

Cashless society draws closer with only one in six payments now in cash

Level: Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Match the currencies with the countries in which they are used.

- | | |
|-----------|-----------------|
| 1. yen | a. India |
| 2. dollar | b. Hungary |
| 3. rand | c. Japan |
| 4. rupee | d. Egypt |
| 5. pound | e. Canada |
| 6. forint | f. South Africa |

2 Key words

a. Find the following words in the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

1. a verb meaning *make things happen at a faster rate* _____ (2)
2. a noun meaning *the action or process of buying or selling something*
_____ (2)
3. a verb meaning *become less* _____ (3)
4. a noun meaning *the process by which a disease spreads from one person to another*
_____ (4)
5. an adjective meaning *depending on something* _____ (5)
6. an adjective meaning *clean and not likely to cause illness or disease*
_____ (7)
7. a noun meaning *someone who buys and uses goods or services*
_____ (8)
8. an adverb meaning *very quickly* _____ (8)
9. an adjective meaning *able to be done or worth doing* _____ (9)
10. a verb meaning *suddenly fail or stop existing* _____ (10)

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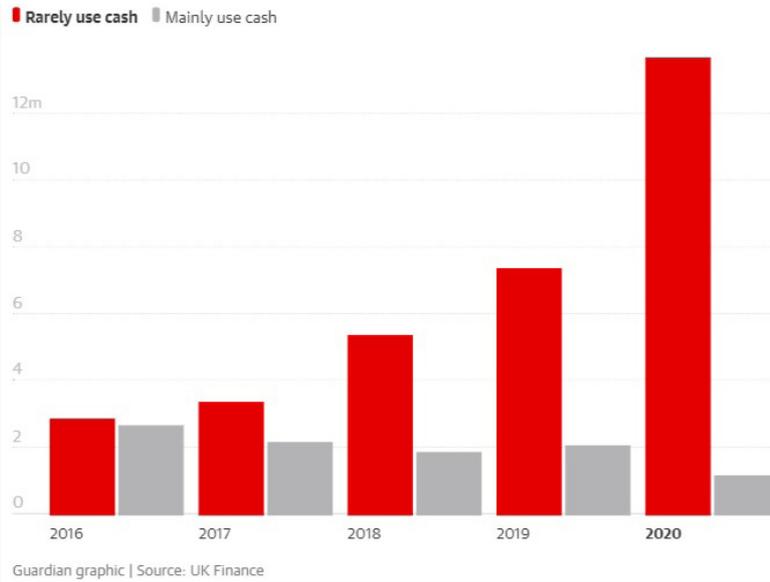
- 1 The UK has moved closer to becoming a cashless society after official data showed that the number of payments made using notes and coins fell by 35% in 2020.
- 2 The coronavirus pandemic has dramatically accelerated changes in spending habits. 13.7 million people led a “cashless life” in 2020 – almost double the 7.4 million in 2019. Five in six payments now involve no notes or coins, compared with half of all transactions ten years ago. A growing number of businesses both big and small now refuse cash, with many having decided to go card-only over the past year.
- 3 “There has been a significant fall in cash use by consumers in a relatively short period of time,” said the banking trade body UK Finance, which published the figures. “Since 2017, cash use had been declining by around 15% each year, so 2020 represented an acceleration of this decline.”
- 4 The trend reflects the fact that many places where people commonly use cash, such as pubs and cafés, were shut for large parts of 2020, while more people shopped online. While many businesses have temporarily or permanently gone card-only, some consumers have been avoiding touching banknotes and coins because they are worried about Covid transmission.
- 5 Nevertheless, the findings are likely to increase concern that millions of people are possibly being left behind as the move to a cashless society speeds up. About 1.2 million consumers still mainly used cash for their day-to-day spending during 2020, down from 2.1 million people in 2019. However, the Access to Cash Review said there were more than five million people in the UK still “heavily reliant” on notes and coins.
- 6 Contactless and mobile payments became much more popular in 2020. The number of contactless payments rose by 12% during 2020, and overall they represented more than a quarter (27%) of all payments. As recently as 2016, the figure was 7%.
- 7 This is the result of a number of factors, including the decision to increase the upper limit for tap and pay from £30 to £45 in April 2020 – a further rise to £100 is planned – and a belief that contactless is more hygienic than handling cash. About 83% of people in the UK now use contactless, with no age group or region falling below 75%. Cash was used for 17% of all payments in 2020 – down from 45% in 2015 and 56% in 2010.
- 8 During 2020, there were 13.7 million consumers who either did not use notes and coins at all, or only once a month. This number has grown rapidly: in 2018, it was 5.4 million people; in 2017, it was 3.4 million; and in 2016, it was 2.9 million.
- 9 However, with large parts of the economy closed for some of 2020, UK Finance said this was not necessarily a measure of people who had chosen to live a cashless life. Gareth Shaw, the head of Which? Money, said the government must ensure that cash remained a viable payment option for as long as it was needed.
- 10 The Access to Cash Review has previously warned that the country’s “cash infrastructure” – from cash machines to cash-sorting centres – could be in danger of collapsing because while the costs are largely fixed, income is declining quickly. Natalie Ceeney, its chair, said that as cash use declined, “there is an increasing risk that people won’t be able to access it or that shops won’t accept it.”

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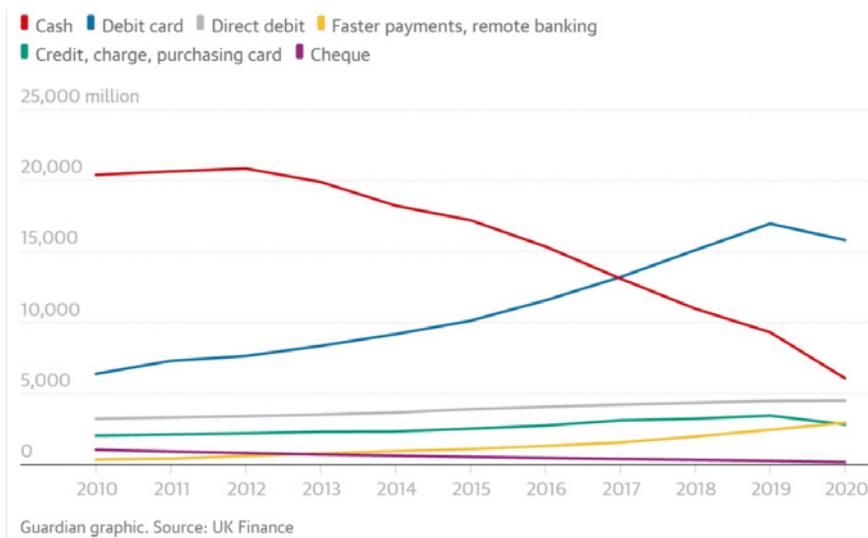
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The number of people who say they rarely use cash - once a month or less - grew to 13.7m in 2020



Cash payments have declined by 70% since 2010



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3 Comprehension check

a. Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the article? Correct any that are false.

1. Only 35% of people in the UK used notes and coins in 2020.
2. Almost 14 million people led a “cashless life”.
3. People commonly use cash to shop online.
4. Some people don't like touching banknotes and coins because they are worried about catching Covid.
5. In 2020, 7% of all payments were contactless.
6. The upper limit for tap and pay is £100.
7. Some people believe that contactless payment is more hygienic than using cash.
8. More than 80% of people in the UK now use contactless payment.
9. In 2020, 13.7 million people only used notes and coins once a month.
10. There is a danger that in future people won't be able to get cash and shops won't accept it.

4 Key language

a. Fill the gaps in the phrases using these prepositions.

about from by in on to of

1. the number fell _____ 35%
2. changes _____ spending habits
3. worried _____ catching Covid
4. day-_____ -day spending
5. a quarter _____ all payments
6. reliant _____ cash
7. an increase _____ £30 to £45

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- “It's much better to pay by card than in cash.”
- “Paying in cash is safer than paying by card.”

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6 In your own words

a. Look at the second graph from the news article. Write full sentences to describe the following.

- the fall in cash payments between 2010 and 2019
- the fall in cash payments in 2020
- the rise in debit card payments between 2010 and 2019
- what happened to debit card payments in 2020 compared to 2019
- the increase in remote banking from 2010 to 2020
- the fall in cheque payments between 2010 and 2020

You will find the following adverbs useful:

slightly
gradually
rapidly
significantly