

# Summary of Key Results from the Survey of Visa Applicants Who Used A Licensed Immigration Adviser

2021

Survey undertaken by: GravitasOPG

Report prepared: September 2021

# Introduction



## Research Aim



## Research Objectives

Provide specific measures of licensed adviser performance in **line with IAA's key functions**

Provide measures of satisfaction with the service received from licensed advisers and identify changes in these measures over time

Identify areas for improvement



# Summary of key findings

- Overall satisfaction with the quality of service received from the adviser remains high (86%) and stable, more than half of applicants continue to have their service expectations exceeded, and most would recommend their adviser to friends and family (91%). Good communication – including the provision of regular updates and quick responses to questions – is a strong contributor to the service received being better than anticipated.
- Consistent with previous survey rounds, residence (89%) and work (90%) visa applicants continue to be most satisfied with the overall quality of service received. In 2021, satisfaction levels among student visa applicants appear problematic with overall satisfaction for this group significantly lower (70%) than all other visa types (89% combined), and the share of students satisfied/very satisfied having declined significantly from 2019 (down 15 percentage points).
- Satisfaction with all aspects of client service and communications have improved since 2019.
- Perceptions of information provision and timeliness are also very positive and show good improvement since 2019.
- Satisfaction with the overall experience of applying for a NZ visa has declined significantly since 2019, with residence visa applicants being the least likely to be satisfied.
- The decision to use an immigration adviser continues to be strongly motivated by the perception that using an adviser ensures the best chance of success of having the application approved. A preference to use professional services is also expressed. Since the first COVID-19 lockdown, the regular visa policy/criteria changes have made it challenging for individuals to get up-to-date information and this has become a push factor to using an adviser.
- Despite using the services of an immigration adviser, applicants are most likely to find out how their current visa works via sources provided by Immigration New Zealand – particularly the Immigration New Zealand website (62%) and the visa approval letter (62%).

# Summary of key findings (2)



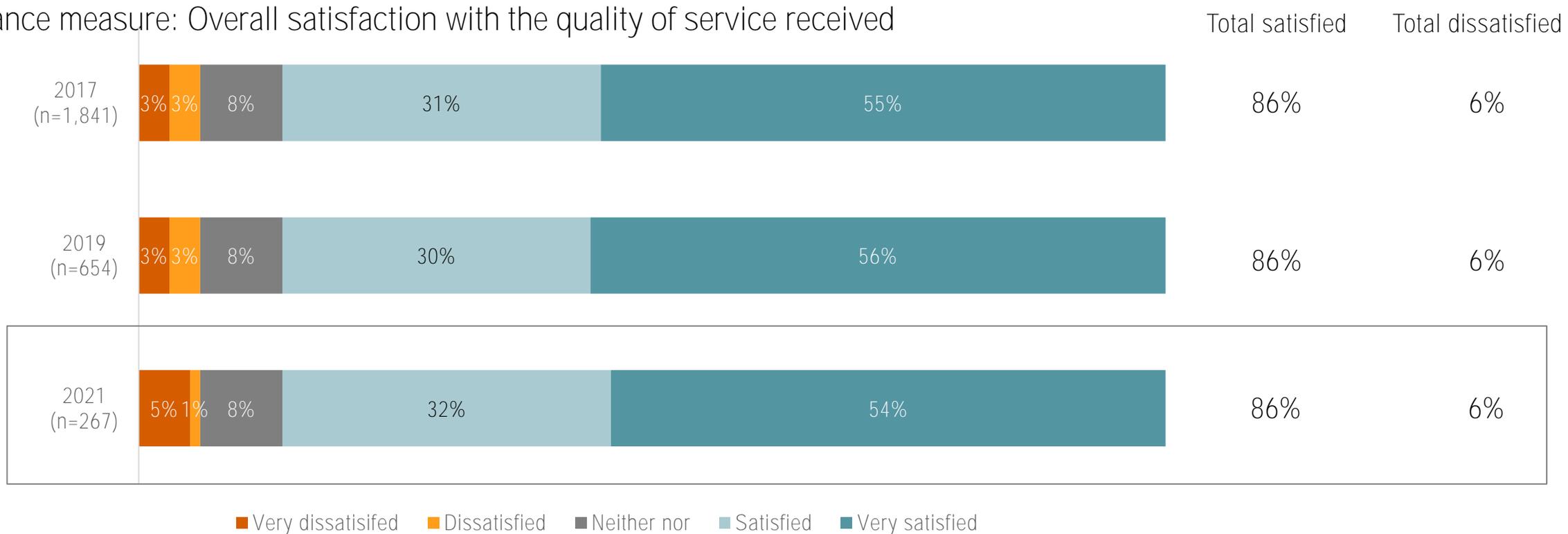
- Moving forward, for advisers working with residence visa applicants, consider:
  - ✓ More regular proactive contact
  - ✓ Ensuring easy access to staff
  - ✓ Ensuring agreed timeframes are kept – and delays are notified as early as possible so timeframe expectations can be re-set
  - ✓ Providing services at a reasonable cost and ensure refund policies are explained.
- Moving forward, advisers working with student visa applicants should consider:
  - ✓ Carrying out the application process as quickly as possible
  - ✓ Being more open to referring complex cases on to specialist advisers/lawyers, and in a timely way
  - ✓ Ensuring adequate language support is in place
  - ✓ Enhancing awareness of the complaints process.

# Overall satisfaction with the quality of service received from the adviser remains high and stable



Applicants remain positive about the quality of service received from their adviser overall, 86% satisfied to some extent, including more than half (54%) who are *very satisfied*. Six percent express some level of dissatisfaction, this share unchanged since 2017. Satisfaction among students declined significantly from 2019 (down from 85% to 70%).

Performance measure: Overall satisfaction with the quality of service received

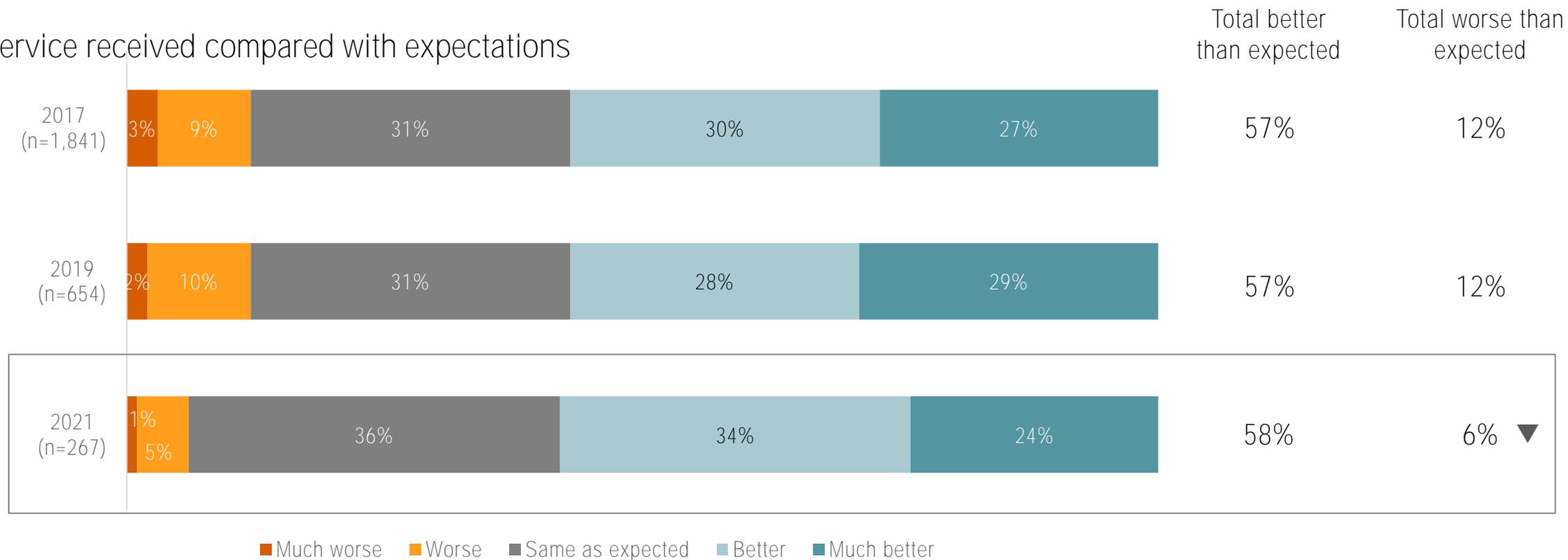


# More than half of applicants continue to have their expectations of service exceeded; only 6% say expectations are not met



Almost three in five clients (58%) continue to have their expectations of the service they would receive from their adviser exceeded, including 24% who described the service as *much better* than they thought it would be. In 2021 only 6% considered the level of service as worse than they anticipated, a significant decline from 12% in 2019. Student visa applicants were significantly more likely (27%) to have experienced worse service than they expected.

Level of service received compared with expectations

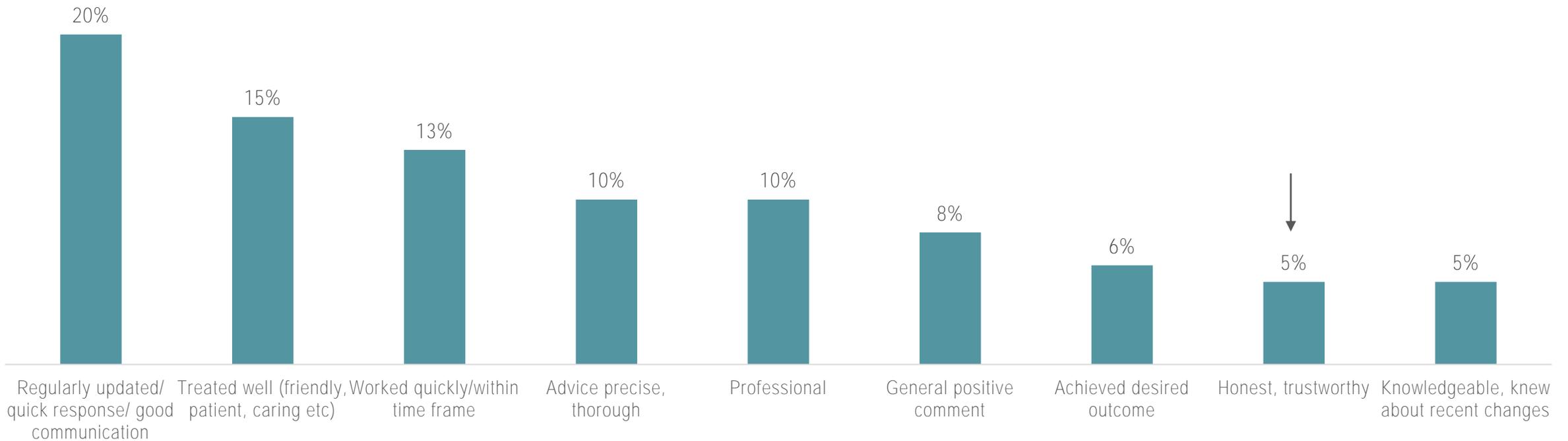


# Good communication from adviser is key contributor to service expectations being exceeded



Good communication from the adviser – including being regularly updated on application process and receiving a quick response to questions – is the most frequently-cited contributor to expectations of service being exceeded. Being treated well by adviser staff (being friendly, patient, caring etc) and working quickly – particularly where clients are working to a set timeframe or deadline – are also frequently mentioned.

## Why service received was better than expected



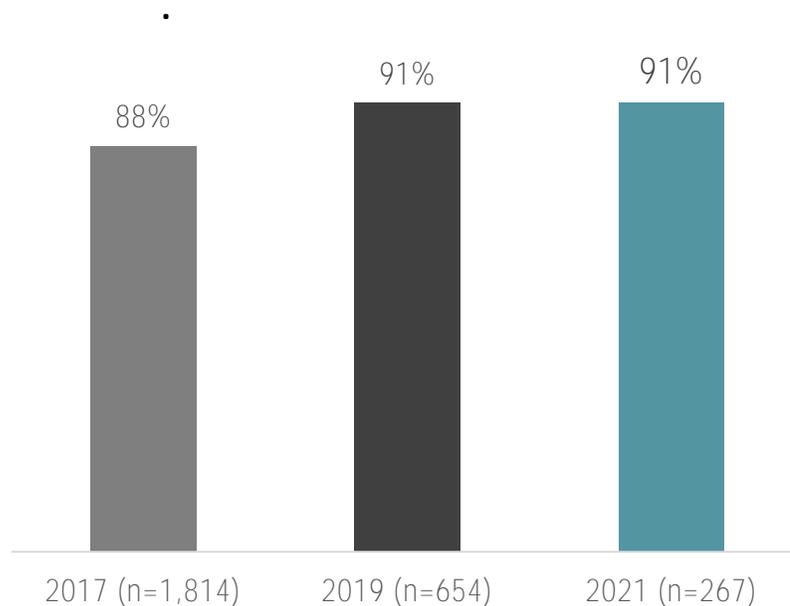
Base: n=134 (Respondents whose service experience was better/much better than they expected)  
Multiple responses to this question permitted. Graph shows those reasons mentioned by 5% or more of respondents whose expectations were exceeded.

# Reflective of their satisfaction with the quality of service provided, willingness to recommend the adviser remains high and stable



Almost all applicants (91%) would be willing to recommend their adviser to family and friends. This rating is stable from 2019.

Recommendation of adviser to friends and family (% yes)



Base: All respondents

Applicants significantly less likely to recommend their adviser include:

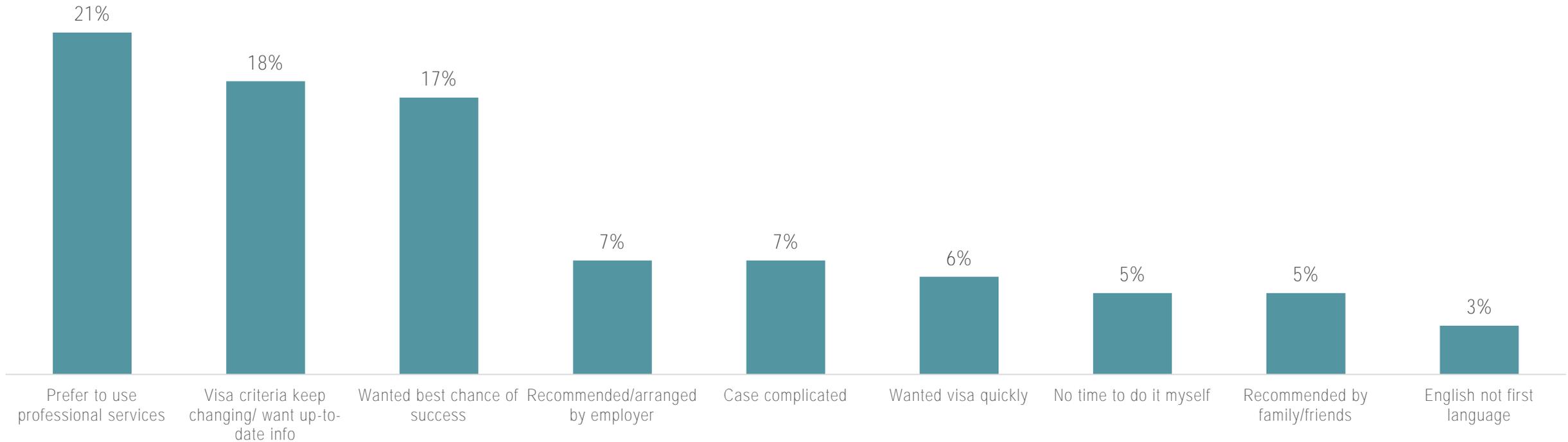
- ▼ Student visa applicants (80% recommend)
- ▼ Chinese/East Asian applicants (83% recommend)

# A preference for using professional services is the most frequently mentioned main reason for using an adviser



A preference for using professional services is the most frequently mentioned main reason for using an adviser (21%). The need for up-to-date information because visa criteria/rules keep changing (18%) and a perception that using an adviser offers the best chance of application success (17%) are also frequently mentioned.

Main reason for using an immigration adviser





## Poor treatment by staff and administration errors/lack of attention to detail are key contributors to service expectations not being met



Reasons given for service expectations not being met include:

- Poor treatment by adviser staff (unfriendly, not tactful) n=4
- Administration errors, lack of attention to detail n=4
- Lack of follow-up n=3
- Had to repeat same information to different staff n=2
- Application preparation process took longer than expected n=2
- Poor quality information received n=2
- Adviser staff stressful to deal with n=1
- Had to do an unexpectedly large amount of work myself n=1
- Expensive/poor value for money n=1

Base: n=17 (Applicants whose received service worse/much worse than expected); Multiple responses to this question permitted

*My adviser is not professional at all. They did not check any information I submitted – and even typed my name wrong!*

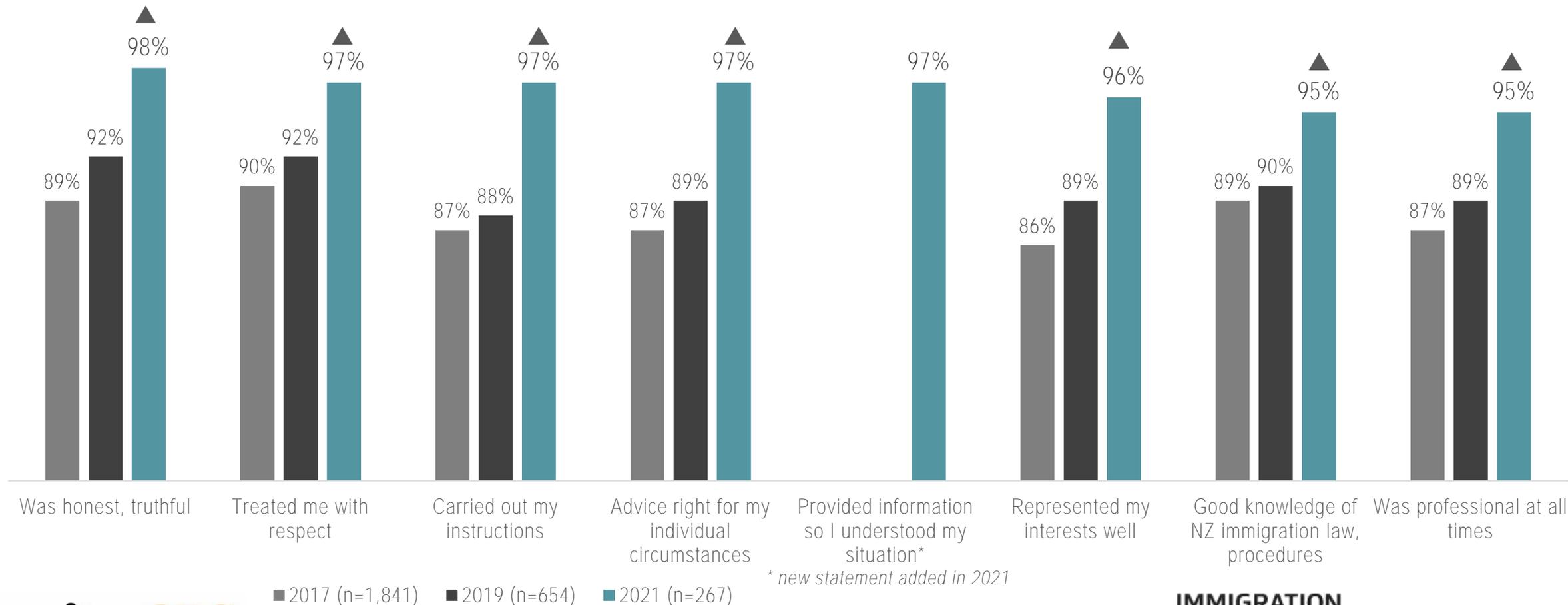
*I expected proactive, friendly and detailed service. The actual information received from my immigration adviser was not even as good as what I found on my own research.*

# Adviser Performance: applicants very positive about standard of client service received



Applicants are very positive about the client service received from their licensed adviser, with all ratings being above 95%. Perceptions have improved significantly since 2019 for all aspects of client service, most notably for 'carrying out my instructions' (up from 88% to 97%).

## Client service: How well did immigration adviser deliver on ... (% well/very well)



\* new statement added in 2021

■ 2017 (n=1,841) ■ 2019 (n=654) ■ 2021 (n=267)

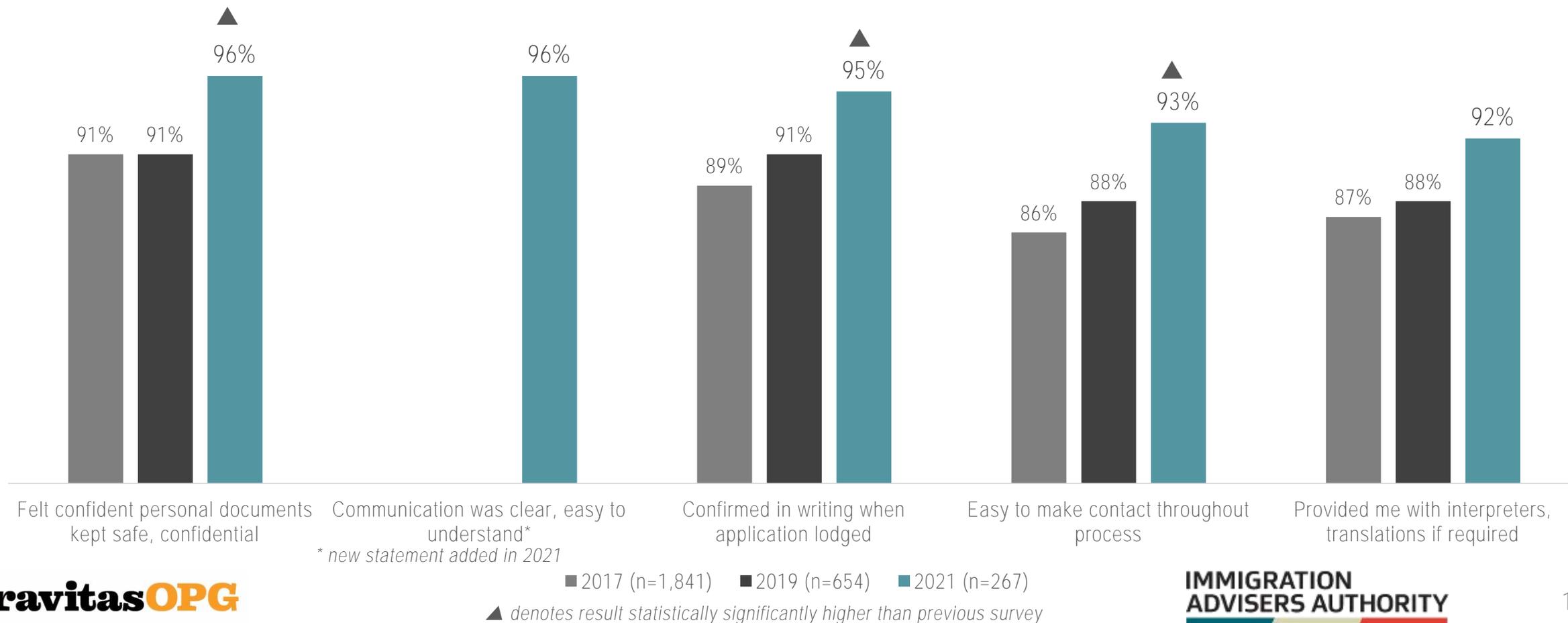
▲ denotes result statistically significantly higher than previous survey

# Adviser Performance: applicants very positive about quality of communication



Applicants are also very positive about the quality of communication with their licensed adviser, including 96% who were communicated with in a way that was clear and easy to understand. Perceptions have improved significantly since 2019 for confidentiality of documents, receiving written confirmation of application lodgement and accessibility throughout the process.

## Communication: How well did immigration adviser deliver on ... (% well/very well)

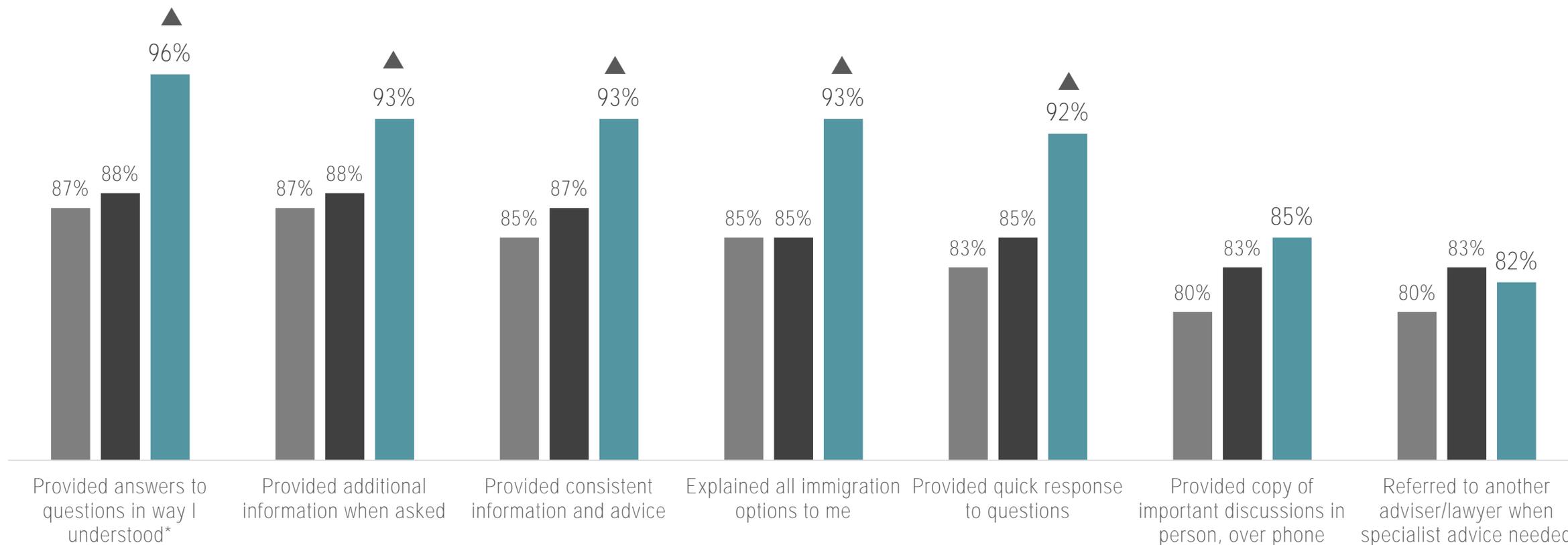


# Adviser Performance: provision of information from LIAs generally well received



Applicants are very positive about the provision of information from advisers, with ratings particularly high for answers to questions being provided in a way that applicants understand (96% positive). However, consistent with previous periods, not all advisers provide copies of important face-to-face or phone discussions, and results suggest there is continued reluctance from some advisers to refer clients on to another adviser/lawyer when specialist advice is needed.

## Providing information: How well did immigration adviser deliver on ... (% well/very well)



\* Previously asked as 'Providing clear answers to questions'

■ 2017 (n=1,841) ■ 2019 (n=654) ■ 2021 (n=267)

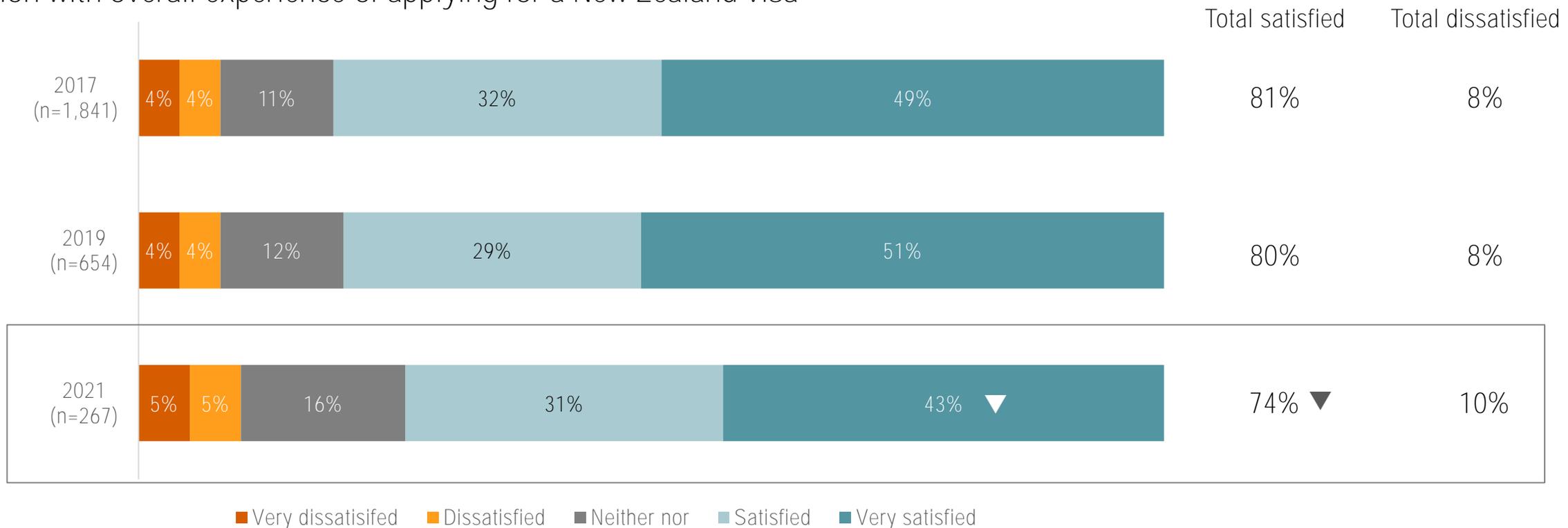
▲ denotes result statistically significantly higher than previous survey

# Satisfaction with overall experience of applying for a NZ visa has declined significantly since 2019



Three-quarters of applicants (74%) are satisfied to some extent with the overall experience of applying for a New Zealand visa. This result represents a significant decline from 80% in 2019. The changes and uncertainty in relation to visa approvals since the first COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020 are likely to have contributed to this decline in satisfaction. Satisfaction ratings are highest among South East Asian applicants (87%); residence visa applicants are the least likely to be satisfied (54%).

Satisfaction with overall experience of applying for a New Zealand visa



# Two-thirds of applicants say no improvements are needed to the service provided by their adviser



Of those who gave suggestions, the most frequently-mentioned were:

Suggestions for improvement include

- More regular contact with clients n=16
- Reduce cost/better value for money n=9
- Faster preparation/processing of application n=6
- More timely response to questions n=5
- Clearer provision of information n=3
- Better customer service generally n=3
- Improve staff knowledge n=2
- Easier to contact particular staff members n=2
- **Full disclosure of all costs 'up front'** n=2
- Better communication between team members n=2
- Provide more realistic time frames n=2
- Offer a more personalised service n=2
- Improved communication generally n=2

*Multiple responses to this question permitted. A full list of suggestions is provided in the Appendix*

# Awareness and Compliance



- Almost all applicants (94%) were aware that they had used a licensed immigration adviser.
- This year, 57% of applicants could recall having been given a copy of the New Zealand Licensed Immigration Advisers Professional Standards. This result is consistent with the previous survey round (58%).
- 83% of applicants could recall having been given a written agreement outlining the services that would be provided to them by their adviser.
  - Applicants aged 41-50 years (14%) and student visa applicants (13%) were over-represented among those who had not.
  - Perceptions of the written agreement was positive among those who had received one.
  - In contrast to other aspects of the adviser service, perceptions of the written agreement was lowest among work visa applicants.
- Awareness of the complaints process remains low (41%); of the small number who made a formal complaint, most are satisfied with the experience
  - Student visa applicants were significantly over-represented among those saying they didn't know how to make a complaint (55%).
- Just less than half of applicants (47%) were aware of the online register of licensed immigration advisers. Awareness of the register has declined from the 2019 survey (54%).

# Method



## Survey Method



Survey invitation and link emailed to 2,077 visa applicants sourced from databases provided by MBIE. Three email reminders sent to applicants to encourage response.

Questionnaire available in English and Simplified Chinese.

## Eligible Respondents



Respondents were those who:

- ✓ Had received a decision on their visa application
- ✓ Were recorded by INZ as having used a licensed immigration adviser
- ✓ Had a personal email address recorded on the INZ database

## Fieldwork Dates



Data collected over two rounds in 2021:

- Round One (for decisions made January-**March '21**): 30th April to 29th May
- Round Two (for decision made April-**June '21**): 24<sup>th</sup> July to 21<sup>st</sup> August

## Sample Size



Total sample size: n=267

- Round One: n=162
- Round Two: n=105

*Note that sample sizes in previous years have been considerably larger*

2013: n=1,053      2014: n=1,341  
2015: n=1,716      2017: n=1,841  
2019: n=654

## Response Rate\*



15%

*Note that response rates prior to 2019 have been considerably higher:*

2013: 24%    2014: 22%    2015: 23%  
2017: 23%    2019: 12%

## Margin of Error



Maximum margin of error on sample size of n=267:  $\pm 6.0\%$

(For a result of 50% at 95% confidence)

## Data Weighting



Results have been weighted by decision type (approved/declined), application (visa) type and location of adviser (onshore/offshore) to ensure the profile of survey responses matches that of the adviser-using applicant population.

*Note that results in previous years have not been weighted.*

## Testing for Differences



All results have been cross-tabulated by gender, age, nationality group, adviser location, visa type, decision type and decision date. Statistically-significant differences identified in this analysis have been highlighted. Statistically significant changes over time are also noted.

# Survey Sample



- The survey was conducted among applicants who received a decision during January – June 2021.
- Only 20% of applicants who used a licensed adviser had a personal email recorded on the INZ database (compared to 40% in 2019). This reduced the availability of applicants who could be surveyed.
- ^ This figure excludes duplicate emails and those who had received an INZ survey in the last 183 days.

