The 2022 Australian and New Zealand Contact Centre Decision-Makers' Guide

(1st edition)

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The 2022 Australia & New Zealand Contact Centre Decision-Makers' Guide

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INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

"The 2022 Australia and New Zealand Contact Centre Decision-Makers' Guide" is ContactBabel's second 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 2022. Analysis of the results was carried out in June 2022.

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 – 72
- New Zealand – 40

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 – 42
- Private sector / commercial – 70

Size bands

- Sub-50 seats – 63
- 50-100 seats – 28
- More than 100 seats – 18
- Did not answer – 3.

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 affect 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.

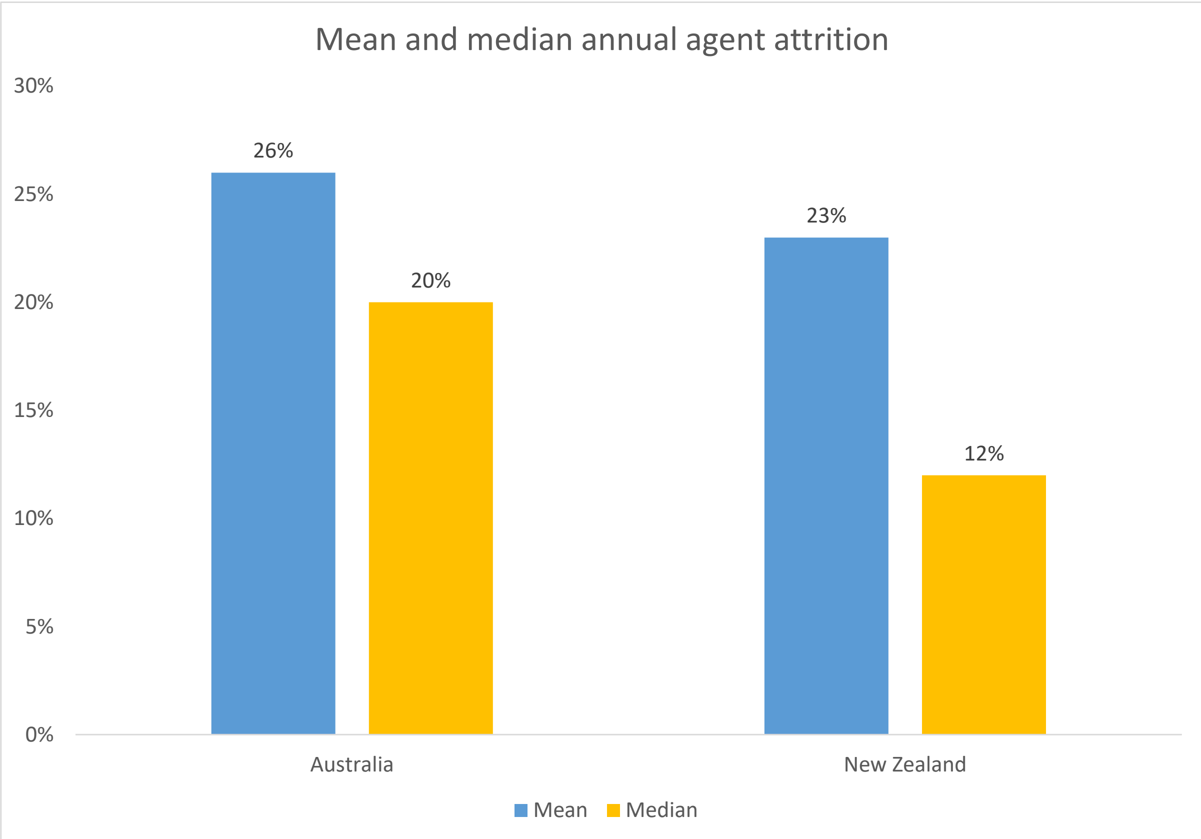
This report defines "attrition rate" as the total number of agents leaving the contact centre in a 12-month period, divided by the average number of occupants during the same 12-month period, expressed as a percentage.

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

Reported agent attrition rates in Australia were 26% mean and 20% median, which is an increase on last year's figures. New Zealand's mean attrition has also risen slightly, although the median is lower at only 12%.

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 NZ contact centres reporting high attrition rates has dragged up the mean to 23%.

Figure 1: Mean and median annual agent attrition

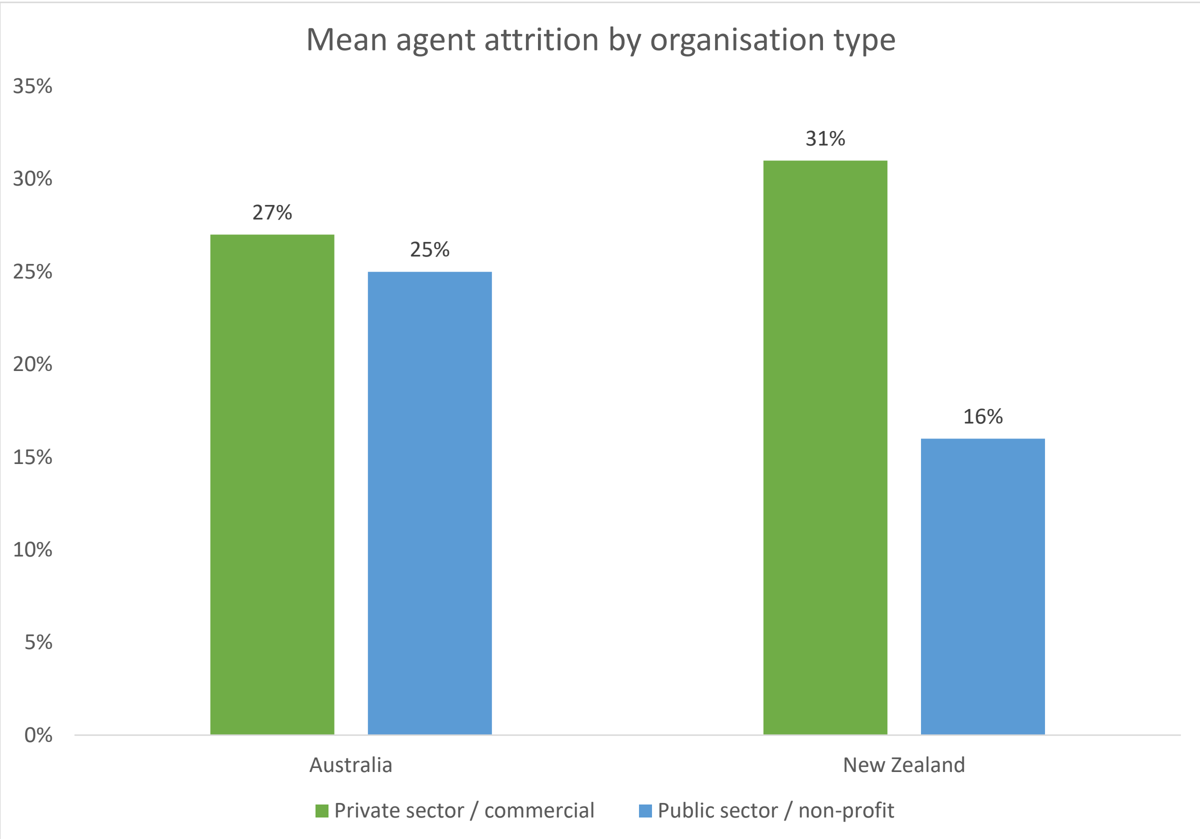


AGENT ATTRITION BY ORGANISATION TYPE

Looking at attrition rates by organisation type (i.e. private sector or public sector / non-profit), we can see that commercial businesses report higher mean attrition, especially in NZ.

This may well be in part because outsourcing / telemarketing businesses fall into this category and these often have higher than usual attrition rates. Many governmental agencies tend to have consistently lower than average attrition rates.

Figure 2: Mean agent attrition by organisation type

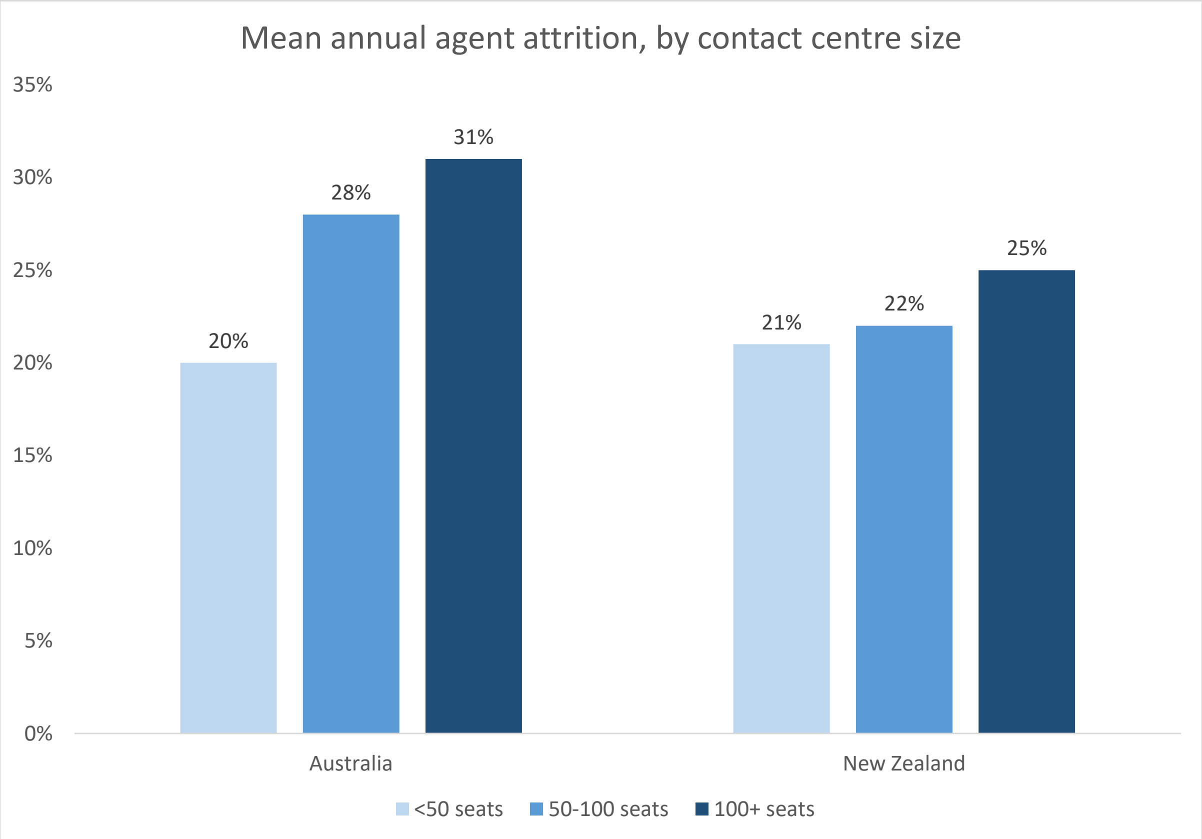


AGENT ATTRITION BY CONTACT CENTRE SIZE

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 is certainly the case in Australia.

There is less difference in attrition by size band shown by New Zealand survey respondents, although a pattern is still present.

Figure 3: Mean agent attrition by contact centre size



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, repetitive tasks and of course the pandemic – 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.*

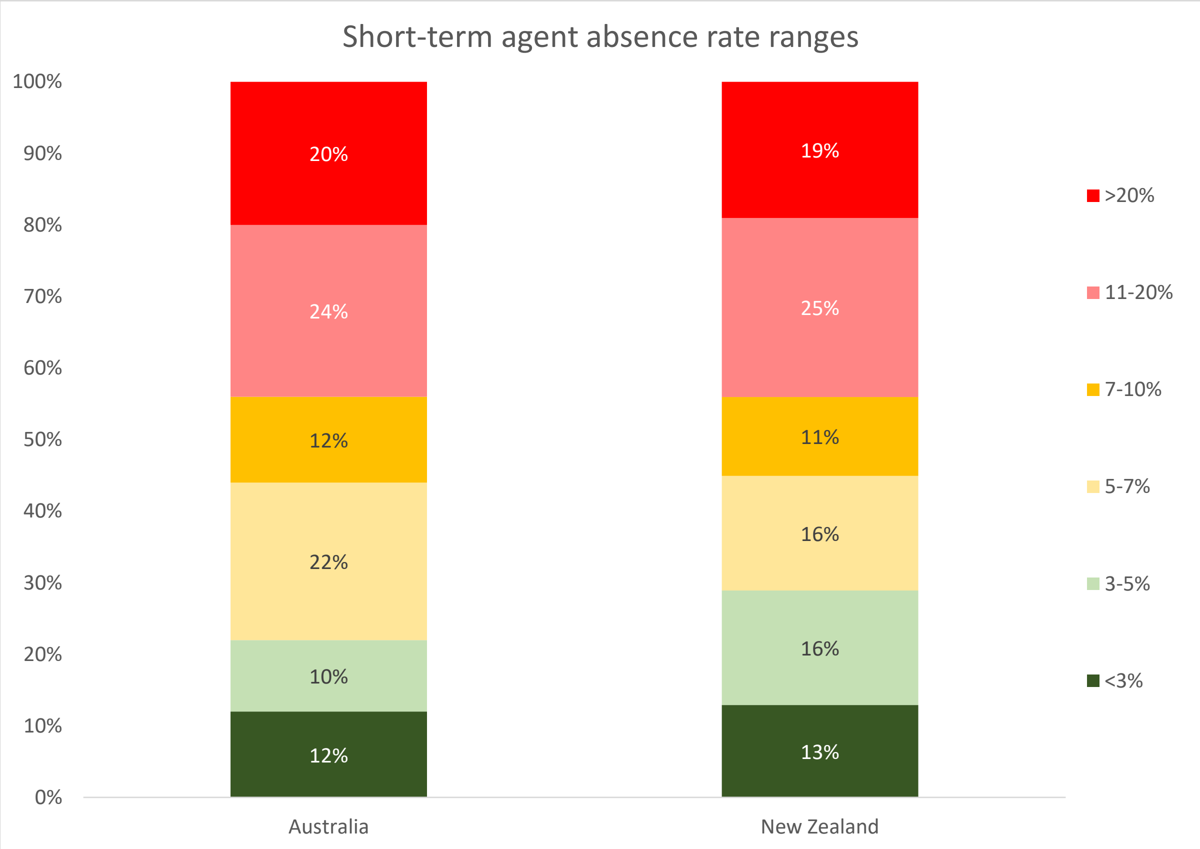
Long-term absence *- this includes long-term sickness, maternity leave, sabbaticals and other long-term absences where the business expects the absence, and is able to plan for it. This is* ***not*** *included in these figures.*

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 11.4% for Australia and 9.2% for New Zealand. Median figures are 8.0% and 10.0% 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 12% compared to 10% in the private sector. In New Zealand, there is very little difference, with 10% absence rates in both the public and private sectors.

By contact centre size, sub-50 seat Australian operations have the lowest mean absence rates (8.7%), with 50-100 seat and 100+ seat operations reporting 11.8% and 12.9% respectively. In New Zealand, the respective figures are 8.4%, 7.6% and 12.8%.

SALARIES

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

Australian salaries are reported to be considerably higher than New Zealand's figures.

Figure 5: Mean average salaries by country

Role	Australia	New Zealand
New agent	AUD $57,705	NZD $48,513
Experienced agent	AUD $62,951	NZD $54,322
Team leader / supervisor	AUD $81,331	NZD $71,950
Contact centre manager	AUD $118,751	NZD $106,547

SALARIES BY ORGANISATION TYPE

Those respondents in Australian public sector / non-profit contact centres report higher salaries for agents and team leaders, although the contact centre managers get paid a little less on average than their counterparts in the private sector. A similar pattern exists in New Zealand.

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	$56,865	$62,556	$80,798	$119,951
Public Sector / Non-Profit	$59,181	$63,664	$82,349	$116,695
Average	**$57,705**	**$62,951**	**$81,331**	**$118,751**

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	$46,809	$51,786	$68,546	$107,901
Public Sector / Non-Profit	$51,071	$58,355	$77,136	$103,913
Average	**$48,513**	**$54,322**	**$71,950**	**$106,547**

SALARIES BY CONTACT CENTRE SIZE

In the US and UK, the general pattern is that smaller operations tend to pay more to agents and supervisors, although less to their contact centre managers. This pattern is also found in Australia.

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
<50 seats	$60,865	$68,371	$83,372	$123,016
50-100 seats	$54,163	$62,231	$72,640	$122,367
100+ seats	$51,333	$62,333	$90,000	$130,000
Average	**$57,705**	**$62,951**	**$81,331**	**$118,751**

In New Zealand, this pattern is much less obvious, especially at contact centre manager level.

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

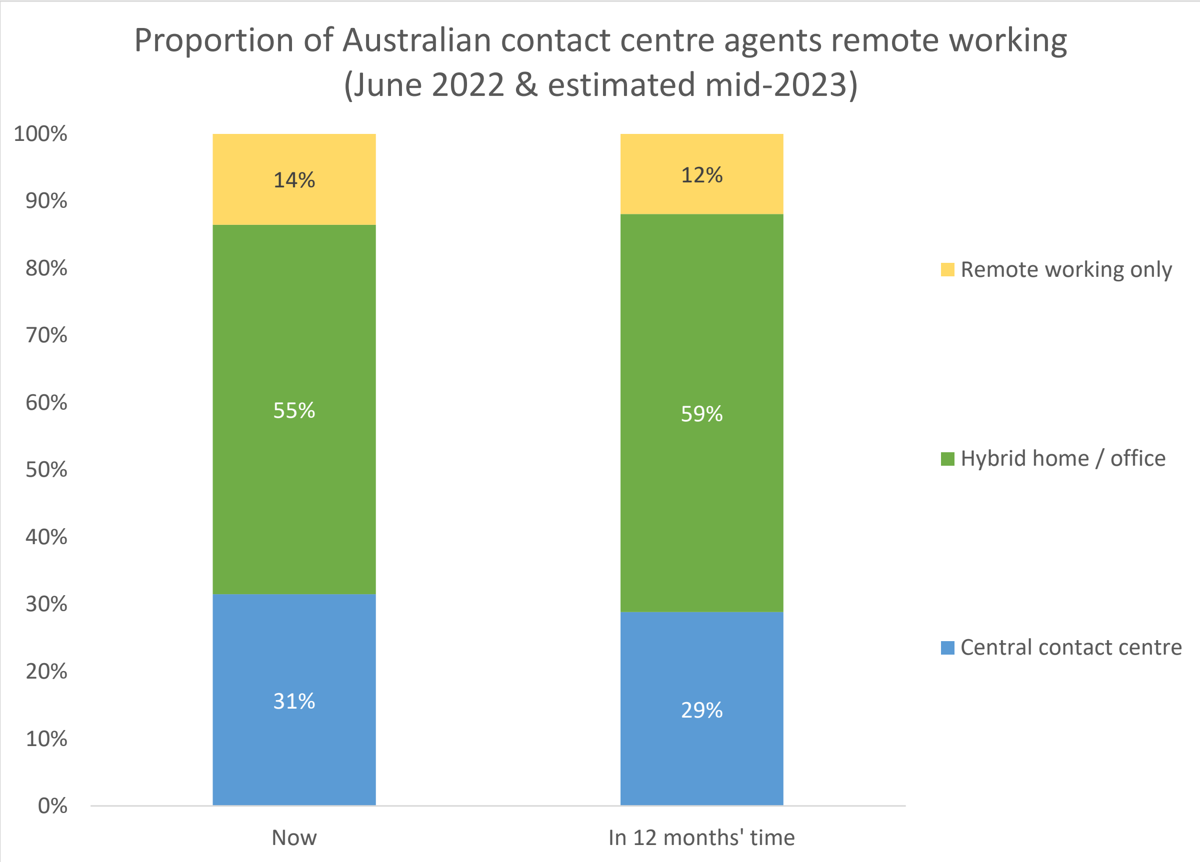
Contact centre size	New agent	Experienced agent	Team leader	Contact centre manager
<50 seats	$48,950	$54,163	$71,123	$96,403
50-100 seats	$47,624	$55,083	$74,561	$138,971
100+ seats	$48,112	$55,250	$68,000	$102,250
Average	**$48,513**	**$54,322**	**$71,950**	**$106,547**

REMOTE WORKING

The survey looked at the current use of contact centre remote working, and businesses' expectations for mid-2023. Please note that the figures below split out hybrid working from full-time remote working.

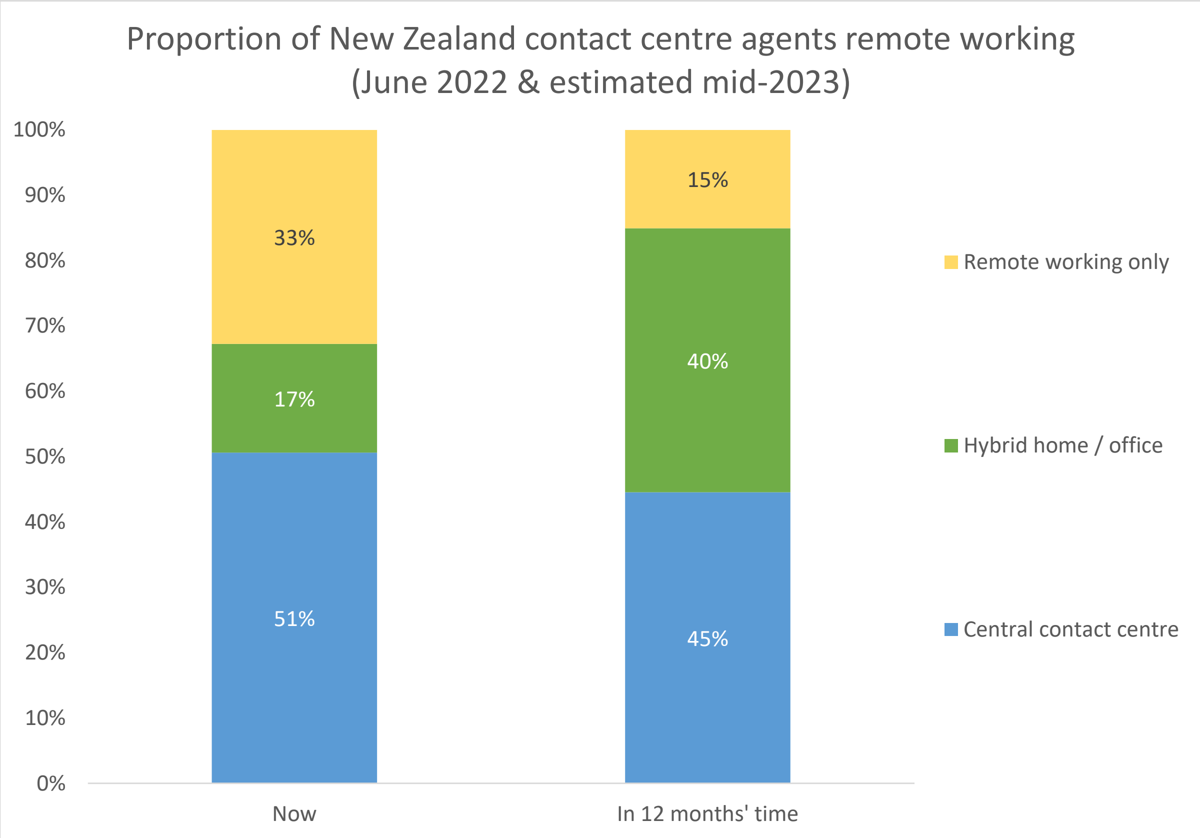
14% of Australian contact centre agents are working entirely remotely at the moment, with 55% working in a hybrid model. There is very little change expected in the next 12 months.

Figure 10: Proportion of Australian contact centre agents remote working (June 2022 & estimated mid-2023)



One-third of New Zealand agents are working entirely remotely, although there is an expectation that there will be a strong movement towards hybrid working over the next 12 months.

Figure 11: Proportion of New Zealand contact centre agents remote working (June 2022 & estimated mid-2023)



OPERATIONAL BENCHMARKING

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

CONTACT CENTRE PERFORMANCE METRICS

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

<u>Internal metrics</u>

Call duration / Average Handle Time: A typical 'old-fashioned' metric, which is 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 to use to work out cost per call.

Agent occupancy rate: The agent occupancy rate is calculated as the proportion of time in a given period that is call-time plus wrap-up, (that is, the proportion of time that each agent spends on dealing with the call itself and the actions deriving from it. A laborious wrap-up time caused by slow back-office systems or lack of familiarity from the agent's perspective can go some way to producing high occupancy rates, which looks as though the agent is constantly active, but which is actually negative for both business and customer.

Call throughput and abandonment rates: Understanding the types of call being received as well as tracking the number that are dropped can be translated into lost revenue within a sales environment, making a pitch for greater investment easier. With the use of callback, calls that would otherwise be abandoned can be kept alive, although at the cost of an additional outbound call.

Revenue per call / promise to pay: As many contact centres are now profit centres, understanding the effectiveness of the sales or debt collection efforts is vital to judging the success of the contact centre itself.

Call transfer rate: This metric can indicate training needs at the individual agent level, a failure in the initial IVR routing or a need to update FAQs or other information on a website (for example, a spike in this metric might be driven by a recent marketing campaign which has confused some customers, creating a high level of calls about the same issue). Tracking and analysis of call recordings in cases of high transfers should identify the issue.

Schedule adherence: Schedule adherence is a metric that looks to help with the fine-tuning of a contact centre's labour force, so that calls are answered swiftly, but that agents are not sitting idly waiting for calls. It is a metric that is of more importance to schedulers than to customers, although the impact of getting schedules wrong can be catastrophic for efficiency, cost and performance. The importance of adherence to schedule has only been included in this survey for the past two years, in a question later in this chapter which asked respondents which were the most important contact centre metrics. Surprisingly, it was said to be more important than key customer-facing metrics such as first-contact resolution.

Staff attrition rates: A well-publicised cost that senior management are very aware of, high levels of staff attrition are poisonous to the effective running of the majority of contact centres, causing excessive recruitment and training costs, lower average call handling quality and longer queue times due to inexperienced staff, as well as the vicious circle of lower staff morale.

Average speed to answer / longest call waiting etc.: This metric has a strong and demonstrable effect on customer satisfaction or frustration, as well as impacting on call abandonment, lost revenues and high staff attrition rates caused by excessive pressure. Average speed to answer is a metric which is easily measured, and forms a vital view of the contact centre's staffing levels as well as impacting directly upon the customer experience. As such, it is similar in nature to the call abandonment rate. Contact centres should of course consider the amount of time that a customer spends in the IVR segment of the call when considering the 'speed to answer' metric - as the customers themselves surely do so.

Cost per call: Although this is an attractive and easily-understood metric for senior management to view, there is a real danger that calls are closed too quickly and revenue and loyalty-building opportunities are lost. If a contact centre has many short calls (which may be better off being dealt with by self-service), this will produce a lower cost-per-call figure, which makes it look as though the contact centre is doing well, when the opposite may be the case. The same logic applies to first-call resolution rates.

Cost per call is a very complicated metric that is difficult to get correct. However, senior non-contact centre management understand how cost figures impact the business more than occupancy or call abandonment rates, although these have an impact on all parts of the business. At the most basic level, cost per call can be calculated by dividing the overall spent budget of the contact centre by the number of calls, although this does not take into account abandoned calls or situations where the customer has had to call multiple times to get a resolution (a situation which in fact brings cost per call down, although being negative to both business and customer). Neither does it take into account the effect of failure demand - where the contact centre cleans up after processes elsewhere in the business go wrong, leaving the contact centre to sort them out. As such, it 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. There is considerable debate about how satisfied (or delighted) customers have to be before it starts making a noticeable difference to the bottom-line (i.e. how happy does a customer have to be before they accept premium pricing strategies, and how unhappy do they have to be before they go elsewhere?). There's no easy answer, but high customer satisfaction ratings – at a reasonable cost for the business – are surely 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, or the undesirability (or otherwise of losing such customers).

First-contact resolution: Improving first call/contact resolution (FCR) benefits customers (who are more happy / loyal / profitable / etc.); agents (higher morale; fewer frustrating calls); and business (lower cost of repeated calls; higher profitability): everyone wins. This can be hard to measure, as it is the customer, and not the contact centre that should be stating whether the issue has been resolved successfully.

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 also easy to quantify). Enlightened operations now regard this metric with wariness, as a call cut short too quickly can often mean a worse experience for the customer (with lower revenues over time), lower first-call resolution rates (which increase costs in the long-term) and fewer cross-selling or upselling attempts being made. Low call duration can also mask a lack of agent capability, as knowledgeable agents may go out of their way to deliver the best service possible, which leads to longer call times, as well as having the confidence and ability to address multiple issues within a single call. The use of call recording, monitoring and speech analytics, as well as close supervision by team leaders can assess whether this is the case.

Helpdesks and sales contact centres now pay much less regard to managing call lengths (especially in premium rate environments), but most operations will still be aware of it, especially it is obvious that a high-quality agent will spend less time on certain types of call than a low-quality agent. Although the contact centre's own management is aware of the questionable value of average call duration as a useful metric, the senior management (who are used to measuring this) may be less willing to replace such a definite and cost-related metric with something else. A surprisingly high proportion of respondents still use call duration targets as a metric for deciding agent bonuses.

Average call duration varies significantly between businesses, especially for sales calls, as some types of interaction will involve a complex explanation of products, along with legislative explanations and disclaimers, with time needed to run credit checks and to refer upwards to more senior decision-makers (as well as take payment details), making the mean average sales call duration usually significantly longer than service calls.

Australian service calls are on average around 6½ minutes in duration, with New Zealand calls being a minute or so shorter. Sales calls in both countries are considerably longer than service calls.

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 28s	6m 0s	10m 33s	10m 0s
New Zealand	5m 19s	4m 45s	7m 51s	7m 24s

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.

Both Australian and New Zealand survey respondents reported a mean average call abandonment rate of around 8-9%, with the median somewhat less.

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

Country	Call abandonment rate (mean)	Call abandonment rate (median)
Australia	8.2%	5.0%
New Zealand	8.6%	6.0%

SPEED TO ANSWER

Average speed to answer (ASA) is another of those traditional statistics which has always been measured, and there is a strong case for keeping it at the forefront of how contact centres measure their success. Speed to answer plays a vital part in improving the customer experience, and also feeds into other performance measures such as call abandonment rate. However, contact centres should also keep a close eye on "longest call waiting" statistics to get a fuller picture of the pre-call experience that customers are having. Some contact centres reduce their speed to answer figures by not counting the time taken for the caller to deal with IVR or listen to announcements before speaking with an agent: 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 the phone. Of course, not everyone sees it that way, but your customers certainly do.

As an aside, past ContactBabel research[1] has indicated that callers believe that they wait for an average of 11½ minutes to speak with an agent. As average speed to answer is usually 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.

Australia and New Zealand report a mean speed to answer of over a minute, with the Australia median being exactly one minute and NZ considerably less. The median average dilutes the negative upward effect of a few respondents that have ASA figures of many minutes which skew the whole industry 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	84	60
New Zealand	67	28

The mathematics of contact centre performance tends to suggest that larger operations should have an advantage over smaller contact centres where ASA and queue management is concerned, but this is not always the case in reality.

For Australia, sub-50 seat operations report a mean of 85 seconds, with 75 seconds for 50-100 seat contact centres and 92 seconds for 100+ seat survey respondents.

In New Zealand, the respective figures are 72 seconds, 43 seconds and 58 seconds.

Looking at public/private organisations, there is very little difference in Australia, although the NZ public sector reports much higher mean ASA than the private sector (88 seconds, compared to 41).

[1] Source: ContactBabel analysis of ICM Research data interviewing 1,004 UK adults on behalf of Vicorp.

FIRST-CONTACT RESOLUTION

The ability to understand a query and deal with it in a reasonable timeframe at the first time of asking is seen as the key to customer satisfaction, in that it reduces the overall number of calls while providing the customer with a good experience which will impact on the company's overall performance. It also has a positive effect on the agent's morale (and thus, staff attrition rates), and increases the chances of a successful cross-sell and up-sell being made. Little wonder that this metric is growing in importance, although first-call resolution can be very problematic to quantify accurately (risking this metric being ignored), especially as it is not simply a matter of producing a monthly report from ACD statistics.

Australian and New Zealand survey respondents report median FCR figures of around 80%, and mean figures in the mid-70s.

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

Country	First-contact resolution rate (mean)	First-contact resolution rate (median)
Australia	76%	80%
New Zealand	73%	81%

THE ROLE OF FIRST-CONTACT RESOLUTION

For most businesses, there is no fixed agreement on what a successful contact centre looks like: even in similar industries, around half of businesses state that a contact centre is a strategic asset, with the other half seeing it as an operational cost centre. Contact centre managers are tasked to balance factors such as cost, efficiency, staff morale and attrition, call quality, customer satisfaction and revenue – some of which may be mutually antagonistic – in a constantly-changing environment where there is limited opportunity for reflection. Often these contact centres exist on a virtual island away from the rest of the business, not just geographically, but logically as well. Although they belong to the business, and constantly receive insights about other parts of the operation, they may not have the ability to provide actionable insight either for their own benefit or for other departments.

Having said that, 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 do contact centres attempt to measure the most important metric of all - first-contact resolution?" ('First-contact' resolution differs slightly from 'first-call' resolution, in that it includes emails, web chat and other non-voice channels as well. In reality though, 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 most important metric, the vast majority of survey respondents place first-contact resolution as being one of the top 3 metrics that are most **influential** on customer satisfaction, with 69% stating it as being no.1: in effect, far more important than any other metric. So, logically it seems that to improve customer satisfaction, a business has to improve first contact resolution rates.

The ability to understand a query and deal with it in a reasonable timeframe at the first time of asking is the key to a contact centre's success, reducing the overall number of contacts while providing the customer with a good experience which will impact on the company's overall performance. It also has a positive effect on the agent's morale (and thus, staff attrition rates), and increases the chances of a successful cross-sell and up-sell being made. Little wonder that the first-contact resolution metric has grown hugely in importance, but it can be problematic to quantify accurately. This risks the metric being downplayed, especially as it is not simply a matter of producing a monthly report from ACD statistics.

First-contact resolution rates are not simple to understand, but have to be viewed in context. An improving business may well see its FCR rate actually decline after it implements process improvements, which is counter-intuitive, but if the business had been handling live calls that were more suited to self-service or avoidable through better marketing communications, getting rid of these 'easy' calls entirely will make the FCR rate decline. If many calls are about the same issue, and are answered quickly and accurately, it improves FCR rates, but of course piles up cost and impacts negatively upon other performance metrics, such as queue length and call abandonment rate.

Businesses should consider the reasons for these unnecessary calls, rather than just focusing upon a single metric, as 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 which could be 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-call resolution rates initially, allowing a clearer picture of what is really happening in the contact centre to emerge, which can then be addressed more fully.

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 within this metric.

The digital channels – email, web chat and social media – are supposed to be able to deliver a cost advantage over telephony.

The cost of a phone call in Australia is somewhat higher than New Zealand, probably as a result of calls taking over a minute longer in Australia.

Email is reported to be more expensive than a phone call in New Zealand, although web chat and social media are considerably lower. In Australia, only social media was reported to have a lower cost than telephony.

It should be noted that many respondents were unable to provide an accurate estimate of cost per web chat or social media contact, so these figures should be considered only as a guide.

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

Country	Australia	New Zealand
Phone	AUD $12.32	NZL $10.65
Email (agent-handled)	AUD $12.10	NZL $12.47
Web chat (agent-handled)	AUD $11.99	NZL $7.21
Social media (agent-handled)	AUD $8.00	NZL $7.25

Average outbound call costs (for ANZ as a whole in this case, due to the very low numbers of responses to this question) are a mean of AUD $10.59 / NZD $11.71, and median of AUD $8.00 / NZD $8.84.

Again, these figures should be considered as a guide.

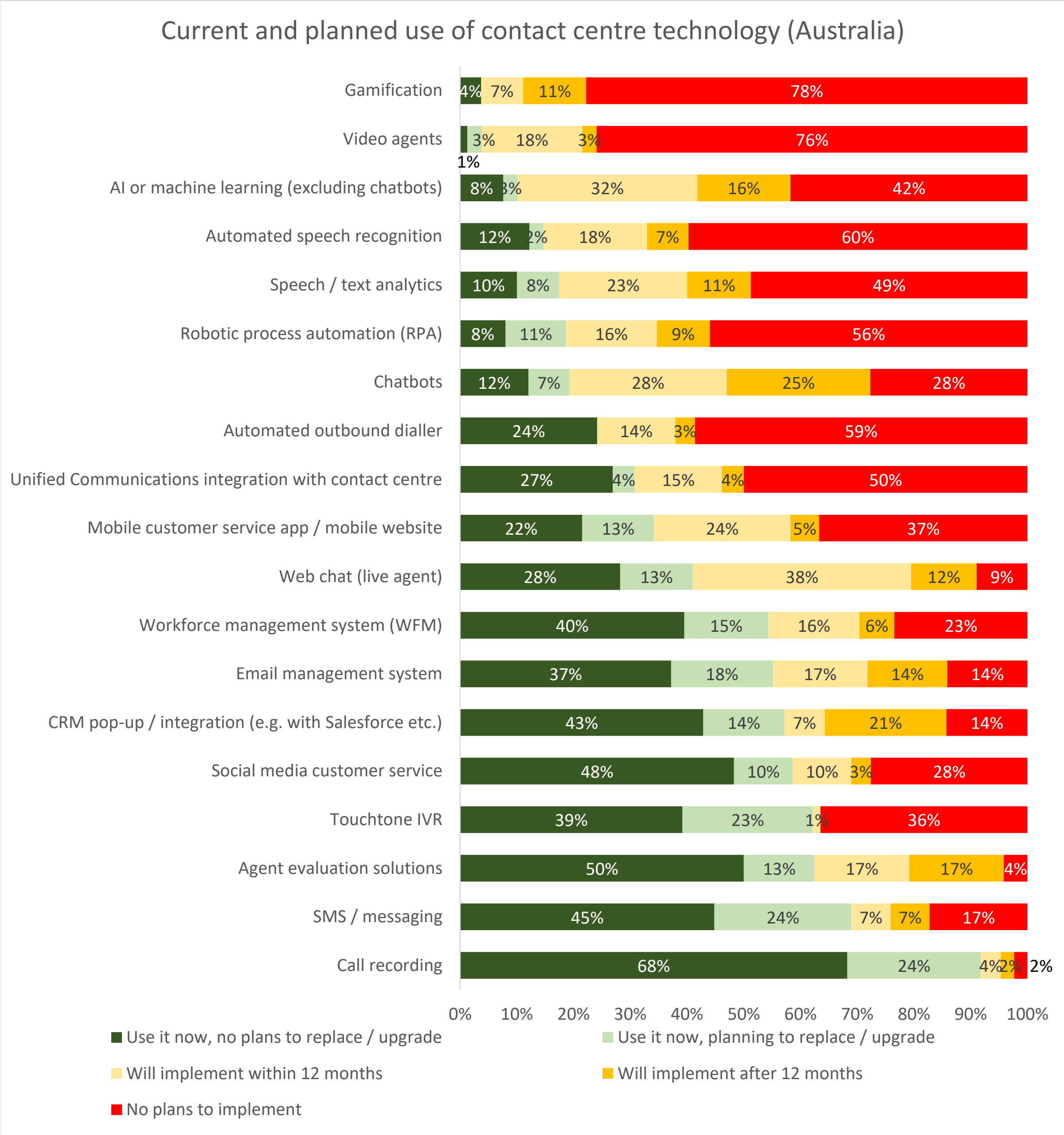
TECHNOLOGY

CURRENT AND PLANNED USE OF CONTACT CENTRE TECHNOLOGY

The majority of Australian survey respondents use call recording, SMS/messaging, agent evaluation solutions, touchtone IVR, social media customer service, CRM, email management and workforce management.

There is considerable interest in implementing interaction analytics, chatbots, AI, mobile customer service and live agent web chat in the short-term.

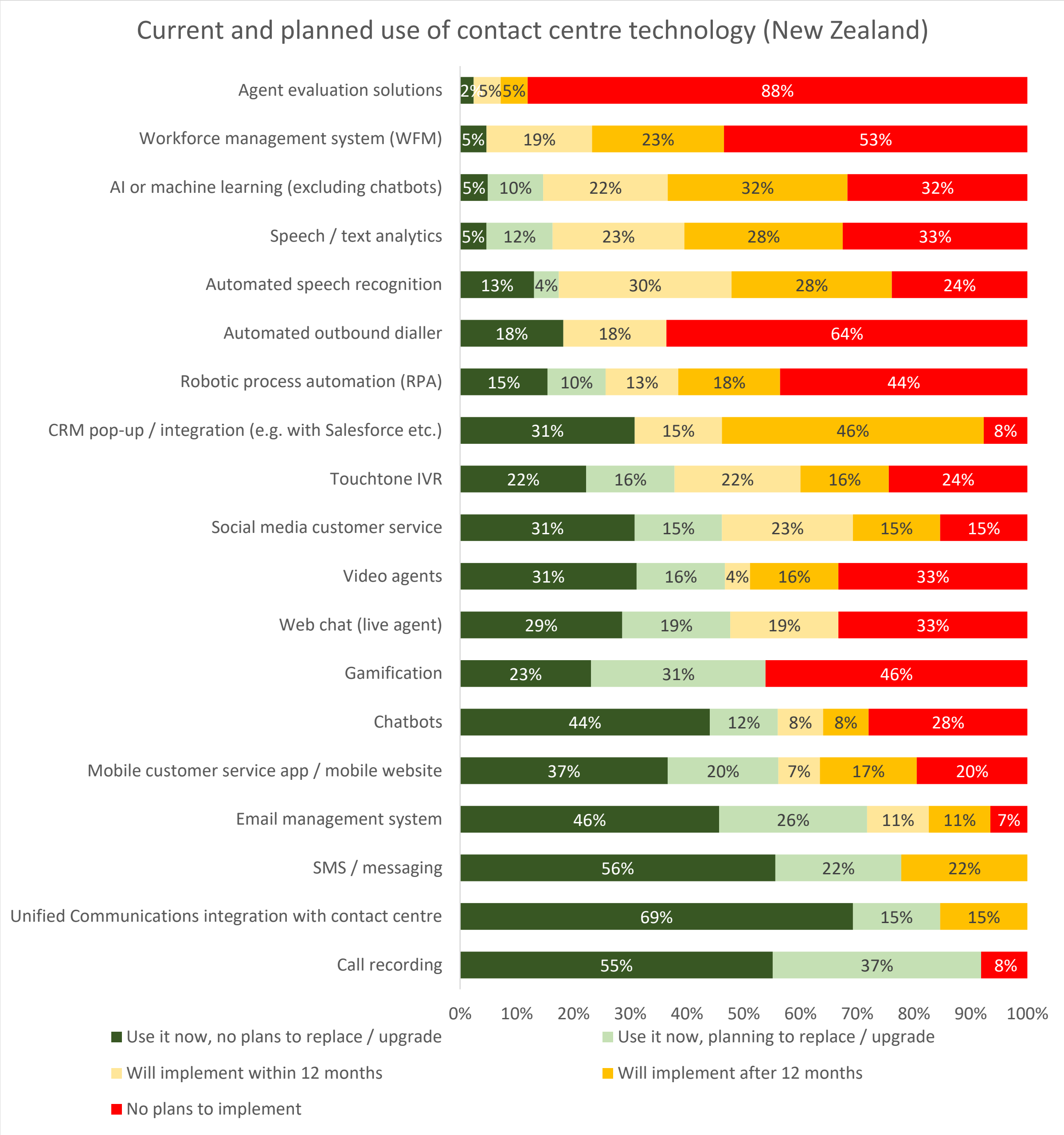
Figure 17: Current and planned use of contact centre technology (Australia)



Looking at New Zealand respondents, the majority use call recording, unified communications, SMS/messaging, email management, mobile customer service, chatbots and gamification.

There are intentions to implement speech recognition, WFM, interaction analytics, AI, social media customer service and live agent web chat in the next 12 months.

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



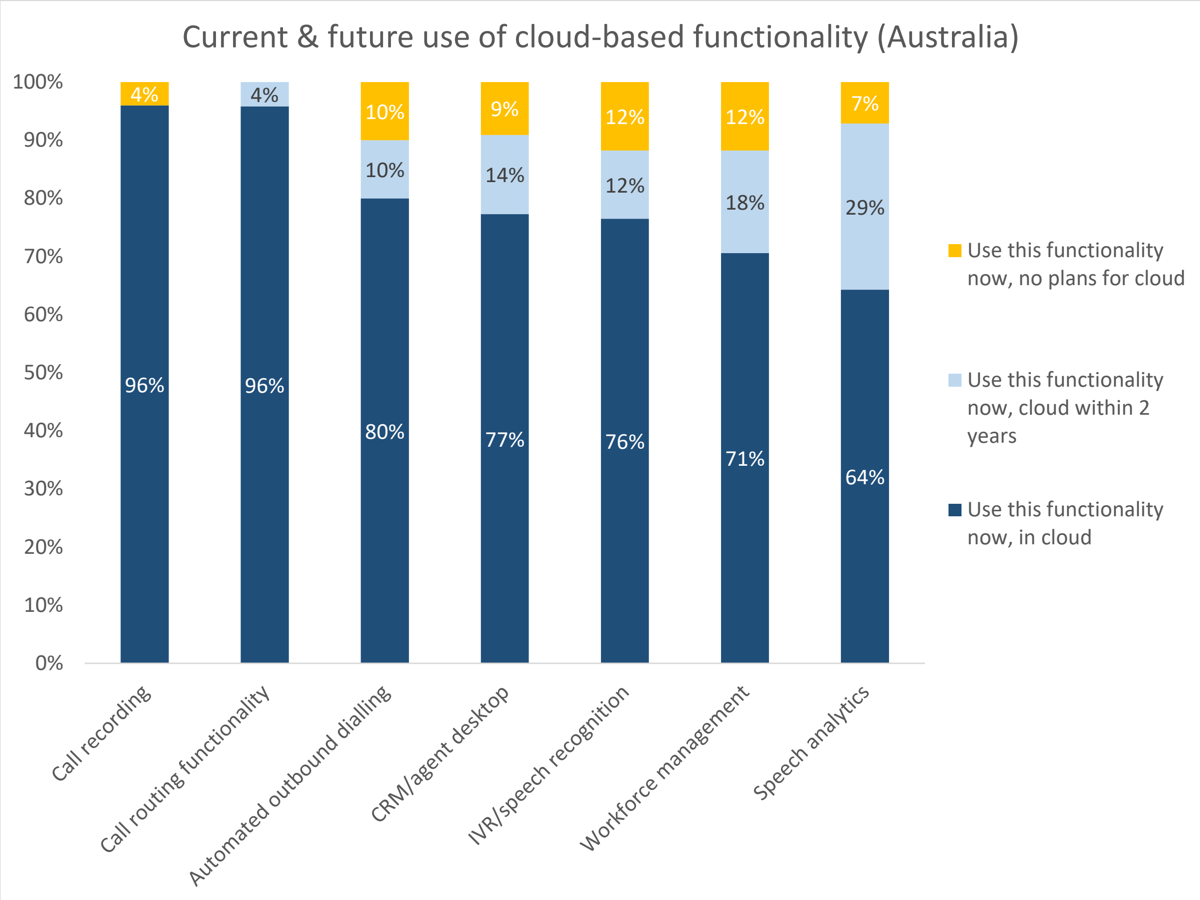
CLOUD-BASED CONTACT CENTRE SOLUTIONS

83% of Australian survey respondents currently use some cloud-based contact centre functionality. For New Zealand respondents, the figure is somewhat lower, at 43%.

Of those Australian survey respondents that use these applications, almost all have call recording and call routing functionality in the cloud.

There is a strong expectation amongst users of speech analytics that it will move into the cloud within two years.

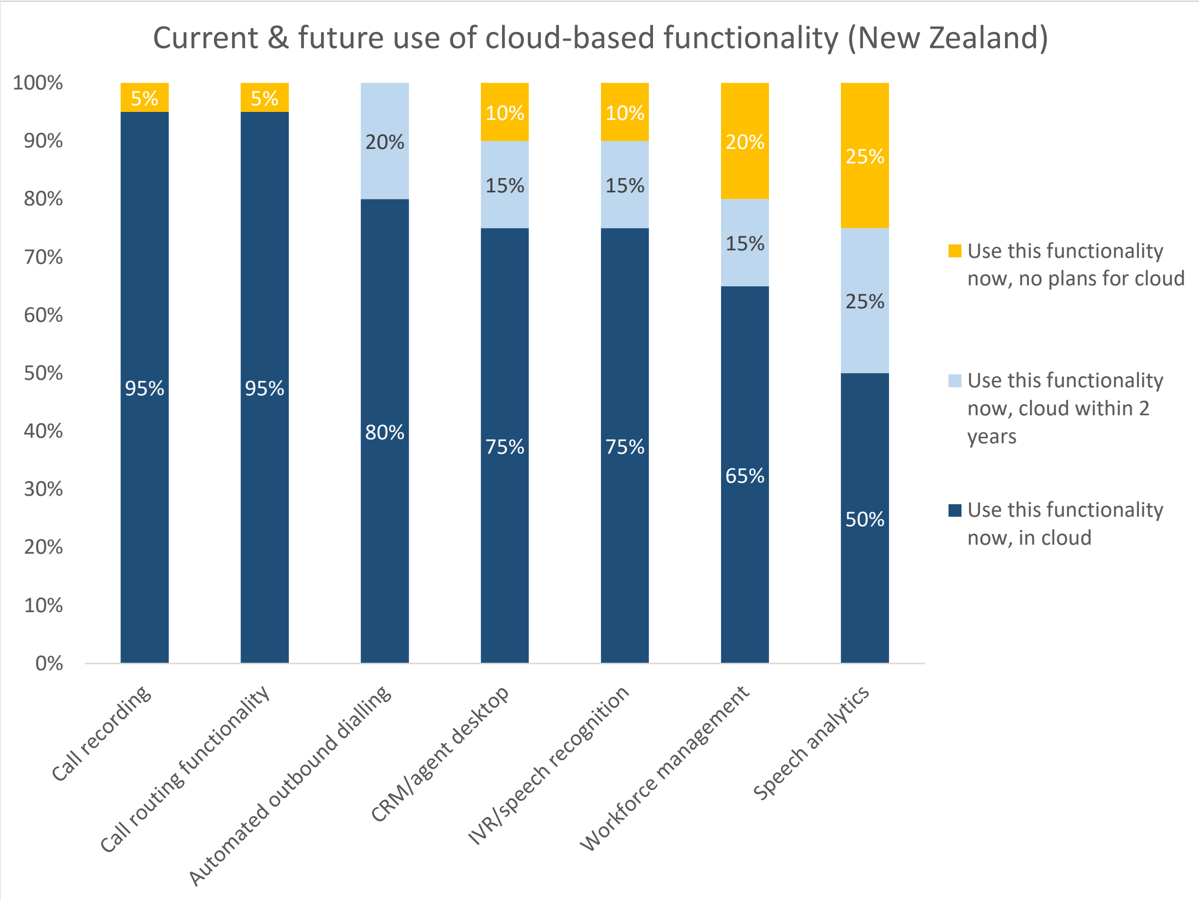
Figure 19: Current & future use of cloud-based functionality (Australia)



For New Zealand users of these applications, call recording and call routing are also very likely to be based in the cloud.

While 25% of speech analytics users expect this to move to the cloud within 2 years, the same proportion expect that they will continue to use this on-premise.

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



How Cloud Contact Centre Technology Delivers for Your Customer's Journey

Leading Contact Centre organisations are reimagining their customer journeys creating memorable experiences at every touchpoint. This transition to digital engagement is delivered through powerful cloud contact centre technology providing innovative opportunities for growth. Flexible and comprehensive, cloud technology creates better experiences for both your agents and your customers. Here's how cloud contact centre technology delivers quality and success.

What is Cloud Contact Centre Technology?

Genesys Cloud CX is ideal for organisations wanting an affordable and quick-to-deploy contact centre solution. It is a fully-featured, configurable solution delivered with the simplicity of the cloud. It is the ideal solution for contact centres with 10 to 500+ seats. Genesys Cloud CX is quick to deploy, scalable and evergreen. Here are some notable ways Genesys Cloud CX differs to on-premise solutions:

Better customer experience: Genesys Cloud enables a 24/7 self-service experience with chatbots to handle simple customer enquiries or tasks and initiates context-aware transfers to agents for high-value interactions. The fully featured out-of-the-box solution includes auto attendant, speech-enabled IVRs, call routing, call-back and reporting.

Reduce handle times: Route the right information and the right interactions to the employee best suited to help. Integrate Genesys Cloud with your CRM so you can provide personalised, context-aware experiences.

Find new revenues: Customers will likely spend more when the experience is great. Connect buyers with the right agent at the right moment to increase conversions and sales.

Delivering Better Customer Experience

Once deployed Genesys Cloud CX delivers a wealth of advantages for your contact centre including:

- **Better workforce management:** Your frontline teams are responsible for significant portions of customer interaction, experience and overall satisfaction. Cloud solutions help empower these teams with a variety of tools, including staff scheduling products, AI-powered tools, employee engagement and performance improvement.
- **Channel integration:** Genesys Cloud service enables your customers to interact with you across multiple channels: voice, SMS, email, web and social. At the same time, it enables you to integrate these different touchpoints under a single platform to provide employees with the necessary real-time and contextual data to offer personalised services for your customers.
- **Complaint management:** Dashboards with real-time data and historical reporting make it easy to understand your business and manage customer experiences across all channels. Cloud contact centres can handle their complaints more effectively as AI solutions automatically predict customer pain points, suggest action during complaint management processes and provide quality assurance throughout every customer interaction.

Modern organisations need simpler, smarter ways to empower employees, unify disparate data sources and deliver unforgettable CX. Cloud solutions can do all this and more, digitising contact centre solutions with fast, affordable and user-friendly tools — all delivered and deployed over the internet.

Contact GSN to Start Delivering Better Customer Journeys with Genesys Cloud CX Today

GSN are Cloud Contact Centre and Digital Experience Experts. With over 18 years' experience, GSN provides highly tailored delivery and support. Our team of experts bring together human and digital engagement solutions to help clients transform their customer and employee experiences. GSN develops solutions in-house and partners with many award-winning local and international businesses, to ensure our clients have access to the latest innovation. **Ready to be more than just a number?**

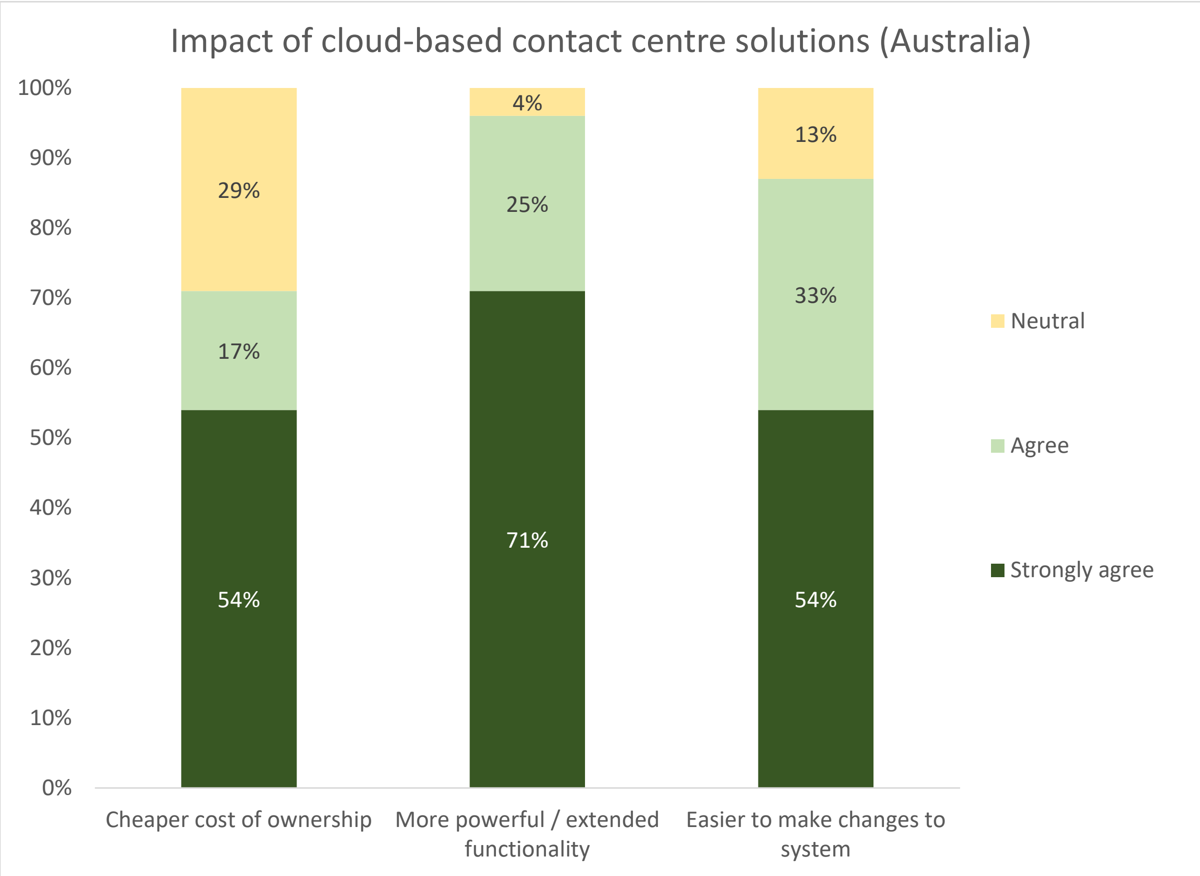
Australian cloud users are very positive about the impact that cloud has had on their contact centres.

54% of respondents agreed strongly that cloud-based solutions had given a cheaper overall cost of ownership of their contact centre technology, with 29% neutral.

96% experienced more powerful extended functionality in a cloud-based environment to some extent.

87% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that cloud made it easier to make changes to the system, with 13% neutral.

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



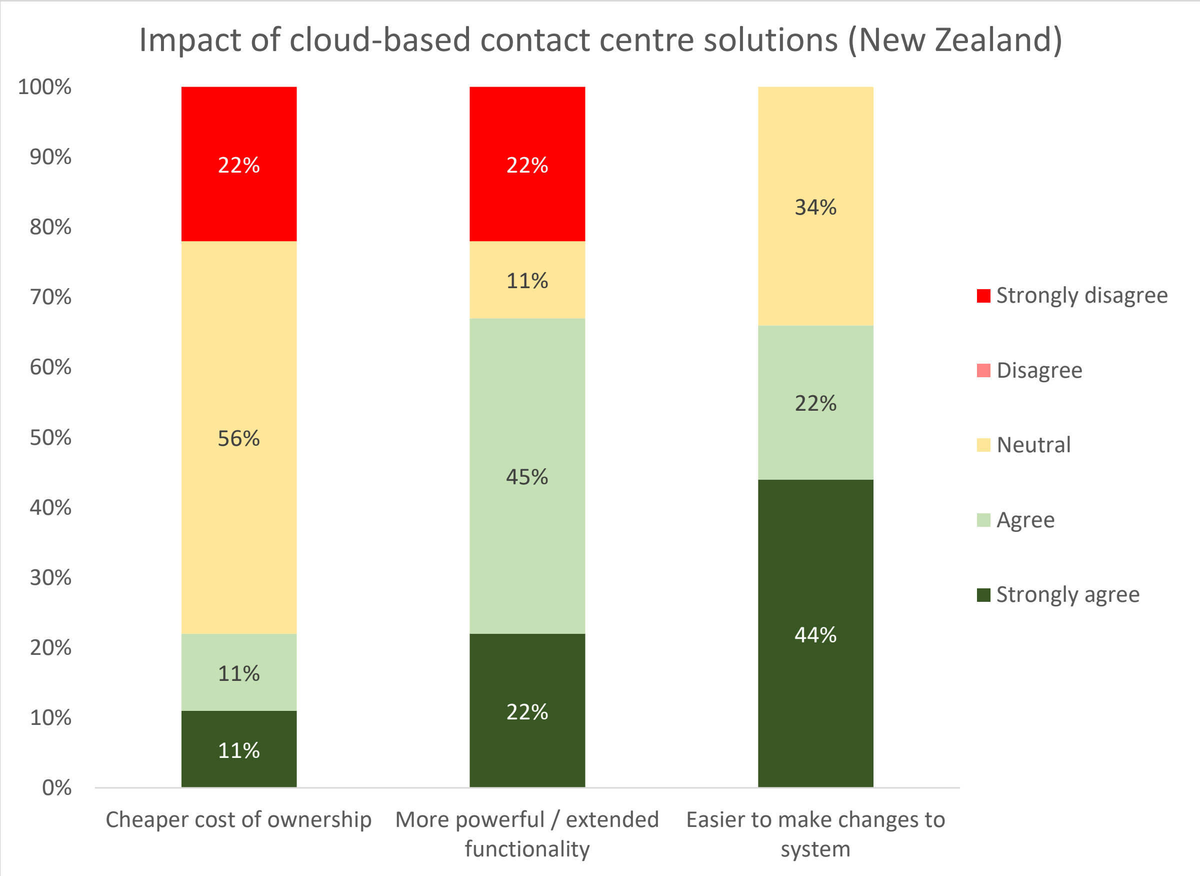
New Zealand cloud users were still quite positive, although not as enthusiastic as Australian survey respondents.

Only 22% of respondents agreed that cloud-based solutions had given a cheaper overall cost of ownership of their contact centre technology, with the same proportion strongly disagreeing.

67% experienced more powerful extended functionality in a cloud-based environment to some extent, with 22% again strongly disagreeing.

There was more unanimity that cloud made it easier to make changes to the system, with 66% agreeing and 34% neutral.

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



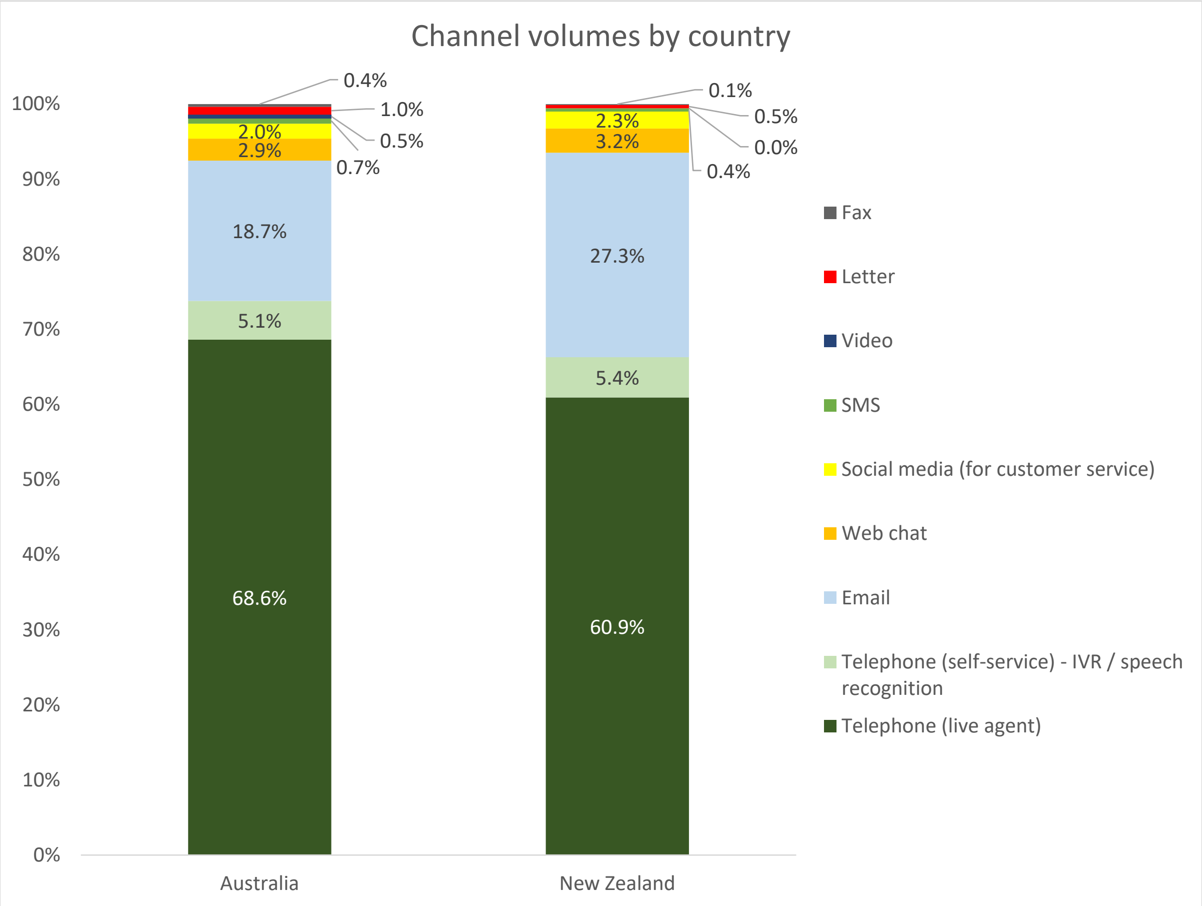
CHANNEL USAGE

CHANNEL VOLUMES

Australian survey respondents report that around 69% of inbound customer contact is through telephony, compared to just over 60% for New Zealand.

NZ respondents are more likely to be handling larger proportions of email. Web chat and social media account for only around 2-3% of inbound volumes in both countries.

Figure 23: Channel volumes by country

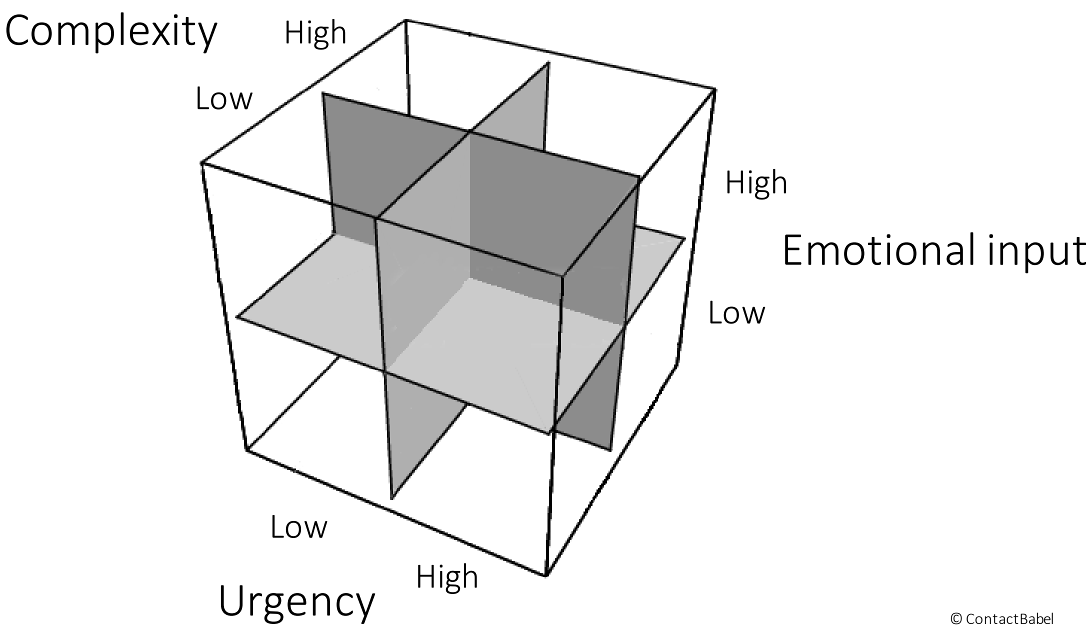


Country	Australia	New Zealand
Telephone (live agent)	68.6%	60.9%
Telephone (self-service) - IVR / speech recognition	5.1%	5.4%
Email	18.7%	27.3%
Web chat	2.9%	3.2%
Social media (for customer service)	2.0%	2.3%
SMS	0.7%	0.4%
Video	0.5%	0.0%
Letter	1.0%	0.5%
Fax	0.4%	0.1%

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. 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 seen elsewhere in this report in order 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.

The Customer Interaction Cube



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. Our hypothesis is that 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 tentative framework for readers to build their own scenarios. It should be noted that the results of the customer survey that follow this section suggest that different age groups and socioeconomic segments have their own views on how they prefer to contact a business in each of these cases. Primary and secondary channels are suggested, but will differ between organisations and customer types.

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	Email	Phone
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; 999	Phone	Web chat

There are many other variables that could be considered alongside these that will impact upon the suitability of channels:

- Demographics
- Ownership of smartphone / broadband impacts upon channel availability
- Time of day (i.e. is this an out-of-hours enquiry? Is the customer at home, at work, or travelling?)
- Whether the request is specific to an account, or a generic issue (i.e. is it necessary to pass through security first?).

While the 2x2x2 cube can help businesses to estimate the current and potential volumes and resourcing required to serve the customer base, it is important to remember that similar types of customer interaction may require very different handling depending on circumstances. For example, a query about product delivery may be a small part of a wide-ranging research process carried out by a particularly thorough prospective customer, or may be asked by a customer who has just realised they've forgotten about an important birthday and needs immediate, accurate information.

McKinsey talks about the 'moment of truth' in customer interactions[2], often occurring when the customer has an unexpected problem or has a high emotional stake, when long-term loyalty and customer advocacy can be won or lost depending on the outcome and the way in which it is handled. Businesses and their representatives should be aware that these relatively rare occurrences offer great opportunities. Recognising and handling these moments of truth appropriately – moments which are defined as such by the customer, not the business – will have a far greater long-term impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty than the dozens of competently-handled, forgettable interactions that may have happened previously.

Although the 2x2x2 cube gives some indication of the types of interaction that are more likely to be 'moments of truth', which businesses may choose to be handled by their more experienced and empathetic agents, they are by their nature difficult to predict. Current real-time speech analytics solutions can indicate a measure of stress in the customer's voice, flagging this up to the agent within the call, but agents should be in any case capable of recognising this without technology. In any case, if the customer has already tried two or three other channels without success, even the most competent and empathetic agent will find it difficult to turn the moment of truth around positively.

[2] http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organisation/our-insights/the-moment-of-truth-in-customer-service

For this reason, a true omnichannel approach is vital which offers the same high level of service and knowledge through each channel. Equally important is the freedom for agents to act in way appropriate to the situation – for example, if a 'high-emotion' interaction happens on social media, which can't be handled on that channel (e.g. it needs to go through security, or is too complex and lengthy for a non-voice channel), the agent should be given the license to place an outbound call to that customer in real-time, rather than advise them to call the contact centre. While this will impact upon the social media channel's service levels while the agent is away from it, the moment of truth offers the opportunity to lock-in that customer's loyalty. For contact centre operations traditionally run on a structured command-and-control basis, this may sound chaotic, but businesses have to decide if the occasional relaxation of their own procedures is an acceptable trade-off for providing the customer with something that they truly value. Agents need to be given *carte blanche* to deliver in 'moments of truth', and the training and support to recognise when this is happening.

This is not to say that 'moments of truth' necessarily have to be handled by a live agent. The popularity of self-service runs deep in the customer base, and the only reason that many customers abandon self-service at the point of crisis in order to ring the contact centre is only because self-service cannot deliver what they need. If companies focused their efforts on providing more sophisticated and reliable self-service applications, there is no reason why these could not deliver at least as much customer benefit at these moments of truth.

For example, if a passenger misses their plane, they are then likely to engage in a long and complicated discussion with a live agent (either at the airport or in a contact centre), involving alternatives, connections and payments. If, on missing the last call for the plane, the customer were immediately provided with an SMS or email detailing the various options available to them, which they could then select and rebook at once, this would be more convenient for the customer and significantly reduce the cost of service to the business. Perhaps more importantly, the customer would feel that the airline is looking out for them, creating long-term loyalty out of the negative experience of missing a plane.

The surveys of 1,000 Australian and 1,000 New Zealand consumers carried out for this report attempted to understand which the channels of preference would be in cases of high emotion, urgency and complexity through presenting survey respondents with three hypothetical scenarios:

High emotion: **notifying a company that an incorrect item has been sent to them**. This was chosen as a high emotion interaction as being sent an incorrect item is often frustrating, as not only has the desired product not arrived, but the customer is then left with the problem and effort of returning the item. This is not a particularly complex interaction, and in many cases will not be particularly urgent.

High urgency: **checking the arrival time of a flight that the customer is meeting**. This is likely to be an urgent interaction as it is very time-sensitive. Complexity is very low - as the required information is simply a time - and in the majority of cases, should have a fairly low emotional impact.

High complexity: **receiving guidance on completing a mortgage application or tax form**. This is likely to be a complex and long interaction, but is unlikely to have high levels of urgency or emotional response.

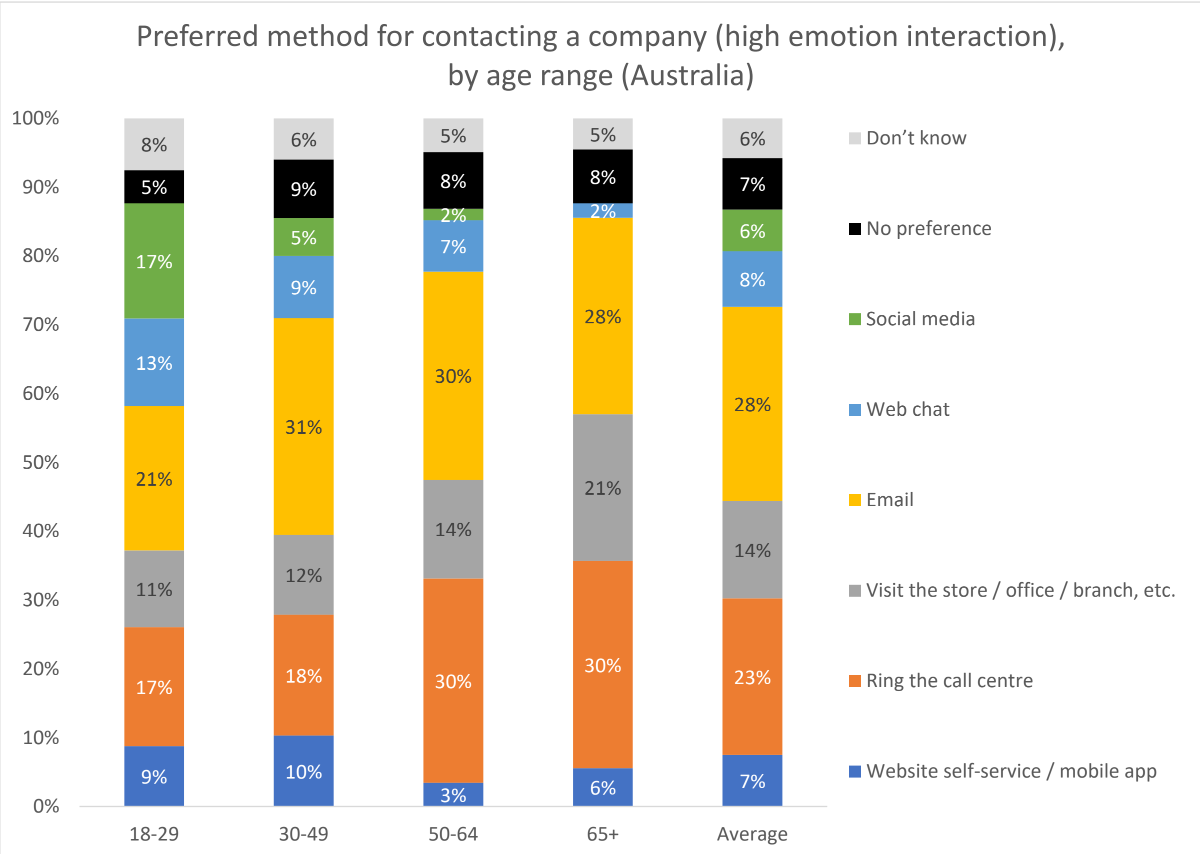
HIGH EMOTION INTERACTIONS

Consumers taking the survey were asked to imagine that a product they had ordered from a company had arrived but was incorrect. In this circumstance, they were asked which would be their preferred method for contacting the company to notify them that this was the case.

The most popular option was to email the organisation, with 28% of Australian respondents choosing this method. The second most popular, at 23%, was phoning the contact centre.

There was a strong pattern based on the age of the survey respondent and their preferred channel: the older demographics were more likely to pick up the phone, although email was popular with all over-30 age groups. Social media and web chat were very popular options with the youngest demographic, with the former equalling the telephony channel.

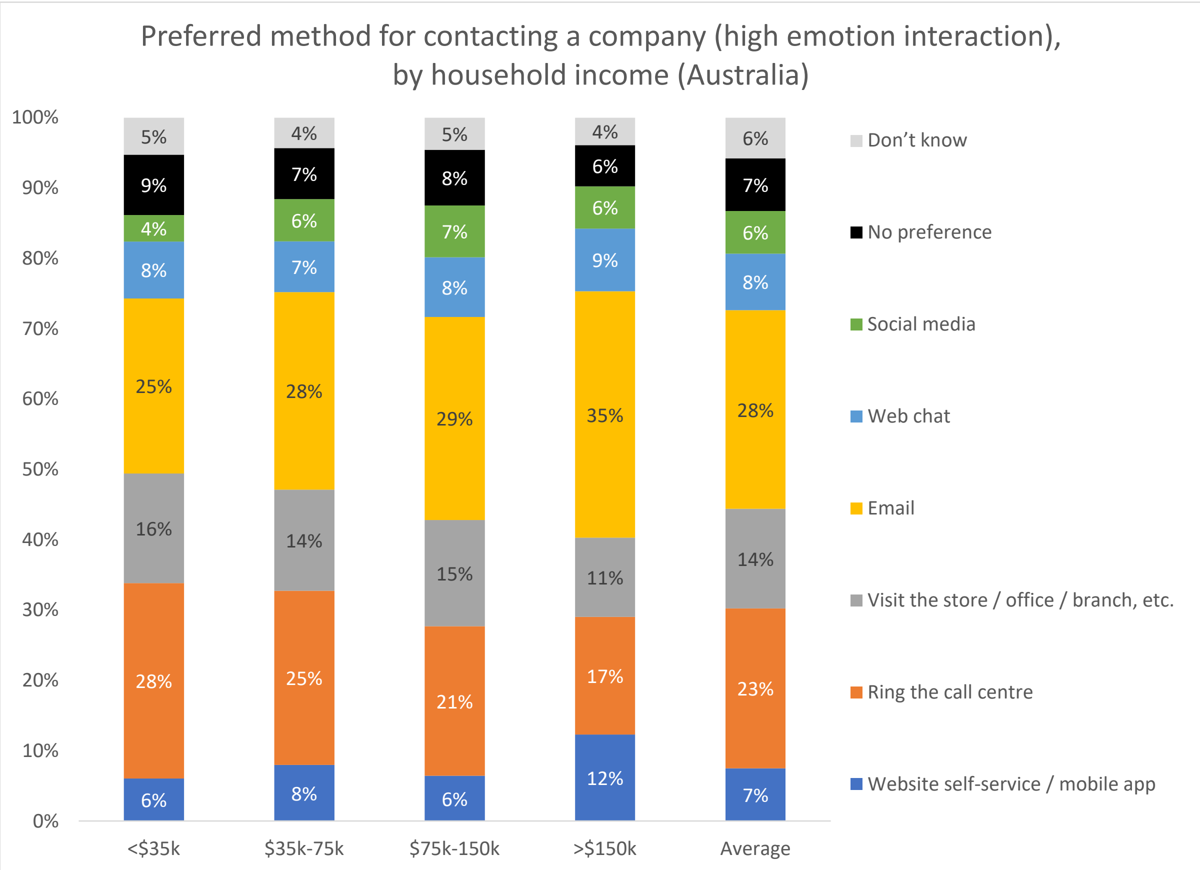
Figure 25: Preferred method for contacting a company (high emotion interaction), by age range (Australia)



When considering the preferred method for contacting a company with a high emotion interaction, email was the most popular choice for all.

Lower-income Australian customers were somewhat more likely to pick up the phone, with higher-income respondents being the most likely to email.

Figure 26: Preferred method for contacting a company (high emotion interaction), by household income (Australia)

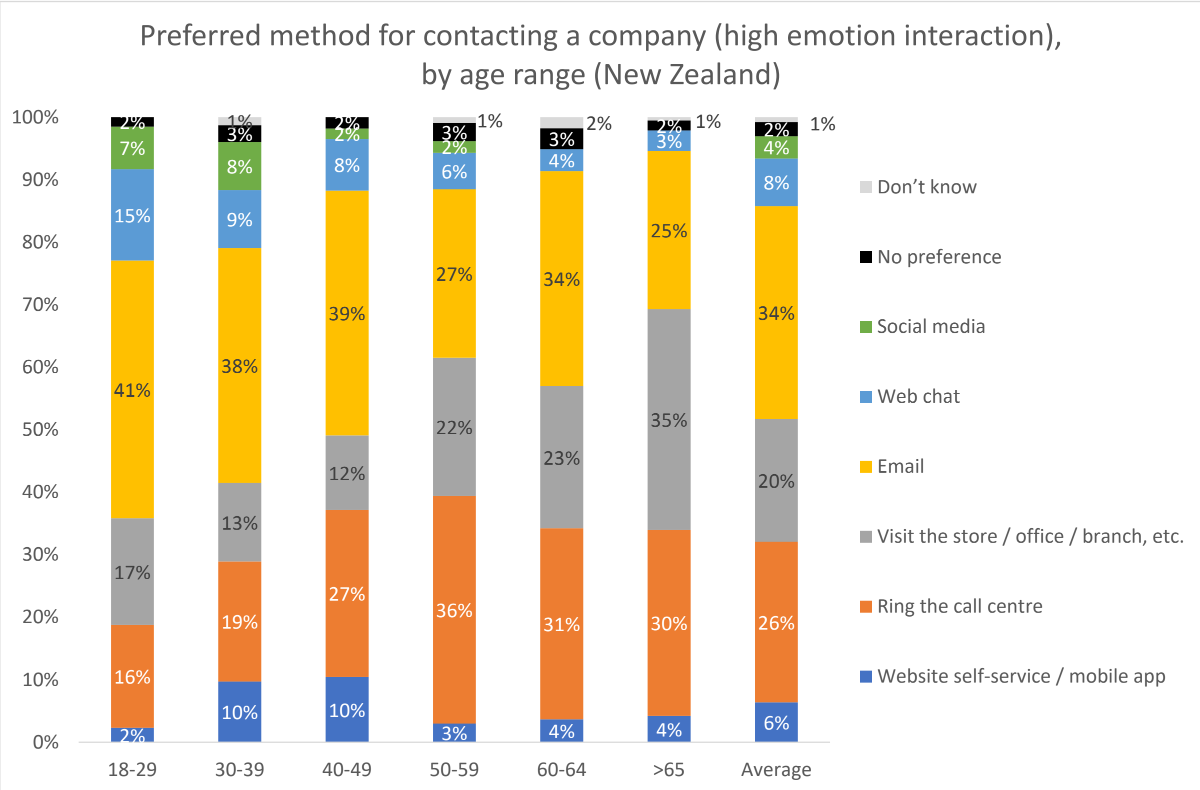


Looking at New Zealand customers, email was again the most popular channel, especially amongst younger customers.

Older demographics were more likely than younger customers to pick up the phone or visit the store.

A high proportion of younger people would choose to use web chat or social media in this case.

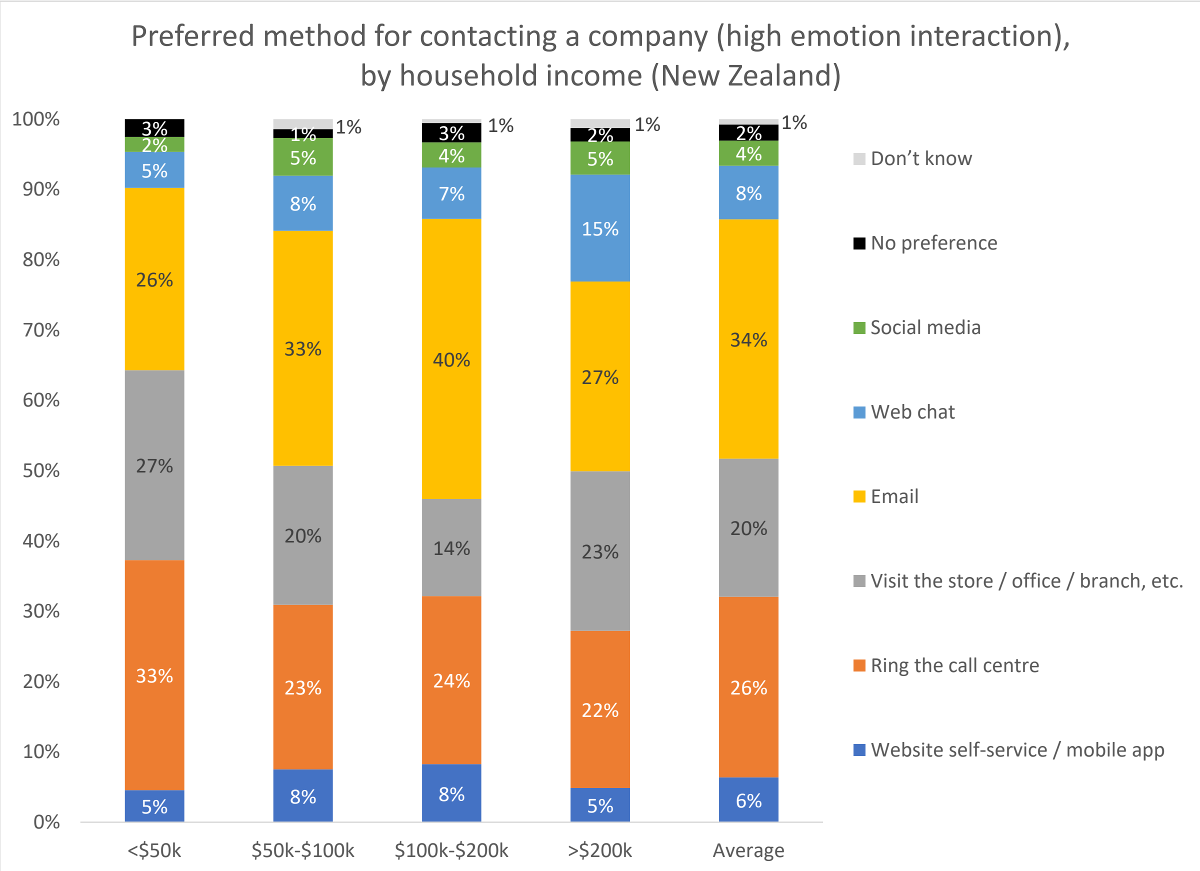
Figure 27: Preferred method for contacting a company (high emotion interaction), by age range (New Zealand)



New Zealand customers did not show a clear pattern for channel choice when considered by household income.

High-income customers were somewhat more likely to use web chat and less likely to pick up the phone.

Figure 28: Preferred method for contacting a company (high emotion interaction), by household income (New Zealand)

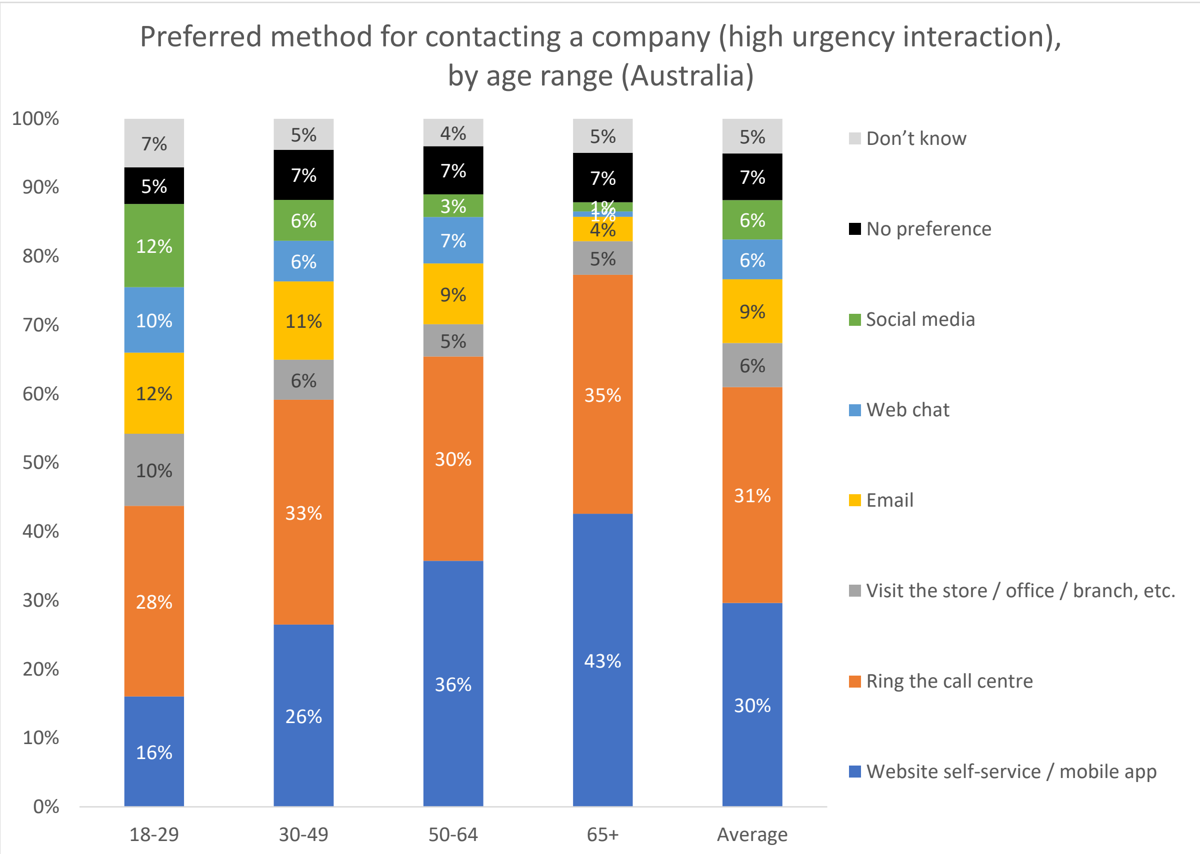


Survey respondents were asked which would be their preferred channel of choice in a situation where they were meeting somebody from a plane and needed to confirm the time at which to be at the airport.

The most popular channels for Australian respondents were those of telephony and web self-service, with older people being far more likely than younger people to try to solve the issue themselves on the website.

Social media and web chat were popular with younger customers, as was email despite its unsuitability for rapid responses in most cases.

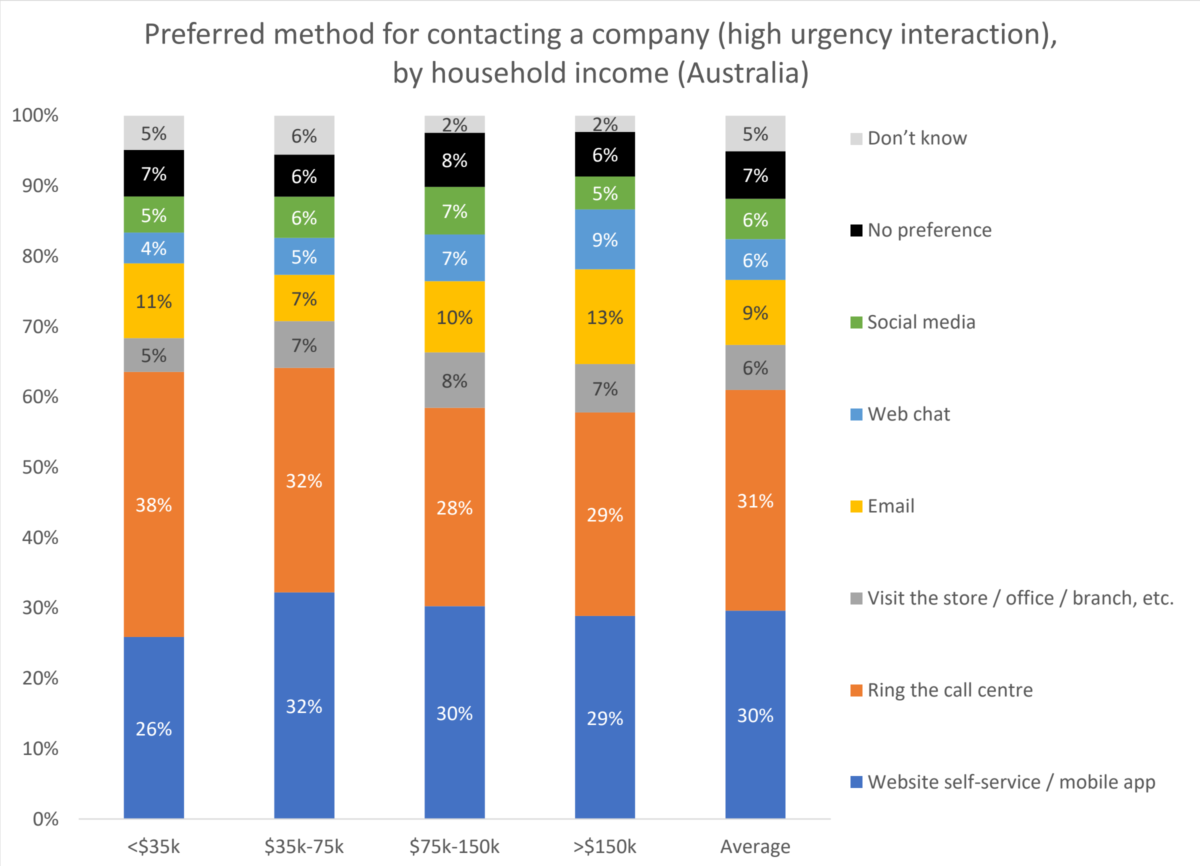
Figure 29: Preferred method for contacting a company (high urgency interaction), by age range (Australia)



When considering Australian customers segmented by household income, the pattern was far less pronounced.

Higher-income customers were a little more likely to use web chat, but there is considerable uniformity across all groups.

Figure 30: Preferred method for contacting a company (high urgency interaction), by household income (Australia)

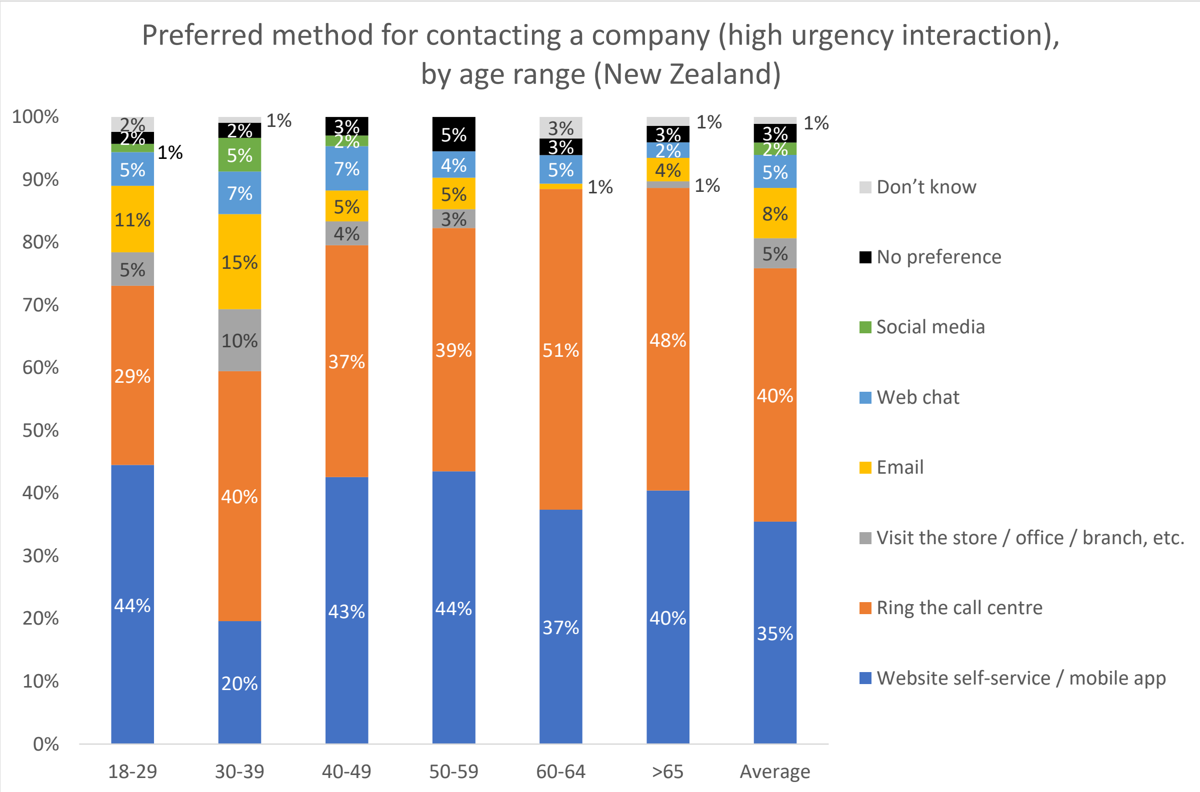


	<$35k	$35k-75k	$75k-150k	>$150k	Average
Don't know	5%	6%	2%	2%	5%
No preference	7%	6%	8%	6%	7%
Social media	5%	6%	7%	5%	6%
Web chat	4%	5%	7%	9%	6%
Email	11%	7%	10%	13%	9%
Visit the store / office / branch, etc.	5%	7%	8%	7%	6%
Ring the call centre	38%	32%	28%	29%	31%
Website self-service / mobile app	26%	32%	30%	29%	30%

New Zealand customers favour using the contact centre, with web self-service also very popular.

There is little clear pattern across age groups, and the very low figure for web self-service amongst 30-39 year-olds is very probably a statistical anomaly.

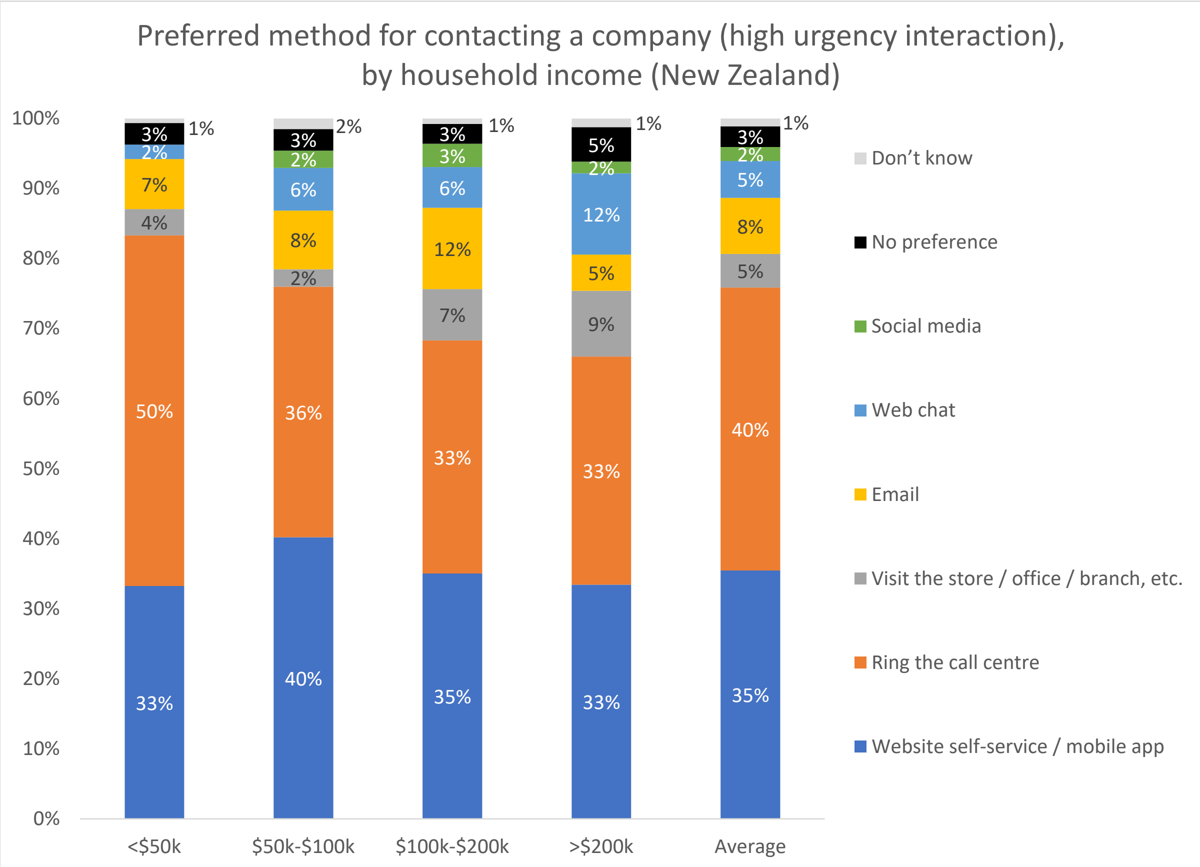
Figure 31: Preferred method for contacting a company (high urgency interaction), by age range (New Zealand)



When considering New Zealanders segmented by household income, calling the contact centre was much more popular amongst lower-income customers.

High-income customers report that web chat is a more popular channel than it is for low-income groups.

Figure 32: Preferred method for contacting a company (high urgency interaction), by household income (New Zealand)



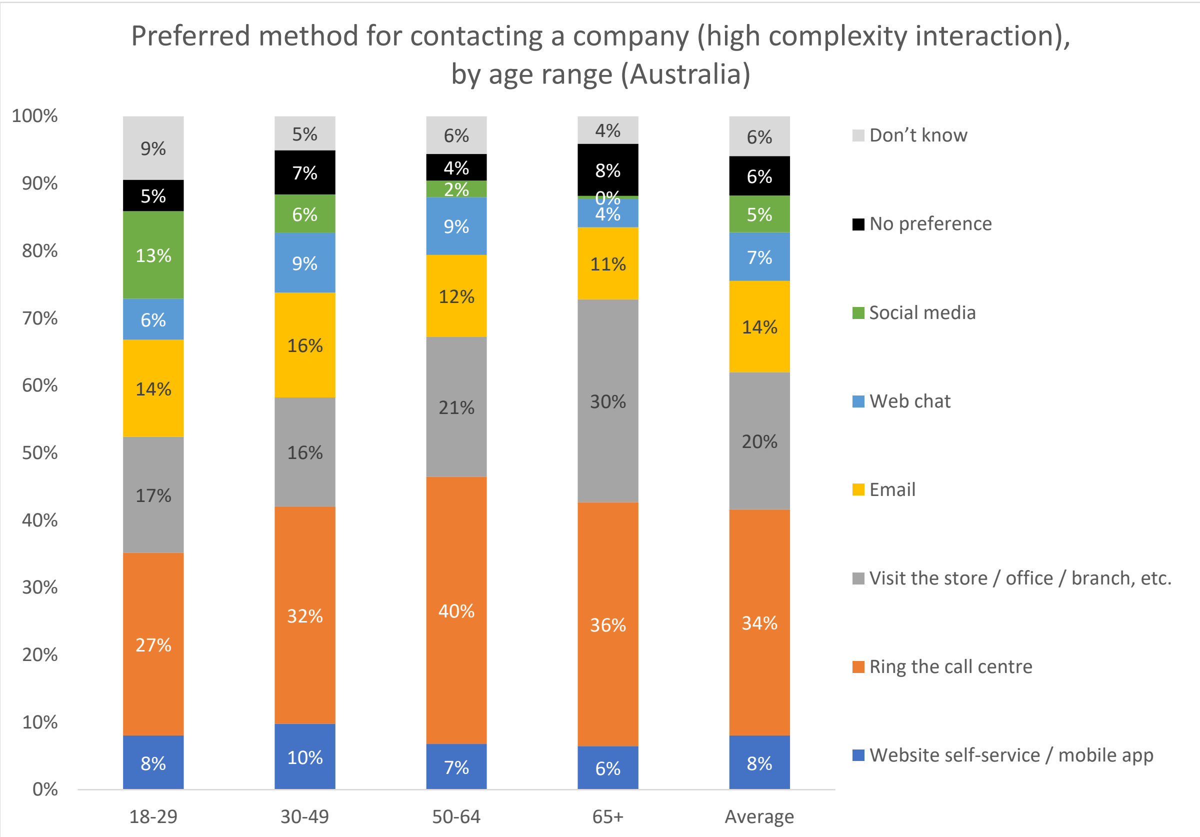
HIGH COMPLEXITY INTERACTIONS

For highly complex interactions, such as getting expert guidance with a tax form or mortgage application, making a physical visit to an office or branch is much more popular with the older demographic of Australian customers.

This group is also more likely to use the contact centre, unlike younger demographics which may use social media.

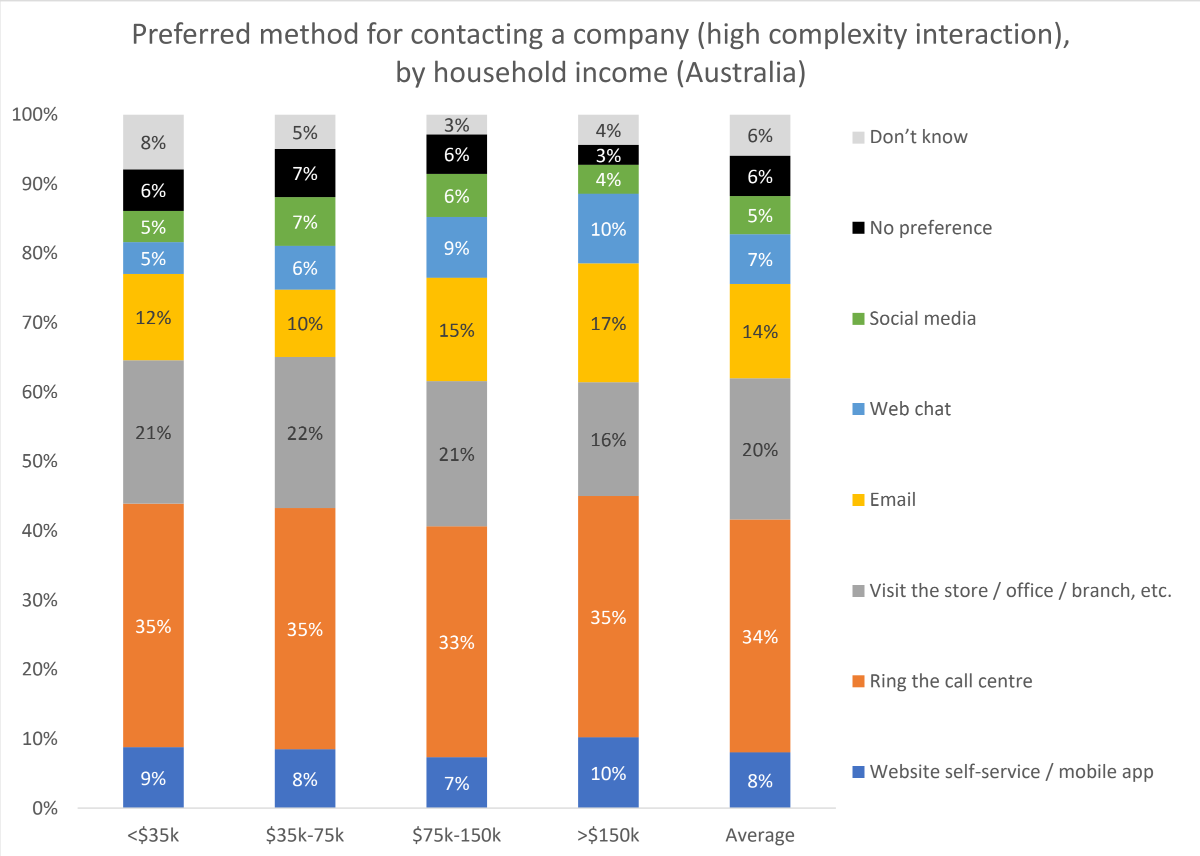
Web chat was also seen as an appropriate primary channel for complex interactions by a significant minority of 30-65 year-olds, whereas email is generally much less popular than it is for high emotion interactions, possibly due to the probable requirement for back-and-forth communication.

Figure 33: Preferred method for contacting a company (high complexity interaction), by age range (Australia)



Higher-income Australian customers were the most likely to use email, but there is little clear difference across income groups.

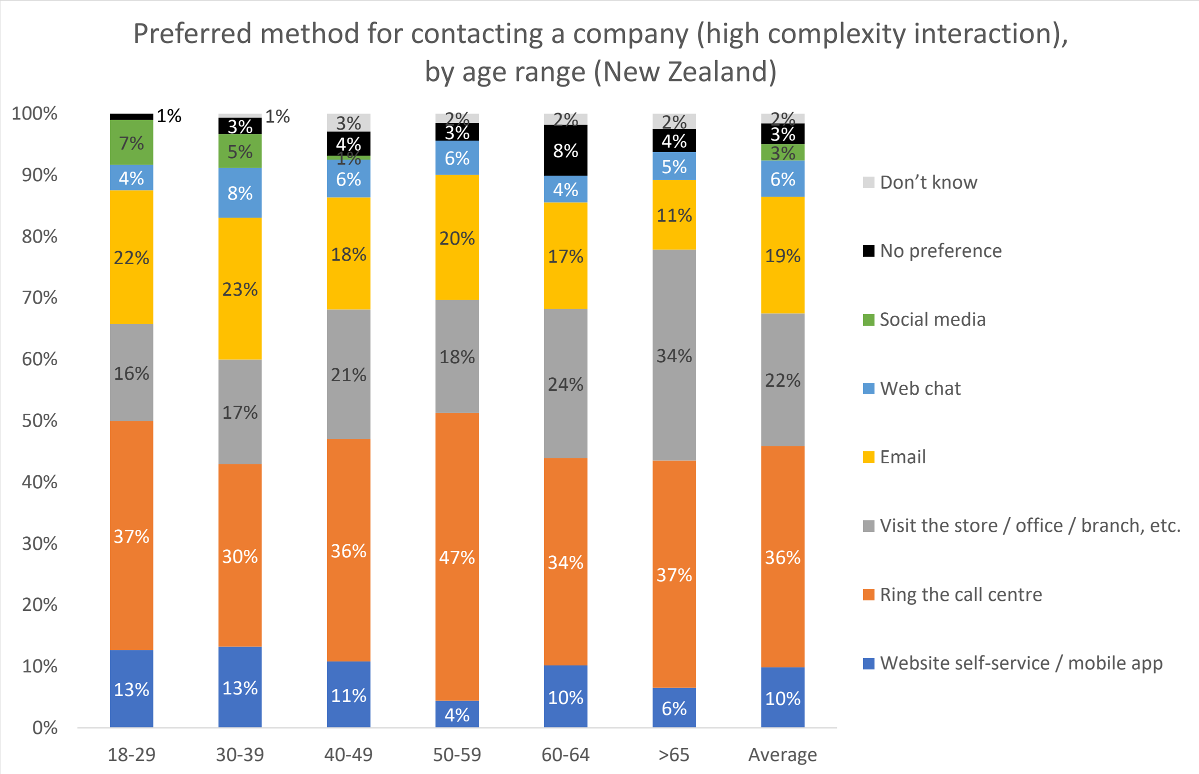
Figure 34: Preferred method for contacting a company (high complexity interaction), by household income (Australia)



New Zealand customers are also in favour of using the phone to handle complex enquiries, and are a little more likely than Australians to use email.

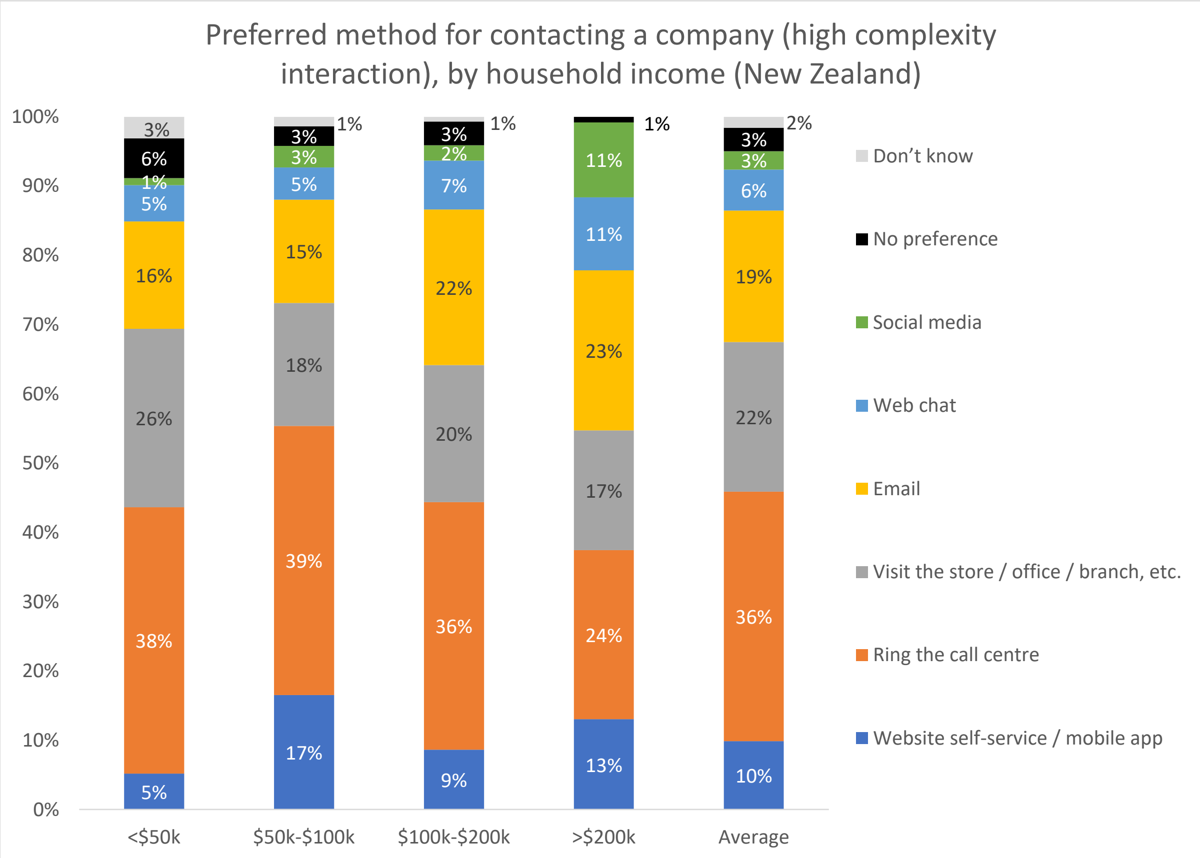
Self-service peaks in younger demographics, as does email and social media. Older customers are more likely to pay a visit to the office or store.

Figure 35: Preferred method for contacting a company (high complexity interaction), by age range (New Zealand)



Higher-income New Zealanders are more likely to use email or web chat, whereas those in lower-income brackets would use telephony or a physical visit to the organisation.

Figure 36: Preferred method for contacting a company (high complexity interaction), by household income (New Zealand)



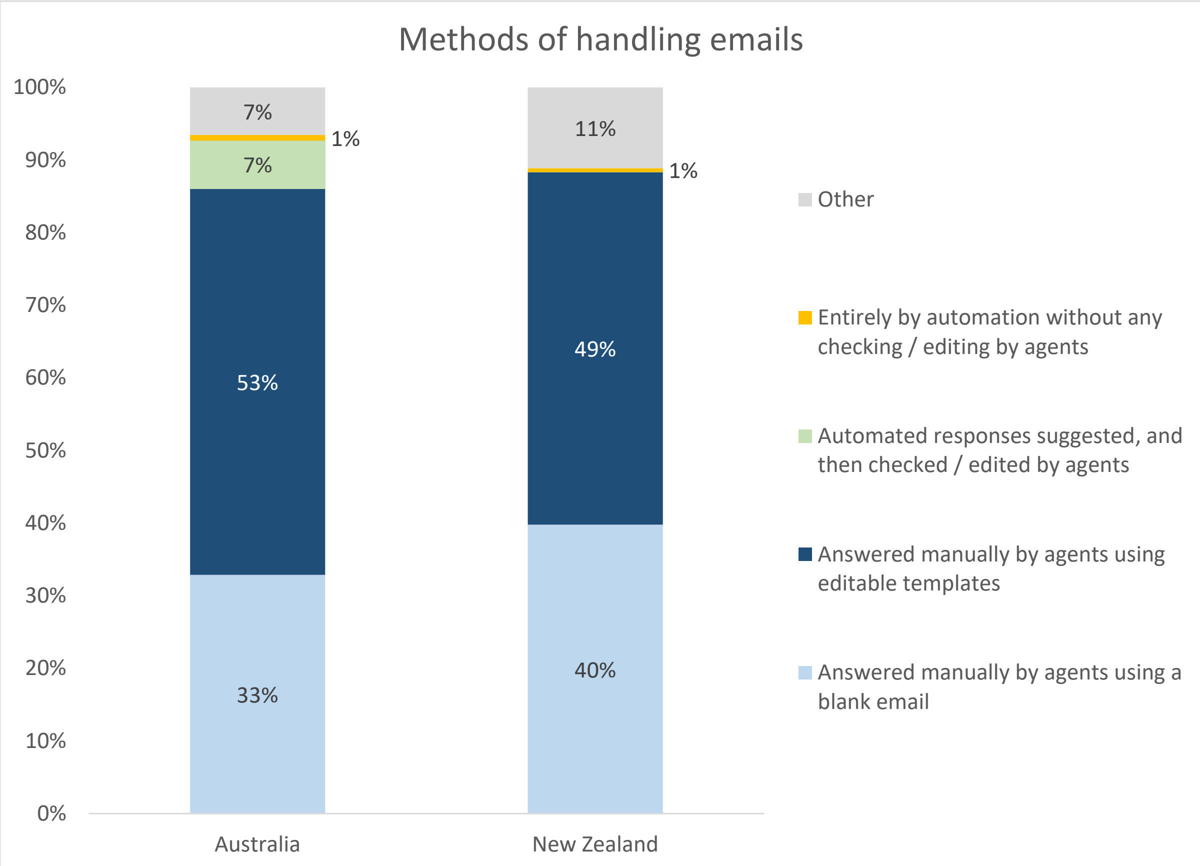
EMAIL

For businesses that handle substantial volumes of email, while it is not suggested that they should 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.

The most popular method of answering inbound emails is to use agents rather than automation. Around half 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 7% 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. Very few emails from New Zealand respondents were handled through automation.

Figure 37: Methods of handling emails



WEB CHAT

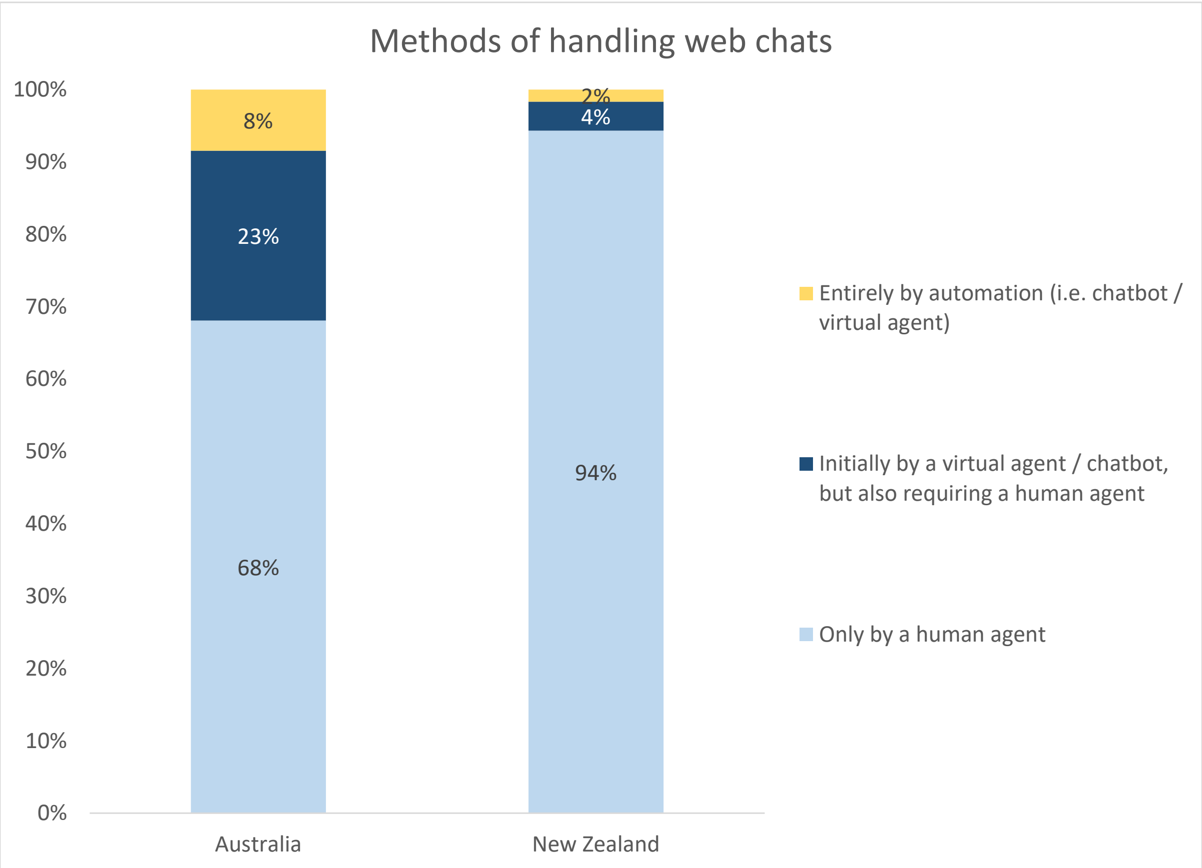
Web chat (or instant messaging / IM) sessions act by offering a live or automated assistance option to the process of web browsing. Like email, it has been around for many years, but only recently has started to grow volumes to the extent where it has become a mainstream channel for customer-business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

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.

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 far more likely than their New Zealand counterparts to be using automation, whether entirely through chatbots, or more likely having agents check and amend suggested responses before sending.

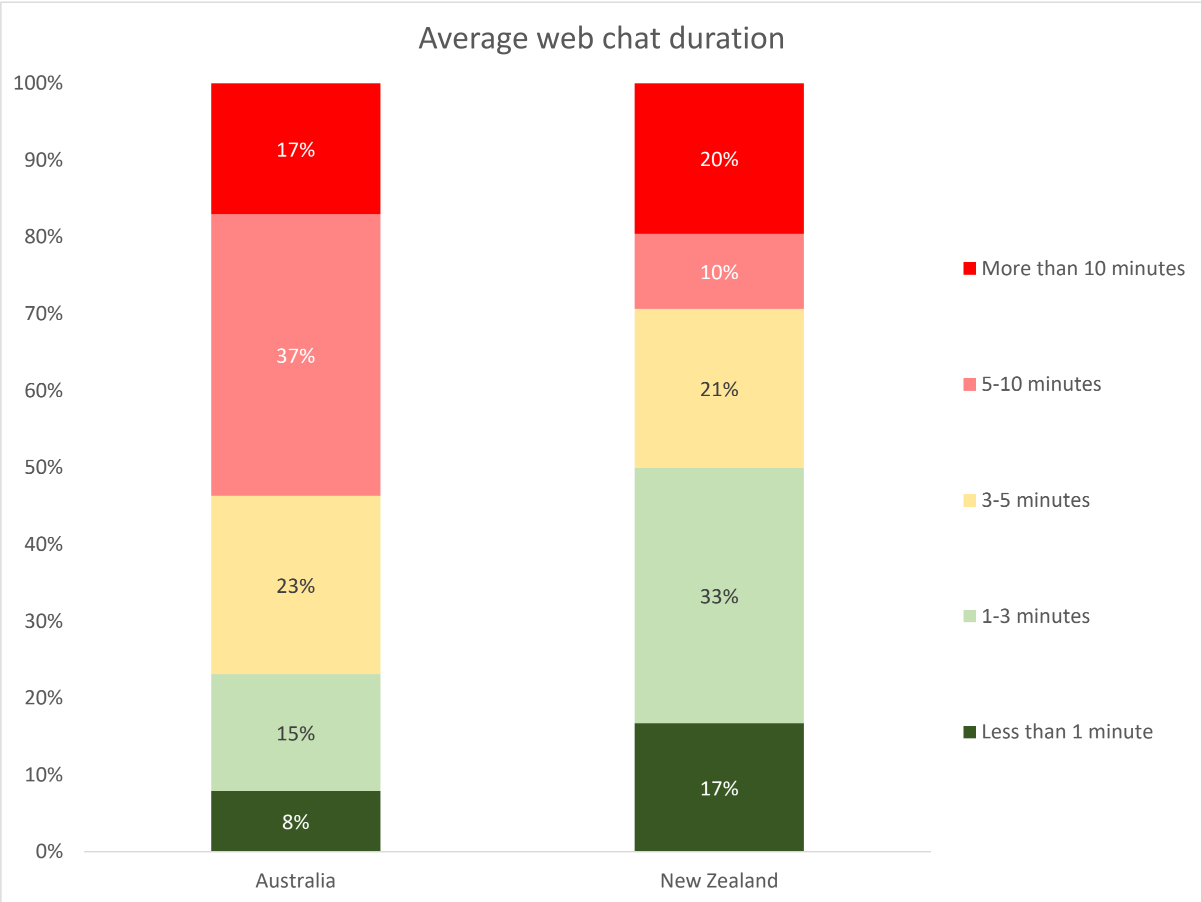
Figure 38: Methods of handling web chats



54% of web chats with Australian survey respondents and 30% of NZ web chats take longer than 5 minutes to complete.

However, half of NZ web chats take less than three minutes, which will be very positive for customers.

Figure 39: Average web chat duration

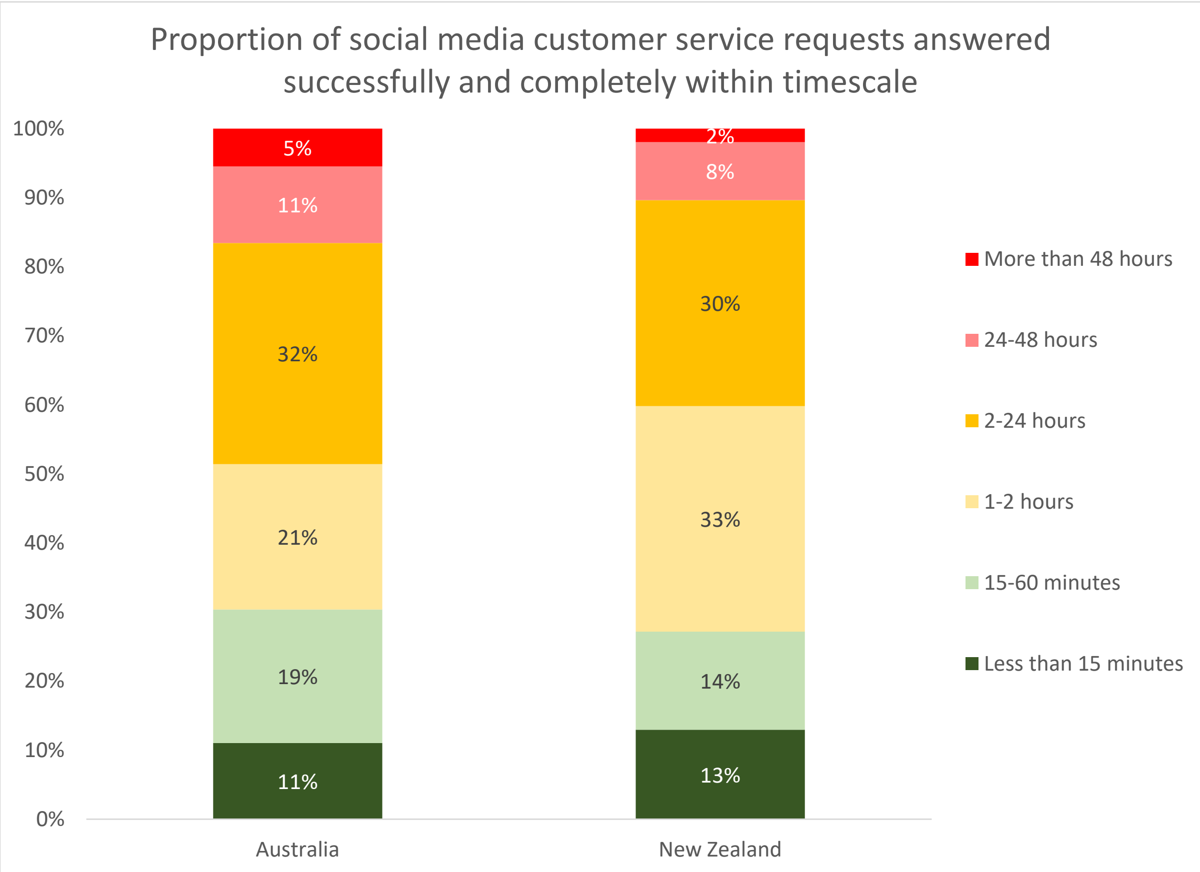


SOCIAL MEDIA

The Australian and New Zealand survey respondents show similar patterns for answering social media customer service requests, with around 25-30% being answered within an hour, and around 85-90% within the same day.

Only a small proportion of requests take longer than two days to answer.

Figure 40: Proportion of social media customer service requests answered successfully and completely within timescale



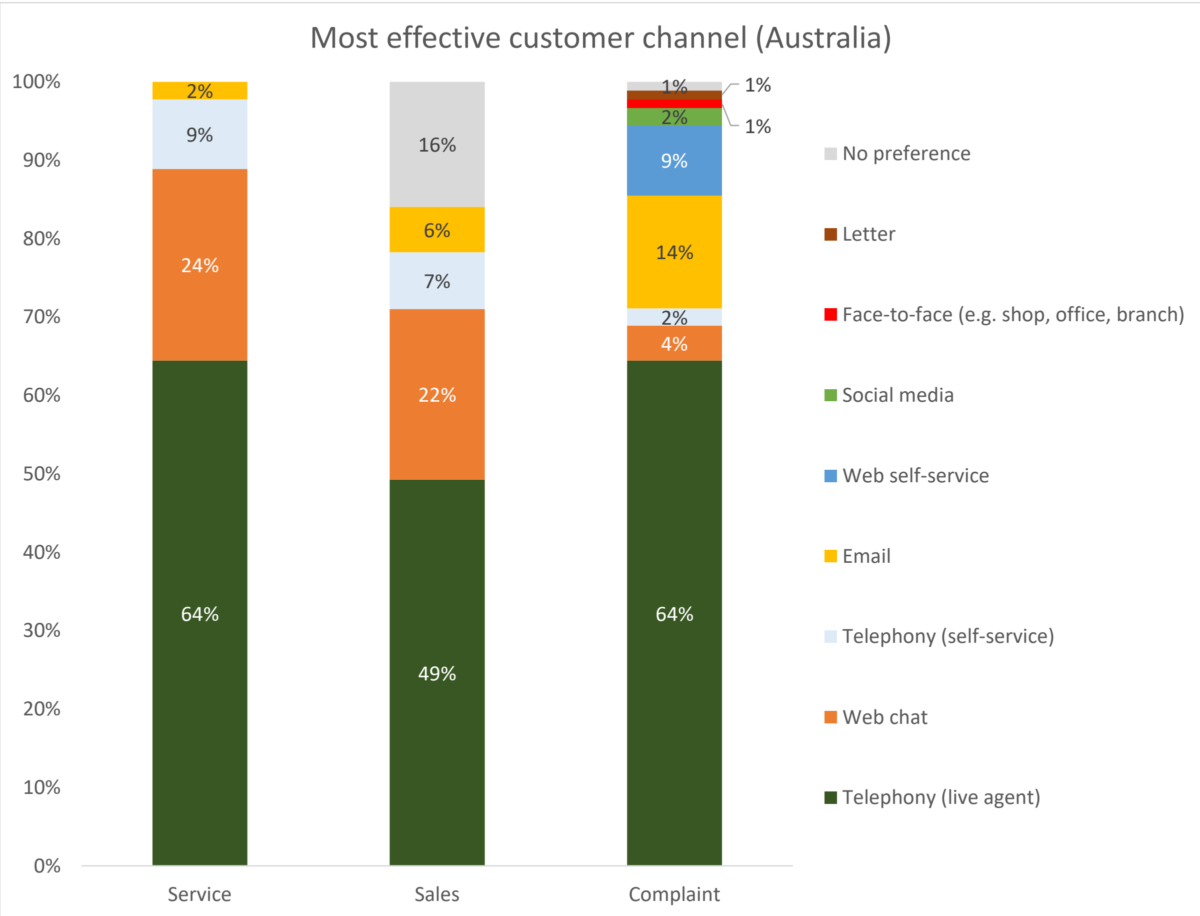
MOST EFFECTIVE CUSTOMER CHANNELS

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.

A majority of Australian respondents stated that telephony would be the best channel to use for service and complaints, with around half also believing this to be the case for sales.

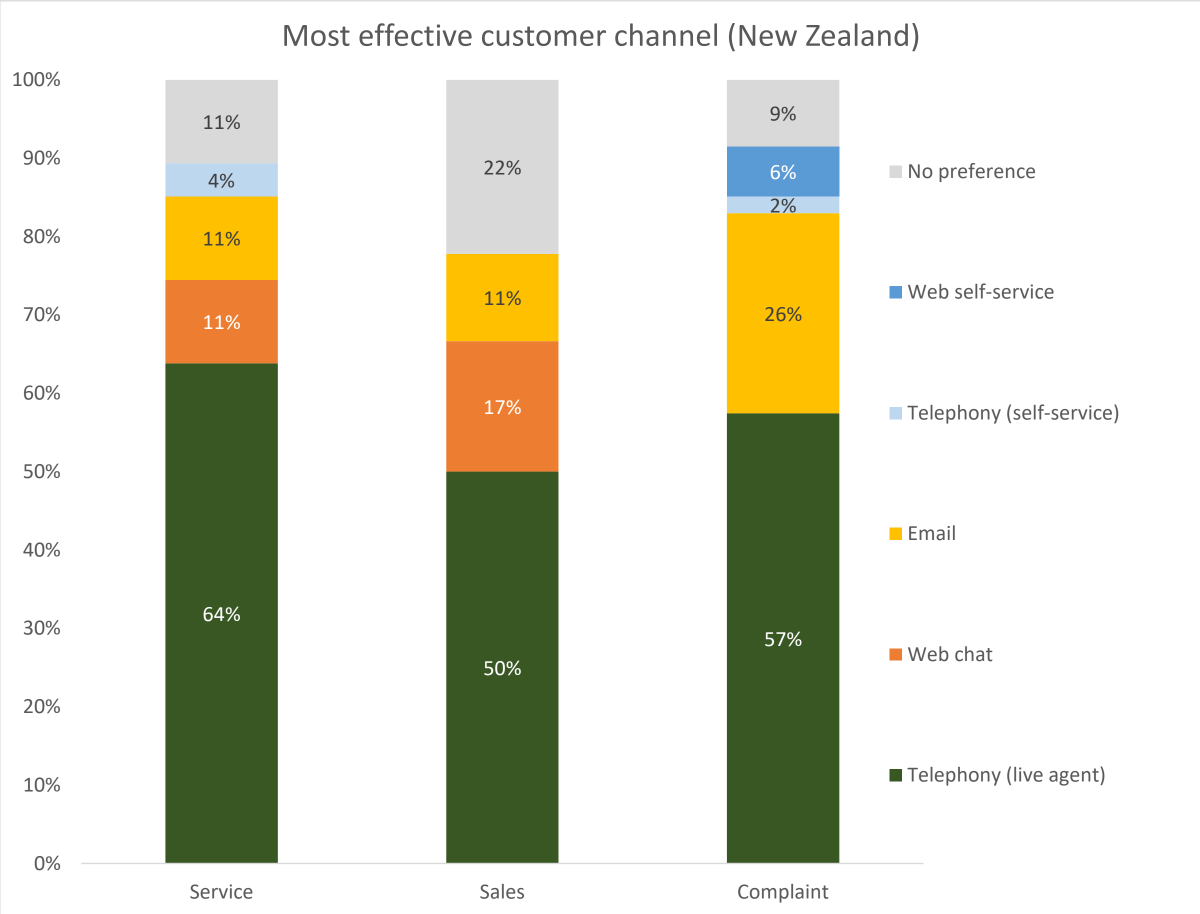
Web chat also gained support, especially in the service and sales scenarios.

Figure 41: Most effective customer channel (Australia)



The pattern for New Zealand respondents was similar, although email was said to be the best channel for complaints in 26% of cases.

Figure 42: Most effective customer channel (New Zealand)



WHAT DOES CX MEAN TO A CUSTOMER?

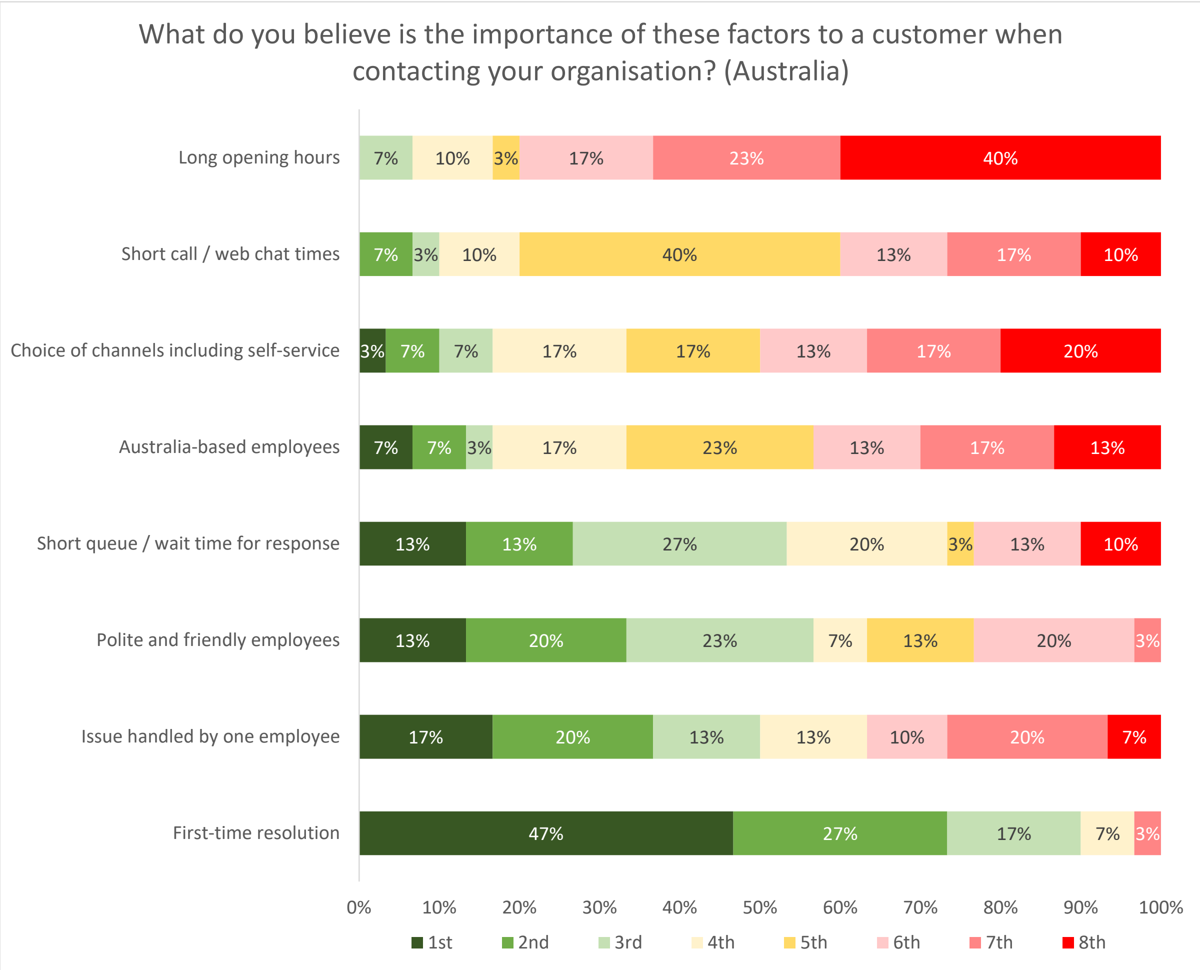
It is difficult for an organisation to be confident about which of the many elements that go towards a great customer experience are actually the most important, and consequently should receive the greatest investment and resource.

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



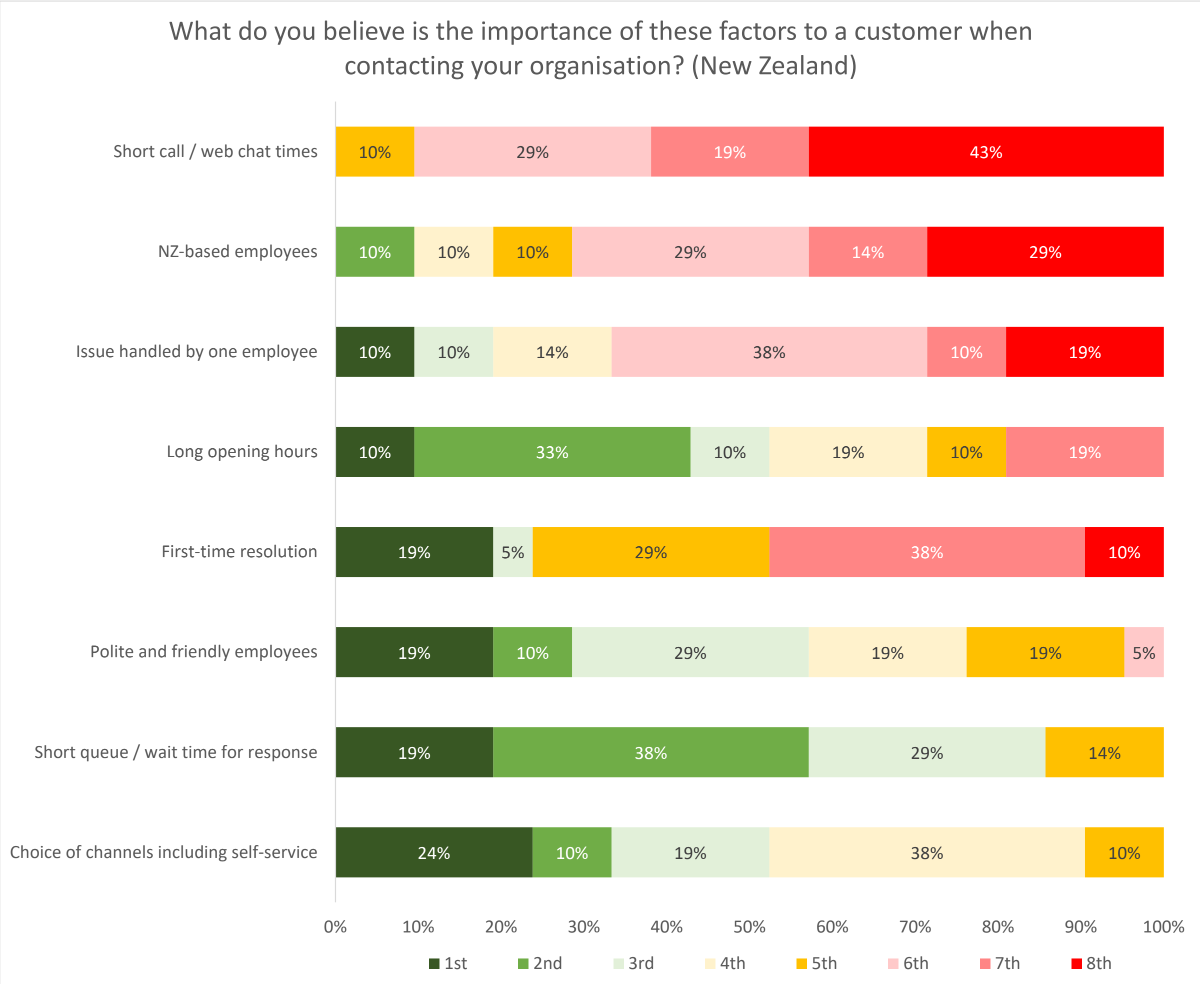
As with many past ContactBabel surveys, first-time resolution was clearly seen as being the most important factor impacting upon customer experience, with 47% of Australian survey respondents ranking it in first place, and a further 44% placing it within the top three.

A short queue time or wait time for a response was also seen as being important, being ranked in the top 3 by 53% of respondents, with polite and friendly employees being ranked in the top 3 by 56% of organisations surveyed. Having the issue handled by a single employee was placed in the top 3 by 50% of respondents.

New Zealand organisations showed far less coherence. 76% placed having a short wait / queue time as a top 3 factor, and 58% did the same for polite and friendly employees.

Having a choice of channels was seen as being far more important to NZ businesses than it was to Australian survey respondents but the major difference was that only 24% 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 44: What do you believe is the importance of these factors to a customer when contacting your organisation? (New Zealand)



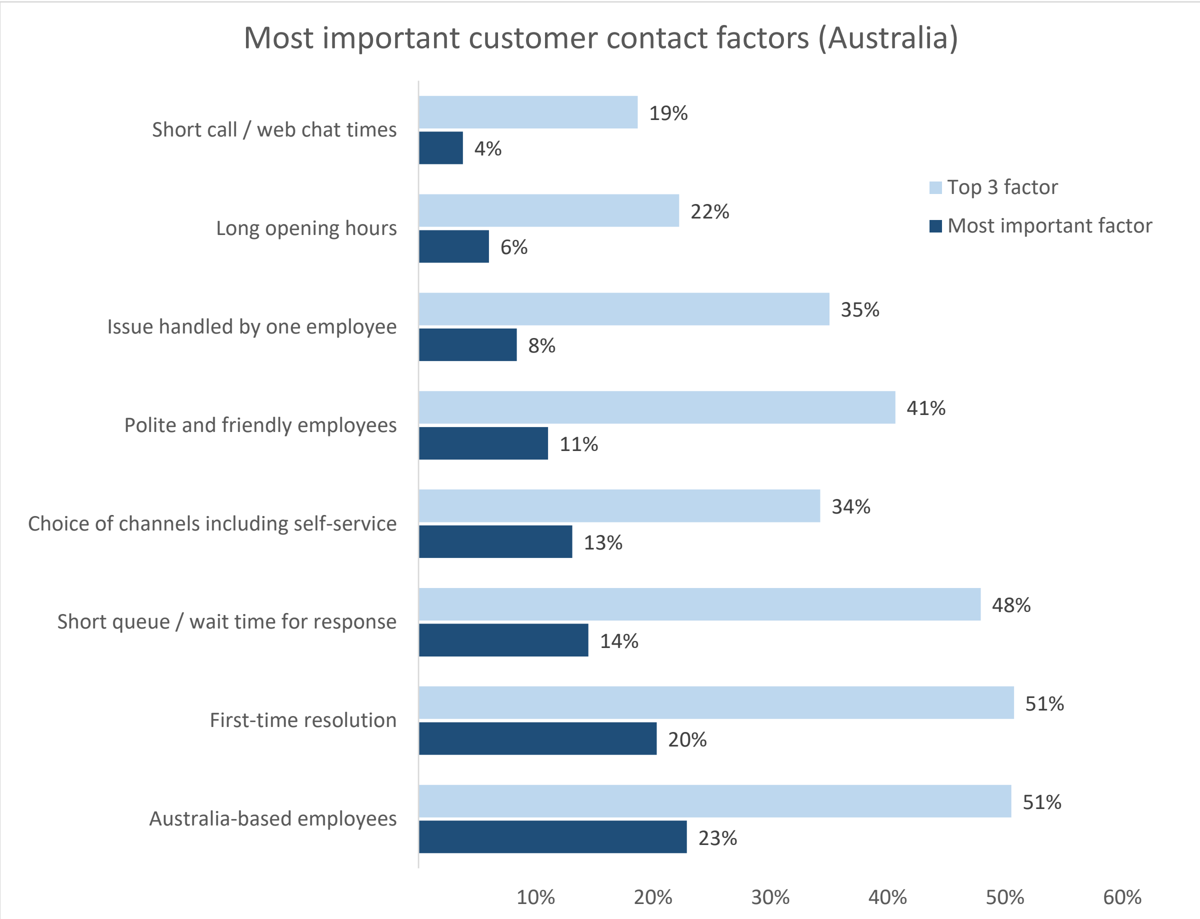
THE VIEW FROM THE CUSTOMER

ContactBabel commissioned research firms to carry out a survey of 1,000 Australian and 1,000 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.

As such, consumers were asked to state which were the top three most important factors to them when contacting an organisation, with the same factors presented to them that had been offered to organisations within the business survey which most of this report is based upon.

The following 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 45: Most important customer contact factors (Australia)



Australian customers were far more likely to value speaking with Australia-based agents, with 51% of customers stating that this was a top 3 CX factor for them. Only 17% of businesses had thought that this would be the case.

First-contact resolution was the second most important factor, with short queue / wait times and polite, friendly employees also being seen as important. These factors align with what Australian businesses expected their customers to value.

New Zealand customers – unlike NZ businesses – believe that first-contact resolution is critical to customer experience. Like the organisations surveyed, they also believe that a short queue / wait time is vital.

Having NZ-based employees is seen as a top 3 CX factor for 40% of customers, with only 10% of businesses expecting this to be a major factor.

Whereas 53% of NZ businesses expect having a choice of channels to be a top 3 CX factor, only 32% of NZ customers felt the same way.

Figure 46: Most important customer contact factors (New Zealand)

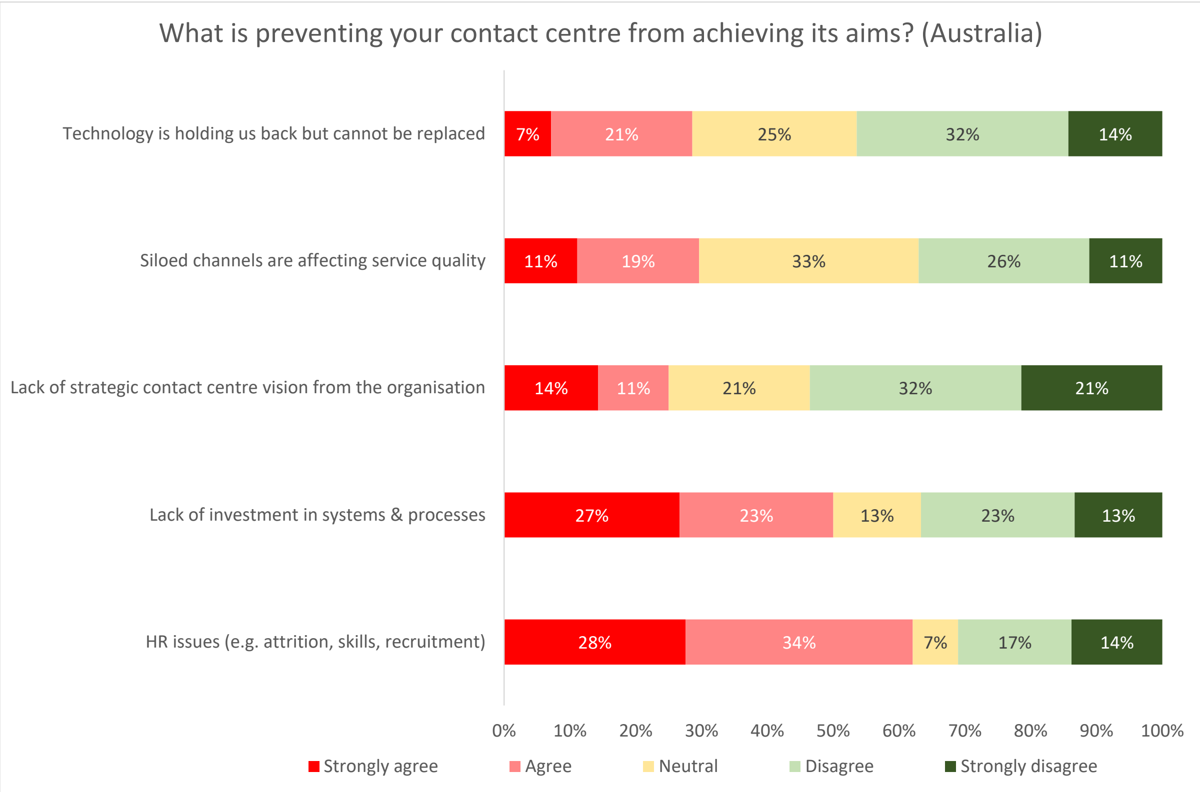
Survey respondents were asked to give their views on what was preventing the contact centre from achieving its aims, assuming that there was a gap between what was being achieved and what would be ideal.

50% agree that systems and processes are holding the contact centre back from achieving its aims and 62% were concerned about the limitations of their HR, possibly driven by the difficulties around remote working.

30% 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, and require 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.

Only 28% of Australian businesses agreed or strongly agreed that irreplaceable technology was a problem. 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.

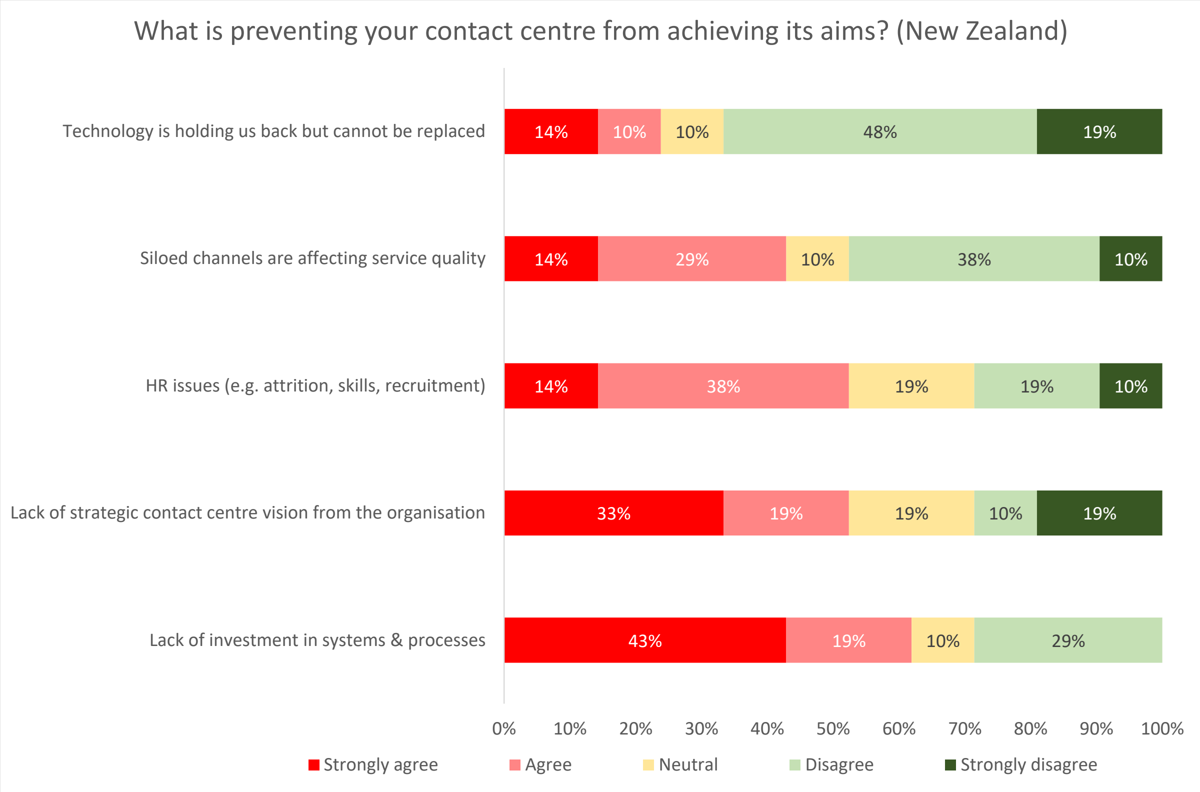
Figure 47: What is preventing your contact centre from achieving its aims? (Australia)



From the perspective of New Zealand businesses, a lack of investment was seen as the major factor holding back the contact centre, with a lack of strategic vision from the higher levels of the organisation also seen as a problem.

HR issues were of concern to over half of NZ survey respondents, while siloed channels preventing true omnichannel and affecting service levels were seen as an issue by over 40% of companies.

Figure 48: What is preventing your contact centre from achieving its aims? (New Zealand)

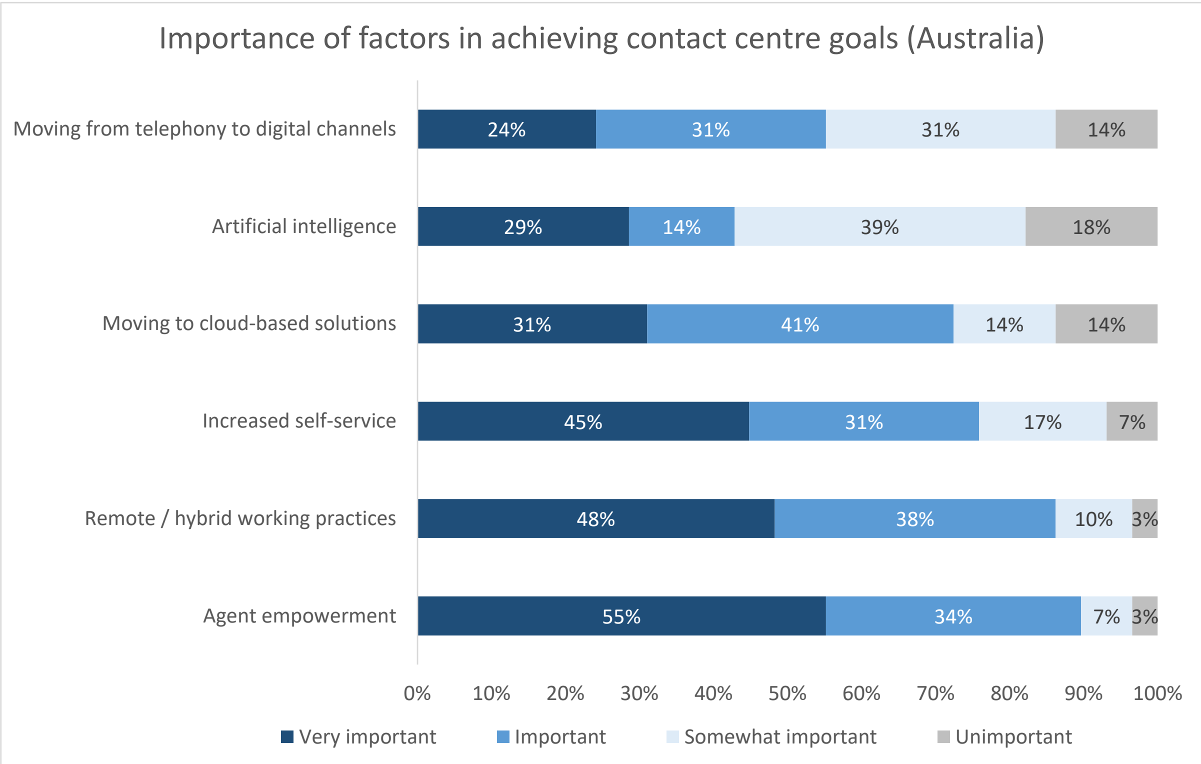


Australian survey respondents were asked their opinion on how important various customer experience developments would be to their organisation in the next two years.

Perhaps the most striking finding was that the most important factor determining the future success of the customer experience programme was not technology-related, but rather a desire for agents to become more empowered to handle customer requests more effectively, leading to improved first-contact resolution rates.

The remote / hybrid working model was also seen as something vitally important to get right, as earlier in the report the data showed that the hybrid model is here to stay. An increase in self-service and continued move to the cloud are also rated as being very important.

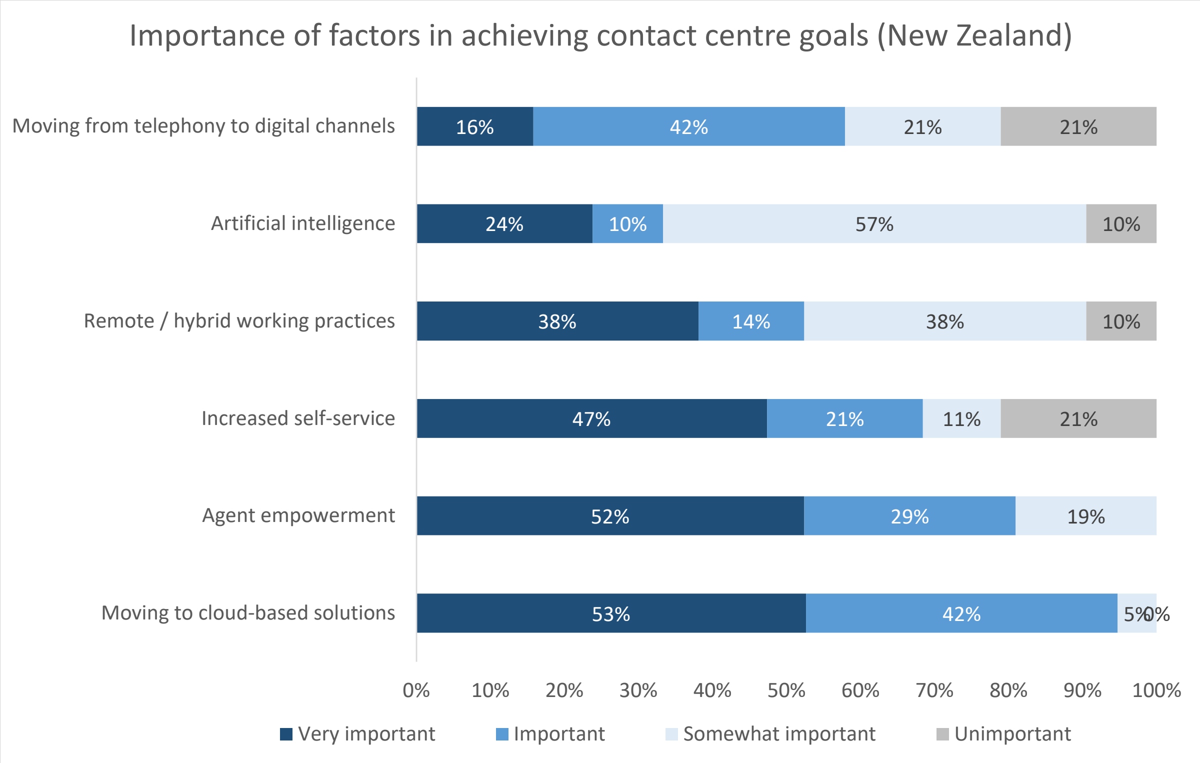
Figure 49: Importance of factors in achieving contact centre goals (Australia)



For New Zealand survey respondents, cloud and agent empowerment are seen as key components of contact centre success, with self-service also being seen as vitally important for almost half of survey respondents.

Like Australia, AI is not seen as being of the first priority for most respondents, with the move to digital channels being more valued as a whole.

Figure 50: Importance of factors in achieving contact centre goals (New Zealand)

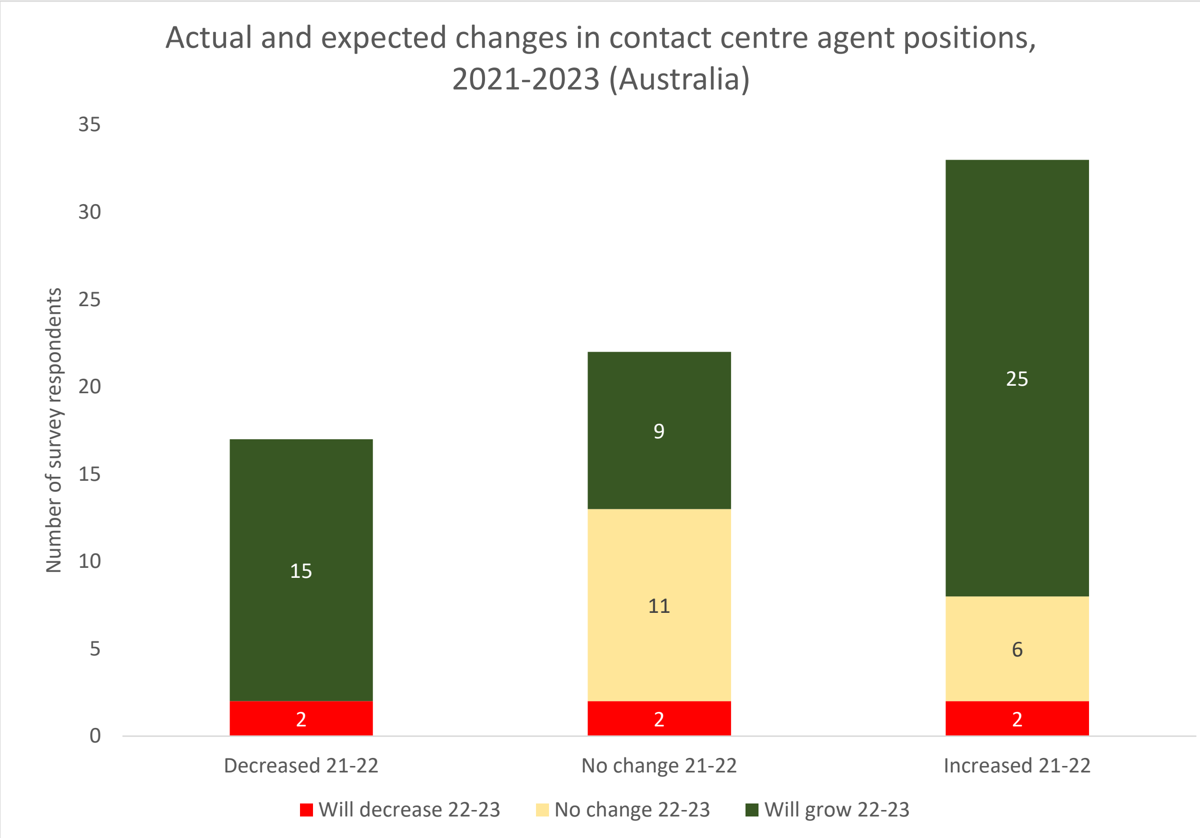


PLANNED AND ACTUAL CHANGES IN AGENT POSITIONS, 2021-2023

As the following chart shows, 46% of Australian contact centres experienced growth in the past 12 months, whereas 24% shrank. 22 respondents (29%) did not report any major changes in headcount.

Looking ahead to the next 12 months, 64% expect growth and only 8% expect declining headcounts.

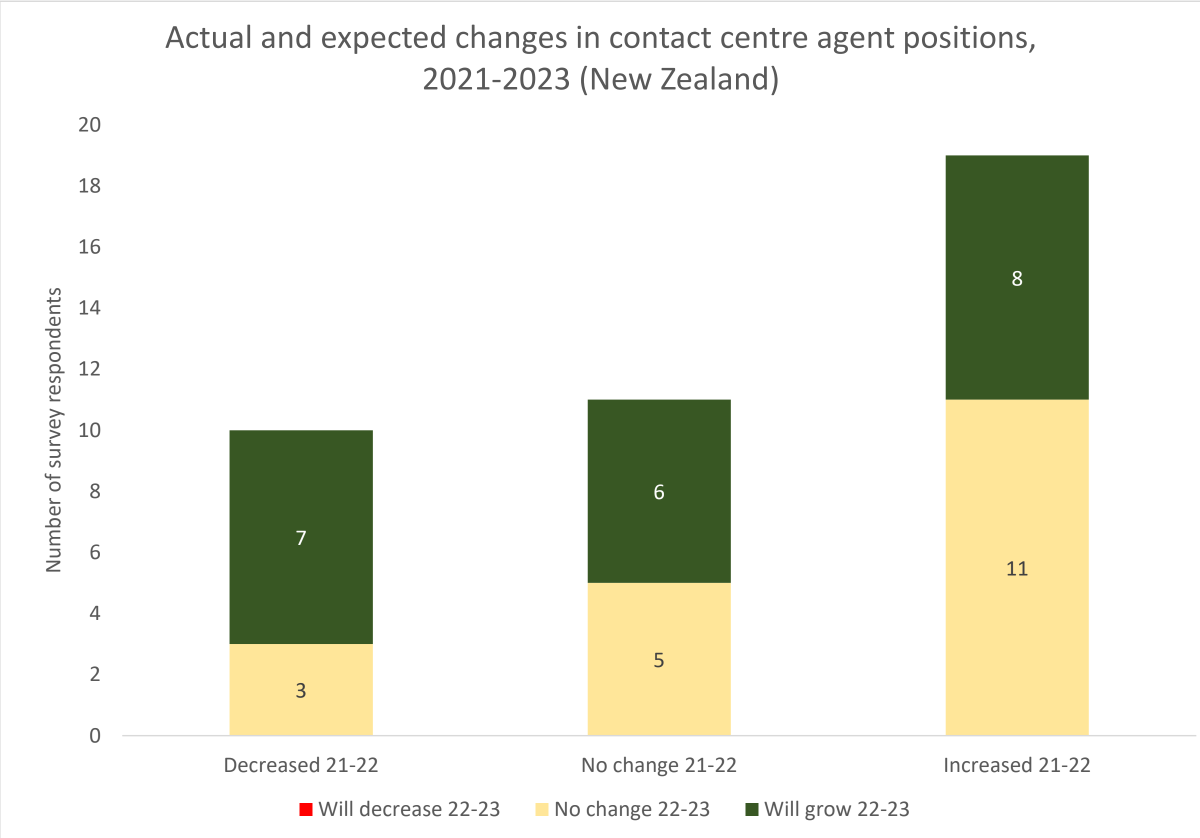
Figure 51: Actual and expected changes in contact centre agent positions, 2021-2023 (Australia)



25% of New Zealand survey respondents saw a decline in agent positions last year, with 48% seeing a rise.

53% expect growth over the next 12 months, while no survey respondents expect that their contact centres will shrink.

Figure 52: Actual and expected changes in contact centre agent positions, 2021-2023 (New Zealand)



APPENDIX: 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.

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.

We help the biggest and most successful vendors develop their contact centre strategies and talk to the right prospects. We have shown the UK government how the global contact centre industry will develop and change. We help contact centres compare themselves to their closest competitors so they can understand what they are doing well and what needs to improve.

If you have a question about your company's future in the contact centre industry, we can help you.

Email: info@contactbabel.com

Website: www.contactbabel.com

Telephone: +44 (0)191 271 5269

FURTHER CONTACTBABEL REPORTS

The UK / US Contact Centre Decision-Makers' Guide: results of the largest annual survey of UK & US contact centre operations. Free to download.

The UK / US Contact Centre HR & Operational Benchmarking Reports: detailed information on salaries, attrition, absence, recruitment and performance benchmarks.

The Inner Circle Guides: detailed analyst reports on key technologies, including:

- AI, Chatbots & Machine Learning
- Cloud-based Contact Centres
- Customer Engagement & Personalisation
- Customer Interaction Analytics
- First-Contact Resolution
- Fraud Reduction and PCI DSS Compliance
- Omnichannel
- Outbound & Call Blending
- Remote Working
- Self-Service
- Video & Next-Generation Customer Contact
- Voice of the Customer
- Workforce Optimisation.

All Decision-Makers' Guide & Inner Circle Guides are free to download from www.contactbabel.com.