Customer Experience Management Benchmark (CXMB) Series
Corporate Edition

2020 Corporate Insights and Initiatives:

A Year Like No Other

Execs In The Know

COPC

Contents

Preface

The year 2020 has been like no other. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our industry in ways that would have been unthinkable just one year ago. Leaders quickly pivoted to respond to this global event, fast-tracking strategic initiatives or implementing new ones. We have seen shifts in channel offerings, adoption of new staffing models as organizations shifted thousands of employees to working from home, and an increased focus on employee engagement.

This year's research strives to capture organizations' responses to the pandemic, and we continue the practice of drawing comparisons between the Consumer and Corporate Editions. Please bear in mind that we have changed how we define certain channels. They include:

- **Human-assisted channels:** phone, email, in-person, social media, messenger systems, webchat, and video chat
- **Self-service technologies (SSTs):** website, IVR, mobile app, in-store kiosks, and chatbots

Four key themes emerged from the research:

1. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the acceleration of many organizations' strategic initiatives.
2. Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, customer experience (CX) remains a priority.
3. SSTs witnessed significant growth and adoption.
4. Increased work-from-home (WFH) strategies will likely be retained after the pandemic.

We hope you find the 2020 Corporate Edition of the Customer Experience Management Benchmark (CXMB) Series to be filled with useful data and benchmark information that reveal how enterprises are responding to this unprecedented time, while rising to the challenge of ensuring that consumers have memorable and seamless experiences.

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A Note From the Authors

We are delighted to bring you the 2020 Corporate Edition of the CXMB Series, marking the ninth year and 17th volume in the series.

Given the changes experienced by organizations all over the world, this year's research provides valuable insights into the initiatives they have implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. From the dramatic increase in self-help technologies (SSTs) to the wide adoption of work-from-home (WFH) strategies, it is clear that the customer-contact industry remains focused on making decisions with a "customer first" mindset. This customer-centric focus continues to define the culture and future of contact centers and the broader customer experience (CX).

The data from this report is drawn from the participation of 169 organizations and 223 individual responses. We are grateful to all who assisted by contributing their valuable time and insights.

We also give a heartfelt thanks to all our contributors, supporters, and readers who continue to inspire us to conduct this research and publish our findings year after year.

Kind regards,

Execs In The Know

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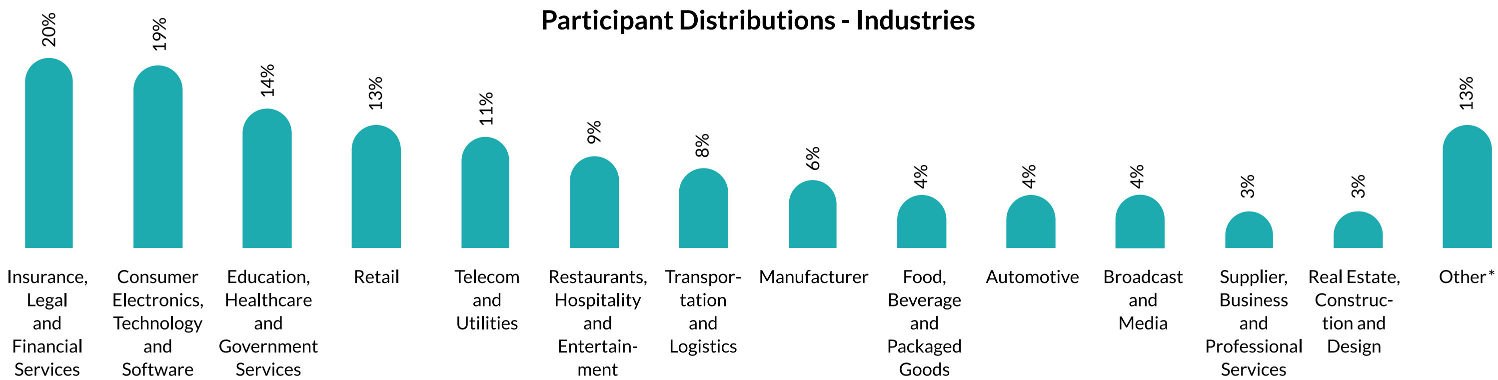
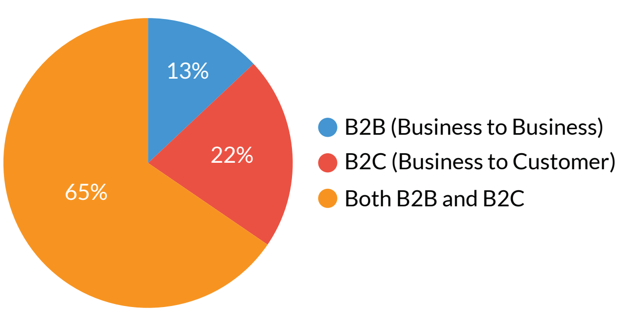
About the Participants

A wide range of industries participated in this year's survey, including insurance, legal and financial services, consumer electronics, technology and software, education, healthcare and government services, and retail.



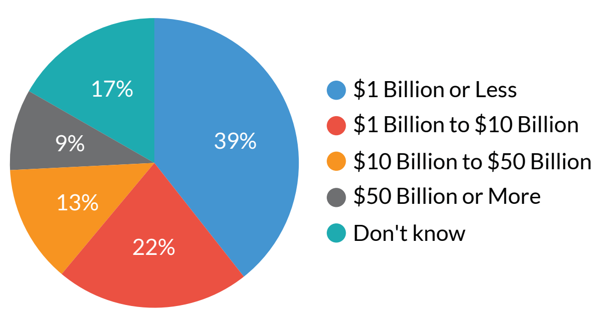
*Includes non-profit organizations, gaming, recruitment, talent management, etc.

Breakdown of Participants by Business Type



This year there were more respondents (65%) from organizations that engage in both B2B and B2C activities when compared to 2019 (51%).

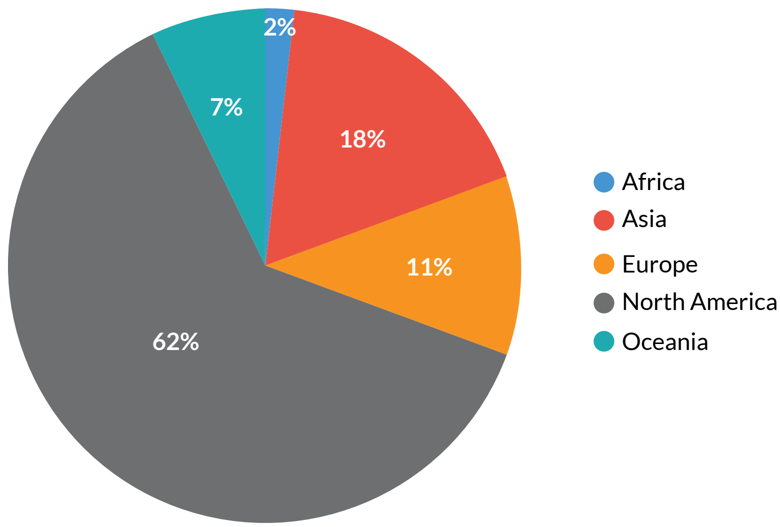
Breakdown of Participants by Revenue



Organizations with revenues below $10 billion represent the largest participant group (61%).

The 2020 Corporate Edition expanded its global reach. Though more than half the respondents were from organizations headquartered in North America, there was also good representation from Europe, Asia, and Oceania.

Headquarter Locations of Participants



A heartfelt thanks to all the organizations that participated in this year's benchmarks, which included:

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Summary of Key Findings

1) The COVID-19 pandemic forced the acceleration of many organizations' strategic initiatives.

Fifty percent of respondents stated that some of their strategic initiatives were fast-tracked due to COVID-19, including:

- Greater focus on self-service technologies (SSTs)
- Increased use of newer technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), analytics, and robotic process automation (RPA)
- Further investments in digital platforms
- Business continuity planning (BCP)
- Shift in staffing strategies, primarily work-from-home (WFH)

2) Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, improving the customer experience (CX) remains a priority.

Thirty-five percent of respondents stated that "improving the customer experience" continues to be their top priority in 2021, including the following initiatives:

- Create greater consistency across channels (50%)
- Improve ease of navigation across channels (45%)
- Implement a more holistic approach to measuring CX. The percentage of respondents stating that their organizations measure CX across all channels increased from 15% in 2019 to 24% in 2020.
- Develop systems for better utilizing consumer feedback to improve CX (78%)
- Proactively follow up with consumers who had a negative CX to remedy the situation (85%)

3) SSTs witnessed significant growth and adoption.

- 29% of respondents stated that their organizations witnessed higher growth in human-assisted channels, while 62% stated that SSTs experienced higher growth.
- 81% of respondents stated that their organizations are shifting traffic from human-assisted channels to SSTs.
- 73% of respondents stated that consumers prefer to use SSTs for "simple/routine" customer-care issues.
- 76% of respondents stated that they have specific initiatives to increase the resolution rate for SSTs vs. 71% for human-assisted channels.
- Despite experiencing higher growth of SSTs compared to human-assisted channels, only 25% of respondents stated that first-call resolution (FCR) for SSTs was more than 50%, whereas 62% stated the same for human-assisted channels.
- "Expanding channel capability" emerged as the most important priority for SSTs.
- Within SSTs, chatbots witnessed the highest growth in 2020.
- Half of the respondents stated that their organizations measure the abandonment rate for SSTs.

4) Increased utilization of WFH will likely continue after the pandemic.

- Of respondents with in-house staff:
  - 92% stated that they currently have some WFH staff.
  - 53% stated that they had no WFH staff prior to the pandemic.
  - 80% stated that more than half of their current staff are WFH.
- Of respondents with outsourced staff:
  - 55% stated that they currently have some WFH staff.
  - 64% stated that they had no WFH staff prior to the pandemic.
  - 58% stated that more than half of their current staff are WFH.
- 62% of all respondents stated that their organizations will not revert to pre-COVID-19 staffing models.

5) Organizations need to focus more on multichannel journeys.

- 44% of respondents stated that consumers take multichannel journeys to resolve a single issue.
- 42% of respondents believed that consumers are forced to take a multichannel journey.
- Only 20% of organizations measure the performance of a multichannel journey against the performance of a single-channel journey.
- Only 12% of respondents believed that their organizations do a good job of providing a seamless experience to consumers who use multichannel journeys to resolve an issue.

09 Survey Results

- COVID-19 Impact
- Strategic Insights
- Operational Insights
- Channel Results

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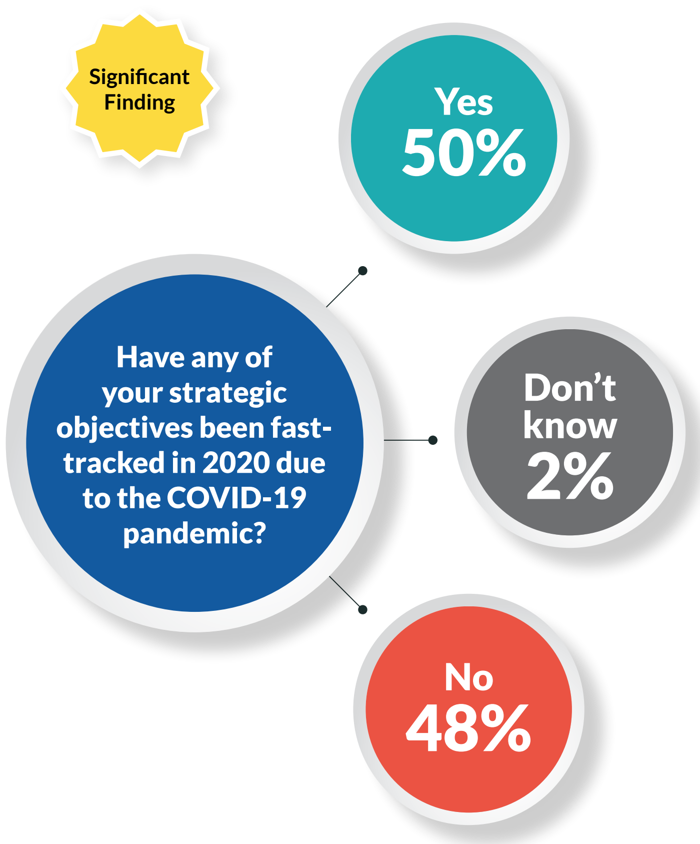
COVID-19 Impact
Survey Results

- Impact on Strategic Initiatives
- Key Learnings

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically impacted how organizations are operating to best support consumers and employees, forcing the acceleration of many strategic initiatives. In fact, 50% of respondents stated that they had fast-tracked some of their strategic initiatives in the following ways:

- **Increasing the use of self-service technologies** (SSTs), shifting more traffic from human-assisted channels to SSTs
- **Accelerating the use of newer technologies**, such as artificial intelligence (AI), analytics and robotic process automation (RPA), virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI), screen capture, and cloud-based contact centers
- **Implementing or expanding work-from-home (WFH) staffing models**
- **Focusing on several other initiatives,** including business continuity planning (BCP), employee-engagement efforts, and customer segmentation



COVID-19 Impact

Key Learnings

COVID-19 has had an immediate and wide-ranging impact on how organizations are operating, organizing, and providing services to consumers. Five key learnings were evident from the survey results:

1. **The work-from-home (WFH) staffing model was successfully adopted.**
2. **Contact centers must be prepared for the unthinkable by implementing robust business continuity plans (BCPs).**
3. **Investment in self-service technology (SST) and other technologies that improve resolution capabilities and efficiencies are key steps in future-proofing contact centers.**
4. **The importance of employee engagement and well-being should not be underestimated.**
5. **Organizations must proactively communicate with consumers and simplify the process consumers use to contact organizations.**

The following are verbatim responses from respondents when asked what their most significant learnings were in light of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic:

1. The WFH staffing model was successfully adopted.

- While a number of organizations already had WFH operations in place prior to the pandemic, that staffing model had not been adopted widely throughout the industry. Our research shows that **implementing WFH at scale has been largely successful**. Most of the customer experience (CX) leaders surveyed believed that their organizations' shift to WFH was implemented effectively and proved to be not only a critical short-term measure to keep lines of communications open with consumers but a more productive operating model as well.

> "We experienced productivity gains due to reduced absenteeism rates."

> "Mindset can make anything work. We previously considered it difficult to have an effective remote workforce. However, we went from 0% WFH to 98% WFH in two weeks and performance was not impacted."

- **WFH is here to stay.** Data collected in this year's survey underscored the likelihood that many organizations will maintain their WFH staffing model even after things get back to "normal." In fact, **62%** of respondents stated that they **will not revert to pre-COVID-19 staffing models**.
  - "Remote work is more effective and efficient than previously thought by many."
  - "The remote workforce has had little impact on customer experience and efficiency."
- However, **further improvements are required to ensure that successful WFH models can be sustained** while meeting consumer expectations and maintaining a motivated workforce.
  - "Increased communication and new ways to 'see' each other are critical. I have implemented standard lunch times, and 60-minute meetings are now only 50 minutes."
  - "Implementing scaled hiring and BPO operations in a WFH environment is very difficult, as is tracking the changes in consumer behaviors and contact types."

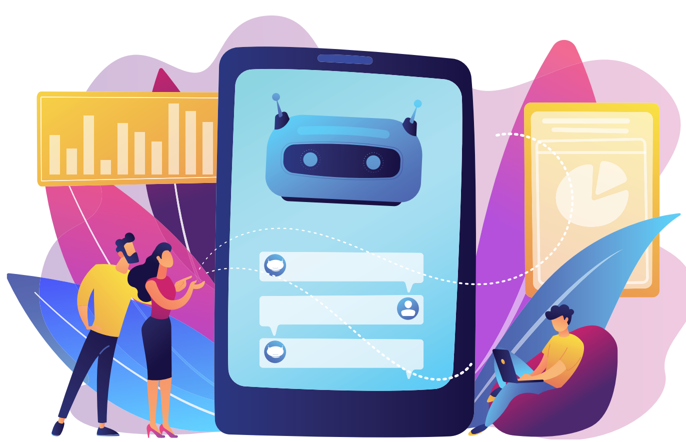
2. Contact centers must be prepared for the unthinkable by implementing robust BCPs.

- **BCPs prepare organizations for adverse and unpredictable situations,** such as the shutdown experienced by organizations globally.
  - "BCP enhancements are needed to account for long-term global events."
  - "Our offshore operations were shut down for a long period, exposing gaps in our business continuity plan."
  - "Multisite capabilities help business continuity."
  - "Have resources in multiple locations as a backup/redundancy, be flexible with employee schedules, and start developing a WFH recruiting and training strategy."
  - "Our BCP that covered the US, Canada, Manila, and China was not fully prepared for a global pandemic. We never considered that all locations would close."
  - "Have a contingency plan in case of a catastrophic event. Be flexible and patient with your providers. Diversify your call center locations (on/off/near shore)."

- **Collaboration is key.** Collaboration among internal departments, vendors, partners, and employees helps organizations deal with unexpected situations.
  - “Collaboration to support our essential services and watching everyone work together and readily adapt to changing circumstances; commitment to customer, safety”
  - “Collaborating faster to make process, policy and technology changes”
  - “Having strong relationships with our outsourcing partner has been critical to navigating and implementing creative resolutions to this unprecedented event.”
- **Rethinking strategies.** Contingency planning and commercial (outsourcing) models will need to change.
  - “We need more contingency strategies for unexpected volume.”
  - “Looking at it from an outsourcing executive perspective - the biggest learning is that this level of disruption to contact-center operations might be heavily mitigated if the operations themselves were set up in a pay-for-performance environment/compensation model.”

3. Investment in SST and other technologies that improve resolution capabilities and efficiencies are key steps in future-proofing contact centers.

Organizations should continue to invest in and expand SST capabilities.



- This year’s study shows that, while traffic increased for both human-assisted and SSTs, a **higher percentage of respondents stated that they saw an increase in SST volumes** (71% for SSTs vs. 44% for human-assisted channels). Therefore, in addition to managing volume increases, organizations will also need to use SSTs to help shift traffic across channels as part of their load-balancing strategies.
  - “The need for a decentralized approach to customer service channels. Must have the ability to shift volume when one channel is incapacitated”
  - “Need to harness the power of technology to provide contactless solutions to customers”

> "Self-service is important. Clear information is important."

> "Accelerate digital adoption."

Technology innovations will support organizations into the future.

- Technology innovation will be required to support the industry, whether the goal is to provide a better CX, to enable efficient and secure WFH practices, or to ensure compliance when dealing with outsourcers.

> "Need tighter technology systems to protect customer privacy and security and better UI for agents to more easily help customers"

> "Applied technology is expected and required to stay in lead position for new business"

> "Our BPO vendors must become PCI compliant in the home environment, or we need to install technology to take over credit card collection from the agents."

> "Cloud adoption far exceeded estimates. Customers are no longer interested in 'best of breed,' and instead want a fully integrated suite."

4. The importance of employee engagement and well-being should not be underestimated.

- **Communication and staying connected with employees are important.** Respondents emphasized that "listening to employees" became more important than ever.

> "Ensuring leaders are highly engaged to manage the people in the contact centers"

> "Need to bring the team along with you. We need to stop and reflect on the amount of change and the impacts it has on people and customers. With a larger WFH force, what is the operational environment for the future going to look like?"

> "Communication is the key. Ensure WFH for consultants is structured. WFH is possible!"

- **Effective engagement programs need to be implemented for in-center and WFH employees.** It is important to focus on strategies that engage the workforce and support agents regardless of where they are located; this is even more critical for WFH staff.

  > "It's about people, not process. Listening is more important than ever. Being proactive builds trust."

  > "Importance of employee experience and culture in providing great CX in a difficult time."

  > "Engagement is key as working from home is extremely isolating."

  > "Importance of supporting employee wellbeing to maintain high productivity and retention."

  > "Keeping agents engaged in ways which simulate working in a bricks and mortar center to build camaraderie. It is tough to keep everyone informed as you lose the 'informal channels' that exist when a team is co-located on the floor."

  > "Our teams have had to get creative in fostering employee engagement. It has been more difficult compared to pre-COVID-19. Also, we have had to provide greater schedule flexibility to our support associates especially those who have families/children to take care of."

5. Proactively communicating with consumers and making it simple for them to contact organizations should be a priority.

- Providing **regular communication and updates** to consumers helps to improve the CX.
- **Staying connected with consumers** and providing regular proactive updates about how the organization is dealing with these unprecedented times inspire confidence, reduce customer concerns, and enhance the overall CX.

  > "Being available and communicating updates to customers to mitigate issues"

  > "Rapid response approach to key customer friction/issue points; aligned communications from marketing to operations; focus on data driven decisions."

  > "Need to be proactive and more frequently communicate with customers"

COVID-19 Impact

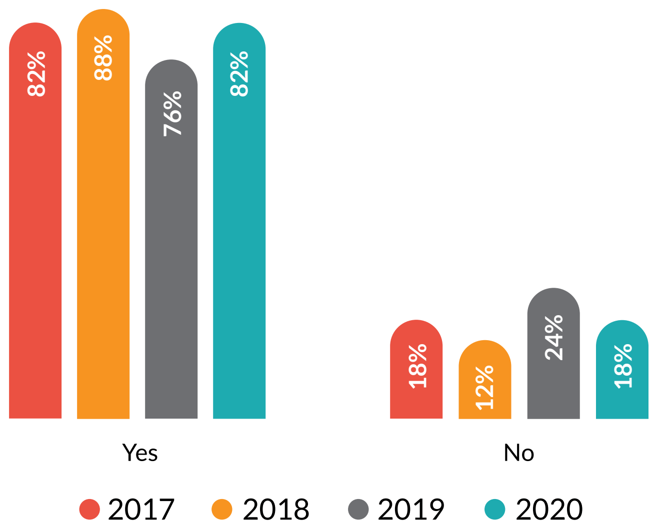
Key Learnings

- Identify channels and platforms that **make it easy for consumers to contact you** to resolve their issues.
- Investing time and resources in activities that **improve experiences and elevate consumers' trust** are, and will continue to be, beneficial.
  - "Customer processes must be simple and easy to implement."
  - "Build a helpline through online self-serve like chatbots that can help customers quickly with concise and precise answers."
  - "Internal support systems need to be strong and stable to provide seamless customer service no matter where we are."
  - "Customers can be understanding and more patient with wait times given the pandemic situation."
  - "Online interactions with customers are really effective - just with some improvements."

Strategic Insights
Survey Results

- Perceptions
- Priorities and Initiatives
- Customer Experience (CX) Feedback Programs
- Conclusions

Do you feel your customer-care organization is generally meeting the needs and expectations of your customers?

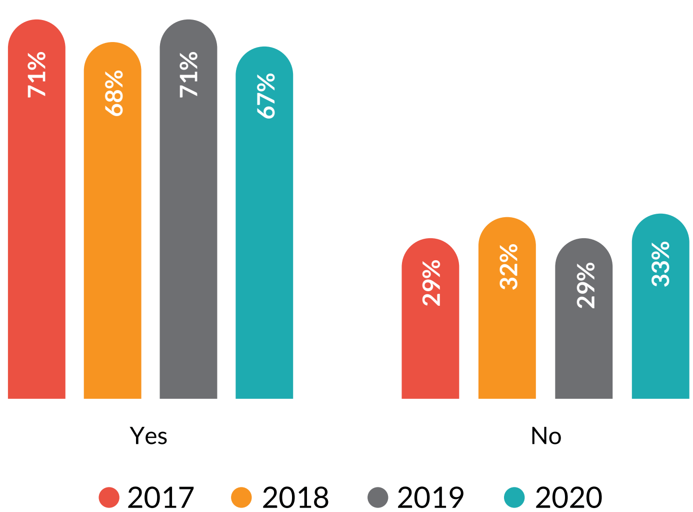


Over the past three years, the percentage of respondents stating that their organizations generally meet the needs and expectations of their customers has remained consistent (between 76% and 88%). This trend continued into 2020, even as the COVID-19 pandemic altered the customer experience (CX) landscape, with 82% of respondents stating that they were able to meet the needs and expectations of their customers. Organizations implemented several initiatives to minimize the negative impact that the pandemic had on the CX, such as increasing and enhancing self-service technologies (SSTs), shifting much of the workforce to work-from-home (WFH) environments, and creating remote programs for training and managing employees.

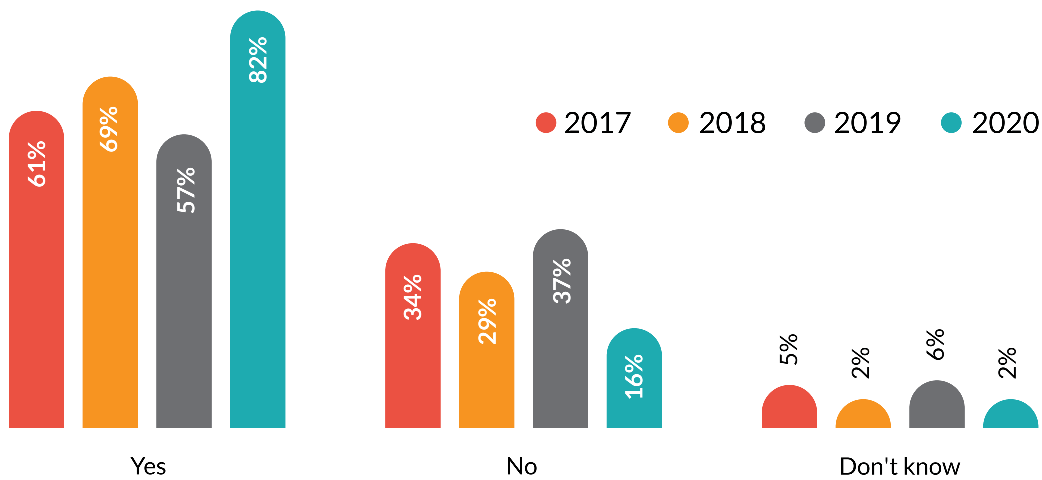
Do you feel your customer-care organization generally does a good job of exemplifying your brand promise at every touchpoint?

With product offerings becoming more homogenous, the customer-care experience has become a key criterion for consumers when they are selecting which companies and products are most likely to meet their needs and expectations.

Nevertheless, the data also suggests that one-third of respondents feel that their organization does not sufficiently deliver on its brand promise at every touchpoint.



Do you believe your company has a good understanding of which channels your customers prefer to use?



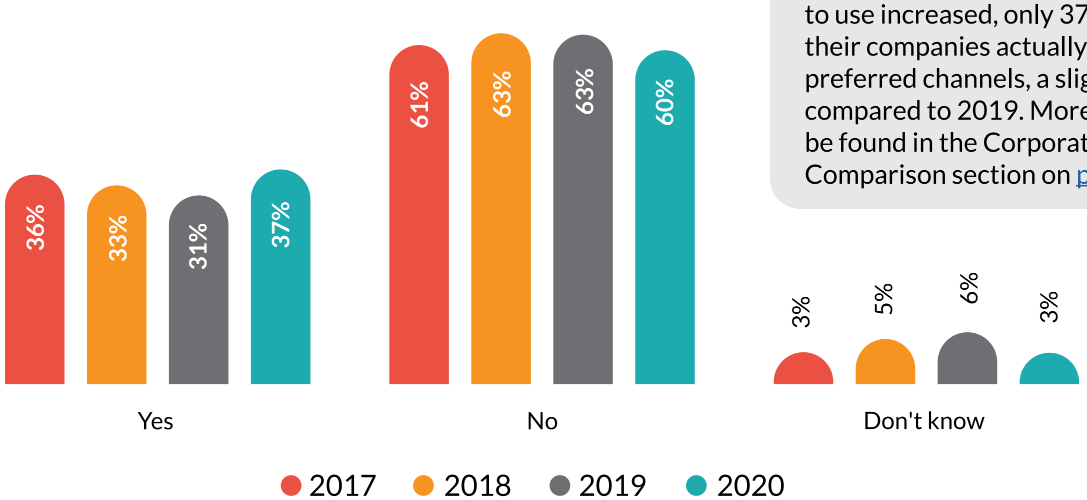
There was a 25-point increase in the percentage of respondents who believed that their organizations had a good understanding of which channels their consumers prefer to use.

This dramatic increase may be explained by the impact of the pandemic which forced consumers and organizations to shift from human-assisted channels to SSTs.

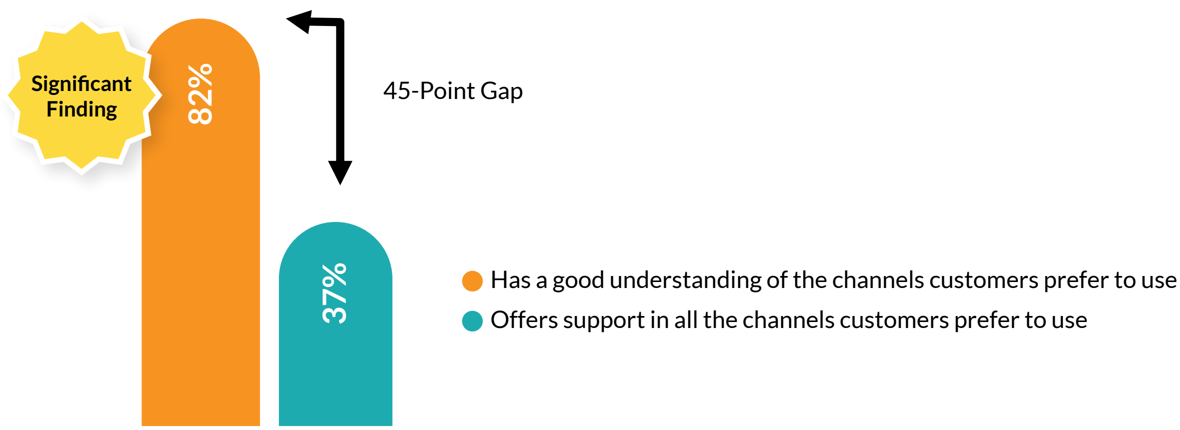
- Of the respondents who believed that their organizations understood their consumers' preferred channels, 55% experienced higher growth in SSTs compared to only 26% who experienced higher growth in human-assisted channels.

Do you believe your company offers support in all the channels that your customers want to use?

While the percentage of respondents who stated that their organizations had a good understanding of which channels their consumers preferred to use increased, only 37% stated that their companies actually offered all the preferred channels, a slight increase compared to 2019. More insights can be found in the Corporate vs. Consumer Comparison section on page. 76.



Understanding channels preferred by customers vs. offering channels preferred by customers



While the majority of respondents (82%) stated that their organizations have a clear understanding of the channels their consumers prefer to use, only 37% stated that they actually offer support in all those channels.

Brands must aim at narrowing this gap as having the right channels in place is one of the key requirements for providing a satisfactory CX.

Which challenge is your company struggling with the most in its pursuit to provide an exceptional customer experience (CX)?

Seven key themes emerged from responses received to the above question. Below are these themes, along with some supporting verbatim comments.

Impact of COVID-19

- "During this pandemic, our industry has been decimated, so any strategies involving financial investment is essentially on hold until we start seeing a better revenue stream."
- "Unprecedented changes in contact types and reasons in the pandemic era"

Initiatives to Improve CX

- "We currently do not have true omnichannel capabilities. Each channel is separate and has its own fair share of limitations which adds to failure demand."
- "Getting customers the information when and where they need it"

Need for Better Technology

- "Technology limitations to tie customer data together"
- "Digital transformation is at the forefront, but current platforms and support systems need to catch up to make digital transformation happen."

Managing Customer Expectations

- "Unpredictable customer needs related to changing macro-environment"

Internal Inadequacies and Inefficiencies

- "Our organization has had many acquisitions and is not harmonized in terms of systems or processes for speaking with one voice."
- "Legacy paper-based processes and security within a regulated financial services environment"
- "Planning and managing multiple markets all at different points of maturity. We launch, aggressively grow, and stabilize regions at the same time."

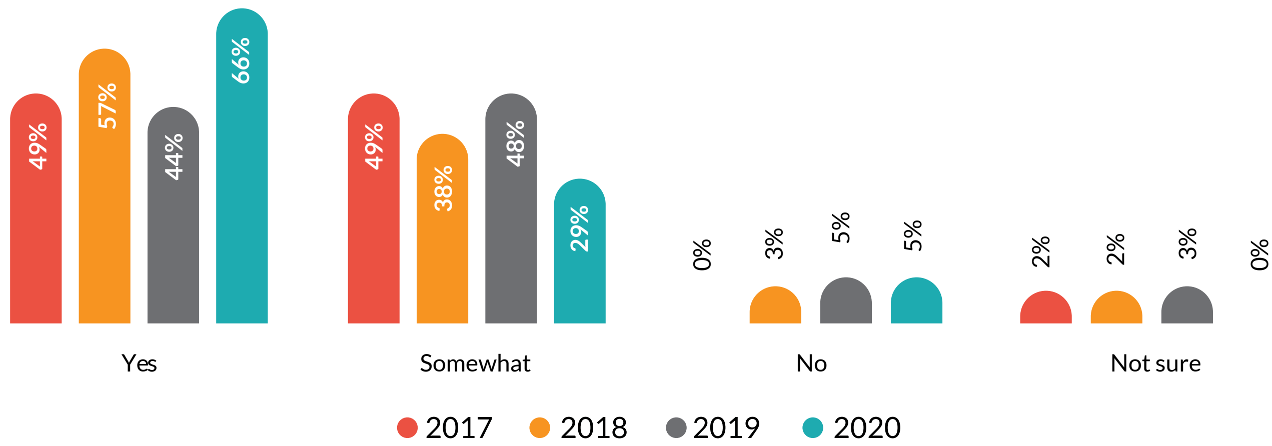
Converting Data Into Insights

- "Turning mountains of data into actionable insights"
- "Data management is probably the biggest challenge. There's quite a large amount of data available, but we have not gotten to a point where all of that data is easily consumable by operational teams responsible for CX."

Containing Costs

- "Rising operational costs and ability to curb them"
- "Spending/investments constraints due to the pandemic impacts on revenue/growth"

Is your company's leadership fully committed to a "customer first" strategy?

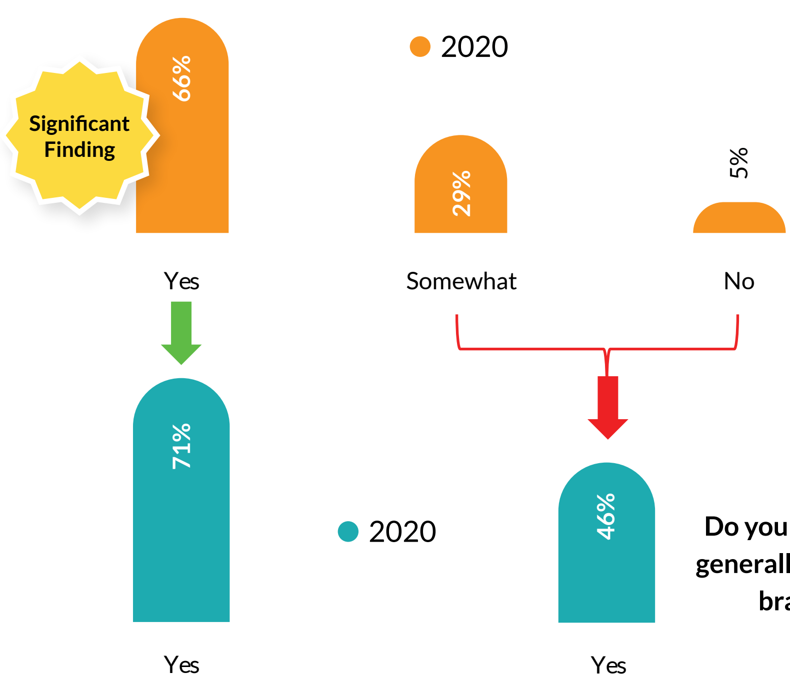


More than ever before, respondents stated that their leadership is fully committed to a "customer first" strategy.

Despite this increase, however, quite a few respondents still believed that their organizations' leadership was not fully committed to this strategy, as 29% answered "somewhat" and 5% answered "no."

Exemplifying Brand Promise and Commitment to a "Customer First" Strategy

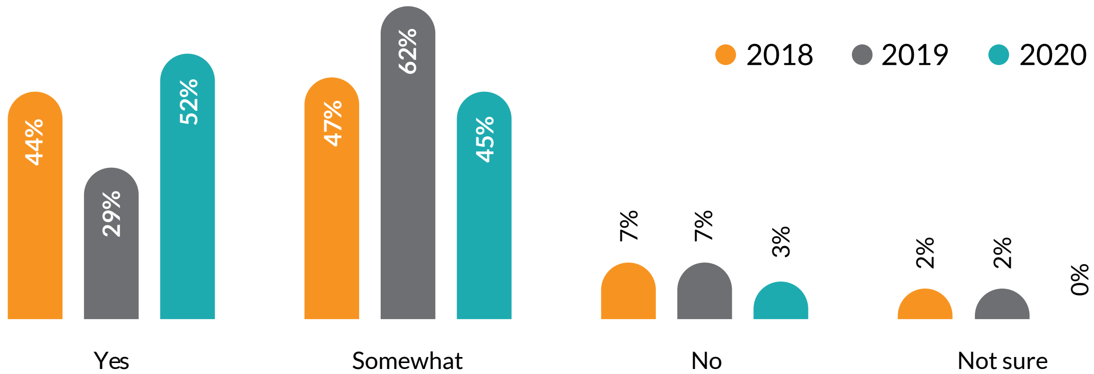
Is your company's leadership fully committed to a "customer first" strategy?



The data indicates a strong relationship between leadership's commitment to a "customer first" strategy and the organization's ability to exemplify its brand promise at every touchpoint. Of the organizations in which leadership is committed to such a strategy, 71% of respondents said that they believed their organizations did a good job of exemplifying brand promise. Of the organizations that are not fully committed to this strategy, only 46% of respondents said that they believed their brand promise was consistently delivered.

Do you feel your customer-care organization generally does a good job of exemplifying your brand promise at every touchpoint?

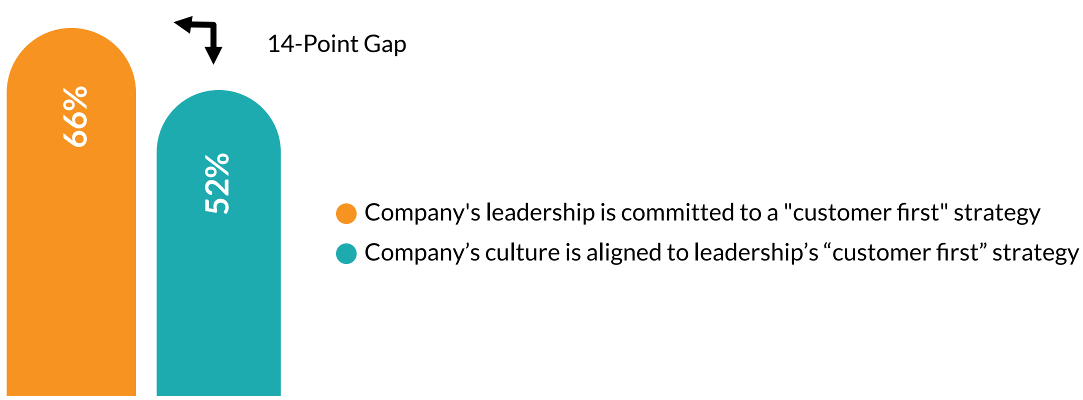
Do you believe the culture of your company is aligned with your leadership's "customer first" strategy?



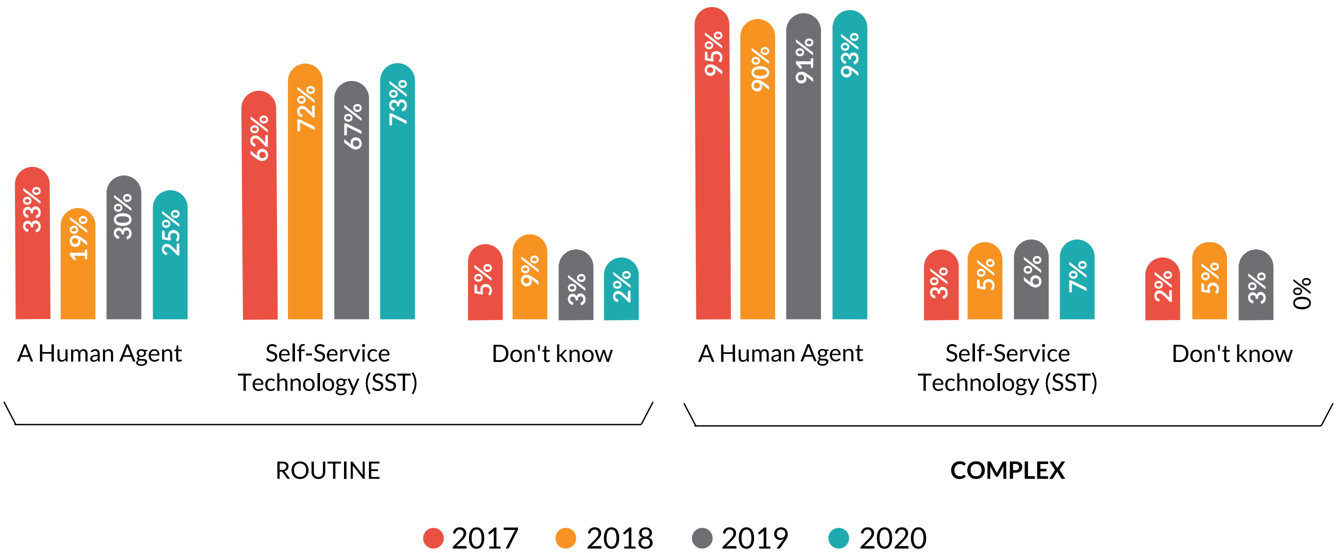
Leadership's commitment to a "customer first" strategy is not enough on its own to deliver customer success. The data reveals that the organization's culture must also be aligned with such a strategy.

The data below reveals a 14-point gap between the company's commitment to a "customer first" strategy and the company culture's alignment with that strategy. Specifically, 66% of respondents said that leadership was committed to a "customer first" strategy (answered "yes" to the first question) and 52% said that their organization's culture was aligned with that strategy (answer "yes" to the second question).

Leadership's commitment to a "customer first" strategy vs. the company's culture being aligned with a "customer first" strategy



In the event of a routine/complex customer-care issue, which do you think your customers would rather interact with, assuming both are equally capable of solving the issue?



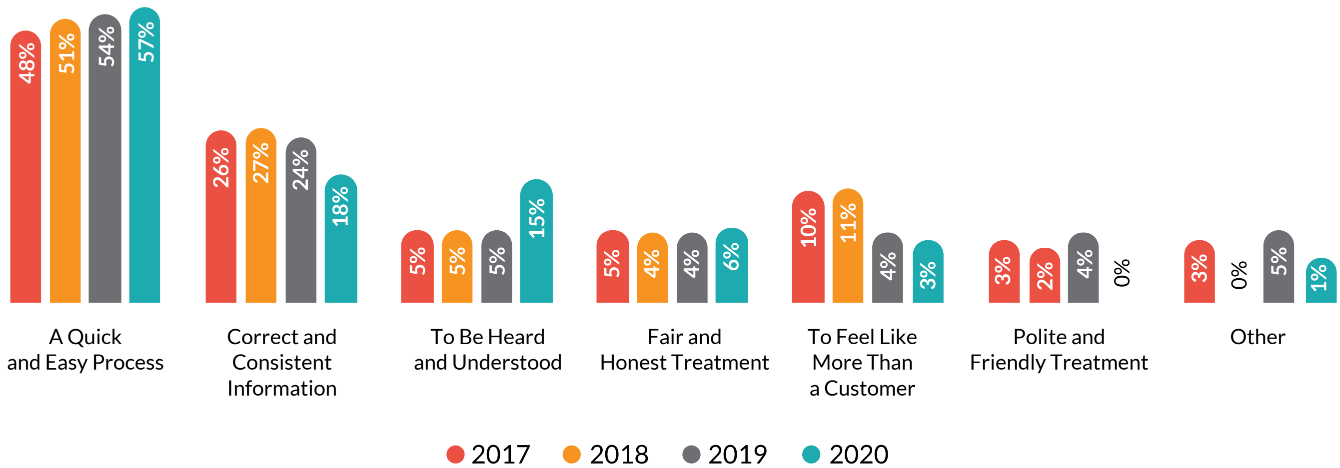
As data from previous years has shown, respondents believe that consumers prefer to interact with SSTs for more routine or simple issues, whereas they believe that consumers prefer to interact with human agents for more complex issues.

This holds true even with the increased adoption of SSTs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Strategic Insights

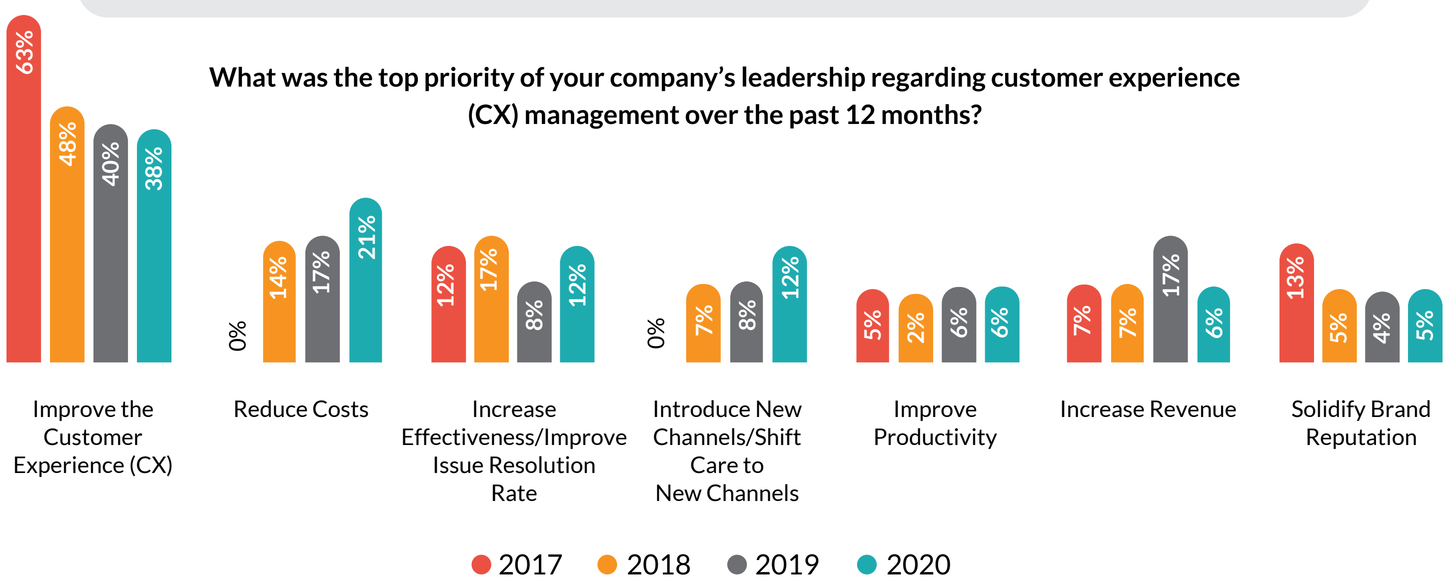
Priorities and Initiatives

Aside from getting their issues resolved satisfactorily, what do you think is most important to your customers when trying to resolve a customer-care issue?



Providing "a quick and easy process" continues to be the most important factor that respondents believe matters most to their customers, followed by providing "correct and consistent information." The most significant change was with regard to being "heard and understood," which increased by 10 points year-over-year. This is understandable as consumers were navigating the pandemic-related restrictions and exploring new channels to connect with organizations. More insights can be found in the Corporate vs. Consumer Comparison section on page 74.

What was the top priority of your company's leadership regarding customer experience (CX) management over the past 12 months?



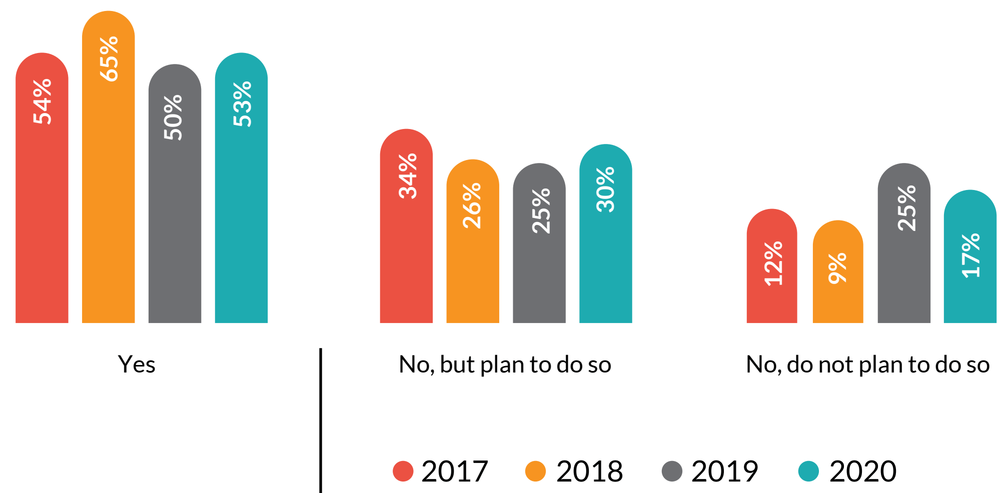
Improving the customer experience (CX) continued to be the top priority of leadership in 2020. "Reduce costs" grew slightly in importance compared to previous years, with 21% of respondents noting that it was a top priority.

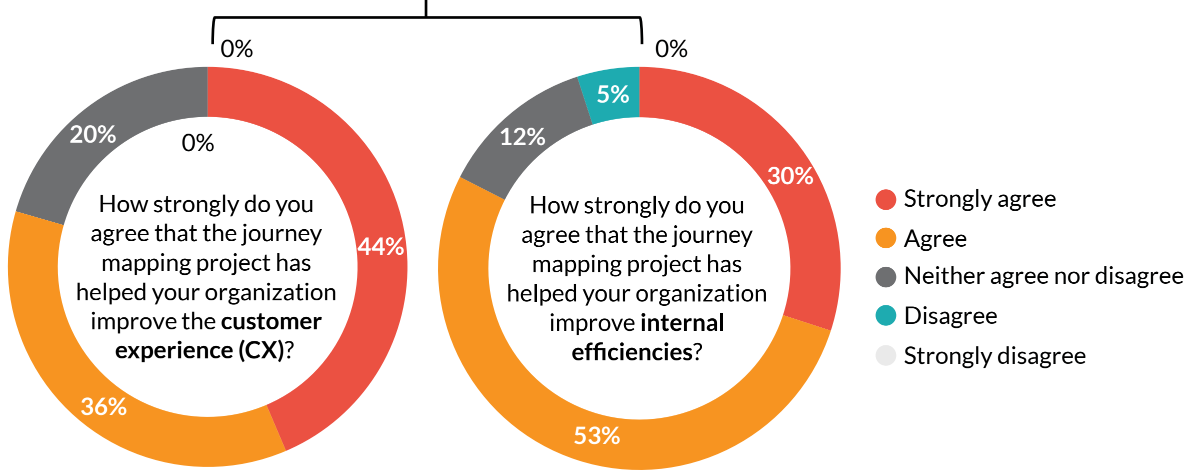
The industry-wide focus on reducing costs reflects the difficult business environment that organizations have had to operate in during the last 12 months. However, even during these challenging times, it is encouraging to see that leadership is still focused on improving the CX.

What will be the top priority of your company's leadership regarding customer experience (CX) management in the coming year?

Improving CX will continue to be organizations' top priority over the coming year. Additionally, more customer-facing aspects related to CX — such as improving issue resolution rates and introducing new customer-care channels — account for 63% of the respondents' top priorities. Internal business goals — such as improving productivity, reducing costs, and increasing revenue — account for an additional 31% of the respondents' top priorities.

Has your company conducted any service journey or customer journey mapping projects in the last 12 months?





The percentage of respondents who stated that their organizations have conducted a service or journey mapping exercise was consistent with 2019 results. Eighty-three percent stated that they have conducted service journey mapping in the last 12 months or are planning to do so, which is consistent with projected priorities related to "improving resolution rates" and "shifting care to new channels."

Respondents who stated that their organizations conducted customer or service journey mapping "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that it helped them improve CX (80%) and internal efficiencies (83%).

Of all your company's upcoming customer-care initiatives, please briefly describe the one you think will have the most positive impact on the customer experience (CX).

Six key themes emerged from responses received to the above question. Below are these themes, along with some supporting verbatim comments.

Focus on Self-Service Technologies (SSTs)

- "An investment in self-service and automation to help customers resolve their issue"
- "Purchasing and installing static calibration equipment to avoid us having to send customers to dealerships"
- "Increased functionality of chatbots and self-service tools"

Rethinking Channel Strategies

- "Omnichannel management of customer interactions, social media management, and customer experience projects"
- "Shifting from channel of choice to right channeling - digital first"

Working Toward a "Customer First Strategy" Culture

- "Creating a culture of customer-centricity with dealers, corporate employees, and leaders"
- "Expanding customer care to all customers and upgrading a platform to make the experience easier"
- "Harmonizing several acquisitions into one best in class CX organization"

Use of Newer Technologies

- "Data and tech strategies - identifying and solving problems before they happen OR providing automation/AI to enable the customer to self-serve"
- "We are launching a comprehensive contact center in the cloud that will modernize all of our customer care capabilities."

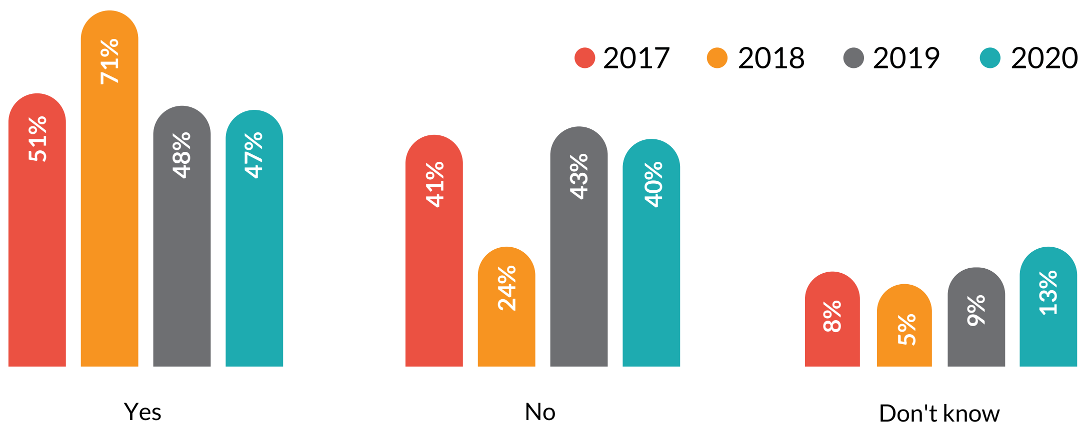
Use of Data-Based Insights and Analytics

- "Enhancing our VOC analytics platform and introducing persona-based engagement"
- "Personalized, dedicated customer service model based on customer insights, their spending habits, their preferred channel, etc."
- "Restructuring care from function-based teams to persona-based teams. Moving to a simplified tools stack"

Better Understanding of Customers' Needs and Expectations

- "We are a global company but currently offer support in only a few languages. We are expanding to support languages for every customer (using human efforts and technology)."
- "Customer segmentation - There are some deliberate changes we made to segmentation to provide bespoke service to each segment."
- "Fully understanding customer needs and objectives, coupling that with growth expectations and having a plan that compliments that"

Does your organization have any specific initiatives to create greater consistency across channels?



Given the efforts that organizations are making to shift traffic from human-assisted channels to SSTs — coupled with the increased demand for SSTs in the wake of COVID-19 — "consistency across channels" remains important for many organizations. Providing a consistent experience across all channels strengthens organizations' brand perceptions and enables them to better deliver upon their brand promises.

What are the initiatives to create greater consistency across channels?

The following themes emerged from responses received to the above question, along with some supporting comments.

Aligning Internal Systems and Processes

- "Aligning processes and responses, getting all systems to talk to each other"
- "Ensure customer service is based on one consistent process, regardless of channel"
- "Training for agents and customers to drive consistency in support. Eliminating friction with self-service and full-service engagements"

Creating a Knowledge Base

- "Branding initiatives and a single source of answers via knowledge base"
- "Common database of issues and solutions accessible easily through digital platforms"
- "Cross-functional executive steering committee addressing common issues, pain points, and operational enhancements"

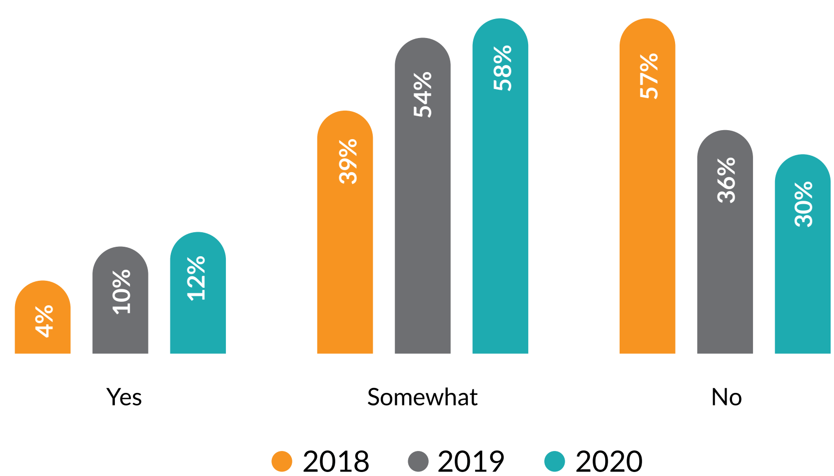
Use of Insights

- "Use of customer service profiles, mystery shopping, and surveys"
- "While not necessarily across channels, we are working to create a consistent experience across customer segments. For example, allowing all customers to use the same options within our warranty claims online tool."

Use of Technology

- "Enhancing the call center with new technologies like live chatbots and live Whatsapp, by shifting inbound calls to self-service channels"

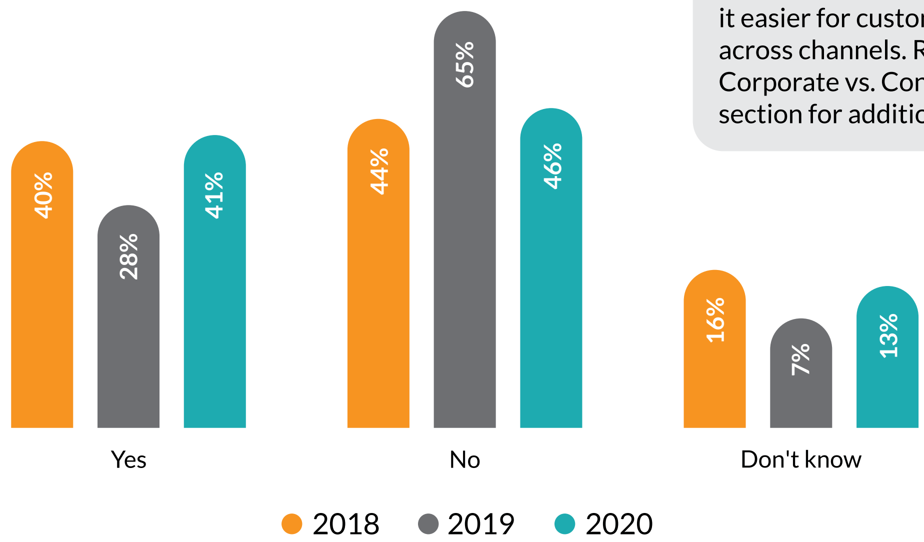
Do you feel that your organization does a good job of providing a seamless and easy experience as your customers transition between different channels and solutions?



The data suggests that there is still a lot of work to be done to deliver excellent CX for customers who transition between different channels and solutions. Only 12% of respondents believed that their organizations were performing well in this area.

Based on the CXMB Series 2020 Consumer Edition, 71% of consumers stated that they had been involved in a multichannel journey in the past 12 months, up from 63% in 2019. Given the availability and adoption rate of new channels, this number is expected to grow. Therefore, it will be important for organizations to incorporate disciplines such as service design into their CX strategies, giving special focus to multichannel interactions. More insights can be found in the Corporate vs. Consumer Comparison section on page 82.

Does your organization have any specific initiatives to create greater ease for customers as they navigate across channels?



Although only 12% of respondents believed that their organizations were doing a good job of providing an easy and seamless multichannel experience, 41% stated that their organizations had specific initiatives in place to make it easier for customers to transition across channels. Refer to page 82 in the Corporate vs. Consumer Comparison section for additional insights.

What are the initiatives to increase ease while navigating across channels?

As a follow-up question, we asked respondents to elaborate on these initiatives. The key themes that emerged related to the use of newer technologies and a better understanding of consumers' pain points.

Use of Emerging Technologies

- "AI-based monitoring tool on journeys"
- "Bringing interactions that are happening in multiple solutions into a new CRM"
- "Common database accessed through digital means"
- "Contact center as a cloud solution"
- "In-app service offering across all channels"

Initiatives for Better Understanding of Customer Pain Points

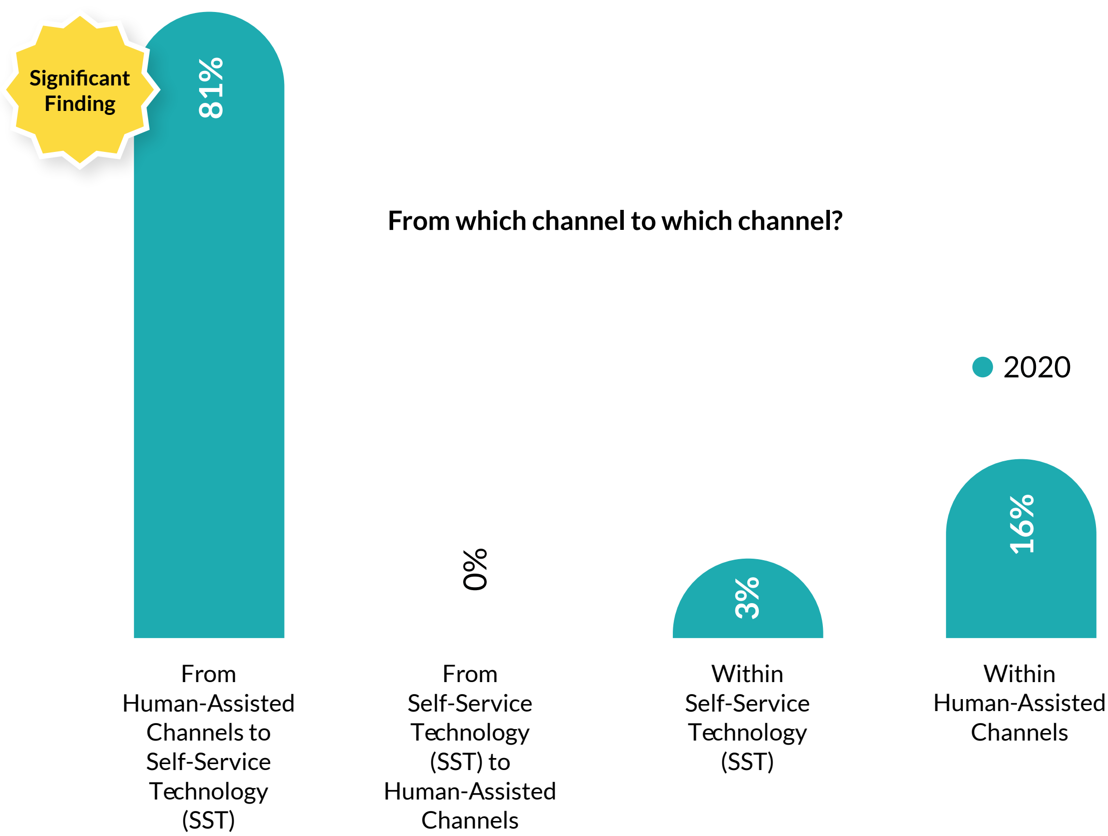
- "Mapping out the customer journey and identifying customer pain points"
- "Procurement of a customer engagement system to support multi-channel engagement and provide more insights into customer journey"

Is your organization actively trying to shift engagement traffic from one channel to another?

Yes %	2017	2018	2019	2020
	52%	64%	46%	67%

While active channel-shifting decreased significantly in 2019, it shot up in 2020 with an increase of 21 points. This jump was likely caused by the pandemic, with most shifts occurring from human-assisted channels to self-service technologies (SSTs).

From which channel to which channel?



Beyond the performance metrics, does your organization have a system for utilizing customer feedback to improve the customer experience (CX)?

Yes %	2017	2018	2019	2020
	77%	77%	73%	75%

Three-quarters of respondents indicated that their organizations use customer feedback to improve the CX. Beyond the traditional CX metrics — such as customer satisfaction (CSAT), net promoter score (NPS), and customer effort score (CES) — there are many other feedback mechanisms that can contribute to robust CX programs.

We asked respondents about the systems they had in place, and below are some of their responses:

- "A feedback/rating option, using this data to improve products and services"
- "Call back subscribers with low satisfaction and unresolved issues"
- "Programs such as client advisory board, top customer program, and community feedback"
- "Customer surveys + customer verbatims + speech and text analytics"
- "In-app feedback is reviewed and responded to, allowing us to identify any trends that may need to be addressed"
- "In-app menus for people to report the improvements and challenges in usability"
- "Journey maps, customer escalations root cause analysis, Gemba walks"

Following a negative customer-care experience, does your organization proactively follow up with customers to help remedy or apologize for the situation?

Yes %	2017	2018	2019	2020
	83%	75%	72%	80%

As we learned from the CXMB Series 2020 Consumer Edition, proactive contact with consumers following a negative experience reduces the risk of a negative impact to future purchasing decisions.

Additionally, proactive follow-ups help consumers feel as though they are "being heard and understood," which is an important driver of the resolution process. For additional insights, refer to page 75 in the Corporate vs. Consumer Comparison section.

Key Findings

- Eighty-two percent of respondents stated that they believe their organizations meet the needs and expectations of their customers.
- There is a 45-point gap between organizations understanding which channels their consumers prefer to use and actually offering all those channels.
- There is a wide disconnect between leadership's commitment towards a "customer first" strategy and fostering a culture that is aligned with this strategy.
- Seventy-three percent of respondents believed that consumers prefer to access self-help channels when tackling simple, routine issues.
- Improving the customer experience (CX) is, and will continue to be, the top priority for organizations.
- Though the percentage of respondents who stated that their organizations conducted service or customer journey mapping has stayed at 2019 levels, there was an increase in the percentage who stated that they plan to do so in the near future.
- Of those respondents who stated that their organizations conducted journey mapping, 80% believed that this practice helped improve CX then, and 83% believed that it helped improve internal efficiencies.
- Only 12% of respondents stated that their organizations were doing a good job of providing a seamless and easy CX across channels, and only 41% have initiatives to solve for this.
- Organizations have repeatedly stated that most of their initiatives focus on providing memorable, multichannel experiences, including the use of emerging technologies to automate processes and channel flows, rich data to access predictive insights, and improved understanding of customer expectations.

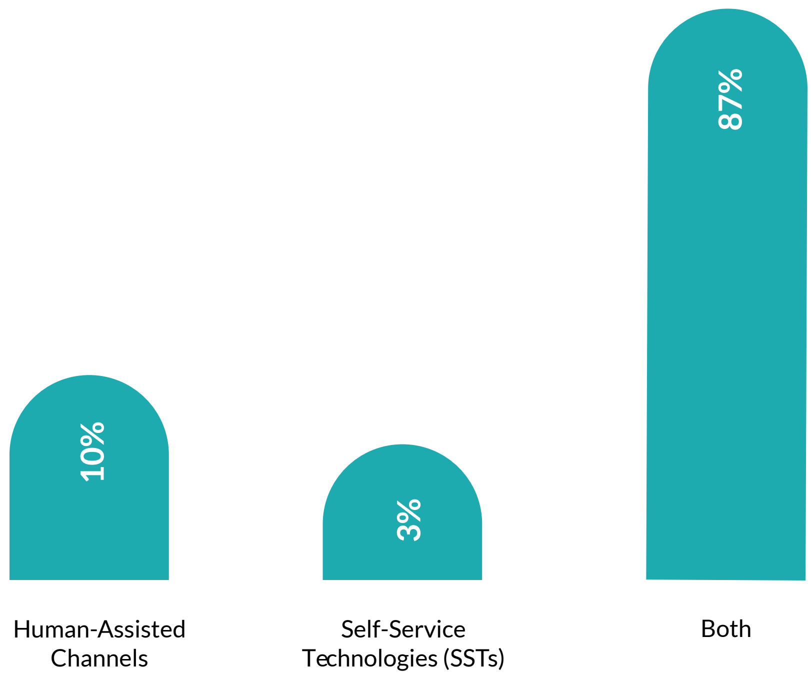
Critical questions that organizations must ask themselves:

- Once we understand which channels our consumers want to use, are we then actually offering those channels, and are we ensuring that the channels we offer have the highest probability of resolving issues?
- Are we creating a "customer first" culture across the organization that is embedded into every function, level, and entity (including vendors and partners) to ensure that the organization is aligned on the mission to deliver memorable and positive customer experiences?
- What key initiatives are in place to provide a seamless experience to consumers as they navigate between channels to resolve their customer-care issues?

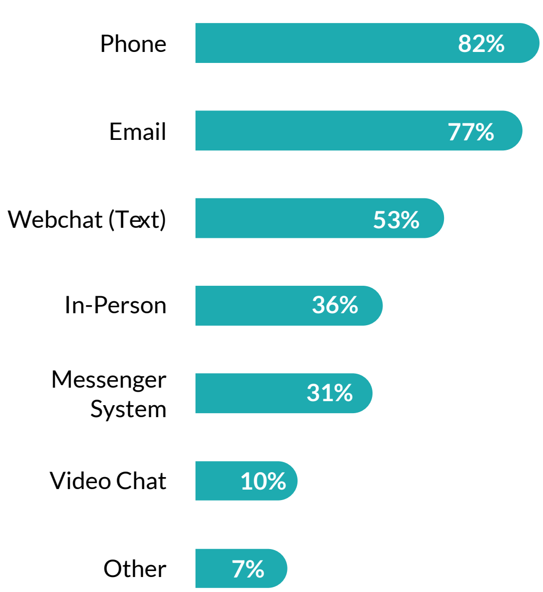
Operational Insights
Survey Results

- Volume and Growth
- Monitoring, Measuring, and Perfomance Improvement
- Staffing
- Employee Engagement
- Technology
- Conclusions

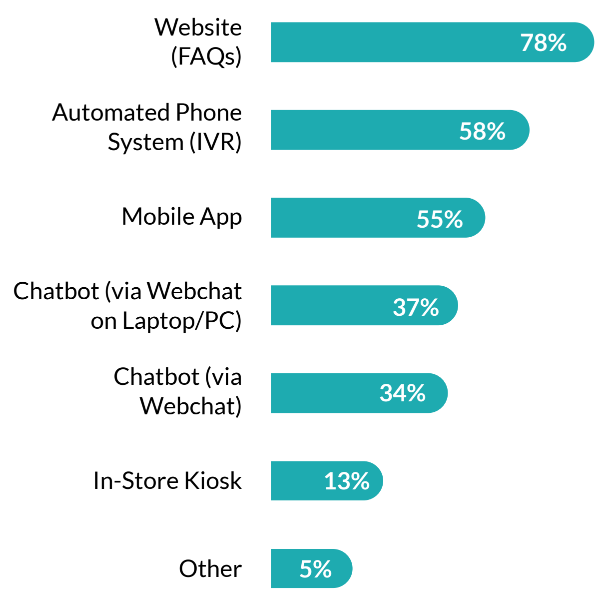
Which of the following channels does your organization offer?



Which of the following human-assisted channels does your organization offer? (Select all that apply.)



Which of the following self-service technologies (SSTs) does your organization offer? (Select all that apply.)



A large majority of respondents (87%) stated that their organizations offer both human-assisted channels and self-service technologies (SSTs).

In the last 12 months, which of the following channels have grown the most?

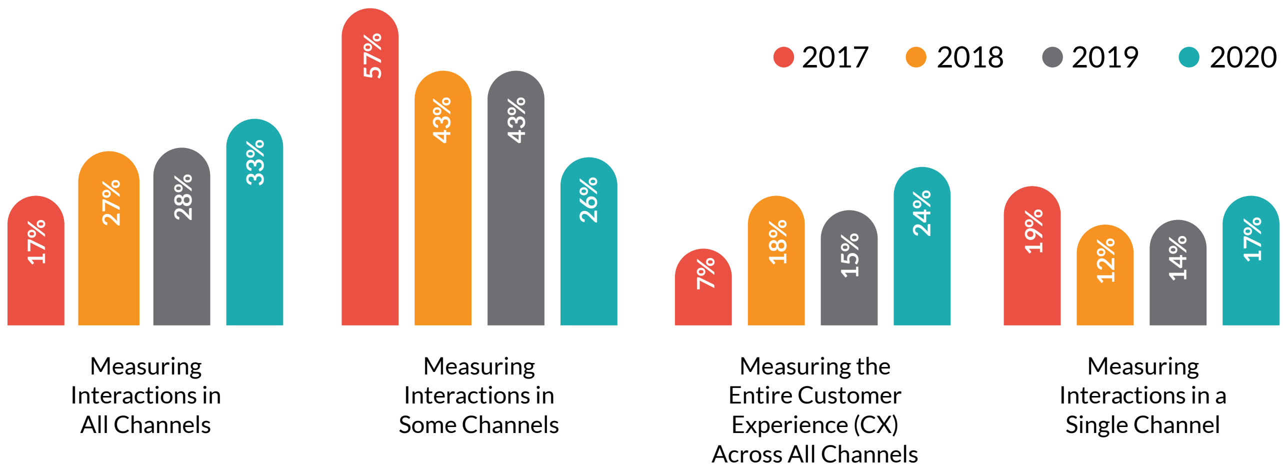
Nearly one-third of respondents (29%) stated that their organizations experienced the most growth in human-assisted channels, while 62% stated that SSTs grew the most.

These results are consistent with the findings from the 2020 Consumer Edition which revealed that the percentage of consumers who used SSTs to resolve a single customer-care issue increased from 43% in 2019 to 75% in 2020.

Operational Insights

Monitoring, Measuring, and Improving Performance

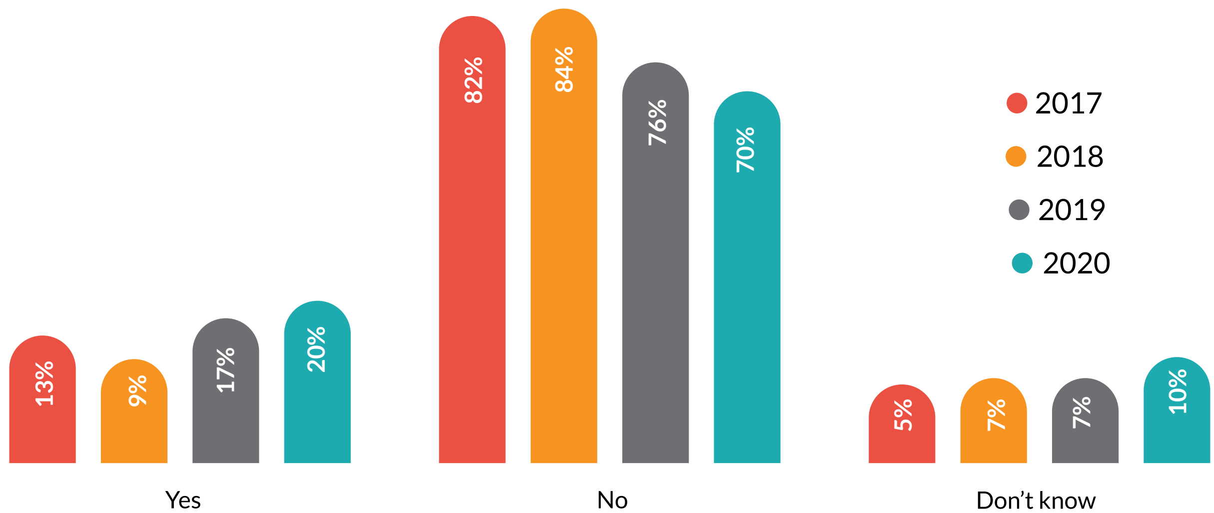
How would you describe how you are measuring the customer experience (CX)?



The way organizations are monitoring and measuring the customer experience (CX) is evolving toward a more holistic approach.

The percentage of respondents who said that they are measuring CX across all channels increased from 15% in 2019 to 24% in 2020. Given the increase in multichannel interactions, it is important for businesses to monitor and measure their customers' end-to-end experiences.

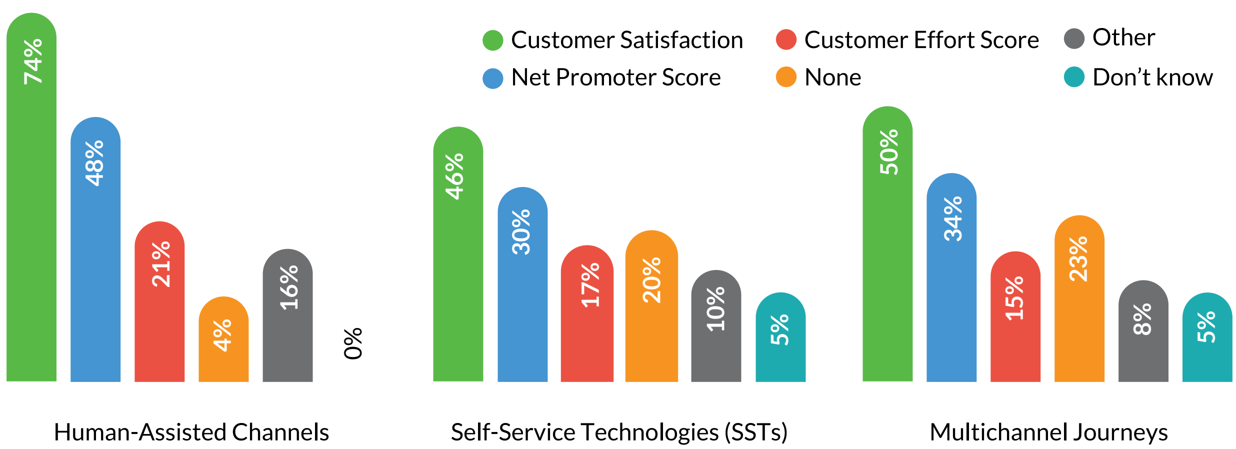
Does your organization measure the performance of a multichannel journey against the performance of a single-channel journey (e.g., resolution or satisfaction rates)?



As found on page 69, nearly half of respondents (44%) stated that their customers utilize multiple channels to resolve a single customer-care issue. However, only 20% stated that their organizations measure the performance of a multichannel journey against that of a single-channel journey.

Providing a consistent and seamless CX when navigating across channels is a key driver of overall CX. So, organizations must measure the performance of multichannel interactions, especially considering that volumes are likely to increase.

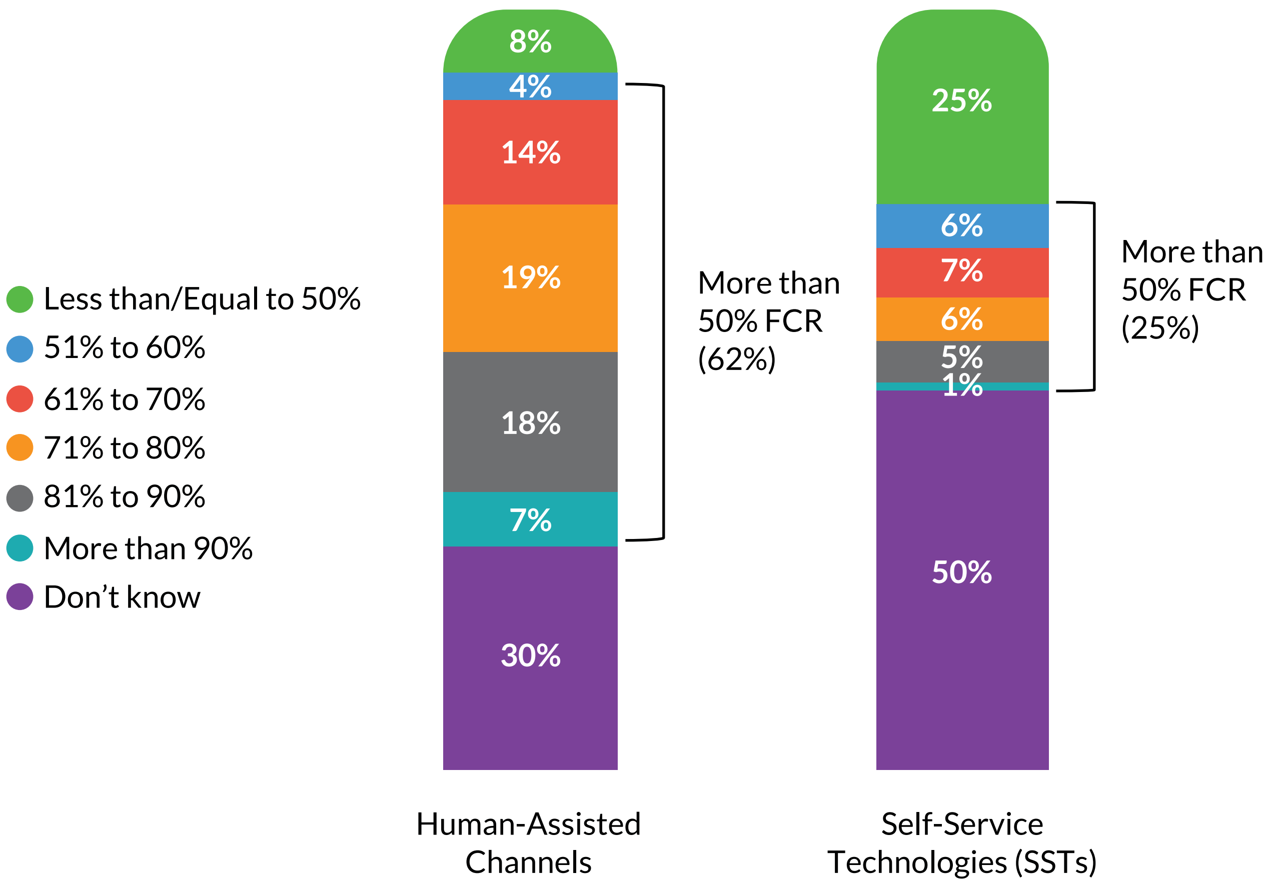
Which metric do you use to measure customer experience (CX)? (Check all that apply.)



Customer satisfaction (CSAT) and net promoter score (NPS) are the most common metrics used by organizations to measure CX.

Almost all respondents (96%) stated that they measure CX for human-assisted channels. It is less common for organizations to measure CX for SSTs or multichannel journeys. More than 20% stated that they do not measure CX at all in those channels and journeys.

What do you estimate your first-contact resolution (FCR) is for human-assisted/self-service technologies (SSTs)?

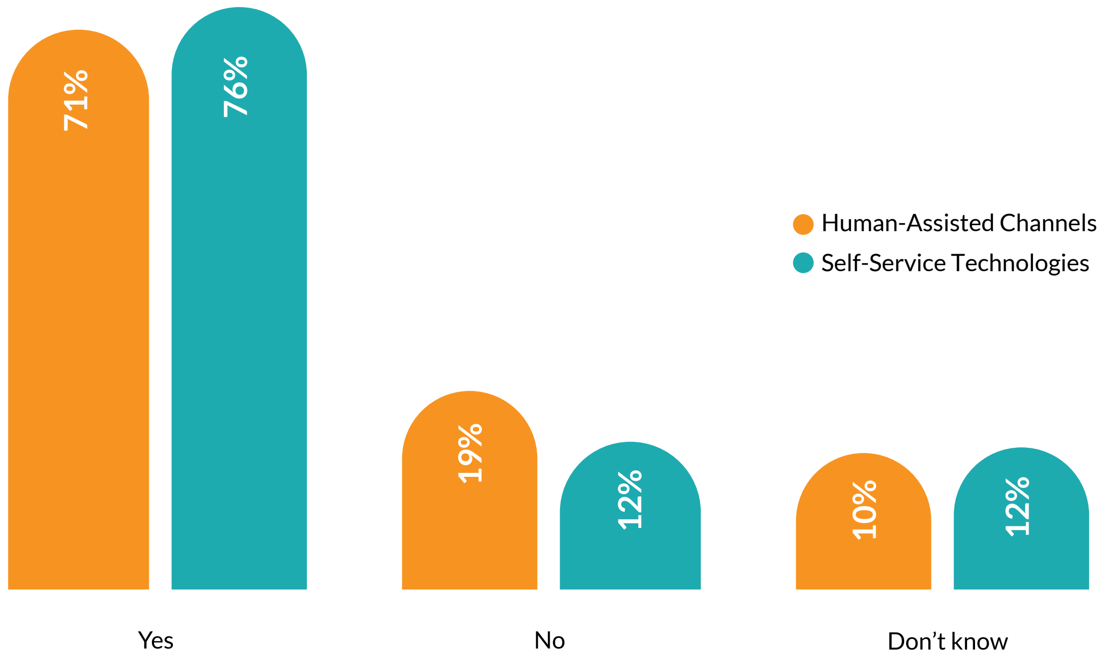


Almost two-thirds (62%) of respondents stated that their FCR is greater than 50% for human-assisted channels but only 25% stated the same for SSTs.

There seems to be a large gap in corporate knowledge around FCR—30% of respondents said that they do not know the FCR for their human-assisted channels, and 50% said that they do not know the FCR of their SSTs.

Issue resolution and FCR are key drivers of CSAT. Organizations must bridge this knowledge gap so that they may improve the overall CX. Additional insights can be found in the Corporate vs. Consumer Comparison section on page 79.

Does your organization have any specific initiatives to increase the resolution capabilities of human-assisted/self-service technologies (SSTs)?



The majority (76%) of respondents stated that they have specific initiatives in place to improve resolution capabilities for SSTs, and 71% stated that the same for human-assisted channels.

As a follow-up question, we asked respondents for details about these initiatives. Many responses about SSTs revolved around better use of insights from data, a focus on educating consumers, and constant monitoring and updating of SSTs. For human-assisted channels, respondents discussed enhancing agent and employee capabilities, leveraging available insights from data, and the use of newer technologies.

Digging further into initiatives for both SSTs and human-assisted channels, some key themes emerged which are detailed on the following page, along with verbatim comments.

Operational Insights

Monitoring, Measuring, and Improving Performance

When asked about intiatives to increase SST resolution capabilities, four key themes emerged from the comments:

Leveraging Data and Insights to Increase Resolution Rates

- “Analysis of unresolved IVR cases to determine areas of improvement; review of all website documents to ensure all current and past product literature is available and findable”
- “For the bots to be able to use data points to much more accurately predict what the issue the person is contacting us is actually about”
- “Guided service and integration of more customer data to route guests to the right agent or self-serve solution”
- “Improved data and analytics to address digital gaps; increasing IVR capabilities”
- “Using predictive engine to proactively route customer to self-serve options, instead of navigating around the menu and ended up pressing 0 for agent”

Constant Monitoring and Improvements of SSTs

- “Some of the initiatives by our organization include increasing chat deflection (chatbot) scripts to reduce unnecessary chats and increasing self-serve features on IVR.”
- “Active management of FAQs on website based on customer feedback, including new content as well as webforms”
- “Continuous review of self-service journey to get to the root cause of the issue and solve for that and enhancing the journey based on customer feedback”
- “To build services that are more self-explanatory with guides and wizards to make the experience better without going here and there trying to understand and find answers”
- “Bot fine-tuning, omnichannel strategy to transfer complex transactions”

Implementing Initiatives to Understand Challenges Faced by Customers Using SSTs

- “We’re currently doing service journey mapping to understand why customers veer away from self-serve to assisted channels.”
- “Surveying customers on why they don’t use tailor solutions to overcome that behavior”
- “Intelligent routing, increased channel choice for customers, identification of blockers to customers completing their journeys digitally”
- “Bot fine-tuning, omnichannel strategy to transfer complex transactions”

Adopting Technology-Based Solutions for Improvements and Efficiencies

- "Connect to back-end data sources to present customers with info and choices rather than ask them for information."
- "Iterate and improve AI methods to support faster and more accurate resolution."
- "Looking at partnerships for in-app support via WalkMe"

Describe the initiatives to increase the resolution capabilities of human-assisted channels.

When asked what initiatives respondents were implementing to increase resolution capabilities within human-assisted channels, three key themes emerged:

Improving Agent and Employee-Facing Tools, Training, and Knowledge

- "Improve system capability and empowerment for agents to make decisions and offer the right resolution."
- "Additional agent training"
- "Targeted training on high impact issues. Implementing knowledge management"
- "Change mindset on channel preference and the belief that customers deserve to receive an exceptional experience in that moment with resolution."

Leveraging Data and Insights to Increase Resolution Rates

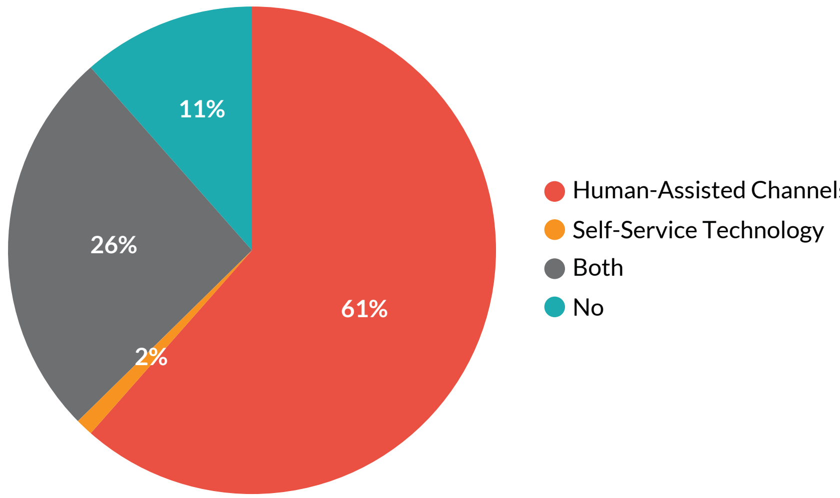
- "Analyzing where there is no/lesser resolution and creating SOP around it"
- "Doing key driver analysis and using the top reason for non-resolution as means to check for possible agent development initiatives"

Adopting Technology for Increasing Resolution

- "AI assistance for contextual search and offering likely solutions with iterative questioning"
- "Deployment of CRM platform to more departments connecting service up for our customers"
- "Enhancements to phone and email channels via new technology capabilities integrating interactions directly to agents"

Does your organization have a quality assurance (QA) program in place for any of the following channels?

A quality assurance (QA) program is a key support process that enables organizations to uncover key issues that impact CX. Approximately 90% of respondents stated that their organizations have a QA program in place. Not surprisingly, a larger percentage (61%) said that they have a QA program in place only for human-assisted channels compared to only 2% for SSTs.



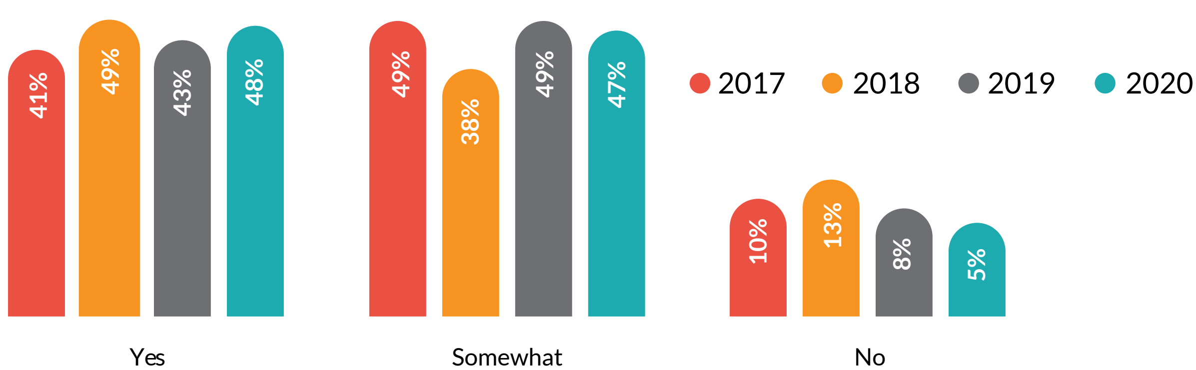
Who conducts your quality assurance (QA) monitoring?

The approach to QA staffing has not changed since 2019. Over 40% of respondents reported that they conduct monitoring via a "combination of independent QA team and supervisors/team leads." Only 10% of respondents stated that their organizations use an external provider to monitor customer interactions.

Which systems or tools do you use to conduct your quality assurance (QA) program?

The data shows a dramatic shift in the tools that organizations used to conduct QA monitoring in 2020, with over 50% of respondents stating that they use a "combination of both manual and software" methods. It is evident that the use of manual approaches — whose rate decreased 15 points in 2020 — is declining in popularity.

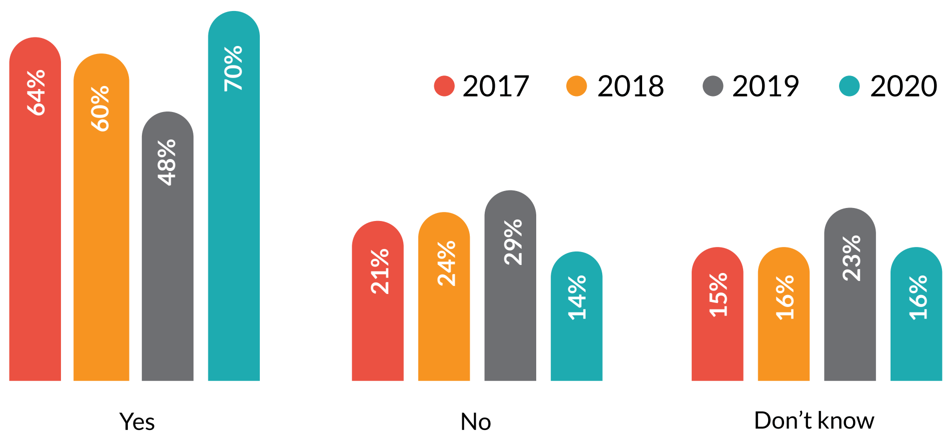
In general, do you think your quality assurance (QA) program(s) is helping to improve resolution and customer satisfaction (CSAT) rates?



Forty-eight percent stated that their QA programs helped improve issue resolution and CSAT, representing a five-point improvement over 2019.

While there was improvement in 2020, a QA program should do more than simply identify errors. It should also support organizations in their mission to deliver on their brand promise. If results from QA programs are not leading to improved resolution rates or decreased customer effort, then companies may need to re-evaluate such programs.

Are results from your quality assurance (QA) program aligned with your customer satisfaction (CSAT) results (e.g., as QA performance improves, CSAT results also improve)?



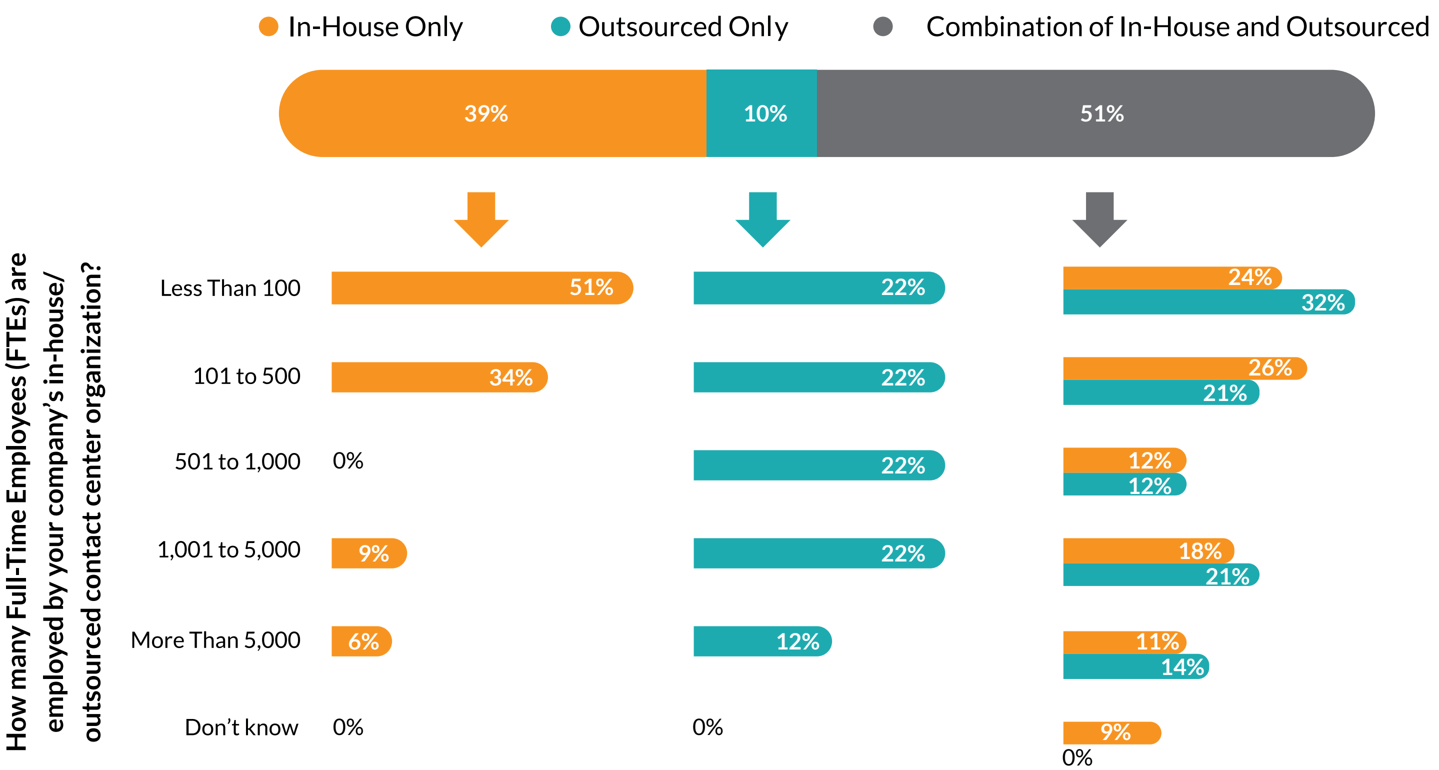
QA programs that are well designed will produce results that have a strong correlation with CSAT — they even can act as a predictor to CSAT. If correlation is lacking, organizations need to identify gaps in processes to ensure QA results can be used to drive actions that lead to improved performance.

This year’s results were especially encouraging, with 70% of respondents stating that their QA results are aligned with CSAT.

Operational Insights

Staffing

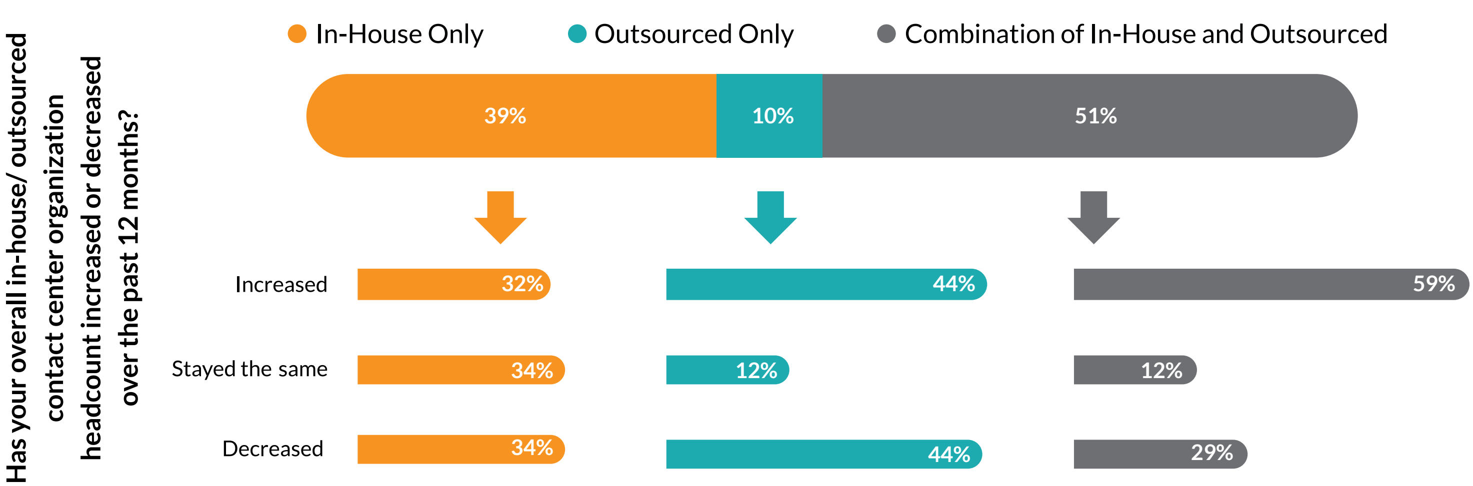
Do you use in-house customer-contact staff or outsourced customer-contact staff?



About half of respondents (51%) stated that their organizations use a combination of in-house and outsourced staff.

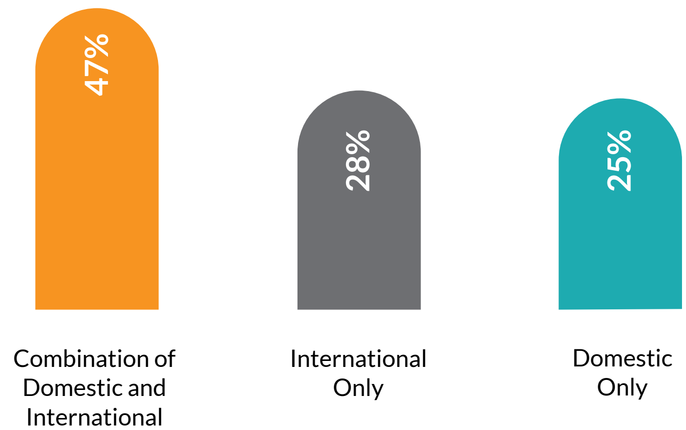
The data shows that organizations that have a combination of in-house and outsourced staff experienced the largest growth in headcount. On the other hand, organizations with only in-house staff witnessed the lowest growth in headcount.

Do you use in-house customer-contact staff or outsourced customer-contact staff?

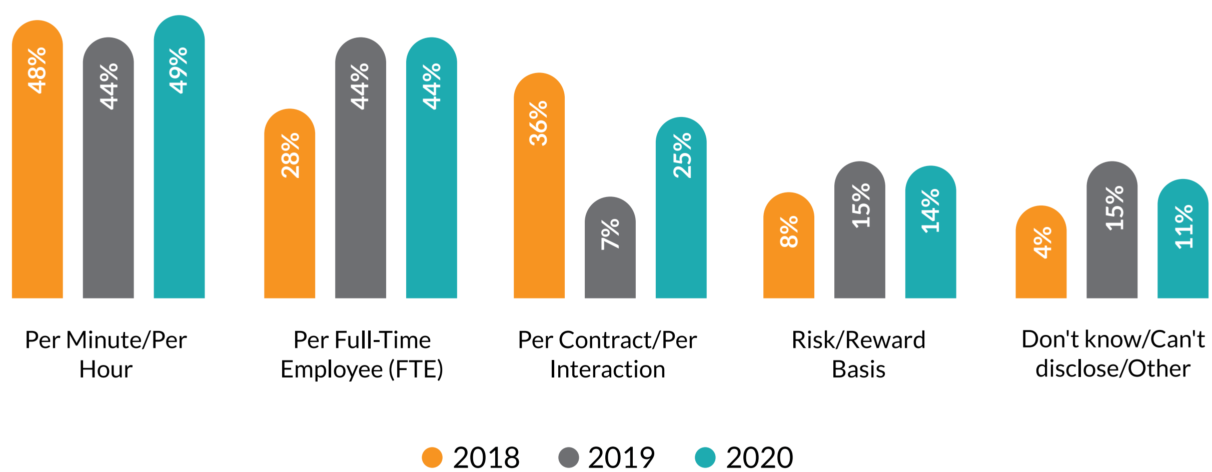


Where are your outsourced contact centers based?

Almost half of respondents whose organizations utilize outsourced contact centers stated that they use both domestic and international locations.

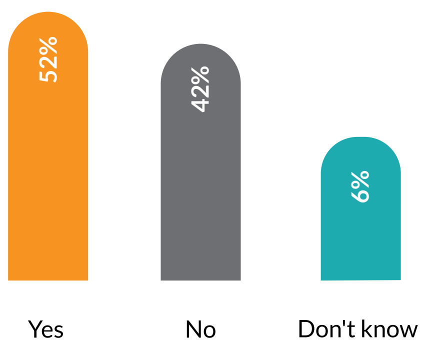


What commercial model(s) do you use when outsourcing? (Check all that apply.)

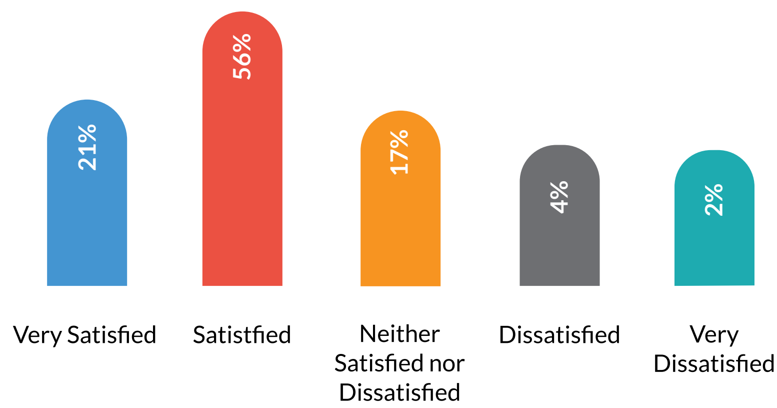


Paying per minute or per hour continues to be the most used commercial model among organizations that outsource, with nearly half (49%) of respondents using this model.

Has the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted your outsourcer's ability to meet your strategic goals?



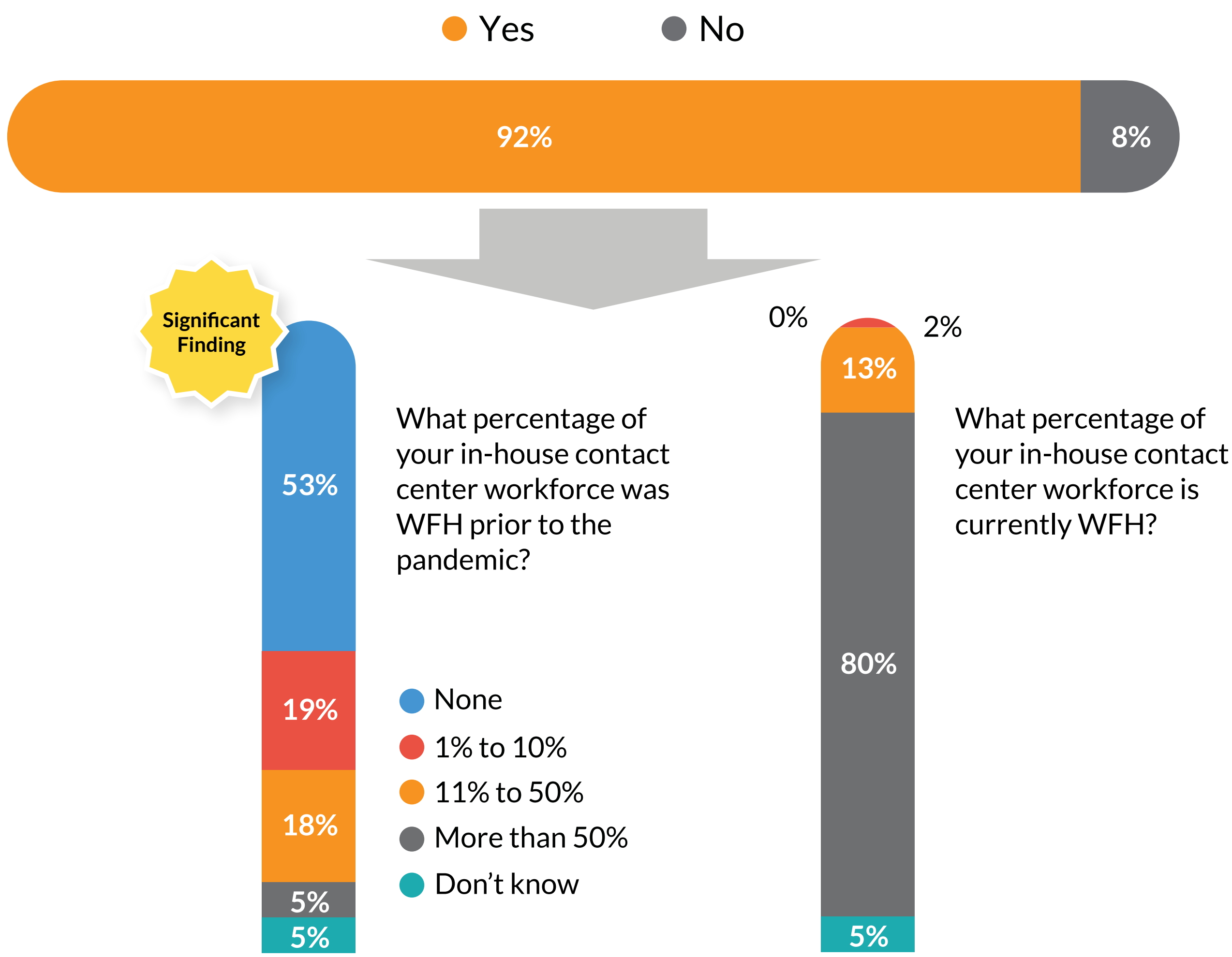
How satisfied are you with your outsourcer's performance?



More than half of the respondents (52%) believed that the COVID-19 pandemic adversely impacted their outsourcers' ability to meet their organization's strategic goals.

Satisfaction with outsourcers is also quite low, with only 77% of respondents stating that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their outsourcers' performance.

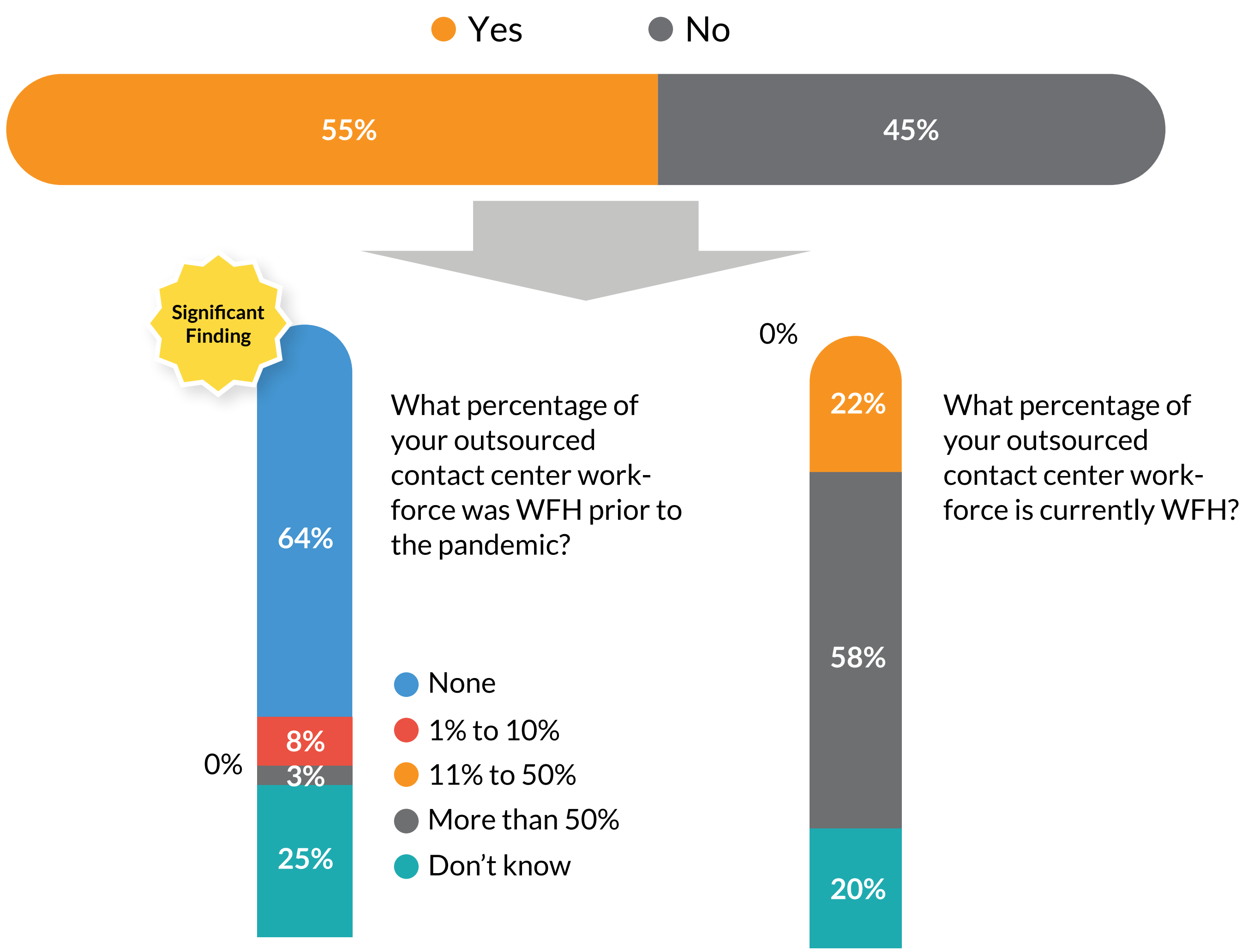
Do you have in-house contact center employees working from home (WFH)?



The data reveals the significant increase in work-from-home (WFH) staff. This change was not something that businesses anticipated or were prepared for, but the transition was swiftly executed.

An interesting finding is that while more than 50% of the respondents stated that they had no in-house WFH staff prior to the pandemic, zero respondents stated that they are currently operating with no WFH staff.

Do you have oursourced contact center employees working from home (WFH)?



The data also shows the increase in WFH outsourced staff.

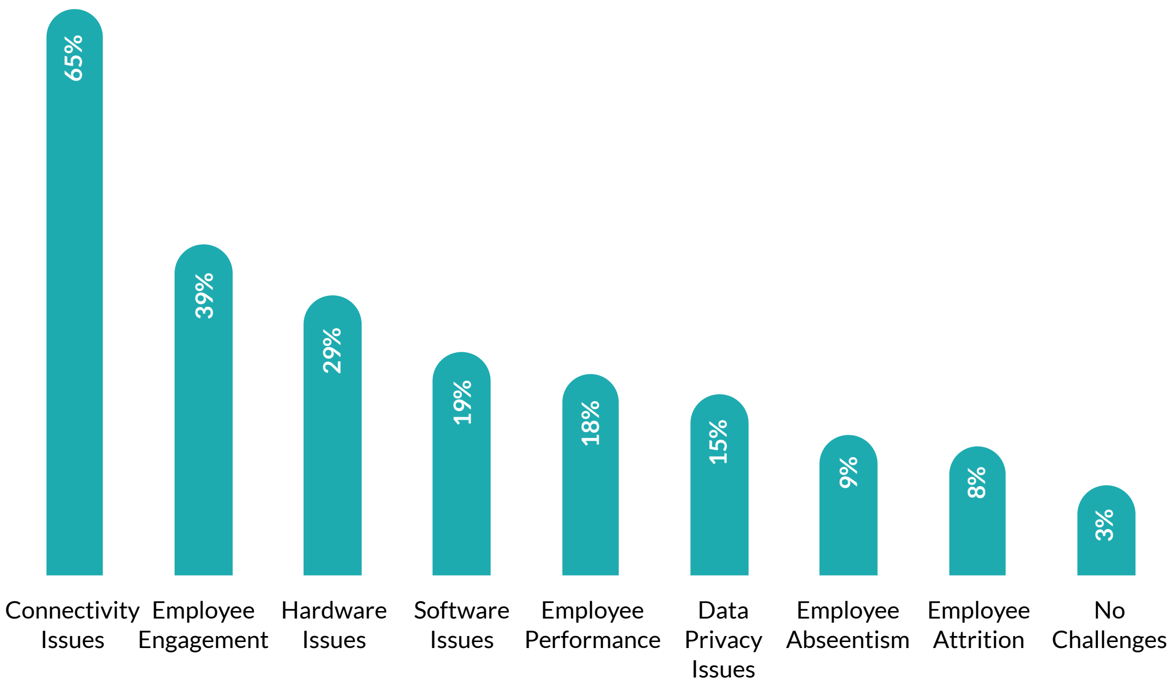
More than 60% of respondents stated that they had no WFH outsourced staff prior to the pandemic, whereas every respondent now has some degree of WFH staff.

Seventy percent of respondents who stated that none of their outsourced staff were WFH prior to the pandemic said that more than 50% of their current outsourced staff is WFH.

Operational Insights

Staffing

What have been your biggest challenges in managing work-from-home (WFH) employees? (Select all that apply.)



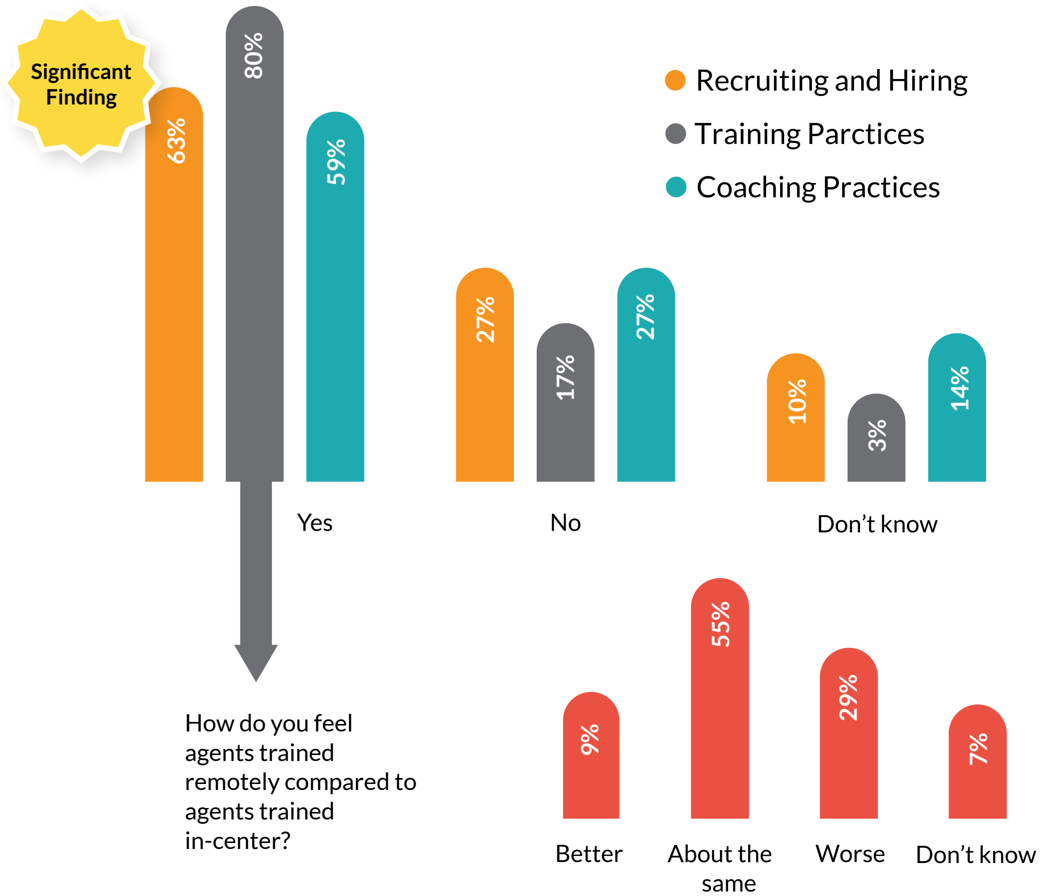
Technology-related concerns emerged as three of the top four challenges that organizations faced as their contact center employees transitioned from office to WFH. The most cited technology-related issues include connectivity, hardware, and software.

Employee engagement also proved to be an issue, as 39% of respondents said that it was their biggest challenge in managing and motivating remote employees.

Operational Insights

Staffing

Have you adjusted your recruiting/hiring practices, training/ coaching as a result of the shift to work-from-home (WFH)?



The pandemic undoubtedly impacted the way organizations recruit, hire, train, and coach their employees. Most of these adjustments centered around the creation and use of tools that allow companies to engage with employees remotely.

One in three respondents believed that the performance of the remotely trained agents was worse than those trained in-center. This should be a matter of concern, as remote working and training have become the norm for most organizations.

When respondents were asked about specific adjustments made for WFH staffing models, an overarching theme of "moving to online tools" was evident, in addition to operational changes. These themes are reflected in the verbatim comments here:

Changes in Recruitment and Hiring Practices

Introduction of Online Methods to Hire and Onboard

- "Move to 100% virtual. Targeting more technically astute staff"
- "Video interviews instead of face to face. Removed group sessions and presentations"
- "Engaged a third-party organization to support online vetting process, plus have implemented assessment centers over Teams and virtual interviews. Training has been reviewed to support virtual training. Results to be reviewed for effectiveness"

Focus on WFH Capabilities

- "We have virtual onboarding and training. Ask specifically in recruitment around availability and ability to WFH."
- "WFH allows for a wider pipeline of applicants."

Adjustments in Recruitment Criteria

- "Change in hiring profile, experience requirements, and video conferences to interview candidates"
- "Had to relax the language skill tests as we haven't been able to find a way of ensuring this is done without any bias"
- "We are now open to hiring remote employees and expect that post-COVID-19 ~25% of our employee base will be remote. Will help us better address peak times in our business"

Changes in Training Practices

Shift to Online and Self-Paced Learning Tools

- “All of our training has been migrated to online and we now have a higher % of our training modules that is self-paced.”
- “All training now virtual. Reduced the number of agents to trainer ratio to increase individual engagement”
- “More web-based and on-demand learning in smaller more flexible snippets instead of classroom based scheduled learning”
- “Video training. Electronic material/resources. Knowledge checks by topic. Mentor/help available via chat”

Initiatives to facilitate Better Learning Through Online Training Methods

- “All virtual training with a 3-day nesting period in the center”
- “Allow more time to achieve competency.”
- “Hybrid approach -- one week in a center socially distanced, one week on the floor socially distanced, both with two trainers for oversight, then send home”
- “Packages and onboarding reviewed for a virtual delivery including access to support teams, mentors and SMEs through virtual chats, video and Support queues”

Smaller Batches

- “Size of group training spacing 6’ and sanitation programs”
- “Training team size decreased, online training /zoom”

Changes in Coaching Practices

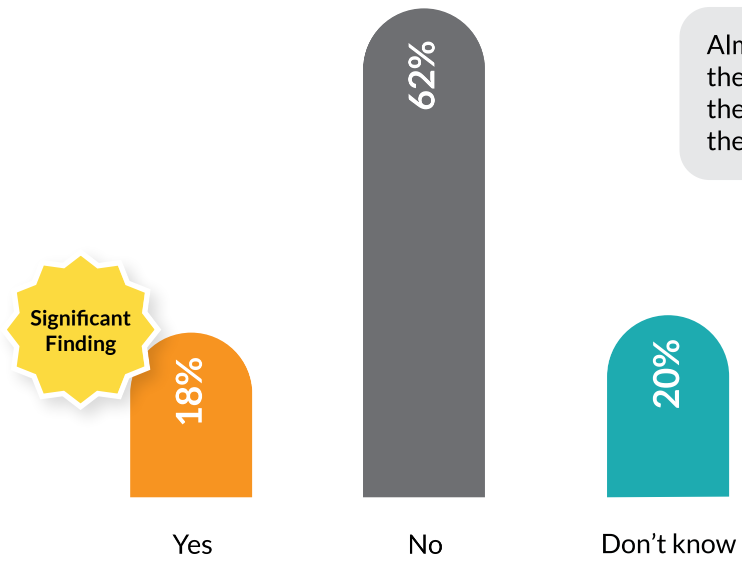
Introduction of Online Methods to Coach

- "Increase in side-by-side coaching, scheduled coaching events, and use of the Verint software to identify coachable issues"
- "More frequent face-to-face via Zoom and increased efforts to touch base. Don't allow the coaching to focus on job performance but more well-being."
- "No longer occurring in person, more check points via online tools"
- "Video calls, more adherence monitoring, and increased reporting for visibility "
- "Rather than sitting side-by-side or meeting in a conference room, coaching is done via Teams video."

Greater Focus on Teamwork and Well-Being

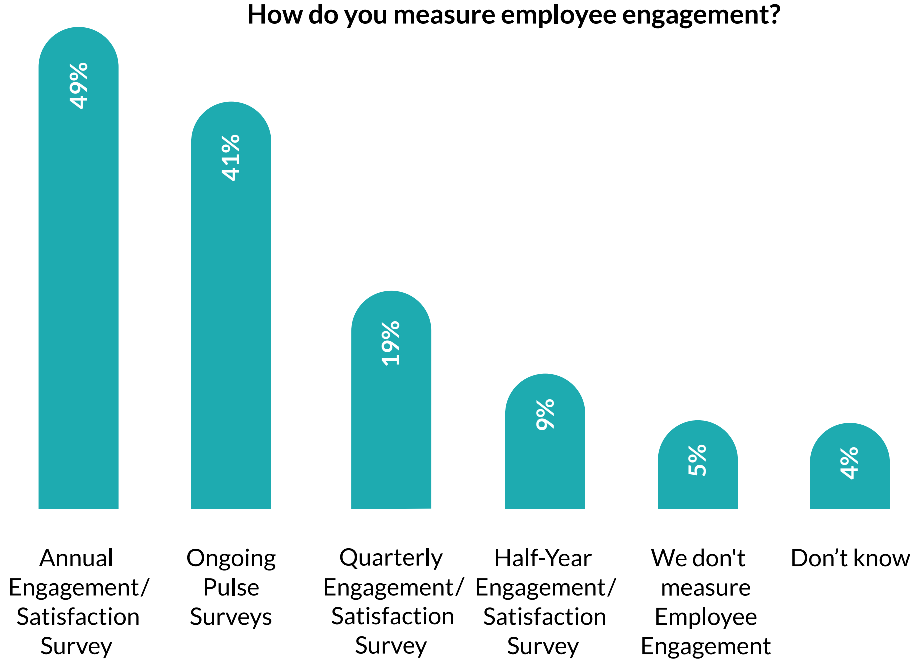
- "Higher tolerance for errors, more emphasis on morale, employee satisfaction"
- "Implement virtual coaching, plus also virtual support mechanisms. Future state is to review but also look at opportunities for on-site collaboration for meetings, one-on-ones etc. So now we look at office space as more collaboration zones rather than workstations."
- "Increase interaction and mental coaching."
- "More focus on workload prioritization, teamwork, and well-being"

Do you believe once things go back to "normal" you will revert to your pre-COVID staffing model?



Almost two-thirds (62%) stated that they do not believe they will revert to their pre-COVID-19 staffing model once the pandemic is behind us.

How do you measure employee engagement?

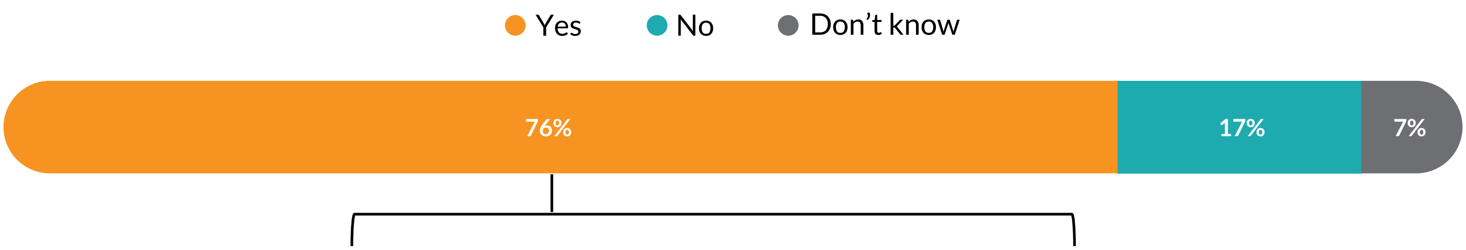


A large majority of respondents (90%) stated that their organizations have at least one program in place to measure employee engagement with the most common tool being the annual engagement/ satisfaction survey.

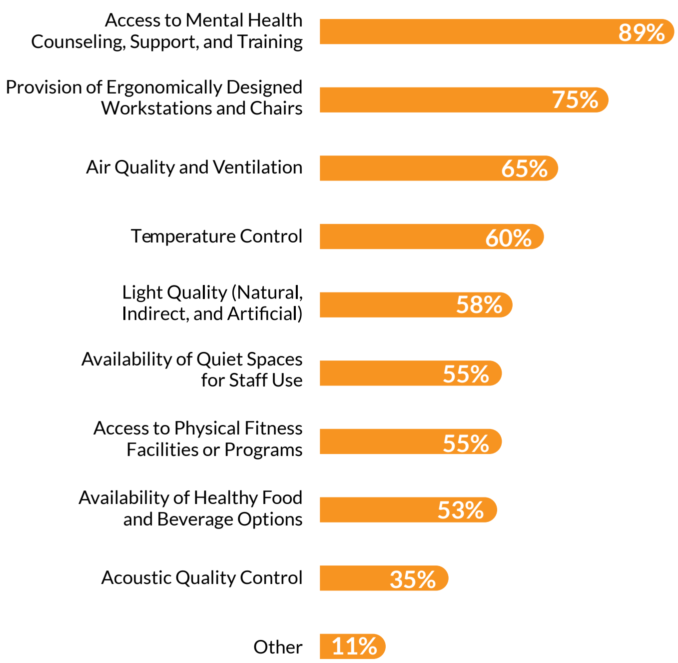
Operational Insights

Staffing

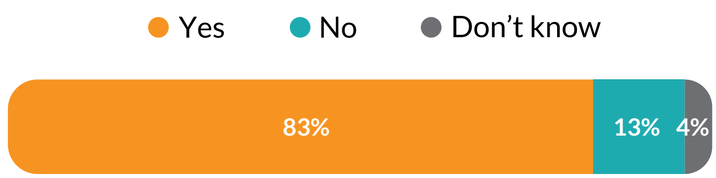
Do you have programs to improve the overall health and well-being of your contact center employees?



Which of the following health and well-being programs do you have? (Select all that apply.)

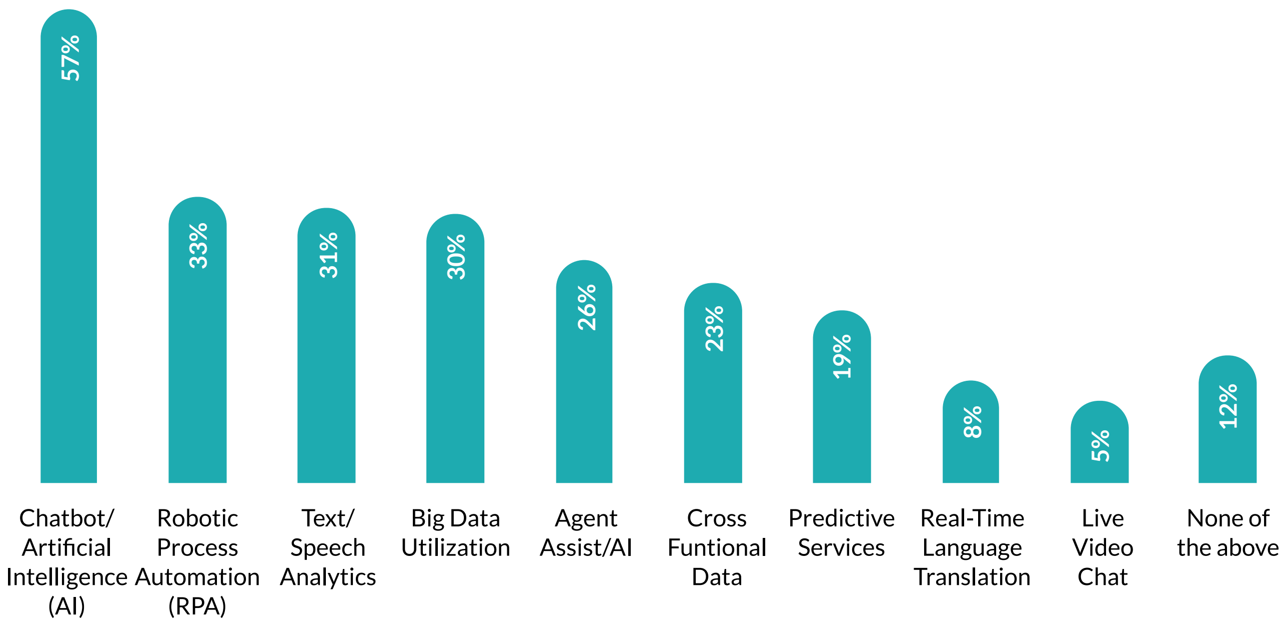


Does your approach for managing the health and well-being of contact center employees consider both WFH staff and those in an office environment?



Seventy-six percent of respondents stated that they have health and well-being programs in place for their contact center employees. A high percentage (83%) also stated that their organizations offer these programs for both WFH and in-center employees. This is important since many of these companies do not plan on reverting to pre-COVID-19 staffing models once the pandemic is behind us.

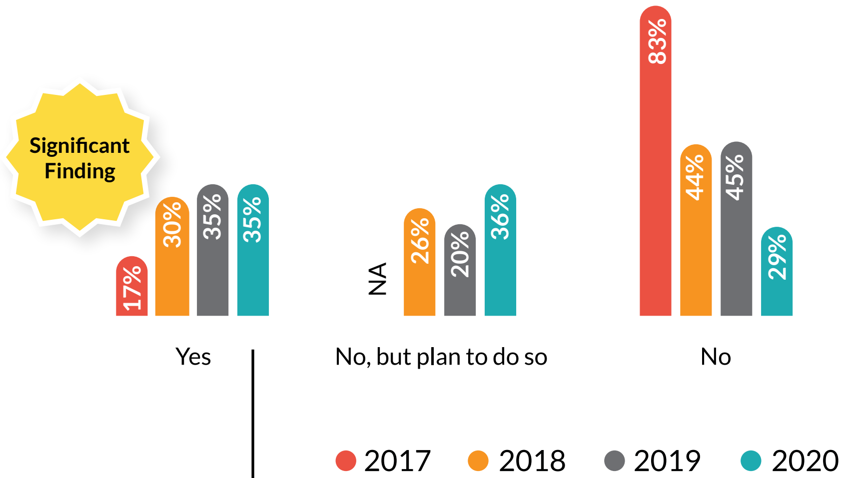
Which of these emerging technologies is your organization most invested in?



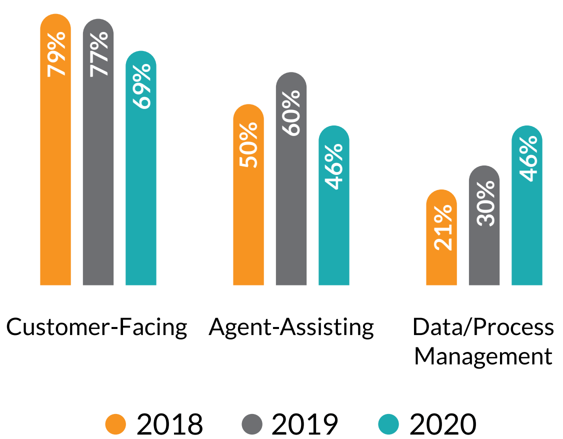
Unsurprisingly, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to support self-service technologies (SSTs) is the most invested-in technology.

The following image shows that while 35% of respondents stated that their organizations have deployed AI-based solutions for their contact center operations, another 36% said that their organizations intend to do so in the near future — a rate that has increased from 20% in 2019.

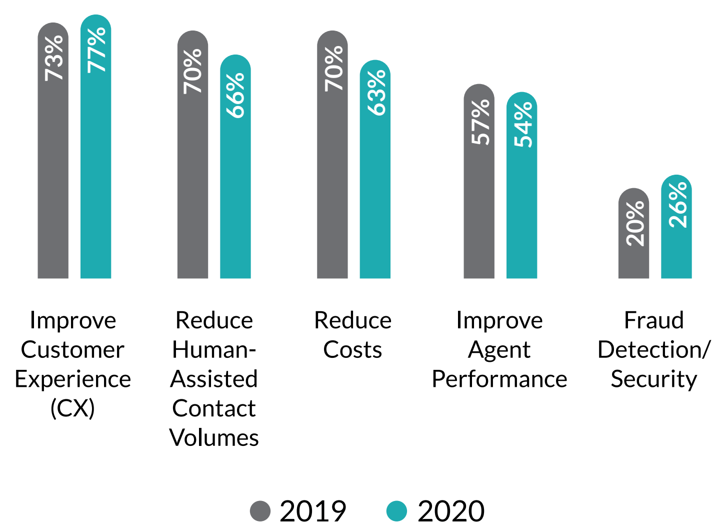
Has your company applied the use of artificial intelligence (AI) within your contact center organization?



How would you describe the specific application(s) of your AI-powered solutions? (Select all that apply.)



Which objectives are you primarily trying to accomplish with your use or future use of AI-powered solutions? (Select all that apply.)



AI is primarily being used for customer-facing applications, however, the use of AI has also surged for data and process-management applications, going from 30% in 2019 to 46% in 2020. This aligns with the findings that many strategic initiatives are focused on "data/insights-based initiatives to improve customer experience (CX)."

Key Findings

- A high percentage of organizations (87%) now offer both human-assisted channels and self-service technologies (SSTs). Phone is the most offered channel, which is consistent with the findings from the 2020 Consumer Edition, where it was found to be the most used channel.
- Nearly one-third (29%) of respondents experienced a higher growth rate of human-assisted channels compared to SSTs, while the growth rate of SSTs was higher for 62% of respondents.
- The way organizations are now looking at capturing customer experience (CX) data seems to be undergoing a shift. The focus on measuring interactions in all channels increased from 28% in 2019 to 33% in 2020, and measuring the entire CX across all channels increased from 15% in 2019 to 24% in 2020.
- A majority of respondents (62%) stated that first-contact resolution (FCR) was greater than 50% for human-assisted channels, but only 25% stated the same for SSTs. There seems to be a gap in respondents' awareness of their FCR performance. Thirty percent of respondents did not know their FCR for human-assisted channels, and 50% did not know their FCR for SSTs.
- For SSTs, only 25% of respondents stated that their FCR rate is more than 50%. This needs to improve given the fact that an increasing number of organizations perceive that more and more customers prefer to use SSTs for routine and simple issues.
- Organizations are making efforts to increase resolution rates for both SSTs (as stated by 76% of respondents) and human-assisted channels (as stated by 71% of respondents).
- Eighty-nine percent of respondents stated that their organizations have a quality assurance (QA) program in place. However, a higher percentage of respondent (61%) stated that their organizations have QA programs only for human-assisted channels compared to 2% that have QA programs only for SSTs.
- The most common staffing strategy is a combination of in-house and outsourced staff, as was noted by 51% of respondents.
- There was a dramatic increase in moving personnel to a work-from-home (WFH) staffing model, even though organizations were not necessarily prepared to quickly make such a change. In fact, according to respondents:
    - 92% stated that they currently have in-house WFH staff. Of those respondents, 53% stated that they had no WFH in-house staff prior to the pandemic, and 80% stated that more than 50% of their in-house staff is now WFH.
    - 55% stated that they currently have outsourced WFH staff. Of those respondents, 64% stated that they had no WFH outsourced staff prior to the pandemic, and 58% stated that more than 50% of their outsourced staff is now WFH.

Key Findings, cont.

  - 62% stated that they will not revert to pre-COVID-19 staffing models once the pandemic is behind us.

- Employee engagement seems to be moving in the right direction as 90% of respondents stated that their organizations have at least one initiative aimed at measuring it.

- Though the percentage of respondents stating that their organizations use artificial intelligence (AI) for contact center setups has remained similar to 2019, a higher percentage of respondents stated that they are considering using it in the near future (from 20% in 2019 to 36% in 2020). The key objective in the use of AI is to improve CX, which is also the top priority of organizations for the future.

Some critical questions that organizations must ask themselves:

- With an increase in traffic and greater focus on SSTs, are we equipped to measure quality and customer satisfaction (CSAT), while also benchmarking ourselves against industry leaders? If resolution rates continue to be low, will shifting to SSTs work to our advantage and improve our chances of carrying out a successful "customer first" strategy?

- In what ways can the use of new technologies, such as AI, enhance the CX? How will it serve our consumers?

- Given that WFH staffing at higher levels is here to stay, what steps do we need to take to ensure that productivity improves, employees stay engaged, and resolution rates do not decrease? Furthermore, which challenges need our immediate attention?

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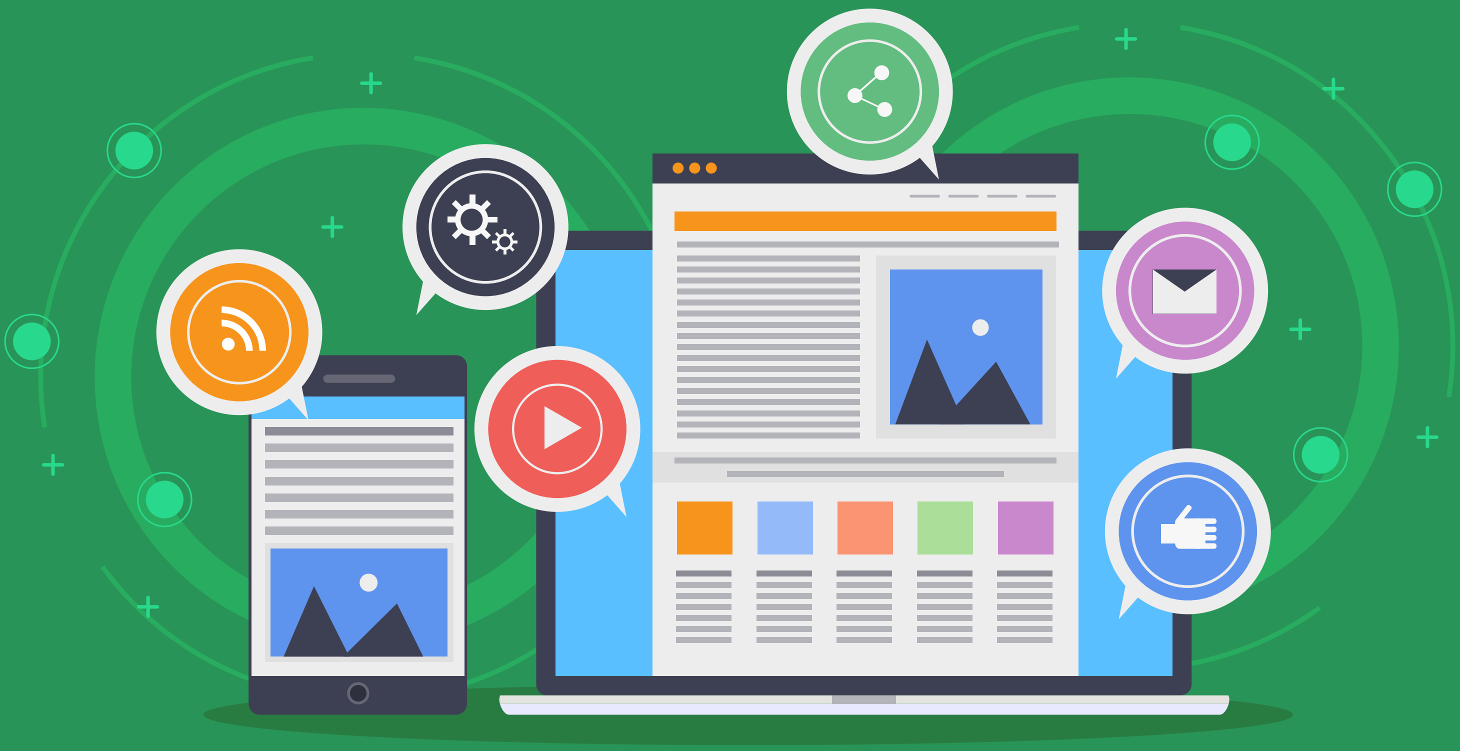
Channel Insights
Survey Results

- Human-Assisted Channels
- Self-Service Technologies (SSTs)
- COVID-19 Impact
- Multichannel Journeys
- Conclusions



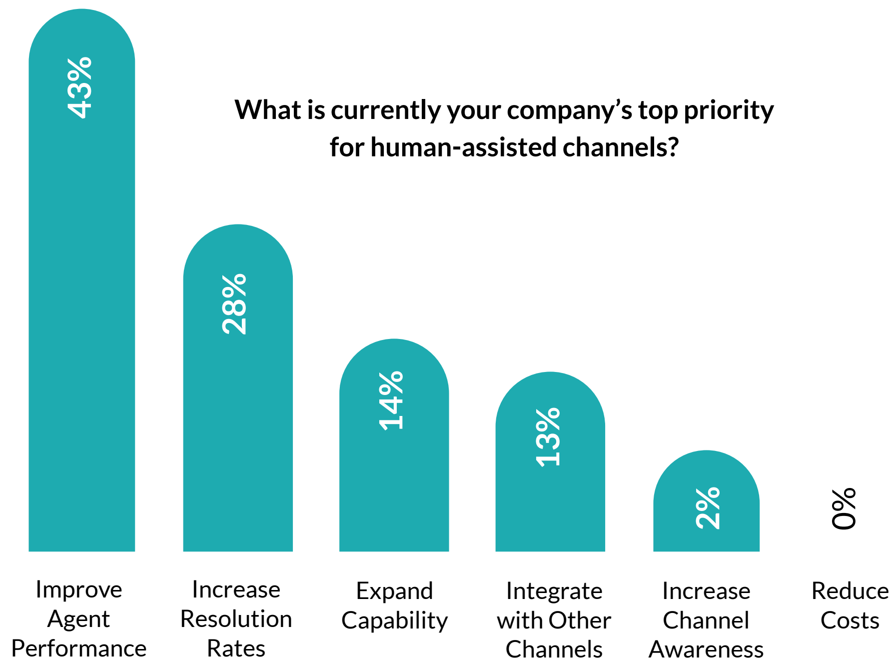
Channel Insights

Human-Assisted Channels

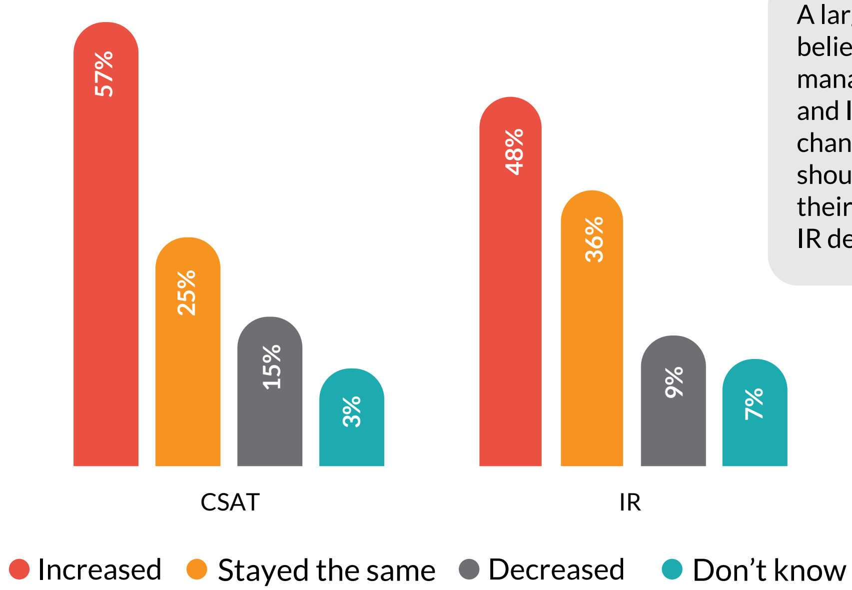
For human-assisted channels, 43% of respondents stated that "improving agent performance" is the top priority for their organizations.

Increasing resolution rates also ranks high in importance for many organizations, with 28% of respondents stating that it is their organization's top priority. Approximately 60% of these respondents also stated that they have specific initiatives in place to increase the resolution capabilities of their human-assisted channels.

What is currently your company's top priority for human-assisted channels?



In the last 12 months, do you believe that customer satisfaction (CSAT) and issue resolution (IR) via human-assisted channels in your organization has increased or decreased?

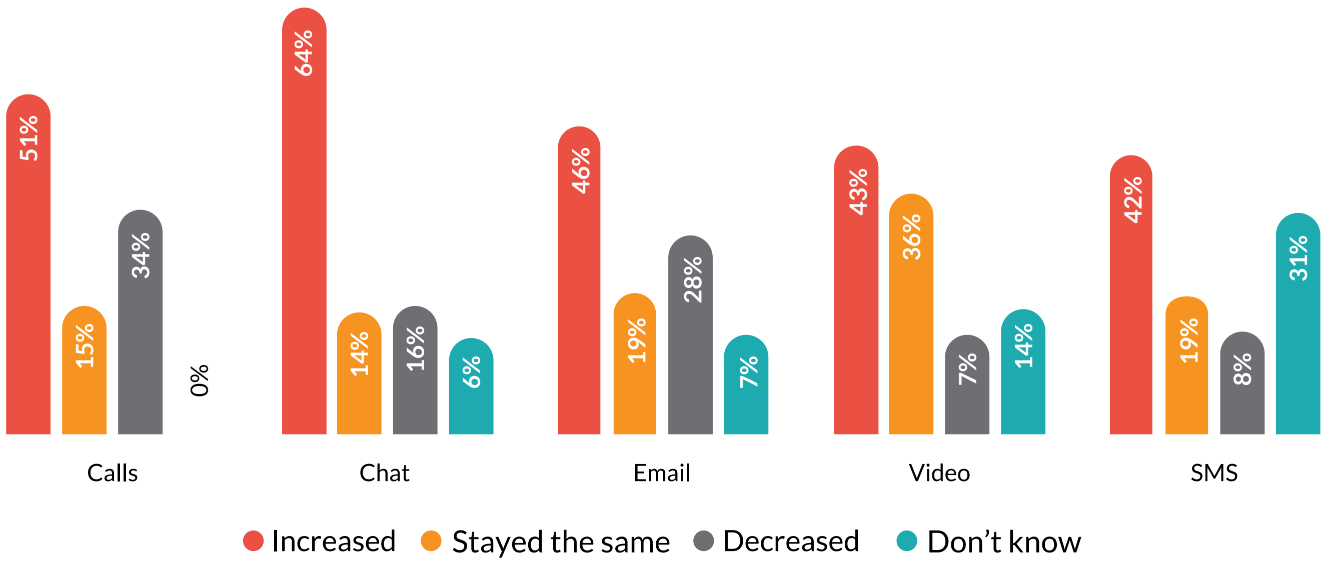


A large proportion of respondents believed that their organizations had managed to improve CSAT (57%) and IR (48%) in their human-assisted channels in the last year. However, it should be noted that 15% believed their CSAT decreased and 9% believed IR decreased.

Channel Insights

Human-Assisted Channels

In the last 12 months, have the volumes for the following human-assisted channels in your organization increased or decreased?



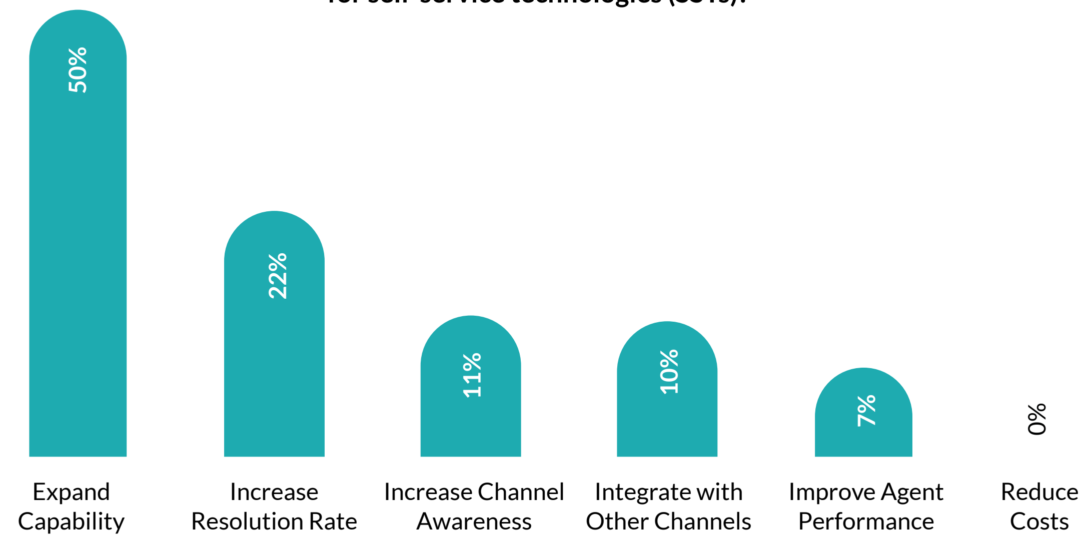
Volumes increased across human-assisted channels over the past 12 months with the highest increase in chat-based solutions. This indicates that consumers are now willing to explore other “real-time,” human-assisted channels beyond just phone interactions.

We also observed this trend in the CXMB Series 2020 Consumer Edition, which showed that the proportion of consumers that interacted through video and online chat increased from 34% in 2019 to 53% in 2020. The percentage of consumers that interacted via phone remained fairly constant (60% in 2019 and 58% in 2020). Additional insights can be found on page 78 of the Corporate vs. Consumer Comparison section.

Channel Insights

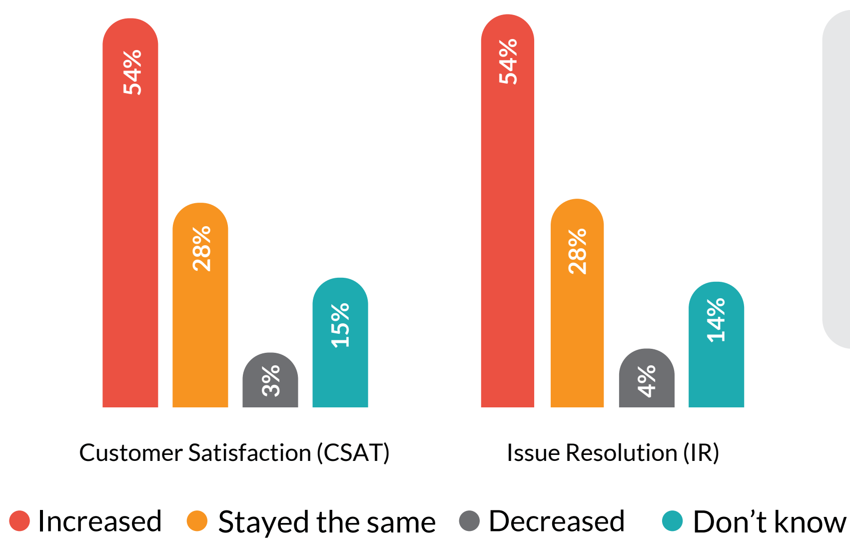
Self-Service Technologies (SSTs)

What is currently your company's top priority for self-service technologies (SSTs)?



Organizations are looking to expand their self-service technology (SST) capabilities, with 47% of respondents indicating that it is their top priority in these channels. With self-service adoption by consumers increasing, it makes sense that organizations are focused on this.

In the last 12 months, do you believe that customer satisfaction (CSAT) and issue resolution (IR) via self-service technologies (SSTs) in your organization have increased or decreased?

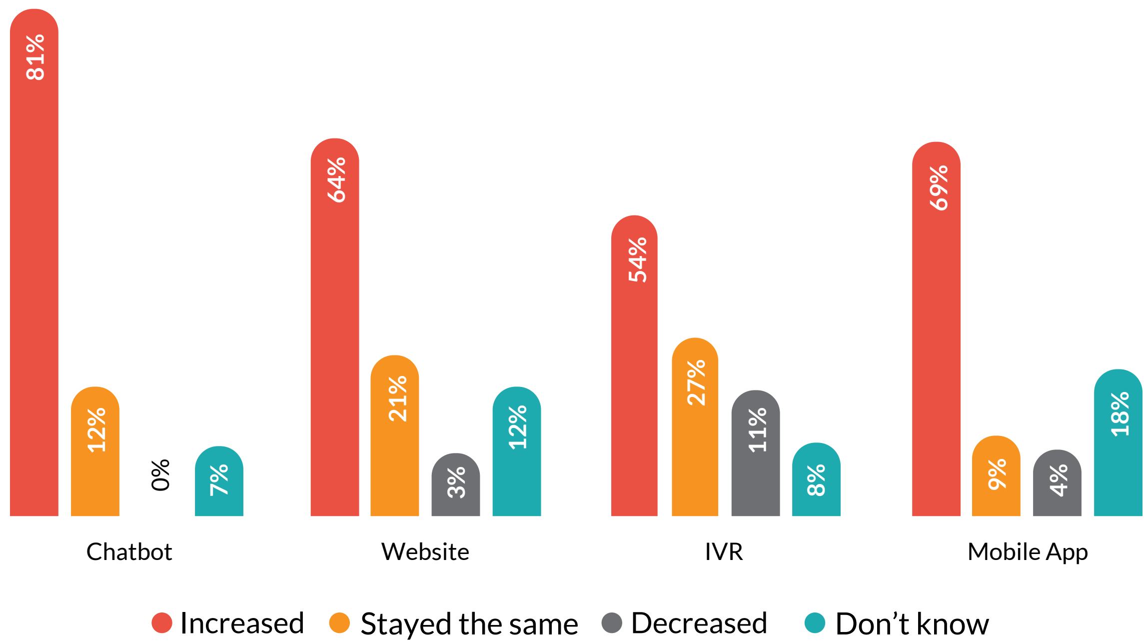


SSTs have also witnessed an increase in CSAT and IR in many organizations over the last 12 months, with more than 50% of respondents reporting increases in both performance metrics. A low percentage of respondents indicated that CSAT decreased.

Channel Insights

Self-Service Technologies (SSTs)

In the last 12 months, have the volumes for the following self-service technologies (SSTs) in your organization increased or decreased?



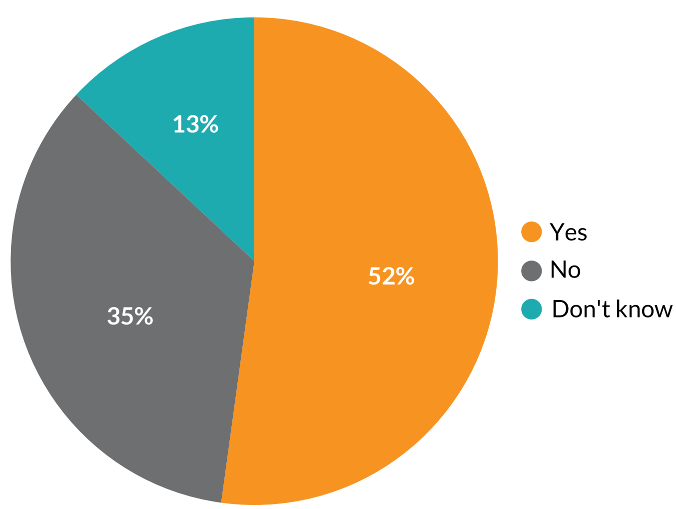
Most respondents have reported an increase in volumes across all SSTs in the past 12 months with the highest increase being attributed to chatbots (81%) followed by mobile apps (69%).

This finding is consistent with data from the CXMB Series 2020 Consumer Edition in which chatbot usage grew almost two-fold over the preceding 12 months, in addition to increases in mobile app and chat usage. Refer to page 77 in the Corporate vs. Consumer Comparison section for additional insights.

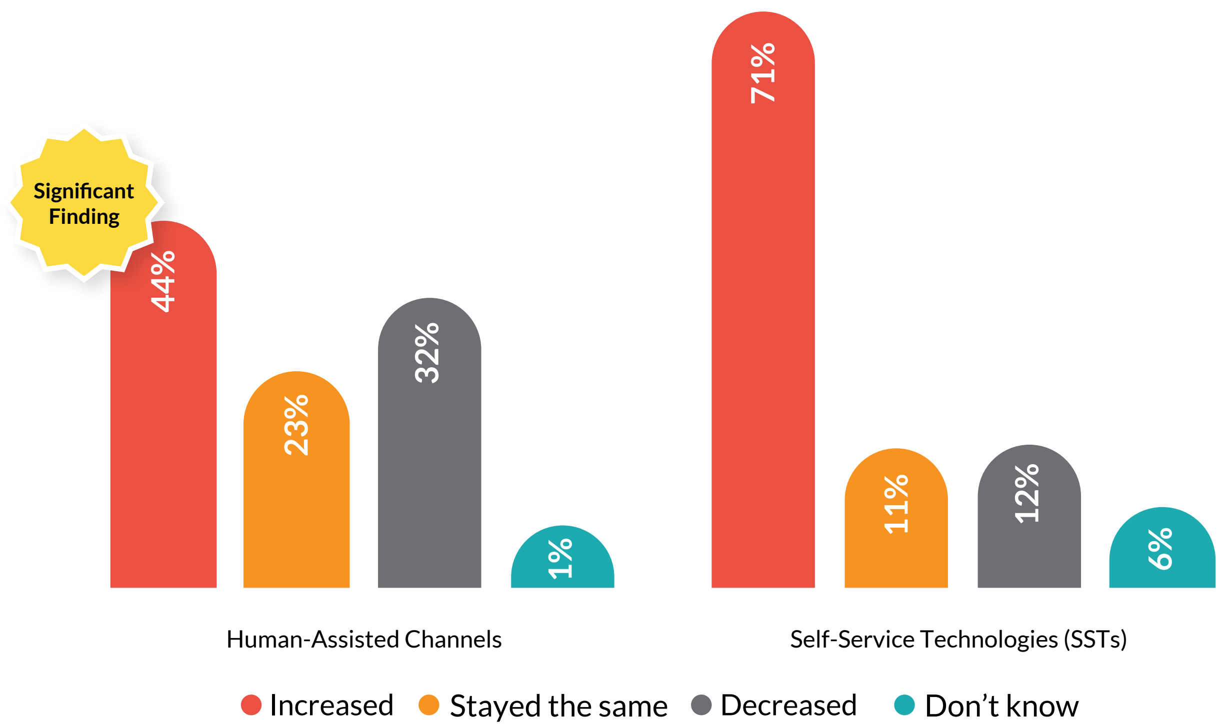
Do you measure how many customers attempt to use self-service technology (SST) but abandon the interaction before completing the task?

Only half of respondents stated that their organizations measure abandonment rate for SSTs.

With an increase in SST volume and organizations' focus on expanding capabilities in these channels, it is important for companies to know why and when consumers abandon these interactions.

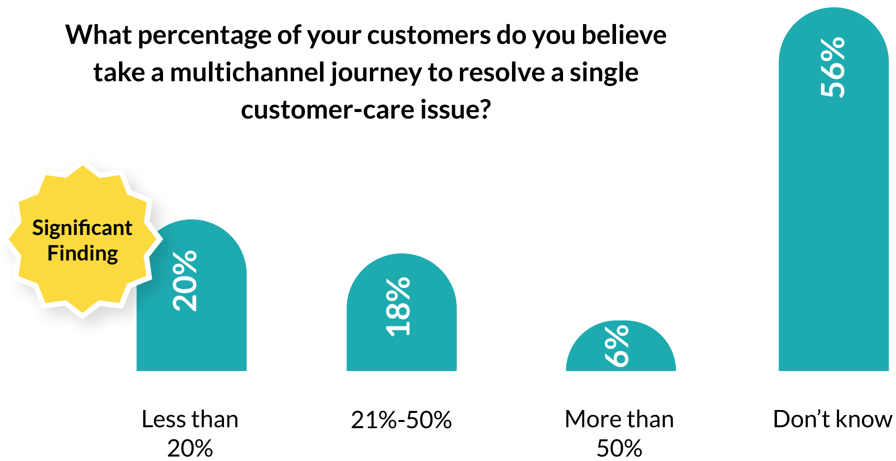


Have your human-assisted/self-service technology (SST) contact volumes increased or decreased as a result of the pandemic?

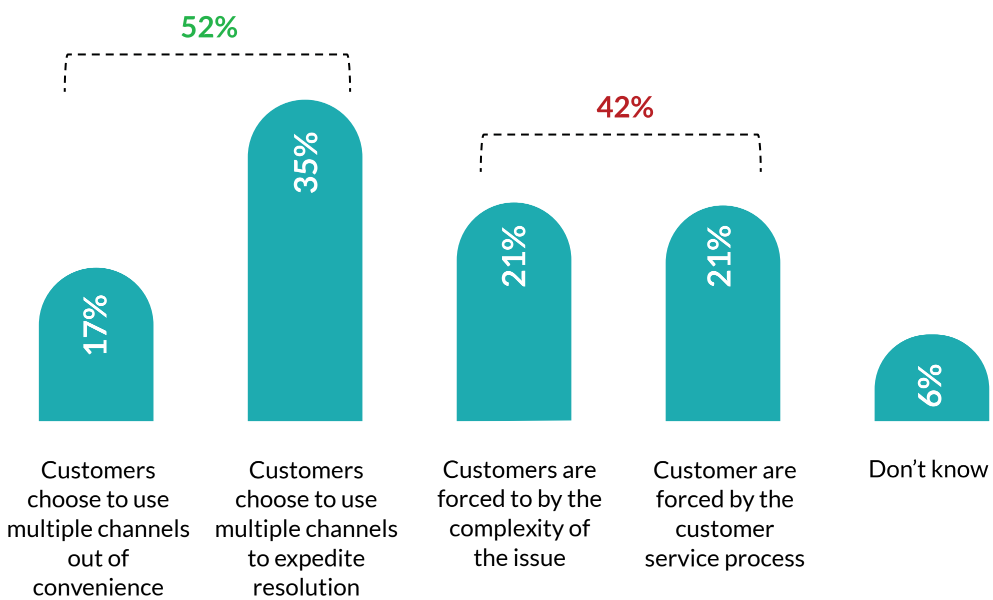


Interestingly, the use of both human-assisted channels and self-service technologies (SSTs) grew as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a much higher percentage of respondents stating that their organizations experienced an increase in SST use.

What percentage of your customers do you believe take a multichannel journey to resolve a single customer-care issue?



Please help us understand why you think customers use multiple channels to resolve a single customer-care issue.



More than half of respondents were unable to answer this question, and of those who did answer believed that a minority of their customers take multichannel journeys to resolve single customer-care issues. These findings are contrary to what we reported in the CXMB Series 2020 Consumer Edition, where we found that 71% of customers stated that they had used multiple channels to resolve a single customer-care issue.

This poses a big question for our industry: Is there a disconnect between what customers consider to be multichannel journeys vs. what executives think? If the answer to this question is "yes," then we believe this is an issue that needs to be resolved, as it is vital for organizations to understand the service journeys that consumers experience to resolve their issues. Additional insights can be found on page 80 and 81 of the Corporate vs. Consumer Comparison section.

Key Findings

Human-Assisted Channels

- “Improving agent performance” is the top priority for 43% of respondents.
- Despite major growth in human-assisted volumes , the increase in customer satisfaction (CSAT) and issue resolution (IR) has been impressive.
- All human-assisted solutions witnessed growth over the past 12 months, with chat experiencing the highest volume increase.

Self-Service Technologies (SSTs)

- “Expanding channel capability” is the top priority of organizations as stated by 47% of respondents.
- “Increasing resolution rates” is also a priority for SSTs as indicated by 21% of respondents.
- SSTs have also witnessed an increase in CSAT and IR over the last 12 months despite volume increases.
- Volumes increased across SST solutions over the past 12 months, with the highest percentage of respondents stating that it was observed for chatbots followed by mobile apps.
- 52% of respondents stated that their organizations measure abandonment rate for SSTs.
- The pandemic has resulted in a volume increase in both human-assisted channels and SSTs. However, 71% of respondents stated that their SST volumes increased while 44% stated that their human-assisted channel volumes increased.

Multichannel Journeys

- 44% of respondents stated that they were aware of the percentage of their consumers who took multichannel journeys to resolve a single customer-care issue.
- Only 6% of respondents stated that more than 50% of their consumers take a multichannel journey to resolve a single customer-care issue.
- 42% of the respondents stated that their consumers were “forced” to take a multichannel journey.
- Only 20% of the organizations measure the performance of a multichannel journey against the performance of a single-channel journey.
- Only 12% of respondents stated that they believe their organizations do a good job of providing a seamless and easy experience for consumers navigating across channels.

Some critical questions that organizations must ask themselves:

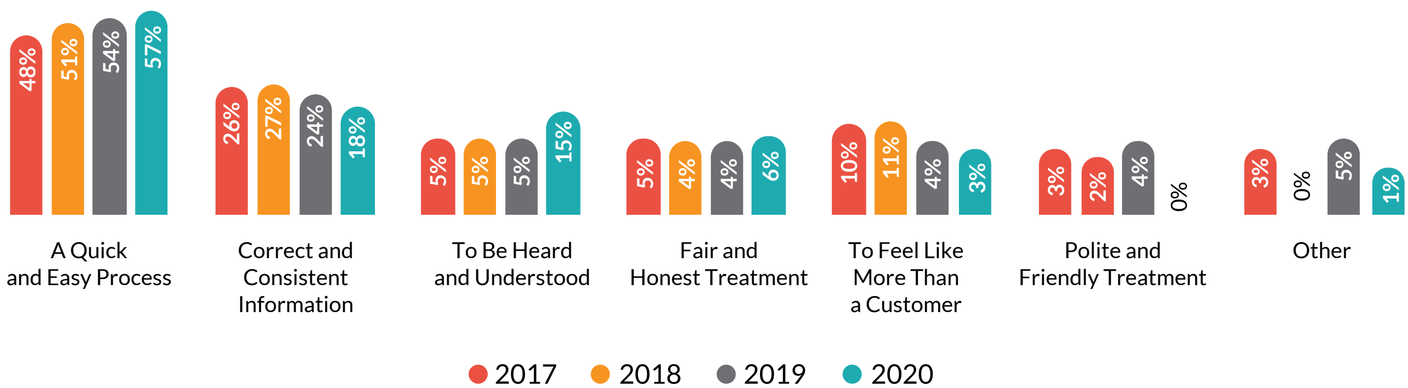
- Given the channel shifts occurring, are we adequately equipped to service through those channels, both in terms of volume and the "right" channel mix?
- For human-assisted channels, "improving agent performance" is still a top priority. Do we have enough initiatives and monitoring mechanisms in place to support these efforts considering a large part of the workforce is working remotely and will continue to do so? This includes the right hiring process, appropriate training, adequate infrastructure, and effective engagement programs to keep agents motivated.
- Do we know what percentage of our consumers take a multichannel journey to resolve their issues?
- Multichannel journeys can be a source of dissatisfaction among consumers if they are forced to take them. Do we have processes and measurements in place to understand the types of consumer interactions that require multichannel journeys? Do we need to conduct a service or journey mapping exercise to better design seamless and memorable multichannel journeys?

Corporate vs. Consumer Comparison
Survey Results

Corporate vs. Consumer Comparison

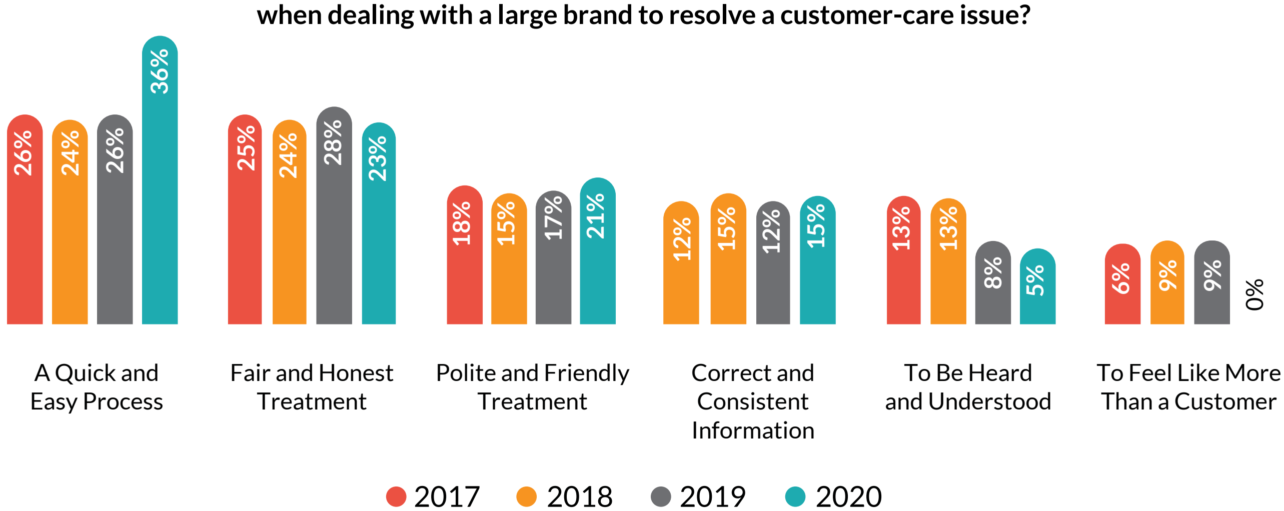
CXMB Series 2020 Corporate Result

Aside from getting your issues resolved satisfactorily, what do you think is most important to your customers when trying to resolve a customer-care issue?



CXMB Series 2020 Consumer Result

Aside from getting your issues resolved satisfactorily, what is most important to you when dealing with a large brand to resolve a customer-care issue?



Per the findings from the 2020 Consumer Edition, consumers stated that “a quick and easy process” was most important to them when attempting to resolve an issue. Our corporate respondents were aligned with this, believing the same to be true for their consumers.

However, a continuing disconnect exists with the perceived importance of “fair and honest treatment.” Almost 25% of consumers valued this as important, while only 6% of corporate respondents believed that to be the case.

Therefore, organizations should not discount factors that affect how consumers feel about their interactions while trying to resolve an issue. “Quick and easy” solutions should be a given, yet companies must also pay attention to whether consumers feel they have been treated well. A similar disconnect can be observed for “polite and friendly treatment.”

Corporate vs. Consumer Comparison

CXMB Series 2020 Corporate Result

Following a negative customer-care experience, does your organization proactively follow up with customers to help remedy or apologize for the situation?

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Yes %	83%	75%	72%	80%

CXMB Series 2020 Consumer Result

Following the negative experience, did the brand proactively contact you to try to remedy or apologize for the situation?

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Yes %	15%	23%	17%	41%

Percentage of consumers who indicated that the negative experience will have a negative impact on their future purchase decision based on their proactive contact status.

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Yes % if proactively contacted	73%	67%	63%	78%

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Yes % if proactively not contacted	84%	83%	89%	84%

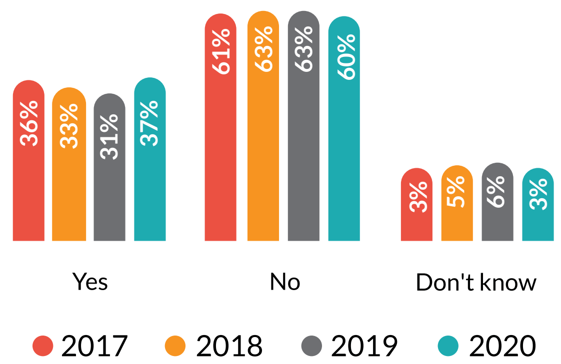
Eighty percent of corporate respondents stated that they followed up with consumers in cases of negative feedback, an increase of eight points since 2019. However, only 41% of consumers stated that organizations followed up with them after a negative experience. While this percentage has more than doubled since 2019, there is still a significant disconnect between the perceptions of consumer and corporate respondents.

As in previous years, the 2020 data also shows that a proactive contact in the case of negative feedback can mitigate the chances of a future purchase decision being adversely impacted.

Corporate vs. Consumer Comparison

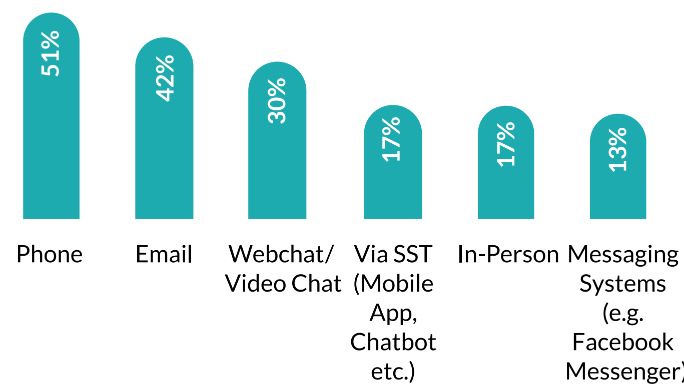
CXMB Series 2020 Corporate Result

Do you believe your company offers support in all the channels that your customers want to use?



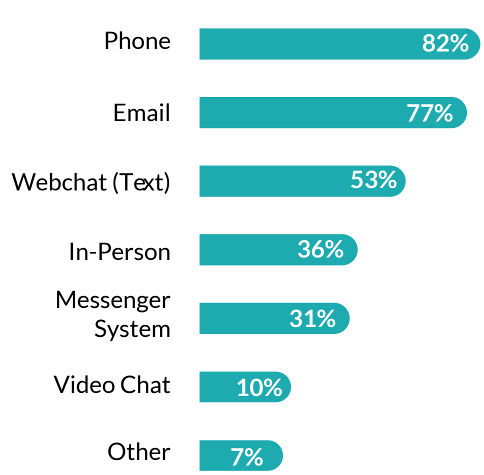
CXMB Series 2020 Consumer Result

If you knew your customer service issue would be resolved, regardless of the contact channel, which would be your preferred contact method?



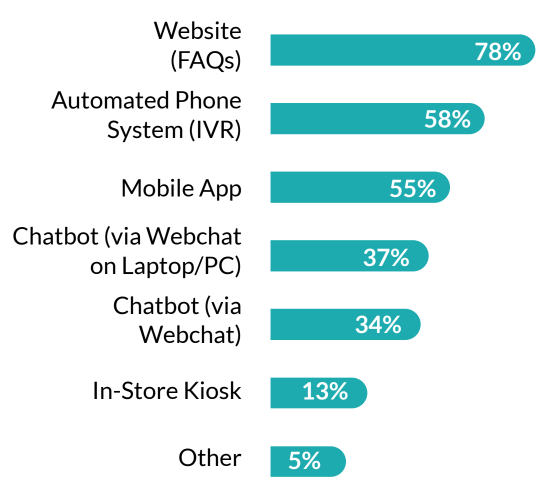
CXMB Series 2020 Corporate Result

Which of the following human-assisted channels does your organization offer? (Select all that apply.)



CXMB Series 2020 Corporate Result

Which of the following self-service technologies (SSTs) does your organization offer? (Select all that apply.)

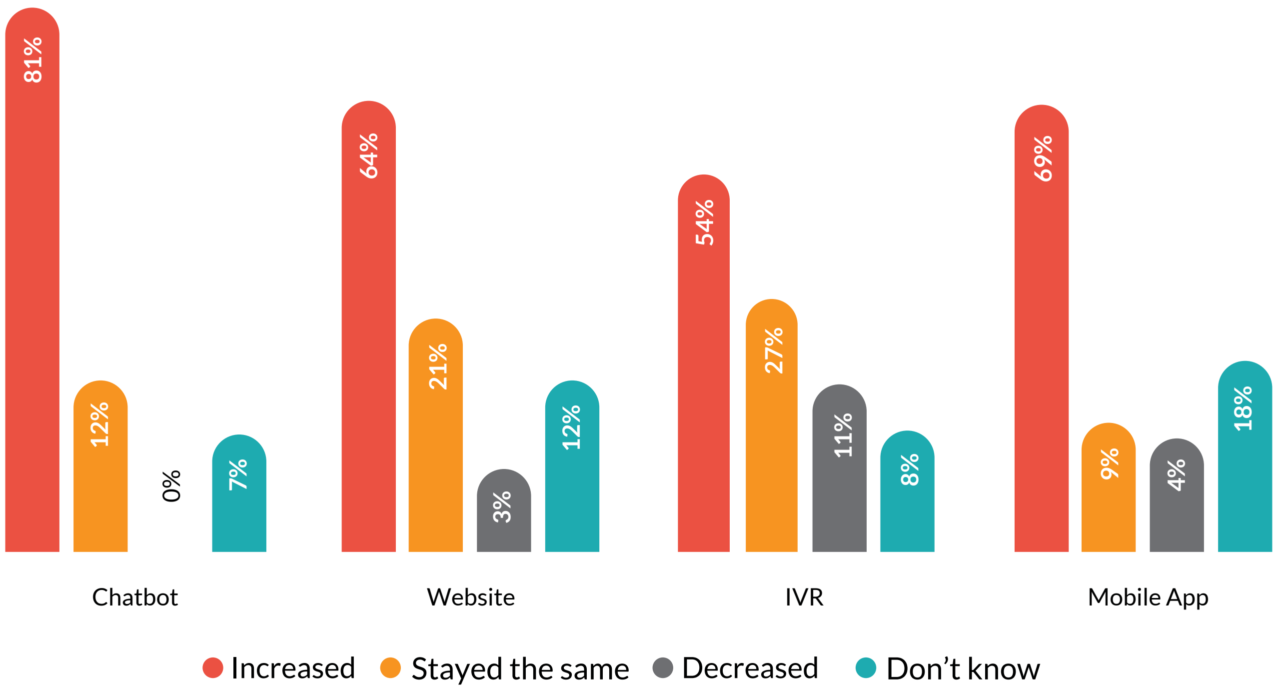


In the 2020 Corporate Edition, 37% of respondents stated that their organizations offer all the channels their consumers prefer to use. According to the 2020 Consumer Edition, the channels that are most preferred by consumers also are the most offered channels by organizations, for both human-assisted and self-service technologies (SSTs).

Corporate vs. Consumer Comparison

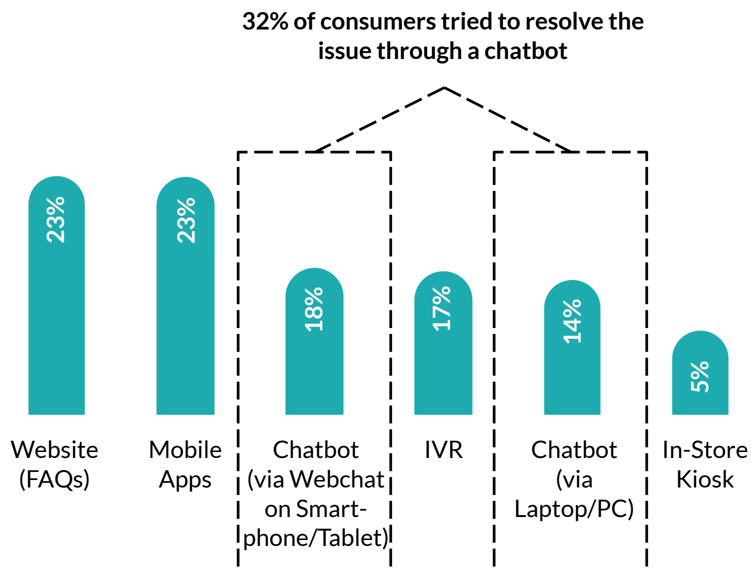
CXMB Series 2020 Corporate Result

In the last 12 month, have the volumes for the following self-service technologies (SSTs) in your organization increased or descreased?



CXMB Series 2020 Consumer Result

Thinking about your most recent issue, which of the following self-service technologies (SSTs) did you try to resolve your issue?

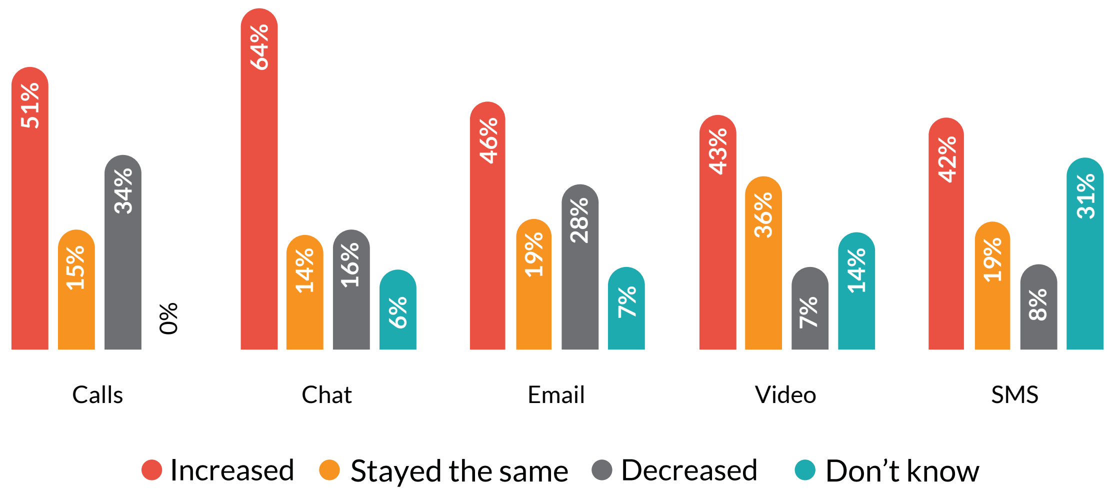


In the 2020 Corporate Edition, respondents indicated that for SSTs, their organizations witnessed the most volume growth for chatbot solutions, followed by mobile apps, website, and IVR, in that order. Per the findings from the 2020 Consumer Edition, chatbots were the most often used SST, followed by websites and mobile apps.

Corporate vs. Consumer Comparison

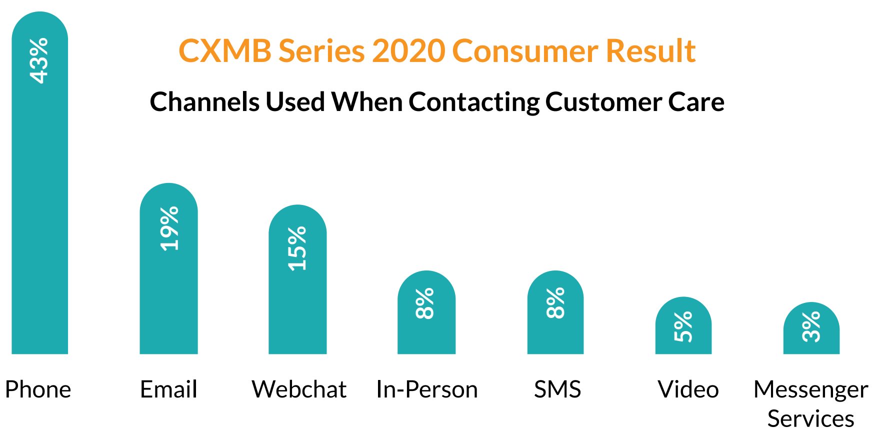
CXMB Series 2020 Corporate Result

In the last 12 month, have the volumes for the following human-assisted channels in your organization increased or descreased?



CXMB Series 2020 Consumer Result

Channels Used When Contacting Customer Care



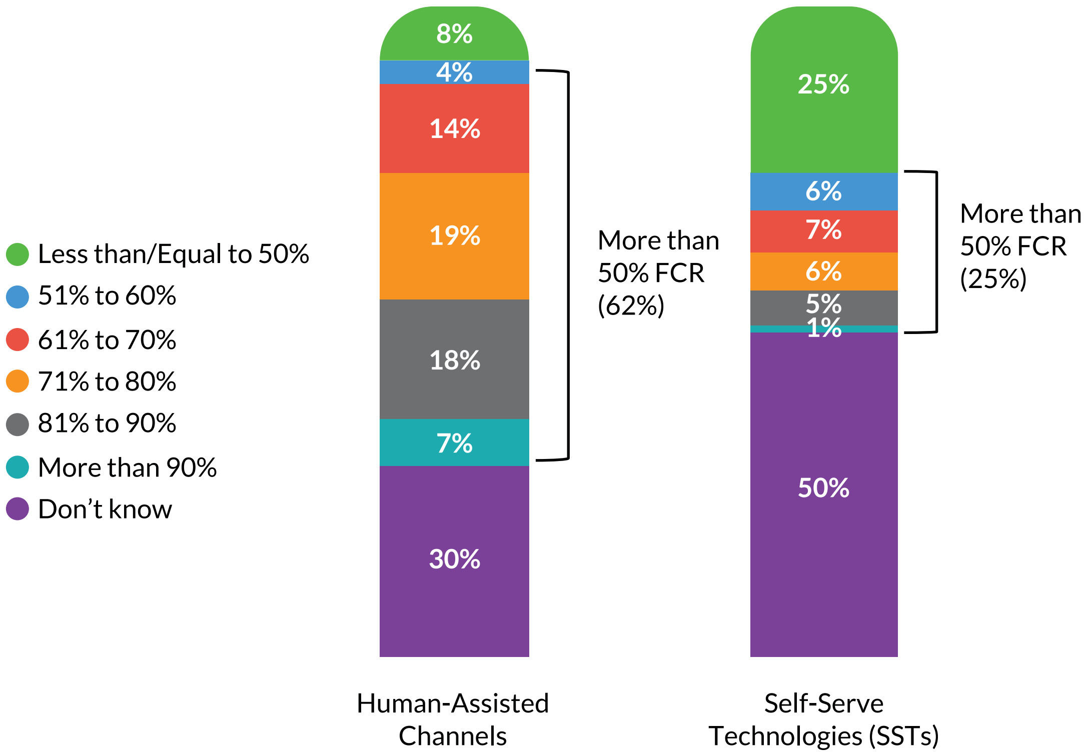
In the 2020 Corporate Edition, respondents indicated that chat, calls, and email-based interactions experienced the highest volume growth, in that order. As per the 2020 Consumer Edition, these were also the human-assisted channels most preferred by consumers.

While phone grew at a slower rate than chat and all SSTs, it continues to be the most preferred channel for consumers. From the 2020 Consumer Edition we know that phone has the highest issue resolution (IR) (89%) and first contact resolution (FCR) (52%). For multichannel journeys, the highest percentage of interactions begin and end with phone. Therefore, it is important to be aware of these factors, especially as organizations try to deflect traffic from phone to SSTs. Consumers are accustomed to a certain level of service and resolution capability through phone, so improving capabilities in emerging channels and creating channel consistencies will play a pivotal role.

Corporate vs. Consumer Comparison

CXMB Series 2020 Corporate Result

What do you estimate you first contact resolution (FCR) rate is for human-assisted/self-service channels?



CXMB Series 2020 Consumer Result

Issue Resolution (IR) and First Contact Resolution (FCR) for Human-Assisted Channels

CHANNEL	IR%	FCR%
Phone	86%	52%
Email	82%	45%
Webchat	84%	49%

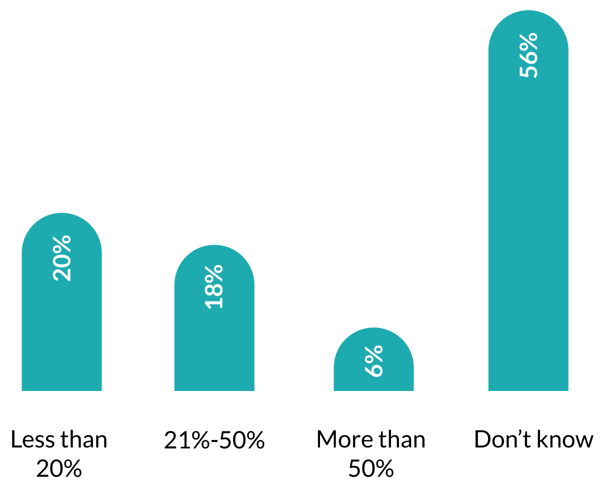
Per the 2020 Corporate Edition, 62% of respondents estimated their FCR to be more than 50% for human-assisted channels. However, there seems to be a disconnect with respondents from the 2020 Consumer Edition. The highest FCR per consumer for phone is 52%. Phone, email, and webchat are the most used human-assisted channels and FCR for each is close to 50% according to consumers.

Organizations need to understand how consumers perceive FCR, because while organizations might believe that they have a healthy FCR, consumers appear to believe otherwise. Since FCR is a key driver of customer satisfaction, this disconnect could adversely impact CX.

Corporate vs. Consumer Comparison

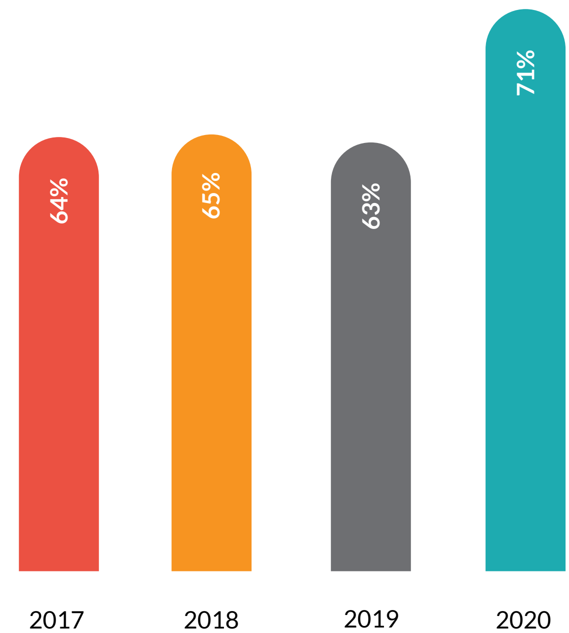
CXMB Series 2020 Corporate Result

What percentage of your customers do you believe take a multichannel journey to resolve a single customer-care issue?



CXMB Series 2020 Consumer Result

Within the past 12 months, did you use multiple channels (like phone, email, and social media) to resolve a single customer-care issue?

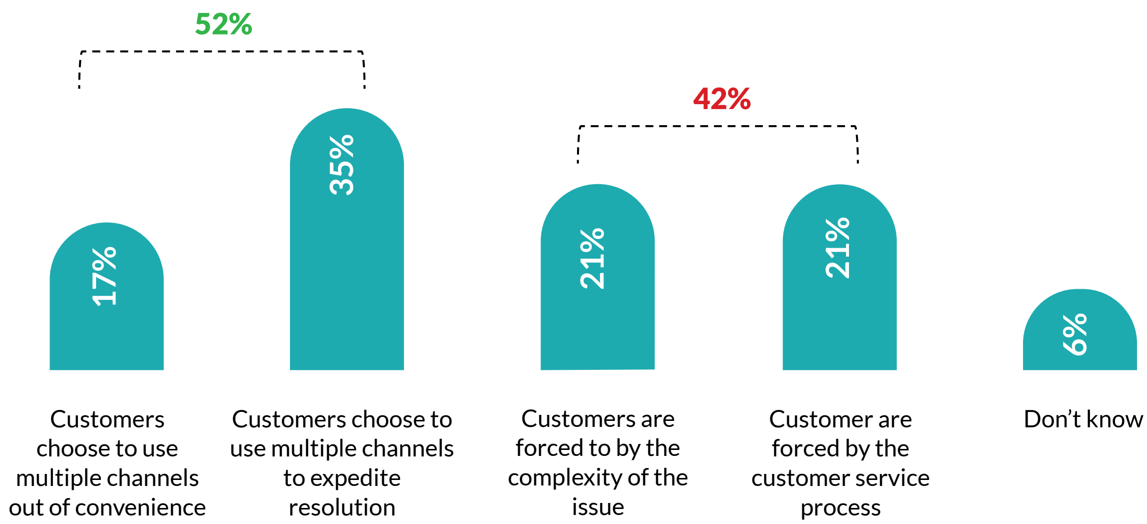


According to the 2020 Consumer Edition, the percentage of consumers who used multiple channels to resolve a single issue grew from 63% in 2019 to 71% (after several years of remaining flat). This is contrary to what corporate respondents believe. A minority of them stated that their consumers take multichannel journeys to resolve a single customer-care issue. Therefore, there could be a disconnect in organizations' understanding of how consumers define a multichannel journey. If it is "forced" upon consumers, multichannel journeys could adversely affect CX, as explained in the next finding.

Corporate vs. Consumer Comparison

CXMB Series 2020 Corporate Result

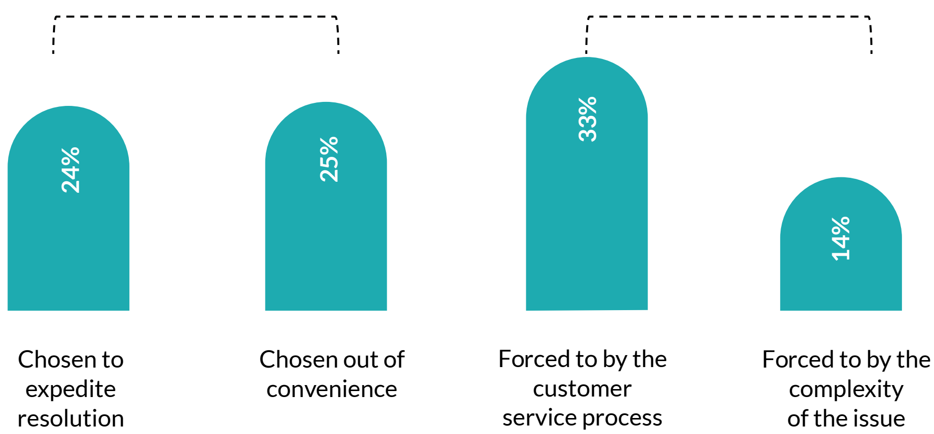
Please help us undersand why you think customers use multiple channels to resolve single customer-care issues?



CXMB Series 2020 Consumer Result

Why did the process take you across multiple channels?

49% of the customers choose to take a multichannel journey while **47%** are forced to take one

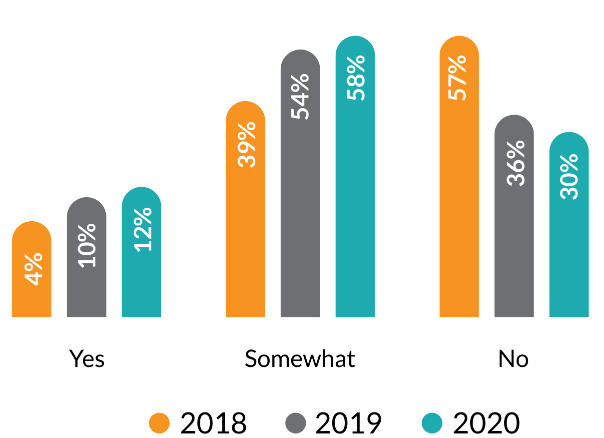


In continuation of the previous finding, the data from the 2020 Corporate Edition shows that more than 40% of corporate respondents believed that consumers were “forced” to take a multichannel journey. It is a concerning statistic, since the 2020 Consumer Edition illustrates that when consumers are forced to take a multichannel journey versus choosing to take one, dissatisfaction rates are almost seven times greater and issue resolution (IR) is significantly lower.

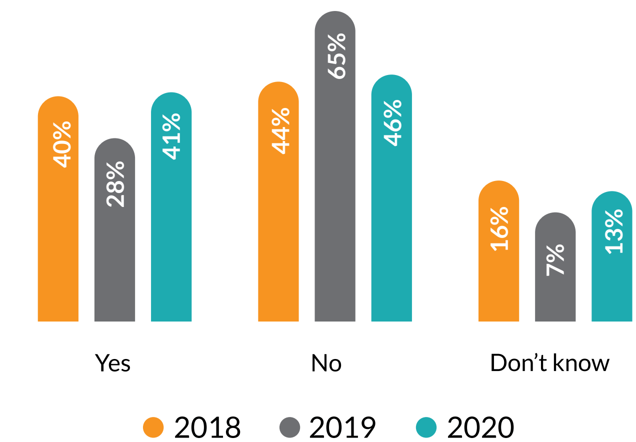
Corporate vs. Consumer Comparison

CXMB Series 2020 Corporate Result

Do you feel that your organization does a good job of providing a seamless and easy experience as your customers transition between different channels and solutions?

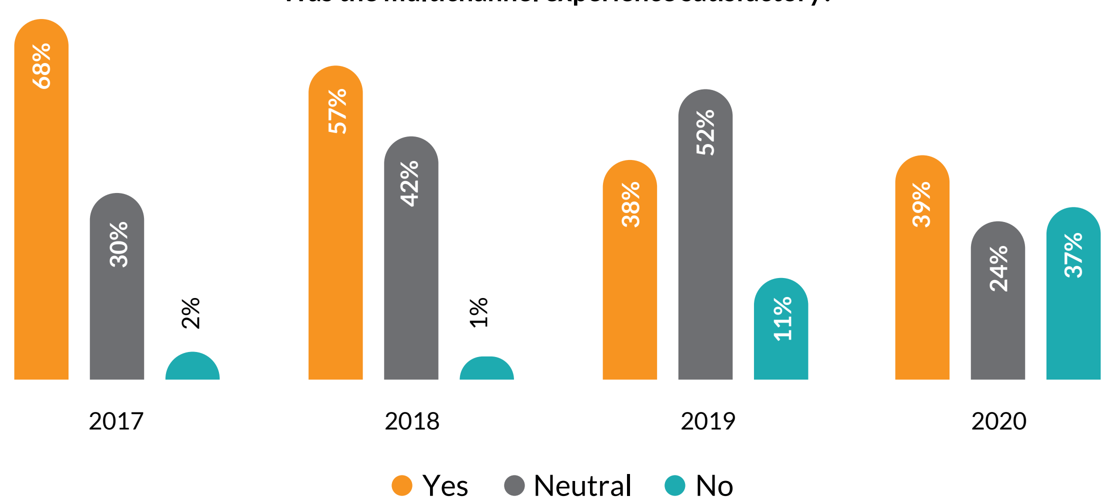


Does your organization have any specific initiatives to create greater ease for customers as they navigate across channels?



CXMB Series 2020 Consumer Result

Was the multichannel experience satisfactory?

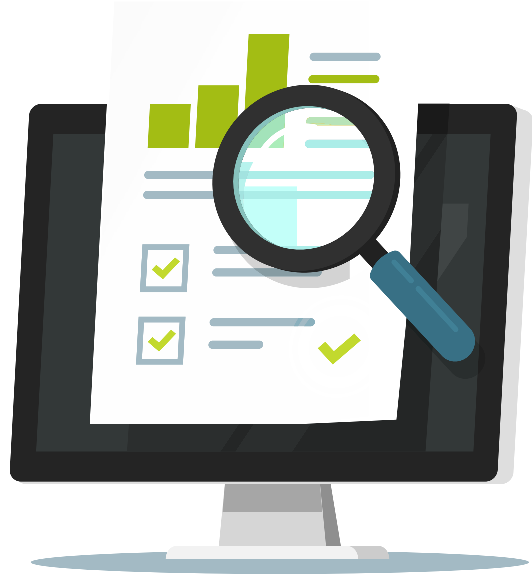


Despite the fact that only 12% of corporate respondents stated that they believe their organizations do a good job of providing a seamless experience across channels, only 41% stated that their organizations have dedicated initiatives to do so.

This lack of commitment to improving the CX across channels in a multichannel journey is causing low satisfaction rates: Respondents who rated their experiences as “not satisfied” increased from 11% in 2019 to 37% in 2020.

83

Research and Methodology



The 2020 Corporate Edition of the Customer Experience Management Benchmark (CXMB) Series was developed using the results of a custom online survey.

The structure of the survey and organization of data consisted of two separate parts; each was aimed at different audiences, depending on their roles within their organizations.

- **Strategic:** This section included 64 questions that focused on capturing insights related to organizations' overall strategies and initiatives aimed at monitoring, measuring, and improving the customer experience (CX).
- **Operational:** This section included 67 questions that focused on the tactical aspects of carrying out those CX initiatives.

Both surveys were privately and exclusively solicited by email invitations. These invitations targeted individuals in senior roles who were responsible for establishing overall CX strategies, managing their CX customer-care programs, and operationally implementing such programs.

We received 223 individual responses from 169 unique companies. The respondents were invited to respond to both surveys if they were involved with their organizations' CX strategic planning and operational delivery of CX programs. Otherwise, they completed the survey most relevant to their role and scope of management.

We also expanded the survey's global coverage, inviting business leaders from various regions, although most were from North America. Survey responses were gathered from October 26 to December 4, 2020.

About the Study's Authors

Execs In The Know

Execs In The Know brings together customer experience (CX) leaders from across industries in an effort to advance the conversation and set a new agenda for delivering amazing experiences for consumers. As a global community of the brightest minds in CX, Execs In The Know provides opportunities to learn, share, network, and engage to innovate. Operating under the motto of "Leaders Learning From Leaders," Execs In The Know facilitates many opportunities for community engagement, such as their bi-annual national event, Customer Response Summit, virtual CX series, CustomerCONNECT, and private, online community, Know It All. There are also exclusive, laser-focused engagements like industry briefings, virtual luncheons, and executive roundtables. Execs In The Know also guides and informs the industry with a rich tapestry of CX-related content that includes CX Insight magazine, CXMB Series research, webinars, podcasts, blogs, and much more.

To learn more about Execs In The Know, visit https://execsintheknow.com.

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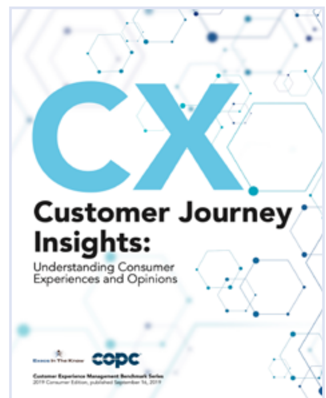

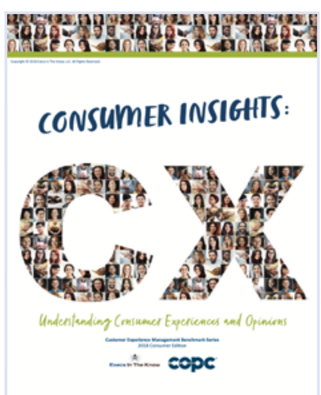

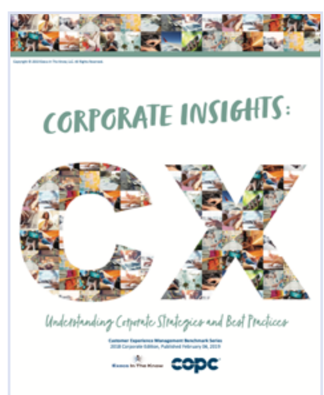

The CXMB Series 2021 Consumer Edition will be coming soon,
followed by the 2021 Corporate Edition.