

# AI + EQ = the Future of Customer Experience

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ServiceNow research shows how the UK is one of the most sceptical countries in EMEA when it comes to AI's role in the customer experience (CX)

Just 55% of UK consumers say AI will eventually detect emotions and close the gap between human and machine interaction

69% of UK consumers say AI chatbots fail to understand emotional cues, pushing AI to evolve beyond automation

19 May, 2025, London - **ServiceNow**, the AI platform for business transformation, has today released the **ServiceNow Consumer Voice Report 2025** which surveyed 17,000 adults across 13 countries in Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA), with 2,000 of these surveyed across the UK. Now in its third year, the report reveals a significant shift in consumer expectations across the UK and EMEA when it comes to AI's role in customer experience (CX). The key takeaway for UK business leaders is that consumers no longer want AI that just gets the job done; they want AI that understands them.

Consumers in the UK are the best at spotting AI across EMEA. Despite 54% of them seeing the importance of a good chatbot service, 69% see AI chatbots as efficient but emotionless, often missing nuances like tone, urgency, or frustration. These missing nuances are considered a clear sign they're speaking to an AI as just 16% would associate these emotionless traits with human service. This is a critical indication towards the demand for more sophisticated AI capabilities, using advancements such as agentic AI to make future interactions more intuitive, empathetic, and frictionless.

Cathy Mauzaize, President, EMEA at ServiceNow, added: "Business leaders across EMEA risk being left behind if they

fail to embrace the collaboration between AI and human expertise. Consumers are no longer satisfied with disconnected, inefficient service. They expect AI to streamline interactions, anticipate their needs, and complement human agents, not replace them. The companies that successfully integrate AI with human-driven customer service will not only improve efficiency but also build stronger, more trusted customer relationships.”

- Findings from the report show that: Despite some scepticism, belief in AI’s emotional intelligence is growing across EMEA. 71% of consumers think AI will eventually detect emotions, closing the gap between human and machine interactions. The UK, however, remains the most sceptical about AI’s emotional intelligence, with just 55% believing this gap will close
- Generational differences shape these views with 27% of 18–34-year-olds in the UK believing AI will never understand emotions, jumping to 62% of those aged 55+ sharing this doubt. The UK are least optimistic about rapid advancements in AI chatbots – Under half (45%) anticipate that AI chatbots will recognise emotions by the end of the year, and 46% predict the same for voice assistants. While AI is improving, human agents remain the gold standard for emotionally intelligent interactions: 70% of UK consumers currently expect human customer service agents to recognise emotions.

Damian Stirrett, Group Vice President and General Manager at ServiceNow UK & Ireland, said: “Businesses in the UK who fail to integrate AI with human expertise will lose out fast. Used correctly, AI brings huge opportunities to not just level-up the service of human agents but establish the UK as a leading market for customer experience. . But with the UK proving one of the most sceptical customer bases in EMEA, businesses must make the right investment to ensure positive returns on the customer experience they deliver.”

#### High Stakes, Low Trust: The UK’s AI Trust Gap

The report highlights a clear AI trust gap – consumers embrace AI for speed and convenience in low-risk tasks, but in emotionally charged situations, they seek human oversight.

- In the UK, AI is established as a trusted channel for routine tasks like scheduling a car service (13%) or tracking a package (15%), but confidence drops when more is at stake.
- As the AI landscape evolves, trust is set to grow too – 24% of UK consumers who don’t currently trust AI to dispute a suspicious transaction will do so within three years, a 20 percentage point increase from today.
- Today, few consumers trust AI with sensitive tasks. Only 3% of UK consumers would trust AI to close a bank account after a loved one’s death (under the EMEA average of 5%), 4% to dispute a suspicious transaction (below the EMEA average of 6%), and 5% to replace a lost or stolen passport.
- This dynamic will shift though, with 41% of UK18–34-year-olds who don’t currently trust AI to close a loved one’s bank account would do so in the next 3 years, alongside 27% of those aged 35-54. Older generations aged 55+ in the UK are least trusting when compared to the same age group across other EMEA markets, with

just 13% agreeing with this statement.

- However, some tasks will always demand human oversight. 50% of consumers who don't currently trust AI say they'd never trust AI alone to dispute a suspicious transaction. This doesn't mean AI has no role to play. It can work seamlessly in the background, provided consumers can still feel a human touch.

### The Customer Paradox – What We Value in Humans, We Criticise in AI (and vice versa)

Consumers want speed yet preferably opt for human-led interaction. They want accuracy and seamless continuity but will shy away from AI-led services. This creates a paradox. What consumers want in customer service doesn't always match their channel preferences.

- Ironically, some of the UK's biggest frustrations such as long hold times (59%) and repeating information (46%) stem from human-led support. Yet over a quarter of customers in the UK say they are most likely to choose talking to a human on the phone over all other forms of customer service channels including AI regardless of mood, except when feeling tired when email is preferred.
- This paradox goes both ways. Consumers expect AI to handle complexity but don't trust it to. 61% of UK consumers say struggling with multi-step, layered conversations is more of an AI trait than human (23%), showing a gap between expectations and confidence.

The findings point to a need for businesses to rethink customer relationships to be more proactive. The 'ideal' scenario isn't just better support, it is using AI insights and data analysis to anticipate the need before it arises.

### Closing the Gap on AI's Growing Pains

Businesses have invested heavily in AI-powered customer experiences, yet customer expectations keep rising.

- AI in customer service isn't failing but evolving. Two thirds (68%) of UK consumers say AI chatbots haven't met their expectations over the past five years.
- AI must get better at reading context and learning from interactions. 67% of UK consumers feel AI-driven solutions have fallen short, reinforcing the need for better data and smarter adaptation.

By bridging these gaps, businesses can unlock AI's potential as a powerful partner, fostering trust and driving exceptional results.

Download the full ServiceNow Consumer Voice Report 2025 [here](#). You can also read our blog post [here](#) and sign up to our webinar on the findings [here](#).

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## Methodology

Between 10th–17th January 2025, ServiceNow, the AI platform for business transformation, and Opinium conducted a survey of 17,000 nationally representative adults in the UK, Republic of Ireland (ROI), France, Spain, Germany, Belgium, Austria, Italy, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Sweden, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. 2,000 adults were representative in the UK.

## About ServiceNow

ServiceNow (NYSE: NOW) is putting AI to work for people. We move with the pace of innovation to help customers transform organizations across every industry while upholding a trustworthy, human centered approach to deploying our products and services at scale. Our AI platform for business transformation connects people, processes, data, and devices to increase productivity and maximize business outcomes. For more information, visit: [www.servicenow.com](http://www.servicenow.com).