Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Division (RPID)

Customer Satisfaction Survey 2021

December 2021

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Produced on behalf of Scottish Government by Progressive Partnership, December 2021

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Contents

Background and objectives

Customers of the Scottish Government's Rural Payments and Inspections Division (RPID) apply to receive rural grants and subsidies through the Single Application Form (SAF).

Research was needed to measure customer satisfaction with RPID's services and identify potential improvements to service delivery. The research also provided an update on the most recent wave of the study conducted in 2013.

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RPID is also a key source of information on rural and agricultural issues for rural businesses (farms, crofts etc.) throughout Scotland.

The research data was collected via an online survey between 6th August and 6th September 2021.

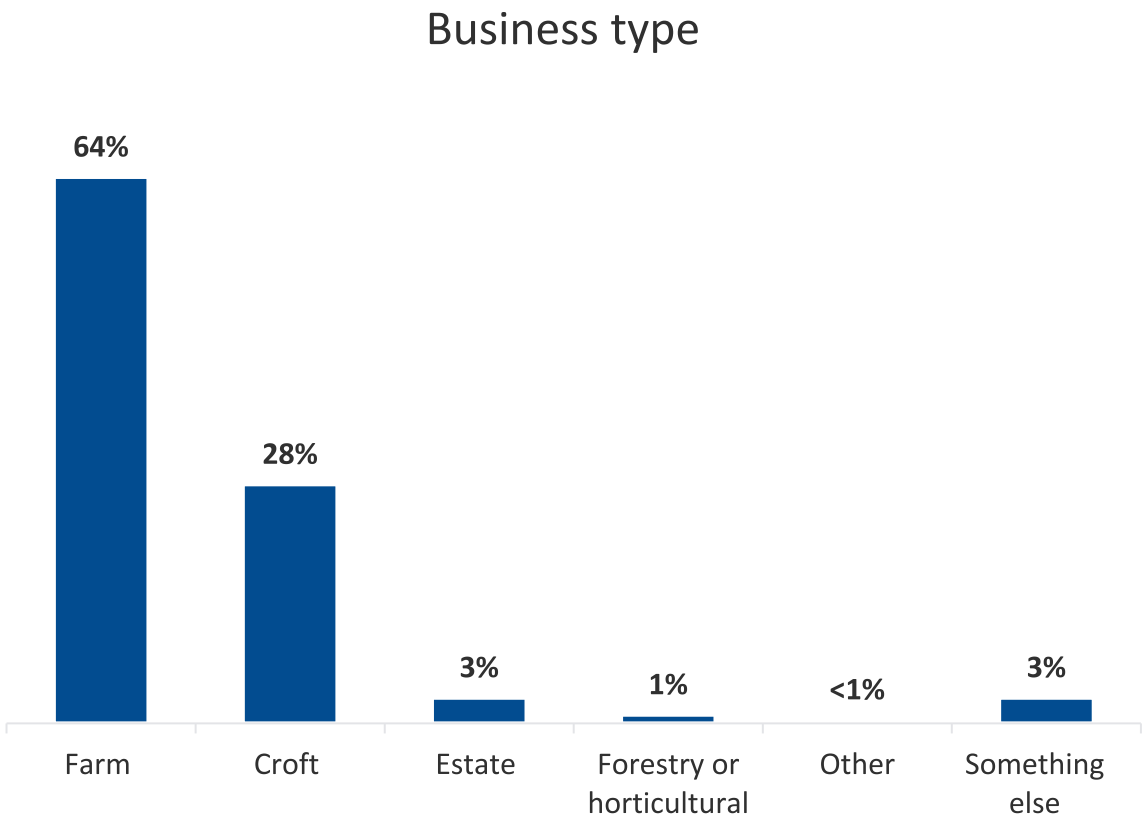
Method

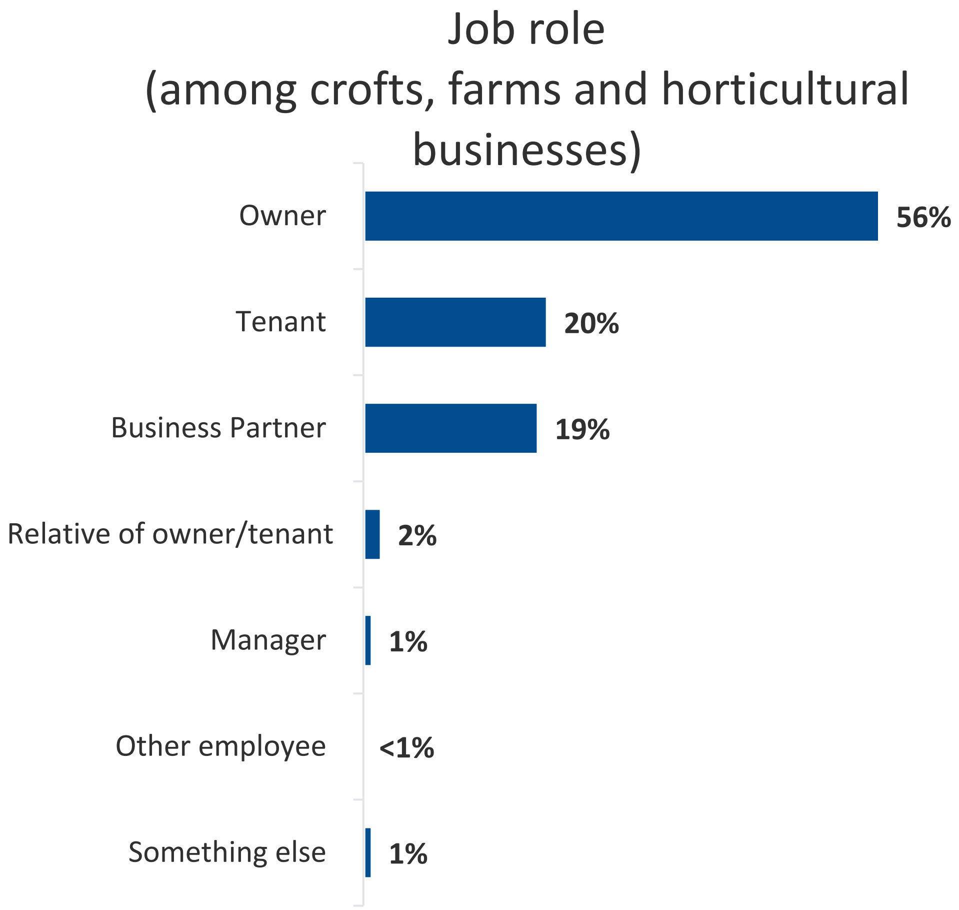
- The research data was gathered via an online survey disseminated to all RPID customers on the sample database with a valid email address.
- Sample was provided directly by the Scottish Government. As well as contact information, the local RPID area office for each customer was appended to the data.
- Due to the nature of online surveys (sample is self-selecting), no quotas were applied to the data. Data fell out naturally, broadly in line with the customer profile.
- In all, 2,147 customers across Scotland responded to the survey; a response rate of 14%.
- Fieldwork took place between 6th August and 6th September 2021.
- The margin of error associated with the data is between ±0.39% and ±1.97%. These are calculated at the 95% confidence interval (market research industry standard).
- The distribution of survey responses by area office was compared to the sample database. The respondent profile was broadly in line with the database, which would suggest the findings are representative of RPID's customer base. The profile of the sample in terms of customer type was also broadly consistent with previous findings. A high level of confidence can therefore be placed in the representative nature of the results and no weighting has been applied to the 2021 data based on customer profile or area.
- Due to differences in the methodology and sample between the 2013 wave and the 2021 wave (agents were not included in the 2021 survey, and the 2013 wave used a multi-mode telephone-online approach), no weighting has been applied to match 2021 to 2013 data.

Analysis and reporting conventions

- Only statistically significant differences are reported.
- Statistically significant differences between sub-groups on charts are noted with or or depending whether a finding is, respectively, higher, lower, or higher and lower than other findings.
- Where base sizes are low a caution sign is shown. These results must be read with caution.
- Where figures do not add to 100% this is due to multi-coded responses or rounding.
- Comparisons between the 2013 and 2021 surveys are presented in purple boxes. Due to differences in the methodology and sample composition between these surveys, no statistical analysis of the differences between these surveys has been undertaken. Any comparisons are therefore indicative only and should be treated with caution.
- For ease, analysis refers to younger and older customers: younger customers are those aged between 16 and 40 years old, and older customers are aged 65 and older.
- Throughout the report, analysis compares farmers and crofters to ‘other businesses’. Other businesses comprises forestry/horticultural businesses, estates, environmental groups, community groups, and other rural businesses (rather than meaning all other businesses that are not farms).
- In some charts, 1% and 2% labels are not shown for ease of reading.

Sample profile
Business type & job role





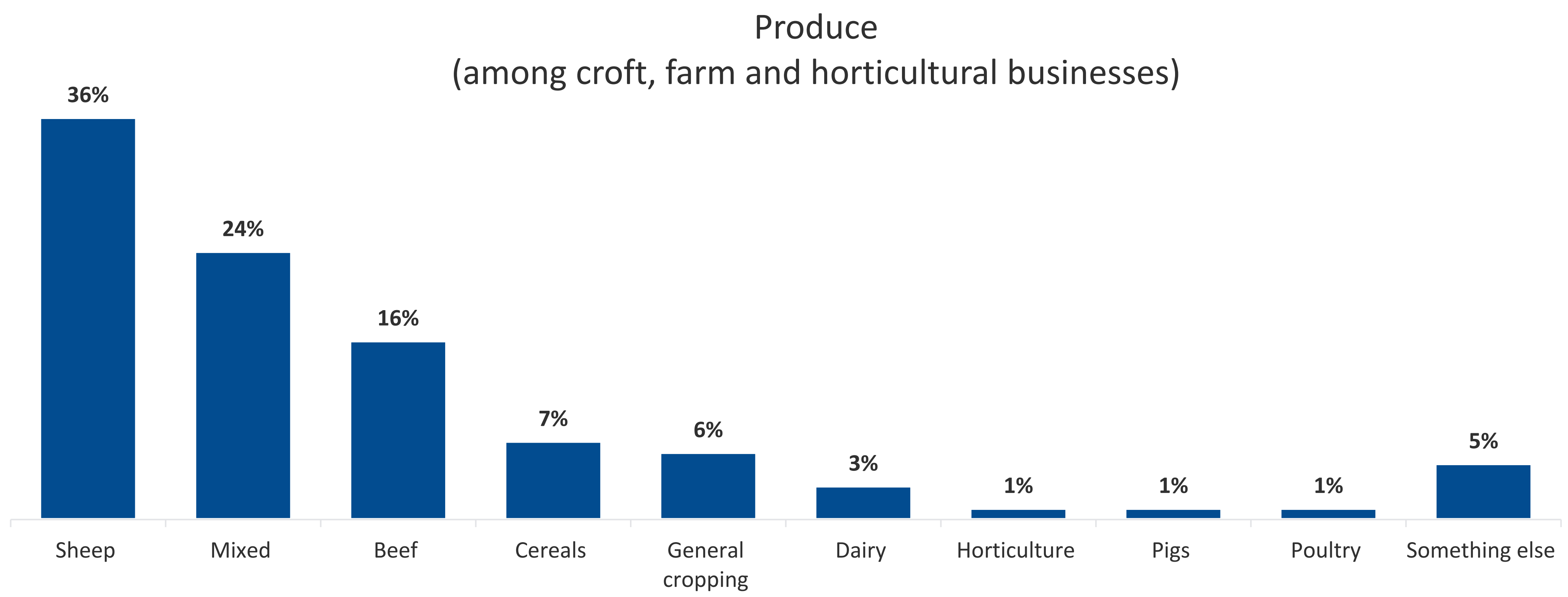
SQ9: Moving on slightly, which of the following best describes your organisation/business? Base (all): 2,147
SQ11: And which of the following best describes your main role or job title in your organisation/business? Base (those working in farms/crofts/forestry or agriculture): 2,002

Sample profile
Job role by business type

- The table adjacent shows the proportion of customers in each job role, broken down by business type.
- It shows that customers working on farms were significantly more likely than those working on crofts to be:
  - Owners (59% vs. 49% of crofters);
  - Business partners (25% vs. 43%); and
  - Managers (2% vs. none).
- On the other hand, customers working on crofts were more likely than farmers to be tenants (43% and 11%, respectively).

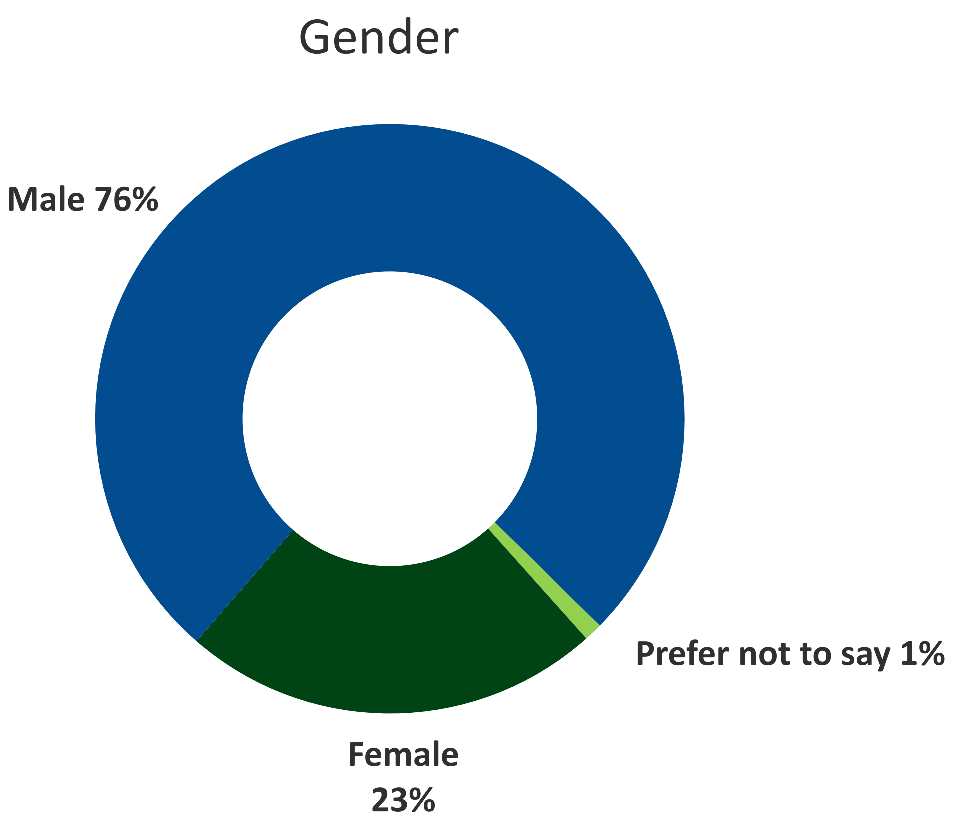
	All	Croft	Farm	Forestry and horticultural business
Owner	1,128	296	817	15
	56%	49%	59%	68%
Tenant	404	255	149	-
	20%	43%	11%	-
Business partner	380	36	341	3
	19%	6%	25%	14%
Manager	29	-	26	3
	1%	-	2%	14%
Relative to farm owner / tenant	43	8	35	-
	2%	1%	3%	-
Other	18	5	12	1
	1%	1%	1%	5%

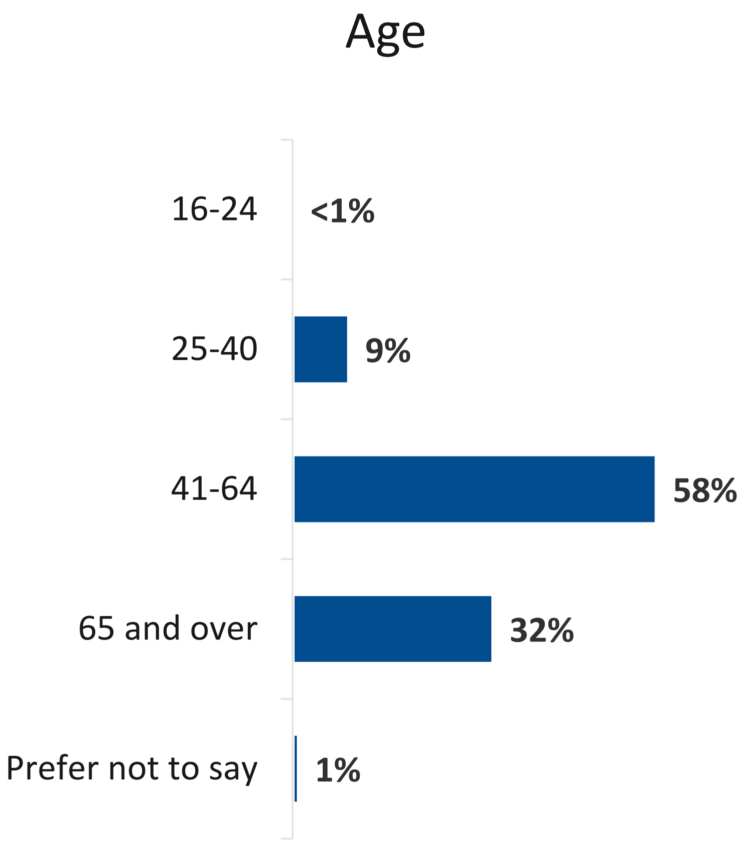
Sample profile
Produce type



SQ10: And which of the following best describes what you produce? Base (those working in farms/crofts/forestry or agriculture): 2,002

Sample profile
Personal demographics





SQ12. Please select the option that applies to you.
SQ13: Which of the following age groups applies to you? Base (all): 2,147

Sample profile
Age by gender

- The table adjacent shows the proportion of customers in each age group, broken down by gender.
- As shown here, the age profile was broadly similar for men and women, although men were slightly more likely to be over the age of 64 (33%, compared to 29% of women).

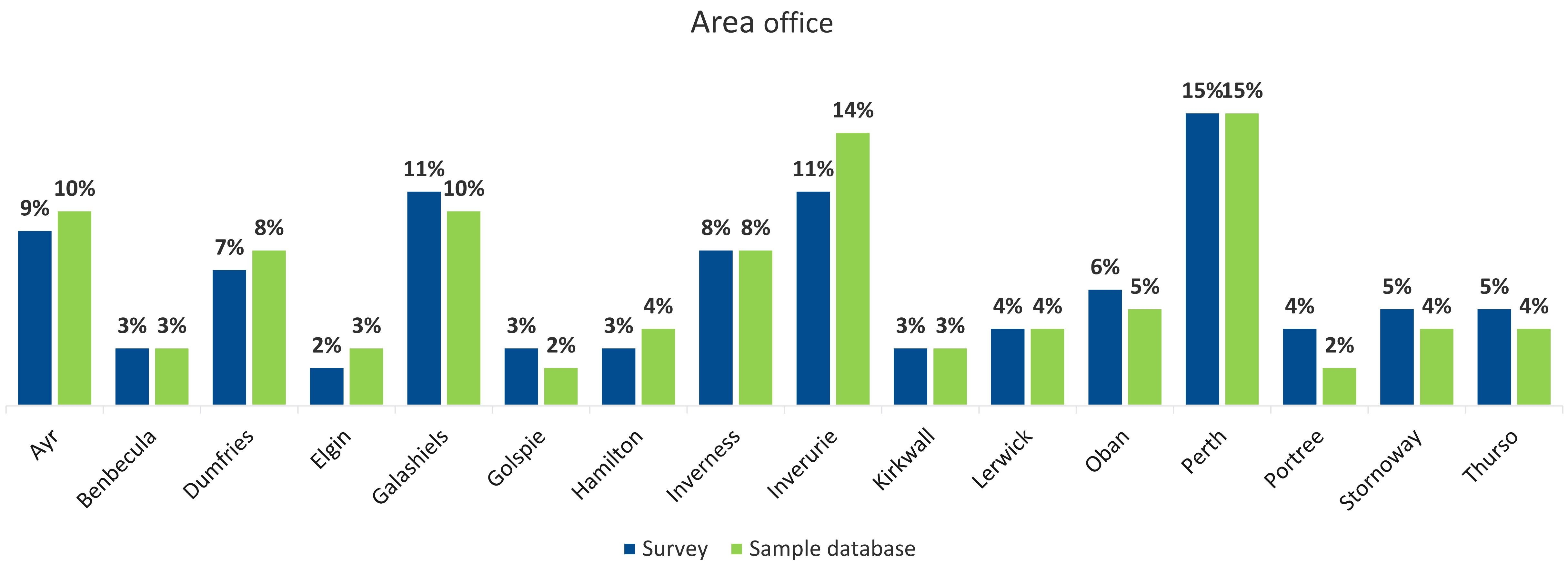
		All	Male	Female
Age	16-24	6	3	3
		0%	0%	1%
	25-40	184	132	52
		9%	8%	11%
	41-64	1,249	948	291
		58%	58%	59%
	65 and over	686	545	140
		32%	33%	29%

Sample profile
Age and gender by business type

- The table adjacent shows the proportion of customers in each gender and age group, broken down by business type.
- It shows key differences by gender, with crofters more likely to be female (26% vs. 21% of farmers) and farmers more likely to be male (78% vs. 73% of crofters).
- A greater proportion of farmers than crofters fell into the 41-64 age bracket (61% vs. 54%), with representation in the other age brackets broadly similar for farmers and crofters.

		All	Croft	Farm	Forestry and horticultural business
Gender	**Male**	1,632	436	1,074	122
		76%	73%	78%	73%
	Female	490	155	295	40
		23%	26%	21%	24%
Age	**16-24**	6	2	4	-
		0%	0%	0%	-
	25-40	184	62	107	15
		9%	10%	8%	9%
	41-64	1,249	322	837	90
		58%	54%	61%	54%
	65 and over	686	206	422	58
		32%	34%	31%	35%

Sample profile
RPID area office



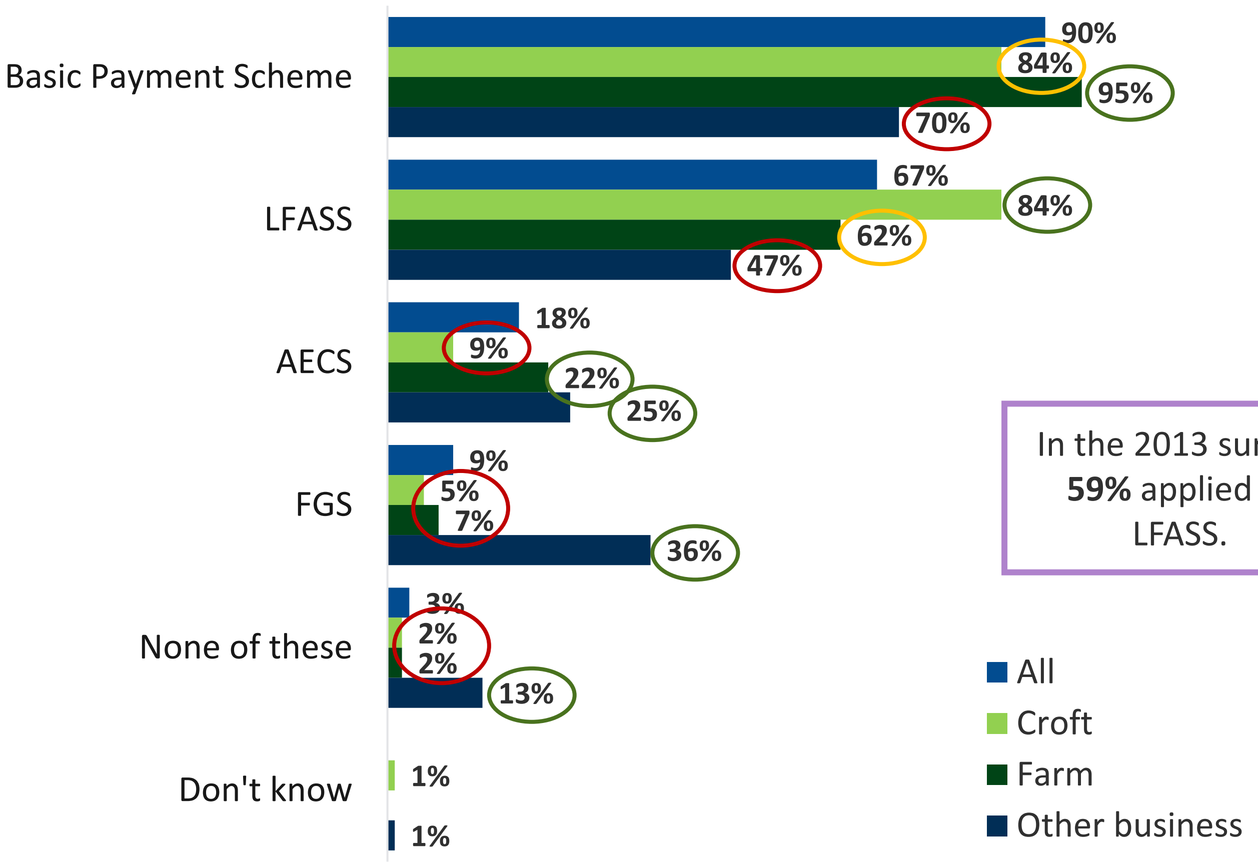
Area office: sample vs. survey. Base (all): 2,147

Customers’ views on the SAF and submitting applications

SAF: schemes applied to

- **Almost all** (99%) of RPID's customers had submitted an SAF in the last 12 months.
- The Basic Payment Scheme was the most applied to scheme (90%), and the LFASS (67%) was also widely applied to.
- There were several differences by business type, with:
  - Farmers most likely to apply to the Basic Payment Scheme (95% vs. 70% of other businesses);
  - Crofters most likely to apply to the LFASS (84% vs. 47% of other businesses); and
  - Other businesses most likely to apply to the FGS (36% vs. 5% of farmers).
- There were also differences by area office, with customers based in Kirkwall more likely than average to apply to each of the following:
  - LFASS (96% vs. 67% on average); and
  - AECS (49% vs. 18%).
- Tenants (83%) were also more likely than owners (65%) to have applied to the LFASS.

SAF schemes customers apply to



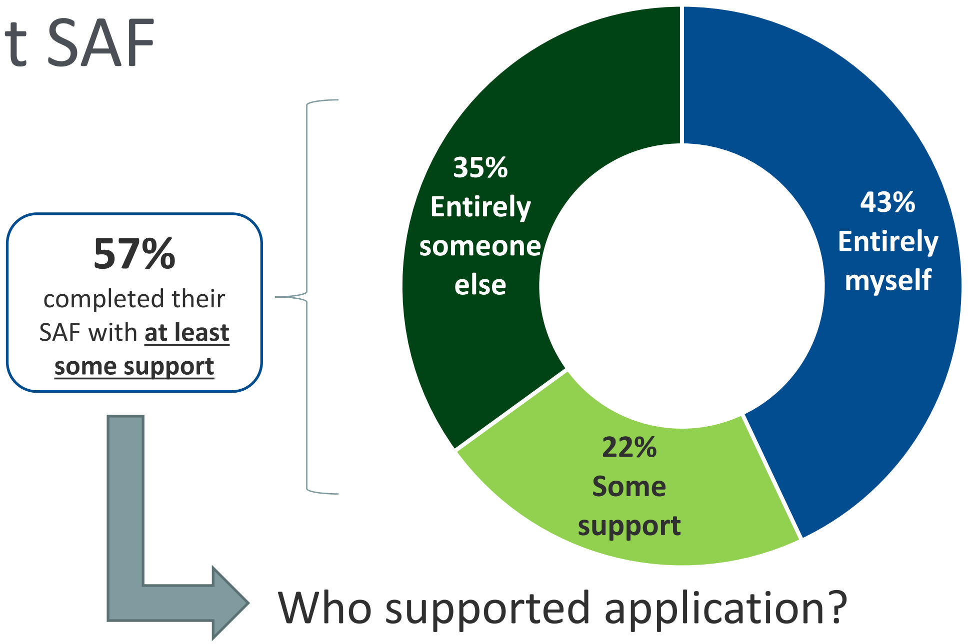
In the 2013 survey, **59%** applied to LFASS.

SQ3: In your most recent SAF, did you apply to any of the following…?
Base (all who submitted an application): 2,030

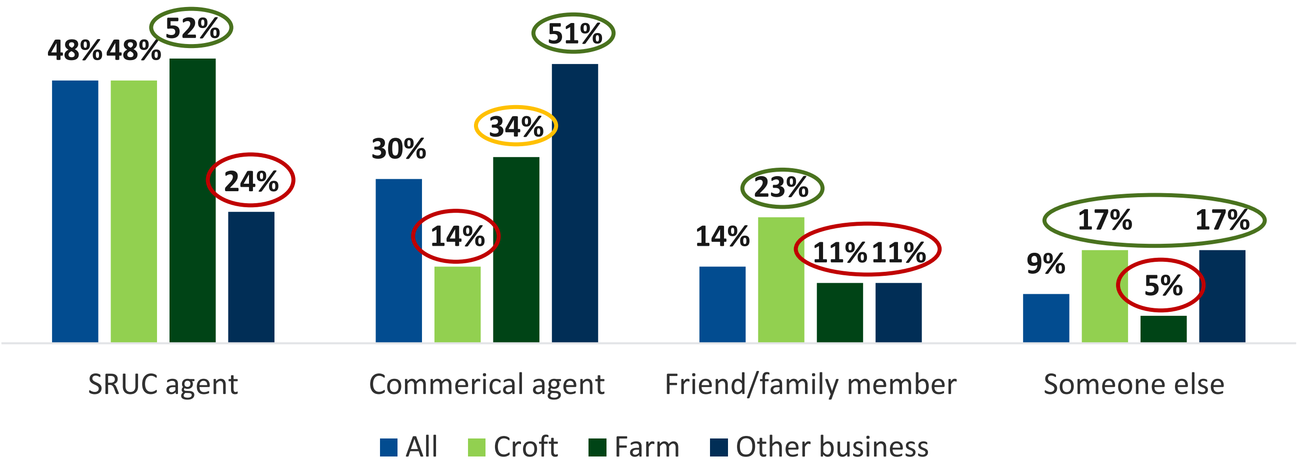
SAF: support applying

- RPID customers were more likely to complete their SAF with at least some support (57%) than on their own (43%).
- There were key differences by job role and business type in terms of customers who reported that someone had completed the application for them:
  - Business partners (40%) and owners (36%) were more likely to report this than tenants (29%); and
  - Farmers (40%) were more likely to report this than crofters (23%).
- Customers were most likely to be supported by agents to complete their application, with SRUC agents being the most common (48%).
- Commercial agents were more likely to be used by each of the following:
  - Other businesses (51%) than crofts (14%);
  - Business partners (36%) and owners (31%) than tenants (15%); and
  - Younger (37%) than older (25%) customers.

How customers completed their most recent SAF



Who supported application?

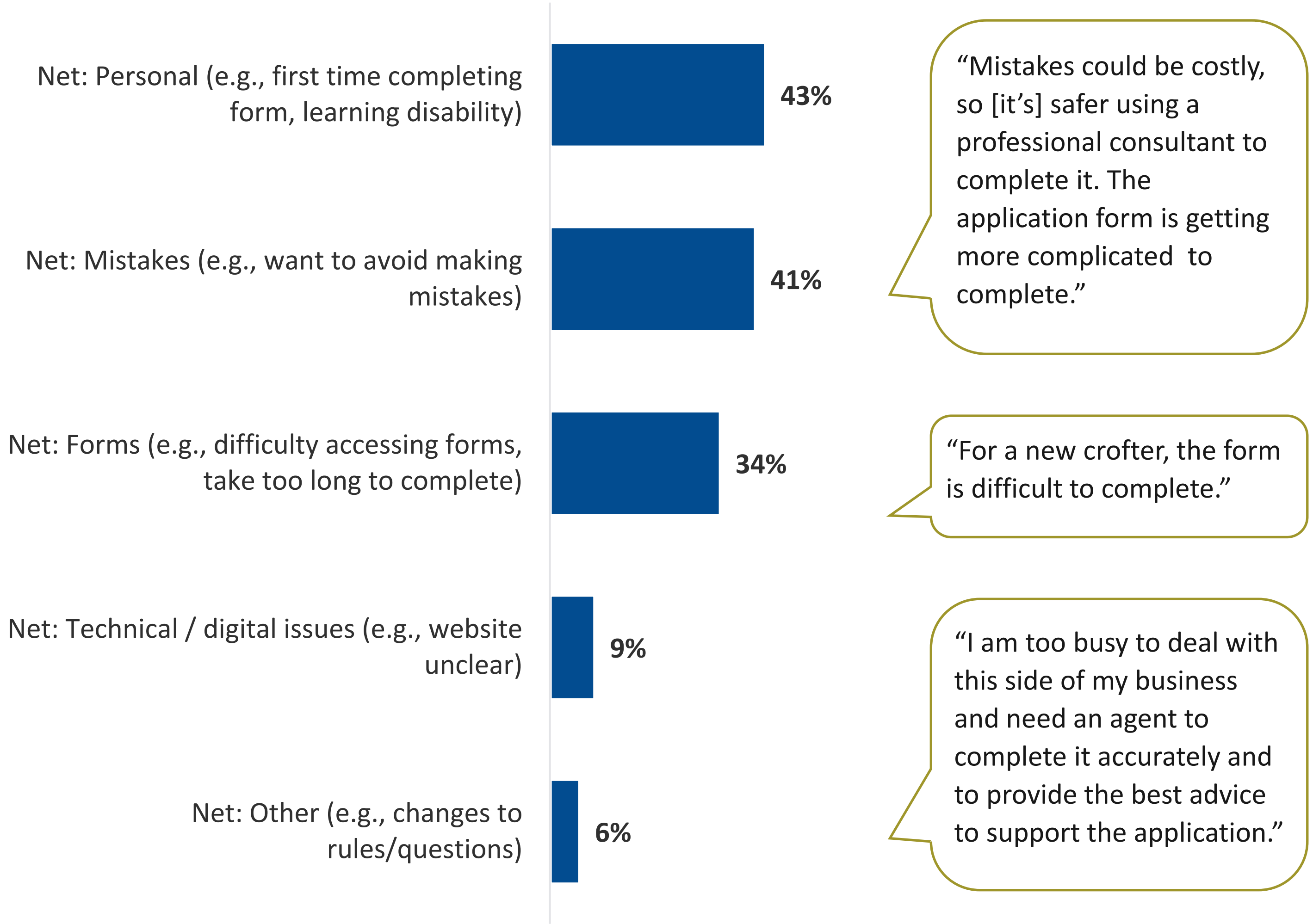


SQ5: Which of the following best describes how you completed your most recent SAF? Base (all): 2,147
SQ6: Who supported you with your application? Base (all who had support completing application): 1,217

SAF: support applying

- The chart provides a high-level summary of the themes customers reported as to why they needed support with their most recent SAF.
- The reasons customers gave for needing support with their most recent SAF were varied, although two key themes emerged: personal reasons (43%) and avoiding mistakes (41%).
- Personal reasons encompassed a range of factors including being new to the process of completing an SAF, lacking confidence to complete the forms, and having a disability which impacted their ability to understand how to complete the forms.
- Avoiding mistakes encompassed two main factors: wanting to avoid the penalties for making mistakes; and wanting to doublecheck that the information customers had provided was correct.
- **Please note, this chart only shows the overarching summary codes emerging from this open-ended question. The full analysis is provided on the next slide.**

Reasons customers needed some support with most recent SAF summary



SQ6a: Can you tell us the reasons why you needed some support with your most recent SAF? Base (all who gave a reason for needing support): 1,018

Reasons customers needed some support with most recent SAF (all)

Reasons support needed	%
NET: Personal	**43%**
Leave it to a professional	19%
Disability/tech literacy (respondent feels unable)	10%
New to this/first time completing form	7%
The way I've always done it	6%
Lack of confidence (general)	4%
Not familiar/only complete them once a year	2%
Too busy to complete forms – generally	2%
Too busy to complete forms in spring/busy time of year	1%
NET: Mistakes	**41%**
Want to avoid mistakes/double check it's correct (general)	25%
Want to avoid the penalties for mistakes	12%
Too important to make mistakes	6%

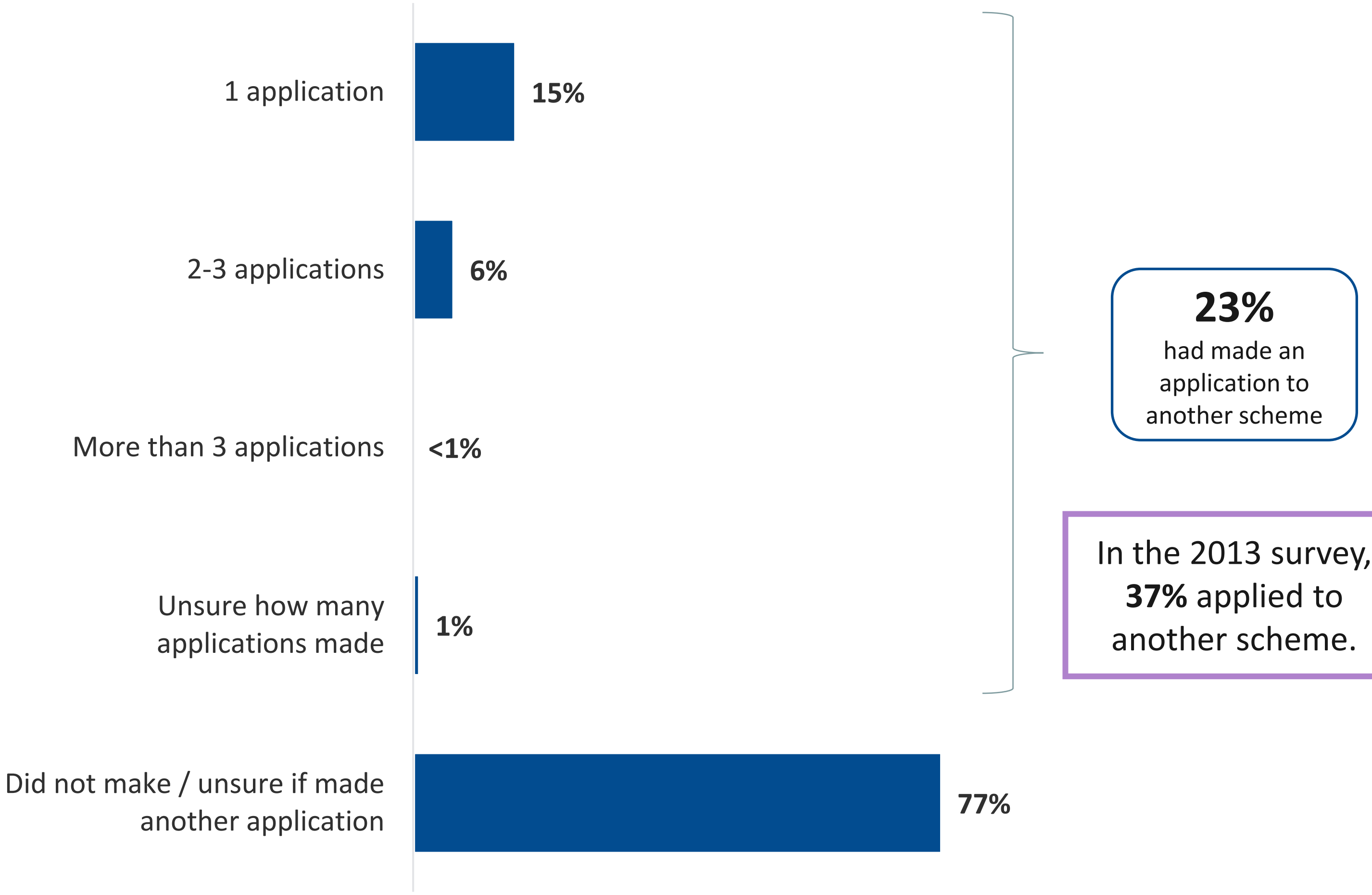
Reasons support needed	%
NET: Forms	**34%**
Forms difficult/unclear/complicated	29%
My case is unique/complicated/not covered in form	4%
Takes too long to complete forms	3%
Difficulty accessing form (form unavailable)	1%
NET: Technical/digital issues	**9%**
Website/system unclear/complex	4%
Technical issues (errors, crashes)	3%
No/poor internet access	2%
Don't trust/anxious about online	<1%
NET: Other	**6%**
Changes to rules/questions	5%
Issues relating to Covid	<1%
General concern re how much it costs to complete forms	<1%
Base (all who gave a reason)	**1,018**

SQ6a: Can you tell us the reasons why you needed some support with your most recent SAF? Base (all who gave a reason for needing support): 1,018

SAF: other applications

- Around one quarter (23%) of RPID customers had made an application to another none-SAF scheme in the last 12 months. Virtually all of them applied to between one and three other schemes.
- The following groups were more likely not to have made another application:
  - Owners (80%) than tenants (74%) and business partners (70%);
  - Other businesses (84%) and farms (79%) than crofts (73%);
  - Older (84%) than younger (66%) customers; and
  - Customers that completed their SAF with support (81%) than those that completed it on their own (74%).

Applications made to other schemes in the last 12 months



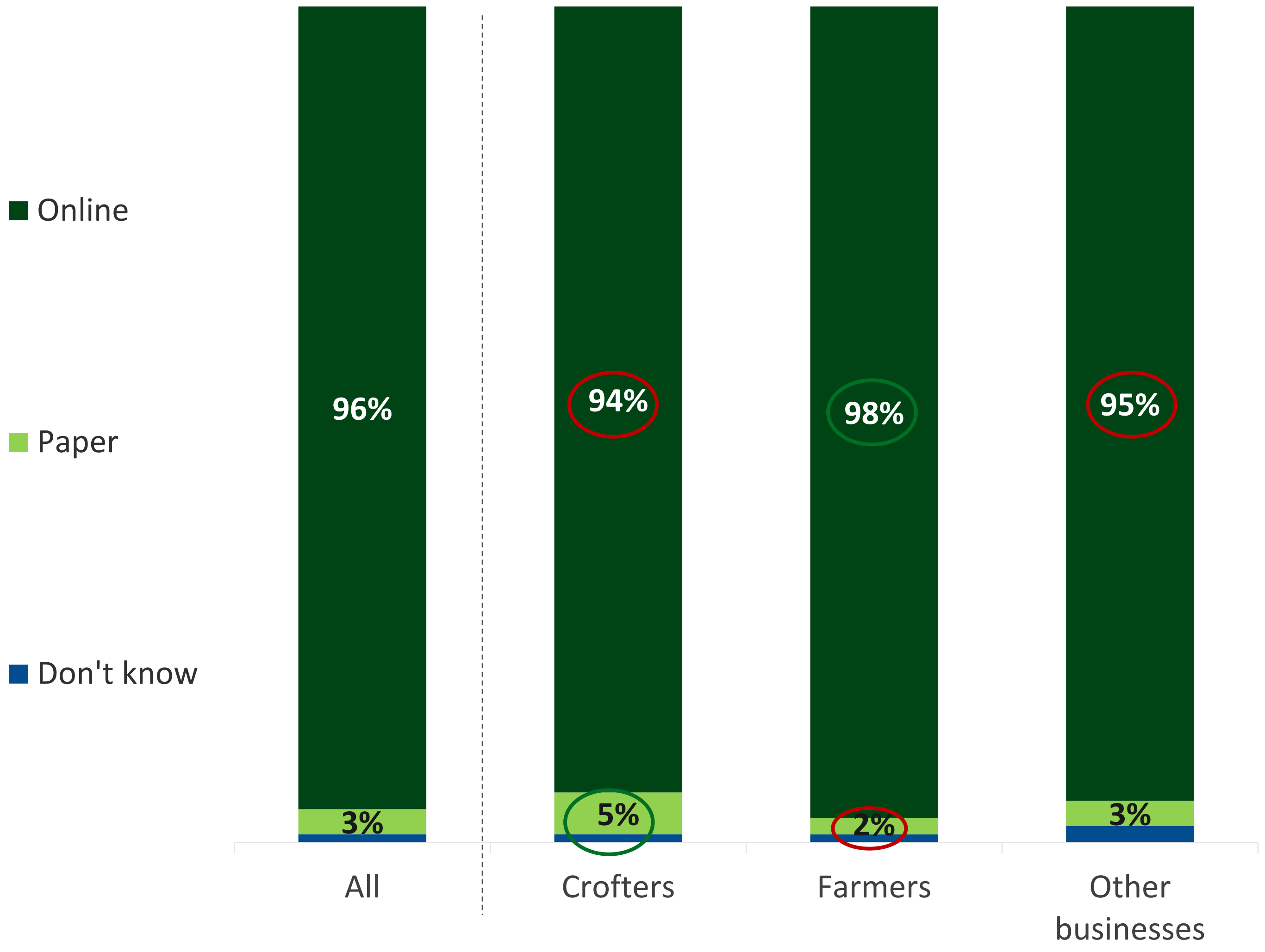
In the 2013 survey, **37%** applied to another scheme.

SQ7/8: How many applications to other schemes have you made in the last 12 months?
Base (all): 2,147

SAF: online & paper applications

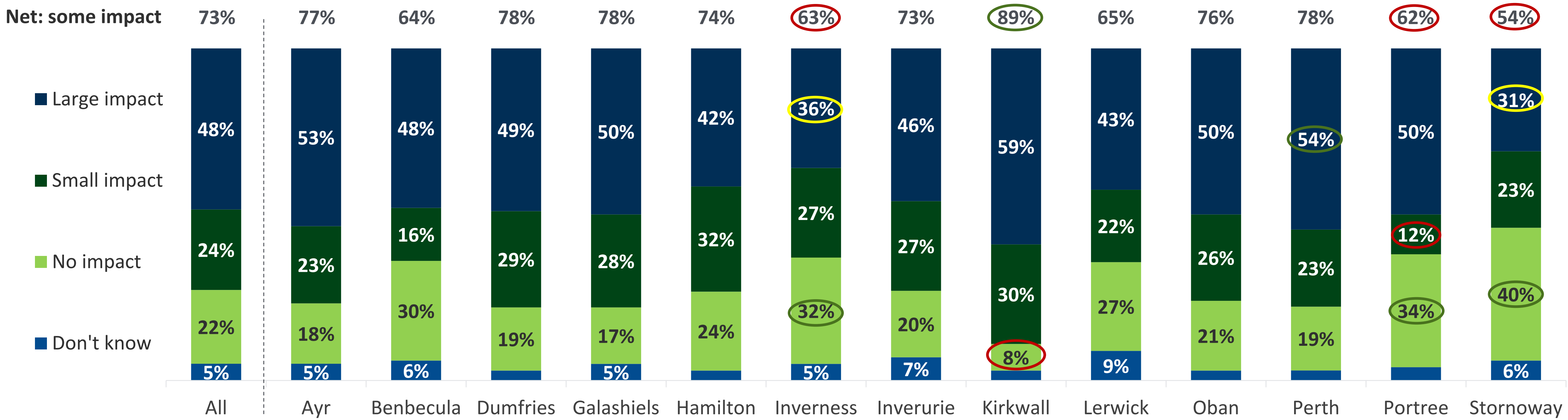
- The vast majority (96%) of customers submitted their most recent SAF via an online application. This may have been on their own or with some support.
- There were key differences by job role and business type, with the following groups more likely to submit an online application:
    - Farmers (98%) vs. other businesses (95%) and crofters (94%); and
    - Business partners (99%) vs. owners (96%).
- Additionally, those who used face-to-face support from area offices to submit their applications were more likely to submit a paper application (4% vs. 1%).
- It is worth noting that because nearly three in five (57%) customers completed their SAF with at least some support, we cannot say for certain that these figures reflect knowledge of actual completion method (although very few said they did not know). There were, however, few substantial differences in application method by whether customers received some or no support – although those who completed with some support were more likely to complete a paper application (5%, compared with 2% who completed on their own).

How most recent SAF was submitted



SQ4: For your most recent SAF, how was it submitted? Base (all who had submitted an application): 2,130.

Extent to which broadband quality impacts customers' ability to complete online



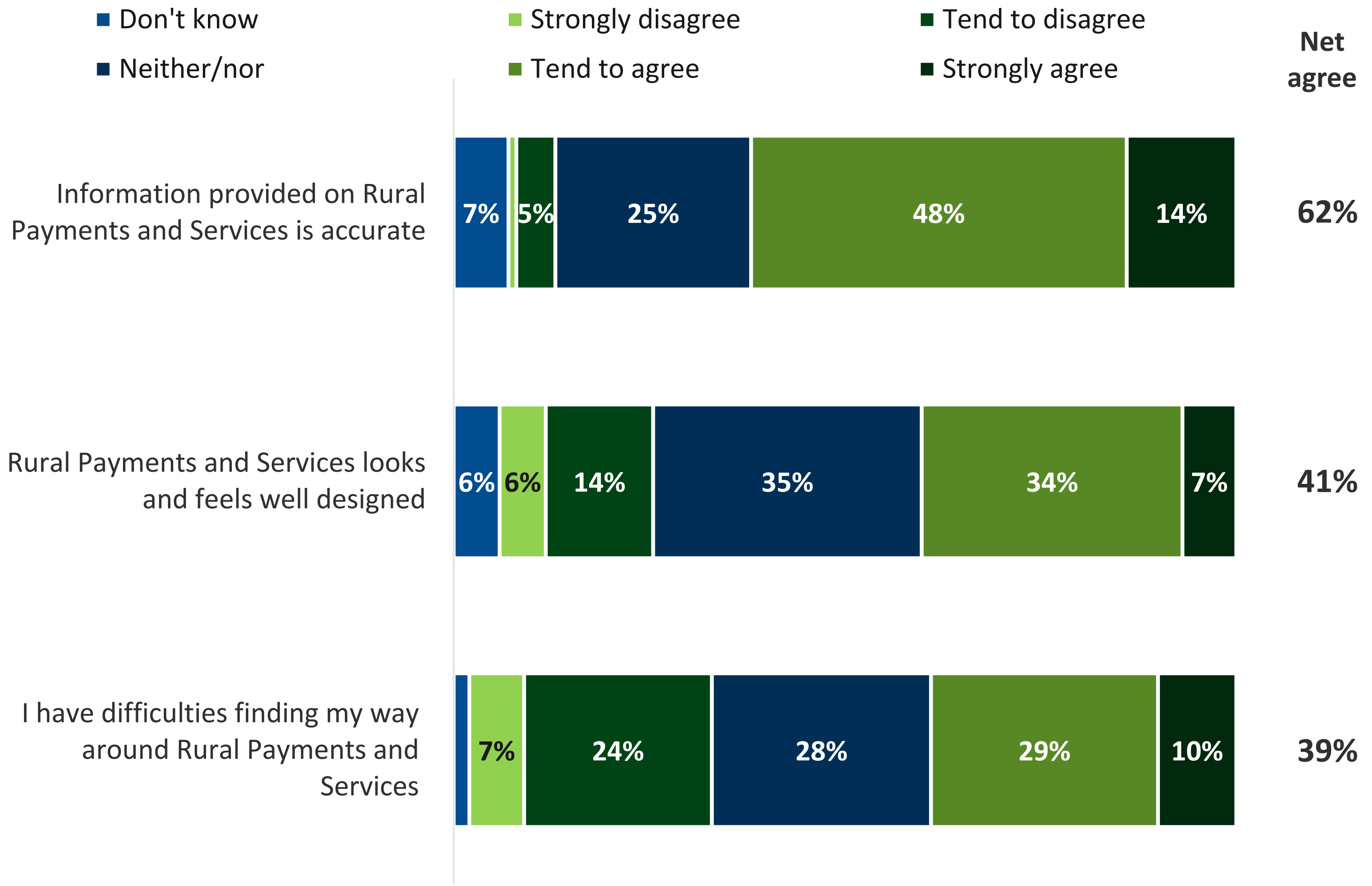
- Despite the high proportion of customers that submit their SAF online, quality of broadband had at least some impact on three in four (73%) customers, and it was more likely to have a big (48%) than small (24%) impact.
- There were key differences by area office, with customers in Kirkwall (89%) more likely than average – and customers in Stornoway (54%), Portree (62%) and Inverness (63%) less likely than average – to report that broadband quality somewhat impacted their ability to submit their RPID applications online.

Q21. How, if at all, does the quality of broadband/internet service in your area affect your ability to complete RPID applications online? Base (all who submitted online application): 2,054 NB: only significant differences vs. average are shown on this chart. White circles are used to highlight significant differences instead of red circles due to the colour of the bars.

Satisfaction with <u>online</u> applications

- Customers were most likely to agree (62%) that information provided on the Rural Payments and Services online system is accurate.
- They were, however, more likely to agree (39%) than disagree (31%) that they have difficulties finding their way around the website.
- Differences by business type and job role were common. Farmers and crofters were more likely to agree that:
  - Information provided on Rural Payments and Services is accurate (64% and 61%, compared with 49% of other businesses);
  - Rural Payments and Services looks and feels well designed (43% and 39%, compared with 49%).
- Similarly, business partners were more likely to agree that:
  - Information provided on Rural Payments and Services is accurate (70%, compared with 60% of owners);
  - Rural Payments and Services looks and feels well designed (47%, compared with 40%).

Views of the Rural Payments and Services online system

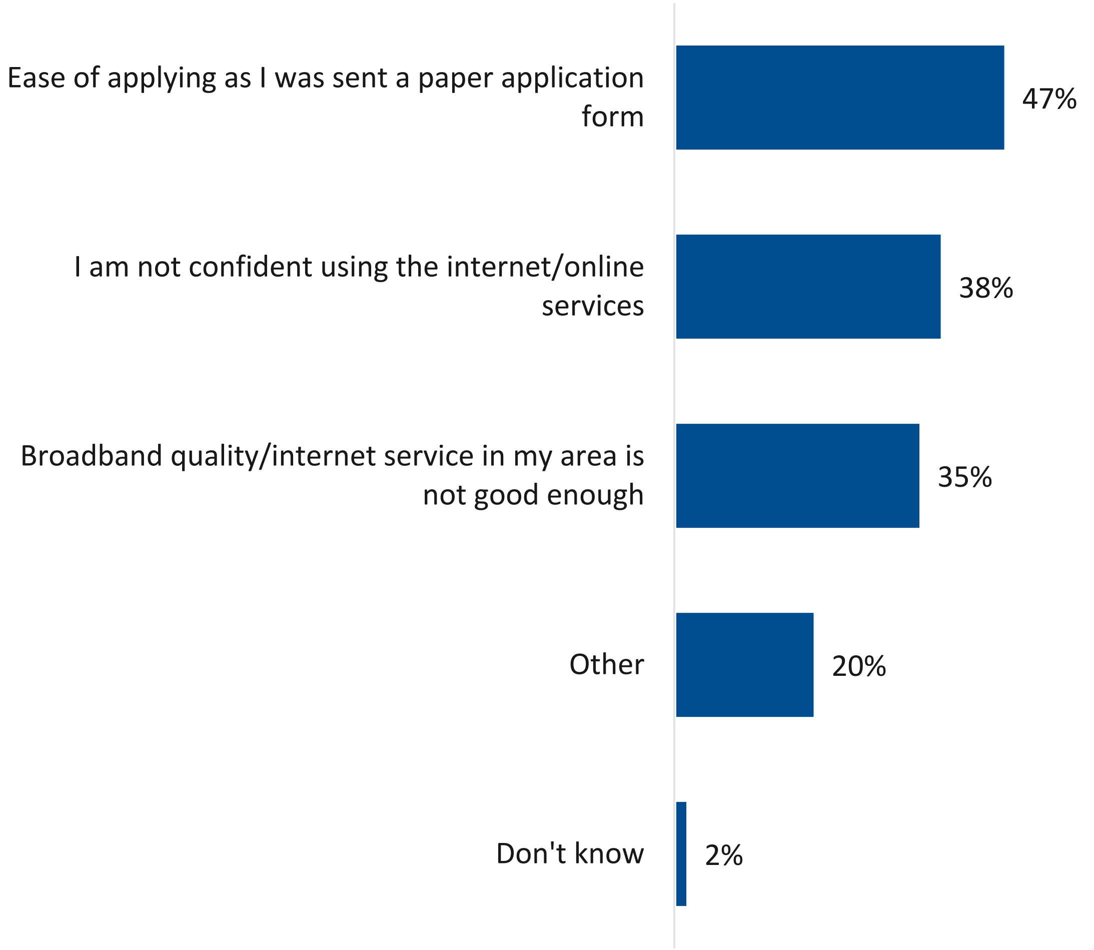


Q20: Thinking about your experience of using the Rural Payments and Services online system, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Base (all who submitted application online): 2,054

Submitting paper applications

- Of the minority (3%) of customers that submitted their SAF as a paper application, this was more likely to be because they were sent a paper application (47%), than not being confident using the internet (38%), or broadband being poor quality in their area (35%).
- This would suggest that some paper applicants would be able to make the transition to online applications.

Reasons for submitting a paper rather than online application



Q22: Which, if any, of the following are reasons for completing the application on paper rather than online? Base (all who submitted paper application): 55

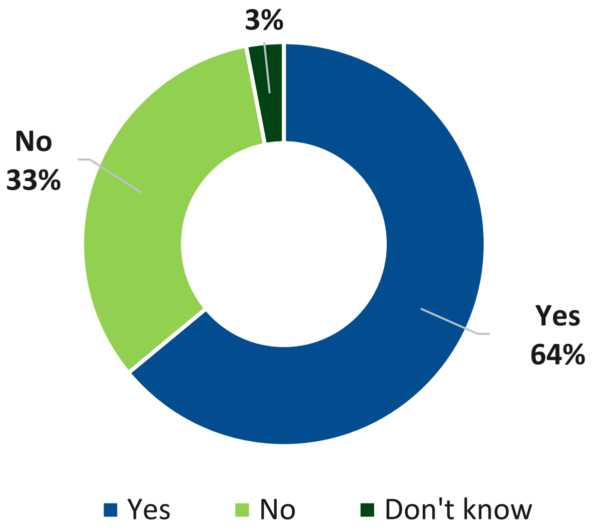
Customers’ views on the information they obtain about rural grants, services and issues

Information sources (general)

- Most (64%) RPID customers obtained information on rural grants or support services in the last 12 months.
- The following groups were more likely to have done so:
  - Business partners (69%) than owners (61%); and
  - Younger (75%) than older (57%) customers.
- In relation to wider rural and agricultural issues, RPID customers received information from a range of sources, the most common being: RPID/SG (46%), SRUC/SAC (40%), internet/email/social media (39%), Scottish Farmer (36%).
- Just under half (45%) of RPID customers consulted a farming publication, and one in five (21%) a mainstream news publication.
- There were key differences by business type, job role and age of customer, with the following **more likely to consult a range of sources**:
  - Business partners (including Scottish Farmer – 45%, compared with 36% of owners and 31% of tenants);
  - Farmers (including SRUC – 44%, compared with 35% of crofters and 28% of other businesses); and
  - Older customers (including RPID/SG – 49%, compared with 33% of younger customers).

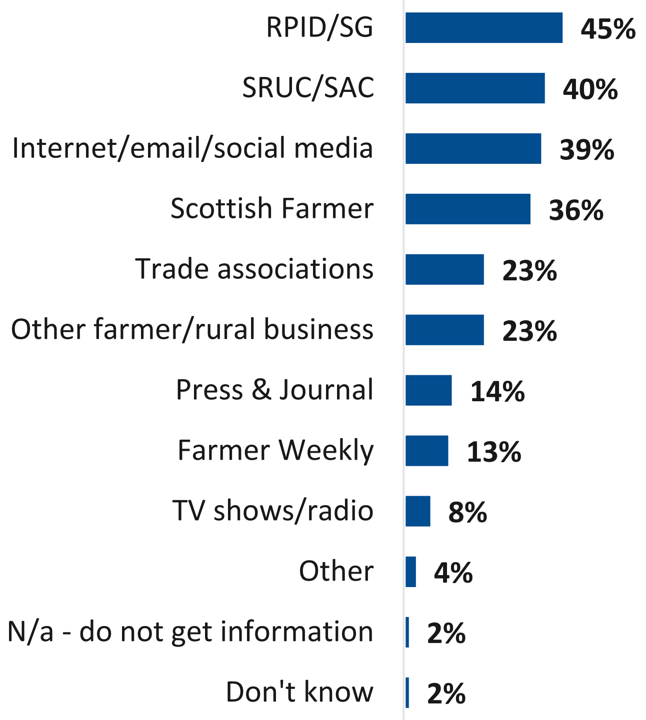
Information obtained on rural grants, support services and rural issues

Whether obtained information on **rural grants and services**



In the 2013 survey, **44%** had not obtained information on rural grants.

Where obtained most information about **rural and agricultural issues**

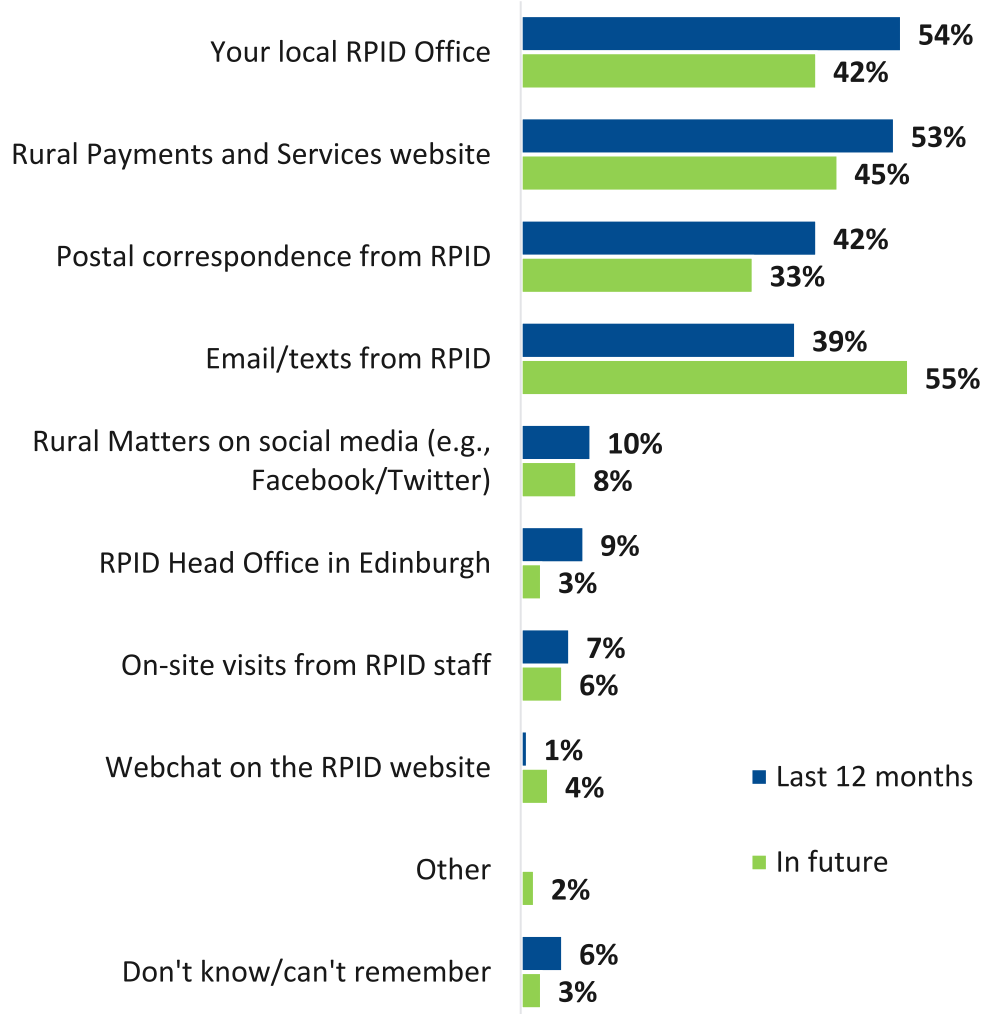


SQ1: In the last 12 months, have you obtained any information on rural grants or support services from any source?
Base (all): 2,147
Q1: From which sources would you say you receive most of your information about rural and agricultural issues?
Base (all): 2,147

Information sources (RPID)

- RPID customers that had obtained information from RPID in the last 12 months were most likely to refer to two sources: their local RPID office (54%) and the Rural Payments and Services website (53%). Almost one in three (29%) customers had consulted both of these sources.
- Differences by age of customer were most apparent here, with younger customers more likely than older customers to have referred to the following sources:
  - Rural Payments and Services website (63% vs. 51%); and
  - Rural Matters on social media (18% vs. 6%).
- Preferences for future sources of information tended to align with current usage; the Rural Payments and Services website (45%), the local RPID Office (42%) and postal correspondence (33%) were some of the most common preferences. However, preference to be contacted by email/text in future exceeded current usage significantly (39% currently obtain information by email/text, but 55% would prefer to obtain information this way in future).
- There were key differences by business type, with farmers more likely than crofters to have a preference for the following sources of information:
  - Email/texts from RPID (57% vs. 51%);
  - Rural Payments and Services website (47% vs. 38%); and
  - Postal correspondence from RPID (36% vs. 31%).

Sources of information obtained in last 12 months / preferred in future from RPID



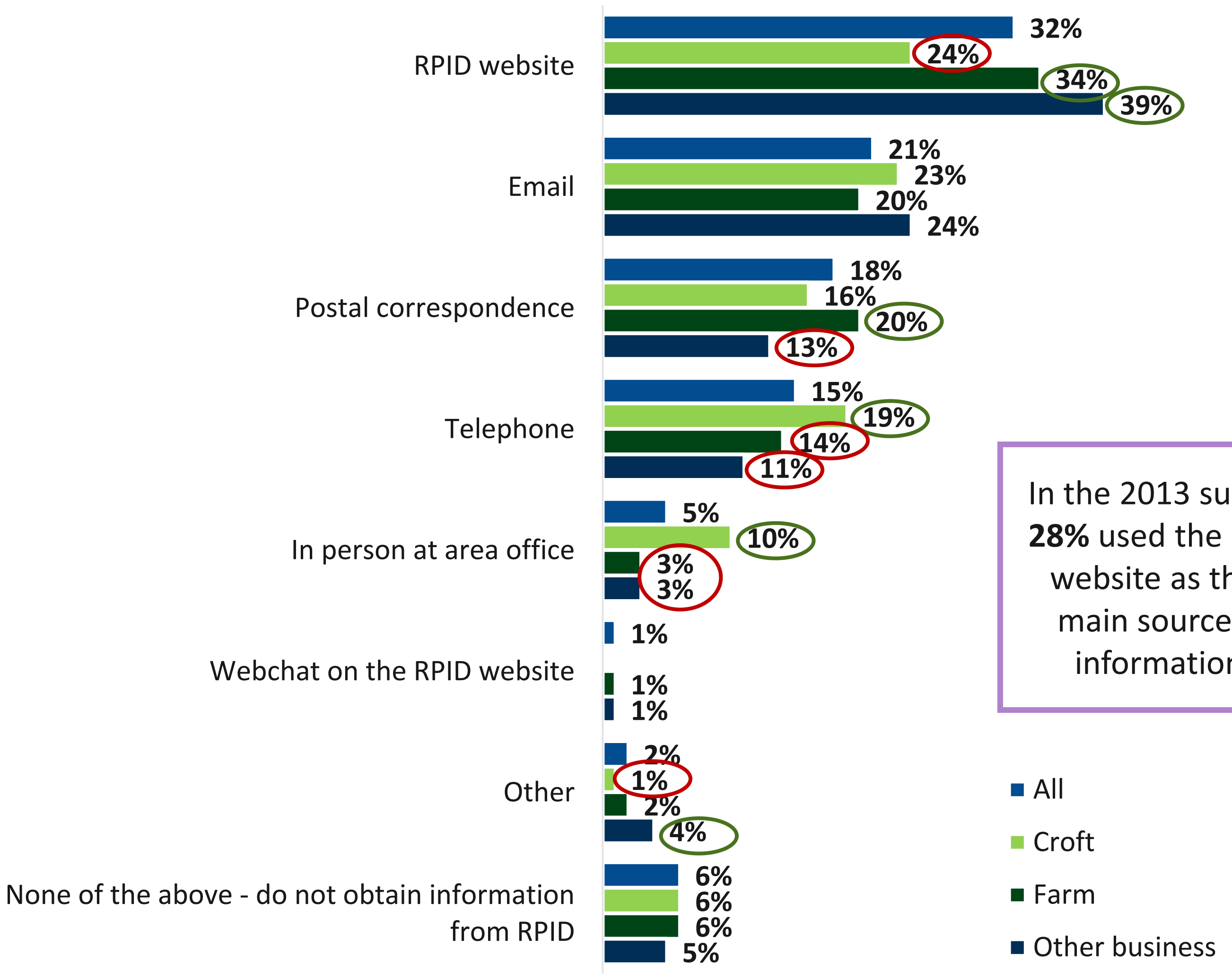
In the 2013 survey, **64%** had obtained information from their local RPID office and **49%** from postal correspondence.

Q12: In the last 12 months have you obtained information from…?
Base (all who have obtained information from RPID): 1,439
Q14: In future, which, if any, of the following methods would you prefer to obtain information from RPID? Base (all): 2,147

Main source of information (RPID)

- The RPID website was, by some margin, the main source of RPID information. One in three (32%) customers reported this, compared with one in five (21%) for the next-most common source of information: email.
- There were marked differences by business type, with crofters more likely to use the telephone (19%) and the area office (10%) than farmers (14% and 3%, respectively) and other businesses (11% and 3%, respectively).
- Conversely, other business (39%) and farmers (34%) were more likely than crofters (24%) to use the RPID website.
- There were also key differences by role of respondent: tenants (8%) were more likely than owners and business partners (5% and 3%, respectively) to use the area office.
- Additionally, younger customers were more likely to use the RPID website (38%) and email (29%) than older customers (27% and 19%, respectively).

Main source of information from RPID



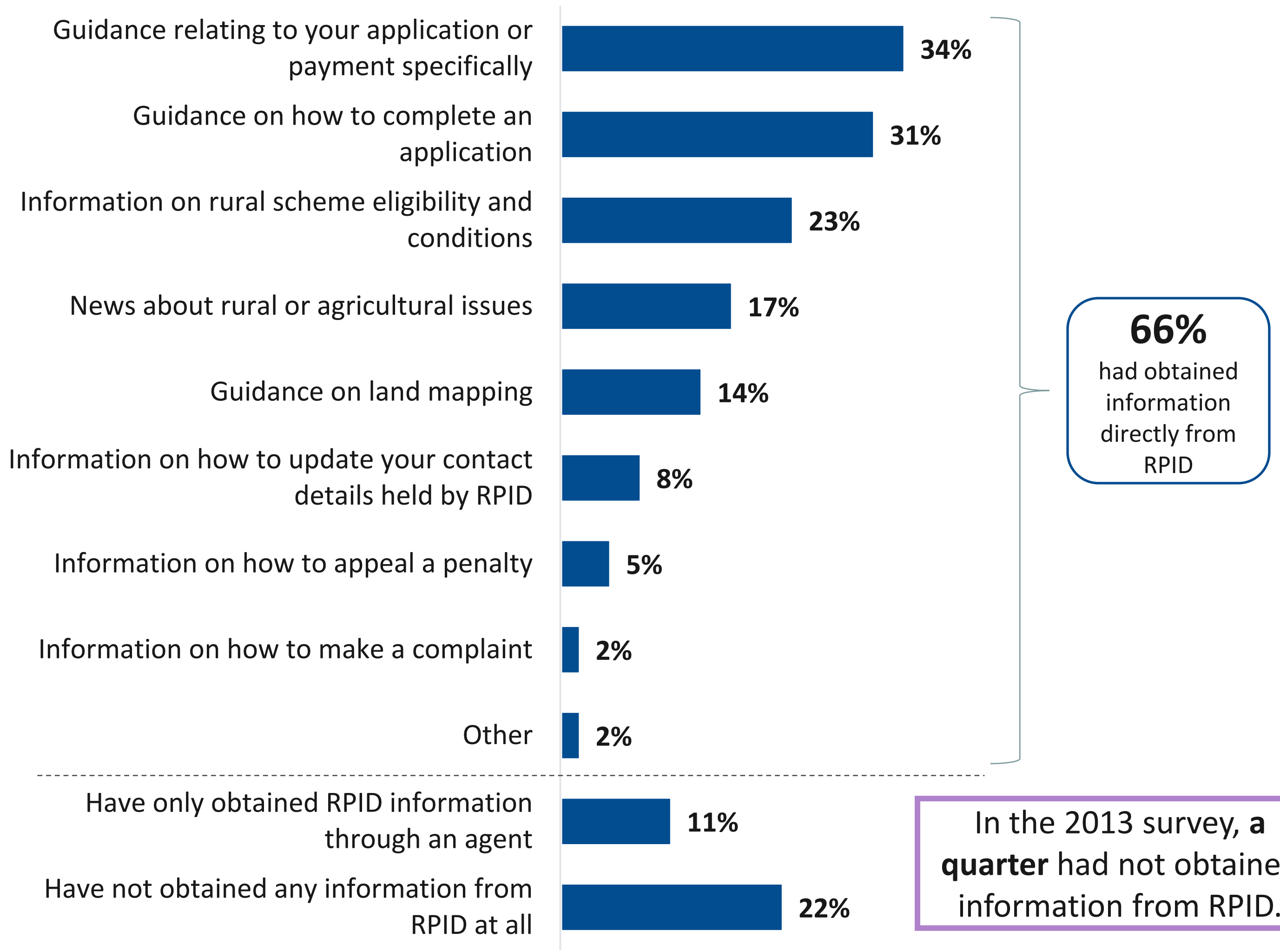
In the 2013 survey, **28%** used the RPID website as their main source of information.

Q13: What is your main source of information from RPID? Base (all): 2,147

Types of information obtained (RPID)

- Two in three (66%) RPID customers had obtained information from RPID in the last 12 months. On average, customers had obtained two pieces of information.
- The following groups were more likely to have obtained information from RPID:
  - Tenants (72%, compared with 65% of owners); and
  - Crofters (71%, compared with 66% of farmers).
- The most common types of information obtained related to applications for rural grants, including guidance relating to the customer's application or payment specifically (34%) and how to complete an application (31%).
- There were key differences by business type with crofters more likely to have obtained the following information:
  - Guidance on how to complete an application (38% vs. 29% of farmers); and
  - Guidance relating to your application or payment specifically (37% vs. 32%).

Types of information obtained from RPID in the last 12 months



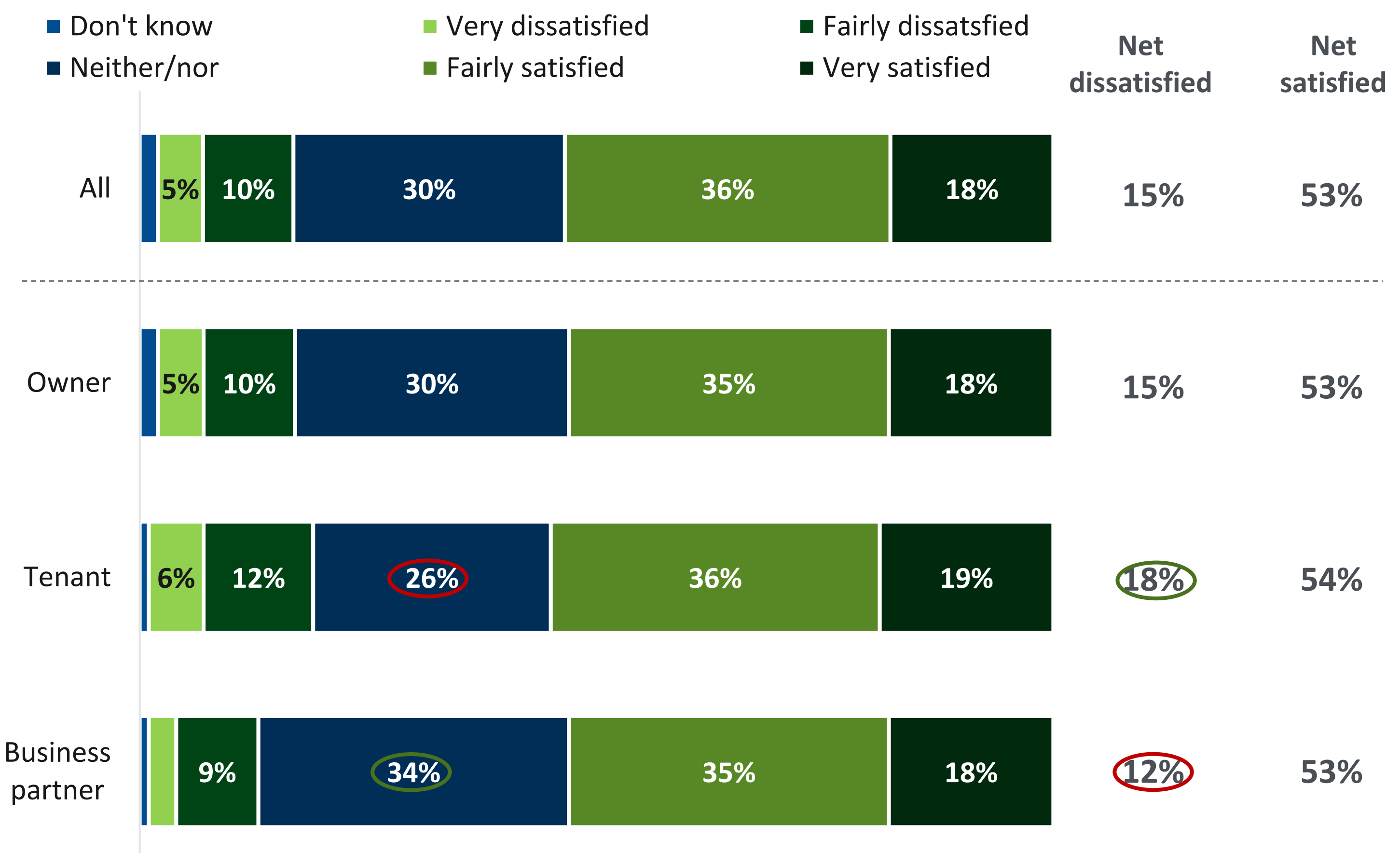
In the 2013 survey, **a quarter** had not obtained information from RPID.

Q11: In the last 12 months have you obtained any of the following from RPID? Base (all): 2,147

Satisfaction with information from RPID

- Customers are considerably more likely to be satisfied (53%) than dissatisfied (15%) with the information and services on rural grants and schemes provided by RPID, although almost one in three (30%) customers reported they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.
- Satisfaction was higher among customers who:
  - Had completed their SAF without any support (57%, compared with 46% of customers who employed someone else to complete their SAF); and
  - Were based in Golspie and Benbecula (65% and 61%, compared with 49% in Inverness and 44% in Inverurie).
- Dissatisfaction was higher among:
  - Tenants (18%, compared with 12% of business partners); and
  - Crofters (18%, compared with 14% of farmers).

Satisfaction with information and services on rural grants from RPID



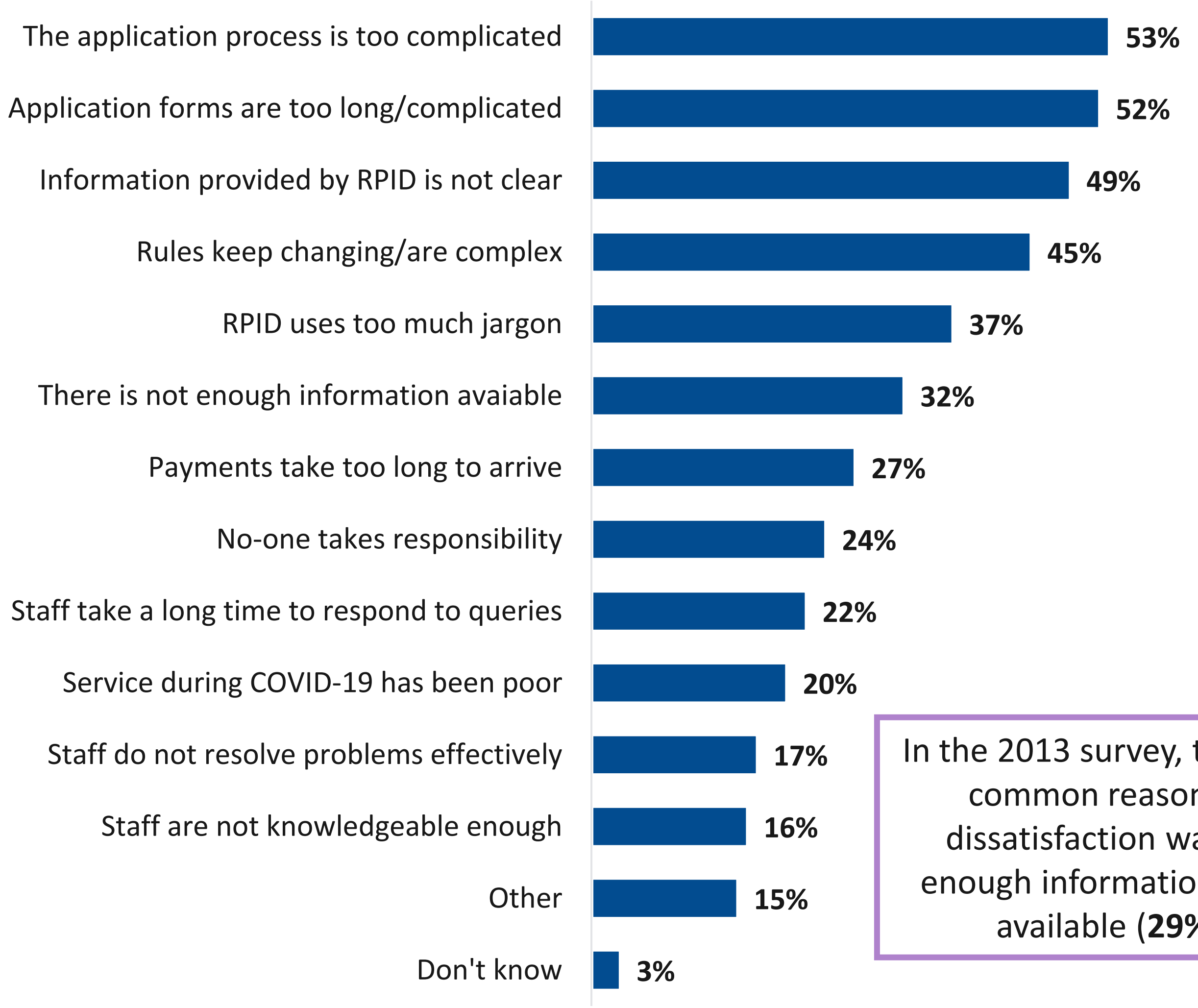
In the 2013 survey, **64%** were satisfied with information and services on rural grants from RPID.

Q2: Thinking about your experiences in the last 12 months, overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with information and services on rural grants and schemes provided by RPID? Base (all): 2,147

Reasons for dissatisfaction with information

- Reflecting the guidance customers were most likely to have obtained from RPID in the last 12 months, their main reasons for being dissatisfied with the information and services provided by RPID centred around applications. The two most common reasons for being dissatisfied were that the application process is too complicated (53%) and the application forms are too long/complicated (52%).
- Differences were most prominent by business type, with crofters more likely than farmers to be dissatisfied by a range of things, including:
  - The application process being too complicated (64% vs. 44%);
  - The application forms being too long/complicated (61% vs. 45%);
  - Payments taking too long to arrive (39% vs. 18%); and
  - Staff taking a long time to respond to queries (30% vs. 17%).
- Other businesses were more likely to report the information and guidance provided by RPID is not clear or accessible (71%, compared with 48% and 43% of farmers and crofters, respectively).

Customers' main reasons for dissatisfaction with information



In the 2013 survey, the most common reason for dissatisfaction was not enough information being available (**29%**).

Q3: What are your main reasons for saying that you are dissatisfied with information and services provided by RPID? Base (all dissatisfied with information from RPID): 330

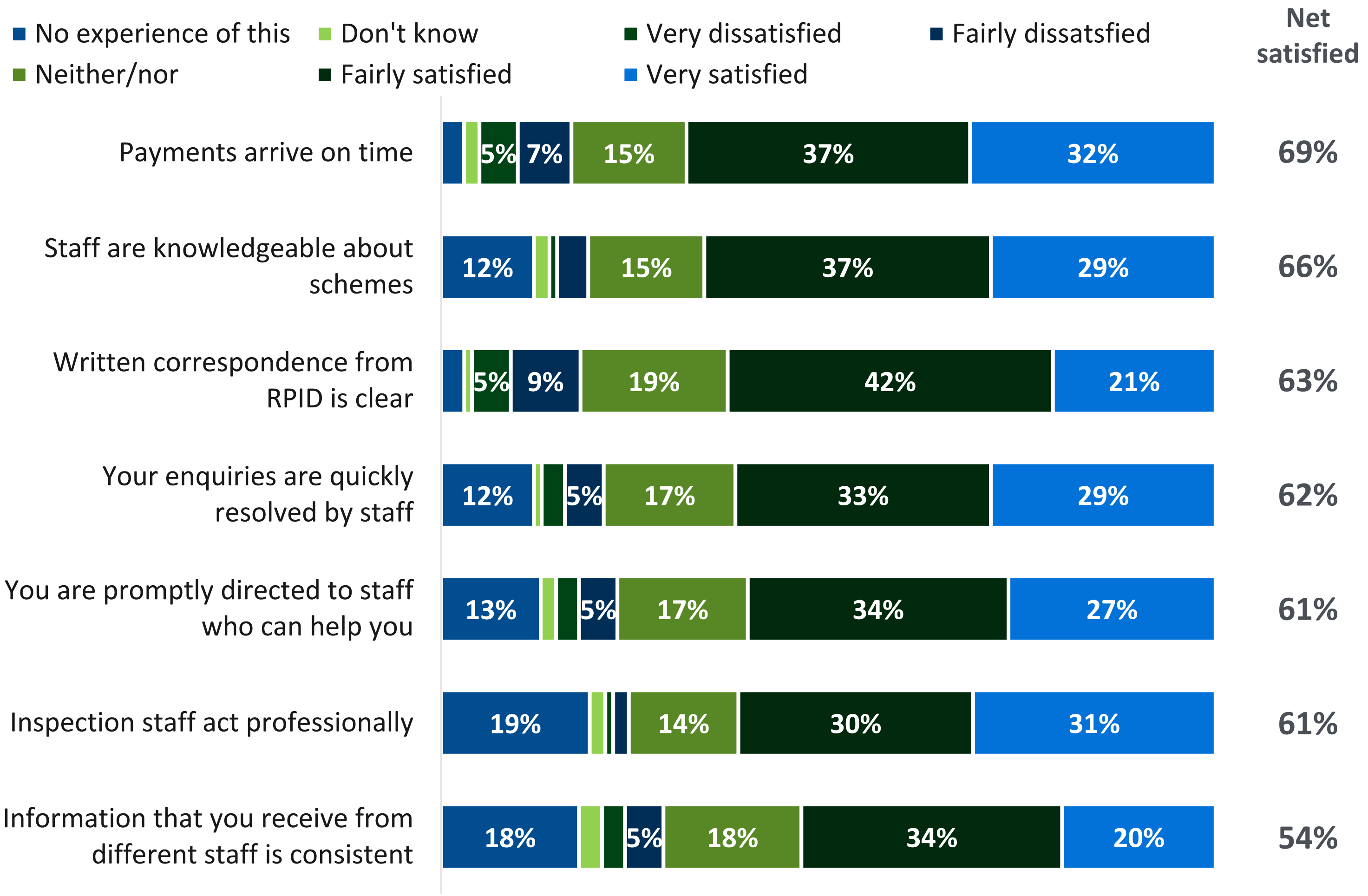
Customer views on RPID’s performance

Satisfaction with RPID performance

- The highest levels of satisfaction were seen for payments arriving on time – seven in ten (69%) were very or quite satisfied with this.
- Several of the areas where customers were most satisfied related to aspects relating to RPID staff members – e.g., staff being knowledgeable about schemes (66%); enquiries being quickly resolved by staff (62%); and inspection staff acting professionally (61%) were all aspects of RPID's performance that satisfied most customers.
- Customers were also satisfied that written correspondence from RPID is clear (63%).

In the 2013 survey, **72%** of customers were satisfied that they are promptly directed to staff who can help you. **70%** were satisfied their enquiries are quickly resolved by staff.

Aspects of RPID's performance customers were most satisfied with



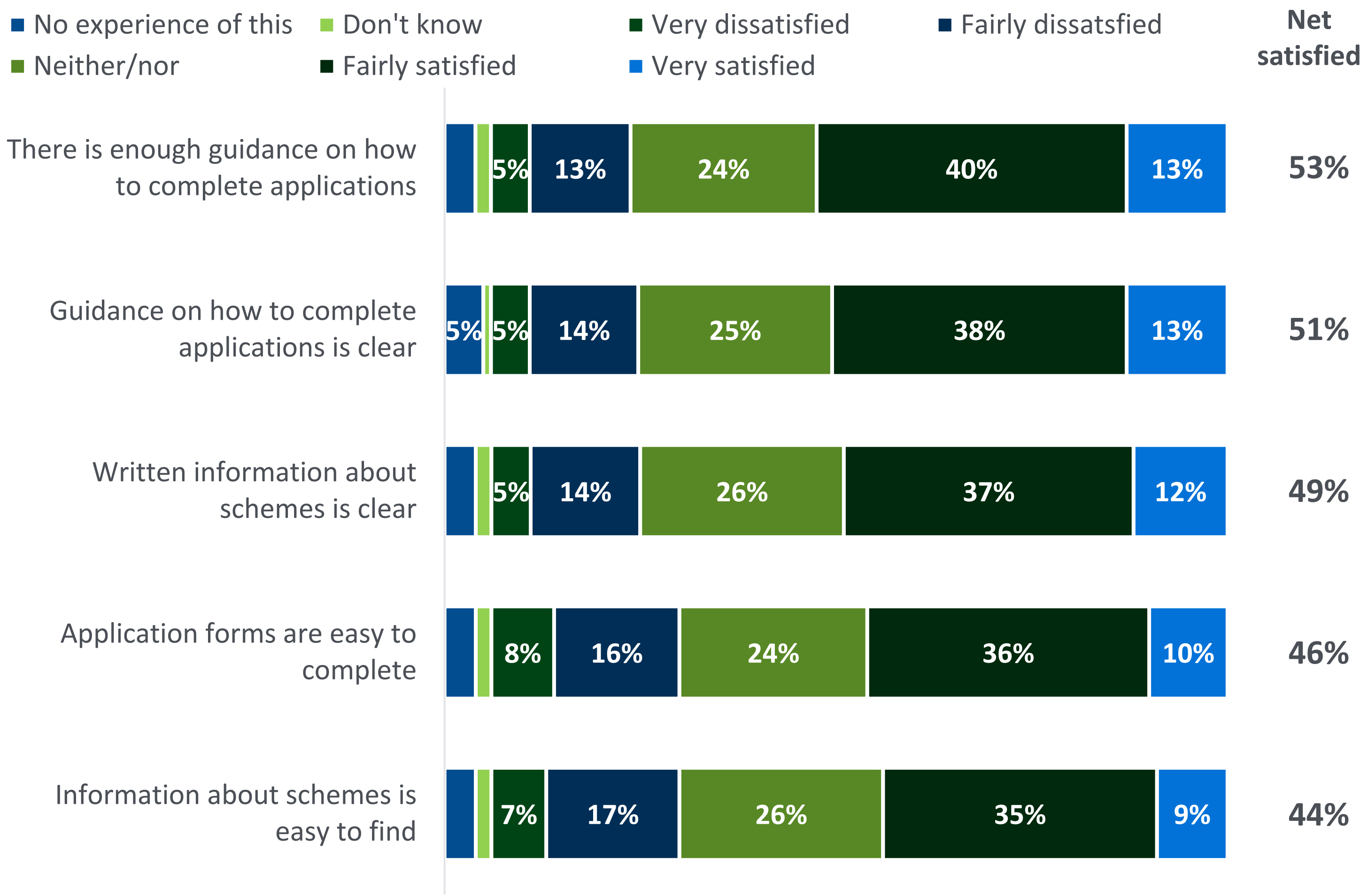
Q5: Thinking about your experiences in the last 12 months, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the performance of RPID on each of the following factors? Base (all): 2,147

Satisfaction with RPID performance

- Reflecting previous findings, customers were generally least satisfied about aspects of RPID's performance relating to two things:
  - Applications forms
  - Information about schemes
- They were least satisfied about application forms being easy to complete (46%) and information about schemes being easy to find (44%).

- Across all satisfaction measures, there were key differences by business type and role of respondent.
- Business partners were more likely than owners to be satisfied with several aspects of RPID's performance, including:
  - Payments arriving on time (77% vs. 68%);
  - Inspection staff acting professionally (67% vs. 59%); and
  - Enough guidance on how to complete applications (62% vs. 50%).

Aspects of RPID's performance customers were least satisfied with

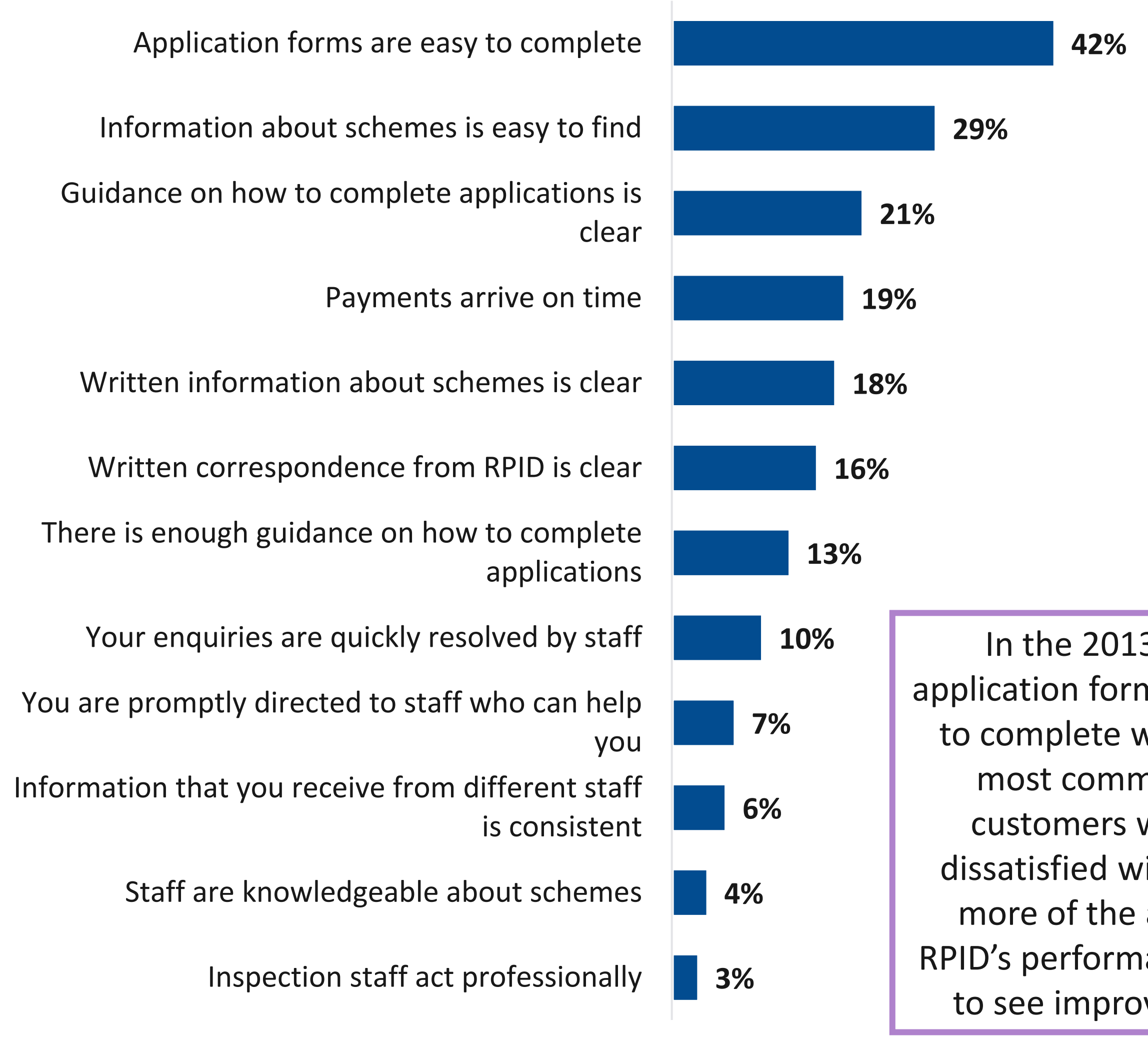


Q5: Thinking about your experiences in the last 12 months, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the performance of RPID on each of the following factors? Base (all): 2,147

Ways for RPID to improve

- Customers who were dissatisfied with three or more of the aspects of RPID's performance were asked to select the ones they would most like to see improved. This group equated to 15% of the total sample.
- Reflecting previous findings about satisfaction levels, application forms being easy to complete was, by some margin, the most common aspect of RPID's performance customers would like to see improved (42%). Information about schemes being easy to find was another key improvement from customers' perspective (29%).
- There were few consistent differences by groups of customers, suggesting customers generally feel similarly about aspects of RPID's performance they would like to see improved.
- Crofters (49%) were, however, more likely than farmers (37%) to report they would like application forms to be easier to complete; whereas farmers (33%) were more likely than crofters (23%) to want information about schemes to be easy to find.

Aspects of RPID's performance customers would most like to see improved



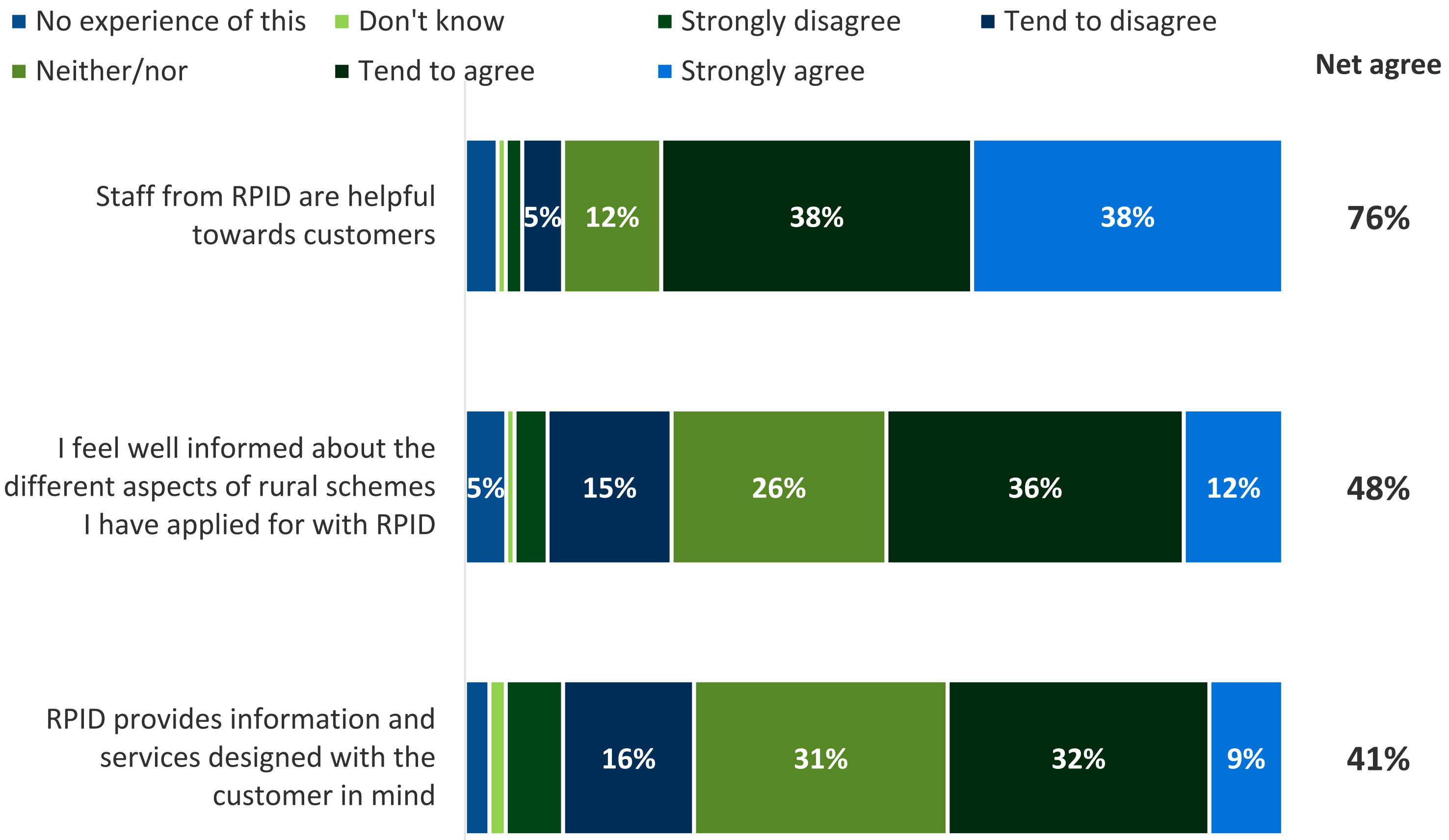
In the 2013 survey, application forms being easy to complete was also the most common thing customers who were dissatisfied with three or more of the aspects of RPID's performance wanted to see improved (**36%**).

Q6: Which one or two would you most like to see RPID improve on?
Base (all dissatisfied with 3 or more aspects of RPID performance RPID): 528

Communication with customers

- When it came to how RPID communicate with their customers, customers were very positive about RPID staff: 76% agreed that staff were helpful towards customers.
- They were less positive about RPID's ability to communicate with its customers about rural matters. Less than half (48%) agreed that they felt informed about RPID's rural schemes; and fewer still (41%) agreed that information and services were designed with the customer in mind.
- Differences in agreement were most prominent by business type. Other businesses were less likely to agree with each of the statements than crofters and farmers; most notably, that RPID provides information and services designed with the customer in mind – 42% of crofters and farmers agreed with this statement compared with 26% of other businesses.

Agreement with statements about RPID's communication with customers



In the 2013 survey, **56%** of customers felt well informed about different aspects of rural schemes they had applied for.

Q4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base (all): 2,147

Views on the complaints process

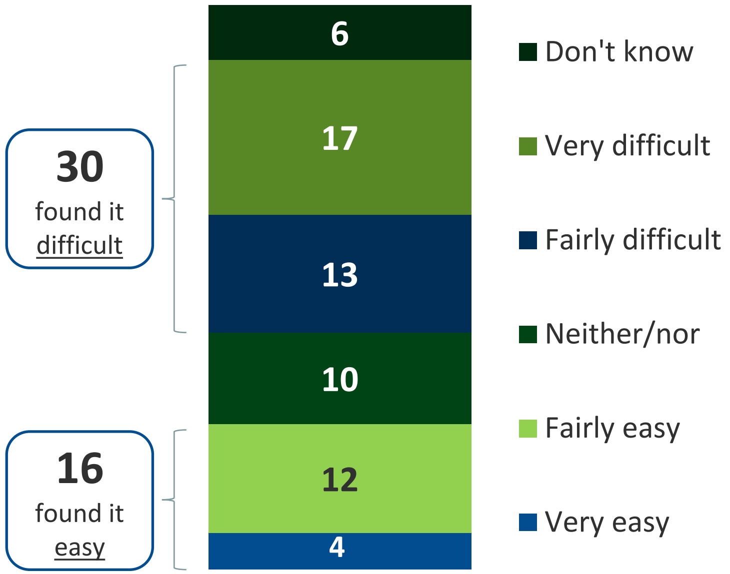
- A small minority (3%, just 62 respondents) had complained to RPID about its staff or services.
- Reflecting dissatisfaction with other aspects of RPID's performance, a greater proportion of other businesses (5%) and crofters (4%) than farmers (2%) had made a complaint.
- Customers in Portree (7%) and Stornoway (6%) were also more likely than average to have made a complaint.
- Of those who did complain, they were almost twice as likely to report it was difficult than easy – and only a quarter (17/62) felt their complaint was resolved to their satisfaction. However, we do not know whether this was a reflection of the outcome of the complaint, or the way in which it was handled.
- Of the suggestions customers gave about how RPID could improve its complaints process, acting more quickly to complaints being raised (13) was the most common.

Customers' experiences of the complaints process

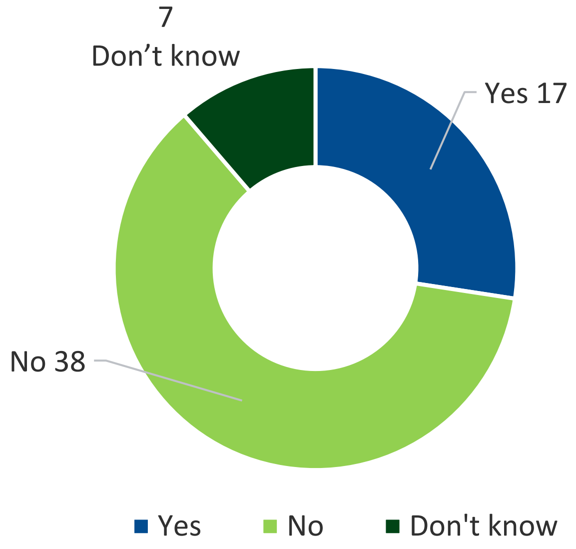
97%

customers did not say they had complained to RPID.
Of the **3%** of customers (62 people) that had complained…

How easy to follow the complaint process



Whether complaint resolved to satisfaction



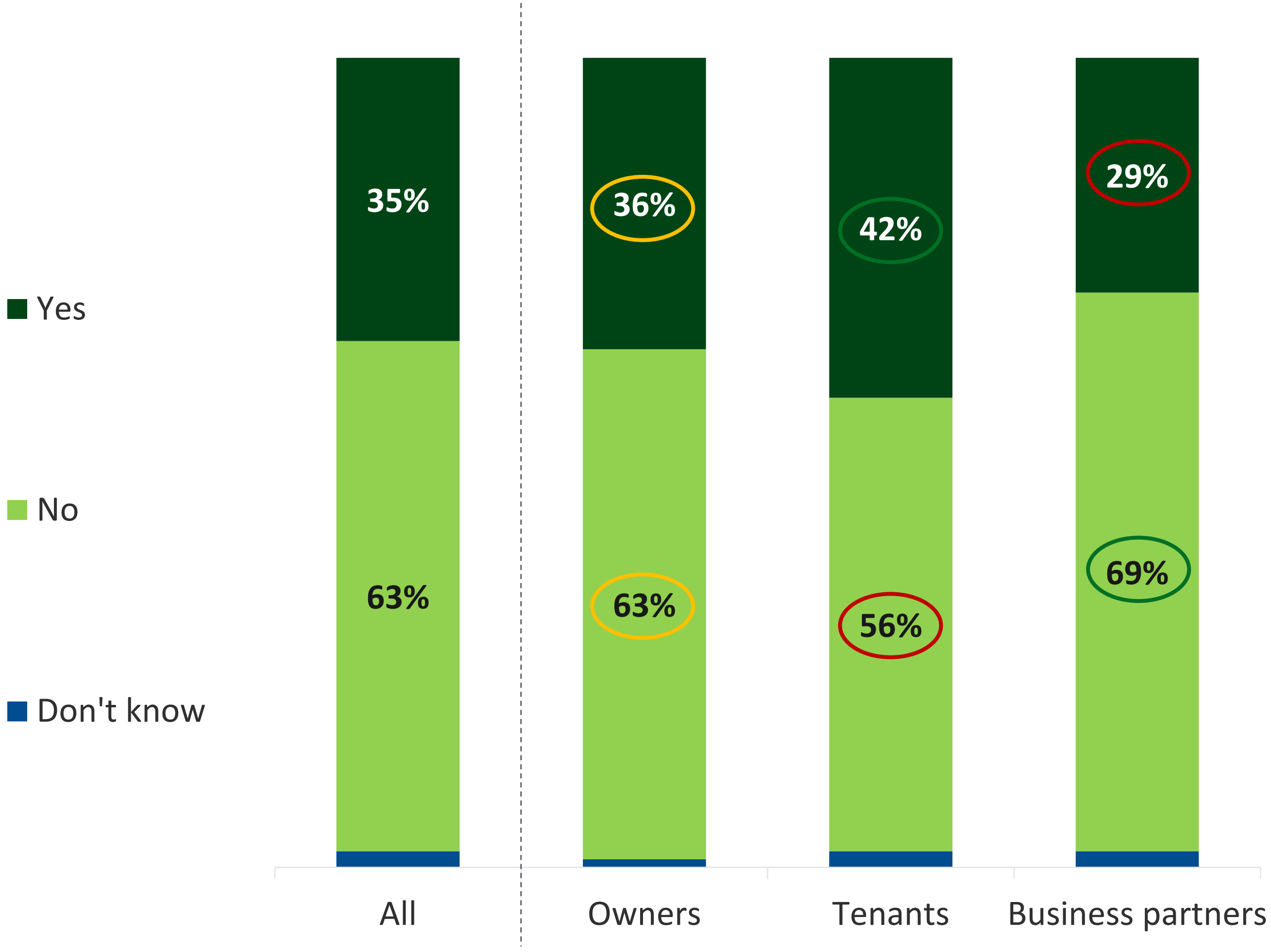
Q8: How easy was it to follow the complaint process? Q9: Was the complaint resolved to your satisfaction? Base (all who had made a complaint): 62. NB: figures are shown as absolutes not percents on this slide due to the small base size.

Impact of COVID-19 on RPID’s services

Face-to-face support pre-COVID

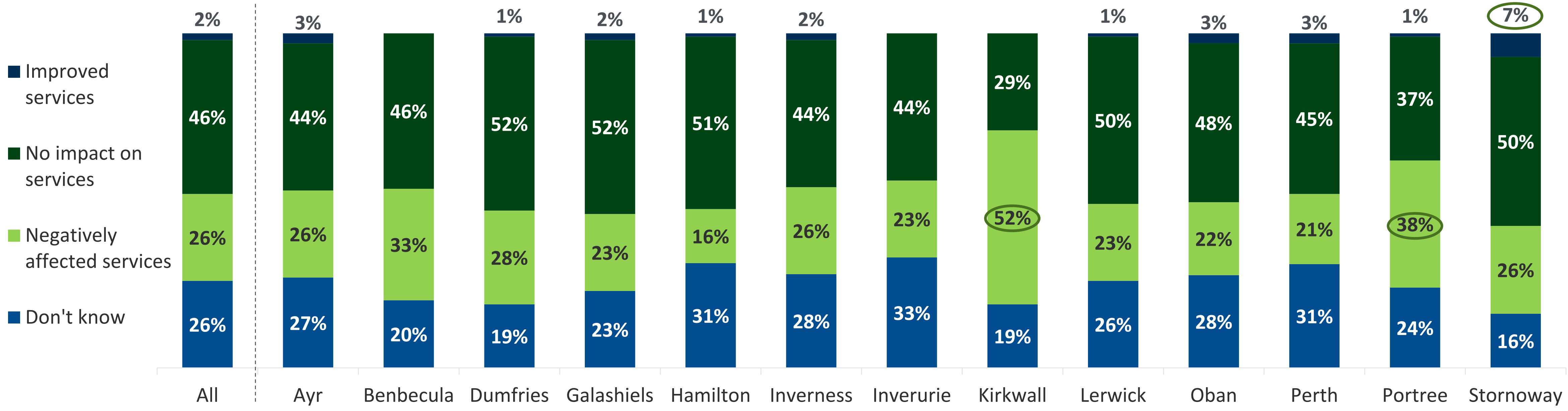
- Around one in three (35%) customers used area offices before COVID-19 for face-to-face support with their RPID applications.
- Differences between customers reflected differences in the proportions that reported they had obtained information from their local RPID office in the last 12 months.
- Tenants (36%) were more likely than business partners (29%) to have used area offices, as were crofters (48%) in comparison to both farmers (31%) and other businesses (25%).

Whether customers used area offices for face-to-face support with applications



Q16: Before COVID-19, did you use the area offices for face-to-face support with these applications? Base (all): 2,147

Extent to which COVID-19 has affected RPID services



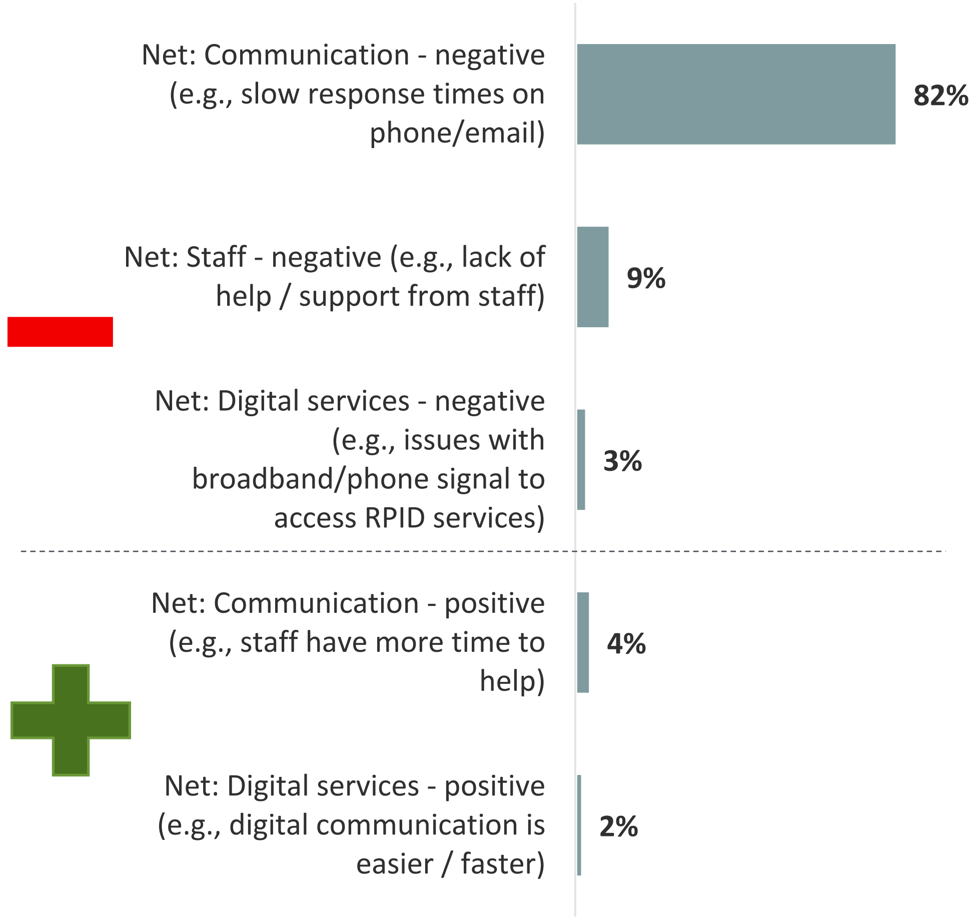
- Customers were most likely to say that COVID-19 had no impact on RPID services (46%), but where they felt it had an impact, this was more likely to be negative (26%) than positive (2%).
- Younger customers (5%) were more likely than older customers (1%) to feel that COVID-19 had <u>improved</u> RPID services.
- There were also key differences by area office, with customers in Kirkwall (52%) and Portree (38%) more likely than average (26%) to say COVID-19 had negatively affected services. Customers in Stornoway, on the other hand, were more likely to say it had improved services (7%, compared with 2% on average).

Q17: In your view, to what extent has COVID-19 affected the overall quality of the services RPID offers? Base (all): 2,147 NB: only significant differences vs. average are shown on this chart.

How COVID-19 has affected RPID (summary)

- Customers who felt COVID-19 had affected the overall quality of the services RPID offers were asked to explain why.
- Among these customers, the negative impact of COVID-19 on communication with customers was most prominent (82%).
- Communication encompassed a number of themes including slow response times via phone and email, difficulty contacting staff directly and the overall time it takes to get a response to a query.
- Around one in 10 (9%) customers felt COVID-19 had had a negative impact on the role of RPID staff. Customers cited poor service from staff, and that they had no main point of contact during the pandemic.
- A minority (4%) of customers were positive about the impact of COVID-19 on RPID's communication with customers. They either felt response times were quicker or that staff now had more time to help customers.
- **Please note, this chart only shows the overarching summary codes emerging from this open-ended question. The full analysis is provided on the next slides.**

Reasons customers gave for saying COVID-19 had affected RPID services



"No ability to speak to RPID staff without having to leave a message or email first."

"Trickier to make contact with staff and response times have been extended."

"I have a hearing problem and though I understand the need to stop face to face contact as a result of the virus, I hope that once this virus is over face to face will be available again."

Q18. What makes you say that COVID-19 has improved/negatively affected RPID services? Base (all who gave a reason for COVID-19 impact on RPID): 513

How COVID-19 has affected RPID (all – negative reasons given)

Negative reasons given	%
NET: Communication – negative	82%
No face-to-face comms	35%
Difficulty contacting staff/no call divert service	25%
Long process/takes a long time to get a response	14%
Slow response times on phone	12%
Main phone line not answered	7%
Slow response times on email	5%
No call back	3%
Don't like leaving answer machine messages	3%
Would like appointment time for call-back	<1%
NET: Staff – negative	9%
Lack of help/support from staff	5%
Poor service from staff (e.g. rude)	2%
No main point of contact at RPID	2%
Inconsistent info from different staff	1%

Negative reasons given	%
NET: Digital services – negative	3%
Issues with broadband	1%
Issues with mobile service/phone signal	1%
Older people struggle with accessing digital services	<1%
IT issues	<1%
NET: Other – negative	16%
Unreliable process/services	9%
Using Covid-19 as an excuse to avoid doing work	3%
Lack of inspections	1%
Other negative comment	4%
Base (all who commented)	**513**

Q18. What makes you say that COVID-19 has improved/negatively affected RPID services? Base (all who gave a reason for COVID-19 impact on RPID): 513

How COVID-19 has affected RPID (all – positive reasons given)

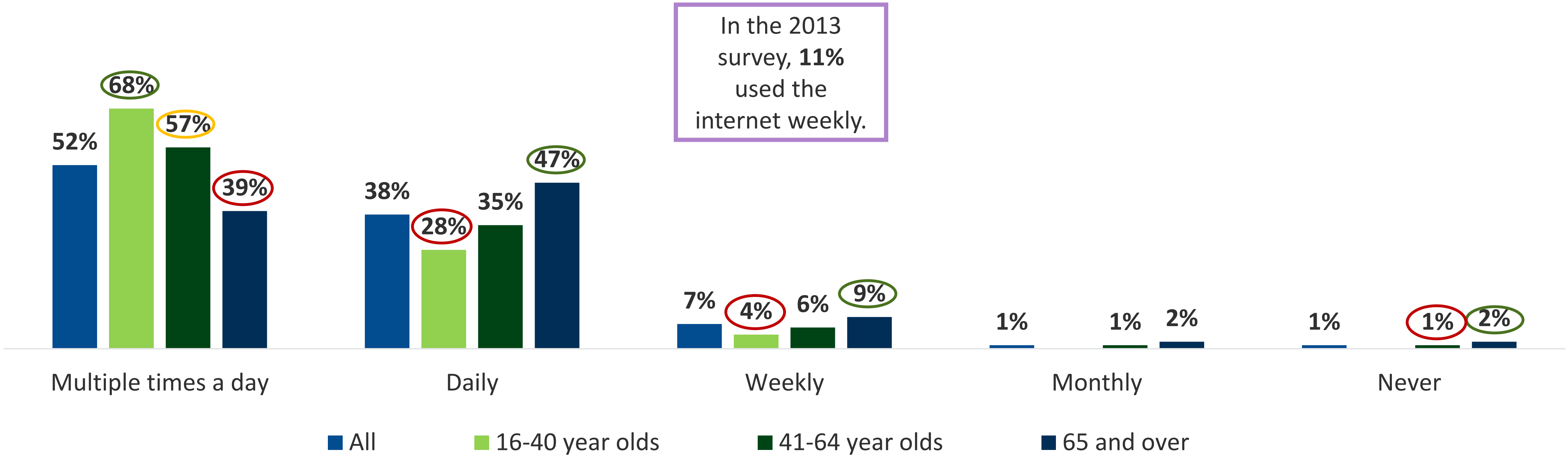
Positive reasons given	%
NET: Communication – positive	5%
Staff have more time to help	4%
Quicker response time	2%
NET: Digital services – positive	2%
Easy to use online system	1%
Applications processed faster	<1%
Webinars are good	<1%
Digital communication is easier	<1%
Information more easily accessible online	<1%
NET: Other – positive	2%
Fewer inspections is less stressful	<1%
Other positive comment	2%
Base (all who commented)	**513**

Q18. What makes you say that COVID-19 has improved/negatively affected RPID services? Base (all who gave a reason for COVID-19 impact on RPID): 513

Online behaviours

Internet use

How often customers use the internet (by age of customer)



- The vast majority (97%) of RPID customers use the internet at least weekly, and most commonly use it multiple times a day (52%) or daily (38%).

- The following are more likely to use the internet multiple times a day:
  - Younger customers (68%) than older customers (39%).
  - Other businesses (65%) than farmers (52%) and crofters (49%).

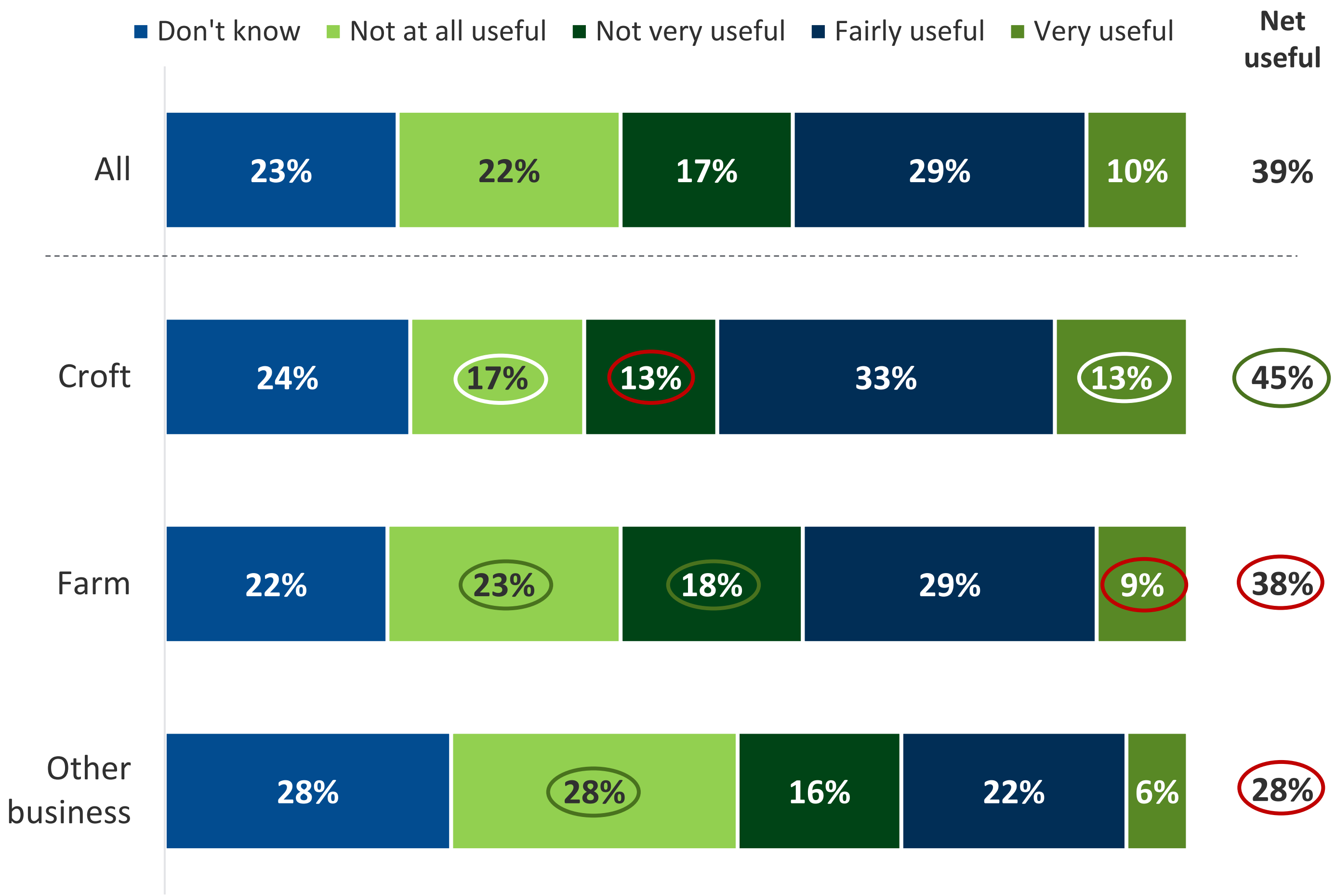
Q19: How often do you use the internet (either for work or personal use)? Base (all): 2,147

Social media

- Of customers who use social media, an even proportion of people reported they would find information and news updates from RPID via social media useful (39%) and not useful (38%).
- There were differences in reported usefulness by business type, job role and age. All of the following (who use social media) were more likely to consider information and news updates via social media as useful:
  - Crofters (45%, compared with 38% of farmers and 28% of other businesses);
  - Tenants (47%, compared with 37% of owners); and
  - Younger customers (59%, compared with 30% of older customers).

In the 2013 survey, **48%** reported they would find it useful if RPID were to provide information and new via social media.

Agreement with usefulness of providing information via social media



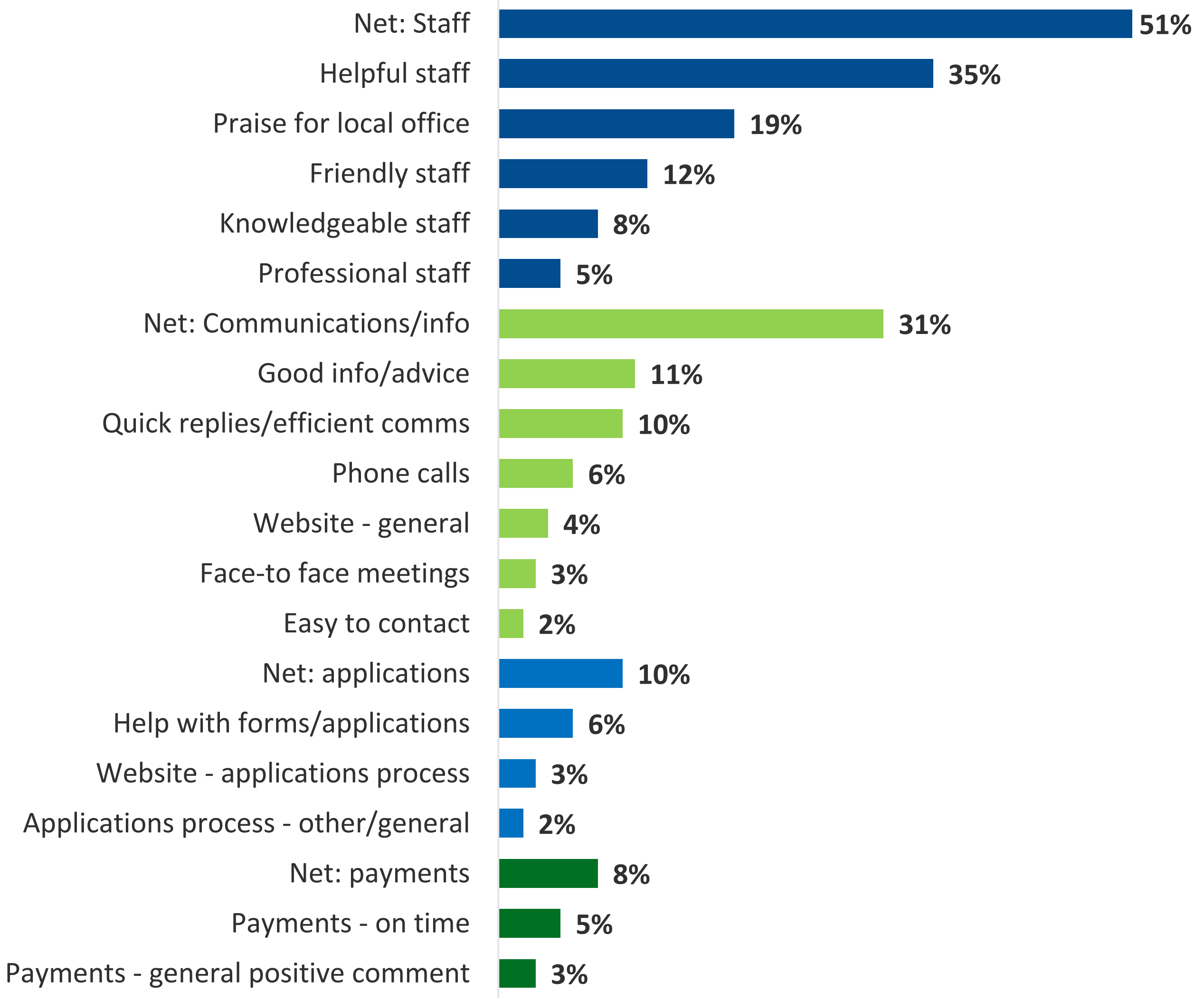
Q23: RPID provide information and news via social media such as Facebook and Twitter. How useful do you find this? Base (all who use social media): 1,379. White circles are used to highlight significant differences instead of red circles due to the bar colour.

What RPID does well and what it could improve on

What RPID does well

- Over two in five (43%) customers reported something that RPID does well in terms of its services.
- The most common of these overarching themes, reflecting findings presented earlier in the report, related to staff (51% of those who commented). Customers variously reported their experiences with helpful staff (35%), friendly staff (12%), knowledgeable staff (8%) and professional staff (5%).
- The second-most common theme related to communications and information (31%). These customers felt RPID did one or more of the following well:
  - The quality of information and advice provided (19%);
  - The speed at which RPID responded to queries and communicated with customers (10%); and
  - The phone line (e.g., availability) (6%).
- **Please note this chart only shows a summary of the key themes emerging from this open-ended question. The full analysis is provided on the next slide.**

Aspects of RPID's performance customers feel are positive (summary)



Q24. Overall, what, if anything, does RPID do well in terms of its services? Base (all who provided a response): 930

What RPID does well (all)

What RPID does well	%
Net: Staff	**51%**
Helpful staff	35%
Praise for local office	19%
Friendly staff	12%
Knowledgeable staff	8%
Professional staff	5%
Net: Communications/info	**31%**
Good info/advice	11%
Quick replies/efficient comms	10%
Phone calls	6%
Website – general	4%
Face-to face meetings	3%
Easy to contact	2%
Help for non-tech savvy	1%
Email correspondence	1%
Email alerts	1%

What RPID does well	%
Net: Applications	**10%**
Help with forms/applications	6%
Website - applications process	3%
Applications process - other/general	2%
Net: Payments	**8%**
Payments - on time	5%
Payments - general positive comment	3%
NET: Other positive comments	11%
Other general positive comment	10%
Inspections – positive	1%
Some offices better than others	1%
Base (all who commented)	**930**

Q24. Overall, what, if anything, does RPID do well in terms of its services? Base (all who provided a response): 930

What RPID does well (example quotes)

"Have local officers who understand local needs and market conditions and give up to date local info."

"I have always found staff to be very helpful whether on the phone or, before Covid, face to face."

"Without the assistance of the local RP&ID representatives I doubt very much if my SAF and any other applications would be completed successfully online. I would also point out that the local team are very supportive and understanding of how difficult these computer-generated forms can be for the older generation."

"Telephone contact usually good but setting up a password to access my account virtually impossible for someone my age."

"RPID is an extremely efficient and helpful online site to find your way around. We are a family of 4 individual crofters, who check out this site regularly and find it extremely helpful with form filling and the information it contains regarding grants available and environmental issues."

"RPID have now provided an excellent portal for farmers to complete applications online and receive communication back regarding queries or progress of their application. The online mapping tool has been an absolute godsend for any farmers changing boundaries and measuring field sizes. Thank you for providing us with this facility. The system for uploading maps of greening areas onto my SAF application works very well and is easy to use."

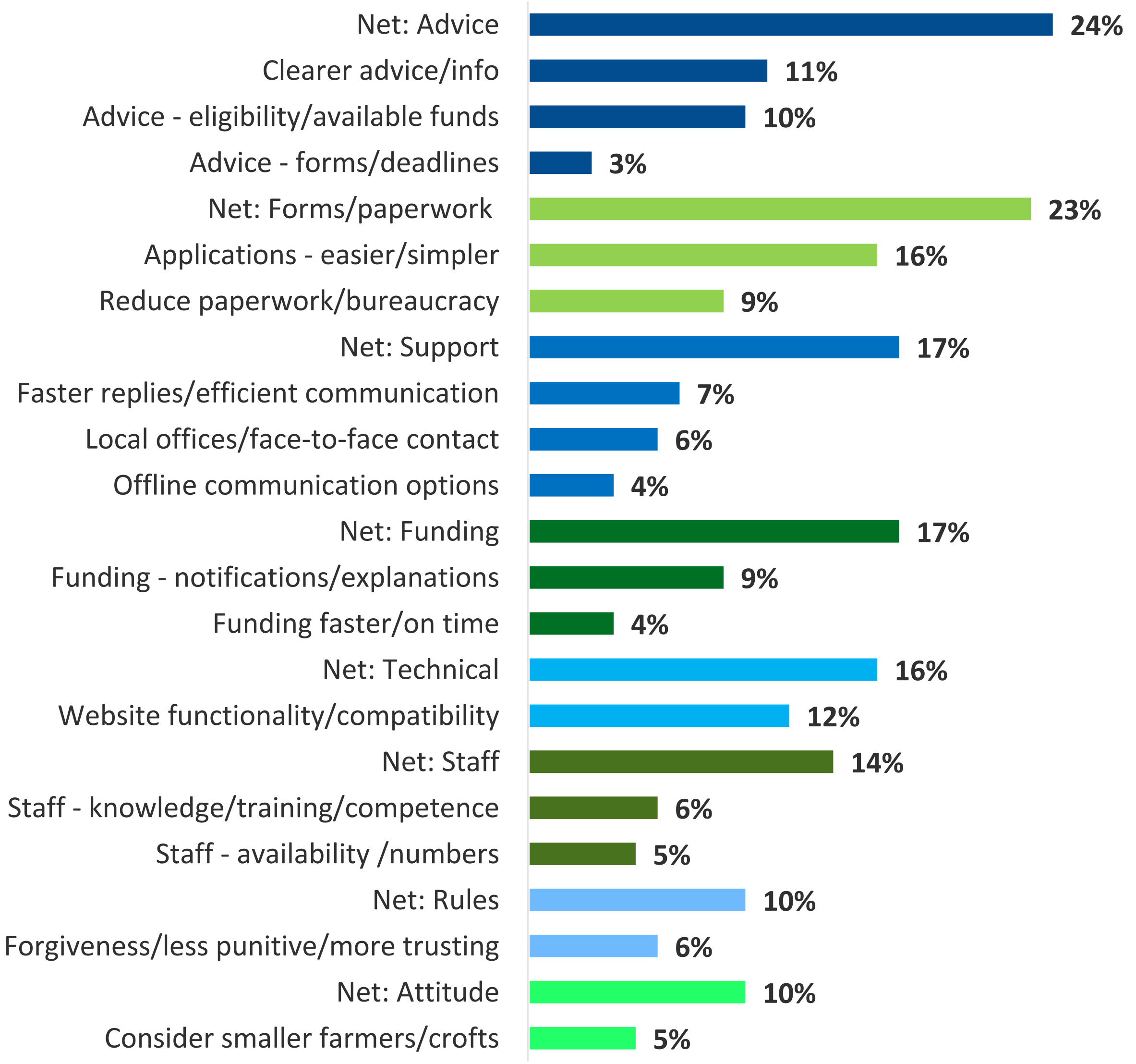
"Good info on web site. If I need to speak to someone directly, I can usually get all the info I need with just one phone call."

Raw data including verbatim quotes provided under separate cover

What RPID could improve on

- Half (49%) of customers reported something that RPID could improve on.
- The most common of these overarching themes, reflecting findings presented earlier in the report, related to advice (24% of those who commented) or forms and paperwork (23%).
- Under the theme of advice, customers chiefly wanted:
  - Clearer advice and information relating to the SAF and rural grants/issues more broadly (11%); and
  - Advice on their eligibility for funding (10%).
- Under the theme of forms and paperwork, customers referred to two things:
  - Making applications easier to fill in (16%); and
  - Reducing the amount of paperwork they needed to complete (9%).
- Other commonly mentioned themes related to support from RPID and funding issues .
- **Please note this chart only shows a summary of the key themes emerging from this open-ended question. The full analysis is provided on the next slide.**

Suggested improvements to services (summary)



Q25. And how, if at all, do you think RPID could improve its services? Base (all who provided a response): 1,049

What RPID could improve on (all)

What RPID could improve on	%
Net: Advice	**24%**
Clearer advice/info	11%
Advice – eligibility/available funds	10%
Advice – forms/deadlines	3%
Advice – climate/environment	2%
Advice – other topics	2%
Net: Forms/paperwork	**23%**
Applications – easier/simpler	16%
Reduce paperwork/bureaucracy	9%
Net: Support	**17%**
Faster replies/efficient communication	7%
Local offices/face-to-face contact	6%
Offline communication options	4%
Support for non-tech savvy	2%

What RPID could improve on	%
Net: Funding	**17%**
Funding – notifications/explanations	9%
Funding faster/on time	4%
Issues re: WHAT is funded	2%
Funding – fairness	2%
Net: Technical	**16%**
Website functionality/compatibility	12%
Better emails (more informative)	3%
IT issues – other	2%
Net: Staff	**14%**
Staff – knowledge/training/competence	6%
Staff – availability /numbers	5%
Staff – attitude	2%
Staff – better leadership/more accountability	2%

What RPID could improve on	%
Net: Rules	**10%**
Forgiveness/less punitive/more trusting	6%
Flexibility around rules	3%
Rules – consistency/stability	2%
Stricter enforcement of rules	1%
Net: Attitude	**10%**
Consider smaller farmers/crofts	5%
Respect for farmers	3%
Listening/dialogue	3%
Net: Inspections	**6%**
Mapping/boundary issues	4%
Inspections – onsite issues	1%
Inspections – timings/convenience	1%
Inspections – fewer	<1%
Base (all who commented)	**1,049**

Q25. And how, if at all, do you think RPID could improve its services? Base (all who provided a response): 1,049

What RPID could improve on (example quotes)

"Assuming Covid and the associated restrictions continue, another telephone line with somebody to operate it who is as knowledgeable as the current staff are would be a help at peak times."

"Website and all forms etc. need to be re-written and simplified. They need to be clear and concise and user friendly. Use words not acronyms. Use far fewer words."

"Clear, legible easy to understand instructions. Please."

"Listen more to feedback; improve RP&S interface; provide a portal for all correspondence, including remittance advices and calculations for all payments made."

"Less jargon user friendly process most of the farmers in my neighbourhood are over 60. There's no way the can do SAF themselves - just issue us an award based on your own surveys - most payment schemes will rarely change but every year you go through hoops for jargon not easy to understood especially as anything with computers for many is scary."

"More time to assist with new entrants this is why only farmers' sons are in this industry... people from no farming parents don't know how to fill these forms in and get denied all grants."

"Making a more user friendly form Have webinars where you can book in for a real person to show you how to complete a form Have a webinar for different types of computer illiterate people . Agents who simply fill in forms for lots of people will be well used to the terms etc but a farmer who only sees a form once a year has to remind themselves how to do it first."

"Be proactive with all grant applications and try and move away from being seen as trying to hinder crofting development through excessive paperwork."

Raw data including verbatim quotes provided under separate cover

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions and recommendations

Improvements to the online system for submitting SAFs can be made
The vast majority of customers submitted their most recent SAF online, either on their own or with some support. They did so even though they reported broadband quality had at least some impact on their ability to do so. Customers tended to agree that the information on the Rural Payments and Services online application system is accurate, but there is room for improvement: fewer than half of customers who submitted their application online reported the online system looks and feels well designed, and they were more likely to agree than disagree that they have difficulties finding their way around the system.

RPID could consider investing in improvements to the online application system, making it easier for customers to complete their SAF and find key information.

Customers want to obtain information from RPID by email and text
In the last 12 months, customers were most likely to obtain information from RPID via their local RPID office or the Rural Payments and Services website. In future, however, customers were most likely to report wanting to receive information via email and text.

Consideration should be given to alternative forms of communication to meet customer preferences, particularly for types of information that might be more easily conveyed via email and text such as notifications and alerts.

Customers find the application process and forms too complicated
Although customers were more likely to be satisfied than dissatisfied with the information and services on rural grants and schemes provided by RPID, a substantial minority felt that the application process as a whole was too complicated, or the application forms were too long or complicated.

RPID could consider consulting with customers (possibly in a qualitative follow-up study) about ways in which the application process and forms could be made less complicated.

Conclusions and recommendations

Customers are generally satisfied with RPID staff

In response to a range of aspects of RPID's performance, customers reported high levels of satisfaction with RPID staff. They felt staff were knowledgeable about schemes; helped them resolve enquires quickly; and that inspection staff act professionally. Most customers also agreed that RPID staff are helpful to customers. However, it is worth noting that the balance of ratings was towards 'quite' rather than 'very' satisfied so there is scope to improve these ratings.

Consideration should be given to continuing investment in customer-facing staff through training and CPD – while customers feel this is a positive aspect of RPID, there is scope to improve satisfaction in this area.

RPID is a key source of information on rural and agricultural issues

RPID was the most common source from which customers received information about rural and agricultural issues. This is a key strength of the organisation, particularly as customers have a range of sources to refer to (including farming publications, rural colleges and social media).

RPID should continue to strengthen its position as a key source of information on rural and agricultural issues. This could be achieved by consulting with customers about what sorts of information they would like to receive about the latest developments in the sector.

COVID-19 has had an impact on the services RPID provides

One in three customers used their local area office for face-to-face support with applications, a service RPID hasn't been able to offer during the pandemic. One in four customers felt that COVID-19 had negatively affected RPID's services; highest among the ways in which it had affected services was communication. Customers felt response times to enquiries had increased and staff were less available during the pandemic.

Progressive would recommend consulting with customers (possibly in a qualitative follow-up study) about ways in which RPID might best provide its services after the pandemic, either by reverting to previous, or finding new ways, of working with and for customers.

Technical appendix

Technical appendix
Quantitative

- The data was collected by an online survey.
- The target group for this research study was RPID customers.
- The sampling frame used for this study was all customers on the RPID customer database.
- The target sample size was between 2,000 and 3,000 responses and the final achieved sample size was 2,147.
- Fieldwork was undertaken between 6th August and 6th September 2021.
- All eligible customers (those with a valid email address) were selected to take part. Respondents to internet self-completion studies are self-selecting and complete the survey without the assistance of a trained interviewer. This means that Progressive cannot strictly control sampling and, in some cases, this can lead to findings skewed towards the views of those motivated to respond to the survey.
- The overall response rate to the survey was 14%. This response rate is good for a survey of this kind.
- The sample broadly represents the target population in terms of the spread of responses by local area office.
- The final data set was not weighted, due to lack of available population information, and fundamental differences in methodology and customer base with previous iterations of the survey.
- The overall sample size of 2,147 provides a dataset with a margin of error of between ±0.39% and ±1.97%. These are calculated at the 95% confidence interval (market research industry standard).
- Our data processing department undertakes a number of quality checks on the data to ensure its validity and integrity.
- For CAWI Questionnaires these checks include:
  - Responses are checked for duplicates where unidentified responses have been permitted.
  - All responses are checked for completeness and sense.
- Data gathered using self-completion methodologies are validated using the following techniques:
  - Internet surveys using client lists use a unique invitation link system to ensure that duplicate surveys are not submitted. The sample listing is also de-duplicated prior to the survey launch.
  - Where some profiling information has been provided on the sample list, this is also checked against responses where possible to validate the data.
- A computer edit of the data carried out prior to analysis involves both range and inter-field checks. Any further inconsistencies identified at this stage are investigated by reference back to the raw data on the questionnaire.
- Where 'other' type questions are used, the responses to these are checked against the parent question for possible up-coding.
- Responses to open-ended questions will normally be spell and sense checked. Where required these responses may be grouped using a code-frame which can be used in analysis.
- A SNAP programme set up with the aim of providing the client with useable and comprehensive data. Crossbreaks are discussed with the client in order to ensure that all information needs are met.
- All research projects undertaken by Progressive comply fully with the requirements of ISO 20252.

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