

**New Student and Family Programs  
First Generation Assessment 2018-2019**

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**New Student and Family Programs  
First Generation Freshman Focus Groups  
2019**

**Purpose of Assessment**

In fall 2018 New Student And Family Programs contacted Student Life Studies wanting to assess the experience of first generation freshman during their first semester at Texas A&M in relation to the their experience at New Student Conferences the previous summer. The results will be used to inform changes to the New Student Conference experience for future first generation students attending the conference, so these students feel more prepared attending the NSC and Texas A&M University their first year. Two focus groups were planned for October 2018, and first generation freshmen identified as “moderate risk” through EAB provided by New Student and Family programs were the intended participants.

**Method and Sample**

The focus group protocol and questions were designed by New Student and Family Programs and Student Life Studies. The focus groups were facilitated by staff from Student Life Studies on October 16, and October 23 2019. Additionally, the focus groups were digitally recorded and transcribed by student employees within Student Life Studies.

Focus group participants were solicited through an email invitation sent on October 12<sup>th</sup> through Qualtrics survey software; 11 students signed up to participate and 7 showed up for the focus groups. As not enough students from the identified population (EAB list) signed up to participate, first generation students participating in LAUNCH were also invited.

Data was analyzed in a formal content analysis conducted by a staff member of Student Life Studies and the New Student and Family Programs Graduate Assistant to identify main themes that were presented by the students. This report presents the qualitative themes developed from the analysis. The complete interview transcripts can be found in separate documents.

**Results**

Results will be reported as themes for the questions that were asked in the protocol. The questions asked and corresponding themes identified from the focus group responses follow:

**Question 1.** Did you attend the pre-conference day of your New Student Conference? How did you decide to attend or not attend the pre-conference day?

- Four students indicated they did not attend pre-conference day and three indicated they had.
- Those who went to the preconference did so because they wanted to be prepared and didn't have other plans
- Those who did not attend indicated they could not due to their transportation to the conference, because it would be an extra day, just did not want to and was already familiar with campus.

**Question 2:** Here is a brief list of programs and topics covered during the New Student Conference and pre-conference day of the NSCs. Please review them to refresh your memory of topics covered at your New Student Conference. What were your expectations prior to attending your NSC? What topics do you remember the most from pre-conference?

- Expectations were receiving an introduction to Texas A&M, and exposed to a lot of information. Expected to be walking about and touring campus,
- Found that actually the conference was too much sitting and too many long presentations.
- Topics remembered from pre-conference were the rundown, campus housing and skits.

**Question 3:** What information would have been beneficial for you to know prior to your NSC?

- Topics included construction on campus, IT information, meal plan information and nothing.

**Question 4:** After your NSC, what was/is still confusing for you about the Texas A&M University processes? What remaining questions do you still have? Did you feel you were equipped with accurate information when attending your NSC?

- Topics were/are still confusing included bus routes, student holds, IT processes (where to go for help and where to get free access to programs like excel) and nothing.
- Students thought the booklet provided them accurate information when attending NSC, although transcripts from high school were brought by students in case it was needed.

**Question 5:** Some students attending Texas A&M University are the first in their family to attend college, and generally, students first in their family to attend college are referred to as First Generation students. Part of the reason you were invited to participate in these focus groups is because you were identified as a First Generation student. If this descriptor is correct, how has your Texas A&M experience been influenced by being a first generation college student? What are your perceptions or understanding of being a first-generation college student?

- Positive perceptions of being a first-generation college student included meeting people (through Century Scholar events), scholarships available, new ways to learn in college versus high school and help picking major. Two of the seven specifically articulated that first-generation college student was positive.
- Neutral perceptions included being a role model for others (siblings – both good and bad due to pressures of that role), and necessity of being self- reliant (as no one in family to ask about how to do things like create degree plan and figure out what classes to take). Some indicated having siblings already in college and they were somewhat of a help.
- Negative perception included not knowing who to ask for things associated with college, and that being away from home was challenging,
- Students were asked where they go to get answers to questions about college that they cannot get answered by family members and students indicated extended family (cousins), contacts through high school programs (Gear Up), mentors through student organization including Fish Camp, the Pavilion, fellow student employees and self-motivated to find answers anywhere and everywhere.

**Question 6:** If there had been a program, held on the pre-conference day of your NSC specifically for first-generation college students, would you have been interested in attending? Why or why not? What would the barriers be to attending the program?

- Seven indicated they would attend. Reasons given were specifically that it was geared towards first generation students. Others shared they would like such a program to include information on campus resources specific to them, information on financial aid, information on how hard college can be.
- Barriers to attending were given as scheduling conflicts, transportation to the pre-conference event and contributing to parents being overwhelmed. One student thought that the pre-conference marketed specifically for first generation students might provide enough incentive to overcome the barrier of needing to spend more time at NSC.

**Question 7:** If there were a program held during Howdy Week specifically for first-generation, would you have been interested in attending? What would the reasons be to attending or not attending the program?

- Half of the students indicated they would go, as long as the event was fun, a social thing and did not interfere with other fun events during Howdy Week. And provided give a-ways, like free T-shirts.
- Others said they did not participate in Howdy Week because it conflicted with move-in days to college and that they couldn't move in that early so would not attend (off campus housing).

**Last Question (8):** The Office of New Student and Family Programs is going to use this information to improve their New Student Conferences and pre-conference days, is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience using this program?

- Suggestions included more free time, more social gatherings, knowing books needed for classes and information about on campus dining options that accommodate class schedules.

Report prepared by: Susan Fox-Forrester, Student Life Studies  
Report prepared for: Kaylie Towles, New Student and Family Programs  
Report prepared on: March 20, 2019

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## New Student and Family Programs First Generation Comparison to Not First Generation First Time in College Survey Results

### **Purpose**

Review differences in response results to the 2018 First Time in College (FTIC) Survey between First Generation students and Not First Generation students. Specifically, the below graphics demonstrate the response difference between First Generation and Not First Generation students for questions that relate to the First Generation Focus Groups report summary (March 20, 2019), and generally, financial matters explored in the FTIC survey.

### **Results:**

During the focus group, students indicated topics that still confuse them which included IT processes, such as where to go for help and where to get free access to programs like Microsoft Excel. Table 1 shows the comparison of frequency percentages of responses to the FTIC survey question 14 “During this academic year, how often do you anticipate each of the following being obstacles to your school work or academic success?” response choice 8 “Poor Study Environment (noisy roommate, poor internet connection, inadequate computer”.

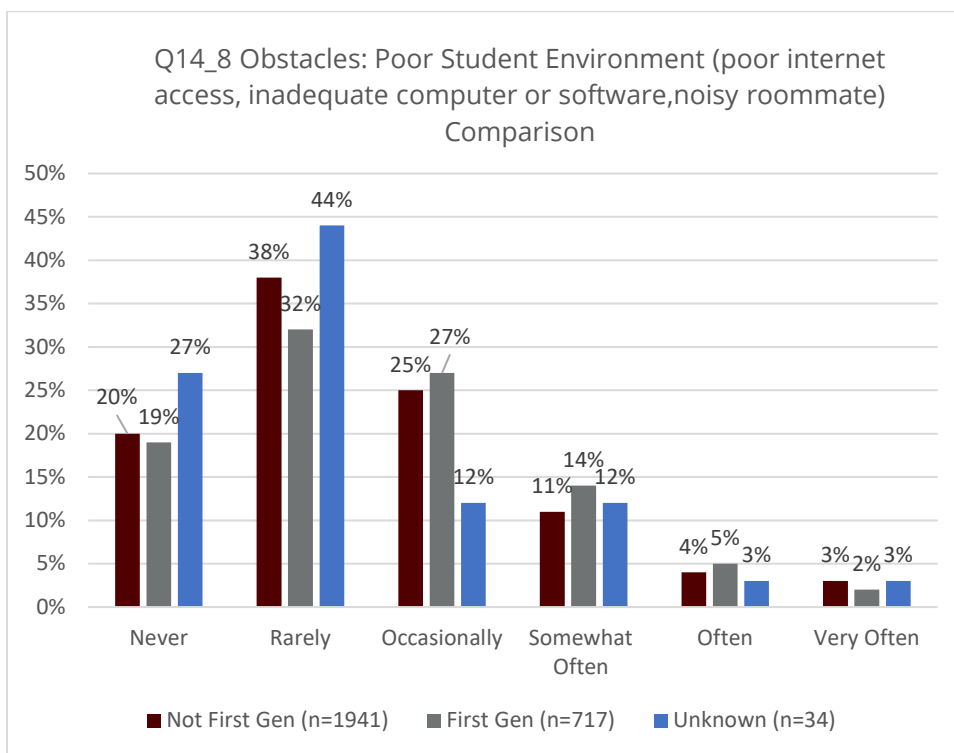


Table 1

The students also indicated some negative perceptions during the focus groups to being a first generation college student on campus, including challenges in being away from home and family. Table 2 shows comparison of frequency percentages of responses to the FTIC survey question 14\_2 “During this academic year, how often do you anticipate each of the following being obstacles to your school work or academic success?” response choice 2 “Competing Family Responsibilities.”

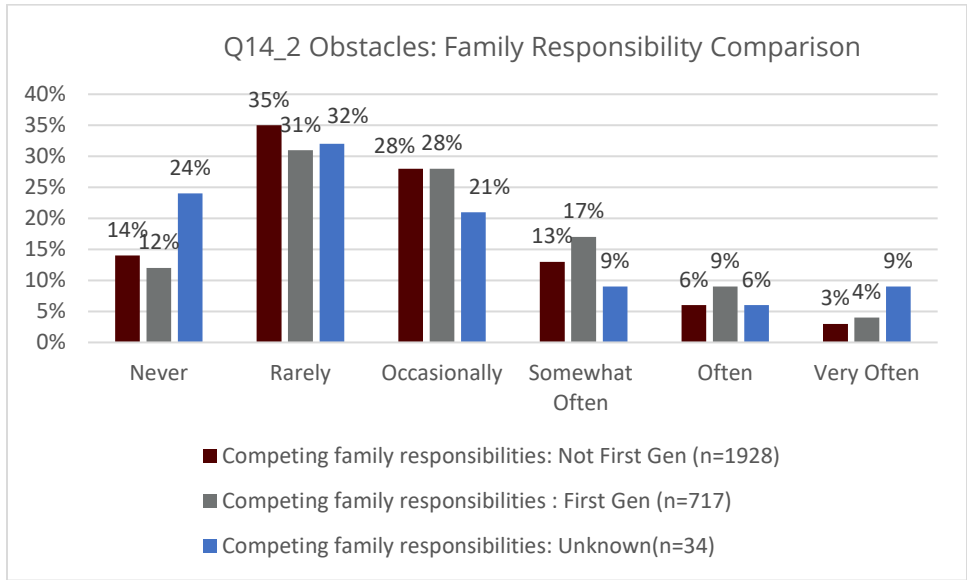


Table 2

During the focus groups positive perceptions of being a first generation college student were also shared, and included having scholarships available to them as first generation college students. Table 3 shows comparison of frequency percentages of responses to the FTIC survey question 9\_7, which asked for the level of agreement or disagreement to the statement “Given grants and scholarships if any that I receive, the cost of attending TAMU is manageable.”

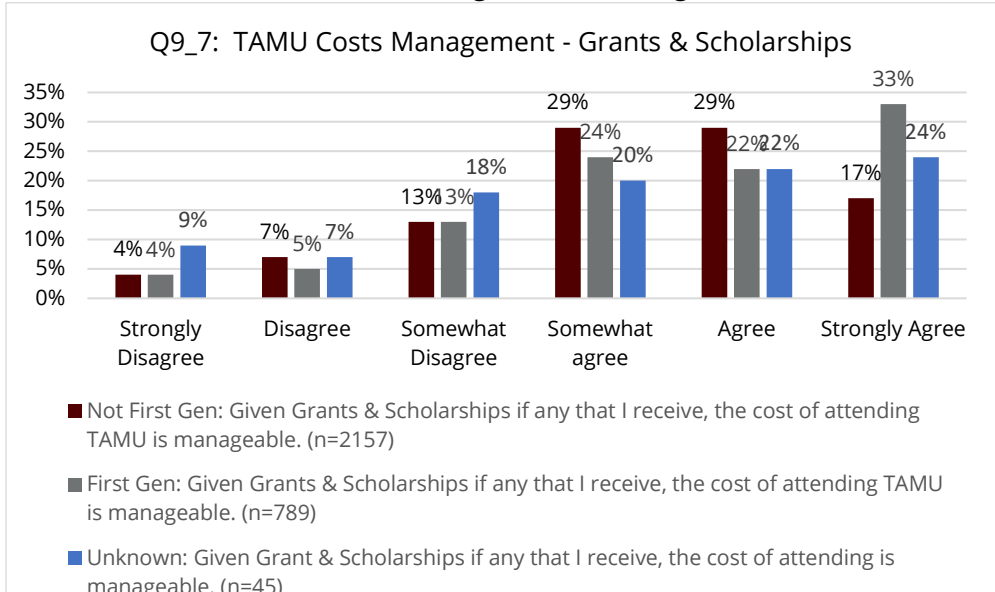
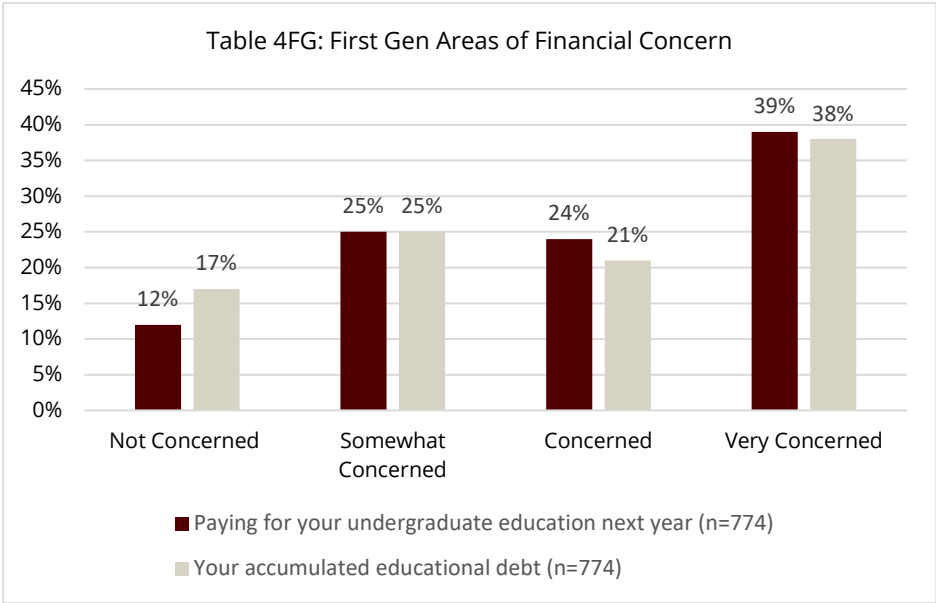
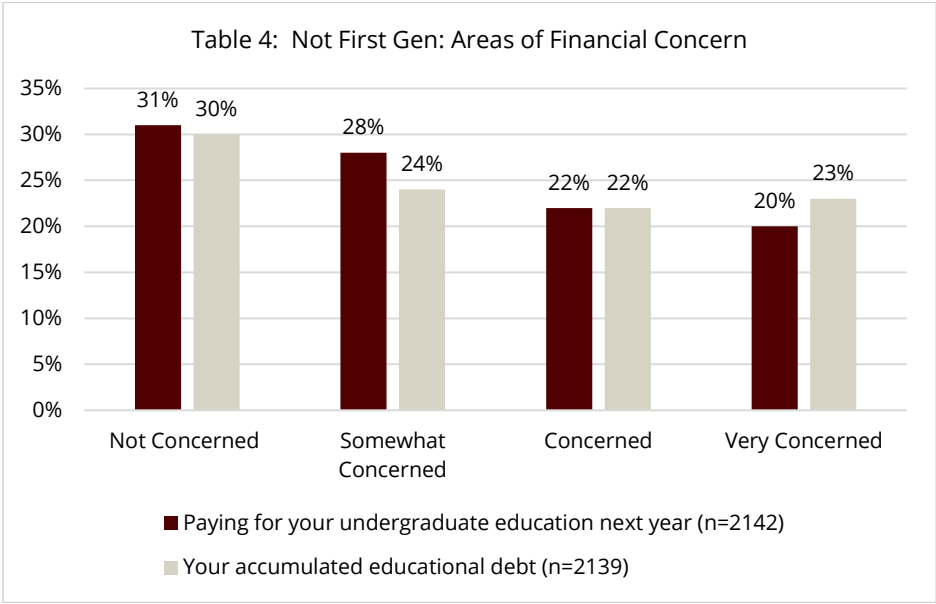
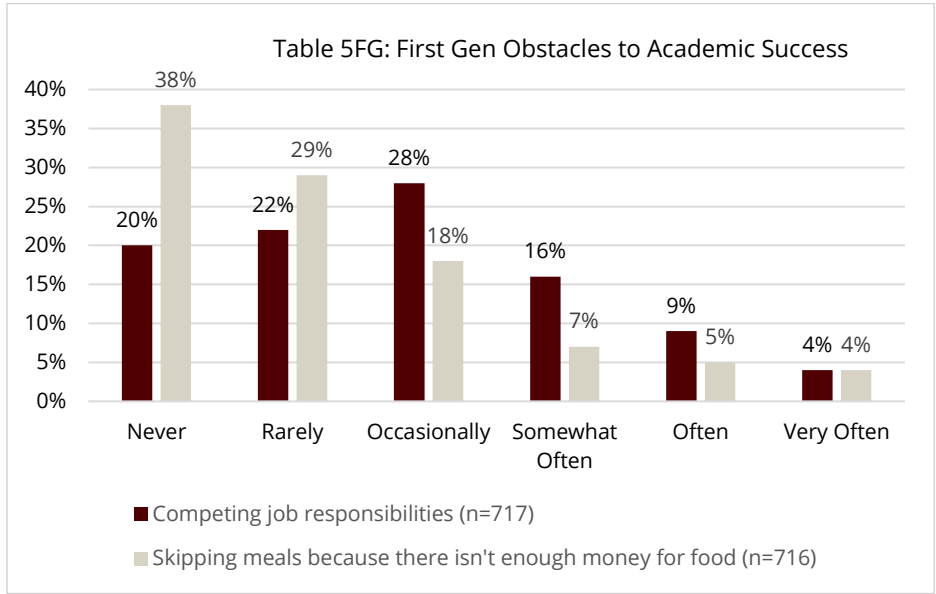
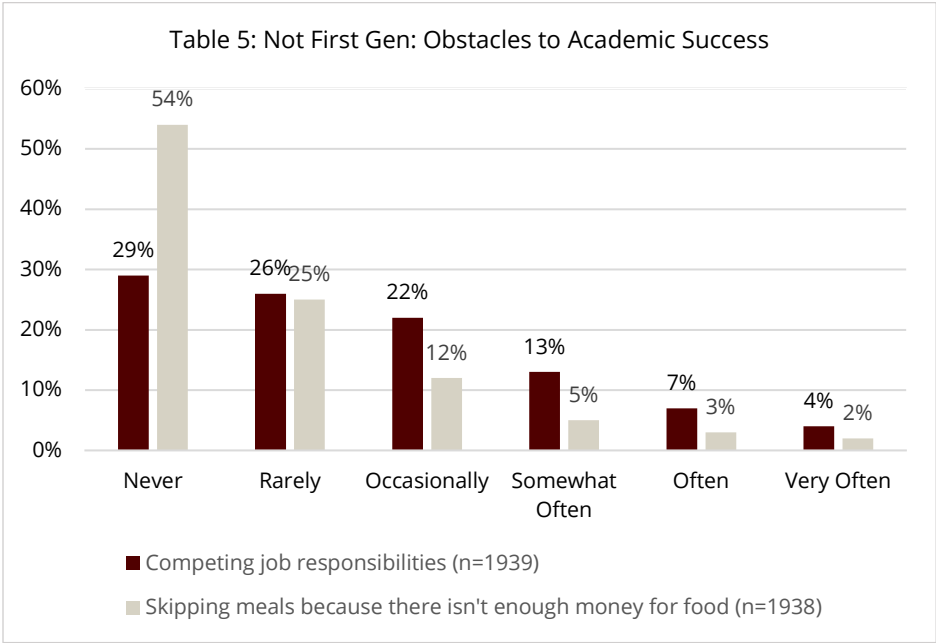


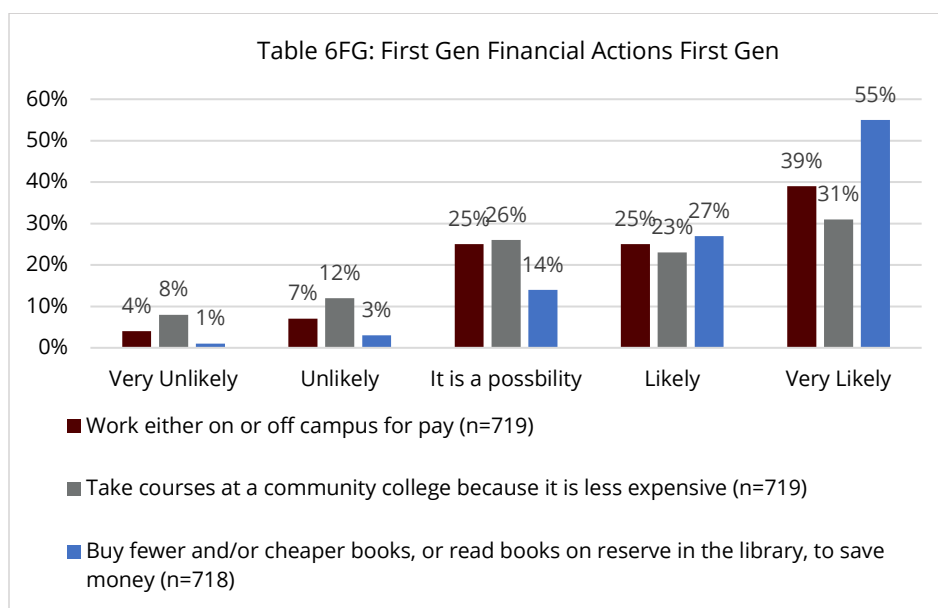
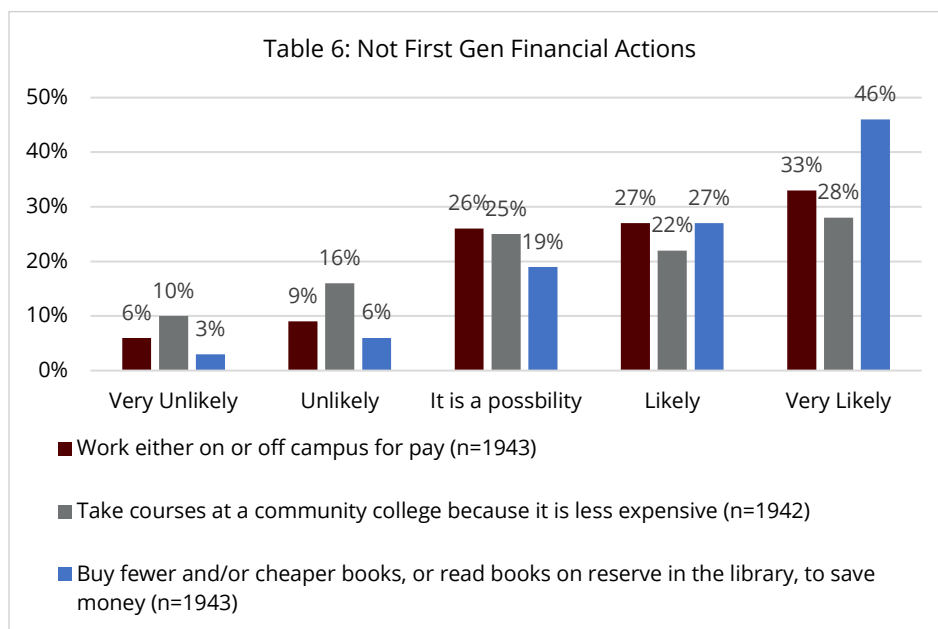
Table 3

In the following tables on the next three pages, comparison of not first generation and first generation students' frequency percentages of response to FTIC Survey questions that focus on financial matters are shown. Responses from students for which their first generation status was unknown are not shown. Table 4 shows not first generation students response frequency percentages and Table 4FG shows first generation students response frequency percentages to FTIC survey questions 10\_3 and 10\_5. Similarly, Tables 5 and 5FG show these same populations of students' response frequency percentages to FTIC Survey questions 14\_1 and 14\_11. Finally, Tables 6 and 6FG shows these same populations of students' response frequency percentages to FTIC Survey questions 13\_5, 13\_7 and 13\_9.









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 Report prepared on: April 4, 2019

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