



# Customer Communications Consultation

November 2019

# Background



## Rationale:

Our aim is to provide customers with clear, relevant and useful information that is easy to understand and personal to them.

We have recently been talking to customers face-to-face, across the country, about customer communications. Some strong themes have emerged from the feedback we have received so far. We now want to find out whether these views are shared by customers we were not able to meet in person.

# Background



## Sample size:

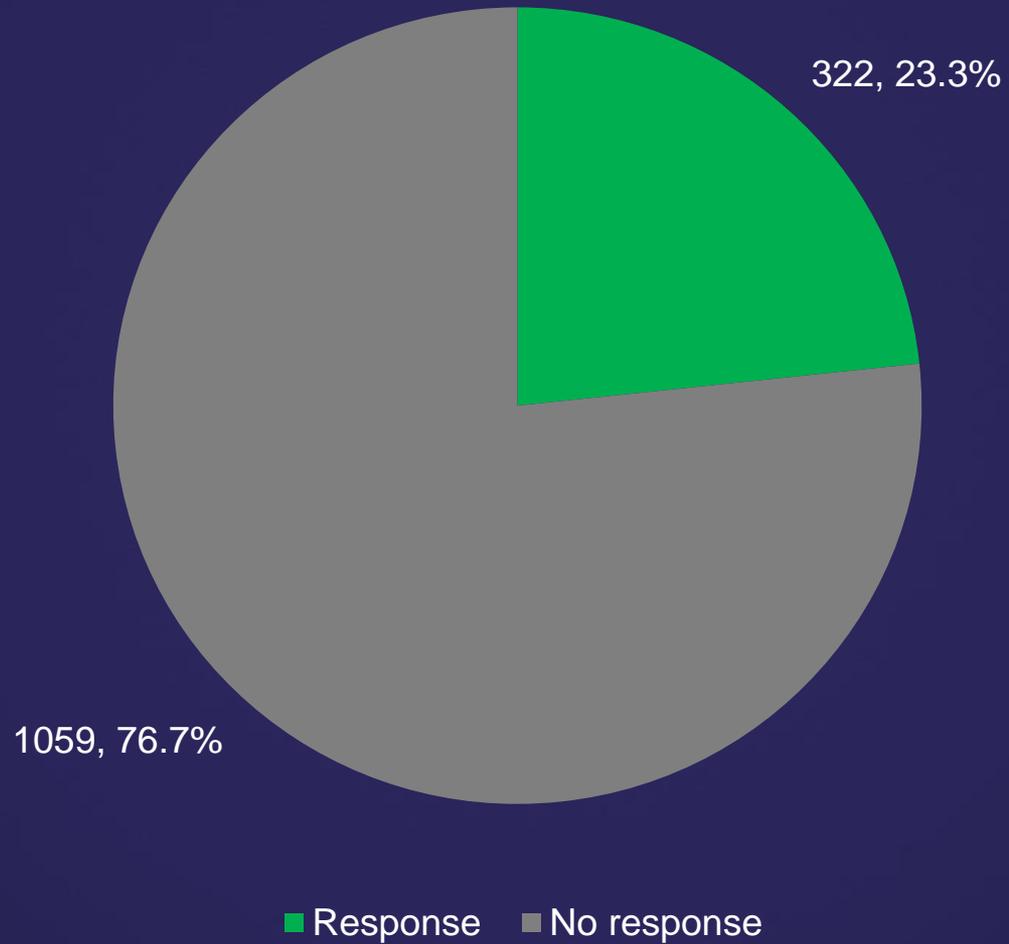
Members of the Accent 500 and those who expressed an interest in taking part in a focus group but were not able to attend were invited to take part in the survey by email. A corresponding number of residents were invited to take part in the survey by text message and by post, where possible, via residents' preferred contact channel. A total of 1,381 residents were invited to take part.

The consultation was open for two weeks and yielded 322 responses (23.3%) with a margin of error of  $\pm 5.5\%$

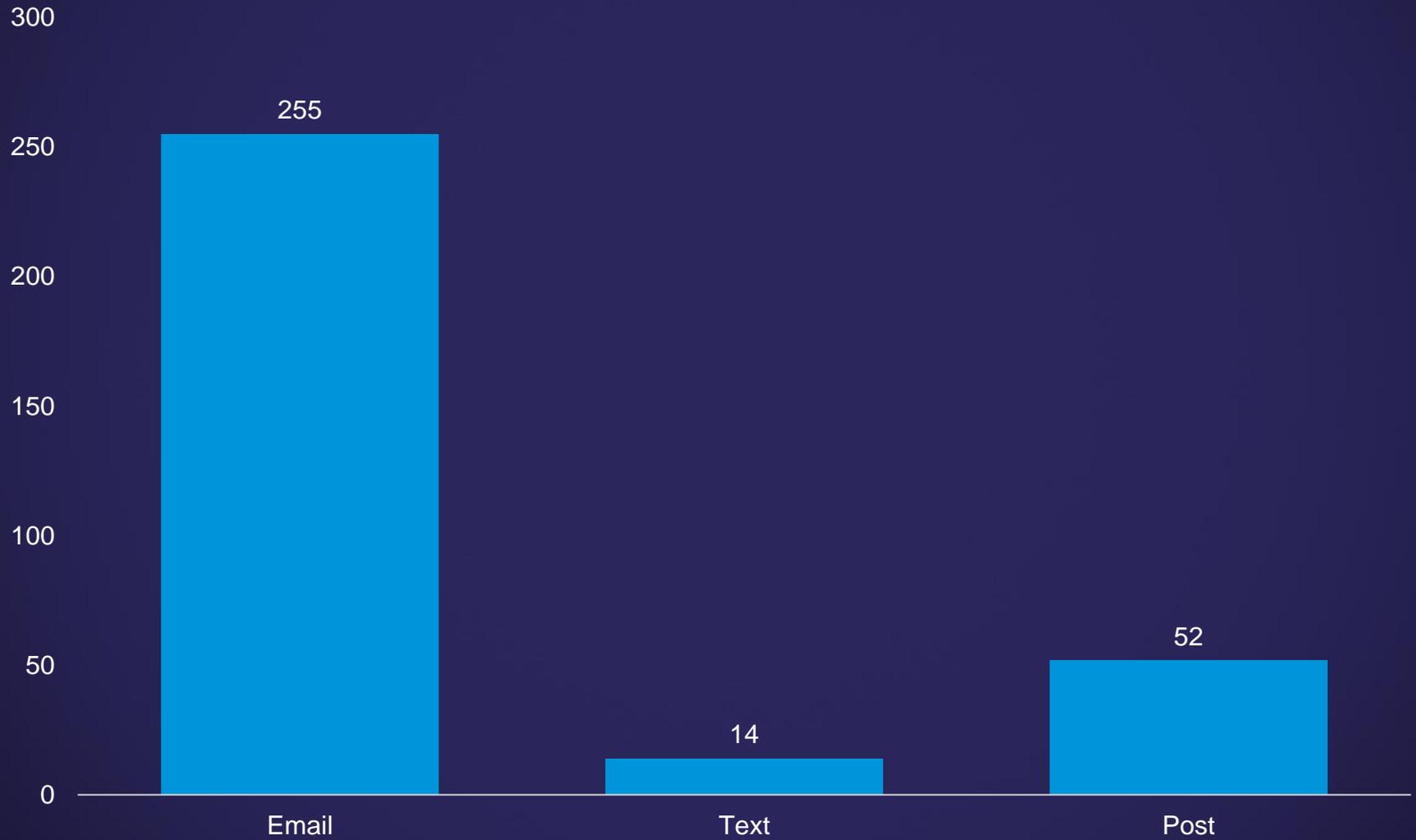
## Notes:

Participants in the postal survey were not asked about online communications.

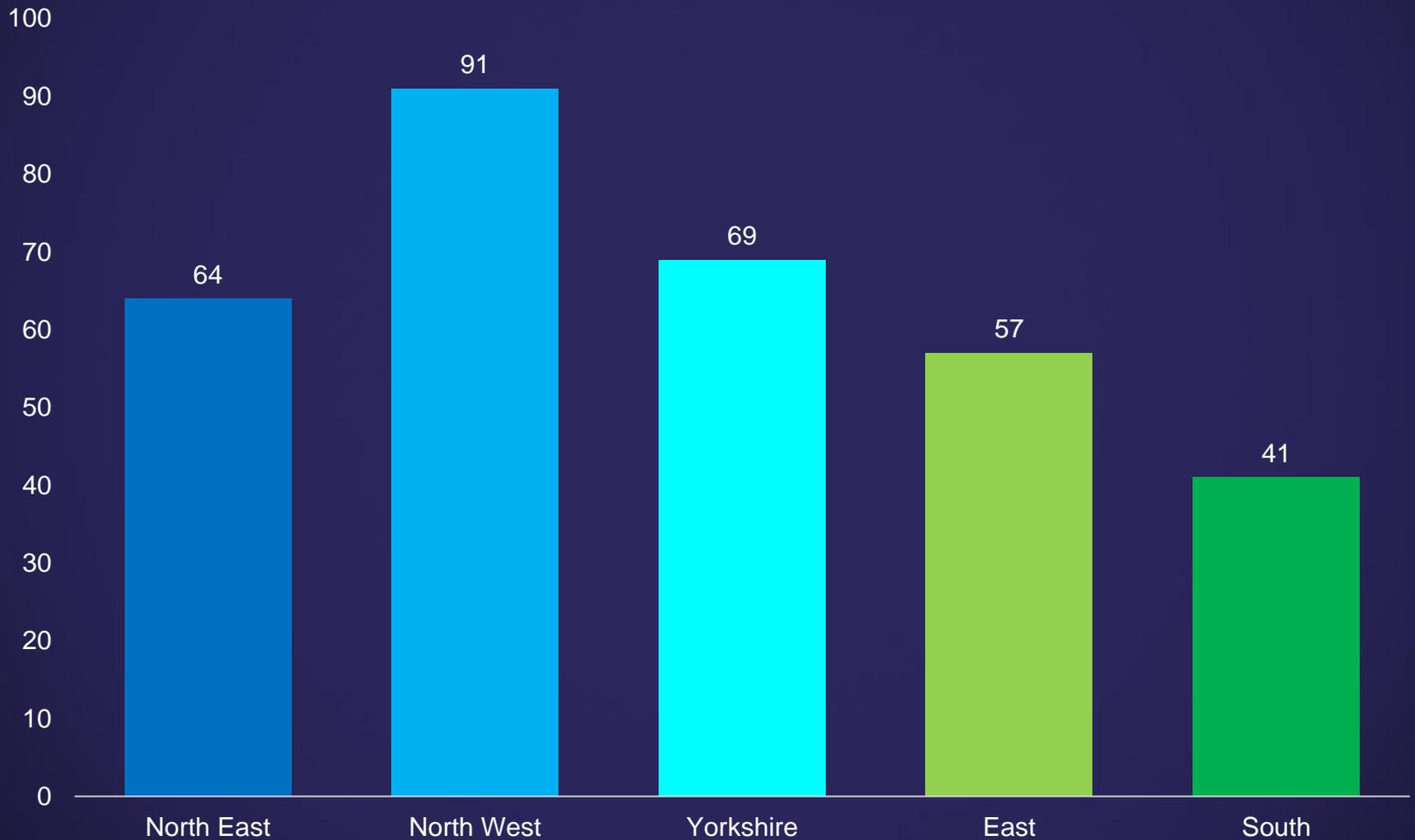
# Responses



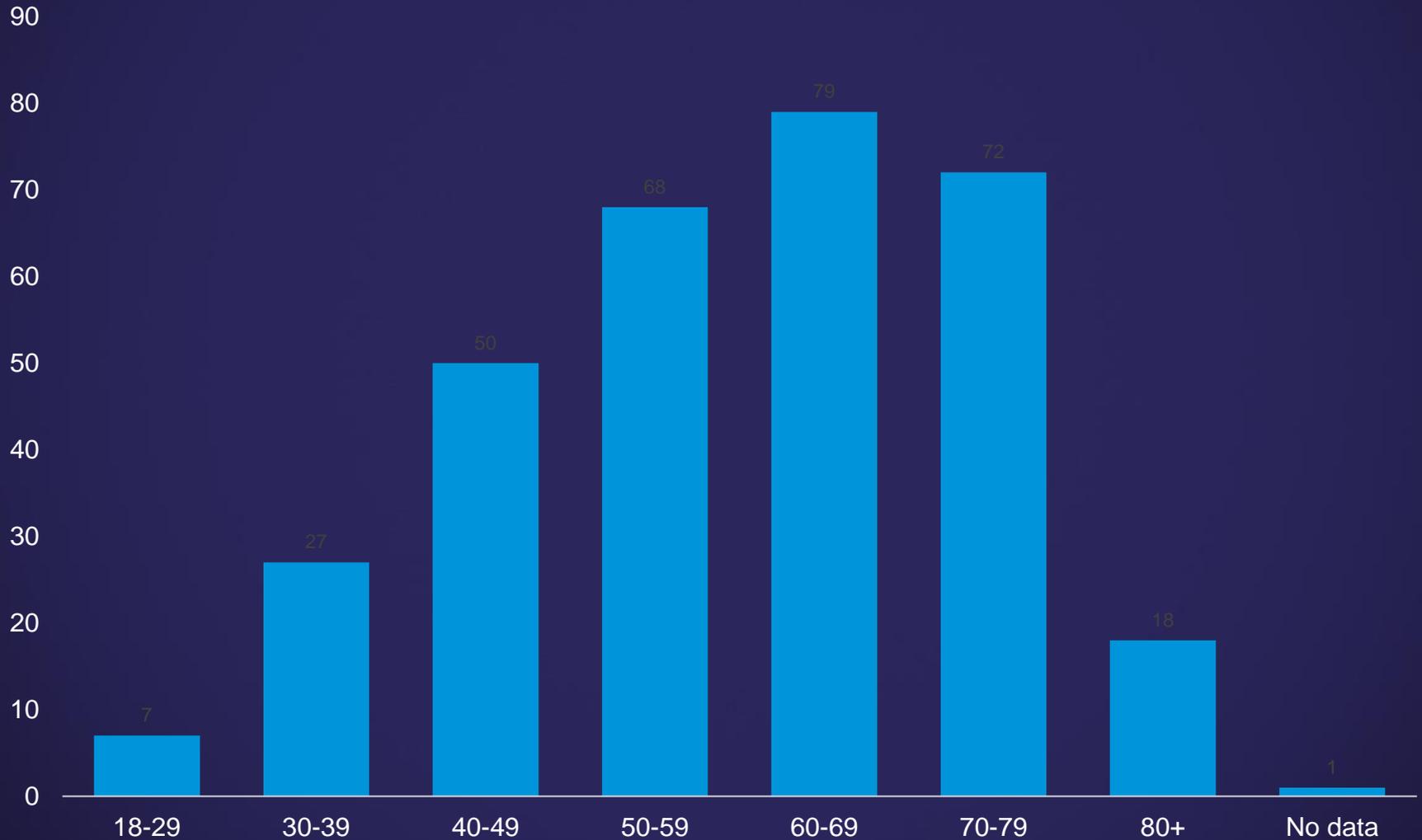
# Responses by Method



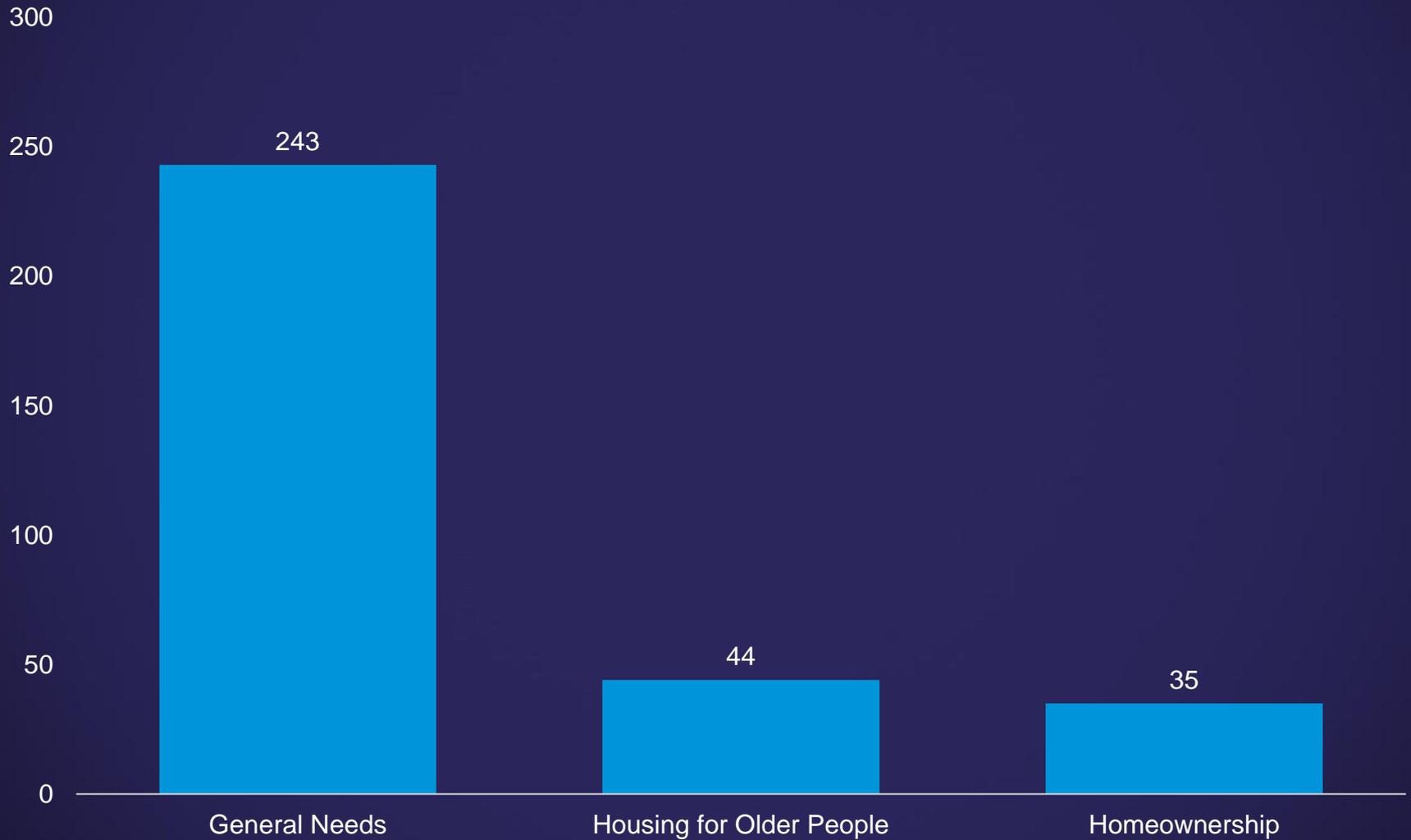
# Responses by Region



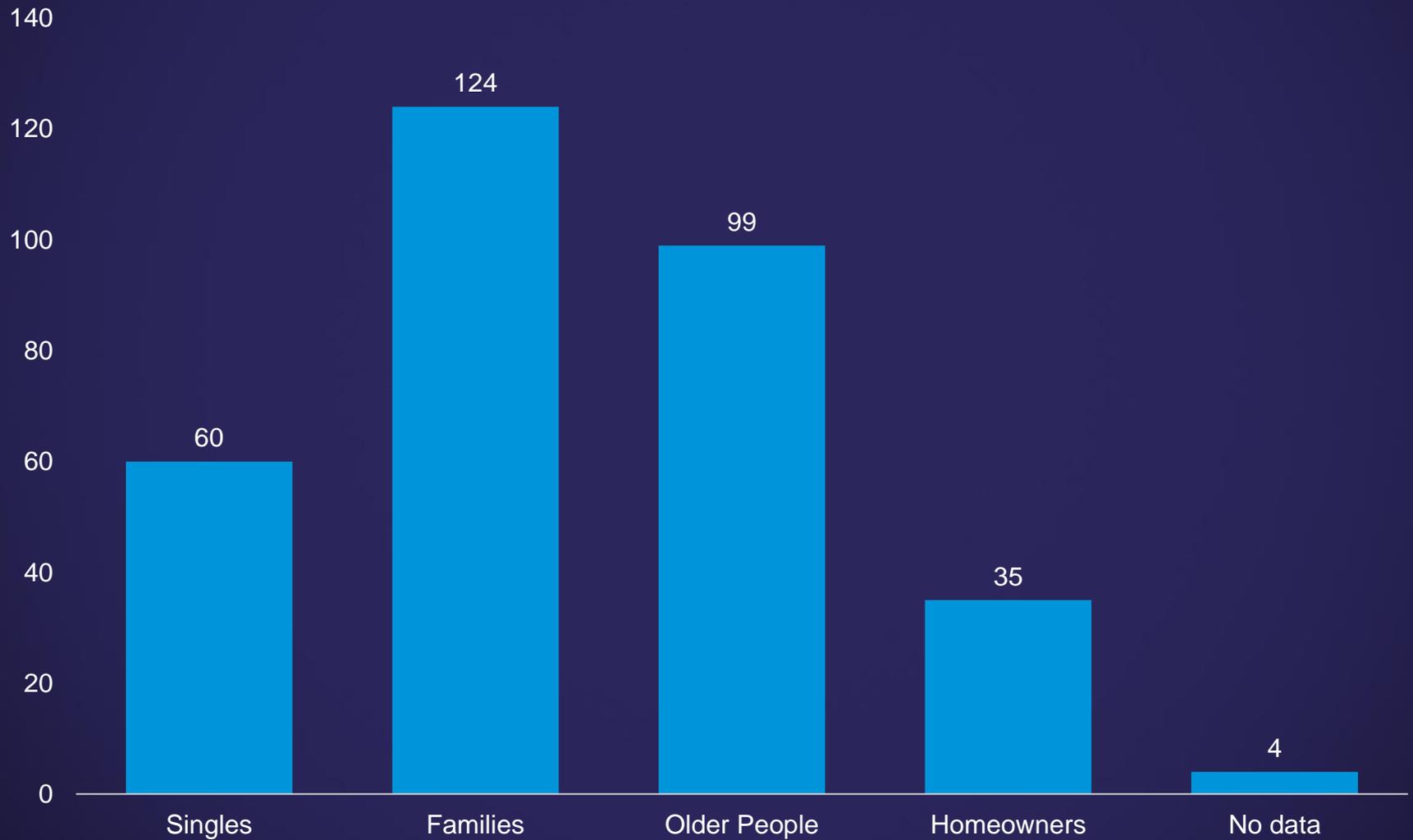
# Responses by Age Band



# Responses by Tenure Type



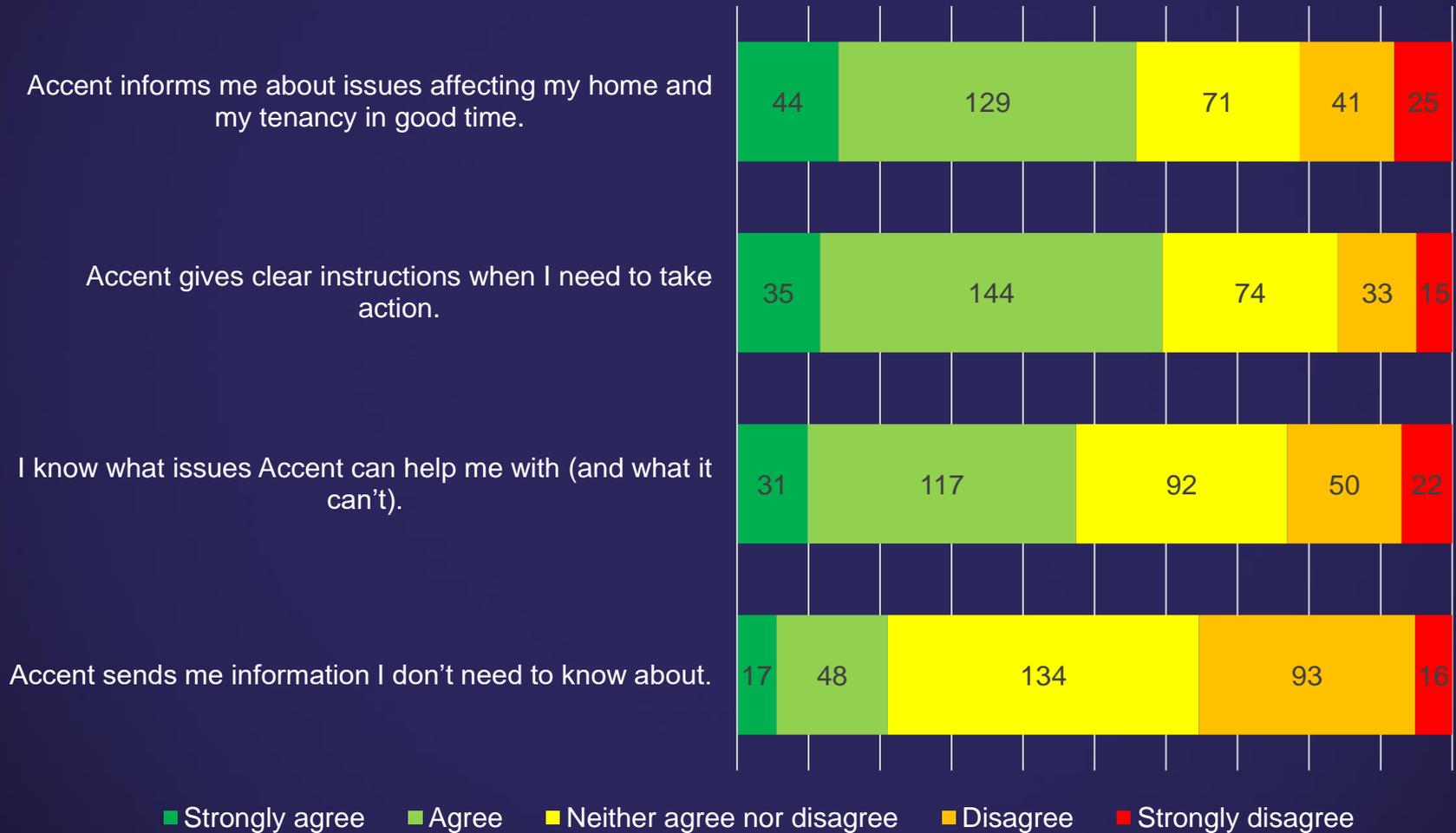
# Responses by Household Type



# Content



0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%



# Tone



0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

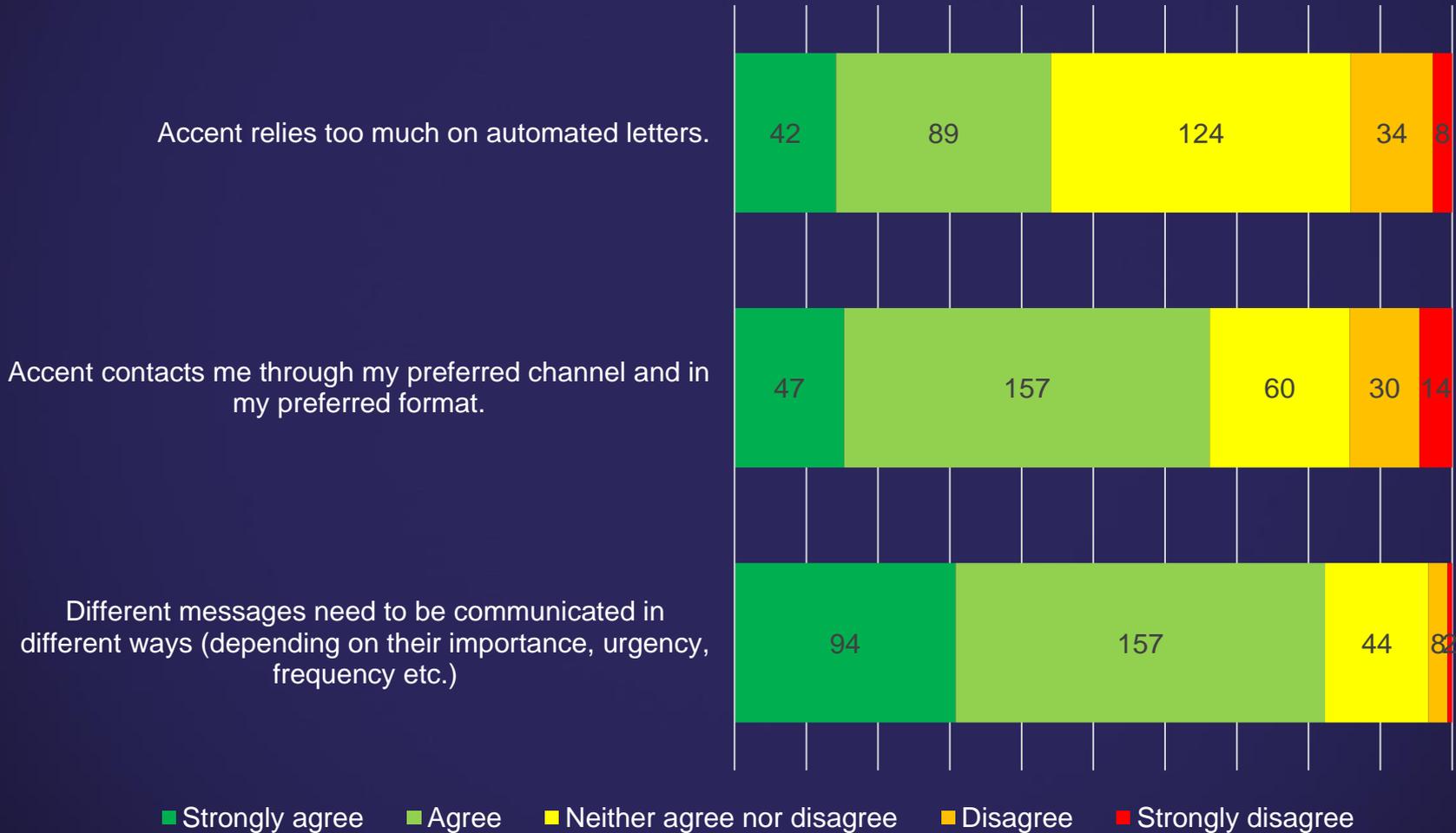


■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

# Channel



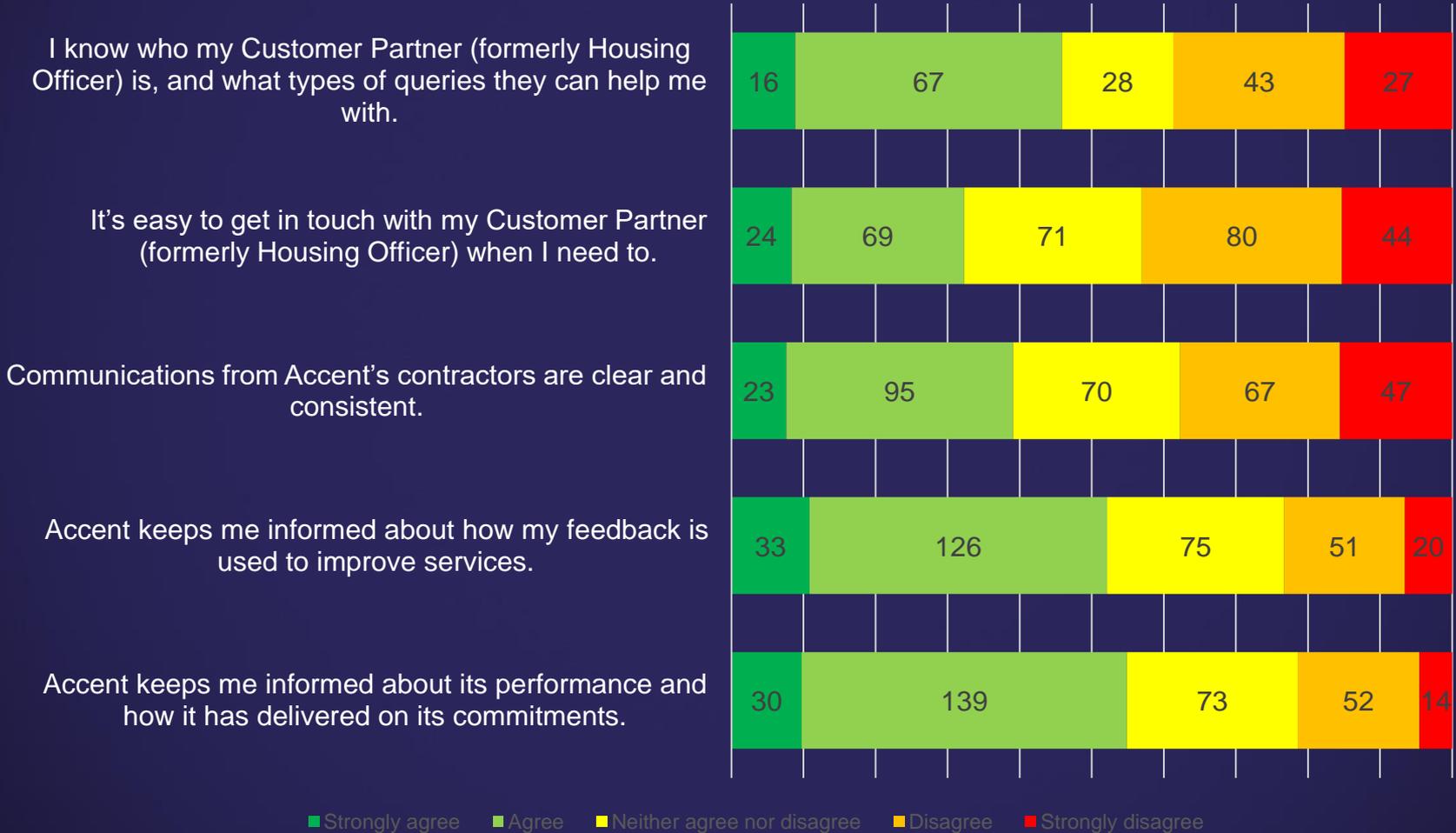
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# Keeping you informed



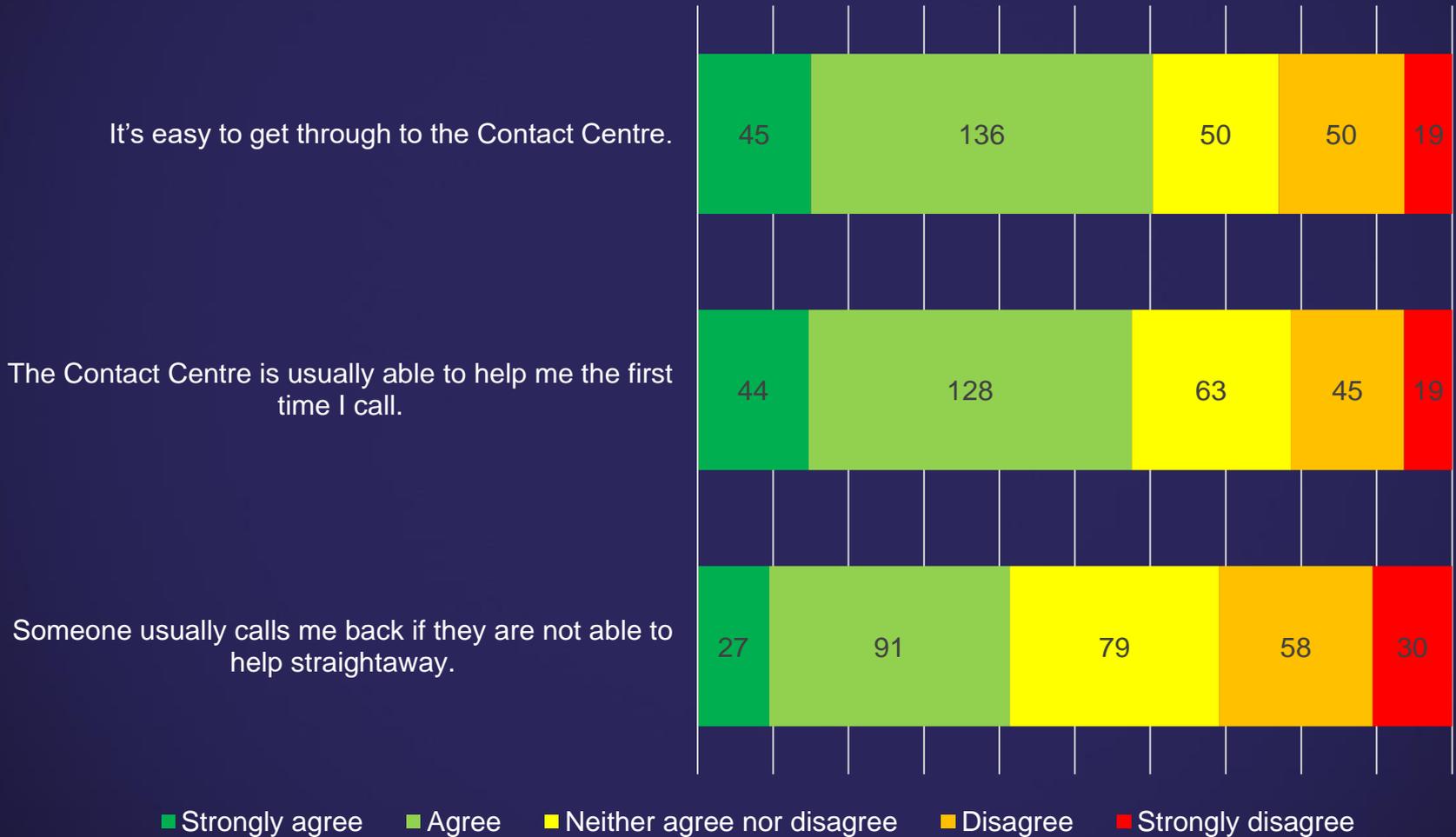
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# Contact Centre



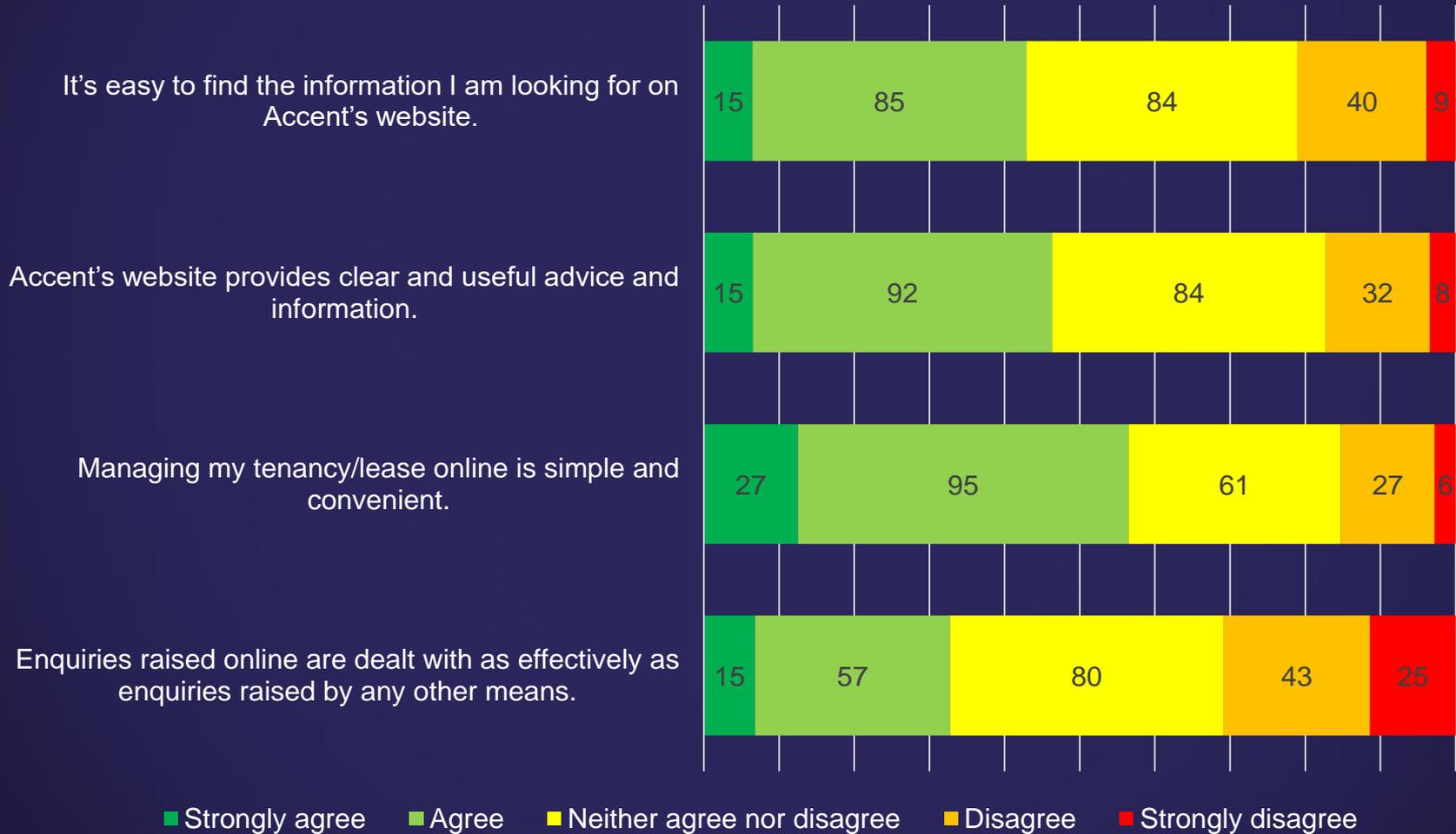
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# Online



0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%



# Is there anything you would like to be able to do online, but are not currently able to?



As a shared-owner, get clear absolute detail on each of the actual annual charges to my property, accounting for itemised differences between estimates and final amounts charged.

Check live status of repairs request, i.e. SLA with contractor, change date of booked in appointments. Provide photo evidence to support repairs raised to ensure the right contractor is allocated.

Email acknowledgment of works requested so you know they have gone through.

Get any kind of response about repairs or even to log a repair effectively. Get any real understanding of my account e.g. how it breaks down into major works and anything else.

# Is there anything you would like to be able to do online, but are not currently able to?



I have tried to communicate problems online in the past and even sent photos but since they didn't reach anyone who could respond and help, I've stopped trying. I find it a very impersonal method.

I think the page is hard to get round and needs to be made better in general. The account page is good and the online chat is useless.

I'd like to be able to see contact details for my housing officer, I don't remember her name.

I'd like to be able to see the repairs page in greater depth for example date, time, who is attending, outcome, customer satisfied - yes or no, further feedback etc.

# Is there anything you would like to be able to do online, but are not currently able to?



To look for housing swaps with other Accent tenants and/or to be able to be considered for an alternative Accent property that becomes vacant in a more suitable area, so that our current property may be offered for potential Accent residents.

Video call customer services through any smartphone. Maybe an Accent video call app for those who rely on lip-reading.

What needs to be updated in the homes and also to inform Accent of concerns regarding neighbours or problems round our living areas.

Not all areas of my home are covered by the repairs options on my online account, e.g. plastering issues.

# Do you have any other comments about Accent's customer communications?



Accent can consistently use email communications to update customers instead of relying on post. It is a faster way and reduces carbon foot print for those who choose it.

Accent clearly despise their customers and it's very apparent. We are given as little information as possible and usually far too late.

Live chat is a waste of time as nobody ever replies and the sessions are timed out. Extremely frustrating as it's also impossible to get through to the call centre and I don't have time to keep trying all day as I'm working.

Complaints are not dealt with as quickly as they could be. No communication from Accent after a complaint is submitted, we are left in the dark.

# Do you have any other comments about Accent's customer communications?



Confirmation emails of any phone calls that are made, or be able to see the verbal communication and details of what customer services have written about the call.

Often unclear what is happening and either informed too late or not at all, before work is carried. Makes you feel Accent are not interested in the views of its tenants as they have no input, as a result of bad communications.

I did not know the housing officer's title had changed. This has never been communicated to me, despite this survey being in communications which is rather ironic!

I think there needs to be a more connected communication between tenant, Accent and contractor. It would be helpful if tenants know when something is being done to their home. And if it has in fact been done.

# Do you have any other comments about Accent's customer communications?



I personally stopped three different households from paying last year's £160 correction as they all thought it was an arrears letter when it was in fact a credit. I doubt very much your letters have the 'crystal clear' accreditation.

All considered letters are sent out, with a distinct lack of attempts to communicate directly first either by phone or email.

Is there a way to stop sending letters regarding rent arrears when there are none? This usually happens if the month begins on a Saturday. It is a waste of paper and money and causes more work for your staff answering calls regarding this matter.

Needs immediate improvement to restore trust.

# Conclusions



- 1 out of 5 respondents felt that Accent fails to inform them about issues affecting their tenancy and their homes in good time. Comments indicated that when customers are required to take action, Accent does not give enough notice.
- 1 out of 5 customers feel that Accent does not give clear instructions when they are required to take action. Comments indicated that customers sometimes receive conflicting instruction from Accent and its contractors.
- Respondents felt a distinct lack of clarity around account information, particularly in the case of homeowners.
- 4 out of 5 respondents agreed that Accent's communications are in 'Plain English' but were less inclined to agree that communications are personal and relevant to their circumstances.
- 1 out of 3 respondents disagreed that it is clear Accent cares about its customers from the way in which it communicates with them. Apart from being able to get in touch with the Customer Partner, this was the area in which respondents expressed the lowest levels of satisfaction.

# Conclusions



- The majority of respondents agreed that different messages need to be communicated in different ways. 2 out of 3 respondents agreed that Accent communicates with them through their preferred contact channel.
- Less than half of respondents know who their Customer Partner is and less than one third of respondents found it easy to get in touch with their Customer Partner. Some respondents indicated that they were not aware the job title of the Housing Officer had changed.
- Respondents' comments indicated that they would like to be able to speak with their Customer Partner directly, without having to go through the Contact Centre. Comments indicated that customers see the Contact Centre as a barrier rather than a benefit in such instances.
- Respondents tended to agree that enquiries are resolved at the first point of contact by the Contact Centre, but respondents were less inclined to agree that someone usually calls them back if the Contact Centre are not able to help them straightway.

# Conclusions



- Less than half of respondents agreed that it was easy to find information on the website or that the website provides clear and useful advice.
- More than one third of respondents felt that enquiries raised online were not dealt with as effectively as enquiries raised through other means. Comments indicated that customers who had suffered a negative experience online would be deterred from using online services in the future.
- Respondents would have liked acknowledgement of requests submitted online to provide assurance that they had been received, and were being dealt with appropriately.
- While more than half of respondents found managing their tenancy/lease online convenient, comments indicated that many had experienced problems logging in.
- Respondents' comments revealed that while online services are used and valued, they still prefer personal contact from time-to-time.

# Conclusions



- Respondents felt that the repairs functionality of MyAccount could benefit from improvements such as: facility to upload photos to support repair requests, repairs status, name of contractor, ability to change or cancel appointments and facility to provide feedback.
- Some respondents, particularly homeowners, would like MyAccount to provide more detailed account information. Others would have liked MyAccount to provide more detail about planned works.
- Respondents suggested that response times to web-chat are poor.
- There appears to be an appetite for more communication by email although this is in part because customers like to have a record of correspondence, suggesting that they don't trust us.
- Respondents felt that Accent fails to keep them informed about the progress of enquiries and complaints.
- Respondents' comments alluded to Accent's reliance on auto-generated letters, which feel impersonal and in some cases unhelpful.