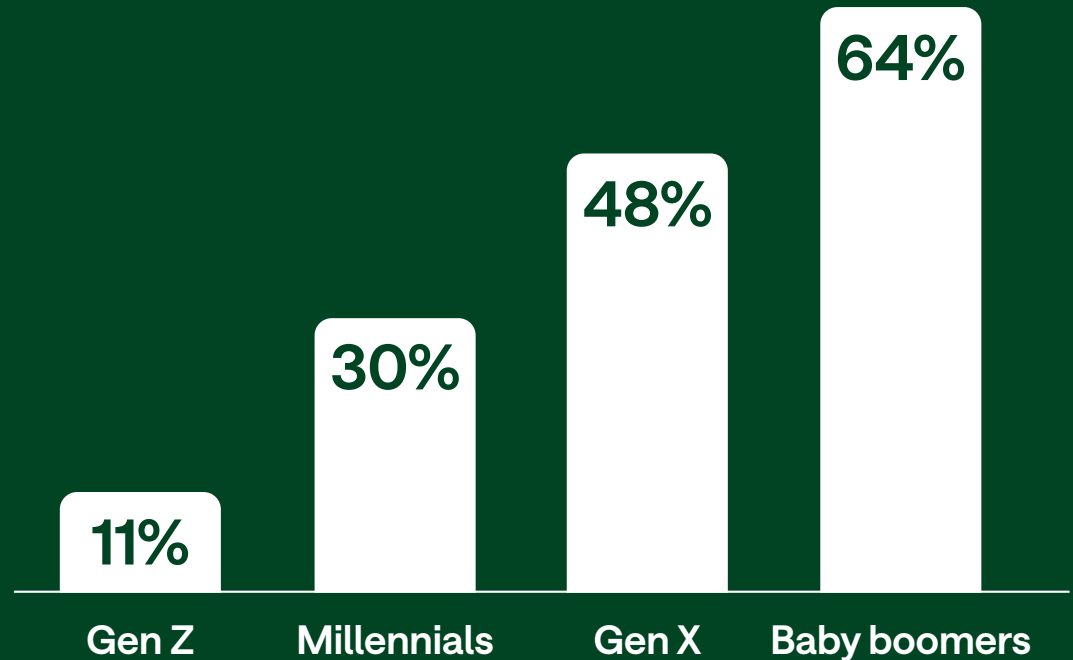


Almost half of all respondents

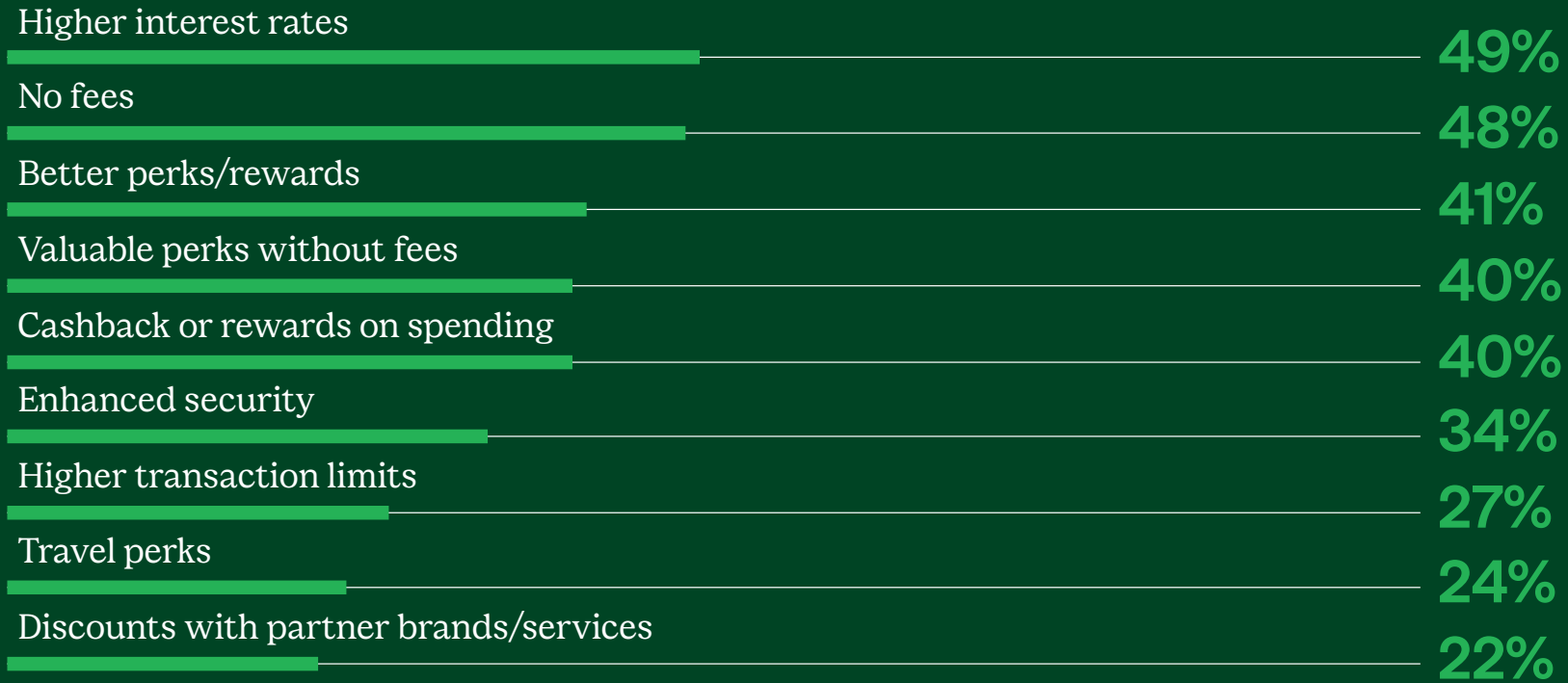
**48%** feel that they should not have to pay to earn rewards. But within this group, younger consumers have accepted that rewards come at a cost.

Younger consumers aren't necessarily accepting the status quo. They've just never seen it work any other way.

“ I should not have to pay to earn rewards: ”



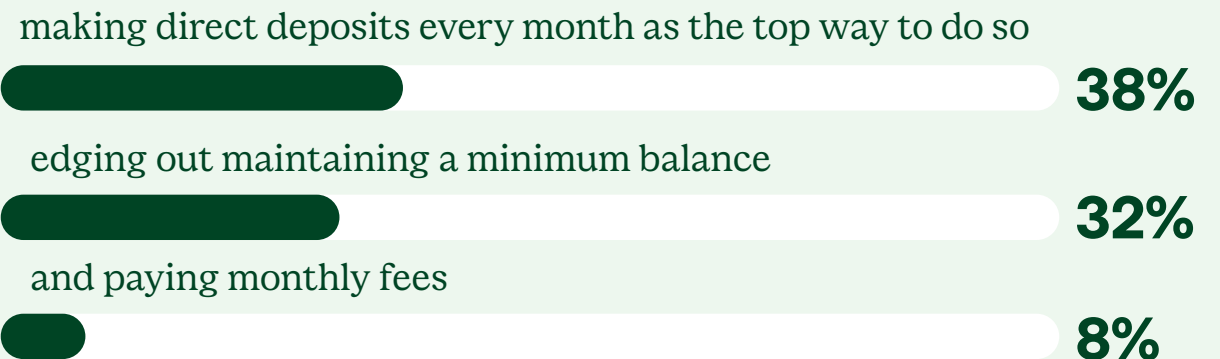
# What people perceive as “premium” banking



## Banking has a perception problem:

rewards feel reserved for the wealthy, and expectations are splitting — older consumers resist fees while younger ones accept pay-to-play benefits.

## When it comes to earning rewards, Americans prefer:



# The Cost of Access

For some, the cost of banking adds to the frustration.

22% say their bank charges a monthly fee for any account or service no matter what

Of those with fees, the average respondent reports paying \$213 per month

Only a handful (31%) say there are no requirements to keep their checking account fee-free

In order to avoid fees, respondents say they must:



29%

Maintain a balance



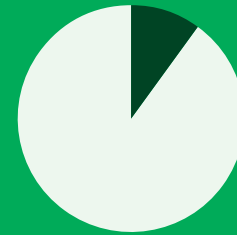
20%

Maintain income/deposits



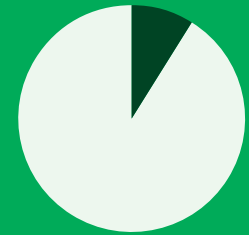
14%

Have a savings account



10%

Keep account open for a set time



9%

Minimum debit transactions

# Credit Cards are a Workaround, Not a Preference

While checking accounts lag in rewards, Americans have been forced to turn to credit cards to make up the difference.



**81%**

of Americans use a credit card

**Over half**

have a fee-based card

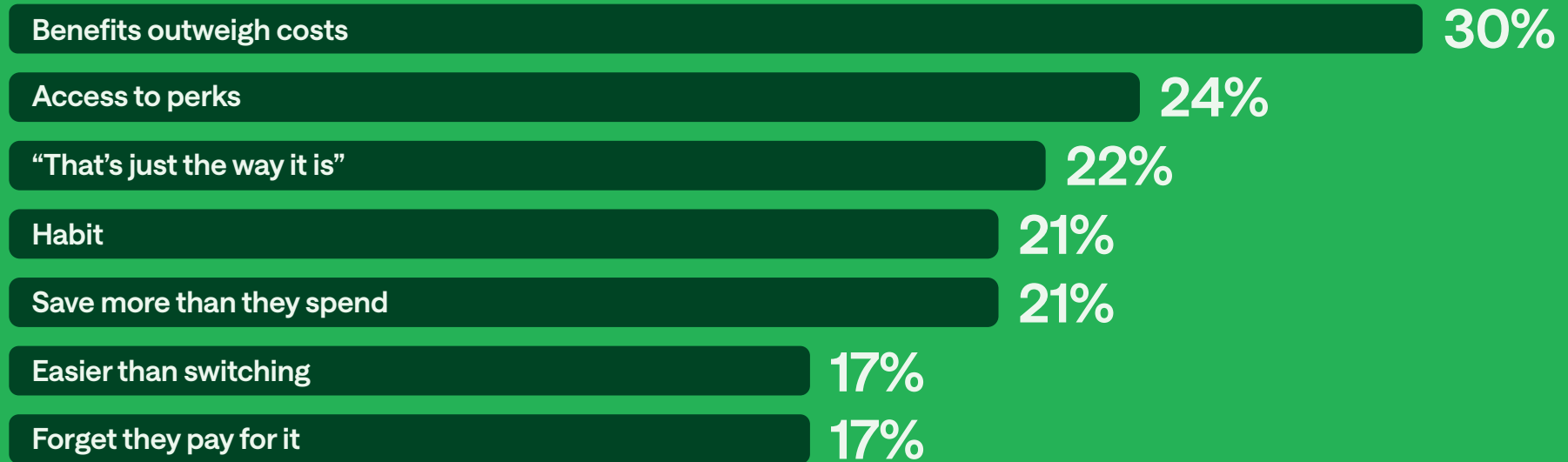
**\$1,000**

Average total annual credit card fees

**24%**

say the primary reason they use a credit card is to earn rewards, outranking the desire to build credit

# Why Americans keep fee-based cards



## However, this loyalty seems fragile.

More than half



would cancel or downgrade their card if checking accounts offered the same rewards

And most



believe checking accounts should offer the same rewards as credit cards

More than three-quarters



of millennials agreed that checking accounts and credit cards should offer the same rewards

# A System Ready for Change

A majority,

**55%**

of Americans,

say traditional banking needs an overhaul, including 69% of Gen Z and 66% of millennials. The data suggests they're right. Despite having long-standing relationships with their bank and frequently using their accounts, meaningful rewards are still limited at best.

As a result, consumers are turning to credit cards to fill the gap, even as most believe those same rewards should be built into checking accounts.



# Research Methodology

Talker Research surveyed 2,000 Americans with a bank account who have access to the internet; the survey was commissioned by Chime and administered and conducted online by Talker Research between April 2 and April 8, 2026.



chime®

talker  
research

---

Trend Report 2026