

THE CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

# Customer Survey 2022

October 2022

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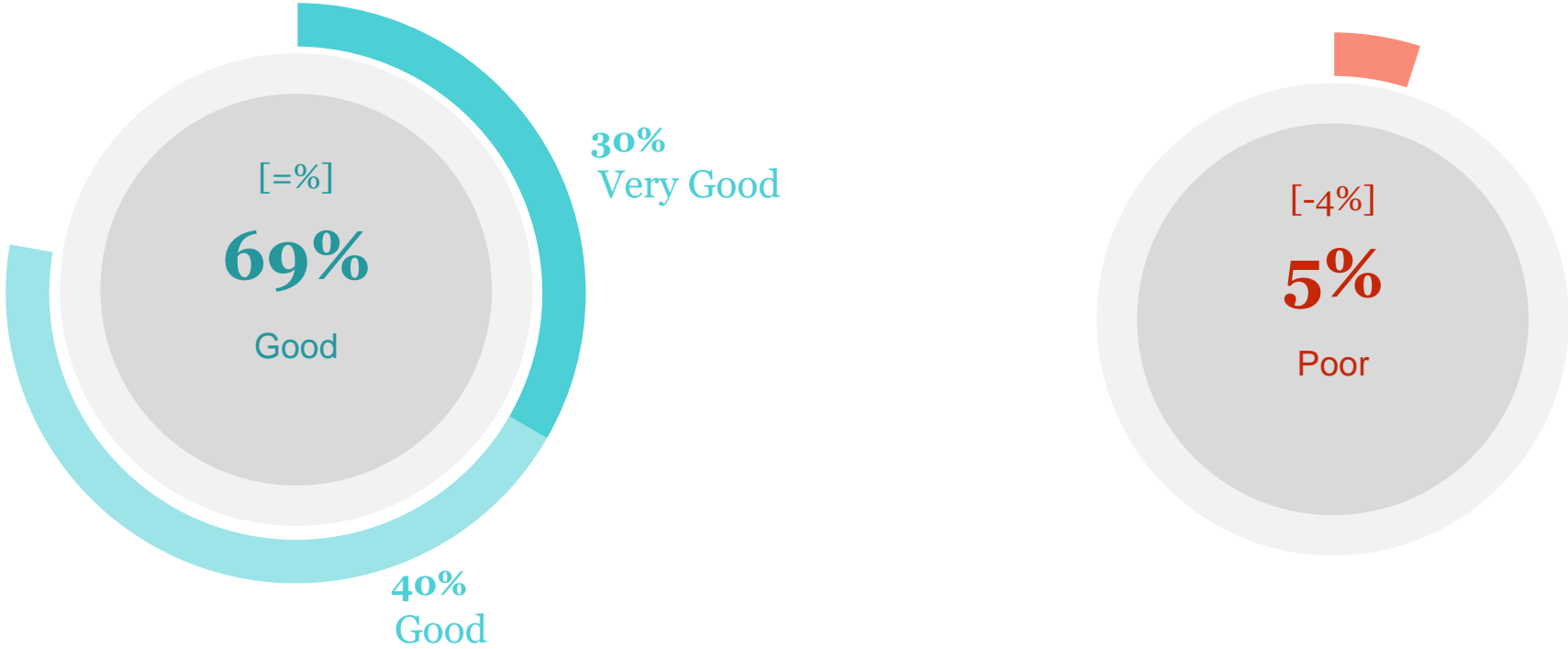
# Executive summary

- + **The Charity Commission's customer service ratings remain consistently high year-on-year.** For the third year running, 69% of customers rate the service as good. The perceived quality and ease of some services has steadily risen.
- + **Online channels remain the predominant channel of access for customers.** The four-fifths who have visited the website and the half who have used the register continue to rate the services highly and pick them out as particular strengths
- + **The most commonly used online functions enjoy particularly high ratings.** Seven in ten people file accounts and update charity or trustee details online, and of these nine in ten feel they receive a good service. The last four years have seen a slight improvement in scores for most online services, though customers broadly do not perceive standards to have changed.
- + **Positivity towards staff remains alongside frustration with perceived unresponsiveness.** Customers tend to find the help and guidance they receive on the phone or via email helpful, praising the attitude of staff. But complaints persist on the grounds that wait times on the phone are too long and email responses too late in coming.
- + **Customers are split on whether services are suited to their particular charity, though most feel they should be.** Less than half feel that the Commission's services are suited to charities like theirs, a proportion that varies little with charity size. Over half, on the other hand, feel that the Commission ought to tailor its services to the needs of their charity.
- + **Most charities only have one person who deals with online Charity Commission processes.** Most of these people find the services they use easy enough to operate without further guidance.

**The Charity Commission's  
customer service ratings remain  
solid and stable**

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# The Charity Commission's customer service remains relatively well regarded



# Customer service ratings are stable within income brackets, with those below £500k continuing to score it higher than those above

**% SUM Good**



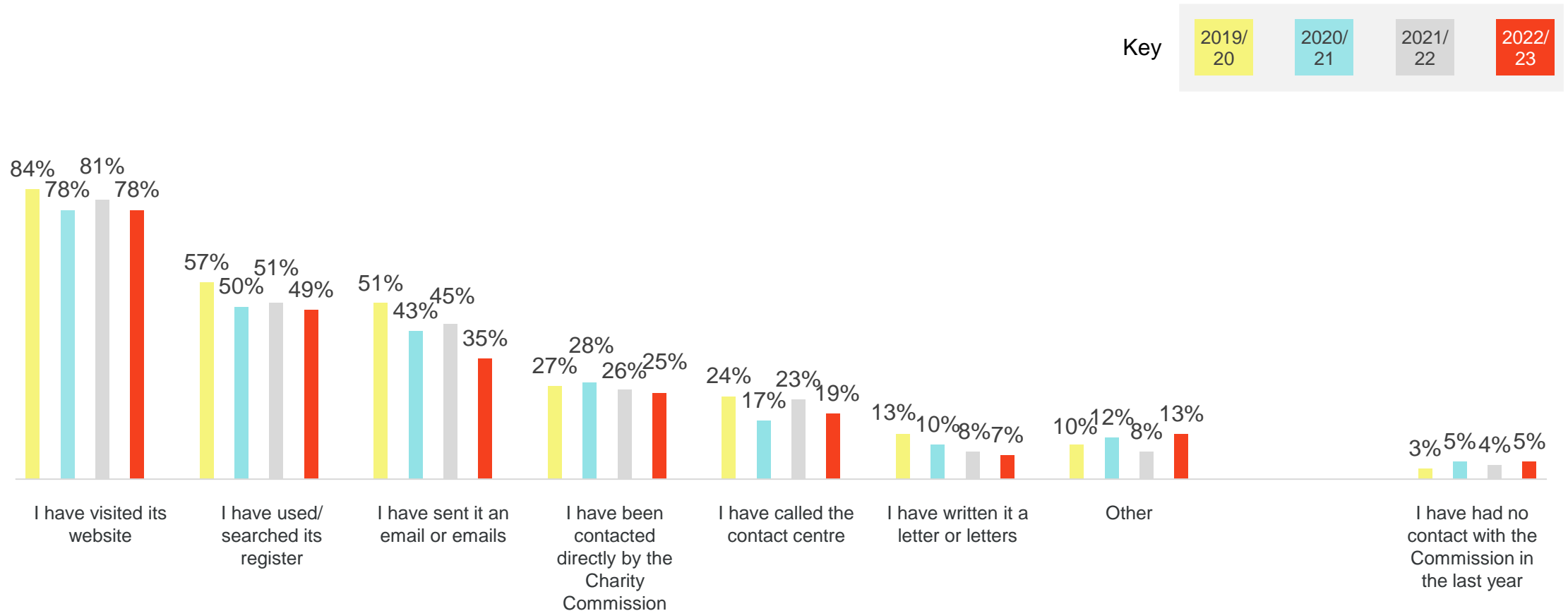
Overall, how would you rate the Charity Commission's customer service? Base: 2019: 0-10k (284), 10-25k (201), 25-100k (296), 100-500k (255), 500k (343); 2020: 0-10k (327), 10-25k (195), 25-100k (275), 100-500k (235), 500k (258); 2021: 0-10k (315), 10-25k (187), 25-100k (254), 100-500k (165), 500k (197); 2022: 0-10k (314), 10-25k (168), 25-100k (210), 100-500k (166), 500k + (179)



**Online channels are the most  
common means of contact with  
the Charity Commission**

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# The website remains the most popular means of interaction with the Commission, but email has seen a marked decline since 2019/20



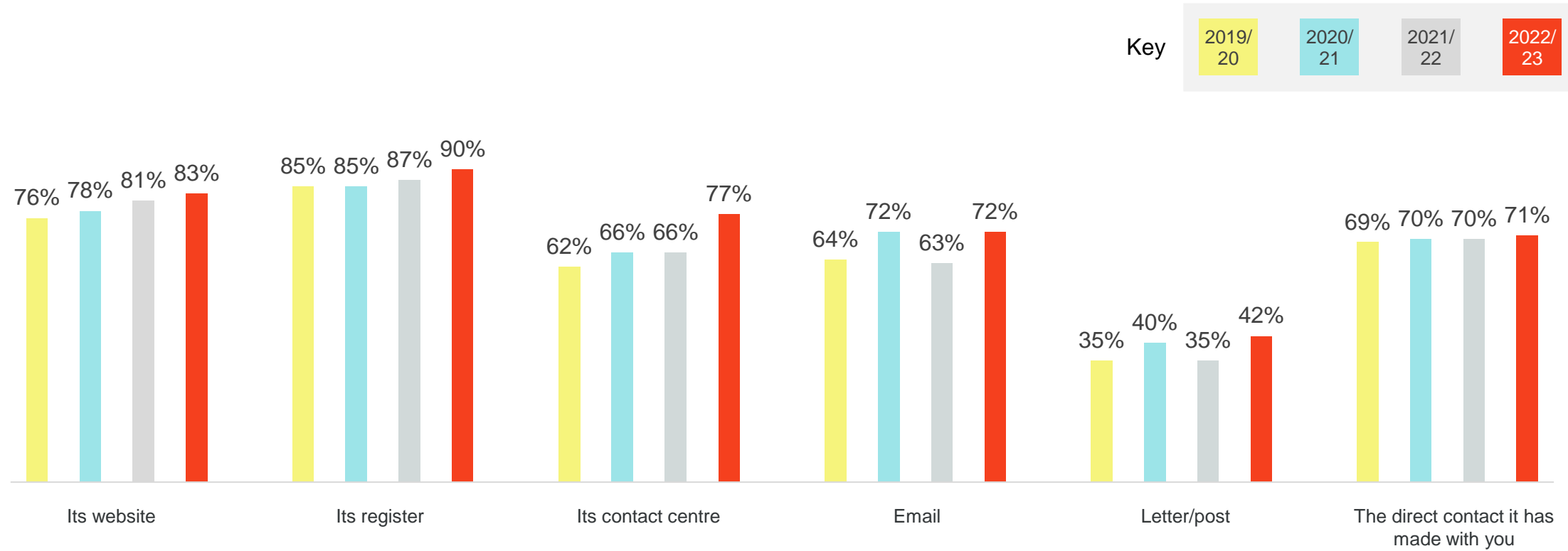
**The website and register  
continue to enjoy high levels of  
appreciation**

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# The website and register continue to perform best, though the last four years have seen a modest improvement in ratings across most channels

**% SUM Good**

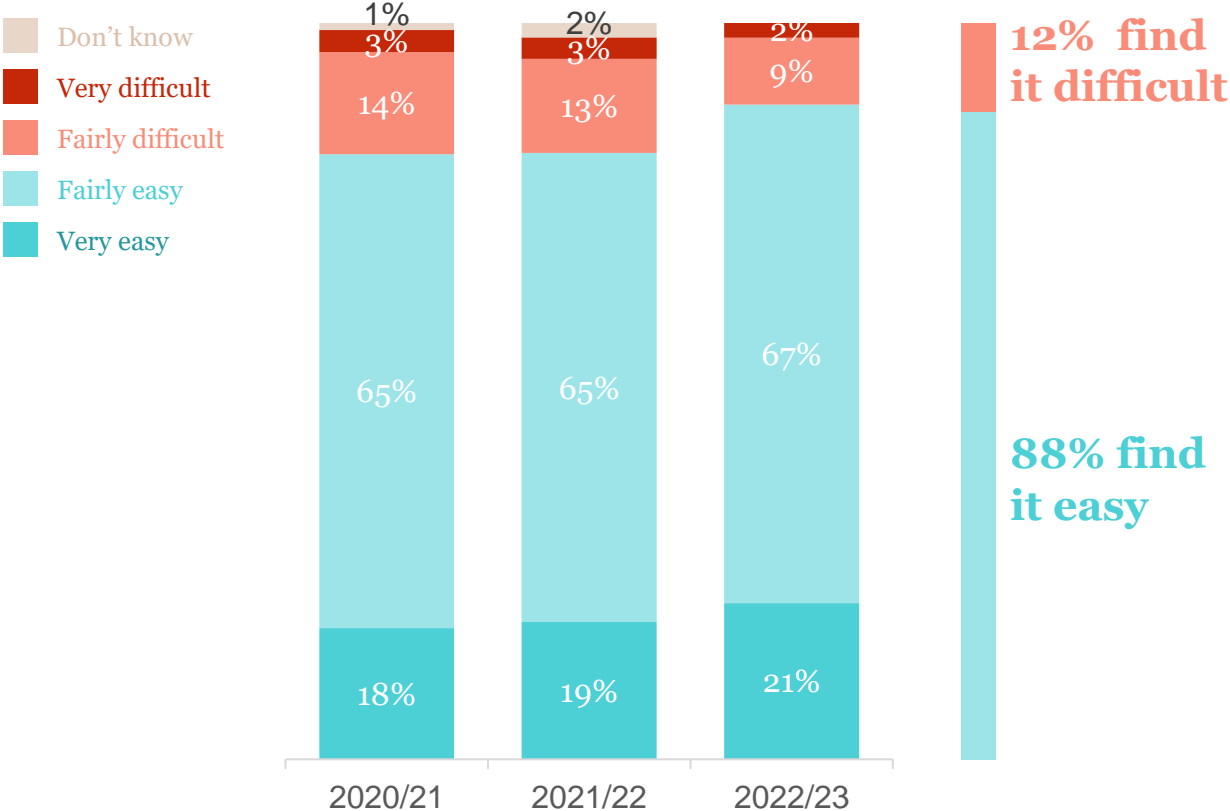


How would you rate the service that is provided by the Charity Commission through each of these channels overall? NB Small base size\*. Base: 2019: Website (1,215), Register (831), Contact Centre (350), Email (744), Letter/post (184), Contact it has made with you (394); 2020: Website (1,085), Register (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); 2022: Website (818), Register (515), Contact Centre (205), Email (368), Letter/post (78)\*, Contact it has made with you (266)



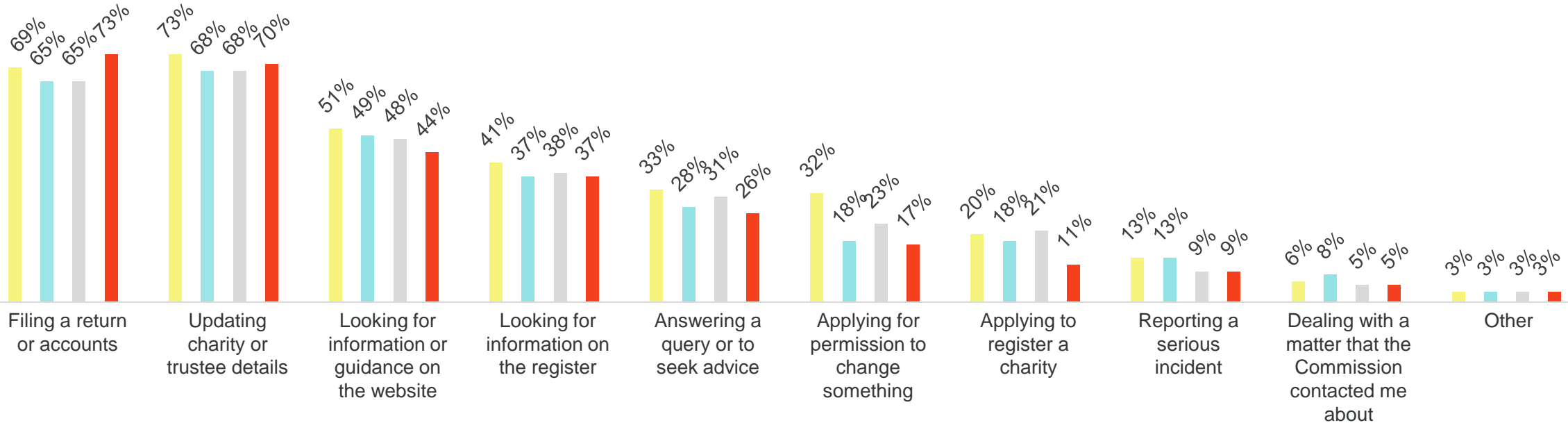
# Almost nine in ten find it easy to locate what they need on the Charity Commission's website

*Among the 78% who use the website...*

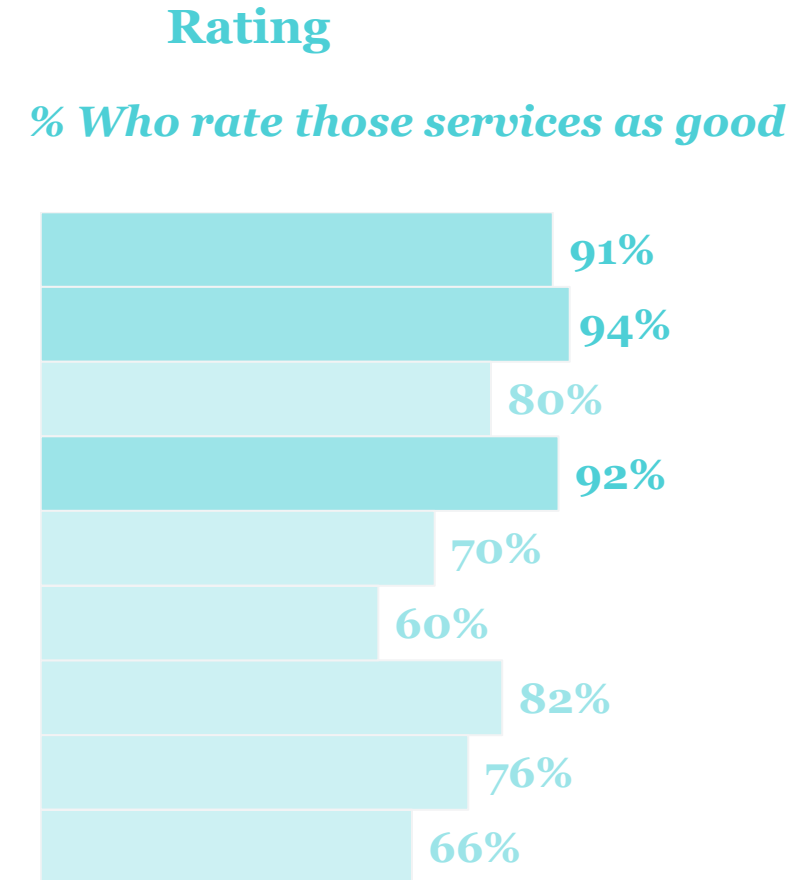
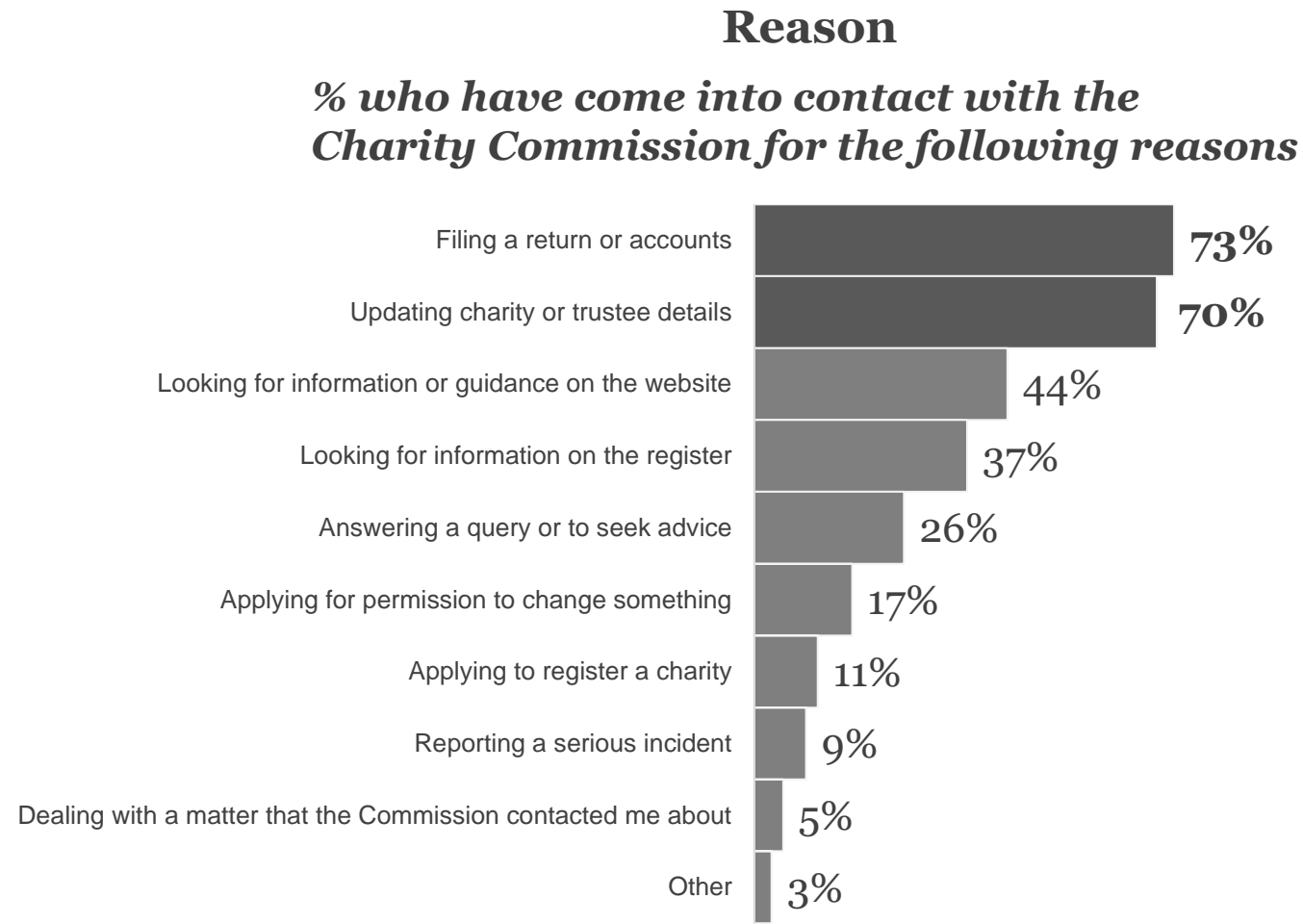


# While more customers are filing accounts/returns online, markedly fewer are applying to make changes or register charities

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



# The most commonly used services – filing returns/accounts, updating details – are highly rated, as is the register as an information source



For what reasons have you had contact with the Charity Commission in the last year? Base: (1,003); How would you rate the service that is provided by the Charity Commission in each of these areas? Base: Filing (728), Updating details (700), Looking... on the website (444), Looking... on the register (369), Query (258), Permission (172), Registering (106), RSI (95)\*, Contacted me (47)\*, NB Some low base sizes

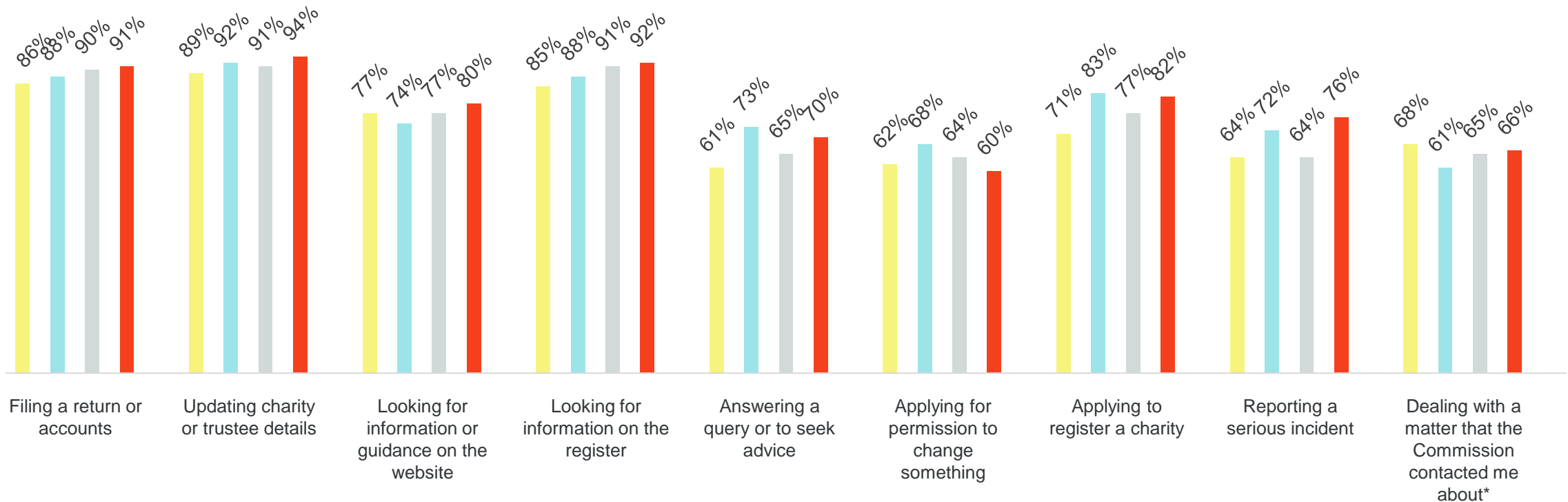
**Most service ratings either  
remain stable or show slight  
improvement over the long term**

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# Ratings of the Commission's services have remained broadly stable since 2019/20

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

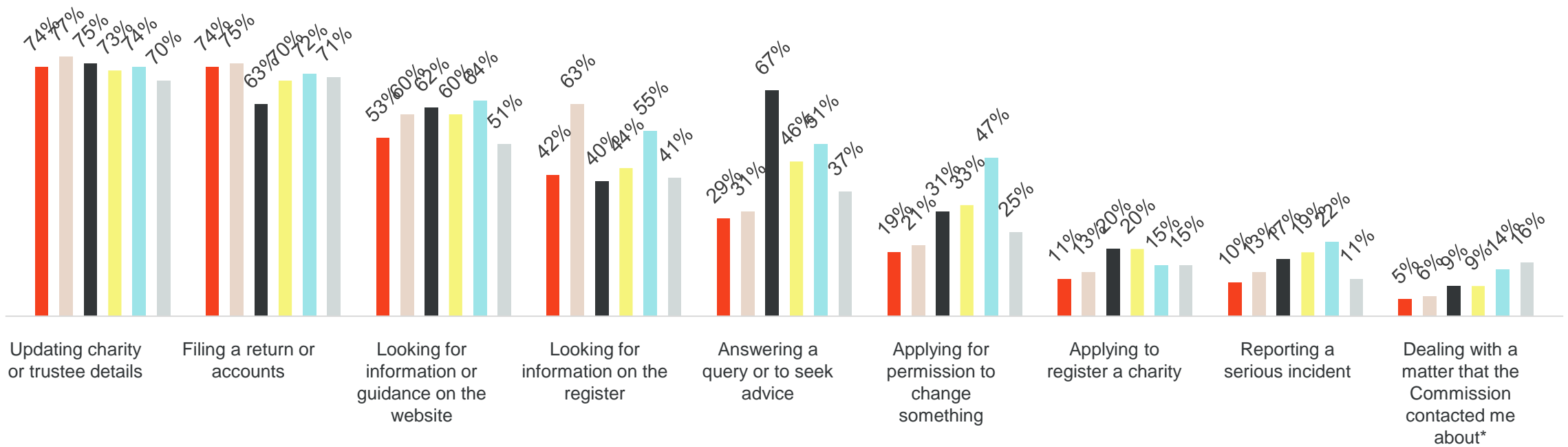
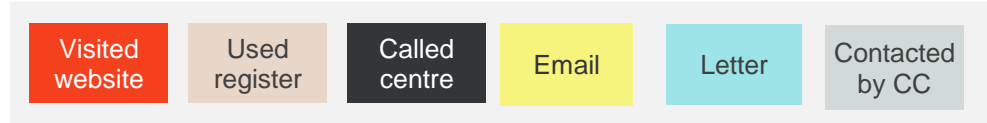
Key



How would you rate the service that is provided by the Charity Commission in each of these areas?  
 Base: Filing (728), Updating details (700), Looking... on the website (444), Looking... on the register (369), Query (258), Permission (172), Registering (106), RSI (95)\*, Contacted me (47)\*, NB Some low base sizes

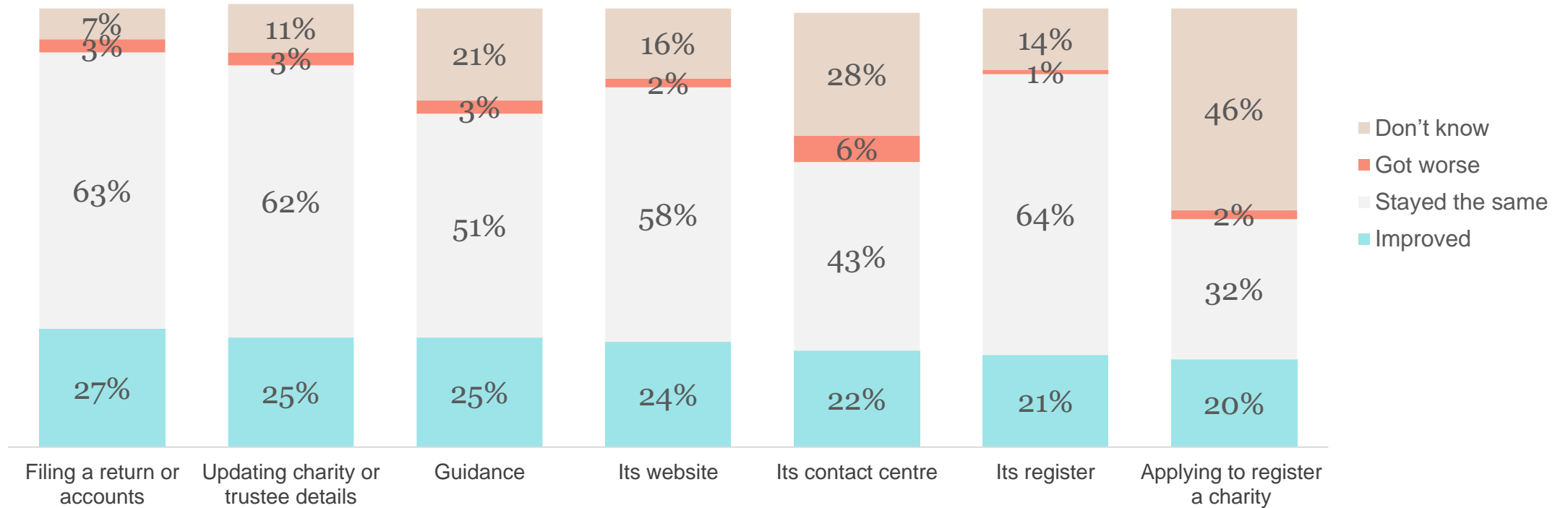
# Those who look online at the website or register are less likely to be seeking answers or advice than those who call the contact centre

Key: channel of contact with the Commission



And for what reasons have you had contact with the Charity Commission in the last year? Base: Visited website (818), Used register (515), Called centre (205), Email (368), Letter (78), Contacted by Charity Commission (266)

# While customers sense more improvement than regression, the quality of service is broadly felt to have remained the same





**Customers are generally happy  
with the services the  
Commission provides**

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# CUSTOMERS ARE BROADLY PLEASED WITH THE ONLINE SERVICES

## Helpful & professional staff

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- ✓ When forthcoming, the quality of the assistance received over the phone or by email is often praised by those who are able to speak to someone
- ✓ Staff are felt to be knowledgeable, understanding and keen to help

## The charity register and annual returns

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- ✓ Many pick out the facilities for searching and updating the register as particularly useful and uncomplicated
- ✓ While some feel the filing of returns could be simplified, most find the process straightforward enough

## Clarity of online guidance

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- ✓ Most customers are content that the website tends to offer the guidance they need
- ✓ Many, though not all, believe that the user-friendliness of the website is such that they do not need to phone or email

## Availability of information

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- ✓ The majority express appreciation for the large quantity of information, though a few find it difficult to locate what they need
- ✓ Some find it reassuring to know that they can call the contact centre if they remain unsure

# CUSTOMERS ARE BROADLY PLEASED WITH THE ONLINE SERVICES

## Helpful & professional staff

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*“The advisors in the Contact Centre can be absolutely wonderful. Their advice is fantastic and, when they didn't know the answer to a technical problem I had, had the grace to admit they didn't know and to come back to me with the answer.”*

*“Positive attitude from staff who genuinely wanted to help.”*

*“Speaking to the helpline was incredibly useful and easy to access. I felt taken seriously and treated like an individual.”*

## The charity register and annual returns

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*“Very impressed with the officer who reviewed our charity application and helped explain a couple of issues we needed to resolve.”*

*“Updating the register is very user friendly.”*

*“When updating the charity details or preparing and submitting the annual return, I have found the relevant sections easy to follow and complete.”*

## Clarity of online guidance

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*“Clear and comprehensive explanations on website, including examples of situations that may come up.”*

*“The menus on the website are generally clear and easy to use.”*

*“I didn't need to speak to anyone and could do it all online!”*

## Availability of information

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*“The service is straightforward and the information available is easy to find and comprehensive.”*

*“The information on finance is useful.”*

*“They explained where I could get further information if I needed it. I felt reassured I was doing the right thing.”*

**However, some would like to see  
improvements in the  
accessibility of relevant  
information**

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## SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT PRIORITISE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF RELEVANT GUIDANCE

### Clear and accessible information

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- ✗ Some from smaller charities in particular continue to complain of overly complex or legal terminology
- ✗ Respondents seek detailed, relevant information to be conveyed in a concise format

### Responsiveness

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- ✗ Long waits for email responses are again a source of frustration for many
- ✗ Those who mention having interacted on the phone often highlight the difficulty of getting through to someone
- ✗ The appreciation people have for the help they do eventually receive leads them to express desire for more staff to improve accessibility

### Guidance appropriate to charity

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- ✗ Some feel that the answers to their queries are frequently simple and ought to be easier to find
- ✗ The wealth of information is set against the lack of any straightforward means of navigating it
- ✗ Some representatives of less-professionalised charities feel they lack the knowledge and the time to find their way to what they need

### Website functionality

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- ✗ While most people find the website user-friendly enough for their needs, several point to areas where improvements could be made:
  - Navigation is felt not to be intuitive for those who seldom use it
  - Some struggle to find what they are looking for when searching the register
  - Many mention that the RSI function is slow and prone to malfunction

## SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT PRIORITISE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF RELEVANT GUIDANCE

### Clear and accessible information

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*“Easier to understand documents. We are volunteers and I do not understand some of the terms used.”*

*“It can be fiddly to find things if the terminology isn’t what you are used to. More plain English is needed.”*

*“Language not geared towards civilian users with no professional background in business, charities, accounts.”*

### Responsiveness

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*“Turn around time needs desperate attention for registering a charity.”*

*“The time taken to respond to enquiries was appalling.”*

*“Getting someone to understand and dealing with a difficult issue relating to an old trust was very difficult and took a number of calls and emails - once I was allocated a person to help, the help was brilliant.”*

### Guidance appropriate to charity

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*“More specific and detailed information on the website is a must. There are too many 'read this 200-page PDF' type solutions.”*

*“Often find it difficult to find specific information required on a topic.”*

*“It should be much easier to find things on the website. There are so many connected links between documents that it's hard to know if you've read everything.”*

### Website functionality

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*“The IT continues to be clunky and hard to use in certain areas.”*

*“Improve the ability to search by name and select criteria to restrict number of possible matches.”*

*“The Serious Incident Reporting forms are very frustrating to use. They glitch, are hard to edit, often become unresponsive and take much longer to complete than should be necessary.”*

# Those customers who desire improvement continue to call for greater responsiveness and more intuitive search functions

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## Customers would like...

### 1. Swifter responses by phone and email

*“Why can’t you speak to the person dealing with your enquiry?”*

*“Responses are eventually received but only after a significant wait and numerous requests from the charity for updates or timelines. We appreciate you are busy, but you should be able to provide a rough timeline.”*

### 2. Easier access to advice and guidance

*“I want to know how I can get advice on trustee behaviour, there is no such thing to be found.”*

*“Clear flagging of guidance documents that are current/in force, and of those which have been superseded.”*

### 3. Simpler ways of locating specific information

*“I think one sometimes has to do quite a lot of investigation to find what one is looking for.”*

*“It was a bit circular and hard to find the right part of the site to change trustee details.”*

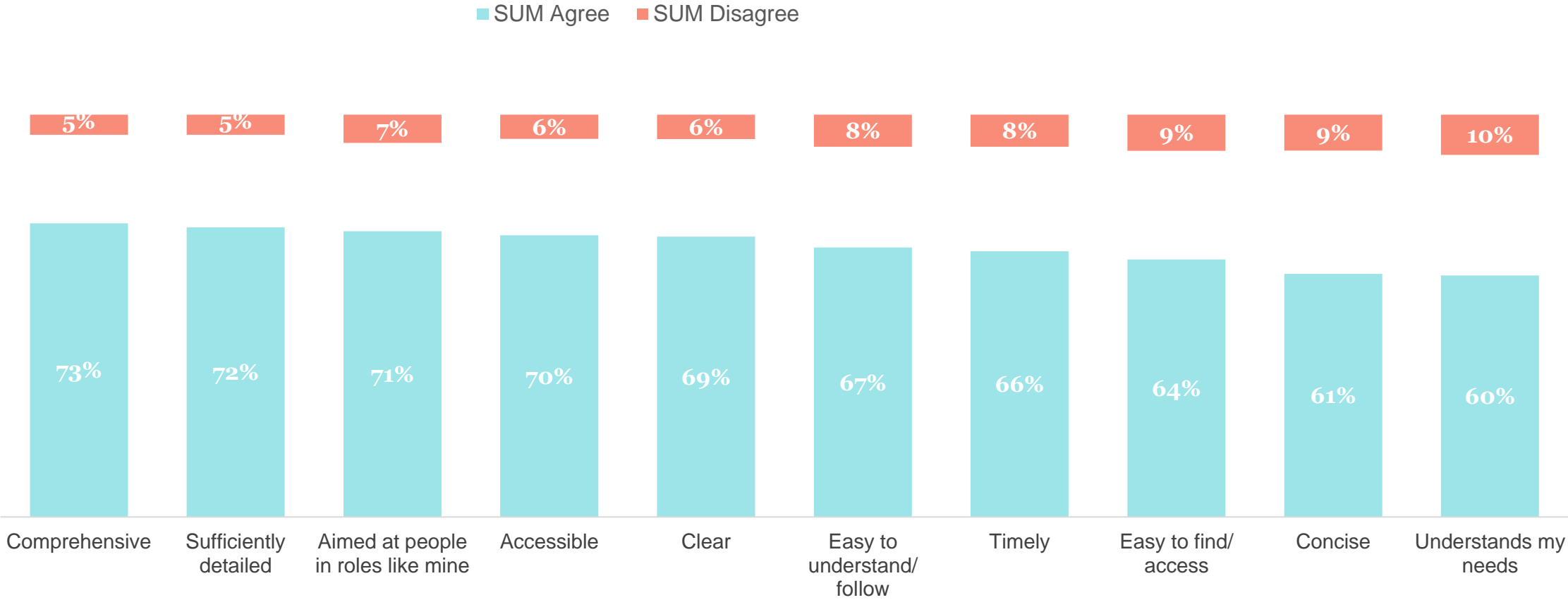
*“It is extremely difficult to find details of a contact - address, telephone number, email - and if there is a specific question to ask that is not covered by searching the website, that can be very frustrating.”*

**Indeed, customers do not think  
that the comprehensiveness of  
the Commission's services is  
matched by its understanding of  
specific needs**

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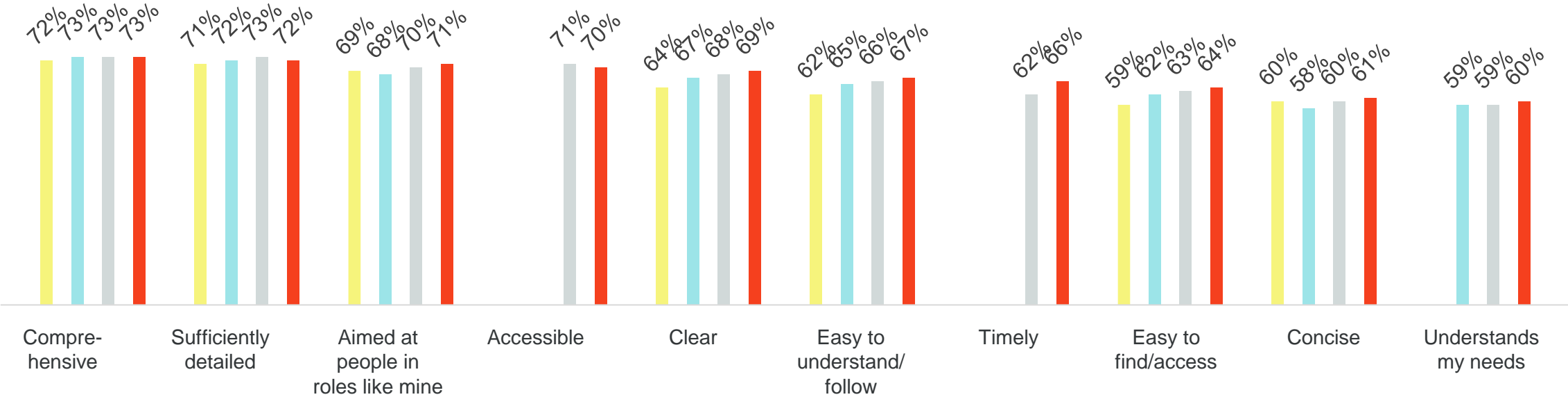
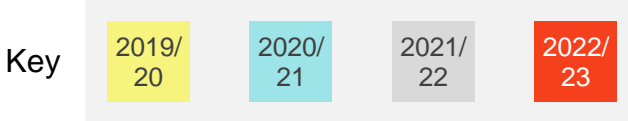


# As previously, customers are most likely to agree that the Charity Commission's services are comprehensive and detailed



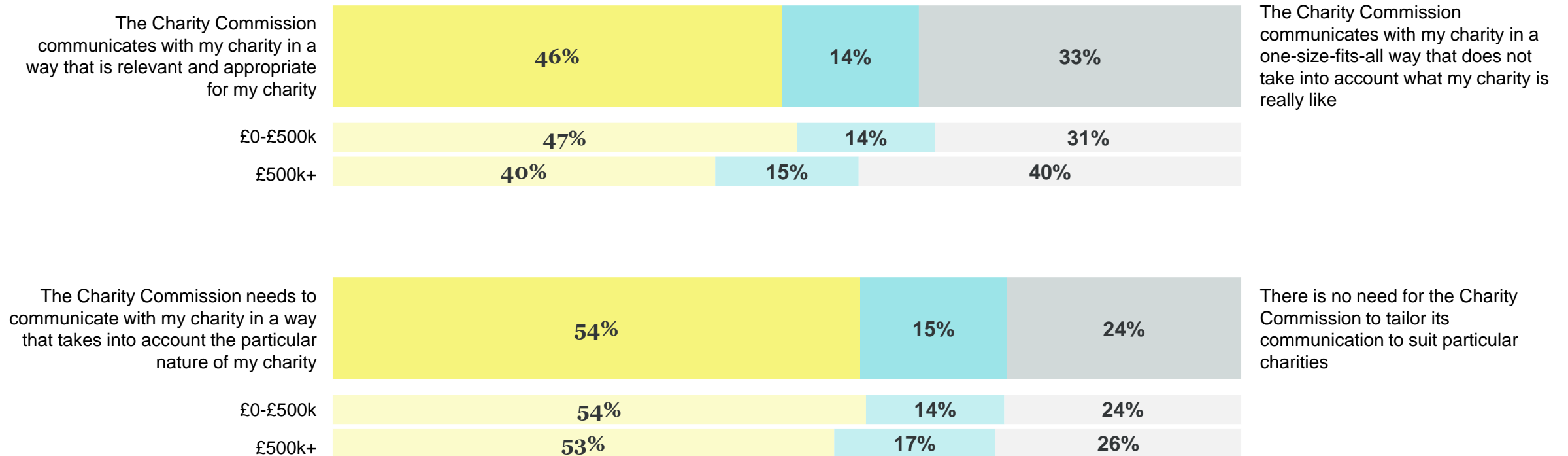
# While these metrics remain broadly stable, clarity, ease of understanding and timeliness have risen notably since 2019/20

% of service users who agree



# Customers are divided on whether the Commission's communications are suited to their particular charities, though most feel they should be

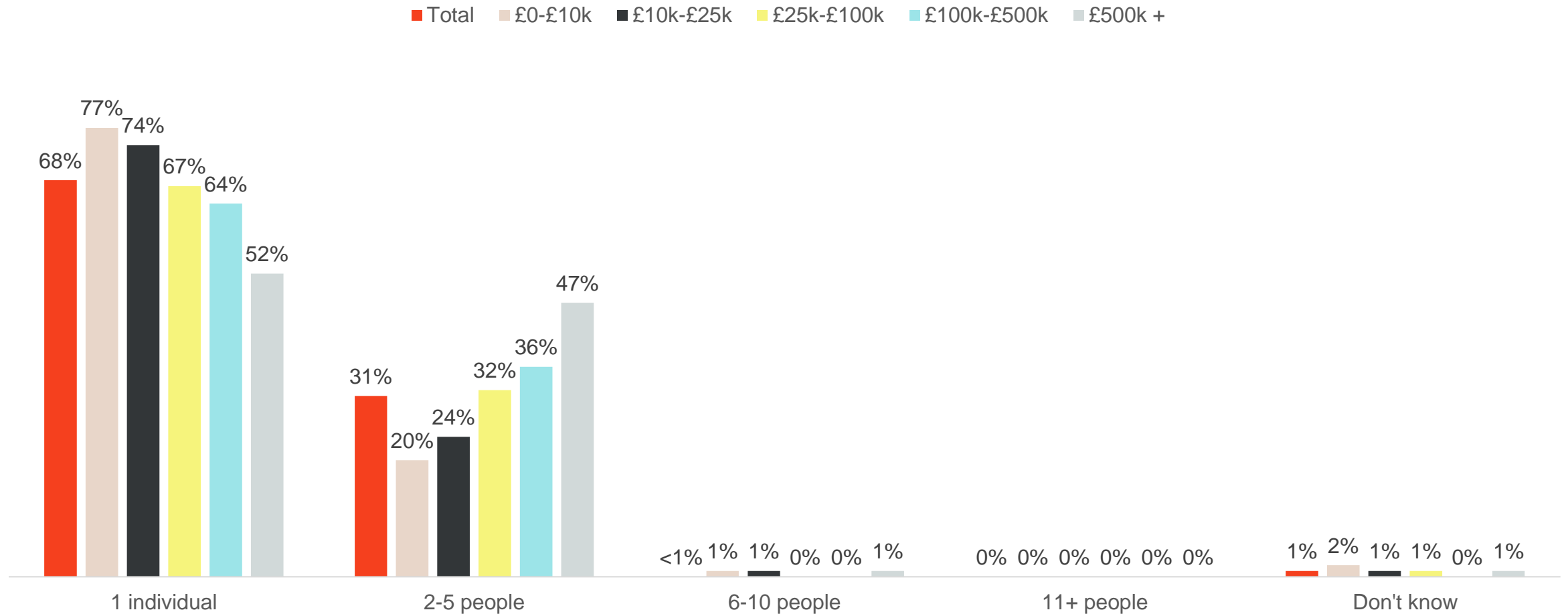
■ Agree more with statement A (10-6) ■ Neutral (5) ■ Agree more with statement B (4-0)



**The few people at any given  
charity who carry out functions  
on the website are broadly  
satisfied with the process**

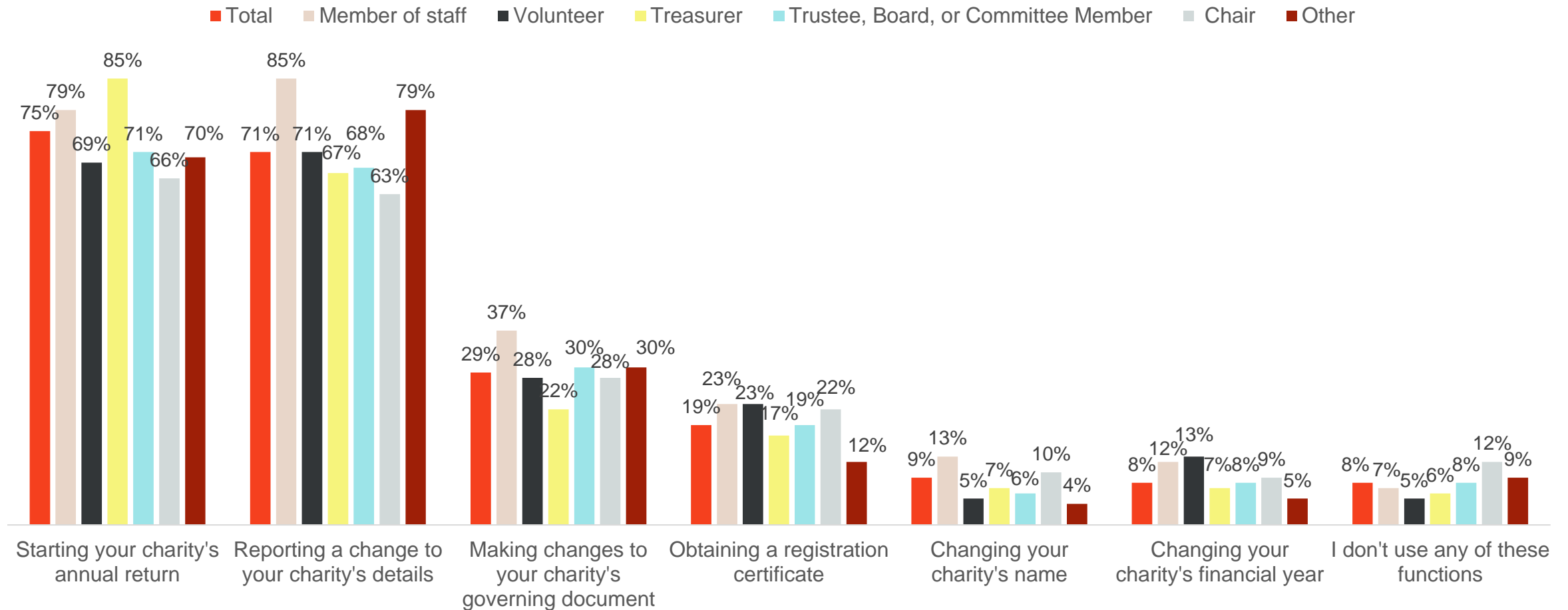
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# Interactions with the website are the preserve of five people or fewer in almost all charities and of only one person in two-thirds of charities

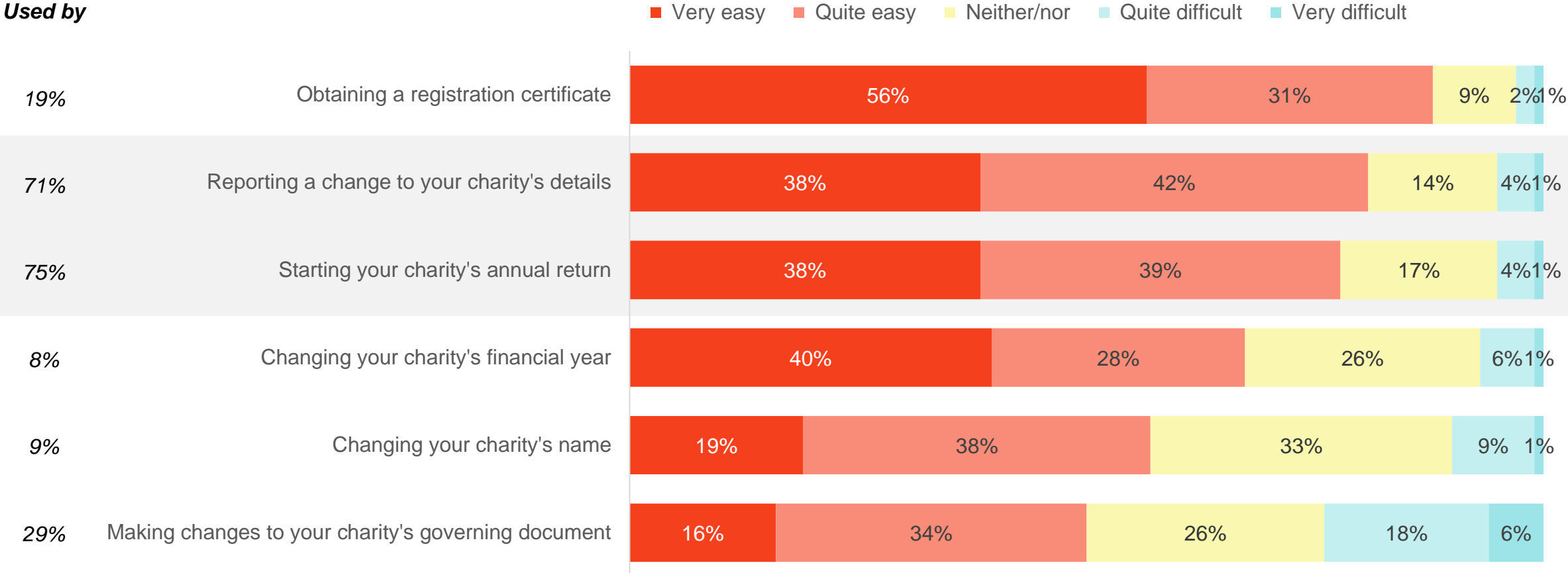


Which of the following best describes the way your charity uses any of the following functions on the Charity Commission's website: starting your charity's annual return, reporting a change to your charity's details, making changes to your charity's governing document, changing your charity's financial year, choosing a charity name, or obtaining a registration certificate. Base: Total (1,054), 0-10k (314), 10-25k (168), 25-100k (210), 100-500k (166), 500k+ (179)

# For people in all roles, annual returns and the reporting of changes to details are the most common tasks



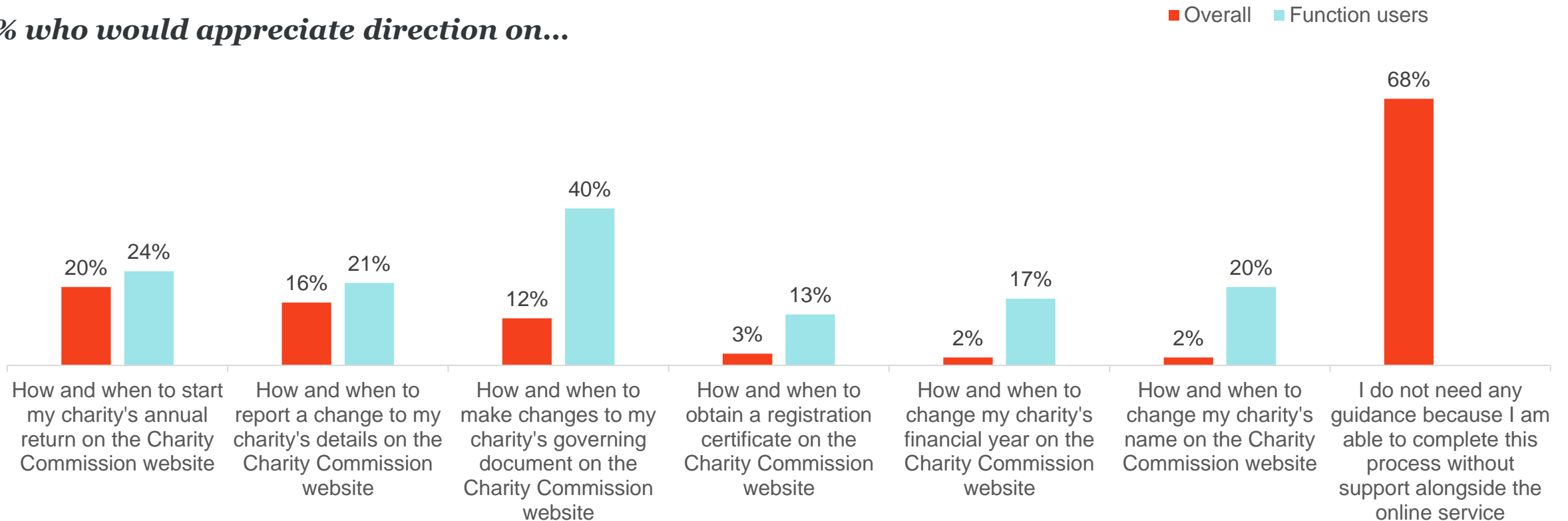
# At least half find it quite or very easy to use the functions they need; four-fifths in the case of the most commonly used functions



Please select which of the following best describes how easy or difficult you find it to use the following functions on the Charity Commission's website. Base: Obtaining certificate (205), Reporting change (752), Starting return (795), Changing financial year (86)\*, Changing name (94)\*, Changing governing document (301). \*NB Low base size

# Though most feel equipped for their tasks, two-fifths of those who have to make changes to the governing document would appreciate direction

*% who would appreciate direction on...*





**Appendix**

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# Methodology

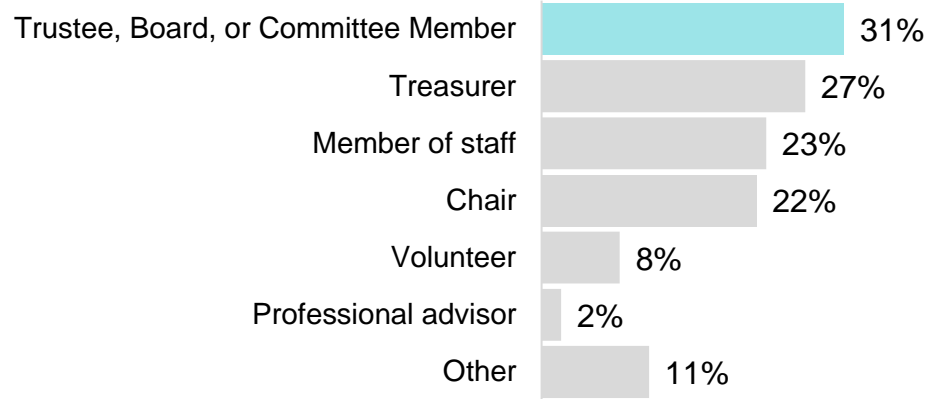
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## Quantitative survey of trustees

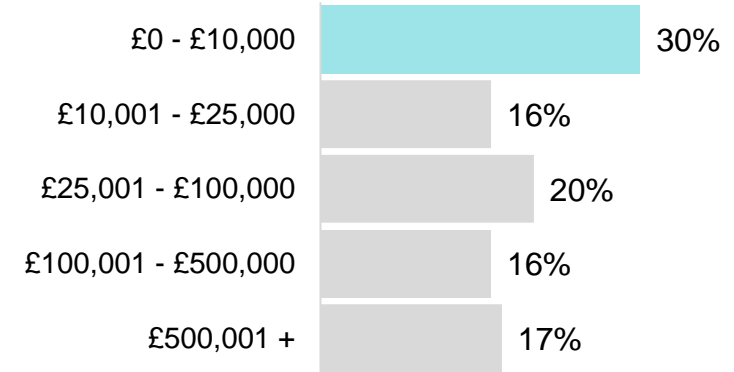
- + Yonder conducted an online survey of 1,054 participants taken from the Charity Commission's database, sampled using the Charity Commission's register. These included a combination of people who had had contact to submit an annual return in the past 12 months, those who had had other forms of contact 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.
- + Where percentages do not sum up to 100%, this may be due to computer rounding.

# The respondents

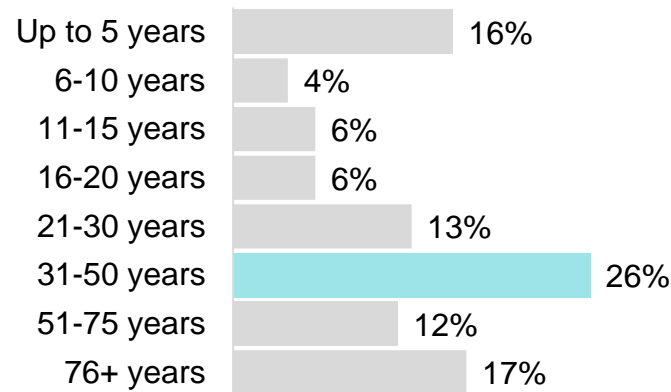
## Role



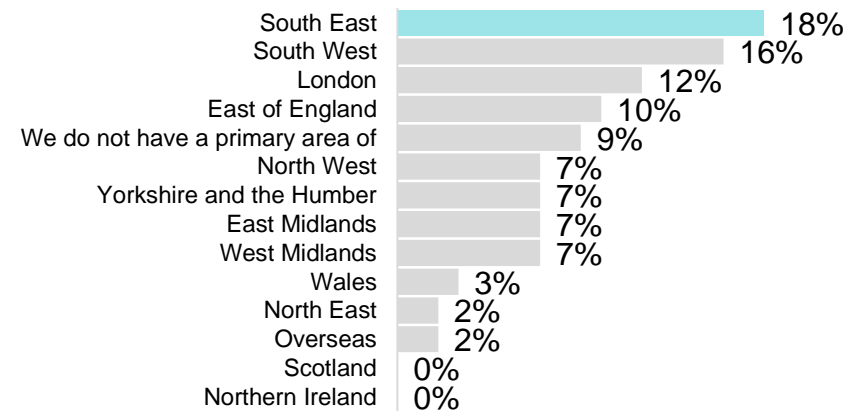
## Income



## Years operating



## Geography (primary area)



# Charity remit

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