

Credit Card Facts

- **Credit Cards in the U.S.: 1.22 billion.** (663 million bank cards, 555 million retail/gasoline cards.)
Source: CardTrack.com.
- **Revolving Consumer Credit Outstanding in the U.S.: \$969.9 billion,** as of July, 2008. *Source: Federal Reserve Statistical Release, Consumer Credit Outstanding, Table G. 19, September 8, 2008.*
- **Credit Card Debt Held by Consumers in the U.S.: about \$850 billion,** as of July, 2008. *Source: CFA calculation,¹ based on the data above reported by the Federal Reserve Board.*
- **Average Credit Card Debit per Household: \$7,430.** *Source: 114.4 million households; U.S. Census Bureau, "American Families and Living Arrangements 2006."*
- **Average Credit Card Debt per Card-Holding Household that Carries a Balance: \$17,103.** *Source: 74.9 percent of households (about 85.7 million) have a credit card. 58 percent of households with a credit card² (about 49.7 million) do not pay their balance in full every month; Federal Reserve Board, "2004 Survey of Consumer Finances."³*
- **Credit Card Solicitations mailed in 2007: 5.2 billion.** *Source: Synovate Mail Monitor, "US credit card mail volume declined in 4th quarter 2007 as troubled issuers pull back," February 2008.*
- **Credit Card Solicitations per Household: 36.**
- **Credit Card Accounts that Pay a Late Fee: 35 percent,** representing about 242 million cards.⁴
- **Income from Penalty Fees for Six Largest Credit Card Issuers: \$7.4 billion.**⁵

¹ Revolving credit outstanding is often used as a proxy for credit card debt, but most experts believe that outstanding credit card debt is slightly less. Approximately 5 percent of consumer revolving credit is not on credit cards. Between 4 to 9 percent of the debt does not truly revolve. It is repaid to the credit card issuer before the next billing cycle starts. Taking these two factors into account, outstanding credit card debt is likely to be between \$834.1 and \$882.6 billion.

² This means that about 43 percent of all households carry all of the credit card debt that is outstanding.

³ Bucks, Brian K., Kennickell, Arthur B. Moore, Kevin B., "Recent Changes in U.S. Family Finances: Evidence from the 2001 and 2004 Survey of Consumer Finances," p. 31, <http://www.federalreserve.gov/PUBS/oss/oss2/2004/bull0206.pdf>.

⁴ "Credit Cards: Increased Complexity in Rates and Fees Heightens Need for More Effective Disclosures to Consumers," U.S. Government Accountability Office, September 2006, pg. 5. Thirty-five percent of the credit card accounts from the six largest issuers that the GAO examined had at least one late fee in 2005.

⁵ "Credit Cards: Increased Complexity in Rates and Fees Heightens Need for More Effective Disclosures to Consumers," U.S. Government Accountability Office, September 2006, pg. 72. This figure is for 2005.