



## PRESS RELEASE

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### COVID-19, government incentives and mandates boost card acceptance

*Continued growth in merchant outlet and EFTPOS terminals numbers worldwide strengthens coverage of all schemes, but acceptance of the largest players differs significantly between regions*

### 82% of payment terminals now accept contactless

While 2021 saw long periods of lockdown and continued retail closures, the second year of the pandemic was overall a positive one for global card acceptance. A controversial view that cashless payments are “more hygienic”, combined with government mandates and incentives such as tax breaks provided a boost. RBR’s study *Global Payment Cards Data and Forecasts to 2027* found that the number of card-accepting merchant outlets grew by 2% to a record 88 million, with the number of EFTPOS terminals increasing at an even greater rate, up by 5% to 134 million worldwide by the end of the year.

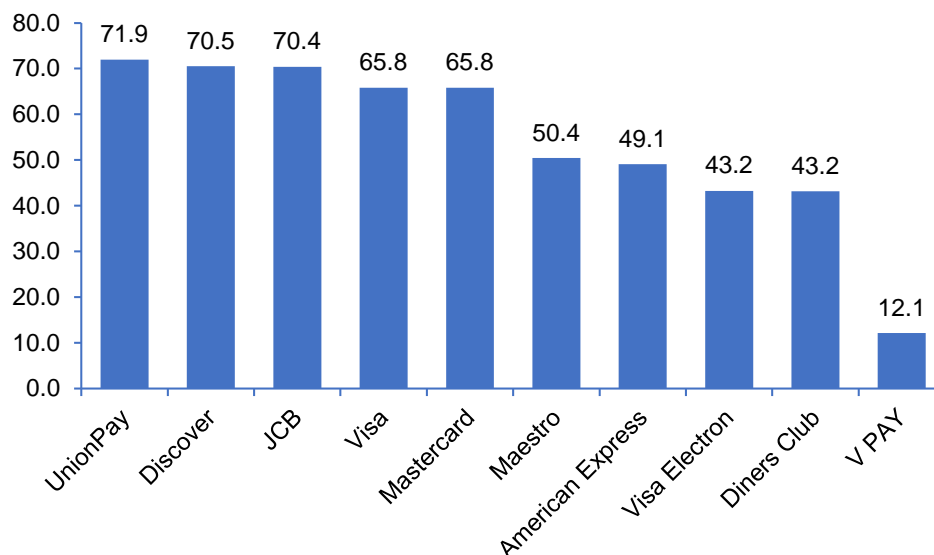
Contactless card acceptance jumped upwards to cover 82% of terminals. This reflected increased preferences for low-touch payment methods during the pandemic.

### UnionPay continues efforts to build acceptance outside of Asia-Pacific

UnionPay remains accepted at more outlets than any other scheme. The majority of the world’s 72 million UnionPay-accepting outlets are, however, concentrated in its home market of China and the wider Asia-Pacific (AP) region. The scheme’s reach in other parts of the world is established but falls short of its coverage in AP; it is accepted at three quarters of outlets in the Americas and over half across Europe.

RBR’s study identified a surge in UnionPay acceptance in the Middle East and Africa (MEA). Much of this growth was in Saudi Arabia, where there was increased UnionPay card issuance by the country’s banks amid wider efforts to attract Asian tourists to the country.

**Global number of merchant outlets by scheme, 2021 (millions)**



Source: *Global Payment Cards Data and Forecasts to 2027 (RBR)*

### Outside of China, Visa and Mastercard accepted at 96% of merchant outlets

Visa and Mastercard can be used at 75% of outlets globally, placing the pair joint fourth in terms of acceptance, behind Discover and JCB, which benefit from wider acceptance in Asia-Pacific. If China is removed from the total, however, coverage stands at 96%, unchanged since 2020.



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There remain a few European countries that have lower Visa and Mastercard acceptance levels. This is the case in Germany, for example, where high merchant fees and preferences for the domestic scheme push down acceptance. In the Netherlands, sub-brands V PAY and Maestro are, somewhat unusually, more widely accepted than the main brands, but the situation there is set to change as issuers migrate to Visa and Mastercard from 2023.

### **Local payment methods are challengers to international schemes**

RBR forecasts that the number of EFTPOS terminals globally will rise to 165 million by 2027, spread across 109 million merchant outlets. More countries are expected to follow the example of Greece, where card acceptance has jumped upwards in previous years thanks to a mandate for businesses to install EFTPOS terminals.

In some countries, card acceptance is expanding rapidly but this is not translating into surges in card expenditure due to competition from alternative cashless payment methods. Kazakhstan is seeing triple-digit growth in EFTPOS device numbers but these accept domestic QR code payments as well as international scheme cards. The former is benefiting the most from the ramp up in terminals.

Daniel Dawson, who led RBR's *Global Card Payments and Forecasts to 2027* research, commented: "*The pandemic provided a real boost to global card acceptance across all regions. We could see disruption to future growth, however, if more merchants and consumers opt to transact via QR codes and smartphones, rather than with international scheme cards and EFTPOS terminals*".

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### **Notes to editors**

These figures and insights are based on RBR's study, *Global Cards Payment Data and Forecasts to 2027*. For more information about this report or to discuss the findings in more detail please email Daniel Dawson ([daniel.dawson@rbrlondon.com](mailto:daniel.dawson@rbrlondon.com)) or call +44 20 8831 7310.

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