

# Summary of Key Results from the Survey of Visa Applicants Who Used A Licensed Immigration Adviser 2022-2023

Report prepared for the Immigration Advisers Authority (IAA)

Survey undertaken by: GravitasOPG

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# Introduction



## Research Aim



To monitor performance of licensed immigration advisers (LIAs) and provide information that will assist IAA to regulate and support LIAs

## Research Objectives

Provide specific measures of LIA performance in line with IAA's key functions

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

Identify areas for improvement

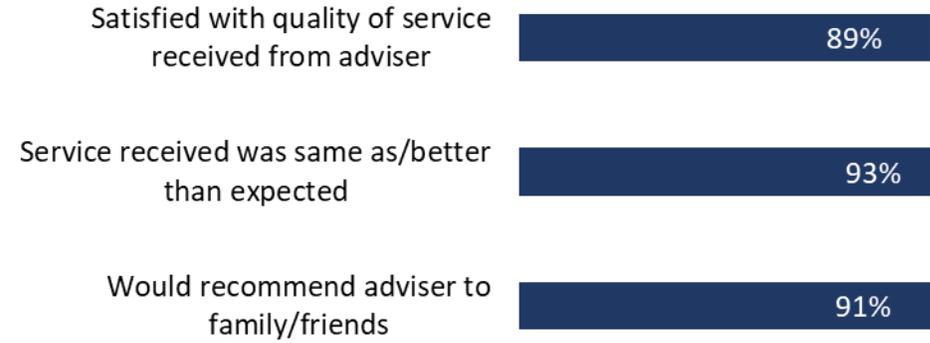
# Summary of key findings (1)

- Overall satisfaction with the quality of service received from the adviser remains **high (89%) and stable**, most LIA clients would recommend their adviser to others, and **three in five have their service expectations exceeded.**
- **Good communication** – including the provision of regular updates and quick responses to questions – continues to strengthen as the key contributor to the service received being better than anticipated. Most suggestions for improvement also related to better communication.
- Compared with 2021, rates of satisfaction with the overall application experience are more consistent across sub-groups. There have been declines in satisfaction among offshore and older LIA clients, but improvements for female and student visa applicants and those from China/east Asia.
- Satisfaction with all aspects of **client service and communication remain high**. Whilst still very high (over 90%), positive perceptions have declined significantly on a few attributes, most notably carrying out the applicant's instructions, providing information so the applicant understood their situation and advice being right given personal circumstances.
- Perceptions of **information provision are generally high**. However, **LIA clients are less satisfied with answers being provided in a way they could understand and having all immigration options explained.** There may be continued reluctance from some advisers to refer clients on to another adviser/lawyer when specialist advice is needed. Information provision is most problematic for work visa applicants.
- While applicants are very **positive about the timeliness of the process**, there has been a **significant decline in providing ongoing timely updates on application progress.**

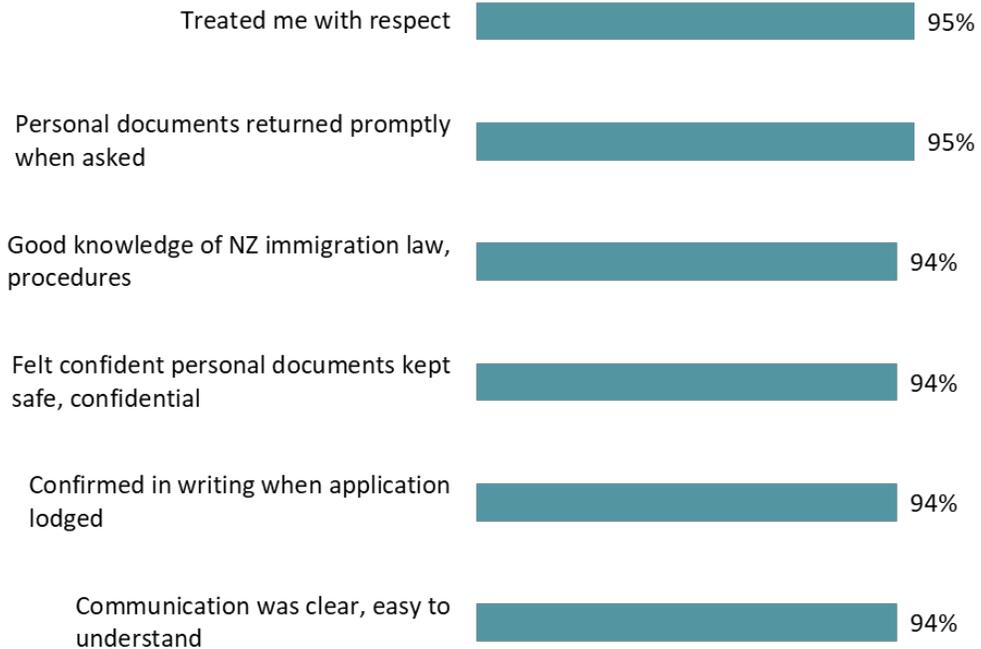
## Summary of key findings (2)

- Despite using an immigration adviser, applicants are most likely to find out how their current visa works through **INZ-provided sources** (the visa approval letter and the INZ website).
- 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.
- Post lockdowns, applicants are less likely to feel that they need to use an adviser to keep abreast of the regular visa policy/criteria changes. However, **language issues** have become a stronger push factor recently, with clients using an adviser to assist with **identifying which visa to apply for** and/or with **completing the application form**.
- **Word of mouth remains the most common way applicants find out about an adviser.**
- Almost all applicants were **aware that they had used a licensed immigration adviser**. Most could recall having been **given a written agreement**, significantly higher than in 2021.
- **However, less than a sixth could recall receiving a copy of the New Zealand Licensed Immigration Advisers Professional Standards**, slightly higher than previous years. **Just over half were aware of the online register of licensed immigration advisers, similar to 2019 after a dip in 2021.**
- **Awareness of the complaints process remains low (41%);** satisfaction was high among the few who had made a formal complaint.
- Low levels of **awareness of their visa conditions** was evident among Students (that a visa change was required before change of education provider), and among Visitors (that they are not allowed to work while in New Zealand).

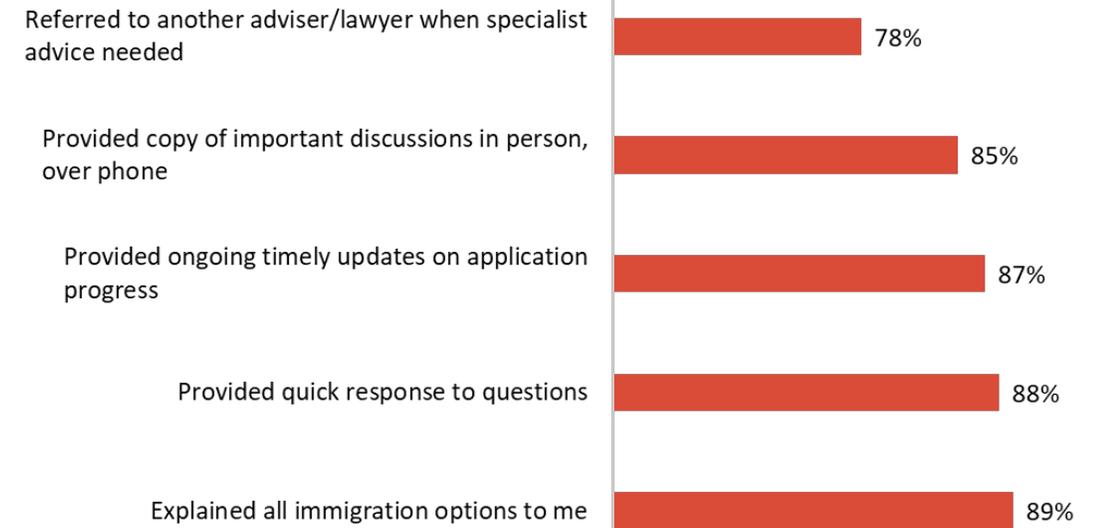
# Key results 2022/23



## Top areas of performance



## Lowest areas of performance

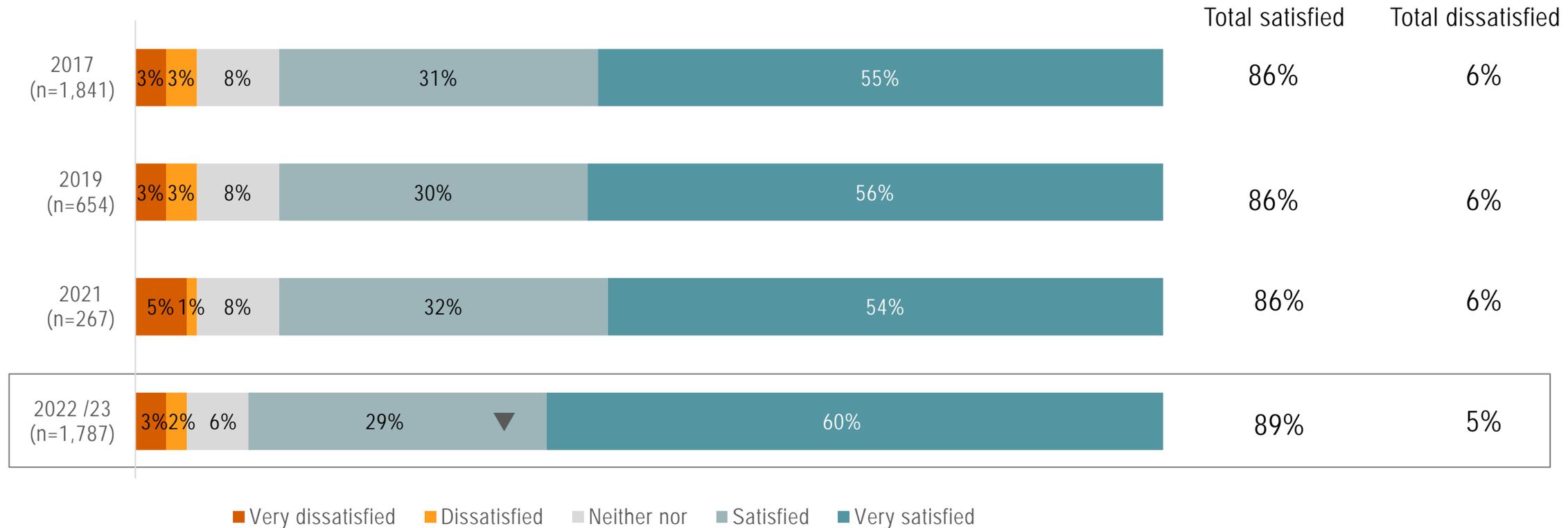


# Overall satisfaction with the quality of service received from the adviser remains high and stable.



Applicants remain positive about the quality of service received from their adviser overall (89%), including 60% who are *very satisfied*. Five percent express some level of dissatisfaction, this share stable since 2017. Satisfaction was higher among women, older applicants and those using an NZ-based adviser. Satisfaction among students has improved since last year, but is still lower than other visa applicants.

## Performance measure: Overall satisfaction with the quality of service received

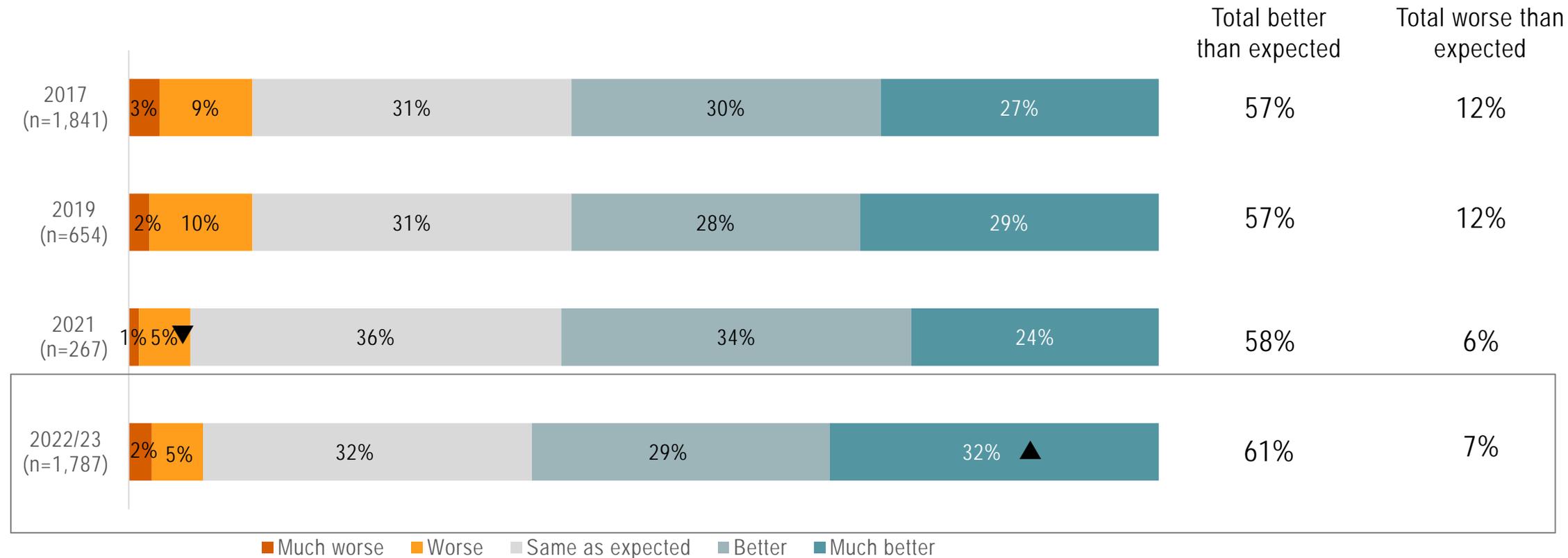


# Three in five applicants continue to have their expectations of service exceeded; only 7% of expectations are not met.



Three in five adviser clients (61%) continue to have their expectations of the service they would receive from their adviser exceeded, including 32% who described the service as *much better* than they thought it would be (this share up significantly from 24% in 2021). In 2022/23 only 7% considered the level of service as worse than they anticipated, down from 12% in 2017 and 2019.

## Level of service received compared with expectations

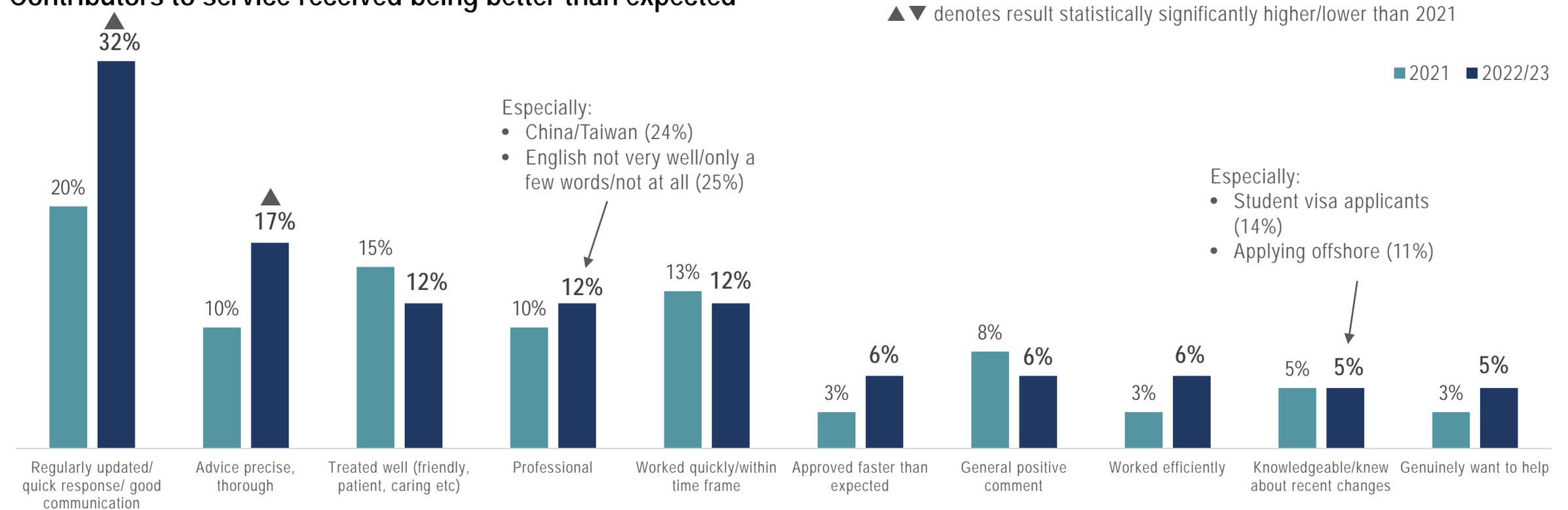


# Good communication from adviser is a key contributor to service expectations being exceeded; its importance is increasing.



Good communication from the adviser – including being regularly updated on the application process and receiving a quick response to questions – continues to be the most frequently-cited contributor to expectations of service being exceeded. Its frequency of mention has increased significantly since 2021. Advice being well delivered (precise, thorough), client being treated well, the professionalism of advisers and the timeliness of the work done are also frequently mentioned.

## Contributors to service received being better than expected



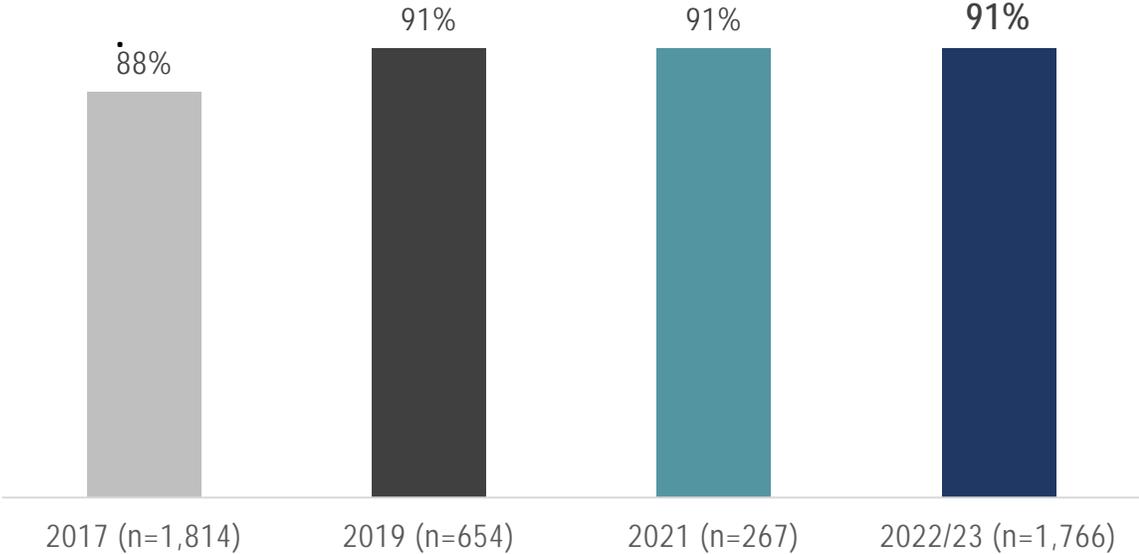
Base: n=1,113 (Respondents whose service experience was better/much better than they expected)

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 since 2019.

Recommendation of adviser to friends and family (% yes)



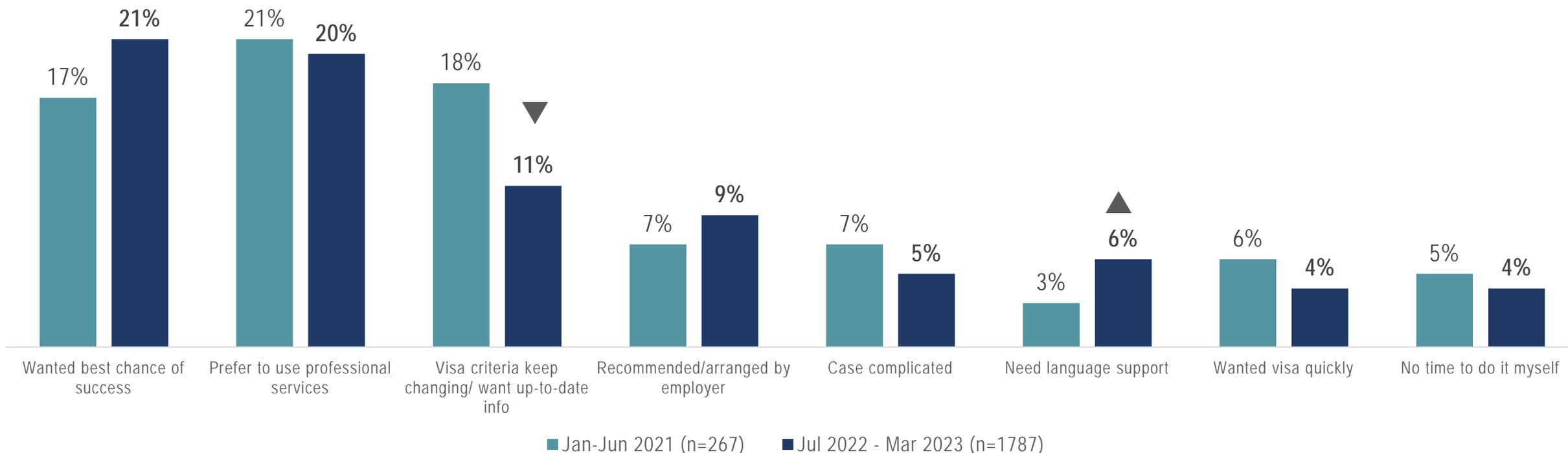
Base: All respondents

# Wanting the best chance of success is the most frequently mentioned main reason for using an adviser.



Applicants who received a decision on their visa application between July 2022 and June 2023 were most commonly motivated to use an immigration adviser because they believed this would give them the best chance of success (21%). A preference for using professional services is also a common motivator (20%). The share using an adviser because the visa criteria keep changing/they want access to the most up-to-date information has declined significantly since 2021 – down from 18% to 11%. In contrast, the share using an adviser because they need language support has increased significantly over the same period (most likely due to a change in LIA-user profile, including an increase in Chinese/east Asian, visitor and student visa applicants in 2022/203).

## Main reason for using an immigration adviser

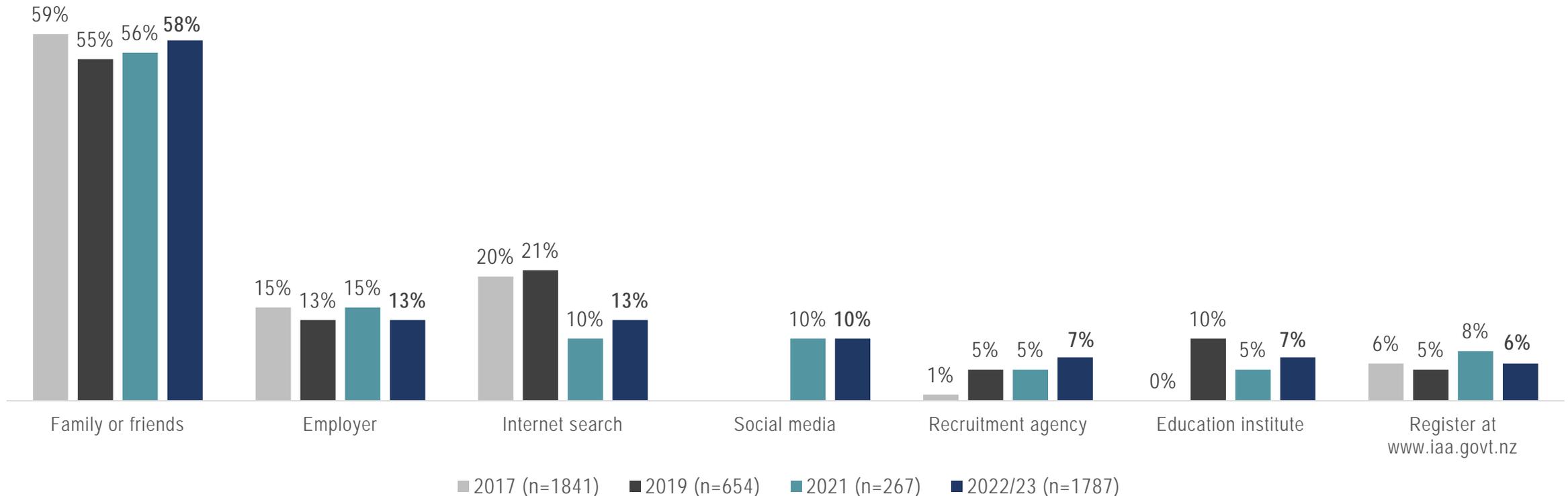


# Recommendation from family or friends remains by far the most frequently-used source to generate adviser awareness.



Over half of respondents (58%) heard about the immigration adviser they used through word of mouth from family or friends. The popularity of this source of awareness is consistent with previous surveys. Thirteen percent had heard about their adviser from their employer and a further 13% via an Internet search.

## Sources of awareness of adviser used





## Insufficient communication is the key contributor to service expectations not being met.



Reasons given for service expectations not being met include:

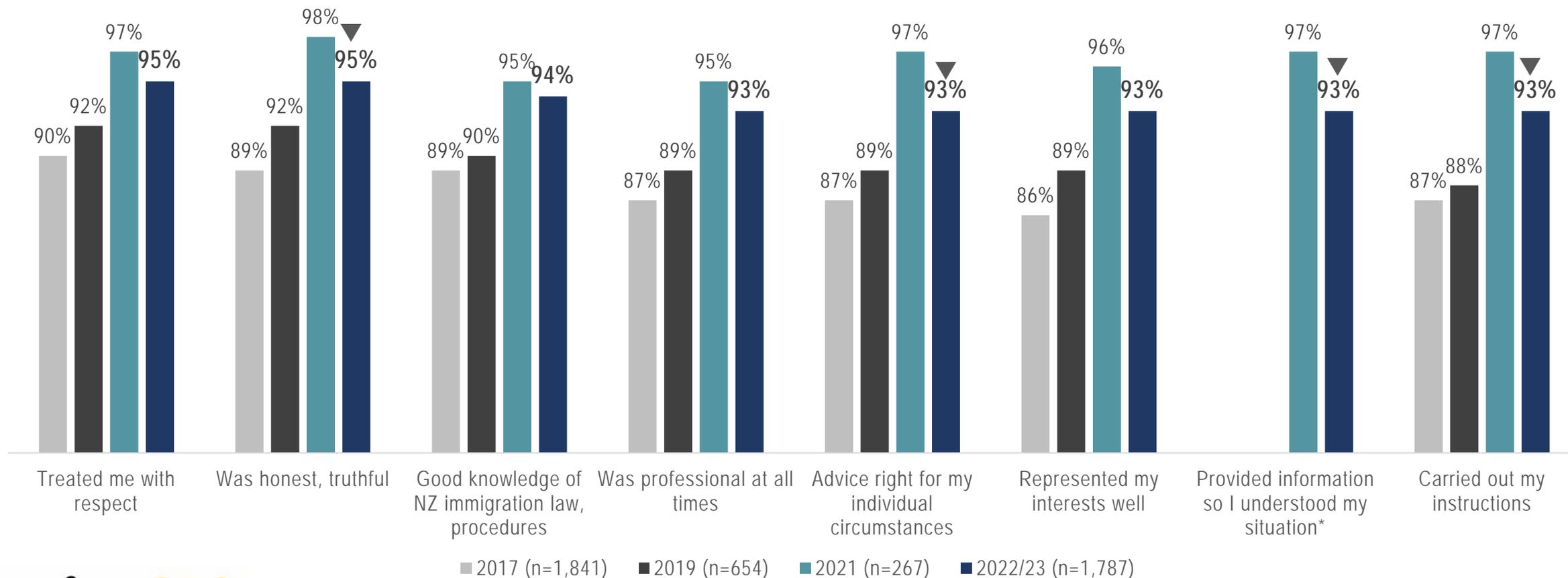
Lack of communication	N=29
Lack of follow-up/not proactive/needed to be followed up	N=24
Process took longer than expected	N=21
Lacked sufficient knowledge	N=12
Poor quality information received	N=11
Still had to do a lot of work myself	N=11
Very expensive/poor value for money	N=8
Administration errors/lack of attention to detail	N=8
Poor treatment by staff – unfriendly, not tactful, unprofessional	N=5
Lack of ongoing support	N=5
Frustration of ongoing requests for information	N=3
Lack of clarity about how application process would work	N=3
Fraudulent behaviour	N=3
Poor customer service generally	N=3

# Adviser performance: Applicants very positive about standard of client service received.



Applicants continue to be very positive about the client service received from their licensed adviser, with ratings highest for advisers treating applicants with respect, and the adviser being honest and truthful. Whilst still very high, positive perceptions have declined significantly on a number of attributes, most notably carrying out the applicant's instructions, providing information so the applicant understood their situation and advice being right given personal circumstances, all down from 97% to 93%.

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

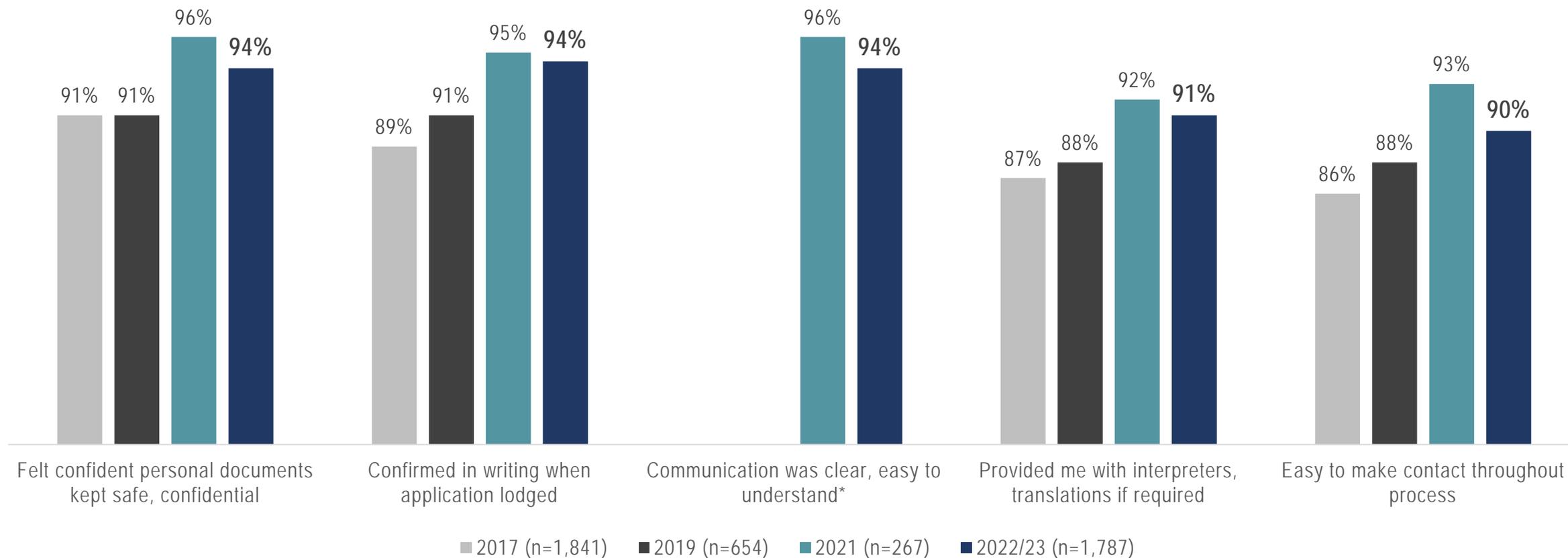


# Adviser performance: Applicants very positive about quality of communication.



Applicants are also very positive about the quality of communication with their licensed adviser. All results are stable from 2021.

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

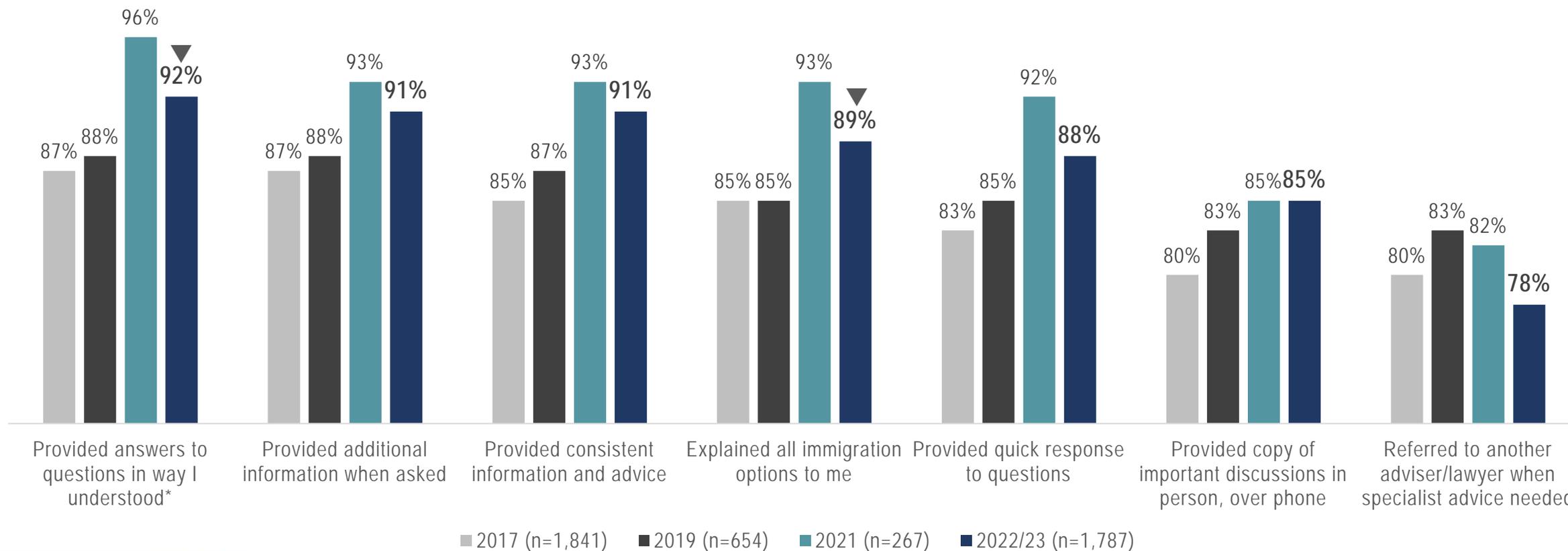


# Adviser performance: Provision of information from LIAs generally well received.



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 (92% positive – though a significant decline from 2021). However, consistent with previous periods, not all advisers provide written copies of important face-to-face or phone discussions, and results suggest there may be continued reluctance from some advisers to refer clients on to another adviser/lawyer when specialist advice is needed. There is also evidence of a decline in advisers explaining all options to clients since 2021.

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

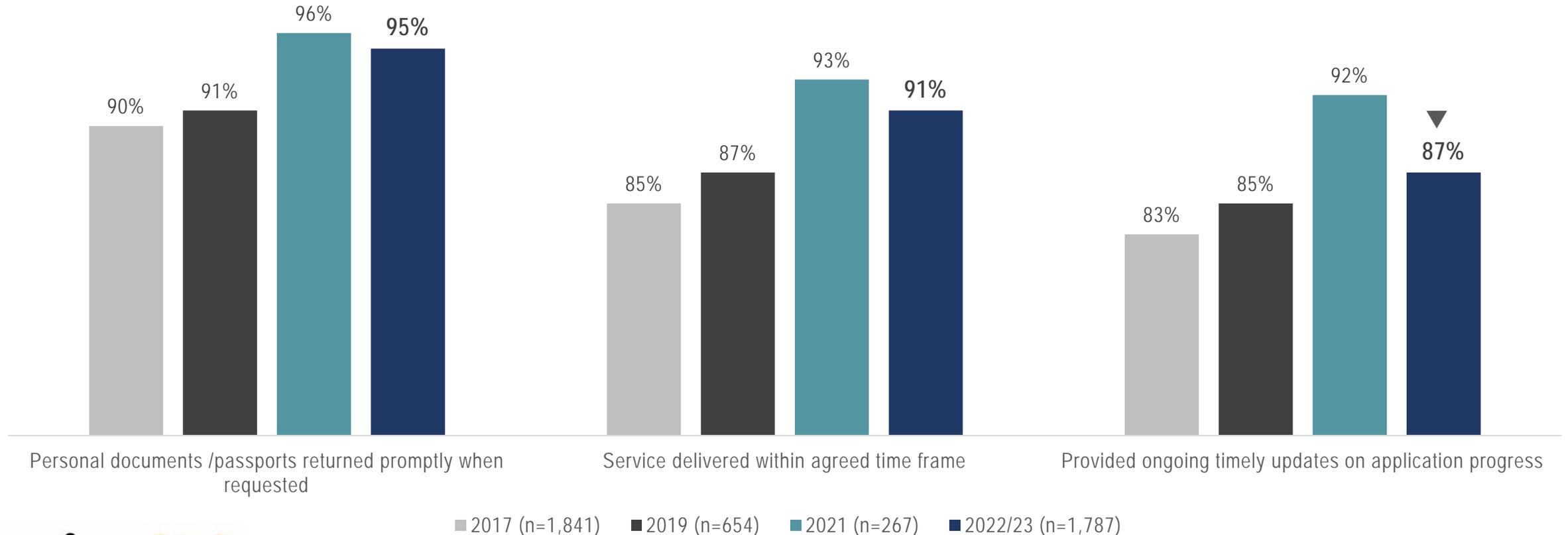


# Adviser performance: Applicants very positive about timeliness of process.



Applicants' ratings for the timeliness of the process remain very positive, particularly for personal documents and passports being returned promptly when requested. However, the share who were provided with ongoing timely updates on the progress of their application has declined significantly since 2021 – down 5 percentage points to 87%.

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



# Perceptions of written agreement positive among those who received one.



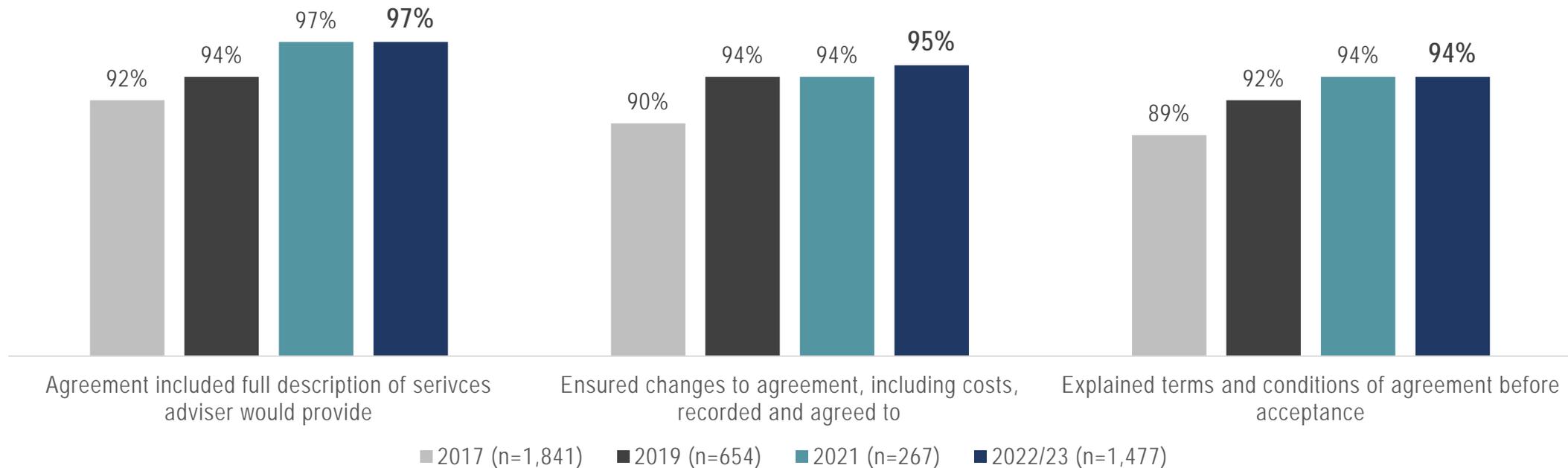
Provided with written agreement by LIA?



89% of applicants could recall having been given a written agreement outlining the services that would be provided to them by their adviser, this share up significantly from 83% in 2021. (There were no notable differences in provision of a written agreement by sub-group.)

Among those who had received a written agreement, perceptions of the three aspects questioned on continued to be very positive, particularly for the agreement including a full description of the services the adviser would provide. Results are stable over time.

Written agreement: How well did immigration adviser deliver on ... (% well/very well)

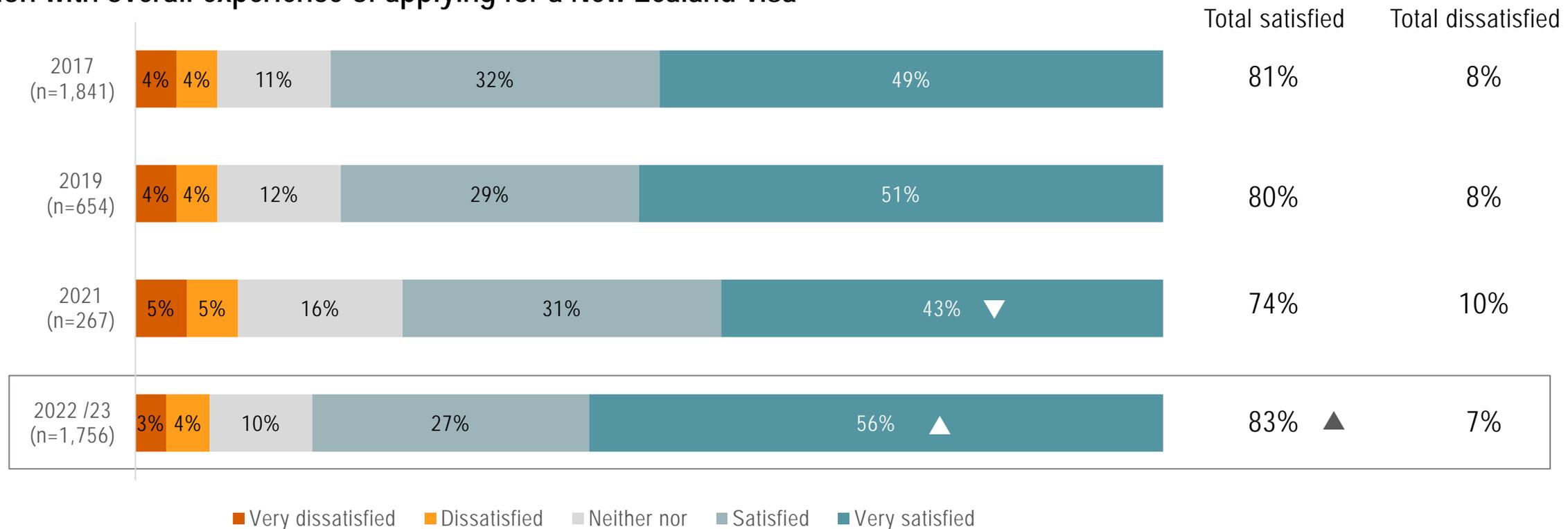


# Satisfaction with overall experience of applying for an NZ visa has improved significantly since 2021.



Eighty-three percent of applicants are satisfied to some extent with the overall experience of applying for a New Zealand visa, including 56% who are *very satisfied*. This result represents a significant increase from 74% in 2021. Satisfaction ratings are highest among visitor visa applicants (88%) and those from South East Asia (88%) or the Indian subcontinent (86%). Ratings are least positive for declined applicants (43%) and those from North America (64%).

## Satisfaction with overall experience of applying for a New Zealand visa





# 77% of applicants say no improvements are needed to the service provided by their adviser

Of those who gave suggestions, the most frequently-mentioned are outlined in the table below. It should be noted that most suggestions relate to communication.

## Suggestions for improvement include

- More regular contact with client/more updates 4%
- More timely response to questions 3%
- Reduce cost/better value for money 2%
- Provide more/complete information 2%
- Communications (not specified) 1%
- Faster processing 1%
- More proactive in providing information 1%
- Better customer service 1%
- Advise on options 1%
- Full disclosure of all costs, terms and conditions 1%
- More communication channels available/allow video calls 1%
- More knowledgeable staff 1%
- Put more pressure on INZ to process quickly/explain delays 1%
- Greater attention to detail 1%

*Multiple responses to this question permitted.*

# Awareness and Compliance



- Almost all applicants (94%) were aware that they had used a licensed immigration adviser.
- Just over half of applicants (54%) were aware of the online register of licensed immigration advisers, a significant increase from 2021, and similar to levels in the 2019 survey.
- Three in five applicants (62%) could recall having been given a copy of the New Zealand Licensed Immigration Advisers Professional Standards (*all were shown the online version during the survey*), up slightly from previous years.
  - Applicants from China/East Asia are significantly more likely to specifically note not receiving a copy of the standards.
- 89% of applicants could recall having been given a written agreement outlining the services that would be provided to them by their adviser, significantly higher than in 2021 (83%). Perceptions of the written agreement was positive among those who had received one.
- Awareness of the complaints process remains low (41%); of the small number who made a formal complaint, most are satisfied with the experience.
- There was a low level of awareness of their visa conditions among:
  - Students – If I want to change my education provider, I have to get my visa changed first (47% aware, 35% not sure).
  - Visitors - I am not allowed to work while I am in New Zealand (69% aware).

# Method

## Survey Method



Survey invitation and link emailed to 3,000 visa applicants each quarter; sourced from INZ's administrative database, 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, and
- ✓ Had a personal email address recorded on the INZ database.

## Online Survey Periods



Q1 (Jul-Sep '22): 3 – 31 Oct 2022

Q2 (Oct-Dec '22): 16 Jan – 13 Feb 2023

Q3 (Jan-Mar '23): 7 Apr – 2 May 2023

Q4 (Apr-Jun '23): 3 – 31 July 2023

## Sample Size



2022/23: *n*=1,787

Work = 37%, Visitor = 26%, Student = 24%, Residence = 10%; Other = 3%

### Annual Totals

2013: *n*=1,053      2014: *n*=1,341

2015: *n*=1,716      2017: *n*=1,841

2019: *n*=654      2021: *n*=267

*Reasons for the reduced numbers in 2019 and 2021: 2019: Survey conducted twice in the year vs. three times earlier, and consequent long time-gap between visa decision & survey invitation.*

*2021: Lower application numbers due to the border closure, combined with client personal email addresses not registered.*

## Response Rate\*



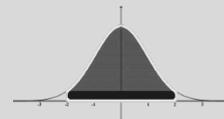
Total 2022/23: 14%

2013: 24%    2014: 22%    2015: 23%  
2017: 23%    2019: 12%    2021: 15%

*Possible reasons for the lower responses from 2019:*

- 2019 - long time-gap between visa decision & survey invitation
- 2021, current – correct client email addresses not registered, clients discouraged from responding to surveys.

## Margin of Error



2022/23: Maximum margin of error on sample size of *n*=1,787 ± 2.3%

(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 to 2021 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 July 2022 – June 2023.
- 36% of applicants who used a licensed adviser had a personal email recorded on the INZ administrative database, an improvement from 20% in 2021. *(However, the accuracy of the email address cannot be verified).*
- ^ This figure excludes duplicate emails and those who had received an INZ survey in the last 183 days.

