

One in Three UK Consumers Will Call a Competitor if a Business Fails to Answer the Phone Within 60 Seconds

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Media:

New YouGov research commissioned by Answer4u reveals the hidden cost of missed business calls, with only 26% of UK consumers willing to wait longer than a minute.

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Businesses could be losing customers in less than a minute when calls go unanswered, according to new YouGov research commissioned by telephone answering specialist Answer4u.

The nationally representative survey of 2,046 UK adults found that more than one in three consumers (37%) would abandon a call within 60 seconds before deciding to contact a competitor instead.

The findings also challenge the assumption that customers will leave a message and wait for a callback. Just 6% of respondents said they would leave a voicemail instead of waiting for their call to be answered, while almost one in four (24%) would switch to another contact method instead.

The research highlights the growing pressure on businesses to remain accessible, particularly in sectors where inbound calls often represent high-value enquiries or sales opportunities.

Key Findings

- 37% of UK adults would abandon a business call within 60 seconds.
- 18% would wait less than 30 seconds
- Only 26% would wait longer than a minute
- Only 6% would leave a voicemail rather than wait
- 24% would switch to another contact method rather than wait
- Women (28%) are significantly more likely than men to seek alternative ways to contact a business than waiting for the call to be answered.
- Consumers aged 25-44 showed the lowest tolerance for waiting on the phone (with only 53% saying they would wait for the call to be answered).

Stuart Wilson, Director of Operations at Answer4u, said:

"A caller's experience begins the moment they dial your phone number. No matter how good a business is, or how strong its customer service may be, none of that matters if the caller never gets to speak to someone. Our research shows that businesses have a very small window to make a positive first impression, and that window starts long before the conversation begins."

The findings were particularly relevant for small businesses, sole traders and professional service firms where business owners often balance customer enquiries alongside client work, meetings and day-to-day operations.

Sally-Ann O'Neill, Head of Contact Centre Operations at Answer4u, added:

"There is definitely a low uptake on leaving voicemails and it's clear customers generally prefer channels that provide immediate response or confirmation that their enquiry has been received. I believe many see voicemail as a slower, less reliable route."

Answer4u, which has handled more than 60 million calls for UK businesses since 2004, says the results reflect a trend it has observed across thousands of organisations that rely on inbound enquiries for growth.

The company believes the findings should serve as a reminder that unanswered calls are not simply a customer service issue. They can directly affect lead generation, sales and customer retention.

Mark Menhennet, Co-Founder of Answer4u, said:

"We've spent more than 20 years helping businesses capture opportunities that might otherwise be missed. One thing has remained consistent throughout that time: when customers are ready to make contact, they expect someone to answer. Every missed call represents a potential opportunity that may never come back."

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Business & Finance ::

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The full [Answer4u research report](#) explores consumer attitudes towards unanswered business calls, voicemail usage and changing communication preferences across different age groups and demographics.

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:

"Thinking about a time you needed to contact a business by phone, how long, if at all, would you be willing to wait for a business to answer your call before deciding to contact a competitor instead?"

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.

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