



2ND EDITION

Omnichannel Trends Report 2021



LIVEVOX





INTRODUCTION

New Decade, New Norms

In the [first edition of this report](#) released in January of 2020, we made predictions for a new era in customer service.

At that time we had no way of knowing just how new the era would be, let alone the changes facing the contact center industry.

As the coronavirus outbreak grew more widespread in March of 2020, **business disruption loomed universally** and left no industry unscathed. Customer behavior patterns morphed, and workforces did an about-face by augmenting workflows, updating their channel mix, and even foraying deeper into automation.

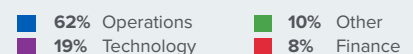
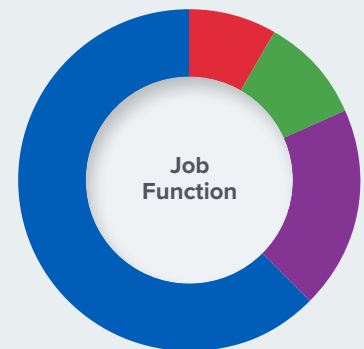
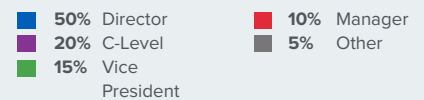
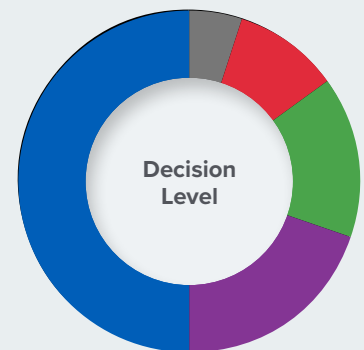
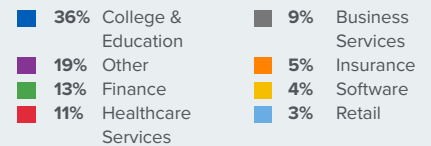
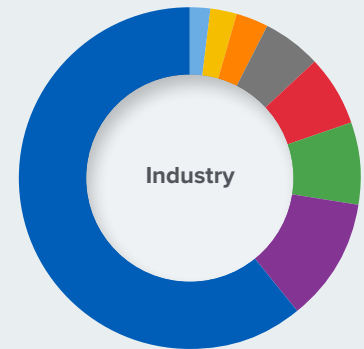
While some companies have succeeded in re-evaluating their contact center strategies, capabilities, and channel suites (live chat, voice channels, etc.) to support heavier inbound volumes and deliver quality customer experiences in a contactless world, **others still seem to be struggling** to adapt.

In our 2nd Edition of the Omnichannel Trends Report, **LiveVox collected insight from over 3,000 customer service professionals** across a range of industries from financial services to education to retail. For many, the abrupt shift to remote work has prompted an increase in messaging channel and workflow automation adoption, hastening the speed of digital transformation.

The **3,705 respondents** who participated in this research **lead companies that ideated and executed short-term crisis management plans** that included forward-looking continuity and reallocation measures.

The 2nd Edition Omnichannel Trends Report explores how organizations have internalized **the lessons of 2020 and are working toward a more resilient 2021** by increasing agent training and collaboration while getting smarter about the work needed to get work done.

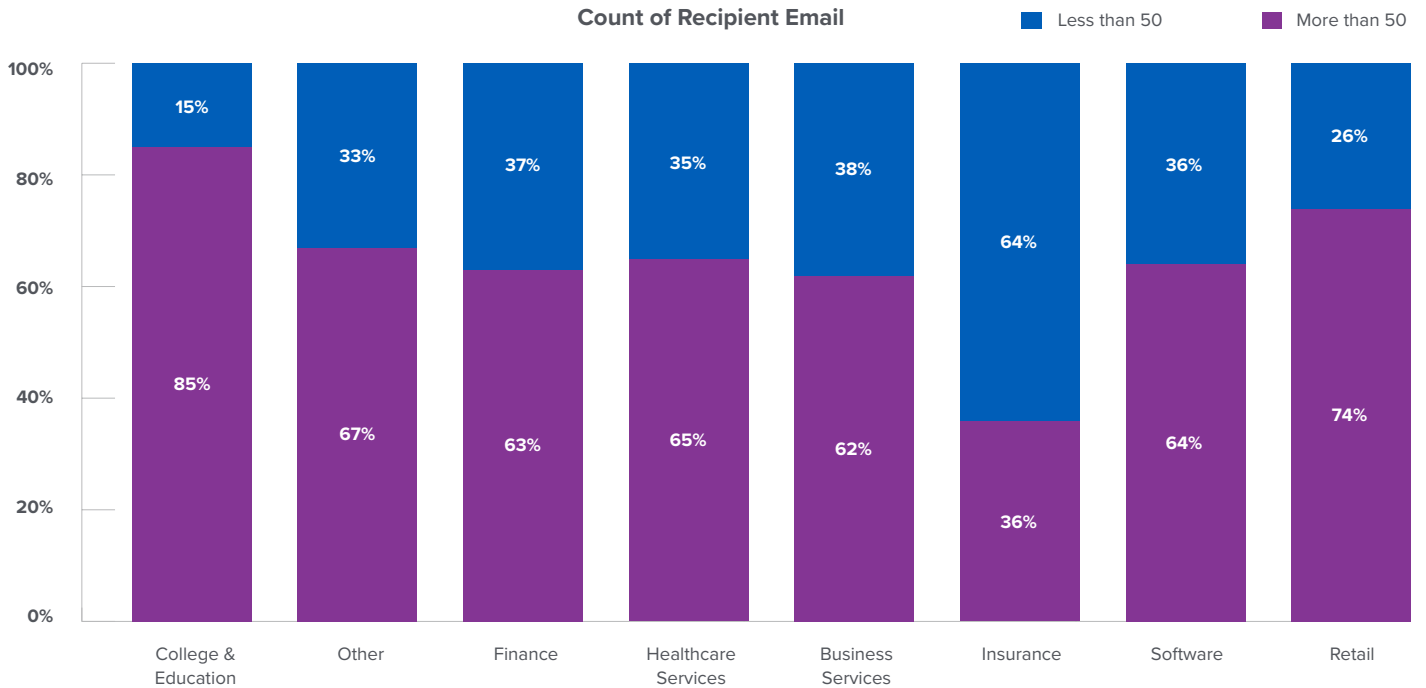
Demographics



> How many contact center agents does your company employ across your organization?



By Industry:



SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

- While many organizations restructured to meet digital demand, **customers continued to rely on voice for complex assistance.**
- **Across industries, there is a need for more advanced skills-based routing** of inbound queries and more comprehensive reporting, with messaging apps and AI sitting at the convergence of these two trends.
- **Faster adoption of digital channels and automation has necessitated workflow capabilities that make integration and segmentation faster** for agents.
- **All processes are not created equal.** Quality management systems are critical to remote workforce success.



A Rise in Call Complexity Means Voice Is Still Vital

Yes, digital activity has boomed since businesses shuttered in 2020, but customer issues have grown in complexity.

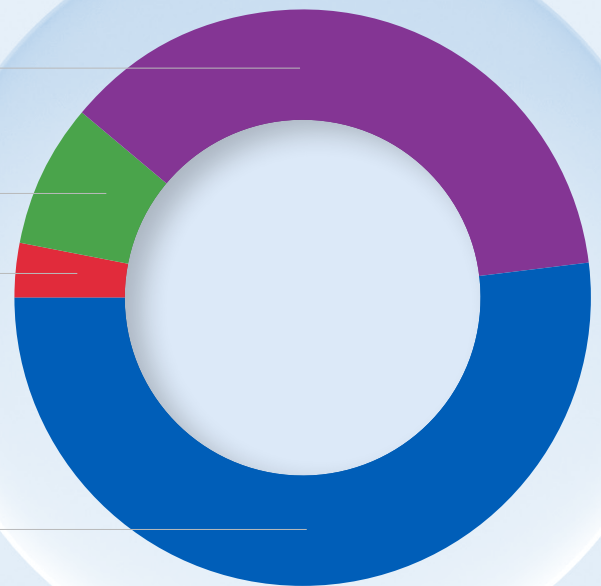
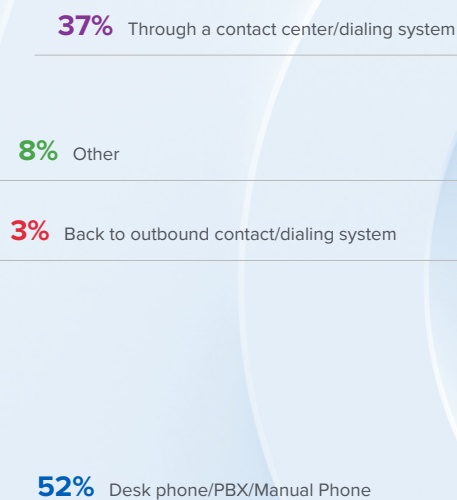
As customer behavior moved from physical interactions to digital transactions throughout 2020, contact centers fell under enormous pressure to continue delivering the same quality of in-person customer service with simplicity, ease, and speed in unfamiliar terrain. As customer demands soared in a newly remote environment, contact center managers found themselves short of capacity and unable to address the evolving needs and resource expenditure related to customer calls.

Many organizations pivoted and retooled by adopting digital channels into their service suites to mitigate volume influx.

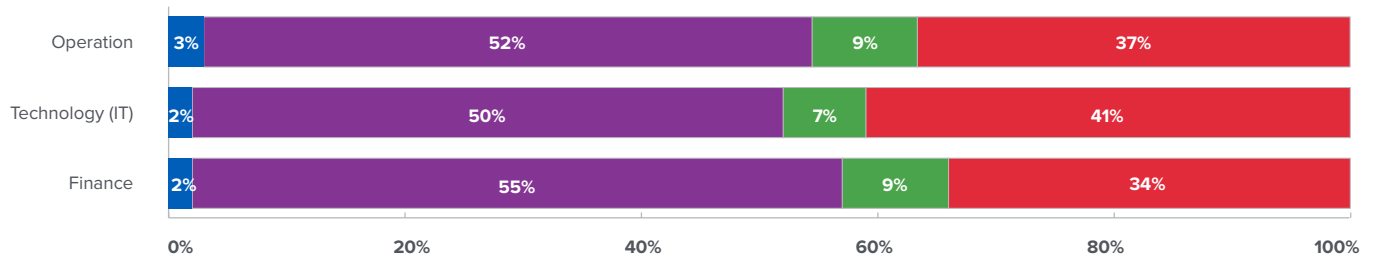
As the COVID-19 fallout intensified, and with digital channel usage at an all-time high, logistical delays, poor integrations, and lack of automation led to extremely high call volumes.

As we've outlined in [previous reports](#), system integration remains a persistent hang-up for many contact center operators. This has created new urgency around the need for service automation further upstream in the customer journey. With most organizations still relying on manual desk phones rather than integrated voice networks, there's a huge opportunity for voice and contact flow overhauls in 2021. **While agents are deflecting calls with digital channels, the complexity of conversations reinforces the importance of capabilities like conversational IVR, triggered SMS, and intelligent bots to reduce call queues.**

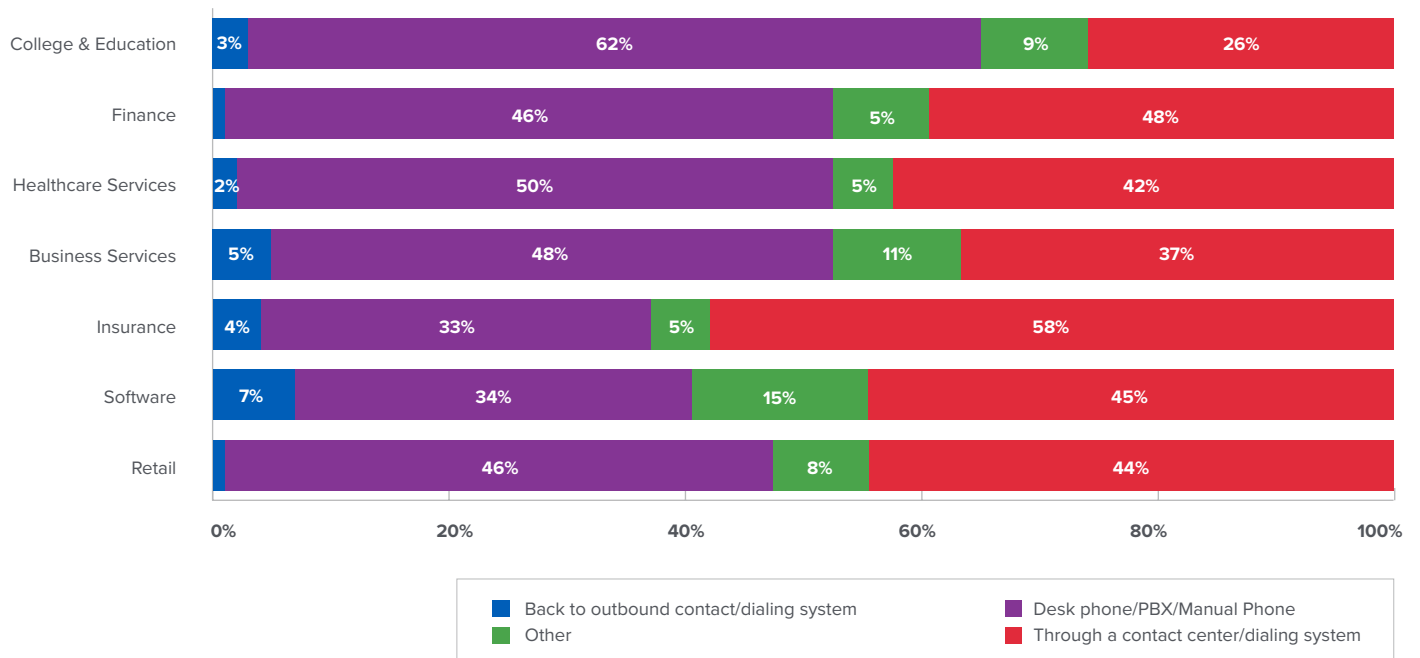
> How do you currently handle inbound calls, customer responses, and/or customer follow-up routing?



By Job Function:



By Industry:



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Over half** of our responders **still handle inbound interactions through a PBX or manual phone.**
- The **Higher Education sector has the highest percentage of PBX/manual phone use** compared to a call center system.
- Those in the **Insurance and Finance sectors have the highest percentage of use of contact center systems to handle inbound calls and customer follow-up.**
- While it's true most contact centers have restructured themselves as omnichannel entities in favor of digital channels of choice, **2020 showed that voice is still one of the most immediate forums for handling complex needs** irrespective of channels.
- The spike in call volume could indicate the following things: 1) contact center **growth**, 2) **customer preference** for picking up the phone when requests are more sophisticated, and 3) **mismanagement of digital channels** due to lack of integration.



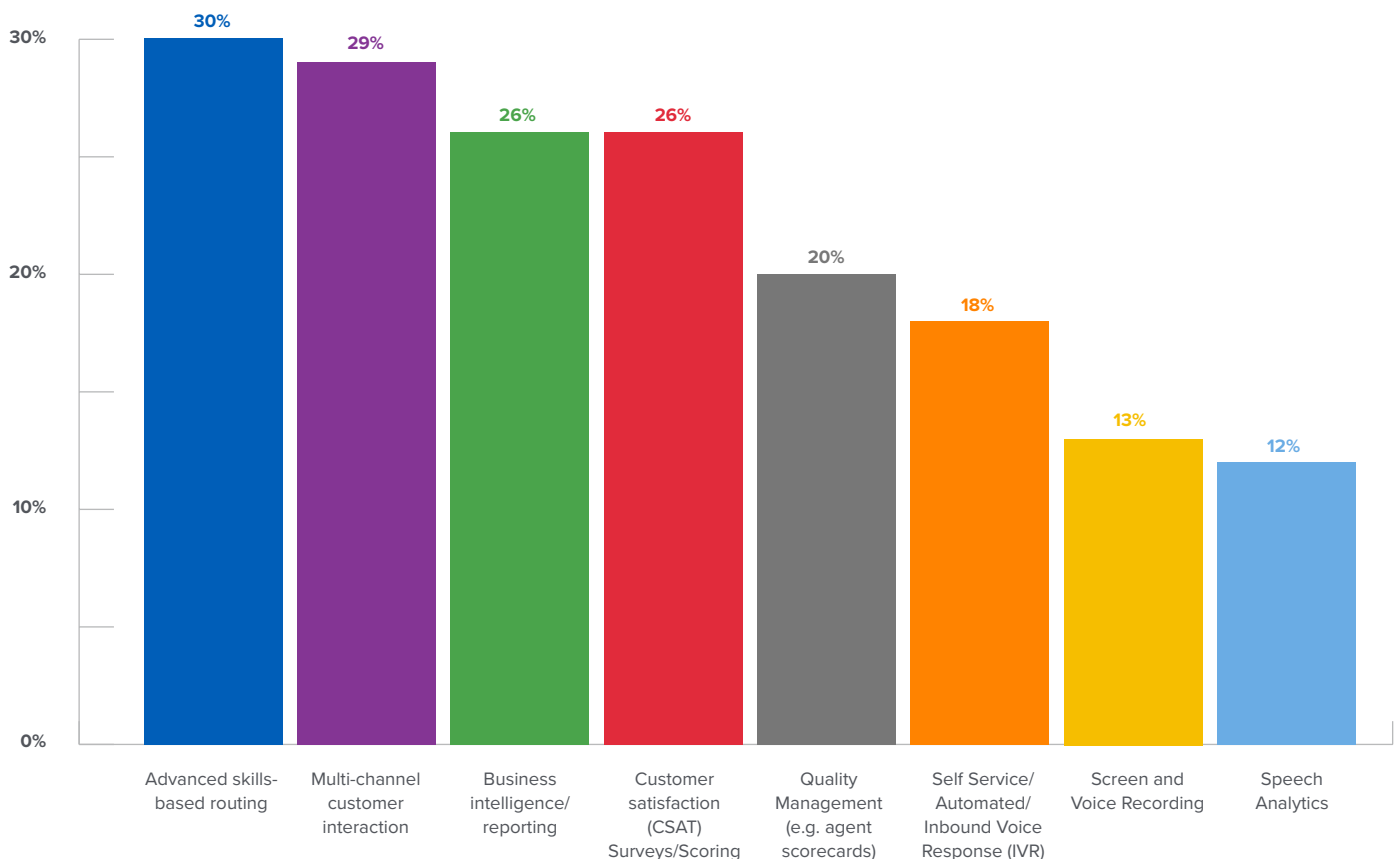
Productivity Pains Persist

As remote work rises, monitoring individual agent performance becomes paramount, making work more challenging for managers and impacting organizational productivity globally.

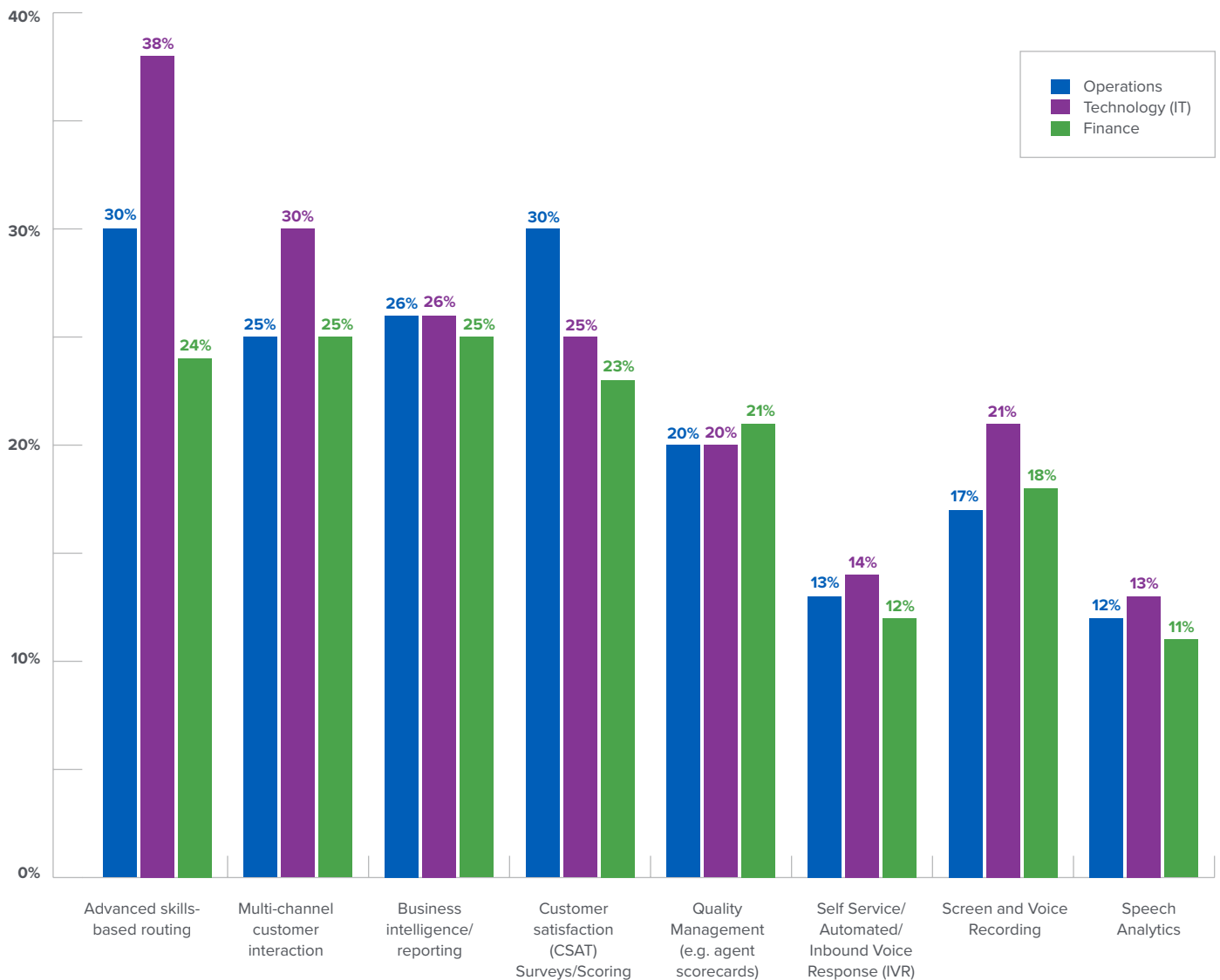
On the whole, 2021's Omnichannel Trends respondents cited difficulty with four key productivity and performance management areas: **skills-based routing**, **multichannel interactions**, **business intelligence**, and **CSAT**. A lack of system integration could be a contributing factor to the gap in performance tracking and optimization capability. Prioritizing contact center functions that connect disparate data for greater operational understanding requires a leadership commitment to unified processes and a platform capable of easily supporting this initiative.

As we noted in 2020, **42% of contact centers reported integration struggles** as barriers to seamless service and productivity patterns. Overdependence on legacy systems and a tendency to shoehorn in new capabilities including messaging, ticketing, and QM applications correlate with a lack of BI and organizational performance clarity.

> What contact center functions do you find most challenging to manage/leverage?



By Job Function:



KEY TAKEAWAYS



The Top 4 Rated Productivity Needs:

- Skills-based routing
- Multichannel customer interaction
- BI Reporting
- CSAT.



The most challenging aspects to manage were skills-based routing in multichannel environments, with those in **I.T. having a higher selection rate (38%)** of Skills-Based Routing compared to **Finance (24%)** and **Operations (30%)**. While **Operations** had a slightly higher selection rate of Multichannel Customer Interaction (**30%**) compared to **I.T. (25%)** and **Finance (23%)**.



AI-Based & Messaging Solutions Enhance Operations

Leveraging their vast data flows, **contact centers began using AI and machine learning tools on a larger scale in 2020**. In the first edition of this report we found that messaging and chatbots were on the rise as Q4 2019 drew to a close, with 36% of organizations looking to add them into their communication stacks. Those margins have widened by 18 points among this year's participant cohort.

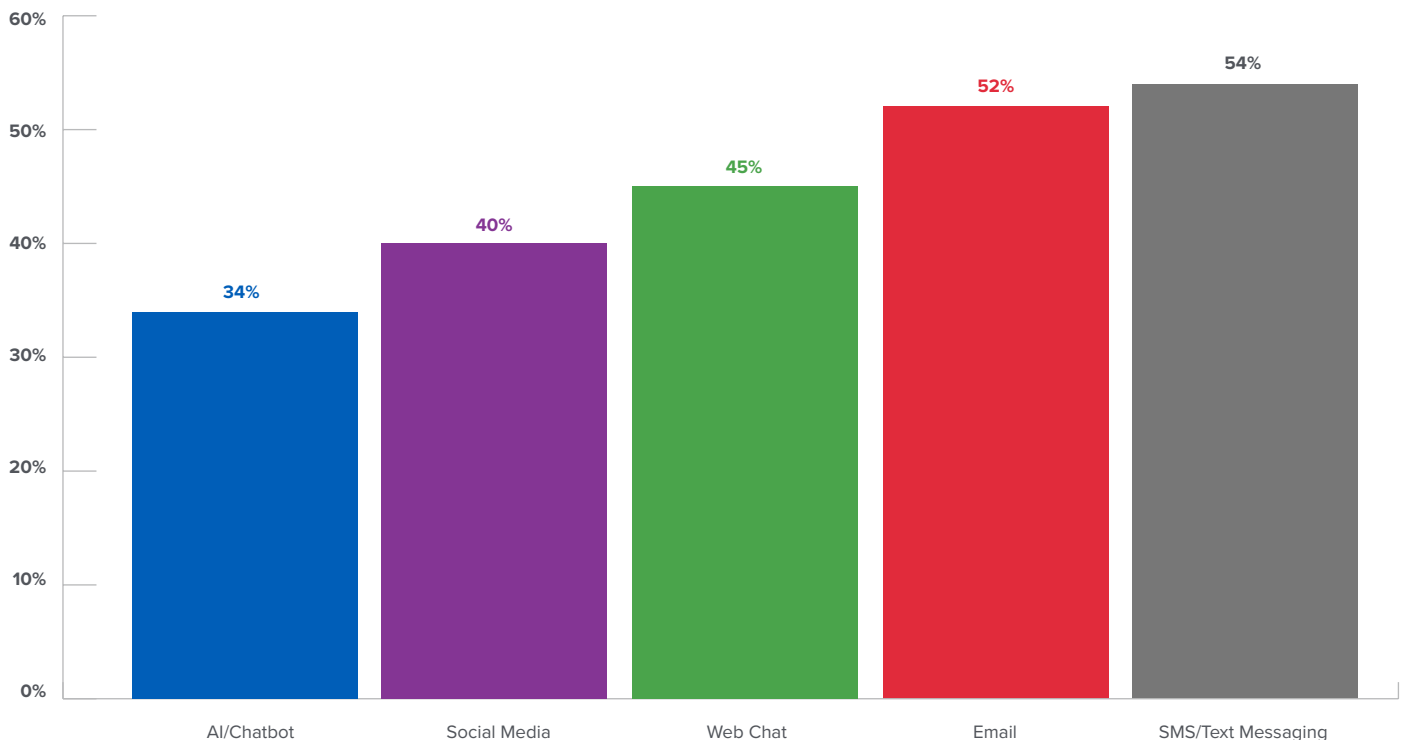
For the purposes of this report, we've defined AI as any tool concerned with getting computers to do tasks that would normally require human intelligence.

Embracing AI-enabled platforms as enhancers of essential functions like contact center workflows and channel suites is key for saving time, effort, and cost. Webchat, bots, and

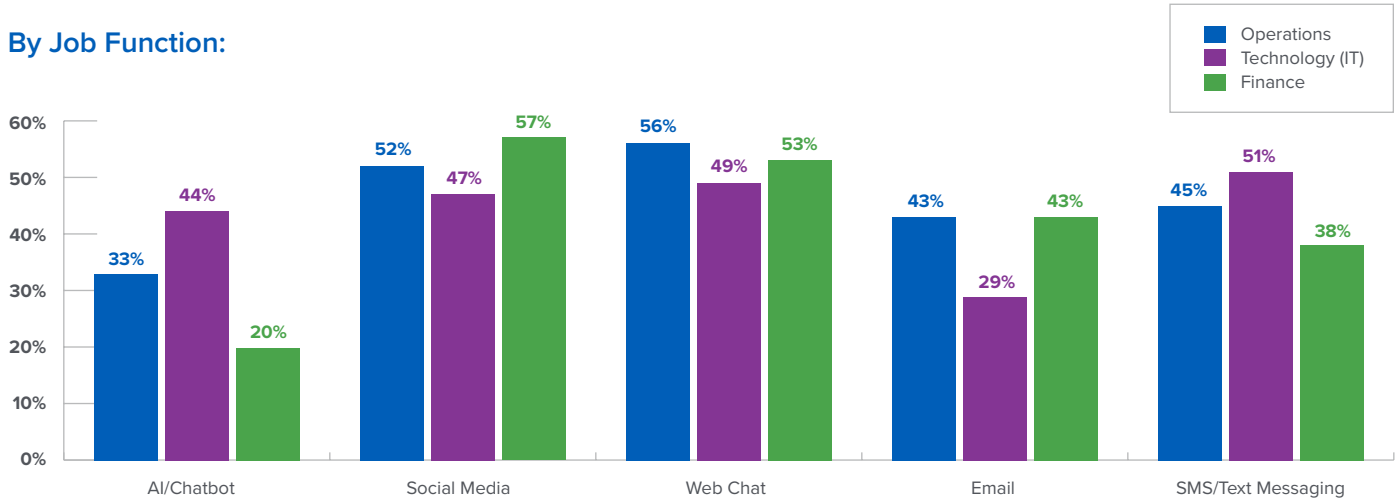
workflow management tools automate repetitive, lengthy tasks with greater accuracy leaving agents to focus on the increasingly complicated demands of customers.

However, we've noted [elsewhere](#) that **the emergence of AI-based solutions in the contact center is not a zero-sum game that will render human agents obsolete**. Instead, we see firms turning to these technologies in an effort to amplify human output. This is evident by the industries with the highest interest in AI adoption over the next 12 months—business services, finance, software, and insurance. These fields are all extremely data and metrics driven and require deep analysis and forecasting. AI delivers greater accuracy while saving these sectors time and eliminating unnecessary labor cost.

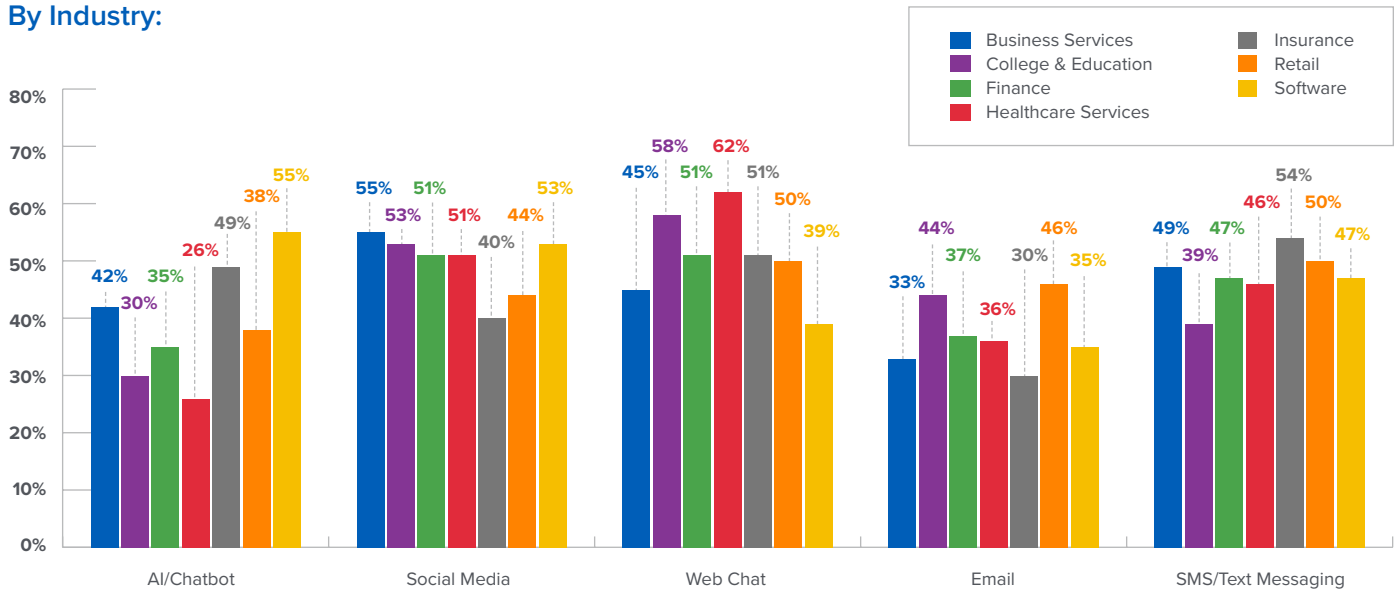
> What contact channels will you be looking to utilize in the next 1 to 2 years?



By Job Function:



By Industry:



KEY TAKEAWAYS

54% On average, across all industries SMS had the highest selection rate followed by Email and Webchat.

62% In particular, Healthcare and Higher Education had the highest selection rate for SMS as a future channel (62% and 58%, respectively).

55% Responders in the Software and Insurance sectors selected AI/ChatBot as a future channel at a higher rate than any other industry (**55% and 49%, respectively**).

48% This figure, mentioned earlier, indicates that large call centers are more likely to implement AI/Chabots than smaller organizations at 48% and 28%, respectively.

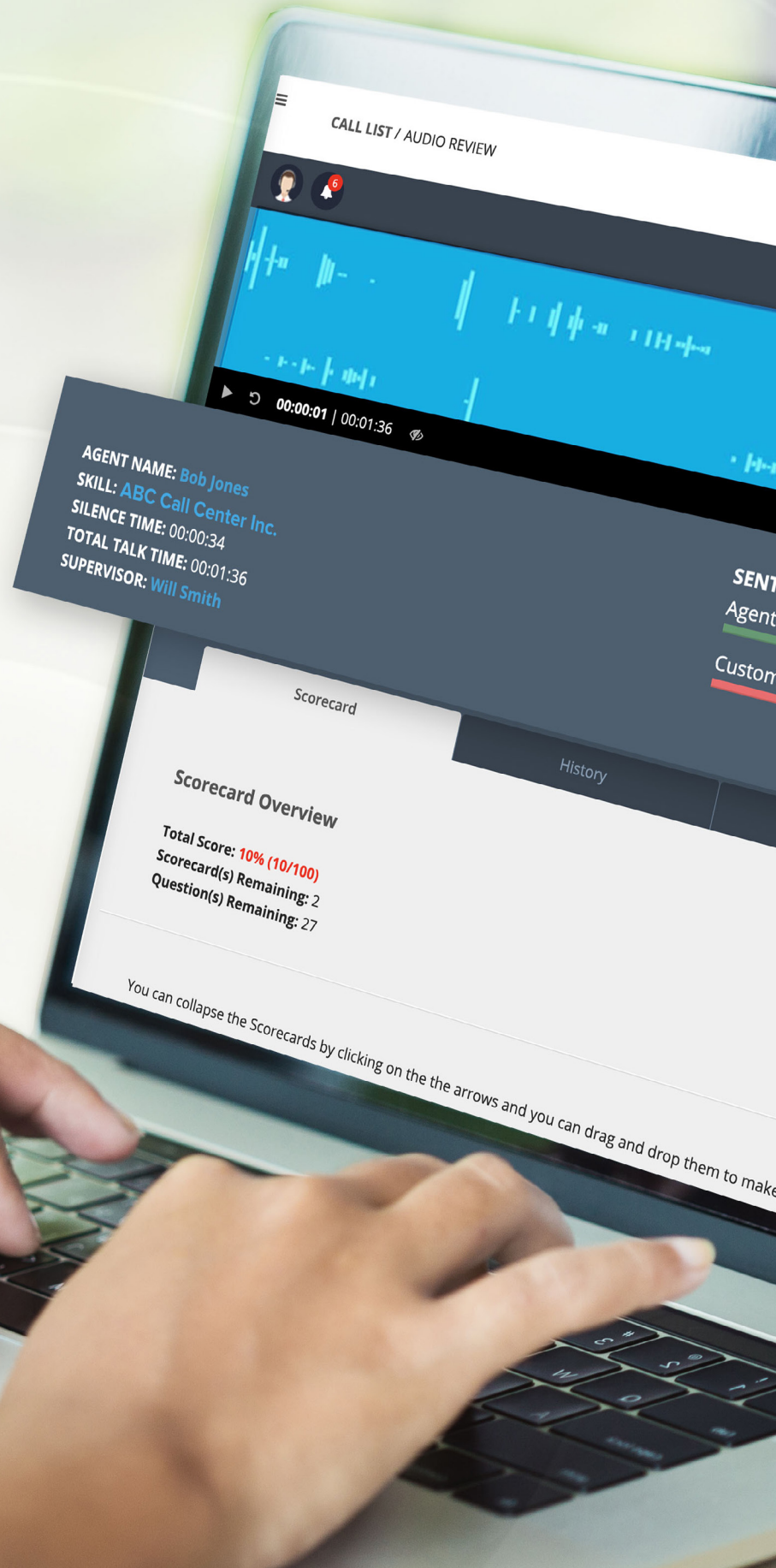


Quality Management is the CX Pressure Sensor

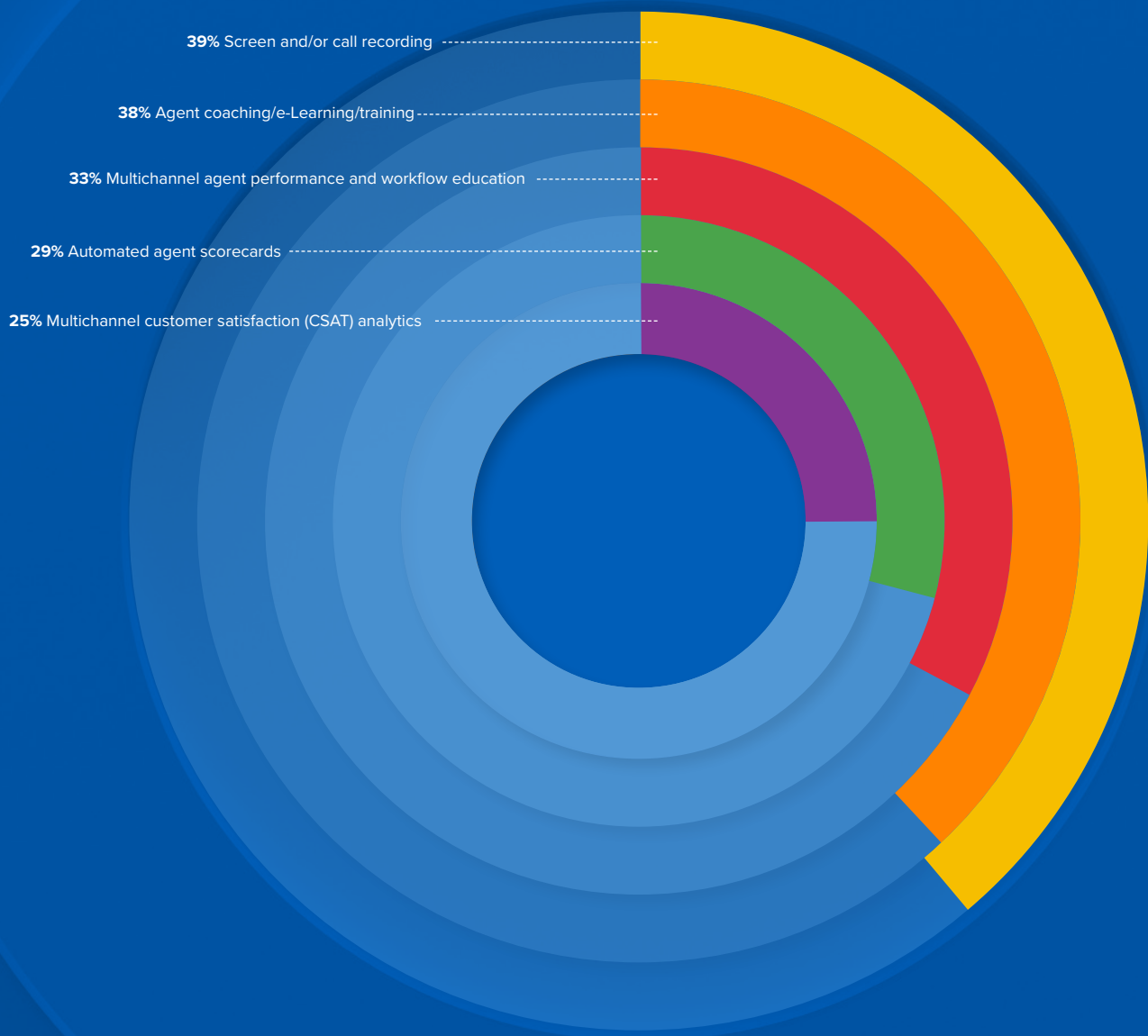
How often do you refine your quality management capabilities? If your answer is: "All the time! My contact center is constantly monitoring what's working and what isn't, and our agents adopt quality assurance best practices as fast as they're measured..." then you're as unique as a unicorn. If you wish that was your answer, or if you're still in the process of adapting workflows to include scalable quality management processes, then you're in good company—100% of our respondents are in the process of amplifying this area of their business in some capacity.

39% of 2021's Omnichannel Trends respondents are currently looking to up the ante on their QM processes and are in the market for screen and call recording tools specifically, investments surely driven by the need for greater oversight in distributed settings. Equally advantageous are eLearning and remote coaching capabilities which 38% of respondents are looking to adopt in the next 12 months.

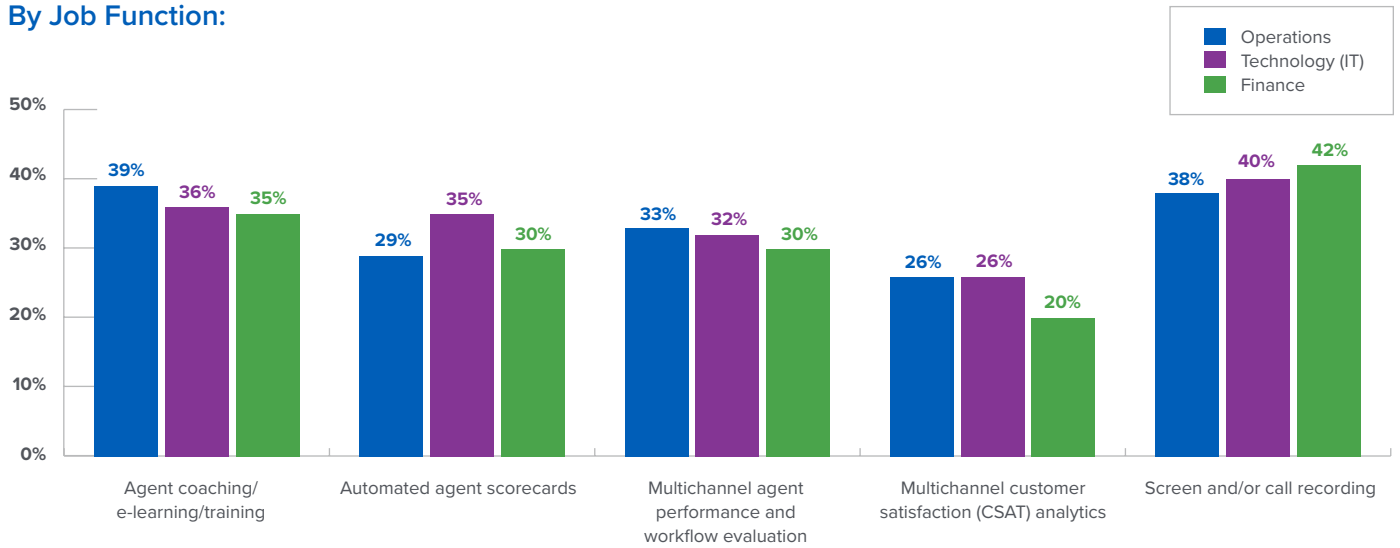
Easily accessible training information, onboarding processes that incorporate call calibration activities, and real-time screen sharing help to benchmark service standards and alleviate the quality and consistency issues remote work can create.



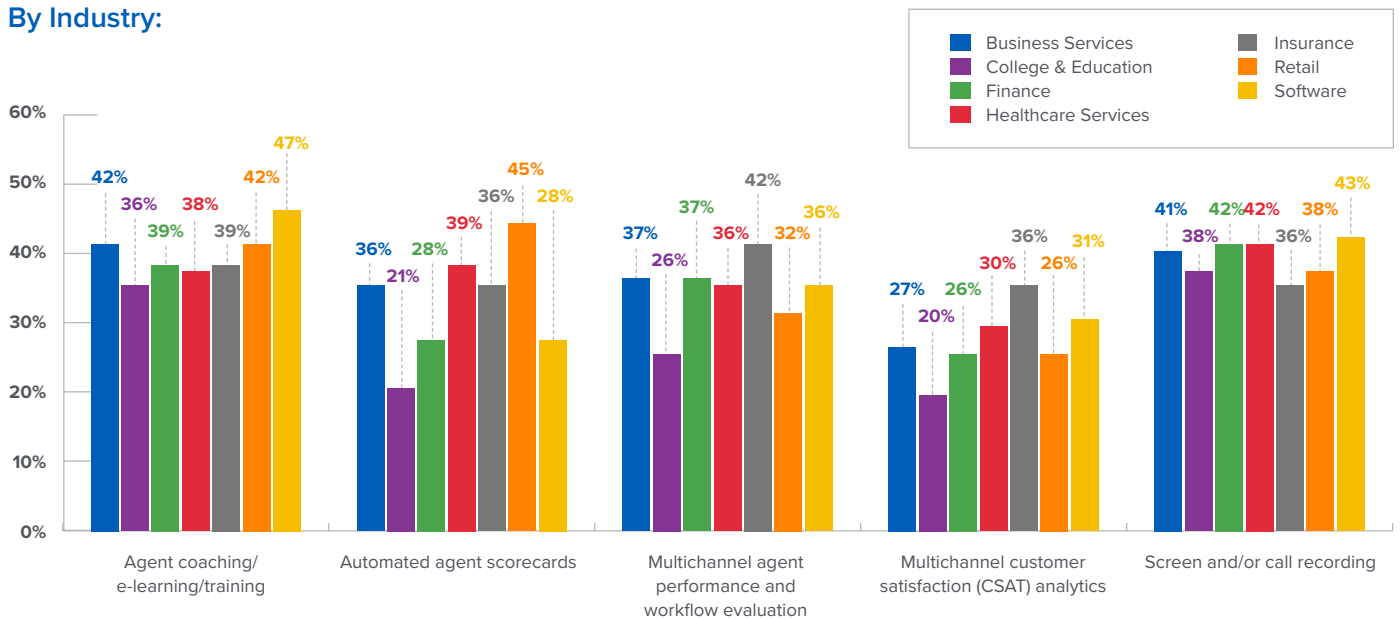
> What Quality Management capabilities will you be looking to utilize in the next 1 to 2 years?



By Job Function:



By Industry:



KEY TAKEAWAYS



Screen/Call Recording and Agent Coaching/Training were the top choices.

47%

Responders from the Software industry selected Agent Coaching/Training at a higher rate (47%).

45%

Responders from the Retail industry selected Automated Agent Scorecards at the highest rate (45%).

44%

Managers were more interested in utilizing Agent Coaching/Training (44% selected) while C-Level executives were more interested in leveraging Screen/Call Recording (43%).



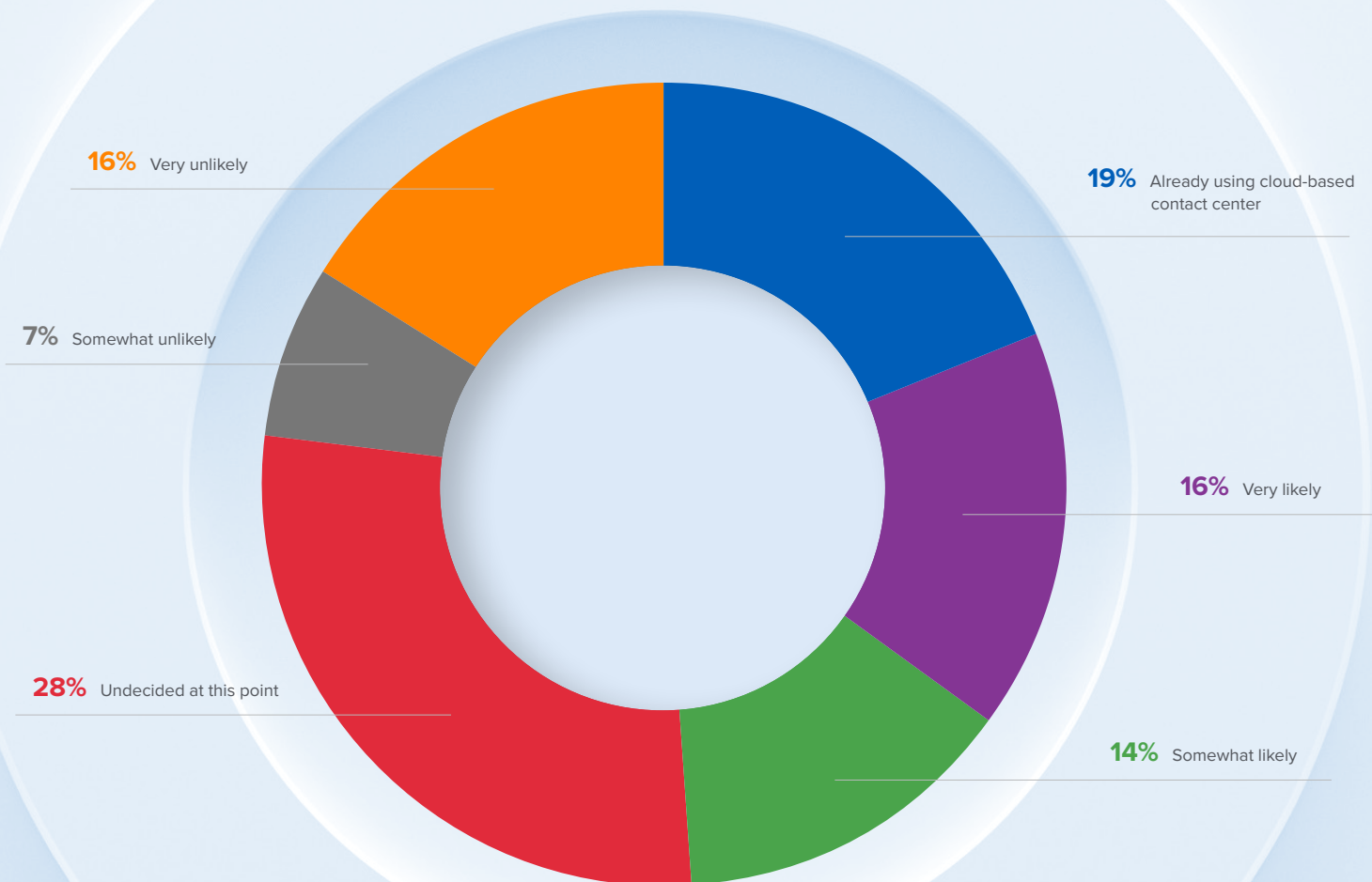
Cloud Migration Persists as an Essential Advantage

Surprisingly, **28% of contact center leaders surveyed reported being “undecided”** when it comes to migration of their contact center to the cloud. On the other hand, **Cloud spending increased 37% in just the first quarter of 2020** according to [PwC](#), and this uptick in investment is likely to continue.

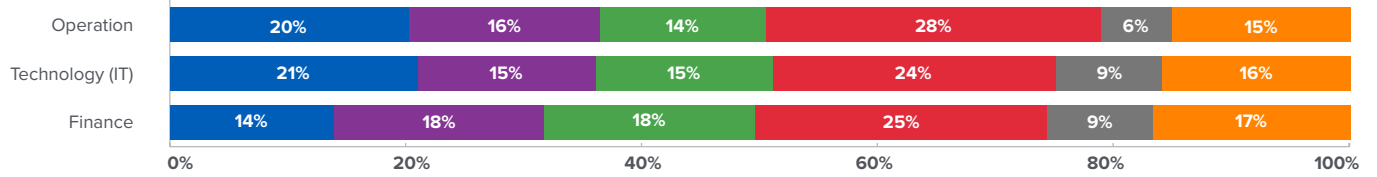
As the economy strained throughout 2020, businesses further transitioned their preferences to OpEx over CapEx expenditures due to cash flow constraints as well as faster benefits and implementation.

Gaining insight and access to the vast amounts of data available via customer interactions is key to gaining control over the customer journey and bigger profit margins. There is no better way to do that than unifying data in one flexible, accessible place. Cloud innovation continues to be the most effective way to achieve this and will no doubt continue to grow in adoption.

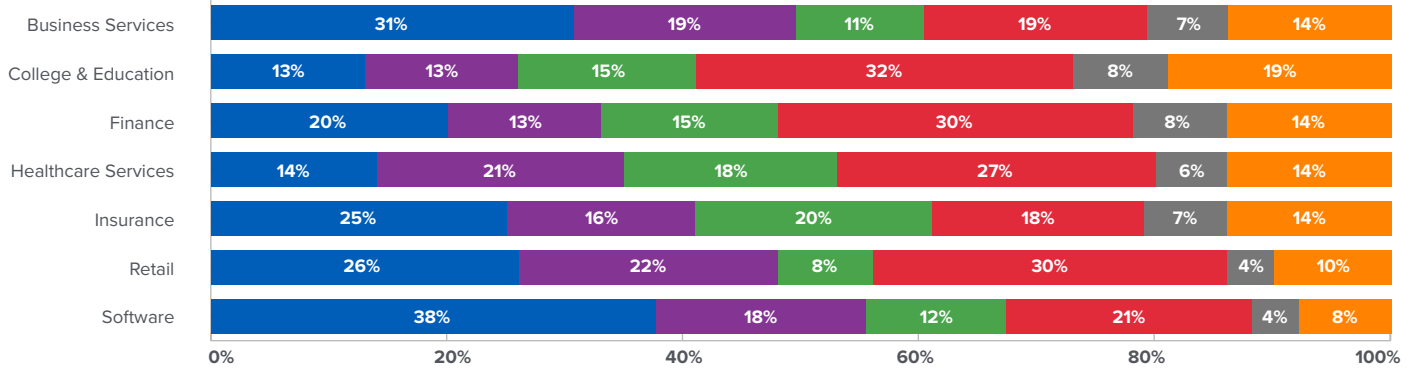
> How likely is your company to move to a cloud-based contact center solution in the next 2 years?



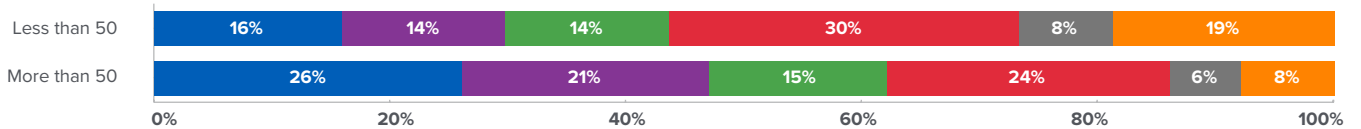
By Job Function:



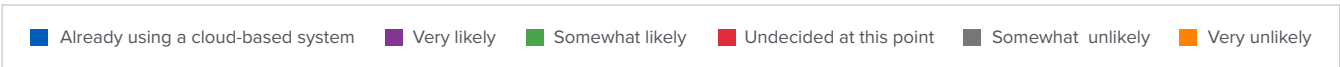
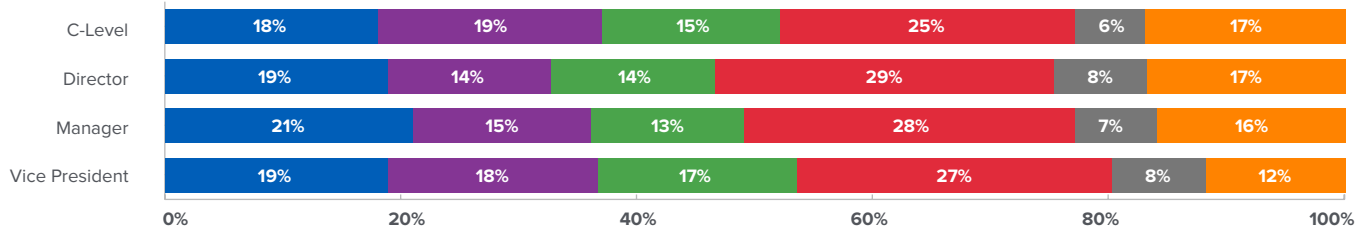
By Industry:



By Agent Size:



By Decision Level:



KEY TAKEAWAYS

20%

Only 20% of responders are **already using a cloud** based system.

38%

Responders in the **Software and Business Services** sectors were the **highest % that currently use cloud-based platforms** (38% and 31%, respectively).

13%

Responders in **Education and Healthcare** were the **lowest % that currently use cloud-based solutions** (13% and 14%, respectively). However, Healthcare had the highest rate saying they are very interested or slightly interested in moving to the cloud (39% of responders).



The Road to Resilience in 2021

If 2020 taught us anything, it's that the best practices of today may be tomorrow's bare minimum.

To transition from the widespread disruption that occurred in 2020 and bounce back stronger in 2021, Omnichannel Insights Report respondents are finding innovative new strategies and solutions focused on AI enhancements, better workflow integration, and voice optimizations to build out their CX playbooks.

Top 3 Omnichannel Contact Center Imperatives for 2021:



The agile cloud imperative: implement agile messaging capabilities to enable quick pivots and adapt communication plans.



The agent experience imperative: deliver digital customer experiences with a customer-first mindset by focusing on automation and internal workflow management that aids agents.



The integrated data imperative: unify information across important systems and invest in purpose-built automation and workflow solutions to avoid redundancy and streamline collaboration for frictionless customer experience.



About LiveVox

LiveVox is a next-generation contact center platform that powers more than 14 billion interactions a year. We seamlessly integrate omnichannel communications, CRM, AI, and WFO capabilities to deliver an exceptional agent and customer experience while reducing compliance risk. Our reliable, easy-to-use technology enables effective engagement strategies on communication channels of choice to drive contact center performance. Our battle-tested risk mitigation and security tools help clients maximize their potential in an ever-changing business environment. With 20 years of cloud experience and expertise, LiveVox's CCaaS 2.0 platform is at the forefront of cloud contact center innovation. Our more than 500 global employees are headquartered in San Francisco, with offices in Atlanta; Columbus; Denver; New York City; St. Louis; Medellin, Colombia; and Bangalore, India.

To learn more, visit www.livevox.com or call one of our specialists at (844) 207-6663.