



# 2019 NICE inContact Customer Experience (CX) Transformation Benchmark

Global Findings:  
Business vs. Consumer

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# Executive Summary



# Overview

The NICE inContact Customer Experience (CX) Transformation Benchmark is fielded in the US, UK, and Australia with two surveys, one among consumers and one among contact center decision makers.

This report presents global findings from the business wave of the research and provides comparative results to the consumer study published in 2018. Year-over-year findings for the US are available and presented where applicable.

## This report includes:

- The channels that businesses offer along with their own assessment of the quality of the service they provide, across both agent-assisted and self-service channels
- Comparisons of what businesses report to what consumers say about their actual experiences across channels, as well as attitudes

NICE inContact conducts this study annually and tracks changes over time.

# Major Findings

Today's highly competitive experience economy calls for companies to elevate their game. Organizations of all sizes now must consistently deliver exceptional customer experiences to achieve business goals and drive growth. This research aims to help customer experience leaders better understand and improve the customer service experience, while expanding their service channel offering and advancing their contact center operations.

The research found significant differences in how customers and businesses perceive the customer experience.

## Channel Performance Gaps

- Businesses underestimate customer satisfaction with agent-assisted methods overall, and particularly underestimate phone.
- For self-service methods, businesses overestimate customer satisfaction with automated assistants / chatbots and IVR.
- Businesses give every method of communication a higher Net Promoter Score® than do consumers. The largest gaps are for IVR, automated assistant / chatbot, email, text, and social media.

## Chat Momentum

- Businesses are increasingly offering online chat and consumer usage is increasing significantly.
- Consumer and business ratings for chat are all relatively high, including for satisfaction, ease of use, likelihood to recommend, first contact resolution, and Net Promoter Score®.

## Customer Experience (CX) Success

- Businesses overestimate their own CX success compared to consumer perceptions for:
  - Making it easy for customers to get issues resolved in their preferred channels
  - Providing a consistent customer service experience across the purchase journey

## Seamless Omnichannel Interactions

- Providing seamless omnichannel interactions continues to be important to consumers, but businesses give themselves poor ratings in this area.

## AI Disconnect

- Businesses misjudge consumers' desire to use AI for customer service, as well as AI's ability to make it easy for customers to get issues resolved.

The research found **significant differences** in how customers and businesses perceive the customer experience.

# Comparison of Consumers and Businesses Globally

Channels	% Satisfaction (9/10)			% Preference (top 3 ranking)			Net Promoter Score® (NPS®)		
	Consumer	Business	Difference	Consumer	Business	Difference	Consumer	Business	Difference
<b>Agent-assisted</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>-8</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>+6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>+19</b>
Video chat	n/a	45	n/a	5	20	+15	n/a	32	n/a
Online chat	47	41	-6	53	42	-11	21	25	+4
Text	38	33	-5	11	14	3	-2	25	+27
Phone	44	36	-8	63	60	-3	7	24	+17
Email	35	35	0	53	43	-10	-9	19	+28
Social media	29	31	+2	10	16	+6	-10	17	+27
<b>Self-service</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>-5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>+20</b>
Mobile app	44	40	-4	21	20	-1	25	28	+3
Automated assistant / chatbot	28	37	+9	9	14	+5	-8	25	+33
Website	41	37	-4	50	45	-5	14	21	+7
IVR	26	33	+7	20	16	-4	-26	16	+42
Home electronic assistant	n/a	46	n/a	4	10	+6	n/a	30	n/a

Box around delta indicates a statistically significant difference. Stat testing is not used for NPS® scores. Agent-assisted and self-service preference is an aggregate of #1 most preferred ranking scores.

# Methodology

This report presents global findings from the Business wave of the research and provides comparative results to the Consumer study published in 2018.



## Fielding

- The consumer wave of research was fielded March–April 2018
- The business wave of research was fielded November–December 2018



## Consumer screening criteria

- Consumers who communicated with a company through a customer service experience in the last three months
- US, UK, and Australia
- N=2,407



## Business screening criteria

- Contact Center decision-makers across industries
- US, UK, and Australia
- N=905



# Channel Usage

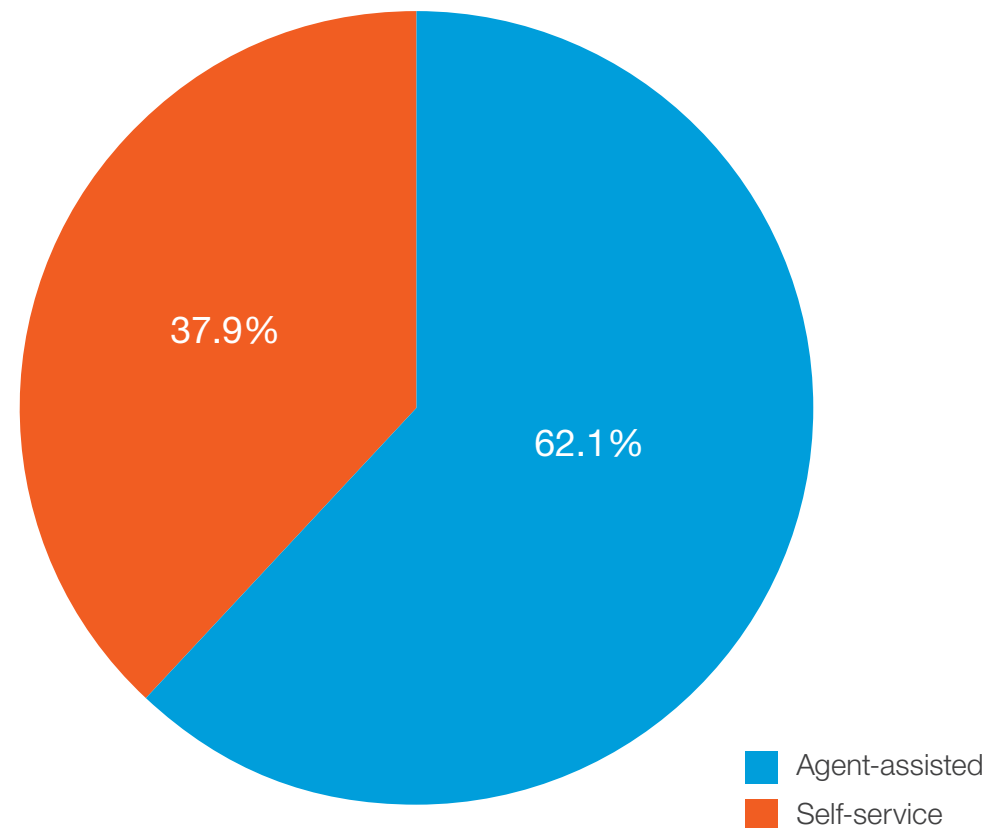
Agent-assisted & Self-service



# Agent-assisted methods are more common across countries

Businesses across the world estimate about six in ten customer service experiences are agent-assisted and four in ten are self-service.

**Average Estimate of Agent-assisted Versus Self-service Customer Service Experiences**



CC2. Thinking about all the service experiences customers have with your company, what proportion of those experiences fall into each of two main categories: 'Agent-assisted' and 'Self-service'?

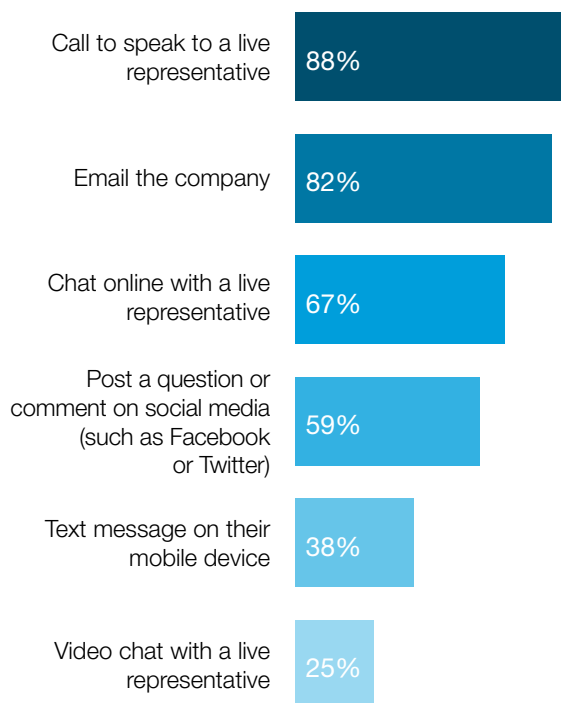
# Most organizations offer phone, email, chat and social media; nearly all offer websites

Across countries, being able to call and speak to a live representative is the most popular method of agent-assisted communication offered by businesses, followed closely by email.

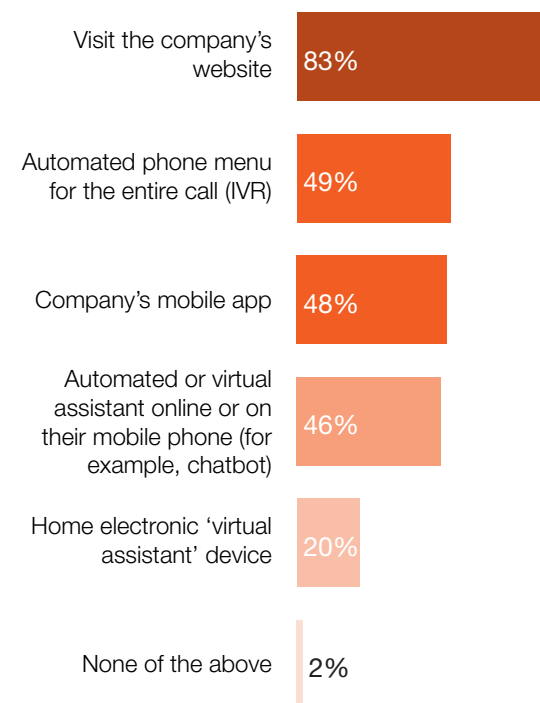
Video chat is offered much less frequently than other means of agent-assisted communications.

The majority of organizations allow customers to visit their company website to interact with the organization.

## Agent-assisted Methods of Communicating with Customers



## Self-service Methods of Communicating with Customers



■ Agent-assisted  
■ Self-service

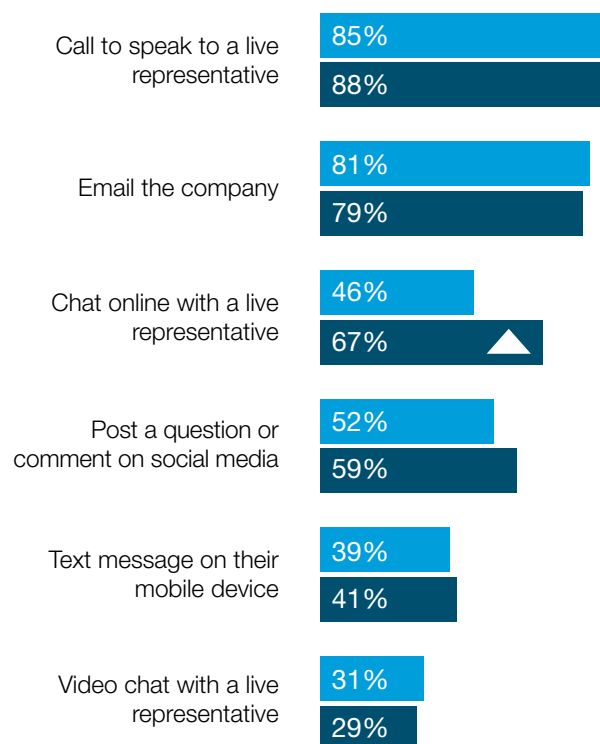
CC1A. In which 'Agent-assisted' ways does your company communicate or interact with customers? Please select all that apply.  
CC1B. In which 'Self-service' ways does your company communicate or interact with customers? Please select all that apply.

# US organizations report an increase in offering online chat and online assistants / chatbots, and a drop in IVR

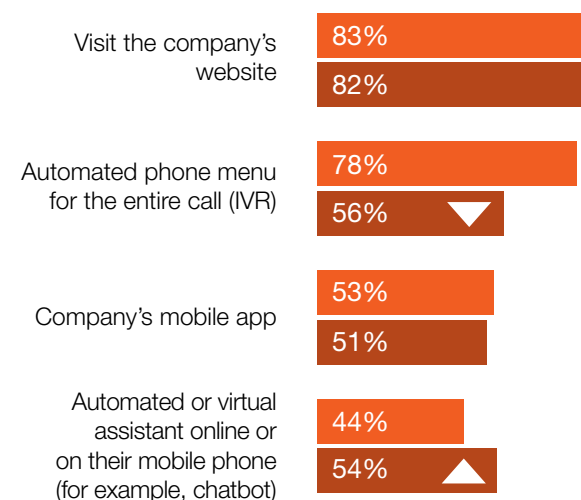
Compared to 2017, significantly more US organizations say they offer online chat with a live representative and online assistant / chatbot.

Significantly fewer say they allow customers to use an automated phone menu for the entire call.

## US Tracking Year-over-Year: Agent-assisted Methods of Communicating with Customers



## US Tracking Year-over-Year: Self-service Methods of Communicating with Customers



■ 2017 ■ 2017  
■ 2018 ■ 2018

▲ Significantly Higher  
▼ Significantly Lower

CC1A. In which 'Agent-assisted' ways does your company communicate or interact with customers? Please select all that apply.

CC1B. In which 'Self-service' ways does your company communicate or interact with customers? Please select all that apply. \*Wording changed for responses between 2017 and 2018.

White arrows indicate statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

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# Channel Performance

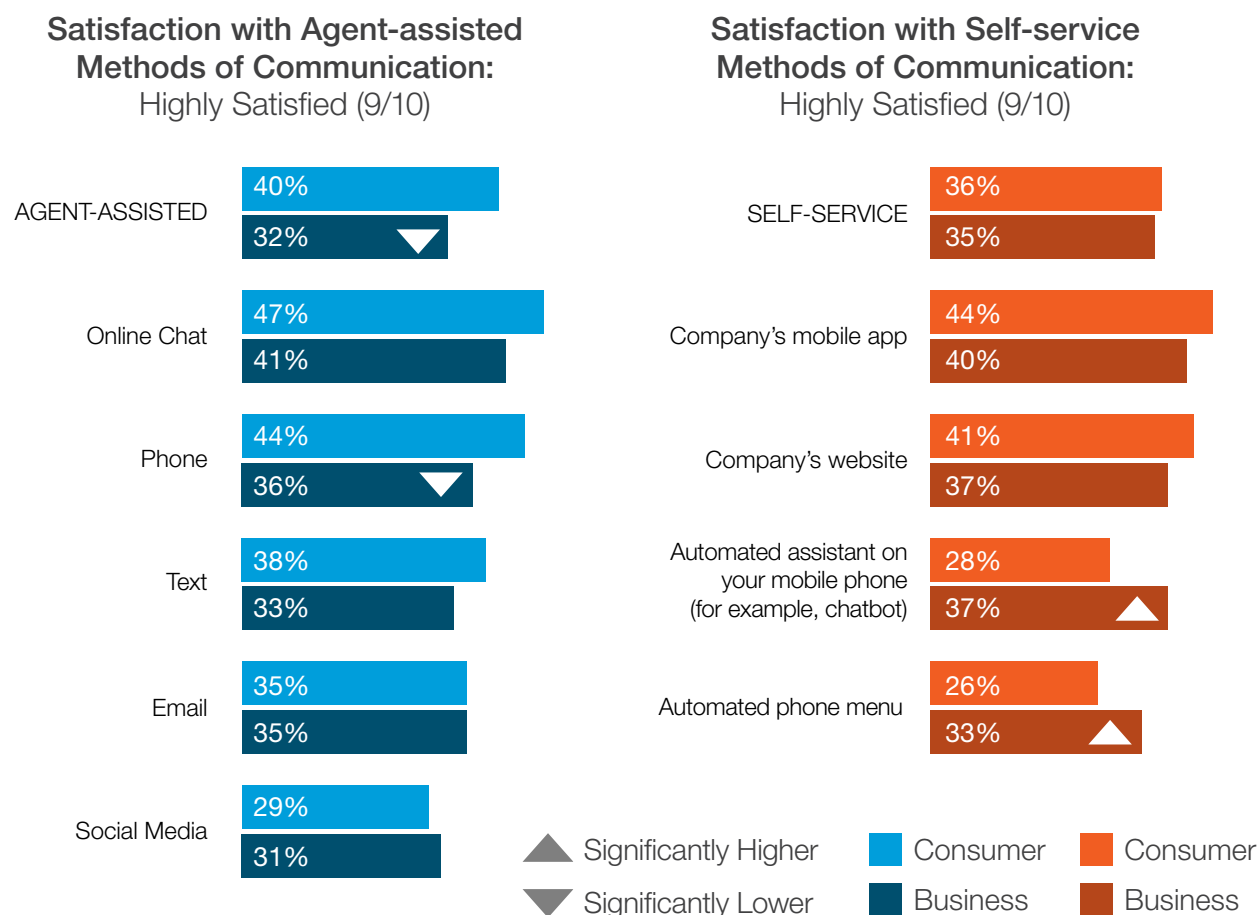
Satisfaction, Preference, Likelihood to Recommend/Net Promoter Score®, Ease of Use, First Contact Resolution (FCR)

# Businesses underestimate customer satisfaction with phone, and overestimate satisfaction with online assistants / chatbots and IVR

Businesses are significantly less likely to rate phone as highly satisfying to customers compared to consumers' own ratings.

Conversely, they rate their customers' satisfaction with automated assistants / chatbots and automated phone menus significantly higher than customers do.

**Overall Satisfaction:**  
**Business: 37% | Consumer: 38%**



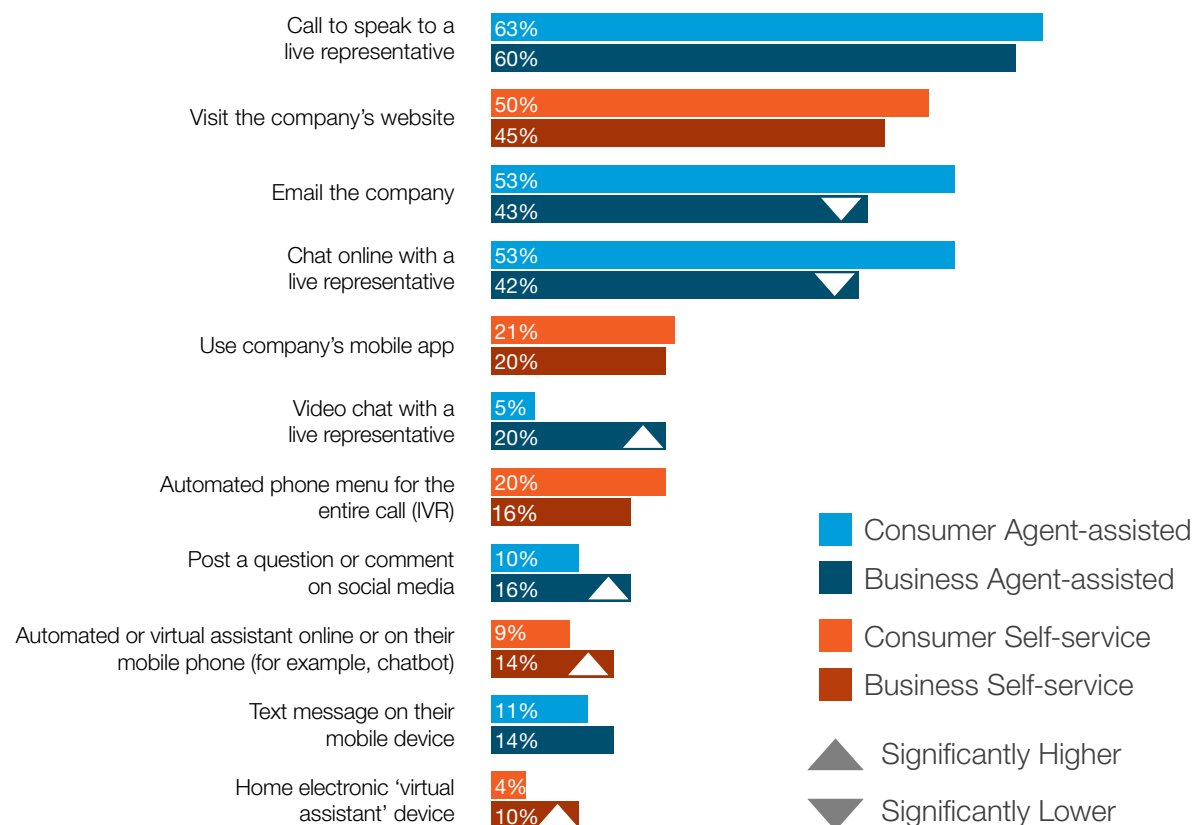
CH1. For each method below that your customers can interact with the company in an 'Agent-assisted' fashion, overall how satisfied are customers with this method of communication during their experience? CH2. For each method below that your customers can interact with the company in a 'Self-service' fashion, overall how satisfied are customers with this method of communication during their experience?  
 Black arrows indicate statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

# Consumers prefer email and online chat more than businesses

Consumers are significantly more likely to give email and online chat a top 3 ranking than businesses.

Conversely, businesses are significantly more likely to prefer interacting with their customers via video chat, social media, virtual assistant / chatbot and/or home electronic virtual assistants.

## Preferred Way to Interact with Customers: Top 3 Ranking



CP1. Please rank the top three ways that your company would prefer to interact with a customer during a service experience from the list below.  
White/green arrows indicate statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

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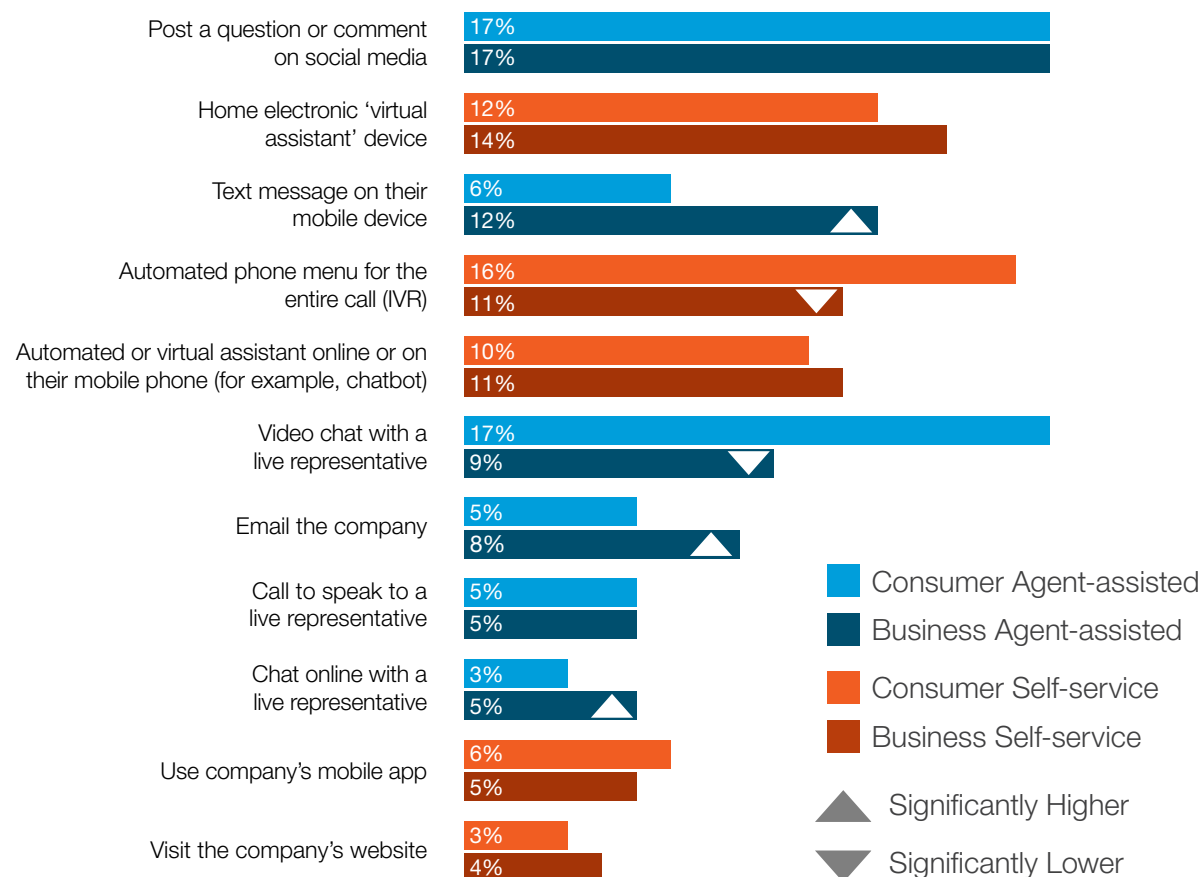
# Consumers and businesses are in agreement on distaste for social media interaction

Both consumers and businesses rank social media as their least preferred method for interaction.

Businesses are significantly more likely to report that text message and email are their least preferred methods of interacting with their consumers.

On the other hand, consumers are significantly more likely to say their least preferred methods are IVR and video chat.

## Least Preferred Method to Interact with Customer



CP2. And from the list below, which is the LEAST-preferred method that your company would prefer to interact with a customer during a service experience? Please select one response. White arrows indicate statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

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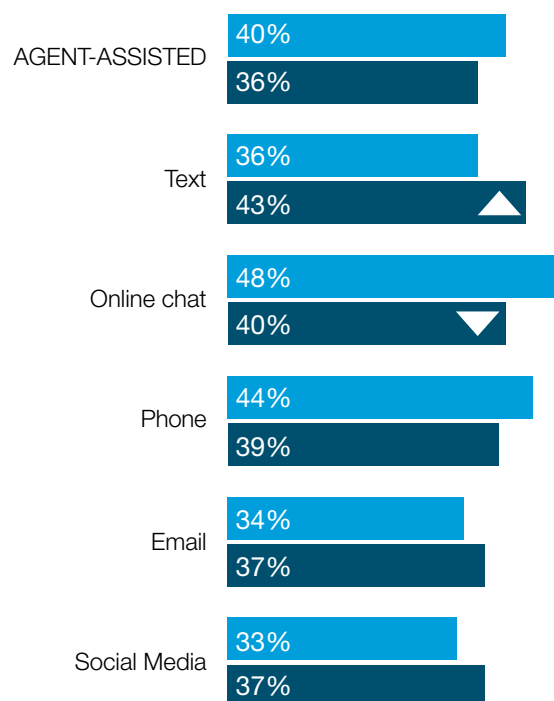
# Businesses underestimate customers' likelihood to recommend their company based on their experience with online chat, app and website

Compared to customers, businesses are significantly more likely to say customers would be highly likely to recommend their company based on text and IVR interactions.

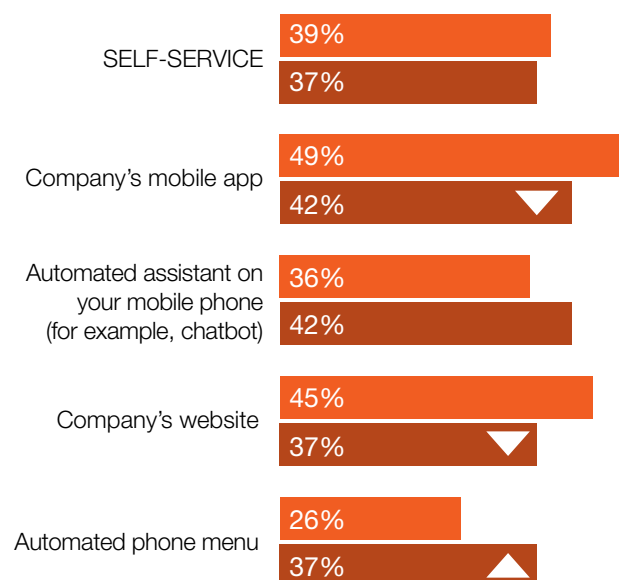
However, businesses are less likely to say consumers are highly likely to recommend their company based experiences with:

- Online chat
- Mobile app
- Website

**Likelihood to Recommend Agent-assisted**  
**Method of Communication:**  
Highly Likely to Recommend (9/10)



**Likelihood to Recommend Self-service**  
**Method of Communication:**  
Highly Satisfied (9/10)



Significantly Higher   
 Consumer   
 Consumer  
 Significantly Lower   
 Business   
 Business

CH5. For each method below that your customers can interact with the company in an 'Agent-assisted' fashion, how would you rate how likely customers would be to recommend your company to others if asked by family, friends or colleagues, based on their experience with that channel? CH6. For each method below that your customers can interact with the company in a 'Self-service' fashion, how would you rate how likely customers would be to recommend your company to others if asked by family, friends or colleagues, based on their experience with that channel?

White arrows indicate statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

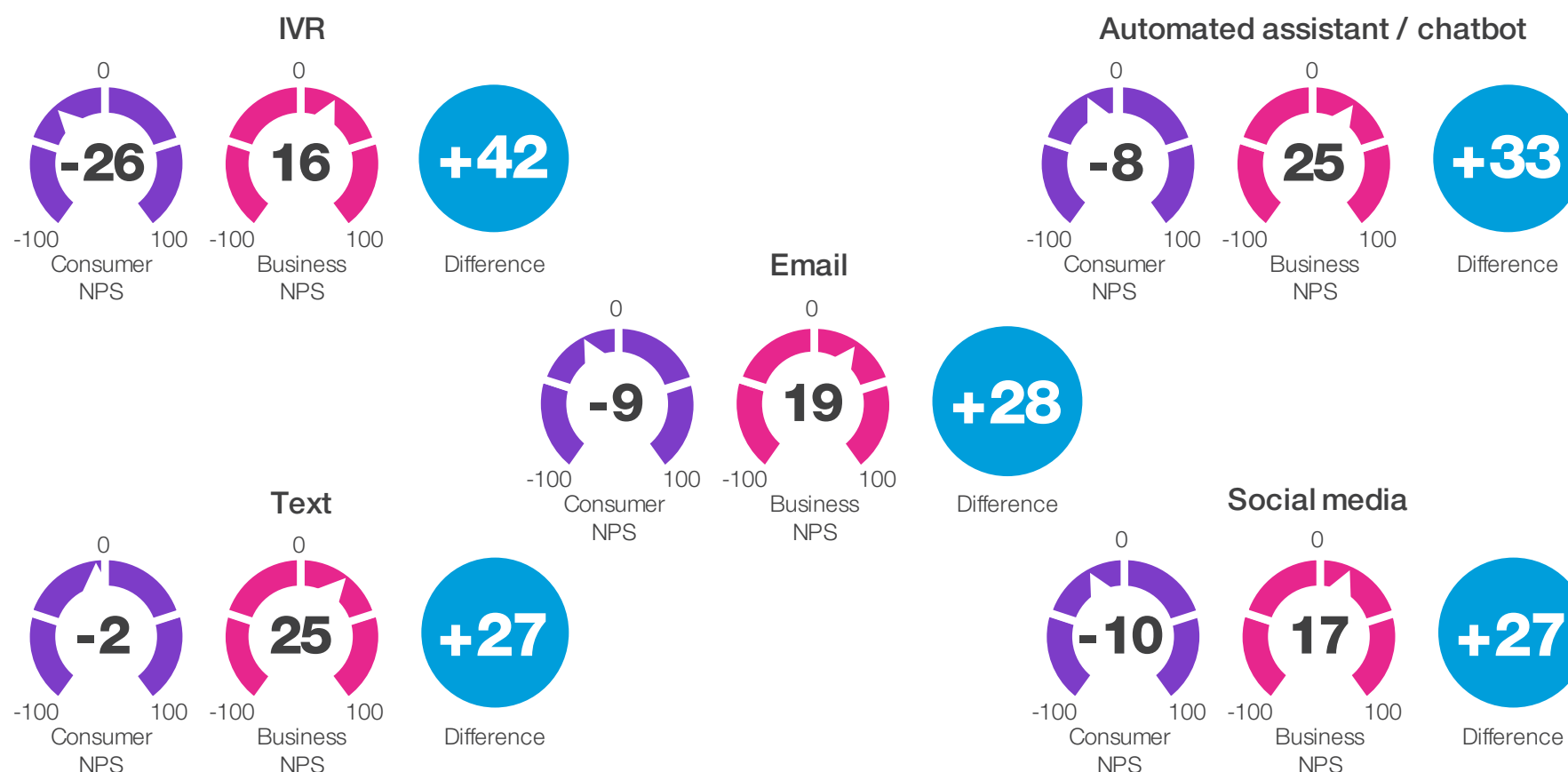
Businesses give every method a higher Net Promoter Score® when asked to rate how likely consumers would be to recommend their company

Method	Consumer NPS	Business NPS	Difference
<b>Agent-assisted</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>+19</b>
Video chat	n/a	32	n/a
Online chat	21	25	+4
Text	-2	25	+27
Phone	7	24	+17
Email	-9	19	+28
Social media	-10	17	+27
<b>Self-service</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>+20</b>
Mobile app	25	28	+3
Automated assistant / chatbot	-8	25	+33
Website	14	21	+7
IVR	-26	16	+42
Home electronic assistant	n/a	30	n/a

CH5. For each method below that your customers can interact with the company in an 'Agent-assisted' fashion, how would you rate how likely customers would be to recommend your company to others if asked by family, friends or colleagues, based on their experience with that channel? CH6. For each method below that your customers can interact with the company in a 'Self-service' fashion, how would you rate how likely customers would be to recommend your company to others if asked by family, friends or colleagues, based on their experience with that channel?

# Businesses give every method of communication a higher Net Promoter Score® (NPS®) than consumers

Largest gaps are for IVR, automated assistant / chatbot, email, text and social media.

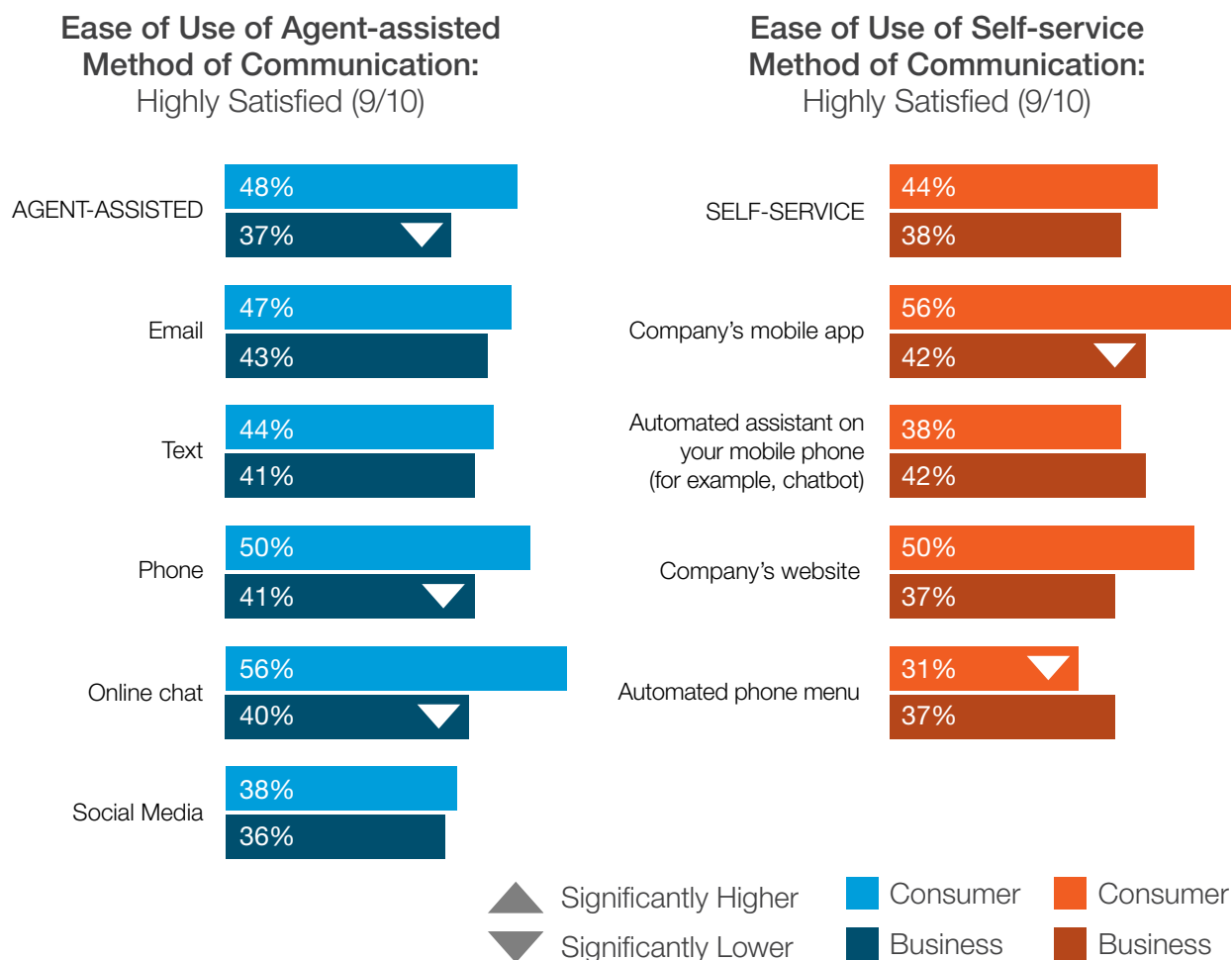


CH5. For each method below that your customers can interact with the company in an 'Agent-assisted' fashion, how would you rate how likely customers would be to recommend your company to others if asked by family, friends or colleagues, based on their experience with that channel? CH6. For each method below that your customers can interact with the company in a 'Self-service' fashion, how would you rate how likely customers would be to recommend your company to others if asked by family, friends or colleagues, based on their experience with that channel?

# Consumers view phone, chat, mobile apps and website as easier to use, compared to business ratings of customer ease of use

Businesses are significantly less likely to rate several methods of communications as extremely easy for customers to use, compared to customers:

- Phone
- Online Chat
- Mobile app
- Company's website



CH3. For each method below that your customers can interact with the company in an 'Agent-assisted' fashion, how would you rate how easy or difficult customer experiences are?

CH4. For each method below that your customers can interact with the company in a 'Self-service' fashion, how would you rate how easy or difficult customer experiences are?

White arrows indicate statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

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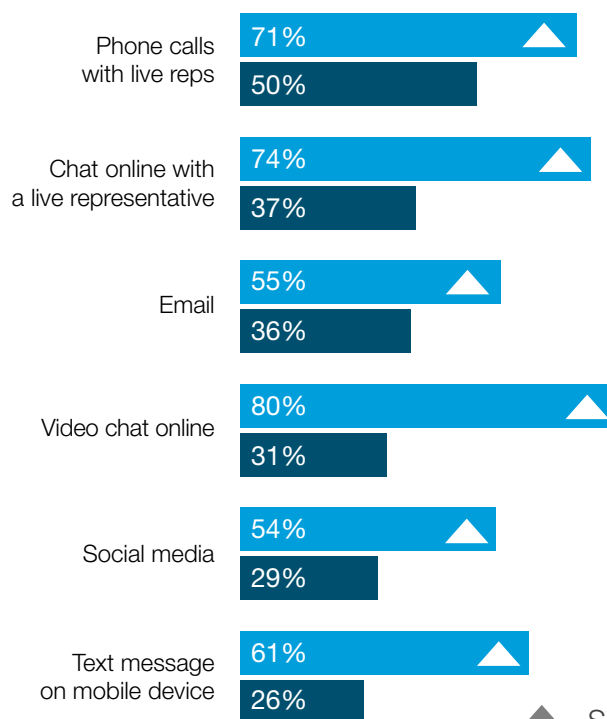
# Consumers are significantly more likely to say their issue was handled during the first point of contact, across all communication methods, compared to businesses' estimation of resolving customer issues

Consumers report significantly higher rates of first contact resolution for all types of communication.

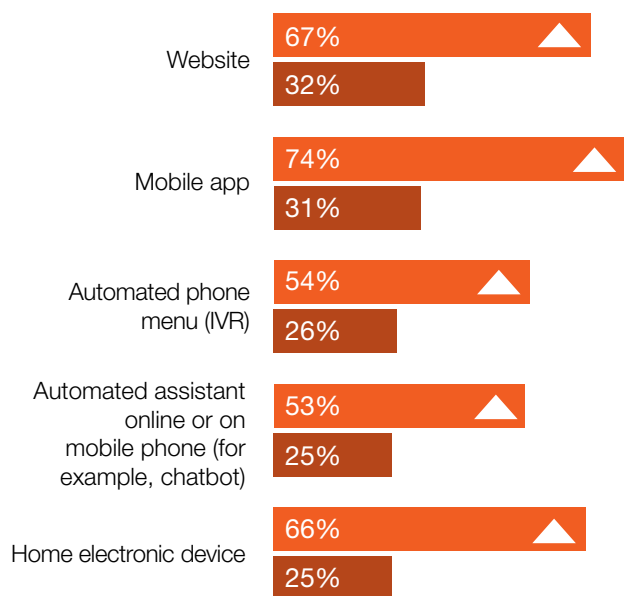
Video chat online and mobile apps rank relatively higher among consumers compared to businesses.

The most successful methods are similar for both audiences, with phone calls and online chat being a top 4 method for both consumers and businesses in resolving their issues.

## Issue Handled During First Point of Contact by Agent-assisted Method: Average Percentage of the Time



## Issue Handled During First Point of Contact by Self-service Method: Average Percentage of the Time



Significantly Higher  
 Significantly Lower  
 Consumer  
 Business  
 Consumer  
 Business

P1. Below are the various ways you said customers interact with your company. For each channel, what percentage of the time is the service experience resolved during the first point of contact?



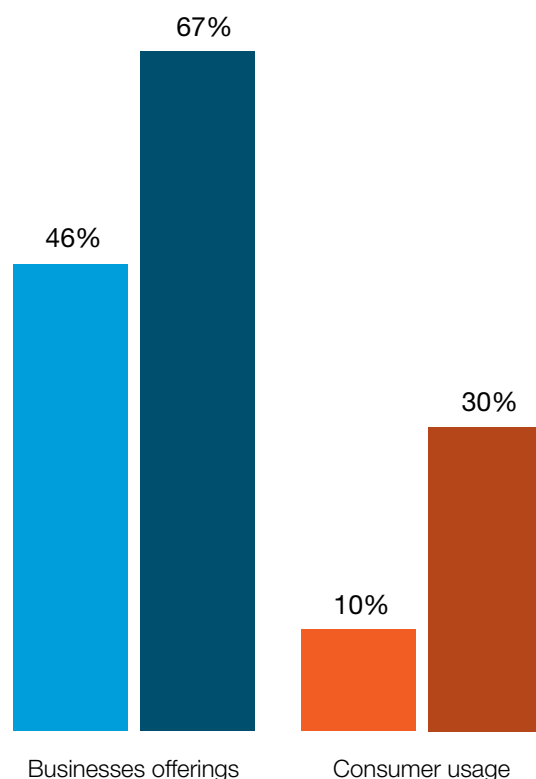
# Chat Momentum

# Online chat in the US is offered and used more often, and is more likely to be preferred by businesses and consumers, year-over-year

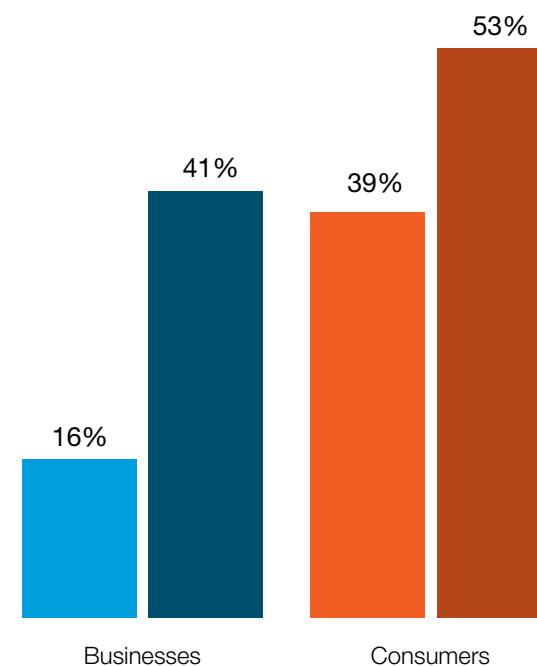
US businesses and consumers both report an increase in online chat, in offering / usage.

Both also are more likely to rank it as a top 3 preferred method of communication since 2017.

**US Tracking Year-over-Year:**  
Offer Online Chat Over Time



**US Tracking Year-over-Year:**  
Top 3 Rank Preference of Online Chat Over Time



■ 2017 ■ 2018

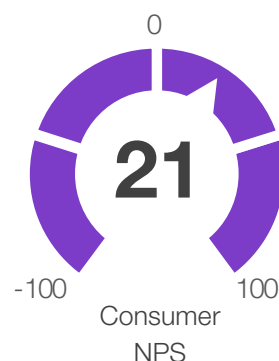
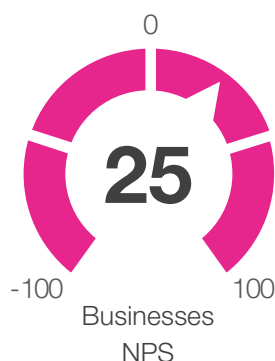
# Businesses give online chat positive ratings across the board and online chat is a method that consumers like to use



Consumers validate businesses' perceptions of online chat and may love it even more than businesses realize.

Consumers rate online chat as one of the top methods for satisfaction, ease of use, and likelihood to recommend, and 74% said their issue was resolved at first point of contact with online chat.

Compared to businesses' evaluation of consumers' perceptions of chat, consumers are statistically significantly more likely to rate chat as easy and likely to recommend as well.



Businesses give online chat an NPS® score of 25 and consumers award chat an NPS score of 21, **top-tier NPS scores among 11 methods tested**

\*highly satisfied, extremely easy, highly likely to recommend, very successful are defined as a 9 or 10 rating on a scale of 1-10.

# Yet phone remains the most preferred method, the one that evokes the most positive emotions and the method that most often resolves issues on the first contact



Both businesses and consumers **most often give phone a top 3 ranking in their preferred way to interact during a customer service experience**. 64% of consumers and 60% of businesses say it is one of their top 3 preferred methods.



Businesses say that **phone calls most often resolve customer issues during the first point of contact** compared to other methods – they estimate it resolves their issues 50% of the time on the first try. Consumers affirm this, with **71% saying their issue is resolved during the first point of contact on the phone**.



Businesses report that phone also **creates the most positive emotions for consumers** among all methods. Four in ten (41%) say phone creates extremely positive\* emotions.

However, since 2017 the **percentage of businesses that rate phone interactions on resolving customer problems very successfully\* has decreased significantly** – from 63% in 2017 to 53% in 2018 among businesses in the US.



\*Extremely positive emotions and very successfully are defined as a 9 or 10 rating on a scale of 1-10.

# Customer Experience (CX) Success

# Businesses perceive agent-assisted methods as outperforming self-service methods on various characteristics

**More than half of businesses** give themselves a very good or excellent rating on perceptions of success. Businesses report that agent-assisted performs better, particularly with resolving issues quickly and offering personalized services.

Interestingly, consumers are more likely to give businesses very good/excellent scores **on all agent-assisted and self-service perceptions of success.**

## Perceptions of Experiences: Very Good/Excellent



CH9. Thinking only about the 'Agent-assisted' service experiences customers have with your company (e.g., phone, email, text, chat, social media), rate your company on each of the characteristics below. Please select one per row.

CH10. Thinking only about the 'Self-service' service experiences customers have with your company (e.g., website, mobile app, automated phone menu, automated or 'virtual assistant'), rate your company on each of the characteristics below. Please select one per row.



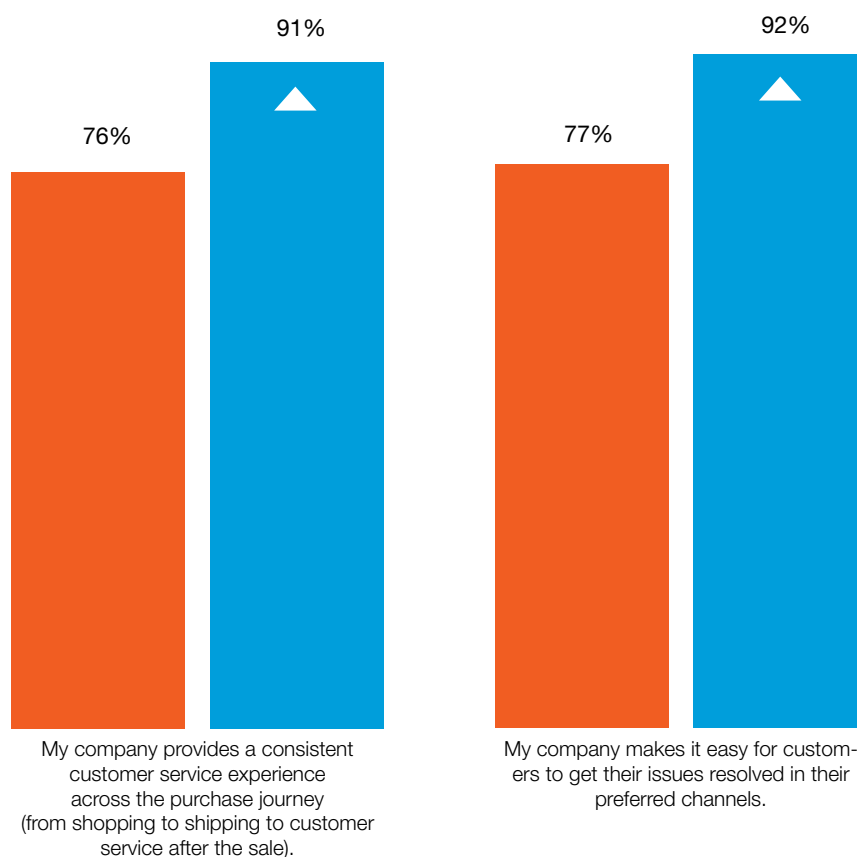
# Businesses overestimate CX success in two key areas of consistency and resolution

Businesses are more likely to agree on positives about their customer service such as:

My company provides a consistent customer service experience across the purchase journey

My company makes it easy for customers to get issues resolved in their preferred channels

**Channel Attitudes:** Somewhat + Strongly Agree



Consumer

Business

Significantly Higher

Significantly Lower

CA1-11 For each of the statements below, indicate how strongly you agree or disagree. Please select one per row. White arrows indicate statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

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# Businesses perceive agent-assisted methods as outperforming self-service methods on various characteristics

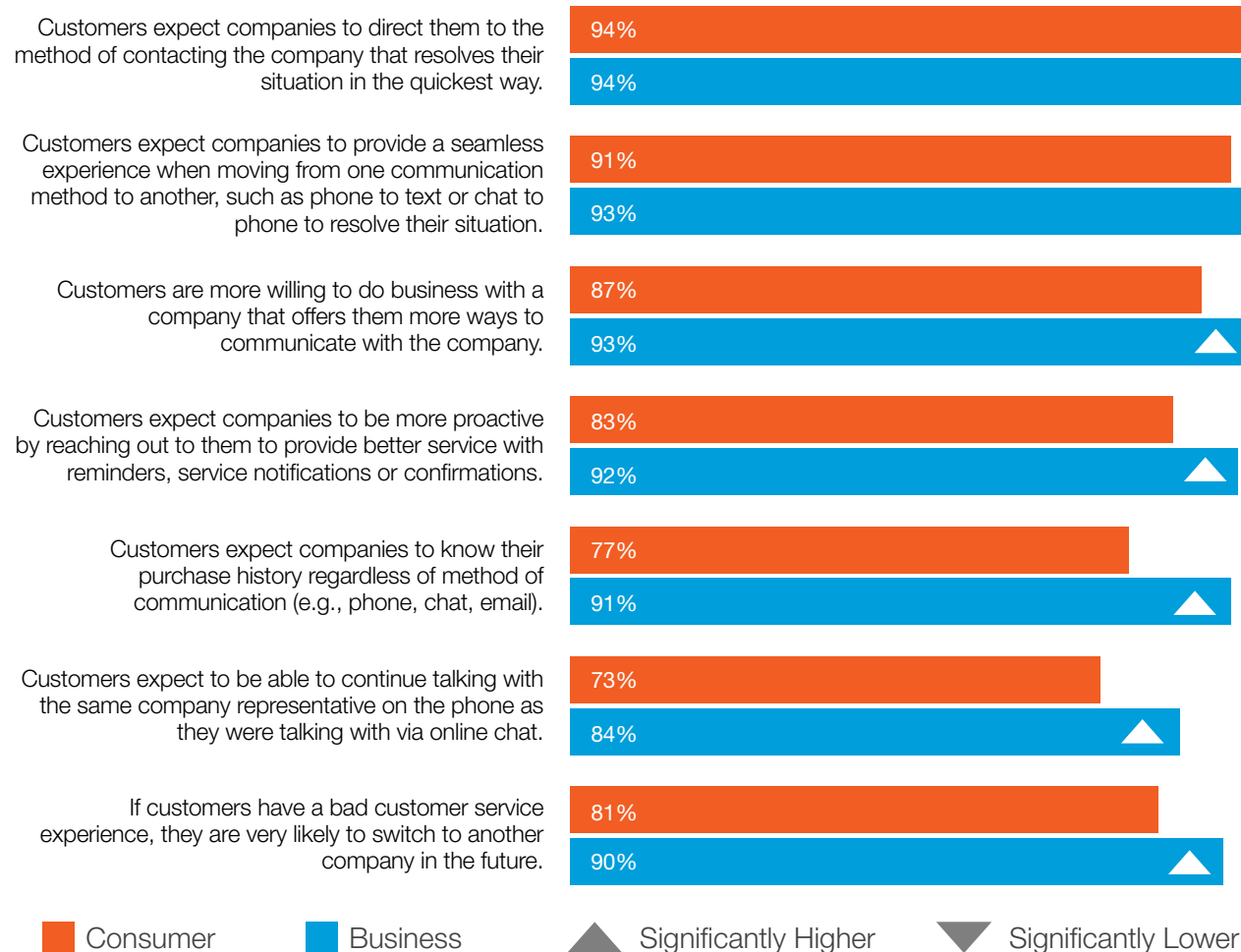
Consumers and businesses agree similarly in expectations that companies should direct them to the method that will resolve their issue the quickest and should provide a seamless experience as they move between different communication methods.

Businesses are more likely to agree with various statements that indicate they may overestimate customer expectations:

- Customers expect companies to be more proactive
- Customers expect companies to know their purchase history
- Customers expect to continue talking with the same company rep

Further, they are more likely to agree with the statement: Customers are more willing to do business with a company that offers them more ways to communicate.

## Channel Attitudes: Somewhat + Strongly Agree

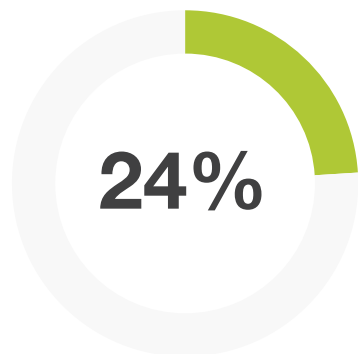


CA1-11. For each of the statements below, indicate how strongly you agree or disagree. Please select one per row. White arrows indicate statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

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# Seamless Omnichannel Interactions

# Businesses have room to improve in providing a seamless experience



**Only 24% of businesses globally give themselves an excellent rating on allowing customers to switch seamlessly between methods of communication.**

Significantly more US businesses give themselves a poor rating since 2017 (moving from 14% poor rating to 19%).

## Global Rating on Allowing Customers to Switch Seamlessly Between Methods



## US Tracking Year-over-Year:

### Rating on Allowing Customers to Switch Seamlessly Between Methods



■ Excellent (9-10)
 ■ Moderate (7-8)
 ■ Poor (1-6)
 ▲ Significantly Higher

T4. How would you rate your company on allowing customers to switch seamlessly between channels or methods of communication when dealing with your company (e.g., start a process on the website, finish it on the mobile app, or move from an online chat conversation to phone with the same live representative)?

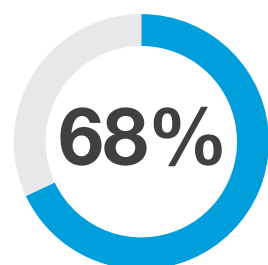
# AI Disconnect

# Businesses have a misconception that consumers want more AI

Consumers and businesses are in agreement that **customers want to be informed if they are interacting with a chatbot/virtual assistant** and that **customers would prefer to interact with a live agent**.

However, businesses tend to believe customers are interested in using AI, and find it easy to use these technologies....

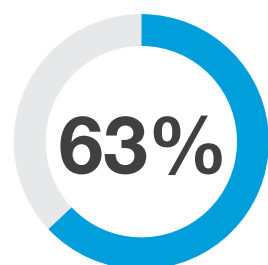
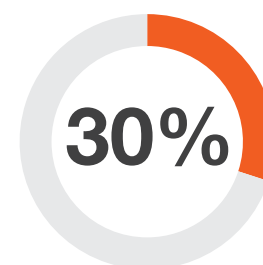
...At statistically significantly higher rates than customers actually feel.



Of businesses agree **customers would like to use their virtual assistants** to interact with companies

**38%**  
gap

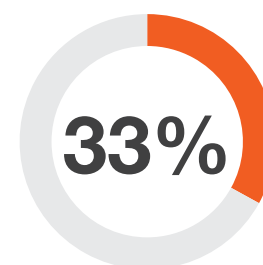
Of consumers agree they **would like to use their virtual assistants** to interact with companies



Of businesses agree chatbots and virtual assistants **make it easier for customers** to get their issues resolved

**30%**  
gap

Of consumers agree chatbots and virtual assistants **make it easier to get their issues resolved**





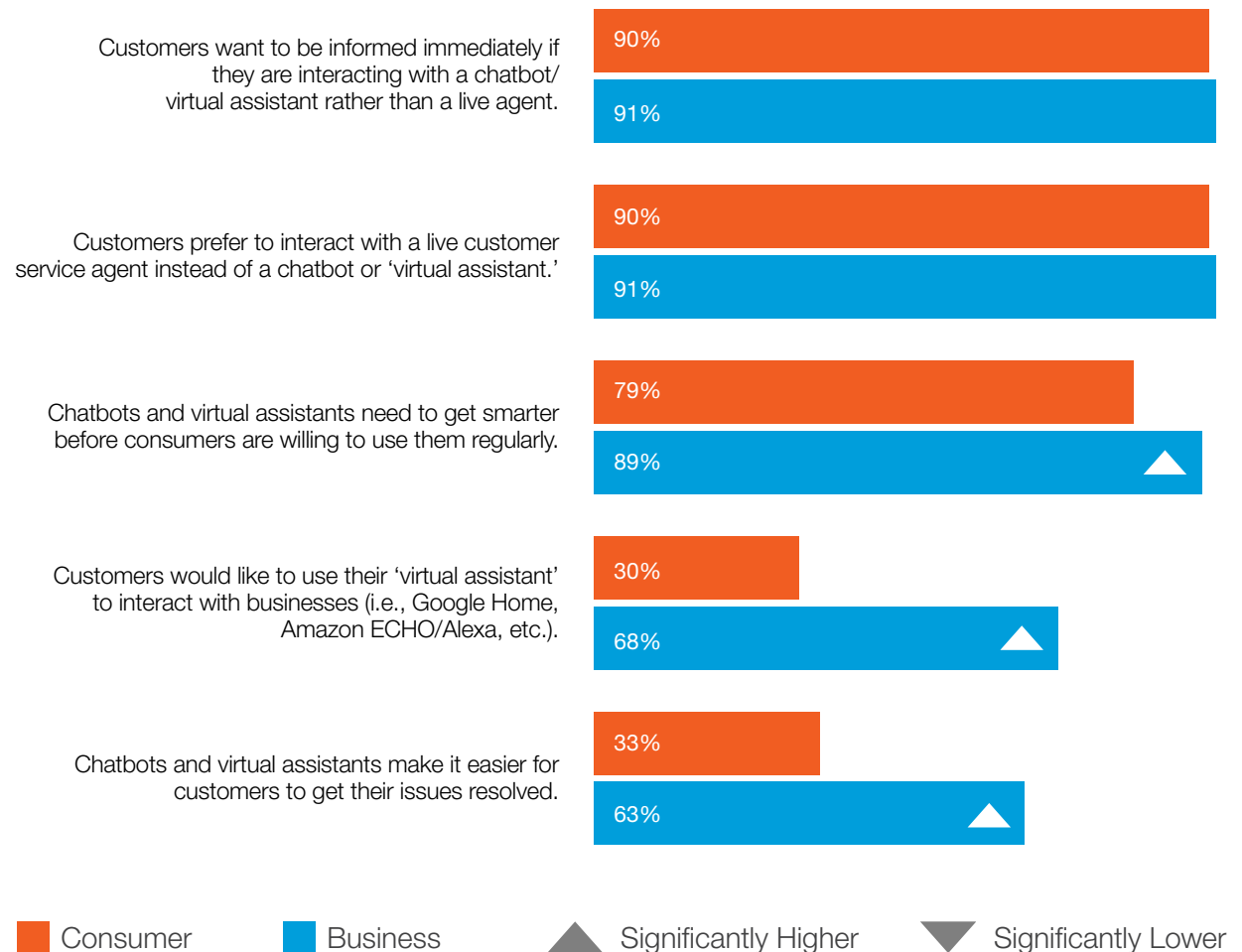
# Businesses are not in touch with consumer perceptions of AI

Businesses and customers are in agreement with the challenges and negatives of using AI in customer service – they both agree in similar proportions that customers want to be informed if they are interacting with a chatbot and that customers prefer to interact with a person.

Businesses are significantly more likely to agree that chatbots and virtual assistants need to get smarter before consumers are willing to use them regularly.

However, businesses are significantly more likely to agree that customers would like to use their virtual assistants to interact with them, and that these technologies make it easier for customers to get their issues resolved.

## AI Perceptions: Somewhat + Strongly Agree



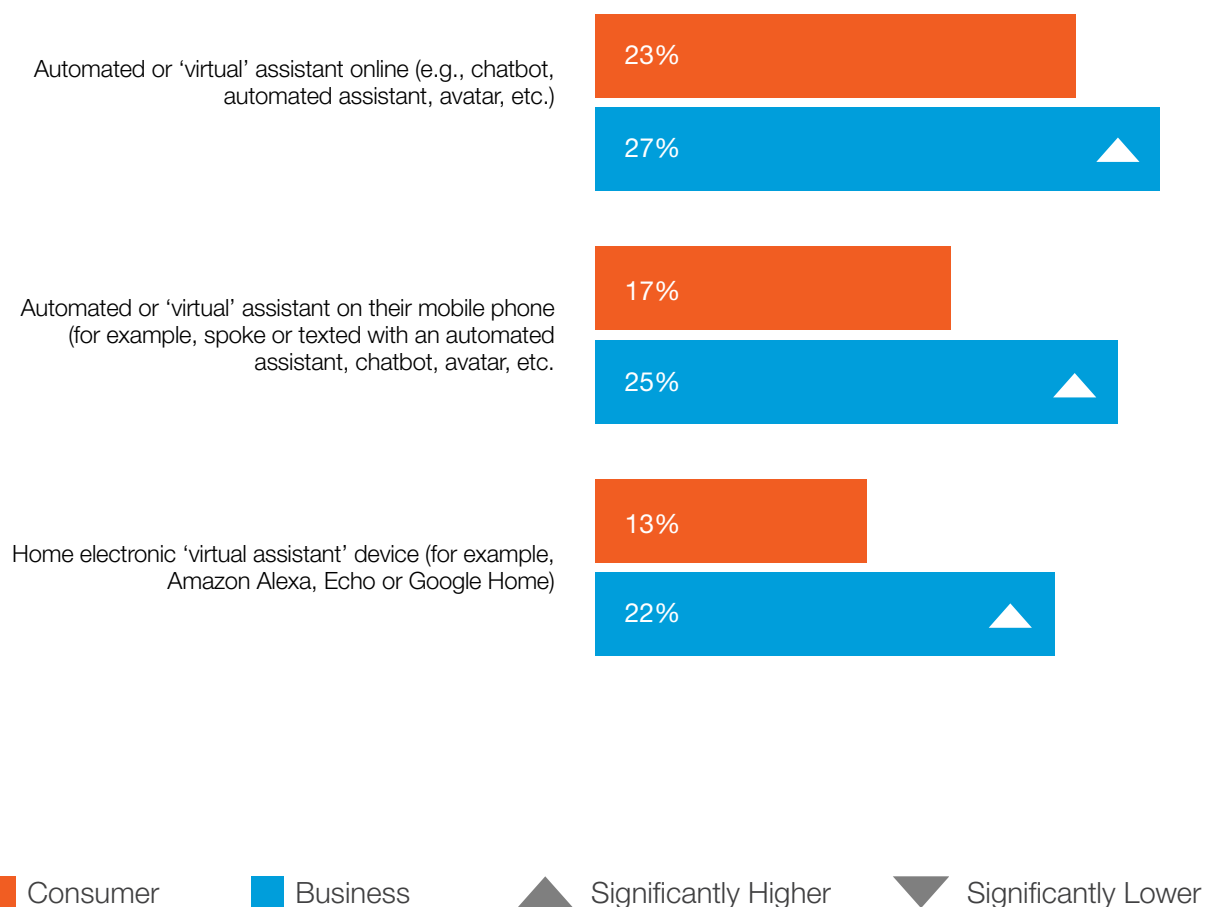
AI2.1-6. For each of the statements below, indicate how strongly you agree or disagree.  
 White arrows indicate statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

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# Businesses overestimate customer use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for any purpose

Compared to reported usage by consumers, businesses report significantly higher percentages of customer usage of AI for all types of AI technology tested.

## AI Usage: Percentage of Customers That Have Ever Used Technologies



AI1.1 In your estimation, what percentage of your customers have ever used each of the following "automated" or "artificial intelligence" technologies?  
White arrows indicate statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

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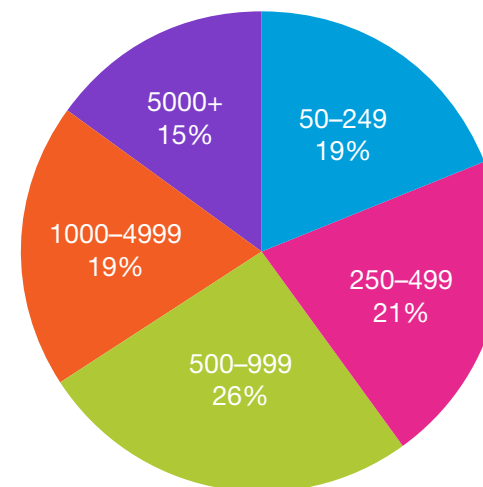
# Firmographics

# Number of employees & stations

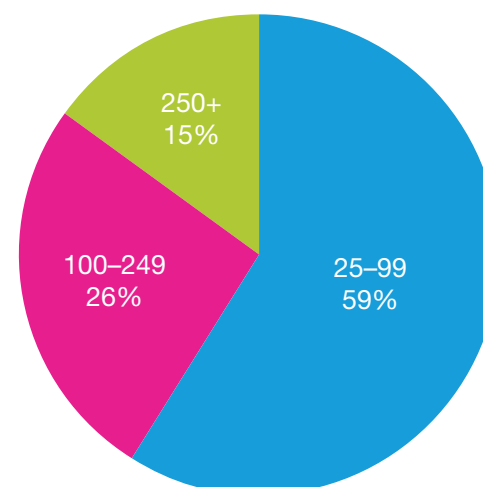
# of employees	Employee Size			
	Total	US	UK	AUS
50–249	19%	17%	20%	20%
250–499	21%	20%	23%	20%
500–999	26%	30%	21%	26%
1000–4999	19%	22%	17%	18%
5000+	15%	10%	19%	16%

# of stations	Contract Center Size			
	Total	US	UK	AUS
25–99	59%	61%	61%	55%
100–249	26%	26%	24%	27%
250+	15%	13%	15%	18%

**Global Respondents:**  
Number of Employees



**Global Respondents:**  
Number of Contact Center Stations



S3. How many people does your company employ at all locations? Your best estimate is fine.

S4. When your call center(s) is/are fully-staffed, how many stations do you have across the company? Again, your best estimate is fine.

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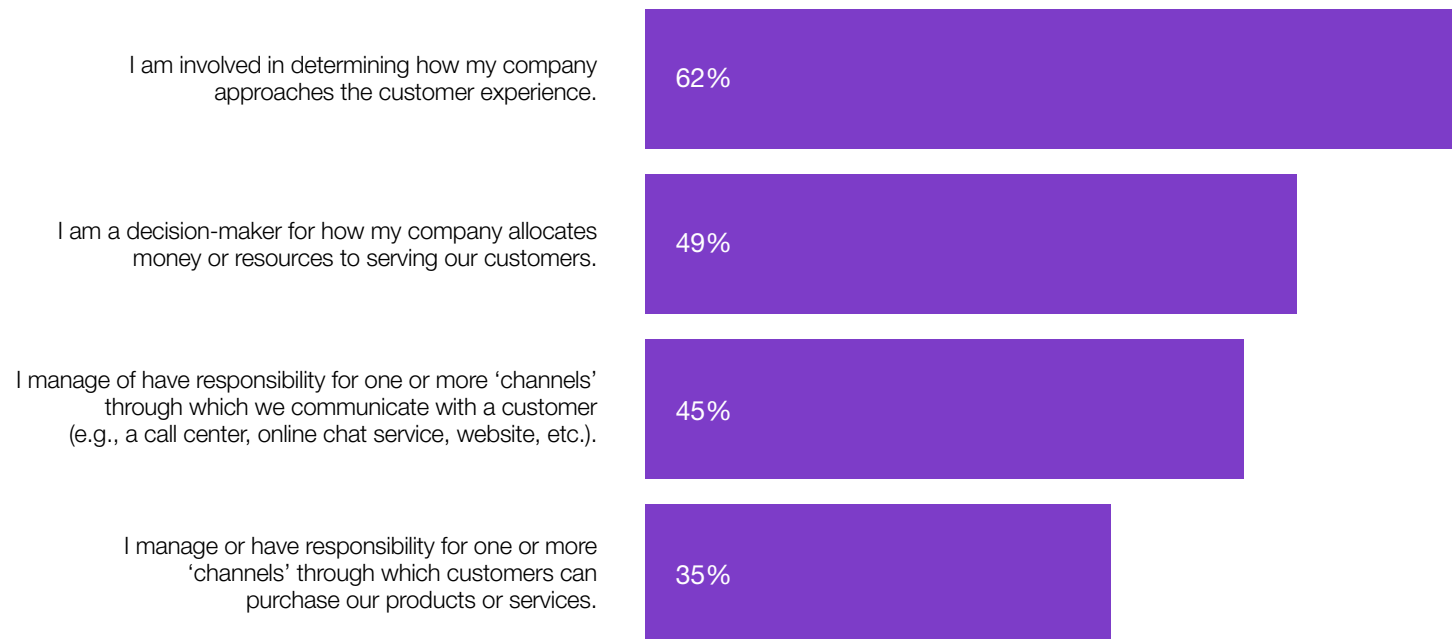
# Respondents involvement during purchase process

	Customer Service or Contact Center Software				Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Software				Unified Communications Software				Digital Experience Software			
	Total	US	UK	AUS	Total	US	UK	AUS	Total	US	UK	AUS	Total	US	UK	AUS
Determining the business need	<b>69%</b>	74%	64%	68%	<b>57%</b>	62%	53%	55%	<b>53%</b>	58%	49%	52%	<b>58%</b>	63%	55%	55%
Evaluating the product or service	<b>64%</b>	67%	63%	61%	<b>58%</b>	60%	55%	59%	<b>52%</b>	62%	50%	46%	<b>60%</b>	66%	59%	56%
Recommending or selecting the product or service	<b>60%</b>	65%	59%	55%	<b>57%</b>	65%	52%	53%	<b>49%</b>	55%	46%	47%	<b>55%</b>	60%	53%	53%
Authorizing or approving the product or service	<b>55%</b>	57%	52%	55%	<b>50%</b>	56%	48%	47%	<b>47%</b>	50%	43%	48%	<b>54%</b>	56%	54%	51%
Determining business or technical requirements	<b>52%</b>	55%	53%	49%	<b>60%</b>	68%	57%	56%	<b>45%</b>	50%	45%	40%	<b>59%</b>	62%	57%	58%

S2. For each of the software categories below, please indicate your level of involvement during the purchase process. Please select as many responsibilities as needed in each column:

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# Day-to-day responsibilities



S1. Thinking about how your company services or communicates with its customers, which of the following are part of your day-to-day responsibilities? Please select all that apply.

## Why **NICE** inContact ?

We are the cloud contact center software leader with the most complete, easiest and most reliable solution to help organizations achieve their customer experience goals. NICE inContact continuously innovates in the cloud and is the only provider to offer a complete solution that includes CXone, an expert service model and the broadest partner ecosystem. For more information, visit [www.niceincontact.com](http://www.niceincontact.com)

### More Resources

2018 Customer Experience (CX) Transformation Benchmark, Global Consumers [Ebook](#)

Powerful Enablers of Omnichannel Customer Self-service [Ebook](#)

Faster Service, Happier Customers: Using Self-service to Accelerate the Speed of Resolution [White Paper](#)

Total Economic Impact of NICE inContact CXone [Research](#)

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