

‘Bill Shock’ in the contract mobile phone market

Online research report

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Background

- Communications services feature usage-based charging, which combined with the availability of a wide variety of services priced at different levels, some of which are used infrequently, means that consumers can find themselves facing bills that exceed what they are used to, or expect. This is referred to as ‘unexpectedly high bills’ or ‘bill shock’.
- Concerns about bill shock have been expressed directly by consumers in complaints received by Ofcom, as well as by MPs and through reporting in the media. The complaints that Ofcom receives about unexpectedly high bills are usually in relation to mobile phone bills.
- Last year Ofcom commissioned research to better understand the impact and consumer harm resulting from unexpectedly high bills received by mobile phone consumers. A repeat of this study was commissioned in 2013 to look at trends and understand the new issues/causes relating to the sending of text messages.
- This report has been written by Other Lines of Enquiry in consultation with Ofcom.

Objectives (Overview)

- To understand in more detail the issues being experienced by consumers as a result of bill shock in the mobile contract market in 2013 and (where appropriate) to compare experiences with data from 2012.
- More specifically to better understand:
 - The extent of 'harm' to consumers caused by bill shock – both financial and other
 - Type of usage causing bill shock - numbers called, data used etc.
 - The extent of any overlap between causes of bill shock e.g. where consumers experience more than one type
 - The extent to which consumers are empowered to complain and receive any compensation
 - The sources of information on the cost of calls/data that consumers use
 - To compare what, if any, changes have taken place since last year's research

Objectives (in-depth)

- Provide further detail on the cause of bill shock
 - Understand more about what types of voice calls cause bill shock
 - Understand what type of data usage causes bill shock
 - Understand more about the causes of bill shock when roaming both inside and outside the EU
 - Understand more about the types of text message that cause bill shock
- Extent to which consumers are aware of and are using measures to protect against bill shock
 - Detail on awareness of consumer's liability for unauthorised calls made in the event of a lost or stolen mobile phone, i.e. for charges incurred from when the phone is gone to when it is reported as lost/stolen
 - Detail on awareness of whether it is possible to choose tariffs for usage that enable consumers to set their own financial caps and receive usage alerts
 - Detail on awareness of how consumers can protect themselves, e.g. by locking their phones
 - Mobile tariff transparency – sources of information on cost of calls, awareness of cost of calls outside tariff bundle

Methodology

- Other Lines of Enquiry have used an in-house online panel, panelbase.net, which has 200,000 registered members in the UK. This panel was used to source the sample.
- The survey was conducted between 16th July and 12th August 2013. The questionnaire was adapted from the 2012 questionnaire by Other Lines of Enquiry and Ofcom to ensure key trend data could be collected whilst also accounting for market changes.
- Respondents were given a small incentive to complete the survey with a higher incentive provided to those who answered questions relevant to multiple issues/quota groups
- At the start of the survey respondents were screened to ensure that:
 - They personally own a mobile phone paid for on a monthly contract basis
 - They personally pay the bill for this mobile phone
- Quotas were imposed on reason for bill shock. Soft quotas were placed on demographics to ensure the sample remained fairly representative of the mobile contract market, acknowledging that the characteristics of those suffering bill shock may vary from the overall market.

Methodology - Weighting

- The table below shows the demographic profile of responses achieved and subsequent weighting. Where data on bill shock as a whole is presented, the profile is weighted to match the demographics of mobile phone contract users according to Wave 1 of Ofcom's Tech Tracker in 2013.
- Data on individual types of bill shock are not weighted as some variation of demographics would be expected within individual bill shock groups.

		Demographics		Have a Smartphone?			
		Un-weighted	Weighted	Yes - Un-weighted	Yes - Weighted	No - Un-weighted	No - Weighted
Gender	Male	49%	50%	88%	79%	12%	21%
	Female	51%	50%	83%	77%	17%	23%
Age	16-34	45%	41%	93%	89%	7%	11%
	35-44	24%	25%	90%	83%	10%	17%
	45-54	17%	16%	80%	74%	20%	26%
	55+	14%	18%	62%	47%	38%	53%
SEG	AB	40%	31%	88%	82%	12%	18%
	C1	31%	33%	87%	80%	13%	20%
	C2	14%	17%	85%	77%	15%	23%
	DE	15%	19%	77%	67%	23%	33%
Location	England	86%	85%	86%	78%	14%	22%
	Scotland	8%	8%	84%	76%	16%	24%
	Wales	4%	4%	91%	86%	9%	14%
	N. Ireland	1%	2%	67%	59%	33%	42%

Sample Summary

- In total 1,102 respondents completed the survey. As respondents could experience bill shock due to multiple reasons, respondents completed the survey in relation to a maximum of 2 causes.
- Assignment was initially prioritised based on expected incidence and updated dynamically to ensure an even number of completes.

Quota group	Bill Shock Issue (in the last 12 months)	Estimated incidence*	Initial Priority	Number of completes
1	Calls to numbers not included in allowance	3%	7	206
2	Exceeding monthly voice allowance	1.2%	6	214
3	Using data not included in allowance	1%	5	201
4	Exceeding data allowance	0.6%	3	109
5	Using mobile while away in Europe	Data	2	64
		Voice		69
6	Using mobile while away outside of Europe	Data	1	59
		Voice		51
7	Lost/stolen phone	3%	8	201
8	Sending messages not included in allowance	0.7%	4	109

*incidence rates based on Ofcom face to face survey of 6,277 UK adults conducted in March/April 2013

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Executive Summary (1/5)



Important note on analysis: The analysis contained in this report is based on a subset of mobile contract customers i.e. those who experienced an unexpectedly high bill in the twelve months prior to interview. The estimated incidence of each separate 'bill shock cause' ranges between 0.6% due to consumers exceeding their data allowances to 3% due to consumers making calls to numbers not included in their allowances or as a result of unauthorised use of a consumer's lost / stolen mobile phone¹.

There has been no significant change in the average amount of bill shock for most issues

- Making calls to numbers not included in allowance reported an average bill shock of £17, broadly comparable with that noted for the new quota group 'sending messages not included in allowance' included in the study this year (£16).
- Using data without an allowance and exceeding data allowance reported levels of £21 and £22 respectively, while exceeding voice allowance reported levels nearly twice this amount at £45. These amounts are not significantly different to those reported in 2012.
- Use of mobiles abroad continues to report higher levels of bill shock at £74. However, this average is increased by a small number of outliers saying they have experienced bills of £200+, more than they had expected. And most (71%) respondents said their bills were up to £50 more than expected. An increasing proportion of those experiencing bill shock due to voice use abroad said they had sought information on the cost of calls abroad prior to their trip (49% to 62%) .
- The vast majority (85%) of participants experiencing bill shock said they became aware of this within a month, broadly comparable to 2012 (82%). Most (72%) continue to discover this by looking at their bill.

The level of bill shock from unauthorised use of lost/stolen mobiles rose significantly to £65 but higher levels of reimbursement means the net loss remains broadly unchanged at £27.

- The only cause to see a significant rise in the amount of bill shock was 'lost or stolen mobile' with a shift from £34 to £65. This rise was partly driven by a small proportion (5%) of consumers stating they had received bills of £200+ more than expected. The study in 2012 did not pick up any participants with bill shock of this level.
- However, 2013 sees a rise in the mean amount being reimbursed resulting in a total net loss due to a lost or stolen phone not significantly different to that noted in 2012 (£27 vs. £20).
- Most of those who had experienced an unexpectedly high bill due to a lost/stolen phone said they reported it to their provider (70%). Just over a quarter (27%) said they had reported it to their insurer.
- More than half (57%) of these participants said they did not know that liability for any usage would not lie with them, once the phone had been reported to their provider as lost/stolen.

¹ While use in the EU and outside each equate 0.5% total use abroad stands at just under 1%

Executive Summary (2/5)



Calls to 0845 numbers continue to dominate the underlying cause of bill shock due to calling numbers not included in allowance

- The average amount that bills were higher than expected in relation to this cause was £17 (£19 in 2012) in most cases (77%) bills were less than £21 more than participants had expected (72% in 2012).
- Two thirds (64%) of these participants said this was due to calls to 0845 numbers. Around half as many said this was due to making calls to 0800 numbers (36%) and 0870 numbers (31%).

'Exceeding monthly voice allowance' driven by people making more calls than usual and being unaware they have exceeded their allowance

- The average amount of bill shock due to exceeding monthly voice allowance was £45 (similar to 2012 at £43). Almost half of incidents were for bills shock amounts of £20 or less (47%). However 1 in 10 incidents were over £100 more than expected.
- Making more calls than usual (79%) remains the top reason for exceeding the call allowance, with the vast majority (90%) unaware they were making calls outside of this – not significantly different to that reported in 2012 (87%).
- Most consumers who said they had experienced an unexpectedly high bill due to exceeding their voice allowance said this was due to calling mobiles (74%). Forty-five percent said this was due to making calls to landline.

Half of respondents experiencing bill shock due to using data without an allowance said they knew they were using the mobile network to access data – a rise from 37% in 2012

- The average amount of bill shock caused solely by using data without an allowance was £21 while not significantly higher than the £15 observed in 2012 higher proportions said their bills were £21-50 (33%, 19% in 2012) or £51+ (6%, 3% in 2012) more than expected.
- Browsing or accessing the internet (63%) remained the most common activity causing the unexpectedly high bill amongst those without a data allowance (69% in 2012). Other activities included use of apps (42%).
- There was a significant increase in respondents who reported being aware they were using data via the mobile network (from 37% in 2012 to 50% in 2013).

Executive Summary (3/5)



Greater stated awareness of reaching data allowance than in 2012 (24% vs. 14%) among those who experienced bill shock due to exceeding their data allowance

- The average amount of bill shock caused solely by exceeding data allowance was £22 (£30 in 2012) with most (97%) incidents involving amounts of £50 or less. There was a significant rise in the proportion saying they exceeded their allowance because “someone has used the phone to download data and the data had not been switched off” (19%, 9% in 2012).
- There was a significant increase in the proportion of respondents aware they had used up their data allowance before they used the additional data (24%, 14% in 2012).
- A fifth of respondents who suffered bill shock due to exceeding their data allowance said that their provider had told them they had a bigger data allowance. This is double, and significantly higher than the 10% stating this in 2012.

Greater awareness of automatic data downloads among Smartphone owners (59% from 52%)

- There is an increasing awareness of ‘push’ notifications (i.e. automatic data downloads). Nearly three in five (59%) Smartphone owners say they are aware that data may download automatically up from around half (52%) in 2012.
- In total two-fifths (40%) of all bill shock participants were aware that some handsets convert certain text messages automatically (i.e. when a text message is converted into data and charged accordingly). Awareness of this was significantly higher amongst Smartphone owners (42%) compared to non Smartphone owners (23%).

Of those who experienced bill shock due to sending messages not included in allowance, two fifths (39%) said that they had been charged for sending a different type of message to that intended, 17% said that they had sent more messages than they intended.

- Average bill shock for sending picture messages was £16 with the majority (79%) of unexpectedly high bills in relation to this issue being for £20 or less than they had expected.
- Two fifths (39%) said they thought they were sending a different type of message and 17% said they had sent more messages than they intended. Almost two thirds (65%) of participants who experienced bill shock due to sending picture messages, said they had no idea how much it cost to send a picture message.
- Most (81%) respondents who experienced bill shock due to sending picture messages, said they had sent the messages from within the UK.

Executive Summary (4/5)



Among those who experienced bill shock, nearly six in ten (58%) said this had occurred on multiple occasions, this being highest among younger participants.

- Around two in five (42%) participants said they had experienced bill shock on a single bill (42% in 2012) and 58% had received bill shock on more than one bill.
- Experience of bill shock on multiple occasions was more common amongst younger respondents (66% amongst 16-34 year olds) and those with Smartphones (60%).

Some (15%) participants said they experienced multiple issues on a single bill. The most common causes related to a combination of different types of voice use or a combination of voice and data use abroad.

- Fifteen percent of respondents said they had experienced bill shock due to multiple causes on a single bill, broadly comparable to the proportion noted in 2012 (13%) despite a change in methodology.
- Mean bill shock among these consumers was £40 with a net loss (i.e. excluding any re-imbursement) of £24. This cannot be directly compared to 2012 due to the addition of the new quota group and changes in sample composition.
- Various combinations of issues were reported, the most common combination being 'calls to numbers not in allowance' and 'exceeding voice allowance' (9%), followed by 'data use abroad' and 'voice use abroad' (8%).

Just over a third said they made a complaint about their unexpectedly high bill with likelihood to complain higher among those experiencing higher values of bill shock

- Just over a third (37%) reported making an official complaint, not significantly different to 2012 (34%). However there was a significant increase in complaints amongst those whose bills were between £21 and £50 more than expected – up from 36% in 2012 to 45% in 2013.
- Similar to findings in 2012 propensity to complain was higher among those experiencing higher levels of bill shock – rising from a third (32%) among those with bill shock amounts up to £20 to 44% among those who reported a £50+ bill shock.
- The main reason respondents said they didn't make a complaint continues to be a sense of responsibility for their own actions i.e. they felt it was their fault, mentioned by 55% of those who did not make a complaint.

Executive Summary (5/5)



Consumers are more likely to use simple measures such as locking the handset (63%) or setting a password (49%) as methods to prevent bill shock, but there are indications of an increase in awareness and use of disabling mobile data

- Half of the sample (51%) said they currently check their usage levels, with a further quarter (25%) aware that it is possible – use of these methods remaining broadly comparable to those reported in 2012, although there has been a slight change in methodology which may have affected trend data.
- Despite a rise in awareness of usage alerts (56% up from 46%) and tariffs which allow limits to be set (54% up from 46%) over two fifths remain unaware of these options.
- Data indicates a rising proportion say they currently switch off/disable mobile data generally (42% from 34% in 2012) or switch off mobile data abroad (42% from 32% in 2012) with a further quarter (24% and 27% respectively) aware, but not currently using these options. Please note that a change in methodology between surveys means trend data may have been affected.

Despite an increasing proportion of participants who agree that ‘there is sufficient information on the cost of mobile data’ – half disagree and a majority (79%) say they ‘need more information on the cost of out of allowance calls’.

- There was a significant increase in agreement that ‘there is enough information on how much it costs to use data on mobiles up from 43% (net agreement) in 2012 to 50% in 2013. But almost half continue to disagree.
- Four-fifths (79%) of respondents agree with the statement ‘I need more information on the cost of calls outside of my allowance’.

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Overview of bill shock

Number of incidents of bill shock versus number of reasons for bill shock

The pattern of bill shock incidents is not significantly different to 2012 despite the addition of the new quota group for ‘sending messages not included in allowance’.

27% of respondents had experienced bill shock due to a single cause on a single bill, whereas 29% had experienced multiple causes on multiple bills.

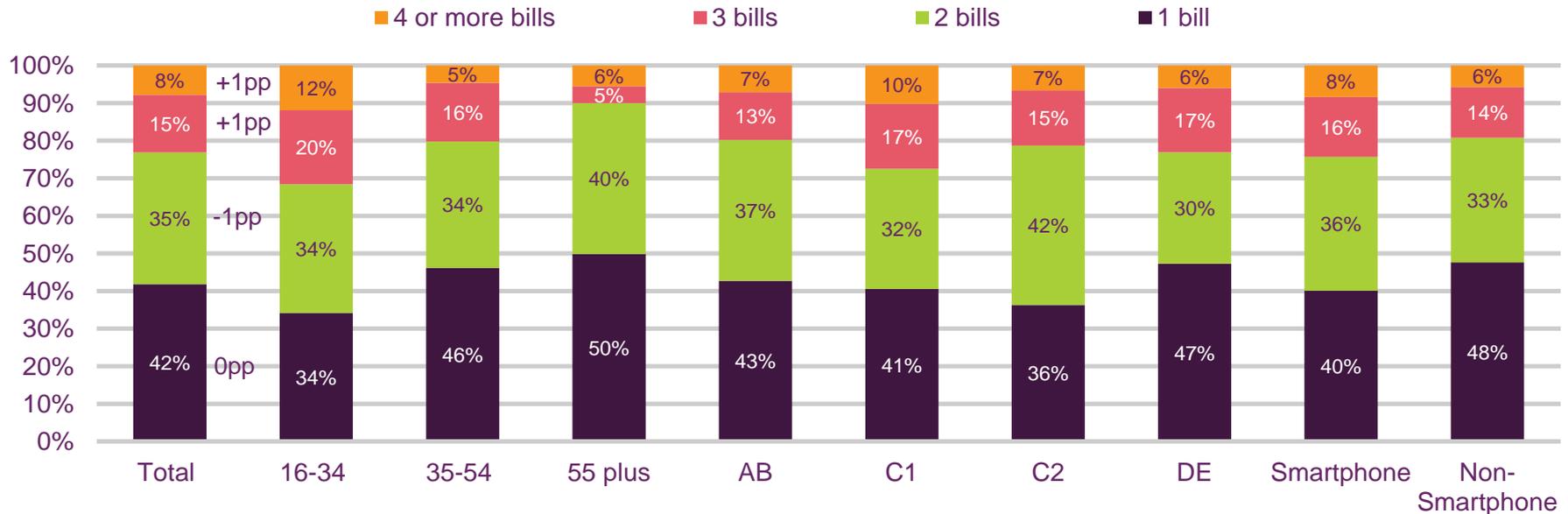
	Single bill 2013	Multiple bills 2013
Single quota group 2013	27%	29%
Multiple quota groups 2013	15%	29%

Weighted data. Q. In the last 12 months how many mobile bills have been higher than you expected? Base: All respondents excluding those who only answered in reference to a lost or stolen phone and those who said don't know for number of bills (932)

Overview of bill shock

Incidents of bill shock by demographics

Overall pattern of incidents remained consistent with the 2012 data with no significant changes for single versus multiple bills across any of the groups.



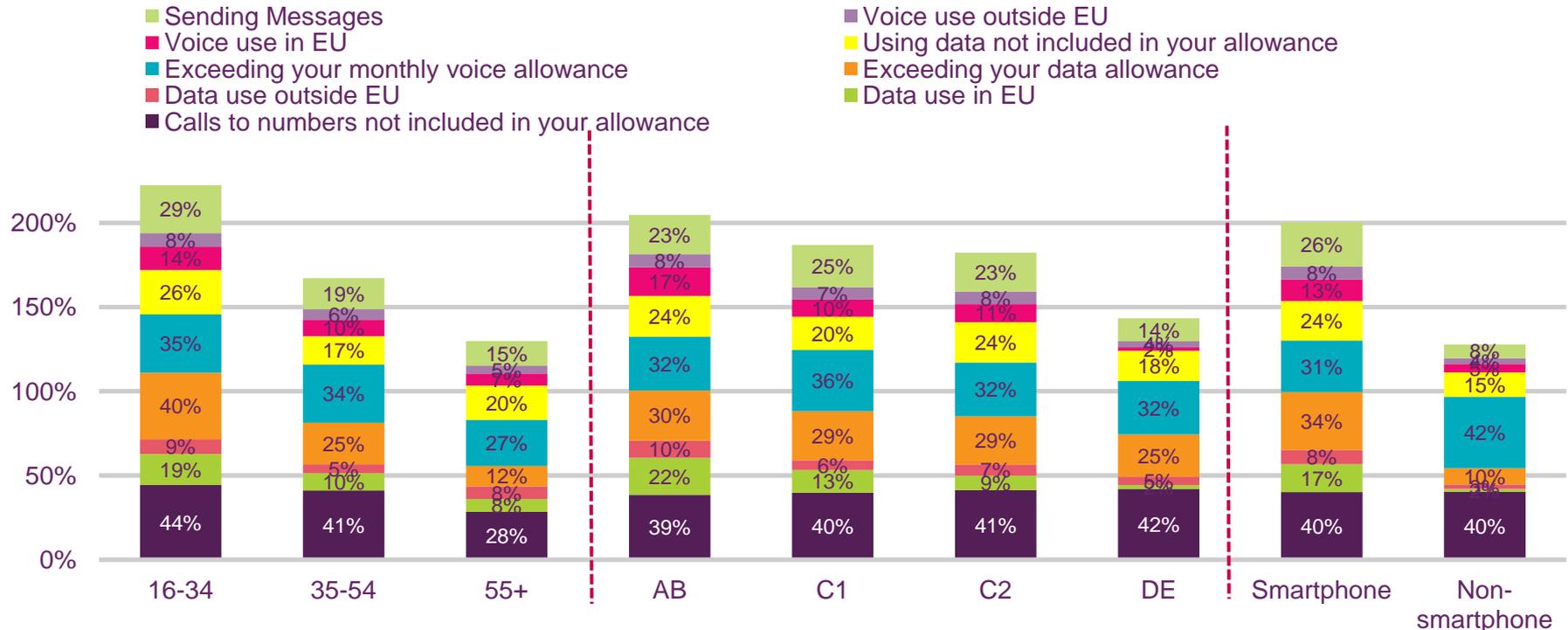
Weighted data. Q. In the last 12 months how many mobile bills have been higher than you expected? Base: All respondents excluding lost or stolen phone and don't know (932), 16-34 (387), 35-54 (377), 55 plus (168), AB (284), C1 (311), C2 (149), DE (182) Smartphone user (715), Non-smartphone user (217)

+/- # pp indicates the percentage point change from 2012 data

Overview of bill shock

Type of incident by demographic and phone type

Bill shock was generally higher amongst the younger age groups, AB socio-economic group, and Smartphone users.



Weighted data. Q3/4/7a/7b. You said that you'd received at least one unexpectedly high bill for your mobile phone in the past 12 months. What were the reasons your mobile phone bill was higher than you expected.... Base: All respondents excluding lost or stolen phone only and don't know (932), 16-34 (387), 35-54 (377), 55 plus (168), AB (284), C1 (311), C2 (149), DE (182) Smartphone user (715), Non-smartphone user (217)

Overview of bill shock

Average amount of bill shock by issue

The mean average amount of bill shock for issues caused solely by ‘voice’ remain broadly comparable to those noted in 2012 across most issues. The only issue type to see a significant rise was ‘lost/stolen mobile’ however, this increase is partly caused by a small number of cases with very high levels of bill shock. The median amount rose by £6.

	Calls to numbers not in allowance	Exceeding voice allowance	Using data without an allowance*	Exceeding data allowance*	Sending messages not included in allowance*	Total use abroad	Lost/ stolen mobile
Mean additional £'s due to bill shock - 2012	£19	£43	£15	£30	-	£60	£34
Median	£13	£30	£10	£15	-	£30	£20
Mean additional £'s due to bill shock - 2013	£17	£45	£21	£22	£16	£74	£65
Median	£12	£25	£15	£15	£15	£35	£26

Un-weighted data. Q11a&b How much more than usual was your bill? Base: Calls to numbers not in allowance (154, 2012 - 80*), Exceeding voice allowance (132, 2012 - 90*), Using data not included in your allowance (81*, 2012 - 59*), Exceeding data allowance (86*, 2012 - 107), Sending Messages (56*). Total use abroad (120, 2012 - 138), Lost/stolen mobile (166, 2012 - 103), ***Low base size, treat as indicative only**

Overview of bill shock

Net loss due to bill shock

Taking account of the amount of money people were reimbursed there were no significant changes in the net amount of loss due to bill shock. This data is based on people experiencing each of these issues in isolation and none of these shifts are statistically significant.

	Calls to numbers not in allowance	Exceeding voice allowance	Using data without an allowance*	Exceeding data allowance*	Sending messages not included in allowance*	Total use abroad	Lost/ stolen mobile
Mean Net loss due to bill shock - 2012	£13	£36	£12	£26	-	£49	£20
Mean Net loss due to bill shock - 2013	£13	£43	£14	£19	£13	£57	£27

Un-weighted data. NET score - Q11a&b How much more than usual was your bill? Q18a./b/c How much money received back from provider. Base: Calls to numbers not in allowance (154, 2012 - 80*), Exceeding voice allowance (132, 2012 - 90*), Using data not included in your allowance (81*, 2012 - 59*), Exceeding data allowance (86*, 2012 - 107), Total use abroad (120, 2012 - 138), Lost/stolen mobile (166, 2012 - 103*), Sending Messages (56*). ***Low base size, treat as indicative only**

Overview of bill shock

Net loss due to bill shock

Net loss was highest for incidents caused by use abroad (£57). Incidents involving lost and stolen phones featured the highest average level of reimbursement and so although average bill shock stood at £65, mean net loss was £27.

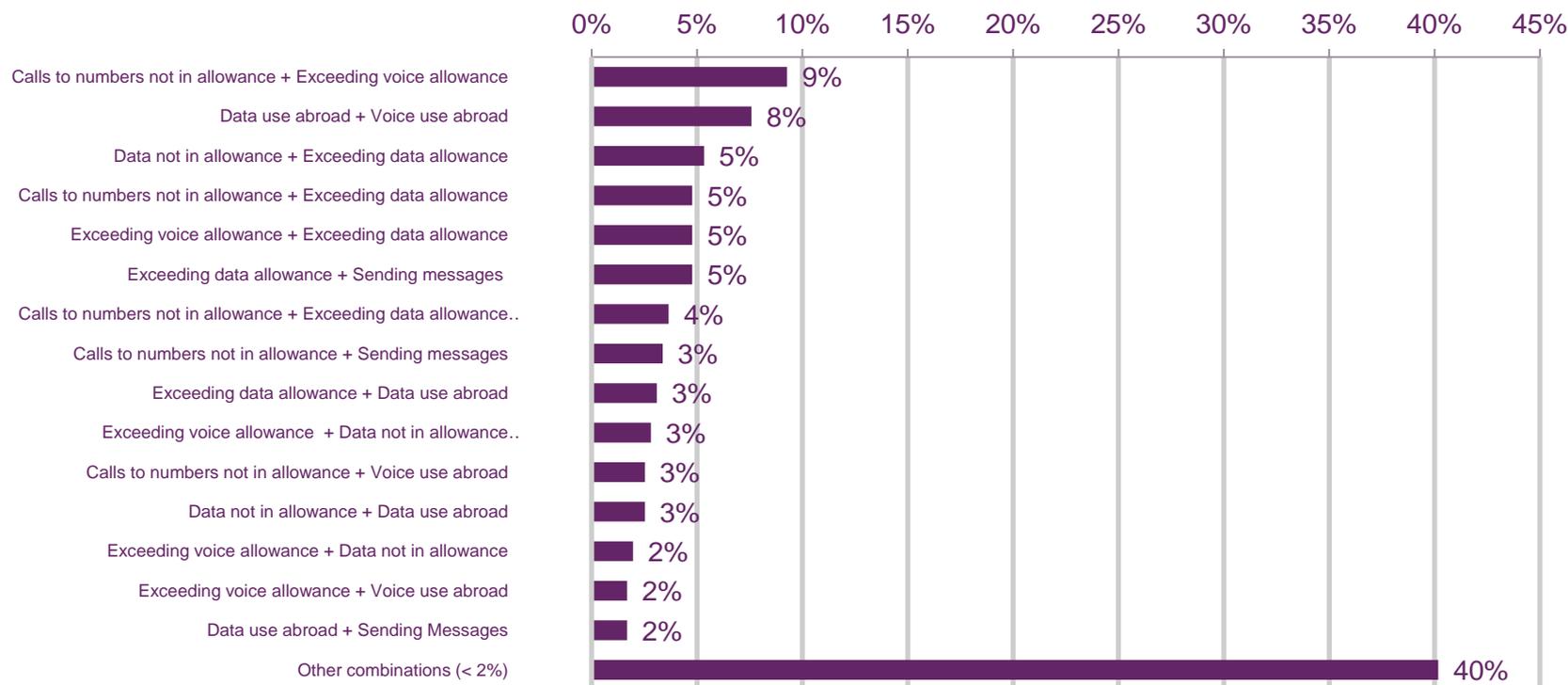
	Calls to numbers not in allowance	Exceeding voice allowance	Using data without an allowance*	Exceeding data allowance*	Sending messages not included in allowance*	Total use abroad	Lost/stolen mobile	Multiple incidents
Mean additional £'s due to bill shock	£17	£45	£21	£22	£16	£74	£65	£40
Mean £'s reimbursed	£4	£2	£6	£3	£3	£17	£38	£16
Mean Net loss due to bill shock	£13	£43	£14	£19	£13	£57	£27	£24

Un-weighted data. NET score - Q11a&b How much more than usual was your bill? Q18a/.b/c How much money received back from provider. Base: Calls to numbers not in allowance (154), Exceeding voice allowance (132) Using data not included in your allowance (81), Exceeding data allowance (86*), Total use abroad (120, 2012 - 138), Lost/stolen mobile (175), Sending Messages (56*), Multiple incidents (356). ***Low base size, treat as indicative only**

Multiple issues experienced on single bill

Combination of issues included on single bill

Various combinations of issues are included in the category of 'multiple issues'. Some of the most common being 'calls to numbers not in allowance and exceeding voice allowance' and 'data and voice use abroad'.

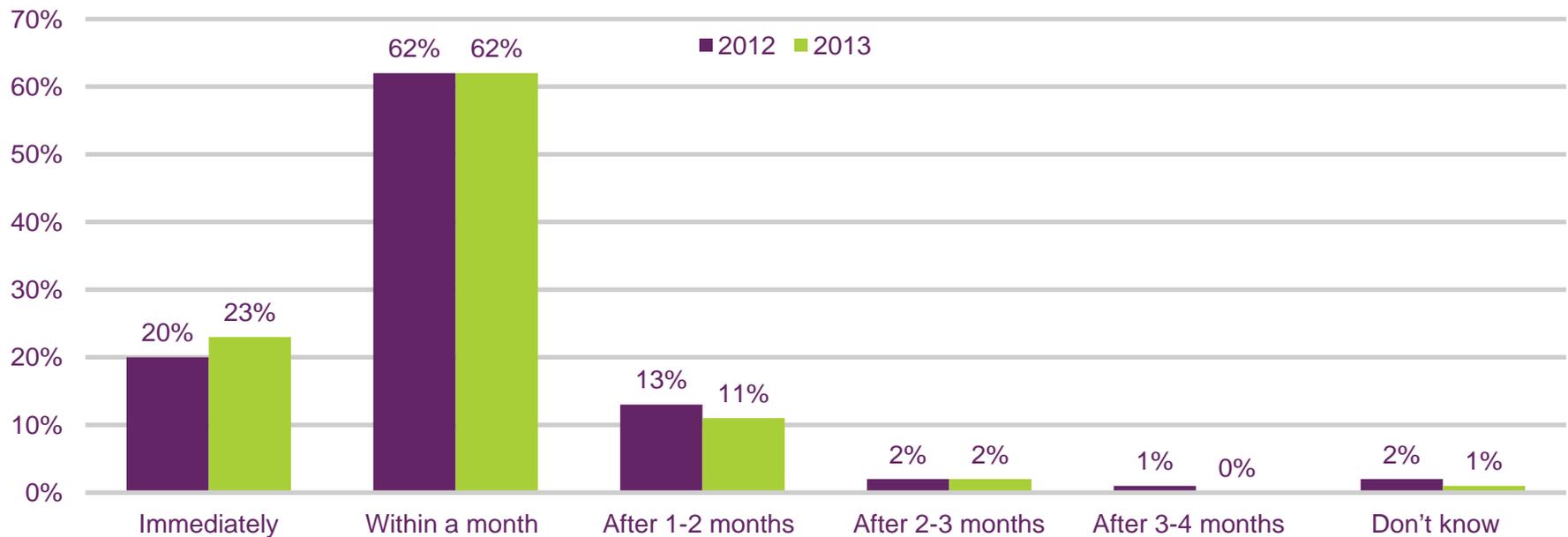


Un-weighted data. Based on 356 bills containing multiple issues. Some degree of confusion noted among respondents with regards data use among those in the multiple issues group, as it is not possible to incur charges for both 'data not included' and 'exceeding data allowance'

Overview of bill shock

When consumers found out about the charges

In line with the 2012 findings, bill shock is usually discovered quickly with 85% of incidents being discovered at least within a month with almost a quarter (23%) discovered 'immediately'.



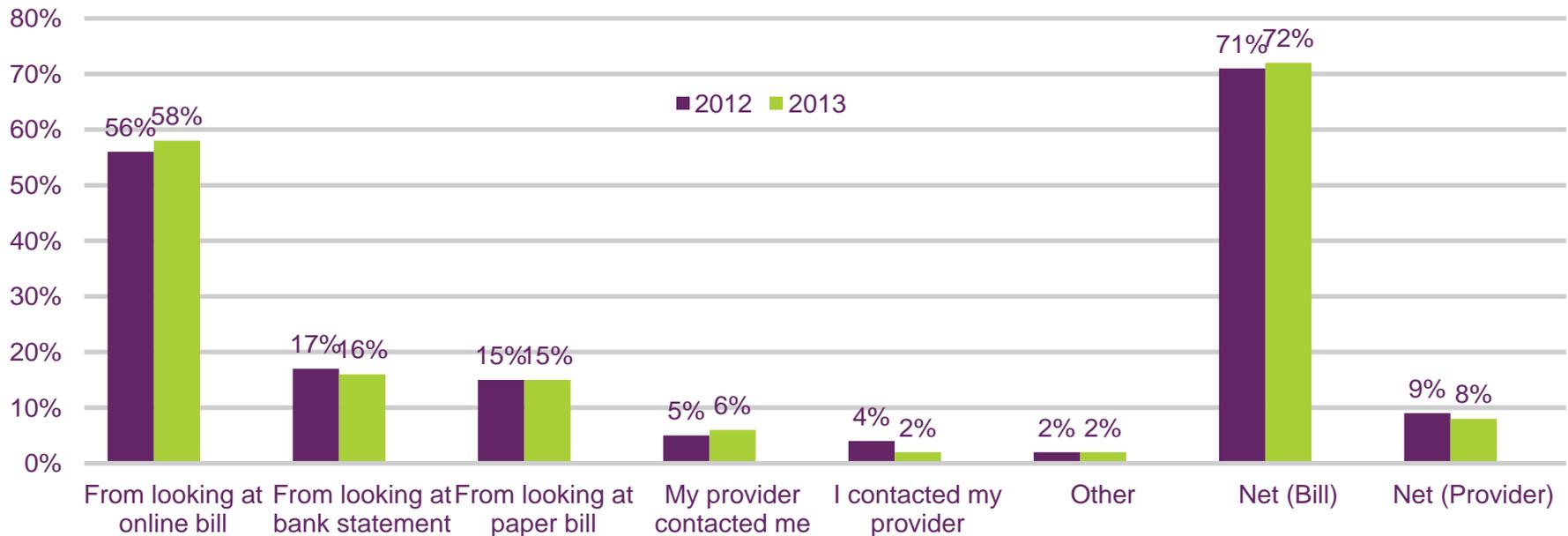
Weighted data. Q13. How soon after the unexpected charges had been added to your bill did you find out about them? Base: All incidents of bill shock excluding those who only said lost / stolen phone (994, 2012 - 673)

Overview of bill shock

How consumers initially found out about the charges

The majority of consumers first found out about their charges from looking at their bill (72%). In line with figures from 2012, a small proportion in comparison first found out about the charges from their provider (8% in 2013, 9% in 2012, no significant difference) with 6% saying their provider contacted them. 1

6% of consumers first found out about their charges by looking at their bank statement.

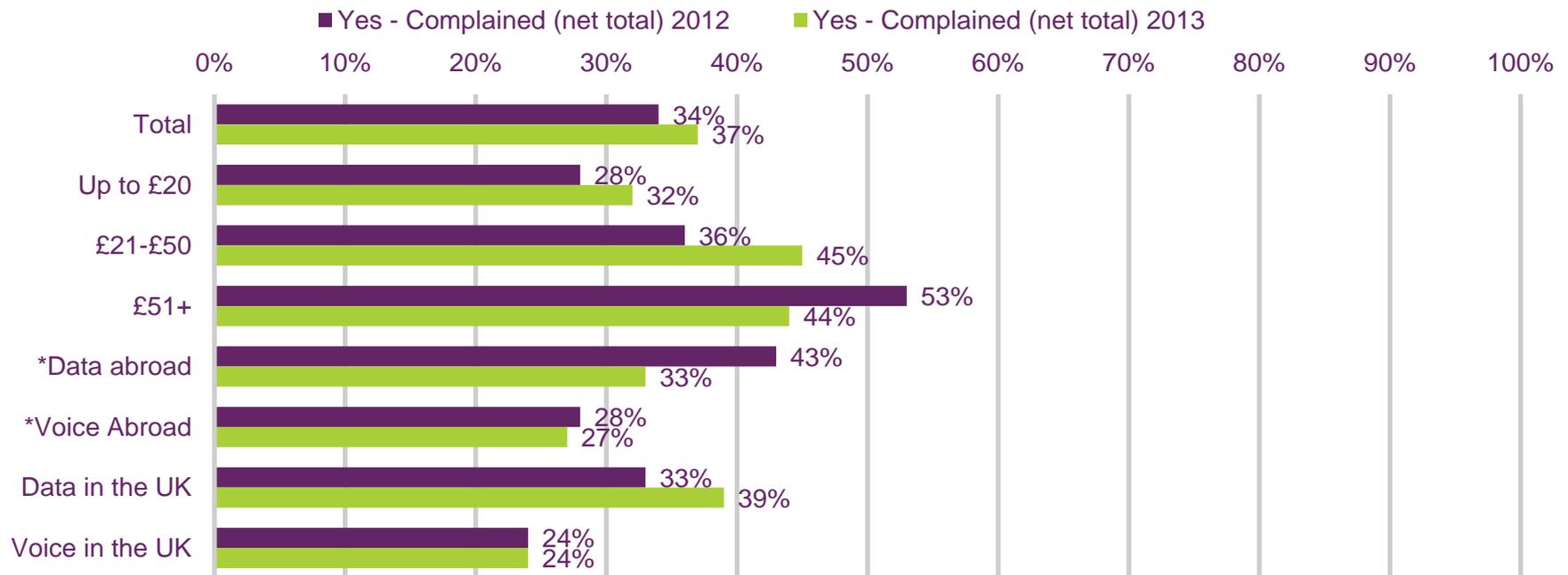


Weighted data. Q12. How did you initially find out you had been charged more than you expected? Base: All incidents of bill shock excluding those who only said lost / stolen phone (994, 2012 - 673)

Overview of bill shock

Complaints versus amount (£) of bill shock

Just over a third (37%) of people who experienced bill shock said they made a complaint, broadly comparable to the proportion in 2012. However there is a significant increase in complaints made when the amount of bill shock is £21-50.

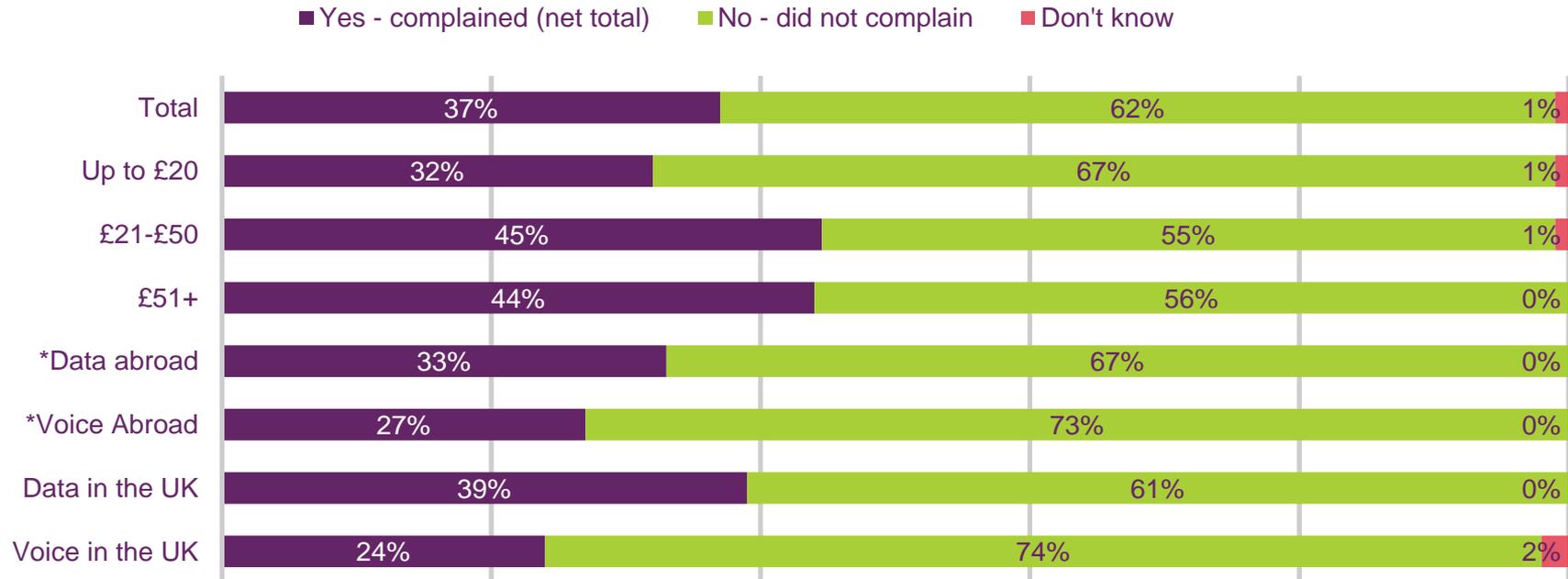


Weighted data. Q15a. Did you make an official complaint as a result of the unexpected charges? Base: All 'incident' of bill shock excluding those who only said lost / stolen phone (994, 2012 - 673), Bill of up to £20 (542, 2012 - 350), bill between £21-£50 (299, 2012 - 214), bill £51+ (136, 2012 - 120); bill shock from a single cause (609, 504 2012) due to: data abroad (59*, 2012 - 81*), Voice abroad (53*, 2012 - 59*), Data in the UK (169, 2012 171), Voice in the UK (328 , 2012 193) ***Low base size, treat as indicative only**

Overview of bill shock

Complaints versus amount (£) of bill shock

As reported in 2012 complaints were made significantly more often if the bill shock was greater than £20. Complaints were also significantly more likely for data rather than voice based issues in the UK. A similar pattern was seen abroad, although data is only indicative due to the low base sizes of these groups.



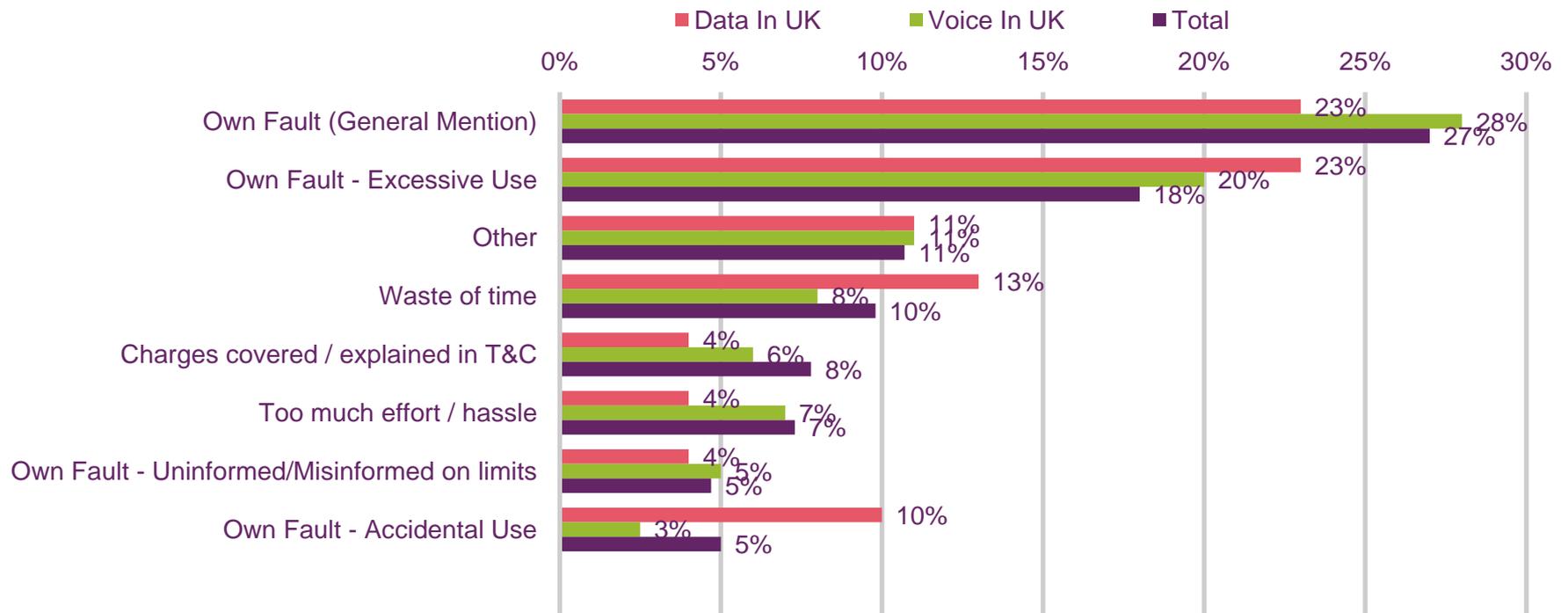
Weighted data. Q15a. Did you make an official complaint as a result of the unexpected charges? Base: All 'incidents' of bill shock excluding those who only said lost / stolen phone (994); Incidents where value of bill known (978) - Bill of up to £20 (542), bill between £21-£50 (299), bill £51+ (137); Bill shock from a single cause (609) - due to: data abroad (59*), Voice abroad (53*), Data in the UK (169), Voice in the UK (328)

***Low base size, treat as indicative only**

Overview of bill shock

Reasons for not making complaint

Reasons cited for not making a complaint were broadly similar to those mentioned in 2012. Most said they felt it was their fault (Net for 'own fault' 55%, 54% in 2012). Those who received bill shock for data in the UK were significantly more likely to say they didn't complain because it was their fault, although their use was accidental.

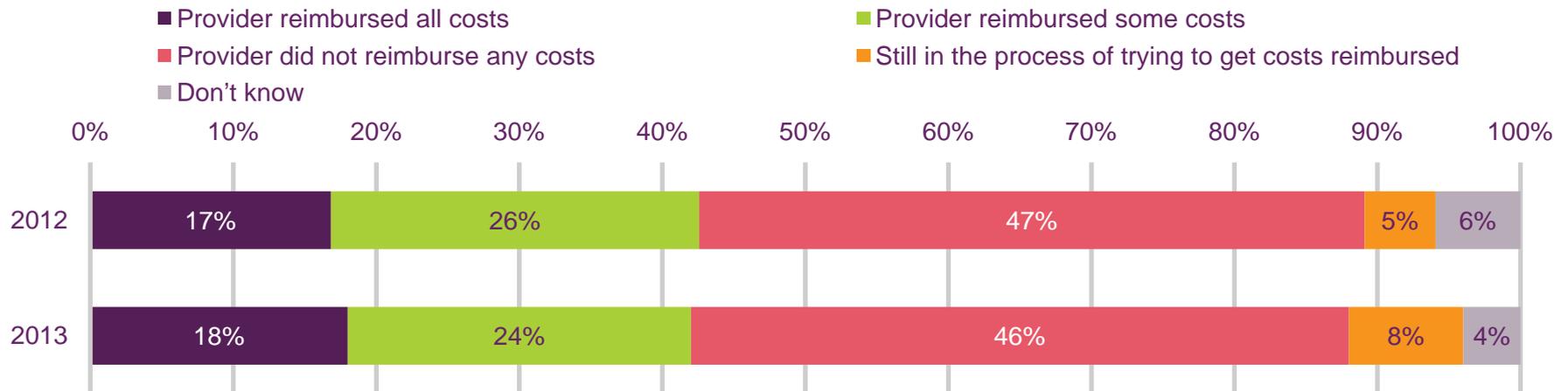


Weighted data. Q15b. Why did you not make a complaint? Responses 5% or greater. Base: All incidents of bill shock excluding those who said lost / stolen and those who did make an official complaint (612) and those solely caused by Data use in the UK (103) or Voice use in the UK (243).

Overview of bill shock

Whether reimbursed

There was no change in the proportion of cases receiving some reimbursement. In almost half of the incidents of bill shock (46%) where a consumer spoke to a provider, the provider did not reimburse any costs. In around one fifth of incidents (18%) consumers were fully reimbursed and a further 24% said they received some money back from their provider.



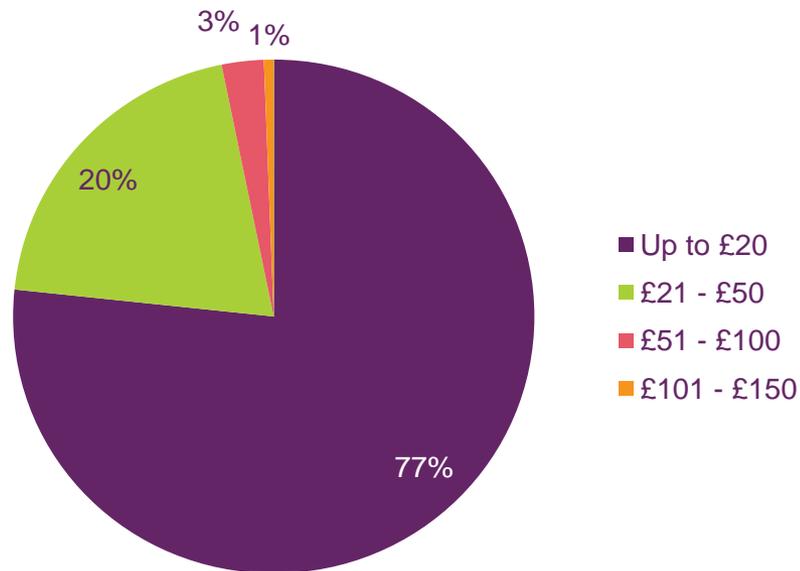
Weighted data. Q18a. Which of the following best describes whether you received any money back from your provider? All incidents of bill shock where a consumer made a complaint or spoke to a provider, excluding those who said lost or stolen (640, 2012 – 383)

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Calls to numbers not included in allowance

Amount of bill shock



Mean score = £17 (£19 2012)

- The average additional amount added to bills uniquely attributed to calls to numbers not included in allowances was £17.
- In the majority of cases the additional amount was less than £20 in value (77% of incidents, 72% in 2012)
- The pattern of additional costs was similar to that seen for this quota group in 2012

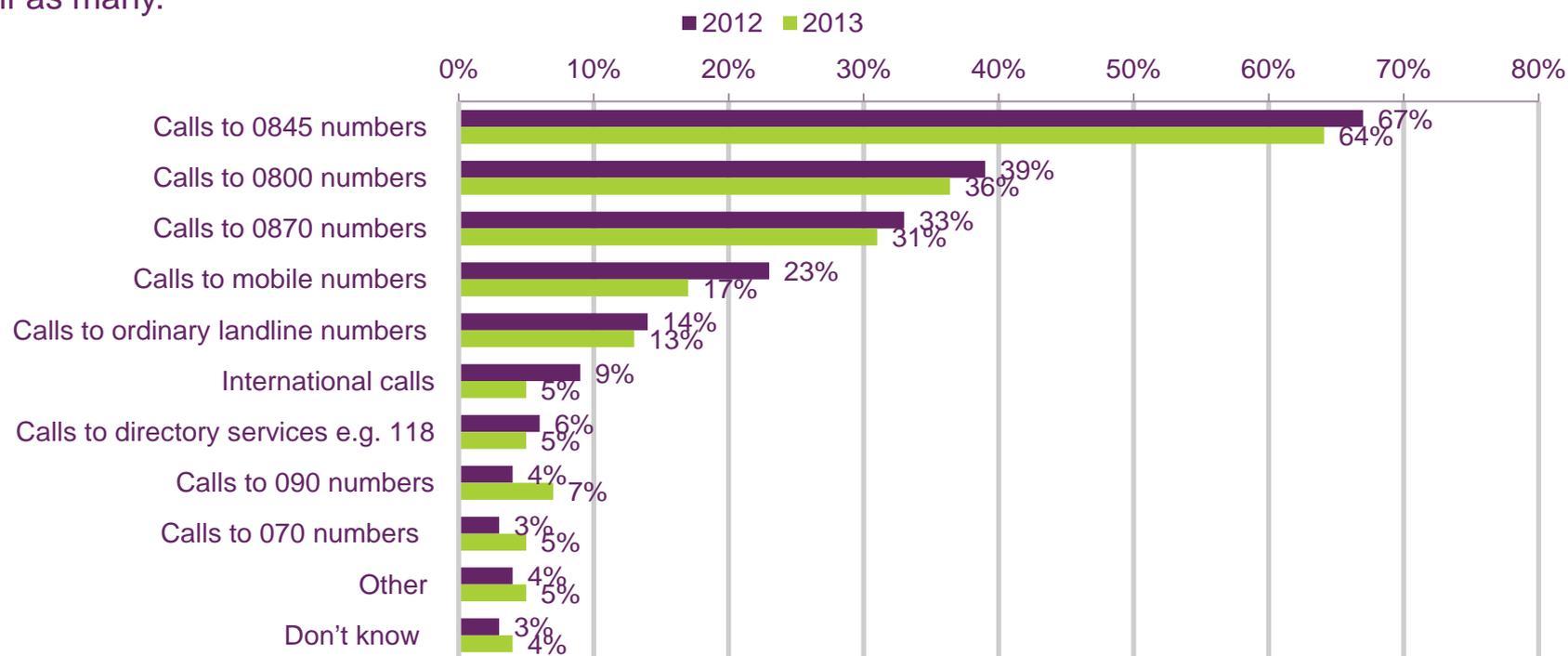
Un-weighted data. Q11a&b Combined. How much more than usual was your bill? Base: All incidents of bill shock as a result solely of calls to numbers not included in allowance (154, 2012 – 80*), excluding don't know ***Low base size, treat as indicative only**

Calls to numbers not included in allowance



Types of voice calls resulting in bill shock

As in 2012, Calls to 0845 numbers (64%) were the main causes of bill shock due to numbers not included in allowance with calls to 0800 numbers (36%), and 0870 numbers (31%) being mentioned by half as many.



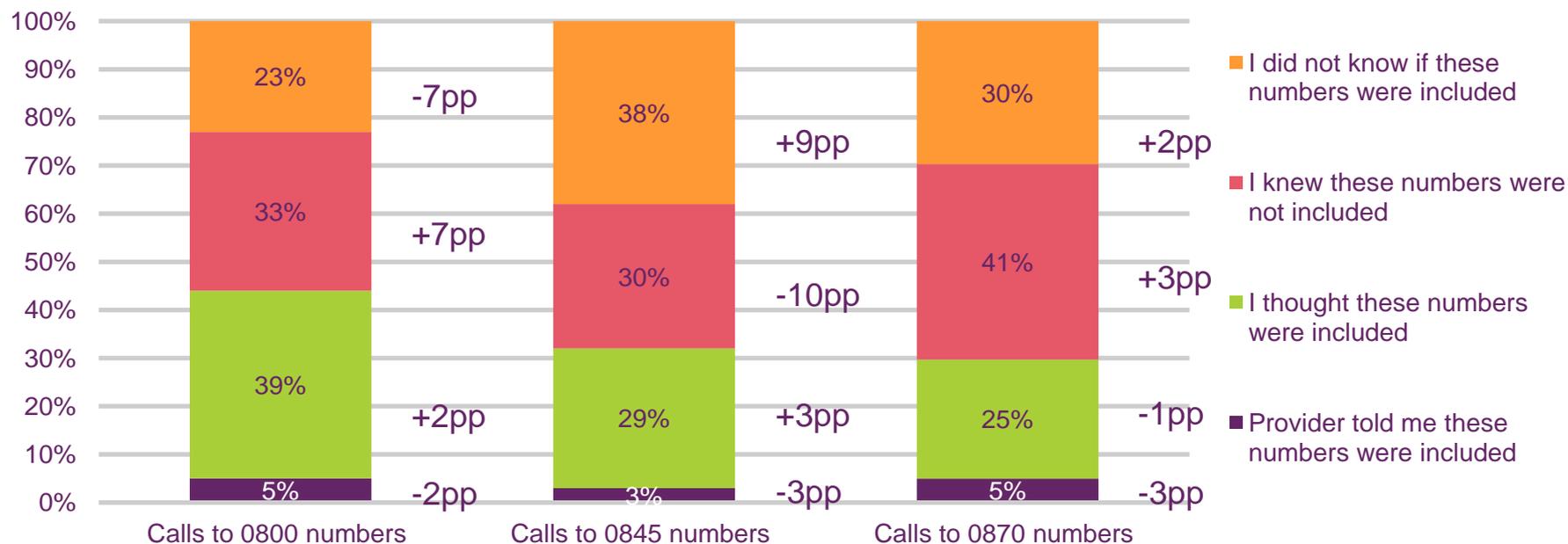
Un-weighted data. Q20. What types of voice calls caused you to receive the unexpectedly high bill? Base: Respondents who received an unexpectedly high mobile phone bill as a result of calls to numbers not included in their allowance (206, 2012 – 119)

Calls to numbers not included in allowance



Awareness of whether calls were included in allowance

The proportions who thought that numbers were included in their allowance were similar to those seen in 2012. Differences noted below are not statistically significant.

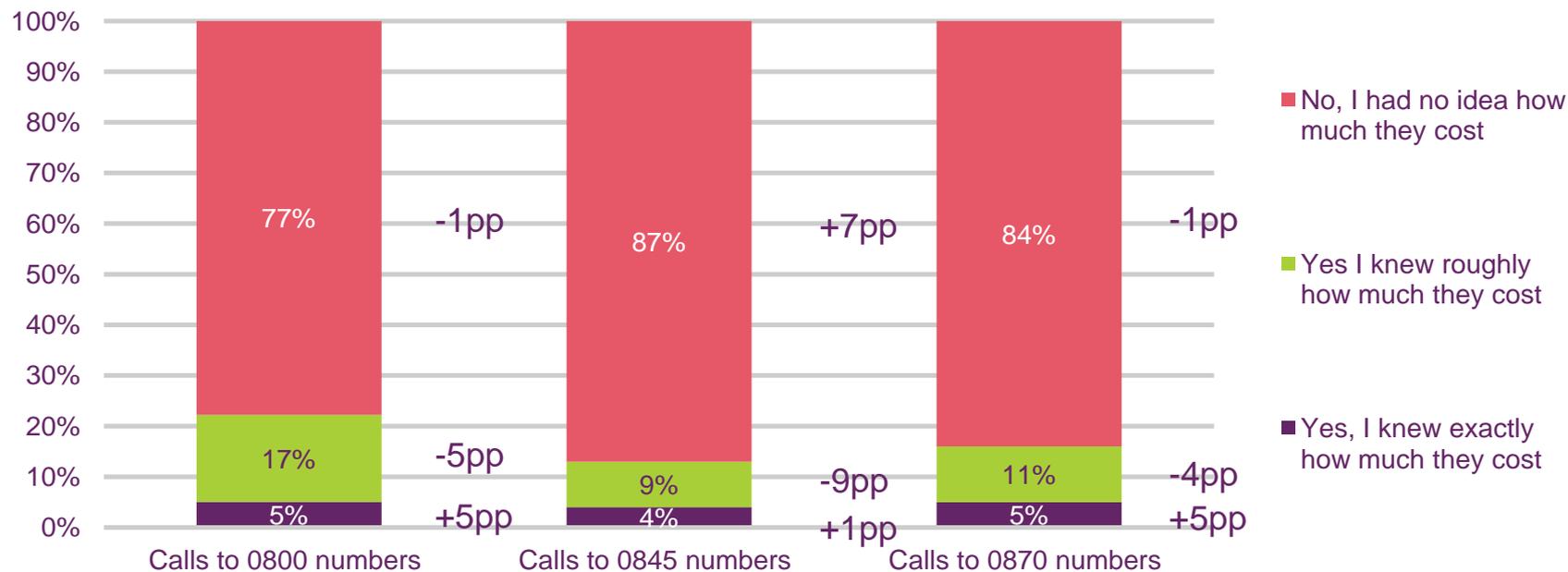


Un-weighted data. Q22. Which of the following best describes your awareness of whether these calls were included in your call allowance before you received the unexpectedly high mobile phone bill? Base: All those who received an unexpectedly high mobile phone bill as a result of: Calls to 0800 numbers (75*, 2012 46*), Calls to 0845 numbers (132, 2012 – 80*), Calls to 0870 numbers (64*, 2012 – 39*) ***Low base size, treat as indicative only** +/- # pp indicates the percentage point change from 2012 data

Calls to numbers not included in allowance

Awareness of the costs of calls

In line with 2012, the vast majority of respondents who received an unexpectedly high bill as a result of calls to 0800, 0845 or 0870 numbers previously had no idea about the cost of the calls.



Un-weighted data. Q23. Were you aware of how much it costs to call these numbers from your mobile?

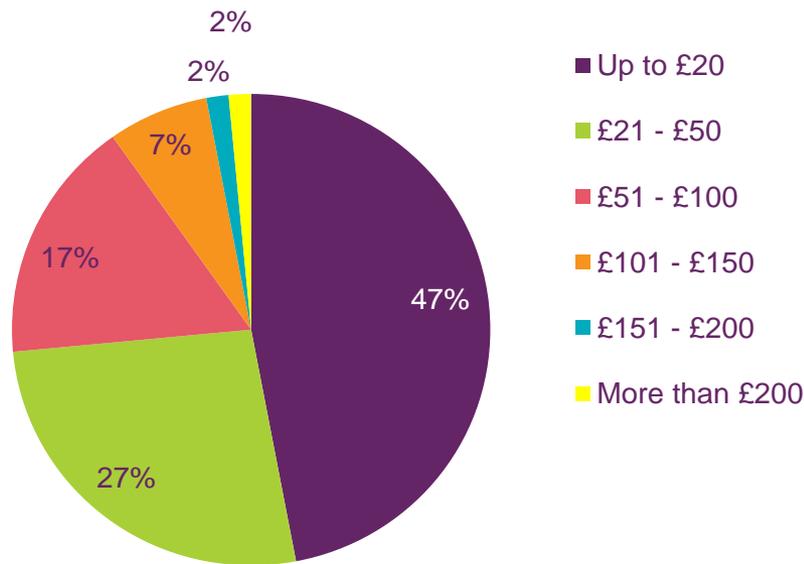
Base: All those who received an unexpectedly high mobile phone bill as a result of: Calls to 0800 numbers (75*, 2012 46*), Calls to 0845 numbers (132, 2012 – 80*), Calls to 0870 numbers (64*, 2012 – 39*) *Low base size, treat as indicative only +/- # pp indicates the percentage point change from 2012 data

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Exceeding monthly voice allowance

Amount of bill shock



Mean score = £45 (£43 in 2012)

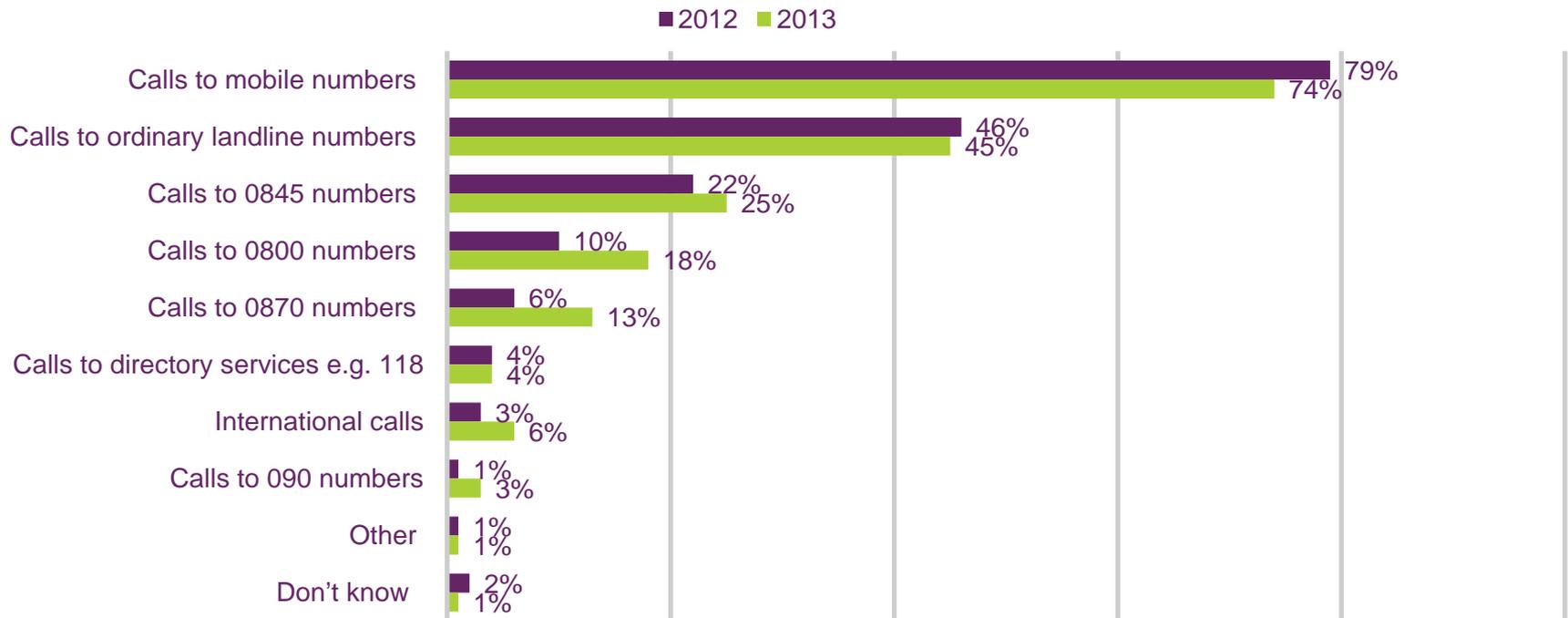
- The average additional amount added to bills solely due to exceeding monthly voice allowance was £45.
- In almost half of incidents (47%) additional costs were £20 or less, however in a quarter of incidents (27%) the additional amount was between £21 and £50.
- In one in 10 incidents the additional cost was over £100.

Un-weighted data. Q11a&b Combined. How much more than usual was your bill? Base: All incidents of bill shock as a result solely of exceeding monthly voice allowance (132, 2012 – 90*), excluding don't know ***Low base size, treat as indicative only**

Exceeding monthly voice allowance

Types of voice calls resulting in bill shock

Most bill shock as a result of exceeding the monthly voice allowance results from calls to mobile numbers (74%) or to ordinary landline numbers (45%). However the proportion due to 0800 numbers, 0870 numbers and international calls are significantly higher than in 2012. This may be linked to an apparent lack of awareness around which numbers are included in call allowances.

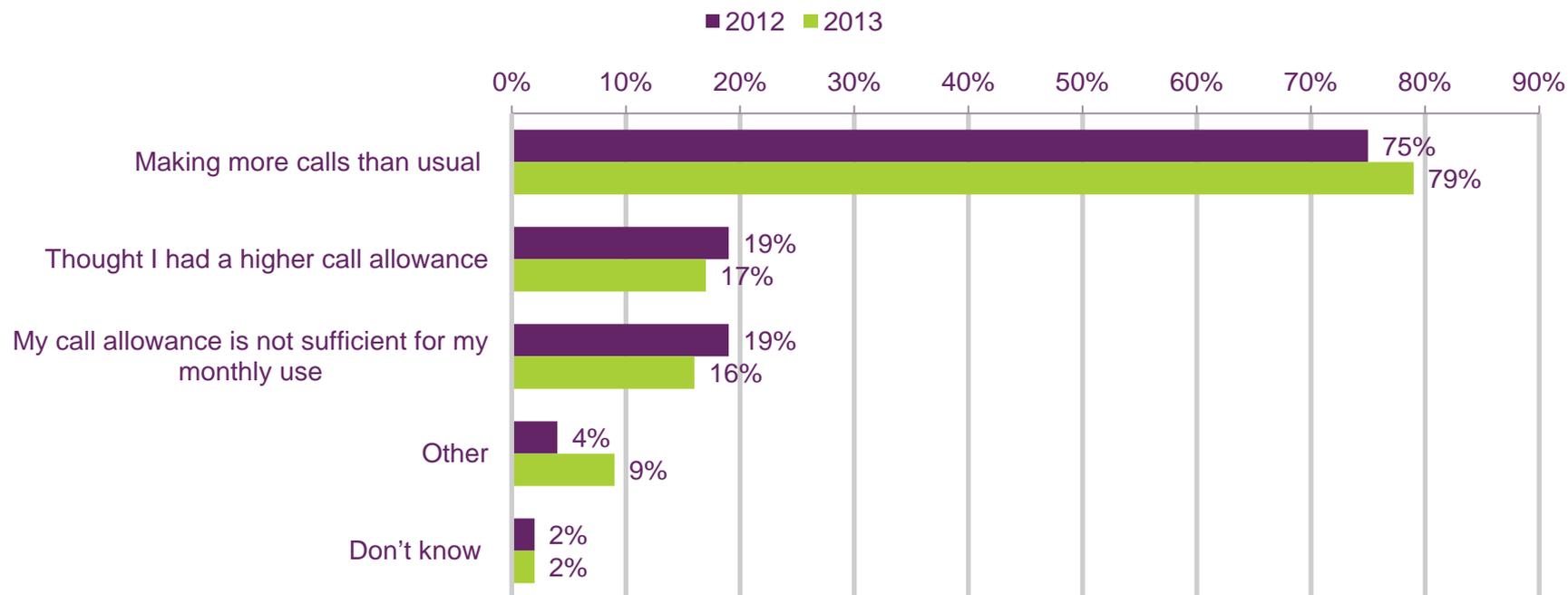


Un-weighted data. Q26a. What types of calls made you reach/exceed your voice allowance? Base: Respondents who received an unexpectedly high mobile phone bill as a result of exceeding their monthly voice allowance (214, 2012 – 126)

Exceeding monthly voice allowance

Reasons for reaching/exceeding allowance

The pattern of causes is similar to last year with over three quarters (79%) of respondents stating that they received the unexpectedly high bill because they made more calls than usual. Just under a fifth (17%) said they 'thought they had a higher call allowance' and 16% said that their 'call allowance is insufficient'.

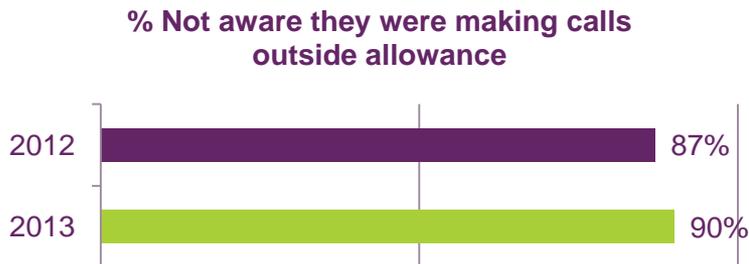


Un-weighted data. Q25. What caused you to reach/exceed your voice allowance? Base: Respondents who received an unexpectedly high mobile phone bill as a result of exceeding their monthly voice allowance (214, 2012 – 126)

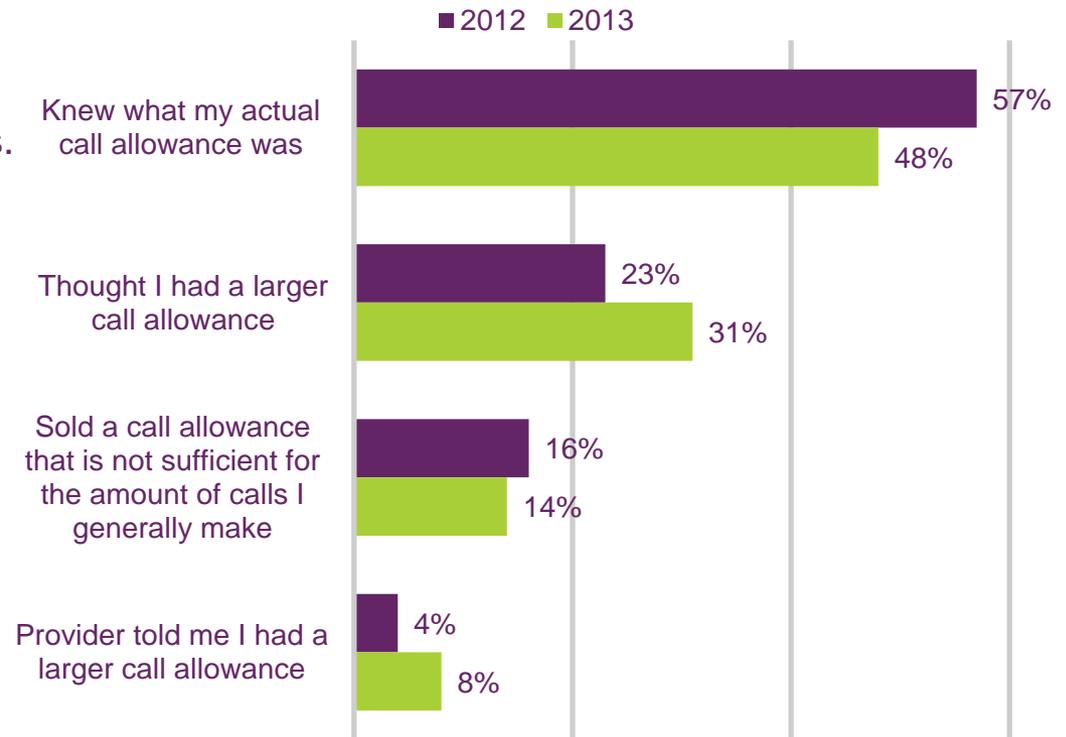
Exceeding monthly voice allowance

Awareness of voice allowance

- Almost half (48%) claimed to know what their allowance was and just under a third (31%) said they thought their allowance was larger than it was.
- The vast majority (90%) were unaware they were making calls outside of their allocated call allowance. No change since 2012.



Awareness of call allowance prior to bill shock

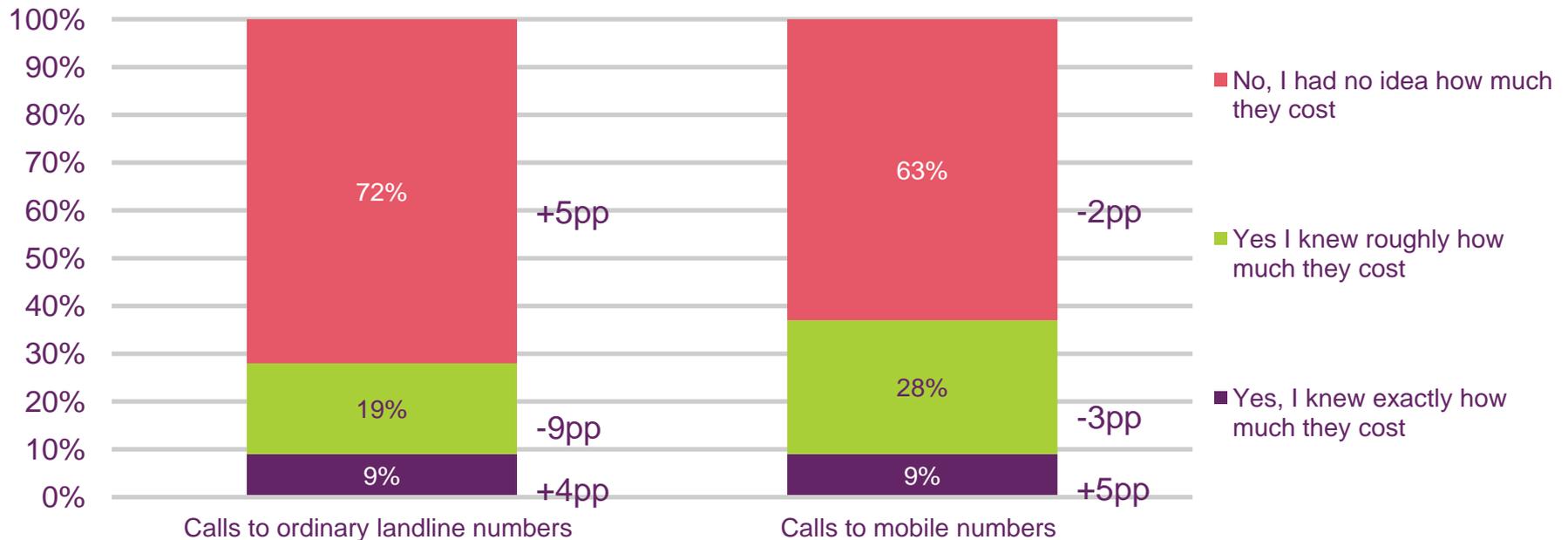


Un-weighted data. Q27. Were you aware that you had reached/exceeded your voice allowance before you made these additional voice calls? Q28. Which of the following best describes your awareness of your call allowance before you received the unexpectedly high mobile phone bill? Base: Respondents who received an unexpectedly high mobile phone bill as a result of exceeding their monthly voice allowance 2012 (126), 2013 (214)

Exceeding monthly voice allowance

Awareness of the costs of calls

There remains a lack of awareness, amongst those who experienced this type of bill shock, of the costs of making calls outside of their call allowance. The majority said that they had no idea how much calls to landlines (72%) and/or mobiles (63%) cost outside of their voice bundle.



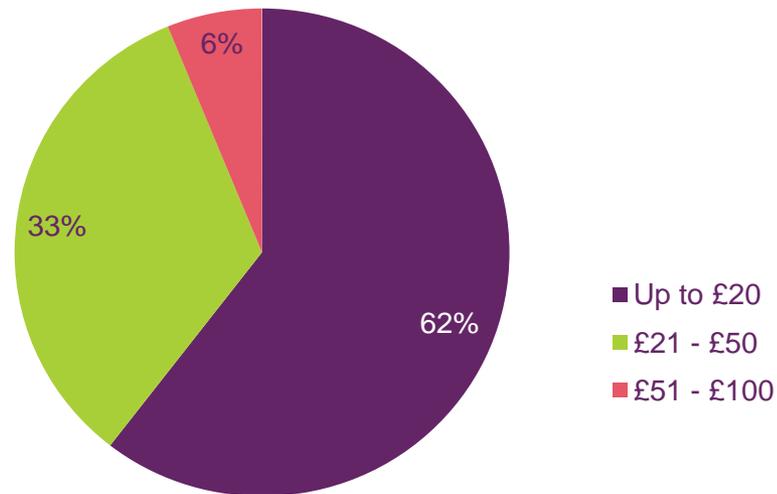
Un-weighted data. Q29. Were you aware of the costs of making these calls once you have used your call allowance? Base: Respondents who received an unexpectedly high mobile phone bill as a result of exceeding their monthly voice allowance for calls to landline numbers (97*, 2012 – 58*) and calls to mobile numbers (159, 2012 – 99*) ***Low base size, treat as indicative only** +/- # pp indicates the percentage point change from 2012 data

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Using data without a data allowance

Amount of bill shock



- The average additional amount added to bills due solely to using data without an allowance was £21.
- There was a drop in the proportion stating additional bill shock of up to £20 (61% vs. 78% in 2012), with higher proportions involving bills of £21-50 (33%, 19% in 2012) or £51+ (6%, 3% in 2012).

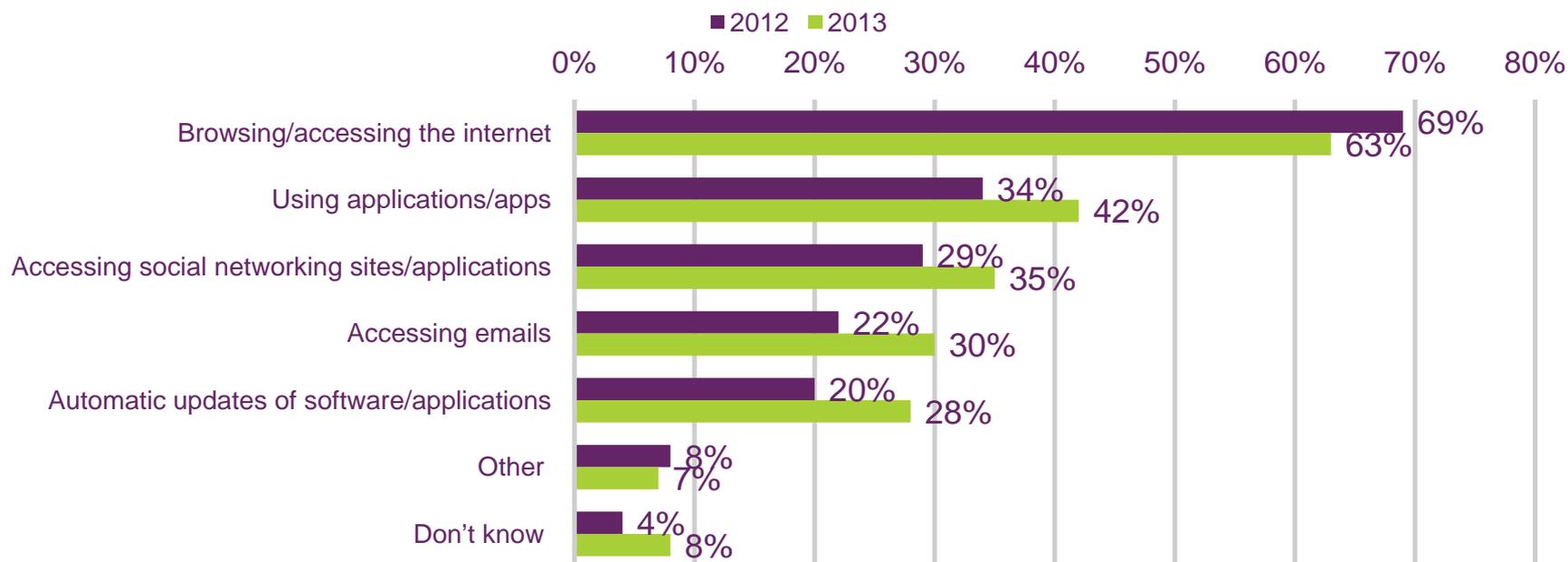
Mean score = £21 (£15 in 2012)

Un-weighted data. Q11a&b Combined. How much more than usual was your bill? Base: All incidents of bill shock as a result solely of using data without an allowance (81*, 2012 – 59*), excluding don't know ***Low base size, treat as indicative only**

Using data without a data allowance

Activities resulting in extra charges

Causes of bill shock remain broadly comparable with those reported in 2012 (changes are not statistically significant). Browsing or accessing the internet (63%) remained the most common activity resulting in unexpected charges for data amongst those without an allowance.

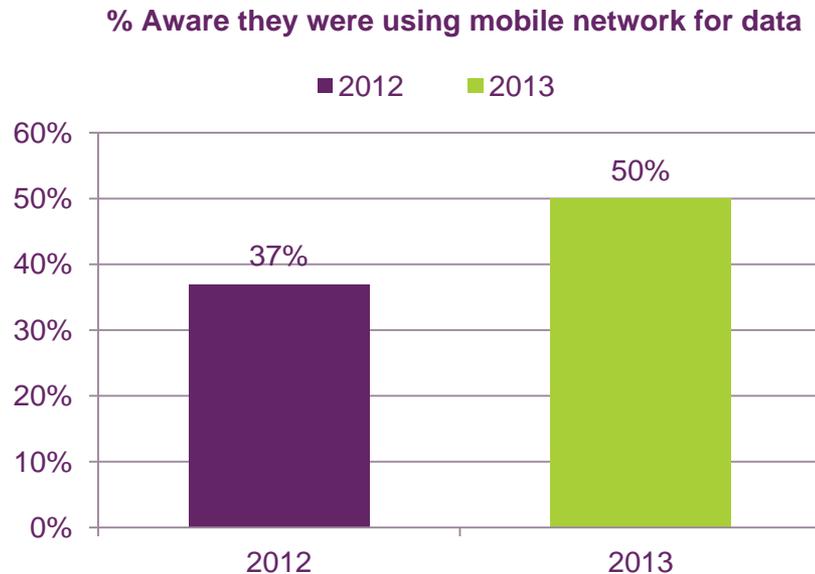


Un-weighted data. Q31. Which of the following activities resulted in you being charged unexpectedly for data? Base: Respondents who received an unexpectedly high bill as a result of using data without an allowance (201, 2012 - 112)

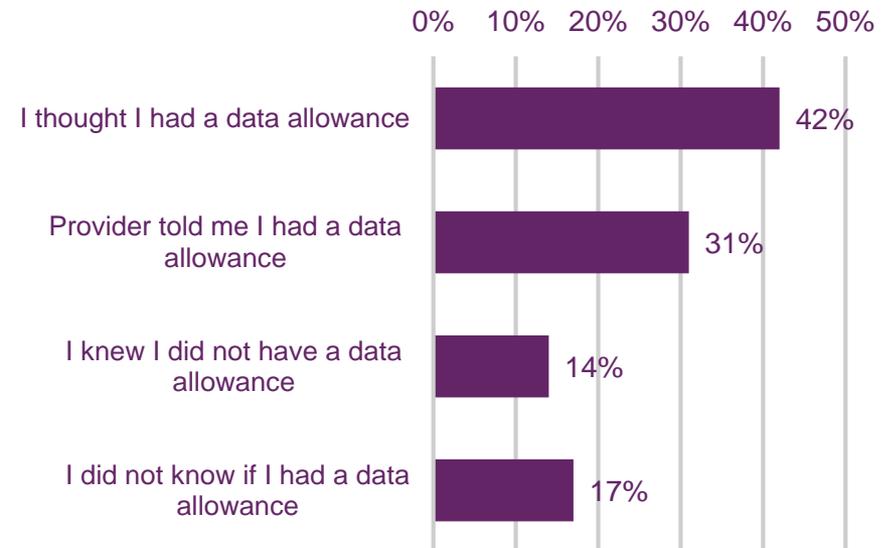
Using data without a data allowance

Awareness of data allowance

- Despite a significant rise in the proportion of respondents aware they were using data via the mobile network, half still claimed not to be aware.



Awareness of call allowance prior to shock



- In total 71% (net) thought they had a data allowance – this includes 31% who said their provider had told them data was included in their allowance.

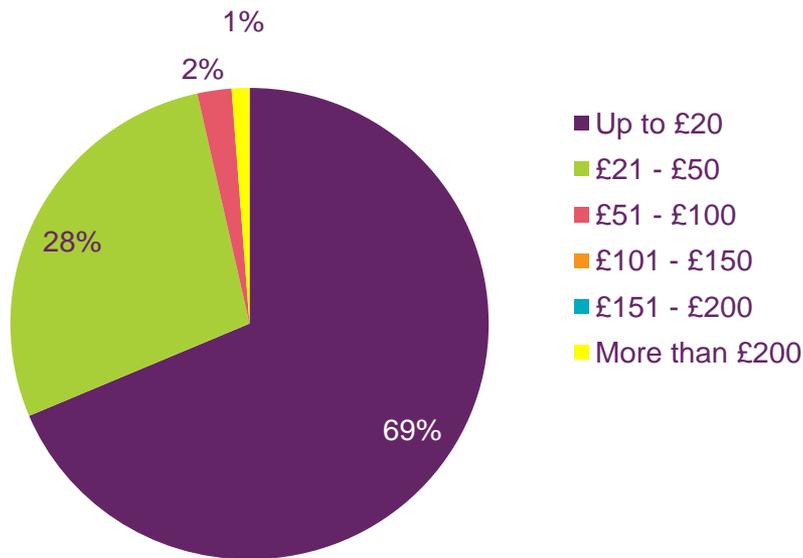
Un-weighted data. Q33. Were you aware that you were using the mobile network to access data? Base: Respondents who received an unexpectedly high bill as a result of using data without an allowance (201, 2012 - 112) Q34. Which of the following best describes your awareness of whether you had a data allowance before your unexpectedly high bill? Base: Respondents who received an unexpectedly high bill as a result of using data without an allowance 2013 (201)

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Exceeding data allowance

Amount of bill shock



Mean score = £22 (£30 in 2012)

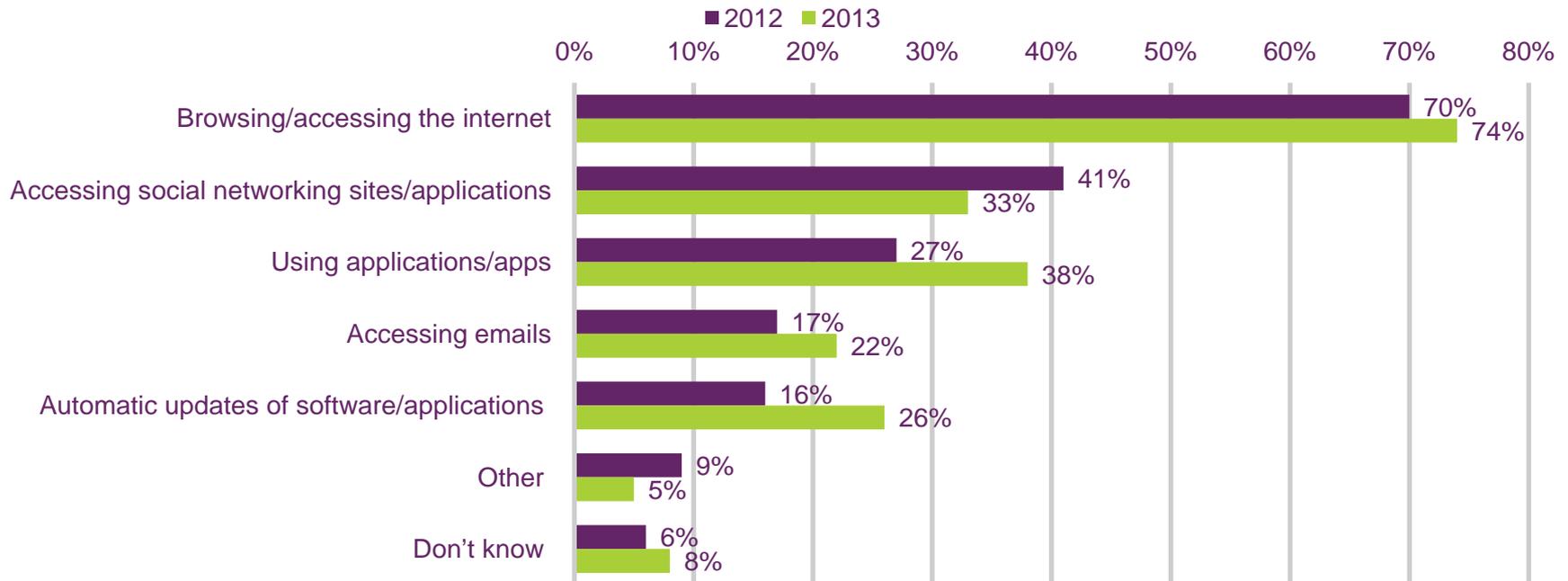
- The average additional amount added to bills due to solely exceeding data allowances was £22.
- In the majority of cases (69%) unexpectedly high bills of up to £20 more than expected.
- In almost a third of cases (28%) bills were between £21 and £50 more than expected, and in 3% of cases bills were £51 or over

Un-weighted data. Q11a&b Combined. How much more than usual was your bill? Base: All incidents of bill shock as a result solely of exceeding data allowance (86*, 2012 107), excluding don't know ***Low base size, treat as indicative only**

Exceeding data allowance

Reasons for reaching and exceeding data allowance

Browsing the internet (74%) remains the main reason for reaching and exceeding data allowances. Use of apps now being mentioned by comparable proportions as mentioning social networking sites.

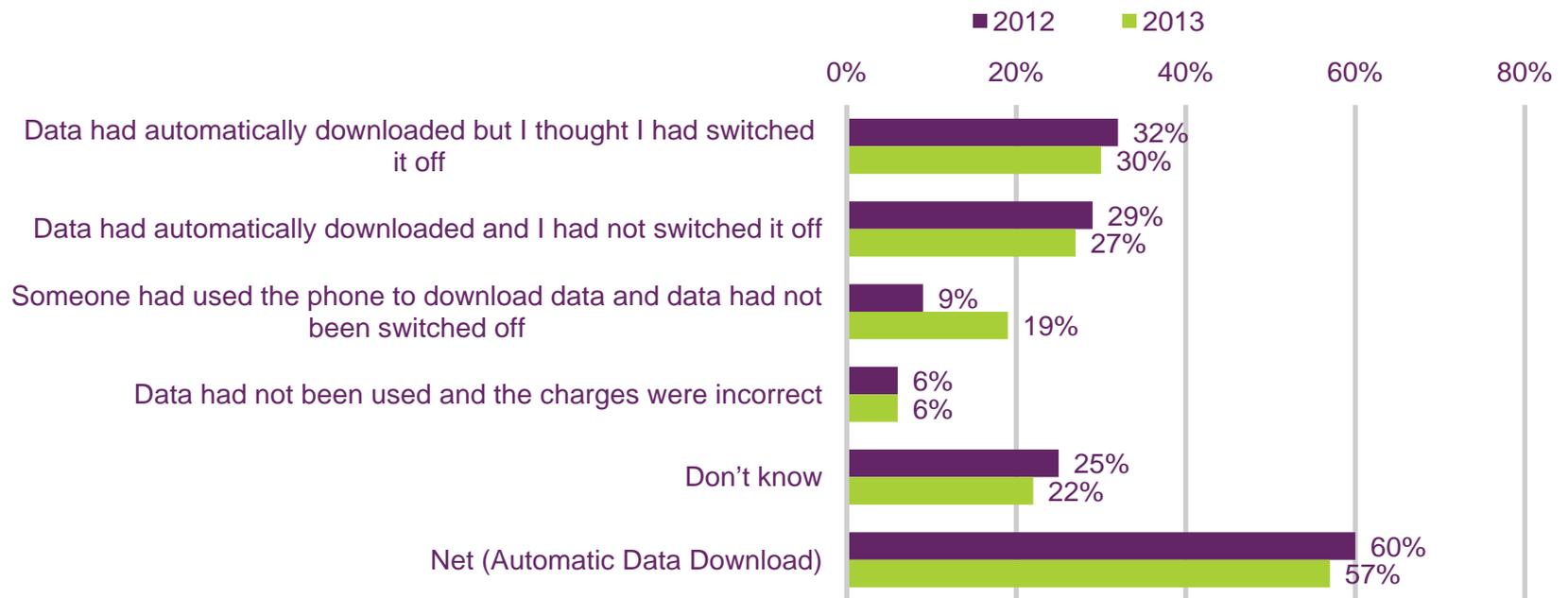


Un-weighted data. Q37. What caused you to reach/exceed your data allowance? Base: Respondents who received an unexpectedly high bill as a result of exceeding data allowance (109, 2012 - 126)

Exceeding data allowance

How data allowance was reached/exceeded

- Similarly to 2012, the majority (57%) of respondents said they incurred the additional charges because data had automatically downloaded. Three in ten (30%) said they thought they had switched this function off and 27% said they hadn't.
- There was a significant increase in reports of 'data not being switched off' by 10 percentage points



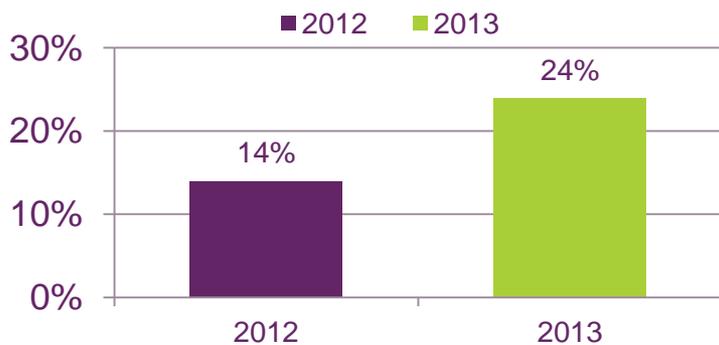
Un-weighted data. Q38. Which of the following best describes how you reached/exceeded your data allowance? Base: Respondents who received an unexpectedly high bill as a result of exceeding data allowance (109, 2012 – 126)

Exceeding data allowance

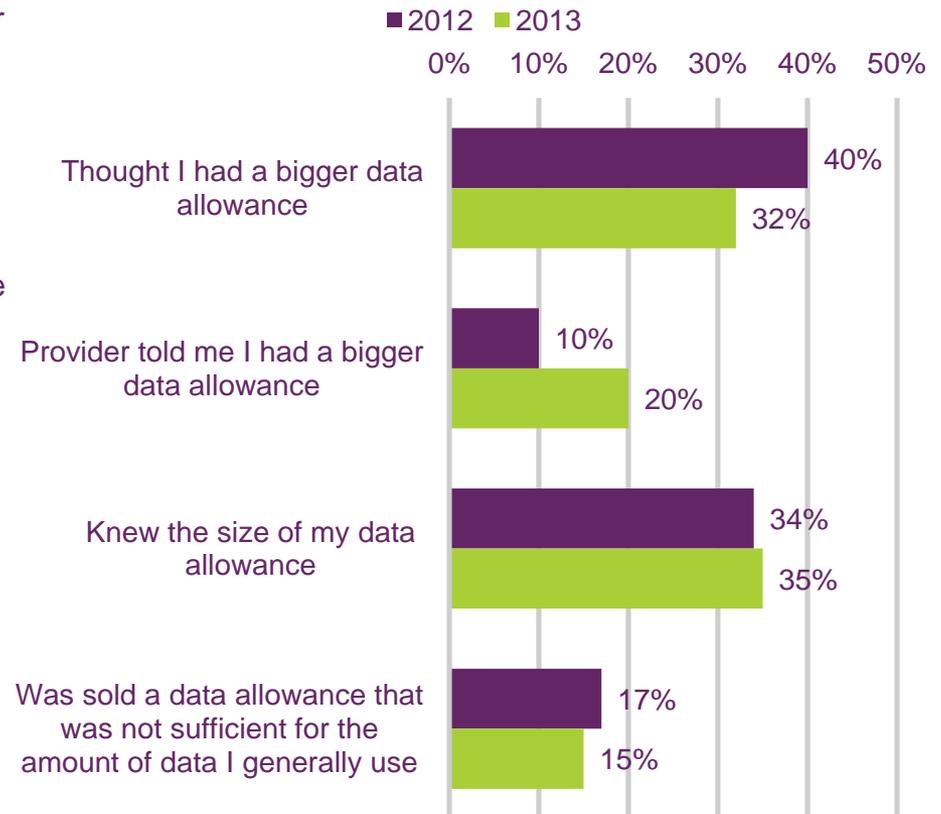
Awareness of data allowance

- Despite a significant rise in the proportion of these respondents stating they knew they had used up their data allowance, three-quarters were not aware that this was the case.
- In total, half thought either they had a bigger allowance (32%) or said they had been told their allowance was bigger by their provider (20%). There was a significant increase in the proportion saying the latter.

% Aware they had used up data allowance



Awareness of data allowance prior to bill shock



Un-weighted data. Q39. Were you aware that you had used up all of your data allowance before you used additional data? Q40. Which of the following best describes your awareness of your data allowance before you received an unexpectedly high mobile phone bill? Base: Respondents who received an unexpectedly high bill as a result of exceeding data allowance 2012 (126), 2013 (109)

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Using mobile abroad - summary

Amount of bill shock

- Average bill shock for use abroad stands at £74 – indications that this is higher for data use abroad than voice use abroad. This average is increased by a small proportion of responses stating bills in excess of £200.

	Total use abroad	Using data abroad*	Voice calls abroad*
Up to £20	30%	28%	32%
£21-£50	41%	39%	43%
£51-£100	19%	22%	15%
£101-£150	5%	3%	8%
£151-£200	1%	0%	2%
More than £200	4%	8%	0%
Mean 2013	£74	£97	£46
Mean 2012	£60	£61	£59

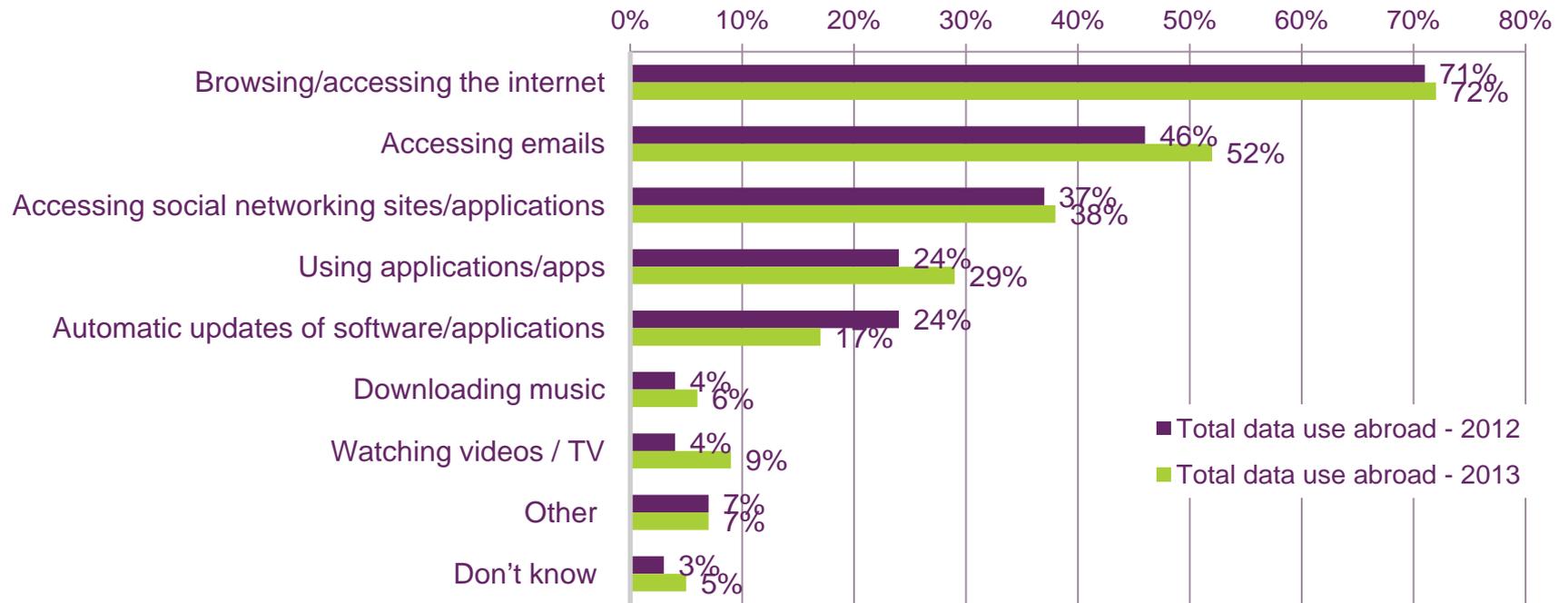
Un-weighted data. Q11a&b How much more than usual was your bill? Base: Total use abroad (120, 2012 - 140), Using data abroad only (67*, 2012 - 81*), Voice calls abroad only (53*, 2012 - 59*) *Low base size, treat as indicative only

Using data while abroad

Reasons for the additional costs

The pattern of causes for those exceeding their allowance remains fairly consistent with 2012 with Browsing the internet (72%) the lead cause. There are no significant shifts from 2012 to 2013.

The pattern of causes for those experiencing bill shock for data inside and outside of the EU are largely similar but sample sizes are small so this data has not been charted.

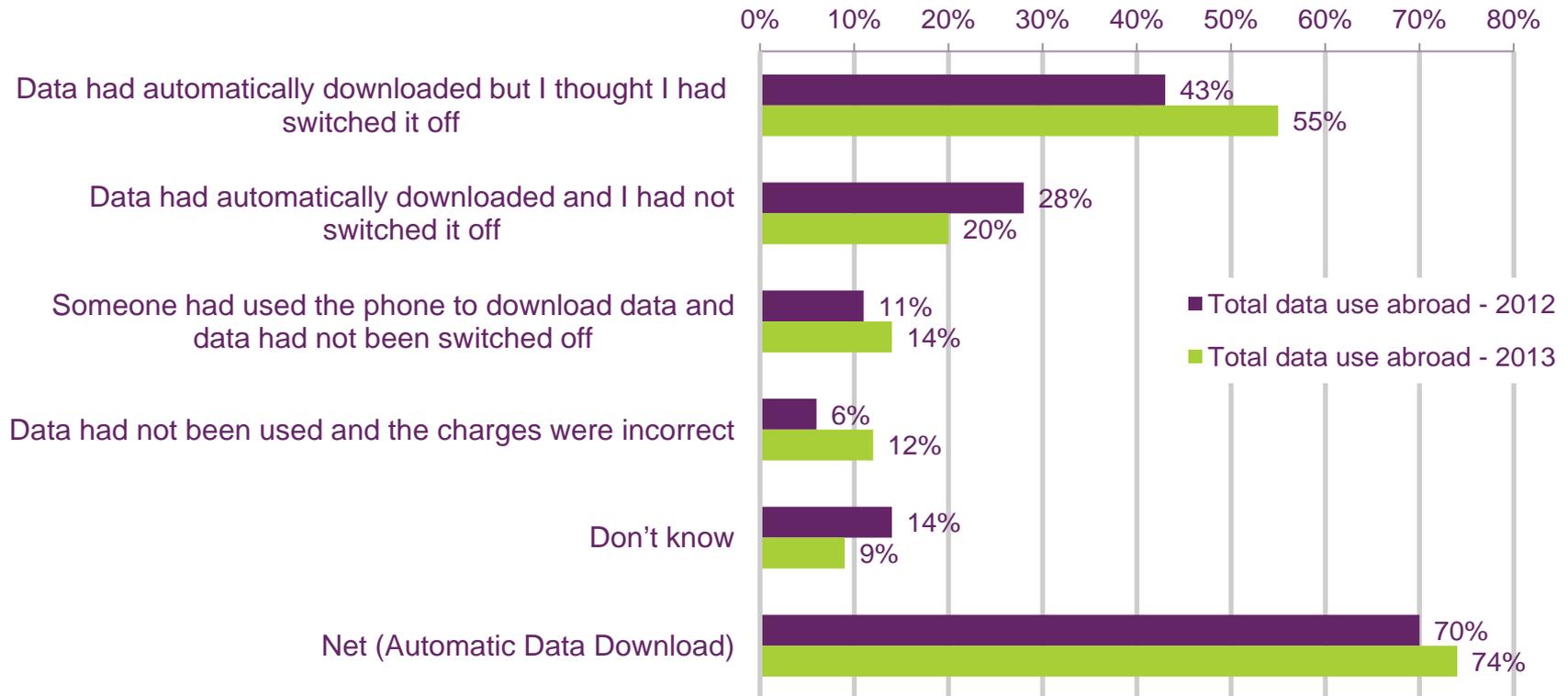


Un-weighted data. Q43/53. Which activities caused you to be charged more than you had expected? Base: Respondents who received an unexpectedly high bill as a result of data use abroad combined (121, 2012 – 119)

Using data while abroad

How data allowance was used

There are no significant changes in relation to how data allowance was used whilst abroad between 2012 and 2013.

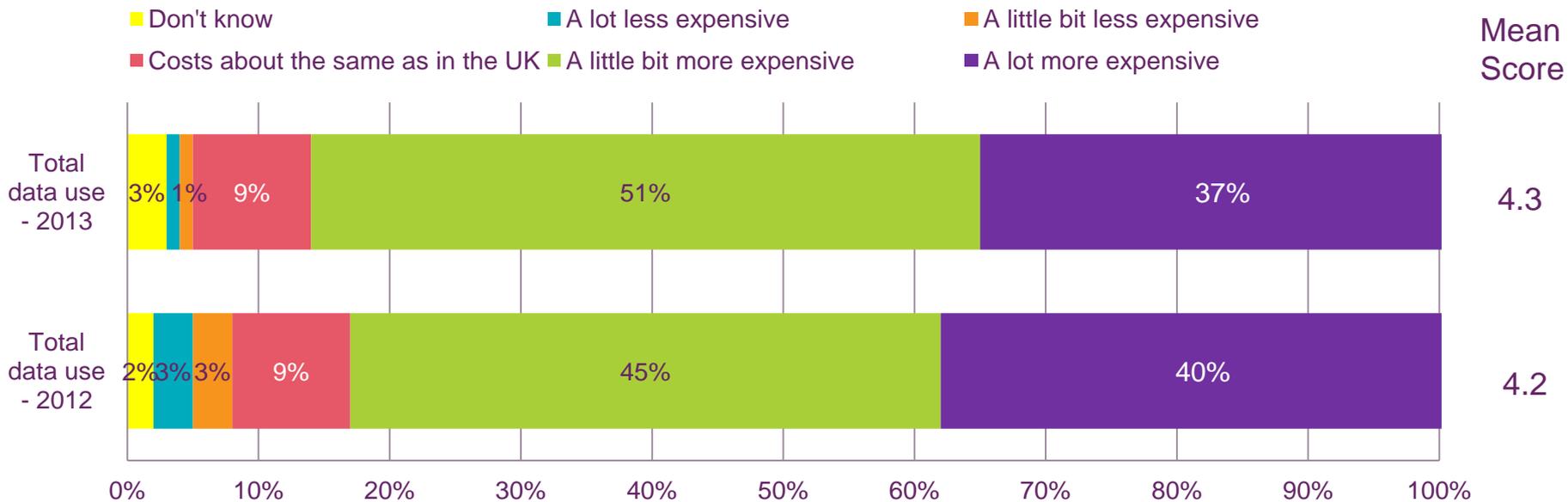


Un-weighted data. Q44/54. Which of the following best describes your use of data whilst travelling? Base: Respondents who received an unexpectedly high bill as a result data use abroad combined (121, 2012 – 119)

Using data abroad

Awareness of cost of using data abroad

The majority (88%) of respondents who experienced bill shock due to using data abroad said they thought it was more expensive to do so compared to use in the UK. Around one in ten (9%) thought it would cost the same. These figures are broadly comparable to those reported in 2012 (no significant differences).



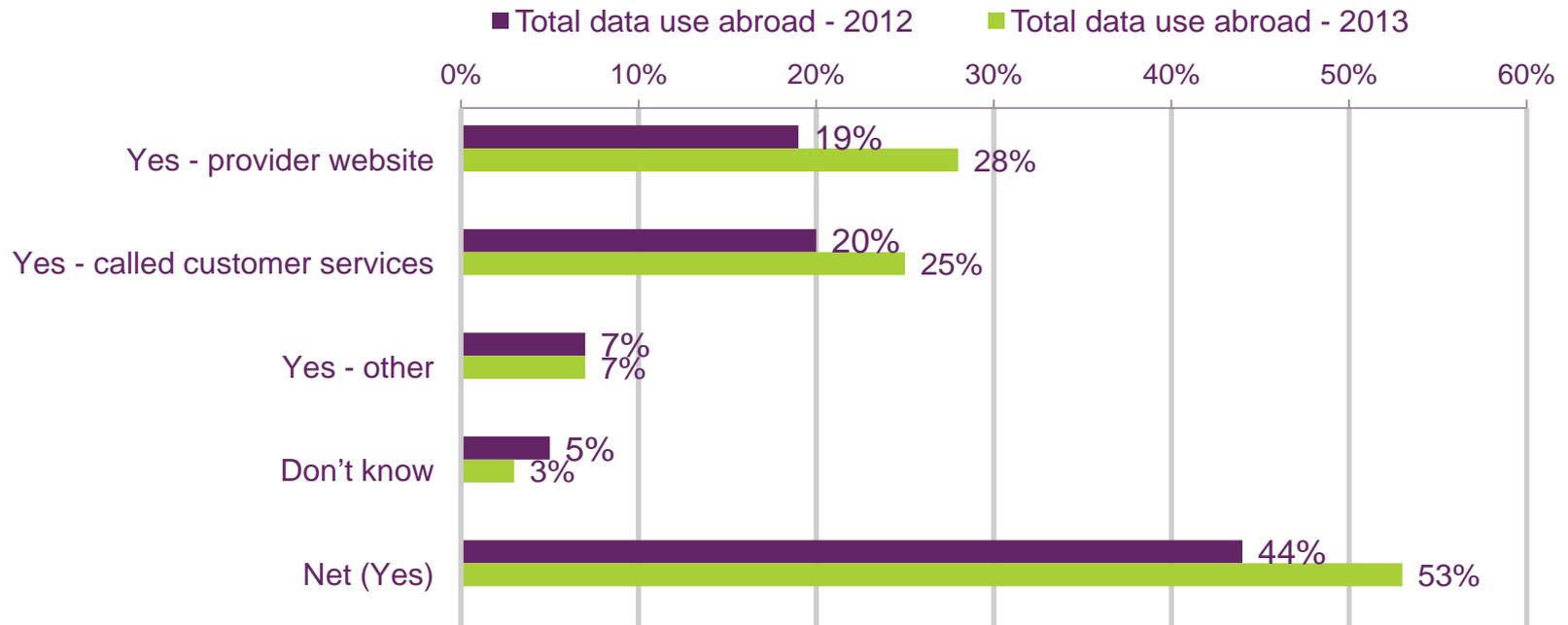
Un-weighted data. Q46/56. Before receiving an unexpectedly high bill, how much more expensive, if at all, did you think it was to access/use data on your mobile while travelling abroad compared to the UK? Base: Respondents who received an unexpectedly high bill as a result of data use abroad combined 2012 (119), 2013 (121)

Using data abroad

Whether provided any information on costs of using data abroad

Just over half (53%) of consumers experiencing bill shock due to use of data abroad said they had contacted their provider for information prior to their trip. The apparent differences noted below are not statistically significant.

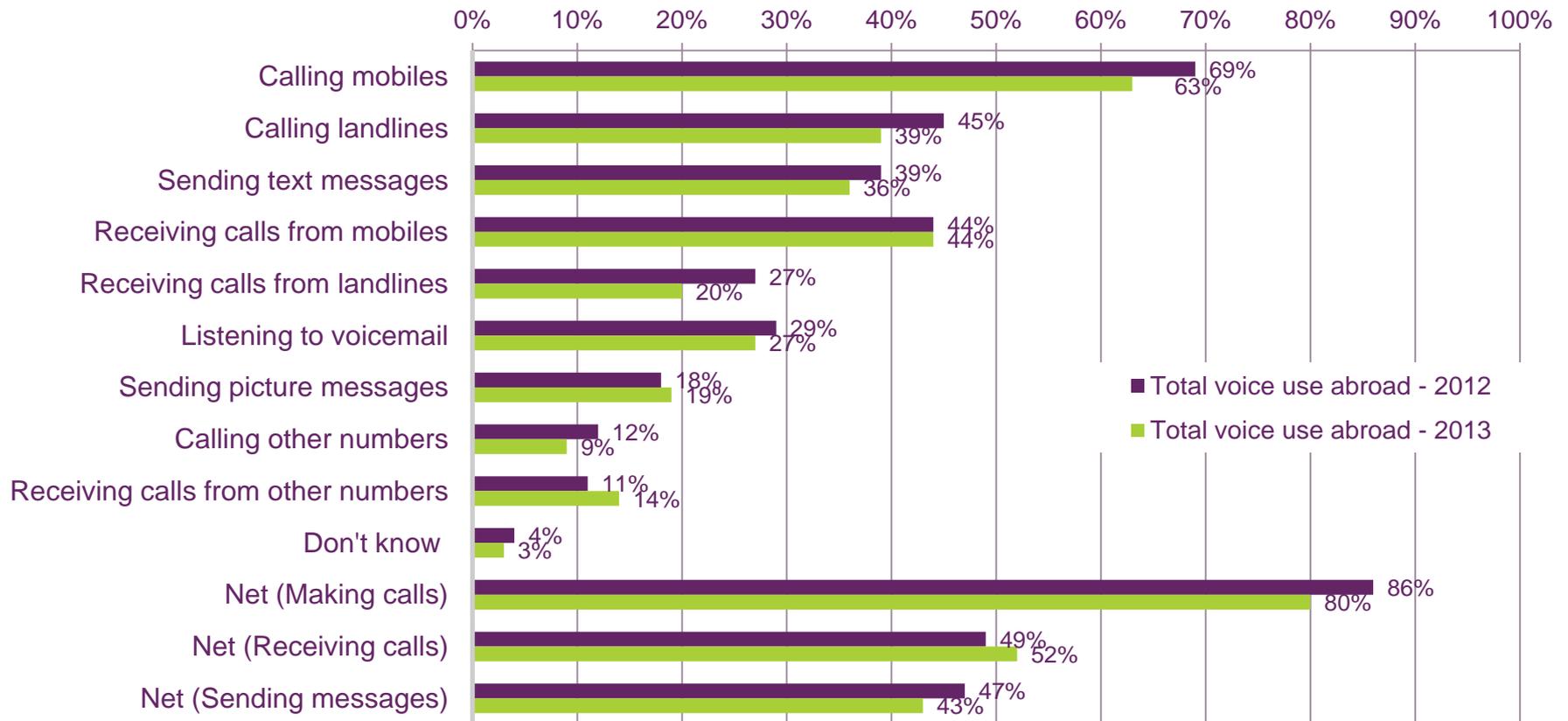
There was no significant difference in the proportions saying they obtained information on data charges abroad in relation to whether the respondent was travelling within or outside of the EU. Sample sizes were small so data has not been charted.



Un-weighted data. Q45a/55a. Did you get any advice or information from your provider about using data whilst travelling prior to your trip?
 Base: Respondents who received an unexpectedly high bill as a result of voice use abroad combined (121, 2012 – 119)

Using voice while abroad

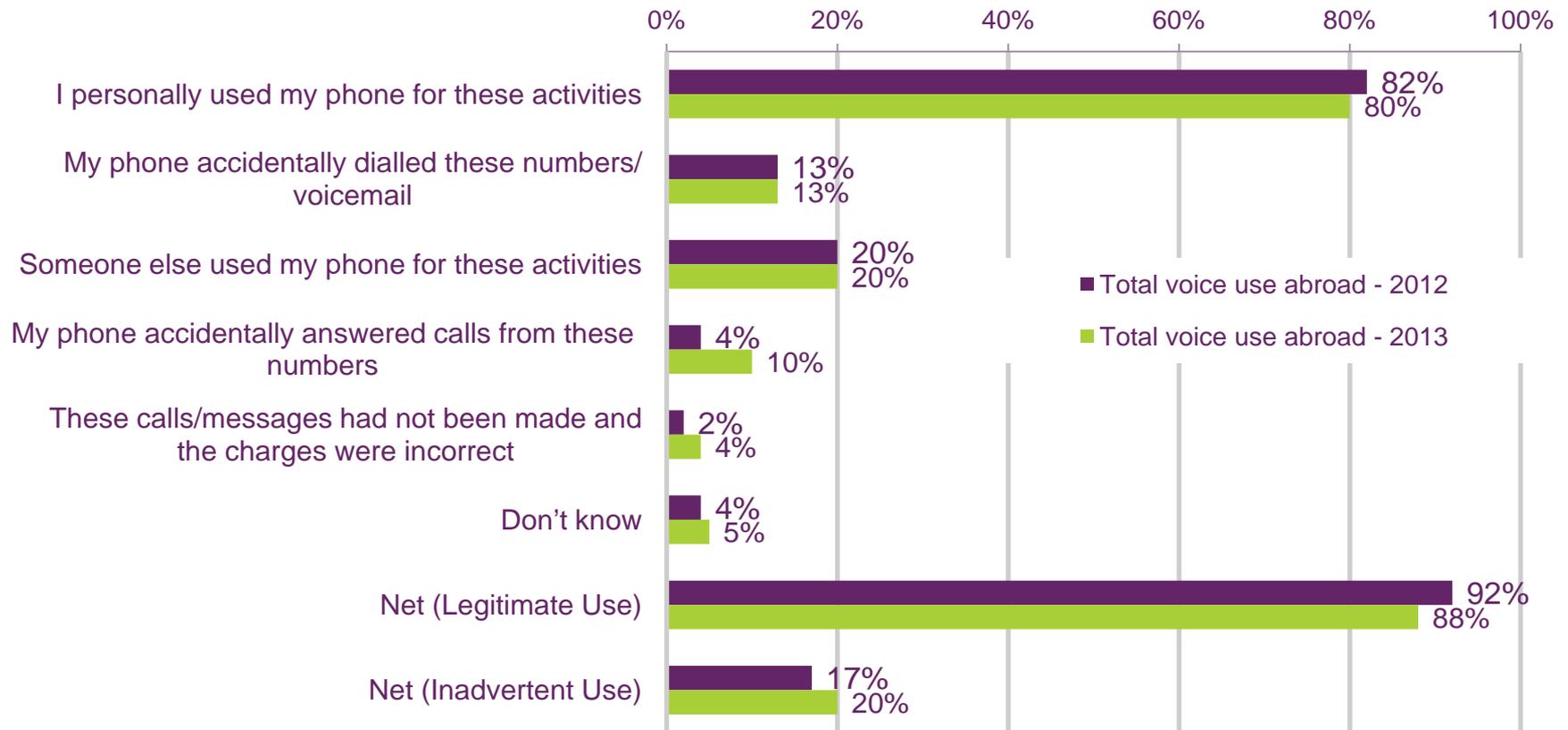
Reasons for the additional charges



Un-weighted data. Q47/57. Which of the following caused you to be charged more than expected? Base: Respondents who received an unexpectedly high bill as a result of voice use abroad combined (117, 2012 – 119)

Using voice while abroad

How voice calls were made



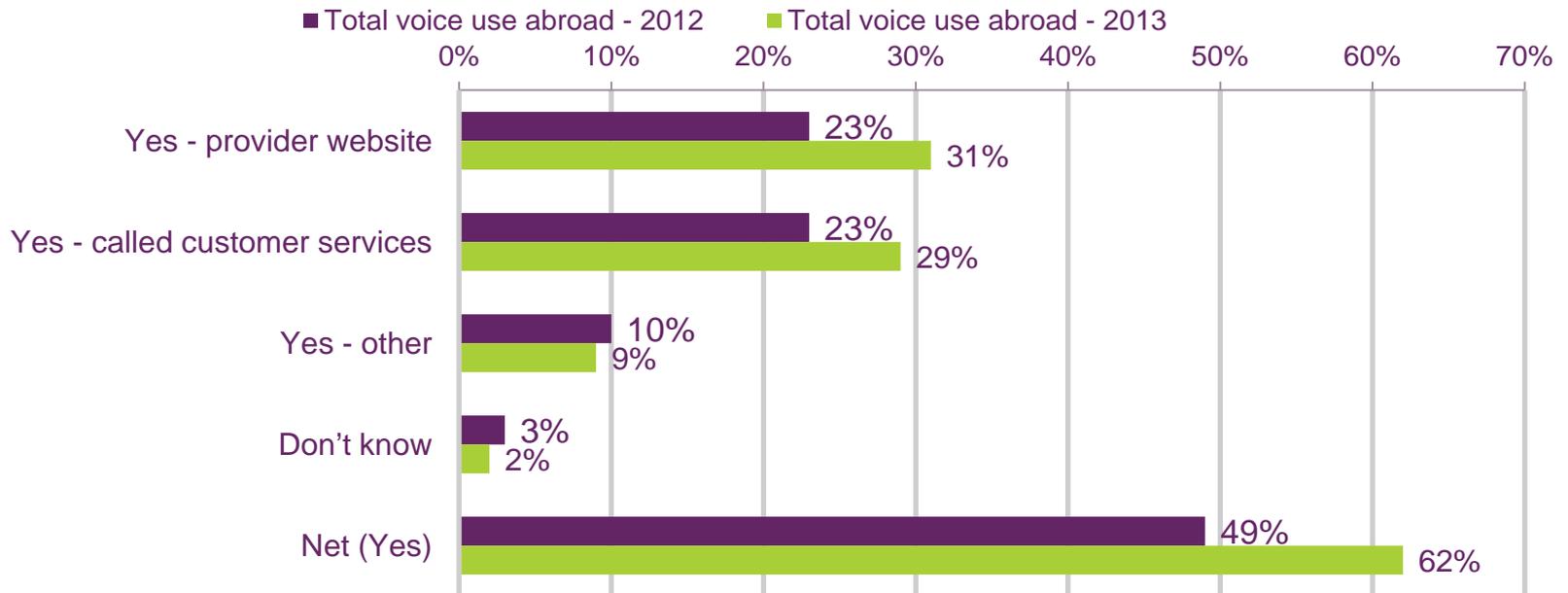
Un-weighted data. Q49/59 – Which of the following best describes how you were charged more than you expected? Base: Respondents who received an unexpectedly high bill as a result of voice use abroad combined (117, 2012 – 114)

Using voice abroad

Whether provided any information on costs of using voice abroad

There was a significant increase in those who sought information about making or receiving calls whilst travelling abroad prior to their trip (62%, up from 49% in 2012).

There was no significant difference by whether the participant was travelling in the EU or outside. Sample sizes are low and as such data has not been charted.



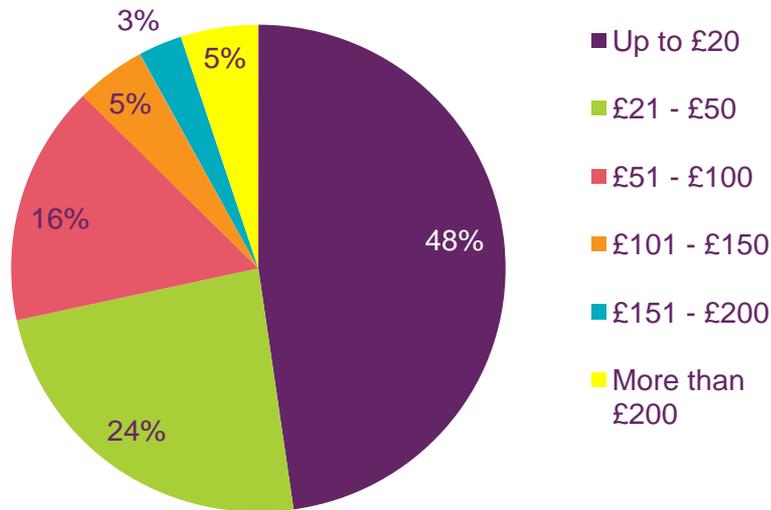
Un-weighted data. Q50a/60a. Did you get any advice or information from your provider about making or receiving calls while travelling abroad prior to your trip? Base: Respondents who received an unexpectedly high bill as a result of voice use while abroad combined (117, 2012 – 114)

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Lost and stolen

Amount of bill shock



Mean score = £65 (£34 in 2012)

- The average additional amount of the bill because of a lost or stolen mobile was £65, almost double the figure in 2012.
- However in 48% of cases, this amount was less than £20 and in a further quarter (24%) the bill was £21-£50.
- A total of 13% involved bills of £101 or more.
- The rise in the average is partly attributable to the 5% who had bills over £200 more than usual (0% in 2012).

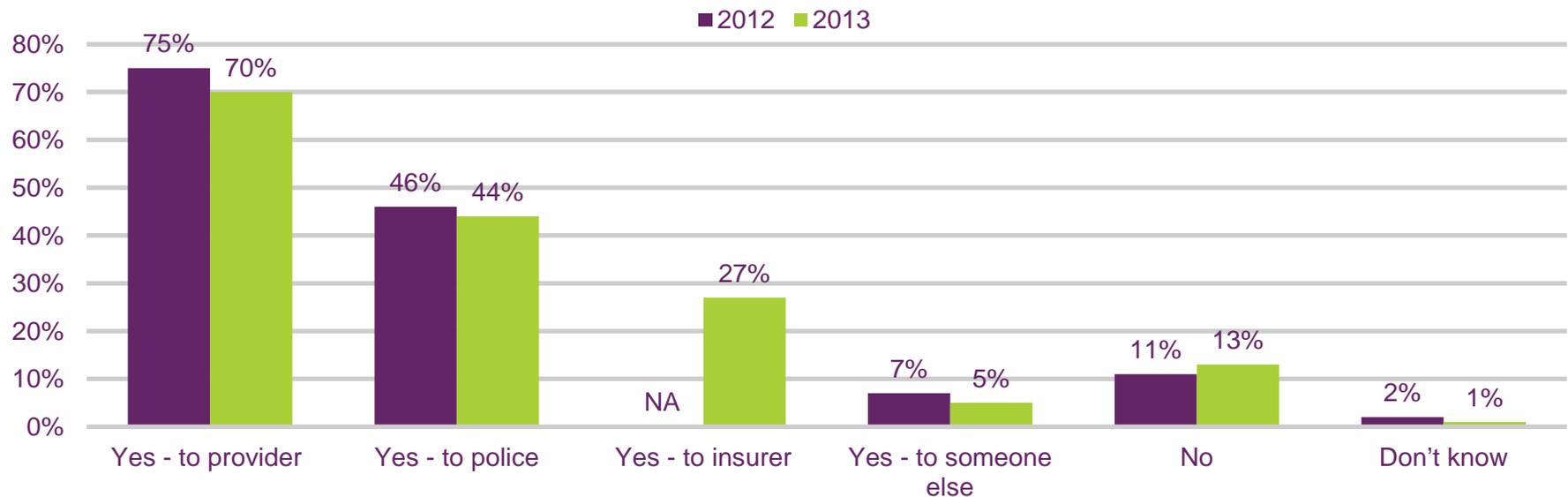
Un-weighted data. Q11a&b Combined. How much more than usual was your bill? Base: All incidents of bill shock as a result solely of a lost or stolen mobile (166, 2012 - 103)

Use of lost/stolen mobile

Whether reported phone lost/stolen

As with the 2012 data, most of those who had incurred additional charges due to lost/stolen phone said they reported it to their provider (70%). Just over a quarter (27%) said they had reported it to their insurer. This was not in the code-frame in 2012 and so no trend data is available.

57% were unaware that they would not liable to pay charges incurred after the phone has been reported lost or stolen to their provider (significantly higher than the 44% in 2012).



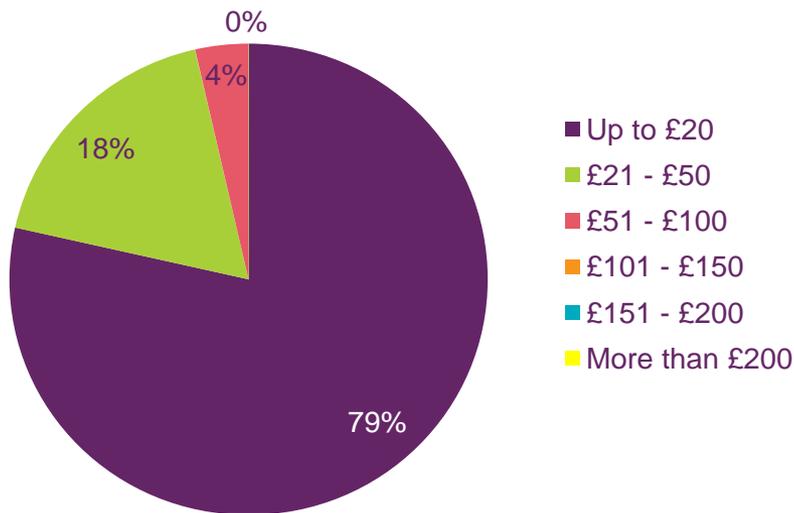
Un-weighted data. Q64. Did you report the fact that your mobile phone was lost or stolen? Q65. Once consumers report their phone as lost or stolen to their network provider, they are no longer required to pay for any unauthorised use of their mobile phone after this point. Before now were you aware of this? All incidents of bill shock caused by a lost or stolen phone (201, 2012 - 118)

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Sending messages not included in allowance

Amount of bill shock



Mean score = £16

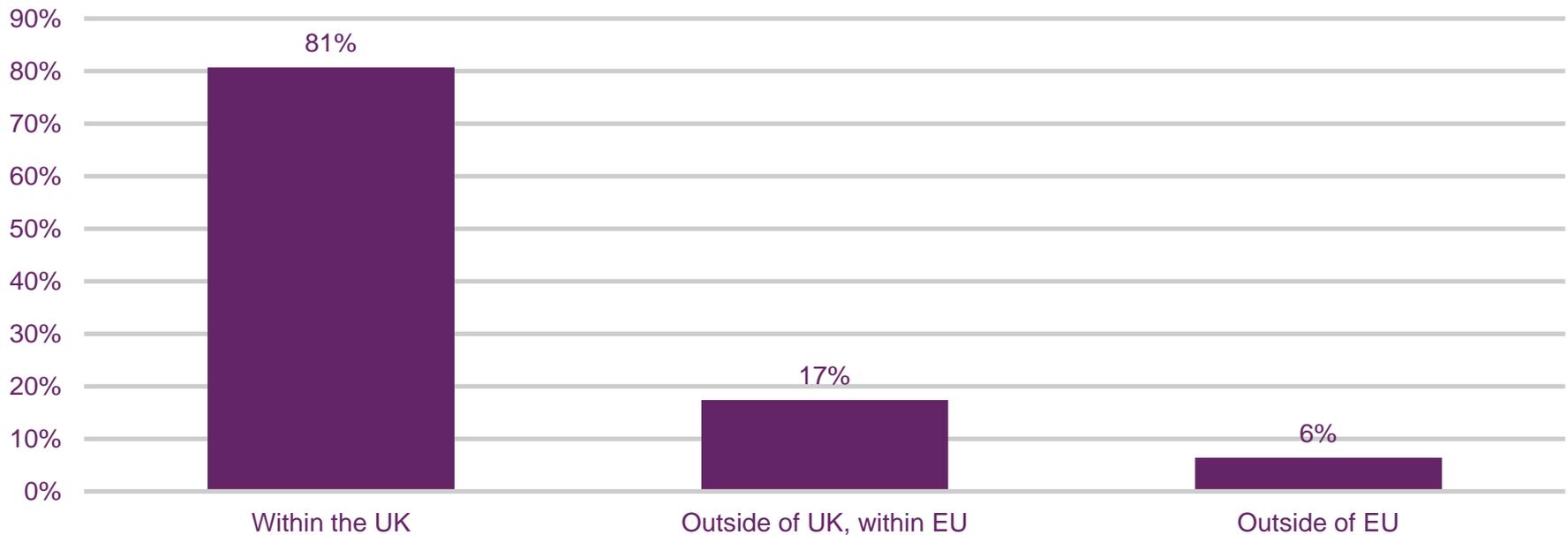
- The average additional amount added because of 'sending messages not include in allowance' only was £16
- In the majority of cases (79%) unexpectedly high bills received because of sending messages was less than £20.
- A further 18% of cases involved bills of £21 - £50 and only 4% of cases involved bills of £51 or more.

Un-weighted data. Q11a&b Combined. How much more than usual was your bill? Base: All incidents of bill shock as a result solely of Sending Messages not included in allowance (*56) ***low base**

Sending messages not included in allowance

Location when sent

The vast majority (81%) of those who experienced bill shock for sending messages were in the UK when they sent the messages. A further 17% had sent messages from outside of the UK but within the EU and 6% from outside of the EU.

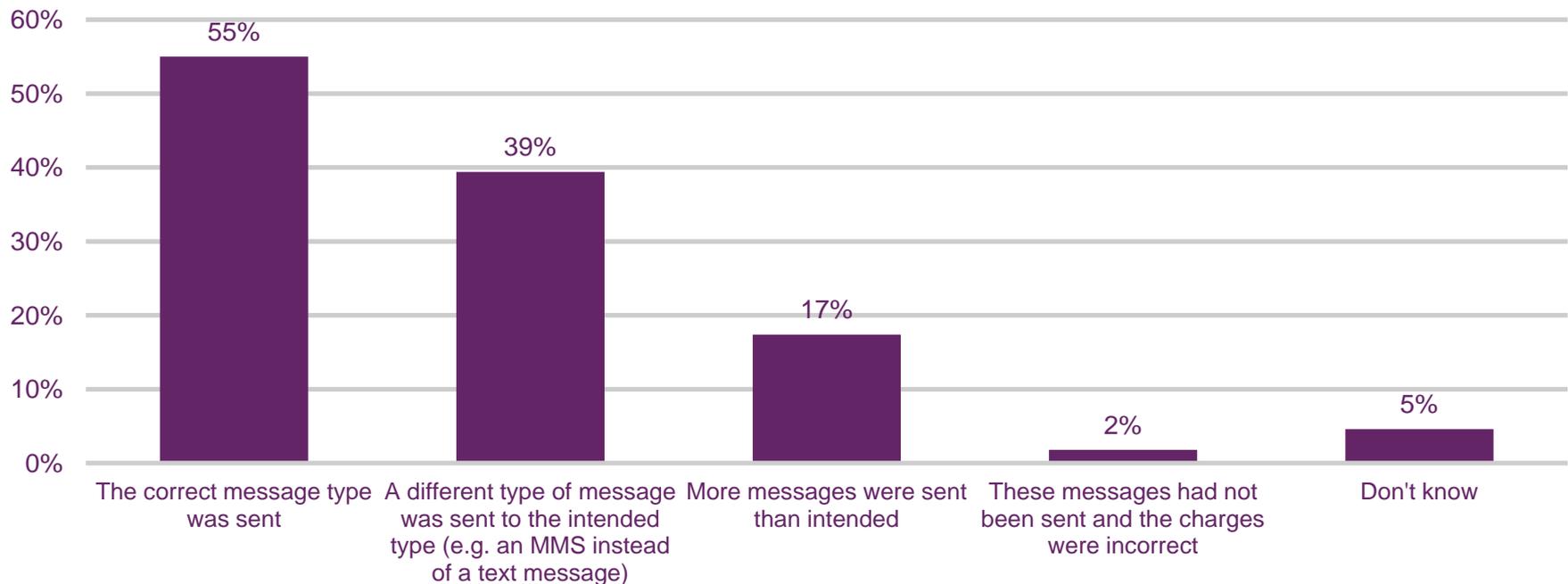


Un-weighted data. Q68. Where were you when you sent the messages that lead to your unexpectedly high bill? Base: All respondents who experienced bill shock for Sending Messages not included in allowance (109). Note new quota group for 2013 so no 2012 data available.

Sending messages not included in allowance

How messages were sent

All respondents had sent picture message 55% of respondents reported that they had sent the correct message type i.e. they knew they were sending a picture message. However two fifths (39%) said that a different message type had been sent compared to what they had intended, and 17% said that they had sent more messages than they intended.

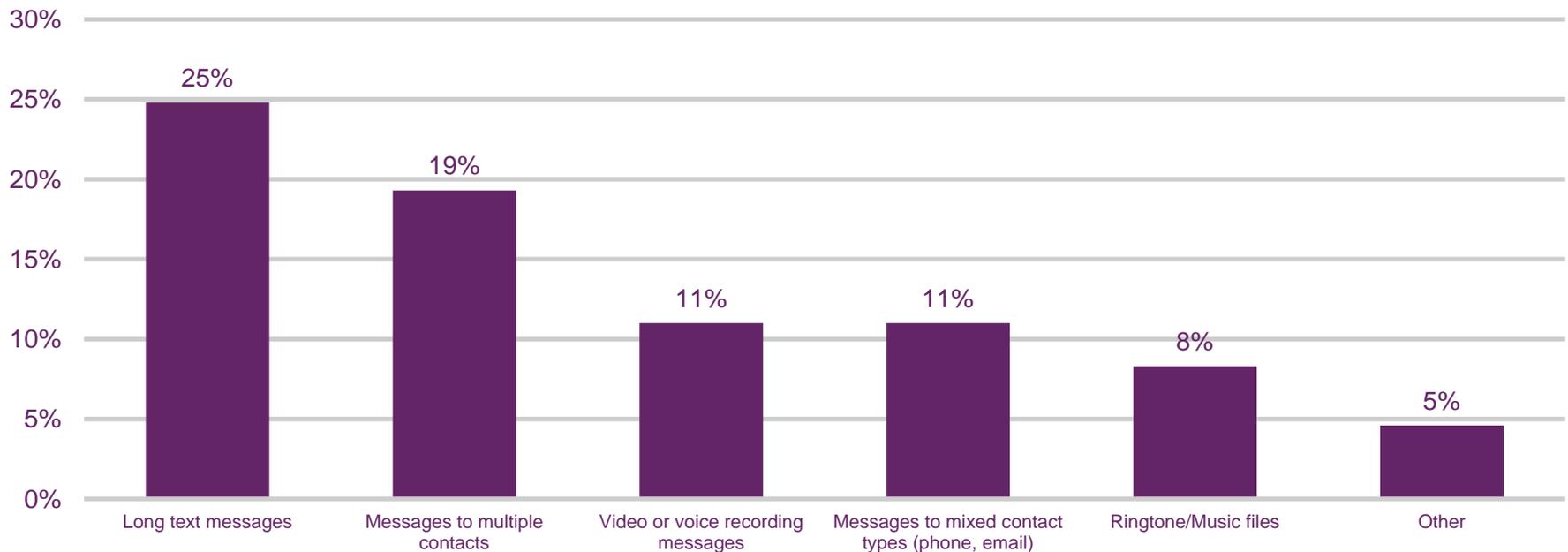


Un-weighted data. Q69. Which of the following best describes how the messages were sent? Base: All respondents who experienced bill shock for Sending Messages not included in allowance (109). Note new quota group for 2013 so no 2012 data available.

Sending messages not included in allowance

Message types causing bill shock

The most common stated cause was sending long text messages which were seemingly converted into a picture message (25%) followed by sending messages to multiple contacts (19%).

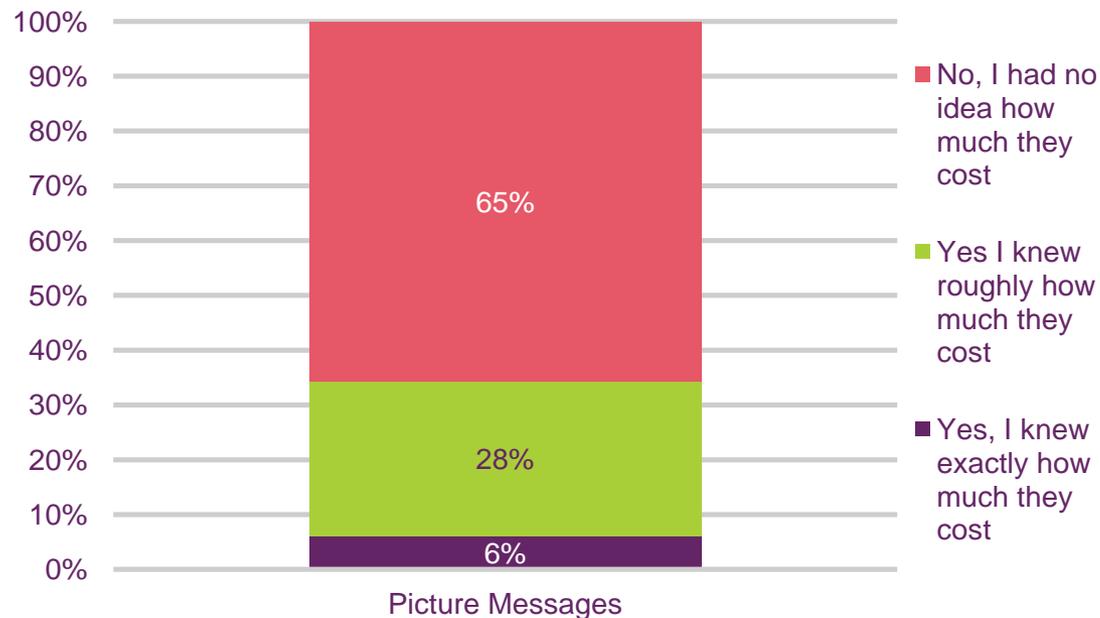


Un-weighted data. Q3c. What type of messages resulted in your unexpectedly high bill? Base: All respondents who experienced bill shock for Sending Messages not included in allowance (109). Note new quota group for 2013 so no 2012 data available.

Sending messages not included in allowance

Awareness of cost

Almost two thirds (65%) had no idea how much picture messages cost to send. 6% said they knew exactly how much it cost to send picture messages, and just over a quarter (28%) said they had some idea.



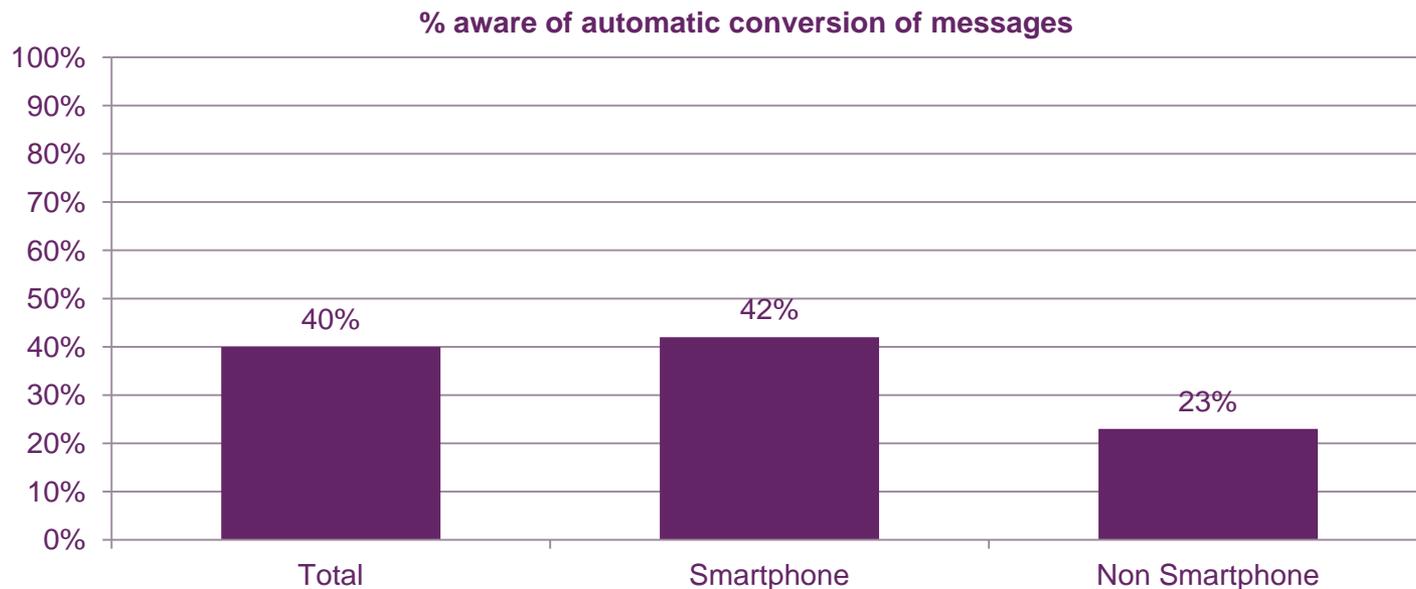
Un-weighted data. Q71. Were you aware of how much it costs to send the following types of messages?

Base: All those who received an unexpectedly high mobile phone bill as a result of Sending Messages not included in allowance (109)

Sending messages not included in allowance

Awareness of automatic conversion

Around two in five respondents who experienced bill shock for any reason said they were aware that some phones automatically convert long or mixed messages into mms messages (40%). Respondents with a smartphone were significantly more likely to be aware (42%) compared to non Smartphone owners (23%).

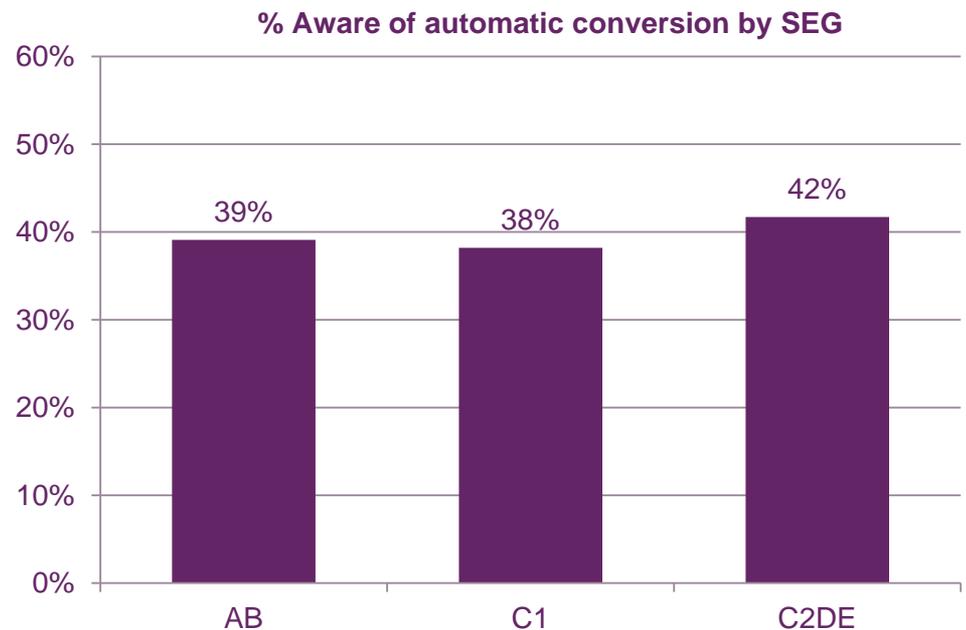
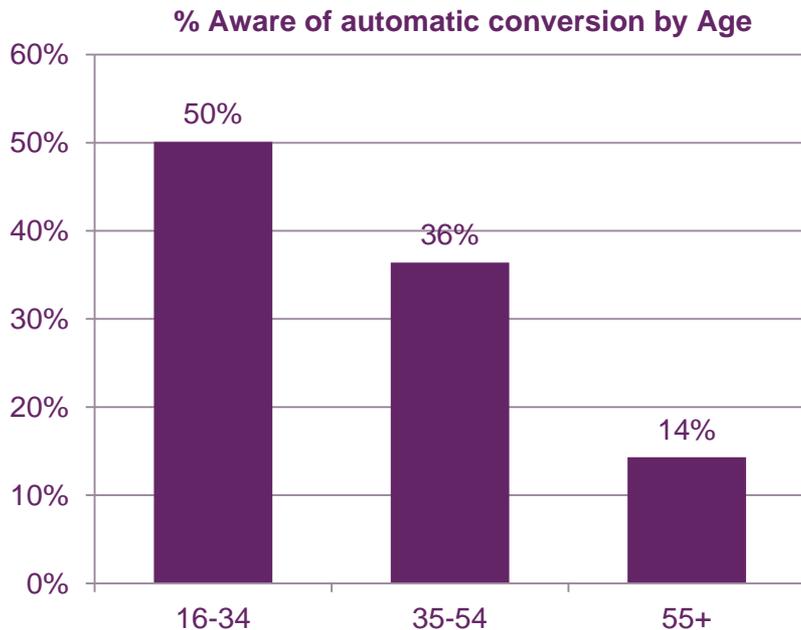


Un-weighted data. Q73. Some phones automatically convert messages which are long or sent to multiple/mixed recipients into mms/picture messages and these may be charged at a different rate to standard text messages. Before now were you aware of this?
Base: All respondents (1,102); Smartphone owners (943), Non-Smartphone owners (159).

Sending messages not included in allowance

Awareness of automatic conversion, by demographic

Younger respondents were significantly more likely to be aware that some phones automatically convert long or mixed messages into mms messages. Observed levels of awareness decreased with age from 50% amongst 16-34 year olds to 14% amongst those aged 55+. No significant difference was seen by socio-economic group (SEG).



Un-weighted data. Q73. Some phones automatically convert messages which are long or sent to multiple/mixed recipients into mms/picture messages and these may be charged at a different rate to standard text messages. Before now were you aware of this?

Base: All respondents (1,102); 16-34 (497), 35-54 (451), 55+ (154); AB (437), C1 (340), C2DE (319)

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Preventative measures



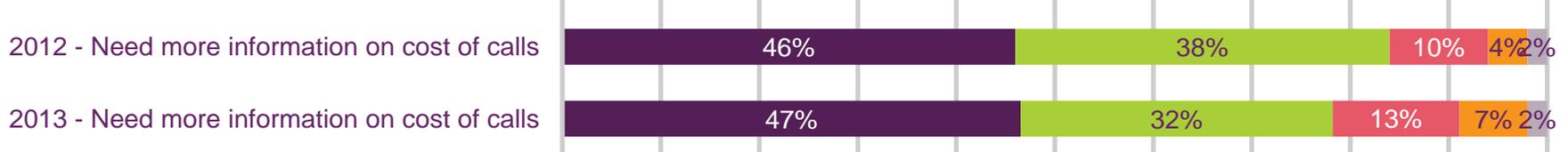
Attitude to amount of information on voice and data costs

■ Strongly Agree
 ■ Slightly Agree
 ■ Slightly Disagree
 ■ Strongly Disagree
 ■ Don't know

Statement: There is enough information on how much it costs to use data on mobiles



Statement: I need more information on the costs of calls once I have used up my call allowance

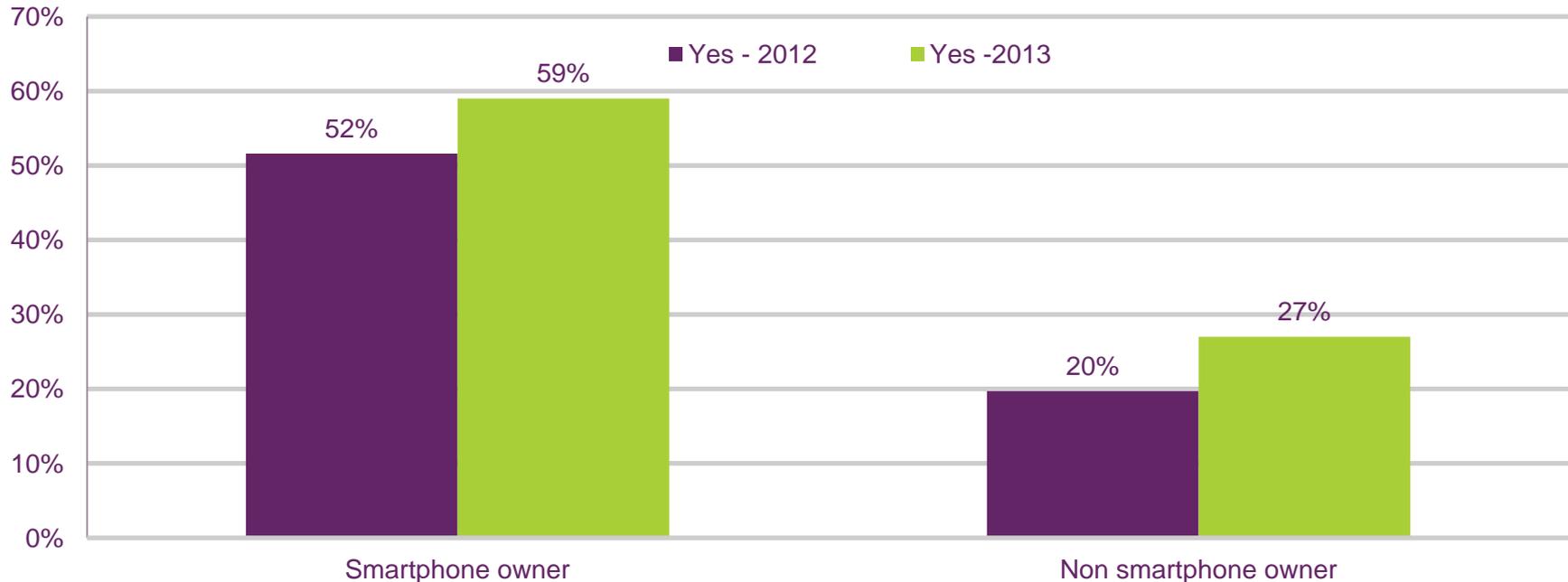


Weighted data. Q9c. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?
 Base: All respondents (1,102, 2012 – 702)

Unknowingly downloading data

Awareness of push notifications – By Smartphone ownership

There is a significant increase in awareness increasing awareness of Push notifications amongst smartphone owners. Nearly three in five (59%) smartphone owners say they are aware that data may download automatically up from around half (52%) in 2012.

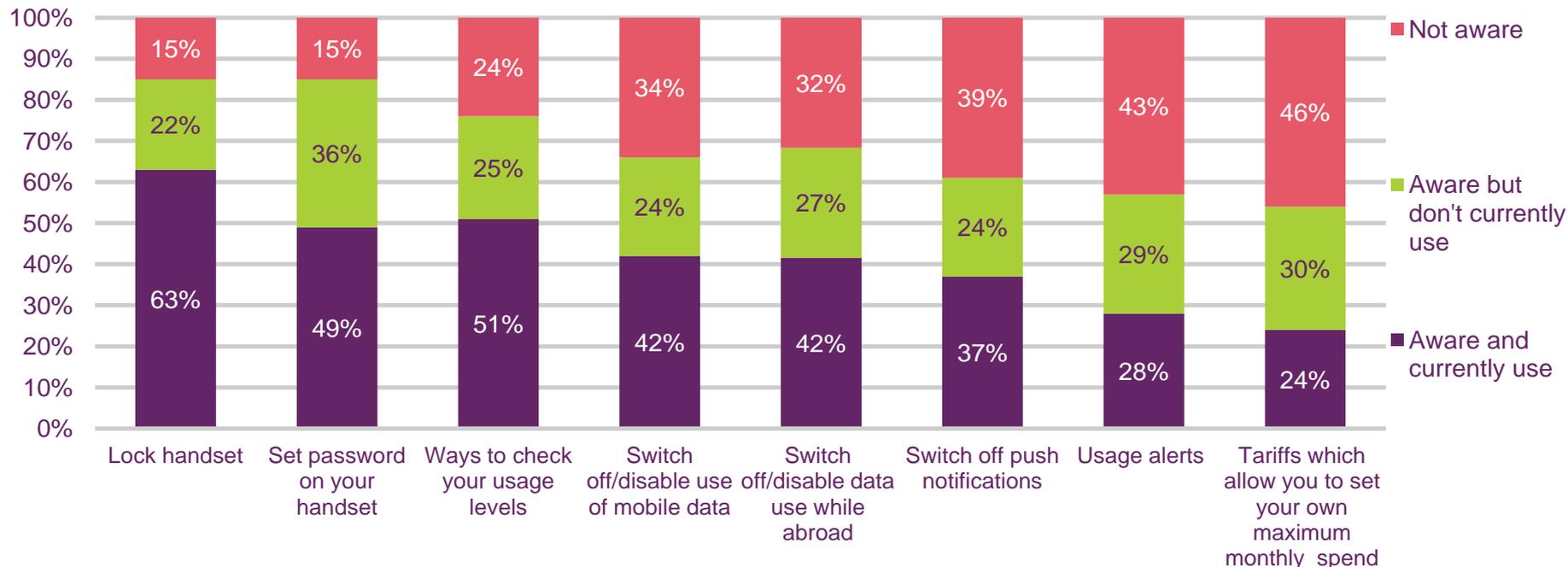


Weighted data. Q66. Some applications (apps), emails, social networking sites etc. may download data automatically, unless you change the settings on your phone to stop this happening. This type of data use is known as 'push notifications'. Before now were you aware of this? Base: All respondents (1,102, 2012 - 702), Smartphone (857, 2012 - 505), non smartphone (245, 2012 - 197).

Methods to prevent bill shock

Information about ways consumers can prevent bill shock

Simple measures such as locking the handset or setting a password were the preventative measures that customers were most likely to use. Roughly half of the sample (51%) currently check their usage levels, with a further quarter (25%) aware that it is possible.



Weighted data. Q67. Are you aware of any of the following and have you used them? ...Ways you can check your usage levels (e.g. amount of minutes or texts remaining) Base: All respondents 2013 (1,102)