

## Card Expenditure Statistics [CES] – March 2009

Seasonally-adjusted

**Plastic card spending** in March amounted to £32.5 billion; there were 668 million purchases. March's figure is 3.2% higher than the average seen over the past six months and is the highest since September 2008 following five months of subdued spending that has seen the annual rate of growth fall from 8.7% to 5.4%. Spending on **debit cards** amounted to £21.9 billion from 499 million purchases. This was £1.0 billion higher than in February, but the annual growth rate slipped back by 10 basis points to 8.2%. **Credit card** spending was £10.6 billion from 168 million purchases. This was £0.5 billion higher than in February and has increased the annual rate of growth by 20 basis points to 0.3%. The average plastic card purchase value in March was £49.18, this is 1.7% lower than the average for the 12 months to November 2007, ie, before the reduction in VAT. Credit card purchases averaged £63.12, and those on debit cards £44.42.

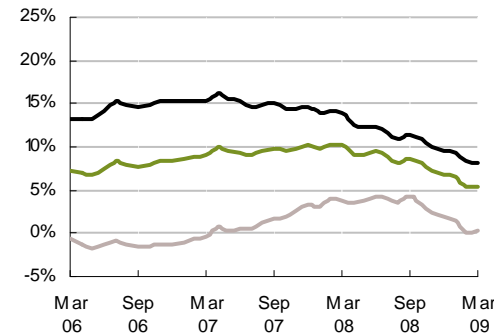
National Statistics commented in March **Retail Sales** on modest annual growth with sales for the three months to March up by 2.0% on March 2008. Over the same period retail sales on plastic cards grew by 7.6% reflecting increased use of debit cards compared with other payment means. The plastic card share of total retail sales<sup>1</sup> has increased from 64.7% to 65.7% over the past 12 months.

The largest increase in plastic card spending in March occurred in the food & drink sector. Additionally at the detailed level there were increases in family clothing, DIY, garden centres, sports shops and travel agencies. A rise was also noticeable in payments to charities where some £35 million over and above the average monthly total was paid in close to 1 million donations, reflecting the success of the Comic Relief appeal on 26 March. It is likely that further payments will have been made in April.

<sup>1</sup>CES 3-month moving average spending for March of £15.19 billion expressed as a percentage of a similar 3-month moving average for National Statistics 'All retailing' (EAQV) based on the value of Retail Sales at current prices (SA) that gives a figure of £23.12 billion.

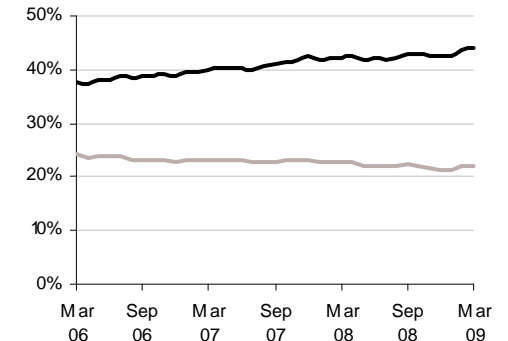
**Chart 1**

Spending on plastic cards  
Annual growth rates



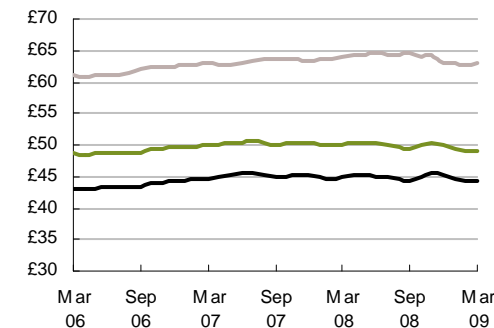
**Chart 2**

Percent of retail sales made on plastic cards  
Three-month moving average



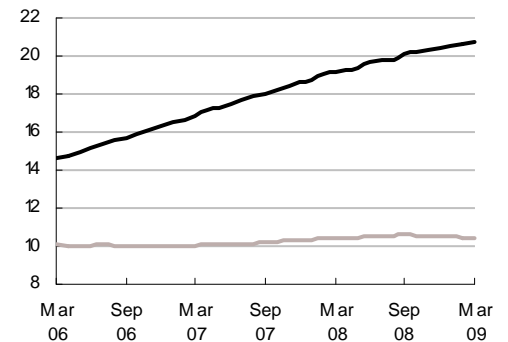
**Chart 3**

Average transaction values  
Three-month moving average



**Chart 4**

Average monthly expenditure  
£ billions



— Debit cards  
— Credit cards  
— All plastic cards