

CCMA launch results of study on Consumer Perceptions of Customer Service in Ireland and their views on use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

[CCMA Ireland](#) is a not-for-profit industry association that champions Customer Experience (CX) excellence and advocates for the customer service industry in Ireland. The industry employs over 60,000 professionals. Our members include many indigenous and international organisations in financial services, healthcare, telecoms, outsourcing and entertainment who provide customer service support from their operations in Ireland. Our mission is to promote collaboration, shared learning and best practice for customer service organisations.

Overview of Study

CCMA commissioned [W5](#) to undertake a study to capture Irish consumers' perceptions of customer service in Ireland with a particular focus on customer service support channels and consumer preferences. ***The research also sought to understand consumers views on the use of AI in providing customer service support.*** Finally, respondents were also asked for their views on a career in customer services.

This 2026 research builds on a similar survey conducted in 2024. This year's survey was expanded based on feedback from CCMA members, gathered through a conversational survey conducted in March/ April 2026.

A nationally representative sample of 1,012 respondents completed the survey between April 21st and May 11th, 2026.

Key Findings

1. Customer Service Channels & Ratings

- Customer service in Ireland is positively regarded with **68% of customers rating a recent customer service interaction as good/very good.**
- Customer service ratings improved across most communication channels in 2026.
 - **In-person** remains the strongest-performing customer service channel at **75% (+4pp)**.
 - With notable improvements across **Email**: up 9ppt to **61%**,
 - **Phone**: up 7ppt to 59% and
 - **WhatsApp/Messenger**: up 5ppt to **60%**
- Customers continue to value friendly, helpful and professional staff interactions.
- To access customer service support **Phone (91%)** and **email (89%)** remain the most widely used customer service channels, highlighting that customers still rely heavily on direct, familiar communication methods.
- **Live chat with agents (70%)** usage has achieved mainstream adoption and appears to bridge the gap between convenience and human support.

- There is a **clear shift towards self-service with customers increasingly comfortable self-serving for simple, transactional tasks such as payments, appointments, delivery tracking and quotes.** This reflects growing demand for convenience, speed and digital control.
- **Customers prefer human support for complex or sensitive issues such as complaints and billing issues,** highlighting the importance of empathy, reassurance and problem resolution on these journeys
- **This dual track is evident in digital chat channels' mixed results:** Live agent chat performed reasonably well (54%) AI phone agents scored low (29%)

2. Consumer Views on Artificial Intelligence (AI) Usage in Customer Service Support

- AI acceptance is conditional, **customers accept AI for simple, low-risk, transactional & repetitive tasks.**
- However as interaction stakes rise- such as **on more complex and impactful interactions (e.g. complaints, fraud), respondents quickly see less role for AI, preferring the human touch** instead.
- Verbatim feedback highlights strong frustration **where AI blocks access to humans, gives generic answers, fails to understand nuance, or creates longer resolution journeys.**
- Customers strongly believe that AI use in customer service should be transparent and clearly disclosed, => **77% want to be told when AI is being used.**
- **Over half (57%) agree that it is currently clear when they are interacting with an AI agent.**
- Customers repeatedly describe **AI as: Impersonal/ robotic / cold / frustrating and lacking empathy or understanding.**
- The biggest current frustration for customers is **AI's inability to deal with anything outside straightforward requests.**

3. Customer Pain Points

- Customers express frustrations with long wait times, difficulty reaching a real person, automation/ chatbots, inconsistent service quality, and poor communication/ follow up.
- Respondents describe service as becoming more impersonal and harder to navigate.
- Empathy, reassurance and problem-solving remain key expectations in customer service journeys.

4. Vulnerable Customers

Given the focus for many Irish customer service organisations on supporting vulnerable customers the study specifically looked at this group. By vulnerable customer, we mean those who may need additional or accessible supports.

We identified that 26% of respondents reported having a long-term physical or mental impairment that limits daily activities or work, including age-related conditions. The most commonly reported vulnerabilities were mental health conditions (26%), serious long-term illness (24%), and mobility impairments (24%).

Key findings were:

- Vulnerable customers report lower levels of customer service satisfaction 63% (versus 70% among non-vulnerable respondents).
- There are clear opportunities for companies to improve services for this group of customers.

5. Careers in Customer Service

- **Perceptions of customer service careers improved in 2026**, particularly around: remote/hybrid work, flexibility, and work-life balance.
- However, pay and career progression are still not viewed as major strengths for the sector.

Learnings for CX Industry and Areas for Improvement

- Customer feedback highlights a strong desire to speak to real people, not bots or automated systems. Customers want AI to support simple tasks only, with a clear option to reach a human.
- Need for customer service operations to reduce waiting times & respond faster.
- Customers want to engage with advisors who understand the issue, give accurate answers, take ownership, and avoid scripted or generic responses.
- Customers also want honest answers, clearer timelines, updates on unresolved queries, and callbacks when promised.
- There is a need for more flexible ways to engage with service providers- with a variety of channel options, longer opening hours and accessibility for those who need more support.
- Lastly customers want to feel listened to, respected, and treated as individuals rather than processed through a system.

About CCMA Our mission is to promote collaboration, shared learning and best practice for organisations with customer service operations in Ireland.

For further information on this research please contact [Dorothy O'Byrne](mailto:dorothy@ccma.ie) Managing Director CCMA Ireland at dorothy@ccma.ie or 0872256055.