

Safety, Convenience  
and Choice:

# THE TRUE VALUE OF CARDS

*Research on the value and cost of cards in today's dynamic and vibrant payments ecosystem. Based on a survey of merchants and consumers in Ireland.*



## Introduction

The Irish payments landscape is evolving rapidly. Tech advancements, shifts in merchant and consumer preference, increased competition among providers, all point to a payments ecosystem that is increasingly digitalised, fast and efficient. Irish consumers are enthusiastically adopting digital means of payment. Merchants are capitalizing on this, embracing contactless and mobile payments. Merchants expect their turnover to be increasingly digital: cash turnover is expected to drop from 35% to 24% in the next five years and **71% of merchants prefer accepting digital payments over cash.**

Both consumers and merchants in Ireland have a marked preference for card-based payments. 55% of consumers believe cards are the best payment method when considering safety & security, and 59% choose cards for their convenience. **63% would prefer to pay with**

**card even when cash is an option. 73% trust cards above all other payment methods, both at home and abroad.**

Merchants also expect to accept new payment methods in the near future. About 20% of merchants surveyed plan to expand acceptance by embracing BNPL and crypto-based payments in the next 12 months.

Furthermore, the volume of contactless payments is rising rapidly. 96% of Irish merchants believe that contactless payments by card or mobile have been beneficial to their business, and **82% welcome the increased usage of non-traditional types of payments in addition to cards and cash.** Overall, consumer and merchants prefer cards among payments options because they perceive them as the most convenient, secure and positive for turnover.



# Key highlights

## The merchant perspective



### Relationship with cash

Irish merchants still select cash as one of their preferred payment methods, second (66%) after card payments (78%). Nevertheless, the prevalence of cash among payment methods is decreasing. Irish **merchants expect cash-generated turnover to drop from 35% to 24% in the next five years**. Furthermore, today cards rank highest among payment methods when considering turnover, above cash.

### 71% of merchants prefer accepting digital payments over cash.

60% of merchants believe the cost of handling cash (and its associated risks) works out to be pricier than paying card payment fees.



### Market evolution: winners & winners

The Irish payments landscape is evolving and expanding, with broad uptake of new and digital methods of payment.

While cash and cards remain the preferred methods of payment in terms of volume, **85% of merchants expect to be making more transactions through instant payments in the next 12 months**.

92% of Irish merchants believe electronic payments are critical to their organisation and **88% believe that accepting a large range of payment options has increased sales**. 96% of merchants believe contactless payments have been beneficial to their business.

**89% of merchants in Ireland are satisfied with the payment solutions available to them**. Similarly, 91% of merchants believe their customers are satisfied with the payment options available to them.



### What merchants really want

The top priorities for Irish merchants are by far safety, security and consumer preference, about 10% higher than the European average. Cost is not the most important variable when choosing between payment methods. **Cost of accepting digital payments is a priority only for 38% of merchants** and is ranked at the same level as consumer reach.

Irish merchants recognise that card payments have benefitted their organisation in many ways. Guaranteed payment comes first, with 98% of Irish merchants claiming their organisation has benefitted from this. Moreover,

**96% of Irish merchants claim card payments have enabled them to increase sales.**



### Card payments: cost and value

**78% of Irish merchants prefer cards over all other payment methods**. This is in line with merchant preference across Europe (77%).

As we have seen, **safety & security and consumer preference are top of mind for Irish merchants**, and Irish merchants rank cards as the payment method that best meets those priorities. Cards also rate as the preferred payment method across other factors (such as convenience/ease of use 58%, drive consumer spending/sales 60%, managing disputes, refunds and chargebacks 61%, generating valuable transaction data or consumer insights 62%) compared to other payment types.

**85% of Irish merchants believe that the benefits brought about by card payments outweigh the costs**, and **82% believe they pay a reasonable level of fees** for the value they receive from accepting card payments. Finally, **80% of merchants say they understand the fees they pay** for accepting cards.

# Key highlights

## The consumer perspective



### Relationship with cash

While cash remains an important payment option in Ireland, Irish consumers are more digitally inclined than their peers, and traditional reliance on cash is rapidly changing.

**92% of Irish consumers believe there are advantages to mobile payments.** Speed (55%), convenience/ease of use (52%), and being able to pay with their phone (42%) are the top three reasons why they believe this is the case.

**63% of Irish consumers would also rather pay with card over cash,** given the opportunity.



### Market evolution: winners & winners

The Irish payments landscape is evolving, with healthy competition in the market and new payment methods becoming available every day. While cash and cards remain the preferred payment options for consumers, 37% of Irish consumers have used instant payments in the last year, and 12% have used BNPL solutions in the last 12 months, in line with the European average (14%).

Moreover, **64% of consumers expect to make more transactions via instant payments in the next year.**

However, nearly half of the surveyed population (48%) are concerned about the potential for fraud when using real-time bank transfers and instant payments, which might be slowing uptake.



### A look at consumer preference

**Safety, security, and convenience rank highest among consumer priorities.** Irish consumers prefer cards over other payment methods because they meet these priorities best. 55% believe cards are the best payment method for safety & security and 59% choose cards for convenience. Cash ranks second in both categories, respectively 25% and 26%.

Irish consumers are satisfied with the existing payments landscape. Indeed, **88% of consumers feel like their payment needs are met.** Being more digitally inclined, 66% of consumers would support mandatory acceptance of digital payments at points of sale.



### Value of cards

Our research shows that Irish consumers believe card payments meet their payments needs best compared to other payment methods available in the market.

**73% trust cards over all other payment methods,** both at home and abroad. **63% would rather pay with card even if cash were available.**

Comparatively, if we look at alternative payment methods, only 14% of consumers do not have concerns when executing bank transfers (either instant or standard bank), where fraud and non-redeemability of funds were overwhelmingly listed as the top concerns.

Card payments are preferred by the majority due to their safety and security (55%), ease of use (59%), speed (54%), availability (58%), online payments (73%) and various other factors. The speed (52%) of card payments is also what makes them particularly attractive for in-store purchases

According to Irish consumers, **cards are considered to be the safest to use when paying for large amounts (65%).**





## Digital Euro

Awareness of the Digital Euro amongst Irish merchants is the lowest of the markets surveyed. 44% have not heard of the Digital Euro (compared to the 29% European average). 43% Are unsure about the potential benefits of a Digital Euro.

Similarly, 56% of Irish consumers have not heard of the Digital Euro, and only 8% consider themselves to be knowledgeable. Among those aware and knowledgeable, 40% would choose the Digital Euro for online purchases. At the same time, 61% are not sure how the Digital Euro would benefit them, and 58% of Irish consumers believe the Digital Euro is a form of cryptocurrency.

### Methodology:

This report is based on a survey commissioned by Payments Europe and conducted by FTI Consulting in 2024.

The survey was completed by 2,250 merchants working in physical and online retail in Ireland (250), Austria (250), Greece (250), Czech Republic (250), Denmark (250), Finland (250), Hungary (250), Latvia (250), and Lithuania (250).

The survey was also completed by 13,000 consumers living in Ireland (1,000), Austria (1,000), Greece (1,000), Czech Republic (1,000), Denmark (1,000), Finland (1,000), France (1,000), Germany (1,000), Hungary (1,000), Latvia (1,000), Lithuania (1,000), Poland (1,000), and Sweden (1,000). Respondents were weighted on region, gender, and age to ensure representativeness.

