



# May 2025

---

GCVA  
Consumer Report

Vol.  
58



The GCVA is partnering with GlobalData to deliver a monthly snapshot of consumer behaviour and attitudes across the gift card sector. This report covers the 60th reportage of monthly research, since GlobalData began tracking this back in May 2020; with the initial research covering the period from the beginning of the lockdown (March 2020), to the end of May 2020.

The April fieldwork went to field on May 1st and was designed to explore habits during the previous month, across a UK nationally representative sample of 2,000 consumers.

👉 [gcva.co.uk](https://gcva.co.uk)      ✉ [info@gcva.co.uk](mailto:info@gcva.co.uk)      ✂ [@gcva\\_](https://twitter.com/gcva_)  
📌 Gift Card Voucher Association (GCVA)

## Topline Takeaways

- Retail spending growth set to increase to 3.0% in 2025, boosted by inflation but also by positive volumes
- April gifting demand benefitted from later Easter
- Self-use purchasing up slightly over April
- Physical gift cards purchased instore outperformed over April
- Multistore gift cards continue strong performance
- Experience and Leisure saw a particularly strong performance over April
- UK consumers see gift cards as a medium for supporting local businesses

# Retail spending growth set to increase to 3.0% in 2025, boosted by inflation but also by positive volumes



Following growth of 1.6% to £450.9bn in 2024, retail spending growth is forecast to increase to 3.0% in 2025. We expect inflation to come through higher in 2025, at 2.2%, as retailers, particularly grocers, increase their prices to cope with higher wage costs. Volumes are forecast to rise by 0.8% in 2025 which will be the first positive volume growth since 2021, as consumers feel more comfortable against an improved backdrop of strong wage growth in 2024, and relatively stabilised inflation in comparison to the peaks in recent years. That said, this benefit will not necessarily be felt by all; for those needing to remortgage and facing much higher monthly payments, household spending will be squeezed.

## Online Channels

The online channel will see improved growth of 4.1% in 2025 following a rise of 2.8% in 2024 and 2.0% in 2023, following the peak year of the pandemic when online penetration reached over 30%. Online penetration will rise marginally in 2025 to 27.5% and slowly rise on an annualised basis to 2029, with more rapid growth evidenced in the online food market, as retailers' proposition improvements entice shoppers.

## Grocery outlook

The food & grocery market is expected to grow by 3.8%, to £201.9bn in 2025. Food inflation is expected to peak in the middle of the year, rising to 4.2%. Despite a further predicted rise in inflation, volumes are expected to improve in the second half of the year, resulting in a 0.3% uplift for 2025 as a whole. We expect a minimal level of 'trading down' to discounters in comparison to last year, as mainline grocers provide a wide price architecture and the ability for consumers to trade up and down, whilst also providing attractive loyalty schemes.

## Clothing & Footwear Outlook

The clothing & footwear market started the year in a declining position, with sales remaining negative in January and February alike. However, following a better March outlook, the market is expected to improve as the year progresses as consumer confidence and finances improve, leading to a muted rise of 0.8%, to £60.2bn. As a result of these fluctuations in market fortunes, volumes will remain negative for the third consecutive year in 2025, falling 0.1%, as consumers prioritise spending on other areas such as leisure.

In brighter market news, the online channel is expected to continue outperforming, rising 1.4% £24.8bn, with online penetration growing 0.2ppts to 41.2% as convenience factors, combined with a wide product offering and price comparison abilities, collectively continue to appeal to consumers.

# April gifting demand benefitted from later Easter



The 32.2% of consumers that bought physical gifts, gift cards, or made self-use gift card purchases over April 2025, was slightly higher than April 2024 (30.5%). Both gift cards and physical gifting experienced higher purchasing penetration over April as a whole; 16.0% of UK consumers purchased gift cards for somebody else, compared to 15.0% in April 2024.

This uptick is reflective of a broader recovery in household finances, which is finally feeding through to a tangible parallel improvement in consumer sentiment. April 2025 also benefitted

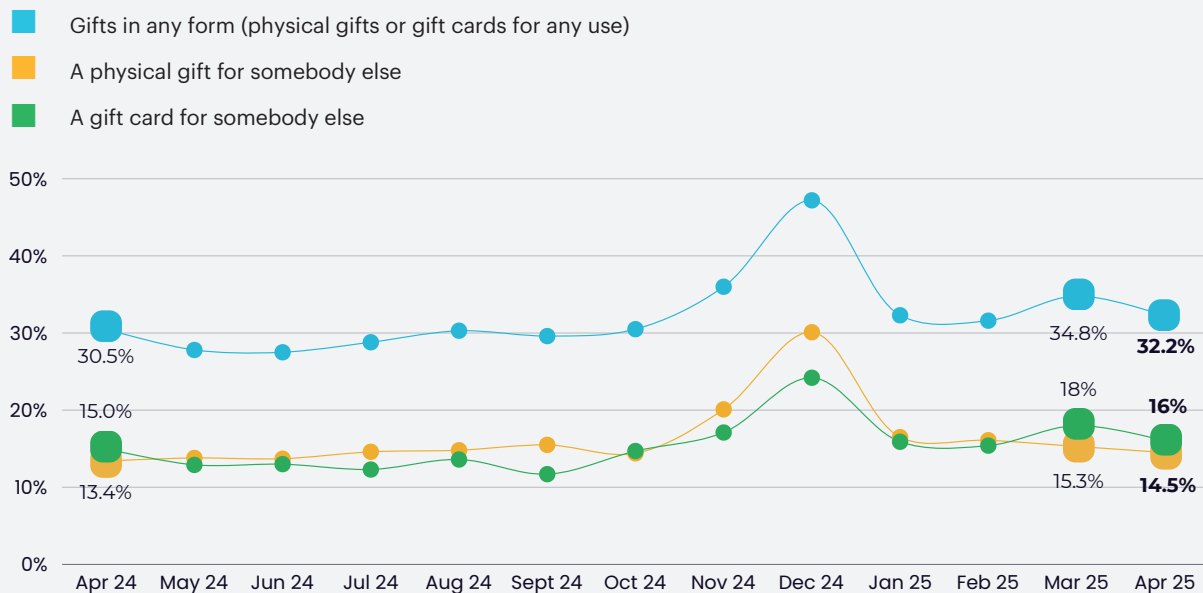
**April 2025 also benefitted from the Easter holiday period falling mid-way through the month, compared to the end of March in 2024**

from the Easter holiday period falling mid-way through the month, compared to the end of March in 2024. While Easter is not as significant a gifting occasion as the other key Spring seasonal events, consumers are increasingly looking to alternatives and supplements than to the more traditional Easter egg gifts.

However, it is important to note that this improvement is not currently being felt evenly across all UK households. Of those surveyed that didn't purchase gifts cards over April, 17.2% reported they didn't because they had cut back significantly on non-essential spending, which was markedly higher than those citing this same reason in April 2024 (10.8%).

**Figure 1:**

## Did you purchase any of the following:



# Self-use purchasing up slightly over April



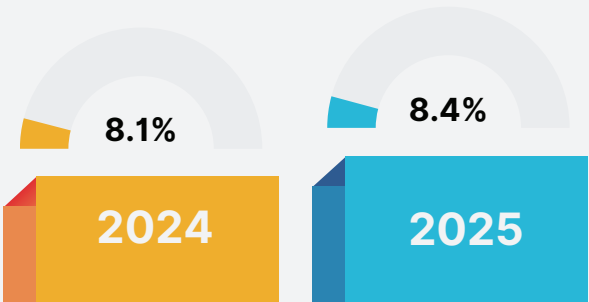
Despite the Easter holidays driving increased financial commitments for many UK families, 8.4% of UK consumers said they purchased gift cards for self-use over April 2025, which was an increase on the same 8.1% in April 2024. This points to a greater degree of financial flexibility among UK consumers, amid improving household finances. Gift cards have both the potential to support consumers during, or following, periods of higher outgoings and, increasingly, in supporting consumers seeking assistance with saving and budgeting. Indeed, the proportion of those purchasing self-use cards that cited “to help with saving money” was at 51.2% over April 2025.

The proportion of those purchasing self-use cards that cited “to help with saving money” was at 51.2% over April 2025

Figure 2:

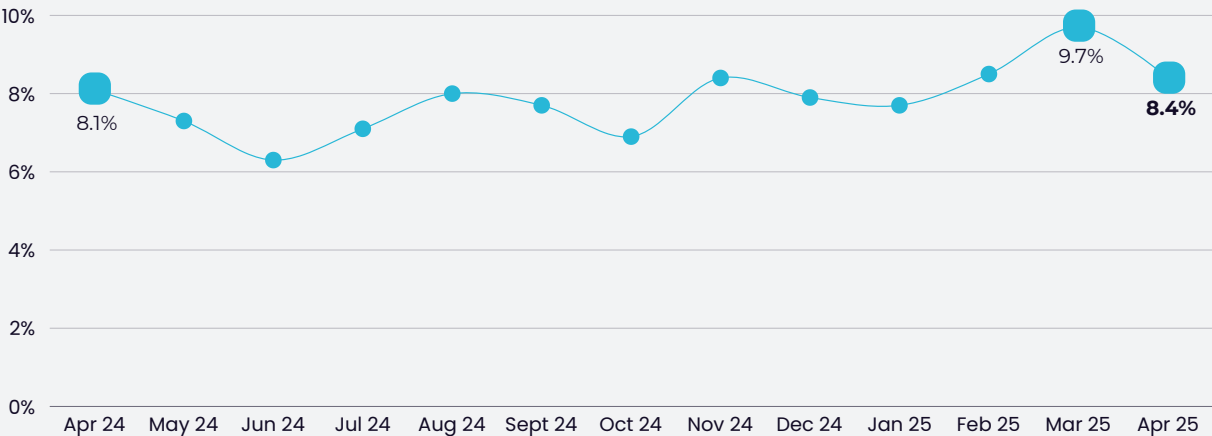
## Purchasing a gift card for yourself - April 2024 vs April 2025:

- April 2024
- April 2025



## Did you purchase any of the following:

- A gift card for yourself



# Physical gift cards purchased instore outperformed over April



Physical gift cards purchased instore experienced another strong performance over April. Physical options benefited from the elongated Easter break and favourable weather conditions, which helped boost more in-person social gatherings. More generally, in addition to physical cards continuing to be viewed as more “thoughtful” gifting options, physical formats have benefitted from greater choice within physical stores, including the growing array of options in gift card categories such as entertainment, leisure, and gaming.

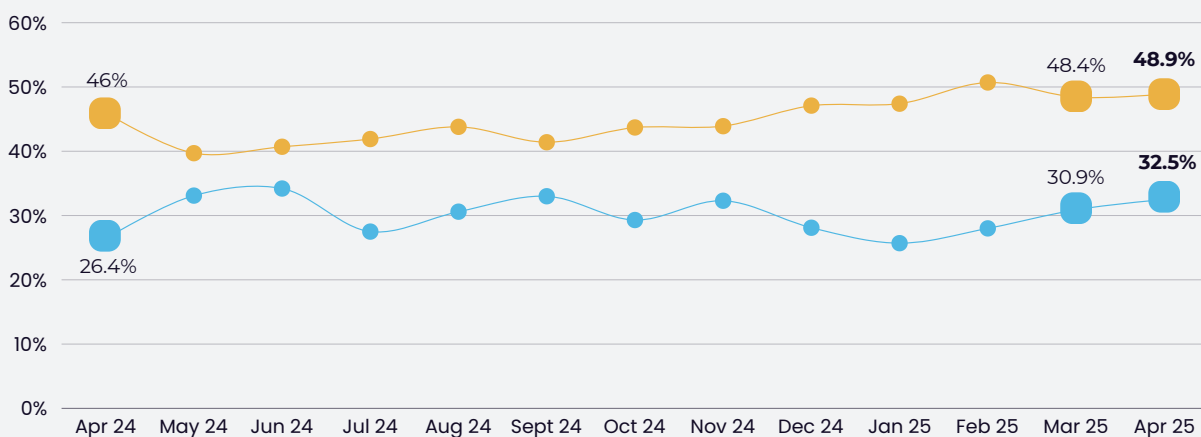
In relation to online purchasing specifically, a year-on-year improved performance was measured across digital gift cards; (32.5% of gift cards purchased, vs. 26.4% in April 2024), and physical gift cards (28.6% purchased compared to 30.6% in April 2024). Consumer expectations continue to rise when surrounding cross-channel purchasing and redemption. In April 2025, 58.3% of respondents agreed with the statement “I expect all gift cards to be usable across all of the retailer’s sales channels”, compared with 40.5% who expressed the same sentiment in April 2024.

**Physical formats have benefitted from greater choice within physical stores**

**Figure 3:**

## Which type of gift cards did you purchase?

- A physical gift card from a retailer/gift card issuer online
- A digital gift card from a retailer/gift card issuer online



# Multistore gift cards continue strong performance



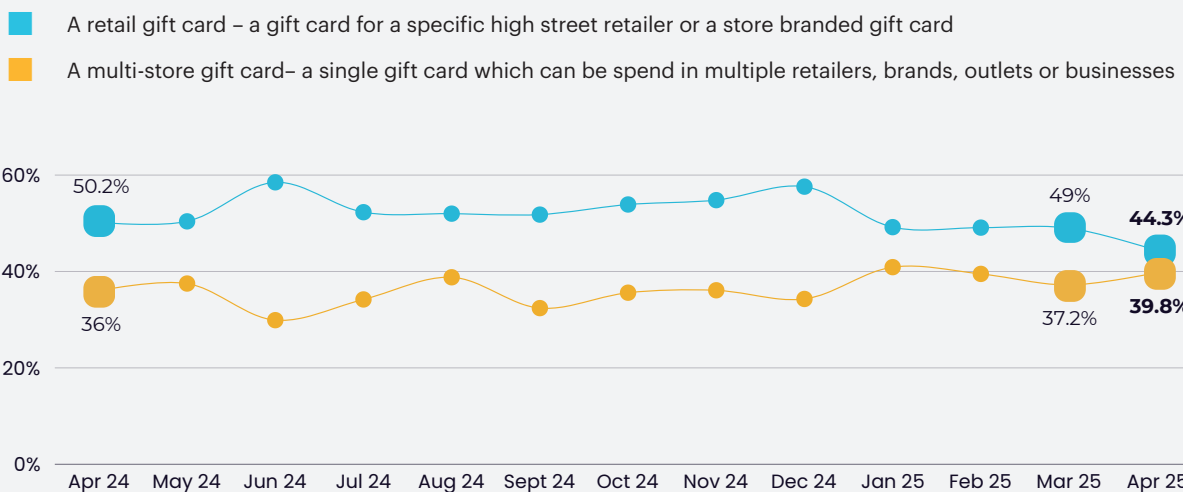
Multistore gift cards again outperformed over April; the proportion of gift card consumers purchasing multi-store gift cards (39.8%), increased in April 2025 in comparison with April 2024 (36.0%). In contrast, the proportion of gift card consumers purchasing single brand gift cards (44.3%), declined in comparison to April 2024 (50.2%).

Multi-store cards have the potential to overcome lingering consumer concerns surrounding the perceived lack of flexibility that gift cards provide, compared to other payment options

Multi-store cards have the potential to overcome lingering consumer concerns surrounding the perceived lack of flexibility that gift cards provide, compared to other payment options. The challenge for these gift card types continues to be balancing certain perceptible shortcomings of desirability in this context on the part of the gift card giver, against the value offered to the gift card recipient of the freedom of spend within a range of retailers.

Figure 4:

**When purchasing gift cards (includes gift cards, vouchers, digital, e-gift codes etc.), which types of gift cards did you purchase, either for yourself or someone else? Please select all that apply**



# Experience and Leisure saw a particularly strong performance over April



The proportion of gift card buyers purchasing experience and leisure gifts cards –for activities such as hotel stays, spa breaks, and restaurants – increased in comparison to April 2024. These card types benefitted from stronger demand due to their positive association as more thoughtful gifting options, particularly

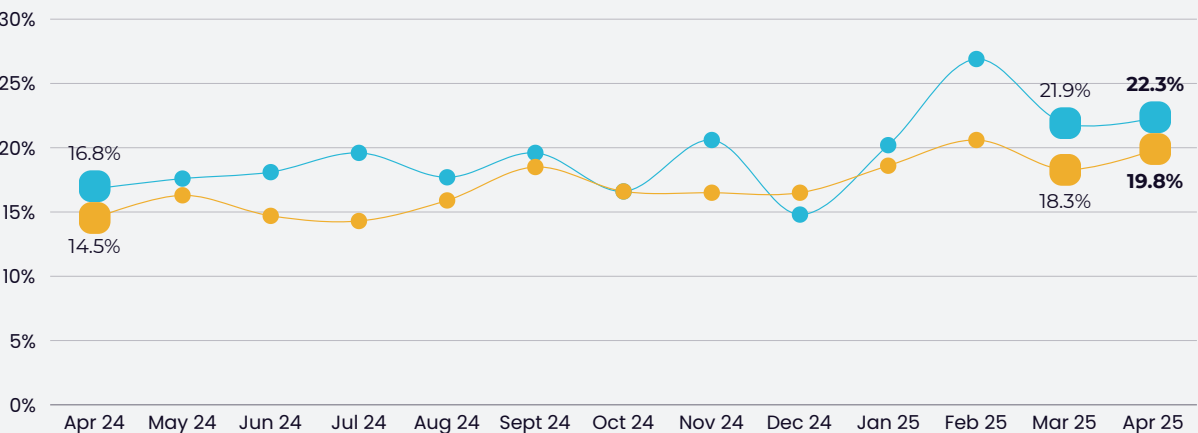
**These card types benefitted from stronger demand due to their positive association as more thoughtful gifting options, particularly during a period of the year when consumers are increasingly planning more social activities and recreational breaks**

during a period of the year when consumers are increasingly planning more social activities and recreational breaks. Demand was also boosted by an increase in supply, with many national, regional, and local leisure and experience businesses introducing special deals and tailored offerings.

Figure 5:

## Experience and Leisure saw a particularly strong performance over April

- An experience e.g. hot air balloon ride, helicopter ride, hotel stay
- Leisure e.g. Travel, theatre tickets, spa, dining



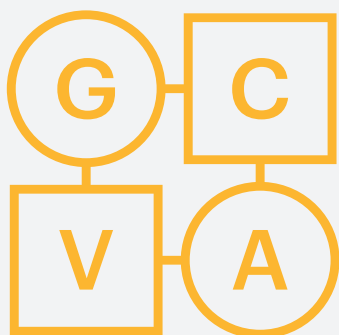


# UK consumers see gift cards as a medium for supporting local businesses



Over April 2025, 29.1% of UK consumers agreed with the statement “I have/will purchase gift cards with the intent of supporting companies that I like”. This is more than double the 14.7% who expressed this sentiment in April 2024.

**Evidence continues to suggest that many consumers are increasingly proactive in purchasing gift cards to funnel support to local companies**



The GCVA is the trade body and membership organisation for gift cards and vouchers. The association represents the key players in the industry and promotes best practice for the benefit of gift card issuers, services and consumers.

On the time-period comparisons, this month's report covers the April calendar month, with comparisons made to March 2025 and April 2024. Where relevant, comparisons have also been made to the wider tracking period.

🖱️ [gcva.co.uk](https://gcva.co.uk)

✉️ [info@gcva.co.uk](mailto:info@gcva.co.uk)

🌐 Gift Card Voucher Association (GCVA)

✂️ @gcva\_