



Tech Support Research Report

Insights into the most common tech support queries





INTRODUCTION

We all have high expectations when it comes to technology. IT needs to work and we have little patience for system crashes, connectivity issues or device incompatibility slowing down our work or play.

As more of us work from home, and technology permeates our lives like never before, we face the dilemma of always being on. However, not having the tech support to help us when we are not in a traditional office environment leads many to turn to the internet for solutions. Often, a fix can be found via YouTube or familiar forums.

Lakeside Software has been monitoring end-user experience since 1997 and sees and hears about technology problems constantly. In this report, we decided to delve into the most common tech support queries reported online by conducting research to reveal where the most problems lie, offer proactive measures to minimise the occurrence of these issues, and also explore what the future holds for tech support.

Our study reveals that hardware issues are the most prevalent, accounting for 60% of user queries and highlighting significant challenges with physical devices. Software issues follow at 24%, with network problems comprising 11%, and security concerns representing a mere 4%. We delve into the most common problems within each of these categories.

We hope that this analysis highlights popular areas of concern among computer users and prompts IT teams to consider the underlying issues that frustrate users. Indeed, this insight can play a role in empowering IT professionals to implement proactive solutions to identify issues before they escalate, and improve user experience.



Hardware issues hit hardest

We analyzed 500 unique tech support queries on [Reddit Tech Support](#) from earlier this year, focusing on queries an individual may turn to their firm's tech support team to answer.

Our research identified four main types of inquiries: hardware, software, networking, and security, with hardware technical support issues being the most common, accounting for 60% of all inquiries. Here, we provide an in-depth analysis of hardware-related inquiries.

40%

General performance issues:

From slow performance, frequent system crashes, to hard drive failures.

15%

Storage and data access:

From slow performance, frequent system crashes, to hard drive failures.

20%

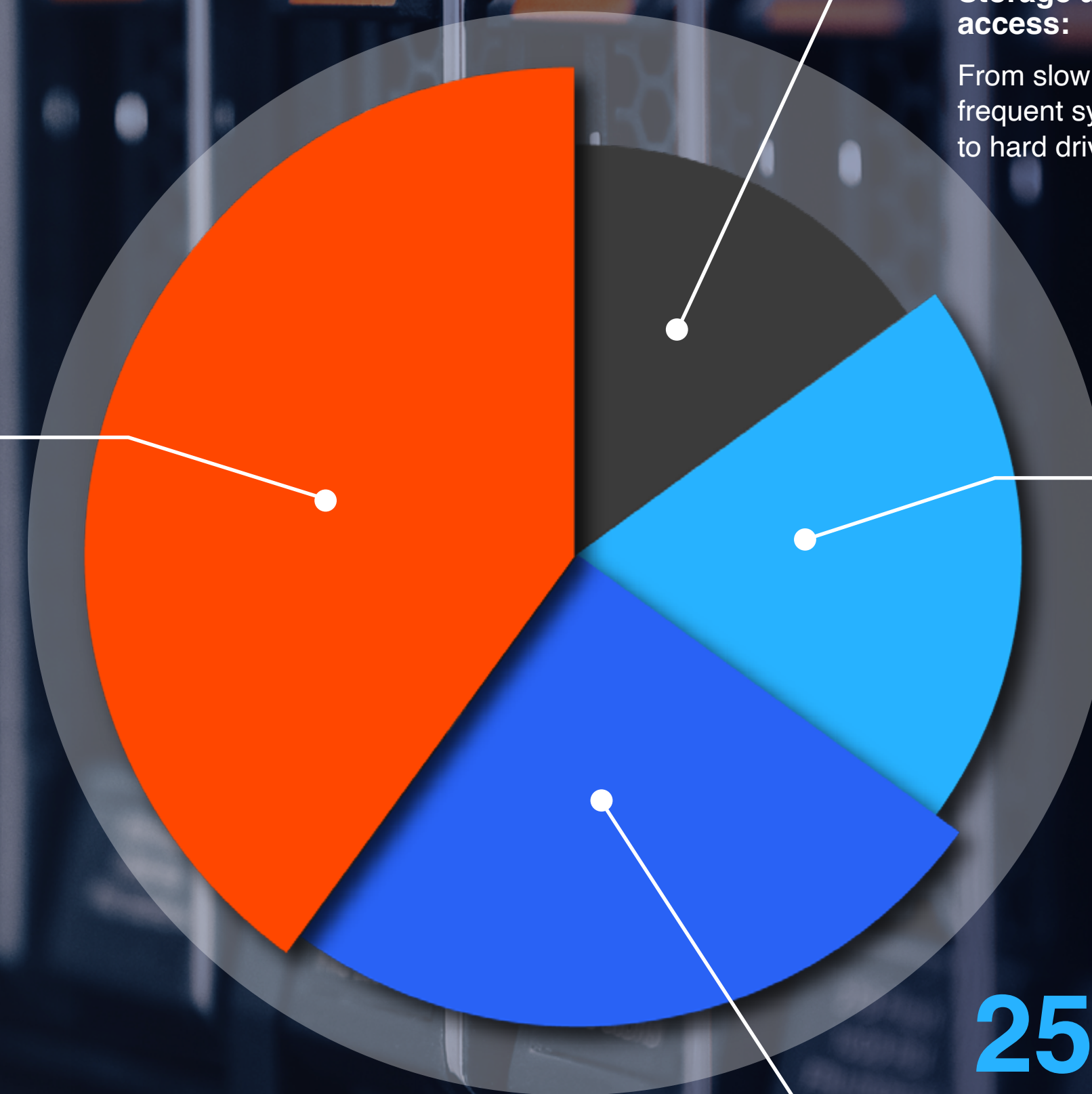
Power and booting troubles:

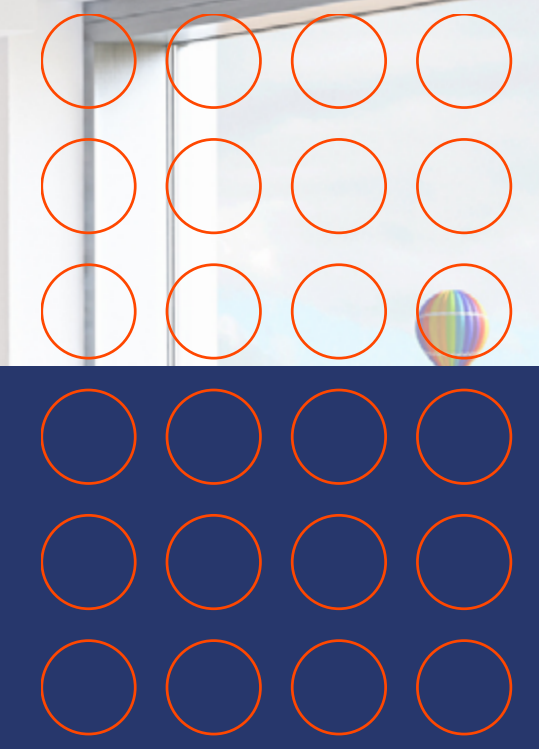
Involving computers not powering up, unexpected shutdowns, and difficulties during the boot process.

25%

Peripheral connectivity issues:

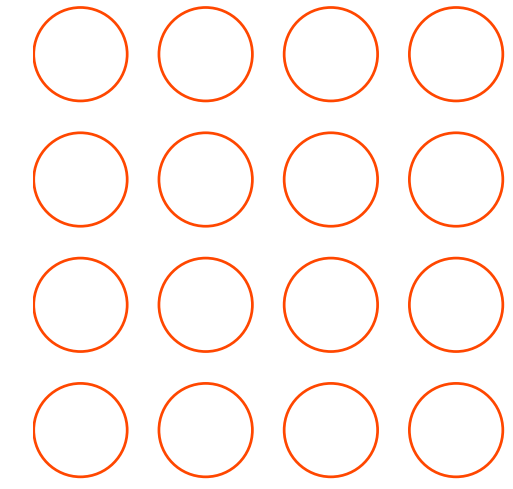
Including malfunctioning USB ports and issues with external devices like keyboards and mice.





As hardware accounted for 60% of overall issues,
we decided to drill down into the four main areas of hardware tech queries further.





General performance

The three most common performance-related issues are system stability, speed, and hard drive reliability.



48%

System crashes and blue screen errors:

This is a recurrent issue in which users experience frequent system crashes, sometimes accompanied by blue screen errors, which indicate serious stability concerns.



36%

Slow performance:

Respondents mentioned slow system performance, highlighting issues with lagging or delayed response times.



15%

Hard drive issues:

Mentions of hard drive failures, unusual noises, and difficulties accessing files.



Peripheral connectivity

Three predominant themes, each highlighting specific user-reported problems that frequently arise with peripheral connectivity, are:



48%
USB port malfunctions:

Problems with USB ports not working correctly, such as ports becoming non-responsive or having connection issues over time.



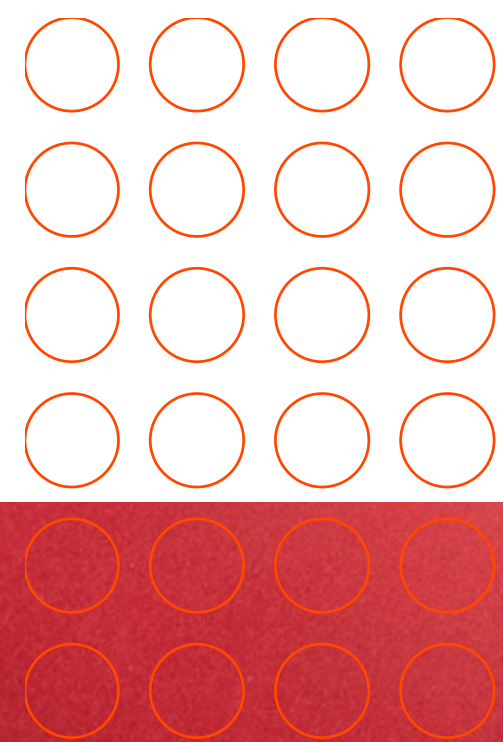
30%
Connectivity issues:

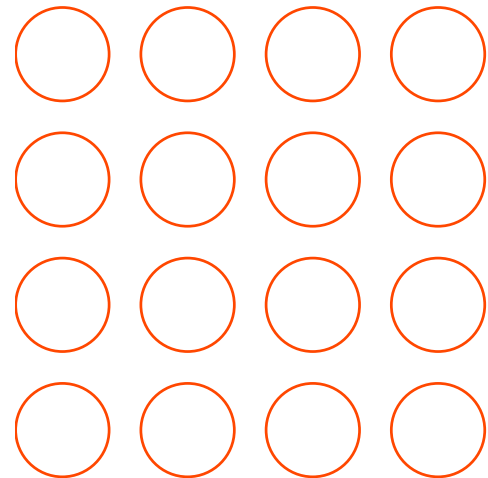
Difficulties connecting external devices like keyboards, mice, and monitors. Issues include devices not being recognized by the system or malfunctioning after connection.



22%
Peripheral hardware failures:

Often with more severe hardware issues like damaged ports or complete failure of peripheral devices to function as expected.





63%

Main monitor connection issue:

For example, monitors are detected by the system but display only a black screen, even though the cursor can be moved.



26%

Graphics card port failures:

One example is the Zotac GTX 1060 3GB, where users find that all ports except DVI stop functioning, leaving them unable to use HDMI or DisplayPort outputs.



11%

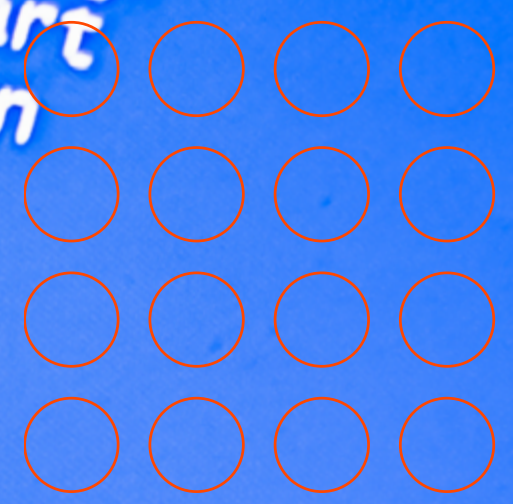
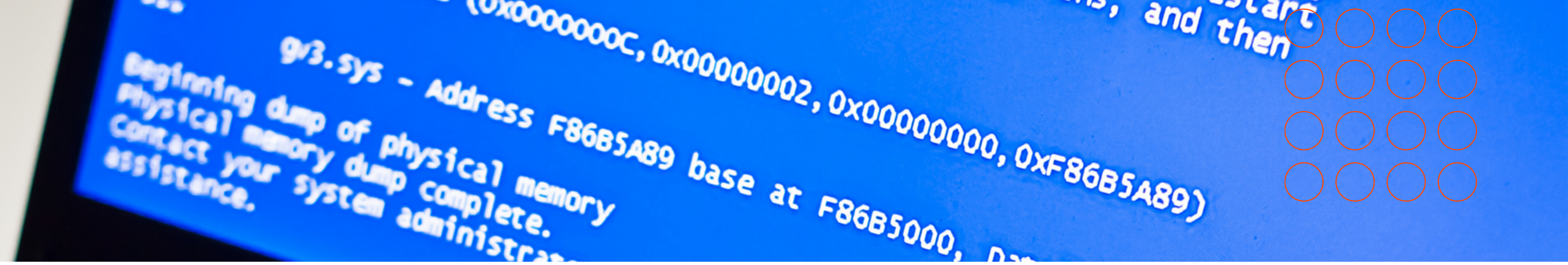
Display not working:

For instance, DisplayPort suddenly not working, leading to no signal being sent to the monitors. Even after restarting, the problem persists, along with mouse pointer issues when DisplayPort is connected.



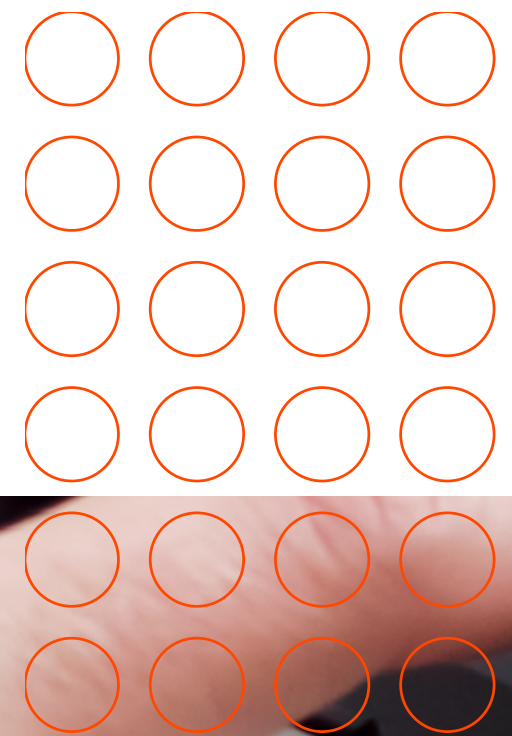
Display and graphics cards

This section delves into the prevalent technical challenges faced by users regarding display and graphics card functionalities.



Power and booting

We delve into the most common power and boot-related challenges encountered by users, as highlighted in tech support inquiries.



54%
Power issues:

Devices not powering on suggest potential power supply, motherboard, or critical component problems. In portable devices, battery-related issues like improper charging or low battery life may indicate battery health or connectivity problems.



37%
Boot problems:

Include difficulties reaching BIOS or failed boot sequences, often due to corrupted system files, BIOS configurations, or failing hardware.



9%
Unexpected shutdowns:

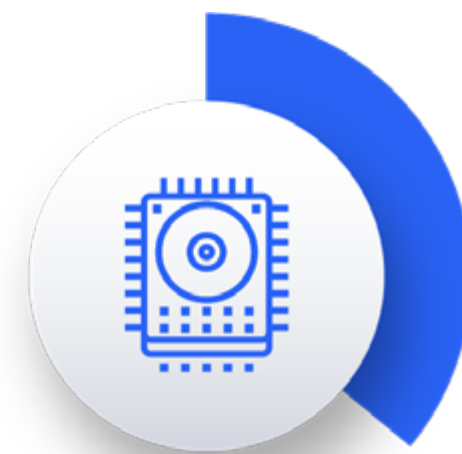
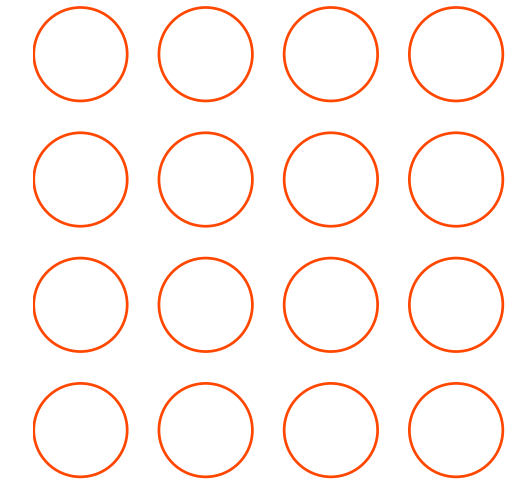
Result from hardware failures like overheating, power supply issues, faulty RAM, hard drive or motherboard problems, graphics card or CPU issues, and peripheral hardware failures.





Storage and data access

Here are the three most common themes and specific problems users have reported:



36%
Hard drive issues:

Symptoms include unusual noises, slow data access, and complete drive failures.



36%
SSD problems:

Include undetected drives, slow performance, and firmware issues requiring updates for conflict resolution or performance enhancement.



28%
Data loss:

Results from inability to access files due to drive failures or corrupted files, RAM issues impacting system performance, and problems accessing files due to permission settings, file system errors, or software conflicts.

Where software falls short

This detailed analysis of the software problems examines specific categories of software-related issues. This analysis confirms that installation/set up and operating system errors are the most pressing, with data integrity and software compatibility also being significant. Here are the breakdowns and we investigate the following further:

25%

Installation and setup:

This category involves issues with installing software, configuring settings, or activating licenses.

22%

Operating system errors:

Covering crashes, error messages, and unexpected behavior.

14%

Performance and speed concerns:

Slow software performance, crashes, and responsiveness issues.

19%

Software compatibility problems:

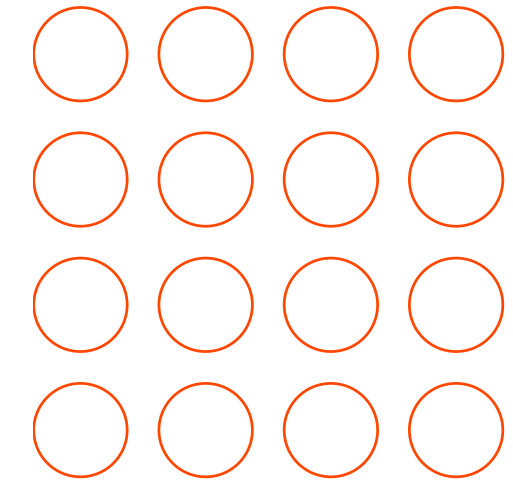
Includes issues with software not working with specific hardware or conflicting with other applications.

20%

Data issues, loss or corruption:

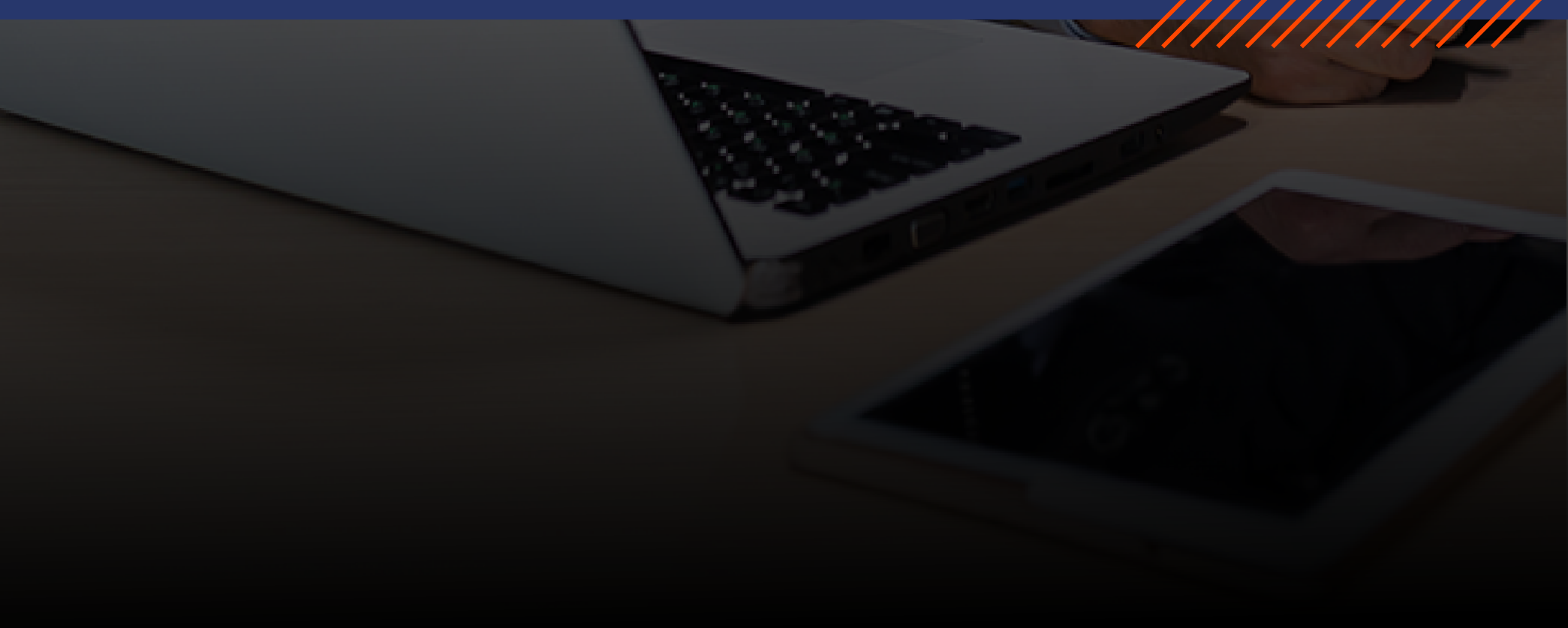
Concerns such as data loss, recovery difficulties, and virus-related problems.





Installation and set up

As part of the installation and setup problems, we uncover the three most pressing hurdles users encounter:



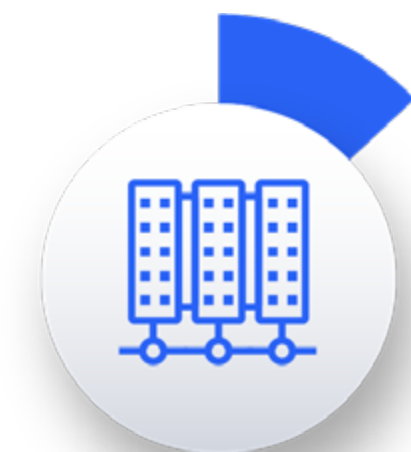
52%
PC reset difficulties:

Users encounter errors preventing complete PC resets, with some installation failures attributed to incompatible system settings or configurations.



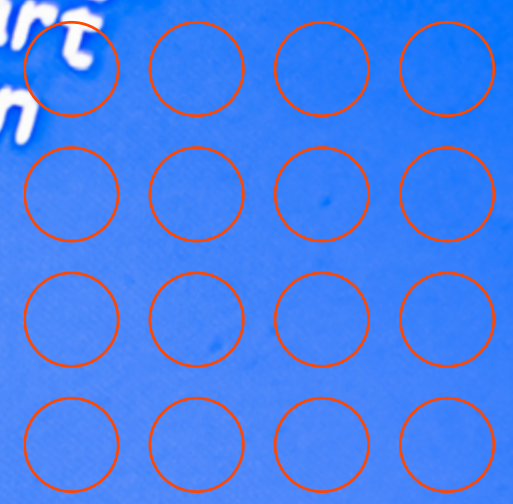
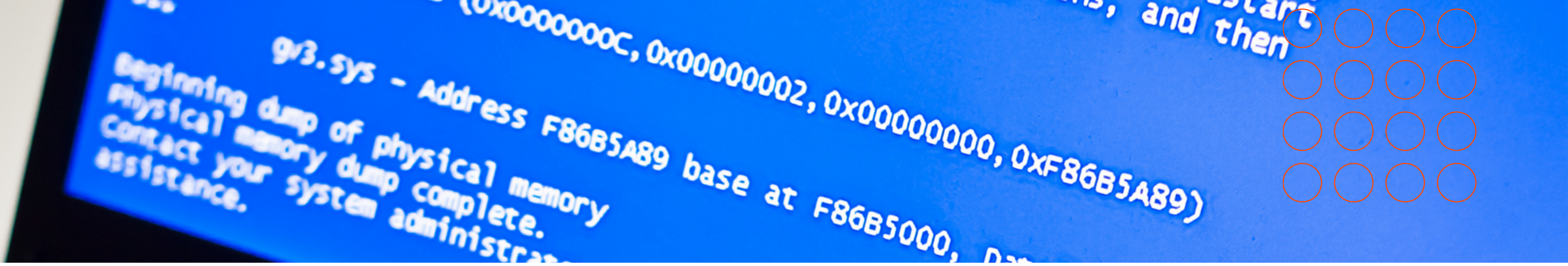
32%
Software update errors:

Update failures or system instability issues, including challenges with lost activation keys, activation errors, or issues with the software's activation server during license updates.



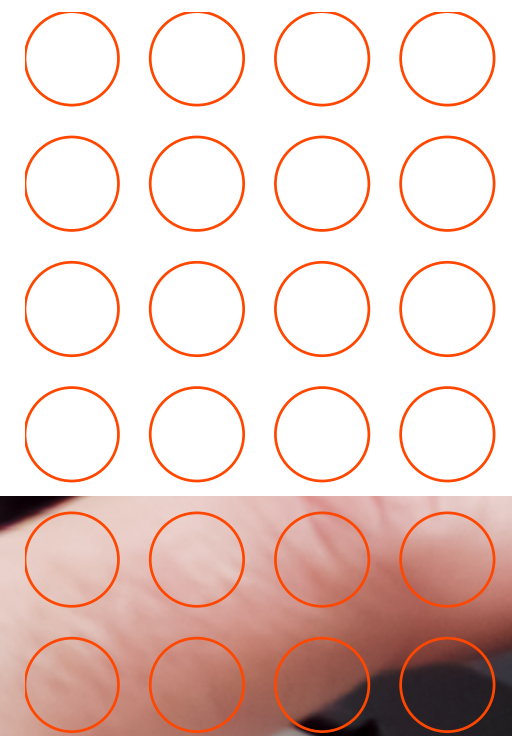
13%
Access control issues:

Inability to access specific drives or directories due to permission settings changes, such as one user being unable to access the C drive after altering permissions on their laptop.



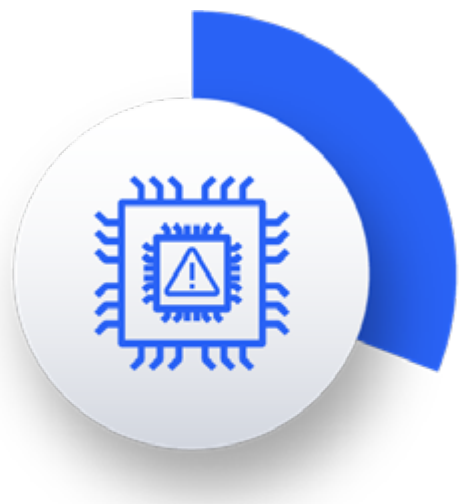
Operating system errors

Operating system errors were unique and specific. We grouped together the three most common issues:



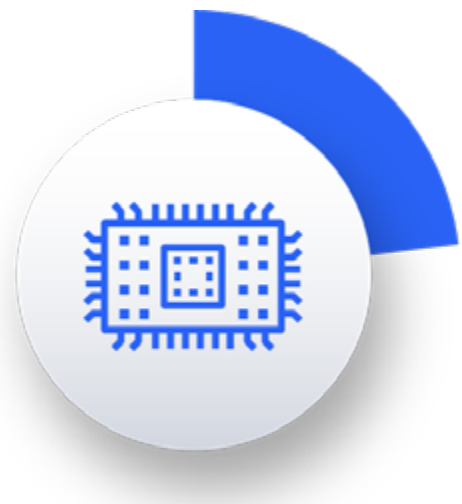
42%
System crashes:

Users experienced crashes during specific operations or when using certain applications, indicating software compatibility issues or system instability. Unexpected system behavior includes erratic OS behavior, unexpected restarts, freezing, or malfunctioning functionalities.



31%
Performance problems:

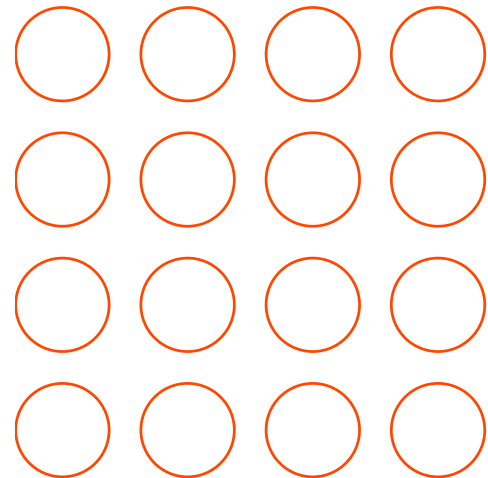
Users report slower system performance, particularly after updates or when running specific software, affecting overall usability. Boot phase issues include the system not booting up, being stuck on boot screen, or boot process errors. Update process problems involve failed installations, system instability, or incomplete updates.



23%
Hardware compatibility issues:

Users encountered error messages due to malfunctioning or incompatible hardware with the operating system.





65%

File directory issues:

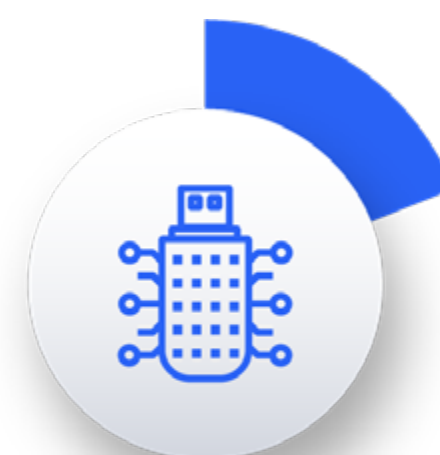
Users report trouble finding SSD files, discrepancies between reported and visible data, and instances of inaccessible data due to corruption from system crashes, software errors, or viruses.



26%

Data recovery challenges:

Users encounter difficulty recovering lost data from accidental deletion or hardware failures, including scenarios where traditional methods fail, system crashes causing data loss, and issues with backup creation or restoration.



19%

Unrecognized storage devices:

Some users experience problems with OS not recognizing storage devices like external hard drives or USB devices.

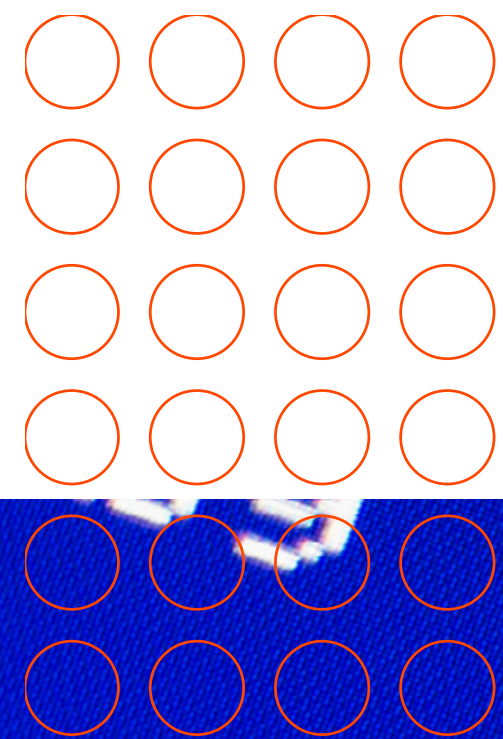
Data issues, loss or corruption

Here is an analysis of the three most pressing issues directly mentioned, including examples of data issues, loss, and corruption problems reported by users:



Software compatibility problems

The examples in this section represent the three most prevalent software compatibility problems reported in our findings, showing users' diverse challenges when installing and using new software alongside existing systems and applications.



44%

Operating system compatibility issues:

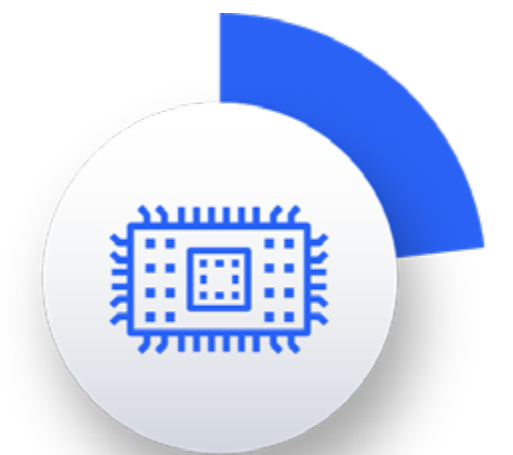
Software is incompatible with the user's operating system version, resulting in installation or runtime errors, particularly with software designed for newer or different OS versions.



28%

Conflicts with existing applications:

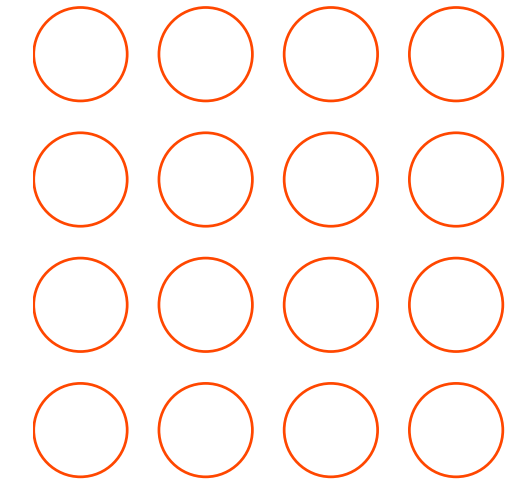
Newly installed software clashes with pre-existing ones, causing system instability, crashes, or malfunctioning of the new software. Software updates also introduce compatibility issues with other installed applications, leading to functionality problems.



22%

Hardware compatibility issues:

Arise when software fails to work with certain hardware components due to driver issues, hardware age, or unsupported hardware features.



Performance and speed concerns

There were three prevalent issues around software performance, highlighting challenges that affect user experience due to software inefficiencies or system resource management problems.



50%
Slow software performance:

Significantly slow software applications with longer loading times, lag, and delayed responses to inputs, impacting overall system responsiveness across multiple tasks.



39%
Frequent software crashes:

Unexpected closures or errors terminating applications suddenly, suggesting underlying hardware, power settings, or software-related power management issues.



6%
Performance degradation over time:

Computers or specific applications gradually become slower, possibly due to software updates, system resource allocation, or accumulating background processes.

Networking nightmares and connectivity challenges

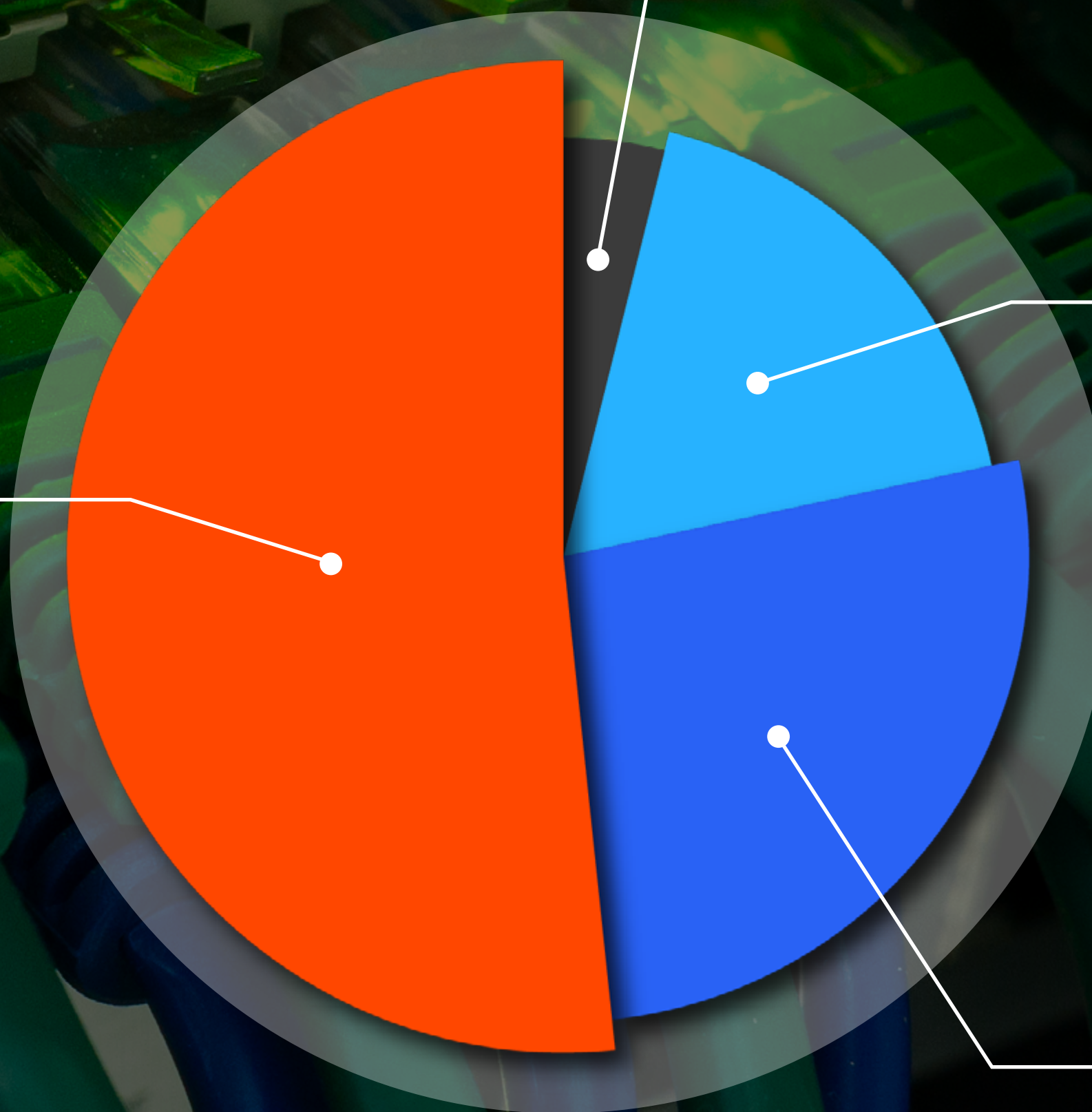
An analysis of network problems confirms that connectivity, configuration and speed issues were most pressing queries with a breakdown as follows, and further analysis of the top two issues:

52%
Router and wi-fi connectivity problems

4%
Troubleshooting network devices

18%
Internet connectivity speed issues

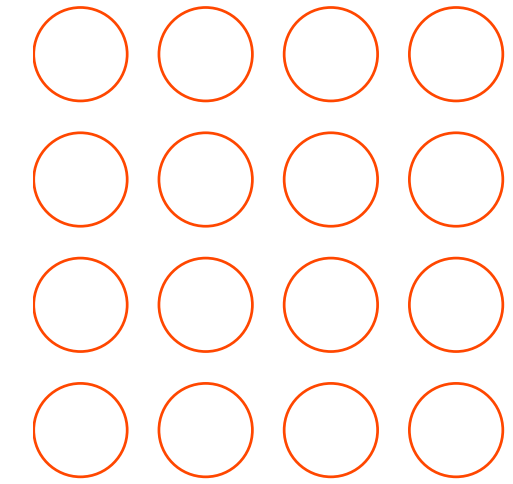

27%
Network configuration and settings





Router and wi-fi connectivity

The main issues around router and wi-fi connectivity involve a range of symptoms, from intermittent disconnections to specific network configuration problems.



01

Intermittent Wi-Fi disconnections:

Users frequently disconnect from their Wi-Fi networks, attempting troubleshooting steps like updating drivers, adjusting adapter settings, and resetting network configurations across different devices and operating systems.

02

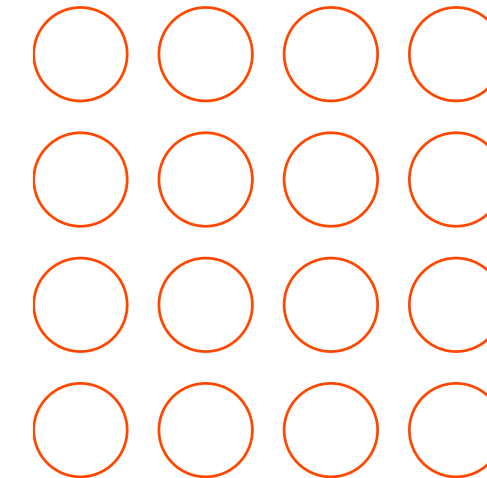
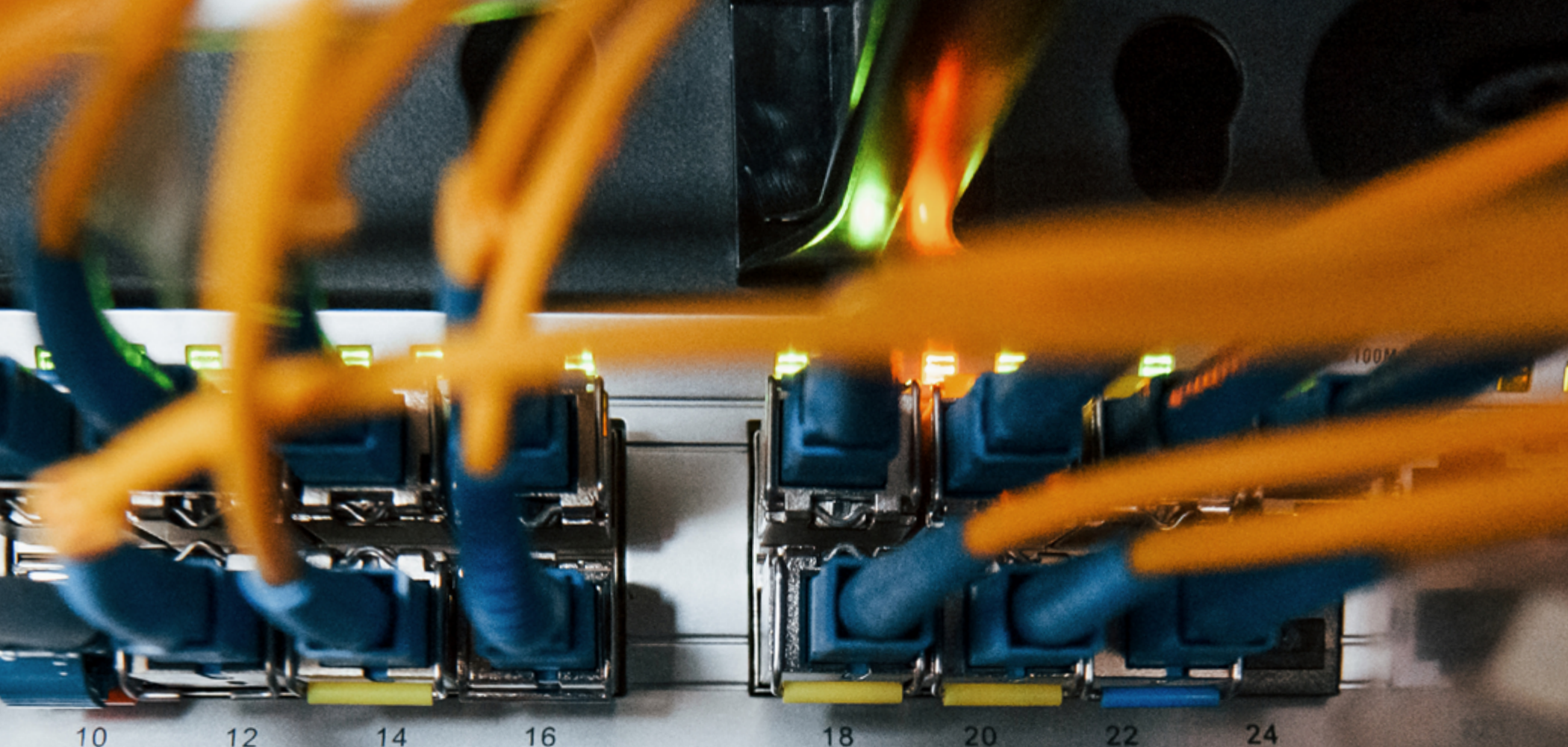
Inability to connect to specific servers/websites:

Struggle to access certain servers or websites on their Wi-Fi networks despite other sites working fine, affecting multiple devices and appearing isolated to the Wi-Fi network.

03

Devices unable to detect Wi-Fi networks:

Users can't detect operational Wi-Fi networks despite troubleshooting router and device settings, with the problem persisting despite attempted fixes.



Network configuration and settings

01

Networking configuration issues:

Users commonly seek help with setting up their modem and router on the same IP network, experiencing trouble with VPN to their home network, and encountering difficulty in monitoring network traffic of a computer on LAN.

02

Hardware and connectivity problems:

Many users face concerns regarding NIC (Network Interface Card) functionality and potential hardware issues, experience unidentified network and connectivity issues after a router factory resets, and suspect hardware failure due to inability to obtain an IPv4 address through DHCP and other connectivity issues.

03

Software and security concerns:

Users often inquire about issues with malware detection and remote access suspicions, seek methods for monitoring and managing network traffic efficiently, and encounter SIP registration problems.



Security concerns

Security remains a paramount concern for individuals and organizations alike. Interestingly, data suggests that security issues are among the least reported online, with 4% of our total, potentially due to their sensitive nature. It's often advised that such matters be addressed directly with specialized security vendors to ensure professional handling and confidentiality. The outlined percentages provide insight into the prevalence of each type of security concern, indicating a cautious approach to online discussions and reporting of such sensitive issues.

28%

Antivirus software and malware removal

Discussions focus on the installation, updating, and troubleshooting of antivirus software, alongside queries about malware detection and removal.

21%

Firewall Configuration

This category addresses the setup and configuration of firewalls, as well as challenges related to blocked applications or network traffic.

17%

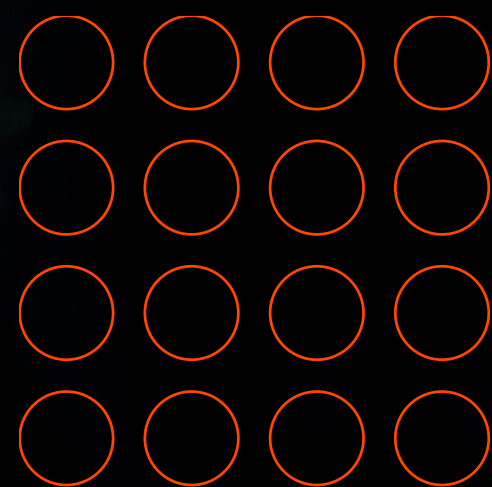
General Cybersecurity Concerns

These inquiries cover broader cybersecurity practices, including advice on protecting personal information and enhancing online safety. These also include password management, where assistance here revolves around password recovery, resets, and strategies for creating strong, secure passwords.

17%

Phishing and Email Security

Concerns in this area typically involve phishing attempts, suspicious links, and general email security issues.



The shift to Proactive IT with AI

Individuals frequently encounter issues across various domains, including hardware, software, network, and security, leading them to seek tech support online. Many of these instances can be replicated in the workplace, with weary workers frustrated by long support wait times, trying to implement their own fixes, or simply suffering in silence and hoping the problem will resolve itself.

In the realm of hardware, common problems include system crashes, blue screens, and lagging performance, often due to outdated drivers or failing components. Users also encounter compatibility issues between hardware and software, as well as power and booting troubles such as faulty power supplies and overheating.

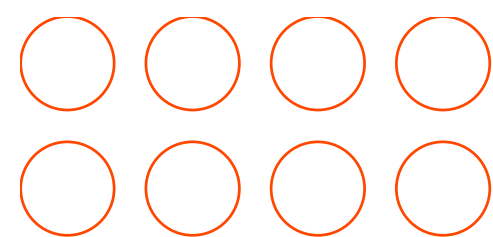
Software-related challenges often involve compatibility problems with operating systems or other applications, leading to performance issues like slow software and system instability. Users also struggle with system updates and PC resets. On the network front, connectivity problems are prevalent, including intermittent disconnections and difficulties in detecting Wi-Fi networks. Configuration issues related to IP settings, DNS, and firewalls further complicate network stability, while SIP ALG options and firewall problems affect VoIP applications.

Finally, security remains a critical concern, with individuals vulnerable to malware and virus infections due to inadequate antivirus solutions or outdated software. Phishing and other cyber threats target their data, exacerbated by poor password management and a lack of awareness about security best practices.

To address these challenges, adopting AI-driven proactive IT measures enable organizations to shift from a reactive approach to a more strategic, preventative model. By using data and comprehensive visibility, AI can predict issues, automate maintenance, and optimize performance, ensuring systems run smoothly and securely. This transformation enhances user satisfaction and productivity while significantly reducing the burden on IT teams.

Furthermore, the ability to anticipate and address issues before they escalate can lead to cost savings, improved employee morale, and a more resilient IT infrastructure, ultimately contributing to the organization's overall success and stability.

To address these challenges, adopting AI-driven proactive IT measures enable organizations to shift from a reactive approach to a more strategic, preventative model.



The future of tech support

Whether tech support is requested on an online forum or from an internal team, the volume of inquiries can be reduced, and overall IT efficiency improved by adopting proactive IT measures powered by AI - this is the future of tech support. This approach uses rich data and advanced analytics to predict, prevent, and resolve issues before they impact end-users. Here's how Lakeside's AI-driven platform can deliver proactive IT:



Data-driven insights and visibility:

Proactive IT begins with comprehensive visibility across the entire IT environment, which is only possible through analyzing vast amounts of endpoint data. Lakeside Software collects more than 10,000 datapoints every 15 seconds and then uses an embedded AI-engine to analyze and extrapolate insights. This continuous data collection and analysis helps IT teams identify potential issues early. Organizations can surface real-time issues, prioritize them based on severity and impact, and take corrective action before the issue escalates into a major disruption.



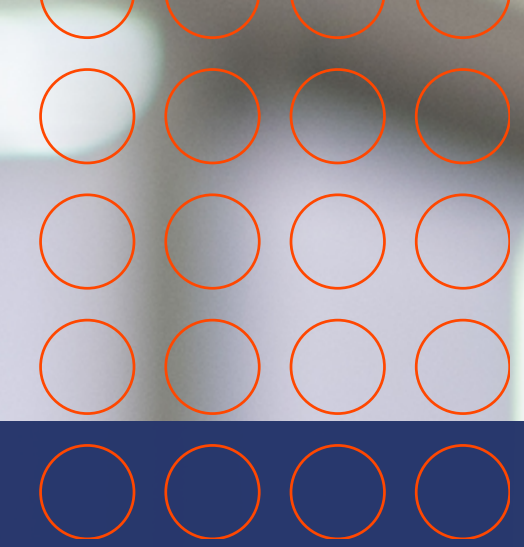
Automated incident detection and resolution:

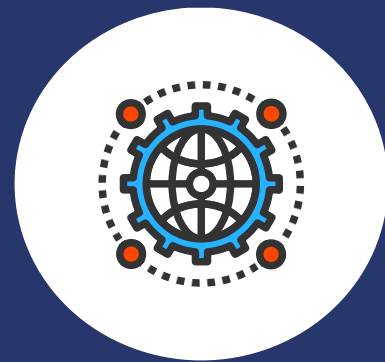
AI-powered tools can detect anomalies and incidents automatically, enabling swift responses to emerging problems. Automated scripts and predefined actions can resolve common issues such as driver updates, system optimizations, and hardware diagnostics. This mitigates the problem at hand and also prevents similar issues from arising in the future. Lakeside Software offers more than 220 out-of-the-box automations can handle large-scale high-impact problems.



Proactive maintenance and health monitoring:

AI-driven proactive maintenance involves regular updates and health checks to ensure systems run optimally. This includes updating firmware, performing hardware diagnostics, and optimizing resource allocation. By preemptively addressing potential failure points, such as failing hard drives or outdated software, organizations can maintain high system reliability and performance.





Empowering self-service and reducing help desk tickets:

AI can empower individuals to resolve their own issues through self-service solutions, significantly reducing the volume of help desk tickets. By providing real-time device insights and tested automations, people can address recurring problems independently. This not only improves satisfaction but also frees up IT staff to focus on more complex tasks. Tools that help individuals troubleshoot and fix issues on their own can avoid the need for help desk intervention.

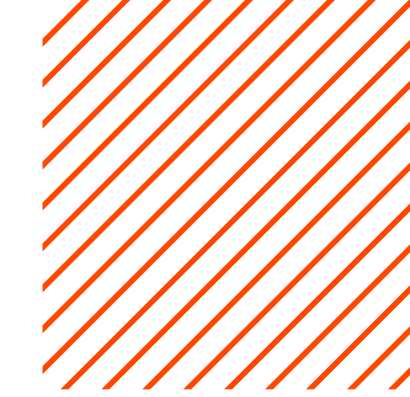


Enhanced security measures:

Security is a critical aspect of IT management. AI can enhance cybersecurity by continuously monitoring for threats, running regular scans, and educating users on best practices. Proactive IT solutions ensure antivirus software is always up to date, firewalls are properly configured, and potential vulnerabilities are patched promptly. This reduces the risk of malware infections and other security breaches.



Enhance IT service and reduce security risks with AI





About Lakeside

Lakeside Software is how organizations with large, complex IT environments can finally get visibility across their entire digital estate and see how to do more with less. For far too long, IT teams have struggled to see what's going on in their dark estate – where costly inefficiencies, poor employee experiences, and unresolved problems hide. Only Lakeside lets you give everyone a better view, so they can see the hidden issues, see the smartest fixes, and see the biggest savings. That's why so many of the world's leading global brands rely on Lakeside. And it's how our customers see an average ROI of more than 250%.

[Learn how you can get a better view](#)

Methodology:

This research aims to analyze tech support queries on one of the largest and most active online communities, Reddit, specifically within its tech support forum which boasts over 2.1 million members. The period from in Q1 2024 has been selected as the focus window to capture a snapshot of user interactions and challenges.