

TALKDESK REPORT

Connecting in the Metaverse: A Talkdesk Survey



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Introduction

With COVID-19, an increase in violent crime, polarized politics, social injustices, inflation, and other issues in the physical world, many people are turning to the metaverse to find somewhere to connect with others in a relatively safe way. Our survey finds that 69% of respondents have been in the the metaverse recently. The uncertainty in the physical world is why people believe the metaverse will make connections stronger (49%), and it's why 44% of people would consider dating in the metaverse. Metaverse activities, which have origins in the gaming world, will expand to encompass everything from friends and family relationships, to dating, work, and leisure activities.

The reality of the metaverse, however, is not without its challenges. Much like elsewhere on the internet today, we see harassment and similar abuse in the emerging metaverse. Learning from the evolution of the internet and degradation of online culture, more than half (56%) of respondents want the

government to regulate the metaverse in some way, and fewer than half (46%) of survey takers believe tech companies have implemented policies that are strong enough to keep these digital worlds safe.

The Talkdesk Metaverse Survey also indicates that the metaverse will be the next channel for brand engagement. In fact, a quarter of respondents (26%) say they bought a digital item or found inspiration to make a physical purchase in real life (21%) during their time in the metaverse. With buying and browsing for goods and services (both physical and digital) becoming a key metaverse activity, brands need to prepare for this channel.

Read on for more findings from the Talkdesk Metaverse Survey, as well as recommendations for brands looking to establish a presence in these new digital worlds.

I. Welcome to the metaverse

Who's in the metaverse and what are they doing?

Surveys find that as much as 70% of the population has experienced feelings of isolation, feeling left out, or lacking companionship due to COVID-19. It's not surprising then, despite being in its early days, the metaverse is even now attracting a wide array of visitors eager to connect, recreate previous experiences, and try new ones.

More than two-thirds (69%) of the respondents to the Talkdesk Metaverse Survey have already begun dabbling in these new digital worlds, with slightly more men (73%) than women (62%) participating, so far. Generationally, millennials (73%) and Gen Zers (64%) are more likely to have visited the metaverse than other generations, but baby boomers (45%) are feeling its pull as well.

In terms of activities, women are more likely to use the metaverse as a virtual showroom, where they engage with products virtually, but then turn back to traditional digital methods for buying those products in the real world (25% vs. 18% for men). Men, on the other hand, are slightly more likely than women to make actual purchases in the metaverse and tend to spend on virtual items/products, like non-fungible tokens (NFTs,) (15% men vs. 12% women) or clothing for a virtual avatar (17% men vs 16% women).

Notably, gaming, one of the most widely available activities in the metaverse, is the preferred choice for Gen Z, which at 38% is the only cohort to select this as the top activity. Nearly half (44%) of all Gen Z men play games there, the highest response of any group.

Have you ever visited the metaverse?
If yes, what did you do there?



An out-of-this-world experience

On top of pandemic loneliness, broader social and global concerns have people looking not only for an escape, but a safe place to interact with friends and family. More than half (55%) of all respondents also say they feel separated from family and friends due to COVID-19. This ability to reconnect especially drove baby boomers' exploration of the metaverse, as socializing with friends (39%) topped their list of preferred activities in the new frontier.

Additionally, many respondents seeking new, more thrilling experiences, are eager to try something not found in the real world. Nearly a third (32%) cite this as the reason for their excitement about the idea of a metaverse. And, while craving novel experiences, most respondents (62%) want to do so authentically while in their digital persona, with nearly two-thirds (62%) saying they would create an avatar who resembled their real-life self. Many of these respondents (68%), in fact, have already created lookalike avatars on other platforms.

Because of real-world fatigue and the level of excitement generated by the metaverse, the majority of respondents feel the metaverse is already living up to their expectations (85%), with gaming (83%) and the ability to socialize (83%) leading in terms of most favorable experiences.

What did you think of your metaverse experience?
(total respondents "agree" or "strongly agree")



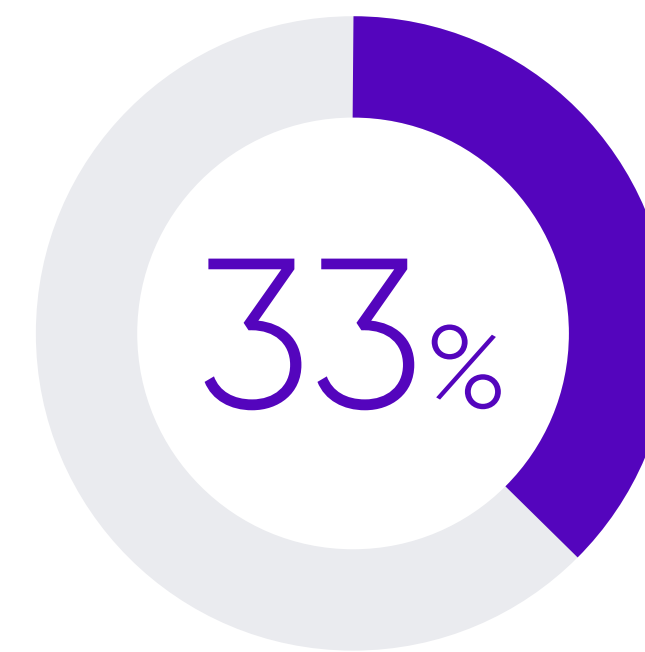
A mainstream metaverse

Meta, the company behind Facebook and Instagram and a leading driver of the metaverse, has said it expects the virtual world to become fully built out (i.e., a sophisticated, seamless, and intuitive immersive environment with mass adoption) by 2031. The Talkdesk Metaverse Survey finds that consumer expectations may be higher given the level of media attention around the metaverse. A third of respondents believe the metaverse will be mainstream much sooner, with (34%) of respondents expecting it will reach full maturity within the next five years. Just 19% agree with Meta's forecasted timeline.

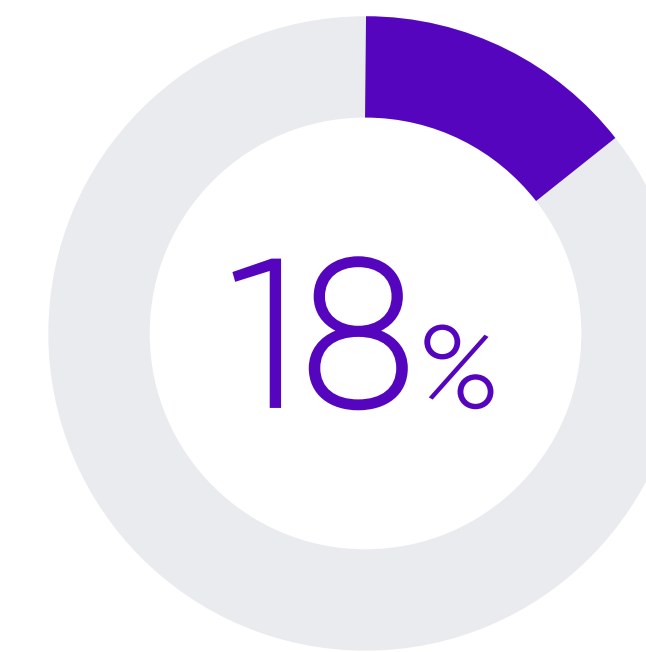
Interestingly, respondents may also be placing expectations on a reluctant source in fast tracking the metaverse, with 18% of those surveyed citing Elon Musk/Tesla as a potential leader. Musk has gone on record with doubts around the legitimacy of the metaverse.

With Meta's long timeline and Musk's lack of interest in the metaverse, the space is ripe for disruption for brands that can quickly deliver upon consumer expectations, giving them the opportunity to lay claim to tech leadership in short order.

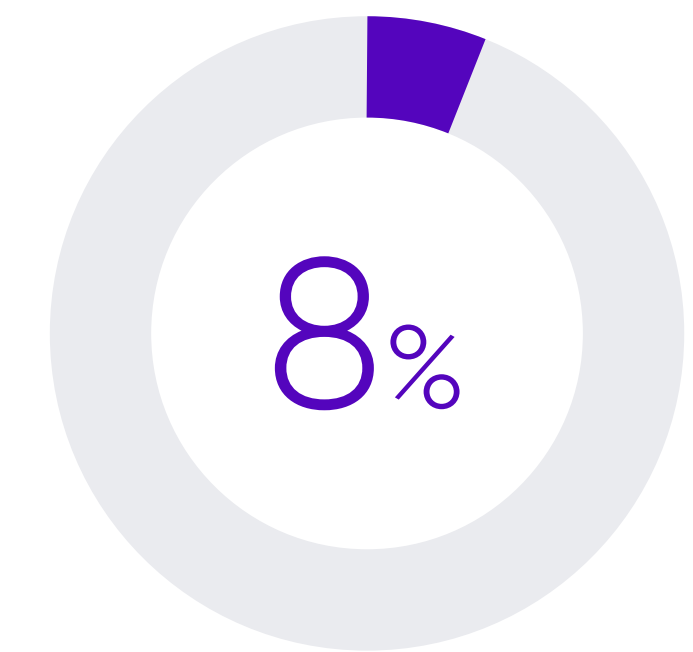
Which company do you think will make the metaverse mainstream?



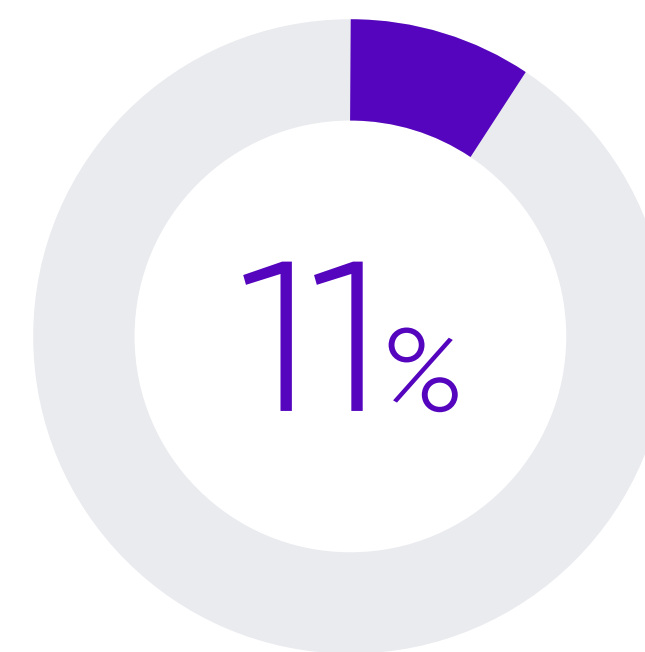
Meta/Facebook
(Mark Zuckerberg)



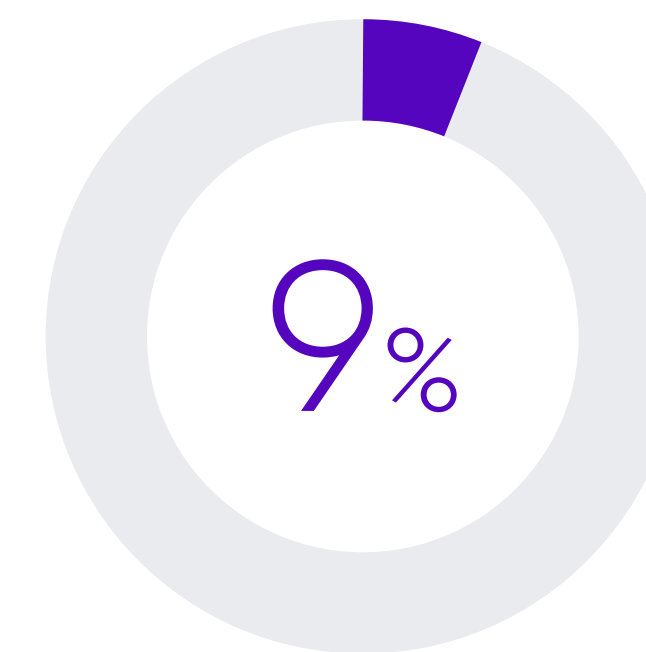
Tesla (Elon Musk)



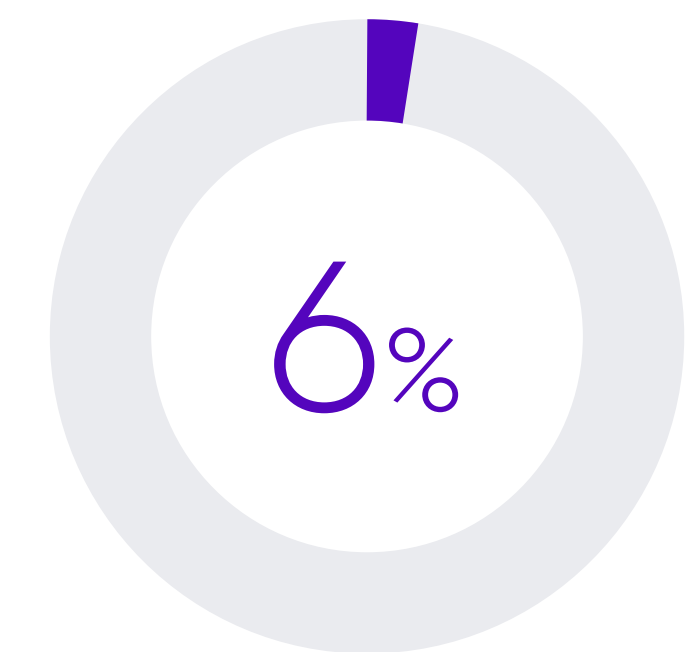
Amazon (Jeff Bezos)



Microsoft
(Satya Nadella)



Google (Sundar Pichai)



Apple (Tim Cook)

II. Life in the metaverse

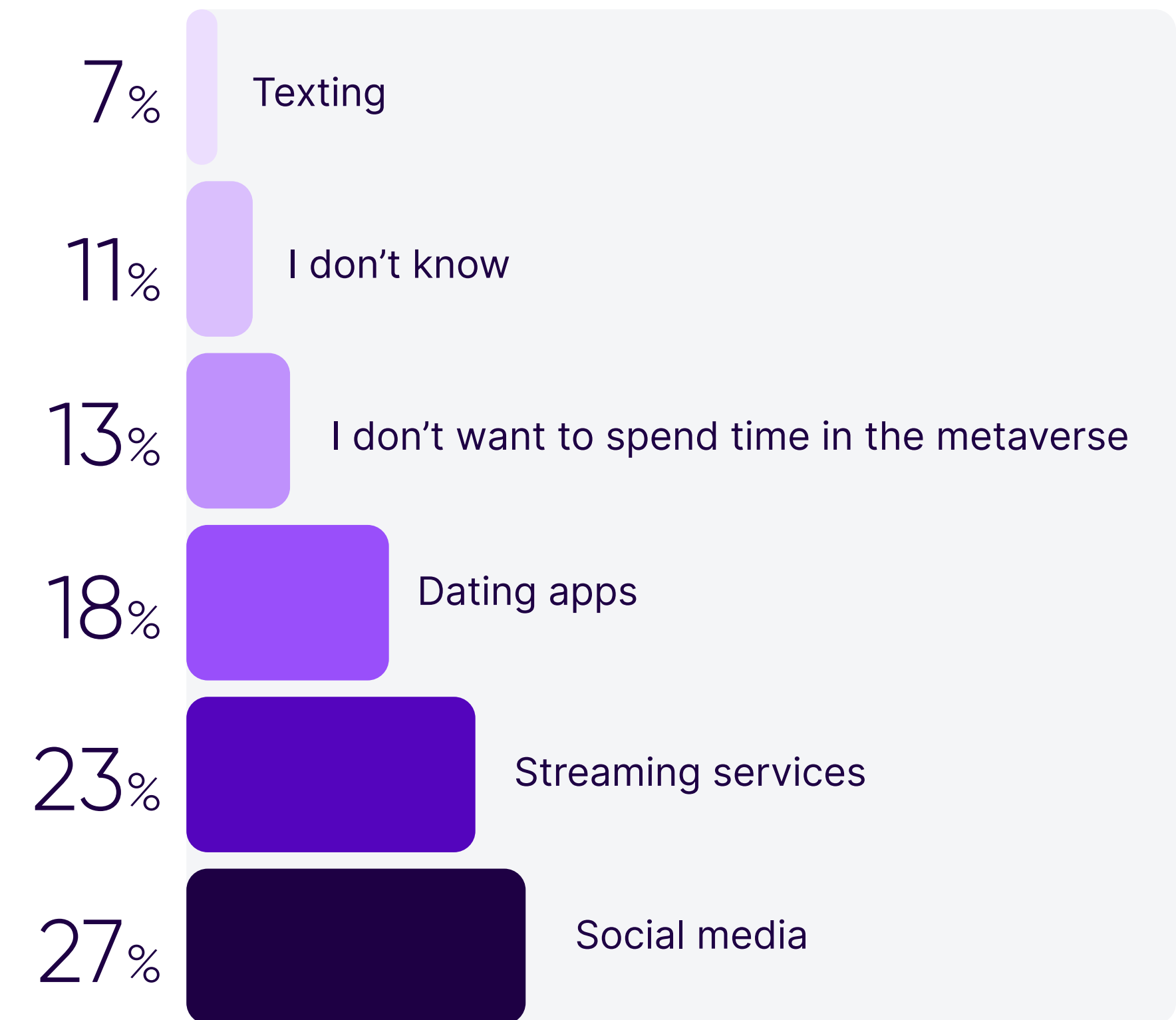
Living in the metaverse

The concept of the metaverse could have significant implications for how we live. Indeed, during the pandemic many stayed in touch with loved ones via video chat – which could be considered a half-step in between the Web2 version of the internet (as we have experienced it since the late 1990s) and the metaverse of today.

It's possible that those positive, digital interactions are what prompted nearly half of all respondents (49%) to say the metaverse will improve relationships with family, friends, colleagues, and neighbors, impacting society for the better. Only one quarter of respondents fear it will make relationships worse or obsolete.

Millennials are the most likely to look forward to living the metaverse life, with more than two-thirds (69%) saying they would join virtual workspaces, followed by 61% of Gen Zers, 53% of Gen Xers, and fewer than half (46%) of Baby Boomers. In addition, 44% of respondents say they would consider dating in the metaverse (44%). This demographic skewed largely male, with more than half (52%) of all men and just one third of women sharing this opinion.

What would you give up to give yourself time to experience the metaverse? (responses are rounded to the nearest whole number)



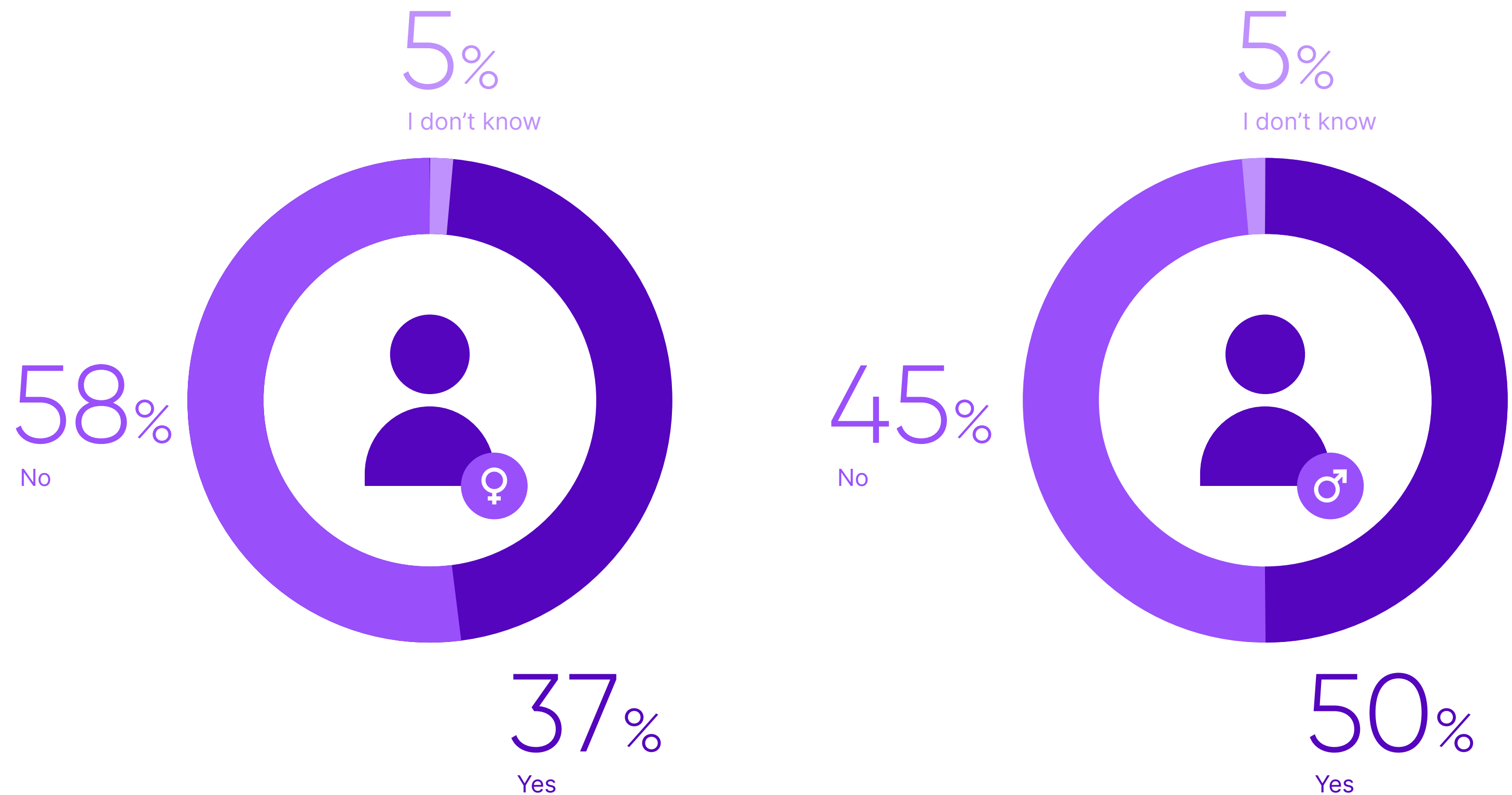
Policing the metaverse

Perhaps in reaction to witnessing the increasing abuse, disinformation, and conflict that has come to permeate the modern internet, more than half of respondents (56%) believe the government should regulate the metaverse and have oversight on how brands interact with consumers in the immersive virtual world.

Less than half of respondents (46%) believe technology companies have created strong policies to prevent harassment, racism, or other discrimination. Another third want to see even greater protection, stating policies are not strong enough, with the remainder not sure. Paradoxically, nearly half (49%) say they trust technology companies to protect personal data and privacy in the metaverse.

Demonstrating common ground, the oldest generations (baby boomers 44% and Gen X 38%), and the youngest (Gen Z 33%) are the most likely to think tech companies need to go further in their efforts to prevent abuse in the metaverse.

Have you experienced harassment, racism or discrimination in the metaverse?

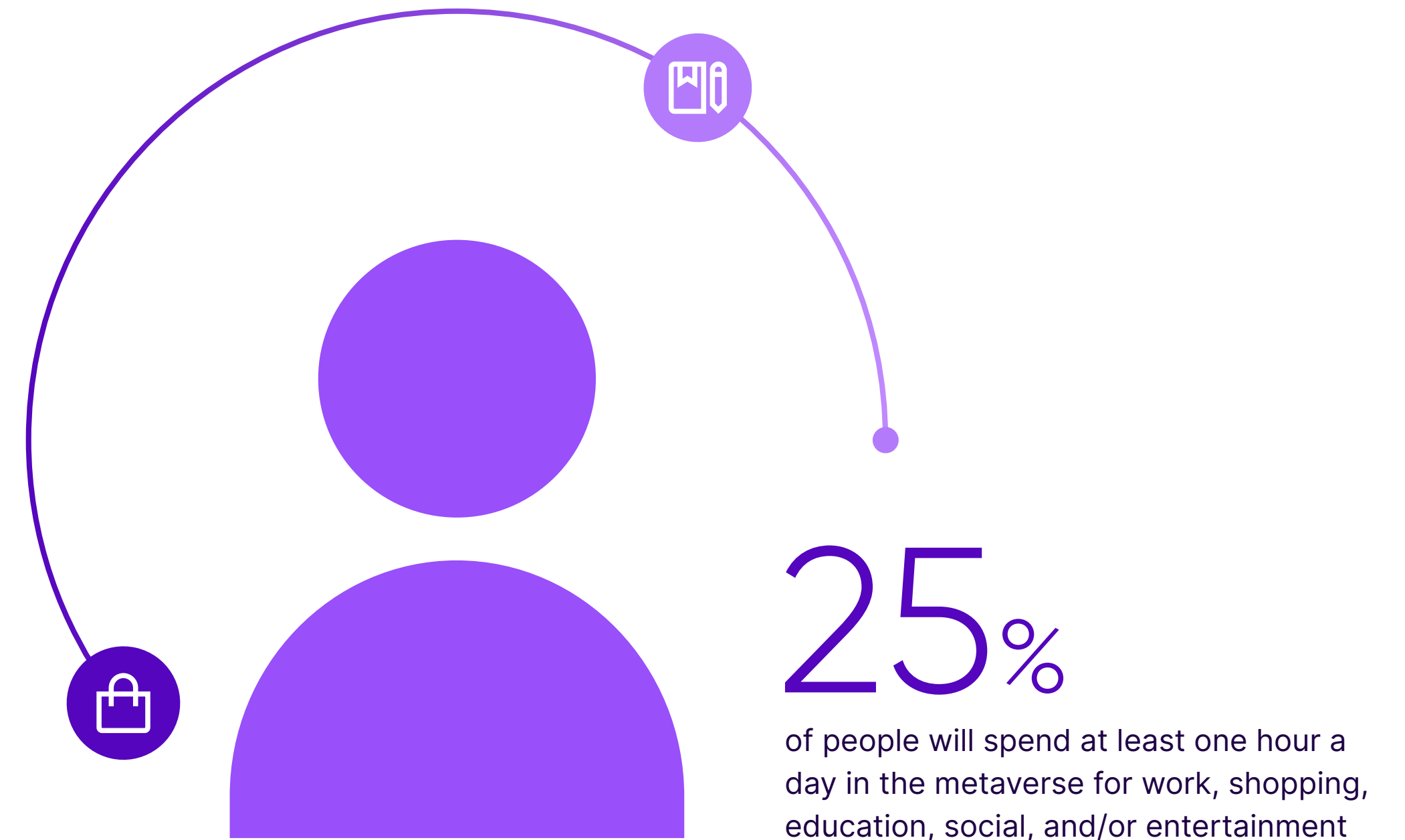


III. CX in the metaverse

Insights for brands

Consumers see obvious potential in the metaverse to establish and strengthen bonds between family, friends, and coworkers. For brands, as well, there's an opportunity to make, retain, and deepen customer connections. With the threat of a recession, coupled with inflation and dwindling consumer spending, brand loyalty is being put to the ultimate test as consumers reconsider purchasing decisions.

Brands vying to foster customer affinity should think of the metaverse as the new frontier for doing so – especially as experts predict 25% of people will spend at least one hour a day in the metaverse for work, shopping, education, social, and/or entertainment. As the metaverse continues to evolve, it will undoubtedly reshape how consumers engage in all of these activities and how they interact with brands, which is why nearly all business leaders expect a positive impact on their industry within five to 10 years.



In less than a generation, the world has gone from buying at brick and mortar physical retailers to shopping online and via mobile. The metaverse represents the next channel through which brands will connect with consumers.

Already, more than one in four consumers (26%) have bought a virtual item and another one in five (21%) have found inspiration to buy a physical product through the metaverse. As consumers do so more and more, brands will need to further develop their customer service strategies to account for this evolving platform. Indeed, 62% of respondents also say they would want a brand avatar or “omni-associate” to provide proactive assistance in suggesting a product or showing them things to do in the virtual space.

Would you purchase any of the following in the metaverse? (multiple answers were allowed)

40%

Virtual concerts and brand experiences

37%

Virtual clothing & accessories

37%

Real-world products (apparel, furniture, cars)

34%

Virtual property & land

31%

Get inspiration to buy something in the real world

31%

Virtual art & assets (aka NFTs)

15%

Don't want to make purchases in the metaverse

How much would you spend in metaverse?

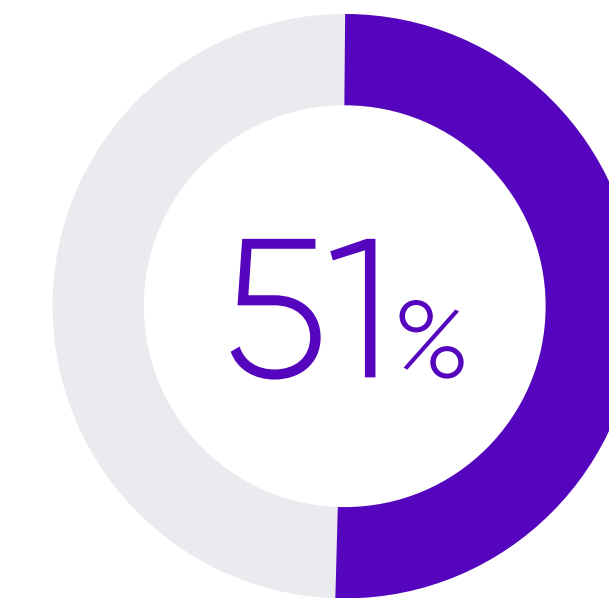
Less than \$100	\$100-\$500	\$501-\$1,000	\$1,001-\$2,000	\$2,001-\$5,000	\$5,000+	I don't plan to spend money in the metaverse
17%	16%	14%	11%	9%	6%	20%

Faster, better service

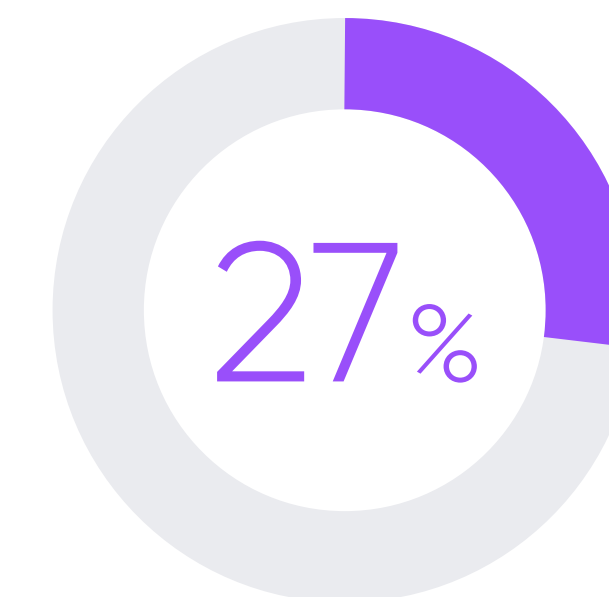
Echoing their belief that the metaverse can be a place that fosters positive relationships and community, consumers are optimistic about the level of service they will receive in the metaverse. More than half (51%) of respondents expect customer service to be better in these digital worlds and nearly one in three consumers (32%) believe these immersive environments will provide less frustration and anxiety than calling and talking to a contact center agent.

Respondents also believe that it will be easier to access product or brand information (27%), and that it will be more effective and interactive to seek assistance from an omni-agent's metaverse avatar than engaging with a chatbot online (27%). Simply put, brands will be able to exceed customer expectations and deliver a better overall experience if they're able to engage and assist consumers quickly and seamlessly in the metaverse.

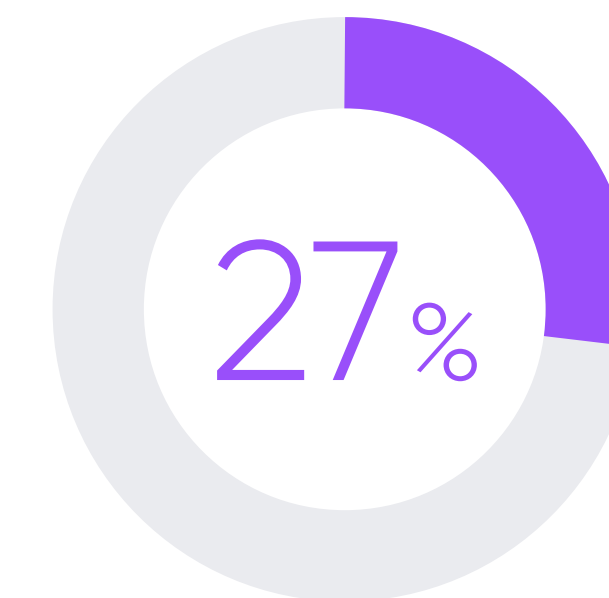
Once the metaverse is established as a customer service channel, respondents indicate they would be almost as likely to virtually interact with a brand's avatar in the metaverse (42%), as they would be to call customer service via phone (44%). This is an invitation for brands that have not yet established a presence in the metaverse to consider it as the next channel in their omnichannel customer experience strategies.



51% of respondents expect customer service to be better in these digital worlds



27% believe that it will be easier to access product or brand information



27% believe that it will be more effective and interactive to seek assistance from an omni-agent's metaverse avatar than engaging with a chatbot online

Recommendations

What brands can do

A presence in the metaverse will likely become as common as having a website over the next several years. Forward-thinking brands can get ahead of the competition with a few simple steps.

Get your foot in the door

Lifestyle brands and those catering to younger demographics will need to establish a metaverse presence sooner rather than later. While our survey finds that people of all ages have experienced the metaverse, it is the digital natives of Gen Z who will be its earliest adopters.

Find your space

Brands should look for opportunities to reinforce their values and physical experiences, as well as to establish new ways of engaging with their key target groups.

Stay nimble

The early days of any new technology can be rocky. Brands exploring how best to leverage the metaverse with consumers should be resilient in the event of any setbacks.

Embrace creators

The metaverse is the first iteration of Web3, where content is decentralized with ownership and publication held directly by creators (vs. being amassed by big tech brands). Embrace those that align with your brand and support the communities that rally around them.

Explore new digital assets

Consider support for cryptocurrencies and digital assets known as NFTs, which allow businesses to experiment with new offerings that complement their physical goods and services.

Optimize customer experiences

Artificial intelligence and automation can help companies to not only deliver smarter, more personalized, and seamless customer experiences across the metaverse and other channels, but also predict future needs and behaviors.

Interested in learning more about how to address customer experience in the metaverse, contact [Talkdesk](#).

Methodology

In April 2022, Talkdesk surveyed 1,500 U.S. consumers between the ages of 16 and 65 via the mobile polling app Pollfish to determine awareness of the metaverse, associated perceptions, and uncover opportunities for brands to deliver new and better customer experiences.

For the purposes of this survey, the generational breakdowns are categorized as:

Generation Zers are between the ages of 16-24

Millennials are between the ages of 25-44

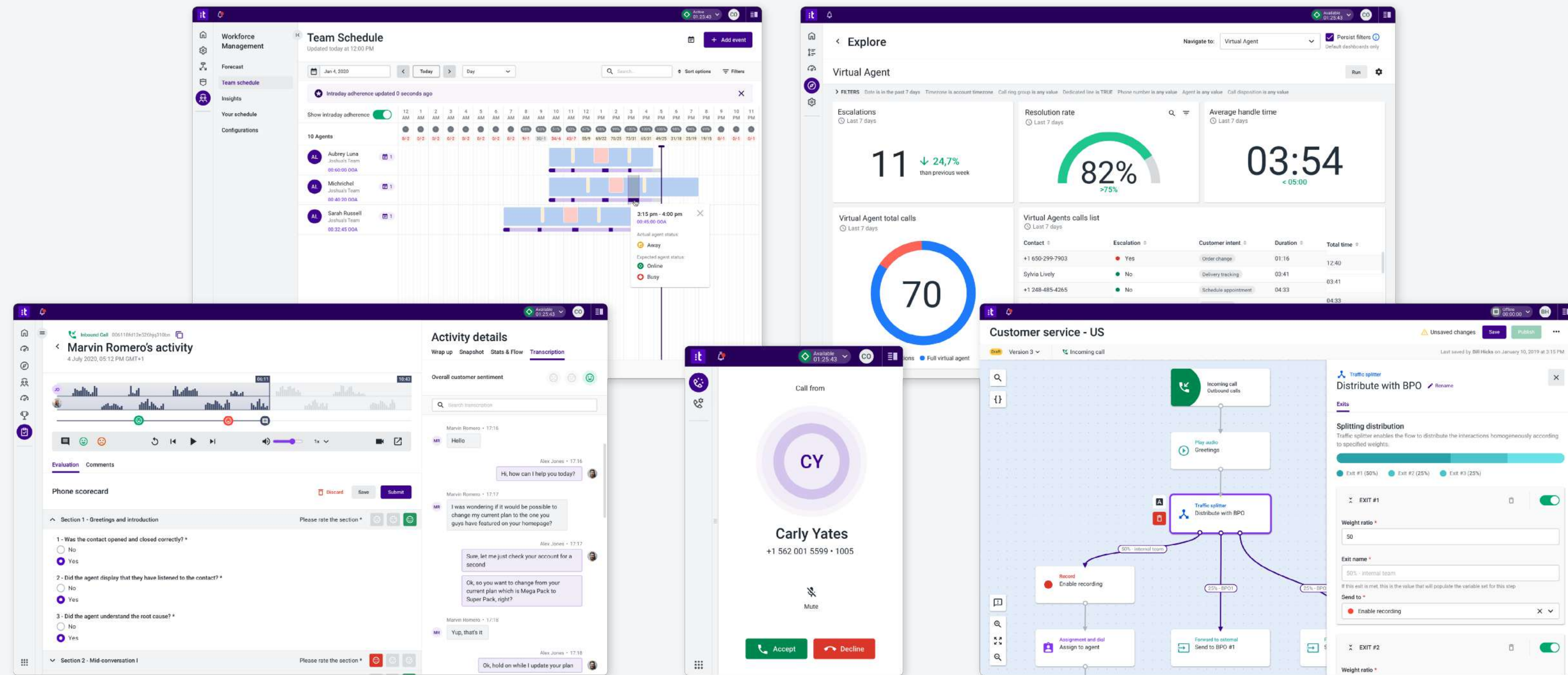
Generation Xers are between the ages of 45-54

Baby Boomers are over 55 years of age

For more specific information on its audience and methodology, please visit: [Pollfish's Methodology Page](#).



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