



EMEA

Consumer Patience Index 2026

What 700+ consumers say makes
(and breaks) their brand loyalty.



It only takes one bad experience for customers to leave.

For decades, customer support systems have been designed to deflect. Keep the calls contained, point customers down self-serve paths, design systems optimized around what the business thinks is best.

Europeans are done feeling like second priority.

Earlier this year, **Parloa surveyed US consumers** on their frustrations, tolerance thresholds, and expectations around automated customer service. What we found was a population exhausted by broken automation, skeptical of meaningful improvement, and ready to act.

Now we wanted to see if those same sentiments carried across geographical boundaries.

So we surveyed 700+ consumers in France, Germany, Ireland, and the UK, and found that poor customer experience is even more likely to make customers abandon a brand. Consumers are even starting to turn to general-purpose AI to answer their questions before trying to navigate a company's IVR tree.

The old way of customer experience doesn't work, and consumers are finally speaking up about it.



The results of this survey show that consumers are desperate for something better, and they know it's possible with AI. 75.2% of respondents believe that future AI systems will handle complex service requests better than humans.

For brands thinking about their customer experience, the findings of this survey indicate that there is a massive opportunity to build trust and loyalty with your customers through it. Because when customers feel like a priority. They're more likely to stick around.



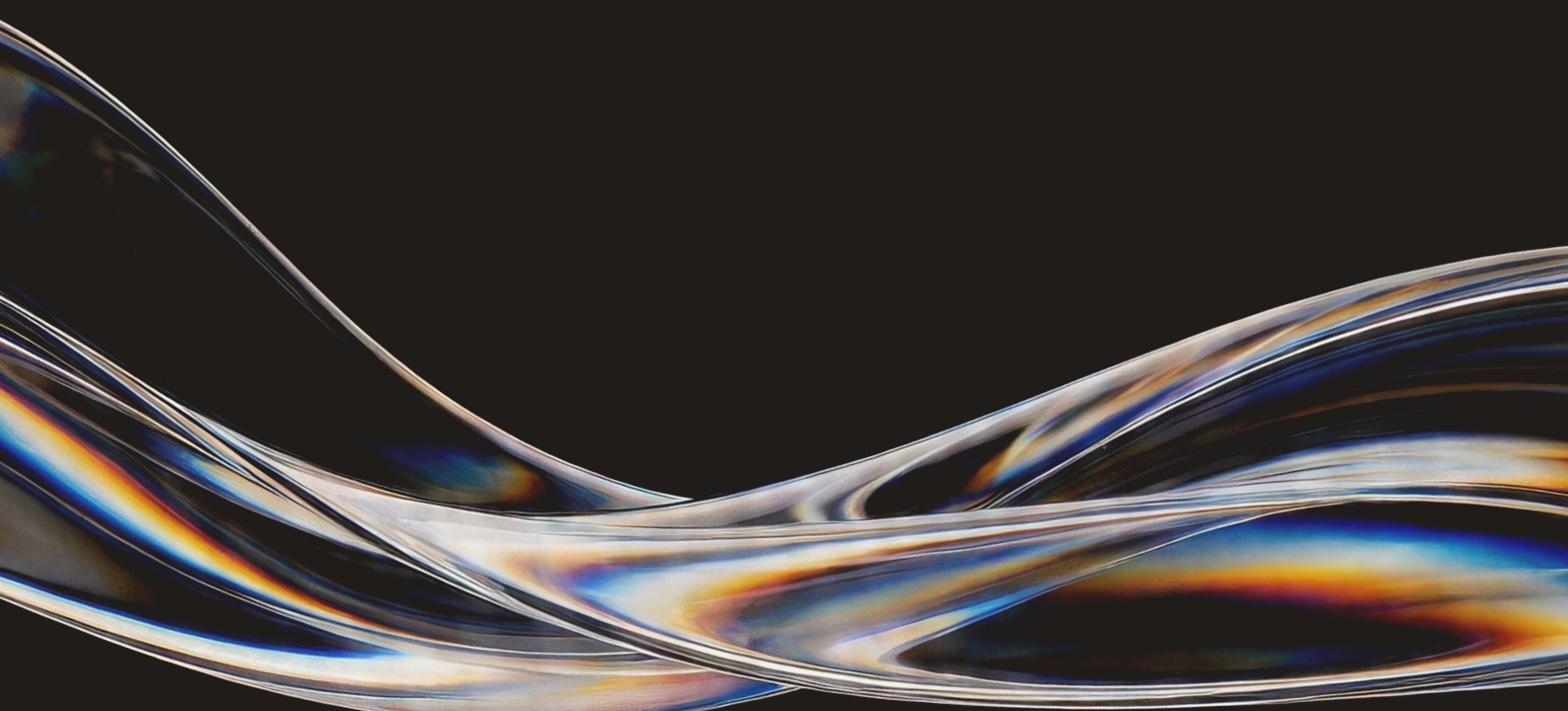
Latané Conant

Chief Marketing Officer, Parloa



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Key findings



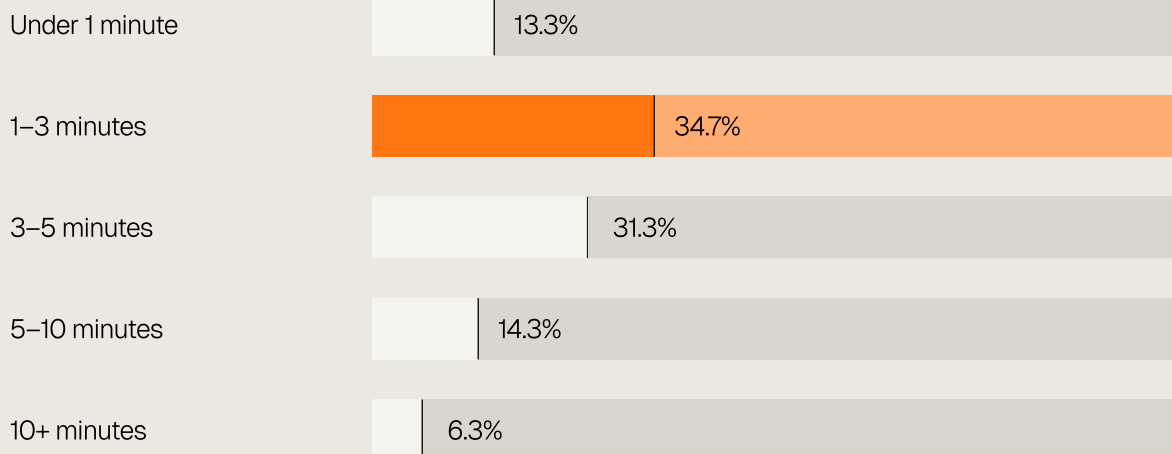
Automation has five minutes...

When faced with an automated system, 79.1% of consumers say they'll wait up to five minutes before demanding a human agent. 60% of that percentage will wait only three minutes.

Similarly, when working with automation to resolve an issue, consumers expect complete resolution within five minutes.

If not, **50.5% of consumers say they'll deploy tactics on automation to be routed to a human faster.**

When faced with an automated assistant, how long are you willing to interact before demanding a human agent?



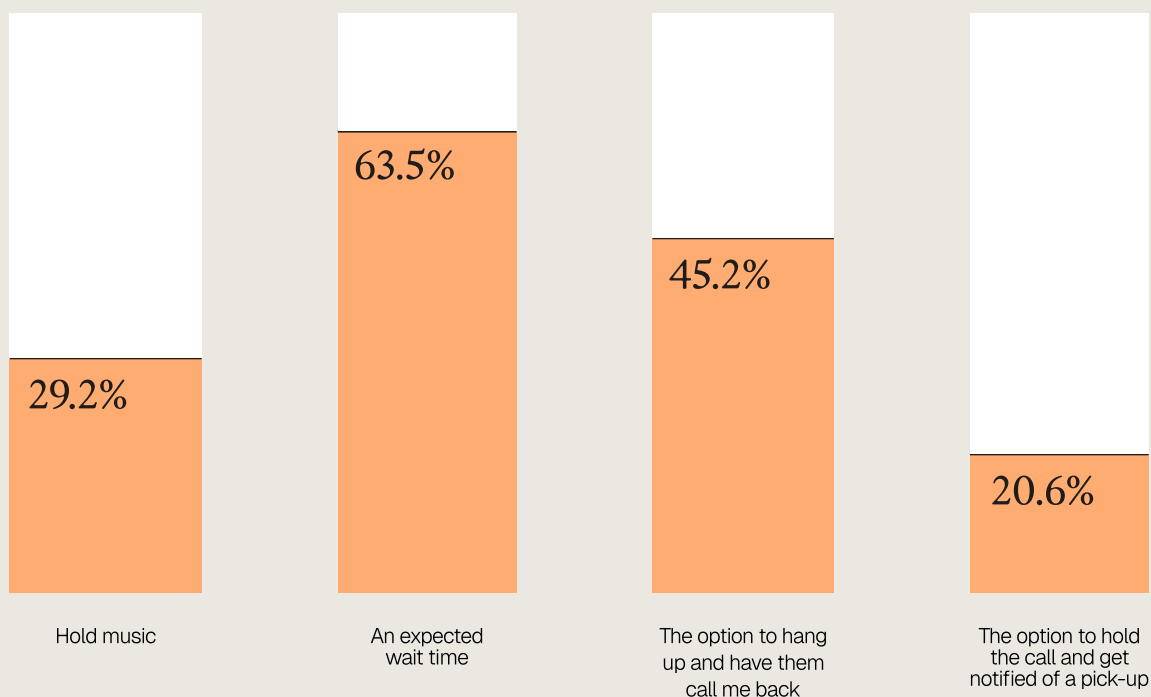
Long wait times took the #1 position for consumers' most frustrating support experiences.



...and hold music doesn't appease.

When asked about which hold features consumers prefer on a support call, an expected wait time and the option to be called back ranked in the top two positions, far ahead of hold music.

When on hold for a customer experience call, what features do you like? Please select all that apply.



29.6%

of consumers said they'd rather switch brands than be put on hold.



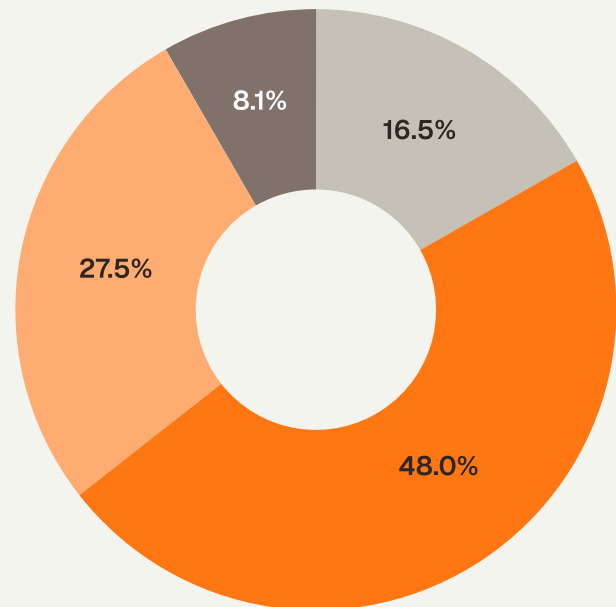
Automation fails to understand humans...

After long wait times, consumers ranked “talking to a bot that doesn’t understand me” as the second most frustrating support experience. Yet, they’re used to it.

When asked about being transferred to a human during an automated support experience, 48% of respondents said they assume they’ll need to be transferred to a human and restart the conversation because “that’s always how it goes.”

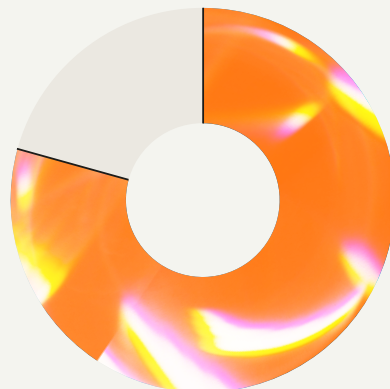
If an automated system transfers you to a human agent who must restart the process, how forgiving are you of that experience?

-  Somewhat forgiving — it’s annoying, but it’s how it always goes.
-  Forgiving — I don’t like the system, but I am nice to the customer service rep since it’s not their fault.
-  Very forgiving — I understand the creation of a better system would be difficult.
-  Not forgiving — I shouldn’t have to waste my time because the company’s system is bad.



86.1%

of respondents have requested to talk to a human because they assumed their issue was too complex for the automation, and it just felt easier.



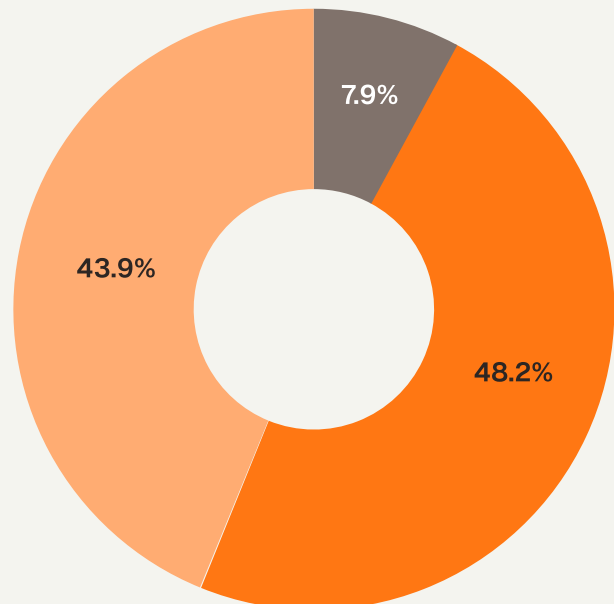


...yet comprehension leads to loyalty.

92.1% of respondents said feeling understood influenced their satisfaction with automated support. And with 90% of consumers saying a brand's customer experience influences how they perceive the brand, this feeling of comprehension carries immense capital.

How important is “feeling understood” (for example, empathy or tone) to your satisfaction with automated support?

-  Somewhat important
-  Extremely important
-  Not important



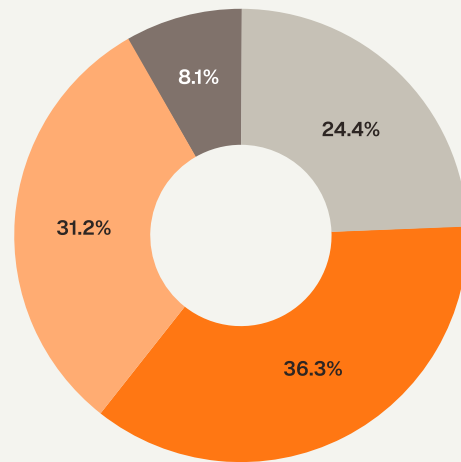


Consumers know what AI can do...

When asked how confident consumers are that automated support solutions can understand and resolve requests accurately, 75.6% of respondents said they were at least somewhat confident. And 55.2% said they were comfortable using it before talking to a human.

How confident are you that automated systems can understand and resolve your requests accurately?

- Somewhat confident
- Confident
- Extremely confident
- Not confident at all





...but brands have failed to prove it.

Yet just **6.6% of respondents said IVR consistently resolves their issues.** For the other 93.4%, the experience ranges from partial effectiveness to complete failure.

How often do you feel the IVR phone menu actually supplies options that meet your needs?

Sometimes - but rarely can an automated menu resolve my issue fully.

39.6%

It depends - easier issues get resolved easily, but complex issues break down.

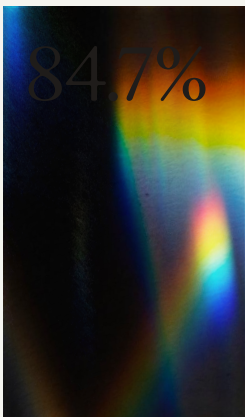
41%

Never - the pre-scripted options are useless.

12.8%

Always - I don't have issues with this style of automation. It resolves my concerns!

6.6%



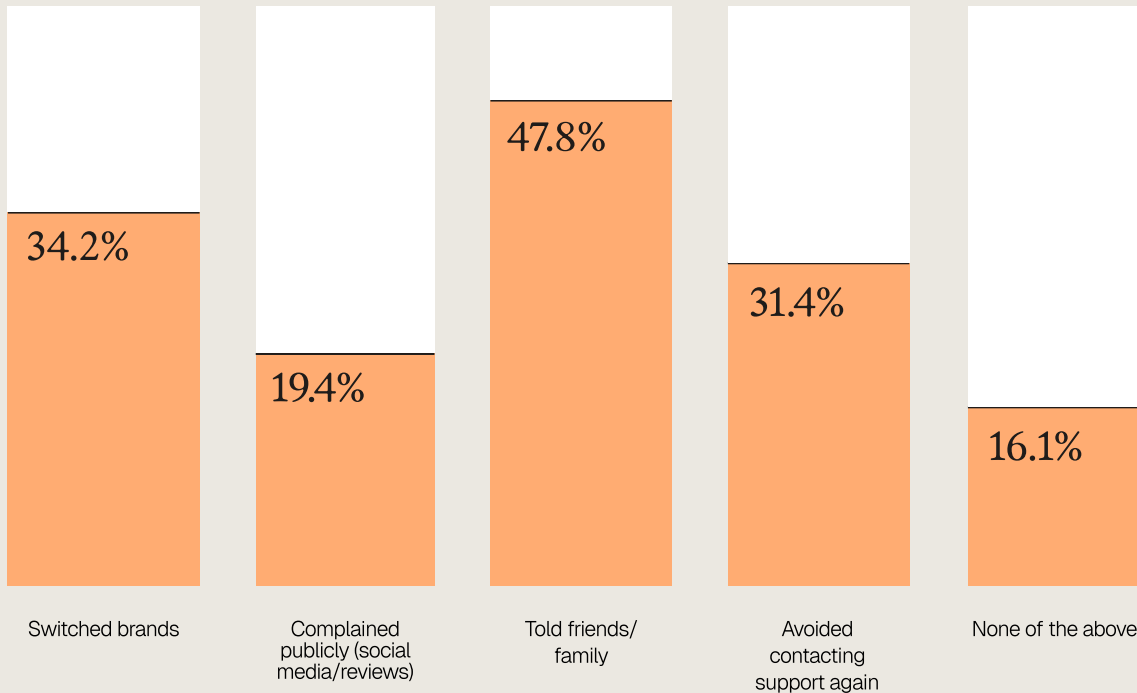
of consumers said they would continue using AI systems if they consistently resolved issues.



Customer sentiment drives the bottom-line...

After experiencing bad customer experience, 34.2% of respondents reported switching brands.

Have you ever done any of the following after a bad customer experience?



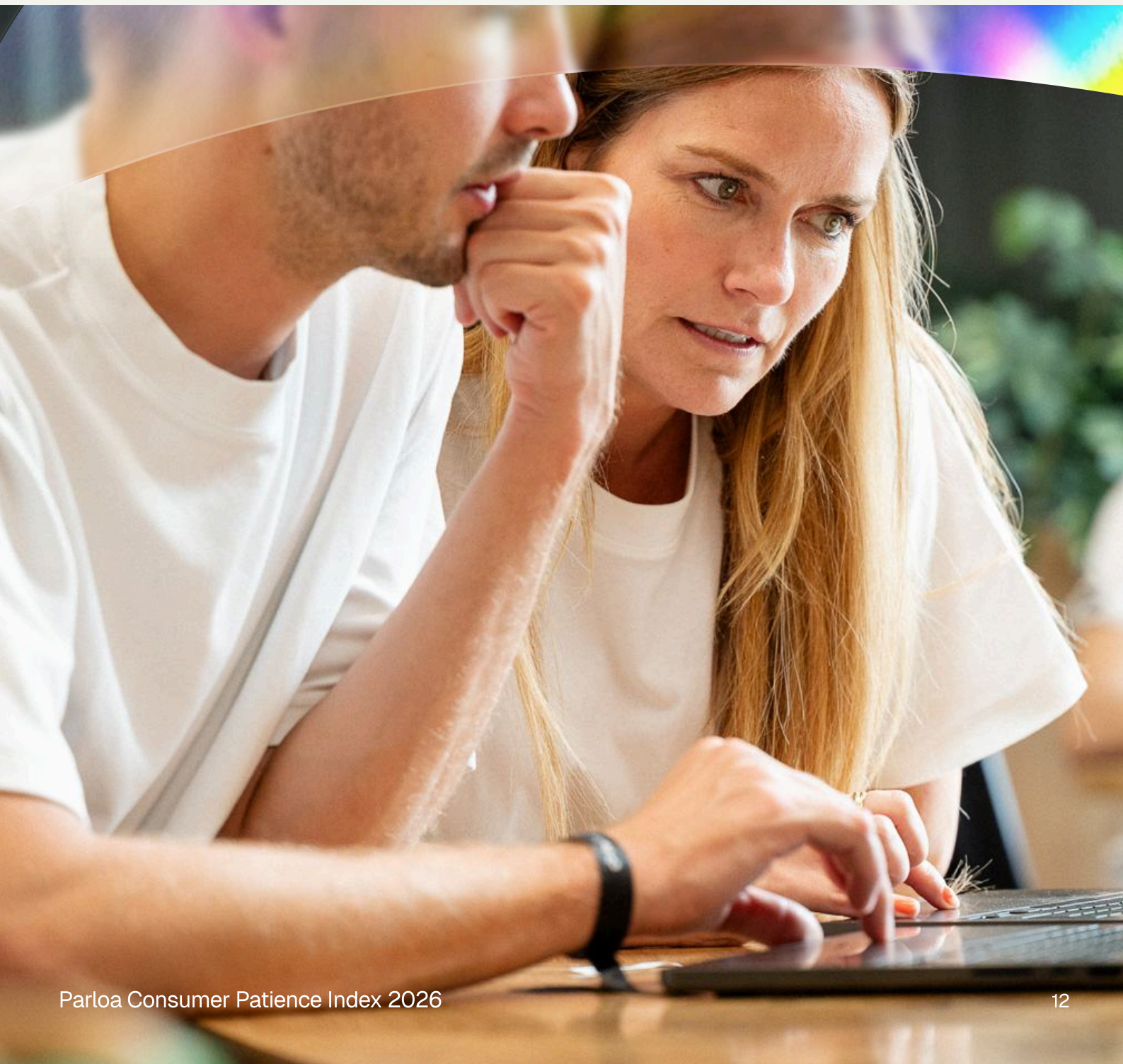
24.8%

of consumers said they're likely to leave a brand after just one bad support experience.



...in more ways than one...

Bad customer experiences don't just lead to churn risks, they close the door to new revenue before companies even have the chance to crack them open. 47.8% of respondents reported telling family and friends about bad support experiences, threatening the brand loyalty of people who may not have even had the chance to become a customer yet.





Customers want more from AI...

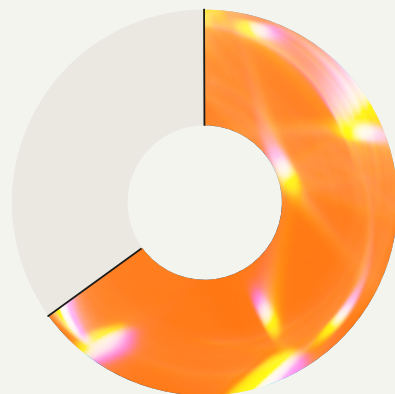
Despite what they've experienced so far, consumers are confident AI can do better for them, and they're ready for it.

75.2%

of respondents believe that future AI systems will handle complex service requests better than humans.

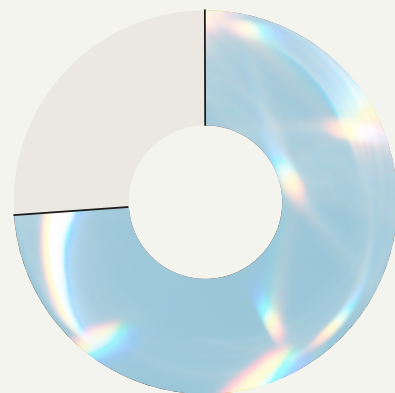
69.5%

also reported interest in using AI assistants that personalize service based on their history and preferences.



79%

said they would prefer automated service that anticipates their needs and is proactive.



Consumers aren't averse to AI. Quite the opposite. They know it can deliver better experiences, and they're waiting to experience those improvements themselves.



...but accuracy remains #1.

Despite human interest in AI, consumers aren't willing to shortcut speed-to-resolution for accuracy.

62.6% of respondents said they'd rather wait for a human to get the issue resolved than get faster automated help with minor accuracy trade offs.

Which trade-off would you prefer when seeking help?

62.6%

Wait longer for a human to ensure I stay on until my issue is resolved

37.4%

Get faster automated help with minor accuracy trade-offs





The gift of high expectations

Consumer expectations for automated customer experience have never been higher. Knowing the technology available, consumers want real-time, reliable, secure service, and they're willing to switch brands to get it. The Consumer Patience Index paints a picture that CX leaders can't afford to look away from. The cost of bad customer service, measured not only in churn, but also stalled revenue, is high.

The good news is, brands don't have to guess. This survey outlines exactly what brands need to deliver in order to earn customer loyalty. With the right AI in place, all of these expectations can be met.

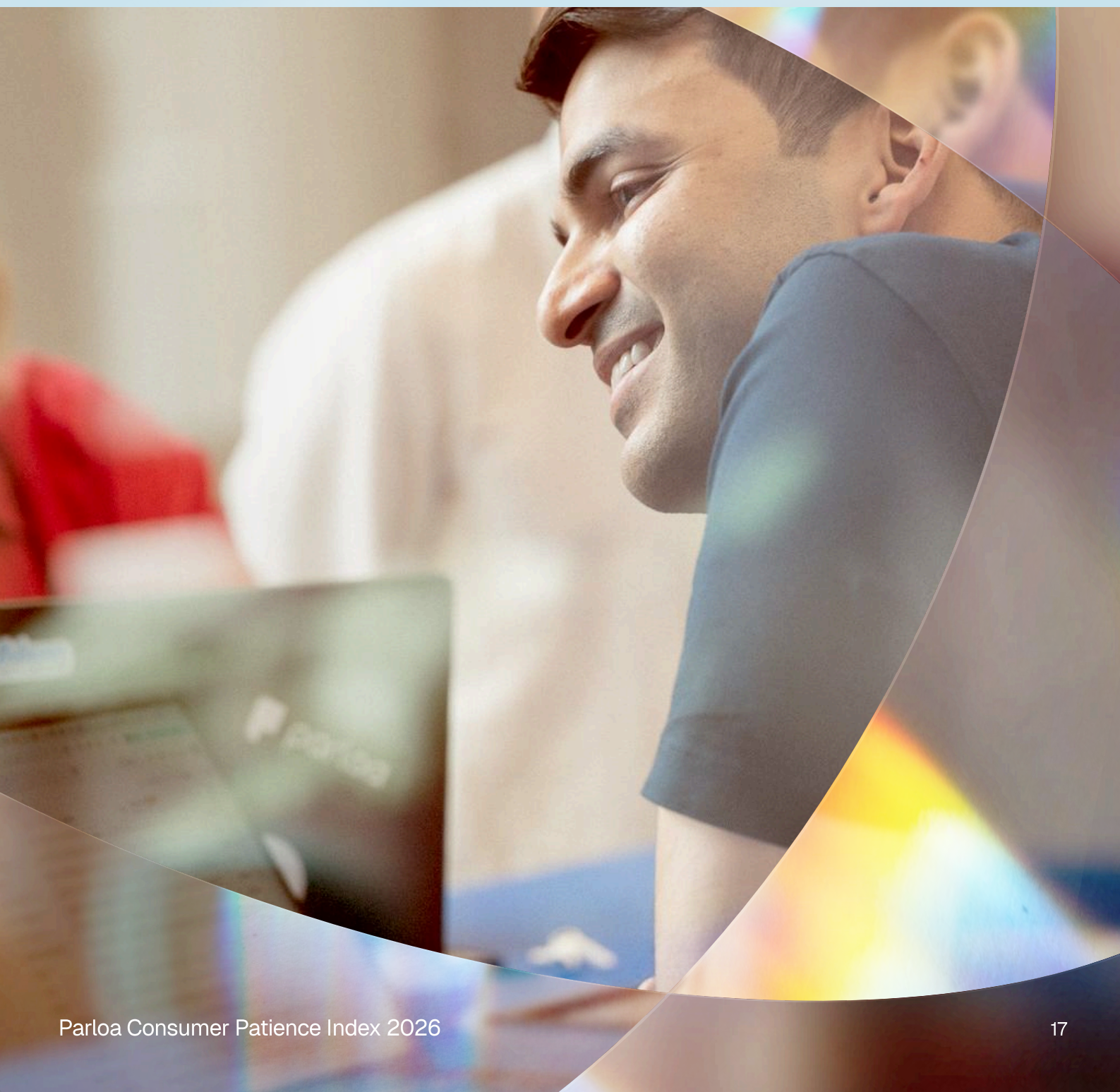
But time is of the essence. With the volume of vendors available across industries today, customers don't need brands. One bad experience, and they'll just move on to the next. The companies that act quickly to meet consumer expectations will be the ones who successfully transform their support channels from being sources of churn to engines for revenue.

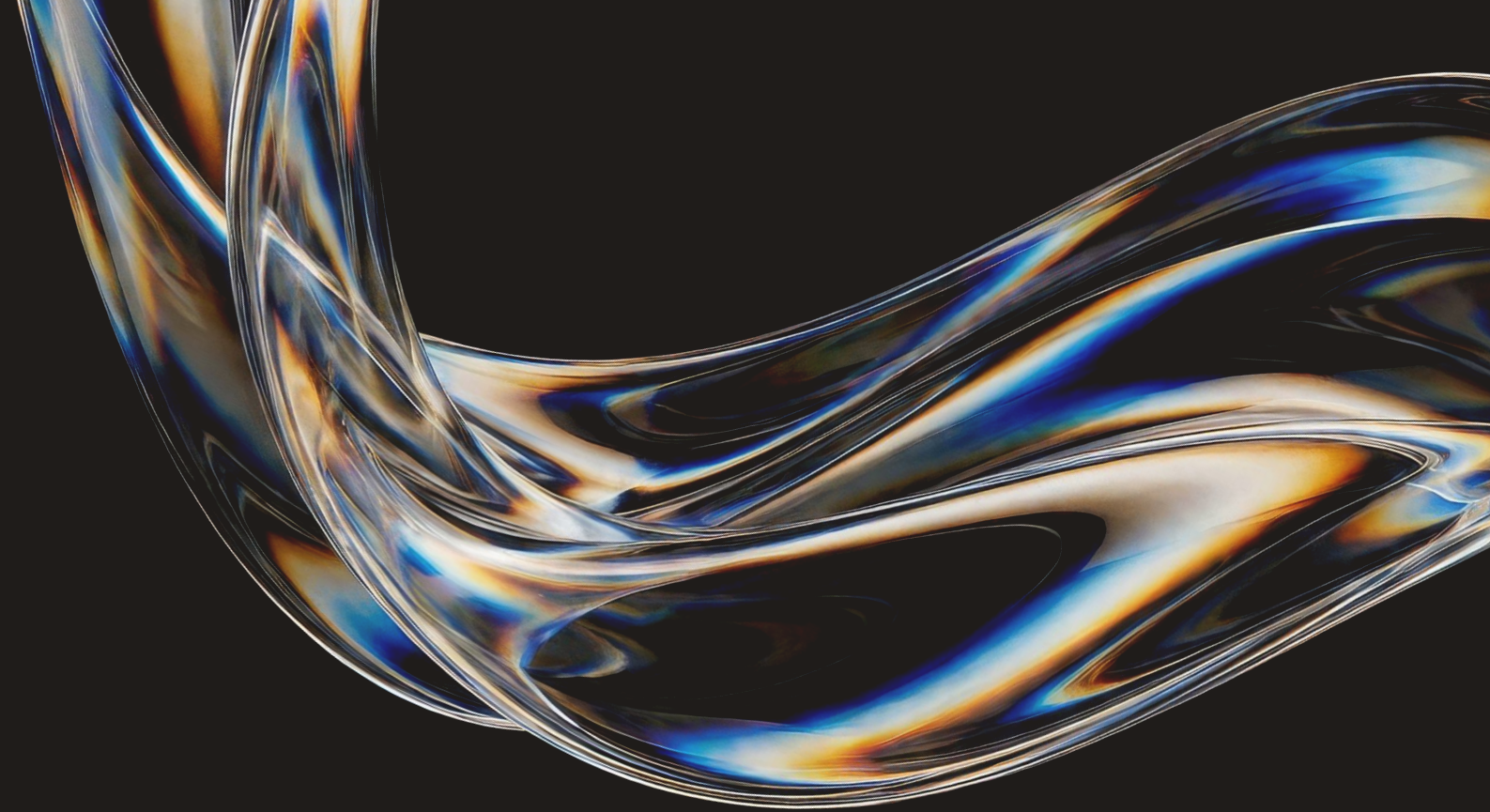
Are you ready to set the new standard for high-quality customer experience in your industry?

Talk to us

About this survey

This survey was commissioned by Parloa and conducted by independent research firm Propeller Insights in Summer 2026, with a sample of more than 750 consumers over the age of 18, residing in the United Kingdom, Ireland, France and Germany, and who had interacted with a company's customer service department in the prior 12 months. Data was collected via an online survey instrument.





Customer Patience Index 2026

Survey conducted Summer 2026

European adults with recent customer service interaction.

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