



Credit Cards in the United Arab Emirates

January 2026

Table of Contents

KEY DATA FINDINGS

2025 DEVELOPMENTS

Charge cards continues to face challenges

INDUSTRY PERFORMANCE

Shift to credit cards hits the use of personal charge cards

Commercial charge cards lead the category

WHAT'S NEXT?

Charge cards in circulation and transaction volumes to fall amidst a shift to credit cards

American Express to continue to shape the competitive landscape

Players to employ strategic positioning to sustain growth

COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

American Express is streets ahead of rivals

Majid Al Futtaim Finance's cobranding cards gain traction

CATEGORY DATA

Table 1 - Charge Cards: Number of Cards in Circulation 2020-2025
Table 2 - Charge Cards Transactions 2020-2025
Table 3 - Charge Cards in Circulation: % Growth 2020-2025
Table 4 - Charge Cards Transactions: % Growth 2020-2025
Table 5 - Commercial Charge Cards: Number of Cards in Circulation 2020-2025
Table 6 - Commercial Charge Cards Transactions 2020-2025
Table 7 - Commercial Charge Cards in Circulation: % Growth 2020-2025
Table 8 - Commercial Charge Cards Transactions: % Growth 2020-2025
Table 9 - Personal Charge Cards: Number of Cards in Circulation 2020-2025
Table 10 - Personal Charge Cards Transactions 2020-2025
Table 11 - Personal Charge Cards in Circulation: % Growth 2020-2025
Table 12 - Personal Charge Cards Transactions: % Growth 2020-2025
Table 13 - Charge Cards: Number of Cards by Issuer 2020-2024
Table 14 - Charge Cards: Number of Cards by Operator 2020-2024
Table 15 - Charge Cards Payment Transaction Value by Issuer 2020-2024
Table 16 - Charge Cards Payment Transaction Value by Operator 2020-2024
Table 17 - Commercial Charge Cards: Number of Cards by Issuer 2020-2024
Table 18 - Commercial Charge Cards: Number of Cards by Operator 2020-2024
Table 19 - Commercial Charge Cards Payment Transaction Value by Issuer 2020-2024
Table 20 - Commercial Charge Cards Payment Transaction Value by Operator 2020-2024
Table 21 - Personal Charge Cards: Number of Cards by Issuer 2020-2024
Table 22 - Personal Charge Cards: Number of Cards by Operator 2020-2024
Table 23 - Personal Charge Cards Transaction Value by Issuer 2020-2024
Table 24 - Personal Charge Cards Transaction Value by Operator 2020-2024
Table 25 - Forecast Charge Cards: Number of Cards in Circulation 2025-2030
Table 26 - Forecast Charge Cards Transactions 2025-2030
Table 27 - Forecast Charge Cards in Circulation: % Growth 2025-2030
Table 28 - Forecast Charge Cards Transactions: % Growth 2025-2030
Table 29 - Forecast Commercial Charge Cards: Number of Cards in Circulation 2025-2030
Table 30 - Forecast Commercial Charge Cards Transactions 2025-2030
Table 31 - Forecast Commercial Charge Cards in Circulation: % Growth 2025-2030

Table 32 - Forecast Commercial Charge Cards Transactions: % Growth 2025-2030

Table 33 - Forecast Personal Charge Cards: Number of Cards in Circulation 2025-2030

Table 34 - Forecast Personal Charge Cards Transactions 2025-2030

Table 35 - Forecast Personal Charge Cards in Circulation: % Growth 2025-2030

Table 36 - Forecast Personal Charge Cards Transactions: % Growth 2025-2030

COUNTRY REPORTS DISCLAIMER

[Credit Cards in the United Arab Emirates - Category analysis](#)

[Credit Cards in the United Arab Emirates - Company Profile](#)

KEY DATA FINDINGS

2025 DEVELOPMENTS

Targeted activities help to widen the base of credit card users

INDUSTRY PERFORMANCE

Lifestyle spending stimulates credit card use

Fertile ground for credit cards in the United Arab Emirates

WHAT'S NEXT?

Ongoing shift to cashless society, rising consumer confidence and incentives to grow the possession and use of credit cards

Innovations and lifestyle-linked products to drive growth opportunities

Regulatory changes may impact credit card use

COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

Visa and First Abu Dhabi Bank invest in their credit card portfolios

Mastercard International innovates while Emirates NBD leverages a strong and diversified offer

CATEGORY DATA

Table 37 - Credit Cards: Number of Cards in Circulation 2020-2025

Table 38 - Credit Cards Transactions 2020-2025

Table 39 - Credit Cards in Circulation: % Growth 2020-2025

Table 40 - Credit Cards Transactions: % Growth 2020-2025

Table 41 - Commercial Credit Cards: Number of Cards in Circulation 2020-2025

Table 42 - Commercial Credit Cards Transactions 2020-2025

Table 43 - Commercial Credit Cards in Circulation: % Growth 2020-2025

Table 44 - Commercial Credit Cards Transactions: % Growth 2020-2025

Table 45 - Personal Credit Cards: Number of Cards in Circulation 2020-2025

Table 46 - Personal Credit Cards Transactions 2020-2025

Table 47 - Personal Credit Cards in Circulation: % Growth 2020-2025

Table 48 - Personal Credit Cards Transactions: % Growth 2020-2025

Table 49 - Credit Cards: Number of Cards by Issuer 2020-2024

Table 50 - Credit Cards: Number of Cards by Operator 2020-2024

Table 51 - Credit Cards Payment Transaction Value by Issuer 2020-2024

Table 52 - Credit Cards Payment Transaction Value by Operator 2020-2024

Table 53 - Commercial Credit Cards: Number of Cards by Issuer 2020-2024

Table 54 - Commercial Credit Cards: Number of Cards by Operator 2020-2024

Table 55 - Commercial Credit Cards Payment Transaction Value by Issuer 2020-2024

Table 56 - Commercial Credit Cards Payment Transaction Value by Operator 2020-2024

Table 57 - Personal Credit Cards: Number of Cards by Issuer 2020-2024

Table 58 - Personal Credit Cards: Number of Cards by Operator 2020-2024

Table 59 - Personal Credit Cards Payment Transaction Value by Issuer 2020-2024

Table 60 - Personal Credit Cards Payment Transaction Value by Operator 2020-2024
Table 61 - Forecast Credit Cards: Number of Cards in Circulation 2025-2030
Table 62 - Forecast Credit Cards Transactions 2025-2030
Table 63 - Forecast Credit Cards in Circulation: % Growth 2025-2030
Table 64 - Forecast Credit Cards Transactions: % Growth 2025-2030
Table 65 - Forecast Commercial Credit Cards: Number of Cards in Circulation 2025-2030
Table 66 - Forecast Commercial Credit Cards Transactions 2025-2030
Table 67 - Forecast Commercial Credit Cards in Circulation: % Growth 2025-2030
Table 68 - Forecast Commercial Credit Cards Transactions: % Growth 2025-2030
Table 69 - Forecast Personal Credit Cards: Number of Cards in Circulation 2025-2030
Table 70 - Forecast Personal Credit Cards Transactions 2025-2030
Table 71 - Forecast Personal Credit Cards in Circulation: % Growth 2025-2030
Table 72 - Forecast Personal Credit Cards Transactions: % Growth 2025-2030

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[Debit Cards in the United Arab Emirates - Category analysis](#)

[Debit Cards in the United Arab Emirates - Company Profile](#)

KEY DATA FINDINGS

2025 DEVELOPMENTS

Demographic, digital and infrastructure developments boost debit cards

INDUSTRY PERFORMANCE

Digitalisation spurs debit card usage

A strong share of the population remains unbanked or underserved

WHAT'S NEXT?

Debit card usage is set to rise over the forecast period

Transaction value per card may slow as frequency increases

Banks to invest in security, digital features and loyalty to stay competitive

COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

Visa and First Abu Dhabi Bank enjoy wide coverage to lead

Emirates NBD and Mastercard International invest in strategic direction

CATEGORY DATA

Table 73 - Debit Cards: Number of Cards in Circulation 2020-2025
Table 74 - Debit Cards Transactions 2020-2025
Table 75 - Debit Cards in Circulation: % Growth 2020-2025
Table 76 - Debit Cards Transactions: % Growth 2020-2025
Table 77 - Debit Cards: Number of Cards by Issuer 2020-2024
Table 78 - Debit Cards: Number of Cards by Operator 2020-2024
Table 79 - Debit Cards Payment Transaction Value by Issuer 2020-2024
Table 80 - Debit Cards Payment Transaction Value by Operator 2020-2024
Table 81 - Forecast Debit Cards: Number of Cards in Circulation 2025-2030
Table 82 - Forecast Debit Cards Transactions 2025-2030
Table 83 - Forecast Debit Cards in Circulation: % Growth 2025-2030
Table 84 - Forecast Debit Cards Transactions: % Growth 2025-2030

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[Pre-Paid Cards in the United Arab Emirates - Category analysis](#)

KEY DATA FINDINGS

2025 DEVELOPMENTS

Pre-paid cards cater to a wide range of needs

INDUSTRY PERFORMANCE

Greater uptake and use of closed loop and open loop pre-paid cards

Pre-paid integration through digitalisation

WHAT'S NEXT?

Closed and open loop pre-paid cards to gain momentum as daily payment tools

Focus on micro pre-paid card transactions

Learning the pre-paid function early

COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

RTA dominates closed loop pre-paid cards with transportation cards

Visa leverages wide acceptance and partner networks while First Abu Dhabi Bank's strong offer appeals to personal and commercial users

CATEGORY DATA

Table 85 - Pre-paid Cards: Number of Cards in Circulation 2020-2025

Table 86 - Pre-paid Cards Transactions 2020-2025

Table 87 - Pre-paid Cards in Circulation: % Growth 2020-2025

Table 88 - Pre-paid Cards Transactions: % Growth 2020-2025

Table 89 - Closed Loop Pre-paid Cards Transactions 2020-2025

Table 90 - Closed Loop Pre-paid Cards Transactions: % Growth 2020-2025

Table 91 - Open Loop Pre-paid Cards Transactions 2020-2025

Table 92 - Open Loop Pre-paid Cards Transactions: % Growth 2020-2025

Table 93 - Pre-paid Cards: Number of Cards by Issuer 2020-2024

Table 94 - Pre-paid Cards: Number of Cards by Operator 2020-2024

Table 95 - Pre-paid Cards Transaction Value by Issuer 2020-2024

Table 96 - Pre-paid Cards Transaction Value by Operator 2020-2024

Table 97 - Closed Loop Pre-paid Cards: Number of Cards by Issuer 2020-2024

Table 98 - Closed Loop Pre-paid Cards: Number of Cards by Operator 2020-2024

Table 99 - Closed Loop Pre-paid Cards Transaction Value by Issuer 2020-2024

Table 100 - Closed Loop Pre-paid Cards Transaction Value by Operator 2020-2024

Table 101 - Open Loop Pre-paid Cards: Number of Cards by Issuer 2020-2024

Table 102 - Open Loop Pre-paid Cards: Number of Cards by Operator 2020-2024

Table 103 - Open Loop Pre-paid Cards Transaction Value by Issuer 2020-2024

Table 104 - Open Loop Pre-paid Cards Transaction Value by Operator 2020-2024

Table 105 - Forecast Pre-paid Cards: Number of Cards in Circulation 2025-2030

Table 106 - Forecast Pre-paid Cards Transactions 2025-2030

Table 107 - Forecast Pre-paid Cards in Circulation: % Growth 2025-2030

Table 108 - Forecast Pre-paid Cards Transactions: % Growth 2025-2030

Table 109 - Forecast Closed Loop Pre-paid Cards Transactions 2025-2030

Table 110 - Forecast Closed Loop Pre-paid Cards Transactions: % Growth 2025-2030

Table 111 - Forecast Open Loop Pre-paid Cards Transactions 2025-2030

Table 112 - Forecast Open Loop Pre-paid Cards Transactions: % Growth 2025-2030

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[Store Cards in the United Arab Emirates - Category analysis](#)

[Store Cards in the United Arab Emirates - Company Profile](#)

2025 DEVELOPMENTS

Store cards is beset by weak circulation

INDUSTRY PERFORMANCE

Some call for store cards but usage fragments and falls further

Large retailers continue to invest in store cards

WHAT'S NEXT?

Ongoing shift to payment alternatives to dampen store card use

Store cards to remain characterised by small-ticket purchases

Focus on digitalisation and loyalty to maintain interest in store cards

COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

Retail is the bedrock of store cards

CATEGORY DATA

Table 113 - Store Cards: Number of Cards in Circulation 2020-2025

Table 114 - Store Cards Transactions 2020-2025

Table 115 - Store Cards in Circulation: % Growth 2020-2025

Table 116 - Store Cards Transactions: % Growth 2020-2025

Table 117 - Store Cards: Number of Cards by Issuer 2020-2024

Table 118 - Store Cards: Payment Transaction Value by Issuer 2020-2024

Table 119 - Forecast Store Cards: Number of Cards in Circulation 2025-2030

Table 120 - Forecast Store Cards Transactions 2025-2030

Table 121 - Forecast Store Cards in Circulation: % Growth 2025-2030

Table 122 - Forecast Store Cards Transactions: % Growth 2025-2030

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[Financial Cards and Payments in the United Arab Emirates - Industry Overview](#)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The number of cards in circulation rises healthily and steadily

KEY DATA FINDINGS

INDUSTRY PERFORMANCE

Credit cards and pre-paid cards gain momentum while debit cards remain popular

Stronger fintech activity spurs usage

Leading players leverage ecosystems as smaller players struggle

WHAT'S NEXT?

Bright outlook for most types of financial cards

Company and government activities to increase the penetration of financial cards

E-commerce to hasten financial card use

COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

RTA benefits from strong integration and tourism recovery to consolidate its position as the leading issuer

Visa benefits from strong growth in financial cards and partnerships

MARKET INDICATORS

Table 123 - Number of POS Terminals: Units 2020-2025

Table 124 - Number of ATMs: Units 2020-2025

Table 125 - Value Lost to Fraud 2020-2025

Table 126 - Card Expenditure by Location 2025

Table 127 - Financial Cards in Circulation by Type: % Number of Cards 2020-2025

Table 128 - Domestic versus Foreign Spend 2025

MARKET DATA

Table 129 - Financial Cards by Category: Number of Cards in Circulation 2020-2025

Table 130 - Financial Cards by Category: Number of Accounts 2020-2025

Table 131 - Financial Cards Transactions by Category: Value 2020-2025

Table 132 - Financial Cards by Category: Number of Transactions 2020-2025

Table 133 - Consumer Payments by Category: Value 2020-2025

Table 134 - Consumer Payments by Category: Number of Transactions 2020-2025

Table 135 - M-Commerce by Category: Value 2020-2025

Table 136 - M-Commerce by Category: % Value Growth 2020-2025

Table 137 - Financial Cards: Number of Cards by Issuer 2020-2024

Table 138 - Financial Cards: Number of Cards by Operator 2020-2024

Table 139 - Financial Cards: Card Payment Transactions Value by Operator 2020-2024

Table 140 - Financial Cards: Card Payment Transactions Value by Issuer 2020-2024

Table 141 - Forecast Financial Cards by Category: Number of Cards in Circulation 2025-2030

Table 142 - Forecast Financial Cards by Category: Number of Accounts 2025-2030

Table 143 - Forecast Financial Cards Transactions by Category: Value 2025-2030

Table 144 - Forecast Financial Cards by Category: Number of Transactions 2025-2030

Table 145 - Forecast Consumer Payments by Category: Value 2025-2030

Table 146 - Forecast Consumer Payments by Category: Number of Transactions 2025-2030

Table 147 - Forecast M-Commerce by Category: Value 2025-2030

Table 148 - Forecast M-Commerce by Category: % Value Growth 2025-2030

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SOURCES

Summary 1 - Research Sources

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