

Multilingual Service in the Support Center



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Introduction

In order to discover more about the need for multilingual support, how it's currently being provided, and whether or not it will be expanding, HDI and Lionbridge conducted research during the first half of 2017. The data presented in this report were collected via an online survey conducted in March and April 2017. This report is based on 381 completed responses, and at least one survey was completed and submitted from each of twenty-three countries and across thirty industries.

This study sought to understand the following:

- Is multilingual support a priority?
- Are there positive effects on metrics when multilingual support is offered?
- How is support being provided, for which products/services, and at what levels?
- What is the level of challenge in providing multilingual support?
- What are future plans?

“Providing multilingual support can be challenging for enterprise service desks, but when provided it has substantial positive impact on CSAT, FCR, and other quality metrics. Unfortunately, it isn’t more prevalent because language strategies have carried a high cost. The landscape is changing. Second generation, artificial intelligence-based real-time translation technology is eliminating language barriers across agent-assisted and self-service communications channels, significantly lowering the cost of omnilingual service. In conjunction with over-the-phone interpretation, it’s easier than ever for service desks to provide the language support that employees, partners, distributors, and suppliers want and value.”

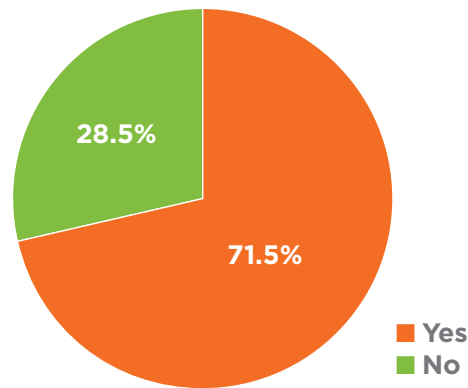
— Tom Tseki
VP and GM, GeoFluent and Customer Care Solutions
Lionbridge

Key Findings

Multilingual support is a priority.

Nearly three-quarters of the respondents who answered the question, “Is multilingual support a priority for your support center(s)?” indicated that multilingual support *is* a priority for their organizations (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: IS MULTILINGUAL SUPPORT A PRIORITY?



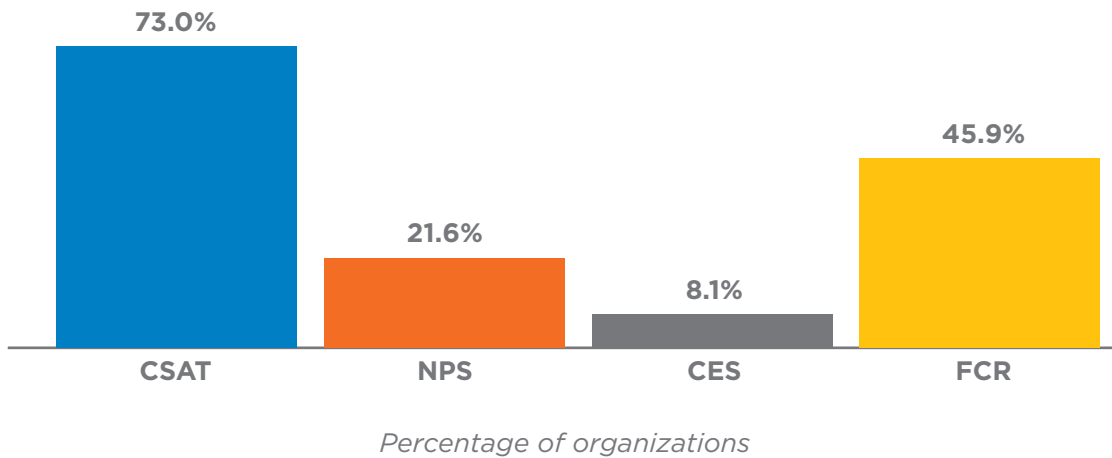
“We feel that we don’t have the necessary tools to help some of our non-English-speaking users. We want to be able to provide a high level of support, but the language barrier delays our responses and causes frustration on both sides.”

— Survey respondent

Key quality measures improve when support is provided in a customer's native language.

Almost three-quarters of respondents said customer satisfaction (CSAT) scores were better when support was provided in the customer's native language; more than one-fifth said Net Promoter Scores (NPS) were better, and nearly 46% said first contact resolution (FCR) was better (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2: WHAT QUALITY MEASURES IMPROVE WHEN SUPPORT IS PROVIDED IN NATIVE LANGUAGES?*



* Respondents were asked to select all that apply; responses ≠ 100%

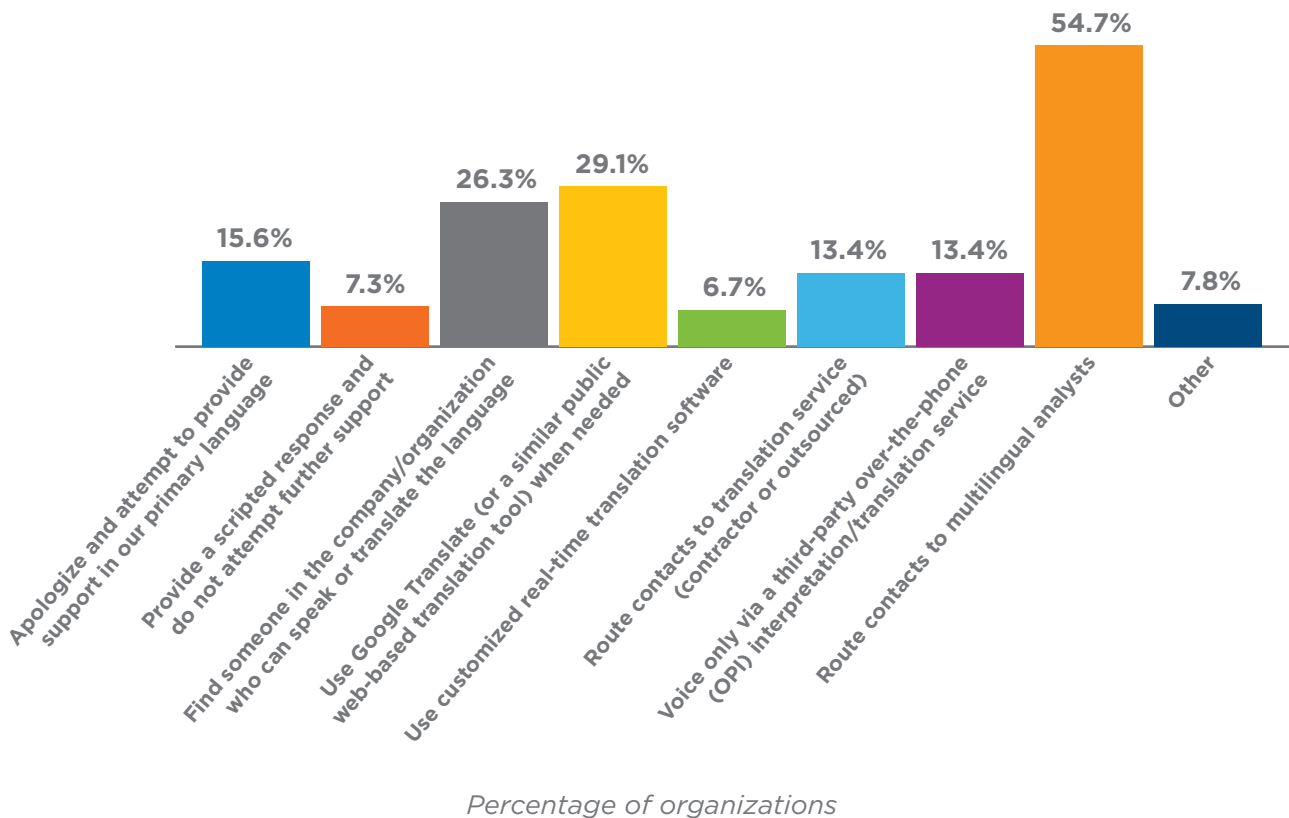
Multilingual support is important and is a challenge.

When asked if supporting multiple languages is a challenge, respondents rated the level of challenge at 5.8 out of 10 (mean). It's not overwhelming, but it *is* a significant challenge.

Despite multilingual support being a priority and demonstrably improving important measurements, there are serious challenges for support centers in providing it. In order to understand this better, the respondents were asked how they currently handle contacts in languages other than their primary language.

Over 15% of organizations simply apologize for not being able to provide support in nonprimary languages and attempt to continue in their primary language. In over 7% of organizations, analysts give a scripted response to contacts in other languages and provide *no further support*. More than one-quarter try to find someone in the organization who can assist in the nonprimary language, and over 29% use Google Translate or a similar machine translation tool (Figure 3).

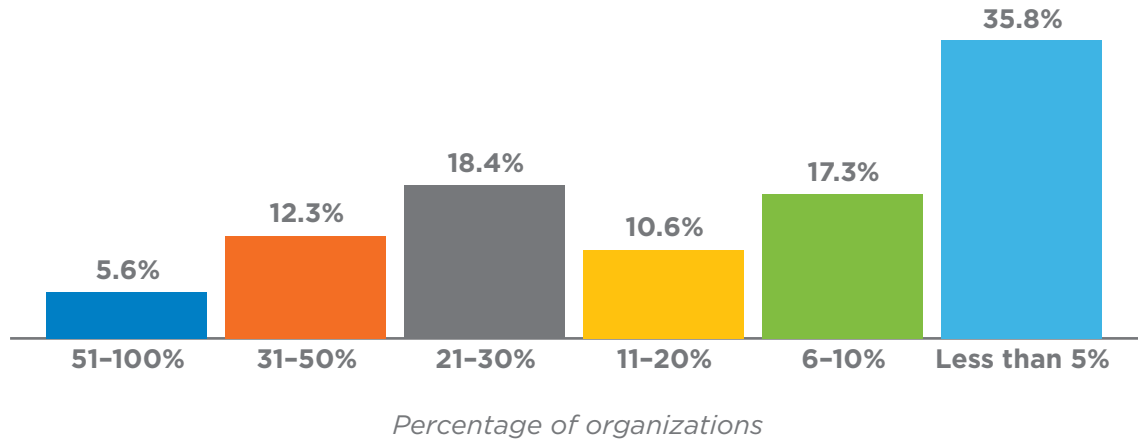
FIGURE 3: HOW ARE CONTACTS IN NONPRIMARY LANGUAGES CURRENTLY HANDLED?*



* Respondents were asked to select all that apply; responses ≠ 100%

About one-third of respondent organizations receive 21-50% of their contacts in a language other than their primary, while 5.6% of organizations handle between half and all of their calls in a nonprimary language (Figure 4). Just over one-third of the respondents said that their support center receives less than 5% of contacts in nonprimary languages.

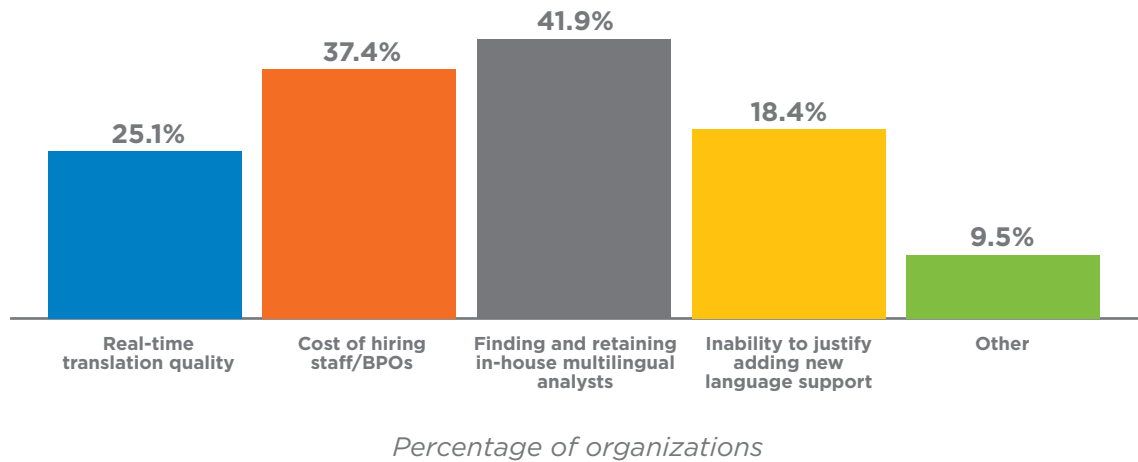
FIGURE 4: WHAT PERCENTAGE OF CONTACTS ARE IN A NONPRIMARY LANGUAGE?



Slightly more than half of respondent organizations say they don't expect the volume of nonprimary language support to change over the next three years.

Nearly 55% of organizations route calls to staff who are multilingual, but as shown in Figure 5, finding and retaining multilingual staff is a challenge for the largest percentage of support centers that are providing multilingual support.

FIGURE 5: WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH PROVIDING MULTILINGUAL SUPPORT?*



* Respondents were asked to select all that apply; responses ≠ 100%

Despite these challenges, *less than one-tenth* (9.5%) of respondents said they would prefer *not* to provide support in nonprimary languages. About one-third (34.6%) said they would prefer to provide multilingual support internally with existing staff, while 11.7% said they would prefer second-generation real-time translation solutions.

Location and the demographics of the organization have a role to play in the difficulty or ease of supporting multiple languages.

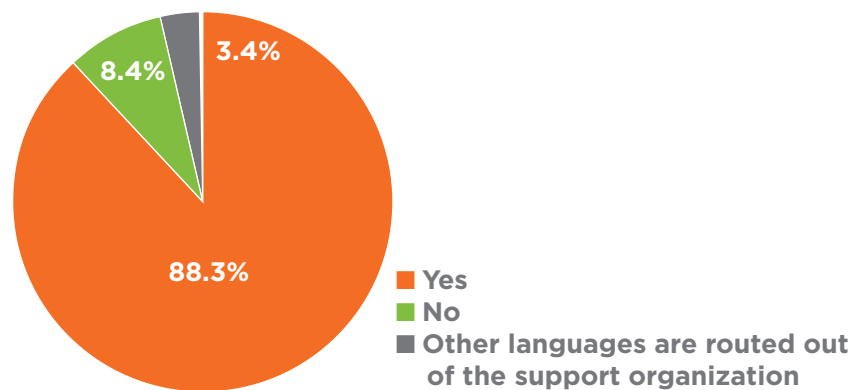
“We are very fortunate to be part of a multilingual community, so we frequently have bilingual technicians on staff.”

– Survey respondent

Overwhelmingly, analysts like supporting customers in their native languages.

Nearly nine out of ten respondents (88.3%) said their analysts like providing support in nonprimary languages; 3.4% said that contacts in nonprimary languages are routed outside of support, so this question did not apply (Figure 6).

FIGURE 6: DO YOUR ANALYSTS LIKE SUPPORTING CUSTOMERS IN NONPRIMARY LANGUAGES?



Nearly half (47%) of respondent organizations provide support in at least one other language, and more than one-fifth (20.7%) offer support in three to five languages (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7: IN HOW MANY LANGUAGES IS SUPPORT PROVIDED?

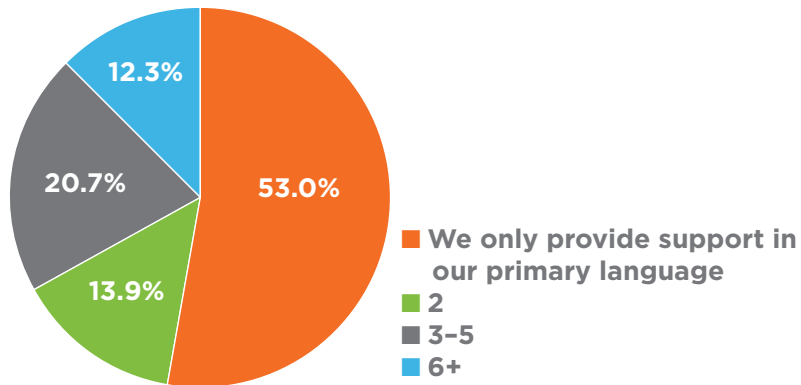


FIGURE 8: IS YOUR SUPPORT CENTER PLANNING TO ADD SUPPORT FOR ANOTHER LANGUAGE OR LANGUAGES?

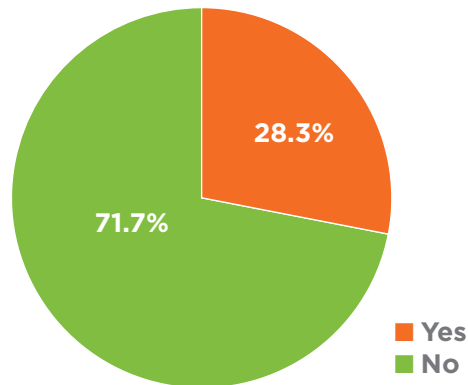
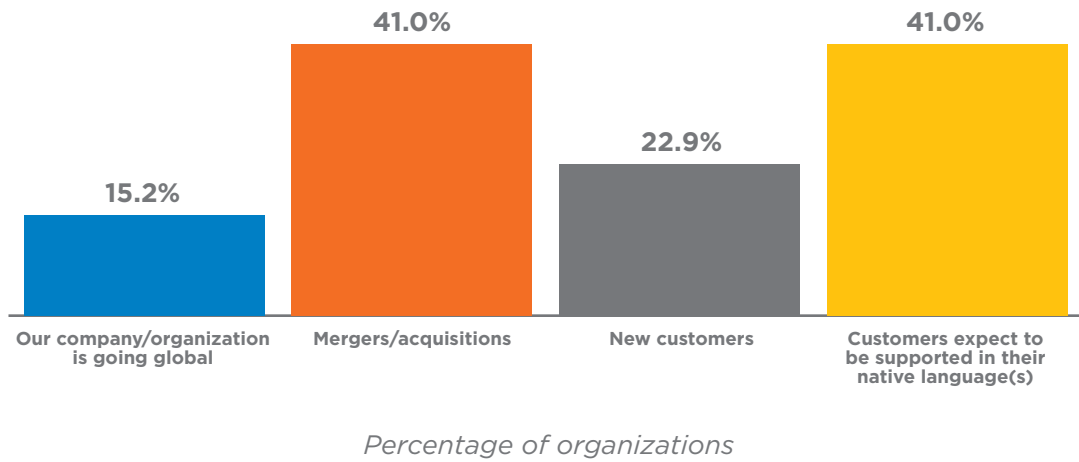


FIGURE 9: WHY IS YOUR SUPPORT CENTER ADDING LANGUAGES?



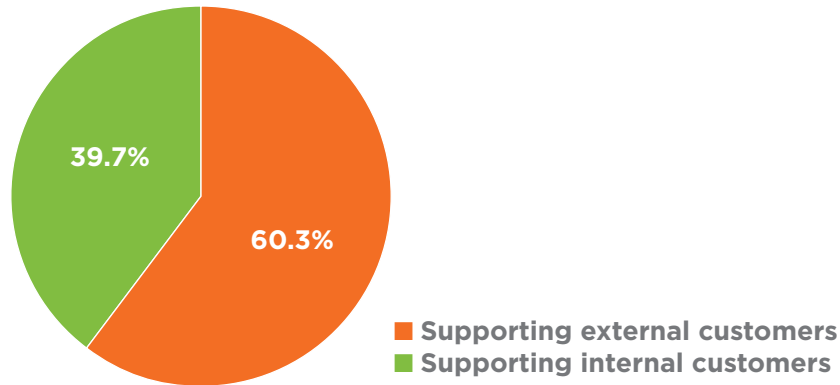
** Respondents were asked to select all that apply; responses ≠ 100%*

While 27.2% are looking to add language(s) within one year and an additional 28.3% percent in 1-2 years, 44.6% say they are more than two years away from adding additional languages.

Other Findings

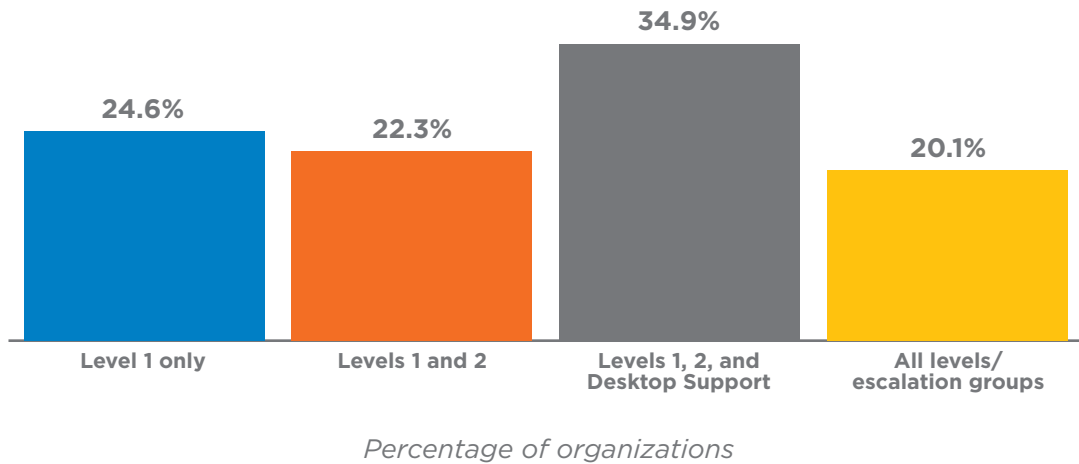
Supporting external customers—the customers of the company or organization—rather than internal customers—such as fellow employees—is more difficult, by a 60/40 margin (Figure 10).

FIGURE 10: WHERE IS THE LANGUAGE CHALLENGE GREATER?



In four-fifths of organizations, multilingual staff handle both primary language and nonprimary language contacts. One-fifth of organizations offer multilingual support at all escalation levels and groups. Almost one-quarter limit multilingual support to Level 1; about one-third offer it at Levels 1, 2, and desktop support (Figure 11).

FIGURE 11: WHERE IS MULTILINGUAL SUPPORT OFFERED?*



* Respondents were asked to select all that apply; responses ≠ 100%

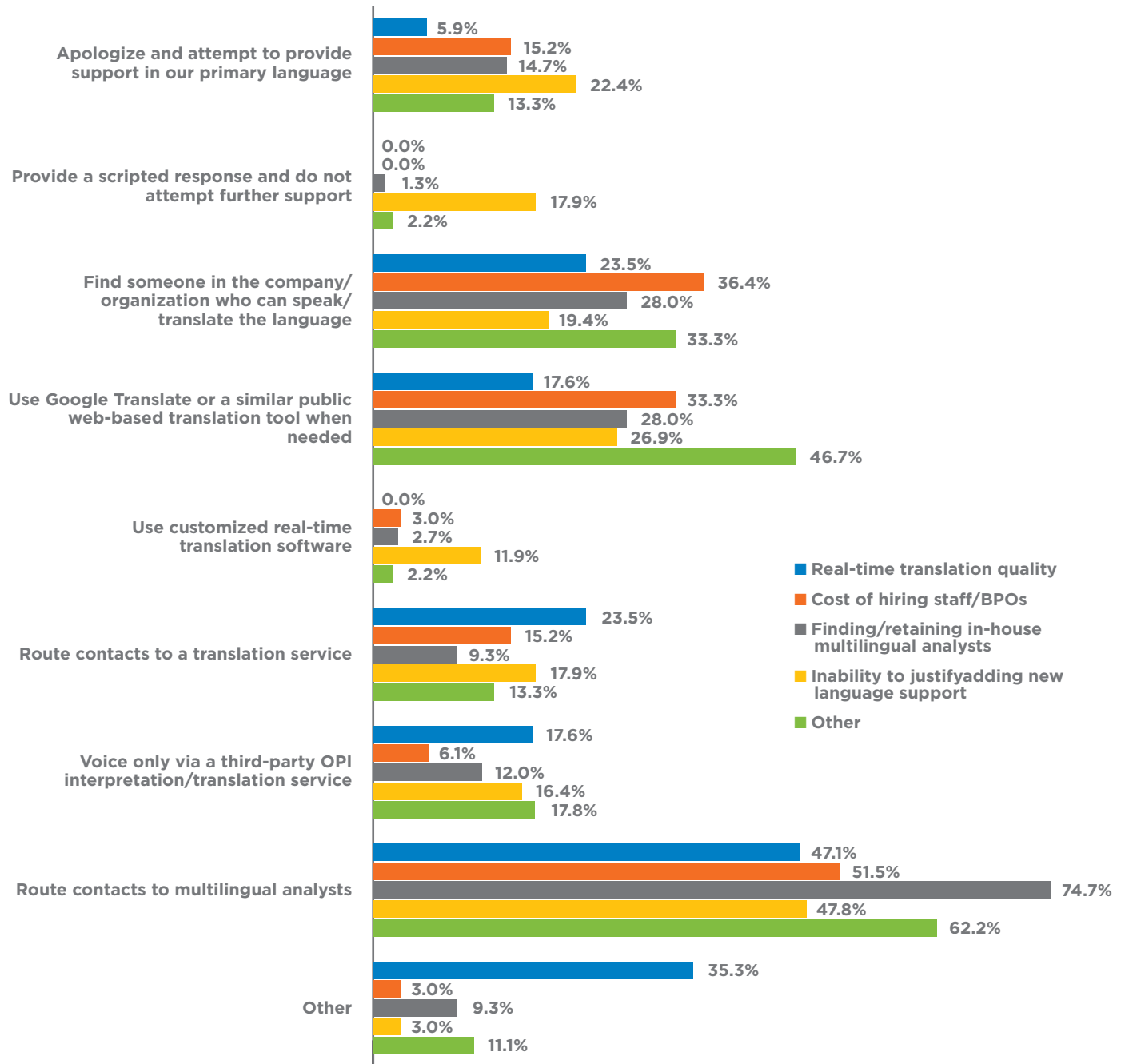
Multilingual support is most likely to be offered over the phone (77%) or via email (57%), and less likely to be offered on other channels. While many organizations are planning to add channels, about half say they won't provide multilingual support over those channels. Of those who will, 77.8% say they will do so by hiring multilingual staff or by using their existing staff. Nearly one-quarter say they will use Google Translate or a similar public web-based translation tool.

Less than half (46.2%) of respondents said they provide support for all products and/or services in multiple languages, while 15.2% do it on a case-by-case basis, taking time and resources.

Less than one-fifth of organizations dedicate multilingual staff to providing support outside the primary language; in the others, multilingual staff members handle both primary and nonprimary languages.

Deeper Dives

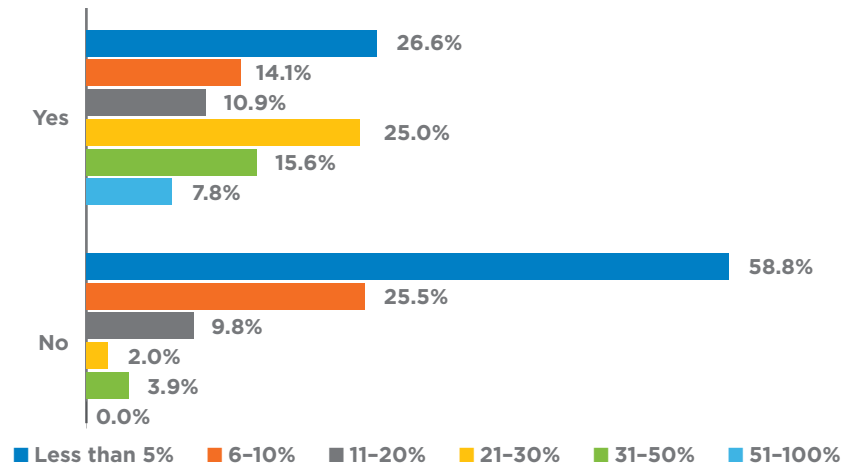
FIGURE 12: BIGGEST CHALLENGES VS. CURRENT CONTACT HANDLING



Percentage of organizations

Those who use customized real-time translation software appear to be addressing their challenges (including cost) better than most.

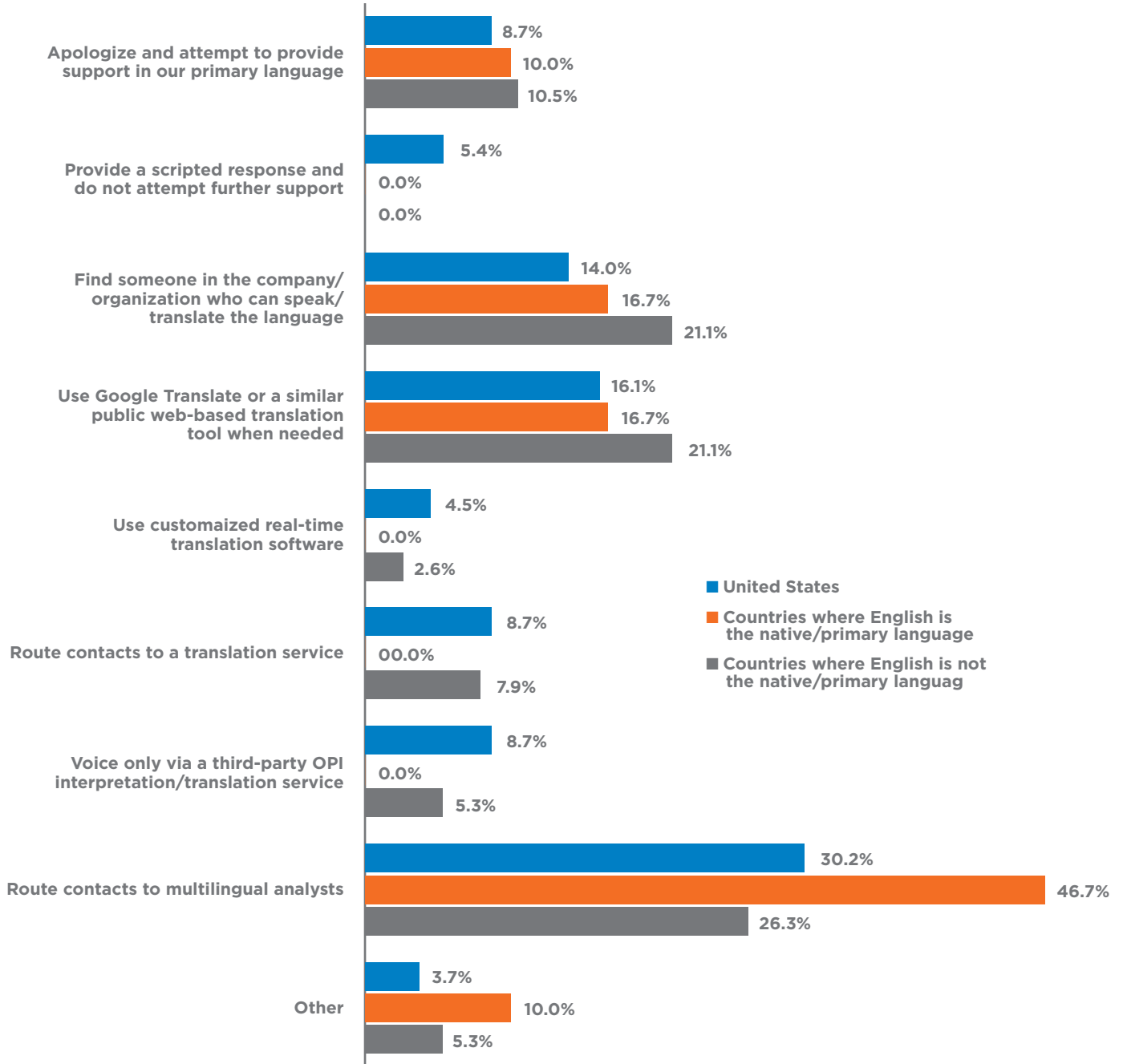
FIGURE 13: PRIORITY (YES/NO) VS. PERCENTAGE OF TICKETS IN NONPRIMARY LANGUAGE



Percentage of organizations

Those who said multilingual support was not a priority generally have smaller percentages of tickets in nonprimary languages. Although this is intuitive, the stats bear it out.

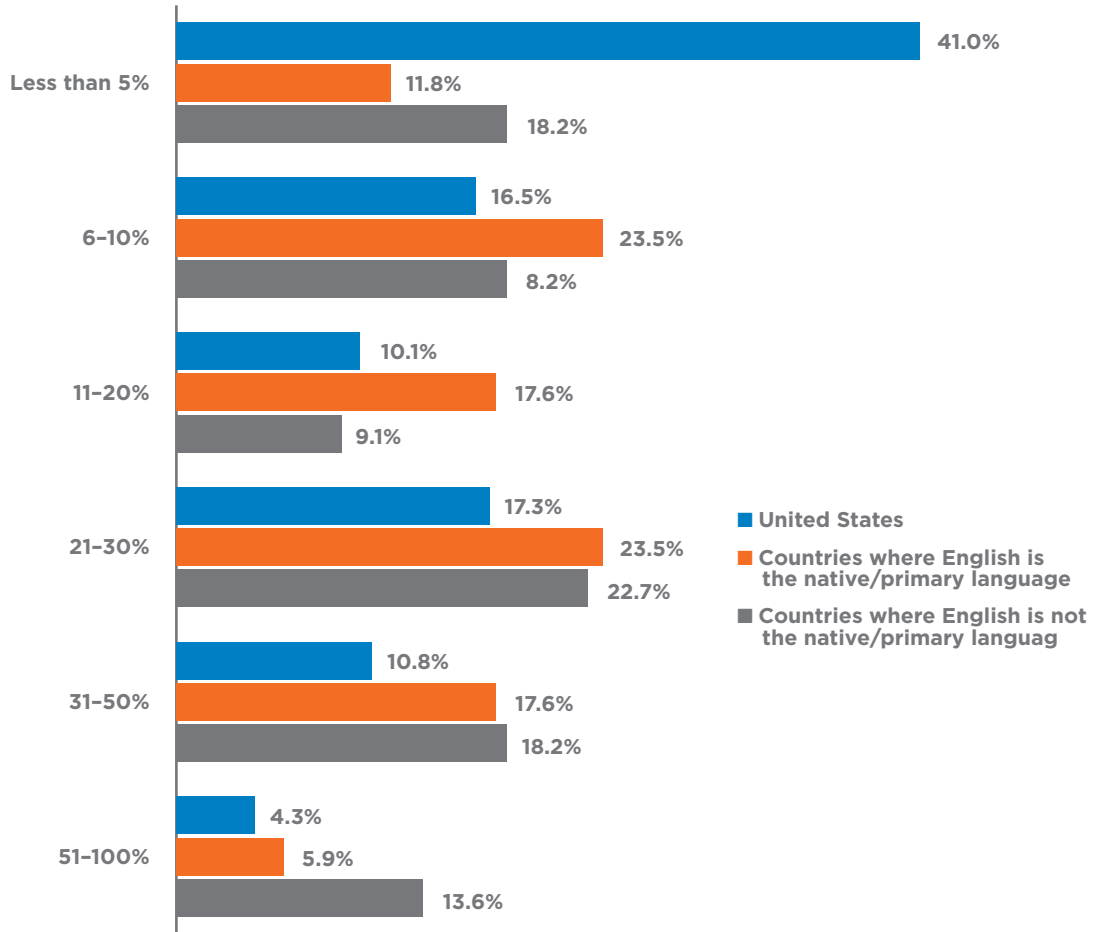
FIGURE 14: LOCATION OF COMPANY HEADQUARTERS VS. CURRENT CONTACT HANDLING PRACTICES



Percentage of organizations

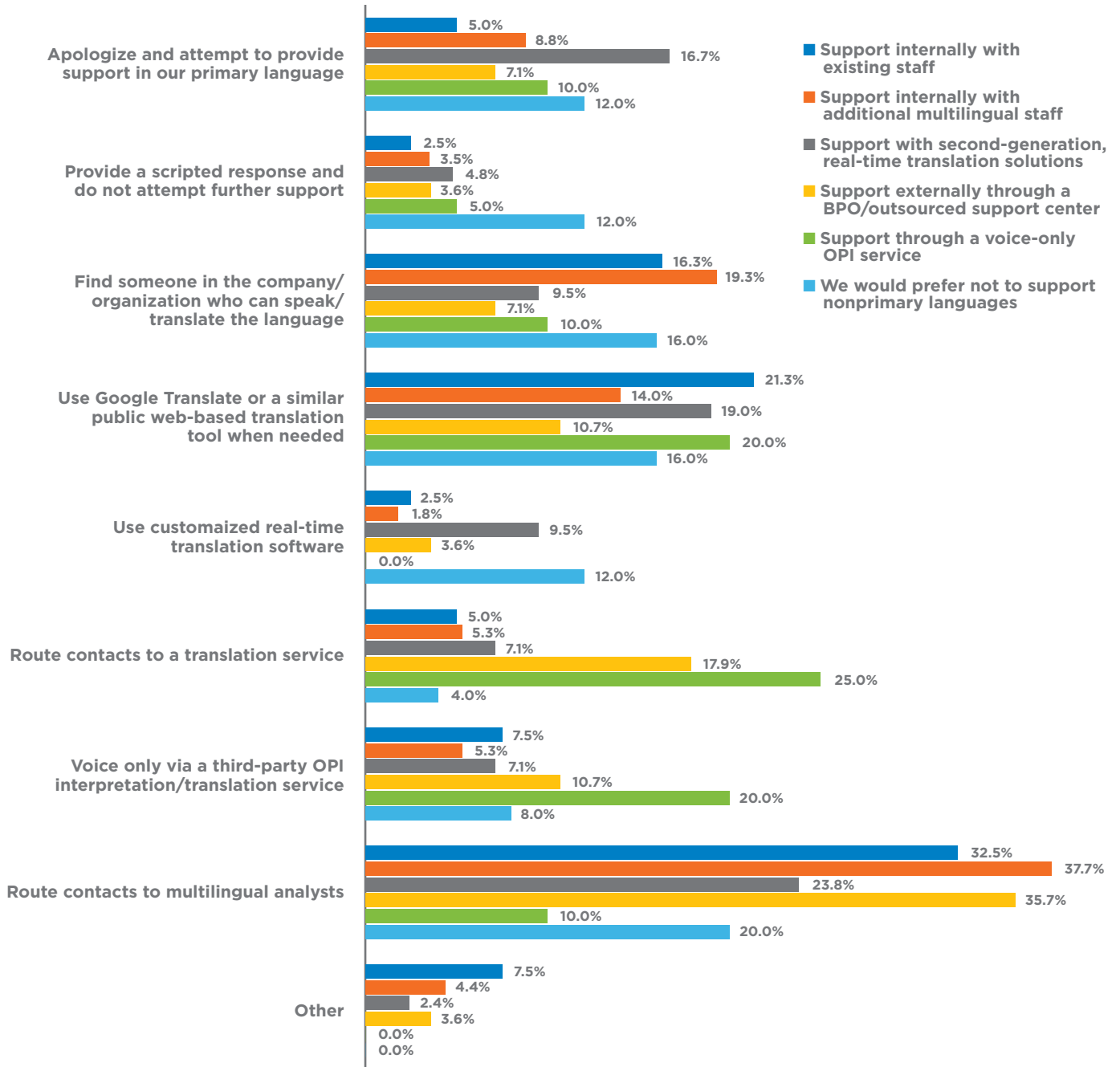
The US is the only country represented in which a scripted response is offered with no further support. Other countries where English is the primary language are most likely to route the call to a multilingual analyst.

FIGURE 15: LOCATION OF COMPANY HEADQUARTERS VS. PERCENTAGE OF NONPRIMARY LANGUAGE CONTACTS



Percentage of organizations

FIGURE 16: PREFERENCES FOR SUPPORTING ADDITIONAL LANGUAGES VS. CURRENT CONTACT HANDLING PRACTICES



Percentage of organizations

There appears to be a desire to route calls to a multilingual analyst, even among those who would prefer *not* to provide multilingual support. Organizations that apologize and attempt to support in the primary language chose real-time second generation software as a preference more than any of the others.

Demographics

The 381 respondents to this survey represent twenty-three countries (85.8% from the United States) and approximately thirty industries. The largest segments represented are education, including higher education, K-12, and other, and financial/legal services.

The majority of respondents' organizations are based in the United States (86.6%); 0.3% (each) are in the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland; 7.1% are based in countries where English is not the native/primary language; and 5.8% are based in countries other than the US, UK, or Republic of Ireland where English is the native/primary language.

FIGURE 17: WHERE ARE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S SUPPORT CENTERS, INCLUDING OUTSOURCED SUPPORT CENTERS?

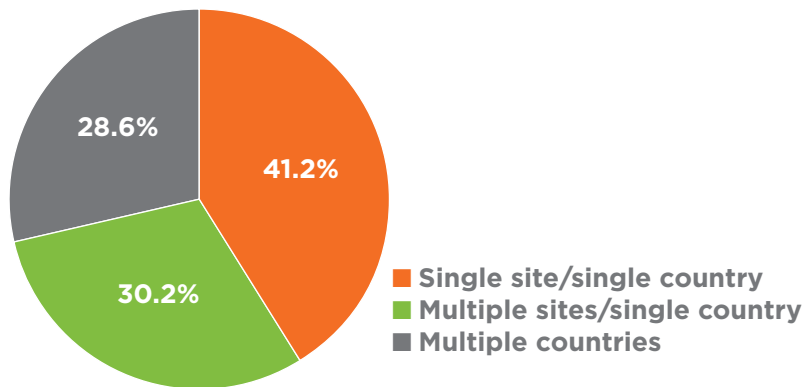


FIGURE 18: HOW MANY ANALYSTS WORK IN YOUR SUPPORT CENTER(S)?

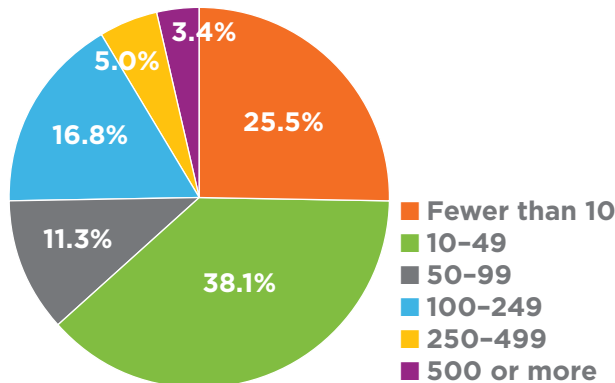


FIGURE 19: HOW MANY PEOPLE WORK IN YOUR ENTIRE COMPANY (NOT JUST IT)?

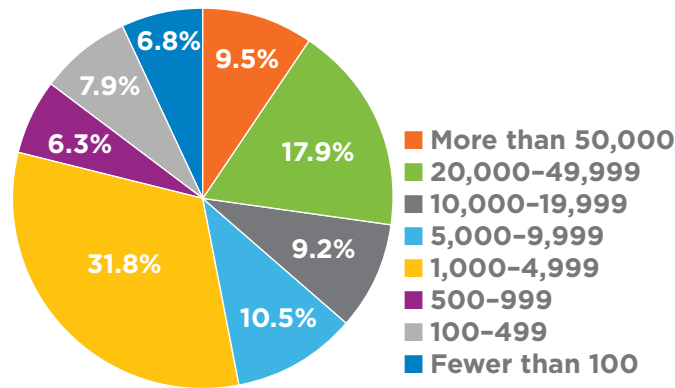
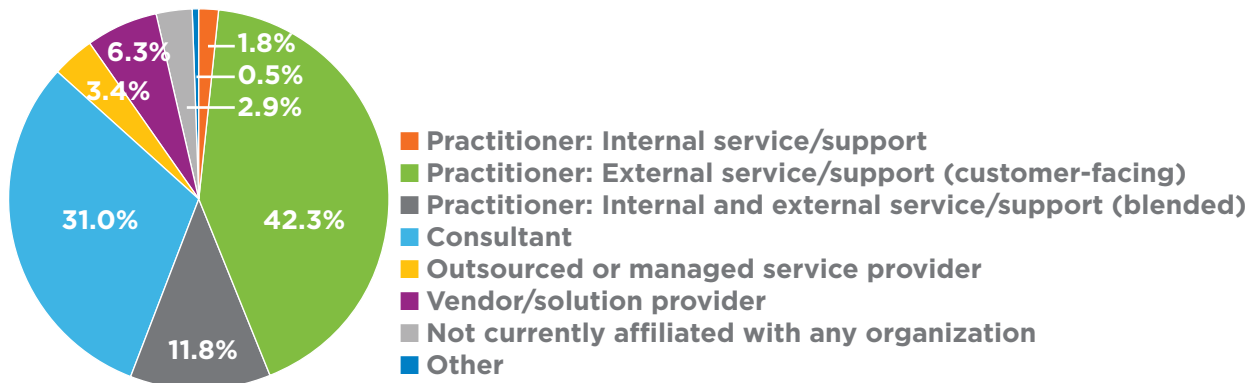


FIGURE 20: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR POSITION/JOB FUNCTION?



FIGURE 21: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR ROLE?



About HDI

In 1989, HDI became the first professional association created for the technical support industry. Since then, HDI has remained the source for professional development by offering resources to promote organization-wide success through exceptional customer service. We do this by:

- Facilitating collaboration and networking
- Hosting acclaimed conferences and events
- Producing renowned publications and research
- Certifying and training thousands of professionals each year

Our mission is to elevate the customer experience through the development of the technical support industry.

About Lionbridge

Lionbridge enables more than 800 world-leading brands to increase international market share, speed adoption of products, and effectively engage their customers in local markets worldwide. Using our innovative cloud technology platforms and our global crowd of more than 100,000 professional cloud workers, we provide detail-critical business processes, including translation, online marketing, global content management, and application testing solutions that ensure global brand consistency, local relevancy, and technical usability across all touchpoints of the customer lifecycle. Based in Waltham, MA, Lionbridge maintains solution centers in 27 countries. To learn more, visit www.lionbridge.com.

About GeoFluent

GeoFluent Omni-Channel™ is a multilingual solution that helps contact centers, service desks, and enterprises eliminate language barriers with their customers, prospects, partners, distributors, and employees. Across channels and languages, GeoFluent enables more effective communications and increases CX without having to hire or maintain bilingual staff or use multiple language services providers. The solution includes GeoFluent Virtual Translator, designed for self-service and agent-assisted digital channels such as chat, chatbots, email, SMS and forums/communities; GeoFluent Interpreter, an innovative solution that improves the over-the-phone interpretation experience; and, GeoFluent Translate, a self-service and secure method for rapid document translation. These can be delivered as an integrated solution or utilized separately. At the core of each GeoFluent module is Virtual Linguist, an engine trained specifically for each GeoFluent client, ensuring multilingual consistency and accuracy across languages, channels, and use cases while understanding the context and unique brand, channel, and use case acronyms, lingo, and speak. To learn more, visit www.geofluent.com.

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