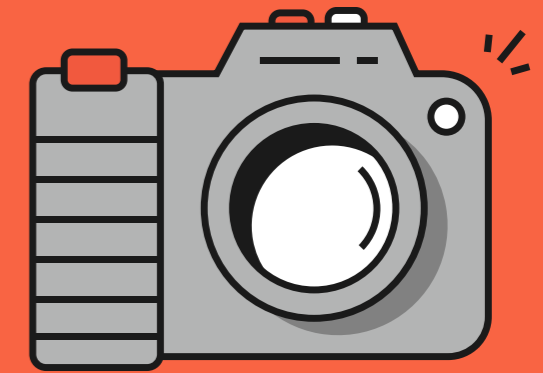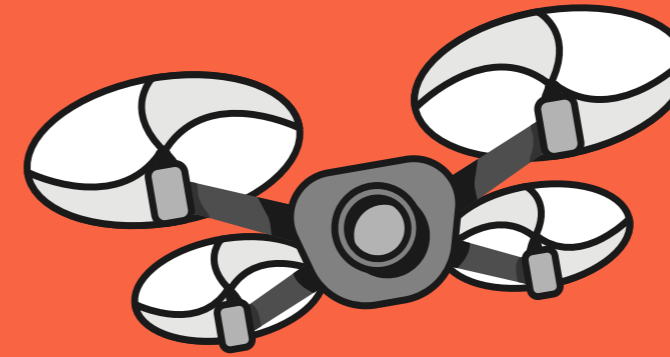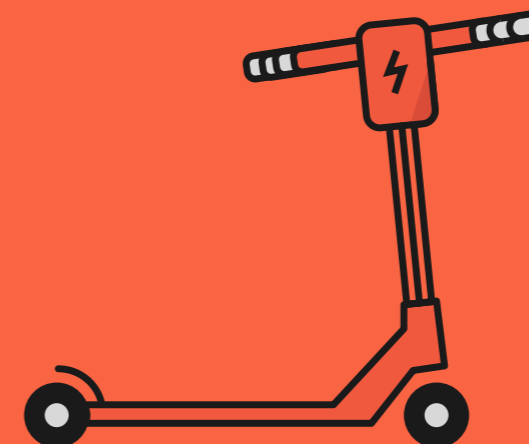# Hardware Support Insights Report

mavenoid

Introduction: Tailor your support for physical products

In today's customer experience era, excellent product support is synonymous with business success.

Now more than ever, users expect efficient, seamless, high-quality service. Most importantly, they crave support that understands their unique technical issue and the product they're using — to a T. This kind of top-tier support begins with the understanding that not all products are the same —so not all support should be the same.

Physical products are unique and require a different support approach— you simply can't fix a broken appliance the same way you can rebook a flight or debug software. Hardware support is a breed of its own and deserves to be treated as such. But, are support professionals treating hardware support differently?

We tackle this question head on in Mavenoid's first annual Hardware Support Insights Report. Where we explore what hardware support is, why it's unique, and key insights from hardware support professionals and leaders across the industry.

Methodology

Mavenoid surveyed support experts from Apple, Ring, Weathertech, and more of the world's leading hardware, consumer electronics, and physical product companies who share their unique challenges, characteristics, and tips for hardware support.

 Apple

ring

WeatherTech®

Key insights

INSIGHT ONE

Half of hardware support teams cover more than three products

INSIGHT TWO

52% of respondents had hardware that works in conjunction with software

INSIGHT THREE

Customer effort and satisfaction lead among hardware respondents as key metrics for support teams

INSIGHT FOUR

64% of respondents leverage support automation (ie. chatbot or virtual agent)

What's inside

How hardware support operates

By definition, hardware support includes any type of preventive and remedial support that is given to customers for physical products. This could include installation guidance, maintenance, repair (mail-in, onsite, remote, or otherwise), technical troubleshooting, replacement part ordering, or any customer support delivery designed to fix or optimize a tangible product.

To get a better understanding of how hardware support really operates, we asked respondents to share their support experiences ranging from how many products they service to if there is ever a need to provide onsite support. **Our survey findings concluded — Hardware support depends on software, often requires onsite support, and usually applies to many products.**

Hardware support encompasses more products

Our survey indicates that a substantial number of hardware support teams cover more than three products, with half of the respondents supporting four or more products.

Each hardware product sold contains bits and pieces that can physically break, and potentially software that can malfunction. What makes hardware devices even more unique and different from a typical retail good or software application is that they often cannot be upgraded remotely, with customers not wanting to replace these products due to the cost & effort required (such as a removing a washing machine).

How many product lines do you support?

50%
1 to 3 products

20%
4 to 6 products

14%
6 to 10 products

16%
10+ products
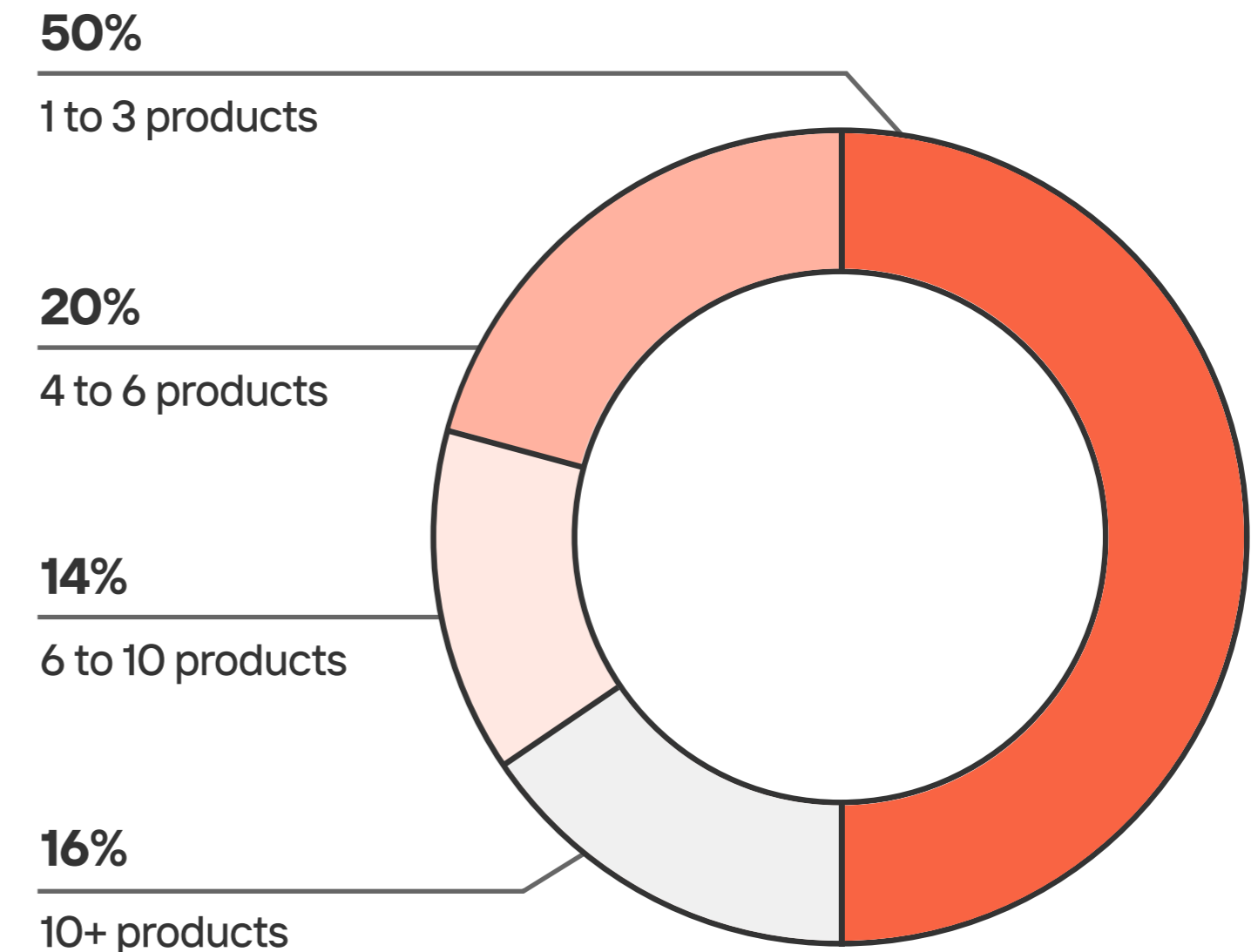
Half of hardware support teams cover more than three products

Since individual hardware products have their own intricacies, the more products to support means more knowledge to manage.

This challenge compounds with each additional product, putting more onus on teams to structure, organize, curate, and update the knowledge base in a way that both humans and automation can leverage. The result often becomes a tangled mess of FAQs, articles, and patchy snippets that are a hassle to manage and keep up to date. This impacts the ability and speed of resolution for repetitive or known support inquiries.

With more products to maintain, **hardware companies should invest in a support systems and processes that can streamline the management of their knowledge base across many product lines**, reducing the overhead impact on hardware teams down the line. As companies scale, more products are released and more complex products are created, these support systems can scale accordingly.

Shifting away from on-site support

One significant difference between hardware and software/service support is the actual physical product. Hardware often has an inherent physical component — which requires fixing/replacing broken parts, setup, installation, maintenance, and more.

Traditionally, when dealing with these complex physical devices, there has been a need for hardware companies to dispatch technicians and/or invest in onsite support services— both expensive and time extensive for companies and consumers.

Onsite support is still prevalent; though, more recently (particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic), teams have been forced to transition to a remote support setup. As the pandemic subsides, we wanted to see how hardware support leaders think about the necessity of onsite support moving forward.

Is there a need to provide onsite support with hardware products?


42% Yes

54% No

4% Unsure
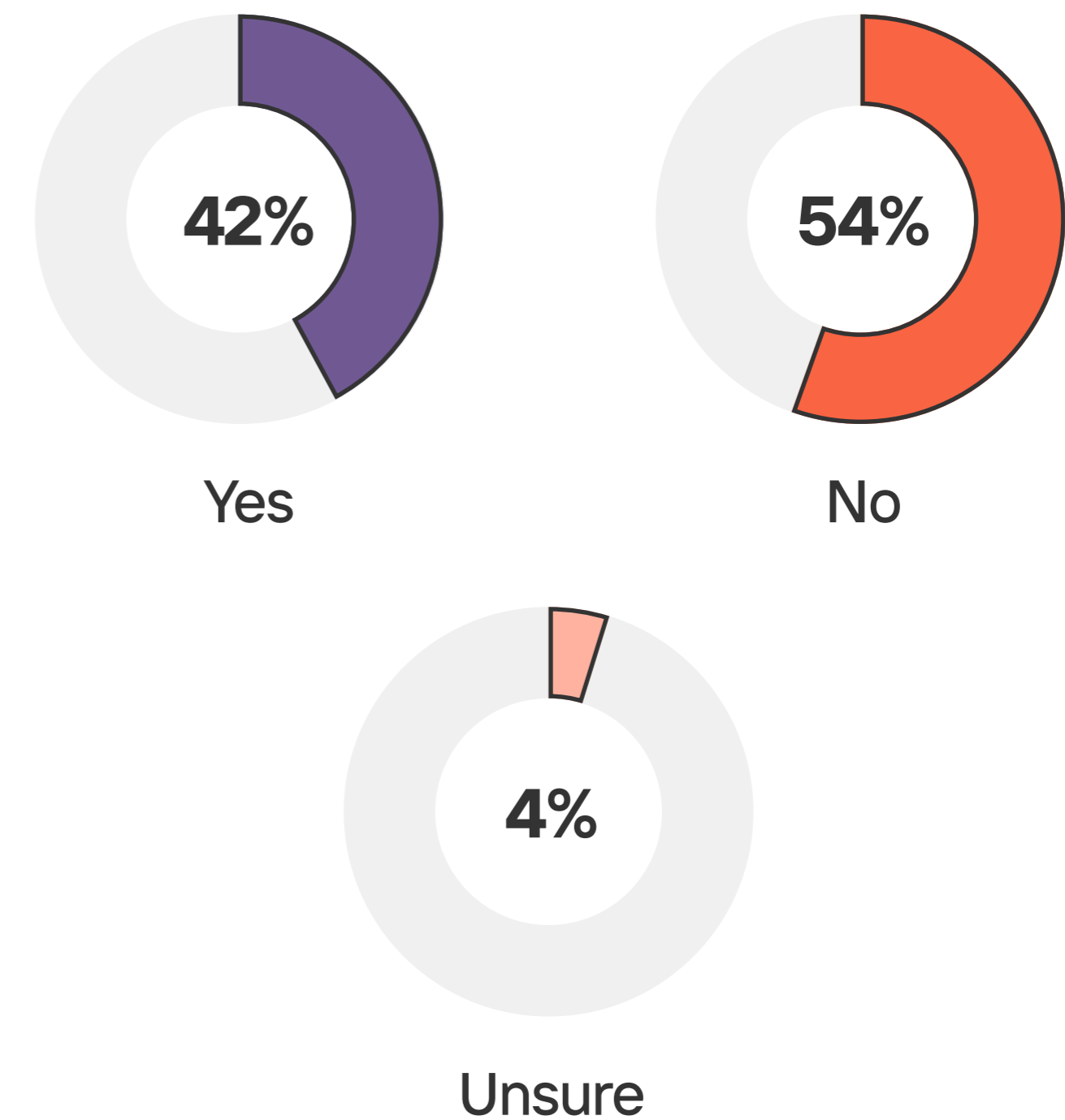
When asked if there is a need to provide onsite support, a majority of respondents indicated they do not think onsite support options are necessary.

Showing how the function is embracing channels that enable remote support, like phone, video, email, and self-service. This shift allows companies to reduce the high costs of onsite support — estimated by Gartner to be 200X higher than remote support options.

Moving away from onsite support also emphasizes the customer's ability to troubleshoot and address issues by themself. Maintaining efficiency with customers serving as their own technicians relies on reliable access to product knowledge— meaning agents have to be excellent at conveying product information remotely, and self-service technology must be able to address hardware-specific issues.
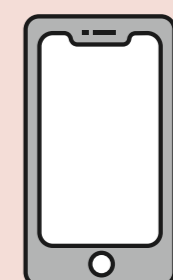
Physical service costs
200x higher than self-service
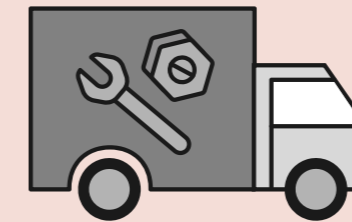
Remote service costs
40x higher than self-service

Self-service

Open 24-7 — What are the optimal support service hours?

Hardware issues range in complexity, from problems with easy fixes to issues that require more advanced troubleshooting. Regardless of the fix, most hardware businesses don't and can't control when and where their products are used. Nonetheless, customers still expect access to support whenever they need it, and this can be at any time of the day. So, with these factors in mind, how often should hardware support companies offer support, and what is the sweet spot to keep customers happy?

Here's what we found. 40% of respondents spend 8 hours per day on hardware support, while another 40% spend 12 hours per day on hardware support, with only 20% of respondents offering 24-hour support.

How many hours of service does your company offer?

40%
8 hours / day

20%
24 hours / day

40%
12 hours / day
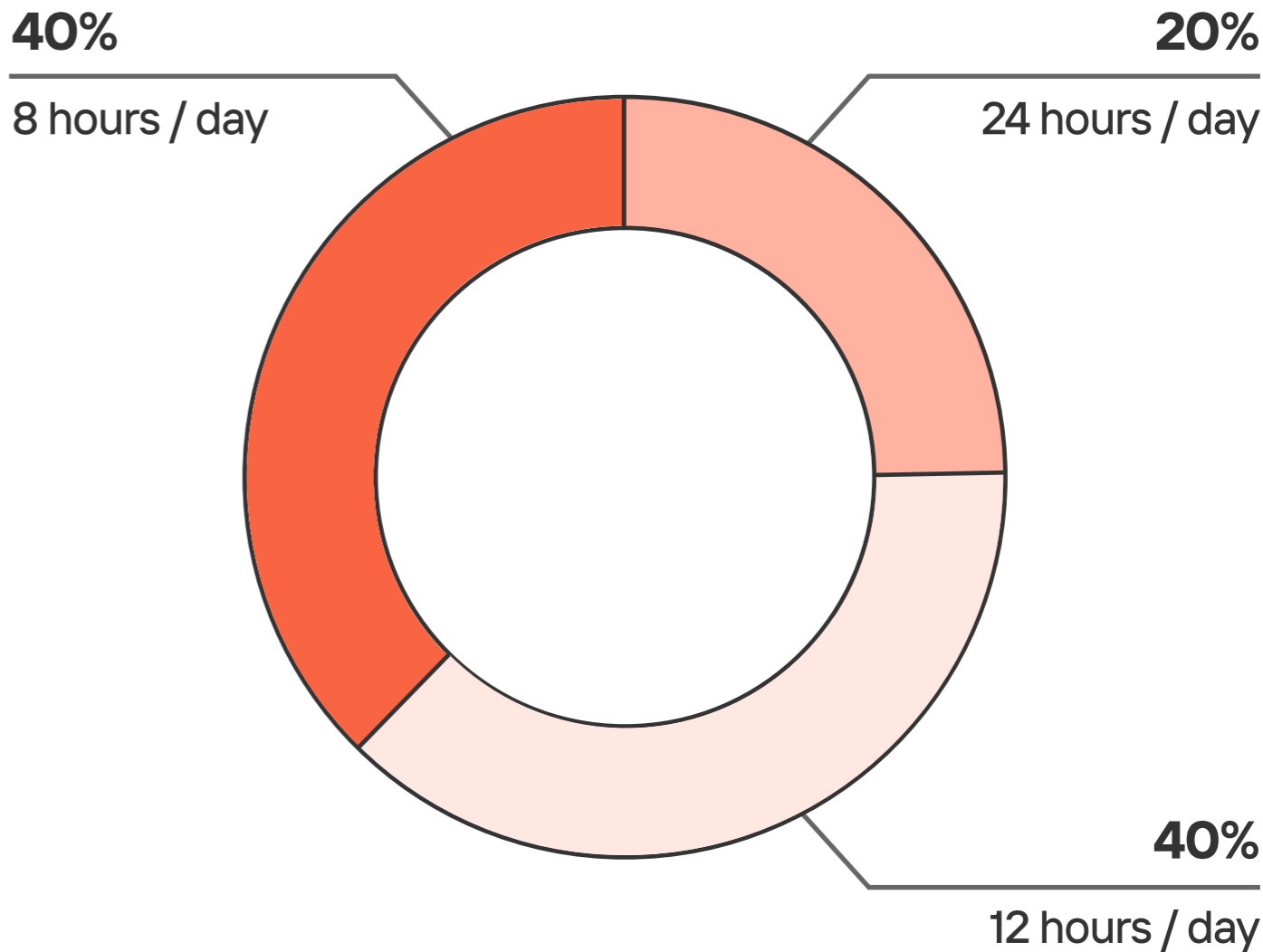
Only 20% of respondents offer 24-hour support

However, not all problems occur between the hours of 9–5 — and providing only 8-12 hours is not the solution to provide phenomenal hardware support.

Lacking access to 24-hour support, customers face a poor experience when having to wait hours for the next support window, often impacting overall CSAT and loyalty. Then why are the majority of hardware leaders only providing 8-12 hours of support?

Due to overhead associated with in-person, phone, and live support, companies often have to reduce support hours due to the additional costs. The good news is that self-service options provide an automated way to provide 24-hour support to customers while being cost-conscious. Stronger automation options will resolve most support inquiries without additional resources and integrate seamlessly with existing systems to log and create tickets or escalate to humans as needed. The bottom line — **Prioritizing 24/7 customer service support is the path to keeping existing customers and reaching new ones.**

Check this
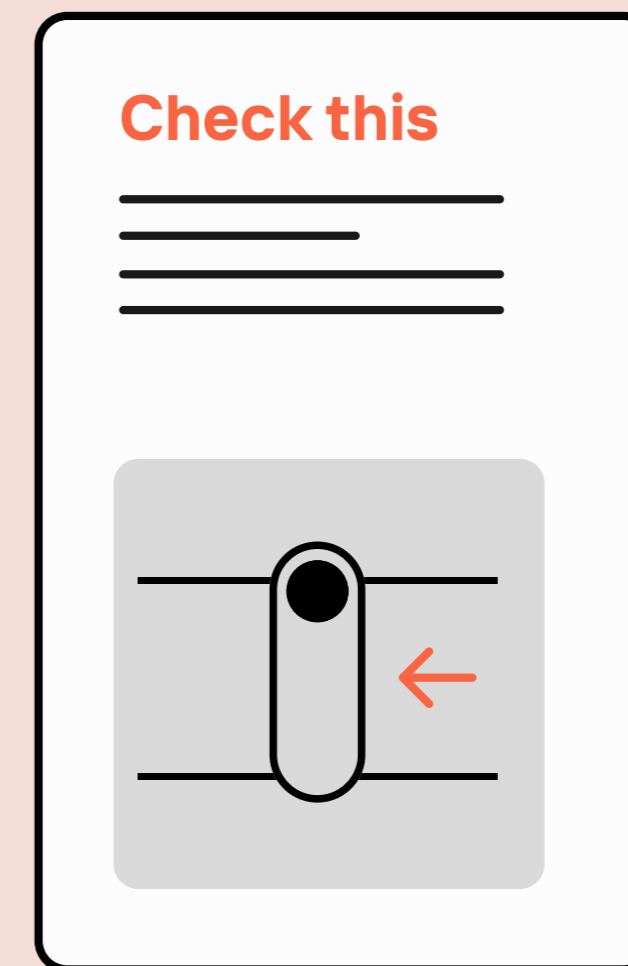
Hardware and software are becoming more intertwined with the rise of IoT

Connected devices and the Internet of Things (IoT) is becoming a larger part of the hardware landscape. This increases the complexity of hardware products in general, with better diagnostic capabilities necessary for automation and agents needed in order to identify issues on both hardware and software sides.

To see how interconnected IoT and physical products really are, we asked our hardware support respondents if their product was "linked to a particular software application where it's important to understand how they work together" — 56% said yes. In other words, the majority of hardware products have a corresponding software component (i.e., how micromobility companies have an app to rent their scooters). As such, support for the hardware products and the corresponding software, and how they work together, is important for support professionals to consider.

Does your hardware work in conjunction with a specific software?

52%
Yes

48%
No
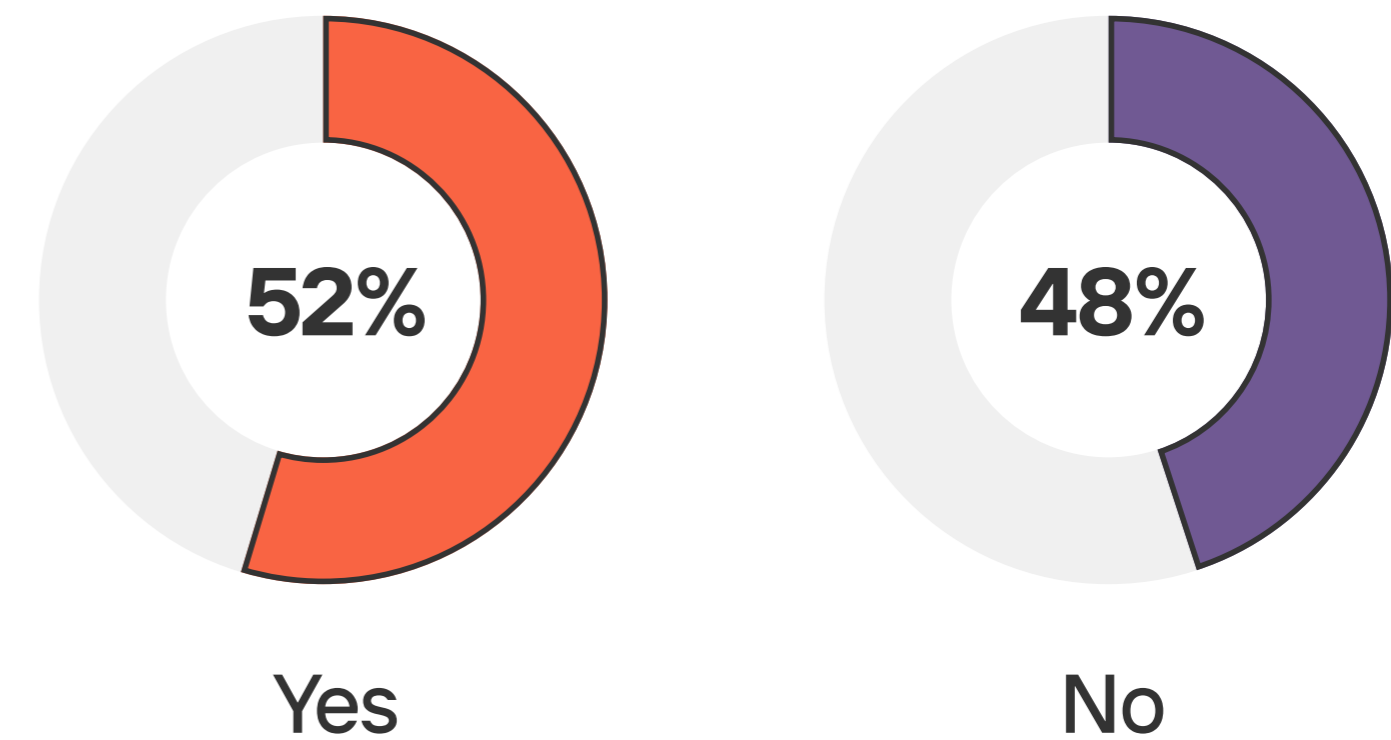
52% of respondents had hardware that works in conjunction with software

The added piece is that since these hardware products are connected to the internet, it presents an opportunity to provide proactive support (i.e., error codes from a hardware device trigger automation that sends a virtual assistant to the user on how to fix that specific error code).

Specifically, with connectivity and IoT, teams can get more accurate and proactive data from products that can lead to better support experiences. Specific error codes from software can be used to diagnose issues directly without guesswork. Better yet, connected devices can automatically send errors and maintenance requests to brands that can then practice proactive support. For example, your connected wearable can trigger a code that indicates when the battery is degrading, allowing the brand to send the customer a message to purchase a new battery and how to replace it themselves.

Purchase replacement
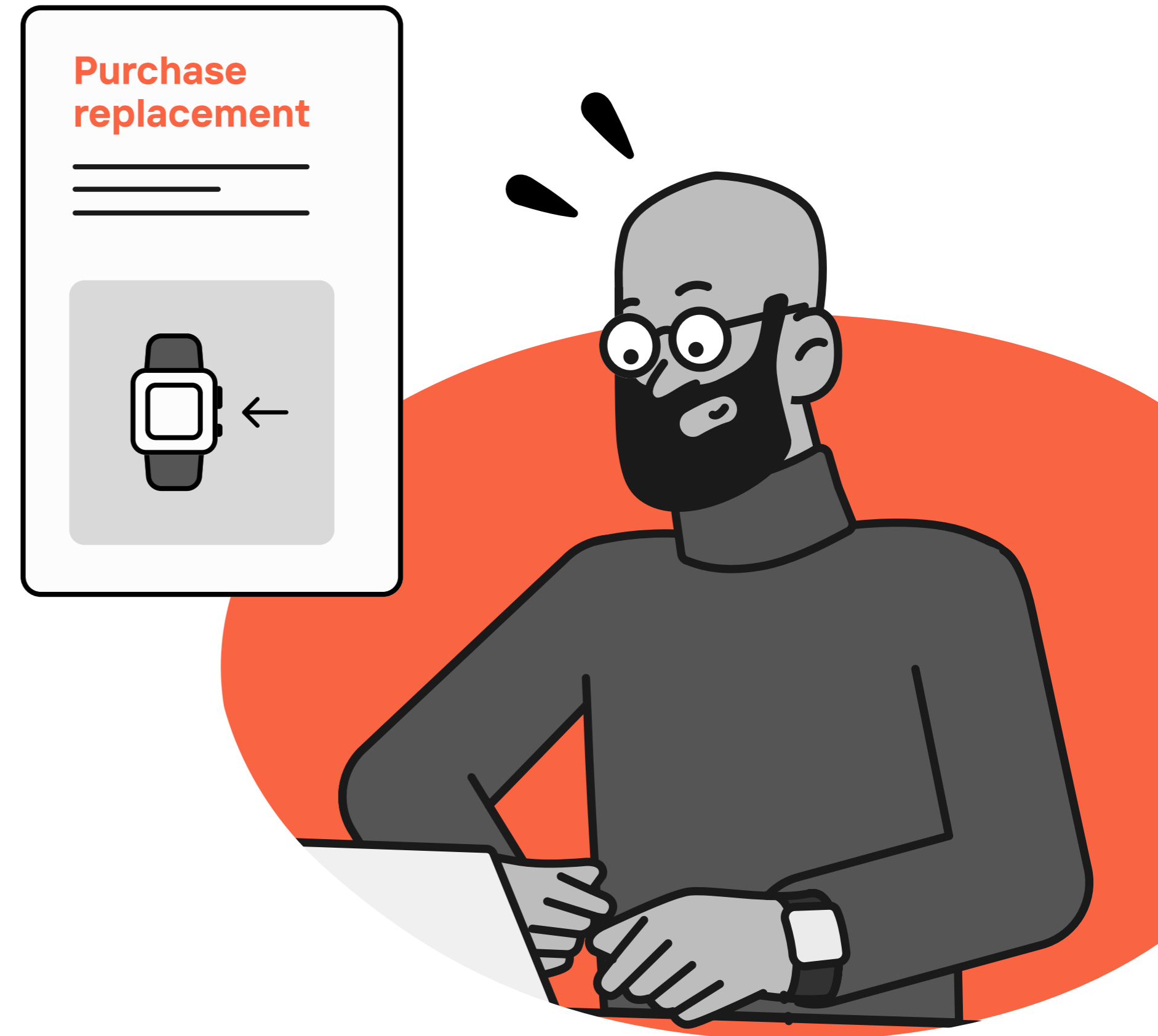
The many metrics of hardware support

As it often does, how product support teams measure their success comes down to the numbers. We wanted to know what metrics are measured and which metrics were most important to teams supporting hardware products to understand how leaders are making decisions. Survey respondents were asked to indicate what metrics they measure within their organization, and among those, which are key metrics and which are measured but not as vital (aka additional metrics).
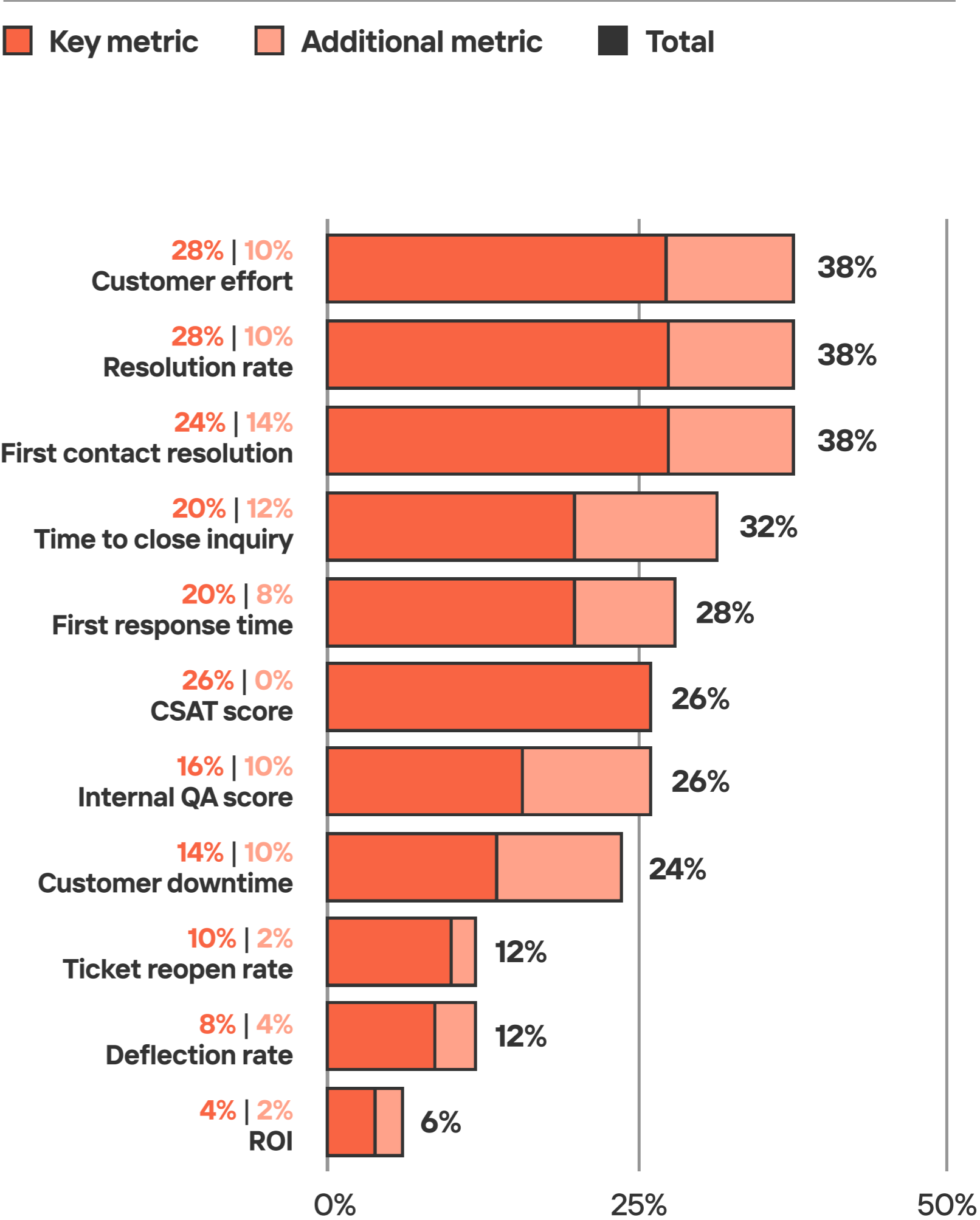
Key metrics for product support teams

Product support organizations measure various metrics, but there isn't consistency across the function around which metrics to measure and which are the most important. Even so, our results show that hardware support teams value customer effort, resolution rate, and satisfaction above all else — highlighting how **teams are looking to align the customer experience with their performance.**

Interestingly, deflection rate (the percent of support inquiries that are not sent to human support teams) was over 3x less prevalent as a key metric than resolution rate (the percentage of support inquiries that are actually solved by automation), **signaling that hardware brands care about the result of support requests, not only removing tickets from agent queues.**

Tailoring metrics for physical products and their unique challenges is the key to providing phenomenal support and keeping users coming back. By focusing on metrics that count for physical hardware, companies will be able to allocate necessary resources properly, understand which channels customers use, and identify recurring issues in the support process.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate what metrics they measure within their organization, and among those, which are key metrics and which are measured but not as vital (aka additional metrics).

Chart

Legend: ■ Key metric ■ Additional metric ■ Total

Metric	Key metric	Additional metric	Total
Customer effort	28%	10%	38%
Resolution rate	28%	10%	38%
First contact resolution	24%	14%	38%
Time to close inquiry	20%	12%	32%
First response time	20%	8%	28%
CSAT score	26%	0%	26%
Internal QA score	16%	10%	26%
Customer downtime	14%	10%	24%
Ticket reopen rate	10%	2%	12%
Deflection rate	8%	4%	12%
ROI	4%	2%	6%

0%   25%   50%

The opportunity of automation

The trend to invest in this automation has taken over the customer support industry, and it's not slowing down any time soon. The pandemic gave companies even more reasons to shift towards automation as human interaction became riskier. Forrester reported 70% of customer service decision-makers plan to invest in increasing automation and 73% in CX feedback technology.

The hardware support leaders we surveyed also invest in automation, with 64% of respondents claiming they leverage support automation of a chatbot or virtual agent. While the trend of automation is prevalent in nearly two-thirds of brands surveyed, the remaining third has a massive opportunity to adopt the technology and improve support operations.

Two thirds of respondents leverage support automation (ie. chatbot or virtual agent).

<u>At its core, automation is about implementing a system to complete repetitive tasks without the need for human labor.</u> But a key aspect to acknowledge is the adoption of automation and the efficiency of support automation. Automation that has a low-resolution rate (i.e. sub-10%) often does less to reduce costs, as customers end up reaching back out to agents more frustrated than before due to a lack of effective automated help.

A Gartner study assessed the fallbacks of automation, claiming that the average self-service resolution rate using automation is at 9% — indicating that not all automation will be good for customer support. In these scenarios, no resource is saved, but the customer experience is hurt in the process. Especially for hardware, **it's more important than ever to focus on elevating resolution rate for support automation tools, as this has a direct impact on ROI.**

You've sent me the wrong size. It's for kids. How do I send it back?

I'm not sure I understand.

Here's a link to the children's collection:

Mavenoid was built for hardware

Unlike a generic automated support solution, Mavenoid is tailored for hardware support. Purpose-built to support users of physical products, machines, devices, and gadgets, Mavenoid powers hardware support for the world's most innovative brands—from scaling startups to leading enterprises.

Around the world, leading hardware support companies such as Husqvarna, BSH Hausgeräte, Jabra, and Superpedestrian lean on Mavenoid to help them provide an excellent customer experience at every stage of growth. Ready to embrace purpose-built hardware support?

Get a demo today

What makes the Mavenoid difference?

✓ **Streamlined hybrid support.** Providing welcome flexibility through everything from AI-guided self-service to agent-assisted video support, our products swiftly guide you toward solutions—ensuring a seamless customer experience across all mediums.

✓ **Intelligent automation.** In analyzing 8,000+ support tickets across 12 different product categories, we found that support teams spent a staggering 78% of their time troubleshooting. Built to streamline customer service, Mavenoid lets you automate the single biggest time thief for support teams, with teachable AI that learns from every interaction and continually improves on its own. Easily automate support flows, from simple product FAQs to advanced troubleshooting—then sit back and benefit from a better customer experience.

✓ **Resolution rate tracking.** Mavenoid was created to solve customer problems, not deflect them. Our product assistant provides custom metrics so you can easily track resolution rates with an eye for constant improvement—driving customer satisfaction by solving problems as they arise.

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