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Complaints Handling within Regulated Financial Services Firms- Consumer Research



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Foreword

In 2015, the Central Bank of Ireland (“the Central Bank”) commissioned PwC to conduct research on consumers’ attitudes and experiences of making a complaint to a financial services firm (“firm”) and the subsequent impact that their experience had on future behaviour relating to complaints. It further sought to explore the reasons why those who might have a reason to complain did not go on to do so.

An online survey, designed to examine and explore consumers’ experiences and perceptions of the complaints handling process, was conducted with a panel of over 1,000 consumers. The surveys were completed during November 2015 by consumers who had a reason to complain to a firm during the last five years. This was followed up, in March 2016, with a qualitative study comprising eight focus groups of 61 consumers who also had a reason to complain to a firm. These focus groups were intended to further understand consumers’ experiences of making a complaint.

The Central Bank commissioned this research to highlight potential risk issues and to identify possible barriers to effective complaints handling. The results of this research will inform our work and contribute to wider discussions with industry and policymakers both domestically and internationally in the area of complaints handling. Regulated firms should have regard to the findings of this research in their own complaints handling processes, seeking to identify good practices which should be adopted in their own firms.

Key findings

Respondents had a poor opinion of several aspects of the complaints process

- Only 41% of respondents who had made a complaint said that they were treated fairly during the process.
- Only 39% of respondents were satisfied with how the complaint was handled.

Respondents who were given a named contact during the process were more satisfied with how their complaint was handled

- 52% of respondents who were given a named contact were satisfied with how their complaint was handled compared to 29% of those who were not given a named contact.
- 70% of respondents who were given a named contact were satisfied with the outcome of their complaint compared to 55% of those who were not given a named contact.
- 62% of those who were given a named contact were satisfied that they were kept up to date throughout the process compared to 24% of those who were not given a named contact.

The knowledge, experience and authority of the point of contact were considered to be among the most important aspects of the complaints process

- 55% of respondents who had made a complaint said that the person handling the complaint having the appropriate knowledge and experience was among the three most important aspects of the complaint process.
- 46% of respondents said that the person handling the complaint having the appropriate authority to deal with the complaint was among the three most important aspects.

Timely resolution of the complaint was also considered an important aspect of the complaints process

- 50% of respondents who had made a complaint said that timely resolution of the complaint was among the three most important aspects of the complaint process.

The way in which complaints are handled can have a significant impact on consumer behaviour

- 18% of respondents who had made a complaint said that they switched provider based on how the complaint was handled.
- 51% said that they were less likely to purchase another product/ service from the same firm.
- 56% said that they were less likely to recommend the firm to a friend or family member.

The two main reasons for not complaining were a belief that the problem could not be resolved or that they would not be treated fairly

- Of those who had a reason to complain but did not do so, 43% said that they did not complain because they did not think the problem could be resolved.
- 32% responded that the reason for not complaining was that they did not have confidence they would be treated fairly.
- Other reasons for not complaining included considering the process to be too onerous (22%), not having the time (19%) or not knowing how to complain (13%).

1. Introduction

Background

This report details the results and findings of research undertaken to understand consumers' experience and perception of the complaints handling process in firms in Ireland. The Central Bank has put in place a strong regulatory framework for complaints handling in the Consumer Protection Code 2012 ("the Code") with which regulated firms must comply. In undertaking this research, the Central Bank sought to better understand consumers' experiences and expectations of how firms are applying this framework. The purpose of this research was to examine consumers' attitudes and experiences of complaining to a firm by:

- identifying the most common reasons for making a complaint to a firm;
- exploring the different channels and means that consumers use to communicate their complaint;
- examining what aspects of the complaints handling process are the most important to consumers;
- exploring what features of the experience, when making a complaint, have the greatest impact

on consumers' satisfaction with the process and feelings of having been treated fairly by the firm;

- identifying the impact of the experience of making a complaint on the consumer's likelihood to complain again as well as likelihood to repurchase or recommend the product or service being complained about; and
- exploring the obstacles that are experienced by those consumers who had a reason to complain but who did not.

In publishing this report, the Central Bank is publicising the findings to help promote a consumer-focused culture in the financial services industry that results in positive outcomes for consumers of financial products and services in Ireland.

Methodology and scope

PwC were commissioned by the Central Bank to conduct this research in September 2015. The consumer research encompassed two separate exercises; an online consumer survey conducted in November 2015, followed by focus groups held in March 2016.

Consumer Survey

1,058 completed responses were received through an online survey; 995 of which were consumers who had

made a complaint to a firm in the last five years with 63 being those who had a reason to complain, but did not do so.¹

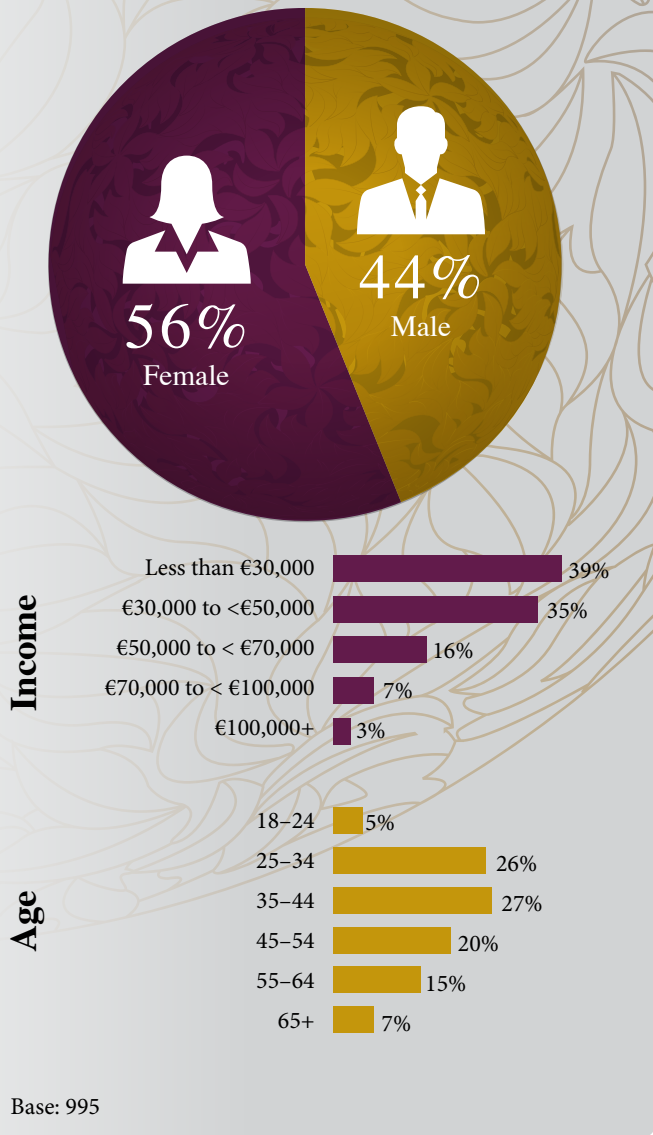
The majority of those who did complain made their complaint within the last two years, equating to 86% of the total population of respondents surveyed².

The profile of respondents to this online study can be broken down into male/female ratios, income brackets and age categories as overleaf:

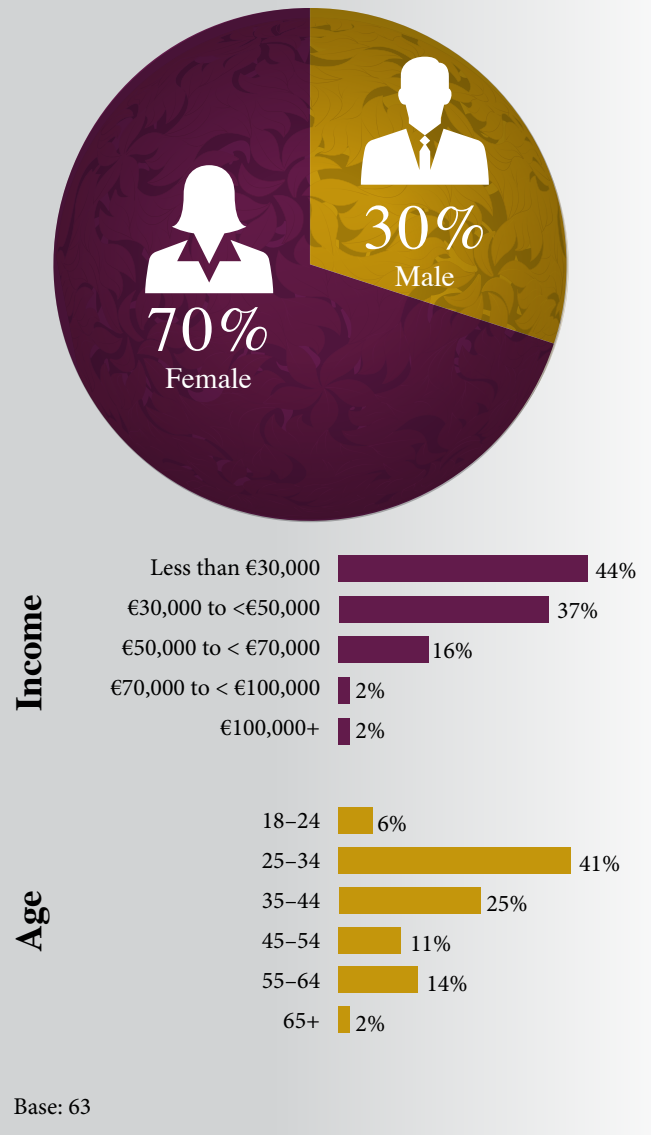
¹ Data provided throughout this report may not sum up to 100% due to rounding or use of multi-response questions.

² It should be noted that this review was undertaken as a single point-in-time exercise and was limited in the responses of the participants referred to in this survey. Using a phased launch, a nationally representative sample of 500 consumers were targeted first – this enabled PwC to understand what proportion of the population had made a complaint about a financial services firm in the last five years. The survey was then opened up to any sample that had a reason to complain in the last five years. Accordingly, the results are reflective of the consumers' perception with regard to the complaints handling process and therefore not evidence of compliance or non-compliance with the Code for individual financial services firms. It should be noted that these results are based solely on the recollection of those respondents surveyed. The Central Bank has not validated these results by a process of independent review.

94% of respondents complained:



6% had a reason to complain, but did not



Focus Groups

The quantitative phase of research was followed by eight focus group discussions designed to gain a more qualitative insight into consumers' experiences of making a complaint and the perceived obstacles to making a complaint. The focus groups comprised of 61 consumers aged between 18-55+ and were conducted in Dublin and Sligo. All participants had a reason to complain in the last five years. Seven of the groups consisted of consumers who had made a complaint to a firm while one group of respondents

had a reason to complain but did not go on to make that complaint. The results from those focus group discussions are reflected throughout this document as a supplement to the findings of the quantitative research.

The profile of respondents that participated in the focus group discussions were broken down along geographical location, age and whether they proceeded with making a complaint, as presented overleaf:

Group	Location	Age	Type of group
1	Dublin	55+	Complainer
2	Dublin	35-55	Complainer
3	Dublin	Any age	Complainer
4	Dublin	18-34	Complainer
5	Dublin	35+	Non-complainer
6	Sligo	55+	Complainer
7	Sligo	35-55	Complainer
8	Sligo	18-34	Complainer

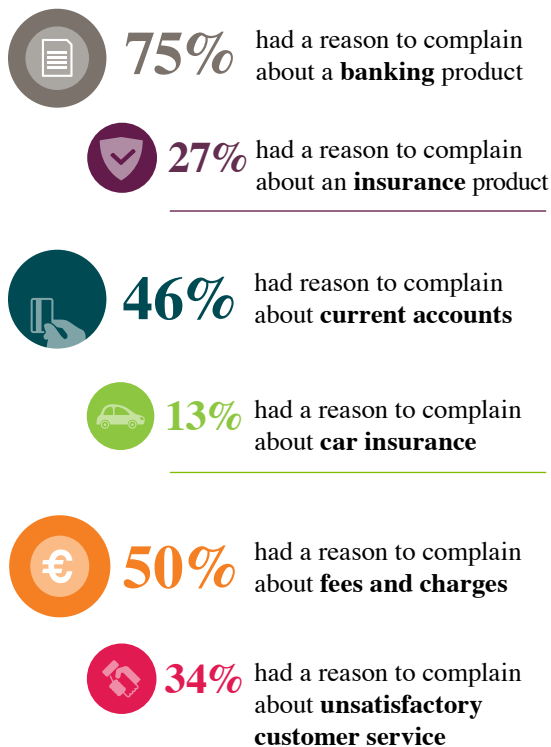
Unless otherwise stated, references in this report to 'respondents', or findings with respect to respondents, are to respondents to the quantitative survey and do not include the participants of the focus groups.

2. Reasons for complaining

The online consumer survey was based on the responses from 1,058 consumers who have had a reason to complain to a firm in the last five years. 995 of the respondents (94%) had gone on to make a complaint, with the remaining 63 not having done so (see Chapter 9 for specific findings from this cohort who did not make a complaint). 75% of the survey respondents had a reason to complain about a banking product while 27% had a reason to complain about an insurance product. 46% of the respondents had a reason to complain about a current account and 13% had a reason to complain about car insurance. 50% had a reason to complain about fees and charges while 34% had a reason to complain about unsatisfactory customer service.

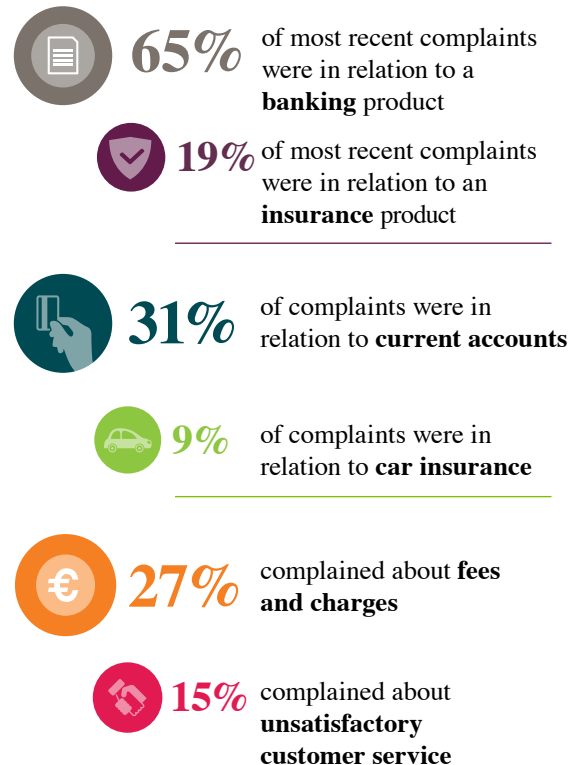
In order to focus recall of a specific event, respondents who had made a complaint were asked to consider their most recent experience of making a complaint. The majority made their most recent complaint to a bank³ (74%) or an insurance company (15%).⁴ 65% of respondents complained most recently about a banking product while 19% complained most recently about an insurance product. 31% of these most recent complaints related to current accounts and 9% were in relation to car insurance. Over a quarter (27%) of most recent complaints were in relation to fees and charges, whilst 15% complained about unsatisfactory customer service. A similar profile of firms and issues prevailed in the focus groups.

Reasons to complain in last 5 years...



Base: 1,058

Reasons for most recent complaint made...



Base: 995

³ For the purposes of this report, findings relating to 'banks' include responses relating to firms formally known as 'building societies'.

⁴ Other financial institution types that were identified by respondents as being the institution to whom they had a reason to complain were insurance/investment intermediaries, credit unions, investment managers, debt management firms and mortgage brokers among others.

3. How consumers made their complaints

Respondents complained to firms in a number of different ways, with speaking to someone in-branch/office (62%) or by telephone (57%) being the most common channels used for their most recent complaint. Respondents also most recently complained by letter/email (40%) or online through

social media or an online form (30%). 66% of those that complained to an insurance company did so over the telephone while 67% of those that complained to a bank spoke to someone in-branch/office.

How did you raise your most recent complaint?



62% spoke to someone in the branch/office



57% telephoned the company



40% wrote to/emailed the company



14% completed a form on the company's website



9% commented on the company's Facebook page



7% tweeted the company

Base: 995

Complaints Handling within Regulated Financial Services Firms

- 51% of respondents who made a complaint used only one channel of communication to make their most recent complaint.
- Over a quarter of those respondents who complained (27%) complained through two channels. Of these, 29% spoke to someone in-branch/office and then telephoned, 14% telephoned then wrote to and the same portion wrote to and then telephoned the firm.
- Over a fifth (22%) of those who complained made their complaint through more than two channels.

How did you make your most recent complaint?



Focus groups findings:

Participants of the focus groups tended to have complained either in-branch/office or via telephone, with most describing poor customer service and the need to complain multiple times, often over multiple channels, resulting in frustration and the feeling of not being taken seriously.

Telephone contact was the preferred channel for the majority of participants; it was felt to be a good way to get in contact with a member of staff at the firm with whom you could discuss sensitive information. However, frustration was expressed at the length of time it sometimes took to get in touch with the correct individual with some participants describing being passed from department to department. Complaining in-branch/office was described by focus group participants as having felt official and personal but many participants noted it was not always a convenient channel and there was sometimes a lack of privacy.

Most of the participants of the focus groups described themselves as being time poor and

would welcome a complaints process that was more convenient to their lifestyle and less time consuming. Participants, particularly younger cohorts, were open to online complaint processes such as an online complaints form, email or live web-chat. Online channels were appealing to participants due to the ability to access via working hours and the perceived immediacy of acknowledgement and potential to receive a record of complaint and regular updates.

However, the vast majority of participants considered complaining to firms as too personal/private for social media, and did not consider it to be a formal channel. Some focus group participants reported a fear of complaining in public fora such as social media, referring to the perceived control a bank would have on their overall finances and a concern around being black-marked which could result in the inability to get a loan in the future or have an adverse effect on their credit rating.

4. Outcome of the complaint

In terms of the outcome of their complaint, almost a quarter (23%) received an apology from the firm while approximately one-fifth (18%) were provided with redress/compensation and 32% had their specific issue resolved.

Of those respondents who received redress, 64% said that they were treated fairly during the

complaints process and 76% said that they were satisfied with the outcome. Of those respondents who did not receive redress, 36% said they were treated fairly during the complaints process and 56% said that they were satisfied with the outcome. Overall, 61% of respondents said they were satisfied with the outcome of their complaint.

What was the outcome of the complaint?



Base: 995

Focus groups findings:

Participants in the focus groups reported that complaints relating to fees and charges and debit/credit card transactions were generally resolved to their satisfaction in terms of outcome.

The participants were generally less satisfied with the outcomes relating to other types of complaints and in some cases referred to these complaints as 'grey areas' (i.e. complaints relating to issues

that are not straightforward or rectified/explained immediately). During discussions at the focus groups, participants put forward that it was essential that reassurance was provided that the issue would not reoccur. For many participants, an apology was an expected outcome.

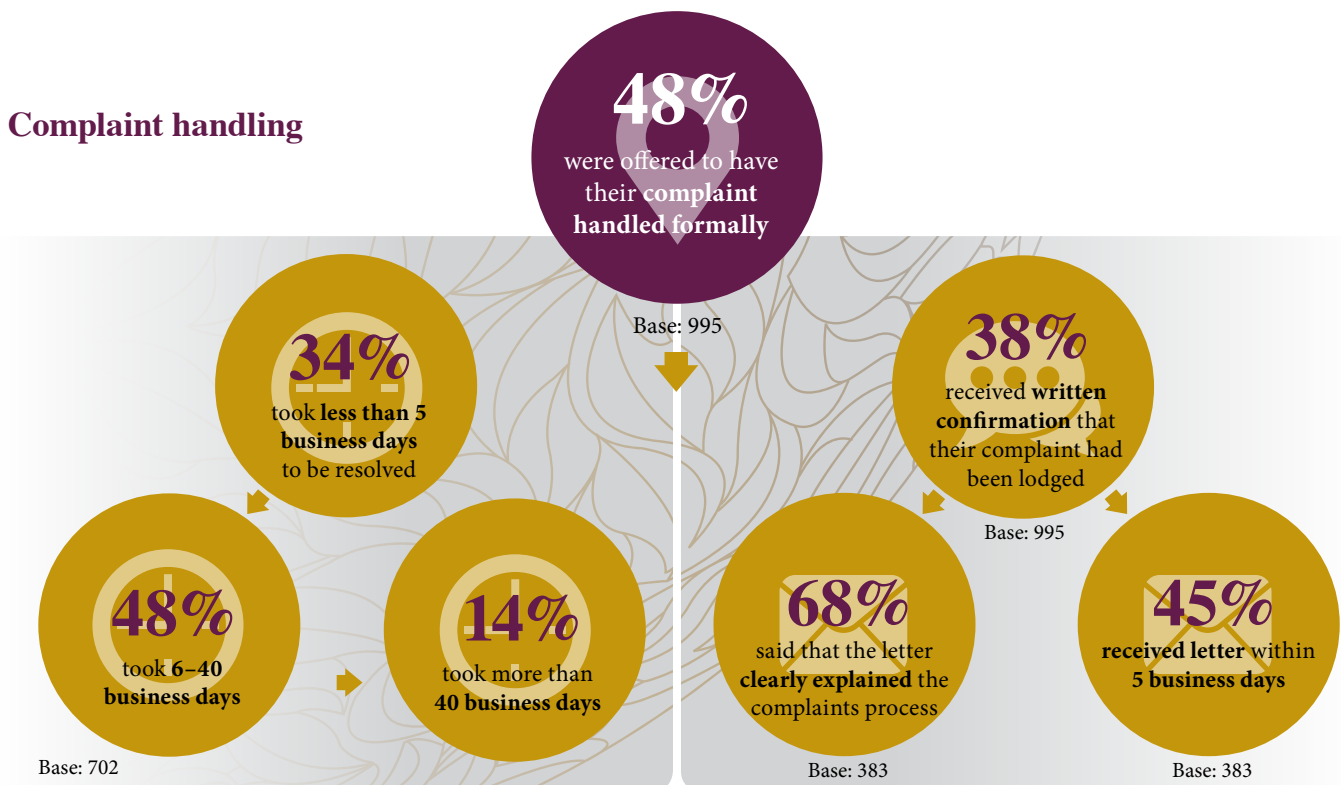
5. Consumers' experience

Of those respondents who complained, less than half considered that they were offered to have their complaint handled formally. 38% of those respondents that complained recalled having received a written communication that their complaint had been lodged, 45% of whom recalled having received such a communication within 5 business days. Of those who recalled having received a letter, 68% said the letter clearly explained the complaints process.

Of those respondents whose complaints had been resolved, 34% recalled their complaint having been resolved in less than 5 business days while almost half (48%) said their complaint was resolved within 6-40 business days and 14% recalled it taking more than 40 business days.

- More respondents who considered that they were offered to have their complaint handled formally were satisfied with how their complaint was handled (53%) than those who did not consider that they were offered to have their complaint handled formally (24%);
- More respondents who were given a named contact were satisfied with how their complaint was handled (52%) than those that were not given a named contact (29%);
- More respondents who recalled having received a written communication that their complaint had been lodged were satisfied with how their complaint was handled (50%) than those who did not recall having received such a confirmation (31%);
- More respondents whose complaint was resolved within 5 business days were satisfied with how their complaint was handled (63%) than those whose complaint was not resolved within 5 business days (39%).

Complaint handling

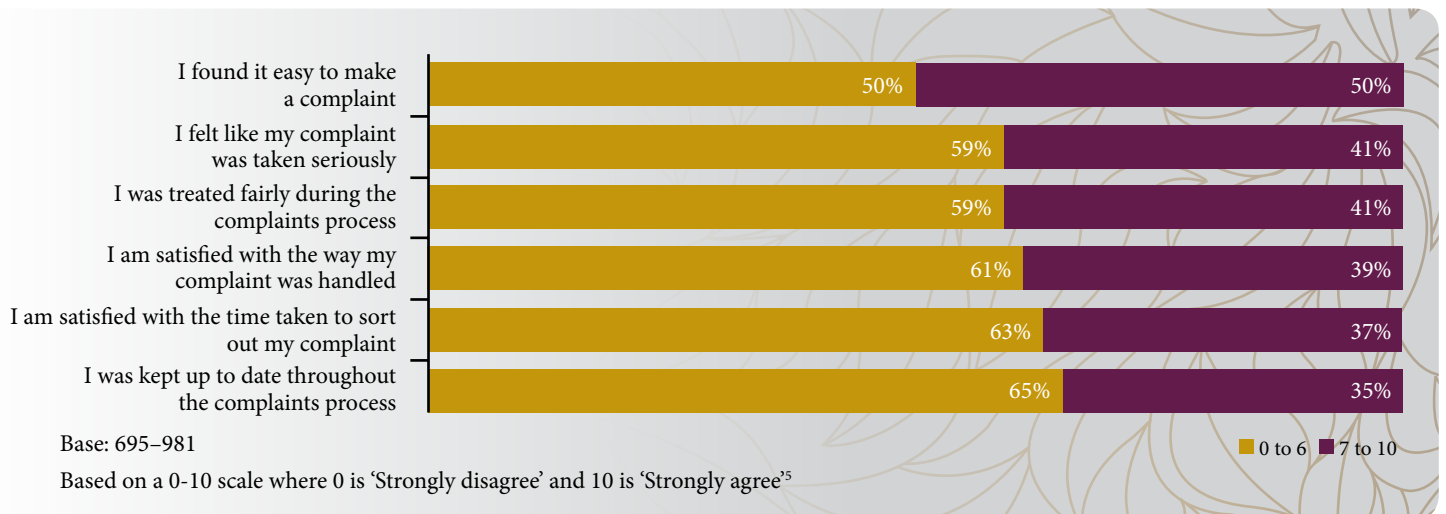


Complaints Handling within Regulated Financial Services Firms

Half of those who made a complaint found it easy to do so, but overall, respondents had a poor opinion of the complaints process;

- 41% of respondents felt their complaint was taken seriously;
- 41% of respondents said that they were treated fairly during the process;
- 39% of respondents were satisfied with how the complaint was handled;
- 37% of respondents were satisfied with the time taken to sort out the complaint; and
- 35% of respondents said that they were kept up to date during the process.

Regarding the complaints process, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements



On a number of issues, differences emerged between the levels of satisfaction between respondents who complained to a bank compared to respondents who complained to an insurance company.

	Respondents that complained to a bank	Respondents that complained to an insurance company
Satisfied with the time taken to sort out complaint	41%	30%
Satisfied with the way the complaint was handled	42%	32%
Agreement that the person they dealt with clearly explained the process	61%	54%
Agreement that the person they dealt with had the appropriate knowledge and experience	61%	54%
Agreement that the person they dealt with had the appropriate authority	60%	50%

Base: 251-723 (Bank) Base: 52-144 (Insurance)

⁵ Where satisfaction/agreement is ranked on a 0-10 scale, 7-10 is taken as being satisfied/in agreement and 0-6 is not considered to be either satisfied or in agreement.

More of those respondents who said that they were treated fairly during the complaints process were satisfied with how their complaint was handled (84%) compared to those who did not say that they were treated fairly (8%).

Respondents who considered that they were offered to have their complaints handled formally were also more likely to have said that they were treated fairly during the complaints process (66%, compared to 38% for those who did not consider that were offered to have their complaints handled formally). Similarly, those who were given a named contact were also more likely to have said that they were treated fairly (49%) than those respondents who were not given a named contact (27%). Also, 56% of those respondents who recalled having received a written communication that their complaint was received said that they were treated fairly compared with 35% of those that did not recall having received such a confirmation.

Focus groups findings:

For participants of the focus groups, the experience of complaining was generally poor, regardless of organisation or service. Complaining to a firm was perceived by some participants as more hassle and as having poorer customer service than when complaining to a non-financial services firm.

Poor complaint experiences described by focus group participants echoed some of the areas rated poorly by respondents in the online survey. Ease of making a complaint was hampered by participants' lack of awareness of the complaints process and whether a complaint was being actioned. Satisfaction with how the complaint was handled was affected by having to use multiple channels of communication to reach an outcome as well as having to deal with various members of staff.

The dissatisfaction with being kept up to date and the time taken to sort out the complaint expressed by respondents to the online survey was reiterated by participants of the focus groups. The participants expressed frustration with what they felt were insufficient updates on progress of their complaints, resulting in them having to chase up the status of their complaints with the firm as well as a perceived lack of honest timelines from the firm.

6. What features are especially important to consumers in a complaints process?

The knowledge, experience and authority of the complaint handler, as well as timely resolution, were the most important aspects to respondents of good complaints experience.

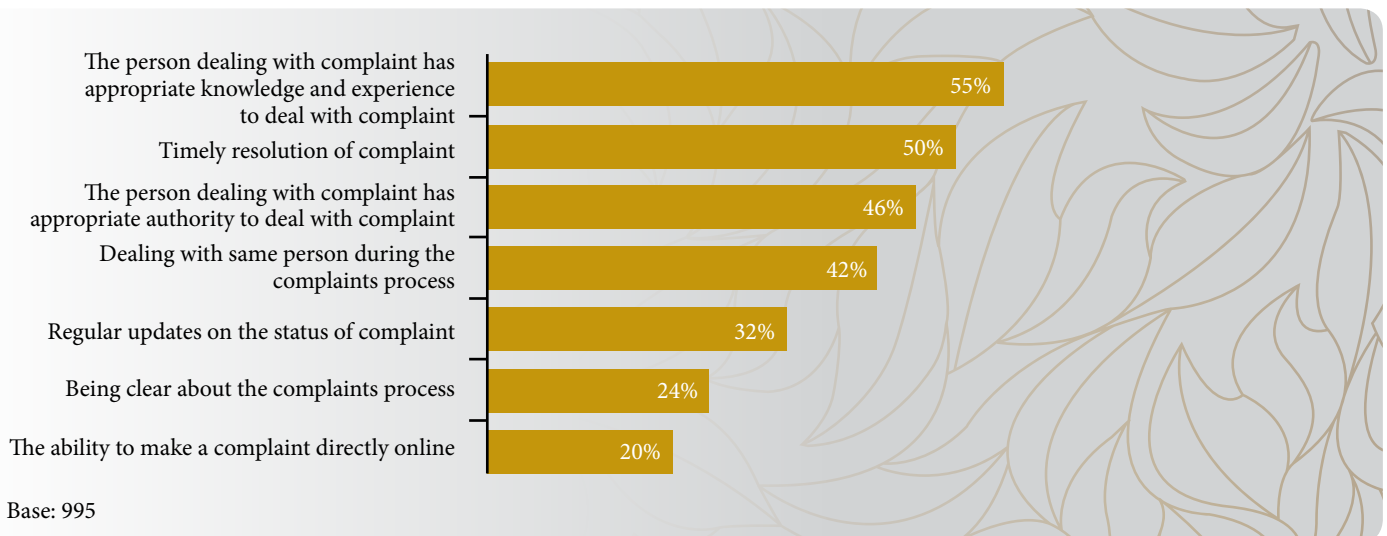
55% of respondents said that having confidence in the person dealing with their complaint was the most important factor, specifically confidence in their level of knowledge and experience. 46% of respondents said that it was important to them that

the person dealing with their complaint had the appropriate authority to deal with the complaint.

Time-related factors also had an important role to play in the complaints experience of the respondents, with 50% of respondents ranking timely resolution as being in the top three most important factors while 32% ranked being kept abreast in relation to the status of their complaint, via regular updates.

Respondents were asked to consider the importance of each of the following when making a complaint...

Which of these is important to you when making a complaint?



Focus groups findings:

For participants in the focus groups, acknowledgement of the complaint and having a point of contact were the most important aspects of the complaints process. Regular updates at key stages of the complaints process were ranked as being important by participants, reducing the need for them to follow up with the firm in relation to their complaint. Time taken was also important to focus group participants but an honest timeline with regular updates was more important.

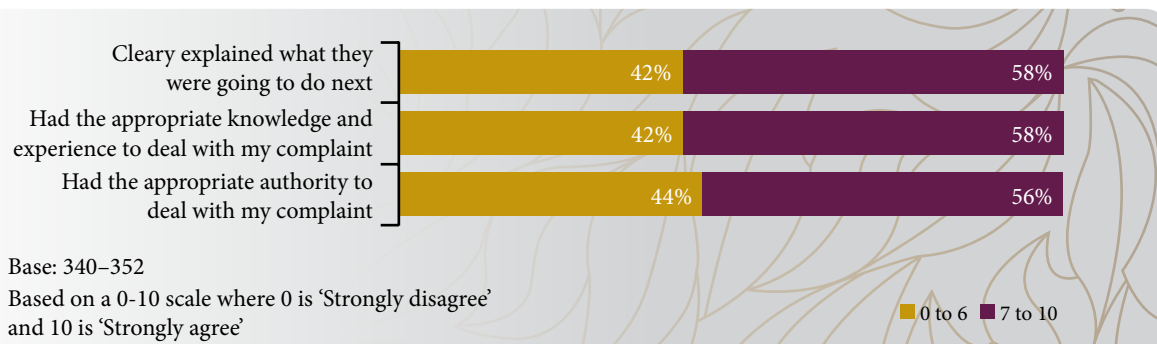
Having a main point of contact

Respondents who were given a named contact during the process were more satisfied with how their complaint was handled. In particular, compared to others, respondents who were given a named contact had higher levels of agreement that they felt their complaint was taken seriously, that they were treated fairly and that they were kept up to date throughout the complaints process. Just over a third (36%) of those respondents who complained recalled that they were given the name of someone within the firm who would be their point of contact during the complaints process.

Those respondents who were given a named point of contact were also asked to rate various aspects of their complaints experience in relation to their main point of contact.

Just over half of those respondents given a named point of contact were satisfied that the person clearly explained the process (58%), had the appropriate knowledge (58%) or experience and authority (56%) to deal with their complaint.

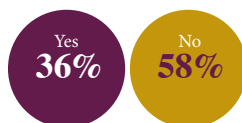
The person I dealt with during the complaints process...



Those who responded 'Yes' to being given a named point of contact were more likely to agree with the statements below in comparison to those who responded 'No'.

Were you given the named point of contact?

Regarding the complaints process, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statement.



Statement	Yes	No
I felt like my complaint was taken seriously	59%	28%
I was kept up to date throughout the complaints process	62%	24%
I am satisfied with the way my complaint was handled	52%	29%
I was treated fairly during the complaints process	56%	30%
I am satisfied with the time taken to sort out my complaint	51%	28%
I found it easy to make a complaint	62%	40%
I am satisfied with the outcome of my complaint	70%	55%

Base: 695-981

Focus groups findings:

Participants in the focus groups felt that having a point of contact within the firm was one of the most important aspects of the complaints process, as it provided them with reassurance that a member of staff had taken ownership of the complaint. Being passed between multiple members of staff was noted as an issue that many participants had experienced and had resulted in participants having felt frustrated with the complaints handling process.

Impact of time taken to resolve complaints

In terms of the length of time taken to resolve complaints, 34% of respondents indicated that it took 5 business days or less to resolve their complaint, 48% between 6 and 40 business days and 14% indicated that it took longer than 40 business days. Taking each of these time periods, respondents in each category then responded to their experience of key aspects of the complaints process. In overall terms, respondents whose complaint took 6 business days or more to be resolved were less satisfied with the complaints process than those whose complaint was resolved within 5 business days; with respondents whose complaint took between 6 and 40 business days to resolve scoring lowest of all.

Complaining to someone in-branch/office or by telephone resulted in the quickest resolution for the respondents: 35% of those respondents who spoke with someone in-branch/office and 32% of those who telephoned had their complaint resolved within 5 business days. Respondents who complained to a bank said that they were more likely to have their complaint dealt with within 5 business days (36%) than those who complained to other firms⁶.

How long did it take for your complaint to be resolved?



Regarding the complaints process, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	5 or less business days	6-40 business days	More than 40 business days
I was kept up to date throughout the complaints process	61%	37%	59%
I felt like my complaint was taken seriously	71%	44%	68%
I was treated fairly during the complaints process	65%	42%	54%
I am satisfied with the outcome of my complaint	73%	62%	71%
I am satisfied with the way my complaint was handled	63%	39%	46%
I am satisfied with the time taken to sort out my complaint	64%	32%	46%
I found it easy to make a complaint	71%	53%	54%

Base: 702

Focus groups findings:

For participants of the focus groups, time taken to resolve the complaint was important but an honest timeline with regular updates was felt to be more important. There was an expectation among participants that time could vary depending on the type of complaint but most participants said that they would be happy if they were given an honest

indication of how long it might take the firm to resolve the complaint. Of those participants that were given a timeline in relation to the resolution of their complaint, not all were followed but those participants who felt that the timeline was followed were generally more satisfied with the process.

⁶ Insurance (29%). Insurance/Investment Intermediary, Broker or Agents (28%) and Credit Unions (19%).

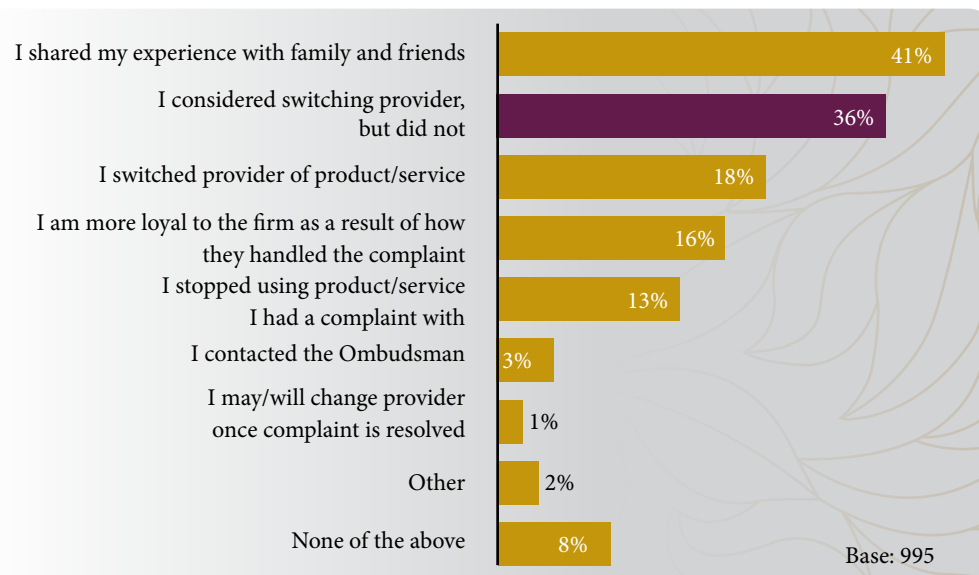
7. Impact of complaint handling on behaviour

16% of respondents surveyed who had made a complaint agreed that they were more loyal to the firm as a result of how their complaint was handled. However, over half of the respondents (54%) said that they switched (18%) or considered switching (36%) as a result of how their complaint was handled.

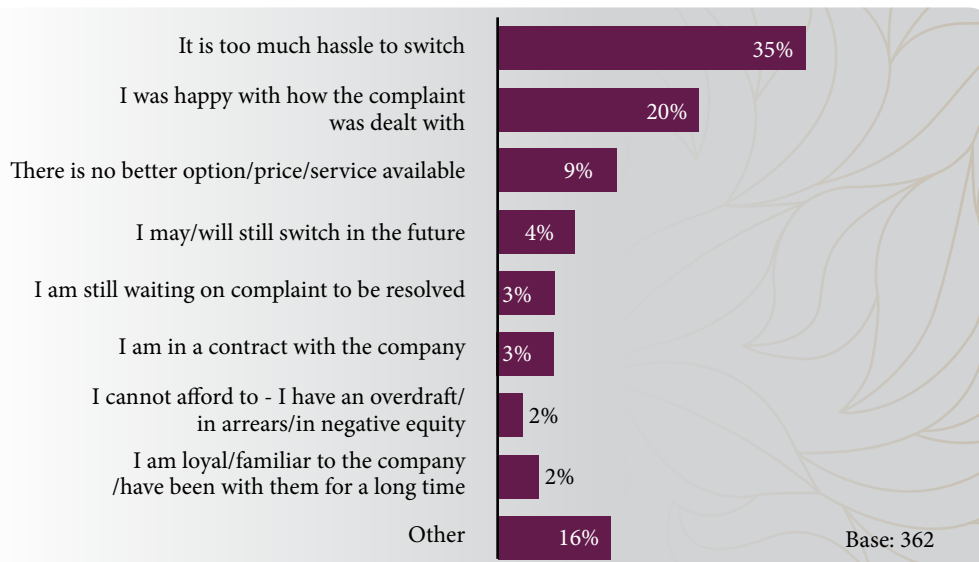
Of those respondents who considered switching but did not switch, a third said they did not do so

as it was too much hassle while a fifth said they did not switch because they were happy with how their complaint was dealt with. One in ten said they did not switch as there was no better option available. A greater percentage of respondents who complained to an intermediary, broker or agent (32%), or an insurance company (31%), said that they switched than those who complained to a bank (14%).

As a result of how your most recent complaint was handled, which of the following apply?



Why did you decide not to switch provider?





Those respondents who said that they switched providers were less likely to:

- Consider that they were offered to have their complaint handled formally (34%),
- Say that they were kept up to date (17%),
- Feel like their complaint was taken seriously (22%),
- Say that they were treated fairly (19%),
- Be satisfied with the time taken to resolve the complaint (18%),
- Be satisfied with their point of contact (33%),

than those respondents that said that they did not switch.



Those respondents who said that they were more loyal to the firm as a result of how their complaint was handled were more likely to:

- Consider that they were offered to have their complaint handled formally (77%),
- Have recalled having received written communication that their complaint had been lodged (57%) ,
- Have been given a named contact (56%),
- Say that they were kept up to date (71%),
- Feel like their complaint was taken seriously (83%),
- Say that they were treated fairly (85%),
- Be satisfied with the outcome of their complaint (86%),

than those who did not say that they were more loyal to the firm.

51%

of consumers who made a complaint were less likely to purchase another product/service from the same firm compared with 63% of those who did not complain

Those respondents who said they were less likely to repurchase another product as a result of how their complaint was handled were also less likely to:

- Consider that they were offered to have their complaint handled formally (36%),
- Have been given a named contact (26%),
- Had their complaints resolved within 40 business days (68%),
- Say that they were treated fairly (18%), and
- Be satisfied with how the complaint was handled (16%) and the outcome of the complaint (42%),

than those who are just as likely/more likely to repurchase.

56%

of consumers who made a complaint were less likely to recommend the firm to a friend, family member or colleague compared with 76% of those who did not complain

Those respondents who said they were less likely to recommend the financial institution as a result of how their complaint was handled were also less likely to:

- Consider that they were offered to have their complaint handled formally (36%),
- Have recalled having received written communication that their complaint had been lodged (31%),
- Have been given a named contact (27%),
- Had their complaints resolved within 40 business days (71%),
- Received compensation or an apology (30%),
- Felt that their complaint was taken seriously (22%),
- Say that they were treated fairly (20%),
- Be satisfied with how the complaint was handled (17%), and
- Be satisfied with the outcome of the complaint (43%),

than those who are just as likely/more likely to recommend.

Focus groups findings:

In general, respondents felt frustrated about their experience of complaining to a firm, and as a result most of the participants had considered switching. Older participants were more likely to have followed through and switched their provider than younger participants. One of the main reasons given by focus group participants for not switching reflects

the main reason for not switching amongst survey respondents, a perception that it would be too much hassle. Other reasons reported by focus group participants include no choice/competition, feeling that there is no difference between providers and being tied into a product/service.

8. Complaining in the future

Respondents were also asked if they would make a complaint in the future. The majority of those respondents who had already made a complaint said they were likely to do so. However, less than half of these said they would be confident that they would be treated fairly.

Those respondents who complained to an insurance company said they were more likely to complain

again (85%) than those who complained to a bank (79%).

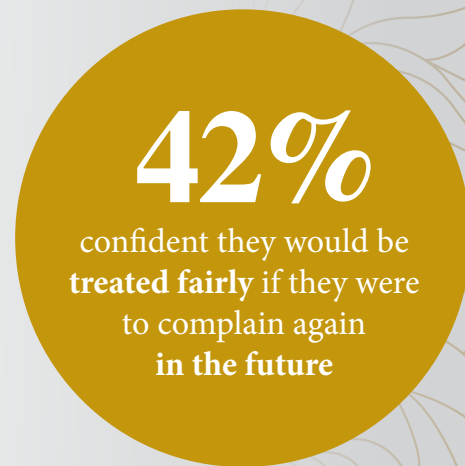
Those respondents who complained to an insurance company said they were more likely to be confident that they would be treated fairly were they to complain in the future (51%) than those who complained to a bank (43%), or investment intermediary, broker or agent (24%).



Respondents who were said that they were likely to complain again were also more likely to:

- Have been offered redress/compensation (20%),
- Have had the same point of contact throughout the complaints process (64%),
- Feel that the person dealing with the complaint had the appropriate knowledge and experience to deal with it (66%),
- Be satisfied with the outcome of the complaint (69%),

than those who are less likely to complain again.



Those respondents who were confident that their complaint would be dealt with fairly in the future were more likely to:

- Have recalled having received a written communication that their complaint was being dealt with (50%),
- Have been given a named point of contact (47%),
- Have been offered redress/compensation (28%),

than those who said that they were not confident that their complaint would be dealt with fairly in the future.

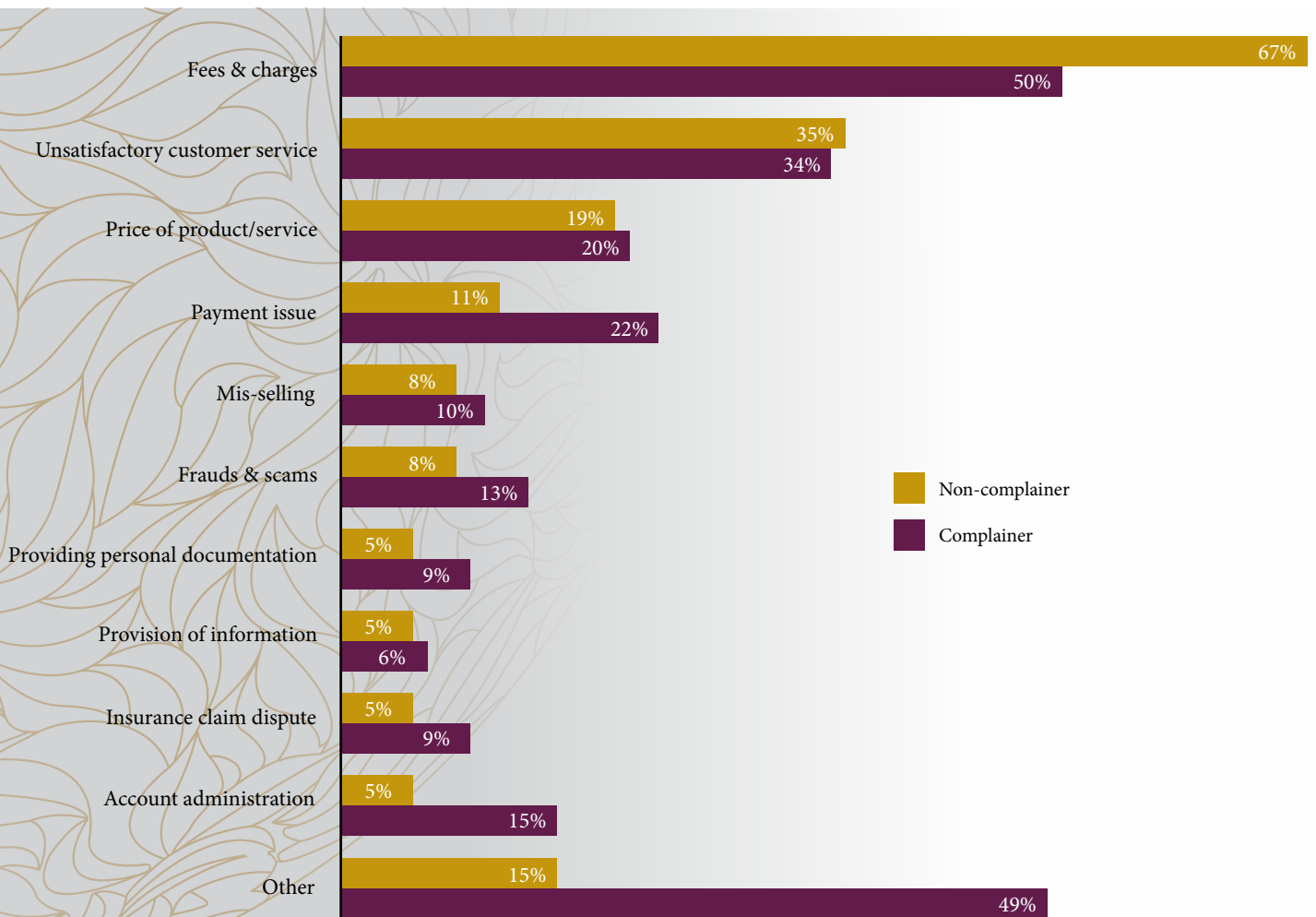
Focus groups findings:

All participants of the focus groups reported that they would complain again, with many stating that they felt that they had no choice but to complain.

9. Respondents who did not make a complaint

Those respondents who did not make a complaint experienced similar issues to those who did make a complaint, although a greater proportion of non-complainers had an issue with fees and charges.

Have you had a reason to complain to a financial institution about any of the following in the last 5 years?

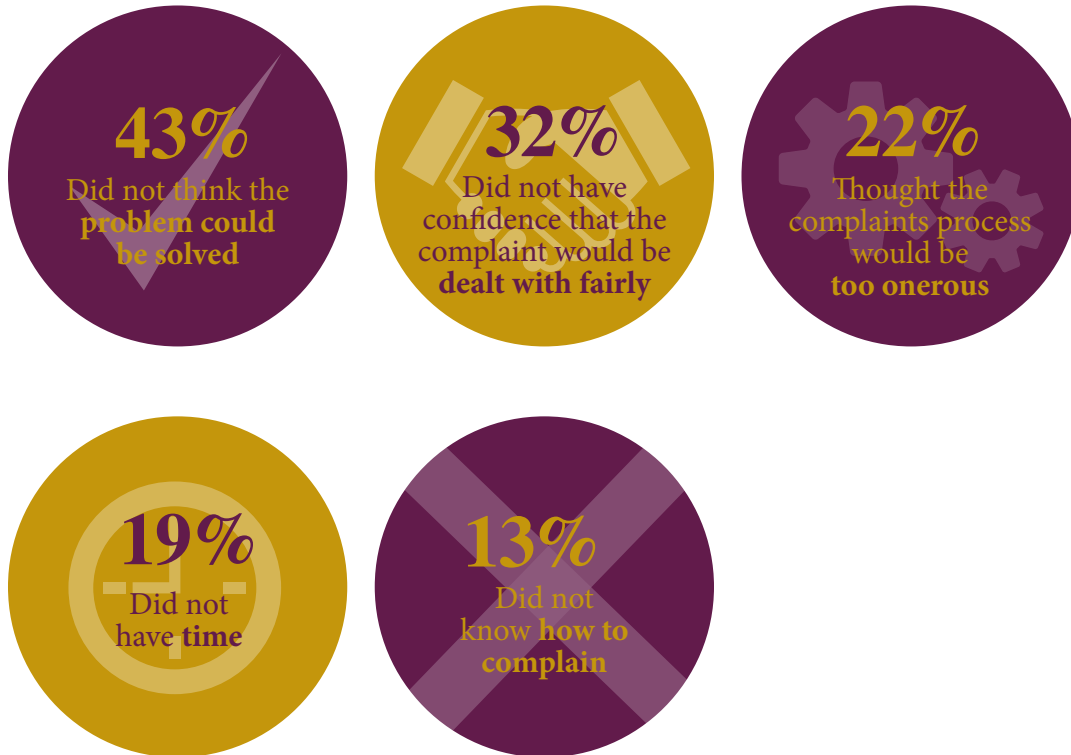


Non-complainer base: 63

Complainer base: 995

The most common reasons for not making a complaint were either respondents felt that their complaint could not be resolved (43%) or that they would not be treated fairly (32%).

Why did you not complain?



Base: 63

Focus group findings:

Participants in this focus group said they were open to complaining about an issue or a charge that was clearly a mistake made by the firm but less likely if the issue was considered by them to be a 'grey area', such as a refused loan/mortgage request.

Throughout the focus groups, including those comprised of participants who did go on to make a complaint, many participants reported that the complaints processes in place do not encourage people to make a complaint;

rather they perceived the process to be designed to discourage consumers from making a complaint. Some focus group participants who had not made a complaint reported a fear of the control the firm had over their finances, a concern about being black-marked which could have an impact on future financial needs if they did go on to complain.

Availability of independent advice or guidance on whether an issue was a viable complaint and worth pursuing was posed by some participants as something that might encourage them to complain.



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