

A Women's Guide to Building a Strong Financial Plan

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Higher prices, borrowing costs, tariff uncertainty and global conflicts are complicating financial decisions for many Americans. For women, those pressures can make long-term planning even more challenging at a time when they are playing an increasingly central role in financial decision-making — within their families, their careers and their communities.

Yet in our experience, even highly accomplished women often carry a quiet question: Am I making the right decisions for the long term?

This isn't a question of capability. In fact, research consistently shows that women tend to be thoughtful, disciplined and forward-thinking investors. A 2018 Warwick Business School study found that investment returns for women outperformed men by 1.8%, suggesting that they perform as well as, or better than, their male counterparts. And yet, confidence doesn't always match that capability.

What's often missing is not knowledge, but clarity.

Confidence Comes From Clarity

Financial confidence is often misunderstood. It's not about having all the answers or constantly monitoring markets. It's about having a clear understanding of your complete financial picture and a plan that supports it.

When you can see where you are, where you're going and the trade-offs along the way, decision-making becomes more straightforward. Uncertainty is reduced. And confidence begins to build.

Financial Confidence Extends Beyond Your Finances

Financial confidence doesn't stay contained to your balance sheet; it often influences how you show up across other areas of your life, including your career. When you have clarity around your financial picture — what you have, what you need and what your plan supports — you're more likely to make decisions from a position of strength rather than uncertainty.

That can mean feeling more comfortable advocating for yourself in compensation conversations, evaluating new opportunities more thoughtfully or making career transitions with greater intention. It helps create a sense of stability and the ability to make choices based on what you want, rather than what you feel you have to do. In that way, financial confidence becomes not just a financial advantage, but a broader source of personal and professional empowerment.

Understanding the Confidence Gap

There are structural reasons that many women feel less confident around financial decisions:

- Longer life expectancy, which requires planning over a longer time horizon.
- Career pauses or nonlinear earnings paths.
- Historically lower levels of involvement in financial decision-making compared to their male counterparts.
- A more thoughtful and cautious approach to financial decision-making.

These factors are not disadvantages, but they do make clarity and structure even more important.

At the same time, we are in the midst of one of the largest intergenerational wealth transfers in history, with an estimated \$124 trillion expected to change hands over the coming decades. Women are poised to be the primary beneficiaries of a significant portion of that wealth.

This shift will likely make financial clarity and confidence increasingly more important — not only as a personal priority, but as an essential component of effective long-term decision-making.

What a Thoughtful Plan Provides

A well-constructed financial plan goes beyond individual investment decisions. It helps create a cohesive framework that connects all aspects of your financial life, including:

- Cash flow and lifestyle planning
- Investment strategy
- Tax coordination
- Estate planning
- Philanthropic goals

When these elements are aligned, financial decisions can become more intentional and less reactive.

From Awareness to Action

One of the most powerful first steps is simply organization.

Bringing all assets, liabilities and financial responsibilities into one place can provide a level of clarity many individuals have never experienced. From there, it becomes easier to define goals, understand options and make informed decisions.

Connecting Wealth With Purpose

At its core, financial confidence is about alignment: understanding not just what you have, but what you want your wealth to do. Whether that is supporting family, creating flexibility or making a broader impact

in your community, a thoughtful plan allows your financial decisions to reflect your priorities. Taking the time to understand your financial picture — and the questions that matter most to you — is often the first step toward building lasting confidence.

And if you're looking for guidance in building that clarity, working with a trusted advisor to develop a customized plan can be an important next step.

About the author

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