

The state of service expectations

WHAT YOUR
CUSTOMERS REALLY
WANT FROM SERVICE
AND SUPPORT

★ Foreword

01 The non-negotiables of customer service

02 AI where it helps, human where it counts

03 Customer loyalty: Why they stay, why they leave

■ Methodology

78%

of customers say they are more loyal to brands when they trust the customer service



*Foreword

80%

say customer service shapes
their overall brand perception.

→ Find out why in chapter 3

Today, customers have the power of choice — and they know it. Whether they're choosing a logistics broker who can coordinate seamless transportation or customer service software with a highly responsive and proactive support team, buyers carefully weigh their options before committing to a business.

Even if a brand earns a customer's business, customer loyalty is not a guarantee. With so many other options out on the market, even a single bad service experience can create an opening. In fact, 59% of customers say they'll leave a brand, or advocate doing so, after three or fewer bad experiences. The businesses that excel in customer service are best positioned to grow, whether through fast responses, quick-to-resolve support, or a nice personalized touch.

Brands keep one-upping each other to set new standards for customer service. And with AI improving operations, democratizing customer insights, and resolving more customer needs, the bar for exceptional customer service is only getting higher.

The list of what customers define as table stakes for customer service continues to grow. Are you keeping up?

At Front, we wanted to know what's behind those rising customer expectations. We surveyed 4,500 desk workers to understand what makes them stay or stray from companies that sell the tools and services essential to their work. In this report, you'll find:

- The non-negotiables of customer service, including the key factors that drive trust and loyalty
- The current customer sentiment towards AI-powered customer service
- Why fast, accurate, and proactive support is a competitive advantage
- Practical customer service strategies to help your team deliver standout service

We hope this report will help you understand the service qualities that matter most to your customers — and how to meet them where they are. I'm excited for you to dive in.



Kenji Hayward
Head of Support, Front
[linkedin.com/kenjihayward](https://www.linkedin.com/in/kenjihayward)



01

KEY TAKEAWAY

Customers covet fast responses, efficient resolutions, accurate answers, and personalized service (but not too personal).

The non-negotiables of customer service

The non-negotiables

Customers want fast and fuss-free answers

Fast replies are no longer exclusive to B2C customer service. Quick responses are just as high in demand for B2B customer interactions. But customers don’t just demand responsiveness; they also want their inquiries resolved as easily as possible.

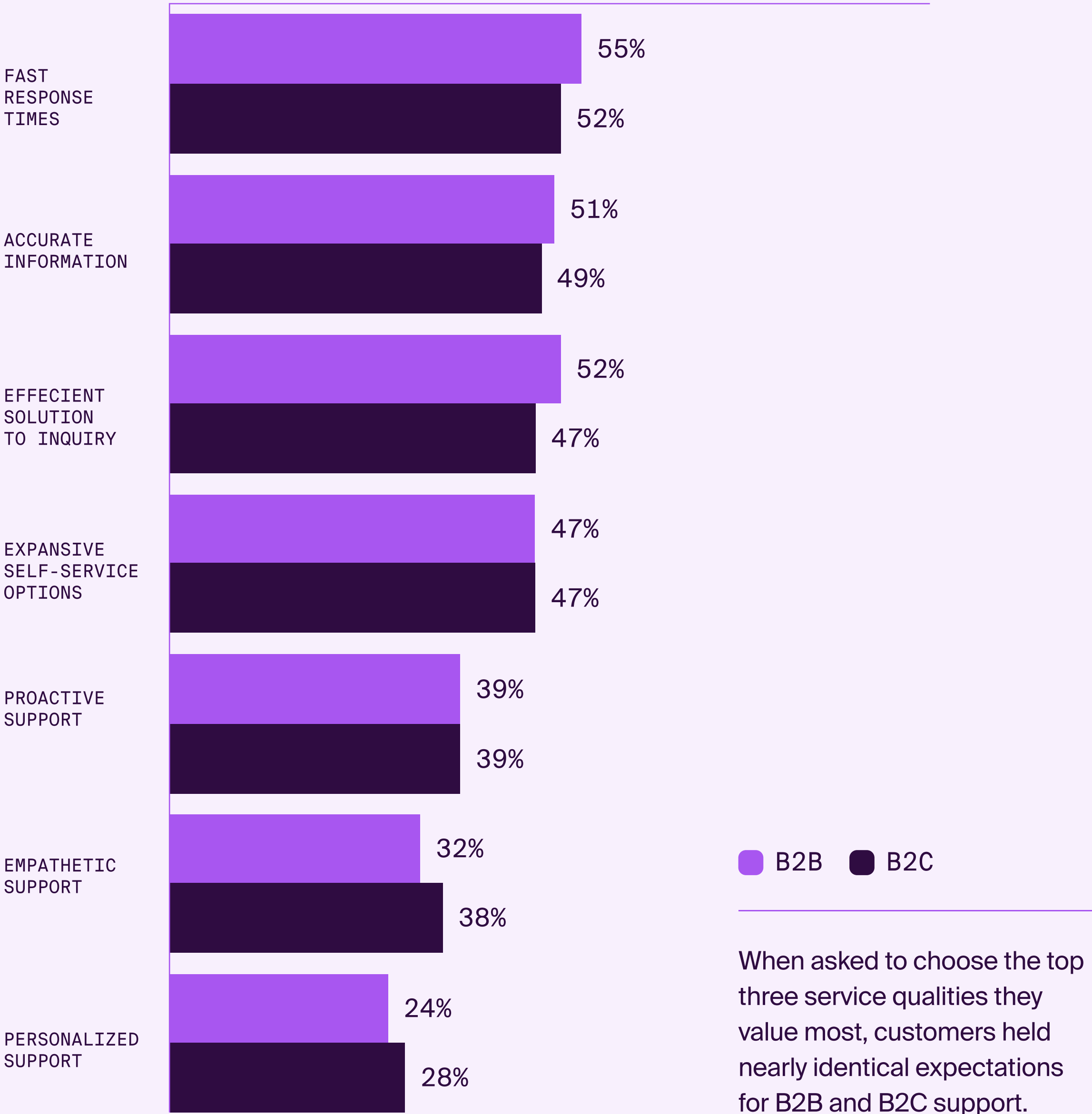
Fast response times were the most frequently cited ‘top service quality’ in both B2B and B2C experiences. The second most important quality differed: B2B customers prioritized efficiency, while B2C customers valued accuracy. (We’ll get to accuracy in the next section.)

How long is a customer willing to wait?

< 2 hours

One-third of customers expect to hear back on their inquiry in 2 hours or less, no matter the industry, software, or service.

Top “most valued” service qualities



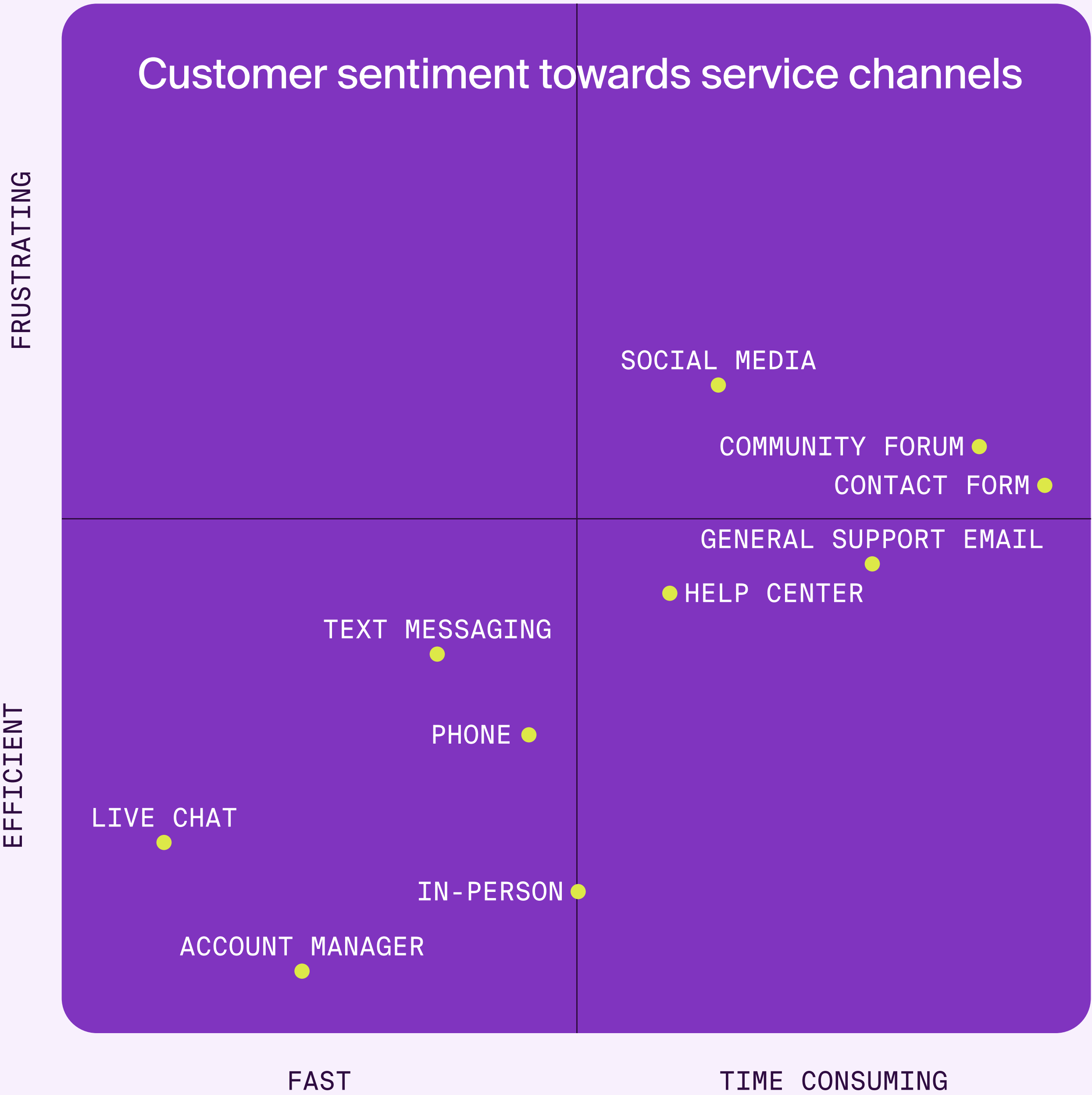
There are many ways to contact customer service, but not all channels are equal. Customers feel differently about how fast or slow and how efficient or frustrating a support channel can be. 28% of customers think phone and account managers are the fastest way to get help while 33% find contact forms as the most time-consuming.

36% found account managers to be the most efficient, whereas 24% thought contact forms as the most frustrating.

The bottom line? Customers want real-time help and find involving a human is the fastest and most efficient way to solve their problems.



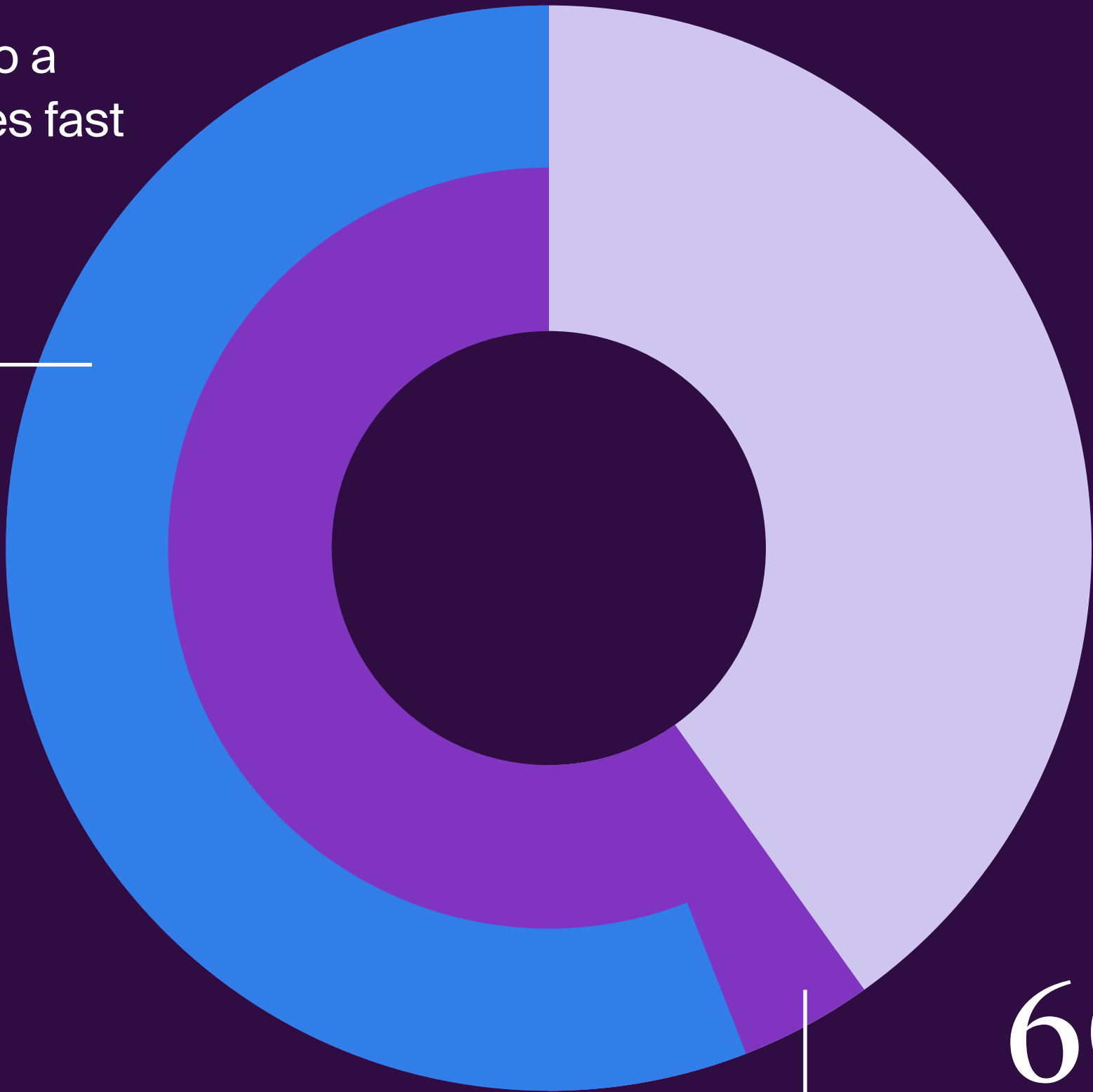
While live chat is fast and easy to use, it ranks lower for service quality than in-person or phone.



Responsiveness drives loyalty and revenue

55%

feel more loyal to a brand that replies fast and is attentive

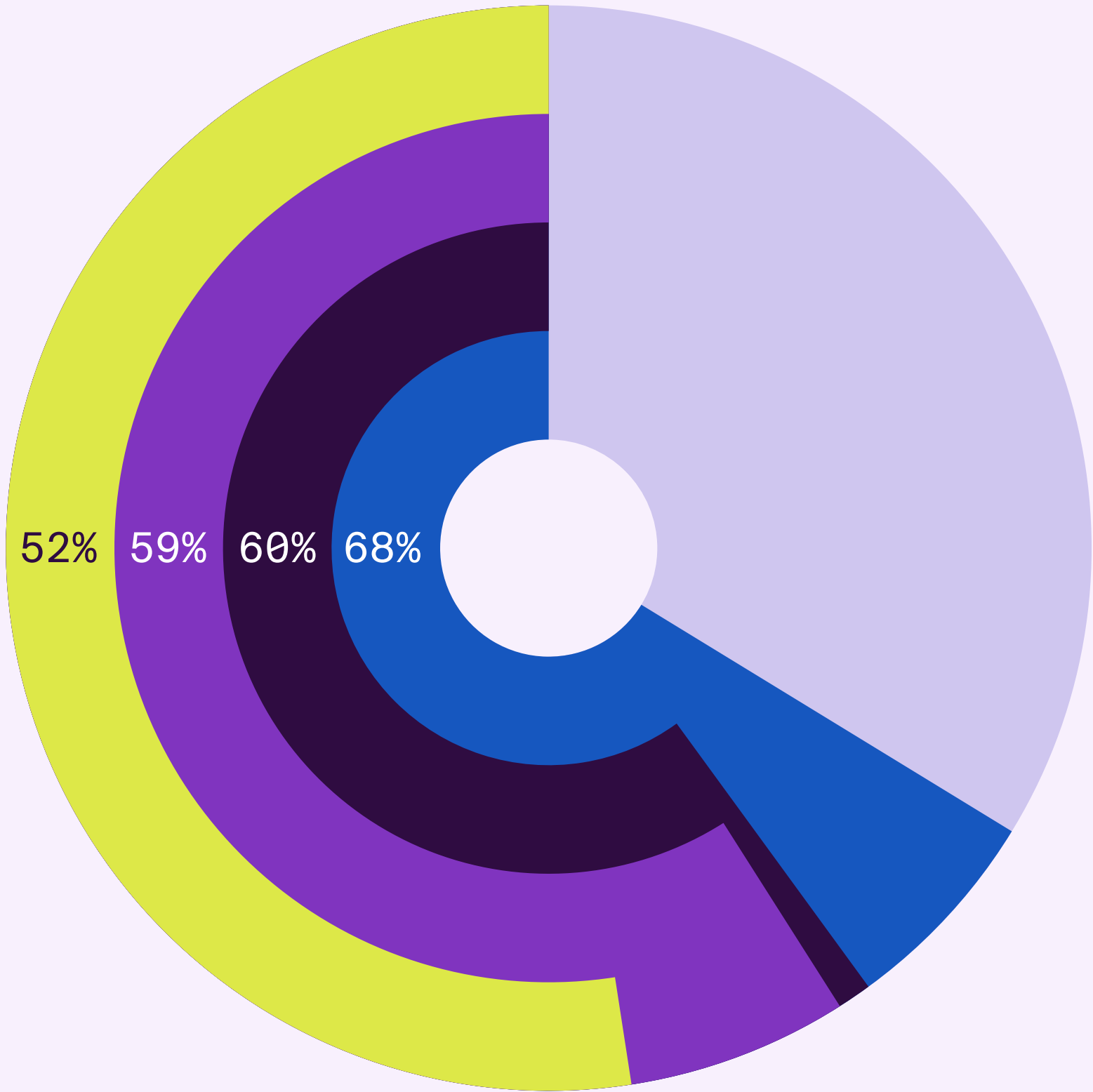


60%

would be willing to pay more for faster response times

Speed matters so much that customers are willing to pay a premium to ensure they have reliable access to fast service.

Who'd pay more for faster replies?



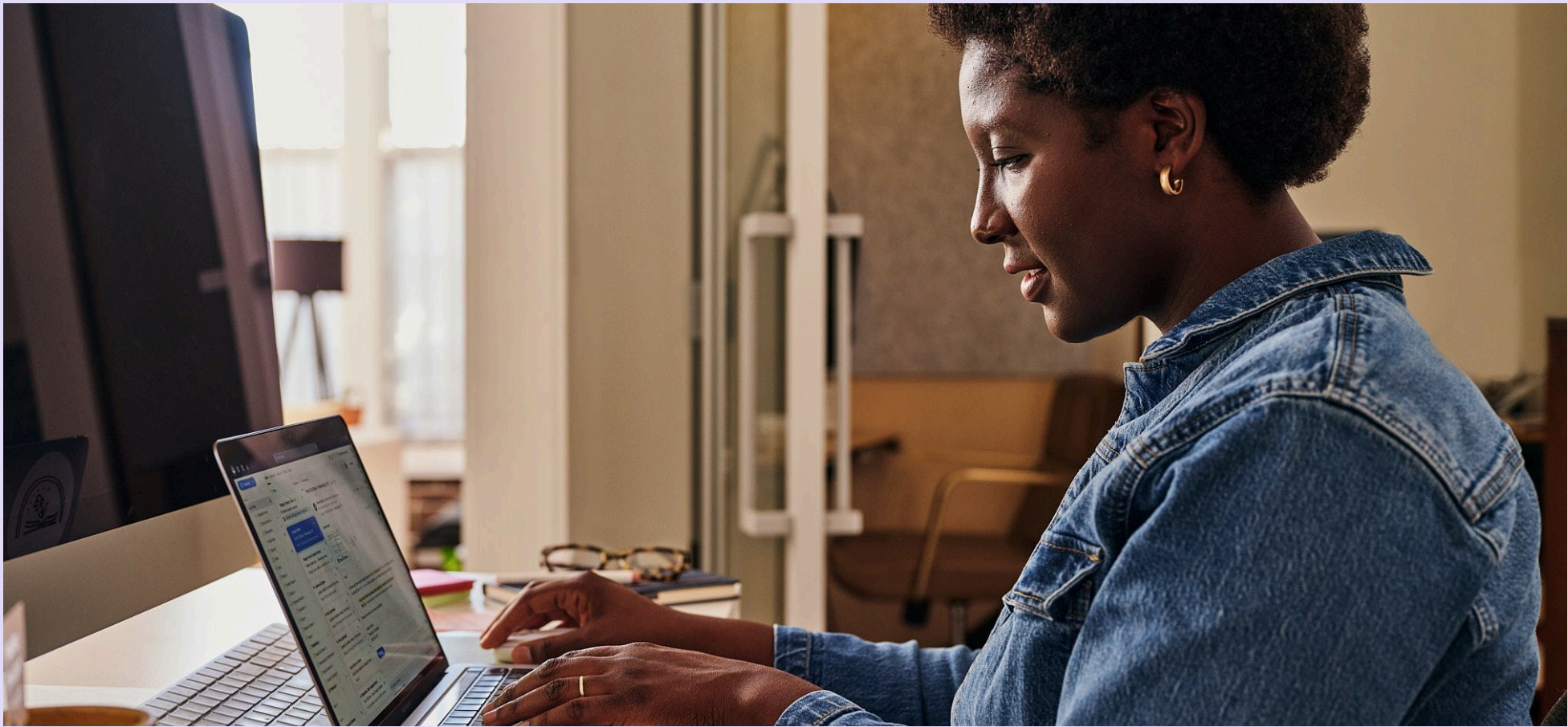
- LOGISTICS
- FINANCIAL SERVICES
- PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
- SAAS

Willingness to pay more varies by service, with SaaS users valuing responsiveness the most.

The non-negotiables

Gain trust with accurate and reliable service

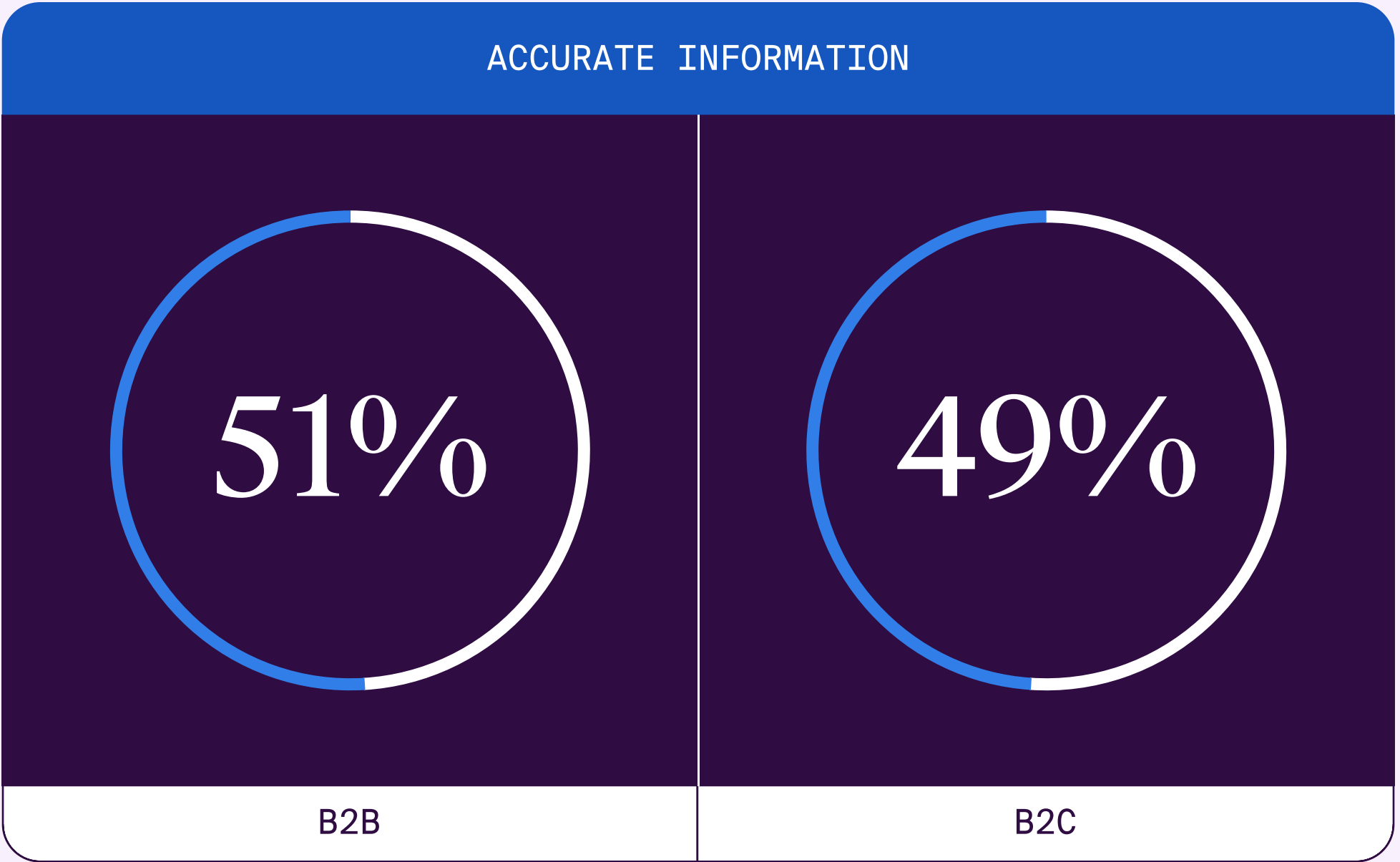
When customers want help, they expect error-free, fact-checked, and legitimate answers. This expectation is a big driver of building trust and strengthening brand loyalty.



A higher standard in SaaS

17%

SaaS users are 17% more likely to expect agents to understand the context of their issue from the get-go.

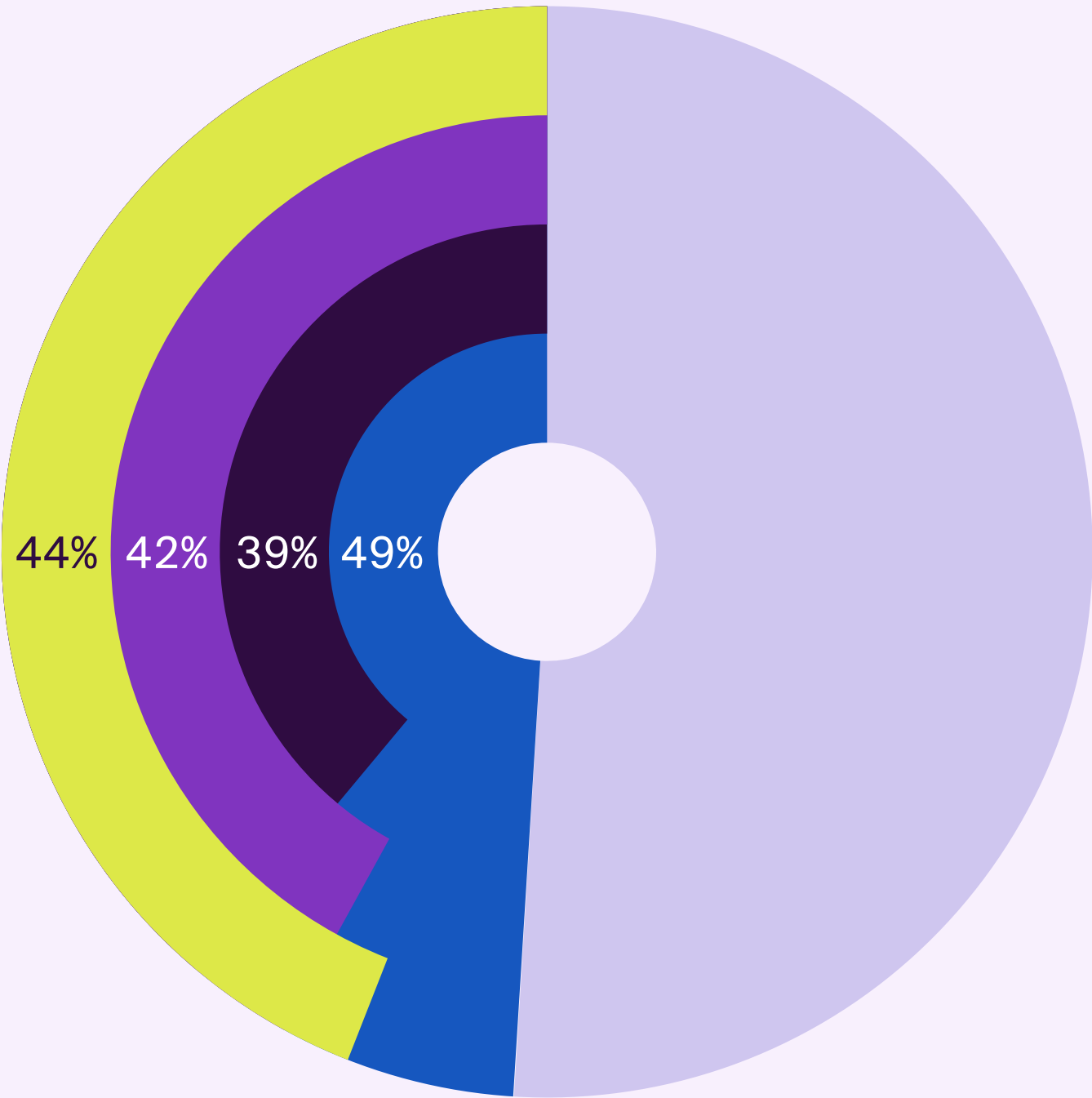
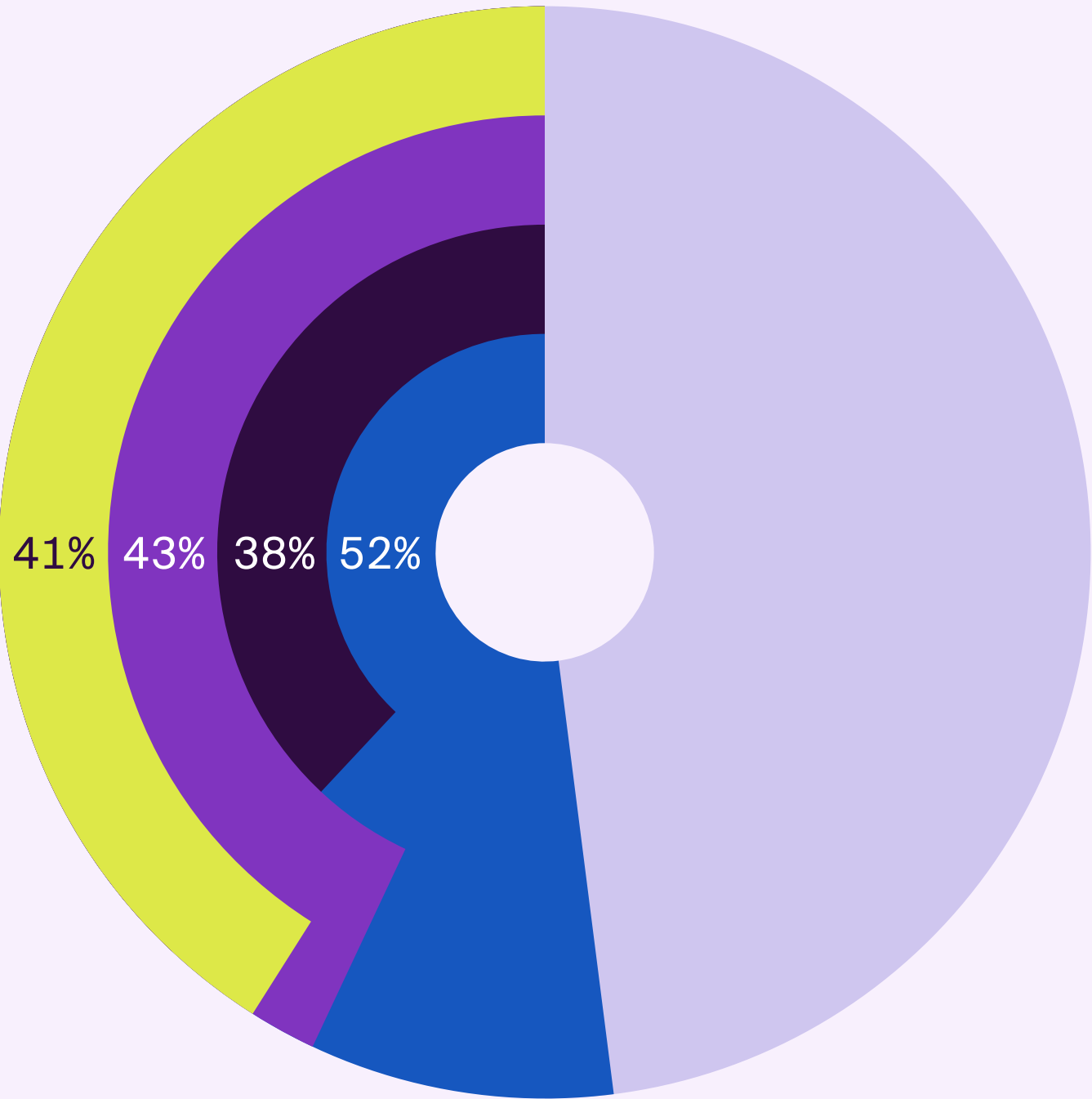
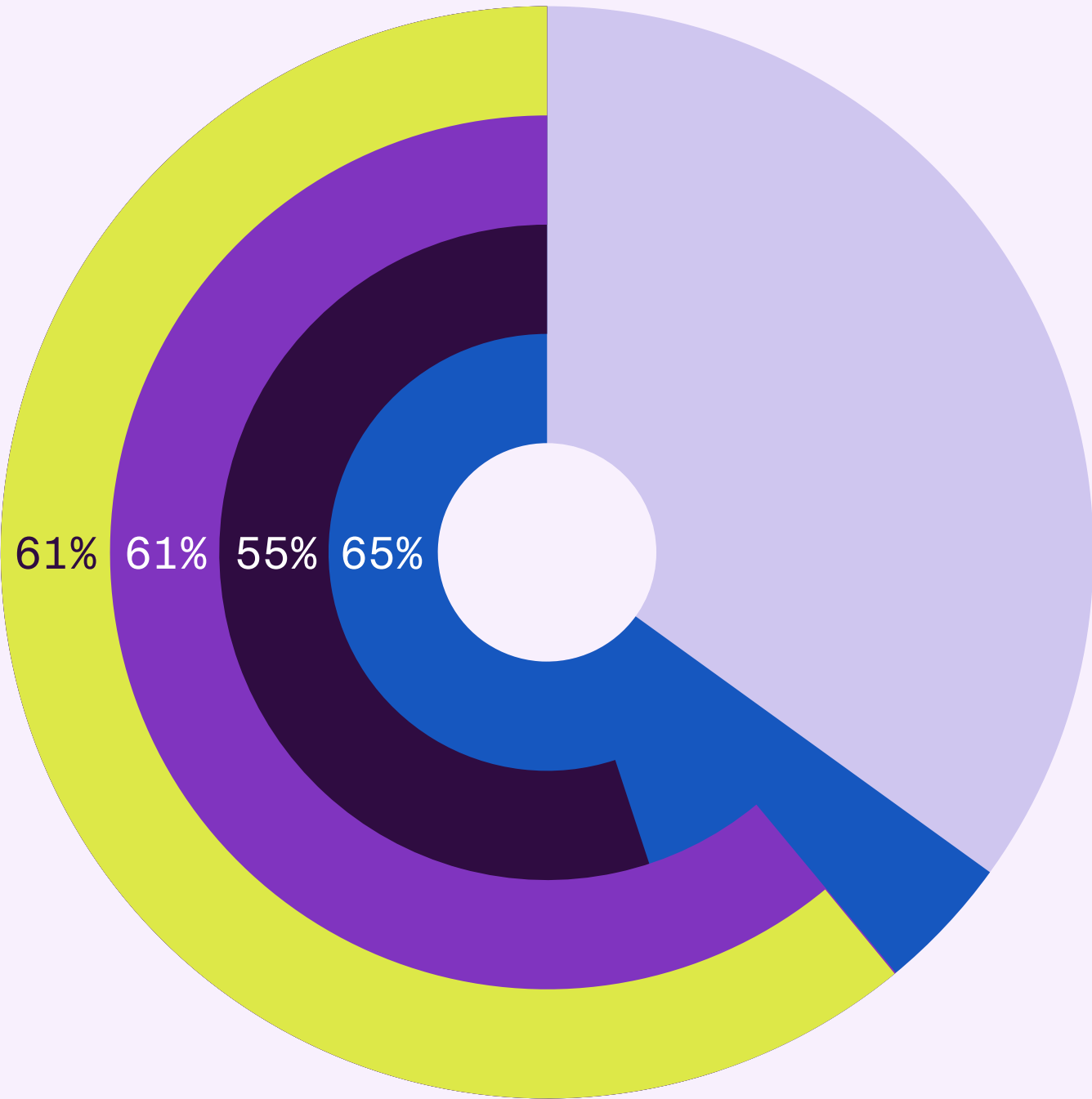


Half of B2B and B2C customers call out accurate information as one of the top qualities of customer service.

When customers ask questions, they want accurate answers in real-time — meaning they’re craving support to be knowledgeable. Customers expect agents to already understand the context and offer solutions they didn’t expect, especially SaaS app users.

- LOGISTICS USERS
- FINANCIAL SERVICES USERS
- PROFESSIONAL SERVICES USERS
- SAAS USERS

Traits of high-quality customer service



Real-time, accurate answers to my questions

The agent already understands the context

The agent offers a solution I didn’t expect

The non-negotiables

The power (and pitfalls) of personalization

Half of customers say they are less likely to return to a business that fails to offer a personalized B2C experience — even if their first experience was a good one. Customers expect businesses to have a certain level of knowledge about them without providing additional info.

Personalization matters just as much to B2B customers: Two-thirds¹ expect the same or better personalization in their professional lives compared to their personal lives.

Are you leveraging data to personalize?

56%

Expect businesses to already have data to personalize B2C experiences without any additional input.

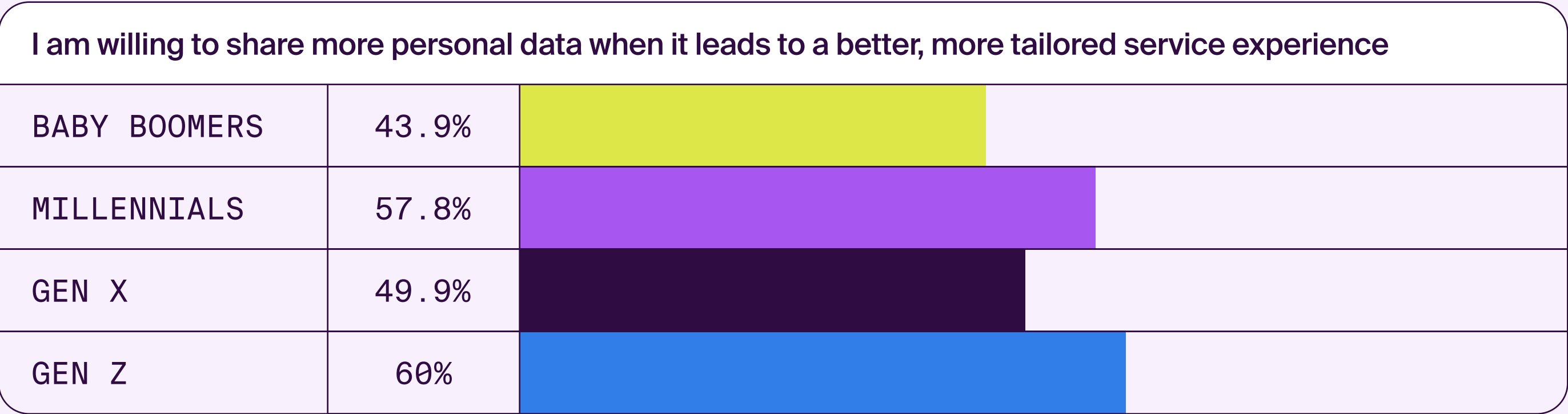
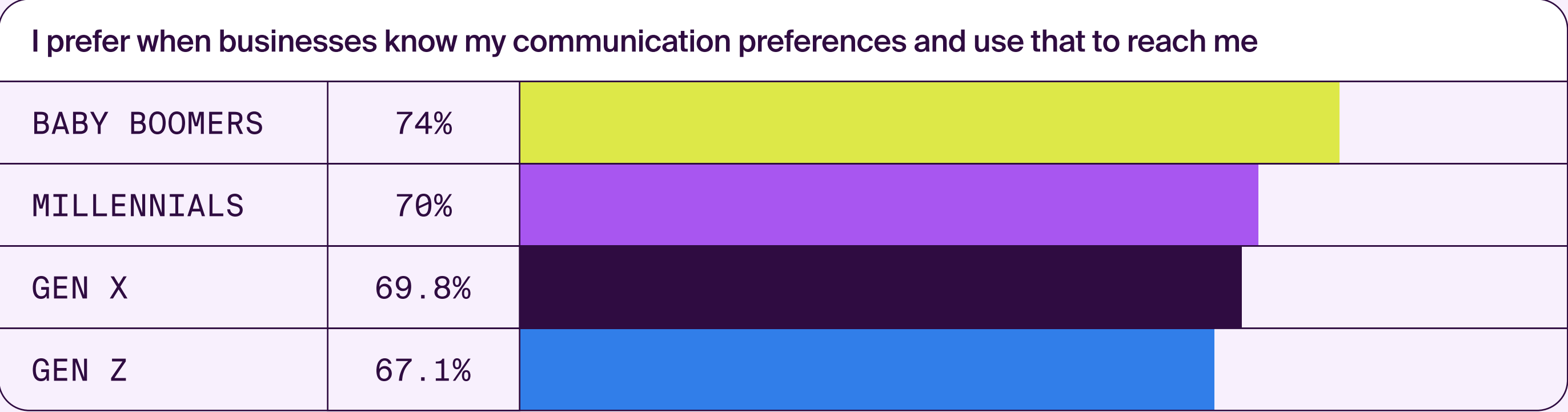


have privacy concerns over excessive personalization

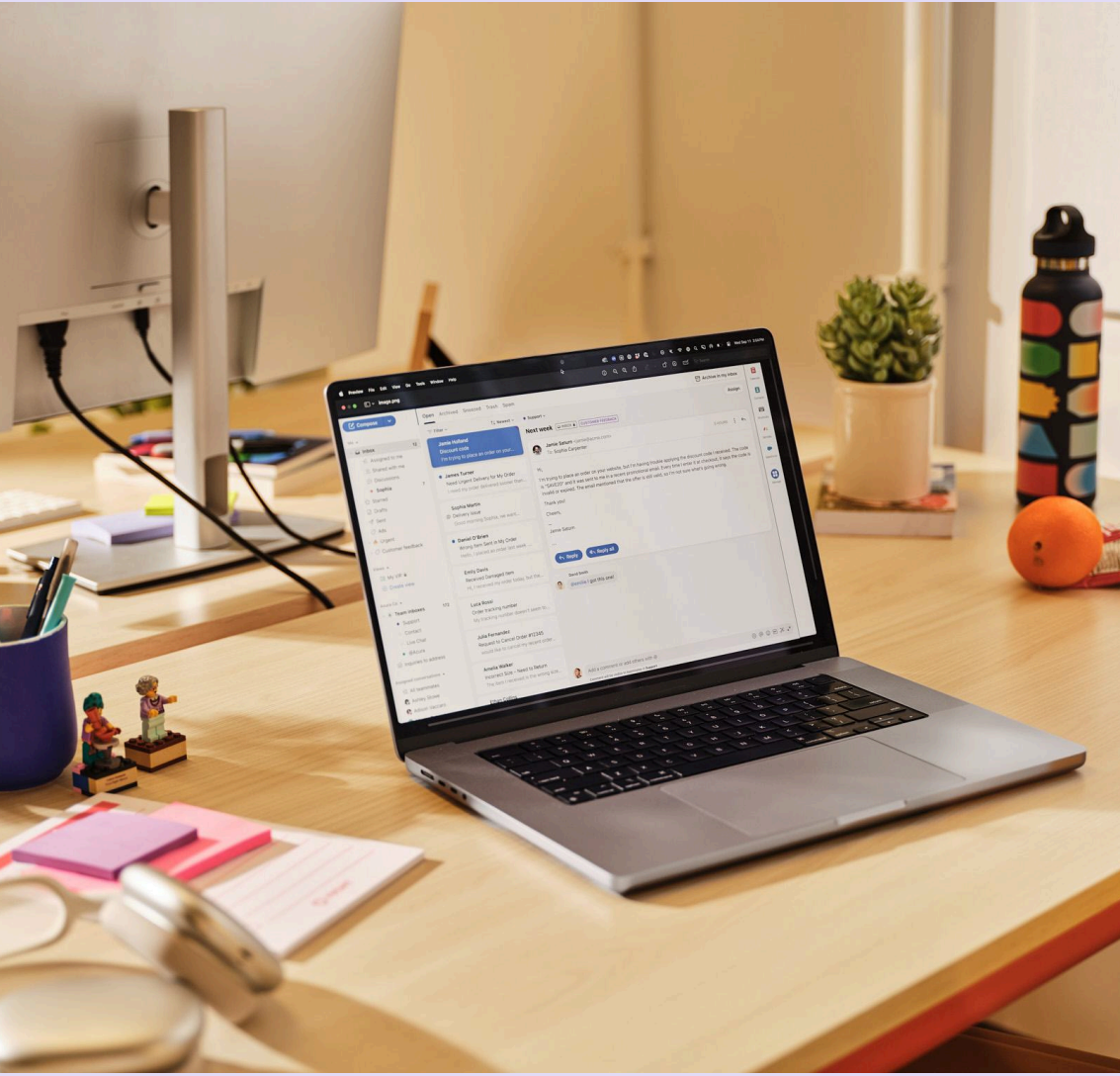


are more loyal to brands that tailor their experiences from past interactions

1. "Personalization at Scale", Adobe, 2022



SaaS users appreciate B2C personalization far more than other industries.

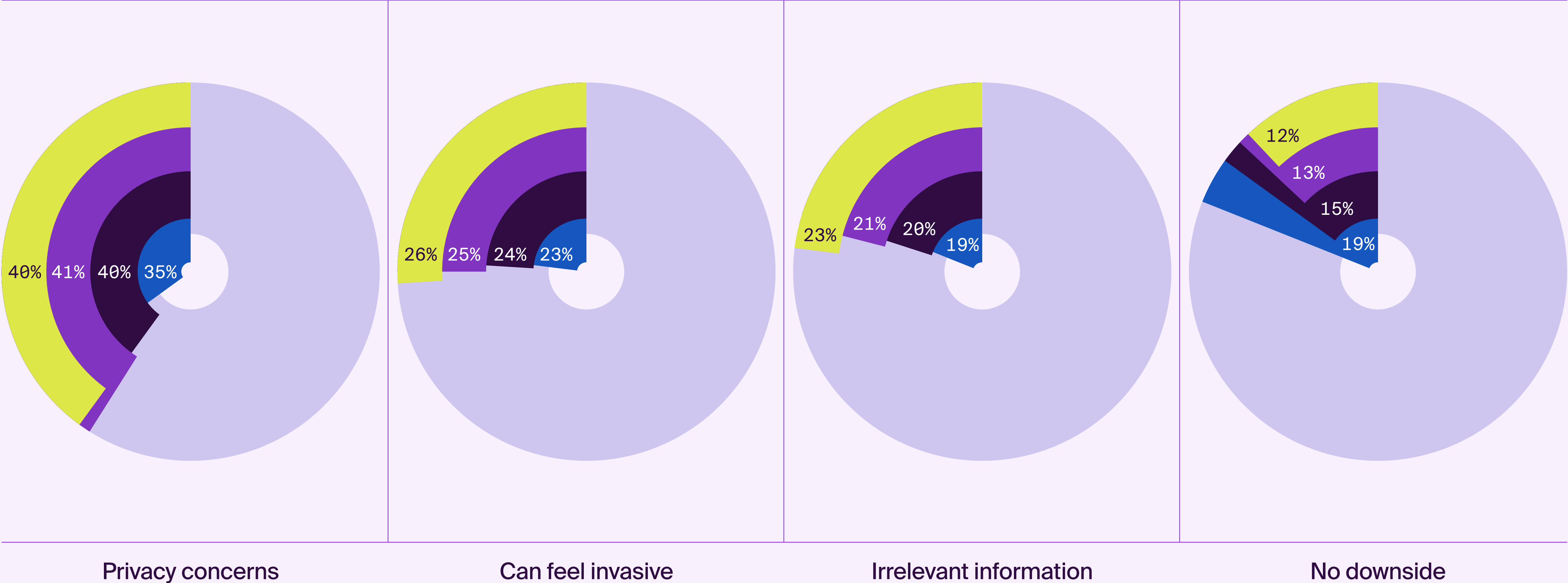


There are also generational preferences for personalization, making it challenging for businesses to balance the right level of customization. For example, Baby Boomers want businesses to know their communication preferences, Millennials want to receive relevant offers, and Gen Z are the most open to sharing more personal data for tailored experiences.

Over-indexing on personalization causes data security concerns and can start to feel invasive. On the flip side, SaaS users are 27% more likely than the other industries to see no downsides in more personalized experiences. As B2B borrows more elements from B2C experiences, customer service leaders need to monitor both buying behaviors — at the end of the day, B2B customers are also consumers swayed by similar appeal.

- LOGISTICS USERS
- FINANCIAL SERVICES USERS
- PROFESSIONAL SERVICES USERS
- SAAS USERS

Downsides of too much personalization

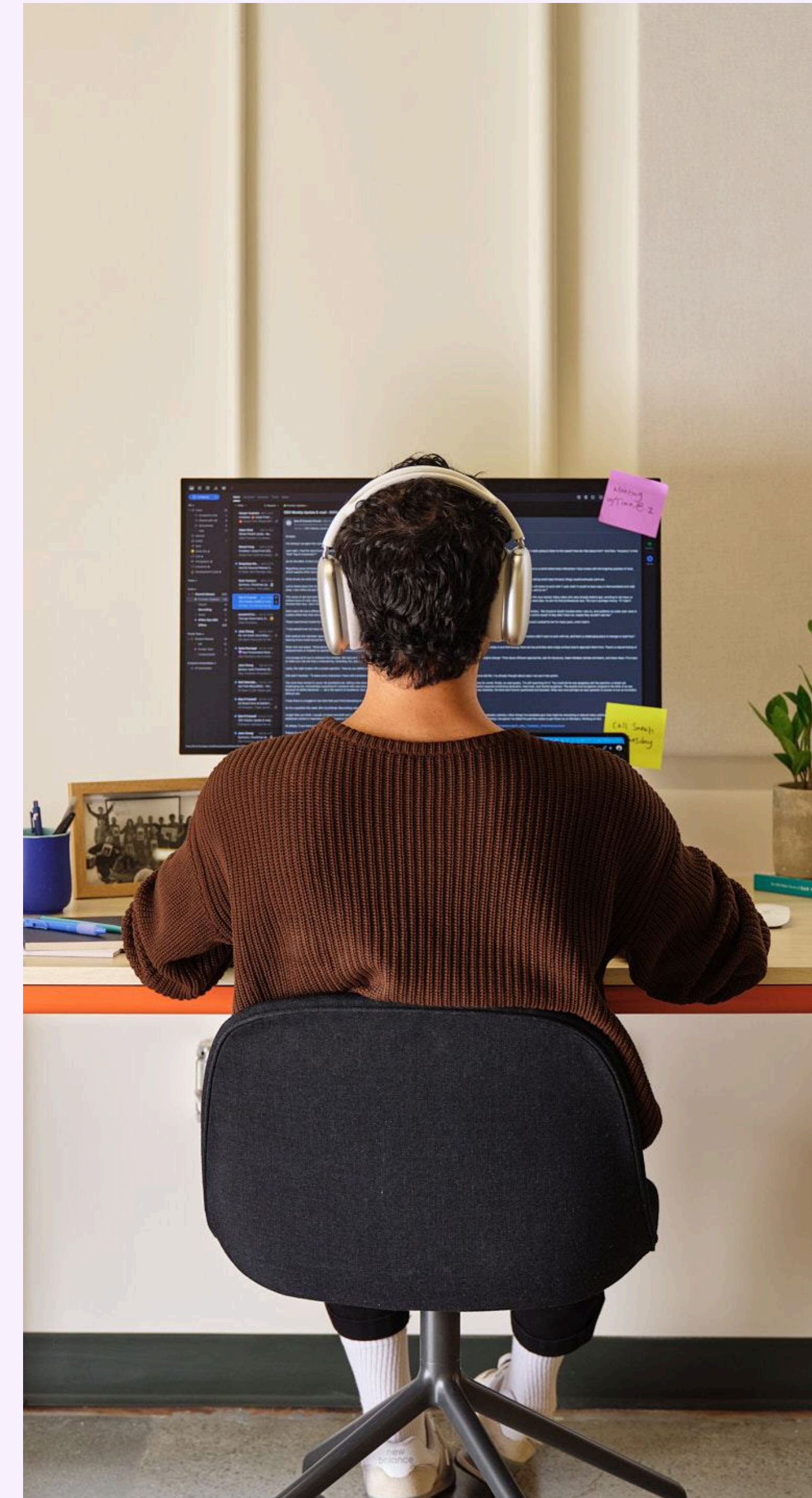


“ Even with the way that AI is shaping service delivery today, customer's non-negotiables haven't changed. They want accessible, accurate, and effective support. AI can make or break that experience. It's non-negotiable for service leaders to understand our customers and their goals first.



Neal Travis

Head of Customer Experience
Academy to Innovate HR (AIHR)





What does this mean for my service strategy?

01

Use AI and automation to reduce response times, but make it easy to reach a human if needed.

02

Invest in omnichannel support so customers can get help when and how they want it.

03

Leverage tools that give 360° customer visibility and have seamless handoff processes in place for agents to have all context at their fingertips.

04

Understand customer needs — either through customer-facing teams or technology that can track customer signals and trends — to offer the right level of personalization.

02

KEY TAKEAWAY

AI should be used strategically to augment, not replace, customer service teams. Customers still value human connection and often turn to humans first when they want high-quality service.

AI where it helps,
human where
it counts

Know AI, trust AI: Why daily users see customer service differently

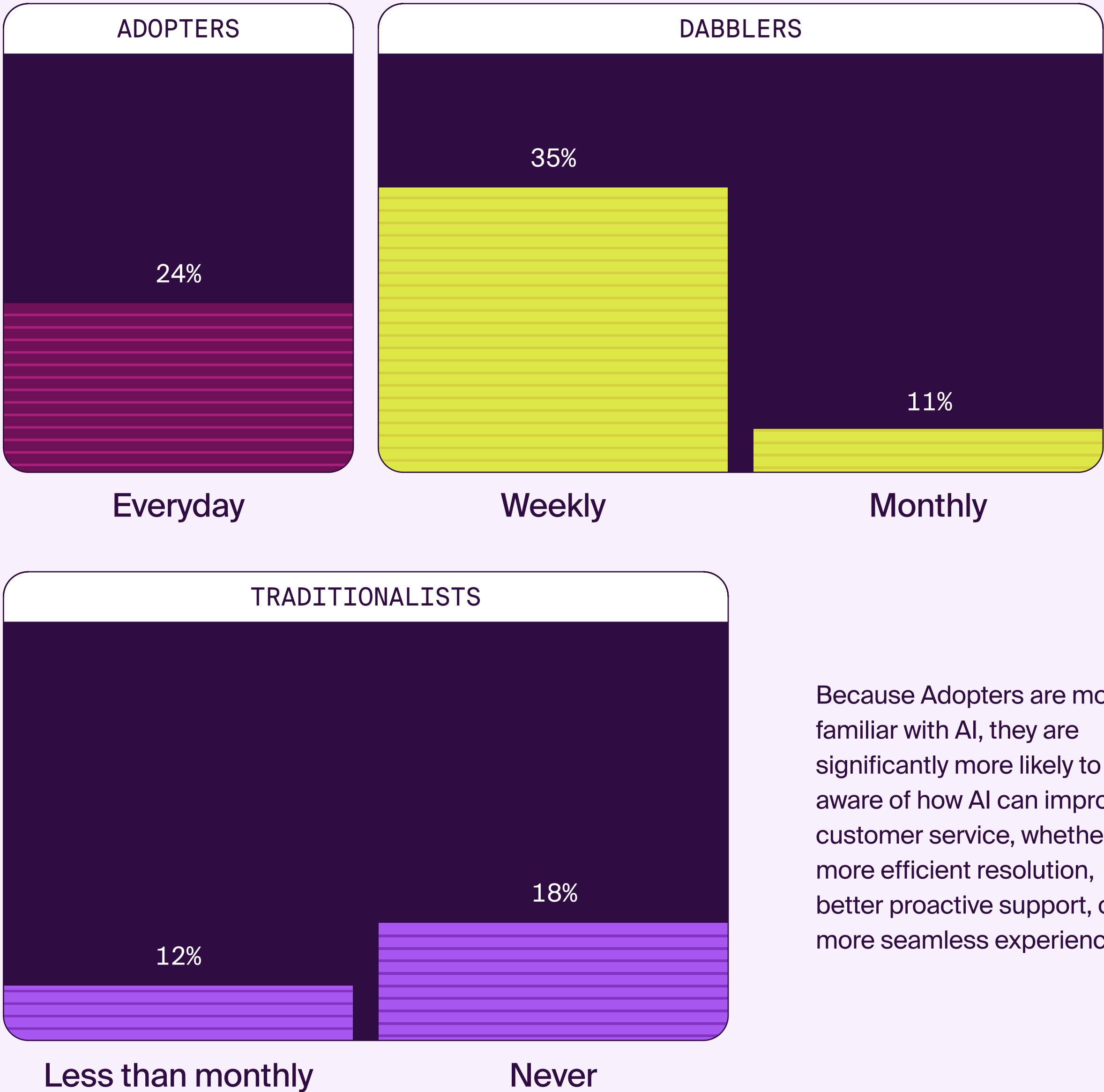
70% of customers use AI for work at least monthly, but only about a quarter use AI daily. While AI is most commonly used for writing or research, these daily-use “Adopters” are using AI for more advanced tasks like data analysis, time management, or coding.

What makes AI trustworthy?

35%

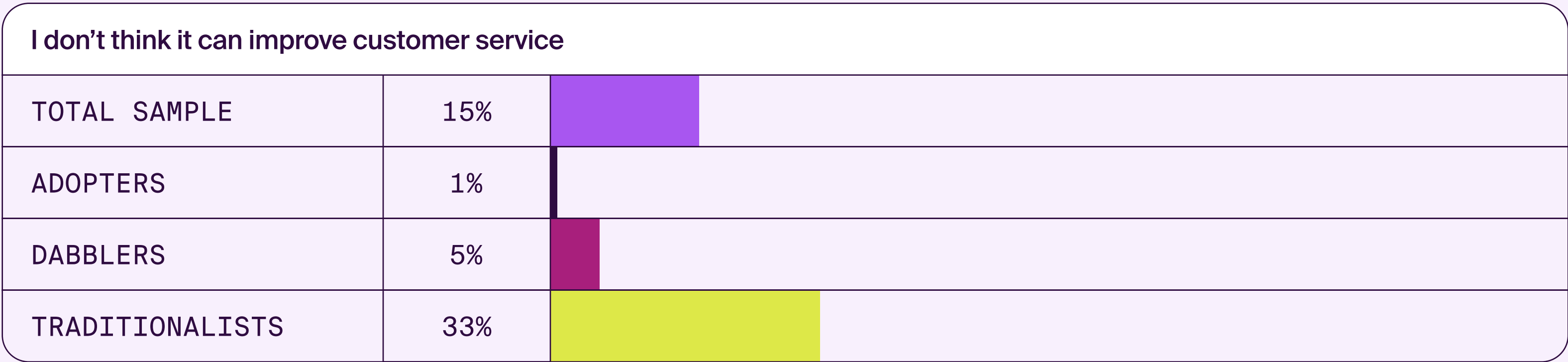
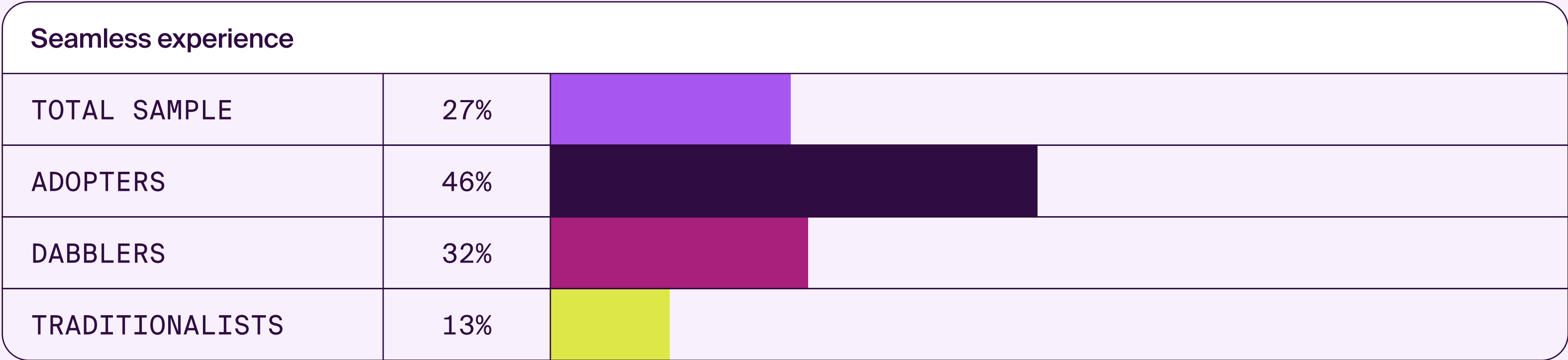
What do customers need from AI-driven customer service to trust it? They value accuracy 35% more than speed.

AI usage frequency at work

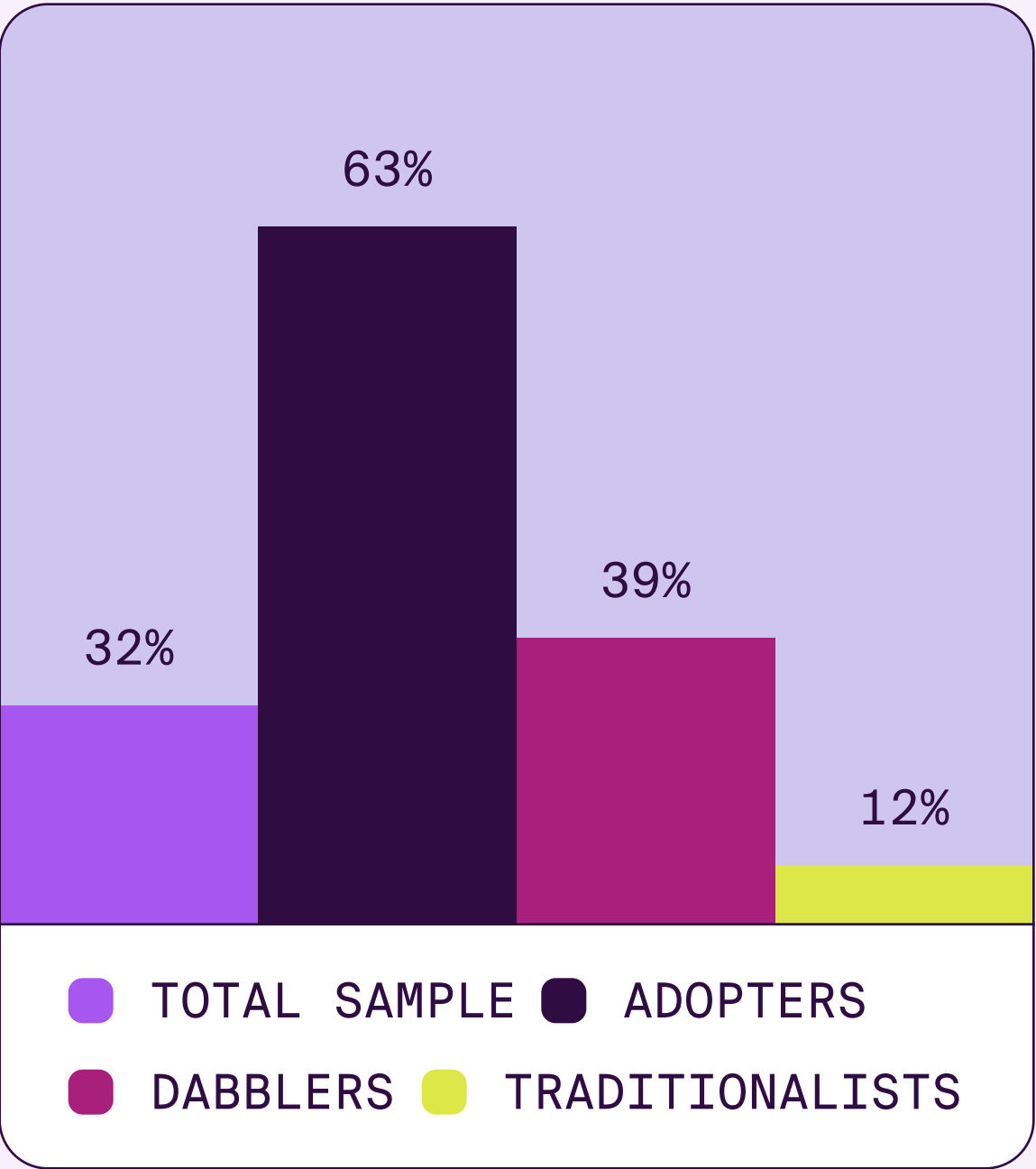


Because Adopters are more familiar with AI, they are significantly more likely to be aware of how AI can improve customer service, whether it’s more efficient resolution, better proactive support, or more seamless experiences.

AI benefits to customer support



Since Adopters use AI more frequently at work, their perception of businesses using AI in their customer experience is much more positive than Traditionalists, who seldom use AI.



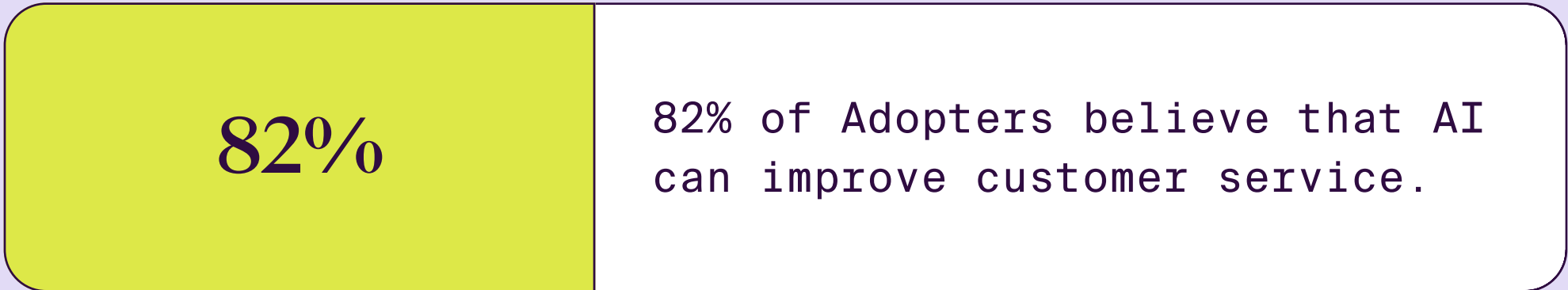
A business that uses AI cares more about their customers' experiences than those that don't (% that agree)

AI where it helps

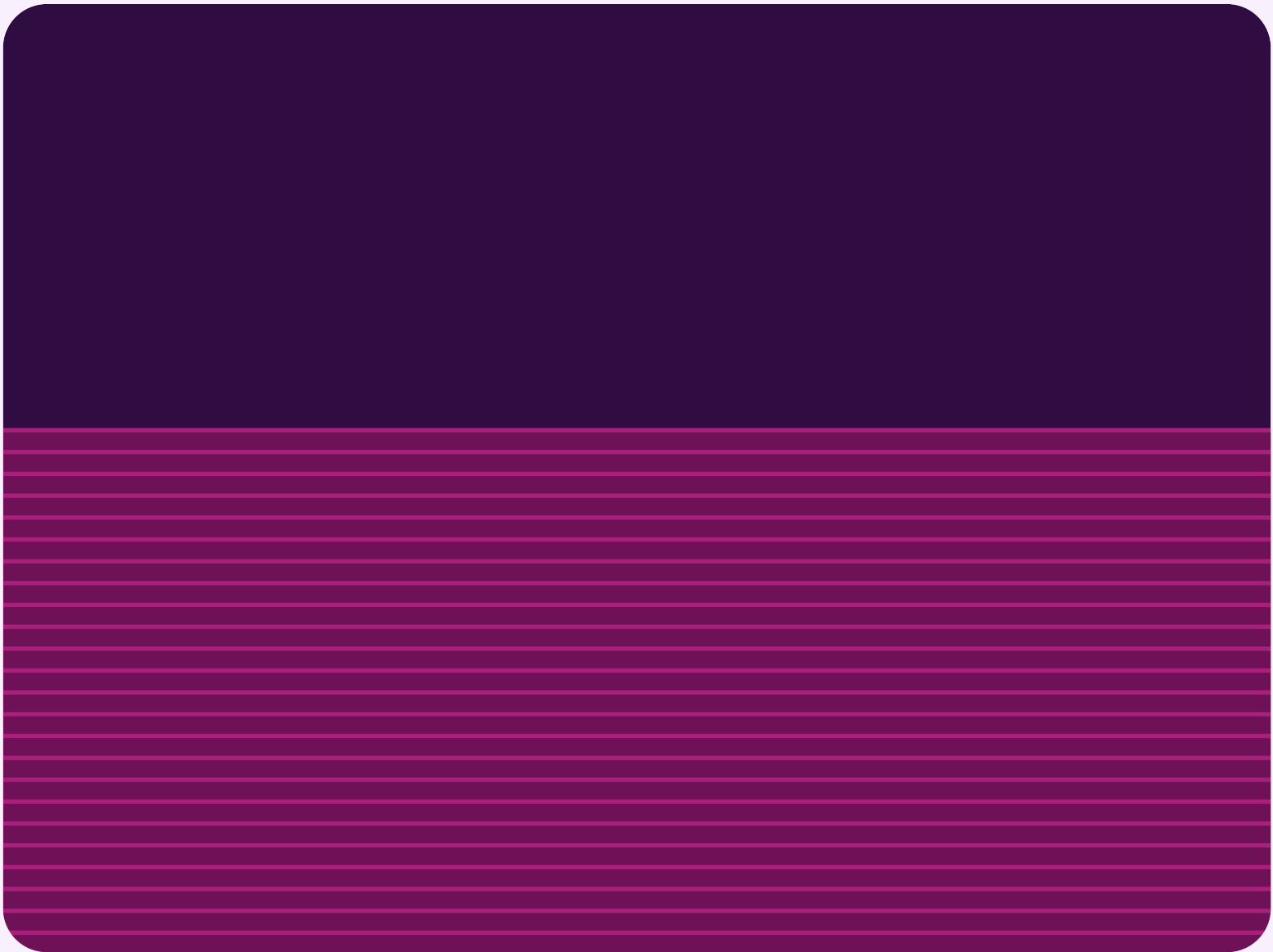
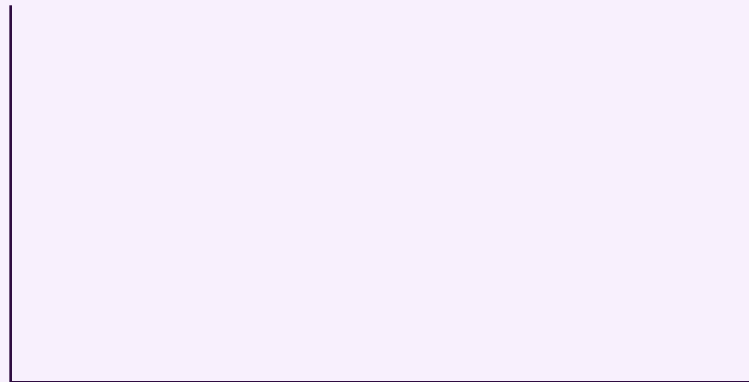
The AI paradox: Promise vs. frustration

After years of chatbots and interactive voice response (IVR) that provided a mediocre experience at best, the rapid advancement of AI-powered customer service promises a more conversational and efficient way to get support. Now, AI can handle simple inquiries and leave the more complex ones to humans.

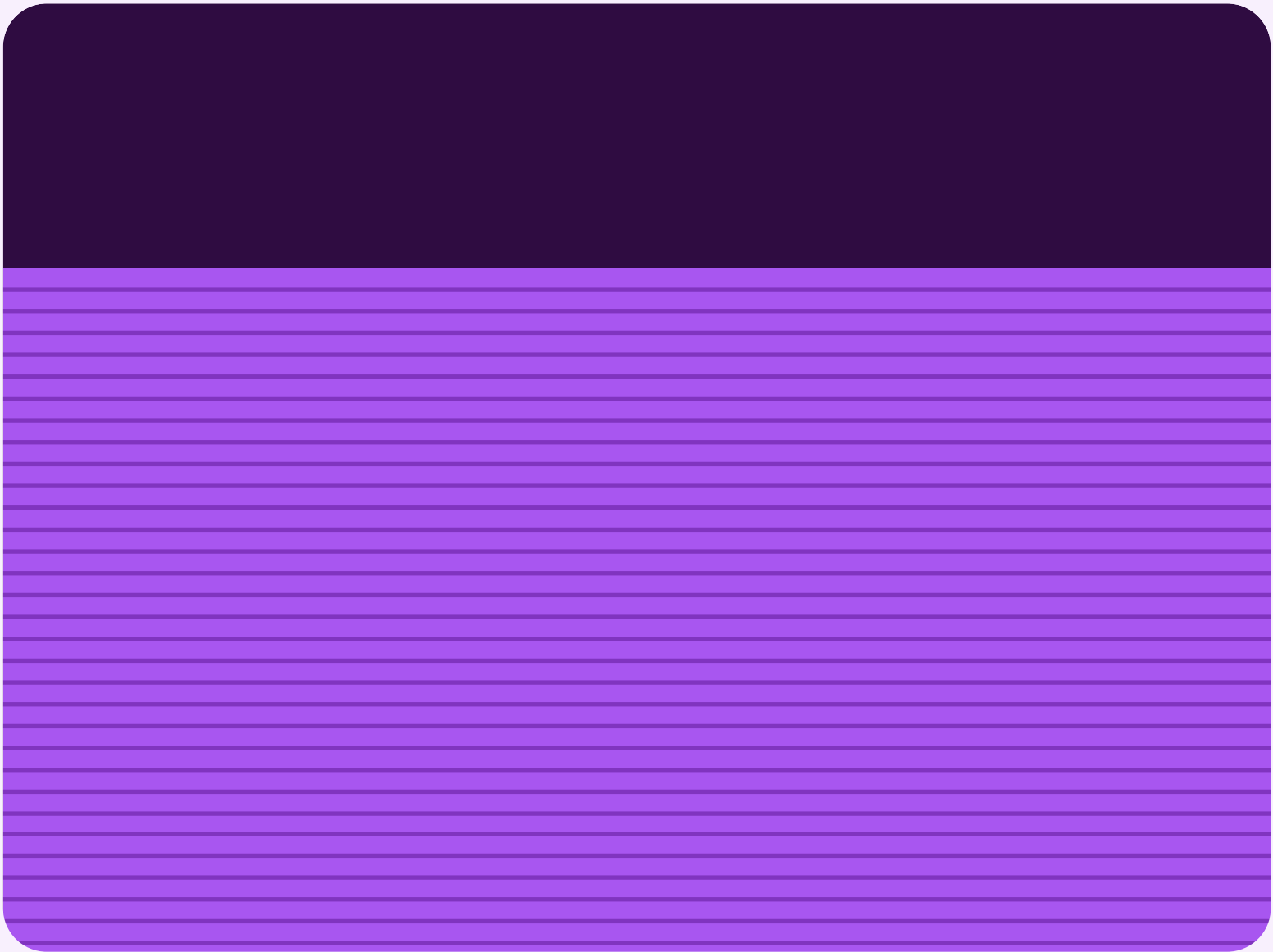
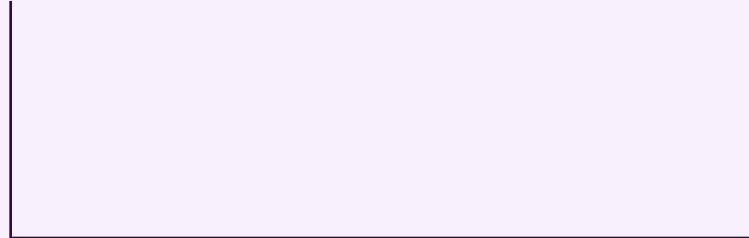
Did you know...



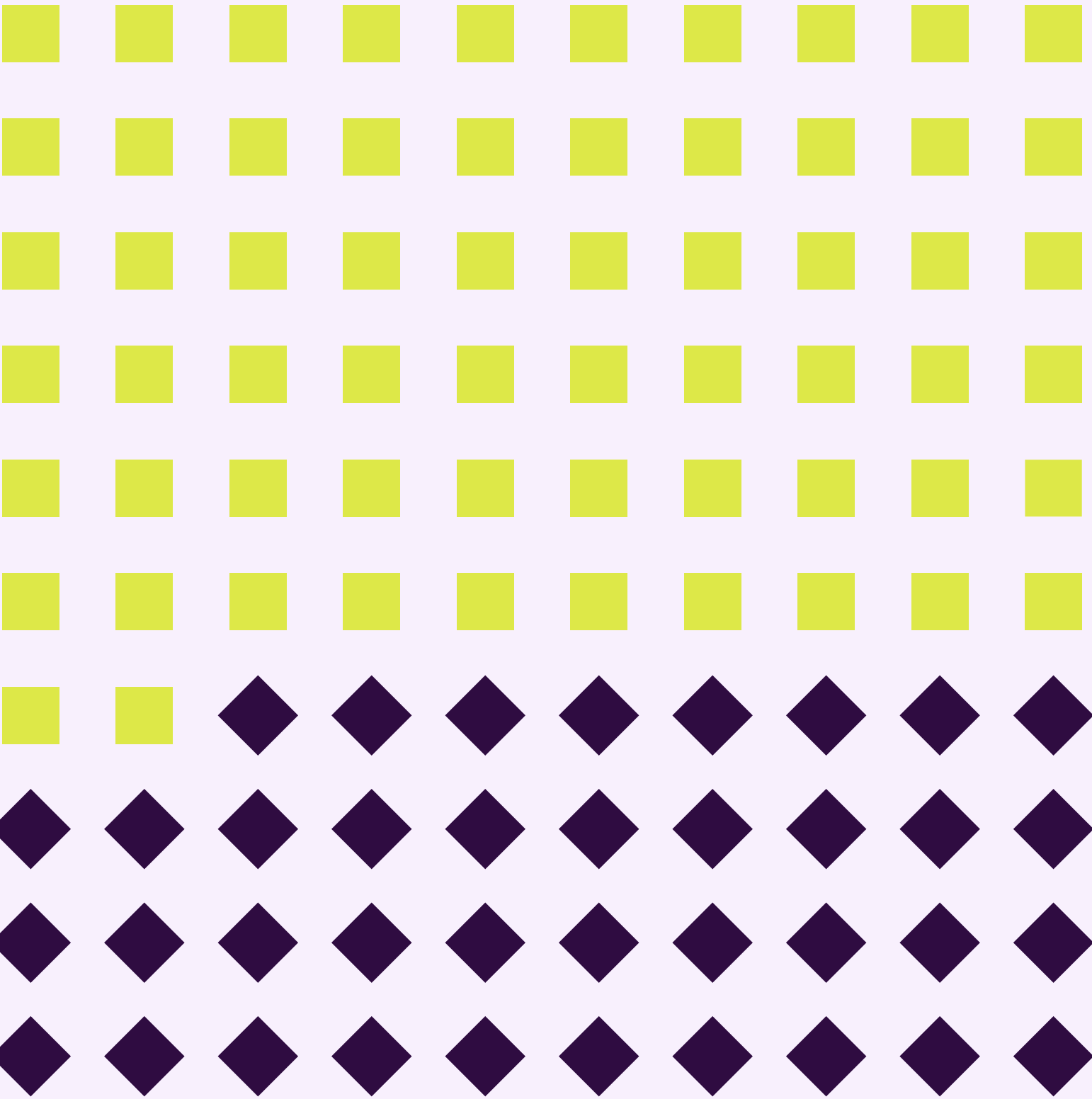
58%
believe AI can improve
customer service



71%
wish they could solve
their problem without
needing a human

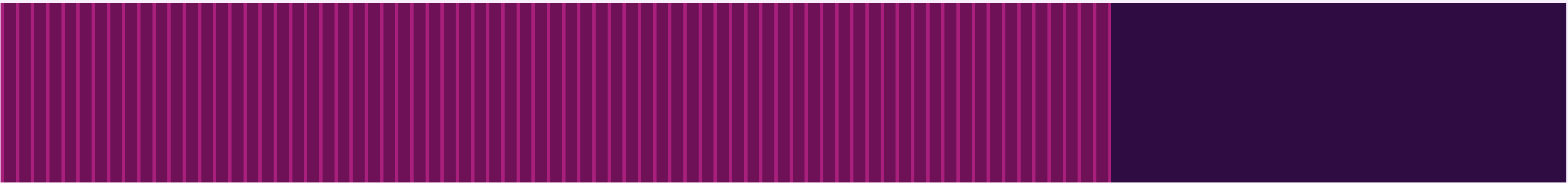


But AI implementation was harder than expected for businesses, with only 26% of companies advancing beyond the proof-of-concept stage to generate value.¹ The AI-powered customer experience has much room for improvement given that customers are still struggling to get their questions answered.

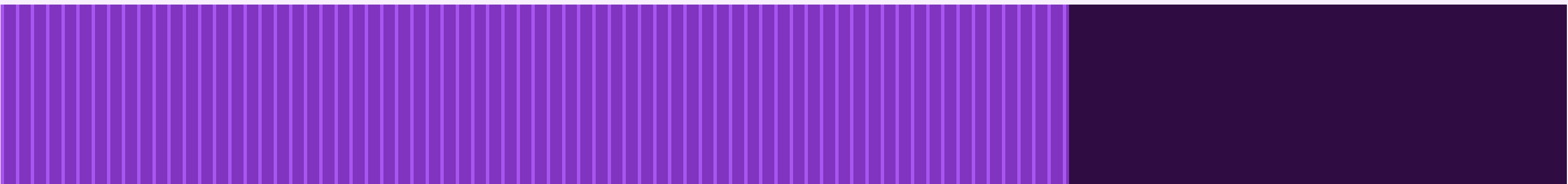


62%
still find something off
about AI’s output

80%
think AI struggles with solving problems the first time



78%
claim AI has trouble understanding issues quickly



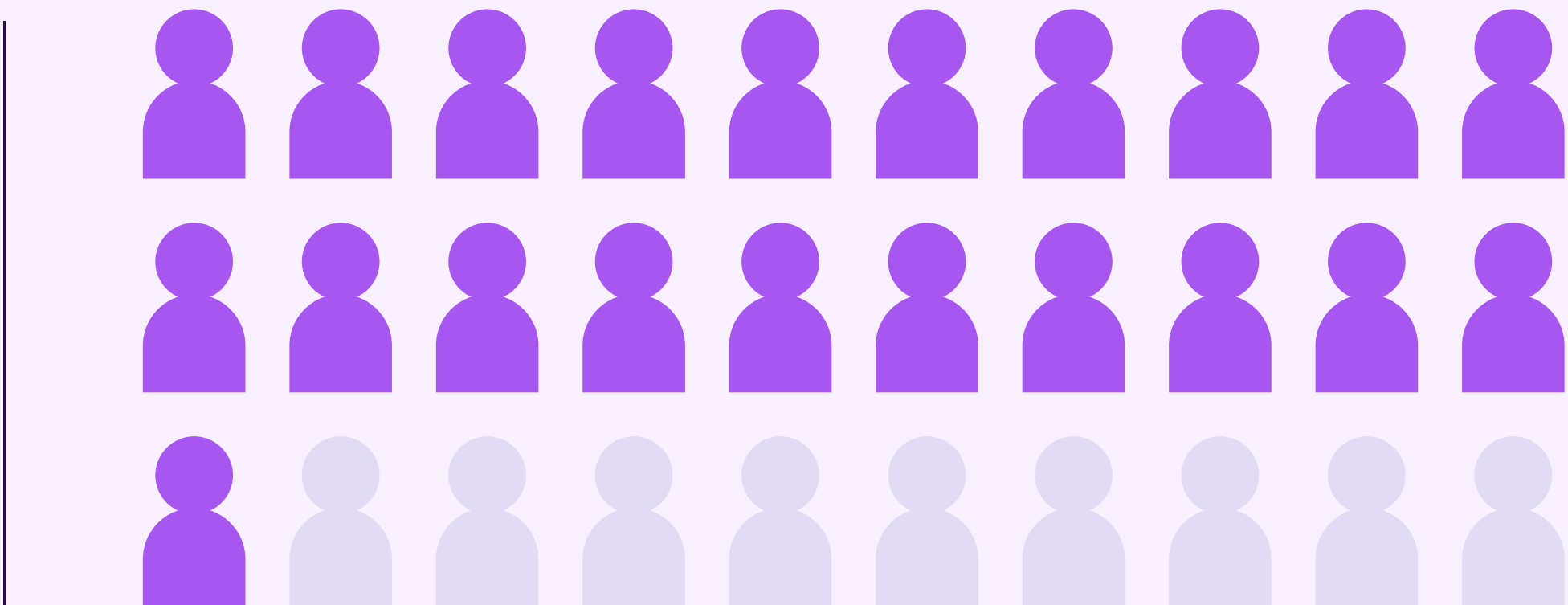
1. Where’s the Value in AI? BCG. 2024.



Customers are frustrated, yet hopeful. They appreciate how fast and easy it is to get support from AI-powered customer service, but they still want any escalations to be handled by a human.

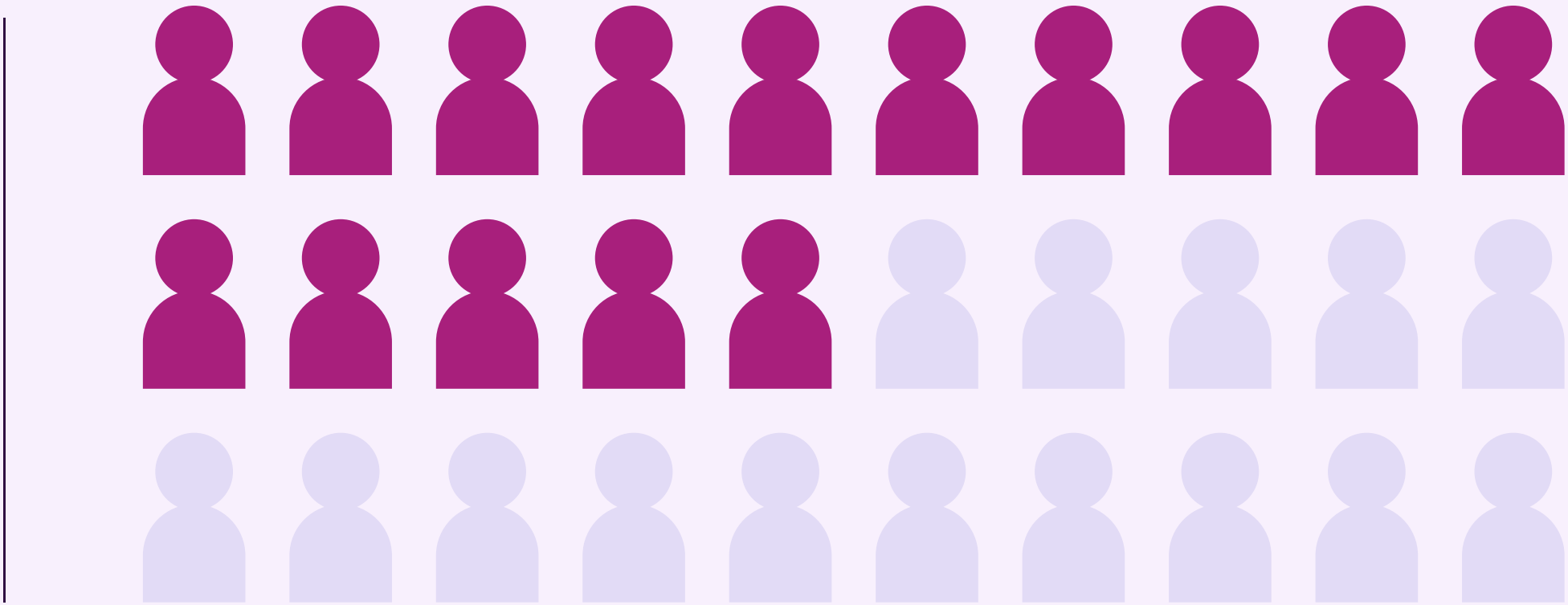
70%

say businesses make it too difficult to reach a human in the AI-powered experience



49%

would stop doing business with brands relying entirely on AI



“Customers lead complex lives, and they have a low tolerance for additional complexity created by customer service. Well-designed and implemented AI cuts through the complexity to offer service that is predictive, proactive, and personalized. But, if AI is simply bolted onto existing customer service channels, it adds to the complexity and erodes customer trust.



Nick Clark

Associate Director, Service and Support Operations
Boston Consulting Group

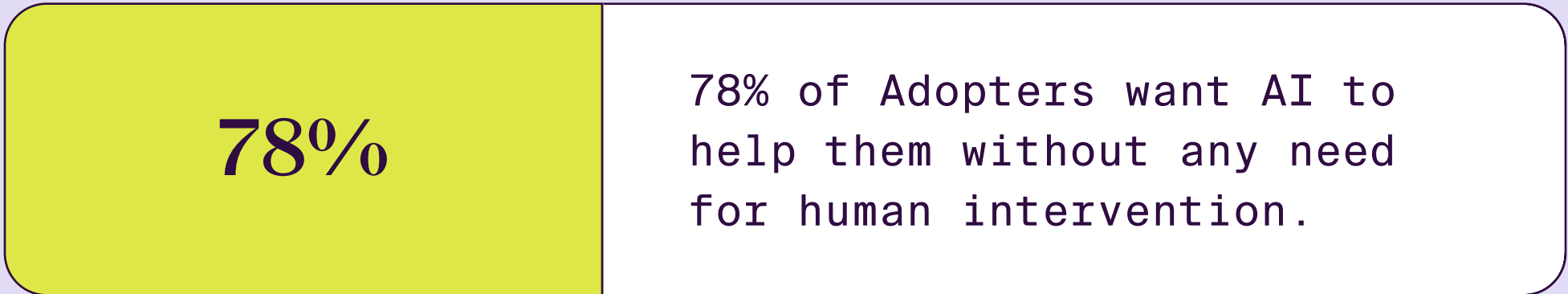


AI where it helps

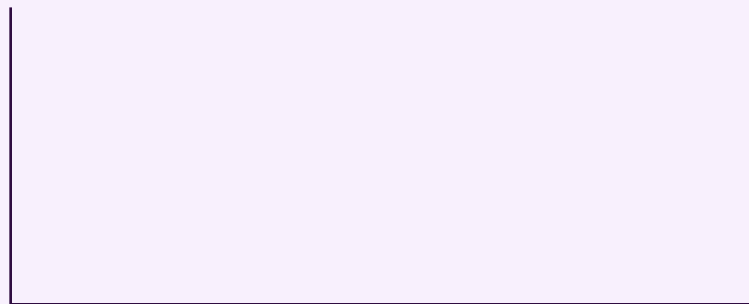
Do customers care who's supporting them? Yes, they do.

Customers want to know whether or not they're being helped by AI — and will adjust their expectations accordingly.

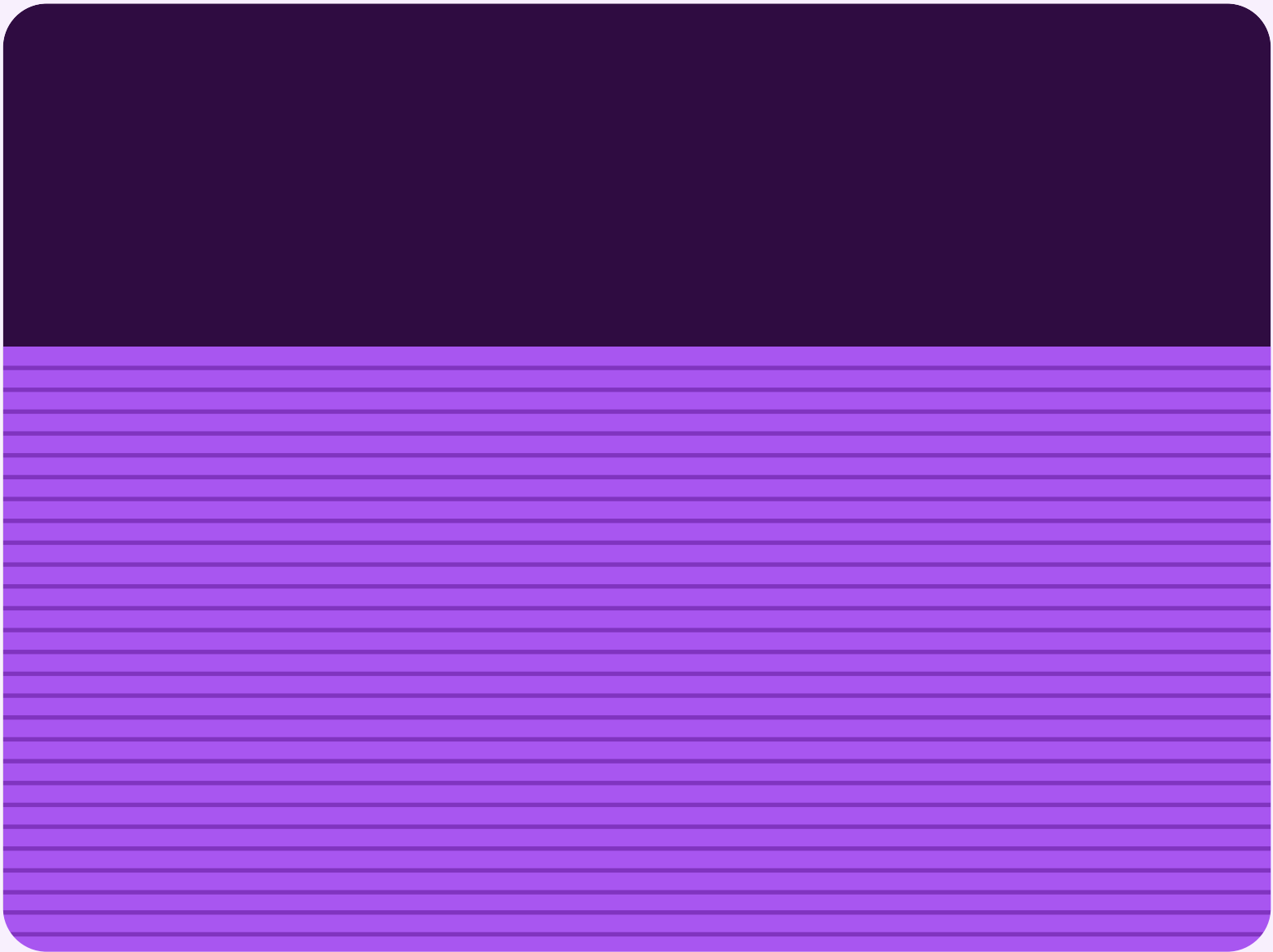
Did you know...



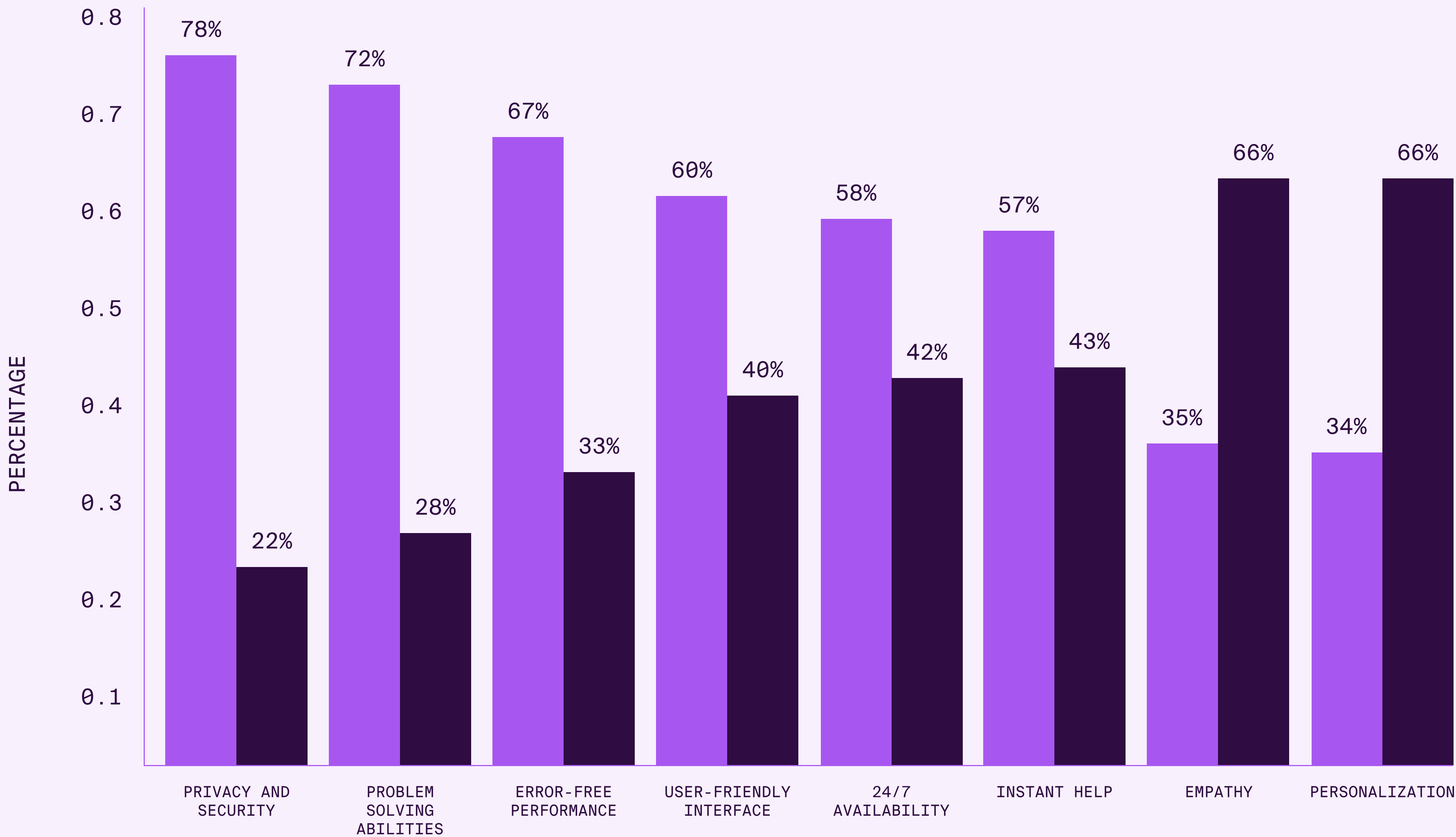
57% agree they need to know who (or what) is helping them



64% think it's deceptive when a brand doesn't communicate how they use AI



Here's what they expect from AI-powered customer service:

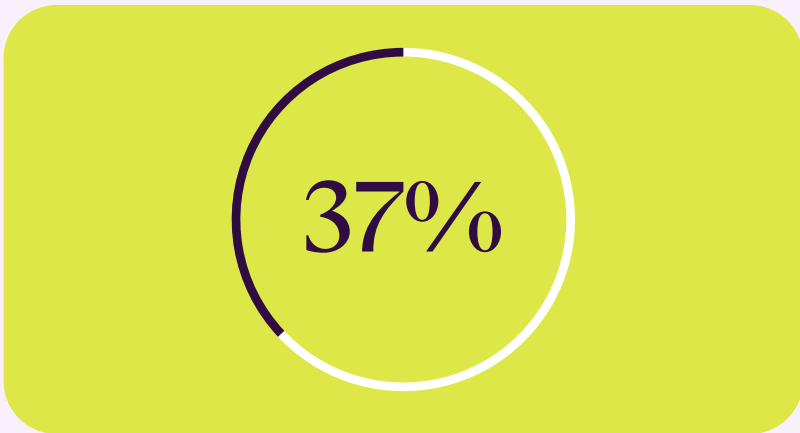


■ MUST HAVE ■ NICE TO HAVE | Traditionalists value privacy and security above all other AI users.

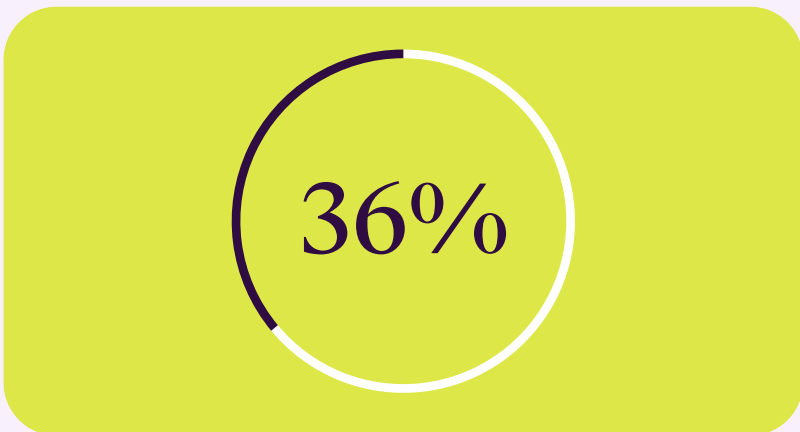
Top factors for a smooth AI-to-human handoff:



Easy escalation to a human when needed



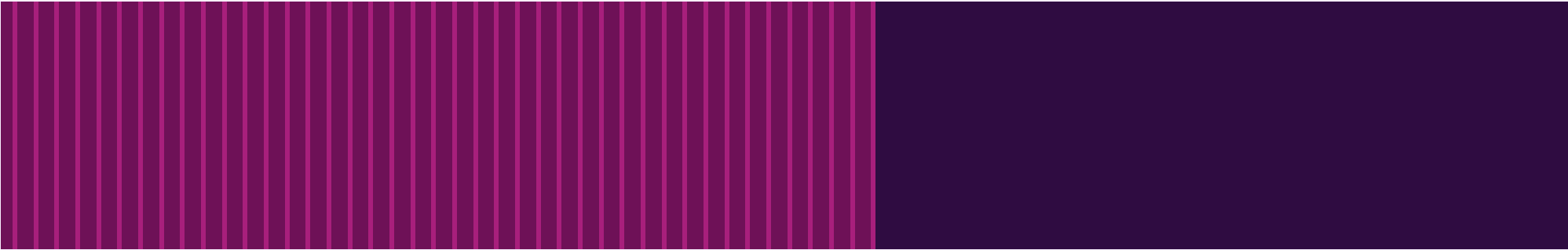
AI clearly communicates when it's time to speak to a human



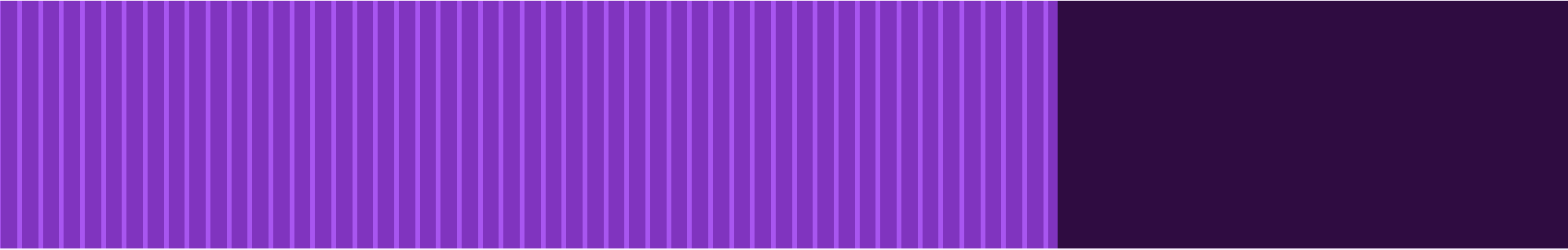
Being able to talk to a human on the phone quickly

Customers have different standards when they're getting help from AI or humans.

52%
are more demanding of humans than AI



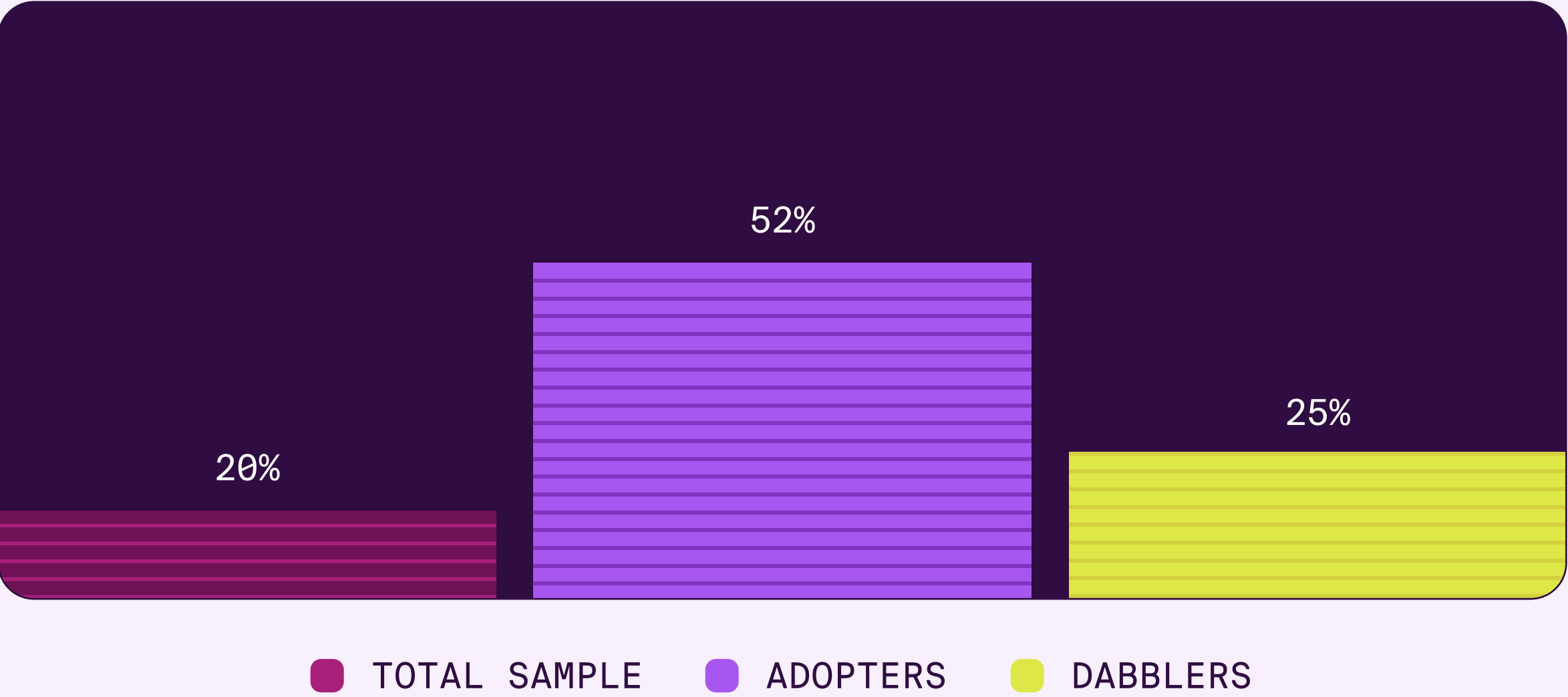
67%
find humans more trustworthy than AI



68%
think AI should be better at treating them like a person



Frequent AI users are more satisfied with AI-led vs. human service



Those who use AI daily like Adopters are 92% more likely to say they're "very satisfied" with AI-powered customer service compared to human interactions.

Adopters are 20% more likely than the average customer to find AI more trustworthy than humans. They also demand more from AI-powered customer support than human agents, unlike the rest of the crowd.

How do you get AI-powered customer service right?
Here are the dos and don'ts that we follow here at Front.

✔ Do	⊘ Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make it easy to reach a human• Ensure accurate responses with up-to-date knowledge sources• Continuously improve your AI to respond more effectively• Be transparent about how you're using AI• Use AI for proactive support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make human handoffs a poor experience• Skimp on training your AI to do better and sound empathetic• Pretend that your AI is a human with customers• Overlook data privacy concerns• Give up on AI to enhance your self-service support



Measure AI-powered customer support with the AI Experience Impact Score (AXIS)

AI is handling more and more customer support queries, but visibility into AI's service quality hasn't kept up. The new metric AI Experience Impact Score (AXIS) offers support leaders a practical way to measure and improve AI-led support quality.

The AXIS framework measures three components:

- 1. Resolution Accuracy (RA):** How well your AI-powered support understands and resolves customer issues.
- 2. Interaction Effort (IE):** How easily customers interact with your AI-powered support, focusing on the clarity and simplicity of communication.
- 3. Handoff Smoothness (HS):** How seamlessly the transition from AI to human agents happens, emphasizing continuity and amount of customer effort.

It's an easy-to-interpret metric on a scale of 1-5, allowing support leaders to track trends in their AI-led customer interactions and pinpoint where the experience can be improved.

To learn more about AXIS, [download the white paper](#).

“ To be successful with AI, support leaders should continuously invest in boosting AI resolution rates. As AI masters simple inquiries, customer trust in self-service grows. Human experts will remain essential for complex cases and AI oversight.



Kevin Yang
Head of AI
Front





What does this mean for my service strategy?

01

Be transparent about what part of your customer service is AI-led or human-led.

02

Stay on top of knowledge management to improve your AI's resolution rates.

03

Use the AI Experience Impact Score (AXIS) to target problem areas in your AI-led customer interactions.

04

Test and iterate your AI-powered service often and frequently. If the stakes are too high, try testing internally first or with a smaller pilot customer group.

05

Optimize escalation pathways from AI to humans to make handoffs as seamless as possible.



03

KEY TAKEAWAY

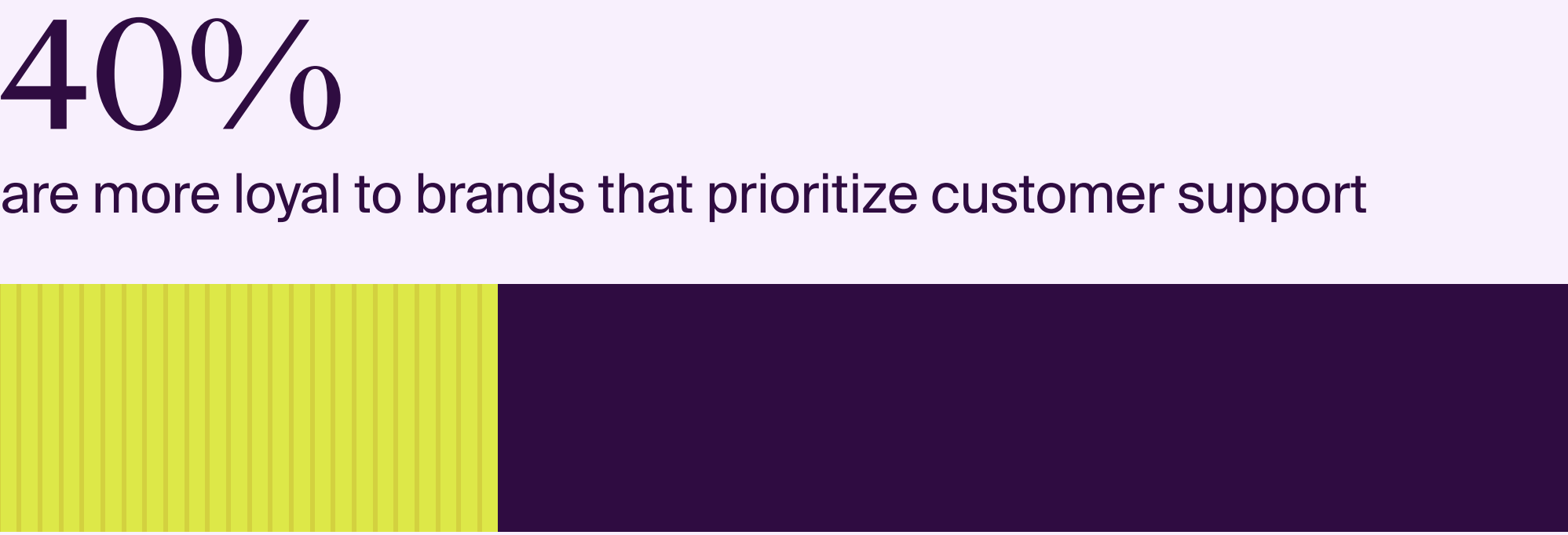
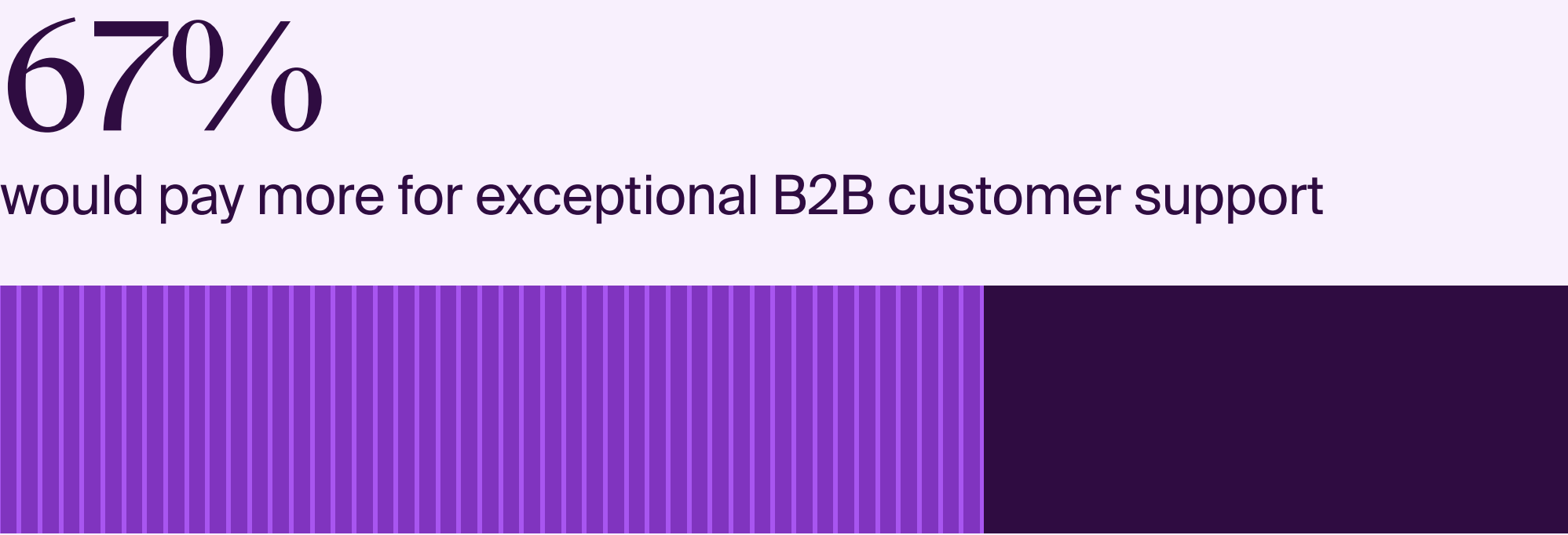
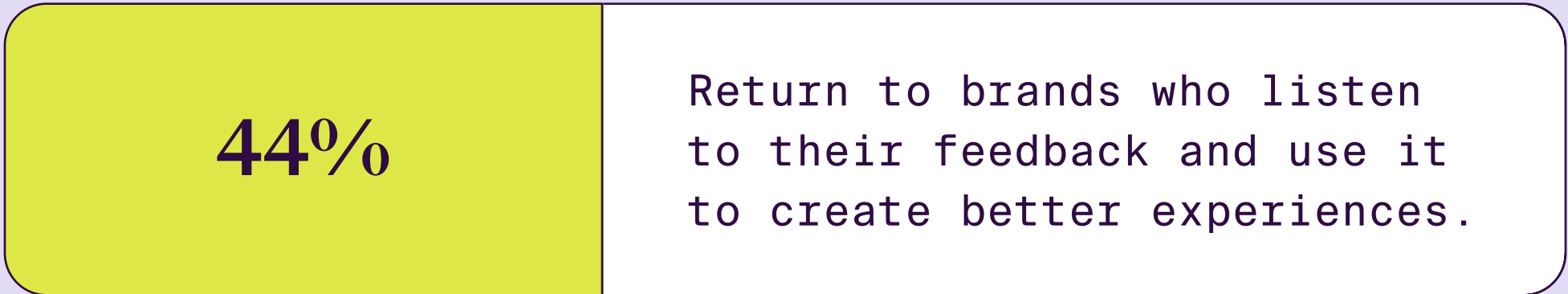
Customer service isn't just about solving problems – it's a core brand differentiator. Customers are willing to pay a premium for exceptional customer service, underscoring just how important it is to them.

Customer loyalty: Why they stay, why they leave

How exceptional service boosts revenue

Customers think service is high-quality when they feel seen and heard. That means customer feedback needs to turn into action. Customers recognize when brands prioritize their customer service. Conversely, not prioritizing service can lead them to reconsider the competition.

How are you utilizing customer feedback?



Great customer service isn't just effective retention — it's revenue.

The breaking point for customers

Customers won't tolerate poor experiences. They're ready to walk after three strikes. Slow response times and unhelpful agents drive more customers to competitors — more than cost!

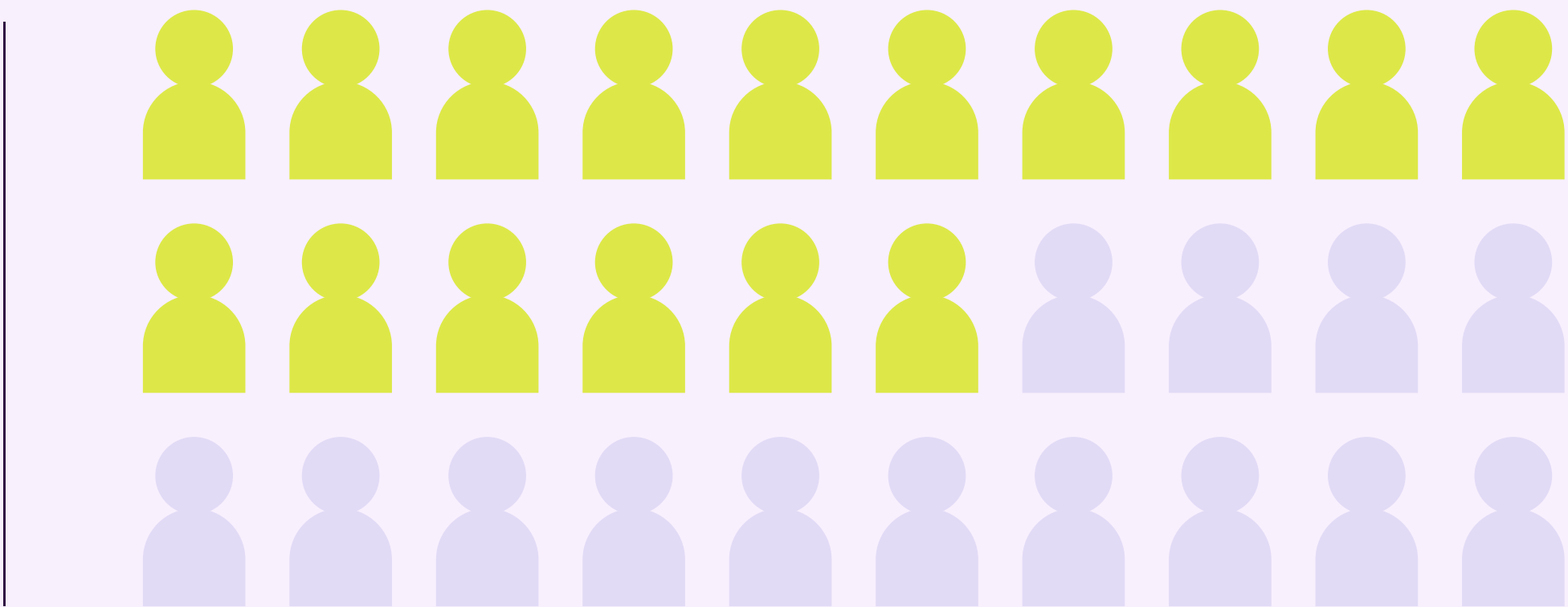
Does word spread about support?

1 in 2

Half of customers say they often share opinions (positive or negative) on the customer support they receive with their coworkers.

59%

will push their team to switch to a competitor after three (or fewer) bad experiences.



32%

say there are too many hoops to jump through to get answers



30%

say it's too hard to reach a human



Customer loyalty

Support that shows up before the problem does

The customer service that earns brownie points with customers offers diverse self-service options and helpful proactive support. This is true across both B2B and B2C.

Does personality make AI more human?

42%

Adopters are 42% more likely to think businesses have more customer empathy by giving their chatbots personality.

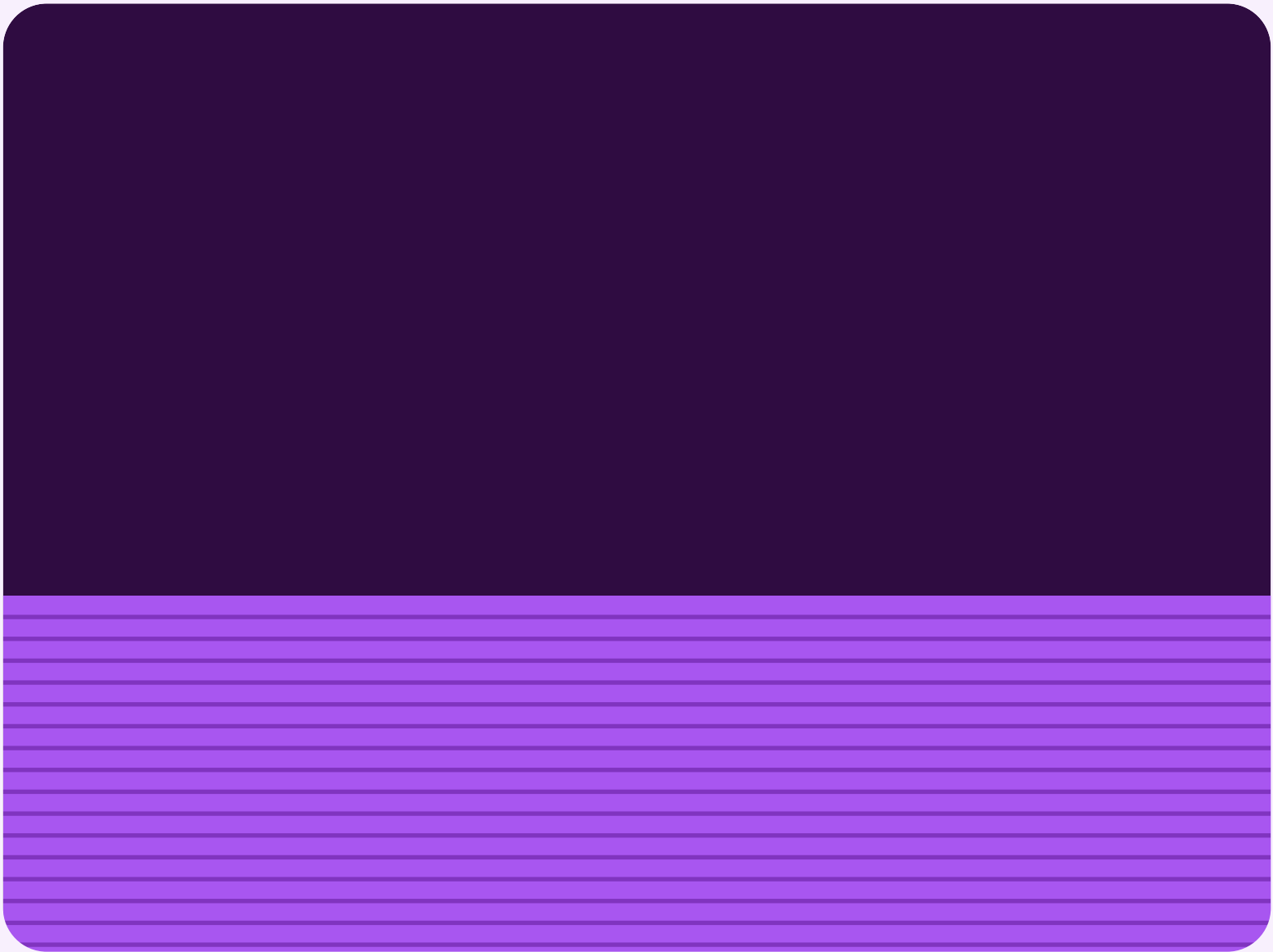
47%

want expansive self-service options to solve issues independently

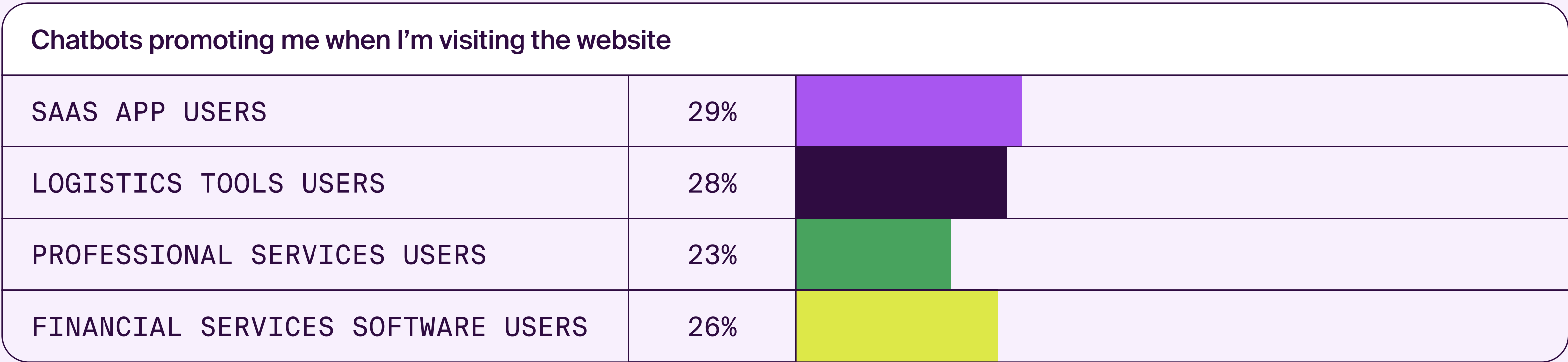
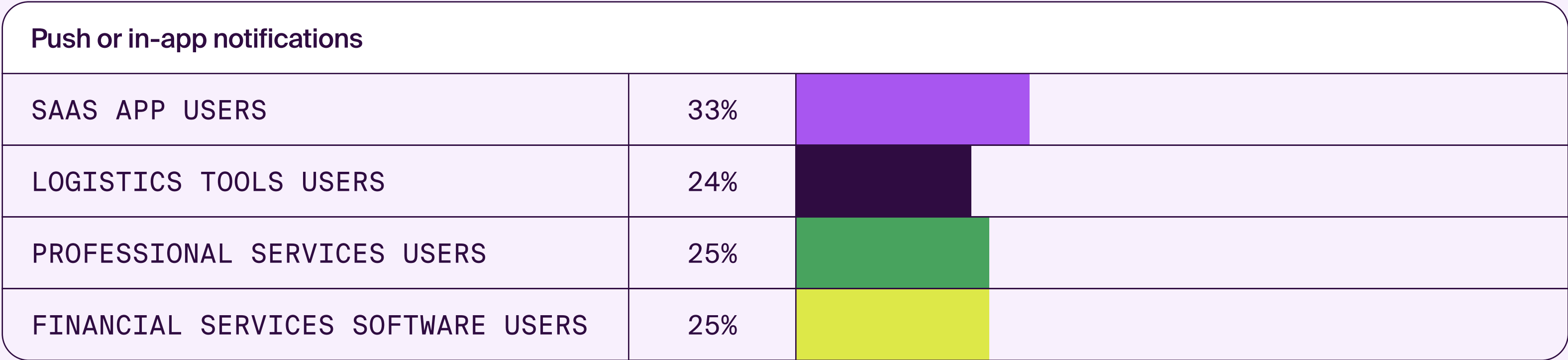
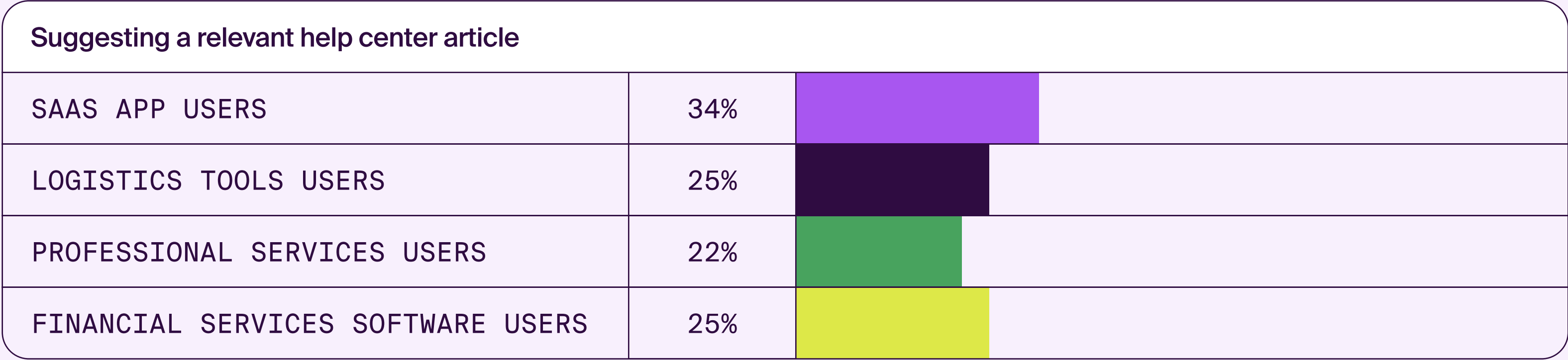


39%

appreciate proactive support that anticipates issues before they escalate



SaaS users appreciate proactive support beyond email and text



Traditional channels for proactive support are the most pleasant

Across industries, customers prefer proactive support in the form of email and text updates, but SaaS users significantly appreciate notifications from help centers, in-app, and chatbots.

The most impactful customer support strategies don't wait for issues to arise — they proactively guide, inform, and assist customers at every stage of their journey.

Here are some examples:

- Sending a reminder text message before a demo.
- Emailing before an upcoming renewal to check in on progress and goals.
- Improving help center navigation to quickly point customers to the right resources.
- In-app notifications announcing scheduled maintenance times.
- Chatbots offering assistance when a website visitor spends a long enough time on a high-intent page like pricing.

Customers remain optimistic about future improvements, with AI having a role. Millennials and Gen Z make up 71% of B2B buyers. These tech-savvy generations are opting for more self-service paths¹ where generative AI will spur them to do their own research and competitive analysis. 55% of younger generations would use the product or service less if they couldn't self-resolve their issue.²

64%
wish there were more robust self-serve solutions



39%
believe AI can positively impact proactive support



1. Younger Generations Are Shaking Up B2B Buying – Are You Prepared? Forrester. 2024.

2. Adapting to the Customer Service Preferences of Gen Z and Millennials. Gartner. 2023.

“ Loyalty doesn’t need gimmicks. Offer respect, a listening ear, and a promise you’ll show up. Customers will return that favor tenfold.



Mercer Smith
VP, Community + Education
PartnerHero



What does this mean for my service strategy?

01

Research your customers to understand which self-service channels and proactive support methods they prefer — whether that means improving an existing option, creating a new one, or choosing the right communication channels like email or text messaging.

02

Use AI-generated insights to quickly spot common customer challenges and refine your proactive support strategy. For example, AI can highlight ticket trends and quickly reveal key features users struggle with — helping your team improve onboarding and drive adoption.

03

Make sure your self-service channels are quickly accessible and easy to navigate. Don't bury the option to reach a human.



Exceed your customers' expectations with Front

Front is the AI-powered customer service platform for teams who know great customer experiences drive revenue. Front is the only solution that combines the support queue, individual inboxes, and real-time collaboration into a unified workspace, helping more than 9,000 businesses deliver exceptional service at every touchpoint.

As your needs evolve, Front's modern and intuitive platform scales alongside you, with an award-winning support team who will ensure your success from day one. Easily configure workflows with quality-first AI that puts your team in control — providing efficiency and insights to keep your entire organization customer-first, every day.

[Try Front for free](#)[Request a demo](#)

Methodology

This survey was commissioned with Global Web Index (GWI) from February to March 2025. 4,501 respondents from the United States took an online survey, where they were screened to be full-time employees who spent more than 50% of their working time on a computer. The audience consists of professionals who rely upon one or more of software-as-a-service (SaaS) apps, logistics software or services, professional services, and financial software or services to perform their job. Respondents were compensated for their time upon completing the survey.