

22 million hours on hold: New Zealand embraces AI to reduce wait times

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New Zealand has made progress on reducing customer service pain with a decrease of two-million hours on hold. Yet the customer improvement journey isn't over with 22 million hours spent resolving issues.

Auckland, New Zealand; 11 March 2026 – New research from ServiceNow, the AI control tower for business reinvention, has revealed that Kiwi are increasingly seeing AI change the customer service experience throughout the nation for the better.

ServiceNow's annual **Customer Experience Report** found Kiwi spent 22 million hours (8.7 hours per person) waiting to resolve issues in 2025. The research shows a decrease of two-million hours year-on-year, down from 24 million – a reduction in wait time for Kiwi for a second year in a row.

Despite consistent improvement, the frustrations with poor customer service still persist. The research shows that almost half (48%) of New Zealanders will switch to a competitor after poor or slow service, more than a quarter (26%) will lodge formal complaints, and 21% actively request refunds or compensation.

Customers want issues resolved almost immediately and expect technology to be the solution, with 38% saying AI is already helping meet this expectation. With 52% of New Zealanders expecting improved speed, efficiencies and convenience from companies that deploy AI, organisations only have a limited time to get AI right before customer demands shift again.

New Zealanders expect AI-enabled customer service

That appetite for automation is only growing. Speedy resolutions are no longer a nice to have, it's the expectation of customers, with 55% seeing 24/7 support as the biggest benefit of AI. Meanwhile, the majority of New Zealanders (72%) now prefer self-service before calling a customer service representative, and nearly two-fifths (39%) have a preference to use technology to lodge complaints or resolve issues, signalling a clear move away from traditional call-centre models.

Kate Tulp, New Zealand Country Manager at ServiceNow, says, "What we're seeing in New Zealand is a shift from AI hesitation to demand for tech that enables services to get the job done. Customers are making deliberate choices about who earns their trust. AI becomes powerful when it removes friction across the entire journey, not just at the front door. Organisations that connect data, identity and service in one experience will be the ones customers stay with."

Customer Service Representatives are under pressure, see AI as essential

The strain on frontline teams is clear:

- 55% cite high call volumes as their biggest challenge, and 36% struggle with inconsistent customer data
- Customer service representatives juggle an average of four systems to resolve issues, with some complex cases taking over a full working week (42.6 hours)

AI is already helping to relieve the pressure for Customer Service Representatives:

- 60% reduction in time spent addressing customer questions and issues
- 58% improvement in summarising call notes

Yet, more than half of agents (54%) say organisations must improve their use of AI to enhance customer experience, while 50% point to the need for better training to deliver higher-quality customer service.

"Service representatives are under real pressure, juggling high volumes and fragmented systems, which makes it harder to deliver consistent service. AI has already shown it can take a meaningful load off frontline teams, but the next step is using it well. When organisations treat AI as part of the workforce, with the right training, governance and accountability, service representatives can move out of reactive firefighting and focus on faster, higher-quality resolution. That's how you improve productivity and customer experience at the same time," says Ms. Tulp.

Performance varies across industries

Banks and retailers are leading the way, resolving issues in an average of 2.4 days, while telecommunications providers are the fastest for simpler fixes, with nearly half of the cases resolved in under an hour.

- Best performing sectors for resolution times:
 - Banks – 2.4 days on average
 - Retailers – 2.4 days on average
 - Nonprofits – 2.9 days on average
- Sectors needing the most improvement:
 - Government – 5.8 days on average
 - Manufacturers – 6.5 days

“Customer expectations are moving faster than customer experience. With 65% of Kiwi valuing responsiveness and 52% expecting AI to deliver faster, more convenient service, the gap is widening. AI adoption is now a customer experience maturity issue and organisations have a very limited window to get it right,” says Ms. Tulp.

Case study – Palmerston North City Council accelerates public record requests by 88% with ServiceNow

Palmerston North City Council (PNCC) has deployed ServiceNow to modernise how it delivers essential public services, including Land Information Memorandum (LIM) reports and contact centre support for constituents.

Regulatory and Development General Manager at PNCC, Kerry-Lee Probert says that as a result of using ServiceNow Public Sector Digital Services and Government Service Portal, a process that previously took up to eight days is now digitally processed in less than half an hour. “It’s possible for LIM reports to be sent to requesters within 24 hours if needed, but our officers generally take a little extra time to make checks.”

Chief Information Officer at PNCC, Ryan Eames notes, “the Council made a strategic choice in using ServiceNow as an Enterprise platform, and it is paying massive dividends – it has amplified our transformation at scale.”

The ServiceNow AI Platform has also enabled contact centre customer service agents to resolve cases up to 50% faster and supported the expansion of out-of-hours contact centre services to 46 other councils.

AI-powered platforms like ServiceNow help leaders and organisations define what comes after the customer service tipping point, creating connected, intelligent, secure service experiences that match exactly what New Zealanders are asking for: speed and seamless resolution.

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The research

This research was commissioned by ServiceNow in partnership with ThoughtLab, a leading thought leadership and

economic research firm, and was conducted in accordance with ISO 20252 standards. Between September and October 2025, the study surveyed 27,250 customers, 3,515 customer service representatives, and 3,900 executives across 18 countries and eight industries to understand how AI is reshaping customer experience.

In addition to the broader global survey, ServiceNow partnered with Suzy Speaks, an AI-powered voice research platform, to conduct qualitative, AI-moderated, one-to-one conversations with consumers to capture nuanced, human insights about their experiences with AI in customer service. These interviews were conducted with 100 participants per country in the US, UK, Germany, India, Japan, Singapore, and Australia.

About ServiceNow

ServiceNow (NYSE: NOW) is the AI control tower for business reinvention. The ServiceNow AI Platform integrates with any cloud, any model, and any data source to orchestrate how work flows across the enterprise. By unifying legacy systems, departmental tools, cloud applications, and AI agents, ServiceNow provides a single pane of glass that connects intelligence to execution across every corner of business. With more than 75 billion workflows running on the platform each year, ServiceNow helps organizations turn fragmented operations into coordinated, autonomous workflows that deliver measurable results. Learn how ServiceNow puts AI to work for people at www.servicenow.com.

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