

Department for Work and Pensions Customer Experience Survey

Child Maintenance Service 2021/22

Annual

Published: 29 August 2024

Great Britain

The Customer Experience Survey (CES) is designed to monitor customer satisfaction with the services offered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to inform improvements in service delivery. It is an ongoing cross-sectional study with quarterly interviewing. This research was externally commissioned by DWP with fieldwork independently conducted by Ipsos (previously known as Ipsos MORI).

The data in this report is based on 3,394 interviews conducted with Child Maintenance Service (CMS) customers who had contact with the service between April 2021 and March 2022. This report presents data on overall customer satisfaction and looks at survey data that is mapped to the DWP Customer Experience Drivers. The DWP Customer Experience Drivers provide standards against which customer service delivery can be measured. This report includes data relating to: Get it Right; Make it Easy; Communicate Clearly; and Professional and Supportive.

Our thanks go to all those who gave up their time to take part in this study.

About the Child Maintenance Service

CMS helps separated families to make financial choices to provide for their children when needed. Child maintenance is an arrangement between parents to cover the child's living costs when one parent no longer lives with them. Parents use CMS to arrange child maintenance if they do not want to contact the other parent themselves, and many have tried family-based arrangements before deciding to use CMS. CMS is unique in that there are two customers for each case (a Receiving Parent and a Paying Parent), often with an opposing position about their maintenance arrangement. This means that, in many instances, when a positive result for one customer is achieved, the other customer may be less satisfied.

At a glance – Overall customer satisfaction

Just over one third of customers were satisfied with CMS services overall



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Abbreviations

CES	Customer Experience Survey
CMS	Child Maintenance Service
CSES	Claimant Service and Experience Survey
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions

About the survey

Survey methodology

CES replaced the previous Claimant Service and Experience Survey (CSES) in 2019 and CMS customers were included in the survey from this point onwards.

Sample

CES is a survey of customers who have had recent contact with CMS, rather than all CMS customers. The sample includes parents who have been in contact with the service during each three-month quarter to either make a new application, report a change of circumstances, or because of arrears. 'Contact' includes any time a customer has phoned, written a letter, emailed, filled in an online form, used the Child Maintenance online portal, or otherwise got in touch with CMS. Customers are also included in the sample if they were contacted by CMS through any of these methods. For the contact to be identified and the customer included in the overall survey population, the contact needs to have triggered a change in CMS administrative data during the three-month quarter.

A quota sample design is used to meet minimum interview targets for each parent type and contact reason, with a random sample of CMS customers drawn from the population to meet these quotas. Weighting is then applied to the data so that findings are representative of the survey population: data is weighted by age, gender, length of service use, and contact reason.

Fieldwork

The survey moved to a mixed-mode online and telephone approach from 2019 with fieldwork conducted quarterly with CMS customers. The data in this annual report is based on interviews completed with 3,394 CMS customers who had contact with the service between April 2021 and March 2022.

Statistical conventions

Percentages in charts may not always add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Responses for sub-groups with larger base sizes will be more robust and have a lower margin of error than sub-groups with smaller base sizes. Therefore, it is possible to identify relatively small differences as being statistically significant when comparing sub-groups which have larger sample sizes. The issue of sub-group size particularly applies to the customer characteristics sections where the sample sizes for some ethnicities are smaller.

The differences between Paying Parents and Receiving Parents illustrated in this report are found to be statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level. Receiving Parents give higher scores, reflecting the differences between these two main CMS customer groups. A statistically significant difference at the 95 per cent confidence level means that you would only expect to see the result caused by chance 1 in 20 times.

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Results

Overall satisfaction

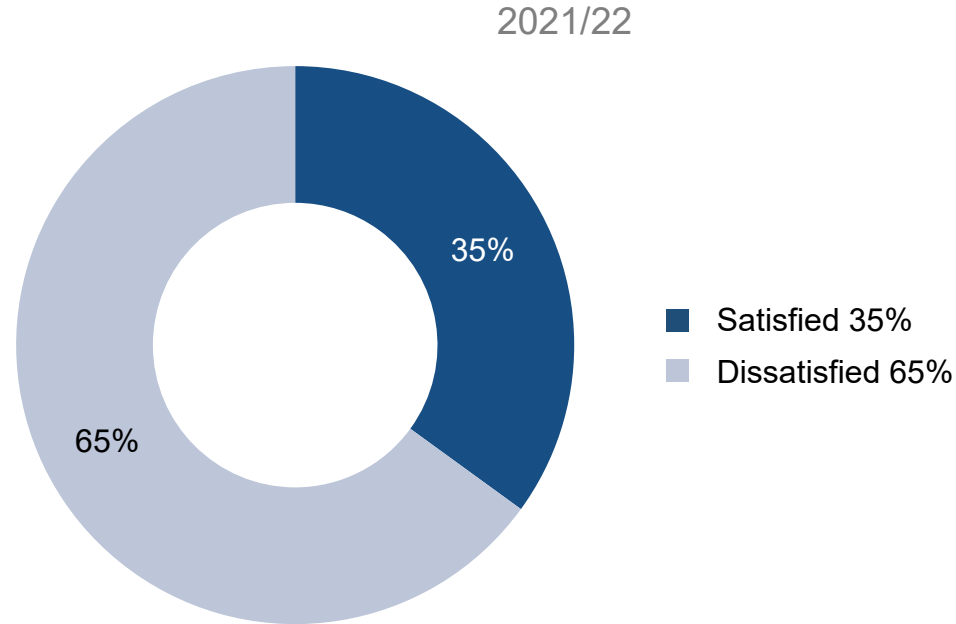
CMS respondents were asked how satisfied they were about the service they had received. It is important when considering the satisfaction of these customers to note that CMS is unique in that there are two customers for each case, often with an opposing position about their maintenance arrangement. This means that, in many instances, when a positive result for one customer is achieved, the other customer may be less satisfied. This can include, for example, where enforcement action is taken to secure child maintenance, where collect and pay arrangements are implemented, and where payments and liability are calculated based on known circumstances. Parents often contact CMS at a time where their personal relationships are strained and they may have a poor quality or non-existent relationship with the other parent. Many have tried family-based arrangements before deciding to use CMS.

These circumstances of CMS customers, particularly for arrears customers, mean that they may not necessarily be expected to have high levels of satisfaction.

More than one third of all customers reported being satisfied with the services provided by CMS

In 2021/22, 35 per cent of all CMS customers said they were either fairly or very satisfied with the overall service provided by CMS. This figure includes both Paying and Receiving Parents. 'Don't Know' responses to the overall satisfaction question are excluded from analysis throughout.

Figure 1: Percentage of customers who were satisfied or dissatisfied with the services provided by CMS

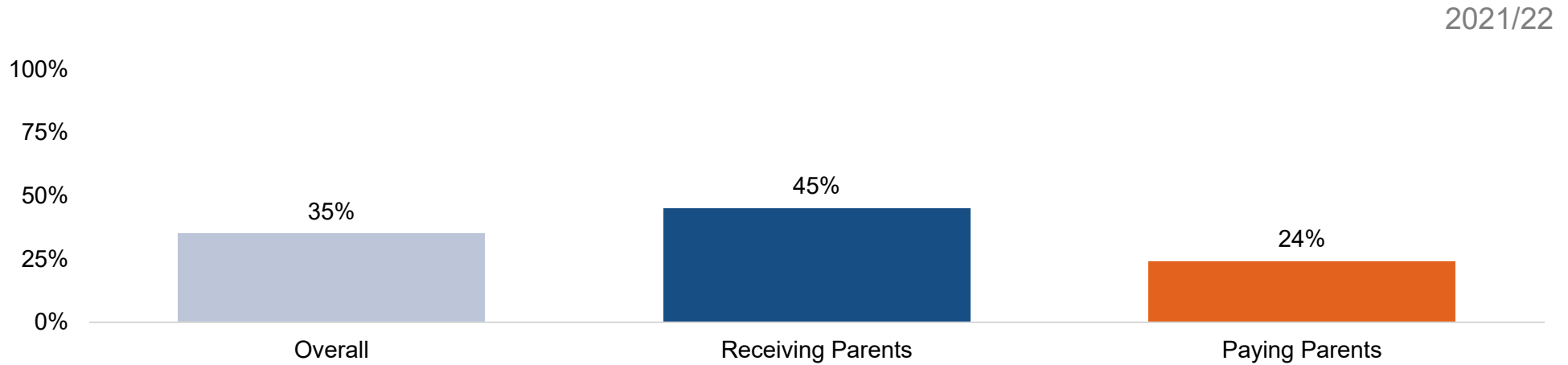


Base: All customers (excluding Don't Know responses). Overall (3,337); Receiving Parents (1,710); Paying Parents (1,627).

More than four out of ten Receiving Parents and almost one quarter of Paying Parents were satisfied with the services provided by CMS

Receiving Parents were more likely to be satisfied than Paying Parents. Figure 2 shows that in 2021/22, 45 per cent of Receiving Parents were satisfied compared to 24 per cent of Paying Parents.

Figure 2: Percentage of customers who were satisfied with the services provided by CMS by parent type

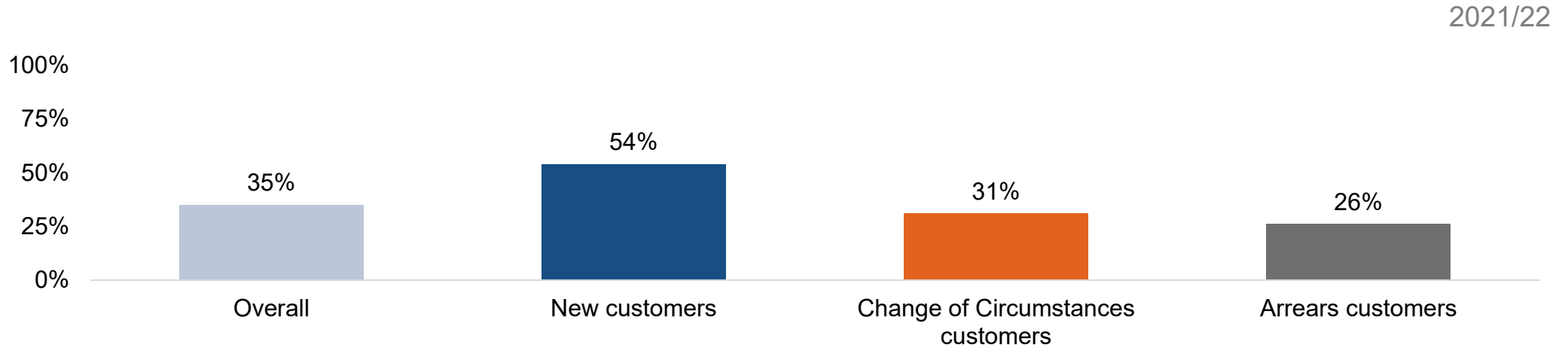


Base: All customers (excluding Don't Know responses). Overall (3,337); Receiving Parents (1,710); Paying Parents (1,627).

More than half of New customers reported being satisfied with the services provided by CMS

In 2021/22, 54 per cent of New customers were satisfied, compared to almost a third of Change of Circumstances customers (31 per cent) and around a quarter of Arrears customers (26 per cent).

Figure 3: Percentage of customers who were satisfied with the services provided by CMS by contact type



Base: All customers (excluding Don't Know responses). New customers (456); Change of Circumstances customers (2,007); Arrears customers (865).

Results by Customer Experience Driver

This section of the report is structured around four Customer Experience Drivers: Get it Right; Make it Easy; Communicate Clearly; and Professional and Supportive. The questions presented below have been selected on the basis that they have the best coverage of survey respondents, as some questions are only asked to particular customer groups.

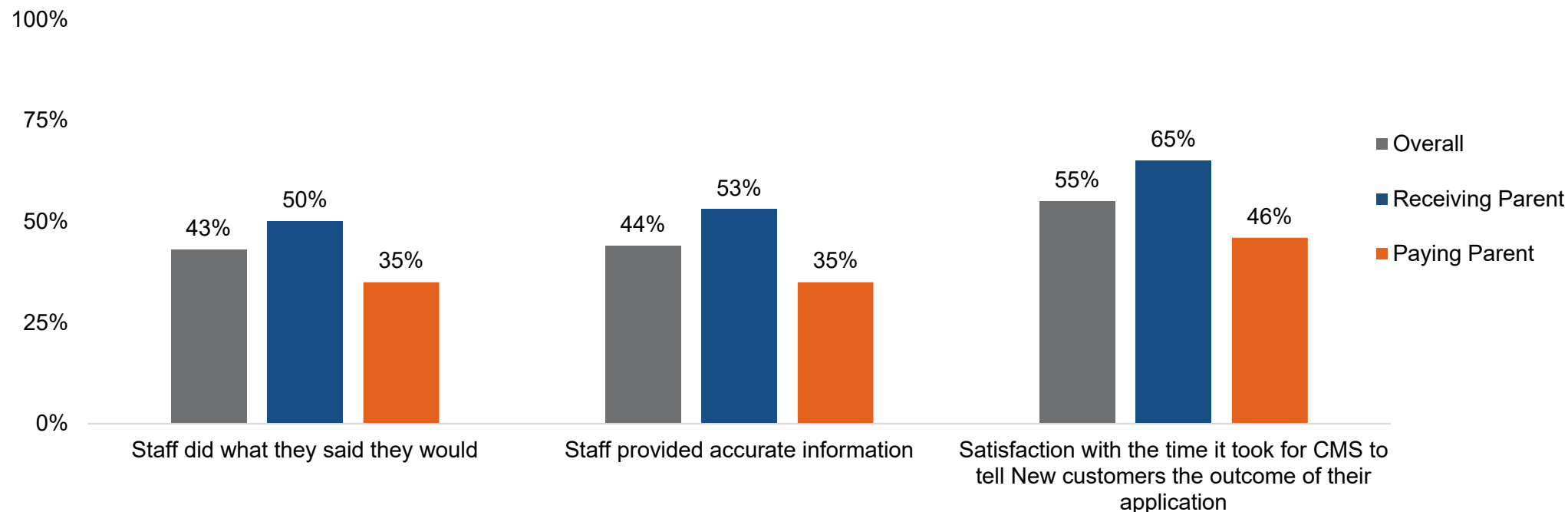
Get it Right

Questions that relate to the Get it Right Driver are reported below.

Figure 4 shows that, overall, more than four out of ten customers agreed that staff¹ did what they said they would (43 per cent) and that staff provided accurate information (44 per cent). The third question was only asked to New customers: more than half of New customers were satisfied with the time it took CMS to communicate the outcome of their application (55 per cent).

Figure 4: Percentage of customers who agreed with key questions related to the Get it Right Driver by parent type

2021/22



Bases:

Staff did what they said they would do: All customers who had phone/online/in person contact (excluding Not Applicable responses). Overall (3,023); Receiving Parents (1,558); Paying Parents (1,465).

Staff provided accurate information: All customers who had phone/online/in person contact (excluding Not Applicable responses). Overall (3,062); Receiving Parents (1,568); Paying Parents (1,494).

Satisfaction with the time it took for CMS to tell New customers the outcome of their application: All New customers. Overall (497); Receiving Parents (240); Paying Parents (239).

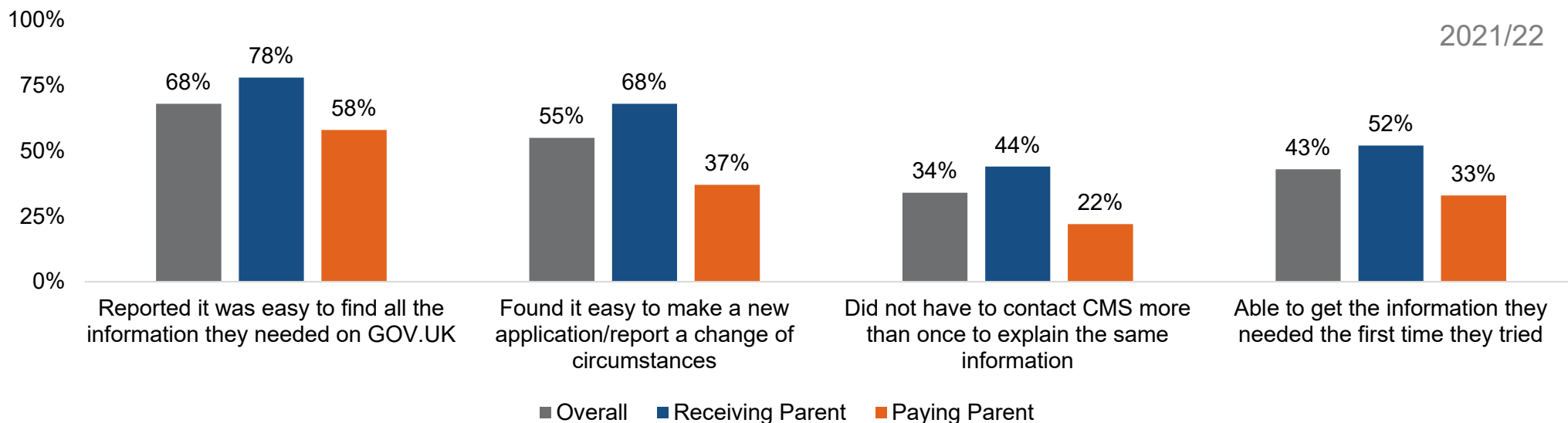
¹ This report refers to “staff” to reflect the wording used when the questionnaire was designed. In future, this will be updated to “colleagues”.

Make it Easy

Questions that relate to the Make it Easy Driver are reported below.

Figure 5 shows that, of those who used GOV.UK, almost seven out of ten customers reported that it was easy to find the information they needed (68 per cent). Over half of customers found it easy to make a new application or report a change of circumstances (55 per cent)². Around one third of all customers said they did not have to contact CMS more than once to explain the same information (34 per cent). At the same time, more than four out of ten customers reported that when they were first in touch with CMS, they were able to get the information they needed the first time they tried (43 per cent).

Figure 5: Percentage of customers who agreed with key questions related to the Make it Easy Driver by parent type



Bases:

Reported it was easy to find all the information they needed on GOV.UK: All customers who used the government website (GOV.UK). Overall (610); Receiving Parents (293); Paying Parents (317).

Found the process of making a new application/reporting a change of circumstances easy: All New Receiving Parents and all Change of Circumstances customers. Overall (2,278); Receiving Parents (1,261); Paying Parents (1,017).

Did not have to contact CMS more than once to explain the same information: All customers. Overall (2,517); Receiving Parents (1,261); Paying Parents (1,256).

Able to get the information they needed the first time they tried: All customers who had communications by phone, online, video call, or in person. Overall (3,106); Receiving Parents (1,600); Paying Parents (1,506).

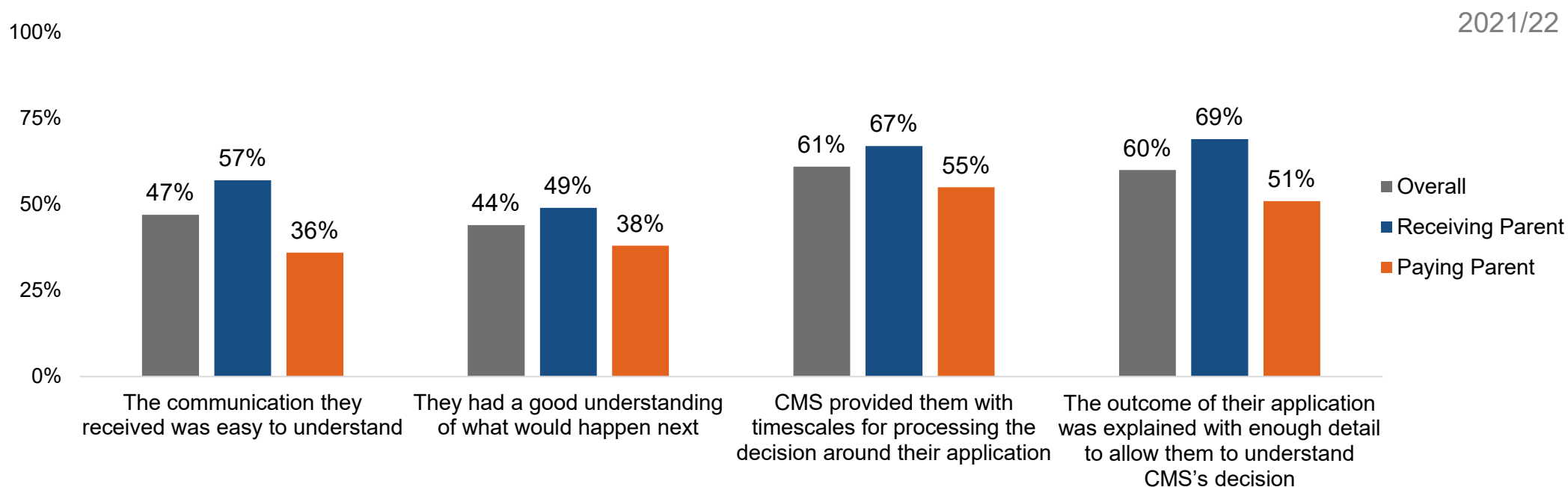
² For this question, the Paying Parents group only includes Change of Circumstances customers, so the difference in results might partly reflect the lower overall satisfaction level for the Change of Circumstances group (see page 7).

Communicate Clearly

Questions that relate to the Communicate Clearly Driver are reported below.

Figure 6 shows that, overall, more than four out of ten customers agreed that the communication they received was easy to understand (47 per cent) and that they had a good understanding of what would happen next during the application process/when reporting a change of circumstances (44 per cent). The other two questions were asked of New customers only: around six out of ten New customers agreed that CMS provided them with timescales for processing the decision of their application (61 per cent) and that the outcome of their application was explained with enough detail (60 per cent).

Figure 6: Percentage of customers who agreed with key questions related to the Communicate Clearly Driver by parent type



Bases:

The communication they received was easy to understand: All customers (excluding Not Applicable responses). Overall (3,320); Receiving Parents (1,704); Paying Parents (1,616).

They had a good understanding of what would happen next: All customers (excluding Not Applicable responses). Overall (3,346); Receiving Parents (1,721); Paying Parents (1,625).

CMS provided them with timescales for processing the decision around their application: All New customers. Overall (479); Receiving Parents (240); Paying Parents (239).

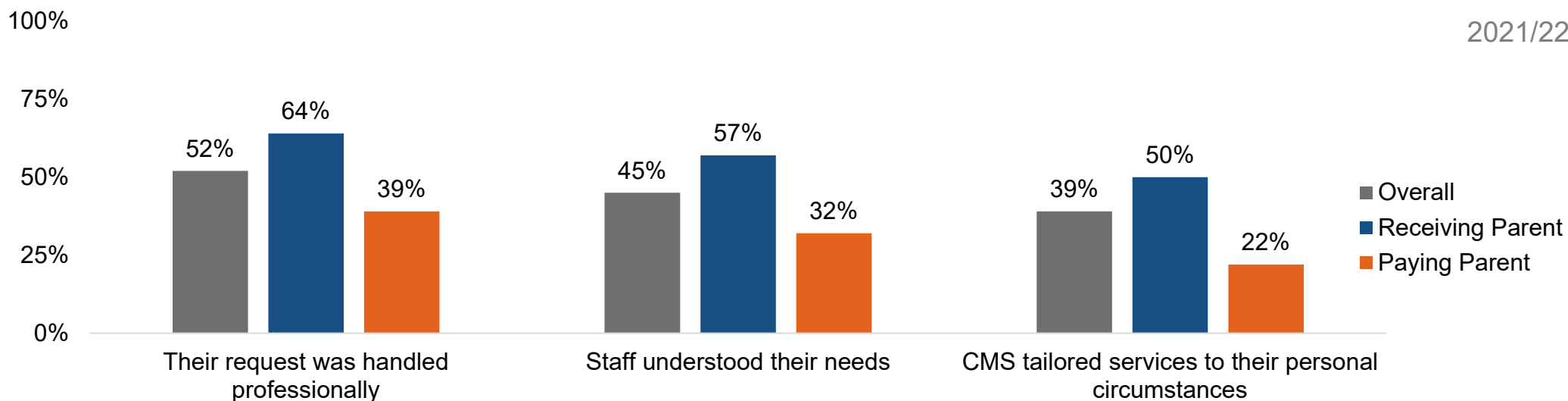
The outcome of their application was explained with enough detail to allow them to understand CMS's decision: All New customers. Overall (479); Receiving Parents (240); Paying Parents (239).

Professional and Supportive

Questions that relate to the Professional and Supportive Driver are reported below.

Figure 7 shows that overall, more than half of customers considered their request was handled professionally (52 per cent). More than four out of ten agreed that staff understood their needs (45 per cent), and 39 per cent reported that CMS tailored services to their personal circumstances³

Figure 7: Percentage of customers who agreed with key questions related to the Professional and Supportive Driver by parent type



Base:

Their request was handled professionally: All customers who had phone/online/in person contact (excluding Not Applicable responses). Overall (3,091); Receiving Parents (1,588); Paying Parents (1,503).

Staff understood their needs: All customers who had phone/online/in person contact (excluding Not Applicable responses). Overall (3,056); Receiving Parents (1,570); Paying Parents (1,486).

CMS tailored services to their personal circumstances: All New Receiving Parents and all Change of Circumstances customers (excluding Not Applicable responses). Overall (2,208); Receiving Parents (1,209); Paying Parents (999).

³ For this question, the Paying Parents group only includes Change of Circumstances customers, so the difference in results might partly reflect the lower overall satisfaction level for the Change of Circumstances group (see page 7).

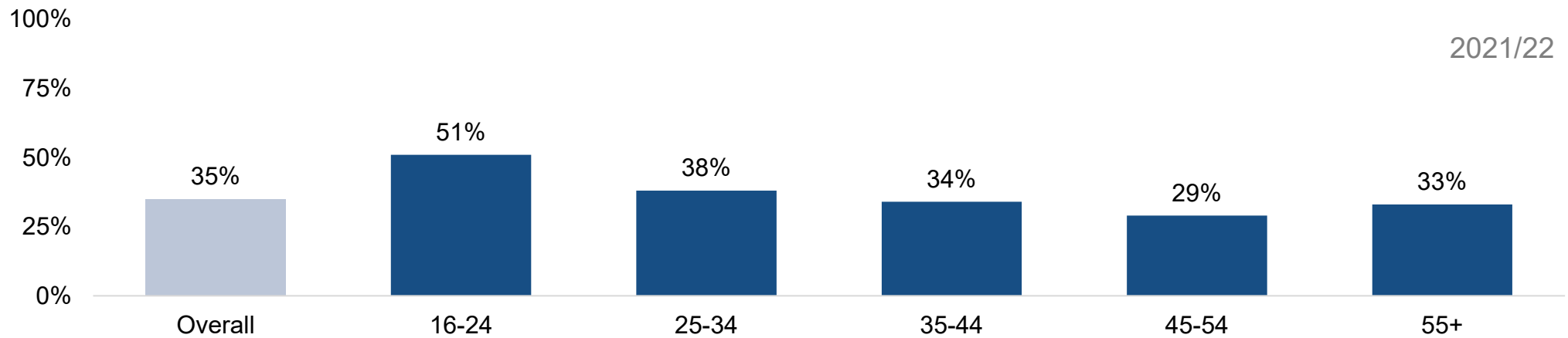
Customer characteristics

The following section explores overall customer satisfaction by age, gender, ethnicity, and whether customers reported having a long-term health condition. It also looks at customers' digital propensity.

Age: Younger customers appeared to have higher overall satisfaction than older customers

The youngest age group was more likely to be satisfied. Those aged between 16 and 24 reported a higher satisfaction level (51 per cent) than those in older age groups. These differences (between the 16-24 age group and each of the 25+ groups) are statistically significant. Those aged 25-34 and 35-44 were also statistically more likely to report being satisfied compared to those aged 45-54. However, the base size for the age group 16-24 is low (92) so this result should be treated with caution.

Figure 8: Percentage of customers who were satisfied with the services provided by CMS by age

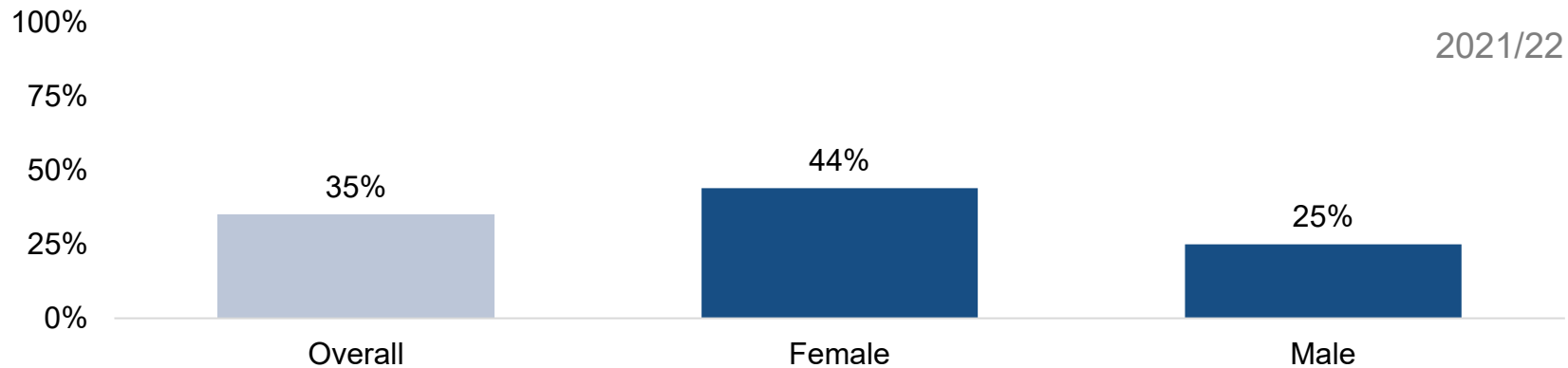


Base: All customers (excluding Don't Know responses). Overall (3,337); 16-24 (92); 25-34 (888); 35-44 (1,294); 45-54 (831); 55+ (232).

Gender: Women were more likely to be satisfied than men

Female customers were more likely to be satisfied with the service overall than male customers. Figure 9 shows that 44 per cent of women reported they were satisfied, compared to 25 per cent of men, which is a statistically significant difference. This is because male CMS customers are more likely to be Paying Parents, for whom overall satisfaction is lower.

Figure 9: Percentage of customers who were satisfied with the services provided by CMS by gender

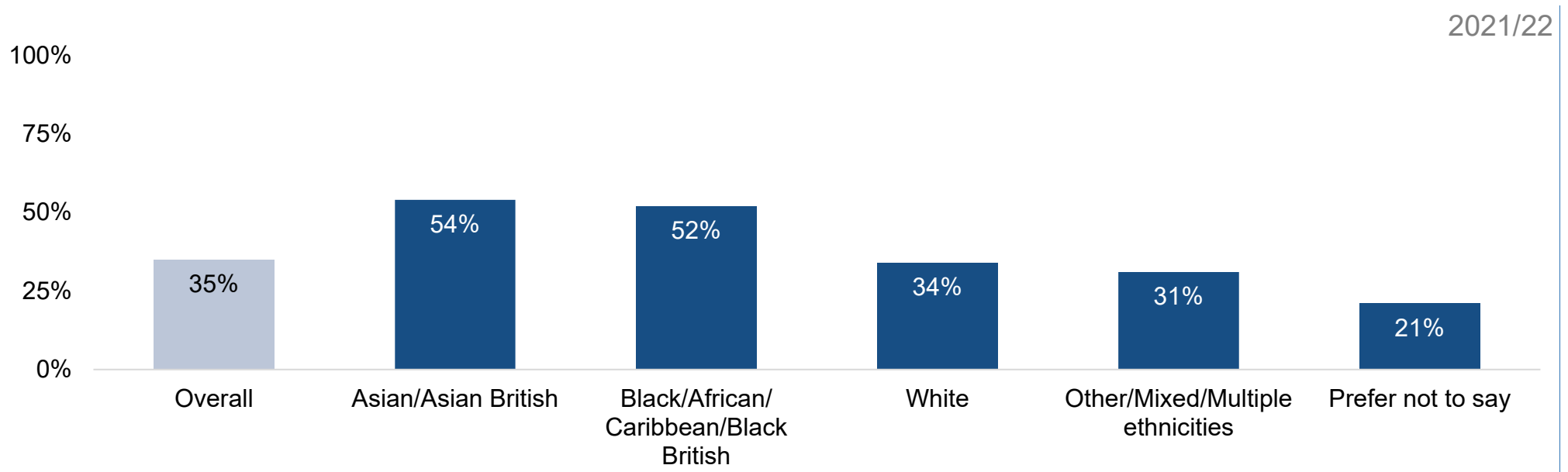


Base: All customers (excluding Don't Know responses and respondents whose gender was missing in the sample). Overall (3,268); Female (1,660); Male (1,608).

Ethnicity: Satisfaction was highest for customers from Asian or Asian British backgrounds

More than five out of ten Asian/Asian British customers (54 per cent) and Black/African/Caribbean/Black British customers (52 per cent) were satisfied overall. The difference between each of these groups and the White (34 per cent) and Other/Mixed/Multiple ethnicities (31 per cent) groups are statistically significant. However, satisfaction was lowest among customers who chose not to disclose their ethnicity (21 per cent). Except for White customers, the bases for the ethnicity groups are below 200; these results should therefore be treated with caution.

Figure 10: Percentage of customers who were satisfied with the services provided by CMS by ethnicity



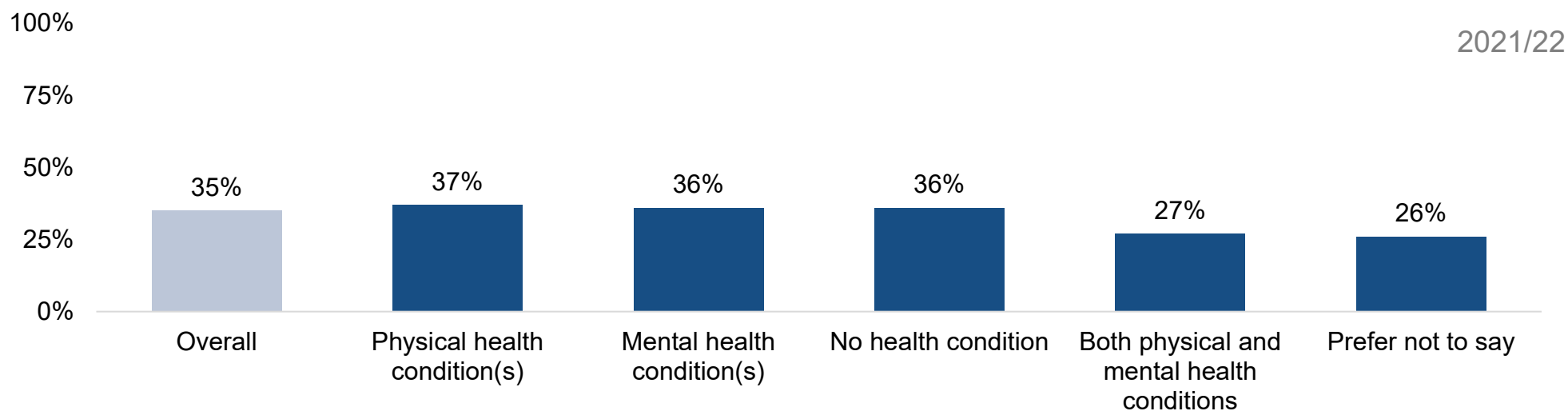
Base: All customers (excluding Don't Know responses). Overall (3,337); Asian/Asian British (104); Black/African/Caribbean/Black British (186); White (2,765); Other/Mixed/Multiple ethnicities (110); Prefer not to say (172). The Other and Mixed/Multiple ethnicities groups were combined to give a larger base size for analysis.

Long-term health conditions: Customers who reported both physical and mental health conditions were the least satisfied

Those who reported having only physical or only mental health conditions had similar levels of satisfaction to those with no health condition (36 per cent). Those with both physical and mental health conditions were less satisfied at 27 per cent. The differences in satisfaction between the group with both physical and mental health conditions and all other groups are statistically significant. The customers who preferred not to reveal their health conditions reported the lowest satisfaction levels, at 26 per cent.

A long-term health condition or disability is defined as any physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more, as self-reported by customers responding to the survey.

Figure 11: Percentage of customers who were satisfied with the services provided by CMS by whether they reported a long-term health condition



Base: All customers (excluding Don't Know responses). Overall (3,337); Physical health condition(s) (264); Mental health condition(s) (487); Both physical and mental health conditions (276); No health condition (2,090); Prefer not to say (220).

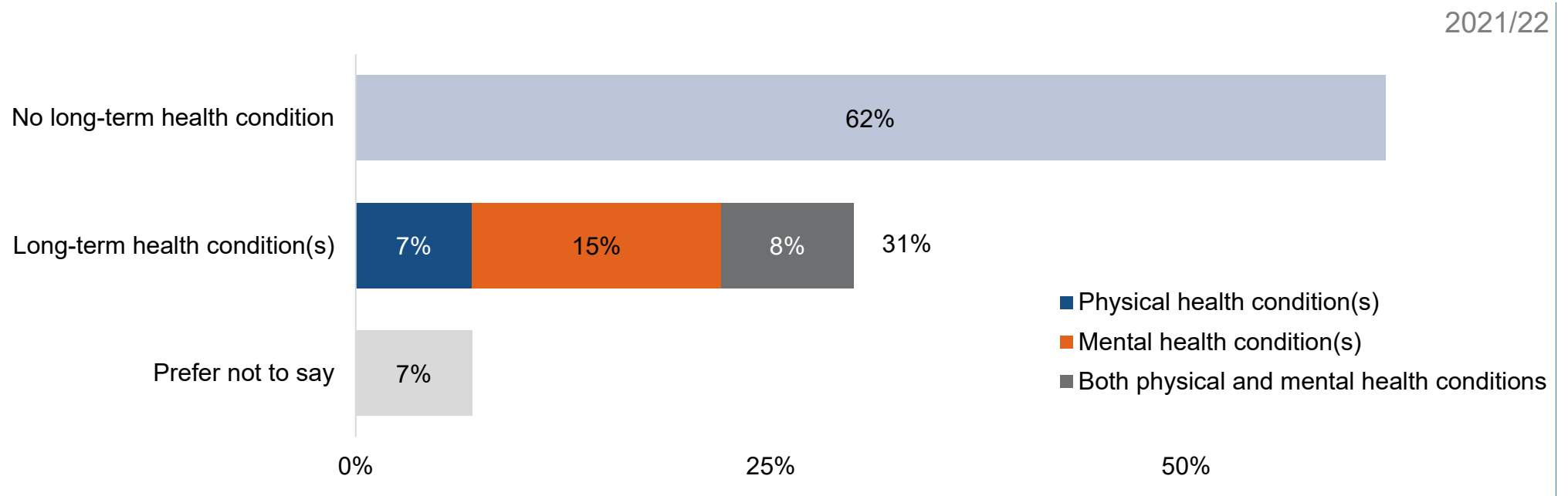
Long-term health condition profile

This section explores the customer composition by long-term health conditions.

Around three out of ten customers reported having a long-term health condition(s)

More than six out of ten customers reported they had no long-term conditions. Seven per cent reported having only a physical health condition(s); 15 per cent reported having only a mental health condition(s), and eight per cent reported having both physical and mental health conditions. The percentages do not total 31 per cent due to rounding.

Figure 12: Percentage of customers by whether or not they have a long-term health condition(s)



Base: All customers (3,394).

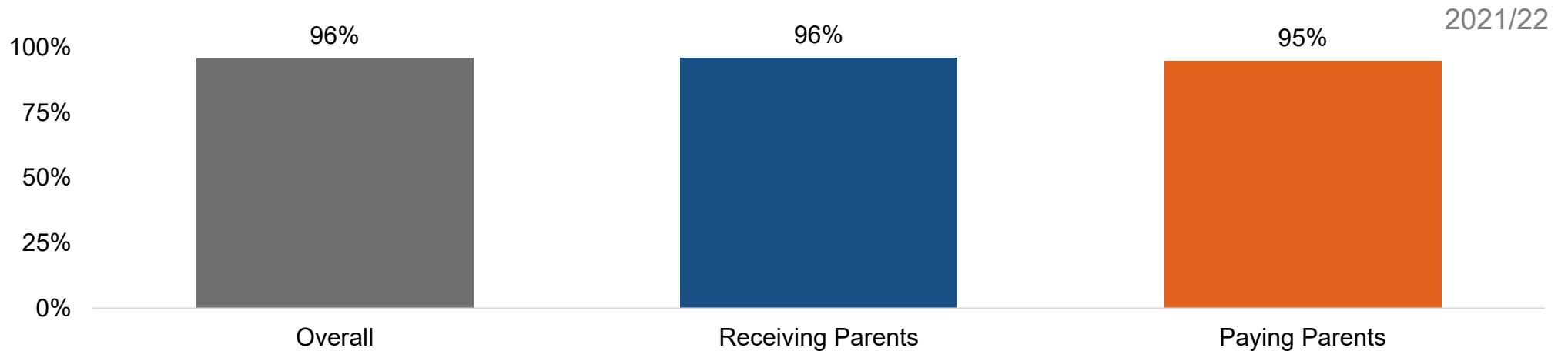
Digital propensity

This section explores customers' digital propensity.

More than nine out of ten of the customers who participated in the survey declared they had internet access

Overall, digital propensity was high with 96 per cent of CMS customers stating they could access the internet, either at home or elsewhere. Although Receiving Parents (96 per cent) and Paying Parents (95 per cent) both reported high levels of internet access, the difference between them is statistically significant.

Figure 13: Percentage of customers who had access to the internet

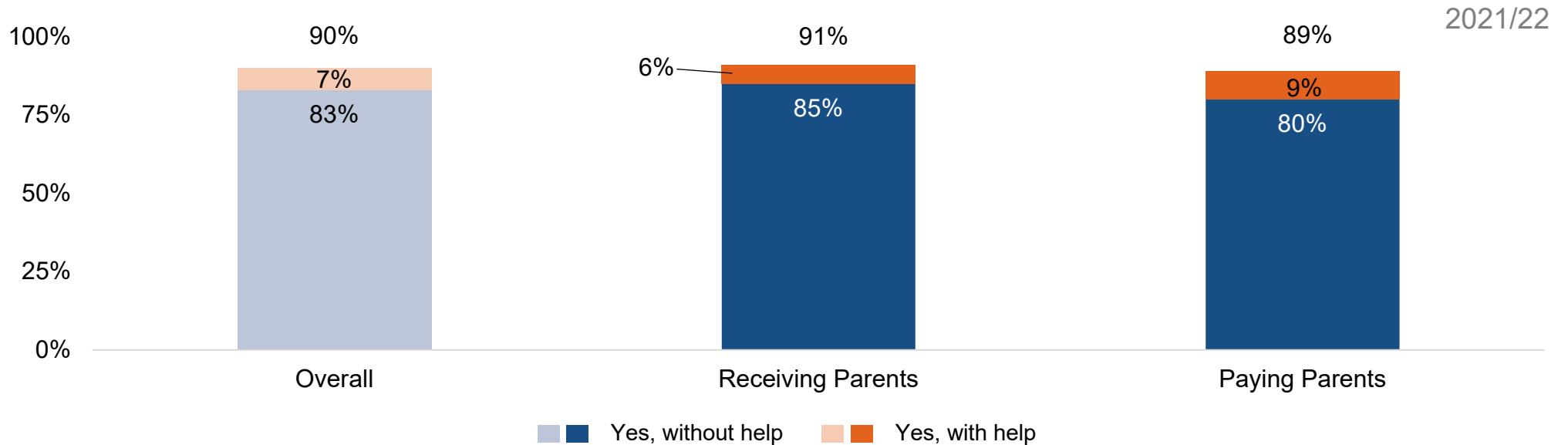


Base: All customers. Overall (3,394); Receiving Parents (1,745); Paying Parents (1,649).

Nine out of ten CMS customers said they could have accessed government services using the internet

Customers were asked if, had it been available, they could have used the internet to access government services. Figure 14 shows that 83 per cent reported that they could do so without help. A further seven per cent could have accessed government services online with help. The difference between Receiving Parents who said they could access without help (85 per cent) and Paying Parents (80 per cent) is statistically significant.

Figure 14: Percentage of customers who could have accessed government services using the internet if it was available



Base: All customers: Overall (3,394); Receiving Parents (1,754); Paying Parents (1,649).