



Customers are back. What about customer service?

By Chris Deeney

KEY FINDINGS:

- **Most Americans feel satisfied with their overall experiences with customer service in the past 12 months.**
- **Expectations for customer service have changed in the past year: most (66%) say they expect the same, while 18% indicate expectations are now higher.**
- **Older Americans (21%) are most likely to say they have lowered their customer service expectations this past year.**

More and more Americans are back to their normal activities, such as eating out, in-store shopping, travel and heading back to the office. However, it appears not all industries are staffed and prepared to meet the needs of the returning consumer. Ipsos eNation Omnibus wanted to find out how Americans feel about their service experiences as they venture out.

It's been difficult to meet consumer needs as businesses deal with a tight job market, inflation, product shortages and transportation delays. The lack of labor has made it extremely difficult to hire more staff or lay off low-performing employees. It's a challenging situation that leads to disappointed customers and overworked, unhappy employees.



Today's customer service is not on target

In general, Ipsos discovered most Americans feel satisfied with their overall experiences with customer service in the past 12 months.

How rate overall customer service experience in past 12 months:	
Satisfied	67%
Neutral	24%
Dissatisfied	9%

However, half feel customer service has diminished since COVID started. Older Americans are even more likely (70%) to think the pandemic has negatively impacted customer service.

How COVID pandemic changed customer service:	
Improved (net)	28%
Vastly improved	11%
Somewhat improved	17%
Did not change	22%
Diminished (net)	50%
Somewhat diminished	36%
Vastly diminished	14%

Looking at how expectations for customer service have changed in the past year, most (66%) say they expect the same, while 18% indicate expectations are now higher and 16% indicate they have lowered their expectations. Older Americans (55 and older) are most likely to say they have lowered (21%) their customer service expectations this past year. Those in households with income of \$100,000 or more are most likely to now have higher expectations (30%).

How customer service expectations changed in past year:				
Age	Total	18-34	35-54	55+
Higher expectations	18%	24%	24%	7%
Same	66%	62%	62%	72%
Lower expectations	16%	14%	13%	21%

Still, most respondents are showing patience while experiencing the prevalent shortages of staff.

How customers react when visiting an understaffed restaurant or store:

Just deal with it	51%
Have empathy for staff available	49%
Leave without purchase	13%
Express frustrations	11%

Why do customers think service has declined?

A study conducted by Arizona State University concluded customer service is worse than ever and so is customer rage. Ipsos found at least 25% of Americans feel long wait times, lack of staff, automated/not human phone interaction, limited customer service staff and/or negative staff attitudes are the leading factors contributing to a bad customer experience.

Contribute to unpleasant customer experience:

Long wait times	43%
Lack of staff/workers	36%
Automated calls/not human	34%
Customer service slow/not available/reachable	31%
Negative staff attitude	28%
Not receiving product/service as expected	18%
Shipping/distribution shortages	17%
Self-checkout problems	16%
Technological hurdles	14%



Ipsos asked those who encountered a customer service experience this past year how they felt customer service had changed. Few—usually 20% or less—indicated their service has improved this past year; most thought service has remained the same. However, for retail, restaurants, telecommunications, and airline customers, at least one-third said they experienced a decline in quality of service in this past year. The financial industry received the most service-improved mentions (27%).

Customer service experience received within industry during past year:			
	Declined	Same	Improved
Retail	38%	48%	14%
Restaurant	36%	45%	19%
Telecommunications (phone/cable)	35%	45%	20%
Airlines	33%	47%	20%
Hotel/motel	28%	54%	18%
Utilities	27%	53%	20%
Grocery	26%	56%	18%
Home remodel/maintenance	26%	53%	21%
Healthcare	23%	56%	19%
Financial	21%	52%	27%
Insurance	20%	61%	19%
Automotive	17%	64%	19%
Rideshare	16%	67%	17%
Personal care	11%	67%	22%

Getting back to basics will improve customer service experiences

Many Americans say they feel very satisfied if they simply encounter the basics: receiving a service/product as expected; getting human interaction; not just technology customer service; and/or not having to wait long to be served. Older Americans (55 and older) are especially likely to want those basic expectations met. Other customer service expectations that may have previously been considered common also make consumers feel positive about their transaction.

What makes an ideal customer service experience:				
Age	Total	18-34	35-54	55+
Getting service/product as expected	54%	42%	49%	68%
Have human, not technology customer service	51%	43%	49%	60%
Not waiting long to be served	51%	31%	50%	67%
Treated equally as other guests	48%	47%	48%	47%
Not waiting long to pay	45%	31%	43%	57%
Not hovered over	31%	31%	32%	29%
Customer service can meet needs	29%	27%	32%	28%
Served by one dedicated person	26%	23%	28%	25%
Greeted at the door	23%	19%	28%	21%
Having needs anticipated versus having to ask	19%	16%	23%	17%
Being addressed by name	15%	14%	17%	13%
Getting special/VIP service	12%	11%	16%	10%
Receive a business card	9%	9%	13%	5%



Many Americans hope that once staffing shortages and distribution channels improve, so will customer service experiences. When asked, half of Americans think customer service will improve by the year 2025.

With growing frustration levels and limited workers available, it's important for managers to find new ways to motivate employee performance. Incentives, awards and recognitions will be needed to keep good workers on staff. With limited labor options, keeping your customers and employees coming back is of major importance.

Why Ipsos eNation Omnibus

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Ipsos U.S. eNation Omnibus completes five national surveys each week. Ipsos Omnibus offers a variety of services, including overnight, custom, and digital studies. Data for this study was generated by an Ipsos eNation online omnibus study of 1,005 American adults, age 18 and older, conducted September 26–27, 2022. If you would like complimentary access to this Inflation Study, or to learn more about eNation Omnibus, please contact:

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