

progressive

Scottish Housing Regulator
Stakeholder Communications Research
October 2022



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Summary of findings



- Stakeholders use all of SHR communications methods, but the website and publications are the sources of information used most often. Stakeholders find all sources of information useful, but most find direct contact with the organisation, publications and the website very useful.
- The amount of information, frequency and quality of information across SHR publications is generally about right.
- Stakeholders generally find SHR regulatory publications and products very useful, especially the Regulatory Guidance and the Regulatory Advice Notes. Most felt topic coverage was about right across the Regulatory publications. There were possible gaps in the Thematic Inquiries and Recommended Practice publications.
- Stakeholders generally find SHR Charter publications and products very useful, especially the Comparison Tool and Statistical Information. Most felt the level of topic coverage and level of detail was about right across the Charter publications. Some felt topic coverage and the level of detail could be increased in the comparison tool and the individual landlord reports.
- Generally, stakeholders felt that information products such as website news items and the annual report, were useful and did not need changed.
- There was support for the improvements SHR has made to its communications over the last few years. Most find the updated website easy to read, with around half saying it's easy to find the information they want on the site. Changes to publications to make them clearer, shorter and simpler were all considered useful by stakeholders.



SHR's information

SHR information: methods



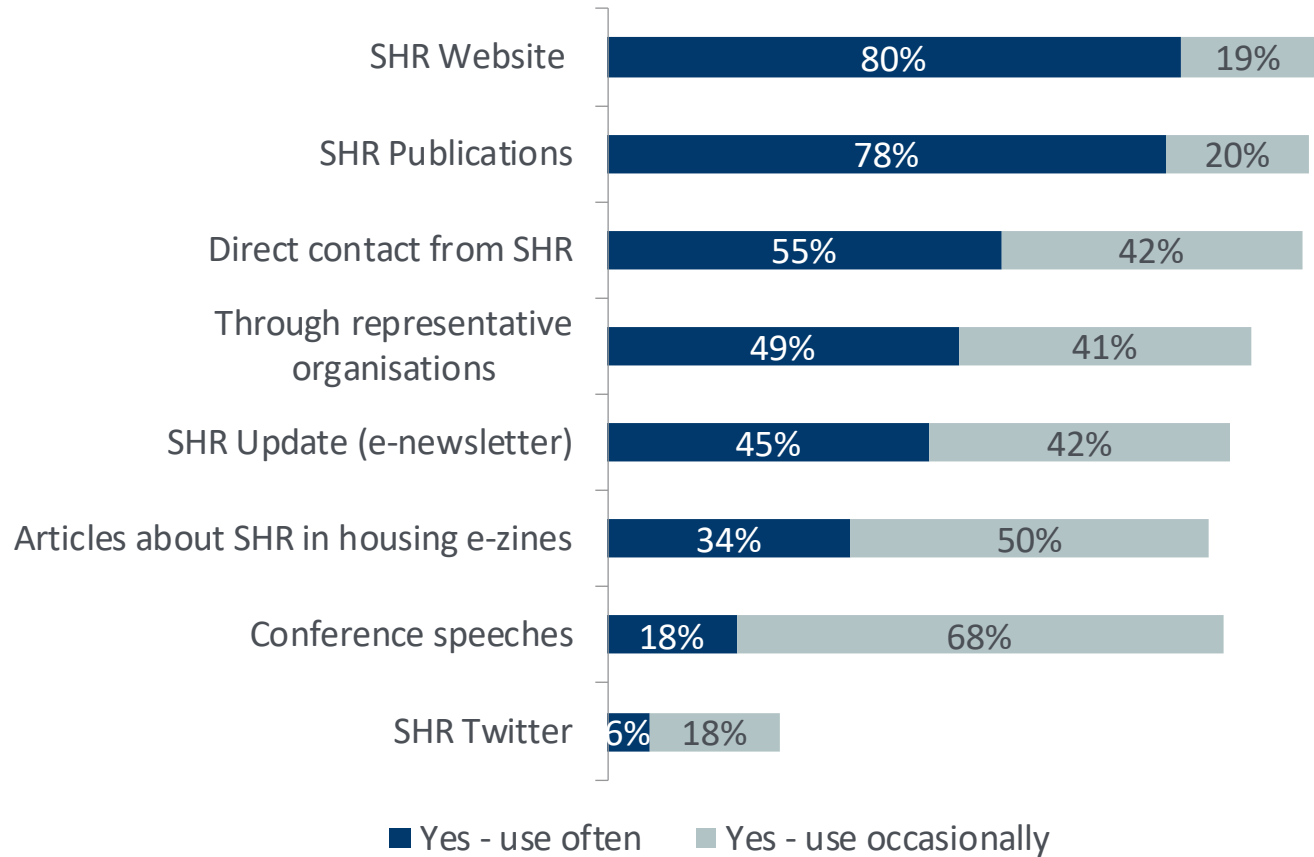
The methods used most often to find out about SHR's work were the website and SHR publications: around four-fifths of respondents use the website often and around the same proportion use publications often. Almost everyone else uses these methods occasionally.

- RSLs were more likely than LAs to use the website (85% vs 33%) and to use SHR publications (86% vs 44%)

Direct contact from SHR and information from representative organisations were used often by around half of respondents, and occasionally by most of the others. Most respondents also obtained information from articles about the SHR and from conference speeches, but these tended to be occasional information sources.

Just a quarter of respondents said they used Twitter as a source of information, with just 6% saying they used it 'often'.

Around four-fifths use the SHR website and publications often. However, Twitter is a source of information for only a quarter of stakeholders and just 6% use it often.



Q1. Which of the following methods do you use to find out about the SHR's work? **Note:** table totals **do not** sum to 100% as only those who use (often or occasionally) are shown

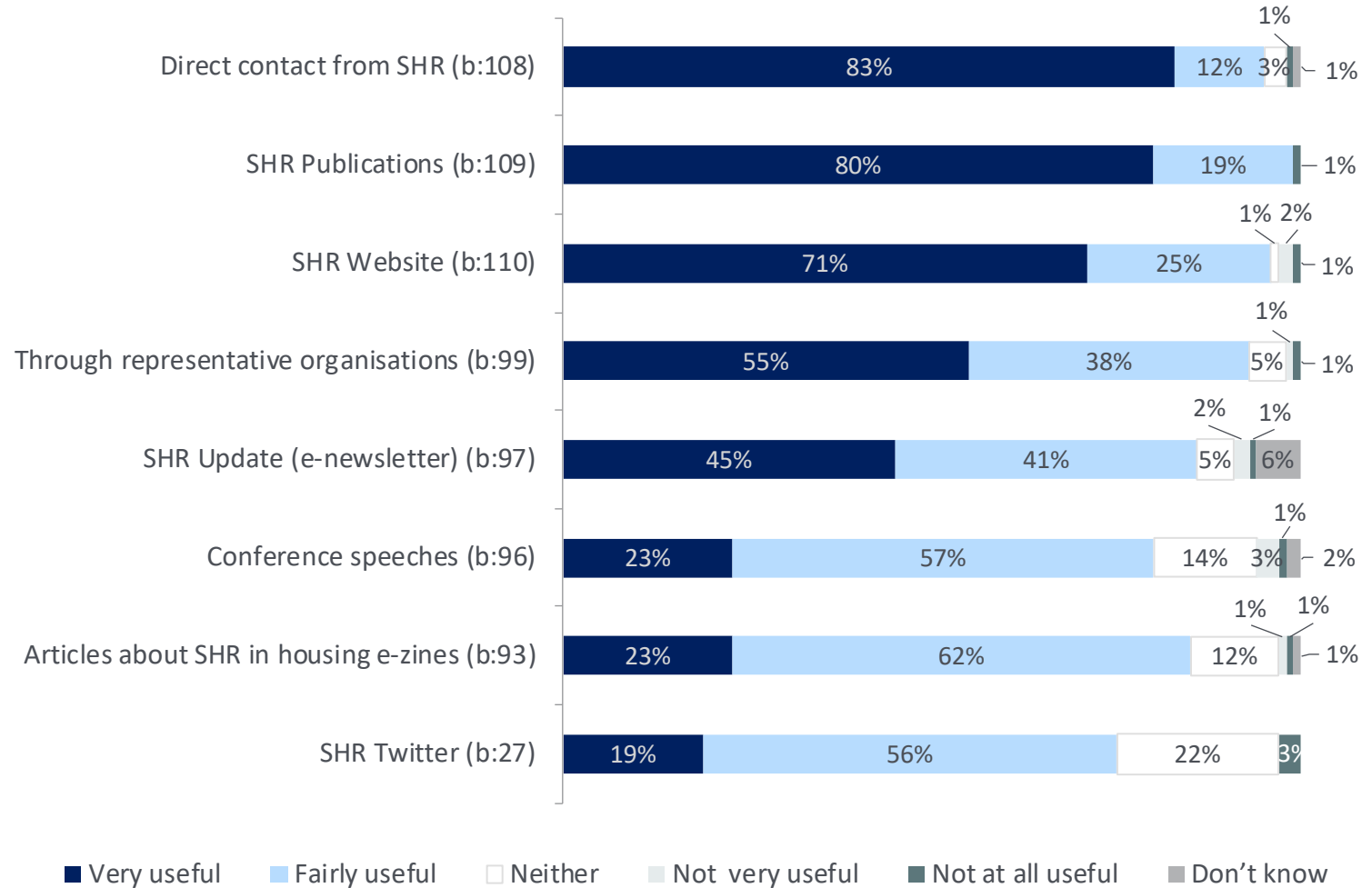
Base All respondents: 111

SHR information: usefulness

People generally find the various SHR communications methods useful.

- In particular, almost all (95%) say they find direct contact with SHR useful, with four-fifths of these saying it is very useful; likewise, almost all (99%) find publications useful with four-fifths saying they are very useful; and almost all (96%) find the website useful with more than two-thirds saying it is very useful.
- Just 3% of those using SHR Update, 2% of those using SHR housing e-zines and 3% of those using SHR Twitter did not find them helpful.

Stakeholders were most likely to find direct contact with SHR staff and SHR publications to be very useful sources of information about the organisation



Q2. In your opinion, **how useful** are the different methods that you use?

Base: Respondents using often/occasionally: 27 – 110
Caution: SHR Twitter results use a very small base

SHR information: methods

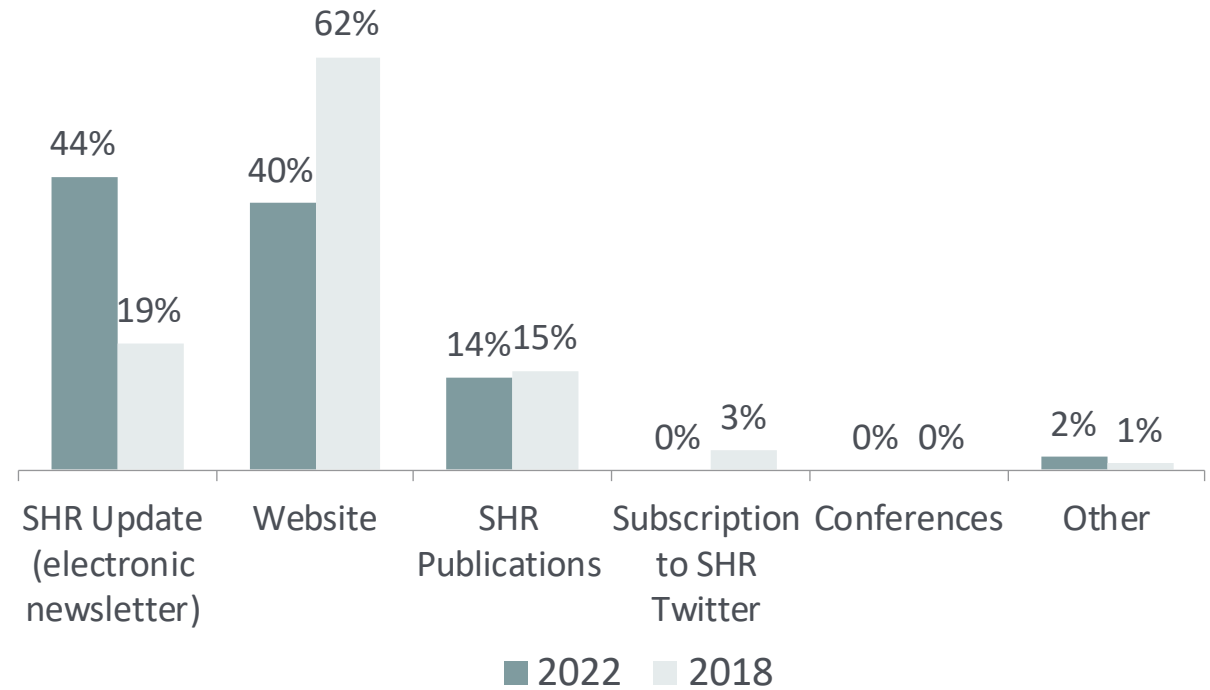


Stakeholders are far less likely now than they were in 2018 to consider the website the most effective way of getting information about SHR.

The survey asked respondents to select the single most effective communication method from those listed.

- Just over two-fifths (44%) chose SHR Update and a further two-fifths chose the website.
- Conferences and Twitter were not selected by any respondents as their preferred method of receiving information.

As can be seen on the chart, this is a shift from 2018, when respondents considered the website the most effective communications method.



Q3. In your opinion, what would be the single most effective way to find out about SHR's work?

Base All respondents: 2022: 111, 2018: 106

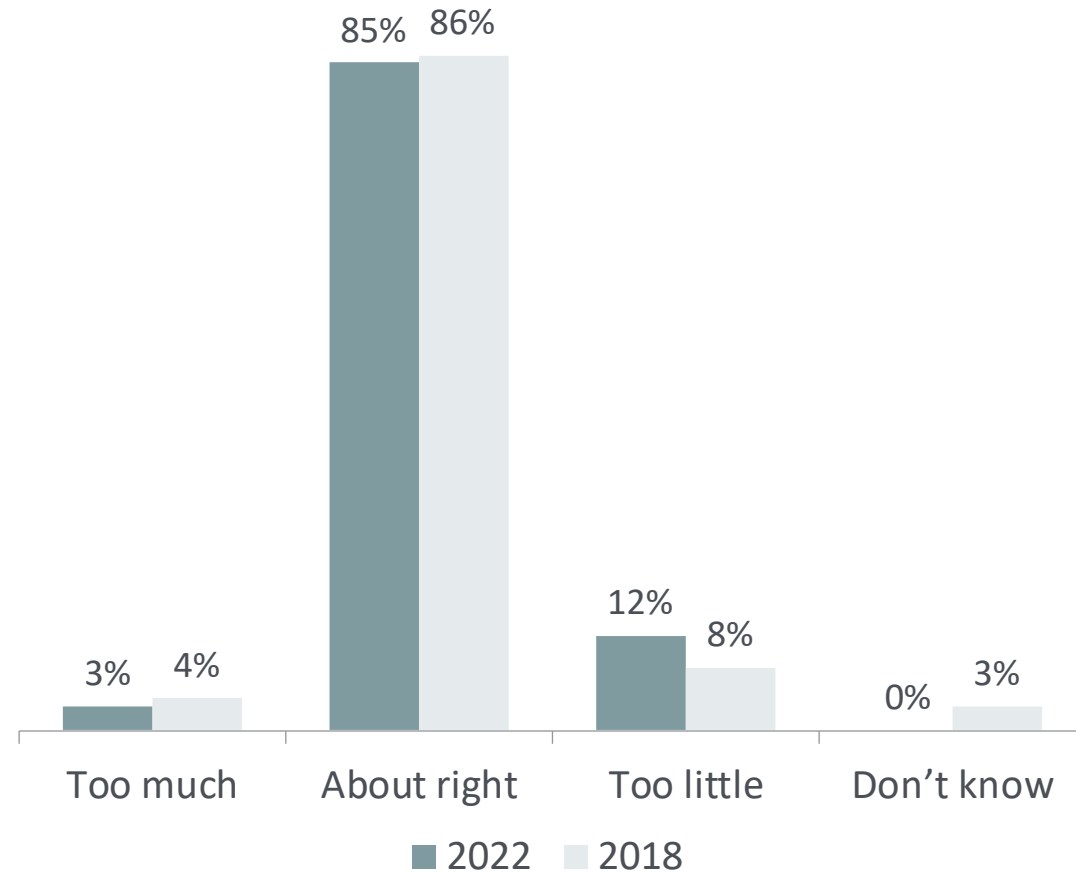
SHR information: amount

Most (85%) of the respondents say that the amount of information available from SHR is about right.

- Just over a tenth (12%) say SHR publishes too little information.
- Just 3% say SHR produces too much information.

These results were consistent with the 2018 findings.

Generally, stakeholders felt that SHR produces the right amount of information. However around 11% think it does not produce enough



Q4 Overall, do you think that the **amount of information** available from SHR is about right, too much or insufficient?

Base All respondents: 2022: 111, 2018: 106

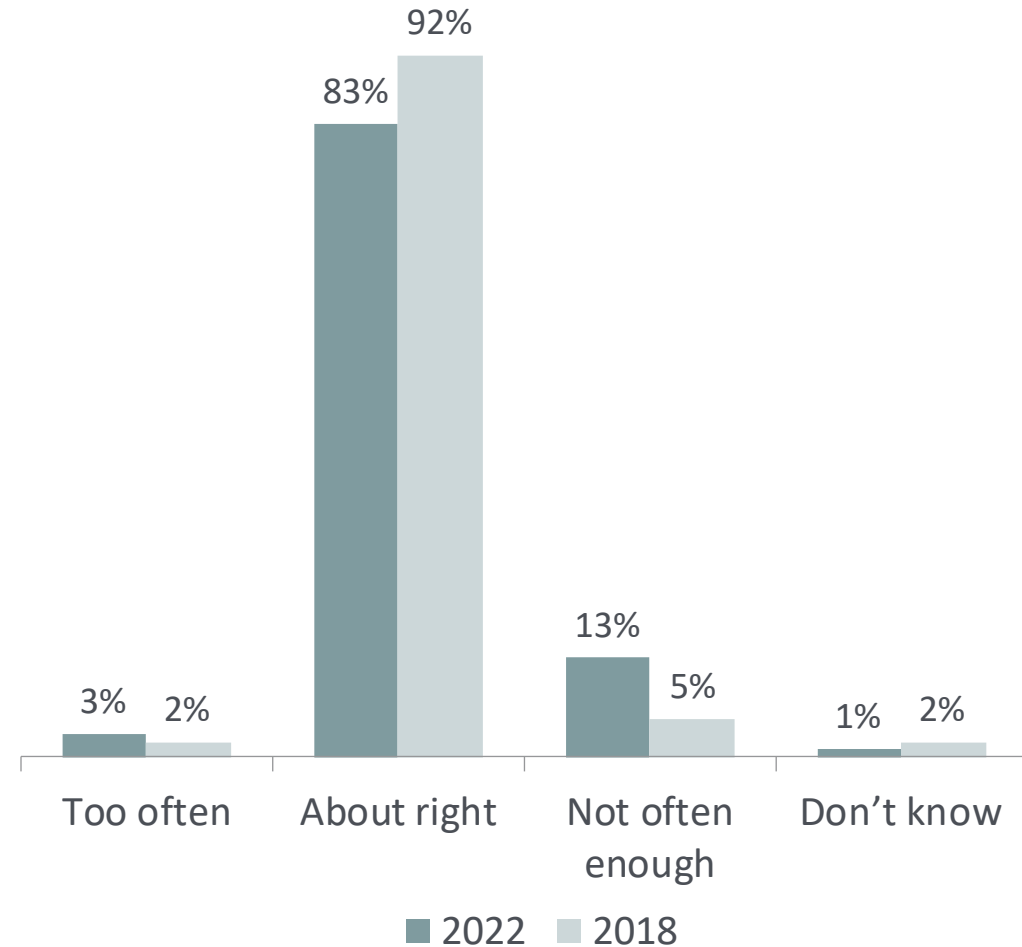
SHR information: frequency

Most (83%) of the respondents considered the frequency of information provision to be about right.

- Just over a tenth (13%) say SHR information is not produced frequently enough.
- Just 3% say SHR produces its information too frequently.

There are some changes from 2018: while the vast majority of respondents continue to agree that the frequency of information produced is about right, the proportion has declined since 2018; and the proportion of those saying it is not produced often enough has increased.

Most stakeholders felt the SHR produces information frequently enough. However, 13% would like it more frequently, a significant increase since 2018.



Q5 Do you think that SHR produces publications and statistics **often enough, too often or not often enough?**

Base All respondents: 2022: 111, 2018: 106

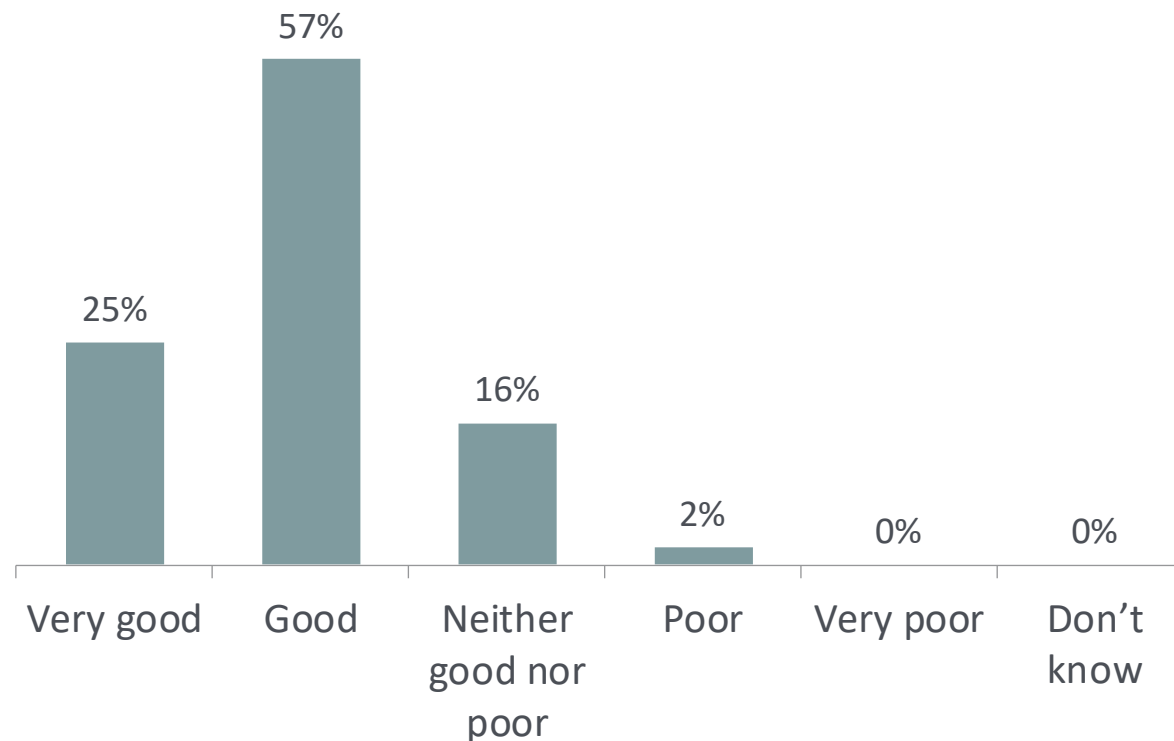
SHR information: quality

Most (82%) respondents rate the quality of SHR information as good, with a quarter of all respondents rating it as very good.

Most of the others (16%) rate the SHR information as neither good nor poor with just 2% considering it poor.

(Comparisons with 2018 are not available as the rating scale has been amended.)

Most stakeholders felt they are content that the quality of information produced by the SHR is good.



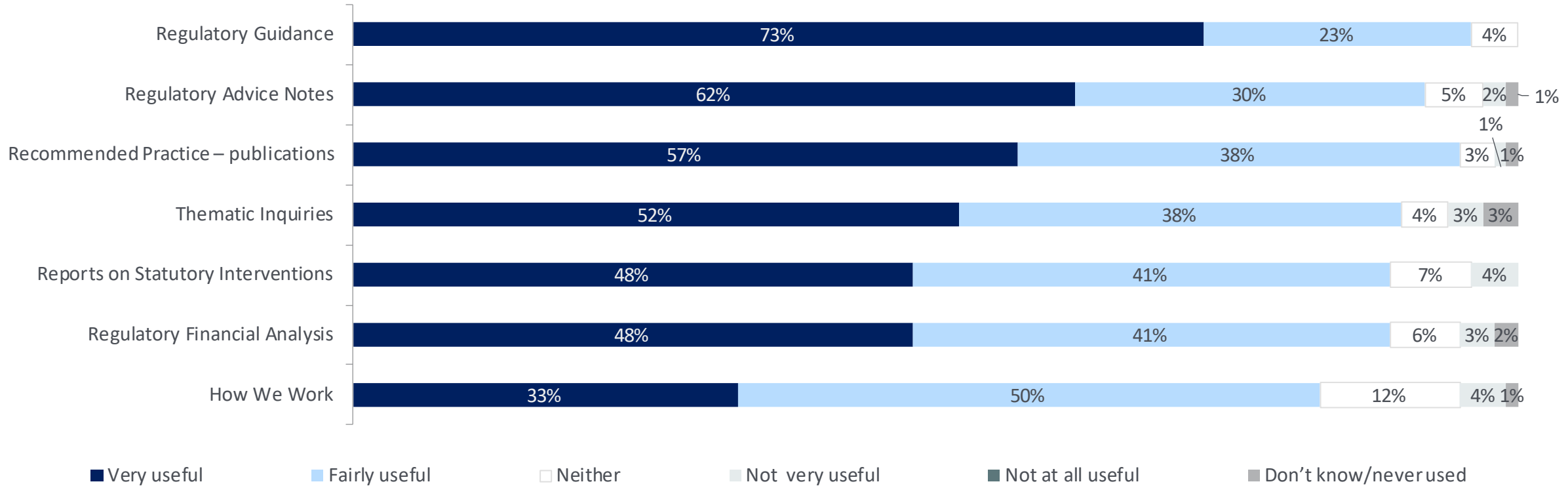
Q6. Overall, how would you rate the **quality of information** available from SHR? Base All respondents: 2022: 111,

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SHR's communications and publications



Stakeholders generally find the regulatory publications useful, with typically between 80% and 90% finding the publications very or fairly useful.



Most of the stakeholders found the regulatory publications useful, with typically between 80% and 90% saying the various publications were either very or fairly useful. In particular, the Regulatory Guidance, Regulatory Advice notes and Recommended Practice: over 90% of stakeholders found these at least useful, well over 50% found them very useful.

Q7. SHR produces a wide range of information about its work. Some of these are listed here. How would you rate the usefulness of each?

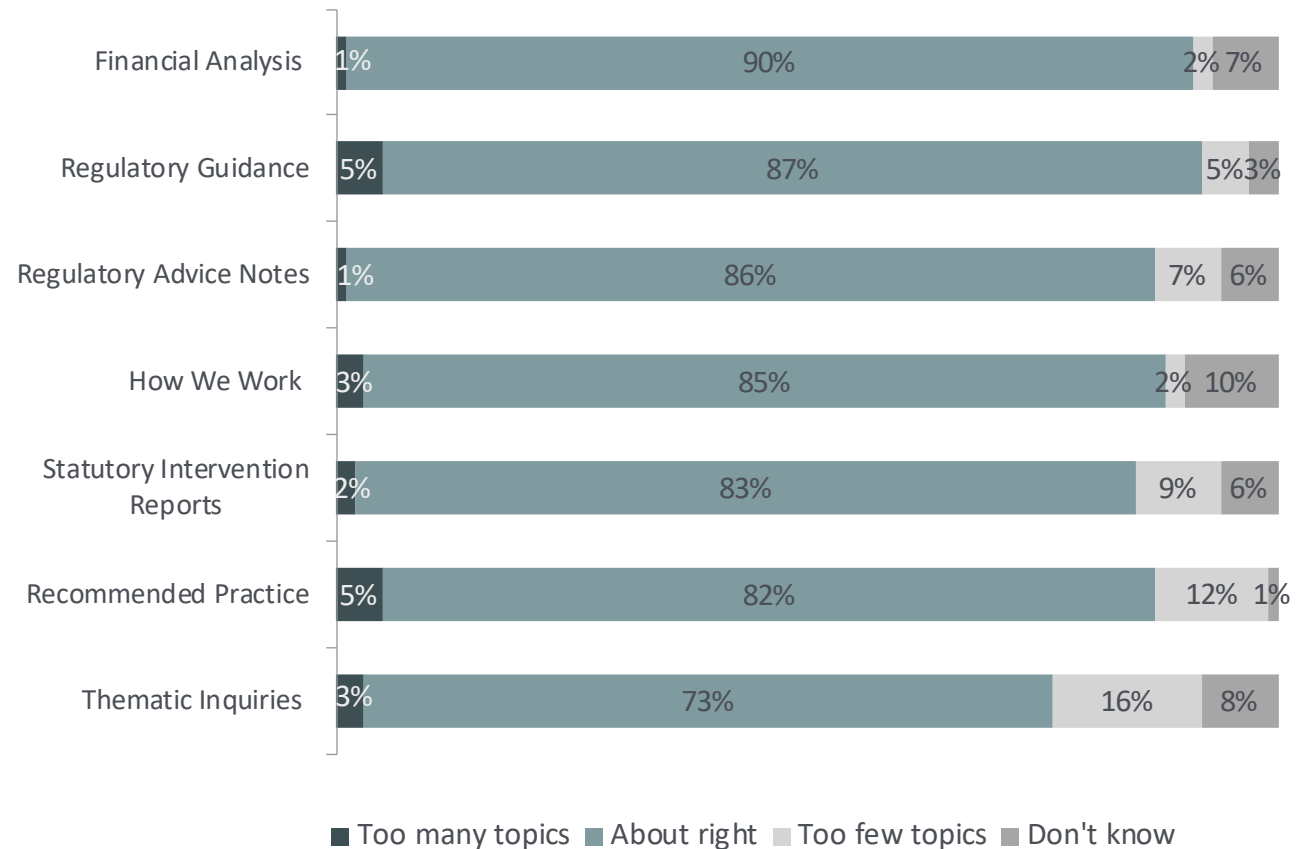
Base: All respondents 111

Regulatory publications: range

The topic coverage is generally about right across the range of regulatory publications with agreement ranging from 80%-90%. The exception here being Thematic Inquiries, slightly lower at 73%.

- Respondents rarely thought there were too many topics in any of the categories. However, around a tenth of respondents considered there were gaps in coverage within the:
 - Thematic Inquiries (16%)
 - Recommended Practice publications (12%)
 - Statutory Intervention Reports (9%)

Most stakeholders felt topic coverage was about right across the Regulatory publications. There were possible gaps in the Thematic Inquiries and Recommended Practice publications.



Q8 For each product, please say if the **range of topics** covered is about right, or if it is too broad or too narrow.

Base All respondents: 111

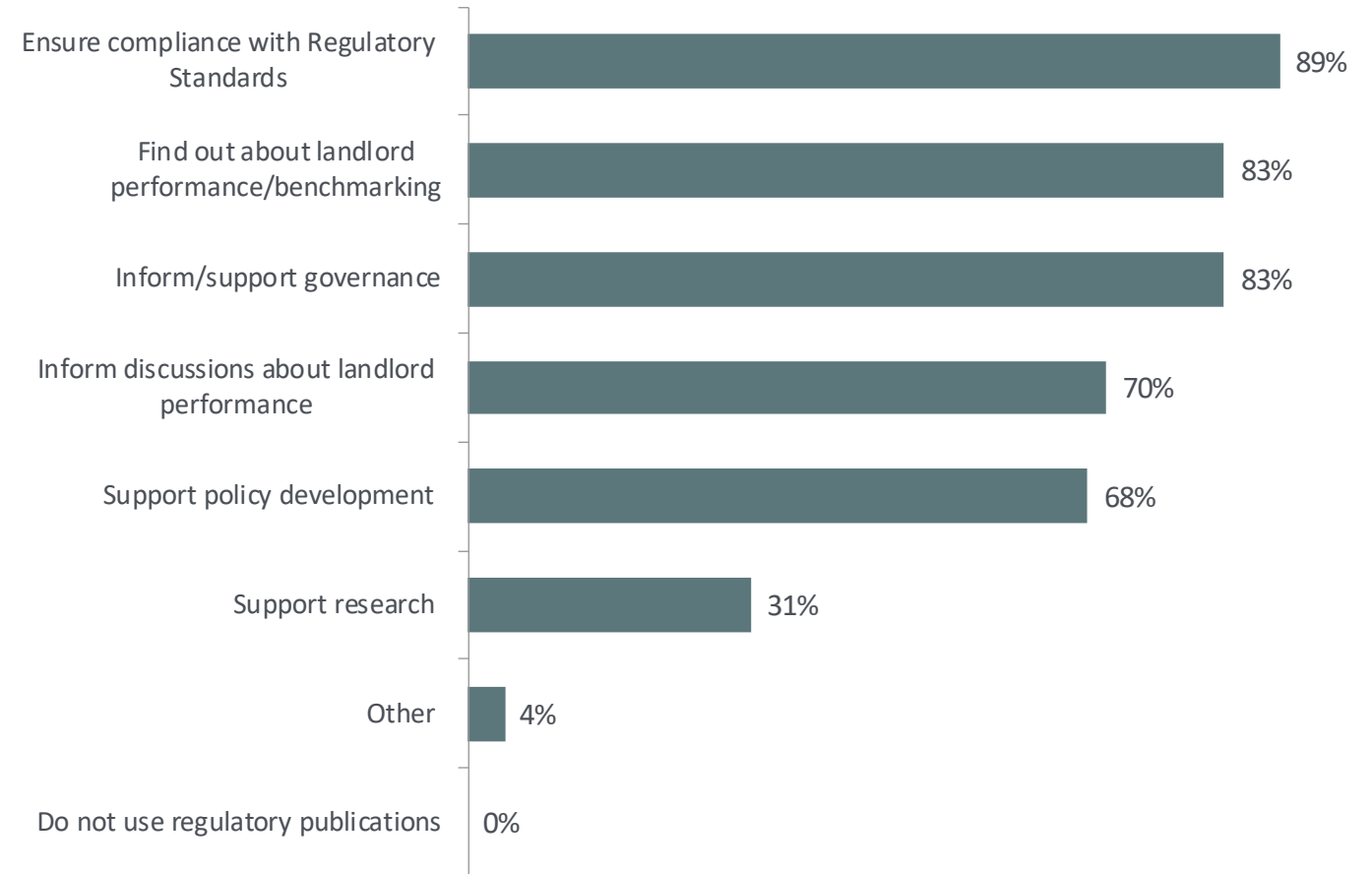
Regulatory publications: use

Regulatory publications are used in a variety of ways.

The main uses are to support compliance, performance management and governance within landlords.

- Overall, around nine-tenths (89%) of respondents use these publications to ensure compliance with Regulatory standards. This rises to 98% for RSLs.
- Around four-fifths each used these publications for benchmarking and to inform or support governance.
- None of the respondents said they did not use regulatory publications.

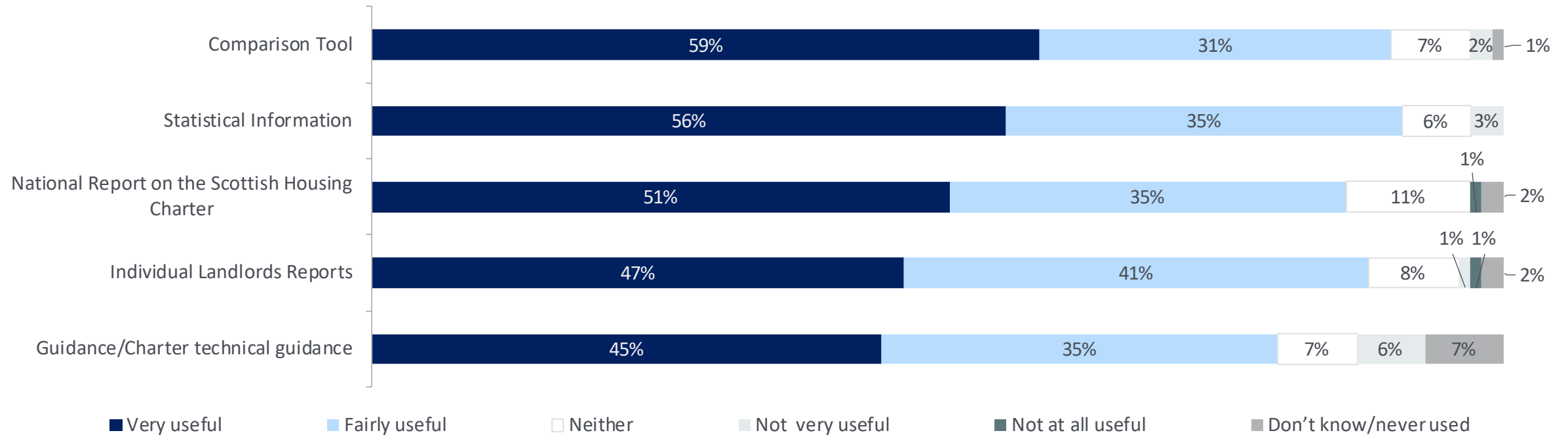
Stakeholders all used the Regulatory publications. The main uses were to inform or support compliance and performance management.



Q10 - Thinking specifically about the Regulatory publications SHR produces – the publications such as guidance, assessments, analysis and advice notes. How do you use these publications?

Base All respondents: 111

Stakeholders generally found the social charter publications useful. Typically, between 80% and 90% said they found the charter products either very or fairly useful.



Most of the stakeholders found the Charter products useful, with typically between 80% and 90% saying the various publications were either very or fairly useful. In particular, the Comparison Tool, Statistical Information and National Report on the Charter: over 80% of stakeholders found these at least useful, well over 50% found them very useful.

Q7. SHR produces a wide range of information about its work. Some of these are listed here. How would you rate the usefulness of each?

Base: All respondents 111

Charter publications: range

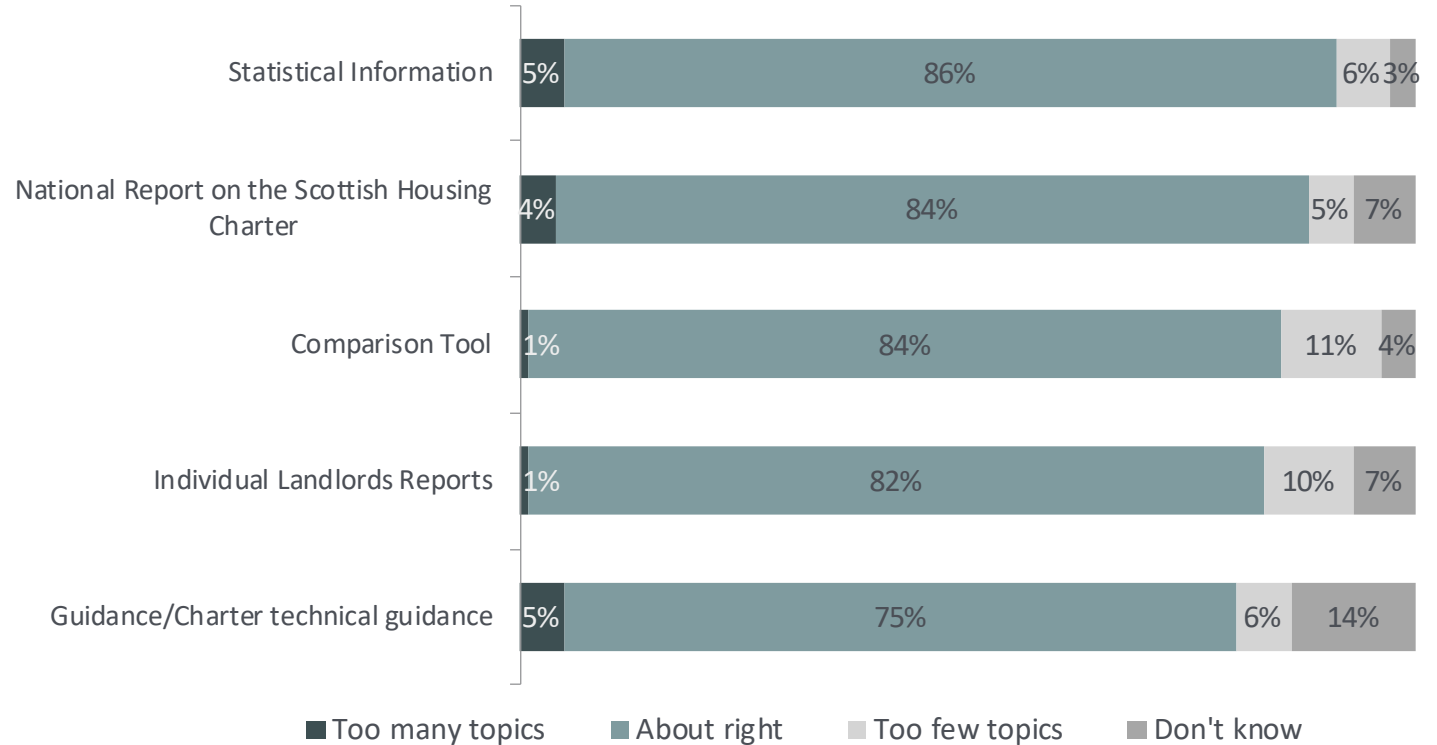
The topic coverage is generally about right across the range of charter publications with agreement ranging from 75%-85%.

Respondents rarely thought there were too many topics in any of the categories. However, around a tenth of respondents considered there were gaps in coverage within the:

- Comparison Tool (11%)
- Individual Landlord Reports (10%)

Well over a tenth of stakeholders did not comment on the Charter Guidance products.

Most stakeholders felt topic coverage was about right for Charter publications. Some felt coverage could be expanded in the Comparison Tool and the Individual Landlord Reports.



Q8 For each product, please say if the **range of topics** covered is about right, or if it is too broad or too narrow.

Base All respondents: 111

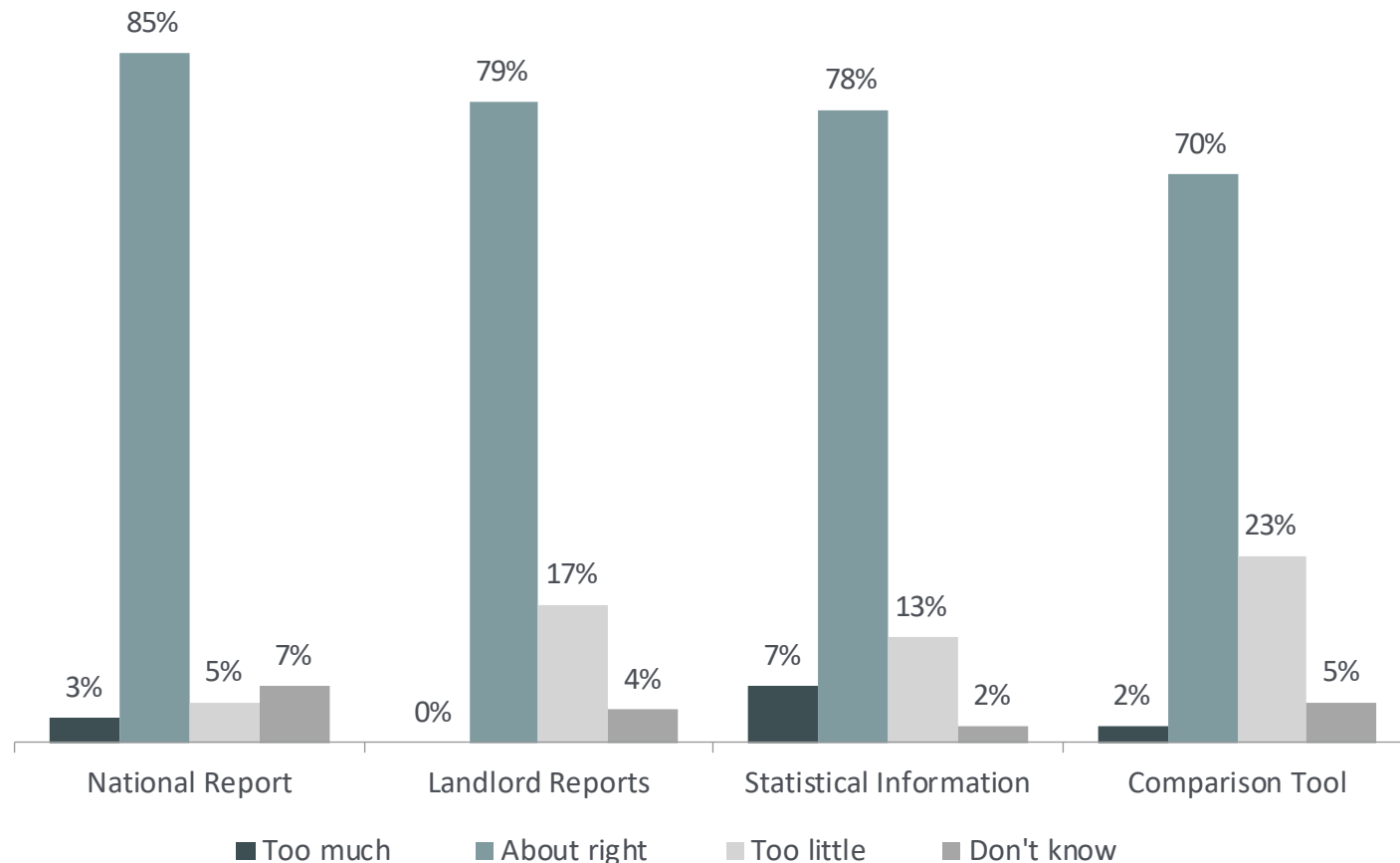
Charter publications: detail

Respondents were generally content with the level of detail across the Charter products, with around four-fifths saying the level was about right.

- However, a fifth feel there is too little detail available in both the Comparison Tool (23%) and Individual Landlord Reports (17%). Almost all the respondents saying there is too little detail were landlords. Conversely, others feel there is too much information.

Similar percentages were content with level of detail available in Chart products in 2018.

And most stakeholders felt that the level of detail in the Charter products was about right. However, around a fifth wanted more detail in the Comparison Tool and the Individual Landlord Reports.



Q11 Would you say the **level of detail** [in Social Housing Charter products] is about right, too much, or too little.

Base All respondents: 111

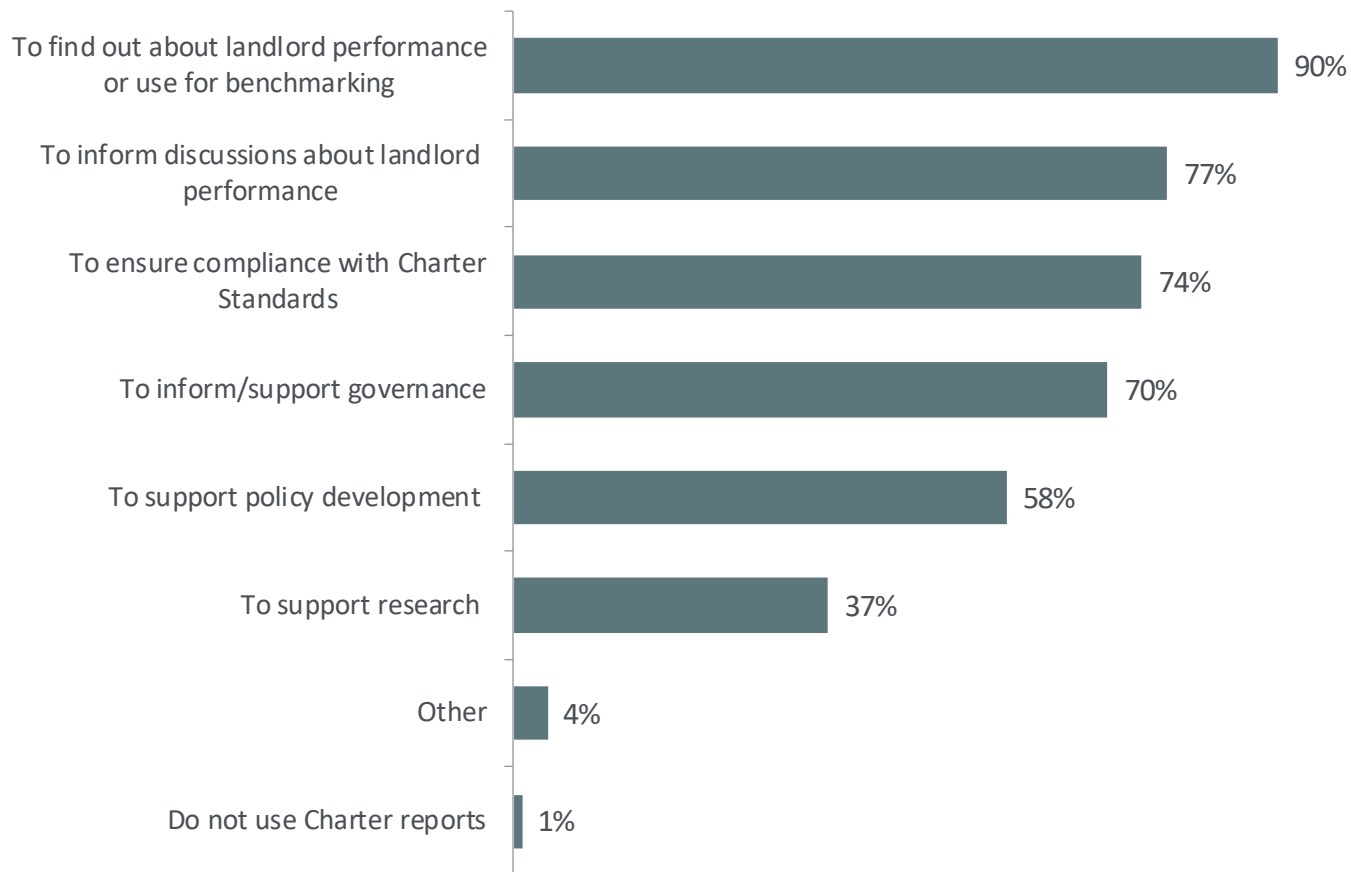
Charter publications: use

The main use for the Charter publications is performance management. Nine-tenths of respondents use these publications for benchmarking, while just over three-quarters use the Charter publications to inform discussions about landlord performance.

Around three-quarters use the publications to ensure compliance with the Charter standards.

The Charter publications are also being used to inform continuous improvement, with around three-fifths using publications to support policy development and two-fifths to support research.

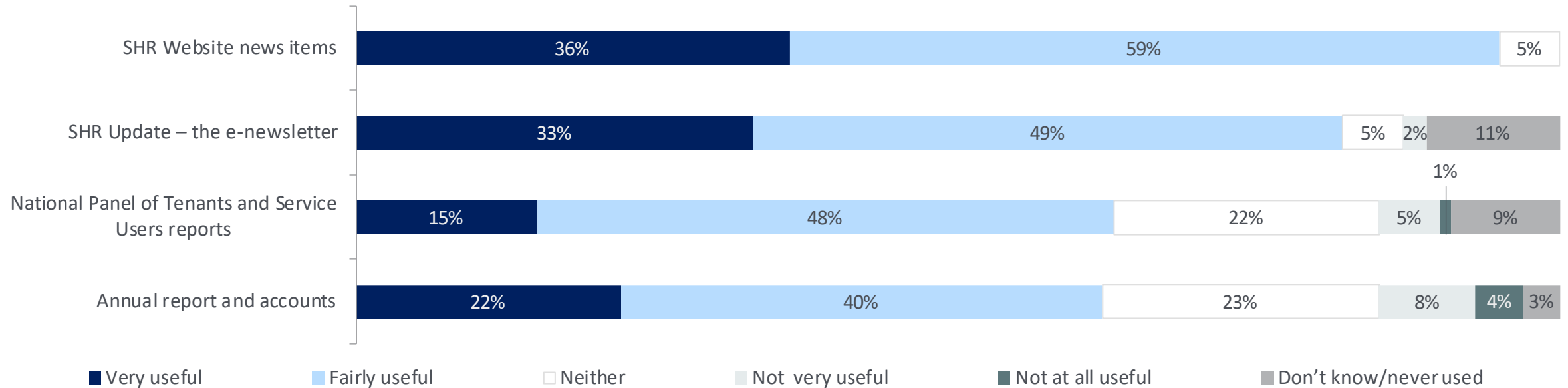
Stakeholders are using Charter products for benchmarking/performance management. Notably many are also using them to support continuous improvement.



Q12 - Thinking specifically about the Social Housing Charter products SHR produces – the publications such as national report on the SHC, the individual landlord reports, the Comparison Tool and statistical information. How do you use these publications?

Base All respondents: 111

Stakeholders generally found the SHR information products useful, in particular, the website news items and SHR Update.



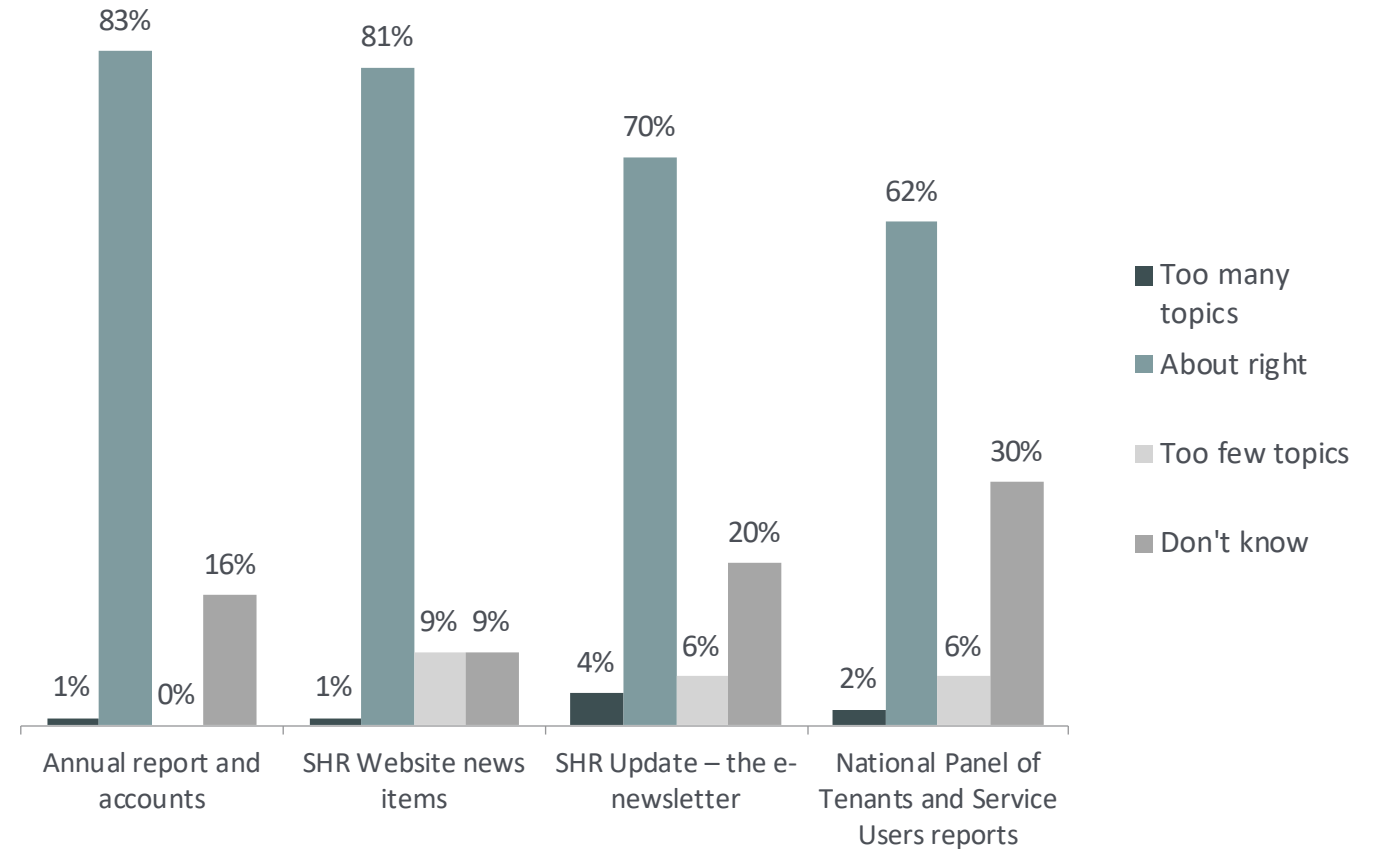
The vast majority of stakeholders found the website news items and SHR Update useful (around 95% and 82% respectively), indicating these are key mechanisms for distributing information about/from the organisation. Around three-fifths of stakeholders each found the National Panel of Tenants and Service Users reports and the SHR Annual Report useful.

Information publications: range

The topic coverage is generally about right across the range of information publications with agreement generally ranging from 70%-85%. The one exception was the National Panel of Tenants and Service Users reports, which almost a third of respondents felt unable to comment on.

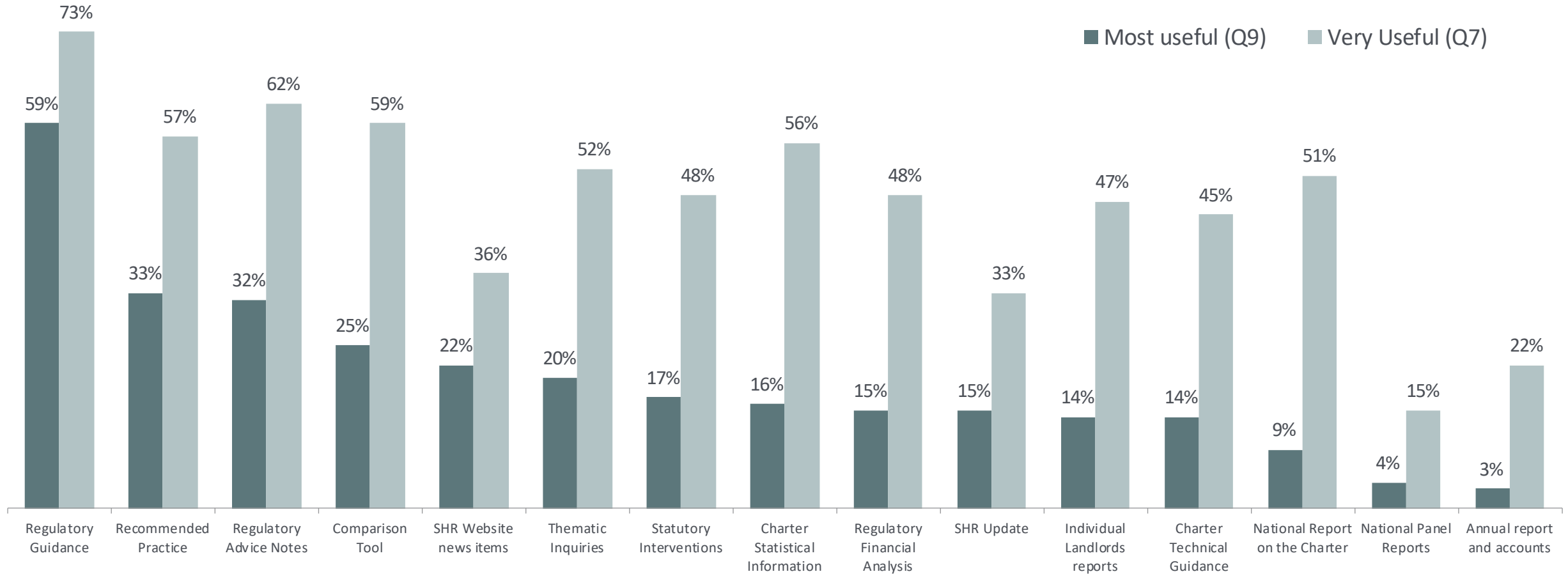
Respondents almost never thought there were too many topics in any of the categories. However, around a tenth of respondents (9%) considered there were gaps in coverage within the Website news coverage.

Stakeholders were generally content with the range of topics covered in information products



Q8 For each product, please say if the **range of topics** covered is about right, or if it is too broad or too narrow. Base All respondents: 111

The key product SHR produces is the Regulatory Guidance, it is by far the frequently mentioned 'most useful' product, and around three-quarters say it is very useful.



Q9 What would you say are the three most useful types of SHR publications? [Tick 3]

Base All respondents: 111

Q7 SHR produces a wide range of information about its work. Some of these are listed here. How would you rate the usefulness of each?

Most useful SHR products



The survey also asked respondents to name the **three most useful types of SHR publications**.

- As the chart above shows, the Regulatory Guidance was mentioned most often by respondents (59%). The other key publication types were: Recommended Practice, Regulatory Advice Notes and the Charter Comparison Tool each cited by at least a quarter of respondents.
- The National Report on the Charter, the National Panel of Tenants and Service User Reports, SHR's Annual Report and How We Work were each mentioned by fewer than 10% of respondents.

The chart above also shows the percentage of respondents who considered each product **very useful**.

- Those with highest scores for 'most useful' were typically also those likely to be considered very useful. In particular, the Regulatory Guidance was considered one of the most useful by 59% of respondents and very useful by 73% of respondents – clearly a key set of publications.
- The Recommended Practice, Regulatory Advice Notes and the Charter Comparison Tool are also clearly important: they are listed as one of the most useful documents by between a quarter and a third of respondents, and are considered very useful by at least half of all respondents.
- A range of other publications are recognised as being very useful by substantial numbers of stakeholders but were not cited as their principal information sources. In some cases, this may be simply information that is extremely useful, but partial or supplementary: charter statistical information, thematic inquiries, national report on the housing charter, regulatory financial analysis, reports on statutory interventions, individual landlord reports and charter technical guidance.

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Changes to SHR communications

Changes to SHR communications

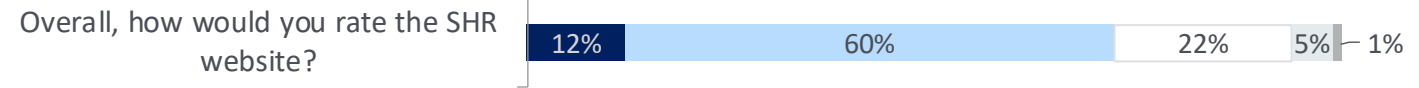


Around three-quarters of stakeholders find the updated website easy to read, but only around half say it's easy to find the information they want on the site.

The SHR has made some changes to its website recently. The survey tested views on these changes.

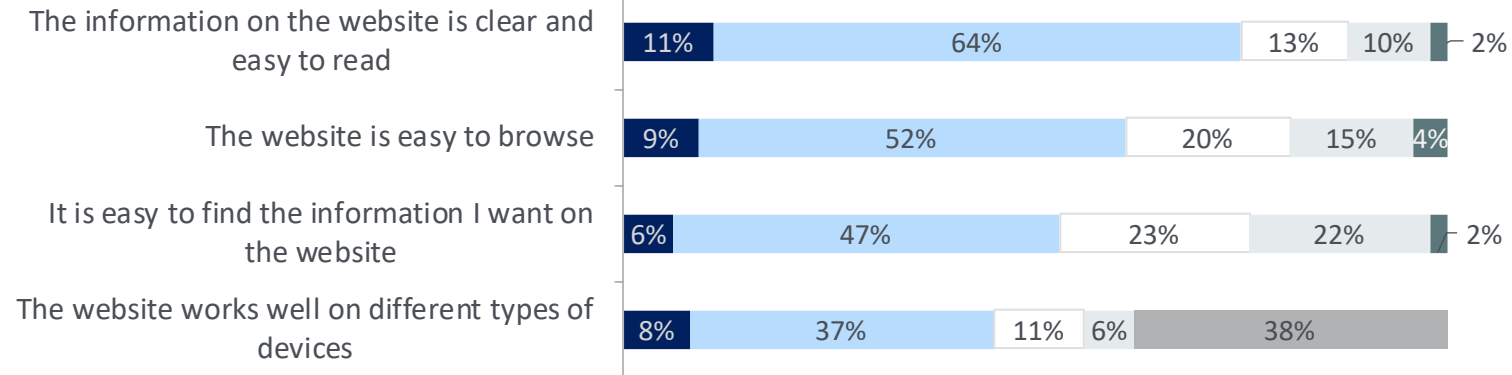
- Almost all (99%) of the respondents had used the website since the website had been updated and relaunched in 2019. Around three-quarters (72%) of respondents rated the SHR website as good, including around one in ten (12%) who rated it as very good.
- A key objective of the redesign was to improve accessibility. Most respondents (75%) agree the website information is clear and easy to read.
- Around three-fifths (61%) agreed the website is easy to browse and around half (54%) agreed that it's easy to find the information they want on the website. Notably around a fifth of respondents disagreed with each of these statements suggesting there may be further work to do on improving the website's search facilities.
- The website appears to work well across different types of devices, with just one in twenty (6%) disagreeing.

Rating the new website



■ Very good ■ Good □ Neither good not poor ■ Poor ■ Very poor ■ Not used SHR website since 2019

Views on the new website



■ Strongly agree ■ Agree □ Neither ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know

Q13 Overall, how would you rate the SHR website?

Base Q13 All: 111

Q14 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the new website?

Q14 All who have used new website: 110

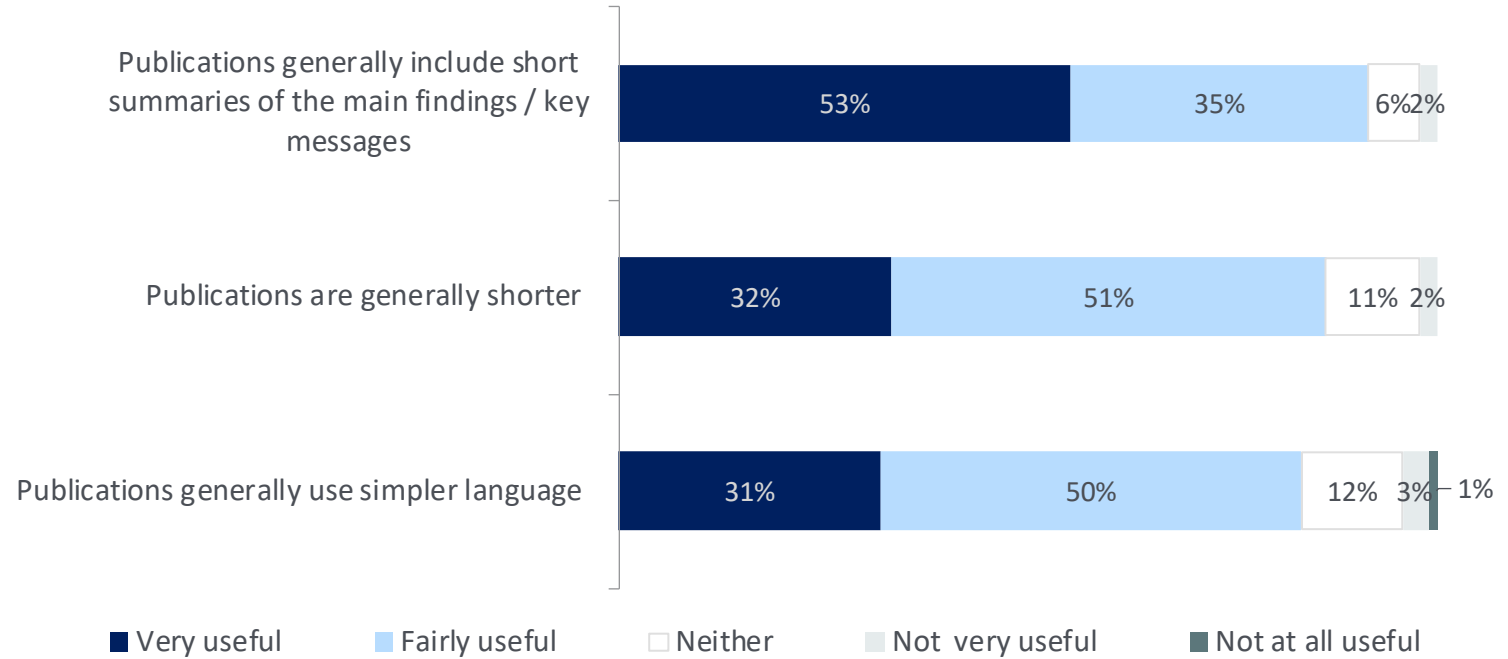
Changes to SHR communications

The SHR has also made some changes to its publications recently. The survey tested views on these changes.

Most respondents thought these changes were useful.

- Nearly nine-tenths (88%) thought the inclusion of a short summary in reports was useful, including 53% who said this was very useful.
- Around four fifths thought the shorter report format (83%) and the use of simpler language (81%) was useful, including a third who said these were very useful.

Changes to publications to make them clearer, shorter and simpler were all considered useful by stakeholders.



Q15 SHR has made some changes to its publications over the last year or so. In your opinion, **how useful** have the following changes been?
Don't knows not shown – all 4% - 5%

Base All respondents: 111

Changes to SHR communications



Respondents were asked if there was anything else the SHR could do to improve its communications.

Half (50%) said ‘nothing’ /no improvements were needed. This is the same as in 2018. The main comments that were made related to the website and the content of publications.

- Nearly a fifth (17%) suggested improvements to the website, such as improving the search facility and layout.
- 16% suggested changes to the content of communication and publications, including access to more detailed statistics; flexibility to analyse the information; clearer and more user-friendly.
- Several (4%) made specific comments about the Comparison Tool, including that it could be more interactive and easier to navigate.

The other comments were all made by around one in twenty of the respondents. They included:

- Improving the language within the documents: points raised included clarity (especially the difference between guidance and regulations), brevity and tone.
- The look of the publications
- Frequency
- Making it easier to print and download information

Other comments included:

- Accessibility of SHR communications that are not online
- Value of direct contact: via email and face to face meetings

Half of stakeholders said no further improvements to communications were required. The key suggestions made were to make it easier to search for and access information – both online and in publications.

Other improvements to SHR communications and publications (spontaneous)	%
Nothing	50%
Improve website	17%
Content of communications/publications	16%
Language used in the communications	5%
The look of the communications/publications	5%
Frequency of communications/publications	4%
Make information downloadable / printable	4%
Comparison Tool	4%
Others	9%

Q16. Is there anything else SHR should do to improve its website, communications or publications?

Base All respondents: 111

Further improvements to SHR communications?



The comparison tool is useful, but it could be improved and made more interactive and flexible – e.g. to compare specific data across a wider range of landlords.

You can print the pages but not always the full document.

Greater promotion of e-newsletter.

We would like to see more publicity and promotion of the SHR and the work they do.

Tracked changes to guidance so that staff can identify key changes quickly especially ARC, etc.

Website landing page could be clearer and easier to navigate.

Further development of accessible information for tenants who have difficulties with literacy would be welcome.

Whilst most associations use benchmarking these days, the old statistical information database was hugely helpful in serving that function, to allow an RSL to compare functions and services easily across whole categories of association.

When the SHR's chief officers communicate, they should do this directly, i.e. including their direct contact details.

The format of the website is quite complex, and information can be pretty bulky.



Conclusions

Summary and conclusions



Background

- The SHR commissioned Progressive to undertake a survey of its communications to enable SHR to understand how stakeholders use its publications and the value they place on its communications. The survey findings and recommendations will be used to inform its communications approach and strategy.
- The survey was conducted online, using a questionnaire designed by Progressive in consultation with SHR.
- SHR provided 226 stakeholder contacts, comprising RSLs, local authorities and other bodies. In addition, the Registered Regional Tenant Networks were contacted via the engagement officer at Scottish Government. A total of 111 responses were received.

Communications methods

- SHR uses a variety of methods to communicate its work. The survey asked about the SHR website, publications, SHR Update, the e-zine, conference speeches and Twitter, as well as direct contact with SHR and information via representative organisations. Stakeholders use all of these.
- The most commonly utilised are the SHR website and SHR publications, which are used by all stakeholders, and used often by around four-fifths. Almost everyone finds publications and the website useful.
- Twitter and conference speeches are used only occasionally. Most stakeholders find these useful (around three quarters) – although most of these people did rate them as ‘very useful’.
- Most respondents selected either SHR Update or the website as the most effective way of communicating information about SHR.

Summary and conclusions

SHR information - overview

- Almost all stakeholders think that the amount of information and frequency of publication of SHR publications is about right.
- Most stakeholders think the quality of SHR information is good, including around a quarter of respondents who think it is very good. Only a handful of respondents consider the quality of SHR to be poor.

SHR publications

- On the whole, stakeholders find SHR publications useful and they rarely note that a publication is 'never used' or 'not at all useful'.
- The Regulatory publications were particularly useful to stakeholders. Indeed, at least half of all respondents find the following 'very useful': Regulatory Guidance, Regulatory Advice Notes, Recommended Practice, and Thematic Inquiries
- These publications were also identified by stakeholders as the 'most useful' of SHR's publications (when asked to list the three most useful types of SHR publications): Regulatory Guidance, Recommended Practice and Regulatory Advice Notes.
- In addition, the Charter Comparison Tool was considered a key product by respondents, with well over half saying it was very useful, and a quarter selecting it one of their 'most useful' products.

Summary and conclusions

Changes to SHR products and publications

- SHR has made some changes to its publications recently. Overwhelmingly, stakeholders have found these changes useful: with almost all finding the inclusion of summaries, the move to shorter reports and the use of simpler language useful.
- There was also support for the updated and relaunched website. The vast majority of respondents consider the information on the new website to be clear and easy to read, easy to browse and easy to navigate. However, there is a significant minority (around a fifth) of users continue to find browsing and accessing information difficult.
- Stakeholders commented on the current products and publications. Most considered that no changes were required, but a small number of modifications were suggested.
- The most common suggestions related to improvements to the website, to improve the layout, navigation and content. There was an appreciation that the site contained a great deal of information, and there were concerns that because some data files were large information could be difficult to locate, navigate and use. It was suggested that further work was required to improve the look of the website, to make the website more user-friendly, and to assist users to make best use of the information on the site.
- Comments were also made around the content and readability of publications and products; the need to make them clearer, more concise, and relevant to the range of stakeholders. In particular, improvements to the Comparison Tool were suggested to expand the range of data held on the Tool and enhance its flexibility.
- Improved data presentation and management could be especially important as several respondents suggested additional information would be of benefit. This included more detailed Charter information, to provide landlords with fuller contextual and comparative information.



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Appendices: project background and approach

Project background



The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR), an independent Non-Ministerial Department, directly accountable to the Scottish Parliament, is the independent regulator of registered social landlords (RSLs) and local authority housing services in Scotland.

The SHR regulates social landlords by monitoring, assessing and reporting on:

- How social landlords are performing their housing services
- RSLs' financial well-being
- RSLs' standards of governance

SHR communicates with stakeholders in a range of ways including, face to face through meetings and speaking engagements; its website through website news and publications; the regular SHR Update newsletter; and social media using its Twitter account.



The website was updated and relaunched in 2019. This ensured it fully complied with accessibility standards for all public body websites. The redesign process also provided a useful opportunity to enhance the website, to make it generally more accessible and user friendly.

SHR has commissioned Progressive to undertake a survey of all its communications. The outcomes will enable SHR to understand how stakeholders use SHR publications and the value they place on its communications.

The SHR will use the research findings and recommendations to inform its communications approach and strategy.

Project objectives



Understand the value stakeholders place on communications products

Prioritise future work

Enhance communications approaches

Inform communication and engagement strategies

Reflect on feedback

Priorities for communications

Method and sample

- **Method:** A quantitative method was utilised – an online survey
- **Sample:** SHR provided 226 stakeholder contacts. These comprised:
 - Landlord bodies: registered social landlords and local authorities
 - Landlord representative and professional trade organisations
 - Registered Regional Tenant Networks
 - Key advocacy organisations
 - Lenders and funders
 - Auditors
 - Other regulators
- **Response:** The achieved sample was 111
- **Fieldwork dates:** 30 August – 26 September 2022
- **Quality assurance:** All work has been carried out in accordance with ISO 20252 guidelines and the MRS Code of Conduct
- **Reporting:** Only statistically significant differences are reported

Sample profile



Sector	%
Registered social landlord	72%
Lender or funder	9%
Local authority	8%
Tenant and representative bodies	7%
Other	4%
Base	111

The survey response was 46%, very good for this type of survey. Of the 111 responses, around three-quarters were from RSLs, a tenth were from local authorities, and a fifth from other organisations. The surveys were typically issued to, and returned from, the organisation's head of housing/chief executive.

Role of respondent	%
Head of housing/ Director / Chief executive (or representative)	86%
Tenant representative	6%
Finance and audit	2%
Housing services	2%
Policy development and research	1%
Communications, ICT and PR	1%
Other	3%
Base	111

Technical appendix



Data collection

The data was collected by online survey

The target group for this research study was Scottish Housing Regulator stakeholders

The sampling frame used for this study was a listing of stakeholder contacts provided by SHR.

The sample type was probability. All contacts on the listing were invited to take part in the survey. In addition, Tenant representatives were contacted via intermediaries.

The target sample size was c100 and the final achieved sample size was 111.

Fieldwork was undertaken between 30 August – 26 September 2022

All persons on the sampling frame were invited to participate in the study. Respondents to paper and internet self-completion studies are self-selecting and complete the survey without the assistance of a trained interviewer. This means that Progressive cannot strictly control sampling and, in some cases, this can lead to findings skewed towards the views of those motivated to respond to the survey.

The overall response rate to the survey was 46%. This response rate is typical for a survey where respondents are interested in the topic and motivated to respond.

Data analysis

The final data set was not weighted.

The overall sample size of 111 provides a dataset with a margin of error of between $\pm 1.38\%$ and $\pm 6.65\%$, calculated at the 95% confidence level (market research industry standard).

The following methods of statistical analysis were used: Z tests and t-tests.

Quality assurance

For CAWI Questionnaires these checks include:

- Responses are checked for duplicates where unidentified responses have been permitted.
- All responses are checked for completeness and sense.
- Specific quality checks to be conducted during fieldwork may include checking speed of completion, responses in patterns/flat-lining, contradictory answers, quality of open-ended responses etc.

A computer edit of the data carried out prior to analysis involves both range and inter-field checks. Any further inconsistencies identified at this stage are investigated by reference back to the raw data on the questionnaire.

Where “other” type questions are used, the responses to these are checked against the parent question for possible up-coding.

Responses to open-ended questions will normally be spell and sense checked. Where required these responses may be grouped using a code-frame which can be used in analysis.

A SNAP programme set up with the aim of providing the client with useable and comprehensive data. Crossbreaks are discussed with the client in order to ensure that all information needs are met.

All research projects undertaken by Progressive comply fully with the requirements of ISO 20252.