



# Corporate Strategy Survey

August 2020

# Background



## **Rationale:**

In 2018 Accent launched its Corporate Strategy, in which we stated our aim to be with customers for their journeys. The purpose of this survey is to check we are still heading in the right direction.

Each question describes a change we have made, or are making, to our services and the reasons for this. We then asked for feedback on each of these changes, one at a time.

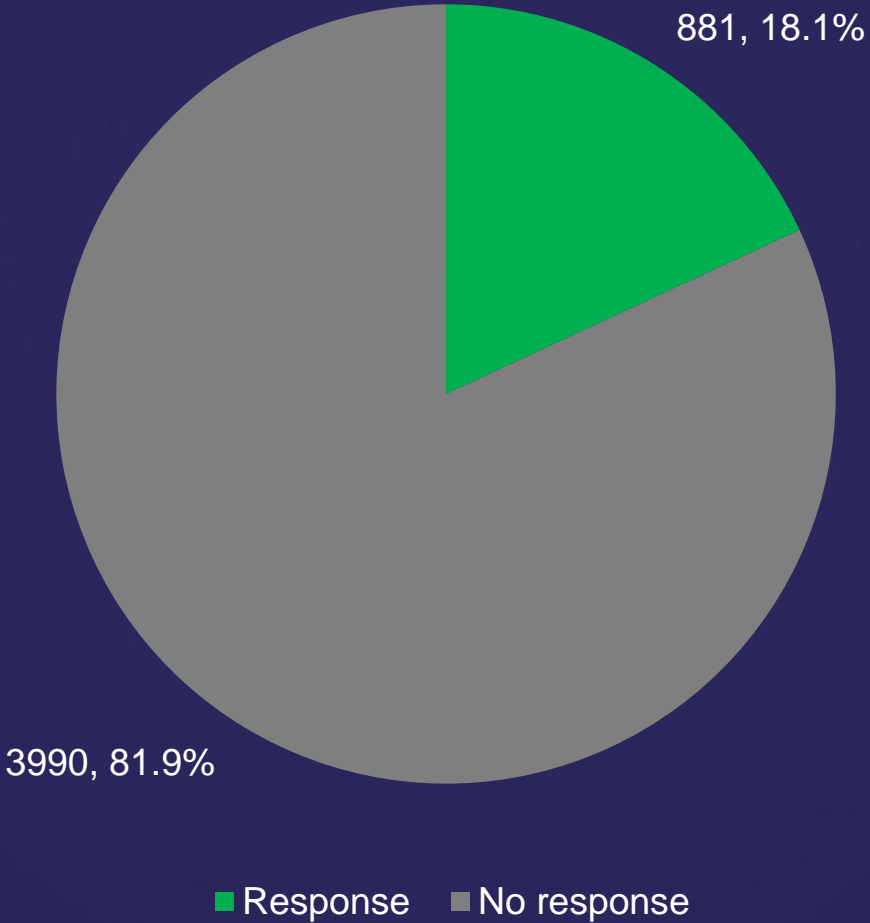
The results of this survey will inform our new 3-Year Corporate Strategy.

## **Sample size:**

All members of the Accent 500 were invited to take part in this consultation as well as a representative cross section of the wider customer population. The survey was carried out exclusively by email. Two attempts were made to contact customers. The consultation was open for two weeks.

In total, the survey yielded 881/4871 responses (18.1%) with a margin of error of  $\pm 3.3\%$ .

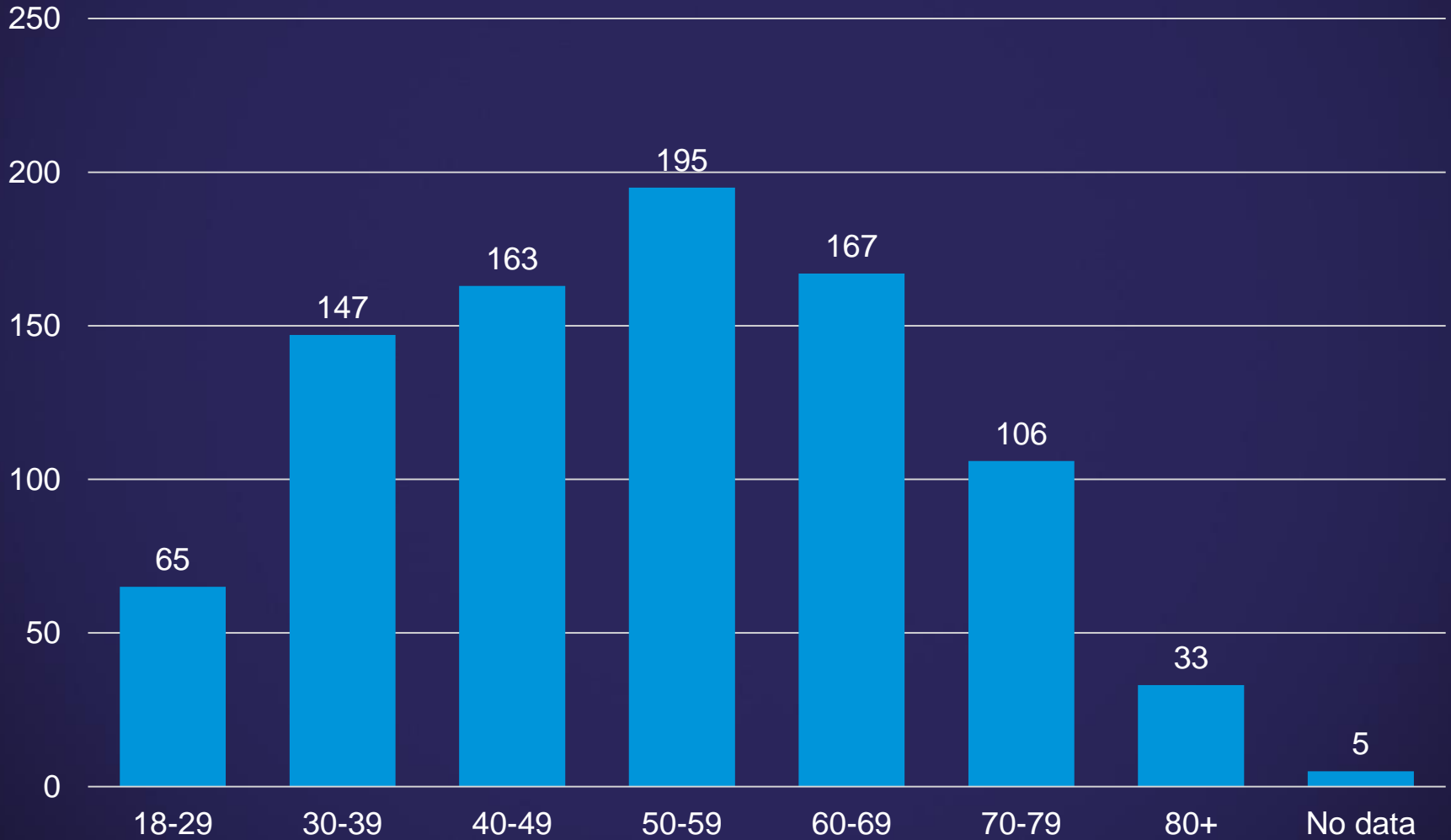
# Responses



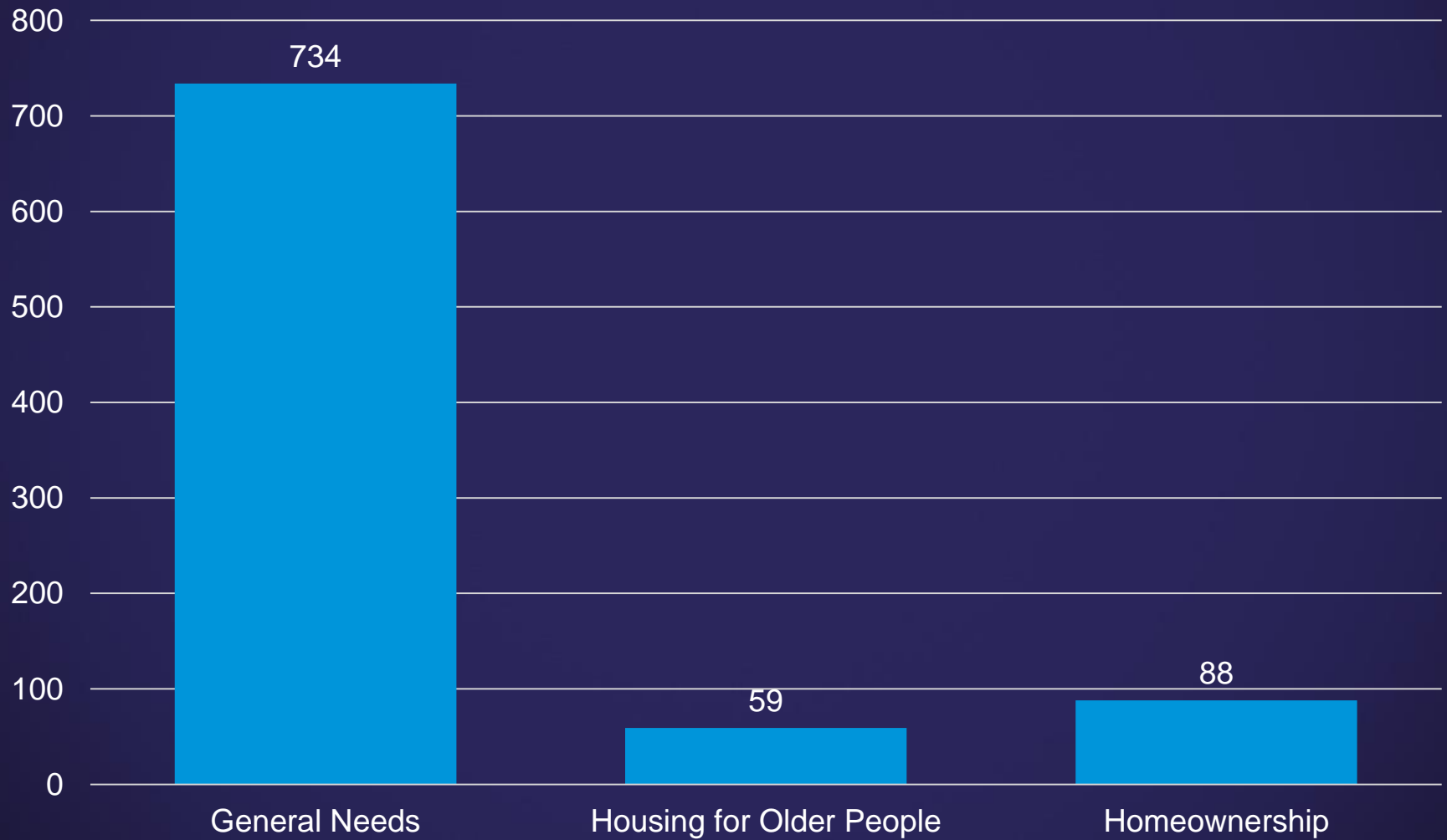
# Responses by Region



# Responses by Age Band



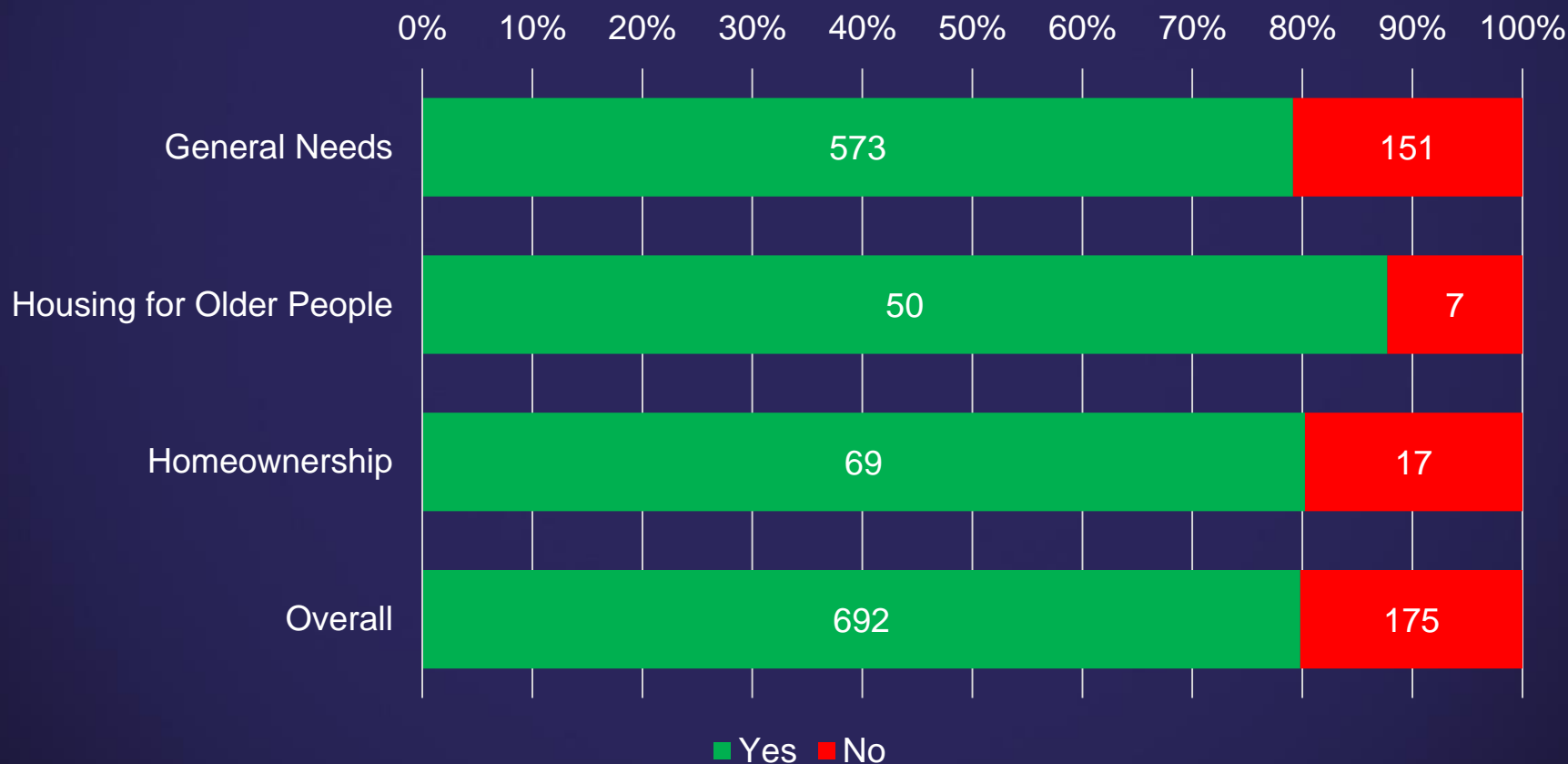
# Responses by Tenure Type



**Prioritising calls:** Our offices are currently closed and our Contact Centre colleagues have been working at home. Normal service levels have now resumed, but at times we have needed to prioritise the most urgent calls.



Should Accent prioritise calls from the most vulnerable customers and those with the most urgent needs, and encourage other customers to use its online services (website, web-chat, email and MyAccount)?



If **yes**, please let us know why you feel this way:



Non-urgent calls would tie up staff that are needed for urgent or vulnerable customers.

**Miss G, Camberley**

Being disabled, elderly, suffering with mental health or any other health issues can lead people to feel isolated and lonely.

**Mr C, Nottingham**

Customers with urgent needs should be helped before those with non-urgent needs as their needs require a quicker response and this seems to be the outcome of calling.

**Miss H, Peterborough**

I am lucky I can use online services. Older people may not be able to so therefore they must have telephone access as a priority.

**Miss H, Leeds**

I find the app very easy to use, however maybe a separate contact number for the vulnerable would make things easier for them.

**Mrs M, Leyland**

I'm classed as vulnerable because of my mental health and physical health issues. I have recently sent two emails and haven't had a reply from either.

**Mrs K, Rushden**

It feels the fairest way to do things. The website and portal are really easy to use, so we should be utilising it.

**Mrs C, Camberley**

Many of the most vulnerable tenants will have difficulty in accessing online services, they would benefit from human contact and special needs may be picked up in conversation.

**Mrs M, Peterborough**

Vulnerable customers should always come first... Accent could consider internet training within their Independent Living schemes to encourage the use of their online services.

**Ms T, Nottingham**



If **no**, please let us know why you feel this way:



All people should have the same service and not all customers wish to use online services.

**Mr P, Bradford**

How can you say whose calls are more serious than others? I am not a vulnerable person but if my roof is blown off then I am in more need than a vulnerable person with a minor problem.

**Mr M, Ossett**

I wonder what algorithm Accent would use to decide who the most vulnerable customers are.

**Ms C, Leeds**

Impossible to contact Accent by phone/email/webchat. I recently emailed a complaint regarding a problem with my toilet and had no response.

**Miss H, Bradford**

Residents should be able to choose their contact channel of preference and not be nudged/cajoled/shamed in to what is more convenient to Accent.

**Mr W, Bradford**

How would you know if a call is urgent until you have spoken to the person? Every call is important.

**Mr G, St Ives**

While more use of other methods of communication should be encouraged, there will always be a percentage of customers who will wish to do things personally...

**Mr A, Bradford**

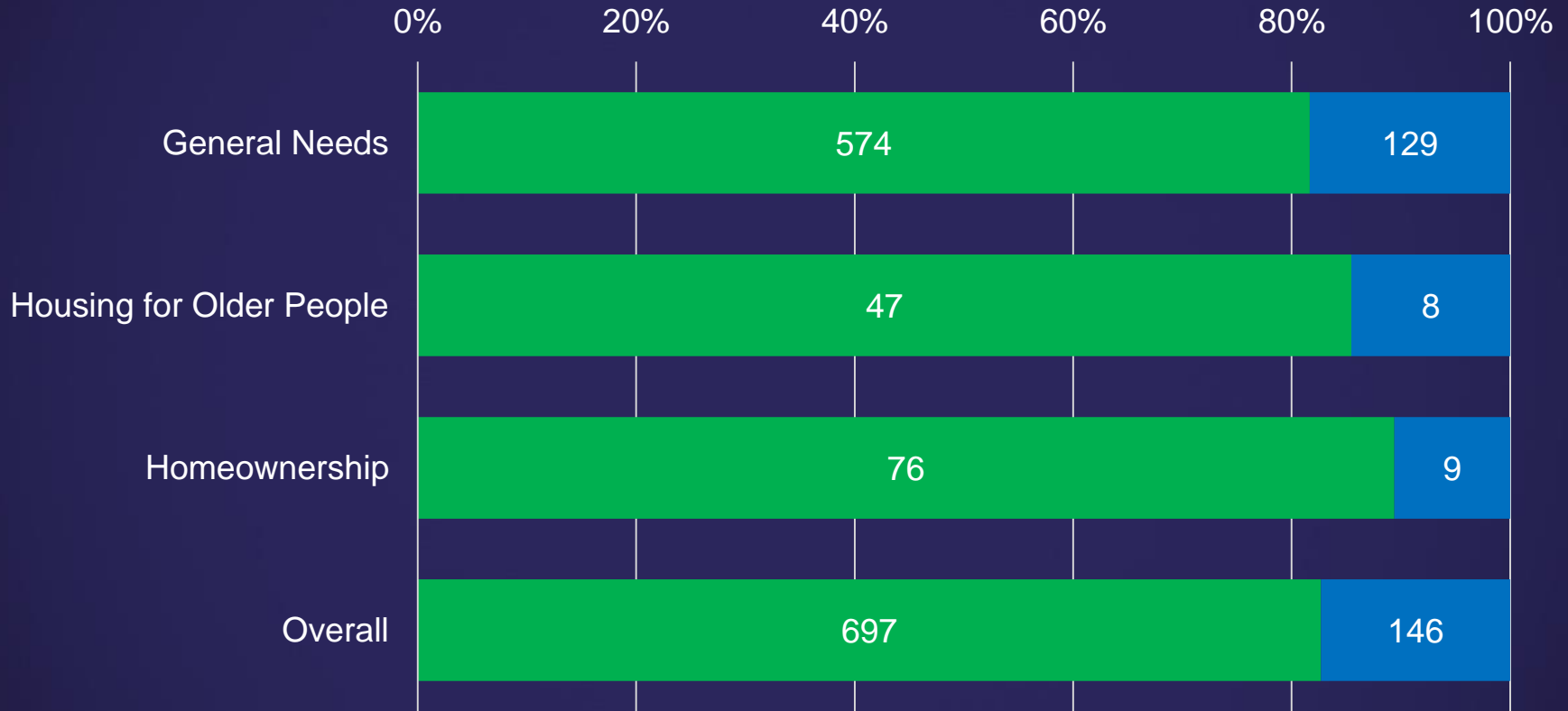
Anyone can be vulnerable at anytime and circumstances can change. The portal does not always work. MyAccount has never worked.

**Mrs H, Camberley**

Because in my experience the online notification doesn't work. I'm saying this as a vulnerable person too. Also many people won't have access, or find it too difficult.

**Miss H, Huddersfield**

**Customer communications:** Given the pace at which things are changing, and with limited access to print and post, we have attempted to keep customers updated about our services by email and via the website.



- I would prefer to be kept updated about changes to services as and when they happen.
- If I need to know what services are available, I'll check myself (call the Contact Centre, visit the website, check MyAccount etc.).

**'I would prefer to be kept updated about changes to services as and when they happen' – Please let us know why you feel this way.**



Always nice for customers to be kept updated about changes as and when they happen, could save unwanted calls to the Contact Centre.

**Miss A, Stanley**

Because more people calling for information about services available could stop someone with urgent needs getting the help they need.

**Mr D, Leeds**

Accent really keeps us in the dark. It talks about good communication, but this does not happen.

**Mr T, Ashford**

Emails are great, so much better than printed materials... I have checked the website in the past but found it didn't answer all of my questions and was sometimes a bit slow to update.

**Mrs H, Burnley**

I am always interested in the emails that Accent send when a new service has been launched or a current service has been given a makeover. It makes me feel I am a part of Accent...

**Mrs K, Rushden**

I am too lazy to check MyAccount regularly.

**Mr R, Huntingdon**

I like to be informed and then I can determine if there is anything I need to action, financially or otherwise.

**Miss W, Bradford**

Sometimes in our busy, challenging lives we tend to forget to keep checking for updates plus we have no idea if changes have been made unless we were notified.

**Ms T, Woking**

Without being informed I could miss vital info that could be relevant to my care or care of my home.

**Mr M, Burnley**

**'If I need to know what services are available, I'll check myself (call the Contact Centre, visit the website, check MyAccount etc).'** – Please let us know why you feel this way.



I am capable of gathering information myself... The only time Accent should update us of changes is if they affect us and we wouldn't know about it without them doing so.

**Mrs W, Peterborough**

Saves me reading irrelevant things.

**Mr E, Nelson**

I feel that the MyAccount platform is sufficient and beneficial in keeping customers updated with the latest services changes/new developments if it is accessed regularly.

**Miss C, Bradford**

I'm 36 and have internet access and I'm fully able to find this information out on my own. And by me doing this it's freeing up a little extra time for staff to deal with more pressing issues.

**Miss D, Bradford**

I often do not read all email.

**Miss R, St. Ives**

Most things are on MyAccount now which makes it a lot easier.

**Mr S, York**

Unless it was an urgent change to service that would affect me directly and required an urgent response, I would be happy to check myself.

**Mr D, Camberley**

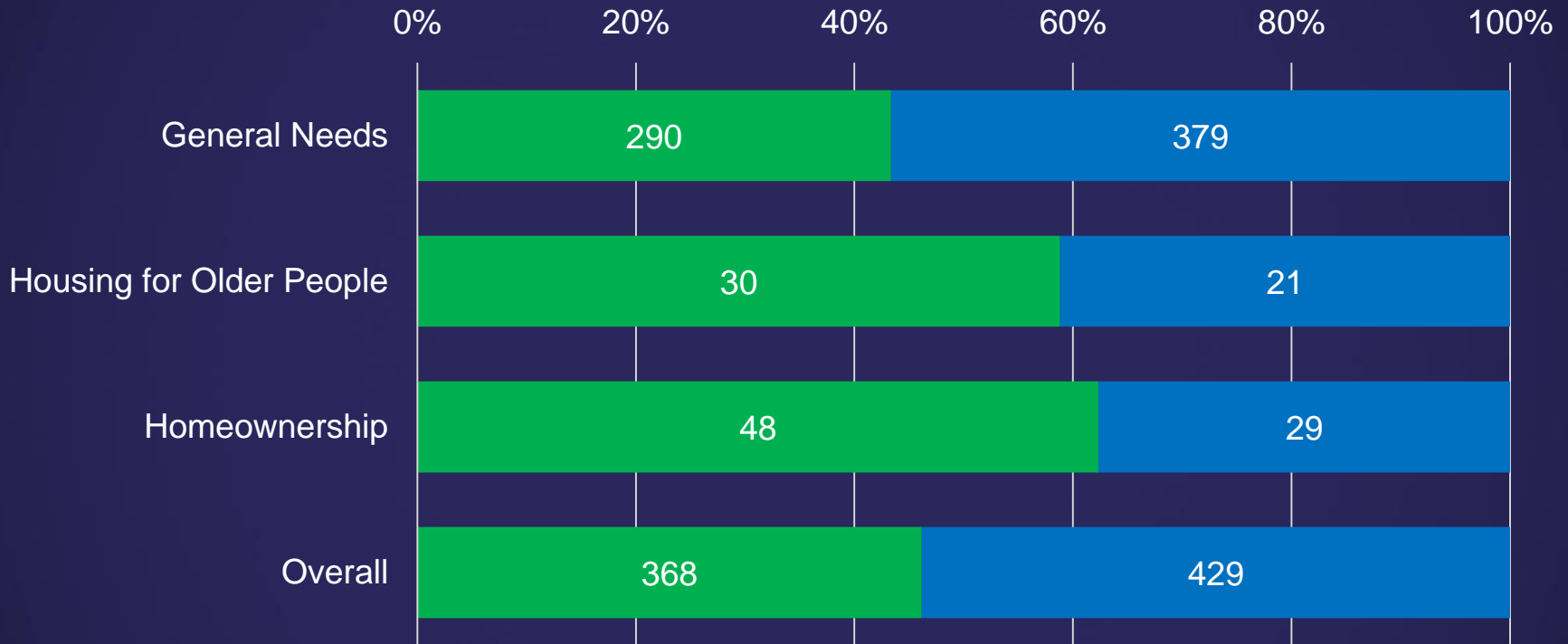
Many services will possibly not apply to all residents...

**Mr M, Nottingham**

The website is very good and very easy to use.

**Mrs B, Woking**

**Personal contact:** Our colleagues have not been able to visit our estates or see customers in their homes, but they have attempted to contact every customer by telephone to carry out a 'welfare check' and make sure they have the support they need.



- I would prefer to see my Customer Partner/Homeownership Specialist out and about from time-to-time even if they are not able to speak to me about my individual concerns each time.
- I would be happy with fewer visits from the Customer Partner/Homeownership Specialist, as long as they are contacting me personally from time-to-time to make sure I am safe, happy and comfortable in my home.

**'I would prefer to see my Customer Partner/Homeownership Specialist out and about from time-to-time even if they are not able to speak to me about my individual concerns each time.'** – Please let us know why you feel this way.



Because they may spot things that the householder hasn't.  
**Mr W, Camberley**

By being seen people will feel more valued and not forgotten.  
**Mr T, Skipton**

I have the support of a Scheme Manager for the personal touch but would expect the Customer Partner to be involved in estate management.  
**Mrs M, Peterborough**

In 3 years I have never even seen my Customer Partner let alone had the option to tell them any issues. These are just empty words again from Accent.  
**Mr H, Bradford**

So they can get an idea of how things are e.g rubbish, grounds maintenance and gardening. It shows they are still monitoring things.  
**Miss M, Nottingham**

You can't get a feel for people and their environment remotely.  
**Mr R, Chorley**

I have never been contacted to see if I am OK. I am in my late 60s and slightly disabled. And never see anybody visiting either. Very poor. Any sort of contact would be an improvement and welcome.  
**Ms C, Ilkley**

Always best to see the localised housing officer out and about their area. Shows that you are taking an avid interest in the community we live in and share!  
**Mr M, Bradford**

Gives confidence that we are being looked after.  
**Mrs C, Cambridge**

**'I would be happy with fewer visits from the Customer Partner/Homeownership Specialist, as long as they are contacting me personally to make sure I am safe, happy and comfortable in my home.'** – Please let us know why you feel this way.



As long as my Customer Partner is available to deal with issues, I don't need to see her 'out and about'... I am capable of making contact with her if I need to.

**Miss B, Camberley**

I do not always see what is going on in my street, so I would be unlikely to see my Customer Partner out and about. I feel that a telephone call is more personal and friendly.

**Mr R, Huntingdon**

I feel if I have to report something like anti-social behaviour it is easier over the phone. If the Customer Partner comes out it's easier to identify who has complained.

**Mr R, Accrington**

I would prefer no contact at all. Also I work and wouldn't be at home to see them out and about. I don't feel I need this level of support. If I have an issue I will contact Accent to report it.

**Miss W, Bradford**

If there are no issues, then I think their time could be used where it's needed.

**Miss G, Camberley**

In this time of uncertainty, contact with Accent just to make sure we are OK makes us feel valued and cared for.

**Mrs G, Lightwater**

I've never had a visit from my current Customer Partner, which is fine; I don't think there's any need for her to take the time to visit without a specific need.

**Miss H, Peterborough**

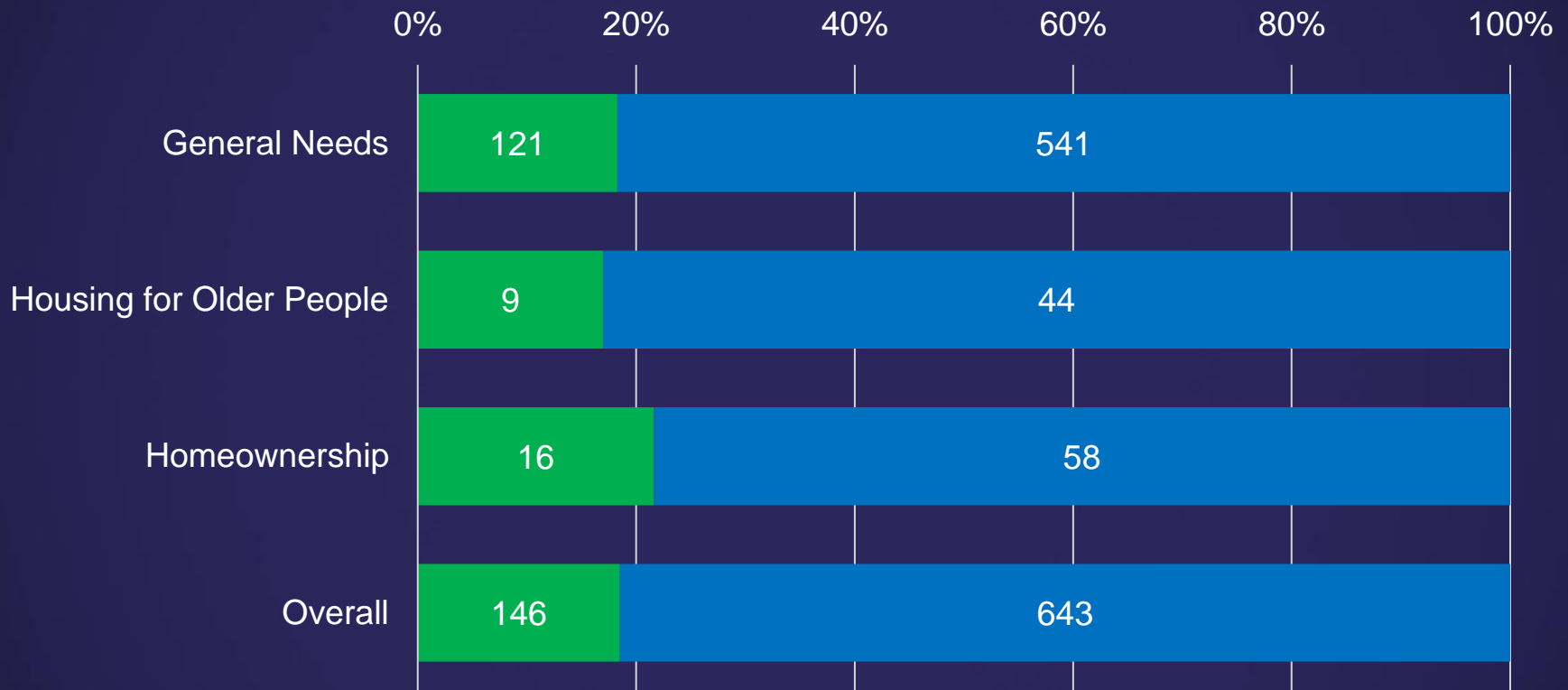
Time spent on sites could be used more effectively on other duties.

**Ms B, Colne**

Welfare checks are good when you're on your own.

**Mrs C, Chorley**

**Flexible working:** Our colleagues have had to respond to the same challenges that we have all found ourselves in and this has meant, in some instances, working outside of usual office hours.



- I would prefer that my Customer Partner/Homeownership Specialist works set hours, so that I have a better idea of when they might be available.
- I don't mind what hours my Customer Partner/Homeownership Specialist works, as long as someone is available to deal with emergencies at all times.



**'I would prefer that my Customer Partner/Homeownership Specialist works set hours, so that I have a better idea of when they might be available.'** –  
Please let us know why you feel this way.



As I get older I prefer consistency.  
**Ms T, Nottingham**

Because then we then know when we might just get a response and get something effective done.  
**Miss V, Colne**

Everyone is then clear on when it is possible to contact someone.  
**Mrs C, Camberley**

Can't be on call 24/7 and wouldn't expect them to.  
**Miss T, Yarm**

Many times I have been unable to get through to the right person and the person on call has not known their working hours either.  
**Mrs S, Bradford**

Needing to know when the Customer Partner is available is important to me due to my work pattern.  
**Mrs H, Middlesbrough**

Always good to know that someone is available at a fixed time so that you have a better chance of reaching that person.  
**Mr L, Ashford**

It would be nice to know what time they are available for us to contact them.  
**Mrs G, Bradford**

So I can work this around my working hours.  
**Mr H, Bradford**

**'I don't mind what hours my Customer Partner/Homeownership Specialist works, as long as someone is available to deal with emergencies at all times.'** – Please let us know why you feel this way.



9 to 5 is outdated.  
**Mr C, Dukinfield**

Because Customer Partners should be able to work as they feel is right for them.  
**Mr D, Leeds**

Everyone has to be flexible for things to work in these times and as long as someone is available, it doesn't matter.  
**Mrs H, Burnley**

Customer Partners are humans too, and might need flexible hours. As long as emergencies are dealt with in an efficient and timely manner, who cares what hours they work?  
**Miss B, Camberley**

I believe the hours a Customer Partner works, should be between them and their employer.  
**Mr L, Aldershot**

I know that some Customers Partners work well over their normal hours, into the evening.  
**Ms M, Camberley**

I understand that I am not the only one they look after.  
**Mr W, Barrow-in-Furness**

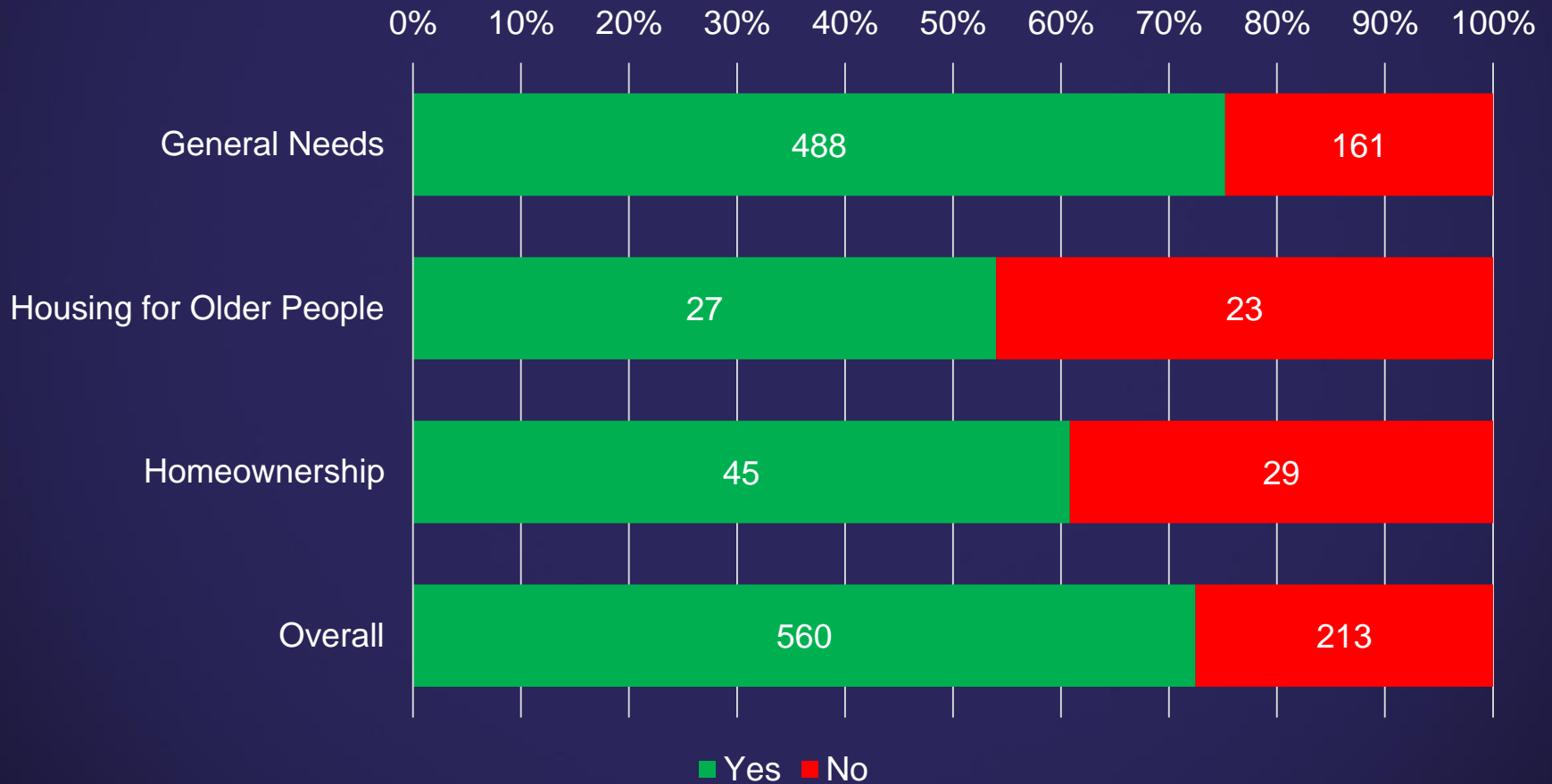
They need to be available when we are available. They are not flexible, they don't work weekends or evenings.  
**Mr M, Ossett**

Would be easier for myself to contact you outside of usual hours.  
**Miss A, Stanley**

**Travel and the environment:** Our colleagues have not been able to travel to our estates or see customers in their homes, but we have reduced our carbon footprint and travel expenses. These savings can be reinvested into services and properties.



Would you be happy to see Accent colleagues less often if this meant helping the environment and saving money?



If **yes**, please let us know why you feel this way:



Anything that lessens the environmental impact by businesses is always the preferred option.

**Mrs W, Peterborough**

Happy to see them less as long as they keep checking that tenants are OK and that Accent are always there when needed no matter how small the problem is.... after all we are your customers.

**Ms T, Woking**

I don't feel any money saved will be passed to your tenants. Of course environment and money are important but so are staff for smooth running of company.

**Mr M, Burnley**

I don't see them anyway as I am usually at work and I don't appreciate the value of estate walkabouts.

**Miss W, Bradford**

Keeping carbon footprint as low as possible can only be a good thing.

**Miss H, Leeds**

Many queries I have can easily be sorted over the phone or via email.

**Mrs C, Camberley**

Saving money to put back into other services and properties within the company.

**Miss A, Stanley**

We all have a responsibility to reduce waste, water use and anything else that impacts the environment. As a housing association you have to reinvest that money into improvements...

**Mr C, Nottingham**

I am a big believer in helping the environment, and if you guys are travelling way too much for seemingly no reason, I'd be happy for it to stop!

**Miss H, Burnley**

If **no**, please let us know why you feel this way:



I answered 'no' as it is imperative the street is visited to keep the standard up. I'm sure other aspects could forgo a visit though.

**Mrs H, Burnley**

Accent staff are already like hens' teeth. Reducing this will only make things worse for customers already struggling to speak with staff.

**Mr H, Bradford**

Presence and visibility is key to me. Communities need support and monitoring.

**Mr W, Bradford**

This isn't really ideal as seeing them less may mean things are missed or residents may feel they are not valued.

**Mr T, Skipton**

This sounds like a sneaky way of reducing your responsibilities, and face-to-face contact.

**Ms G, Ashford**

As our contact has been very infrequent anyway, why would we vote for less?

**Mr H, Nottingham**

Because I feel standards are already falling from what they use to be.

**Mr G, Bradford**

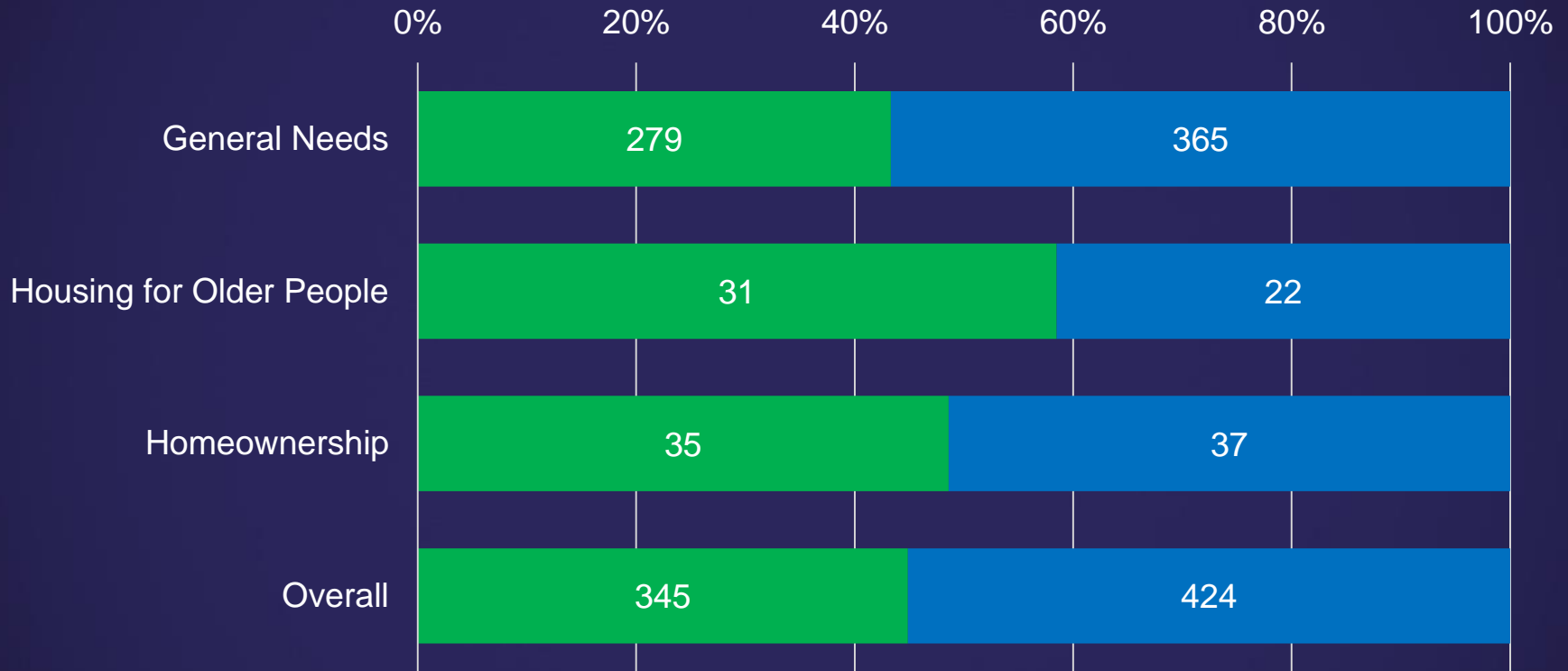
I don't believe there needs to be a trade off. With adequate planning and resources there should be little or no impact on the environment.

**Mr J, Ossett**

I'm sure savings have been made, but at the expense of the service currently received.

**Mr J, Ashton-Under-Lyne**

**Diagnosing repairs:** Our surveyors have not been able to visit all properties/estates to assess repairs. We have been asking customers to send us photos and videos of repairs issues so we can diagnose the problem.



- I would prefer someone to visit my property/estate to diagnose the problem accurately, even if I have to wait for an appointment.
- I would be happy to attempt sending photos and videos of repairs issues, if it would help to get the problem fixed more quickly.

**'I would prefer someone to visit my property/estate to diagnose the problem accurately, even if I have to wait for an appointment.'** – Please let us know why you feel this way.



I don't want the responsibility of making a wrong assessment of a situation.

**Ms G, Ashford**

I don't feel that photos would have represented the situation clearly and it was better to talk to the person face-to-face and be able to explain the issues.

**Mrs H, Burnley**

I would not have the technical skill to send photos or videos.

**Mrs H, York**

I'm not a plumber, joiner or electrician. I could take a wrong photo. Too much bother - that's what you guys get paid for.

**Mr S, Bradford**

Videos and photos don't always give an accurate idea of the damage, far better to see it for yourself.

**Mrs M, Peterborough**

Not everyone has the knowledge of how to send photos. A lot of older people live in these properties.

**Mr D, Leeds**

Dealing with someone face-to-face and being able to discuss the problem would better. You can then follow up with photos if problem is not sorted within a suitable timeframe.

**Mrs H, Middlesbrough**

Have tried sending photos in the past and nothing has been done.

**Mr D, Nottingham**

Accuracy saves time and money.

**Ms W, York**

**'I would be happy to attempt sending photos and videos of repairs issues, if it would help to get the problem fixed more quickly.'** – Please let us know why you feel this way.



The problem is seen by staff first hand and they, on the other end of the phone or email, don't just fob you off because they think you are making it out to be worse than it is.

**Miss V, Colne**

To save on travel times and the carbon footprint like you mentioned in the last question, I think taking photos of the repair issues is a great idea.

**Mrs K, Rushden**

During a pandemic, it's preferable to limit visitors as much as possible. I have used video and photos in the past while reporting repairs, and am happy to do so.

**Miss B, Camberley**

Easier to establish a diagnose before a visit, parts could be ordered beforehand and fixed quicker.

**Miss A, Stanley**

Having just waited over three weeks to have a urgent repair attended to, I would have used this method to have a quicker response.

**Mrs L, Middlesbrough**

I think it depends on the nature of the repair issue, but generally speaking it seems more efficient to send photos and videos and I'd be fine with doing that.

**Miss H, Peterborough**

To reduce the likelihood of the wrong person for the job being sent.

**Mrs W, Peterborough**

The advances in many technologies support this approach but only for those who are confident and able to do this.

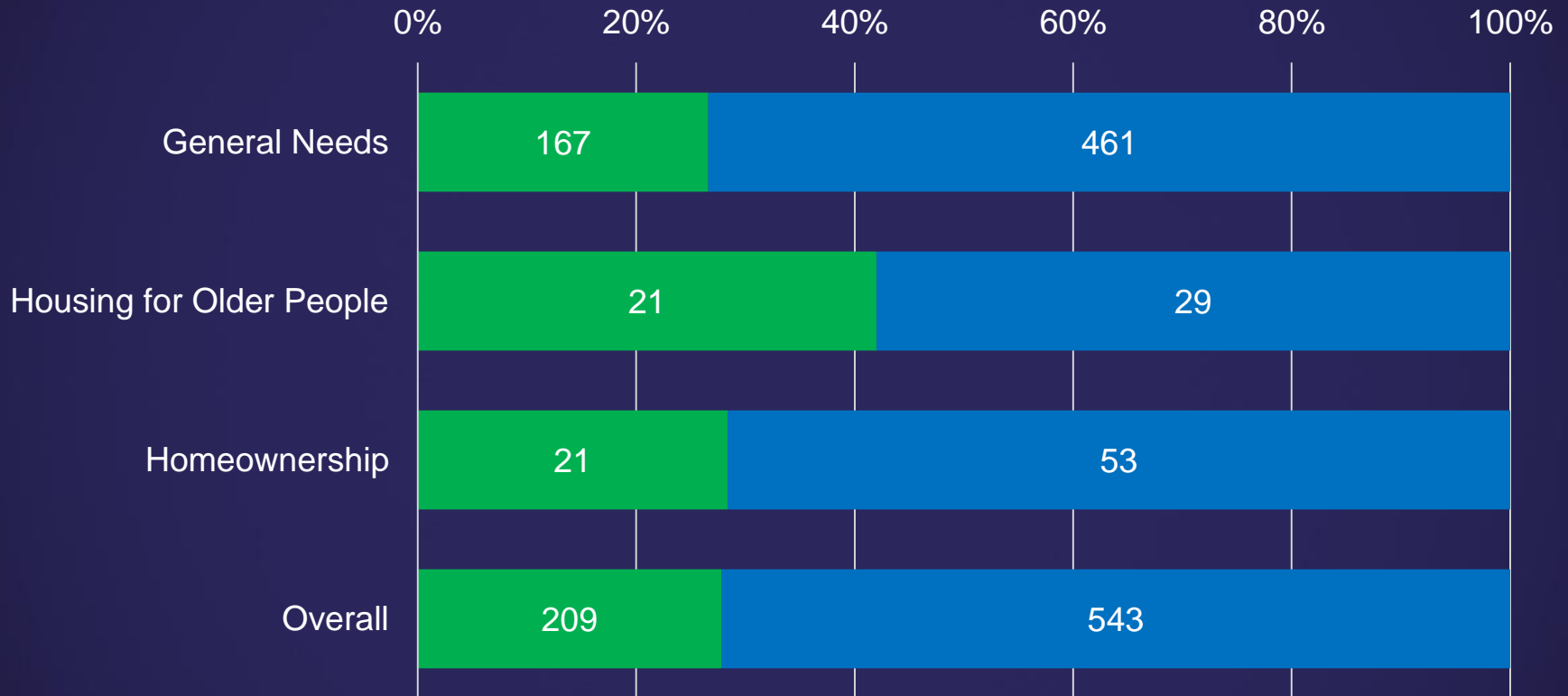
**Mr W, Bradford**

This would leave the agent free to complete repairs more quickly.

**Mr W, Barrow-in-Furness**



**Rent/service charge queries:** Many customers have called to say that they are struggling with rent/service charges.



- If I need to get in touch about my rent/service charges, I would prefer to deal with the same person every time, even if I have to wait to speak with them.
- If I need to get in touch about my rent/service charges, I don't mind who I speak to as long as they can get me the help I need.

**'If I need to get in touch about my rent/service charges, I would prefer to deal with the same person every time, even if I have to wait to speak with them' – Please let us know why you feel this way.**



If you speak to the same person each time they know first-hand what you are speaking about and your problem is not banded about from one person to another. Common sense really.

**Miss V, Colne**

It is helpful to deal with somebody who knows your situation.... This is especially true in the awful situation of struggling with money, which can be a frightening and shaming experience...

**Miss B, Camberley**

Continuity is always useful as it means you don't have to repeat what might be an emotional situation over and over.

**Mrs G, Lightwater**

Having to repeat from the start the problem each time is wearing. As long as calls are returned promptly this would be my preference.

**Ms C, Leeds**

I prefer to build relationships with people who know my history.

**Mr G, Ashton-Under-Lyne**

This way, things do not get or could get misinterpreted.

**Mr W, Barrow-in-Furness**

Continuity and better relationship building as a positive outcome.

**Mrs J, Brough**

Easier to talk to someone you know.

**Mrs H, Peterborough**

Have had problems in the past dealing with different people on the same subject.

**Mr R, Liversedge**

**'If I need to get in touch about my rent/service charges, I don't mind who I speak to as long as they can get me the help I need.'** – Please let us know why you feel this way.



All staff appear to be polite and well-trained, never had any issues with gaining advice. As all calls are logged any member of staff can follow on from previous calls.

**Mrs L, Middlesbrough**

As long as all staff follow the same process and offer the same guidance, speaking to the same person should not be a requirement.

**Mrs W, Peterborough**

As long as notes are on the account then it shouldn't matter if I deal with someone different.

**Mr T, Skipton**

I assume all staff have adequate skills to deal with issues.

**Mrs H, York**

I have no expectation of talking to the same person twice anyway.

**Miss H, Peterborough**

I just want the right answers from someone who is polite and empathic.

**Mr W, Bradford**

If it was an ongoing issue I would prefer the same person to oversee that issue to completion. Any new issue can be picked by anyone as long as they know what to do and they see it through.

**Mr C, Nottingham**

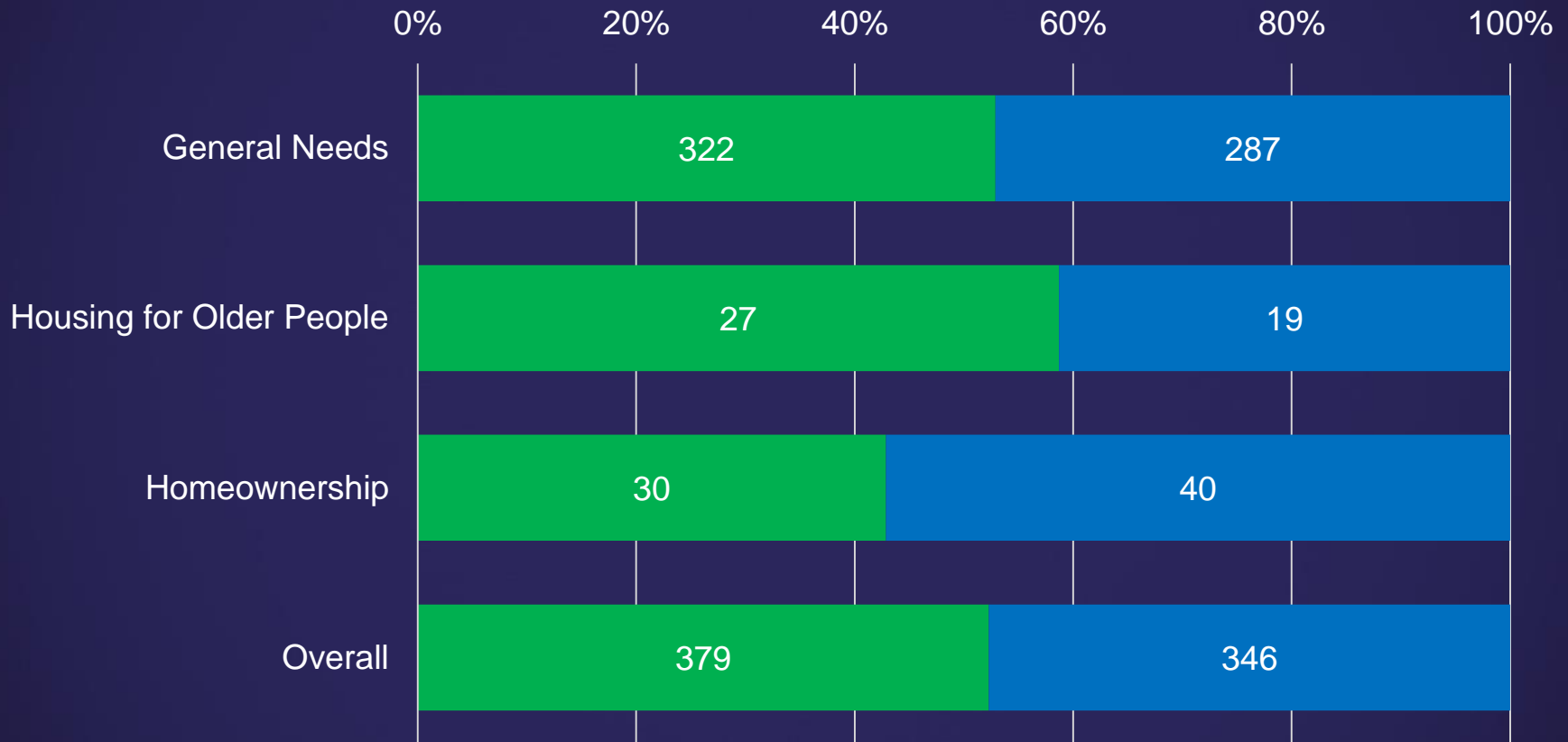
All my details are on file so I don't care if I speak to the Pope or Popeye the Sailorman.

**Mr H, Bradford**

As long as I have let you know I'm struggling and someone is there to help it doesn't matter who it is.

**Miss B, Bradford**

**Digital inclusion:** We are keen to make sure that customers have the skills, the confidence and the equipment they need to manage all aspects of their lives online, when face-to-face services are not available.



■ Accent should help customers to get online.

■ Accent focuses on its core services (rent/service charge collection, repairs and estate management) and customers should seek help getting online elsewhere.

**'Accent should help customers to get online'.** – Please let us know why you feel this way.



As long as you respect the fact that not all customers want to be online and ensure services remain accessible... I have no problem with you helping tenants access the web.

**Miss B, Camberley**

If Accent want to move towards more online services then it's a no-brainer.

**Ms T, Nottingham**

If your preference is for people to use online then the ones who struggle with this should be offered some form of assistance.

**Mrs W, Peterborough**

It would show a collaborative approach if Accent were to help. Some residents may not be able to get help elsewhere.

**Mr T, Skipton**

This helps both parties.

**Mr W, Barrow-in-Furness**

Accent have installed Wifi but offered no help at all. If possible, brief training to older tenants...

**Mr M, Wakefield**

It's easy to pay your rent online. I do it that way and it doesn't take more than five minutes.

**Mr B, Halifax**

Because now everything is changing to online.

**Mr M, Bradford**

Could save money in the long term.

**Miss L, York**

**‘Accent focuses on its core services (rent/service charge collection, repairs and estate management) and customers should seek help getting online elsewhere’. – Please let us know why you feel this way.**



I can't answer this question honestly because if someone wants the skills surely they would have them already.

**Mr D, Leeds**

Quite a lot of older people are not computer literate or have no interest in becoming so.

**Mrs L, Middlesbrough**

Even though I feel you should concentrate on looking after tenants and properties, it would not hurt to signpost people to grants and incentives available to people who are struggling...

**Mrs C, Camberley**

I don't think it should be your responsibility to help private home holders to get online. We are private people, living in our own homes. It is up to us what we do.

**Mrs S, Bourne**

It is not the job of Accent to educate their customers. Instead, they should concentrate on delivering a first class service to the customers.

**Mr B, Camberley**

I used to be a teacher. This is a job for a professional.

**Mr G, Ashton-Under-Lyne**

I'm quite torn on this. I do think it's a good thing that Accent is helping customers to get online. I just wouldn't want that to be Accent's main priority to the detriment of other areas.

**Miss H, Peterborough**

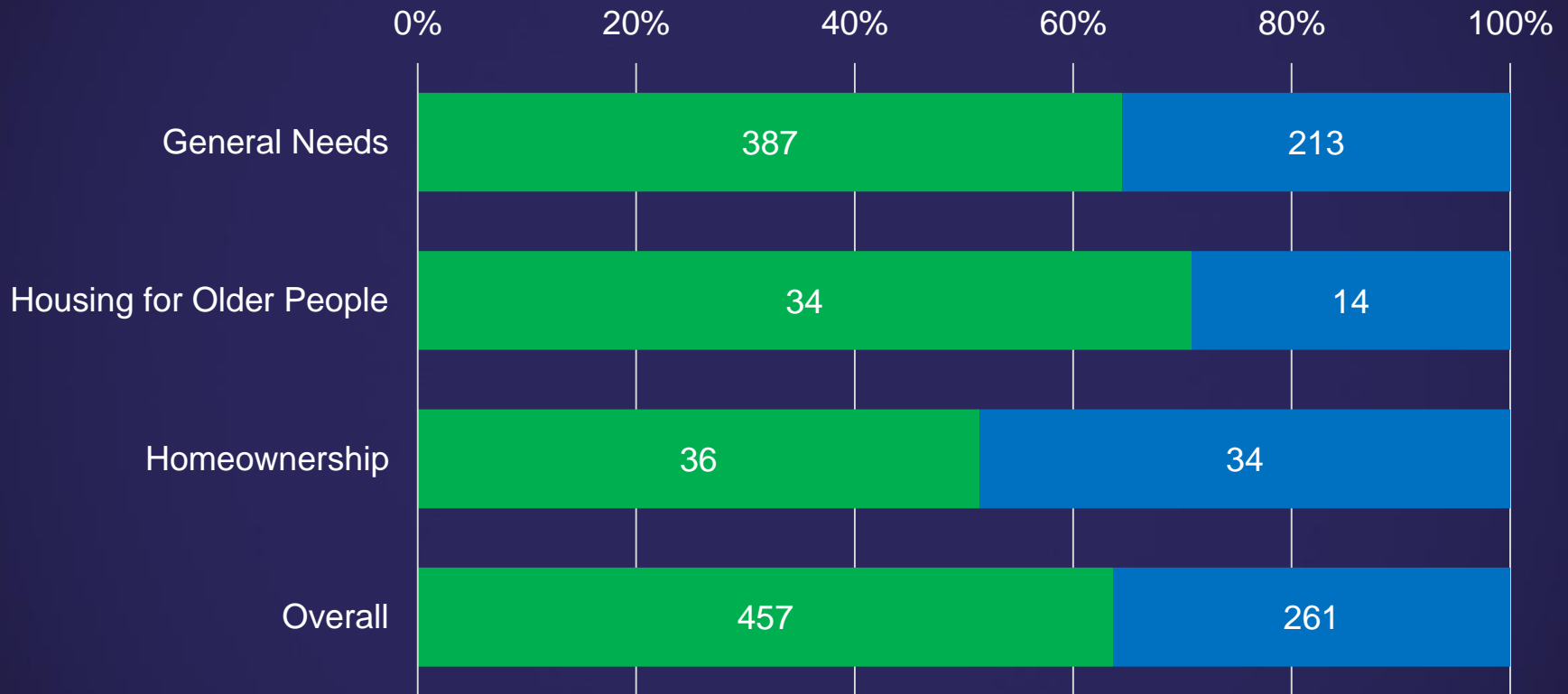
The landlord can't be expected to act as teachers.

**Ms B, Colne**

There are ample opportunities to get help, I feel that Accent could direct them to these opportunities... I don't feel that money should be spent on this, it should be spent on the houses and services.

**Mrs H, Burnley**

**Local support services:** As we have not been physically present in our communities, we have relied on our partnerships with local support services.



- Customers can contact Accent about any difficulties they may be experiencing and expect to be put in touch with a local support service.
- Accent focuses on its core services (rent/service charge collection, repairs and estate management) and customers should contact any support services they may require directly.

**‘Customers can contact Accent about any difficulties they may be experiencing and expect to be put in touch with a local support service’. –**  
Please let us know why you feel this way.



Accent has the names of services people could need so I feel it would be a short call to provide someone with that info.

**Mr C, Nottingham**

Advice may be needed about which support service to contact and it also alerts Accent about a potential problem.

**Mr R, Huntingdon**

It shows collaboration but also makes it easier for residents when they don't know where to go.

**Mr T, Skipton**

As long as Accent respects tenant choices in this area and doesn't insist we go through you, I have no issues with you providing signposting to other services for tenants who request that.

**Miss B, Camberley**

I think sending out an email to each customer with details of their local services would be a good idea... Many health support services have local branches.

**Mrs K, Rushden**

Might have more clout coming from you.

**Mr E, Nelson**

Just call one number and get your problems sorted out. Easiest way for customers.

**Mr M, Cambridge**

This puts confidence in the customer that you do care.

**Mr W, Barrow-in-Furness**

Accent are helpful and I'd rather speak to them than just ring other services beforehand.

**Miss D, Bradford**



**‘Accent focuses on its core services (rent/service charge collection, repairs and estate management) and customers should contact any support services they may require directly’. – Please let us know why you feel this way.**



Accent should concentrate on its strengths and part of that should always be deferring to other services when they have more experience or expertise in a subject.

**Mr A, Bradford**

Accent needs to concentrate on trying to improve its own services, never mind anybody else's.

**Ms C, Ilkley**

It is difficult enough to contact Accent by phone. People contacting Accent about community matters would make it much worse. Customers can be sent a list of all available support services.

**Mr L, Aldershot**

Clearly you are not the Citizens' Advice Service.

**Mrs H, York**

Plenty of information out there for people to find themselves.

**Miss T, Yarm**

Accent are landlords not social workers. I personally would prefer Accent to concentrate on the buildings, grounds, repairs etc. rather than wasting their time on things that are easily accessible...

**Miss D, Ossett**

Accent should advise and support... but leave it up to the customer to make contact themselves.

**Mr T, Cambridge**

Diversity of services makes the core service weaker by taking away support from it.

**Mr L, Leeds**

I would prefer to talk to the support services directly. That way the message doesn't get mixed up whilst being passed on, which happens quite often.

**Mrs B, Harrogate**

**Reward and recognition:** We expect that many customers have become more involved in their local communities and have undertaken volunteering opportunities.



If **yes**, please let us know why you feel this way.



Accent residents who raise the profile and increase the public perception of their landlord should have recognition.

**Mrs M, Peterborough**

Anything that encourages people to care about where they live is a good thing.

**Mr D, Peterborough**

Support these schemes by encouraging your own staff to volunteer on a community scheme... This way they engage with tenants in an informal way to forge strong relationships.

**Mrs C, Camberley**

Obvious to me it promotes a cleaner, calmer estate.

**Mr M, Burnley**

Rewarding customers for helping in the community shows them they are valued and may encourage others to help also, which can bring communities together which is never a bad thing.

**Mrs W, Peterborough**

Volunteering brings its own reward but recognition is always welcome.

**Mrs W, Accrington**

Building better communities deserves recognition and volunteering helps people move on to paid employment.

**Miss W, Chorley**

Creates communities. Gives a normal resident impetus to do more for their community.

**Mr B, Barrow-in-Furness**

I think it would be a nice gesture if Accent showed their support to customers who do things in the community as I think it's just good to have a good bond between tenant and landlord.

**Mr D, Barrow-in-Furness**

If **no**, please let us know why you feel this way.



Accent is a housing provider not a support group. Accent should spend all its time on housing, once it has that right perhaps it can look at other areas.

**Mr H, Bradford**

Not everyone has the ability to do more, so no personal rewards should be given... Accent can support a community group so that it shows that you are more than a rent collector.

**Miss W, Bradford**

Recognise and support but not reward. We should all strive to support our community.

**Mr R, Chorley**

You are a social housing provider. This is not your remit.

**Miss B, Camberley**

I don't want rewards, I want results.

**Mr W, Camberley**

I think it's brilliant to see more people out in communities... but if you started to reward people and some people got missed out you could start upsetting people...

**Miss H, Halifax**

Concentrate on being there in the first place. Then we wouldn't have to rely on these volunteers.

**Mrs S, Camberley**

There are organisations out there that already do this. This would be a waste of money when it could be spent improving homes.

**Mr R, St Neots**

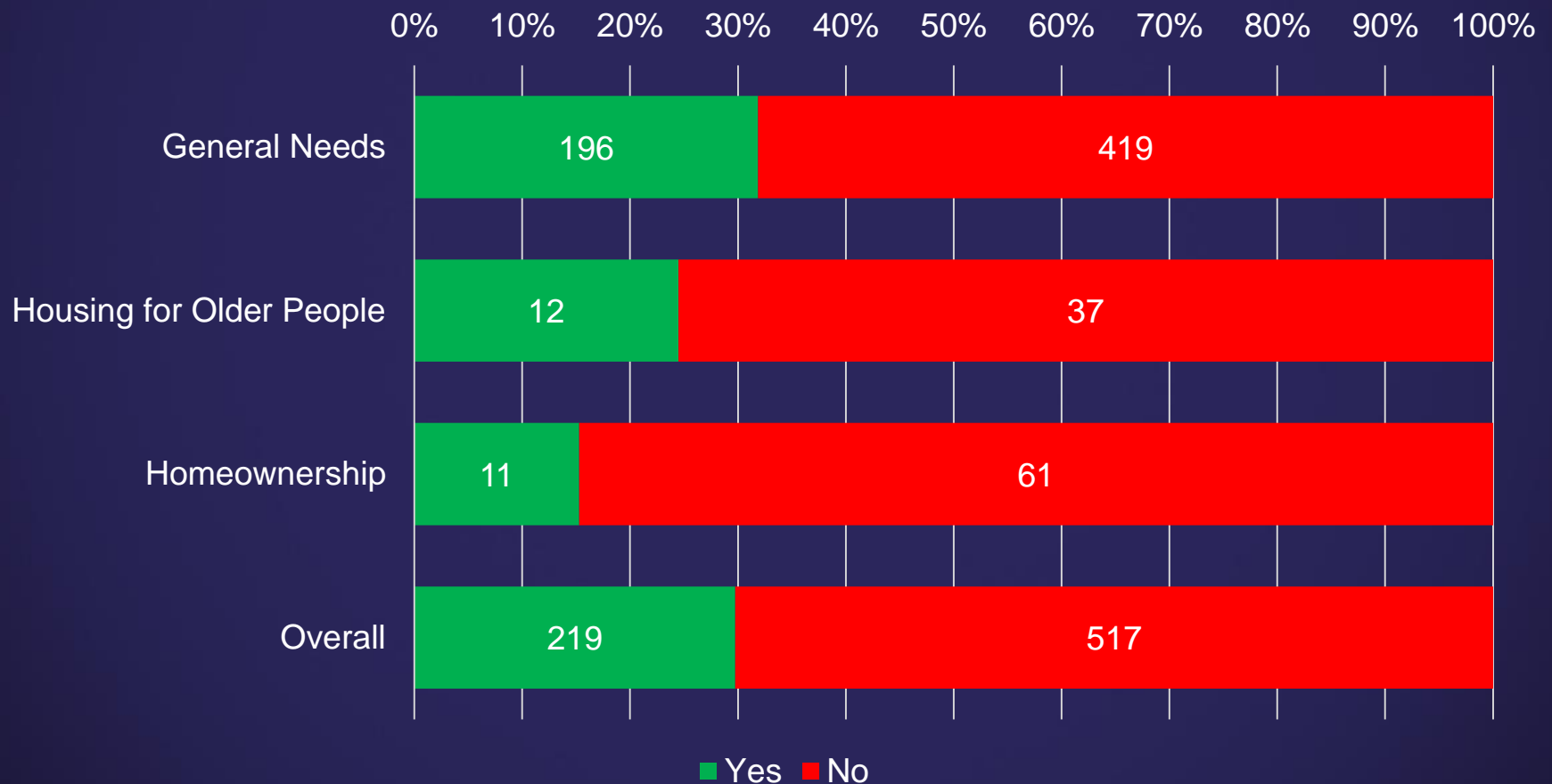
Volunteers do so because they want to and they achieve their own reward for doing it. Accent don't need to be involved in rewarding them.

**Mrs H, Burnley**

**Virtual viewings:** We have been carrying out virtual viewings of our properties, where possible, to minimise face-to-face contact.



Would you considering renting or buying a home if you had only been able to view it online?



If **yes**, please let us know why you feel this way.



Absolutely! Also when a property comes up for rent, having photos and room measurements would help out everyone with making sure their furniture fits.

**Mrs K, Rushden**

Because then at least you can see if you're capable of taking on such a property and you can at least assess how much it's going to cost to clean it up/renovate to make it into a home.

**Miss V, Colne**

I signed for my current property having only viewed it through windows so online is no different.

**Mr A, Bradford**

It's 2020 for goodness sake. Get with Rightmove. Will your properties exhibit well online though?

**Mr W, Bradford**

You can do online tours which give all information needed.

**Mrs M, Peterborough**

Seeing a space will help you decide how your items will fit in. However if that wasn't an option I would still opt for the virtual viewing with all the measurements for each room provided.

**Miss W, Bradford**

As long as I have all the relevant information I would be happy to do so. I had decided that I wanted my current home before viewing in person as I had undertaken my research.

**Miss T, Leyland**

As long as the pictures were up to date, then definitely.

**Ms N, Bradford**

I do lots of things online, this would just be another one. It's not that different to buying a product without seeing it.

**Miss B, Camberley**

If **no**, please let us know why you feel this way.



It would give you an overall view but to get a better idea of size and layout, I would prefer to visit.

**Mrs F, Bradford**

I would like to get a feel for the area in which I was potentially moving to.

**Mr D, Peterborough**

Online viewing can perhaps be deceptive and I would like to see the property as it is.

**Mr B, Camberley**

To make such a commitment... based on a photo isn't a responsible choice. It's far too easy to click on a whim!

**Mr H, Bradford**

You need to get a feel of the area and look at the building in situ.

**Mr M, Ossett**

A photograph will not show the area around the property. Neighbours and neighbourhood are just as important.

**Mr L, Ashford**

Choosing a home is too important not to see the property 'warts and all'.

**Mrs H, Oldham**

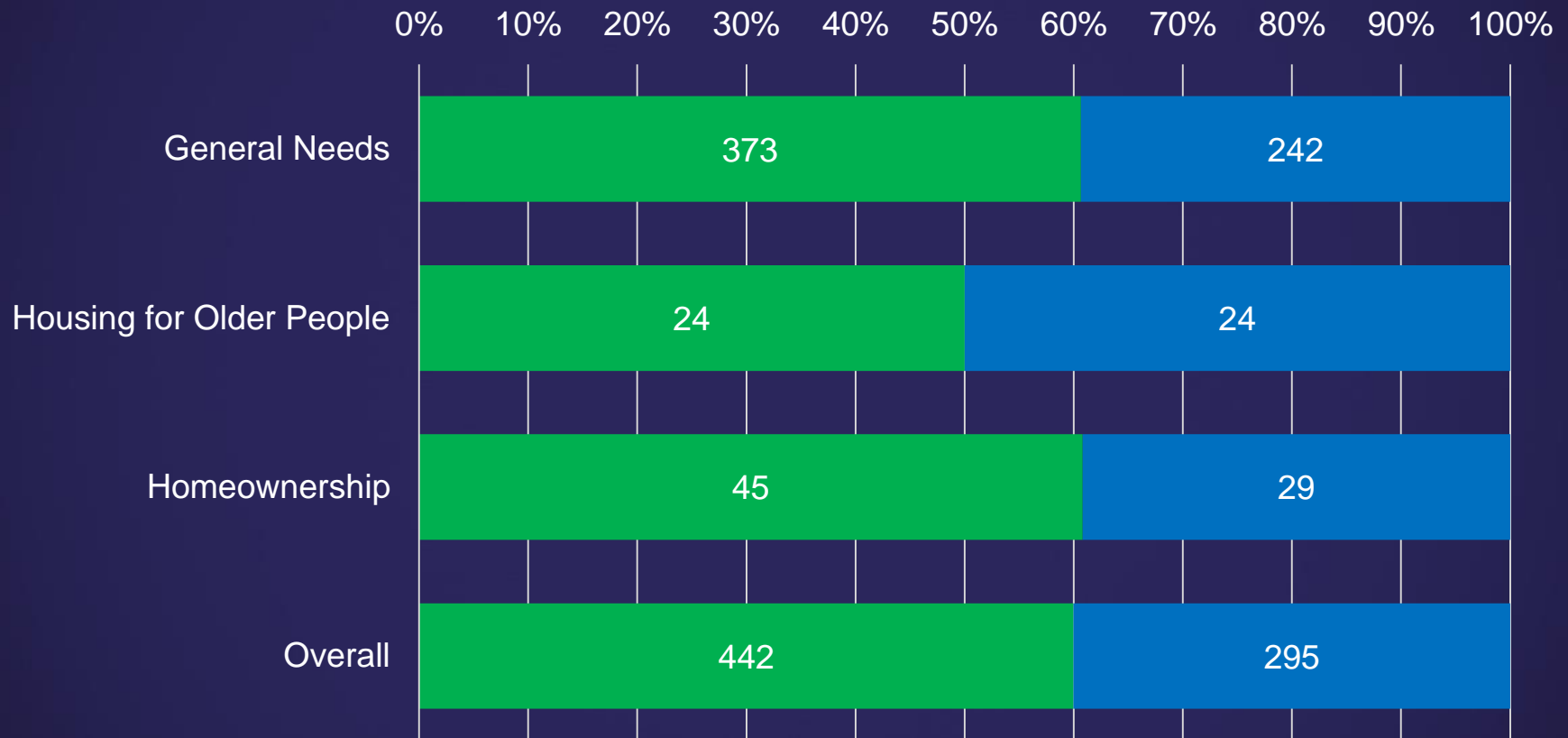
Have viewed properties on line and been disappointed when actually visiting.

**Mr R, Liversedge**

Seeing a space will help you decide how your items will fit in. However if that wasn't an option I would still opt for the virtual viewing with all the measurements for each room provided.

**Miss W, Bradford**

**Online participation:** All customer engagement activity which requires face-to-face contact has been suspended. We have begun to use Skype and Zoom to hold meetings with customers.



- I would be happy to take part in online conversations concerning my home, my neighbourhood and community.
- I would prefer to give my views in another way.



**'I would be happy to take part in online conversations concerning my home, my neighbourhood and community.'** – Please let us know why you feel this way.



A forum style can work well as long as Accent are going online to join in, shape and collate responses.

**Mr C, Nottingham**

I think having a person speaking to you directly is a personal touch. Much more rewarding.

**Miss B, Woking**

You could set up a Zoom meeting with tenants or even use Microsoft Teams to have a more personal conversation with the tenants if needed.

**Ms T, Woking**

If I can get my voice heard, bring it on.

**Mr G, St Ives**

If the technology is available and isn't going to cost the resident then it would be an advantage and would save travel time, money and environment.

**Mr T, Skipton**

No problem taking part in online conversations and I find they are more convenient too.

**Mrs H, Burnley**

This could be a way forward.

**Ms T, Nottingham**

I am comfortable with Zoom sessions especially if it involves less travelling for Accent.

**Mrs H, York**

As a disabled person this would be very helpful.

**Mr M, Burnley**

**'I would prefer to give my views in another way'.– Please let us know why you feel this way.**



I may not always be available when you are online and therefore prefer to continue giving my views through your surveys.  
**Ms W, Ashton-Under-Lyne**

I really don't like being on camera!  
**Miss H, Peterborough**

The push to make everything online is dangerous for vulnerable customers.  
**Ms G, Ashford**

Online is not always the quickest or clearest way to communicate.  
**Mr R, Huntingdon**

A lot of people don't use or understand Skype or Zoom, I personally wouldn't have a clue what they are.  
**Mr D, Leeds**

I am one old the older generation, so would prefer direct contact. I would also have concerns about sharing worries, complaints etc. with other tenants.  
**Mr H, Camberley**

I feel sometimes it is easier to give honest feedback if you are not in front of other people.  
**Mrs M, Peterborough**

Seems to be no point as nothing ever comes of it.  
**Mr R, Camberley**

I have the feeling I am writing everything and no one will even read this. Give a video call. Let me make sure someone is listening to me and I will be happy.  
**Mr S, Northampton**

Could you give an example of something Accent should:  
**STOP** doing:



Stop calling tenants 'customers' and housing officers 'Customer Partners'. It's corporate speak, and it's insulting.

**Miss B, Camberley**

Allowing the workforce in Shipley making the decisions for this area.

**Mrs S, Bourne**

Assuming that we are all available for a full day to wait for an appointment.

**Miss W, Bradford**

Changing maintenance contractors.

**Miss M, Nottingham**

Ignoring emails or issues, giving poor notice for works.

**Mr C, Nottingham**

Judging updates to properties using timeframes instead of the condition of the property.

**Mrs C, Camberley**

Pandering to anti-social tenants.

**Mrs B, Brighouse**

Promising to improve things and then nothing ever does improve.

**Ms C, Ilkley**

Stop hiring contractors who do not do their job properly!

**Mrs G, Lightwater**

Could you give an example of something Accent should:  
**STOP** doing:



Taking key decisions without resident input.  
**Mr W, Bradford**

Trying to be all things to all residents.  
**Mr H, Cambridge**

Using one size fits all email/mail letter templates.  
**Mr A, Bradford**

Calling up several times a day when rent is due even though you have explained to them what the problem is.  
**Miss S, Nelson**

Changing kitchens after 25 years. Should be sooner.  
**Miss P, St. Neots**

Doing repairs to something that needs replacing.  
**Miss N, Nelson**

Giving contracts to companies that cannot do the job properly.  
**Mr T, Sandhurst**

Half conversations. Emails will abruptly stop... leaving questions unanswered which is not only rude but unprofessional.  
**Mr H, Bradford**

Ignoring its long-serving residents to prioritise new occupants.  
**Mrs S, Camberley**

Could you give an example of something Accent should:  
**START** doing:



Consider actual socially beneficial projects such as installing solar panels on your housing stock. This would help the environment, help tenants by reducing our bills, and help your finances...  
**Miss B, Camberley**

Encouraging more customers to become more proactive in their own neighbourhood.  
**Mr A, Bradford**

Getting service charges right.  
**Mr L, Middlesbrough**

Instruct Shipley to award our groundwork contracts to local trades people.  
**Mrs S, Bourne**

Making customers feel they are taking their views seriously.  
**Mr B, Camberley**

Give a clear guide to the complaints process.  
**Mrs M, Peterborough**

Respond to online queries/requests, or at least send an (automated) email to acknowledge they've been logged.  
**Miss H, Peterborough**

Regular visits from a Customer Partner. Dealing with repairs and problems in an effective way and time frame.  
**Mr G, St Ives**

Rewarding good residents who just keep doing it right over a period of time.  
**Mr W, Bradford**

Could you give an example of something Accent should:  
**START** doing:



The things they keep promising to do, like some proper basic level of gardening and grounds maintenance and regular checks to make sure they are fulfilling their responsibilities at each site.

**Ms C, Ilkley**

Visiting sites to check on contractors i.e. gardeners.

**Mr J, Stalybridge**

Answer live chat.  
**Mr T, Stockton-on-Tees**

Bathroom and kitchen improvements on a large scale.

**Mr R, St Neots**

Being in contact with tenants that have been with you for a long time and give you no grief. We never get any contact for being good tenants.

**Miss M, Chorley**

Checking completed works that their contractors have completed. I believe that this would improve the quality of work, rather than paying out for shoddy workmanship.

**Mrs B, Harrogate**

Communicating more effectively with repair service.

**Mr D, Bradford**

Deal with complaints properly.

**Miss W, Bradford**

Employing own workforce who will care about the repairs being right and have better customer care.

**Mr H, Bradford**

Could you give an example of something Accent should:  
**CONTINUE** doing:



Being awesome! We've all had to change the way we work, communicate, go about our daily lives... these are difficult times and we are all in this together!  
**Mrs K, Rushden**

Building properties for social rent, as well as affordable rent and shared ownership.  
**Mr G, St Ives**

Checking residents are safe and happy.  
**Miss G, Camberley**

Getting better contractors.  
**Mr H, Cambridge**

Engaging with tenants, as long as you're actually listening to what we have to say.  
**Miss B, Camberley**

Implementing plans to reduce financial burden for the customers.  
**Mr M, Cambridge**

Moving towards more resident input whilst acknowledging you're not there yet.  
**Mr W, Bradford**

Offering value for money but not compromising on quality.  
**Miss M, Preston**

Putting customers first and putting money back into the properties. Makes people proud and want to look after their homes.  
**Miss T, Yarm**

Could you give an example of something Accent should:  
**CONTINUE** doing:



Receiving the good service our present Customer Partner offers.  
**Ms B, Colne**

Updating the website to allow people to do more for themselves online.  
**Miss W, Bradford**

Whitegoods support for people struggling.  
**Mrs R, Middlesbrough**

Keep being considerate and caring. It goes along way.  
**Mr B, Barrow-in-Furness**

Being proactive in service development.  
**Mrs L, Middlesbrough**

Being supportive around COVID-19 and working with residents to avoid eviction.  
**Mr H, Lightwater**

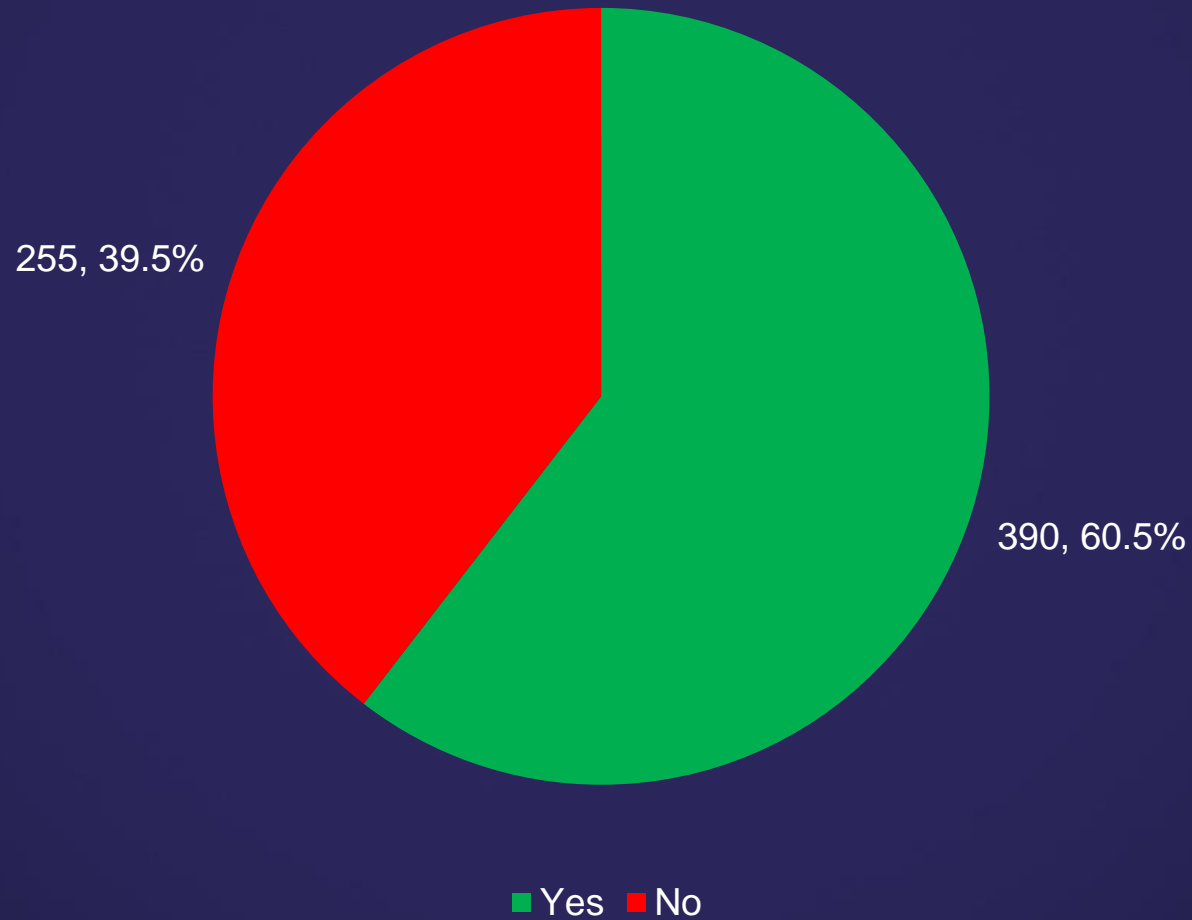
Engaging with Accent 500.  
**Mr C, Nottingham**

Improving online portal. It's useful, but I booked a repair, didn't get confirmation. So now I am sat here not knowing whether he will turn up or not.  
**Miss G, Leeds**

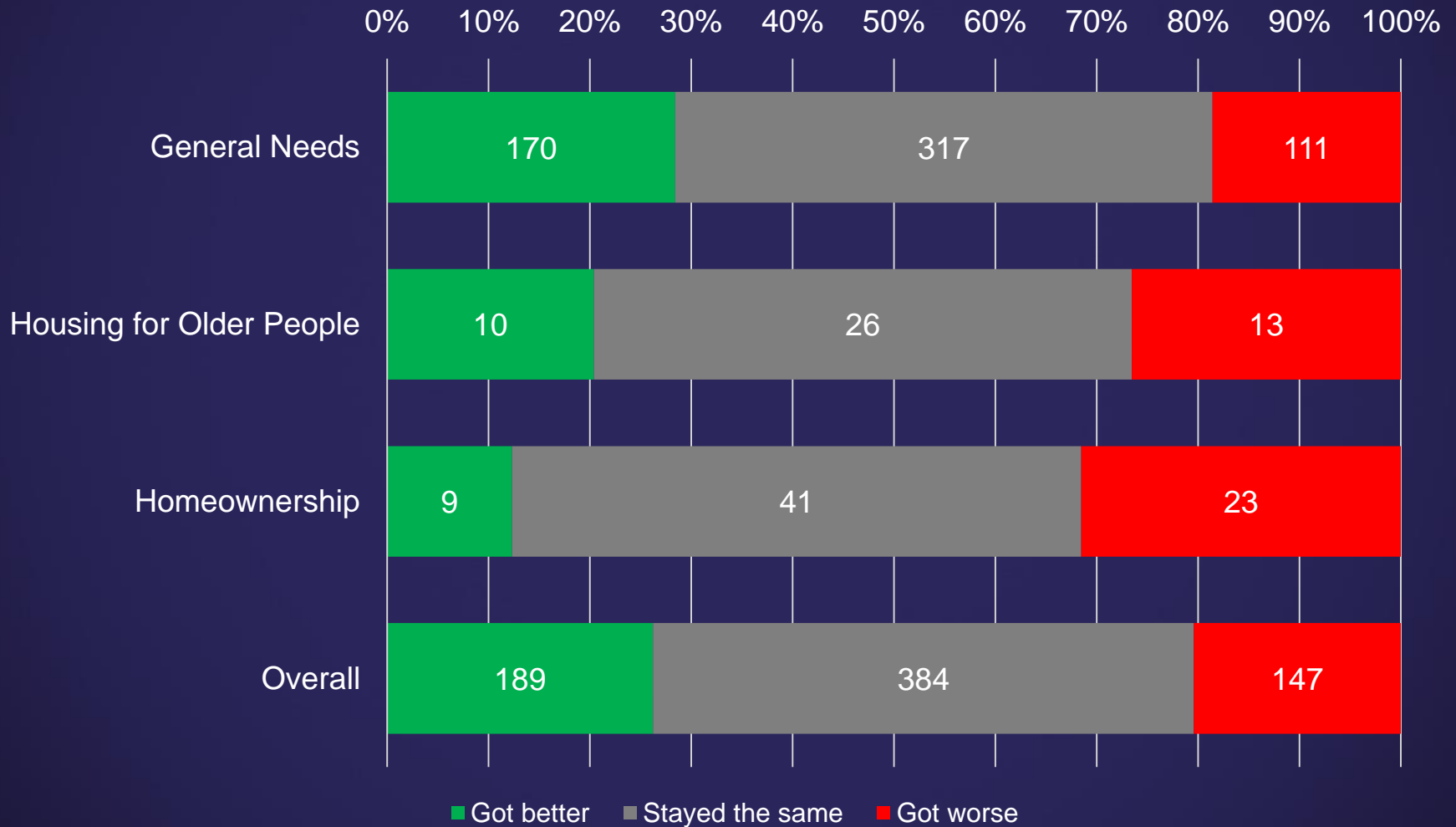
Keeping up with health and safety.  
**Mrs W, Camberley**



# Prior to taking part in this survey, had you heard about the Accent Partnership? (Homeowners not asked)



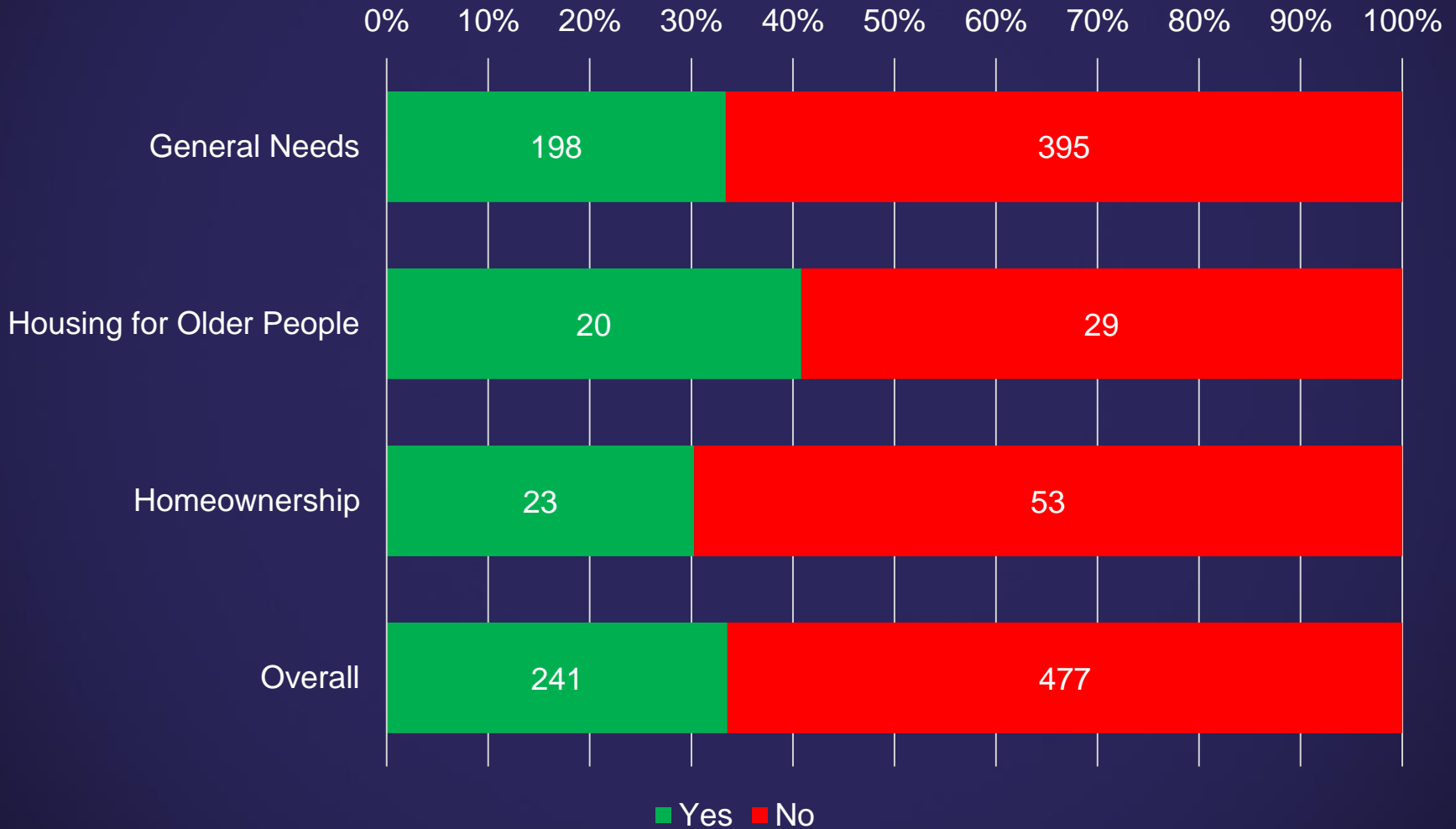
# How do you think the service provided by Accent has changed over the last 12 months?



# How satisfied are you that Accent listens to your views and acts upon them?



# Would you be interested in taking part in an online discussion via Zoom to explore some of the topics covered in this survey in more detail?



# Conclusions



- Customers tend to agree that Accent should prioritise calls from vulnerable customers and encourage other customers to use online services – but many were concerned that not all customers would be able to access online services. Many customers indicated that they would be happy to use online services, but only if they work as effectively as the services delivered through other channels.
- Most customers prefer to be notified about changes to services as and when they happen. Most customers agree that email is a quick, convenient and cost-effective way to do this, but that emails should be aimed at particular groups of customers to avoid supplying them with information which is irrelevant to their circumstances.
- 6 out of 10 general needs customers would be happy with fewer visits from their Customer Partner, as long as they are contacted personally from time-to-time. However, only 4 out of 10 homeowners felt this way about their Homeownership Specialist.

# Conclusions



- Some customers expressed the view that they scarcely see their Customer Partners anyway, and that seeing them less often would mean not seeing them at all. Some customers feel like they do not benefit from visits as they usually take place during working hours, when they are unavailable.
- Most customers are happy for Accent colleagues to work flexibly, but some feel that set hours would give a better indication of when they might be available.
- Customers are generally happy to see Accent colleagues less often if it means saving money and helping the environment, but not at the expense of delivering an excellent customer service. Some customers expressed the view that their neighbourhood does not get the attention it requires from the Customer Partner.
- Customers would generally be happy to attempt sending photos and videos of repairs issues to help diagnose the problem, but acknowledged that not all customers would be able to do this. Many customers felt that more complex repairs issues would still require an inspection from a surveyor.

# Conclusions



- Customers expect that Accent colleagues are sufficiently trained to deal with any type of enquiry and have little expectation of speaking to the same person every time they called. That being said, some customers feel that there is value in building a relationship with an individual and that it saved them from having to reiterate an issue.
- Customers are divided as to whether Accent should support customers to get online. Some feel that if we are encouraging customers to use online services, then we should also provide help to access them. Other customers suggested that Accent is not best placed to deliver this type of service and that there was plenty of help available elsewhere.
- Customers feel that Accent should serve as the first point of contact for customers who needed support with other aspects of their life – but that other providers are better equipped to deliver this type of support. Some customers expressed the view that some of Accent's partnerships with contractors and suppliers are in need of improvement, and until these are resolved we should not be entering new agreements.

# Conclusions



- Customers feel that rewarding customers who are involved in their local communities could help to promote harmonious communities. However, some customers who are not able to volunteer are concerned that they might be treated less favourably if Accent were to do this.
- Up to one third of customers would consider renting a home that they had not been able to view in person, as long as enough information about the property is provided for them to be able to make an informed decision. Customers were less inclined to buy a home that they had not been able to view in person.
- 6 out of 10 customers would consider participating in online discussions via Zoom. Many customers indicated that they were already doing this.
- More customers felt that Accent's services had 'got better' over the last twelve months than had 'got worse' which reflects the UKCSI results – but this tendency did not occur in homeowners.



# Conclusions



- Only 51% of customers were satisfied that Accent 'listens to their views and acts upon them', down from 64% in 2016. Homeowners were included in the sample this time and the survey was carried out exclusively online, which may have influenced this result.