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## **CONSUMER SATISFACTION WITH CREDIT CARDS HITS ALL TIME LOW AS HIGH STREET BANKS CONTINUE TO BE THE BIGGEST LOSERS**

*With almost three in ten (28%) Brits expecting to start the New Year in the red because of Christmas spending<sup>[1]</sup>, credit cards could seem like a lifeline for many. However, as uSwitch.com's latest Customer Satisfaction Report reveals an overall drop in satisfaction with providers, consumers should be aware of the heroes and villains of the credit card market:*

- **Drop in satisfaction: overall satisfaction with credit card providers drops to the lowest ever, while satisfaction with customer support also falls<sup>[2]</sup>**
- **Best in class: M&S reclaims top spot in overall satisfaction as well as winning the product information award**
- **Bottom of the league: almost two million customers dissatisfied with their credit card company's customer support<sup>[3]</sup> – Bank of Scotland, Santander, and Halifax come bottom of the table**
- **Biggest improver: Virgin storms up the league table, with 74% of its customers now satisfied overall - up 8% from last year**
- **Less credit: just a quarter of consumers (25%) have three or more credit cards - down from three in ten (30%) last year<sup>[4]</sup>**
- **Stuck in a rut: over a third of people (36%) have never switched their credit card - a further quarter (23%) haven't switched for over 5 years<sup>[5]</sup>.**

After another tough financial year for consumers, the annual credit card Customer Satisfaction Report from [uSwitch.com](http://uSwitch.com), the independent price comparison and switching service, reveals that overall satisfaction with credit card providers has fallen – and is now the lowest it has ever been<sup>[2]</sup>. But although all providers have seen a slip in standards, the traditional banks continue to be the biggest losers - failing to win a single award between them for the third year running.

At the top of the tables, Marks and Spencer reclaimed the top spot for overall satisfaction, while ethical bank Co-op also performed well, climbing two places into 2<sup>nd</sup> position as well as winning three other awards. Despite conceding the top spot for overall satisfaction, global

credit card provider American Express still had a successful year winning four of the 11 categories. In fact, between them, Amex, M&S and Co-op dominate in the customer satisfaction league, winning ten out of 11 categories between them – only Virgin broke their stranglehold winning the best balance transfer award.

The survey of over 10,000 credit card customers reveals that the biggest improvement this year comes from Virgin - with an 8% increase in overall customer satisfaction while last year's biggest climber, Natwest, falls three places. The top five for overall satisfaction is completed by two supermarkets, Tesco and Sainsbury's Finance - highlighting the growing competition presented by alternatives to the high street banks and traditional providers.

At the wrong end of the table, the big banks still dominate. While new entrants to the report Vanquis and Bank of Scotland were voted bottom for overall satisfaction, they are closely followed by Barclaycard, HSBC, Halifax, Lloyds TSB and Santander. None of the high street banks top any category - only RBS manages second place for its balance transfer service. And although overall satisfaction across the board has slipped, things are worse for the banks. Last year the best high street bank was 15% off the top performer. This year the gap has widened to 19%.

However, almost two million<sup>[3]</sup> are dissatisfied with the everyday service provided by their card company, consumers are holding onto their cards. Over half (51%) have had their credit card for more than five years<sup>[6]</sup>. This may be a reaction to it being harder to get credit now, but it also means consumers are missing out on new deals on the market. It also seems that consumers are trying to become less reliant on credit cards, despite the rising cost of living. A quarter (25%) admit to having three or more credit cards, compared to three in ten (30%) in 2011<sup>[4]</sup>.

**Michael Ossei, personal finance expert at [uSwitch.com](http://uSwitch.com), says:** “2012 is set to be another tough year for consumers, and for those worried about starting the year in debt, credit cards may be the only option. However with overall satisfaction and customer service getting worse across the board, and the high street banks still providing some of the worst service, consumers should look around further afield at new providers for the best credit card for them.

“Instead of putting up with poor service or an uncompetitive rate, consumers should look around for a better deal – and sometimes they have to venture off the high street. With trust in the banks still low, and more players in the market, consumers have a bigger choice when looking for a new credit card. And with three in ten card users choosing their most recent card based on the rewards or points it offered, with generous schemes such as loyalty points that can be converted into cash, gifts, airmiles or money off your shopping bill, it's easy to see why Marks and Spencer, American Express and the supermarkets are doing so well.”

**Barnaby Jenkins, Head of Credit Card, M&S Money, said:** “Ensuring our customers are happy with the service they receive is our number one priority, so it’s fantastic to hear that the M&S Credit Card has come top for overall customer satisfaction.”

“Customer feedback is incredibly valuable to us and we’ll continue to work closely with our customers to make sure we’re delivering the best service possible.”

## **uSwitch.com Customer Satisfaction Report – highlights:**

### **Best Overall**

Marks and Spencer regained the top spot for overall satisfaction this year, satisfying 92% of its customers. American Express slipped to third place behind the Co-operative, but with just one percentage point between the top three, it’s all to play for.

### **Biggest Improver**

Virgin has pulled itself up seven places in overall satisfaction going from 15<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>, with 74% of its customers now satisfied, up from 66% last year.

### **Worst Provider**

Vanquis finds itself at the wrong end of the table for overall customer satisfaction in its first year in the report. But the general trend is that the high street banks are at the bottom of the league and for the third year in a row they fail to win an award between them.

### **Supermarket sweep**

With almost a three in ten credit card customers (28%) looking for more than offers and great rates, supermarkets are winning over consumers with generous reward schemes<sup>[7]</sup>. Tesco’s consistent high scores across a number of categories can be partly attributed to its generous reward scheme, while Sainsbury’s also enter the report in the top five.

Stuart McKeggie, Head of Sainsbury’s Credit Cards, said: “We’re delighted that our customers rate our products and service highly. We always strive to offer our customers great value and give the Sainsbury’s shopper a compelling reason to bank and shop with us. This year has been a great year for us with the introduction of two new market-leading cards, and offering card holders double Nectar points on Sainsbury’s shopping in-store, online and in petrol stations for two years has proved very popular indeed with our customers.”

**For more information visit [www.uSwitch.com](http://www.uSwitch.com) or call 0800 093 0607**

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**An ISDN line is available for radio interviews. For further information please contact:**  
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## Notes to editors

Research referred to in the release was conducted online by YouGov between 14/11/11 and 17/11/11 (sample size 10,012 adults). All figures are based on uSwitch.com analysis. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults who own one or more credit cards (aged 18+). uSwitch.com has been conducting the research since 2007.

1. From research carried out online with the uSwitch.com Consumer Opinion Panel in November 2011 amongst a sample of 1,193 GB adults. When asked "Do you think you will be in debt as a result of Christmas?" 27.4% said 'Yes'; 53.8% said 'no'; 18.8% said 'don't know'.
2. When asked "Overall, how satisfied are you with your main credit card?" 77% said 'satisfied'; in 2011 78% said 'satisfied'.
3. According to the UK Card Association report 'A decade of cards' 2010 report there are 30 million card holders in the UK:  
[http://www.theukcardsassociation.org.uk/files/ukca/documents/press\\_releases/decade\\_of\\_cards\\_final.pdf](http://www.theukcardsassociation.org.uk/files/ukca/documents/press_releases/decade_of_cards_final.pdf) .  
The research shows that 68% of credit card holders are satisfied with everyday customer support provided by their main credit card. 6% are fairly or very dissatisfied. 6% of 30 million = 1.8 million.
4. When asked "How many credit cards do you personally own?" 25% said three or more. In 2011 30% said 'three or more'.
5. When asked "When did you last switch you main credit card?" 13% said 'between 5 and 10 years'; 10% said more than 10 years = 23% more than 5 years; 36% said 'I have never switched my main credit card'.
6. When asked 'How long have you held your main credit card?' 24% said 5-10 years and 27% said more than 10 years, this means 51% have had it for longer than five years.
7. When asked 'What was the main reason to choosing your main credit card?' 28% said reward/points, 18% said recognised/established brand and 1% said brand that has added prestige.

## About us

uSwitch.com is a free, impartial, online and telephone-based comparison and switching service, helping consumers compare prices on gas, electricity, water, heating cover, home telephone, broadband, digital television, mobile phones and personal finance products including mortgages, credit cards, current accounts and insurance. In 2010 uSwitch.com celebrated ten years of saving customers money.

uSwitch.com is the first comparison website to achieve the Plain English Campaign's Internet Crystal Mark, which is recognised as a standard that a website has clear language, is accessible and easy to use, and has been tested on a sample of its users.

uSwitch.com is dedicated to helping consumers save money whether they have internet access or not. It offers a dedicated call centre, manned by uSwitch customer service representatives, as well as a freepost 'Send us your bill' service, whereby customers can post their latest energy bills with their telephone number to FREEPOST USWITCH, to get a free call back from a dedicated customer services representative. The service is also available via fax, email and post. Consumers should fax 0203 214 8417, email [CustomerServices@uswitch.com](mailto:CustomerServices@uswitch.com) or write to Customer Services, uSwitch.com, Centro 3, 19 Mandela Street, London, NW1 0DU with their postcode and usage details.

uSwitch.com is owned by Forward Internet Group Limited, a privately funded collection of internet-based businesses focused on consumer engagement and innovation.

## Appendix: full findings across all categories

Overall Satisfaction						
Provider	CSR 2012		CSR 2011		Change (12 -11)	
Score	Score	Position	Score	Position	Score	Position
Marks & Spencer	92.3%	1	91.7%	2	1%	1
Co-operative Bank	91.4%	2	88.8%	4	3%	2
American Express	91.3%	3	92.0%	1	-1%	-2
Tesco	88.3%	4	87.8%	5	0%	1
Sainsburys Finance	82.8%	5	NA	NA	NA	NA
Nationwide	82.0%	6	88.9%	3	-7%	-3
Capital One	78.7%	7	75.6%	7	3%	0
Virgin	74.3%	8	66.4%	15	8%	7
MBNA	74.0%	9	75.1%	9	-1%	0
Royal Bank of Scotland	72.9%	10	65.9%	16	7%	6

NatWest	72.3%	11	76.4%	8	-4%	-3
Santander	72.0%	12	73.9%	10	-2%	-2
Lloyds TSB	71.7%	13	69.7%	14	2%	1
Halifax	71.5%	14	70.3%	13	1%	-1
HSBC	71.3%	15	71.8%	12	-1%	-3
Barclaycard	69.5%	16	72.2%	11	-3%	-5
Bank of Scotland	65.2%	17	NA	NA	NA	NA
Vanquis	61.4%	18	NA	NA	NA	NA

Recommend to a friend						
Provider	CSR 2012		CSR 2011		Change (12 -11)	
score	Score	Position	Score	Position	Score	Position
Co-operative Bank	83.0%	1	80.8%	2	2%	1
American Express	82.1%	2	81.3%	1	1%	-1
Marks & Spencer	81.9%	3	80.7%	3	1%	0
Tesco	78.2%	4	80.7%	3	-3%	-1
Sainsburys Finance	68.1%	5	NA	NA	NA	NA
Capital One	68.1%	6	62.0%	6	6%	0
Nationwide	68.0%	7	66.0%	5	2%	-2
Virgin	60.2%	8	54.1%	10	6%	2
MBNA	59.0%	9	58.9%	7	0%	-2
HSBC	55.9%	10	51.3%	13	5%	3
Santander	55.6%	11	57.1%	8	-1%	-3
Royal Bank of Scotland	53.6%	12	50.5%	14	3%	2
NatWest	52.8%	13	54.9%	9	-2%	-4
Barclaycard	52.5%	14	53.1%	12	-1%	-2
Halifax	52.1%	15	53.7%	11	-2%	-4
Lloyds TSB	49.4%	16	50.2%	15	-1%	-1
Bank of Scotland	47.9%	17	NA	NA	NA	NA
Vanquis	35.3%	18	NA	NA	NA	NA

Quality of Application process						
Provider	CSR 2012		CSR 2011		Change (12 -11)	
score	Score	Position	Score	Position	Score	Position
Vanquis	85.1%	1	NA	NA	NA	NA
American Express	80.9%	2	81.1%	1	0%	-1
Virgin	78.1%	3	79.4%	2	-1%	-1
Marks & Spencer	76.1%	4	76.6%	4	-1%	0
Santander	75.2%	5	73.9%	7	1%	2
Tesco	75.1%	6	77.1%	3	-2%	-3
Capital One	74.4%	7	75.6%	5	-1%	-2
Nationwide	71.6%	8	75.5%	6	-4%	-2
Halifax	70.4%	9	71.9%	9	-2%	0
Co-operative Bank	70.3%	10	73.1%	8	-3%	-2
Sainsburys Finance	63.6%	11	NA	NA	NA	NA
Lloyds TSB	63.5%	12	64.7%	13	-1%	1
NatWest	63.0%	13	64.9%	12	-2%	-1

MBNA	63.0%	14	66.0%	11	-3%	-3
Royal Bank of Scotland	61.6%	15	64.7%	14	-3%	-1
HSBC	59.2%	16	66.3%	10	-7%	-6
Barclaycard	56.8%	17	59.5%	15	-3%	-2
Bank of Scotland	55.3%	18	NA	NA	NA	NA

Customer Support						
Provider	CSR 2012		CSR 2011		Change (12 -11)	
Provider	Score	Position	Score	Position	Score	Position
Co-operative Bank	88.0%	1	82.2%	2	6%	1
Marks & Spencer	81.3%	2	82.7%	1	-1%	-1
American Express	81.3%	3	81.0%	3	0%	0
Vanquis	74.2%	4	NA	NA	NA	NA
Sainsburys Finance	74.2%	5	NA	NA	NA	NA
Tesco	73.4%	6	75.0%	4	-2%	-2
Nationwide	72.9%	7	74.5%	5	-2%	-2
Capital One	72.5%	8	71.1%	6	1%	-2
Royal Bank of Scotland	64.5%	9	61.6%	14	3%	5
MBNA	63.1%	10	66.1%	11	-3%	1
NatWest	62.4%	11	70.1%	8	-8%	-3
Barclaycard	62.3%	12	67.3%	10	-5%	-2
HSBC	62.0%	13	67.8%	9	-6%	-4
Lloyds TSB	61.6%	14	60.2%	15	1%	1
Virgin	61.1%	15	64.4%	12	-3%	-3
Halifax	60.7%	16	63.8%	13	-3%	-3
Santander	54.0%	17	58.9%	16	-5%	-1
Bank of Scotland	52.8%	18	NA	NA	NA	NA

Payment services						
Provider	CSR 2012		CSR 2011		Change (12 -11)	
score	Score	Position	Score	Position	Score	Position
American Express	92.0%	1	89.7%	3	2%	2
Tesco	88.9%	2	89.8%	2	-1%	0
Co-operative Bank	87.8%	3	86.0%	5	2%	2
Marks & Spencer	86.2%	4	92.5%	1	-6%	-3
Capital One	86.1%	5	85.6%	6	1%	1
Nationwide	83.6%	6	83.9%	8	0%	2
Sainsburys Finance	83.2%	7	NA	NA	NA	NA
Barclaycard	80.3%	8	81.5%	11	-1%	3
HSBC	79.2%	9	84.5%	7	-5%	-2
MBNA	79.1%	10	82.0%	10	-3%	0
Virgin	79.0%	11	79.6%	12	-1%	1
Royal Bank of Scotland	76.7%	12	76.2%	15	0%	3
NatWest	76.4%	13	82.2%	9	-6%	-4
Vanquis	75.3%	14	NA	NA	NA	NA
Santander	75.1%	15	73.9%	10	1%	-5
Lloyds TSB	71.9%	16	79.0%	13	-7%	-3

Halifax	70.6%	17	78.2%	14	-8%	-3
Bank of Scotland	69.0%	18	NA	NA	NA	NA

Online services						
Provider	CSR 2012		CSR 2011		Change (12 -11)	
score	Score	Position	Score	Position	Score	Position
American Express	88.2%	1	83.1%	2	5%	1
Capital One	78.7%	2	74.5%	6	4%	4
Virgin	78.7%	3	75.6%	3	3%	0
Nationwide	75.9%	4	75.0%	4	1%	0
MBNA	75.2%	5	72.0%	8	3%	3
Marks & Spencer	72.3%	6	72.8%	7	0%	1
Tesco	72.2%	7	70.3%	9	2%	2
HSBC	71.3%	8	75.0%	5	-4%	-3
Vanquis	68.8%	9	NA	NA	NA	NA
Barclaycard	67.8%	10	64.4%	12	3%	2
NatWest	67.1%	11	67.7%	10	-1%	-1
Co-operative Bank	64.6%	12	63.1%	13	1%	1
Sainsburys Finance	64.4%	13	NA	NA	NA	NA
Royal Bank of Scotland	62.8%	14	60.0%	15	3%	1
Lloyds TSB	61.4%	15	62.5%	14	-1%	-1
Halifax	61.2%	16	64.6%	11	-3%	-5
Santander	59.7%	17	47.5%	16	12%	-1
Bank of Scotland	48.9%	18	NA	NA	NA	NA

Balance transfers						
Provider	CSR 2012		CSR 2011		Change (12 -11)	
score	Score	Position	Score	Position	Score	Position
Virgin	61.6%	1	66.8%	1	-5%	0
Royal Bank of Scotland	51.9%	2	41.2%	6	11%	4
Co-operative Bank	46.5%	3	41.8%	4	5%	1
Santander	44.8%	4	43.9%	2	1%	-2
Nationwide	43.1%	5	37.3%	11	6%	6
Sainsburys Finance	41.4%	6	NA	NA	NA	NA
Halifax	40.2%	7	37.3%	12	3%	5
HSBC	40.0%	8	37.9%	9	2%	1
NatWest	39.4%	9	41.6%	5	-2%	-4
Barclaycard	38.8%	10	36.1%	13	3%	3
Tesco	38.4%	11	37.4%	10	1%	-1
MBNA	37.7%	12	38.2%	8	0%	-4
Bank of Scotland	37.5%	13	NA	NA	NA	NA
Lloyds TSB	37.3%	14	40.3%	7	-3%	-7
Marks & Spencer	36.5%	15	34.3%	15	2%	0
Capital One	34.0%	16	36.1%	14	-2%	-2
American Express	33.8%	17	31.9%	16	2%	-1
Vanquis	27.9%	18	NA	NA	NA	NA

Interest Rate Charges						
Provider	CSR 2012		CSR 2011		Change (12 -11)	
score	Score	Position	Score	Position	Score	Position
Co-operative Bank	28.2%	1	26.7%	1	2%	0
Virgin	28.0%	2	23.2%	3	5%	1
Marks & Spencer	25.2%	3	18.3%	11	7%	8
Nationwide	24.8%	4	21.4%	7	3%	3
American Express	23.6%	5	21.1%	9	3%	4
Capital One	23.0%	6	21.6%	6	1%	0
Santander	22.6%	7	26.2%	2	-4%	-5
Sainsburys Finance	21.8%	8	NA	NA	NA	NA
Barclaycard	21.2%	9	19.7%	10	1%	1
Tesco	21.0%	10	23.0%	3	-2%	-7
Halifax	18.2%	11	22.7%	3	-5%	-8
HSBC	17.7%	12	14.3%	14	3%	2
NatWest	15.9%	13	15.9%	13	0%	0
Vanquis	15.5%	14	NA	NA	NA	NA
MBNA	15.5%	15	16.6%	12	-1%	-3
Lloyds TSB	15.2%	16	14.4%	14	1%	-2
Royal Bank of Scotland	14.1%	17	12.0%	16	2%	-1
Bank of Scotland	12.7%	18	NA	NA	NA	NA

Billing Service						
Provider	CSR 2012		CSR 2011		Change (12 -11)	
score	Score	Position	Score	Position	Score	Position
American Express	95.1%	1	92.3%	3	3%	2
Marks & Spencer	92.8%	2	94.3%	1	-1%	-1
Co-operative Bank	90.2%	3	93.1%	2	-3%	-1
Tesco	89.7%	4	90.9%	4	-1%	0
Capital One	87.4%	5	85.8%	8	2%	3
Sainsburys Finance	85.4%	6	NA	NA	NA	NA
Nationwide	84.4%	7	87.5%	6	-3%	-1
Barclaycard	81.8%	8	83.7%	9	-2%	1
HSBC	81.7%	9	85.9%	7	-4%	-2
MBNA	80.8%	10	81.6%	11	-1%	1
NatWest	79.0%	11	81.6%	12	-3%	1
Virgin	78.6%	12	77.2%	14	1%	2
Royal Bank of Scotland	78.1%	13	75.0%	15	3%	2
Santander	77.1%	14	72.7%	16	4%	2
Lloyds TSB	77.1%	15	80.1%	13	-3%	-2
Halifax	74.3%	16	81.9%	10	-8%	-6
Vanquis	73.1%	17	NA	NA	NA	NA
Bank of Scotland	69.8%	18	NA	NA	NA	NA

Product Info						
Provider	CSR 2012		CSR 2011		Change (12 -11)	
score	Score	Position	Score	Position	Score	Position

Marks & Spencer	85.5%	1	82.8%	2	3%	1
Co-operative Bank	80.0%	2	82.7%	3	-3%	1
American Express	79.6%	3	83.9%	1	-4%	-2
Tesco	76.1%	4	77.9%	4	-2%	0
Nationwide	75.7%	5	74.3%	5	1%	0
Sainsburys Finance	72.8%	6	NA	NA	NA	NA
Capital One	71.1%	7	71.3%	6	0%	-1
Virgin	69.8%	8	66.4%	11	3%	3
Vanquis	66.6%	9	NA	NA	NA	NA
Barclaycard	65.8%	10	71.1%	8	-5%	-2
Royal Bank of Scotland	65.8%	10	62.5%	15	3%	5
MBNA	65.6%	12	69.4%	10	-4%	-2
HSBC	64.1%	13	70.2%	9	-6%	-4
NatWest	64.0%	14	66.2%	12	-2%	-2
Halifax	61.8%	15	64.8%	13	-3%	-2
Lloyds TSB	61.8%	15	64.0%	14	-2%	-1
Santander	59.4%	17	61.6%	16	-2%	-1
Bank of Scotland	56.3%	18	NA	NA	NA	NA

Value for Money						
Provider	CSR 2012		CSR 2011		Change (12 -11)	
score	Score	Position	Score	Position	Score	Position
American Express	85.1%	1	86.07%	1	-1%	0
Marks & Spencer	84.0%	2	80.02%	4	4%	2
Co-operative Bank	80.3%	3	81.91%	2	-2%	-1
Tesco	79.6%	4	80.38%	3	-1%	-1
Sainsburys Finance	75.9%	5	NA	NA	NA	NA
Nationwide	68.5%	6	64.28%	5	4%	-1
Capital One	68.1%	7	62.31%	7	6%	0
Santander	63.5%	8	60.99%	9	3%	1
MBNA	60.9%	9	63.67%	6	-3%	-3
Virgin	59.4%	10	58.65%	11	1%	1
Barclaycard	55.9%	11	55.87%	12	0%	1
Royal Bank of Scotland	55.1%	12	52.82%	16	2%	4
Halifax	54.2%	13	55.27%	13	-1%	0
HSBC	53.4%	14	52.87%	15	1%	1
Lloyds TSB	52.6%	15	54.93%	14	-2%	-1
NatWest	51.9%	16	58.65%	10	-7%	-6
Bank of Scotland	46.4%	17	NA	NA	NA	NA
Vanquis	39.7%	18	NA	NA	NA	NA