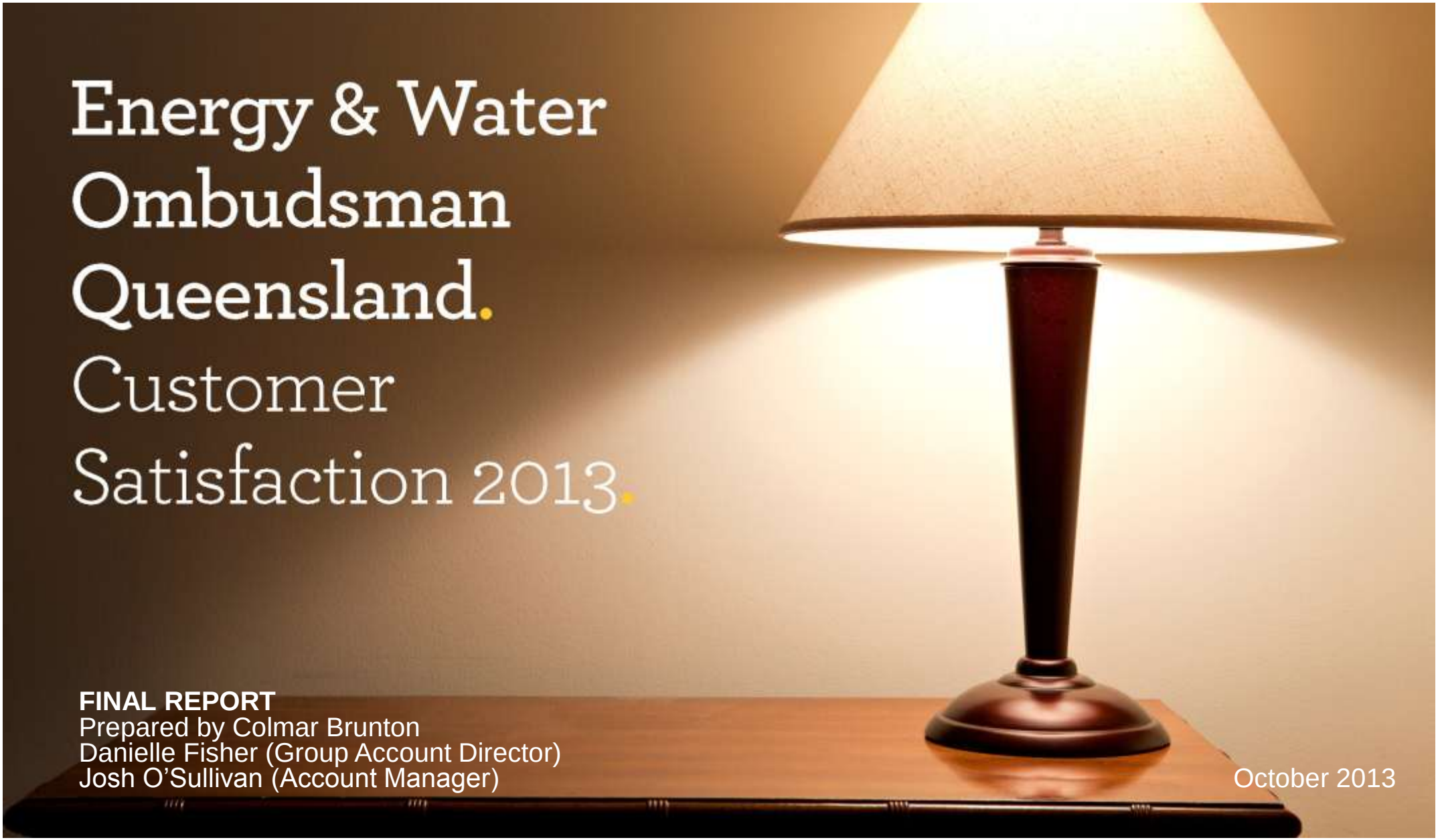
Energy & Water Ombudsman Queensland. Customer Satisfaction 2013.



FINAL REPORT

Prepared by Colmar Brunton
Danielle Fisher (Group Account Director)
Josh O'Sullivan (Account Manager)

October 2013

colmar brunton.

Contents.

Executive Summary 4

Research Background 10

Research Findings 15

- Overall Customer Satisfaction 16
- Accessibility 22
- Process Adherence 30
- Contact with EWOQ 35
- Referral to Higher Level 44
- Outcome for Customers 49
- Customer Service Evaluation 61
- Fairness of Process 66
- Improvements Recommended 74

Appendix 79

Executive Summary.

Key Findings – Customer Satisfaction

Customers' overall satisfaction with the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ) has declined in 2013. While results are generally still positive, there has been a consistent trend of more negative perceptions in 2013 across almost all areas compared to 2011. Overall customer satisfaction has significantly declined from 82% of customers being 'very satisfied' in 2011 to 74% in 2013. While there are some differences by customer type, all customers reported a moderate to high level of satisfaction overall in 2013:

- RHL customers (74% - very satisfied) are more likely to be satisfied with EWOQ than Investigation customers (72% - very satisfied). This is a significant turnaround from 2011, where RHL customers were significantly less likely to be satisfied (81% - very satisfied) compared to Investigation customers (85% - very satisfied).
- Electricity (75% - very satisfied) and gas (78% - very satisfied) complainants are significantly more likely to be satisfied with EWOQ's performance compared to water complainants (29% - very satisfied). Customers with water complaints are less satisfied across all aspects of EWOQ's process and service, however it is important to note that the sample size for water complaints is very small (n=18).
- Customers with Transfer complaints are significantly more satisfied with EWOQ (86% - very satisfied) compared to Supply complaints (62% - very satisfied). Most customers indicated they had a Billing complaint, and satisfaction with this complaint type was in line with the average customer results (74% - very satisfied).
- Similar to 2011, customers who had multiple case workers handling their complaint (48%) and those who believe the process took longer than expected (53%) were the least likely to be very satisfied with the process.

Key Findings – Significant Declines in Satisfaction

The table to the right indicates the statements where customer satisfaction results have considerably decreased in 2013. Please note that not all declines in satisfaction have been noted; only those that have dropped by a considerable amount.

It must also be noted that in 2011, performance generally increased compared to the 2010 results and therefore some results are coming back to previous levels (before the 2011 spike). However in many situations, results have dropped lower than those recorded in 2010, making these areas which EWOQ should address in order to increase overall satisfaction levels.

Large Differences Between 2011 and 2013 Results				
Question No.	Question / Statement	2013 (very satisfied %)	2011 (very satisfied %)	Diff.
Q12B	Satisfaction with explanation of final outcome	49%	61%	-12%
Q22	Satisfaction with EWOQ overall	74%	82%	-10%
Q18C	Satisfaction with the frequency of updates on the progress of your complaint	46%	55%	-9%
Q18A	Satisfaction with time taken to resolve complaint	62%	71%	-9%
Q18B	Satisfaction with the information provided on the process that would be followed	69%	76%	-7%
Q16D	Satisfaction with ease of contacting staff during the dispute	74%	79%	-5%

Key Findings – Case Handling

Driving some of the negative perceptions towards EWOQ is the increasing number of contacts and length of time to deal with complaints. In 2013, the number of contacts per resolution has increased with 41% of complaints resolved after more than two contacts, compared to only 33% in 2011. There has also been an increase in the proportion of cases handled by a number of different people (up 3% points) and a decrease in the number of cases handled by the same person all of the time (down 8% points).

Similarly, customers are more likely to indicate complaints took longer than expected to resolve (26%) compared to 2011 (20%). Also, the proportion of customers believing the issue was resolved in a shorter time than expected (35%) has significantly dropped compared to 2011 (43%).

Given customers are significantly more likely to be negative about EWOQ if they feel the process is taking a long time, which this data suggests is increasingly happening, it should be of top priority for EWOQ to address (and start reversing) this trend in case handling.

Number of Contacts Before Resolution (Q8)

Number of Contacts	2013 (%)	2011 (%)	Diff.
Only one or two contacts	58%	66%	-8%
Multiple contacts	41%	33%	+8%
Don't know	1%	1%	-

Person Handling Case (Q9)

Person Handling Case	2013 (%)	2011 (%)	Diff.
Same person all of the time	53%	61%	-8%
Same person most of the time	29%	23%	+6%
Number of different people	15%	12%	+3%
Don't know	2%	3%	-1%

Length of Time to Deal with Complaint (Q21)

Length	2013 (%)	2011 (%)	Diff.
Longer than expected	26%	20%	+6%
As expected	33%	35%	+2%
Shorter than expected	35%	43%	-8%
Don't know	4%	4%	-

Key Findings – Reasons for Dissatisfaction

In 2013, there seems to be a growing issue of customers believing their case is still unresolved. This was the number one reason for dissatisfaction behind the final outcome, the explanation of the final outcome and overall service provided by EWOQ. While the case being unresolved was a main cause of dissatisfaction in 2011, this has increased in proportions across every area in 2013. This growing number of customers indicating their issue is unresolved is highlighted through 7% of customers indicating that their case is not closed, compared to less than 1% indicating this in 2011. Furthermore, 16% of customers believe they cannot comment on the outcome explanation provided by EWOQ because a resolution has not be found, increasing from only 5% of customers in 2011.

The fact that outcomes were less likely to be in favour of the customer in 2013 has also contributed to the drop in performance scores for EWOQ this wave. Almost all customers who believe the result was in their favour are very satisfied with the overall performance of EWOQ (94%), compared to those who believe the outcome was not in their favour (42% - very satisfied with EWOQ). Outside of unresolved cases, 'the result was not in my favour' was the most consistent reason provided for customers' dissatisfaction, with the proportion of customers believing the result was in their favour declining from 62% (2011) to 52% (2013).

A proportion of customers also indicated that 'nothing was done' by EWOQ, and this is also causing dissatisfaction towards EWOQ. The main improvement area noted was that 'EWOQ needs more power', and this lack of ability to affect their case, particularly if the case went through multiple contacts, was a major cause of dissatisfaction for customers. Another growing trend causing dissatisfaction in 2013 was that customers believed that 'staff were not supportive nor willing to help my case'. While it is EWOQ's role to remain independent of all parties (including customers), customers felt that EWOQ were not understanding of their situation and did not want to assist. This was the main reason noted for dissatisfaction regarding EWOQ's customer service.

Recommendations

While the performance of EWOQ has significantly declined compared to 2011, it must be noted that performance is still satisfactory. Customers are still satisfied with EWOQ (82% - satisfied), customers are still highly likely to recommend EWOQ (92%) and EWOQ's accessibility has improved (88% - easy to find). As discussed further in the Benchmarks section, Colmar Brunton believes that despite a drop in performance, all ANZOA Benchmarks are still being achieved by EWOQ.

However, Colmar Brunton does encourage EWOQ to consider the recommendations below, which will help ensure overall performance will increase in years to come:

- Improve Investigation performance. Investigation customers have replaced RHL customers as holding the most dissatisfaction towards EWOQ. This is mainly because Investigation customers are more likely to believe the results are not in their favour and have had to deal with a longer process compared to RHL customers. Both of these areas require addressing in order to increase satisfaction amongst Investigation customers.
- Improve Water Complaint performance. Water complainants are considerably less satisfied than electricity or gas complainants across all areas. Addressing issues with water complaints was indicated as an area requiring improvement in 2011, however satisfaction has dropped even further in 2013. It is important to note though that due to a small number of water complaints, only 18 customers were interviewed in 2013 so the results are indicative only.
- Improve handling of Supply cases. Supply complainants are considerably less satisfied than customers with other complaints types. These customers were most likely to suggest EWOQ needs more power to help them. EWOQ should consider if its processes can be adapted to enable them to have more influence on Supply cases and/or look at how perceptions of its efforts in this area can be increased.
- Ensure customers understand their case is closed. Many customers believe their case is still unresolved, and this could suggest either the issue is ongoing, it was not correctly resolved in the first instance, or they believe EWOQ is still investigating it. Regardless, this is causing high dissatisfaction towards EWOQ. EWOQ needs to be clearer in indicating to customers when their cases are closed, what EWOQ has done about the issue and what the customer needs to do if this issue occurs again.

Research Background.

Introduction

The Energy Ombudsman Queensland was established on 1st July 2007 as a free and independent dispute resolution service for Queensland's energy consumers. On 1st January 2011, the Energy Ombudsman Queensland was restructured into the Office of the Energy and Water Ombudsmen (EWOQ). The core goals of the relatively newly formed EWOQ are to provide a free, fair, accessible, accountable, effective and independent dispute resolution service that meets the diverse needs of all domestic and small business electricity, water and reticulated gas customers, and energy and water suppliers, in Queensland.

At the establishment of the scheme in 2007 there was a requirement that the performance of the scheme be assessed within the first three years of operation. In 2010, Colmar Brunton was commissioned to conduct a full performance review, with the customer satisfaction component of this research separately re-commissioned in 2011. More recently in 2013, Colmar Brunton were again commissioned to conduct Wave 3 of the customer satisfaction research as a part of an independent review of EWOQ to be undertaken in the latter part of 2013. The purpose of this research was to understand how well the EWOQ is performing both against industry standard benchmarks and in comparison to the last wave of customer satisfaction research in 2011.

This quantitative research was conducted using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) methodology. The research was conducted between 23rd April and 16th May 2013, and was designed to include all residential and business customers of EWOQ for the period of 1st October 2012 to 31st March 2013, starting with the most recent customers first. This method is consistent with the 2010 and 2011 waves of research to ensure historical comparability.

This report presents the full findings of this research.

Research Objectives

The research objectives as identified by Colmar Brunton and EWOQ are listed below:

- Complainant satisfaction with EWOQ
- Assessment of EWOQ's dispute resolution processes
- The degree of equitable access to EWOQ
- EWOQ's scope, powers and jurisdiction; and how they perform against the Australian and New Zealand Ombudsman Association (ANZOA) benchmarks of:
  - Accessibility: the scheme makes itself readily available to customers by promoting knowledge of its existence, being easy to use and having no cost barriers
  - Independence: the decision-making process and administration of the scheme are independent from scheme members
  - Fairness: the scheme produces decisions which are fair and seen to be fair by observing the principles of procedural fairness, by making decisions on the information before it and by having specific criteria upon which its decisions are based
  - Accountability: the scheme publicly accounts for its operations by publishing its determinations and information about complaints and highlighting any systemic industry problems
  - Efficiency: the scheme operates efficiently by keeping track of complaints, ensuring complaints are dealt with by the appropriate process or forum and regularly reviewing its performance
- The strengths and weaknesses of the current scheme
- The role of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland

Methodology

Initially drafted by Colmar Brunton in 2010, the EWOQ customer satisfaction survey was developed based on a review of the 2008 Customer Satisfaction Survey (OESR) along with the output gathered through depth interviews of complex case customers conducted as part of the 2010 independent review. The aim of the survey was to analyse the customer satisfaction across all areas of EWOQ to determine factors which impact on satisfaction. In the 2013 wave of research, the questionnaire was updated slightly on the previous versions (2010 and 2011).

All EWOQ customers who had made a complaint were sent a letter prior to the research being conducted to firstly notify them of the research, and secondly to give them the option to opt out of the research. Following this process a total of 1,326 useable contact records were provided based on cases closed between 1st October 2012 and 31st March 2013. A total of n=510 interviews were completed with the main sample splits indicated in the table to the right.

Achieved Sample*				
	Total	RHL	Investigations	
Residential	450	327	123	
Business	60	36	24	
	RHL			
	Electricity	Gas	Water	Total
Residential	293	20	14	327
Business	35	0	1	36
	Investigations			
	Electricity	Gas	Water	Total
Residential	111	10	2	123
Business	21	2	1	24
RHL + Investigations	460	32	18	**510**

* Data has been weighted according to case type (RHL versus Investigations) and complaint type (electricity, gas or water) to ensure the data is representative of EWOQ's customer base and is historically comparable.

Report Structure Interpretation

In 2013, Colmar Brunton moved the traditional MS Word report into a more dynamic MS PowerPoint report. This decision was made for the ease of distribution / presentation, as well as a neater look and feel.

There are a number of references used by Colmar Brunton throughout the report. Firstly, the green and red arrows to the right indicates if there has been a statistically significant shift (with a confidence level of 95%) between the results experienced in 2011 and now in 2013.

Secondly, the circles to the right indicate whether certain splits of the data (i.e. RHL vs. Investigation) are statistically significant against the total results (again with a confidence level of 95%).

Finally, the boxes with the 'key(s)' in them indicate Colmar Brunton's key takeout of that particular slide. While we encourage the reader to read all commentary in depth, this is designed so any reader is able to see the key takeout and understand the purpose of the specific slide quickly and easily.

▲ Significantly higher compared to 2011 total results

▼ Significantly lower compared to 2011 total results

Significantly higher compared to the total

Significantly lower compared to the total

Key Takeout of Slide

Research Findings.

Overall Customer Satisfaction.

Overall Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction with EWOQ in 2013 has significantly declined compared to customer satisfaction levels experienced in 2011. The proportion of very dissatisfied customers has increased from 6% (2011) to 8% (2013), and the proportion of very satisfied customers has decreased from 82% (2011) to 74% (2013). Despite this decline, the vast majority of customers (82%) are at least 'satisfied' with the service provided to them by EWOQ.

One major shift compared to 2011 is the satisfaction of RHL versus Investigation customers. In 2011, 81% of RHL customers were very satisfied with EWOQ's service, and this has dropped slightly to 75% in 2013. For Investigation customers, however, the proportion of very satisfied customers has significantly dropped from 85% (2011) to 72% (2013).

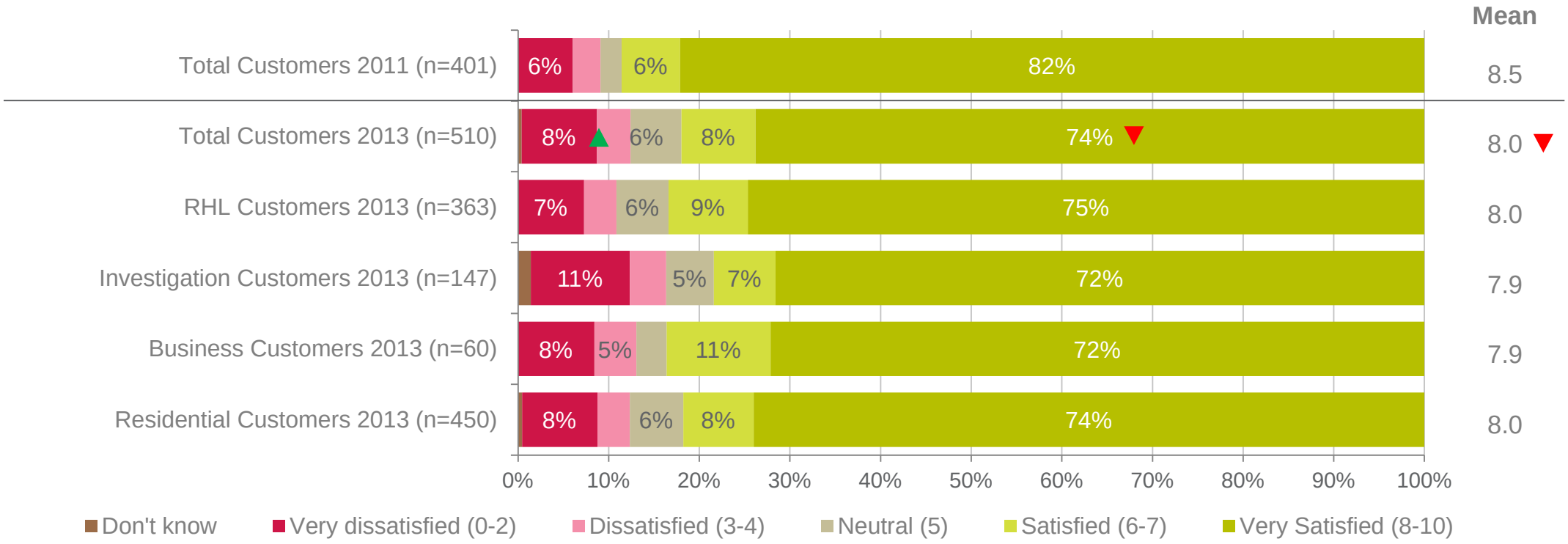
Similar to 2011, customers with electricity complaints are significantly more satisfied compared to customers with water complaints. Three quarters (75%) of customers with electricity complaints are very satisfied with EWOQ overall, with gas complaints even higher at 78%. However, only 29% of customers with water complaints are very satisfied with EWOQ. In fact, customers with water complaints were more likely to be very dissatisfied (31%) with the service provided, than being very satisfied (29%)*.

Customers who came to EWOQ with Transfer complaints were the most likely to be very satisfied with the service provided (86%). Although there were few customers with these types of complaints, Customer Service (67%) and Credit (64%) complainants were the least likely to be very satisfied with EWOQ. Similar to 2011, customers who had multiple case workers handling their complaint (48%) and those who believe the process took longer than expected (53%) were the least likely to be very satisfied with the process.

* Water sample small at n=18

Overall Customer Satisfaction

Overall customer satisfaction with EWOQ has significantly declined. This is primarily linked to customers who went through the Investigation process, where satisfaction has significantly declined from 85% of very satisfied customers in 2011, to 72% in 2013.



Q22. Now taking everything into consideration, how satisfied were you overall with the service you were provided with during your contact with the EWOQ?
Base: Total customers (2013 n=510, "don't know" excluded for mean)

▲ Significantly higher compared to 2011 total results
▼ Significantly lower compared to 2011 total results

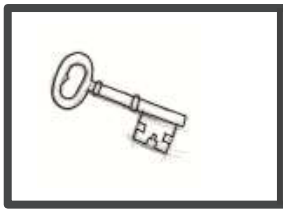
Recommendation of EWOQ

Despite a significant drop in customer satisfaction in 2013, likelihood to recommend EWOQ remains very high at 92%. This is a slight drop from 2011 (94%), however still remains above the levels achieved in 2009 (91%). Customers most likely to recommend EWOQ include customers with Transfer complaints (98%), gas complaints (97%), those who believe the process was shorter than expected (96%), and customers who believe EWOQ adequately explained their independence to them (95%) and gave them a clear indication of the process (95%).

Notably, there is a strong correlation between willingness to recommend and satisfaction with the service provided by EWOQ. All customers (100%) who are very satisfied with the service provided by EWOQ were likely to recommend EWOQ, with satisfied (91%) and neutral / dissatisfied (59%) customers less likely to recommend. Customers who have experienced Marketing (100%) or Transfer (98%) issues were the most likely to recommend EWOQ's services to friends.

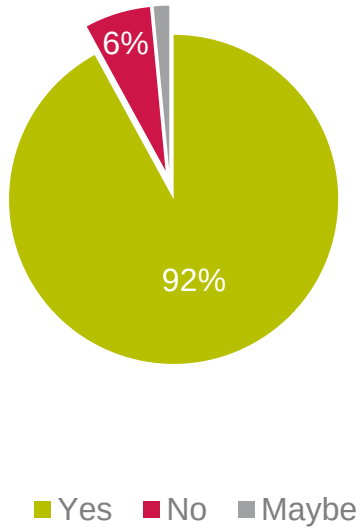
There were no significant differences in the willingness to recommend for RHL versus Investigation customers, nor business versus residential customers. Water customers, however, were significantly less likely to recommend EWOQ (69%), compared to gas (97%) or electricity customers (92%).

Recommendation of EWOQ

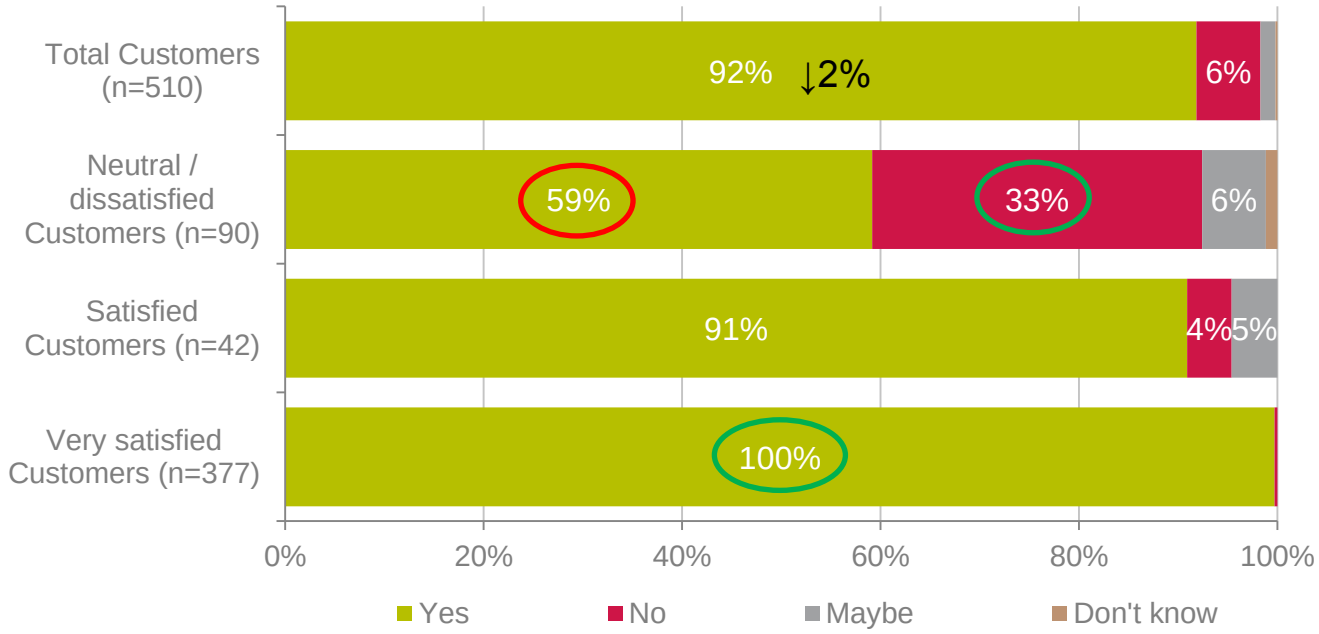


Despite a slight decline (2%), overall likelihood to recommend EWOQ remains very high at 92%.

Total Customers



Split by Overall Satisfaction

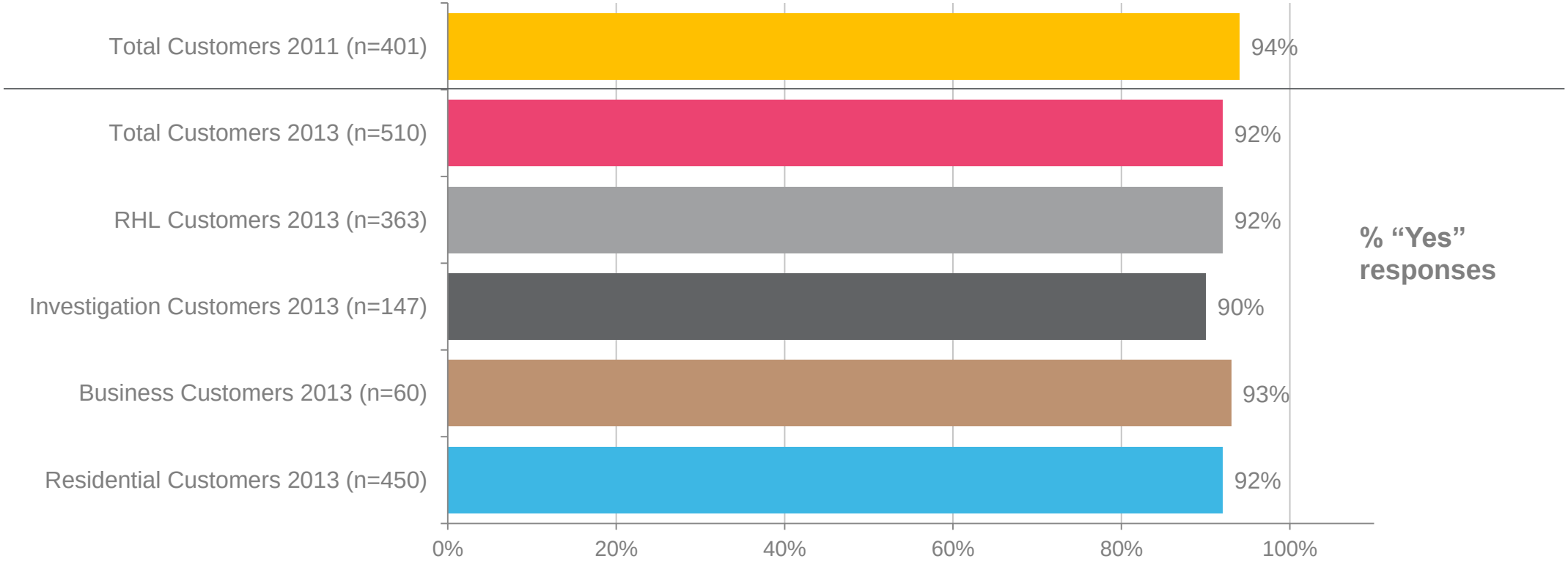


Q26. If a friend had a complaint about their electricity, gas or water company that they couldn't resolve, would you recommend that they get in contact with the EWOQ?
Base: Total customers (2013 n=510)

Significantly higher compared to the total
Significantly lower compared to the total

Recommendation of EWOQ

There are no significant differences in the likelihood to recommend by case type or business versus residential customers. Water complaints were the least likely to recommend at 69%.



Q26. If a friend had a complaint about their electricity, gas or water company that they couldn't resolve, would you recommend that they get in contact with the EWOQ?
Base: Total customers (2013 n=510)

Accessibility.

Awareness of EWOQ

Due to the high proportion of customers in 2011 indicating that they either did not know how they had come to first hear about EWOQ or they had just known (as indicated in 'Other'), Colmar Brunton included the option 'Had always known' into the 2013 questionnaire. This response has come out as the main way most customers first learnt of the existence of EWOQ, with more than one third (36%) indicating they could not recall where they had first heard of EWOQ as they 'just knew' of the Ombudsman's existence. This was highest for customers with high education qualifications and high incomes, who simply understood there would be an Ombudsman available to assist them and didn't have to be notified about their existence.

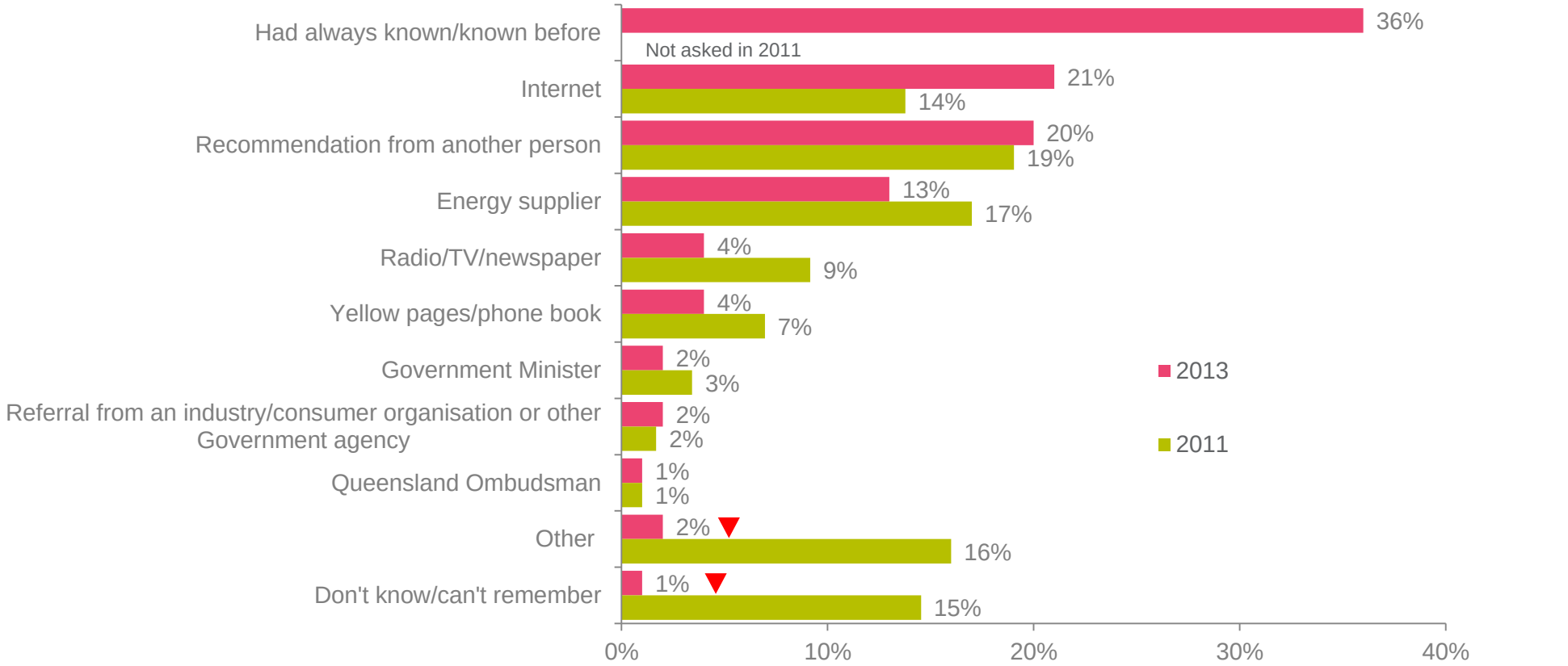
The Internet continues to increase as a key source of awareness of EWOQ. In 2010, 11% of customers indicated that they first learnt about EWOQ's existence via the Internet, while this has increased to 14% (2011) and 21% (2013) over the last three years. Customers most likely to have used the Internet to identify EWOQ include those under 35 years of age (38%), those with higher education levels (Bachelor (28%) and Post-Graduate (35%)), and those employed full time (26%) or part time (35%). Customers with water complaints were also more likely to find out about EWOQ via the Internet than through any other method.

Awareness of EWOQ through a recommendation from another person remains high (20%) and is significantly more likely for those living in housing commission (37%) compared to the average customer. Customers with low incomes were also significantly more likely to find out about EWOQ's existence via their energy supplier (21%), with recommendations from other people also high (24%).

Awareness through traditional media methods (radio / TV / newspaper) has considerably declined from 9% (2011) to 4% (2013). It was higher for retirees (7%) than any other demographic.

Awareness of EWOQ

Because of the general expectation in Queensland that an Ombudsman must exist, 'had always known' was the most common response to how customers first learnt of EWOQ's existence. Awareness through the Internet is significantly growing, while awareness through traditional avenues (radio / TV / newspaper / Yellow Pages) is declining.



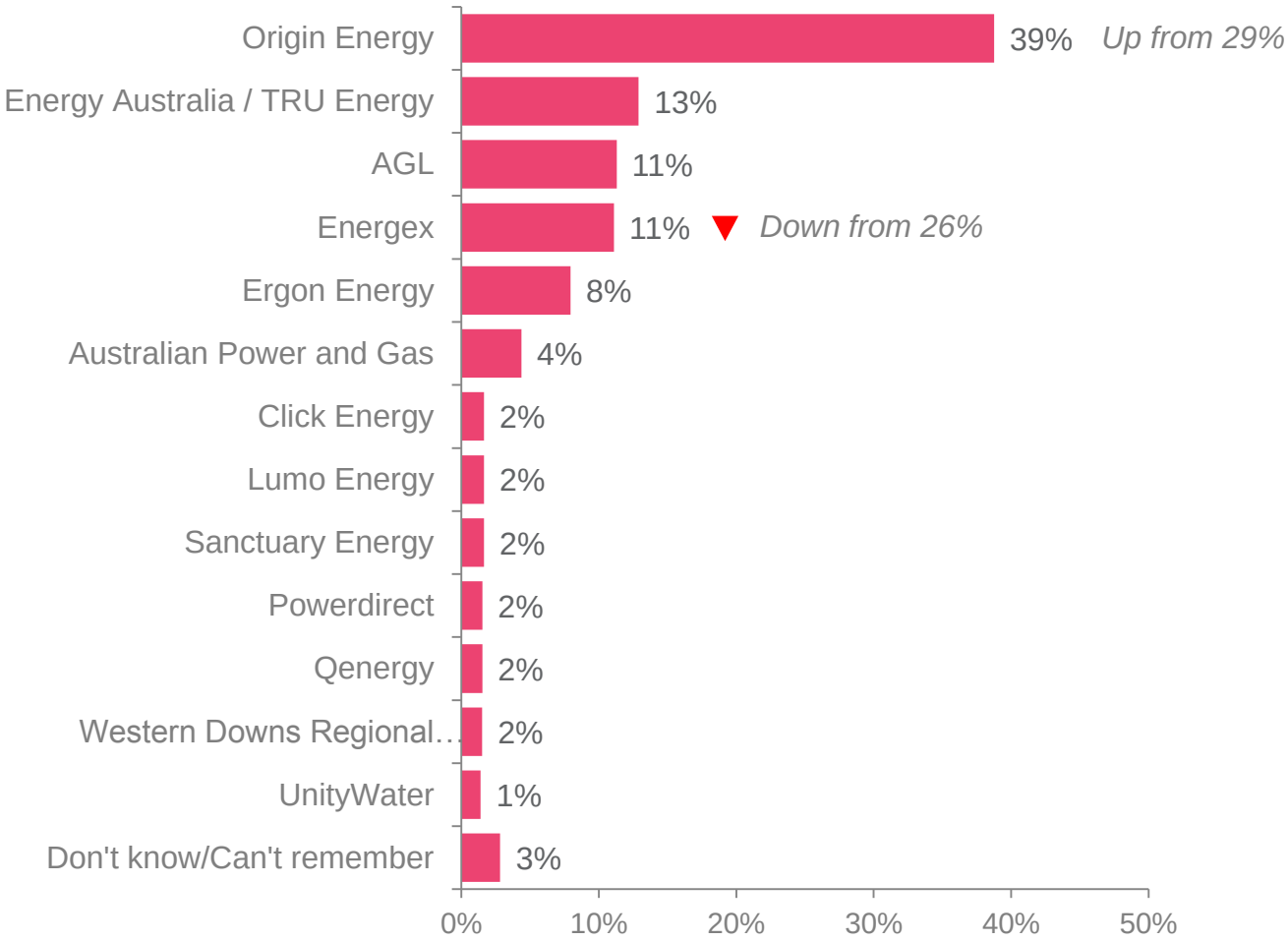
Q1. How did you first learn of the existence of the Energy Ombudsman?
Base: Total customers (2013 n=510)

Awareness through Supplier

The proportion of customers who have heard of EWOQ from Origin Energy has increased from 29% (2011) to 39% (2013). In the same timeframe, Energex has significantly decreased from 26% (2011) to 11% (2013).

The proportion of customers hearing of EWOQ from all other electricity and water suppliers has remained consistent with 2011.

Origin Energy generates the highest number of EWOQ referrals out of all electricity and water suppliers in Queensland.



▲ Significantly higher compared to 2011
▼ Significantly lower compared to 2011

Q2. And which energy supplier was that?
Base: Those who heard about Energy Ombudsman through Energy Supplier (2013 n=63)

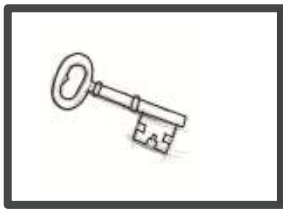
Ease of Accessing EWOQ's Contact Details

Customers generally believe it is easy to access EWOQ's contact details, with 79% of customers finding it 'extremely easy' and 88% finding it 'easy'. This is a slight improvement on 2011, in which 86% found it 'easy' to access EWOQ's contact details.

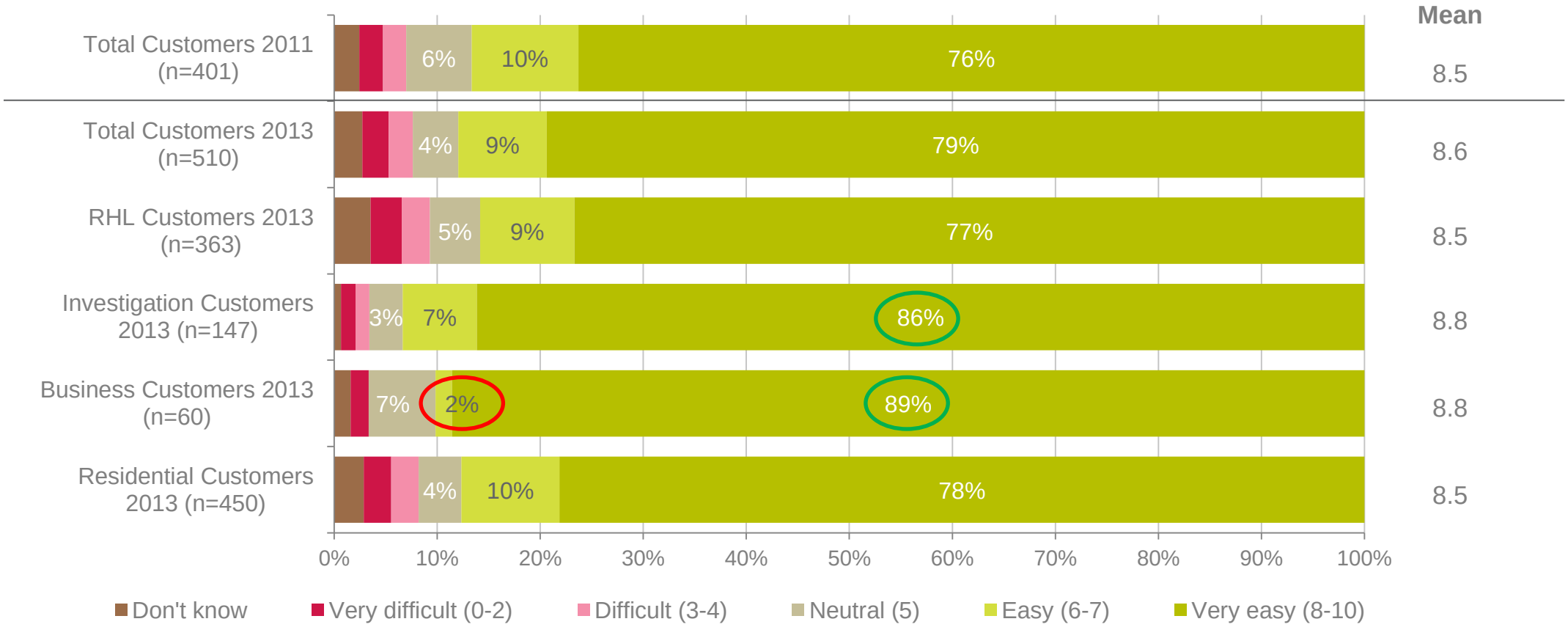
There were a number of varied opinions about the ease of finding EWOQ's contact details. Customers who believed these details to be significantly easier to find include home duties customers (87% - extremely easy), high income customers (87% - extremely easy), business customers (89% - extremely easy) and Investigation cases (86% - extremely easy). Customers with disabilities (67% - extremely easy) and those who would not recommend EWOQ to friends (56% - extremely easy) were less likely to agree these contact details were easy to find.

Although not significantly different, customers with water complaints were less likely to agree it was 'extremely easy' to find EWOQ's contact details (71%), compared to electricity (80%) or gas (76%) customers. Customers who had located EWOQ's contact details online also found it considerably easier to identify EWOQ's contact details (89% - extremely easy) compared to those who heard through their electrical supplier (84% - extremely easy) or from another person (84% - extremely easy).

Ease of Accessing EWOQ's Contact Details



Ease of accessing EWOQ's contact details has slightly increased in 2013. This is because considerably more customers are easily identifying EWOQ through the Internet in 2013 than in years prior.



Q3. How easy was it to find the contact details for the Energy & Water Ombudsman? Please rate how easy or difficult it was on a 0 to 10 scale.
Base: Total customers (2013 n=510, "don't know" excluded for means)

Significantly higher compared to the total
Significantly lower compared to the total

Ease of Making a Complaint

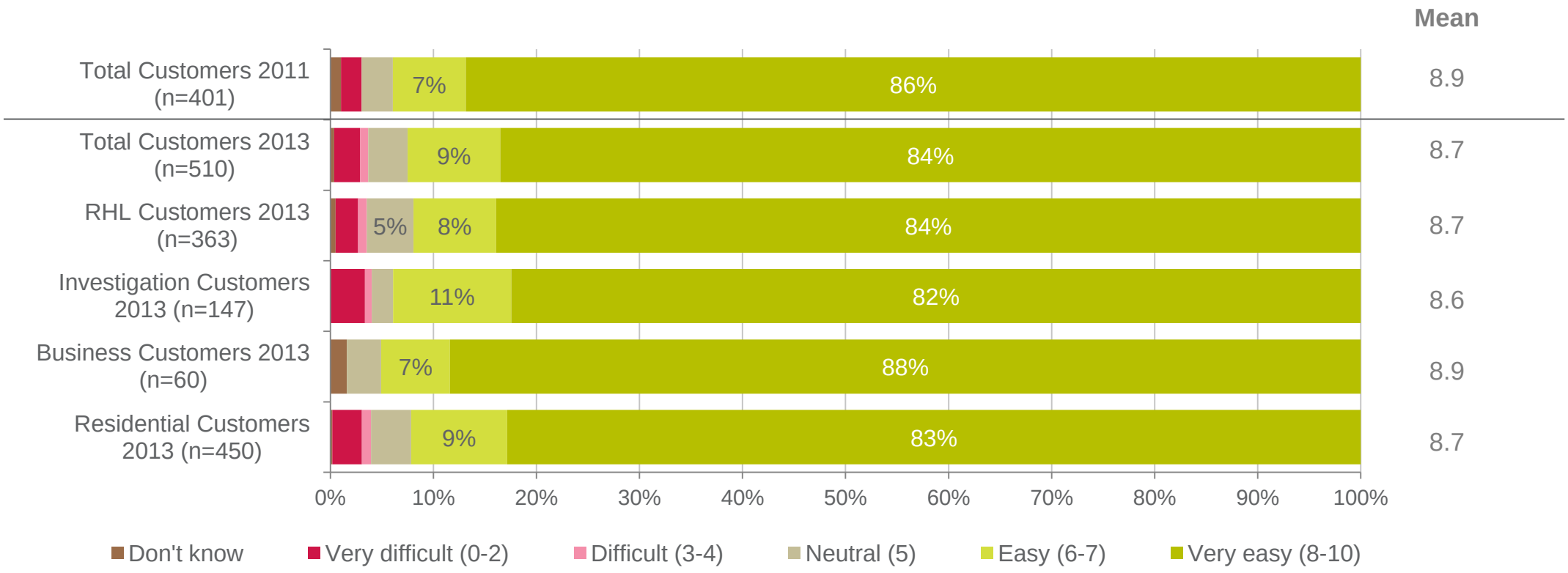
Most customers believe the process of making a complaint to EWOQ is either very easy (84%) or at least easy (93%). While the proportion of customers who found this process easy (93%) has remained the same as 2011, those believing this process to be very easy (84%) has slightly decreased from 2011 (86%).

Notably, business customers were the most likely to find this process very easy (88%) and no business customers interviewed believed this process was difficult. Overall satisfaction with the service provided by EWOQ is also strongly correlated with the ease of making a complaint, with customers very satisfied with EWOQ's service being significantly more likely to believe that making a complaint is very easy (94%), compared to those very dissatisfied with EWOQ's service (40% - very easy to make a complaint).

Reasons for the complaint also played a role in the customer's ability to make this complaint to EWOQ. Customers making complaints about Supply were significantly less likely to believe that making this complaint was very easy (65%), whereas customers with Transfer (91%) or Billing (85%) complaints believed this process was very easy. There were few statistical differences in the ability to make a complaint across demographics, with satisfaction the same for both English and non-English speaking households.

Ease of Making a Complaint

Customers generally find it quite easy to make a complaint to EWOQ. There are few differences by demographics, with business customers the most satisfied with this process.



Q10. How easy was it to make your complaint to the Energy & Water Ombudsman? Please rate the level of difficulty on the same 0 to 10 scale you used earlier .
Base: Total customers (2013 n=510, "don't know" excluded for means)

Process Adherence.

Role as an Independent Dispute Resolution Service

The vast majority of customers (86%) believe that EWOQ staff adequately explained their role as an independent dispute resolution service at the beginning of their case process. This is a slight improvement on 84% agreeing with this in both 2010 and 2011. Residential customers were more likely to believe this process was explained (86%) compared to business customers (81%), however business customers were more inclined to indicate this explanation was not necessary as they understood this independence prior to their contact with EWOQ.

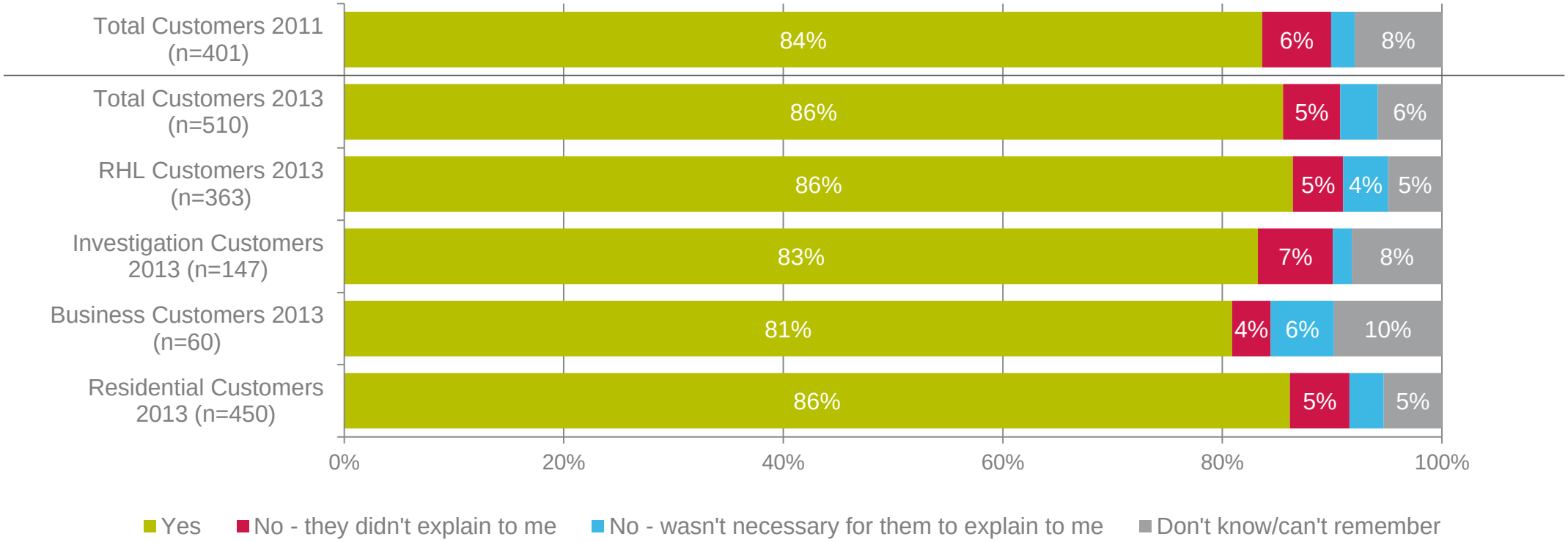
In previous years, customers that went through the Investigation process were highly likely to believe this independent role had been adequately explained at the start of the process (88%), however this has fallen to 83% in 2013. Comparatively, in 2013 RHL customers are more likely to believe EWOQ adequately explained their independent role (86%) compared to 2011 (82%).

In line with 2011, customers who are dissatisfied with EWOQ are significantly more likely to believe they were not explained EWOQ's independence at the beginning of the case by a case worker (50% believe they were explained this). Those not willing to recommend EWOQ to friends were also not likely to believe they were notified (46% believe they were explained the independence of EWOQ). In comparison, customers who are very satisfied with EWOQ's service (91%) and would recommend EWOQ to friends (89%) are significantly more likely to believe they were explained this independence.

In line with their lower customer satisfaction ratings, water complaint customers (65%) were the least likely to believe they were adequately explained of this independence compared to electricity (87%) or gas (79%) customers.

Role as an Independent Dispute Resolution Service

EWOQ is clearly explaining their role as an independent dispute resolution service to the majority of customers. Considerable improvements have been seen in this regard for RHL customers, however for Investigations this has weakened.



Q4. Was the Energy & Water Ombudsman's role as an independent dispute resolution service explained to you adequately at the beginning of the process by the consultant?
Base: Total customers (2013 n=510)

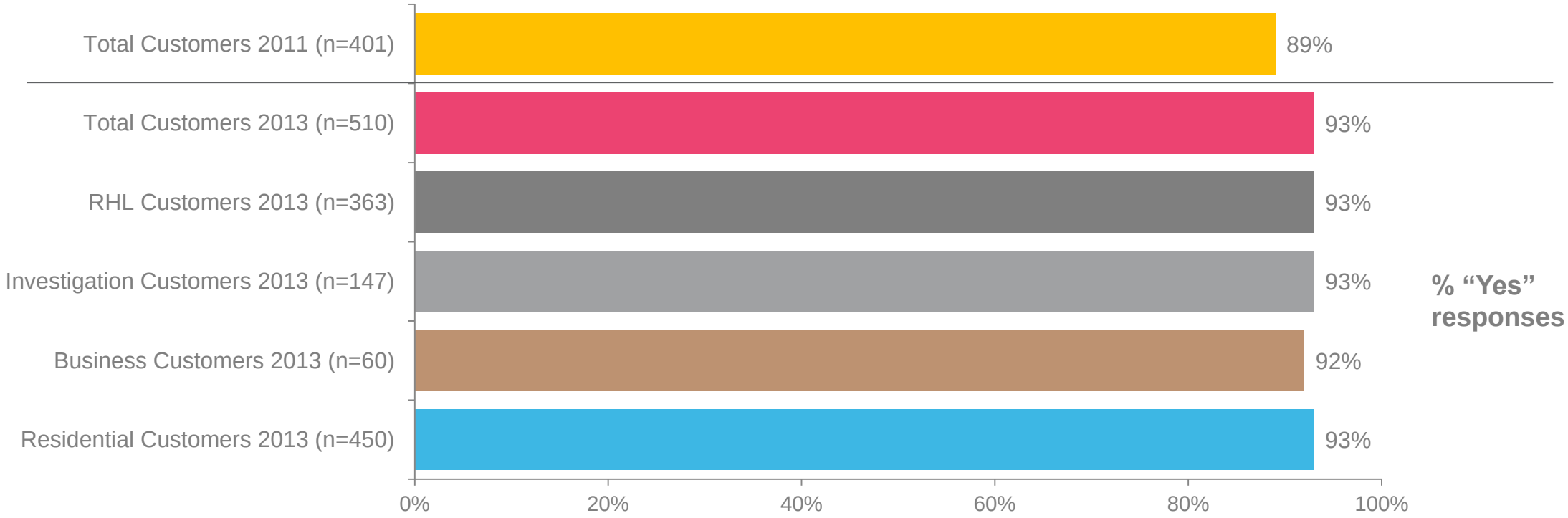
Indication of the Process

Just as EWOQ has improved in notifying customers of their role as an independent dispute resolution service (increased from 84% in 2011 to 86% in 2013), EWOQ has also improved in notifying customers of the process they need to go through in order to make a complaint (increased from 89% in 2011 to 93% in 2013). In contrast to 2011 results where Investigation customers indicated they were more likely to have been given a clear indication of the process compared to RHL customers, these proportions remain high for both customers types in 2013 (RHL and Investigations – both 93%).

Customers who had been notified of EWOQ's independence were also significantly more likely to believe they had been notified of the process they would go through (97%) compared to the average customer (93%). Again, water complaint customers (81%), those dissatisfied with the service provided (68%) and those not willing to recommend EWOQ (61%) were the least likely to believe they had been notified of the process they needed to go through.

Indication of the Process

EWOQ is giving a clear indication of the process customers need to go through to make a complaint and receive a resolution. This has improved on the 2011 results for most customer demographics.



Q5. Did the Energy & Water Ombudsman give you a clear indication of the process you needed to go through in order to make a complaint and resolve your issue?
Base: Total customers (2013 n=510)

Contact with EWOQ.

Method of Contact

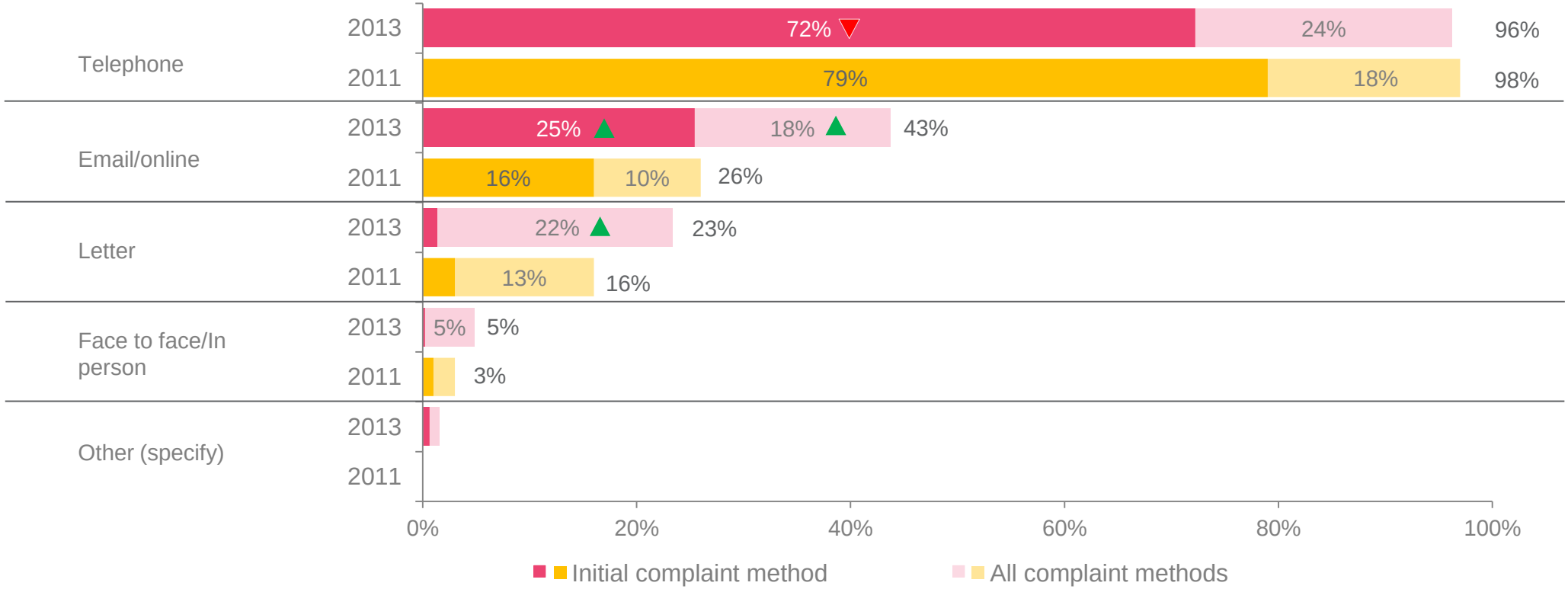
Communication with EWOQ through the Internet and email has increased to its highest proportions, increasing from 26% of customers using this method in 2011, to 43% in 2013. This increase is both in relation to the initial contact (increasing from 16% in 2011 to 25% in 2013) and secondary contacts (10% in 2011 to 18% in 2013). Younger customers (under 35 years) are significantly more likely to use the Internet and email as a communication method (58%) compared to older customers (over 65 years) in which only 21% used these contact methods. Customers with higher education degrees were almost just as likely to make their initial complaint to EWOQ over the Internet, as over the telephone.

Despite the growing trend of Internet and email communications between EWOQ and their customers, telephone is still easily the method most used, with 96% of cases requiring contact through the telephone (down from 98% in 2011). Customers with lower income levels (under $50,000 per year) were significantly more likely to initially use the telephone to make their complaint (81%) than customers with higher income levels over $90,000 (51%). Older customers (over 65 years of age) were the most likely to use the telephone to initially issue their complaint (81%).

Interestingly, customers who made their initial complaint through the Internet and email were more likely to be very satisfied with the service provided to them by EWOQ (81% - very satisfied) compared to customers who initially contacted EWOQ over the telephone (72% - very satisfied). However, by the end of the complaint process, those who had used the Internet and email at some point during the complaint process were no more likely to be very satisfied with the overall service (75%) than those who had telephone contact (74%) during the process.

Method of Contact

Contact with EWOQ through the Internet has significantly increased over the past two years. Young customers and customers with higher incomes and education levels are most likely to use this method. Interestingly, customers are more likely to be satisfied with EWOQ if they initially contacted them through an online channel rather than over the telephone.



Q6. How did you initially make your complaint to the Energy & Water Ombudsman?
Q7. Over the course of your complaint did you have contact with the Energy & Water Ombudsman by…?
Base: Total customers (2011 n=401; 2013 n=510)

▲ Significantly higher compared to 2011
▼ Significantly lower compared to 2011

Number of Contacts

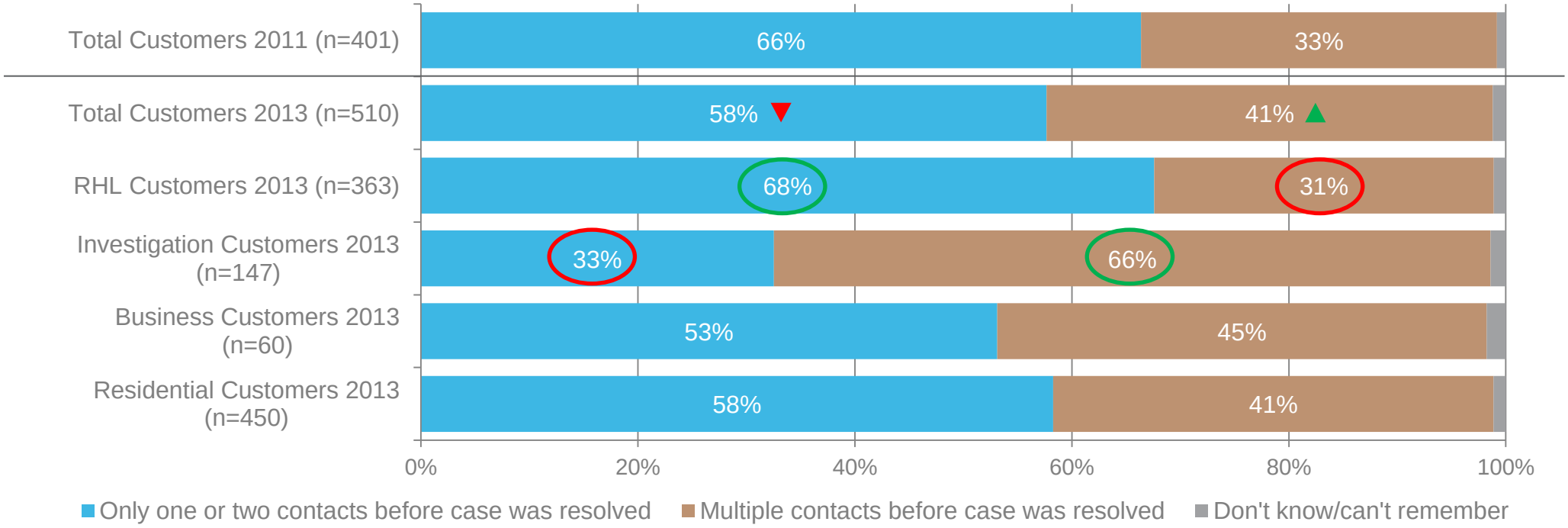
The proportion of customers believing they have experienced multiple contacts trying to resolve their issue has significantly increased from 33% in 2011, up to 41% in 2013. Consistent with this, the proportion of customers indicating their issue was resolved in only one or two contacts has dropped from 66% in 2011 to 58% in 2013. These proportions are, however, still more positive than in 2010, when only 40% of customers indicated they received a resolution in two or less contacts, compared to 58% in 2013.

The streamlining of processes with the introduction of the RHL continues to be of benefit, with a high proportion of RHL customers indicating their process was resolved in two contacts or less (68%), compared to Investigation customers who were significantly less likely to experience this (33%).

Customers who made their initial enquiry through the Internet were just as likely as those who made this enquiry through a phone call to have the process resolved within two contacts (Internet - 58%; telephone - 57%). However, if the Internet becomes a secondary source of contact, customers were less likely to resolve their complaints within two contacts (48%) compared to customers solely using the telephone (57%). Water customers were also the least likely to resolve their complaint within two contacts (45%).

Number of Contacts

The average number of contacts required before finding a resolution has significantly declined since 2011. RHL customers are significantly more likely to have a resolution within two contacts compared to Investigation customers – highlighting the streamlined nature of the RHL process.



Q8. How much contact did you have with the Energy & Water Ombudsman regarding your complaint? Would you say you had …
Base: Total customers (2011 n=401; 2013 n=510)

▲ Significantly higher compared to 2011
▼ Significantly lower compared to 2011
Significantly higher compared to the total
Significantly lower compared to the total

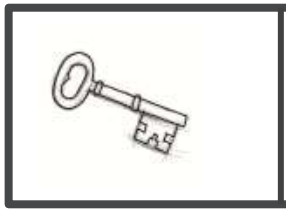
Case Handling

The proportion of customers who have had their case handled by the same person all of the time has decreased in 2013, with just over half of customers indicating they dealt with the same person all of the time (53%). This is a considerable decline from 61% in 2011, with the proportions of ‘same person most of the time’ (up 6% points) and ‘number of different people’ (up 3% points) increasing in 2013.

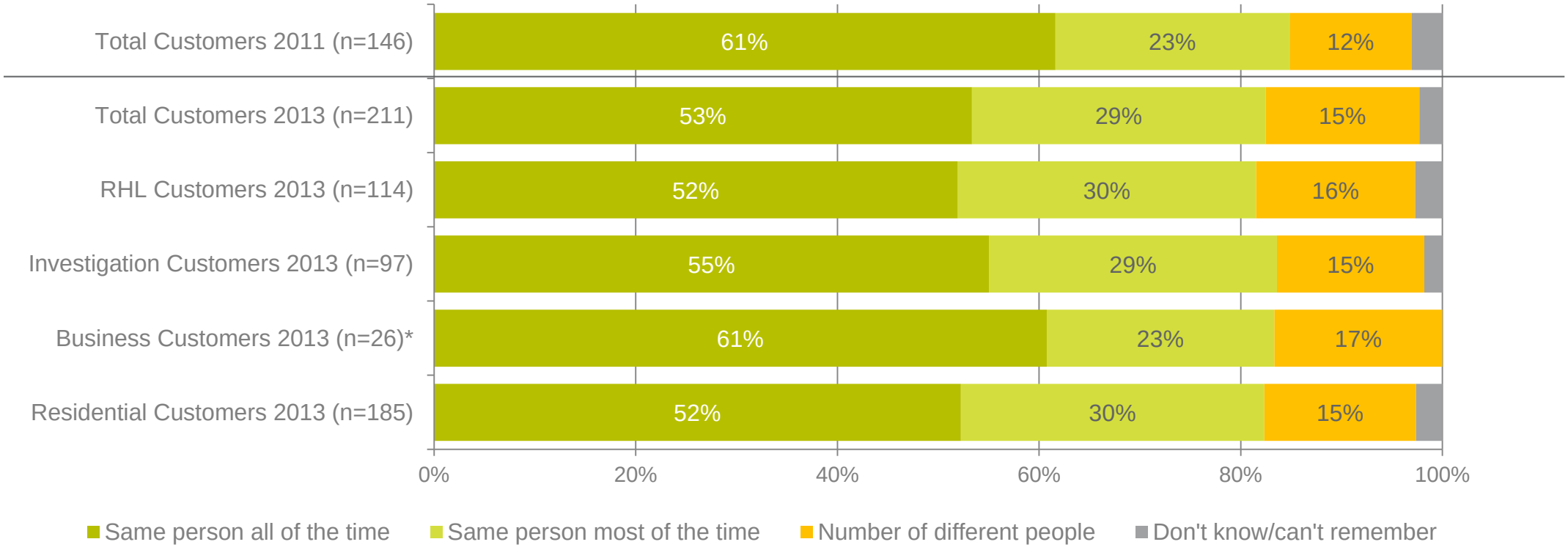
This decrease in the proportion of customers having the one case officer offers an explanation in the decline in the overall service score for EWOQ in 2013. Customers who dealt with the same person throughout were more likely to be very satisfied (77%) with EWOQ’s service compared to those who dealt with the same person most of the time (71%), and those who dealt with different representatives (48%) during the resolution of their case.

Business customers were more likely to indicate they had the same customer service representative at all times (61%) compared to residential customers (52%).

Case Handling



The proportion of cases being handled by the same person all of the time has dropped compared to 2011. Despite this, the majority of cases are still being handled primarily by one case officer.



Q9. Was your case handled by ……
Base: Those who had multiple contacts (2013 n=211)
** Insufficient sample size (n<30), results indicative only*

Length of Time to Deal with Complaint

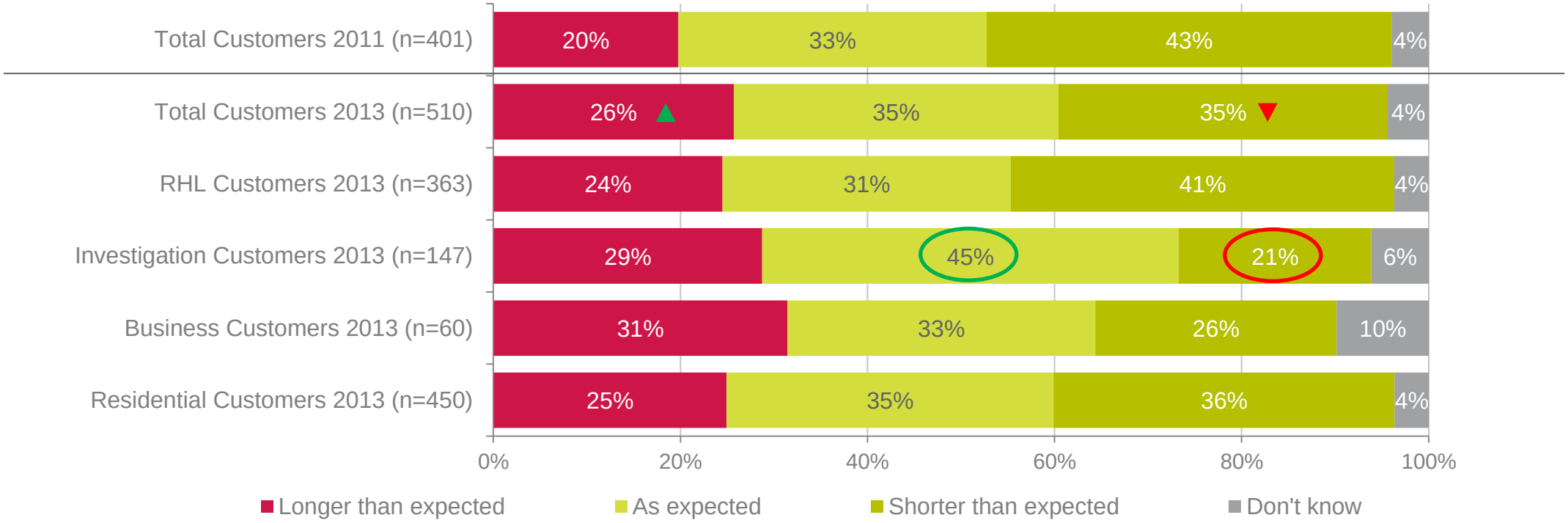
Positively, more customers indicate the length of time it takes to deal with EWOQ is shorter than expected (35%), rather than longer than expected (26%). However, this is a significant decrease in performance in this area compared to 2011, where as many as 43% indicated they believed the process was shorter than expected, and only 20% longer than expected.

There are also significant differences by case type, with Investigation customers significantly less likely to indicate the process took shorter than they expected (21%) compared to RHL customers (41%). This identifies the key strength of the RHL system, where customer complaints are dealt with quickly and efficiently outside of the Investigations process. Residential customers are also more likely to believe the process was resolved in a timeframe shorter than expected (36%) compared to business customers (26%).

Customers who believe the process took shorter than expected were significantly more likely to recommend EWOQ (96%), compared to those who believe the process took longer than expected (86%).

Length of Time to Deal with Complaint

Most customers believe that EWOQ deals with the complaint in a timeframe that is either shorter than expected (35%) or as expected (35%). In 2013, the proportion of customers saying the process took longer than expected has significantly increased (from 20% to 26%).



Q21. Was the time taken to deal with your complaint…
Base: Total customers (2013 n=510)

Significantly higher compared to the total
Significantly lower compared to the total
Significantly higher compared to 2011
Significantly lower compared to 2011

Referral to Higher Level.

Referral to Higher Level

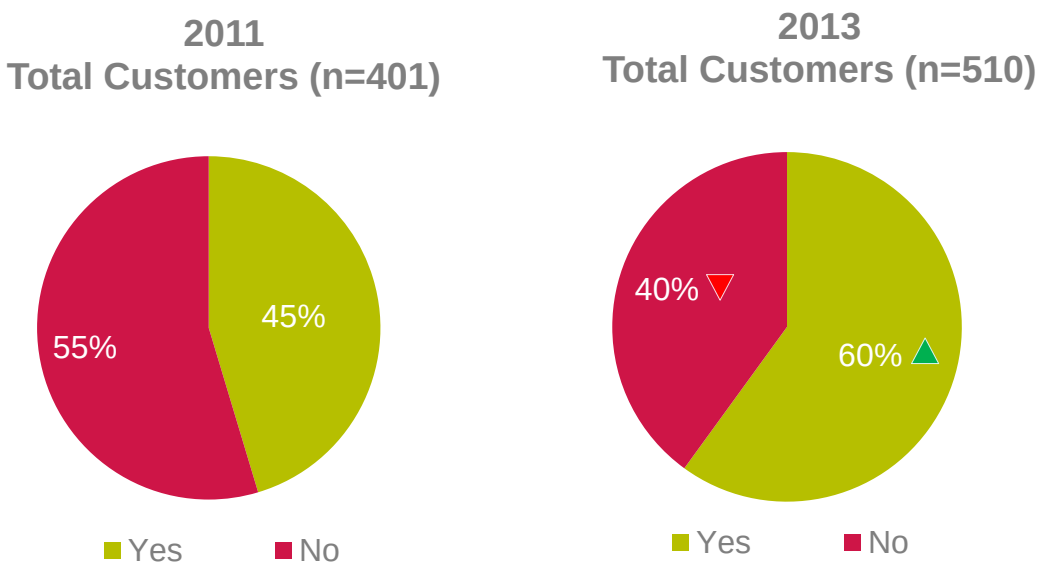
In the sample file provided for the purposes of the research, 74% were tagged as Referral to Higher level (RHL) whilst 26% were tagged as Investigation. These proportions are in line with the 2011 sample file where 73% of customers were tagged as RHL in the sample. Despite these high proportions, not all customers indicated that they choose to be referred to a higher level, with 45% believing they chose this in 2011, and 60% believing they chose this in 2013. This higher proportion of customers indicating they wanted to be referred to a higher level indicates there is less confusion around terminology and processes in 2013. However, because discrepancies still exist with some customers believing they were referred to a higher level when they were not (and visa versa), throughout the report customers have been separated in accordance with the sample file data (not self-reported responses).

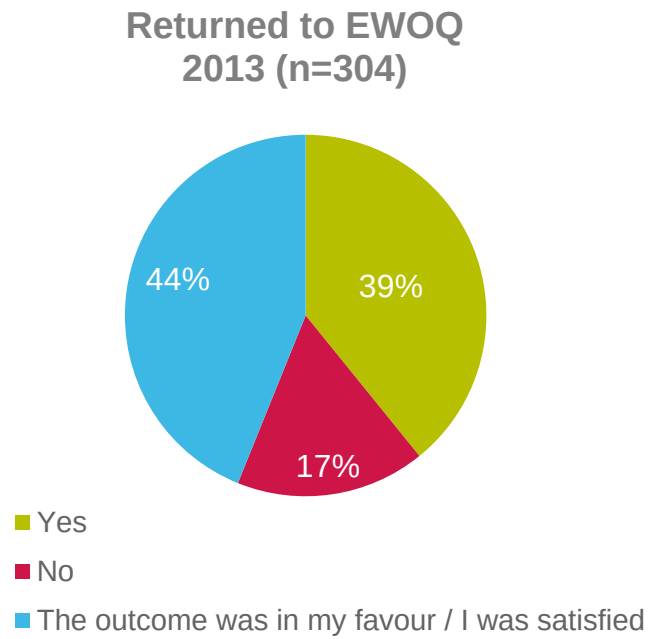
Just over half of customers (53%) who went through the RHL process believed they did not receive an outcome in their favour or they simply weren't satisfied with the process. Most of these customers then returned to EWOQ (73%), however 27% indicated they chose not to return to EWOQ. The most common reasons for not returning to EWOQ include believing the matter could not be resolved (31%), they were still waiting for their supplier to resolve their issue (18%), they did not need EWOQ anymore (14%) and they could not be bothered pursuing their issue anymore (13%). Transfer complainants were the most likely to indicate they did not need to return to EWOQ because they were satisfied with the outcome generated by the RHL (66% satisfied, compared to 47% of the total sample).

Referral to Higher Level

Most customers believe they chose to be Referred to a Higher Level, and there is slightly less confusion about this process. There are however still proportions of customers who are confused if they went through this process or not.

Chose to have complaint referred to a higher level





Q27. When you originally contacted EWOQ, did you choose to have your complaint referred to a higher level within your energy or water supplier?
Base: Total customers (2013 n=510)

Q28. If the outcome of the Referral to Higher Level was not in your favour or you weren't satisfied with the process, did you return to EWOQ?
Base: RHL whose matter not resolved (2013 n=304)

▲ Significantly higher compared to 2011
▼ Significantly lower compared to 2011

Referral to Higher Level

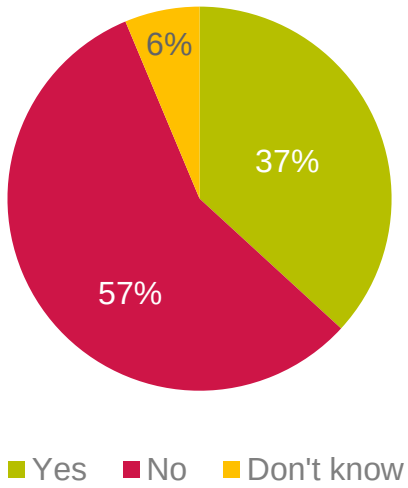
Customers are generally aware of what will happen next in the RHL process, however knowledge of this can still be considerably improved. Customers are also finding it somewhat difficult to deal with their supplier during the RHL process.

When customers were referred back to their energy and water supplier, the majority (57%) felt they understood what would happen next.

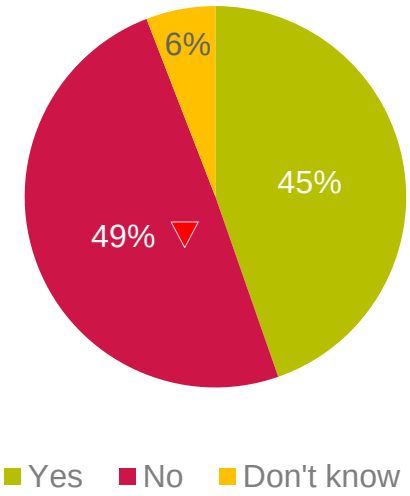
There was, however, a significant decrease in the proportion of customers **not** finding their energy and water supplier difficult to deal with once referred back (down from 60% not finding this difficult in 2011 to 49% in 2013).

Business customers (51%) and customers with water complaints (60%)* were the most likely to indicate they had trouble dealing with their supplier when they were referred back by EWOQ.

Unsure what was next when referred (n=304)



Difficult to deal with company (n=304)



Q30. When EWOQ referred you back to your energy or water company, did you feel unsure as to what would happen next?
Base: RHL (2013 n=304)

Q31. Did you find it difficult to deal with the company again?
Base: RHL (2013 n=304)

* Small sample size

▲ Significantly higher compared to 2011
▼ Significantly lower compared to 2011

Referral to Higher Level

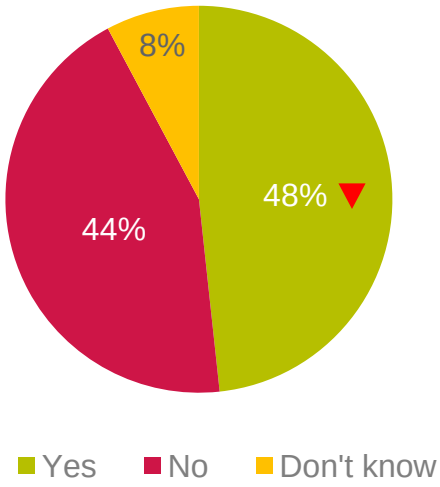
In line with the overall satisfaction with EWOQ scores amongst RHL customers dropping from 2011, more customers believe their supplier has been more difficult to deal with and hasn't handled their complaint fairly compared to 2011. Slightly fewer customers also believe their referral to a higher level has been useful compared to 2011.

Similar to an increase in customers who indicated they are finding it more difficult to deal with their supplier during the RHL, significantly fewer customers feel their supplier handled their complaint fairly and impartially (48%) compared to 2011 (58%).

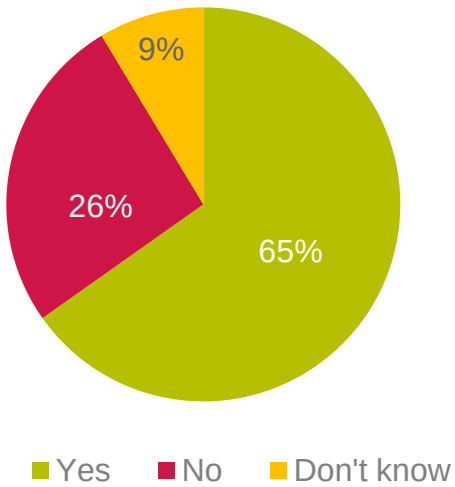
There is also a smaller proportion of customers indicating that the RHL was a useful step to take (65%) compared to 2011 (72%).

Water complainants were more negative about the RHL process that those with electricity or gas complaints.

Complaint handled fairly (n=304)



Referral useful (n=304)



Q32. Did you feel that the company handled your complaint fairly and impartially when you were referred back to them?
Base: RHL (2013 n=304)

Q33. Did you feel that the referral back to the company was useful step to take?
Base: RHL (2013 n=304)

▲ Significantly higher compared to 2011
▼ Significantly lower compared to 2011

Outcome for Customers.

Outcome of Complaint

In 2013, fewer customers believe the outcome of their complaint was in their favour (from 62% in 2011, to 52% in 2013). This proportion of customers has been primarily replaced by the increase in customers who believe the case was resolved through a compromise between themselves and the supplier (from 10% in 2011, to 17% in 2013). It is important to note that the proportion of customers who believe the outcome of their complaint was not in their favour has remained minimal at 6% (both waves), and there has been more of a switch from favourable outcomes to compromises, rather than from favourable outcomes to unfavourable outcomes.

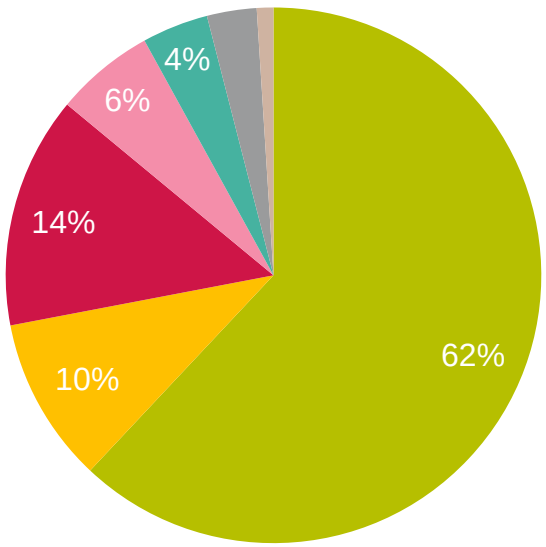
In 2013, the codeframe of ‘the case is not closed’ was added to the questionnaire given the proportion of customers who indicated this in the ‘Other’ responses in 2011. Although all customers within the sample should have had their case closed by EWOQ, 7% indicated they do not believe their case is resolved. This is significantly higher for customers who believe the time taken to resolve their complaint has been longer than expected, with 17% of these customers believing their case is still unresolved.

Looking at these results by the type of issue, customers with Transfer issues (65%) were significantly more likely to believe the outcome was in their favour, whereas customers with Supply issues (32%) were significantly less likely to believe so. Older customers (over 65 years) were also significantly more likely to believe the final outcome was in their favour (67%), whereas younger customer (under 35 years) were less likely to agree (46%).

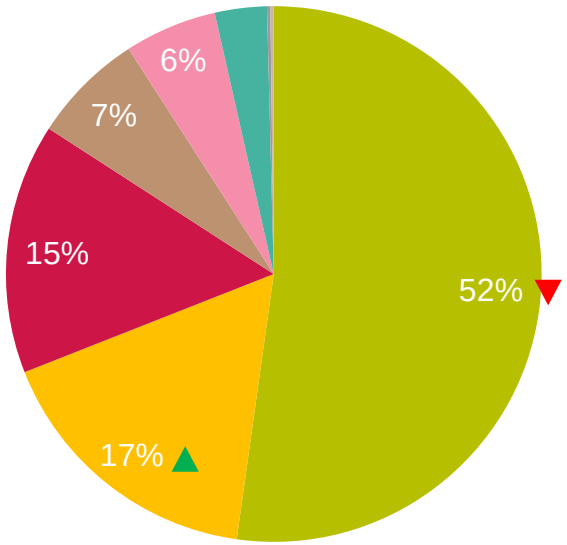
Outcome of Complaint

Just over half of customers believe the result was in their favour, which is a 10% point drop on 2011 results. There were increases in the proportion of customers indicating the final outcome was a compromise, and that the issue is not actually closed (from the customer's perspective).

2011 - The final outcome… Total Customers (n=401)



2013 - The final outcome… Total Customers (n=510)



- Was in my favour
- Was a compromise or agreement between me and the energy or water supplier
- The case is closed but I still believe the issue is unresolved
- The case is not closed
- Was not in my favour
- There was no clear outcome
- Other
- Don't know

▲ Significantly higher compared to 2011

▼ Significantly lower compared to 2011

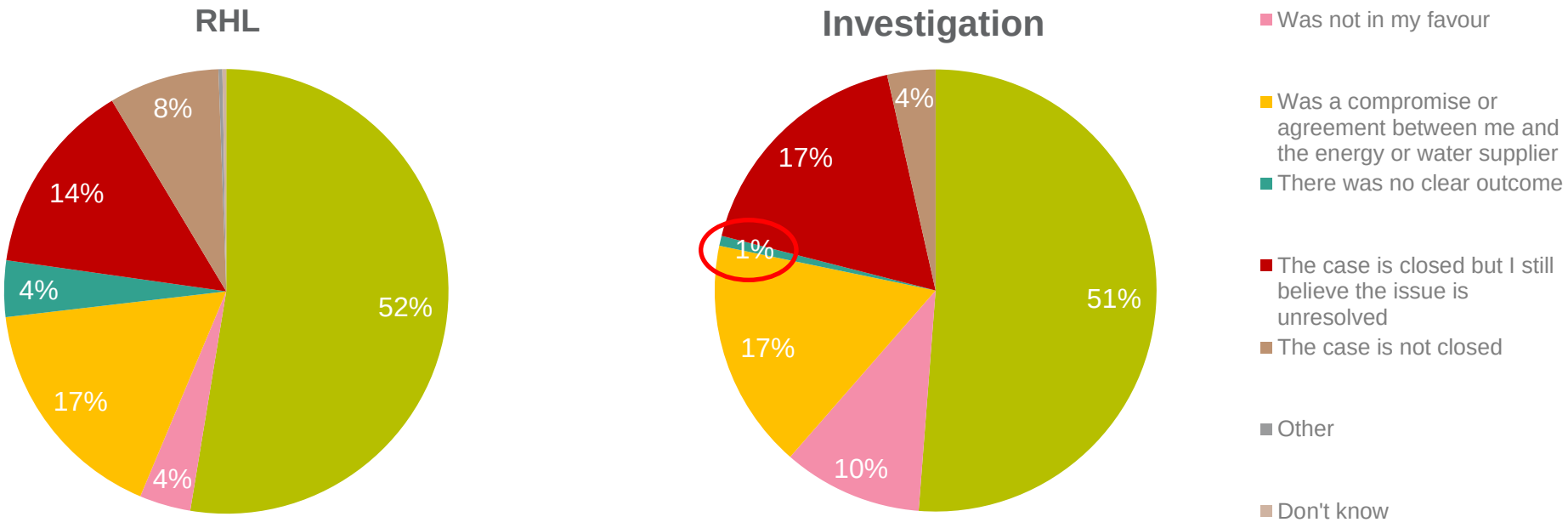
Q11. Which of the following statements best describes the final outcome of your complaint to the Energy & Water Ombudsman? The outcome…

Base: Total customers (2013 n=510)

Outcome of Complaint

Customers who have gone through the RHL process were no more (or less) likely to believe the final outcome was in their favour compared to those who went through the Investigation process.

The final outcome of the complaint



Q11. Which of the following statements best describes the final outcome of your complaint to the Energy & Water Ombudsman? The outcome .....
Base: RHL (2013 n=363); Investigation (2013 n=147)

Significantly higher compared to the total
Significantly lower compared to the total

Satisfaction with Final Outcome & Outcome Explanation

In line with lower satisfaction of service levels, and fewer customers believing outcomes are being found in their favour in 2013, customers are also less likely to be satisfied with the final outcome and the explanation regarding this outcome, compared to results in 2011.

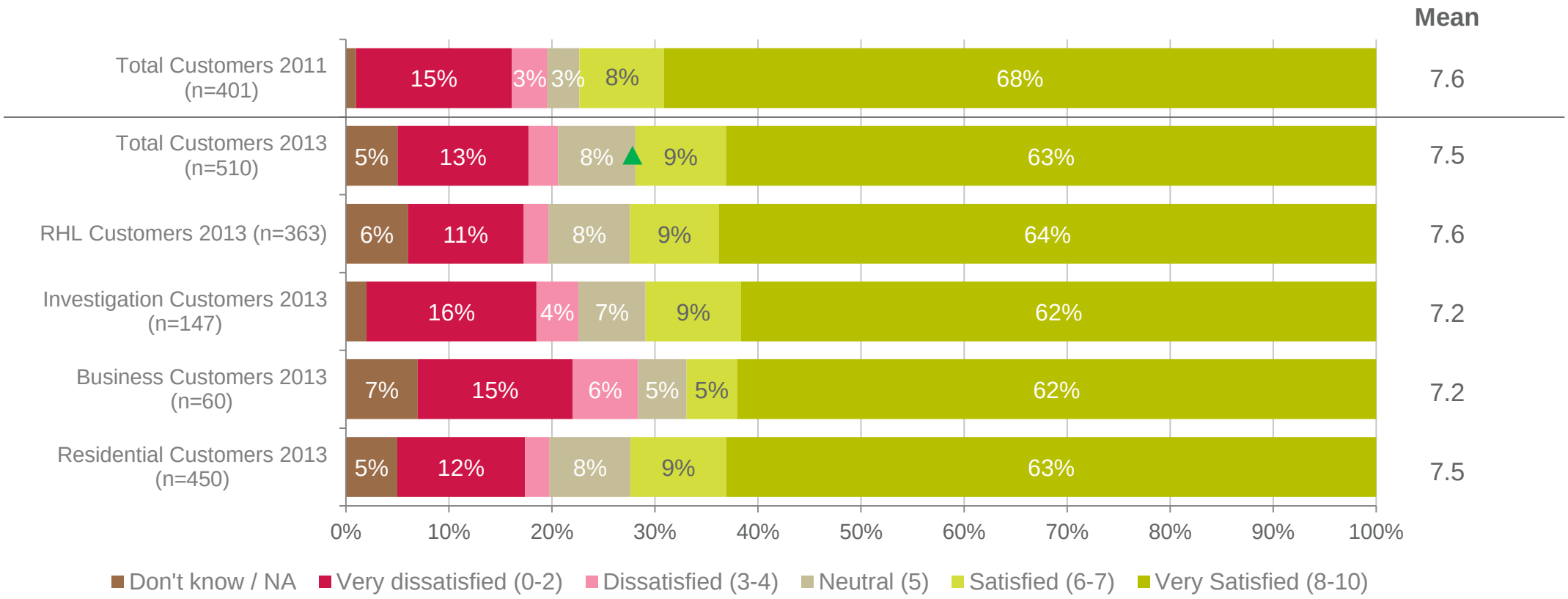
In terms of satisfaction with the final outcome, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of customers feeling neutral towards this outcome in 2013 (8%) compared to 2011 (3%). This increased proportion of customers feeling neutral is a result of less satisfied customers in 2013 (dropping from 76% in 2011, to 72% in 2013) as well as less dissatisfied customers in 2013 (dropping from 18% in 2011, to 16% in 2013). Notably, the proportion of Investigation customers feeling negative towards the final outcome of their case has significantly increased from 14% (2011), to 20% (2013). Conversely, the proportion of RHL customers feeling negative has decreased from 19% (2011), to 13% (2013). Of particular concern, the majority of water complainants (61%) were very dissatisfied with the final outcome of their case which is an increase on 2011, where 51% of customers were very dissatisfied.

In terms of satisfaction with the explanation given, there has been a significant decrease in the proportion of customers feeling very satisfied with this (dropping from 61% in 2011, to 49% in 2013). There has been a significant increase in the proportion of customers believing this question to be ‘Not Applicable’ to them, suggesting many customers were either not provided with an explanation or that their case remains unresolved.

Although Investigation customers are less likely to be very satisfied with the final outcome (62%) compared to RHL (64%), Investigation customers are significantly more likely to be very satisfied with the *explanation given* regarding the final outcome (61%) compared to RHL customers (45%). Customers living in publically rented properties were significantly more likely to be very satisfied with the explanation given to them regarding the final outcome (71%), compared to those who privately rent (55%) or those who own (or are paying off) their own home (45%).

Satisfaction with Final Outcome

The majority of customers are satisfied with the final outcome (72%) of their complaint, however the proportion of very satisfied customers has dropped in the last two years.

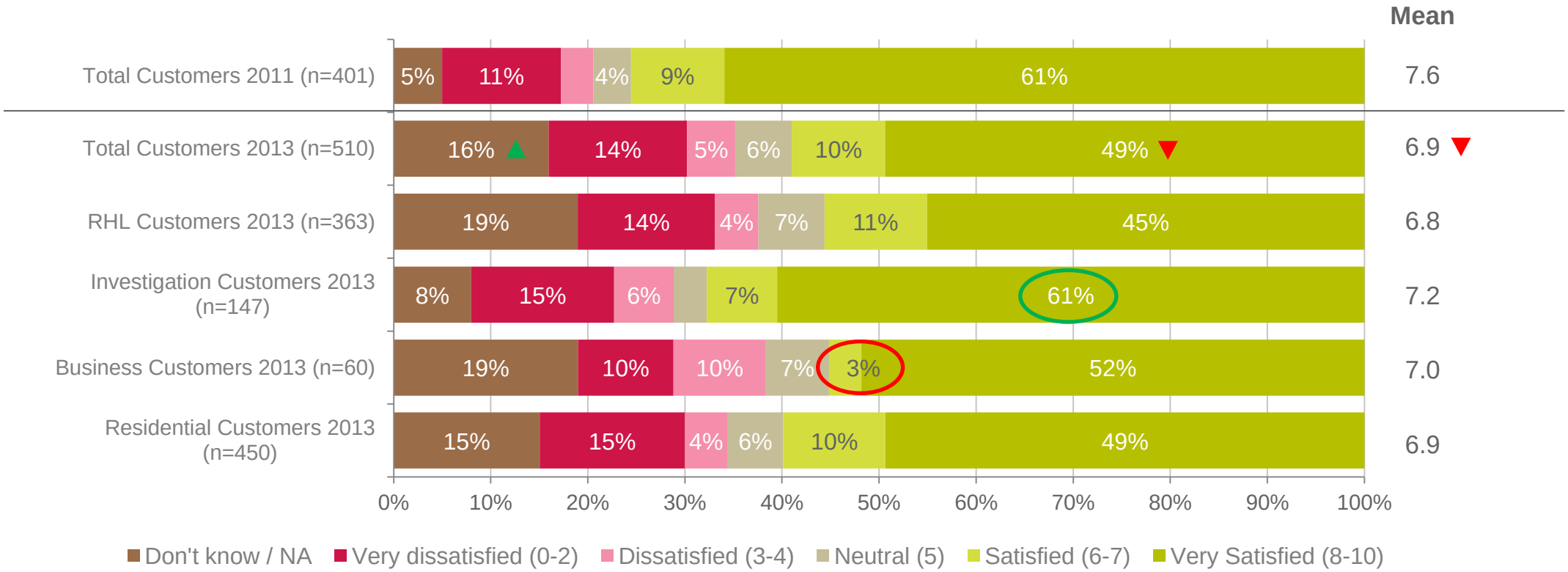


Q12. How satisfied were you with the following aspects of your case? Please rate your satisfaction on a 0 to 10 scale.
Base: Total customers (2013 n=510, "don't know" excluded for mean; "N/A" responses not shown)

▲ Significantly higher compared to 2011
▼ Significantly lower compared to 2011

Satisfaction with the Explanation of the Final Outcome

The proportion of customers very satisfied with the explanation of their final outcome has significantly decreased in 2013. Investigation customers are significantly more satisfied with the explanation given compared to RHL customers.



Q12. How satisfied were you with the following aspects of your case? Please rate your satisfaction on a 0 to 10 scale.
Base: Total customers (2013 n=510, "don't know" excluded for mean; "N/A" responses not shown)

Significantly higher compared to the total
Significantly lower compared to the total
Significantly higher compared to 2011
Significantly lower compared to 2011

Reasons for Dissatisfaction with Outcome of Complaint

At an overall level, the two most consistent reasons regarding customers' dissatisfaction with the final outcome are that customers still believe the issue is unresolved and that the result was not in their favour.

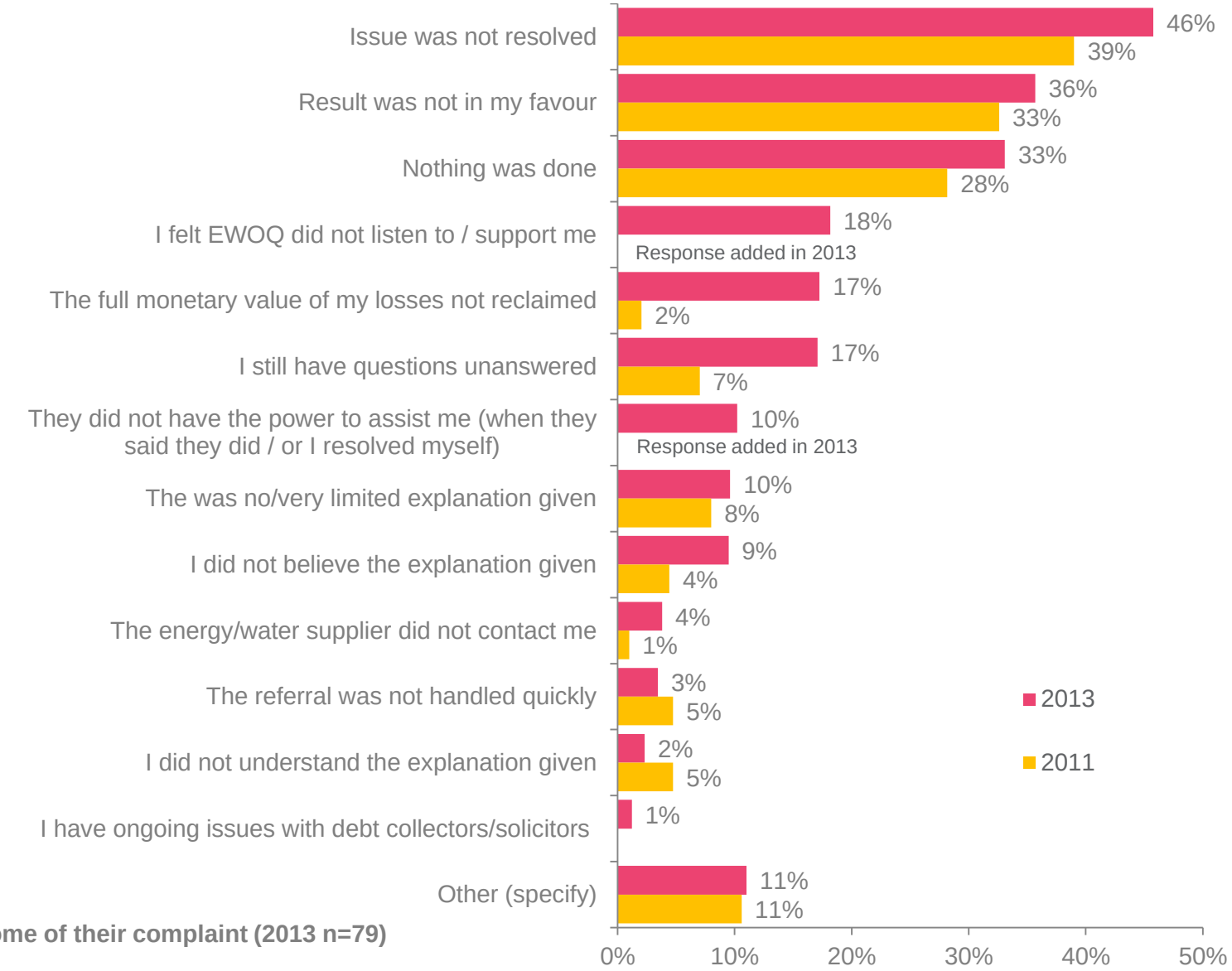
Looking specifically at dissatisfaction regarding the outcome, the main reasons for dissatisfaction are that the customer believes the issue is still unresolved (46%), the result was not in their favour (36%) and nothing was done by EWOQ to resolve the issue (33%). More than half of RHL customers (51%) were dissatisfied with the final outcome because they believe their issue has not been resolved. Comparatively, almost half of Investigation customers (49%) were dissatisfied with the final outcome because the result was not in their favour, and one third (33%) because they felt EWOQ did not listen nor support them in the case.

Other reasons for dissatisfaction with the outcome which notably grew in 2013 were that they believe EWOQ did not listen nor support them (18%), the full monetary value of the customer's losses have not been reclaimed (17%) and the customer still has queries that remains unanswered (17%).

Consistent with the main reason for dissatisfaction in relation to the final outcome itself, the main reason for dissatisfaction with the explanation of the outcome is that the issue still remains unresolved (30%). Following this reason, the result not being in their favour (23%) and the limited explanation provided regarding the result (19%) were reasons for dissatisfaction.

Outcome of Complaint – Reason for Dissatisfaction with Outcome

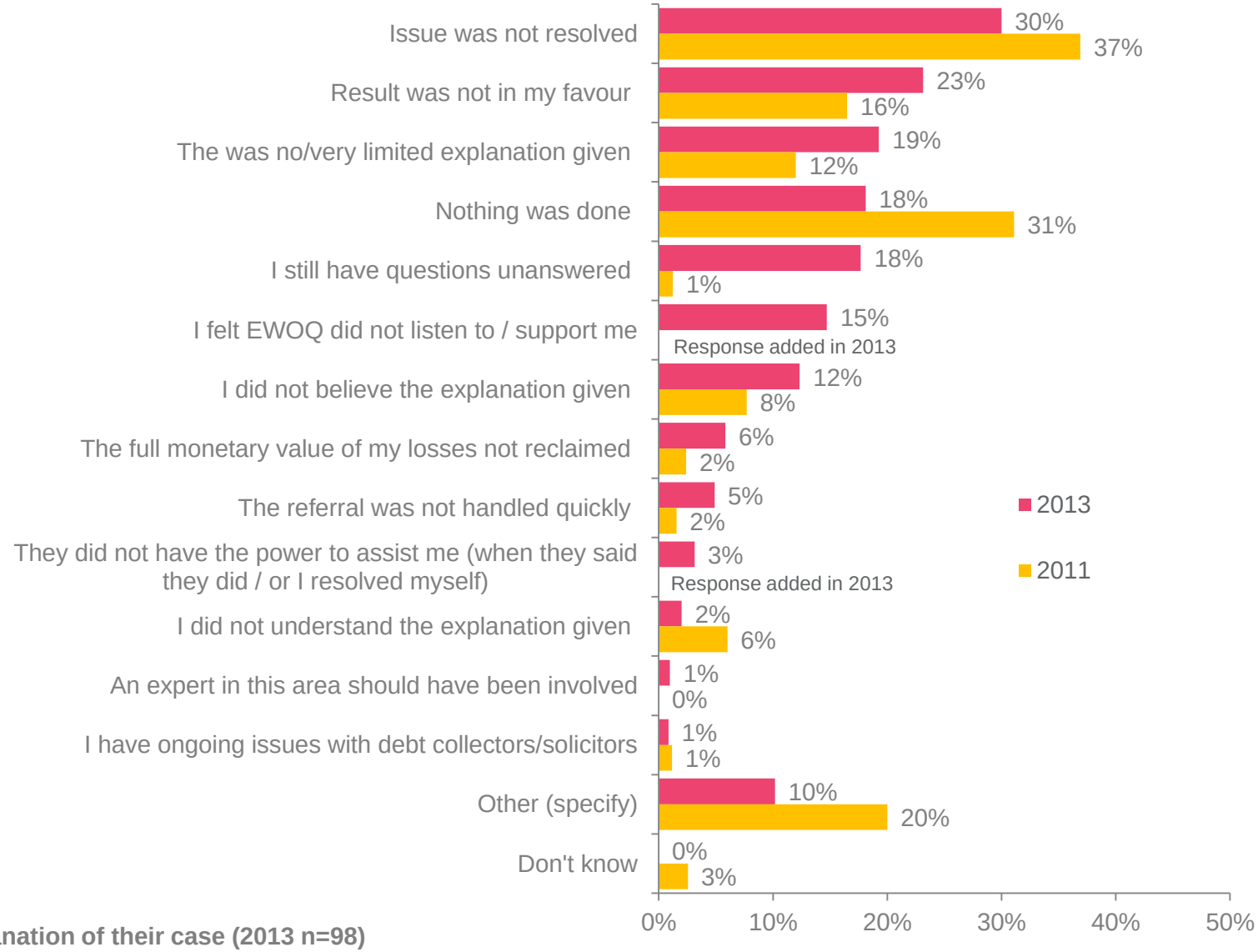
Customers believe the fact that their issue remains unresolved is the main reason why they are dissatisfied with the final outcome provided by EWOQ. Notably, this is creating more dissatisfaction for customers than results not being in the customer's favour.



Q13. Why were you dissatisfied?
Base: Those who were dissatisfied with outcome of their complaint (2013 n=79)

Outcome of Complaint – Reason for Dissatisfaction with Explanation

The main reason for dissatisfaction regarding the explanation of the outcome has more to do with the actual outcome (or non outcome), rather than anything to do with the explanation itself.



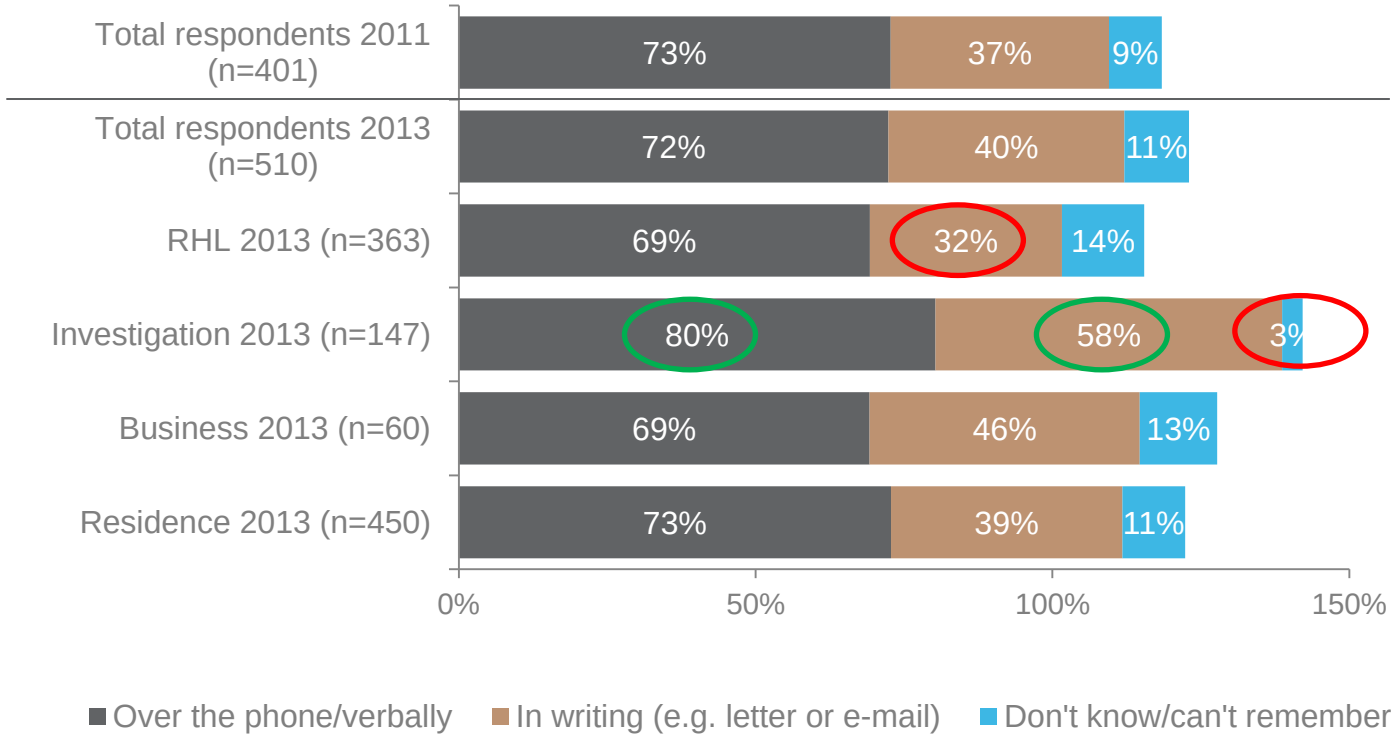
Q13. Why were you dissatisfied?
Base: Those who were dissatisfied with explanation of their case (2013 n=98)

Outcome of Complaint – How Outcome was Received

Most customers received the outcome of their complaint over the phone or verbally. Just over one third received their outcome in writing.

There has been little change in how customers have received the outcome of their complaint from 2011 to 2013. There has been a slight increase in the proportion of customers being notified in writing (increase of 3% points) and this has been led by Investigation customers (of which 58% believe they received the outcome of their complaint in writing).

In line with 2011 results, Investigation customers were significantly more likely to receive communication over a variety of methods compared to RHL customers.



Q14. How did you receive the outcome of your complaint?
Base: Total customers (2013 n=510)
Multiple responses allowed for how outcome was received

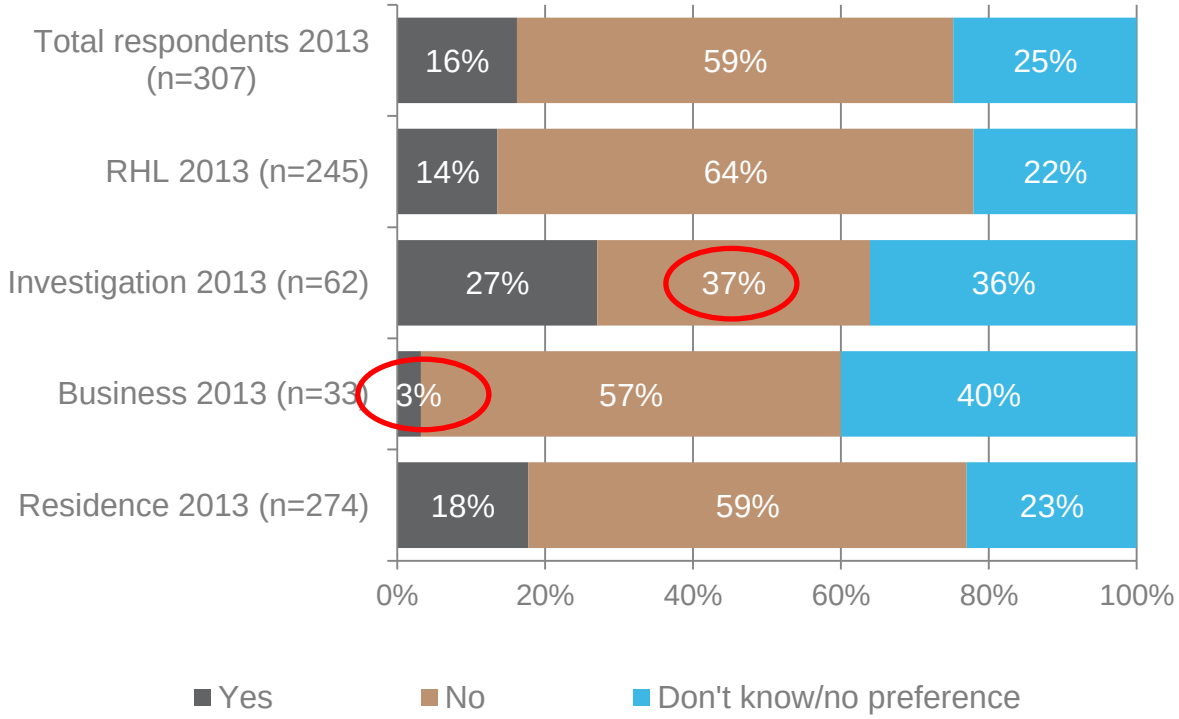
Significantly higher compared to the total
Significantly lower compared to the total

Outcome of Complaint – Asked About Outcome in Writing

Most customers who did not receive their outcome in writing indicated that they were not provided with the opportunity to do so.

Of customers who did not receive their outcome in writing, only 16% of customers believe they were offered this. A high proportion (59%) believe they were not offered their outcome in writing, with one quarter (25%) not able to remember if this was an option to them.

Investigation customers are the most likely to believe they were offered the opportunity to receive this in writing (27%), while very few businesses believe this was offered to them (3%).



Significantly higher compared to the total

Significantly lower compared to the total

Q15. Were you asked whether you would like the outcome of your complaint in writing?
(Question changed from 2011, rendering 2013 data incomparable with 2011 data)
Base: Those who did not receive outcome in writing (2013 n=307)

Customer Service Evaluation.

Customer Service Evaluation

All elements of customer service have declined in 2013 for EWOQ. Specifically, ‘the ease of contact during the dispute’ and ‘the effort made by staff to fully understand the customer’s complaints’ have significantly dropped compared to the service levels of 2011. Despite these significant reductions compared to 2011, customer service satisfaction remains high, with at least 85% satisfied for all statements.

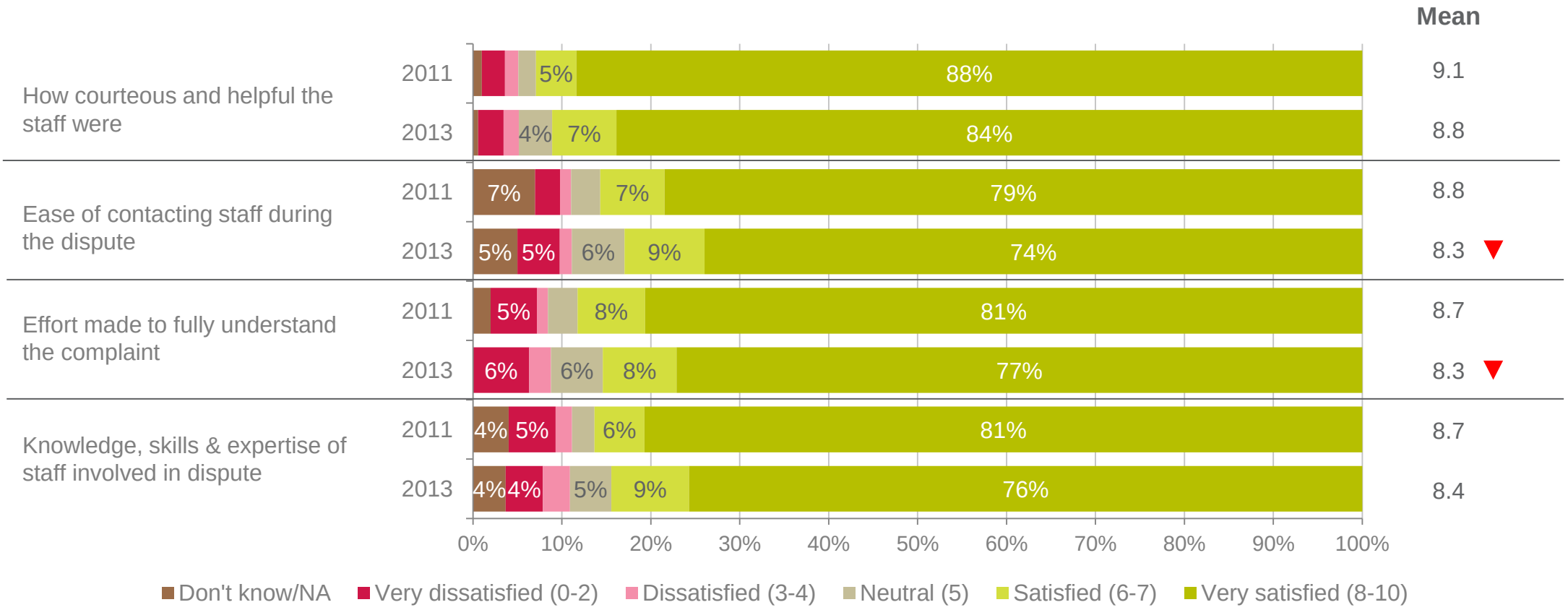
In terms of customer service, EWOQ’s strength remains how helpful and courteous the staff are during the complaint. More than four in five customers (84%) were very satisfied with the courteousness and helpfulness of the staff, only slightly reducing from 88% in 2011. Older customers (65 years or more - 93%) were significantly more likely to be satisfied with this service element compared to younger customers (under 35 years - 79%).

The element experiencing the largest drop in satisfaction levels was the ease of contacting staff during the dispute. This has been driven by the 15% of customers who believe their case was handled by a number of different customer service representatives, of which 22% were very dissatisfied with the ease of contacting staff (compared to the overall customer average of 5%).

Customers in full time employment and customers with water complaints were considerably more likely to be negative about the effort made to fully understand their complaint and the knowledge, skills and expertise displayed by the EWOQ staff, compared to the average customer.

Customer Service Evaluation

While overall customer satisfaction remains high, some elements have significantly declined since 2011. Customers in full time employment and those with water complaints hold the most negative customer service perceptions of EWOQ.



Q16. How satisfied were you with the staff who handled your complaint? Please rate how dissatisfied or satisfied you were on a scale of 0 to 10.
Base: Total customers (2011 n=401; 2013 n=510; "don't know" excluded for mean; "N/A" responses not shown)

▲ Significantly higher compared to 2011
▼ Significantly lower compared to 2011

Customer Service Evaluation

There are no significant differences regarding customer service elements across case type. The largest difference was the lower satisfaction of business customers regarding EWOQ's knowledge, skills and expertise.

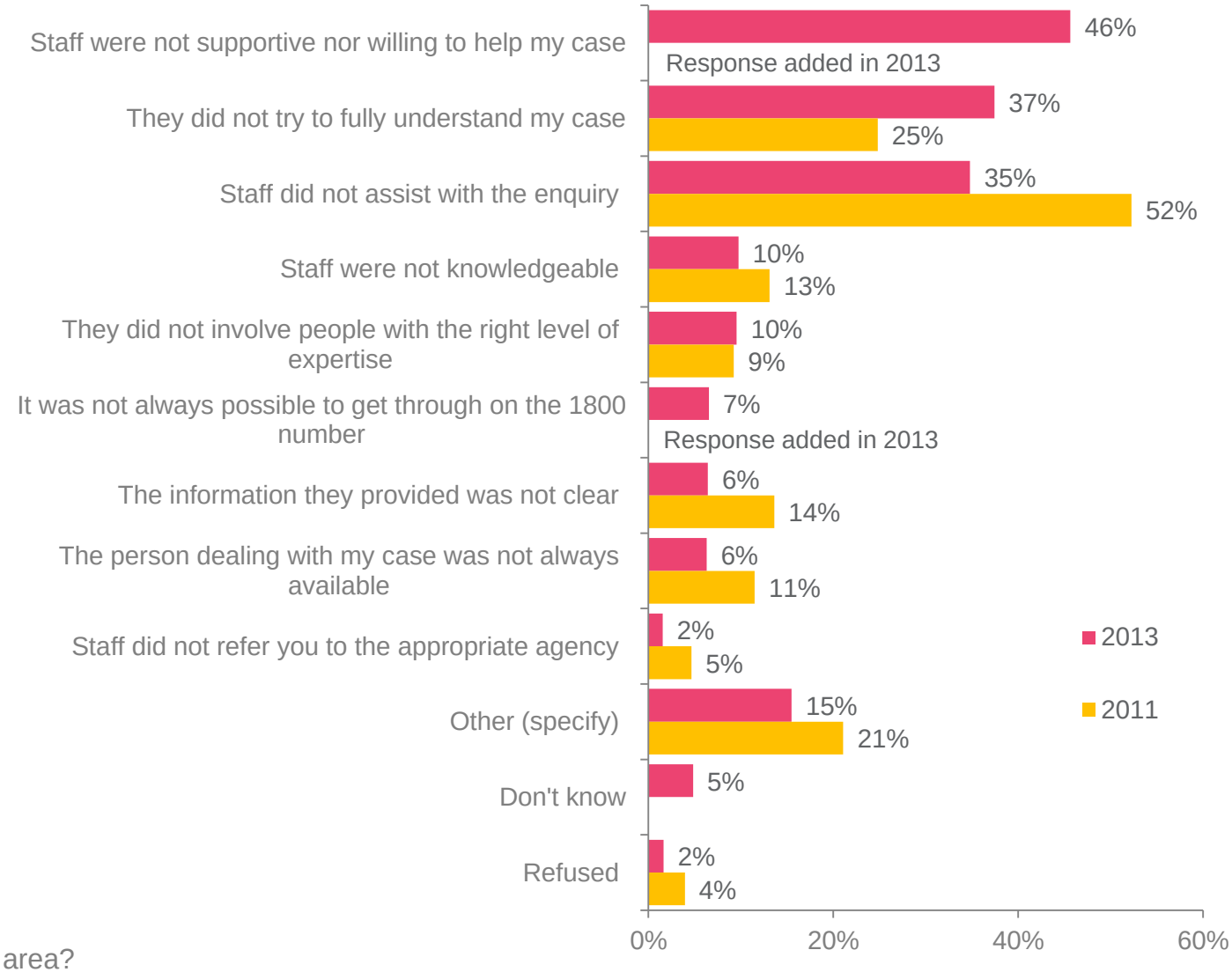
	Mean Satisfaction				
	Total 2013	RHL 2013	Investigations 2013	Business 2013	Residence 2013
	(min. n=486)	(min. n=343)	(min. n=143)	(min. n=56)	(min. n=428)
How courteous and helpful the staff were	8.8	8.8	8.7	8.6	8.8
Ease of contacting staff during dispute	8.3	8.3	8.4	8.3	8.3
Effort made to fully understand complaint	8.3	8.3	8.2	8.2	8.3
Knowledge, skills and expertise of staff involved in dispute	8.4	8.4	8.4	8.0	8.5

Q16. How satisfied were you with the staff who handled your complaint? Please rate how dissatisfied or satisfied you were on a scale of 0 to 10.
Base: Total customers (2011 n=401; 2013 n=510; "don't know" excluded for mean; "N/A" responses not shown)

Reasons for Customer Service Dissatisfaction

Added as a separate codeframe in 2013 because of the high proportions selecting 'other' in 2011, staff not being supportive nor willing to help the customer was the strongest reason for dissatisfaction in 2013. This is similar to the concerning increase in customers believing that the staff did not try to fully understand their case. Most other dissatisfaction areas dropped or remained stable in 2013.

Customers were most dissatisfied with EWOQ's ability to be supportive and their willingness (or lack thereof) to help them with their case.



Q17. Why were you particularly dissatisfied with this area?
Base: Respondents dissatisfied from Q16 (2011 n=35; 2013 n=63)

Fairness of Process.

Fairness of Process

Across all statements regarding the process that should be followed, customer satisfaction has declined in 2013. Only two of the six statements have not seen significant declines in customer satisfaction levels, which were 'EWOQ's independence / lack of bias' (down from 8.6 in 2011 to 8.3 in 2013) and 'assistance given to present your side of the case' (down from 8.3 in 2011 to 7.9 in 2013).

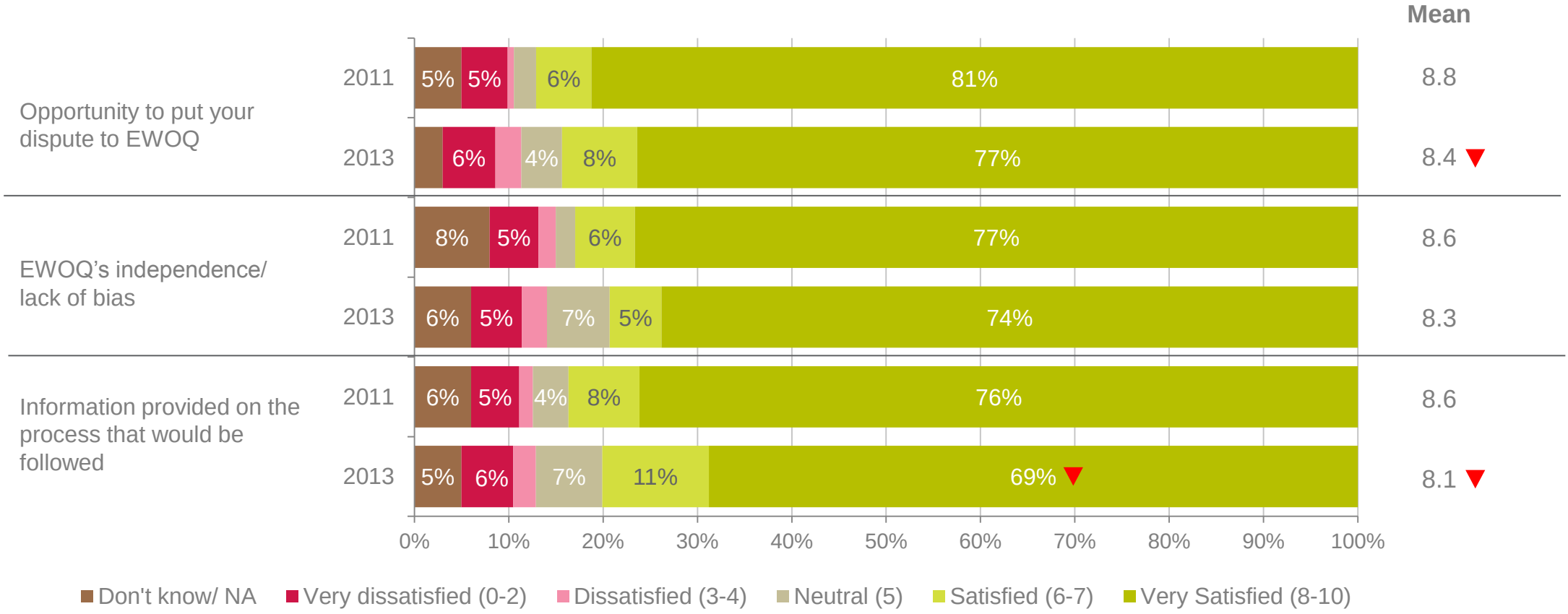
The statement with the largest decrease in satisfaction was 'how frequently you were updated on the progress of your complaint', which decreased from 55% very satisfied in 2011, to 46% in 2013. Investigation customers (55%) and older customers (65 years or more - 58%) were considerably more likely to be very satisfied with these updates, compared to RHL customers (42% - very satisfied) and younger customers (less than 35 years - 32% very satisfied) who were quite dissatisfied with the lack of communication from EWOQ.

Although decreasing significantly, the opportunity customers have to put their dispute to EWOQ remains the area with the highest satisfaction in 2013, with 77% very satisfied. EWOQ's independence and non bias is also seen to be a strength of EWOQ for most customers, with 74% very satisfied with this element.

The following customer groups were consistently more negative towards EWOQ than the average customer regarding the process that was followed: water complainants, customers who do not believe EWOQ explained their role to them or did not provide them with a clear indication of the process, customers who dealt with multiple staff members, customers who believe the process took longer than expected, younger customers (under 35 years) and customers on high incomes ($90,000 per year).

The Process Followed

The three statements below are where customers hold the **highest** satisfaction for EWOQ regarding their process. Customers are, however, less satisfied across all process orientated statements in 2013, and significantly less so for 'opportunity to put your dispute to EWOQ' and 'information being provided on the process that would be followed'.

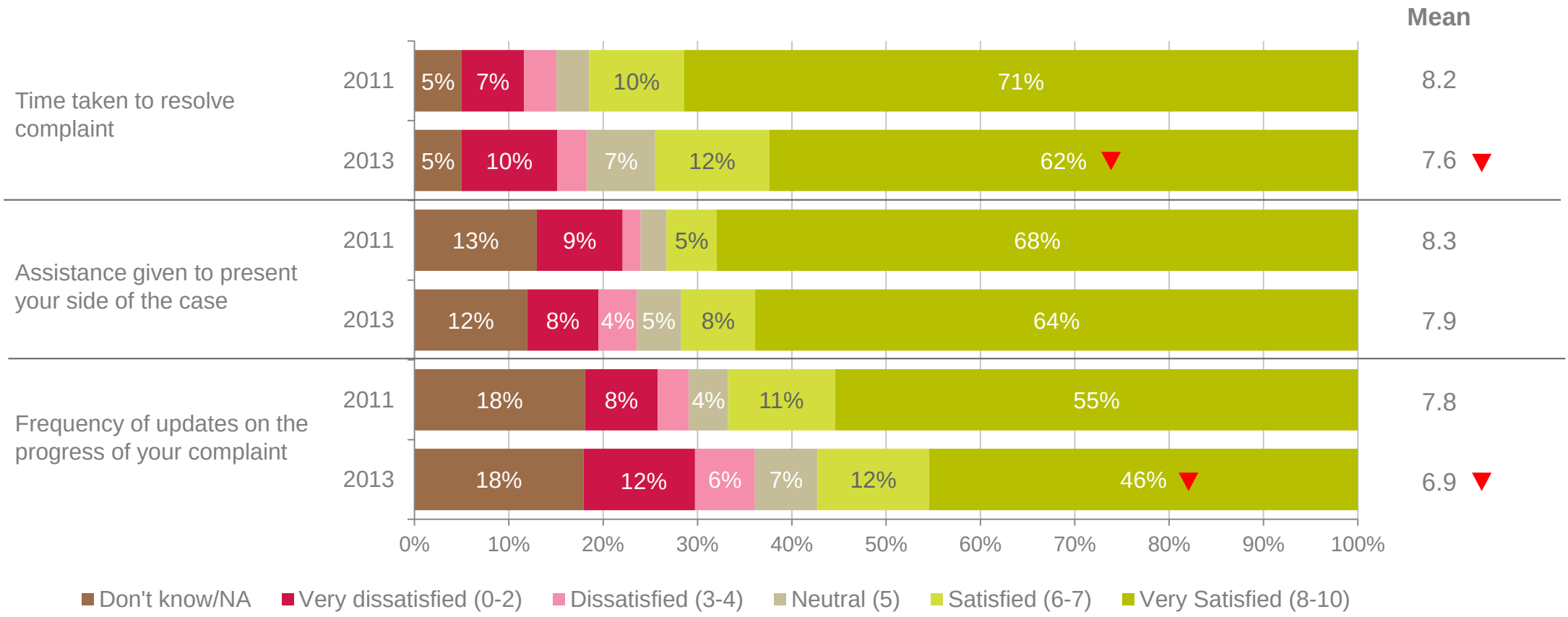


Q18. What about the process that was followed? Please rate how dissatisfied or satisfied you were on the same 0 to 10 scale for the following.
Base: Total customers (2011 n=401; 2013 n=510; "don't know" excluded for mean; "N/A" responses not shown)

▲ Significantly higher compared to 2011
▼ Significantly lower compared to 2011

The Process Followed

The three statements below require the most **urgent improvement** to generate higher satisfaction around the EWOQ process that customers must go through. Updating customers on the progress of their complaint has significantly declined from 77% satisfied in 2010, to only 58% satisfied in 2013.



Q18. What about the process that was followed? Please rate how dissatisfied or satisfied you were on the same 0 to 10 scale for the following.

Base: Total customers (2011 n=401; 2013 n=510; "don't know" excluded for mean; "N/A" responses not shown)

▲ Significantly higher compared to 2011

▼ Significantly lower compared to 2011

Why Wasn't the Process Followed

	Mean Satisfaction				
	Total 2013	RHL 2011	Investigations 2011	Business 2013	Residence 2013
	(min. n=421)	(min. n=288)	(min. n=133)	(min. n=47)	(min. n=374)
The opportunity you were given to put your side of the dispute to EWOQ	8.4	8.4	8.4	8.3	8.4
How independent/unbiased EWOQ's point of view was when dealing with your complaint	8.3	8.4	8.1	8.4	8.3
The information provided on the process that would be followed	8.1	8.1	8.2	8.0	8.1
The assistance given to present your side of the case	7.9	7.9	7.9	7.6	7.9
The time taken to resolve your complaint	7.6	7.5	7.8	7.1	7.6
How frequently you were updated on the progress of your complaint	6.9	6.6	7.7	6.9	6.9

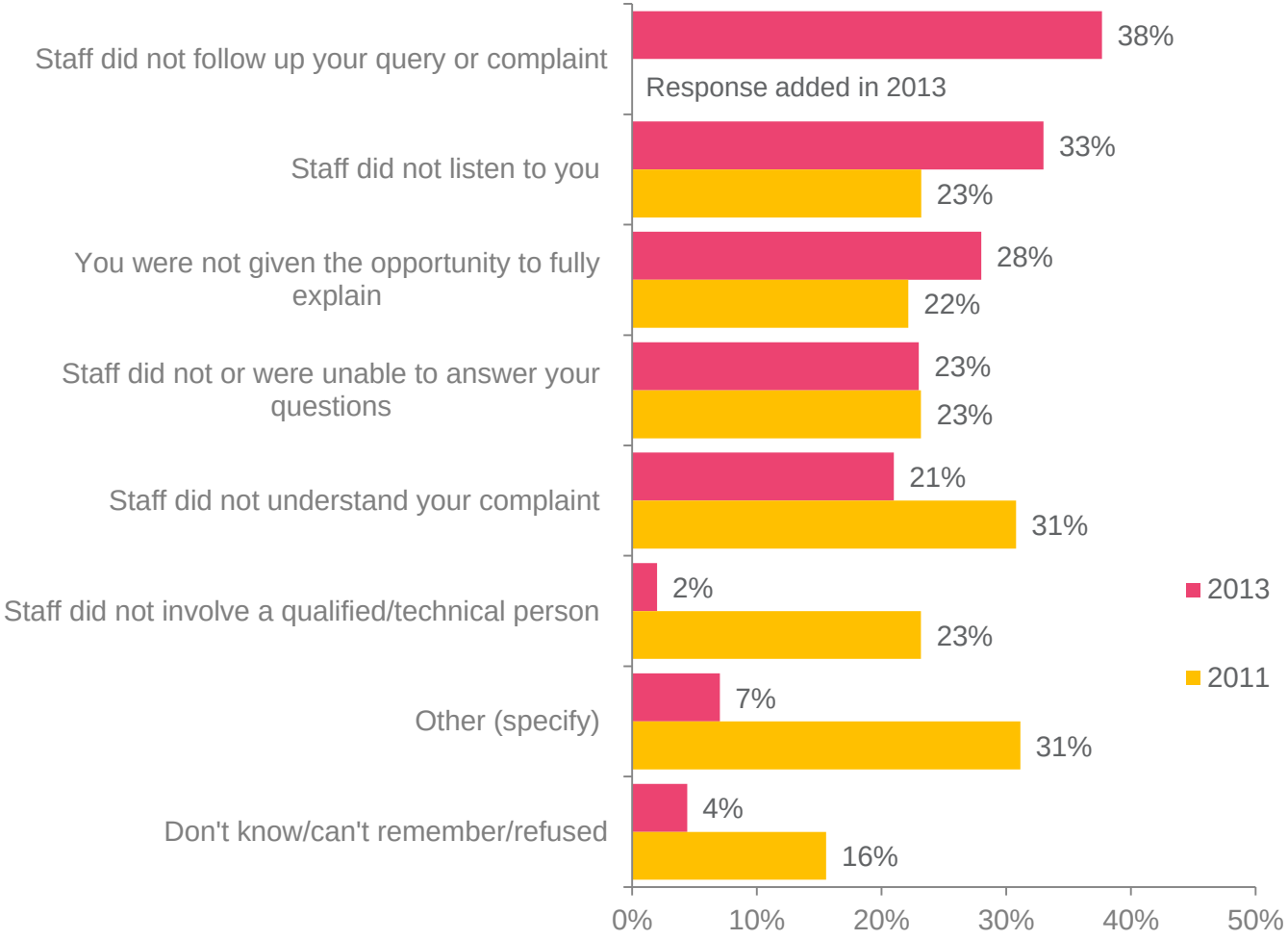
Q18. What about the process that was followed? Please rate how dissatisfied or satisfied you were on the same 0 to 10 scale for the following.
Base: Total customers ("don't know" excluded)

Significantly higher compared to the total
Significantly lower compared to the total

Dissatisfaction with Opportunity to Provide Dispute to EWOQ

There has been an improvement in the ability of EWOQ to fully understand customers' complaints (number one reason for dissatisfaction in 2011). However, customers were more critical of the lack of follow up or listening provided by staff on the case in 2013.

Of the 8% of customers dissatisfied that they were not given enough opportunity to provide their case to EWOQ, the main reasons for this dissatisfaction were that staff did not follow up with or listen to them.



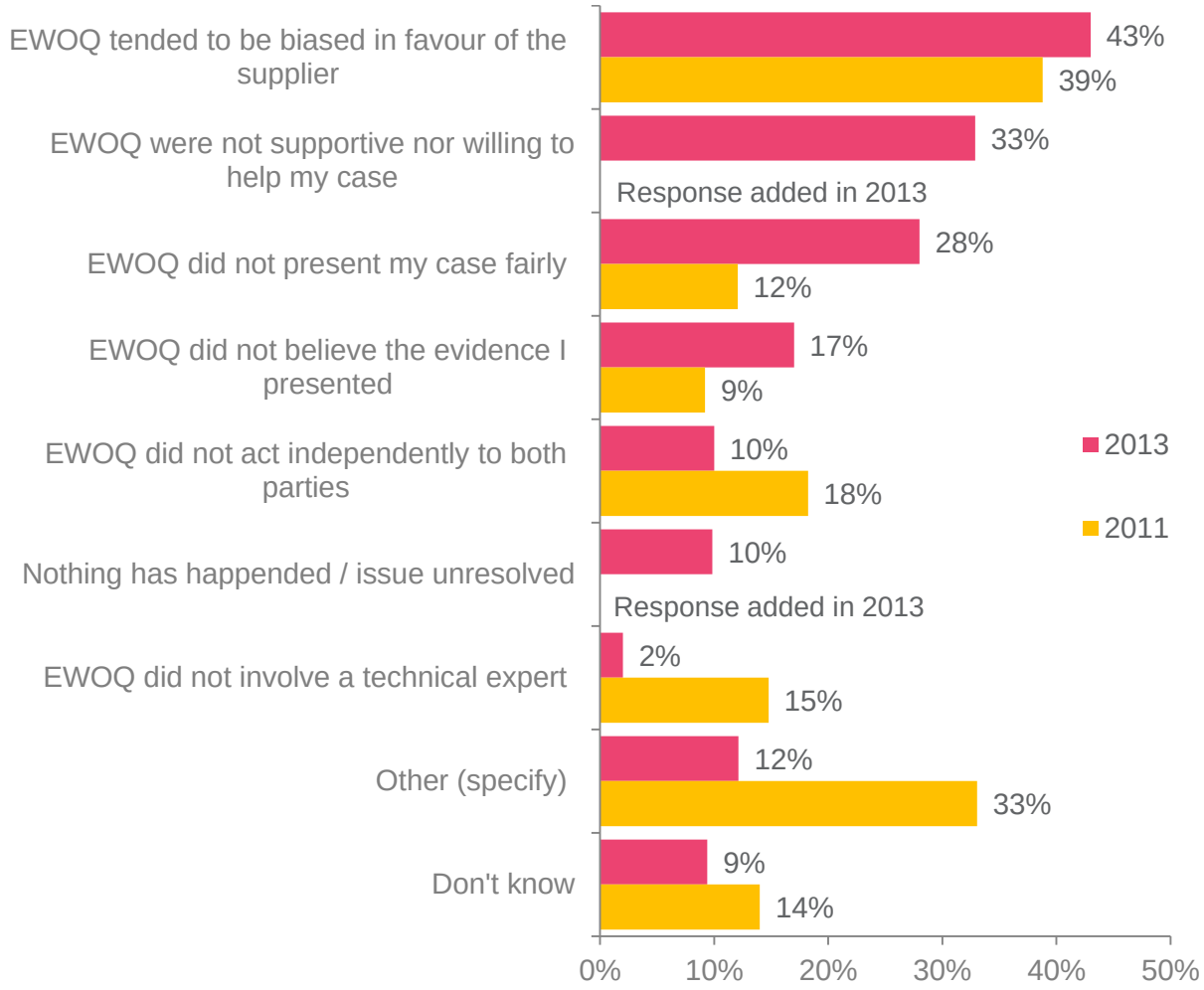
Q19E. Why weren't you satisfied with the opportunity you were given to put your side of the dispute to the EWOQ?
Base: Dissatisfied customers (2011 n=19*; 2013 n=43)

Note: * small sample size

Dissatisfaction with EWOQ's Perceived Bias

There is a perception from a small number of customers who believe that EWOQ is biased in favour of the supplier. This is linked to a proportion of customers who also believe EWOQ is not supportive of the customer and not generally willing to help them bring their case against the supplier.

Of the 8% of customers who are dissatisfied with EWOQ's point of view, the main reason behind this dissatisfaction is that customers believe that EWOQ is biased in favour of suppliers.



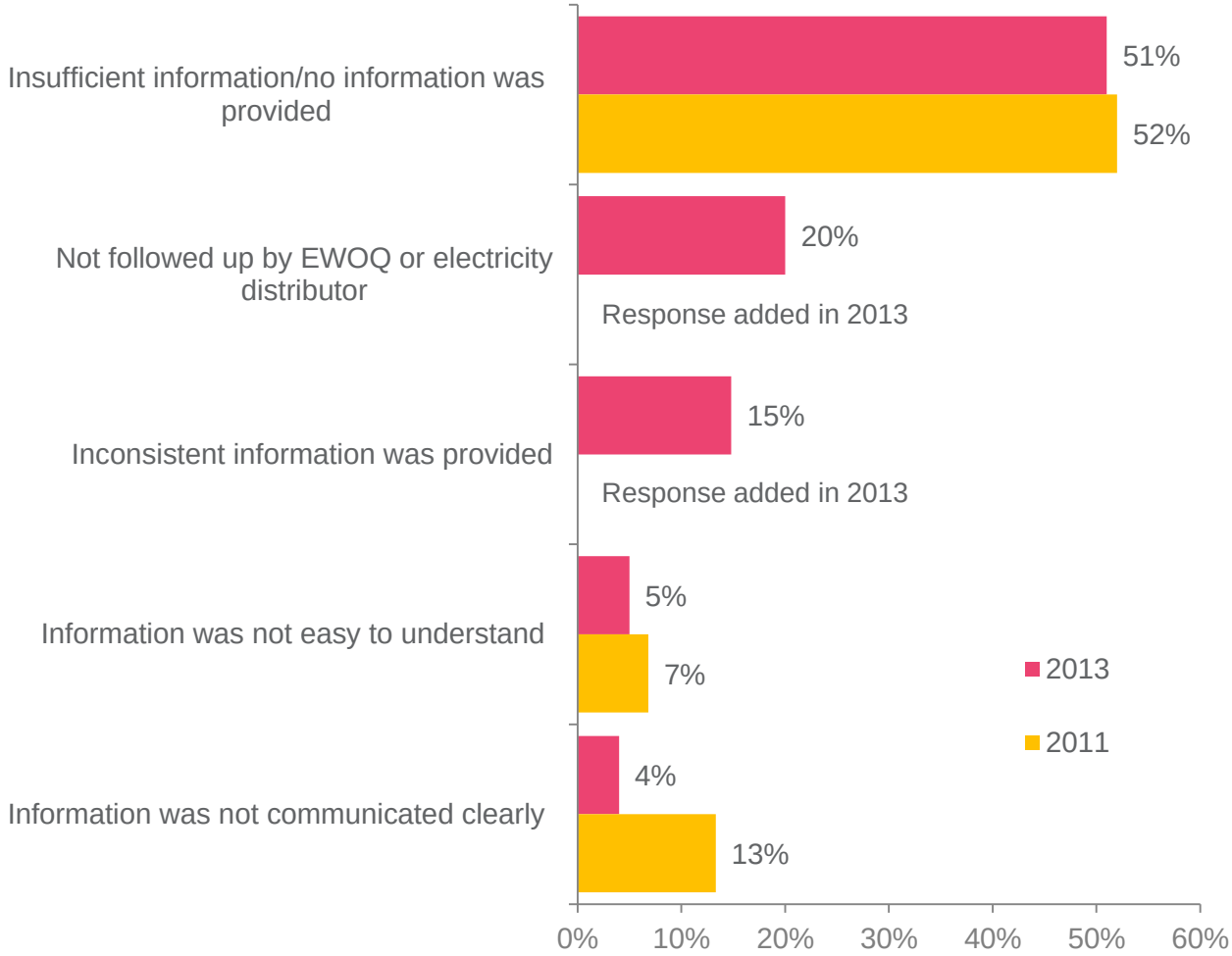
Q19D. Why weren't you satisfied that the EWOQ's point of view was independent/unbiased?
Base: Dissatisfied customers (2011 n=26*; 2013 n=42)

Note: * small sample size

Dissatisfaction with Information Provided

Information provided by EWOQ is generally easy to understand and is communicated clearly. Dissatisfaction simply mainly stems from there being insufficient or no information provided.

Of the 8% of customers who are dissatisfied with the information provided, the main reason behind this dissatisfaction is simply the lack of information provided.



Q19B. Why weren't you satisfied with the information provided on the process that would be followed?
Base: Dissatisfied customers (2011 n=25*; 2013 n=41)

Note: * small sample size

Improvements Recommended.

Areas of Improvement

In line with a consistent decrease in the performance of EWOQ across a number of service areas, there are a number of customer suggested improvements in 2013.

Overall Performance

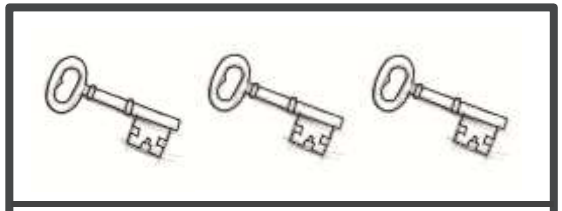
Just under half of customers believe there are no improvements required to enhance the performance of EWOQ, which has shifted from 49% in 2011 to 45% in 2013. Business customers (61%) and customers in housing commission (63%) are the most likely to believe no improvements are required.

Similar to previous years, there is no standout and consistent reason indicated by customers as the area requiring the most improvement; rather, there are six different improvement areas which are indicated by 5% of the customer base surveyed or more. With the exception of the main improvement noted – EWOQ needs more power (11%) – the majority are customer service areas, such as improved communication (10%), willingness to fight (7%), quicker response (6%), listening (6%) and more efficient service (5%).

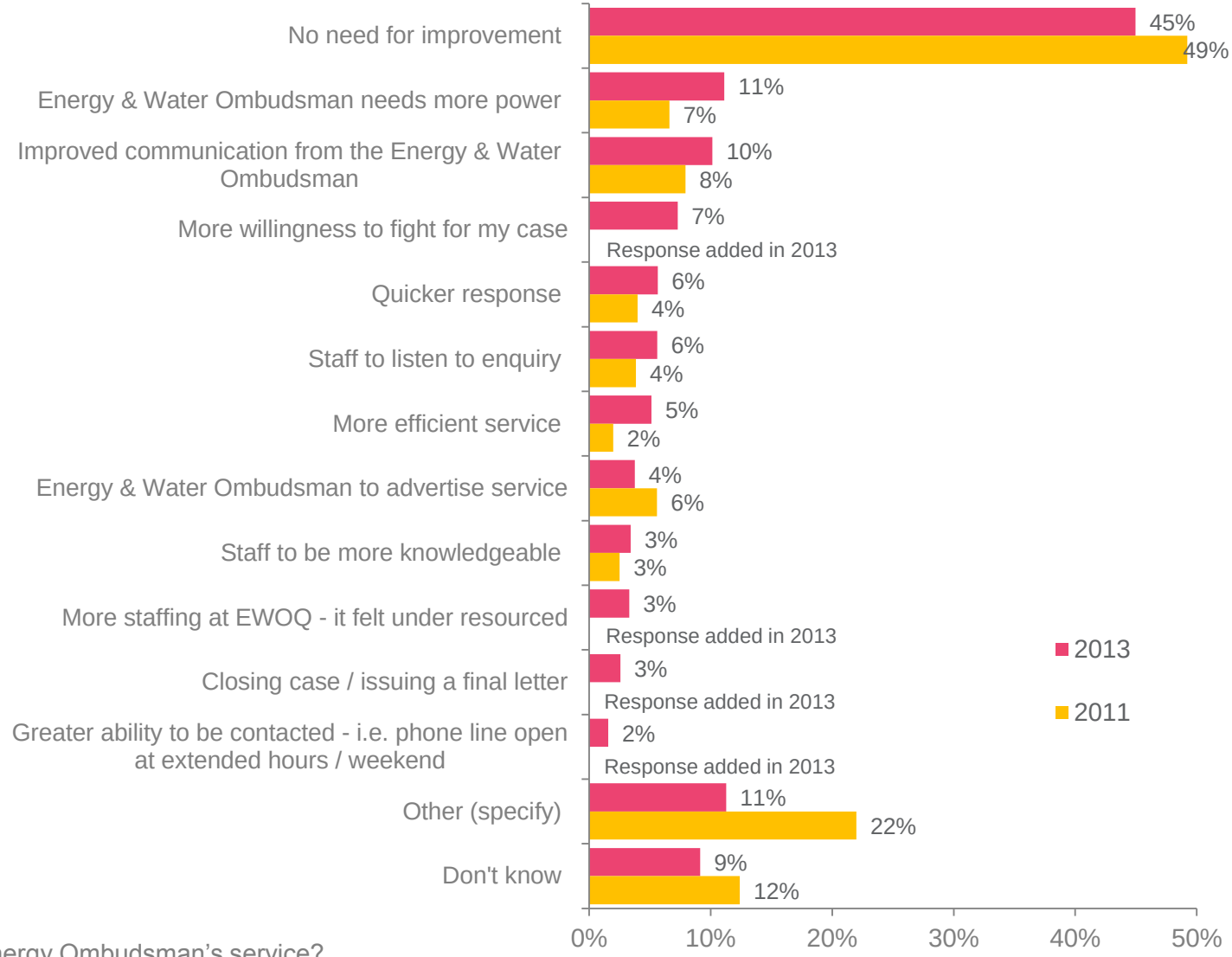
Helping Present Case to EWOQ

The majority of customers believe no further assistance was required to help them present their side of the case to EWOQ (62%), however this proportion has significantly decreased from 72% in 2013. Similar to overall performance, there are no standout reasons as to why more customers are of the opinion they needed more assistance compared to 2011, however the most noted improvement areas include having someone willing to listen (5%), having a contact they could call (5%) and generally better quality customer service from EWOQ when discussing the case (5%). These proportions were significantly higher for very dissatisfied customers, and of the 6% of customers who would not recommend EWOQ, this group of customers were significantly more likely to quote better quality customer service from EWOQ as the primary area requiring improvement (18%).

Overall Improvements Recommended



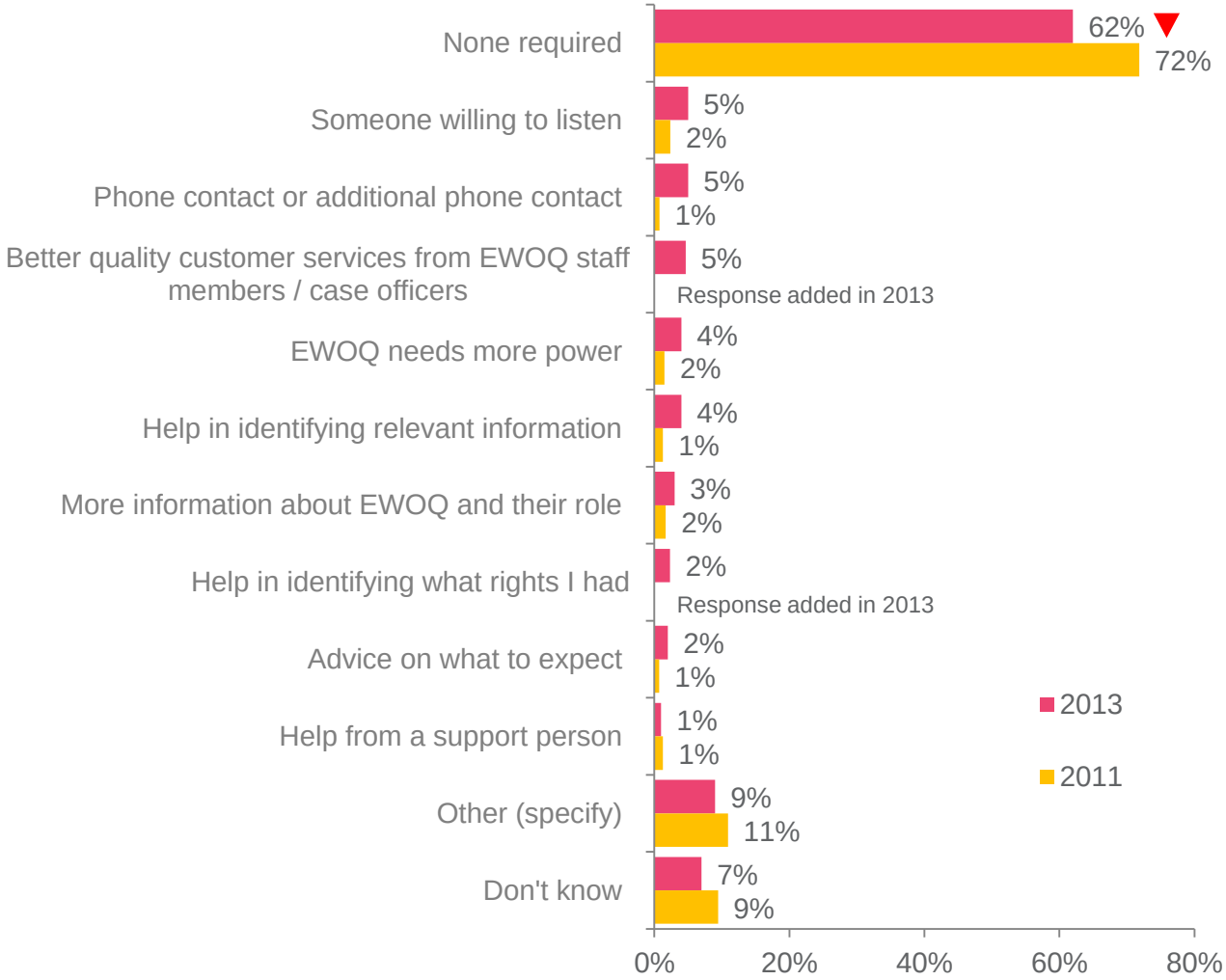
Just under half of EWOQ's customers believe there is no need for improvement to the service offered. The most common improvement requested is that EWOQ needs more power, which is closely followed by improving customer service aspects.



Q25. What would improve the operation of the Energy Ombudsman's service?
Base: Total customers (2011 n=401; 2013 n=510)

Specific Improvements for Helping Present Case to EWOQ

Most customers believe there is nothing more EWOQ could have done to help them present their side of the dispute (62%). This proportion of customers has, however, significantly declined in 2013.



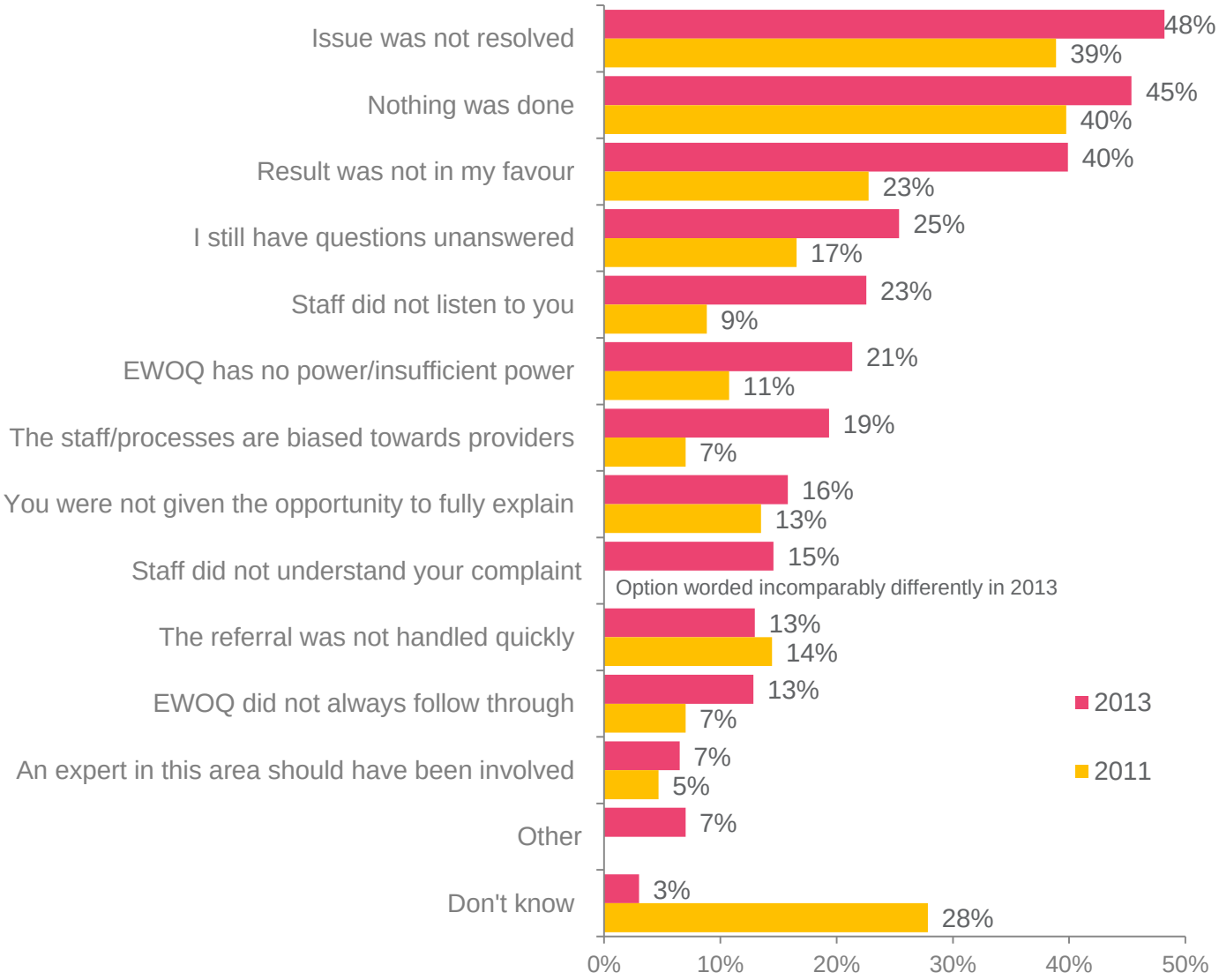
Q20. What assistance might have helped you in presenting your side of the dispute to the Energy & Water Ombudsman?
Base: Total customers (2011 n=401; 2013 n=510)

▲ Significantly higher compared to 2011
▼ Significantly lower compared to 2011

Overall Reasons for Dissatisfaction with EWOQ

The main overall drivers of dissatisfaction for customers remain similar to the 2011 results, albeit increasing in frequency in 2013. The 'issue not being resolved' (48%) was the greatest reason for dissatisfaction, followed by 'nothing was done by EWOQ' (45%) – which was more likely for RHL customers (53%) compared to Investigation customers (32%).

The main drivers of overall dissatisfaction are that 'the issue is not resolved', 'nothing has been done' or 'the result was not in the customer's favour'.



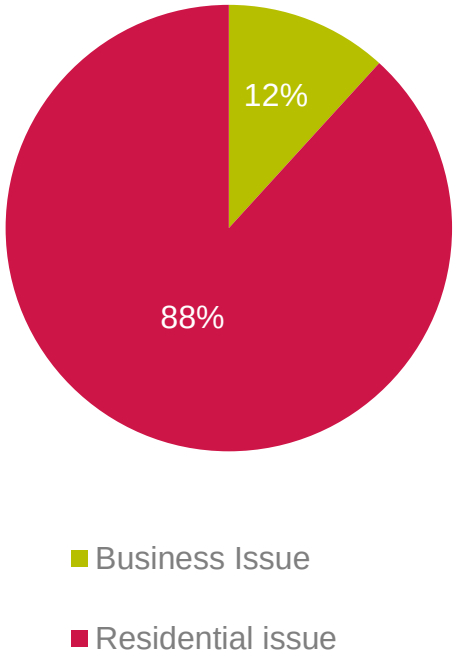
Q23A. Why is that? (Based on Q22)
Base: Very dissatisfied and dissatisfied customers (2011 n=25*; 2013 n=61)

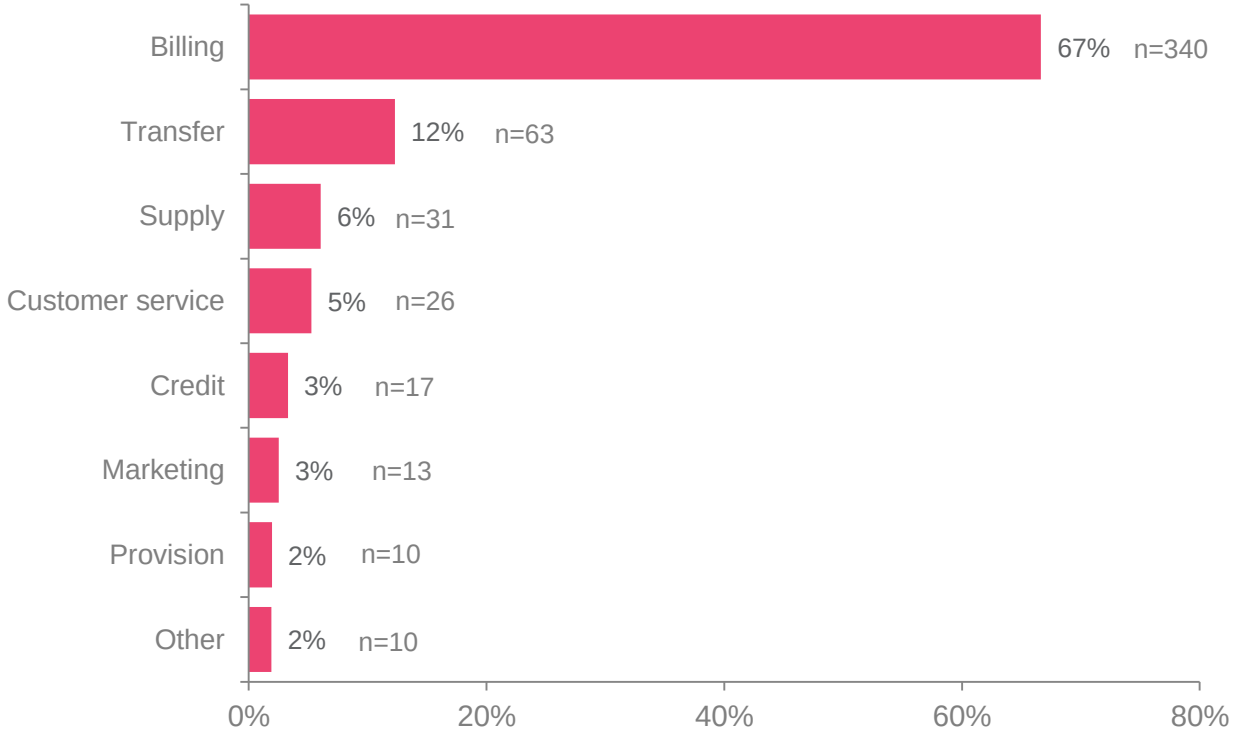
Note: * small sample size

Appendix.

Complaint Classification.

Complaint Classification



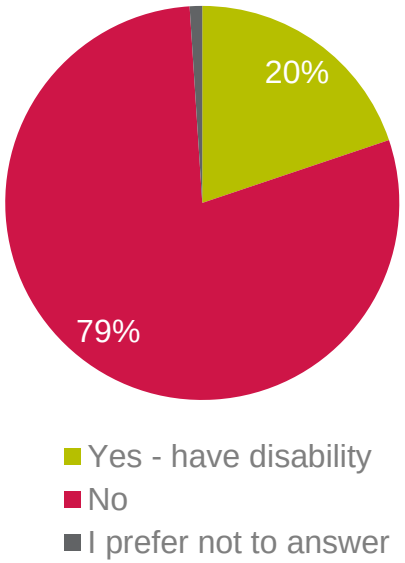


S1B. Thinking about your complaint made on [DATE] to the Energy & Water Ombudsman, was this complaint about a business or domestic/home issue?
Base: Total customers (2013 n=510)

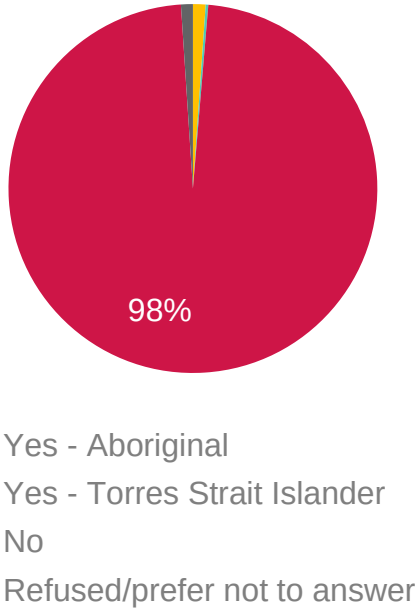
S2. What was your complaint to the Energy & Water Ombudsman about? Was it relating to...
Base: Total customers (2013 n=510)

Demographics.

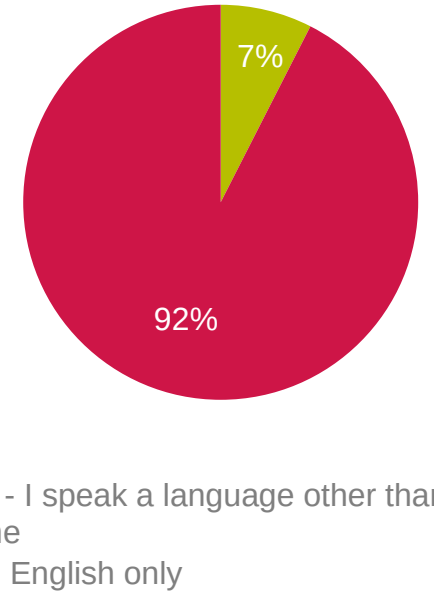
Demographics



D11. Do you have a disability that restricts everyday activities and which has lasted or is likely to last for 6 months or more?
Base: Residential customers (2013 n=450)

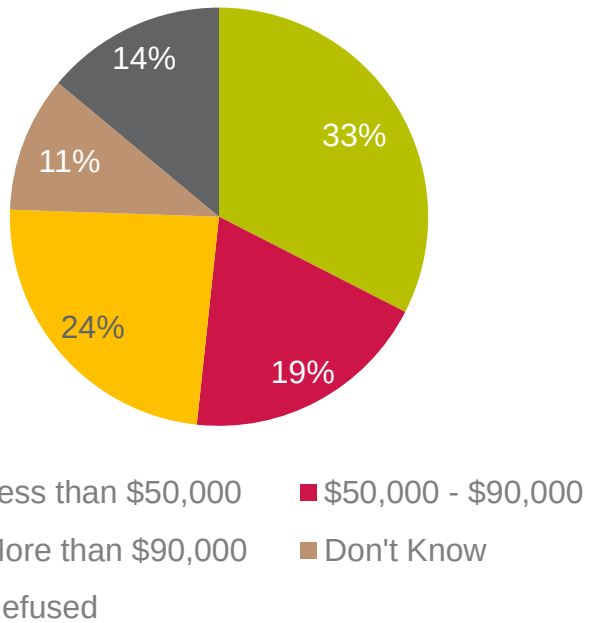


D8. Do you identify yourself as an Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or Australian South Sea Islander?
Base: Residential customers (2013 n=450)

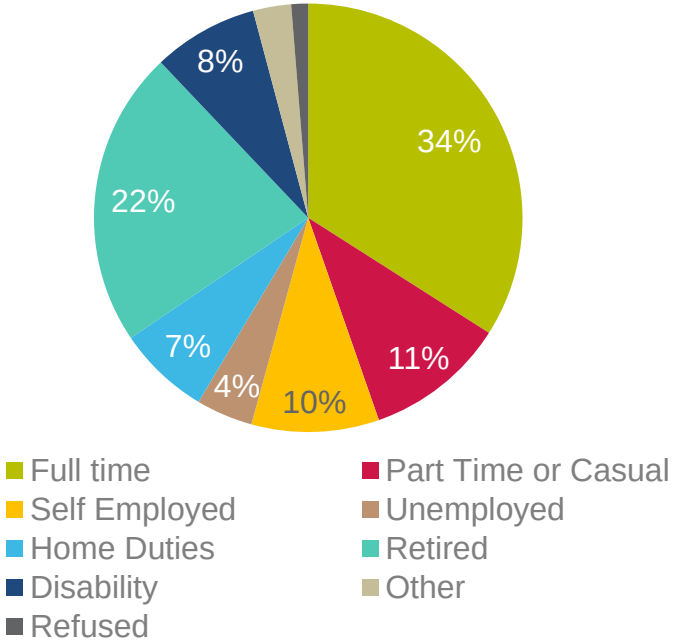


D5. Do you usually speak a language other than English at home?
Base: Residential customers (2013 n=450)

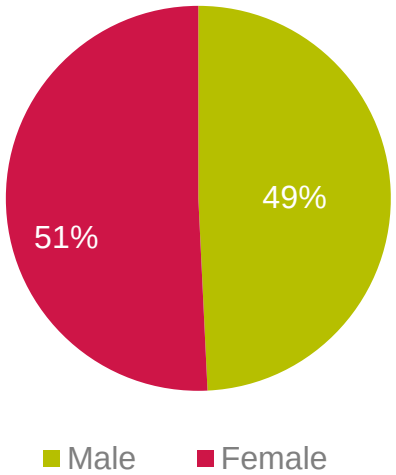
Demographics



D9. What is the total of all wages/salaries., Government benefits, pensions, allowances and other income that your household usually receives?
Base: Residential customers (2013 n=450)

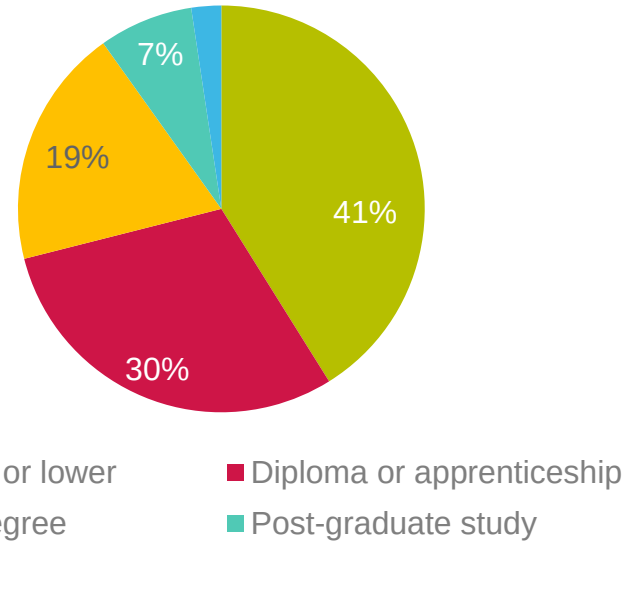


D7. Which of the following best describes what you currently do?
Base: Residential customers (2013 n=450)

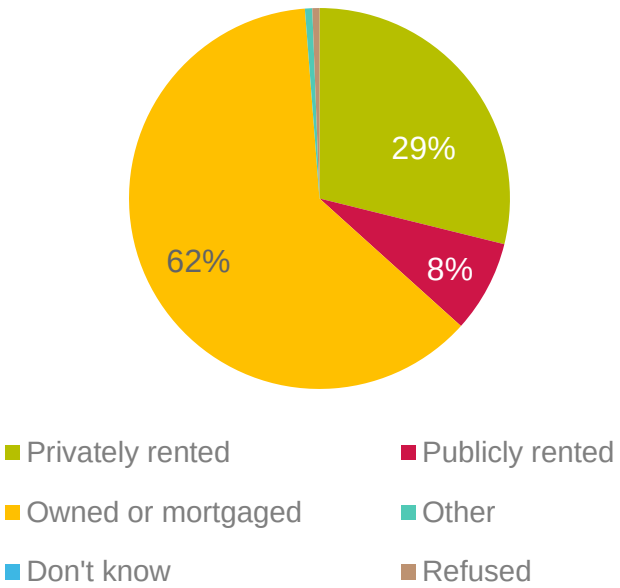


D4. Gender
Base: Residential customers (2013 n=450)

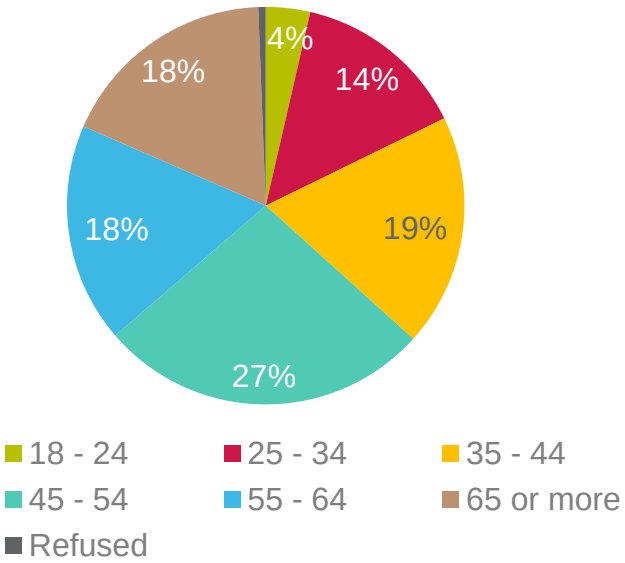
Demographics



D6. What is the highest level of education you have attained?
Base: Residential customers (2013 n=450)



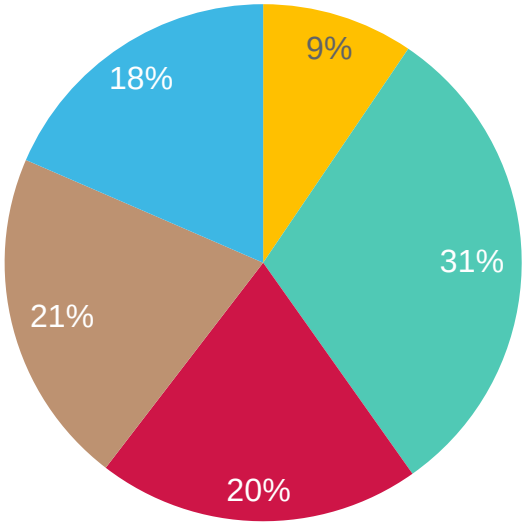
D1. Is your residence?
Base: Residential customers (2013 n=450)



D3. Could you please tell me your age range?
Base: Residential customers (2013 n=450)

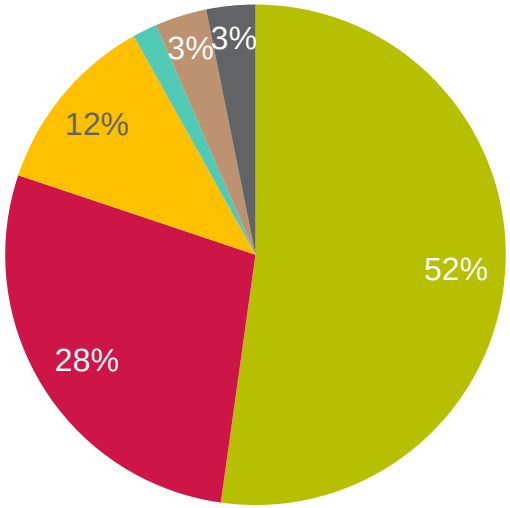
Firmographics.

Firmographics



- Home office
- Commercial offices / premises
- Factory
- Farm
- Other

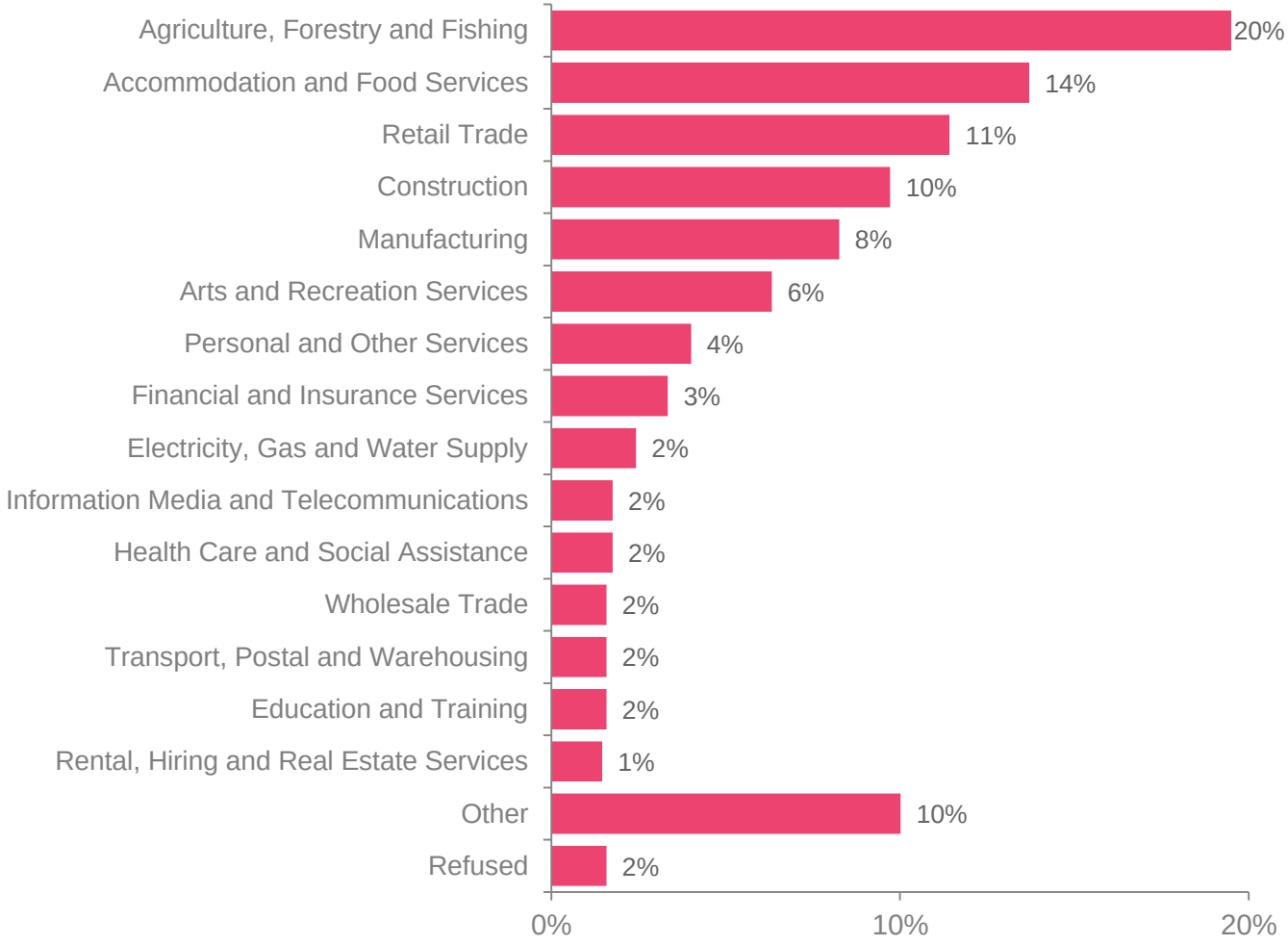
F1. The main premise of your business is best described as a…
Base: Business customers (2013 n=60)



- 1-4 employees
- 5-19 employees
- 20-99 employees
- 100 or more employees
- Don't know
- Refused

F2. Including yourself, how many people does your business currently employ at this site? Please include all full-time, part-time and casual employees?
Base: Business customers (2013 n=60)

Firmographics



F3. And what industry does your business operate in?
Base: Business customers (2013 n=60)

ANZOA Benchmarks.

Benchmark 1: Accessibility

BENCHMARK ACHIEVED

Principle:
EWOQ makes itself readily available to customers by promoting the existence of its service and having no cost or fee barriers.

Purpose:
To promote customer access to the scheme on an equitable basis.

Evaluation:
Overall this benchmark has been **achieved** from a customer perspective.

Key Indicators:
- Customers are finding out about EWOQ's existence through a variety of methods (Q1)
- It is easy to find EWOQ's contact details (88% agree - Q3)
- It is easy to make a complaint to EWOQ (93% agree - Q10)
- A variety of contact methods are available and used (Q6 and Q7)
- It is easy to contact EWOQ during the dispute (83% agree - Q16D).

Benchmark 2: Independence

BENCHMARK ACHIEVED

Principle:
The decision-making process and administration of the scheme are independent from scheme participant, consumer and government influence.

Purpose:
To ensure that the processes and decisions of the scheme are objective and unbiased and are seen to be objective and unbiased.

Evaluation:
Overall this benchmark has been **achieved** from a customer perspective.

Key Indicators:

- The role of EWOQ as an independent dispute resolution service is explained adequately at the beginning of the process (86% agreed - Q4)
- Customers are satisfied that EWOQ's point of view is independent/unbiased (79% satisfied - Q18).

Benchmark 3: Fairness

BENCHMARK ACHIEVED

Principle:
The scheme produces decisions which are fair and seen to be fair by observing the principles of procedural fairness, by making decisions on the information before it and by having specific criteria upon which its decisions are based.

Purpose:
To ensure that the decisions of the scheme are fair and are seen to be fair.

Evaluation:
Overall this benchmark has been **achieved** from a customer perspective. However, results for this benchmark are significantly weaker in 2013 compared to 2011.

Key Indicators:
Customers are satisfied that:

- EWOQ made sufficient efforts to fully understand their complaint (86% satisfied - Q16C)
- EWOQ's point of view is independent/unbiased (79% satisfied - Q16D)
- They were given the opportunity to present their side of the case (85% satisfied - Q18E)
- They were given the assistance needed to present their side of the case (72% satisfied - Q18F)
- EWOQ provided them with a clear indication of the process the customer needed to go through in order to make a complaint and resolve their issue (93% agree - Q5)

In addition, a decreasing proportion of customers believe the outcomes to be in their favour (52% in 2013; 62% in 2011 - Q11).

Benchmark 4: Accountability

NOT APPLICABLE

Principle:
EWOQ publicly accounts for its operations by publishing information about complaints and highlighting any systemic industry problems.

Purpose:
To ensure public confidence in the scheme and allow assessment and improvement of its performance and that of scheme participants.

Key Indicators:
This benchmark was not assessed in detail in the customer satisfaction survey.

Benchmark 5: Efficiency

BENCHMARK ACHIEVED

Principle:
The scheme operates efficiently by keeping track of complaints, ensuring complaints are dealt with by the appropriate process or forum and regularly reviewing its performance.

Purpose:
To give customers and scheme participants confidence in the scheme and to ensure the scheme provides value for its funding.

Evaluation:
Overall this benchmark has been **achieved** from a customer perspective. Overall customer satisfaction, however, has declined from 88% satisfied (2011) to 82% satisfied (2013).

Key Indicators:
- The benchmark of 80% customer satisfaction has been exceeded (82% satisfied - Q22)
- Most cases are resolved in two or less contacts (58% - Q8) and cases are mainly dealt with the same person all of the time (53% - Q9)
- Customers generally believed the time taken to resolve their case was either as expected (35%) or shorter than expected (35% - Q21)
- Customers are generally satisfied with the time taken to resolve their dispute (74% satisfied - Q18A).

Benchmark 6: Effectiveness

BENCHMARK ACHIEVED

Principle:
The scheme is effective by adhering to appropriate and comprehensive terms of reference and undergoing periodic independent reviews of its performance.

Purpose:
To promote customer confidence in the scheme and ensure that the scheme fulfils its role.

Evaluation:
Overall this benchmark has been **achieved** from a customer perspective.

Key Indicators:
- Customers are satisfied that the role of EWOQ is adequately explained at the start of the process (86% satisfied - Q4)
- Approximately 1 in 10 customers (11%) indicated that EWOQ needs more power (Q25)
- Customers are satisfied with the knowledge, skills and expertise of EWOQ staff (84% satisfied - Q16A).

Thanks.

colmar brunton.