

# GENERATION INSTANT:

How Freelancers Use Instant Payments  
to Reduce Financial Hardship



May 2024 Report

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Acknowledgment

Generation Instant: How Freelancers Use Instant Payments to Reduce Financial Hardship 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.

# Introduction

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Life as a freelancer is not easy. It requires constantly drumming up work while hoping for prompt payment after the product or service has been delivered. Moreover, consumers who work in freelance, contract or consulting work rely on disbursements for part, if not all, of their income.

The payments they receive are also typically larger. With disbursement payments making up a large portion of their income, failure to receive timely payment can lead to financial strain, especially because freelancers are more likely to live paycheck to paycheck than the average consumer. Freelancers identify instant payments as a solution to relieve the financial strain they face, making them more likely to choose this payment method.

In fact, the average freelancer is 17% more likely to select instant payments than the average consumer, and 84% report that they would choose instant payments if given the option. While speed and convenience are the most common reasons consumers give for selecting instant payments, freelancers are more likely to cite relief from financial strain as a reason they choose instant payments. Because they often need access to good funds urgently, nearly half of freelancers say they are willing to pay a fee to receive their payments instantly.

These are some of the insights explored in Generation Instant: How Freelancers Use Instant Payments to Reduce Financial Hardship, a PYMNTS Intelligence and Ingo Payments collaboration. This report is based on a census-balanced survey of 3,898 U.S. consumers conducted between Dec. 28, 2023, and Jan. 22, 2024, examining consumers' growing interest in and satisfaction with instant payment methods when receiving disbursements from government and nongovernment entities.

**This is what we learned.**



# THE ARCHITECTURE OF MONEY MOBILITY

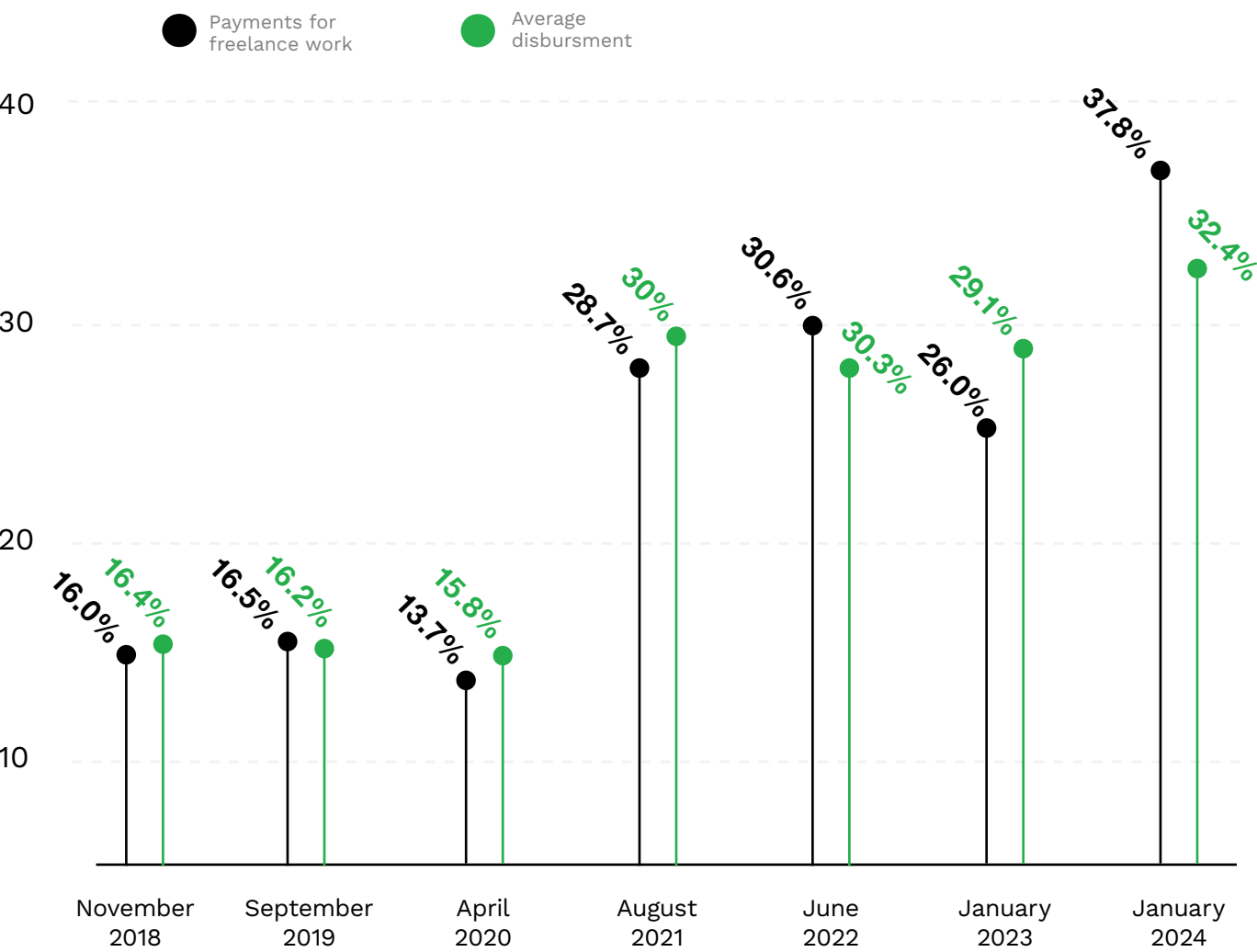


# Freelancers are 17% more likely to use instant payments than the average consumer, and 84% would choose instant payments if given the option.

The use of instant payments to receive disbursements has risen over the years, with instant payments for freelance work closely mirroring the average trends. In the last year, however, instant methods have become a more common way for consumers who perform free-lance, contract or consulting work to receive payment than they are for the average disbursement. Rising to a high of 38%, freelancers are 17% more likely to use instant than the average consumer.

Even as the portion of freelancers who have used instant methods to receive disbursements rose, the portion of freelancers who would use instant payments is far higher. In fact, 84% of freelancers would select instant payments if given the opportunity — 10% more than the average consumer. This indicates how much freelancers value the quick access to funds instant payment methods provide.

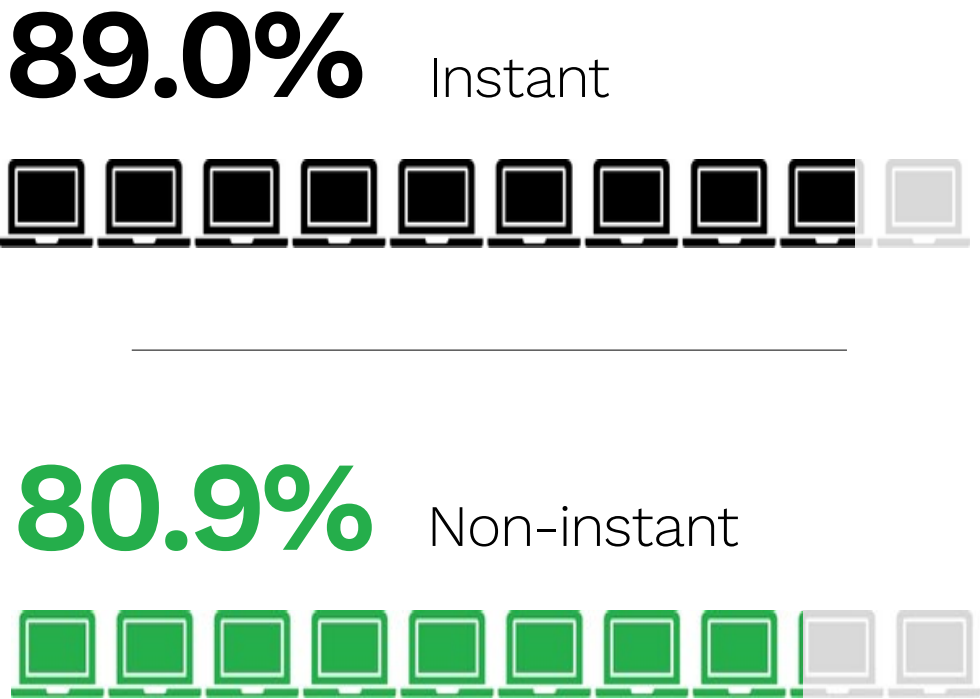
**FIGURE 1:**  
**Freelancers’ use of instant payment methods**  
Share of consumers using instant payments to receive disbursements, by whether the disbursement was for freelance work



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence  
**Generation Instant: How Freelancers Use Instant Payments to Reduce Financial Hardship, May 2024**  
N = 2,237: Complete responses, fielded Dec. 28, 2023 – Jan. 22, 2024

Since fast access to good funds is so important to their livelihoods, it is little surprise that consumers doing freelance, contract or consulting work report more satisfaction with instant than non-instant methods. Among consumers who did paid freelance work, 89% reported being very or extremely satisfied when they received payment via instant methods — 10% more satisfied than those paid via non-instant options. The high levels of interest and satisfaction among freelancers using instant payments suggests that their use of instant payments is poised to grow rapidly if demand is met.

**FIGURE 2:**  
**Freelancers’ satisfaction with payment methods**  
Share of freelancers highly satisfied with the method they use most to receive payments



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence  
**How Freelancers Use Instant Payments to Reduce Financial Hardship, May 2024**  
N = 411: Respondents who received payments for freelance work in the last 12 months, fielded Dec. 28, 2023 – Jan. 22, 2024

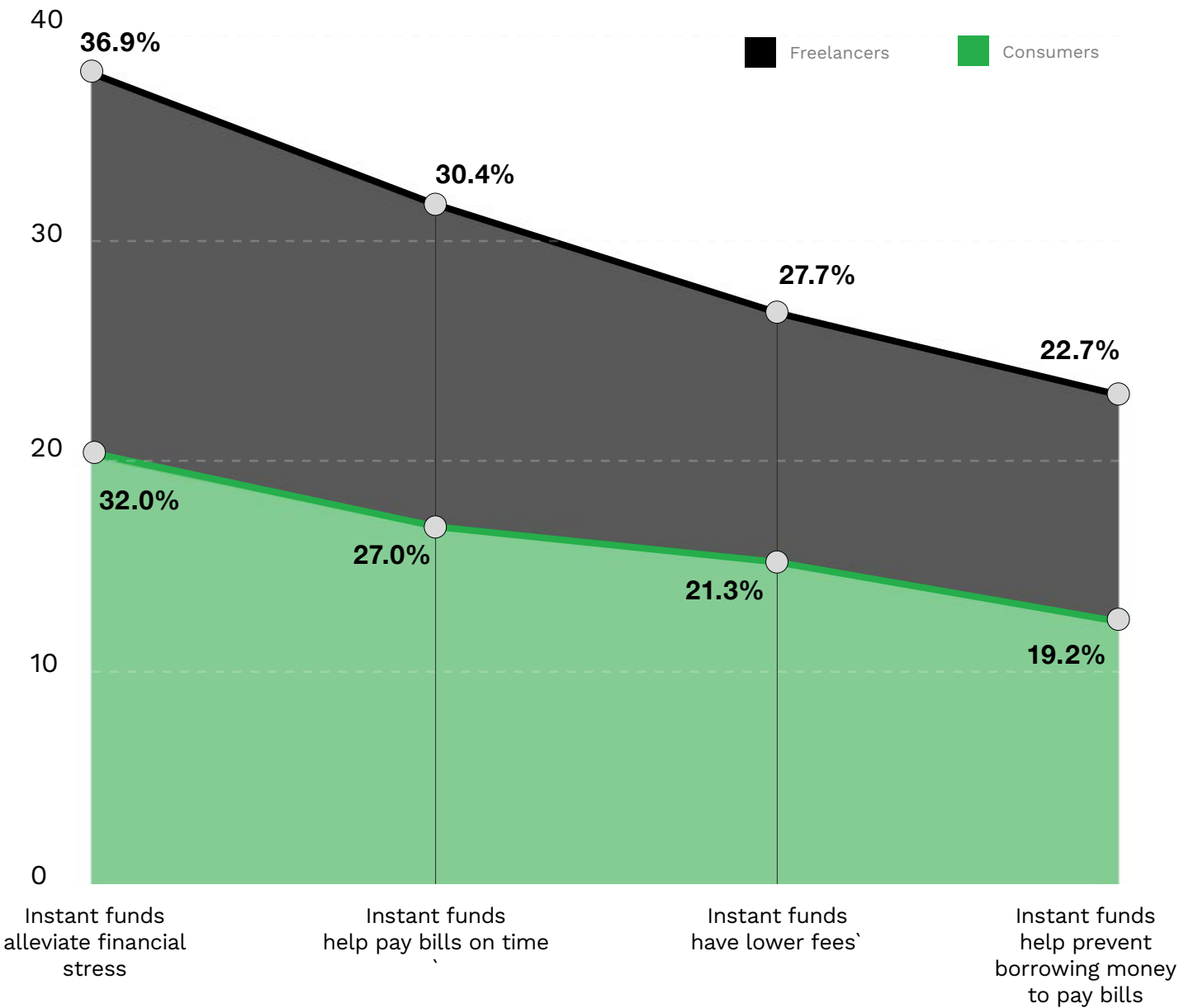


# Instant payments are especially important to freelancers because they help reduce the financial strain of late payments.

Both freelancers and the average consumer agree that convenience and speed are the most appealing benefits of instant payments. Freelancers, however, are more likely to say they use instant payments to relieve financial strain. In fact, 37% of freelancers — 15% more than the sample average — prefer instant because immediately available funds relieve financial stress. In addition, 30% prefer instant payments because they help them pay their bills on time — 13% more than the average consumer.

Meanwhile, 28% of freelancers note that instant payments are cheaper than alternate payment methods and save them money — 30% more than the sample average. Twenty-three percent — 18% more than the average consumer — report that receiving funds instantly helps them avoid borrowing money to pay their bills, implying an indirect method of saving, since they would not have to pay interest on loans. The need to receive funds as soon as possible after providing a product or service helps explain why freelancers use instant payments at higher rates than the average consumer.

**FIGURE 3:**  
**Freelancers’ reasons for using instant pay**  
Share of consumers who primarily use instant payments to receive disbursements citing select reasons for using that method



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence  
**Generation Instant: How Freelancers Use Instant Payments to Reduce Financial Hardship, May 2024**  
N = 1,032: Respondents who are very or extremely likely to choose to receive disbursements via instant payments, fielded Dec. 28, 2023 – Jan. 22, 2024

## Nearly half of freelancers would be willing to pay a fee to receive their payments instantly, especially for larger payouts.

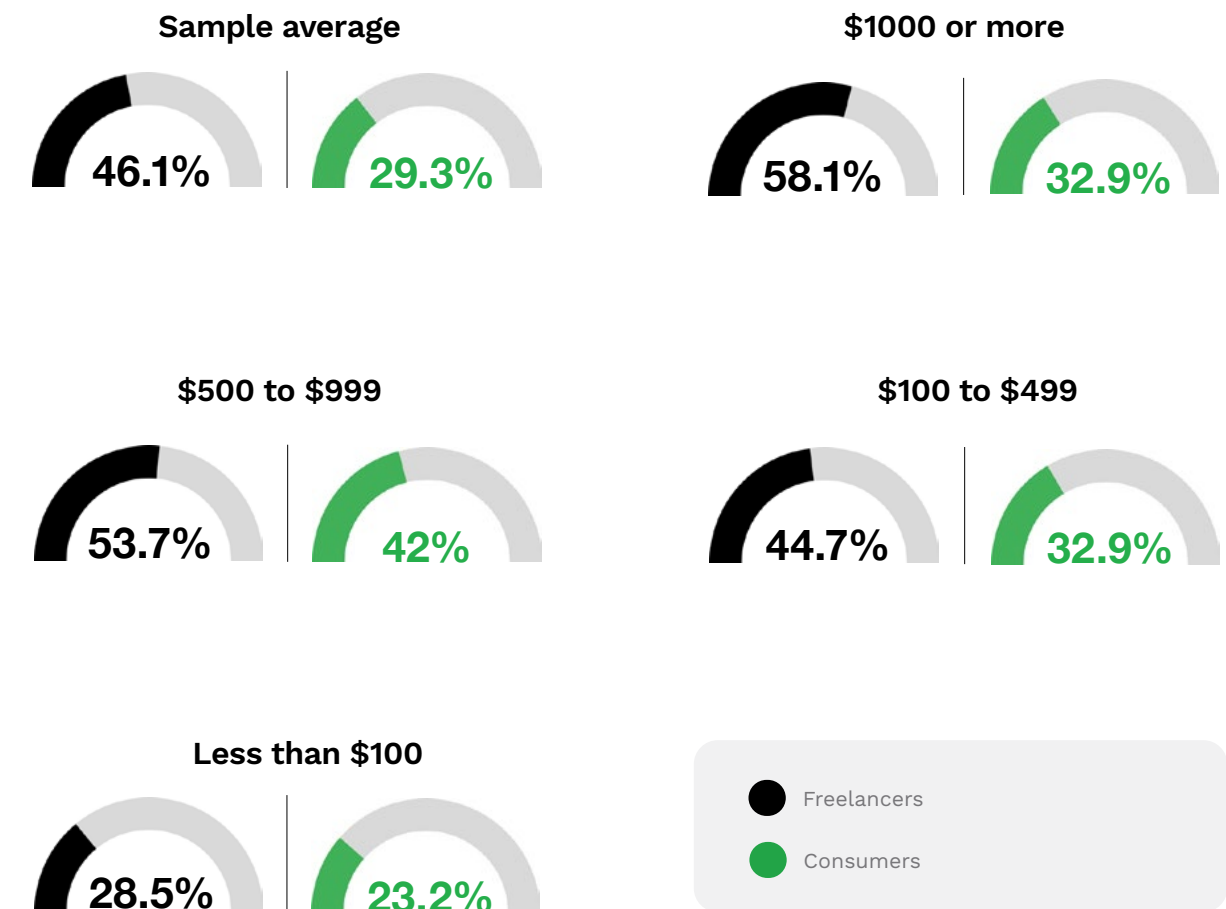
**Freelancers' need for immediately available funds helps explain their greater willingness than the average consumer to pay a fee to receive funds instantly.** While 29% of consumers are willing to pay a fee to receive payments instantly, 46% of freelancers say the same. In fact, freelancers grow increasingly more willing to pay a fee as the value of the payment rises, peaking at 58% willing to pay if the payment is more than \$1,000.

Freelancers are also willing to pay more for instant disbursements. Data shows that 50% prefer to pay a fixed fee, with those who prefer fixed fees willing to pay up to \$3.11 to receive payments instantly. The average consumer who is willing to pay only wants to pay \$2.50. Freelancers are also more interested in paying a percentage fee than the average consumer: 30% of freelancers prefer percentage fees, compared to 25% of all consumers. Freelancers who prefer percentage fees would pay up to 1.6% of the disbursement value to receive payments instantly, while the average consumer is only willing to pay 1.3%.

**FIGURE 4:**

### Willingness to pay for instant

Share of consumers who would be very or extremely likely to pay a fee to receive disbursements instantly, by freelancer status and typical size of payment



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence

**Generation Instant: How Freelancers Use Instant Payments to Reduce Financial Hardship, May 2024**

N = 2,237: Complete responses, fielded Dec. 28, 2023 – Jan. 22, 2024

That freelancers are willing to pay more than the average consumer for instant pay further indicates how important quick access to good funds is to their cash flow and financial stability.



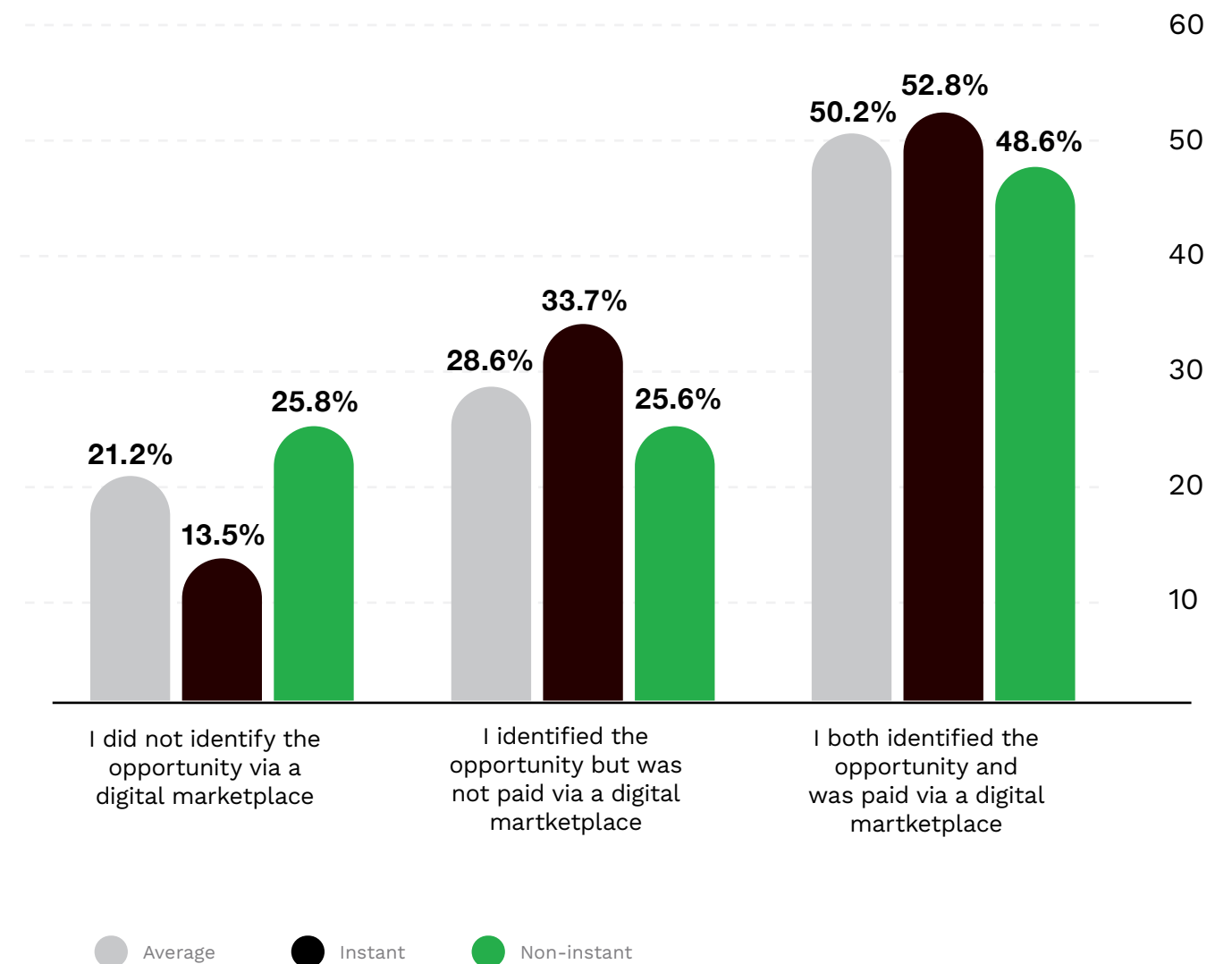
## Eight in 10 freelancers use digital marketplaces to sell their goods and services, which drives up instant payment usage.

**Freelancers who receive instant payouts are more likely to use digital marketplaces.** In fact, 34% of freelancers who receive payments via instant methods found opportunities via a digital marketplace, while 53% both found the opportunity and received payment via a digital marketplace. Just 13% of freelancers who receive payments via instant methods did not find freelance or consulting opportunities via digital marketplaces. That freelancers are heavily reliant on digital marketplaces that offer instant payments suggests marketplaces could play a key role in boosting instant use among freelancers.

**FIGURE 5:**

### The role of digital marketplaces in freelancers' work

Share of freelancers who cite digital marketplaces as playing select roles in their sales of goods or services across instant payment usage



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence

**How Freelancers Use Instant Payments to Reduce Financial Hardship, May 2024**

N = 411: Respondents who received payments for freelance work in the last 12 months, fielded Dec. 28, 2023 – Jan. 22, 2024

## CONCLUSION

Life as a freelancer can be challenging, with managing one's finances while awaiting payment a key concern. It is no surprise then that instant payment options are especially popular among freelancers, rating higher in usage and satisfaction than the average consumer. Even though freelancers increasingly prefer instant payouts, they are not always given the option. This is true even though freelancers are more willing than the average consumer to pay for instant to receive payments because they often urgently need funds to pay their monthly expenses. Most freelancers rely on digital marketplaces, which also means they are more likely to receive instant payments.

This suggests that digital marketplaces that do not provide an instant payment option are missing an opportunity to attract and retain talent, since many freelancers expect and value instant pay to reduce financial stress and support their livelihoods.

## METHODOLOGY

Generation Instant: How Freelancers Use Instant Payments to Reduce Financial Hardship, a PYMNTS Intelligence and Ingo Payments collaboration, is based on a census-balanced survey of 3,898 U.S. consumers conducted between Dec. 28, 2023, and Jan. 22, 2024, examining consumers' growing interest in and satisfaction with instant payment methods when receiving disbursements from government and nongovernment entities. Our sample was balanced to match the U.S. adult population in a set of key demographic variables: 51% of respondents identified as female, 32% had a college degree, 38% earned more than \$100,000 annually and 29% were millennials.

# ABOUT

**PYMNTS**  
INTELLIGENCE

**PYMNTS Intelligence** is a leading global data and analytics platform that uses proprietary data and methods to provide actionable insights on what’s now and what’s next in payments, commerce and the digital economy. Its team of data scientists include leading economists, econometricians, survey experts, financial analysts and marketing scientists with deep experience in the application of data to the issues that define the future of the digital transformation of the global economy. This multilingual team has conducted original data collection and analysis in more than three dozen global markets for some of the world’s leading publicly traded and privately held firms.

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**INGO** Payments

**Ingo Payments** is the money mobility company. Founded in 2001, it provides technology platforms and expert risk management to FinTechs, banks and businesses that enable safe and instant money movement, from any source to any destination. Ingo’s solutions power deposits and transfers for inbound and outbound money flows, cross-platform P2P and digital payouts, with network reach to more than 4.5 billion bank accounts, cards, digital wallets and cash-out locations. This transformation of traditional payments helps businesses reduce cost and delays while dramatically improving the consumer experience. Headquartered in Alpharetta, Georgia, Ingo employs more than 200 professionals and serves some of the largest brands in North America.

We are interested in your feedback on this report. If you have questions or comments, or if you would like to subscribe to this report, please email us at [feedback@pymnts.com](mailto:feedback@pymnts.com).

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