

THE CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Customer Survey 2021

MARCH 2022

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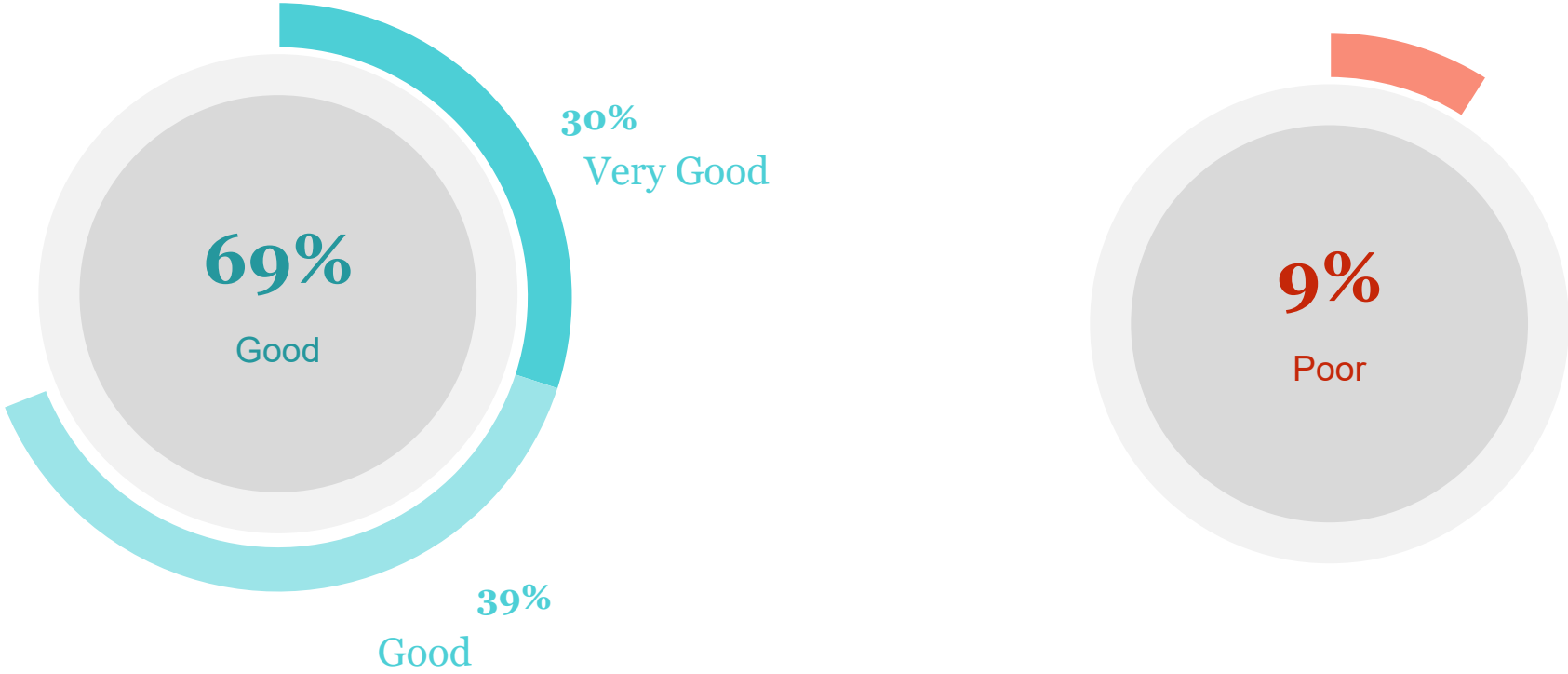
Executive summary

- + **Overall, the Charity Commission's customer service continues to be rated highly:** as last year, 69% of surveyed customers say it is good or very good.
- + **Some customers continue to recognise improvements.** A significant minority continue to perceive improvements in the Commission's services, particularly in facilitating the formulaic tasks of filing reports and accounts and updating trustee details.
- + **Customers continue primarily to come into contact with the Commission through its website,** mostly to perform tasks required of them such as updating their details and filing their accounts. The Commission's website and register are rated highly and many are impressed by the quantity of information available.
- + **Customers are positive about the personal interactions they've had with Commission staff.** When able to speak to staff, most customers praise their professional and helpful service. It is access to, rather than the quality of, such interactions that customers would like to see improve.
- + **Some customers continue to call for improvements to support.** Some continue to struggle to find what they want with the website's search function. When they seek guidance on the phone or via email, many find it takes too long to get through or to receive a reply. Some say they find the Commission's information and guidance hard to understand and too tailored to those with professional expertise.
- + **Customers have found COVID-19 information useful,** though the number using it has almost halved since 2020/21.

**The Charity Commission's
customer service continues to be
rated highly**

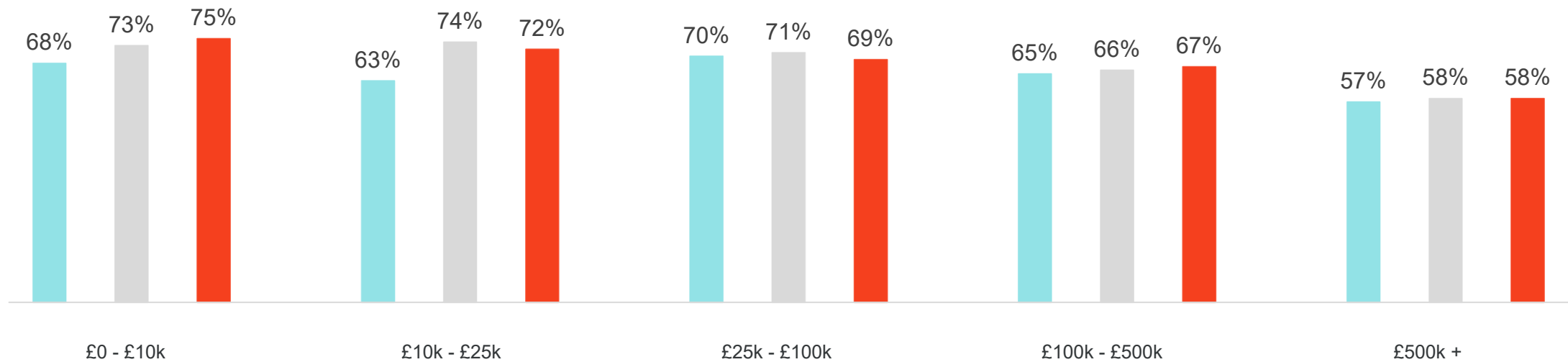
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A majority rate the Charity Commission's customer service as good



Smaller charities continue to rate the Commission's customer service more highly than larger ones

% SUM Good



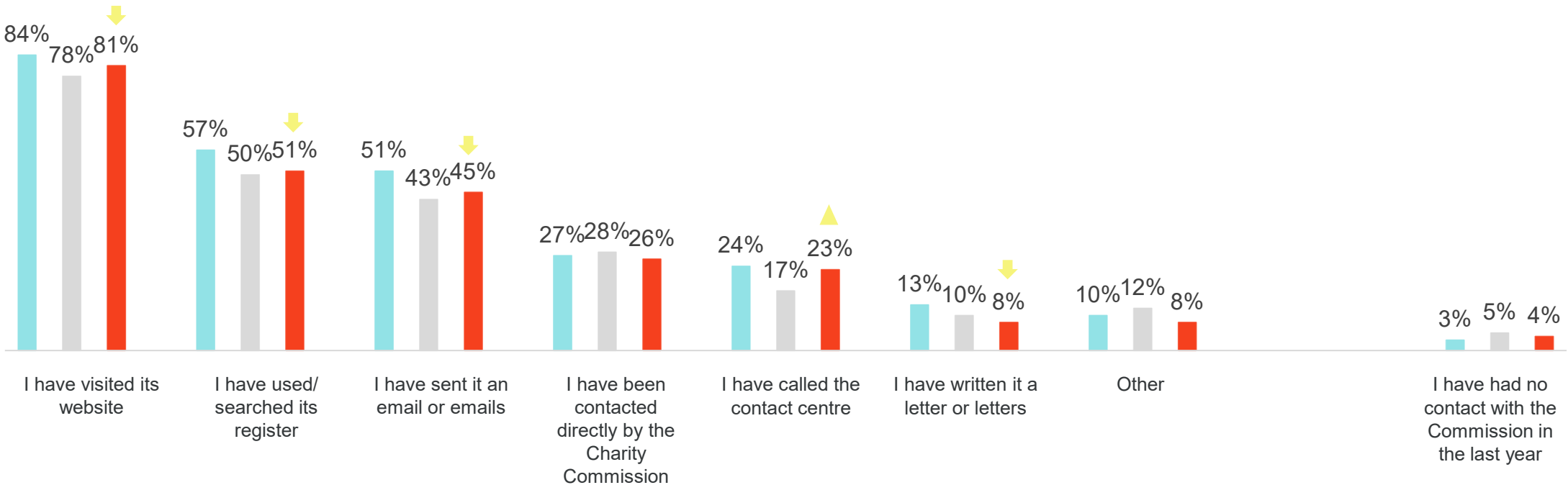
↑↓ Indicates a significant change since 2019/20
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**Contact is made mostly through
the website**

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Most contact with the Charity Commission continues to come through its website. Since 2019/20 has been a reduction in contact with the Charity Commission via website, register, email and letter



↑↓ Indicates a significant change since 2019/20
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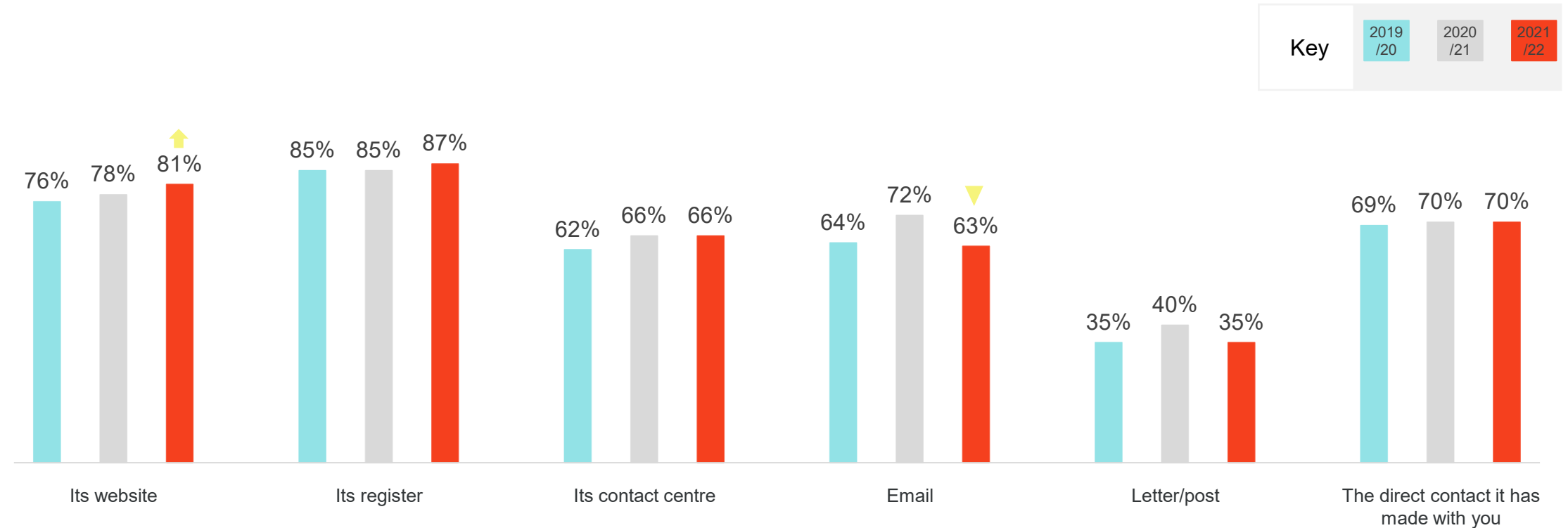






**And interaction with the register
and website, or more practical
functions continues to drive
positive sentiment**

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The register and the website continue to be the best performing of the Commission's channels. Rating of email contact has fallen since 2020/21

% SUM Good



  Indicates a significant change since 2019/20
  Indicates a significant change since 2020/21

How would you rate the service that is provided by the Charity Commission through each of these channels overall? NB Small base size*. Base: 2019: Website (1,215), Register (831), Contact Centre (350), Email (744), Letter/post (184), Contact it has made with you (394); 2020: Website (1,085), Register (691), Contact Centre (242), Email (602), Letter/post (136), Contact it has made with you (391); 2021: Website (965), Register (609), Contact Centre (279), Email (535), Letter/post (97)*, Contact it has made with you (304)

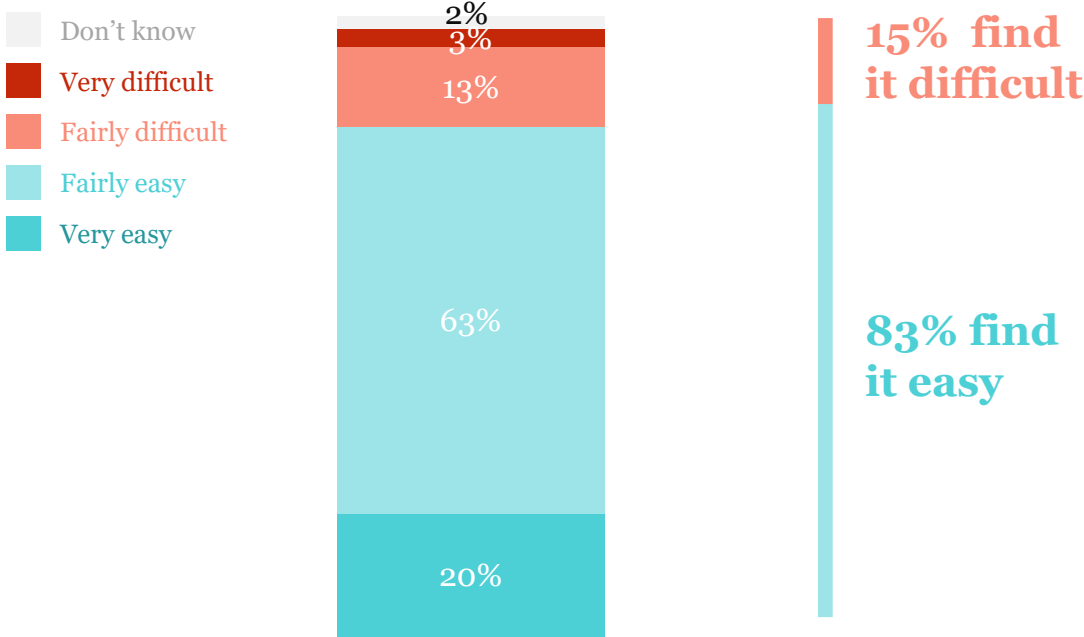


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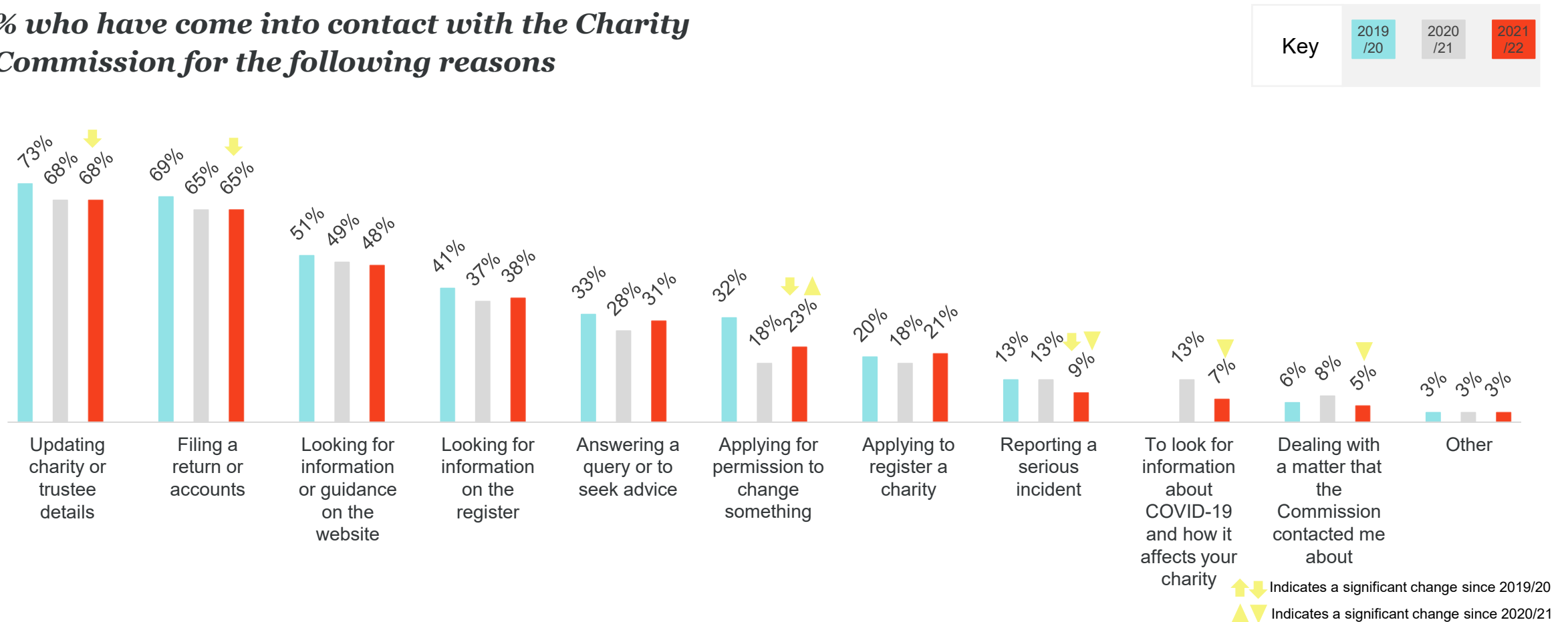
A majority find it easy to locate the information they need on the website, with no change in ease since 2020/21

Among the 81% who use the website...

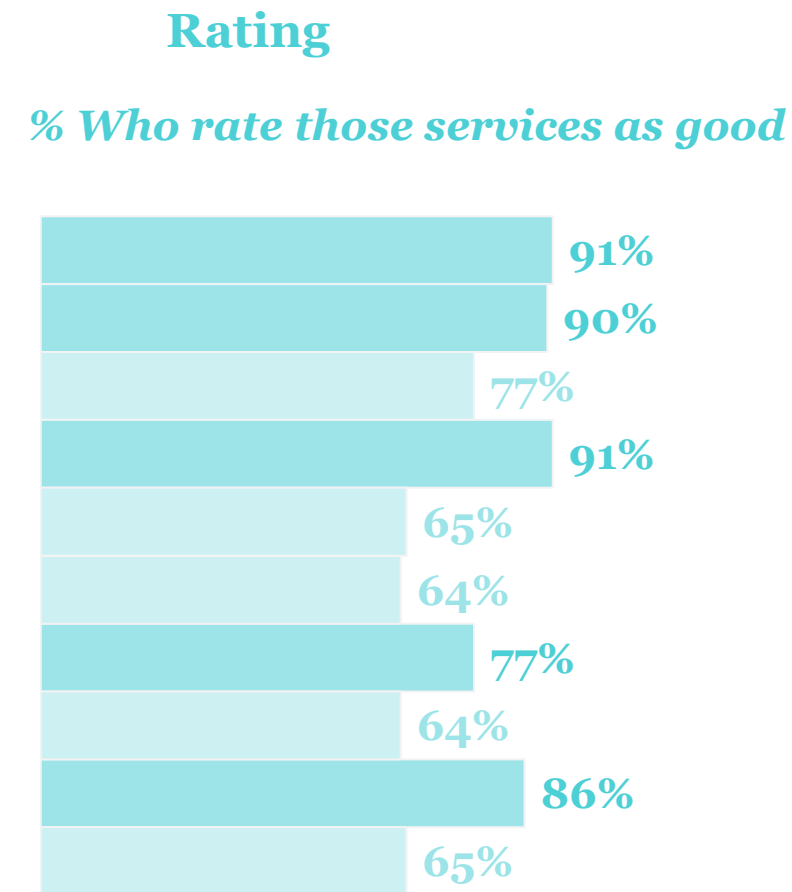
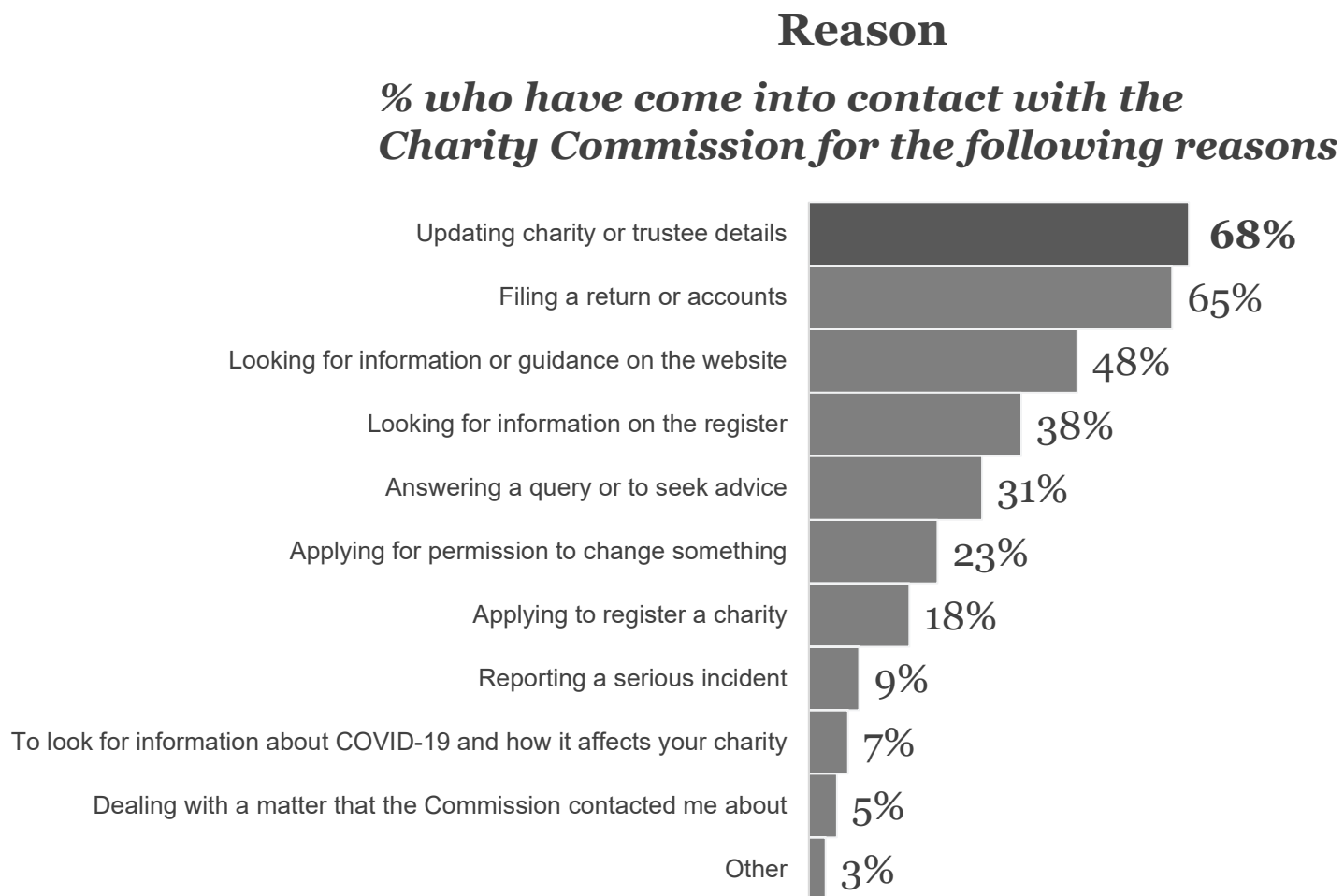


Whilst this had reduced since 2019/20, customers most commonly come into contact with the Charity Commission through practical tasks such as updating their details or accounts

% who have come into contact with the Charity Commission for the following reasons



Updating details, searching the register and filing returns or accounts are the most highly rated services

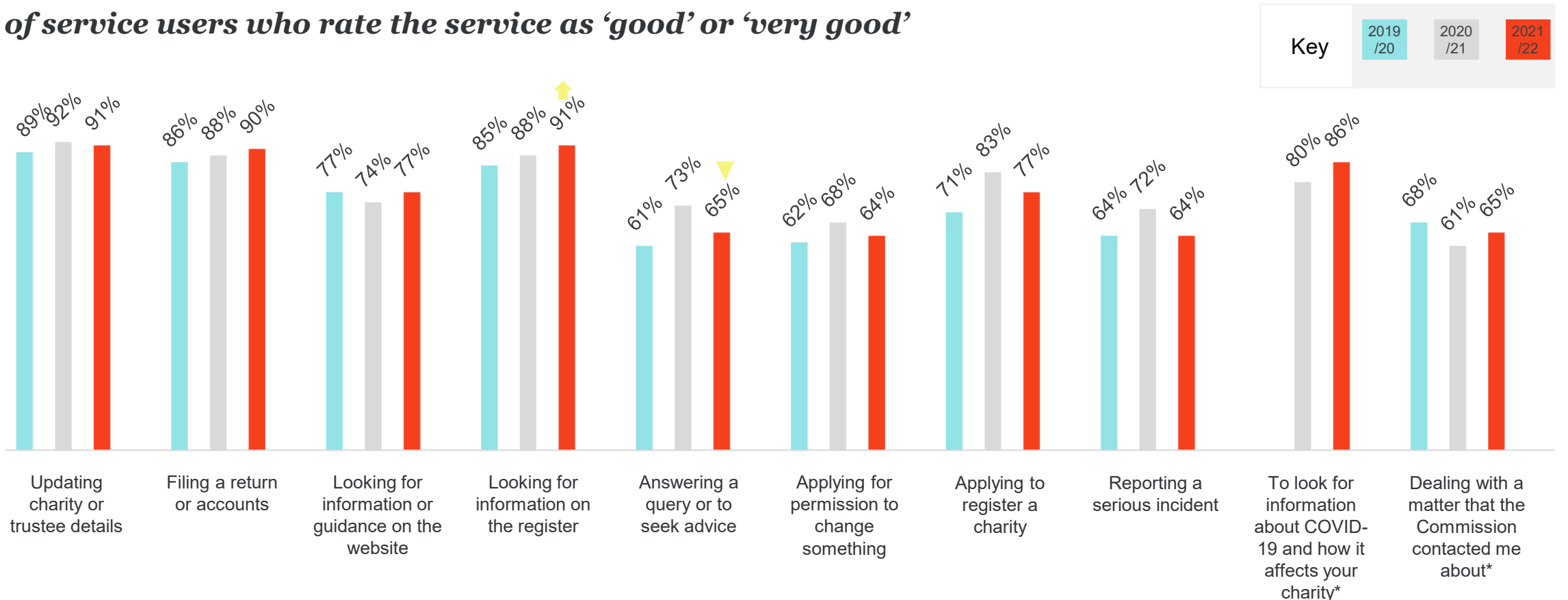


**Rating of services is broadly
consistent with year-on-year
findings**

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Rating of services is broadly stable across years...

% of service users who rate the service as 'good' or 'very good'



↑ ↓ Indicates a significant change since 2019/20
▲ ▼ Indicates a significant change since 2020/21

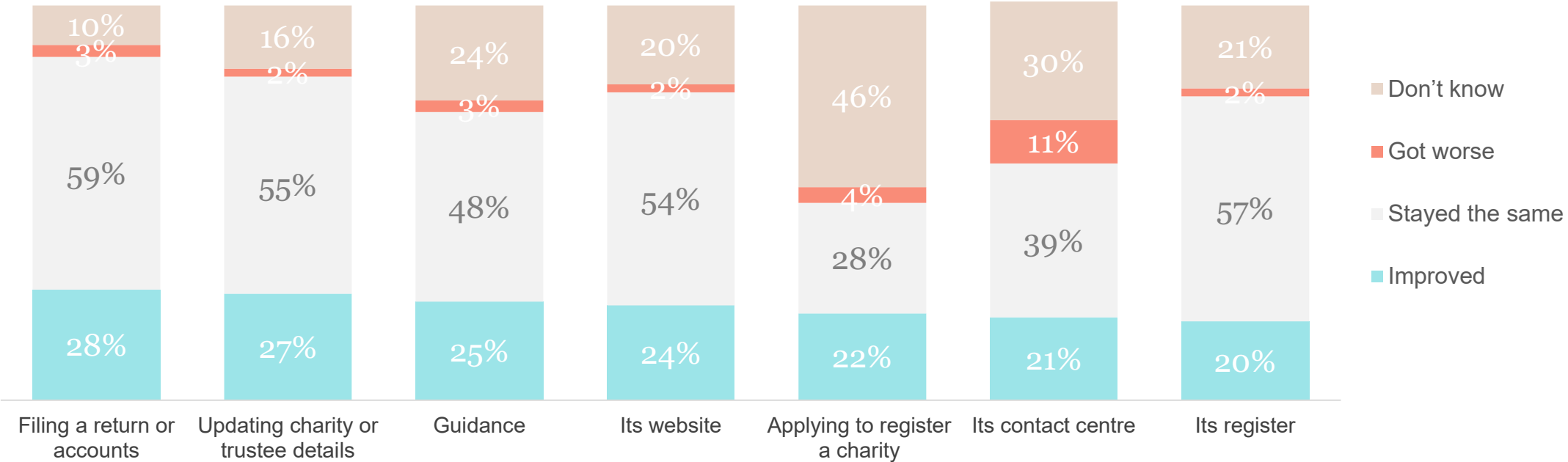
...but there has been some fluctuation when it comes to making applications, answering a query/seeking advice, and reporting incidents

% of service users who rate the service as 'good' or 'very good'



↑ ↓ Indicates a significant change since 2019/20
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When prompted, most say the Commission's services have stayed the same, although a significant minority point to some improvement



**Most believe that the
Commission provides helpful
advice and support overall as
well as largely intuitive online
systems**

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THE COMMISSION IS SEEN TO BE MOST HELPFUL IN FOUR KEY AREAS

Helpful & professional staff

- ✓ When able to speak to someone at the Commission, usually via the contact centre or email, customers continue to be impressed with the service they receive
- ✓ Staff are seen to be helpful and professional
- ✓ For those who struggle with navigating the website, the contact centre staff are felt to be crucial

The charity register and annual returns

- ✓ As in last year's survey, the register and annual returns system are generally thought to work well
- ✓ There is some recognition that improvements have been made to the layout of the website which some say is clearer and easier to use

General advice and guidance

- ✓ Customers value the wealth of information and guidance available on the Commission's website
- ✓ Many say it is clear, accessible and covers all the key elements those involved in the running of charities need to know
- ✓ Some say guidance has improved in the past year, and has been particularly useful in light of the COVID-19 pandemic

Availability of information

- ✓ The website attracts praise from those who value the availability of a large amount of information and who feel able to access what they need
- ✓ However, there is a minority who criticise the website (see slides 24-25)

**THE
COMMISSION
IS SEEN TO
BE MOST
HELPFUL IN
FOUR KEY
AREAS**

Helpful & professional staff

“The individual on the phone clearly wanted to help me get the application right.”

“e-mail replies were very clear and helpful.”

“The person I spoke to was efficient, knowledgeable and very helpful, resolving the query in a few minutes.”

The charity register and annual returns

“Register of Charities is the best and easiest function.”

“I feel it is a trustworthy source of registered charity information.”

“So easy to do Annual Returns nowadays.”

General advice and guidance

“Guidance is very detailed.”

“The feedback and advice to achieve my goals was really helpful.”

“Very helpful in resolving the issue regarding our objects in the Articles of Association and suggesting amendments so we could be registered as a charity.”

Availability of information

“The range of information on the website makes it a useful 'go to' resource, whatever the subject matter.”

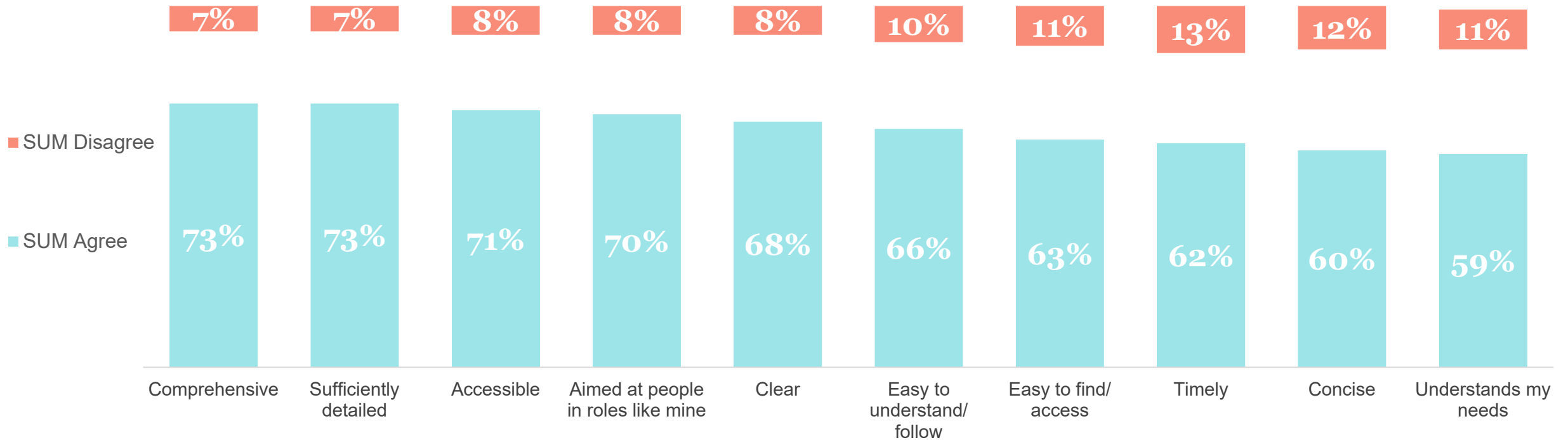
“I generally find looking for information easy, there are plenty of files on the majority of things Trustees may be seeking help with.”

“The information on the Charity Commission's website is clear and helpful.”

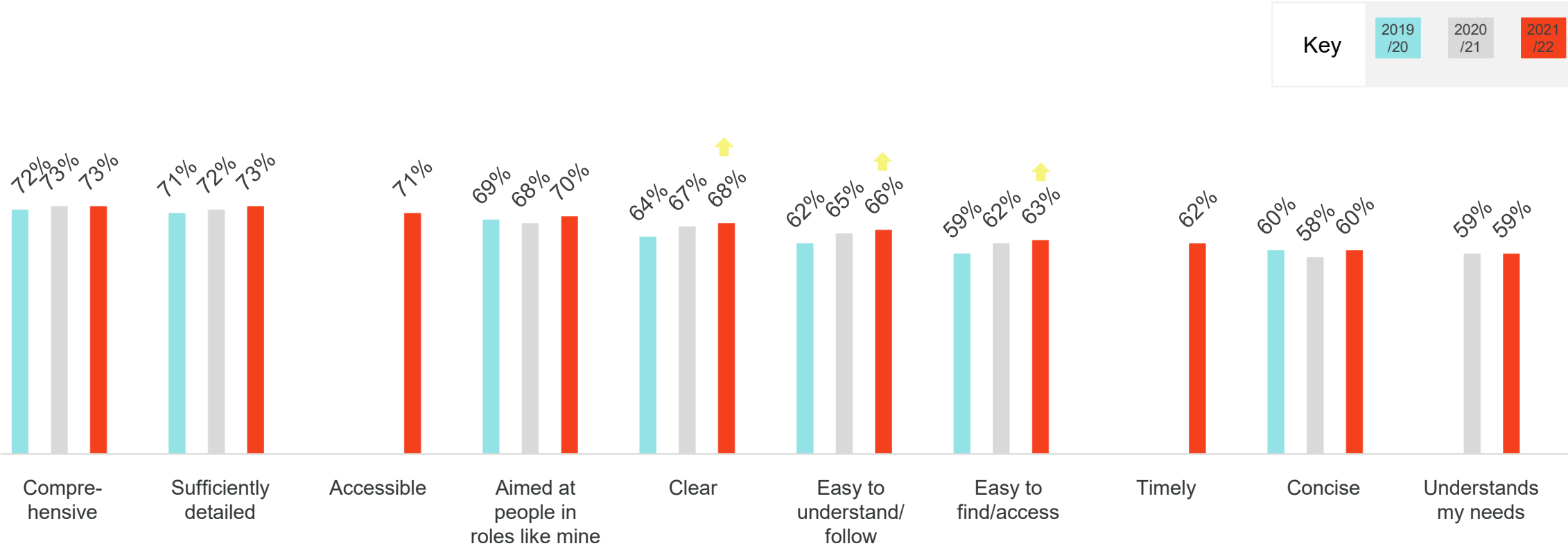
Whilst the Commission is seen to provide detailed and helpful services, ratings for concision and ease of access remain lower

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Services are seen to be comprehensive and detailed, with high levels of agreement for all measures



Services are seen to be comprehensive and detailed, with clarity, ease to follow and ease of access increasing since 2019/20



↑ ↓ Indicates a significant change since 2019/20
▲ ▼ Indicates a significant change since 2020/21

**Indeed, calls for improvement
focus on providing clear &
accessible information for all
customers**

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SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT ARE FOCUSED ON HOW ACCESSIBLE AND UNDERSTANDABLE GUIDANCE IS

Clear and accessible information

- ✗ Terminology is still sometimes found to be overly complex or legal in nature, and not aimed at ordinary people
- ✗ People remain keen that there should be someone available on the phone if they cannot access what they need by other means

Responsiveness

- ✗ When email communications are mentioned, it is often in the context of slow responses or not receiving a response at all
- ✗ Some feel the process of contacting the contact centre or email queries can take far too long, leaving them confused or unable to resolve their issue

Interpretation of guidance

- ✗ Some continue to find the Commission's advice impractical for non-professionals to follow
- ✗ These people are frustrated with a 'one size fits all approach' which ignores the needs of specific charities or does not account for how the rules may apply to charities in 'real life'
- ✗ This is partly seen to be linked to difficulty in speaking to an advisor or case worker

Website functionality

- ✗ Though some find the amount of information helpful, others struggle to navigate it and find what they are looking for
- ✗ People continue to find that the search function frequently does not bring up what they need

**SUGGESTIONS FOR
IMPROVEMENT
ARE FOCUSED ON
HOW ACCESSIBLE
AND
UNDERSTANDABLE
GUIDANCE IS**

Clear and accessible information

“Once I was in contact with a named person who was able to give me targeted advice it was very good. Prior to that it was extremely difficult.”

“Although the website is reasonably straightforward it would be nice to have easier access to a real person - I am the only person at one charity who can manage to use a computer.”

The charity register and annual returns

“Email exchanges regarding changing the terms of the charity -- though the response was slow (weeks).”

“When replying to an email with further questions I did not receive a reply, so I haven’t really had a helpful experience.”

“I’ve never had any response to emails.”

Interpretation of guidance

“Remember many of us are not professionals, we don’t have sector knowledge and expertise. That’s what we come looking for! Just expecting us to do everything right is not helpful, we want to be told and/or shown how in basic simple language.”

“Simpler process for filling out annual returns and more guidance for non finance people.”

“The guidance on Serious Incident Reporting is awful - unclear and unhelpful.”

Website functionality

“The site itself is very in-depth and for someone setting up a charity for the first time it is exhausting and feels like a minefield.”

“It is very difficult to understand the website, definitely a case of information overload. It needs to be simplified big time - definitely not user friendly for an old fogie like me.”

“The search functionality on the website could be better.”

Customers continue to desire more accessible channels of verbal communication as well as quicker responses and clearer guidance

Customers would like...

1. Oral contact with the Commission

"A telephone helpline where questions can be answered and guidance given on issues."

"A contact for quick queries or clarification about any aspect of the Commission's guidance."

2. Greater responsiveness to queries and problems

"Timely action on communications and actions by the Commission to avoid repeating submissions."

"They are prepared to let things go on getting worse until a serious incident occurs as a result of their not being proactive."

"I submitted an application, waited several weeks, and only then did I receive a huge amount of confusing and non-applicable feedback. If I had this information in the first place, it would have saved me (and the commission!) a lot of time."

3. Clearer guidance on specific processes, e.g., submitting reports and accounts and applying for registration

"Would like the guidance for submitting annual reports and accounts to be clearer in some parts."

"Guidelines could have been made simpler / clearer when completing application."

"Clearer, more accessible guidance which can be downloaded and printed, not just only available on web."

**The few who have not had
contact with the Charity
Commission thought they did
not want or need it**

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The few who have not had contact with the Charity Commission thought they did not want or need it

4% of those surveyed had no contact with the Charity Commission in the last year*

Most did not want or need any help or contact

Why customers have not had any contact with the Commission

Other reasons included:

I wanted help with the management of my charity but thought that it would be too time-consuming to contact/use the Charity Commission's services

I wanted help with the management of my charity but did not know where to start

I wanted help with the management of my charity but I did not know that the Charity Commission provided it

Appendix

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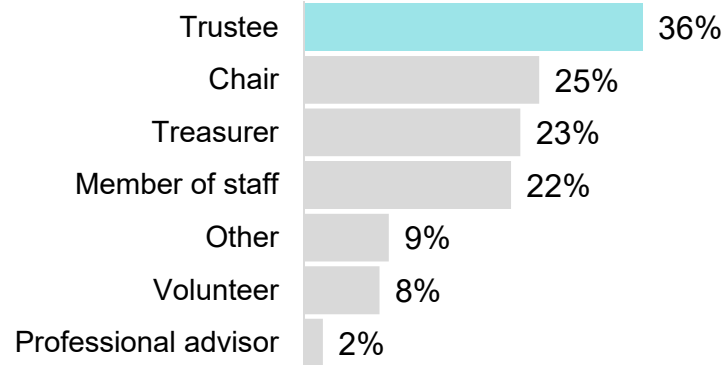
Methodology

Quantitative survey of trustees

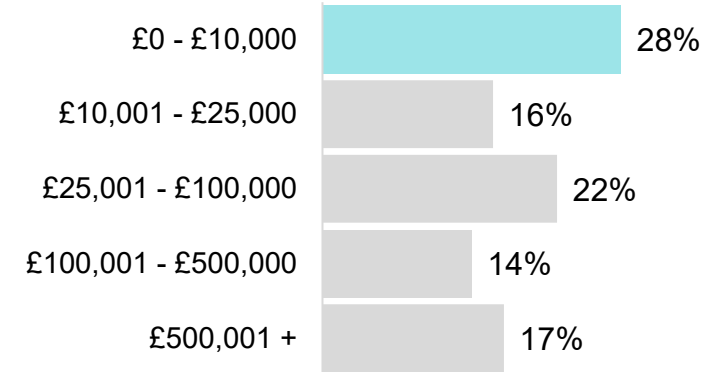
- + Yonder conducted an online survey of 1,191 participants taken from the Charity Commission's database, sampled using the Charity Commission's register. These included a combination of people who had had contact to submit an annual return in the past 12 months, those who had had other forms of contact in the past 12 months (e.g., applied for permission to make a change, were subject to a compliance enforcement case, applied to register, or reported a serious incident), and those who had had no contact at all in the past 12 months.
- + Where relevant, answer options were randomised, and scales rotated. All questions using opposing statements were asked using a sliding scale.
- + The data was weighted to be representative of the views and experiences of active customers of the Charity Commission.
- + Significance testing is used in this report to compare results from previous years against the 2021/22 data to check if differences were statistically significant at the 95% probability level. This means that we can be 95% confident that differences between years are genuine and have not occurred by chance. Significant differences between 2021/22 and 2019/20 are shown on each chart by an upwards (for an increase) or a downwards (for a decrease) arrow, and significant differences between 2021/22 and 2020/21 are shown on each chart by an upwards (for an increase) or a downwards (for a decrease) triangle.

The respondents

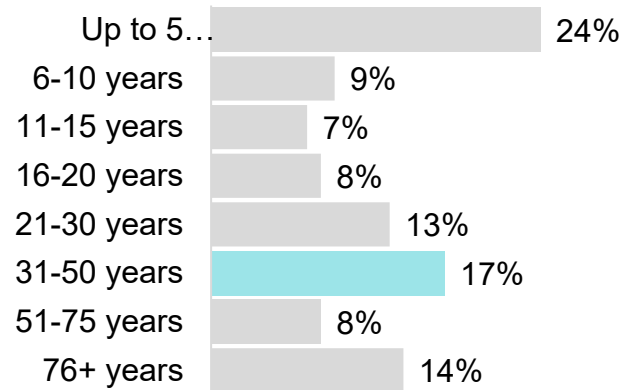
Role



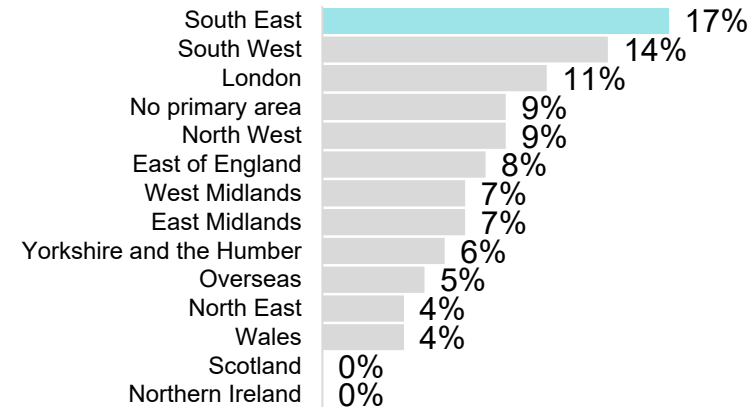
Income



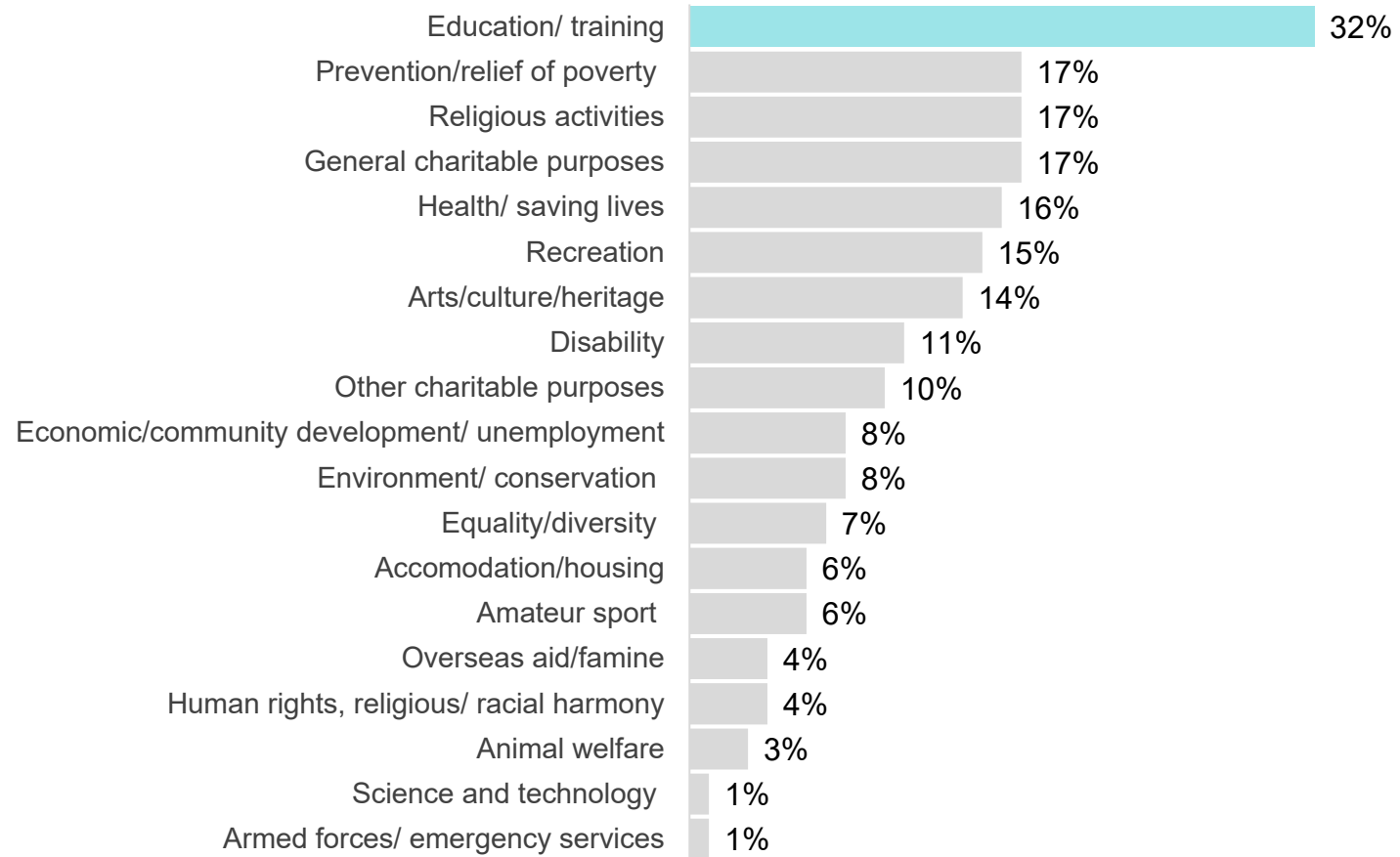
Years operating



Geography (primary area)



Charity remit



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