NEWS RELEASE

Mastercard SpendingPulse: Tech Takes Center Stage This Black Friday as U.S. Retail Sales Rise 5.8% YOY

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E-commerce spending rises 13.4% year-over-year (YOY) while in-store spending grows 3.8% as consumers navigate weather and return to stores

PURCHASE, N.Y.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- According to preliminary insights from Mastercard SpendingPulse™, U.S. retail sales excluding gas and autos were up 5.8% on Black Friday 2026, compared to Black Friday 2025. Mastercard SpendingPulse measures in-store and online retail sales, representing all payment types, and is not adjusted for inflation.

Shoppers put money toward tech this Black Friday, with electronics and software spending up 7.9% YOY. The category had a big run earlier in the month, jumping 37.9% on November 18 and 43.5% on November 19, the week Grand Theft Auto VI and other video games launched. Technology is also changing how people shop, as **AI and other digital tools increasingly help shoppers discover products**, compare options and make more informed purchasing decisions.

“Black Friday showed an adaptable consumer who remains willing to spend while being thoughtful about where, when and how they do so,” said Michelle Meyer, Chief Economist at the Mastercard Economics Institute. “Tech was a standout, particularly software, with spending on video games and AI tools showing up uniquely this year, while the return to stores reinforced the enduring appeal of the in-person shopping experience.”

Black Friday 2026 retail spending trends

Compared to Black Friday last year, U.S. retail spending trends included:

- In-store traffic picks up: Shoppers worked around stormier weather in parts of the country on Thanksgiving and returned to stores on Black Friday. In-store spending rose 3.8%, the strongest Black Friday for in-store since 2022.
- Tech gets a head start: Shoppers had already been taking advantage of early holiday promotions on Thanksgiving Day, when electronics and software grew 19.2%.
- Style spending accelerates: Apparel spending grew 4.4%, while jewelry rose 4.6% on Black Friday. After a softer start to the season, apparel began gaining momentum on Thanksgiving, when spending rose 7.4% YOY, before continuing its pickup on Black Friday.

What to expect as holiday shopping continues

Black Friday is just one chapter. As Cyber Monday and the holiday season continues, shopping patterns may continue to shift, with consumers rushing to beat deadlines and turning to stores for last-minute purchases. **Mastercard Economics Institute insights** show that the final week before Christmas is an important period for in-store shoppers.

“Black Friday is one of the peaks, but holiday shopping comes in waves,” said Meyer. “We expect to see the typical moderation after Black Friday, but there’s still plenty of shopping ahead. Activity should build again around shipping cutoffs, followed by a final in-store push as shoppers check off the last items on their lists.”

Helping keep holiday shopping secure

As holiday shopping continues, security remains top of mind. Mastercard works behind the scenes to help protect transactions whether consumers shop online or in stores. Mastercard SafetyNet, an AI-enabled security solution, identifies and stops potentially fraudulent activity before it can impact consumers and businesses. Mastercard SafetyNet has prevented more than $7 billion in fraud around the world in the first nine months of 2026 alone.

Wherever and however consumers choose to shop, Mastercard encourages them to remain vigilant, shop with trusted retailers, use secure payment methods and immediately report suspected scams or suspicious activity to their bank or card provider. Together with Mastercard’s advanced fraud prevention technology, these precautions help give consumers greater confidence and control throughout the holiday season.

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