Medallia

THE GENERATIONAL DIVIDE:

Driving customer participation in feedback surveys



A Medallia Market Research Briefing

Intro

Customer Experience professionals have long relied on post-interaction surveys to understand how their customers feel. But sustaining a sufficient volume of responses isn't a given. As consumer behaviors change, new channels for capturing feedback emerge, and other insights methods gain traction, CX leaders are asking a critical question: Are we getting the broadest, most representative feedback through our current methods?

At the same time, a new generation of buyers, Gen Z, is entering the market with different expectations for brand communication and a unique relationship with digital feedback. Their influence is increasingly critical, causing brands to wonder if their traditional listening methods are missing key insights from this demographic, among others.

To better understand how consumers feel about giving feedback, and how these sentiments differ across generations, we surveyed 2,000 US consumers (500 each for Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z). Our goal: to uncover what motivates consumers to fill out a survey (or what holds them back), how their perceptions of feedback have evolved, and what makes Gen Z's approach to providing their opinions so different.

We're excited to reveal findings that illustrate how brands can better access customers through feedback opportunities, and why understanding generational nuances is key to building lasting relationships.



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01

Executive Summary

Key Findings

Driving better survey feedback participation, especially with Gen Z, involves careful consideration of channels, experience components, and more.

Many consumers feel feedback fatigue

But there isn't convincing evidence it is affecting Gen Z more than older generations.

Gen Z has tendencies toward third-party reviews

They are 2x as likely as Boomers to have last provided feedback via a review site or a company's social media page.

Easiness and a reason for positivity drive feedback

But particularly negative experiences drive feedback too—an important trade-off between declining feedback rates and experience improvements.

Trust, brevity, and incentives could unlock better participation

Gift cards, loyalty rewards points, and discount codes are the most desired perks for submitting feedback.

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02

Sentiments on feedback surveys

A sizable amount of customers are experiencing feedback fatigue.

51%

say they’re getting more feedback requests from companies now than in the past.

36%

say too many companies are asking for feedback.

39%

say companies should notice from their behavior and expressions if they’re satisfied or not, without the need for a feedback survey.

What this means

Companies must consider other methods of collecting customer experience insights to complement feedback surveys, including conversational intelligence from customer service interactions, digital experience analytics, market research, and more.

From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); "Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.” % selecting “strongly agree” or “tend to agree”.

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Most customers don’t recall a time when a company has told them how they plan to act on the feedback received.

Only 26% of customers recall a time where a company followed up with them after feedback was provided and told them what they plan to do with the information.

When this does occur, **73%** of customers say their opinion of the company improved afterward. This presents an opportunity for more companies to increase transparency with customers, both to collect more feedback and to boost reputation in the process.

From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); “Has a company ever followed up with you after you filled out a feedback survey and told you what they will do based on the information you provided?” Among subset who say it has occurred (n = 314). “How did your impression of the company change when they did that?”

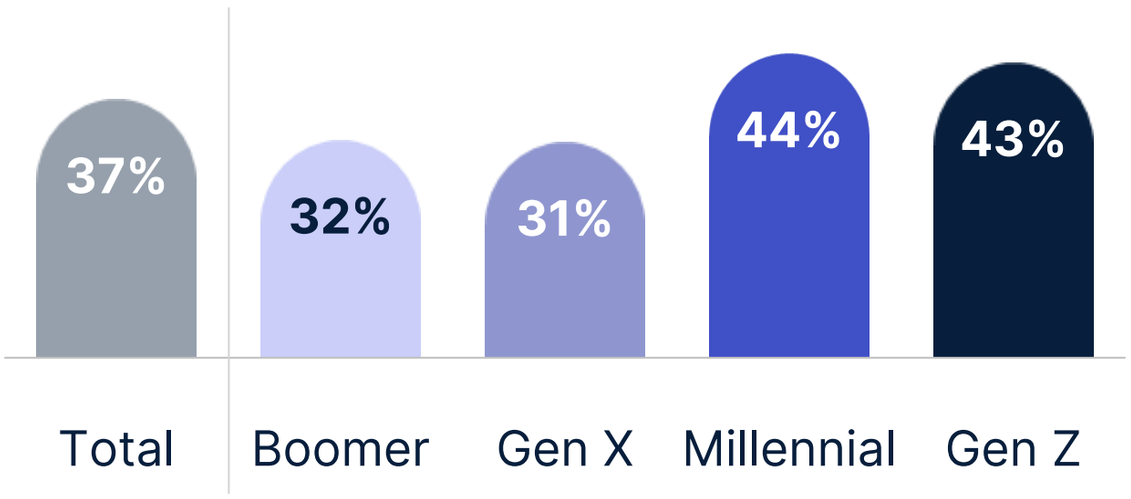


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As a result, many (Gen Z and Millennial) question the usefulness and integrity behind feedback requests.

“I doubt that companies take action on what customers say when they fill out feedback surveys”

% agreeing, by generation



22%

also recall at least one time being pressured to give a positive review to help an employee avoid consequences.

From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); "Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.” % selecting “strongly agree” or “tend to agree”.

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But are younger customers more resistant to giving feedback overall? The data doesn't suggest it.

Incidence of submitting feedback to a company in the past month is quite consistent by generation.

% who say they've submitted feedback to a company in the past month

by generation



Additional insight

Generations are also very uniform in the proportion that does recall completing a feedback survey at some point in the past (all four were **89-90%**)

From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); "When was the last time you had an interaction with an organization and you DID submit feedback, if ever?"

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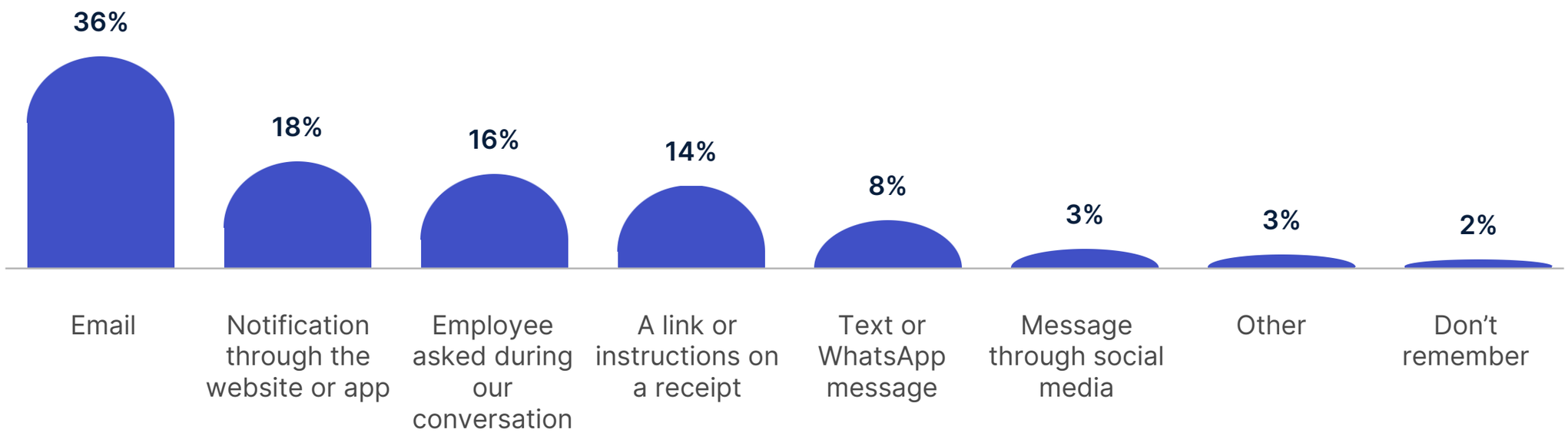
03

The characteristics of feedback today

Consumers recall feedback requests most often coming via email.

How feedback was requested in most recent situation

% citing



Despite email's high incidence, Text / WhatsApp messages and social media direct messages had the highest likelihood of the customer completing the feedback request (each **~20%** higher than email).

From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); "How were you asked for feedback?" Among those that recall being asked for feedback in most recent interaction (n = 621)

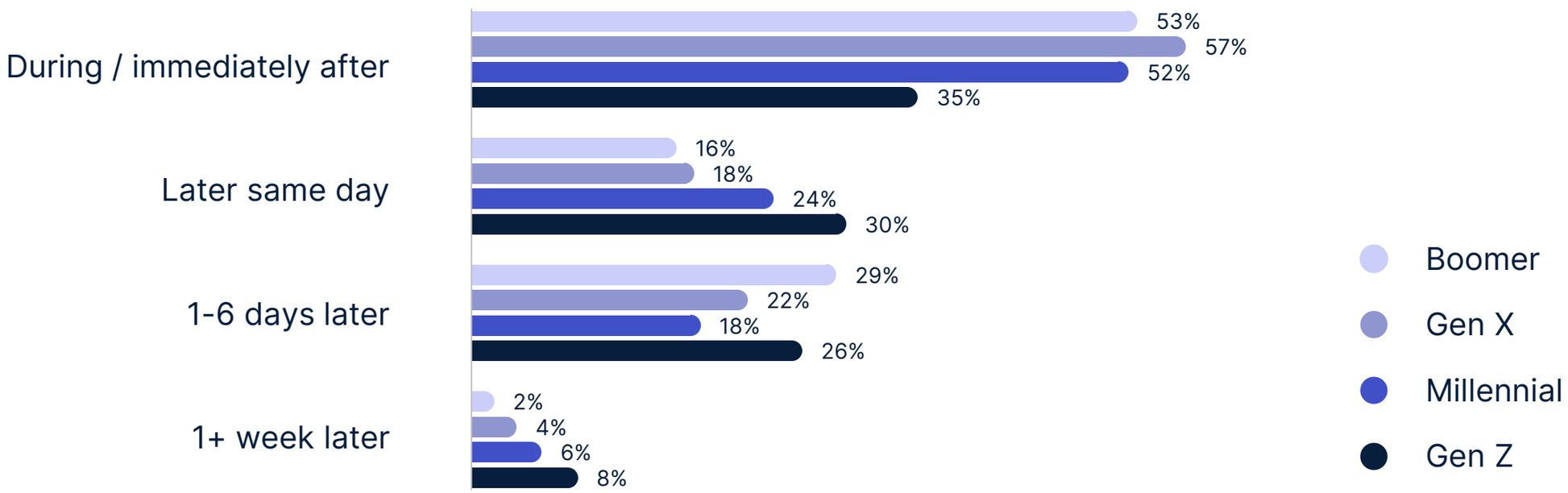
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If filling out a feedback survey, Gen Zers are less likely to do it immediately.

They are **27% less likely** than the population average to do it during or immediately after an interaction, instead opting for later that day or days later.

Most recent time filling out feedback survey: how long after interaction

by generation



From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); “How long after the interaction did you submit feedback?” Among those who completed a feedback survey in their last interaction (n = 576)

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Gen Zers are about 2x as likely as Boomers to choose a third-party review site to give feedback.

Most recent method used to submit feedback, % citing, by generation

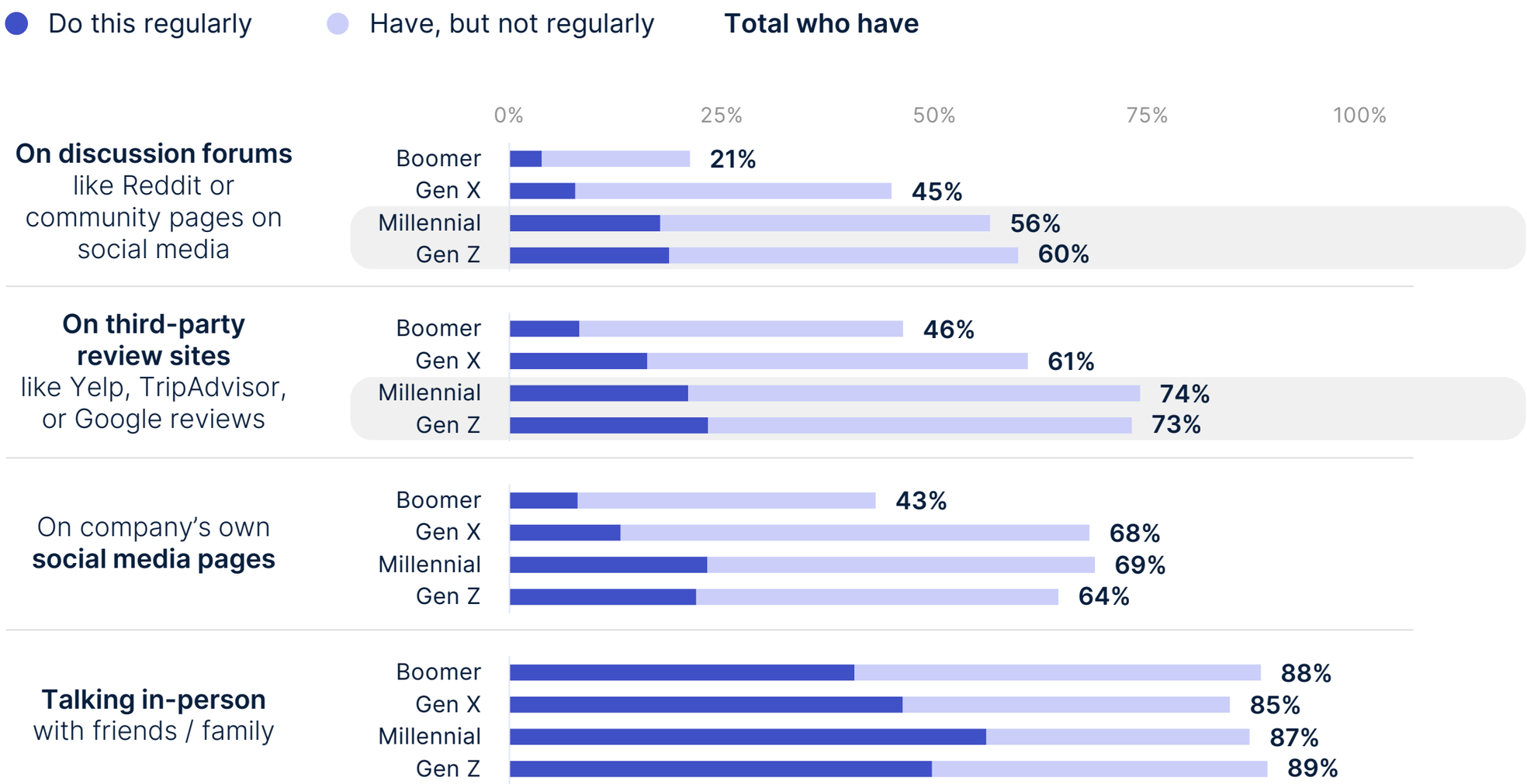
	Boomer	Gen X	Millennial	Gen Z	Biggest over-index
Company website (smartphone or tablet)	20%	25%	26%	25%	Millennial
Company mobile app	18%	27%	23%	21%	Gen X
Company website (desktop)	29%	14%	12%	14%	Boomer
Over a phone call with company	14%	16%	19%	12%	Millennial
Third-party review site or social media platform	8%	9%	12%	15%	Gen Z
Other*	10%	9%	7%	13%	Gen Z

From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); “In what way did you give your feedback about the experience with that organization?” Among subset with recollection of a specific feedback instance (n = 1,610) *Highest “Other” options included in-store kiosks and paper forms.

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In general, younger consumers are better versed in feedback outside of company channels.

Sharing experiences in ways other than feedback surveys, % citing



From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); "Besides direct surveys, do you talk about your experiences with companies in any of these ways? Select what is true for you for each."

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Score ratings and positive comments dominate the content found in feedback.

Most common content in feedback surveys, % citing

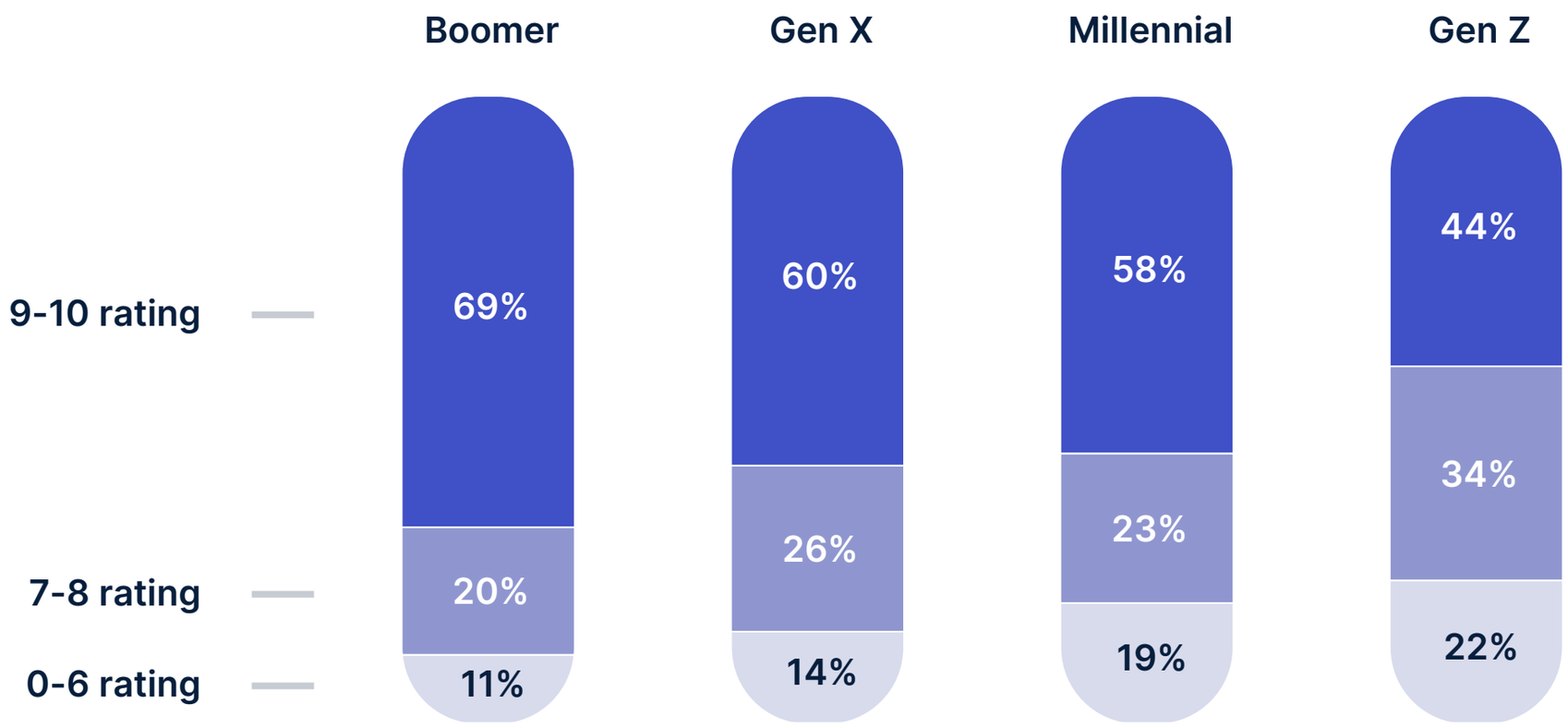
1	Rating individual parts of experience (e.g. service speed, quality, friendliness, etc.)	39%
2	A number rating (or number of stars) for satisfaction	34%
3	Praising the quality of goods / services	34%
4	Praising a specific employee	28%
5	A number rating of likelihood to recommend the brand	27%
6	Complaining about the quality of goods / services	13%
7	Providing ideas for the organization to consider in the future	12%
8	Pointing out a technology glitch or process issue	7%
9	Complaining about a specific employee	5%

From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); “What was in the feedback you provided? Select all that apply.” Among subset that gave feedback in most recent opportunity provided (n = 571).

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Believe it or not, younger customers are the ones most likely to be dissatisfied with an experience.

Gen Z customers are **twice as likely** as Boomers to rate their experience a 6 or below on a 0-10 scale.



From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); “How satisfied were you with this interaction?”

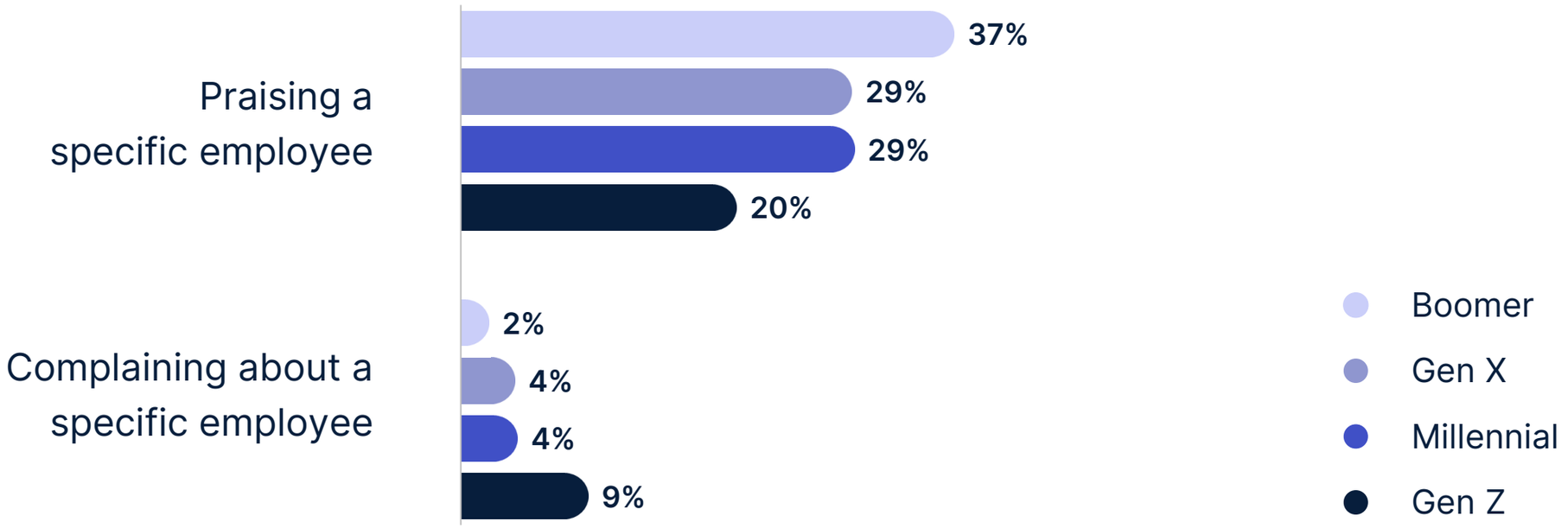
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Gen Z feedback is also far less likely to praise (and more likely to critique) employees.

Gen Z customers are **44% less likely** than Boomers to include praise for a specific employee in their feedback, and roughly **4x more likely** to be critical.

% of feedback containing content type

by generation



From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); “What was in the feedback you provided? Select all that apply.”

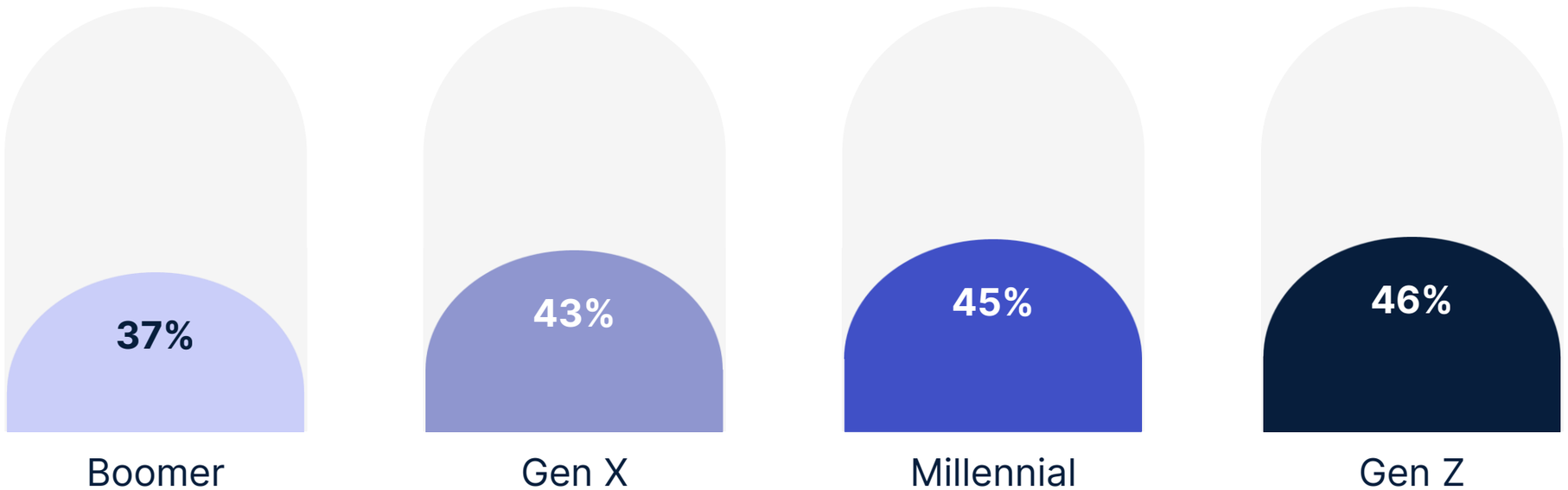
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But, on the bright side, Gen Z opinions of companies aren’t all doom and gloom.

Gen Z customers are **22% more likely** than Boomers to feel an emotional connection to at least one brand.

“I feel an emotional connection to at least one company I use”

% agreeing, by generation



From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); "Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.” % selecting “strongly agree” or “tend to agree”.

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And Gen Z is more likely to take its time when filling out feedback surveys.

27% more likely

56% of Gen Z respondents say they spent over 5 minutes on the most recent company feedback survey they completed, vs. only **44%** of the population average saying so (a 27% relative difference).

From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); “How long did you spend filling it out?”

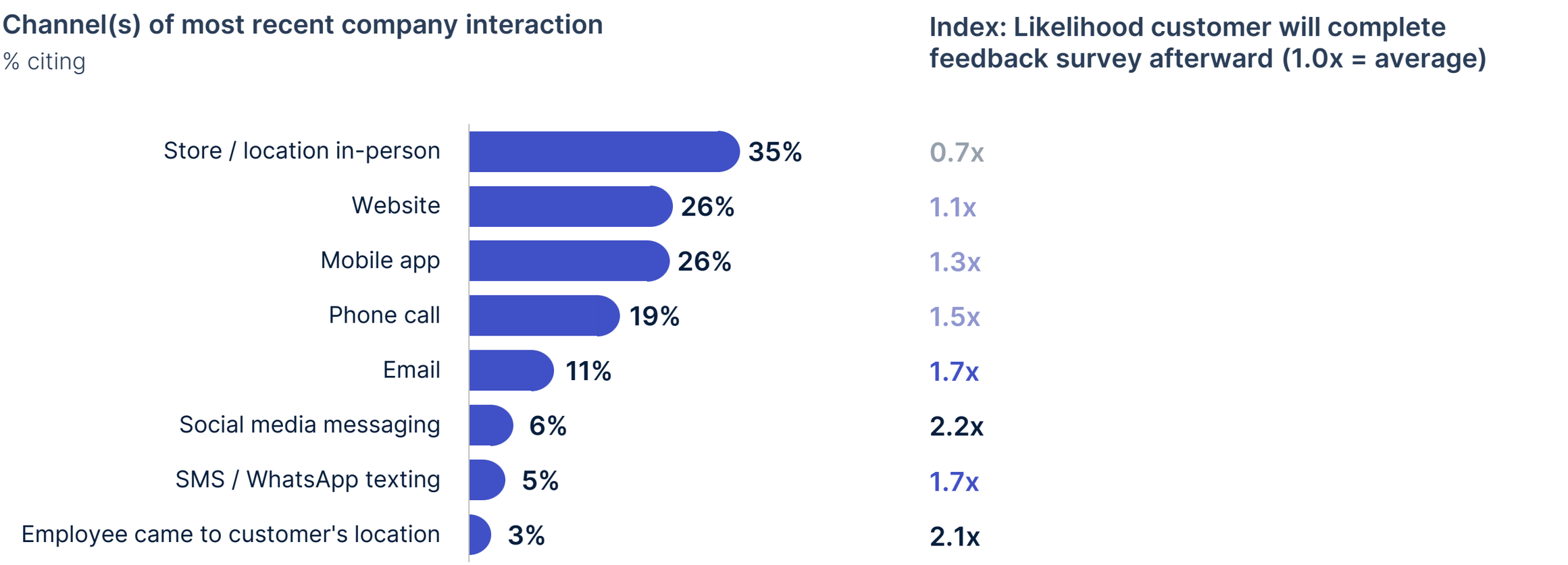
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04

Current drivers in the decision to give feedback

Though most common, in-person visits are least likely to result in a feedback submission.

Digital communications like email, social media messaging, and texting are among those most likely to result in a feedback submission.



From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); “Through what way(s) did the interaction with the organization occur?” / “Which of the following is true for you on that occasion?”

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Channel choice for the interaction itself is tied to preferences for giving feedback.

“The process of providing feedback should never make me use a channel (e.g. phone, email, text, etc.) I wasn’t already interacting with the company through”

47% agree

Additional insight

Boomers (**57%**) are especially likely to agree, and Gen Z (**39%**) least likely.

From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); "Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.” % selecting “strongly agree” or “tend to agree”.

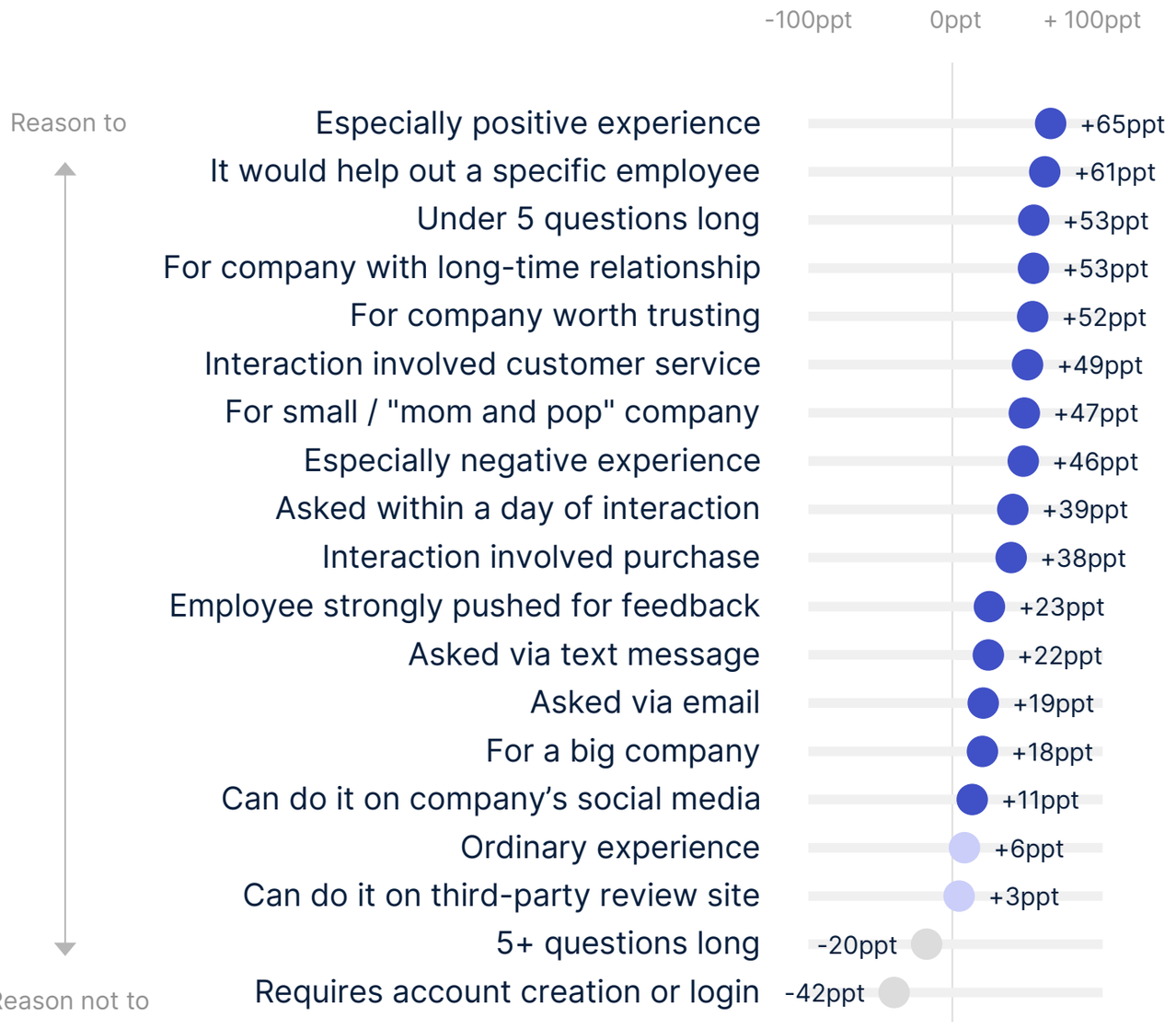
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A reason to speak positively + low required effort drive the decision to give feedback the most.

The existing perceptions and relationship between customer and company matter too.

Net effect on decision to provide feedback

Sorted by highest net increase in percentage point difference:
(% saying increases likelihood) - (% saying decreases likelihood).



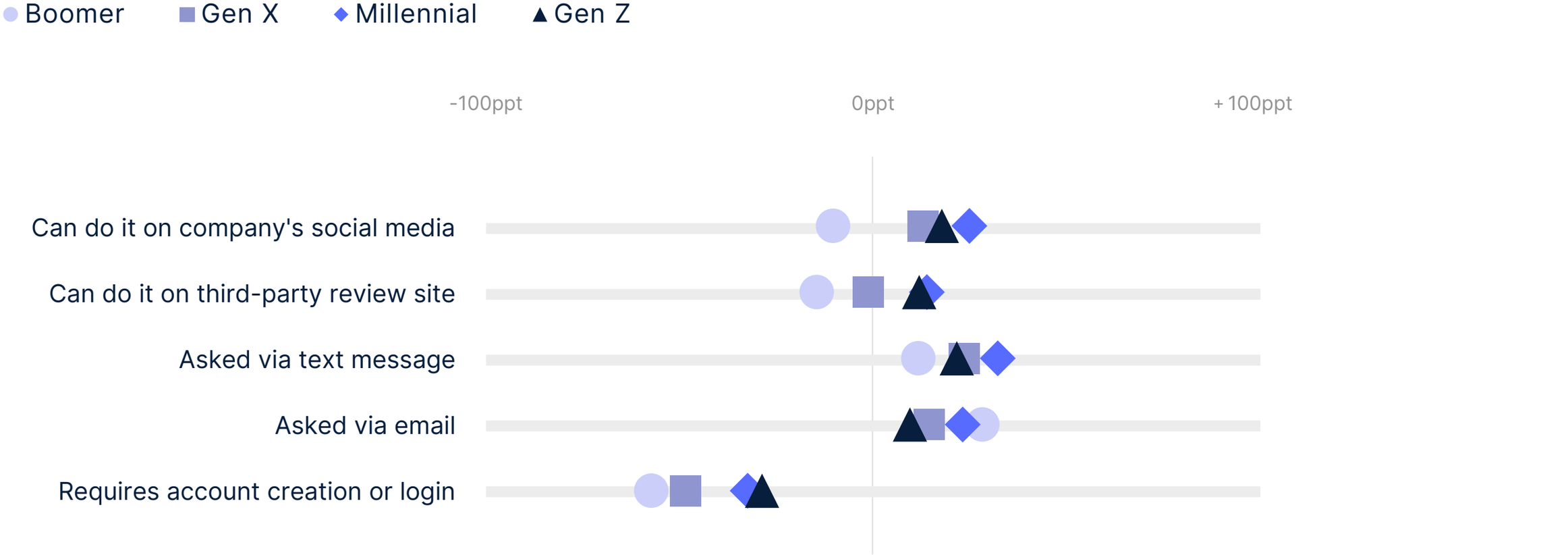
From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); "Do any of the following play a role in your motivation of whether or not to fill out a feedback survey?"

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Third-party sites and login requirements are among the decision factors affecting generations differently.

Generational differences: what affects the decision to provide feedback?

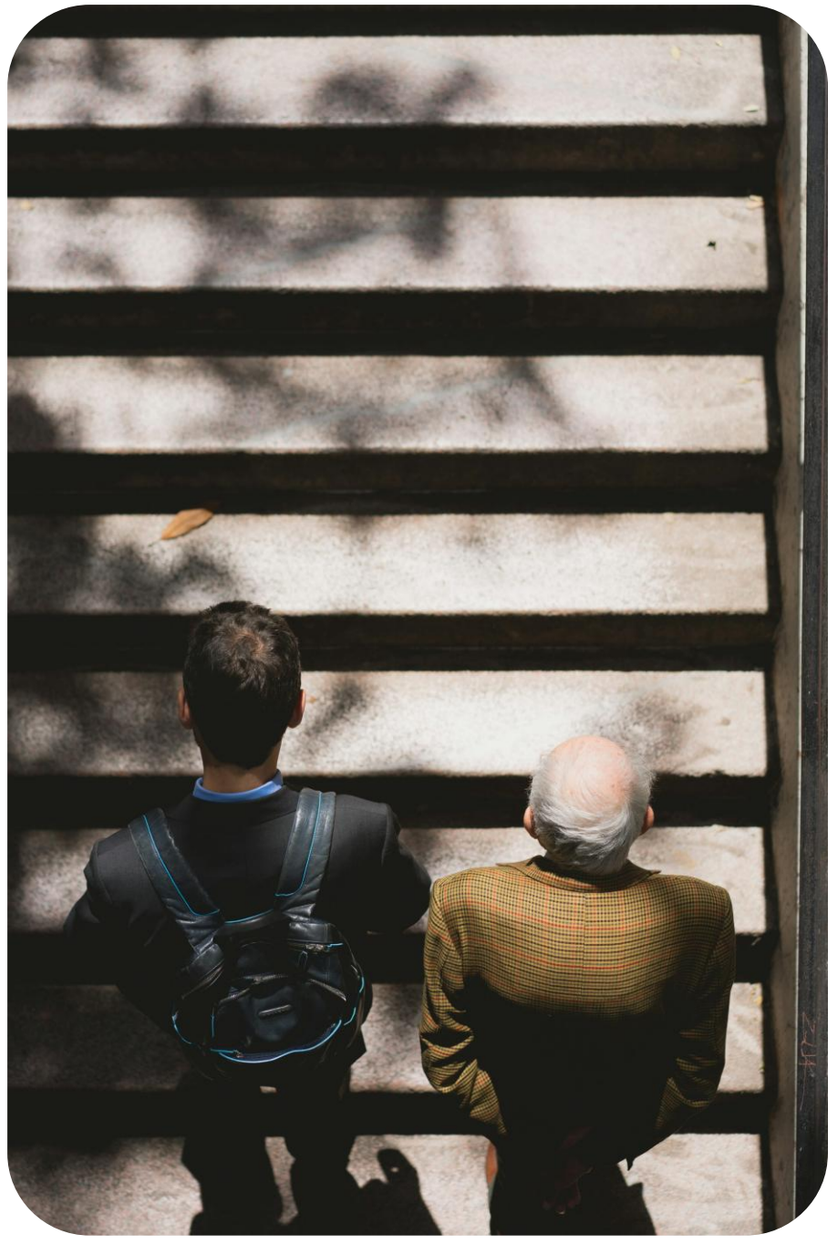
Select factors shown. Net percentage point difference: (% saying increase likelihood) - (% saying decrease likelihood)



From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); “Do any of the following play a role in your motivation of whether or not to fill out a feedback survey?”

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What makes an experience “especially positive”?



Top factors

With ten options to choose from, respondents were most likely to cite several service-related attributes, including “An employee that goes beyond their typical job responsibilities to resolve an issue” (**58%**), “An especially friendly and pleasant employee” (**51%**), “Getting live help from a person instead of self-serve or AI bot” (**29%**), and “Very short wait time to receive help” (**26%**). These outranked ones regarding product quality, value for the money, and others.

Gen Z’s unique preferences

Gen Z was more likely than other generations to cite characteristics for a nice, clean in-person atmosphere and a product that works especially well. They were less likely to care about help from a person instead of self-serve or AI.

From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); “You indicated an especially positive experience increases the chance you’ll fill out a feedback survey. What are the top 3 things that can make an experience especially positive, in your mind?” Among subset defined in question (n = 1,425).

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If overly positive experiences drive feedback participation, does that mean issue reduction will too? Not quite.

Customer Experience practitioners seeking experience improvements *and* better feedback survey participation rates simultaneously may be in for a rude awakening.

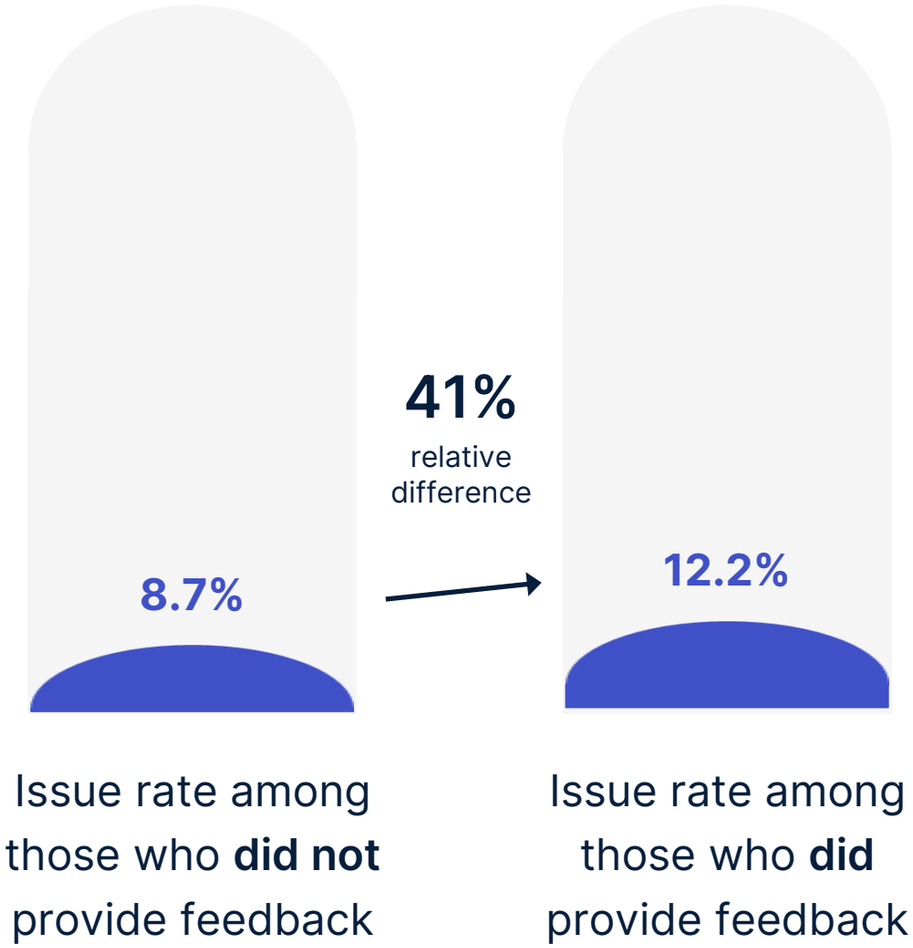
While especially positive experiences drive feedback, so do issues during the experience (which presumably make them overly negative, which also drives feedback participation).

Similarly, needing to deal with customer service during an interaction also increases the chance of completing a feedback survey by **33%**, and having an issue escalated to a supervisor makes that chance go up to **96%**.

This critical context can help avoid misaligned goals when looking to improve trends for overall CX program health.

Issue(s) during the interaction

% of customers citing issue(s), by whether or not they chose to give feedback afterward



From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); “”"Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.” % selecting “strongly agree” or “tend to agree”.

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Customers expose this paradox in their own words: extreme experiences (good *and* bad) are the most worthy of feedback.

Over 30% of respondents cited this as their primary driver, ranking highest of 8 major themes.

Customers' decision process for whether or not to complete a feedback survey

top free response themes

1. Especially positive or negative experience
2. Low time / effort required
3. Quality of interaction with a specific employee
4. Seeking resolution to a specific problem
5. Emotional response / venting
6. General desire to help company
7. Incentive / reward in exchange for feedback
8. Personal habit to give feedback

From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); "In your own words, how do you usually decide whether or not to give feedback when a company asks for it?". Rank based on % of responses containing theme.

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Generational skews on how customers describe their decision process:

Respondents did vary by age in terms of what they felt were the most important considerations. The biggest skews, vs. the total population average, included:

Boomer: Low time / effort required; Personal habit to give feedback

Gen X: Seeking resolution to a specific problem

Millennial: Quality of interaction with a specific employee

Gen Z: Incentive / reward in exchange for feedback; Emotional response / venting

Recognizing the types of interactions most common for a brand, and their likelihood of driving the considerations above, can help explain why responses rates by generation may differ.

> ...when I had additional issues that needed to be dealt with, but the agent was unable to fulfill my request.
>
> **Gen X respondent**

> I usually base it off the interaction with the employee. If they are kind and courteous I give them positive feedback.
>
> **Millennial respondent**

> Either to enter giveaways, get discounts, or if my experience was really good or really bad.
>
> **Gen Z respondent**

From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); “In your own words, how do you usually decide whether or not to give feedback when a company asks for it?”. Rank based on % of responses containing theme.

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Time commitment is often a deterrent to giving feedback, but purposefulness matters too.

Reasons for not giving feedback when requested

% citing

Didn’t want to spend time on it	37%
Meant to, but forgot or got distracted	20%
Had already given this company feedback before	19%
Experience wasn’t bad enough to warrant it	15%
Survey was too long	15%
Experience wasn’t good enough to warrant it	11%
Disbelief company will act on feedback	9%
Survey link was expired or broken	7%
Survey asked for sensitive information	5%
Feedback requested before experience was over	4%
Method (e.g., paper, online) wasn’t convenient	4%
Request came too long after interaction	4%
Request wasn’t clear or didn't apply to me	4%
Have difficulty reading or writing	3%

Additional insight

Gen Z over-indexes vs. the population include reasons like “Feedback requested before experience was over”, “Method wasn’t convenient”, and “Have difficulty reading or writing”.

The first two of these are consistent with other findings on Gen Z emphasis toward certain channels and having a gap between interaction and feedback submission. The latter may reflect the increased diversity of native language for this generation compared to earlier ones.

From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); “Why didn’t you provide feedback this time? Select all that apply.” Among subset that had opportunity to, but did not, provide feedback in prior interaction (n = 199).

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05

Improving feedback participation in the future

Trust can drive motivation to give feedback. What do customers say makes an organization trustworthy?

51%

say they trust an organization more if it provides service with face-to-face or voice-to-voice interactions, instead of just typing

40%

say they trust an organization more if it asks for feedback during the interaction, instead of later on

Additional insight

Gen Zers are especially likely (**44%**) to find in-the-moment opportunities for feedback a sign that a brand is trustworthy.

From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); "Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements." % selecting “strongly agree” or “tend to agree”.

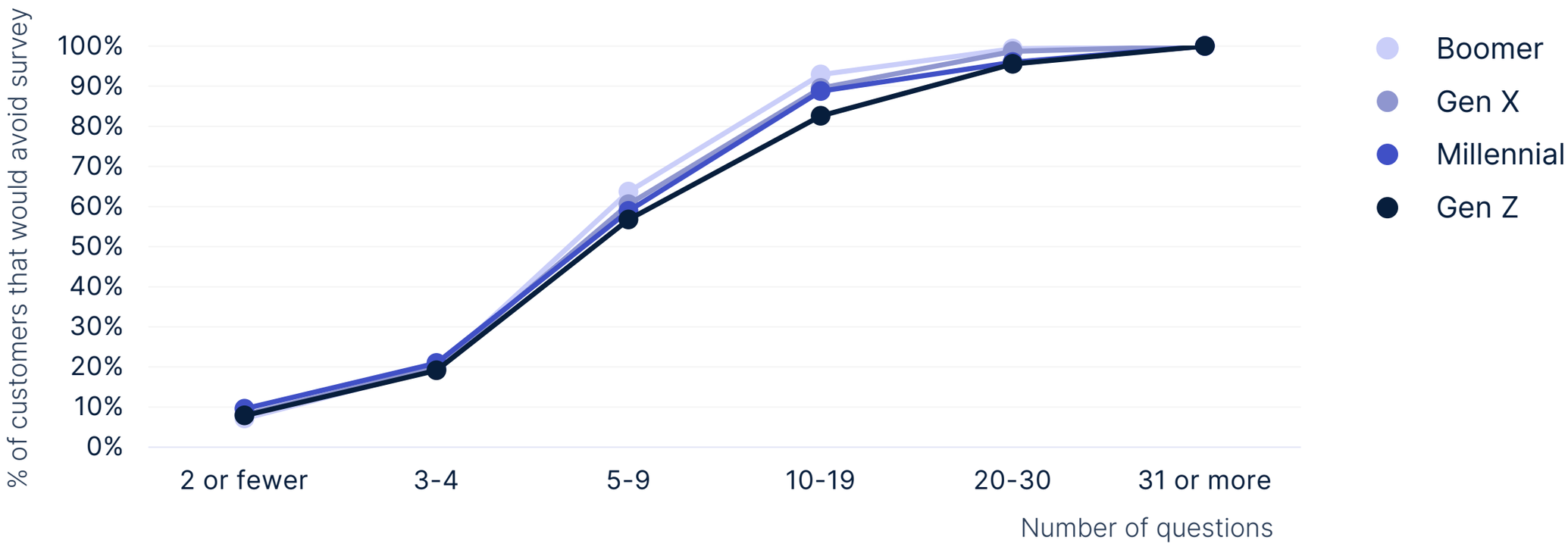
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Shorter surveys can also boost participation. About half of customers find 5+ questions to be too long.

Compared to other generations, Boomers are a bit more intolerant of long surveys.

How many questions is too many in a feedback survey?

Cumulative percent saying they would avoid filling out a survey of this length or higher; by generation



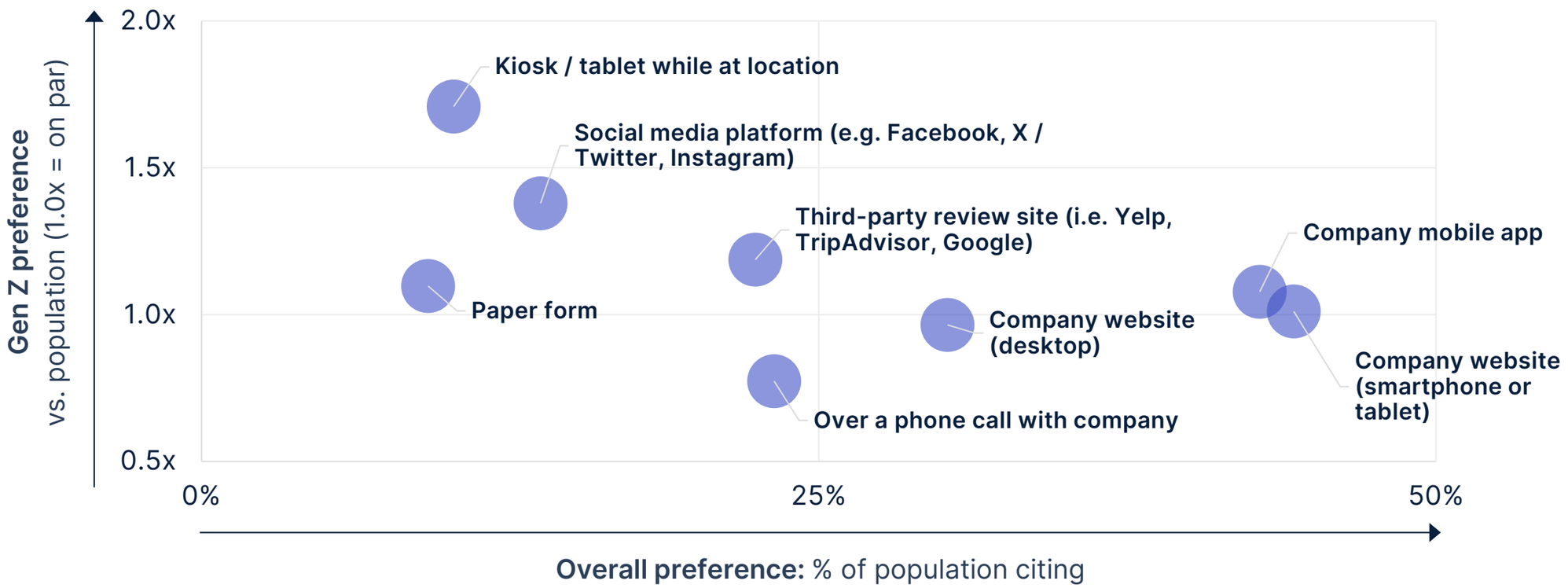
From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); “How many questions do you think a company’s / organization’s feedback survey could have before you’ll avoid filling it out? Enter a number below.”

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App and website are the most preferred channels for feedback surveys overall, but Gen Z skews toward digital in-store and third-party sites.

Gen Z's preference for phone call-based survey is lower than other generations.

Channel preferences for filling out company feedback surveys



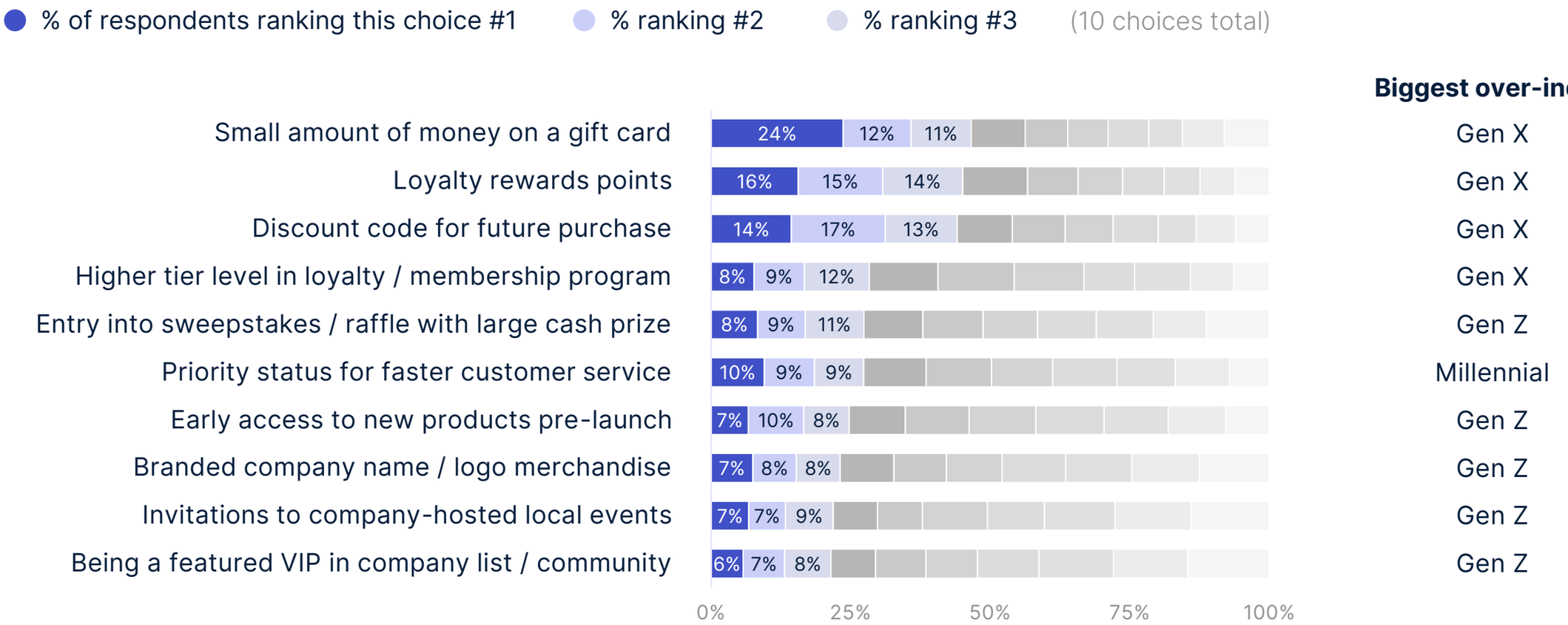
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From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); "Which of the following ways of giving a company / organization feedback do you prefer the most? Select up to 3"

What else might motivate feedback participation? Financial incentives are most appealing.

Gen Z does lean more towards experiences or other perks than older generations.

What incentives would motivate better feedback participation?



From Medallia August 2025 Sentiments on Feedback Survey (n = 2,000); “What would motivate you to fill out their feedback surveys more often? Rank the following choices in order of your preference, with 1 being the most preferred and 10 being the least.” List sorted by % placing in top 3. Biggest over-index: generation with highest % ranking choice #1.

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Conclusion

Medallia’s research into consumer feedback provides a clear directive for CX professionals: to get the most representative insights, you must both refine your survey strategy and diversify your listening methods.

The data shows that while many consumers report feeling feedback fatigue, this isn't a uniquely Gen Z problem. Instead, it's a universal sentiment that challenges the traditional reliance on post-interaction surveys.

The rising influence of Gen Z introduces a new dynamic. This generation's tendency to provide feedback through third-party review sites and social media means if you're not listening to these channels, you're missing critical insights from a key demographic. This shift highlights a broader need to capture the voice of the customer wherever it appears, not just where a survey asks for it.

Ultimately, the goal is to get a complete and accurate picture of the customer experience. While traditional surveys still hold value, companies must recognize their limitations. Findings like the importance of trust, brevity, and tangible incentives offer a path to boosting survey participation. But this is just one piece of the puzzle. The true competitive advantage will come from weaving these findings into a broader listening strategy that also leverages insights from conversational intelligence, digital experience analytics, and external market research.

By moving beyond a survey-centric approach, CX practitioners can truly hear the full voice of the customer and make more informed decisions that lead to lasting experience improvements.

Methodology

Medallia gathered survey responses from 2,000 US consumers.

500 responses were collected for each of the following generations: Gen Z (aged 16-28), Millennial (age 29-44), Gen X (age 45-60), and Boomer (age 61-80).

Weighting was applied to the sample based on US census distribution of gender.

The survey was fielded from August 7 to August 13, 2025 using Medallia's Agile Research survey platform.

About Medallia
Medallia is the pioneer and market leader in customer, employee, citizen, and patient experience. Medallia Experience Cloud captures billions of experience signals across interactions including all voice, video, digital, IoT, social media, and corporate-messaging tools. Medallia uses proprietary artificial intelligence and machine learning technology to automatically reveal predictive insights that drive powerful business actions and outcomes. For more information visit **http://www.medallia.com**.