

March 2025 Report

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND INSTANT PAYMENTS **FUEL BUSINESS DISBURSEMENT EFFICIENCY**



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Digital Transformation and Instant Payments Fuel Business Disbursement Efficiency was produced in collaboration with Ingo Payments, and PYMNTS Intelligence is grateful for the company’s support and insight. PYMNTS Intelligence retains full editorial control over the following findings, methodology and data analysis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

What’s at Stake 04

Key Findings 08

The Full Story..... 12

Data Focus 32

Actionable Insights..... 38

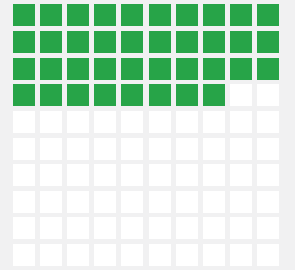
Methodology..... 41

About 42

WHAT'S AT STAKE

The future of payments can be seen in real time or instantly, but no one expected disbursements to have that same visibility. After all, such funds typically are distributed between a government agency and a consumer or a business and a consumer via slower bank transfer or check-based processes. Yet as U.S. consumers increasingly receive disbursements — including earnings and income payments, Social Security payments, tax refunds, insurance claim payouts and loan disbursements — from a variety of corporate and government agencies, they turn to instant payment methods more often. This shift is primarily fueled by a need for immediate access to monies and assurance that these are readily available.

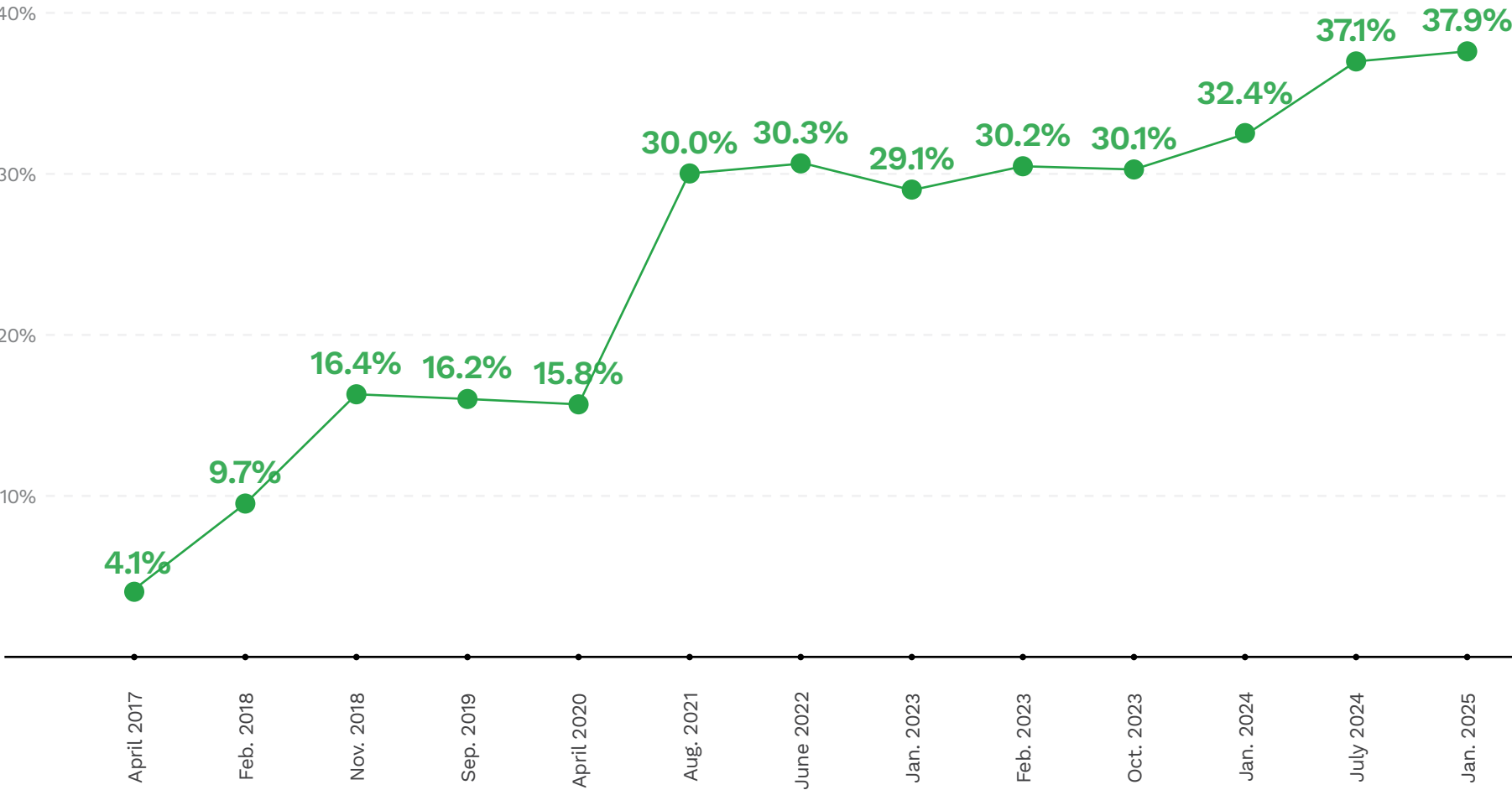
38%



of consumers most often received **nongovernment disbursements instantly**, up from 4.1% in 2017.

Driven by a preference for speed, certainty and convenience, the share of consumers who primarily receive nongovernment disbursements via instant payments has swelled nearly 10 times since 2017, with a sharp surge in the last year. Since 2023, the share who would choose instant payments if given the option is up by 19%, with parents and younger generations favoring instant the most. This surge in preference highlights the growing importance of instant payments in the eyes of consumers, making it imperative for businesses to adapt and offer these options to remain relevant. The challenge is not only about enabling instant transactions but also ensuring their security, reliability and ease of use. A well-developed instant payment ecosystem can boost consumer satisfaction, enhance financial inclusion and drive revenue growth across multiple industries.

FIGURE 1
Consumers receiving instant disbursements
Share of consumers who most often received nongovernment disbursements instantly



● Average (excluding government)

Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Digital Transformation and Instant Payments Fuel Business Disbursement Efficiency, March 2025
N = 2,526: Complete responses, fielded Jan. 9, 2025, to Jan. 27, 2025

These are some of the findings explored in Digital Transformation and Instant Payments Fuel Business Disbursement Efficiency, a PYMNTS Intelligence and Ingo Payments collaboration. This report is based on a census-balanced survey of 4,416 U.S. consumers conducted between Jan. 9 and Jan. 27. It examines consumers’ use of instant payments for the disbursements they receive from government and nongovernment entities. This edition focuses on nongovernmental disbursements. This is the eighth year we have conducted this study, providing insight into consumers’ growing interest in instant disbursements.

This is what we learned.

KEY FINDINGS

01

PREFERENCE SURGE

The share of consumers who primarily receive nongovernment disbursements via instant has risen nearly tenfold since 2017, with borrowing and income payouts the most likely to be received instantly.



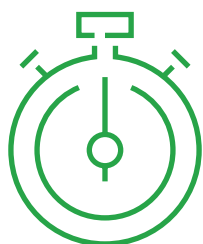
45%

Share of consumers who say they receive borrowing disbursements most often via instant methods, followed by income disbursements at 44%

02

NEED FOR CERTAINTY

One in 4 disbursement receivers urgently need their funds instantly, with the certainty of funds being immediately available combined with financial need being the core drivers of urgency.



24%

Share of disbursement receivers who say they need their funds in 30 minutes or less

03

BANK PREFERENCE

Consumers who prefer digital payments receive instant payments most often, and these instant receivers prefer funds to go directly to their banks.



35%

Share of disbursement receivers who say they prefer that instant payments go directly to their banks

04

WILLING TO PAY

Urgency increases disbursement receivers' willingness to pay for instant funds access, with 1 in 5 willing to pay a substantially higher fee to get funds instantly.



20%

Share of consumers who would pay a substantially higher fee to get funds instantly in an urgent situation

THE FULL STORY

The urgent need and certainty that funds are immediately available drives consumer interest in and willingness to pay to receive nongovernment disbursements via instant payment.

The share of consumers who primarily receive nongovernment disbursements via instant has risen nearly tenfold since 2017, with borrowing and income payouts the most likely to be received instantly.

The widespread adoption of instant payments over the past decade underscores the changing landscape of financial transactions and nongovernment disbursements, which are part of that change. In fact, instant payments usage continues its steady rise year over year, with no disbursement category dipping in use. Currently, 38% of consumers most often receive nongovernment disbursements instantly, a nearly 10 times increase from 4.1% in 2017. Data also shows a surge from 32% in January 2023. At 45% and 44%, respectively, consumers are most likely to say they receive borrowing and income disbursements most often via instant methods, followed by legal settlements at 41%.

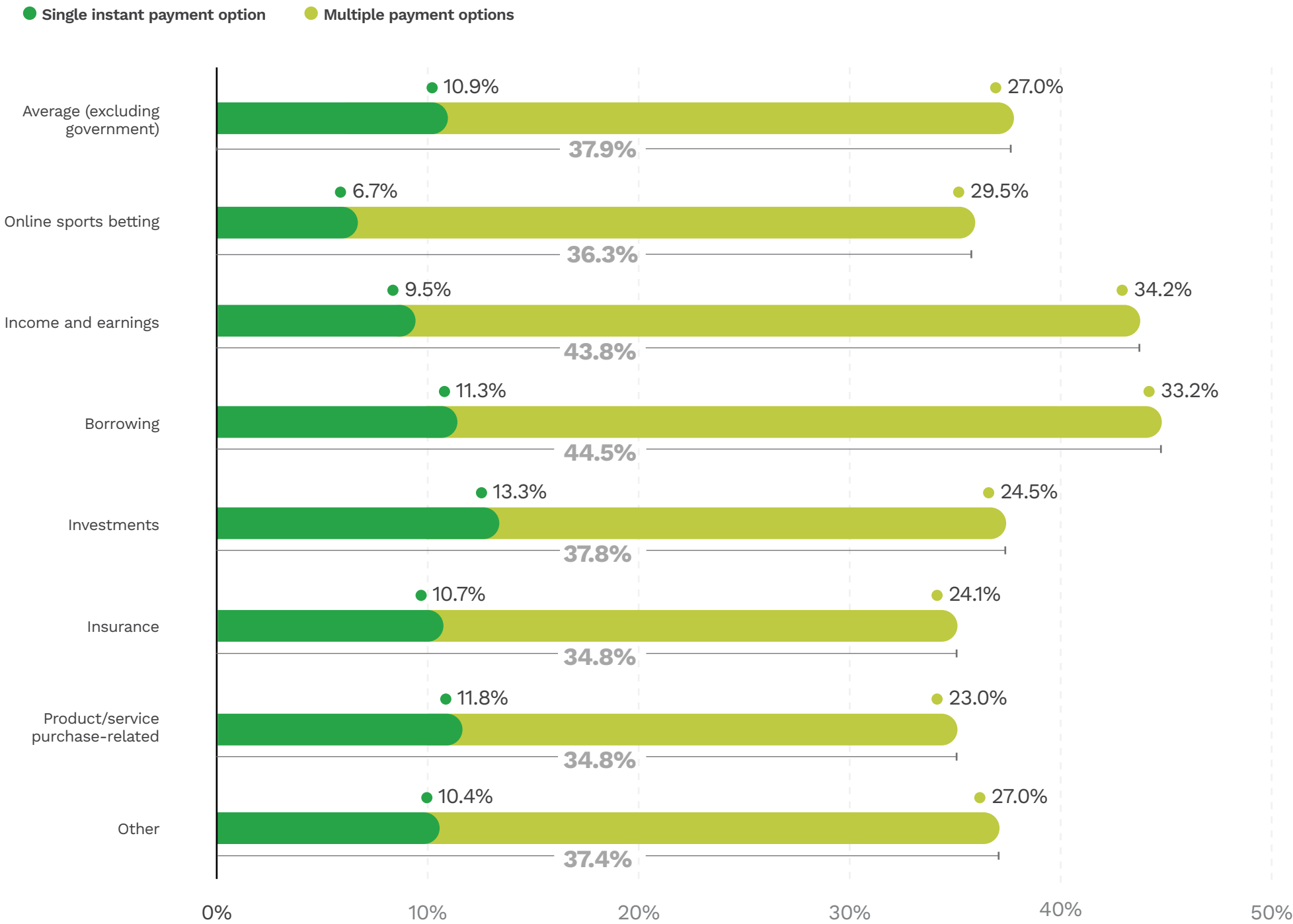
Consumers are increasingly interested in choosing instant disbursements when they have multiple payment options, with 4.9% more this year than last having opted for instant. In January 2025, 27% of receivers chose instant when they had multiple options, while 11% used instant when it was the only option offered. The year-to-year increase is especially evident among consumers who received borrowing disbursements, with 33% opting for instant when they had multiple options, a 38% increase from last year.

These findings indicate that consumers’ growing preference for instant payments has been driven by a shift in how they manage their daily expenses, savings, and financial planning. Compared to traditional payment methods, which can take several business days to process, instant payments offer a level of certainty and control consumers increasingly demand.

FIGURE 2

Instant choice and availability

Share of consumers who used instant methods as their most typical way to receive disbursements when only one or multiple options were provided, by category



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Digital Transformation and Instant Payments Fuel Business Disbursement Efficiency, March 2025
N = 2,526: Complete responses, fielded Jan. 9, 2025, to Jan. 27, 2025

Meanwhile, the share of disbursement receivers who say they are highly likely to choose instant if given the option is up 19% from 47% in 2023 to 56% this year. This shift is particularly evident among younger generations and parents. While interest in choosing instant payments grew among all demographic groups, it remains highest among these two demographics. For instance, 67% of consumers who have children are highly likely to choose instant payments if given the choice compared to 48% of those without children. At 70%, Generation Z consumers are highly likely to choose instant payments if given the choice, while just 37% of baby boomers say the same. Meanwhile, slightly more than two-thirds of millennials and bridge millennials say they are highly likely to choose instant payments if given the choice.

These findings suggest that financial constraints, as well as the increased spending that comes with raising children, can drive consumers to require instant access to good funds. For these consumers, the ability to receive payments instantly means they can better handle urgent expenses, reduce reliance on credit and improve financial planning.

FIGURE 3

Consumers who choose instant disbursements

Share of consumers highly likely to choose instant payments if given the choice, by demographic

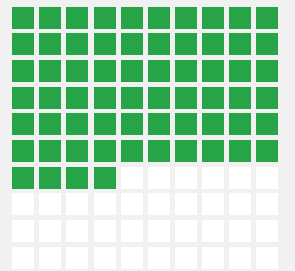
	January 2023	January 2024	January 2025
Generation			
• Generation Z	51.8%	52.5%	70.3%
• Millennials	61.4%	64.0%	68.1%
• Bridge millennials	64.4%	61.1%	67.3%
• Generation X	50.5%	47.3%	55.5%
• Baby boomers	29.0%	28.2%	36.7%
Income			
• More than \$100K	52.2%	48.9%	58.9%
• \$50K-\$100K	46.2%	47.7%	54.4%
• Less than \$50K	40.4%	42.1%	51.8%
Family status			
• Have children	59.3%	60.3%	67.3%
• Do not have children	38.6%	38.9%	48.0%

Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Digital Transformation and Instant Payments Fuel Business Disbursement Efficiency, March 2025
N = 2,526: Complete responses, fielded Jan. 9, 2025, to Jan. 27, 2025

One in 4 disbursement receivers urgently need their funds instantly — with the certainty of funds being immediately available combined with financial need the core drivers of urgency.

Despite significant differences since January 2024, data shows that urgency is beginning to show a consistent, durable presence in the lives of consumers. Urgency means that consumers want their payouts in 30 minutes or less, and the share of consumers who say this has remained steady at 24%. Not surprisingly, a higher share of millennials (29%) and consumers with children (29%) say they want their payouts in 30 minutes or less, a further indication that financial pressures can drive the urgent need for funds.

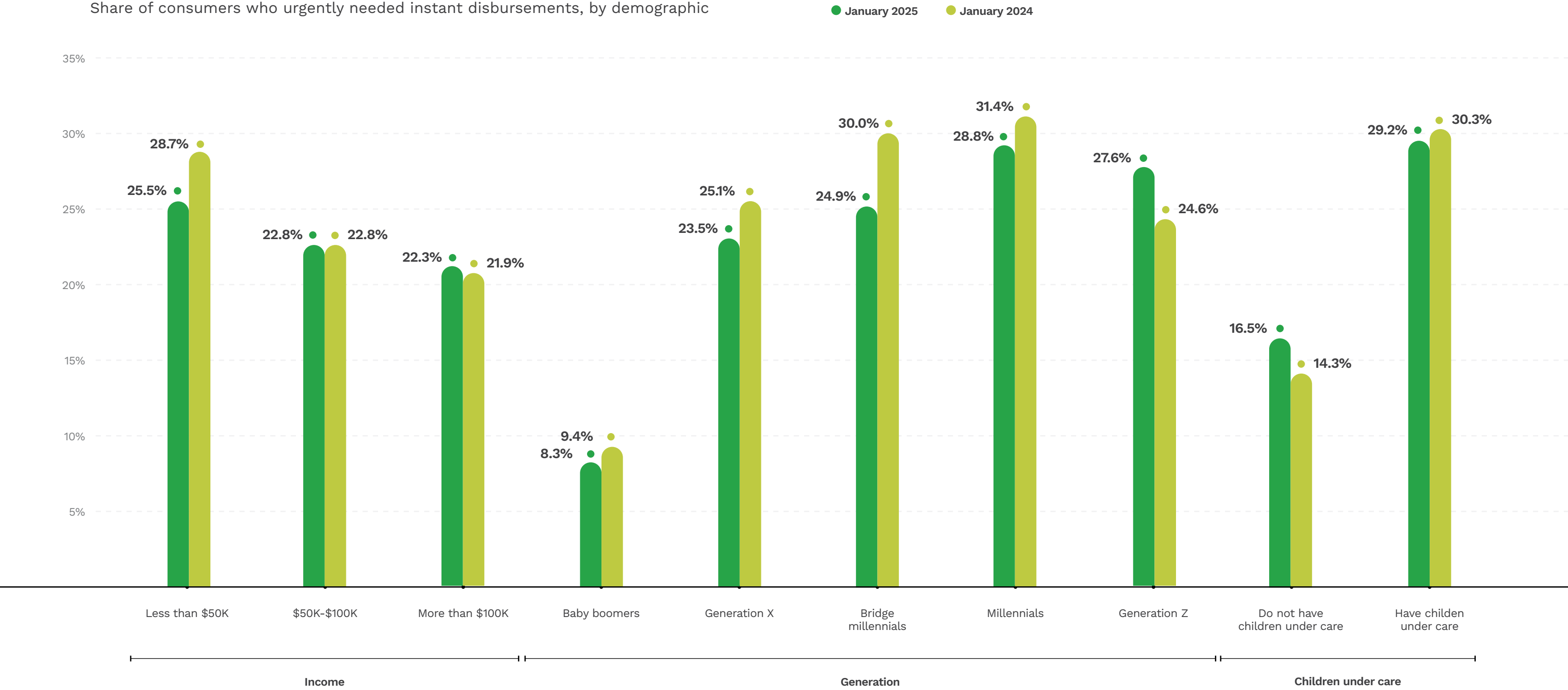
64%



Receivers who used instant payments the most for multiple disbursement types and are willing to pay a slightly higher or much higher fee for receiving instant payments if they need the funds urgently

There has also not been a huge change in urgency across disbursement types since last year. At 31%, sports betting disbursements are still the most likely to be wanted urgently, as these funds are most likely needed for further betting. Though they remain in the lead, there has been a slight dip in urgency for sports betting payouts as well as for income and borrowing disbursements. Meanwhile, the urgency to get product- and service-related funds instantly has risen marginally. These findings highlight areas of special interest to consumers, suggesting an opportunity for business senders to increase customer engagement and satisfaction by offering instant payouts.

FIGURE 4
Consumers who need funds urgently
Share of consumers who urgently needed instant disbursements, by demographic



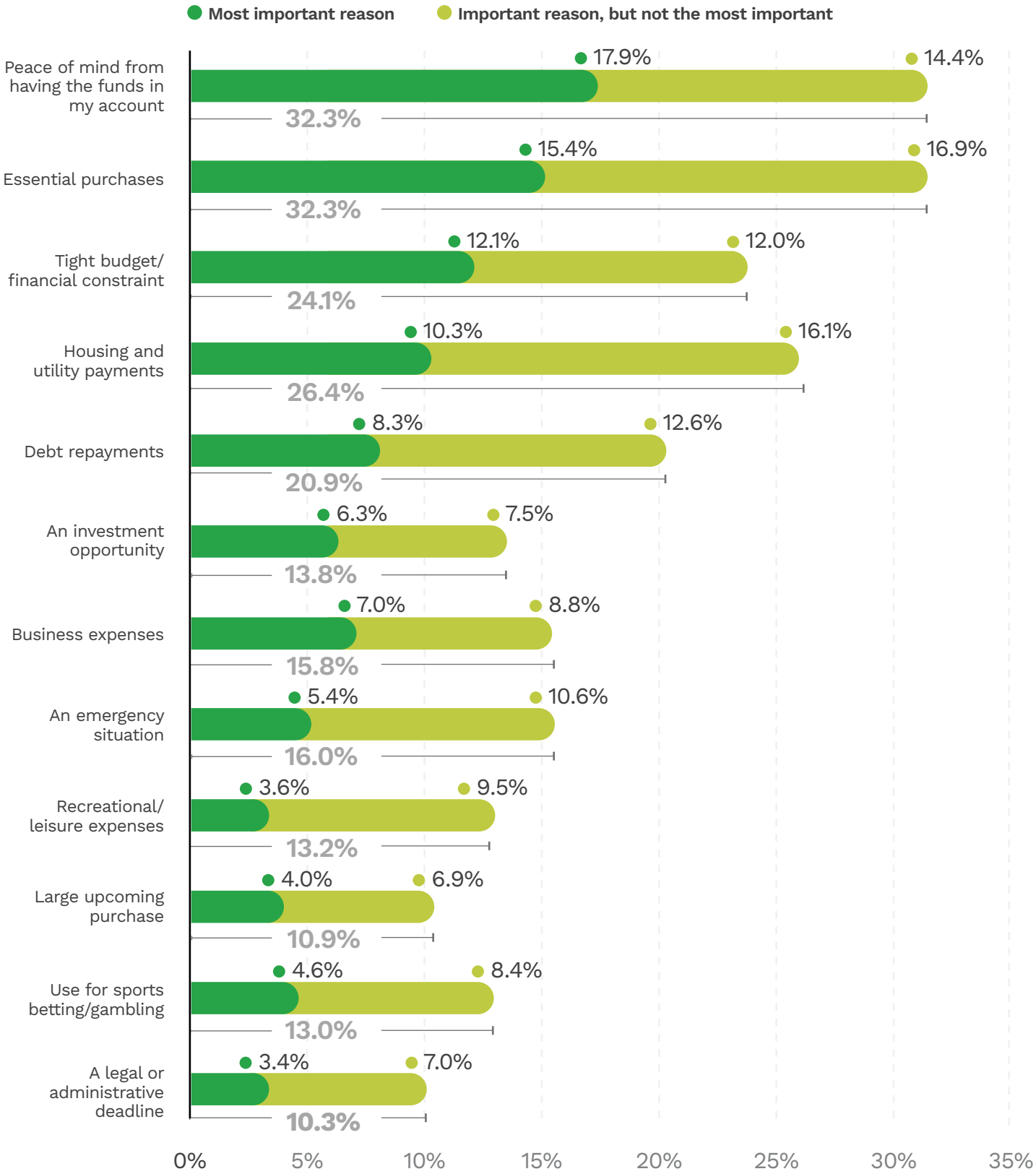
Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Digital Transformation and Instant Payments Fuel Business Disbursement Efficiency, March 2025
N = 2,526: Complete responses, fielded Jan. 9, 2025, to Jan. 27, 2025

Consumers have various reasons for wanting instant disbursements, but the certainty that funds are immediately available to spend is the top reason cited by receivers. In fact, one-third (32%) of consumers cite peace of mind from having the funds in their account, with 18% saying this is the most important reason. Yet also notable is that when aggregating all the reasons that are based on financial need—bills, emergency expenses, essential items, debt repayments and financial constraint—data shows that financial need is cited by over half of consumers as the most important reason they want their disbursements instantly.

The certainty of immediate available funds was the most popular reason for needing to receive payments instantly among approximately 22% of respondents receiving product- or purchase-related payments, followed by insurance and winnings, at 19% each. Meanwhile, financial need played the biggest role in instant receipt for borrowing. In fact, 64% of borrowing disbursement receivers want funds instantly due to financial need. These findings again suggest that financial pressures and constraints are key drivers behind the growing interest in instant payments.

Moreover, data shows that the larger the disbursement, the more disbursement receivers need it immediately. In fact, receivers of disbursements that average more than \$500 in value are 33% more likely to use instant as their primary way to receive disbursements. Notably, this trend is consistent across all types of disbursement categories, suggesting that the size of the payment is a key factor in why certain disbursements are wanted instantly more than others.

FIGURE 5
Reasons consumers want instant payment methods
Share of consumers who cite select reasons why they wanted instant payments over the last 12 months



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Digital Transformation and Instant Payments Fuel Business Disbursement Efficiency, March 2025
N = 814: Respondents who typically need funds instantly, fielded Jan. 9, 2025, to Jan. 27, 2025

Consumers who prefer digital payments receive instant payments most often, and these instant receivers prefer funds to go directly to their banks.

Consumers overwhelmingly prefer that instant payments be deposited directly into their bank accounts. Among the most popular methods are Zelle and push-to-debit options, which provide seamless integration with banking services. Unsurprisingly, consumers who say they prefer digital payments are also more likely to receive instant payments most often. In fact, consumers who favor Zelle and push to debit are three times as likely to be regular users of instant payments. Those who prefer direct bank deposits and digital wallets are more than twice as likely to turn to instant regularly.

Yet, while those who prefer Zelle and push to debit are most likely to use instant regularly, only 3.3% of consumers prefer Zelle and 6.1% prefer push to debit. With 35% of consumers preferring bank deposits, it is clear that bank deposits are most favored by consumers. This preference for direct deposit into bank accounts may also reflect a broader desire among consumers for seamless integration with existing financial tools.

FIGURE 6
Predicted probability of instant usage
Share of consumers who prefer select instant methods and are likely to use instant regularly



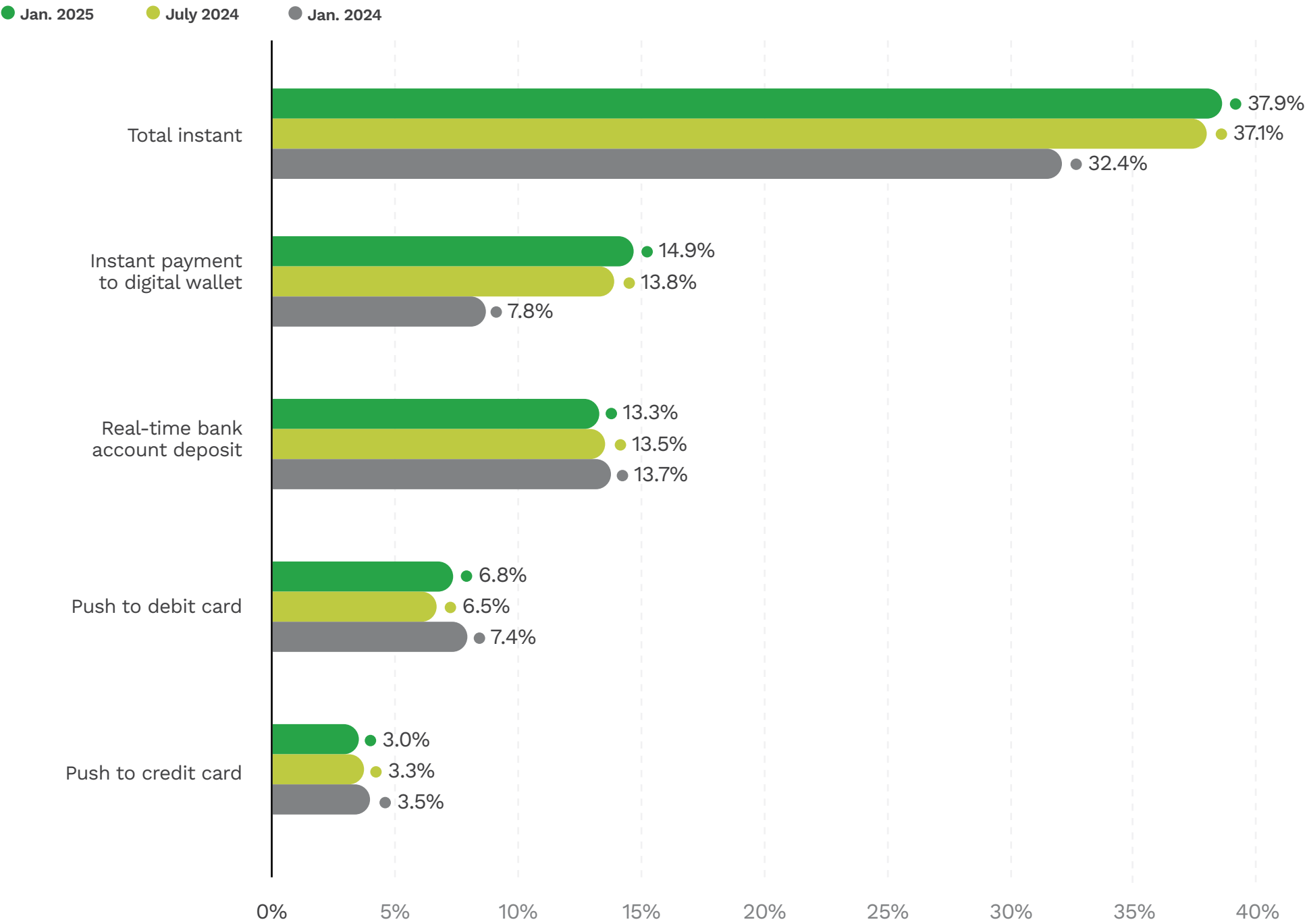
Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Digital Transformation and Instant Payments Fuel Business Disbursement Efficiency, March 2025
N = 2,526: Complete responses, fielded Jan. 9, 2025, to Jan. 27, 2025

Data also shows that, consistent with July 2024, more payments are received instantly to digital wallets —PayPal specifically— an indication that digital wallet use drives increased instant usage. In January 2025, 15% of disbursement receivers said they used instant payment to a digital wallet the most often compared to 14% in July 2024 and 7.8% in January 2024. Moreover, the increasing use of PayPal, in particular, accounts for the growth in instant use via digital wallets. In January 2025, 7.4% of receivers used instant payment to PayPal the most often, compared to 5.6% in July 2024. The increased use of digital wallets suggests that consumers are looking for payment methods that offer flexibility and convenience, particularly those that allow quick fund transfers and easy spending.

FIGURE 7

Consumer instant method usage

Share of consumers using select instant payment methods the most to receive disbursements

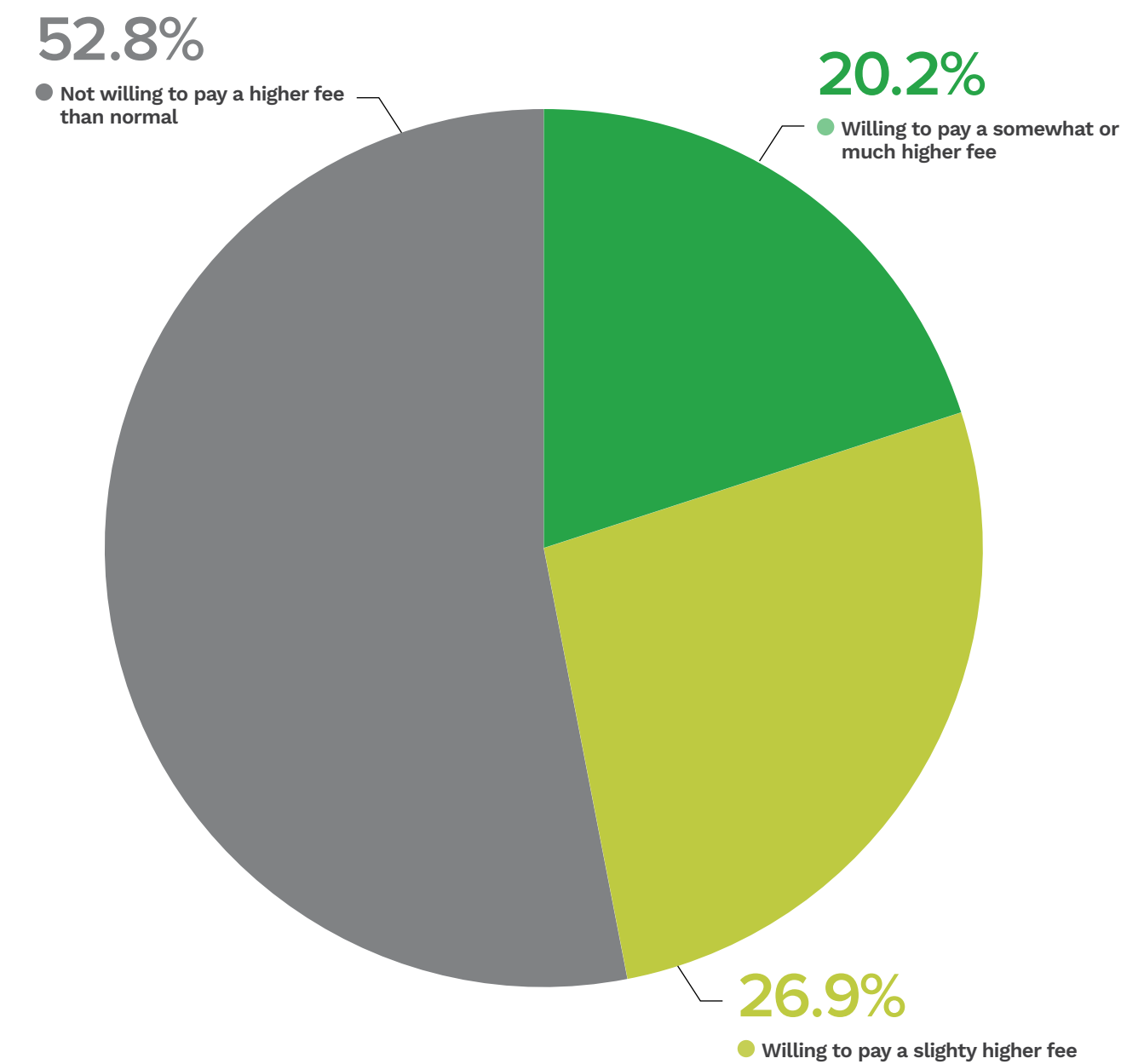


Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Digital Transformation and Instant Payments Fuel Business Disbursement Efficiency, March 2025
N = 2,526: Complete responses, fielded Jan. 9, 2025, to Jan. 27, 2025

Urgency increases disbursement receivers’ willingness to pay for instant funds access, with 1 in 5 willing to pay a substantially higher fee to get funds instantly.

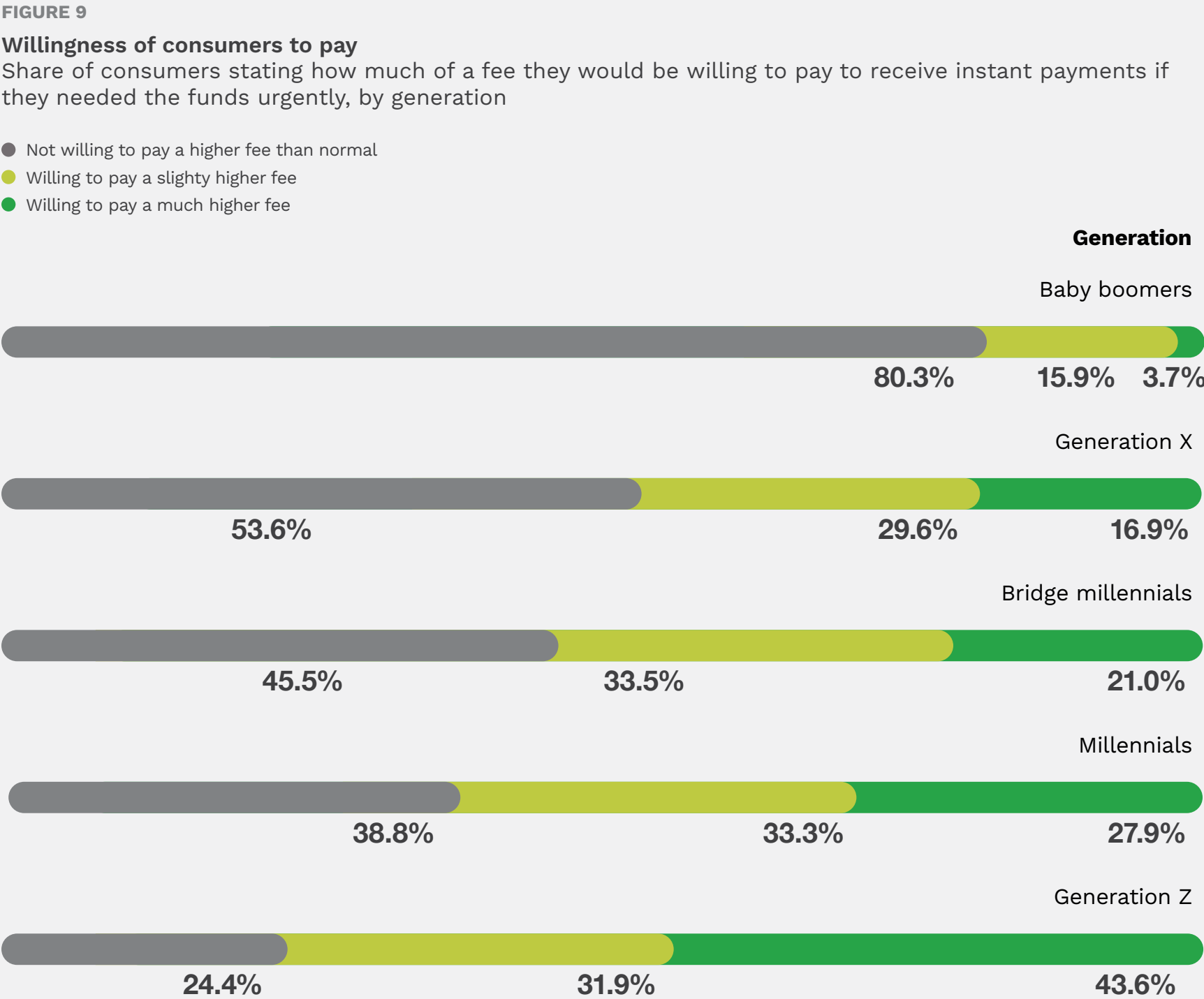
As instant payments become more prevalent, consumers are demonstrating a growing willingness to pay a premium for faster access to their funds. Nearly half of disbursement receivers indicated they would be open to higher fees for instant transactions, particularly in urgent financial situations. While 27% of disbursement receivers are willing to pay a slightly higher fee to get funds instantly in an urgent situation, 20% are willing to pay a substantially higher fee to get funds instantly. This willingness to pay more for immediate access presents an opportunity for businesses to offer premium instant payment services. However, it is crucial to strike a balance between fees and customer satisfaction to avoid alienating price-sensitive consumers.

FIGURE 8
Willingness to pay for instant disbursements
Share of consumers willing to pay a fee to receive disbursements when they need the funds urgently



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Digital Transformation and Instant Payments Fuel Business Disbursement Efficiency, March 2025
N = 2,526: Complete responses, fielded Jan. 9, 2025, to Jan. 27, 2025

Younger consumers are more willing to pay higher fees to receive funds instantly when the funds are urgently needed. While 80% of baby boomers are unwilling to pay more for instant payments in urgent situations, three-quarters of Gen Zers would pay a slightly higher fee to get urgently needed funds instantly with 44% willing to pay a much higher fee. Also, 60% of paycheck-to-paycheck consumers with issues paying their monthly bills would pay a slightly higher fee, with 26% of these consumers willing to pay a significantly higher fee. Both demographics are more likely to face ongoing financial constraints, an indication that financial need combined with urgency drives up the amount consumers would spend to get instant disbursements.



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Digital Transformation and Instant Payments Fuel Business Disbursement Efficiency, March 2025
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DATA FOCUS

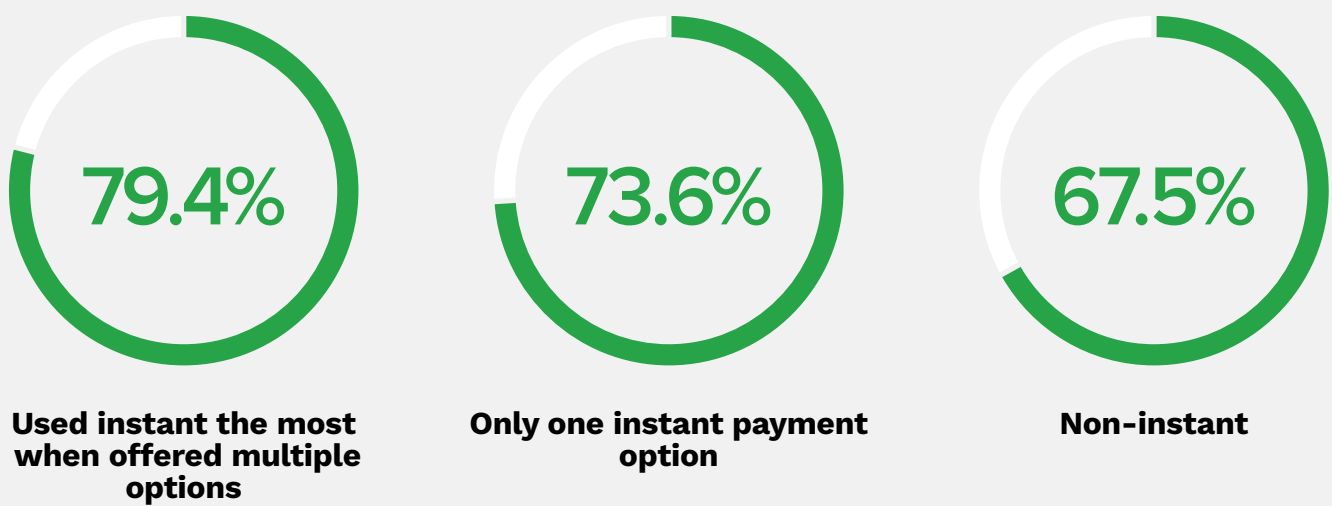
Regular instant receivers are highly satisfied, making them even more willing to pay higher fees.

High satisfaction with immediate funds likely draws consumers back for more, and this satisfaction pays off, as regular users are willing to pay higher fees for instant funds.

Consumers who frequently use instant payments tend to develop a strong reliance on these services, demonstrating their trust in the reliability and efficiency of real-time transactions. One-third (34%) of consumers reported using instant payments across multiple disbursement types, while 62% received instant payments for at least one type of disbursement. At 51%, Gen Z consumers are most likely to be regular receivers, 48% more than the general population. This pattern of repeat usage suggests that once consumers experience the benefits of instant payments, they are unlikely to revert to slower methods.

High satisfaction levels among regular users also implies that the availability of instant payments significantly influences customer loyalty. The share of consumers who are highly satisfied is 18% higher among those who choose instant than among those who receive non-instant payments. At 79%, consumers continue to be happiest when they can choose instant from a range of instant options as opposed to when instant is the only available option, at 74%. This suggests that optimizing user experience and expanding access to instant payment options can help ensure sustained consumer engagement.

FIGURE 10
Consumer satisfaction when receiving disbursements
Share of instant receivers who are highly satisfied when receiving disbursements, by payment type



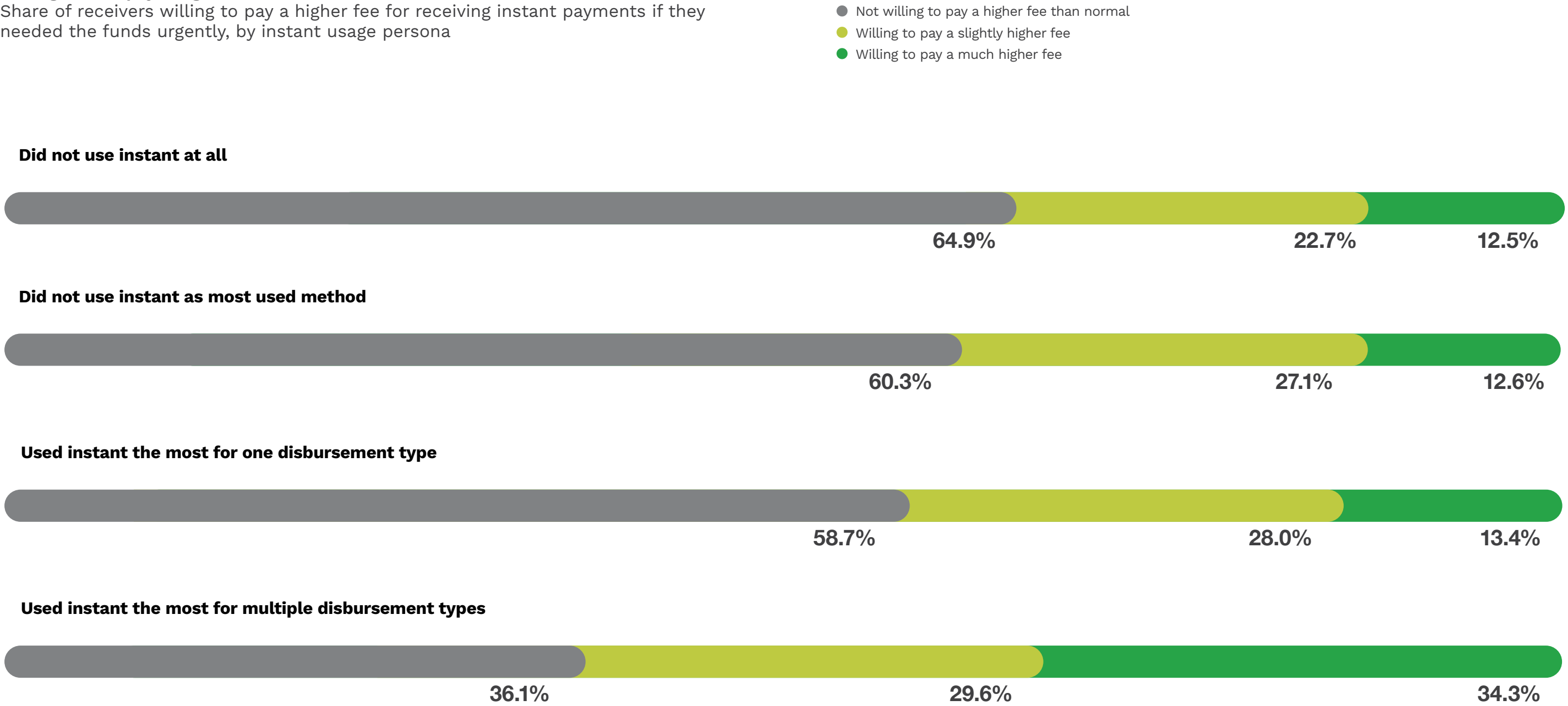
Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Digital Transformation and Instant Payments Fuel Business Disbursement Efficiency March 2025
N = 2,526: Complete responses, fielded Jan. 9, 2025, to Jan. 27, 2025

Moreover, regular instant receivers are more willing to pay extra to get funds instantly if they have an urgent need. In fact, 64% of receivers who use instant payments for multiple disbursement types are willing to pay a higher fee for instant payments if funds are needed urgently. These consumers are nearly three times as willing to pay a much higher instant fee to receive urgently needed funds than those who rarely receive instant or not at all. These findings highlight the link between regular instant use to receive disbursements, high satisfaction with access to immediate funds and the willingness to pay higher fees, especially when they need funds right away. Given the varying willingness of consumers to pay for instant access, providers should implement tiered pricing models. Offering both percentage-based and fixed-fee options will help maintain affordability and maximize user engagement while ensuring profitability.

FIGURE 11

Willingness to pay a higher fee

Share of receivers willing to pay a higher fee for receiving instant payments if they needed the funds urgently, by instant usage persona



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Digital Transformation and Instant Payments Fuel Business Disbursement Efficiency, March 2025
N = 2,526: Complete responses, fielded Jan. 9, 2025, to Jan. 27, 2025

ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS



01

The demand for instant transactions is not a passing trend but a fundamental shift in consumer expectations. Employers, gig companies and service providers must integrate instant payout solutions to meet worker and consumer demands for faster access to earnings and refunds. Companies that fail to adapt risk losing users to competitors that offer more flexible payment options.



02

Urgency is primarily driven by financial need and the certainty that funds are immediately available for spending. Larger disbursements and specific categories such as betting or income disbursements are more likely to be wanted instantly. Businesses should consider offering instant payment options, especially for larger transactions or in sectors where immediate access to funds is critical for consumers.



03

Consumers receiving instant payments favor direct-to-bank deposits, including Zelle and push-to-debit options. Digital wallets are rapidly growing, with PayPal emerging as a preferred method. The continued interest in Zelle and push-to-debit methods signals an industry shift toward seamless, mobile-first financial experiences. Strengthening digital wallet and bank integrations will be key to meeting evolving consumer expectations.



04

Among nearly half of disbursement receivers, urgency increases the willingness to pay more for instant funds access, especially among those facing financial constraints. While some individuals are willing to pay a percentage-based fee for faster transactions, others prefer fixed costs that provide predictability in pricing. By offering flexible payment structures, financial institutions and service providers can accommodate a wide range of users while maintaining affordability and accessibility.

March 2025 Report

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND INSTANT PAYMENTS FUEL BUSINESS DISBURSEMENT EFFICIENCY

METHODOLOGY

Digital Transformation and Instant Payments Fuel Business Disbursement Efficiency, a PYMNTS Intelligence and Ingo Payments collaboration, is based on a census-balanced survey of 4,416 U.S. consumers conducted between Jan. 9 and Jan. 27. It examines consumers' use of instant payments for the disbursements they receive from government and nongovernment entities. This edition focuses on nongovernmental disbursements. This is the eighth year we have conducted this study, providing insight into consumers' growing interest in instant disbursements. Our sample was balanced to match the U.S. adult population in a set of key demographic variables: 51% of respondents identified as female, 33% had a college degree, 46% earned more than \$100,000 annually and 29% were millennials.

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