Execs In The Know

Published
September 2025

CX LEADERS
TRENDS & INSIGHTS

CONSUMER EDITION | 2025

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH: Transcom

TABLE OF **CONTENTS**

PREFACE

Expectations, preferences, and behaviors continue to evolve as consumers navigate the customer experience (CX) journey. This latest research, released in partnership between Execs In The Know and Transcom, delivers a comprehensive look at how consumers approach care, examining both their experiences and their perceptions.

In an environment defined by rapid change, agility and innovation remain critical differentiators. This year's findings reveal clear shifts in consumer behavior, alongside persistent challenges that companies have yet to solve. From the accelerating adoption of text-based solutions (page 14) to the continued demand for agent-assisted resolutions (page 50), the data in this report paints a vivid picture of a CX landscape where convenience and empathy must go hand in hand.

One of the most striking trends in 2025 is the surge in self-help usage. In the past year, consumer use of unassisted tools to find answers, make purchases, or resolve issues jumped from 55% in 2024 to 78% in 2025 (page 45). This growth is especially pronounced among consumers ages 30 to 44 years, with usage climbing from 54% to 87%. Yet while more consumers are turning to self-help first, the preference for human assistance remains strong (page 50), particularly when issues are complex, emotionally charged, or unresolvable through automation.

This year's research also shines a brighter light on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in the CX space. For the first time, the report includes a dedicated DEI section, and the results are unequivocal: 75% of consumers say they would, or already have, avoided doing business with a company due to disagreement with that company's stance on DEI-related matters (page 60). This finding underscores that brand values are not a peripheral consideration — they are a core factor in loyalty, trust, and purchasing decisions.

Additionally, consumers continue to gravitate toward text-based channels as their most frequently used form of customer care, yet nearly half still use phone at least once a year to resolve an issue. This duality reflects an ongoing balancing act: consumers want speed, efficiency, and flexibility, but they also want access to empathetic, empowered humans when it matters most. Companies that can deliver on both fronts, optimizing the self-help experience while ensuring live support is accessible, consistent, and compassionate, will be best positioned to earn lasting customer trust and loyalty.

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHORS

It is our pleasure to once again bring the customer experience (CX) community this latest volume of industry research. Now in its eighth edition under the CX Leaders Trends & Insights banner, this report continues our commitment to providing timely, relevant, and actionable insights into the evolving world of CX.

It is our hope that the expanded scope of this year's research will spark meaningful discussion, inform strategic priorities, and help CX leaders better align their people, processes, and technologies to meet rising consumer expectations. The insights within these pages are designed to serve as both a benchmark and a catalyst, guiding brands toward delivering experiences that are seamless, empathetic, and inclusive.

We'd also like to take a moment to thank the CX leaders who contributed a Practitioner's Perspective to this volume of research. These unique insights provide additional meaning and context to the results contained in this research, and these contributions are invaluable.

Practitioner Perspective contributors include:

Brandon Linton
(page 19)

Johnathon White
(page 51)

Scott Jacobs
(page 60)

Kudzaishe Mugara
(page 65)

Jeffrey Newman
(page 82)

Kat Stewart
(page 84)

Finally, we'd like to extend a warm thank you to our volume partner, Transcom. Be sure to check out the special Partner Commentary by Jeff Blair, Chief Growth Officer at Transcom, an examination of "The Experience Gap" – the gap between what consumers expect and what companies are delivering. You can find the commentary on page 6 of this report.

Kind regards,

The Execs In The Know Research Team

PARTNER COMMENTARY

Transcom

Transcom

The Experience Gap and Why CX Leaders Must Act Now

Insights from the *2025 CX Leaders Trends & Insights: Consumer Edition* survey reveal a growing divide between rising consumer expectations and the reality of many CX interactions.

This widening “**Experience Gap**” is more than a missed opportunity, it is actively undermining customer loyalty, cutting into revenue, and placing even the most well-established brands in potential jeopardy. The data suggests that the gap has never been wider, and its impact has never been more urgent.

At first glance, customer expectations seem contradictory.

It is no secret that consumers demand instant answers, seamless digital experiences and zero friction. However, just the same, they demand the connection, the understanding, and the ease that comes from talking to a customer support representative.

On the surface, these may look contradictory, but they are not. They reflect a desire for flexibility. While self-service should be available and effective, consumers should also have seamless access to a knowledgeable representative when needed.

Many AI efforts fail because organizations are not operationally ready, leading to missed ROI and broken expectations. Brands that pair smart automation with empowered teams will succeed.

Beneath all the tech, great CX still depends on strong operations. The best AI cannot fix broken workflows. AI can amplify excellence if the foundation is solid.

Too often, brands deliver polished interfaces or aspects of a great solution, only to be let down by broken back-end processes. This disconnect shows up as:

Fast transactions, followed by long waits for help

Personalized marketing, but impersonal support

Chatbots that escalate to agents missing context and relevant background

As companies race to deploy AI, many are layering automation onto a weak foundation. This report explores what's driving the Experience Gap and how leading brands are closing it with co-intelligent CX models that blend people and technology together seamlessly.

Customer experience is either your most powerful growth driver or your quickest source of loss.

Exceptional customer experience is not just about making people happy; it is a direct driver of revenue. In fact, 82% of customers say they'll spend more and remain loyal with brands that consistently provide great customer interactions (page 19). This manifests itself in repeat business, renewed subscriptions, and word-of-mouth marketing that money cannot buy.

On the flip side, poor experiences come at a real cost. Nearly half of customers abandon self-service when it fails to resolve their issues, resulting in frustration, increased support expenses, and lost revenue.

The divide between organizations that understand this and those that do not has never been more pronounced. While some treat customer experience as a mere check box, leading brands embed it as a strategic pillar within their go-to-market strategies.

Closing the Experience Gap requires a holistic investment: empowering and training people, designing customer-centric processes, and deploying integrated technology that functions seamlessly. When these elements align, every customer interaction becomes an opportunity to reinforce loyalty and drive sustained financial performance.

82% of customers say they will spend more and remain loyal with brands that consistently provide great customer interactions.

Self-service usage surges despite being among the least preferred support options.

Self-service adoption has risen significantly. Seventy-eight percent of customers used it last year (up from 55%, page 45), and 27% plan to use it more (page 49). However, those same customers rank self-service among the least effective ways to solve their problems. Additionally, when customers are confident their issue will be resolved, 61% still prefer live support, and that preference jumps to a 2-to-1 ratio among those over 60 years (page 50).

Only 61% of those ages 60+ report voluntarily using self-service compared to 81-87% among younger customers (page 45), showing this channel is only going to become more popular. Customers want speed and convenience, but when self-service fails to address complex needs, it leads to frustrating loops, dead ends, and impersonal hand-offs.

That frustration quickly compounds, shifting the burden onto CX teams to pick up the pieces. This data reveals a deeper challenge. AI-powered self-service works well when the underlying process works well. Too often, companies rush to adopt digital tools or AI without first fixing the operational basics.

The problem is not that self-service itself is broken, but that it is often poorly designed. Success starts with defining which issues can and should be resolved through self-help, and which should be escalated, supported by smart routing, seamless hand-offs, and empowered agents. When organizations layer AI on top of weak foundations, they do not solve customer care problems, they make them bigger.

To close the Experience Gap, self-service and live representative support teams must be fully integrated, because customers expect them to work together, not in isolation.

Invest in your people.

When asked what would most improve the customer experience, consumers overwhelmingly pointed to better-trained support agents, outpacing better automation. According to the survey, these three key areas matter:

Communication fluency

Sixty-six percent of consumers say accent or language issues have negatively affected support (page 81). Fluency, active listening, clear articulation, and comprehension are critical. In addition, organizations should invest in the right technology to support front-line teams in these areas.

Cultural competency

Delivering great service means more than speaking the right language. It is about understanding diverse perspectives, expectations, and communication styles. Emotional intelligence and cultural fluency are essential to resolving issues with empathy and effectiveness.

Real-time assist tools

CX teams need live support that delivers context, guides next steps, and eliminates guesswork. Coaching should be driven by insights from real conversations, not just post-call surveys to improve performance at the moment.

What sets customer experience leaders apart? They understand how to transform their entire CX ecosystem.

The results speak for themselves. Across Transcom clients, high employee satisfaction and zero detractors consistently correlate with CSAT scores above industry benchmarks. It is clear that empowered, well-trained teams drive exceptional outcomes for both employees and customers.

The brands driving these outcomes are leading the charge not by simply adding technology or head count, but by rethinking CX from the ground up by:

Investing in advanced training that emphasizes clarity, nuance, and cultural understanding.

Equipping agents with real-time tools to reduce errors, speed resolution, and enhance communication.

Leveraging deep interaction data to drive coaching, quality assurance and process improvement.

Combining automation for routine tasks with increasingly skilled agents focused on complex, emotional, or high-value issues.

The result is a seamless experience where consumers feel heard and supported without needing to repeat themselves.

Most CX failures are not due to a lack of technology, but from weak foundations: fragmented processes, inconsistent operations, and under-trained teams. We have seen first-hand that
without fixing the foundation, even the best tools can not deliver lasting impact. That is why leading brands are stepping back to strengthen the core before they scale automation, AI or digital channels.

In closing — a practical guide to closing the Experience Gap.

To drive end-to-end CX transformation, the key is to take a holistic, customer-led approach:

01 Define the vision and outcomes

02 Map and analyze agent and customer journeys

03 Engage frontline teams

04 Optimize before automating

05 Use data and analytics to improve processes

06 Keep human support where it counts

07 Expand what you measure

08 Equip teams with training and tools

09 Pilot before scaling

10 Partner for outcomes, not just tools

Closing the gap is not just about adding more tech. It is about building a resilient, human-centered CX foundation that can scale, adapt, and lead in an increasingly competitive landscape. The brands that get it right today won't just keep up tomorrow, they will pave the way forward.

Jeff Blair
Chief Growth Officer
Transcom

Jeff Blair is a CX engagement leader with over 25 years of experience in the global BPO and CX industries.

Jeff is passionate about building strong partnerships and empowering people to deliver experiences that create lasting customer value.

He works closely with clients to co-create CX strategies that blend people, insight, and smart technology to drive long-term growth and loyalty.

Transcom's mission is simple: to transform customer interactions into powerful opportunities that fuel customer lifetime value.

Transcom supports both fast-growing scale-ups and large, complex enterprises. It combines passionate people, advanced technology, and deep CX expertise to deliver end-to-end transformation of customer experience operations.

SURVEY **RESULTS**

Methodology

This report, the *2025 CX Leaders Trends & Insights: Consumer Edition*, was developed using a multi-module, multi-cohort series of consumer surveys conducted on the SurveyMonkey online surveying platform. Consumer surveying occurred across eleven unique survey modules from June 2 through June 3, 2025 using SurveyMonkey Audience, a survey panel targeting platform. Sample sizes for individual questions ranged from 265 to 290. All respondents were U.S.-based individuals ages 18 years or older.

CONSUMER **EXPERIENCES**

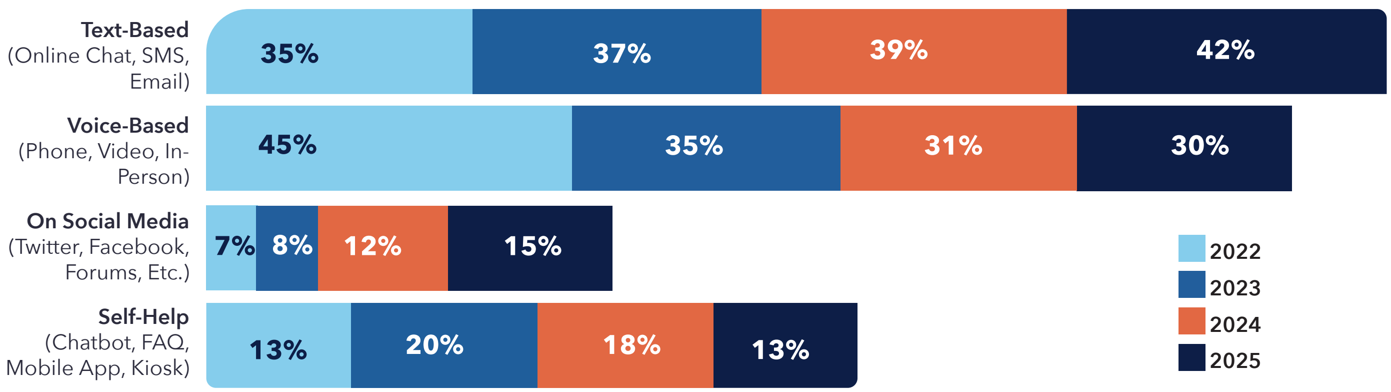
- » Consumer Use
- » The Multichannel Journey
- » The Happy & Unhappy Consumer
- » Self-Help Solutions
- » AI-Powered Solutions

CONSUMER USE

CUSTOMER CARE CHANNEL AND SOLUTION USE

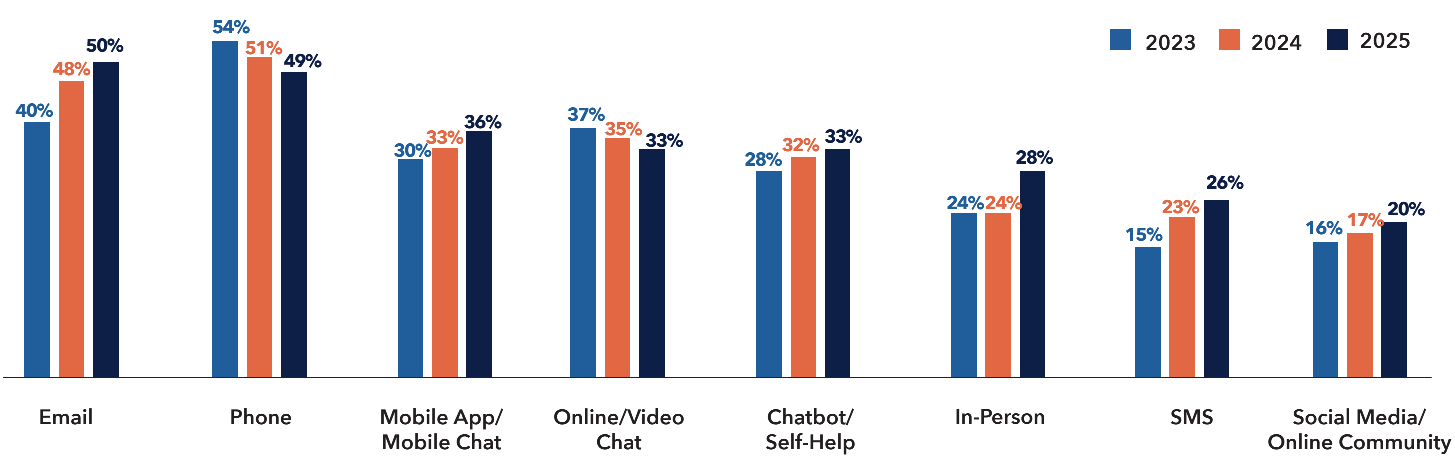
In a trend steadily unfolding since 2021, use of Voice-Based channels has continued to shrink with the increased use of Text-Based channels, though Voice-Based Solutions (Phone, in particular) continue to play a vital role. Social media use also continues to climb as a primary source of customer care engagement for some consumers, surpassing Self-Help use for the first time in 2025, though this trend is expected to be short-lived given the explosion in the use of Self-Help for all purposes related to CX (page 45).

Within the past 12 months, which method of interacting with customer care have you used the most frequently?



In terms of individual customer care solutions, overall use mirrors channels of most use (above) with Email and Phone leading the way. SMS and Mobile Apps also extended gains first established last year, as did Email. Only Phone and Online/Video Chat have seen year-over-year declines. Age was also a factor, particularly in the case of Phone, where 67% of respondents ages 60 and above indicated use of Phone, while no other age group exceeded 50%. See the following page for a more detailed breakdown of solution use by age.

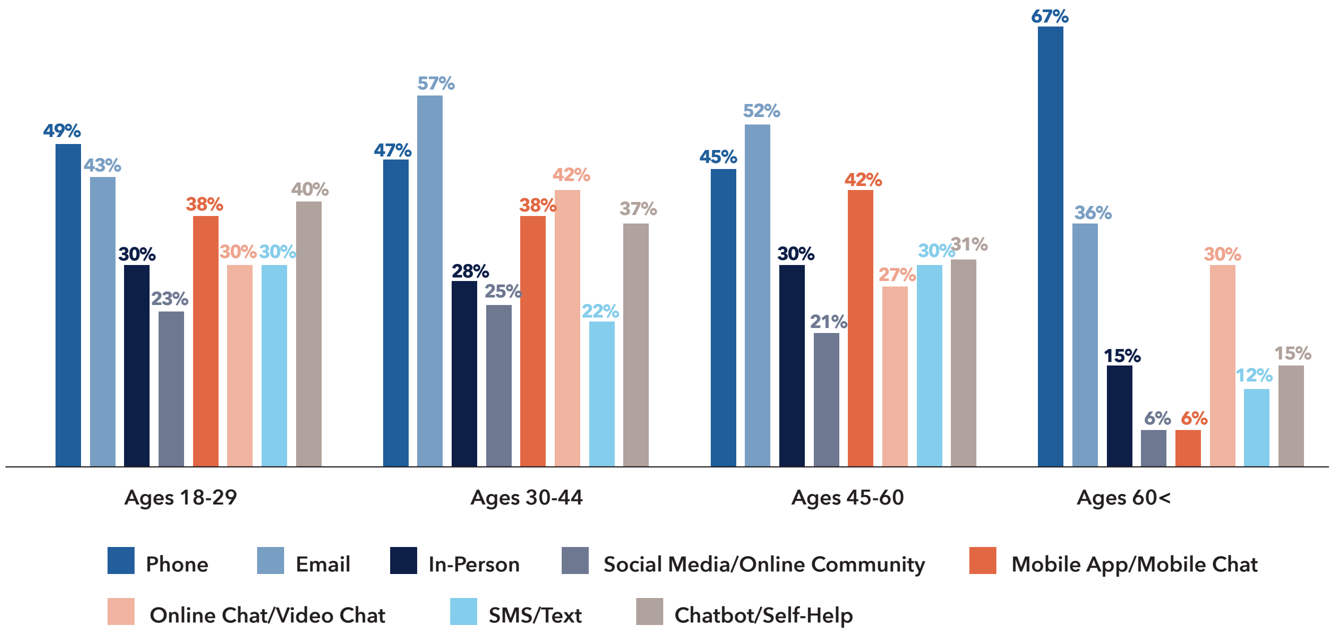
Within the past 12 months, which solution(s) have you used to engage with a brand's customer care department? (Select all that apply.)



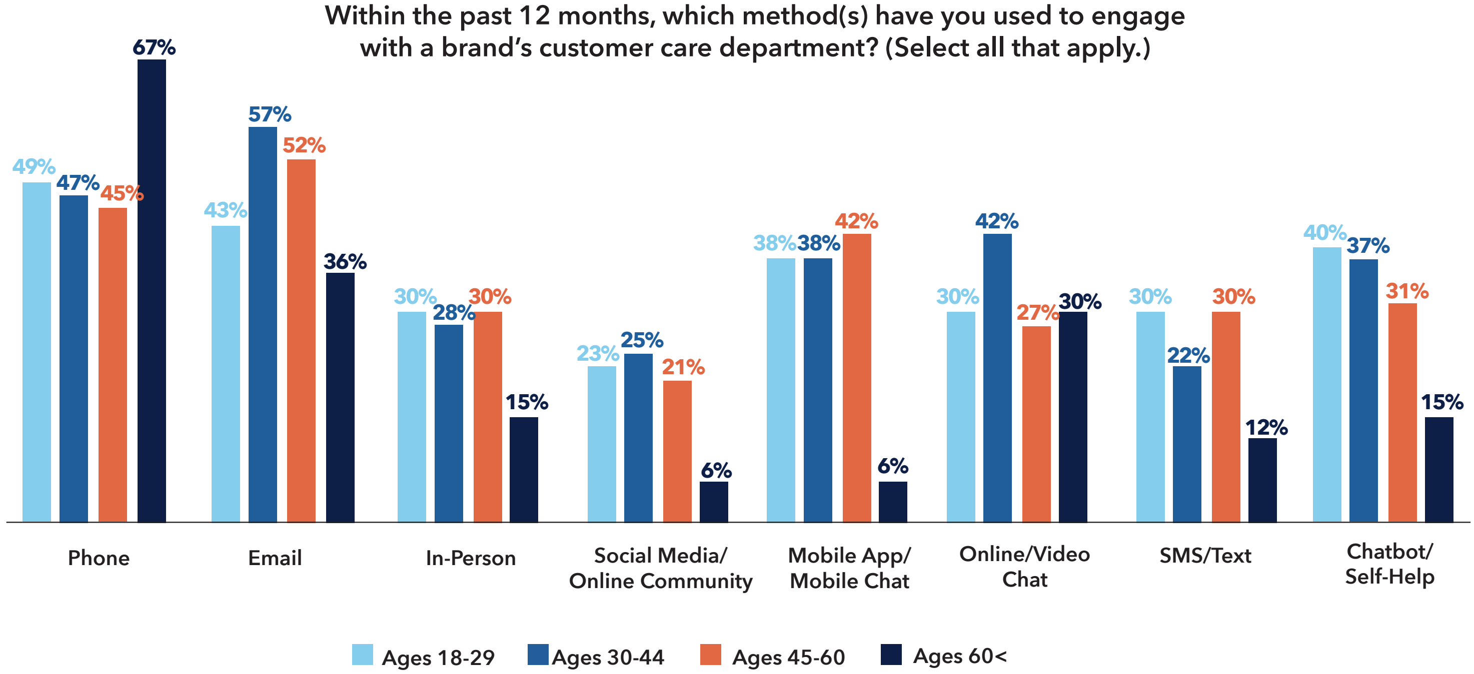
SOLUTION USE BY AGE

The below charts present the same data as the bottom of the previous page, but as a demographical breakdown. In analyzing this data, it's not only clear that those ages 60 years and older are relegated to primarily three channels (Phone, Email, and Online Chat), it also offers guidance on the importance of Mobile App/Mobile Chat and Chatbot/Self-Help, as these channels are heavily used by every age group except those ages 60 years and older.

Within the past 12 months, which method(s) have you used to engage with a brand's customer care department? (Select all that apply.)



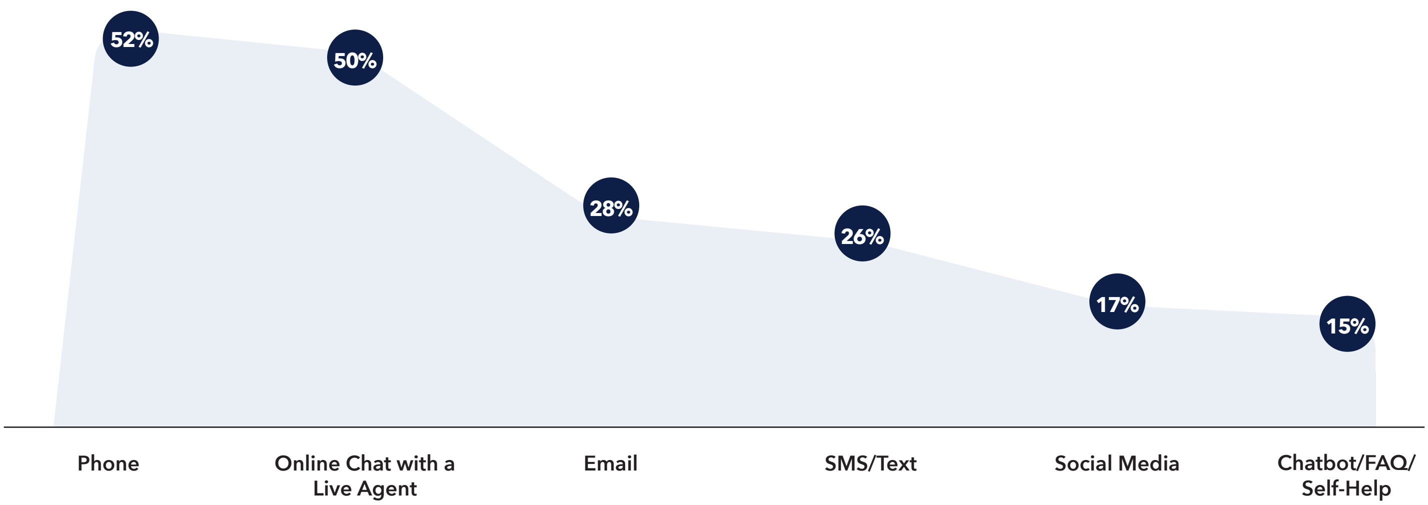
Within the past 12 months, which method(s) have you used to engage with a brand's customer care department? (Select all that apply.)



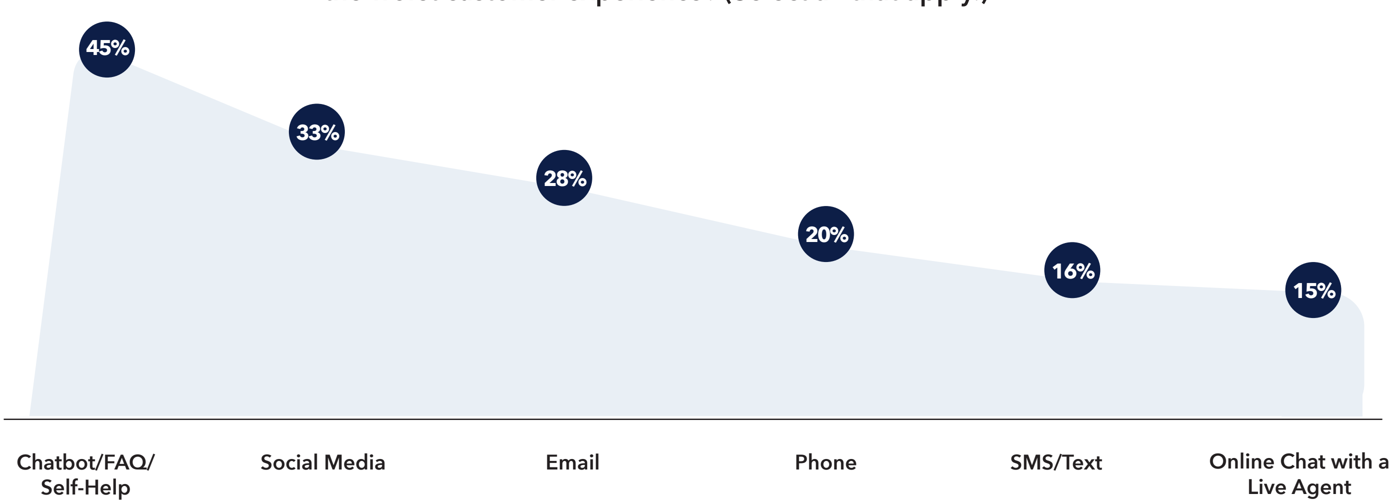
BEST AND WORST CHANNEL EXPERIENCES

When, in a pair of new questions, consumers were asked which channels provide the best care experiences, Phone and Online Chat (with a live agent) scored highest, while Chatbot/FAQ/Self-Help and Social Media scored lowest. Not surprisingly, when the inverse was asked (worst care experience), Chatbot/FAQ/Self-Help and Social Media were most named, with Online Chat (with a live agent), SMS/Text, and Phone earning the fewest responses. See the following page for a Channel Perception Score for each channel … essentially a gap analysis between the two charts below.

Which of these customer support channels typically provides the best customer experience? (Select all that apply.)



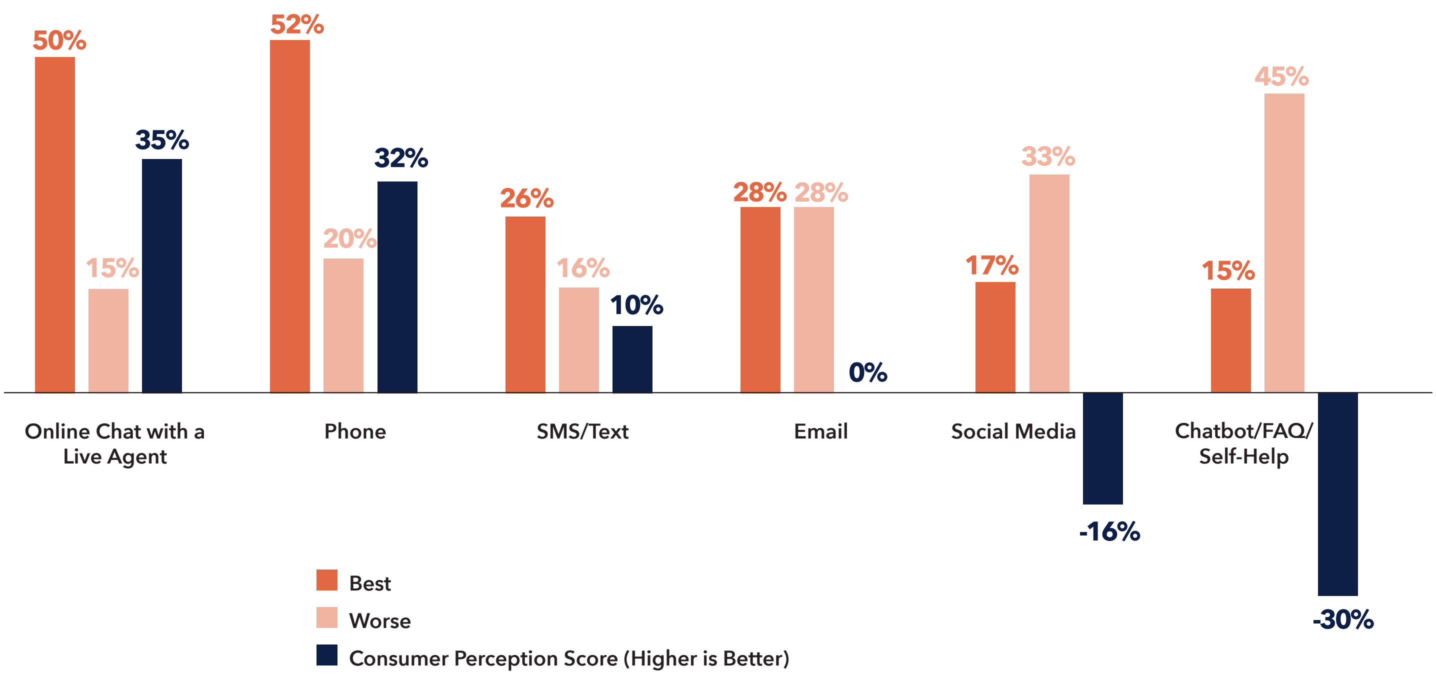
Which of these customer support channels typically provides the worst customer experience? (Select all that apply.)



CHANNEL PERCEPTION SCORE

When comparing the responses on the previous page, a Channel Perception Score emerges. The Channel Perception Score consists of survey responses for best customer experience minus responses for worst customer experience on a solution-by-solution basis. The result is a rough scoring of how consumers feel about the experience provided by various solutions. Essentially, consumers have the highest perception of Online Chat (with a live agent) and Phone, while having the lowest perception of Chatbot/FAQ/Self-Help and Social Media. Consumers were slightly positive in their perception of SMS/Text, and they were neutral on Email.

Which of these customer support channels typically provides the best/worst customer experience? (Select all that apply.)



HOW CONSUMERS DEAL WITH POOR CX

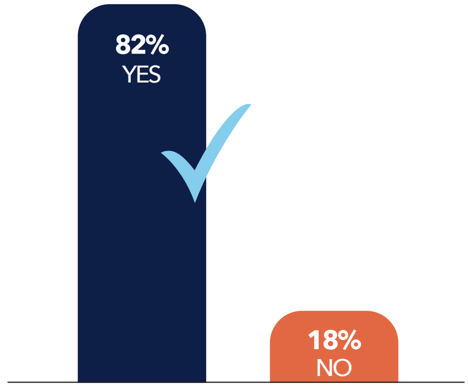
In a new question for 2025, consumers were asked about their typical action to remedy a poor customer service experience. Most often, consumers are escalating issues to a supervisor (31%) or retrying their service action a different way (24%). In a somewhat troubling result, a significant percentage of consumers (18%) are simply abandoning the process when they run into poor customer service. To help combat issues of abandonment, brands can focus on journey mapping, Quality Assurance, and making use of valuable Voice of the Customer data to help address recurring pain points and process gaps.

When dealing with a poor customer service experience, what actions did you typically take to try to remedy the situation?

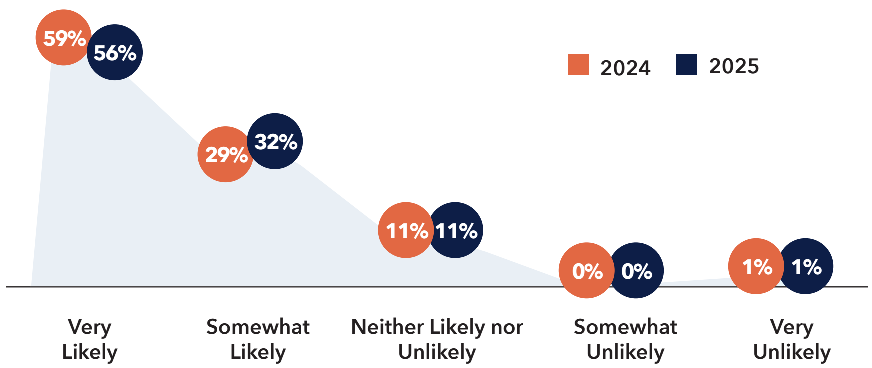
LOYALTY AND THE IMPACT OF CX

In another new question for 2025, consumers were asked about loyalty due to consistently excellent care. A substantial 82% of consumers have recollected experiencing CX-driven loyalty at some point in their lives, emphasizing the criticality of customer care, as well as the supporting cast of internal functions that make exceptional care possible, including back- and mid-office operations.

Have you ever stayed loyal to a company primarily because of consistently excellent customer service, even when other options were available?



How likely is it that a positive customer care experience will increase your loyalty as a customer?



Like the above, results at left showcase the power of customer care and its ability to (when well executed) drive customer loyalty. With 88% of consumers indicating positive CX as a "Very Likely" or "Somewhat Likely" driver of customer loyalty, investment in the customer care journey is a sensible business strategy for growing revenue.

How does your organization view customer experience and the importance of loyalty?

"The survey results speak for themselves — creating an experience where customers feel valued and engaged is critical to loyalty, which, in turn, drives repeat business and recommendations. At Ethos Veterinary Health, we provide emergency and specialty healthcare to pets. While ER visits are rarely planned, delivering a positive experience for pet parents is second only to the quality of medical care. Many of our clients return, whether for the same pet or another in the household, and online reviews and feedback to their primary care veterinarian greatly impact future business.

Monitoring and engaging with customer feedback through surveys and online reviews is table stakes. To truly differentiate, we need to continually raise the bar in how we deliver services. Ethos recently completed an extensive review of how we can create differentiated and targeted customer experiences. We have launched a multi-year journey to scale existing CX best practices and develop new ones. Examples include:

- **CX Ambassadors:** Several of our hospitals introduced CX ambassador roles to keep pet parents informed (e.g., triage status, wait times, treatment updates) and more comfortable while they wait. These ambassadors create such a good experience that they are often called out by name in surveys and online reviews, and the trust they build helps support treatment discussions, ensuring pets receive the best medical care.

- **Digital Touchpoints:** We are testing several tools to enable seamless communication before, during, and after a visit, from pre-op instructions to photos and check-ins for overnight stays to virtual follow-ups. These additional touchpoints expand our interaction outside the visit and create more opportunities for positive experiences.

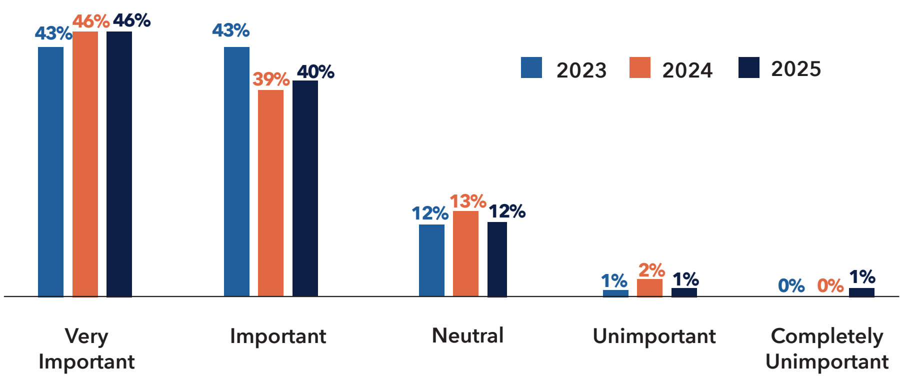
By prioritizing customer experience, Ethos ensures increased customer loyalty, trust, and medical outcomes."

Brandon Linton
Head of Growth & Technology

ETHOS VETERINARY HEALTH

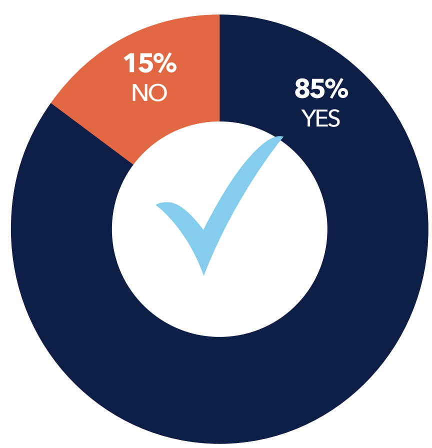
THE IMPORTANCE OF CX IN SHAPING BRAND OPINION AND STOPPING OR SLOWING DOING BUSINESS

How important is your experience with a brand's customer care department in shaping your opinion of that brand?



Like loyalty, brand opinion is also heavily influenced by the types of experiences consumers have with brands. In fact, 86% of survey respondents indicated experience was "Very Important" or "Important" in shaping brand opinion. Clearly, "brand" encompasses more than a product line, a brand persona, or the heritage of a nameplate. Brand is also accountable to the customer care experiences it provides today, and in years past.

Have you ever stopped or slowed doing business with a company due to a poor customer support experience?

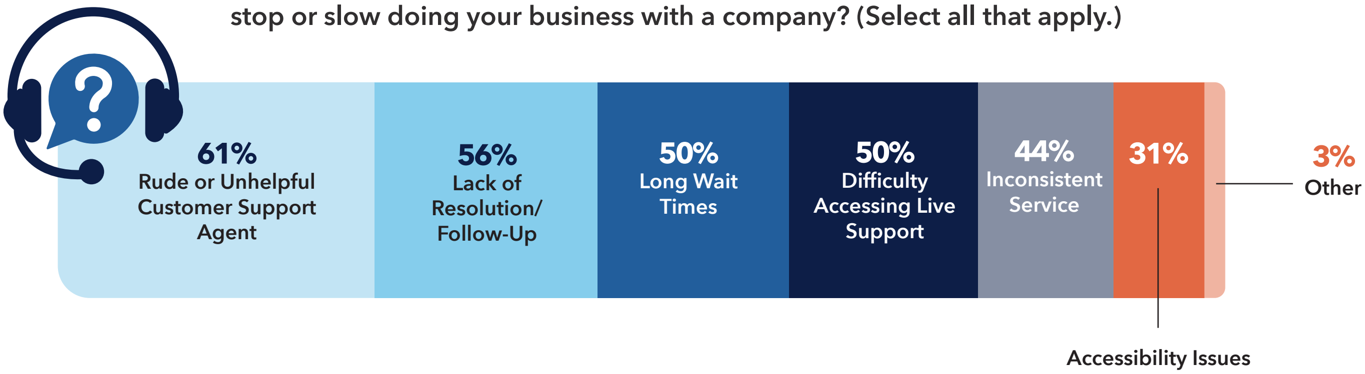


Loyalty isn't the only aspect of the customer-brand relationship impacted by customer care and support experiences. Churn is also heavily influenced, with 85% of survey respondents admitting that they have stopped or slowed doing business with a company because of a poor support experience. Different aspects of an engagement can lead to a poor experience. See the results on the opposite page for a detailed breakdown.

CAUSES OF STOPPING OR SLOWING BUSINESS AND CONSUMER FRUSTRATIONS

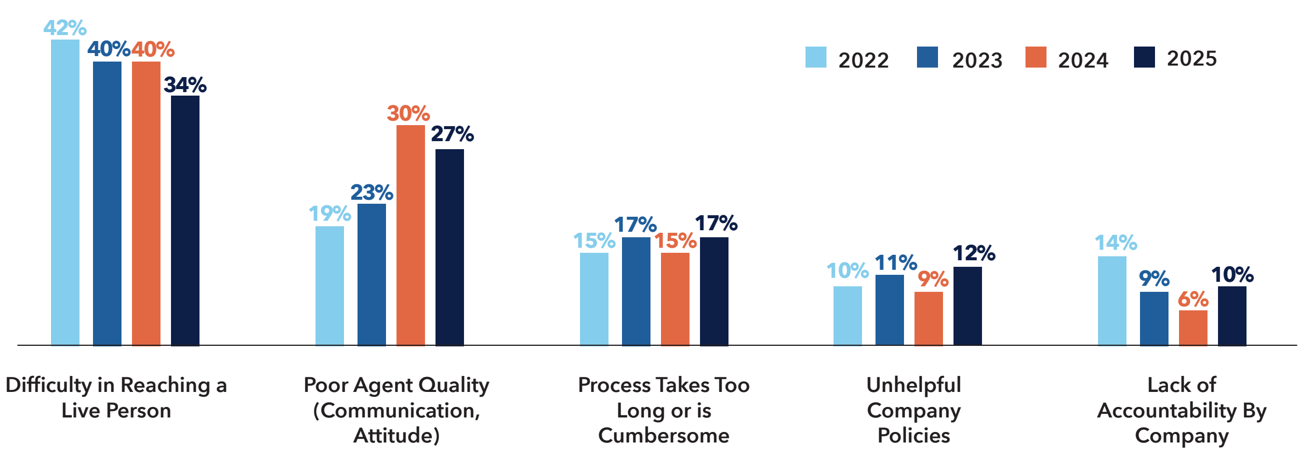
Which types of customer support experiences lead to a loss of business for brands? Most negative experiences are typified by a handful of drivers, including rude/unhelpful agents, a lack of a resolution/follow-up, wait times, or difficulty reaching a live person. Some of these issues have to do with poor agent recruitment/training, while others are driven by process gaps and shortfalls in the technology that supports a program. Brands should seek to better understand the specific experiences and pain points of their customers and target those areas with plans for continuous improvement.

What types of customer support experience could or would lead you to stop or slow doing your business with a company? (Select all that apply.)



Although year-over-year improvements have been made, the category of "Difficulty in Reaching a Live Person" remains the number one driver of frustration among consumers in resolving a customer care issue, topping "Poor Agent Quality" and "Process Takes Too Long/Is Cumbersome." To combat the frustration consumers feel in having a difficult time reaching a live person, brands need to ensure the presence of more flexible and effective unassisted solutions.

What do you find to be the most frustrating aspect of resolving a customer care issue with a brand?

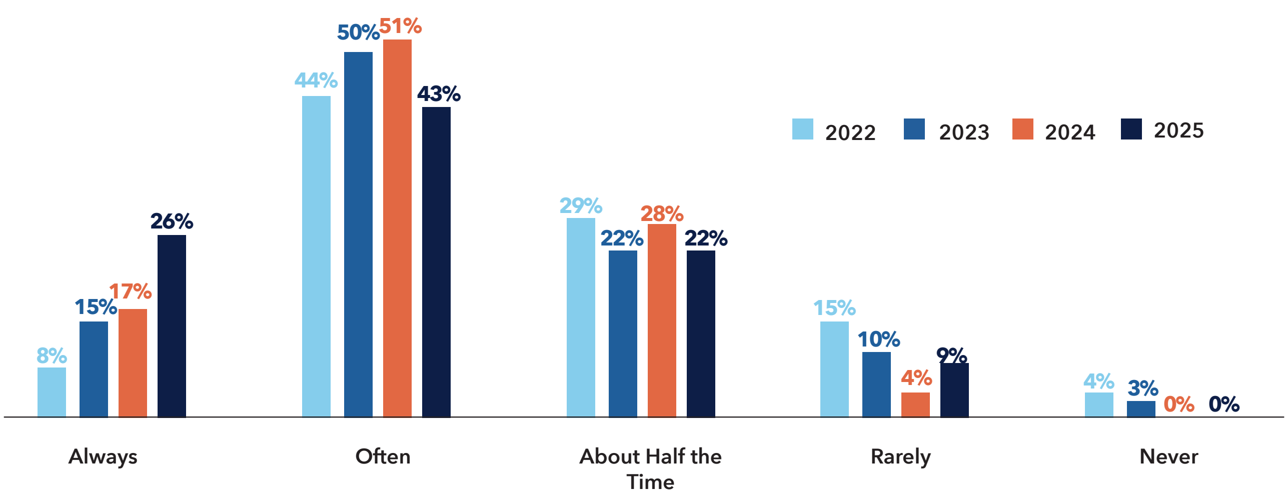


CONSUMER EXPERIENCES — CONSUMER USE

FIRST CONTACT RESOLUTION AND REPEATING INFORMATION

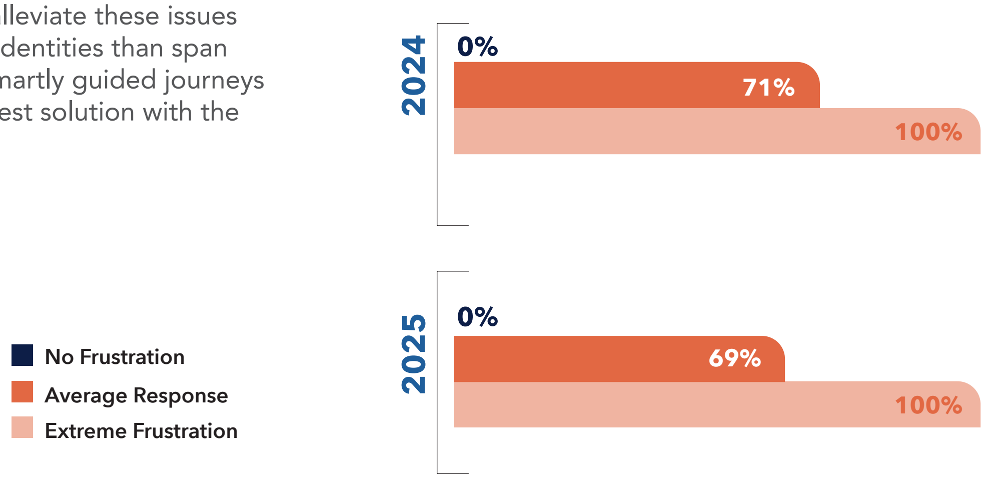
Overall, consumers continued to observe a year-over-year improvement in First Contact Resolution for the third straight year. This is likely due to continued improvements in the effectiveness of self-help and other AI-powered solutions, as well as a natural progression of upskilling for live agents as simple, more transactional-based engagements are offloaded to self-help solutions.

How often are your customer care issues resolved during the first instance of contacting a company's customer care department?



For the second year in a row, consumers continue to express high levels of frustration with having to repeat information in trying to resolve a customer care issue. Brands can help alleviate these issues by implementing persistent identities than span across channels, as well as smartly guided journeys that take customers to the best solution with the greatest ease and speed.

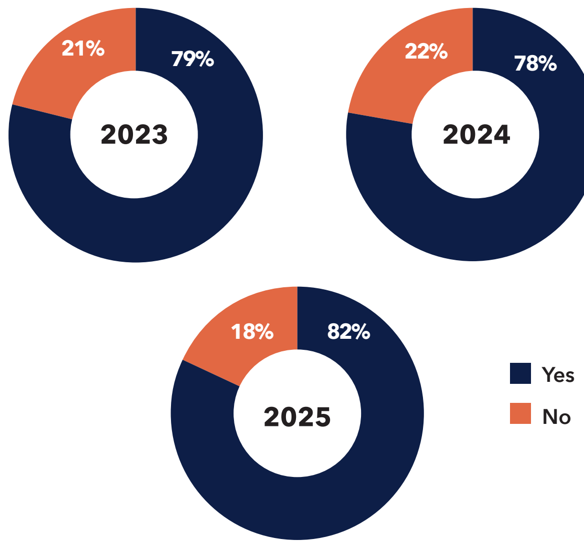
How frustrated are you by having to repeat information (account or personal) in trying to resolve a customer care issue?



THE MULTICHANNEL JOURNEY

USE OF MULTICHANNEL AND CHANNEL SELECTION

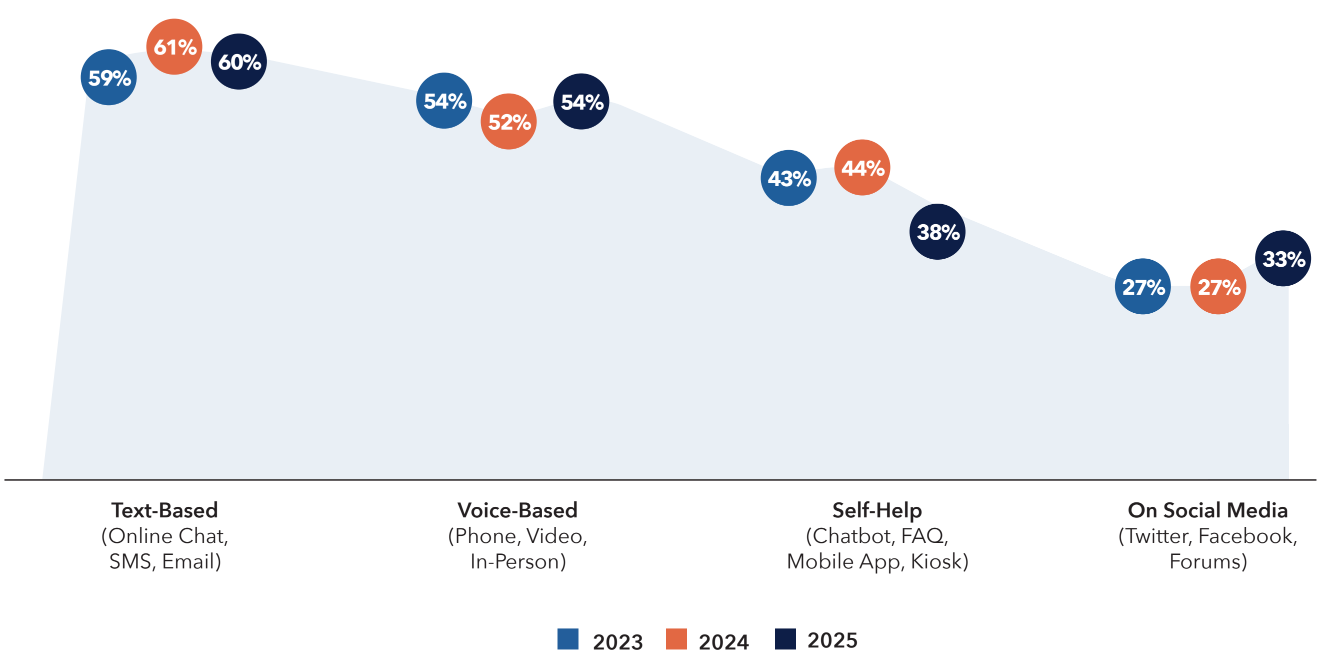
Within the past 12 months, did you use multiple channels (like phone, email and social media) to resolve a single customer care issue?



Use of multiple channels by consumers to resolve a single issue elevated further year-over-year, up four points. Use of multiple channels is most common among those ages 18-29, with 93% using multichannel, and least common among those ages 60 years and above, at 63% use. Given how common such journeys are, companies need to ensure they maintain focus on easy channel-shifting for consumers. This means focusing on key areas like data and intent continuity (i.e., personalization), smart proactive guidance, and consistency in tone, among others.

Text-Based solutions continue to hold a slight edge over Voice-Based solutions in terms of use, though these numbers are again heavily influenced by age. In fact, those ages 60 years and older were far more likely to use both Voice- and Text-Based solutions (at 74% each) than other channels. And when those ages 60 years and older are removed from the data, Text-Based use becomes 58% and Voice-Based use becomes 51%, while Self-Help use rises to 42% and Social Media use floats to 37%.

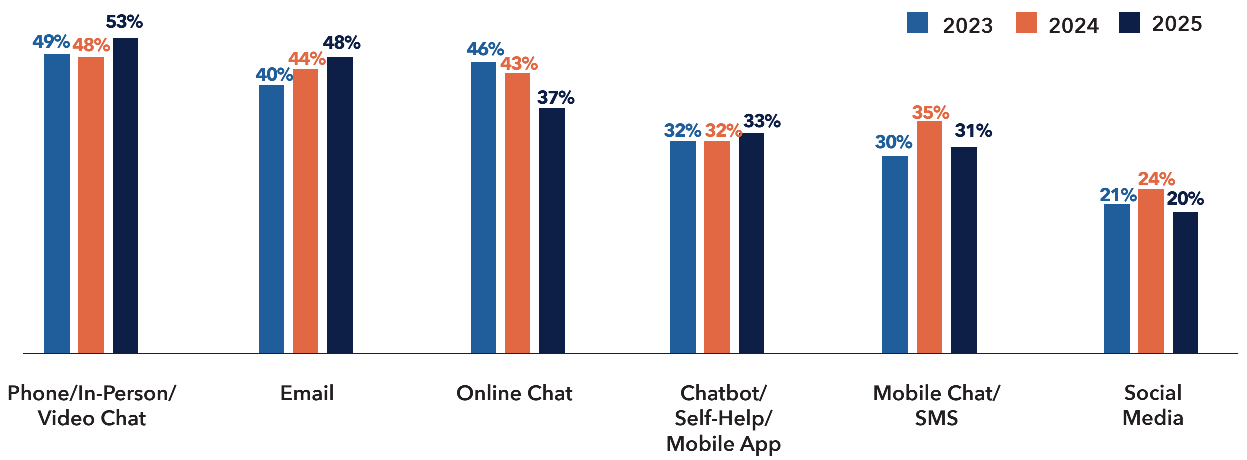
In which ways did you interact with the brand as a part of your multichannel customer service experience? (Select all that apply.)



MULTICHANNEL SOLUTION USE AND REASON

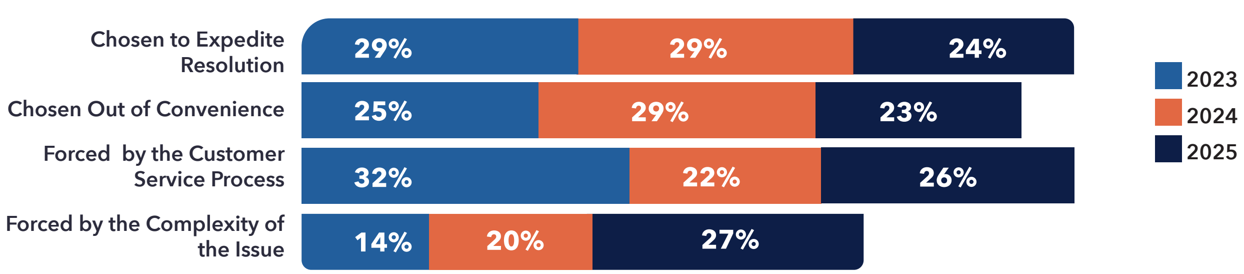
When it comes to a more detailed look at solution use, Voice-focused channels continued to lead the way, with several Text-focused solutions (like Email and Online Chat) not far behind. Again, age played a role, with 64% of those ages 60 years and older having opted for Phone/In-Person/Video Chat compared to only 48% of those ages 18 to 29 years. Furthermore, Chatbots/Self-Help/Mobile App was the most preferred channel among those ages 18 to 29 years, at 39% use in said group.

Which specific solutions did you use as a part of your multichannel customer care experience? (Select all that apply.)



In what is perhaps a troubling year-over-year change, a higher percentage of multichannel users were forced into the multichannel process in 2025 versus 2024, while fewer chose the journey willingly. Those forced into the journey haven't outnumbered those choosing the journey since 2019. This recent surge in consumers being forced into a multichannel journey might be due to the growing use of Self-Help solutions, some of which necessitate a channel shift when an issue is simply too complex for Self-Help to assist.

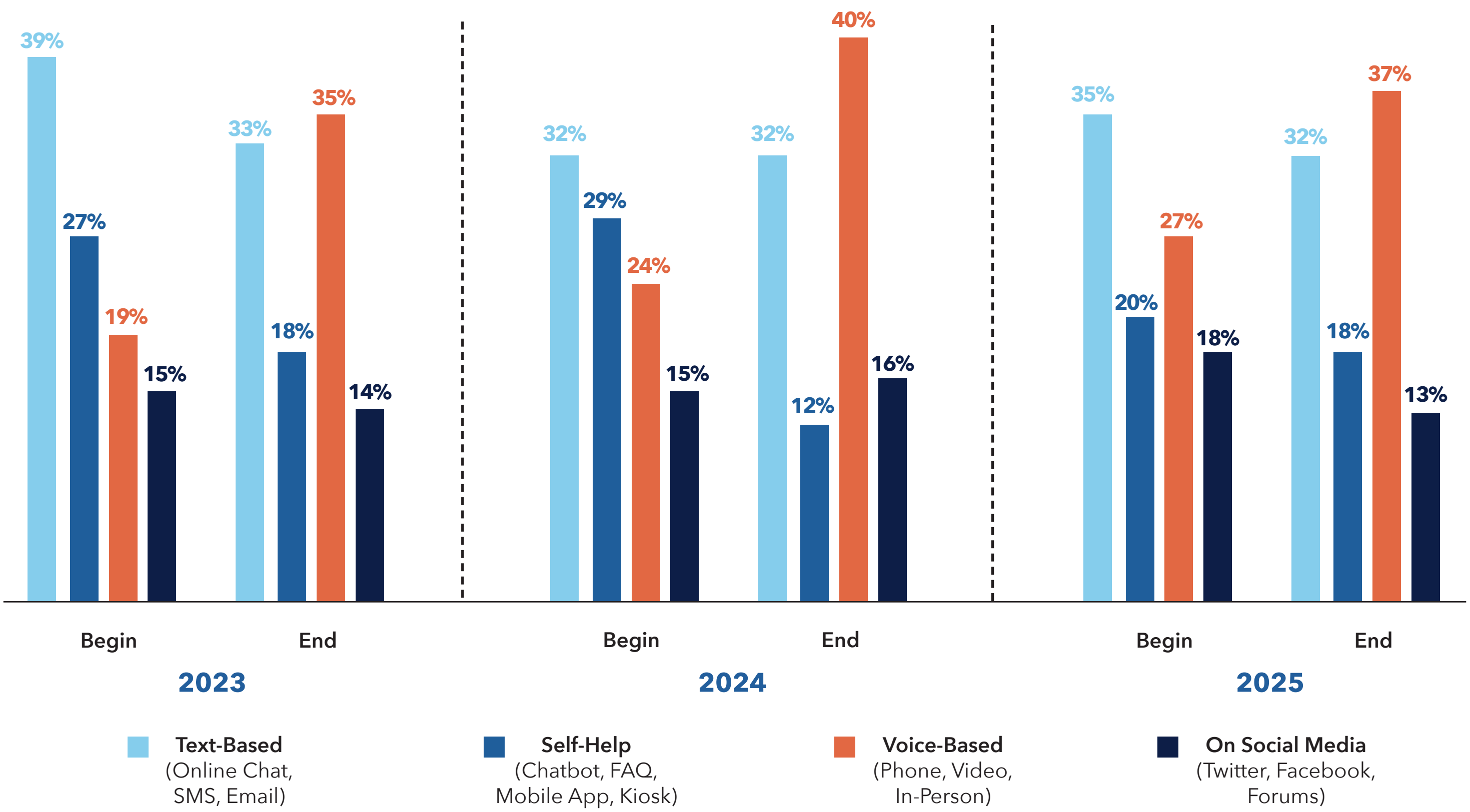
Why did the process take you across multiple channels?



MULTICHANNEL BEGINNING AND ENDING POINTS

Examining where multichannel journeys typically begin and end is a good way to gain insight into which channels are most effective in achieving a resolution. When more engagements begin in a channel versus end there (as in the case of Social Media), it's indicative of the channel lacking in the ability to provide a resolution. Conversely, when more engagements end in a channel versus begin there (as is the case for Voice-Based solutions), this likely indicates the channel is more efficient at resolving issues and has become a go-to channel for consumers who have been unable to find a resolution elsewhere.

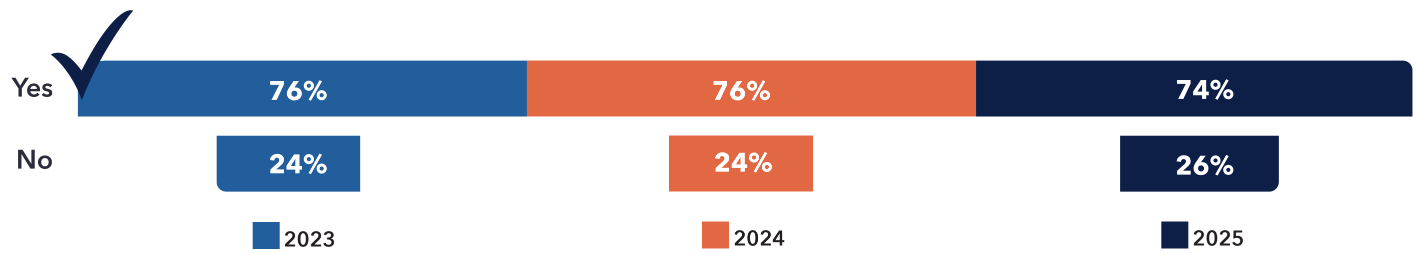
In which channel did your multichannel engagement begin/end?



MULTICHANNEL CONSISTENCY AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

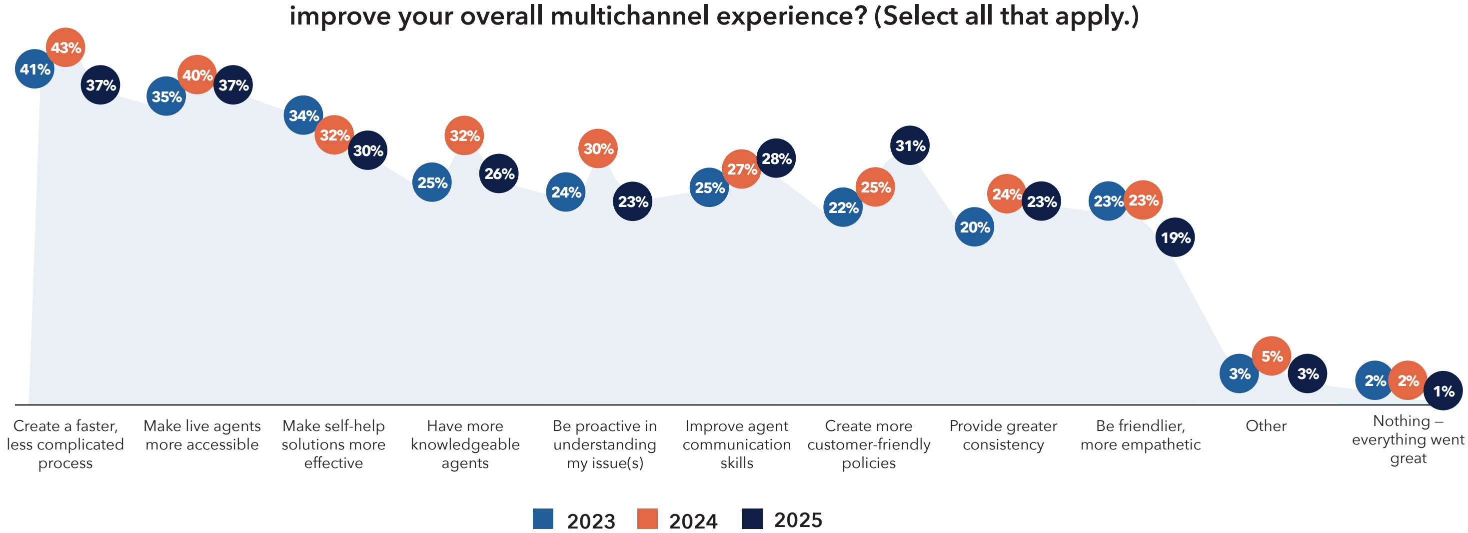
Consistency across channels remained steady, with nearly three-quarters (74%) of survey respondents indicating they had experienced consistency in their journey across channels. Consistency is critical, as it builds trust for the brand, establishes predictability in the journey, and encourages fairness in outcomes. Messaging and policy consistency are especially important, as they support the integrity of the brand while also reducing the potential for escalations.

Was your interaction with customer care consistent across all channels?



When it comes to the multichannel experience, consumers continue to look for a faster, less complicated process, as well as greater accessibility to live agents. For a second year in a row, fewer consumers are looking for brands to make Self-Help solutions more effective, which could be an indication of such solutions slowly, organically migrating toward greater efficiency as the technology matures. Furthermore, there has been a steady climb in the percentage of respondents looking for more customer-friendly policies, likely the result of increasing economic challenges and evolving consumer expectations.

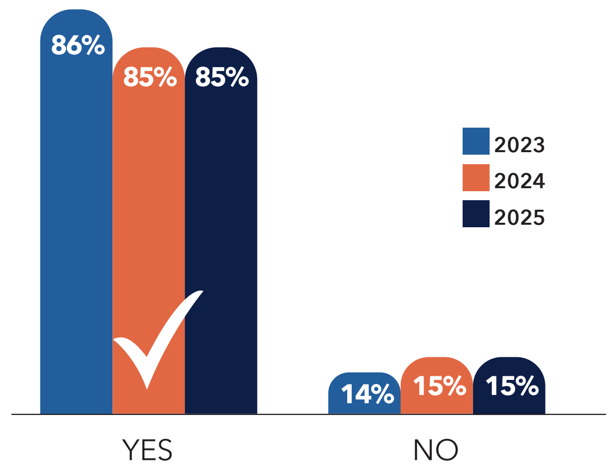
What could the customer care team you interacted with have done differently to improve your overall multichannel experience? (Select all that apply.)



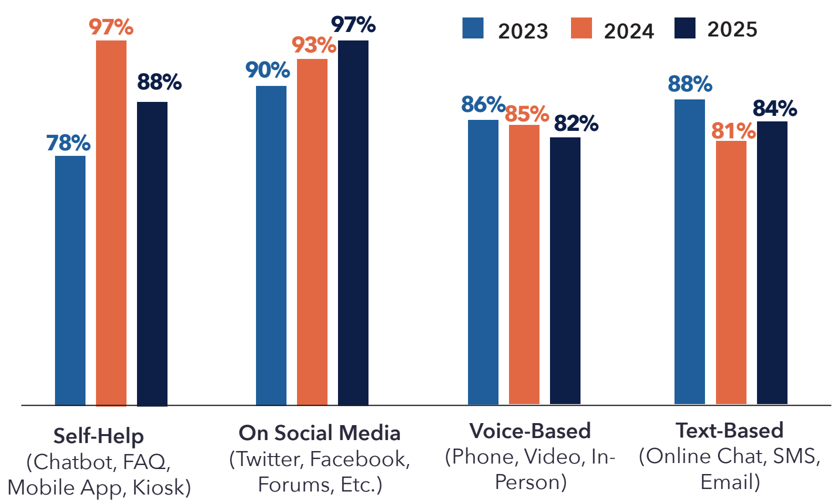
MULTICHANNEL RESOLUTION RATE

The resolution rate of multichannel engagements has remained consistently elevated the last few years, up from 75% when the question was first asked in 2015. Increasing the resolution rate further is heavily dependent upon brands increasing the resolution rates of a few key solutions, most notably Self-Help and Social Media, an accomplishment predicated on continued evolution and improvement of AI-driven platforms and resources.

Was your issue ultimately resolved?

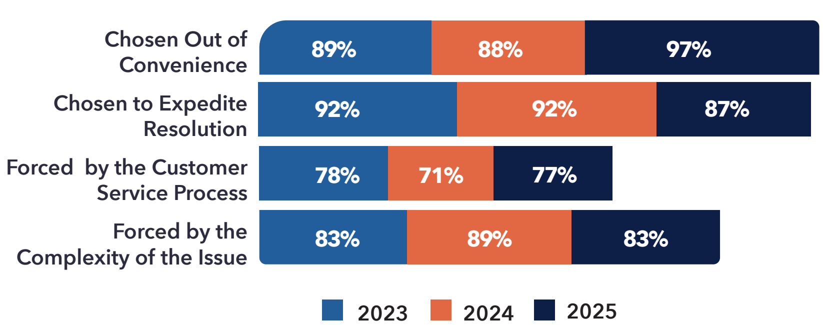


Resolution Rate % Based on the End Point of Multichannel Engagement



The results at left can be a little misleading at first glance. While one might assume the resolution rates are indicative of channel performance (i.e., Social Media offers the highest resolution rate), these results are more likely due to issue complexity. With the introduction of more Self-Help solutions, the most challenging cases naturally flow to more human-centered solutions like Phone, Email, and Online Chat (with a live agent).

Resolution Rate % By Reason For Taking a Multichannel Approach



Unlike the results above, Resolution Rate % By Reason For Taking a Multichannel Approach tells a less nuanced story. When consumers are forced into a multichannel approach, as 53% of respondents were (page 25), they are substantially less likely to get the same resolution if they had chosen the multichannel route themselves.

MULTICHANNEL SATISFACTION RATES

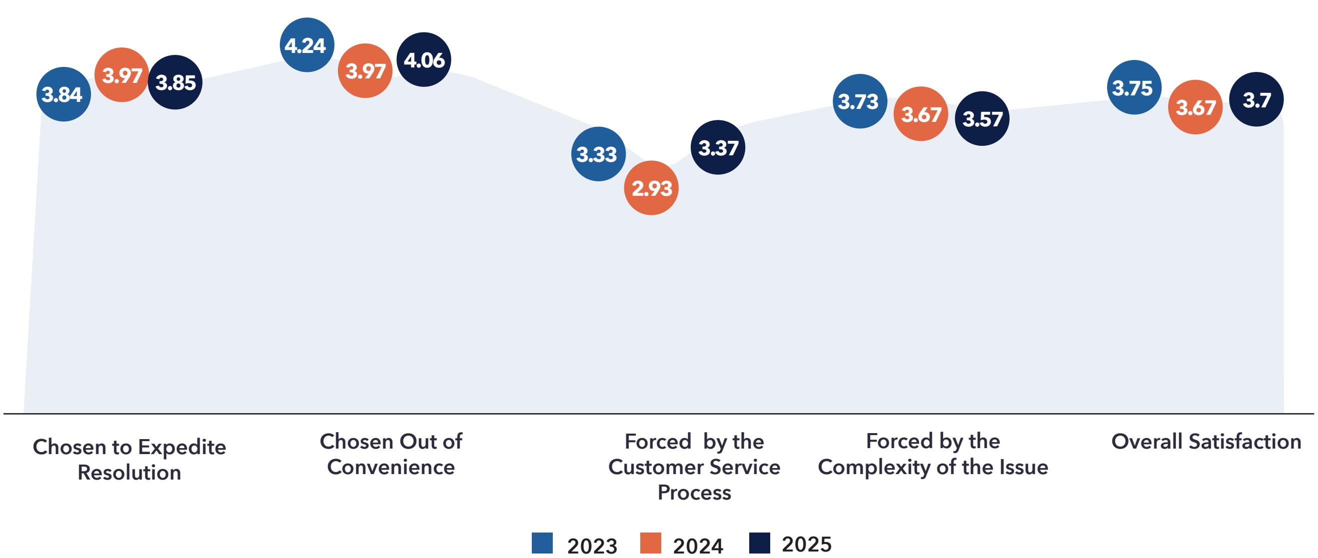
Overall, consumer satisfaction with the multichannel experience remained essentially flat YoY. Most consumers are either "Very Satisfied" or "Satisfied" with the multichannel experience, as they have been for several years. To move the needle in this area, brands should consider ways to better integrate channels, boost the resolution rates of non-human-centered solutions, improve channel guidance and best solutioning, and create easier and more consistent experiences.

Overall, how satisfied were you with the multichannel experience?

	2023	2024	2025	
Very Satisfied	28%	26%	29%	★★★★★
Satisfied	38%	39%	35%	★★★★☆
Neutral	21%	17%	18%	★★★☆☆
Dissatisfied	9%	11%	13%	★★☆☆☆
Very Dissatisfied	0%	7%	5%	★☆☆☆☆

Just like resolution rates for a forced multichannel approach (page 28), satisfaction is also impacted by the reason for taking the multichannel approach with those self-selecting the approach enjoying higher levels of satisfaction, particularly in 2025. Customer Satisfaction with the multichannel approach is likely to be a vital measure of contact center success, particularly as more Self-Help channels are introduced, fueling greater opportunity for multichannel engagement.

Average Level of Satisfaction (on a 5-Point Scale) By Reason For Taking a Multichannel Approach

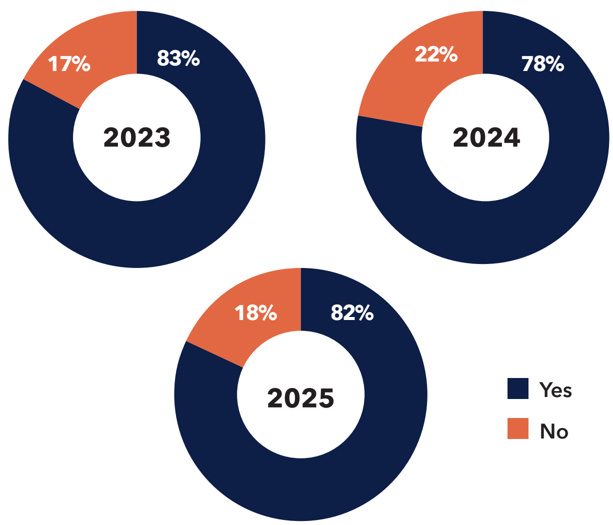


THE HAPPY & UNHAPPY CONSUMER

RATE OF POSITIVE EXPERIENCES AND CAUSE

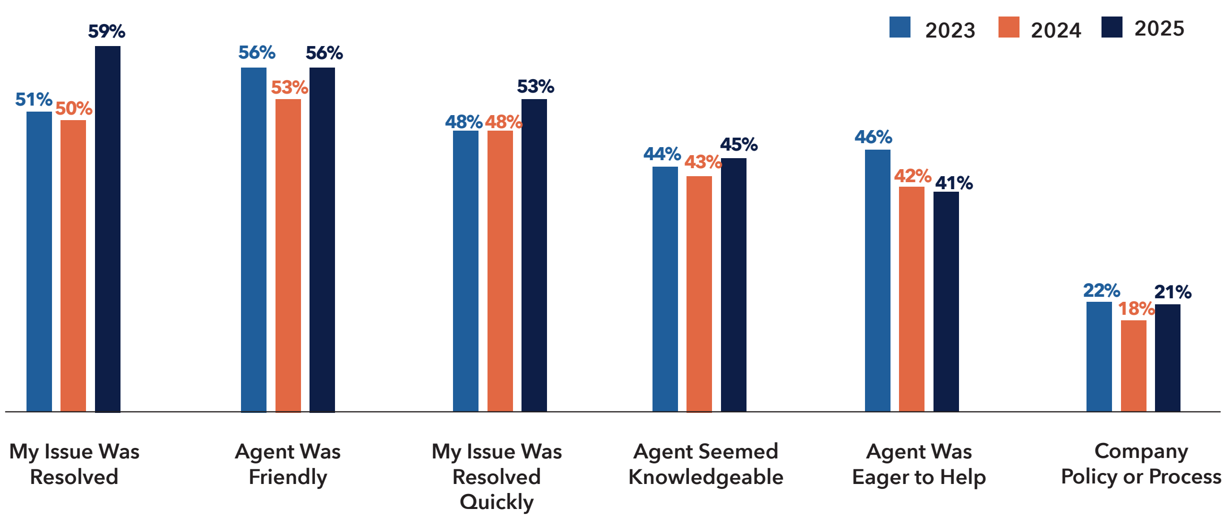
As in years past, a significant percentage of consumers (82%) indicated having a positive experience with customer care in the past 12 months. This question served as a screener, with only those indicating "Yes" advancing to the full 10-question survey. A similar screening question was also used to identify those having a negative experience (62%, page 37). Interestingly, those ages 60 and older had positive experiences at a lower rate (62%), more likely due to reduced consumerism versus any sort of differing expectations. The same was also true for negative experiences (page 37).

Within the past 12 months, have you had a positive experience when interacting with a brand's customer care department?



Although gaining a resolution is the most likely driver of a positive customer care experience, agent-focused factors also weigh in heavily. Friendly, knowledgeable, and eager-to-help agents contribute greatly to positive outcomes, stressing the importance of human-to-human interactions in delighting customers and positively shaping brand opinion.

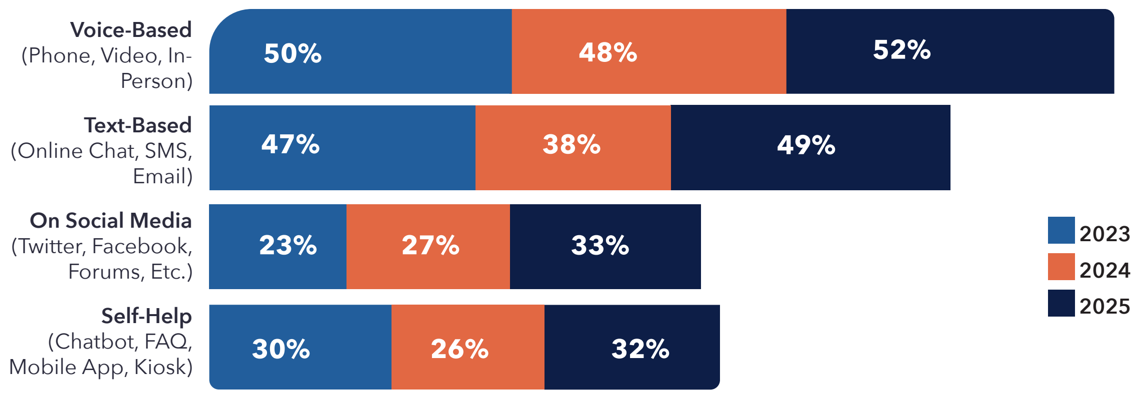
What made the experience positive? (Select all that apply.)



CHANNEL AND SOLUTION USE

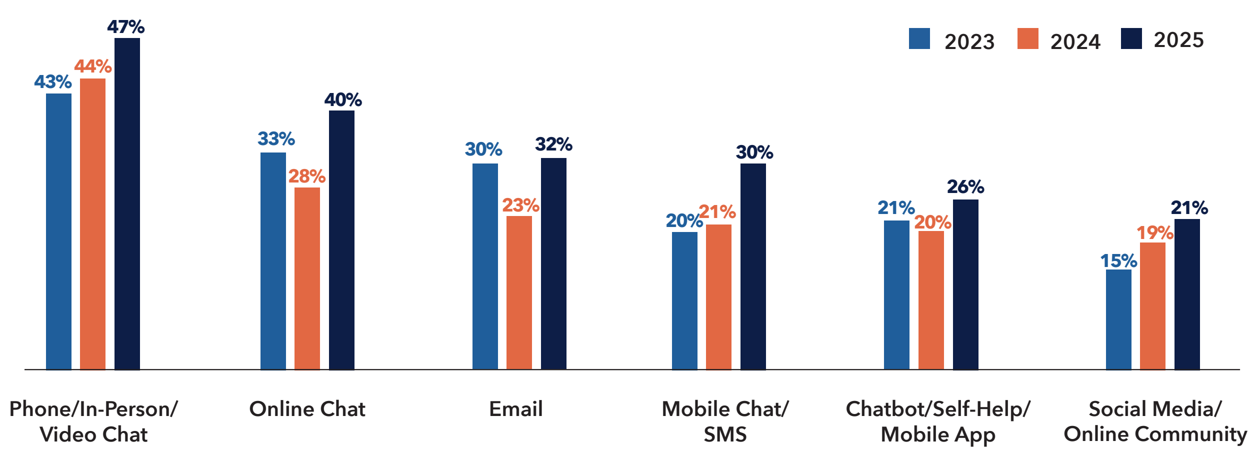
Voice-Based channels continue to be a leading source of positive customer care experiences among consumers. While this makes sense given the volume of Voice-Based engagements compared, say, to Social Media, it is also indicative of the important role Voice-Based solutions play in the overall experience and in shaping brand opinion and future intent (page 36).

Within which contact channel(s) did the positive experience occur?



In a result that reinforces the above results, Phone once again led the way in solution use for positive experiences, followed closely by Online Chat and Email. These results also allude to how common multichannel journeys have truly become, with slightly more than half of respondents (50%) indicating they were using more than one method of contact as part of their positive experience. Interestingly, a lesser percentage (45%) of consumers who had a negative experience indicated they used multiple methods of contact during their issue resolution journey (page 38). This indicates solving an issue across channels can be a net positive, assuming the multichannel journey is properly designed and managed.

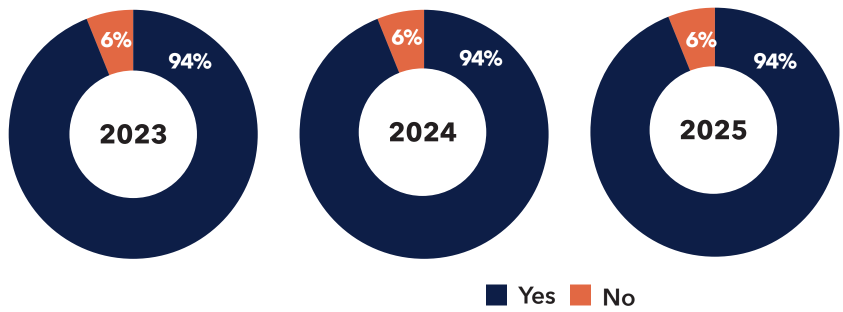
Which specific method(s) of contact were you using when the positive experience occurred? (Select all that apply.)



SATISFACTION AND SHARING THE EXPERIENCE

As expected, resolution rates among those experiencing a positive customer care experience remain heightened, once again coming in at 94%. Conversely, resolution rates among those experiencing a negative customer care experience came in at 57% (page 39), indicating the vital connection between receiving a resolution and having a positive overall customer care experience.

Accepting the customer care experience was positive, was your issue also resolved to your satisfaction?



Consumers are more willing to share about their positive experiences than ever before, with 76% of survey respondents indicating they shared about their recent positive experience with others. Word of mouth is an important component of growth in today's economy, and word of mouth now extends beyond the quality of products and services and into the overall customer experience.

Did you share this positive experience with friends, family and/or strangers?

YES

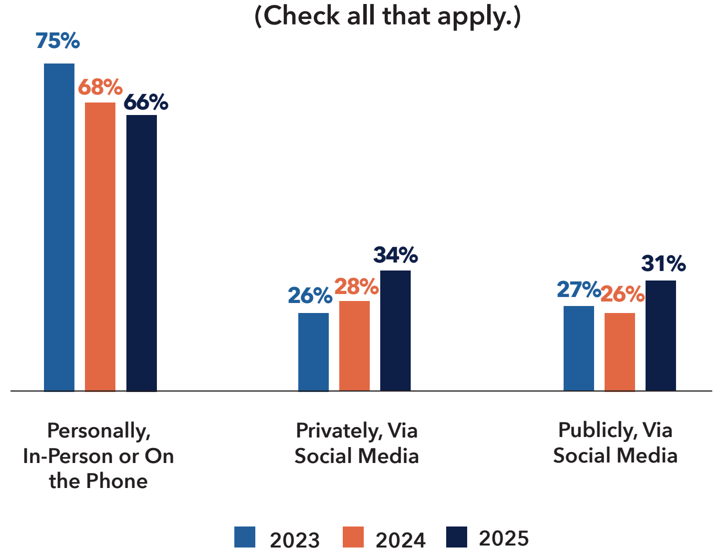
73% 2023
72% 2024
76% 2025

NO

27% 2023
28% 2024
24% 2025

Personal shares (in-person or on the phone) continued to lead the way in breaking down the above results. However, the evolving trend appears to be away from personal shares and toward social media shares (private and public). Age played a significant role in how consumers share, with those ages 18-29 sharing the least (60%), while those ages 45-60 share the most (87%). Furthermore, those ages 18-29 were almost half as likely to share personally (in-person or on the phone) as those ages 45-60.

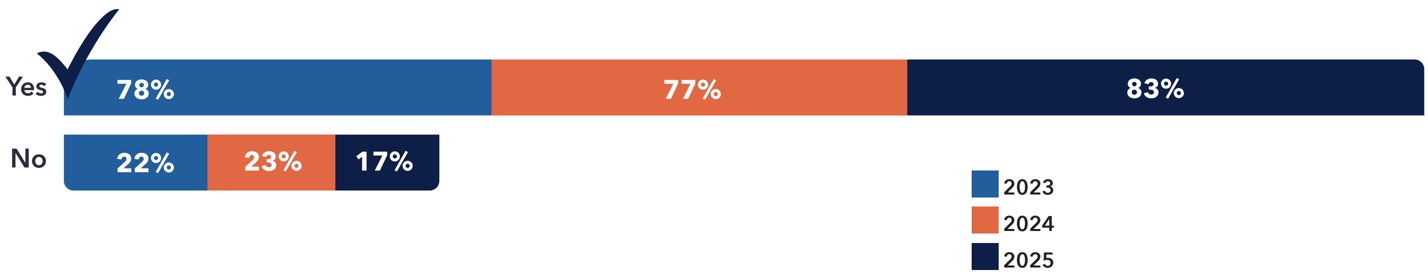
If yes, how did you share the experience? (Check all that apply.)



FEEDBACK ON EXPERIENCES

Feedback opportunities continue to be a prevalent part of the positive journey, with 83% of survey respondents indicating they were given such an opportunity. And while the presence of the opportunity was consistent across demographics, there was stratification by age in who chose to respond (bottom). Those ages 18 to 29 were the least likely to provide feedback, with only 68% doing so when given the opportunity, compared to 87% of those ages 60 and older. This highlights the importance of knowing the age of your average customer versus the age of those providing the most voiceful feedback.

Were you given the opportunity to express your satisfaction via a survey or other feedback form?

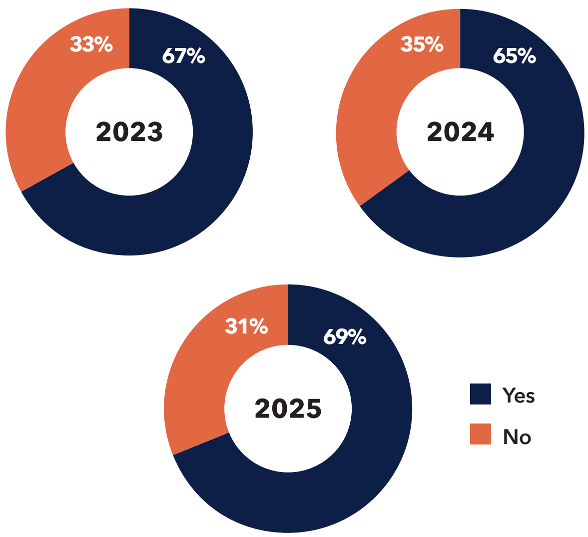


If so, did you take advantage of the opportunity to express your pleasure?

PROACTIVE CONTACT

The percent of respondents claiming they received a proactive follow-up following the positive experience continued to hang around the 65-70% range, significantly above the 45% of respondents who indicated receiving a proactive follow-up following a negative experience (page 42). Follow-ups can have profound and positive effects on overall outcomes and on how consumers make future purchase decisions (page 36).

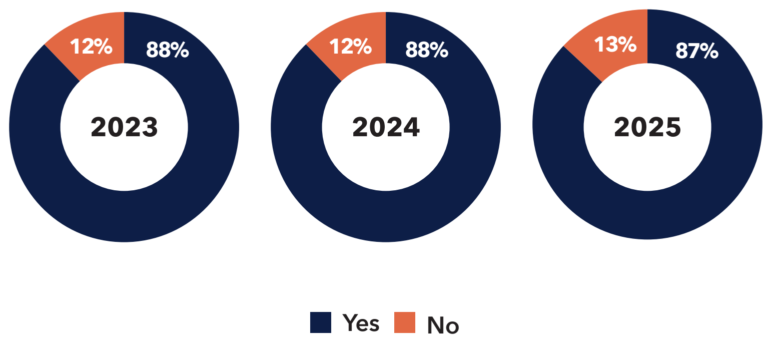
Following the positive experience, did the brand proactively contact you to ensure your issue was resolved and offer further assistance if needed?



PROACTIVE CONTACT AND ITS FUTURE IMPACT

As expected, positive experiences continue to significantly and positively impact future purchase decisions, with 87% indicating a likely positive impact. In other words, a positive customer care experience likely encourages loyalty, repurchase, and a greater share of lifetime wallet.

Will this positive experience positively impact your future purchase decisions?



Proactive follow-ups (or the absence of them) can have an impact on future purchase decisions for those experiencing a positive customer journey. In fact, consumers are consistently more likely to purchase in the future if they receive a proactive follow-up, and are decidedly less likely to repurchase if they did not receive a proactive follow-up. Brands should weigh the expense of proactive follow-ups in relation to the expected gains from improved loyalty and return business.

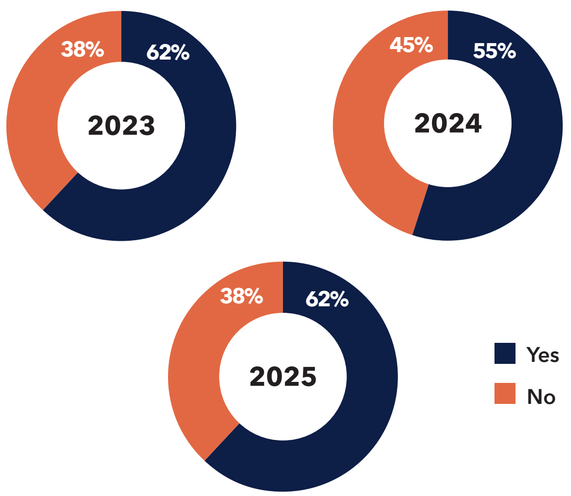
Percentage of consumers who were proactively contacted and said the overall experience will have a positive impact on their future purchase decisions.

Percentage of consumers who were not proactively contacted and said the overall experience will have a positive impact on their future purchase decisions.

RATE OF NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES AND CAUSE

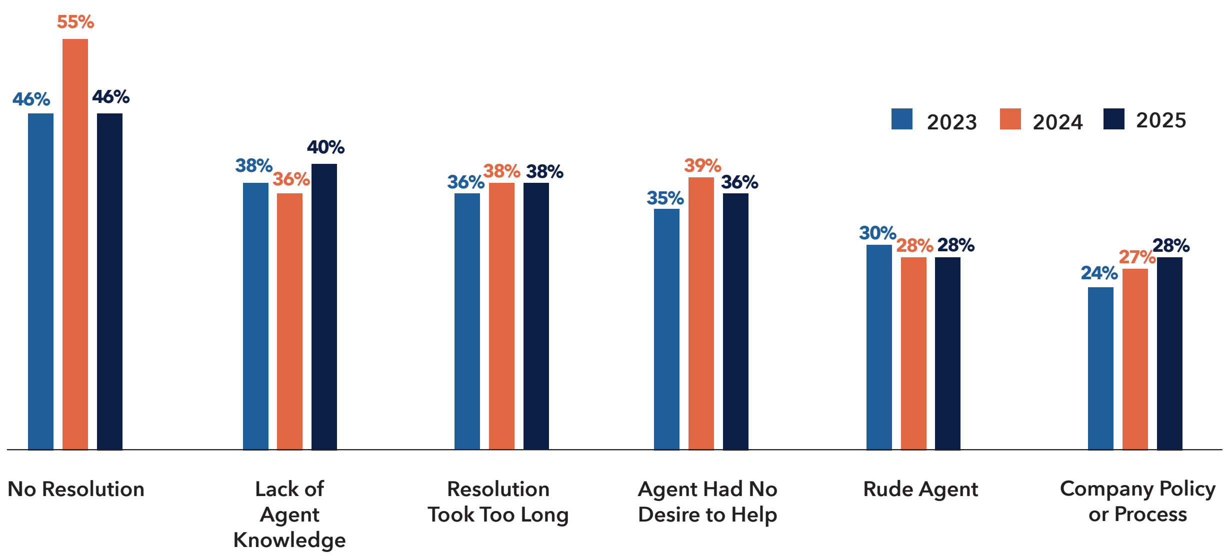
Negative customer care experiences are somewhat less common than positive ones (page 31), with 62% of consumers experiencing a negative interaction in the past 12 months versus 82% having experienced a positive interaction over the same time span. Worth noting was the fact that only 35% of those ages 60 and older reported having a negative experience while also having a lower rate of positive experiences (page 31). This is likely due to their less active consumer lives, meaning fewer opportunities for engagement, positive or negative.

Within the past 12 months, have you had a negative experience when interacting with a brand's customer care department?



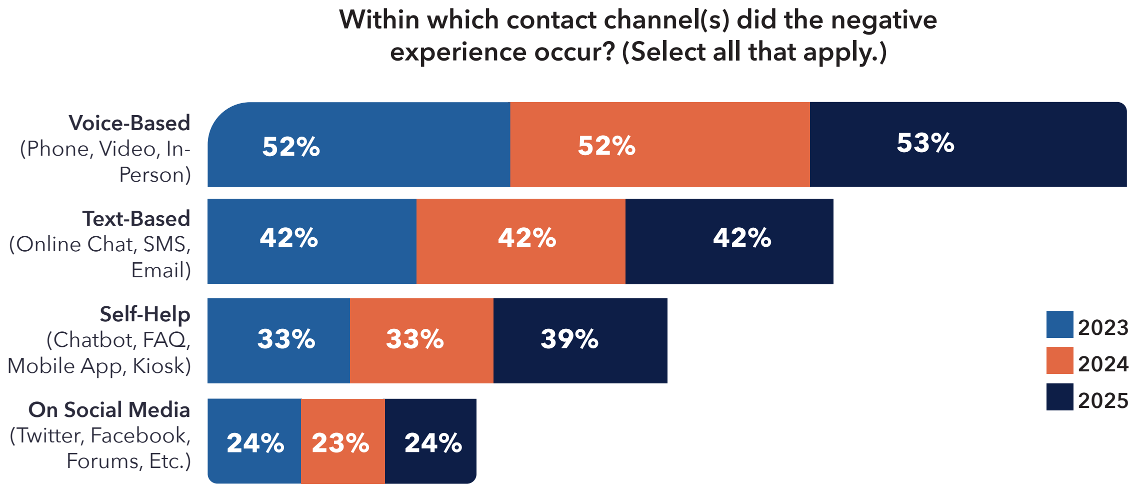
Like those having a positive experience (page 31), resolution rates played a prominent role in whether an experience was viewed as negative or not. Agent behavior also influenced outcomes, as well as customer perceptions, with "Lack of Agent Knowledge" and "Agent Had No Desire to Help" looming large in generating negative experiences. Agent soft skills will only become more important for the simple fact that the issues making their way to live agents are, on average, more complex, as basic interactions are increasingly automated.

What made the experience negative? (Select all that apply.)

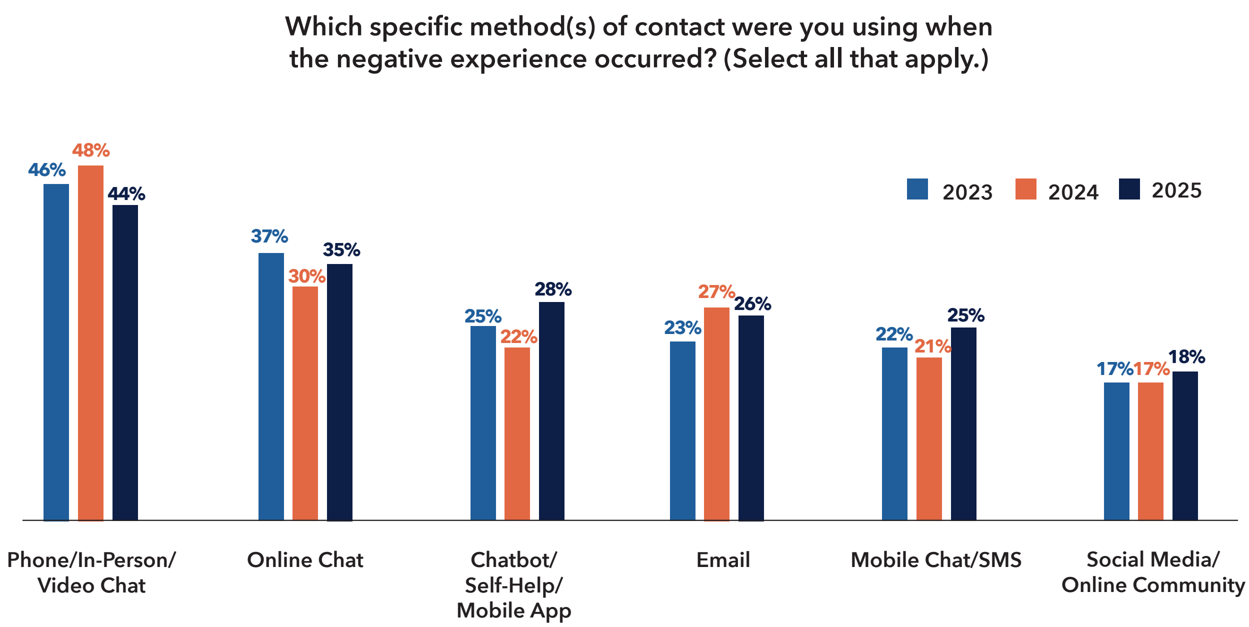


CHANNEL AND SOLUTION USE

Even though Text-Based interactions have grown more prevalent in recent years (page 14), negative customer care experiences were slightly more common in Voice-Based versus Text-Based channels. This is again likely due to more complex (and even unsolvable) issues migrating to Voice-Based solutions as opposed to any sort of criticism of the quality and performance of Voice-Based solutions. Self-Help solutions also saw a move up YoY, likely due to the overall increased use of such solutions (page 45).



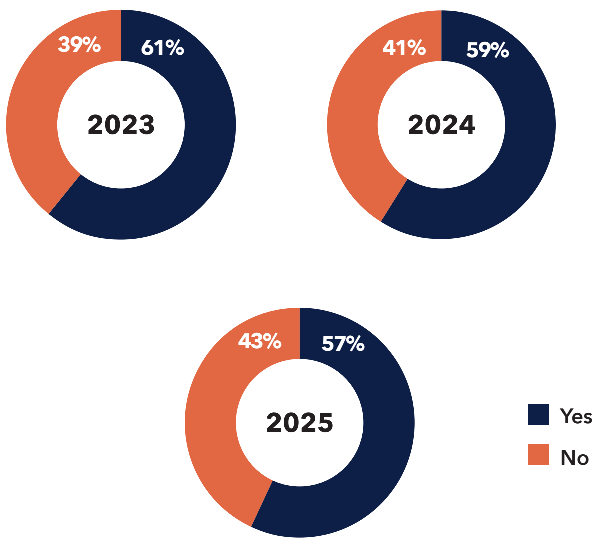
Among those reporting an instance of negative customer care over the past 12 months, Phone and Online Chat were the prominent channels of choice. Again, this is less of an indictment of these solutions versus the fact that they are magnets for complex, difficult-to-solve issues. Worth noting is that among 45% of respondents who had reported a negative experience used one or more contact methods as part of their overall journey.



RESOLUTION AND ITS FUTURE IMPACT

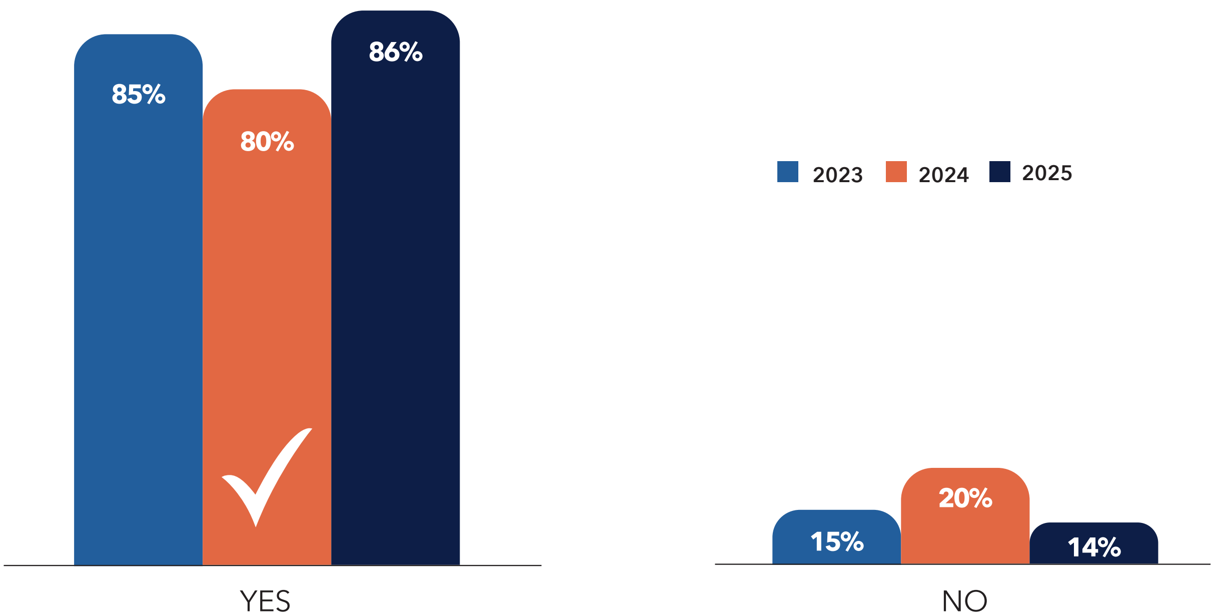
Even though the customer service experience was negative, was your issue eventually resolved to your satisfaction?

Satisfaction levels among those experiencing a negative experience were at 57%, the lowest in the last several years of data. These results clearly show that even if a satisfactory outcome is ultimately achieved, the process needs to be on point from end to end. Every step of the journey matters … not just the ultimate outcome.



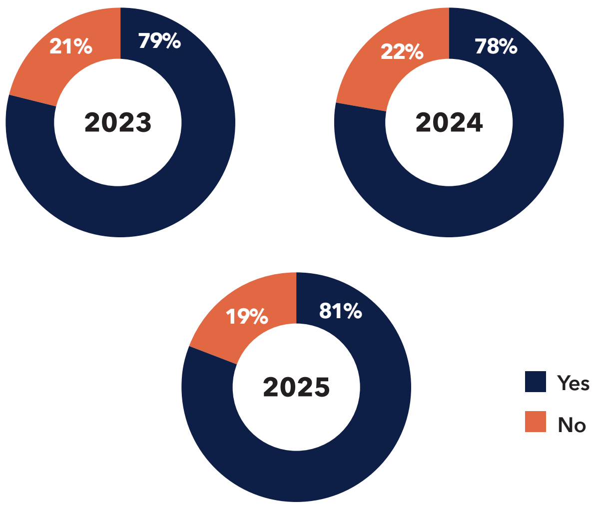
Whether or not an individual ultimately had a satisfactory resolution had little positive impact on whether the negative experience would have a negative impact on future purchase decisions. In other words, consumers who received a satisfactory outcome were just as likely to have a negative future impact on purchase decisions as those who were unsatisfied with the outcome of their engagement.

Percentage of Consumers Who Had Their Issue Resolved to Their Satisfaction but Still Indicated a Negative Impact on Future Purchase Decisions.



SHARING THE EXPERIENCE

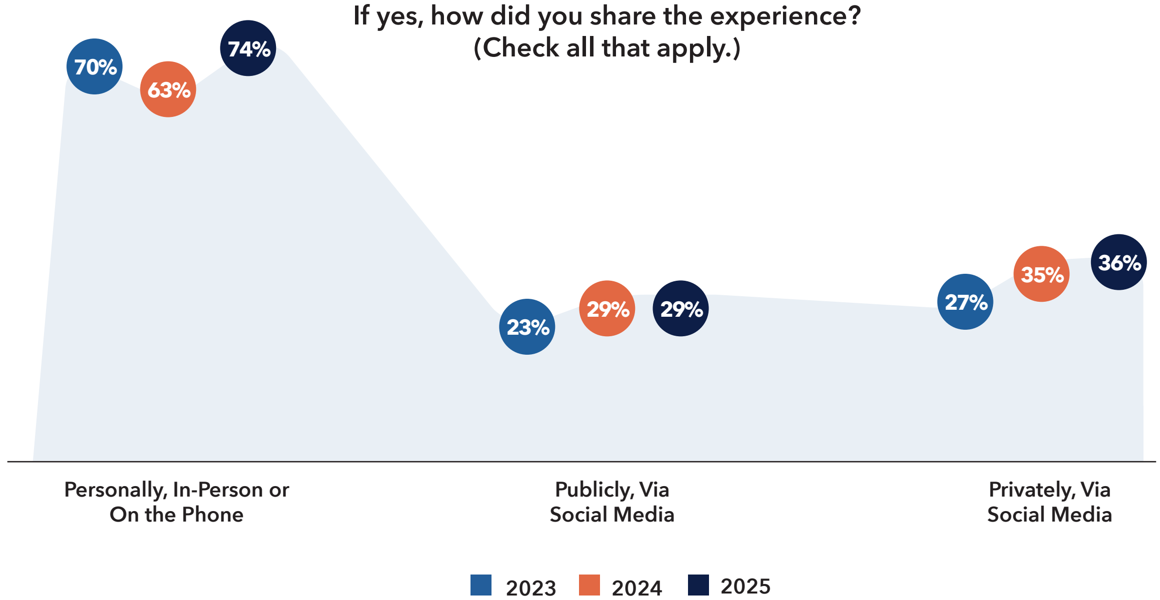
Did you share this negative experience with friends, family and/or strangers?



Consumers continue to be more likely to share about negative experiences with friends, family, and strangers versus positive experiences. This fact has remained constant since the Happy/ Unhappy Consumer section was first introduced in 2022.

Like positive experiences (page 33), personal shares (in-person or on the phone) continue to be the most common among those sharing, but shares via Social Media continue to hold gains established last year. Word of mouth can have an outsized impact on brands that don't focus on a customer-centric care experiences, especially amplifying negative experiences.

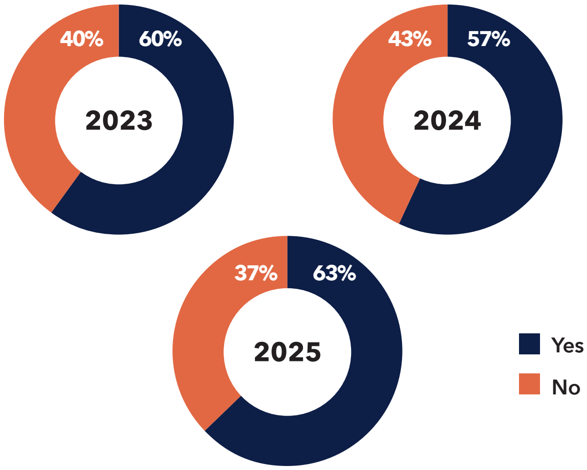
If yes, how did you share the experience? (Check all that apply.)



FEEDBACK ON EXPERIENCES AND FUTURE IMPACT

Although there was a slight YoY increase (up six points) in the percentage of survey respondents who were given an opportunity to express their dissatisfaction with their experience, such feedback opportunities for negative experiences continue to be less common than for those having positive experiences (83%, page 34). Brands should consider ensuring equal opportunities for such feedback to ensure a true picture of the customer care journey they are providing.

Were you given the opportunity to express your dissatisfaction via a survey or other feedback form?



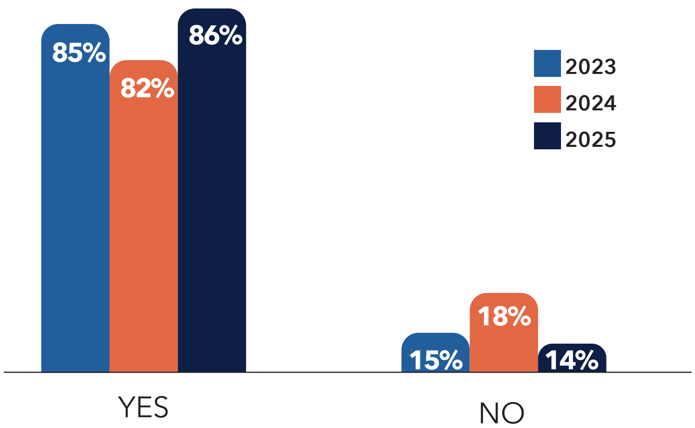
Among survey respondents, those having a negative customer care experience are slightly more likely to share feedback regarding that experience versus those having a positive experience (81% versus 79% in 2025). Either way, these results prove that most consumers would be willing to share feedback about their customer care experiences with brands if afforded the opportunity to do so.

If so, did you take advantage of the opportunity to express your displeasure?

YES
72% 2023
83% 2024
81% 2025

NO
28% 2023
17% 2024
19% 2025

Will this negative experience negatively impact your future purchase decisions?

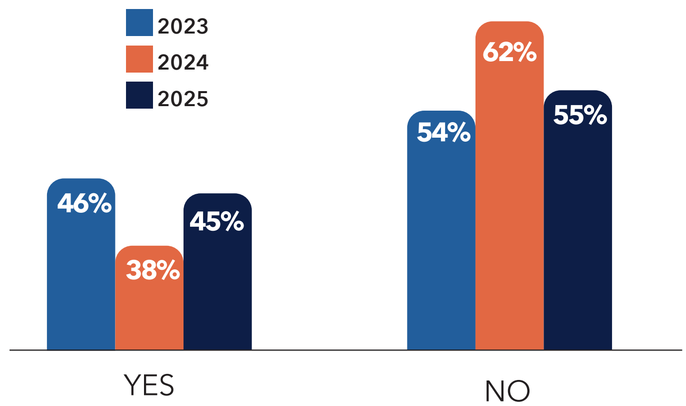


Negative experiences continue to have a lasting impact on customer stickiness and loyalty. In recent results, 86% of respondents indicated a negative impact on future purchase decisions due to their negative experience. Brands should consider this fact alongside the tried-and-true business saying, "It's easier to keep an existing customer than to acquire a new one."

PROACTIVE CONTACT AND FUTURE OUTCOMES

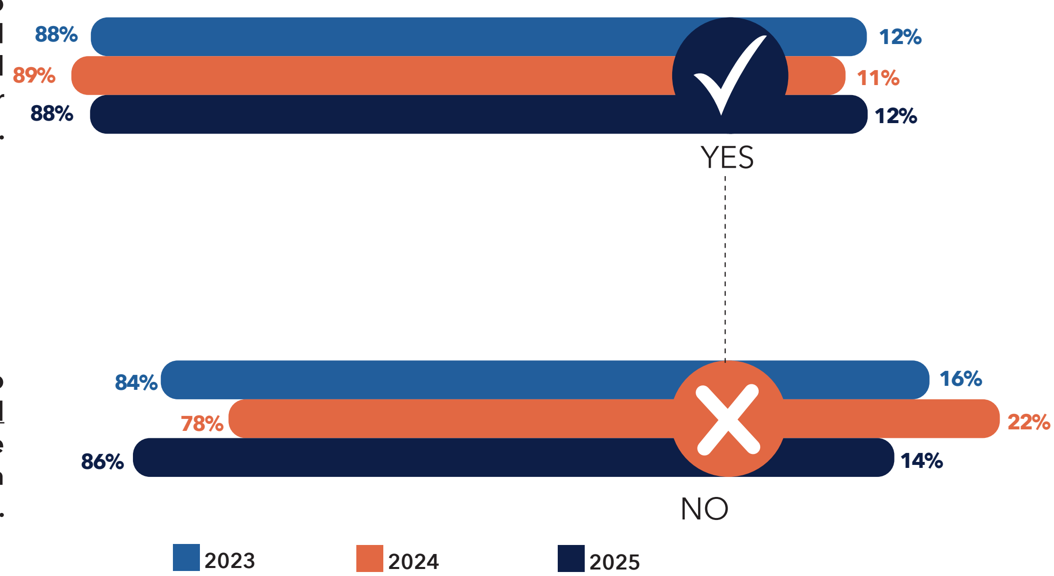
Proactive feedback following a negative customer care experience continues to lag behind the percentage of respondents who received a proactive follow-up following a positive customer care experience (45% versus 69%; page 35). As demonstrated below, proactive follow-ups after a negative customer care experience continue to have a counterintuitive impact, with those receiving a follow-up being slightly more likely to have a negative impact on their future purchases. For brands considering proactive follow-ups following a negative customer care engagement, it will be important to offer something of value instead of just confirming a policy or procedure that might already seem unfair to the customer.

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



Percentage of consumers who were proactively contacted and said the overall experience will have a negative impact on their future purchase decisions.

Percentage of consumers who were not proactively contacted and said the overall experience will have a negative impact on their future purchase decisions.



COMPARING POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

The below comparisons between those having a positive or negative customer care experience tells a concise story. Those having a positive experience are far more likely to be given a feedback opportunity, but are less likely to provide feedback. Positive experiences are also more impactful on future purchase decisions. Finally, proactive follow-ups appear to be of greater value for those who had a positive experience versus those who had a negative experience.

HAD A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

Were you given the opportunity to express your satisfaction via a survey or other feedback form?

YES
78% 2023
77% 2024
83% 2025

NO
22% 2023
23% 2024
17% 2025

If so, did you take advantage of the opportunity to express your pleasure?

YES
85% 2023
82% 2024
79% 2025

NO
15% 2023
18% 2024
21% 2025

HAD A NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE

Were you given the opportunity to express your dissatisfaction via a survey or other feedback form?

YES
60% 2023
57% 2024
63% 2025

NO
40% 2023
43% 2024
37% 2025

If so, did you take advantage of the opportunity to express your displeasure?

YES
72% 2023
83% 2024
81% 2025

NO
28% 2023
17% 2024
19% 2025

Will this positive experience positively impact your future purchase decisions?

	2023	2024	2025
YES	88%	88%	87%
NO	12%	12%	13%

Will this negative experience negatively impact your future purchase decisions?

	2023	2024	2025
YES	85%	82%	86%
NO	15%	18%	14%

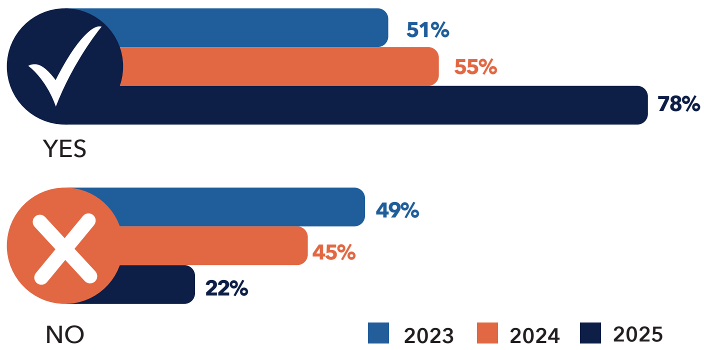
Cross-comparison of consumers who indicated their positive/negative experience will have a positive/negative impact on future purchase decisions based on receiving a proactive follow-up:

	POSITIVE EXPERIENCE LEADING TO A POSITIVE IMPACT	NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE LEADING TO A NEGATIVE IMPACT
Among those who received a follow-up – 2023	91%	88%
Among those who received a follow-up – 2024	91%	89%
Among those who received a follow-up – 2025	92%	88%
Among those who did not receive a follow-up – 2023	82%	84%
Among those who did not receive a follow-up – 2024	83%	78%
Among those who did not receive a follow-up – 2025	76%	86%

SELF-HELP SOLUTIONS

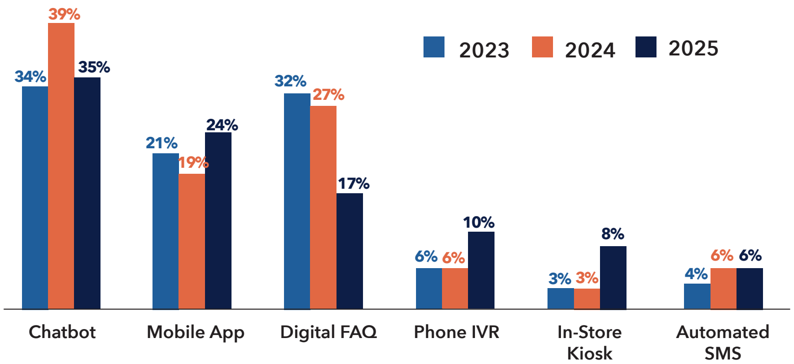
UNASSISTED USE AND REASON FOR USE

Have you used a self-help or unassisted tool (like a chatbot or an online FAQ) to find an answer, make a purchase, or resolve a customer care issue within the past 12 months?



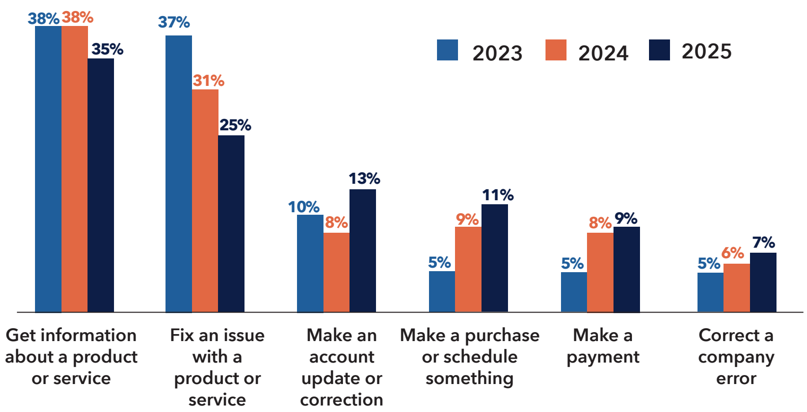
Overall use of self-help or unassisted tools for assistance, purchases, and issue resolution saw a surprising leap forward within the past 12 months. This result likely reflects a combination of increased use among companies and greater acceptance, use, and planned use among consumers (page 49). All that said, age played a significant role, with only 61% of those ages 60 years and older indicating use of self-help. Meanwhile, all other age groups indicated use of self-help solutions ranging from 81% and 87%.

Thinking about your most recent attempt to answer a question, make a purchase, or resolve an issue using such tools, which self-help or unassisted tool did you use?



Chatbots continue to lead in the use of individual self-help solutions, though undergoing a YoY slip in overall use. At the same time, Mobile App, In-Store Kiosks, and Phone-based IVRs saw substantive increases. As consumers become more accepting of AI-powered solutions, smart, interactive solutions like Chatbots, Mobile Apps, and interactive IVRs are expected to grow.

What were you trying to accomplish with the self-help or unassisted tool in your most recent engagement?

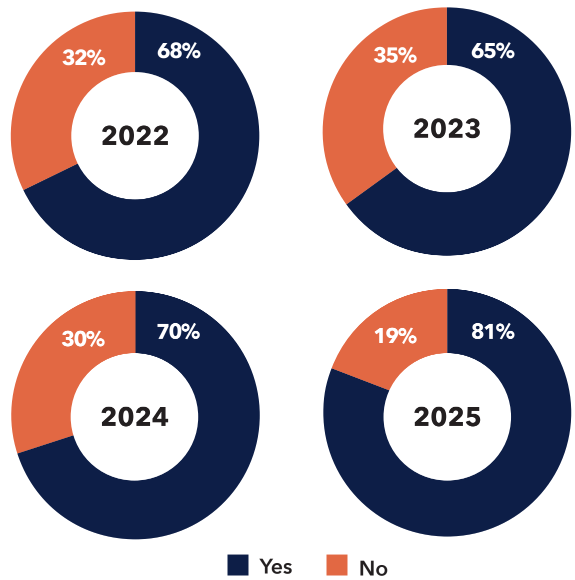


Information seeking remains the primary use of self-help solutions, though still closely followed by their use in resolving issues with products and services. As self-help and AI-powered solutions become more flexible and successful in their functionality, and consumers grow more confident by having positive experiences, the broad use of these solutions is set to achieve strong growth in the years to come.

RESOLUTION VERSUS ABANDONMENT

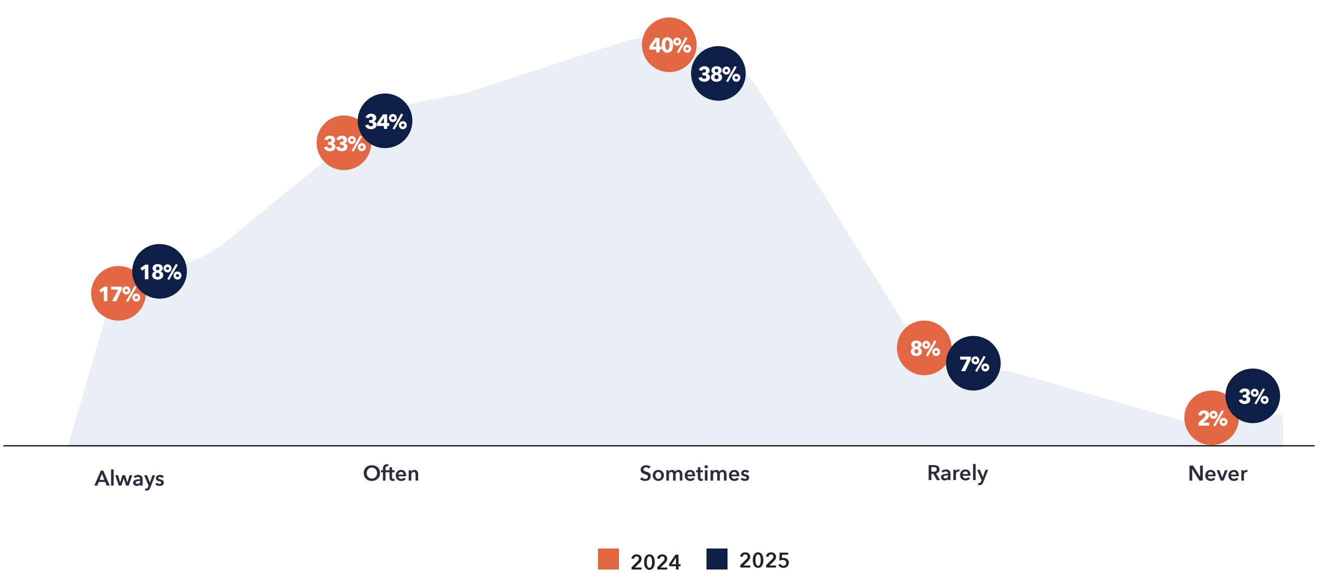
Like overall use of self-help solutions (page 45), resolution/completion rates leapt forward YoY, up 11 points. This result is indicative of solutions that are getting smarter, more intuitive, and more sophisticated in their functionality. Also worth noting is the fact that there was a strong demographic factor with those ages 60 years and older, indicating a completion 72% of the time versus an average of 83% among all other age groups.

Were you able to complete your transaction or find the information you were looking for using the self-help or unassisted tool?



Although resolution rates improved strongly YoY (above), there was seemingly little to no YoY improvement when it came to abandonment. Just like last year, about half of consumers indicated that they "Always" or "Often" abandon self-help solutions because they are either too difficult or are unhelpful. It's worth noting that this result might be as much a perception as it is a reality. Consumers faced years of lackluster performance by self-help and automated solutions, particularly after the rush into such solutions in 2020 and 2021. It will likely take years of improved performance and greater capability to reset consumer perceptions and expectations.

How often do you abandon a self-help solution because it's either too difficult to use, or it's unable to help you resolve your issue?



GETTING BETTER OR WORSE AND SATISFACTION

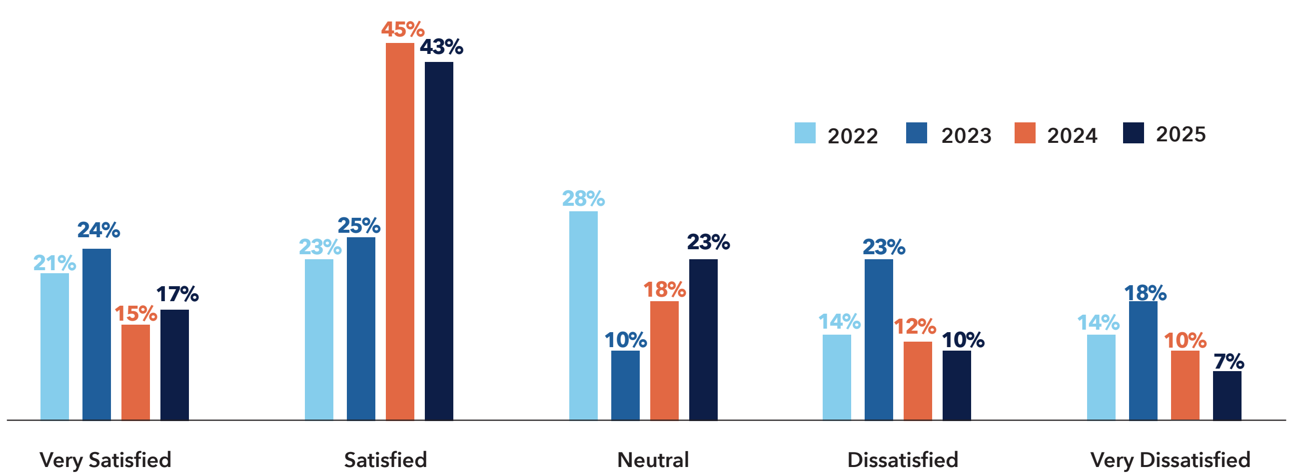
Although abandonment and perceptions of difficult and unhelpful self-help solutions persist, the reality is that consumers see gains in how well self-help solutions perform, particularly in the most recent survey results, with 43% of respondents indicating self-help solutions have gotten "Much Better" or "Better" in recent years, up from a combined 35% when this question was first asked in 2023.

Have you noticed whether or not self-help solutions have gotten better or worse in recent years?

	2023	2024	2025	
Much Better	10%	12%	10%	★★★★★
Better	25%	24%	33%	★★★★☆
About the Same	46%	43%	41%	★★★☆☆
Worse	16%	14%	12%	★★☆☆☆
Much Worse	3%	7%	4%	★☆☆☆☆

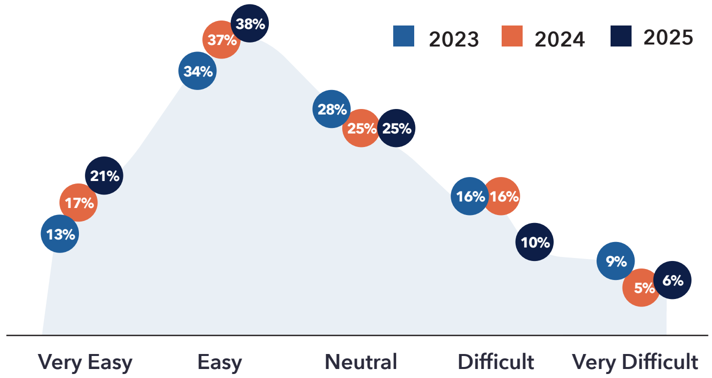
Satisfaction with respondents' most recent self-help interaction were up YoY, particularly at the lower end of the scale, where only 17% of respondents indicated they were either "Dissatisfied" or "Very Dissatisfied," the lowest combined total since the question was first asked in 2018. In other words, in 2025, consumers might not be the most satisfied they've even been with self-help solutions, but they are the least dissatisfied.

What was your overall level of satisfaction with your most recent use of a self-help or unassisted tool to find an answer, make a purchase, or resolve a customer care issue?



EXPERIENCE AND EASE OF USE

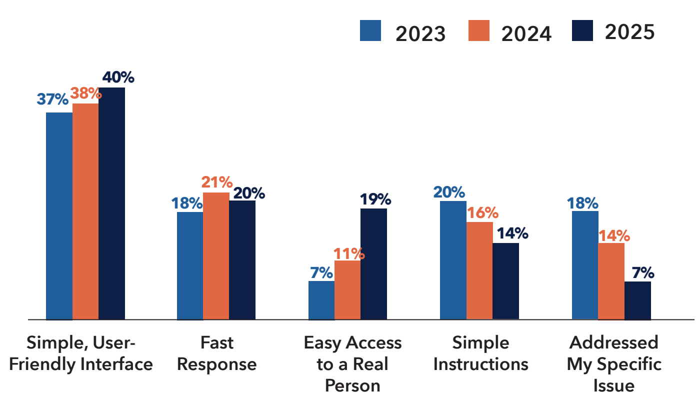
How difficult or easy was it to use the self-help or unassisted tool to attempt to accomplish your intended objective?



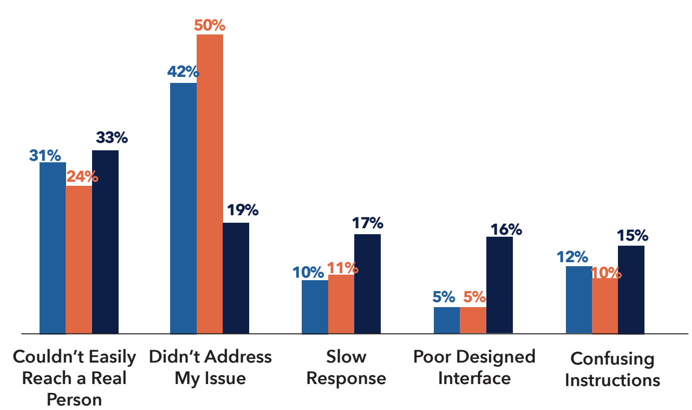
When it comes to self-help tools, ease of use has been one of several barriers to adoption for consumers since their introduction. As technologies like AI improve, and as consumers become more familiar with self-help tools, the ease of self-help tools should improve both in consumer perception and in their actual function. Regardless of the advances in the technology, brands should take care to audit the journeys of the customers.

Based on the results below, "simple" continues to be the primary driver of good experiences for consumers using self-help solutions, followed by fast responses and easy access to a real person. On the flip side, difficultly reaching a real person stood out as a major detractor, though challenges to self-help ease of use are varied. More than ever before, consumers seek ease in their transactions and, for better or for worse, their expectations are driven by their most positive prior experiences with self-help technologies. In other words, consumer expectations are high and always rising as leading brands consistently set a very high bar for self-help solutions.

Thinking about the previous question, what made the self-help or unassisted tool easy to use?



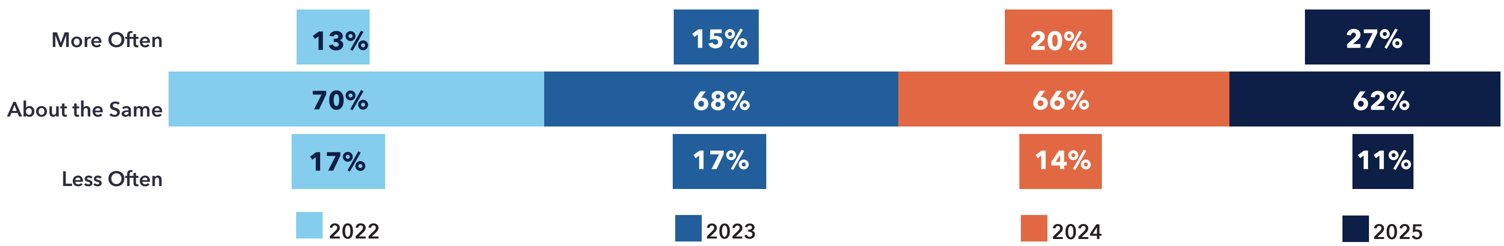
Thinking about the previous question, what made the self-help or unassisted tool difficult to use?



FUTURE USE AND USEFULNESS

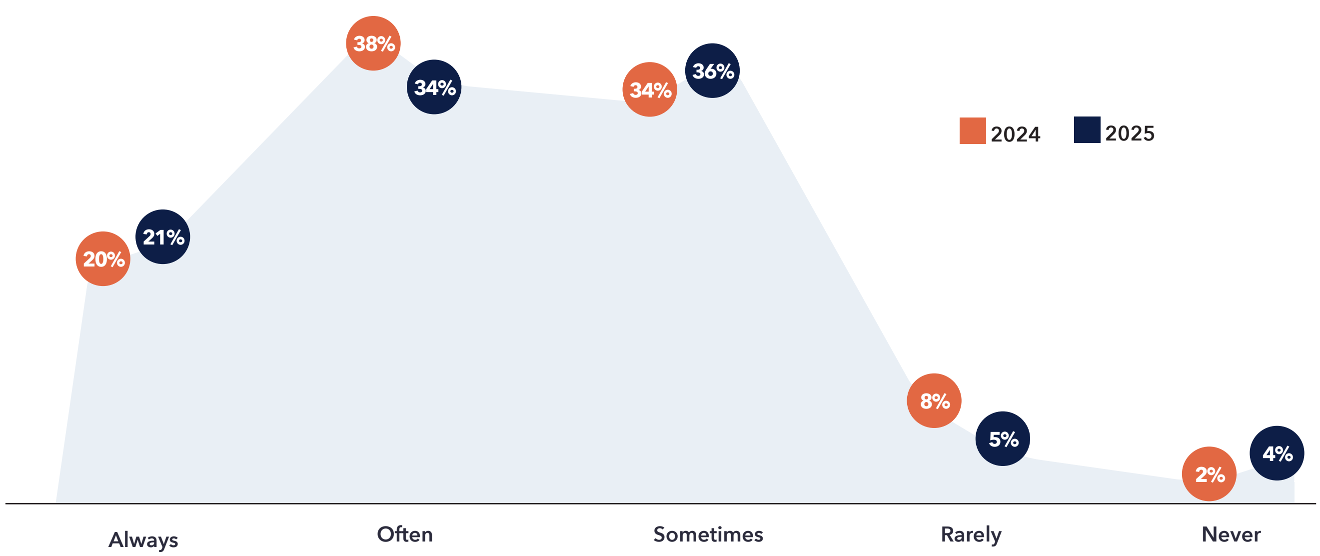
The trend continues to be up in the percentage of consumers who expect to be using self-help tools more frequently in the future, with 27% expecting to use them "More Often," an all-time high since the question was first asked in 2021. A positive trend is also emerging, with fewer consumers indicating they expect to use self-help tools "Less Often."

Do you plan on using self-help or unassisted tools more often or less often in the future?



Issue complexity continues to be a challenge for self-help tools, with 55% of consumers feeling like their issues are "Always" or "Often" too complex to be resolved by self-help solutions. Solution audits, gathering customer feedback, and journey mapping are all effective ways for brands to understand how capable their self-help solutions are, especially when it comes to resolving non-transactional issues. Age played a significant role in these results, with 69% of those ages 60 and older indicating their issues are either "Always" or "Often" too complex compared to only 36% of those ages 19 to 29.

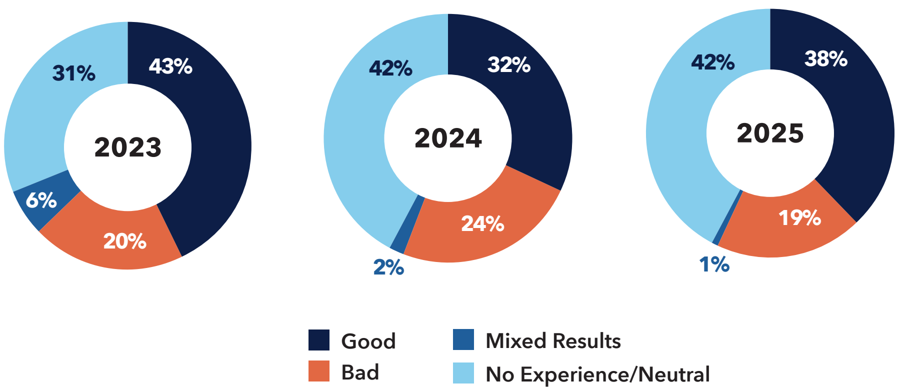
How often do you feel like your customer care issues are too complex to be resolved by a self-help or automated customer care solution?



CURRENT EXPERIENCE AND PREFERENCES

Consumer experiences with self-help solutions improved significantly YoY, with a six-point rise in the percentage of consumers who had a good experience and a five-point drop in those who had a bad experience. This result is consistent with the increase in consumers who indicate self-help solutions are getting better (page 47), as well as the increased ease of use reflected in the results below.

Please describe your experiences using self-help solutions (chatbots, IVRs, FAQ, mobile apps) to resolve customer care issues. Are the experiences good, bad or other?

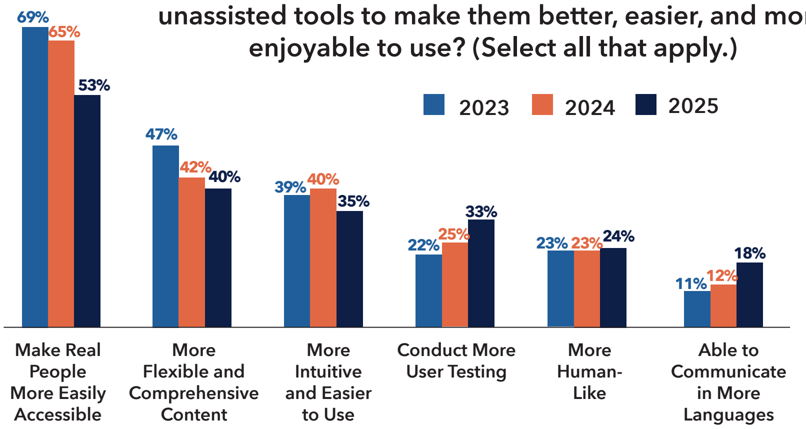


Despite the increase in the consumer use of self-help and other AI-powered solutions (page 45), consumers still lean toward live assistance, especially among those ages 60 years and older who prefer live assistance over self-help by a ratio of 2-to-1. Among those ages 30 to 40, 42% would prefer self-help, representing a nine point gap compared to those ages 60 and older. Driving greater consideration for self-help solutions likely hinges on creating experiences that combat the perception that self-help tools are cumbersome and ineffective at solving all but the most basic tasks.

If you knew your customer care issue would be resolved, which scenario sounds more appealing to you?

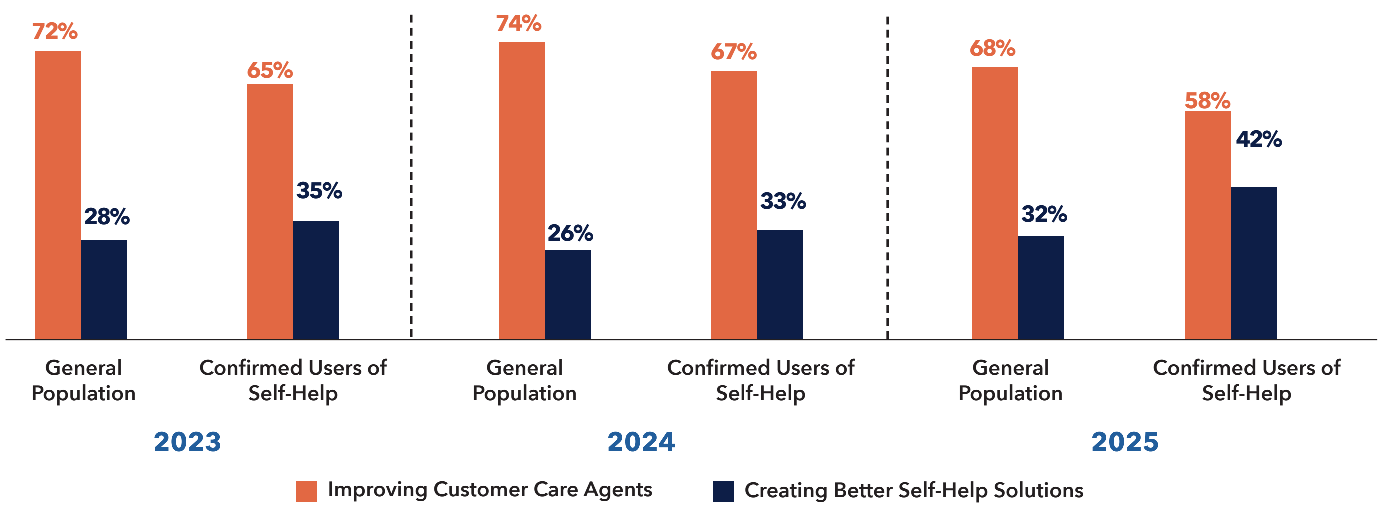
IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

What can companies do differently with self-help and unassisted tools to make them better, easier, and more enjoyable to use? (Select all that apply.)



Consistent with results like the one on the previous page that show consumers still prefer live assistance, easy access to live help is a must-have for consumers. More consumers would also like to see companies investing in agents rather than self-help, and this is especially true among the general population of consumers. Regardless of how far AI technology has come in the last few years, CX is still a human-centered function.

In your opinion, should companies focus more of their resources on improving their customer care agents or on creating better self-help solutions?



Consumers are still concerned with access to live assistance. How do your operations ensure a live agent is available and easy to reach should they be needed?

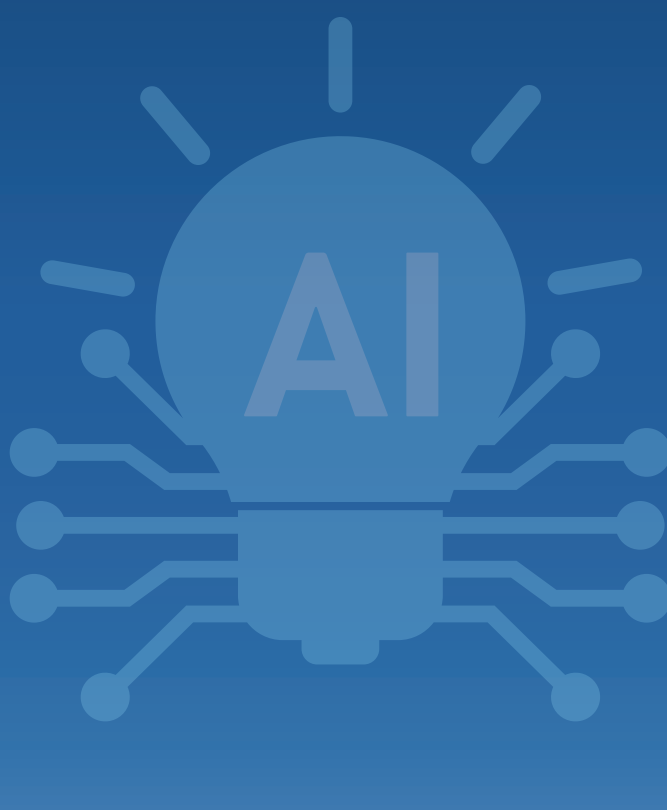
“Every company faces this challenge, and there is no single solution that works for all.

Our guiding principle has always been the Voice of the Customer. Understanding who Razer's customers are and what they need is essential in determining the best approach. Our customer base is highly tech-savvy and overwhelmingly prefers chat as their primary support channel — provided the answer isn't readily available on our support site.

With that in mind, our Digital Assistant is available 24/7, complemented by intuitive troubleshooting flows that are continuously updated based on feedback and content from our Razer Insider community, YouTube channels, technical support, software, and engineering teams. We also recognize that certain scenarios will always require live agent support. For these cases, our flows are designed with thresholds that seamlessly connect customers to agents trained specifically for their issue — at any point during the interaction.”

Johnathon White
Senior Manager, IT Applications - CRM, Helpdesk, & A.I.

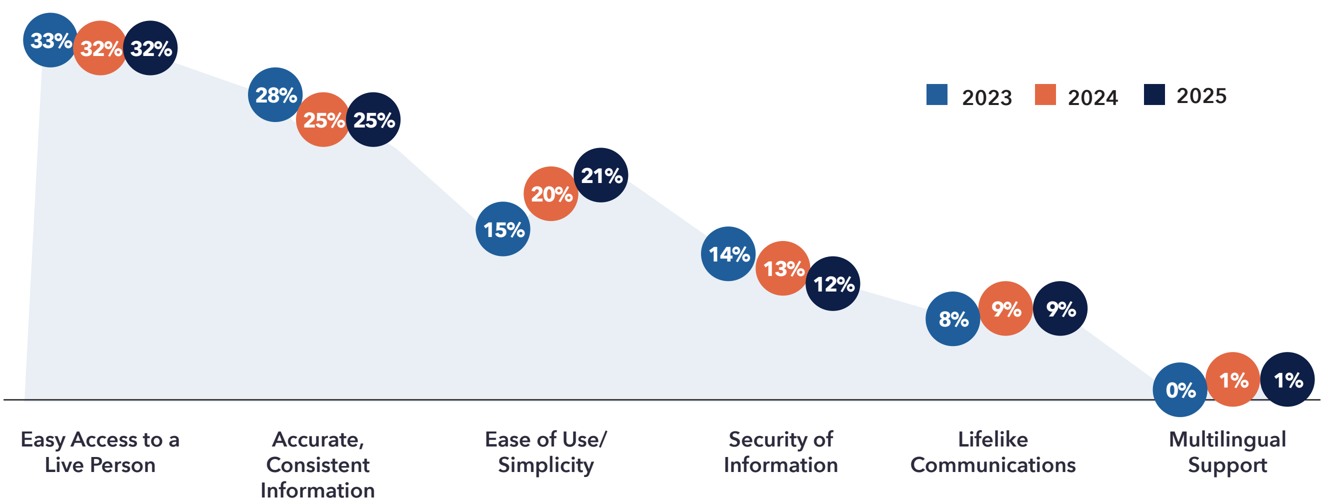
AI-POWERED SOLUTIONS



WHAT'S IMPORTANT AND CONCERNS WITH AI

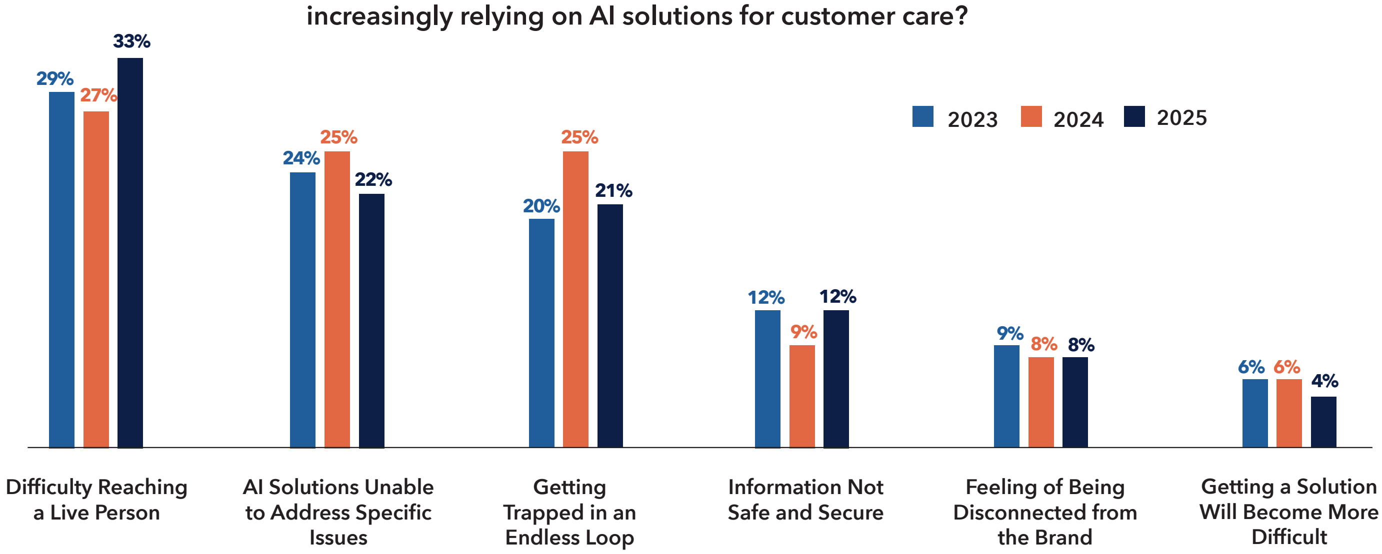
As seen elsewhere in this report, customer care is still very much a human-centered endeavor in the minds of consumers. Easy access to a live person continues to be a primary concern for consumers when using an AI-powered solution (and self-help [page 53]) to resolve a customer care issue. Although AI technology has come a long way, gaps in quality among customer-facing solutions persist, meaning that all too often customers need an easy off-ramp to a live agent. When simple options are not available to get a hold of a live person, consumers are not only frustrated, they have their opinions on AI negatively shaped.

When resolving a customer care issue using a solution powered by artificial intelligence (AI), which is most important to you?



Again, the ability to reach a live person continues to persist at the forefront of consumers' minds when it comes to concerns regarding companies increasing their reliance on AI-powered solutions. In fact, the top three concerns among consumers (Difficult Reaching a Live Person, AI Solutions Unable to Address Specific Issues, and Getting Trapped in an Endless Loop) all revolve around the same pattern of frustration: an AI-powered solution is in some way broken and there is no one there to help. This has been such a common experience that changing perceptions will not only take better AI-powered solutions, but will also take time and lots of positive experiences to counter negative sentiment.

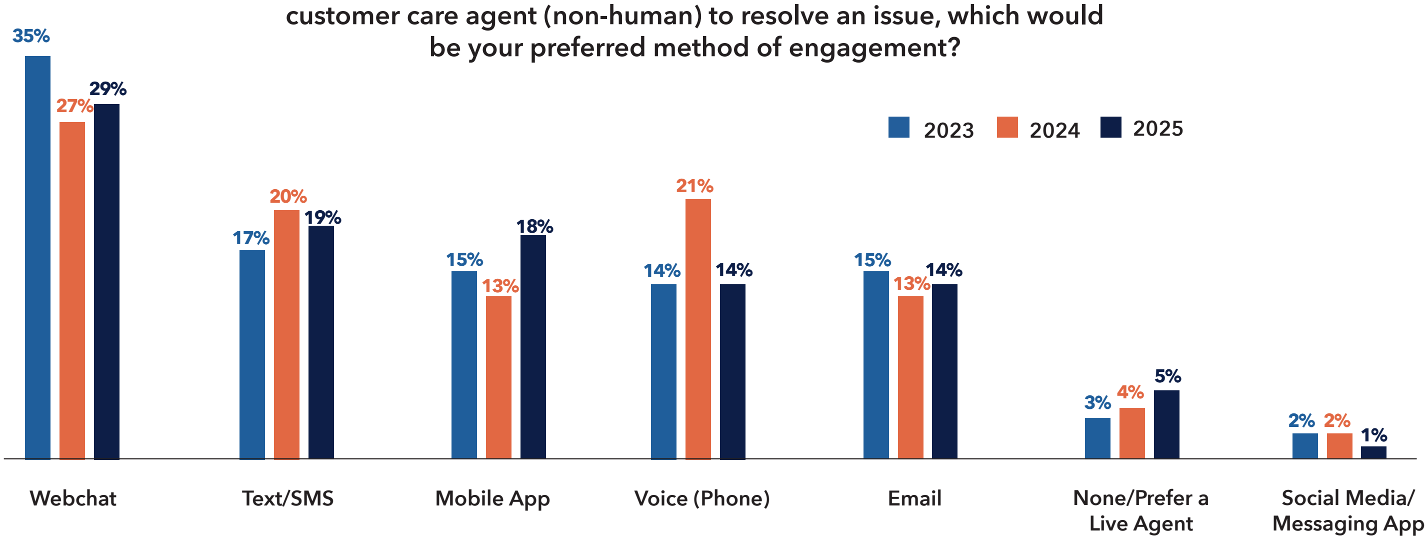
What's your biggest concern with companies increasingly relying on AI solutions for customer care?



SOLUTION PREFERENCE AND FUTURE IMPACT

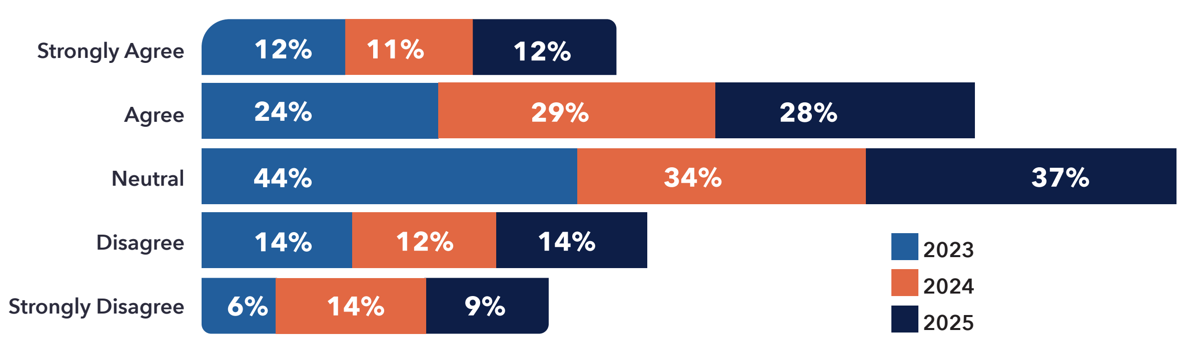
Webchat continues to be the most preferred channel among consumers when engaging with an AI-powered solution to resolve a customer care issue. Consumers also strongly favor Text/SMS and Mobile App, while Voice (Phone) has retreated significantly YoY. These preferences are likely based on personal preference, which is largely shaped by previous experiences. Since not all solutions are as widely available, consumers may have some bias in their preferences due to lack of exposure to certain solutions types. For instance, the *2025 CX Leaders Trends & Insights: Corporate Edition* indicates that only about nine percent of companies offer an AI-powered Text/SMS solution. This likely has a dampening effect on exposure which, in turn, likely reduces overall preference for such a solution. As more types of solutions become available, and consumers gain in experience, these preferences are likely to shift.

If you had to engage with an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered customer care agent (non-human) to resolve an issue, which would be your preferred method of engagement?



Consumers tend to be net-positive on the overall impact of AI on CX, with 40% of consumers saying they either "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" that AI-powered tools and solutions will greatly benefit their customer care interactions in the future. This compares with 23% of consumers who either "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree." This is good news given how quickly the technology is evolving and growing in capability and accuracy.

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: AI-powered tools and solutions will greatly benefit my customer care interactions with brands in the future.



CONSUMER EXPERIENCES — **CONCLUSIONS**

The shift in consumer behavior toward Text-Based solutions (such as Email, Online Chat, and SMS) continues at a steady pace, while the use of Voice-Based solutions (like Phone and In-Person) continues to decline (page 14). This trend reflects broader shifts in communication preferences, especially among younger demographics who value convenience, speed, and the ability to multitask and have asynchronous interactions. In fact, age remains a decisive factor, with consumers over age 60 maintaining a strong preference for voice channels and direct connections with live representatives over the use of chatbots and self-help solutions. For organizations, this generational divide underscores the importance of offering a balanced, omnichannel approach that accommodates varying customer preferences without forcing adoption of one channel over another.

Self-help usage has surged year-over-year, with adoption growing from 55% to 78% (page 45), and resolution rates improving from 70% to 81% (page 46). While these are encouraging indicators for cost-efficient service models, the data also reveals a cautionary tale: more than half of consumers (52%) report "Always" or "Often" abandoning self-help solutions due to poor usability or inadequate problem resolution (page 46). This points to a critical gap — self-help can only be as effective as its design, clarity, and ability to handle complex issues. Companies that fail to address these shortcomings risk eroding trust in self-help tools and, by extension, in their overall brand experience.

Even with these improvements, consumers still overwhelmingly favor the assistance of a live advisor over self-help or AI-powered options. Easy and timely access to human support remains a primary concern for consumers, signaling that automation should be seen as an enhancement (not a replacement) for human interaction. Blending the efficiency of self-help with seamless escalation to live, empathetic support will be key in meeting customer expectations.

Ultimately, the findings on the previous pages highlight that while technology-driven solutions are gaining traction, they cannot stand alone. The future of customer care will require hybrid models integrating smart, intuitive self-service options with empathetic, skilled human agents, all tailored to the needs and preferences of diverse customer segments. Businesses that can strike this balance will be better positioned to drive both operational efficiency and customer loyalty.

CONSUMER
EXPERIENCES

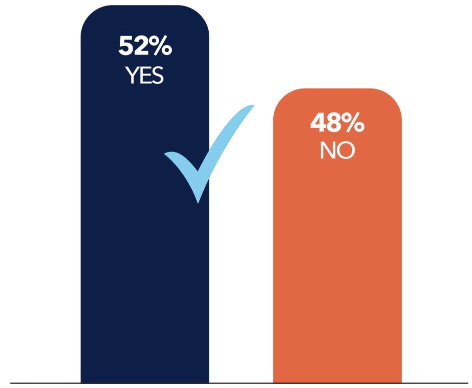
- » DEI
- » Opinions
- » Preferences
- » Views on Agents
- » Expectations

DEI

FELT EXCLUDED AND CURRENT ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY

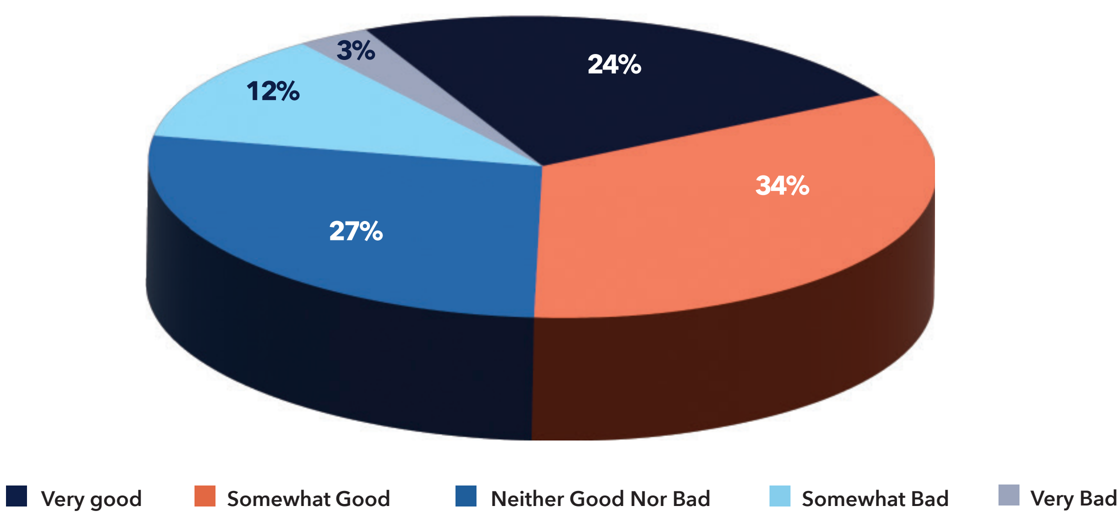
Do you feel you've ever been excluded, misunderstood, or mistreated by a company's customer support operations based on your identity (e.g., race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, etc.)?

In an entirely new area of study for the *CX Leaders Trends & Insights* series, consumers were asked several questions related to DEI, starting with whether they've ever felt excluded, misunderstood, or mistreated by a company's customer support operations. In a rather alarming result, more than half of consumers (52%) feel they have been treated poorly based solely on their identity.



Even with more than half of all consumers feeling mistreated based on identity, the net perception is that companies are generally doing a good job at making customer support inclusive of all types of people. While 58% of consumers think companies are doing a "Very Good" or "Somewhat Good" job at accessibility and inclusivity, only 15% think companies are doing a "Very Bad" or "Somewhat Bad" job of it. Brands should begin to understand accessibility and inclusivity as table stakes in building trust and loyalty among their customers.

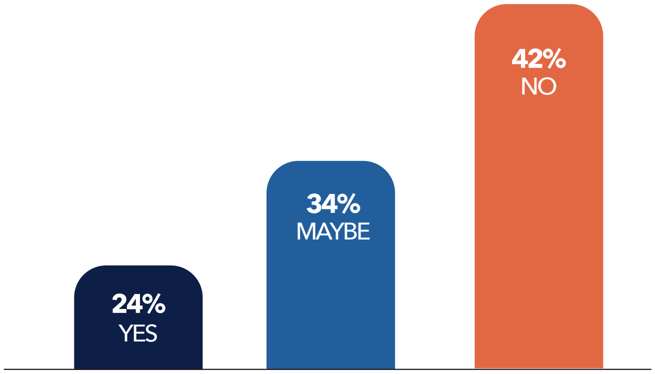
How are companies doing at making customer support accessible and inclusive for all types of people (e.g., non-English speakers, disabled customers, the elderly)?



IMPACT OF EXCLUSION

While it's unclear how many new customers are gained by having an agreeable public stance on DEI (page 60), what is clear is that mistreatment based on identity is an effective way to lose customers. In fact, 42% of consumers indicated that they would not purchase from a company ever again if they felt mistreated based on identity.

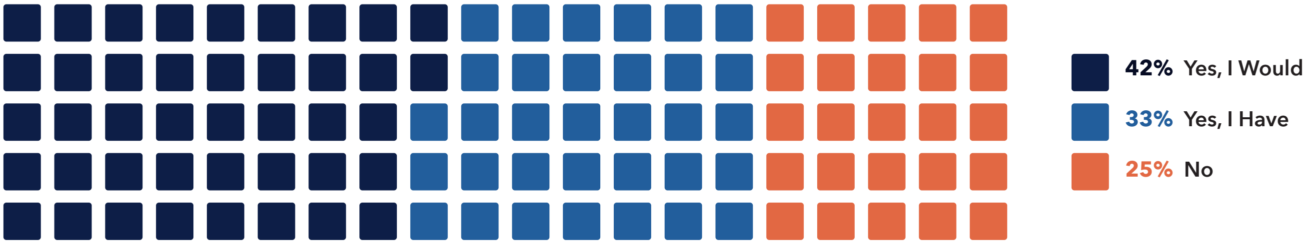
If you felt excluded, misunderstood, or mistreated by a company because of your identity, would you purchase or work with said company again?



IMPACT OF DEI POLICY

Just like losing business due to mistreatment of customers based on identity (previous page), companies are also at risk of losing revenue due to having disagreeable positions related to DEI. Not only have 42% of consumers indicated that they would avoid a business based on DEI, one-third (33%) have already done so. DEI is not just about internal hiring/promotion practices, brand identity, and the social contract. It's also about how individuals experience a brand throughout the process of being a customer.

Would you or have you ever avoided doing business with a company because you disagreed with their position on matters related to diversity, equity, and inclusion?



DEI looks to be a dealbreaker for many consumers. How does your organization approach the topic?

"Throughout its history, Costco has maintained a consistent culture and set of values. Our company Code of Ethics requires that we, first and foremost, obey the law, but also take care of our employees and members, and respect our vendors. Costco has never changed its approach or practices in order to suit current events or prevailing public attitudes. We've always sought to maintain a diverse and inclusive workplace in keeping with our values and code of ethics.

Diversity at Costco simply means that we will hire our employees from the communities in which we operate, so that our employee base reflects the diversity of our members. We also have regional buying offices across the country that allow the merchandise we offer and the suppliers we work with to also reflect what our members value in those regions.

We strive to have a welcoming and inclusive workplace where all employees have opportunities to succeed. We seek to hire great people, and we offer promotional opportunities to all qualified employees who are interested in advancement. These are not new concepts at Costco, but longstanding practices that we believe are not only important for attracting and retaining the best employees, but also critical for the company's success.

So, how does Costco approach DEI? By staying consistent, and by continuing to operate and treat our employees in the same manner that we have since our founding."

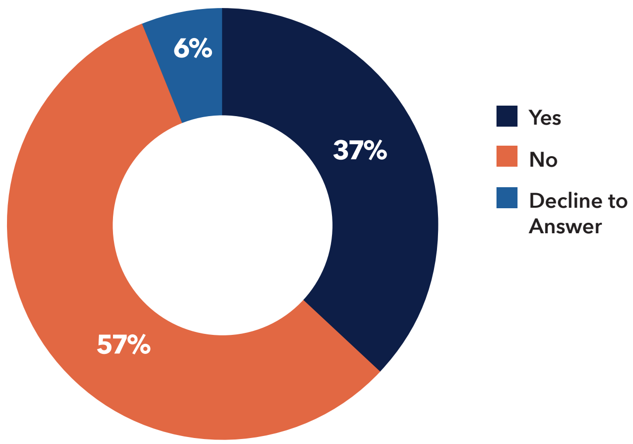
COSTCO WHOLESALE

Scott Jacobs
Vice President – Member Service Centers

PRESENCE OF DISABILITY AND IMPORTANCE OF FAIRNESS

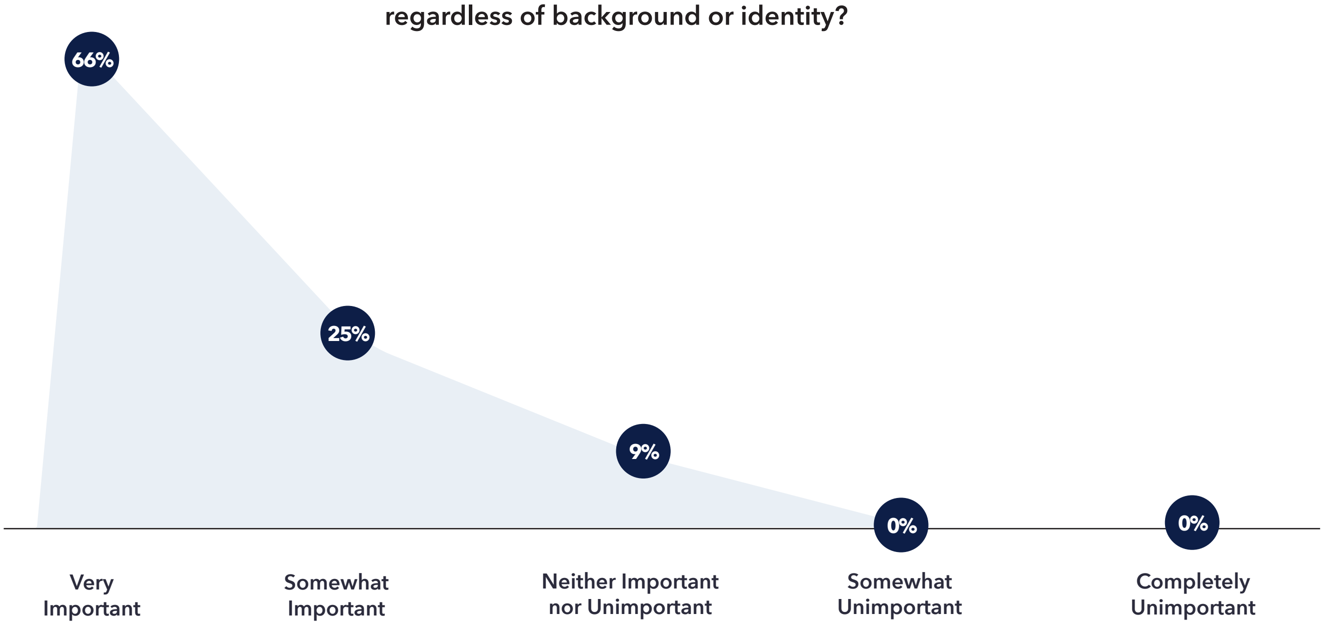
More than one-third (37%) of survey respondents indicated that they are in a household with one or more individuals living with a condition that requires special assistance. This number speaks to the importance of accessibility. Crucially, accessibility is not just about what happens upstream in winning a new customers. It's also about what options a customer has should something go wrong.

Are you or anyone in your household living with a disability or other condition that might require special assistance when working with a brand to resolve a customer support issue?



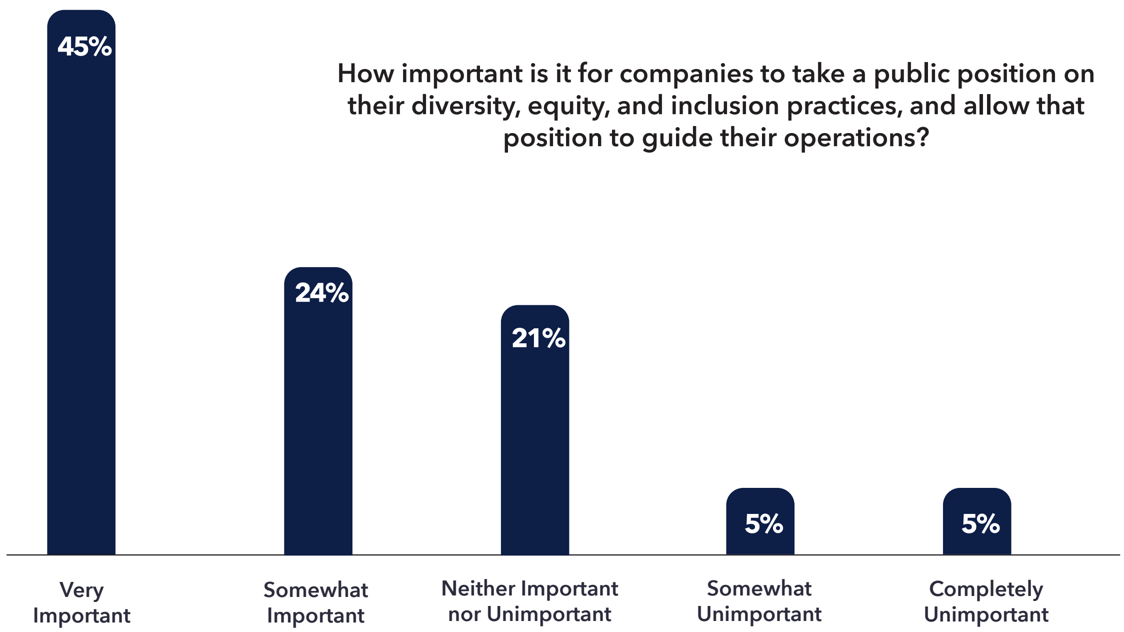
The "E" in DEI, Equity, is most easily defined as "fair treatment." Fair treatment is of major concern to consumers, with 66% describing the importance of fairness (regardless of identity) as "Very Important." Fairness between company and customer starts with the policies that are in place. But, fairness is also impacted by process and practice. Customer journey mapping shouldn't just be about making sure tools work and hand-offs go as planned. It should also be about ensuring there are no biases in outcomes.

How important is it to you that companies treat all customers fairly, regardless of background or identity?

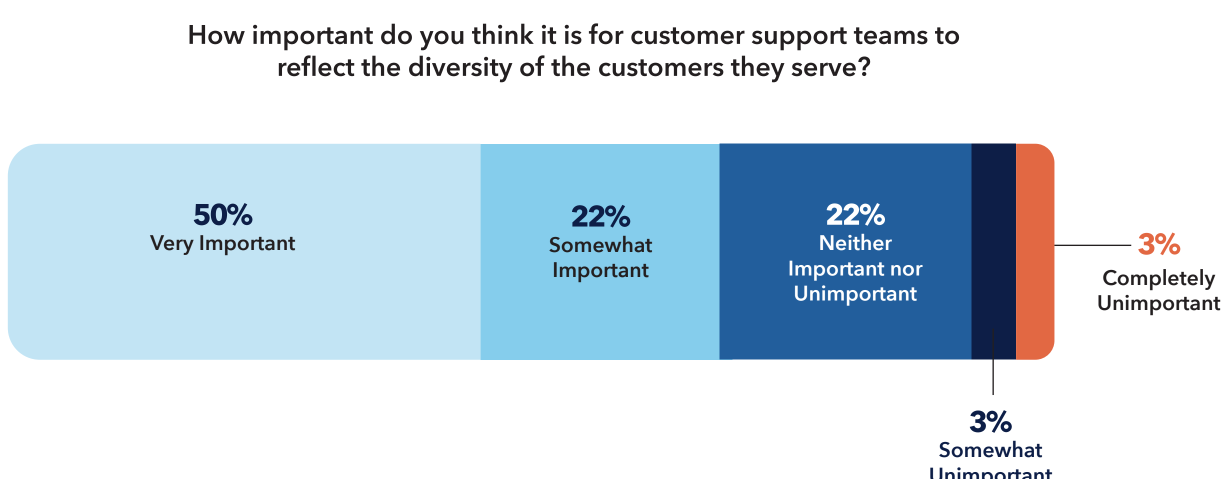


IMPORTANCE OF DEI AND WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

Society (American society, in particular) has undergone significant political and cultural change in recent years. This change impacts individuals, not just as citizens, but also as consumers and customers. This tumult has helped refocus on what matters most. For many, this means thinking about who we associate with and how we treat each other. This extends to companies in a way it had not previously. It should come as no surprise, then, that 69% of survey respondents feel it "Very Important" or "Somewhat Important" for companies to take a public position on DEI and let that position guide its actions.



Like results above, most consumers (72%) think it's important for customer support teams to reflect the diversity of the customers they serve. This perceived importance likely goes beyond things like clear communication (engaging with a native language speaker), expanding into a deeper need for fairness and a desire for deeper relatability with the companies with which we do business. At the end of the day, commerce is as much about relationship building as it is about completing a transaction.

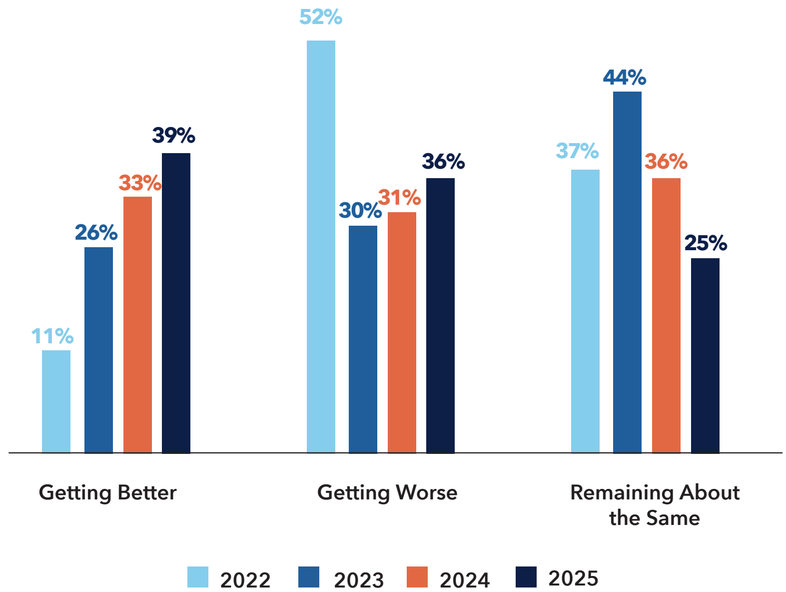


OPINIONS

BETTER OR WORSE, EASIER OR MORE DIFFICULT

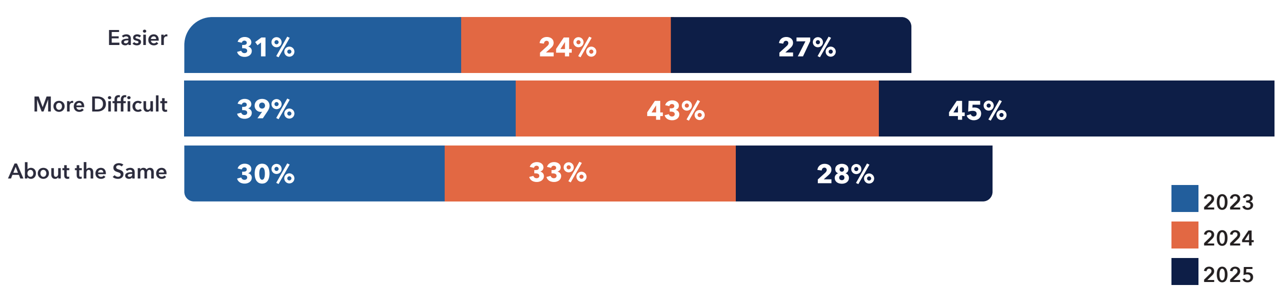
Consumer opinion toward overall customer care quality continues to improve, albeit slowly, with 39% indicating companies are generally getting better at care, compared to 36% who think companies are getting worse. This represents the biggest lead the "Betters" have had over the "Worses" since this question was first asked in 2021. In part, this is likely due to this question being first asked in the heart of a pandemic that strained customer care service. But, it's also likely due to greater enablement of solutions, improvement in technology (AI, specifically), and a greater focus on customer needs.

In general, do you think that companies are getting better or worse at providing good customer care?



Like results elsewhere in this report, age influenced how consumers responded to the below question, with only 10% of those ages 60 years and older indicating resolving issues has gotten easier, while 40% of those ages 18 to 29 indicated the same. This difference according to age is likely due to the introduction of more self-help and AI-powered solutions and fewer options for live, human-to-human care (something widely favored by older consumers). While companies can't and shouldn't roll back their innovations, many of which better serve the majority of their customers, instead, brands should seek to identify which mix of service solutions works best with their specific customer base.

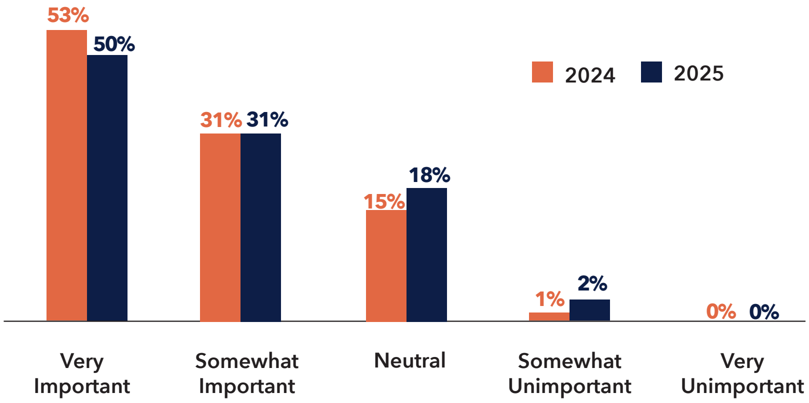
Do you feel that resolving customer care issues with brands has gotten easier or more difficult in recent years?



IMPORTANCE OF THE INFLUENCE OF CARE

Consumers continue to feel strongly about the idea of customer care and CX having influence within brands. When care and CX have a seat at the table, there's a great chance of prioritizing customer needs as companies develop their business strategies and plans. Care and CX also have a wealth of customer data, and having influence throughout an organization provides an outlet for sharing valuable customer insights.

How important is it for customer care and customer experience organizations to have influence within a company?



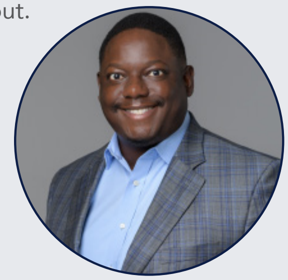
Consumers clearly see the importance of CX. How is care positioned within your organization, and how do you promote its influence?

"Customer care stands as a cornerstone in our organization, shaping every aspect of our strategy, sales and operations. We prioritize attentive listening to customer feedback through diverse channels — surveys, complaints, social media, and insights from colleagues — to understand in real time what matters most to our customers. This agile, focused approach informs our decisions and ensures our actions resonate with evolving needs.

Looking forward, our vision is to transform customer care into a proactive, strategic driver of innovation and long-term success. We are committed to empowering every team member as a champion for the customer, investing in ongoing training and fostering a culture where ownership of the customer experience is celebrated and expected.

To stay ahead, we are uplifting our technology capabilities to anticipate needs and deliver seamless, personalized interactions at every customer touch point. By continually expanding our listening posts and acting swiftly on feedback, we aim not just to resolve issues, but to shape our processes based on direct customer input.

Celebrating customer successes will remain integral to our culture, reinforcing care as a shared value and source of inspiration. Our goal is to set new standards by embedding customer care into product strategy, technology, sales, and operations — ensuring that, no matter their point of contact, customers experience a consistently connected and positive journey with us. Through this forward-thinking commitment, we aspire to redefine what it means to put the customer at the heart of everything we do and cement its influence on how we operate."

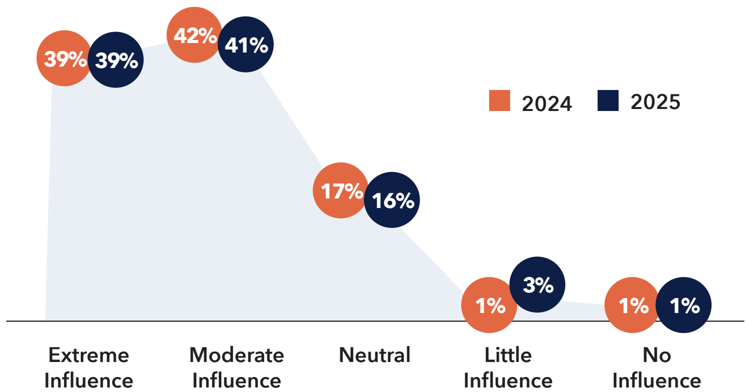


Kudzaishe Mugara
Head of Retail Lending Operations & Servicing

INFLUENCE OF CARE AND IMPORTANCE OF IMPROVING CX

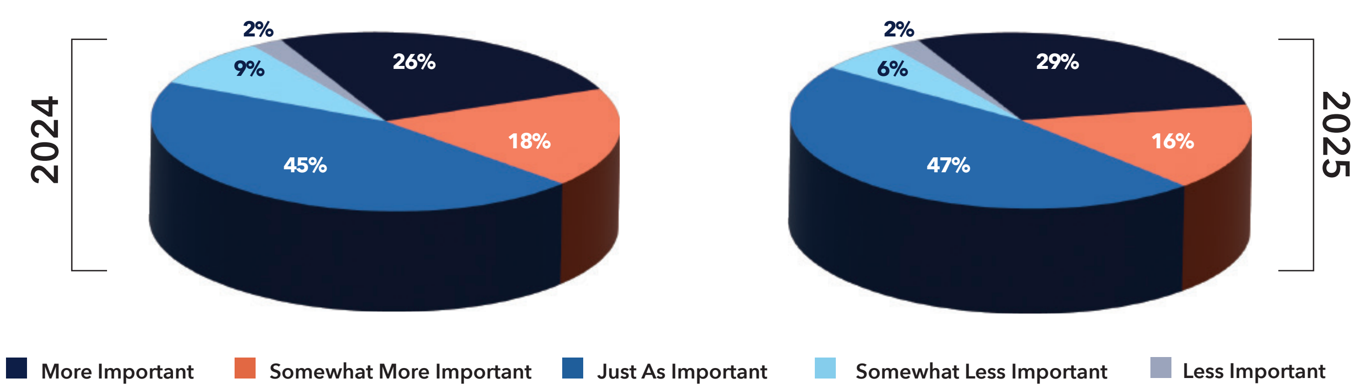
Not only do the vast majority of consumers think care and CX should have influence at companies, they think that influence should be strong. In fact, 39% of consumers think that influence should be "Extreme" … another way of saying almost two of every five consumers think companies should essentially be led by their care organizations.

How much influence do you think customer experience and the customer care organization should have within a company?



Only eight percent of survey respondents felt improving CX was less important than other priorities like product improvements and reducing costs, while 45% felt it was "More Important" or "Somewhat More Important." Based on these results and the one above, it's clear that the customer experience is top of mind for consumers. CX is a business-critical function, too, as a positive experience boosts loyalty (page 19), drives incremental revenue, and builds advocacy for a brand thanks to word of mouth (page 33).

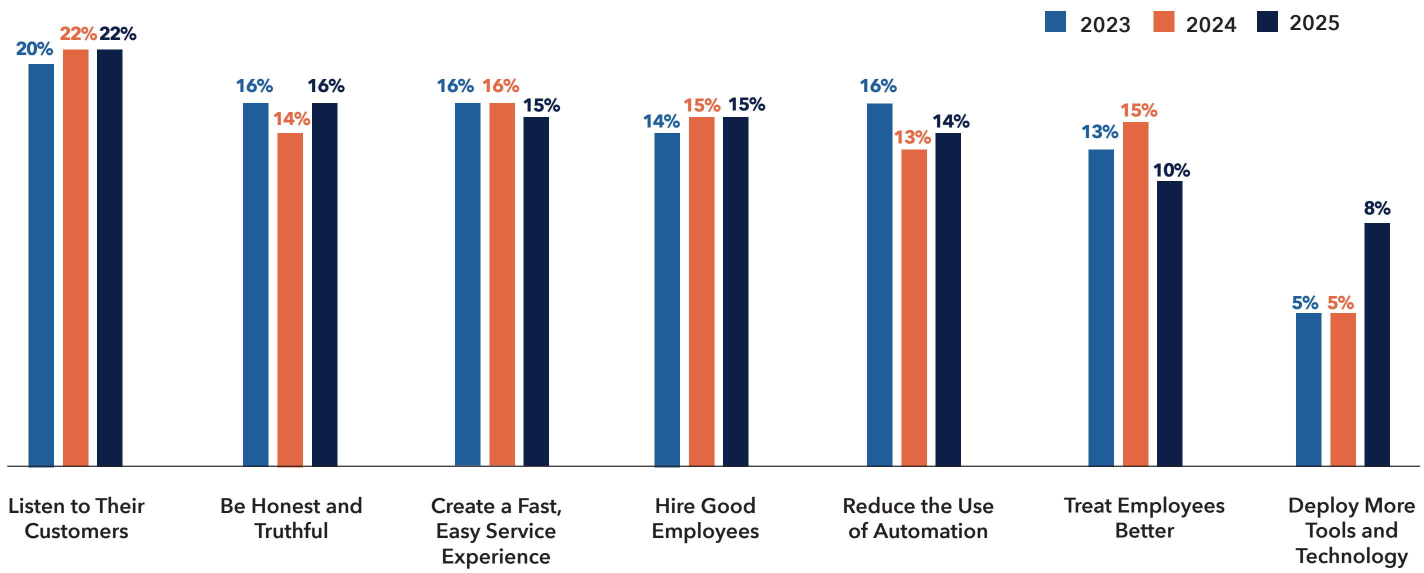
How important is it for a company to focus its resources and energies on improving the customer experience versus other priorities like product improvements and cost reductions?



CREATING AN EXCEPTIONAL EXPERIENCE AND PAYING MORE FOR IT

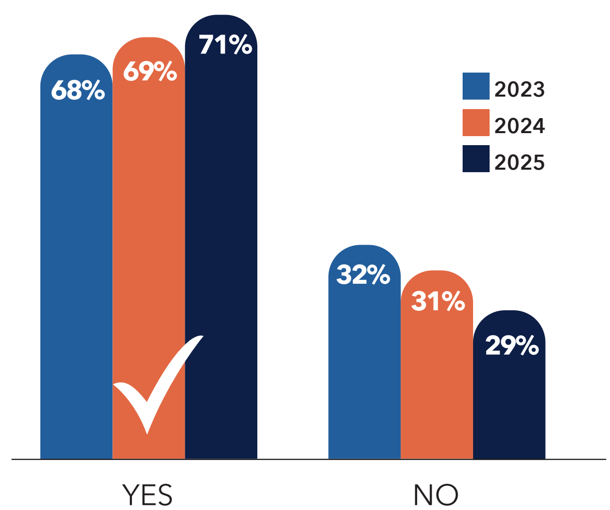
For the third year in a row, consumers point to "Listen to Their Customers" as the top thing companies need to do right to create an exceptional customer care experience. Listening to one's customers isn't just about active surveying. It's about using all Voice of the Customer data that generated across contact points, aggregating this data, and creating useful, actionable outputs that get in front of the right individuals to drive real and meaningful change.

What do companies need to do right in order to create an exceptional customer care experience?



Would you be willing to pay a little more for a product or a service if it meant you'd get world-class customer care support?

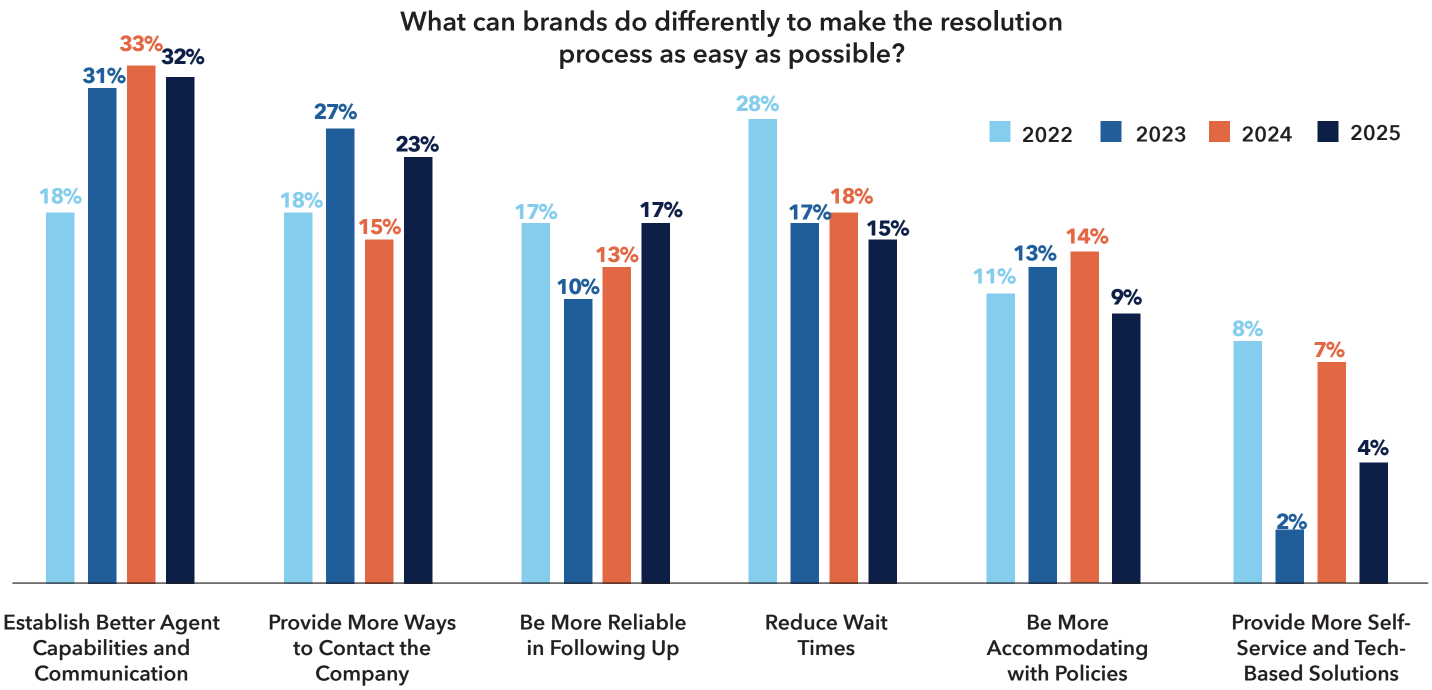
More than two-thirds of consumers (71%) continue to indicate they'd be willing to pay a little more for a product or service if it meant world-class customer care. So not only are consumers willing to express the importance of CX (page 20), they are also willing to put their money where their mouth is. This is a result that should give Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) pause as they decide how to allocate funding and spend across the organization.



CONSUMER PERSPECTIVES — OPINIONS

CREATING AN EASIER PROCESS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONALIZATION

As seen elsewhere in this report, consumers prefer working with live agents over self-help solutions (page 50). Furthermore, they want those agents to have better skills (especially when it comes to communication). Considering that 23% of survey respondents think it would make the resolution easier if brands "Provide More Ways to Contact the Company," yet only four percent indicate "Provide More Self-Service and Tech-Base Solutions," it's clear that consumers are human-focused in their desire for new avenues to connect with companies to resolve customer care issues.



In the second year of asking about personalization, consumers continue to express a high level of importance of personalized experiences. Interestingly, there is a strong correlative relationship between age and how consumers feel about the importance of personalization.

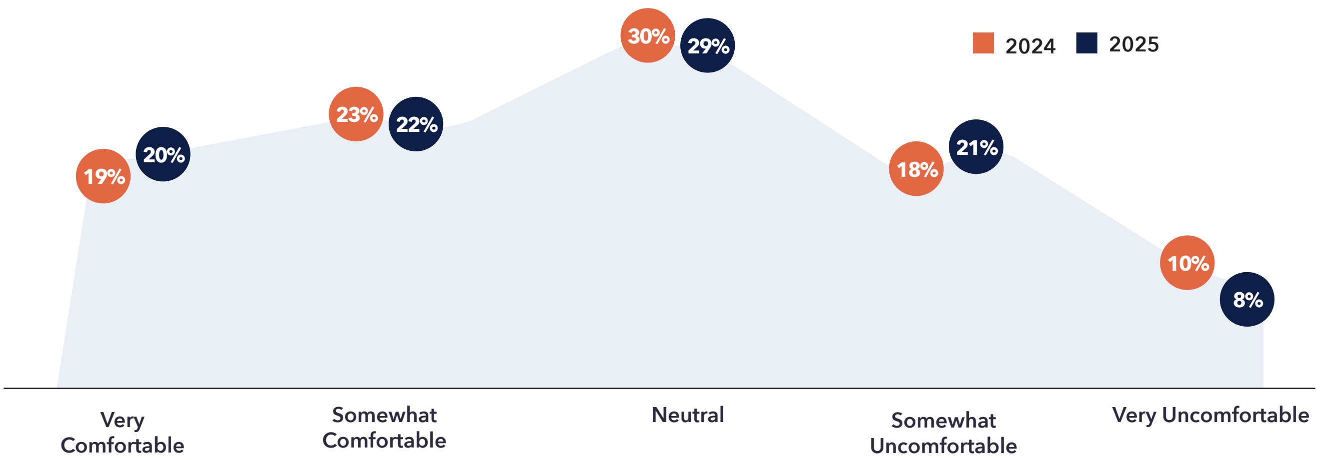
Below is the percentage of survey respondents who indicated "Very Important" (by age group):

Ages 18-29: **28%**
Ages 30-44: **34%**
Ages 45-60: **55%**
Ages 60+: **60%**

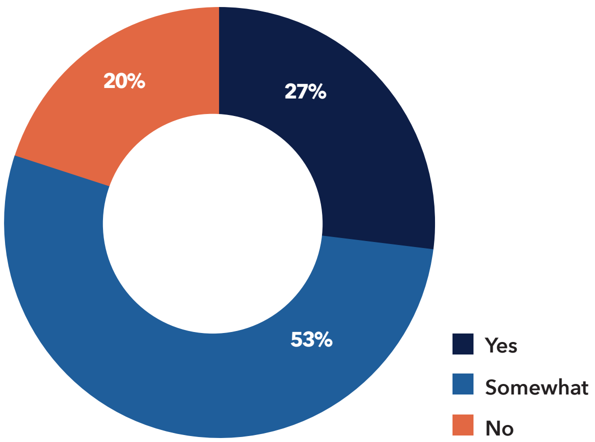
USING DEMOGRAPHICS AND DATA TRANSPARENCY

Although older consumers are more likely to say personalized care experiences are important (page 68), they are also more likely to be uncomfortable with brands using demographics for such purposes. Forty-nine percent of consumers ages 60 years and older indicated they were either "Somewhat Uncomfortable" or "Very Uncomfortable" in responding to the below question compared to 34% of those ages 18 to 29, 27% of those ages 30 to 44, and 14% of those ages 45 to 60. This is an interesting perspective, and perhaps a difficult challenge for brands who are eager to craft personalized experiences for their customers.

How do you feel about brands using demographics (like age or income) to personalize customer care experiences?



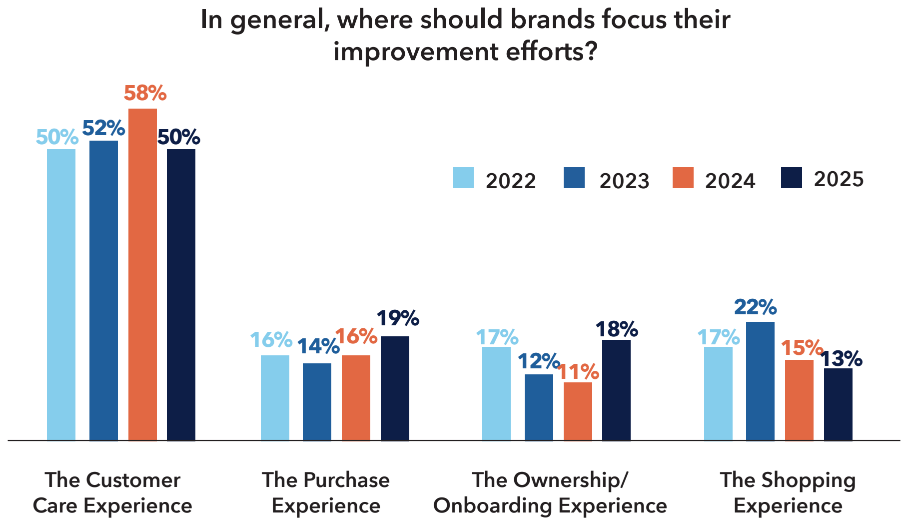
Are companies transparent about how your personal data is collected and used during your customer interactions?



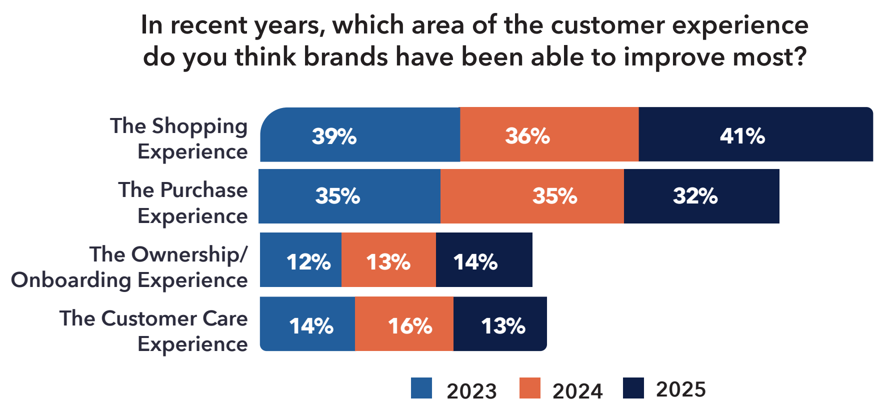
Given the impact of age on the results above, it should come as no surprise that those ages 45 to 60 (GenX) feel mostly strongly that companies are doing a good job of being transparent in how personal data is collected and used. The age group that was most likely to feel companies were not being transparent about personal data were those ages 60 years and older, 31% of which responded "No."

WHERE TO FOCUS IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

Much like in years past, "The Customer Care Experience" is the area of most focus for consumers. This speaks to how important it is for brands to invest in their care operations, understanding that care impacts the overall customer experience in a unique way. Brand opinion is often shaped in that critical moment when things don't go as planned. How a company responds in those moments can either win a customer for life or lose them forever.



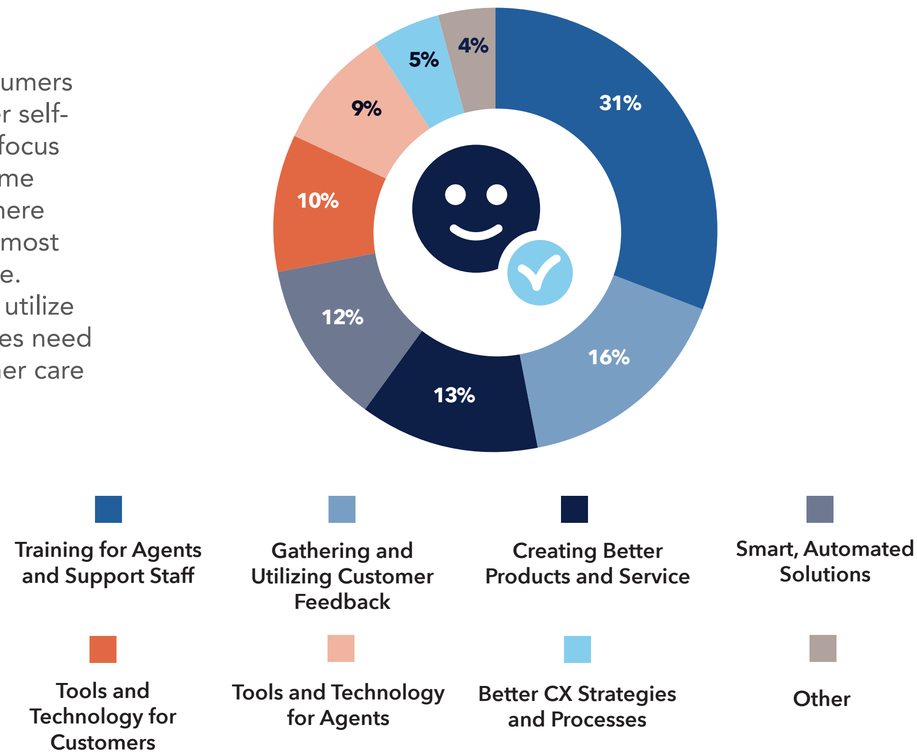
Although consumers point to "The Customer Care Experience" as the area most worthy of focus, "The Shopping Experience" and the "The Purchase Experience" are the two areas where the most improvement has occurred in recent years. Conversely, few consumers (13%) think the biggest improvement gains have occurred around "The Customer Care Experience." Brands should seek to understand why this perception exists and think about how customer care innovations are positioned to customers and consumers in general.



WHERE TO INVEST AND THE IMPACT OF INNOVATION

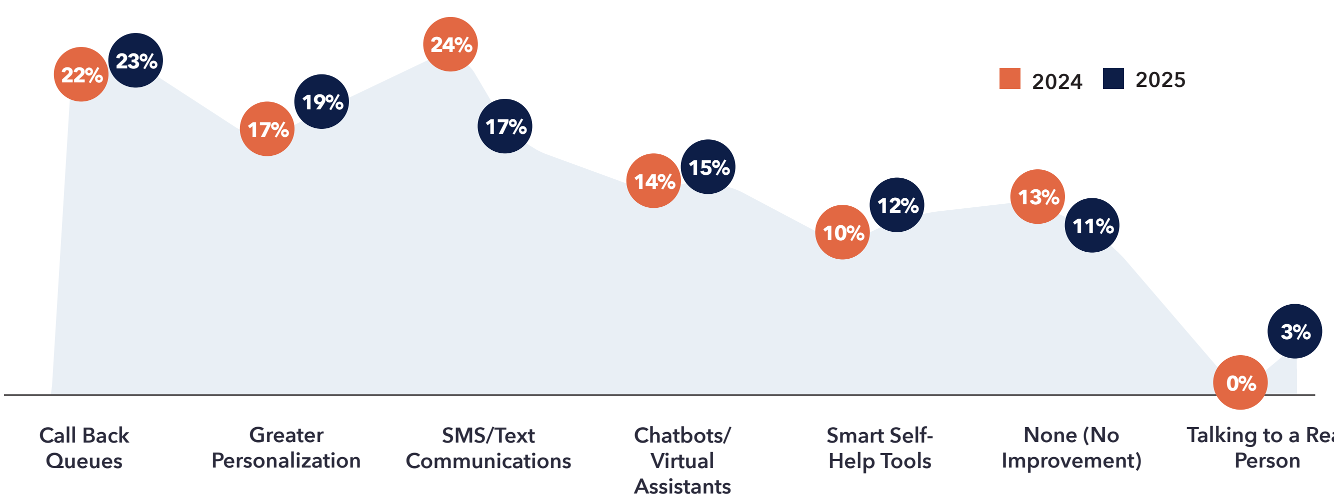
As expressed elsewhere in this report, consumers mostly want to interact with live agents over self-help and AI, and most also want brands to focus on agent quality (page 51). So, it should come as no surprise that agents top the list on where consumers think company investments can most effectively improve the customer experience. Consumers also want brands to gather and utilize customer feedback, echoing what companies need to do right to create an exceptional customer care experience (i.e., Listen to Their Customers).

In your opinion, what is the single most important area of investment for effectively improving the customer experience?



In the second year of asking the question below, consumers continue to point to Call Back Queues, Greater Personalization, and SMS/Text as the most impactful in improving the customer care experience in recent years. Again, age played a role, with older consumers (60 years and older) most appreciating Call Back Queues (29%) and Greater Personalization (24%), while those ages 18 to 29 were most appreciative of Chatbots/Virtual Assistants (21%).

Which of these customer care innovations has most improved your customer care experiences in recent years?

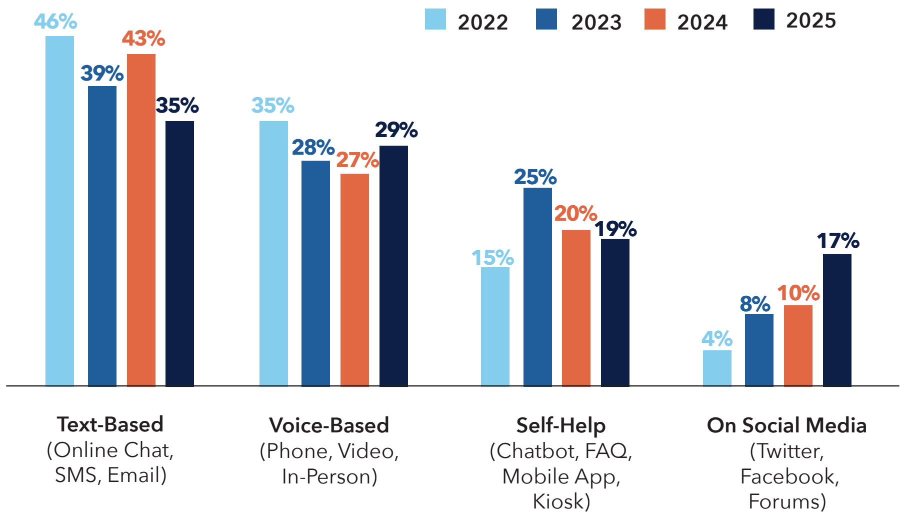


PREFERENCES

CHANNEL PREFERENCES AND FACTORS OF DETERMINATION

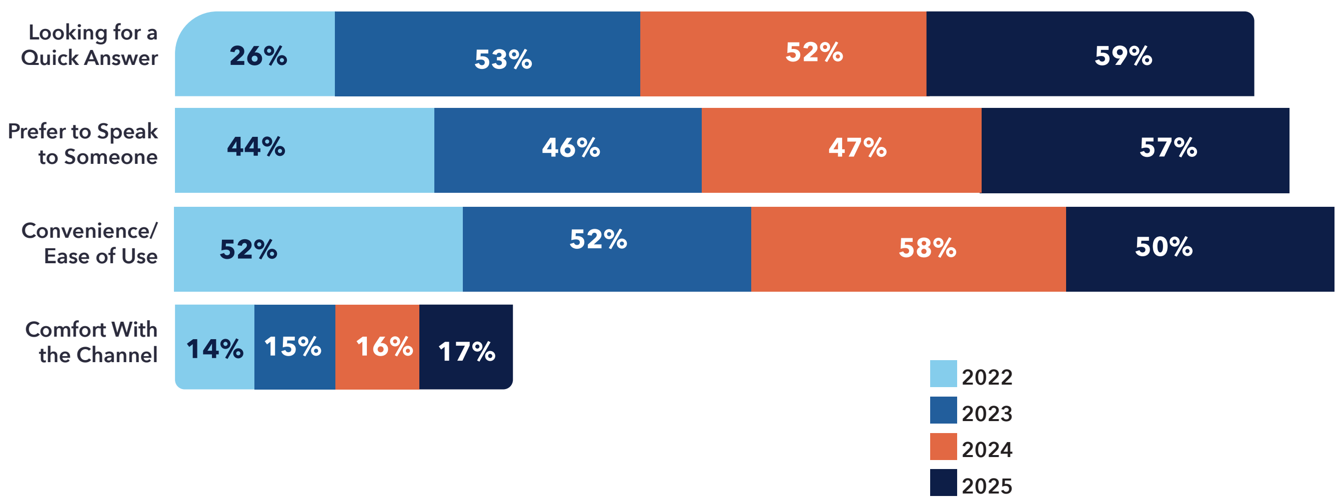
Text-Based solutions, such as online chat and SMS, continue to lead the way in consumer preferences, doing so for the fifth year in a row (back to 2021 when the question was first asked). As one might imagine, age was strongly associated with 61% of those ages 60 years and older preferring Voice-Based solutions compared to an average of 24% preferring Voice-Based solutions among all other age groups.

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



Consumers continue to prefer their channel of care based on a balanced variety of reasons, namely, speed, ease, and the ability to speak with a live person. But as demonstrated on the next page, these preferences are highly swayed by the complexity of the issue being handled. As one might expect, a factor like "Prefer to Speak to Someone" increases in importance as an issue becomes more complex. Brands should consider the complexity of their average issue (as well as the age demographics of their customers) when trying to understand which channel offerings are optimal.

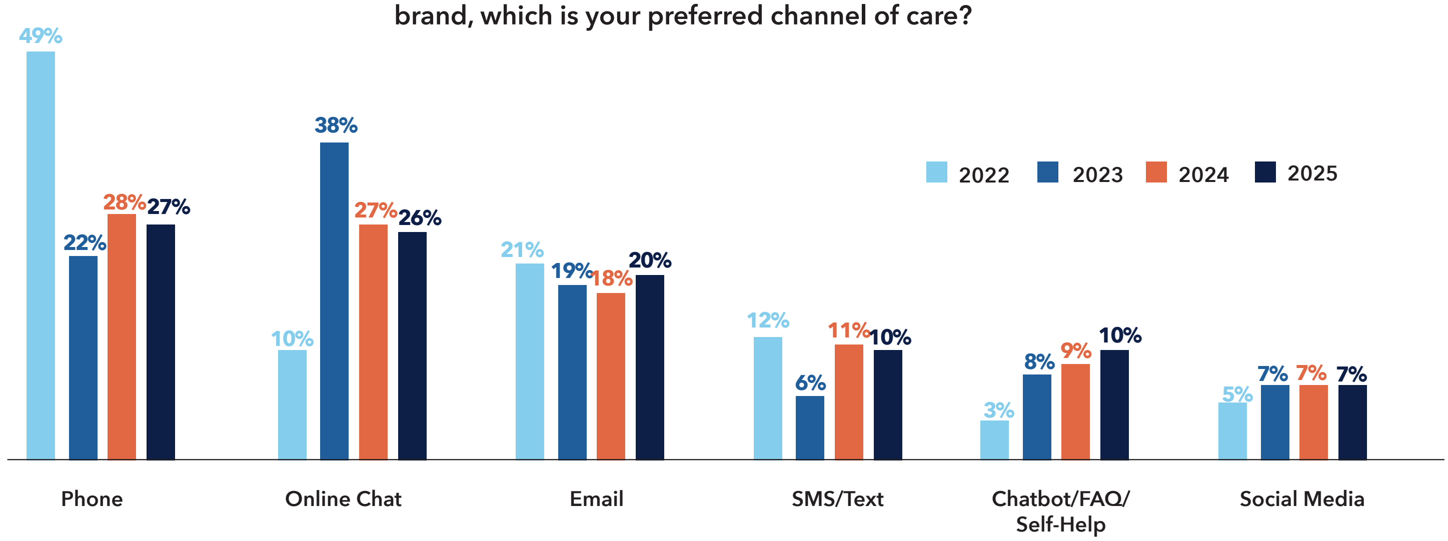
What are the biggest factors in determining your preferred channel of care? (Select all that apply.)



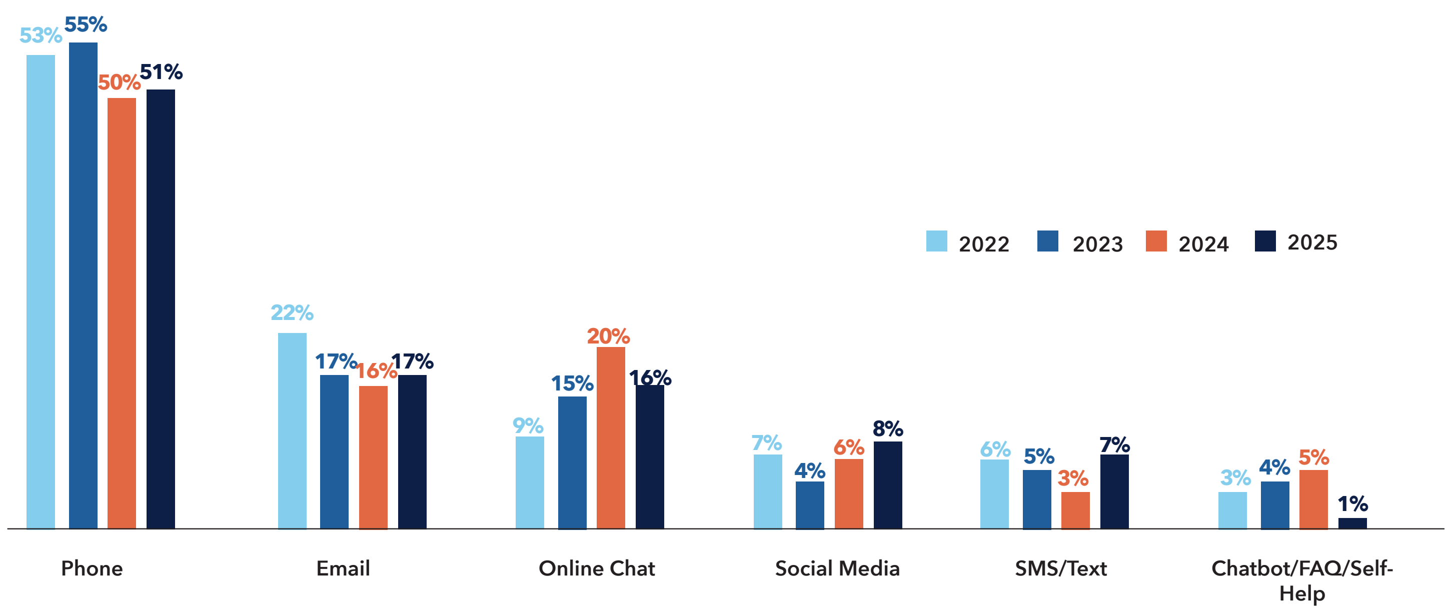
CHANNEL PREFERENCES BASED ON COMPLEXITY

Consumers have held onto their preferential shift away from Phone when it comes to simple customer care transactions, preferring Phone about as much as they prefer Online Chat or Email. Yet when issues are complex, a slight majority of consumers continue to strongly prefer Phone over all other channels of care, with Online Chat and Email distant seconds. At the same time, very few consumers (one percent) prefer a chatbot or other self-help tool when trying to resolve a complex issue, revealing how consumers feel about the ability of such tools to resolve complex issues. A brand should consider the complexity of the issues it typically handles when considering how and why it might deploy self-help solutions, as well as how it handles proving customers access to live agents. In other words, the more complex the average issue, the easier it should be for customers to get ahold of a live agent.

If you had a SIMPLE, transactional customer care issue to resolve with a brand, which is your preferred channel of care?



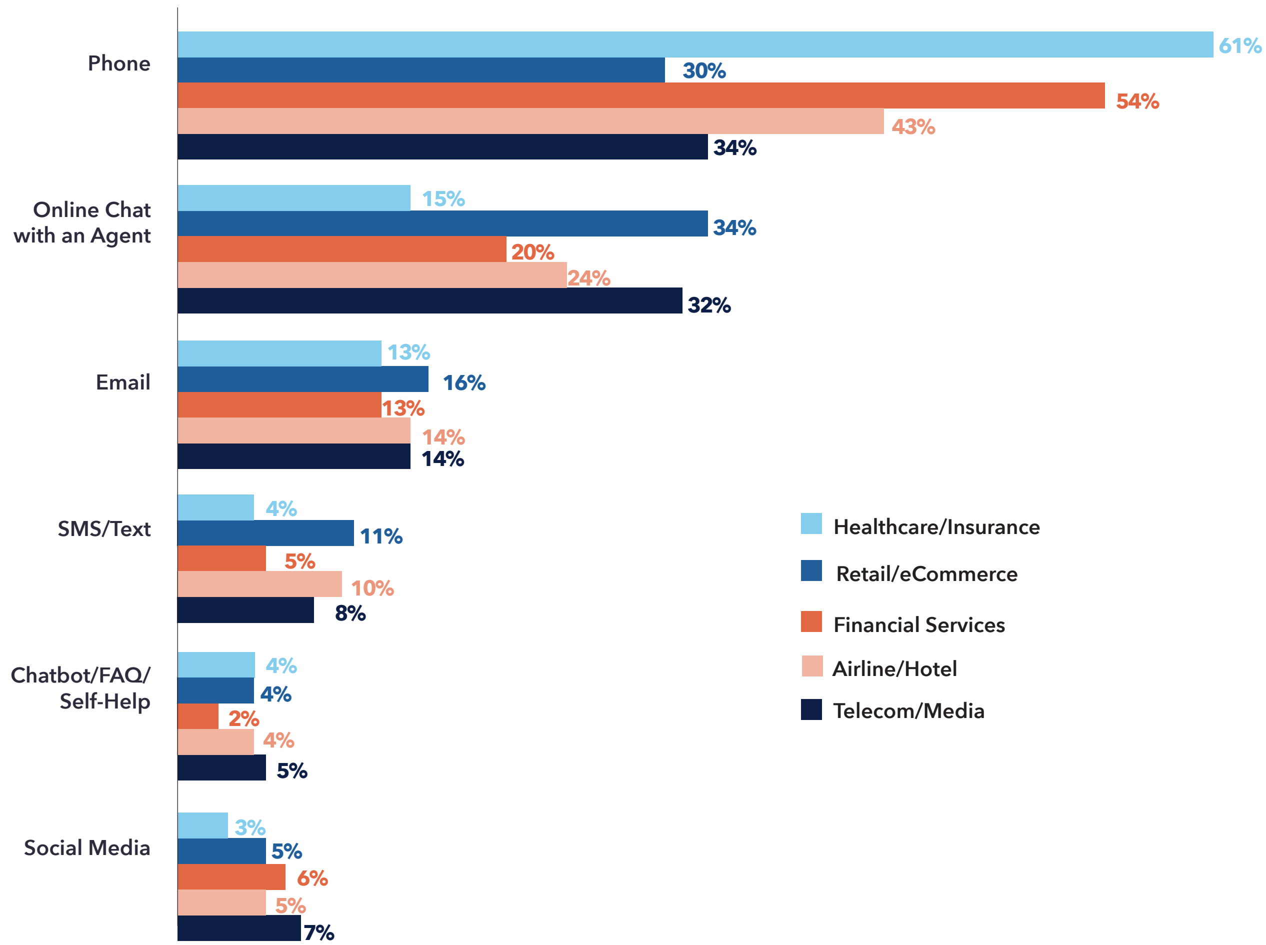
If you had a COMPLEX, transactional customer care issue to resolve with a brand, which is your preferred channel of care?



CHANNEL PREFERENCES BASED ON INDUSTRY

In a new question for 2025, consumers were asked to identify their channel preferences based on industry (independent of complexity). As might be predicted from previous results that show issue complexity drives channel preference (page 74), the desire for Phone is highest for industries where issues are most likely to be complex and critical, like Healthcare/Insurance, Financial Services, and Airline/Hotel. Meanwhile, retail customers are slightly more likely to prefer Online Chat versus Phone, probably because interactions are less likely to be complex and more likely to be simple and transactional in nature.

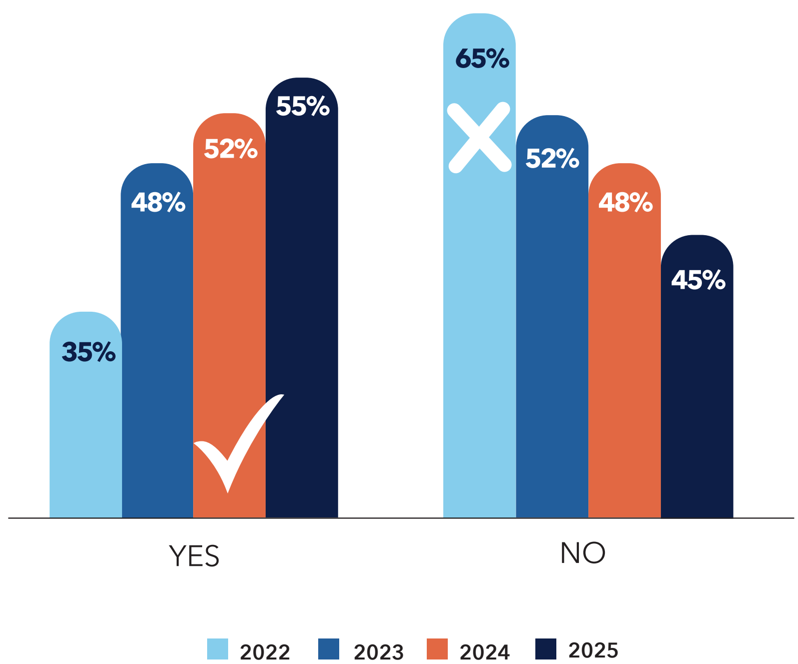
When working with a brand in each of the listed industries, which channel would you most prefer to communicate in?



CHANGES IN CHANNEL PREFERENCES AND CAUSE

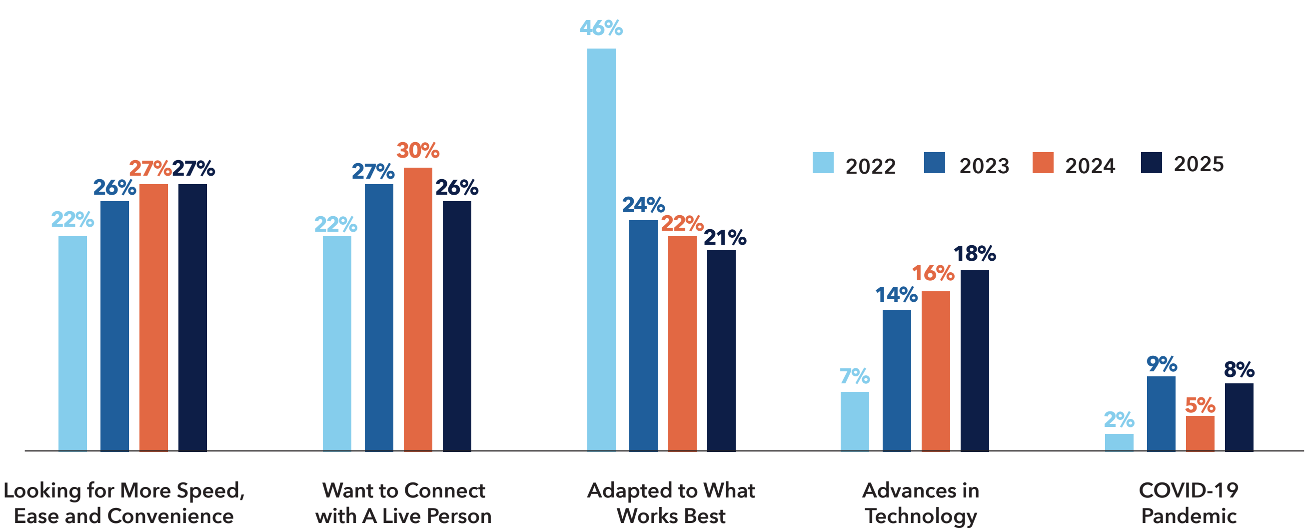
The likelihood of changes in contact preferences among consumers continued to advance in 2025, with 55% of survey respondents indicating a change in preference in recent years. This is the highest response in the affirmative since the question was first asked in 2018, highlighting the increased availability of new channels, and the higher rates of effectiveness and adoption of emerging channels of care.

Has your preferred contact method changed in recent years?



While speed and convenience led the way as a cause of changes in contact preferences, wanting to connect with a live person and consumers' ability to adopt to what works best also factored large. Among all age groups, save those ages 60 years and older, "Looking for More Speed, Ease, and Convenience" was the primary driver of change. For those ages 60 years and older, "Want to Connect With a Live Person" was the primary driver of change, selected by 42% of the cohort.

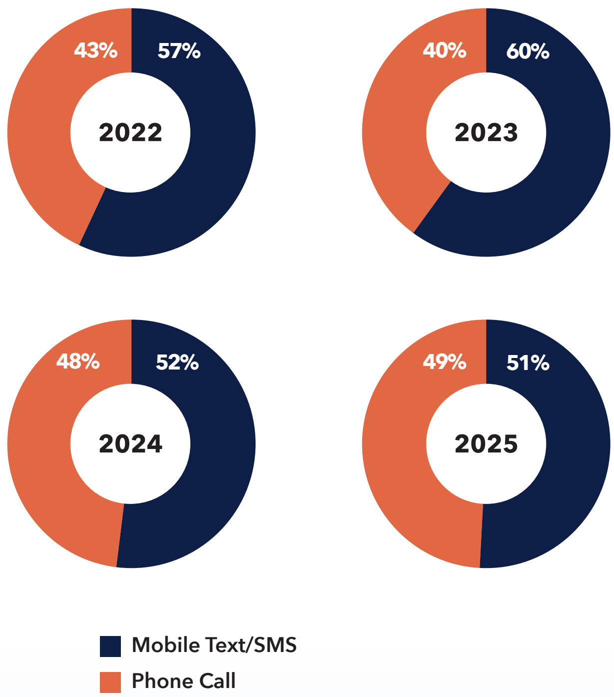
What caused your preferred contact method to change?



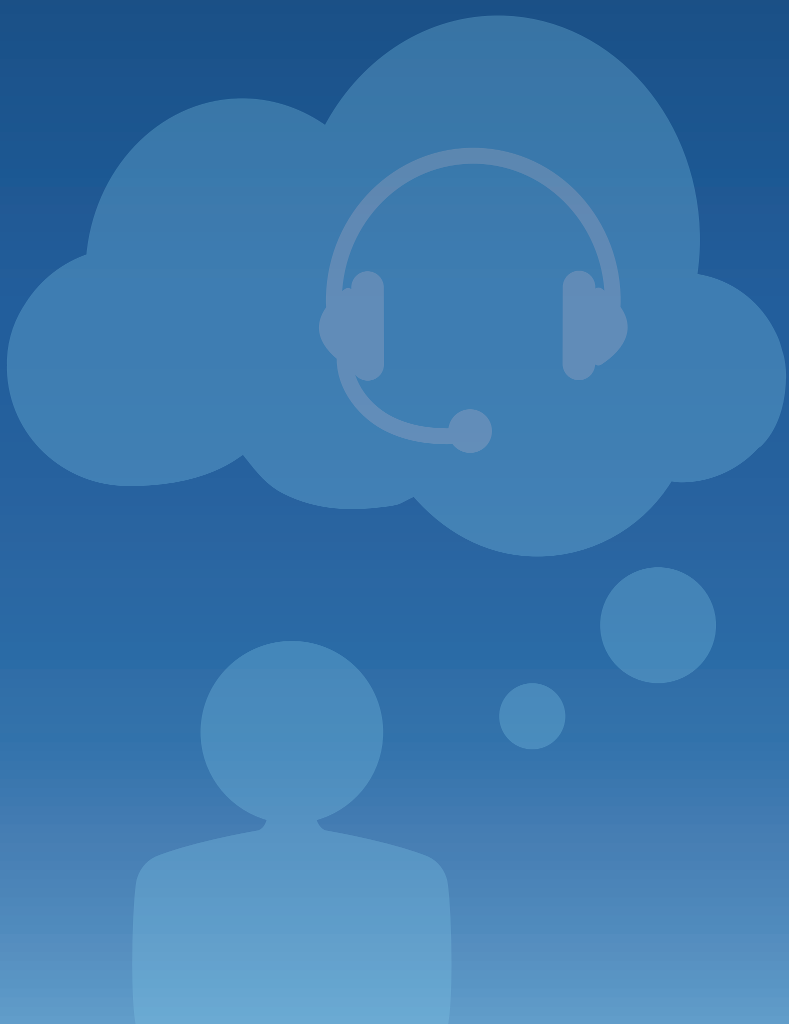
MOBILE DEVICE INTERACTION PREFERENCES

When consumers were asked whether they'd prefer to call or text when attempting to interact with a brand's customer care team, most (56%) of those ages 45 years and older preferred to interact by Phone. At the same time, 57% of those ages 18 to 44 years preferred to Text. This result drives home the idea that brands truly need to understand the demographics and preferences of their specific customers when deciding which channel mix is optimal. They may also want to consider offering personalized solutions based on the demographical information on a customer-by-customer basis.

If you knew your issue would be resolved easily and to your satisfaction, which method would you prefer when interacting with a brand's customer care team?



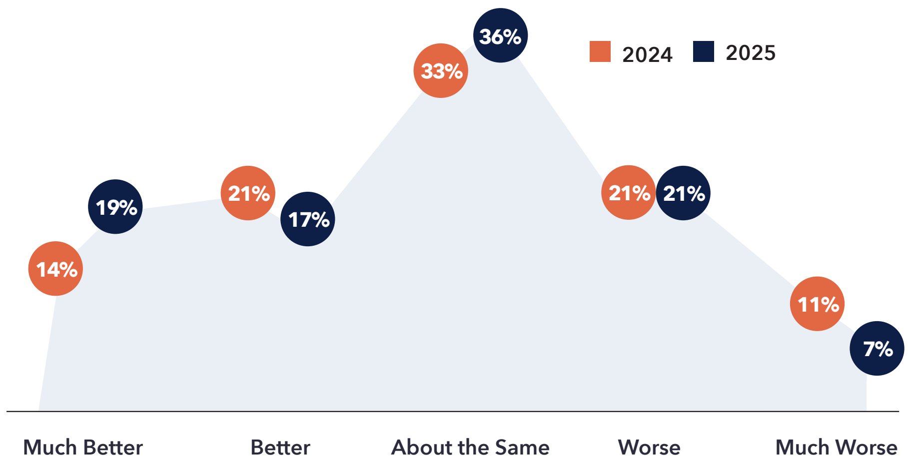
VIEWS ON AGENTS



BETTER OR WORSE AND WHAT'S IMPORTANT

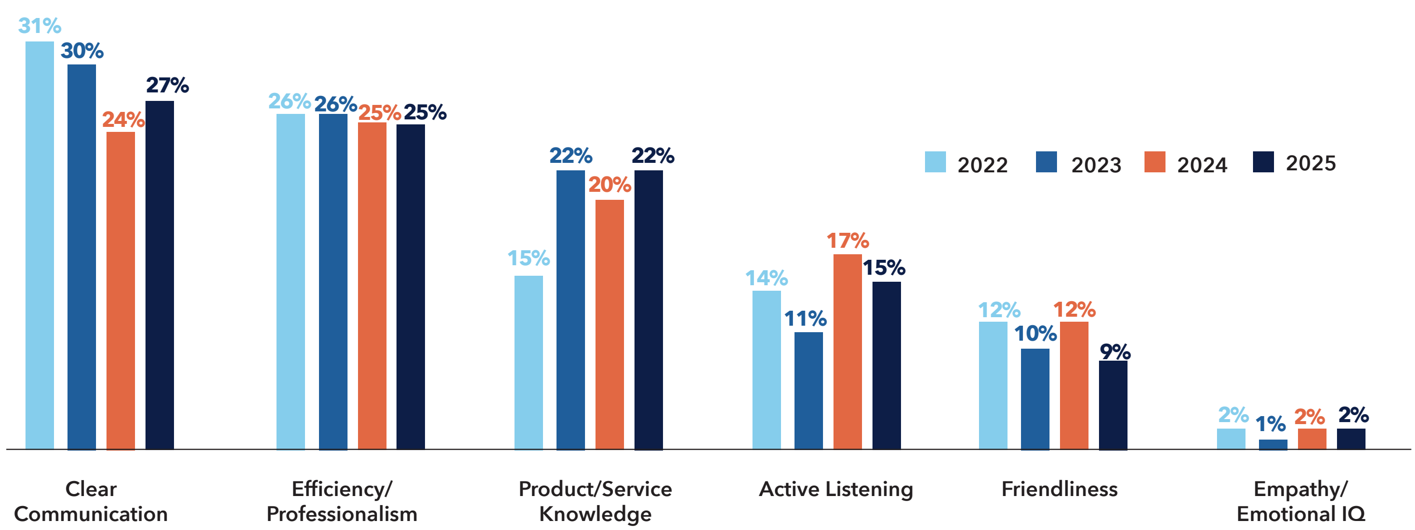
Consumer opinions on agent performance improved slightly in the second year of asking the question at right. There was a five-point lift in the percentage of consumers who said agents are getting "Much Better," as well as a four-point decline in the percentage who indicated "Much Worse." This is good news, as agent interaction is still something consumers prefer (page 50), regardless of issue complexity.

Do you think customer care agents have gotten better or worse at their jobs over the past 3-4 years?



Clear Communications, Efficiency/Professionalism, and Product/Service Knowledge continue to top the list for what's most important to consumers when talking to a customer care agent to resolve an issue. The traits naturally top the list as they, along with Active Listening, are most directed at achieving a resolution to any given issue. As the issues that make it to live agents become increasingly complex, training on communication, efficiency (including tool use and problem-solving), and product knowledge become even more valuable to both agents and customers.

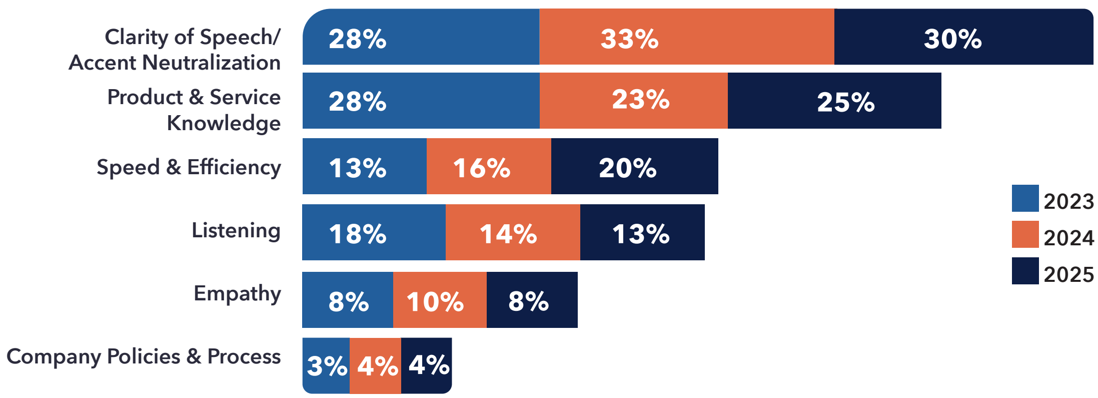
When talking to a customer care agent to resolve an issue with a product or service, what's most important to you?



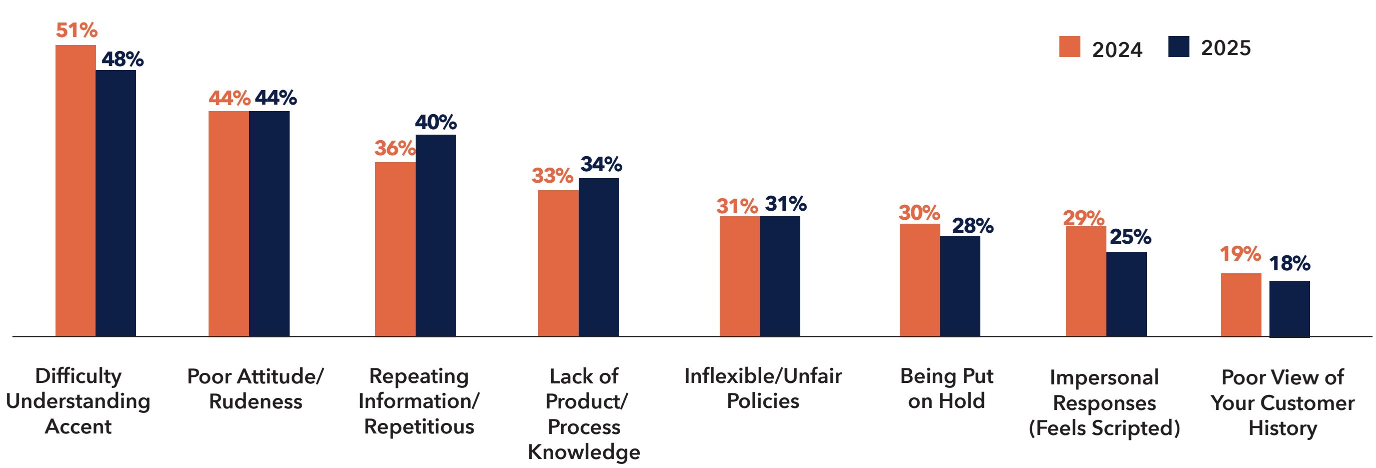
AGENT TRAINING AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

As demonstrated in the results below (and on the following page), clear communication is of primary importance to consumers when it comes to interacting with a live agent, consistently rising above things like agent knowledge, attitude, and job efficiency. Difficulty with accents has long been a common complaint among users of customer care. While accent-related issues persist, some companies are tackling this challenge by using speech enhancement software and/or setting up contact centers in emerging English-speaking markets like Jamaica, Kenya, and Belize.

In which area should companies focus their resources when it comes to training customer care agents?

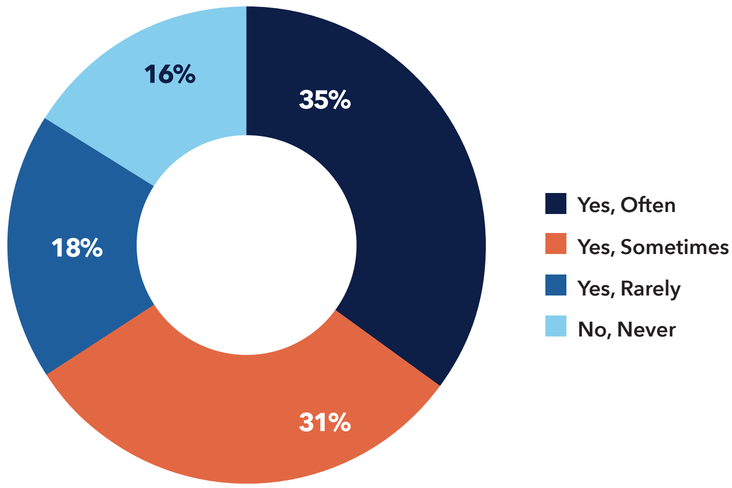


Which of the following characteristics do you find to be most bothersome when speaking to someone to resolve a customer care issue? (Select no more than three.)



IMPACT OF ACCENT AND IMPORTANCE OF FLUENCY

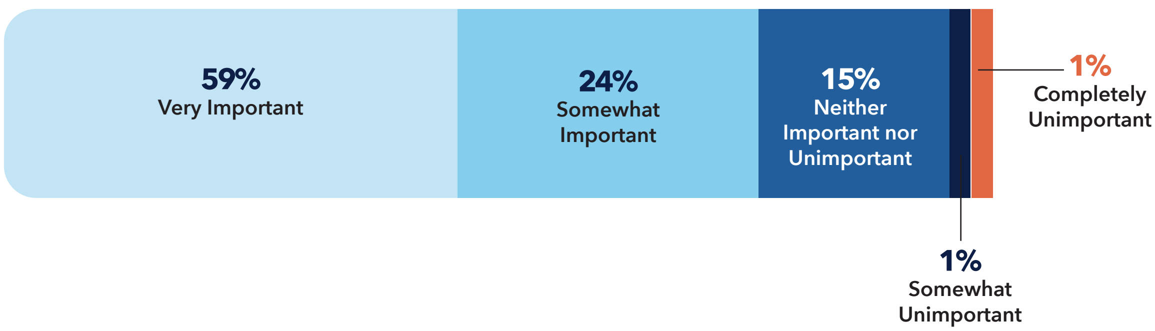
Has an accent ever contributed to your having a negative customer support experience?



An agent accent has often contributed to a negative customer support experience among more than a third of survey respondents (35%), and sometimes does so among another third of respondents (31%). These are big numbers, and reveal the enormity of the challenge posed by unclear communication in the care process. Brands should consider auditing the quality and clarity of communication within their programs and take steps to address the issues discovered.

Consumers are nearly unanimous in their feelings about the importance of fluency when it comes speaking with a customer care agent. In fact, 83% of consumers place some level of importance on agents being fluent in their preferred language, with only two percent indicating little or no importance. Considering all survey participants are U.S.-based, these results are almost exclusively related to English and Spanish speakers, with about 91% of the U.S. population speaking either English or Spanish at home.

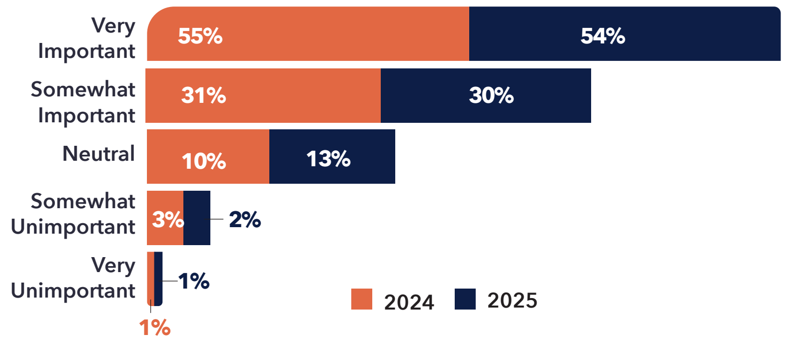
When speaking with a customer support agent, how important is it that they are fluent in your preferred language?



AGENT EMPATHY

Like clarity of speech, empathy is very important to consumers, with 84% describing it as "Very Important" or "Somewhat Important." That said, the importance of empathy is often situational. Empathy is critical when handling sensitive issues related to things like health and finances, whereas clarity of speech is important across all types of engagements.

How important is it for customer care agents to have empathy for you during your issue?



Empathy is an important element of resolving an issue satisfactorily. How do you ensure your agents approach your customers with empathy?

"Empathy isn't just a trait — it's a strategic choice. To embed empathy into every customer interaction, it must be intentionally designed into the fabric of your customer service organization. Here's how:

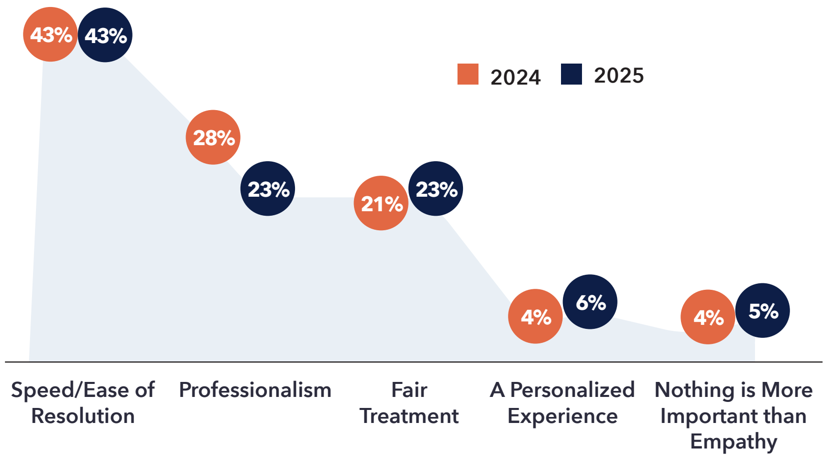
1. **Start with the right employee profile.** Empathy begins with hiring the right people. Define the human skills — like emotional intelligence, active listening, and adaptability — that are critical to your culture and customer expectations. This becomes your ideal employee profile.
2. **Align your recruiting process for hiring success.** Your recruiting process should be tailored to identify those key traits. Use behavioral interviewing, role-play scenarios, and peer reviews to assess for empathy and cultural fit, not just technical proficiency.
3. **Make empathy the spine of your org design.** Too often, organizations build their tech stack, structure, and compensation models first, then hope employee behaviors will follow. Instead, reverse the order: define the behaviors you want to see, then build systems, tools, and processes that enable and reward those behaviors. Empathy isn't an add-on; it should be at the core of how your org functions.
4. **Begin new-hire training with behavior, not systems.** Don't save the soft skills for week two. From day one, center training around who the customer is, the role your agents play, and the human experience you want them to deliver. As you layer on product knowledge and systems training, continue to coach and hold them accountable for showing up with empathy in every interaction and role-play.
5. **Rethink your QA framework.** Does a "100% QA score" mean the customer felt heard, respected, and cared for? Not always. Empathy needs to be explicitly measured — not assumed. Refine your QA rubric to evaluate whether agents are truly connecting with customers, not just checking procedural boxes.
6. **Reinforce it through recognition and rewards.** People do what they're recognized and rewarded for. If empathy is central to your brand, it should be central to how you assign shifts, determine merit increases, and celebrate wins. Make sure your recognition programs reflect the behaviors you want to see more of.

When empathy is intentionally embedded into hiring, training, quality, and recognition, it becomes more than just a soft skill — it becomes your competitive advantage. Customers will remember how your agents made them feel, and employees will thrive in a culture that values humanity. That's the foundation of lasting loyalty on both sides of the conversation."

Jeffrey Newman
Director, Strategic Accounts
Viasat

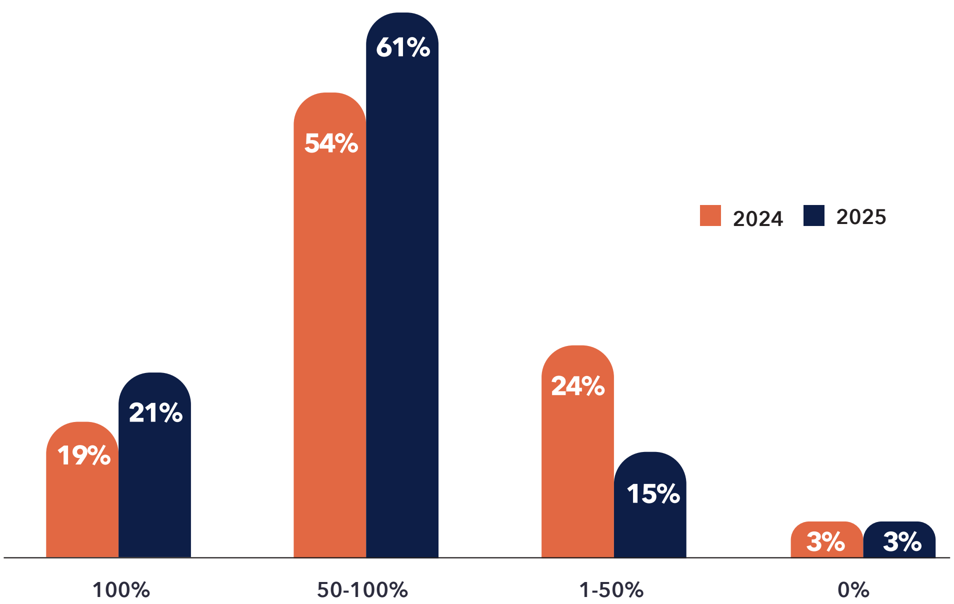
AGENT EMPATHY, CONT.

Which of the following is more important to you than empathy in resolving a customer care issue?



In a somewhat contradictory result to what's on the previous page, only five percent of respondents indicated that nothing is more important than empathy in resolving a customer care issue, while most respondents (89%) point to Speed/ Ease, Professionalism, and Fair Treatment when asked what's more important than empathy. But again, the importance of empathy seems driven by circumstance when, in a follow-up question, 82% of respondents indicated empathy was the most important characteristic in more than 50% of their engagements. Clearly, empathy shouldn't be overlooked. In fact, it should be stressed if the situation warrants it.

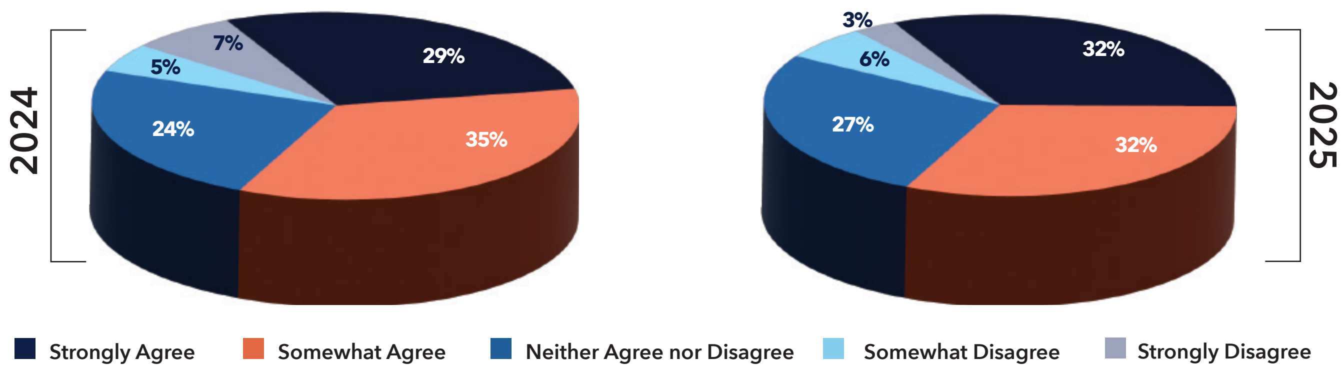
Compared to Speed, Ease of Resolution, Fair Treatment, etc., in what percentage of your engagements do you think empathy is the most important characteristic?



PAYING MORE FOR BETTER AGENT TREATMENT AND AGENT PASSION

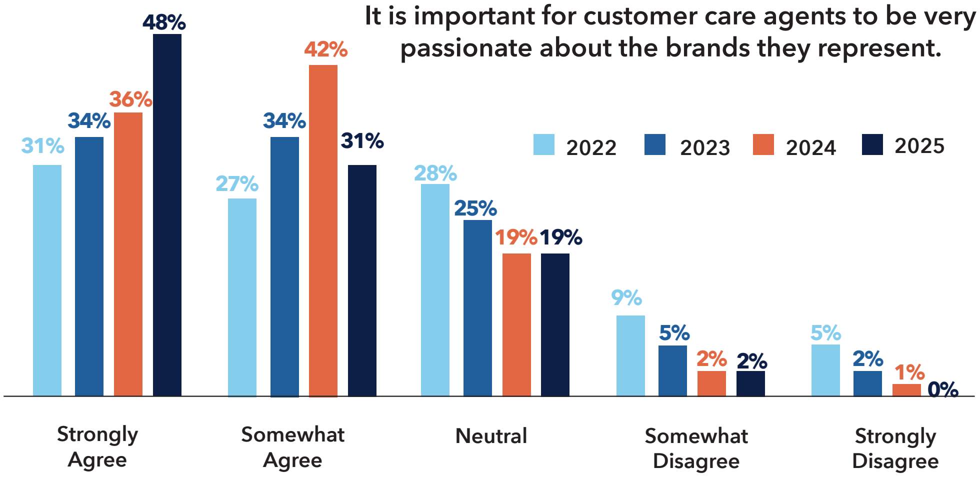
Not only are 71% of consumers willing to pay more for a product/service if it meant world-class customer care, a combined 64% of consumers agree that they'd be willing to do the same if it meant better pay and treatment for employees (including customer care staff). Better treatment for customer care agents means investing in training, enablement, wellness, and career growth, among other things. Treating agents better doesn't only improve employee satisfaction and drive down absenteeism/attrition, it would have a positive impact on the experiences customers have with the brand.

How do you feel about the following statement: I would be willing to pay a little more for a product/service if I knew it meant employees would be paid more and treated better.



More than ever, consumers feel it's important for agents to be passionate about the brands they represent. Agents that act as fans and advocates for a brand are more likely to have skin in the game when it comes to helping customers, which means they'll be more effective at their job. Customers can pick up on this enthusiasm, and the positive experiences they have are more likely to result in brand loyalty versus an experience with an agent that's simply going through the motions.

How do you feel about the following statement: It is important for customer care agents to be very passionate about the brands they represent.



Passion among care agents has never been more important to consumers.
How does your brand build excitement and passion for the brand among your workforce?

"Our frontline agents are an extension of all brand teams that build out the customer experience from shopping to unboxing. Building their excitement to speak about products and services not only reaffirms a customer's purchase, it helps drive up metrics like AOV, CSAT, and LTV. These metrics are business drivers and help position customer service as a retention center versus just a cost center.

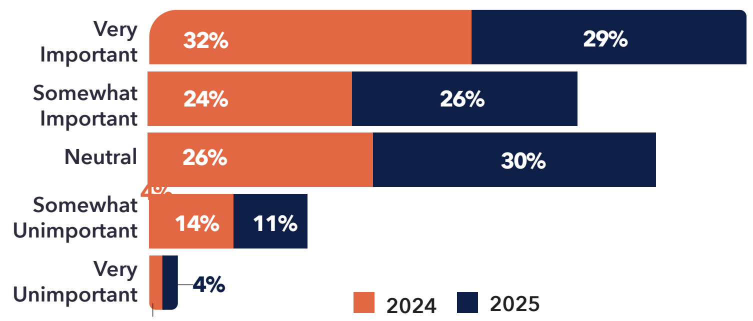
One way we work on brand excitement and passion is through training. We try to get hero products into our team's hands and host monthly new product training and category refreshers. Interacting with the same products the customers use creates experts in our agent pool and makes conversations flow more seamlessly."

Kat Stewart
Head of Customer Experience | FOOD52

CONSISTENCY AND IMPORTANCE OF CUSTOMER HISTORY

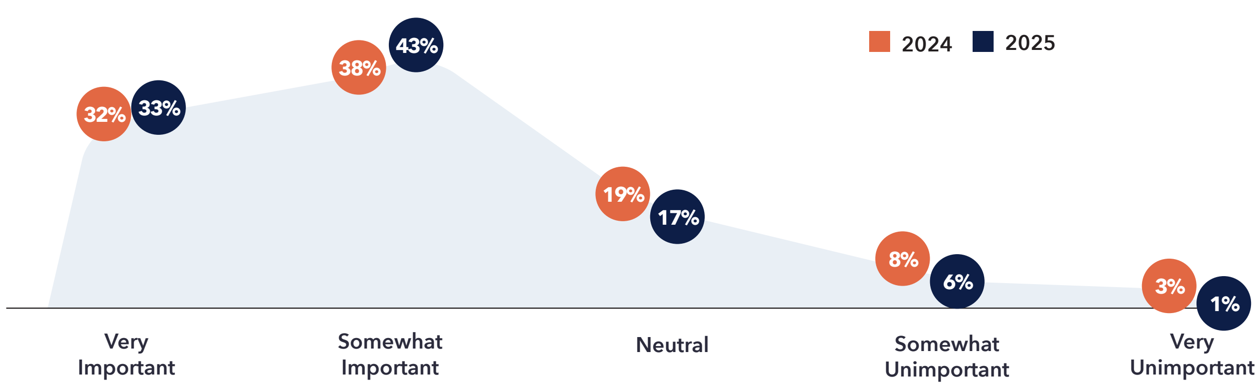
A little more than half (55%) of consumers think agent continuity (dealing with the same agent) is important when working with a brand to resolve an issue. Interestingly, this topic was most important for those ages 30 to 44 years of age, with 59% indicating "Very Important" or "Somewhat Important." Conversely, agent continuity was least important for those ages 60 years and older, with only 51% indicating agent continuity as important.

In dealing with a brand, how important is it for you to deal with the same customer care agent each time?



Consumers feel even more strongly about agents having access to their customer history than they do about agent continuity (above). In fact, 76% of consumers feel agent access to their (the consumer's) customer history is either "Very Important" or "Somewhat Important." Access to this sort of information can help provide context, avoid the frustration of repeating information, and enable agents to be more effective at helping customers reach a resolution.

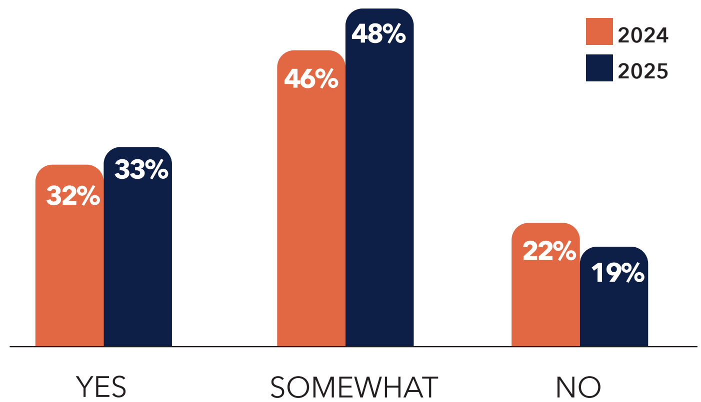
In dealing with a brand to resolve a customer care issue, how important is it for the agent to know you, your customer history, purchase history, and the details of any prior interactions you've had?



AGENT EMPOWERMENT AND THE IMPACT OF DEFLECTION

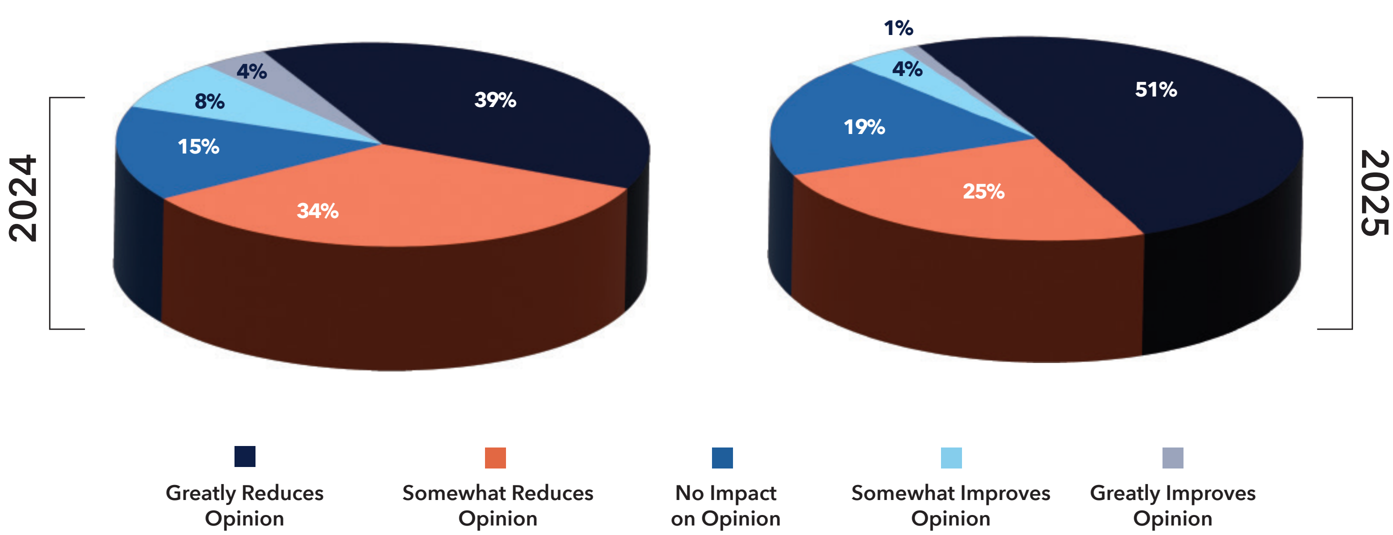
Most consumers (81%) feel companies are doing either a good or somewhat good job of empowering their customer care agents in a way that benefits customers. From the customer's point of view, agent empowerment looks like the ability to be proactive, creative, and enabled to provide flexibility in how an issue resolution is achieved. Empowered, passionate agents are a key ingredient in creating an exceptional customer care experience, especially when issues are complex and require a unique brand of empathy only a human can provide.

Do you feel companies generally do a good job of empowering their customer care agents to act in a way that benefits you as a customer?



Consumers continue to want to interact with live human agents (page 50), and access to a live agent continues to be a top driver of channel preferences. But the result below goes one step further, emphasizing the fact that when companies use technology to deflect consumers away from live agents, it likely reduces brand opinion among a large swath of their customers. Consumers are open to being guided to the right solution for their issue, but active deflection is likely to earn the ire of the majority of consumers who are trying to navigate the traps of customer care. Brands should consider making off-ramps to live assistance easily visible and easy to use.

What impact does it have on your opinion of a company when they use technology and automation to deflect you away from a live agent until all other options have been exhausted?

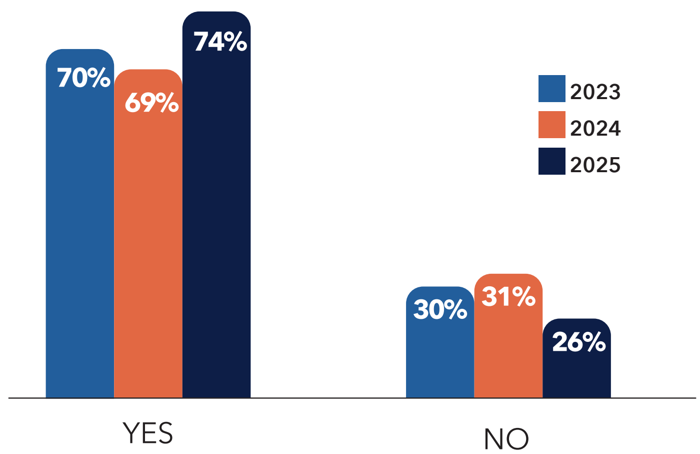


EXPECTATIONS

MEETING NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS AND WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT

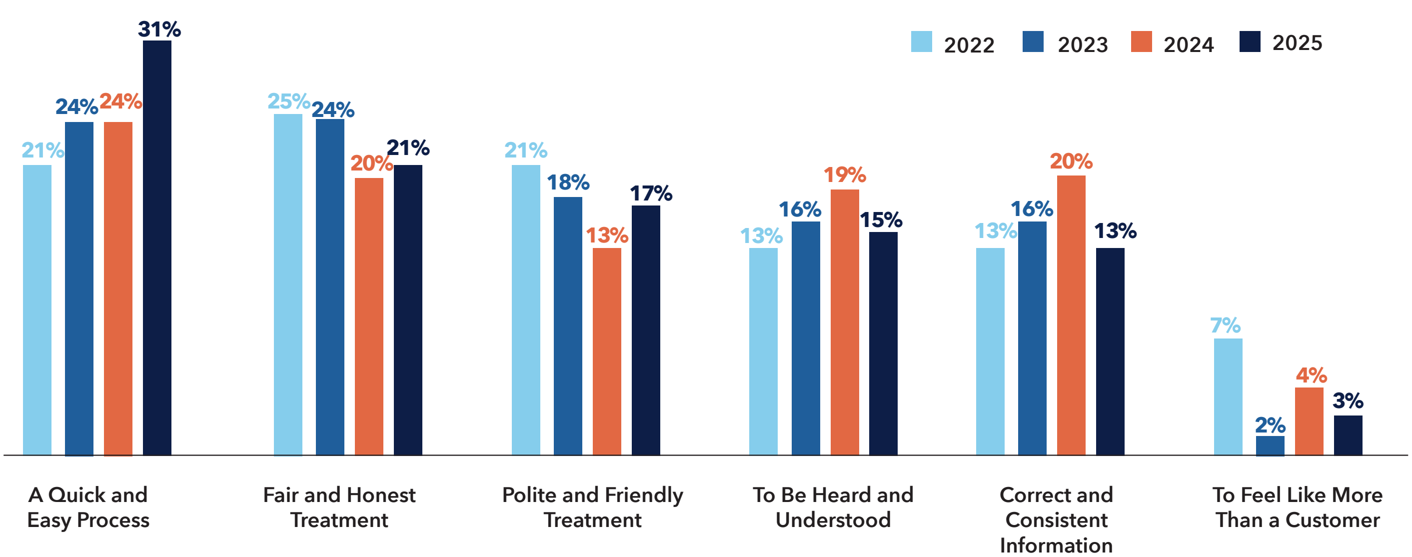
Consumer opinions toward customer care improved slightly year-over-year, with 74% indicating that companies are generally meeting their customer service needs and expectations. Although there is still room for improvement, this result is the highest ever recorded since the question was first asked in 2021. While there is still room to improve, this result is good news, and a testament to the impact of more companies taking a customer-first approach to their customer care operations.

Do you feel that the customer care departments of today's companies are generally meeting your customer service needs and expectations?



Consumers continue to place a premium on speed and ease when it comes to resolving customer care issues with large brands, again followed closely by "Fair and Honest Treatment." Should economic conditions become more uncertain, brands will need to be sensitive to the impact they have on customers' wallets. This might mean periodic reviews of things like company policies.

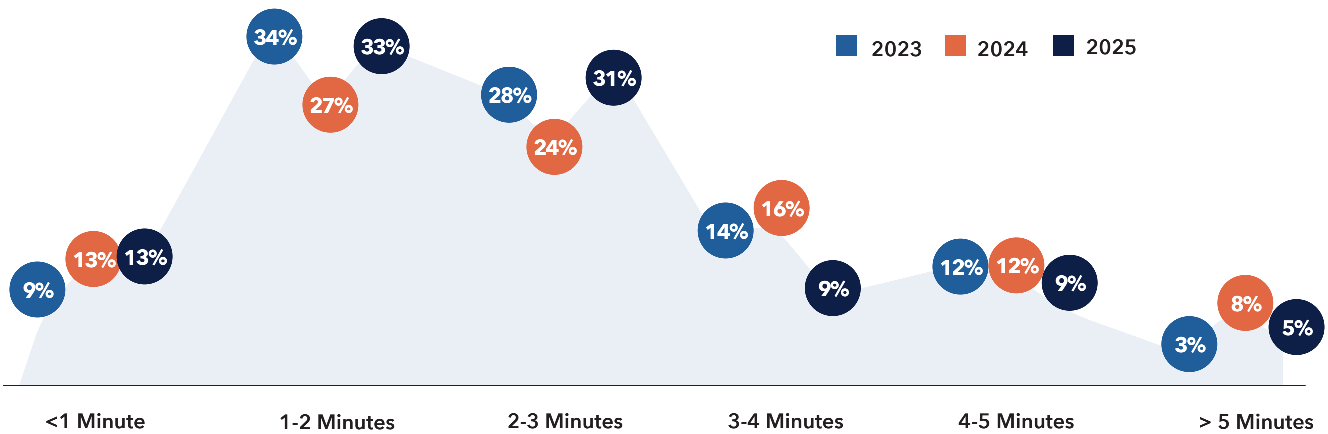
Aside from getting your issue resolved satisfactorily, what is most important when dealing with a large brand to resolve a customer care issue?



RESPONSE EXPECTATIONS FOR PHONE AND EMAIL

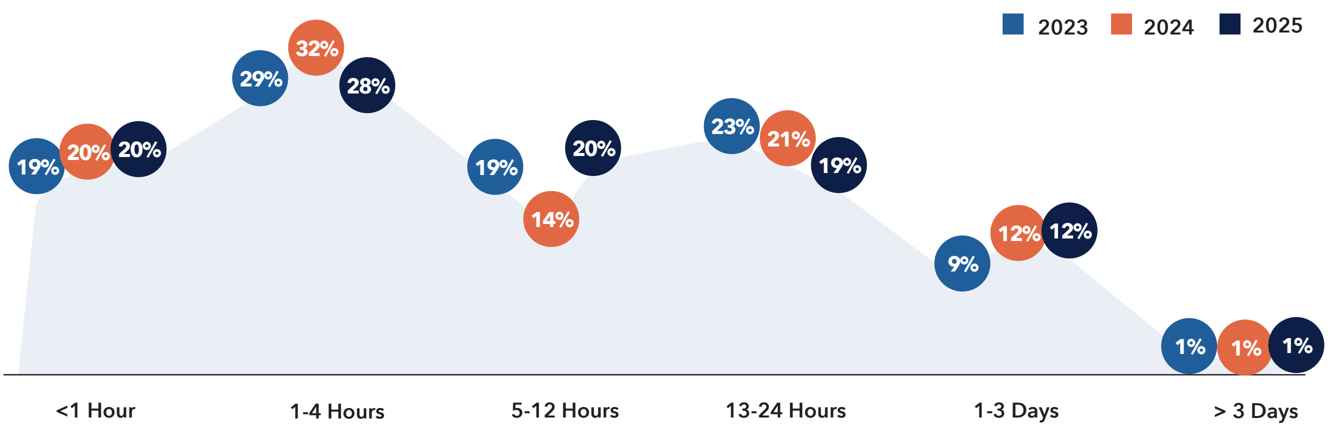
Consumers have upped their response expectations for Phone year-over-year, with 77% of respondents expecting to speak with someone within three minutes compared to 64% in 2024. Although customer care traffic has been slowly diverting to Text-Based channels (like Online Chat, SMS/Text, and Chatbots) in recent years, Phone remains a vital channel for consumers, as well as a primary channel for those ages 60 years and older.

When interacting with a brand's customer care department by phone, how quickly do you expect to be speaking to someone?



Consumers are most willing to wait when it comes to Email, with 32% of consumers willing to wait longer than 12 hours before expecting a response. Although Email is a channel being phased out at many companies, it's still heavily used by consumers, edging out Phone as having the most unique users in 2025 (page 14). That said, consumers continue to prefer both Phone and Online Chat over Email for "simple" issues, though they prefer only Phone over Email for "complex" issues (page 74).

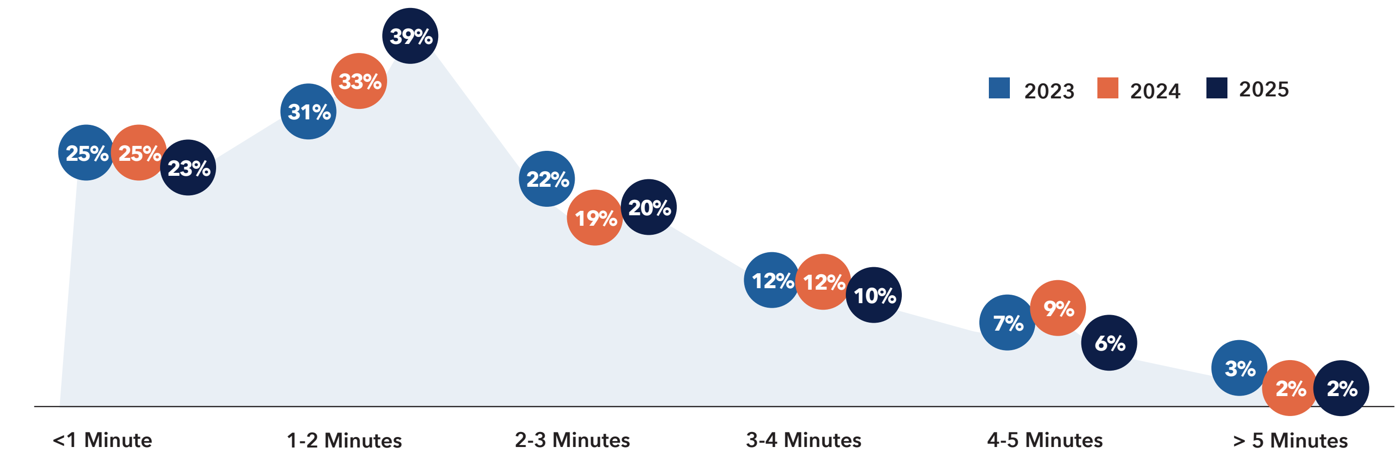
When interacting with a brand's customer care department by email, how quickly do you expect them to initially answer your inquiry?



RESPONSE EXPECTATIONS FOR ONLINE CHAT AND SMS

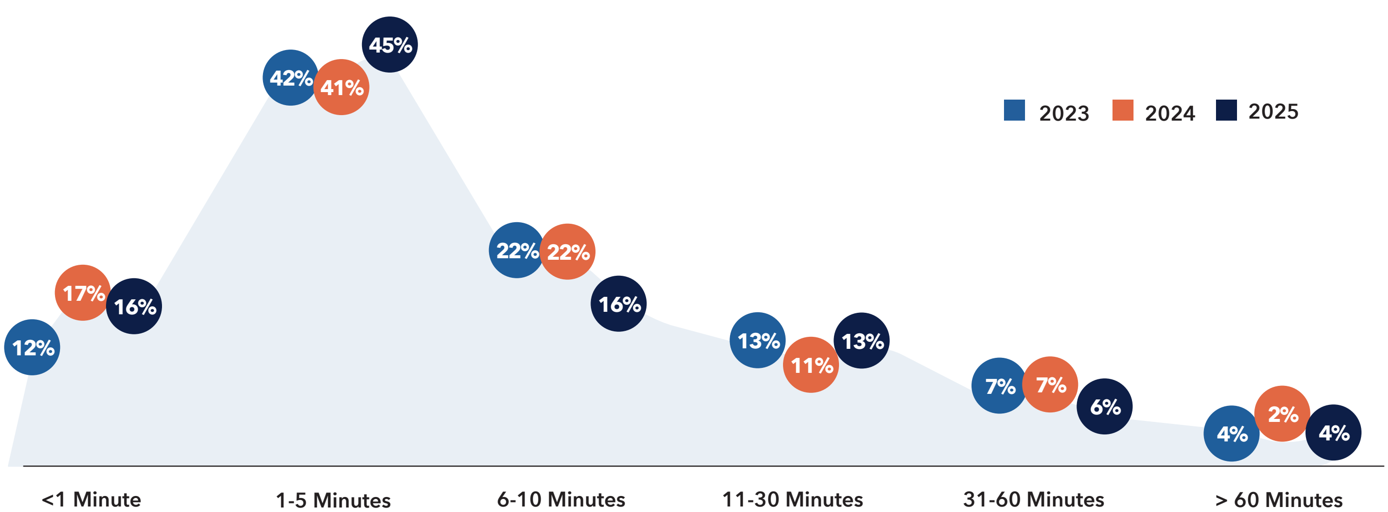
Expectations for Online Chat changed year-over-year, with slightly more consumers expecting a response within three minutes or less. In the latest surveying, 82% or respondents expect a response within three minutes or less, compared to 77% in 2024. Online Chat is among the most preferred channels among consumers for “simple” transactions (page 74).

When interacting with a brand’s customer care department by online chat (e.g., via computer), how quickly do you expect to initially be chatting with someone?



The use of SMS continues to grow, particularly among those below age 60 years, though response expectations are relatively unchanged year-over-year. SMS, like email, is asynchronous communication, resulting in more lax expectations from consumers. Even still, more than half (61%) of consumers expect a response to their initial response in less than five minutes.

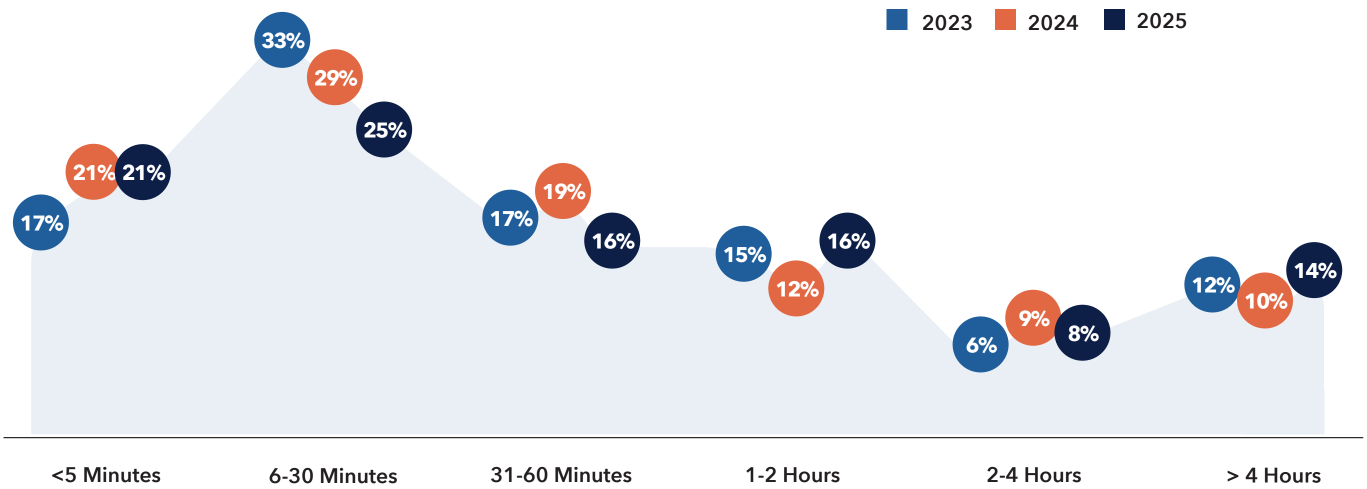
When interacting with a brand’s customer care department by SMS, how quickly do you expect them to initially respond to your inquiry?



RESPONSE EXPECTATIONS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

Response expectations for social media/online forums relaxed slightly year-over-year, with 62% of consumers expecting a response in under an hour compared to 69% of consumers in 2024. Social media for customer care has seen a steady increase in use in recent years (page 14), albeit the growth has been slow. Brands should be especially careful with how they engage on social media given its one-to-many nature, which can amplify the impact of both positive and negative engagements due to digital word of mouth and the potential for actions to go viral.

When interacting with a brand's customer care department via social media or an online forum/message board, how quickly do you expect an initial response?



CONSUMER PERSPECTIVES — **CONCLUSIONS**

The addition of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)-focused section this year revealed striking insights into the role identity plays in shaping the customer care experience. More than half of consumers (52%) reported feeling excluded, misunderstood, or mistreated by customer support operations based on their identity (page 58), a figure with profound reputational and financial implications. Compounding this, 42% of consumers said they would refuse to purchase from or work with a company that had previously mistreated them (page 59). With 75% willing to sever ties over a company's stance on DEI matters (page 60), it's clear that inclusive practices are not optional — they are a business imperative. Treating all customers fairly, valued by 91% of consumers (page 61), is now a baseline expectation.

Beyond DEI, consumers placed a high value on the quality of customer care. In fact, 71% of consumers said they would pay more for a product or service if it meant receiving world-class customer care (page 67), while 64% would pay more if employees were better compensated and treated (page 84). This willingness to invest in positive customer and employee experiences challenges companies to reframe customer care as a revenue driver, not just a cost center.

Shifting channel preferences continue to redefine engagement strategies. The proportion of consumers who have changed their preferred contact method in recent years has reached its highest level since tracking began in 2018, at 55% (page 76). While text-based solutions dominate general preference, the phone still commands a strong lead for complex issues (page 74). This reinforces the need for companies to maintain robust voice support alongside expanding digital capabilities, ensuring that customers can easily navigate between channels, depending on the nature of their needs.

For companies, these findings emphasize that competitive advantage will increasingly hinge on empathy, fairness, and adaptability. Businesses that align operational decisions with customer values — whether through inclusive practices, fair treatment of employees, or balanced channel strategies — will be better equipped to earn trust, foster loyalty, and differentiate in a crowded marketplace.

ABOUT 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, "Leaders Learning From Leaders," Execs In The Know facilitates many opportunities for community engagement, such as its bi-annual national Customer Response Summit and private online community, Know It All "KIA." There are also exclusive, laser-focused engagements like industry briefings 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, industry research, webinars, blogs, and much more.

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ABOUT TRANSCOM

Transcom

Transcom is a global leader in AI-powered and digitally enhanced customer experience (CX) solutions. We help fast-growing scale-ups and large, complex enterprises transform every customer interaction into an opportunity to drive growth, loyalty, and lifetime value.

Partnering with more than 300 clients worldwide, including leading e-commerce, fintech, and technology brands, we combine passionate people, advanced technology, and deep CX expertise to deliver exceptional customer care, sales, content moderation, and back-office services.

With 30,000+ employees across 85 contact centers and remote networks in 29 countries, Transcom helps brands boost satisfaction, accelerate growth, and reduce operating costs.

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