

YOUR CX PLAYBOOK FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

State of the contact center

2025



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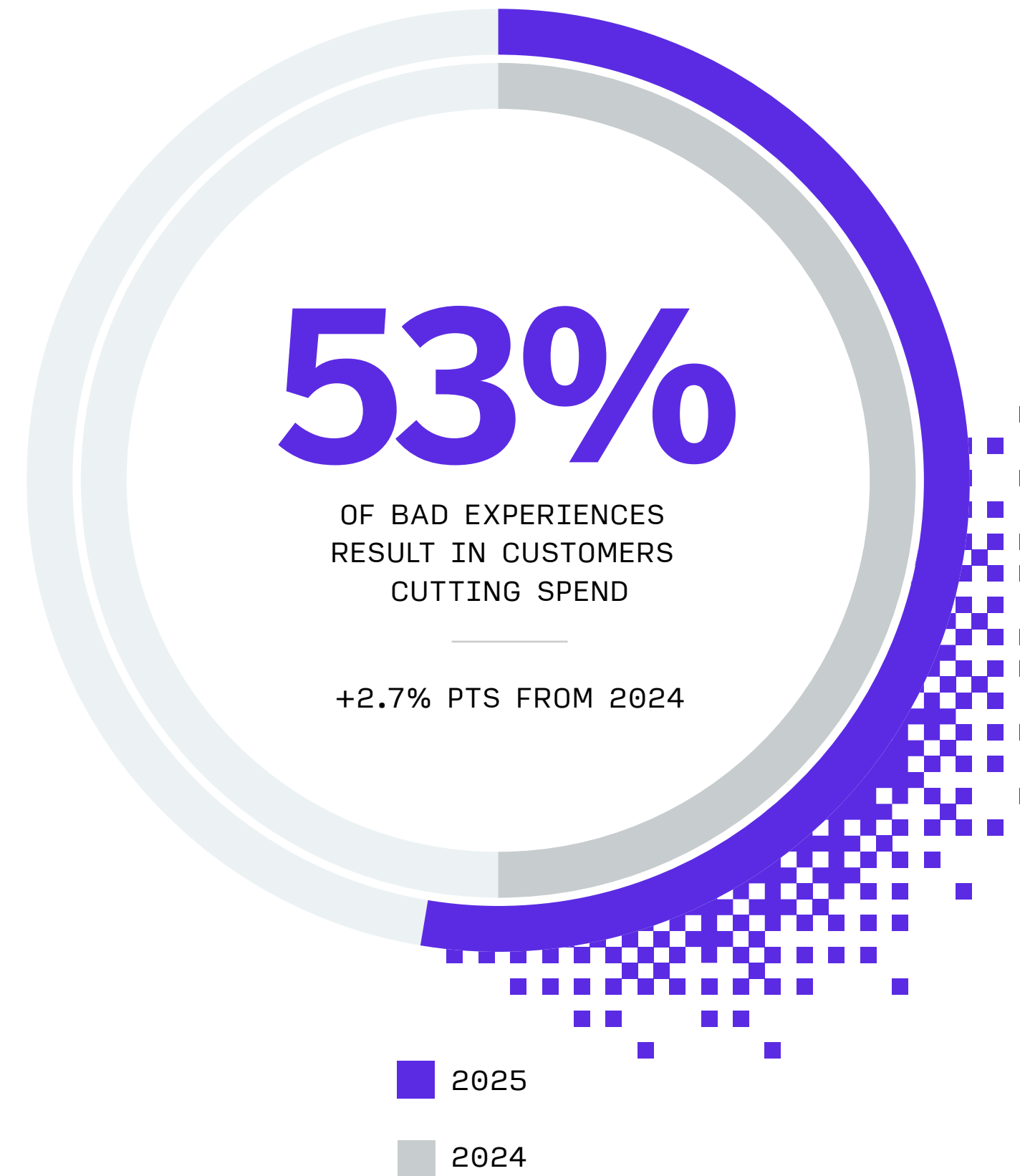
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Contact center experiences are improving, but the stakes are high

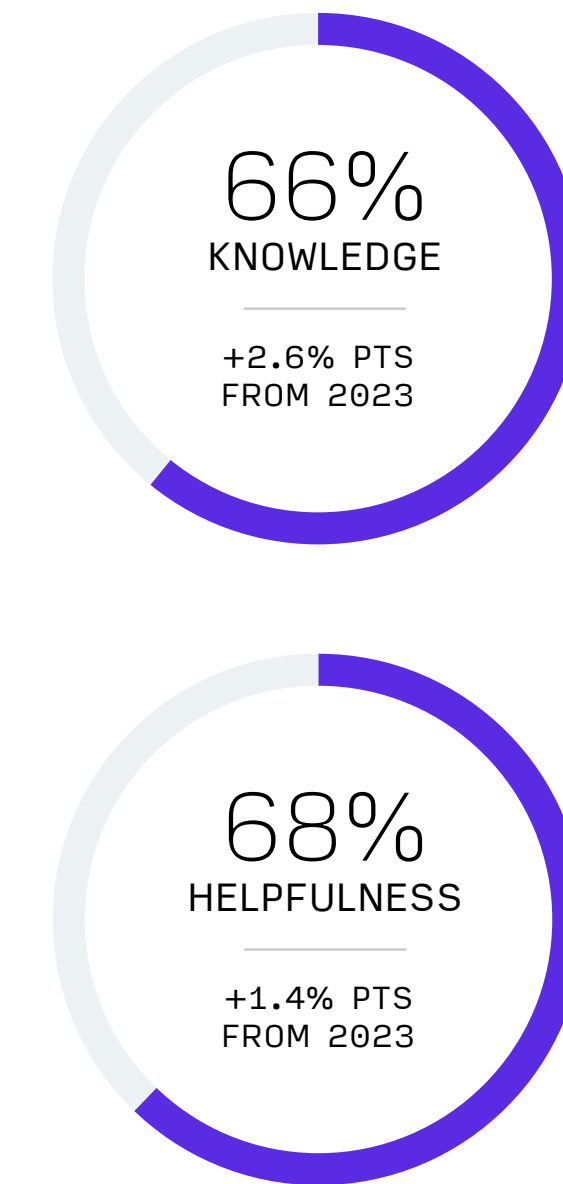
Our biennial contact center research – a survey of over 23,000 consumers and 3,072 employees, diving into the state of contact center experiences around the world – showed that consumers are happier with their contact center experiences in 2025. But, you cannot afford to stand still as consumers are still pushing for better.

If you fail to meet those rising expectations? You'll be punished, immediately. Over 1 in 2 bad experiences result in customers cutting their spend (53%).

CONSUMERS WILL WALK AFTER A BAD EXPERIENCE



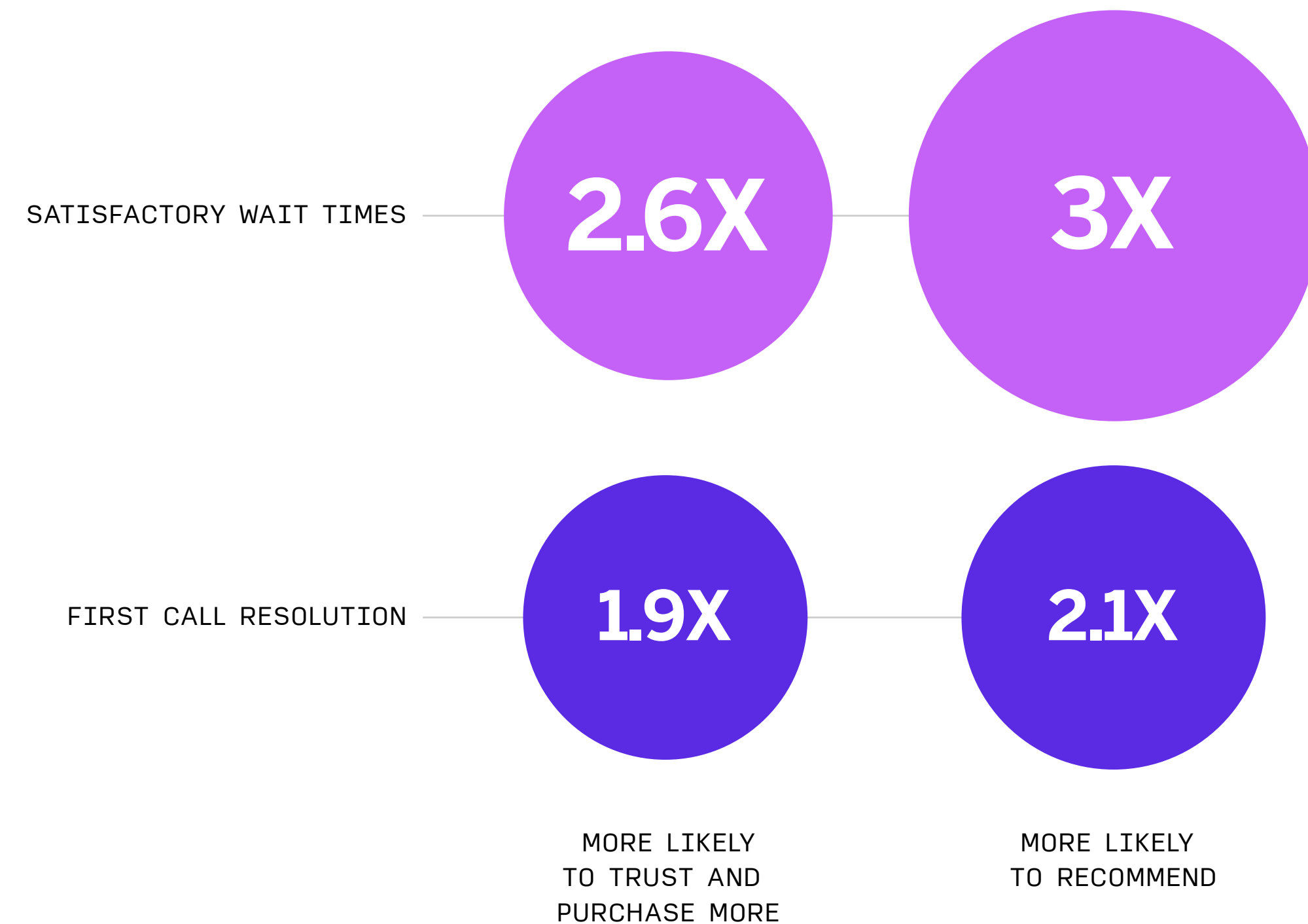
AT A GLANCE THE STATE OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE



Long wait times and low FCR rates? You're leaving money on the table

When consumers are satisfied with wait times, they are much more likely to trust, repurchase from, and recommend the company to others. But while convenience is rewarded, it's not the only priority – solving the issue first time is just as important, producing a similar ROI for the business.

SPEED IS IMPORTANT, BUT MUST BE BALANCED WITH AGENT EFFECTIVENESS



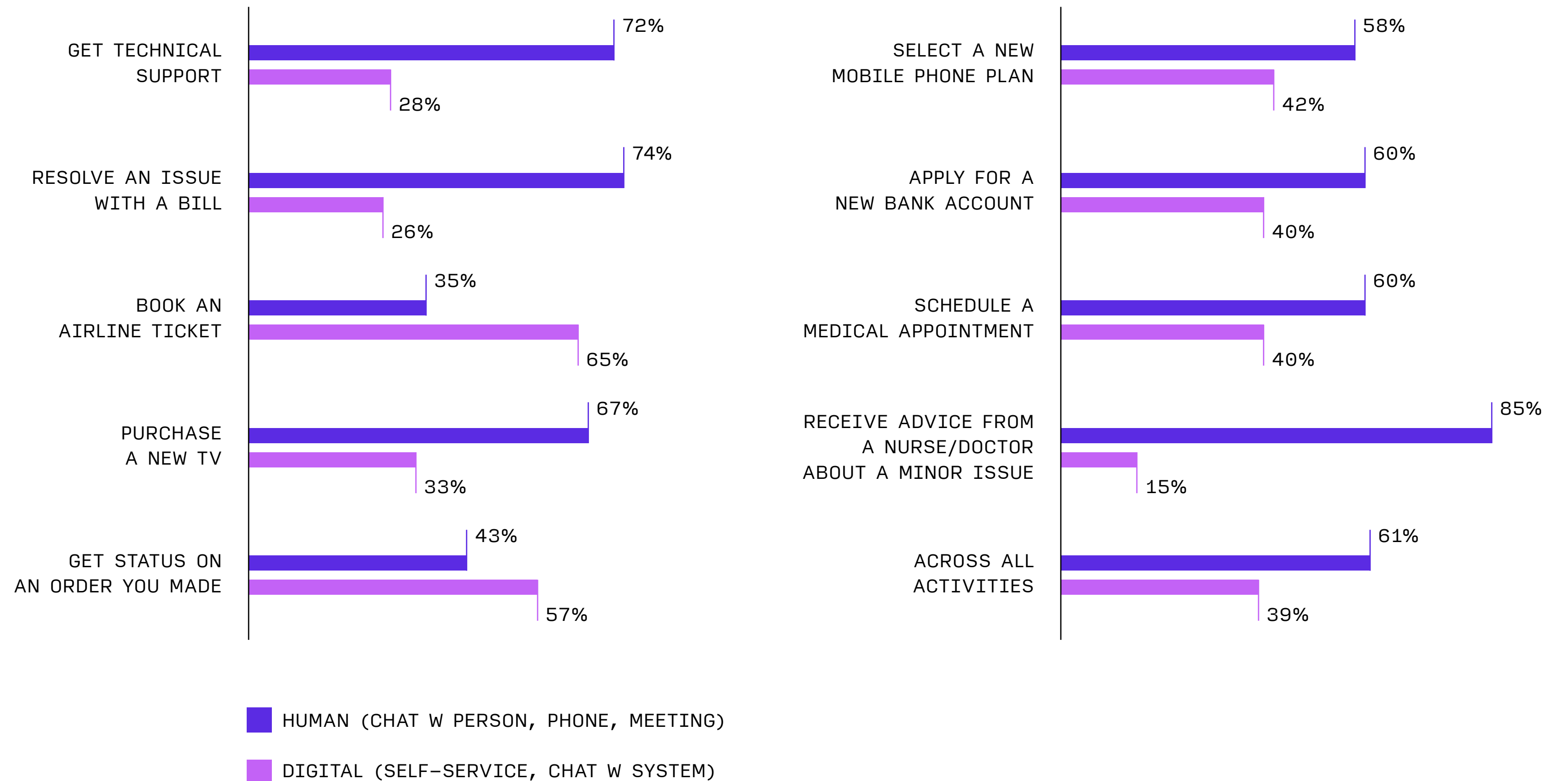
Human-to-human experiences remain vital

But while minimizing wait times has a high ROI, that does not mean you should get them down by simply sending customers to self-service channels.

We found that human connection continues to be a vital ingredient of positive customer experiences in 2025. 61% of consumers prefer to complete their tasks through human channels (over the phone, in person, or via chat) compared to 39% through digital channels (self-service via mobile, computer, or automated chat). Just 8% of consumers prefer to use a chatbot to complete their tasks.

This serves as a timely reminder: Don't sacrifice human-facing channels in the pursuit of operational efficiency, or you'll risk causing frustration and churn. With over 1 in 2 consumers concerned AI will replace a human to connect with (+2.1% pts vs 2024), you cannot choose one or the other, it has to be both.

HOW CHANNEL PREFERENCES BREAK DOWN BY TASK



Contact center agents think AI could improve effectiveness... but consumers are skeptical


Nearly half of contact center employees say if they had AI tools that made it faster or easier to complete their work, they would increase the quality of work with the time saved. However, only 20% are actively using AI to resolve customer issues currently.

Although contact center employees are open to using AI to enable better customer service, consumers need convincing. We found consumer comfort using AI was down a massive 11 % pts year-over-year, and only 1 in 4 consumers trust organizations to use it responsibly. However, that openness increases when consumers can see how it will help them achieve their specific goals.



AI-POWERED AGENTS

Nearly 1 in 2 contact center employees say AI tools would increase the quality of work with time saved



“Consumers strongly seek out self-service for simple queries, but quickly switch to human channels when they perceive their issue as a complex one. Forcing consumers down a self-service path without a clear route to human connection will drive up frustration disproportionately, even though it might look like a cost savings.”



LEONIE BROWN
LEAD PRODUCT SCIENTIST, CUSTOMER CARE

State of the contact center: 5-year-look-ahead

3 TRENDS TO PREPARE FOR

Over the next 5 years, technological advancements, incoming legislation, and evolving customer expectations will rewrite the contact center playbook. To set you on the right path, our CX experts outline the future-defining trends that need to be top of mind and core to every CX leader's customer care program.

TREND 1

AI-powered agent assistance

TREND 2

Next-level customer intelligence

TREND 3

1:1 customer service at scale



TREND 1

AI-powered agent assistance

If you read our 2025 Consumer Trends Report, you'll know that consumer sentiment around AI has dramatically fallen year-on-year. This is at least partly due to rising concerns about AI replacing a human to connect to – a worry now shared by half of all consumers.

Which poses an important question: rather than making AI customer-facing, what if AI was used to empower your staff to deliver a world-class experience every time instead?

AI: An agent's best friend

Over the next few years, we expect to see more and more businesses adopt AI technology in this way. Instead of simply deploying chatbots, the most successful contact centers will use AI to create a workforce of AI-powered

human agents who have ready access to AI tools and are empowered to provide a personalized customer service experience at a scale never before possible.

This is far removed from today's reality, where agents typically spend so much time on administrative tasks, such as post-call notes and resolution efforts, they're not able to scale their impact. By using AI to automate this, you'll free up your agents to do what they do best – help humans and create the lasting connections that we know are so valuable to ensuring satisfaction and repeat business.

HOW AI WILL TRANSFORM AGENT EFFECTIVENESS

- + Automate time consuming tasks like post-call summaries, creating consistent notes every agent and manager can rely on in seconds
- + Automatically summarize huge volumes of information that wouldn't be possible manually, allowing agents to identify compliance issues, key trends, and next steps
- + Implement a reliable quality management process that builds trust and gets everyone aligned around the same objectives

Agentic workflows will streamline business

Autonomous AI agents (not to be confused with your human agents) are the next AI transformation on the horizon. At the moment, AI is self-contained – it works within set parameters dictated by the user.

This is where your human agents will see some immediate benefits firsthand like instant call summaries, intelligent scoring and automated quality control and compliance.

But AI will also transform what goes on behind-the-scenes too, with what will become commonly known as an **agentic workflow**.

This capability will redefine how businesses operate. With the autonomy to act as the “middle man,” AI agents will listen, learn, and pick up on cues from customer interactions, enabling them to complete those tasks automatically.

Not only will businesses be able to streamline their processes, paving the way for much-welcomed productivity gains, but the customer service experience will be greatly improved too – with the agentic workflow empowering your frontline with the time to concentrate on high-value interactions. Win, win!

WHAT IS AN AGENTIC WORKFLOW?

A process where multiple AI agents are working together with autonomy to achieve a shared goal.

EXAMPLE

Traditional AIs will produce a single result from a given prompt – for example, “based on this transcript, tell me what the customer’s reason for calling was and suggest a reason code.”

An AI agent can tackle far more complex tasks. It can make a decision, gather information from other systems, and even run code. “This customer is calling about a billing issue, but the problem is that they haven’t updated their payment method. We’ve sent them a new payment authorization.”

AI agents can also collaborate. A contact center AI agent might identify a billing issue and then coordinate with the marketing system’s AI to determine if the customer qualifies for a new credit card offer.

The view on the ground

ANALYSIS

With mindful usage of AI, the traditional customer service pyramid model will be a thing of the past. Instead, Customer Care leaders can drive personalization at scale by focusing human efforts on the areas that deliver the greatest customer impact. The gold standard will be a mix of automated yet personalized self-service capabilities, with agentic workflows empowering human agents to connect with customers who need to speak with a human earlier in the process.



Leonie Brown

Lead Product Scientist,
Customer Care, Qualtrics

ADVICE

There's no such thing as "good enough" with AI. If it's not great, exceeding the standards that your brand has set, your customers will associate it negatively with your brand, and accordingly reduce spend. So think carefully about what channels you want to offer, the plan today, and in the future, for Human vs AI. And create a quality plan that ensures your customers always get the service level they expect, regardless of human, AI, or channel.



Brandon Hanson

Contact Center Practice
Leader, Qualtrics

ADVICE

The contact center of the future will be a dynamic collaboration between human agents – who will continue to bring their creativity, and a nuanced understanding of human interactions – and AI agents, who will be capable of increasingly complex problem-solving and action-taking. This partnership will enable faster resolution, predictive support, and personalized experiences, redefining customer service as we know it.



Isabelle Zdatny

Head of Thought Leadership
Qualtrics XM Institute

ANALYSIS

Agentic workflows, which are achieved through autonomous AI agents, are often described as the next generation of robotic process automation (RPA) wherein the primary difference is that the former can make complex decisions. But, there's a more strategic difference. Autonomous AI agents take actions based on continuous learning– and that learning is grounded in a business outcome. They don't just automate a process, they also optimize for the business.



Lisa Fairbanks

Global Head, Customer
Experience and GTM, AWS

TREND 2

Next-level customer intelligence

Up until now, identifying the moments that have the greatest impact on the customer – the make or break situations that can cause satisfaction or frustration – has long been an unrealized dream. This is because organizations lack the tools and the time to sift through large volumes of data manually, making it such an uphill struggle that many businesses don't even attempt to understand the customer journey on a detailed level.

The good news is AI can make this a transformative reality for organizations. You'll be able to listen to and analyze every interaction simultaneously, instantly turning data into game-changing customer intelligence that's ready to act on. The impact will be huge. Not only will it help businesses understand the moments of greatest impact for the customer, but it will also show them how to deliver the right experience in those moments as the experience unfolds.

If you can identify and consistently deliver on those moments that matter, it will have a huge influence on your customers' overall relationship with the brand, as you'll be fixing potential causes of frustration before they lead to churn.



The view on the ground

ANALYSIS

One of the single biggest blockers of improving CX is 'what should we fix first'. Stakeholders have competing priorities and it's difficult to accurately identify those moments that matter, that will drive the greatest customer impact. Deeper and broader customer intelligence will help leaders prioritize their efforts and investment to unlock greater ROI.



Leonie Brown
Lead Product Scientist,
Customer Care

ADVICE

Two things stand out that can be solved with the same answer - You Need Better AI.

Your agents need better AI tools that they will actually use, and you need better customer-facing AI tools that your customers will actually appreciate! Empower your agents, delight your customers.



Brandon Hanson
Contact Center
Practice Leader, Qualtrics

ADVICE

While surveys will continue to be a useful source of customer perceptions and attitudes, issues like limited scope, low response rates, and lag times make them insufficient tools for driving real-time experience improvements. By gathering customer intelligence from every interaction, organizations will be able to analyze and identify which moments along a customers' journey have the biggest impact on experience and business outcomes, and act in the moment to keep interactions positive and productive.



Isabelle Zdatny
Head of Thought
Leadership, Qualtrics
XM Institute

ANALYSIS

Organizations have long sought to mature their customer intelligence beyond the themes and sub-themes they already know to be critical to customer satisfaction (e.g., billing issues). They want to be proactive in identifying emerging trends, changes in customer expectations, competitive threats, etc., at scale. Advancements in AI are making this a reality due in large part to the corpus of training data which extends beyond the walls of an organization's existing vocabulary.



Lisa Fairbanks
Global Head, Customer
Experience and GTM, AWS

TREND 3

1:1 customer service at scale

Consumer preferences and expectations will evolve over the next 5 years, but one thing will remain constant. The value they place on human connection. In fact, as AI becomes more prominent, it will become even more important to make sure that customers feel listened to, understood, and supported by human agents who are within easy reach.

But building this connection won't be achieved through the traditional one-size-fits-all customer care pyramid you see today. It will be through creating seamless, personalized journeys for every single customer. This will be an evolution that happens in stages.

Today, customers already expect to be able to interact with businesses on the channel of their choice. Next, businesses will be expected to go further by remembering the details and context of previous interactions, so if a customer switches channels, it's a seamless experience to resolve the issue.

By 2030, we expect contact centers to move away from the blanket approach to customer service entirely. As customer service becomes even more personal, organizations will go beyond tracking the customer as they move from one channel to the next to proactively intervening when needed.

To do this successfully, the role of human agents in customer care will change. Instead of being a last line of defense, companies will use them wherever in the journey they can be the most effective, helping businesses to build connections with customers in a much more impactful way.

This is because, in the background, AI will be listening to and analyzing every interaction, allowing it to actively identify people who want or need to talk to a human, regardless of where they are in their journey. And often before they've even tried to talk to a human!

Whether they're a VIP, or their self-service attempts usually end in failure, AI will be able to surface who needs to talk to a human and then equip agents with the information they need to reach out and resolve the issue proactively, before the customer has had to climb the contact center care pyramid.

But world-class personal service won't just be a nice-to-have for customers, it will be a (legally-binding) must-have. In the next 5 years, incoming legislation around the world will rewrite the playbook for how every contact center operates. From regulation around how AI is used to customer service standards – compliance will be mandatory for the majority of businesses.

KEEPING ON TOP OF THE LATEST LEGISLATION

EU Artificial Intelligence Act

This is the world's first concrete initiative for regulating Artificial Intelligence. The AI Act aims to ensure that AI systems in the EU are safe and respect fundamental rights and values. If you're involved in the development, usage, import, distribution, or manufacturing of AI systems, this act applies to you!

[VIEW SOURCE](#)

Spanish Customer Service Law

Businesses will be required to provide immediate customer support, minimize hold times, reduce misrouting of calls, and ensure swift resolution of issues. This applies to all companies conducting business in Spain, regardless of the country in which a business is established. Which means that if you have Spanish customers, you must comply regardless of where your business is headquartered or where your contact center or agents are located.

[VIEW SOURCE](#)

United States “Time is Money” government-wide action

Businesses will soon be required to avoid “adding unnecessary headaches and hassles to people's days and degrade their quality of life — through excessive paperwork, hold times, and general aggravation.”

[VIEW SOURCE](#)

The view on the ground

ADVICE

Whether it's from the perspective of protecting customers from unnecessary hassle, or protecting employees from having their jobs automated away, we will see increasing amounts of AI legislation being introduced around the world. Organizations need to make sure they communicate their use of AI really well – both to employees and to customers – to maintain trust and avoid potentially huge fines from regulators. Define what your automation is used for and try to connect it to the value it delivers, don't expect people to think automation or AI is inherently useful.



Leonie Brown
Lead Product Scientist
Customer Care, Qualtrics

ADVICE

The future of contact centers & the future of customer experience are inextricably intertwined - contact center leaders should begin now to build a holistic plan that connects CX & Contact Center visions, fueling overall organizational transformation. Do this now and create a completely differentiated experience that your competitors can't replicate.



Brandon Hanson
Contact Center Practice
Leader, Qualtrics

ANALYSIS

An experience designed for everyone satisfies no one. Historically, limited resources forced organizations to adopt a one-size-fits-all approach to customer support. But with AI, that's no longer necessary. AI can analyze vast amounts of data to automatically segment customers based on their unique needs and preferences. This allows companies to create tailored experiences that cater to people's individual psychographic needs. For example, routing customers to human agents or chatbots according to their preferences.



Isabelle Zdatny
Head of Thought Leadership,
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ANALYSIS

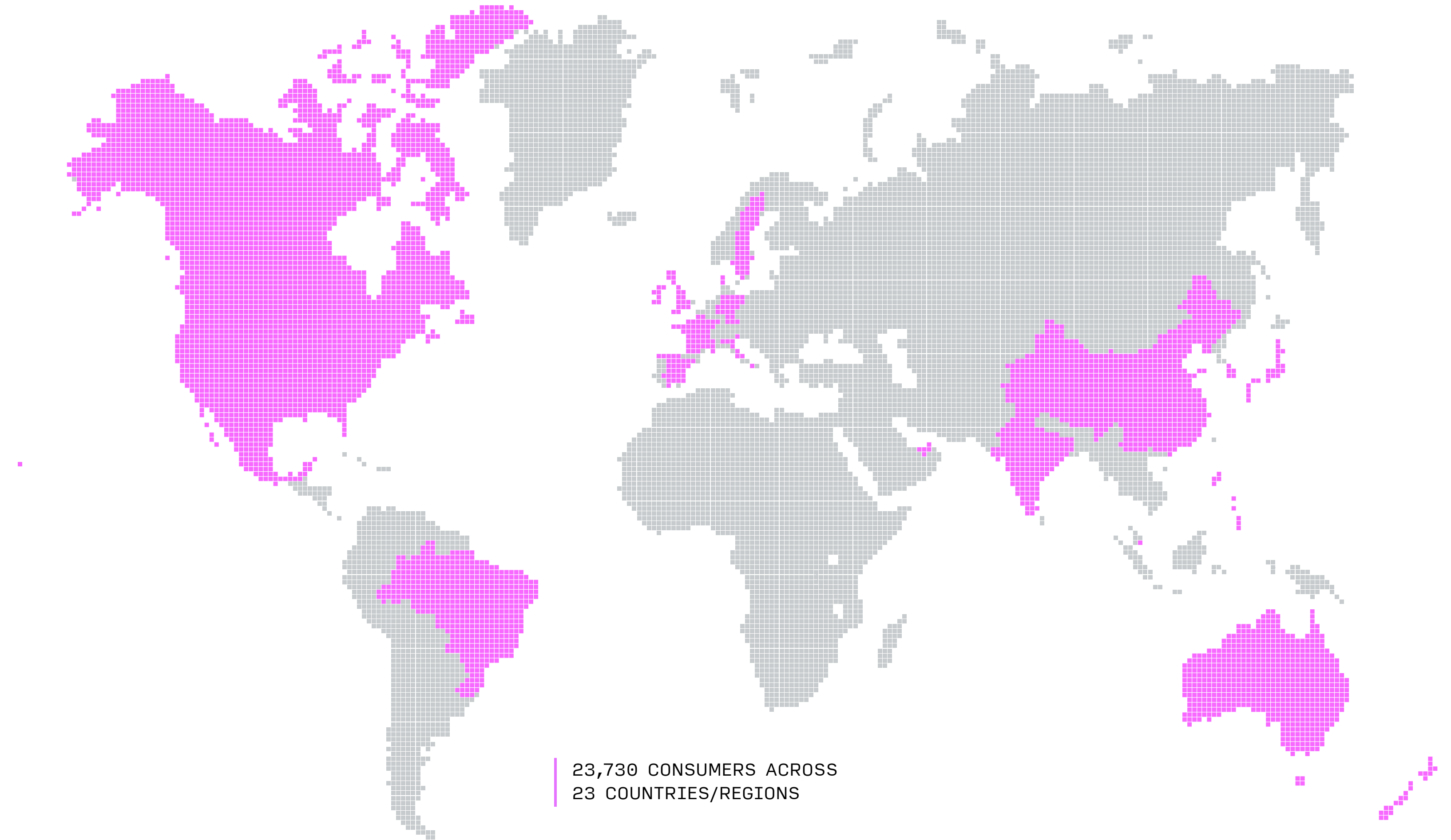
One of the domains where we see a lot of momentum for 1:1 customer servicing at scale is with connected products powered by IoT. At the individual device level, which is associated with an individual consumer, we can leverage AI to identify an anomaly, decision the best path in confidently identifying the root cause and the optimal, hyper-personalized path to resolution.



Lisa Fairbanks
Global Head, Customer
Experience and GTM, AWS

Methodology

The data for this report comes from a global consumer study that Qualtrics XM Institute conducted in the third quarter of 2024. Using an online survey, XM Institute collected data from 23,730 consumers across 23 countries/regions: Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Hong Kong (China), Ireland, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States. To ensure that the data was reflective of the population within those countries, we set quotas for responses to match the gender, age, and income demographics of each country.



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