



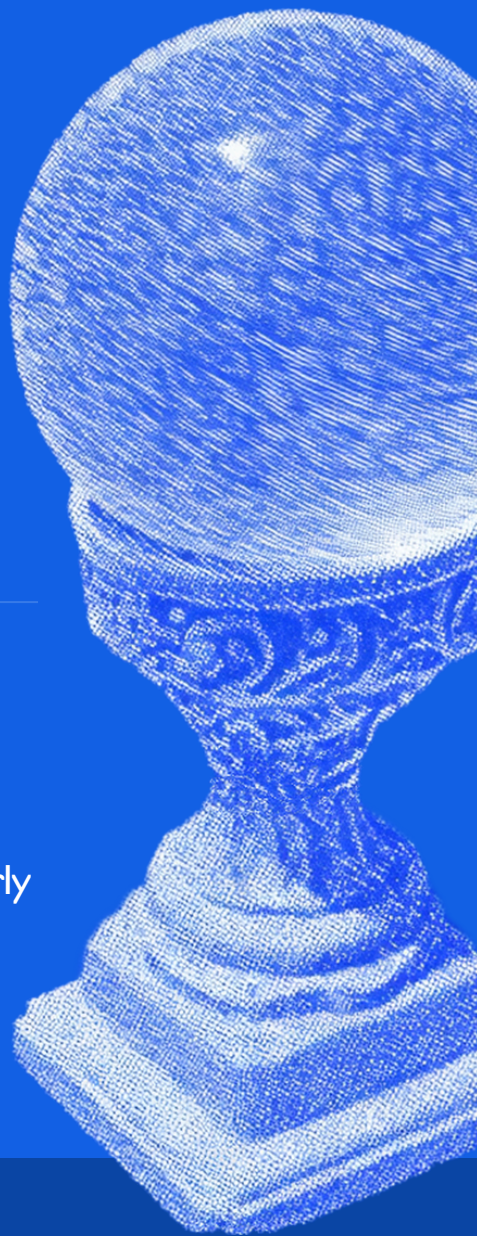
# The 2026-27 Australia and New Zealand Contact Centre Decision-Makers' Guide

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The 2026-27 Australia & New Zealand Contact Centre Decision-Makers' Guide

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: AUSTRALIA

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### PEOPLE AND PAY

- Agent attrition averages 19% (median 15%). Outsourcers and BPOs report by far the highest attrition at 44%, against 23% in the public sector and 14% in the private sector.
- Attrition rises somewhat with size, reaching 26% in operations of 51-200 seats compared with 14% in sub-50 seat centres.
- Short-term absence averages 8.1% (median 6.0%) and is markedly higher in the public sector (10.5%) than the private sector (5.9%).
- Mean salaries range from AUD \$64,839 for a new agent and \$71,932 for an experienced agent, to \$89,093 for a team leader and \$122,162 for a contact centre manager.
- Hybrid working is now the norm, covering 57% of agents, with 21% fully office-based and 22% fully home-based. Over the next 12 months the office-based share is expected to fall to 17%, and home working to rise to 25%.

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### OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE

- Service calls average 6 minutes 41 seconds and sales calls 10 minutes 52 seconds.
- Call abandonment averages 5.1% (median 4.0%).
- Average speed to answer is 97 seconds (median 55 seconds).
- First-contact resolution averages 77%, with a median of 85%.
- The cost of an inbound phone call averages AUD \$15.29, against \$10.20 for an agent-handled email, \$7.75 for a web chat and \$6.27 for a social media contact.

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### TECHNOLOGY AND CLOUD

- The most widely used technologies are call recording (87%), email management (76%), SMS and messaging (71%), workforce management (65%), and social media and CRM integration (both 61%).
- Short-term investment appetite is strongest in chatbots and AI, which 36% and 31% of operations respectively plan to implement within 12 months.
- Newer engagement tools show high replacement intent, with around 40% of chatbot users, 38% of SMS users and 37% of speech analytics users planning to replace or upgrade their solution.

- Cloud is near-universal: the large majority of operations use some cloud-based functionality, most commonly call recording (87% of recording implementations), CRM and agent desktop (88%) and outbound dialling (90%).
- Cloud users value capability over cost, with 97% agreeing the cloud delivers more powerful functionality and 94% that it is easier to change, against 77% who agree it lowers cost of ownership.

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## CHANNELS AND DIGITAL HANDLING

- The live-agent telephone call dominates at 64% of interaction volume, followed by email at 25% and web chat at 6%.
- Telephony is seen as the most effective channel across the board, chosen for service queries (68%), complaints (73%) and sales (59%).
- Web chats are not brief, with almost half lasting more than five minutes.
- Email turnaround is good, with roughly a third of emails answered within the hour and only 9% taking more than 24 hours..

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## CUSTOMER PRIORITIES AND STRATEGY

- Businesses rank first-time resolution as the factor customers value most, followed by short queue and wait times, and having an issue handled by a single employee.
- The most-cited barriers to achieving contact centre aims are a lack of investment in systems and processes (66%), lack of strategic vision (45%), and siloed channels affecting service quality (42%).
- The strategic priorities rated most important are increased self-service (62% very important), remote and hybrid working (46%) and AI (40%).

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NEW ZEALAND

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### PEOPLE AND PAY

- Agent attrition averages 18%, though the median is lower at 10%, reflecting a small number of operations with very high attrition. Outsourcers and BPOs report the highest rates at 45%, against around 11-12% in the private and public sectors.
- Short-term absence averages 7.0% (median 5.0%) and is higher in the private sector (7.0%) than the public sector (3.5%).
- Mean salaries range from NZD \$57,029 for a new agent and \$62,904 for an experienced agent, to \$80,056 for a team leader and \$114,550 for a contact centre manager.
- The office remains the primary place of work, with 52% of agents fully office-based, 26% fully home-based and 21% hybrid. Hybrid working is expected to grow slightly over the next 12 months.

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### OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE

- Service calls average 5 minutes 57 seconds and sales calls 6 minutes 5 seconds.
- Call abandonment averages 5.5% (median 5.0%).
- Average speed to answer is 55 seconds (median 28 seconds).
- First-contact resolution averages 73%, with a median of 79%.
- The cost of an inbound phone call averages NZD \$9.10, against \$6.38 for an agent-handled email and \$4.52 for a web chat.

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### TECHNOLOGY AND CLOUD

- The most widely used technologies are call recording (82%), unified communications integration (77%), SMS and messaging (75%), email management (68%) and social media (66%). Half of operations already use some form of AI or machine learning.
- Planned investment centres on speech and text analytics, AI and machine learning, and chatbots.
- Cloud is universal amongst survey respondents.
- Cloud users value flexibility most, with 97% agreeing the cloud makes systems easier to change and 86% that it delivers more powerful functionality, ahead of the 71% who agree it lowers cost of ownership.

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## CHANNELS AND DIGITAL HANDLING

- The live-agent telephone call accounts for 53% of interaction volume, with email notably prominent at 33% and web chat at 6%.
- Telephony is seen by businesses as the most effective channel, chosen for service queries (69%), complaints (75%) and sales (61%).
- Most web chats are short, with 58% lasting less than three minutes, though close to one in five runs beyond ten minutes.
- Email turnaround clusters at one to two hours (38%), though around a quarter of emails take more than a day.

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## CUSTOMER PRIORITIES AND STRATEGY

- Businesses rank choice of channels including self-service as the factor customers value most, followed by short queue and wait times, and polite and friendly employees.
- The most-cited barriers to achieving contact centre aims are siloed channels affecting service quality (44%), HR issues such as attrition, skills and recruitment (29%), and a lack of investment in systems and processes (35%).
- The strategic priorities rated most important are AI (42% very important), cloud and self-service (both 38%).

## INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

“The 2026-27 Australia and New Zealand Contact Centre Decision-Makers’ Guide” is ContactBabel’s third annual research study of the performance, technology and HR aspects of Australian and New Zealand contact centre operations.

A detailed online questionnaire was answered by 112 contact centre managers and directors in Q2 2026. Analysis of the results was carried out in June 2026.

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### THE STRUCTURE OF THE DATASETS

The data provided by the 112 contact centres interviewed in this study were broken down into discrete segments:

#### **Country**

- Australia – 76
- New Zealand – 36

#### **Business sector**

There were a wide spread of vertical markets with small numbers of respondents within each, which does not support segmentation and analysis by vertical market. Instead, we have split respondents between public sector / non-profit organisations on the one hand, and private sector / commercial organisations on the other.

- Public sector / non-profit – 43
- Private sector / commercial – 69 (of which 12 are outsourcers/BPOs)

#### **Size bands**

- Sub-50 seats – 58
- 50-100 seats – 32
- More than 100 seats – 22.



## How to Get Your Contact Centre AI-Ready (Before You Buy Anything)

The conversation in contact centres has shifted. It's no longer *whether* to adopt AI, but *how fast*. Yet pace is the wrong question. The contact centres pulling ahead aren't the ones moving fastest — they're the ones who built the foundations before they bought the technology.

In my experience, AI doesn't tend to fail because the technology isn't there. It fails because the environment underneath it isn't ready. Three things determine whether you see results or spend a lot of money being disappointed.

### 1. Data readiness

AI is only as good as the data feeding it. Most contact centres are sitting on fragmented customer records, inconsistent disposition codes, and interaction data that's never been structured for anything useful. Personalisation, prediction, automation — all of it assumes you have a single, trustworthy view of the customer. That assumption rarely holds up.

The work here is unglamorous but essential. Audit what data you have, figure out where it lives, and work out whether it can be trusted. If your systems can't answer "who is this customer and what have we done for them?" in one place, no AI is going to be able to compensate for that missing information.

### 2. Process documentation

You can't automate what isn't mapped. A lot of contact centres run on tribal knowledge — the exceptions, workarounds, and unwritten rules that live in your best agents' heads. That's invisible to a machine.

Mapping your top contact reasons end-to-end exposes the decision points, exception paths, and system handoffs that will make or break any automation effort. This isn't about adding bureaucracy. It's about translating operational reality into something a machine — or a vendor — can work with. Ambiguity is where AI goes wrong. Give it clarity and it has something to work with.

### 3. AI governance

Governance is too often treated as a compliance afterthought. It is, in fact, the framework that determines what AI is permitted to do, who is accountable when it gets things wrong, and how performance is measured over time.

Three decisions need to be made upfront: the guardrails (what won't AI handle), the escalation paths (when does a human take over), and the review cadence (who audits outcomes and bias). Without these, you are deploying autonomous decision-making with no one watching.

### The actual starting point

Vendor selection isn't step one. It's probably step four or five. Foundational readiness comes first.

The contact centres realising genuine value from AI are those who treated the unglamorous work — data, process, governance — as the project, not the prerequisite.

**Written by Daniel Harding, Founder & Director, Kaizn – [wearekaizn.com](https://wearekaizn.com)**

## HR BENCHMARKING

### ATTRITION

The modern contact centre requires different people than has traditionally been the case, with skills and behaviours aligned to today's customers, and the business's desire to improve the customer experience.

Throughout the studies that ContactBabel has carried out over the years, staff attrition has consistently been quoted as one of the major worries of contact centre management. Along with staff absences, high levels of unexpected attrition can cripple a contact centre's ability to provide even an acceptable level of service, raising costs and creating a negative customer experience, as well as placing massive stress on those agents who remain at work.

Staff attrition in small doses can be good for a contact centre, bringing in fresh blood and enthusiasm. However, high levels of staff attrition have some serious side-effects:

- Increased recruitment and training costs
- Decreases the average agent competency as there are so many 'learners'
- Can decrease the quality of the customer experience, as the agent may not know how to answer the query correctly first-time
- Adverse effect on contact centre performance indicators, including first-time resolution, call transfer rates, queue time and call length
- Bad for the morale of the remaining staff
- Inexperienced staff are more likely to miss cross-selling and up-selling opportunities
- Increased pressure put on team leaders and experienced agents
- Difficult to bring on-board new systems and ideas, as the agents are struggling with what is already in place.

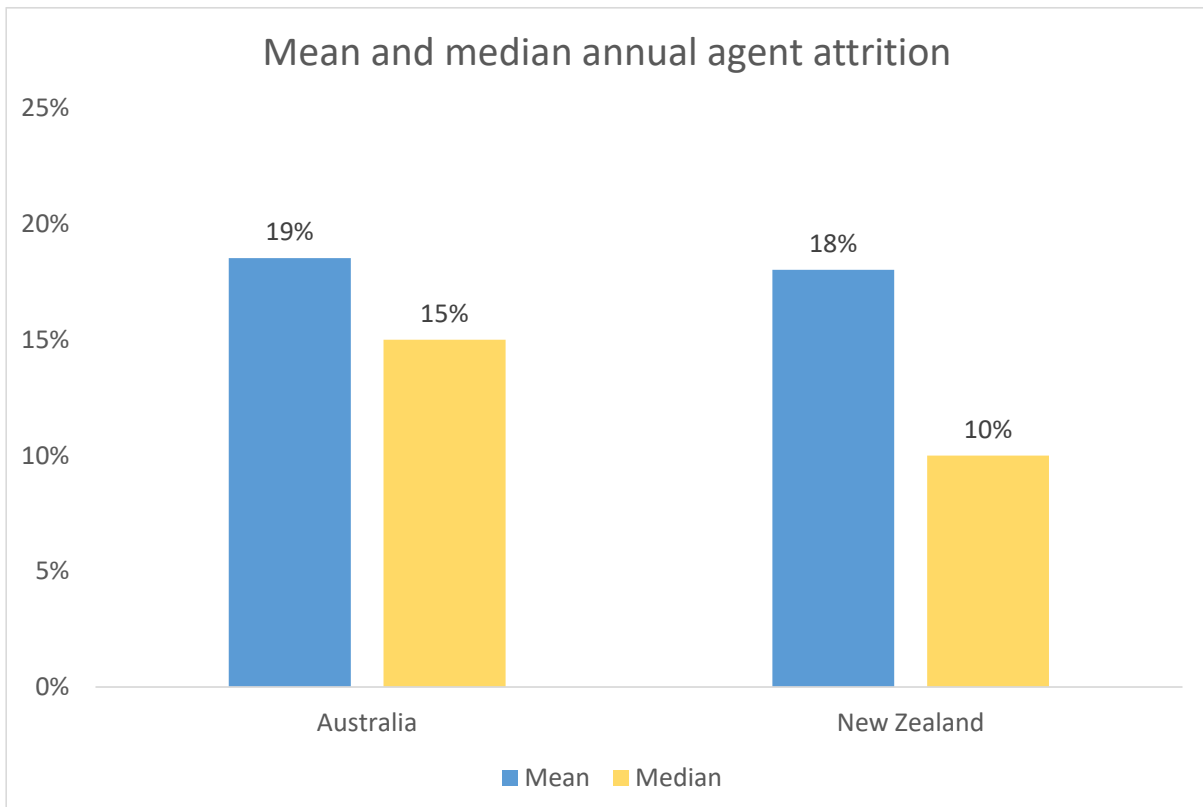
This report defines "attrition rate" as the total number of agents leaving the contact centre in a 12-month period, divided by the average number of occupants during the same 12-month period, expressed as a percentage.

This includes both voluntary and involuntary attrition, but not transfers elsewhere within the organisation.

Reported agent attrition rates in Australia were 19% mean and 15% median, broadly in line with the previous edition of this report in 2023 (20% mean, 15% median). New Zealand's mean attrition has fallen to 18%, with the median dropping to 10%, a notable decrease on the 25% mean and 20% median reported previously.

As a guide, median figures take the midpoint in a series of data points, meaning that any major outliers are not taken into consideration. Mean averages include all of the data, so for example in the chart below, the relatively small number of New Zealand contact centres reporting high attrition rates has dragged the mean up to 18%, well above the 10% median.

**Figure 1: Mean and median annual agent attrition**

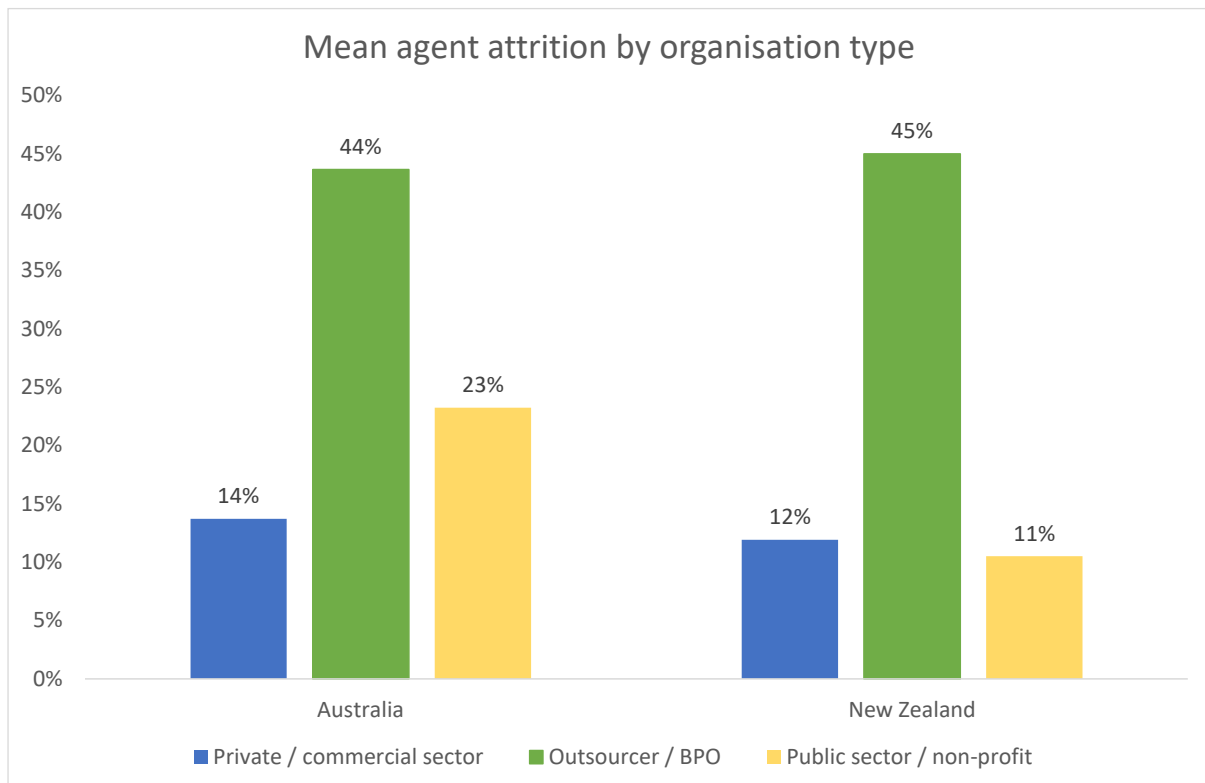


## AGENT ATTRITION BY ORGANISATION TYPE

Looking at attrition rates by organisation type (i.e. outsourcer / BPO, in-house private sector or public sector / non-profit), we can see that BPO / outsourcers report far higher mean attrition than other operations in both Australia and New Zealand, at over 40% in each country.

In Australia, public sector / non-profit operations report notably higher attrition (23%) than the private / commercial sector (14%). In New Zealand there is little difference between the two, at around 11-12%.

**Figure 2: Mean agent attrition by organisation type**

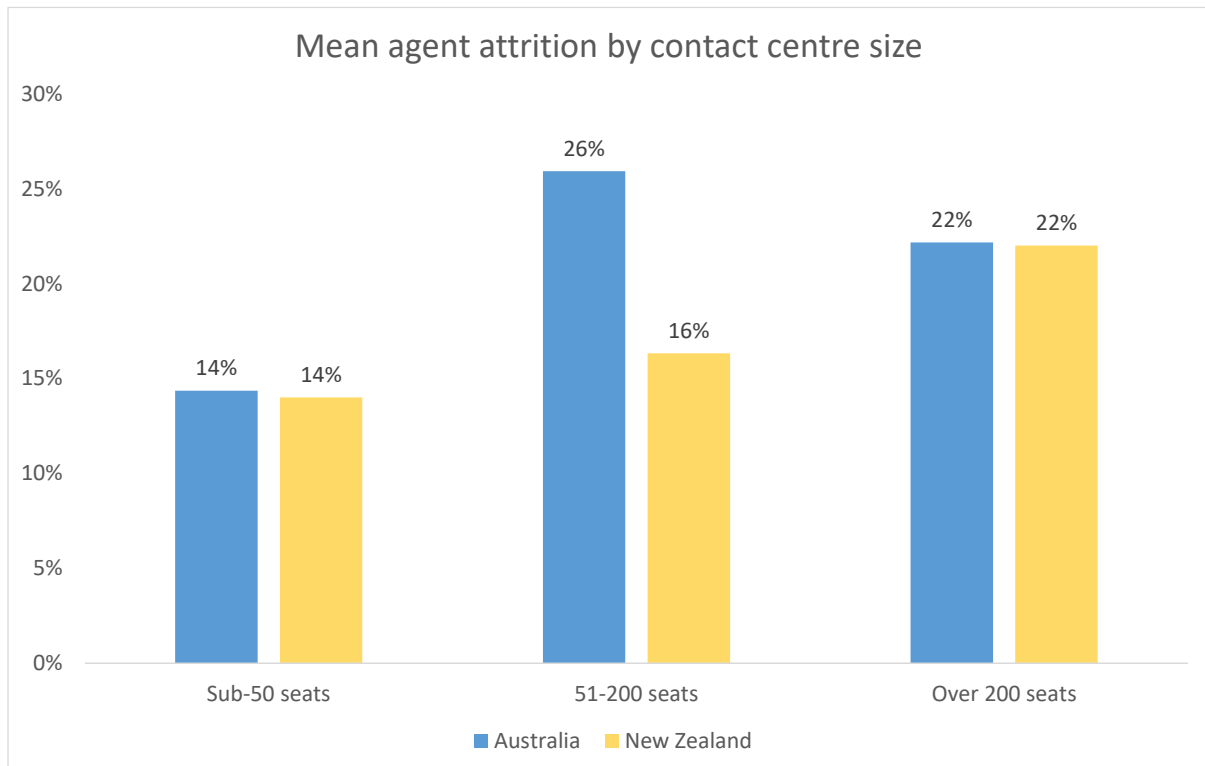


## AGENT ATTRITION BY CONTACT CENTRE SIZE

Previous ContactBabel studies carried out in the US and UK have shown that larger contact centres are more likely to have high attrition rates, and this is broadly the case in Australia, where 51-200 seat and over-200 seat operations report mean attrition of 26% and 22% respectively, well above the 14% reported by sub-50 seat operations.

There is also this pattern amongst New Zealand survey respondents.

**Figure 3: Mean agent attrition by contact centre size**



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## ABSENCE

In a tightly-run contact centre where costs and performance are closely managed, significant levels of staff absence can cause major problems with contact centre performance and the customer experience. Even just a slight increase in absence rates can mean a major difference to how well the contact centre performs on that day. Staff end up overworked and stressed, and more likely to take time off as a result. Morale suffers, which increases staff attrition and overwork, thus creating further absence.

Absence has many reasons – a poor working environment, workplace bullying, an unoptimised schedule which makes impossible demands on staff, lack of leadership, low morale, unsociable hours and repetitive tasks – the list goes on. Staff absence is a vicious circle, each part of which feeds into another, usually leading to higher attrition rates, greater costs and poor service.

There are many causes of unnecessary absenteeism, including:

- The absence of a recruitment process that allows operations to identify unreliable applicants
- Poor front-line leadership: many team leaders are just not able to manage their teams and help prevent absenteeism, a fault of incorrect training and/or recruitment at this level
- Low morale in the contact centre, meaning the workforce think that missing work is acceptable.

There are also other factors that influence absence, including:

- Mandatory overtime and unsociable hours
- Lack of schedule flexibility and choice
- Insufficient mentoring or supervisor support, especially during the transition period after training
- Large team sizes (20+ per team)
- Cancelled team activities like 1:1 coaching due to heavy call volume.

**Short-term (no-show) absence** – *this is the average number of agent days lost through short-term 'no-show' sickness and unauthorised absence as a percentage of contracted days annually. This is included in these figures.*

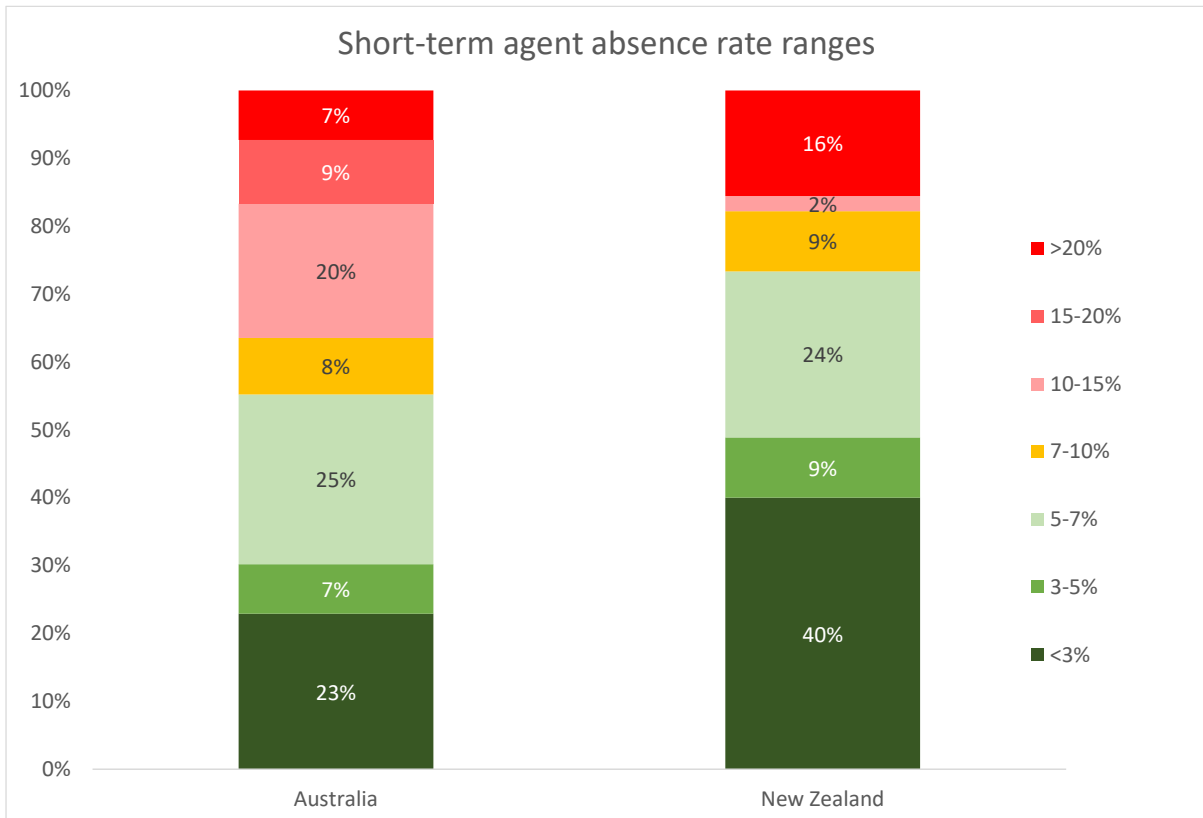
**Long-term absence** – *this includes long-term sickness, parental leave, sabbaticals and other long-term absences where the business expects the absence, and is able to plan for it. This is not included in these figures.*

## SHORT-TERM ABSENCE

Short-term (no-show) absence is the average number of agent days lost through short-term sickness and unauthorised absence as a percentage of contracted days annually.

The mean average for short-term staff absence is 8.1% for Australia and 7.0% for New Zealand. Median figures are 6.0% and 5.0% respectively.

**Figure 4: Short-term agent absence rate ranges**



NB: a range of “3-5%” includes all results from 3.00% to 4.99%. “5-7%” includes all figures from 5.00% to 6.99%, etc.

Looking at organisation types, the public sector in Australia has a mean average of 10.5% compared to 5.9% in the private sector. In New Zealand the pattern is reversed, with a 7.0% absence rate in the private sector and 3.5% in the public sector.

By contact centre size, sub-50 seat Australian operations report mean absence of 6.4%, with 51-200 seat and over-200 seat operations reporting 9.4% and 8.1% respectively. In New Zealand, the respective figures are 5.8%, 7.5% and 8.0%.

## SALARIES

The following figures show mean average annual salaries for four types of contact centre role, shown in AUD and NZD.

**Figure 5: Mean average salaries by country**

Role	Australia	New Zealand
New agent	AUD \$64,839	NZD \$57,029
Experienced agent	AUD \$71,932	NZD \$62,904
Team leader / supervisor	AUD \$89,093	NZD \$80,056
Contact centre manager	AUD \$122,162	NZD \$114,550

## SALARIES BY ORGANISATION TYPE

Australian in-house commercial and public sector / non-profit contact centres report considerably higher salaries than outsourcers / BPOs, with the gap most pronounced at manager level.

A similar pattern is seen in New Zealand, where BPO salaries are markedly lower than other operations across all four roles.

**Figure 6: Mean average salaries by job role by organisation type (Australia - AUD)**

Organisation type	New agent	Experienced agent	Team leader	Contact centre manager
Private / commercial sector	\$65,809	\$72,999	\$91,090	\$123,947
Outsourcer / BPO	\$55,708	\$59,795	\$79,456	\$96,736
Public Sector / Non-Profit	\$64,834	\$72,493	\$89,783	\$124,487
<b>Average</b>	<b>\$64,839</b>	<b>\$71,932</b>	<b>\$89,093</b>	<b>\$122,162</b>

**Figure 7: Mean average salaries by job role by organisation type (New Zealand - NZD)**

Organisation type	New agent	Experienced agent	Team leader	Contact centre manager
Private / commercial sector	\$61,518	\$68,564	\$84,011	\$123,192
Outsourcer / BPO	\$50,581	\$53,172	\$58,398	\$94,667
Public Sector / Non-Profit	\$58,040	\$63,963	\$90,686	\$121,190
<b>Average</b>	<b>\$57,029</b>	<b>\$62,904</b>	<b>\$80,056</b>	<b>\$114,550</b>

## SALARIES BY CONTACT CENTRE SIZE

Previous ContactBabel studies in the US and UK have found that smaller operations tend to pay agents and supervisors slightly more, with less of a differential at manager level.

The 2026 Australian data does not follow this pattern: mid-sized contact centres pay agents and team leaders more, although large operations pay most to contact centre managers, rising from around \$115,000 in sub-50 seat operations to \$136,000 in operations of over 200 seats.

**Figure 8: Mean average salaries by job role by contact centre size (Australia - AUD)**

Contact centre size	New agent	Experienced agent	Team leader	Contact centre manager
Sub-50 seats	\$64,443	\$71,541	\$87,363	\$115,386
51-200 seats	\$67,099	\$73,645	\$94,433	\$129,084
Over 200 seats	\$63,019	\$71,237	\$91,597	\$135,585
<b>Average</b>	<b>\$64,839</b>	<b>\$71,932</b>	<b>\$89,093</b>	<b>\$122,162</b>

For New Zealand, larger operations pay agents somewhat more, but there is little pattern for team leaders and contact centre managers.

**Figure 9: Mean average salaries by job role by contact centre size (New Zealand - NZD)**

Contact centre size	New agent	Experienced agent	Team leader	Contact centre manager
Sub-50 seats	\$56,782	\$62,223	\$81,298	\$110,411
51-200 seats	\$56,527	\$62,157	\$71,906	\$129,175
Over 200 seats	\$60,000	\$70,000	\$85,000	\$120,000
<b>Average</b>	<b>\$57,029</b>	<b>\$62,904</b>	<b>\$80,056</b>	<b>\$114,550</b>

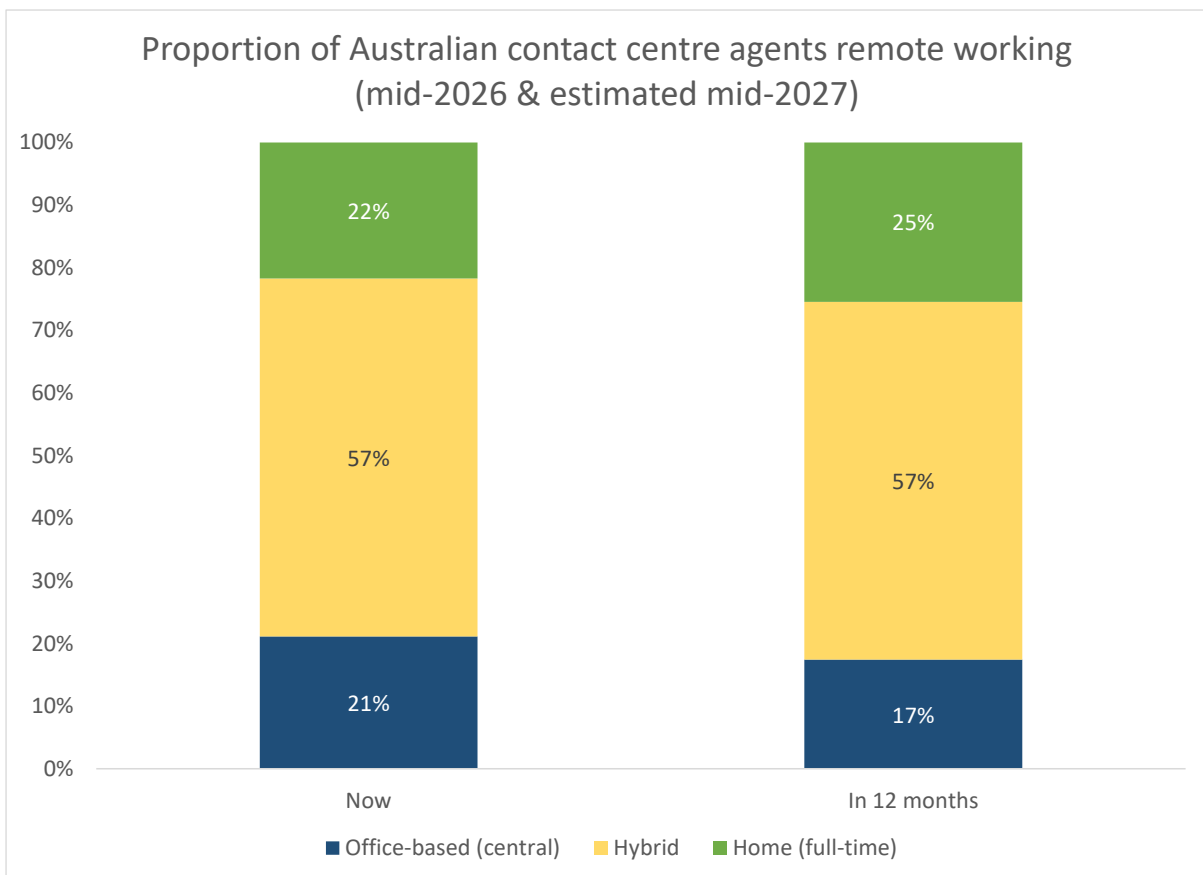
## REMOTE WORKING

The survey looked at the current use of contact centre remote working, and businesses' expectations for the following 12 months. Please note that the figures below split out hybrid working from full-time home working.

In Australia, hybrid working is now firmly the norm, accounting for 57% of agents. Around 22% work entirely from home and 21% are fully office-based.

Respondents expect the office-based share to fall slightly over the next 12 months, with home working rising to around 25%.

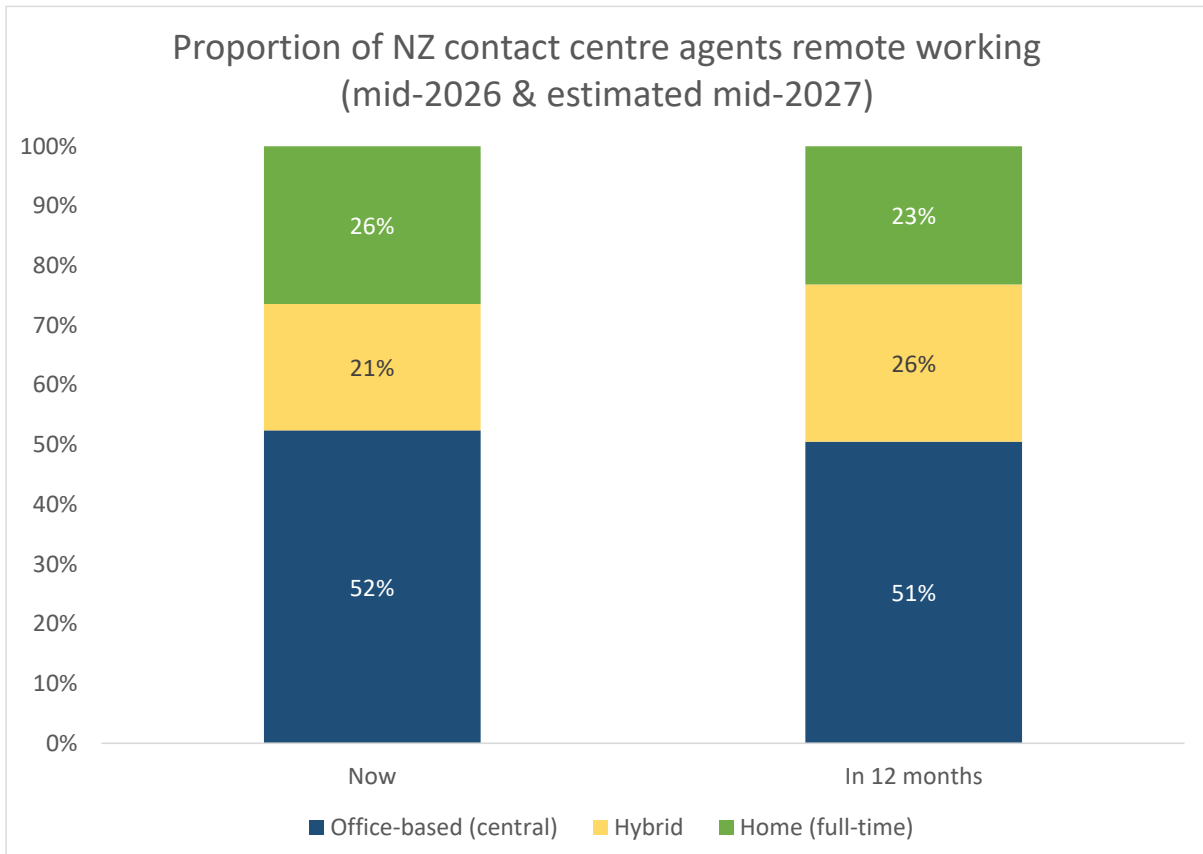
**Figure 10: Proportion of Australian contact centre agents remote working (mid-2026 & estimated mid-2027)**



New Zealand remains considerably more office-based than Australia, with 52% of agents working centrally and only 21% in a hybrid model. 26% work entirely from home.

Hybrid working is expected to grow over the next 12 months, though the office is likely to remain the predominant location.

**Figure 11: Proportion of New Zealand contact centre agents remote working (mid-2026 & estimated mid-2027)**



## OPERATIONAL BENCHMARKING

This section of the report covers the performance of the contact centre and the metrics associated with this.

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### CONTACT CENTRE PERFORMANCE METRICS

Depending on the type of work that they do, contact centres may consider focusing upon various measurements:

#### Internal metrics

**Call duration / Average Handle Time:** a typical 'old-fashioned' metric, generally going out of favour due to the acceptance that each call is different and should take as long as is needed. However, it is one of the easiest statistics to measure, and useful for working out cost per call.

**Agent occupancy rate:** the proportion of time in a given period that is call-time plus wrap-up. A laborious wrap-up caused by slow back-office systems or lack of familiarity can produce high occupancy rates, which look as though the agent is constantly active but which are negative for both business and customer.

**Call throughput and abandonment rates:** tracking the number of calls that are dropped can be translated into lost revenue within a sales environment. With the use of callback, calls that would otherwise be abandoned can be kept alive, although at the cost of an additional outbound call.

**Call transfer rate:** this can indicate training needs at agent level, a failure in IVR routing, or a need to update website information. Analysis of call recordings in cases of high transfers should identify the issue.

**Schedule adherence:** a metric that helps fine-tune the labour force so that calls are answered swiftly but agents are not sitting idle. It is of more importance to schedulers than to customers, although getting schedules wrong can be catastrophic for efficiency, cost and performance.

**Staff attrition rates:** high levels of staff attrition are poisonous to the effective running of most contact centres, causing excessive recruitment and training costs, lower call-handling quality and longer queue times, as well as the vicious circle of lower staff morale.

**Average speed to answer:** this has a strong and demonstrable effect on customer satisfaction, as well as impacting call abandonment, lost revenues and staff attrition. Contact centres should also consider the time a customer spends in the IVR, as customers certainly do.

**Cost per call:** an attractive and easily-understood metric, but one where there is a real danger that calls are closed too quickly and revenue and loyalty-building opportunities are lost. It is a complicated metric that is difficult to get right and should be viewed with caution.

## Customer metrics

**Customer satisfaction ratings:** customer satisfaction is seen to be directly linked to profitability through increased loyalty, share of wallet and customer advocacy. High satisfaction ratings, at a reasonable cost for the business, are good for everyone.

**Customer loyalty / lifetime value / churn rates:** a central thought of CRM is that a business should focus upon keeping profitable customers and growing unprofitable ones. A single figure for customer retention is not effective, as it does not include the types of customer churn.

**First-contact resolution:** improving first-contact resolution benefits customers, agents and the business alike. It can be hard to measure, as it is the customer, and not the contact centre, who should be stating whether the issue has been resolved successfully.

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## CALL DURATION

Average inbound call length has traditionally been a metric which most contact centres have measured, as it is directly related to cost and is easy to quantify. Enlightened operations now regard it with wariness, as a call cut short too quickly can mean a worse experience for the customer, lower first-contact resolution rates and fewer cross-selling or upselling attempts.

Average call duration varies significantly between businesses, especially for sales calls, as some interactions involve a complex explanation of products along with legislative explanations and disclaimers, time to run credit checks and to refer to more senior decision-makers, making the mean average sales call duration usually significantly longer than service calls.

Australian service calls average around 6½ minutes, with New Zealand calls somewhat shorter at just under six minutes.

Sales calls are longer than service calls in both countries, and markedly so in Australia, where they average almost 11 minutes.

**Figure 12: Mean and median call duration (service & sales), by country**

Country	Service calls (mean)	Service calls (median)	Sales calls (mean)	Sales calls (median)
Australia	6m 41s	6m 40s	10m 52s	10m 00s
New Zealand	5m 57s	5m 00s	6m 05s	5m 30s

As the role of an agent becomes more complex, call lengths increase, especially if no additional investment in technology or training is made. Contact centres need to alleviate the effect of the increasing complexity of the work by managing agent occupancy rates and reducing the amount of the call which is wasted, such as silences when the agent is waiting for the system to deliver what is needed, and the caller ID process at the beginning, which can be securely automated and authenticated through voice biometrics.

## CALL ABANDONMENT

The call abandonment rate links directly to customer satisfaction, cost, average speed to answer and revenue, and is widely seen as one of the most important and complete key performance indicators that a contact centre has at its disposal.

Australian and New Zealand respondents report broadly similar performance, with mean abandonment of around 5% and medians of 4-5%.

**Figure 13: Mean and median call abandonment rate, by country**

Country	Call abandonment rate (mean)	Call abandonment rate (median)
Australia	5.1%	4.0%
New Zealand	5.5%	5.0%

## SPEED TO ANSWER

Average speed to answer (ASA) is a traditional statistic that plays a vital part in the customer experience, and also feeds into other performance measures such as the call abandonment rate. It is our opinion that the call should be measured from the moment the caller dials the last digit to the moment the agent answers, including any time spent in the IVR.

Australia reports a mean speed to answer of 97 seconds and a median of 55 seconds, while New Zealand is faster on both measures, at a mean of 55 seconds and a median of 28 seconds. The gap between mean and median reflects a number of operations with very long answer times that pull the mean upward.

**Figure 14: Mean and median average speed to answer, by country**

Country	Average speed to answer (mean) - seconds	Average speed to answer (median) - seconds
Australia	97	55
New Zealand	55	28

As an aside, past ContactBabel UK research showed that callers believed that they wait for an average of 11½ minutes to speak with an agent. As average speed to answer at the time was around 30-60 seconds, this statistic does not make sense.

Our conclusion is that the “11½ minute” figure is collected from people’s subjective view, rather than anyone waiting by the phone with a stopwatch. Also, people tend to remember the times they had to wait a long time, rather than the times they were answered straightaway.

Regardless of the reality, speed to answer does affect customers’ perceptions of the contact centre’s quality.

## FIRST-CONTACT RESOLUTION

The ability to understand a query and deal with it at the first time of asking is seen as the key to customer satisfaction, reducing the overall number of calls while providing a good experience. It also has a positive effect on agent morale, and so on staff attrition, and increases the chances of a successful cross-sell or up-sell.

Australian first-contact resolution has edged up, with a mean of 77% and a median of 85%. New Zealand also reports solid performance, at a mean of 73% and a median of 79%, an improvement on the previous 2023 edition of this report.

**Figure 15: Mean and median first-contact resolution rates, by country**

Country	First-contact resolution rate (mean)	First-contact resolution rate (median)
Australia	77%	85%
New Zealand	73%	79%

## THE ROLE OF FIRST-CONTACT RESOLUTION

Most of the contact centre world has moved on from the ruthless focus on call throughput and call duration that characterised many operations a decade ago. A major question being asked today is how contact centres should measure the most important metric of all: first-contact resolution. ('First-contact' resolution differs slightly from 'first-call' resolution, in that it includes email, web chat and other non-voice channels as well, although non-voice resolution rates are much less commonly measured.)

It can be stated with some confidence that first-contact resolution is seen as the key to a successful contact centre: while customer satisfaction rating is the single most important metric, the vast majority of survey respondents place first-contact resolution as one of the top three metrics most influential on customer satisfaction. Logically, then, to improve customer satisfaction a business has to improve first-contact resolution rates.

First-contact resolution rates are not simple to understand, and have to be viewed in context. An improving business may well see its FCR rate decline after it implements process improvements: if it had been handling live calls more suited to self-service or avoidable through better marketing, removing these 'easy' calls will make the rate fall. High first-contact resolution rates may actually be masking underlying problems:

- The contact centre is handling simple, repetitive calls that could be moved to self-service, or addressed on a website and through better marketing communications
- Callers are dropping out of self-service to speak with agents because the self-service application is failing in its task and should be re-engineered
- Unclear marketing communications are causing customers to call
- Calls are being received that are driven by mistakes from elsewhere in the enterprise.

When businesses begin stopping unnecessary calls at the source, those left are usually of a more complex nature. This will lower first-contact resolution rates initially, but allows a clearer picture of what is really happening in the contact centre to emerge, which can then be addressed more fully.

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## COST PER INBOUND INTERACTION

Cost per call is a very difficult metric to work out for a business, and even more difficult to benchmark in any meaningful way, as calls can vary massively in cost even within the same contact centre, and there is no universal agreement over which elements of cost to include.

The cost of a phone call in Australia (\$15.29) is much higher than in New Zealand (\$9.10), in part because Australian calls run considerably longer, and that salaries are reportedly higher. The digital channels of email, web chat and social media are generally cheaper than telephony in both countries.

Please note that most respondents were unable to provide an accurate estimate of the cost of a web chat or social media contact, so these figures should be considered only as a guide, particularly for New Zealand where the samples are very small.

**Figure 16: Mean average cost per inbound interaction (phone, social media, email & web chat), by country**

Channel	Australia (AUD)	New Zealand (NZD)
Phone	\$15.29	\$9.10
Email (agent-handled)	\$10.20	\$6.38
Web chat (agent-handled)	\$7.75	\$4.52
Social media (agent-handled)	\$6.27	\$7.00

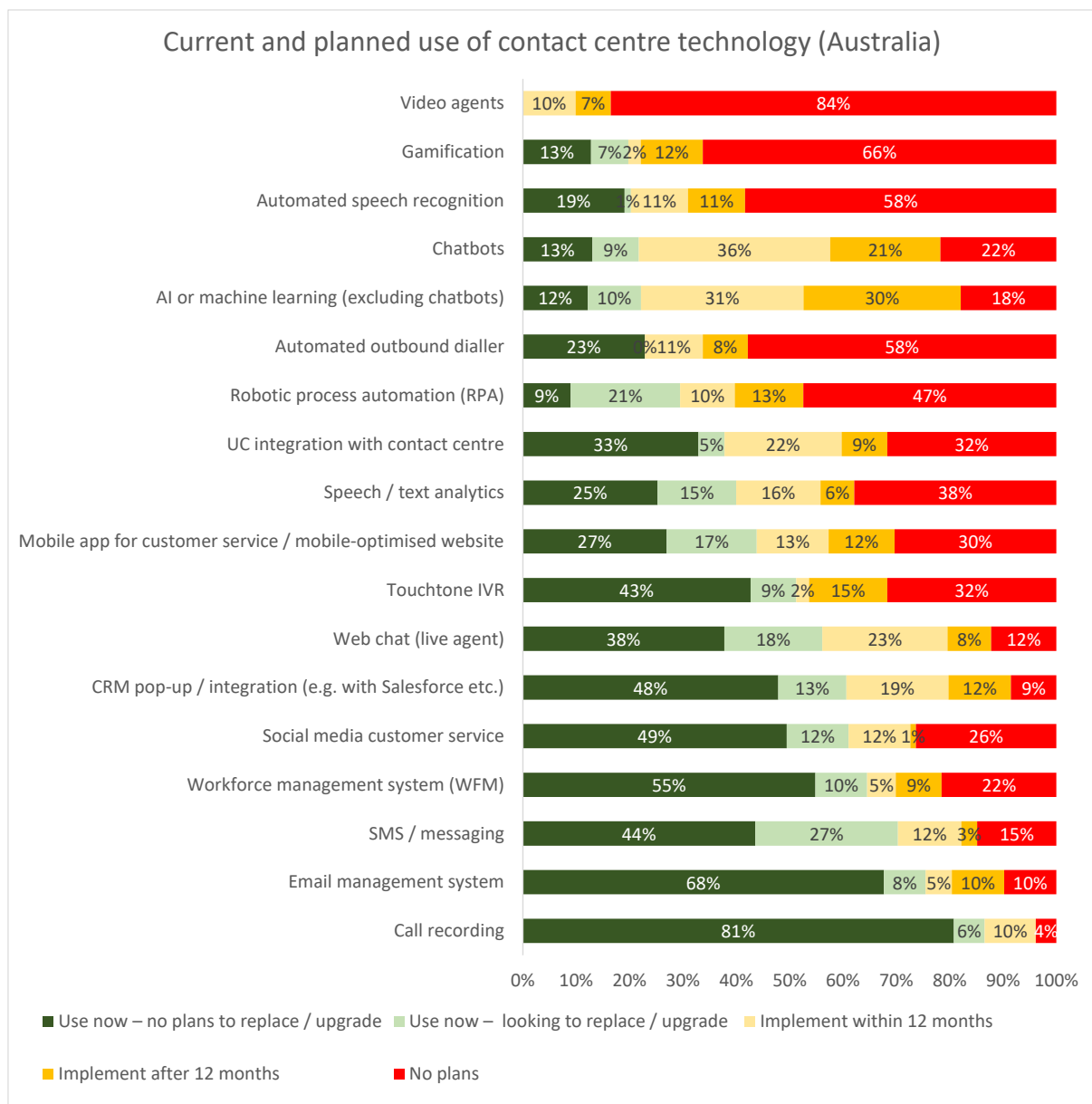
## TECHNOLOGY

### CURRENT AND PLANNED USE OF CONTACT CENTRE TECHNOLOGY

The majority of Australian survey respondents use call recording (87%), email management (75%), SMS / messaging (70%), workforce management (65%), and social media customer service and CRM integration (both 61%).

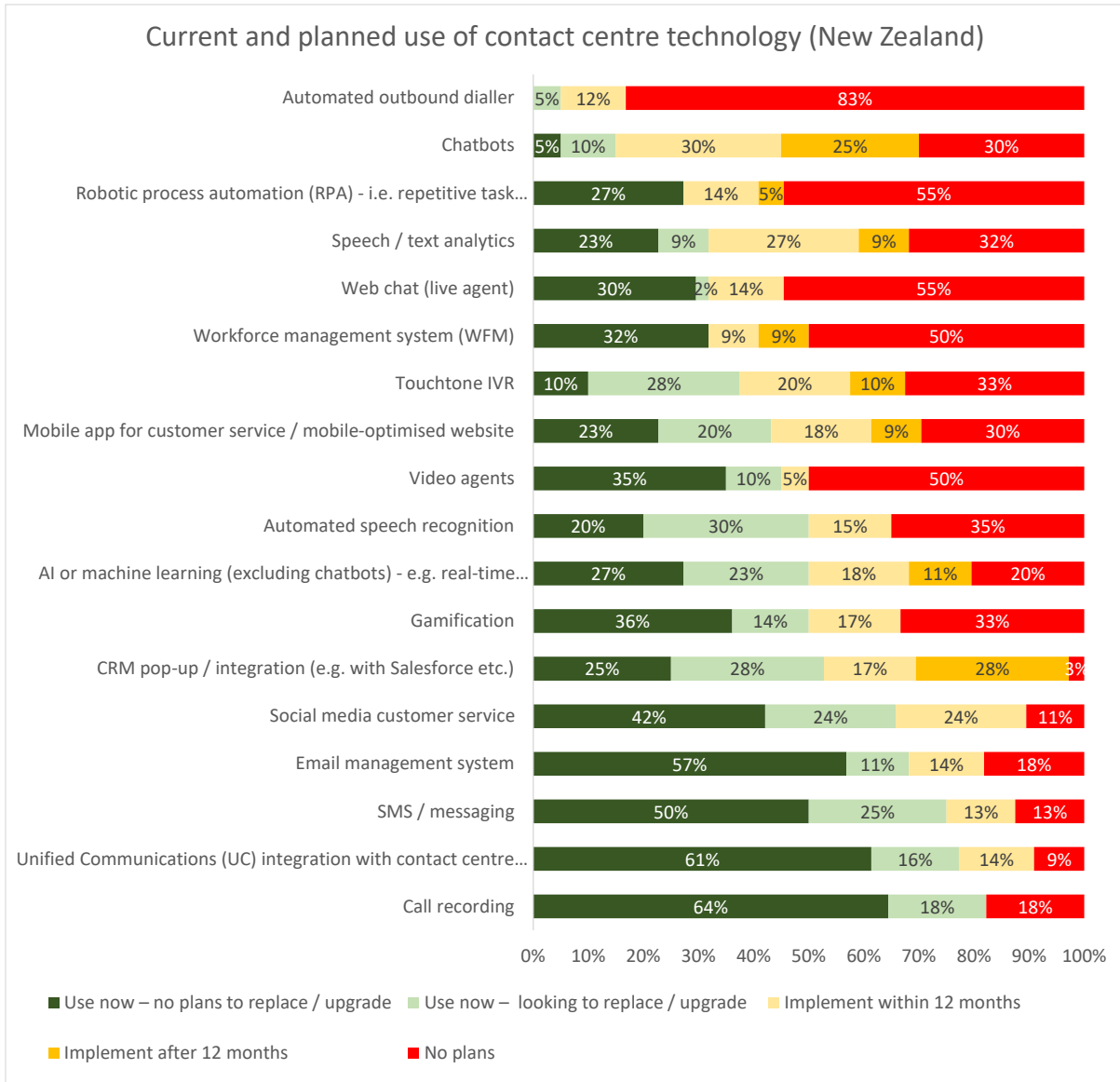
There is considerable short-term interest in chatbots, AI and machine learning, live agent web chat, unified communications and CRM integration, each of which between a fifth and a third of Australian operations plan to implement within 12 months.

**Figure 17: Current and planned use of contact centre technology (Australia)**



Amongst New Zealand respondents, the most widely used technologies are call recording (82%), unified communications integration (77%), SMS / messaging (75%), email management (68%) and social media customer service (66%). Half already use some form of AI or machine learning. New Zealand operations report intentions to add speech and text analytics, AI and machine learning, and live agent web chat over the next 12 months.

**Figure 18: Current and planned use of contact centre technology (New Zealand)**



Splitting current users by their upgrade intentions reveals where dissatisfaction lies. Mature tools are stable: fewer than one in ten users of call recording or email management plan to replace them. The newer engagement technologies are far more volatile, with around 40% of chatbot users, 38% of SMS users and 37% of speech analytics users planning to replace or upgrade their solution. This points to a wave of first-generation digital deployments now being re-evaluated.

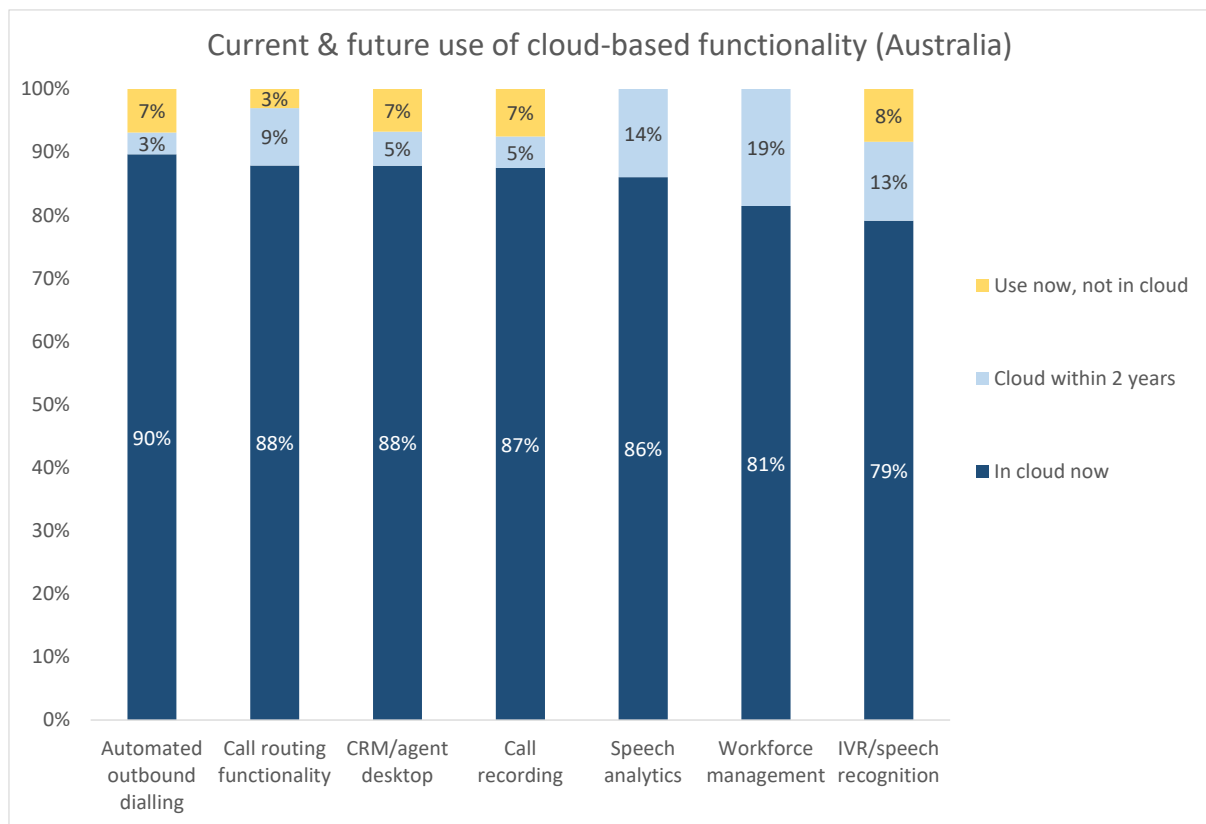
## CLOUD-BASED CONTACT CENTRE SOLUTIONS

Cloud-based contact centre functionality is very popular in ANZ, although care should be taken with these figures, as they show the deployment method of each of these solutions **only** in cases where the survey respondent is using the solution in question.

Amongst Australian users, call recording, speech analytics, CRM / agent desktop, outbound dialling and call routing are the functions most likely to be cloud-based.

There is the general expectation amongst users of these solutions that there will be a slight increase in the move to cloud, although it is not ubiquitous.

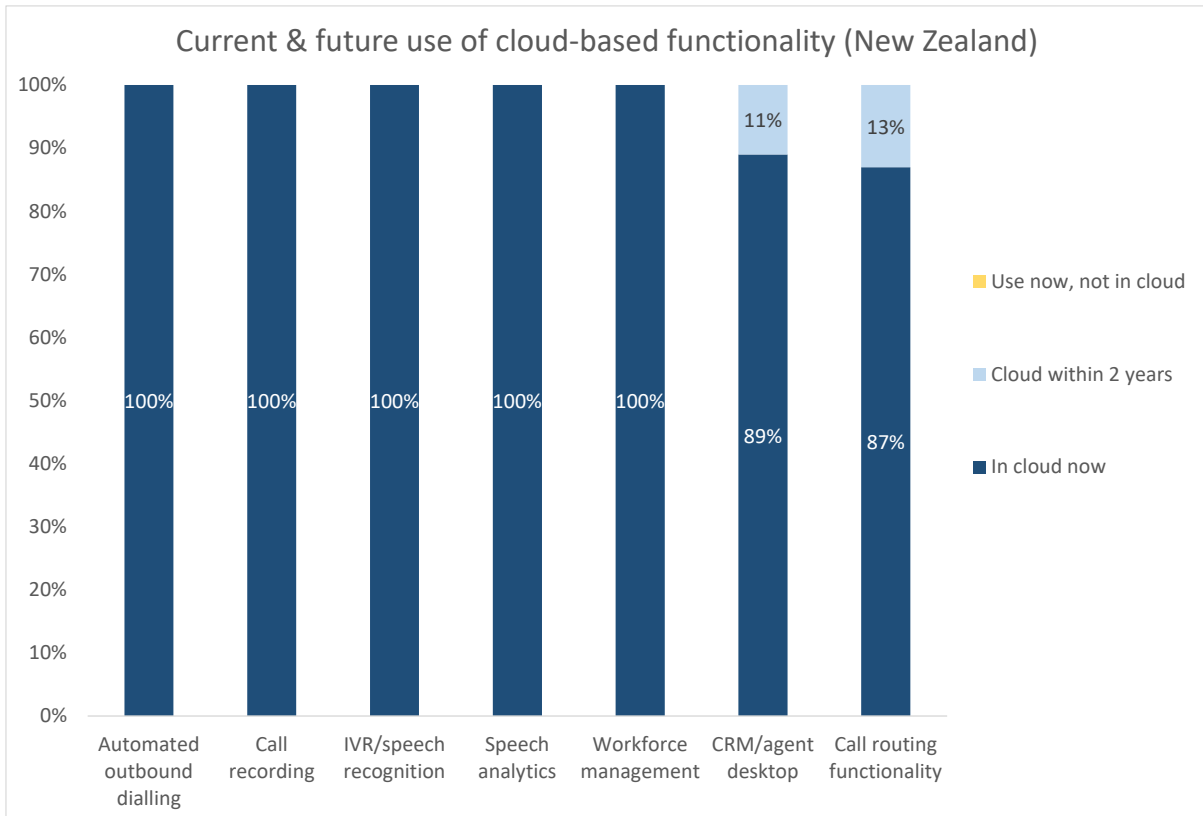
**Figure 19: Current & future use of cloud-based functionality (Australia)**



New Zealand survey respondents using the solutions in question are very likely to have deployed these through the cloud, with all respondents using call recording, outbound dialling, IVR/speech recognition and speech analytics reporting that they are cloud-based.

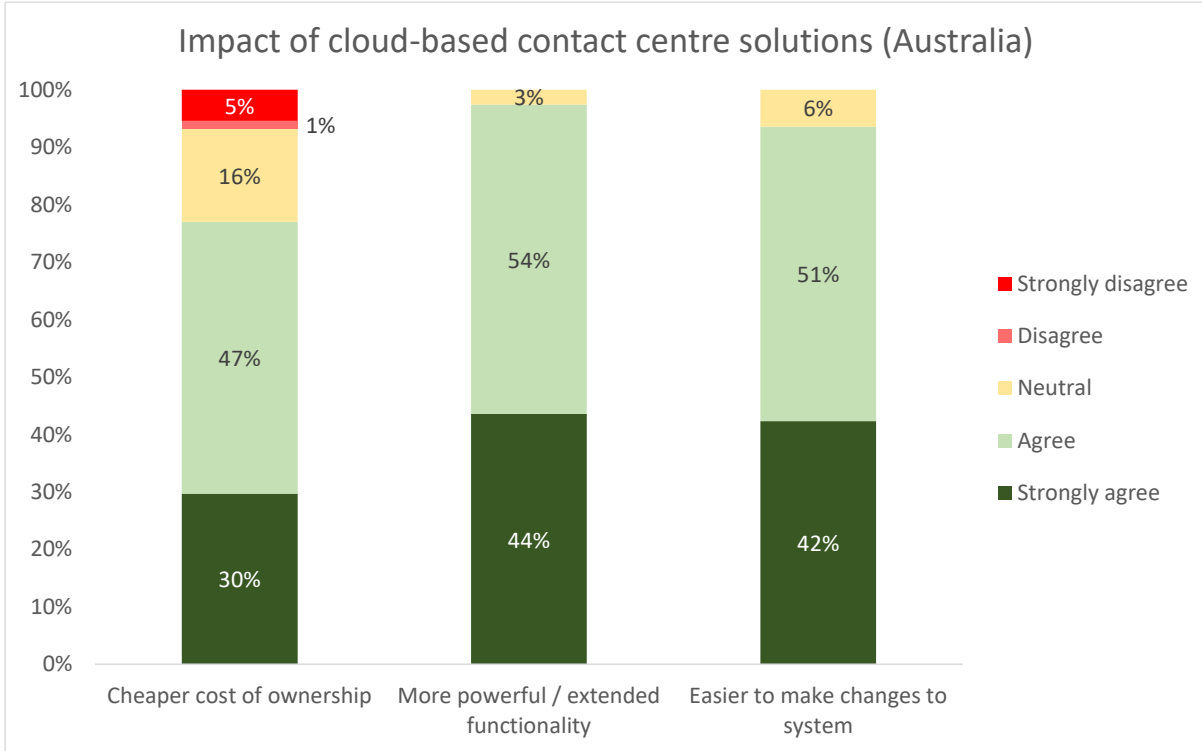
No survey respondents using any of these solutions expect to remain on-premise within two years.

**Figure 20: Current & future use of cloud-based functionality (New Zealand)**

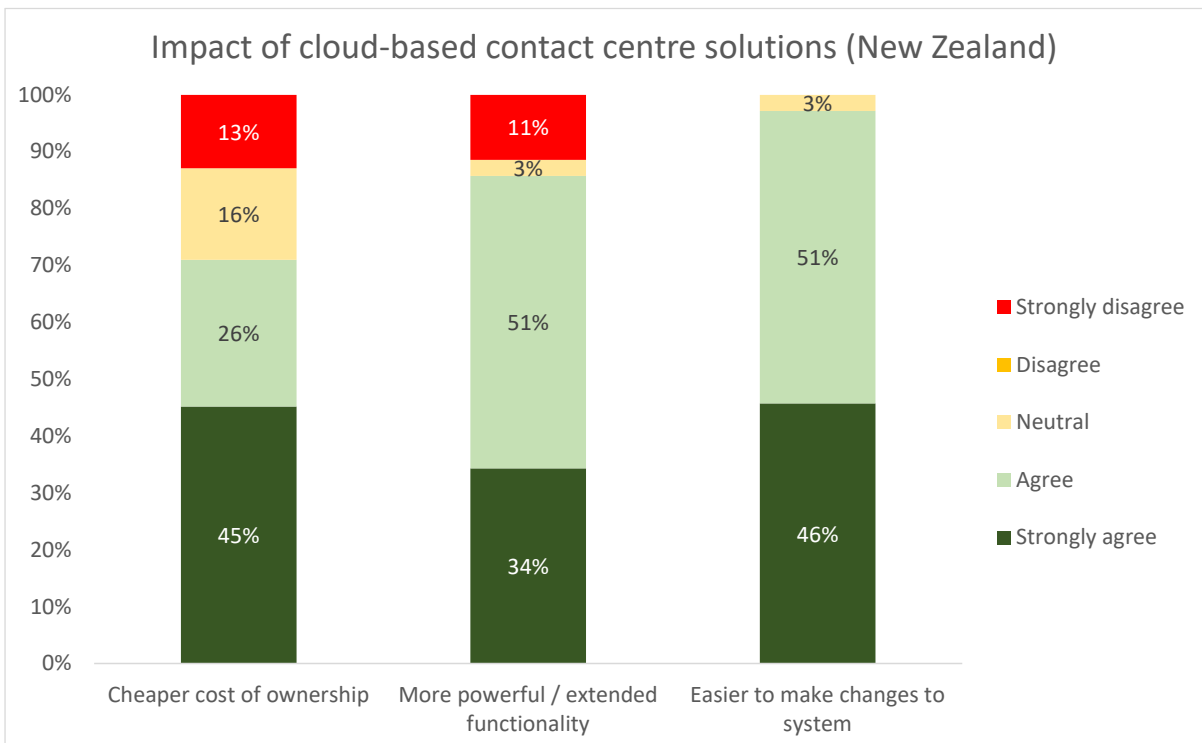


Almost all respondents agree that the cloud delivers more powerful and extended functionality (97% of Australian and 86% of New Zealand cloud users) and that it makes systems easier to change (94% and 97% respectively). Agreement that the cloud has lowered the overall cost of ownership is less universal, (77% Australia, 71% in New Zealand).

**Figure 21: Impact of cloud-based contact centre solutions (Australia)**



**Figure 22: Impact of cloud-based contact centre solutions (New Zealand)**

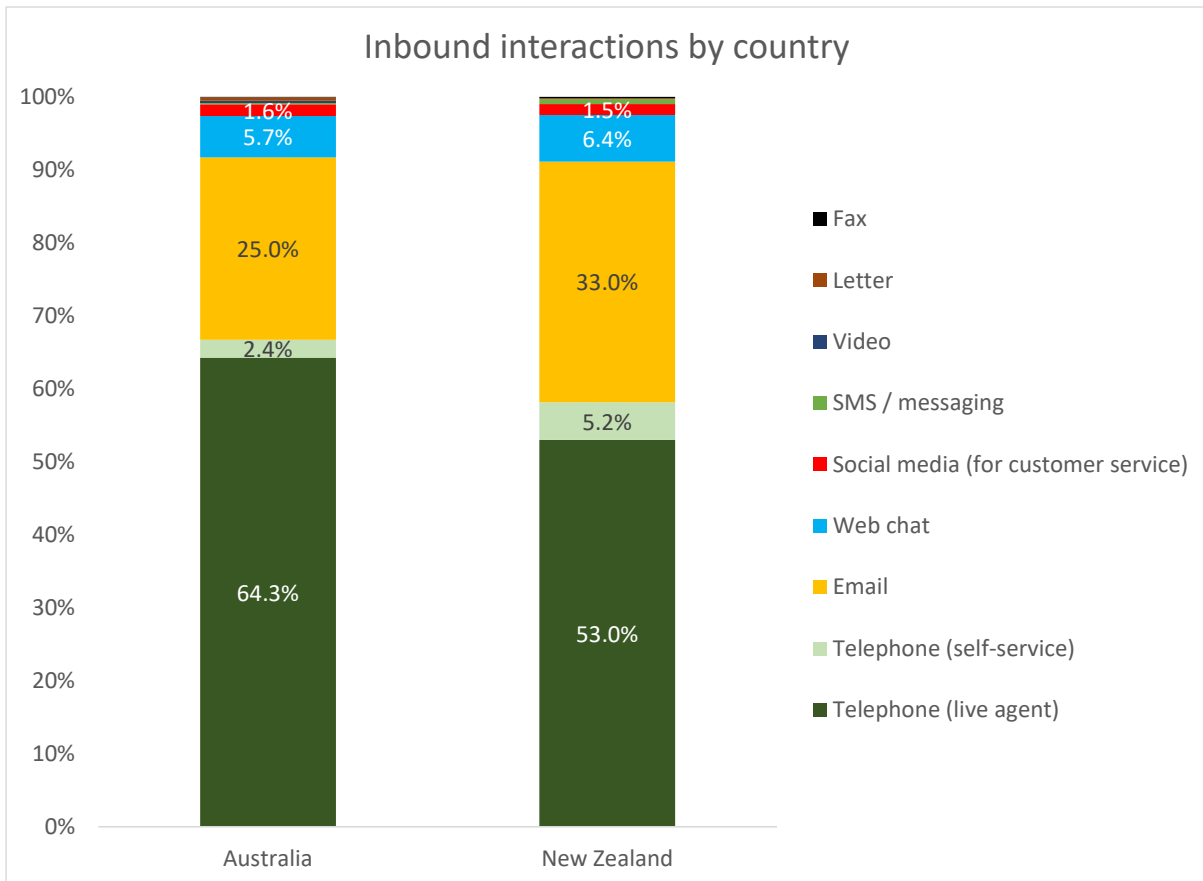


## CHANNEL USAGE

### CHANNEL VOLUMES

Respondents were asked to estimate the proportion of their inbound contact volume handled through each channel.

**Figure 23: Inbound interactions by country**



Channel	Australia	New Zealand
Telephone (live agent)	64.3%	53.0%
Telephone (self-service)	2.4%	5.2%
Email	25.0%	33.0%
Web chat	5.7%	6.4%
Social media (for customer service)	1.6%	1.5%
SMS / messaging	0.3%	0.7%
Video	0.2%	0.0%
Letter	0.5%	0.1%
Fax	0.1%	0.2%

The live-agent telephone call remains the dominant channel in both countries, accounting for 64% of Australian and 53% of New Zealand interaction volume.

Email is the largest digital channel and is notably more prominent in New Zealand (33% of volume) than in Australia (25%). Web chat accounts for around 6% in both countries, while social media, SMS and the remaining channels each handle only a small share of volume.

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## OMNICHANNEL: THE CONSUMER'S CHOICE

There are two main factors that influence contact centres within any vertical market: the need to provide profitable (or at least, cost-managed) service, and customers' requirements and preferences for contacting organisations.

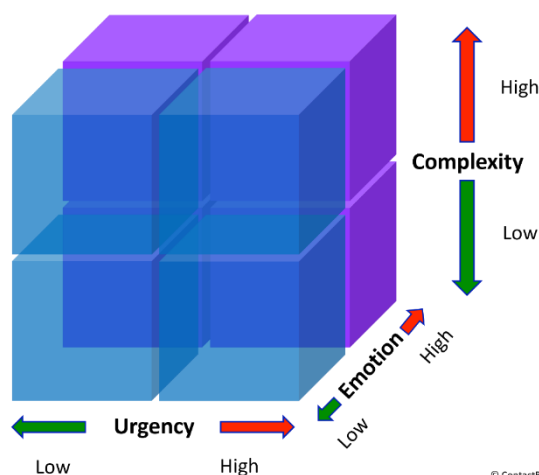
It is not only the nature of the specific business that needs to be considered. The urgency, complexity and emotional importance of the interaction is perhaps at least as important as the nature of the organisation that is being contacted: for a customer calling a bank, a simple balance request and an urgent call about the progress of a mortgage application are very different types of call, and should be treated as such.

There are two main factors that influence contact centres within any vertical market: the commercial activity within that sector, and customers' requirements and preferences for contacting organisations.

It is not only the nature of the specific business vertical market that needs to be considered. The urgency, complexity and emotional importance of the interaction is perhaps at least as important as the nature of the business that is being called: for a customer calling a bank, a simple balance request and an urgent call about the progress of a mortgage application are very different types of call, and should be treated as such.

The Customer Interaction Cube (below) is a structure developed to categorise the different types of customer interactions that businesses have to handle, considering the urgency, complexity and emotional input of the interaction from the customer's perspective.

### The Customer Interaction Cube



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Businesses could use this to analyse their volumes of each type of interaction, cross-referencing it with other variables such as the time of day these types of interaction are received, and the customer demographic preferences to support the relevant channels through the promotion of alternatives to live calls, and the correct levels of resourcing.

Doing this will not only improve the customer experience, but also reduce the cost of service through anticipating the likely resourcing required and even proactively engaging with the customer on lower cost channels first.

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## THE CHANNEL OF CHOICE

Using this 2x2x2 cube as a structure, there are eight types of interaction, a combination of either low or high urgency, complexity and emotional input. Each of these eight interaction types may best be suited to specific channels, and that both business and customer could benefit from matching channel with interaction type.

The examples shown below of various scenarios and the channels most suitable for these are suggestions, and will differ between customer types, businesses and vertical markets, but may offer a starting framework for readers to build their own scenarios.

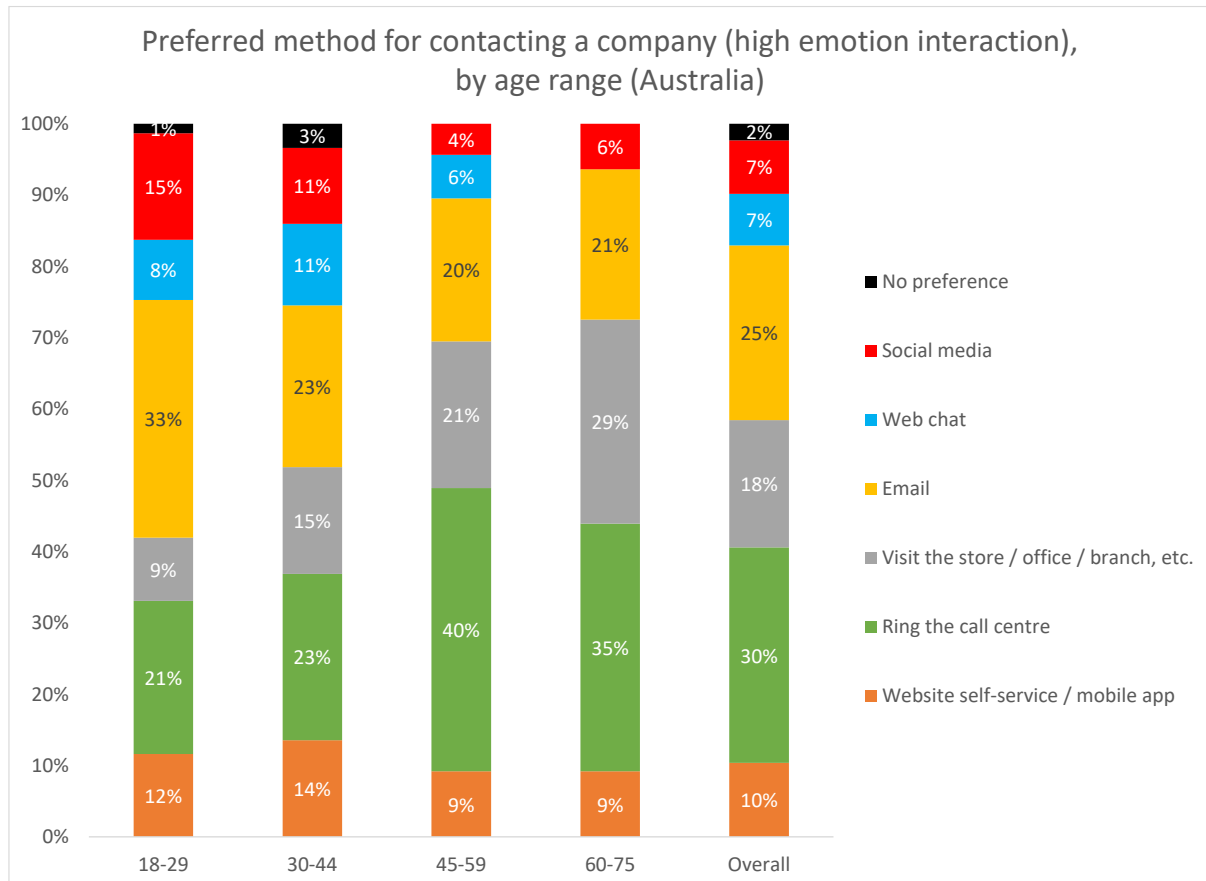
**Figure 24: The Customer Interaction Cube and suggested associated channels**

Emotional importance	Urgency	Complexity	Examples of interaction	Primary channel	Secondary channel
Low	Low	Low	Meter reading; casual product research	Self-service	Web chat
Low	Low	High	Instructions on how to program a TV remote; find out about proposed planning / house building	Self-service	Email
Low	High	Low	Top up mobile credit; check payment has been made	Self-service	Phone
Low	High	High	Details of how to make an insurance claim; understand mobile roaming charges before imminent trip abroad	Web chat / self-service	Phone
High	Low	Low	Book train tickets for important engagement	Self-service	Phone
High	Low	High	Complaint about incorrect billing	Phone	Email
High	High	Low	Simple question about imminent desired purchase (e.g. delivery, personalisation, return policy)	Web chat	Phone / social
High	High	High	Household emergency advice; 000/111	Phone	Web chat

## HIGH EMOTION INTERACTIONS

Customers were asked to imagine that they had a high-emotion interaction to make with a business – for example, an item they had ordered and was looking forward to receiving had arrived but was incorrect – and the method they would prefer for contacting the company to report it.

**Figure 25: Preferred method for contacting a company (high emotion interaction), by age range (Australia)**



The telephone remains the most popular single channel for emotionally charged contact in Australia at 30%, narrowly ahead of email at 25%.

The age divide is stark: younger Australians lean heavily towards email, which is the leading choice for the 18 to 29 group at 33%, while the phone dominates among the over-45s and reaches 40% in the 45 to 59 band. Physical visits climb steadily with age and account for 29% of the oldest group, whereas web chat disappears among the over-60s.

This shows customers' need for reassurance and confidence when something has gone wrong, but it should also be noted that younger customers are generally much more reluctant to pick up the phone.

Social media is a meaningful channel for the youngest cohort, chosen by 15% of 18 to 29 year-olds. Similar UK and US studies highlight the same pattern, with roughly one in seven of the youngest customers naming social media for high emotion contact, and flag it as an important finding for any business serving a younger base.

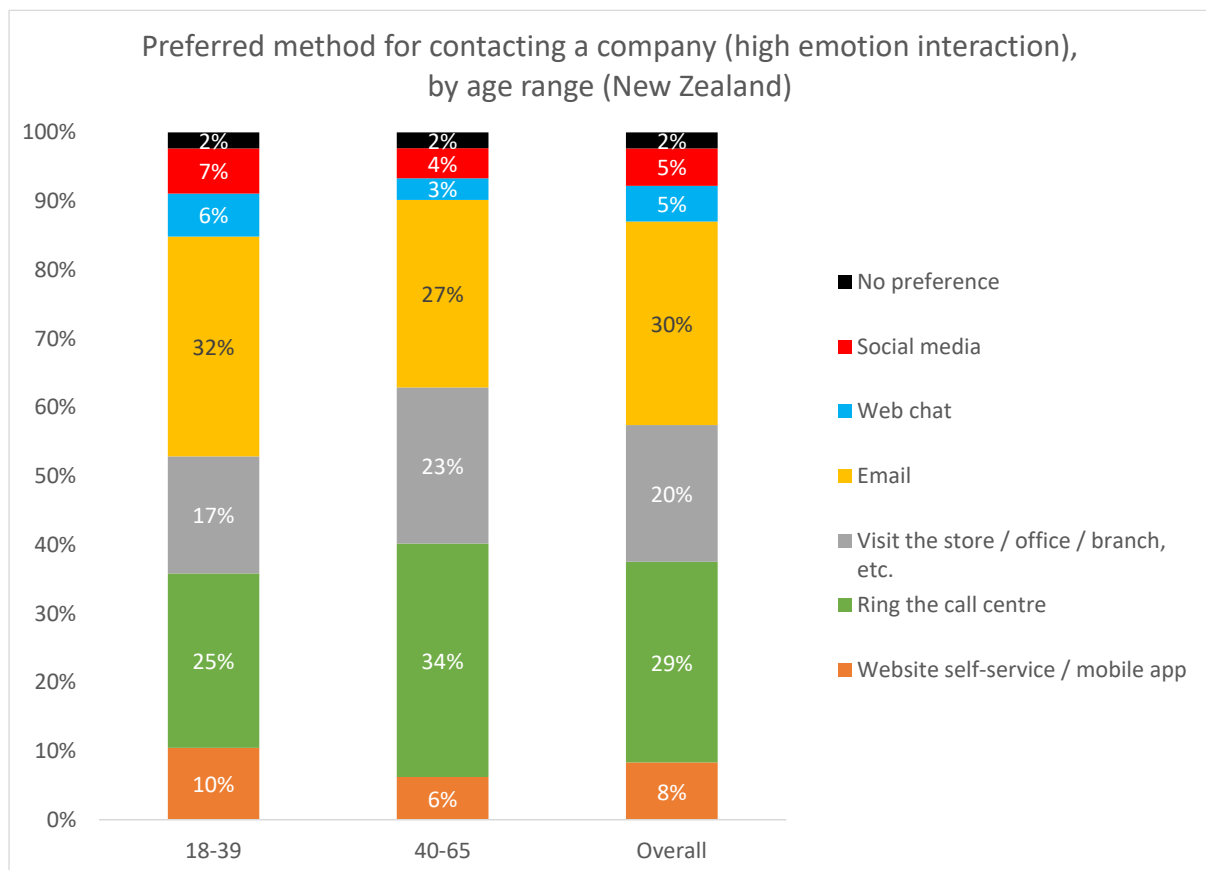
New Zealand retains an email-led preference for emotionally-charged contact, with email the most popular channel overall at around 30% and the phone close behind at 29%.

As in Australia the age pattern is pronounced, with email the clear leader among the 18 to 39 group at 32% and the phone and physical visits stronger in the 40 to 65 cohort.

This reflects the same reassurance-seeking behaviour the US research identifies for high emotion contact, tempered by New Zealand's existing preference for email, which sits closer to the UK pattern than to the more phone-led United States. This pattern is noticeable in the UK (where complaints are often done through email to avoid confrontation), and this may hold true for NZ customers as well.

Physical visits hold up and are firmest among older customers, consistent with the renewed appetite for face-to-face contact reported in all other territories studied.

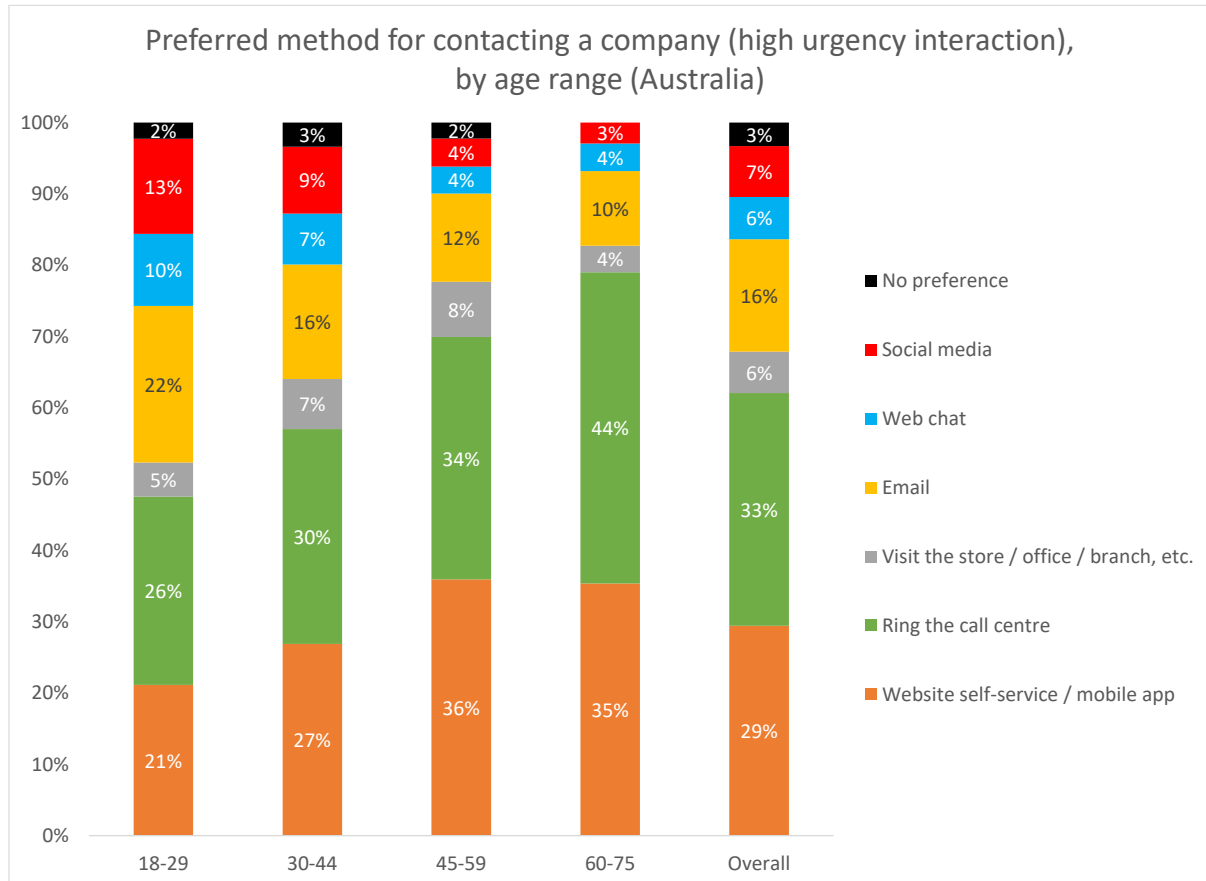
**Figure 26: Preferred method for contacting a company (high emotion interaction), by age range (New Zealand)**



## HIGH URGENCY INTERACTIONS

Customers were asked for their preferred channel in an urgent situation, for example needing to confirm the time to be at the airport when meeting someone from a plane.

**Figure 27: Preferred method for contacting a company (high urgency interaction), by age range (Australia)**



Web self-service has gained around five percentage points since 2023, with the phone channel giving up a similar amount.

The contact centre keeps a narrow overall lead at 33%, but this is carried largely by the oldest customers, where it reaches 44%. Among the 45 to 59 group self-service and the phone are effectively level, and the youngest customers spread their preference more widely across email, self-service and the phone.

This move away from live telephony to web self-service is also seen in the UK and US, perhaps being the beginning of a reversion to the pre-pandemic position and a sign of customers' growing comfort with self-service. In both countries, the large lead the phone had built over self-service has been cut considerably, whether because self-service has improved or because call queue lengths are deterring callers.

The implication for Australian operations is that the pandemic-era surge in telephone preference for quick factual tasks is unwinding, and that well-designed self-service has room to absorb a growing share of urgent demand, particularly from customers under 60.

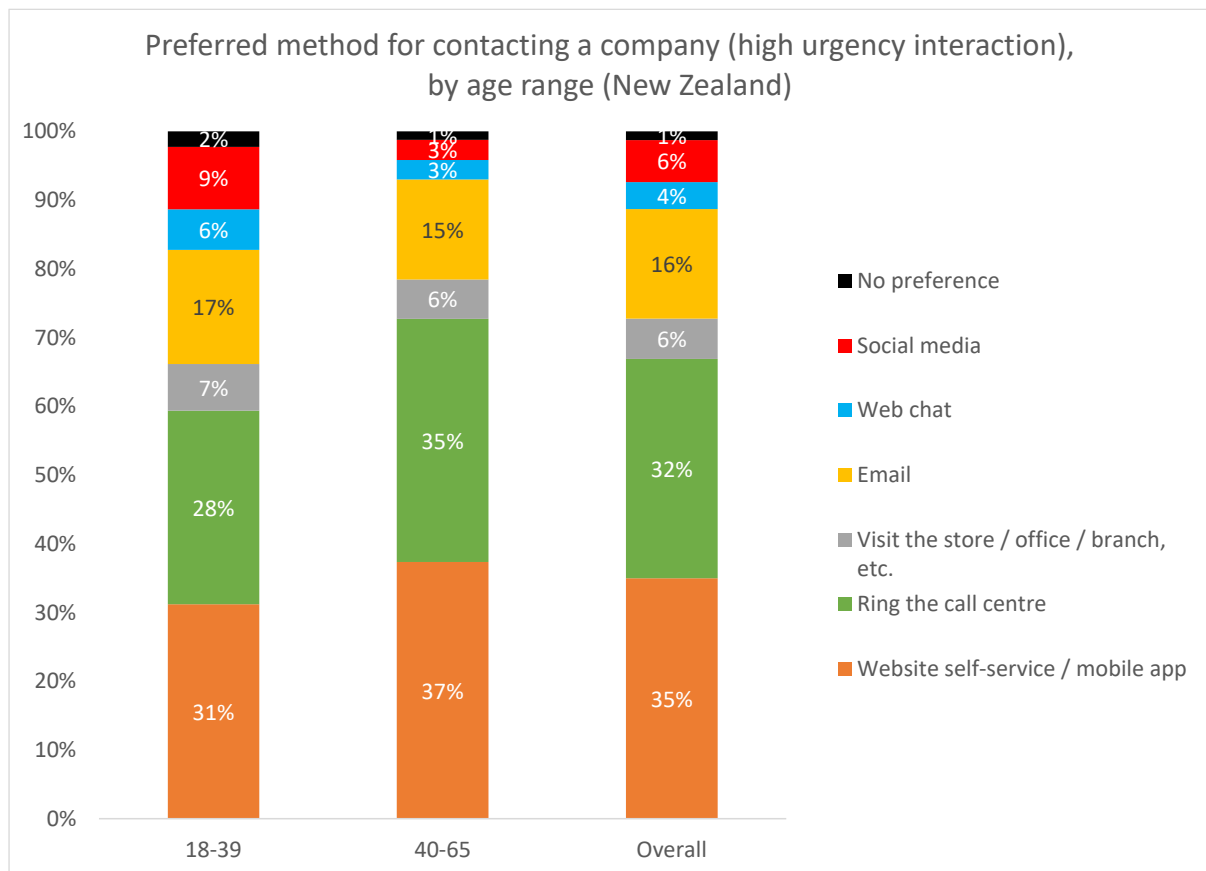
Web self-service has become the most popular channel for urgent enquiries in New Zealand, reaching around 35% and moving clearly ahead of the phone at 32%.

Self-service leads in both age bands and is stronger among the 40 to 65 group at 37%.

This is the most pronounced change in the New Zealand figures, which already showed strong support for both the contact centre and self-service for urgent tasks in 2023.

The practical message echoes Australia. Investment in fast and reliable self-service for simple urgent tasks is likely to be well used by the customer base.

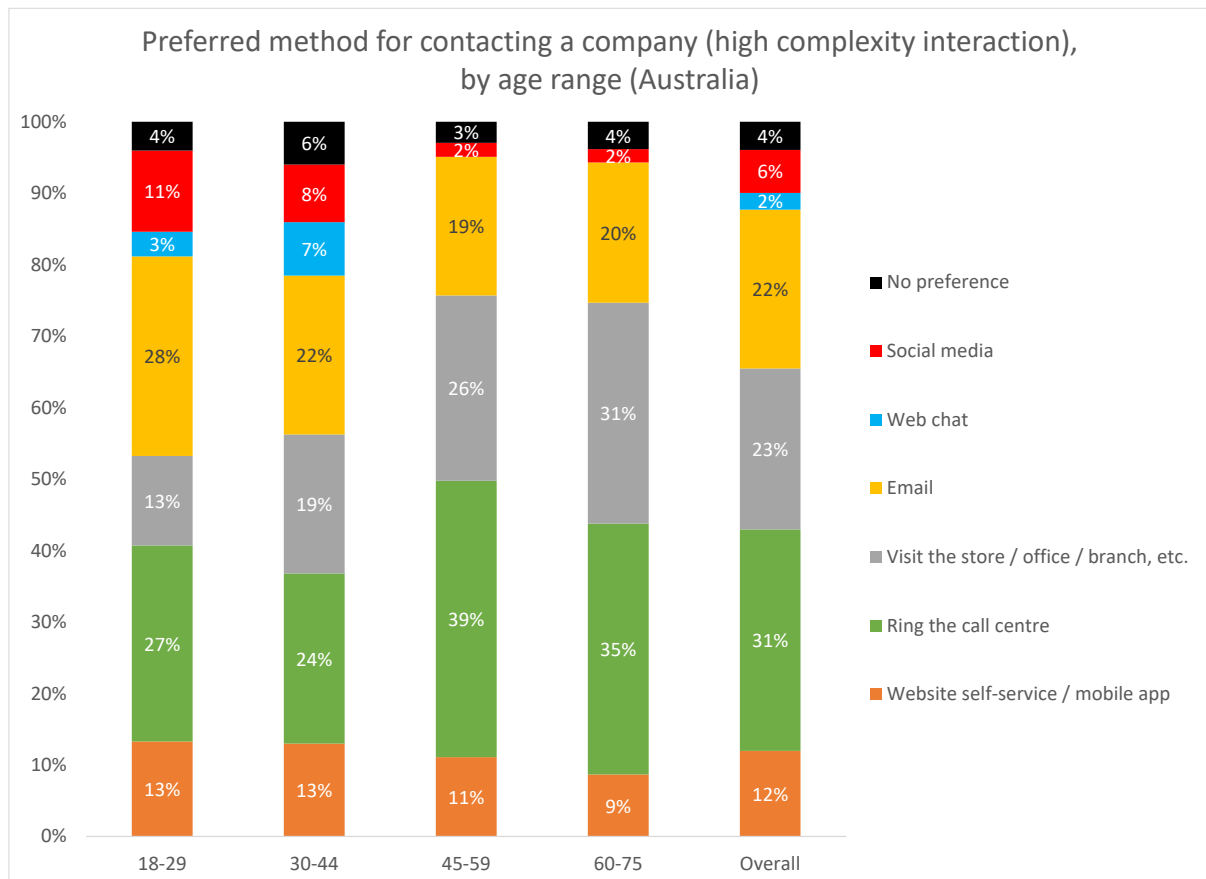
**Figure 28: Preferred method for contacting a company (high urgency interaction), by age range (New Zealand)**



## HIGH COMPLEXITY INTERACTIONS

Customers were asked about highly complex interactions, such as obtaining expert guidance with a tax form or a mortgage application.

**Figure 29: Preferred method for contacting a company (high complexity interaction), by age range**



For complex matters Australian customers to favour human channels, whether face-to-face or telephony.

The phone leads at around 31% and a physical visit is the second choice at 23%, rising to 31% among the oldest group. Email holds up well at 22%, helped by the youngest customers, while web chat retreats to almost nothing for complex queries and is not chosen at all by the over-45s.

The most notable shift since 2023 is the decline of web chat for complex contact, which falls by around four points. This follows the UK and US studies, where web chat lost ground for complex interactions even as it held up for other interaction types.

The underlying reason is that customers increasingly want to be talked through a difficult issue in real time by a person, and the research across all countries is explicit that customers prefer the reassurance of speaking to someone.

UK telephone preference for complex tasks has climbed from 16% in 2018 to 40% in 2025, and the US from 28% to a recent peak of 47%, which underpins the phone's continued dominance for complex issues.

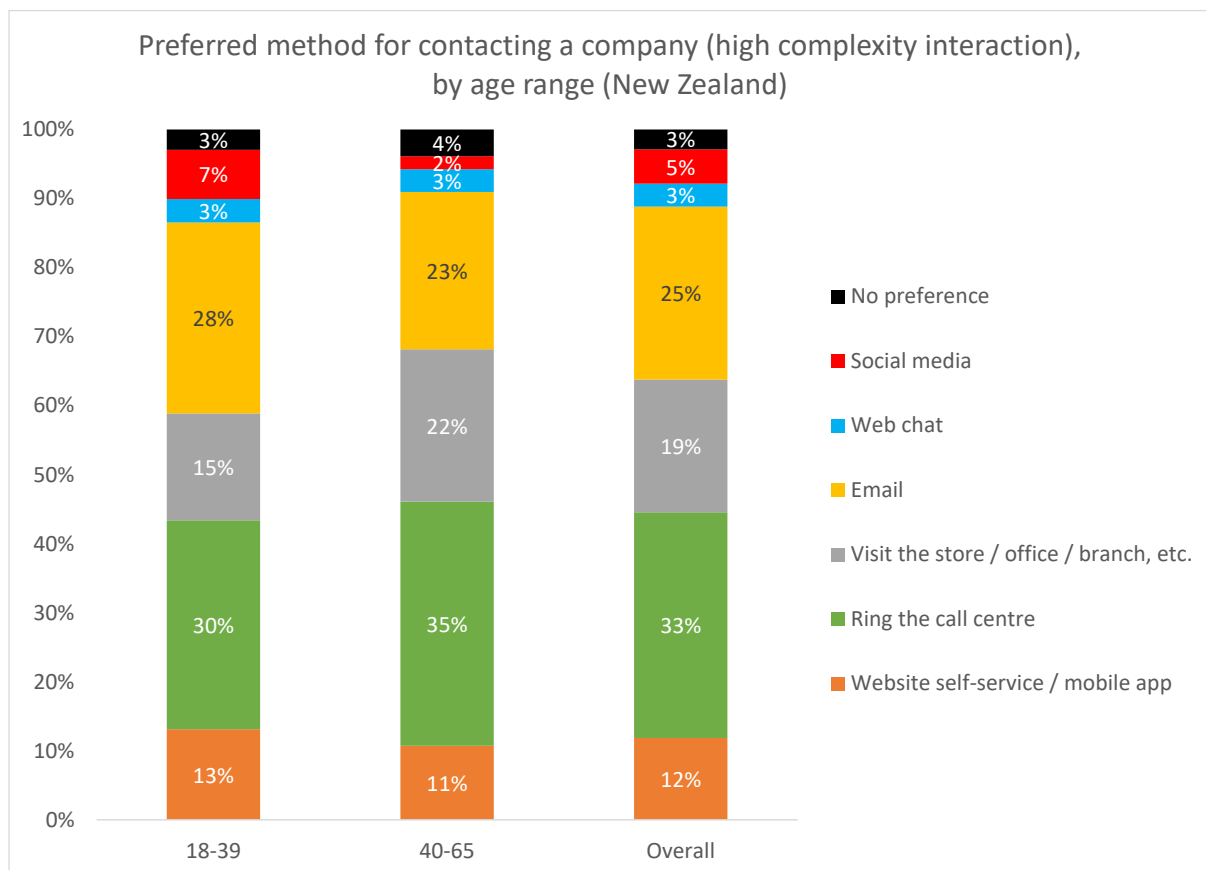
Face-to-face contact remains important and even firms slightly for the oldest Australians, despite the habit of branch visits weakening during the pandemic. Web self-service, by contrast, has limited appeal once a query becomes genuinely complex, a finding common to both comparator markets.

For complex interactions New Zealand customers favour the phone at around 33%, with email the second choice at 25% and physical visits at 19%, the latter rising to 22% in the 40 to 65 group. Web chat is a minor channel at 3% and shows little variation by age.

As in Australia, web chat has declined for complex contact while the phone holds its dominant position, in line with the UK and US finding that customers want to be guided through difficult issues by a person rather than attempt them through self-service or chat.

New Zealand's somewhat higher use of email for complex matters, relative to Australia, persists into 2026. Web self-service sees only a modest gain and remains a limited option once a query becomes genuinely complex.

**Figure 30: Preferred method for contacting a company (high complexity interaction), by age range (New Zealand)**



## DIGITAL CHANNELS

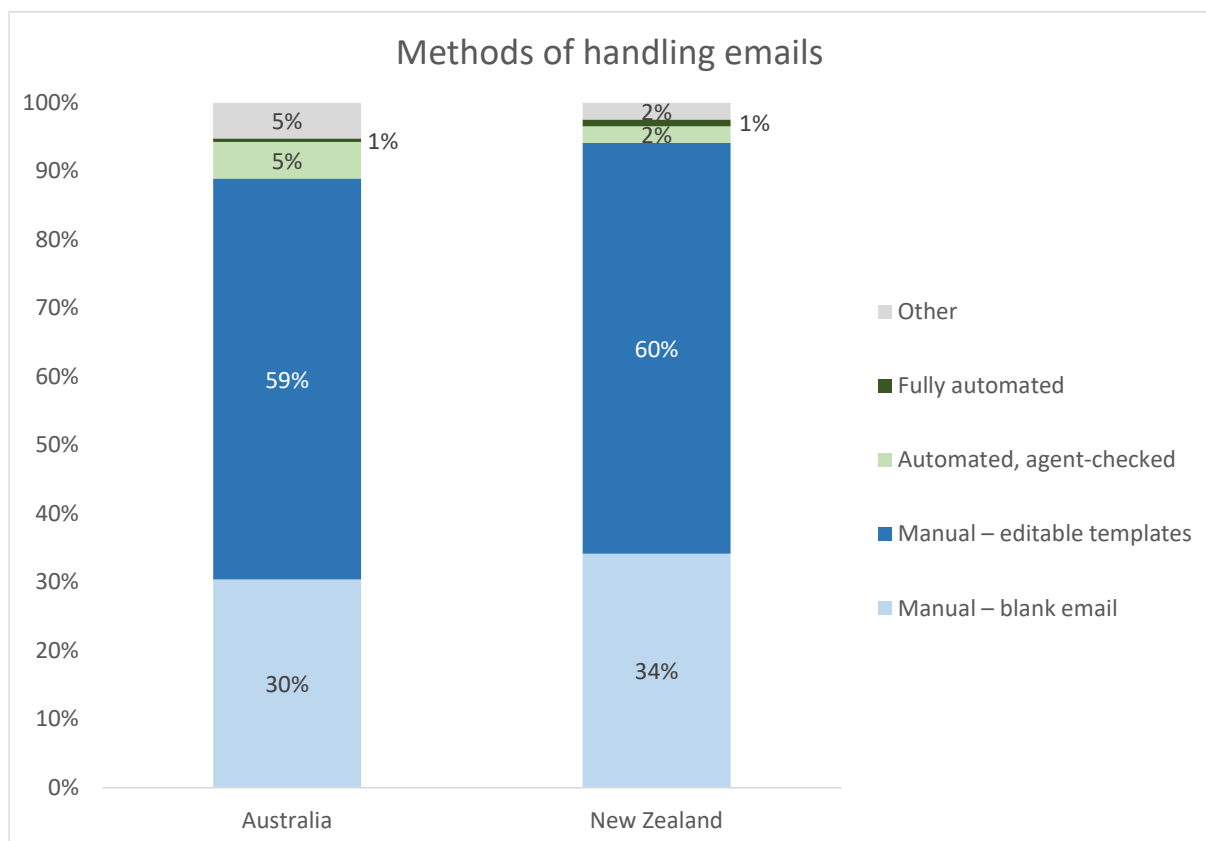
### EMAIL

By far the most popular method of answering inbound emails is to use agents rather than automation. Around 60% of emails are answered by agents who start with templatised, editable responses and change them accordingly, thus not having to compose every email from scratch, but also being able to draw from a common pool of knowledge.

Starting with a blank email and letting agents complete it themselves is not only likely to take longer, but also leads to an increased risk of poor grammar, spelling and punctuation, as well as a less consistent response.

Only 6% of emails from our Australian survey respondents have automated responses, (these statistics do not include simple automated acknowledgements), and of those, the large majority are checked by agents before sending. Only 3% of emails from New Zealand survey respondents were handled through automation.

**Figure 31: Methods of handling emails**

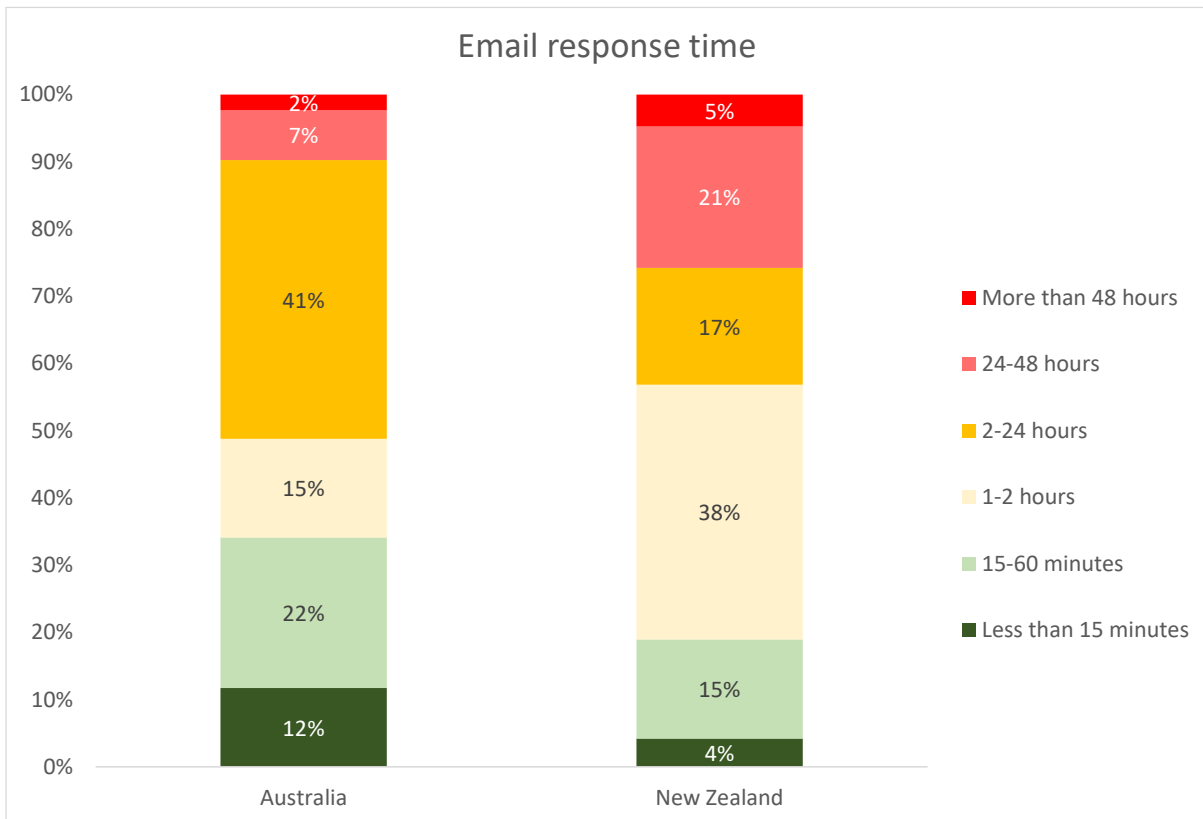


For businesses that handle substantial volumes of email, while it is not feasible to aim to answer an email in the same amount of time that it takes to complete a phone call, it is desirable to manage all interactions closely to consistent business rules, and to act quickly if service levels slip.

While 26% of NZ emails take longer than one day to answer (this does not include auto-acknowledgments), Australian survey respondents report that this is the case with only 9% of their emails.

To have the large majority of emails answered in the same day is a very positive finding, and is certainly a contributor to the relatively high take-up of email in both countries.

**Figure 32: Email response time**



## WEB CHAT

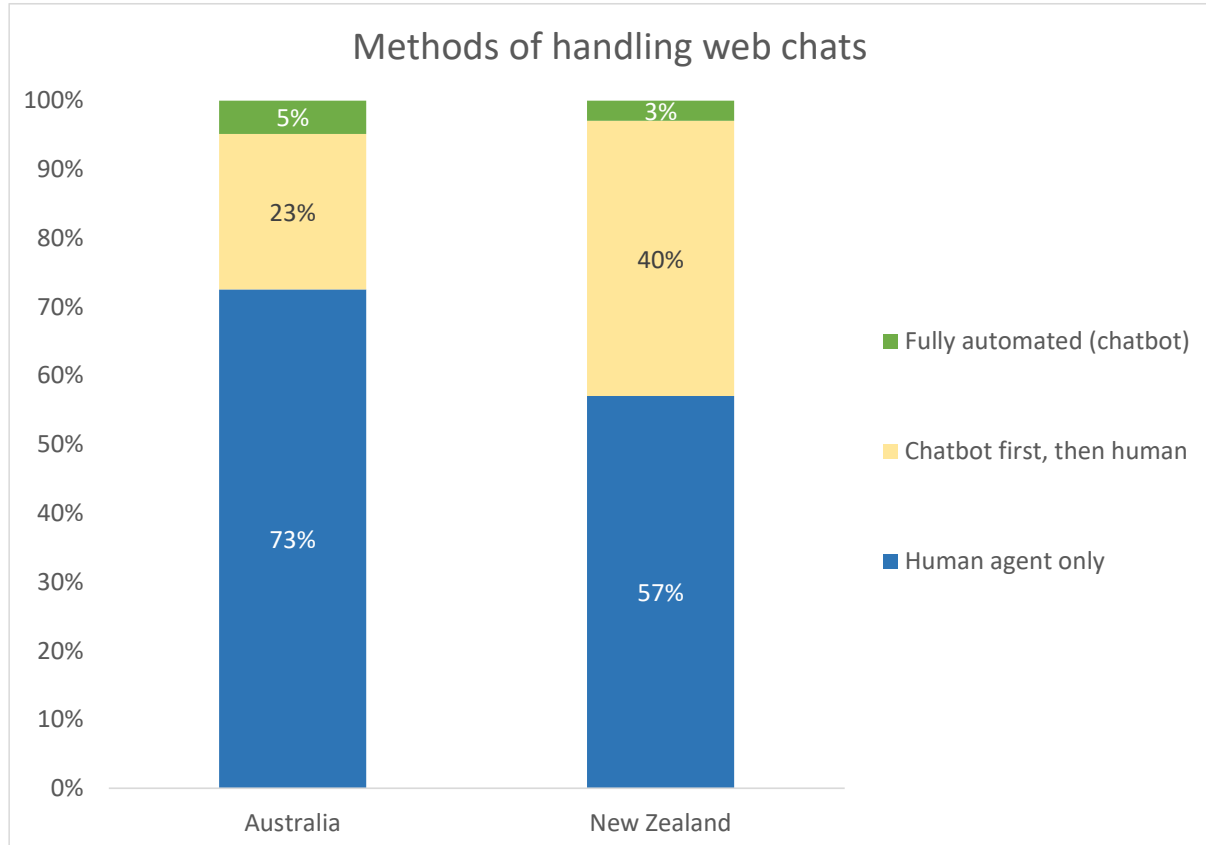
Web chat (or instant messaging / IM) sessions act by offering a live or automated assistance option to the process of web browsing. Like email, it has been around for many years, but has recently grown volumes to the extent where it has become a mainstream channel for many customer-facing organisations.

Web chat offers an organisation a chance to cut costs through running more than one chat session at a time with customers, using the time that a customer spends reading and replying to an agent’s response to deal with other customers concurrently. The advent of automated chat – whether AI-enabled or rules-based – has also driven growth in this channel.

Web chat has often been used as a “point of crisis” channel, for example, to convert an online shopping basket into a sale by providing timely service, or if a browser is paused on a webpage too long, perhaps as they can’t find what they are looking for. In such cases, there are two main benefits to the business in providing web chat: revenue maximisation, and the avoidance of unnecessary calls.

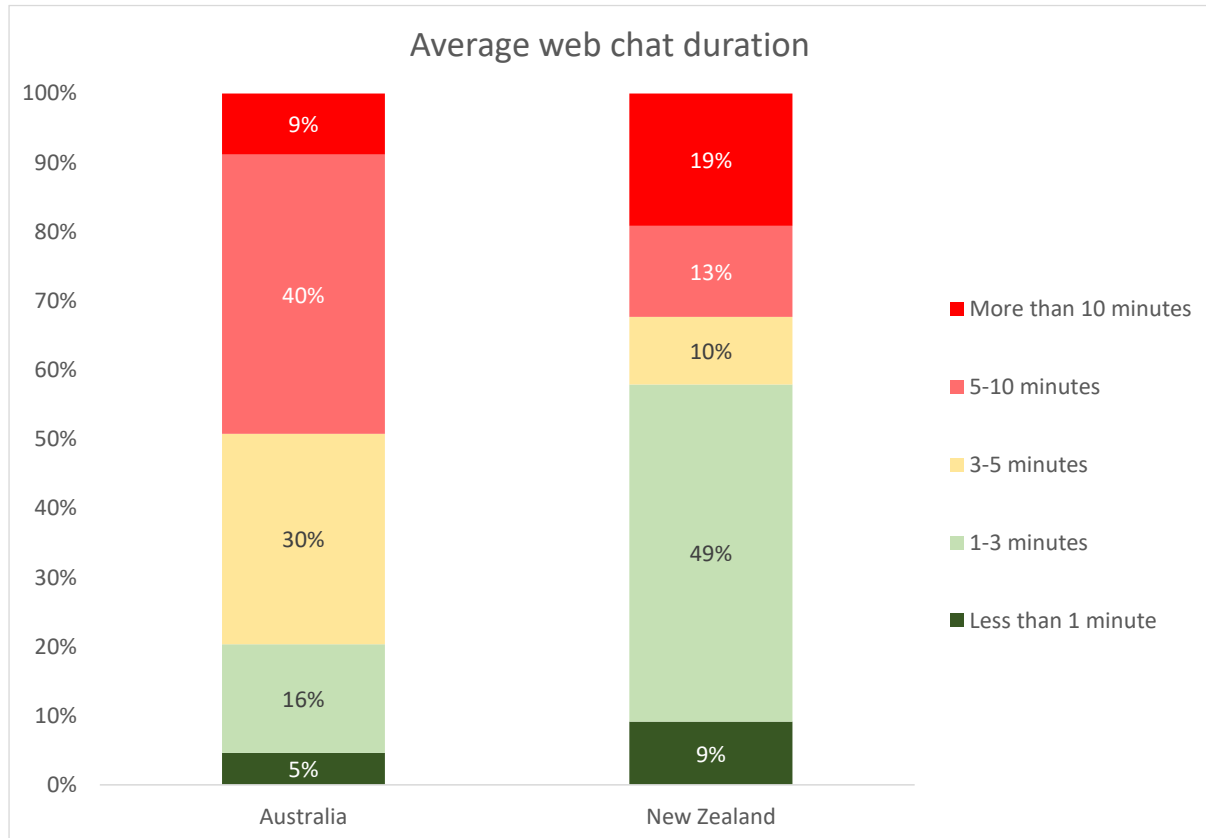
Australian survey respondents were a little less likely than their New Zealand counterparts to be using automation: the large majority in both cases being to have agents check and amend suggested responses before sending, rather than have the chatbot handle the whole interaction.

**Figure 33: Methods of handling web chats**



49% of web chats with Australian survey respondents and 32% of NZ web chats take longer than 5 minutes to complete. However, more than half of NZ web chats take less than three minutes, which will be very positive for customers.

**Figure 34: Average web chat duration**



In Australia phone calls remain considerably longer than web chats, though the gap is narrower than might be expected. The blended service / sales telephone call averages around seven and a half minutes, with two thirds of operations reporting a typical call of five minutes or more and one in five exceeding ten minutes.

Web chats are shorter overall, but only a fifth last under three minutes and roughly half run beyond five minutes. The most common web chat band is five to ten minutes (40% of chats). The Australian web chat is therefore not the quick, transactional exchange often assumed. In length it sits much closer to a voice call than to a brief messaging interaction, which has clear implications for agent concurrency and staffing models.

New Zealand shows a cleaner separation between the two channels. The blended phone call averages around five and a half minutes, shorter than its Australian equivalent, with just over half of operations reporting a typical call of five minutes or more.

Web chats are far quicker at the front end, with almost half falling into the 1-to-3 minute band and well over half completed within three minutes. The exception is a pronounced long tail, as close to one chat in five lasts more than ten minutes. This suggests that while most New Zealand web chats are short and efficient, a minority become drawn-out sessions, whether through query complexity or chats being left open while the customer attends to something else.

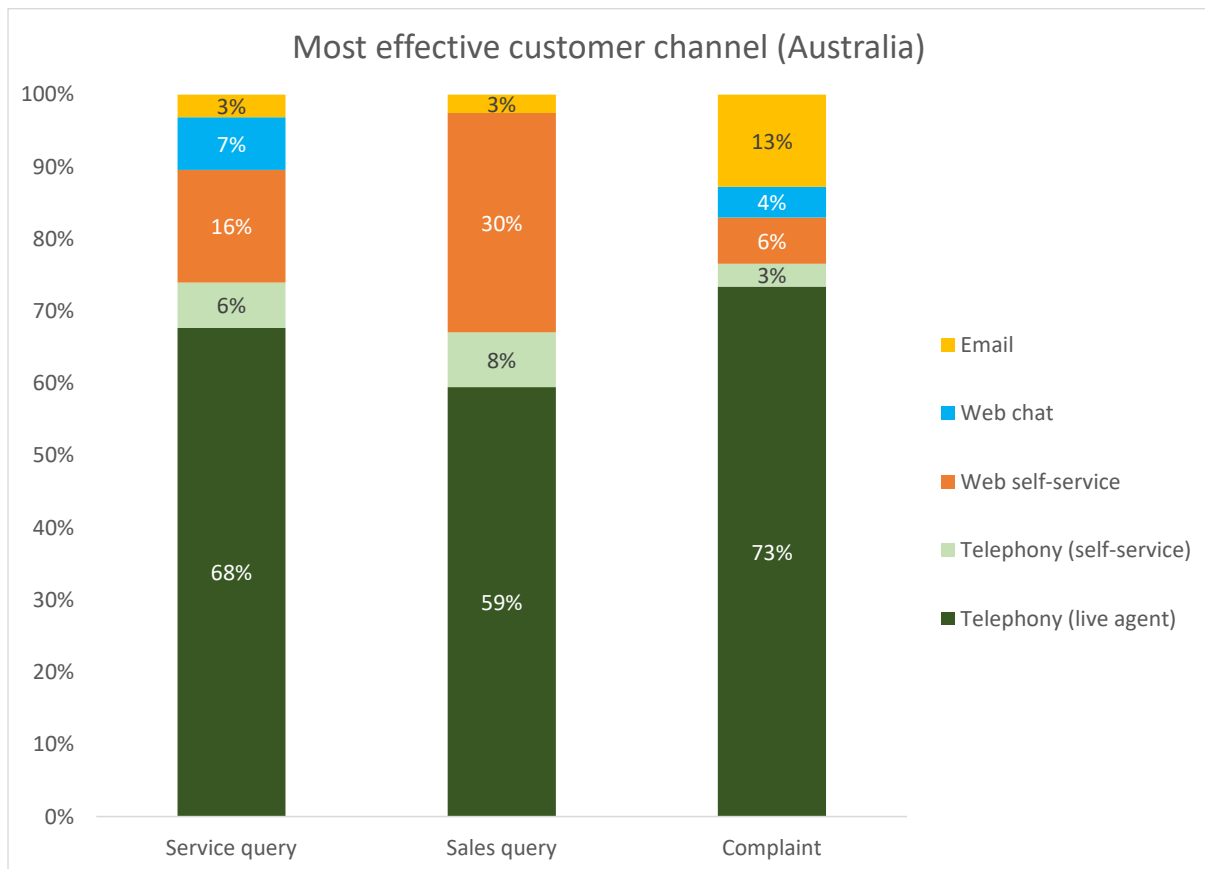
## MOST EFFECTIVE CUSTOMER CHANNELS

Business survey respondents were asked which channel would be most effective for a customer to use in three scenarios – a service query, a sales query and to make a complaint.

Over two-thirds of Australian respondents stated that telephony would be the best channel to use for service and complaints, with just over half also believing this to be the case for sales.

Web self-service also gathered support for sales and service, with email also mentioned in complaint scenarios. Web chat and web self-service were less well considered.

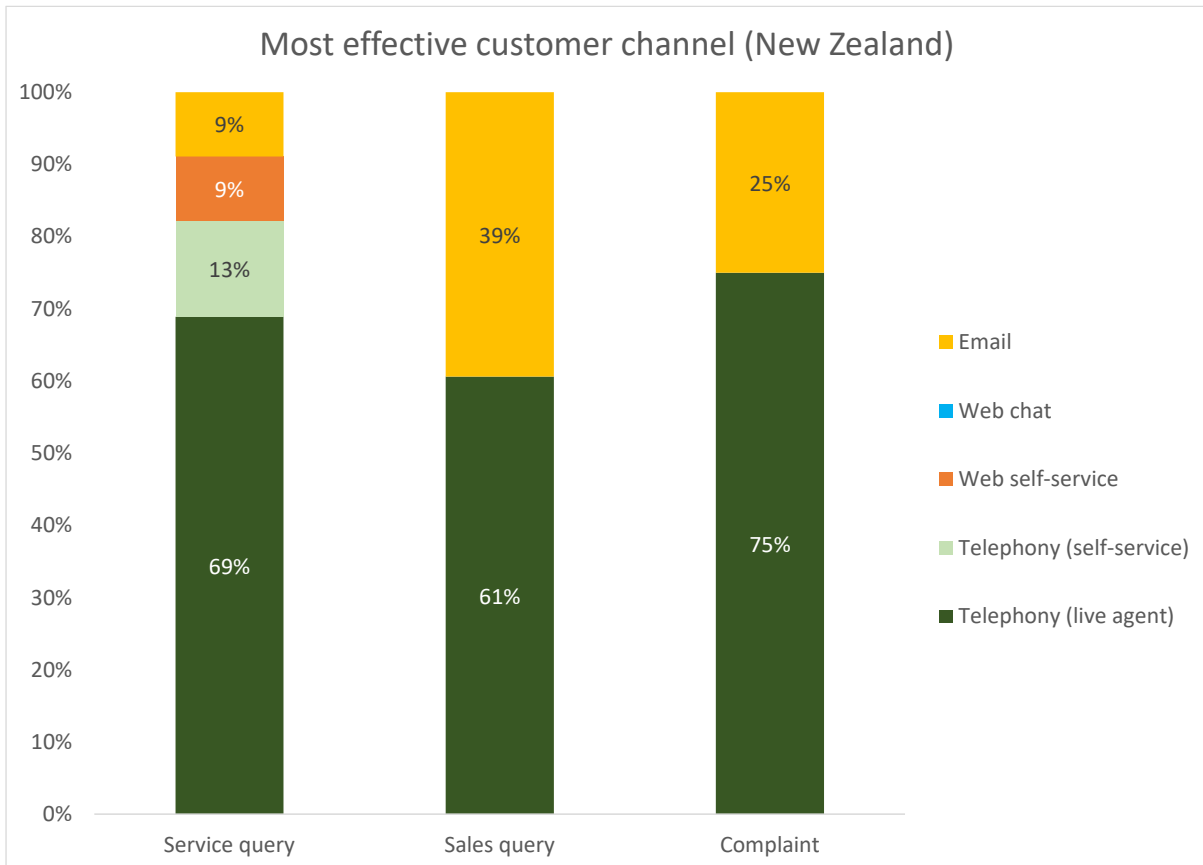
**Figure 35: Most effective customer channel (Australia)**



The pattern for New Zealand respondents was somewhat similar in that the phone is the most highly recommended by businesses.

Email was said to be the best channel for complaints in 25% of cases, and is also considered the best channel for sales by 39% of NZ businesses, showing again the strength of this channel in New Zealand.

**Figure 36: Most effective customer channel (New Zealand)**



## WHAT DOES CX MEAN TO A CUSTOMER?

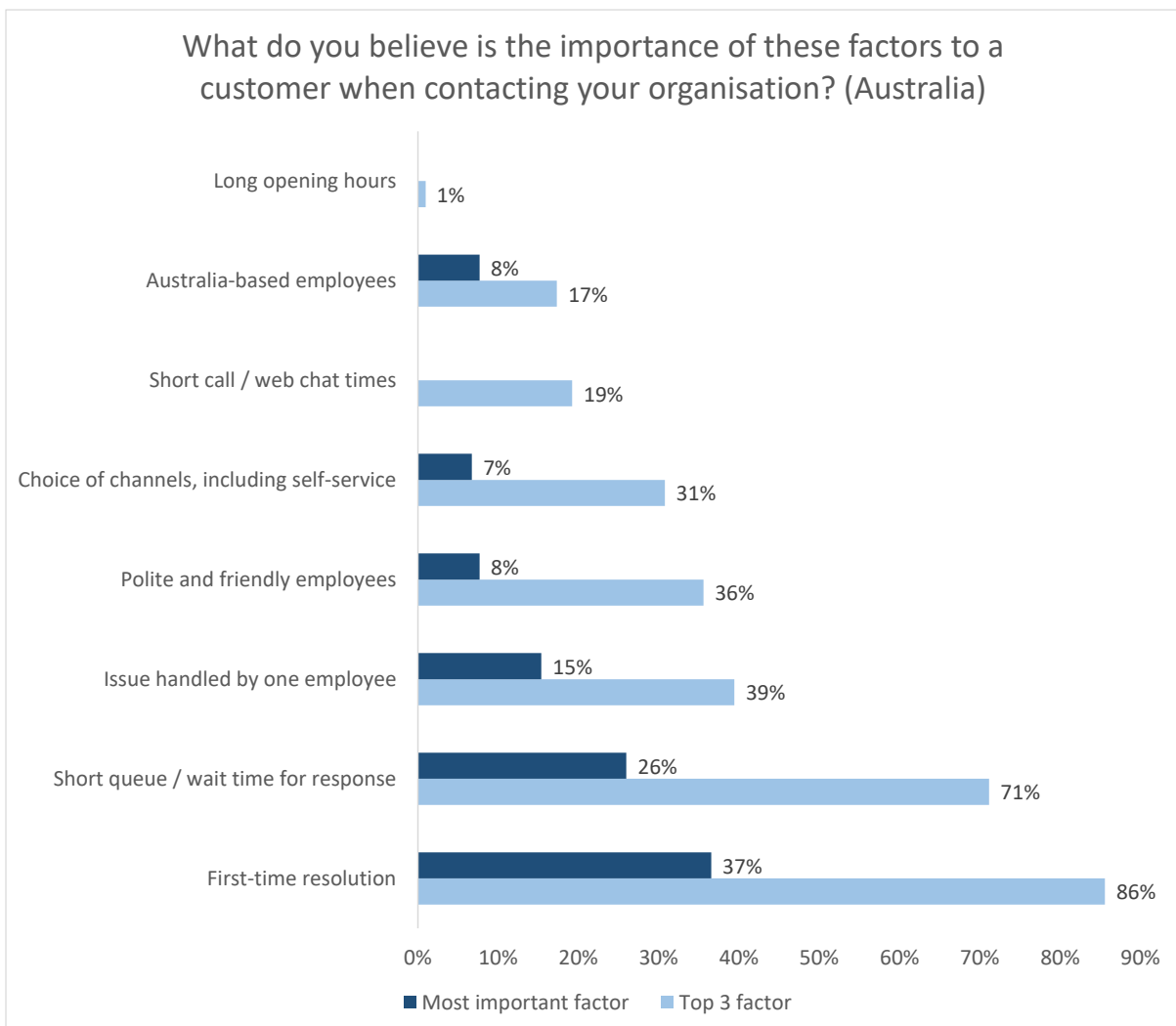
It is difficult for an organisation to be confident about which of the many elements that go towards a great customer experience are actually the most important, and consequently should receive the greatest investment and resource.

This section looks at the importance of key factors which occur within the customer experience when a customer contacts an organisation, from the perspective of the business and also from the customer.

### THE VIEW FROM THE BUSINESS

Organisations were asked to rank by importance eight factors that could be said to impact upon customer experience.

**Figure 37: What do you believe is the importance of these factors to a customer when contacting your organisation? (Australia)**



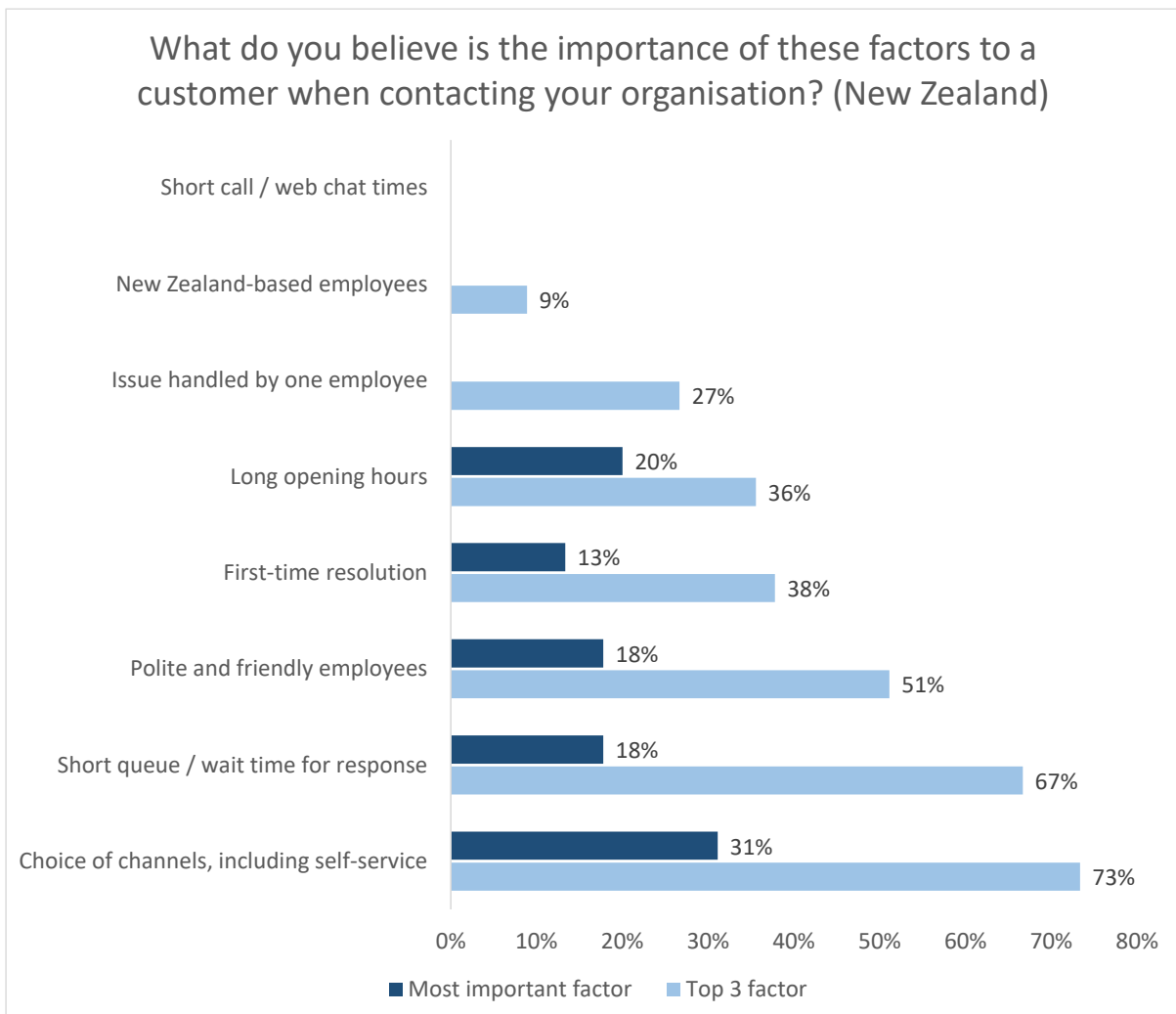
As with many past ContactBabel surveys, first-time resolution was clearly seen as being the most important factor impacting upon customer experience, with 37% of Australian survey respondents ranking it in first place, and 86% placing it within the top three.

A short queue time or wait time for a response was also seen as being important, being ranked in the top 3 by 71% of respondents.

New Zealand organisations showed far less coherence. 67% placed having a short wait / queue time as a top 3 factor, and 61% did the same for polite and friendly employees.

Having a choice of channels was seen as being far more important to NZ businesses (73% top three) than it was to Australian survey respondents (31%) but the major difference was that only 38% of NZ organisations stated that they thought first-contact resolution would be a top 3 CX factor for their customers, which as the next section will show, is certainly untrue.

**Figure 38: What do you believe is the importance of these factors to a customer when contacting your organisation? (New Zealand)**



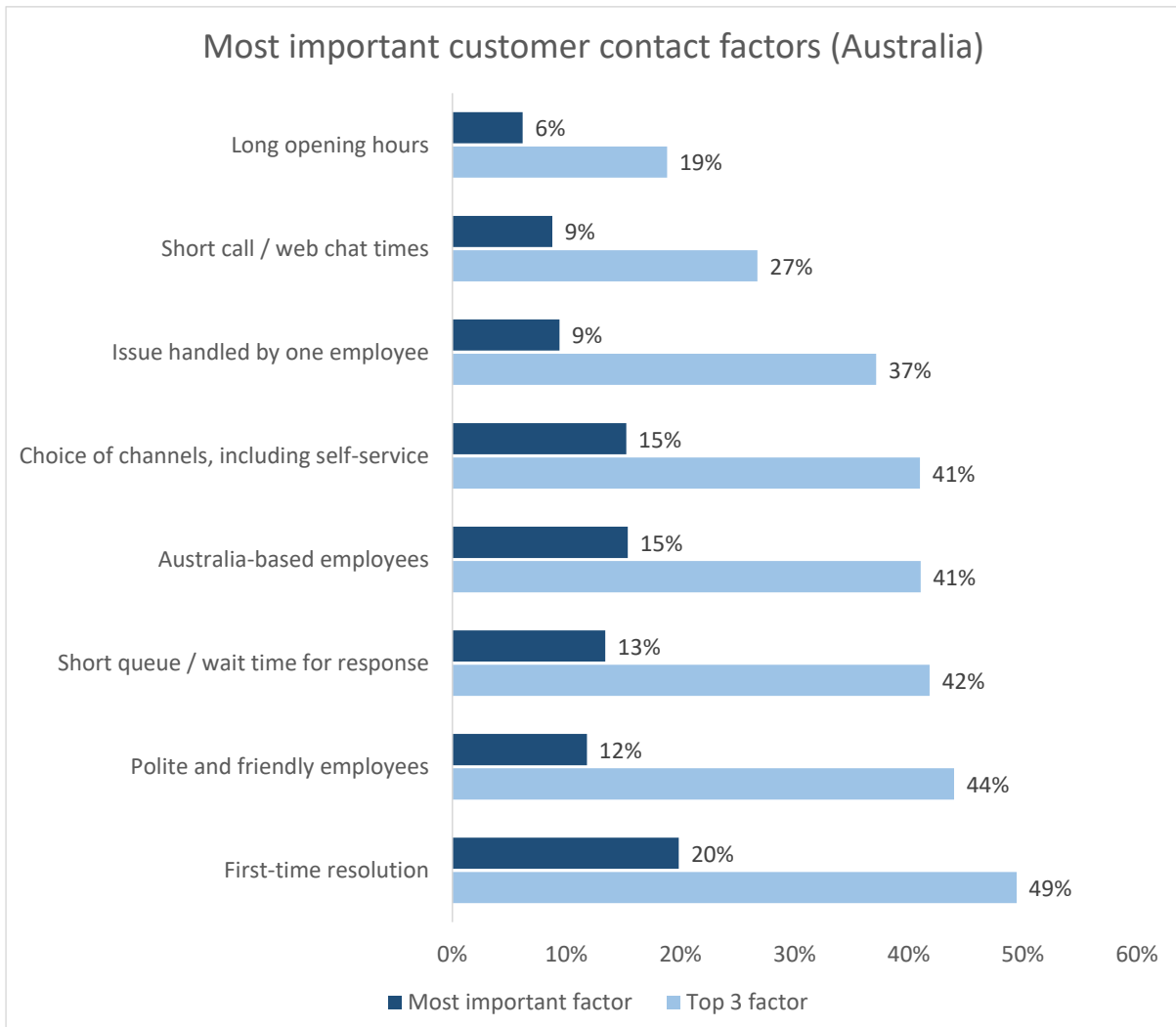
## THE VIEW FROM THE CUSTOMER

ContactBabel carried out a survey of 1,000 Australian and 500 New Zealand customers. One of the purposes was to identify any differences in opinion between organisations and customers about what were the most important customer experience factors when contacting an organisation.

Consumers were asked to list their top three most important factors when contacting an organisation, with the same factors presented as had been offered to organisations.

This section considers these elements of the customer experience from the perspective of customers themselves, and there are some significant differences of opinion between organisations and customers on what impacts the most on customer experience.

**Figure 39: Most important customer contact factors (Australia)**



There is no clear picture of what Australian customers value most, although first-contact resolution is slightly out in first place.

There are differences by age, the sharpest of which concerns Australia-based employees.

Only 30% of 18 to 29 year-olds put this in their top three and just 9% rank it first, but that climbs steeply to 56% and 23% among the 60 to 75 group, making it one of the most important factors for the oldest customers and one of the least for the youngest.

First-contact resolution follows the same upward path, rising from 47% to 57% in the top three and becoming the leading factor of all for the oldest cohort.

Younger customers instead lean towards speed and flexibility. The value placed on long opening hours falls away with age, from 28% of the youngest to 10% of the oldest, and both a choice of channels and short call or web chat times show the same shape, valued clearly more by under-45s than by older customers.

Polite and friendly employees matter fairly evenly until the very oldest group, where their importance drops, especially as a single most important factor at 6% against around 13% for everyone else.

For all that age-related movement, the core of what Australians value is shared.

A short queue or wait time is the great constant, holding at 42% to 49% in the top three across every age band and named most important by a steady 13 to 16% throughout, so it never leaves the top tier whatever the customer's age.

First-contact resolution, although it strengthens with age, is already a leading factor for the youngest group, so getting the issue solved and not being kept waiting form a common foundation for all ages.

Polite and friendly service is widely valued too, sitting at around 44% in the top three for everyone under 60.

The lower-priority factors are broadly agreed as well, with the issue being handled by one employee, short call times and long opening hours all sitting in the lower half of the ranking for most age groups.

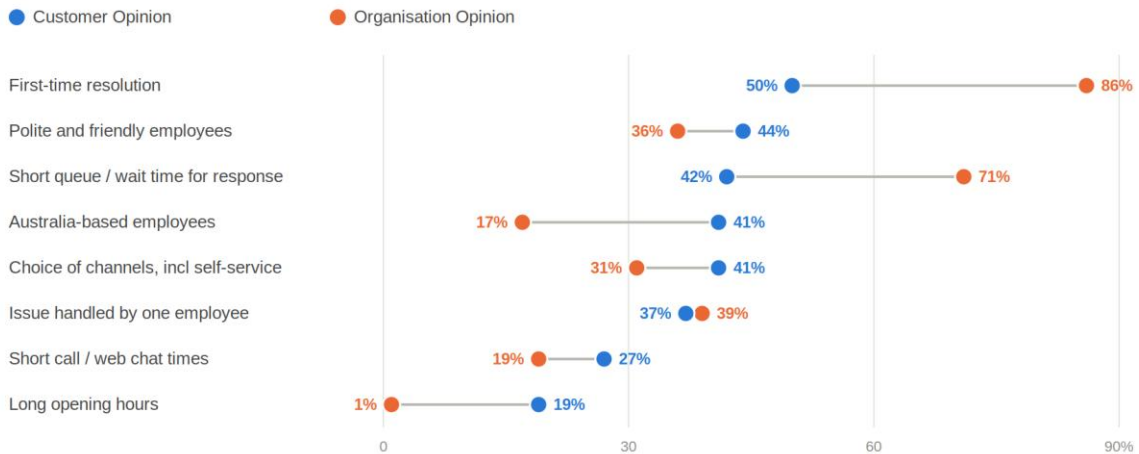
The ordering shifts at the margins as customers get older, but the headline holds across the generations: people want their problem solved quickly and first time, by helpful staff.

While Australian organisations and customers agree on the headline – first-contact resolution matters most to both – the following chart makes a few things more obvious.

**Figure 40: Australia: most important CX factors, customers vs organisations**

**Australia: most important CX factors, customers vs organisations**

Percentage rating each factor in their top three



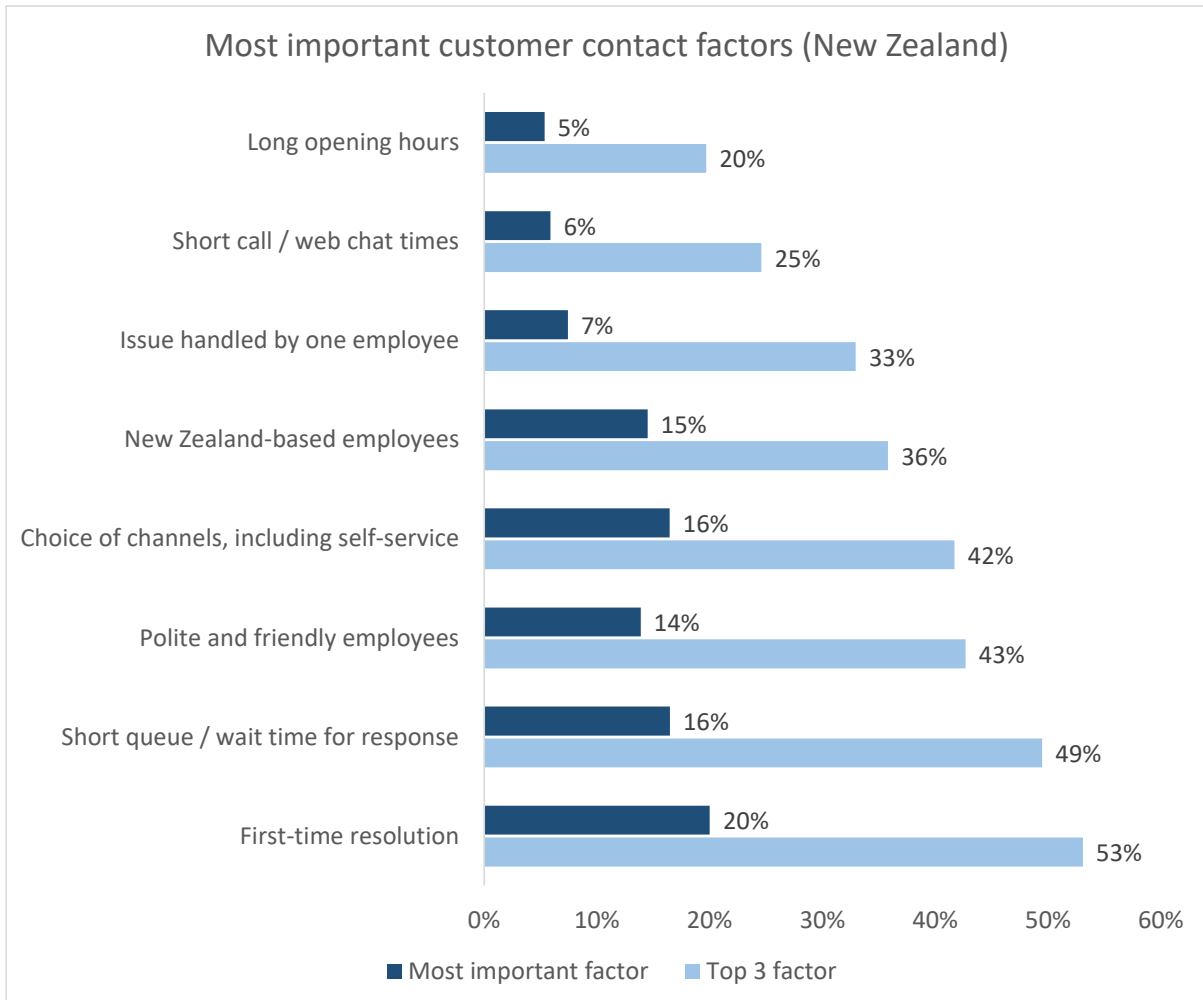
In Australia the two orange dots sitting far to the right (first-time resolution at 86% and short queue at 71%) show how much more narrowly businesses concentrate on speed and resolution than customers do. The reversed gaps are just as telling: Australia-based employees and long opening hours both have the blue dot well to the right of the orange, the factors customers value but businesses discount.

In short, Australian organisations treat customer experience largely as a speed-and-resolution problem, while customers attach far more weight to the human and local side of service, and to access.

Local agents and courteous, available service are where Australian businesses risk most by trusting their own assumptions rather than asking customers.

NZ customers are somewhat more definite about what they most value, with first-contact resolution, a short wait time and polite and friendly agents being most important, although – as might be expected from a country where so much of the customer contact is carried out on digital channels – a choice of channels is also much valued.

**Figure 41: Most important customer contact factors (New Zealand)**



Considering differences by age group, the widest age gap concerns New Zealand-based employees.

It is a top-three factor for 31% of the 18 to 39 group and 12% rank it first, but among the 40 to 65 cohort that rises to 42% and 18%, making local agents markedly more important to older customers.

Issues handled by one employee and a short queue or wait time both firm up with age too, the latter climbing from 50% to 58% in the top three and from 16% to 20% as most important, so older New Zealanders place even more weight on not being kept waiting or passed around.

Younger customers lean the other way on speed and choice. Both short call or web chat times and long opening hours fall with age, from 29% to 21% and from 25% to 17% in the top three respectively, and polite and friendly employees matter more to the under-40s, dropping from 48% to 38% in the top three and from 16% to 12% as most important between the two groups.

Underneath that movement the two age groups agree on the essentials: first-contact resolution and a short queue or wait time are the leading pair for both, with first-time resolution at 52% and 54% in the top three and short wait time at 50% and 58%, so resolving the issue and not waiting form a shared foundation whatever the age.

A choice of channels sits in the middle of the ranking for both groups at 39% and 36% and barely moves as most important, suggesting flexibility is valued fairly evenly.

The lower-priority factors are broadly agreed as well, with short call times and long opening hours in the bottom half for both ages even though the young rate them a little higher.

As in Australia the ordering shifts at the margins with age, but the headline holds across the generations: New Zealanders want their problem solved quickly and first time, by helpful people, with older customers placing extra weight on local agents.

When we compare customers' views with organisations', New Zealand shows some sharp misalignments.

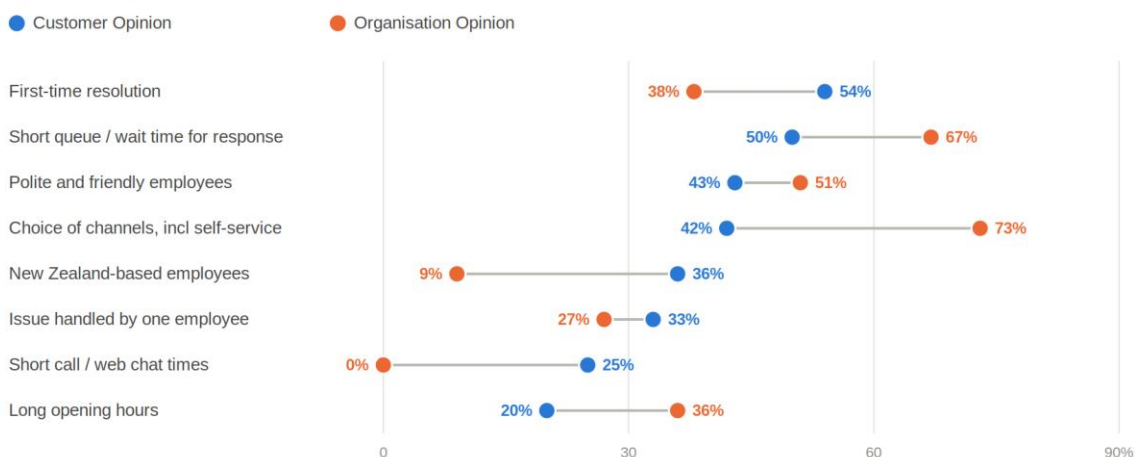
Organisations rank choice of channels including self-service as their single most important factor (73% top three, 31% most important), yet customers place it well down the list at 42% and 17%.

The priority customers lead with, first-contact resolution, is only fourth for businesses (38% against customers' 54%). The two sides have effectively swapped their top concern.

**Figure 42: New Zealand: most important CX factors, customers vs organisations**

**New Zealand: most important CX factors, customers vs organisations**

Percentage rating each factor in their top three



The local-agent gap is similar to Australia: New Zealand-based employees are a top-three factor for 36% of customers but just 9% of organisations, and no business named them most important.

Long opening hours run the other way, valued more by businesses (36%) than customers (20%), which suggests organisations are investing in access that customers have not asked for to the same degree.

They agree on short wait times, important to both, and on the value of polite, friendly staff. Customers place short call times in the top three in 25% of cases, but no organisations agree.

The overall picture is of New Zealand organisations leaning into digital choice and availability while underestimating how much customers still want their issue solved first time and handled by local people. For anyone designing NZ operations around self-service alone, that is a clear strategic risk.

## CONTACT CENTRE STRATEGY

Survey respondents were asked to give their views on what was preventing the contact centre from achieving its aims, assuming that there was a gap between what was being achieved and what would be ideal.

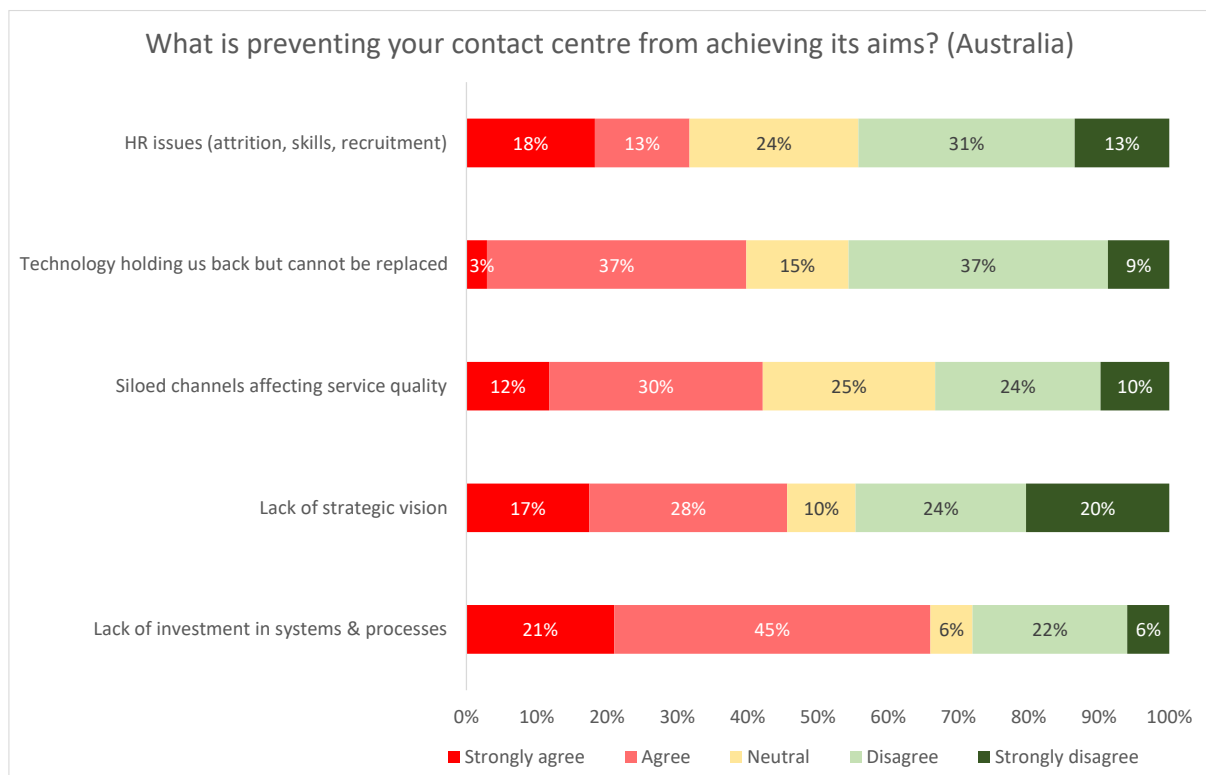
66% of Australian contact centres surveyed agree that a lack of investment in systems and processes are holding the contact centre back from achieving its aims (2023: 61%), but only 31% were concerned about the limitations of their HR, a figure which had been 53% in 2023, possibly impacted at the time by the unfamiliarity of remote / hybrid working.

42% of respondents admit that siloed channels are affecting how they can provide customer service: most of these channels were added and integrated in a piecemeal fashion, requiring the re-engineering of underlying infrastructure and business processes in order to provide the omnichannel experience which many respondents feel is necessary to improve the customer’s experience significantly. This figure was 40% in 2023.

40% of Australian businesses agreed or strongly agreed that irreplaceable technology was a problem: little change since 2023. A lack of ability to change or upgrade systems may be connected with a lack of investment, or may be more to do with the highly customised and bespoke legacy environment that some businesses feel they require to operate.

Concerns around a lack of strategic vision has risen from 38% in 2023 to 45% today, which is a concern: surveys elsewhere in the world usually see this figure declining as the importance of the contact centre and knowledge of its business-wide capabilities tends to increase as senior decision-makers’ understanding of the contact centre’s unique value improves.

**Figure 43: What is preventing your contact centre from achieving its aims? (Australia)**



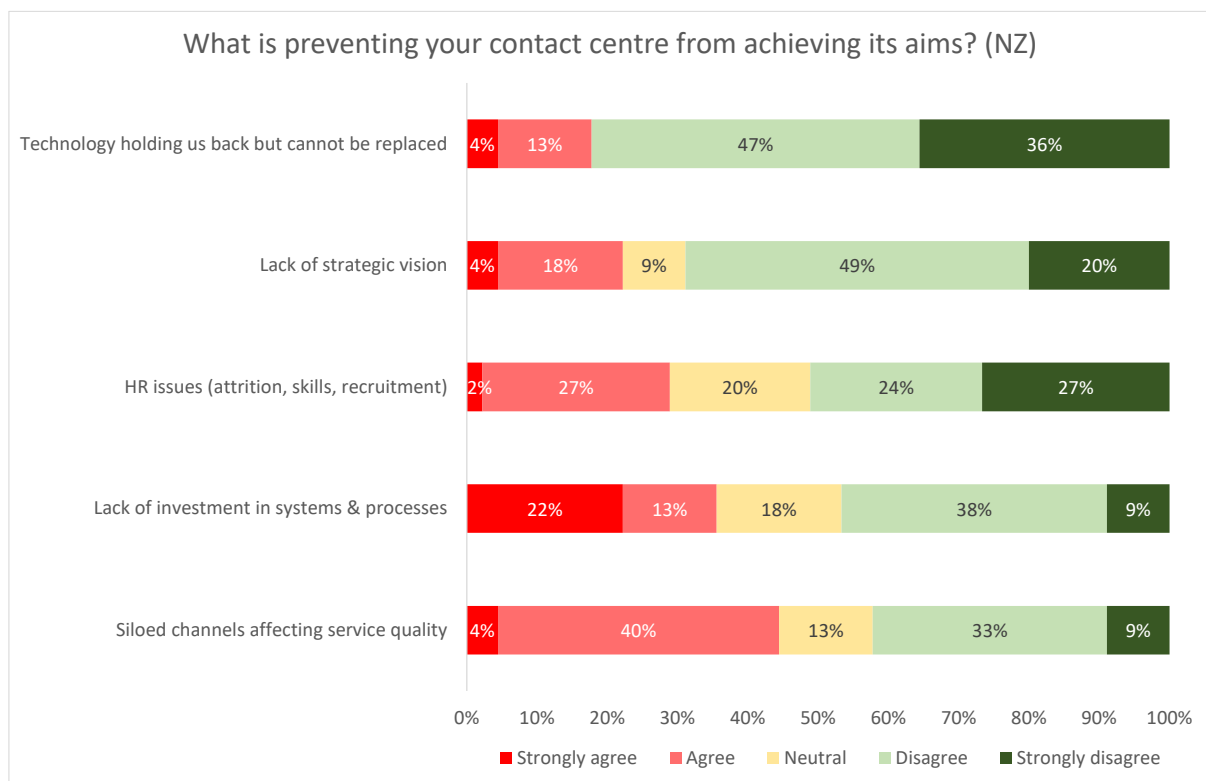
From the perspective of New Zealand businesses, there is far less concern across the board that issues are holding back the contact centre.

With 43% of survey respondents mentioning it, the main concern was that siloed channels were affecting service quality and preventing true omnichannel: this is probably connected with the high level of digital channels used by NZ customers.

A lack of investment was also seen as major factor holding back the contact centre (37% against 50% in 2023), with a lack of strategic vision from the higher levels of the organisation also seen as a major problem by 29% of survey respondents (36% in 2023).

HR issues were of concern to 29% of NZ survey respondents (against 57% in 2023), while legacy technology was rarely seen as a major problem (17% vs 21% in 2023).

**Figure 44: What is preventing your contact centre from achieving its aims? (New Zealand)**



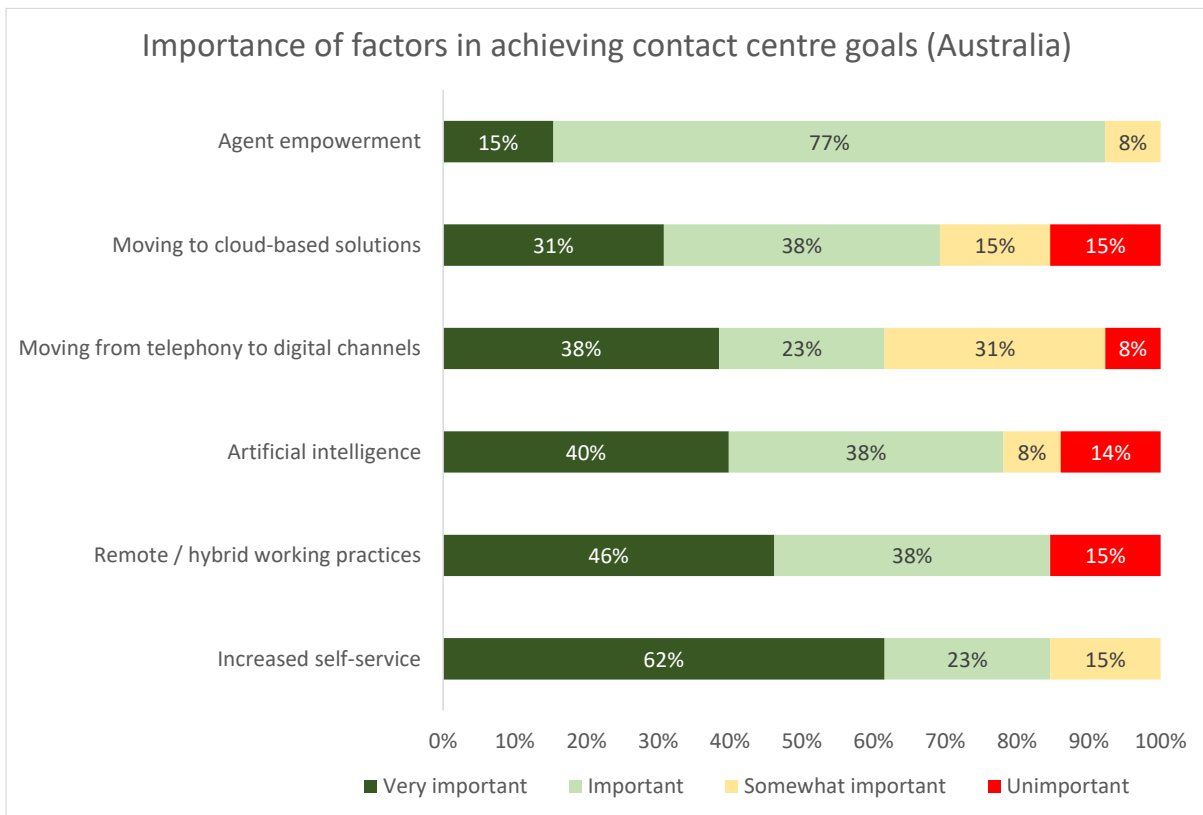
Australian survey respondents were asked their opinion on how important various customer experience developments would be to their organisation in the next two years.

The most important factor determining the future success of the customer experience programme was said to be increasing the uptake of self-service, with 62% of respondents stating this was very important (2023: 47%).

AI was perhaps seen as less important than might be expected, with 40% of respondents stating it to be very important (2023: 21%), but 14% rating it unimportant.

While 92% of respondents said that agent empowerment was important or very important, the proportion rating it the latter has dropped from 56% to 15% since 2023.

**Figure 45: Importance of factors in achieving contact centre goals (Australia)**

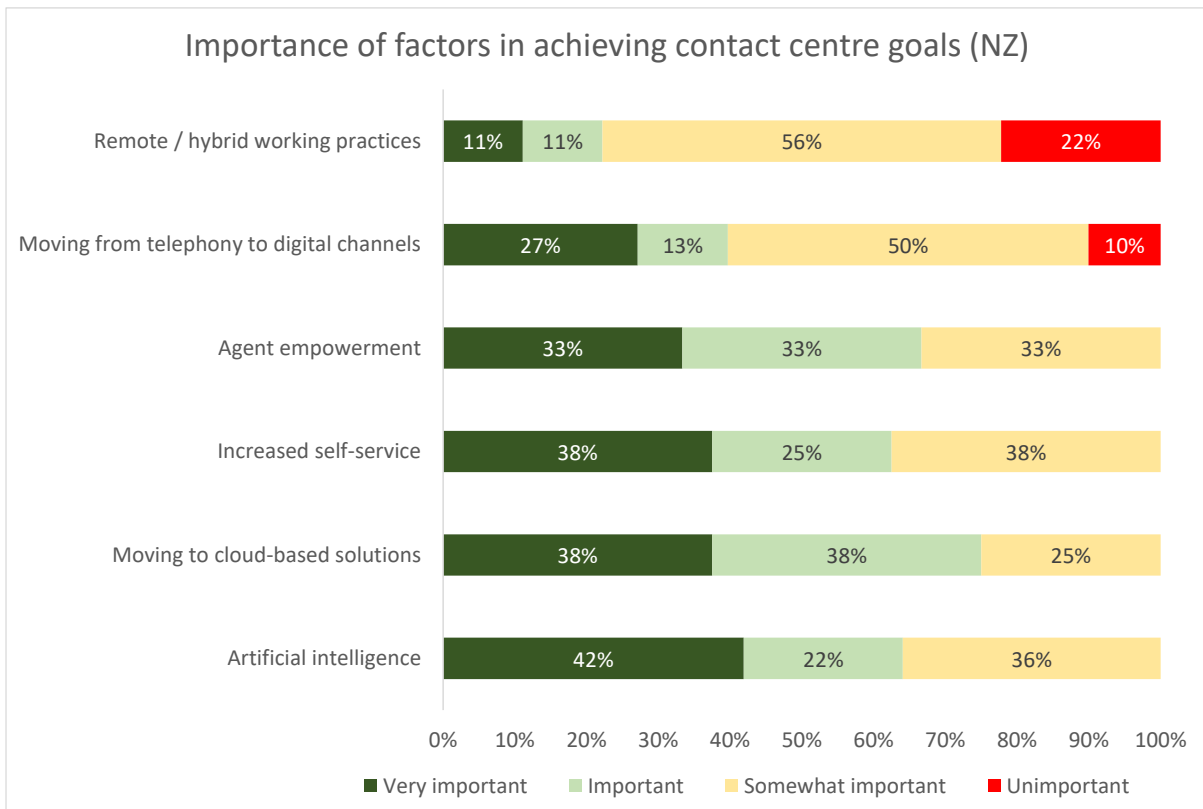


For New Zealand survey respondents, these factors are generally seen as less important than for Australian contact centres, which rarely chose “somewhat important” as an option.

While AI was the most-chosen “very important” factor, there is still not widespread belief that it will be critical to the contact centre’s goals in the next two years. It has risen from 29% to 42% since 2023.

Cloud and agent empowerment are seen as key components of contact centre success, with self-service also being seen as important for over half of survey respondents.

**Figure 46: Importance of factors in achieving contact centre goals (New Zealand)**



## ABOUT CONTACTBABEL

ContactBabel is the contact centre industry expert. If you have a question about how the industry works, or where it's heading, the chances are we have the answer.

We help contact centres compare themselves to their closest competitors so they can understand what they are doing well, what needs to improve and how they can do this.

The coverage provided by our massive and ongoing primary research projects is matched by our experience analysing the contact centre industry. We understand how technology, people and process best fit together and how they will work collectively in the future.

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  - Fraud Reduction & PCI Compliance
  - Omnichannel Workforce Optimisation
  - Remote & Hybrid Working Contact Centre Solutions
  - Self-Service
  - South African Contact Centres
  - Voice of the Customer
  
- **The UK Contact Centre Decision-Makers' Guide**
- **The UK Customer Experience Decision-Makers' Guide**
- **UK Contact Centre Verticals:** Communications; Finance; Insurance; Outsourcing; Retail & Distribution; Travel; Utilities
- **AI in UK Contact Centre Verticals:** Finance; Insurance; Retail & Distribution; Utilities
  
- **The US Contact Centre Decision-Makers' Guide**
- **The US Customer Experience Decision-Makers' Guide**
- **US Contact Centre Verticals:** Finance; Insurance; Outsourcing; Public Sector; Retail & Distribution
- **AI in US Contact Centre Verticals:** Finance; Insurance; Retail & Distribution
  
- **The AI Series:** how can AI help contact centres' operational and commercial issues? Research reports: First-Contact Resolution; Sales Growth; Workforce Engagement; Business Insights: Customer Insights; Agent Productivity; Digital Customer Contact; Contact Centre Cost Reduction; Customer Satisfaction.