

Mastercard launches biometric program as demand for contactless, secure payments grows

Article

The news: Mastercard's new Biometric Checkout Program brings facial and fingerprint recognition technology to the point-of-sale (POS), per a press release.

Here's how it works: The program lets consumers link their facial and fingerprint biometrics to a payment card. Once enrolled in the system, customers can check out with their face or fingerprint, no cards or mobile phones necessary.

The program outlines standards that banks, merchants, and tech providers that want to participate in the program must abide by. Mastercard is working with several biometric and tech firms, including **Payface** and **Fujitsu**, to roll out the program. It kicked off a pilot in Brazil, where it is trialing the tech with Payface across five **St Marche** supermarket locations. Mastercard plans to launch similar pilots in the Middle East and Asia.

Why it matters: Biometric payments may be an answer to heightened demand for contactless payments and transaction security.

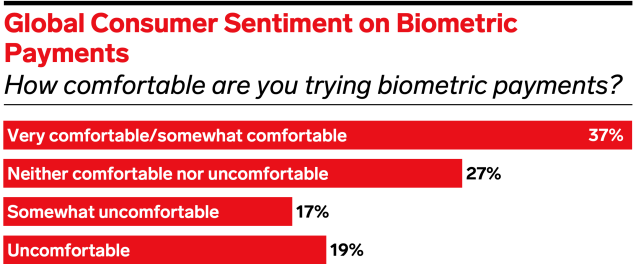
- Contactless payments have become more popular—especially during the pandemic, as consumers opt for more touchless checkout experiences. **The number of global proximity mobile payment users is expected to hit 1.345 billion in 2022**, up from 1.182 billion in 2020, [per](#) Insider Intelligence forecasts. [QR code](#)-based transactions and tap-and-pay cards are also fueling contactless payment growth.
- And growing fraud threats have made payment security a major focus for both businesses and consumers. **Twenty-four percent of global banking customers** cited criminals using their payment cards to make purchases as their leading concern related to financial privacy and security, [per](#) a FICO survey.

Biometrics can feed demand for contactless payments by letting consumers check out faster and with minimal effort while prioritizing security because it involves strong authentication.

Will it work? While biometric payments may be compelling for consumers who value security and frictionless commerce, it could be a hard sell for privacy-focused consumers who are reticent about sharing biometric information. Thirty-six percent of global respondents said they were at least somewhat uncomfortable with biometric payments—nearly split with those who said the opposite, [per](#) a Mastercard survey.

The big takeaway: Mastercard wants to be an early mover in the biometric space as sentiments for the technology improve. The rise in biometric payment cards—which Mastercard is already [involved](#) in—could ease consumers into the space and pave the way for facial recognition and fingerprint-based hardware to take off at the POS.

The Biometric Checkout Program also lets Mastercard ensure its card business isn't cut out as biometric payments gain steam—linking consumers' biometrics with their payment cards lets Mastercard rake in card volume even if a physical card isn't present during the transaction.



Note: Biometric payments can be defined as the use of physical human characteristics, such as facial features, fingerprints, or palm prints, to authenticate transactions.
Source: Mastercard, "Mastercard New Payments Index 2021," May 4, 2021
Methodology: Data is from the May 2021 "Mastercard New Payments Index 2021," which surveyed 15,569 consumers in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, India, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand, the UAE, and the US between February 26 and March 10, 2021. Research was conducted by The Harris Poll and Mastercard Global Foresights, Insights and Analytics.

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