



Generational Trends 2025

Gen X and the Future of Payments

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Overview

Generation X doesn't always get the spotlight when it comes to digital finance, but their coming of age during the birth of ecommerce and their changing payment habits make them an interesting group to watch, blending a mix of trusted methods with new tech when it adds real value.

This generation has seen it all – growing up with cash, cheques, and even those clunky card machines that needed a signature. While they've embraced things like contactless cards and online payments, they're not the type to dive headfirst into new trends without thinking it through. Practicality and a healthy dose of caution are more their style.

Whether it's grabbing groceries or updating tech gadgets, this generation appreciates the simplicity and control debit provides. Credit cards also play a key role, particularly for bigger expenses like hotel bookings, where perks such as points, and purchase protection come into play. Cash is still kept in the mix, often for social settings like dining out, reflecting a preference for flexibility in informal environments. However, mobile wallets

haven't won them over in hospitality or for higher-value purchases, with only a small percentage choosing to tap their phones at the till.

Security sits firmly at the top of their payment checklist. **They value convenience but won't sacrifice reliability to get it.** For Gen X, smooth, hassle-free transactions – both at home and abroad – are non-negotiable.

And, although newer options like buy now, pay later (BNPL) haven't become mainstream for this group, curiosity about wearable payments and biometric options suggests they're willing to adopt innovation if it feels secure.

For merchants, the challenges and opportunities lie in offering dependable payment methods backed by excellent security and meaningful loyalty rewards. With their considerable spending power and preference for practicality, Gen X continues to shape trends in retail and travel payments.



Everyday spending habits

49%

use **debit cards** as their preferred
payment method

44%

believe **credit and debit cards** provide
the most secure online experience

51%

rank **security** as their **top payment
priority**

19%

of Gen X uses **credit cards** when **dining
out**

20%

use **cash** for **grocery shopping**



Getting to know Gen X

Generation X, born between **1965 and 1980 and now aged 45 to 60**, is often called the 'forgotten' generation - wedged between baby boomers, known for post-war social change, and millennials, defined by their digital-first lives.

But Gen X has its own vibe: practical, adaptable, and quietly shaping how we live and work today.

Gen X is at the peak of their careers, often stepping into leadership roles while balancing work, family, and everything in between. In 2018, they held over **50%** of global leadership roles, and many continue to rise into C-suite positions. They're also the ultimate 'sandwich generation', balancing careers with caregiving responsibilities for both children and aging parents. Gen X parents aren't just thinking about their own retirement - they're also balancing concerns about their children's futures. Over half worry that their kids may need financial support well into adulthood.

Despite setbacks during the Great Recession of 2007-2009, Gen X has bounced back, thanks to steady

homeownership and financial recovery. They've learned to weather economic instability and have emerged with significant spending power. In the US, Gen X has the highest average annual expenditure, outspending every other generation by at least \$20,000.

Unlike millennials, who tend to value **experiences over possessions, Gen X remains grounded - investing in homes, savings, and retirement plans**, even as they embrace travel and treat themselves to quality purchases.

This generation has witnessed the rise of personal computers, dial-up internet, and smartphones, adapting to each new

development at their own pace.

They've built tech giants like Google and PayPal, yet many Gen Xers maintain a cautious relationship with digital tools like mobile wallets and BNPL options. They prefer secure, straightforward payment solutions that offer tangible value and reliability over flashy trends.

Gen X approaches shopping with a calculated mindset. They research thoroughly, hunt for deals, and value loyalty programmes that reward them with real perks. When it comes to social media, they're not as prolific as younger generations but still use platforms like Facebook and LinkedIn to stay informed and connected.

In short, Gen X embodies a 'best of both worlds' approach - grounded in practical habits yet open to innovation when it adds real value.

Their influence is felt across industries, and businesses that understand their need for security, reliability, and useful rewards will be well-placed to earn their loyalty.

Gen X in numbers

80%

of Gen X **own property.**

92%

of Gen X are on **social networks**

25%

of the world's population is made up of Gen X

85%

say **authenticity** is important **when choosing between brands**

81%

of Gen Xers **have a Facebook account**

2.5 hours

is **spent on their smartphones** per day



How Gen Xers like to pay

Dining out: cafés, restaurants and pubs

Debit cards are the top choice for Gen X when dining out, with **41%** opting to tap and go. It's a straightforward, fuss-free option that matches their practical mindset. But cash hasn't disappeared – **22%** still prefer to use physical money, especially when it comes to splitting the bill or leaving a tip.

Credit cards come in at **19%**, often used by those keen to earn rewards or for the added security they offer during big celebrations or group outings. On the flip side, mobile wallets barely register at **6%**, showing that while Gen X appreciates convenience, they're not rushing to embrace digital wallets in hospitality just yet.



Merchant tip

Add bill-splitting and tip options to your payment systems to make group meals easy. A loyalty programme with perks - like free drinks or exclusive event bookings - could also go a long way in winning over this crowd.

Staying in hotels

Hotels are where Gen X leans more heavily on credit cards – **31%** prefer using them at check-in. The reason? Hotel stays typically come with higher costs, so reward points and fraud protection become big draws. Debit cards are another preferred payment method with **37%** choosing it to maintain direct control over their spending and avoid debt.

Meanwhile, cash is mainly reserved for tips, with just **10%** using it for actual payments during their stay. As for mobile wallets (**5%**) and wearables (**2%**) - they barely make a dent, showing that Gen X prioritises trusted, familiar payment methods over newer tech when booking and paying for travel accommodations.

A lightbulb icon inside a circle, representing a tip or insight.

Merchant tip

Encourage loyalty by offering repeat-booking discounts and flexible payment plans. Adding a 'pay at check-in' option can also ease concerns for those wary of pre-authorised transactions.



Merchant tip

Highlight secure payment options to reassure buyers, especially for high-value purchases. Personalised reward schemes with exclusive discounts for regular shoppers can really resonate with this value-conscious generation.

Cruises: power of cards

When boarding a cruise, Gen X sticks to their tried-and-trusted cards over cash. Credit and debit cards take the lead, with **21%** and **22%** opting for them, respectively. This generation values a payment method that works seamlessly both on and off the ship - covering everything from excursions to onboard shopping.

Cash usage drops to just **8%**, reflecting the limited practicality of carrying physical money in an environment where digital payments are king. Mobile wallets are barely on the radar, with only **4%** using them. For larger, experience-based spending like cruises, Gen X continues to lean on what they know and trust.

Merchant tip

Encourage upfront spending by offering pre-paid packages and cruise-specific loyalty programmes. Digital wristbands linked to cards can also add a touch of convenience without straying too far from familiar payment habits.

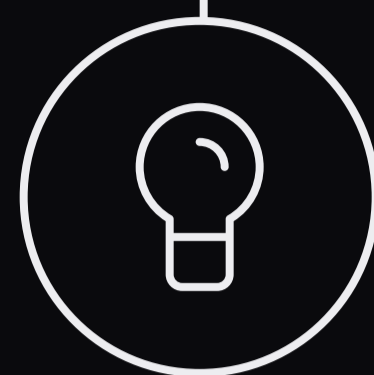
Fashion and accessories

For Gen X shoppers, **44%** reach for their debit cards when buying fashion and accessories - proof they like to keep their spending straightforward and within budget. However, **20%** still opt for credit cards, making the most of rewards and fraud protection, especially for those bigger-ticket buys.

Cash holds its own at **16%**, often used for smaller purchases or independent stores. Meanwhile, mobile wallets sit at just **6%**, showing that while Gen X enjoys convenience, they're not racing to swap their cards for digital alternatives. Instead, they tackle in-store shopping with a mix of practicality and loyalty to what they prefer.

Travel and tickets

Travel spending can be pricey, so it's no surprise that **33%** of Gen X travellers prefer credit cards for ticket purchases, whether for flights, concerts, or family events - taking advantage of travel insurance and fraud protection. Debit cards follow closely at **28%**, especially for domestic trips where Gen Xers like to feel in control of their spending.



Merchant tip

Promote reward-based credit card perks and exclusive partnerships to draw in Gen X travellers. Clear refund policies and insurance options at checkout can build trust and confidence.

Health and wellbeing

Health and wellbeing purchases see **46%** of Gen X shoppers sticking with debit cards - ideal for everyday essentials like prescriptions or vitamins. Credit cards still feature for **16%**, usually when they're picking up pricier items like supplement packs or luxury skincare.

But mobile wallets barely make an appearance at **6%**, showing that Gen X prefers their payment routines steady and reliable, even for quick errands.



Merchant tip

Keep payments easy with fuss-free card integrations, both in-store and online. Reward loyalty with points for regular purchases and bulk buys to encourage bigger baskets and return visits.

Everyday essentials

22%

prefer **cash** for **dining out**

44%

see **debit** and **credit cards** as the **most secure options** for **online purchases**

33%

use **credit cards** for **travel and ticket purchases**

49%

use **debit cards** for **in-store grocery transactions**

43%

prefer **debit cards** for **electronics purchases**

Gen X payment priorities

Security – a non-negotiable priority

Security is a top concern for **51%** of Gen X when choosing how to pay, showing their preference for tried-and-trusted methods. This generation is particularly wary of fraud, with **40%** listing fraud risk as their biggest frustration with digital payments. They prioritise methods that offer robust protection, such as credit cards, which provide added layers of security for larger purchases.

Convenience matters

Ease of use is a payment priority for **41%** of Gen X, especially when shopping online or travelling. However, they are unlikely to sacrifice simplicity for tech bells and whistles. Only **5%** of Gen X consumers regularly use mobile wallets for travel bookings, compared to higher adoption among younger generations. This demonstrates their selective approach; they value convenience but stick to what they feel safe with.

Frustrations: hidden fees and refunds

Hidden fees top Gen X's list of payment pet peeves, with **36%** citing them as



Merchant tip

Highlight security features during the payment process, such as encrypted card transactions or two-factor authentication. Include reassurance messages at checkout to ease concerns.

a major frustration. Additionally, **16%** express dissatisfaction with refund and issue resolution processes. Gen X shoppers prefer transparency at checkout, wanting to know exactly what they're paying for.



Merchant tip

Display clear breakdowns of charges and refund policies upfront. Offering simple refund options - such as automatic refunds for cancellations - can help improve their experience.



Merchant tip

Streamline payment pages with minimal steps and offer autofill options to save time. Provide flexible options such as 'pay at pickup' for added convenience.

Future payment options

Gen X isn't rushing into trends like BNPL - only **4%** are interested. But they're not entirely stuck in the past either. There's some curiosity around innovations like biometric payments (**29%**) and wearables (**34%**), as long as they're secure and make life easier. Features that offer control, like multi-currency wallets for travel, do catch their eye, though only **16%** see them as a must-have.

Flexibility and loyalty perks

Gen X consumers value flexibility, with **25%** favouring the ability to split payments across multiple methods. They're also drawn to tangible rewards - **31%** say loyalty programmes with exclusive discounts influence their shopping decisions. Payment innovations that combine these aspects could appeal to their practical yet reward-focused mindset.

Travelling smart

For Gen X, payments while travelling should be secure and convenient. **70%** of Gen X travellers want to avoid bank card fees abroad, and **81%** prioritise widely accepted payment methods. However, instant currency conversion services appeal to **67%**, signalling interest in tools that simplify travel payments.



Merchant tip

Offer trials or educational content around new payment methods, focusing on their security and ease of use. Promote exclusive perks for early adopters to build trust.



Merchant tip

Introduce payment plans that offer flexibility, such as instalments without hidden fees. Strengthen loyalty programmes by linking rewards directly to preferred payment methods.



Merchant tip

Highlight partnerships with travel platforms that offer fee-free transactions. Promote travel-friendly features like real-time exchange rates and fee transparency.

Future-focused payments



16%

prioritise **multi-currency wallets** when **travelling**



29%

are open to using **fingerprint** or **facial recognition** payments



34%

are interested in payment options like **smartwatches** or **fitness bands**



40%

list **fraud risk** as their biggest frustration with digital payments



12%

opt for **digital wallets** like **PayPal**

Research Methodology

To better understand consumers' payment preferences, PXP - the leading omnichannel global payment platform and innovative industry disruptor - partnered with **Censuswide** to conduct a survey of **2,000-plus consumers aged 18 and above**. Censuswide abides by and employs members of the **Market Research Society** and follows the **MRS code of conduct** and **ESOMAR principles**. Censuswide is also a member of the **British Polling Council**.

Additional Sources

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[PYMNTS](#) | Turns out Gen X Likes BNPL as Much as Millennials Do

[GWI](#) | 8 characteristics of Gen X in 2025

clearvoice.com | How to Market Content to Generation X in 2025

socialmediatoday.com | Survey Finds Consumers Crave Authenticity - and User-Generated Content Delivers

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PXP is a tech platform that makes commerce simpler, better, and more connected. With just one connection to PXP, merchants can unlock a world of commerce across online, mobile, and point-of-sale channels. Powered by a suite of financial services, multiple acquiring connections—including an in-house acquiring license—and diverse alternative payment methods, PXP processes over €30 billion annually through our unified gateway.

Connect once to our global commerce ecosystem to supercharge your growth by unifying payments, streamlining operations, and getting access endless opportunities.

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