



INSTANT PAYOUTS:

The New Paycheck for
a Real-Time Economy

July 2025 Report

PYMNTS
INTELLIGENCE

INGO Payments



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Instant Payouts: The New Paycheck for a Real-Time Economy 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.

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WHAT'S AT STAKE

In a world where almost everything happens instantly, financial institutions can't expect a customer who wants a loan to wait days for an old-fashioned bank transfer to process. The same is true for marketplaces and platforms that issue payments to gig workers, freelancers and content creators. Hardworking individuals want—and often need—to get paid immediately.

PYMNTS Intelligence's latest research examines the critical role of receiving ad hoc payments—"disbursements" for the purpose of this report—in consumers' financial lives. More than one in five disbursement recipients rely on such payouts as their primary source of income, and another 41% count them as important supplemental income.

72%



of consumers received **at least one** instant payment in the last year.

With disbursements functioning as essential income for many, consumers are placing greater importance on receiving them without delay. In fact, 41% of recipients cite an instant payment method as their most-used way to get paid, with even higher shares seen among Gen Zers and millennials.¹ What's more, individuals who receive disbursements frequently or depend on them as their primary source of income are especially willing to pay for instant payment services.

These are just some of the findings detailed in Instant Payouts: The New Paycheck for a Real-Time Economy, a PYMNTS and Ingo Payments collaboration. This edition examines the use of instant payments to receive disbursements and related consumer preferences and behaviors. It draws on insights from a survey of 4,054 consumers conducted from May 2, 2025, to May 29, 2025.

This is what we learned.

¹ PYMNTS Intelligence uses the following birth dates and approximate age ranges in 2025 for generational cohorts: baby boomers: born in 1964 or earlier and now aged 61 or older; Generation X: born between 1965 and 1980 and now aged 45–60; millennials: born between 1981 and 1996 and now aged 28–44; bridge millennials: born between 1978 and 1988 and now aged 37–47; zillennials: born between 1991 and 1999 and now aged 25–34; and Generation Z: born in 1997 or later and now aged 28 or younger.

KEY FINDINGS

01

PAYOUTS ARE THE NEW PAYCHECK

For one-third of millennials, payouts for gig work and tips aren't supplemental—they're essential. Transactional payroll has replaced regular paychecks for millions, creating a new reliance on timely, flexible earnings.



21%

Share of recipients who receive transactional payouts as a paycheck

02

PAYCHECKS COME FROM EVERYWHERE

Ad hoc disbursements come from many sources, including freelance projects, sales commissions, tips, bonuses and monetary gifts, sales of goods and services and property management fees.



20%

Share of recipients who received tips as a core source of cashflow in the last 12 months

03

INSTANT BECOMES ESSENTIAL AS PAYOUTS BECOME PAYROLL

As disbursements become more frequent, dependence on instant deepens. Among those receiving 15 or more payouts a year, 85% got at least one instantly. And nearly half use instant more than any other method.



43%

Share of recipients who received 15 or more disbursements in the last year who cite instant payments as their most-used method of receipt

04

URGENCY BECOMES A BUSINESS MODEL

Instant isn't optional. For freelancers and side hustlers operating without predictable pay cycles, waiting means falling behind. Consumers who rely on disbursements for their core income are 74% more likely to receive those payments instantly and are more willing to pay for instant. Six in 10 consumers who count on regular disbursements as a primary income source say they'd pay to get them instantly. That's four times the rate of those receiving occasional payouts. The more urgent the need, the more valuable the speed.



60%

Share of consumers counting on disbursements as a primary income source who say they would pay to get their funds instantly—four times the rate of others

05

GEN Z MAKES INSTANT THE DEFAULT

Instant is already embedded in Gen Z's financial routine. Seventy-eight percent of this generation received at least one disbursement instantly last year; for 45%, it's the receiving method they use the most. For a generation without fixed paychecks or patience for time lags, reliance on instant is now table stakes.



45%

Share of Gen Z consumers who use instant payments more than any other method to receive funds

06

WALLETS AND DEBIT CARDS ARE THE NEW DIRECT DEPOSITS

When it comes to instant, consumers are choosing flexibility over tradition. Digital wallets and debit cards now outrank real-time bank transfers as the preferred way to get paid, reflecting a shift from routing money to bank accounts to accessing it where it's needed, when it's needed.



30%

Share of core cashflow recipients who received payment through push to debit and digital wallets

PYMNTS IN DEPTH

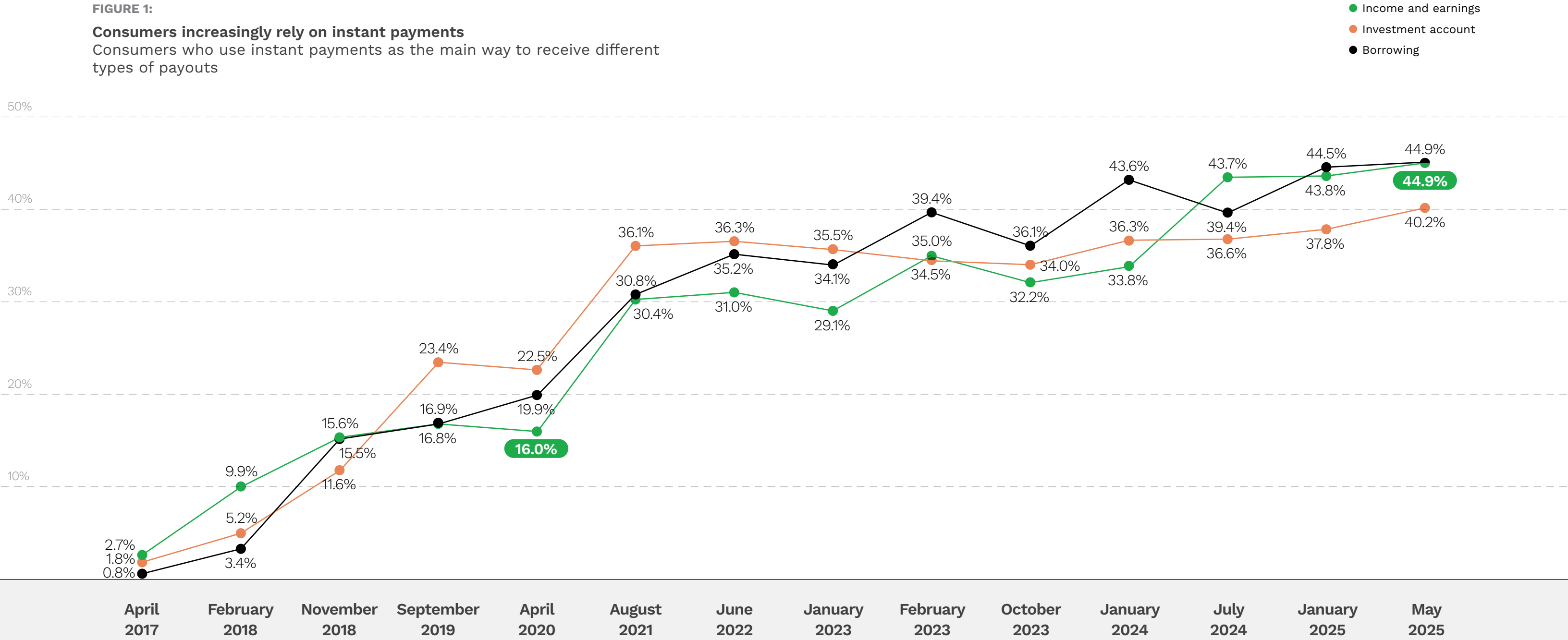
Consumers widely rely on instant payments for receiving disbursements—and many are willing to pay to use this expedited service.

Payouts go piecemeal

The days of just a 9–5 job and weekly paycheck are long gone. Americans increasingly earn income in multiple ways. Maybe they sell used handbags on Poshmark. Rent out a floor of their house. Drive for Uber or Lyft after hours. Money flows into consumer's bank accounts in other ways as well. An insurance payout for that fender bender. A personal loan from a bank. Profits on cryptocurrencies, a high-flying stock or investment portfolio. Rental income from a vacation home. The total dollars in a bank account increasingly come from multiple sources.

Regardless of the source, consumers expect, want and often need to receive their funds instantly.

FIGURE 1:
Consumers increasingly rely on instant payments
Consumers who use instant payments as the main way to receive different types of payouts



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence

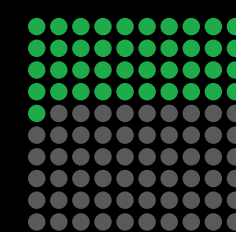
Instant Payouts: The New Paycheck for a Real-Time Economy, July 2025

N = 2,237: Complete responses, consumers who received at least one disbursement in the last year, fielded May 2, 2025, to May 29, 2025

Payouts are the new paycheck, and consumers are increasingly choosing instant.

Instant payments have become central to the financial lives of many Americans. Today, 41% of consumers who received at least one disbursement in the last year used that method more than any other, nearly double the 21% share recorded in 2020. Notably, this is not the result of wider adoption, as the share of recipients using instant payments at least once a year has held relatively steady since 2021, at roughly seven in 10. This reveals a growing reliance on and preference for instant payments among a large userbase as more consumers opt to receive disbursements immediately most of the time.

Across all major types of consumer disbursements, instant payments continue to gain traction. They are most heavily used to receive earnings and borrowed funds, with 45% of recipients citing instant payments as their main way to receive both. For other types of disbursements, including insurance, investment account proceeds and insurance payouts, between 35% and 40% of consumers cite instant payments as their primary method.



41%

Share of disbursement recipients who used **instant payments** more than any other method

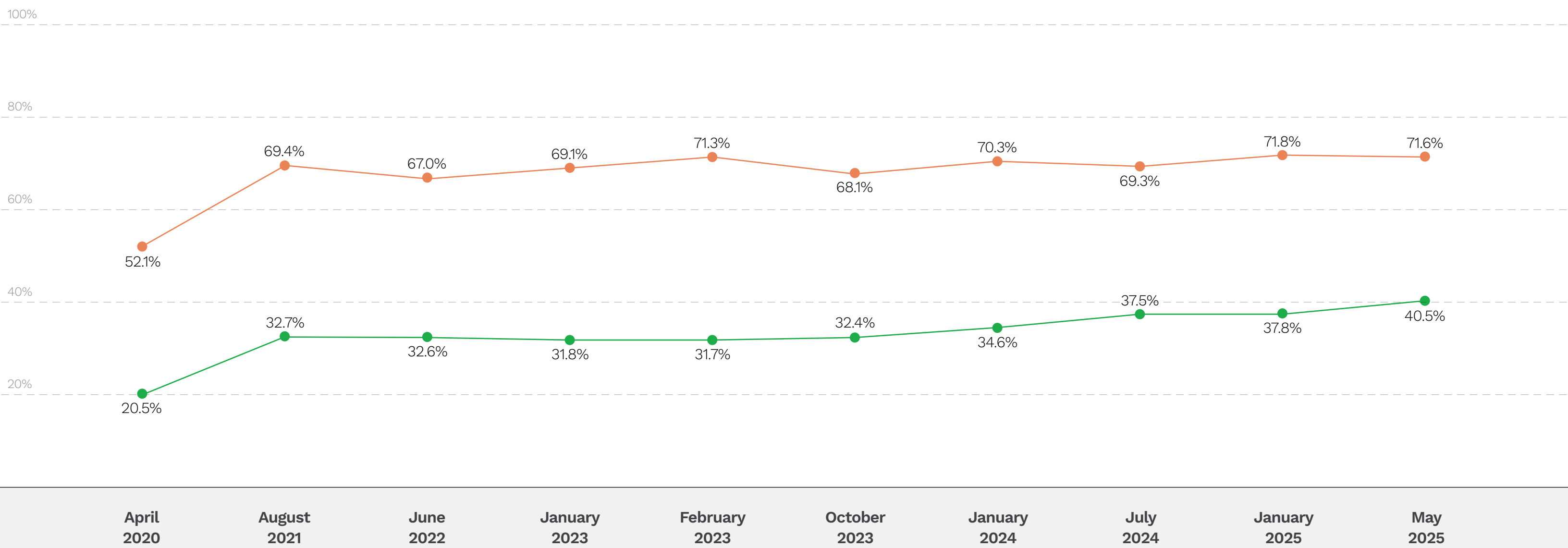
FIGURE 2:

Receiving instant payments

How many consumers used instant payments for disbursements

● Instant as the most used method

● Received at least one instant disbursement



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence

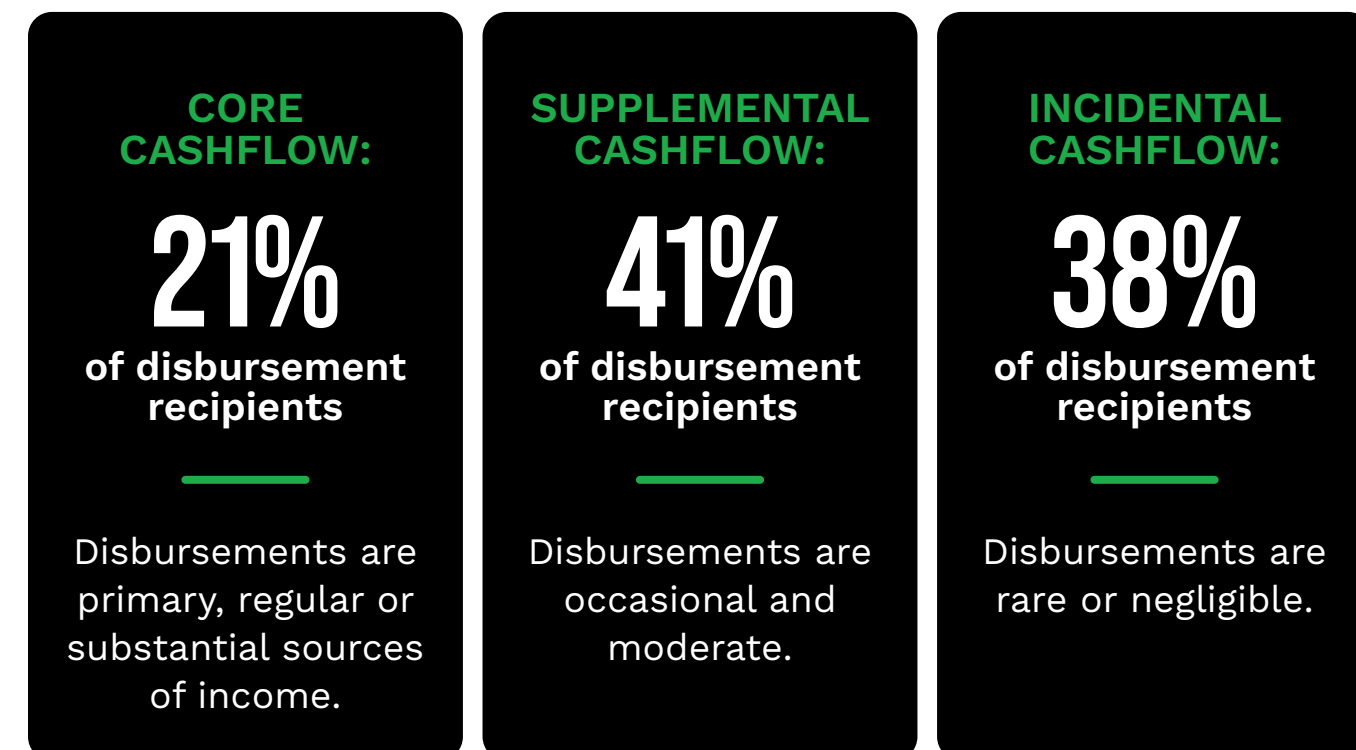
Instant Payouts: The New Paycheck for a Real-Time Economy, July 2025

N = 2,237: Complete responses, consumers who received at least one disbursement in the last year, fielded May 2, 2025, to May 29, 2025

Thirty-one million Americans are “core cashflow” recipients whose income is primarily from disbursements.

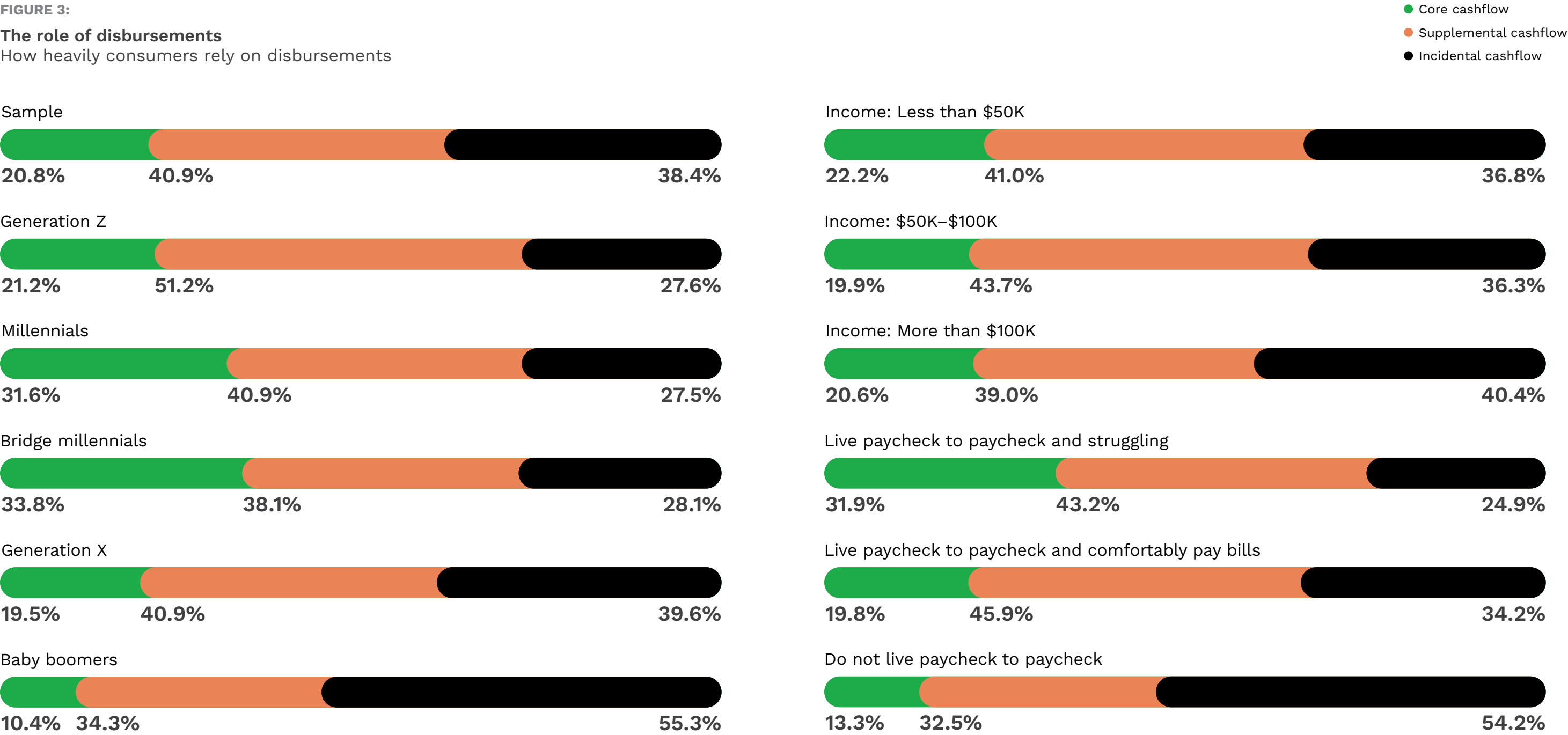
More than one in five Americans who received a disbursement in the last year relied on these payouts as their primary income, amounting to approximately 31 million individuals. Millennials are especially likely to be in the “core cashflow” group, at 32%, as are bridge millennials—the crossover generation comprising older millennials and younger Generation Xers—at 34%. Gen Z consumers are substantially less likely to be classified as core cashflow, at 21%, perhaps because many are in college and not yet working—though it is notable that more than half of them are in the “supplemental cashflow” group, the highest rate in the survey. Gen X is not far behind, with 19.5% in the core cashflow group, joined by 10% of baby boomers.

To analyze the importance of disbursements in a consumer’s overall cashflow position, we defined three groups:



Nearly one-third of disbursement recipients living paycheck-to-paycheck and struggling to make ends meet fall into the core cashflow group, at 31%. This is more than 1.5 times the rate for those who live paycheck-to-paycheck but remain comfortable, at 20%. It’s also roughly 2.5 times the rate of recipients not living paycheck-to-paycheck (13%). Meanwhile, the rates vary little across income brackets, highlighting that reliance on disbursements reflects the nature of work rather than raw earnings.

FIGURE 3:
The role of disbursements
How heavily consumers rely on disbursements

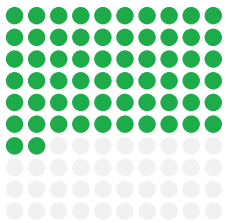


Source: PYMNTS Intelligence

Instant Payouts: The New Paycheck for a Real-Time Economy, July 2025

N = 2,237: Complete responses, consumers who received at least one disbursement in the last year, fielded May 2, 2025, to May 29, 2025

62%

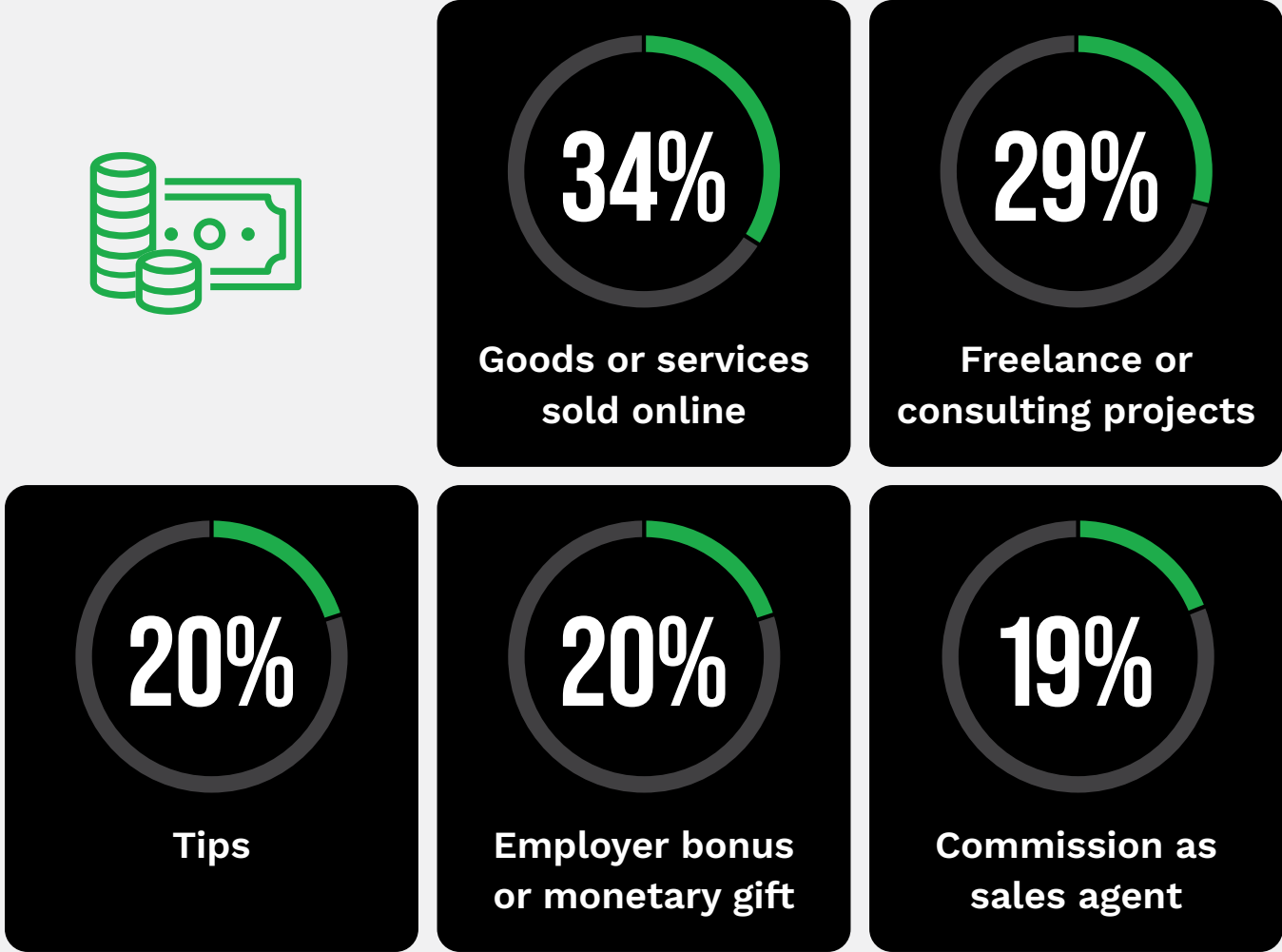


Share of consumers who
rely on disbursements **as primary
or supplemental income**

A closer look at the types of disbursements received by the core cashflow group emphasizes why these payments are critical parts of their income. Just more than one-third of these consumers got paid for goods or services sold online, at 34%, while 29% received disbursements for freelance or consulting projects. For many freelancers and independent contractors, these types of payments are their main or only form of income. Meanwhile, two in 10 core cashflow users received tips, sales commissions and employer bonuses or gifts, also crucial and sometimes primary income sources.

FIGURE 4:

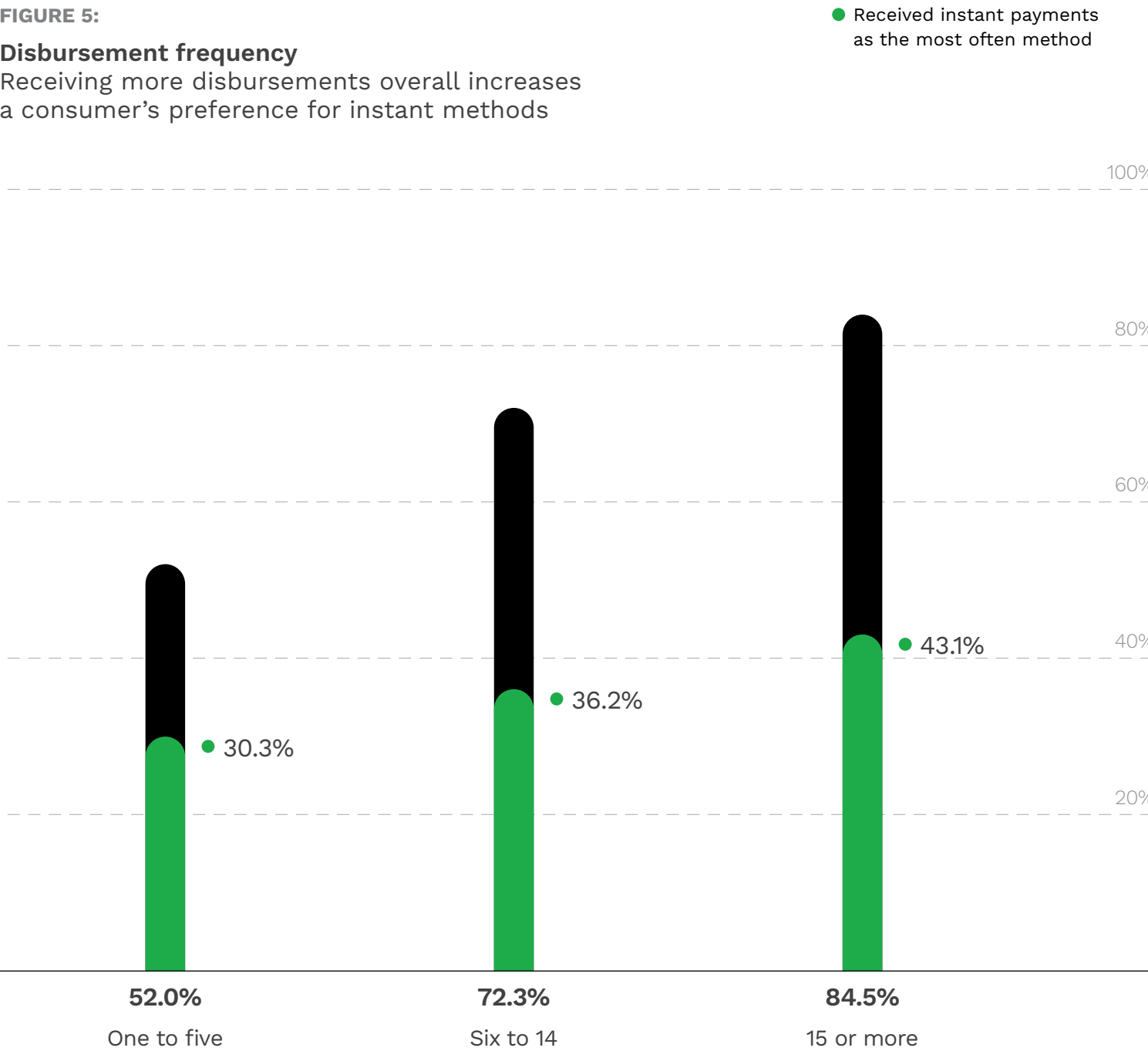
What core cashflow recipients get paid for
The share of the core cashflow group that received each disbursement type



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Instant Payouts: The New Paycheck for a Real-Time Economy, July 2025
N= 403: Consumers classified as “core cashflow” receivers, fielded May 2, 2025, to May 29, 2025

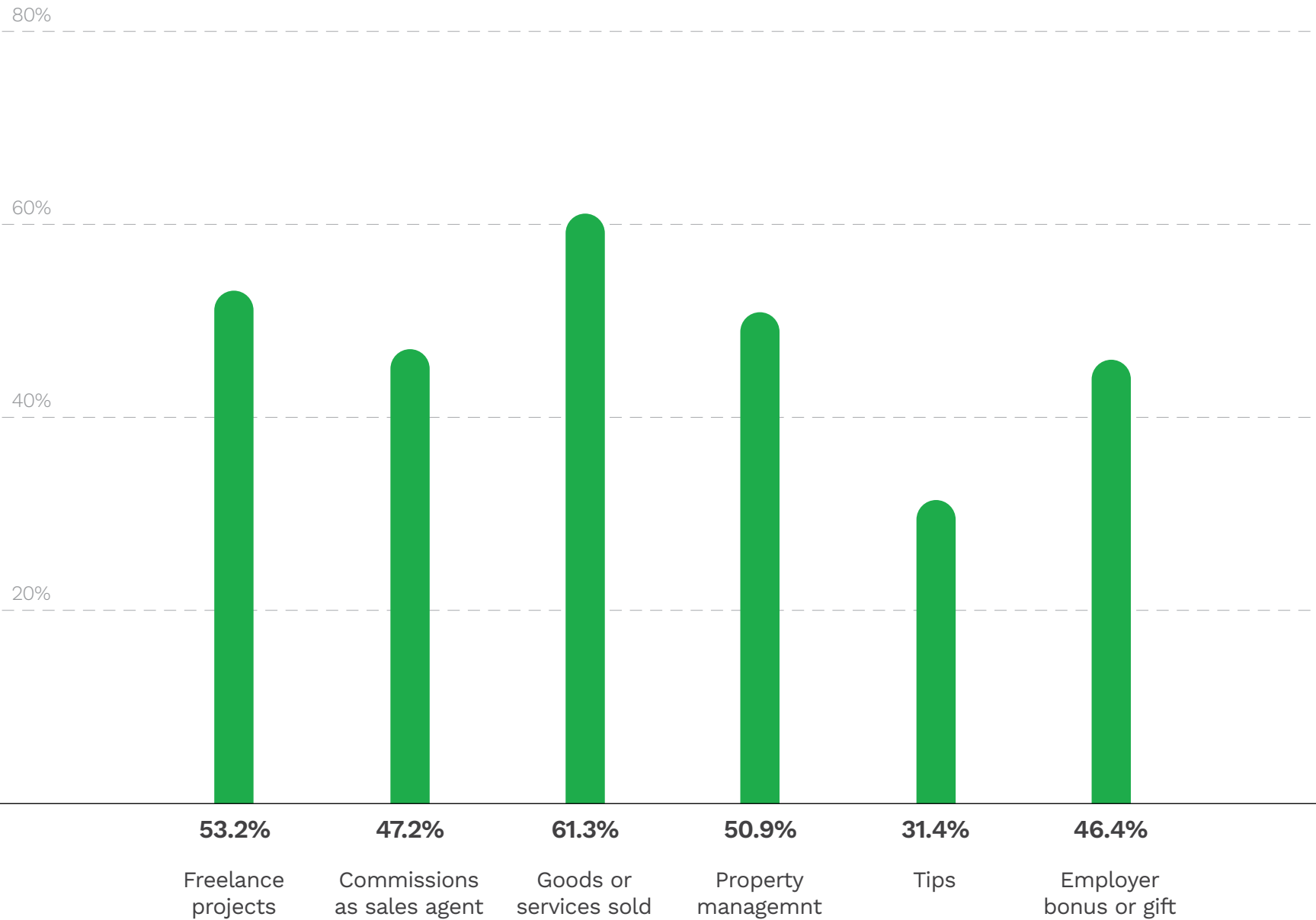
Higher disbursement volume boosts reliance on instant payments.

The data reveals that the more often a consumer receives disbursements, the more likely they are to want to receive their money instantly. Among respondents with more than 15 disbursements in the last year, 85% received at least one instant payment and 43% cite this as their most used method. For consumers with one to five disbursements, these rates drop to 52% and 30%, respectively. This gap highlights that consumers dealing with large volumes of disbursements find particularly high value in the convenience and speed of instant payments.



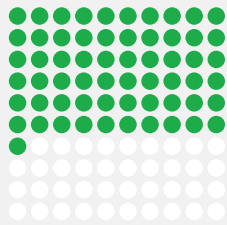
Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Instant Payouts: The New Paycheck for a Real-Time Economy, July 2025
N = 2,237: Complete responses, fielded May 2, 2025, to May 29, 2025

FIGURE 6:
Core cashflow users rely on instant disbursements for key income sources
Share of core cashflow recipients who used instant methods the most to receive select income and earnings disbursements



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Instant Payouts: The New Paycheck for a Real-Time Economy, July 2025
N = 403: Consumers classified as “core cashflow” receivers, fielded May 2, 2025, to May 29, 2025

61%



Share of core cashflow users who **sold goods or services online** cite instant payments as their primary method for receiving disbursements

Looking more closely at how core cashflow users receive disbursements reveals especially strong preferences for instant payouts for work-related income (as opposed to income from, say, selling a handbag online). For example, 61% of those with income from selling goods or services cite a form of instant payment as their go-to method. Roughly half of those with income from freelance projects (53%), property management (51%) or sales commissions (47%) say the same.

Urgency is a business model:

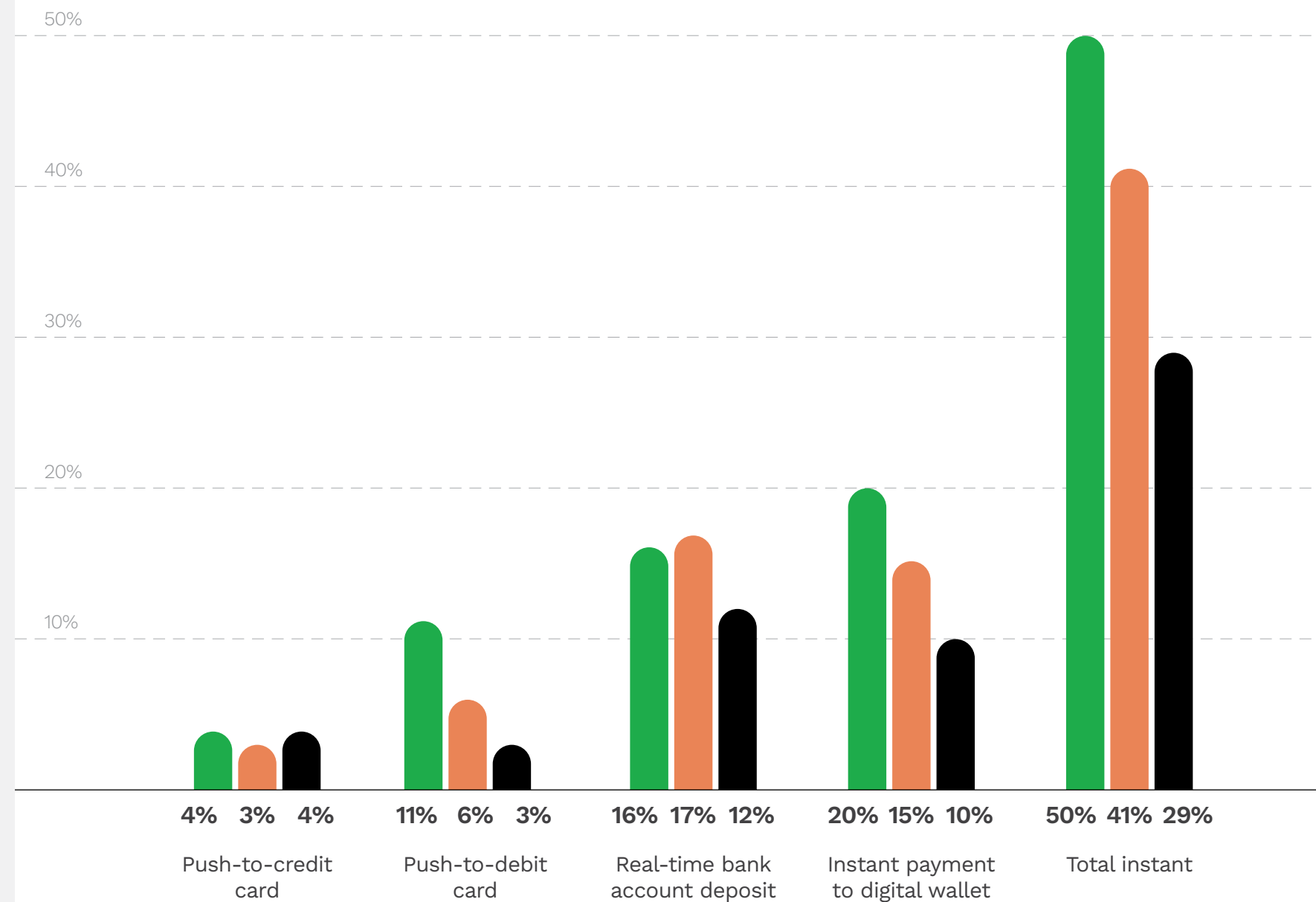
Consumers who rely on disbursements for core income are 60% more likely to pay to receive those payments instantly.

The more consumers rely on disbursements, the more likely they are to prefer instant payments. In fact, half of core cashflow consumers name a type of instant payment as their most-used method. This compares to 41% for the supplemental and 29% for the incidental cashflow groups. Among the core cashflow group, the most popular instant method is payments to digital wallets, at 20%, followed by real-time bank account deposits, at 16%, and push-to-debit or push-to-credit cards, at 11% and 4.4%, respectively. Notably, for other consumers, real-time bank deposits are a bit more popular than instant digital wallet payments, reflecting shifts in preferences as disbursements account for more of a consumer's income.

FIGURE 7:**Frequency of instant payments methods**

Consumers willing to pay a fee for using instant payments, by preferred method and over time

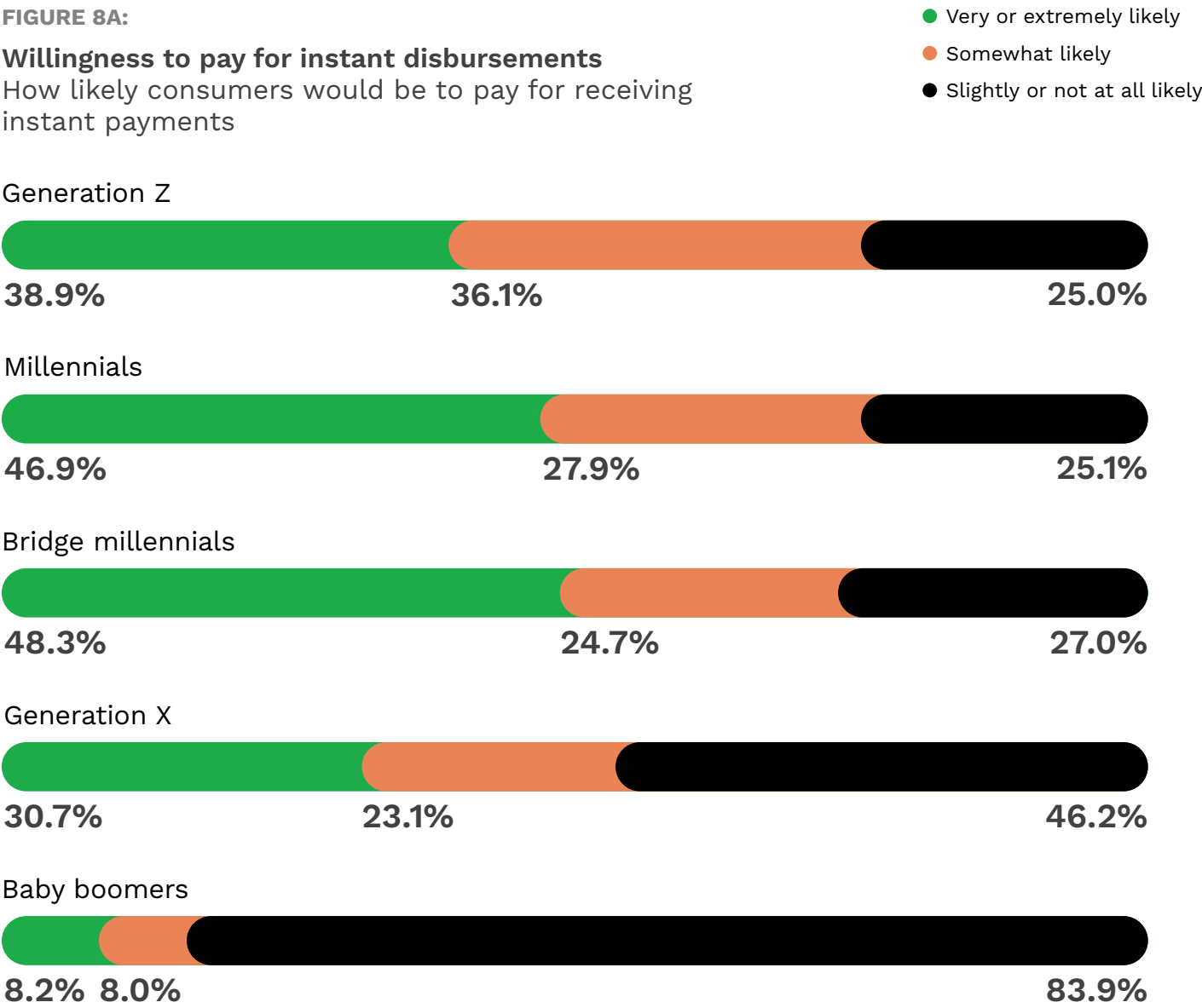
- Core money
- Supplemental money
- Incidental money



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
State of Digital Disbursements: Why Consumers Prefer Instant Payments, April 2025
N = 42,683: Consumer responses, fielded between 2018 and 2025

Reliance on disbursements makes consumers much more willing to pay to receive their funds instantly. Six in 10 core cashflow users say they would be very or extremely likely to open their pocketbooks, roughly four times the rate of the incidental group (15%) and twice the level of supplemental users (31%). More than four in 10 recipients of at least 15 disbursements in the past year would be very or extremely likely to pay for instant. Meanwhile, just 16% of those receiving up to five disbursements a year would be highly likely to pay.

Younger consumers are more likely to pay, likely because they depend on ad hoc payouts to supplement their income while in school—making speed a higher priority. Bridge millennials are the most willing generation to pay for instant disbursements, with 48% highly likely to do so, followed by millennials, at 47%, and Gen Z, at 39%. This drops to 31% for Gen X and just 8.2% for baby boomers. Another important factor is living paycheck to paycheck. Consumers who do so and struggle to pay bills are the most willing to pay for instant disbursements, with 38% highly likely, compared to 32% of those living paycheck to paycheck but still living comfortably, and 24% of those not living paycheck to paycheck.



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence

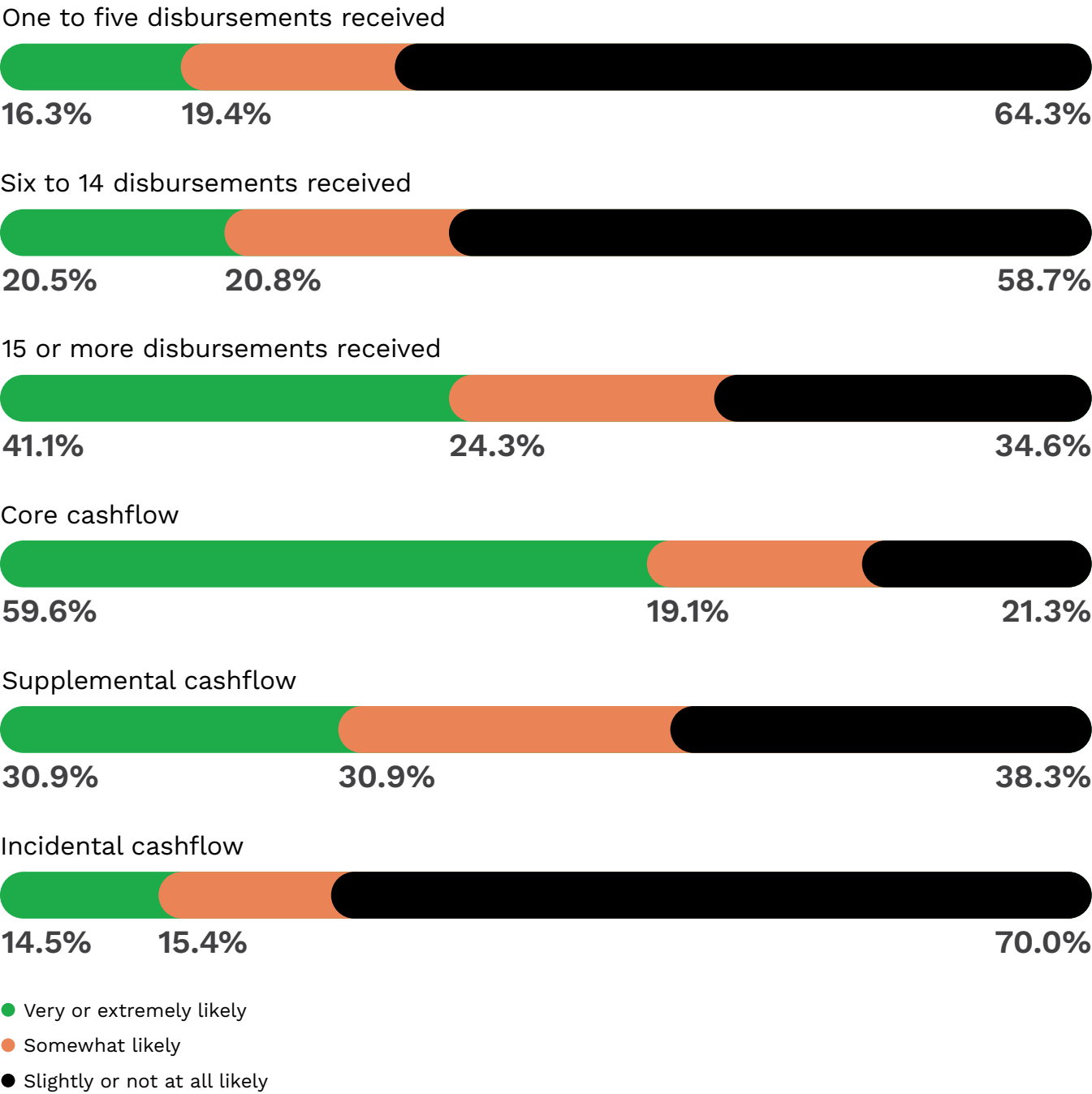
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FIGURE 8B:

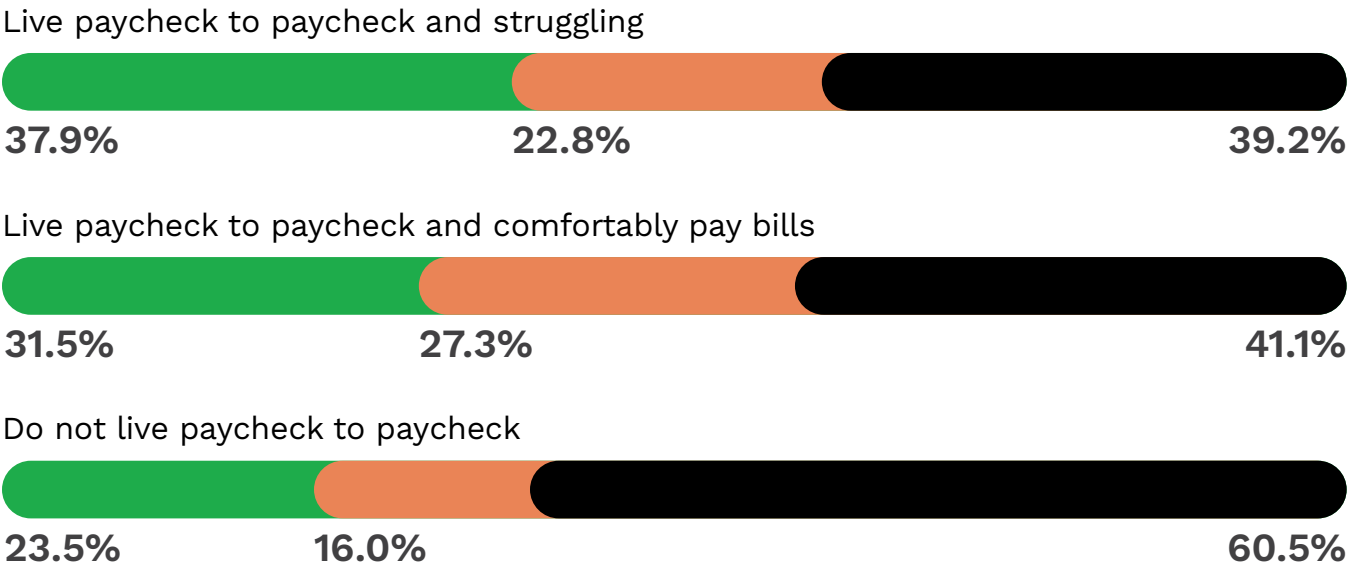
Willingness to pay for instant disbursements

How likely consumers would be to pay for receiving instant payments



41%

Share of consumers **receiving 15 or more disbursements per year** who would be highly likely to pay for using instant payments



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence

Instant Payouts: The New Paycheck for a Real-Time Economy, July 2025

N = 2,237: Complete responses; Consumers who received at least one disbursement in the last year, fielded May 2, 2025, to May 29, 2025

Gen Zers default to instant payments.

More than seven in 10 consumers received at least one instant disbursement in the last year, and 41% say they get more of their payments this way than via any other method. While rates are high across generations, younger individuals are the most enthusiastic adopters. This is especially true for Gen Z: 78% of consumers in this age group received at least one instant disbursement in the last year, and 45% cite this as their most-used method. Millennials follow close behind, at 75% and 43%, respectively. But older consumers use the method, too, with 65% of baby boomers receiving at least one payment this way in the last year, and 31% saying it is the method they use the most.

45%



Share of Gen Zers who cite instant payments as their **top way to receive disbursements**

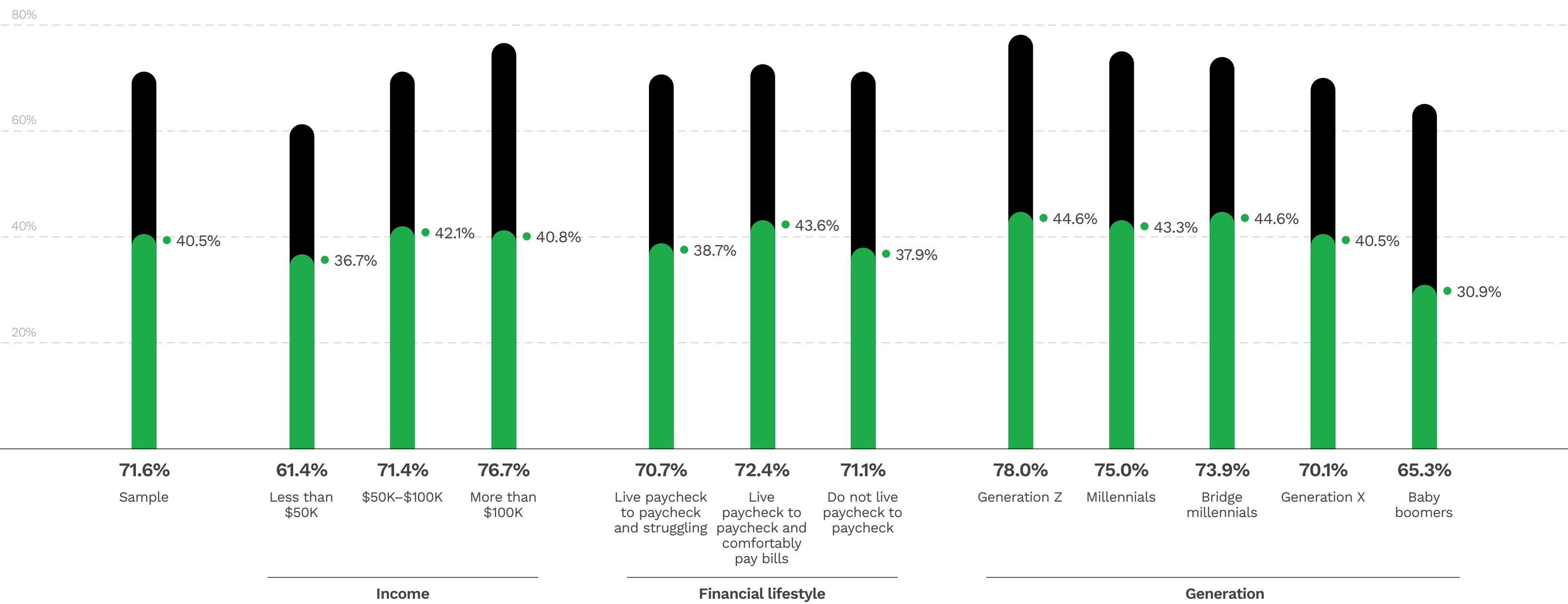
Meanwhile, consumers with higher incomes are the most likely to receive instant disbursements. Among individuals earning at least \$100,000 per year, more than three in four received at least one instant payment in the last year, and 42% say it is their go-to method. Meanwhile, 61% of those with annual incomes of less than \$50,000 received at least one instant disbursement, and 37% cited instant as the method they used most. Conversely, adoption rates are very similar regardless of whether consumers live paycheck to paycheck, underscoring that this is not a primary determinant of choosing instant disbursements.

FIGURE 9:

Instant payments adoption

How many consumers received instant disbursements in the last year

● Received instant payments as the most often method



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence

Instant Payouts: The New Paycheck for a Real-Time Economy, July 2025

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ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS



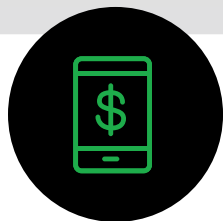
01

More and more Americans rely on instant payments as central to their financial lives. Over four in 10 consumers now receive more disbursements via instant payments than through any other method, revealing a large and growing preference for instant access to funds. This makes instant payments table stakes for financial services providers that offer loans and other borrowing tools, as well as marketplaces or platforms issuing payments to independent contractors.



03

Disbursement frequency drives demand for instant payments. Consumers who receive more payments are much more likely than average to cite an instant payment method as their go-to way of getting paid. The same is true for the core cashflow recipients who rely on disbursements for primary income. Offering products that meet the needs of these high-volume users can help financial services providers stand out from the competition.



02

For tens of millions of consumers, disbursements have replaced traditional paychecks. Millennials in particular are likely to rely on these payments for their primary income source. This dynamic is something that every consumer-focused bank and financial services provider needs to understand. Core cashflow recipients have very different needs than consumers with traditional, regular paychecks.



04

Instant payments are quickly becoming the default for younger consumers. Roughly three-quarters of Gen Z and millennial consumers use instant payments. But use rates are high for all demographic segments, even baby boomers, underscoring that consumers across segments will increasingly expect instant payments to be an option for receiving funds.



INSTANT PAYOUTS:

The New Paycheck for a Real-Time Economy

METHODOLOGY

Instant Payouts: The New Paycheck for a Real-Time Economy is based on insights from a survey of 4,054 consumers conducted from May 2, 2025, to May 29, 2025. The report examines the use of instant payments to receive disbursements and related consumer preferences and behaviors. Fifty-one percent of respondents in our sample are female, the average age was 47.6 years and 40.4% have an annual household income of more than \$100K.

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