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The Travel Consumer Experience Report 2025

How travel and hospitality consumers value human connections and view AI in the modern booking journey

Many Travel 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. Brands wasted no time hitching their wagons to AI, aspiring to increase booking efficiency and provide the experiences that digital-age travelers demand.

But has AI lived up to the hype for travel 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 travel booking 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 travel companies 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. Travel 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 travel purchases.

The big takeaway is that travel businesses must strike the perfect balance of digital, AI, and the human touch and invest in cohesive AI strategies across the entire booking 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, travel brands must make sure 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 travel 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 **travel 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 Travel Consumers Have Encountered A Brand's AI, And Many Didn't Care

When travel consumers are making high-stakes booking 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 they really ready to let AI do the talking?

Only 10% of travel consumers surveyed reported never interacting with a brand's AI when making a high-stakes travel purchase in the last year. The big question is, did they like it?

More than half of the respondents reported that interacting with a brand's AI tools improved their travel booking experience. However, the shrug is also strong, with 29% saying AI made no difference at all, and nearly 19% said that AI made the booking experience worse.

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.

10%
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Have not interacted with a brand's AI

53%
INVOCA
AI made the booking experience better

29%
INVOCA
AI made no difference

19%
INVOCA
AI made the booking experience worse

Travel Consumers Have Mixed Feelings About AI Assistants

Now for the mushy psychological bit—how does interacting with a travel brand's AI agents and tools make consumers feel? When asked to select words that describe how interacting with AI during a travel purchase made them feel, the results were mixed, with 25% selecting "frustrated" and 30% selecting "skeptical." However, 35% selected "confident" and 27% selected "curious," showing positive engagement. The AI apathy is once again strong, with 17% selecting "indifferent".

Skeptical
Curious
Confident
Indifferent
Relieved
Frustrated
Confused

Many Travel 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 booking is not the way to do it. Most travel consumers report feeling forced to use a brand's AI most or all of the time, and many more report feeling forced to use it some 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—54% report feeling positively about it. Again with the AI enuui, 24% were indifferent, another 19% felt negatively, and only 2% said they couldn't tell if it was AI or not.

59%
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Say they feel forced to use a brand's AI

54%
INVOCA
Feel positive about their AI interactions

24%
INVOCA
Are indifferent

19%
INVOCA
Have negative feelings

2%
INVOCA
Can't differentiate AI from human assistance

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

More often than not, travel consumers are satisfied with the help they receive from a brand's AI during the booking process. That does not equate to them appreciating the help, however. 32% of those surveyed report feeling less valued as a customer when a travel brand interacts with them via AI. Though 45% feel more valued, and 24% weren't swayed either way by AI assistance.

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

32%
Less valued

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45%
More valued

INVOCA

24%
Makes no difference

INVOCA

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

48%
Most or all of the time

INVOCA

33%
Sometimes

INVOCA

17%
Rarely or never

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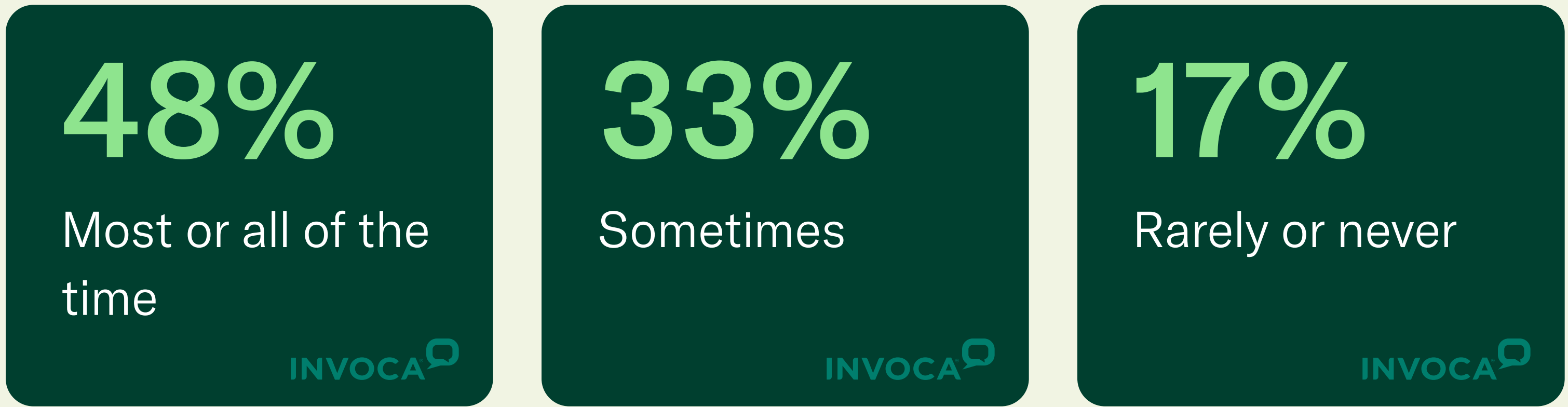
Know Your Audience: Age Matters When It Comes To AI Acceptance

If your travel 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 say they've had a memorable positive experience with a brand's AI when making a high-stakes travel purchase, while only 14% of Boomers said the same.

When Interacting With A Travel Brand's AI

	Average	Gen Z	Boomers
It improved my perception of the brand	55%	58%	5%
Feel positively	54%	51%	5%
Feel more valued	45%	49%	1%
It made the buying experience better	53%	54%	5%
It made the buying experience more personal	44%	49%	4%
Feel satisfied with the assistance it provided	48%	48%	13%

Performance Scale

0%   30%   60%+

Travel 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 (56%), compared to 20% of Boomers.

	Average	Gen Z	Boomers
Think AI is likely to provide misleading or inaccurate information	39%	40%	43%
Trust an AI assistant as much as a human	56%	56%	20%
Confident that AI can help resolve a complex issue	48%	45%	5%
Likely to abandon a booking if AI assistance were all that was available	48%	45%	37%

Performance Scale
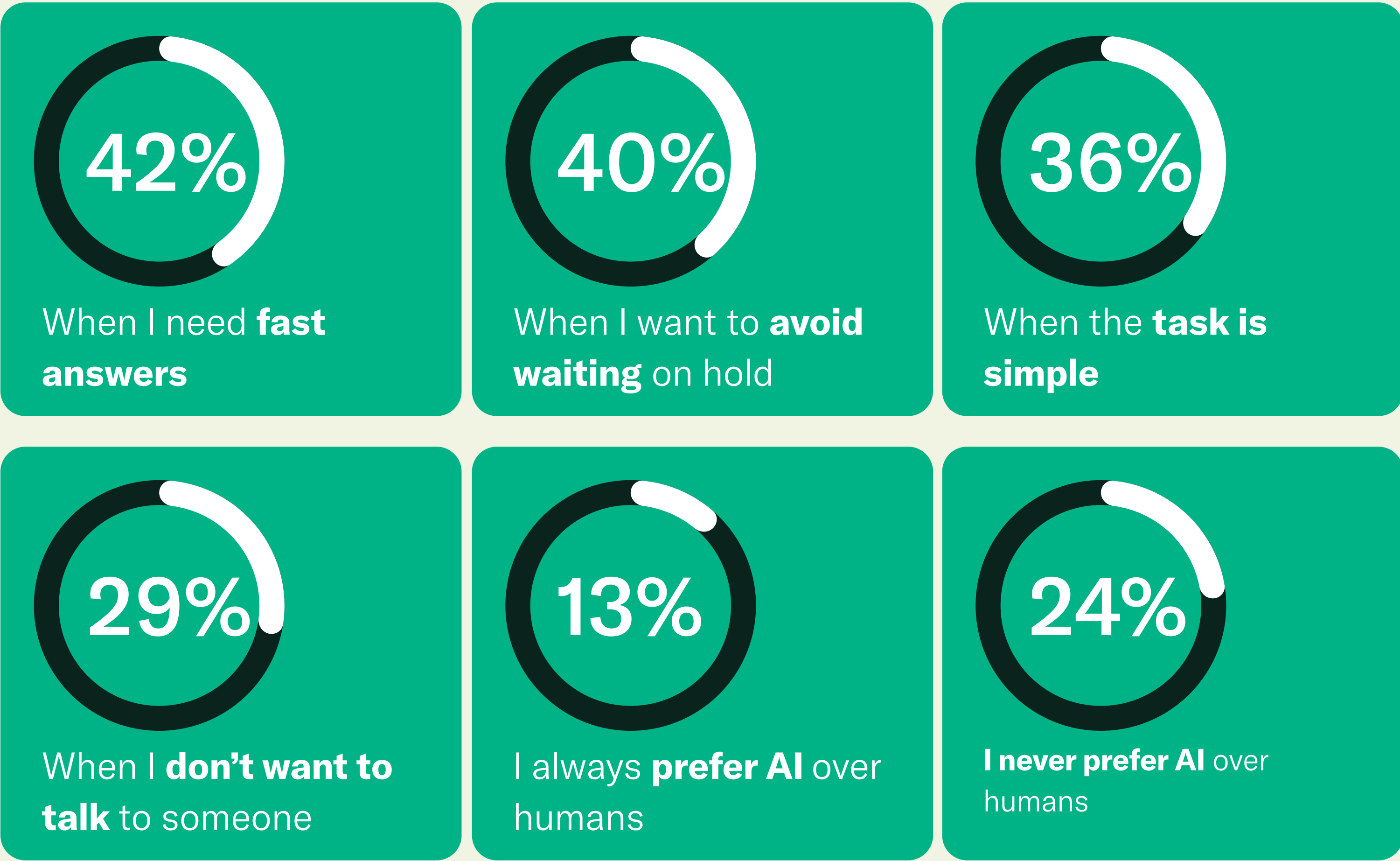
0%   30%   60%+
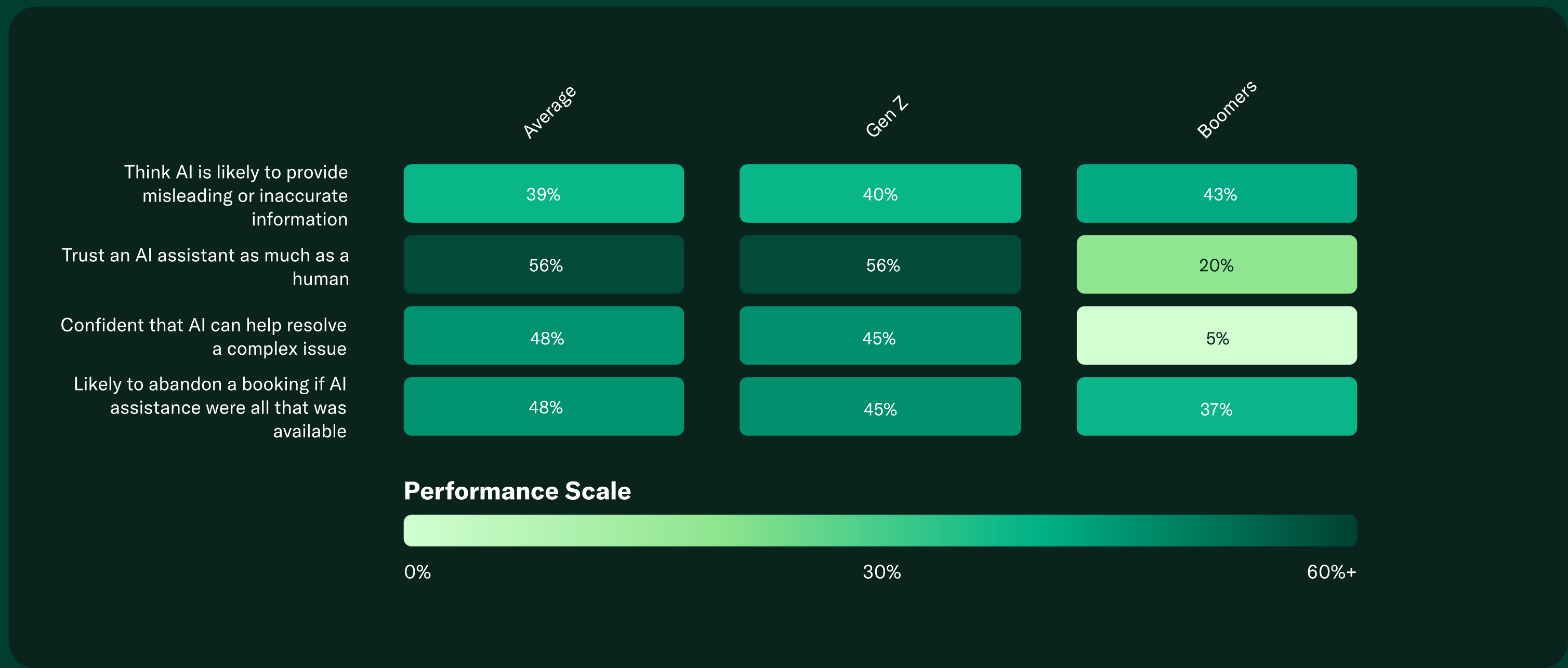
When Do Travel Consumers Want To Use AI?

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

Simplicity and speed are key here. When the task is simple or it's just plain faster than a person, many travel consumers prefer AI. In fact, 83% prefer AI when it resolves their issue faster than a human would. However, 48% think that solving complex issues is the area where AI performs the worst. It's also worth noting that 36% of travel consumers said they'd be more willing to use AI if it were clear how they could speak with a person instead.

Surprisingly, only 29% prefer AI when they don't want to talk to a person, which seems like the perfect use case! There is no significant difference in use case preference across age groups.

Travel Consumers Prefer AI When

42%

When I need **fast answers**

40%

When I want to **avoid waiting** on hold

36%

When the **task is simple**

29%

When I **don't want to talk** to someone

13%

I always **prefer AI** over humans

24%

I never prefer AI over humans

They Think AI Is The Worst At

48%

Solving complex issues

40%

Understanding **context** or nuance

43%

Providing **empathy**

36%

Personalizing communication

27%

Following through on requests

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

Not everybody is satisfied with how AI works today, but over 70% are confident that it will become more helpful in the next three years. And 54% think AI will someday fully replace human assistance for making travel purchases, though 25% of them won't be happy about it.

Survey respondents also shared their opinions on how to improve AI assistants for travel. The top answer was "make getting human assistance faster," but many also want it to sound more natural, provide smarter responses, and enable better personalization. Only 6% said they don't want to use AI at all.

71%
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AI will get more helpful in the next 3 years

54%
INVOCA

Think AI will fully replace human agents someday

25%
INVOCA

Won't like it

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

36%

Quicker access to a human

28%

Smarter responses

15%

More **personalized** interactions

14%

Better voice or tone

6%

Nothing, **I don't want** to use AI

Many Consumers Are Using Generative AI To Research Purchases—Especially Younger Ones

We've covered how travel consumers are using the AI assistants brands provide, but how are they using ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and other generative AI tools when researching their travel purchase? Over 60% report using gen AI when researching a travel booking. 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 You Research A High-Stakes Travel Purchase

Average	Gen Z	Millenials	Gen X	Boomers
61%	61%	57%	42%	11%
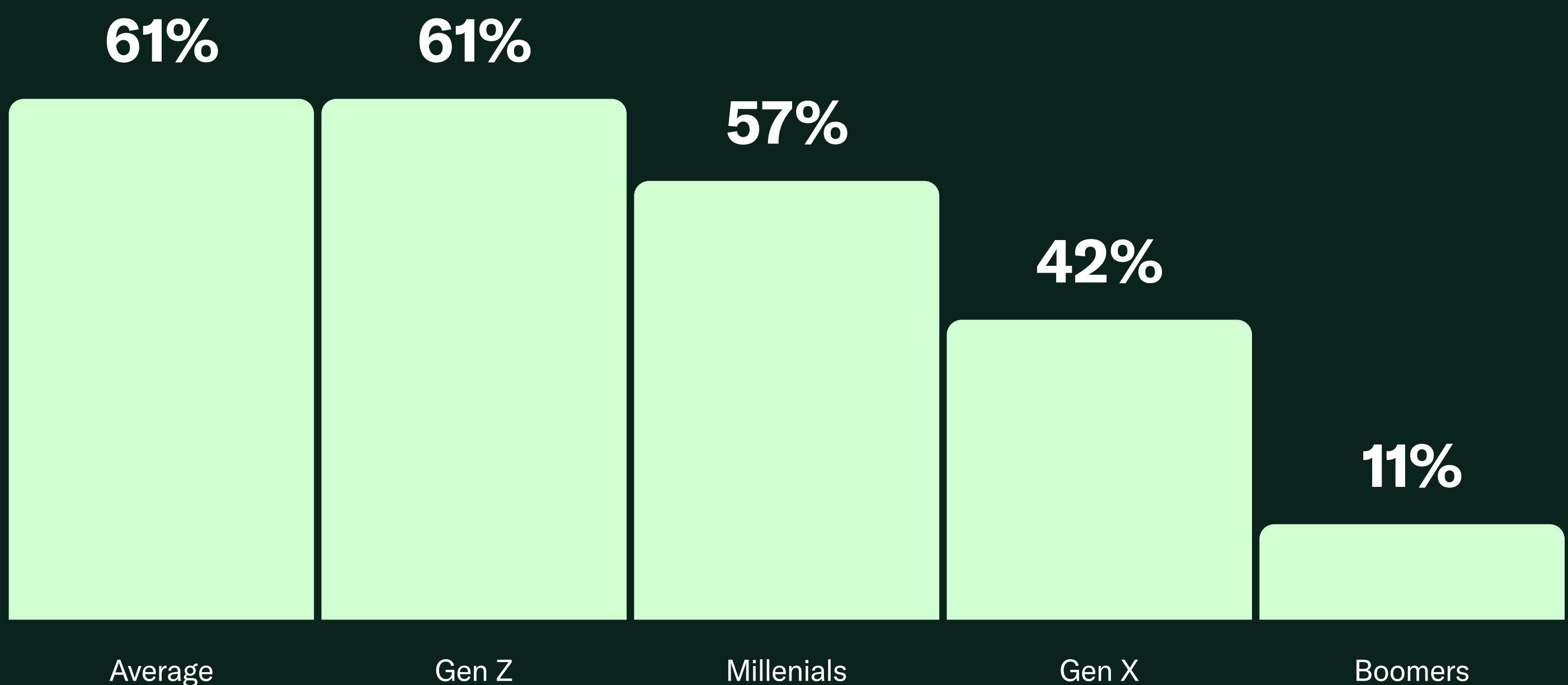
How Travel Consumers Are Using Generative AI During The Booking Journey

44%

To get a quick summary of pricing options

44%

To help interpret reviews or customer feedback

43%

To better understand complex topics

41%

To compare different companies or brands

39%

To generate questions to ask a travel agent or provider

29%

To ask detailed questions they couldn't easily find answers to

Is Generative AI Replacing Traditional Search?

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

Only 15% rely more on generative AI than search engines to inform their travel 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.

	Average	Gen Z	Boomers
I use only search engines	34%	39%	65%
I use both, but rely more on search engines	44%	44%	19%
I use both, but rely more on generative AI	15%	14%	1%
I mostly rely on generative AI tools	2%	0%	0%
I don't use either	5%	3%	13%

Performance Scale

0%   30%   60%+

Human Connections Are Still Critical During High-Stakes Travel Booking Journeys

Travel consumers overwhelmingly value human connections while making a purchase, and almost none feel that it's not important. They need expertise and reassurance when booking complex trips, 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 The Human Connection During A Travel Purchase?

54%
Very important

27%
Important

17%
Somewhat important

2%
Not very important

0%
Not important at all

Travel Consumers Increasingly Prefer To Call Businesses For Help With A Booking

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

Since 2022, the preference for calling has increased by 11%, while the use of email and the preference for AI assistance have remained relatively stable. The preference to call is rooted in reality, as 60% of respondents reported calling when making a travel purchase decision.

This goes to show that when travel 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.
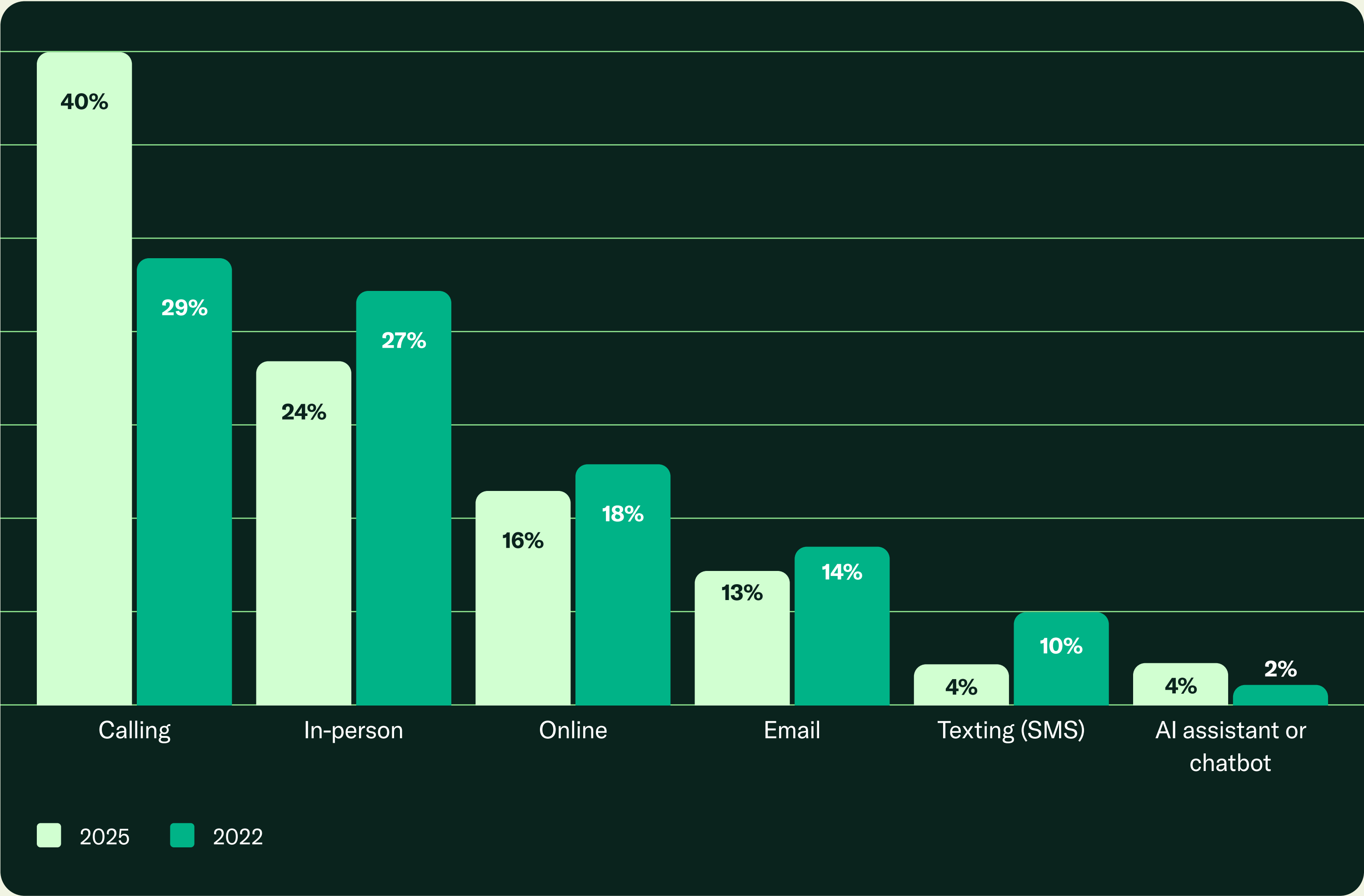
INVOCA

60%
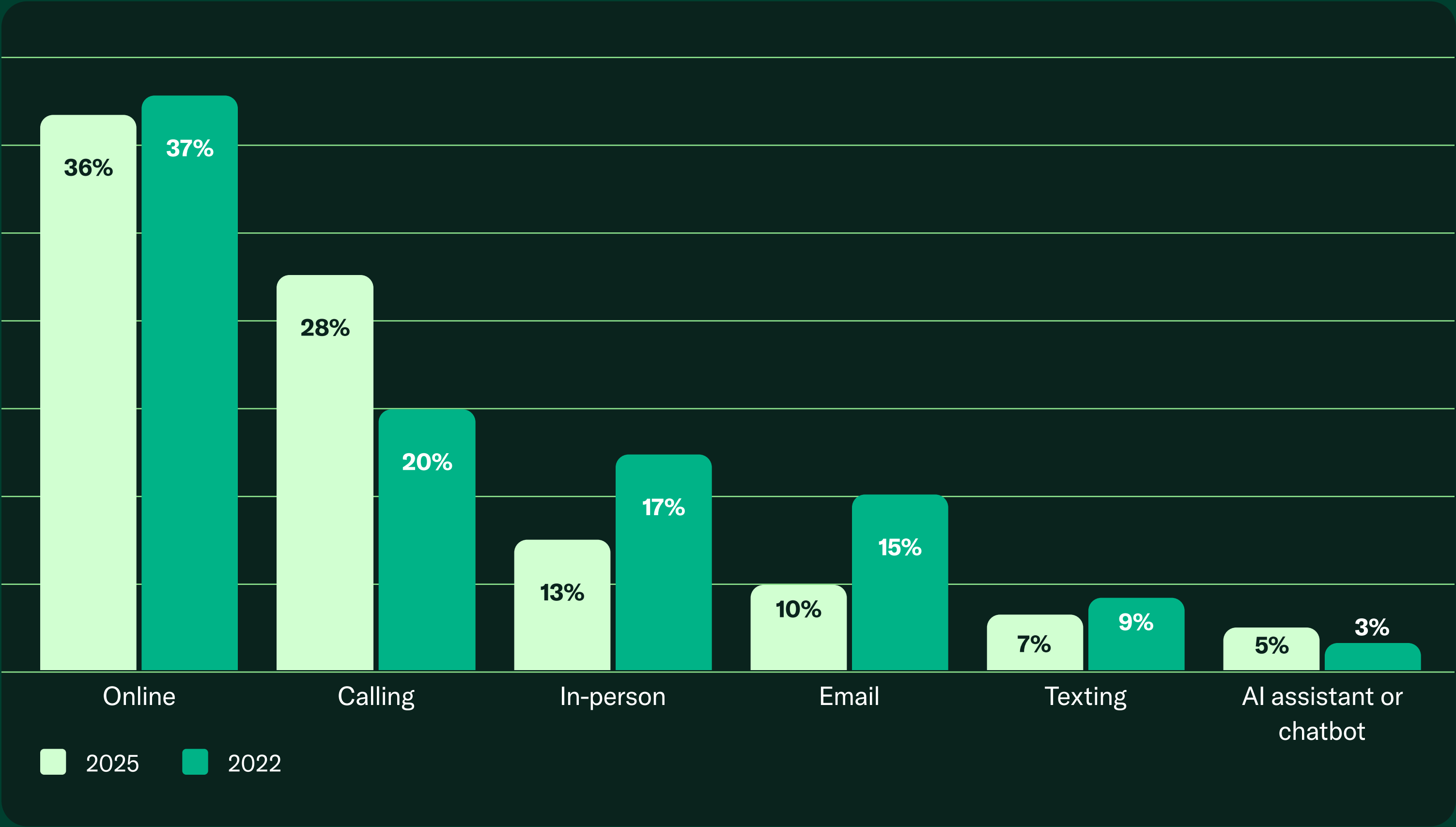Called when making a high-stakes travel purchase

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

	Calling	In-person	Online	Email	Texting (SMS)	AI assistant or chatbot
2025	40%	24%	16%	13%	4%	4%
2022	29%	27%	18%	14%	10%	2%

2025   2022

A Seamless Omnichannel Experience Remains Critical For Travel

Travel 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.
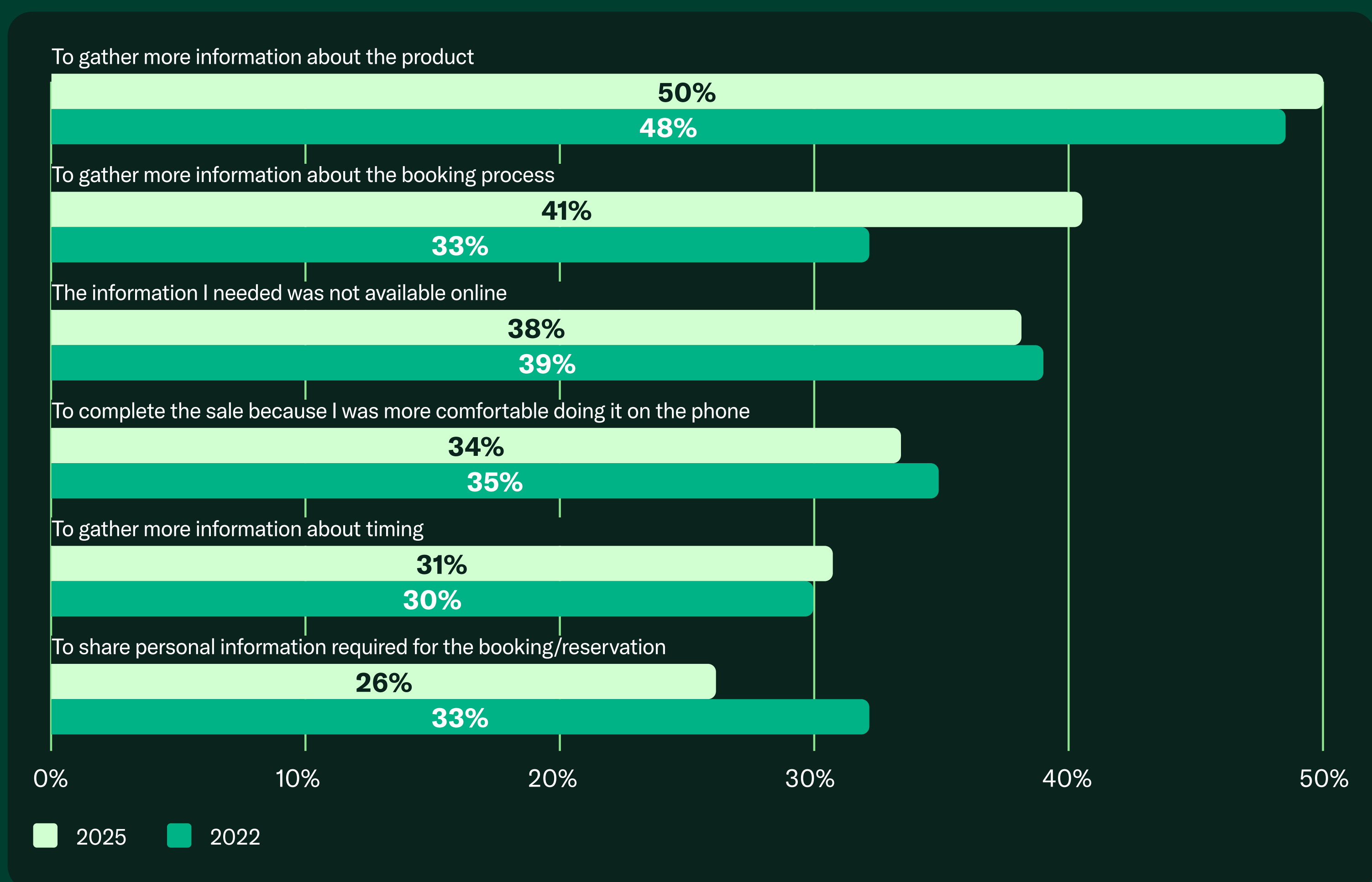
Preferred Channel To Complete Travel Transactions

Channel	2025	2022
Online	36%	37%
Calling	28%	20%
In-person	13%	17%
Email	10%	15%
Texting	7%	9%
AI assistant or chatbot	5%	3%

■ 2025 ■ 2022

Why Are Travel Consumers Calling?

When making a high-stakes travel purchase, most consumers call to obtain more information about the destination, accommodation, or travel provider. Many also need to get more information about how to complete their booking, which can be complex when you consider we're talking about things like booking international flights, planning multi-city tours, or arranging travel insurance. This isn't like buying a simple domestic ticket!

Concerningly, 38% of people are calling because the information they needed was not available online. This signals a continued need to improve online experiences and connect calls to the digital experience to determine the most effective optimizations.

To gather more information about the product

50%	
48%	

To gather more information about the booking process

41%	
33%	

The information I needed was not available online

38%	
39%	

To complete the sale because I was more comfortable doing it on the phone

34%	
35%	

To gather more information about timing

31%	
30%	

To share personal information required for the booking/reservation

26%	
33%	

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%

■ 2025   ■ 2022

Travel Consumers Are Getting A Bit More Patient

We've found that while travel consumers have become a bit more patient than they were during the frantic post-pandemic days, they still demand great experiences. Travel 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.

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

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2025

46%

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2022

76%
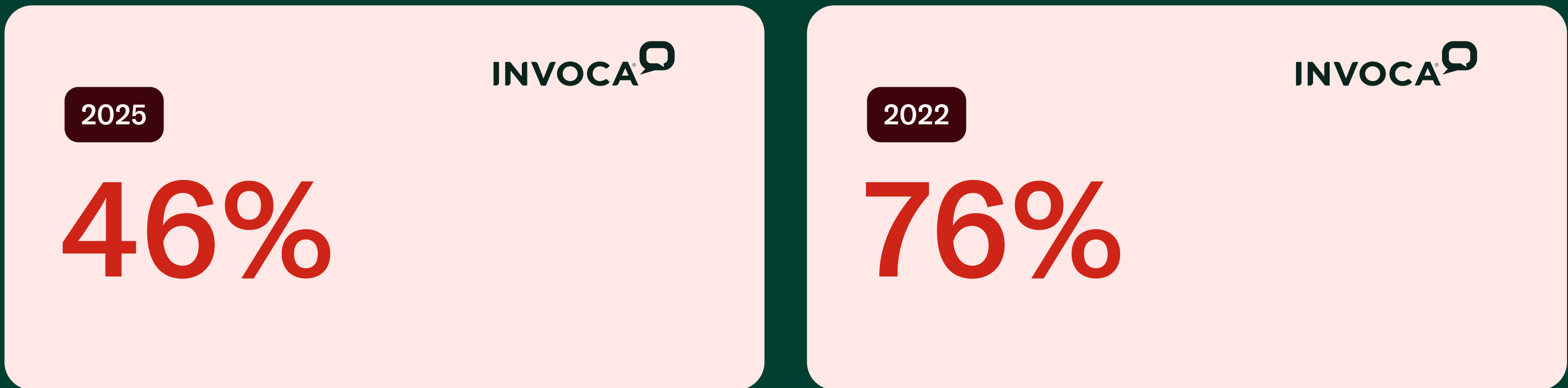
Will Pay More For The Best Customer Service

INVOCA

2025

75%

INVOCA

2022

63%

They'll Wait A Little Longer On Hold

While travel consumers will stay on hold a bit longer before hanging up than in 2022, 50% still report hanging up after being placed on hold. Though most consumers expect to wait on hold for 3-5 minutes, some 36% will still hang up after being on hold for 5 minutes or less, and 9% will only hang on for less than two minutes.

Another 65% 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 grow in popularity, and only 7% will call another travel business instead of using it.
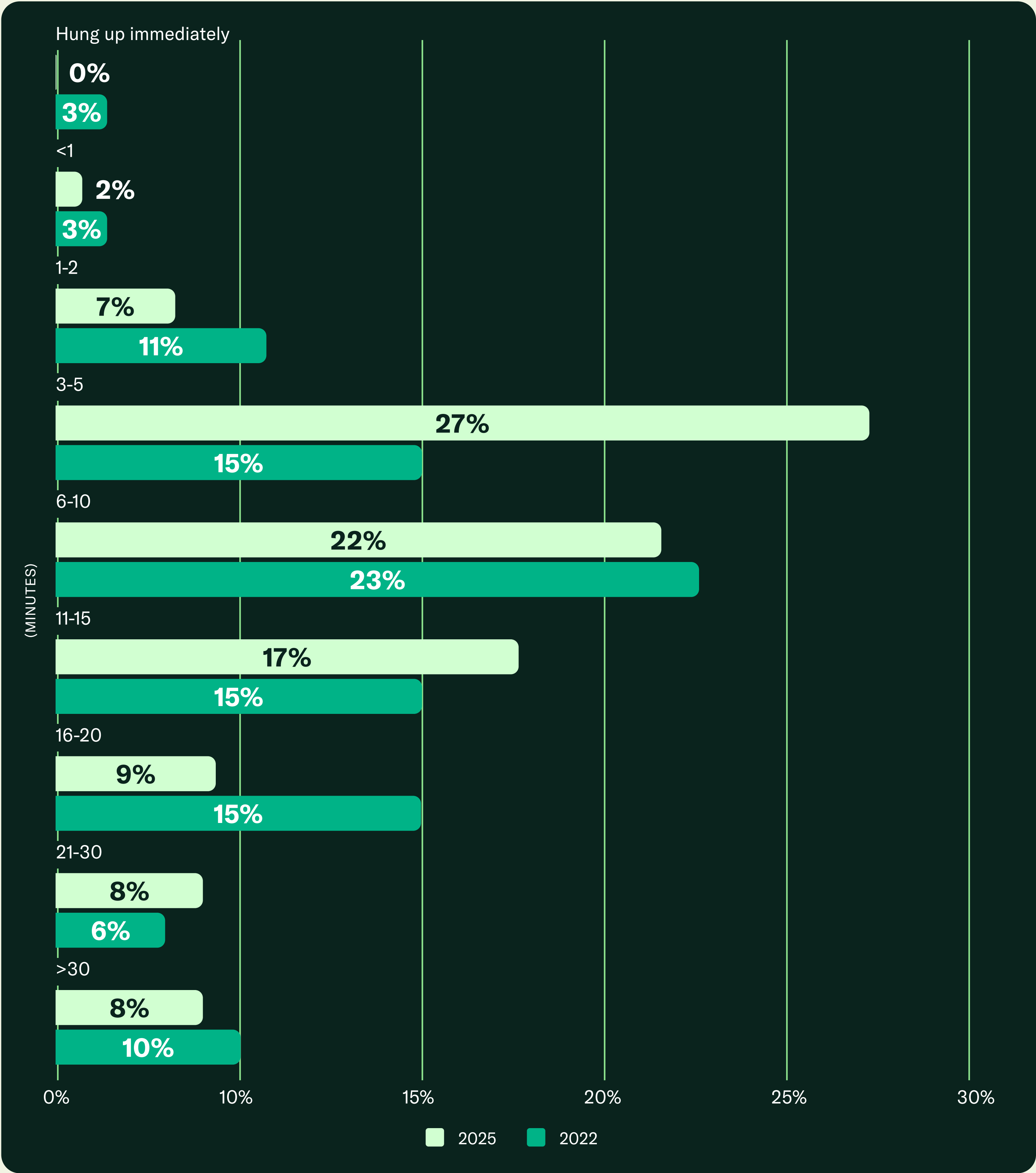
Have Hung Up After Being Placed On Hold

2025

50%

INVOCA

2022

64%

INVOCA

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

2025

43%

INVOCA

2022

42%

INVOCA

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

Hung up immediately
- 0% (2025)
- 3% (2022)

<1
- 2% (2025)
- 3% (2022)

1-2
- 7% (2025)
- 11% (2022)

3-5
- 27% (2025)
- 15% (2022)

6-10
- 22% (2025)
- 23% (2022)

11-15
- 17% (2025)
- 15% (2022)

16-20
- 9% (2025)
- 15% (2022)

21-30
- 8% (2025)
- 6% (2022)

>30
- 8% (2025)
- 10% (2022)

(MINUTES)

0%   5%   10%   15%   20%   25%   30%

■ 2025   ■ 2022

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

While AI can make a huge difference in your travel company's ability to handle customer inquiries—especially when used on the back-end to analyze and orchestrate data—travel consumers still overwhelmingly prefer to call and talk to someone to get help. This applies across all age groups, though Boomers have a significantly stronger affinity for human assistance.

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

60% INVOCA
A human representative

16% INVOCA
A combination of AI and human assistance

21% INVOCA
An AI assistant

3% INVOCA
No preference

Again, this is about using AI at the right place and the right time, and ensuring you can meet your travel 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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