

PYMNTS
INTELLIGENCE

INGO Payments

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Instant Shift: How Choice, Certainty and Convenience Are Driving Demand for Instant Payments

Money Mobility Tracker® Series

Instant payments are quickly becoming a standard option for consumer disbursements, driven by ever-growing demand for choice, certainty and convenience. Is instant the '2.0' of the digital shift — and has it arrived?

■ Read the previous edition



APRIL 2025

Money Mobility
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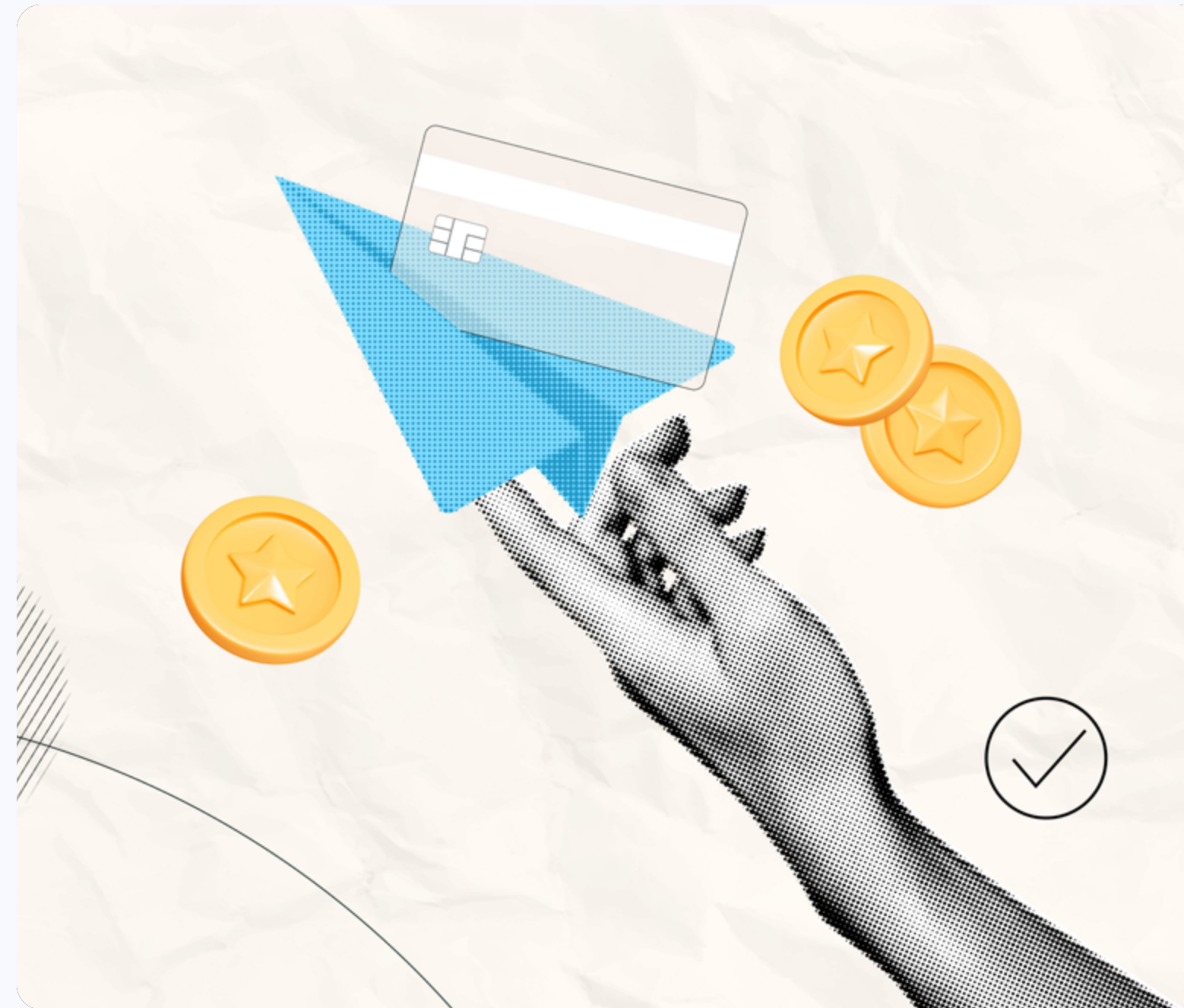
Acknowledgment

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Introduction

By all accounts, 2025 is becoming a watershed year for [real-time payments](#). Factors are coalescing to bring about a turning point in their transition from niche payment method to mainstream preference. According to new PYMNTS Intelligence data, instant payments — once an unconventional concept — have become the transaction method of choice for nearly one-third of nongovernment [disbursement receivers](#), up sharply over the past year.

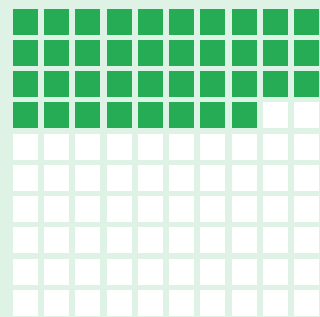
Consumers' increasingly digital lives have undoubtedly raised the bar on expectations for payment choice and convenience, making instant payments a natural go-to. However, this spike signals more than just a continued evolution of those demands. Instead, our research suggests it represents a new shift, driven chiefly by a need for immediate access to funds and the assurance of their ready availability. As all three of these factors — choice, certainty and convenience — work in concert, they are driving instant payments toward becoming the next normal of consumer digital demand.



A Growing Preference

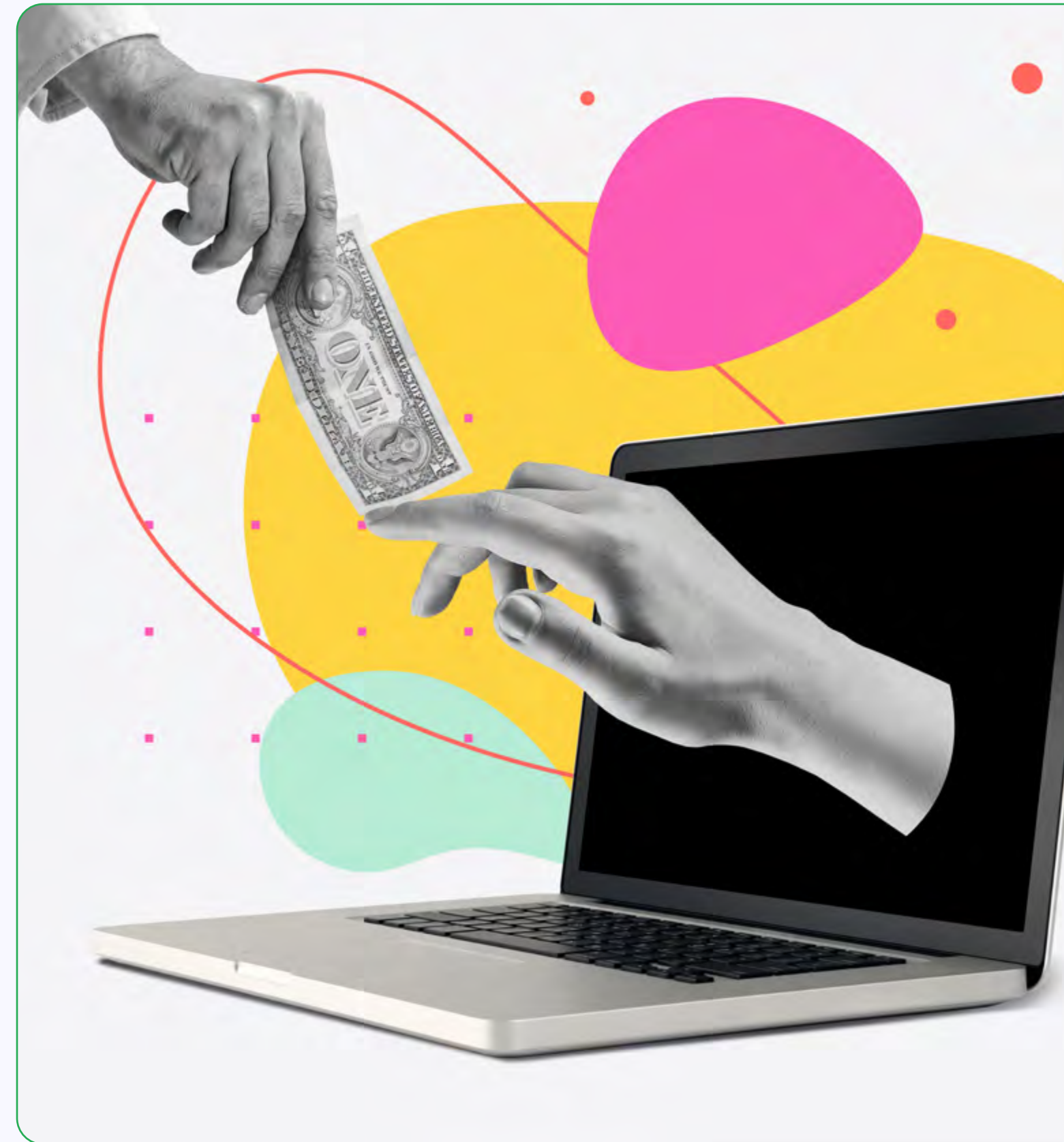
Instant Options Become Payments of Choice

Consumers are increasingly interested in choosing instant disbursements over multiple other payment options, even if they must pay for the choice.



38%

of consumers were receiving most nongovernment disbursements instantly in January 2025, up from just 4.1% in 2017.



A Growing Preference

Nearly 10 times as many consumers use instant payments now as did in 2017.

According to new PYMNTS Intelligence research, the share of consumers who receive nongovernment disbursements chiefly through [instant payments](#) has grown nearly tenfold since 2017. This proportion rose from just 4.1% that year to nearly 38% in January 2025, including a notable recent surge from 32% in January 2023. Over the past 10 years, instant payment preference grew steadily across every disbursement category surveyed, with borrowing, income and legal settlements making up the top three categories.

The shift to instant reflects a conscious consumer choice.

Of the 38% of consumers this year using primarily instant for these disbursements, 27% specifically [chose instant](#) over other options — up 4.9% year over year — while just 11% used instant as the only option offered. This preference was particularly strong among receivers of borrowing disbursements, 33% of whom chose instant over multiple options — a 38% jump from last year. Meanwhile, the share of consumers who said they would choose instant if given the option shot from 47% in 2023 to 56% this year — up 19%.

Moreover, as instant payments become more commonly available, consumers are showing a greater willingness to pay for these services. Nearly half (47%) of disbursement receivers indicated an openness to [paying extra fees](#) for instant transactions, especially when funds are urgently needed. The rising preference for instant over other payment methods reflects a shift in how consumers are managing their daily expenses, with instant payments offering a level of certainty and control that is increasingly in demand.

A Growing Preference

As demand grows, instant solutions are on the rise.

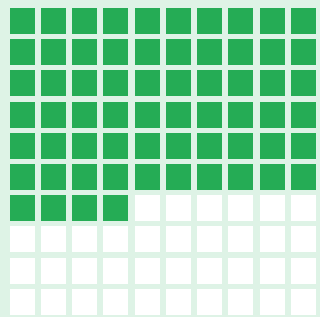
Instant payments' popularity is reflected in the burgeoning of available options. For example, Ingo Payments and ACI Worldwide are partnering to help bring faster payments further mainstream. The solution, known as [ACI Speedpay Digital Disbursements](#), supports a wide range of disbursement methods, including instant payments, PayPal/Venmo, automated clearing house (ACH) and signature debit. Digital and faster disbursements not only speed up processing but also deliver funds when recipients need them most, such as in the aftermath of a natural disaster. These needs underline the growing role of certainty in fueling instant payments' popularity.



Consumer Economics: The Need for Certainty

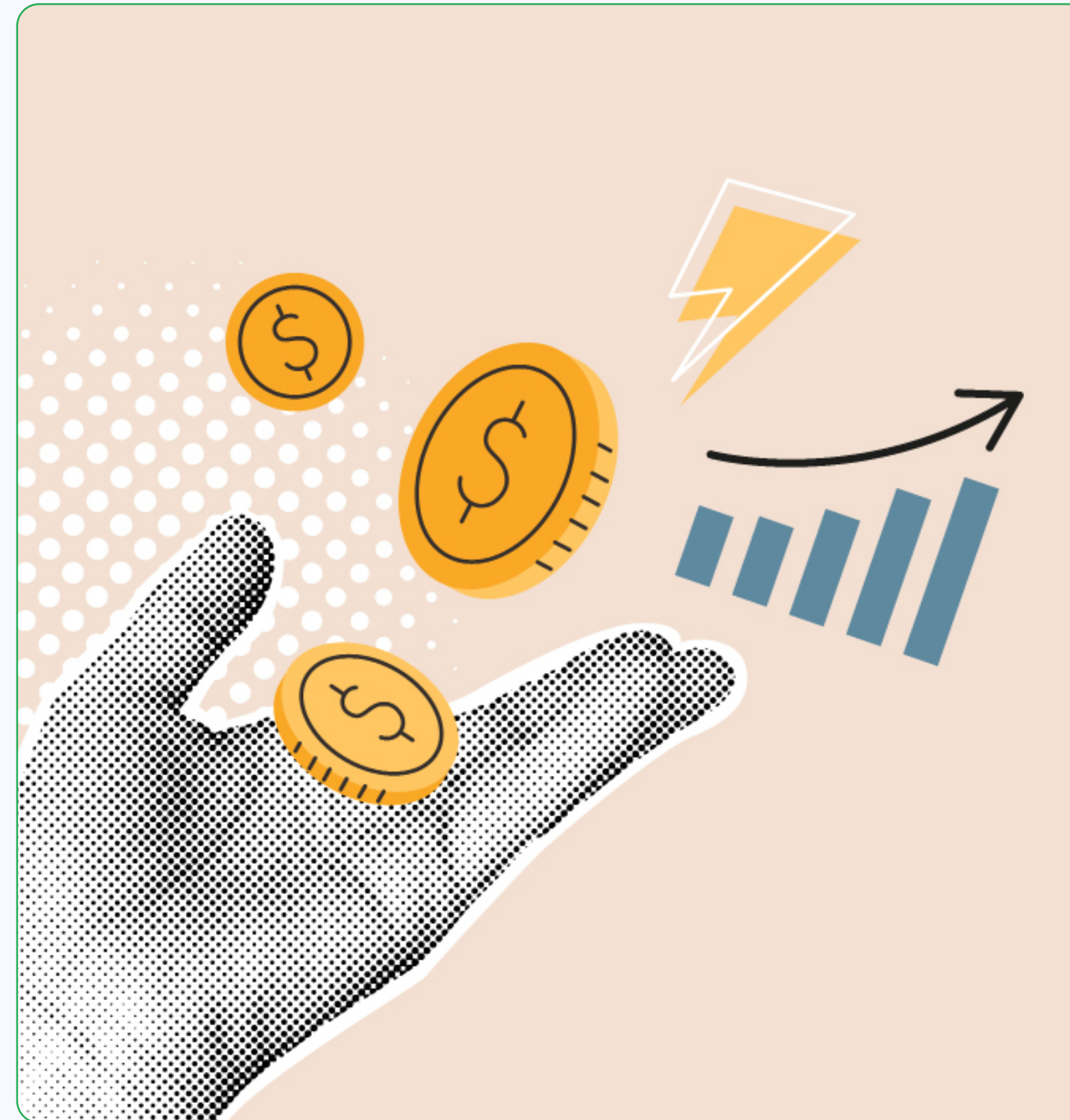
Consumers Seek Instant 'Peace of Mind'

Certainty of availability is a main driver of instant payments' popularity, as quick access to funds is essential when facing financial needs and constraints.



64%

of borrowing receivers cite financial need as their reason for wanting instant disbursements.



Consumer Economics: The Need for Certainty

‘Peace of mind’ is the top driver of instant payment usage.

PYMNTS Intelligence research revealed that certainty of funds’ availability is a significant factor driving the shift to [instant payments](#). Of consumers’ many reasons given for favoring instant disbursements, “peace of mind from having the funds in my account” was the single most prevalent, cited by 32%. Nearly one in five (18%) named it their “most important” reason.

At the same time, when all the reasons representing financial need were aggregated — including bills, emergency expenses, essential items, debt repayments and financial constraint — that aggregate became the biggest reason, cited by more than half of those surveyed. For example, 64% of borrowing disbursement receivers wanted their funds instantly for reasons of financial need. These findings suggest that increasing financial pressures are playing a key role in consumers’ heightened interest in instant payments.



Consumer Economics: The Need for Certainty

Refund delays cause more angst than dental visits for nearly four in 10 consumers.

Illustrating the importance of [funds' immediacy](#), another recent study found that 37% of Americans would rather visit the dentist than wait more than seven days for a refund. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63%) wanted same-day refunds, up 12% over last year, highlighting the growing urgency of faster payments. Retailers that do not offer instant refunds may find themselves punished: Nearly half of consumers said they would avoid patronizing businesses with slow refund policies.

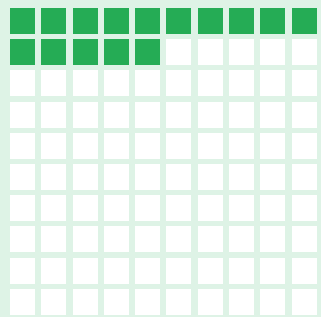
“Refunds are no longer the anonymous back end of the payment system where money just goes to die — they are a defining moment in the customer experience,” TodayPay founder and CEO Jeremy Balkin said in a press release. “For merchants that get refund payment choice right, the reward is loyalty, higher customer satisfaction and repeat sales.”



The Convenience Factor

Digital Wallets Drive Instant Payment Usage

As instant payments become more prevalent, so does consumers' interest in receiving them into their digital and mobile wallets, showcasing a growing preference for convenience.



15%

of recipients in January 2025 received instant payments most often to a digital wallet, nearly double the share one year earlier.



The Convenience Factor

Digital wallets are a vehicle driving instant payments forward.

Although consumers receiving instant payments typically lean toward direct-to-bank deposits, PYMNTS Intelligence finds that [digital wallets](#) are quickly surfacing as a driver of instant payment usage. In January 2025, 15% of disbursement receivers said they received instant payments to a digital wallet most often, up from 14% in July 2024 and 7.8% in January 2024. The increased use of digital wallets to receive instant disbursements suggests that consumers are looking to maximize convenience by leveraging tools that offer speed and ease in both receipt and spending.



The Convenience Factor

The growing synergy with digital wallets could be a force multiplier for instant payments' adoption.

A recent study supports the idea of convenience fueling adoption, and instant payments could not have a better enabler than digital wallets. The study found that choice and [convenience](#) are consumers' top priorities when receiving payouts, both at 96%, second only to security, at 97%. The study also reported that 70% of consumers use mobile wallets at least weekly, and more than one-quarter plan to increase their usage this year. Finally, immediate access to funds emerged as an overwhelming consumer priority, with 79% of those surveyed willing to pay a top fee to obtain it. As digital wallets continue to drive instant payment usage, strengthening the [integration](#) of the two will be key to meeting consumers' expectations.



Call to Action

Instant Payments: The 2.0 of Digital Demand

Digital shift 2.0 is underway as instant payments rapidly move from an emerging innovation to the new standard for digital transactions. This is being driven in part by a fundamental shift in consumer expectations for payment speed, choice and convenience. Today's customers increasingly expect immediate access to their funds and are gravitating toward businesses that deliver on these demands. Moreover, demand is growing for payment certainty to ensure consumers' peace of mind in the face of financial need.

“Real-time payments give businesses more than speed — they unlock trust, loyalty, and set the stage for deeper account relationships that drive long-term growth.”

DREW EDWARDS
CEO



As instant payment options evolve from a competitive advantage to a core requirement, businesses that fail to provide seamless, real-time payouts risk losing both new and existing customers. As we move through 2025 and beyond, instant payments will define a new era of digital commerce — making now the time for organizations to take the lead in this transformation.

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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