

Liveops 2026 AI Maturity Benchmark for Customer Experience

Prepared using analyst survey findings
from Ryan Strategic Advisory.

The logo features the text "live ops" in a dark blue, lowercase, sans-serif font, centered within a white circle. This circle is surrounded by three concentric, semi-circular arcs in shades of blue and grey, all contained within a dark blue triangular shape that points downwards.

live
ops

Executive summary

Artificial intelligence continues to reshape customer experience, but enterprise leaders are sending a clear message: the future of CX isn't AI alone. It's a more deliberate combination of AI and human judgment.

To better understand how organizations are approaching AI in customer experience, Liveops in partnership with Ryan Strategic Advisory surveyed 815 enterprise executives with strategic decision-making authority over contact centers across global markets. The research examined three critical areas: current AI maturity in CX, preferred delivery models, and the barriers slowing AI transformation.

Four clear themes emerged in the research:

AI maturity remains uneven across the market

Organizations are progressing at very different speeds in applying AI to customer experience, with a clear gap between leaders and laggards.

Industry plays a major role in AI adoption

Sectors such as Gaming, FinTech, Digital Enterprise, Media, and E-Commerce are advancing more quickly than in industries like Public Sector, Energy and Utilities, Green Enterprise, and Pharmaceuticals.

Hybrid delivery is the dominant model for CX success

73% of respondents said a model combining AI and human judgment delivers the best customer experience outcomes today. Only 6% chose AI-only automation.

The barriers have shifted from capability to execution

The challenge is no longer whether AI works, but how to implement it effectively. Respondents identified change management, workforce readiness, and data security and compliance as top barriers.

73%

prefer a hybrid AI and human model for CX delivery

61%

are currently in the Walk or Run stages of AI maturity

#1

Change management and workforce readiness is the top-rated barrier

The future of CX isn't AI alone. It's AI and human judgment working together.

Why this research matters

AI has become one of the most discussed topics in customer experience, but the conversation has also become more grounded. Many organizations have moved beyond asking whether AI has a role to play.

Now they're asking more practical questions:

- How mature are we compared to the benchmark?
- Where should AI be applied first?
- What quick wins can fund broader transformation?
- Which barriers are most likely to slow progress?

“ Progress won't be defined by initial AI adoption alone, but by how effectively AI is operationalized within a practical operation model. ”

Liliana Lopez-Sandoval
Head of Technology and Innovation at Liveops

Rather than focusing on hype, this research shows how enterprise leaders currently view AI maturity, CX delivery design, and transformation barriers in operational terms. The findings offer a practical benchmark for decision-makers responsible for CX strategy, digital transformation, contact center operations, and service delivery.

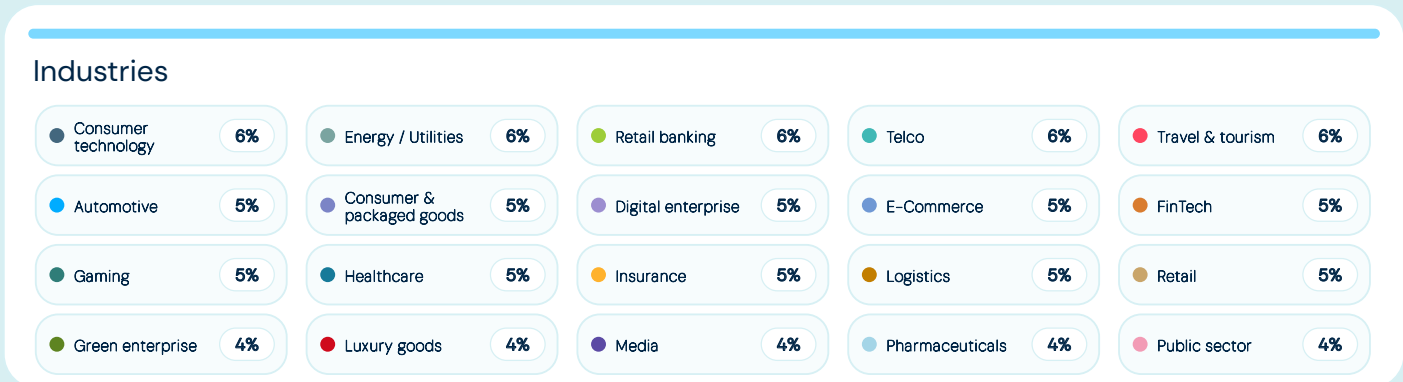
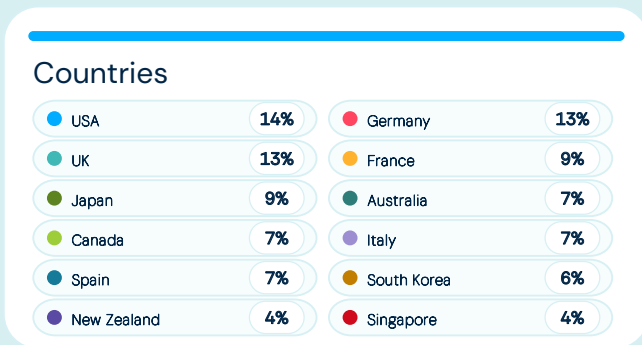
This report reflects the views of 815 enterprise executives with strategic decision-making authority over contact centers. Respondents represented a broad cross-section of global markets, industries, and company sizes. The country mix included the USA, UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Australia, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and New Zealand.

Revenue ranged from \$10 million to more than \$5 billion USD. The industry mix included automotive, telco, retail banking, insurance, travel and tourism, digital enterprise, healthcare, gaming, green enterprise, logistics, luxury goods, media, pharmaceuticals, public sector, retail, e-commerce, consumer technology, energy and utilities, FinTech, and consumer packaged goods.

No one sector or revenue band dominated the research, giving the findings broad relevance for enterprise leaders benchmarking their customer experience strategies.

Respondent Mix

815 executive respondents across countries, industries, and revenue bands



Understanding the AI maturity model

Crawl, Walk, Run, and Fly stages of AI maturity in CX

For the survey, we use the Liveops AI Maturity Assessment framework (Crawl, Walk, Run, and Fly) which defines how AI progresses from insight generation to real-time optimization in CX operations. The 815 CX professionals surveyed were benchmarked against this model.

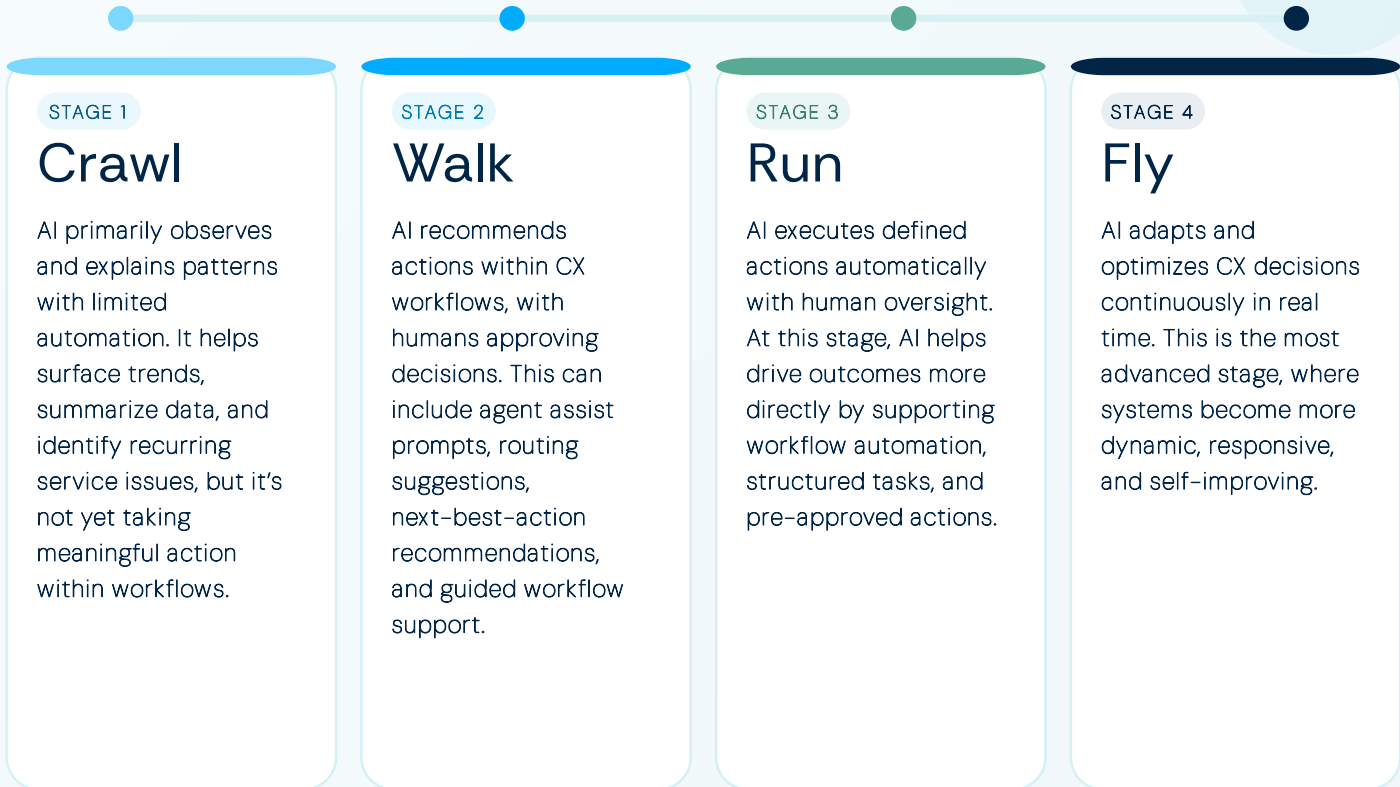
AI Maturity is not a destination. It's a continuous discipline of embedding intelligence within a practical framework to drive better, faster, and more consistent business outcomes.

Liliana Lopez-Sandoval
Head of Technology and Innovation at Liveops

Benchmark Your AI Maturity

Liveops AI Maturity Assessment framework

Crawl, Walk, Run, and Fly stages of AI maturity in CX



AI in CX is moving forward, but maturity is still concentrated in early stages

Although enterprise AI maturity is progressing, most have not reached full maturity, and there are prominent variations by geography as well as industry.

Across the cross-market sample, respondents self-identified their organizations into the following stages of AI maturity in customer experience:

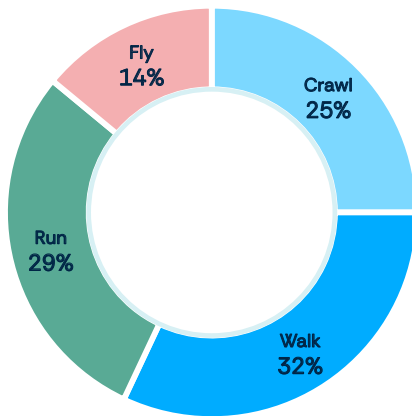
- 25% Crawl
- 32% Walk
- 29% Run
- 14% Fly

This distribution tells an important story. Most organizations have moved beyond the earliest stage of passive AI observation, but relatively few believe they have reached true real-time optimization.

The largest concentration sits in the Walk and Run stages, showing that many enterprises are actively embedding AI into workflows or automating defined actions with human oversight. At the same time, the comparatively small Fly segment reinforces that full maturity remains out of reach for most organizations today.

AI maturity stage distribution

Which best describes your organization's current stage of AI maturity in customer experience?



It was clear from this research that enterprise CX leaders believe that the best way to deliver customer experience is through a combination of AI-powered tools and humans. This was consistent across all demand markets surveyed.

Peter Ryan
President and Principal Analyst at Ryan Strategic Advisory

14%

Say they have reached the Fly stage

61%

Are in Walk or Run stages

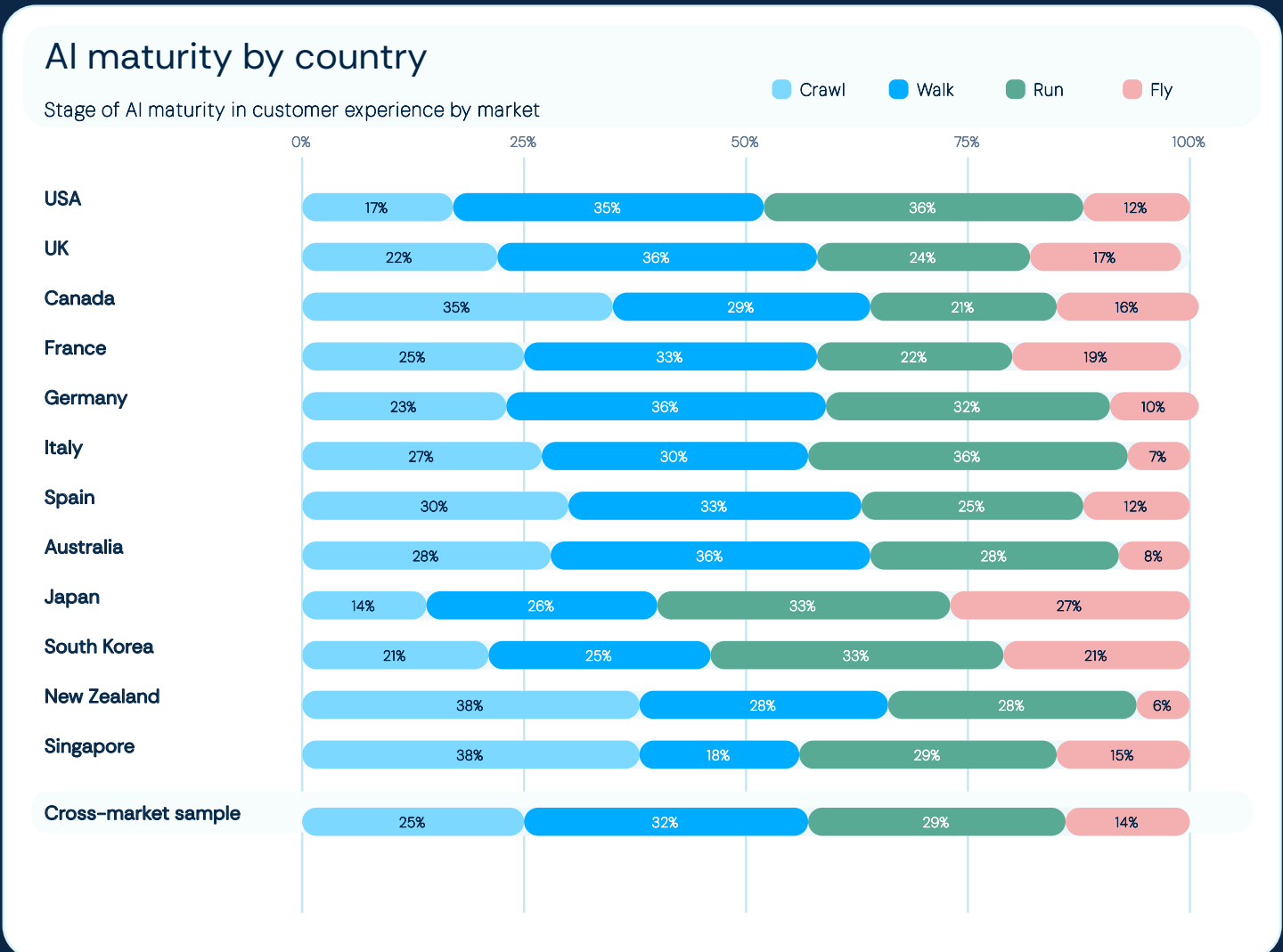
AI maturity in CX varies by country

The path from Crawl to Fly looks different across demand markets

The survey also shows that AI maturity is not progressing at the same pace across countries. While the overall benchmark points to a market clustered in the Walk and Run stages, the country-level breakout reveals meaningful differences in where organizations are gaining traction and where adoption appears more measured.

Markets such as Japan and South Korea show stronger concentrations in more advanced stages of maturity, suggesting greater movement into execution and optimization. Meanwhile, countries including Canada, Spain, New Zealand, and Singapore show higher concentrations in the Walk stage, indicating momentum but also a more deliberate pace of adoption.

These differences matter because they suggest AI maturity is shaped not only by organizational ambition, but by local market conditions, investment priorities, risk tolerance, and operational readiness. The benchmark is global, but the path forward is not one-size-fits-all.



AI maturity in CX varies sharply by industry

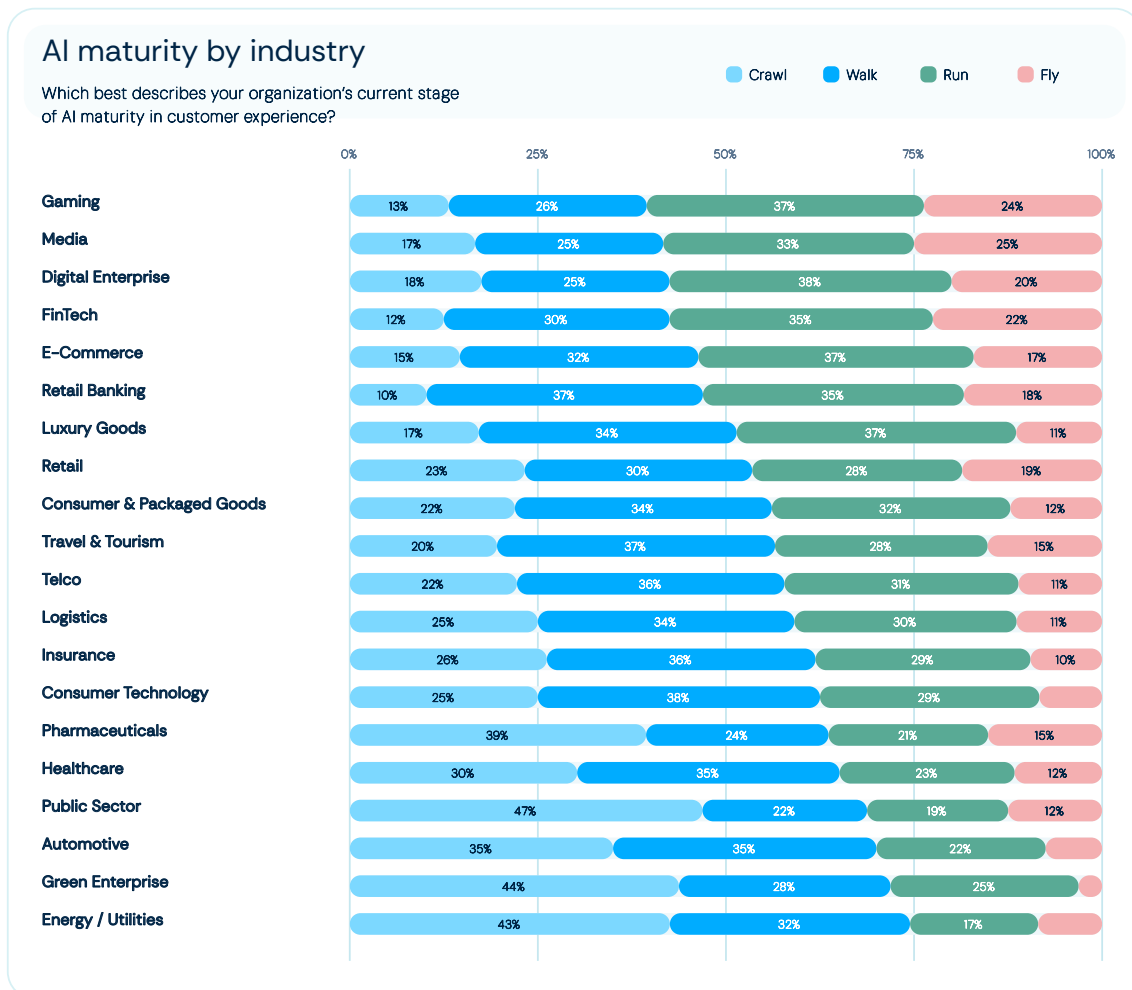
When respondents were asked, “Which best describes your organization’s current stage of AI maturity in customer experience?”, the answers showed meaningful differences from one industry to the next.

Some sectors are moving more aggressively into execution and optimization, while others remain more concentrated in earlier stages of adoption.

Several industries are emerging as clear leaders in AI maturity, with a majority of organizations operating in more advanced stages (Run + Fly). Gaming leads at 61%, followed by FinTech, Digital Enterprise, and Media at 58%, E-Commerce (54%) and Retail Banking (53%).

Other sectors remain much more heavily concentrated in Crawl and Walk, indicating that AI is still being used more for observation, analysis, or guided decision support. Public sector has the highest Crawl concentration at 47%, followed by green enterprise at 44%, energy and utilities at 43%, and pharmaceuticals at 39%.

For many industries, Walk remains the key middle stage. Consumer technology leads Walk at 38%, while retail banking and travel and tourism each sit at 37%. This suggests many sectors are actively embedding AI into workflows while still keeping human review in place.



Hybrid AI and human models are the clear preference

Enterprise leaders overwhelmingly favor a combined delivery model for better CX outcomes

If one finding deserves to be the headline of the report, it's this: enterprise leaders believe hybrid AI and human models deliver the strongest CX outcomes today.

Across the cross-market sample, 73% selected a hybrid model combining AI and human judgment, compared with 21% who selected human-only support and just 6% who selected AI-only automation.

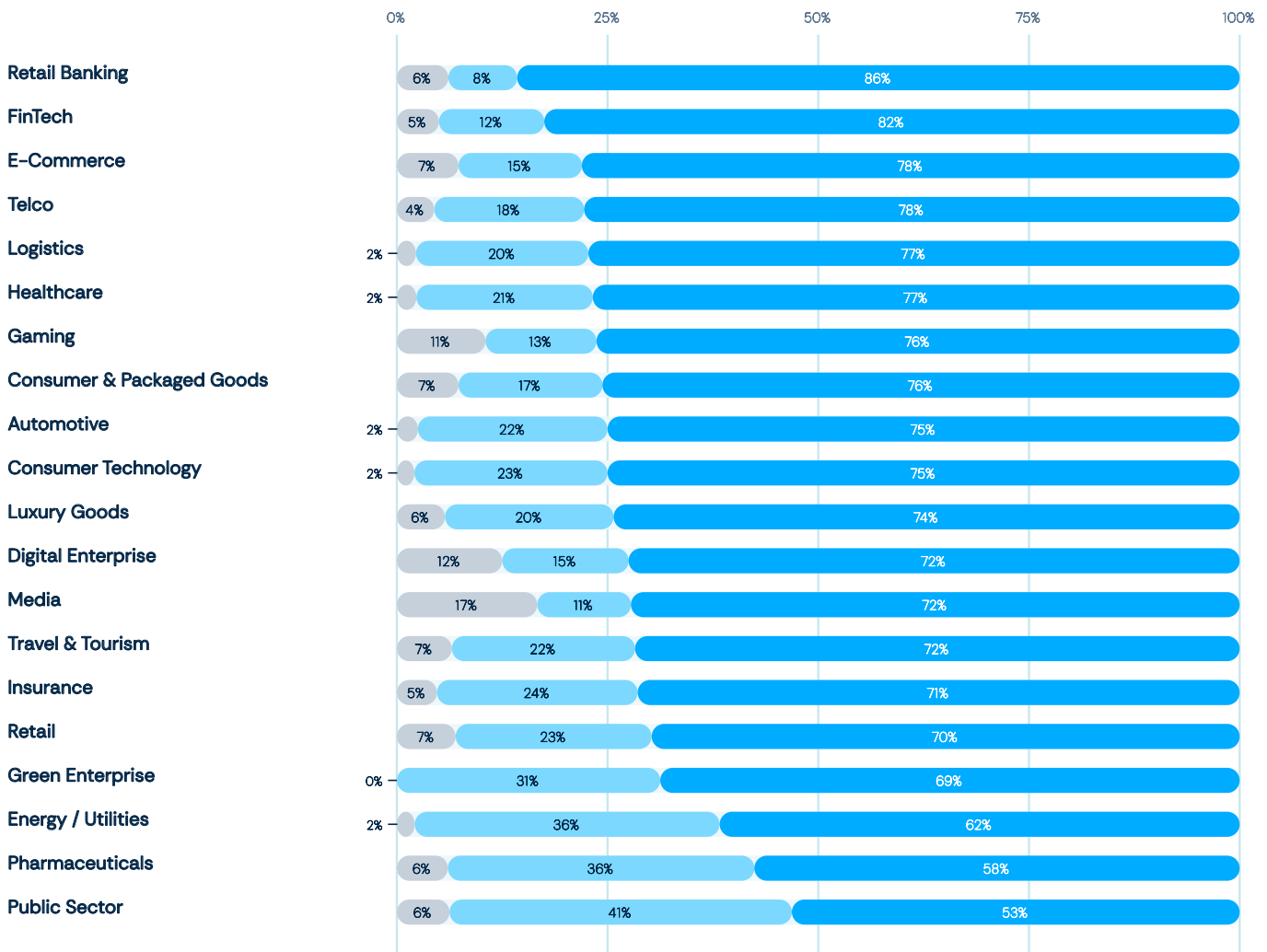
That margin is significant. It shows that while organizations increasingly value AI, they're not looking to remove people from customer experience altogether. Instead, they see the strongest outcomes coming from a model where AI improves speed, insight, consistency, and efficiency, while humans provide context, judgment, empathy, and exception handling.

The more revealing difference is what fills the remaining share outside hybrid. Digital and high-volume sectors such as Retail Banking, FinTech, E-Commerce, and Telco show lower reliance on human-only support and slightly greater openness to AI-only automation. More complex or regulated sectors such as Public Sector, Pharmaceuticals, Energy / Utilities, Healthcare, and Insurance show higher human-only preference, not because they reject AI, but because they require human-in-the-loop models where trust, compliance, nuance, and exception handling matter most.

Preferred CX delivery model by industry

Which delivery model do you believe delivers the strongest customer experience outcomes today?

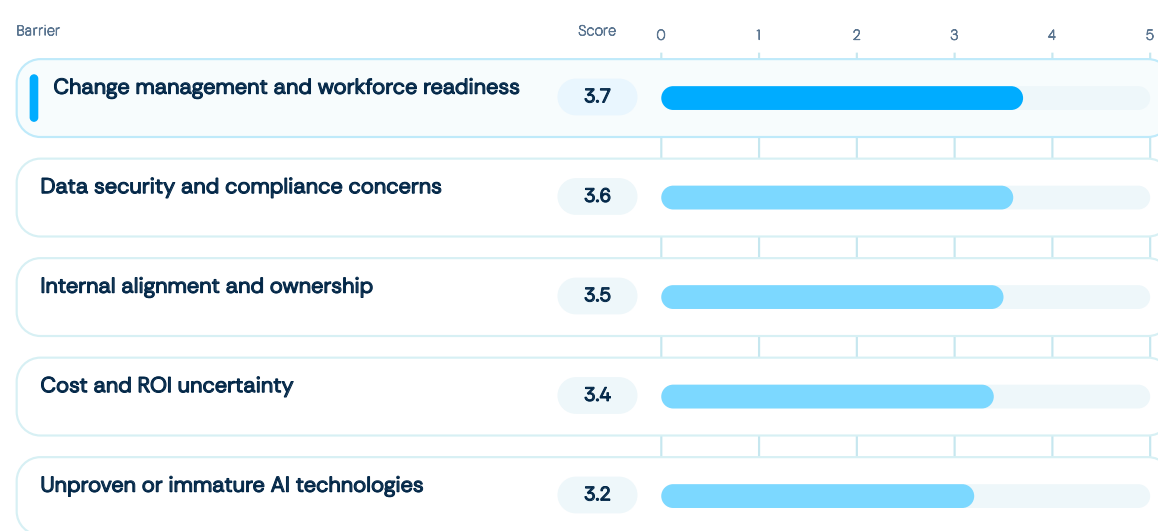
AI-only Human-only Hybrid



Cross-market barrier ranking

To what extent do the following factors slow down or complicate customer experience transformation initiatives at your organization?

Scale: 1 = Not a slowing or complicating factor, 5 = Highly slowing or complicating factor



Transformation is being slowed more by execution than by AI itself

Operational change, workforce adaptation, and governance now outweigh concerns about AI immaturity

Another standout finding from the research is that the biggest barriers to CX transformation are now more operational than theoretical.

When asked which factors most slow down or complicate CX transformation initiatives on a scale of 1 to 5 with five being the most difficult, respondents gave the highest scores to change management and workforce readiness at 3.7 out of 5, followed by data security and compliance concerns at 3.6 out of 5, internal alignment and ownership at 3.5 out of 5, cost and ROI uncertainty at 3.4 out of 5, and unproven or immature AI technologies at 3.2 out of 5.

This matters because it shows enterprise concerns are evolving. AI immaturity still matters, but it's no longer the top issue. Leaders are now more focused on whether their organizations, teams, governance structures, and operating models are ready to absorb transformation successfully.



The question is no longer whether AI matters. It's how organizations are ready to operationalize it across their technology suites.

Peter Ryan
President and Principal Analyst at Ryan Strategic Advisory

What leaders should do next

How to move toward higher AI maturity without losing control, trust, or operational discipline

The survey findings point to a more grounded and practical view of AI in customer experience. Enterprises want progress, but they want it with control. They want innovation, but they also want accountability. They want AI to improve CX, but not at the expense of trust, quality, or operational resilience.

That has important implications for leaders deciding what to do next.

Hybrid should be treated as a strategic operating model, not a transition phase.

Enterprise leaders are not prioritizing AI-only models as the strongest path to CX outcomes. Instead, they see the greatest value in combining AI with human judgment, oversight, and exception handling to ensure both efficiency and quality at scale.

AI maturity must be built intentionally, not accumulated through tools.

Organizations don't progress to Fly by deploying more technology. Advancements happen when AI is applied to high-value use cases, human-in-the-loop decision points are clearly defined, and expanding automation only once governance, data quality, and workflow discipline are in place.

Workforce readiness is the real constraint to AI transformation.

The most significant barrier identified in this research was not the AI technology itself. It was the organization's ability to prepare people, align teams, and operationalize change. Training, change management, cross-functional ownership, and quality controls are as critical as the AI itself.

Best practices for moving toward Fly

- Start with narrow, high-impact use cases
- Keep humans in the loop where judgment, compliance, or exception handling matter most
- Build governance and QA into the model early
- Align operations, technology, and leadership around clear ownership
- Measure outcomes, not just automation volume
- Expand only when the operating model is ready to support it

At Liveops, we see the most sustained progress happens when organizations approach AI maturity as an operating model challenge, not just a technology initiative. The goal is not to chase automation for its own sake. The goal is to orchestrate AI, human expertise, and workflow design in ways that improve speed, consistency, and customer outcomes without increasing risk.

For leaders shaping the future of CX, the takeaway is clear: success will not come from adopting AI faster than everyone else. It will come from integrating AI into a governed operating model that brings together human expertise, data, and automation to consistently deliver better outcomes.



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Liliana Lopez-Sandoval
Head of Technology and Innovation at Liveops

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