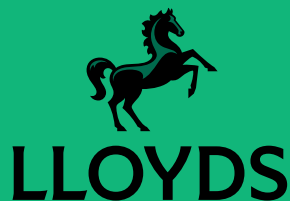


# **From Till to Table:** Smarter Payments Driving Innovation in Hospitality



# Contents



**Welcome** by Melinda Roylett, Managing Director, Lloyds Merchant Services

**3**

**Front of house**

**4**

**Section 1.** Hospitality at the heart of local life

**6**

**Section 2.** What customers expect at checkout

**9**

**Section 3.** What hospitality businesses want from payments

**13**

**Section 4.** Smarter payments, smarter service

**16**

**Section 5.** How Lloyds Merchant Services enables hospitality growth

**19**

**Appendix**

**22**

# Welcome



**Hospitality has always been part of everyday life in the UK. It's the pub where friends catch up, the café that remembers your order, the restaurant where regulars are delighted returners and new faces are warmly welcomed. These are the places that bring people together - where conversations start and connections grow.**

What makes them thrive isn't only the food or the welcome, but the ease of every interaction. When paying the bill is quick and simple, it keeps the focus on people, not process. That's why payment systems matter: they're a vital part of the customer experience and a key ingredient in how businesses run.

As part of our latest hospitality survey, we spoke to businesses across the UK - from independents to high street chains - about how they're evolving. What came through clearly was their drive to grow, their appetite for smarter tools and their relentless focus on delivering great experiences.

They highlighted the need for speed at the till, flexibility at checkout and systems that work smoothly behind the scenes. Many are exploring new formats, expanding services and adapting to changing customer expectations, with technology playing a central role in helping them succeed.

Our role is to back these businesses with straightforward, reliable payment products, solutions and services. By doing so, we help hospitality keep doing what it does best: delivering great experiences, every day.

Melinda Roylett  
Managing Director,  
Lloyds Merchant Services



# Front of house

**Hospitality is one of the UK's most community-focused industries and a major driver of the economy. It employs 2.6 million people<sup>1</sup> and contributes more than £60 billion<sup>2</sup> in output each year. From pubs and cafés to restaurants and hotels, these businesses bring energy to local life and create spaces where people connect.**

Because of the opportunities they create - for jobs, experiences and local growth - we wanted to hear directly from the people running them. This report is based on the views of 250 UK owners/managers of hospitality businesses, including restaurants, food halls, cafés, pubs and pop-ups. They tell us about the opportunities they're pursuing, the challenges they're working to overcome, and the role payment systems play in keeping service moving. Their answers show why it matters: 97% of businesses see hospitality as central to community life, now and for the future.

Payments sit at the centre of the customer experience. The way people settle the bill shapes how quickly tables turn, how smoothly service runs, and how confident operators feel about growth. 60% cite speed as the main reason for upgrading systems. At the same time 42% say slow processing is their biggest barrier, while 40% highlight fees payable without a clear sense of value in return.

Guests want fast, flexible ways to pay, including contactless, mobile wallets, split bills and pay-at-table. Hospitality businesses are looking for systems that do just this without slowing service or adding steps for staff. Many are also planning to expand – into food halls, shared spaces or new branches – so it's vital that payment setups scale with them.

Across the sector, priorities are clear: faster settlement, fairer costs, better integration and practical support. Our answer to this is to provide hospitality businesses with straightforward, dependable payment tools that simplify operations, control costs and support loyalty.

With the right systems in place, venues can trade, scale or adapt with confidence – freeing staff to focus on service and the moments that define great hospitality.



#### Sources:

1. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2025-0147/>
2. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2025-0147/CDP-2025-0147.pdf>

# At a glance: what hospitality businesses tell us



of operators say  
hospitality is at  
the heart of local  
communities



# 77%

report contactless as  
the most requested  
payment method



# 60%

cite speed as their main motivation to  
invest in smarter payment systems

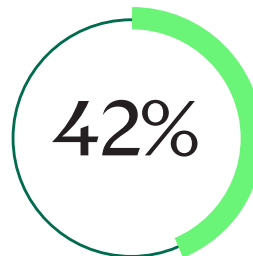
# 56%

of businesses  
planning expansion  
say multi-venue  
formats are top  
choice



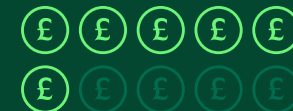
# 48%

want loyalty features  
linked directly to  
payments



say slow  
processing is  
their biggest  
payment  
challenge

# 60%



want faster  
settlement  
from their  
provider

# **Section 1.**

## Hospitality at the heart of local life

# Hospitality at the heart of local life

**Over the past decade, many towns and villages have been tested by the rise of online shopping, Covid, the closure of national chains and falling footfall. Yet hospitality has often helped turn that picture around. Pubs, cafés, restaurants, hotels and music venues create new, vibrant reasons for people to visit, supporting neighbouring businesses in the process.**

Government reforms announced in July 2025<sup>1</sup> will make it quicker and cheaper to turn vacant units into cafés, bars or music venues, with new 'hospitality zones' designed to encourage outdoor dining and late-night trade. Ministers say this will 'put the buzz back into our town centres' by helping smaller operators open, expand and serve more customers.

The hospitality sector keeps finding ways to move forward. Analysis by PWC<sup>2</sup> shows that across Great Britain, the numbers of cafes, coffee shops and convenience stores are increasing. Growth is driven mainly by small and medium-sized businesses. These independents employ local people and encourage residents to buy locally. When they succeed, the benefits ripple out – in jobs, trade and confidence that keeps people coming back.

#### Sources:

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/red-tape-slashed-to-revamp-high-streets-with-new-cafes-and-bars>
2. <https://www.pwc.co.uk/press-room/press-releases/research-commentary/2024/high-streets-suffer-as-38-stores-close-across-great-britain-each.html>

Hospitality brings people together and fuels local economies. In July 2025, non-essential spending grew by 4.3% annually, compared with 0.1% for essentials. Even with tighter budgets, cafés, pubs and restaurants remain an important part of everyday life.

“Hospitality venues are more than places to eat and drink – they’re where communities connect. We’re proud to support the businesses that bring people together and keep local life thriving.”



**Ross Taylor**  
Managing Director,  
Merchant Services Sales  
and Portfolio Management,  
Lloyds Merchant Services





# Hospitality and our communities

**We asked 250 UK hospitality operators about the role that they play in their community. Ninety-seven per cent agreed that their businesses sit at the heart of local life, with seven in 10 strongly agreeing.**

Hotels and restaurants feel it most strongly, with 87% in the East Midlands and 83% in Wales 'strongly agreeing' that hospitality is central to local life. Even in regions with lower intensity, such as Northern Ireland (50%) and Yorkshire & Humber (56%), overall support remains high.

Age and seniority also make a difference. Among over-55s, more than eight in 10 say they 'strongly agree', compared with just over half of those aged 18 to 24. Agreement levels rarely fall below the mid-90s across scale and turnover. Even businesses processing over £50,000 a month share the same view as those handling under £6,000: creating great customer experiences is central to how they operate.

For many, being part of the community shapes how they run their business, and where they grow next. More than half of UK owners and managers say they intend to expand into multi-venue formats, with food halls and shared spaces among the most popular, reflecting continued commitment to local presence, collaboration and visibility.

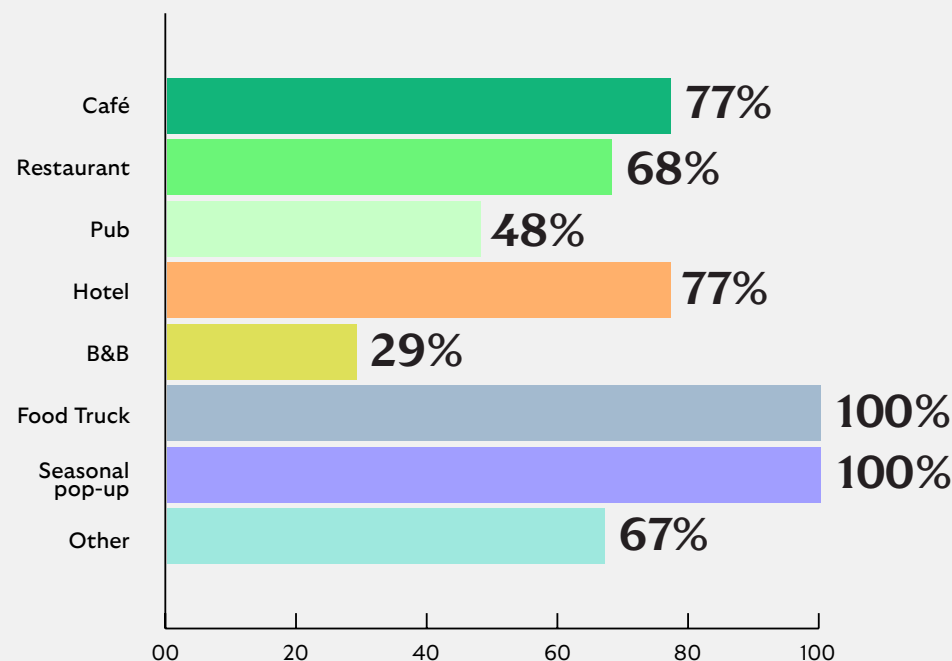
## Altrincham's revival

Altrincham, in Greater Manchester, shows how hospitality can revitalise a community. Its historic Market House has been reinvented as a food hall with six kitchens and two bars, serving everything from pizza and pies to craft beer and coffee. Shared seating and integrated payments let visitors mix and match across traders in a single visit. The buzz has drawn in more independent cafés, bars and restaurants, helping establish Altrincham as a destination for food, drink and community life – twice named the Best Place to Live in the North West by The Sunday Times.



Source: <https://visitaltrincham.com>

**97%** of businesses say hospitality sits at the heart of local communities



% of businesses who 'strongly agree' hospitality sits at the heart of communities



# **Section 2.**

## **What customers expect at checkout**

# What customers expect at checkout

**A visit to a café, pub, hotel or restaurant is made up of many small interactions. The greeting at the door, the way staff engage, the comfort of the space, the timing of service and the thoughtful touches: all of these impact how guests feel during their time there.**

That experience doesn't end with the final course or checkout slip. It finishes with payment, and guests increasingly expect that moment to be quick, easy and familiar. Whether they're tapping a card, splitting a bill or paying by phone, they want it to work smoothly, without delay or confusion.

As the last interaction, payment deserves the same care and attention as the rest of the visit.

## How customers want to pay

Our survey of 250 UK hospitality owners and managers reveals that guests want fast, familiar and convenient ways to pay, especially in high-footfall venues and multi-vendor environments.

“Checkout is part of the customer experience. When it's fast, seamless and integrated, it helps venues deliver the kind of service that keeps guests coming back.”

**Ross Taylor**

Managing Director, Merchant Services Sales and Portfolio Management, Lloyds Merchant Services

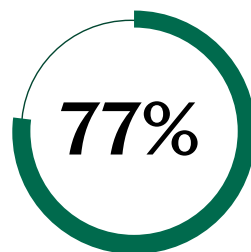
## Contactless

Contactless tops the list. It's the most requested payment method across UK hospitality, selected by 77% of businesses. Whether tapping a card, phone or smartwatch, guests expect it to be available, and businesses see that demand clearly.

Pubs (81%), cafés (81%) and restaurants (80%) all report strong demand, with hotels and seasonal pop-ups close behind. Among businesses with one to nine employees, demand hits 89%. In venues turning over £1 million to £9.99 million, it climbs to 88%.



## At a glance:



of customers  
request  
contactless

81%

of cafés say guests ask to  
pay with contactless

100%

of East Midlands  
respondents report  
contactless demand

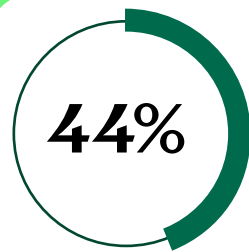


## Mobile Wallets

Mobile wallets, such as Apple Pay® and Google Pay®, are now a familiar part of spending. Nationally, 44% of operators say customers ask for them.

Cafés (58%), pubs (52%) and B&Bs (57%) report the strongest demand. Among firms with 100–249 employees, 53% see requests, and seasonal pop-ups also stand out at 50%. City-level, Edinburgh leads with 80%.

### At a glance:



of businesses say customers ask to pay by mobile wallets

**53%**

of mid-sized companies report customer demand

**74%**

of venues processing £30,000 to £34,000 a month say guests ask for mobile wallets

## QR codes

QR code payments are simple and fast. Guests scan a code with their phone to open a secure payment link - no card terminal or app download. The format suits busy venues and service models built around speed.

Nationally, 19% of businesses say customers ask to pay this way. Demand is strongest in food trucks (29%), seasonal pop-ups (25%) and cafés (23%). Larger groups see it too: 37% of those with 11–50 locations report requests. Regionally, the North East leads (40%), ahead of Greater London (29%) and the North West (25%).

### At a glance:



of businesses report QR code demand

Demand for QR codes peaks at

**29%**

in food trucks

**40%**

of businesses in the North East report requests for QR codes

## Split bills

Split billing means one table, multiple payments. Guests pay their share, whether evenly divided or itemised.

Nationally, 22% of businesses say customers ask to split the bill. Demand is highest in food trucks (57%) and seasonal pop-ups (50%). Among those with 6 to 10 locations, 38% report requests. City level, Belfast and Brighton stand at 50%, followed by Edinburgh at 40%.

### At a glance:



of businesses report split bill requests

**38%**

of those with 6 to 10 sites say customers ask to split

**50%**

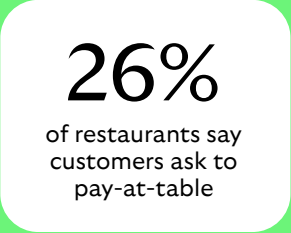
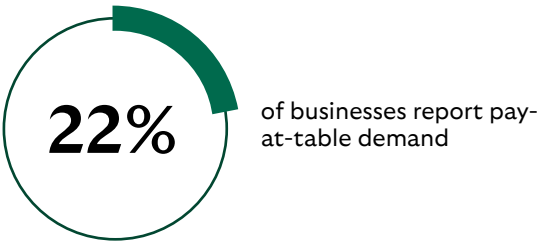
of venues in Belfast and Brighton report demand for split bills

### Pay-at-table

Pay-at-table means guests settle without leaving their seat - by QR code, card reader or app. It suits structured formats like restaurants and hotels.

Nationally, 22% report demand. Restaurants (26%) and hotels (23%) lead, while single-site venues (23%) and larger employers with 250 to 500 staff (33%) also stand out. Regionally, Sheffield (57%), Cardiff (43%) and Birmingham (36%) top the list.

### At a glance:



“Managing customer expectations and keeping up with payment trends is tough, but it’s really important to give customers what they want.”

Survey respondent

### Alternative payments on the rise

Hospitality operators are seeing more alternative payment formats, from bank transfers to Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) and even crypto. These are becoming more visible across venues. BNPL is emerging for higher-value experiences, while crypto remains niche, limited to tech-forward and novelty formats. More choice means more flexibility, and for some venues, uptake is quietly accelerating.

### Rise of alternative payments (Operator-reported increases in emerging formats)

Payment method	% of UK operators observing increase	Where it's gaining ground
Bank Transfer	38.0%	Large firms, high-turnover venues, Northern Ireland
Buy now, pay later	34.8%	Plymouth, Northern Ireland, firms with 250 to 500 employees, £50 million to £99.99 million turnover
Cryptocurrency	16.8%	Belfast, London, firms with >500 employees, £50 million to £99.99 million turnover



### Cash

Despite digital growth, cash is the second most requested method overall, selected by 54% of businesses. Demand is strongest in cafés (61%), pubs (57%) and B&Bs (57%). It’s also reported by 60% of small firms (1 to 9 staff) and 81% of larger groups with 51+ sites. Regionally, the West Midlands leads (76%), followed by the North West (71%) and Wales (58%).

### At a glance:





# **Section 3.**

## **What hospitality businesses want from payments**

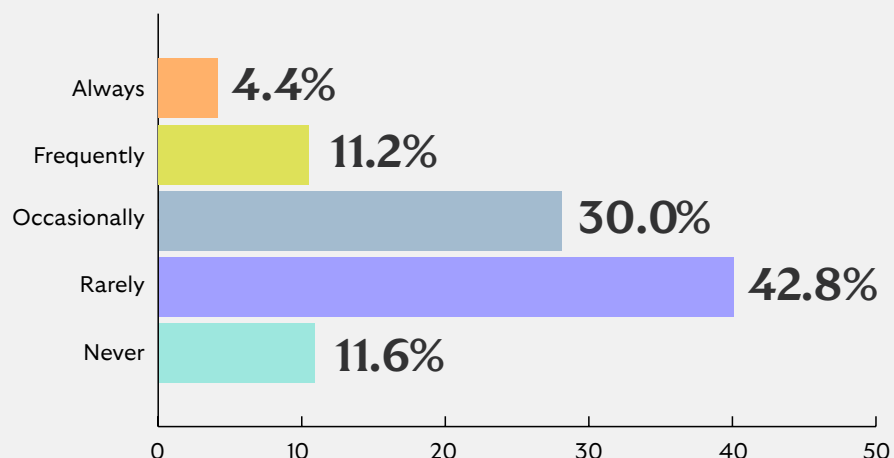
# What hospitality businesses want from payments

Guests expect quick, simple payments. For businesses, that means systems that keep pace during busy shifts, across multiple formats, with staff working at speed. Most say payments work, but they want them faster, cheaper, more reliable and better integrated with tools they already use. This includes quicker settlement, stronger integration and systems that hold up during peak hours.

## What gets noticed at the till

Service is remembered most, unless payment slows it down. Three in 10 businesses say customers occasionally mention delays, while around 15% hear them regularly. Restaurants (14%) are the most likely to report frequent complaints, compared with 9% of hotels and just 5% of pubs. London businesses (13%) and younger managers (21% of 18 to 24s) are most likely to hear it regularly.

### How often businesses hear customer concerns about slow payments



## Where payments could work harder

When payments falter, the causes are familiar: slow approvals, network dropouts, frozen terminals. The consistent message: speed, cost, reliability and integration are where systems fall short.

### Speed that matches the pace of service

Forty-two per cent say slow processing is their top concern with restaurants (49%), pubs (48%) and food trucks (86%) feeling it most. In Brighton, 83% of venues report speed issues.

“People want faster and faster service all the time.”

Survey respondent

### Costs that don't cut into margins

Four in 10 businesses have concern over costs, rising to 57% of firms with fewer than 10 staff. Even large companies note pressure. In Norwich, 60% say fees dominate decisions.

### Tech that holds up under pressure

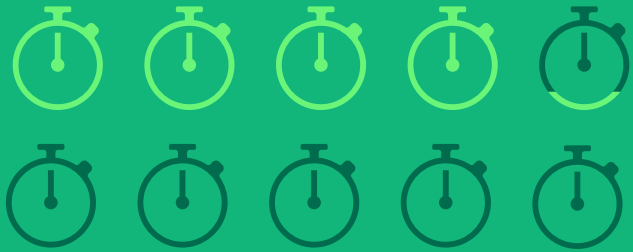
Outages affect 1 in 5, peaking in Northern Ireland (50%) and Scotland (38%). Multi-site businesses say the ripple effect is severe.

“It would be easier if our machines are in use all the time.”

Survey respondent

### Tools that work together, not in silos

Twenty-four per cent want more payment choice, and 1 in 5 want tighter links with tills, booking and loyalty.



**42%** of hospitality owners and managers say speed is their top concern

“

Integrated payment and booking technology would be the most valuable.

Survey respondent

”



**16%**

of pub and restaurant managers hear frequent feedback on speed



**86%** of food trucks report speed challenges



**28%**

of hotels highlight integration gaps

**57%**

of small firms highlight fees as their main issue



**30%**

of restaurants want broader payment choice

# **Section 4.**

## **Smarter payments, smarter growth**



# Smarter payments, smarter growth

Hospitality isn't standing still. UK businesses are planning, investing in service and looking to grow - from independents to national operators. At the same time, they want payment systems that keep pace and work with the tools they already use. Growth and technology go hand in hand: faster service, more choice for guests, and less time troubleshooting.

## Payment tools in use today

Card readers remain the most common technology (37%). Integrated POS follows at 28%, especially in restaurants and hotels. Mobile apps (18%) are most often used by food trucks and smaller cafés. A smaller share use multi-vendor systems (6%), SoftPOS (5%) or online gateways (5%).

Patterns vary by type and region. Restaurants and hotels lean on integrated POS, cafés and pubs favour card readers. Larger multi-site firms are more likely to run multi-vendor systems.

“Growth in hospitality depends on systems that scale with the business. Our job is to make payment technology simple, reliable and ready to support expansion – whether it’s a single café or a multi-operator food hall.”



**Lynne Lagan**  
Head of Product  
& Lab, Lloyds  
Merchant Services



# 56%

of businesses plan to expand into multi-venue settings within 12 months

## Why businesses invest in smarter systems

Speed is the top driver, chosen by 60% of businesses. Lower fees matter most to independents, while larger firms prioritise multi-vendor capability and data insights. Younger managers (18–34) highlight growth and competition more often than older groups.

## Expansion plans

More than half of hospitality businesses (56%) plan to expand in the next 12 months. Food halls are the most popular route (38%), followed by shared spaces (36%). Two-thirds of firms with 50+ staff plan new formats. Among managers aged 25–34, 9 in 10 are planning growth versus 41% of over-55s.

Restaurants lead with 64% planning to expand, nearly half via food halls. Cafés (38%) and pubs (29%) are more cautious, while food trucks show the strongest intent (57%), often via shared spaces. Appetite peaks in the £10 million to £49.9 million turnover group, where 74% plan new sites.

# Why payments matter for growth

Shared spaces need multi-vendor platforms that keep checkout consistent, while independents want systems that are reliable and easy to replicate. In both cases, payments shape how fast service runs and how sustainable expansion proves to be.

## At a glance:

56%

of UK hospitality businesses plan to expand into multi-venue formats

66%

66% of larger firms (50+ staff) plan growth

38%

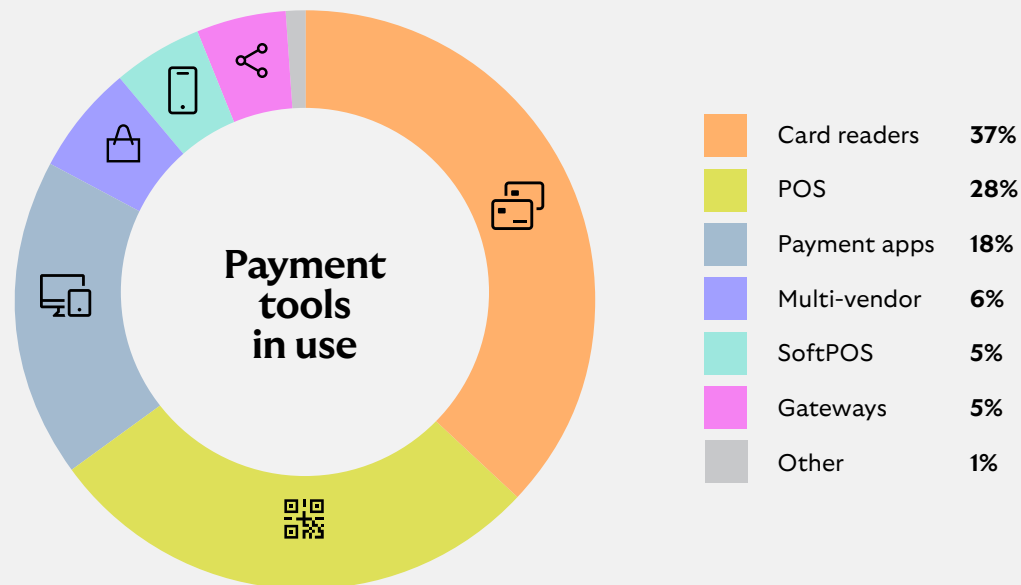
are looking at food halls, 36% at shared spaces

9 in 10

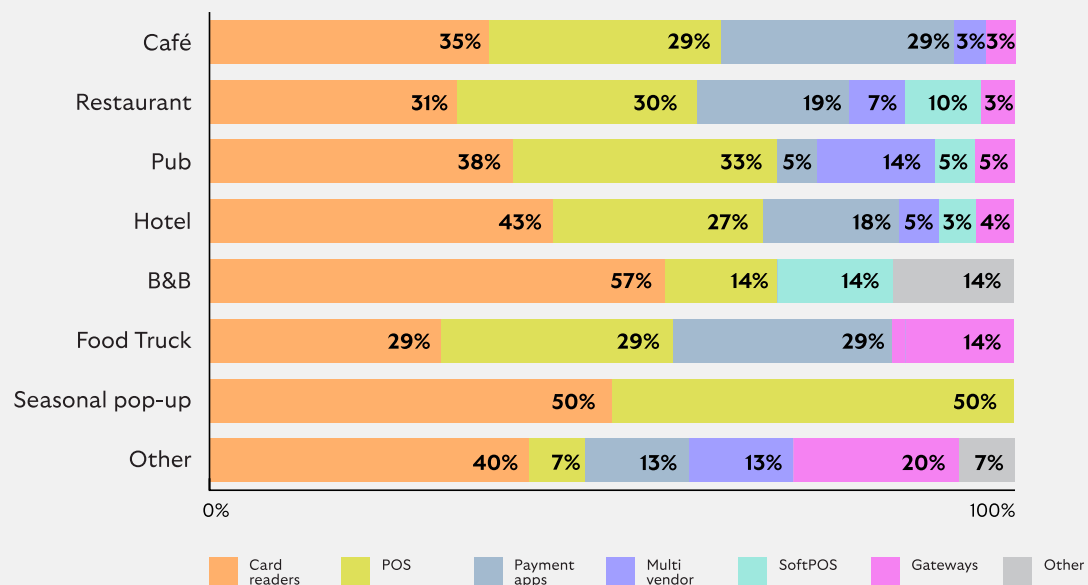
managers aged 25–34 plan expansion vs 41% of over-55s

64%

of restaurants intend to expand, 49% via food halls



## Payment tools by type of business



# **Section 5.**

## **How Lloyds Merchant Services enables hospitality growth**

# How Lloyds enables hospitality growth

**Hospitality is one of the UK's most community-driven industries, and the businesses we spoke to are ambitious. More than half plan to expand in the next 12 months, and payment technology impacts how they grow. What they need from providers is clear: speed, simplicity, fair costs and tools that help them connect with their customers.**

Our report highlights both the challenges and opportunities facing UK hospitality. Businesses are looking for systems that simplify transactions, help manage costs and adapt easily to new formats, whether that's a single-site café, a growing pub group or a multi-vendor food hall. Payments sit at the centre of that picture, affecting service speed, customer loyalty and the sustainability of growth.

Choosing a payment system means choosing a provider. Hospitality businesses want speed, support and systems they can depend on - alongside confidence in who's behind the tech.

We're committed to giving access to tools that are dependable, scalable and built for hospitality. From integrated systems that link payments, tills and apps to services that manage costs, build loyalty and support communities, our goal is simple: to give businesses the confidence to focus on their guests.

“We've built our solutions around what operators told us they need: faster settlement, fairer costs and tech that holds up under pressure. It's about solving real problems, not just selling products.”



**Justin Schuil-Brewer**  
Managing Director,  
Head of Partnership and  
Sales Engineering,  
Lloyds Merchant Services





# Five areas where merchants most want our support:

## 1.

### **Simplifying the tech stack**

With systems like Clover, a flexible point-of-sale device, and Epos Now, a cloud-based POS platform, payments, tills and app integrations are brought together in one place. This reduces hardware clutter, avoids downtime, and makes life easier for teams working under pressure.

## 2.

### **Controlling costs**

Margins in hospitality are tight, so every fee matters. We provide reporting tools and value-added services that give operators a clear view of spend patterns, card fees and cash flow. With this oversight, businesses can make more informed decisions and protect profitability.

## 3.

### **Building loyalty**

Payments close the sale but also encourage the next one. Through app integrations, tailored loyalty features and straightforward tipping options, we help venues turn transactions into lasting customer relationships and repeat visits.

## 4.

### **Backing communities**

Hospitality is central to local regeneration, and we work with venues and local authorities to support projects that bring people back into town centres. From food halls and shared spaces to pop-ups and seasonal venues, we ensure payment infrastructure is in place to keep these ventures viable and visible.

## 5.

### **Listening to businesses**

Operators tell us they want providers who understand the realities of hospitality - peak service hours, high staff turnover, and the need for systems that don't let them down. We take this feedback directly into product design and customer support, making sure solutions fit the day-to-day pressures of running a venue.



Taken together, these priorities show how smarter payments can help hospitality move forward with confidence. The sector is ambitious, resourceful and rooted in community life; Lloyds Merchant Services is here to give it the dependable tools it needs to grow.

# Appendix

## Research Methodology

This report is based on research conducted by Censuswide among a sample of 250 UK owners and managers of hospitality businesses, including restaurants, food halls, cafés, pubs and pop-ups. All respondents were aged 18 and over.

Fieldwork was carried out between 18 August and 26 August 2025.

Censuswide abides by and employs members of the Market Research Society and follows the MRS Code of Conduct and ESOMAR principles. Censuswide is also a member of the British Polling Council.

**To find out how Lloyds Merchant Services can support your business, speak to your Relationship Manager or visit [lloydsbank.com/takepayments](https://lloydsbank.com/takepayments) to explore our solutions.**

**Please contact us if you would like this information in an alternative format such as braille, large print or audio.**

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