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Americans Want Payments They Don't Have to Think About: Interledger Foundation Finds 51% Would Abandon Cash, 35% Cards

The Interledger Foundation's New Report on U.S. Payment Preferences Finds Consumers Want Set-It-and-Forget-It Payments the System Isn't Ready to Deliver

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, UNITED STATES, August 13, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Making a purchase used to require a physical act, such as the exchange of cash or handing a credit card to a clerk. However, increasingly Americans are shifting towards effortless payments that simply require the wave of a phone or watch. This shift is the focus of Out of Sight, Out of Mind: What US Payment Preferences Reveal About the Future of Finance, a new national report from The Interledger Foundation (ILF), an organization building and advocating for open, interoperable payment networks. The second installment in the organization's Future of Digital Finance series finds that consumers are increasingly open to abandoning payment methods that require action, such as cash and cards, in favor of automatic ones.

The shift is unfolding on both sides of the register. Consumers are gravitating toward automatic, out-of-sight payment methods, and businesses are moving away from cash-only transactions. But the payment system underneath was never built for this ease. The rails that move money between financial institutions, providers and borders remain fragmented, and the seamless experience consumers now expect is harder to deliver than it looks.

The first installment of ILF's Future of Digital Finance series examined consumers' relationship with cash and financial institutions. This next iteration shows how decisively consumers are abandoning payment methods that require action, and how quickly businesses are, too.

Americans are opting out of the act of paying.

• Cash is already on the way out for most consumers. More than half of Americans (51%) say they would be open to giving up cash entirely.
• Physical cards are on the same path. Thirty-five percent (35%) of consumers say they would be open to abandoning physical payment cards. For more than a third of the country, carrying a card is starting to feel like one step too many, a number likely to grow as digital wallets make the physical card optional.

"Set it and forget it" has become the default.

• Nearly 7 in 10 Americans feel positively about subscription payments. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of consumers say they love (27%) or like (41%) subscription-based payment models. The appeal is simple: once a subscription is set up, the payment takes care of itself.
• Passive payment is becoming a preference, not an accident. As more consumers default to auto-pay and subscriptions, making a payment is becoming something that happens quietly in the background rather than something they actively do.

Businesses are leaving cash behind, but at a different rate than consumers.

• For most businesses, cash is becoming the exception. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of businesses report that cash accounts for 50% or less of their transactions, and 10% accept no cash at all.
• The retreat from cash is an operational decision. Among businesses that have pulled back on cash, the reasons are the cost of handling cash and the risk of fraud. What consumers want and what businesses need are pointing in the same direction.

"It's clear consumers are expecting payments to be effortless, and not have to think about them. But when they stop thinking about them, they stop scrutinizing them too," said Briana Marbury, President and CEO of the Interledger Foundation. " What people often don't realize is that behind every 'invisible' payment lies infrastructure that, even in the digital age, is still often fragmented and disconnected. If we want payments to work the way consumers now expect, we have to build systems that work across every bank, digital wallet and provider."

Out of Sight, Out of Mind: What U.S. Payment Preferences Reveal About the Future of Finance is based on a national survey commissioned by the Interledger Foundation and conducted by Dynata, with responses from 1,004 U.S. consumers and 253 U.S. businesses. The report is the second installment in ILF's Future of Digital Finance series. The full report is available here.

About Interledger Foundation

Interledger Foundation builds and advocates for an open, interoperable payment network where transactions are not limited to a particular bank, mobile money provider, or location. The organization works to increase access to digital financial services for the 1.3 billion people worldwide who are currently excluded from traditional banking systems through the Interledger Protocol (ILP). The organization works with partners to integrate its ILP into existing and emerging financial and payments infrastructures. It currently has large-scale projects underway with Wallet Guru, People's Clearinghouse, and miPlata.

Learn more at: www.interledger.org

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