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The Telecom Buyer Experience Report 2025

How telecom consumers value human connections and view AI in the modern buying journey



Many Telecom Consumers Are Open To AI, But They Won't Forsake Human Connections. Neither Can Your Business.

When we last published this report in 2022, inflation had started making a dent in consumers' wallets, and ChatGPT was about to take the world by storm. Since then, inflation has chilled out (a little) while the AI wars have heated up. AI has quickly become integrated into every part of our lives, from work to home to play—and our lives as consumers. Telecommunications brands wasted no time hitching their wagons to AI, aspiring to increase buying journey efficiency and provide the experiences that digital-age consumers demand.

But has AI lived up to the hype for telecommunications consumers, or has it foisted frustration and impersonal service upon them for the sake of efficiency and corporate penny-pinching? Can AI replace human agents in the buying process? Is it all too much, too soon? That's what this report is determined to uncover.

We've found a surprising level of acceptance of telecoms using AI to assist their customers during the buying process, but there are also strong signals of resignation, indifference, and outright rejection of getting help from AI agents. Consumers aren't quite ready for a full-on AI takeover, and more so, they still overwhelmingly prefer human assistance when they're making high-stakes purchases in telecommunications services like phone plans, broadband internet, satellite TV, and cable services.

The big takeaway is that telecoms must strike the perfect balance of digital, AI, and the human touch and invest in cohesive AI strategies across the entire buying journey. This includes using AI in the background to help human agents perform at their best and provide fast, highly personalized experiences at every turn. In the rush to utilize the latest AI tech, telecom brands must ensure that consumers are ready for it and that it's not used to put up roadblocks to getting the personal human connection that they desire.

Read on to get the stats and see where telecommunications consumers—and your business—stand in this brave new AI-powered world.



About The Survey

For this report, we surveyed 1,000 consumers from the US and UK who researched and made a "high-stakes" purchase in the last 12 months in the following categories: automotive, healthcare, home services, insurance, financial services, telecommunications, and travel. For this study, a "high-stakes purchase" is defined as one that requires time to weigh options, research, and/or devote more thought to before making a decision, due to the complexity and/or cost of the vehicle, service, or product. Only US data from **telecommunications industry respondents** is used in this report version, excluding generational data, which is from all respondents. Individual industry data by generation was not statistically significant. Results may not total to 100% due to rounding and multiple selection options. The field survey was performed by [Sago Online Research](#).

Most Telecommunications Consumers Have Encountered A Brand's AI, And Many Didn't Care

When telecom consumers are making high-stakes purchase decisions, they have a lot of questions, and there are many touchpoints along the way where they can get answers. That means there are also many opportunities for AI to step in and address their needs quickly. But are telecom consumers really ready to let AI do the talking?

Only 13% of telecommunications consumers surveyed reported never interacting with a brand's AI when making a high-stakes purchase in the last year. The big question is, did they like it?

Nearly half of the telecommunications respondents said that interacting with a brand's AI tools made their buying experience better. However, 29% said AI made no difference at all, and 23% said that AI made the buying experience worse.

SIDENOTE

Brand AI vs Generative AI Survey Questions

When asked questions about "a brand's AI", we specified that the questions refer to AI tools provided by the brand they were interacting with—not tools like ChatGPT or Google Gemini that they may have used independently. We asked questions specifically about generative AI use later in the survey.

13%

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Have not interacted with a brand's AI

48%

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AI made the buying experience better

29%

INVOKA 

AI made no difference

23%

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AI made the buying experience worse

Telecommunications Consumers Have Mixed Feelings About AI Assistants

Now for the mushy psychological bit—how does interacting with a brand's AI agents and tools make telecommunications consumers feel? When asked to select words that describe how interacting with AI during a purchase made them feel, 32% selected "confident," while 34% selected "skeptical" and 28% selected "frustrated." About 18% selected "indifferent."



Skeptical



Confused

Confident

Frustrated

Indifferent

Relieved

Curious



Many Telecommunications Consumers Feel Forced To Use Your AI

You always want to meet your customers where they are, and forcing them into an AI workflow to get questions answered or make a purchase is not the way to do it. Most telecommunications consumers report feeling forced to use a brand's AI most or all of the time—not a good look for the CX enthusiasts among us.

Once they realize they're interacting with AI and not a human—whether that's via a text-based or voice-based agent—47% of telecom consumers report feeling positively about it. About a third were indifferent, 23% felt negatively, and only 1% said they couldn't tell if it was AI or not.

62%

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Say they feel forced to use a brand's AI

47%

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Feel positive about their AI interactions

29%

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Are indifferent

23%

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Have negative feelings

1%

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Can't differentiate AI from human assistance

How Your Telecommunications Brand Uses AI Can Make Or Break Its Reputation



More often than not, telecommunications consumers are satisfied with the help they receive from a brand's AI during the buying process. However, there's a notable divide in how valued customers feel. Almost 40% of telecommunications consumers feel more valued as a customer when a brand interacts with them via AI, while 33% feel less valued, and 28% weren't swayed either way by AI assistance.

When A Telecommunications Business Uses AI To Interact With Customers, They Feel



Telecommunications consumers are satisfied with the help they receive from a brand's AI:



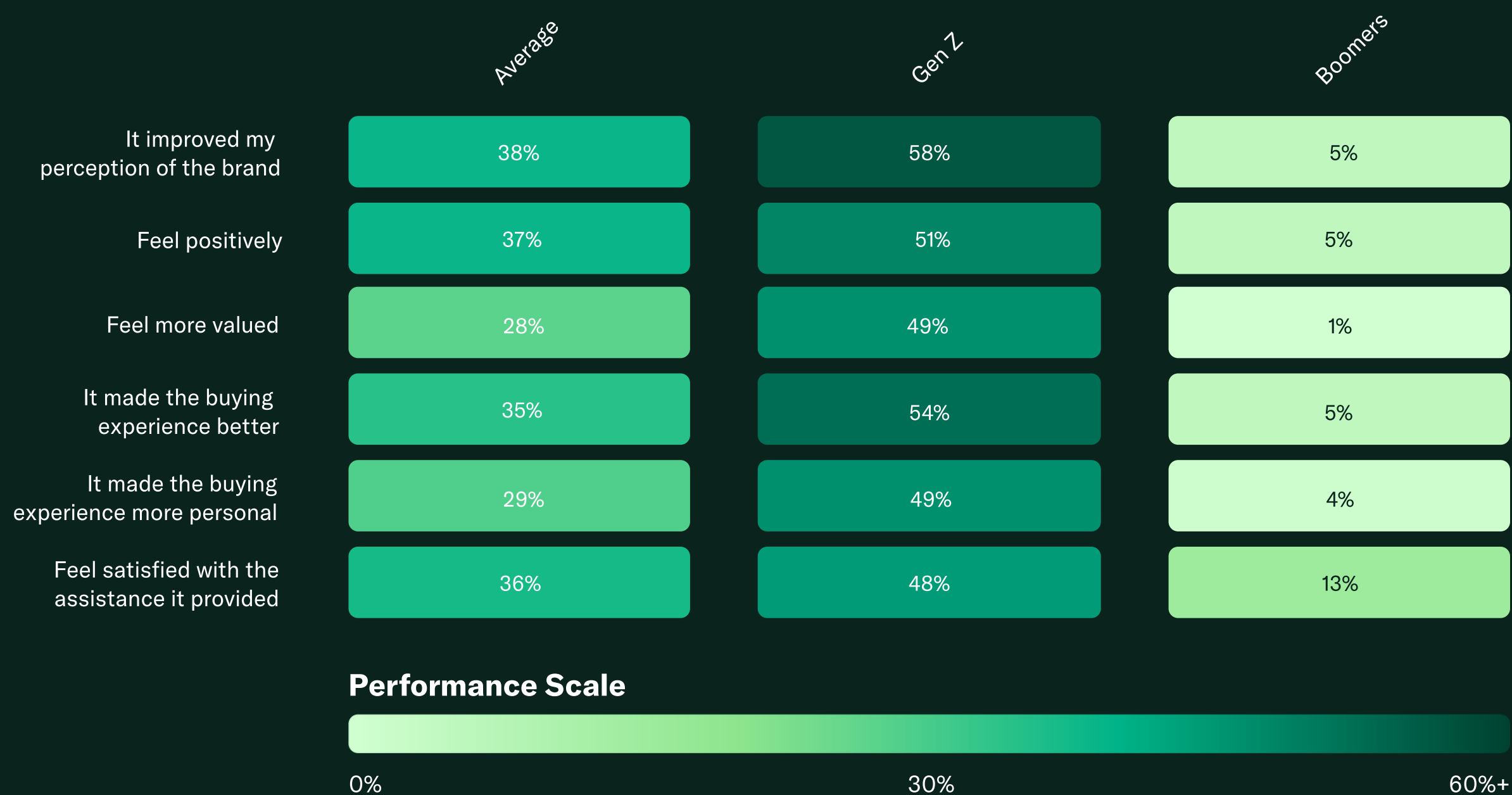
Know Your Audience: Age Matters When It Comes To AI Acceptance



If your customers tend to be on the older side, you need to be particularly thoughtful about your AI implementation. Across the board, Boomers hold a much more negative view of AI, and Gen Xers don't like it much more.

Gen Z, on the other hand, thinks AI is lit. Nearly 60% of Gen Z consumers report having had a memorable positive experience with a brand's AI when making a high-stakes purchase, compared to only 14% of Boomers.

When Interacting With A Brand's AI



Telecommunications Consumers Are Wary Of The Answers That AI Provides

If you've heard of AI, you've likely heard of and possibly encountered hallucinations—when an AI system generates false or misleading information that sounds correct but isn't based on real data or facts. The generational divide is not consistently stark here. Around 40% of both Gen Zers and Boomers think AI is likely to provide incorrect or misleading information. However, more Gen Zers are still willing to trust the answers it gets from AI, at least most of the time (42%), compared to 20% of Boomers.

Nearly 40% of telecommunications consumers think AI is likely to provide incorrect or misleading information. However, 50% of telecom consumers still trust the answers they get from AI most or all of the time, compared to 33% who trust it only sometimes, and 16% who rarely or never trust it. Additionally, nearly half will abandon the purchase if AI assistance is the only option available.

38%

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Think AI is likely to provide misleading or inaccurate information

50%

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Trust an AI assistant as much as a human (most/all of the time)

42%

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Confident that AI can help resolve a complex issue

47%

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Likely to abandon a purchase if AI assistance were all that was available



When Do Telecommunications Consumers Want To Use AI?

There is obviously some trepidation around using a brand's AI assistance when making high-stakes insurance purchases. However, there are situations where insurance consumers are entirely comfortable with or even prefer using AI in the buying process.

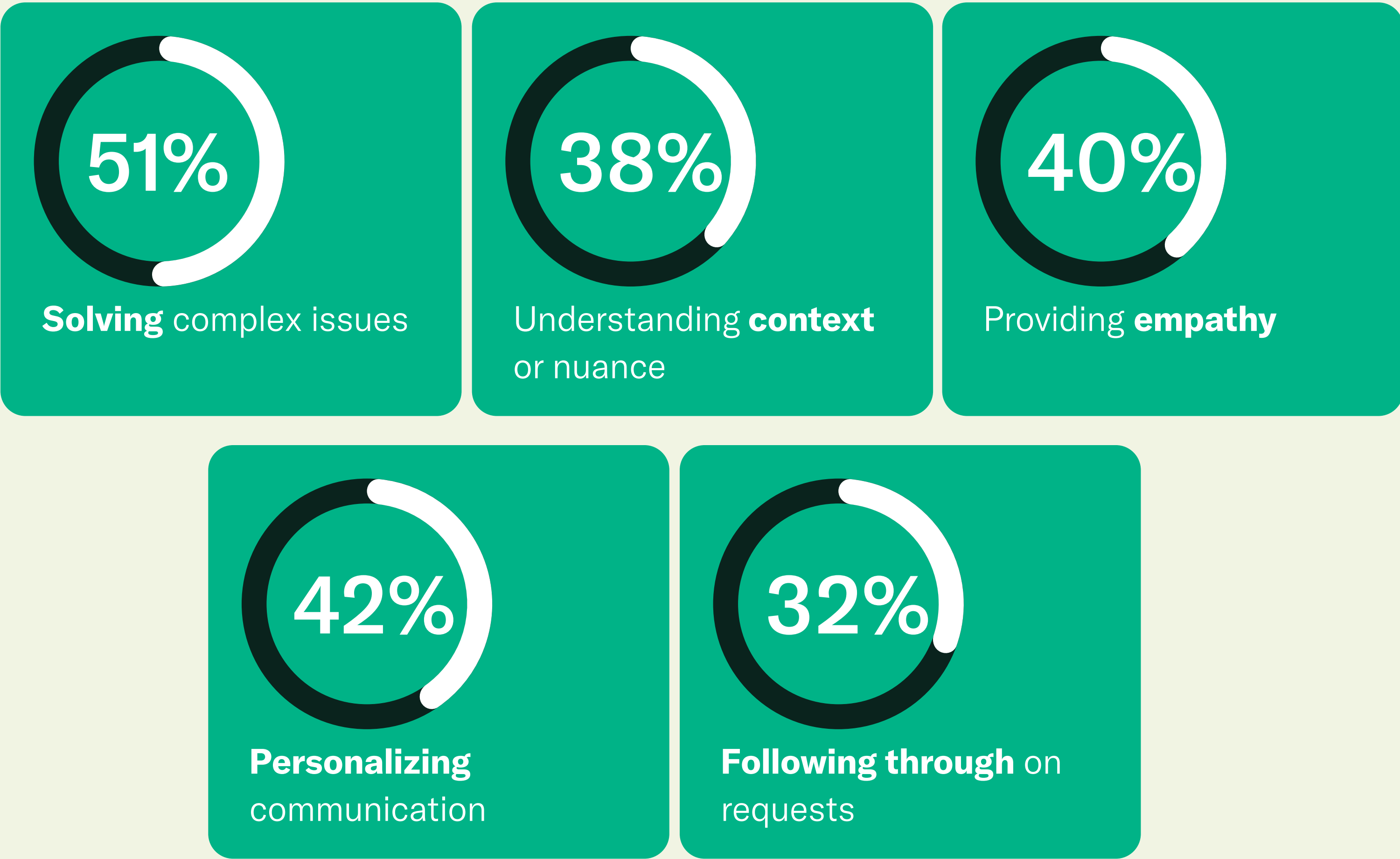
Simplicity and speed are key here. When the task is simple or it's just plain faster than a person, many insurance consumers prefer AI. But 51% think solving complex issues is the thing AI is worst at. It's also worth noting that over three-quarters of insurance consumers said they'd be more willing to use AI if it were clear how they could speak with a person instead.

Surprisingly, only 24% prefer AI when they don't want to talk to a person, which seems like the perfect use case!

Telecommunications Consumers Prefer AI When



They Think AI Is The Worst At



Telecom Consumers Are Optimistic About AI's Future—With A Few Changes

Not everybody is satisfied with the way AI works today, but 66% of telecommunications consumers are confident that it will become more helpful in the next three years. And 47% think AI will someday fully replace human assistance, though 26% of them won't be happy about it.

Telecommunications survey respondents also shared their opinions on how to improve AI assistants. The top answer was "quicker access to a human", but many also want smarter responses, more personalized interactions, and better voice or tone. Only 6% said they don't want to use AI at all.

66%

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AI will get more helpful in the next 3 years

47%

INVOKA 

Think AI will fully replace human agents someday

26%

INVOKA 

Won't like it

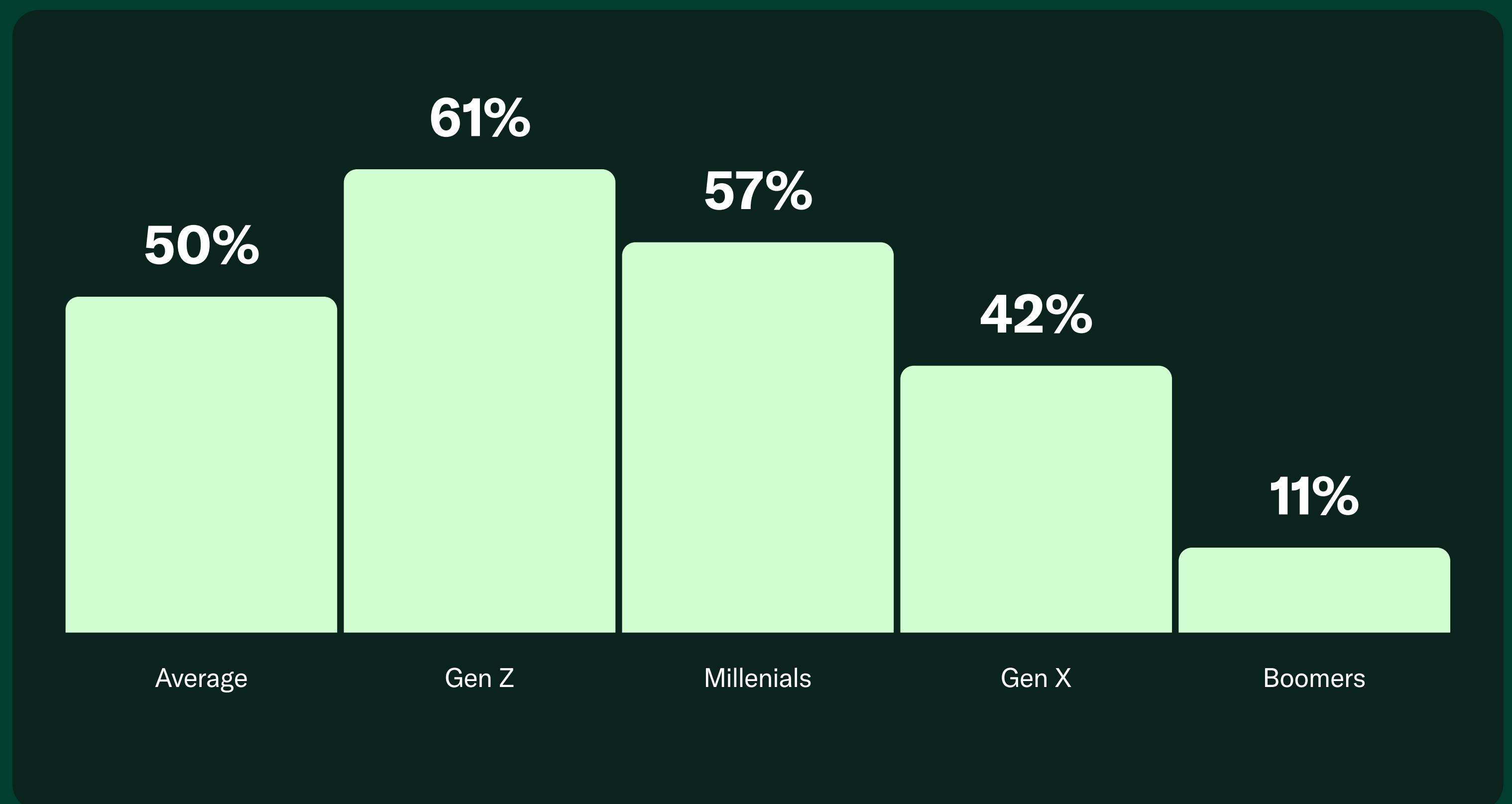
The One Thing That Would Most Improve The Experience With AI Assistants For Telecommunications Consumers Is



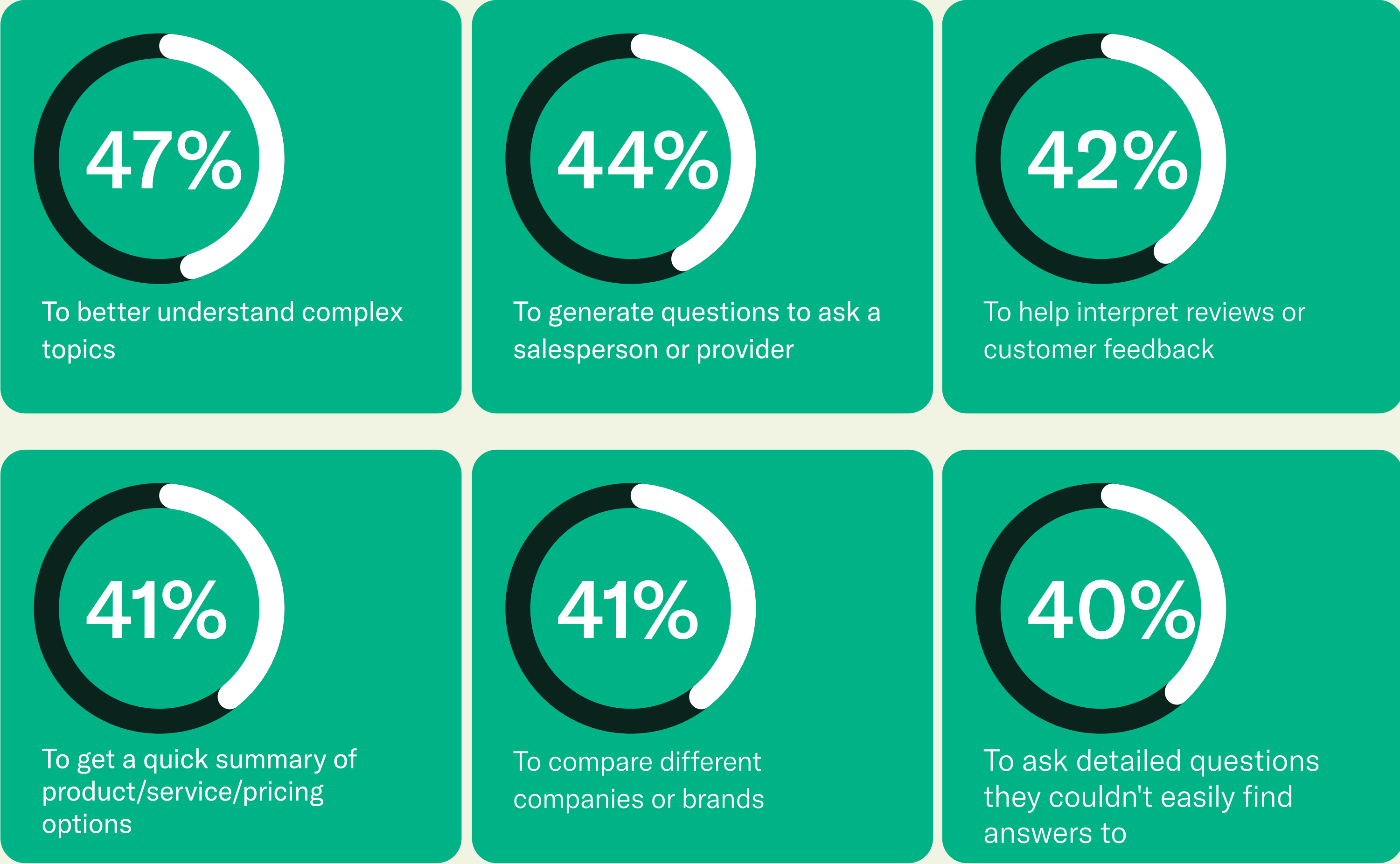
Many Telecom Consumers Are Using Generative AI To Research Their Purchases

We've covered how telecommunications consumers are using the AI assistants brands provide, but how are they using ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and other generative AI tools when researching their purchase? Fifty percent of telecommunications consumers report using generative AI when researching a high-stakes telecommunications purchase. There's a generation gap here, too, with 61% of Gen Zers and sizable proportions of Millennials and Gen Xers saying they've used gen AI when doing research, while only 11% of Boomers have.

Have Used Generative AI To Help Research A Purchase



How Telecom Consumers Are Using Generative AI During The Buying Journey



Is Generative AI Replacing Traditional Search For Telecommunications Consumers?

It's the question on every marketer's mind, and the answer is no. Telecommunications consumers making high-stakes purchases are far more likely to supplement standard search engine use with generative AI research than replace it.

Only 11% of telecommunications consumers rely more on generative AI than search engines to inform their purchase decisions, and only 2% mostly rely upon it. Again, there is a generation gap in most areas except those that mostly rely on generative AI. Usage by Millennials and Gen Xers is similar to Gen Z's.



Human Connections Are Still Critical During High-Stakes Telecom Buying Journeys

Telecommunications consumers overwhelmingly value human connections while making a high-stakes purchase, and almost none feel that it's not important. They need expertise and reassurance when making these types of purchases for complex telecommunications services, and nothing can substitute for the empathy and understanding that a human can provide. There was no significant difference across generations in those who thought it was very important or important.

How Important Is Human Connection During A High-Stakes Telecommunications Purchase?



Telecom Consumers Increasingly Prefer To Call Businesses For Help With A Purchase

In addition to AI, there are numerous digital options for telecom consumers to communicate with and obtain information from brands when considering a high-stakes purchase, ranging from chat to email to websites. But when they need help, telecom consumers prefer to call.

Since 2022, the preference for calling has increased by 11% among telecommunications consumers, while the preference for AI assistance has remained relatively unchanged. The preference to call is rooted in reality, as 74% of telecommunications consumers reported calling when making a high-stakes purchase decision, up from 68% in 2022.

This goes to show that when telecommunications consumers need help in situations where knowledge, empathy, and understanding are paramount, they want a person to give them guidance. Despite improvements in automated assistance and live chat, the desire to pick up the phone has only increased in the telecommunications industry.

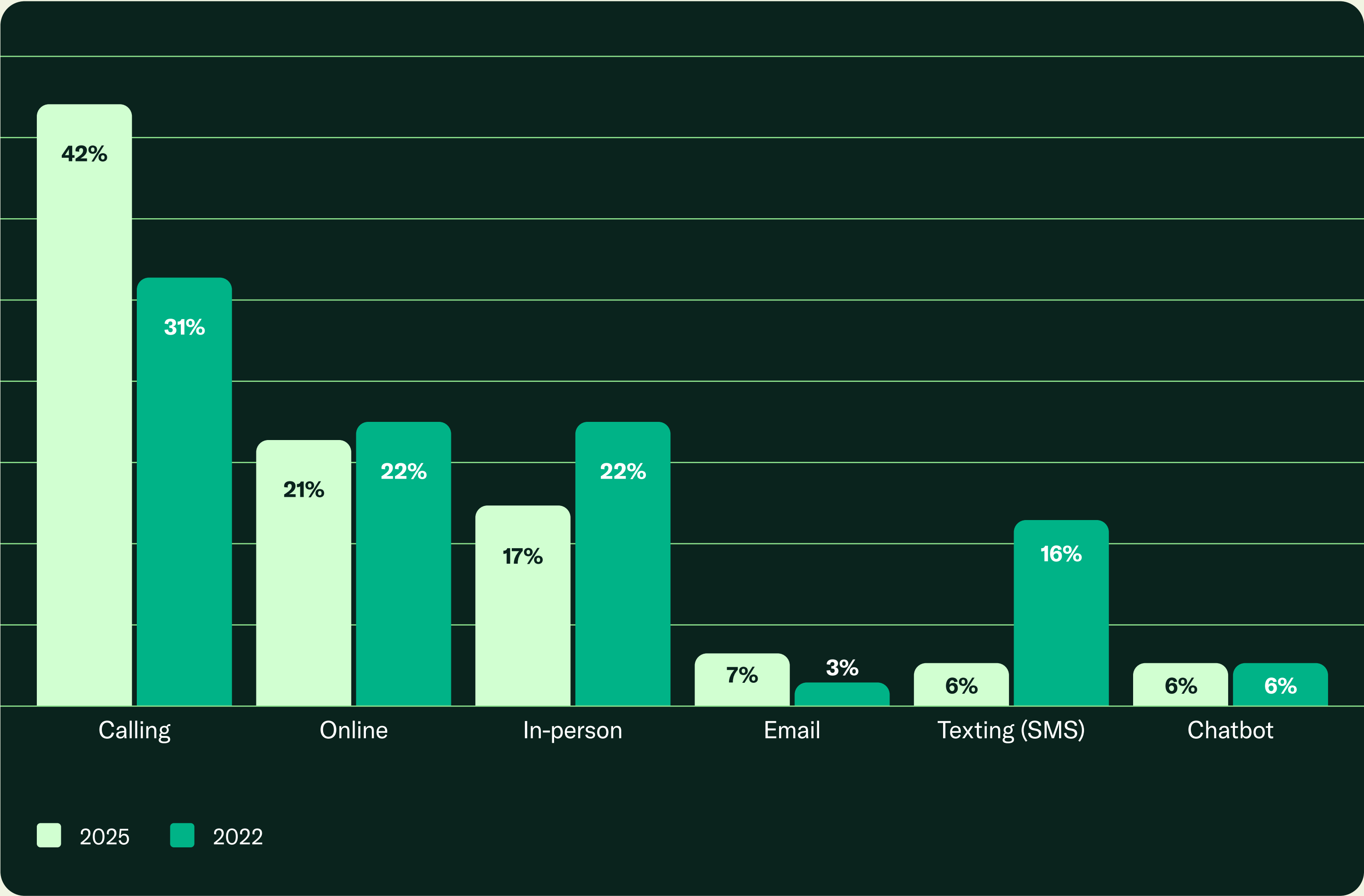
74%

INVOKA 

Called when making a high-stakes purchase



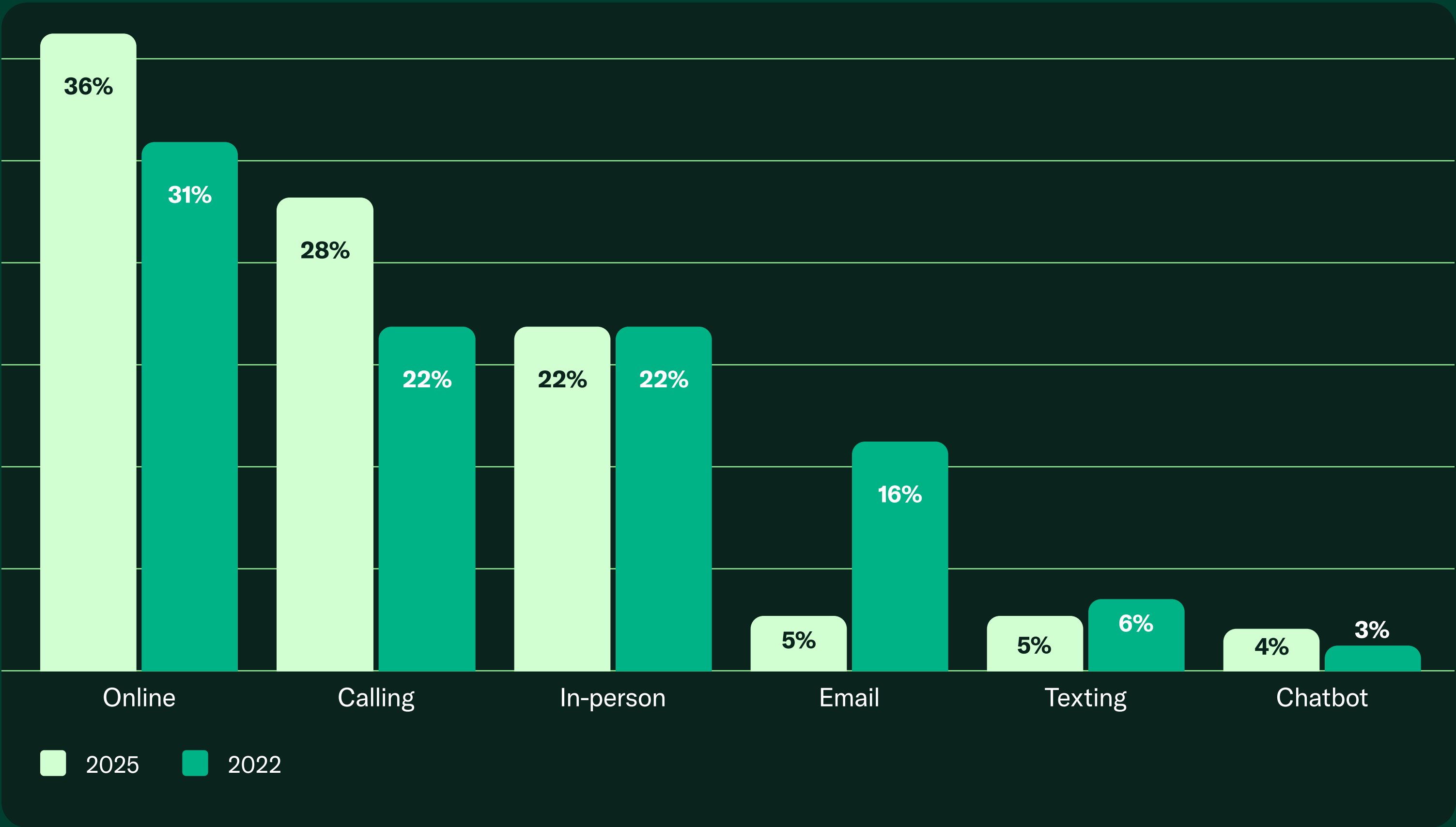
Preferred Communication Method When Telecom Consumers Are Having A Problem And Need Help



A Seamless Omnichannel Experience Remains Critical

Telecommunications consumers prefer to call when they need assistance during a high-stakes purchase, but online is the preferred channel to complete the transaction. Your online-to-offline experience has to be seamless in both directions, and this means connecting data from the digital journey to phone calls is no longer a nice-to-have, but a requirement to optimize and personalize every touchpoint.

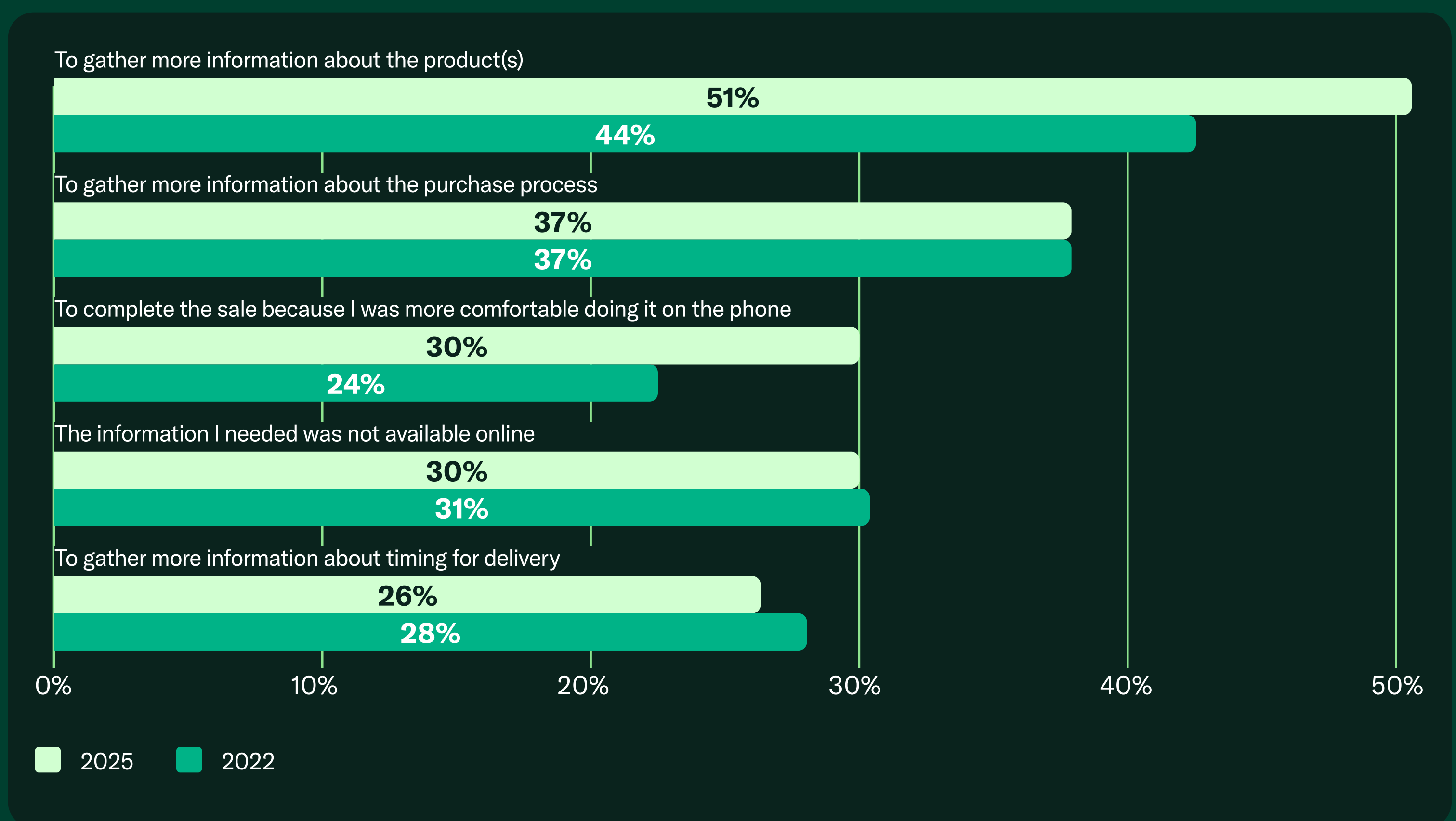
Preferred Channel To Complete Telecommunications Transactions



Why Are Telecom Consumers Calling?

When making a high-stakes telecommunications purchase, most consumers call to obtain more information about the product, service, or provider. Many also need to get more information about how to complete their transaction, which can be complex when you consider we're talking about things like choosing phone plans, setting up broadband internet, or configuring cable and satellite TV services.

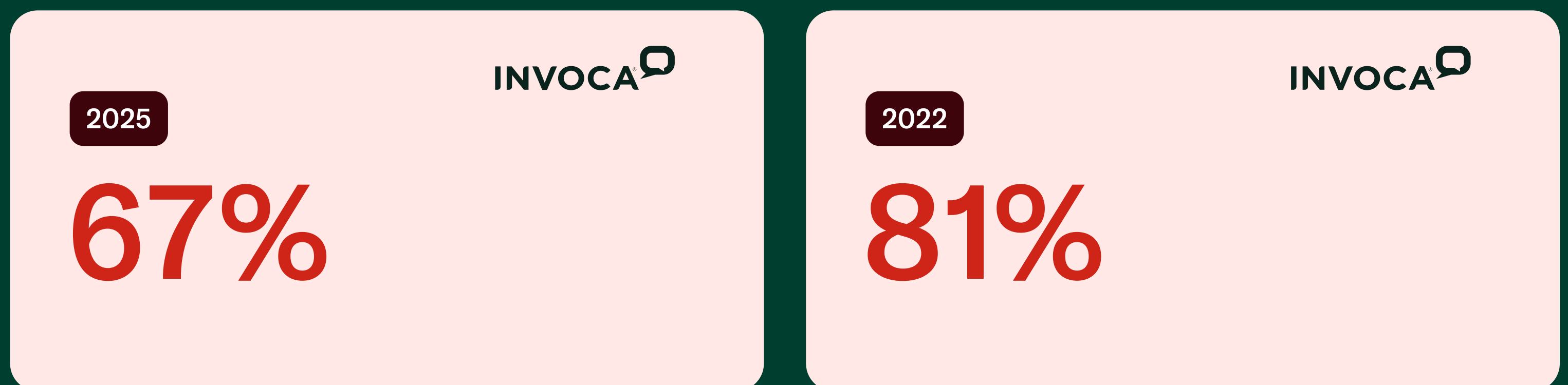
Concerningly, the percentage of telecommunications consumers who are calling because the information they needed was not available online has remained flat over the last three years. This signals a continued need to improve online experiences and connect calls to the digital experience to determine the most effective optimizations.



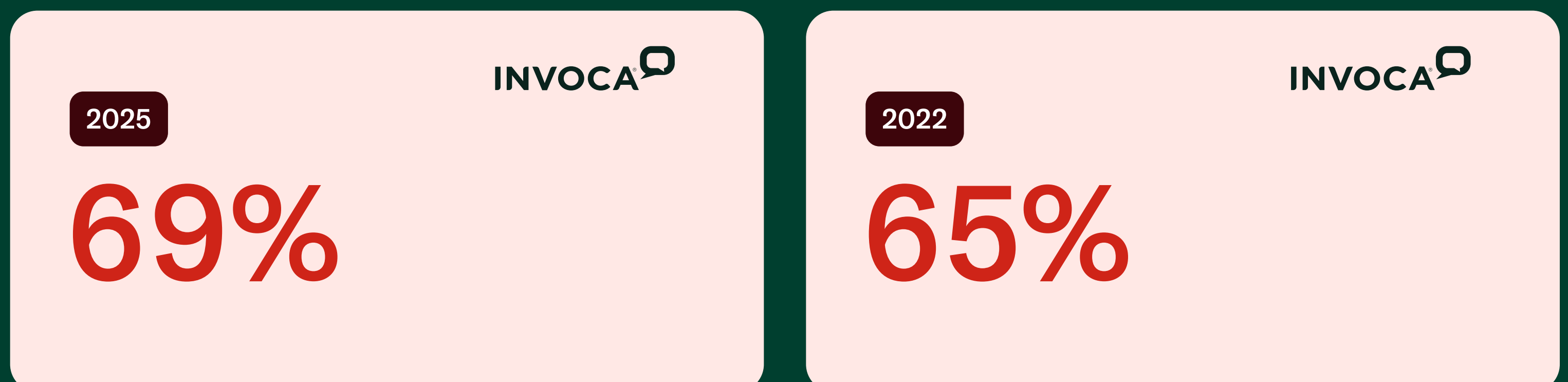
Telecommunications Consumers Are Getting A Bit More Patient

We've found that while telecommunications consumers have become a bit more patient than they were during the frantic post-pandemic days, they still demand great experiences. Telecommunications consumers are increasingly willing to pay more for the best experiences despite the pressures of inflation. They're also prepared to jump ship to the competition at the drop of a hat if you do them wrong, so that newfound acquiescence can't be taken for granted.

Telecommunications Consumers Who Are Likely To Stop Doing Business With A Brand After One Bad Experience



Will Pay More For The Best Customer Service



They'll Wait A Little Longer On Hold

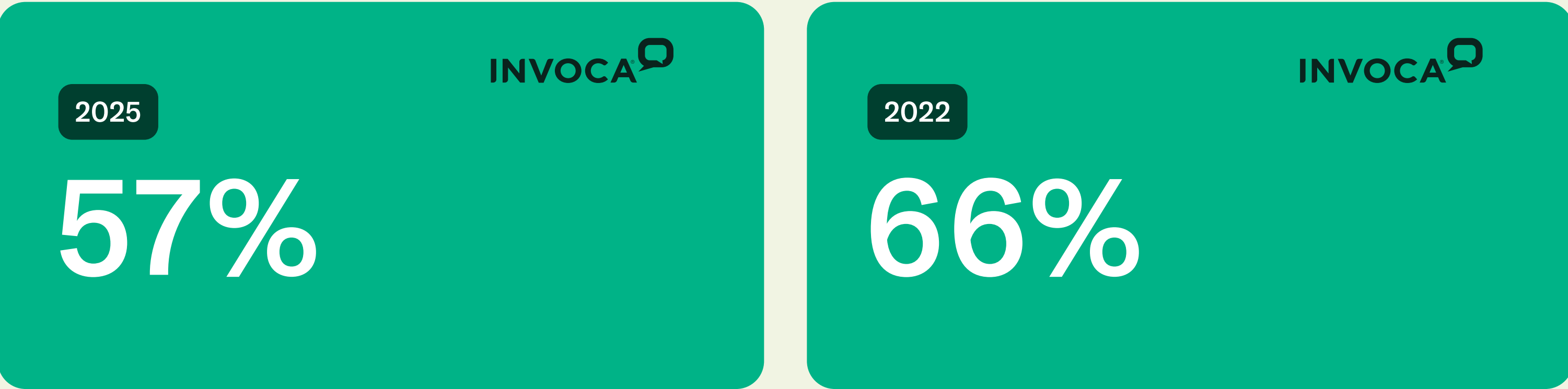


While telecommunications consumers will stay on hold a bit longer before hanging up than in 2022, 57% still report hanging up after being placed on hold.

Though most telecommunications consumers expect to wait on hold for 3-5 minutes, 29% will still hang up after being on hold for 5 minutes or less.

Sixty-five percent of telecom consumers report hanging up after hearing everyone's favorite message about "unexpected high call volumes causing longer than usual wait times," so let's just get rid of that one already. Please? The automated callback option continues to be popular, with 43% willing to use it instead of waiting on hold.

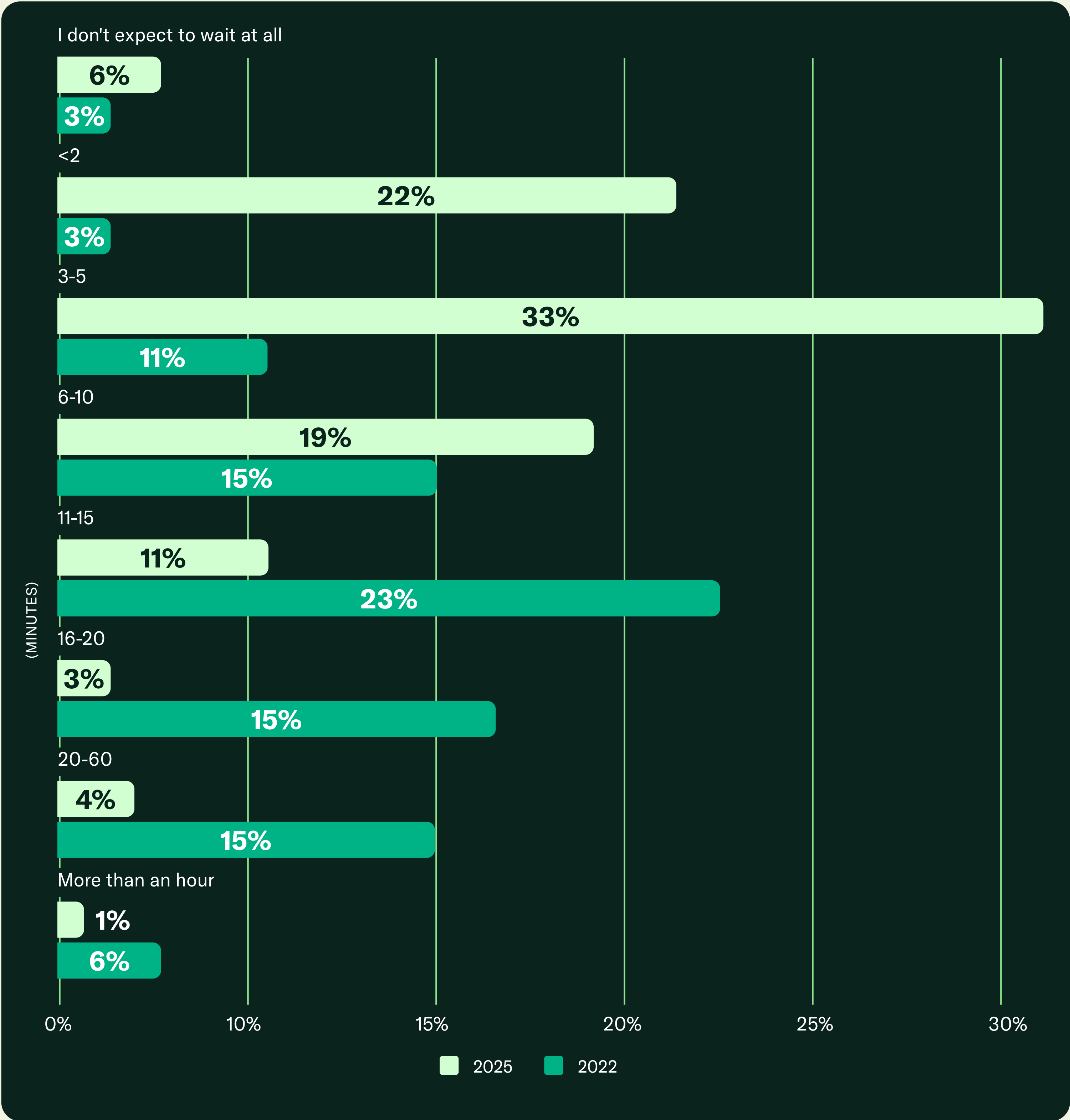
Have Hung Up After Being Placed On Hold



Telecommunications Consumers Who Will Use The Automated Callback Option Instead Of Holding



How Long Will Telecommunications Consumers Wait On Hold Before Hanging Up?



When It Comes To Humans Vs AI Assistance, Telecom Consumer Preference Is Clear

While AI can make a huge difference in your telecommunications company's ability to handle customer inquiries—especially when used on the back-end to analyze and orchestrate data—consumers still overwhelmingly prefer to call and talk to someone to get help.

When Both AI And Human Help Are Equally Available, Telecommunications Consumers Prefer

62%

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A human representative

17%

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A combination of AI and human assistance

16%

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An AI assistant

5%

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No preference

Again, this is about using AI at the right place and the right time, and ensuring you can meet your telecommunications customers where they are, regardless of their communication preference.

Demographic Information



*Demographic data includes data from all respondents.

GENDER				
Male	Female	Non-binary	Other	Prefer not to answer
51%	48%	0%	0%	0%

AGE/GENERATION			
Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers
16%	29%	29%	26%

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION COMPLETED		
Less than high school	High school graduate	Some college/university
2%	24%	28%
College/university graduate	Post graduate	
31%	15%	

RESPONSES BY INDUSTRY (RESPONDENTS COULD SELECT MULTIPLE)			
Travel	Telecommunications	Financial services	Insurance
48%	45%	36%	44%
Home services	Healthcare	Automotive	
35%	39%	36%	

ANNUAL GROSS INCOME				
Less than \$50,000	\$50,000 - \$74,999	\$75,000 - \$99,999	\$100,000 - \$199,999	\$200,000+
39%	24%	14%	20%	4%



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