Sales Analysis & Outlook (UK)

UK Gift Card and Voucher Market

H1 - 2026

two iglöōs

Gift Card & Voucher Association

Summary Report
September 2026

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Introductions

Foreword from:

Hannah Shimko
Managing Director GCVA

This edition of our market report gives us a more complete view of the UK gift card sector than we have had before.

For the first time, we have combined sales data provided by GCVA members with nationally representative consumer research. This has allowed us to produce our first estimate of the overall size of the market, which we put at £10.7 billion a year.

The consumer research also gives us a better understanding of how people use gift cards. 24% of UK adults bought or received one in the past year, across a category that now ranges from supermarket and online marketplace cards to multi-brand products, dining, entertainment and many other uses.

Our member data also shows that the sector continues to perform strongly. Gift cards once again outperformed the wider retail market, maintaining the growth seen in recent reports despite a challenging economic environment.

There are longer-term changes too. B2B remains an important source of growth, digital gift cards continue to gain ground and grocery remains a strong part of the market. Gift cards are now used across a wide range of occasions, from traditional gifting to everyday spending, employee benefits and rewards.

Bringing consumer insight together with our member data gives us a stronger basis for tracking these changes. It will also help us build a clearer picture in future reports of the size, reach and role of the UK gift card market.

Introductions (Cont.)

Foreword from:

Cameron Maxwell
Two Igloos Founder

The gift card category continues to deliver robust top-line growth. Sales among submitting members rose 19% in the first half of 2026, well ahead of UK retail growth of 1–4% over the same period (British Retail Consortium).

There is some important context behind that headline. The typical member grew by 10%, showing that the majority of participating members recorded year-on-year growth.

Business-to-business (B2B) sales continue to stand out, rising 24% year on year. Employee-facing channels remain an important part of this market. Among issuers operating in the benefits, employee savings and salary sacrifice channel, it accounts for a median 57% of their B2B sales. With employers facing higher employment costs and consumers continuing to look for value, non-cash benefits and rewards remain an important part of the picture.

Digital cards continue to grow strongly, while physical sales were broadly flat. The second half of the year will provide an important test of that balance, as physical cards typically perform strongly in the run-up to Christmas when gifting activity increases.

This year we also simplified how members submit data, consolidating categories and tightening definitions. In the H2 report we will go further, breaking spending down by use case and looking at how consumers redeem their cards.

None of this is possible without the members who submit their data, and we thank them.

Executive Summary

Total Market

- **29 GCVA members** contributed to the H1 2026 data capture.
- Gift card sales among contributing members reached **£2,194m in H1 2026**, a year on year increase of **19%.**
- Growth was **underpinned by B2B**, which delivered **75% of all absolute growth** in the period.
- Growth was widespread but uneven: 23 of 29 members grew, though the **median member grew just 10%.**

B2B Market

- The B2B market accounted for **64% of total gift card sales**, and grew **24% year on year.**
- Unusually, this growth was **broad-based** - 23 of 28 members grew their B2B business, at a median rate of **23%.**
- **Digital formats (82% share, +28%)** drove the B2B market, while physical formats declined for the typical issuer **(median -7%).**
- The benefits, employee savings and salary sacrifice B2B channel remains the **largest channel**, at a median 57% of an issuer's own B2B book.

B2C Market

- B2C holds a **31% share** of the total in H1 2026, growing **7%** year on year.
- **Gift Card Specialists (+13%)** grew faster than **retail issuers (+4% year on year).**
- **Within B2C growth is concentrated in digital**, which now accounts for 46% of value, up from 41% a year earlier.
- **Channel mix varies widely by sector:** retail is heavily weighted towards in-store, while Gift Card Specialist and Leisure and Travel skew online.

Non-Sale

- Non-sale accounted for **5% of the total gift card value**, growing **26% year on year.**
- **Merchandise returns and refunds** remained the dominant sub-segment at 90% of non-sale value.
- The **median member declined 7%,** indicating growth sat with one or two large contributors rather than the wider base.

Sector

- **Retail** dominated the cohort, holding a **75% share** of member sales and growing **21%** year on year.
- Retail growth was **concentrated in grocery** - the median Retail member grew just **8%.**
- **Gift Card Specialist**, a new classification this cycle, is the second largest sector at **21% share**, growing **17%.**
- **Leisure and Travel** is small (4% of market) and broadly flat year on year **(+3%).**

Product Type

- **Digital** continues to be the growth driver in the gift card market, holding a **70% share** and growing 27% year on year.
- Digital growth was **broad-based**: 23 of the 27 reporting members grew.
- **Physical** card format sales were near-flat at **+2%** year on year.
- B2B is **82% digital** against B2C's **46%**, reflecting the dominance of online consumer touchpoints in B2B - employee rewards and perks, and cashback websites.

Redemption Type

- **Closed loop** dominated the market, accounting for **79%** of card value and growing **20%** year on year.
- **Multi-choice and open loop** combined account for **21% of all** gift card value, growing **17%**, a sharp deceleration from **+45% in H2 2025.**

Load and Redemption Metrics

- Members reported a median **load value of £55**; digital cards are loaded higher than physical (£59 v £47).
- The **median redemption value was £46**, with cards redeemed online carrying a redemption value just over 50% higher than those redeemed in store.
- **Mobile wallet** capabilities are now widespread; 66% of members enable Apple Pay and 62% Google Pay.

The category continues to grow strongly

Gift card sales among GCVA members grew 19% in the first half of 2026, far outpacing a UK retail market that grew 1-4%.

£2,194m H1 2026 sales across the 29 submitting members	**+19%** Total growth year on year (median member growth +10%)	**+24%** B2B growth year on year (vs +7% for B2C)	**+27%** Digital Growth Year on year (vs +2% for Physical cards)

Three trends that define the half:

→ Most members - 23 of 29 - grew year on year, but the value growth was concentrated in the largest members. So while the total market grew +19%, the typical member grew just 10%.

→ B2B is driving growth into the gift card category, now representing 64% of the market and growing 24% year on year. It accounted for three-quarters of the growth added to the category in the half

→ Digital formats now comprise 70% of sales and grew +27% year on year. The shift to digital, is the one trend shared across almost the entire membership.

Underlying drivers:

Set against a UK retail market growing just 1–4% year on year through H1 2026, and falling consumer confidence, the category's growth likely reflects two things: a structural change in how employers reward people, and gift cards' growing appeal to consumers as a practical tool for everyday spending.

The Consumer lens:

For the first time, this report pairs member sales data with a bottom-up view of consumer behaviour. GCVA commissioned a survey of a demographically representative panel of UK adults, screening 4,075 respondents and completing 996 detailed interviews, capturing why, where and how often people buy and receive gift cards.

24%
of UK adults bought or received a gift card in the past 12 months

9.8
cards per user, per year

£53
average value loaded per card

2.2
gift card categories used per user

What the survey shows:

→ Just under a quarter of UK adults - 24% - bought or received a gift card in the past 12 months.
→ Supermarket and Grocery (10%) and Online Marketplace (9%) are the highest-penetration categories, ahead of multi-brand and swap cards, dining and takeaway, and gaming, streaming and entertainment, all at 6%.
→ The average load of £53 reported by consumers sits close to the £55 median load value members report across all products and channels

Where the value sits:

→ Combining survey-derived category shares with member-submitted sales data puts the total UK gift card market at £10.7bn a year.
→ Supermarket and Grocery (£2.4bn) and Online Marketplace (£1.8bn) together account for around 40% of total category value.
→ Prepaid Visa and Mastercard products reach only 4% of adults but sell £1.3bn on high purchase frequency and corporate gifting, making them the third-largest category by value.
→ The Fashion and Beauty sector is the mirror image: it reaches more people (5%) but at the lowest frequency of any category, so accounts for around £600m.

£10.7bn
Total UK gift card market (new this cycle)

47%
of the market covered by GCVA member data

What this means for interpreting member-submitted data:

GCVA members recorded £5,079m across the rolling year, against a total market of £10.7bn. The member submitted data therefore describes approximately 47% of the category by value - a little under half.

In sectors where the coverage is strongest - Retail (63%) and Gift Card Specialists (52%) - member-derived growth rates are a good proxy for market performance. Where coverage is low - Leisure and Travel (15%) – member submitted data describes the market less well.

Gift Card
& Voucher
Association

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.

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