Nine in 10 Brits Still Prefer Speaking to a Real Person Despite AI Boom, New Research Reveals

Wednesday 12 August, 2026

Exclusive YouGov research commissioned by Answer4u highlights the growing gap between AI adoption and customer expectations.

Nottingham, UK – Despite the rapid growth of artificial intelligence in customer service, 90% of UK adults still prefer speaking to a real person when contacting a business, according to new research commissioned by Answer4u and conducted by YouGov.

The study of 2,046 UK adults found that almost three quarters (74%) strongly prefer interacting with a real person, while only 2% said they would rather communicate with an AI-powered system such as a chatbot, virtual assistant or automated phone service.

The findings come as businesses across the UK continue to invest heavily in AI-powered customer service technologies to improve efficiency, increase availability and manage rising customer demand.

Human interaction remains the preferred choice

The research found:

- 90% prefer speaking to a real person.
- 74% strongly prefer speaking to a real person.
- Only 2% prefer interacting with an AI system.
- Older consumers are the strongest advocates for human interaction, with those aged 55 and over showing the highest preference for speaking to a real person (95%).

AI still has an important role to play

While the findings demonstrate strong support for human interaction, Answer4u believes businesses should avoid viewing AI and people as competing solutions. Instead, organisations should focus on matching the right communication channel to the customer's needs.

"Businesses often assume the conversation is about choosing between AI and people. Our experience tells us it's a much more practical decision than that," said Mark Menhennet, Co-Founder of Answer4u.

"Customers want quick answers when their enquiry is straightforward, but they also want confidence that a knowledgeable person is available when the conversation becomes more complex. "

Routine enquiries, appointment booking, frequently asked questions and out-of-hours support are all areas where AI can improve the customer experience by providing immediate responses and reducing waiting times. More complex conversations continue to benefit from human understanding and flexibility.

"AI has an important role to play in modern customer service, particularly when it comes to handling routine enquiries quickly and consistently," said Stuart Wilson, Director of Operations at Answer4u.

"The challenge for businesses isn't deciding whether to adopt AI, it's deciding where automation improves the customer experience and where a skilled person still delivers greater value. The most effective customer service strategies are likely to combine both."

A changing customer service landscape

Answer4u's full research report, AI vs Human Customer Service in 2026, explores the findings in greater detail, including demographic trends, where AI delivers the greatest value, and practical guidance for organisations developing future customer service strategies.

The report concludes that the future of customer service is unlikely to be defined by AI replacing people. Instead, businesses that successfully balance automation with human expertise are likely to deliver stronger customer experiences and build greater long-term trust.

Media:



Related Sectors:

Business & Finance ::

Related Keywords:

AI :: Ai In Customer Service :: Call Handling :: Telephone Answering ::

Scan Me:

Notes to Editors

Research commissioned by Answer4u and conducted by YouGov.

Fieldwork was conducted online among 2,046 UK adults 18+ using a nationally representative sample. Fieldwork was undertaken between 5th - 8th June 2026.

Respondents were asked:

For the following question, by "AI system" we mean automated phone systems, virtual assistants, or chatbots that use artificial intelligence to help answer customer queries.

When contacting a business, which of the following best describes your preference for interacting with a real person versus an AI system? (Please select the option that best applies)

- I strongly prefer interacting with a real person
- I somewhat prefer interacting with a real person
- I have no preference
- I somewhat prefer interacting with an AI system
- I strongly prefer interacting with an AI system
- Don't know / not sure

About Answer4u

Answer4u is a UK-based telephone answering and outsourced call centre provider headquartered in Nottingham. Established in 2004, the company has supported more than 12,000 UK businesses and handled over 60 million calls. Its services include virtual receptionist support, call handling, help desk services and 24/7 contact centre solutions delivered by a UK-based team.

Company Contact:

Answer4u

T. 08008223344
E. media@answer-4u.com
W. https://www.answer-4u.com

Additional Contact(s):
Darren McCowan, Director of Marketing

View Online

Additional Assets:
https://www.answer-4u.com/ai-vs-human-customer-service-in-2026
https://www.answer-4u.com/hs-fs/hubfs/a4u-AI-demographics-optimised.png

Newsroom: Visit our Newsroom for all the latest stories:
https://www.answer4u.pressat.co.uk