

What shoppers actually ask an AI chat assistant

We analyzed 5,470 real website chat conversations from 246 AI assistants over 90 days. A third are product questions, 39% happen outside business hours, 12.8% turn into a lead, and only 1% ask for a human.

32.7%

of conversations are product questions

39%

start outside 9:00 to 18:00 local time

12.8%

end with the visitor leaving contact details

1.0%

ask to be handed to a human

46.3%

go beyond a single question

47.7%

happen on a phone

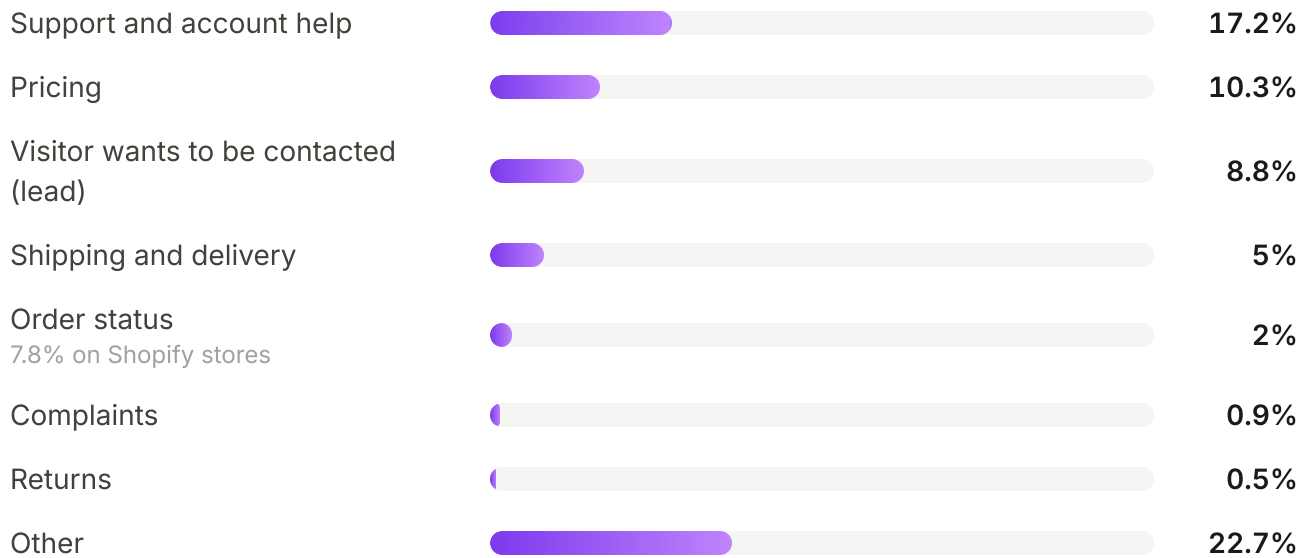
1. A third of every conversation is a product question

The single biggest job of a website assistant is not support. It is answering "does this do X", "which one fits me" and "what is the difference". 32.7% of all conversations were classified as product questions. On Shopify stores the share is 46.9%, and order status becomes the fourth most common topic at 7.8%.

Product questions
46.9% on Shopify stores



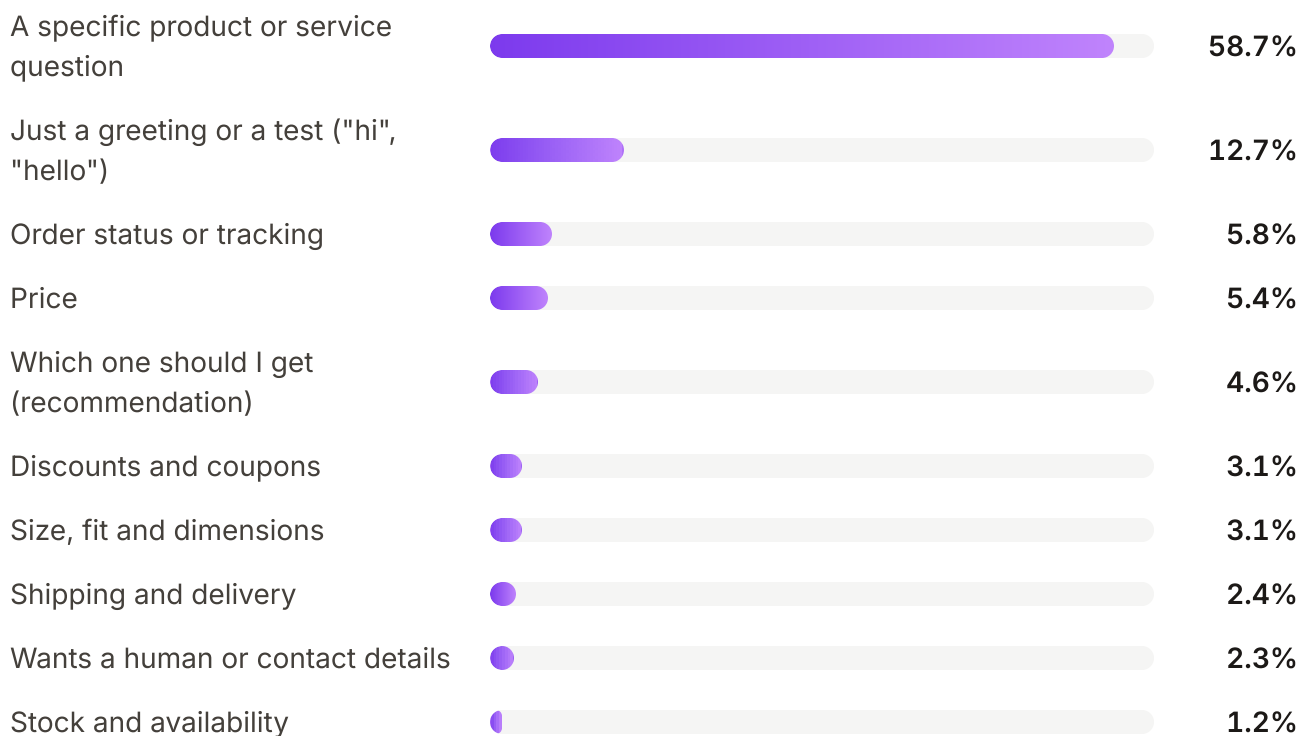
32.7%



Topic assigned automatically per conversation. "Other" includes greetings, tests and off-topic messages.

2. The first message is short and rarely a full question

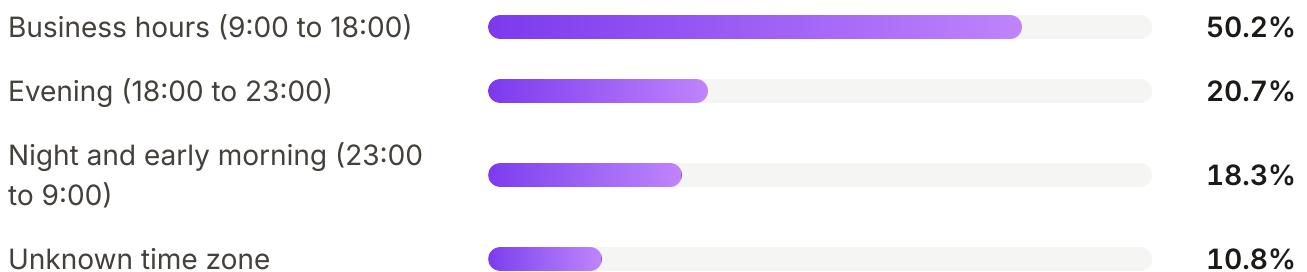
The average opening message is 51 characters, and only 35.7% contain a question mark. People type the way they search: "shipping to canada", "blue one in medium", "track order 1042". An assistant has to answer fragments, not sentences.



Keyword classification of the first visitor message. Categories are exclusive, first match wins.

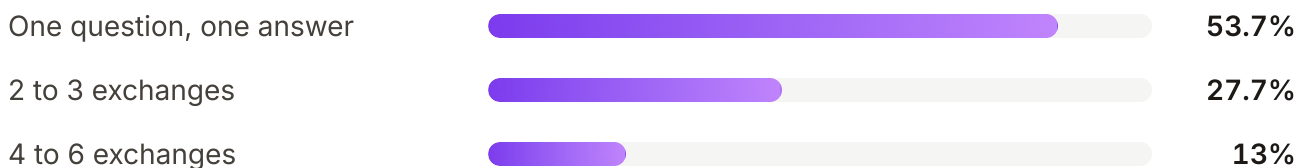
3. Almost four in ten conversations happen when nobody is at the desk

Estimating local time from the visitor's country (known for 5,052 of the 5,470 conversations), 50.2% started during business hours, 20.7% in the evening and 18.3% overnight, with 10.8% from countries we did not map to a time zone. A separate 24.7% of all conversations happened on a Saturday or Sunday. For a small team, that is the traffic a contact form used to absorb.



4. Half stop after one answer, but one in eighteen keeps going

53.7% of conversations were one question and one answer. The rest are real dialogues: 27.7% ran two or three exchanges, 13.0% four to six, and 5.6% seven or more. The average conversation had 4.8 messages. Assistants on general business sites held longer conversations (50.5% multi-turn) than Shopify assistants (35.8%), where shoppers tend to get their answer and go back to the product page.



5. One in eight conversations produces a lead, and almost nobody asks for a human

12.8% of conversations ended with the visitor leaving an email address or phone number. The rate is 18.3% on general business websites (services, agencies, local businesses) and 9.1% on Shopify stores. Only 1.0% of conversations included a request for a human, and assistants pointed visitors to a human channel in 3.7% of conversations. Of the conversations visitors rated, 82% got a thumbs up (188 up, 42 down).

6. Where the conversation starts

23.3% of conversations began on the homepage and 20.4% on a product page, with 4.7% on a collection or category page and the rest on other pages such as FAQs, contact and blog posts. 47.7% of conversations came from a phone, 44.8% from a desktop and 1.3% from a tablet. By country, the United States accounted for 30.0% of conversations, followed by Israel, India, Chile, Canada, the United Kingdom and France.

What this means for a store or business site

- Train the assistant on your product pages first. Policies matter, but a third of the traffic is "tell me about this item".
- Expect fragments. The assistant has to understand "blue medium" as a size and colour question.
- Cover nights and weekends. Two out of five conversations start when nobody is answering email.
- Let it capture contact details. One in eight visitors will leave them when the answer was useful.
- Keep a human handoff, but do not build the experience around it. One percent use it.

Method

Source: 5,470 conversations held on 246 live Chatonbo assistants between 13 June and 11 September 2026. 202 assistants were on the free plan and 44 on paid plans; paid assistants generated 56% of the conversations. Topics come from the per-conversation topic label assigned automatically after each chat. First-message categories come from keyword matching on the visitor's opening message. Local time is estimated from the visitor's country using a single offset per country, on the 5,052 conversations with a known country, so the after-hours figures are approximate. Conversations were aggregated, never read individually. No store or visitor is identified. You may reuse these figures with a link to this page.

FAQ

What do shoppers ask an AI chatbot most often?

Product questions. In 5,470 website chat conversations from June to September 2026, 32.7% were about a specific product or service, and on Shopify stores that share rose to 46.9%. Support questions were second at 17.2% and pricing third at 10.3%.

How many website chat conversations happen outside business hours?

About 39%. Using the visitor's country to estimate local time, 20.7% of conversations started between 18:00 and 23:00 and 18.3% between 23:00 and 9:00. A further 24.7% of all conversations happened on a Saturday or Sunday.

How often does an AI chat conversation turn into a lead?

In this dataset 12.8% of conversations ended with the visitor leaving an email or phone number. Assistants on general business websites converted 18.3% of conversations to a lead, Shopify assistants 9.1%, because shoppers on a store mostly want an answer, not a callback.

How often do visitors ask the chatbot for a human?

Rarely. 1.0% of conversations included a request to be handed to a person, and 2.3% of opening messages asked for a human or contact details. Assistants redirected the visitor to a human channel in 3.7% of conversations.

Do people ask the chatbot one question or have a conversation?

Both. 53.7% of conversations were a single question and answer, but 46.3% went further, and 5.6% ran to seven or more exchanges. The average conversation had 4.8 messages.

Where was this data collected?

From 246 live Chatonbo assistants on customer websites and online stores between 13 June and 11 September 2026. Conversations were counted, never read individually, and no store or visitor is identified.

See what your own visitors would ask. Paste your website address and test an assistant on your pages, no signup.

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- Chat Index (monthly)

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