

The State of Payments Modernization: Insights from Financial Institution Leaders

Survey Results
February 2026

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GATEPOINT RESEARCH
PULSE-REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Financial institutions are modernizing payment processing to reduce fraud, improve operational efficiency, and accommodate popular instant payment methods. This survey highlights the growing importance of delivering secure, efficient, real-time payment capabilities.

71% of those surveyed now view instant payments as strategically important, even *critical*, but many have yet to enable them, constrained by legacy architecture and operational complexity.

Institutions see commercial use cases—such as treasury services, account-to-account transfers, and instant loan funding—as competitive differentiators. Most institutions (82%) plan to modernize within the next 18 months by adopting core banking vendor solutions, and 35% cite plans for a third-party centralized payment hub.

The findings underscore the need for pragmatic, centralized payment orchestration that enables multi-rail modernization without disrupting the core.



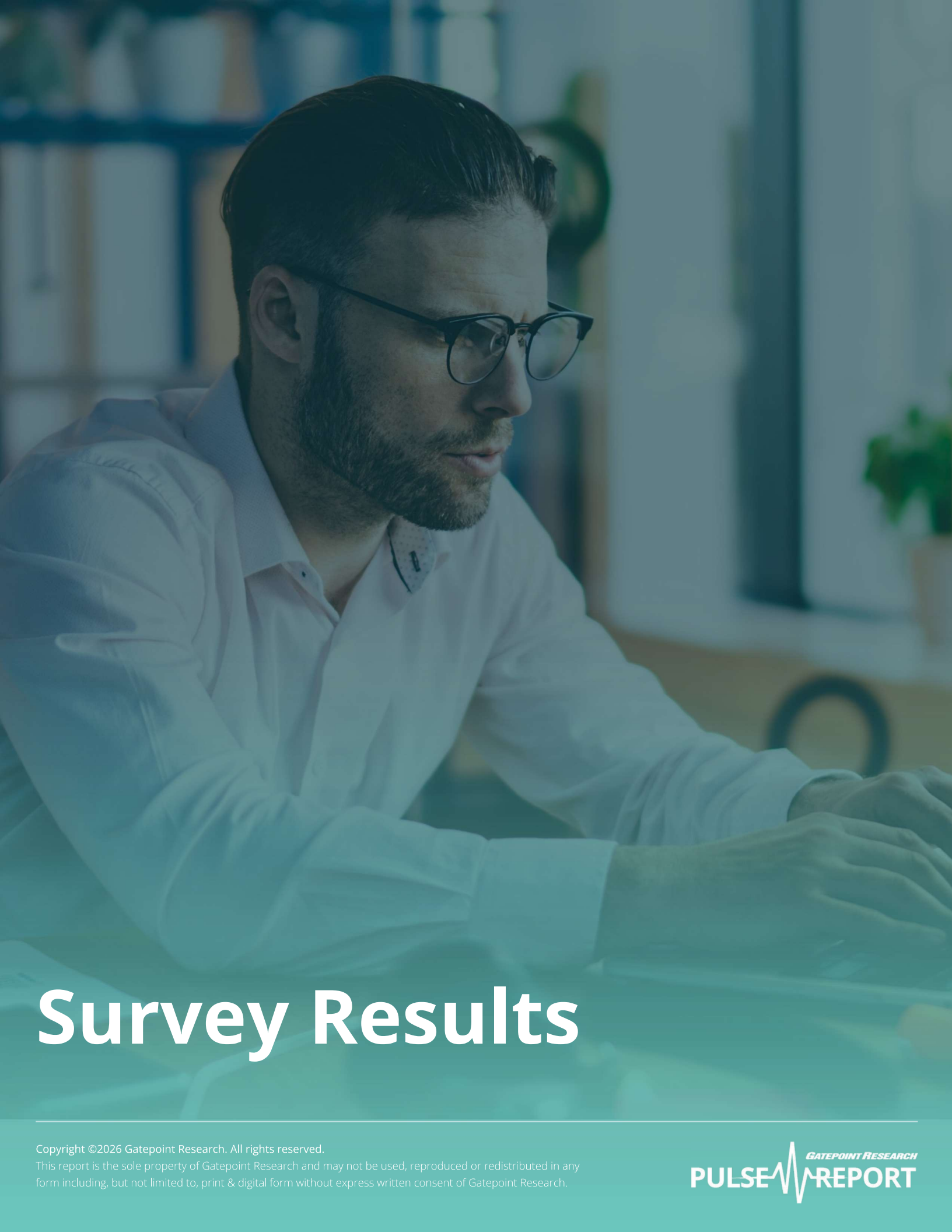
METHODOLOGY

Between September 2025 and February 2026, Gatepoint Research invited 100 bankers to participate in a survey titled *Approaches to Modern Payment Processing*.

All respondents are chief executives (26%) or vice presidents (76%), ensuring the findings reflect strategic priorities for their institutions.

The banks and credit unions we surveyed range from smaller community institutions to large national banks and credit unions:

- **≈ 60%** are community institutions (< \$10B)
- **≈ 30%** are mid-tier regional Institutions (\$10B – \$50B)
- **≈ 10%** are large regional or national Institutions (> \$50B)

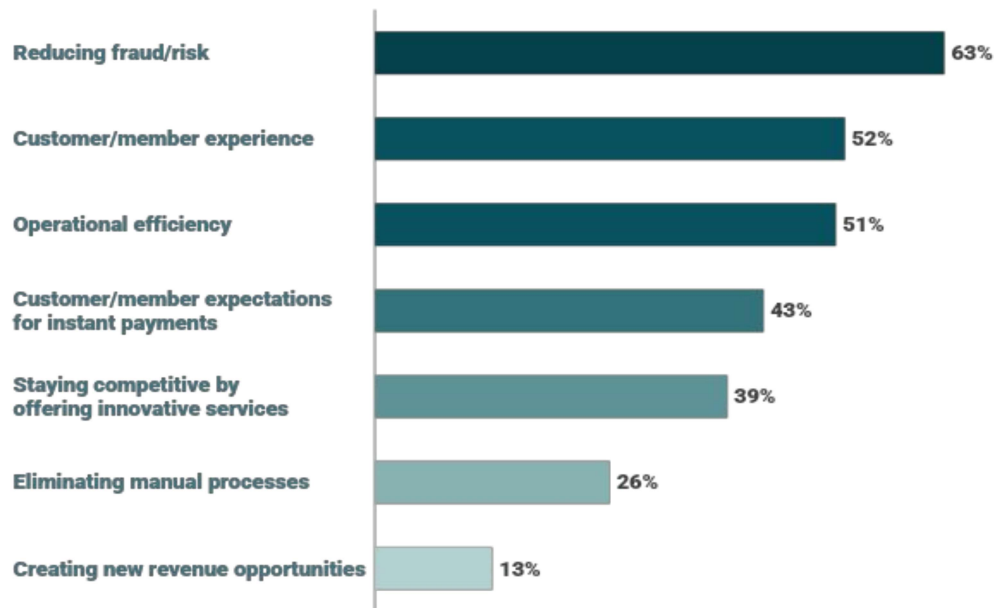


Survey Results

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MODERNIZATION DRIVERS

What are your institution's top three drivers to modernize its payments systems? (Check top 3)

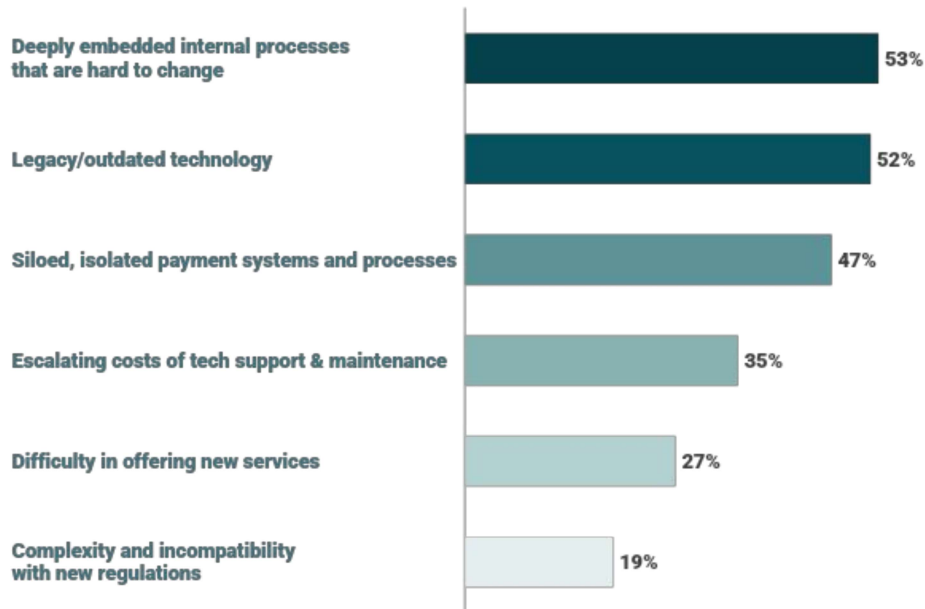


The findings suggest that financial institutions are prioritizing payments modernization primarily to strengthen risk management and improve operational performance. Reducing fraud and risk emerges as the top driver (63%), followed closely by improving customer or member experience (52%) and operational efficiency (51%). These results indicate that institutions are focused on ensuring their payments infrastructure can support faster, always-on transactions while maintaining strong controls and efficient internal processes.

Meeting growing customer expectations for instant payments (43%) is also becoming an important factor, reflecting the broader shift toward real-time payment capabilities. At the same time, the lower ranking of drivers, such as staying competitive through innovation (39%) and creating new revenue opportunities (13%), suggests that many institutions are currently approaching modernization as a foundational infrastructure initiative rather than a growth strategy. The data indicates that organizations are first prioritizing security, operational resilience, and improved service delivery before pursuing new services or monetization opportunities enabled by modern payment platforms.

MODERNIZATION BARRIERS

What technical issues are holding your institution back from modernizing your payment services? (Check all that apply)

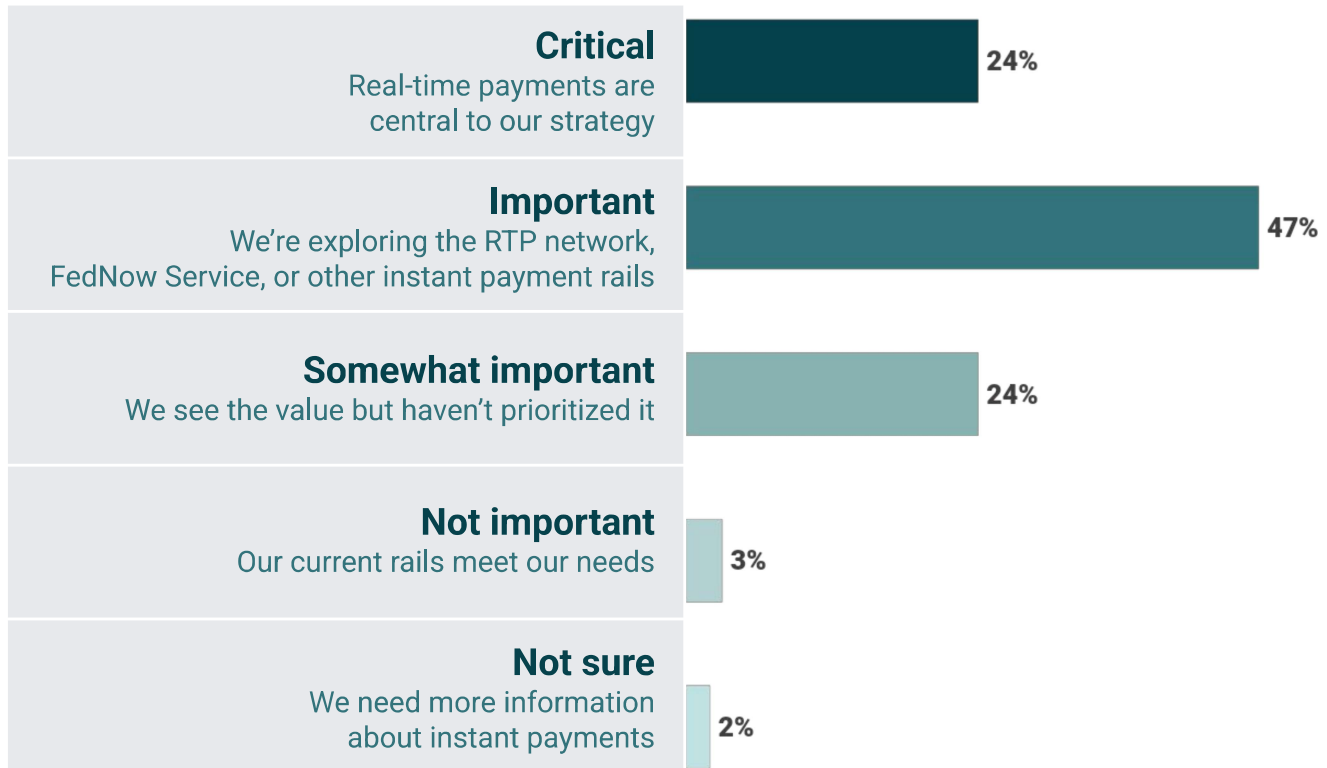


The findings indicate that the most significant barriers to payments modernization are rooted in long-standing operational and technology structures rather than a lack of strategic intent. More than half of respondents cite deeply embedded internal processes (53%) and legacy or outdated technology (52%) as the primary challenges, suggesting that many institutions are constrained by systems and workflows that have evolved over time and are difficult to modify. Nearly half also report challenges related to siloed payment systems and processes (47%), highlighting how fragmented infrastructure across different payment rails can complicate efforts to introduce new capabilities.

At the same time, escalating support and maintenance costs (35%) and difficulty offering new services (27%) point to the growing operational burden associated with maintaining aging platforms. These results suggest that modernization efforts often require institutions to address multiple interconnected issues simultaneously, including legacy technology, operational complexity, and system fragmentation.

INSTANT PAYMENTS

How important is it for your institution to support instant payment capabilities (Send and Receive) across your services? (Check one)

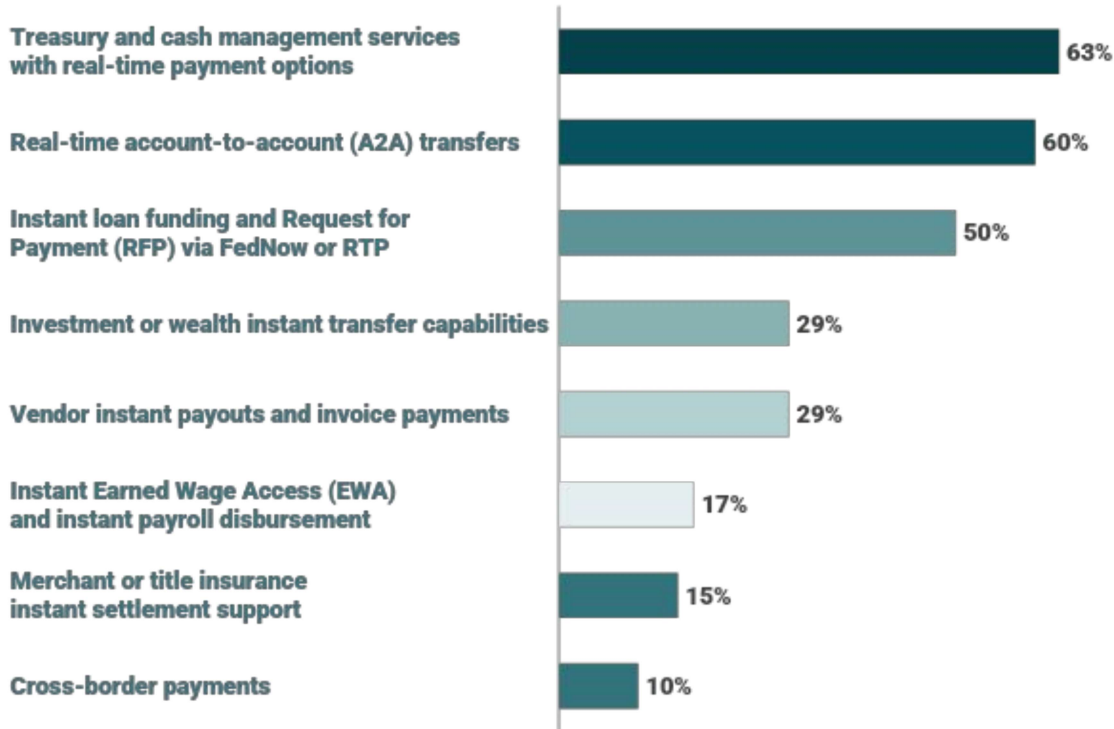


The results indicate that instant payments have become an important strategic consideration for most financial institutions. A majority of respondents (71%) rate the ability to support instant payment capabilities as either critical or important, suggesting that real-time payment functionality is increasingly viewed as a necessary component of modern payment services. At the same time, nearly half of respondents (47%) indicate they are still in the exploration phase, evaluating options such as the RTP[®] network, the FedNow[®] Service, or other instant payment rails.

The data also shows that while interest is strong, institutions are at different stages of adoption. Nearly a quarter (24%) say instant payments are central to their strategy, while another 24% view the capability as somewhat important but have not yet prioritized implementation.

USE CASES AND COMPETITIVE EDGE

Adding which of the following instant payment services would give your institution a competitive edge? (Check all that apply)

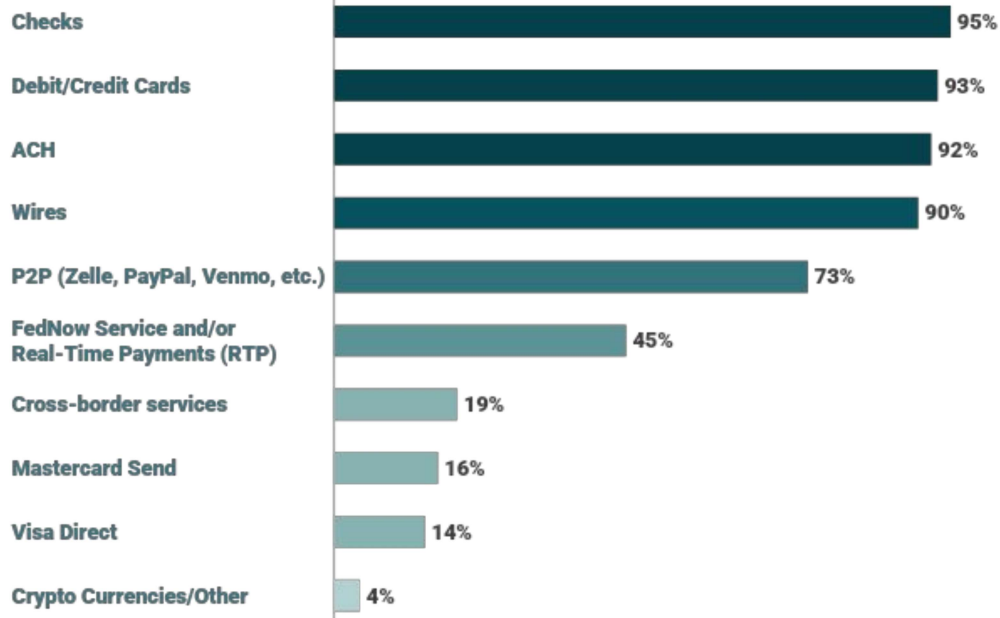


The data indicates that a majority of respondents identify commercial liquidity and account-to-account (A2A) transfers as the most frequent selections for gaining a competitive edge. Treasury and cash management services (63%) and real-time A2A transfers (60%) were selected by more than three-fifths of participants, followed closely by instant loan funding and Request for Payment (RFP) via FedNow or RTP at 50%. These high selection rates for multiple commercial-facing services suggest that institutional interest is heavily concentrated on high-value, business-oriented payment flows.

While commercial use cases saw the highest frequency of selection, the data also shows a broad distribution of interest across a variety of other services. Significant segments of respondents also selected investment or wealth transfers (29%), vendor payouts (29%), and earned wage access (17%).

PAYMENT RAILS

*Which payment rails does your financial institution support?
(Check all that apply)*

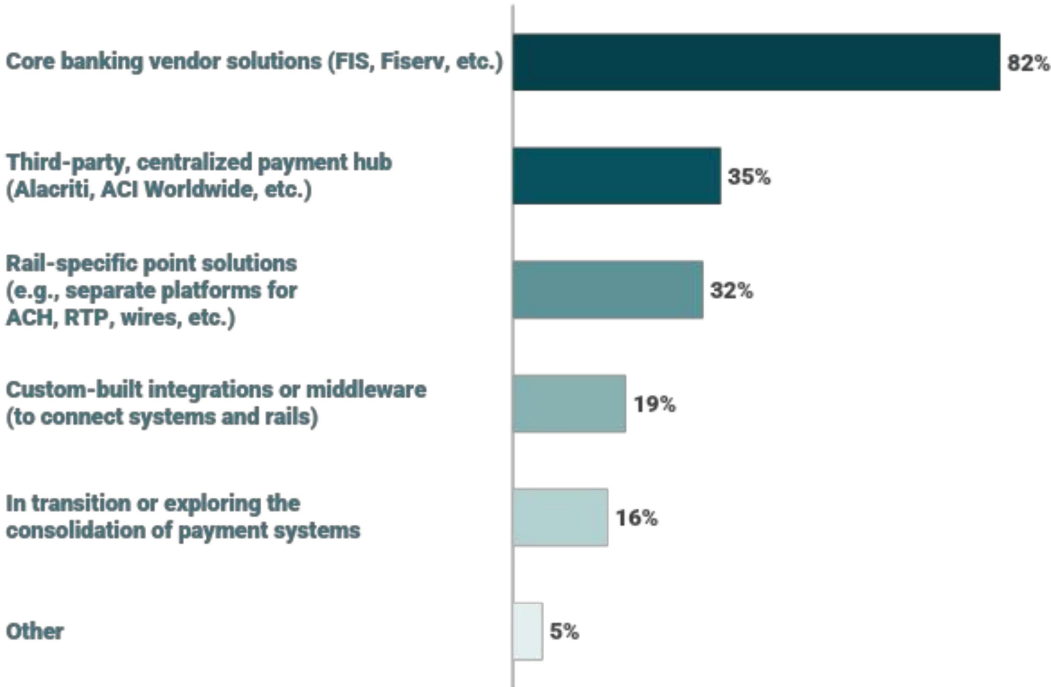


The data shows that traditional payment rails remain widely supported across financial institutions. Checks (95%), Debit and Credit cards (93%), ACH (92%), and Wires (90%) were each selected by at least nine out of ten respondents, indicating that these long-established payment methods continue to form the core of institutional payment infrastructure. Consumer-facing P2P services such as Zelle®, PayPal, and Venmo have also reached broad adoption (73%), reflecting their growing role in everyday payment interactions.

At the same time, newer payment capabilities are gaining meaningful traction as institutions expand their payment portfolios. Nearly half of respondents (45%) report supporting the FedNow Service and/or the RTP network, indicating that real-time payments are already becoming part of the operational landscape for many institutions. Additional capabilities, such as push-to-card services like Mastercard Send (16%) and Visa Direct (14%), along with cross-border services (19%), are also beginning to appear within institutional payment offerings.

MULTI-RAIL PAYMENT PROCESSING

Which of the following best describes your institution's planned approach to managing and processing payments across multiple rails in the next 12-18 months? (Check all that apply)

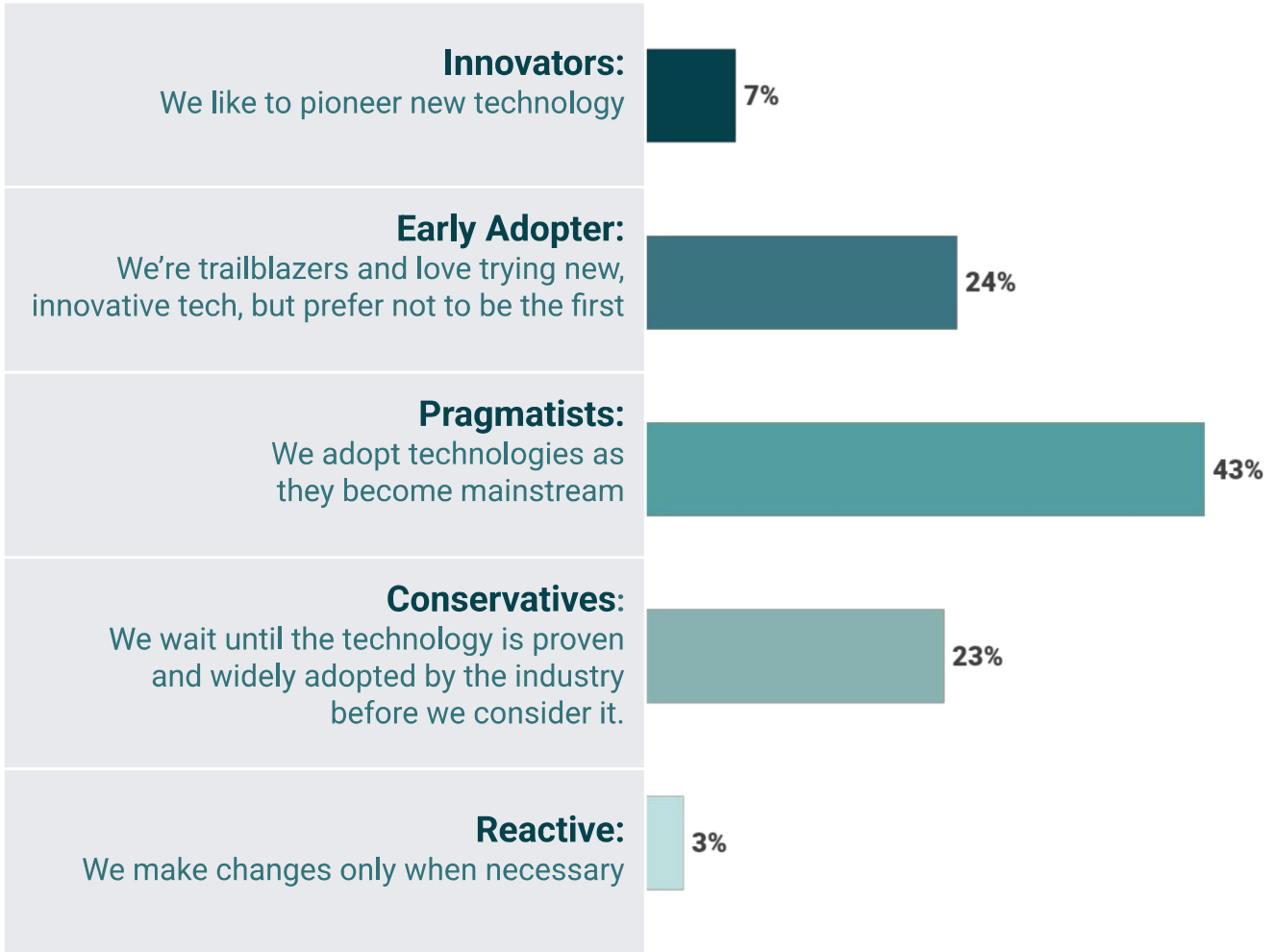


The survey data shows that most financial institutions continue to rely on their existing core banking infrastructure as part of their approach to managing multiple payment rails. Core banking vendor solutions were selected by 82% of respondents for their plans over the next 12-18 months, reflecting the reality that the core remains deeply embedded in the payments environment and often serves as a foundational system for transaction processing and settlement.

At the same time, the multi-select responses indicate that institutions are increasingly layering additional technologies alongside the core to address the growing complexity of a multi-rail payments ecosystem. More than a third of respondents (35%) report plans to use centralized third-party payment hubs, while 32% are implementing rail-specific point solutions for payment types such as ACH, RTP, or wires. This overlap suggests that many institutions are augmenting their core infrastructure with specialized or centralized platforms to better manage orchestration across multiple payment networks.

MODERNIZATION APPROACHES

What best describes your institution's approach to adopting or upgrading to new technology? (Check one)



The survey shows that most financial institutions prefer to wait until a technology is well-established before adopting it. The largest group, Pragmatists (43%), chooses to wait until a technology is mainstream. When combined with Conservatives (23%), who only adopt proven systems, it is clear that two-thirds of the industry takes a cautious approach to modernization.

However, the data also shows a strong group of leaders. Nearly one-third of respondents (31%) identify as Early Adopters or Innovators. This suggests that the market is moving past the early testing phase.

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ABOUT THE SPONSOR

Alacriti is a leading payments fintech delivering comprehensive payment and money movement solutions to financial institutions and businesses.

Alacriti's centralized payment platform, Orbipay Payments Hub, provides innovation opportunities and the ability to make smart routing decisions at the financial institution to meet their individual needs. Financial institutions can take full ownership of their payments and control their evolution with TCH's RTP® network, the FedNow® Service, Zelle®, Fedwire, ACH, and Visa Direct, all on one cloud-based platform.

To speak with an Alacriti payments expert, please contact us at info@alacriti.com.

[Learn more at alacriti.com.](https://alacriti.com)



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