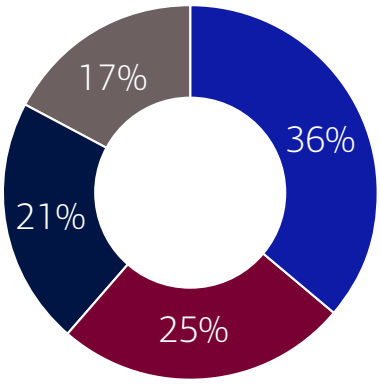
The financial reality of today's young athletes

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Young athletes are earning and saving at unprecedented levels yet face financial decisions far more complex than their peers. Merrill's latest research reveals where they're thriving — saving, investing and giving back — and where they need specialized legal, tax and financial professional guidance to navigate the complexities of name, image and likeness (NIL) deals, taxes and long-term wealth building. This snapshot of the research, highlights the key data points shaping their financial future.

1 Young athletes save and invest more than they spend on luxury.



- **36%** of sports earnings go to saving and investing
- **25%** to personal wants (only **6%** to luxury items)
- **21%** support others (family or charitable giving)
- **17%** cover basic needs

2 NIL deals are transforming finances, but create new challenges.

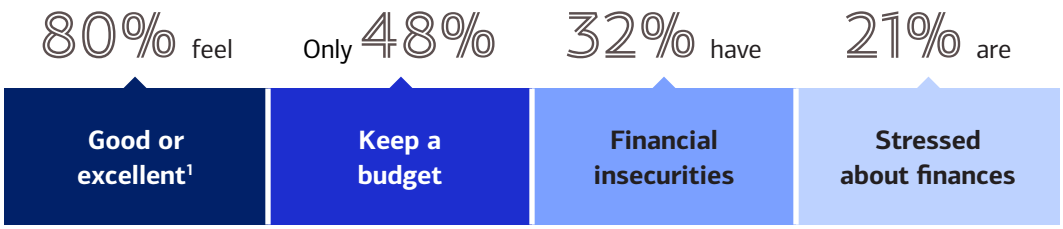
74% **expect $25K+** in NIL income and sponsorships in 2025

32% **earned $10K+** from NIL deals in 2024

61% struggle to navigate NIL opportunities

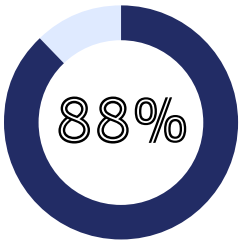
Please see important information on page 3.

3 Many athletes say they are financially literate, yet many feel insecure.

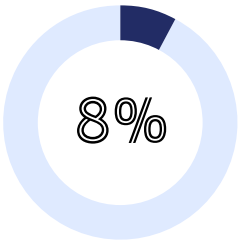


Just 19%
who keep a budget stick to it consistently

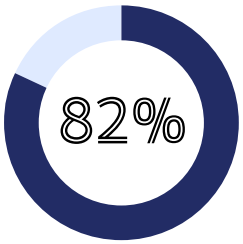
4 Many athletes want a financial advisor, but few actually have one.



want to work with a financial advisor

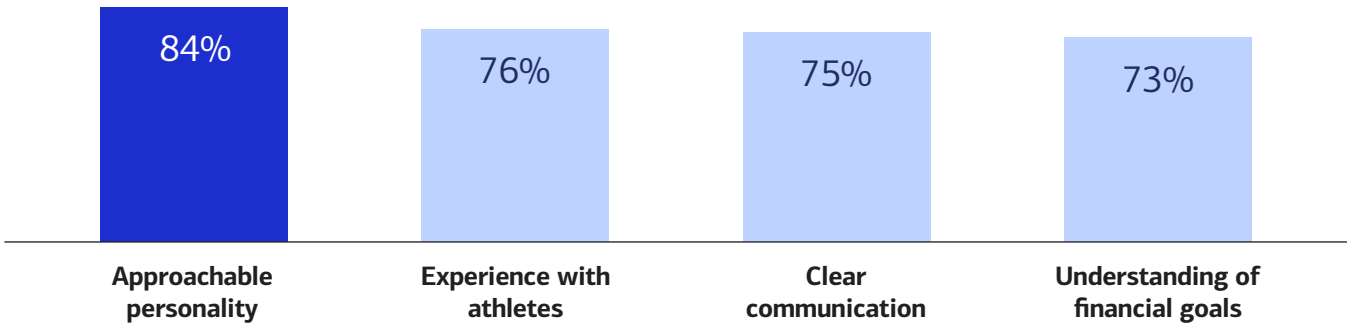


Currently do



want to learn about investing

5 What athletes tend to look for in an advisor.



[1] Athletes surveyed expressed their level of financial literacy skills through the responses to the research question below:

Financial literacy is defined as the ability to understand and effectively use various financial skills, including personal financial management, budgeting, investing, and saving. It involves having the knowledge and confidence to make informed decisions about money and financial resources to achieve financial stability and long-term goals.

Based on the definition above, how would you rate your financial literacy skills? (Select the rating scale point that best describes how you feel.)

Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

Key takeaways

1. Build on strong saving habits to help maximize long-term wealth.
2. Close the confidence gap by seeking specialized guidance tailored to address athlete-specific situations.
3. Get expert legal help to navigate NIL contracts and avoid exploitation.
4. Get professional advice early, especially as income grows and financial decisions become more complex.



Research methodology

This analysis is based on research conducted among 159 high-potential athletes across the United States in 2025. High-potential athletes were defined as those age 18+ with significant earning potential, including athletes with existing or pending NIL deals of $10,000 or more, those competing at professional levels or offered professional contracts, athletes representing their country in international competition, those competing in top conferences for their sport or those expecting to pursue professional athletics. The study participants represented diverse sports including basketball (18%), football (14%), baseball (11%), soccer (9%) and various other competitive athletics. Ages ranged from 18-24, with 81% between ages 18-21. The study examined financial behaviors, NIL participation, advisor relationships and financial planning priorities, providing comprehensive insights into this unique demographic's financial needs and preferences.

Connect with a Merrill Sports & Entertainment Advisor

Specialized guidance to help athletes build strategies designed to manage NIL income, build wealth and make an impact through college, pro career and beyond.

Investing involves risk, including the possible loss of principal. Past performance is no guarantee of future results.

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