

# Public Opinion on Payment Choice: A Survey of Attitudes, Behaviors, and Opinions on Legislative Issues

Prepared for the Payment Choice Coalition

Prepared by the Siena Research Institute

# Executive Summary

Commissioned by the Payment Choice Coalition, the Siena Research Institute administered a survey of 5,570 residents representatively sampled across the nation between May and October 2025 on the topic of payment choice and the utilization of cash payments. Of the 5,570 respondents, some questions were only answered by a subset of the sample, known as split samples, used to measure opinions on more issues while seeking to minimize respondent fatigue. Residents were asked about their attitudes towards the various payment methods, their usage of payment methods, their opinions on a cashless society, and support for pending legislation in Congress, known as the Payment Choice Act.

## Attitudes on Payment Choices

The opening sequence of the survey asked residents whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements. Across the three waves of data collection, the questionnaire included different variations of opinion and attitudinal questions on the various payment methods available to consumers. In a four-question sequence asked to the bulk of survey respondents, residents agree that cash protects privacy and may be more reliable during an emergency, however three-quarters agree that digital and card payments make it easier to track spending.

**Table 1. Attitudes Toward Payment Choices**

Statement	% Agree	% Disagree
Paying with cash protects one’s privacy better than digital or card payments.	92%	6%
Paying with cards or digital apps increases the risk of identity theft.	86%	12%
During a disaster or public emergency, cash is a more reliable payment option than card or digital payments.	85%	11%
It’s easier to keep track of your spending when you use a card or payment app instead of cash.	75%	24%
N = 4,548 United States Residents		

Note: The questions above were asked on a four-point scale: strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, and strongly disagree. Values may not add up to 100% due to rounding and from respondents who said “don’t know”.

In the first wave of the survey, the question series measured more items about the advantages and disadvantages of the available payment methods. Residents express a nuanced understanding of the payment methods. Residents agree that banks help protect consumers from fraud using electronic payments and digital payment methods can be deactivated remotely, unlike cash. However, residents agree that not accepting cash makes it more difficult for people to

purchase goods and services and that cash can help stay within a budget. A majority of residents disagree that reducing the amount of cash in circulation would reduce crime and that cash is slower than card or digital payments.

**Table 2. Attitudes Toward Payment Methods**

Statement	% Agree	% Disagree
When places don't accept cash for payment, it makes it too difficult for some people to buy what they want.	76%	22%
Banks do a good job of protecting customers from fraud when using digital and card payments.	75%	20%
Using physical cash makes it easier to stay within a budget.	70%	27%
Digital payments offer more protection than cash because lost or stolen cards and phones can be disabled	68%	27%
Digital payment apps make it easier to split costs or share payments with others.	66%	20%
Cash payments are slower than digital or card payments.	44%	51%
Reducing the amount of cash in circulation would help lessen criminal activity, such as money laundering or illegal transactions.	31%	61%
N = 1,022 United States Residents		

Note: The questions above were asked on a four-point scale: strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, and strongly disagree. Values may not add up to 100% due to rounding and from respondents who said "don't know".

## Payment Method Behaviors

Respondents were asked, in the last 30 days how they pay for things every month including regular bills and everyday spending, and 85% of residents say they paid with cash in the last 30 days. Only 17% of residents self-describe themselves as cashless, a person who rarely or never uses cash. Despite saying they identify as cashless, 60% of these "cashless" residents say they used cash in the last 30 days. Credit cards, debit cards, and online banking features were also used by two-thirds of residents in the last 30 days. Digital app usage, used by half of residents in the last 30 days, is used higher among cashless residents. Cash is the most used payment method of all of the choices asked.

**Table 3. Payment Methods Utilization in Last 30 Days**

	<b>Credit Card</b>	<b>Debit Card</b>	<b>Digital App</b>	<b>Autopay</b>	<b>Cash</b>
All Residents	70%	74%	57%	67%	85%
Cashless	70%	79%	72%	73%	60%
N = 5,570 United States Residents					

Note: The questions above were asked on a yes/no scale.

Just over one in ten (12%) say that they are using more cash today than they were five years ago whereas 47% say their cash usage has decreased and 40% say it has remained the same. Of the residents using less cash today compared to five years ago, the top three reasons cited were: “I prefer the convenience of using cards or mobile payment” (86%), “I do less in-person shopping now than I used to” (62%), and “I don’t carry cash regularly or don’t have cash readily available” (60%).

**Table 4. Reasons Why People Are Using Less Cash Today**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>% Yes</b>
I prefer the convenience of using cards or mobile payment.	86%
I do less in-person shopping now than I used to	62%
I don’t carry cash regularly or don’t have cash readily available	60%
I am concerned about carrying cash because it can be lost or stolen	38%
Many stores or businesses do not accept cash anymore	30%
N = 2,071 United States Residents	

Note: The questions above were asked on a yes/no scale only to respondents who said they are using less cash today compared to five years ago.

## Opinions on a Cashless Society

Eight in ten residents are opposed to the U.S. moving to a cashless society and stopping usage of paper and coin currency (84-13%) including 83% of Democrats, 90% of Republicans, and 86% of independents. Nearly 6 in 10 residents, 59%, say that regardless of size all businesses should be required to accept cash, 15% say that only some businesses should be required to accept cash, and 1 in 4, 25%, say that businesses should be free to choose whether to accept cash or not. Half of U.S. residents (54%), including 52% of Democrats, 65% of Republicans, and 52% of independents are concerned that the entire cash payment system could be disrupted if people and businesses use cash less often. While 38% of residents think the United States will never become a cashless society, 33% think it will occur in more than 10 years, and 23% think it will happen within 10 years.

## Payment Choice Act

A majority of residents support three key provisions of legislation that has been proposed in Congress known as the Payment Choice Act (PCA) of 2025: requiring most businesses with physical storefronts to accept cash (85-13%), prohibiting businesses from charging cash-paying customers a higher price (67-31%), and carving out an exception for businesses to provide a device that converts cash into an accepted payment method (53-41%). The support for the overall objective of the Payment Choice Act, requiring most businesses with physical storefronts to accept cash as a form of payment, is nearly uniform across party lines with 84% of Democrats and independents and 88% of Republicans supporting the provision. Two-thirds of Democrats and Republicans support prohibiting charging cash paying customers a higher price than other payment methods. A plurality of Republicans (46%), half of independents (50%), and a majority of Democrats (55%) support the component of the bill that carves out an exception for businesses who offer a device that converts cash into prepaid cards without fees. Nearly two-thirds, 64%, of residents say they agree with supporters of the Payment Choice Act of 2025 and 68% say they would be either very or somewhat satisfied if their elected representative voted in favor of the PCA of 2025. Across a series of questions, there is strong bi-partisan support for the Payment Choice Act.

**Table 5. Support for the Pending Legislation Known as the Payment Choice Act**

Question	Support	Oppose
The Payment Choice Act of 2025 would require most businesses with physical storefronts to accept cash as a form of payment.	85%	13%
The proposed bill would prohibit businesses from charging cash-paying customers a higher price than those paying with other methods	67%	31%
The Payment Choice Act of 2025 includes an exception that allows businesses to provide a device that converts cash into prepaid cards on premises, provided there are no fees, a low minimum deposit, no expiration, and no collection of personal information.	53%	41%
N = 4,584 United States Residents		

Note: The questions above were asked on a four-point scale: strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, and strongly oppose. Values may not add up to 100% due to rounding and from respondents who said “don’t know”.