

Paze Pulse® Report

Building Trust With Today's Consumer

**Voice of the Consumer 2026:
Trust & Security**



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ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

This report draws on studies conducted by Accelerant Research in 2025 and paid for by Early Warning Services, including a quantitative online survey of 3,000 U.S. consumers that ran from May 27–June 9, and 44 qualitative interviews recorded between October 6–20, 2025. All participants were adults 18 and older who hold a bank account and debit or credit card, make regular online purchases across multiple retailers, and are aware of at least one digital payment solution.

Every quote in this document is that of a real participant we spoke to. All participants' names have been changed to protect confidentiality. Any/all quote attributions are using pseudonyms. No personally identifiable information is included in this report. While the quantitative sample was designed to reflect a broad cross-section of U.S. online shoppers, it is not a probability sample and findings should not be generalized to the full U.S. population.

Executive Summary

For e-commerce merchants, growth today is more than a function of marketing, traffic, and product assortment. It's increasingly becoming a function of trust.

Today's consumers are active participants in the checkout experience. They continuously evaluate where and how they pay, often making split-second decisions about whether to complete a purchase, switch payment methods, or abandon their cart entirely. While many factors such as price, selection, convenience and loyalty programs continue to play a part, one factor supersedes all others: trust.

Our research shows that consumers evaluate trust across four distinct pillars: reliability, security, recourse, and control. These pillars are not abstract concepts; they directly motivate consumer behaviors that ultimately determine a merchant's bottom line.

- **When trust is uncertain, participants default to protective behaviors** such as guest checkout, manual card entry, or abandoning the purchase altogether.
- **When trust is established, the findings show that consumers are more likely to store credentials**, complete transactions faster, and return for future purchases.
- **When trust is broken, even once, it can lead to immediate churn** and negative word of mouth that impacts future acquisition.

These behaviors can carry measurable business impact across conversion, lifetime value, and the cost of handling disputes when things go wrong.

At the same time, the competitive landscape has shifted. Consumers increasingly rely on signals outside the merchant's control. Peer reviews, social content, and familiar payment methods are key inputs for determining whether a transaction feels safe. In this environment, merchants are building trust through what they can control, while borrowing trust signals from other sources, and reinforcing it across an ecosystem.

At its most basic level, checkout is a utility, helping consumers acquire what they desire. Merchants that take a more strategic approach see the purchase flow as an opportunity: the checkout experience provides trust signals that can either reinforce or undermine the consumer's decision to transact.

This report explores how consumers build, evaluate, and act on trust across the full purchase journey. For merchants, **operationalizing the four pillars of trust is your growth lever**, one that drives stronger conversion, deeper customer relationships, and greater resilience in an increasingly scrutinized digital economy.

Four Pillars of Trust

	CONSUMER CONCERN	WHAT IT MEANS	HEURISTICS/ MEASURED BY
 Reliability	Will this work every time?	Track record & consistency over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time• Peer testimony• Consistency at scale
<p>“Trust would be good experiences over time, like many experiences over time.” – Ian O.</p>			
 Security	Will you keep my data safe?	Protection mechanisms around data and money	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Signals• Logos• Clean interface
<p>“Trust means I'm giving you my information, so I'm trusting that you won't misuse that data and that it's safe with you.” – Faye P.</p>			
 Recourse	Will you fix it if something breaks?	Fast, fair resolution when failure occurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fast resolution• Fraud liability protections• Human support
<p>“Trust has to do with customer service. When you have an issue, they're going to handle it quickly and correct the issue as quickly as possible.” – Salvador G.</p>			
 Control	Am I in charge of my own data?	User agency and visibility over data and actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Notifications• Card lock• Data transparency
<p>“Trust means my information and my payments will only be used for things that I've authorized them to be used for. They're not going to be shared with third parties that I didn't provide approval to receive my information.” – Lucy G.</p>			

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Reliability - Can I Count on This?

By the time a consumer reaches your payment page, the trust evaluation is well underway. They've asked friends. They've checked review forums. They've watched video reviews and asked AI chatbots. Reliability is earned before the consumer arrives.

Reliability is when consumers believe you'll come through for them consistently, built over years of things going right. Consumer participants expressed that when they have this kind of positive history they're more likely to switch on autopilot.

Reliability builds over time, but even when consumers don't have a long-standing relationship with you, there are multiple sources of information to determine reliability.



The Reliability Gold Standard: Time Without Incident

Reliability is earned through repetition without failure. The participants who trusted an institution most deeply very often traced it back to the length of the relationship and the absence of problems.

“It’s reliability through repeated use. If I keep using the same payment method and I consistently don’t have any issues, that affects the trust.” – Ben R.

“If I’ve been shopping at a company for 10 years and never had a problem, I trust that.” – Brielle T.

“I’ve been a customer there now almost 30 years... over the years, they’ve been great.” – Joshua N.

The pattern was the same whether consumers were talking about banks, payment platforms, or merchants. One participant saves card details only with merchants where she has an established relationship and has “never had a breach of that trust.”

Longer relationships make consumers more comfortable accepting offers, as another consumer notes:

“If it’s a site that I’ve shopped with for a while, then I trust them. I log into the app and if a notification says, ‘Hey, we offer this new option,’ I usually check those out.” – Lucy G.

A third put it simply:

“Once I find brands that I really like and respect, I tend to go there first before exploring other options.” – Stephen H.

BY THE NUMBERS

68%

of survey participants have banked with their primary institution for 6+ years.

Paze Consumer Segmentation Study, Accelerant Research, 2025. Online survey, n=3,000 U.S. adults 18+

* Names changed to protect confidentiality. Quote attributions are pseudonyms

Friends & Family Convey Reliability

'Friends and family' isn't just casual word of mouth; it's an active vetting system. A single shared experience can provide a green light or a stop sign.

"If I hear from my wife or a friend I trust making a logical argument about why a payment service is not to be trusted, I'll definitely take that into consideration."

– Dangelo T.

"People close to me will affect my perception. Word of mouth is huge. If it's someone you trust their opinion on other things, you trust their opinion on this." – Norah B.

"I rely on people who are like me – same needs, same obstacles. My parents rely on me for tech opinions, so I turn to my peers." – Lawrence M.

"I will talk to friends more than anything. If my friends haven't used it, I'm not necessarily jumping into it." – Leah M.

What makes this so powerful is relevance. Participants shared how they listen to people who share their context: similar income, similar tech comfort, similar risk tolerance.

+ Positive Experience

"I had never tried Zelle®. I was introduced to it, probably by a friend a number of years ago. I'm like, 'There's no catch. Like, why aren't we all using Zelle®?'" – Nathaniel V.

The Zelle® Network is owned and operated by the same parent company as Paze®, Early Warning Services, LLC.

Negative signals from friends and family are even stronger than positive ones. A single bad story from a trusted person can close a door that's hard to reopen.

BY THE NUMBERS

Who survey participants trust with their payment info:

51%

Search engines

46%

Friends and family

38%

Bank websites or apps

31%

Financial websites

10%

Financial influencers on social media

Paze Consumer Segmentation Study, Accelerant Research, 2025. Online survey, n=3,000 U.S. adults 18+

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Consumers Actively Investigate Companies & Payment Options

Once a merchant or payment method is on their radar, consumers actively run their own due diligence. They seek unbiased, authentic information from sources they feel an affinity towards.

“If it's a site that doesn't look familiar, it looks pretty sketchy. I'll [use a search engine] for their reviews to see if this company is a scam company or something. Trust is very important to me.”
— Brooke F.

“What matters the most is what the consumers are saying. I like to get a general idea of what I'm jumping into. I think real reviews — it helps a lot. Just knowing what other people have encountered will give me an idea of what to expect.” — Macy R.

Search

Search engines are evolving into ‘answer engines,’ providing AI summaries at the top of results pages. In our research, when asked where consumers turn for guidance on financial products/services, search engines top the list.



The Growing Use of AI-Assisted Synthesis

A growing number of consumers are turning to AI tools as a way to aggregate reviews. They see AI summaries as less biased than a search results page, due to the lack of sponsored links or SEO manipulation. Some direct the chatbots to pull from sources such as online forums where responses feel more authentic.

“I use AI tools to get a collective, holistic research pulled together in one place — with reference links.” — Lucy G.

“AI easily generates a summary of what people are saying, the good and the bad.”
— Faye P.

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The Social-to-Deep-Dive Pipeline

Consumers are exposed to and actively seeking short-form content from social media platforms about merchants, products, and payment options. After consuming short-form content, many consumers shared that they seek out more in-depth reviews where they believe the reviewer has more credibility.

“I use [social media app] for a quick overview, but I rely on online video reviews for the in-depth version.” – Demi B.

“I’ll watch multiple reviews to judge how knowledgeable the person sounds before actually trying a new checkout tool.” – Anika T.

Scanning for Red Flags

Along with researching payment methods, consumers evaluate the sites where those payment methods live through Better Business Bureau complaints, B2B review board scores, forum threads about fraud, and more.

“I always look at BBB complaints, reviews – just people like myself – to see if there’s anything fraudulent or scammy about the website.” – Macy R.

“I’ve been doing it for the last five years anyway, because they got me.” – Carol V.

For many, this intensity is a direct response to being burned before. They’re not always looking for reasons to buy. They’re also looking for reasons not to.

One participant captured the intensity of their vetting process:

“I spent probably six months researching robot vacuums. I don’t care what you look like, I don’t care what you say. I’m going to read reviews on different platforms, watch videos, talk to friends.” – Lawrence M.

None of this happens at your checkout. It happens well before – and it keeps happening once they get there.

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A Shortcut: "If Everyone Else Uses It, It's Probably Fine"

Participants indicated that they look beyond their immediate circles. Wide acceptance functions as crowd-sourced reliability proof. If they see a payment method at their top merchants, Fortune 10 companies, and every major retailer, they treat that as a collective endorsement.

“Wide acceptance and usage – if it's widely accepted and used, it's easier to trust.” – Tristan M.

“If I know that the mass is using it, that would get me to switch over. There has to be a reason why they're using it: must be easy, must be well protected, must be well known.” – Michelle P

The logic is circular but powerful: consumers trust what's widely adopted because they assume others did the vetting; they couldn't do themselves. For merchants, the implication is practical, offering a payment method that consumers see everywhere else signals that you've passed the same bar those other merchants set.



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The First Transaction Is an Audition

After consumers decide to shop with you, they're still evaluating your reliability throughout their first experience. What happens next determines if and how they come back. They're looking to see if their transaction felt secure, if their checkout process was frictionless, and what their post-purchase experience was like.

“Majority of the places I go to online are places I've been to before. If I find something that works, I don't deviate from it.” – Jesse W.

“I don't mind my consistent merchants storing my information. But I don't like to share it with new merchants – might be my one and only time going there, and then they have all my information.” – Roxanna J.

“If they are one and done, I won't save my card with them because I don't have an established relationship.” –Pierce A.

Guest checkout can play a part in this story. For some participants, guest checkout isn't a sign of disengagement; it's their way of running a low-stakes trial before investment in the relationship.

Guest Checkout First. Account Only After.

Pam has a practice. When she shops with a new merchant for the first time, she uses guest checkout. No account creation. No stored cards. She's watching.

If the product arrives as described, if the confirmation email came through, if the experience felt professional – she might come back. And on the second or third visit, she might create an account.

“I'm a person that'll use guest checkout and then if my purchase goes well, I'll be like, Okay, I'll go ahead and make an account and save my stuff in there. It truly depends on how well that first purchase goes.” – Pam D.

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Security – Keep My Data Safe



Consumers evaluate security before they click 'buy!' It matters more to them than any other factor, but it's also the hardest one for them to evaluate on their own. So they look for signals and proxies.

Ask consumers what matters most when they're paying online, and security is at the top of the list. It's the baseline. The non-negotiable. Security, as one participant put it, "goes without saying in the digital age."

The paradox of not being able to evaluate such an important pillar weighs on consumers.

"It's gotten to be so technologically advanced that if you didn't have major coding knowledge and understanding of the encryption processes, it would be hard to even verify the security of any of it as a consumer. It's all based on trust as much as anything." – Mac C.

He wasn't alone. Across our conversations, consumers described the same challenge:

"There's really no way to guarantee that your information is going to be secure online. We know this from all the data breaches, right? ...we just kind of live in this age where we have to go on faith a little bit and just hope for the best."

– Reagan K.

"There's not really ever proof that it's secure. You're just kind of believing it... Sometimes, when you're going to check out, there might be a statement there, or, like, some sort of seal... But other than that, not really. You're just kind of hoping." – Ian O.

And the environment is getting harder.

"With technology getting more advanced, it's making it easier for the people who want to take information from you to get it." – Cole W.

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Security Signals Consumers Look For

Consumers aren't evaluating your security stack. They're evaluating your surfaces and looking for signals.

- Familiar payment logos
- A clean, professional interface
- Working standard features (autofill, saved card recognition)
- Lock icons, FDIC language, security badges
- Absence of red flags: pop-ups, cluttered layouts, redirects to unfamiliar pages
- The right kind of friction: verification, 2-step authentication

“You can tell when a website is cheaply made or thrown together. It doesn't give you the confidence to shop with them. You worry that if their website's not well put together, they're not tracking security.” – Norah B.

“I definitely want to see the SSL encryption message. And I don't want things moving around as I'm trying to do my business. There's often a lot of things moving and flashing. That makes me nervous.” – Sky F.

“I was trying to buy dishes and it took me to what I thought was [that brand's checkout], but it was some kind of other site, and I just didn't trust it.” – Denise M.

“Looking for the little lock symbol that indicated it was...a secure website...” – Amos C.

“If it feels like a little hinky and the website gives me the heebie jeebies, I don't want my personal information on here.”
– Eve O.

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Friction is the most counterintuitive signal. Too much friction gets in the way and frustrates. But when it comes to security, too little friction carries its own downsides and can feel reckless. Consumers want to ensure their financial data is kept safe, and they want to see that merchants have safeguards in place. When those safeguards provide the *right kind and just enough* friction to let the consumer see they're being well cared for, it's one of the rare instances of good friction.

“I hate two-factor identification, but I value it.” – Miguel S.

“I've seen payment options where it's just, hey, give us your card and your name. That seems unusual – I would expect somebody who's taking my money to need more information. Asking for my billing zip code, the three-digit security number – that helps me trust it.” – Dangelo T.

“Autofill is convenient and great, but it's really not that secure – anybody could come on my computer or phone and just purchase something.” – Gerry S.

The sweet spot moves depending on the stakes and the relationship. For a \$500 purchase from a new merchant, more security-related friction feels like caring. A \$15 reorder from a familiar site won't need as much.

“My expectations of how fast and automated it should be might depend on what I'm buying... Companies have to be careful, and I'm understanding about that, but not on the regular sites. If I'm buying something under \$100 yeah, I want easy; as few steps as possible.” – Nathaniel V.



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How Consumers Self-Insure

Consumers go to great lengths, with self-imposed rules and litmus tests, to limit their financial exposure online. Think of these as the consumer deliberately creating friction in their own experience for their perceived security.

BY THE NUMBERS

84%

survey participants say they are cautious about where they store their payment information online.

Paze Consumer Segmentation Study, Accelerant Research, 2025. Online survey, n=3,000 U.S. adults 18+

Rarely save card information

Some consumers never save payment details while shopping online, while others severely limit the number of sites where their information is stored.

“I usually check ‘don't save my card’... I don't trust them to keep my data safe.”
– Joshua N.

“I've read too many stories of well-known merchants getting hacked.”
– Amos C.

“I'd rather not have [my credit card number] floating around somewhere else if I don't need it to be.” – Michelle P.

Manual entry

When consumers manually enter card details rather than use autofill or a stored card, merchants often read this as friction. Consumers told us it's intentional: it's deliberate risk management.

“I don't mind typing my [credit card information] in every time, just to keep me a little bit safer.” – Ben R.

Diversifying across payment methods

Consumers deliberately spread cards across multiple wallets so no single breach compromises everything. As another put it, “services go down, services get hacked.”

“I can replace the card if it gets breached, but [if they're all in one wallet] I don't want to give up my whole wallet.” – Lawrence M.

All of these hedges are manual. They work, but they require consumers to rebuild their protection at every new checkout.

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Digital Wallets are Guardrails When Trust is Low

Many merchants assume wallets are used primarily for ease of use. While convenience is indeed a top reason for choosing wallets, consumers also recognize the protection wallets may help provide. Wallets create a trust mechanism for the consumer when they haven't developed trust with the merchant.

“Even if I'm ordering from a website I don't normally order from, or maybe it doesn't feel super safe, I know if my digital wallet is coming in – it's almost like giving me the reassurance that my information isn't going to be used maliciously.” – Tristan M.

“If it's a site that gives me the heebie jeebies, I don't want my personal information on here. I'll use [digital wallet] or Venmo rather than my actual personal banking info.” – Maxine S.

“I typically use [digital wallet] when I'm purchasing items from online marketplaces... because I know it's more secure if I'm unsure as to where I'm buying the products from.” – Demi B.

“It just depends on the trustworthiness of the site. I'm leaning more towards virtual card numbers now.” – Aubrey F.

“I've used [digital wallet] for places that I didn't really trust so much.” – Brooke F.

For unfamiliar merchants, wallets provide more than convenience. The wallet provides a sense of security when merchant trust has not yet been earned.

BY THE NUMBERS

90%

of survey participants say security/fraud protection is a factor when choosing a payment method

Paze Consumer Segmentation Study, Accelerant Research, 2025. Online survey, n=3,000 U.S. adults 18+



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Everyone Knows a Fraud Story

Across the research, many participants shared stories of being personally affected by fraud: skimmed cards, hacked accounts, unauthorized charges, and stolen identities. 44 out of 44 qualitative interview participants reported either having been a direct victim of fraud or hearing stories about hacks and scams. It's part of the common discourse. Victims of fraud are more likely to redouble their diligence.

“Six, seven years ago, ten years ago, whatever it was – I had \$2,500 charges on my card from Maryland. Somebody went in, bought gift cards. My account was out of money.” – Leah M.

Consumers are thinking about security and they appreciate efforts by merchants to conspicuously address security.



100%

Participants reported either having been a direct victim of fraud or hearing stories about hacks and scams.

Paze Qualitative Research, Accelerant Research, October 2025. n=44

Every Notification On and Alert Checked.

Carol has been scammed more than three times. Her kids tease her about it. She knows.

“I've been scammed so many times that I have to pay attention. I can't afford not to.” – Carol V.

Now every notification is turned on. Every alert gets checked. Every transaction confirmation is treated as proof the system is still working. She doesn't trust merchants to protect her. She monitors them in real time.

* Real names have been changed

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The Message That Cuts Through: Hiding the Card Number

Participants in the qualitative interviews were asked to rank the importance of three value propositions for their checkout experience: convenience, security, or familiarity. The value proposition for security (“Your card number isn't shared with online merchants”) resoundingly outperformed convenience (“Your eligible cards are ready to use without typing out full card numbers”) and familiarity (“You're using the same relationship you already have”).

“Pointing out that the card number isn't shared – the security is a stronger grab than the convenience. It's more reassuring and more compelling.”
– Pierce A.

“You don't have to enter your full card number. That would be more safe to me. If you don't have all the card information, it will be a low chance a person will be able to do something with that.” – Ayesha D.

“We are in a time where things are getting hacked so much that even the best companies have had issues. The idea that my card number isn't shared – that's really interesting.” – Faye P.

Most participants in the qualitative research couldn't define “tokenization,” but the idea behind it –that their card number never reaches the merchant and therefore cannot be compromised – resonated immediately.



68%

Participants ranked the card-number-hidden message first

Paze Qualitative Research, Accelerant Research, October 2025. n=44

BY THE NUMBERS

55%

of survey participants say a payment method that doesn't share their card information with merchants would motivate them to adopt it.

Paze Consumer Segmentation Study, Accelerant Research, 2025. Online survey, n=3,000 U.S. adults 18+

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Recourse - Make It Right When Something Goes Wrong



Trust accumulates slowly through years of things going right. It can disappear through a single moment handled poorly.

For many participants in our research, dispute resolution scores ahead of convenience. Motivators for choosing a particular payment method included buyer protection, the ability to file chargebacks, and easy fraud resolution. For a meaningful share of your consumers, the question "What happens if something goes wrong?" outranks the question "How easy is checkout?"

BY THE NUMBERS

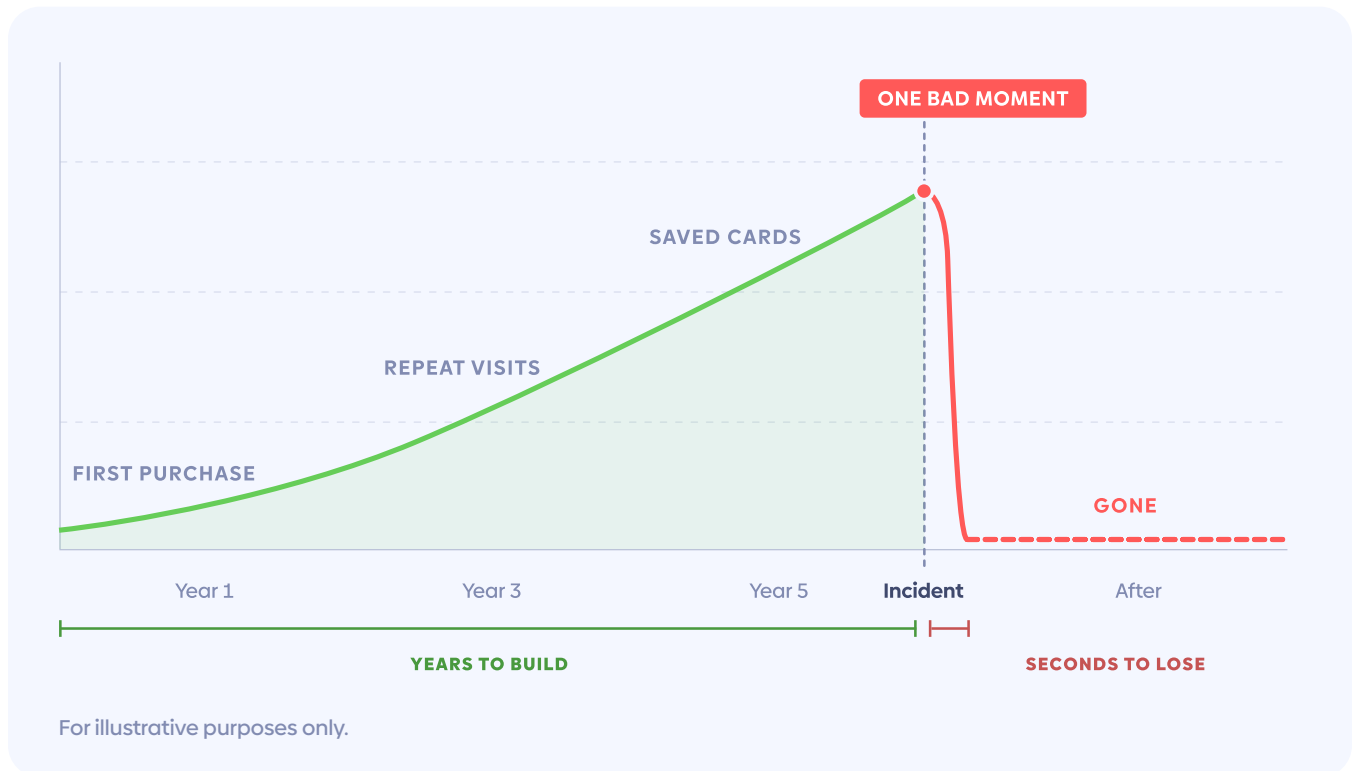
90%

of survey participants rated security / fraud protection as 'very important' or 'important' when choosing an online payment solution.

Paze Consumer Segmentation Study, Accelerant Research, 2025. Online survey, n=3,000 U.S. adults 18+

The 'Trust Math'

Trust builds slowly. Transaction after transaction without incident. It's reinforced by peer endorsement and brand familiarity – the quiet compounding of everything going right over years. But it can all break at once. One dispute handled badly. One breach without communication. One phone call that goes nowhere. One moment when the consumer feels like they're on their own.



“I had a charge disputed and the process was very difficult. I felt like it should have been more secure with how to trace back a vendor...” – Anika T.

“I used to use [a payment wallet] more in the past, but they had some security issues, and some challenges with disputing charges or getting things refunded. So it became less desirable to use that.” – Lucy G.

Participants share these stories with friends and family, cascading the negative impact.

It's often the failure of the response, rather than the failure itself, that damages the relationship. They've accepted that breaches and fraud happen. What they will not accept is being abandoned in the aftermath.

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When Recourse Builds Trust

Not all situations are the same, and neither is the level of recourse. At one end, a payment provider that goes silent will suffer the greatest abandonment. Problems handled well can save a relationship, and sometimes build new trust – especially when the merchant is clear about how it will be made right.

“If anything on your end should go wrong, you’re going to do everything you can to make it right. Like, I made a purchase on [a popular online merchant] and the delivery kept getting delayed... I called support and they said, ‘So sorry. We’ll get it to you in two days.’ ... that for me, says trust... that if things don't work out the way they say it will, that they will do everything they can to rebuild that trust.”
– Dangelo T.

Some of the deepest trust forms when organizations get ahead of problems entirely – catching fraud before it lands.

“If our debit card is two states away, [our bank] calls us to make sure that it's us using it... they take care of us. And we're not just, we're not just a number... they still take care of us like we're one of their main people.” – Dominic R.

Another participant described a similar moment with his bank, after his card information was compromised:

“They caught it. They immediately froze it, sent me an email to verify. They handled it so well.” – Pierce A.

The \$100 Email That Built a Relationship

Dominic’s flight was delayed. He wasn't angry. He wasn't even frustrated. Two days later, an email arrived.

“They emailed me, ‘Here's the \$100 credit. We're so sorry.’ Without me complaining, without even being frustrated. They owned their mistake and they corrected it.” – Dominic R.

He elaborated:

“When you do have to reach out, and [there's a quick response], ‘Yes, we understand that went wrong. Let's make things better.’ That's the key: feeling like there's... a relationship between the company and me.” – Dominic R.

* Real names have been changed

In each of these stories, the response arrived faster than the frustration. These consumers walked away trusting these companies more, not less – because someone was clearly looking out for them.

This is where the power of wallets as a guardrail shows up again. Participants feel that a wallet positioned between consumer and merchant gives them a stronger sense that someone will be on their side – independent of the merchant’s own policies.

When organizations treat recourse as part of the relationship, participants notice.

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Control – Let Me Decide What's Shared



Consumers want to feel like they're in the driver's seat for what's saved, what's shared, and what shows up unexpectedly. It's about making the consumer feel like they have agency in the relationship.

“Control is **making sure my data is where I want it to be and available to who I want to be available to...** being able to easily remove financial information.” – Ronan R.

“Control would be **me being able to determine how I use the card or where I use the card.** Having the access to do with it what I want to do with it.” – Anika T

“Control means security or retention of important info... keeping it, **not losing control of your information.**” – Lawrence M.

BY THE NUMBERS

82%

of survey participants say
“the ability to keep control
over my payment information”
matters when choosing a
payment method.

Paze Consumer Segmentation Study, Accelerant Research, 2025. Online survey, n=3,000 U.S. adults 18+

* Names changed to protect confidentiality. Quote attributions are pseudonyms

“You Gotta Purchase It Some Way”

Brielle was hacked three times and now refuses to save her card information anywhere. She has completely lost faith in big tech platforms to protect her privacy – but she hasn't stopped using their services.

“When it comes to [large tech company] selling my privacy stuff, I don't trust them at all... I don't trust any of them. But without them, how are you going to purchase stuff? You gotta purchase it some way.” – Brielle T.

* Real names have been changed

The Uneasy Truth About Data

Consumers know their data is being collected. They know they can't fully stop it. Most have accepted it, albeit reluctantly, as the cost of shopping online.

“I don't like that almost anything I do nowadays, somebody can profit off of it. And I'm not profiting. I'm just living my life.” – Maxine S.

This came up in conversation after conversation, always in the same shape: the relationship feels lopsided, and consumers are looking for any sign that a company sees it too.

“[Large tech company] controls everything I have in a technological fashion now. It's kind of like one overarching blanket platform for everything in my tech life. I'm not a real big fan of that sort of monopolized atmosphere, but convenience is king nowadays.” – Mac C.

BY THE NUMBERS

79%

of survey participants want full control over how their payment information is used online, even if it means a slower checkout.

Paze Consumer Segmentation Study, Accelerant Research, 2025. Online survey, n=3,000 U.S. adults 18+

Just like in the Security pillar, the right kind of friction is welcomed by consumers if it allows them to have the control they desire.

“I don't want it to be so easy. Again, I'm careless, right?... I don't want to ‘OK’ any payment that I don't really want.” – Cole W.

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Where Control Is Won & Lost

Information Removal

The control feature that came up most consistently is the ability to easily and confidently remove one's information from a site or platform.

“Being able to easily remove financial information from a platform is right up there with the security of the platform itself.” – Ronan R.

“Having complete control over the information that's on there is very helpful to my peace of mind, because I can decide at a moment's notice, I don't want that on there anymore.” – Eve O.

If it's difficult to remove information, the relationship feels like a trap, leading the consumer to believe the company would rather keep their data than gain their trust.



Post-Purchase Confirmation

For a growing number of consumers the most consequential trust moment isn't the checkout. It's the seconds immediately after.

“When I don't get an immediate notification, it's a red light to me. Like something's not right. Something didn't happen.” – Tess H.

“The most important factor for me when choosing what platform to pay with is the receipt process. I want this receipt right back to say, 'Yes, you made this purchase.' And not have any lag time.” – Remi P.

The confirmation isn't merely informational, it's relational. When a consumer immediately receives a clear confirmation message, they feel confident that everything worked as it should and their trust goes up. When confirmations fail in some way, either by being too slow or unclear, the consumer feels unsure and trust goes down.

* Names changed to protect confidentiality. Quote attributions are pseudonyms

Data Transparency

Research participants expressed rather consistent levels of resentment when it comes to data collection happening behind their back. They want institutions to communicate clearly and directly about what will happen with their data. Many participants shared how they find it hard to keep up with the technicalities and fine print of what they're agreeing to when they interact online. Some believe institutions are taking advantage of this dynamic.

“A lot of the different sites we're on have terms and conditions, and sometimes stuff feels like it's snuck in there because they're very long and not all of us have time to read through them. And so, then they are able to sell some of our information.” – Maxine S.

“If I had complete control over where my information was and what information I could put in there and what I could keep to myself. That would be the major factor for me.” – Eve O.

“If I find out they're selling my data to an unauthorized third party or part of the transmission is insecure, I will stop using that product. And even then, it's hard to earn my trust back once it's broken.” – Ronan R.

BY THE NUMBERS

73%

of survey respondents want to see every step of the online checkout process.

Paze Consumer Segmentation Study, Accelerant Research, 2025. Online survey, n=3,000 U.S. adults 18+

* Names changed to protect confidentiality. Quote attributions are pseudonyms

The Institution in the Room

The Bank Trust Bridge Between Merchants & Consumers



When it comes to protecting their payment information, consumers who were surveyed trust their banks more than technology players or retailers.

BY THE NUMBERS

Who survey participants trust with their payment info:

85%

Their primary bank

60%

Tech companies

58%

Large retailers

39%

Smaller retailers

The further you sit from the bank relationship,
the harder every pillar has to work.

Paze Consumer Segmentation Study, Accelerant Research, 2025. Online survey, n=3,000 U.S. adults 18+

Banks hold their money and have long track records of protecting information.

“When I see [large national banks], I trust those brands. I kind of don't have to think twice.” – Michelle P.

“I've had [my bank cards] for so long and they have always taken care of any issues. There is a built-in trust in the brand.” – Dominic R.

“I would tend to have more trust in a service if it were offered by [large national bank].” – Dangelo T.

“I would trust a service more if it were backed by a bank like [large national bank] because I expect more security out of them than [popular digital wallet] or [P2P service].” – Tess H.

Banks are uniquely positioned to succeed in all four trust pillars:

- **Reliability:** Built on years of consistent daily interaction. One consumer's trust in her bank came down to a single word: "Experience."
- **Security:** Consumers assume the bank's infrastructure is robust without investigation. "They're such large names that they can't afford to lose rapport."
- **Recourse:** Banks were named, consistently and unprompted, as the ultimate backstop. "If there was ever any issue, they will protect me."
- **Control:** Banks provide the notification infrastructure, card lock features, and real-time alerts consumers now rely on as their primary monitoring tools.

* Names changed to protect confidentiality. Quote attributions are pseudonyms

The Trust Transfer From Bank-Offered Payment Options

A new merchant cannot manufacture all the pillars of trust on day one. But a bank-offered payment option can step in at precisely the moment the consumer most needs them: at checkout.

“If my bank was like, Hey, we now work with fill in the blank, I would automatically be open to it because it's like they're putting their name behind it. That means they've done the vetting.” – Tristan M.

“If it was verified by my bank as a legit way to pay, like on social media they have verified accounts, that would matter.” – Denise M.

“It tells me that they have the goodwill of established institutions. No bank wants to be dealing with fraudulent charges, so they're going to want the platform they're associated with to be secure.” – Leah M.

BY THE NUMBERS

52%

of survey participants who don't currently use a digital wallet, would adopt a digital wallet for the first time if it were offered by their bank.

63%

of survey participants who currently use a digital wallet, would switch wallet providers for the same reason.

Paze Consumer Segmentation Study, Accelerant Research, 2025. Online survey, n=3,000 U.S. adults 18+

As our Security pillar showed, consumers already use wallets as trust bridges at unfamiliar merchants. When that wallet carries a bank's name, the bridge is even stronger.

* Names changed to protect confidentiality. Quote attributions are pseudonyms

Conclusion

Three thousand consumers showed us what matters most. Forty-four told us why.

They described four pillars of trust: experiencing consistency (reliability), feeling protected (security), knowing someone will show up when it goes wrong (recourse), and having a say in what's shared (control). Together, these pillars describe how consumers build, evaluate, and act on trust across the full purchase journey – the quiet calculation that runs before they click, during checkout, and long after the transaction is complete.

Merchants may consider guest checkout, manual card entry, or cart abandonment as nothing more than friction. But for consumers, these are often protective decisions signaling to merchants that trust hasn't yet been earned.

The competitive landscape makes this more urgent. Consumers increasingly rely on inputs like peer reviews, social content, and familiarity with payment methods to decide whether a transaction feels safe.

Merchants who recognize this are treating the payment experience as strategic: every payment method at checkout either reinforces trust or undermines it. Reading those signals – and acting on them – is how the four pillars become a growth lever. For merchants operating at scale, it shows up in the numbers that matter:

- **Conversion rates** are influenced by how reliable and secure the checkout experience feels
- **Cart abandonment** often reflects unresolved trust concerns
- **Customer lifetime value (LTV)** increases when trust enables repeat usage and stored payment credentials
- **Operational costs and churn rise** when problems aren't resolved well, due to disputes, chargebacks, and support burden

Merchants who operationalize the four pillars earn the relationship milestones that compound: stored credentials, repeat purchases, forgiveness when something goes wrong. Those milestones become the foundation of stronger conversion, deeper customer relationships, and growth that holds up in a crowded digital economy.

Consumers have already set the standards for trust. The merchants who meet those standards will be in the strongest position to earn their customers' loyalty.

About Paze®

Paze is a reimagined online checkout solution that banks and credit unions offer to consumers and merchants, combining all eligible credit and debit cards into a single wallet and eliminating manual card entry. Solving long-standing challenges in e-commerce, Paze provides an easy experience for consumers and merchants alike. More than 165 million credit and debit cards have been added to the Paze checkout solution. To learn more about Paze, visit www.paze.com. Paze is operated by Early Warning Services, LLC, an innovator in financial and risk management solutions.

Paze® is built on security and trust



Actual Card Numbers Stay Hidden

When a customer checks out with Paze®, their full card number is never shared with the merchant. Instead, it is replaced with a unique, one-time-use payment token. If a merchant's system is compromised in a data breach, the full card number (PAN) will not be visible.



Trusted Source

Paze® is operated by Early Warning Services, the company behind Zelle® that's focused on connecting people and financial institutions in ways that reinforce trust and enable progress. Paze enables consumers to make transactions on participating merchant websites. Consumers gain access to the Paze wallet through their existing relationship with a bank or credit union. This foundational trust is critical to consumer adoption. Today, more than 165 million credit and debit cards are eligible to use Paze.



Seamless Control & Authentication

The Paze® wallet is password-less, helping consumers avoid the risk of using weak, shared, or compromised passwords. When a customer checks out, their identity is authenticated with a one-time passcode (OTP) to the mobile phone number or email address associated with their eligible bank or credit union account. This verification step gives the customer a clear, secure touchpoint for every transaction.



Effortless Integration

The consumer does not need to download a new app or create a new account. Their eligible cards are pre-loaded into their Paze® digital wallet* and managed directly through their bank's existing mobile app or online banking. This reduces friction and ensures card details (like expiration dates) are kept up-to-date automatically.



About Early Warning®

Early Warning Services, LLC helps power payments innovation across the United States banking sector—enabling financial inclusion, advancing reliable and fast payments for America’s consumers and small businesses, and helping banks and credit unions protect the people and businesses they serve. For more than 35 years, Early Warning has worked with banks, credit unions, businesses, and government agencies to help drive prosperity, deliver bold innovation, and improve how payments are made. For more information, visit www.earlywarning.com.



Connecting People, Financial Institutions, and Everyday Life

Our work centers on the connections that shape financial life — between people, businesses, and the financial institutions that serve them. With those connections, money can move in ways that support real needs, from opening an account to helping family or running a business.



Protecting the Financial System

As money moves, trust must move with it. Our work supports the systems behind everyday financial life, helping protect the accounts and transactions people rely on in moments that matter.



Advancing the Everyday Economy

By addressing complex challenges thoughtfully and at scale, we work to improve how people and institutions participate in the everyday economy. This approach to innovation helps progress feel practical, grounded, and connected to real life.