

The Next Era of Payments:

How Habits, Experience and Trust
are Helping Redefine Commerce for
Consumers and Merchants

The 2025 Amex Trendex
Digital Payment Edition



2025 Trendex in Summary:



Customers and merchants are interested in payment innovation, but findings show that familiarity and habit run deep.

Innovation continues to reshape the payment landscape. As merchant acceptance of digital payment methods expands in the U.S., consumers are encountering a wider range of payment choices.

While availability of contactless, mobile wallets, and payment applications has increased, results from the 2025 American Express Trendex Digital Payment Edition found many consumers still opt for what they know and trust—traditional debit or credit cards—at the checkout.

Merchant acceptance has expanded; now customer adoption is the opportunity.

Many merchants now accept a range of digital payment options, including mobile wallets, peer-to-peer (P2P) payments, and contactless payments, which means consumers are encountering more choice at checkout. However, results show broader merchant acceptance has not yet translated into increased consumer usage—highlighting that consumer adoption is shaped less by access and more by trust, experience, and established routines.



Merchant acceptance expands payment options:

84% of merchants surveyed **offer peer-to-peer payments**—up from 74% in 2023.

72% **offer payments through mobile wallet or payment apps**—up from 68% in 2023.

79% **offer contactless options** at the point-of-sale (POS) vs 76% in 2023.

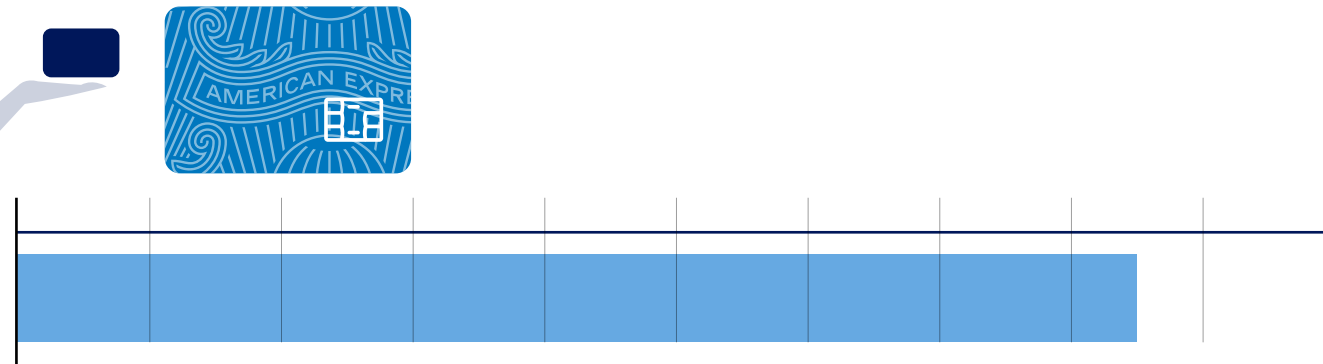
40% who accept in-person payments **now offer software point of sale (SoftPOS) technology** among their payment options, compared to 31% in 2023.¹

89% of those who accept in-person payments but do not use SoftPOS said they **would consider implementing this payment solution upon hearing the description.**

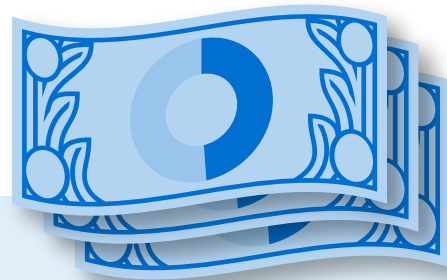
- 51% said they would be very likely.
- 38% said somewhat likely.

¹ SoftPOS allows merchants to use a smartphone as a contactless payment terminal to accept in-person payments from customers without any additional hardware.

Among the top payment methods merchants report their customers use (based on number of transactions):



85% of merchants surveyed reported that **credit or debit cards** top their list of customer payment methods.



49%
say cash or check.



40%
say mobile wallet
or payment apps.



39%
report P2P payments
top the list.

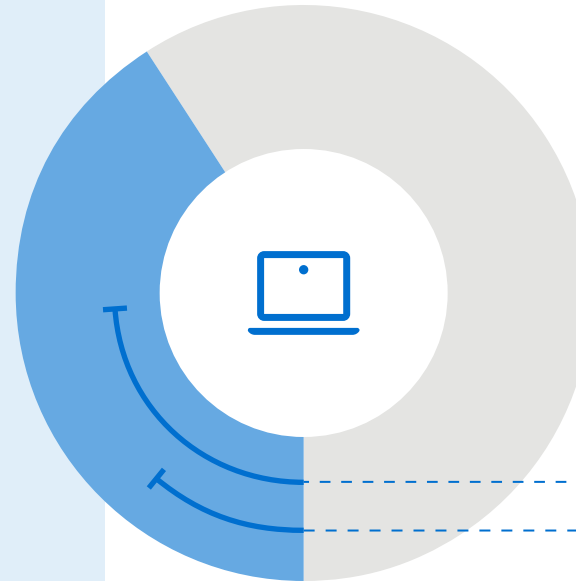


The Shift to Digital

The widespread adoption of new technology usually happens in stages. Consumer behavior shifts gradually, expanding from early adopters to mainstream as capabilities improve and the supporting infrastructure becomes widely available and trusted.

The survey results show that the shift is underway for digital payments, suggesting strong momentum and continued growth in the years ahead.

While debit and credit cards remain the most frequently used methods used by consumers for online (85%) and in-store purchases (82%), the reported **use of mobile payment options has increased, with:**



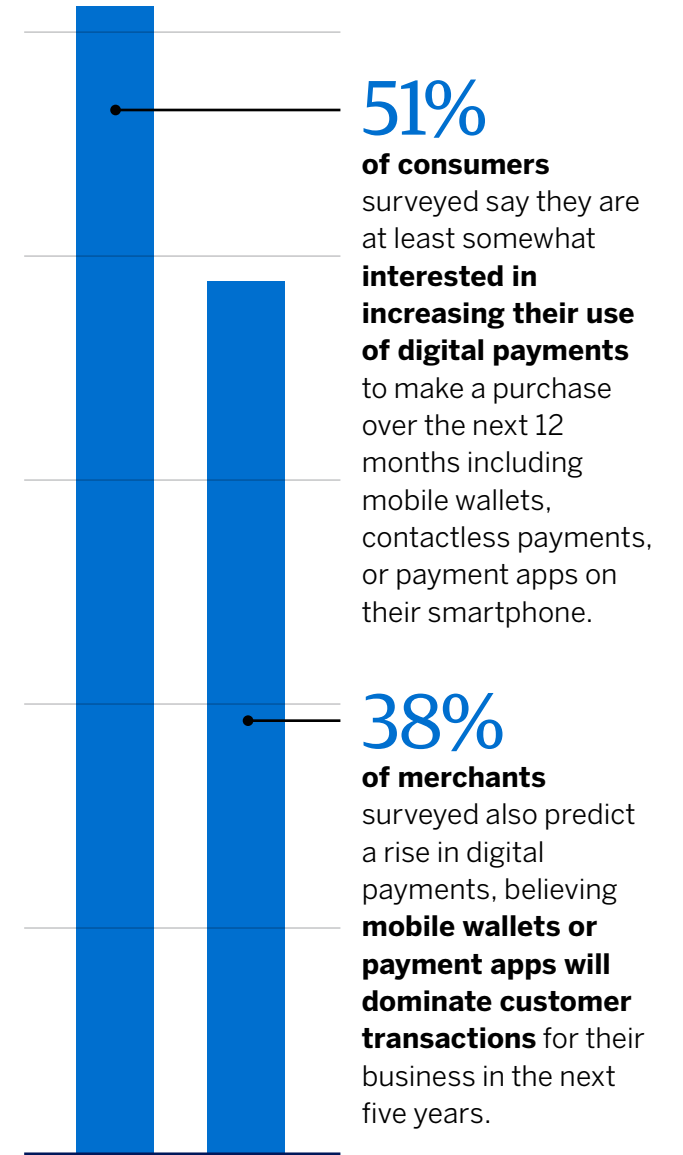
41% of consumers using mobile payments for **online purchases always or almost every time** (up from 35% in 2023). Of those:

59% of Millennials and Gen Z (compared to 26% Gen X and Baby Boomers)



35% of consumers using mobile payments for **in-store purchases always or almost every time** (up from 27% in 2023). Of those:

54% of Millennials and Gen Z (compared to 19% of Gen X and Baby Boomers)



51% of consumers surveyed say they are at least somewhat **interested in increasing their use of digital payments** to make a purchase over the next 12 months including mobile wallets, contactless payments, or payment apps on their smartphone.

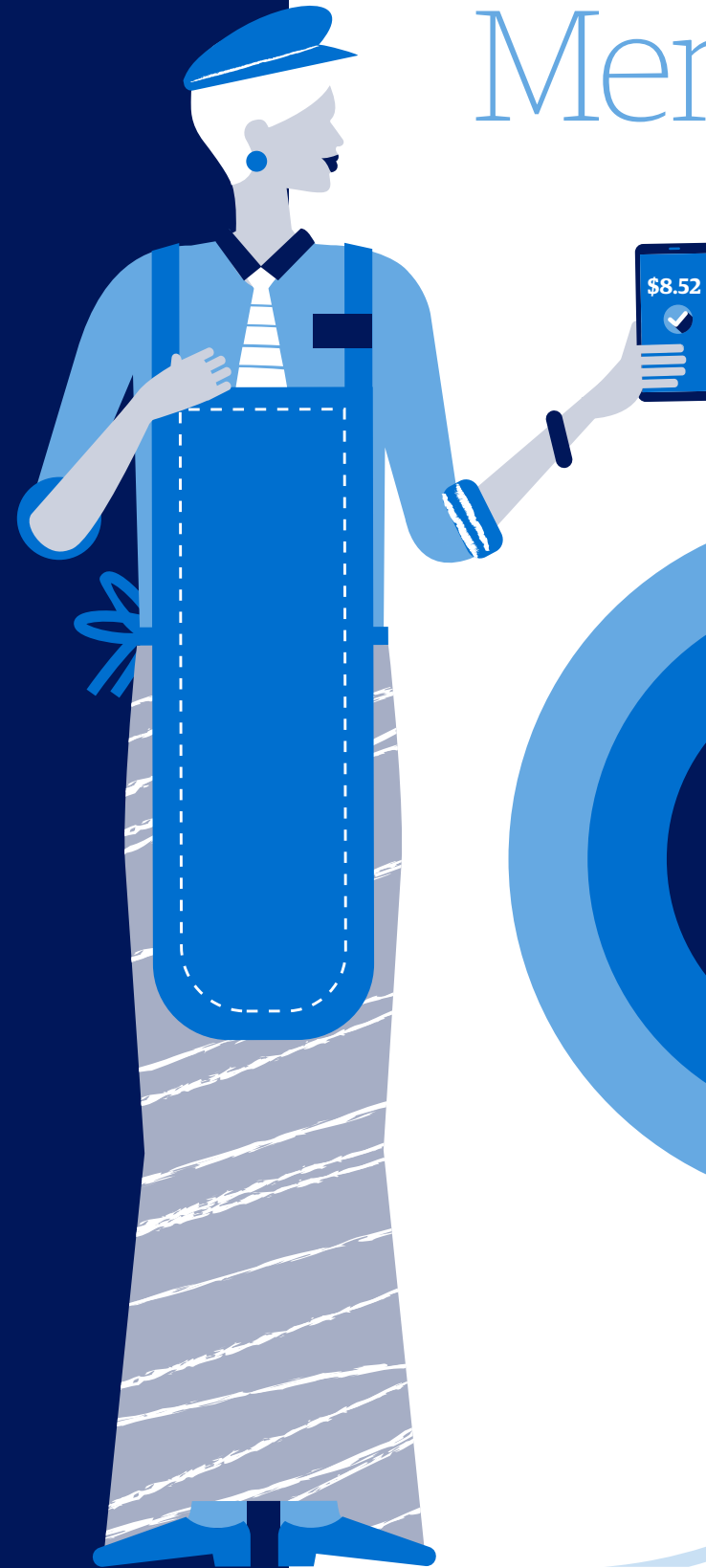
38% of merchants surveyed also predict a rise in digital payments, believing **mobile wallets or payment apps will dominate customer transactions** for their business in the next five years.

Merchants

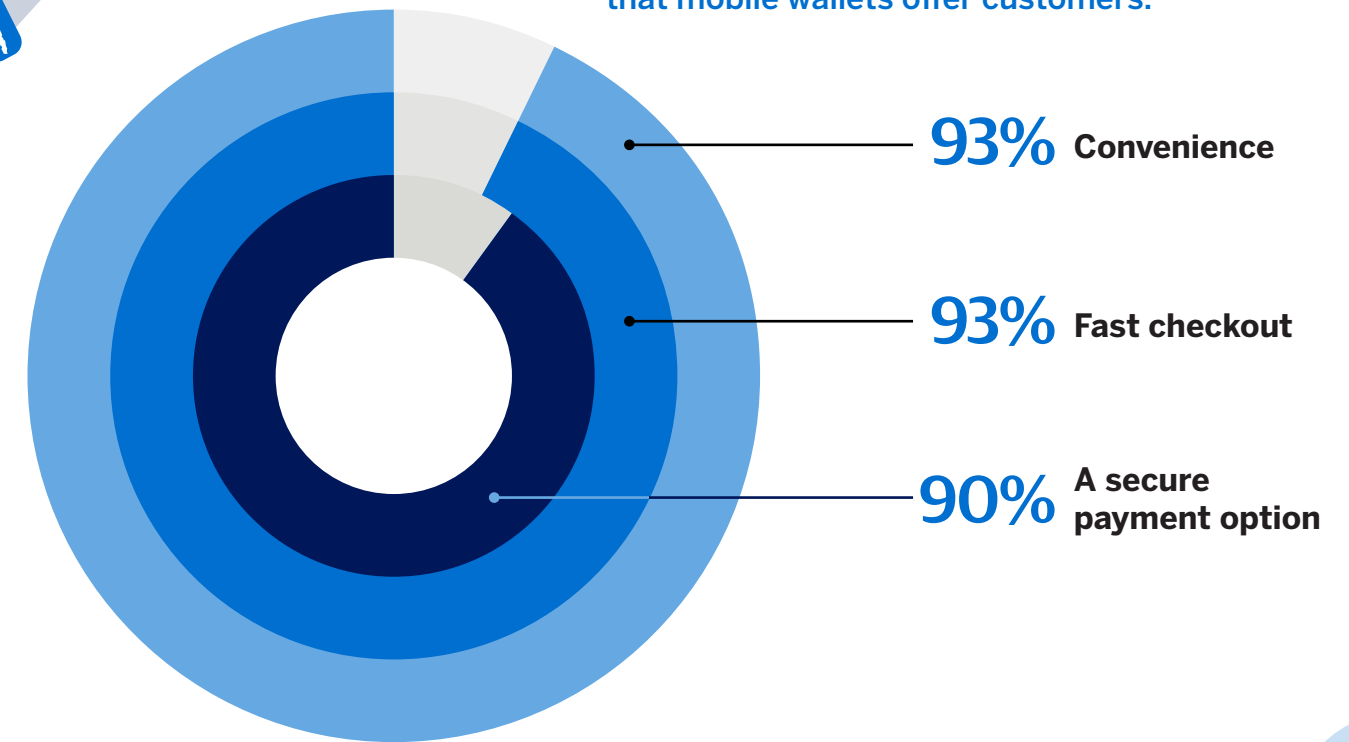


Consumers and merchants see the value in digital payments but for different reasons...

Sentiment towards digital payments, like mobile wallets and payment apps, is shifting among merchants and consumers surveyed. Merchants believe in their value, and some consumers see the benefits.



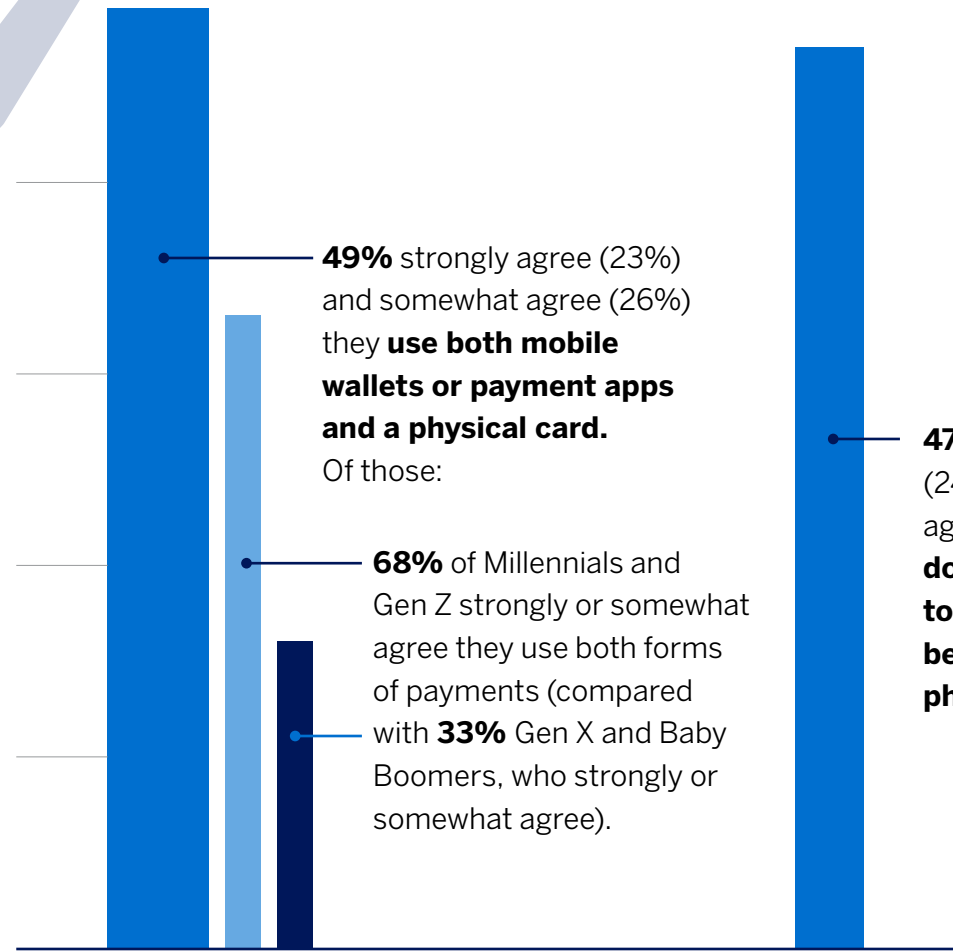
Merchants agree, somewhat or strongly, that mobile wallets offer customers:



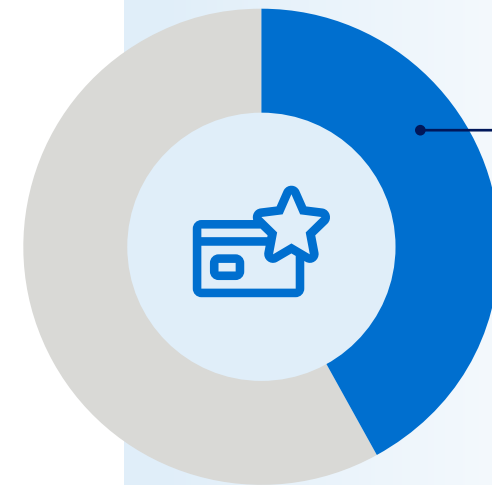
Consumers



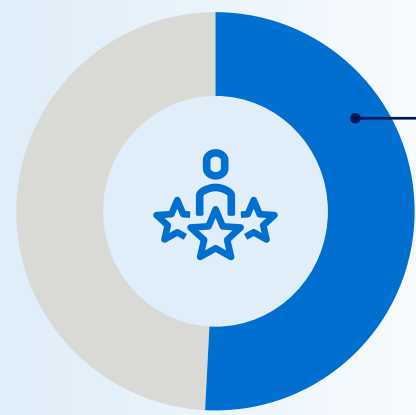
Consumers surveyed are generally divided on the use of mobile wallets and payment applications when compared to a physical card.



Among the list of reasons consumers say they use mobile wallets or payment apps to make purchases online is **speed or convenience (83%)** or the ability to **track their spending (40%)**.



42% say they **never or almost never use mobile wallet or payment apps** when shopping online.

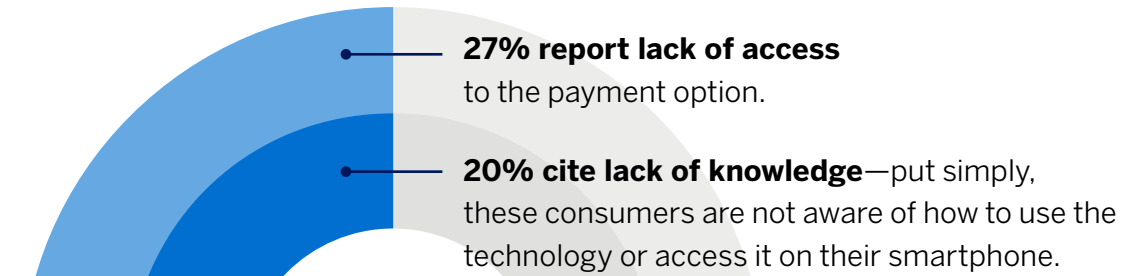


51% of these consumers note their satisfaction with their current payment methods among the reasons they do not use mobile wallet or payment apps when shopping online.

Consumers



However, there are other barriers to adopting mobile wallets or payment apps for in-store shopping. Among the reasons that best describe why consumers do not choose this payment method:



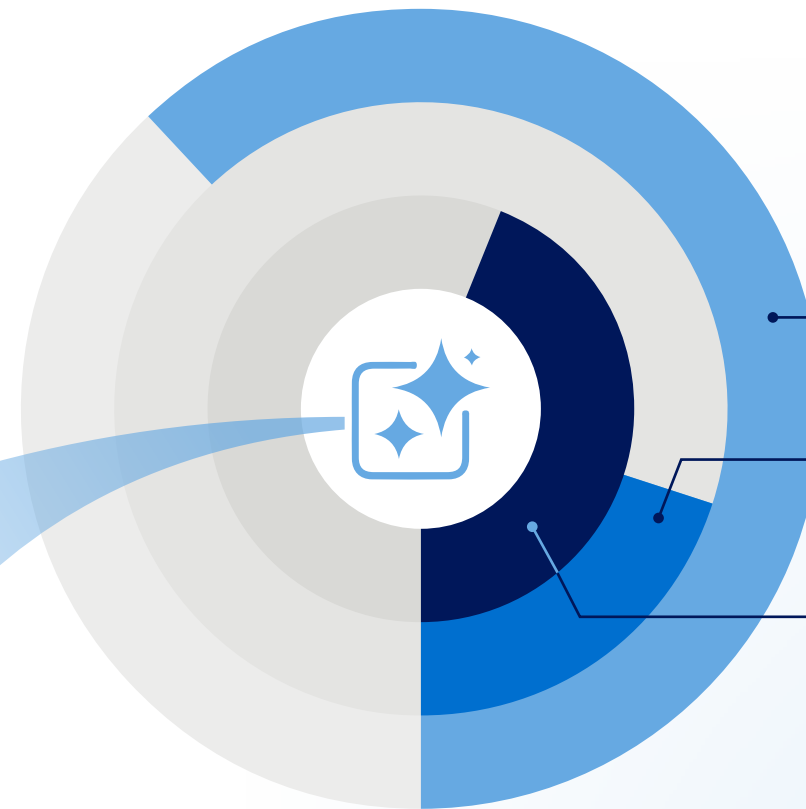
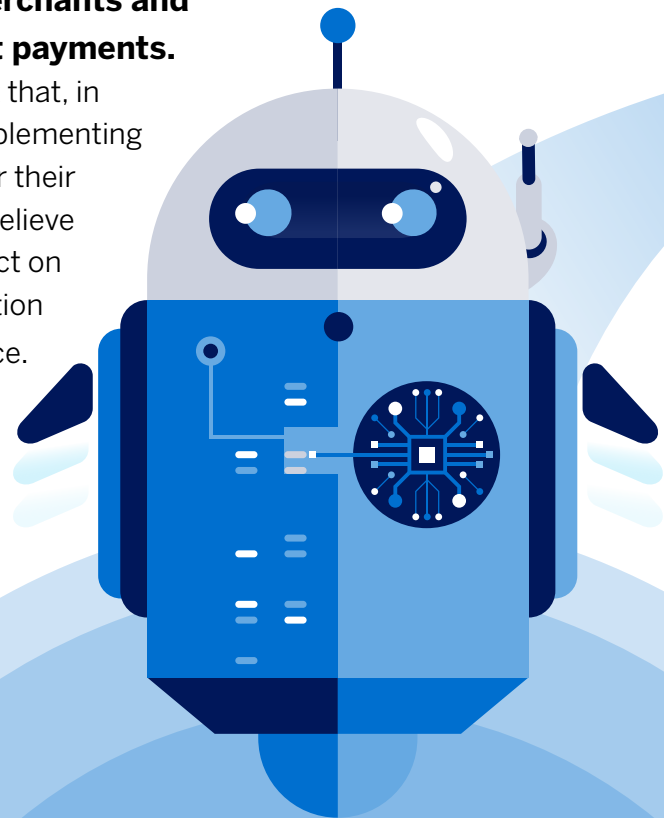
Education and awareness are essential to driving adoption. **Learn more** about how digital payment solutions can help consumers check out with ease.

Merchants

When it comes to AI and payments, consumer confidence is catching up.

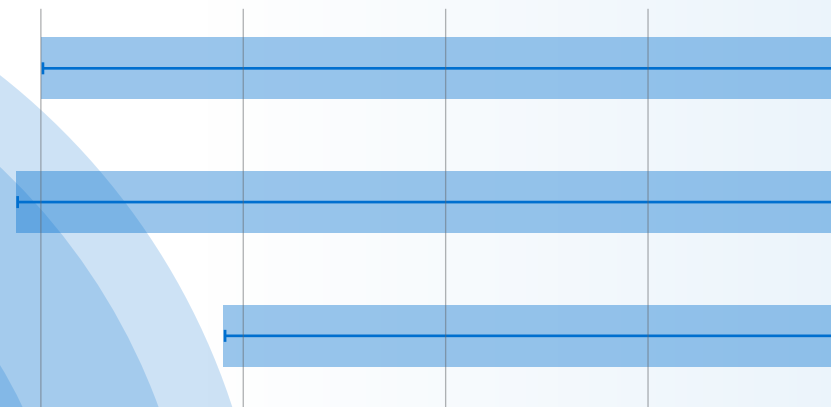
AI is reshaping how merchants and consumers think about payments.

The survey results suggest that, in general, merchants are implementing AI where it makes sense for their business and consumers believe AI will have a positive impact on the speed and personalization of their shopping experience.



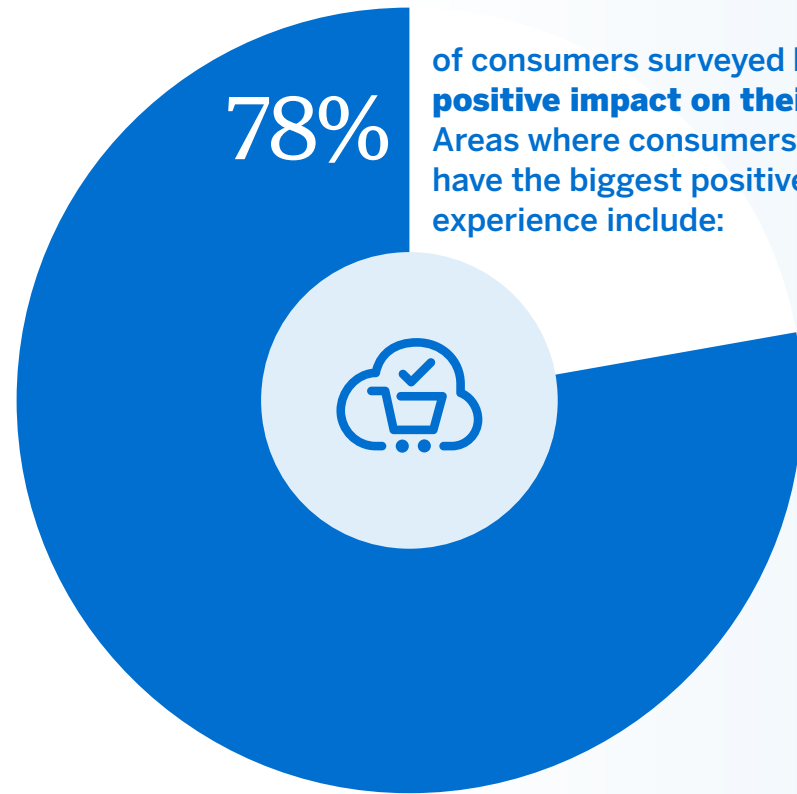
- 62% of merchants surveyed say they **are currently using AI** in their business.
- 20% of merchants have **plans to implement AI in the next 12 months**.
- 44% say their company has **plans for implementing AI agent-initiated payments** in the future.

When asked to **select the biggest barriers** to adopting AI or using more AI in their business:

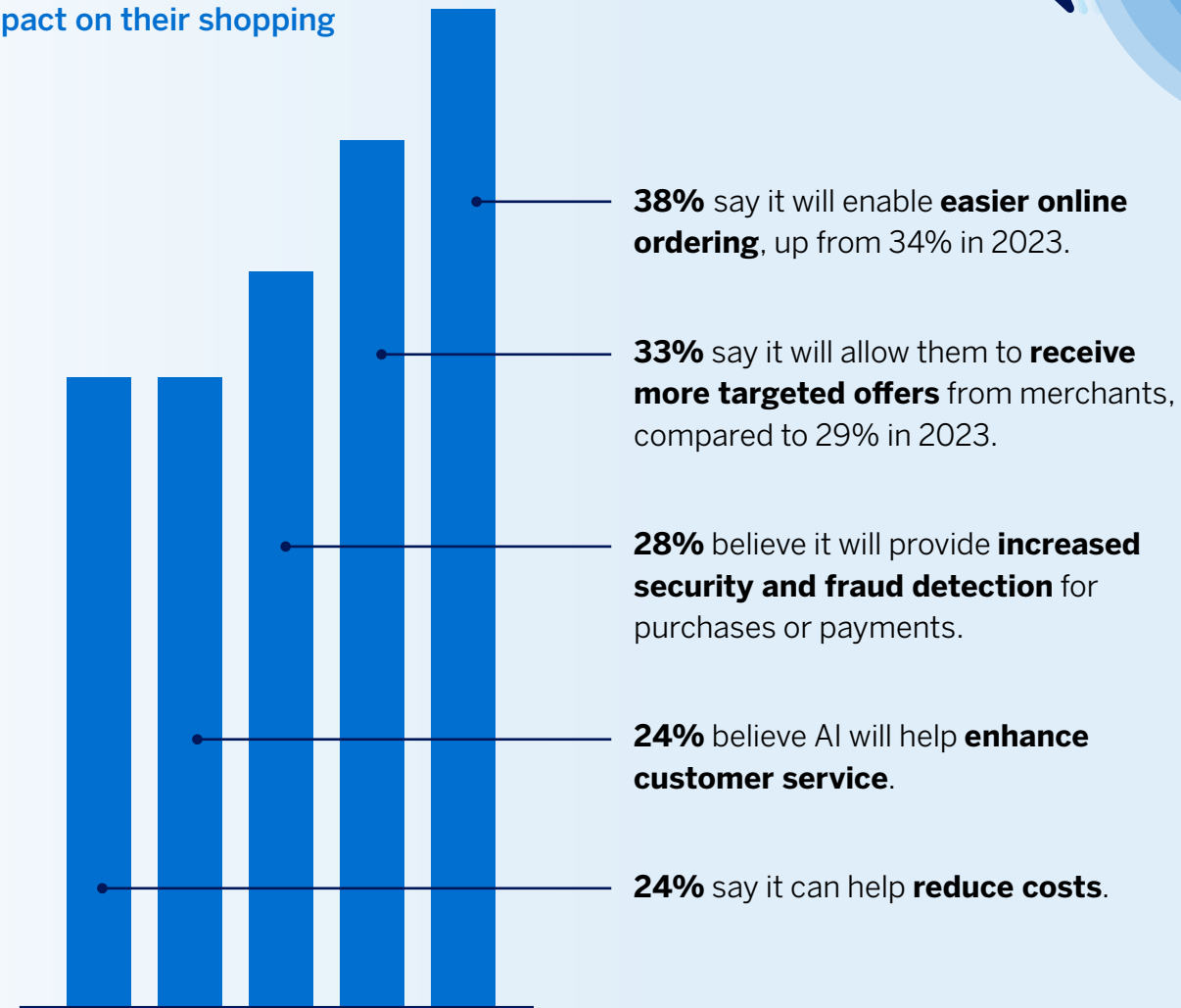


- 40% say they are **worried about potential legal or security issues** (up from 33% in 2023).
- 41% say they have **concerns around the quality of AI tools** (up from 35% in 2023).
- 31% **list cost** among their top concerns (down from 35% in 2023).

Consumers



of consumers surveyed **believe AI can have a positive impact on their shopping experience.** Areas where consumers indicated they believe AI will have the biggest positive impact on their shopping experience include:



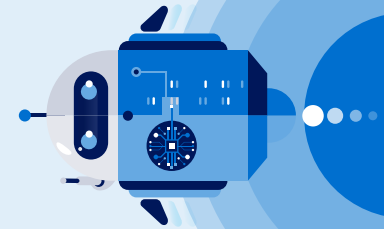
38% say it will enable **easier online ordering**, up from 34% in 2023.

33% say it will allow them to **receive more targeted offers** from merchants, compared to 29% in 2023.

28% believe it will provide **increased security and fraud detection** for purchases or payments.

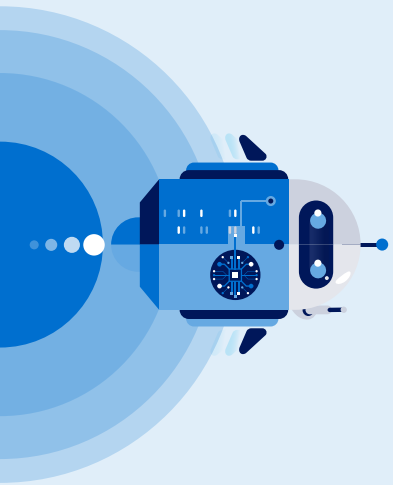
24% believe AI will help **enhance customer service.**

24% say it can help **reduce costs.**

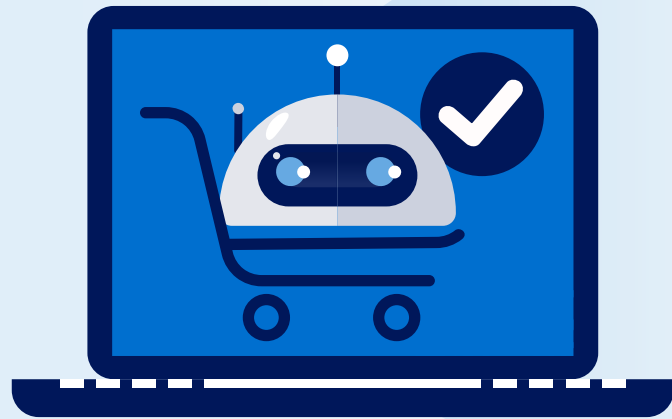


[Read this newsroom article](#) to learn about how American Express is thinking about the age of agentic commerce.

Consumers



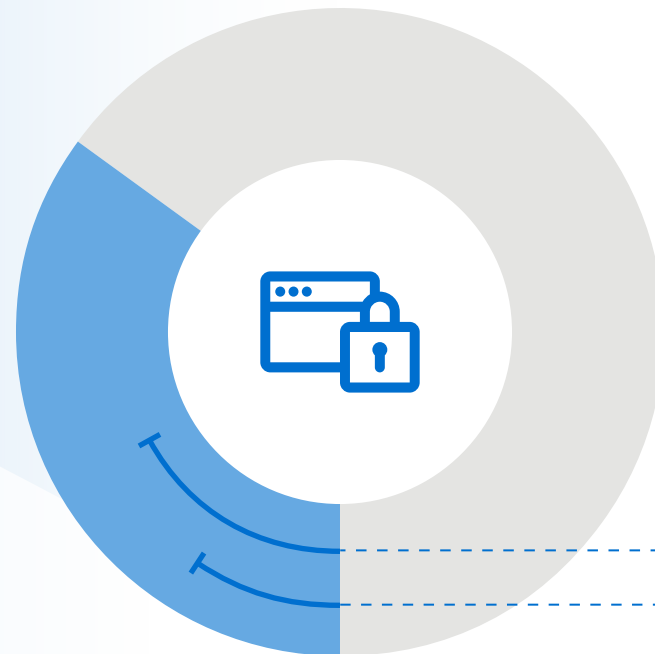
When it comes to AI agents making a purchase for a shopper, there's room for consumer confidence to grow.



63%

of consumers say they would be at least somewhat comfortable with an AI agent recommending items to buy, but they **may not be ready to hand over the controls to AI** when it comes to shopping.

73% of Millennials and Gen Z would be at least somewhat comfortable with AI agent recommendations (compared to **57%** Gen X and Baby Boomers).

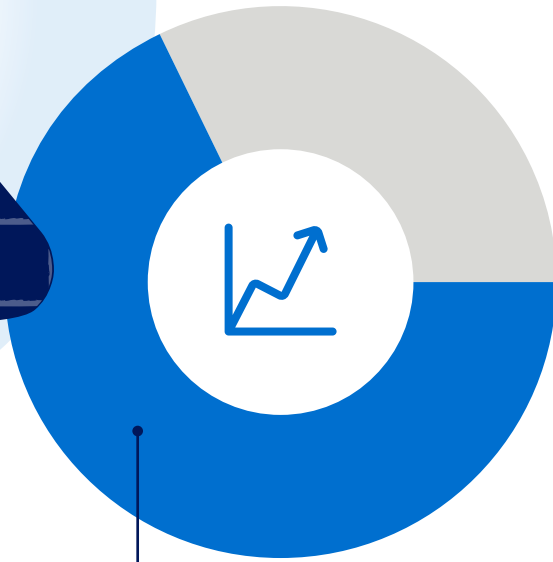


35%

say they would be very or somewhat comfortable with having an **AI agent completing their purchasing using their payment credentials.**

48% of Millennials and Gen Z would be at least somewhat comfortable with an AI agent purchasing with their credentials (compared to **24%** Gen X and Baby Boomers).

Looking ahead and the next era of payments.

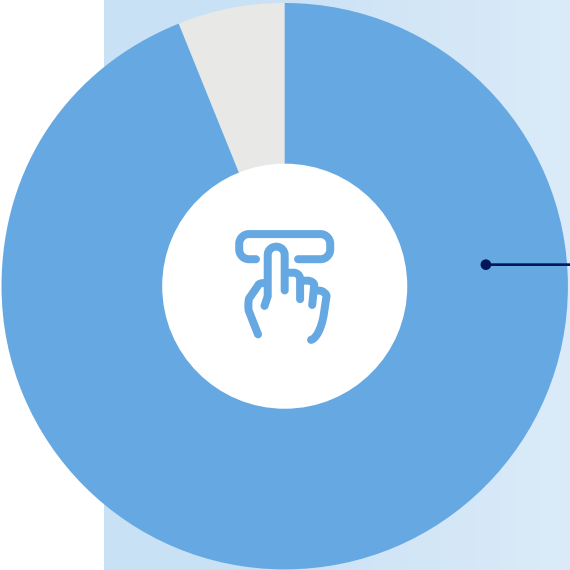


68% of merchants surveyed say their **investment in upgrading or purchasing new innovative payment solutions is likely to increase** in 2026.

Among the reasons merchants anticipate their investment in innovative payment solutions will increase in 2026:

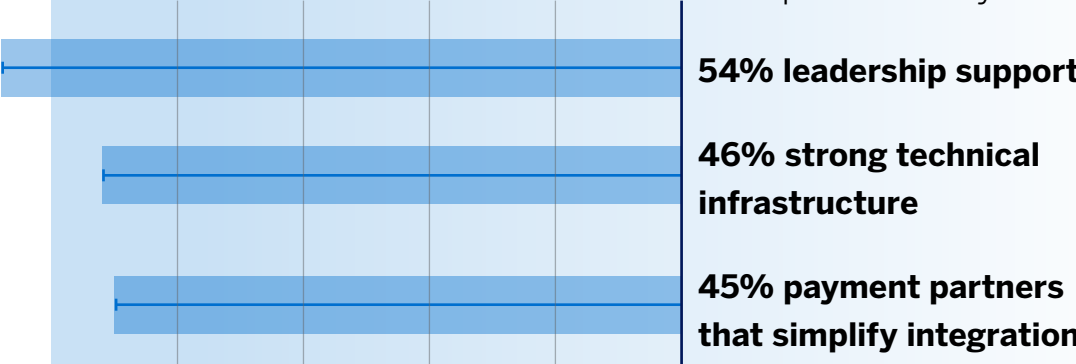
- **63%** say it is to **add new payment methods.**
- **61%** say it is to **meet increased customer demand.**

Merchants are not slowing down when it comes to payments innovation and feel confident about embracing and offering new solutions to consumers in 2026. Findings show that both merchants and consumers are approaching the next wave of innovation thoughtfully.



93% of merchants feel very (59%) or somewhat (34%) **confident in their ability to adopt and manage new payment options.**

Among those merchants who feel confident about adopting new payment options for their business, the top reasons they cite include:



The next phase of consumer adoption will likely be driven by payment experiences that feel easy, secure, and familiar. The future of payments will not be defined by any single innovation, but by how new technology is used to build trust, broaden choice, and elevate the merchant and consumer experience.

Research method:

The 2025 American Express Trendex Digital Payment Edition is based on surveys among U.S. consumers and business leaders.

The consumer survey was conducted among a sample of 1,006 adults, age 18+, weighted based on gender, age, education, race and geographic region intended to represent the total U.S. population. Unless otherwise noted, responses are among consumers who have made an online purchase three or more times in the past 12 months based on self-report. The anonymous survey was conducted online December 1–3, 2025. Where reported, Millennials and Gen Z include consumers 18–44; Gen X and Boomers include consumers 45–79.

The business survey is based on a sample of 401 business leaders in the U.S. who have responsibility for making decisions regarding customer payment options, IT/data security, or online sales strategy and planning. Respondent companies accept online or mobile payments, or don't accept online payments but do accept contactless point-of-sale payments. The anonymous survey was conducted online December 1–10, 2025.

