



# CompareCards Financial Forecast Report

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## FINANCIAL INDUSTRY ALERT

In March 2015, more than 3.6 million conversations about personal finance were analyzed from various online mediums. Data was collected from social networking sites, blogs, forums, websites, TV, radio, magazines and newspapers, to determine what consumers were talking about, what consumers care about, and emerging trends.

Discover what's new, what's changed, and where personal finance conversations are headed next.



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# Impact from February's "I" of the Storm

## Identity Theft

The most important topic discussed in March was Identity Theft. This topic was featured in [February's "I" of the Storm](#). The data indicated that it had the highest current and potential impact. As predicted, Identity Theft continued to grow in emotion as public concern around tax fraud continued to swell.



March brought with it new warnings from the IRS, cautioning taxpayers to beware of bogus emails designed to capture usernames and passwords to access personal information. The IRS also continued to warn tax filers to beware of phone calls from faux IRS agents requesting credit card payments or wire transfers.

**CONSUMER IMPACT:** Well into March, blogs and news sites alike warned of a massive tax scam which has, to date, conned more than 3,000 people into giving up a total of \$15.5 million.

**CURRENT CONDITIONS:** There have been cases of fraud, which have been alarming for consumers, especially among those early adopters of Apple Pay. Reports surfaced that thieves have been using stolen credit cards on Apple Pay.



**DATA SAMPLE:** "If you'll recall, Apple Pay itself remains locked down, and the fraudsters were able to take advantage of banks' rather lazy identity checks." *Engadget, Banks Respond to Fraud, 03/6/15*

## BRAND IMPACT



The issue generated some negativity for Apple, with journalists noting the lax security measures that led to the fraudulent charges on Apple Pay accounts. These concerns began to lessen soon after the initial coverage of the event, with news sources noting the diffusive effect of Apple's quick response to the fraudulent activity, and public worry was smoothed over by added security precautions such as a required login to online banking accounts.

#### DATA SAMPLE:

“Cherian Abraham, estimated that as many as 6 percent of Apple Pay purchases are completed with stolen credit cards, or 60 times the rate of the old-fashioned plastic swipe...Fraudulent purchases at bricks-and-mortar stores are covered by the card issuers and banks. And Apple said it is up to them to increase scrutiny of Apple Pay applicants.” –*The Washington Post*, 3/23/15

“Banks must get better at preventing identity theft in general, and making sure they don’t issue credit cards to fake people. It strikes me that Apple Pay fraud is the least of their problems until that time.” – *Forbes*, 3/4/2015

### FINANCIAL FORECAST



As Identity Theft becomes a part of everyday life, consumers look to financial institutions and service providers to monitor and alert them of potential threats. Consumers are more likely to seek products with security as part of their provided services and are more likely to choose providers with a strong reputation for customer identity security. Because the sentiment of this topic was negative, consumers may drop or criticize current providers or those perceived as lax in this area.

## How To Prepare For These Conditions:

1. [Get Identity Theft Protection](#)
2. [Check Your Credit Report/Score for Free](#)
3. [Repair Your Credit](#)
4. Additional Resources and Information:
  - [Have You Heard About Tax Identity Theft?](#)
  - [Feds Study Credit Card Industry's Arbitration Policy](#)
  - [\\$o Fraud Liability vs. Dispute Resolution: What's the difference & why do we care?](#)
  - [Tips for Double Strength Account Protection](#)
  - [Why It's Smart to Use Credit for Purchases](#)
  - [Children Now Targeted by Credit Card Fraud](#)
  - [MasterCard and Visa Increase Security](#)
  - [How Can I Repair My Credit and Improve My FICO Score?](#)

# New Developments

## Family Costs

Family cost was an emerging topic of interest that was discussed 11,366 times in March. This topic was both high in emotion and velocity as American citizens struggle to care for multiple generations.

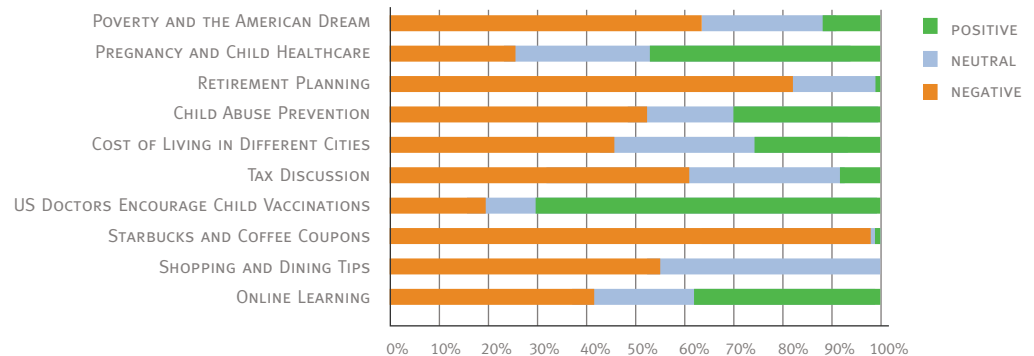
**CONSUMER IMPACT:** Baby boomers in particular feel increasing demands to care for and provide for not only their children, but also their elderly parents.

**CURRENT CONDITIONS:** Commenters worry about the feasibility of retirement for themselves as well as the financial burden of caring for their aging parents. Some of the struggles mentioned by baby boomers include helping their parents cope with home care, community services, or transitional living.



First time parents in particular discuss the stressors (as well as the joys!) of welcoming a new child into the home. In addition to the surprisingly high cost of diapers, baby food, healthcare, and schooling, new mothers opened up on their blogs about the burden of changing schedules and priorities.

**FIGURE 1** – This chart shows the sentiment of topics tied to family costs. The colored squares show the percentage of discussions within that topic, categorized by sentiment.



**DATA SAMPLE:**

“A new study found the most expensive year of your life is . . . age 50. Because that’s when ALL your biggest life expenses collide. You’re still paying your mortgage AND you’re still paying for your kids . . . but you’ve also got new costs with more expensive health care and insurance. Plus, you could also find yourself helping out your parents financially for the first time.” *CBS Local, 3/6/2015*



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This topic is expected to continue to rise in importance. Consumers are likely to respond well to products that offer discounts, rebates, or cash back to help with the cost of having and raising children. They may look for providers and products that help with decisions and provide advice on how to handle elder and child care simultaneously.

### How To Prepare For These Conditions:

- [Can Stockpiling Really Save You Money?](#)
- [Cash Back Fact Sheet Snapshot](#)
- [Rack Up Credit Card Rewards and Win](#)
- [Top Couponing Sites on the Internet](#)
- [DoorBuster Deals Without the Debt](#)
- [The Big Top Credit Cards of 2015](#)

### Pet Costs

*Pet cost was an emerging topic of interest that was discussed 5,602 times in March. This topic was high in emotion and low in velocity. Conversations revolved around the costs of buying pets from breeders versus adoption, and the rising health care costs of keeping a furry loved one healthy.*

**CURRENT CONDITIONS:** Animal shelters appear to be the leading voice within the conversation noting that competing family expenses often leave dogs and cats in need of adoption. Among current pet owners, the cost of animal healthcare is an evolving conversation. News articles also point out the emergence of Animal Emergency Clinics that resemble human Urgent Care facilities.



**DATA SAMPLE:** “Pet insurance costs roughly between \$15 and \$29, depending on the deductible you choose and whether you are insuring a cat or a dog. \$15.2 billion—went to veterinary care in the U.S. in 2014.” *Dave-Lucas. Blogspot, Pet Insurance, 3/1/15*



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Some may rethink pet ownership. Current pet owners will likely seek ways to reduce costs of ownership by spending less on non-necessary spends such as stays at pet spas in favor of overall wellness and health maintenance investments.

## How To Prepare For These Conditions:

1. When addressing Family Cost concerns, don't forget about Rover. For many, pets are an integral part of the household, but often their cost and expenses are overlooked in family budgeting efforts.
2. Adopt a pet instead of buying the adorable puppy in the pet store window to save money.
3. Get pet insurance to help ease the burden of pet medical bills.
4. Additional Resources/Information:  
[Credit Cards for Pet Expenses](#)

## Protecting Personal Data Online

*Protecting personal data online was an emerging topic of interest that was discussed 6,436 times in March. Protecting personal data online has become paramount for consumers, especially due to the constant news of recent data breaches.*

**CURRENT CONDITIONS:** These discussions were proactive and discussion-driven, acknowledging the reality of the cyber world, while showing a readiness to take on growing hacking threats. It is the uncertainty of what is outside of a user's control that worries consumers, with many news articles pointing out that despite locked-down, virus-ready computers, third party vendors and cell phones are still major weak points lacking proper security.



**DATA SAMPLE:** "Mobile is a risk too with 113 phones lost or stolen every minute in the US alone and 86 percent of mobile apps lacking adequate security." *ITProPortal, Where is Your Data at Risk, 3/1/15*

**CONSUMER IMPACT:** With the implementation of cellular payment options such as Apple Pay and Google Wallet catching on with many consumers, it becomes all the more important to secure and fortify mobile apps.

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With a multitude of IT professionals pointing out the open gap in cell phone security as well as the increasing prevalence of cell phone-based commerce, a mobile-based alert system for potential data breaches will be key. Consumers may be wary of and slow to embrace online payment technology. They may need reassurance that these systems can securely handle personal information and proactively reduce threats of identity theft. Alerts to breaches and what to do as a result will be key to any service.

## How To Prepare For These Conditions:

### Additional Resources/Information

- [Protecting Credit Cards from Online Data Breaches](#)
- [Tips for Double Strength Account Protection](#)
- [Temporary Authorization Numbers Provide Added Security](#)
- [Why It's Smart to Use Credit for Purchases](#)

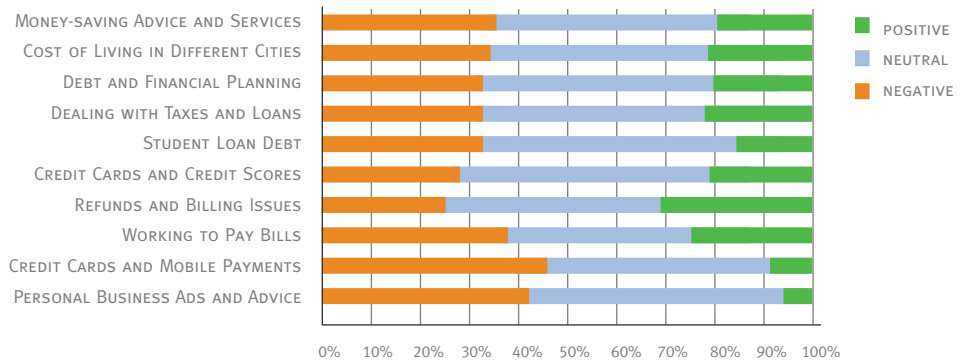
## Renting and Owning Property

As many begin to put their homes on the market, or head out to search for new properties, discussions began to pop up around the financial advantages of owning versus renting homes and apartments, as well as commentary over what is seen as the high price of doing either. Although this was the most discussed topic, it remained low in emotion and low in velocity.

**CURRENT CONDITIONS:** Many younger individuals point to the need to live with roommates just to afford a decent apartment, while others bemoan the fact that even studio apartments are beyond reach. This is a particularly common set of complaints among the college-age audience, who also discuss the added burden of filling out FAFSA paperwork and applying for college loans.



**FIGURE 2 –** This chart shows the sentiment of topics tied to renting and owning property. The colored squares show the percentage of discussions within that topic, categorized by sentiment.



**DATA SAMPLE:** “Found an awesome apartment today and I want it but I can’t afford it on my own at this stage without someone, which defeats the purpose.” *Twitter, 3/1/2015*

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The high volume of this topic suggests that this is a widespread discussion that touches every segment of the public as the cost of living continues to inflate. This is a topic to continue to watch for rising emotion as tax discussions trail off in April and graduation approaches. Consumers are likely to continue this discussion as housing markets improve and the likelihood of rising interest rates becomes a possibility. Younger consumers may opt for renting and avoid the added expenses of property ownership in favor of having money to spend on other priorities such as vacations, a new vehicle, and general consumption.

### How To Prepare For These Conditions:

- [How to Get a Good Deal on Your First Home](#)
- [10 Staging Tips to Maximize Profits in a Strong Housing Market](#)
- Additional Resources and Information:
  - [True Cost of Renting vs. Buying a Home](#)
  - [Rent Payments May Now Be Part of Your Credit Report](#)
  - [5 Tips for Saving Money in College](#)
  - [FinanceU](#) –Resources and Tools for College Students
  - [20 College Scholarships with Easy Applications](#)

### Spring/Summer Vacations

*Spring and summer vacations were an emerging topic of interest that was discussed 20,713 times in March. This topic was high in emotion and low in velocity with an overall positive sentiment.*

**CURRENT CONDITIONS:** Online commenters have flocked to their social media accounts to express their excitement for summer fun and the vacations they have planned around it. These conversations invite the concept of splurging. The warm weather certainly inspires increased spending and open wallets, as evidenced by discussions outlining the sentimental value of vacation as opposed to the monetary aspect.



**DATA SAMPLE:**

“So we surprised the kids during dinner on Wednesday night with a little announcement...the following day they would NOT be going to school! Instead we were taking them to Disneyland! This was a little different approach than we’ve done in the past. We usually do the countdown but thought it might be fun to surprise them. After doing both I have to say, I enjoy the countdown and the build up a little more.” *The Hekert House Blog, 3/1/2015*





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After the tight economy of the past few years, consumers may be more willing to plan and book summer vacations in advance and they may be inclined to treat themselves a little more in this area. This is a highly positive topic and is ripe for opportunity. Voices in this conversation prioritize “experiences” over cost. Products that can be framed as an investment in experience will resonate well despite the price point.

### How To Prepare For These Conditions:

- [Travel Perks Your Credit Card Should Have](#)
- [Credit Cards with Bonus Travel Perks](#)
- [Don't Get Strapped for Cash in a Foreign Land](#)
- [Credit Cards with Travel Insurance](#)
- [Avoid Credit Card Skimming on Summer Vacation](#)
- [How We Flew to Paris – For Free](#)
- [Student Travel Alert: ATM Cards Can Be Disabled in High-Crime Destinations](#)
- [Choosing a Credit Card for Airport Lounge Access](#)

## The “I” of the Storm: Tax Discussions



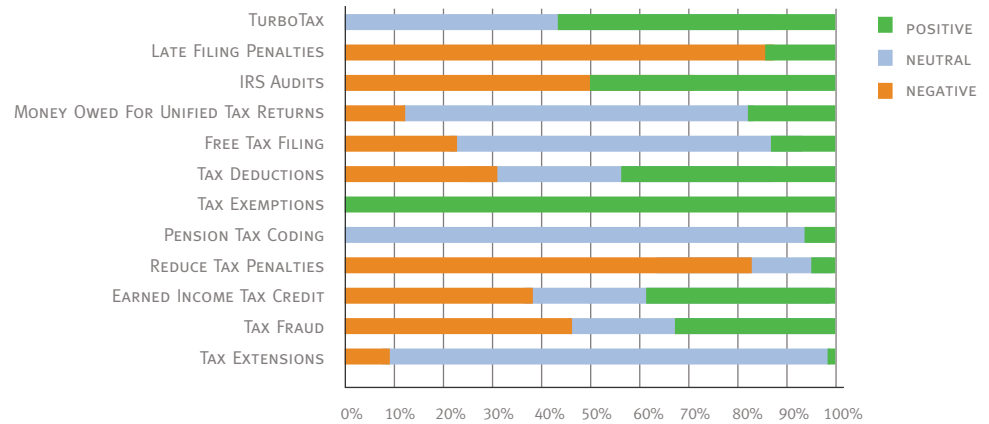
## FINANCIAL INDUSTRY ALERT



The ‘I’ of the Storm is the monthly topic with the highest current and potential impact. These topics have staying power and have remained prominent month after month. However, they are still emerging, which suggests they have the potential to have an even greater impact on consumer hearts and minds. These topics are also highly interconnected with other topics of importance, which means their impact may be felt in many areas.

*The big idea featured in the ‘I’ of the Storm for March is Tax Discussions. While the tax fraud discussions continued, additional aspects of tax filing emerged, snowballing into a general tax conversation in anticipation of the April 15th income tax deadline. These conversations related to the many aspects of tax filing ranging from getting tax exemptions, deductions, and late filing penalties. As evidenced by the high volume, highly emotional topic of Tax Discussion, many Americans were still struggling to put their tax forms together, and, if the data is any indication, the concern that their paperwork may not make it into the IRS in time was a very real anxiety.*

**FIGURE 3** – This chart shows the sentiment of topics tied to tax discussions. The colored squares show the percentage of discussions within that topic, categorized by sentiment.



## How To Prepare For These Conditions In 2016:

- [File Taxes on Time or Face These Penalties](#)
- [Get Your Tax Refund with Prepaid Debit Cards](#)
- [Pros and Cons of Paying Taxes with a Credit Card](#)
- [How Credit Cards Help with Tax Preparation](#)
- [True Cost of Paying Taxes with a Credit Card](#)

## What's this month's biggest threat?

The more contentious topic, the Earned Income Tax Credit, not only proves to be one of the most voluminous within the overall tax discussion, but also one that is evenly split between negative and positive discussions. This is due to the uniquely political charge it carries, with Republicans and Democrats debating on how to best reduce the tax burden on the middle class. In addition to proposed changes to the Earned Income Tax Credit, pundits suggest raising the minimum wage or extending overtime protection.

## Earned Income Tax Credit

**CURRENT CONDITIONS:** The average online commenter often takes the stronger view that regardless of what politicians say, it is the poor and middle-class that will suffer, making this a controversial topic for those on both side of the aisle.



**DATA SAMPLE:**

“Why does a family earning \$50,000 a year have to be taxed more than a billionaire (percentage-wise).” *Infowars, 3/19/15*



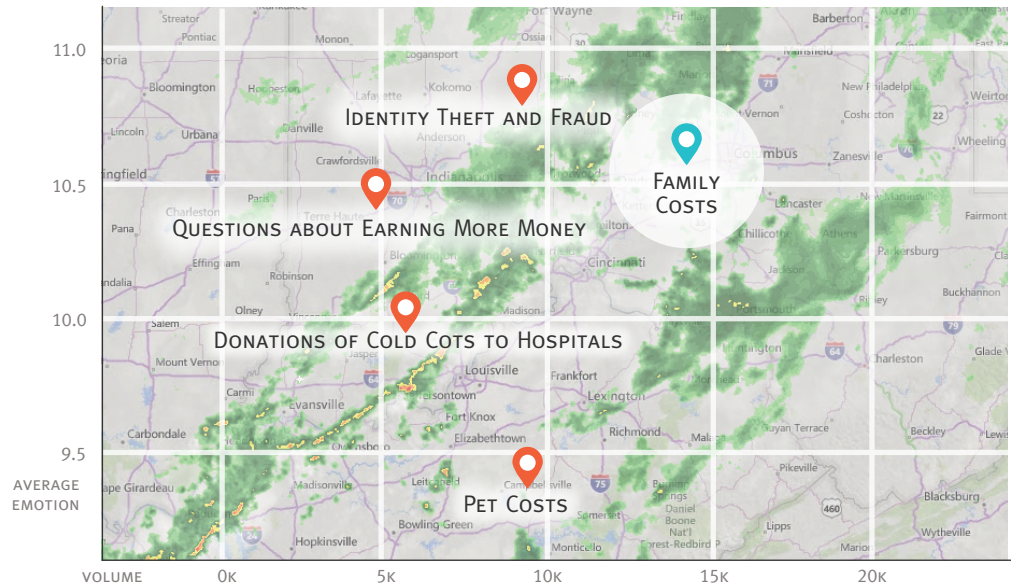
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When issues take a political edge they risk impacting a person's strongly held values and beliefs. Public attitudes in both areas should be continuously monitored so that financial institutions may keep a better pulse on their clients' interests.

# On The Radar

Be on the lookout for the most emotional topics that have yet to become high in volume. If these topics gain attention, they tend to have a high impact on behavior and beliefs.

**FIGURE 4 - What Topics are Most Emotional?** This chart is designed to show the most emotional topics that have yet to become high in volume.



This doppler radar shows emotional intensity. The lower the Average Emotion number, the lower the emotional intensity of the topic.

## The Breakdown: Report Methodology

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Each month millions of conversations about personal finance issues are collected by [evolve24](#). These conversations are measured and assessed using proprietary analytics to identify and measure audience perception.

We look for what people are talking about, what people care about, and what threats and opportunities are emerging for industry participants.

**NUMBER OF ARTICLES & POSTS:** More than 3.6 million conversations were collected that took place between March 1st, 2015, and March 31st, 2015.

**SOURCES:** These conversations were pulled from Twitter, Facebook, other social networking sites, blogs, forums, websites, TV & radio, magazines, and newspapers.

**SEARCH STRING/ARTICLES COLLECTED:** A keyword-based search was used across the sources outlined above to identify relevant conversations. This search generally consisted of personal pronouns, in conjunction with personal finance terms.

**GEOGRAPHY:** All articles and posts were based on an implied U.S. geography.

**LANGUAGE:** Articles were searched in both English and Spanish (using Spanish language keywords).