



Execs In The Know



CX LEADERS

TRENDS & INSIGHTS

CORPORATE EDITION | 2026

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PREFACE

Customer experience (CX) continues to evolve at a remarkable pace, shaped by the accelerating adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), shifting consumer expectations, and persistent structural constraints within organizations. This report, the *2026 CX Leaders Trends & Insights: Corporate Edition*, is designed to help CX leaders make sense of this dynamic environment by grounding strategy in data rather than anecdote. Drawing on survey insights from senior CX leaders, this research examines how technology, channels, data, workforce, and strategy are converging to redefine what “exceptional” customer care looks like in 2026 and beyond. Our intent is not to prescribe a single path forward, but to illuminate patterns, tensions, and tradeoffs that every CX leader must navigate.

A central theme of this year’s findings is that the industry is moving beyond experimentation with AI toward outcome-based management. Two-thirds of contact centers now use some form of AI, yet leaders are increasingly focused on whether it actually works as measured through resolution, abandonment, and customer trust rather than solely on cost reductions/deflection. At the same time, consumer use of AI-powered self-help has surged, forcing organizations to confront whether adoption is being driven by preference or by difficulty accessing live assistance. These realities underscore that success will be defined less by how much automation exists and more by how responsibly, transparently, and effectively it is deployed.

Equally important is the continued maturation of CX as a strategic function. CX influence inside organizations remains strong, and leaders are prioritizing ease, speed, and journey simplification over channel proliferation or tool acquisition. Investment patterns reveal a more disciplined mindset regarding new tools, greater emphasis on predictive analytics, and growing attention to data orchestration and process optimization. CX is increasingly being treated as both an experience discipline and an operational science, and one that must balance empathy with efficiency.

Ultimately, this report is meant to help CX leaders chart a more intentional path forward – one that integrates AI responsibly, strengthens human capability, simplifies journeys, and measures what truly matters. By surfacing industry benchmarks, exposing misalignments, and highlighting emerging best practices, we aim to equip leaders with the insight needed to build more reliable, inclusive, and trust-driven customer experiences.

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHORS

The *2026 CX Leaders Trends & Insights: Corporate Edition* offers impactful insights and extends trendlines in critical areas of CX, including workforce, channel strategy, AI for CX, and program performance. To further expand and deepen insights, this report also extends to topics recently visited in the *2025 CX Leaders Trends & Insights: Consumer Edition*, including new questions on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), as well as new questions touching on Proactive Customer Care and customer perception.

Although no single piece of research can be all-encompassing, we have dedicated this research to targeting those areas we hear most about from our community. To that end, it's worth noting that this research is not static. We want and expect it to evolve, and we look to you, our readership, for ideas on where we should go next. To share your thoughts, please connect with Execs In The Know's research director, Jim Von Seggern, at Jim@execsintheknow.com.

Finally, we'd like to extend a huge thank you to this edition's seven Practitioner Perspective contributors (see below). These valuable contributions help take this research from theory to practice by sharing real-world examples from the trenches. Your contributions are greatly appreciated!

Kindly,

The Execs In The Know Research Team



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METHODOLOGY

The *2026 CX Leaders Trends & Insights: Corporate Edition* was developed based on results derived from a custom 94-question survey delivered via the SurveyMonkey online platform.

Surveying occurred from October 24 through December 22, 2025. Private invitations to partake in the survey were delivered by email to the Execs In The Know community and via promotion within Execs In The Know's private online community, Know It All (KIA). Invitations targeted individuals responsible for managing the customer experience and customer care programs of large Business-to-Consumer (B2C), Business-to-Business (B2B), and B2C/B2B organizations located primarily in the United States and Canada.

The survey benefited from the participation of 87 CX leaders with individual question sample sizes ranging from 61 to 87 responses. See page 7 for a detailed breakdown of this year's survey participants, including details about participation by industry, revenue, and customer type.

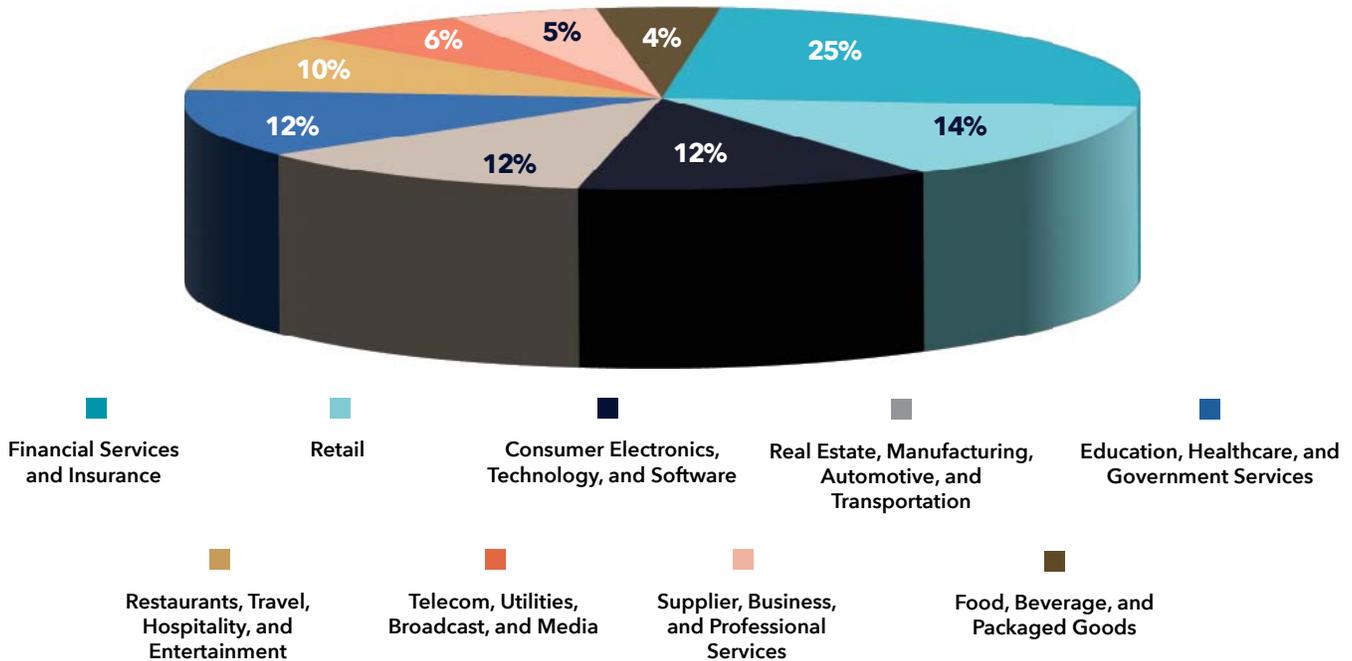
ABOUT THE SURVEY
PARTICIPANTS'
BUSINESSES

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS' BUSINESSES

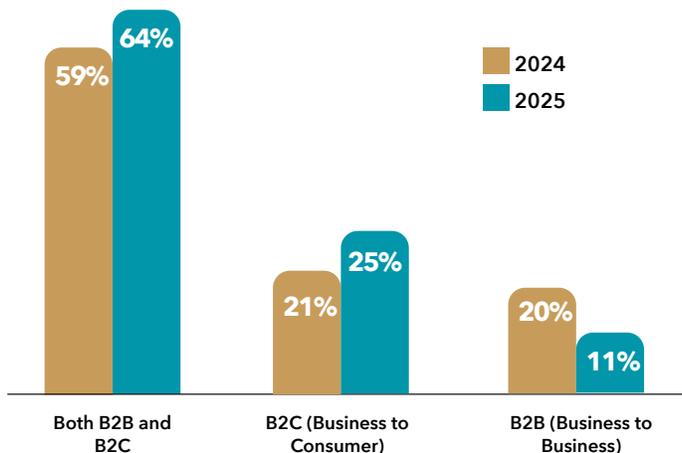
VERTICALS AND BUSINESS TYPES

The verticals represented by this year's participants echoed those of previous years with concentrations on financial, retail, and consumer tech. These heavily weighted verticals tend to be customer-focused, which may skew results toward greater program maturity regarding CX strategies and best practices.

Vertical of Survey Participants



How would you describe your company's overall business type?

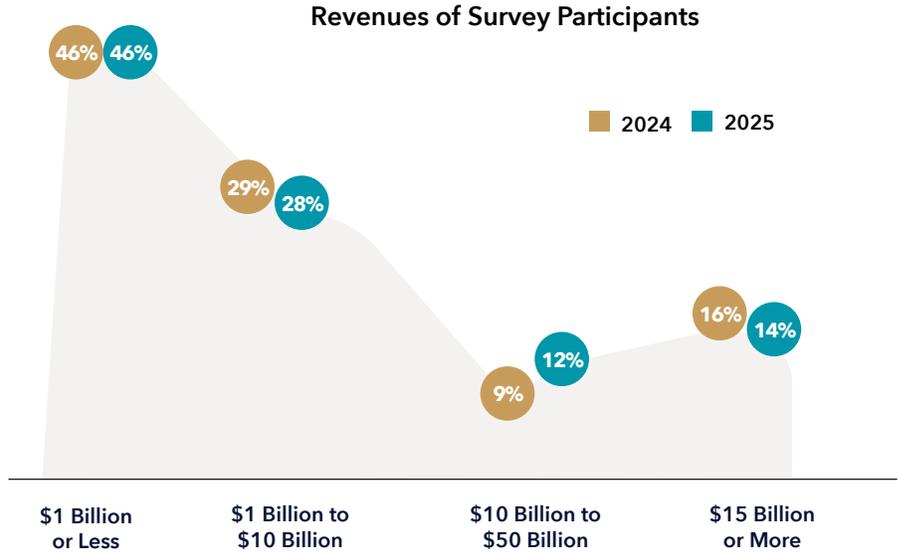


This year's survey participants featured a moderately higher proportion of B2C and hybrid brands compared to last year's report, along with fewer B2B brands. Like prior years, hybrid companies (those serving both businesses and consumers) account for the majority (64%) of participating brands. It's worth reflecting on this breakdown when reviewing these results as they show, again, that results likely skew toward consumer-minded, customer-focused brands.

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS' BUSINESSES

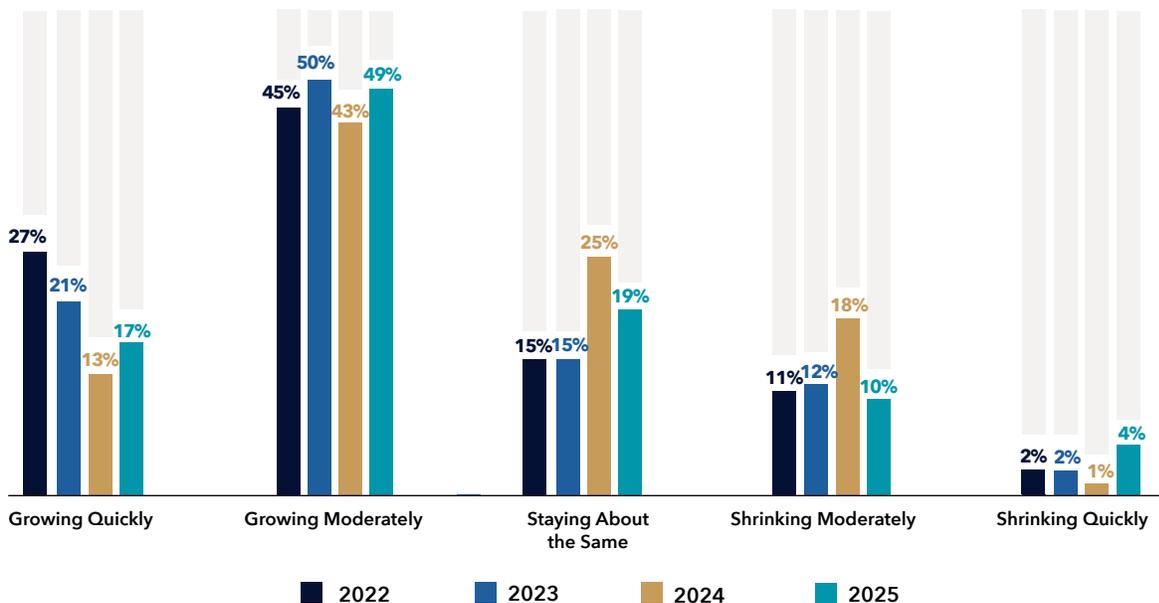
REVENUE AND STATE OF THE BUSINESS

The size (by revenue) of this year's participants wobbled modestly with a few points of change at the top end of the scale, though the largest portion of survey participants continue to be with mid-caps or smaller companies (<\$1B in revenue), again accounting for 46% of the whole. This should also be a consideration in interpreting the results of this research, with larger organizations presumably bringing larger wallets and more advanced program maturation.



Financial conditions generally appeared to improve over the past 12 months. The one exception was the jump from one to four percent year-over-year (YoY) among those indicating their business was "Shrinking Quickly." Though a 400% YoY increase might set off alarm bells, this shift dissipates in the aggregate, with a ten-point increase in the total number of companies that experienced any growth (from 56% in 2024 to 66% in 2025).

How would you generally describe the state of the business over the past 12 months?

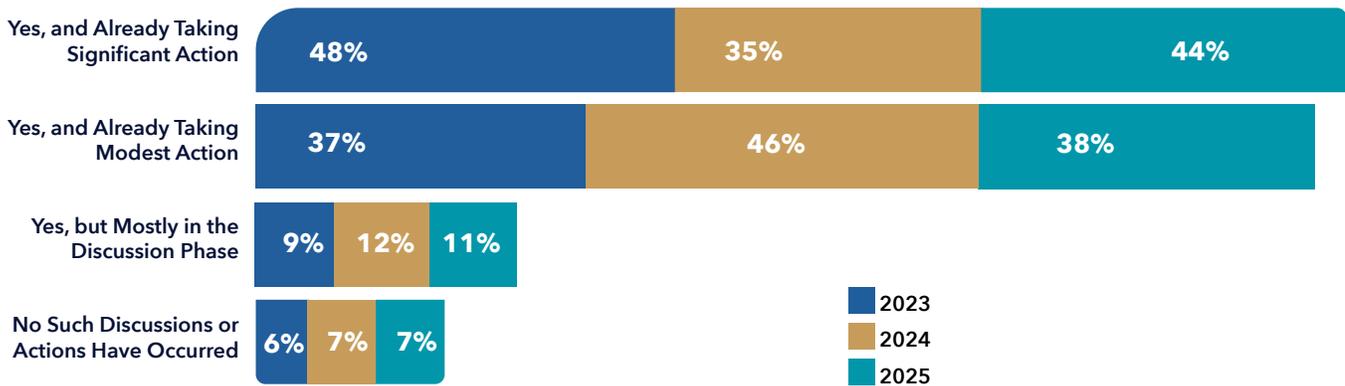


ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS' BUSINESSES

VERTICALS AND BUSINESS TYPES

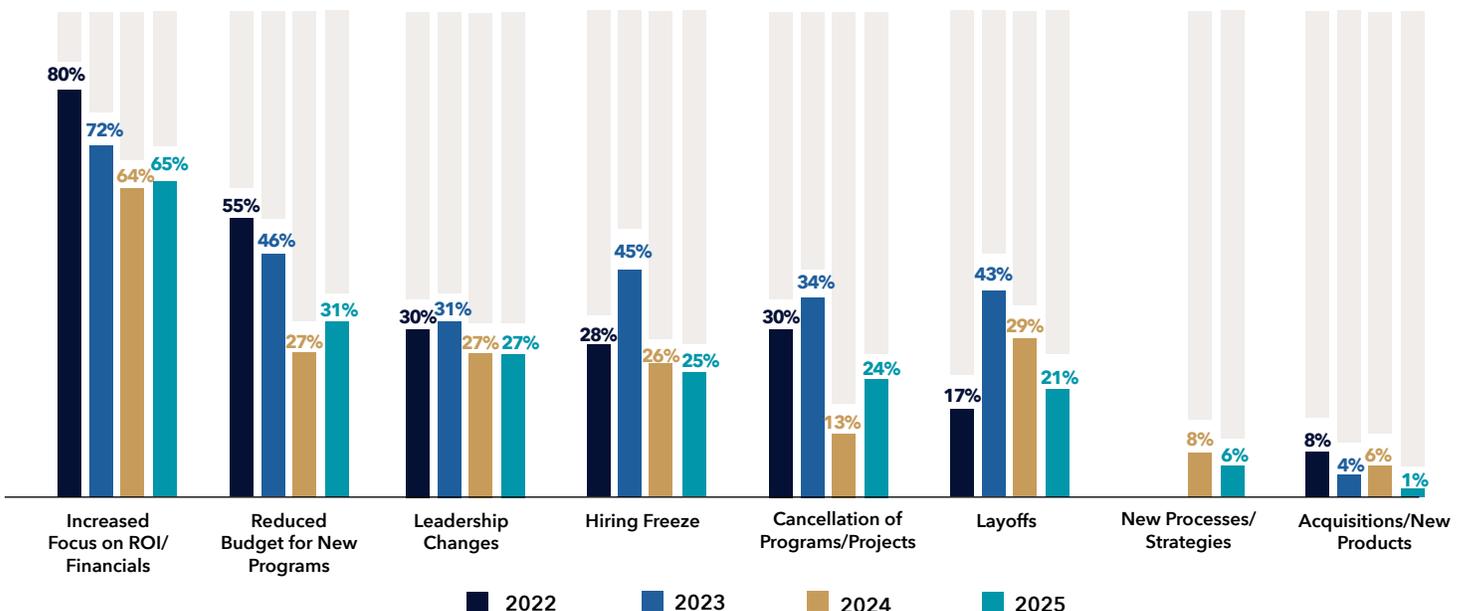
Although economic conditions have appeared to improve in general (page 8), an equal share of companies are discussing and acting on economic uncertainties YoY (81% in 2024 compared to 82% in 2025). Below is a detailed breakdown of the course of action taken. Suffice to say, companies are reacting by placing increased focus on ROI and reducing budgets, though not to the extent seen previously, reinforcing the notion of generally improving business conditions over the past 12 months (page 8).

Has your company begun discussing or acting on the uncertain economic conditions?



An increased focus on ROI remains the preferred tactic among companies taking any action, with more than half (65%) of participants indicating such. Other notable responses were "Hiring Freeze" and "Layoffs," with these coming in at 25% and 21%, respectively. While business conditions may have improved in the near term, many companies are still positioned defensively, all while AI continues to broadly disrupt and reshape business, the workforce, and the overall economy.

Which of the following actions has your organization recently taken in response to the uncertain economic conditions? (Select all that apply.)



SURVEY **RESULTS**

WORKFORCE

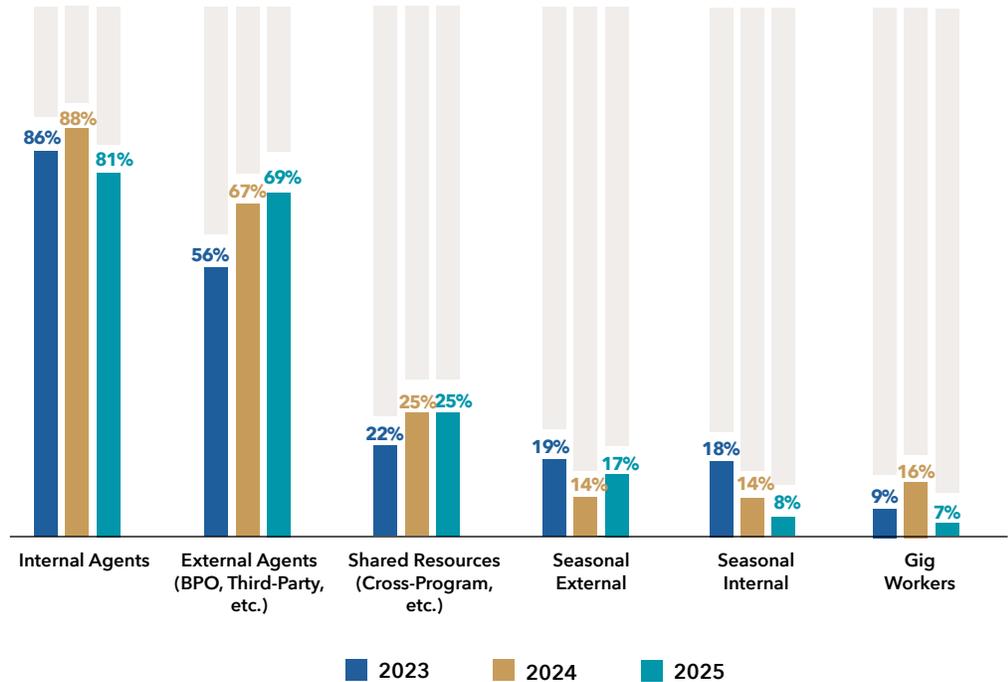


WORKFORCE

TYPE OF DEPLOYED WORKFORCE AND FTE COUNT

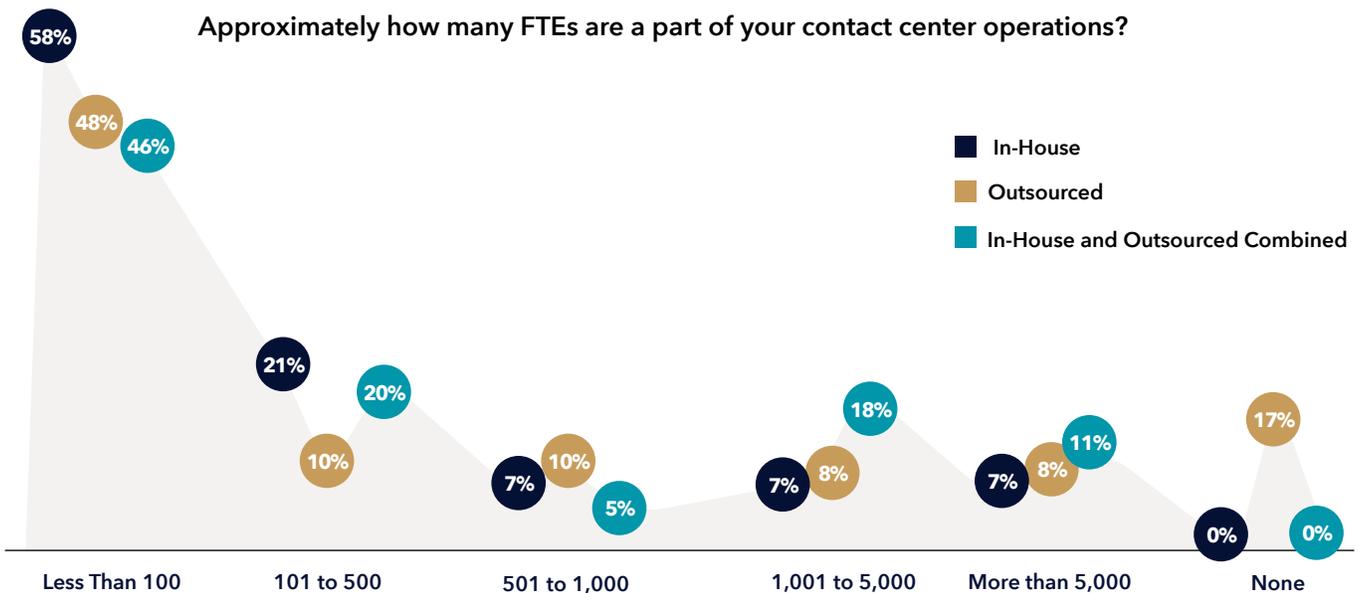
Which types of frontline workforce resources are deployed by your CX operations? (Select all that apply.)

Growth among externally sourced agents has held onto its growth coming out of the global pandemic, sitting at its highest level since 2022, when this question was first asked. After a year of substantial growth, "Gig Workers" saw a precipitous decline of nine points YoY, while the seasonal internal workforce also declined YoY.



This year's cohort skews slightly larger in operational FTE counts compared to last year, with 29% of programs boasting 1,000 or more agents (both in-house and outsourced) compared to only 19% in 2024. Slightly larger programs could infer a skew toward greater investment and more advanced CX programs, though this inference is not infallible.

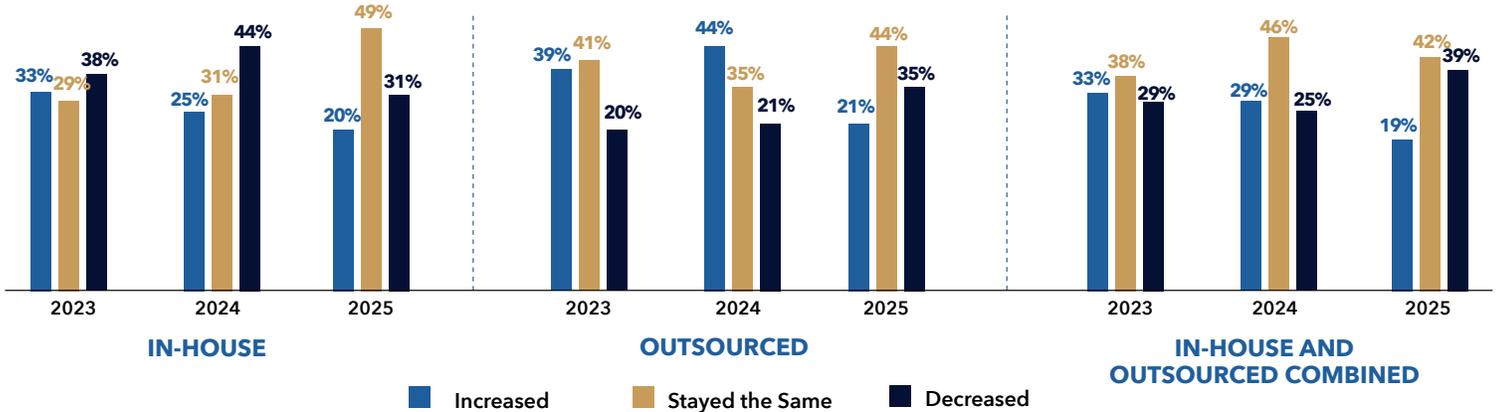
Approximately how many FTEs are a part of your contact center operations?



HEAD COUNT CHANGES AND TEAM DIVERSITY

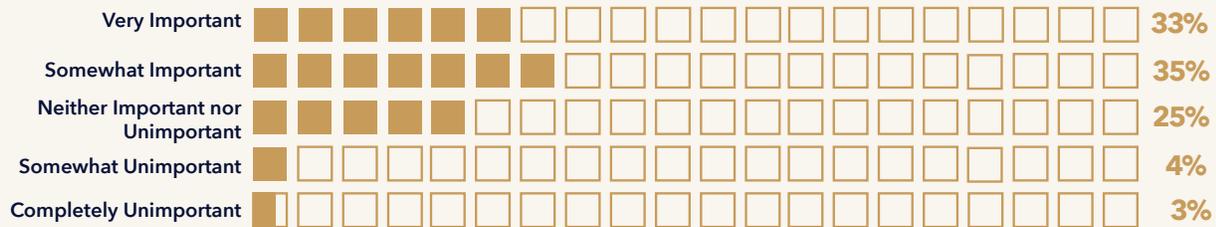
While this year’s survey cohort skewed larger in average FTE count than in previous years (page 12), year-over-year growth was tamped down compared to previous years, with only 19% of programs seeing overall growth in operational head count (both in-house and outsourced) compared to 29% in 2024, alongside growing decreases in total head counts over the previous 12 months compared to both 2024 and 2023. It’s worth noting that these decreases in head count could be indicative of slowing business growth, though it’s more likely related to a combination of factors, including the impact of AI-powered solutions and tools.

How has your contact center operations head count changed over the past 12 months?



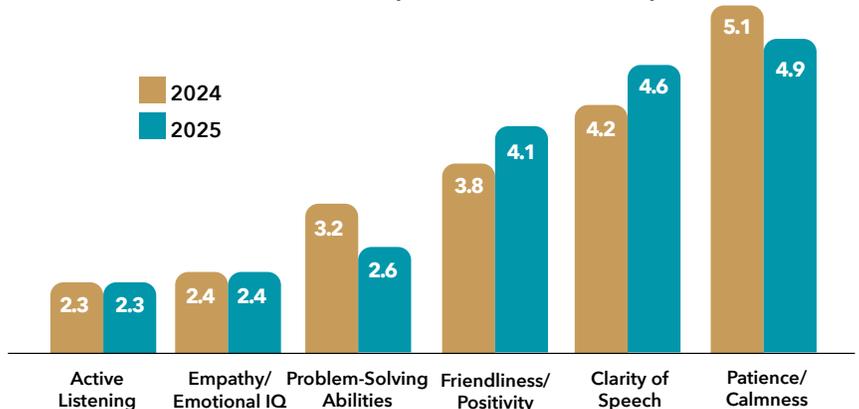
Sixty-eight percent of survey respondents indicated that it was either “Very Important” or “Somewhat Important” to their organization to field a support team that reflects the diversity of the customers they serve. This topic was recently introduced into the 2025 CX Leaders Trends & Insights: Consumer Edition report released in September 2025. Worth noting is how well these results aligned with consumers’ views. For a more detailed comparison of these results, be sure to check out the Consumer Comparisons section with specific comparisons to the below results occurring on page 70.

How important is it to your organization that your customer support team reflects the diversity of the customers they serve?



For the second year in a row, CX leaders give the nod to “Active Listening,” “Empathy/Emotional IQ,” and “Problem-Solving Abilities” as the most important soft skills for their agents. This tracks with an operation impacted by increased use of AI solutions, driving a higher percentage of complex, emotionally sensitive engagements into assisted channels of care. As this trend continues, brands will need to ensure agents are best suited to a more nuanced type of customer engagement — one that might often fall out of the scope of AI-powered and other types of unassisted solutions.

How do you rank the following soft skills in terms of importance for your agents (either internal or external)? NOTE: 1 = Most Important; 6 = Least Important



WORKFORCE SOFT SKILLS

How does your organization strike the proper balance between hiring for soft skills and training for soft skills?

“ At Grubhub, we find that striking the balance between hiring for soft skills and training for them is rooted in the realities of operating globally. Being largely outsourced, we have to be very clear about what must show up on day one versus what can be built over time — hiring for core human behaviors and training for how those behaviors are applied.

Active listening and empathy are the foundations of trust, thus topping our priorities, as some soft skills are simply too expensive to fix once someone enters the production floor. If an agent cannot hear a customer or respond with emotional awareness, no script refinement will close the gap. Following closely behind is problem-solving. We believe that policies and systems can be taught, but the ability to navigate in uncertainty, exercise discernment and guide a customer toward a reasonable resolution tends to be inherent.

Friendliness, clarity of speech and patience are important, but are deemed coachable over time. These particular behaviors are typically strengthened through calibrations, quality-based feedback and coaching. Grubhub places a high value on calm, clear communication, while also recognizing that confidence and composure gradually develop with tenure, program familiarity and the right support structures.

The expectations we set for our BPO partners mirror the standards we desire internally, from performance management to customer experience. Cultural nuance is, however, top of mind. How empathy is expressed, tone is interpreted and what feels polite or friendly can vary by geographic region. We find localized training, led by our partners, is crucial to our success. It allows our standards to be translated into examples that resonate with the agent population they serve.

In the end, this is not a choice between hiring and training. It is about hiring for mindset, then using training, cultural awareness and operational alignment to reinforce those qualities.



Tanisha Parker
Associate Director, Partner Programs



“ As automation and AI continue to absorb routine customer inquiries, the role of the human agent is changing. Results at the bottom of the previous page highlight an important shift toward soft skills, critical thinking, and decision-making. While this area may be underestimated by some executives, it is becoming one of the most important differentiators in modern CX.

Here at Mastermind, we place heavy emphasis on helping agents understand the “why” behind their work. Customer service is not just about resolving an issue in the moment. It is about helping customers remove friction, protect their investment, and get back to using the product or service as intended. When agents understand the downstream impact of their actions, they approach interactions with greater ownership, judgment, and consistency.

This philosophy shapes how we hire and train. Technical skills can be taught, but mindset takes intention. We look for people who can think critically, handle nuance, and make sound decisions when situations fall outside a script. Training focuses not only on tools and policies, but on context. Why standards exist. How one interaction can influence trust, loyalty, or retention. As routine tasks are increasingly handled by technology, human interactions become more complex and emotionally charged. That is where soft skills matter most. An empowered agent who understands the purpose of their work is better equipped to navigate ambiguity, show empathy, and deliver outcomes that feel genuinely human.

Performance management evolves alongside this mindset. Success is no longer measured only by efficiency or adherence, but by whether the interaction moved the customer forward and reduced future friction. This creates stronger agents, more consistent experiences, and teams that feel invested rather than monitored.

The future of CX will belong to organizations that develop human capability with the same discipline they apply to technology. Soft skills are no longer optional. They are the foundation for meaningful experiences in an increasingly automated world.



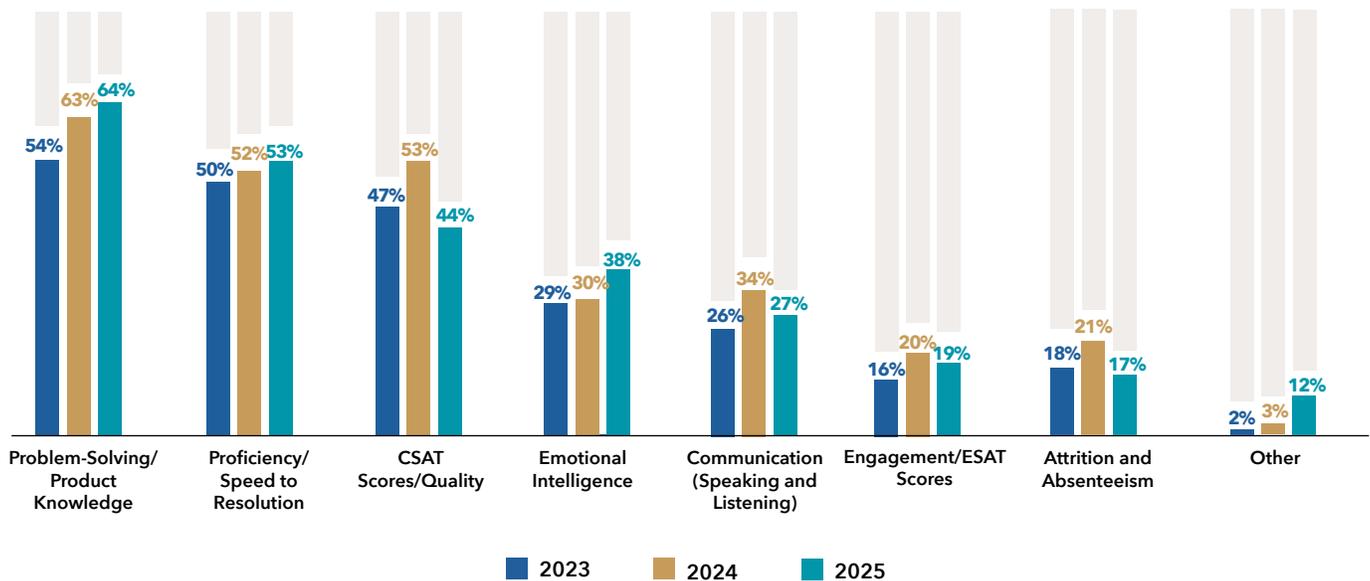
Simas Tamosaitis
Director of Customer Service



AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT AND MOTIVATORS

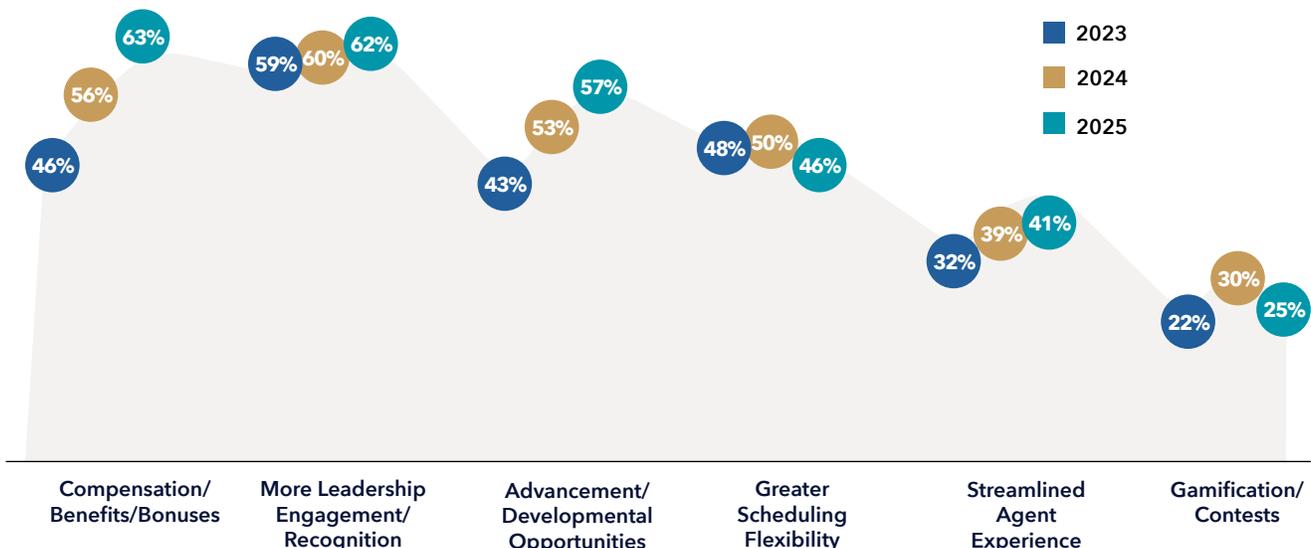
Strongly reflecting results at the bottom of the previous page, “Problem-Solving/Product Knowledge” is the area most targeted by CX leaders in the coming 12 months in terms of improving agent performance. This is a sensible area to target given the shift toward more complex engagements for agents due to the AI hand-off of more basic and transactional engagements. Among “Other,” survey respondents made mention of speed to proficiency, AI fluency, and sales/upselling.

In which area(s) are you most interested in improving agent performance over the next 12 months? (Select no more than three.)



While “More Leadership Engagement/Recognition” remains a top motivator, “Compensation/Benefits/Bonuses” has gained momentum for the second year in a row, taking the top spot in 2025. This is likely due to increasing economic pressures such as inflation and a tight labor market, both of which have continued to pressure household finances. Career opportunities and scheduling flexibility also continue to be significant motivators for contact center workers.

What have been some of the most effective motivators for your workforce? (Select all that apply.)



TOUCH POINTS

- » Channels
- » Measurements, Data, and Performance

CHANNELS

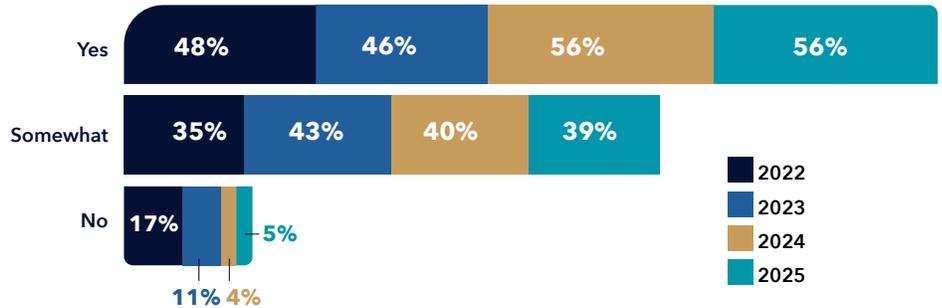


TOUCH POINTS – CHANNELS

UNDERSTANDING PREFERENCES AND SOLUTIONS OFFERED

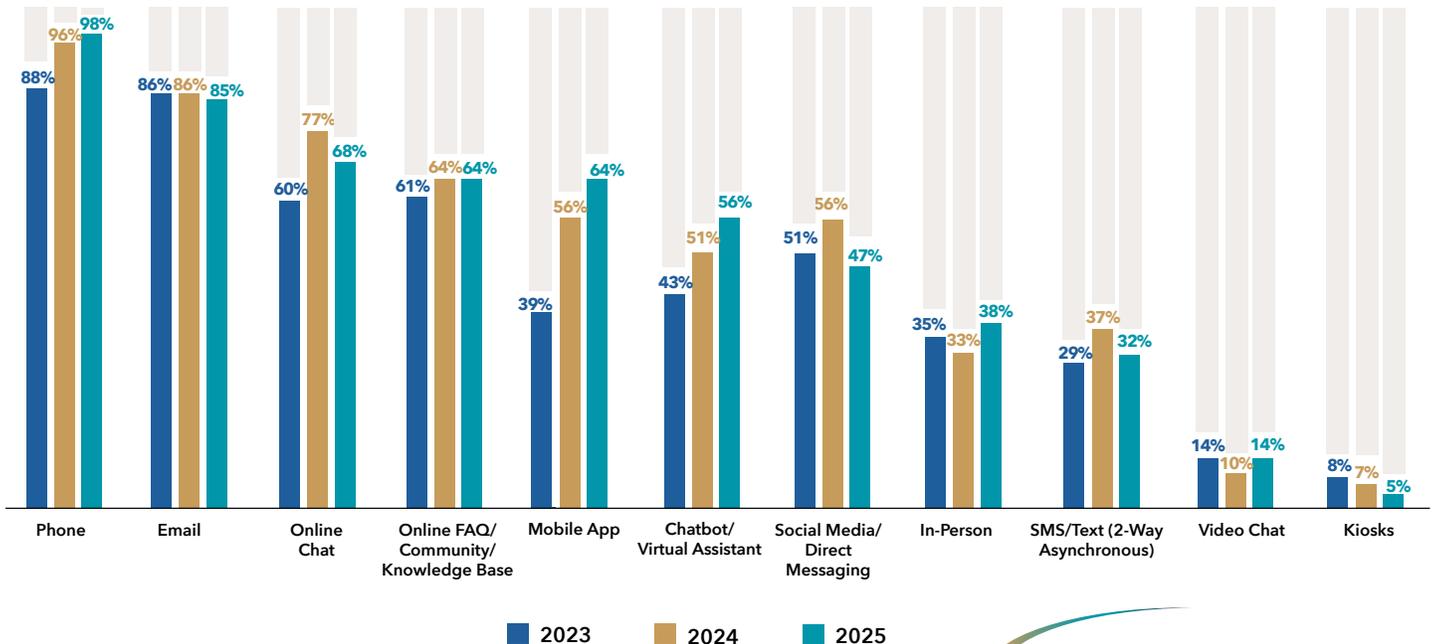
CX leaders continue to express a strengthened understanding of the channels their customers prefer to use, with 56% indicating a good understanding of such preferences. Understanding customer channel preferences is a key enabler of making smart strategic and financial investments, helping companies meet their customers where they are. See page 22 for a detailed breakdown of which channels CX leaders prefer their customers use, and which channels they think their customers prefer. Also, be sure to visit page 71 in the Consumer Comparisons section to see how well these presumed preferences align with previous consumer surveying.

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



The mix of customer care channels offered by companies remained relatively unchanged YoY, with a retreat in Online Chat (from 77% to 68% YoY) and continued gains in Mobile App and Chatbot/Virtual Assistant. Phone and Email continue to be the most prevalent channels offered, followed closely by Online resources (Chat/FAQ/Community/Knowledge Base), Mobile App, and Chat/Virtual Assistant. Channel offerings should closely match consumer preferences, which can vary based on factors like age, issue complexity, and product/service type. Brands should seek to understand the channel preferences of their specific customers.

Which of the following customer care solutions do you offer your customers? (Select all that apply.)

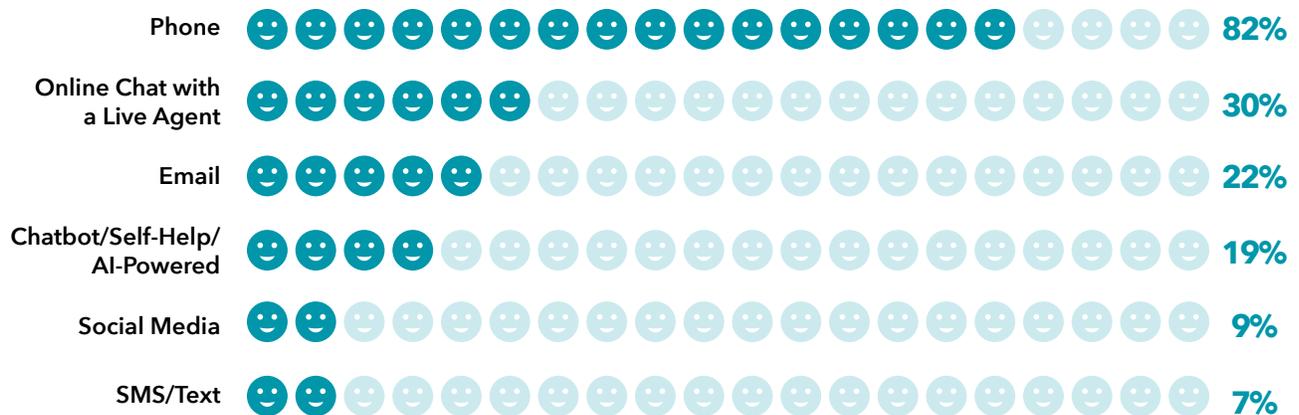


TOUCH POINTS – CHANNELS

BEST AND WORST CHANNEL EXPERIENCES

In a new question for 2025, perceived channel quality was examined from the point of view of CX leaders, looking at the best (below) and worst (at bottom) customer experiences by channel. When asked which channel provides the best experience, respondents by far chose “Phone” by nearly three-to-one compared to other channels. On the flip side, Email was the top choice among CX leaders for providing the “worst” experience. Not surprisingly, these results reflect Resolution Rates by channel (page 21), where Phone leads the way in Resolution Rate (87%), and Chatbot/Virtual Assistant provides the lowest Resolution Rate, at 60%. These results suggest boosting the Resolution Rates of channels might be an effective way to improve the customer experience of each respective channel.

At your organization, which of these customer support channels typically provide the best customer experience? (Select all that apply.)



At your organization, which of these customer support channels typically provide the worst customer experience? (Select all that apply.)

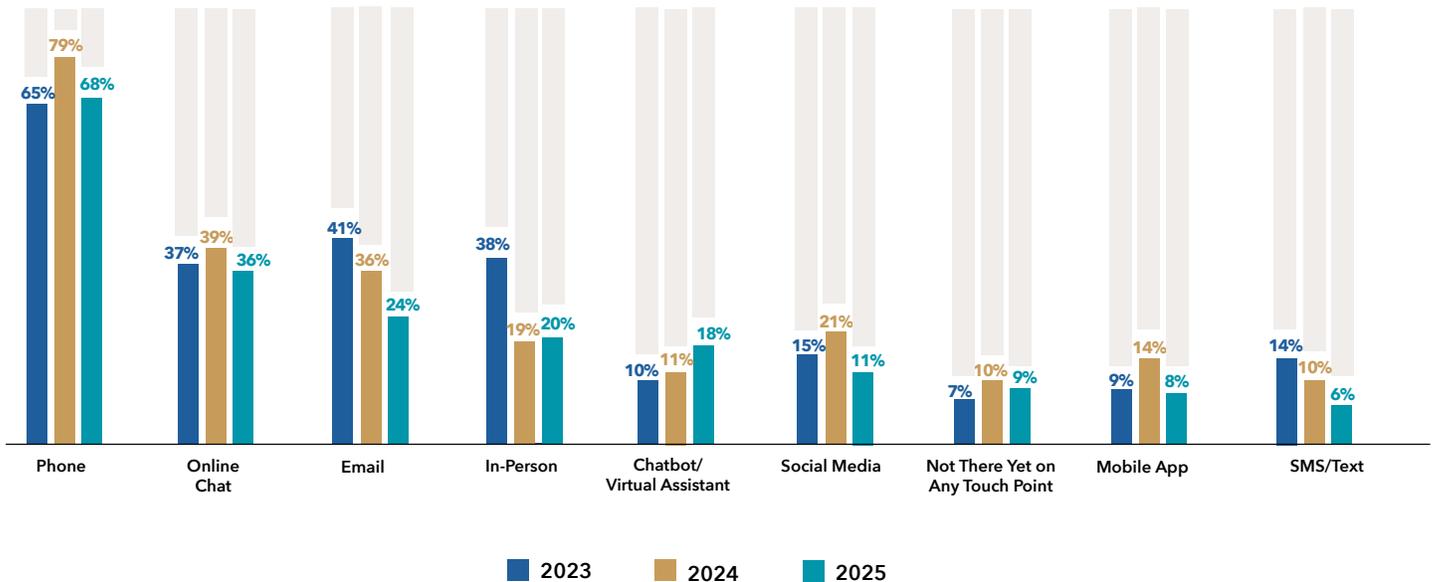


TOUCH POINTS – CHANNELS

WHERE SUCCESS IS OCCURRING AND FUTURE SOLUTIONS

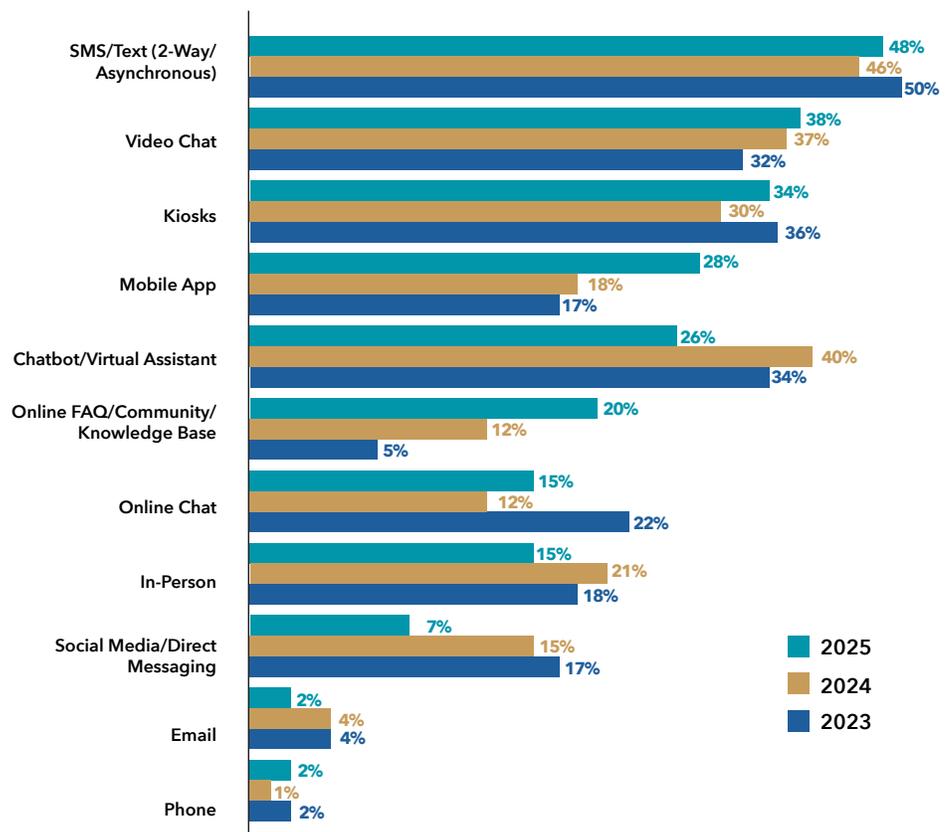
Echoing results from the previous page, CX leaders are most confident in Phone and Online Chat as customer touch points (like previous years), with confidence waning across touch points like Social Media, Mobile App, and SMS/Text. Close performance monitoring, plans for continuous improvement, and a dedication to journey mapping are all powerful strategies improving the effectiveness of contact channels and improving the customer experience.

Which customer touch point(s) do you feel your organization excels at? (Select all that apply.)



Which of the following solutions are not currently offered by your organization, but are a part of your short- to near-term plans? (Select all that apply.)

SMS/Text continues to lead the way when it comes to planned channels of care. Given the results above, it's curious that SMS/Text is both the most targeted solution for future introduction while simultaneously the least selected as a channel where organizations are best excelling. This combination of results illustrates that while SMS/Text is operationally important, it is a channel early in its maturity curve. For brands that have not yet implemented SMS/Text but plan to do so, design, rollout, monitoring, and strategies for continuous improvement will all be crucial factors for success.

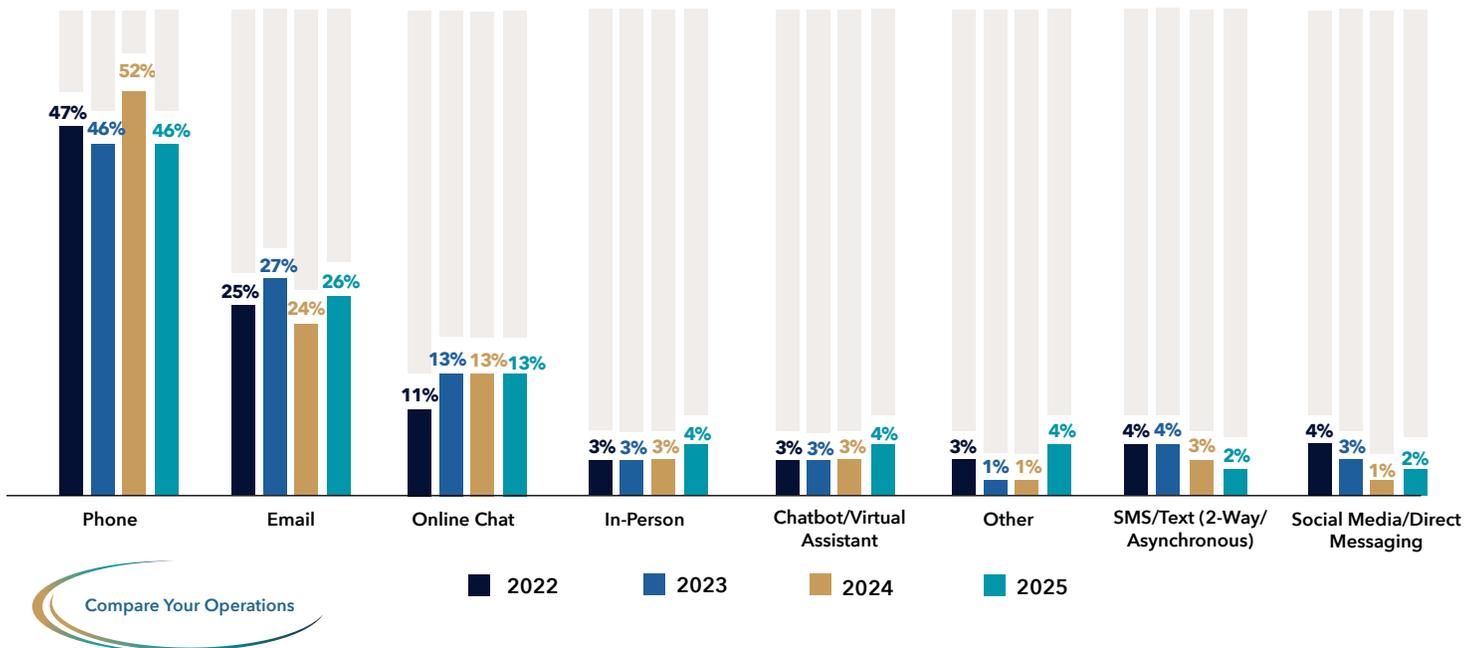


TOUCH POINTS – CHANNELS

VOLUME FLOWS AND RESOLUTION RATES

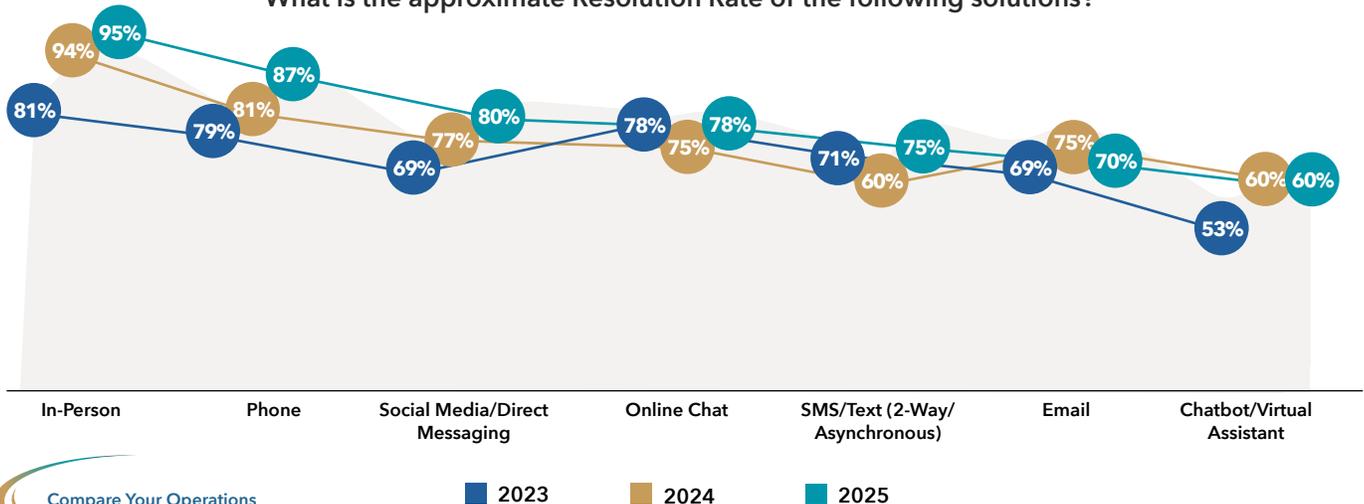
Phone continues to dominate the contact volume of most CX organizations, followed by Email and Online Chat. While Phone underwent a slight YoY drop (down six points), it continues to make up about 50% of global volume. Regardless, contact mix has remained strikingly consistent since 2022. This likely means two things. First, it's that consumer behavior and preference are slow to evolve despite years of investment and guidance to digital channels. Phone remains a pillar because it's what consumers trust, and it is what works best (see below). Second, this consistency of contact mix is possibly a signal of strong maturation in CX operations. Despite a whirlwind of digital innovation and transformation, the current model has matured to a place where it best meets the needs and behaviors of today's consumer.

Please indicate what percentage each of the following solutions contributes to your program's Overall Contact Volume.



In-Person (95% Resolution Rate) and Phone (87% Resolution Rate) continue to perform best, so it should come as little surprise that it dominates volume flow (as indicated above). Of note is the continued underperformance of Chatbot/Virtual Assistant — resolving issues, on average, just 60% of the time. For CX leaders to best proceed down a road of transformation, it is critical to understand that Resolution Rate is ultimately the only metric that matters to customers. It shapes not only their experience, but how they choose to behave in the future.

What is the approximate Resolution Rate of the following solutions?

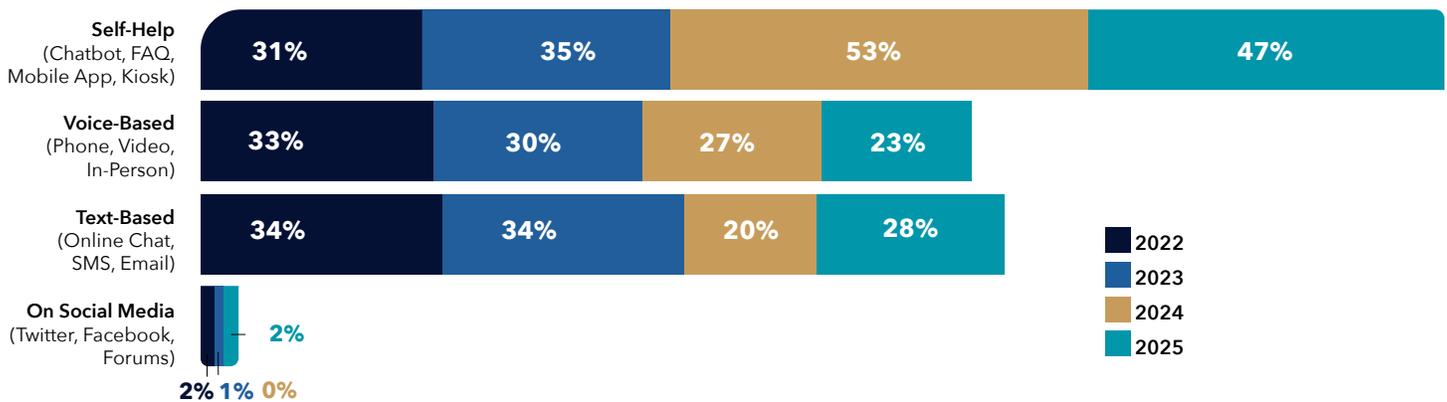


TOUCH POINTS – CHANNELS

UNDERSTANDING CHANNEL PREFERENCES

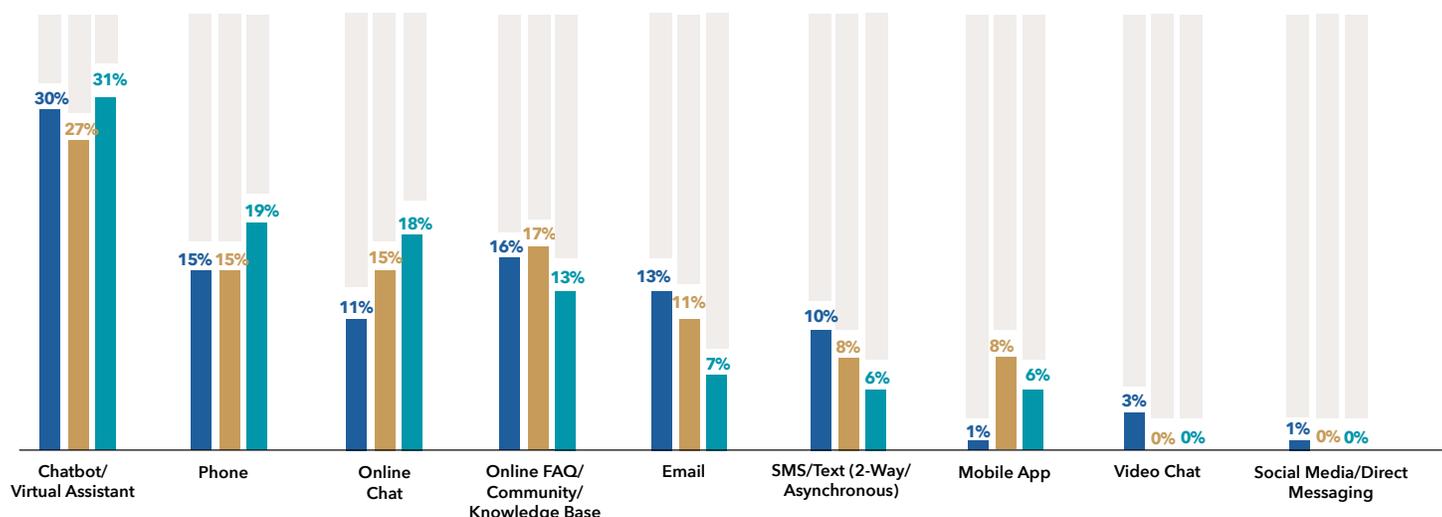
CX leaders continue to place Self-Help at the forefront of what consumers want. The caveat here might be with the assumption that the solution works. In the minds of CX leaders, such a solution would be made easy, efficient, accurate, and the obvious choice. But consumers have not yet had that experience which is why, in recent consumer surveying, only 19% would opt for a Self-Help solution (see Consumer Comparisons, page 71). For some consumers, lack of preference for Self-Help is about more than a poor previous experience. It's a mistrust of the technology itself, a desire for what's familiar, and an inability to adapt to rapid change.

Assuming the customer care issue would be resolved, which contact method do you think consumers would prefer to use?



Not surprisingly, when CX leaders were asked which care channel they most prefer their customers use, Chat/Virtual Assistant lead responses, named by 31% of CX leaders. This was followed by Phone (19%) and Online Chat (18%). These results are most telling in where CX leaders want to go. But the fact is, this vision is far off from what is currently taking place (page 21) with Phone dominating and Chatbot/Virtual Assistant accounting for only a fraction of overall volume. Transformation will not be as quick. For consumers, behaviors will be based almost exclusively on past experiences, not on promised future experiences or the potential of new technology.

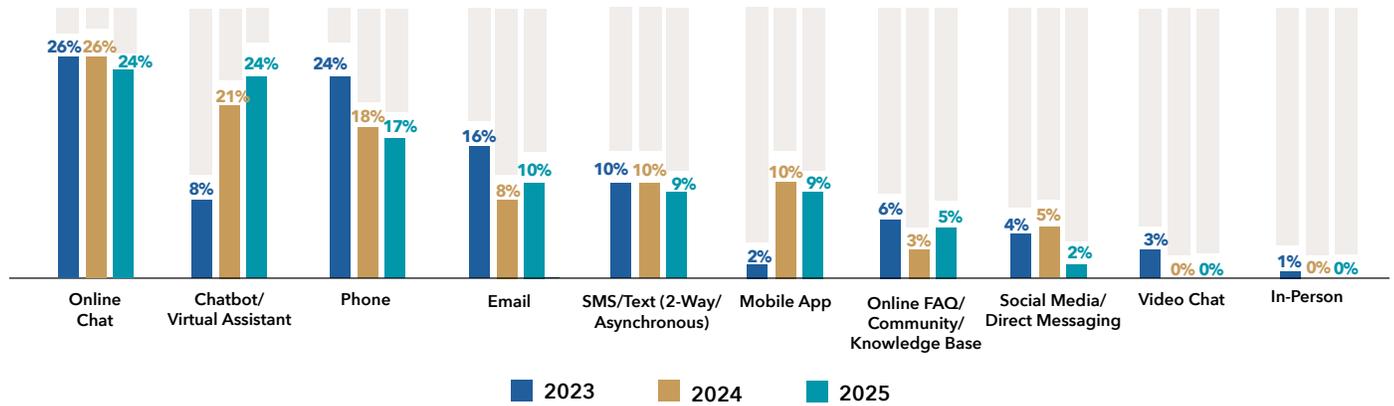
Assuming all solutions are equally capable of resolving a customer's issue, which channel would you prefer your customers use?



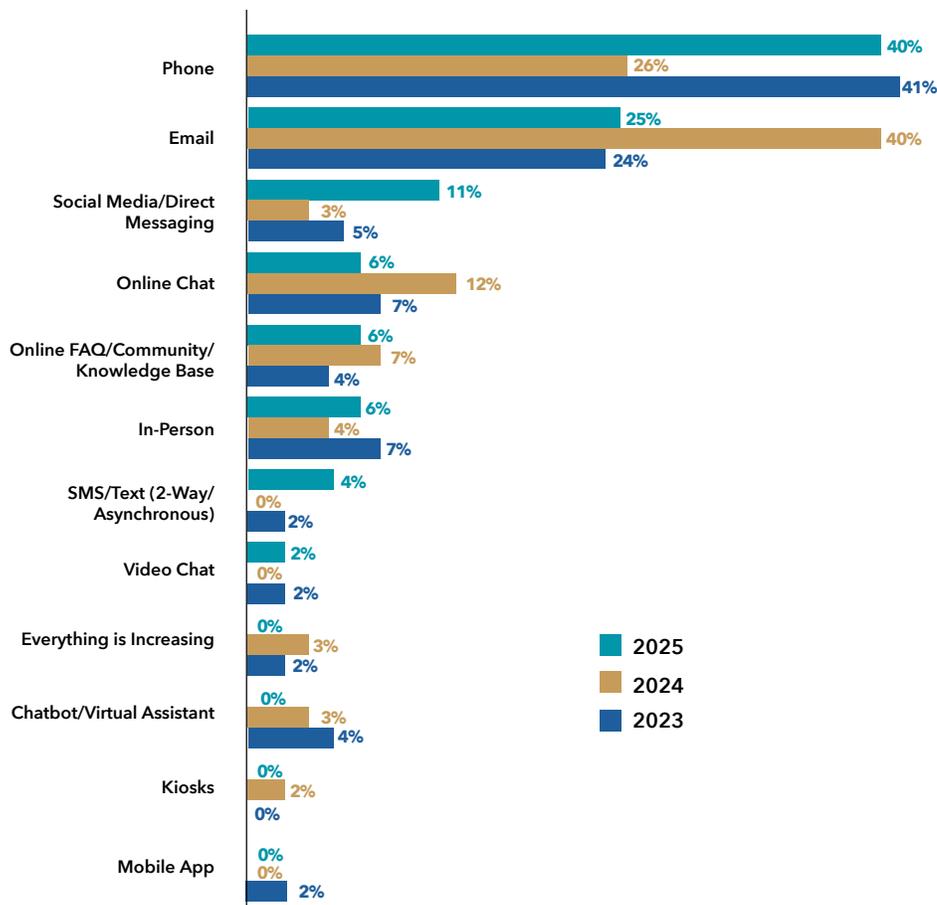
TOUCH POINTS – CHANNELS VOLUME INCREASES AND DECLINES

Growth continues to be seen in channels that facilitate the highest number of net contacts, namely, Online Chat, Phone, and Email. Additionally, Chatbot/Virtual Assistant growth continues to accelerate, though it has yet to account for significant overall volume (page 21). Furthermore, Chatbot/Virtual Assistant wasn't named as a channel seeing the biggest decrease in volume by a single respondent (below). The same can't be said of Phone and Email, which were named by 40% and 25% of respondents, respectively. These decreases are as likely to be an indication of overall volume changes as they are shifts from one solution to another given the stability of channel mix over the last several years (page 18).

Which of the following customer care solutions has seen the biggest increase in volume in the past 12 months?



Which of the following customer care solutions has seen the biggest decrease in volume in the past 12 months?

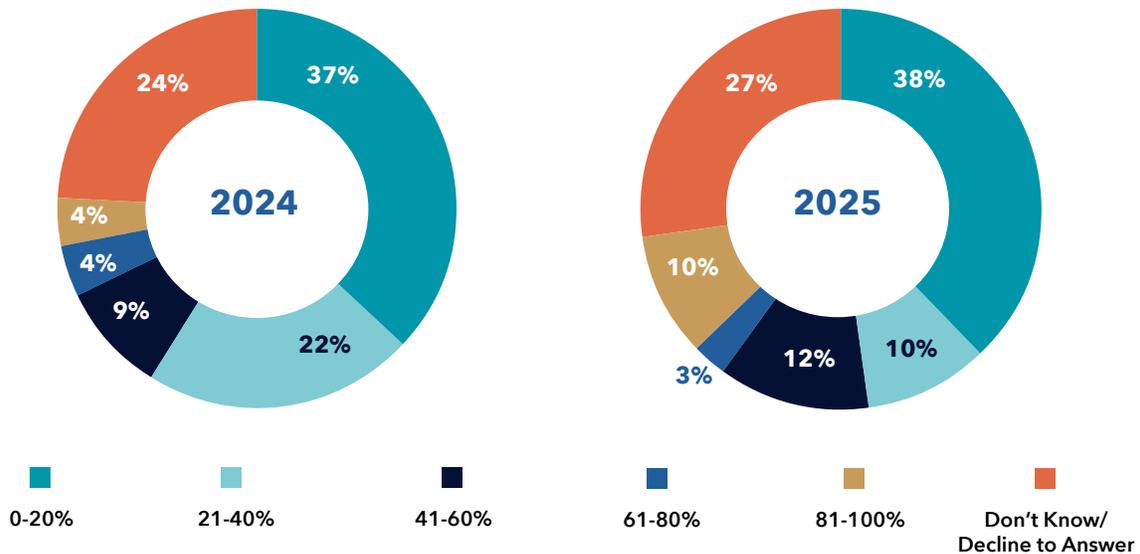


TOUCH POINTS – CHANNELS

MULTICHANNEL SOLUTIONING AND AVOIDING REDUNDANCY

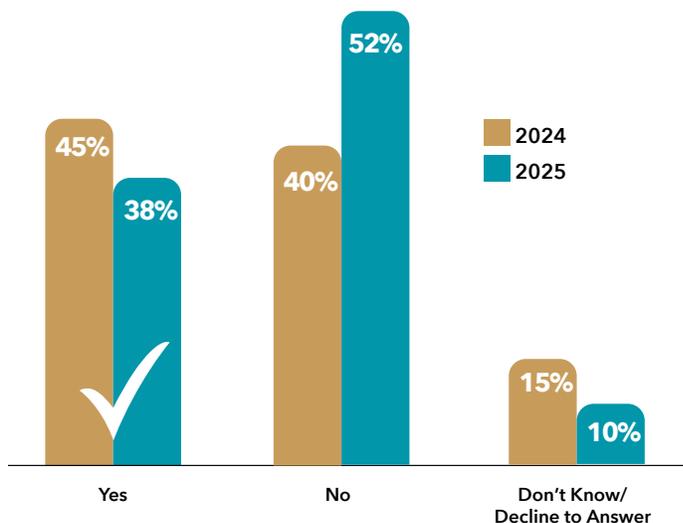
The multichannel journey is a critical component in shaping the overall customer care experience of consumers. In recent consumer surveying, 82% of consumers indicated they had had one or more instance of resolving a single customer care issue across multiple channels of care, up from 78% in 2024. In fact, the universality of multichannel has undoubtedly shaped consumer expectations. Continuity, fluidity, and consistency are the foundations for successful transition management. This fact should have strategic impact as CX leaders work to evolve and maximize their operations.

What percentage of your customer's issues are resolved across multiple channels?



Compare Your Operations

Do you have a process in place to help customers avoid having to repeat information as they transition across channels and from unassisted solutions?



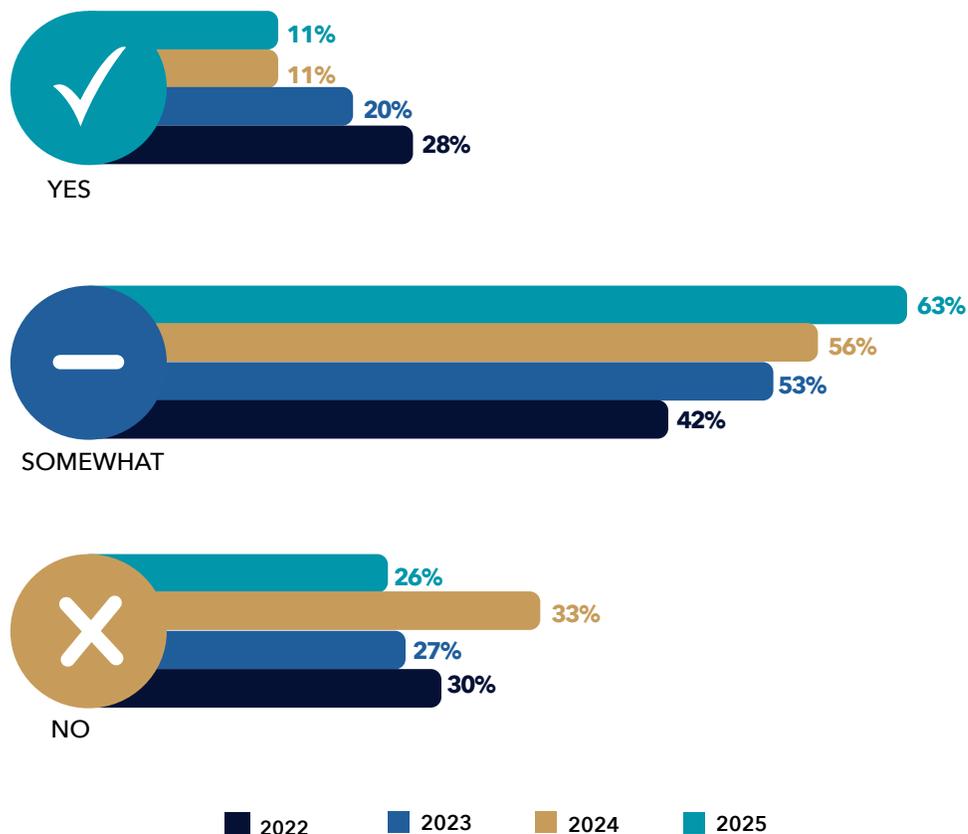
Fewer than half (38%) of organizations have a process in place to reduce instances of redundancy as customers transition across channels. Having to repeat information has long been a complaint of customers. Reducing such instances would imply better conveyance and management of data, with the ultimate goal being a 360-degree view of the customer (including contact history), resulting in greater speed to resolution and a more personalized experience.

Compare Your Operations

PROVIDING A SEAMLESS MULTICHANNEL EXPERIENCE

Few survey respondents (11%) estimate their organizations are doing a good job of providing a seamless, consistent, and easy experience across channels. This number has fallen in recent years, but appears to have stabilized YoY. Although a significant percentage of respondents (63%) indicated “Somewhat” to this important question, these numbers just don’t reflect the universality and prevalence of cross-channel engagements. This clear-eyed view illustrates how much work there is to be done in today’s current channel mix, let alone alongside the introduction of new and emerging channels. Some of these hand-offs and channel shifts may work today because they are among the most common and controlled. But an important pair of questions remains: “What happens in the event of a complex or novel issue, and how can consumers avoid being impacted by the weakest link in the chain?”

Does your organization do a good job of providing a seamless, consistent, and easy experience as your customers transition between different channels and solutions?



MEASUREMENT, DATA, AND PERFORMANCE

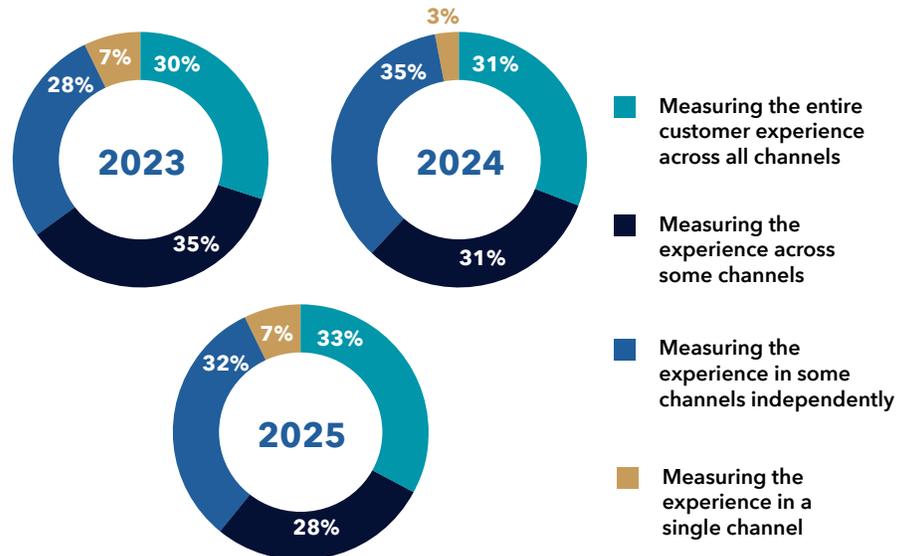


TOUCH POINTS – MEASUREMENT, DATA, AND PERFORMANCE

HOW COMPANIES ARE MEASURING CX AND THE METRICS USED

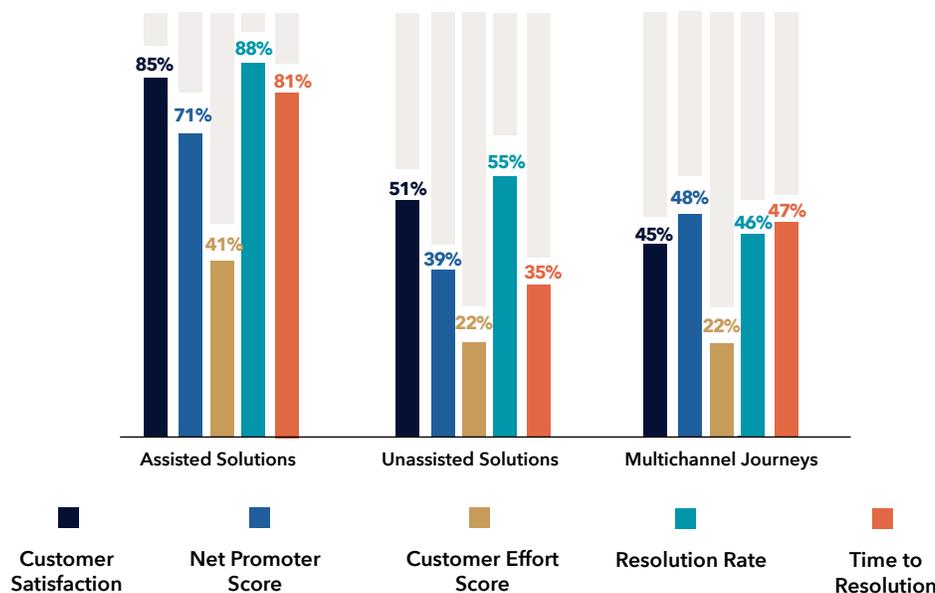
How would you describe how you are measuring the customer experience?

The way in which recipients reported measuring the customer experience was mixed YoY, with slightly more brands measuring across the entire experience across channels (up two points) and only in a single channel (up four points), and fewer measuring across some channels (down three points) and in some channels independently (down three points). Brands should consider a move toward end-to-end measuring, which best reflects a current journey that is often multichannel in nature (page 24).



Like previous years, Assisted Solutions are most broadly monitored against a prescribed set of critical KPIs, with Resolution Rate, CSAT, and Time to Resolution being the most common. Multichannel journeys, and especially Unassisted Solutions, remain seemingly under-monitored by Assisted Solutions standards, with critical metrics like CSAT and Resolution Rate measured by 45-55% of respondents compared to 85-88% of respondents for Assisted Solutions. What isn't measured isn't managed, and this truth — perhaps more than anything else — shapes CX outcomes and guides on future behaviors.

Which metric(s) do you use to measure the customer experience by solution type? (Check all that apply.)

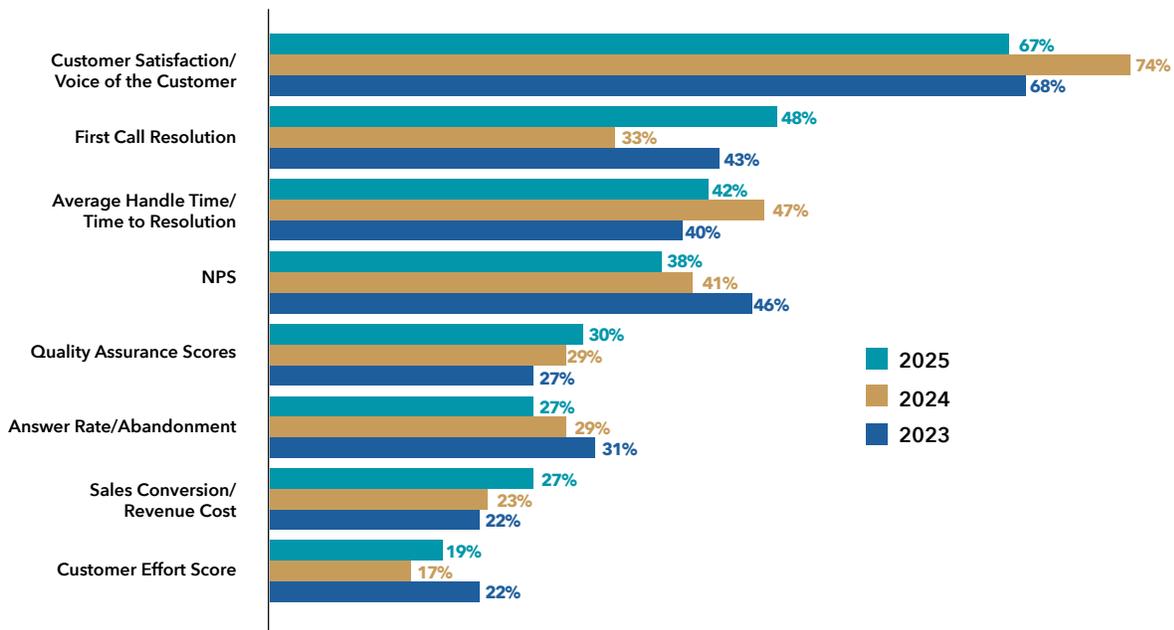


TOUCH POINTS – MEASUREMENT, DATA, AND PERFORMANCE

KPIS AND CHANGES IN PERFORMANCE

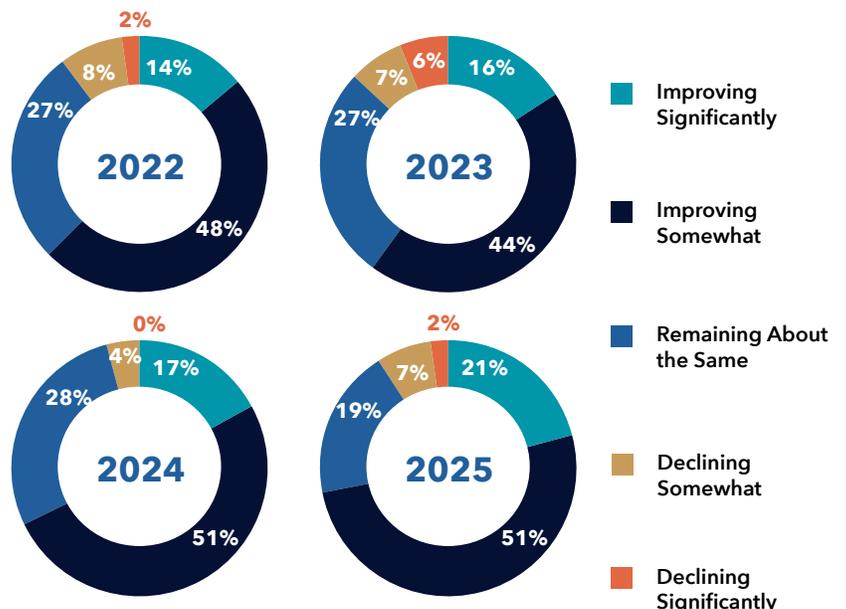
CSAT remains the most watched key performance indicator (KPI) among CX leaders, with a YoY boost to First Call Resolution (up 13 points, to 48%). Conversely, Net Promoter Score (NPS) continued to experience a retreat, now a focal point for only 38% of organizations. This could be an indication of greater focus on outcomes rather than perception. Measurements like NPS might be considered a lagging indicator rather than a measurement of a specific outcome, like CSAT or First Call Resolution (FCR).

Which three key performance indicators (KPIs) are most critical and garner the most attention in the management of your CX operations?



Generally speaking, over the past 12 months, have your critical program KPIs been improving, declining, or remaining the same?

Program performance reported by CX leaders was mixed YoY, with a four percent net gain in those seeing improving program KPIs paired with a five percent net gain in those brands seeing declining program KPIs. At the same time, there was a nine-point YoY drop in those indicating no change on a KPI basis. It could also be that increasing complexity is amplifying outcomes. Brands that are best prepared are seeing gains, while others are being exposed by this increasing complexity.

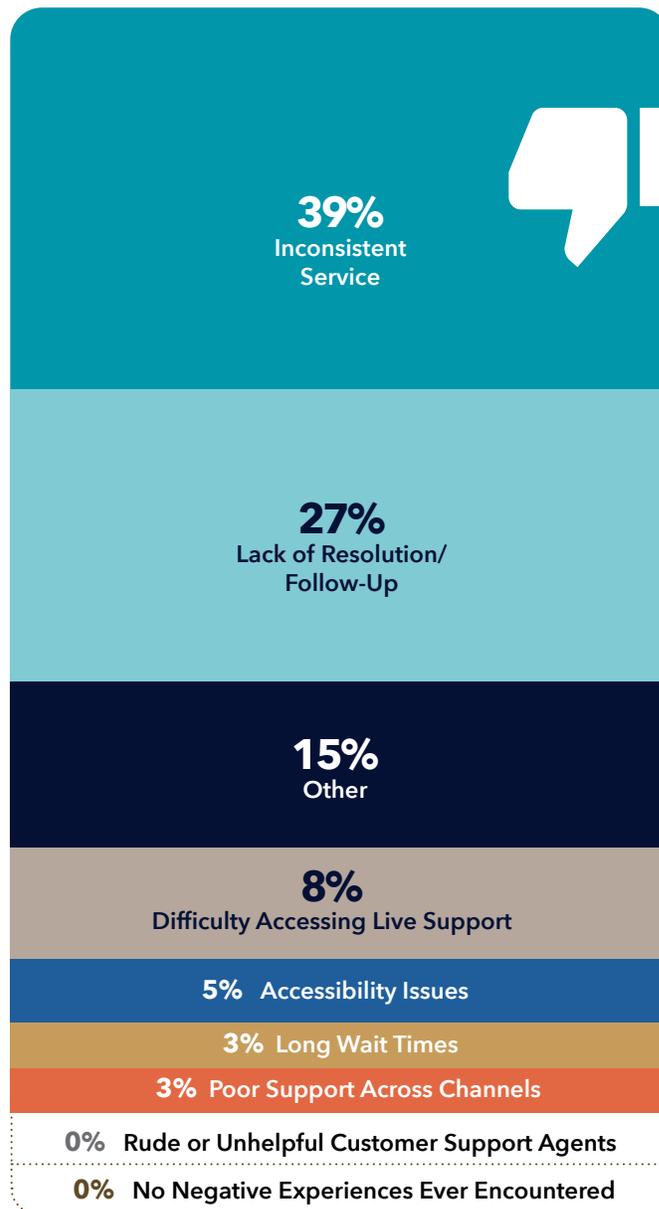


TOUCH POINTS – MEASUREMENT, DATA, AND PERFORMANCE

LIKELY NEGATIVE SCENARIOS

When asked which types of negative customer care experiences are most common at their organization, slightly more than one-third (39%) of respondents pointed to “Inconsistent Service,” followed by “Lack of Resolution/ Follow-Up” at 27%. Among “Other” (15%), multiple respondents named both issues with company policies and complexities that expose previously unknown process, technology, and policy issues. These results should caution CX leaders about the risks of complexity outpacing service design transformation, governance, and company policy.

Which type of negative customer care experience do you think is most likely to be encountered when customers are trying to resolve an issue with your organization?

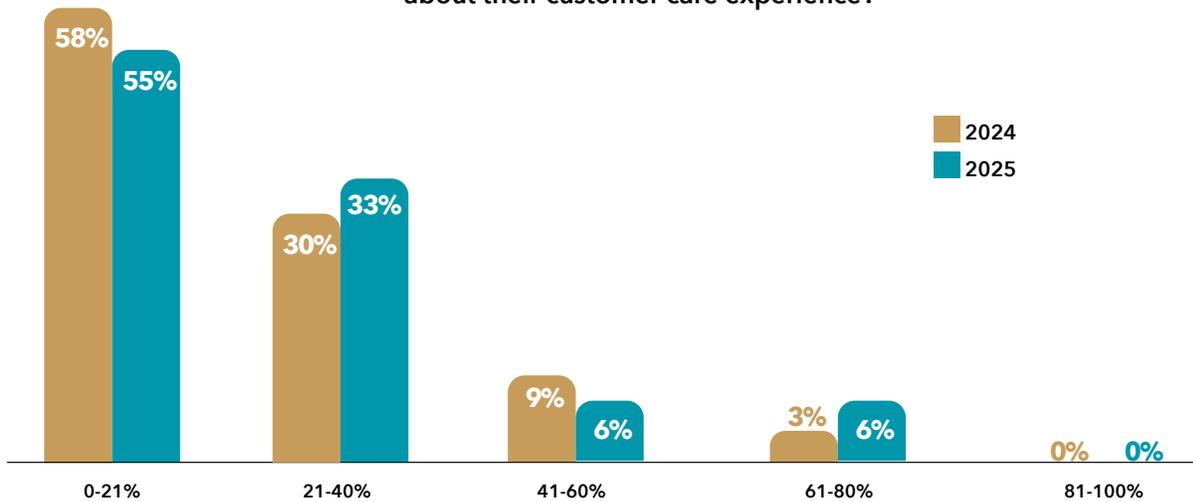


TOUCH POINTS – MEASUREMENT, DATA, AND PERFORMANCE

FEEDBACK PARTICIPATION AND RANDOMIZATION OF COLLECTION

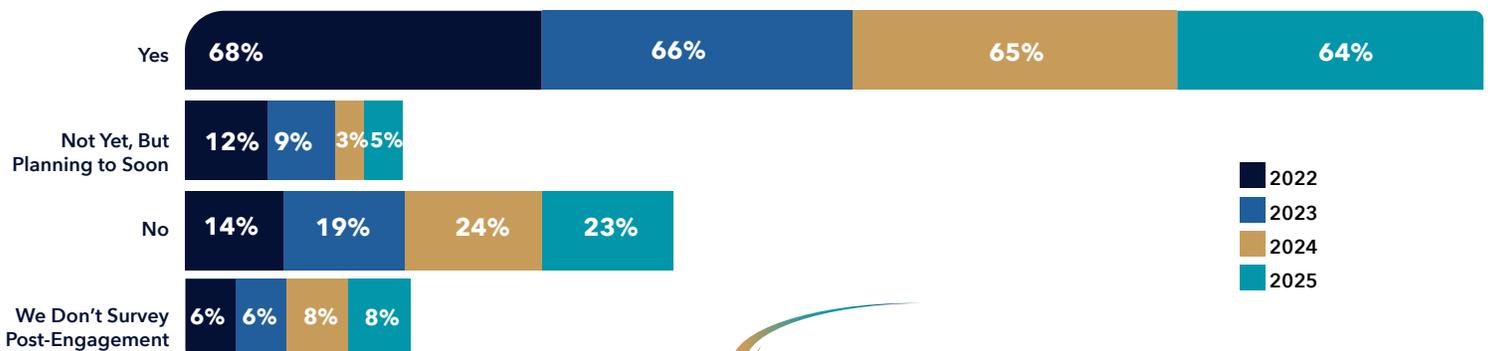
In the second year of asking the question below, results remained consistent YoY, with most brands (88%) reporting customer feedback/survey participation of 40% or less, and with the largest block (55%) reporting 0-20% participation. Survey burnout is a real thing, so brands should seek to gain insights from a range of sources, including both active (surveys) and passive (Voice of the Customer [VoC] or conversation mining). Though they will continue to play a role, surveys alone are no longer an all-encompassing representation of the customer experience.

When you provide the opportunity for them to, what percentage of your customers provide feedback (such as survey response, sentiment, etc.) about their customer care experience?



Although surveys shouldn't be the only option for generating meaningful consumer insights, when used, they should be executed using best practices. One such best practice is randomization, helping to ensure a true representational look at the customer experience. While it's good news that 69% either use randomization or plan to, that still leaves a significant number of brands that are either not surveying or not using randomization techniques when doing so. Without randomization, results can be skewed, producing data that's unreliable for critical decision-making.

When surveying customers post-engagement, does your organization take steps to ensure survey collection is truly randomized?

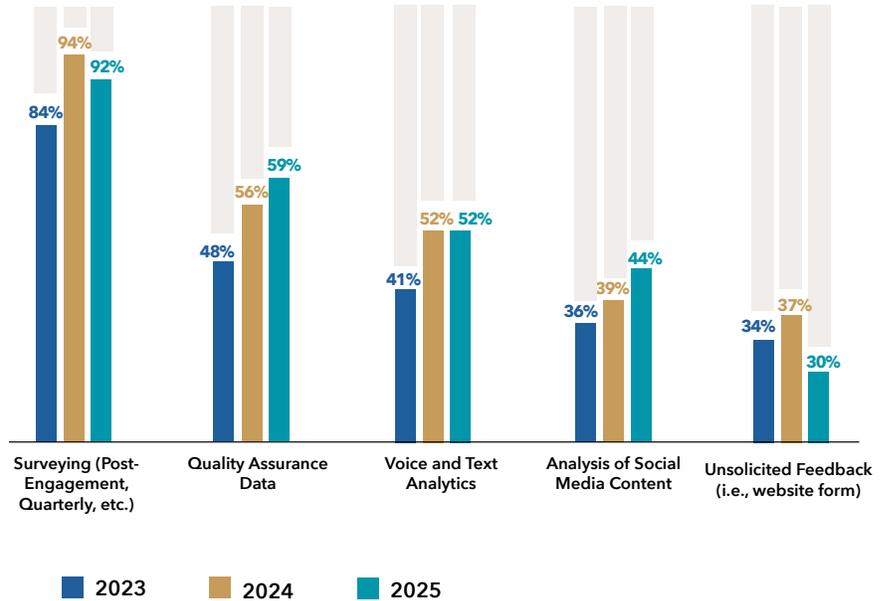


TOUCH POINTS – MEASUREMENT, DATA, AND PERFORMANCE

CAPTURING SENTIMENT AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ITS USE

In a pair of questions that delve deeper into how brands are capturing VoC and to what effect they are utilizing such data, 92% of brands capture said data via direct customer surveying, while Quality Assurance (QA) data (59%), interaction analytics (52%), and the mining of social media content (44%) also play significant roles. While each of these methods of collecting customer insight have their own strengths and weaknesses, the deepest insights come from the triangulation of multiple sources of data. Of course, the real magic lies in how this information is turned into actions that positively transform the experience.

In which ways is your organization capturing customer sentiment and satisfaction information? (Select all that apply.)

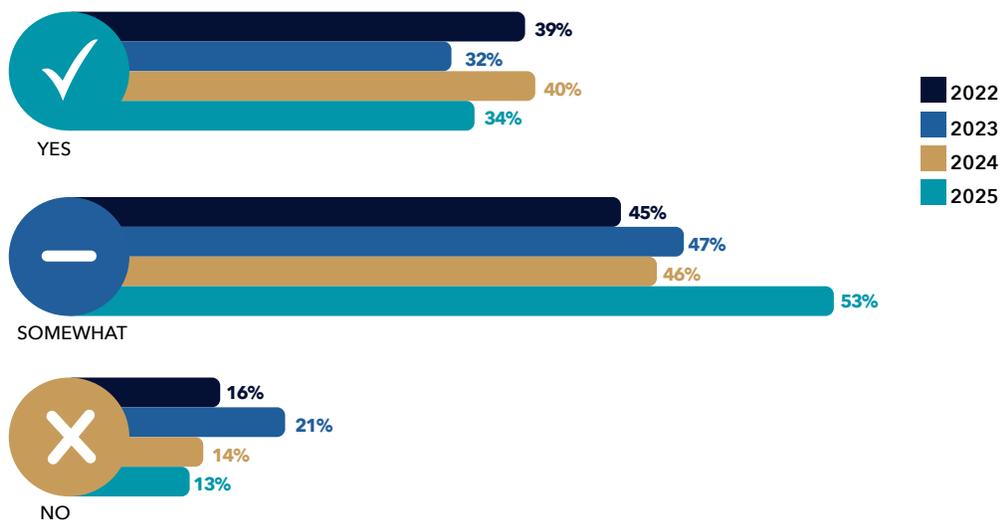


TOUCH POINTS – MEASUREMENT, DATA, AND PERFORMANCE

CAPTURING SENTIMENT AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ITS USE

In a result that continues to reveal the challenges posed by program data, only 34% of survey respondents felt their organization was using things like VoC and QA data in an appropriate and productive way, with another 53% feeling they were “Somewhat” doing so, and 13% outright responding, “No.” At many organizations, the amassing of data is undoubtedly outpacing levels of readiness in managing and actioning such data. For companies collecting and attempting to utilize such data, a good first step is defining ownership for activating insights. From there, consider building processes that facilitate insights becoming action, accounting for things like enablement, cross-function collaboration, and defining measurements for success.

Do you feel your organization is using program data (things like Voice of the Customer and Quality Assurance data) in an appropriate and productive way?



In what ways are you effectively operationalizing program data, and what have been some of the outcomes of these efforts?

“

Most organizations collect extensive QA and VoC data but underuse it due to silos, over-reporting, and a focus on lagging indicators. QA and VoC insights are often disconnected across teams, resulting in dashboards that describe what happened without driving clear action. Feedback tends to focus on agent behavior rather than addressing root causes like broken processes, policies, or digital friction, which leave systemic issues unresolved.

High-performing organizations treat QA and VoC as operational intelligence. They integrate QA findings with VoC themes and performance metrics to identify repeatable defects, prioritize fixes, and drive measurable business outcomes. Instead of managing to agent scores, they act on larger repetitive themes, align ownership across functions, and close the loop by eliminating customer pain points, turning insight into sustained operational improvement.

”



Tracy Sedlak
CX Leader

TOUCH POINTS – MEASUREMENT, DATA, AND PERFORMANCE

MAXIMIZING PROGRAM DATA

In an open-ended question regarding maximizing the value of program data, responses touched on several themes, including the importance of data access and management, cross-functional collaboration, the emergence of qualitative data as a catalyst for change, and the shift from reactive to proactive care. The bottom line: CX leaders don't necessarily need more data ... they need to overcome data bottlenecks and continue to get better at creating effective activation paths that lead to measurable results.

See below for a representative selection of verbatim from the answers received.



WHAT COULD OR SHOULD YOUR ORGANIZATION BE DOING DIFFERENTLY TO MAXIMIZE THE VALUE OF YOUR PROGRAM'S DATA, AND WHAT IS WORKING BEST CURRENTLY?

"Create stronger cross-functional data sharing so insights turn into faster action across teams."

"We are working on creating some AI analytic solutions to customize the experience by personality profile."

"Development of targeted efforts to create a CX that eliminates the need for customers to reach out for assistance."

"We are working to combine siloed data sets into one wholistic dashboard."

"We need to expand resources and budget to follow through on projects to solve discovered opportunities."

"Do more deep dives, customer journey mapping, and data storytelling. Quantitative numbers don't mobilize the organization; qualitative examples do."

"Create product enhancements based on customer feedback vs. a set-in-stone product roadmap."

"We're sharing real data from customers each month with all product teams. It is beginning to force change and a paradigm shift."

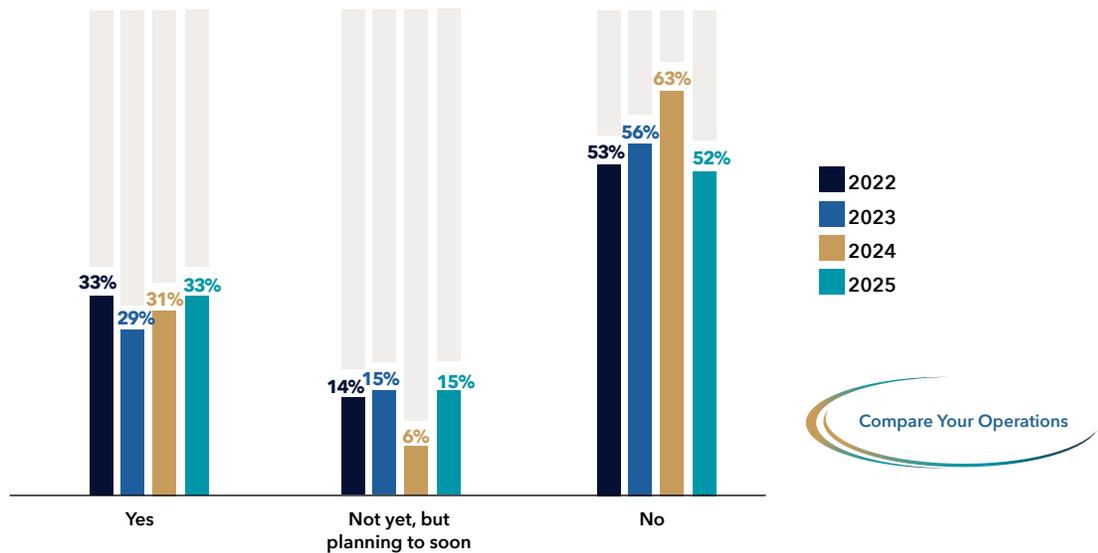


TOUCH POINTS – MEASUREMENT, DATA, AND PERFORMANCE

USE OF DEMOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

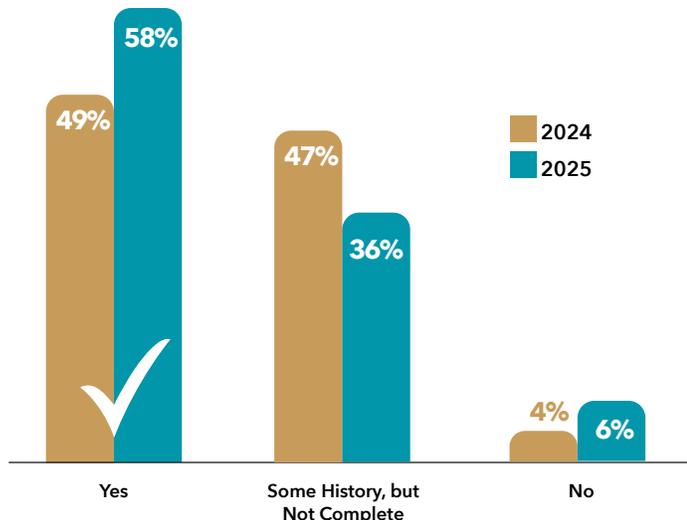
About one-third of companies (33%) are currently using the demographical data (such as age) of their customers to help strategize on solutions and processes within their CX organization, with another 15% planning to do so in the near term. Such demographics (especially age) can have a profound impact on things like channel preference, tool adoption, and brand perception. Using such data is a critical step in creating a truly proactive, intuitive, and personalized brand experience.

Are you using the demographics (age) of your customers to strategize solutions and processes within your CX organization?



When working with a customer to resolve a customer care issue, do your agents (either internal or external) have access to the customer's complete history (purchase, previous interactions, etc.)?

The percentage of companies that empower agents with greater customer information (including purchase and interaction histories) grew YoY, up nine points, from 49% to 58%. Like the use of demographics (as covered above), providing deeper access to customer information can help agents create a more personalized experience, cut down on redundancies that frustrate customers, and make agent workflows more efficient. Simply put, agents cannot deliver the best experience without proper context.

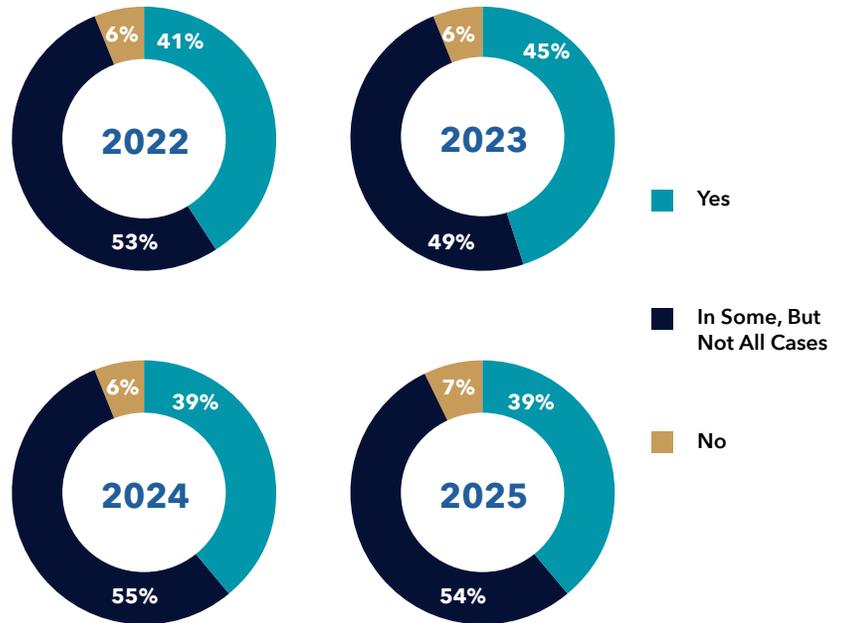


TOUCH POINTS – MEASUREMENT, DATA, AND PERFORMANCE

PROACTIVE FOLLOW-UPS AND APPROACH

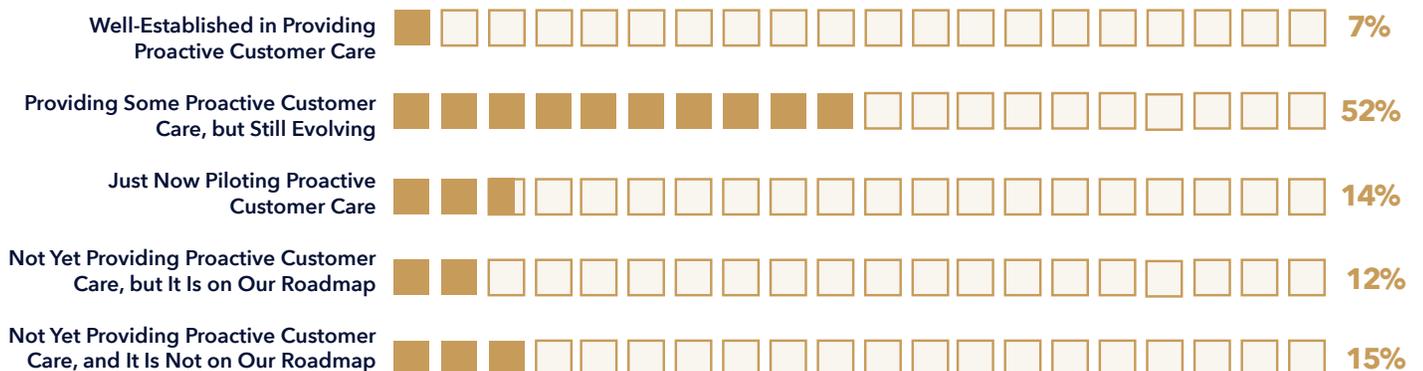
The percentage of companies engaging in proactive follow-ups occurring after a negative care experience has remained range-bound the last several years, with 39-45% of brands following up in all cases, and 49-55% following up in some cases. Proactive follow-ups build trust and loyalty, letting customers know resolution is the ultimate goal. Although recent results suggest the industry has achieved a steady state, there is still more work to be done, especially around enablement with the need for more tools that help detect negative experiences and automatically initiate follow-up processes designed to shift a negative experience into a positive one.

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



Slightly more than half (52%) of survey respondents have indicated that their approach to proactive customer care (not to be confused with proactive recovery, above) is somewhat established, but evolving. Of all those surveyed, only 15% indicated they are not providing Proactive Customer Care, nor is it on their roadmap. To provide proactive care that is contextual and truly matters, brands will need to be timely, relevant, and genuinely helpful.

Which of the following best describes your CX operation's current approach to proactive customer care?

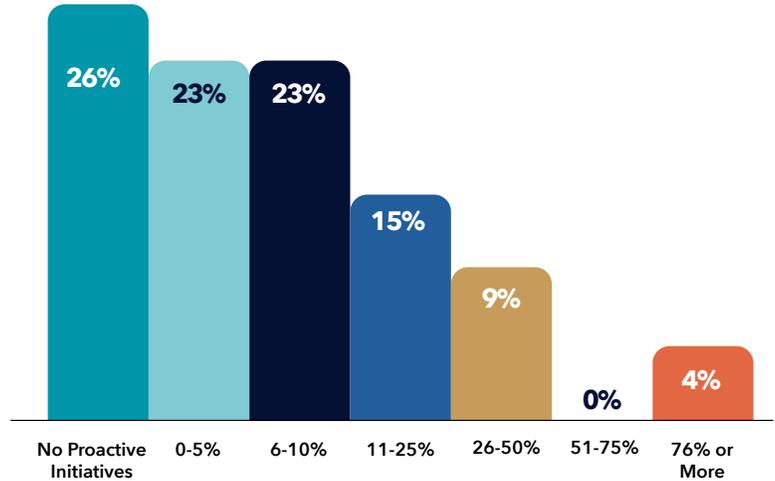


TOUCH POINTS — MEASUREMENT, DATA, AND PERFORMANCE

PROACTIVE VOLUME AND CONSUMER RECEPTIVENESS

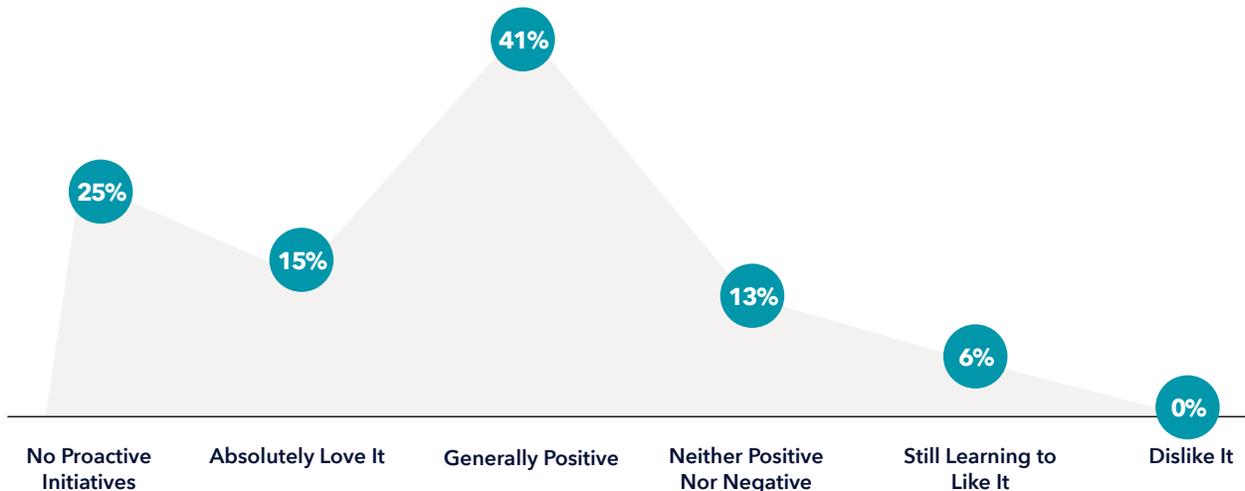
What percentage of your overall volume is impacted by your proactive customer care initiatives?

It is early yet for proactive customer care, and this can be seen in its modest impact on overall volume with most companies seeing an impact of 10% or less. Couple this with the 26% of brands that have yet to implement proactive care initiatives, and it's clear there is runway for growth. As predictive analytics, AI, and journey orchestration capabilities continue to mature, organizations will be better positioned to anticipate needs, prevent issues, and engage customers before problems escalate. The opportunity ahead is substantial.



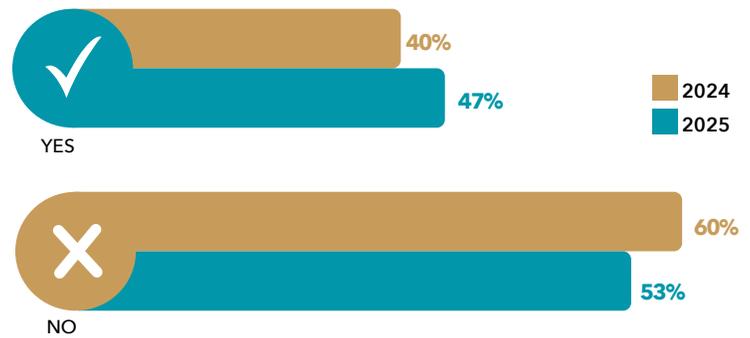
Of the 75% of brands that are providing some level of proactive customer care, customer response has been overwhelmingly positive, with most either loving it or providing genuinely positive feedback. This is clear validation of the core value proposition of proactive care — ease and effectiveness. This result is likely paired with a natural shift in consumer expectations as consumers tend to gravitate toward their best experiences. Now that proactive practices are validated by the customer, the question becomes, which use cases drive the most value for brand and customer, and what are the biggest challenges in scaling the service.

How receptive have your customers been to your proactive customer care initiatives?



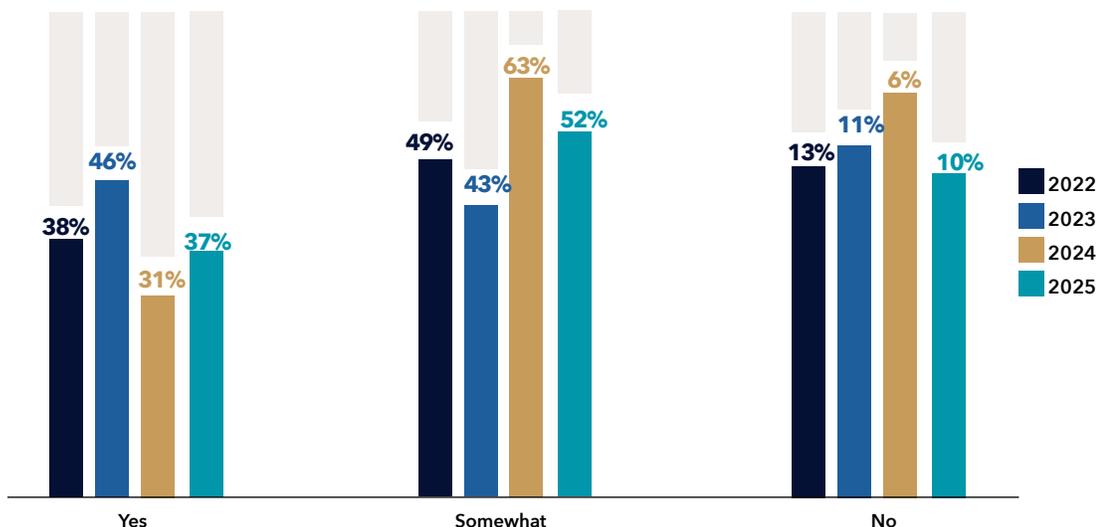
This year’s cohort saw stronger adherence to the practice of measuring the impact of contact center operations on customer loyalty compared to 2024, up from 40% to 47% YoY. Many brands have already grown to understand that contact center operations isn’t just about resolving issues — it’s also about building loyalty. This profound realization, when had, is key to unlocking deeper value for CX operations, and possesses the power to shift and evolve both operations and CX strategies.

Does your organization measure the impact of your contact center operations on the loyalty of its customers?



When asked whether their company is doing a good job of using CX to drive loyalty, 37% of respondents said, “Yes,” while a further 52% indicated, “Somewhat.” Only ten percent said, “No.” Utilizing CX to drive loyalty is a sign of maturation for a care operation, providing the ultimate return to the wider organization. Short of active advocacy, new or strengthened brand loyalty is the ideal outcome of any care engagement. That said, generating loyalty should be by design, not as a byproduct. Brands should consider taking actions that build trust while also measuring the impact had on loyalty across the wider journey and not just at the interaction level.

Do you feel your organization does a good job of using its customer experience operations to drive customer loyalty?

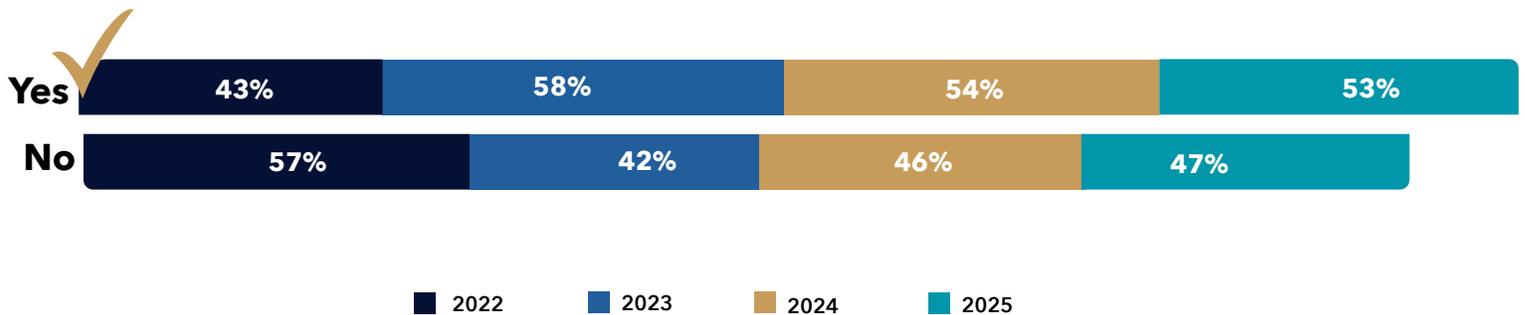


TOUCH POINTS – MEASUREMENT, DATA, AND PERFORMANCE

ABANDONMENT OF SELF-HELP SOLUTIONS

For the third year in a row, more than half of respondents indicated that they measured abandonment rates within self-help solutions, up from 43% in 2022. Abandonment is a key metric for such solutions, but equally important is understanding which journeys generate abandons, as well as where/why customers are giving up. Furthermore, the insights generated by these understandings should be fuel for continuous improvement efforts that should be measured for effectiveness and success.

Do you measure how many customers attempt to use self-help or unassisted solutions but abandon the interaction before completing the task?



CONCLUSIONS:

WORKFORCE, CHANNELS, AND MEASUREMENT

KEY FINDINGS:

- Phone remains dominant in overall volume, but digital and AI-powered channels are rapidly expanding.
- Measurement remains uneven, with assisted channels benefiting from better monitoring than self-help solutions and multichannel journeys.
- Multichannel journeys are ubiquitous, yet most brands still struggle to deliver seamless consistency.

The workforce and channel landscape in 2026 reflect a system in transition. Traditional assisted channels (especially Phone) still carry roughly more than half of all contact volume, reinforcing that human support remains indispensable. Though AI is now deeply embedded across chatbots, mobile apps, email, online chat and, increasingly, voice, rather than replacing agents, AI is primarily augmenting them.

Multichannel has grown ubiquitous, and this expansion is often outpacing many organizations' ability to deliver truly seamless experiences. More consumers than ever are resolving issues across multiple channels, yet a minority of CX leaders feel their organizations provide a consistently easy cross-channel journey. This gap suggests that, while digital capabilities are improving, orchestration, policy alignment, and integration remain significant barriers. The continued prominence of "inconsistent service" and "lack of resolution/follow-up" as top pain points further underscores the thought that execution – not intent – remains the central challenge.

On measurement, progress is mixed. While more brands are tracking performance across entire journeys, self-help and multichannel experiences remain under-monitored relative to assisted channels. This creates blind spots – particularly as AI takes on more responsibility for resolution. Encouragingly, leaders are increasingly focusing on outcome-oriented KPIs such as resolution rate, containment, and abandonment rather than deflection alone. Yet only one-third of organizations believe they are using VoC and QA data effectively, highlighting a persistent gap between data collection and action.

Taken together, these findings point to a workforce and channel ecosystem that is more capable, but also more complex. Success in the coming years will depend on stronger governance, better integration, and a relentless focus on outcomes and actual experiences – particularly as they apply to resolution, effort, and consistency.

CX INITIATIVES AND CX STRATEGIES

- » CX Initiatives
- » CX Strategies

CX INITIATIVES

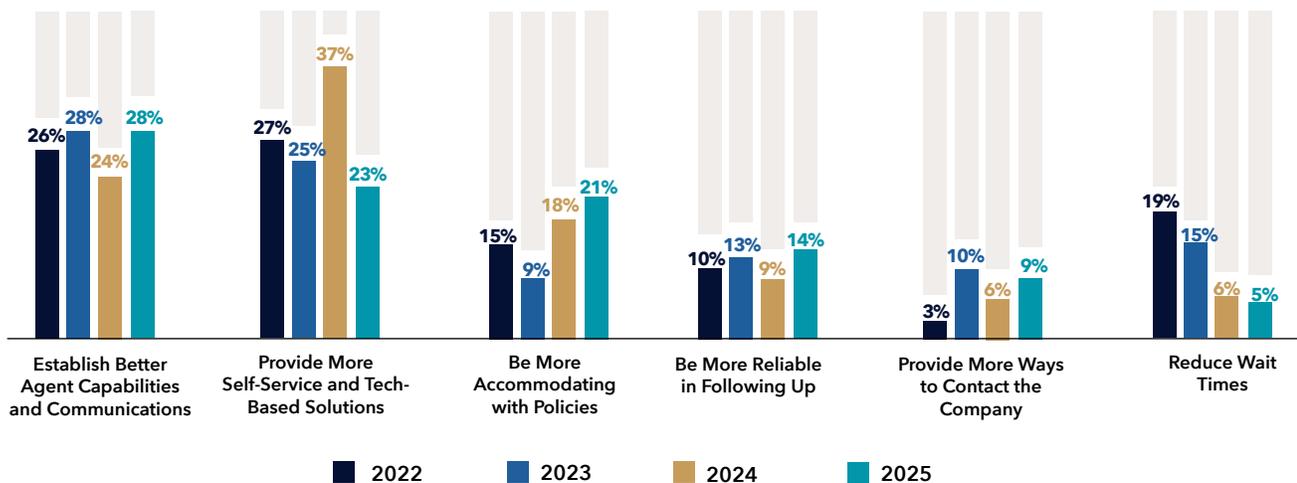


CX INITIATIVES AND CX STRATEGIES – CX INITIATIVES

MAKING CX EASIER AND IMPROVING UNASSISTED SOLUTIONS

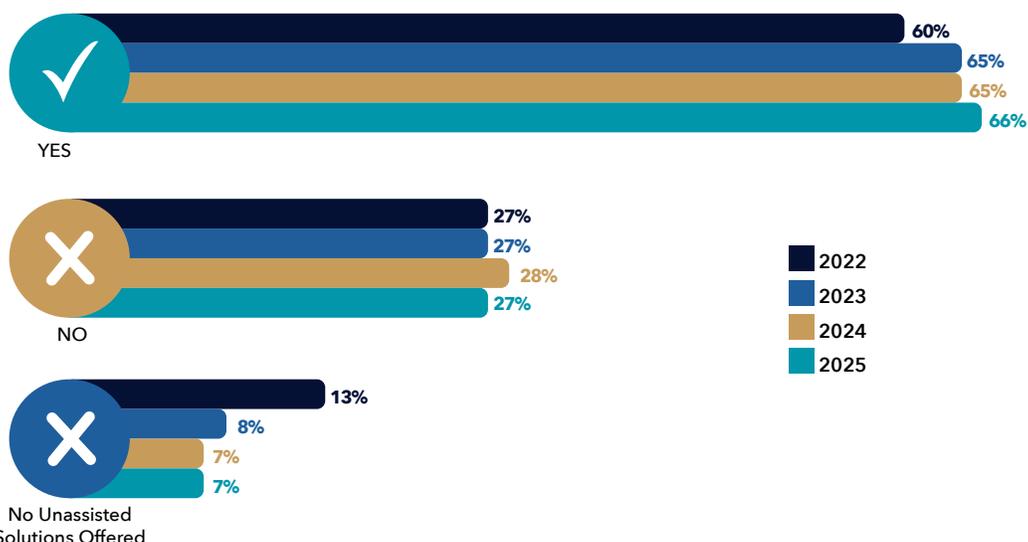
When asked what they think consumers want brands to do to make resolution as easy as possible, most CX leaders gravitated toward one of three options ... better agents (28%), more self-serve options (23%), or more accommodating policies (21%). "Reduce Wait Times" was at the bottom of the list (only five percent), likely signaling a continued volume shift from assisted to unassisted solutions, making wait time a moot statistic. It could also be that CX leaders are reframing easy as more effective (better agent skills) and accommodating (reduced policy friction) as opposed to fast service.

What do you think consumers want brands to do to make the resolution process as easy as possible?



When asked if their organization had a specific initiative to increase the resolution capabilities of unassisted solutions, 66% of respondents indicated they had. A good place to start is by clearly defining which issues should be resolvable using unassisted solutions, as well as a close look at edge cases. Layered onto this should be careful monitoring and measuring of resolution-first metrics, processes for continuous improvement, and realistic expectations, plans, and pathing for escalations to a live agent. Brands need to have a clear-eyed view of what unassisted solutions can and can't handle and route appropriately.

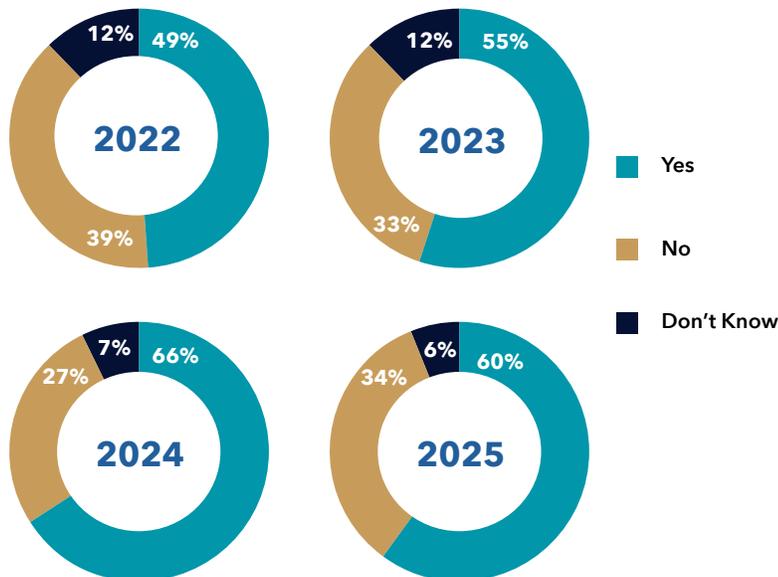
Does your organization have any specific initiatives to increase the resolution capabilities of your unassisted solution(s)?



CX INITIATIVES AND CX STRATEGIES – CX INITIATIVES CREATING BETTER CROSS-CHANNEL EXPERIENCES

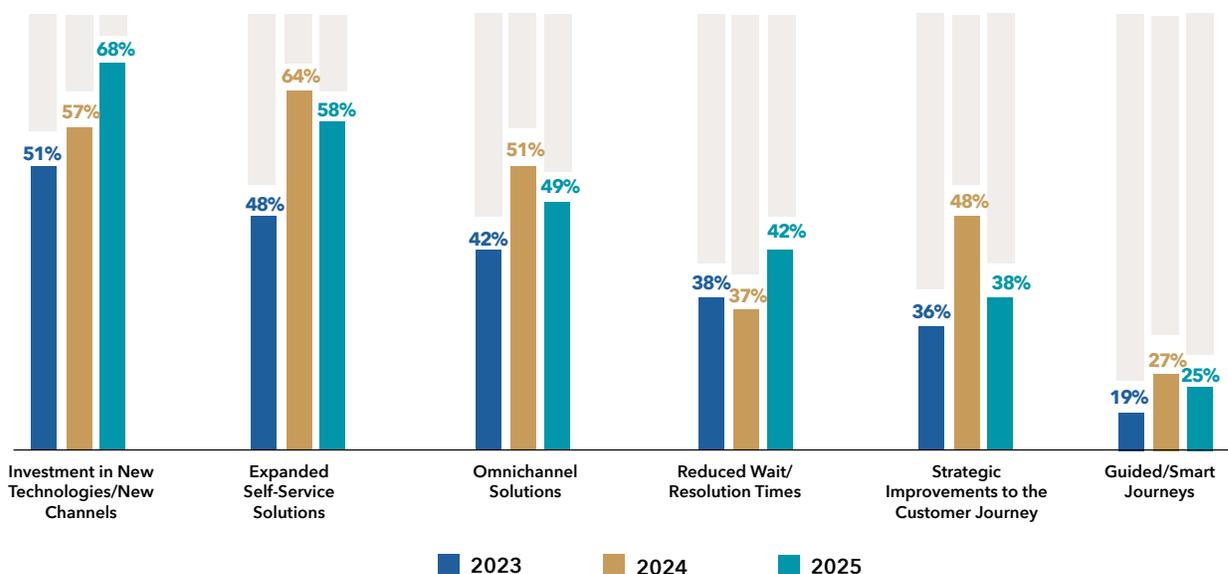
Does your organization have any specific initiatives to create a greater ease for customers as they navigate channels?

After two years of consecutive gains, the percentage of organizations that have specific initiatives to create greater cross-channel ease slipped YoY, from 66% to 60%. This dip could be caused by any number of variables, but a lack of conviction is likely not one of them. More likely, it is a previous sweep of low-hanging fruit, a stall as legacy technology catches up, and/or a focus on right-channeling that altogether avoids instances of escalations or channel hopping. At any rate, the cross-channel experience is now mainstay (page 24), so creating an exceptional cross-channel experience should be more than an operational side quest. It should be an imperative.



Investment in new technology leads the way when it comes to initiatives to create greater cross-channel ease, indicated by 68% of respondents, and followed closely by an expansion of self-service (58%) and omnichannel (49%) solutions. Undoubtedly, the companies that succeed will be the ones that pair smart, successful technology investments with outcome-driven initiatives on the process and policy front. Brands should be considering entire journeys as carefully as they consider endpoints.

What are some of the specific initiatives your organization has implemented to create greater ease for customers as they navigate across channels? (Select all that apply.)

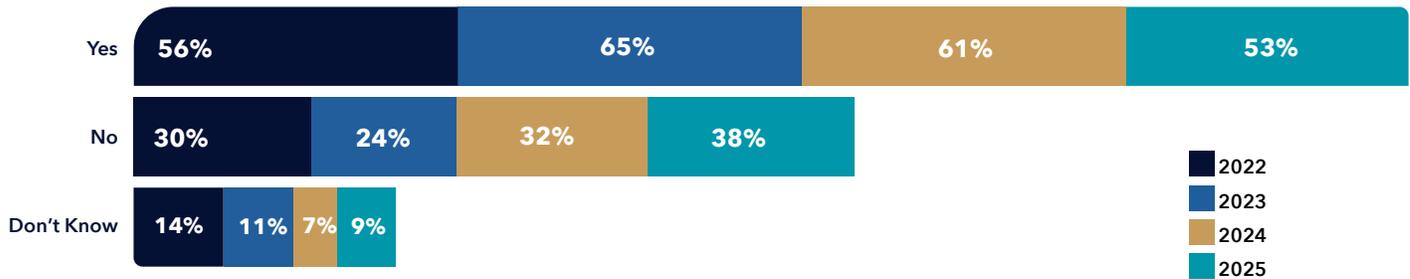


CX INITIATIVES AND CX STRATEGIES – CX INITIATIVES

CREATING GREATER CONSISTENCY ACROSS CHANNELS

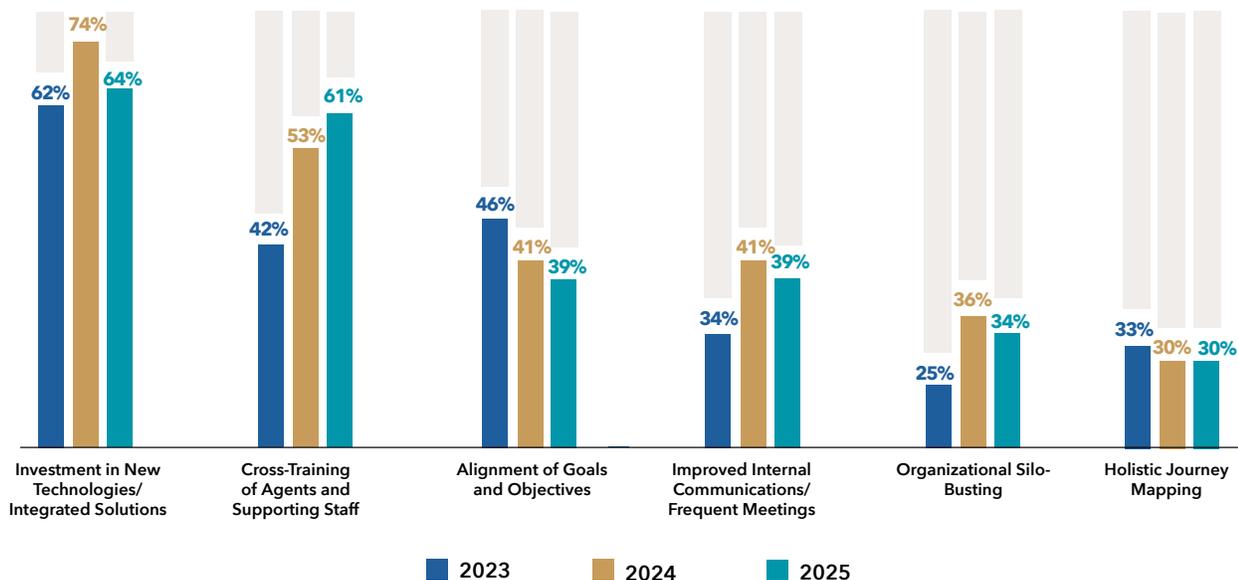
Like ease, consistency is a must-have for consumers, especially as cross-channel engagements have grown commonplace. Alongside initiatives to create greater ease, there was a YoY dropoff in the percentage of companies having specific initiatives to create greater cross-channel consistency, falling from 61% to 53% YoY, and down from 65% in 2023. Although consistency is difficult to achieve with live interactions growing more complex and under the constraints of legacy systems that don't always mesh, many companies have successfully tackled such challenges. See below for how they are doing it.

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



Again, investment in new technology (64%) leads the way in building greater cross-channel consistency, followed by better agent training (61%) and improved alignment of goals and improved internal communication (39% apiece, respectively). The fact is, pulling no single lever will ever achieve total consistency. Therefore, the brands that draw clear lines of ownership and effectively spread their efforts across initiatives will most likely meet with success.

What are some of the specific initiatives your organization has implemented to create greater consistency across all channels? (Select all that apply.)



CX STRATEGIES



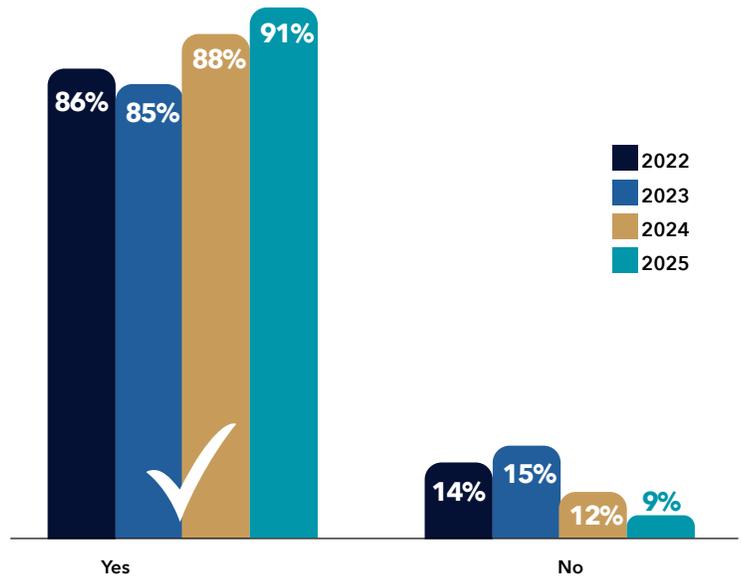
CX INITIATIVES AND CX STRATEGIES – CX STRATEGIES

MEETING NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT

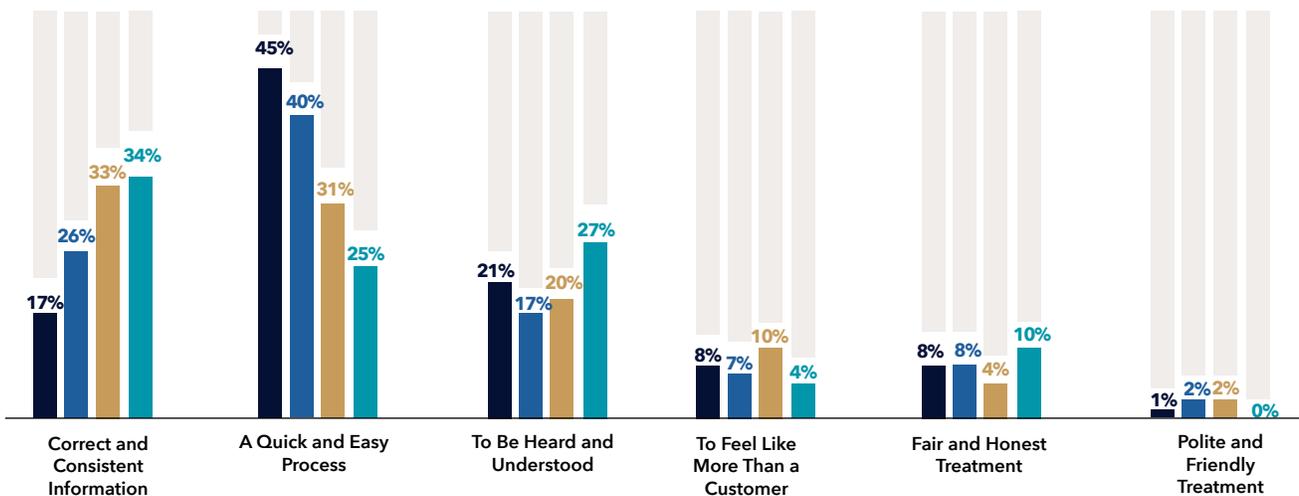
Confidence has swelled to an all-time high, with 91% of CX leaders indicating that their organization is generally meeting the needs and expectations of customers, representing the highest percentage since this question was first asked in 2014. Undoubtedly, challenges remain, like striking the right balance between humans and tech, providing consistency, and tackling increasing complexity. Regardless, this year's results suggest a deeper understanding of expectations, as well as a strengthening confidence in the strategies and initiatives that undergird the modern contact center.

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



CX leaders continue to gravitate toward "Correct and Consistent Information" in speculating what consumers might find important in resolving a customer care issue, with 34% of CX leaders indicating it as most important, followed by "To Be Heard and Understood," (27%) and "A Quick and Easy Process" (25%). For a detailed breakdown of what consumers say they want, and how that compares with these results, please see page 72 in the Consumer Comparisons section.

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

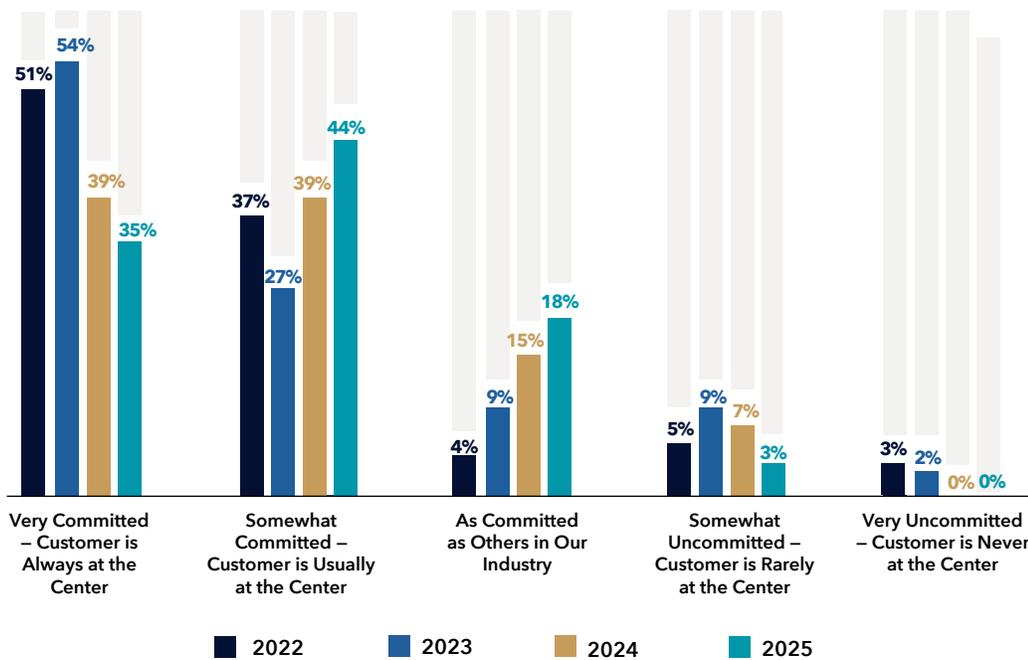


CX INITIATIVES AND CX STRATEGIES – CX STRATEGIES

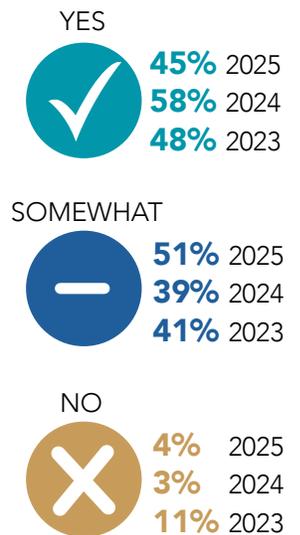
“CUSTOMER FIRST” COMMITMENT AND CULTURAL ALIGNMENT

In the aggregate, commitment to “customer first” hasn’t shifted much YoY, with 79% of brands either very or somewhat committed to a customer first strategy in 2025 compared to 78% in 2024. In other words, some level of commitment to a customer-centric strategy is now the norm. But operationalizing such a strategy is only effective if understood and widely supported organizationally. And this starts with leadership and company culture and ends with effective operational execution.

How committed is your company to a “customer first” strategy?



Do you believe the culture of your company is aligned with a “customer first” strategy?



Support for “Customer First” has waned in recent years. How is your organization making room for “customer first” while still meeting critical business metrics?



At Freshpet, a consumer-first approach starts with caring for our pet parents the way we’d want to be cared for ourselves. When we focus on what truly matters to our consumers, the health and happiness of their pets, their questions, and their concerns, we earn trust and build relationships that last. Taking care of Pet Parents is how we take care of our business. We believe empathy and efficiency go hand in hand. By using data, smart tools, and clear priorities, we’re able to provide thoughtful, high-quality support without losing the personal touch. Clear communication and resolving issues the right way the first time help create easier, more positive experiences for consumers while supporting strong business results.

Most importantly, we listen. Feedback from our pet parents helps us learn, improve, and grow; guiding how we work, how we communicate, and how we show up every day. When we turn those insights into action, a consumer-first mindset becomes part of who we are, helping us better support pet parents and continue delivering fresh, meaningful results.



Lisa Diehl
Director, Consumer Care

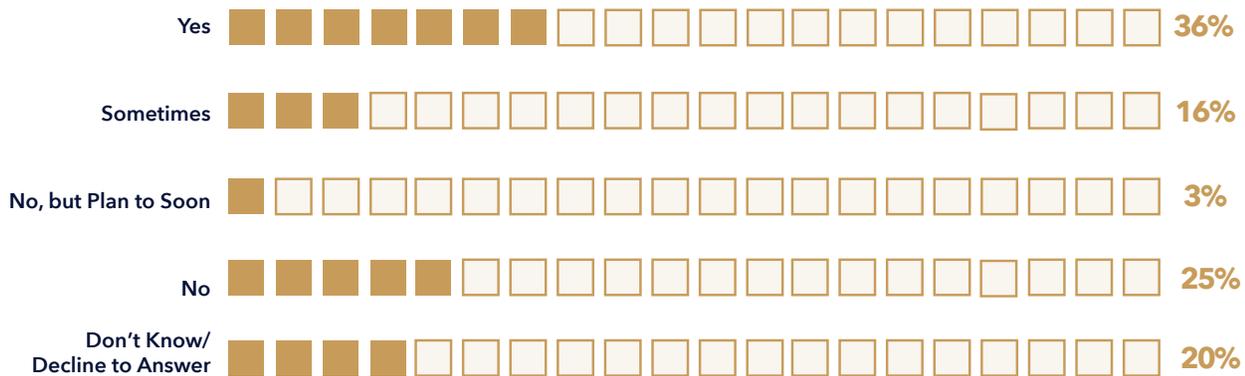


CX INITIATIVES AND CX STRATEGIES – CX STRATEGIES

DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND EQUITY

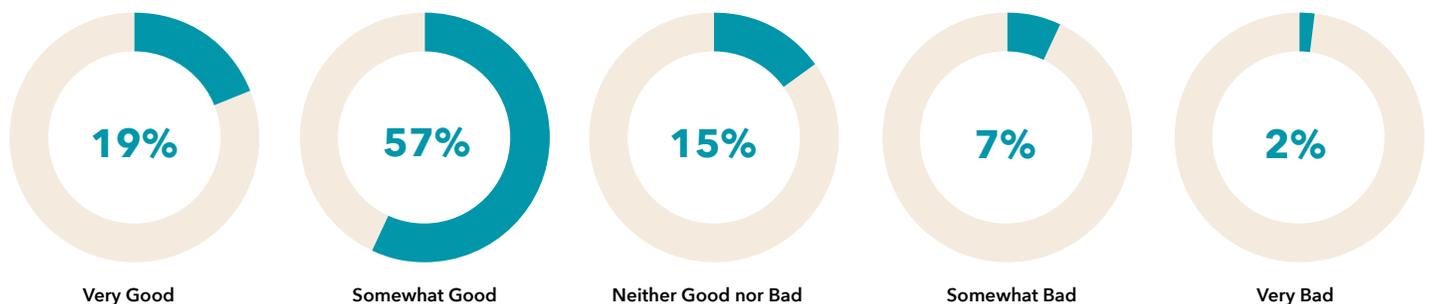
In the first year of asking CX leaders about matters related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), 36% of respondents indicated that their company takes a public stance on DEI and allows that stance to guide operations, compared to 25% of respondents who indicated their company does not. These results show a clear divide on DEI, one worth close observation, as this issue only grows more important (and perhaps polarizing) within people’s personal and professional lives. To see how these results compare with what consumers directly had to say on the issue, check out the Consumer Comparisons section on page 73.

Does your company take a public position on its diversity, equity, and inclusion practices, and allow that position to guide its operations?



In another new DEI-related question, one focused on accessibility and inclusivity, a combined 76% of respondents indicated that their company was doing “Very Good” or “Somewhat Good” at making care accessible and inclusive for all types of people. This compares with a combined nine percent of respondents indicating “Very Bad” or “Somewhat Bad.” Undoubtedly, accessibility becomes more complex in a digital-first world where demographics weigh heavily on things like adoption and preference. Perhaps the first step in creating better accessibility and inclusivity within CX is to better understand where customers are today, where they’re going, and test journeys with a diversity lens, looking for points of silent failure.

How do you think your company is doing at making customer support accessible and inclusive for all types of people (e.g., non-English speakers, disabled customers, the elderly)?

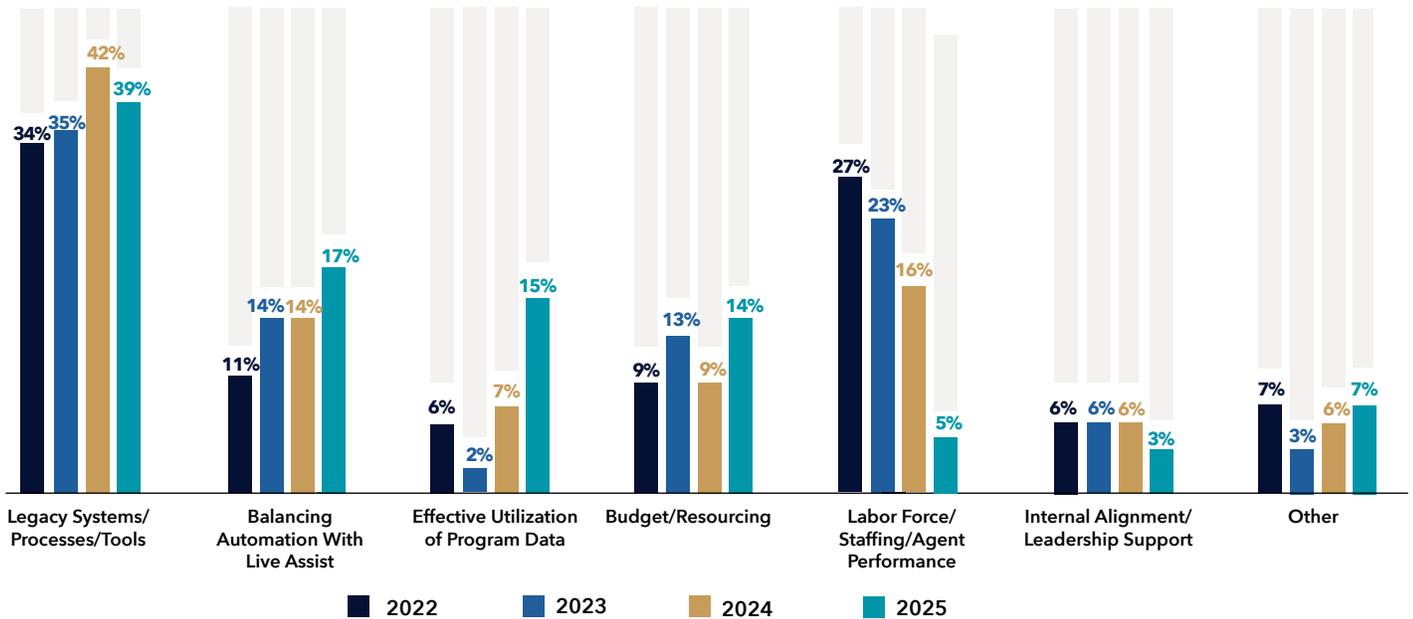


CX INITIATIVES AND CX STRATEGIES – CX STRATEGIES

BIGGEST CX CHALLENGE AND CUSTOMER FRUSTRATION

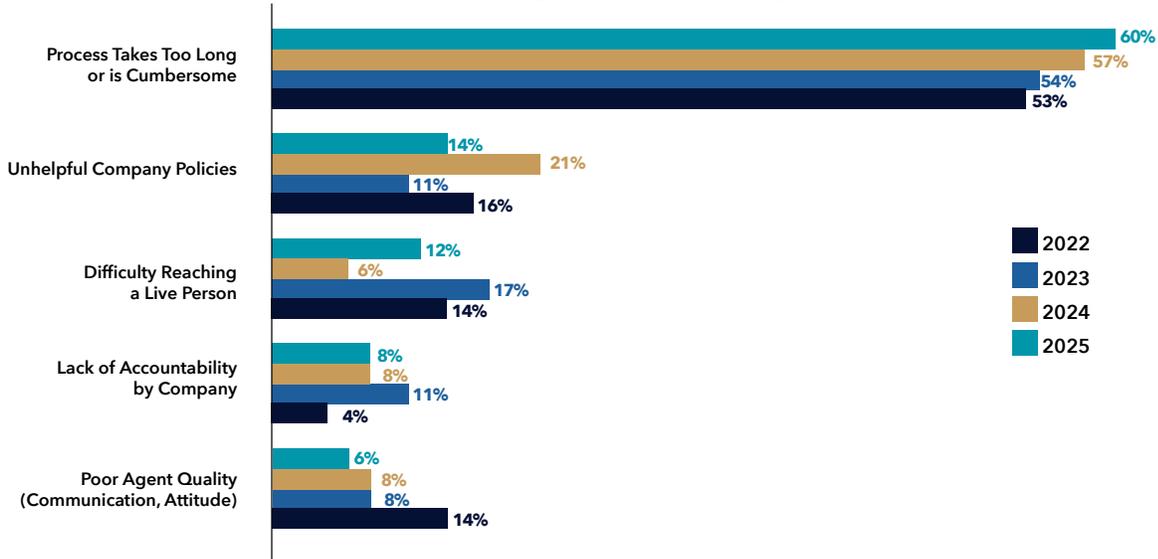
As revealed here and elsewhere in this report (pages 49 and 51), legacy technology continues to pose a major challenge to achieving greater CX success. Not only did 39% of survey respondents name “Legacy Systems/ Processes/Tools” as the single biggest challenge, this response also far outstripped any other category of challenge, exceeding by far even “Balancing Automation with Live Assistance” (17%) and “Effective Utilization of Program Data” (15%). To resolve several of the challenges listed in the results below, CX leaders must first tackle technology that limits progress, especially when that progress can have an outsized impact on the customer/end user.

What is the single biggest challenge currently facing your CX operations?



Sixty percent of CX leaders continue to focus on process ease and speed as a potential source of consumer frustration in resolving a customer care issue. In many ways, a focus on process (rather than agent quality or friction points with individual channels) is a sign of program maturation and journey-minded vision. See the Consumer Comparisons section (page 75) to understand how these results compare with consumer perspectives.

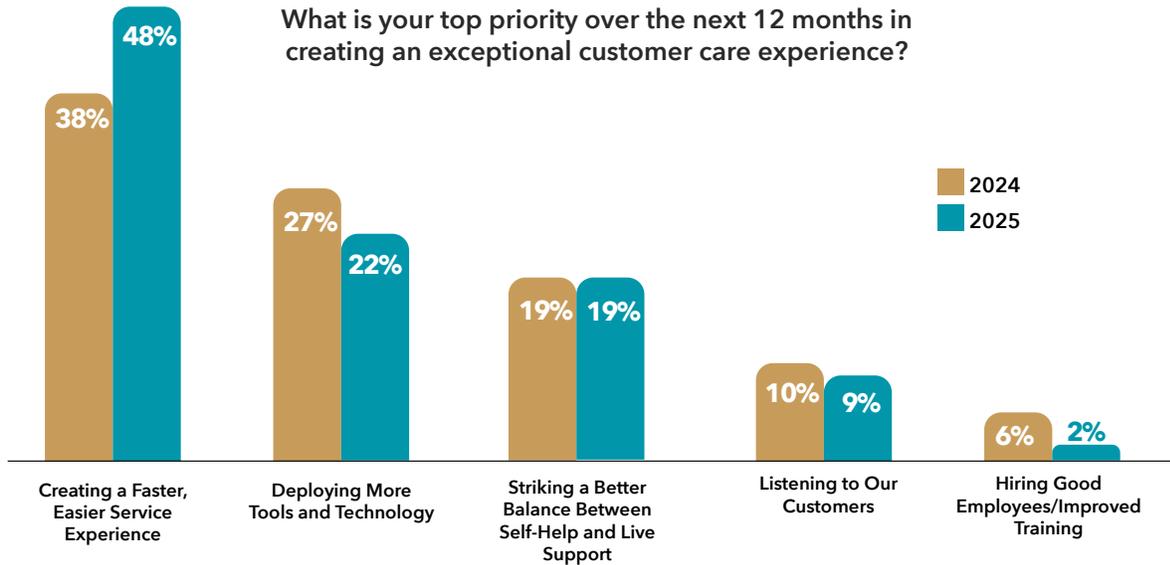
What do you think is the most frustrating aspect of resolving a customer care issue for consumers?



CX INITIATIVES AND CX STRATEGIES – CX STRATEGIES

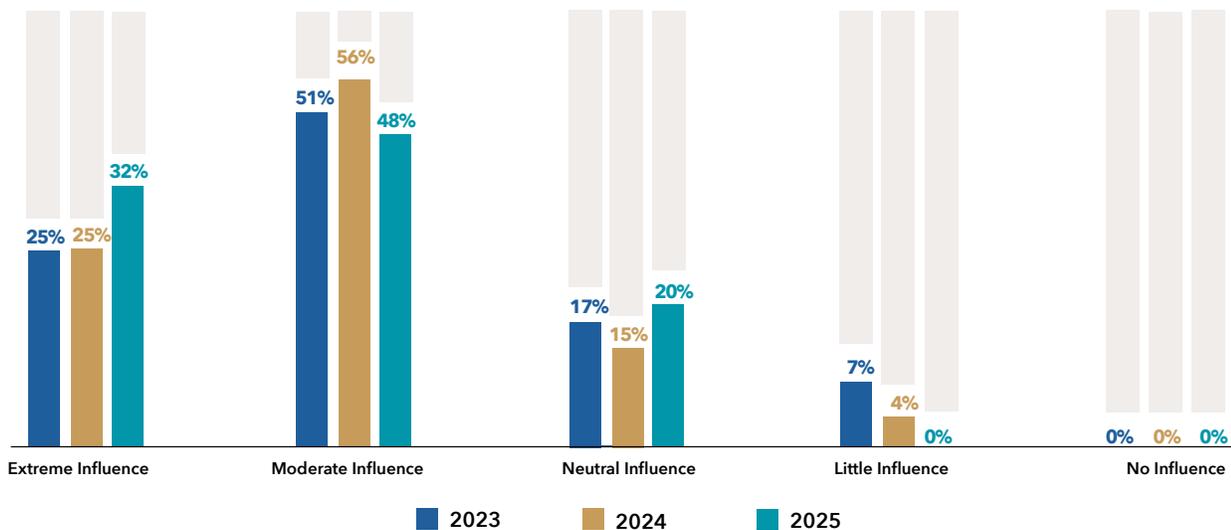
TOP PRIORITY AND THE INFLUENCE OF CX

Aligning with the consumer frustration highlighted on the previous page, CX leaders (48%) are most focused on creating a faster and easier CX experience over the next 12 months, followed by deploying more tools and technology (22%) and striking a better balance between Self-Help and Live Support (19%). It appears, based on these results, that the next 12 months are focused on friction rather than reinvention.



CX continues to have strong influence within companies, with a combined 80% of respondents indicating that influence is either "Extreme" or "Moderate," while 0% indicate "Little" or "No" influence. This is great news for both consumers and businesses, as CX is no longer seen as a support function, but rather as a window into experiencing a brand. When combining this with brands that are "customer first"-focused, the result is higher customer satisfaction, deeper loyalty, and greater lifetime value for many customers who might have otherwise been forever lost due to a poor experience that never happened due to the commitments to creating exceptional CS.

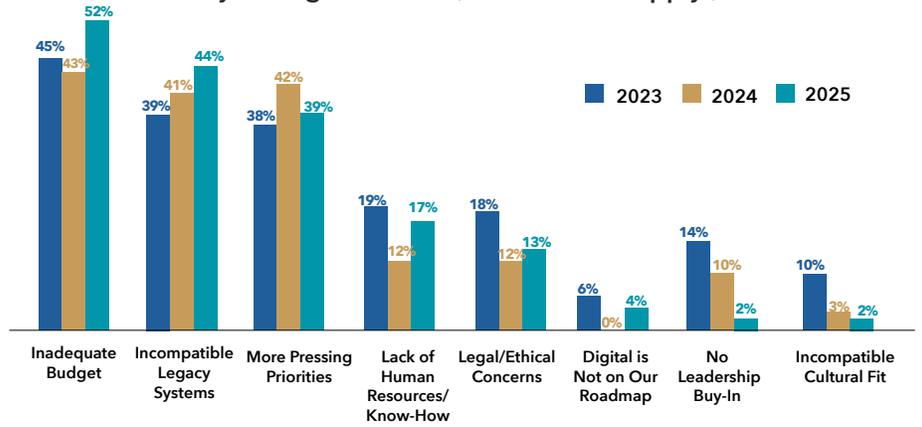
How would you describe the level of influence CX strategies, initiatives, and priorities have within your company?



CX INITIATIVES AND CX STRATEGIES – CX STRATEGIES BARRIERS, INVESTMENTS, AND TECH STACK SATISFACTION

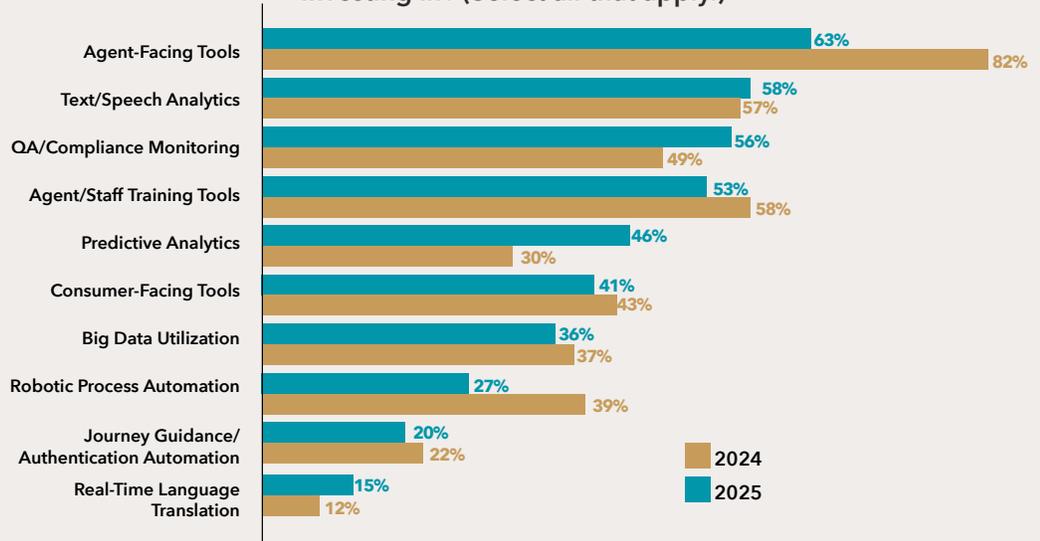
When asked what was preventing a more dynamic digital strategy, “Inadequate Budget” (52%, up nine points YoY) proved a more restricting barrier in 2025, once again eclipsing “Incompatible Legacy Systems” (44%) and “More Pressing Priorities” (39%). “No Leadership Buy-In” (two percent) and “Incompatible Cultural Fit” (two percent) were at the bottom of the list. These results show that while there may always be fiscal pressures, leadership and company culture is definitively aligned behind a digitally minded strategy. This alignment will serve well when it comes to executing on this vision.

What are the main barriers to enabling a more dynamic digital strategy within your organization? (Select all that apply.)



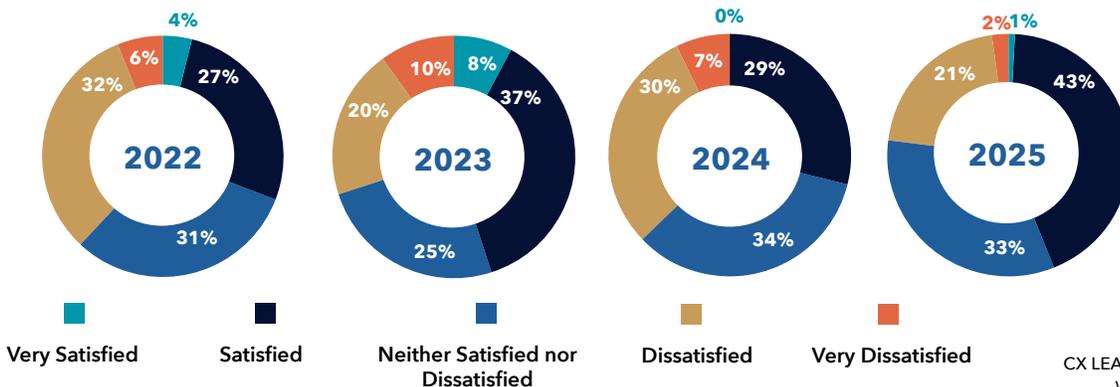
Overall, investment appeared to slow slightly in 2025, with notable drops in “Agent-Facing Tools” (down 19 points YoY) and “Robotic Process Automation” (down 12 points YoY). The one area that saw an uptick of new investment was “Predictive Analytics” (up ten points YoY). With nearly 75% of brands participating in this year’s survey fielding some proactive care measures (page 35), and interest growing in the area, it will be worth observing where these numbers go in the years to come.

Which of these CX technologies is your organization currently investing in? (Select all that apply.)



While technology stack satisfaction saw significant improvement YoY, the fact that only 44% of CX professionals are in some way satisfied with their organization’s current CX tech stack is troubling, especially considering the fact that 23% are in some way dissatisfied. This is a signal that is material, not marginal. Although this result may be directly tied to program maturity, it highlights the importance of measuring internal satisfaction as it applies to program tools, processes, and even company policies.

Are you satisfied with your organization’s current CX technology stack?

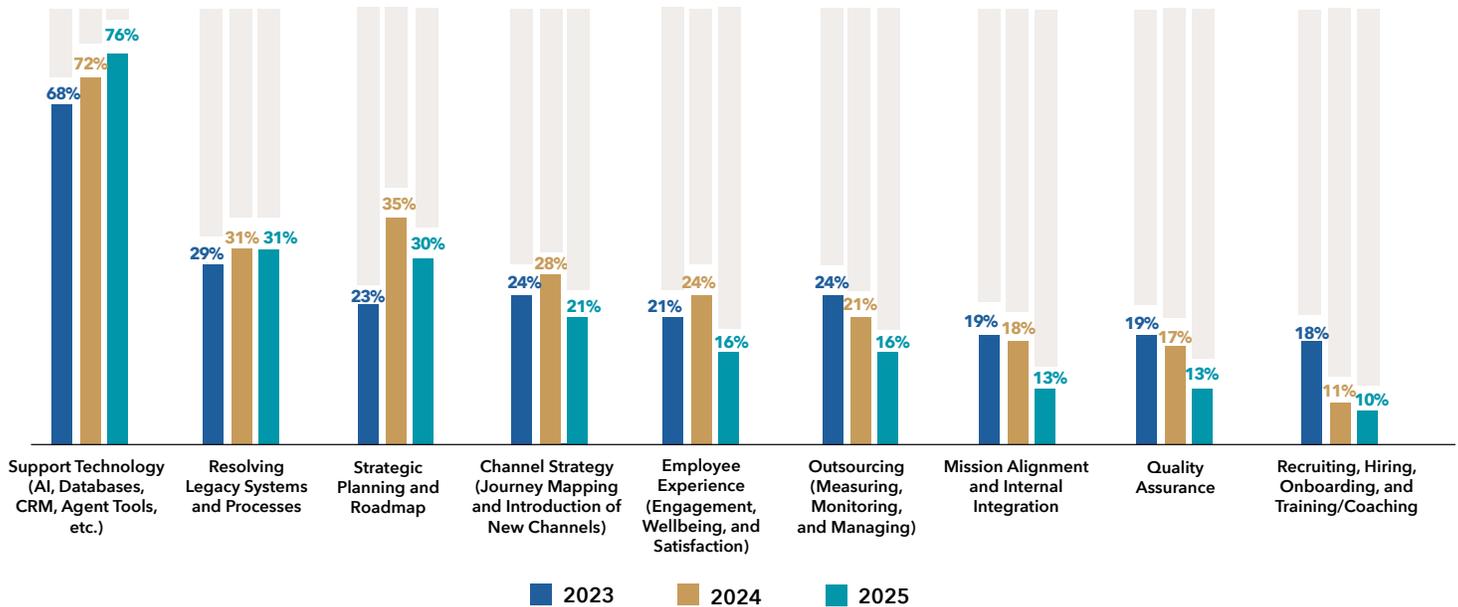


CX INITIATIVES AND CX STRATEGIES – CX STRATEGIES

CX INVESTMENT

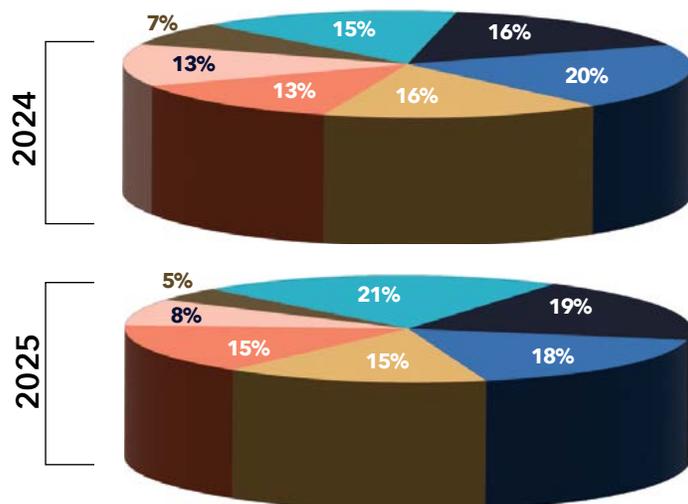
Given the weak satisfaction with the current program tech stack (previous page), it's reassuring to see that "Support Technology" continues to lead the way in 2025, with 76% of respondents naming it as an area of top focus and investment in the coming 12 months. Combined with a result of 31% respondents also naming "Resolving Legacy Systems and Processes" as a top area of focus and investment, it's clear that many brands are set on building a strong digital foundation that can support future innovation and scalability.

Which area(s) of your CX program do you expect to receive the most investment and attention from your company in the next 12 months? (Select no more than three.)



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

In 2025, CX leaders are primarily focusing investment on strategy and process (21%), technology (18%) and automation (19%) to improve the customer experience. These results once again show an awareness among CX leaders that often customer success depends on how service is designed as opposed to how it is delivered. Areas to focus on include channel transitions, access to live assistance (especially when Self-Help is falling short), and design that considers the end-to-end CX journey.

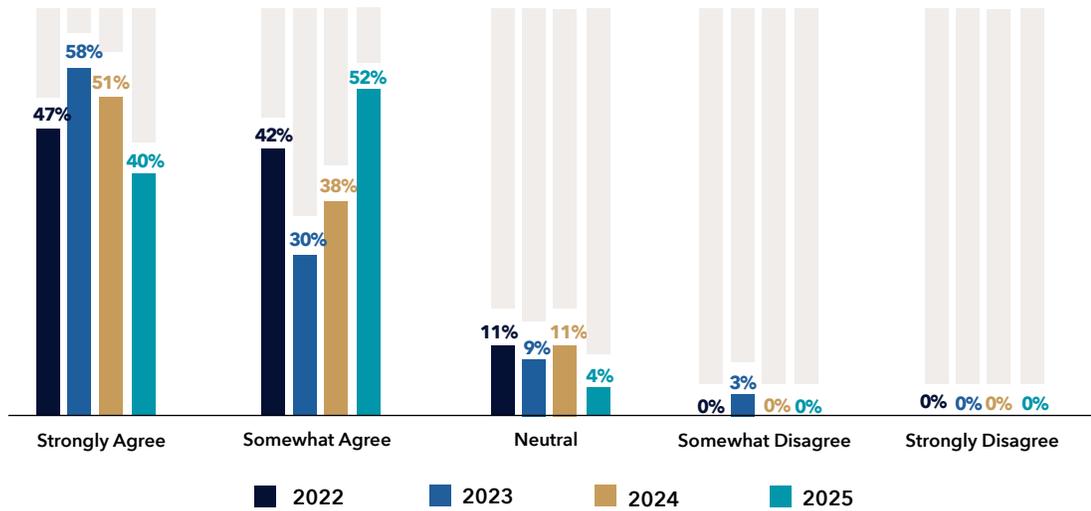


CX INITIATIVES AND CX STRATEGIES – CX STRATEGIES

THE IMPORTANCE OF PASSION AND PREMIUMS FOR EXCEPTIONAL CX

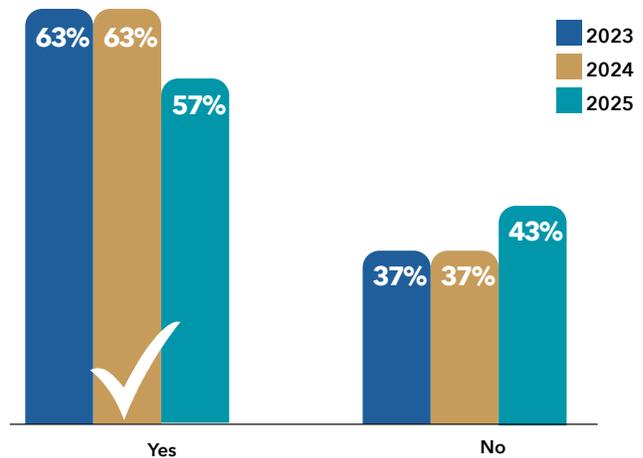
CX leaders demonstrate a deep understanding of the importance of agent passion, with 92% either strongly or somewhat agreeing that the issue of agent passion (toward the brand they represent) is important to consumers. And CX leaders are correct in this understanding, with 79% of consumers either strongly or somewhat agreeing with the statement below. For a complete picture of where consumers sit on this issue, see page 76 in the Consumer Comparisons section of this report.

**In your opinion, how do you think YOUR CUSTOMERS feel about the following statement:
It is important for customer care agents to be very passionate about the brands they represent.**



Do you think your customers would be willing to pay a little more for your products or services if it meant they'd get world-class customer care support?

More than half of CX leaders continue to believe customers would be willing to pay a little more for a product or service if it meant world-class customer care, and they would be right, with 71% of recently surveyed consumers indicating such. In other words, there is no ambiguity regarding CX's value proposition. Not among CX leaders nor consumers. World-class CX is not a "nice-to-have" ... it is both an attractor and a loyalty builder, and most consumers are willing to pay for it.

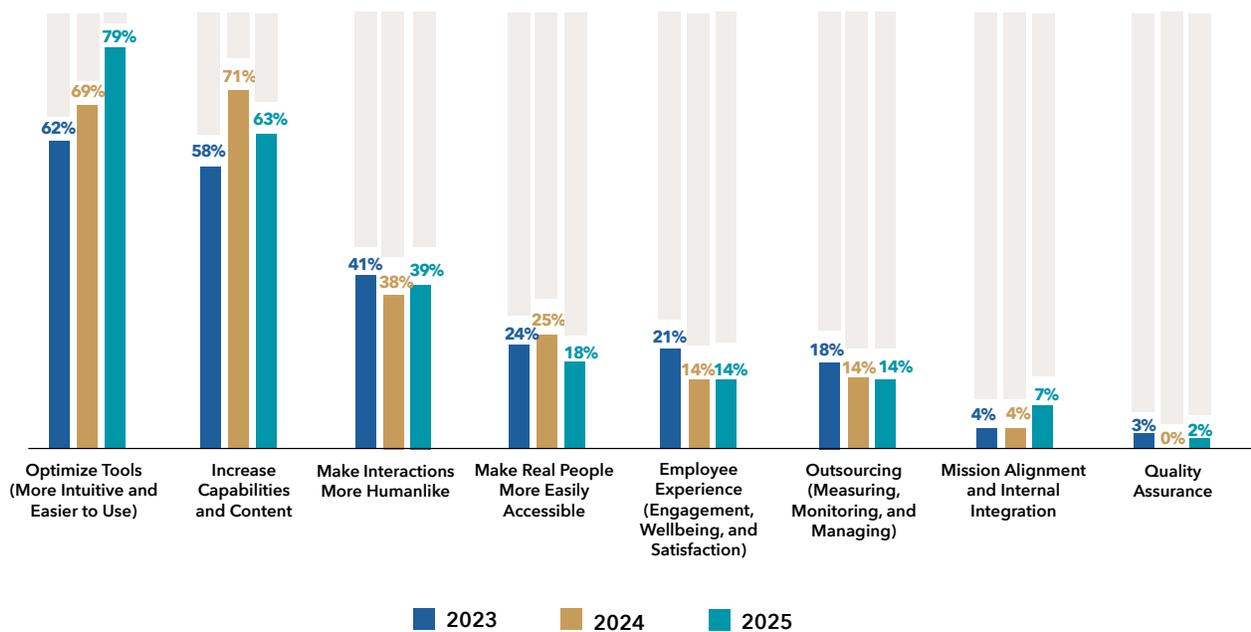


CX INITIATIVES AND CX STRATEGIES – CX STRATEGIES

FUTURE PLANS FOR SELF-HELP

Brands are staying the course on future plans for improving Self-Help and unassisted tools, focusing on optimization of existing tools, increasing capabilities, and making interactions more humanlike. Although other Execs In The Know CX research suggests consumers are more preoccupied with functionality and capability versus humanlike appearances and experiences, brands are generally in line with where consumers would like to see the technology headed, though consumers often point to easy access to a live person as critical.

What future plans do you have for your self-help and unassisted tools to make them better, easier, and more enjoyable to use? (Select all that apply.)

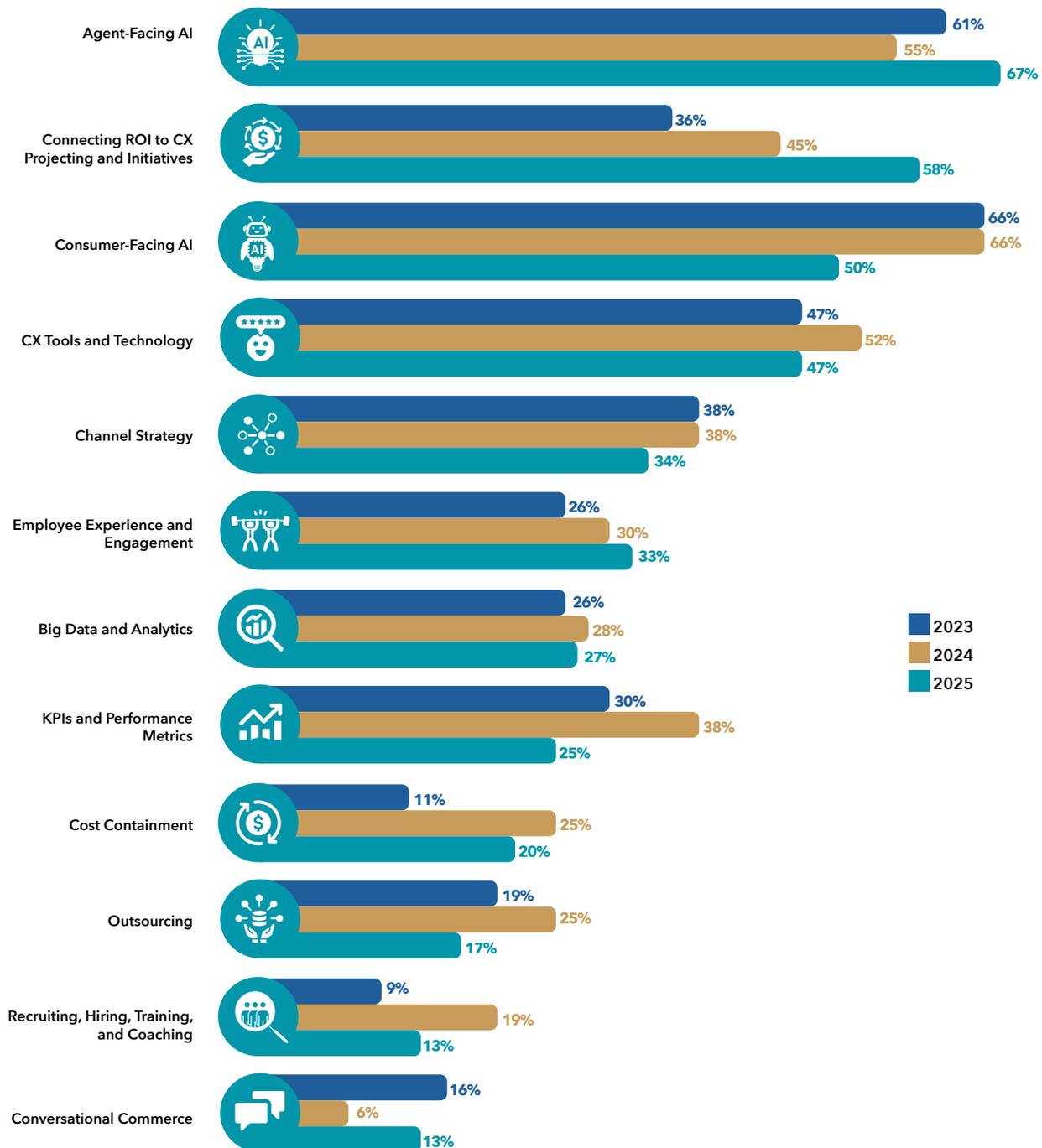


CX INITIATIVES AND CX STRATEGIES – CX STRATEGIES

FUTURE TOPICS OF INTEREST

Interest in topics related to AI for CX (both agent- and consumer-facing) continues to dominate the topics of most interest to CX leaders, although focus on proving value through a stronger ROI narrative has gained steam in each of the last two years of data. An interesting question is how well of a job companies are doing on telling the ROI story for AI-powered initiatives. Are these types of projects receiving the same level of fiscal scrutiny, and if they are, how are they faring? Have recent AI investments proven valuable beyond their cost? One indication might be how well companies are doing at meeting their objectives for AI technology (page 62).

Which CX Topics would you like to see explored in greater depth within EITK content and research? (Check all that apply.)



CONCLUSIONS: CX INITIATIVES AND STRATEGIES

KEY FINDINGS:

- CX leaders are prioritizing faster, easier experiences over new tools.
- Investment is concentrated in strategy/process, technology, and automation.
- Budget has overtaken legacy systems as the primary barrier to digital progress.

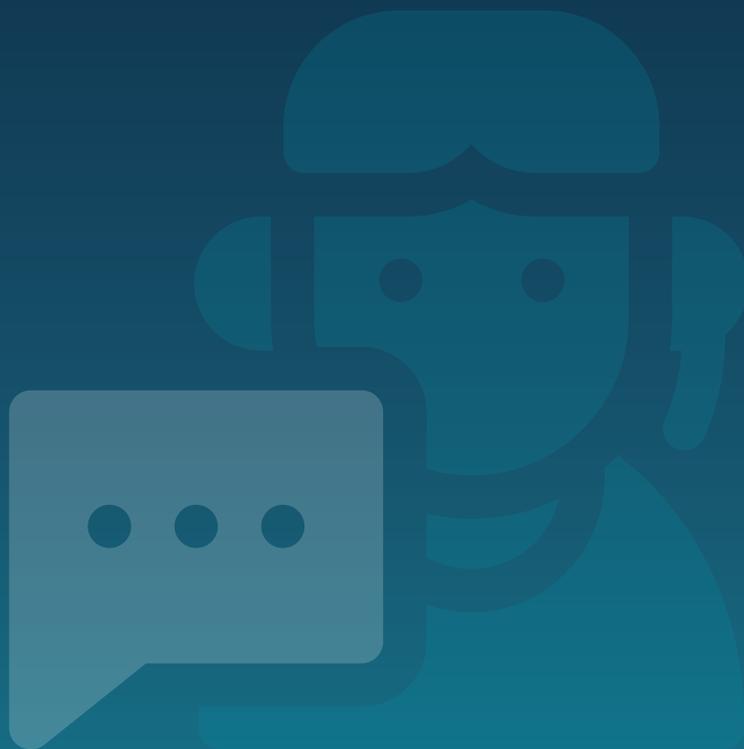
Strategically, 2026 represents a pragmatic inflection point for CX. Leaders are no longer chasing innovation for its own sake; instead, they are concentrating on reducing friction, simplifying journeys, and delivering measurable results. Nearly half of CX leaders cite “faster and easier CX” as their top priority for the coming year – well ahead of technology acquisition. This marks a maturation from channel-centric thinking to journey-centric design.

Investment patterns reinforce this discipline. While spending on support technology has remained steady, organizations are gaining greater interest in predictive analytics and intelligent orchestration. Strategy and process now command a larger share of investment, reflecting an understanding that broken workflows cannot be solved by technology alone. At the same time, budget constraints are the most cited barrier to digital progress, suggesting that leaders must make sharper tradeoffs and build stronger ROI narratives to sustain momentum.

Looking ahead, the most successful organizations will be those that align strategy, technology, and measurement around a common purpose: reducing customer effort while preserving human judgment where it matters most. This requires deep cross-functional collaboration among CX, IT, operations, and analytics teams, as well as a willingness to confront legacy constraints and simplify policies that create friction.

In short, CX in 2026 is less about adding more capabilities and more about making existing ones work better – faster, smarter, and more reliably for customers.

AI FOR CX



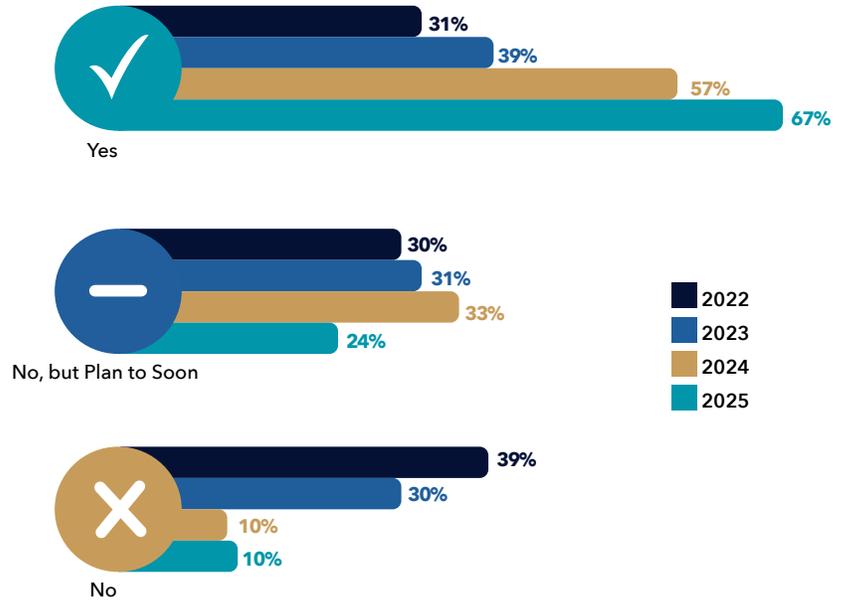
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR CX

THE APPLICATION OF AI FOR CX

The use of AI within the contact center continued to expand YoY, doing so for the third consecutive year. Roughly two-thirds (67%) of contact center organizations now employ some form of AI within their operations, up from 31% in 2022. These results truly indicate that AI for CX has shifted from experimental to mainstream. The next evolution of AI within the contact center will be moving away from simply adopting to a stronger value realization, a value realization that can't simply be all about cutting costs, but must, instead, be about creating a better experience for customers.

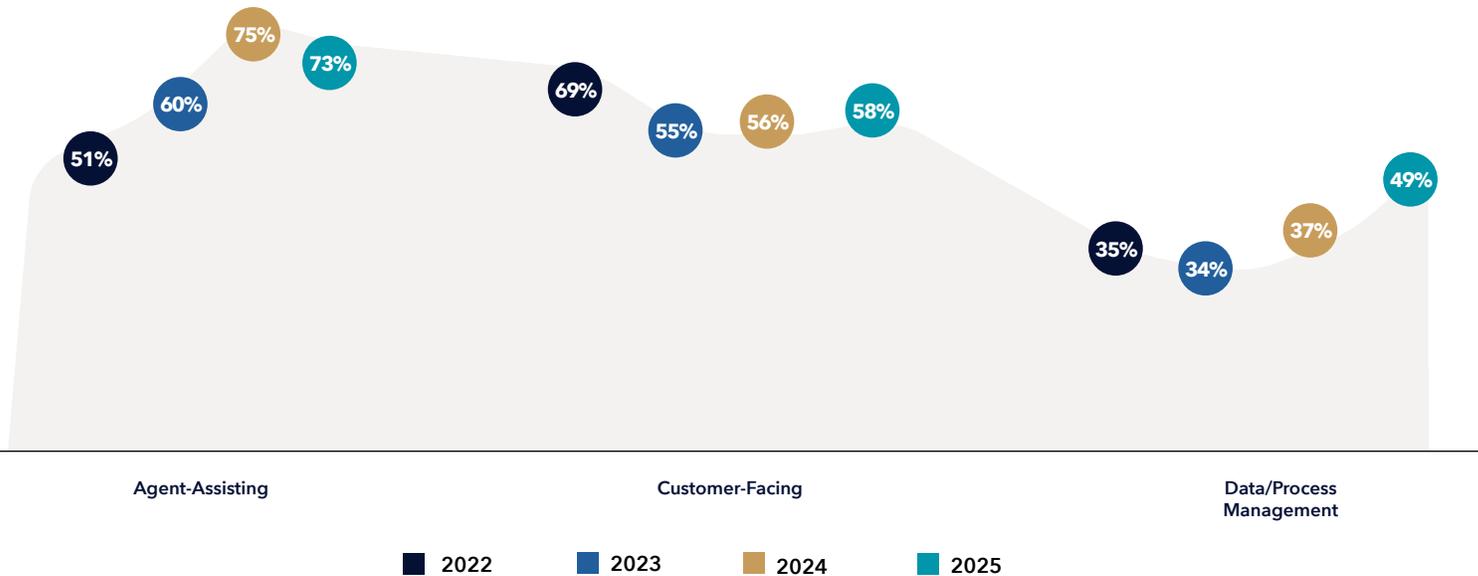


Has your company applied the use of artificial intelligence (AI) within your contact center organization?



Among brands having applied AI within the contact center, Agent-Assisting solutions (73%) continue as the most popular implementation of AI, followed by Customer-Facing solutions (58%). Forty-nine percent of the same group also indicated the use of AI solutions for "Data/Process Management." Although use of both Agent-Assisting and Customer-Facing tools remained steady YoY, "Data/Process Management" underwent a 12-point jump (from 37% to 49%). This shift may be a reaction to increasing complexity and an attempt to use AI to simplify (and even reimagine) processes and behind-the-scenes operations, often impacting the wider organization and not merely the front line.

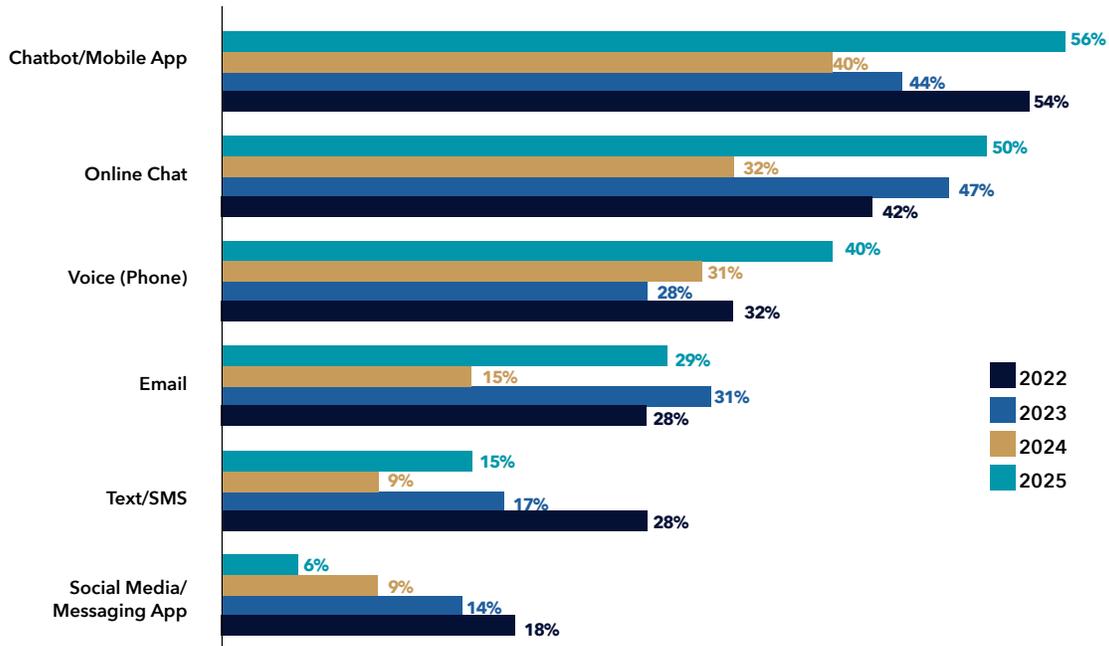
How would you describe the specific application(s) of your AI-powered solutions? (Select all that apply.)



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR CX CHANNEL DEPLOYMENT

Consistent with the continued growth in overall use of AI (top of the previous page), the increased rollout of AI to specific channels was broad YoY, with the most significant growth occurring in Chatbot/Mobile App (56%, up from 40%), Online Chat (50%, up from 32%), and Email (29%, up from 15%). Voice also saw a growth of nine points, from 31% to 40%. Only Social Media/Messaging App saw a decline, from nine percent to six percent. Truly, these results show that AI is following volume, as might be expected. As brands continue down this road, they must be especially aware of two things ... how consistent is the experience across these solutions, and how easy is the escalation process — including the process for reaching a live person.

In which specific channels are you deploying customer-facing or customer-supporting AI-powered solutions? (Select all that apply.)

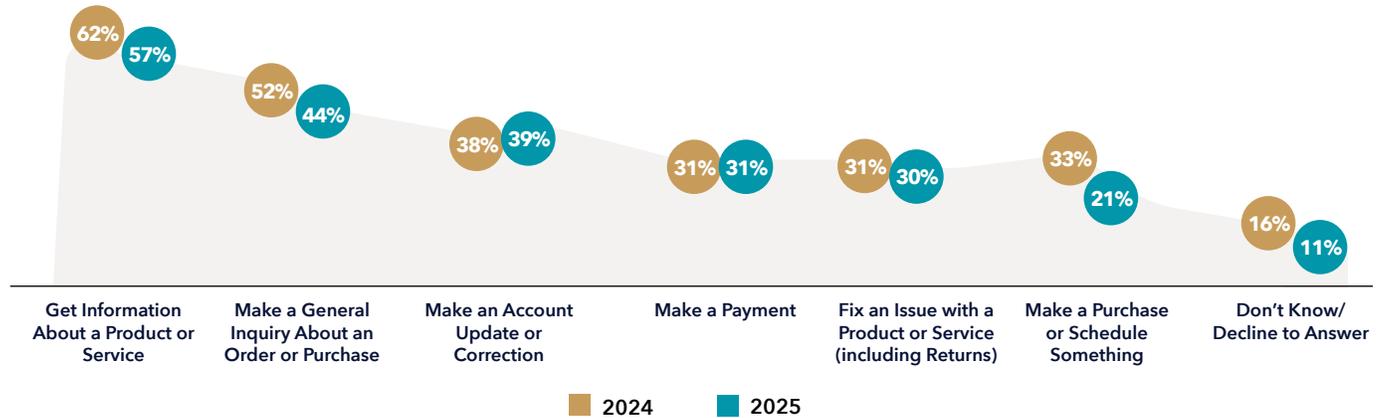


ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR CX

AI CAPABILITIES

At first glance, the functionality of AI-powered solutions appears to be flat or reversing YoY. There could be several reasons for this, but the most likely is tool and program maturity. In 2025, many brands implemented their first AI-powered solution(s). As these mature, they gain functionality. But at launch, it's not uncommon for these solutions to be very narrow in scope and function, as they should be. As these tools evolve, overall functionality should rise, especially as AI-powered tools fully saturate both the front and back offices of virtually every contact center environment. Based on the established trend, this eventuality is not too far away.

What common care issues are your customers able to resolve by using your brand's self-help or AI-powered solution(s)? (Select all that apply.)



“ How is your organization expanding the capabilities of customer-facing AI-powered solutions? ”

Over the past year and a half, our customer service team has experienced a meaningful transformation. When we first introduced AI into the Michael Kors call center, the goal wasn't disruption. It was relief. Relief for our Style Consultants (CSRs) who were balancing high volumes, complex policies, and rising customer expectations. We saw an opportunity to support them with technology that could simplify the work without diluting the personal, elevated service our brand is known for.

We deployed agent-facing AI behind the scenes that quietly listened, transcribed calls, summarized case notes, and offered real-time guidance. That alone changed the rhythm of our work. Calls and conversations moved more smoothly, and outcomes were more consistent. And our teams didn't have to spend time drafting every email from scratch, because GenAI helped craft responses in the MK voice. We also overhauled our approach to handling lost orders, using AI to quickly detect repeat offenders and guide agents toward reshipping when appropriate, improving customer outcomes while reducing unnecessary refund costs. These early steps helped build agent confidence and showed us how thoughtfully deployed AI can elevate both consistency and care.

Now we're getting ready for the next phase of our AI journey, which marks a significant step forward. We're preparing to introduce agentic AI that will engage customers directly from the moment a call arrives. These AI agents will answer the phone, understand why the customer is reaching out, and resolve a wide range of low- to medium-complexity requests on their own. That includes everything from simple questions about return policy, warranty information, and loyalty programs to order look-ups, and more complex price adjustments, cancellations, and starting e-commerce returns. Throughout the agentic experience, the tone, language, and messaging will reflect the MK brand.

What makes this shift meaningful is not automation for its own sake, but the space it creates for Style Consultants to focus on what they do best — providing styling advice, building trust, navigating nuance, and showing empathy in moments that matter. It's a natural continuation of the journey we started: using technology not to replace the human connection, but to amplify it.

In the months ahead, our customer-facing AI will take on a more prominent role, but our commitment stays the same. Better experiences for our customers. Better support for our teams. And a service model that grows more modern without losing the personal, elevated service that makes Michael Kors who we are.



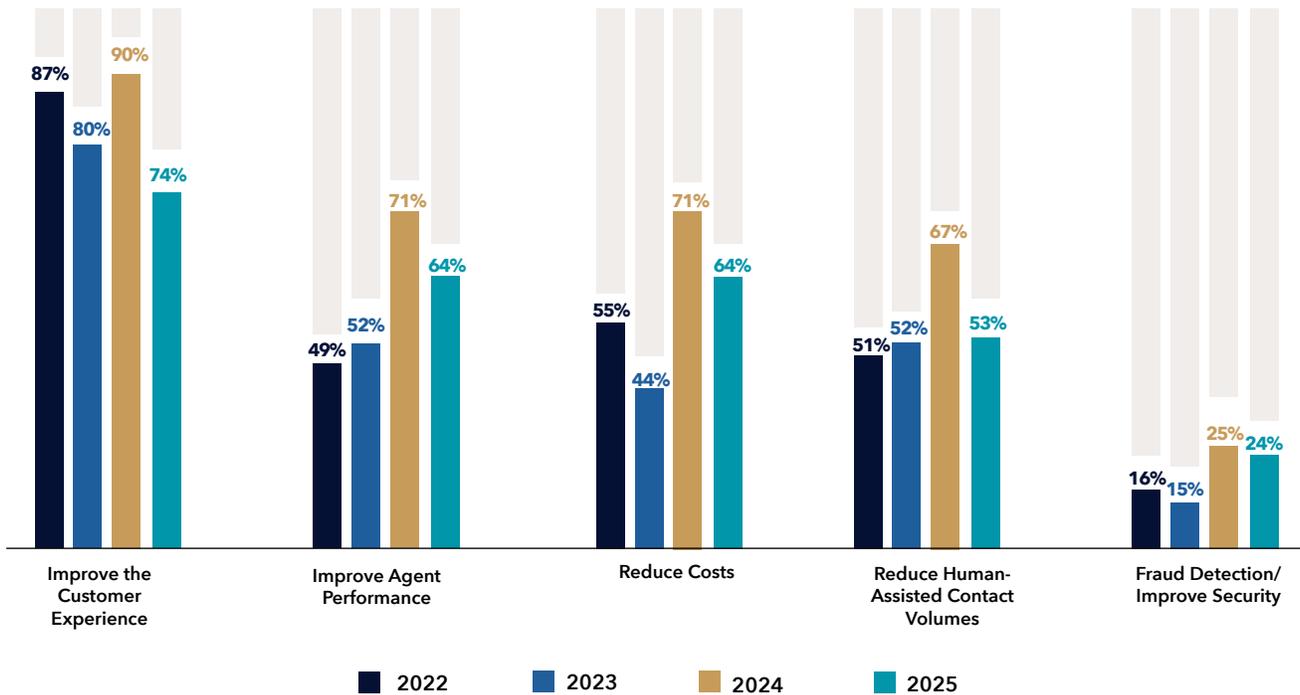
Ebrahim Hyder
Vice President, Customer Service

MICHAEL KORS

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR CX OBJECTIVES FOR AI

While AI objectives are spread less broadly in 2025 (meaning less subscription to each respective objective), those objectives remain concentrated in key areas, including improving CX (74%), agent performance (64%), and reducing costs (64%). It's reassuring that improving the customer experience remains the North Star, as this is a journey-focused objective, and far more focused on outcomes than any other specific objective. An improved experience seems like a logical objective for the marrying of mature CX strategies with new technologies.

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



In what ways have your objectives for AI changed over time?



Our AI objectives haven't shifted over the past year. Once we were clear on the problems we were solving and how we'd measure success, we embarked on a multi-phase plan that made sense for our company and customers. To start, we focused on simple AI tools for specific business problems, beginning with low-risk, agent-facing applications like transcriptions, call summaries, and automated QA — where missteps have minimal impact. We then progressed to customer-facing agentic AI to automate roughly 20% of our email volume and build our team's capacity. As we learn what AI can and can't do reliably, we'll expand the use of automation for even greater cost reductions and roll out agent assist tools to boost performance.



Lisa Oswald
SVP and Global Head of Member Services

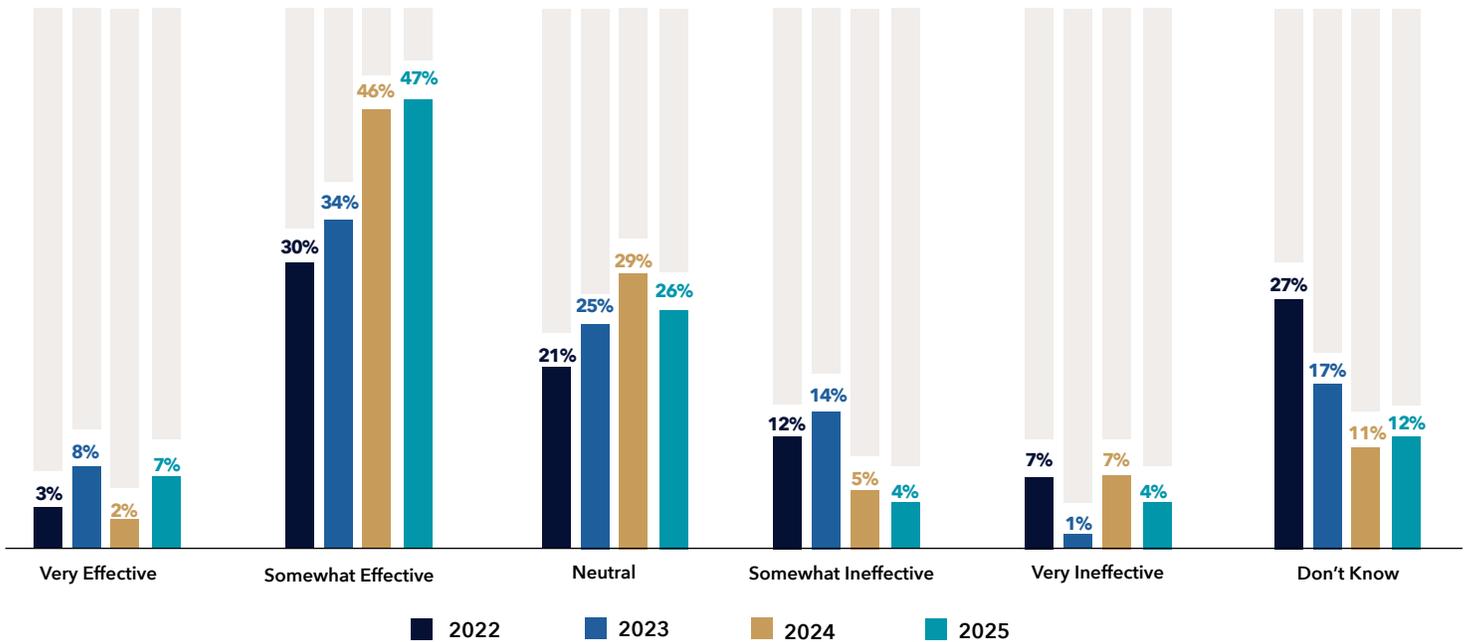


ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR CX

EFFECTIVENESS IN MEETING AI OBJECTIVES

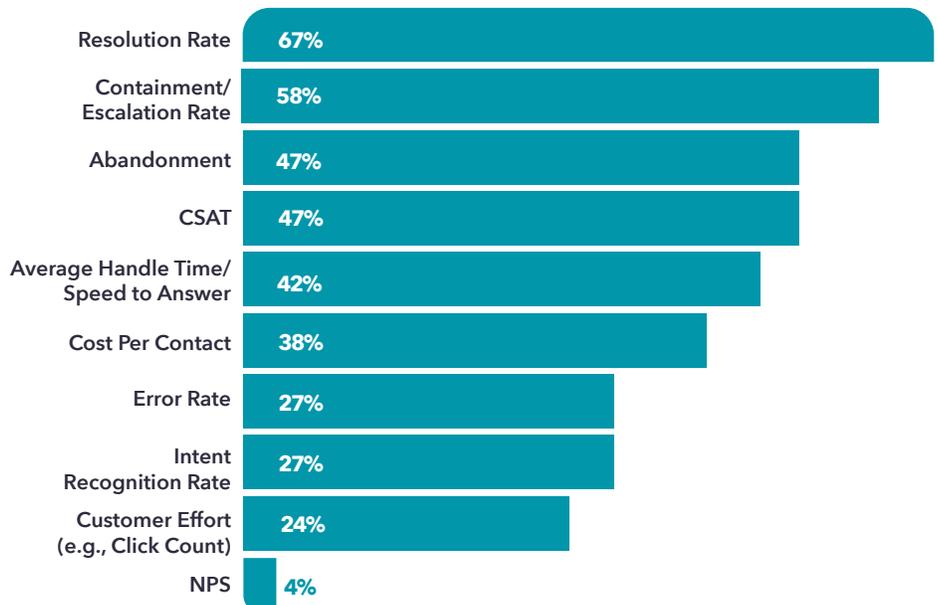
CX leaders were slightly more successful in meeting their objectives for AI use in 2025, with seven percent indicating they've been "Very Effectively" meeting those objectives, up from two percent in 2024. There were also reductions in the percentage of respondents who indicated they were either "Somewhat Ineffective" or "Very Ineffective" in meeting those same objectives, signaling many companies are moving beyond experimentation, pilots, etc., and are instead recalibrating expectations and better understanding the capabilities of AI-powered solutions.

How effective are you in meeting your objectives with your use of AI-powered solutions?



Which performance and effectiveness KPIs are you measuring for your AI-powered solutions? (Select all that apply.)

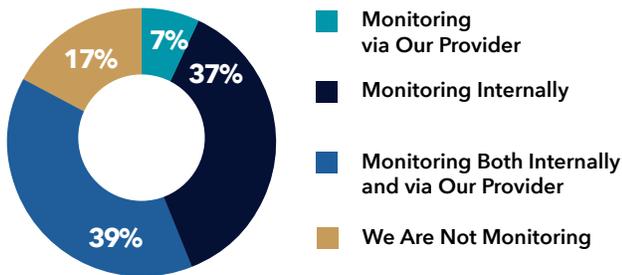
In a new question for 2025, one that seeks to understand how AI-powered solutions are being tracked, Resolution Rate (67%) was the most closely watched KPI, followed by Containment/Escalation Rate (58%), Abandonment (47%), and CSAT (47%). Again, this set of results illustrates that outcomes matter most, but several KPIs are useful in identifying silent breakdowns, creating greater ease/simplicity, and better ways to right-channel customers when AI-powered solutions prove ineffective.



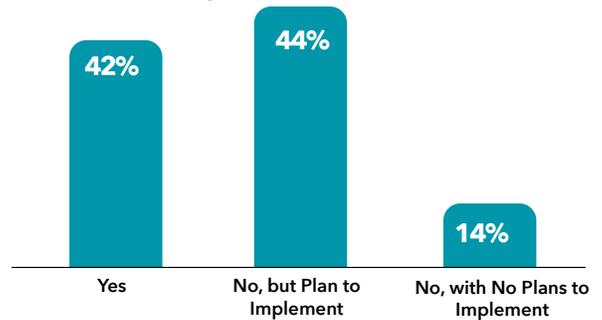
AI KPIS, MONITORING, AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

In a pair of new questions designed to understand how AI-powered solutions are being monitored and continually improved, 83% of respondents indicated they were monitoring AI-powered solutions in some way, with that number increasing to 92% when the data is restricted only to those with active AI-powered solutions. And although the majority of brands don't yet have a process in place for continuous improvement, that will soon change, with 42% of respondents already having such a process, and another 44% planning to introduce such a process in the future. This fact stresses that AI-powered solutions are not a "set it and forget it" type of technology. These solutions need not only monitoring, but also an active and intentional means of steady improvement. Clearly, AI has moved from the implementation and experimentation phase to actively managing and optimizing phase.

How would you describe how your company is monitoring the performance and effectiveness of your AI-powered solutions?



Do you have a defined process in place for AI-powered solution monitoring data to trigger continuous improvement initiatives or actions?



What does your process look like for continuous improvement for AI-powered solutions, and what are some actions that have resulted?

As a healthcare organization, the work we do has a meaningful impact on the lives of the members we serve. We have built a strong track record of success and consistently deliver high-quality experiences. However, in a service-driven industry, past performance is not enough. Customer service is inherently a "what have you done for me lately?" business, and member expectations continue to rise. Remaining an industry leader requires continuous improvement and a willingness to evolve.

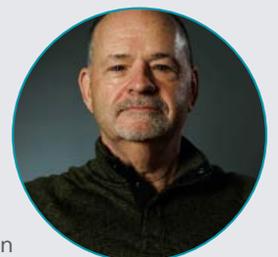
To that end, we have begun our AI journey with a clear focus on enhancing both the agent and member experience. AI is an enabler — not the end goal. In healthcare, human connection, empathy, and expertise will always be essential to delivering great experiences and differentiating our brand. Our approach is designed to strengthen, not replace, the people who serve our members every day.

Our initial use of AI focuses on improving agent efficiency by automating routine and time-intensive processes. Specifically, we are prioritizing the automation of call documentation and trouble ticket creation. These enhancements will reduce administrative burden, increase consistency, and enable faster resolution for members while allowing agents to focus more fully on meaningful interactions. Future phases will expand AI-enabled self-help solutions tailored to member preferences, ensuring routine inquiries are handled efficiently while agents dedicate their time to more complex and high-touch needs. In parallel, we are exploring consolidated user interfaces that streamline systems and provide agents with more intuitive, integrated tools. Together, these efforts represent an investment in our people and our members while improving operational effectiveness.

AI also enables personalization at scale. By leveraging data and machine learning, we can better understand member preferences and behaviors to deliver more relevant, timely, and individualized experiences. This capability moves us beyond one-size-fits-all interactions and reinforces a sense of trust and understanding that is critical in healthcare.

Successful AI adoption requires disciplined, ongoing change management. AI is not a "set it and forget it" solution. We are implementing a structured rollout that includes controlled deployment across agent levels, "day-in-the-life" walkthroughs to validate end-to-end experiences, and rapid feedback loops to refine solutions in real time. All change requests will follow a defined review and prioritization process that incorporates both business and technical inputs. Post-implementation, clear governance and performance metrics will ensure accountability, alignment, and sustained success.

Ultimately, AI has the potential to significantly enhance the member experience by empowering our agents, increasing efficiency, and elevating service quality. When thoughtfully implemented alongside human oversight, AI enhances, not replaces, the human connection, leading to stronger, more meaningful relationships with the members and clients we serve.



Mitch Mann
Vice President, Member Services

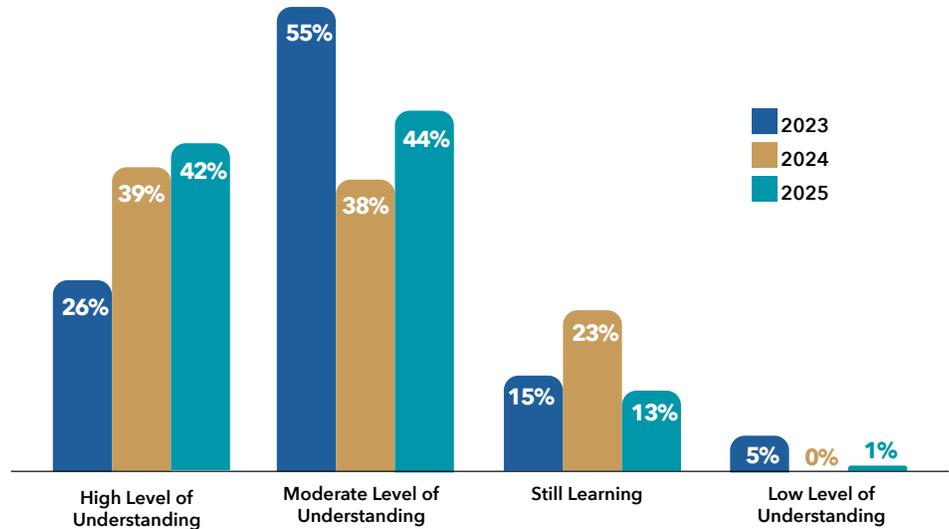


ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR CX

AI UNDERSTANDING AND OWNERSHIP

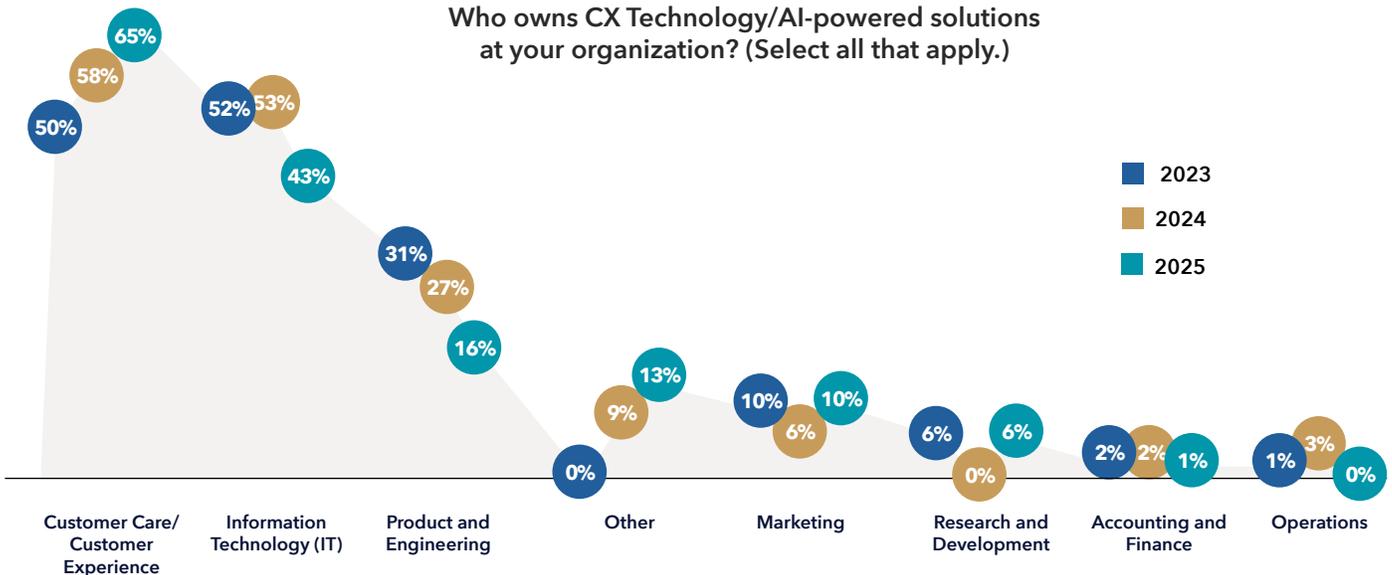
What is your current understanding of AI, AI concepts, and what the technology has to offer your CX operations?

CX leaders have continued to deepen their understanding of AI YoY, with nearly half (42%) having a high level of understanding compared to just 26% in 2023. With this deeper understanding will come a transition to CX leaders taking a more active role in guiding expectations and steering the strategies of AI-powered initiatives. And while there is still educating to be done, the stage is being set for stronger governance, higher levels of accountability, and more clarity on defining success — all of which should lead to greater value from AI-related investments.



Customer Care/CX continues to expand its ownership role as it applies to CX-focused, AI-powered technology. That said, other departments still play an important role — Information Technology (IT), for instance, has some ownership at 43% of brands. In other words, cross-function collaboration and internal collaboration remain critical enablers at many companies. Although CX will continue to take the lead in managing outcomes and steering the strategic ship, it's likely that IT will continue to provide an operational backbone for years to come.

Who owns CX Technology/AI-powered solutions at your organization? (Select all that apply.)

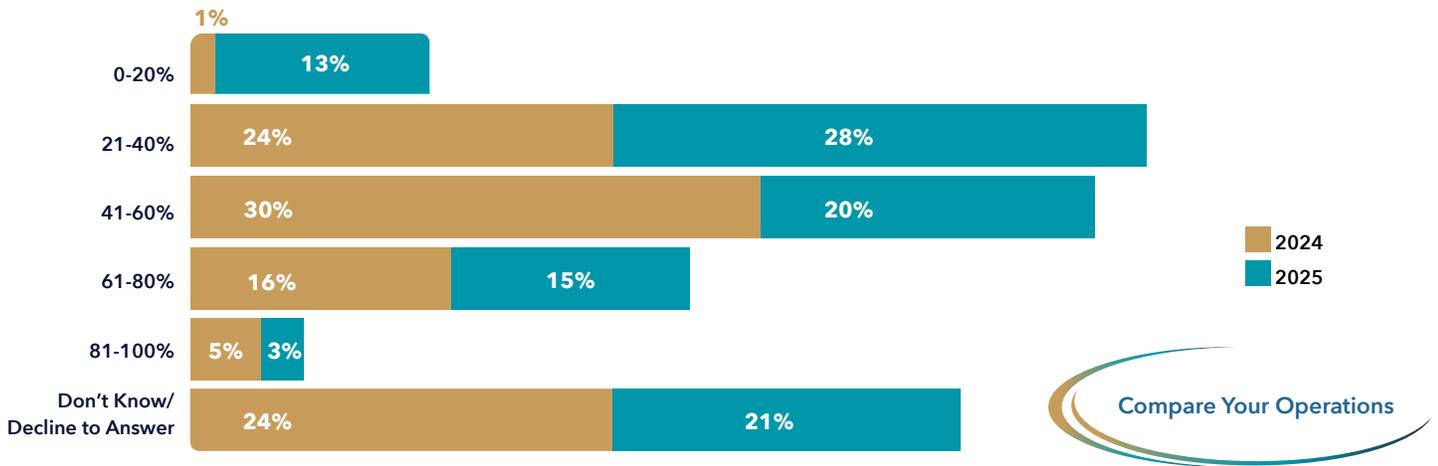


ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR CX

AI FOR CX CAPABILITY AND THROUGHPUT

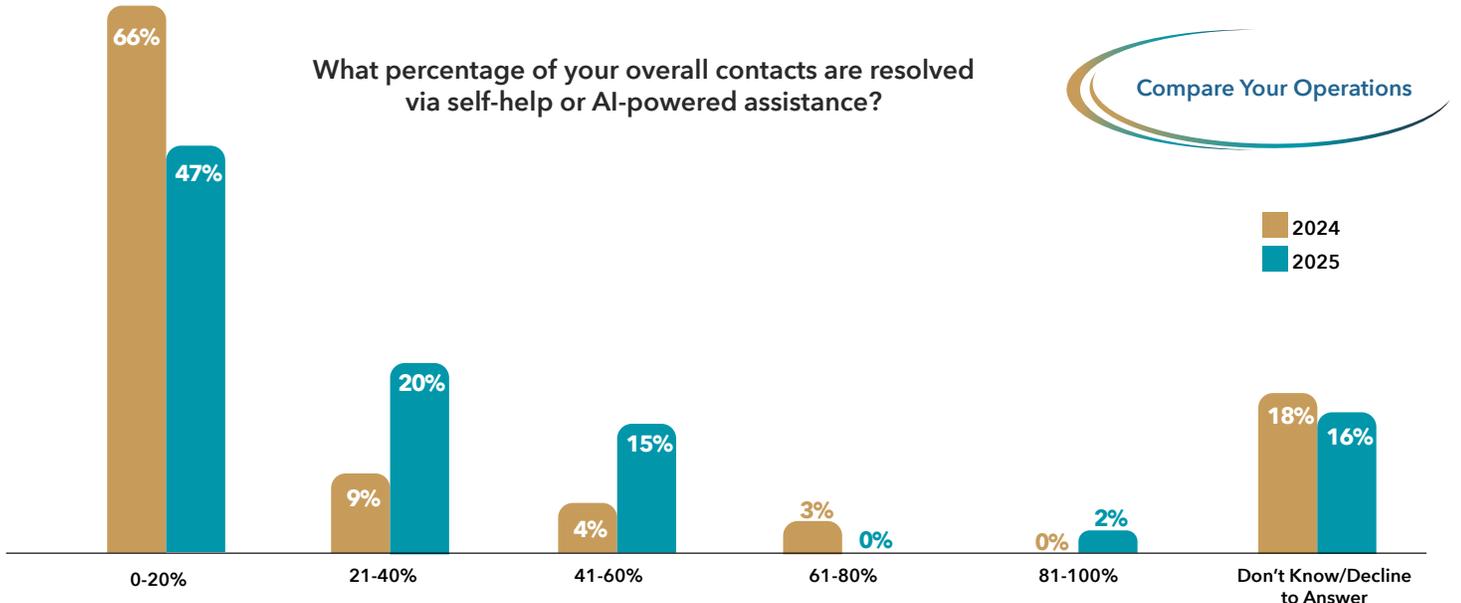
In the second year of asking about the capabilities of Self-Help/AI-powered solutions, a moderate expansion of capabilities was observable. In 2025, there was growth (from 25% to 41% YoY) in the percentage of brands indicating that less than 40% of engagements are too complex for their Self-Help/AI-powered solutions. This result truly proves the point that although Self-Help and AI-powered solutions are becoming more capable and trusted, in many cases, they are still a supplement to human support rather than a substitute for it.

What percentage of your overall customer care engagements are too complex to be resolved using a self-help or AI-powered solution?



Just as the capabilities of Self-Help/AI-powered solutions have grown YoY, so, too, has the overall percentage of contacts resolved via said solutions. A full 35% of brands indicated that 20-60% of their overall contacts are being resolved via Self-Help/AI-powered solutions compared to only 13% in 2024. At the same time, about half of survey respondents (47%) indicated less than 20% of overall contact volume was being handled by Self-Help/AI-powered solutions, down from 66% in 2024. Again, these findings support the idea that Self-Help/AI-powered solutions are still an accompaniment to live support rather than a substitute or replacement.

What percentage of your overall contacts are resolved via self-help or AI-powered assistance?

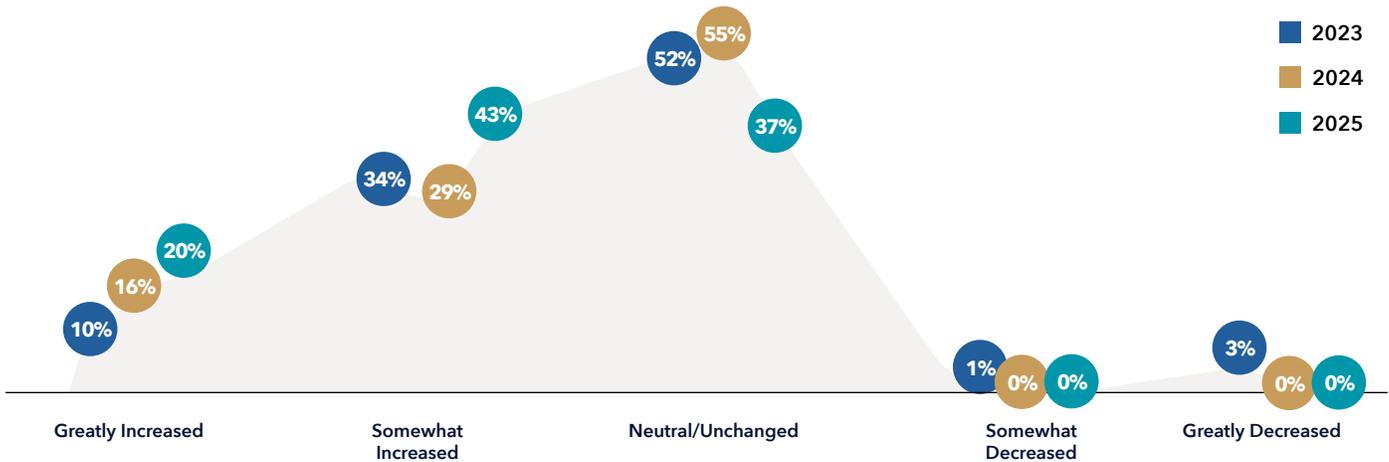


ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR CX

CUSTOMER ADOPTION AND AGENT ACCESS

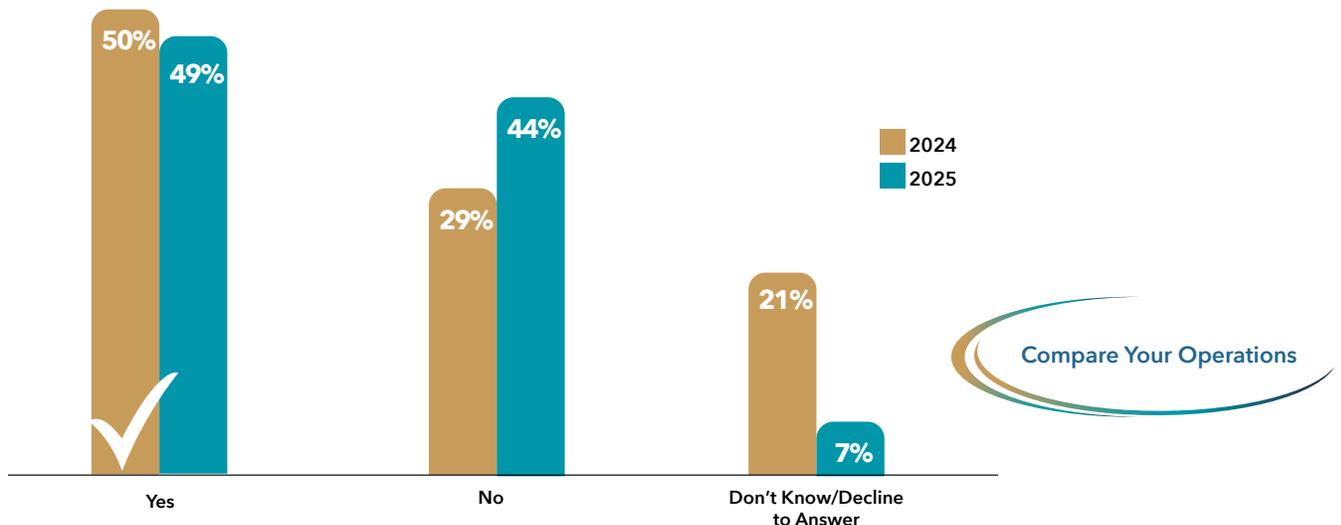
As demonstrated in the *2025 CX Leaders Trends & Insights: Consumer Edition* report (which saw consumer use of Self-Help jump from 55% in 2024 to 78% in 2025), consumer use of AI-powered solutions continues to expand rapidly. CX leaders are also taking notice, with 63% noting an increase in customer acceptance and adoption in 2025, up from 45% in 2024. Although this move indicates a convergence between consumer behavior in CX leadership perception, the industry must help ensure these shifts are due to improved trust and customer desire rather than an absence of alternatives.

How would you describe your customers' acceptance and adoption of AI-powered solutions over the past 12 months?



Revisiting the results above in the context of the results below (with fewer than 50% of brands making live assistance easily accessible), it's worth asking if the increase in the consumer use of AI is in any way related to an inability to easily access live support. If it is, brands need to take a very close look at outcomes, including both abandonment and resolution rates. If the latter of these is flat/falling while the former is flat/rising, this could be a telltale sign of a deteriorating customer experience. If the shift toward AI is not driven by preference, there is a very real possibility that the overall experience will be negatively impacted if every experience with AI is not precisely on point.

Has your organization consciously designed self-help and AI-powered customer care journeys to make live assistance easily accessible?

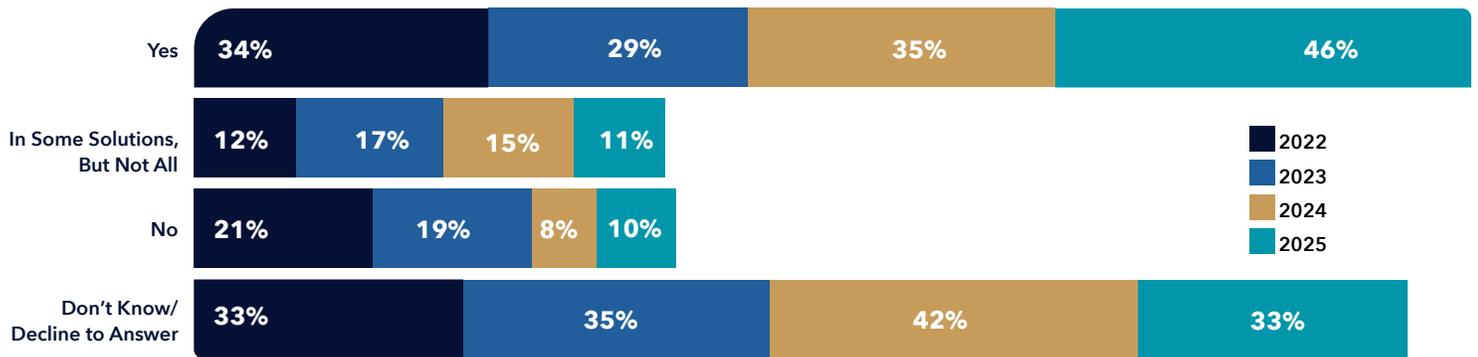


ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR CX

IDENTIFYING OF AI AND CONCERNS

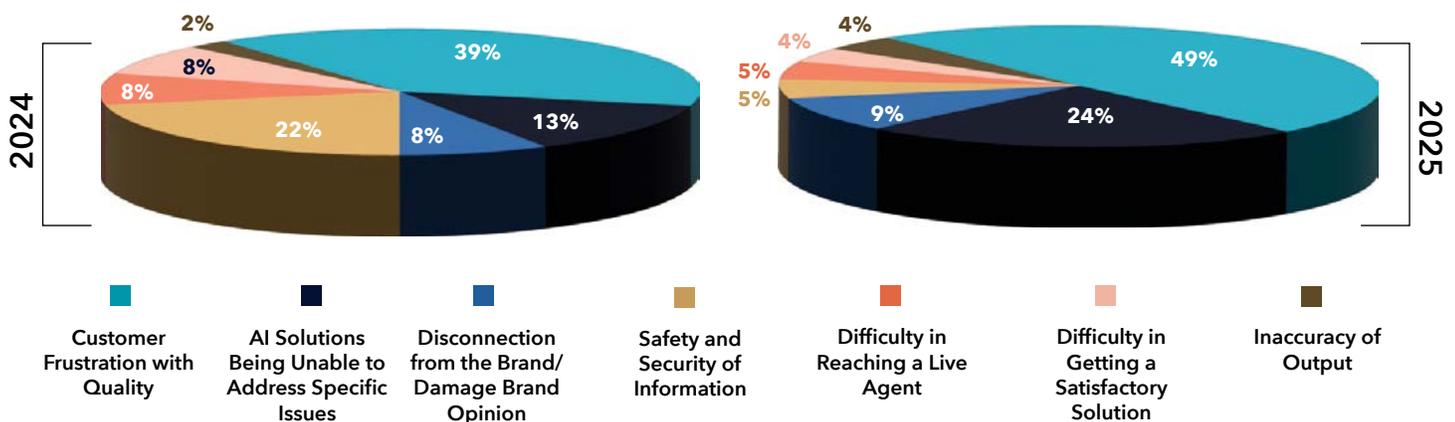
Forty-six percent of brands clearly identify their solutions as nonhuman at the start of an interaction, with another 11% doing so in some solutions (but not all). While these numbers reflect a significant YoY improvement, they still fall short of consumer expectations. To see where consumers land on this issue, see the Consumer Comparisons section on page 78.

In utilizing customer-facing AI-powered solutions, do you clearly identify the solution as nonhuman at the start of an interaction?



In the second year of asking about a brand's biggest concern with increasingly relying on AI, concern with the safety and security of information (five percent, down from 22%) was tamped down YoY, while concerns with AI quality (49%, up from 39%) and capability (24%, up from 13%) have risen. This shift suggests that trust in AI safeguards and governance is stabilizing, though trust in AI performance is still to be earned. This reinforces the ideas that today's CX leaders are leaning into outcome-focused strategies, actions, and initiatives.

What is your biggest concern with your company increasingly relying on AI solutions for customer care?



CONCLUSIONS:

AI FOR CX

KEY FINDINGS:

- AI objectives are more focused – centered on CX improvement, agent performance, and cost reduction.
- Agent-assist AI is the most common use case, while AI for data/process management is the fastest growing.
- Most organizations are now monitoring AI, and a majority plan formal continuous improvement processes.

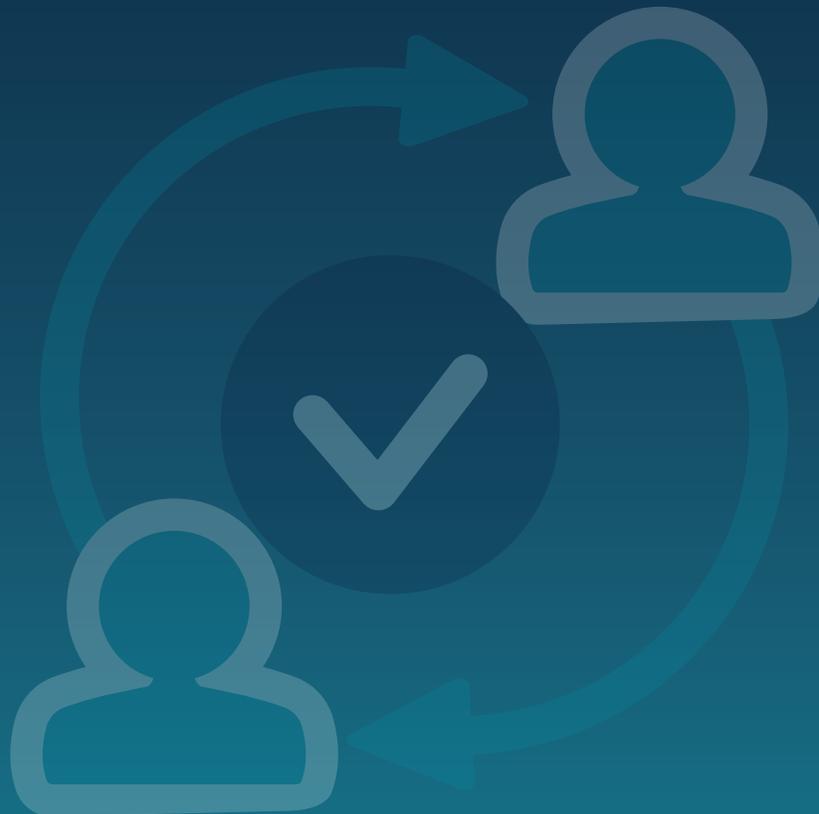
AI has moved decisively from experimentation to mainstream operations in the contact center, with roughly two-thirds (67%) of organizations now using some form of AI, marking a clear inflection point in adoption. Importantly, this expansion is not limited to a single channel or narrow pilots. AI is increasingly spread across journeys – assisted and unassisted alike. Separately, CX leaders are becoming more knowledgeable stewards of the technology, with improved reporting and deeper understanding today than just two years ago – a shift that is driving greater discipline in use-case selection, governance, and measurement.

Big picture, agent-assist remains the dominant use case (73%), underscoring that augmentation – not replacement – is the prevailing model inside the contact center. Yet the most significant momentum is occurring behind the scenes, with a rapid expansion in the use of AI for data and process management, signaling that leaders increasingly view AI as a tool for orchestrating workflows, improving analytics, and reducing systemic friction rather than simply automating customer touch points.

Measurement and accountability are catching up to adoption. CX leaders are no longer judging AI primarily by how much volume it deflects but, instead, are anchoring success in outcomes. In this context, Resolution Rate (67%) has emerged as the most closely watched KPI for AI, followed by containment, abandonment, and CSAT. Governance is also maturing rapidly, with most organizations now monitoring AI in some form, and most either have or plan to introduce formal processes for continuous improvement, treating AI more like a living product than a one-time deployment.

Perhaps most revealing is how leader concerns have shifted. Worries about data safety and security have receded, while anxiety about AI quality and capability has risen. This is a sign that the debate has moved from “Is this safe?” to “Is this good enough?” At the same time, AI objectives have become more concentrated around three priorities: improving CX, strengthening agent performance, and reducing costs. Taken together, the research paints a clear picture: AI in CX has entered a more accountable phase where success will be defined not by adoption alone, but by whether AI consistently improves resolution, reduces effort, builds trust, and delivers a better experience for customers.

CONSUMER COMPARISONS



CONSUMER COMPARISONS

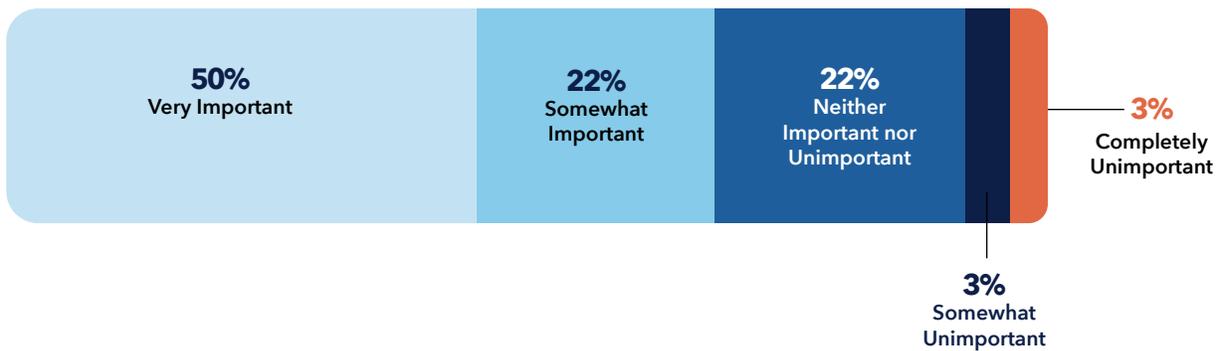
SUPPORT TEAM DIVERSITY

Consumers and CX leaders are well aligned on the importance of support teams reflecting the diversity of the customers they serve, with 72% of consumers deeming it “Very Important” or “Somewhat Important” compared to 68% of CX leaders. Diverse support teams are more likely to understand varied needs, will communicate more effectively, and can handle issues with greater cultural sensitivity and deeper empathy. At the end of the day, diversity is not only a “values” issue; it’s also an experience issue.

CONSUMER VIEWPOINT

2025 CX LEADERS TRENDS & INSIGHTS: CONSUMER EDITION

How important do you think it is for customer support teams to reflect the diversity of the customers they serve?



CORPORATE VIEWPOINT

2026 CX LEADERS TRENDS & INSIGHTS: CORPORATE EDITION

How important is it to your organization that your customer support team reflects the diversity of the customers it serves?



CONSUMER COMPARISONS

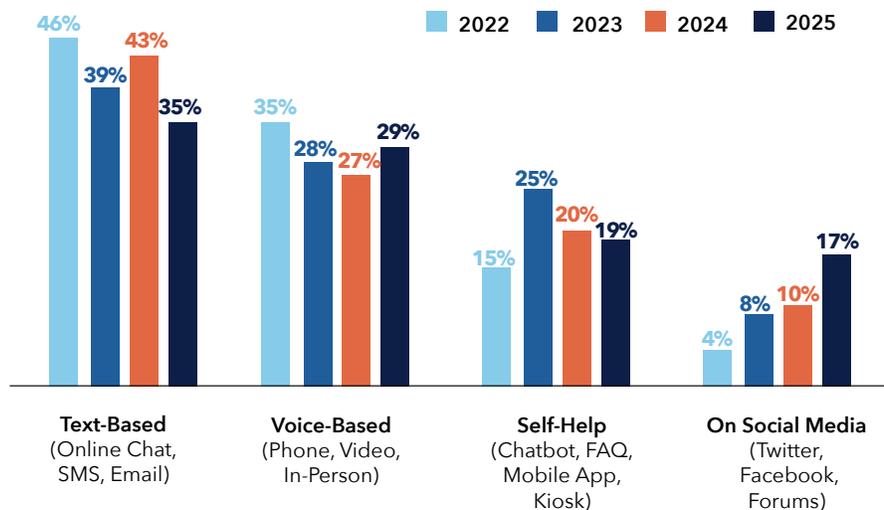
CONTACT METHOD PREFERENCE

There still appears to be a disconnect when it comes to channel preference, with 47% of CX leaders indicating that they think their customers prefer Self-Help solutions, whereas only 19% of consumers actually prefer Self-Help (compared to 35% who prefer Text-Based solutions). This disconnect likely reflects two realities happening at once. On one hand, leaders see the growing usage of self-help and reasonably conclude that customers “want” it; on the other, much of that usage may be driven by the availability or friction in reaching live support rather than true preference. Brands should be aware of the preferences of their own customers, be aware of the impact of demographics (like age) on preference, and be careful not to over-rotate based on behavior rather than genuine preference.

CONSUMER VIEWPOINT

2025 CX LEADERS TRENDS & INSIGHTS: CONSUMER EDITION

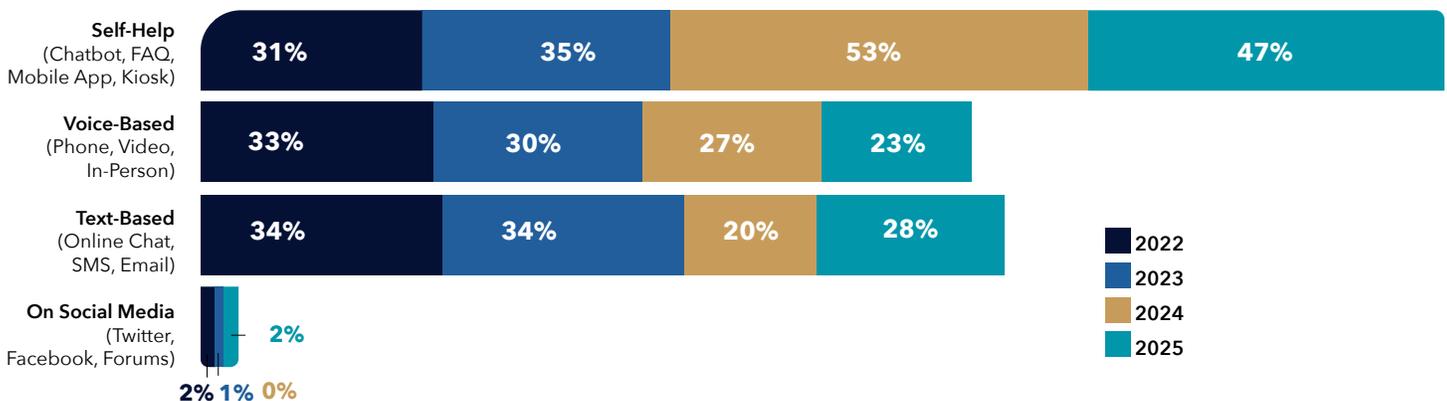
If you knew your customer care issue would be resolved regardless of contact channel, which would be your preferred contact method?



CORPORATE VIEWPOINT

2026 CX LEADERS TRENDS & INSIGHTS: CORPORATE EDITION

Assuming the customer care issue would be resolved, which contact method do you think consumers would prefer to use?



CONSUMER COMPARISONS

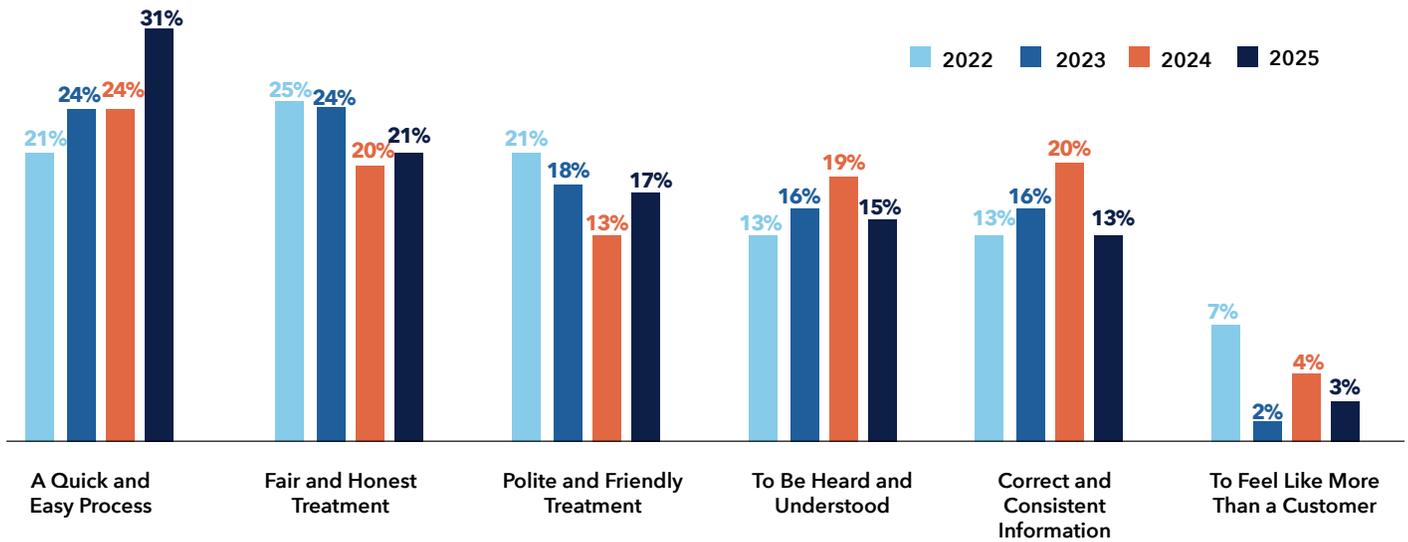
WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT

While consumers view speed, ease, and fairness (combined 52%) as most important when working to resolve a customer care issue, CX leaders think it's correct and consistent information (34%) and being heard (27%) that are most important to consumers. This result indicates that consumers are most concerned with a frictionless experience, while CX leaders think they value accuracy. Bridging this gap requires designing journeys that deliver both — but starting with simplicity, speed, and perceived fairness as the foundation.

CONSUMER VIEWPOINT

2025 CX LEADERS TRENDS & INSIGHTS: CONSUMER EDITION

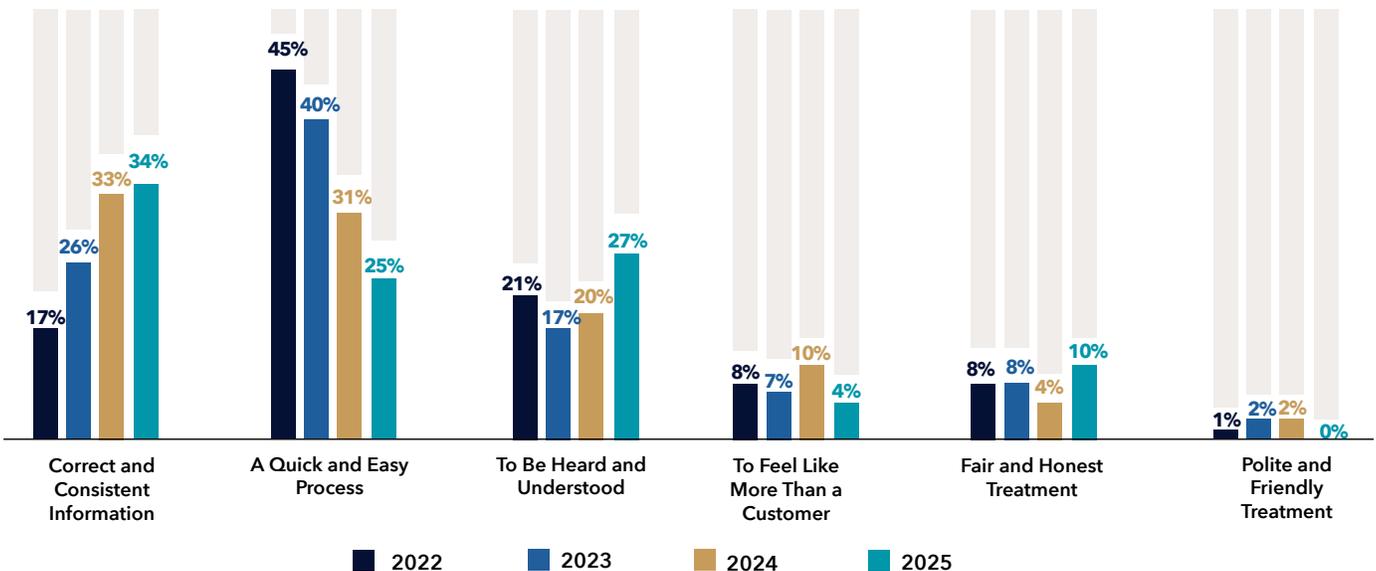
Aside from getting your issue resolved satisfactorily, what is most important when dealing with a large brand to resolve a customer care issue?



CORPORATE VIEWPOINT

2026 CX LEADERS TRENDS & INSIGHTS: CORPORATE EDITION

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



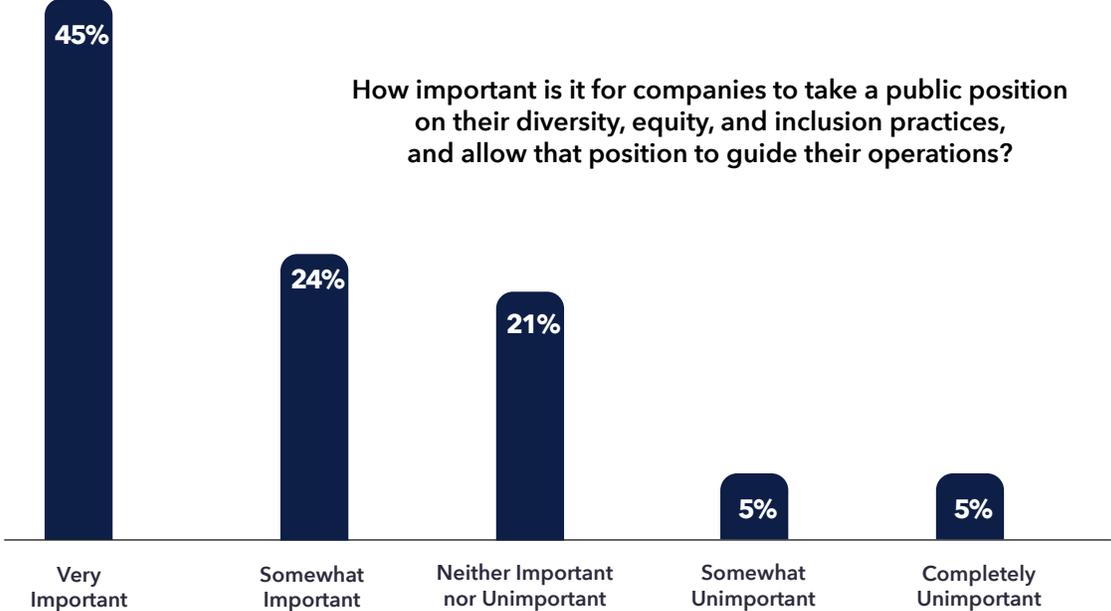
CONSUMER COMPARISONS

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

In an entirely new area of investigation for 2025, 68% of consumers felt it important (either “Very” or “Somewhat” for companies to take a public position on DEI. At the same time, only 36% of CX leaders indicated that their companies took such a position and acted on it. This gap matters for CX because customer care is one of the most visible ways a brand’s values are experienced. Consumers increasingly want brands to say what they stand for and act accordingly.

CONSUMER VIEWPOINT

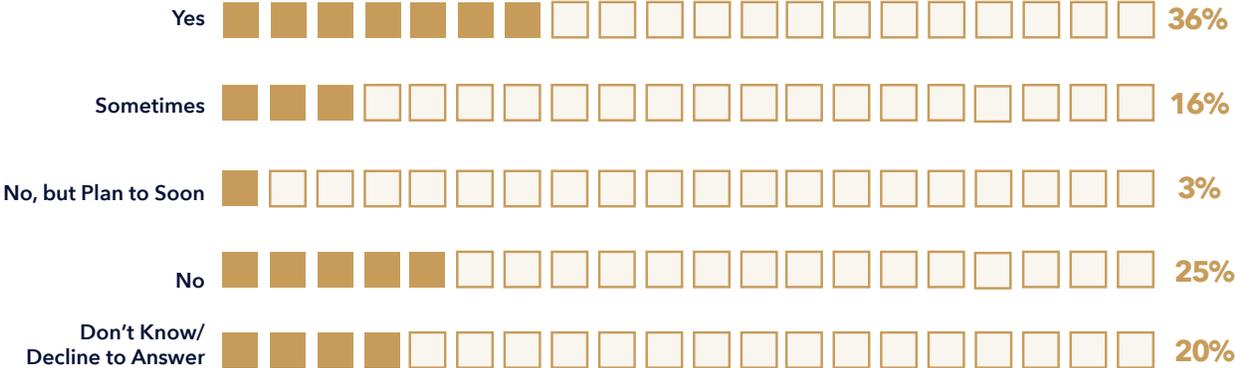
2025 CX LEADERS TRENDS & INSIGHTS: CONSUMER EDITION



CORPORATE VIEWPOINT

2026 CX LEADERS TRENDS & INSIGHTS: CORPORATE EDITION

Does your company take a public position on its diversity, equity, and inclusion practices, and allow that position to guide its operations?



CONSUMER COMPARISONS

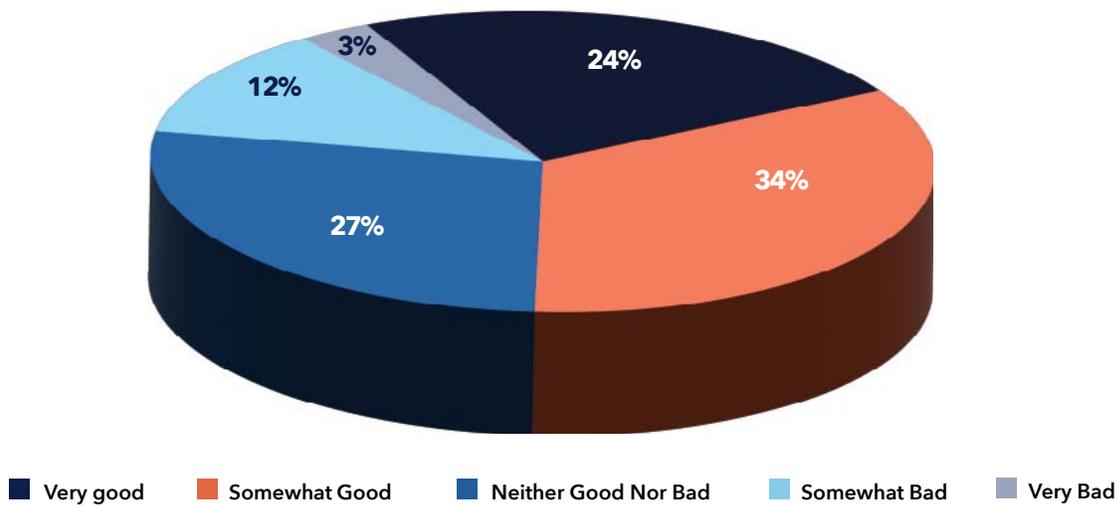
ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY

When it comes to making customer support more accessible and inclusive, 58% of consumers think brands are doing a good job (either "Very Good" or "Somewhat Good"), whereas 76% of CX leaders think their organizations are doing a good job. Closing this gap will require moving beyond compliance and good intentions and toward inclusive-by-design journeys that are validated with real customer testing, continuous feedback, and measurable outcomes.

CONSUMER VIEWPOINT

2025 CX LEADERS TRENDS & INSIGHTS: CONSUMER EDITION

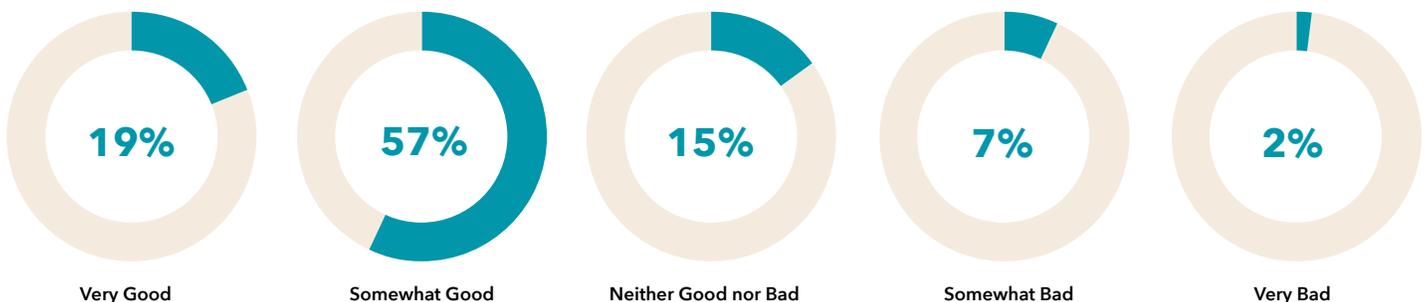
How are companies doing at making customer support accessible and inclusive for all types of people (e.g., non-English speakers, disabled customers, the elderly)?



CORPORATE VIEWPOINT

2026 CX LEADERS TRENDS & INSIGHTS: CORPORATE EDITION

How do you think your company is doing at making customer support accessible and inclusive for all types of people (e.g., non-English speakers, disabled customers, the elderly)?



CONSUMER COMPARISONS

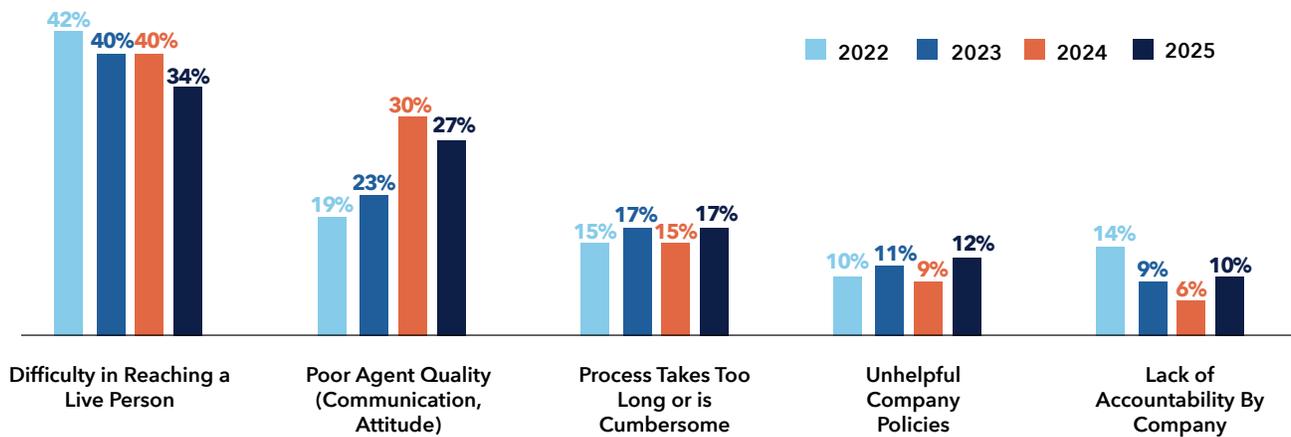
WHAT'S FRUSTRATING CONSUMERS

Consumer continue to point to "Difficulty Reaching a Live Person" (34%) as their top frustration when resolving an issue, followed by "Poor Agent Quality" (27%). CX leaders, on the other hand, widely believe "Process Takes Too Long or is Cumbersome" (60%) to be the top frustration among consumers. This may be a case of overindexing on an internal priority (process and efficiency). The result might be more efficiency tools, automation, and streamlining, but these are also some of the very same things that could potentially put a barrier between customers and the live support they seek. This comparison stresses the point of examining every journey from the consumer's point of view.

CONSUMER VIEWPOINT

2025 CX LEADERS TRENDS & INSIGHTS: CONSUMER EDITION

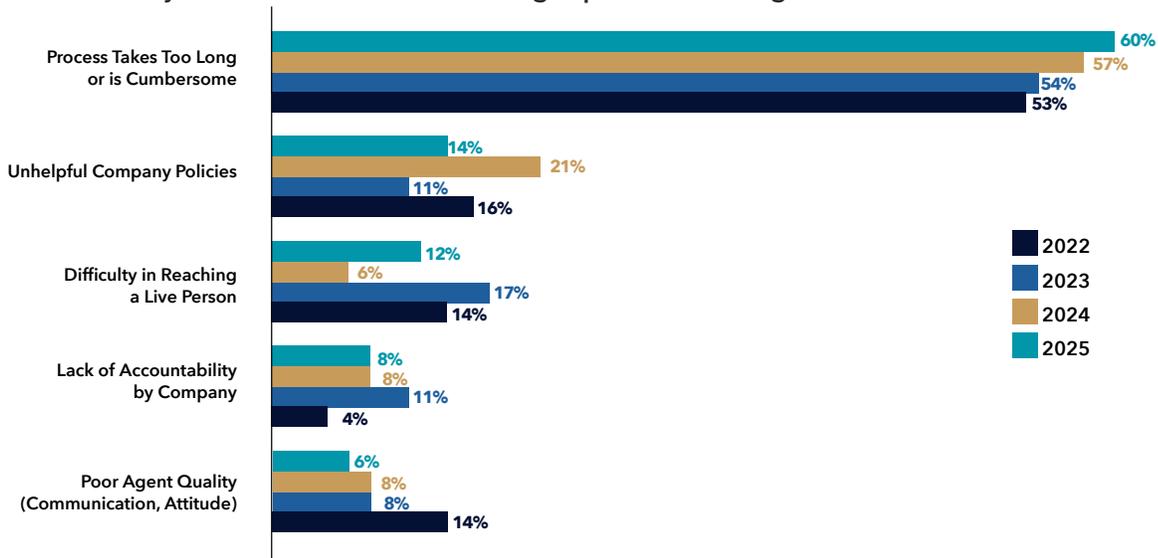
What do you find to be the most frustrating aspect of resolving a customer care issue with a brand?



CORPORATE VIEWPOINT

2026 CX LEADERS TRENDS & INSIGHTS: CORPORATE EDITION

What do you think is the most frustrating aspect of resolving a customer care issue for consumers?



CONSUMER COMPARISONS

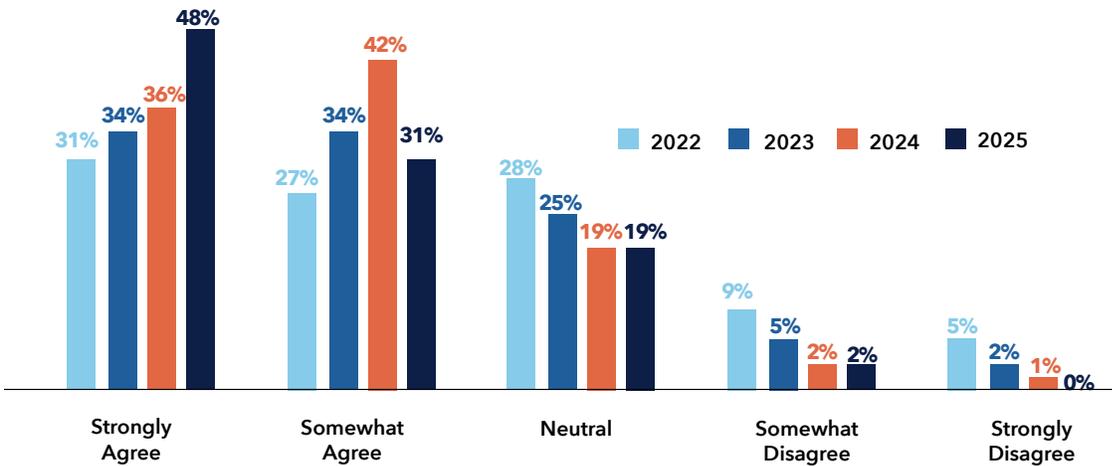
AGENT PASSION

Consumers and CX leaders are fairly aligned on the importance of agents being passionate about the brands they represent. Roughly 80% of consumers agree that agent passion is important, and 92% of CX leaders think their customers would feel agent passion is important. This suggests that most organizations recognize that effective service is not just about scripts, tools, or speed, but also about the energy and mindset agents bring to each interaction.

CONSUMER VIEWPOINT

2025 CX LEADERS TRENDS & INSIGHTS: CONSUMER EDITION

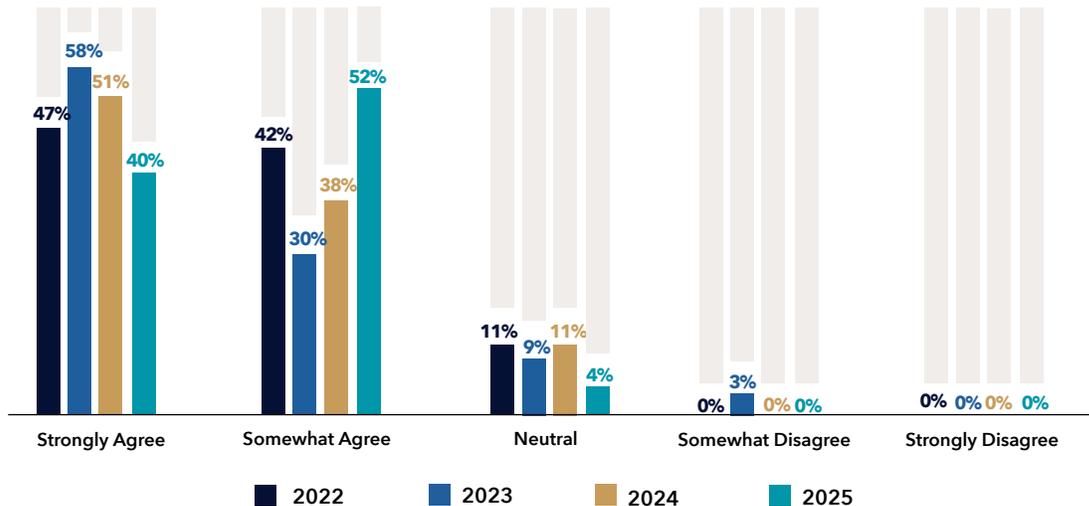
How do you feel about the following statement: It is important for customer care agents to be very passionate about the brands they represent.



CORPORATE VIEWPOINT

2026 CX LEADERS TRENDS & INSIGHTS: CORPORATE EDITION

In your opinion, how do you think YOUR CUSTOMERS feel about the following statement: It is important for customer care agents to be very passionate about the brands they represent.



CONSUMER COMPARISONS

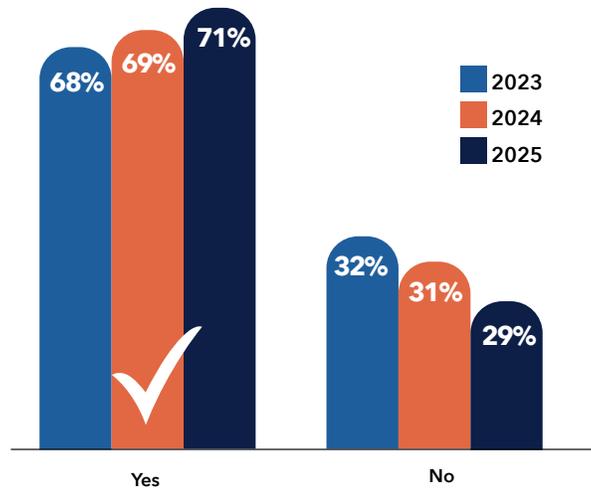
PAYING MORE FOR EXCEPTIONAL CARE

When asked if they'd be willing to pay a little more for a product or service if it meant world-class customer care, 71% of consumers said, "Yes." At the same time, only 57% of CX leaders felt their customers would be willing to pay a little more in exchange for world-class service. Despite the gap, these results suggest that when a brand consistently delivers reliable, easy, and trustworthy care, it may be able to justify higher prices or command stronger loyalty in competitive markets. Perhaps there is no stronger result to consider when making the argument that the contact center is less a cost center and more an opportunity to create deeper value.

CONSUMER VIEWPOINT

2025 CX LEADERS TRENDS & INSIGHTS: CONSUMER EDITION

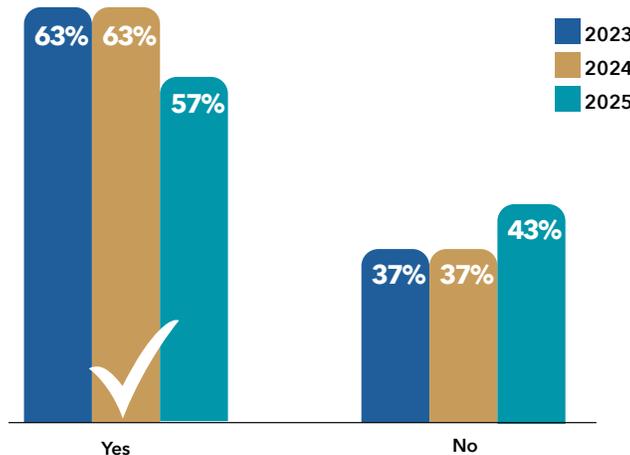
Would you be willing to pay a little more for a product or a service if it meant you'd get world-class customer care support?



CORPORATE VIEWPOINT

2026 CX LEADERS TRENDS & INSIGHTS: CORPORATE EDITION

Do you think your customers would be willing to pay a little more for your products or services if it meant they'd get world-class customer care support?



CONSUMER COMPARISONS

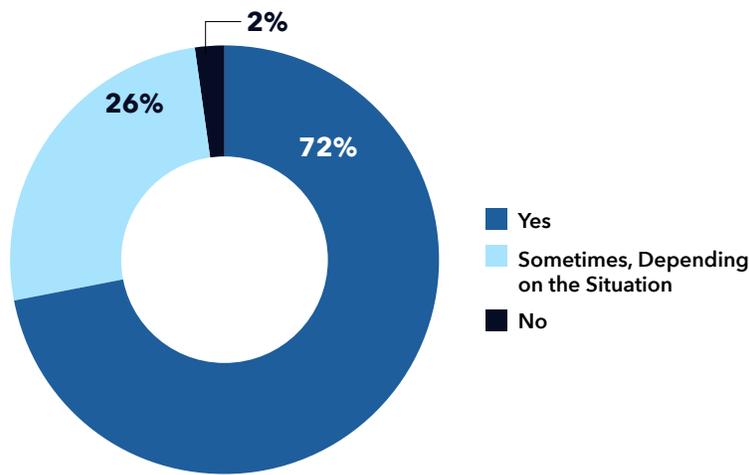
IDENTIFYING AI'S INVOLVEMENT

Although many companies (85% when removing those who didn't know or declined to respond) identify AI-powered solutions at the start of some or all interactions, 98% of consumers think brands should undertake this practice. This suggests that consumers do not view disclosure of AI's involvement as optional or a "nice to have." Instead, consumers see disclosure as a basic component of trustworthy, ethical, and respectful AI-in-the-loop service design.

CONSUMER VIEWPOINT

ETHICS, ADOPTION, AND OPINION: CONSUMER PERSPECTIVES ON AI FOR CX (2025)

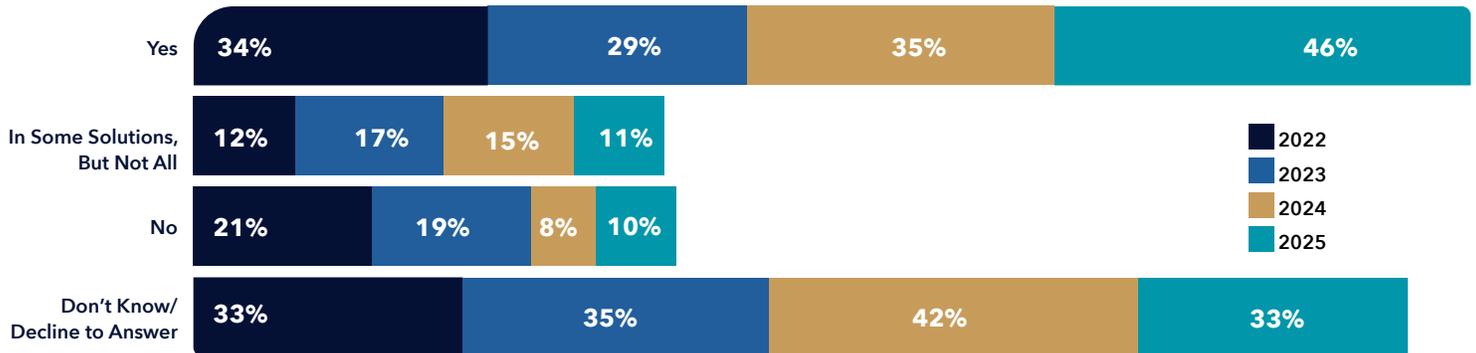
Do you think brands should clearly identify if a customer care representative or interaction is powered by AI?



CORPORATE VIEWPOINT

2026 CX LEADERS TRENDS & INSIGHTS: CORPORATE EDITION

In utilizing customer-facing AI-powered solutions, do you clearly identify the solution as nonhuman at the start of an interaction?



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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