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## Long-Term Credit Card Debt Is On The Rise: 61% With Credit Card Debt Have Had It For At Least A Year

*Gen Xers, lower-income households most saddled with credit card debt*

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NEW YORK - January 12, 2026 - A growing number of Americans are carrying long-term credit card debt, according to a new Bankrate survey. As of December 2025, more than half (61%) of credit cardholders with credit card debt have been in debt for at least a year, up from 53% in late 2024. This includes 31% of credit cardholders who have been in debt for at least three years and 21% who have been in debt for at least five years. Additionally, almost half (47%) of credit cardholders carry debt from month to month, while 53% pay their balance in full.

For more information:

<https://www.bankrate.com/credit-cards/news/credit-card-debt-report/>

Among credit card debtors, 41% say the primary cause was an emergency/unexpected expense, which includes medical bills (12%), car repairs (8%), home repairs (8%) and other emergency/unexpected expenses (13%). The second-most common reason for carrying a balance is day-to-day expenses at 33% (e.g., groceries, childcare and utilities), up from 28% in 2024 and 26% in 2023. Other reasons for carrying credit card debt include retail purchases (10%; e.g., clothing and electronics) and vacation/entertainment expenses (7%).

“The cumulative effects of high prices and high [interest rates](#) are weighing on American households,” according to Bankrate Senior Industry Analyst Ted Rossman. “It’s not that prices have run away from us this year. It’s when we zoom out and consider the past several years that we see how much the cost of living has risen and how many people have taken on debt and dipped into savings as a result.”

Of those carrying credit card debt, fewer than half (48%) say they have a plan to pay down their debt. When it comes to paying off credit card debt, about 1 in 4 (27%) credit card debtors feels less confident about getting out of credit card debt now compared with last year, while 19% are worried they might not be able to make a minimum credit card payment at some point in the next six months and about 1 in 5 (22%) believes they will never get out of credit card debt.

Older generations with at least one credit card are more likely to carry debt from month to month. More than half (53%) of Gen X (ages 46-61) and millennial (ages 30-45) cardholders said they carry debt from month to month, followed 43% of baby boomers (ages 62-80). Comparatively, 40% of Gen Z (ages 18-29) said the same.

Lower-income cardholders are also more likely to carry debt from month to month. The majority (56%) of cardholders with annual household incomes under \$50,000 carry credit card debt from month to month, versus 51% of those earning between \$50,000 and \$79,999 per year, 43% earning between \$80,000 and \$99,999 and 36% earning \$100,000 or more per year.

"My top tip for paying off credit card debt is to sign up for a credit card with a generous 0% balance transfer promotion. These allow you to move your existing high-cost debt over to a new card that won't charge interest for up to 24 months," Rossman said. "You could also consider working with a reputable nonprofit credit counseling agency such as Money Management International. Taking on a [side hustle](#) and cutting expenses are additional levers you can pull."

**Methodology:**

This survey has been conducted using an online interview administered to members of the YouGov Plc panel of individuals who have agreed to take part in surveys. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. The total sample size was 2,564 U.S. adults, of whom 914 carry a balance on their credit card(s). Fieldwork was undertaken between December 2-8, 2025. The survey was carried out online and meets rigorous quality standards. It gathered a non-probability-based sample and employed demographic quotas and weights to better align the survey sample with the broader U.S. population.

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