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2025 Payouts Landscape

How consumer-centric innovations are driving the payout evolution

In the next era of digital payments, differentiation is in the details

In 2025, digital payouts aren't just preferred—they're essential. Almost all Americans (98%) use digital payment methods at least once per month, and 83% have received corporate payouts via digital channels. With barriers to digital adoption largely removed for businesses and consumers alike, the next phase of payments evolution isn't about providing access—it's about continual innovation to reflect deeper consumer priorities.

As the economic landscape shifts, the stakes are high to transform the payouts strategy into a competitive advantage. The Consumer Confidence Index dropped to 98.3 in February 2025, marking its lowest point since June 2024 and the largest monthly decline in over three years¹. Persistent inflation, high interest rates, and economic uncertainty are causing consumers to reassess their spending habits, cut back on non-essentials and place a greater emphasis on value-driven decisions. In this

environment, consumer retention is critical—and it's imperative that businesses proactively invest in digital experiences that strengthen consumer trust and build long-term engagement.

In today's digital-first world, **enhancements to security, choice, speed, and flexibility will be the new differentiators, helping businesses to set themselves apart and operate more efficiently.** Companies that focus on incremental innovations—such as optimizing digital payouts to be faster, more secure, and tailored to consumer preferences—will ultimately lead the way in retaining and engaging customers.

In this report, the second edition of **Onbe** and **NRG's** annual review of the corporate payouts landscape, we'll explore how businesses can stand out, why now is the time to move beyond the status quo, and how brands can implement payout strategies that drive long-term success.

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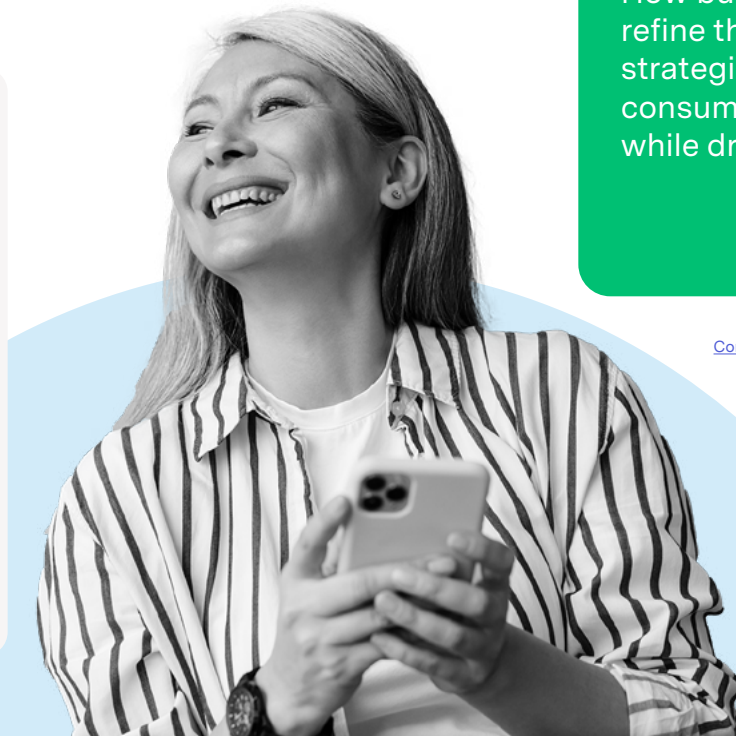
How businesses can refine their payouts strategies to meet consumers' expectations while driving loyalty

METHODOLOGY

Unless otherwise noted, data in this paper comes from a study of 1,504 US consumers, ages 18 and above, who have made a payment or received a payout in the last year, conducted online in January 2025. Respondents had to complete an 11-minute survey about their personal spending habits and their preferences when receiving payouts and incentives.

This paper also draws comparisons to the previous edition of this study conducted in January 2024, based on a survey of 1,594 US consumers selected using the same criteria. Participants for both studies were weighted to be demographically representative of the US in terms of age, gender, and ethnicity.

Onbe and NRG's annual report is an iteration of Onbe's previous yearly payments survey, formerly the Future of Payments.



¹The Conference Board, "[US Consumer Confidence Dropped Sharply in February](#)," PR Newswire, February 25th, 2025

As the corporate payouts market continues to digitize, businesses must innovate to stay ahead

Corporate payouts volume has expanded since last year, with 80% of consumers now receiving between one and ten payouts per month, excluding payroll and compensation payouts—an 8-point increase from 2024. Compared to last year, more consumers now report receiving rebates (+7pts), loyalty payments (+4pts), and customer incentives (+3pts), among other types of payouts. **This growth indicates a substantial opportunity for businesses to further optimize their disbursement strategies to operate more efficiently and meet evolving consumer expectations, preparing for the next wave of digital innovation.**

With corporate payouts continuing to increase and digital payments becoming an expectation, rather than a nice-to-have, the need for innovation will only become more urgent.

Consumers are looking for instant, seamless, and secure access to their funds; something traditional methods like checks cannot provide due to mailing delays, processing times, and other logistical hurdles. Today, **88% of consumers say they prefer digital payment methods**, especially when receiving larger payments. And if the past 12 months serve as any indication, we should expect consumers' appetite for digital payments to continue to grow in 2025.

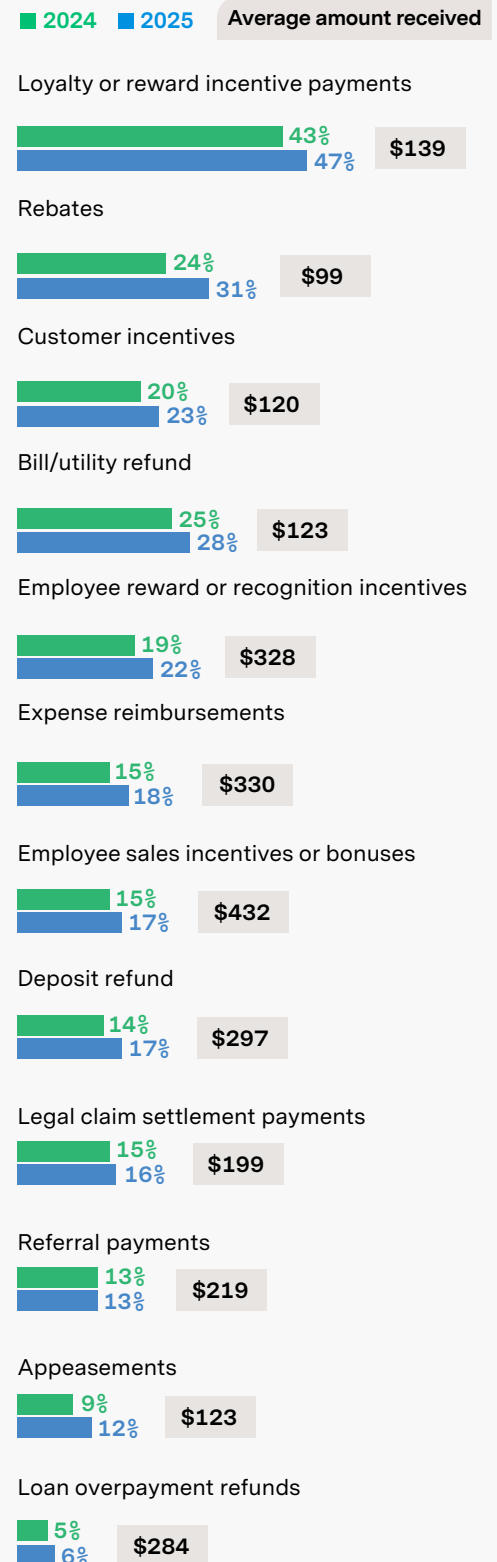
For businesses not already offering digital payouts, now is the time to adapt and embrace digital as a baseline expectation. But even though digital payments are now considered a default option, there's still room for differentiation.

80%
of consumers now receive between one and ten payouts per month—an 8-point increase from 2024

[Click here to find definitions of payout terms and payment modalities outlined in this paper.](#)

Corporate payouts received by consumers

Percentage of consumers who received each type of payout within the last 12 months



Innovation in payment security, convenience, and choice can help businesses differentiate by delivering on consumer expectations

Consumers' priorities when receiving payouts and incentives in 2025

Security, choice, and convenience remain consumers' top priorities in 2025, indicating untapped opportunity for digital enhancements. Success in the payouts arena lies in the details: getting them right can improve engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty at a critical touchpoint. By integrating advanced fraud protection, a range of payout methods, and more seamless experiences, companies can build trust and loyalty while meeting the high expectations of today's digitally savvy consumers.

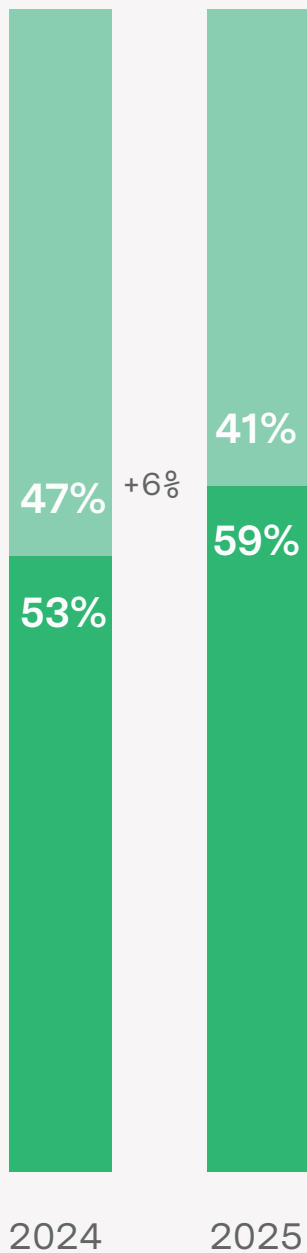
RANK	ATTRIBUTE	PERCENTAGE ²
#1	Security 52% of consumers are more concerned about physical payments getting lost or stolen than digital payments	97%
#2	Choice On average, consumers report having at least two preferred payout methods	96%
#3	Convenience 70% would consider abandoning funds if they found the payout process cumbersome	96%
#4	Flexibility 48% prefer to use different payment methods depending on the payout size	93%
#5	Speed 73% would be dissatisfied with a payout experience if it took longer than one week to receive their funds	86%



²Percentage of consumers who say this factor is important to them when receiving payouts

Q: Which types of payments do you believe are more secure?

- Physical payments
- Digital and electronic payments



Customers expect secure payouts—and it's on the business to deliver

Security remains the number one priority for consumers receiving payouts. **Ninety-seven percent consider it to be the most important factor when choosing a disbursement method**, and 59% believe that digital payments are more secure than physical options—a six-point increase compared to last year.

Although the majority of consumers say they received payouts without issue in 2024, 28% reported a payout being lost, stolen, or sent to the wrong recipient—issues disproportionately tied to physical payout methods.

These security issues are top of mind for consumers, with over half (52%) now expressing greater concern over physical payment

being lost or stolen than a digital one. The United States Postal Service has even issued public warnings about the dangers of sending checks in the mail— noting that mail-theft-related check fraud has surged in recent years, up 385% since March 2020³.

With a digital-first payment solution, businesses can reduce the risk and expense of fraud, while providing recipients with the secure choices they prefer. In recent years, providers have taken steps to incorporate advanced fraud protection, encryption, and biometric technology into their payout solutions—making security protocols more seamless to ensure payments are not just fraud-resistant but convenient to access and spend.

³Tara Siegel Bernard, "[We Can't Stop Writing Paper Checks. Thieves Love That.](#)" The New York Times, December 9th, 2023

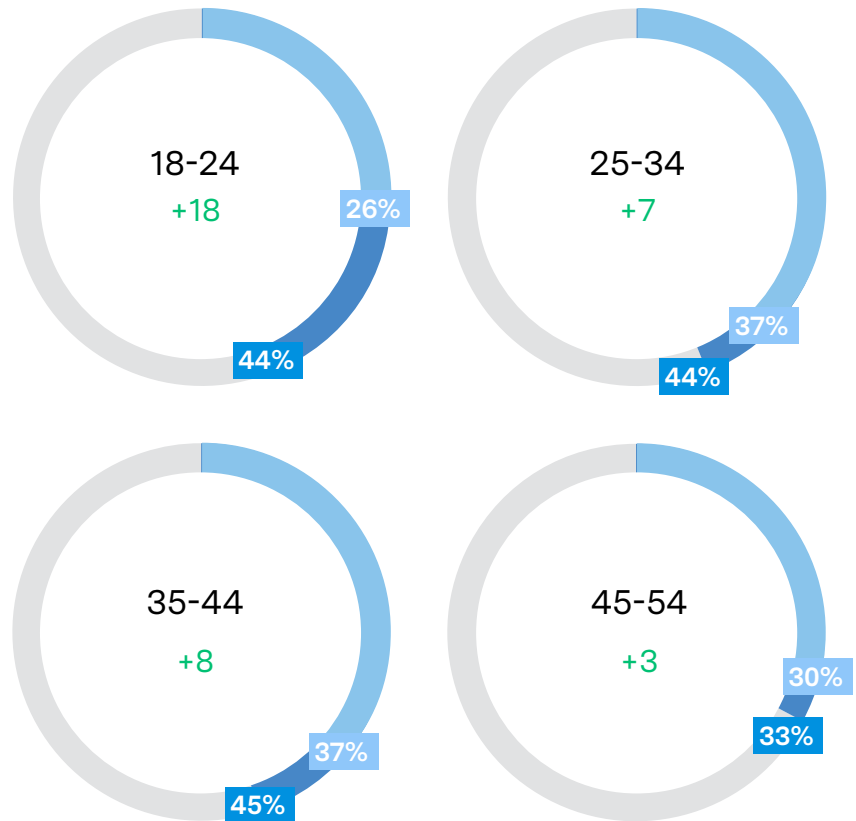
“

I find that digital payments utilize advanced encryption, multi-factor authentication, and sophisticated fraud detection systems, which makes them considerably more secure.” - Male respondent, age 36

Meeting context-driven preferences requires flexible payment options

Percentage of consumers using mobile wallets multiple times per week

■ 2024 ■ 2025 Point difference YoY



Choice remains a defining factor in consumer payout satisfaction. Seventy-six percent of consumers view the ability to select their preferred payout method as very or extremely important.

A primary driver for payment choice is the sheer diversity of consumers' needs and preferences, including consumers' financial habits, the reason behind receiving a payment, the size of the payment, and where they're planning to spend the funds.

With a modern payment solution, businesses can empower their employees and customers to choose the payment method that is best suited to their needs.

The demand for flexible payment methods, such as mobile wallets and payment apps, is rising—unsurprising, given that 93% of consumers seek flexibility in how they manage their spending.

Seventy percent of Americans now use mobile wallets at least once a week—with over a quarter (26%) saying they expect to use their mobile wallets more in 2025. While the US has historically lagged in the adoption of digital methods like mobile wallets, the tide is turning as more and more consumers migrate away from physical payment solutions in favor of flexible digital experiences.



This shift is particularly pronounced among younger consumers, with 18-to-24-year-olds seeing an eighteen-point increase in regular mobile wallet usage compared to last year.

But comfort levels with mobile wallets are also rising among older Americans, with over half (57%) of consumers over the age of 44 now confident that they could complete a purchase with their mobile phone.

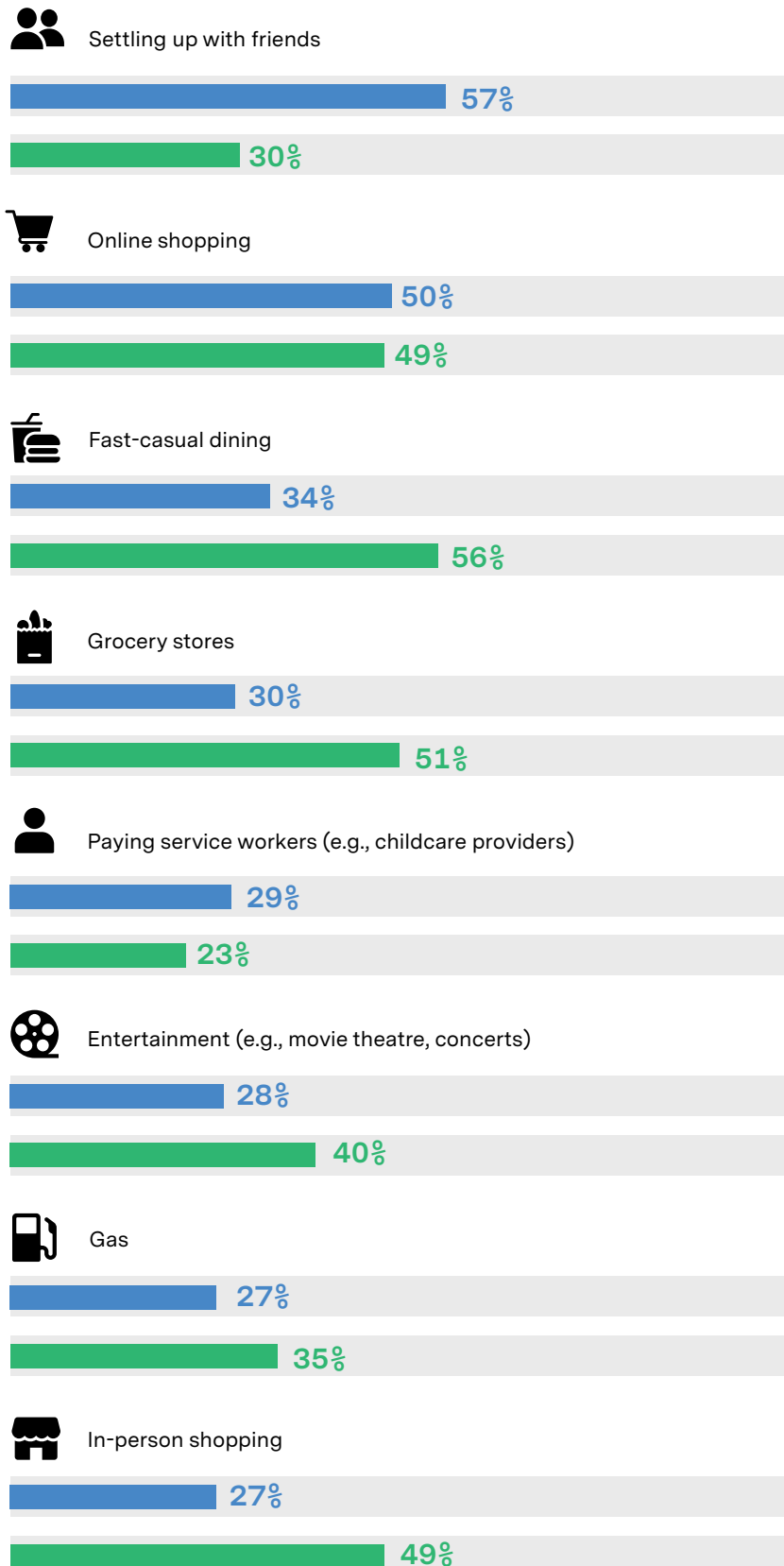
Additionally, 93% of consumers are using payment apps at least once a month, with PayPal (83%), CashApp (39%), and Venmo (37%) being the three most popular payment platforms. But consumers tend to use mobile wallets and payments apps for different purposes, further underscoring the desire for payment choice and flexibility. Payment apps are popular for online shopping and settling with friends, whereas mobile wallets are preferred for in-person spending such as buying groceries and dining out.

Consumers indicate that their preferences range based on the context of the payment, with 48% saying they prefer different payment methods depending on the size of the transaction. Consumers also had varying preferences when receiving a corporate refund compared to a purchase incentive. For instance, push-to-debit bank transfers (72%) were a popular way to receive a security deposit refund, while payment apps (71%) were preferred for purchase incentives and rebates.

This means providing a variety of payout options—from mobile wallets and payment apps to direct deposits and virtual prepaid cards—is critical for businesses that want to meet consumers' diverse needs while reinforcing their financial autonomy.

Categories where consumers prefer to use payment apps or mobile wallets

■ Payment apps
■ Mobile wallets



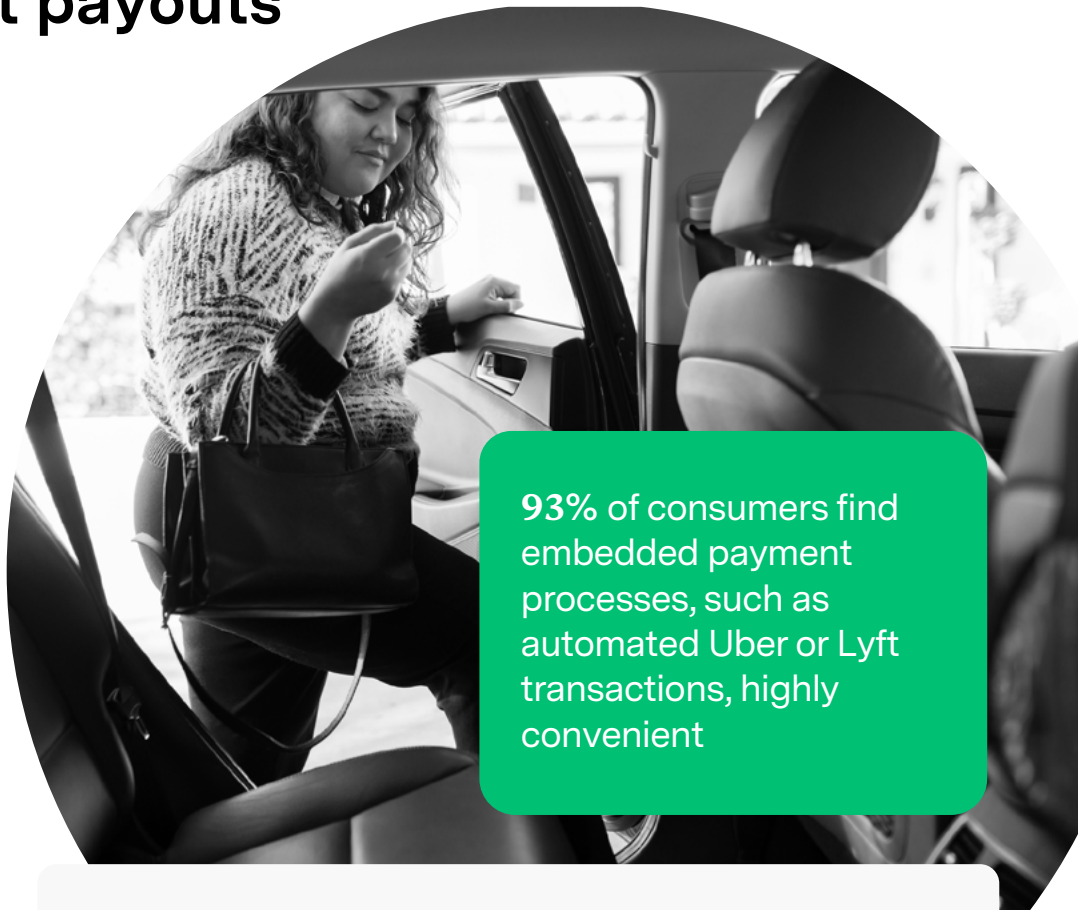
The need for convenience and speed has ushered in an era of instant payouts

Today's consumers want immediate access to their funds. Seventy-three percent say that they need to receive their payout within a week before becoming dissatisfied, with 24% expecting to receive their payment within one business day. Only 5% of consumers say they'd be satisfied with a payment experience that took more than a month to receive. Seventy-nine percent are even willing to pay a premium fee for instant access to funds.

And frustration with traditional payout methods is growing. Since 2024, there's been a 5-point increase in dissatisfied sentiment among consumers waiting for checks in the mail, and more consumers are expressing frustration with the delay it takes to receive funds after depositing a check at their bank (up by 8 points from 2024).

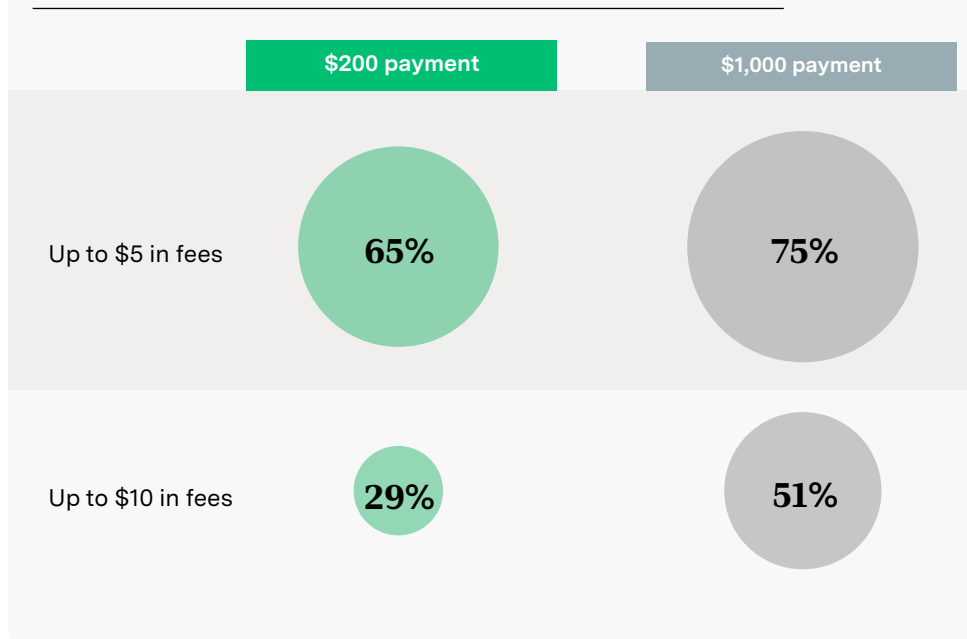
These kinds of waiting periods are unavoidable when dealing with physical payment methods like checks. **Consequently, physical disbursement methods are increasingly ill-suited to the needs of today's consumers and their fast-paced lifestyles.**

Expectations for faster payments from brands also reflect consumers' preferences when making payments. For instance, embedded payments, such as the automated transactions used by rideshare apps, have become increasingly widespread in recent years. With 78% of consumers now valuing the convenience of embedded solutions, many seek the same type of frictionless and instantaneous payment experience when receiving a disbursement.



93% of consumers find embedded payment processes, such as automated Uber or Lyft transactions, highly convenient

Premium fees consumers are willing to pay to receive instant payouts (by payout amount)



*This chart excludes customers not willing to pay any amount in fees

Payouts serve as a key brand differentiator, driving customer loyalty

A positive payout experience can help lay the foundation for long-term brand affinity. Fifty-three percent of consumers say they feel more positively towards companies that offer a smooth payout experience and nearly half (48%) say they would go out of their way to choose such a company over a competitor.

Forty-seven percent would recommend a business to a friend based on a positive payout experience—proof that **an efficient and user-friendly disbursement process can elevate brand perceptions** and generate positive word-of-mouth.

Impact of meeting or surpassing consumers' expectations during a payout experience

53% "I have a more positive impression of that business"

50% "I am more likely to frequent that business/make their products and services part of my routine"

48% "I am more likely to choose that business over their competitor(s)"

47% "I'm more likely to recommend the business to a friend"

Seamless payout experiences minimize operational risk

Digital payouts also offer substantial operational benefits for businesses by eliminating costs and delivery issues tied to physical payment distribution. Unlike checks, which can get lost or go uncashed, digital payments have a low risk of abandonment – a key consideration given that 42% of consumers could imagine themselves abandoning \$10 or less if the process to access funds was time-consuming or confusing.

Due to this lower risk, digital payments help minimize the burden of escheatment – the process of reporting unclaimed property to the government. Failing to escheat abandoned funds can lead to audits and steep fines. **Modernizing the payout process helps businesses not only reduce instances of abandoned funds but also comply more efficiently with state escheatment laws. Digital disbursements are more readily traceable and provide faster insights** into whether consumers have accessed their funds—making it easier to track unused payouts as part of the escheatment process.



A generational shift in payment preferences spotlights the growing importance of sustainability

Modernizing payment systems with sustainability in mind can further enhance brand perception. Sustainability plays an important role in payment choices: **62% of consumers consider environmental impact when selecting payment methods, with younger demographics leading the shift toward eco-conscious solutions.**

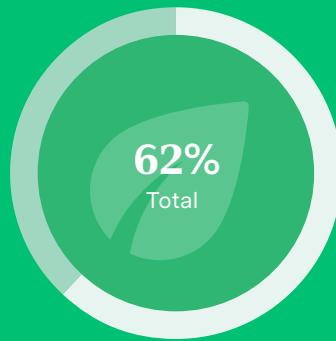
This generational shift in attitudes toward sustainability is likely to reshape the future of the payments industry, as younger demographics—who prioritize and value the environmental impact of their payments—continue to age. Physical payment mechanisms are increasingly viewed as detrimental to the environment, as the widespread use of paper checks contributes to unnecessary waste⁴. In addition to the environmental impact, the costs associated with cutting and mailing a check are far higher compared to digital alternatives.

Companies that transition to digital-first payment systems not only shrink their carbon footprint but also create opportunities to strengthen their corporate reputation among environmentally conscious consumers—while substantially reducing business costs. Now that virtual payments are a popular alternative to physical options like paper checks, the demand for greener digital alternatives is on the rise⁵.

⁴Vlad Macovei, "Digital payments: the green alternative to paper checks," The Paypers, August 9th, 2022

⁵David G.W. Birch, "Green, Greener And Greenest: The Most Sustainable Ways To Pay," Forbes, July 9th, 2024

Percentage of consumers who consider environmental impact when selecting payment methods



Digital differentiation is the path forward

In 2025, digital payouts represent a strategic opportunity, not just a financial transaction. They offer businesses a chance to differentiate at key touchpoints and build lasting loyalty through positive interactions—helping them weather shifts in consumer confidence and the economic landscape.

Digital payouts not only elevate the consumer experience and cultivate deeper engagement; they can also minimize operational risk, cut business costs, and reduce fraud. By prioritizing security that instills consumer confidence, flexibility that accommodates diverse payment contexts, and speed that meets evolving expectations while driving operational efficiency, businesses can transform routine transactions into meaningful differentiators.

The path forward is clear: organizations that embrace strategic innovation in digital payouts—delivering personalized, context-driven experiences that align with consumer needs and priorities—will establish competitive advantages that drive customer retention and business growth well beyond 2025.

Here's how businesses can meet the needs of today's consumers:



Monitor consumer trends and optimize user experiences

Stay ahead by integrating new technologies and adapting to evolving preferences (e.g., sustainability sentiments), ensuring payments are seamless, intuitive, and embedded into customer journeys.



Expand digital payment offerings

Meet diverse and evolving consumer preferences by providing a mix of direct deposit, mobile wallets, prepaid cards, and real-time payments.



Enhance security measures

Invest in fraud prevention, encryption, and regulatory compliance to allay consumers' security concerns.





About NRG

[National Research Group](#) is a leading global insights and strategy firm. Rooted in four decades of industry expertise, the world's most innovative brands turn to us for insights into growth and strategy for any content, anywhere, on any device. Working at the confluence of content, culture and technology, NRG offers insights for bold storytellers everywhere.



About Onbe

With more than 25 years of industry experience and offices in Chicago, Philadelphia, Dallas, and London, Onbe is a fintech that manages and modernizes customer and workforce disbursements for corporate clients ranging from mid-market to the Fortune 500. Onbe's team of experts and technology platform offer clients a turnkey solution to offload their entire B2C payment operations, relieving them of the cost, complexity and risk that come with orchestrating these payments in-house. Backed by top-tier investors, Onbe delivers on today's consumer expectations for instant, digital, and seamless payments.

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