



*Report*

# AI & Customer *Experience*

Survey Report  
in partnership with the  
BYU PR Intelligence Lab

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# Executive Summary

This report outlines research exploring how conversational AI influences customer behavior, satisfaction, and trust. Based on a survey of 508 consumers and business buyers, 13 in-depth interviews, and a 12-person focus group, the research explores three key questions:

- **What features in conversational AI make customers more likely to purchase?**
- **How can AI agents be integrated in a way that is personalized to buyers' preferences?**
- **What causes discomfort and distrust while interacting with AI agents?**

Findings offer marketing executives key insights we believe will serve as a guide for companies as they integrate AI into marketing and sales processes. These insights include findings in four categories:

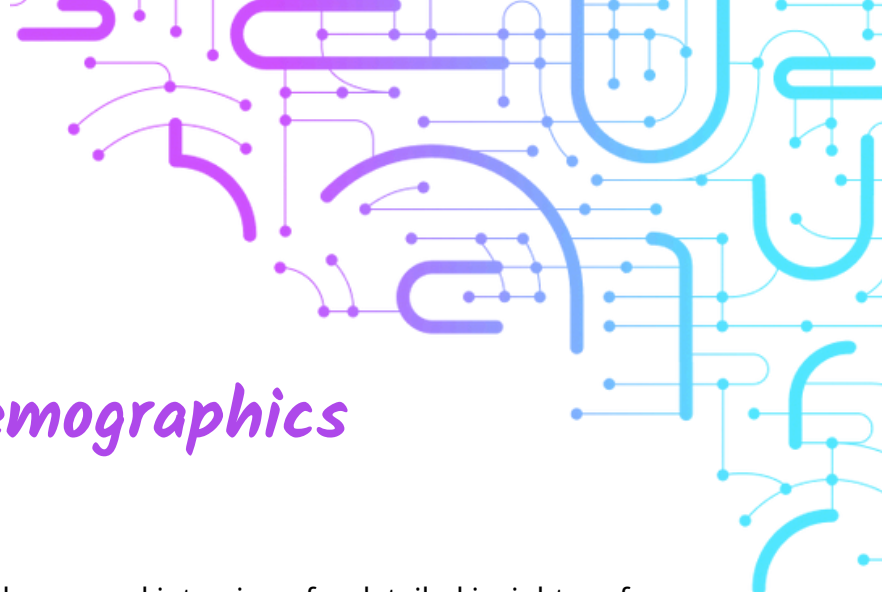
**Helpfulness:** Our research indicates that a majority of buyers (56.7%) view AI as helpful, and also that most people **(67.7%) agree that AI accurately understands their needs half the time or more**. Business buyers also showed a more positive perception, being **25% more likely to strongly agree that AI agents are helpful**. Meanwhile, the data showed that, across all groups, people value convenience and speed, with accuracy holding a clear position of importance.

**Timing and Topics:** Customers are more comfortable interacting with AI earlier in the purchasing process, with **respondents favoring AI by more than 21% of humans during the exploration phase**. Customers in these early stages value AI's 24/7 availability for quick, low-pressure support. However, many still prefer human representatives for complex issues, illustrating a need for robust conversational AI solutions.

**Trust:** Results illustrate that trust is a key barrier to AI interactions, with customers **most concerned about security (40%) and accuracy (41%)**. Many prefer transparency when they're talking to AI instead of a human, and distrust grows when AI struggles with complex issues. To build trust, companies should offer clear transitions to human agents and prioritize data security and transparency.

**Openness to AI in the Sales Process:** Both B2B and B2C buyers increasingly prefer AI agents over humans in early stages of the purchasing process, using them for education and critical buying information. However, human involvement remains essential in the final "ready to buy" stage, where salespeople primarily fulfill contracts. Overall, AI agents are more consistently preferred throughout the sales funnel by business buyers than non-business buyers. However, **B2C buyers favor AI at a 3:1 ratio in the initial "exploration" phase**.





# Methodology & Demographics

## Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods involved in-depth personal interviews for detailed insights, a focus group for collaborative discussions, and a survey to gather broad, quantifiable data. This mixed-method approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the research topic and questions.

## Data Analysis Techniques

We began by organizing data collected from surveys, interviews, and focus groups into thematic categories. Qualitative data was coded to identify recurring patterns and key themes, while quantitative data was analyzed using statistical methods to determine trends and correlations. Relevant quotes from participants were taken to support our conclusions and provide more context for our insights.

## Demographics

### In-Depth Interviews and Focus Groups:

Participants consisted of college students based in Provo, Utah.

### Survey Sample:

- Total Respondents: 508
- U.S. consumers age 18 and over

### Gender Distribution:

- Male: 50.2%
- Female: 49.6%
- Prefer not to say: 0.2%

### Business Decision-Making Involvement:

- Yes: 35.8%
- No: 64.2%





## Insight Summary: Helpfulness

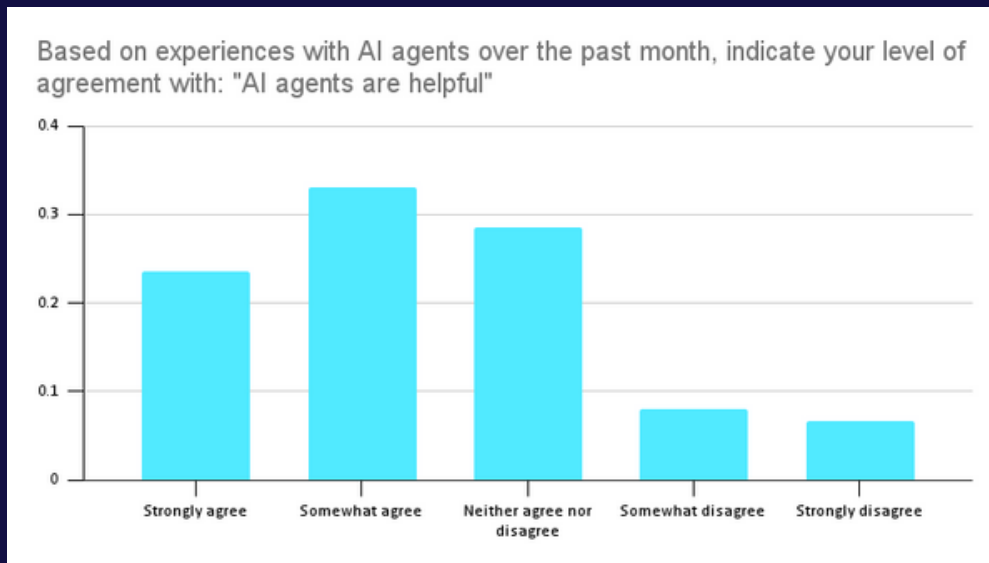
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- A solid majority--**56.7% of all respondents**--either strongly or somewhat agree that AI agents are helpful. Conversely, only 6.7% strongly disagree, and this group is heavily skewed toward older individuals.
- Furthermore, **67.7% of all respondents** report that AI understands their needs accurately about half the time or more.
- Business buyers are **25% more likely** to strongly agree that AI is helpful than non-business buyers. They are also **10% more likely** to feel AI agents "always" meet their needs.
- People are **1.5X more likely** to cite either **convenience** or **speed** as compelling reasons to interact with AI, with these options being selected by half of respondents. Emphasis on convenience indicates that people prefer an individualized journey, and that companies must accommodate them at any stage of that journey with fast information.
- Furthermore, if questions are not answered accurately people get frustrated. Respondents want AI to provide accurate, knowledgeable, and mistake-free responses, with **phrases like "seamless and fast" and "everything under three minutes" appearing frequently** in open-ended responses.
- Most **respondents across all ages feel AI understands them "about half the time."** **Younger users are more likely to say AI "always" understands** them, while **older users are more likely to report AI "never" understands** them.



# Insight 1

## Helpfulness

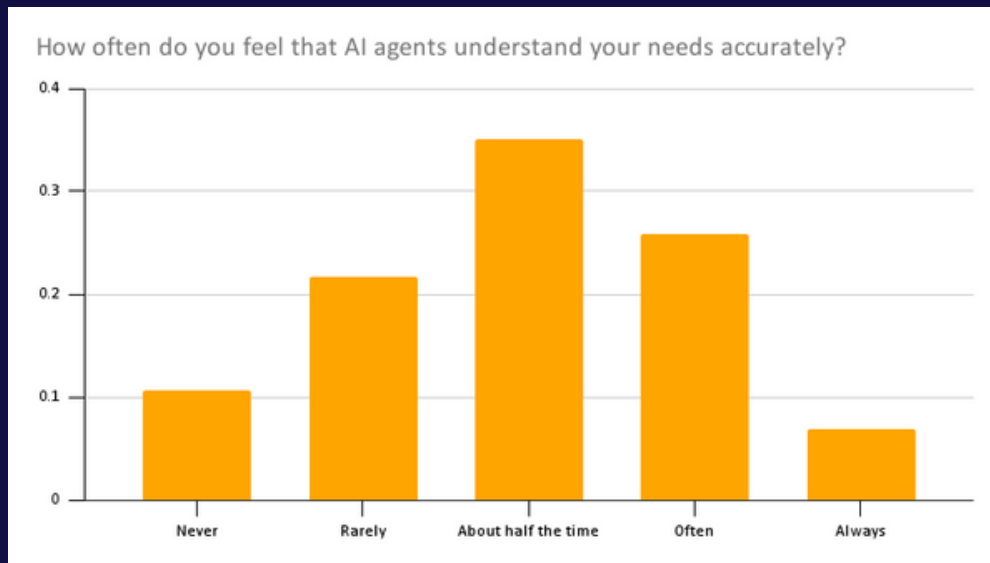


A solid majority--**56.7% of all respondents**--either **strongly or somewhat agree that AI agents are helpful**. On the other hand, only 8.1% somewhat disagree, and only 6.7% strongly disagree. Data presented later in this section shows that **strong disagreement** with this statement is heavily **skewed toward older individuals**.



# Insight 1

## Helpfulness



**67.7% of all respondents report that AI understands their needs accurately about half the time or more, versus 32.3% who report that this is “rarely” or “never” the case. Furthermore, the data showed that the belief that AI does not understand needs is heavily skewed toward those 46 and older.**

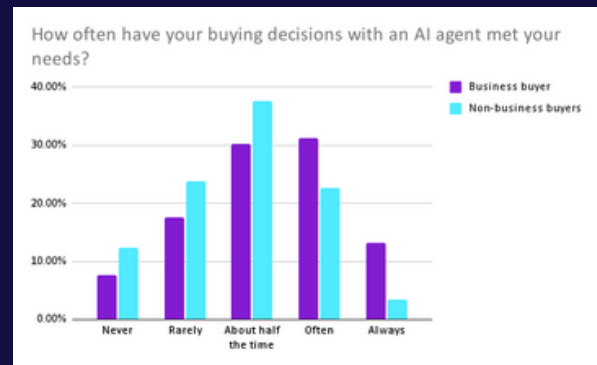
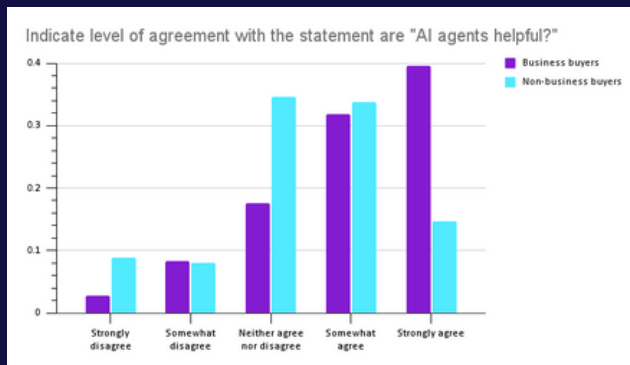




# Helpfulness

## Business vs. non-Business Buyers

Analysis shows a clear difference in how business and non-business buyers perceive AI agents. **Business buyers were more inclined to strongly agree with the statement, "AI agents are helpful"** than non-business buyers. In response to a question on AI's helpfulness, 39.6% of business buyers strongly agreed that AI agents are helpful, compared to just 14.7% of non-business buyers. The contrast is also clear when looking at the 'strong disagreement' rates: only 2.7% of business buyers compared to 8.9% of non-business buyers. This reinforces that **business buyers are more likely to view AI as positive and helpful** than non-business buyers.

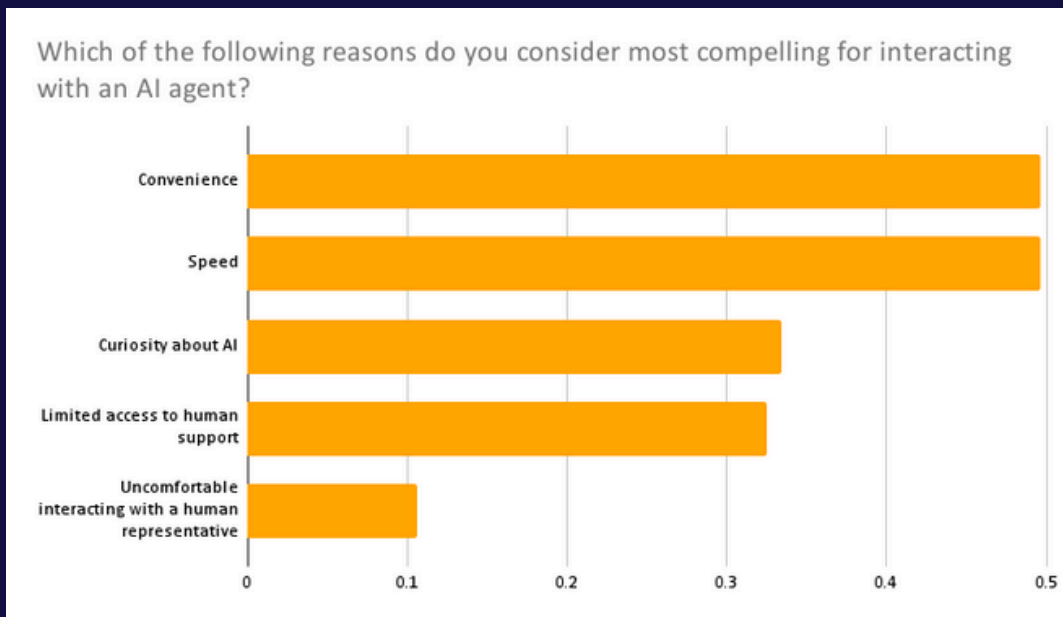


This pattern continued in response to the question "How often have your buying decisions with an AI agent met your needs". **Business buyers are about 10% more likely to feel that AI agents 'always' meet their needs compared to non-business buyers.** This supports the insights above, highlighting a greater receptiveness and overall perceived effectiveness of AI agents among business buyers compared to the general consumer base.



# Helpfulness Convenience and Speed

When asked about the most compelling reasons for interacting with an AI agent, responses revealed that **convenience and speed are the top priorities for consumers**, with both options tying at 49.6%. As nearly half of all respondents identified these two factors as the most important, this shows a **customer preference for efficiency and ease**.



*“My ideal purchasing experience would be everything taking under three minutes”*

A recurring theme in responses to an open-ended question about the ideal purchasing experience was a desire for a fast and effortless purchasing process. This was expressed through phrases like "seamless and fast," "minimal and quick," and "Everything taking under three minutes." This emphasis on speed suggests that **minimizing the time and effort involved in making a purchase is a key priority**.

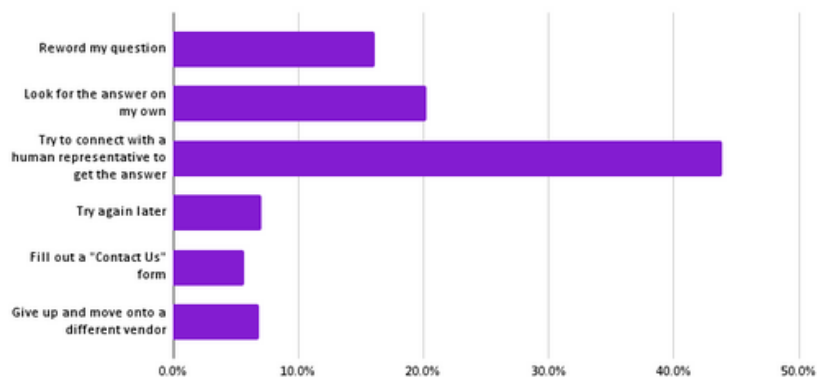


## Helpfulness

### When AI is not helpful?

When asked what they would do next if an AI agent failed to address their needs, **43.9% of respondents said that they would attempt to connect with a human representative** to get an answer, surpassing other options such as searching for the answer independently (20.3%) or rewording their question (16.1%). These findings suggest that online buyers continue to feel an affinity for human sales representatives that manifests itself quickly when AI agents do not meet their needs.

"If an AI agent fails to address your needs in a conversation about a buying decision, what would you do next?"



Focus group and interview insights supported this finding. Specifically, we found that if **AI fails to assist with complex questions, users seek human support**. When it comes to more complex questions, users are frustrated with their perceived lack of AI's ability to understand and adapt to their requests and needs. The lack of adaptation leads users to abandon the purchase process and seek answers from human agents.

*"AI has its place, especially... for simple inquiries, but for more complex issues, a live person is preferred."*

Additional insights from the open-ended survey question about an ideal AI purchasing experience included responses such as: "AI should not make any mistakes," "actually have answers," and be "knowledgeable and easy to understand." **This focus on accurate and readily available information suggests a preference for well-informed AI assistants that guide purchasing decisions effectively.**





## Insight Summary: Timing & Topics

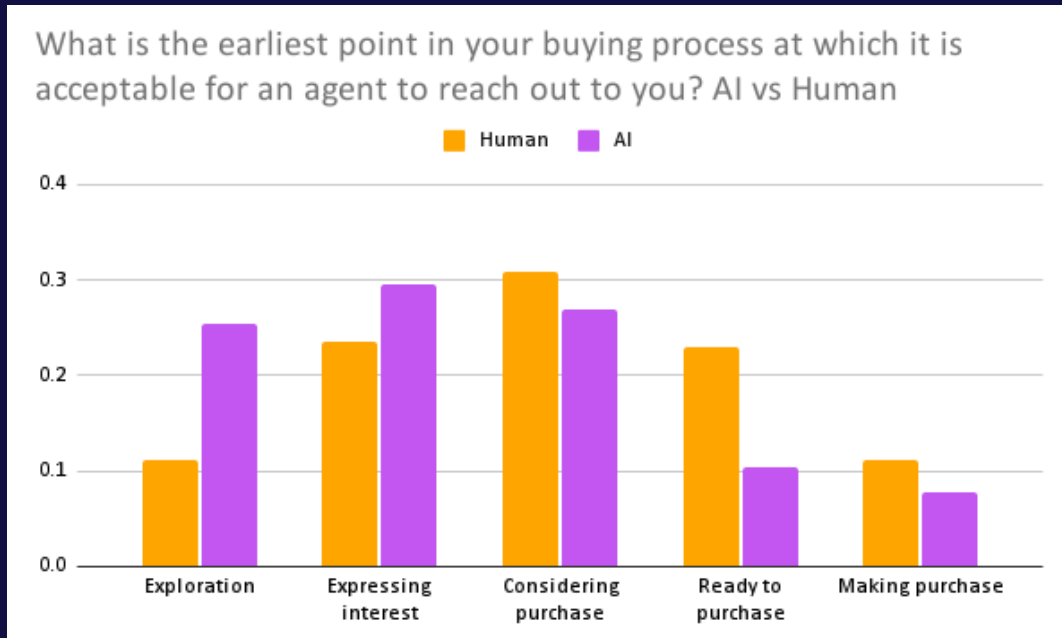
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- Companies should be cautious and thoughtful as they roll out AI solutions, as **respondents showed clear preferences for interaction** according to their position in the marketing funnel. For AI agents to be viewed as helpful, marketers must ensure AI agents meet buying decision needs in appropriate, accurate and trustworthy ways.
- **People prefer AI interactions high in the funnel, with respondents favoring AI by more than 21% humans during the exploration phase**, valuing low-pressure and tailored interactions.
- Marketing teams should apply AI agents to address the ubiquitous challenge faced by companies of wide marketing funnel tops. By starting early, organizations engage and influence where, otherwise, most customer interaction takes place in a dark funnel.
- Customers **want AI that is available when needed but non-intrusive, respecting their autonomy** in decision-making.
- Respondents are **most inclined to use AI vs. a sales rep when they are in the “comparing brands and vendors” phase** of the sales process.
- AI’s availability outside business hours is a major advantage, particularly for simple tasks or urgent inquiries.
- **The largest group of business buyers--57.1%--are comfortable using AI for software purchases**, with business services ranking as the second-highest category (50.5%).
- 33.7% of respondents said AI met their needs about half the time, while **24.6% found AI often or always sufficient**.



## Insight 2

### Timing & Topics



Consumers were notably more comfortable interacting with AI agents earlier in the purchasing process and were especially comfortable during the exploration phase, where they were 21% more likely to prefer that an AI agent reach out to them than a human agent. **This highlights the appeal of low-pressure, tailored interactions that enhance the early stages of decision-making but also seamlessly support buyers through the rest of their purchasing decisions.**

A recurring theme in responses about the ideal purchasing experience was that customers want non-intrusive AI agents that are available when needed but do not dominate the interaction. **This indicates a preference for an AI agent that respects autonomy and provides assistance without being overly assertive or interfering with individual's decision-making processes.**

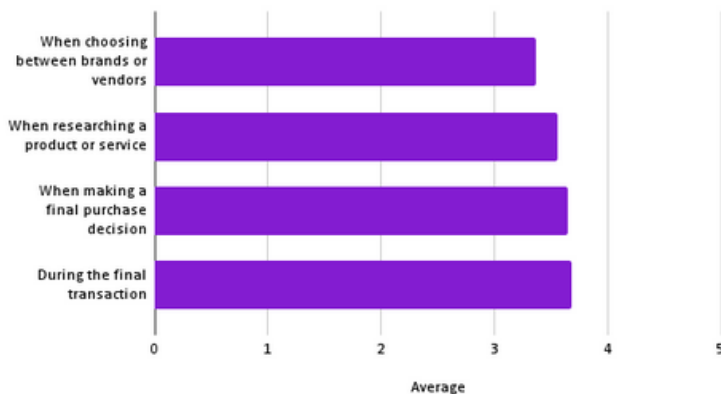
*"The agent is present but not intrusive. You can ask it questions and it will quickly give you rich information."*



## Timing & Topics

*“Conversational AI is really helpful and it can kind of give you the opportunity 24/7, round the clock”*

Preference for AI vs. sales rep (5=strongly prefer sales rep)



On a scale of 1-5, 1 meaning 'strongly prefer AI', and 5 meaning 'strongly prefer a sales rep', people tended to express a moderate preference for the sales rep across a number of purchasing activities. Respondents were most likely to prefer AI when choosing between brands and vendors.

**Customers appreciate the ability to access support and information outside typical business hours.** Though research showed a moderate preference for a sales agent across various purchasing activities, Conversational AI can provide **24/7 availability**, enabling customers to seek assistance or resolve issues at their convenience. According to focus group and interview participants, this can be particularly valuable for simple tasks or urgent inquiries.

*“I feel like, convenience-wise, AI is always easier. You can just tap into it and immediately start typing.”*

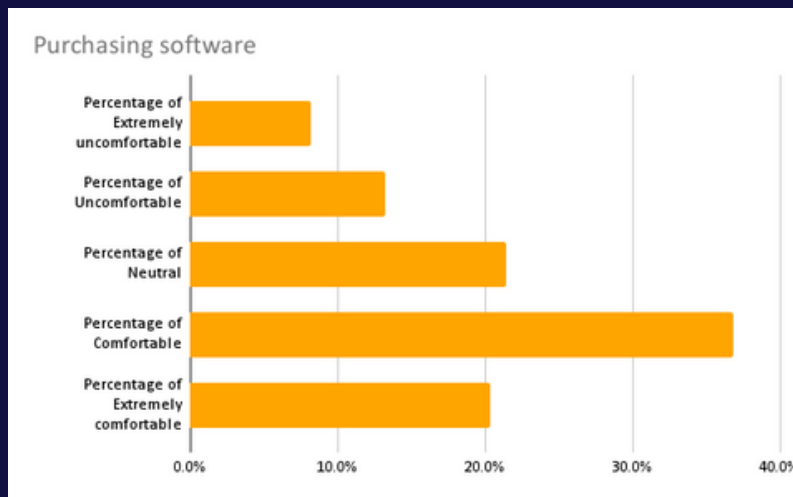




## Timing & Topics

Business buyers were asked how they felt about interacting with an AI agent for business services versus software purchases.

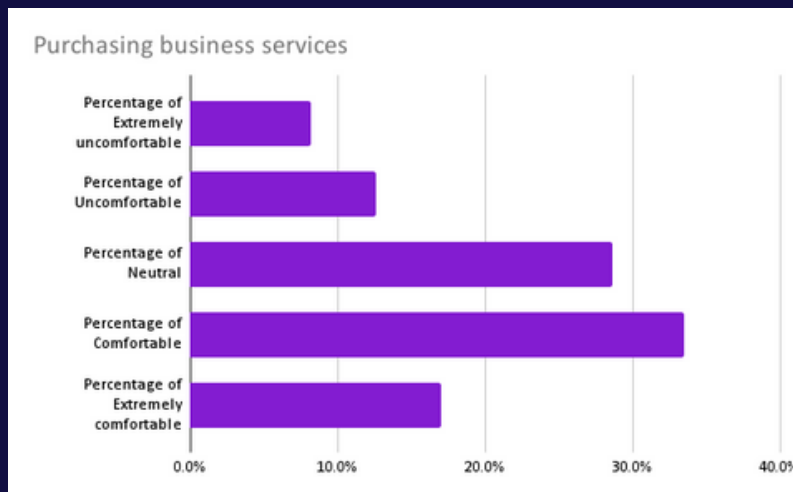
Of the business purchasing categories we explored, business buyers were the most comfortable using AI in software purchases.



57.1%

57.1% of Business Buyers categorized themselves as 'comfortable' or 'extremely comfortable' with using AI to make software purchases.

Business buyers expressed the second highest level of comfort using AI to make purchasing decisions involving business services.



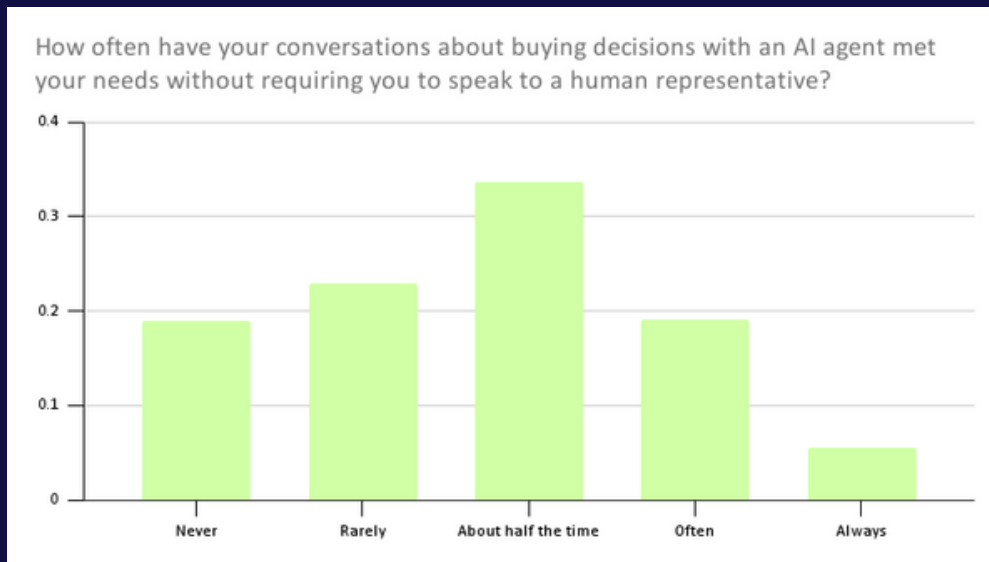
50.5%

A total of 50.5% of Business Buyers categorized themselves as 'comfortable' or 'extremely comfortable' using AI to make Business Service decisions.



## Timing & Topics

The largest group of respondents, **33.7%**, report that conversations with an AI agent met their needs without requiring a conversation with a human rep **'about half the time'**. A smaller yet significant group, 24.6%, say this has occurred 'often' or 'always'.



**Companies should balance AI and human interaction to maximize customer satisfaction and engagement.**

While 33.7% of respondents reported that AI alone met their needs, a significant portion still valued the option to engage with a human representative. **Companies that seamlessly integrate AI's efficiency with human interaction can cater to a broader range of preferences, ensuring that customers feel supported at every stage of their journey.**

The focus group emphasized that companies should leverage AI to streamline simple processes and provide quick information while ensuring seamless transitions to live agents for more complex or sensitive needs. Despite many positive comments, several individuals recounted experiences where AI provided inaccurate information, particularly when dealing with specialized knowledge or technical details.

***"If a company did use an AI agent, they need to fully train the AI so that they're not answering certain technical issues incorrectly, and at some point, the AI bot would transfer to a human, you know, a live representative."***



# Insight Summary: Trust

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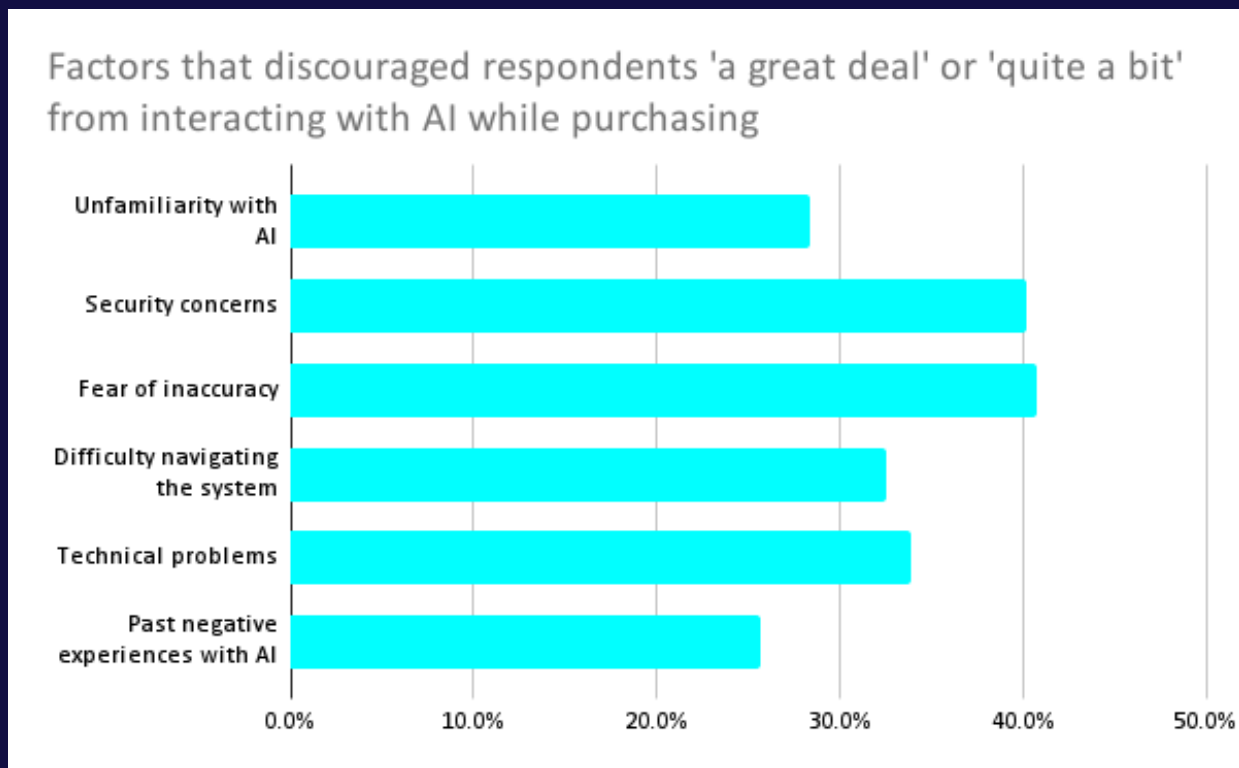
- **Security risks (40%) and fear of inaccuracy (41%) were the biggest deterrents for AI interaction in purchasing.**
- Users are hesitant to share sensitive data, especially financial or healthcare-related details, due to uncertainty about AI's data usage.
- **When AI is unable to handle complex issues, it fosters distrust.** This is mirrored by the finding that showed that 43.9% of respondents said that they would attempt to connect with a human representative to get an answer if an AI agent failed to address their needs (see "When AI is Not Helpful?" section). Companies should **ensure that the AI they deploy is capable of providing the required depth of expertise for a situation.**
- **Negative past interactions were not a major deterrent (28.5% said "not at all"),** indicating privacy and security remain the primary concerns.
- Most respondents felt neutral or comfortable interacting with AI across different purchasing experiences. **Those who were 'extremely comfortable' most commonly engaged with AI in online shopping.** Conversely, respondents felt 'extremely uncomfortable' using AI for banking, financial assistance, car dealerships, and healthcare.
- Interestingly, interviews and **focus groups indicated that a major source of the perception that AI is not helpful stems from inaccuracy.** As this was also identified as the greatest source of lack of trust, we can expect that as trust is built through interactions characterized by accuracy, the percentage of people reporting that AI is helpful--which currently stands at 56.7% (see 'Helpfulness' section)--will also increase.



## Insight 3

### Trust

When asked which factors discourage respondents from interacting with AI during the purchasing process, the factors that were ranked the highest were 'security concerns' and 'fear of inaccuracy.' 40% and 41% of respondents said that each of these factors significantly discouraged them from interacting with AI. **This highlights customers' concern about fraud and misinformation when interacting with AI.**





## Trust

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Findings from our interviews and focus group support these trends. Several people expressed concern because they did not feel in control or aware of the ways that AI would use the information they shared. **Interviewees were especially hesitant to share sensitive personal information, such as financial or healthcare related details, in their conversations with AI**, fearing that their information would not be kept secure when interacting with AI as opposed to a human agent.

*“When I’m working with AI, I can’t really see where that information goes, and even though it may be secure, there’s hundreds of people trying to hack websites...so I’m nervous to give my personal information to AI”*

Additionally, when interviewing people about what causes distrust in their interactions with AI, some expressed a desire for greater transparency about conversational AI so that they do not initially think they are talking to a human representative. **Transparency about AI is important for customer trust as users may feel misled if conversational AI is presented as a human agent.**

*“If I’m talking with AI and it’s trying to fool me into thinking it is a human, and I figure it out, it is very annoying”*

Distrust can also develop when AI fails to assist with complex issues and lacks understanding. This is mirrored by the finding that showed that 43.9% of respondents said that they would attempt to connect with a human representative to get an answer if an AI agent failed to address their needs (see “When AI is Not Helpful?” section). The inability of more rudimentary AI to handle complex or nuanced situations is a primary source of distrust and frustration. **Companies should ensure that the AI they deploy is capable of providing the required depth of expertise needed for a situation.** In situations where the AI cannot be trained with adequate expertise, companies should offer an option to speak with a sales agent in order to maintain trust with their buyers.



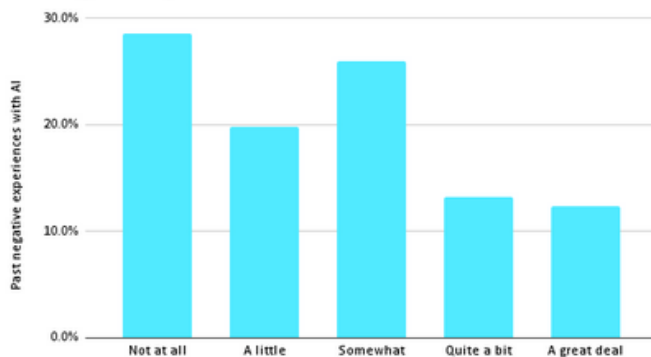
## Trust

An additional question related to the topic of trust stated: what would an ideal purchasing experience with an AI agent look like to you? **When analyzing the responses to this question, we once again found that many people expressed distrust of AI and an overall preference for human interaction.**

Many individuals explicitly stated their discomfort or rejection of AI, often citing concerns about accuracy, a lack of control, and a preference for human interaction. This distrust is exemplified by statements like "I do not trust AI and am uncomfortable with it" and "Risky situation I don't trust AI", revealing a lack of confidence in AI's ability to handle data responsibly. Responses also suggest that while some individuals acknowledge AI's potential for efficiency, they still perceive human judgment as essential for a trustworthy purchasing experience.

*"When I get the AI response, I almost...don't trust it. Like I want to hear from someone that I know actually understands my situation..."*

Past negative experiences with AI



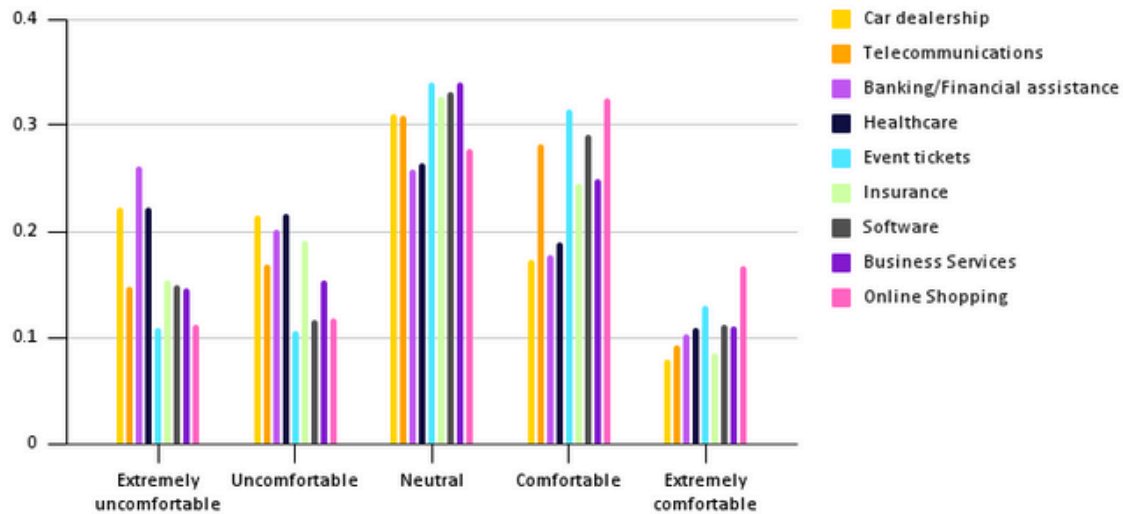
Interestingly, the data from the survey question previously mentioned regarding factors that discourage the use of AI showed that past negative experiences had the highest ranking for "not at all" discouraging at 28.5%. This suggests that **people are not shying away from using an AI agent due to unsatisfactory uses, but rather because of privacy and security concerns.**





# Trust

How do you feel about interacting with an AI agent for each of the following purchasing experiences?



Across various types of purchasing experiences, most respondent reported being either neutral or comfortable interacting with AI. **For those who reported feeling 'extremely comfortable' interacting with AI, online shopping was clearly more common than other purchasing categories.** In contrast, people most frequently felt 'extremely uncomfortable' interacting with AI in banking and financial assistance (followed closely by car dealerships and healthcare).



## Insight Summary: Openness to AI in Sales Process

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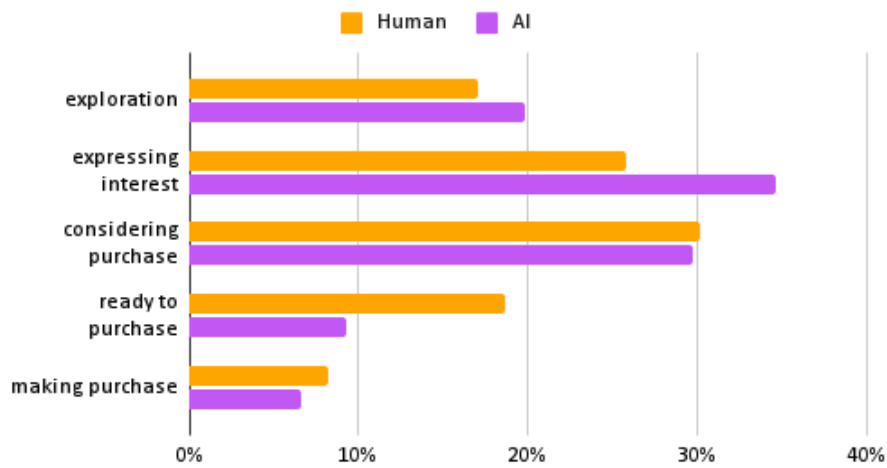
- Overall, the data indicates a **larger impact for AI on B2B selling/marketing vs. consumer**, with business buyers being more open to AI at various portions of the sales funnel.
- **B2B buyers prefer AI agents over human reps early in the buying process**, but this preference becomes more evenly split as they progress through the funnel.
- The only stage where business buyers clearly prefer a human rep is the 'ready to purchase' stage. A slight preference was also detected at the stage at which the buyer completes the transaction.
- For non-business buyers, the desire/need to get info quickly at the top of the funnel is massively amplified, as evidenced in a **strong preference for AI during the "exploration" and "expressing interest" phases**. This may be due to the high level of competition and transactional nature of consumer purchases.
- **Non-business buyers expressed much stronger preference for AI at the "exploration" phase** (21% higher), compared to B2B buyers (3% higher).
- However, as non-business buyers progress through the funnel, their preference switches to human reps.



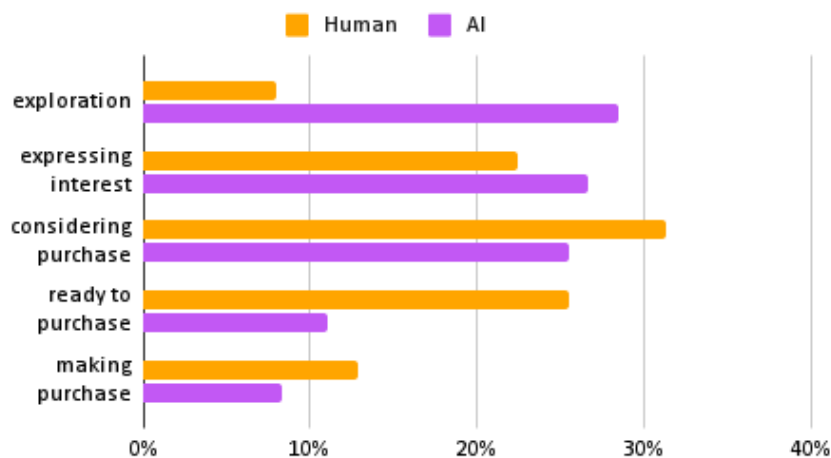
# Insight 4

## *Openness to AI in Sales Process*

Business buyer



Non-business buyer





## Openness to AI in Sales Process

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As the above charts indicate, **business buyers generally tend to be more open to AI at various portions of the sales funnel.** B2B buyers prefer AI agents over human reps early in the buying phase. For example, **in the 'expressing interest' phase, business buyers are 9 percent more likely to prefer AI.** However, this preference becomes more evenly split as they progress through the funnel. This also represents a major shift as the market becomes accustomed to the increased use of AI agents to educate and provide critical buying information.

The only stage where business buyers clearly prefer a human rep is the 'ready to purchase' stage, where respondents were about 9 percent more likely to prefer a human rep. A slight preference was also detected at the stage at which the buyer completes the transaction. However, this was within the margin of error. In a sense, **the data indicates that, in the B2B market, the key role for human representatives is during the contract fulfillment phase.**

For non-business buyers, the desire/need to get info quickly at the top of the funnel is massively amplified, as evidenced in a strong preference for AI **during the "exploration", where respondents were 21% more likely to prefer AI,** and the "expressing interest" phase, where they were about 5% more likely to choose AI. This may be due to the high level of competition and the highly transactional nature of the B2C space.

Interestingly, while business buyers had a generally stronger preference for AI throughout the funnel, non-business buyers expressed **much stronger preference for AI at the exploration phase (approximately 3:1),** compared to B2B buyers (approximately a 5:4 preference for AI).

However, as non-business buyers progress through the funnel, their preference switches to human reps, starting with the "considering the purchase" through the final purchase phase. This may change, however, as AI agents increase in their ability to provide fast, accurate answers to more complex questions.



# About *Conversica*

Conversica's Revenue Digital Assistants™ (RDAs) supercharge workforces to acquire untapped revenue through perfectly structured conversations across chat, email, and SMS. With billions of human interactions spanning more than a decade, Conversica's RDAs have learned to influence and persuade customers and prospects throughout the customer journey lifecycle.

Conversica is the only enterprise-ready solution of its kind that strikes the balance between delivering against modern buyer expectations with generative AI-powered dynamic conversations and the enterprise's need to protect its data and brand.

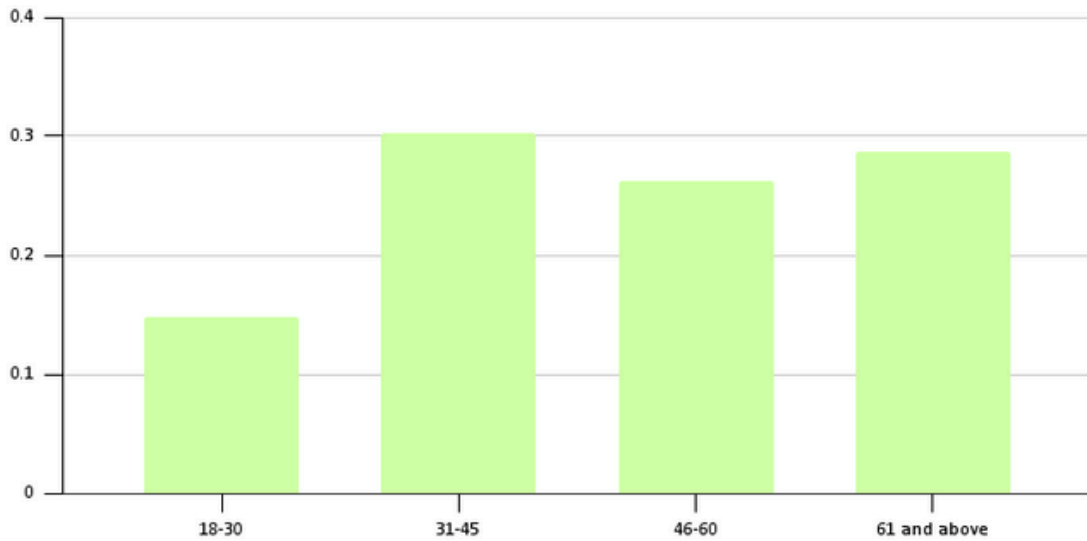
Learn more at [conversica.com](https://conversica.com).



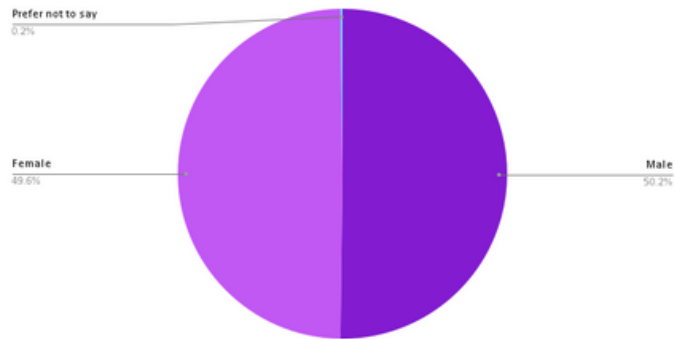
# Appendix

## *Additional Survey Insights*

Age distribution



Please indicate your gender

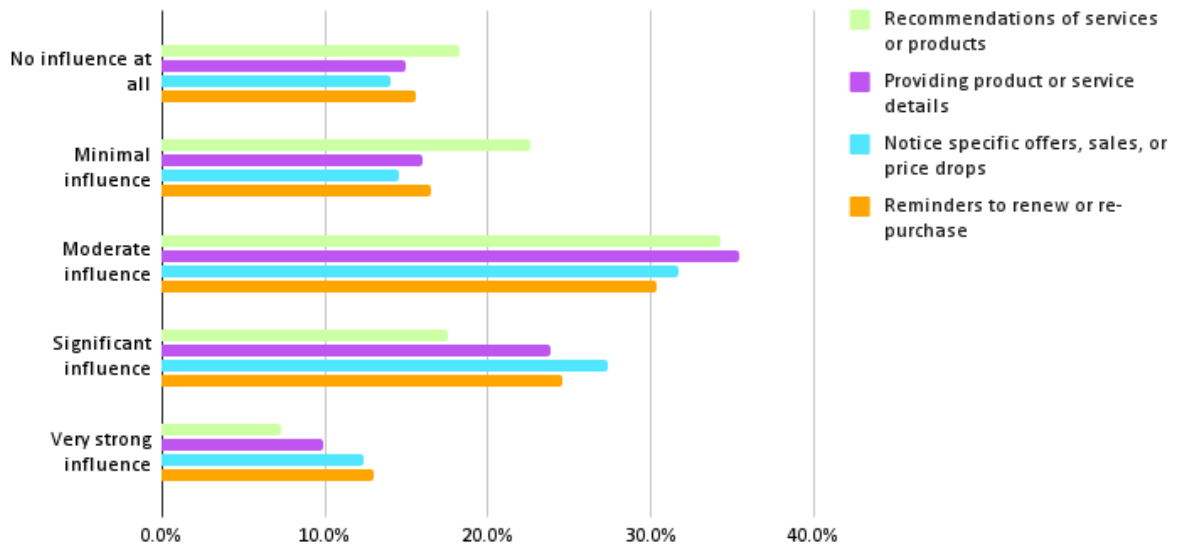


The gender percentage of those surveyed was split very closely down the middle with 50.2% male and 49.6% female.



# Influence of AI on Buying Processes

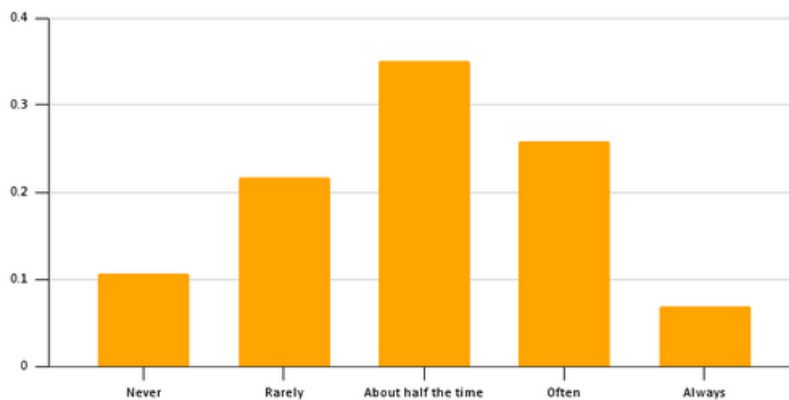
How much influence do you think an AI agent would have in the following areas of the buying decision process?



Respondents tended to report similar levels of influence that they anticipate an AI agent could have on their buying process. When it came to reporting that AI could have a 'significant influence' or a 'very strong influence', respondents were most likely to cite "reminders when it's time to renew or re-purchase", and 'notice of a specific offer, sale, or price drop'.

# Perception That AI Understands Needs Accurately

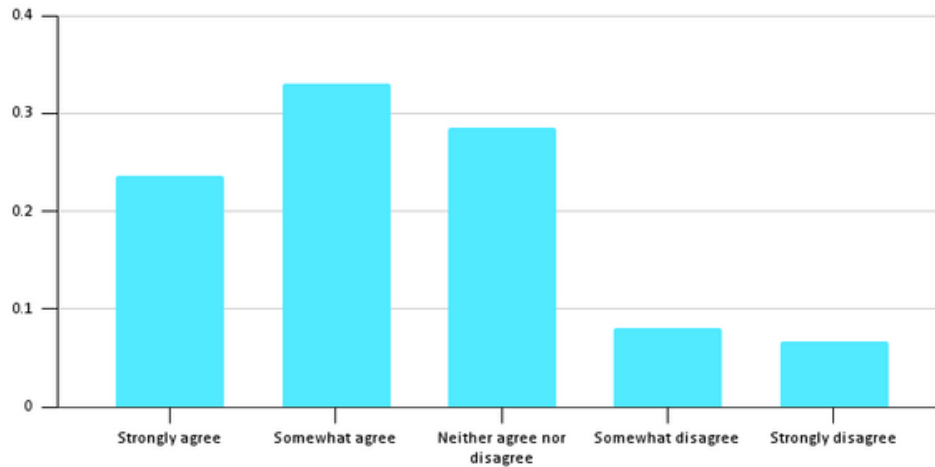
How often do you feel that AI agents understand your needs accurately?



The largest group of respondents, 35%, report that an AI agent understood their needs accurately 'about half the time'. A smaller, yet significant group, totaling 32.7%, say this has occurred 'often' or 'always'.

# Perceptions on Helpfulness of AI

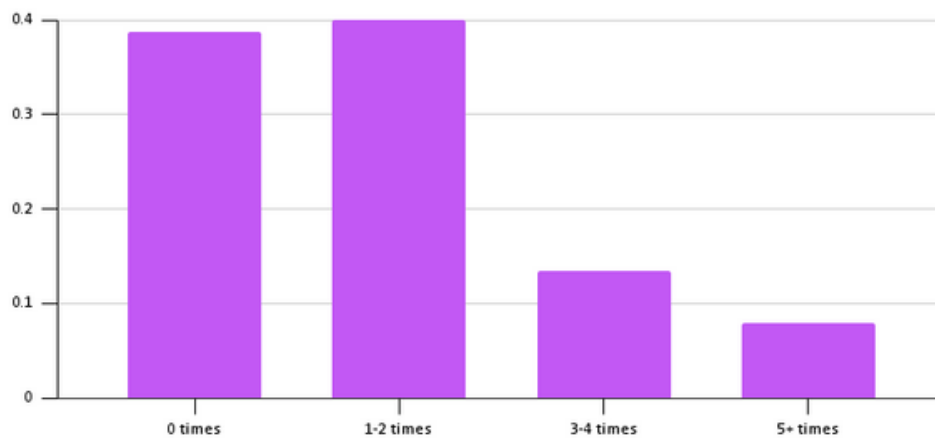
Agreement with: "AI agents are helpful"



Respondents were much more likely to agree with the statement "AI agents are helpful" than to disagree, with 56.7% somewhat or strongly expressing agreement, compared to only 14.8% expressing disagreement.

# Frequency of Interaction with AI During Buying Decisions

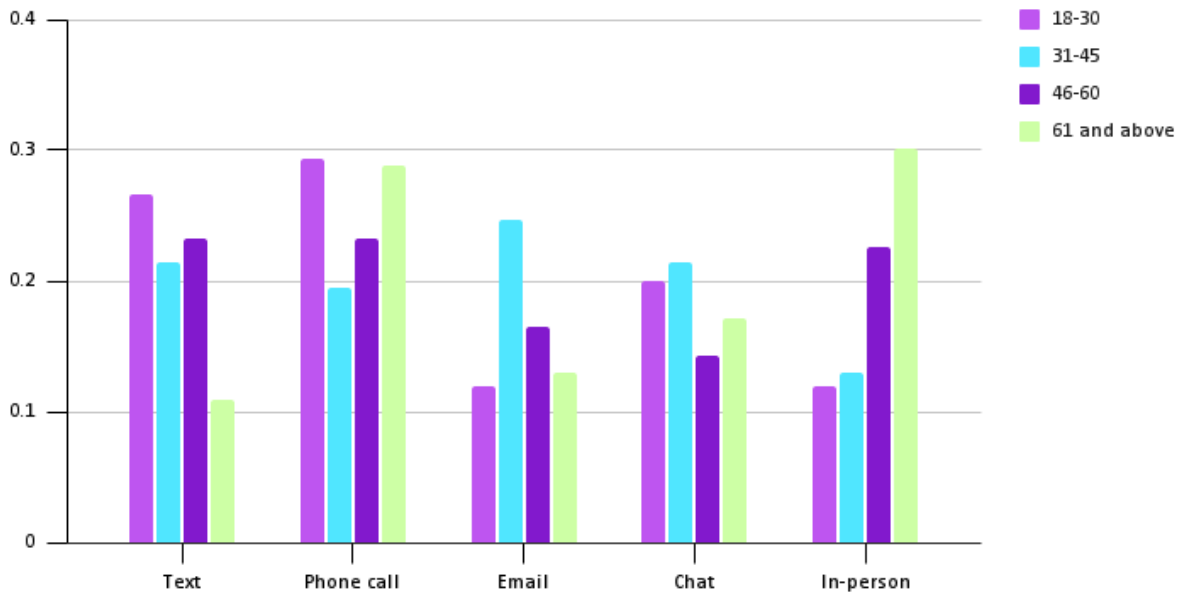
How frequently have you interacted with an AI agent when making a buying decision?



The largest group of respondents, 40%, reported having interacted with AI while making a buying decision 1-2 times, indicating that people still perceive it as a relatively new experience.

# Personalization and Preferences

Preferred method of communication: by Age



Data revealed distinct communication preferences across age demographics in sales interactions. Notably, **29.3% of 18 - 30 year-olds preferred phone calls**, aligning closely with the 28.8% of those 61 and above who also favored this method. However, the older group predominantly chose in-person communication (30.1%). These insights highlight a **significant tilt towards traditional communication modes**, especially among young adults and seniors.

However, individuals aged 31-45 showed a preference for **email** (24.7%) and **text** (21.4%), with texting also being the second favorite communication method for the 18-30 age group (26.7%).

To cater to these preferences, it's crucial for AI software to **seamlessly integrate with multiple communication platforms**, ensuring effective engagement with all customer segments.

# Personalization and Preferences

Across age demographics, nearly 25% of respondents preferred phone calls and just over 20% favored in-person interactions for purchasing and sales-related activities. **Why?**

In our interviews, customers expressed a strong desire for **clarity, understanding, and empathy** in business interactions—qualities they associated with human communication. Traditional methods, typically facilitated by human representatives, are perceived to offer more personalized attention and a better understanding of customer needs compared to the standardized responses often provided by AI.

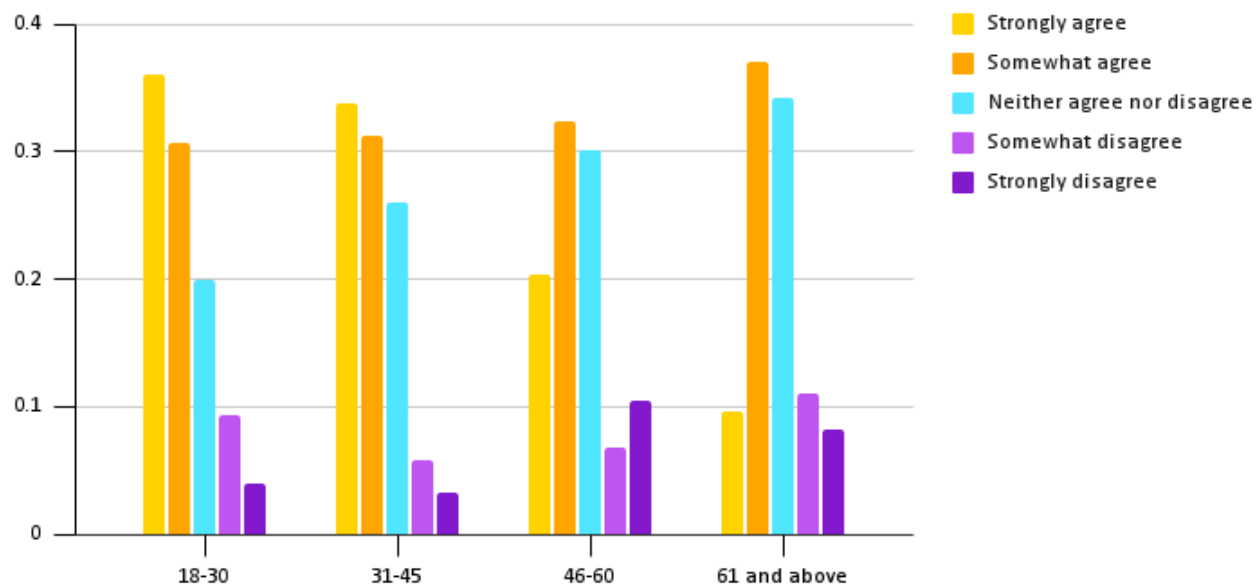
*“A real person, a customer service agent, is much more likely to extend a little bit and give more customer service. AIs are more rigid, and it doesn't seem like they understand.”*

The research indicates a perception that conversational AI performs well with straightforward tasks, improving efficiency and satisfaction. However, there is also a perception that its dependence on clear queries contrasts with the nuanced nature of human communication. **If AI can mimic this level of personalized communication, adapting responses to individual customer needs, it could significantly enhance customer satisfaction.** Companies should also maintain the option for customers to contact a human representative, ensuring a satisfactory interaction regardless of the method chosen.

*“An ideal purchasing experience with an AI agent would involve seamless and personalized interactions where the AI understands my preferences.”*

# Helpfulness (By Age)

Based on experiences with AI agent over the past month, indicate level of agreement with statement "AI agents are helpful": by Age

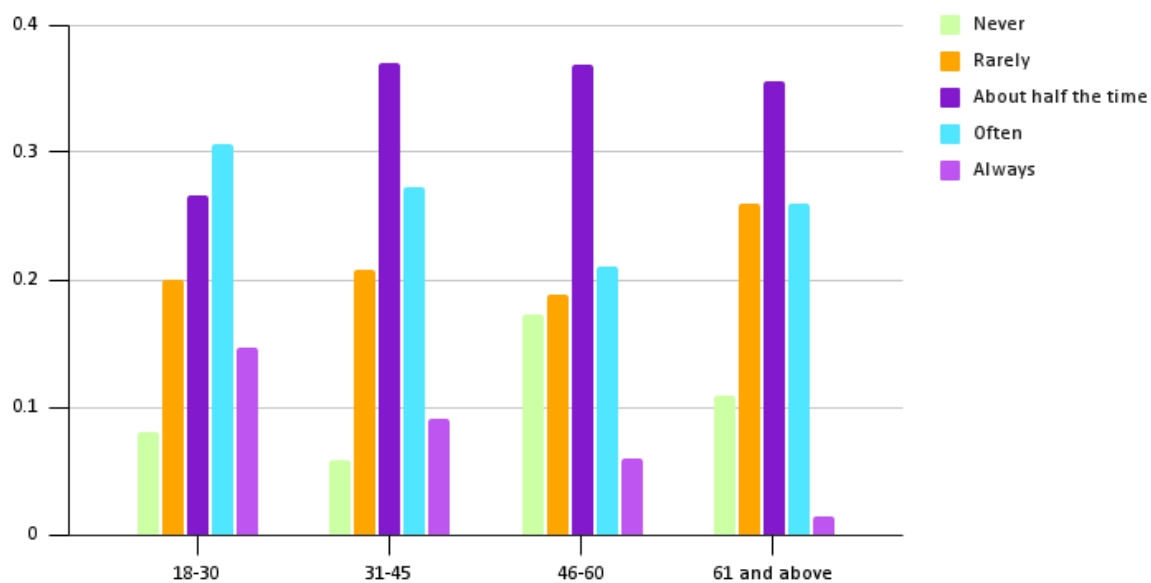


When asked their level of agreement with the statement "AI agents are helpful," 36% of 18-30 year olds responded that they strongly agree, closely followed by 33.8% in the 31-45 age bracket. However, only 9.6% of those aged 61 and above felt that they strongly agreed with the statement. This highlights an **increase in positive perceptions of AI's helpfulness as age decreases**, suggesting that younger individuals are significantly more accepting and optimistic about AI and its usefulness.

# Helpfulness

## Understanding of Needs (by Age)

"How often do you feel that AI agents understand your needs accurately?": by Age



When exploring how often different age groups feel that AI accurately understands their needs, the most frequent response across all ages was *"about half the time"*.

Notably, 14.7% of those aged 18-30 believed that AI 'always' understands their needs, this being significantly higher than any other age group. In contrast, only 1.4% of respondents aged 61 and above reported that AI 'always' understood their needs. Additionally, older respondents (ages 46 and up) were more inclined to state that AI 'never' understands their needs, with 17.3% in the 46-60 age group and 11% in the 61 and above age group expressing this sentiment.

Despite these variations, the largest group of respondents in each age group reported that AI understands their needs about half the time. **This data indicates that while younger generations are more optimistic about AI's capability to grasp their needs, a significant portion of all age groups recognizes AI's effectiveness to some extent.**