Cash Back Rewards are a Budget Lifeline for American Families

As back-to-school costs rise, more American families use rewards to help cover everyday expenses.

UNITED STATES — 2024 REWARDS REDEEMED

$60.9 Billion
Total rewards redeemed

$27.8 Billion
Redeemed as cash back

$7.2 Billion
Redeemed by households under $65,100

$558
Average per credit-card-owning household

Across the country, cash was the most common way households took their rewards in 2024. Cash redemptions are how hardworking families put rewards toward everyday costs rather than travel.

Households earning under $65,100 redeemed
$7.2 Billion in rewards

Households headed by someone without a bachelor's degree redeemed
$14.4 Billion

Households headed by someone age 65 or older redeemed
$11.6 Billion

Rewards reach families across income levels and demographics.

Cash reward redemption increases during July and August, **coinciding with back-to-school shopping.**

Redemption rises again during November and December **during the holiday shopping season.**

These seasonal redemption patterns show households reaching for **rewards when expenses peak.**

American families redeem rewards when household budgets are under pressure.

Working families **redeemed an avg. of $294 in rewards in 2024.**

That is roughly 2 times what a family spends on school supplies for the year **and about 2.5 weeks of groceries.**

Working families receive a financial boost **3 to 4 times greater as a share of income than upper-income households.**

Working families are more likely to take rewards as cash **reflecting greater reliance on rewards to cover everyday expenses.**

Rewards matter most to working families.

Conclusion

Credit card rewards have evolved into a working household financial tool in America. Families redeem hundreds of dollars a year, take most of it in cash, and cash it in when household budgets are under the greatest pressure.

Methodology

This analysis combines 2024 national rewards redemption estimates across approximately 12 issuers, including co-branded cards, with findings from the Electronic Payments Coalition's Financial Lifeline issuer survey representing more than half of the U.S. credit card market by purchase volume. Household income quintiles are drawn from U.S. household income data. "Working families" refers to households in the second income quintile, covering $34,510 to $65,100. Back-to-school spending figures are from the National Retail Federation's 2026 Back-to-School Survey and are reported per family with a K-12 student. Grocery comparison uses U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey data on average household food-at-home spending.