

Code Administrators Performance Survey

Smart Energy Code (SEC)

Gemserv

Introduction

As part of its 2016 Code Governance Review Final Proposals (Phase 3) (CGR3), it was concluded that Ofgem should commission a standardised cross-code study to monitor and assess the performance of Code Administrators in their role in respect to each code that they administer.

The study is now in its fourth year (having not been conducted in 2020) and is designed to evaluate the service provided by Code Administrators in accordance with the principles of the Code Administration Code of Practice (CACoP) which aims to align processes across the industry codes and identify areas of best practice.

The study is not intended to take account of the relative funding of the Code Administrators (CA), or whether they offer value for money.

In 2021, the study has been repeated to monitor performance and identify any developments. Specifically, the survey will be used to:

- **Identify:** Organisations' interaction with codes and CAs; including awareness of CA responsibilities, confidence in dealing with codes, and expectations of the service which Code Administrators should be providing.
- **Measure:** Overall performance of CA on key metrics, including overall satisfaction, support, communications and modification process.
- **Assess:** Specific aspects of service delivery, including email, websites, meetings and accession process.

Throughout the report, we will show data for 2017, 2018 and 2019 and draw comparisons as appropriate.

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- Email industrycodes@ofgem.gov.uk

We'll consider your request and aim to get back to you in 10 days.

Method

A mixed mode programme of research was conducted with individuals interacting with industry codes. The scope of the research included:

- Telephone discussions with Code Administrators prior to commencing the research programme. The conversations were designed to establish any major changes in service provision, thus allowing Savanta the ability to contextualise results from the 2021 survey.
- A mixed mode quantitative survey (online and telephone) with 163 participants to measure experience and performance of code administrators – **35 participants answering about the SEC** (14th June – 15th July 2021).
- 25 follow-up in-depth interviews to get an understanding of drivers of satisfaction/dissatisfaction (9th August – 16th September).

Throughout the report, results are shown:

At a total level (aggregated results for all codes)

At a total level for the SEC (due to small base sizes, results are not broken down by subgroup)

Base sizes vary based on those answering specific questions (those answering are shown under each chart). When questions relate to specific codes total base sizes include all codes being evaluated (individual respondents can evaluate up to two codes they interact with) whilst profiling and organisation related data will only be asked once leading to some variation in base size.

*Where base sizes are small, this is shown by an * for bases less than 30 and ** for bases less than 15. This indicates that the data should be treated with more caution and is indicative only.*

Interpreting Results

Throughout this report, Code level and total level results are shown side by side. By their very nature, codes are different and this does need to be borne in mind when interpreting results:

Some are more technical than others

Others are more commercial

The level of funding varies by code

These differences mean that the governance processes and the role of the code administrator varies by code and therefore the level of service provided is not consistent and cannot, in all instances, be directly compared.

Industry context

It is important to note that significant changes in working patterns/ processes have taken place since the last research was conducted in 2019.

Two years on from the last survey, code administrators service provision has undergone some changes. While some codes have made broad changes across their communications, all have had to adapt to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic which has resulted in much heavier reliance on remote working and virtual communications.

There is also consistent experience of dealing with more urgent modifications over the last months (although the quantitative research suggests the actual number of businesses requesting modifications is lower).

Covid-19 has not had an impact on staffing within code administrators with workload remaining stable or increasing as a result of greater pressure on the energy network. Some code administrators were aware of customers facing difficulties with resourcing which has impacted on ability to engage with codes and attend meetings.

The biggest challenges being faced within the industry were noted as being:

- dealing with the volume of modifications, particularly urgent modifications
- customers challenging decisions which may be out of code administrator hands and based on legislation
- establishing more cross-code working and collaboration
- resourcing within customer organisations
- how does the industry move to zero carbon in the next 30 years

Code administrators have sought to act on the results of previous surveys, in particular reviewing their communications processes. Many of the changes have been refinements rather than major development including:

- improving clarity of communications
- flags on emails to identify whether action is required
- minor changes to websites to aid navigation

Some codes have undergone more substantial changes such as implementing the digitalisation of codes and a move to more self-serve.

The most significant change to communications across all codes has been the enforced reliance on virtual meetings most commonly via MS Teams. This has been a positive experience for both code administrators and industry parties with feedback beginning to be gathered on preferences for future interaction when Covid-19 restrictions ease.

For many, platforms such as MS Teams have offered an enhanced experience in comparison to previous teleconference facilities however if there is a return to mixed mode meetings with some representatives present and others virtual, difficulties may again arise with managing input (as opposed to all being in the room or all online).

Executive summary – SEC

In 2019 a number of factors were seen to have experienced decreases. In 2021 most of these factors have actually increased or at least not decreased further.

It is particularly encouraging that Overall satisfaction with the service provided to their organisation has shown improvement this wave with over a quarter of respondents (29%) saying the service has improved over the past 12 months.

Overall there is an increase in the rating for being kept well informed, with 80% saying they are very/fairly well informed being the highest proportion yet seen for this code.

The key metrics looking at email communications and website provision all score well – with all receiving ratings that are amongst the highest yet seen for this code.

Performance in terms of websites is more mixed. Teleconference and general meeting facilities being fit for purpose both perform well and show improvements compared to previous waves. However, receiving information sufficiently in time for meetings and these materials providing enough information are both metrics that have decreased compared to previous waves.


After a sharp decrease in ratings in 2019, there is an improvement in the proportion positively rating the code for providing support on how modifications raised by others will impact their organisation.

Organisation profiling

The level of expertise organisations have to deal with codes remains consistent with previous years. However, availability of resource has actually shown an increase after ratings fell in 2019.


Whilst medium sized businesses tend to see some increase in levels of expertise compared to smaller firms there isn't any real improvement in resource until we start to examine the data by business with at least 250 employees.

SELF-REPORTED ORGANISATION'S SIZE



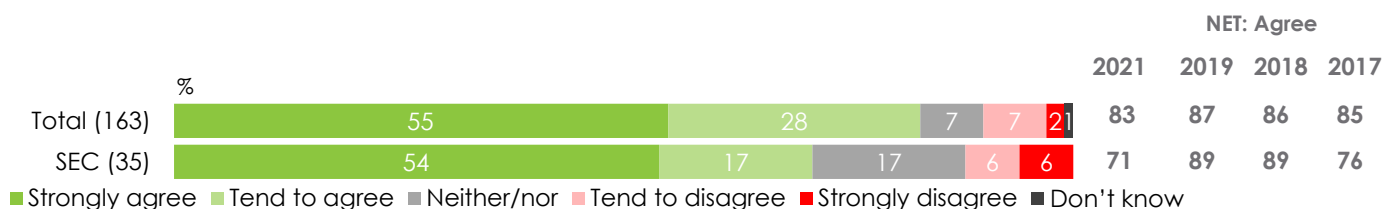
	No. of employees			
	0-49	50-249	250-999	1,000+
Total (163)	26%	15%	9%	47%
SEC (35)	31%	11%	14%	43%

SELF-REPORTED ORGANISATION'S ENERGY MARKET EXPERIENCE



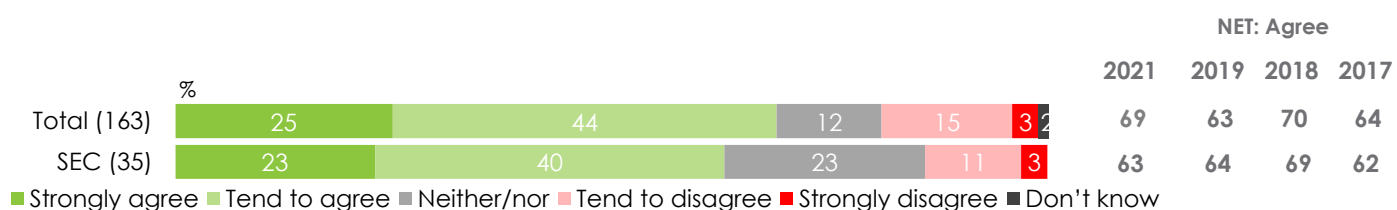
	0-5 years	6-9 years	10+ years
	Total (163)	22%	7%
SEC (35)	29%	11%	60%

SELF-REPORTED SUFFICIENT ORGANISATIONAL EXPERTISE TO DEAL WITH CODES



Q1. To what extent would you agree or disagree that your organisation has sufficient expertise to enable you to deal with the codes you are responsible for or interact with? Base: All responses for those involved with code (number of responses shown in brackets).

SELF-REPORTED ORGANISATION'S RESOURCE



Q2. And to what extent would you agree or disagree that you have enough resource within your organisation to sufficiently deal with the codes you are responsible for or interact with? Base: All responses for those involved with code (number of responses shown in brackets).

Key findings

KPIS

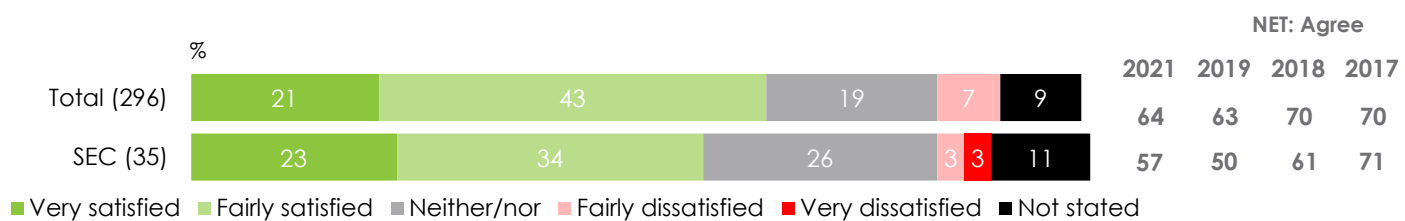
The survey collected four wide measures of satisfaction:

1. Overall satisfaction with the service provided to their organisation.
2. Satisfaction with the provision of support.
3. Satisfaction with support received when requested.
4. Perceived improvements from service received in the last year (introduced in 2018).

Overall, the KPI ratings for the SEC service are very similar to those seen in 2019 (with overall satisfaction showing an improvement after a decrease in this rating in 2019).

OVERALL SATISFACTION

At an organisational level, there is no change in reported overall satisfaction since 2019. This rating had declined from 70% in 2018 to 63% in 2019. However, the SEC service has seen an improvement from 50% very/ fairly satisfied in 2019 to 57% in 2021.

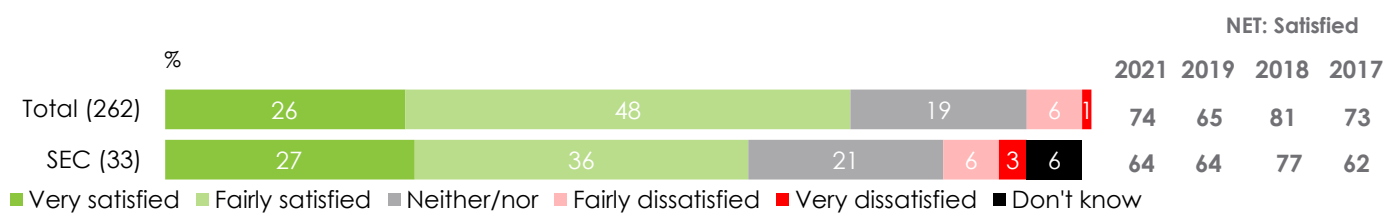


Q10. Thinking about all aspects of your dealings with the code administrator in relation to <this/these> codes, overall how satisfied are you with the service provided to your organisation? Base: All responses for those involved with code (number of responses shown in brackets).

SATISFACTION WITH PROVISION OF SUPPORT

Satisfaction with provision of support from Code Administrators has demonstrated fluctuations wave on wave. After a decrease in 2019 ratings have increased to 74% very/ fairly satisfied in 2021 (this is still slightly below the level seen in 2018).

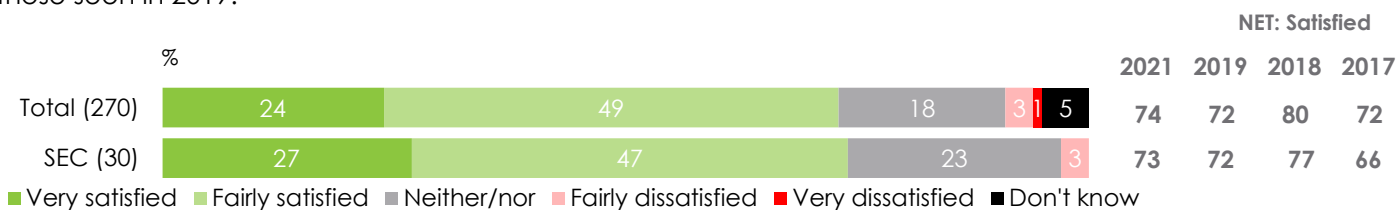
Satisfaction with the provision of support for the SEC has stayed the same since 2019, with 64% being very/ fairly satisfied. The level of dissatisfaction has also stayed the same at 9% (this equates to three respondents being negative about the support provided).



Q11a/Q11c. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the provision of support from the code administrator in your interactions with the <code>? Base: All responses for those aware of support (number of responses shown in brackets).

SATISFACTION WITH SUPPORT RECEIVED WHEN REQUESTED

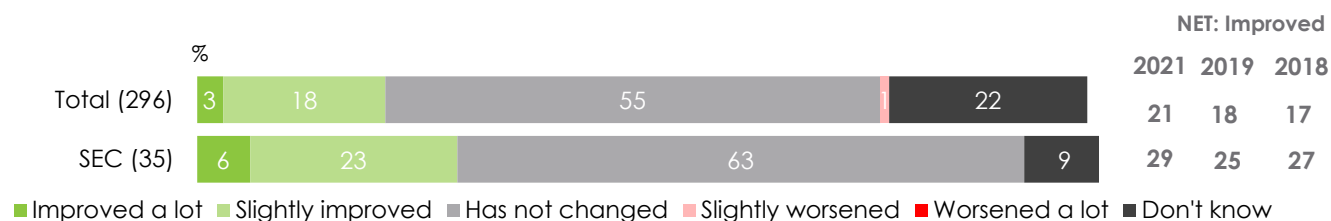
Declines seen in satisfaction with support received when organisations request it in 2019 have seen a slight increase in 2021 at a total level. For SEC, the ratings in 2021 remain at a very similar level to those seen in 2019.



Q13/Q13b. And when you request support from the code administrator in relation to the <code> how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the support you receive? Base: All responses for those proactively seeking support (number of responses shown in brackets).

PERCEIVED IMPROVEMENT

At an overall level, around one-in-five tend to believe that the service they receive has improved over the last year (only 1% felt it had declined). For SEC, 29% feel there has been an improvement, with no-one saying the service has worsened.



Q29b. Thinking about the service that you have received in relation to the <code> in the last year, would you say it has improved, remained the same or got worse? Base: All responses for those involved with code (number of responses shown in brackets).

The most important aspects of CA service provision are consistent across customers. They include:

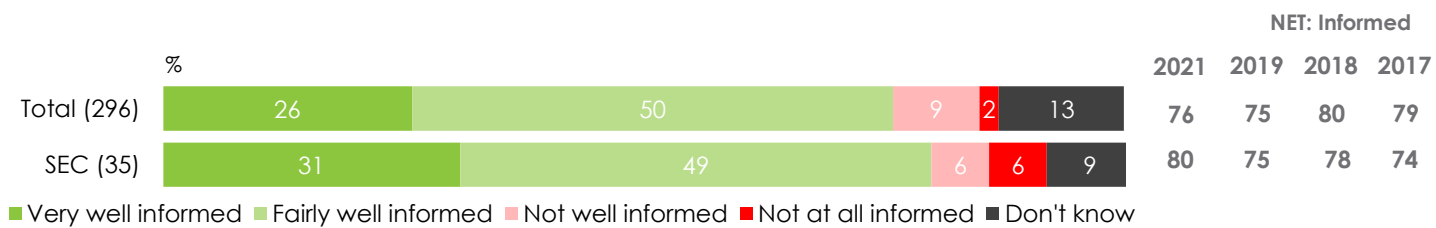
- Being able to get in touch with staff when needed
- Being able to talk to staff who are knowledgeable about the subject matter
- Having low staff turnover so there is consistency in the staff having contact with
- Support with modifications as in the actual drafting of them
- Being kept updated on changes
- Using less legal jargon and ensuring there is understanding of the code

Perceptions of information provision

On average, organisations claim to receive information about the SEC about 3 times a week and for the majority, this frequency is about right (78%, 25 respondents out of 32 receiving information). Only one respondent indicated that the frequency is not often enough whilst four felt it was too frequent.

KEPT INFORMED ABOUT THE CODE

Typically, organisations believe that Code Administrators keep them well informed about the codes; with the proportion feeling very or fairly well informed being in line with 2019. SEC has seen an increase since 2019, with four-in-five saying they are very/ fairly well informed (compared to three quarters doing the same in 2019).

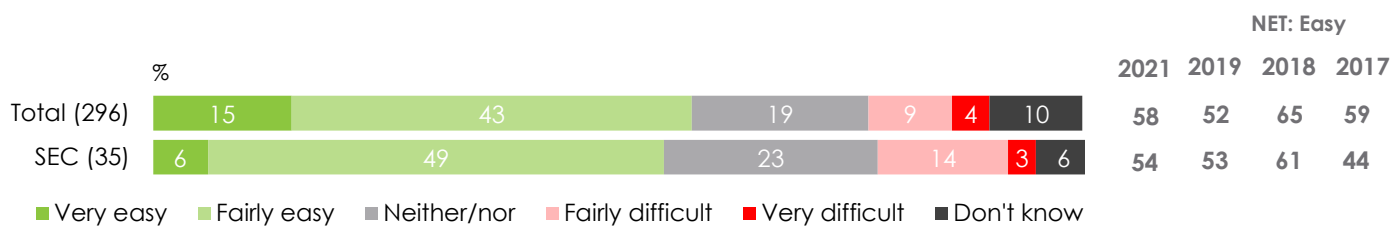


Q14/Q14b. How well do you feel your code administrator keeps you informed about the <code>? Base: All responses for those involved with code (number of responses shown in brackets).

EASE OF INTERPRETING INFORMATION

After the decline seen in 2019, reported ease of interpreting information has increased in 2021. Overall, just over half of organisations feel it is easy to interpret information from Code Administrators in relation to their codes.

Ease of interpreting information relating to SEC is in line with the proportion of individuals finding it fairly/very easy in 2019. However, 17% (6 respondents) feel it is very/ fairly difficult.



Q15/Q15b. Overall how easy or difficult is it for you to interpret the information from the code administrator in relation to Base: All responses for those involved with code (number of responses shown in brackets).

Perceptions of direct services

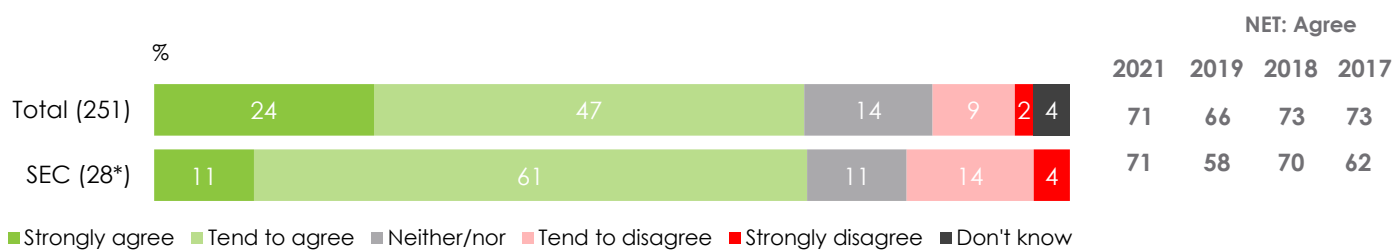
EMAIL

Email communications are largely seen as being sent through at the right frequency. However, as with the quantitative research this is not the case for all.

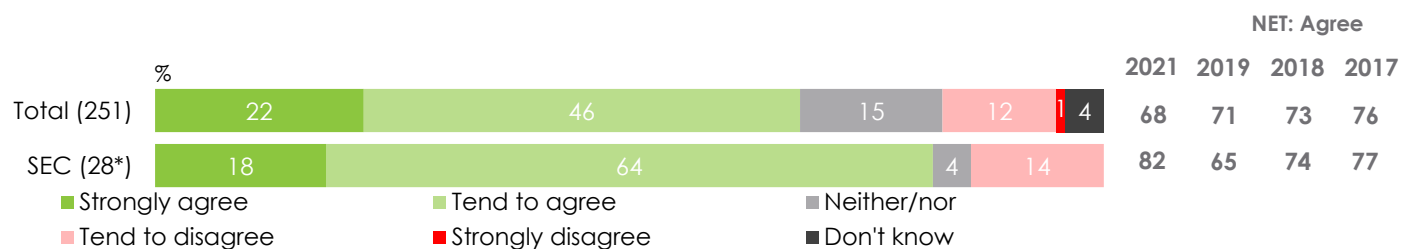
Many find it easy to determine whether they are of relevance or not, with clear subject headings and headers within the body of the emails.

For the SEC, there has been improvements in agreement for both emails being easy to understand and for them making it clear when action needs to be taken (with both having the highest ratings seen for this Code). However, 18% (5 respondents) tend to/strongly disagree that the emails are easy to understand and 14% (4 respondents) that the emails make it clear what action needs to be taken.

'The emails I receive are easy to understand'



'The emails I receive make it clear when action needs to be taken'



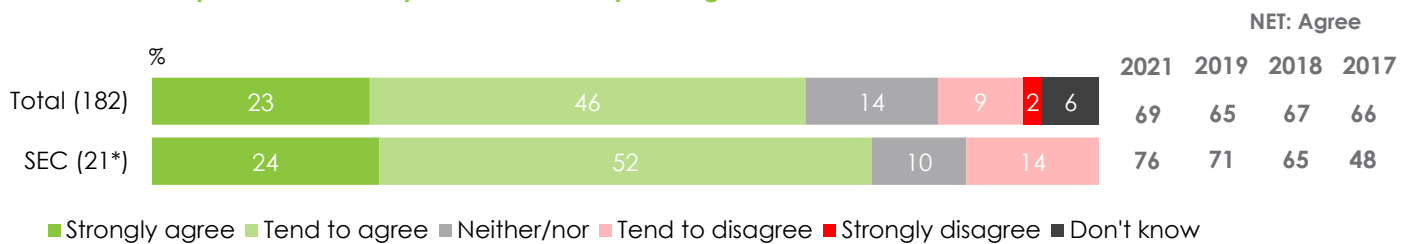
Q19. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following in relation to the <code/codes>? Base: All responses for those receiving information from code administrator (number of responses shown in brackets).

WEBSITES

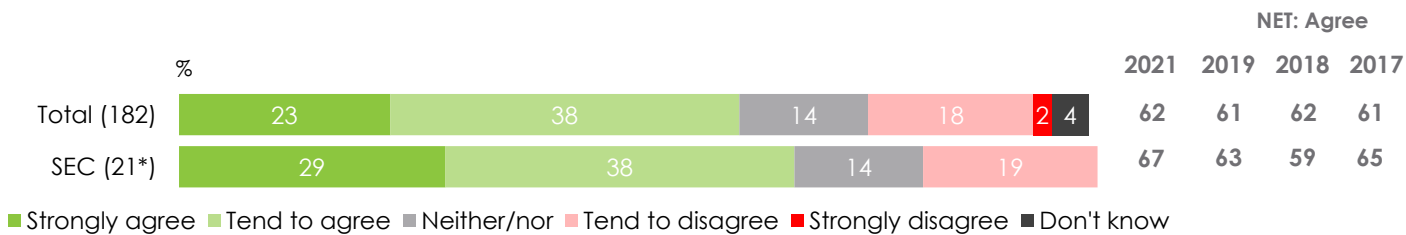
Similarly to emails, code websites are broadly viewed as delivering what is needed. Some are viewed as better than others but now they are all seen as providing a decent level of information, especially those which have moved to digitalisation of the code and provide live chat functions. Digitalisation of the codes is the key thing which is consistently raised. Where documents are digitalised (e.g. rather than being held as pdfs etc) it enables customers to search and find what they need. Where codes are not digitalised, there is frustration that it can be hard to find what is needed.

Ratings have improved for those agreeing that the SEC website keeps them sufficiently informed of any changes or modifications, however, levels of disagreement have seen an increase from 8% in 2019 to 14% (three respondents) in 2021. Both being able to easily find information and the information being easy to understand have seen improvements since 2019, although 19% (four respondents) disagree with the statement that information on the website is easy to find.

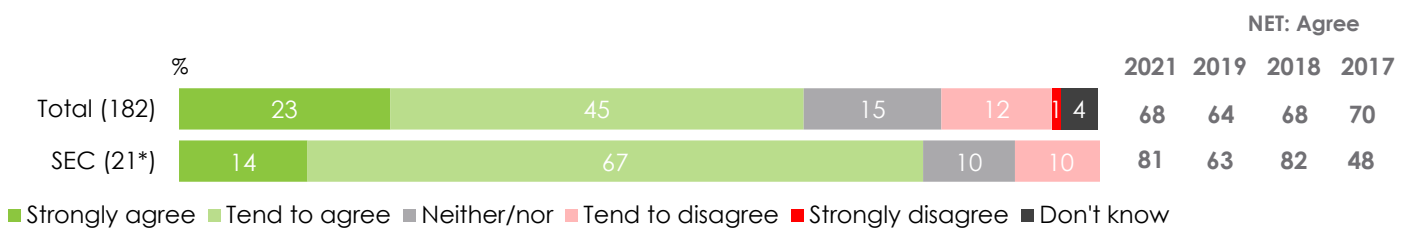
'The website keeps me sufficiently informed of any changes or modifications to the <code>'



'I am able to easily find information on the website'



'The information on the website is easy to understand'



* Low base

Q20. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following in relation to the <code/codes>? Base: All responses for those using code administrator website (number of responses shown in brackets).

Whilst the SEC website did receive largely positive ratings there was a specific comment made relating to the ability to conduct word searches within it:

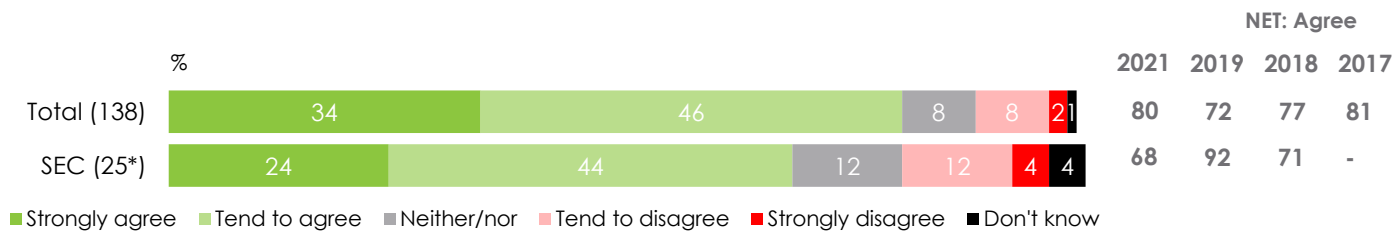
"even though SEC is the code I know best, it is a more difficult website, you can't really word search, it just gives random results"

MEETINGS

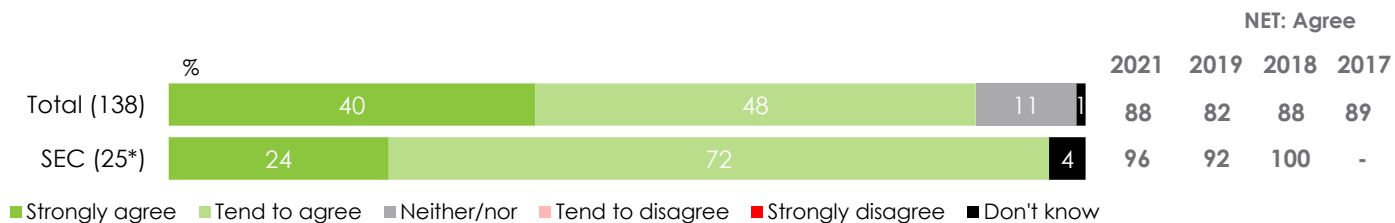
At an overall level, 47% have attended a meeting or workshop in relation to the code they interact with (not surprisingly this is predominantly done as webinars in 2021). Additionally, 75% of organisations involved with SEC had attended a meeting or workshop in the last 12 months (25 individuals).

Those attending SEC meetings have shown an increase in agreement for both the teleconference and meeting facilities being fit for purpose. However, there have been declines in ratings for it being easy to actively participate in the discussion, as well as for the materials received prior to the meetings providing enough information about the objectives. A larger decrease is shown for individuals receiving information in sufficient time before meetings, with 92% agreeing in 2019 compared to 68% in 2021.

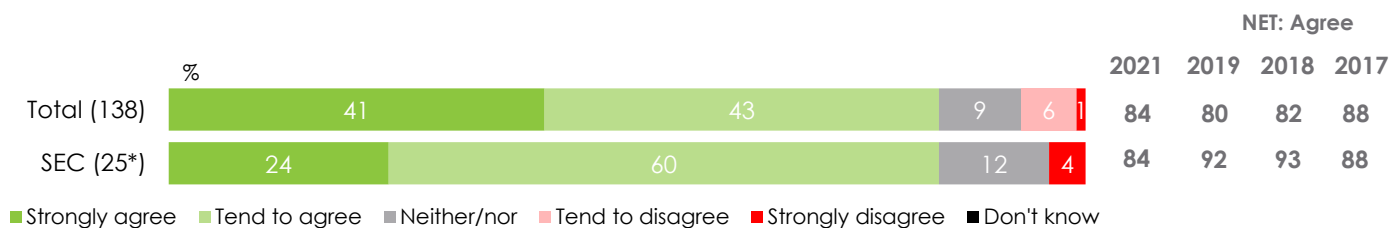
'I receive information in sufficient time before meetings'



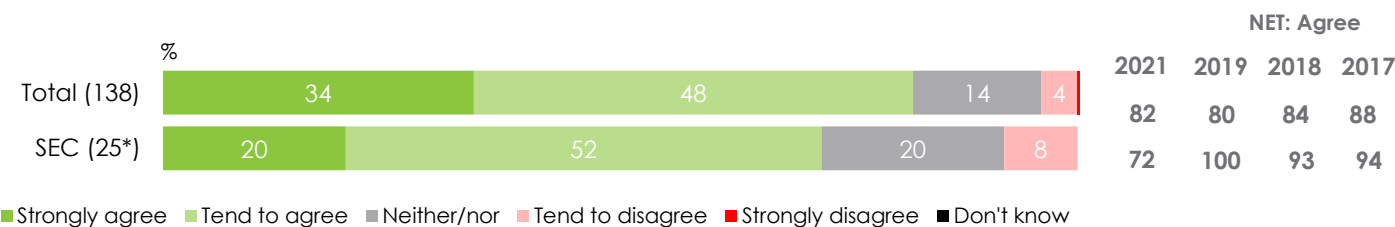
'Meeting facilities are fit for purpose'



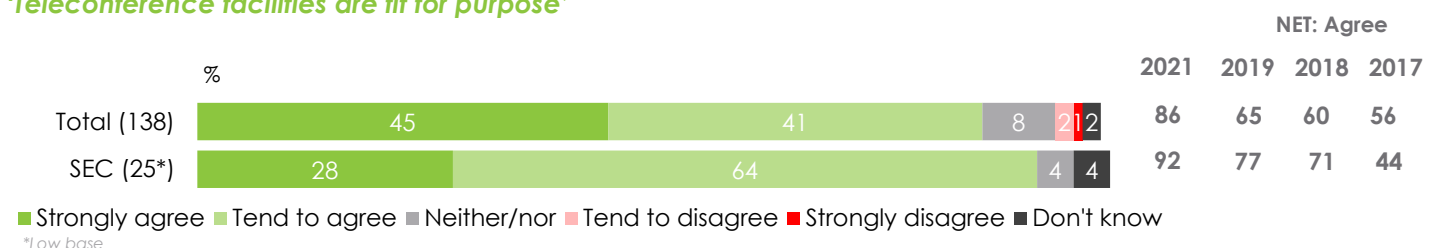
'It is easy for me to actively participate in the discussion'



'The materials that I receive prior to the meeting(s) provide me with enough information about the objectives'



'Teleconference facilities are fit for purpose'



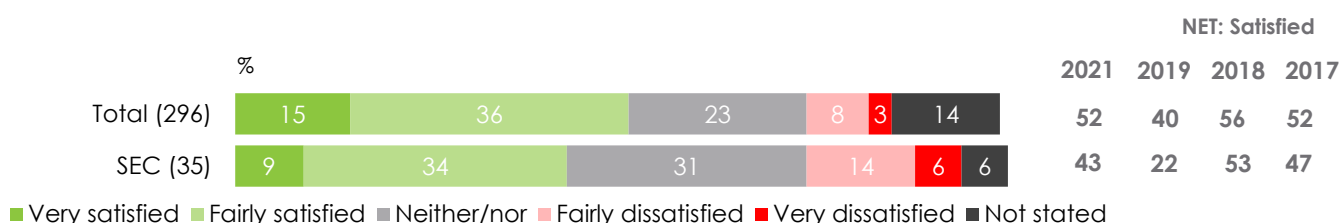
Q22. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following in relation to the <code/codes>? Base: All responses for those attending meetings (number of responses shown in brackets).

RAISING AND UNDERSTANDING MODIFICATIONS

Nine organisations (26%) have raised SEC modifications in the last 12 months and 56% found this very/ fairly easy to do.

Overall, we see the proportion of organisations saying they are satisfied with the support their Code Administrator gives them to understand what modifications mean for them returning to levels seen in 2017, after a dip in performance in 2019.

For SEC, ratings have increased since 2019, with 43% (15 respondents) satisfied with this support whilst 20% (7 respondents) are dissatisfied.



Q28. How satisfied were you with the support the code administrator gave you in helping you to understand what modifications raised by others mean for your organisation? Base: All responses for those involved with code (number of responses shown in brackets).

ACCESSION PROCESS

Twenty-four people (69%), who participated in the research, are employed by organisations who became party, or began the process to become party to, the SEC in the last five years. Of those involved in the process, nine found the process easy whilst four found it difficult (eight said they didn't participate in the process).

Conclusions

Overall there is a strong performance for SEC in 2021, with a number of key metrics showing improvement (and 29% noting that they feel there has been an improvement in performance).

One area that could benefit from further investigation is the provision of information prior to any meetings, both in terms of receiving this in sufficient time and also this being enough information about the objectives of the upcoming meeting.