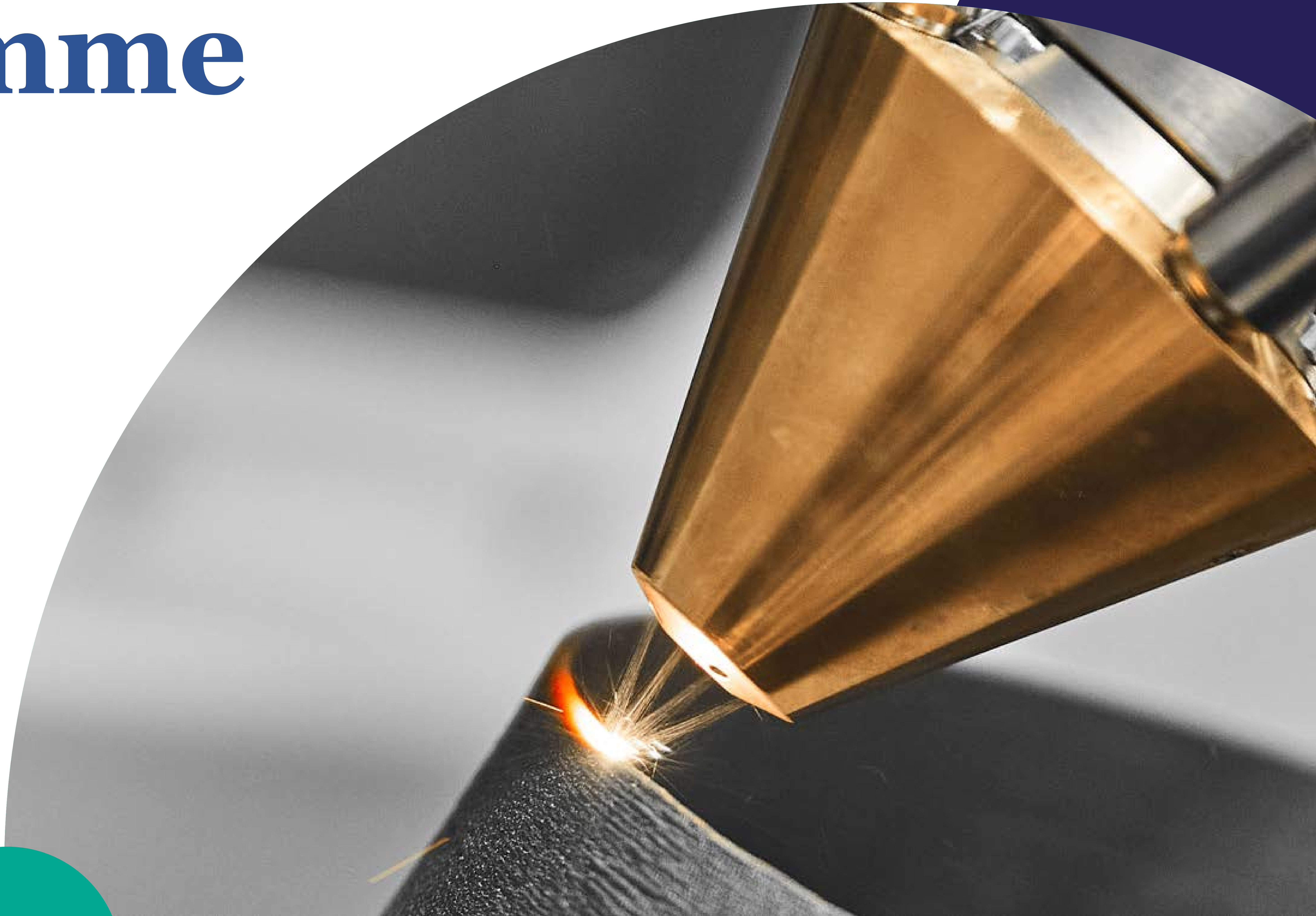
The benefit of being part of the Digital Boost programme

Wave 3 - June 2023



Digital Boost

Rangahau Aotearoa

Research New Zealand

Why was this research completed?

This report summarises the results from the **third wave** of the Digital Boost impact research.

- Wave 1 started in early 2021 and its purpose was to evaluate the early impacts of participation in the Digital Boost programme.

The evaluation continued through:

- Wave 2 with businesses that registered between late September 2021 to mid-April 2022.
- Wave 3 with businesses that registered from April 2022 to January 2023.

Why was this research completed?

To evaluate whether the Digital Boost programme has had (and continues to have) a positive impact on small businesses in terms of:

1. **Enhancing** their digital capabilities
2. **Business outcomes** as a result of being more digitally capable
3. **Participating** in the Digital Boost programme
4. **Sustained impact** of becoming more digital (12 months on).

How was Wave 3 completed?

Wave 3 was completed in **two** stages, and all the surveys were conducted online:

- An initial survey of 'newly registered' businesses to establish their digital-based **intentions** (the '**Expectations** Survey')
- A further survey approximately three months later to identify the impact of participating in the Digital Boost programme (the '**Impact** Survey').

The main body of this report is based on n=611 businesses, who registered with Digital Boost between April 2022 and January 2023 and completed both the Wave 3 Expectations and Impact Surveys.

The last section focuses separately on an additional Impact Survey that was conducted 12 months on with previously registered businesses from Wave 2 (referred to as '12 months on Impact Survey'). The results are based on n=118 Wave 2 registrants who responded approximately 15 months after they registered with Digital Boost, and 12 months after their initial Impact Survey.

The Wave 3 Expectations and Impact Survey results are based on a maximum Margin of Error of +/- 4.0% (at the 95% confidence level), while the 12 months on Impact Survey results have an MoE of +/- 9%.

What did Wave 3 find?

The Digital Boost programme has had positive impacts on small businesses…

1. **Digital Boost has enhanced** registrants' digital capabilities:
   - Three months after registering, most Impact Survey respondents reported their business had already taken **definite** steps towards becoming more online and digital.
   - **More** businesses had started to use new, and complex, digital tools, such as websites (with a payment facility), digital marketing or social media management tools, and cloud services or software.
   - Plus, significantly **fewer** reported that lack of digital knowledge and skills (the two biggest barriers) were stopping their business from becoming more online and digital.
2. Participating in Digital Boost has already had **positive impacts on business outcomes** for some registrants as a result of being more digitally capable:
   - Some early **positive impacts**, just three months on, were increased customer engagement, business resilience and revenue. There had already been a **modest lift** of seven percent more businesses now generating revenue online.
   - Plus, one in ten business owners had reported **increased satisfaction** with their business's current performance compared to three months previously.
3. **Participating** in the Digital Boost programme was an **engaging learning** experience:
   - Almost half continued to visit Digital Boost at least once a fortnight.
   - Digital Marketing was both the most visited and most useful part of Digital Boost.
   - Almost eight out of ten users reported they were satisfied with their overall Digital Boost learning experience.

   In relation to the Digital Facilitation Scheme:

   - About three out of ten respondents were Digital Facilitation Scheme users. Most were very positive about both their DFS onboarding and learning experiences.
4. 15 months on from registration, there continued to be sustained positive impacts especially in terms of increased digital tool use.

Section 1

Reasons for registering with Digital Boost

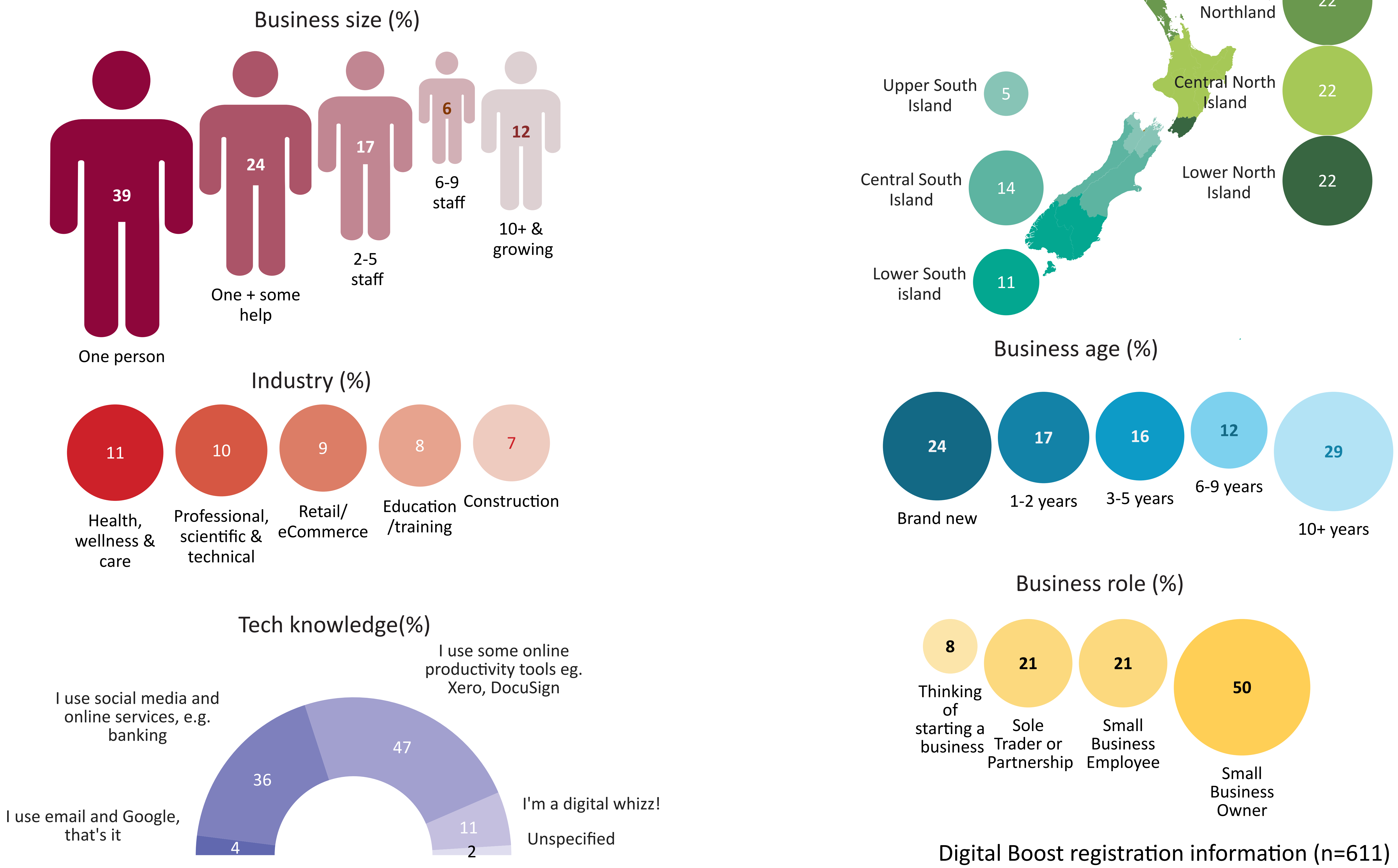
Most Digital Boost registrants worked in small businesses with some experience of basic digital tools

While most Wave 3 respondents worked in **micro small** businesses (80% had 5 or less staff), one-fifth were from larger businesses (18%). Most were existing businesses, but one in four were 'brand new' (24%). The most common industries were **'Health, wellness and care'** (11%), **'Professional, scientific and technical'** (10%), and **'Retail/ eCommerce'** (9%). While two-thirds (66%) lived in the North Island, Auckland was **under-represented** at 20% (fewer than the expected 35%), and 30% were South Island businesses (**more** than the expected 24%).

Most registrants were business owners; one-half described themselves as a small business owner (50%) and one-fifth as a sole trader or partnership (21%).

In terms of prior 'tech use', 40% had experience limited to email, social media and online services like banking, and almost half had used online productivity tools like Xero (47%).

Figure 1: Summary of Digital Boost users' registration information



Digital Boost registration information (n=611)

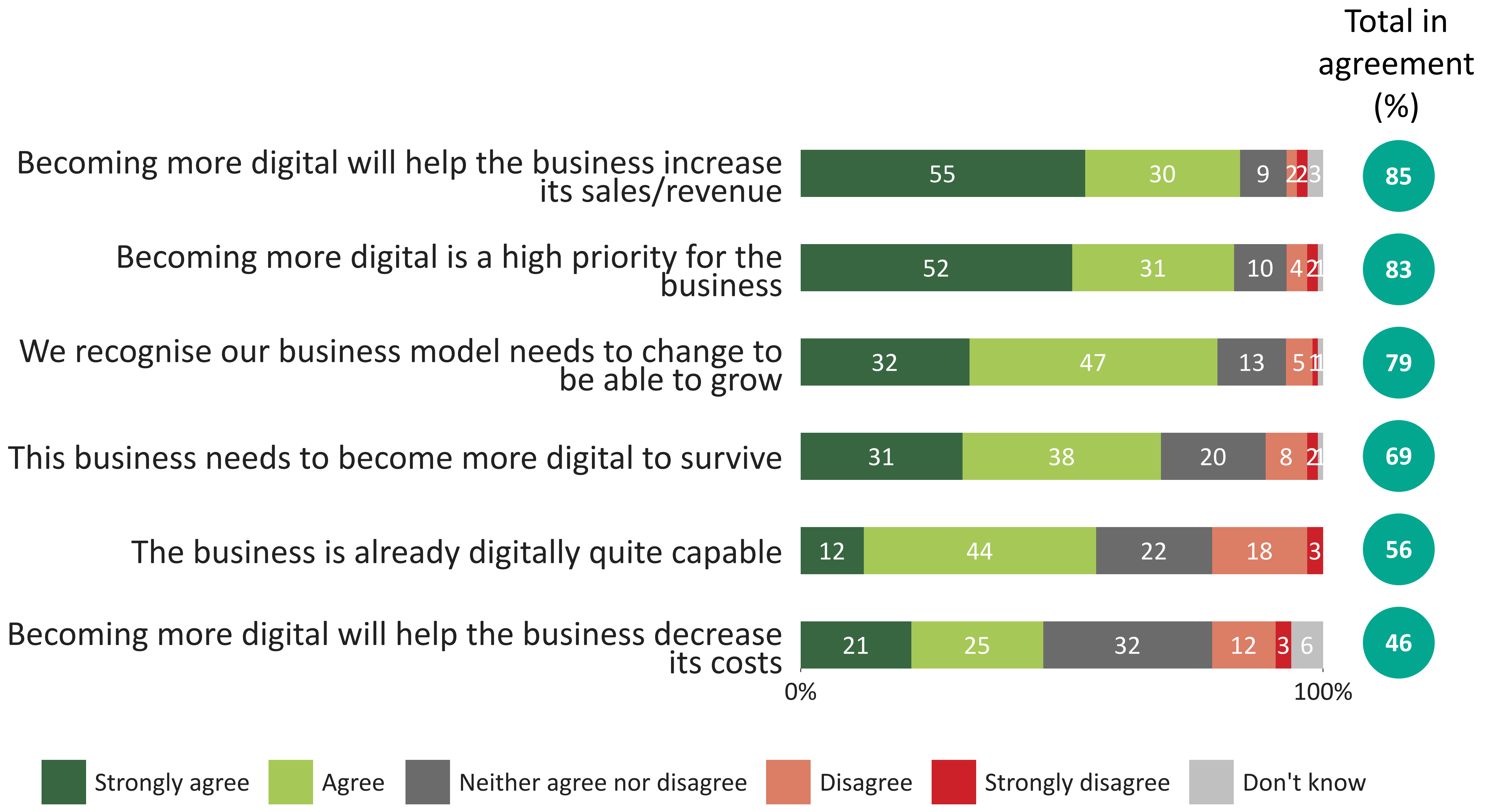
Becoming more digital was a <u>high priority</u> for most registrants - who strived both to increase their revenue and to survive

Despite their limited and basic use of digital tools, a little over half the Wave 3 Expectations Survey respondents reported their business was **'already digitally capable'** (56%).

Most had registered with Digital Boost when they realised their business models required crucial changes both to **grow** (79%), and to become **'more digital to survive'** (69%).

The **strongest** driver to become more digital was to help their business **'increase its sales/revenue'** (85%).

Figure 2: Motivations for becoming more digital and registering with Digital Boost

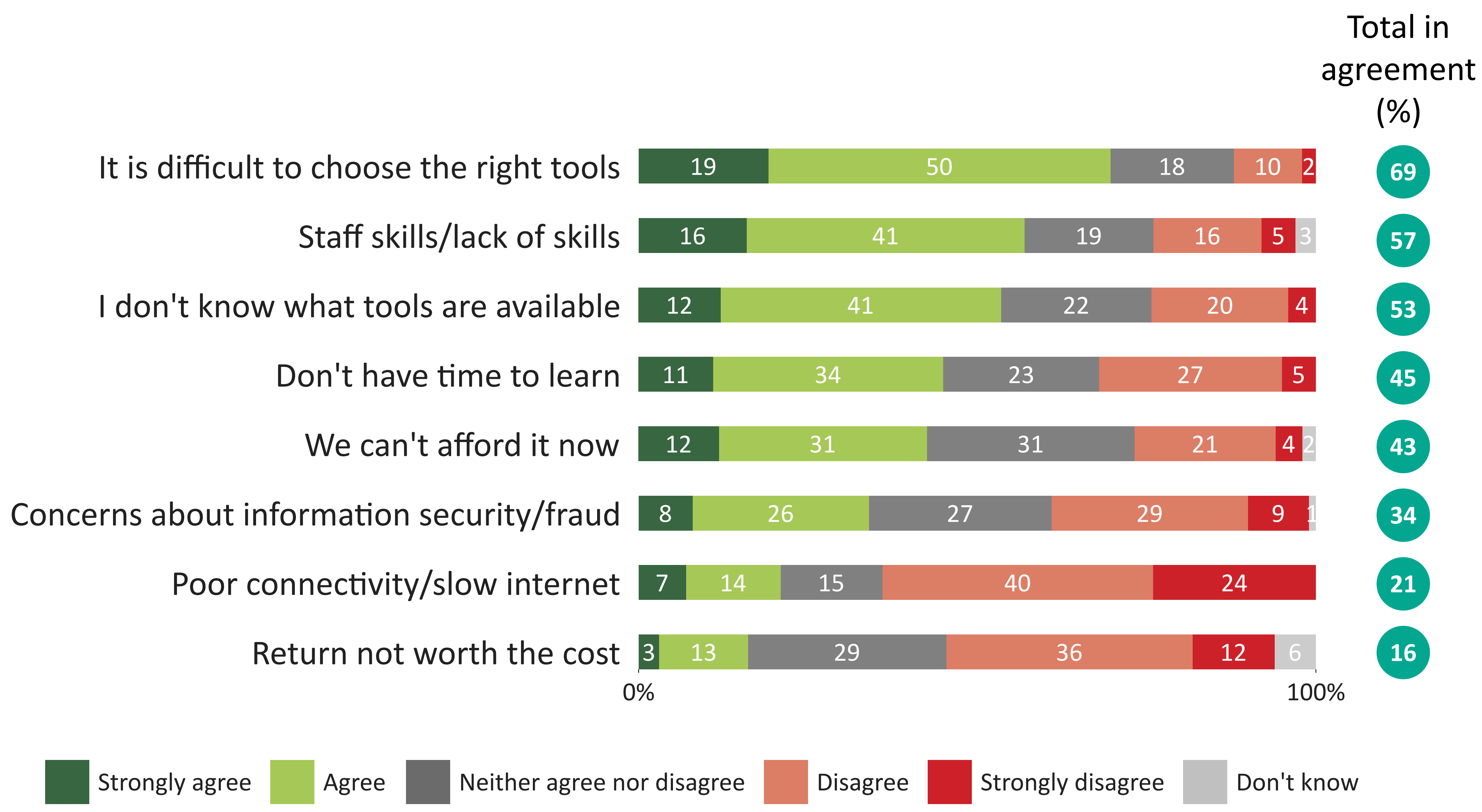


Expectations Survey (n=611)

The <u>biggest barriers</u> to registrants becoming more digital were their lack of digital knowledge and skill

Wave 3 Expectations Survey respondents reported that the **biggest issues which were stopping** their businesses from becoming more digital were difficulty choosing the “right tools” (69%), lack of “staff skills” (57%) and not knowing “what tools are available” (53%).

Figure 3: Issues that stop businesses from becoming more online and digital

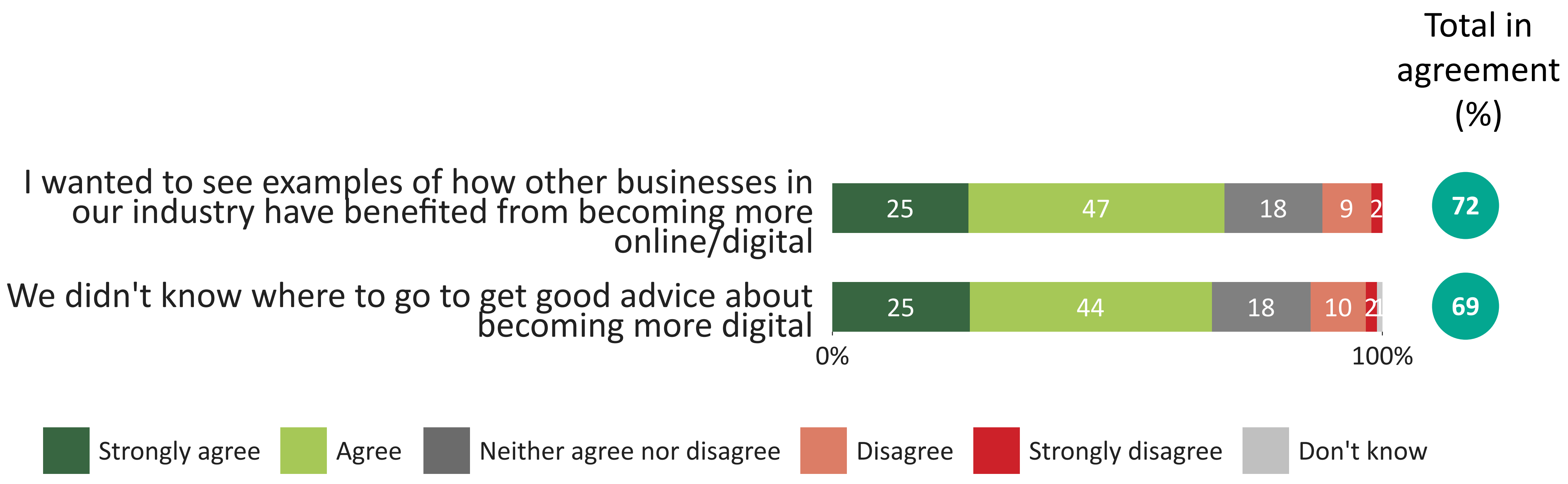


Expectations Survey (n=611)

Digital Boost offers advice and real examples from a familiar source

In the current environment where businesses realise they need to become more digital in order to survive and yet many recognise they lack the skills and experience to implement the required changes, Digital Boost attracted many registrants who were looking for a source of **'good advice about becoming more digital'** (69%), and **relevant 'examples'** of the benefits of being more online/digital (72%).

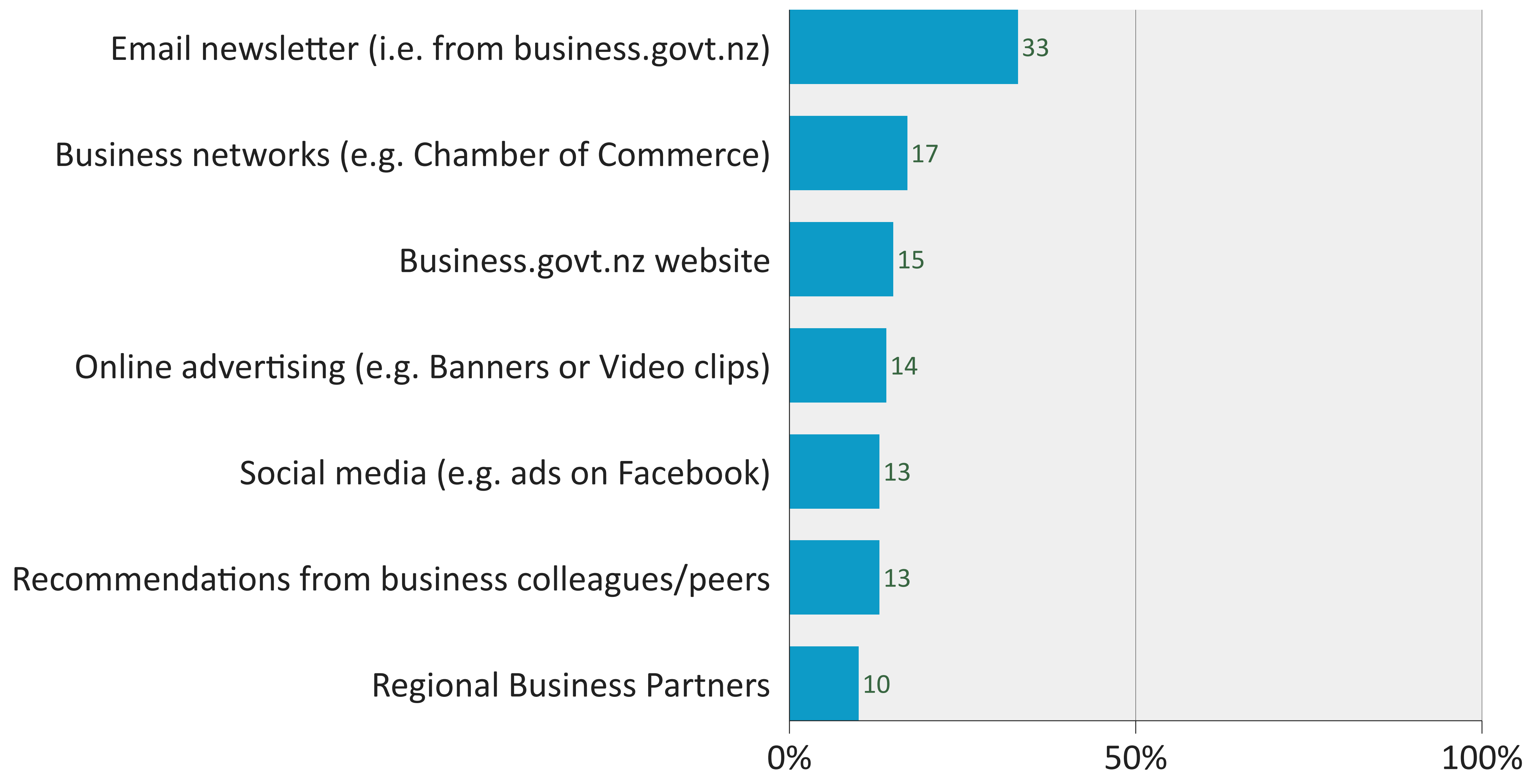
Figure 4: Reasons for registering with Digital Boost



Expectations Survey (n=611)

Also, when businesses were uncertain about their strategic digital decisions, and which potential providers to trust, it probably **helped to hear from a government agency.** One in three respondents stated they first heard about Digital Boost from the business.govt.nz email newsletter (33%).

Figure 5: How respondents first heard about Digital Boost



Expectations Survey (n=611)

Section 1 Summary

Reasons for registering with Digital Boost

The key findings from this section are as follows:

- Although most registrants had prior tech use limited to the use of basic communication and productivity tools, over one-half viewed their business as 'already digitally capable'.
- Most registrants regarded becoming more digital as a means to help their business increase its sales/revenue (85%).
- The biggest barriers which were stopping these businesses from becoming more digital were a lack of digital knowledge and staff skills - difficulty identifying what tools are available and choosing the right ones for their business.
- Respondents registered with Digital Boost because they were looking for a trusted source of relevant, local advice about how to become more digital and online. It probably helped to hear about it from a government agency via business.govt.nz.

Section 2

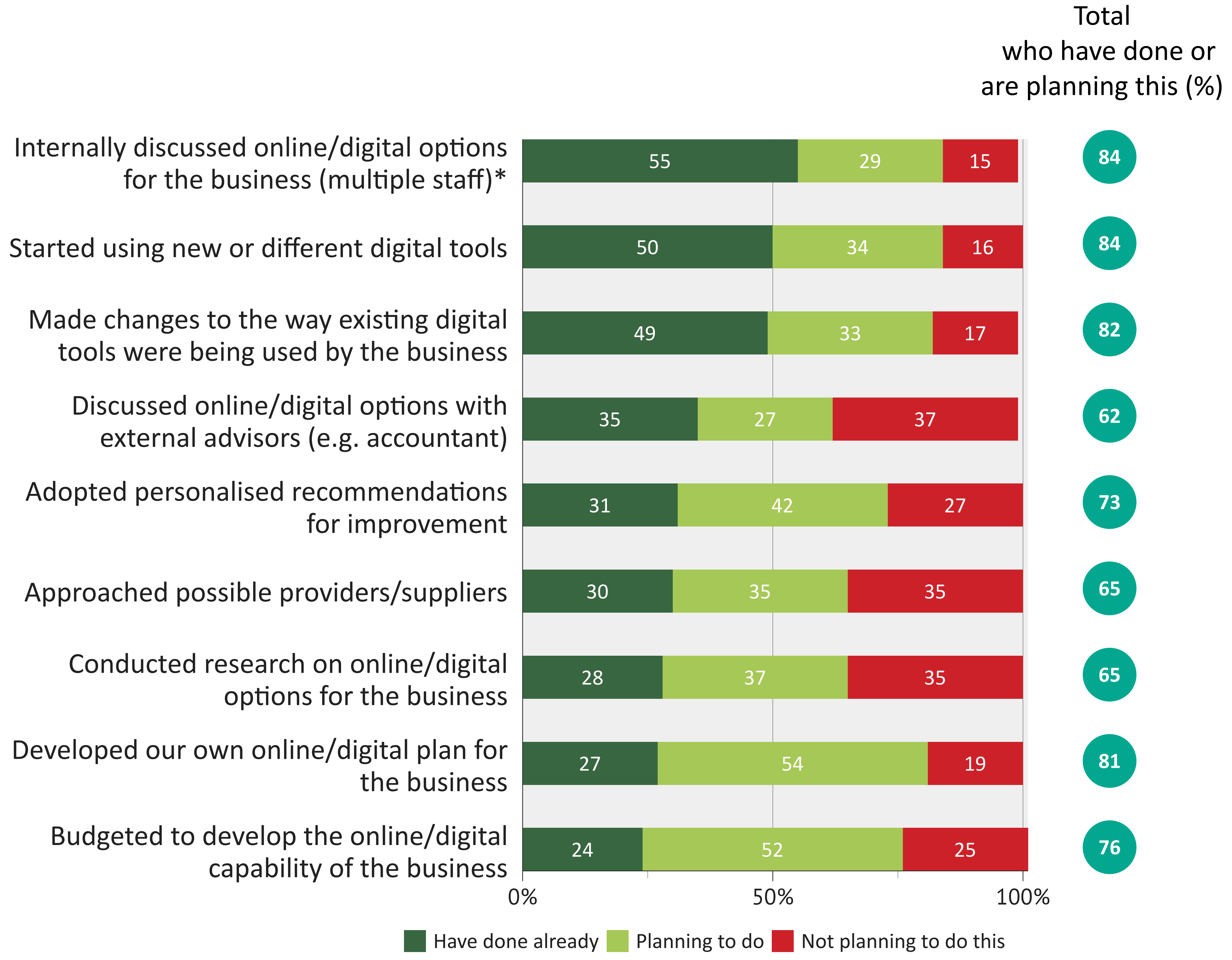
The impact of participating in the Digital Boost programme

As a result of Digital Boost, registrants have taken definite steps to become more digital

Three months after registering with Digital Boost, most Impact Survey respondents reported that their business had already taken **many steps** towards becoming more online and digital or they were planning those steps.

One-half had already changed their use of existing digital tools (49%) and started using new or different tools (50%). While around one-third had already actively sought advice by discussing options with external suppliers, adopting personalised recommendations and/or approaching possible providers.

Figure 6: What the business has done/is planning



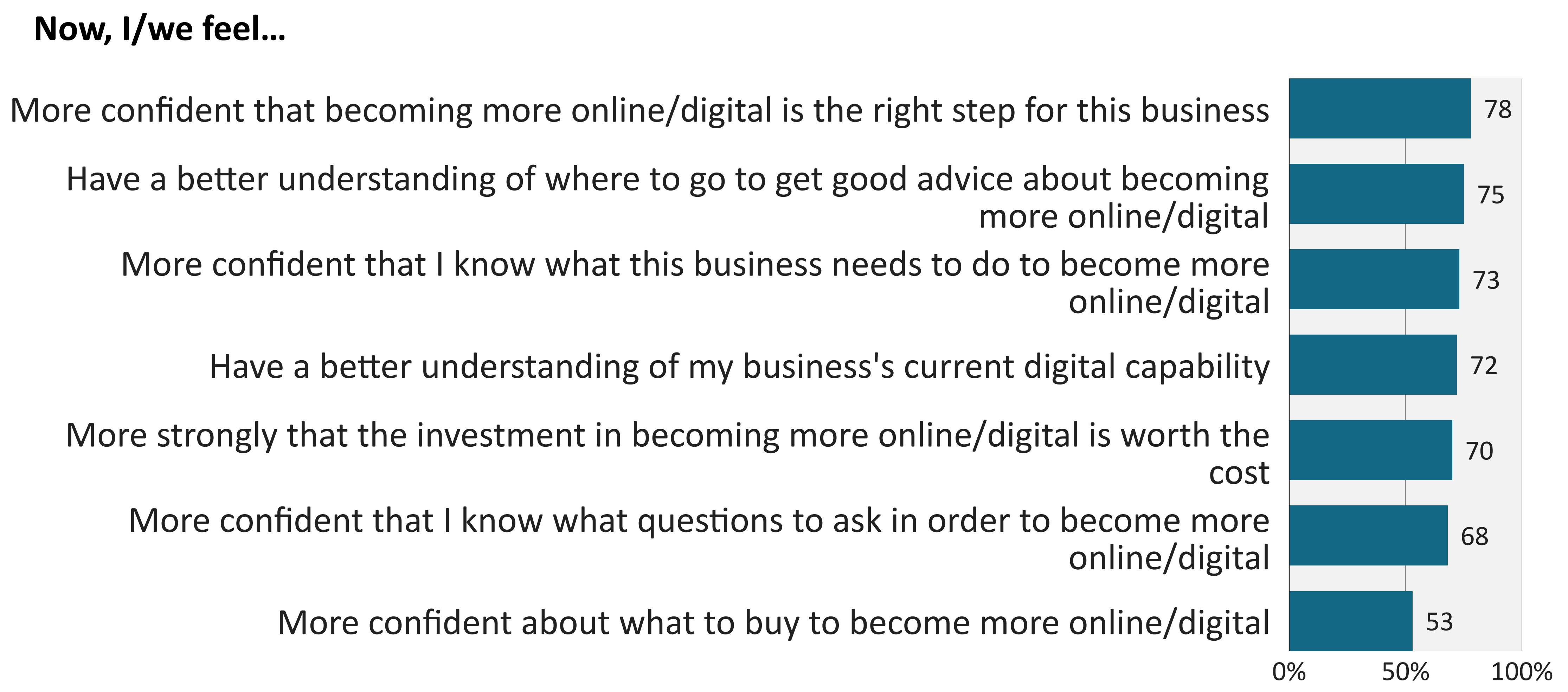
Respondents who completed the Impact Survey (n=611)
*Subsample based on businesses with more than one employee (n=435)

The steps businesses have taken through Digital Boost have helped to increase their confidence and move them towards becoming more digital

Participation in Digital Boost has had a positive impact on allaying respondents' concerns. Three months after registering with Digital Boost, the majority of Impact Survey respondents were **more positive** about their business becoming increasingly digital and that this is the **'right step'** for their business (78%). Also, most had a **better understanding** of 'where to go to get good advice' (75%) and what their business 'needs to do to become more online/digital' (73%).

However, fewer felt more confident about 'what to buy' (53%).

Figure 7: Businesses' changed attitudes towards becoming more digital (% who agree)



Impact Survey respondents who visited Digital Boost after registering (n=575)

Participation in Digital Boost has *reduced barriers* for registrants becoming digital

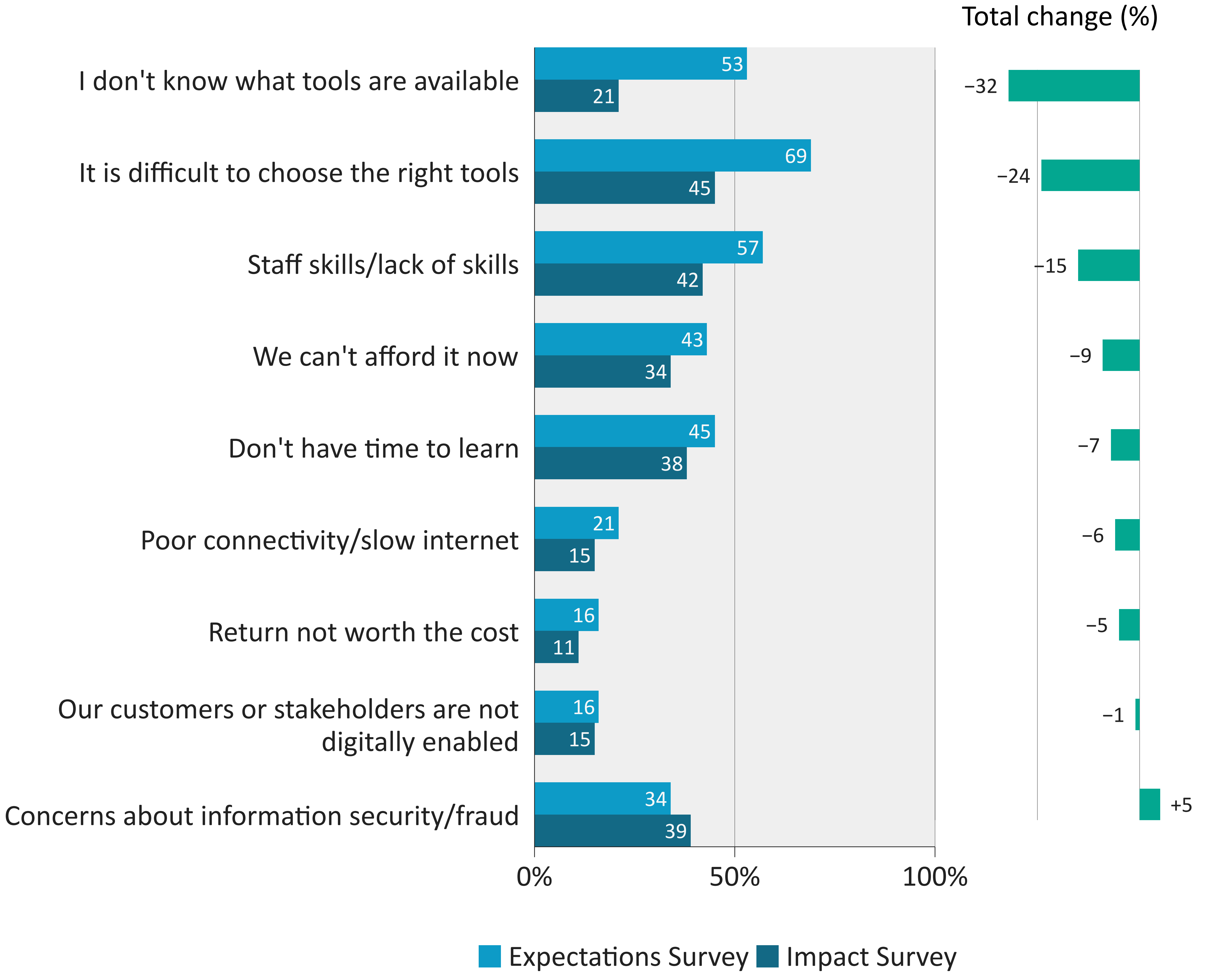
Three months after registering with Digital Boost, there had been a **significant reduction** in the proportion of Impact Survey respondents who reported that their biggest barriers to becoming more digital were their lack of digital knowledge and skill.

One in three **no longer** agreed they 'don't know what tools are available' (a 32% change – from 53% who had agreed in the Expectations Survey – down to 21% in the Impact Survey). Plus, one in four no longer found it 'difficult to choose the right tools' (a 24% change from 69% who had agreed down to 45%). Concerns about the lack of staff skills had declined by 15% to 42%.

The one area where concerns had increased (by 5% to 39%) was around **information security and fraud**, which probably reflected an increased awareness of the potential threats these pose to businesses.

One in five Impact Survey respondents reported that they were aware of 'The Right Tool' website (19%).

Figure 8: Attitude changes towards barriers that stop the business becoming more online and digital (% who agree)



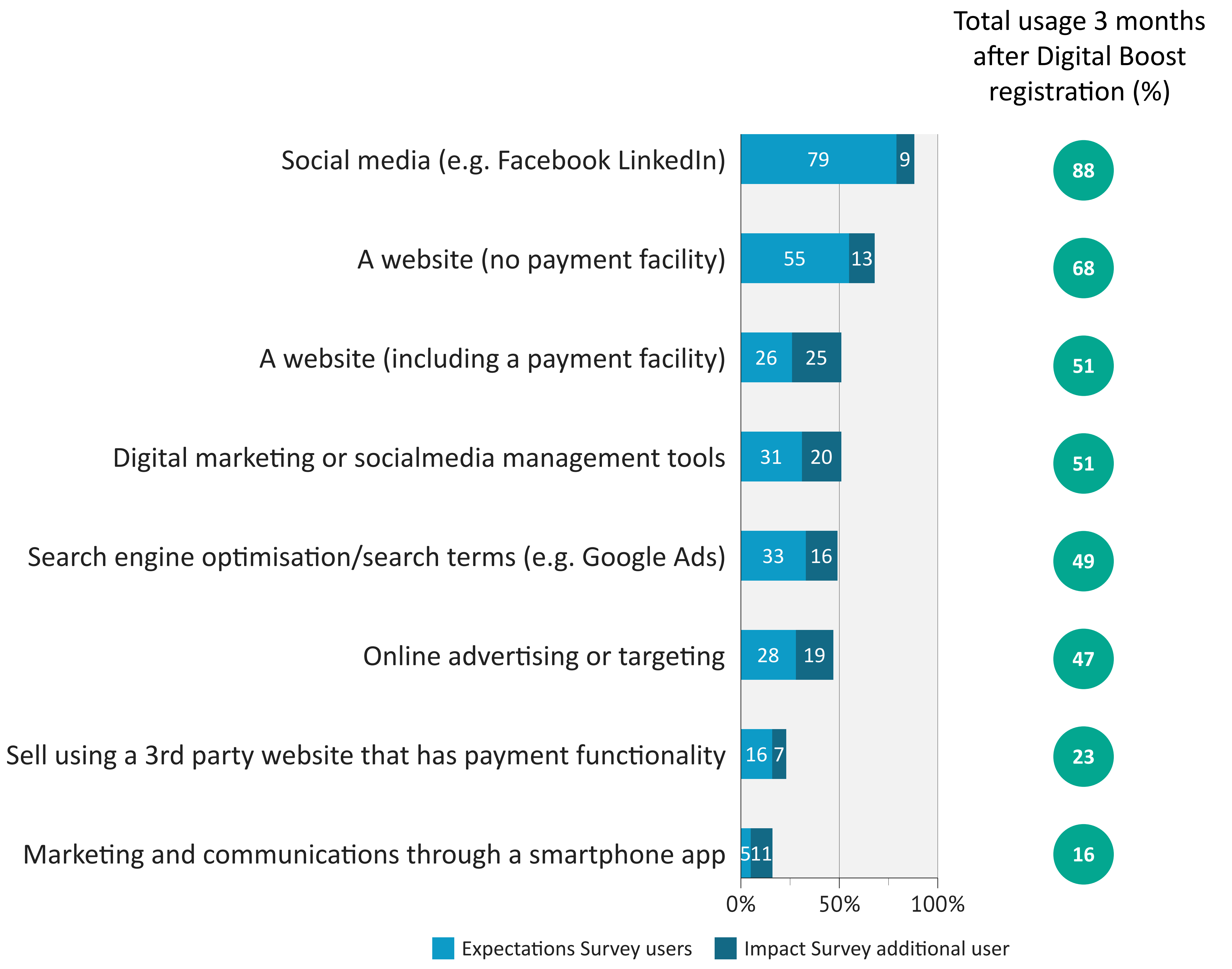
Impact Survey (n=611)

Participation in Digital Boost had significantly increased the use of external digital tools by registrants

As reported earlier, one-half of Impact Survey respondents reported that their business was now using **new** digital tools. Not only were greater numbers of participating businesses using digital tools, but they were using more **complex** digital tools.

One in four Impact Survey respondents reported that after three months of participating in Digital Boost their business now had a **website with a payment facility** (a 25% change - from 26% in the Expectations Survey – up to 51% in the Impact Survey). Plus, one in five more now used **digital marketing or social media management tools** (a 20% change - from 31% to 51%) and **online advertising or targeting** (a 19% change - from 28% to 47%).

Figure 9: Changes in use of key external digital tools (%)



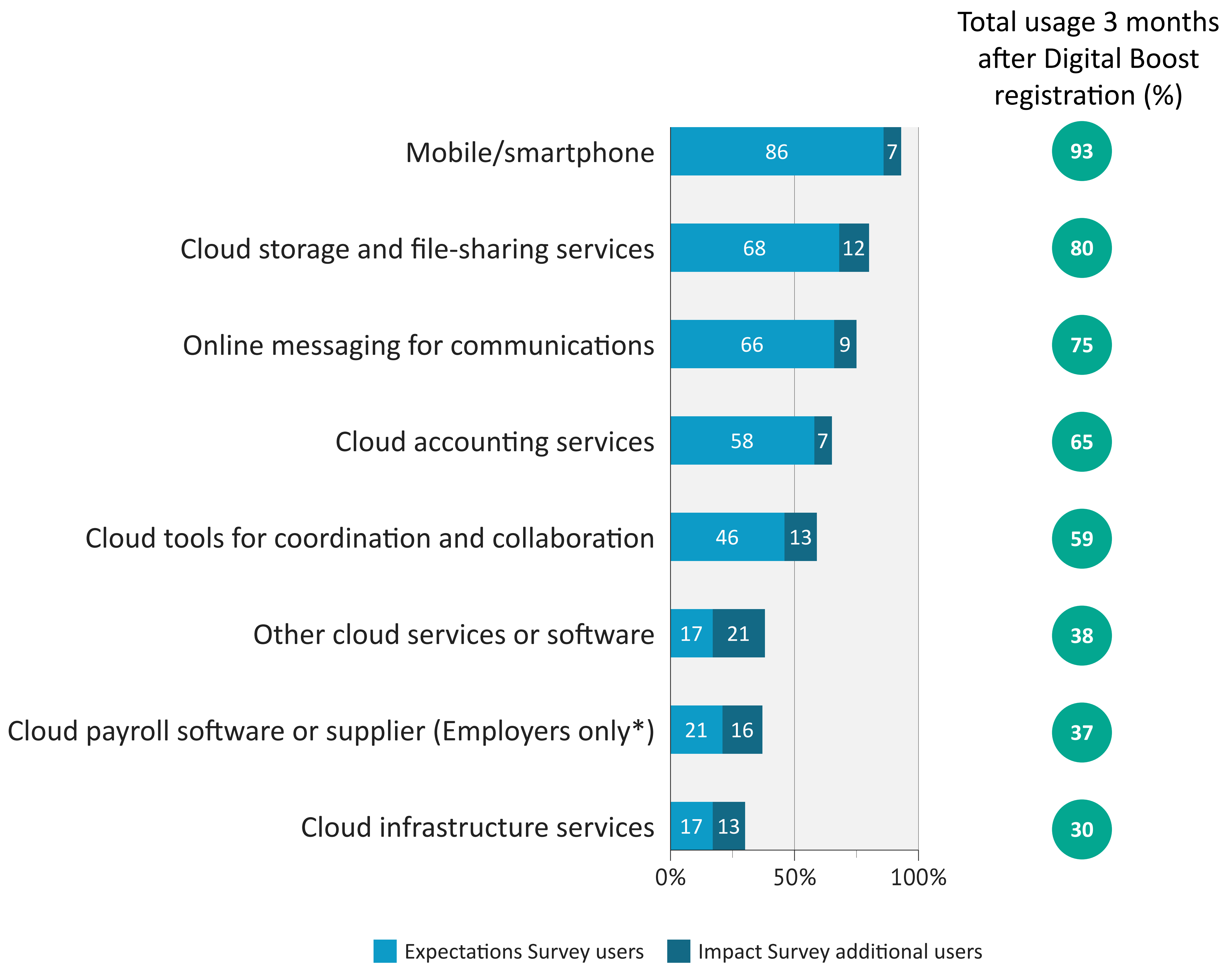
Respondents who completed both the Expectations and Impact Surveys (n=611)

Significantly more registrants were also using internal digital tools

Similar to the growth pattern seen in relation to external digital tool usage, the Impact Survey also showed an increase by registrants in both the use of internal digital tools, and they had started using **more** complex digital tools (including cloud-based solutions).

One in five more small businesses had started using **'other cloud services or software'** after participating in Digital Boost (a 21% change – from 17% in the Expectations Survey – up to 38% in the Impact Survey), and over one in ten more registrants had started using **cloud tools for coordination and collaboration, cloud infrastructure services**, and/or **cloud storage and file-sharing services**.

Figure 10: Percentage using specific internal digital tools (%)



Respondents who completed both the Expectations and Impact Surveys (n=611)
*Subsample based on employers only (n=331)

Section 2 Summary

The impact of participating in the Digital Boost programme

The key findings from this section are as follows:

- Three months after registering with Digital Boost, most **Impact** Survey respondents reported their business had already taken **many steps** towards becoming more online and digital.
- One-half had already changed their use of existing digital tools, and the same proportion had started using new or different tools.
- There was also **increased use** of more complex external and internal digital tools. One in four registrants reported their business had added a website with a payment facility, and one in five more had started using digital marketing or social media management tools, while another one in five more had started using other cloud services or software.
- Participation in Digital Boost had also had a positive impact on allaying respondents’ concerns - there was a **significant reduction** in the proportion who reported that lack of digital knowledge and skills (the two biggest barriers) were stopping their business from becoming more online and digital.

Section 3

Business Impacts from Digital Boost participation

Some Digital Boost registrants had already seen positive impacts on their business, although others faced increased costs and time commitment

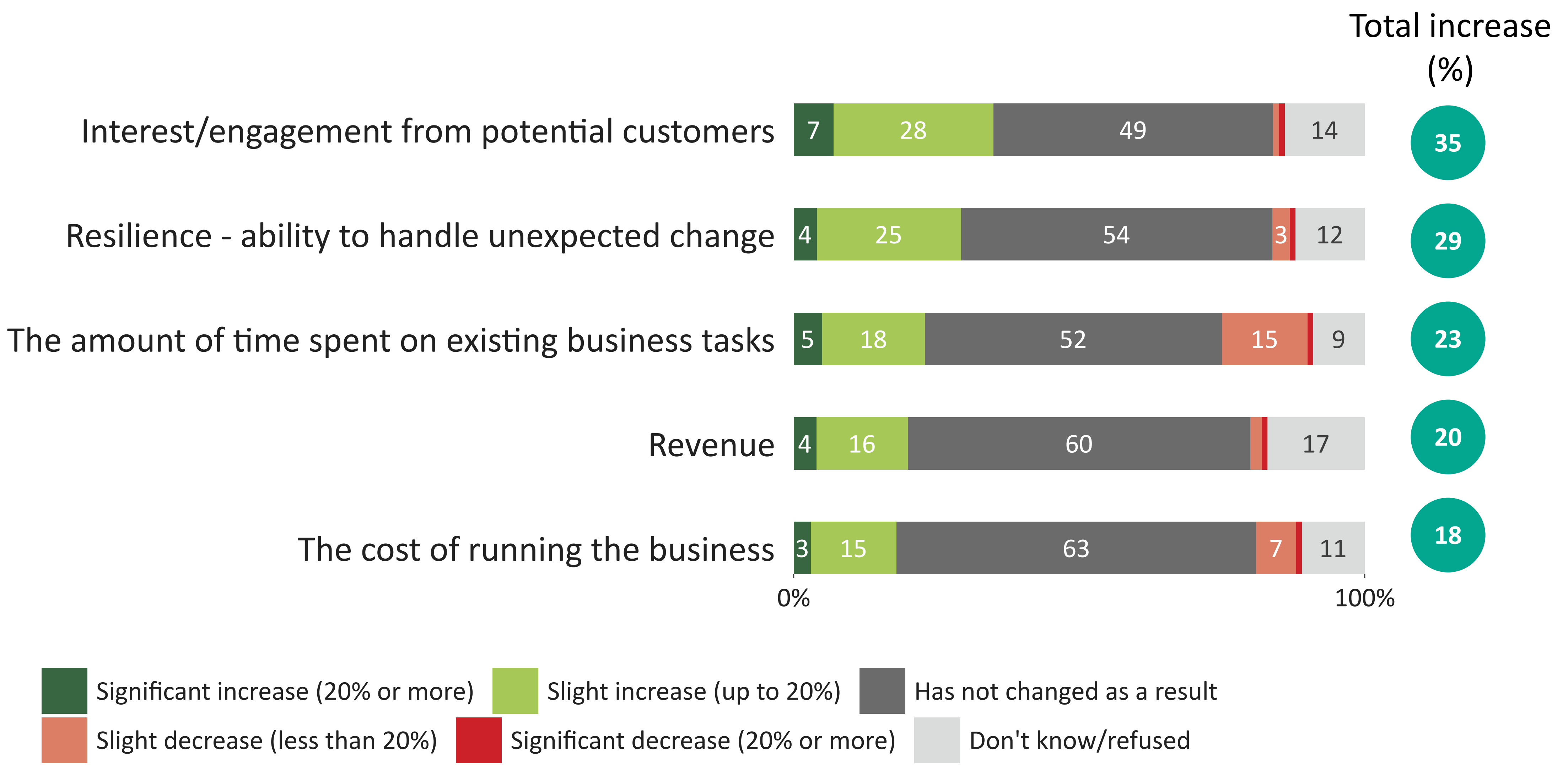
After the relatively short period of three months since they registered with Digital Boost, around 25-40% of respondents had already experienced **many impacts** on their business in terms of their business's costs, revenue, time commitment, resilience and customer engagement.

Early **positive impacts** were that around one in three users (35%) experienced increased engagement from potential customers, over one in four had increased resilience within their business (29%) and one in five reported increased revenue (20%).

Although 50-60% had not seen any impacts yet, in time we would expect to see them benefiting from participation in Digital Boost.

Given the time and costs associated with the adoption and practical implementation of new digital tools, one-in-five reported increased costs in running their business (18%), while one-in-four experienced increased time completing business tasks (23%). However, given the benefits of digital uptake, we expect these will be short-lived.

Figure 11: Digital Boost - Impacts on businesses



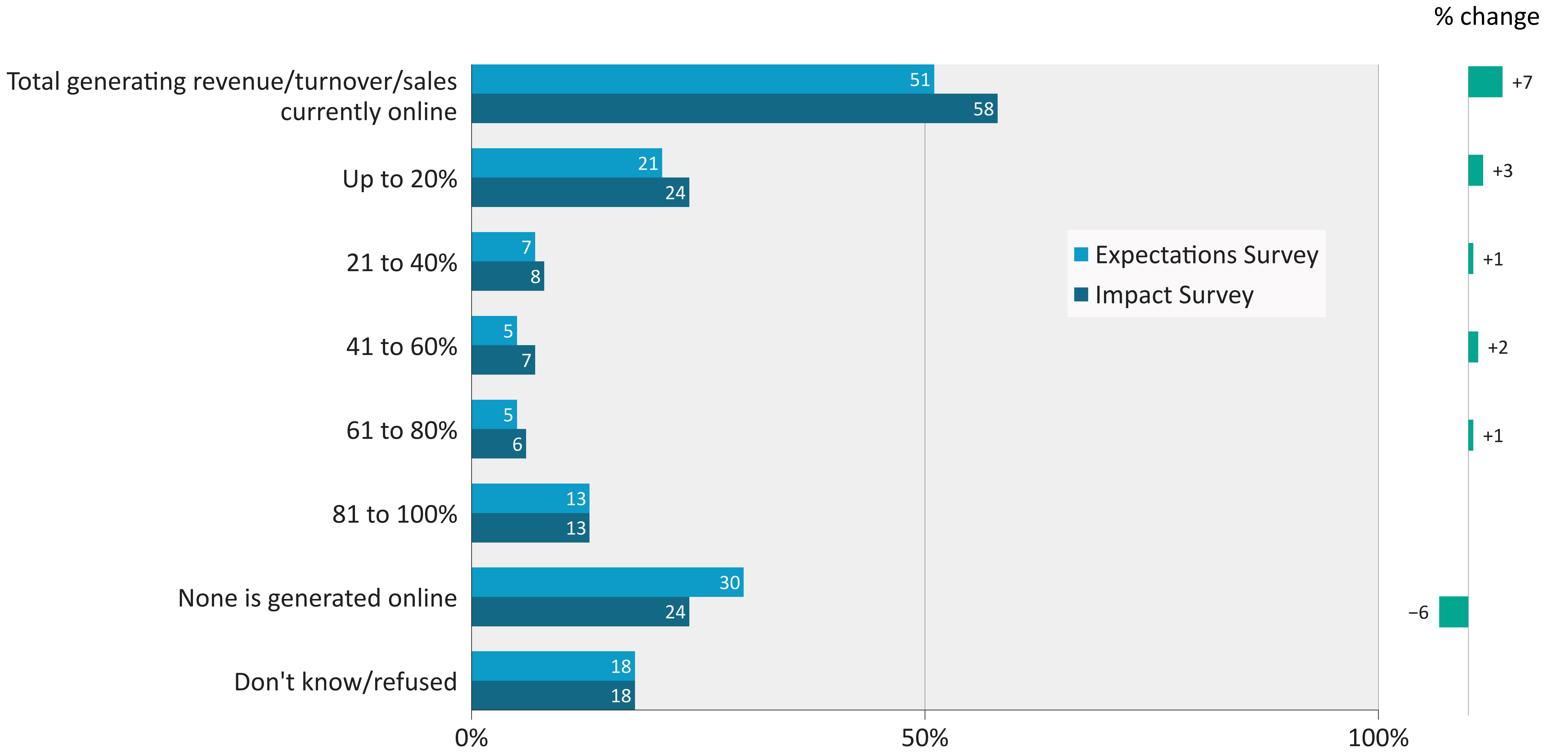
Impact Survey respondents who visited Digital Boost after registering (n=575)

There was a slight increase in the proportion of registrants’ businesses that generated online revenue

As the Impact Survey has shown an increase in the proportion of businesses with websites (with a payment facility), we would hope to eventually see some registrants have an associated increase in revenue from online sales.

So far, just three months after registering there had already been a **modest lift** of seven percent more businesses now generating revenue online – starting from 51% in the Expectations Survey - up 7% - to 58% in the Impact Survey.

Figure 12: The percentage of businesses’ revenue/turnover/sales currently generated online



Respondents who completed both the Expectations and Impact Surveys (n=611)

One in ten owners experienced increased satisfaction with their business's performance

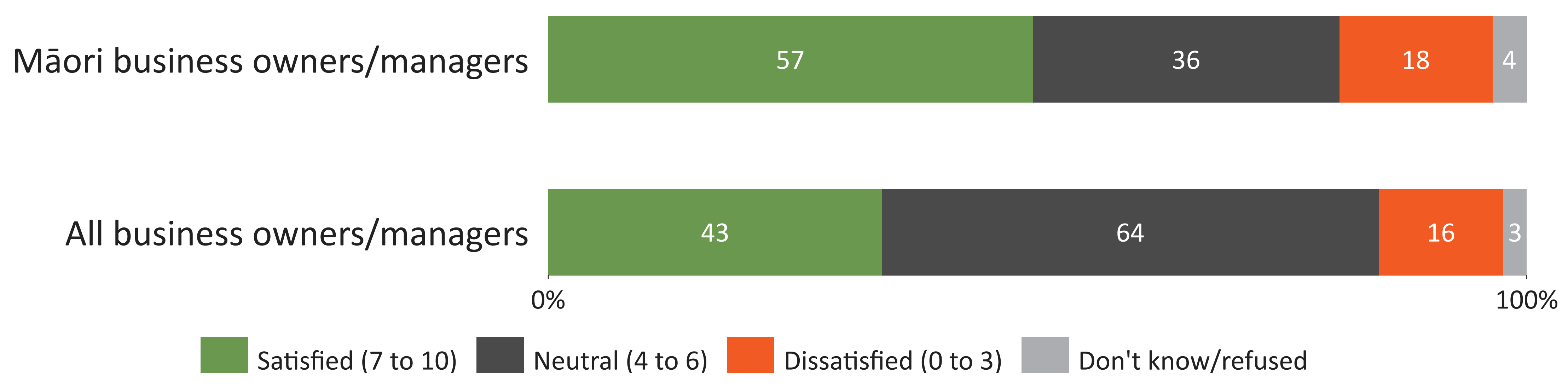
Three months after registering with Digital Boost, one in ten business owners (10%) reported increased satisfaction with their business's current performance compared to three months previously. Although we can't attribute this directly to participation in Digital Boost, the question was asked within the context of the two surveys which asked about their Digital Boost experiences.

Two-fifths of owners (38%) reported themselves 'satisfied' with their business's current performance in the Expectations Survey, and this had increased ten percent - up to 48% 'satisfied' - in the Impact Survey.

('Satisfied' means they gave a rating from 7 to 10 on a scale from 0 'very dissatisfied' to 10 'very satisfied'.)

Overall, around one-half of Impact Survey respondents were satisfied (48% rated 7 to 10), one-third neutral (35% rated 4 to 6) and one-sixth dissatisfied (16% rated 0 to 3).

Figure 13: Owners' satisfaction with their business's current performance



Based on business owners, including those self-employed (n=398)

Section 3 Summary

Business Impacts from Digital Boost participation

The key findings from this section are as follows:

- Three months after registering with Digital Boost, some registrants had already noticed **many impacts** on their businesses, including increased customer interest and resilience within their business. One in five had reported an increase in revenue.
- Just three months on, there had already been a modest lift in the proportion of businesses generating revenue online, reflecting the increase in the proportion of businesses with websites (with a payment facility).
- Not unexpectedly, others reported increases in both business costs and time commitment.

Section 4

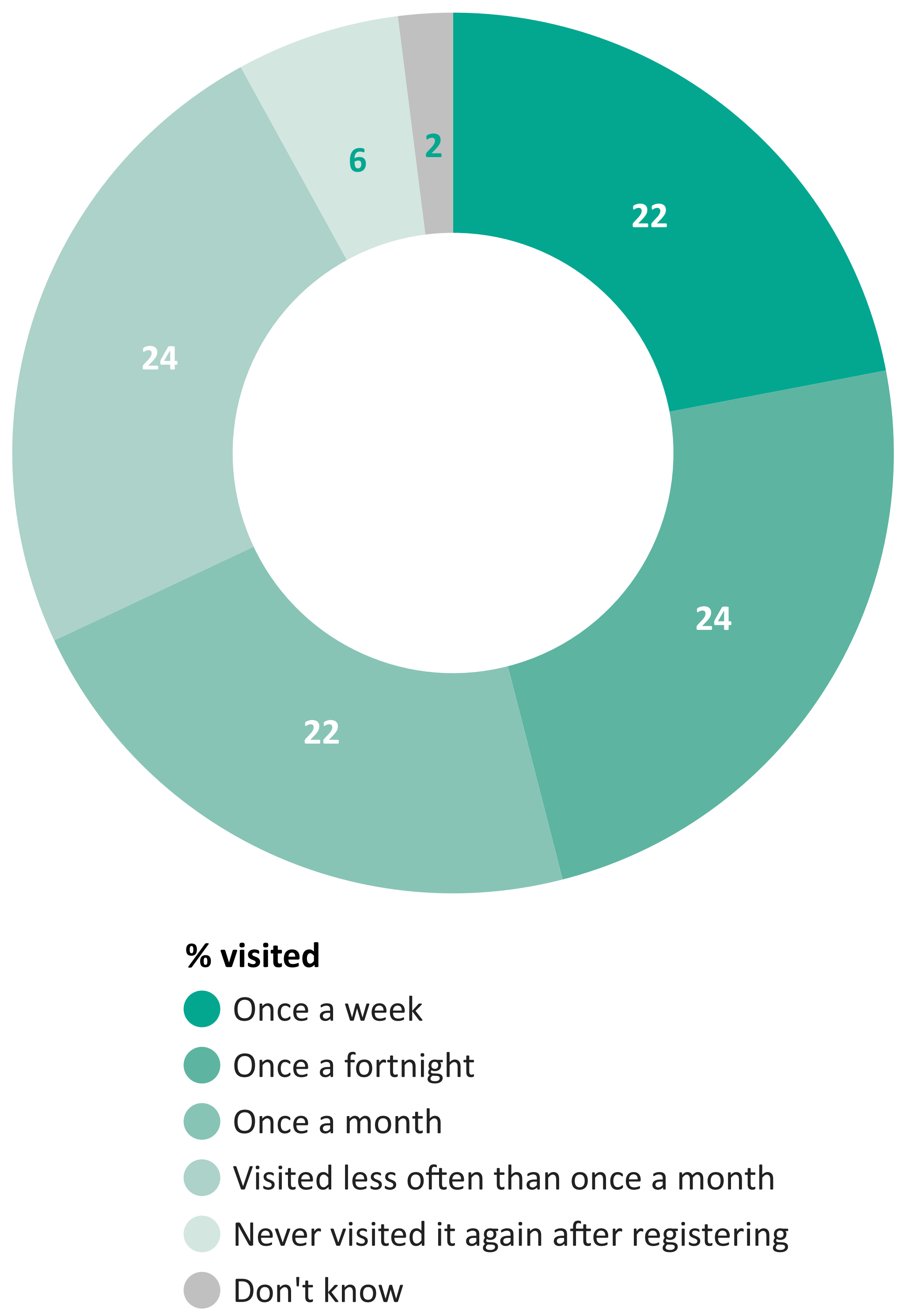
Digital Boost participation experience

Almost half of Impact Survey respondents visited Digital Boost at least once a fortnight

Two-thirds of Impact Survey respondents stated they had visited Digital Boost at least once a month (68%), including almost one-half who visited at least once a fortnight (46%), and one in five who visited once a week (22%). However, one in five had visited less often than once a month (24%) and 6% never visited again after registering.

"I think the Digital Boost programme is amazing. I can't believe such a well thought-out and planned programme exists and for free! I feel like more people need to know this is available for them. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time so far and learnt a lot to help the small business I work in."

Figure 14: Frequency of visits to Digital Boost



Impact Survey (n=611)

Digital Marketing was the most visited and most useful part of Digital Boost

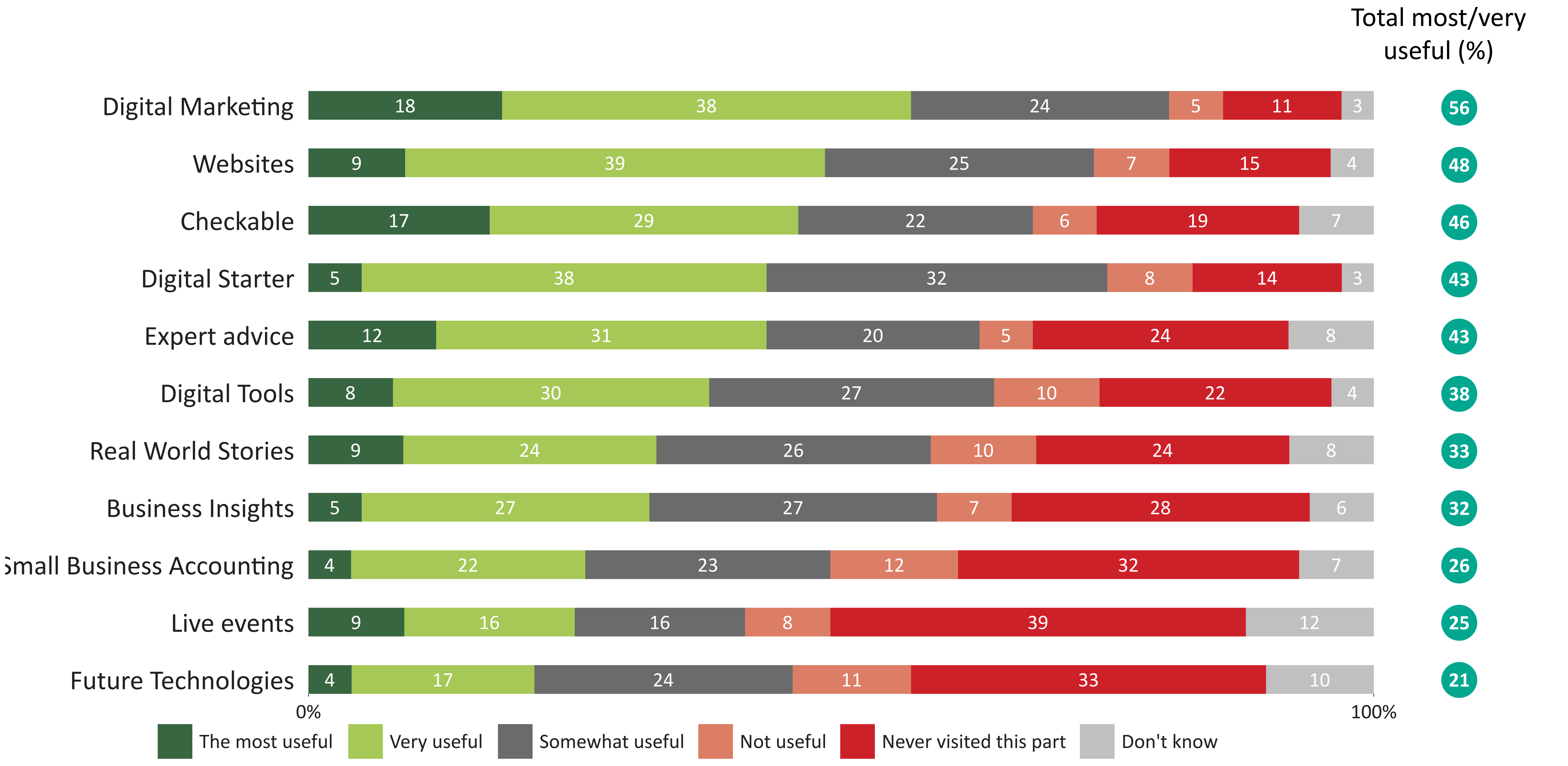
The most popular parts of Digital Boost, visited by at least eight out of ten registrants were Digital Marketing (89%), Digital Starter (86%), Websites (85%), Checkable (81%) and Digital Tools (78%).

Figure 15: Parts of Digital Boost visited (%)

Impact Survey (n=611)

Over one-half (56%) rated Digital Marketing as 'the most' or 'very' useful part of Digital Boost, followed by Websites and Checkable (at 48% and 46% respectively).

Figure 16: Rating the most useful parts of Digital Boost

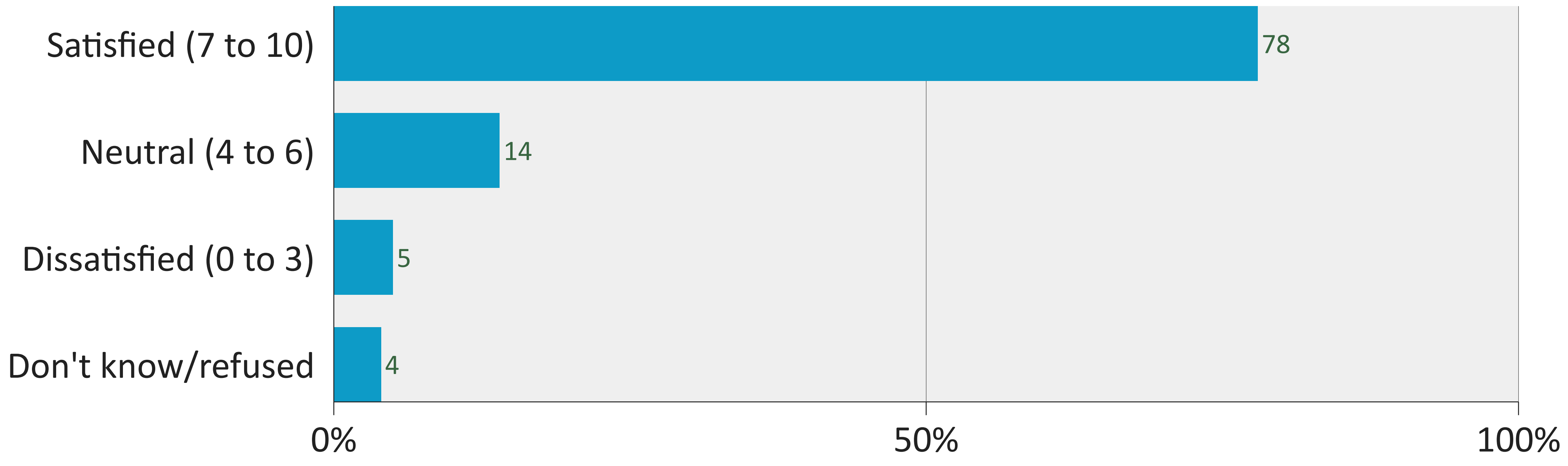


Impact Survey (n=611)

Most Digital Boost users were satisfied with their learning experience

Almost eight out of ten Digital Boost users were satisfied with their **overall learning experience** through Digital Boost. (They gave a rating from 7 to 10 on a scale where 0 is 'very dissatisfied' and 10 'very satisfied'.) Just five percent were dissatisfied (gave a rating from 0 to 3).

Figure 17: Overall satisfaction with Digital Boost (%)



Impact Survey respondents who visited Digital Boost after registering (n=575)

"We have benefitted from working as a team via the Whanganui Chamber of Commerce using the Boost Platform as the basis of learning (Digital Transformation Series). Sharing our knowledge and working collectively to motivate each other to apply new knowledge to our individual and collective businesses is the secret to short and long-term success, not only in digital awareness, but in creating a habit of continuous business development."

Digital Boost has had an impact on Māori and Pasifika business owners and managers who have used it

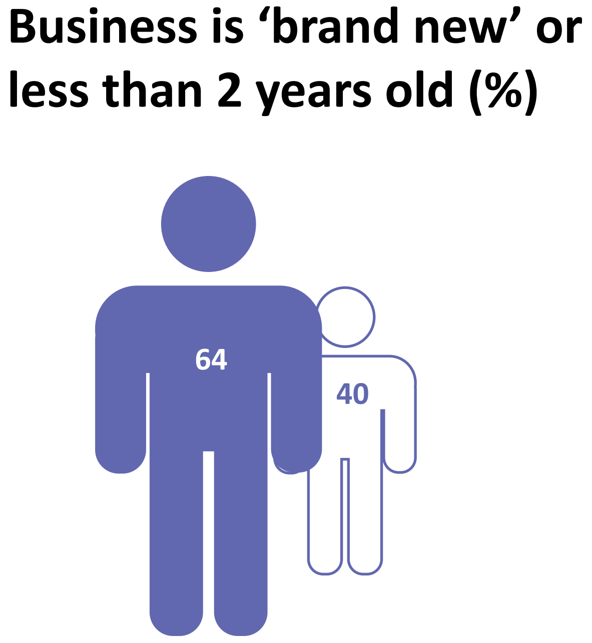
Overall, seven percent of Impact Survey respondents were Māori business owners or managers, and two percent were Pasifika business owners or managers.

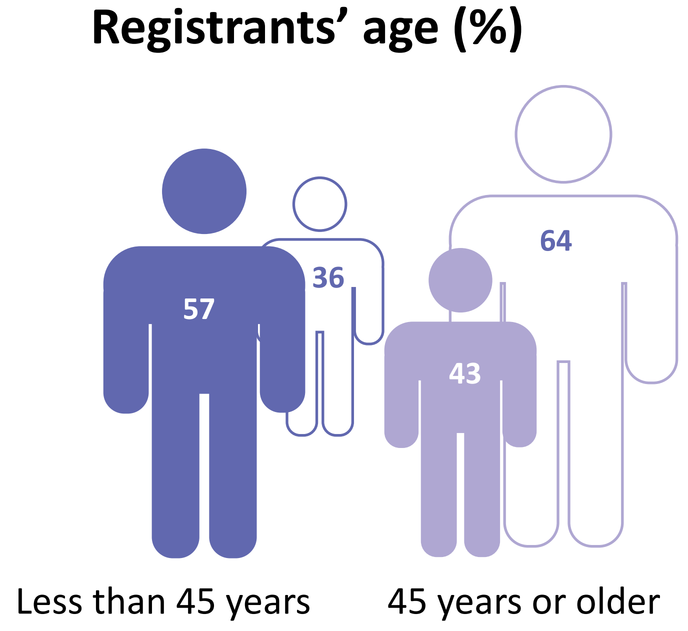
An overview of the Māori business owners and managers follows:

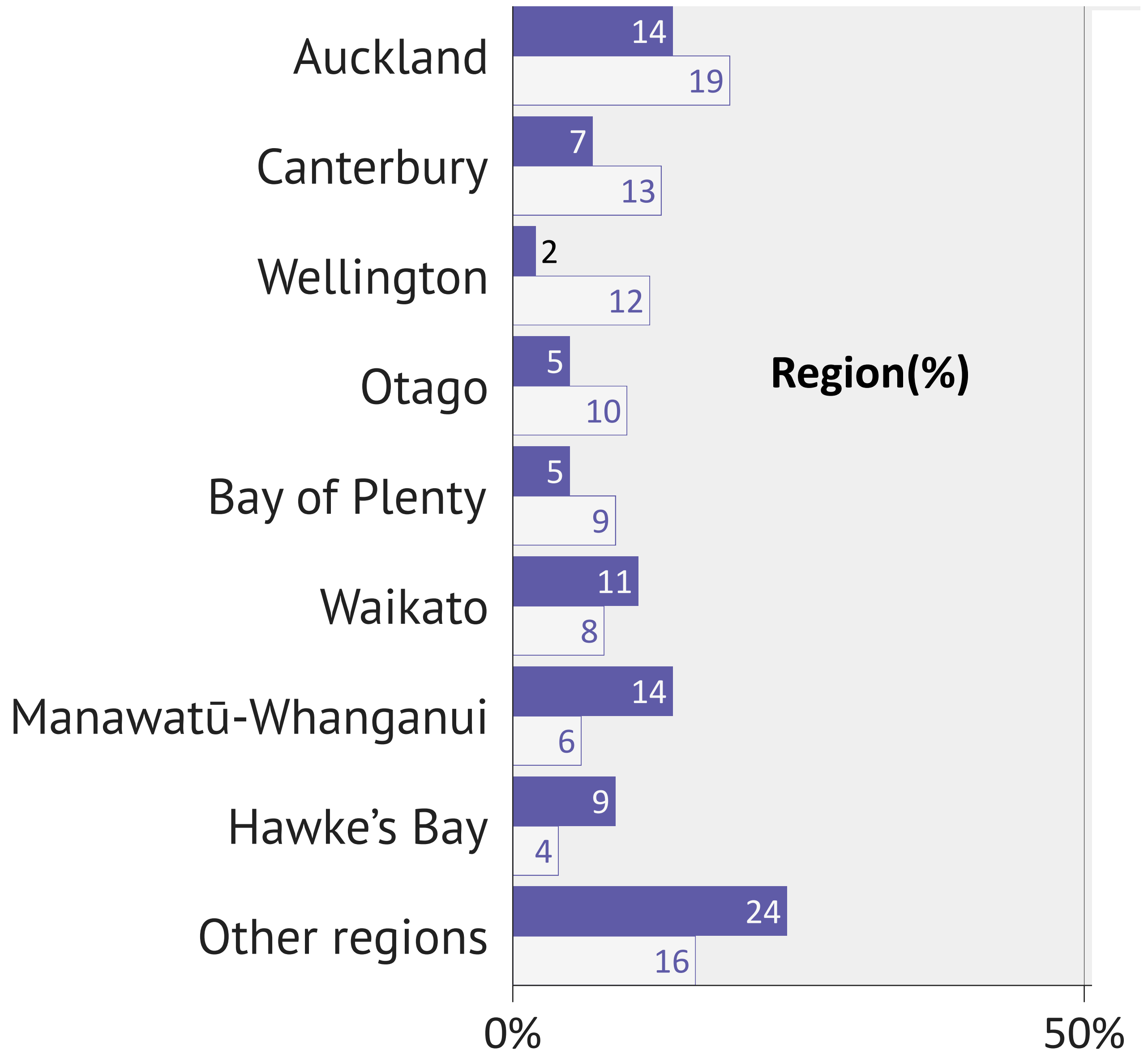
- Two-thirds worked in businesses that were ‘brand new’ or less than two years old (64%), compared to 40% of all business owners/managers.
- They were based predominantly in Auckland (14%), Manawatu-Whanganui (14%), Waikato (11%) and Hawke’s Bay (9%).
- Almost three out of five were aged less than 45 years (57%) compared to one-third of all business owners/managers (36%).

Figure 18: Business owners/managers – key demographics (%)

Māori business owners/managers | All business owners/managers

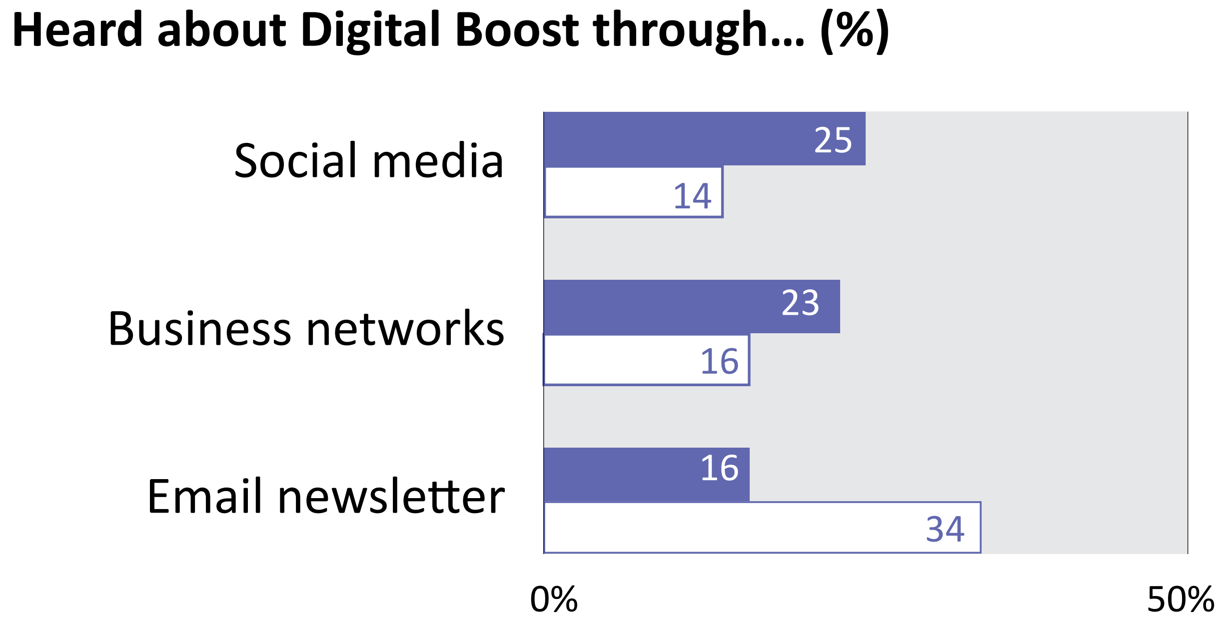






One quarter of Māori business owners and managers first heard about Digital Boost through social media (25%), and business networks (23%). They were less likely than other owners/managers to have learnt about it from an email newsletter (16% compared to 34%).

Figure 19: Main ways business owners/managers heard about Digital Boost (%)

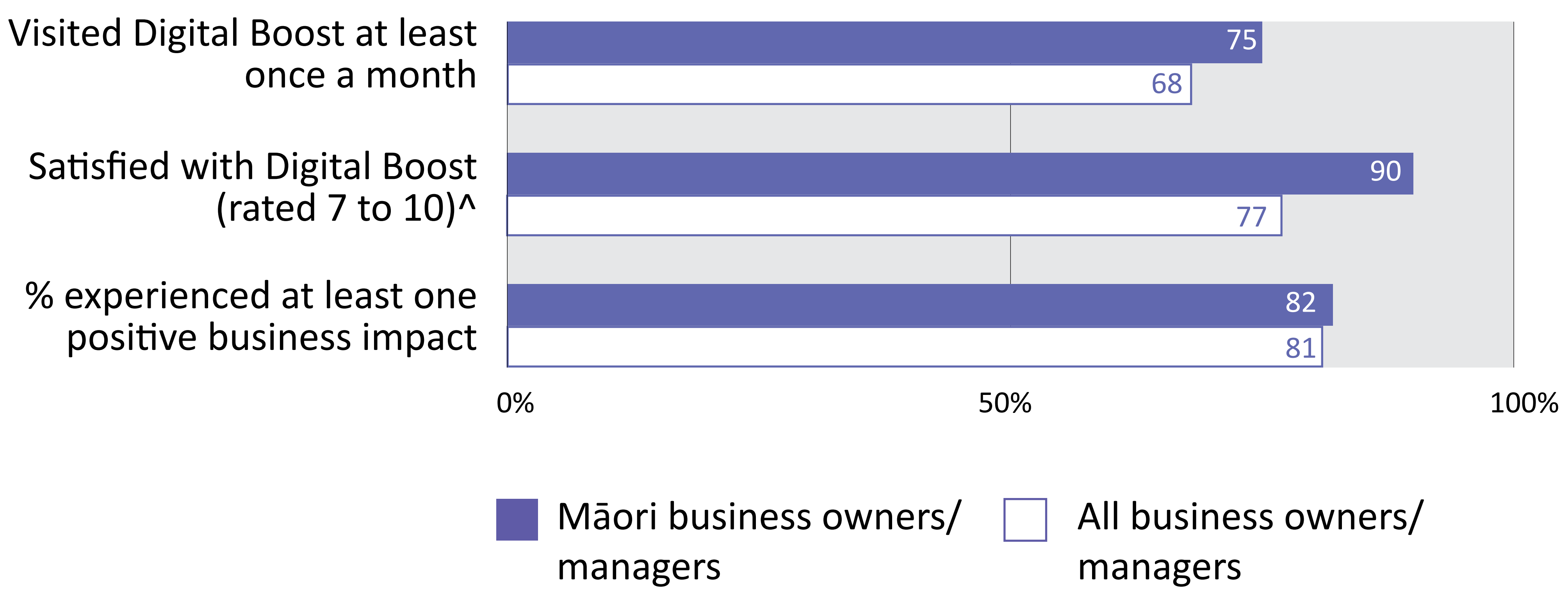


Based on business owners and managers, (including self-employed): All (n=485), Māori (n=44).

Māori and Pasifika business owners and managers reported positive impacts from participating in Digital Boost.

Three-quarters of the Māori business owners or managers had visited Digital Boost at least once a month (75%), and 90% reported they were satisfied. More than four-fifths had experienced at least one positive impact from participating in Digital Boost (82%).

Figure 20: Business owners/managers' experience of participating in Digital Boost



Based on business owners and managers, (including self-employed): All (n=485), Māori (n=44).
^Based on business owners and managers (including self-employed) who had visited Digital Boost since registering: All (n=460), Māori (n=42).

Due to the small sample size for Pasifika business owners and managers (n=14) their results are indicative only. A summary follows:

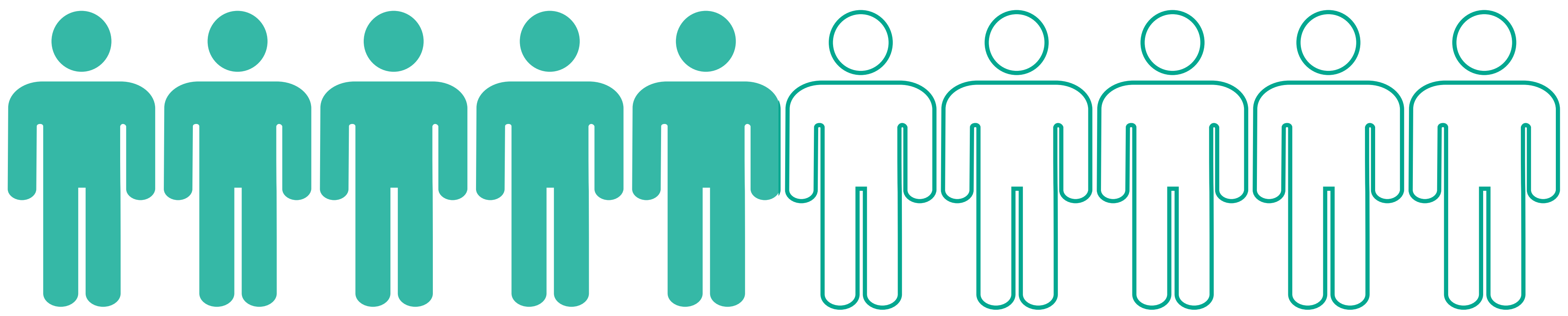
- Three-fifths of Pasifika business owners and managers were based in Auckland.
- Two-fifths worked in businesses less than two years old.
- Two-fifths heard about Digital Boost from an email newsletter and less than 10% from social media.
- Two-thirds had visited Digital Boost at least once a month.
- More than four-fifths were satisfied with Digital Boost and had experienced at least one positive business impact.

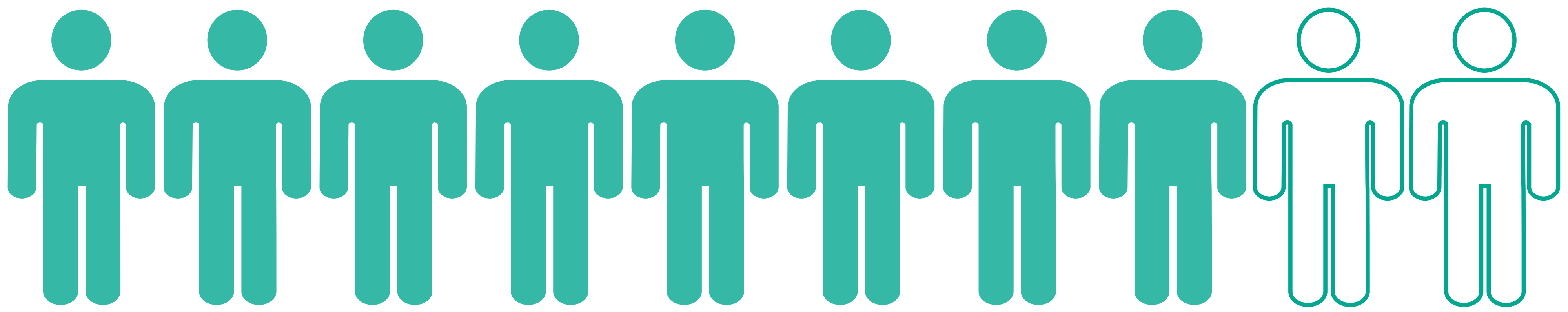
Section 4 Summary

Digital Boost participation experience

The key findings from this section are as follows:

- Almost half the registrants were sufficiently engaged that they continued to visit Digital Boost at least once a fortnight.
- Digital Marketing was both the **most visited** and **most useful** part of Digital Boost, so it's not surprising that we have seen increased use of external digital tools including digital marketing, online advertising, search engine optimisation, and social media.
- Reinforcing the level of engagement noted above, almost eight out of ten Digital Boost users reported they were satisfied with their overall learning experience through Digital Boost.





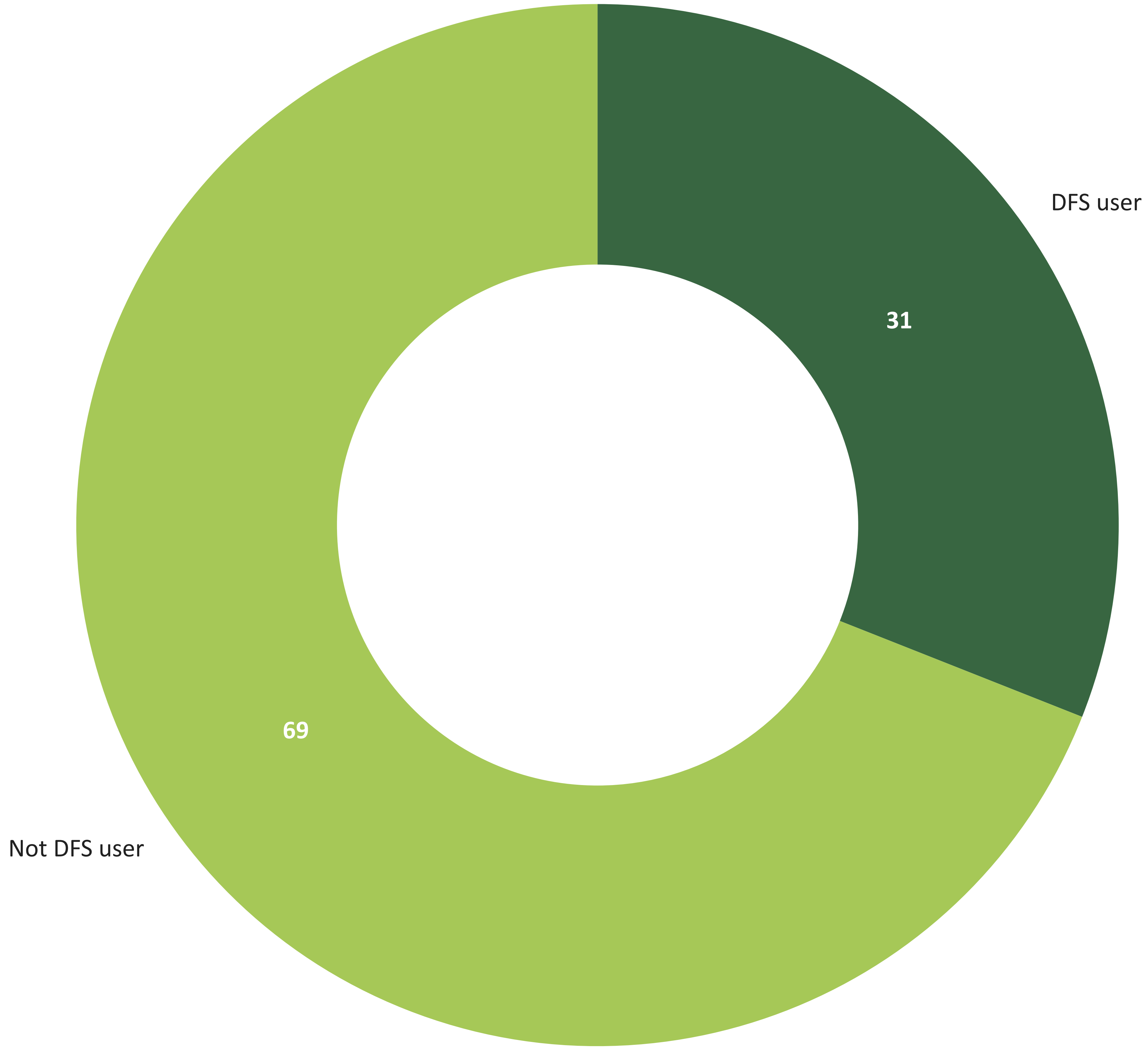
Section 5

The impact of the Digital Facilitation Scheme

Almost one-third had used the Digital Facilitation Scheme

Just under one-third (31%) of the Digital Boost registrants who completed the Impact Survey, had participated in the Digital Facilitation Scheme (DFS). This section compares these ‘DFS users’ with the 69% who were “not DFS users”.

Figure 21: Proportion who had participated in the Digital Facilitation Scheme (%)



DFS users tended to be existing businesses in provincial areas

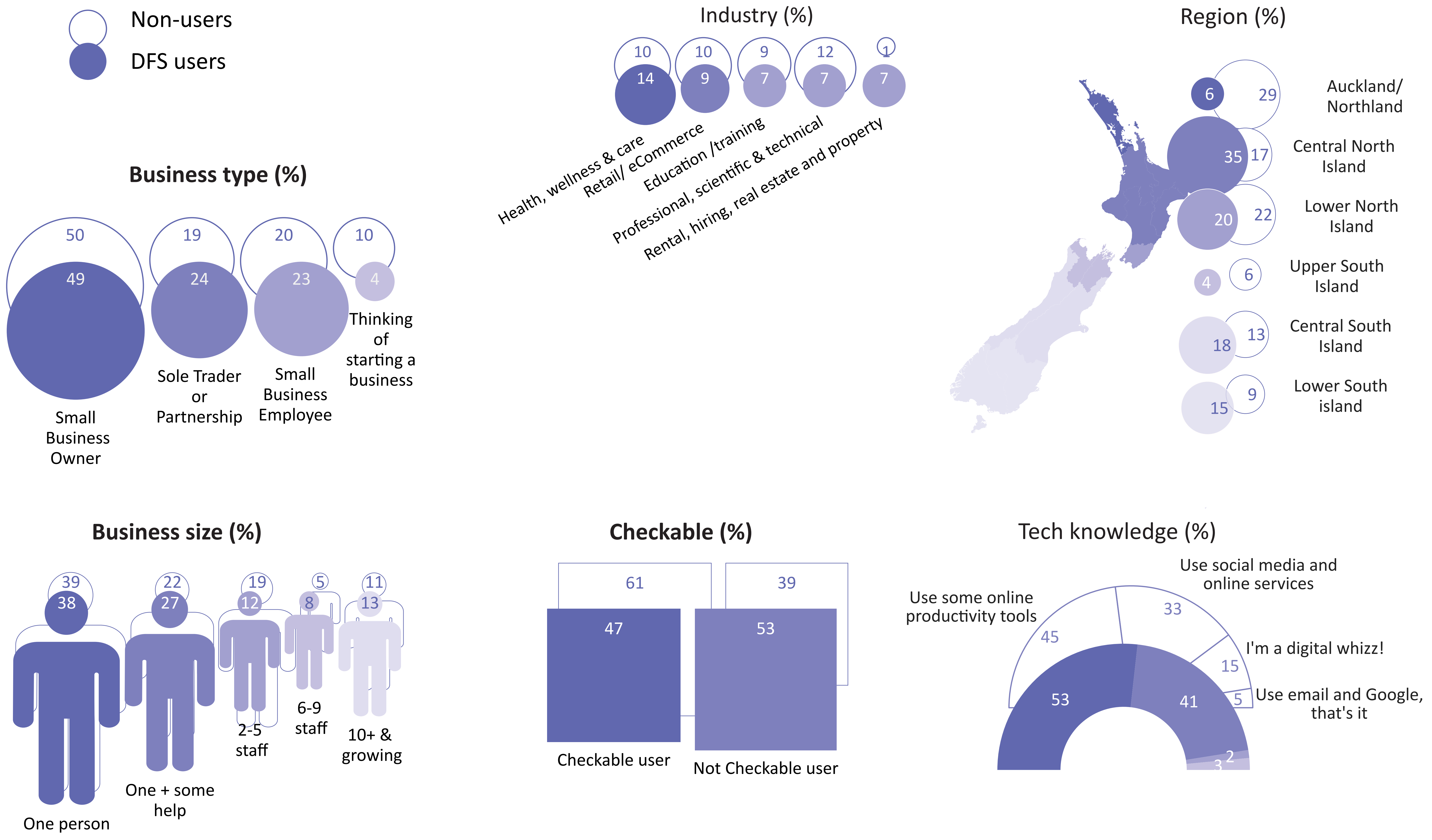
The **Digital Facilitation Scheme** users (in comparison to the non-users) were more likely to have been:

- Based in the Central North Island (35% compared to 17%), and the South Island (37% cf. 28%), and fewer were in Auckland/ Northland (6% cf. 29%).
- Working in existing businesses (96% cf. 89%).
- Working in Rental, Hiring, Real Estate and Property industries (7% cf. 1%), and were less likely to be in the Professional, Scientific & Technical industries (7% cf. 12%).

Two-thirds (65%) were basically a one-person business (one person, plus some help) at their registration, and fewer DFS users had businesses with 2 to 5 staff (12% c.f. 19% of non-users).

When they registered, the DFS users were less likely to have reported that they were a 'digital whizz' (2% compared to 15% of the non-users), or to be a Checkable user (47% cf. 61%).

Figure 22: Business demographics of DFS users versus Non-users



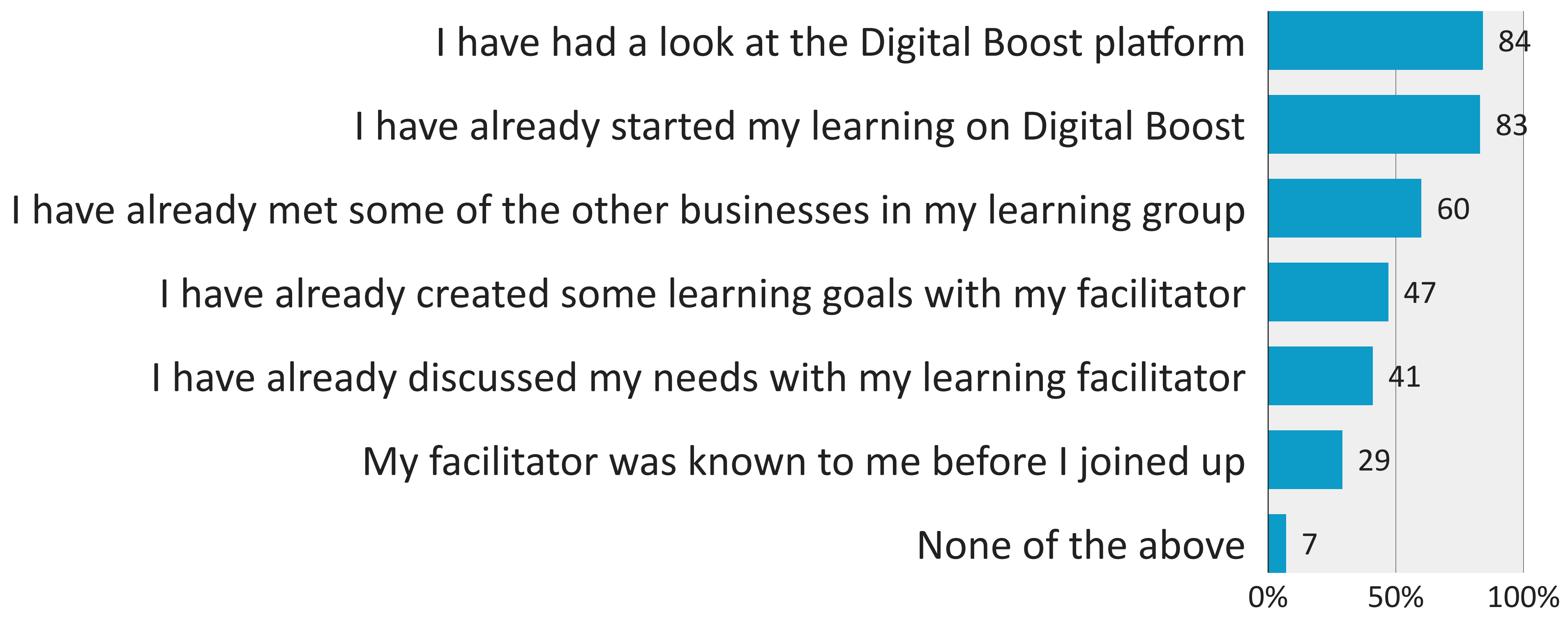
Respondents who completed both the Expectations and Impact Surveys. DFS users (n=190), Non-users (n=421).

Most Digital Facilitation Scheme users were familiar with Digital Boost and understood the DFS processes

Almost three out of ten respondents (29%) were Digital Facilitation Scheme (DFS) users when they completed the initial Expectations Survey. Eight out of ten DFS users were familiar with Digital Boost as they had already looked at the platform (84%) and started their Digital Boost learning (83%).

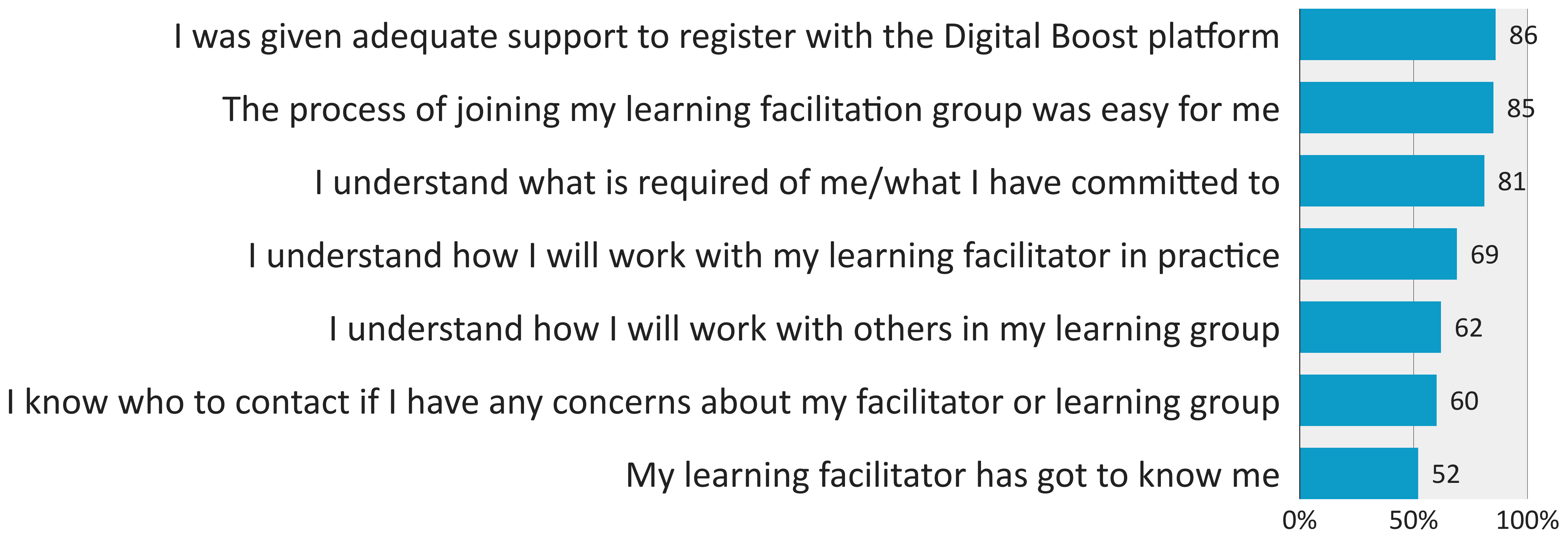
Most were positive about their Digital Facilitation Scheme onboarding experience. Eight out of ten reported they were given adequate support to register with Digital Boost (86%) and that the process of joining their learning facilitation group was easy (85%).

Figure 23: DFS onboarding impressions (% who agree)



Based on respondents who were DFS users when they did the Expectations Survey (n=174)

Figure 24: DFS onboarding experience (% who agree)



Based on respondents who were DFS users when they did the Expectations Survey (n=174)

DFS users were very positive about the performance of the facilitator and the course content

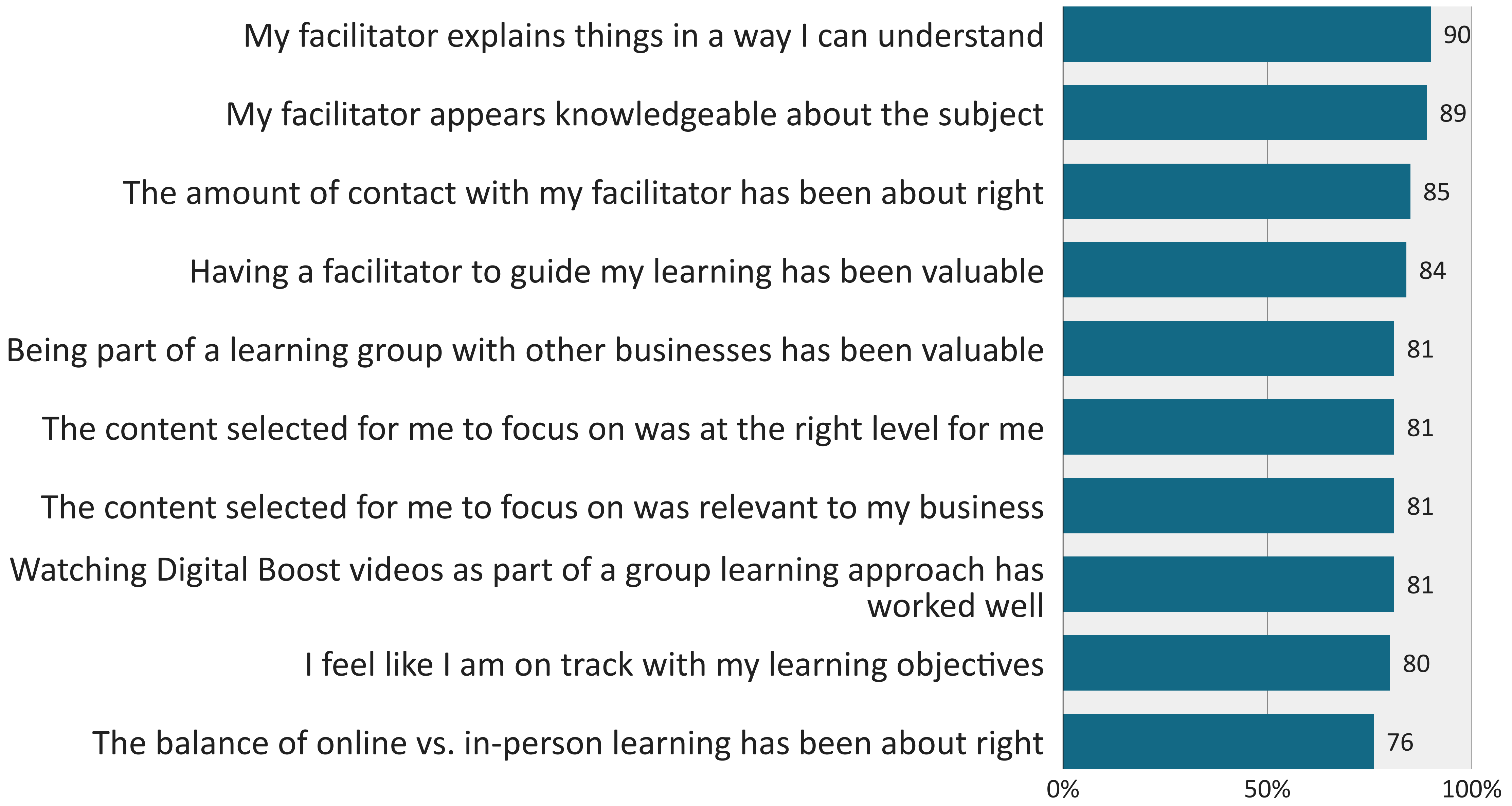
By the time of the Impact Survey, almost one in three respondents were DFS users (31%), as they joined at different stages of their Digital Boost journey.

The majority were very positive about their DFS experience. Nine out of ten agreed their facilitator explained things in an understandable way (90%), was knowledgeable (89%) and the amount of facilitator contact was about right (85%).

"Our facilitator is doing an awesome job of guiding us through the content and material in a manner that is logical and there is a lot to learn and homework research to do. The online discussions and access to someone who gives answers and can discuss my business is fantastic. We watch the videos by ourselves and can then talk through any questions or thoughts in our forums group. The videos are great."

"Facilitator is excellent. I'm not as up to date with my learning objectives as I'm too busy to properly follow through on the work I should be doing. :)"

Figure 25: DFS learning experience (% who agree)



Based on respondents who were DFS users when they did the Impact Survey (n=190)

90% of DFS users agreed their business would benefit from increasing their digital capability

Nine out of ten DFS users agreed their business would **benefit** from making greater use of digital tools or being more online (90%), compared to eight out of ten non-users (79%).

Since the Expectations Survey, there was a slight increase in the proportion of DFS users who agreed they '**would benefit**' from increased digital capability (up 6%), while the proportion of non-DFS users who agreed they 'would benefit' decreased by 5%.

Figure 26: Agreement that the business/workplace would benefit from making greater use of digital tools or being more online (% agree)

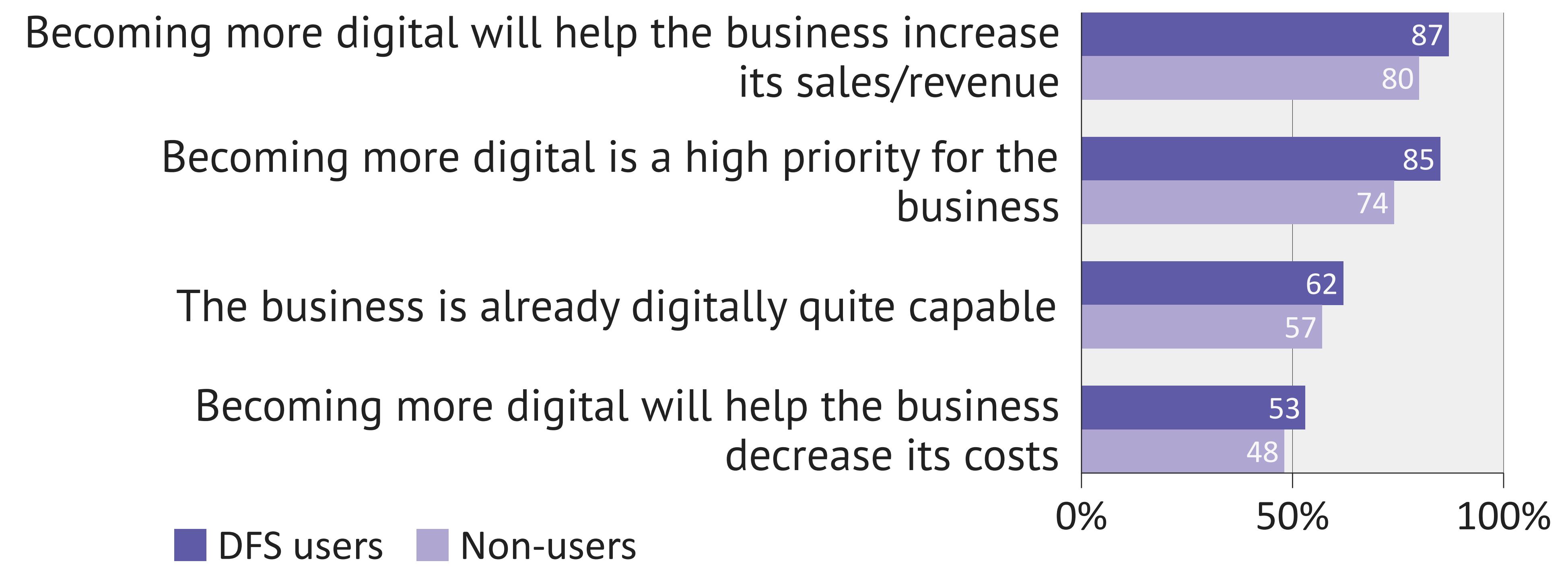
			% change between Expectations and Impact Surveys	
	DFS users	Non-users	DFS users	Non-users
Agree	90	79	6	-5
Neither agree nor disagree	8	14	5	7
Disagree	1	6	-8	-1

Respondents who completed both the Expectations and Impact Surveys. DFS users (n=190), Non-users (n=421).

Becoming more digital was a high priority for DFS users, especially to help increase business revenue

Three months after registering with Digital Boost, the DFS users were significantly more likely than the non-users to have **agreed** that 'becoming more digital' was a **'high priority'** for their business (85% cf. 74%) and 'will help the business **increase its sales/revenue'** (87% cf. 80%).

Figure 27: Impact Survey – attitudes towards becoming digital (% who agree)



Respondents who completed both the Expectations and Impact Surveys. DFS users (n=190), Non-users (n=421).

Barriers to becoming more digital decreased significantly for DFS users

When they initially registered with Digital Boost, a significantly higher proportion of DFS users (compared to the non-users) agreed that it was **‘difficult to choose** the right tools’ (76% cf. 66%) and they **didn’t know** ‘what tools were available’ (65% cf. 48%).

After three months of Digital Boost, one-half of DFS users (48%) **no longer agreed** that **lack of knowledge** of available tools was a barrier, and more than one-third (37%) **no longer** thought it was **difficult** to choose the right tools.

Staff skills or lack of skills was also no longer viewed as a barrier by one-fifth of DFS users (22%). These improvements were significantly higher for the DFS group compared to those who had not participated in the Digital Facilitation Scheme.

Figure 28: Factors that stop businesses from being more online and digital (% agree)

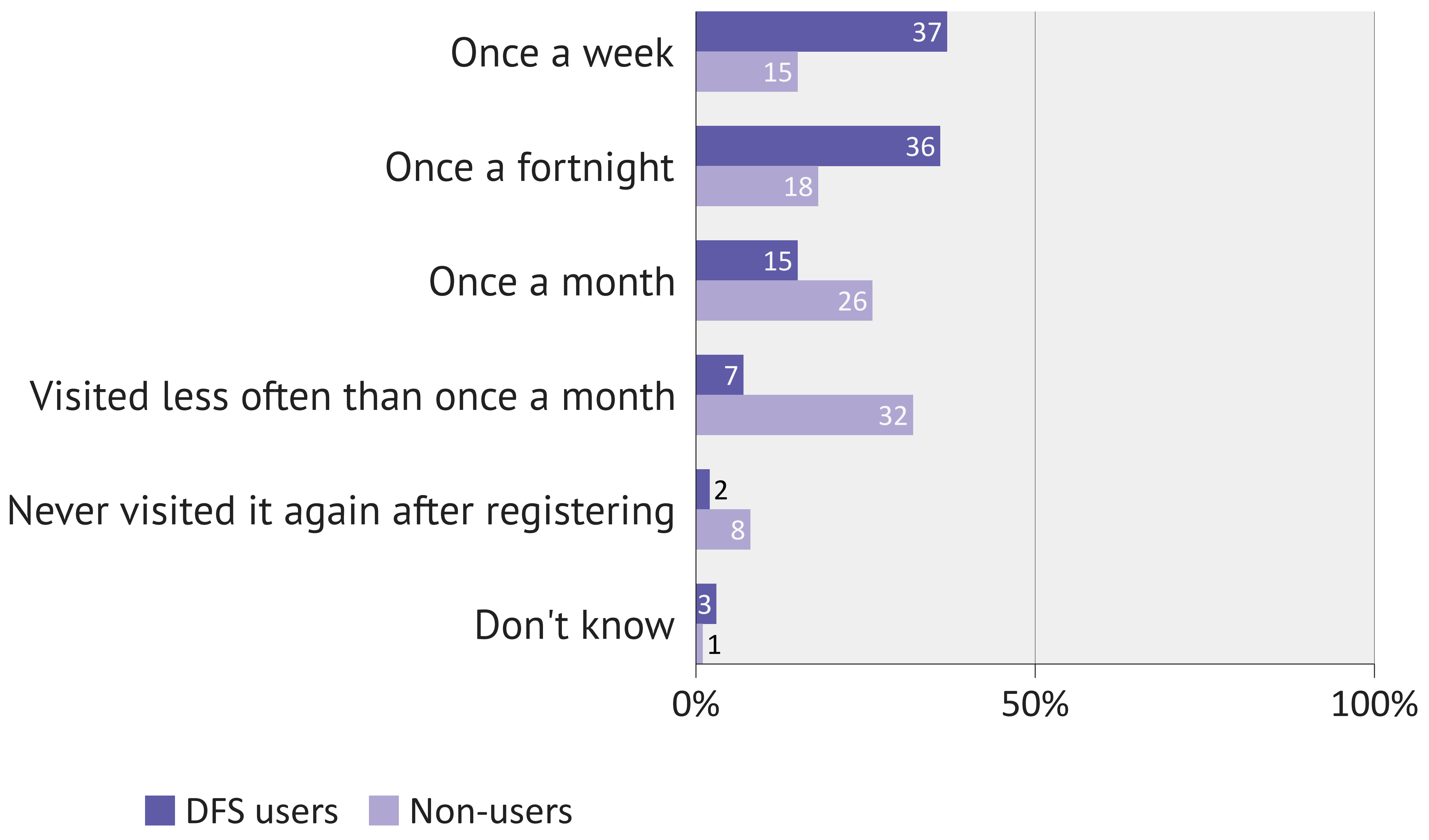
			% change between Expectations and Impact Surveys	
	DFS users	Non-users	DFS users	Non-users
I don't know what tools are available	17	23	-48	-25
It is difficult to choose the right tools	39	48	-37	-18
Staff skills/Lack of skills	41	42	-22	-12
Don't have time to learn	27	44	-15	-2
We can't afford it now	26	37	-14	-7
Return not worth the cost	6	13	-7	-5
Poor connectivity/slow internet	19	14	-3	-5
Digital tools are not relevant	6	7	1	3
Concerns about information security/fraud	41	39	2	8
My/our customers or stakeholders are not digitally enabled	26	37	11	21

Respondents who completed both the Expectations and Impact Surveys. DFS users (n=190), Non-users (n=421).

DFS users visited Digital Boost more frequently than non-users

Almost three out of four DFS users visited the Digital Boost website at least once a fortnight (73%). This was significantly higher - more than double, the one-third of non-users who visited the platform that often (33%).

Figure 29: Frequency of visits to the Digital Boost website after registration (%)



Respondents who completed both the Expectations and Impact Surveys. DFS users (n=190), Non-users (n=421).

DFS users found Digital Boost helpful, relevant to their business, and easy to use

Those who had participated in the Digital Facilitation Scheme were significantly more likely than the non-users to have been **positive about their experience** of the Digital Boost platform in relation to the aspects illustrated in the Figure to the right.

The DFS users were more likely to have agreed Digital Boost helped them ‘understand what to do next’ (87% cf. 56%), it was ‘easy to navigate’ (86% cf. 69%), and ‘visits weren’t too time-consuming’ (86% cf. 66%). Digital Boost also had the ‘information businesses were most interested in’ (85% cf. 61%) and ‘provided good relevant examples of how to be digital’ (85% cf. 57%), with an ‘appropriate level of help’ (82 cf. 56%).

Figure 30: Percentage of Digital Boost Impact respondents who agreed… (%)

	DFS users	Non-users
Digital Boost helped me understand what I should do next to make digital improvements in my business	87	56
Visits to Digital Boost weren't too time-consuming	86	66
It was easy to navigate the Digital Boost platform	86	69
Digital Boost provided good examples of how to be digital which were relevant to my business/industry	85	57
Digital Boost had the information that I was most interested in	85	61
Digital Boost provided me with the level of help that I wanted	82	56

Respondents who completed both the Expectations and Impact Surveys. DFS users (n=190), Non-users (n=421).

DFS users regarded sections of Digital Boost as more useful than non-users

The DFS 'users' were significantly more likely to have found all the parts of Digital Boost specified in the Figure to the right 'very' or 'most' useful, compared to the non-user group (with the exception of Future Technologies), especially the following areas where there was a difference of 25% or more:

- Digital Marketing (75% cf. 48%)
- Websites (66% cf. 41%)
- Digital Starter (66% cf. 33%).

Figure 31: Useful parts of Digital Boost (% who rated parts of Digital Boost as 'very' or 'most' useful)

Respondents who completed both the Expectations and Impact Surveys. DFS users (n=190), Non-users (n=421).

DFS users had increased their digital knowledge and confidence more than non-users

As a result of their three months' learning through Digital Boost, significantly more of the DFS user group had agreed they felt more confident that becoming more online/digital is the 'right step for their business' (87% compared to 74% of the non-users), and that they knew what their business needed to do to 'become more online/digital' (88% compared to 65% of the non-users).

Figure 32: Opinions about progress after learning through Digital Boost (% who agree)

Impact Survey respondents who visited Digital Boost after registering: DFS users (n=187), Non-users (n=388).

DFS users were more satisfied with Digital Boost than non-users

The Digital Facilitation Scheme users were significantly more satisfied with Digital Boost than the non-users (87% compared to 73%).

Figure 33: Overall satisfaction with Digital Boost (%)

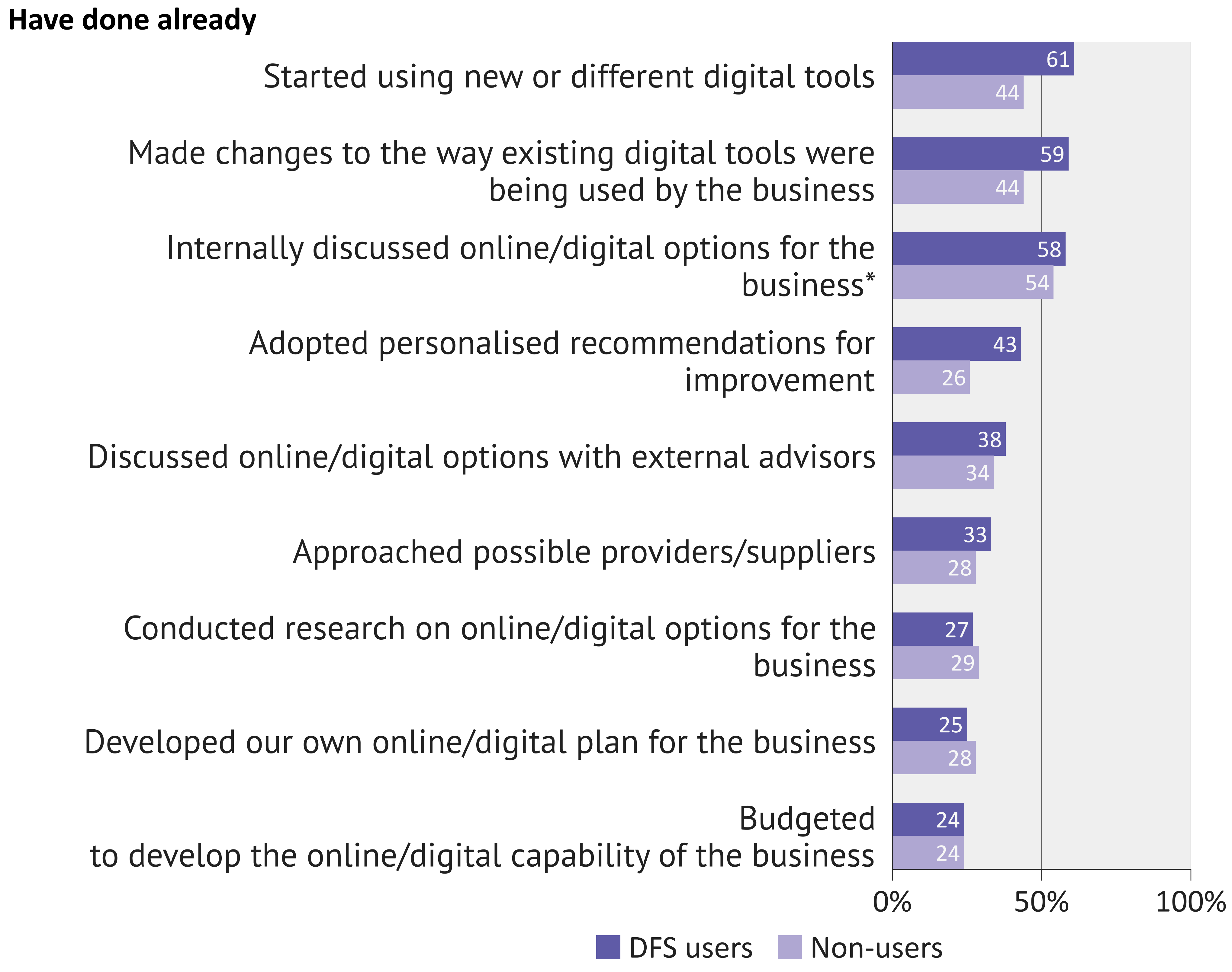
	DFS users	Non-users
Satisfied (7 to 10)	87	73
Neutral (4 to 6)	8	16
Dissatisfied (0 to 3)	3	6
Don't know/refused	2	5

Impact Survey respondents who visited Digital Boost after registering: DFS users (n=187), Non-users (n=388).

Participation in the Digital Boost programme had led DFS users to make positive changes within their businesses

As a result of taking part in Digital Boost, the DFS users were significantly more likely than the non-users to have made progress towards their business becoming more digital, including having ‘started to use new or different digital tools’ (61% cf. 44%), and having ‘changed the way existing digital tools were being used by their business’ (59% cf. 44%).

Figure 34: Impact Survey – changes businesses have already made as a result of Digital Boost (% already done)

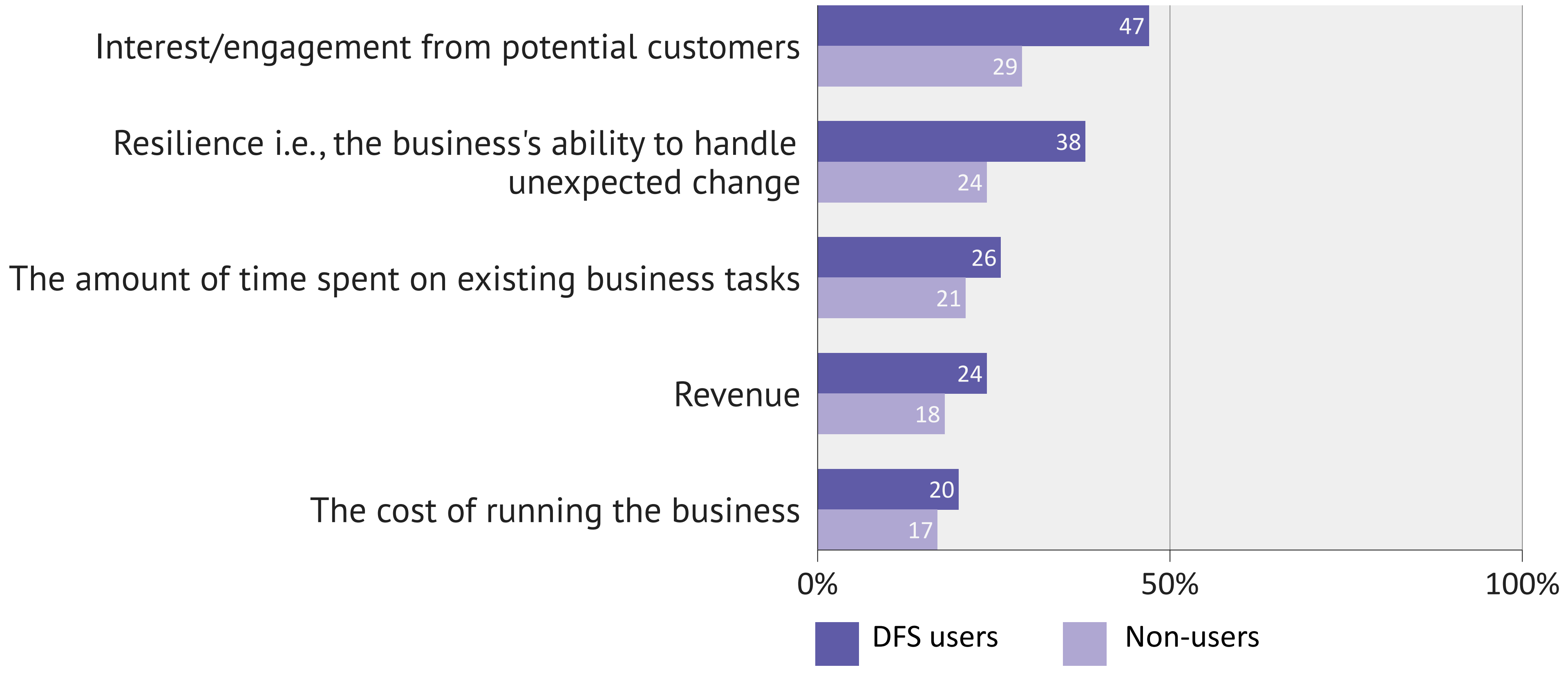


Impact Survey respondents who visited Digital Boost after registering: DFS users (n=187), Non-users (n=388).
*Only asked of businesses with multiple staff: DFS users (n=142), Non-users (n=293).

DFS users' participation in Digital Boost had a positive impact on their business outcomes

Three months after registering with Digital Boost, significantly higher proportions of the DFS users (compared to the non-users) reported their business had experienced an increase in engagement from potential customers (47% cf. 29%), and in business resilience (38% cf. 24%).

Figure 35: Digital Boost – Impacts on businesses by DFS users vs. non-users (% who experienced an increase)



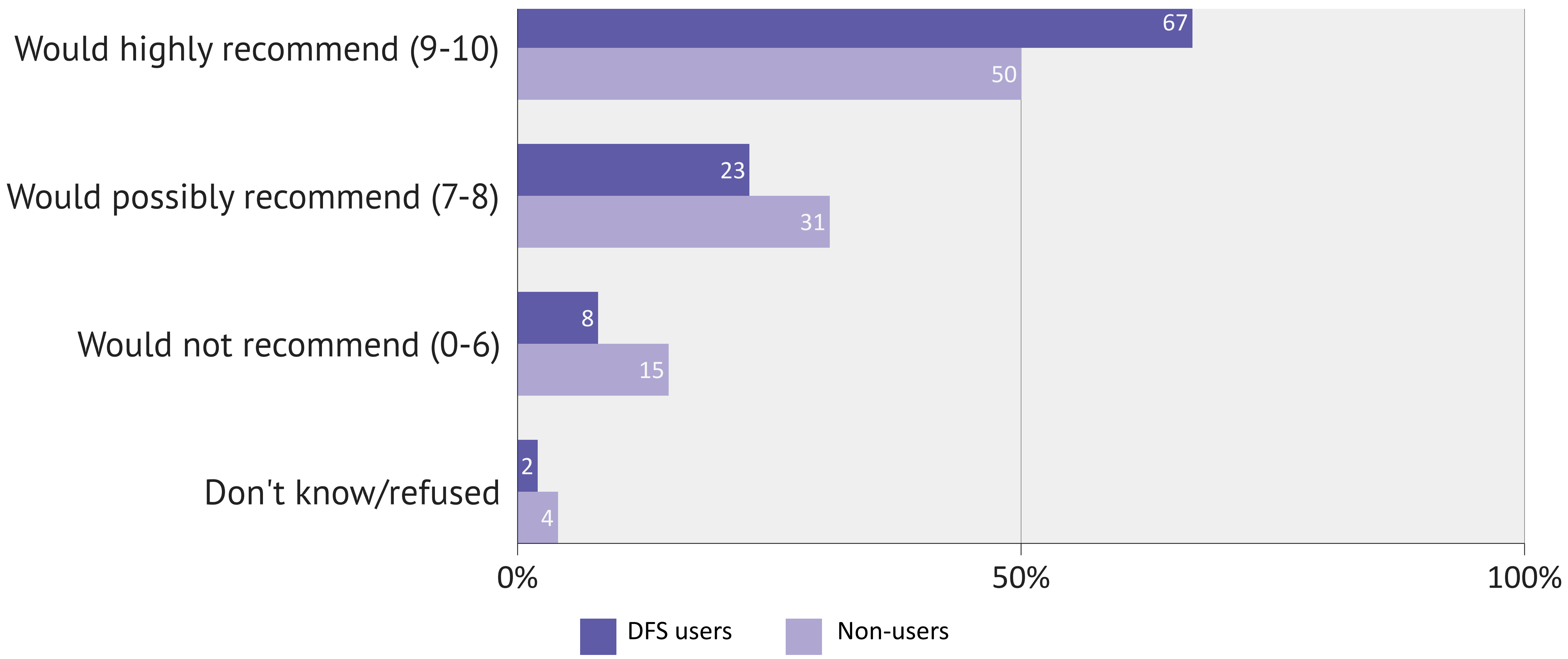
Impact Survey respondents who visited Digital Boost after registering: DFS users (n=187), Non-users (n=388).

Two-thirds of DFS users would highly recommend Digital Boost

Two-thirds of the Digital Facilitation Scheme participants (who had visited the platform since they registered) reported they would 'highly recommend' the platform (67%), compared to one-half of those who had not participated in the scheme (50%).

Those who would 'highly recommend Digital Boost' gave a rating of 9 or 10 when asked to what extent they 'would recommend Digital Boost to a business acquaintance who wanted their business to become more online/digital' using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 was 'would not recommend Digital Boost at all' and 10 was 'would highly recommend Digital Boost'. Those 'unlikely to recommend' gave a rating from 0 to 6.

Figure 36: Recommendation of Digital Boost (%)



Impact Survey respondents who visited Digital Boost after registering: DFS users (n=187), Non-users (n=388).

DFS users need content tailored to specific industries and business needs

Many DFS users commented on how grateful they are for Digital Boost, and they wanted to thank their facilitators and mentors for the assistance, understanding and support they received. They also really valued the 'bite-sized' content, variety of resources, and the opportunity to learn at their own pace.

When asked what Digital Boost needs to do to meet their business needs, the main themes DFS users mentioned were:

1. **There needs to be industry-specific content:** This should be tailored to their particular sectors, such as tourism, sports/recreation, legal services, and consultancy. DFS users emphasized the importance of relevant information and training to effectively apply digital tools and strategies in their respective industries. For example, specialised training on social media, advertising, and analytics.
2. **Personal advice is needed:** Some are looking for 1-on-1 sessions with mentors or experts who can provide tailored advice based on their specific business goals, time constraints, and budgets. They need assistance in creating digital plans, selecting the right tools, and understanding the Return on Investment of digital initiatives.
3. **More practical assessments and continued learning are needed:** DFS users saw value in practical assessments and workshops to reinforce their learning and apply digital skills in real-world scenarios. Examples included troubleshooting workshops, and advanced training on specific topics like WordPress, SSL, PHP versions, website builders, and online booking platforms.
4. **Assist to overcome technical challenges:** Several businesses operating in rural areas, mentioned that slow internet speeds affected their ability to watch videos and engage with online resources effectively.
5. **More communication and follow-up would be useful:** Some DFS users would appreciate ongoing communication and support from Digital Boost. They suggested regular reminders, check-ins, and follow-up sessions to keep them on track and provide assistance when needed.
6. **Finding the time to balance business priorities:** While Digital Boost was valued, finding time to fully engage due to other business commitments and time constraints was an issue. Recordings of expert discussions and interviews for future reference would be useful.
7. **Funding concerns:** Some respondents expressed concerns about funding eligibility criteria, suggesting that support should be available to small businesses regardless of GST registration or income thresholds.
8. **Continue to improve the platform:** Suggestions included having more intuitive website navigation especially for mobile users, options to track progress and bookmark important resources, adding more diverse content (covering different platforms and tools beyond Google) and more focus on business aspects (such as equipment, accounting, and side-hustle management).

DFS non-users need more flexible learning options, in terms of timing, and learning levels

When the group who had not participated in the Digital Facilitation Scheme were asked what Digital Boost needs to do to meet their business needs, the main themes mentioned were:

1. **More flexible learning options are needed:** Lack of time was seen as a barrier to fully engaging with Digital Boost. On-demand webinars and tutorial videos were suggested as ways to counter this, especially if they could be widely available including evenings and weekends.
2. **Content needs to be relevant and practical:** Some suggested breaking down topics by experience level and focusing on industry-specific examples with case studies that address specific business needs, e.g. social media and marketing, tools and strategies that can generate long-term clients, SEO, Google Ads, Google Analytics, and Google Business. Suggestions were made to tailor the content for different sectors, such as retailers, service providers, charities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
3. **Provide affordable options:** The costs associated with digital services in New Zealand were viewed as a barrier, and some non-users need information on affordable website creation and maintenance options, as well as suggestions for accessing discounted rates for website support and hosting.
4. **The platform and navigation needs to be more user-friendly:** Some found Digital Boost confusing to navigate, and suggested ensuring that videos and resources are easily accessible and searchable for future reference.
5. **There needs to be continuous support and communication:** Perhaps regular tips, reminders, and updates could be sent? Along with options to ask specific questions and receive guidance from the Digital Boost team.
6. **There is a need to improve digital literacy:** Some suggested offering beginner-level classes and simplifying the language used to make the content more accessible to individuals with limited digital knowledge.
7. **How can businesses measure the effectiveness of their digital efforts?** Others wanted guidance on tracking the impact of social media campaigns, online engagement, and website improvements in terms of tangible results, such as increased bookings or sales.
8. **It needs to move beyond basic tools and to include more advanced and innovative content:** Some of the non-users wanted to explore new digital innovations, to drive productivity and innovation within their businesses.

Section 5 summary

The impact of participating in the Digital Facilitation Scheme

The key findings from this section are as follows:

- Three months after registering with Digital Boost, the one-third who had participated in the Digital Facilitation Scheme were more frequent visitors to the Digital Boost website (than non-users), three out of four visited at least once a fortnight.
- DFS users were significantly more likely than non-users to have found Digital Boost easy to use and relevant to their business.
- After three months of Digital Boost, one-half of DFS users no longer agreed that lack of knowledge of available tools was a barrier, and more than one-third no longer found it difficult to choose the right tools.
- Over eighty percent of DFS users had increased their digital knowledge, and confidence that they know what their business needs to do to become more online and digital.
- As a result of taking part in Digital Boost, the DFS users were significantly more likely than the non-users to have made progress towards their business becoming more digital, including having started to use new or different digital tools, and having changed the way existing digital tools were being used by their business.
- Significantly higher proportions of the DFS users (compared to the non-users) reported their business had experienced an increase in engagement from potential customers and in business resilience.
- Two-thirds of DFS users would recommend Digital Boost to a business acquaintance who wanted their business to become more online/digital, compared to one-half of non-users.

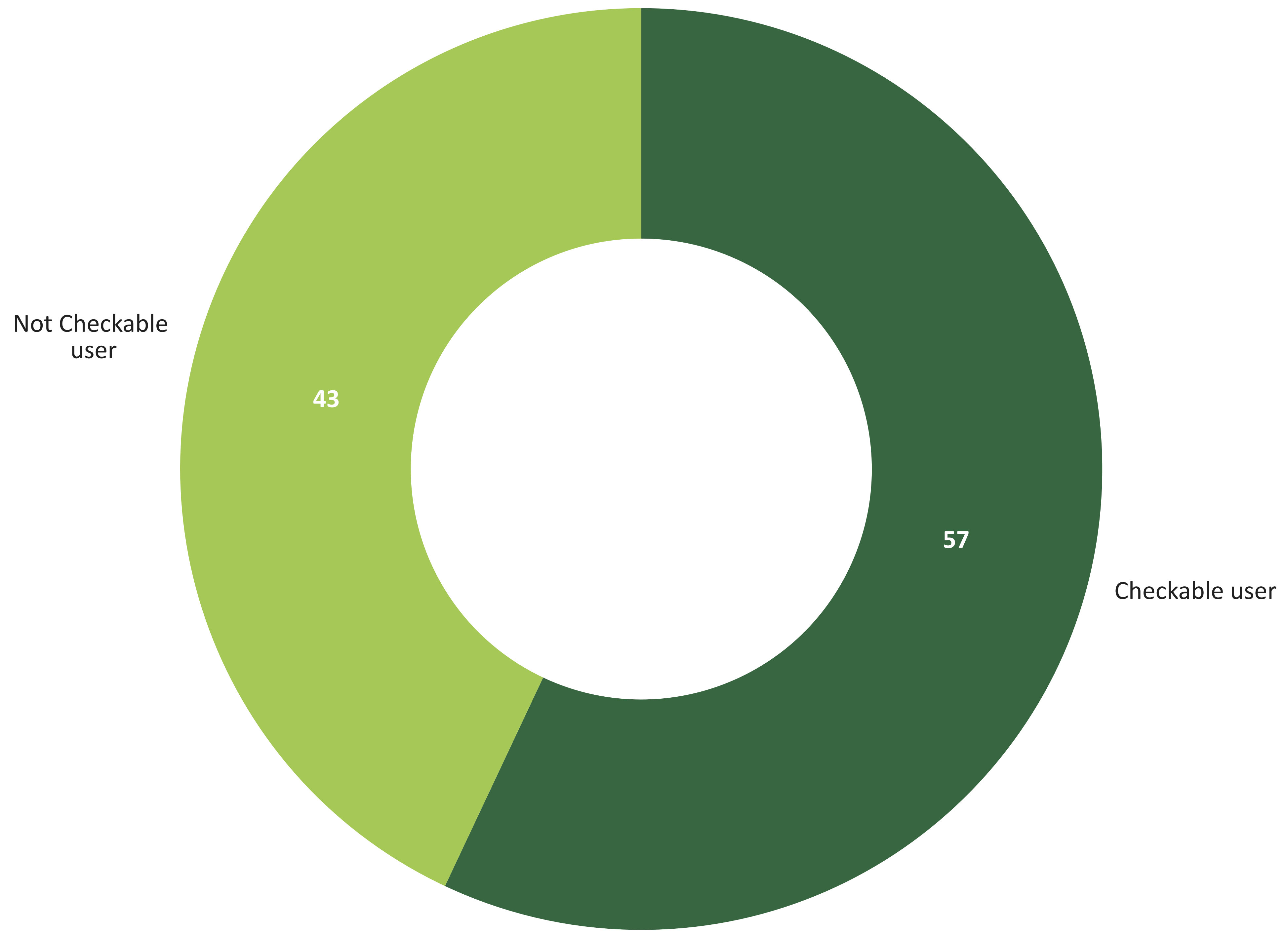
Section 6

The impact of Checkable

More than one-half had used Checkable

Over one-half of the Digital Boost registrants who completed the Impact Survey had used Checkable (57%). This section compares these ‘Checkable users’ with the 43% who were “not Checkable users”.

Figure 37: Proportion who had used Checkable (%)



Respondents who completed both the Expectations and Impact Surveys (n=611).

Half of Checkable users were small business owners and 80% were existing businesses

When they registered, Checkable users (in comparison to the non-users) were more likely to have been:

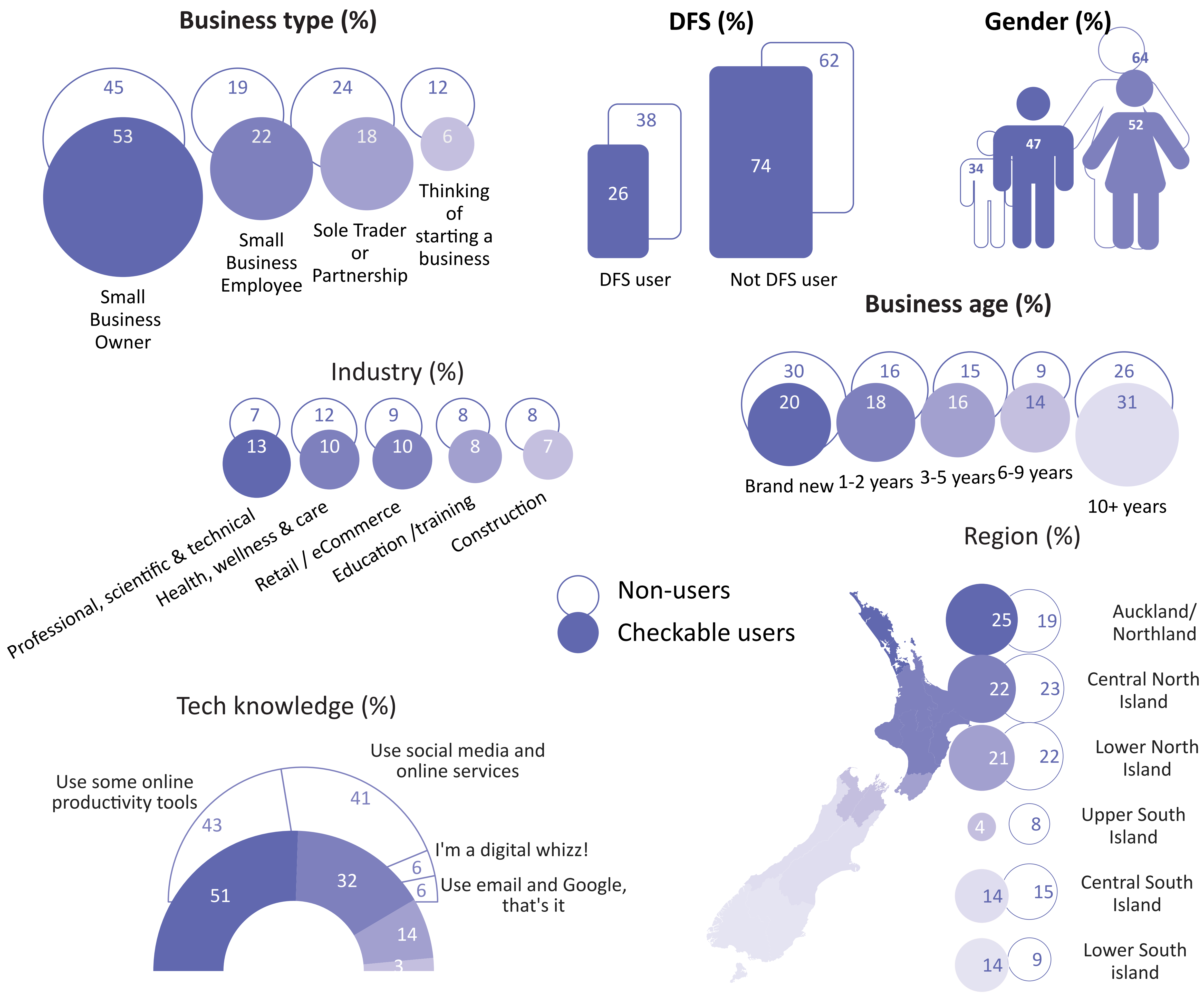
- Small business owners (53% compared to 45%)
- Working in established businesses that have existed more than 5 years (45% compared to 35%), and were less likely to be brand new (20% cf. 30%)
- Working in Professional, Scientific & Tech industries (13% cf. 7%).

The Checkable users were more likely to have reported that they were a 'digital whizz' (14% compared to 6% of the non-users) and were less likely to have been a DFS user (26% compared to 38%).

Checkable users were fairly evenly spread throughout New Zealand, with one quarter in Auckland/Northland (25%), one-fifth in the Central and Lower parts of the North Island (22% and 21% respectively), and one-third in the South Island (32%).

Although overall females make up 57% of the Impact Survey respondents (and males were 41%), amongst Checkable users there was a more even gender split with 52% female and 47% male. There was a significantly higher proportion of females amongst the non-users (64%).

Figure 38: Business demographics of Checkable users versus Non-users



Respondents who completed both the Expectations and Impact Surveys. Checkable users (n=345), Non-users (n=266).

80% of Checkable users agreed their business would benefit from increasing their digital capability

Eight out of ten Checkable users agreed their business would benefit from making greater use of digital tools or being more online (80%), a similar level to non-users (86%).

Since the Expectations Survey, this has remained the case, with little change other than a slight increase in the proportion of Checkable users who gave a neutral response as to whether their business would benefit from increased digital capability (up 8%).

Figure 39: Agreement that the business/workplace would benefit from making greater use of digital tools or being more online (% agree)

			% change between Expectations and Impact Surveys	
	Checkable users	Non-users	Checkable users	Non-users
Agree	80	86	-2	0
Neither agree nor disagree	14	9	8	4
Disagree	5	4	-4	-2

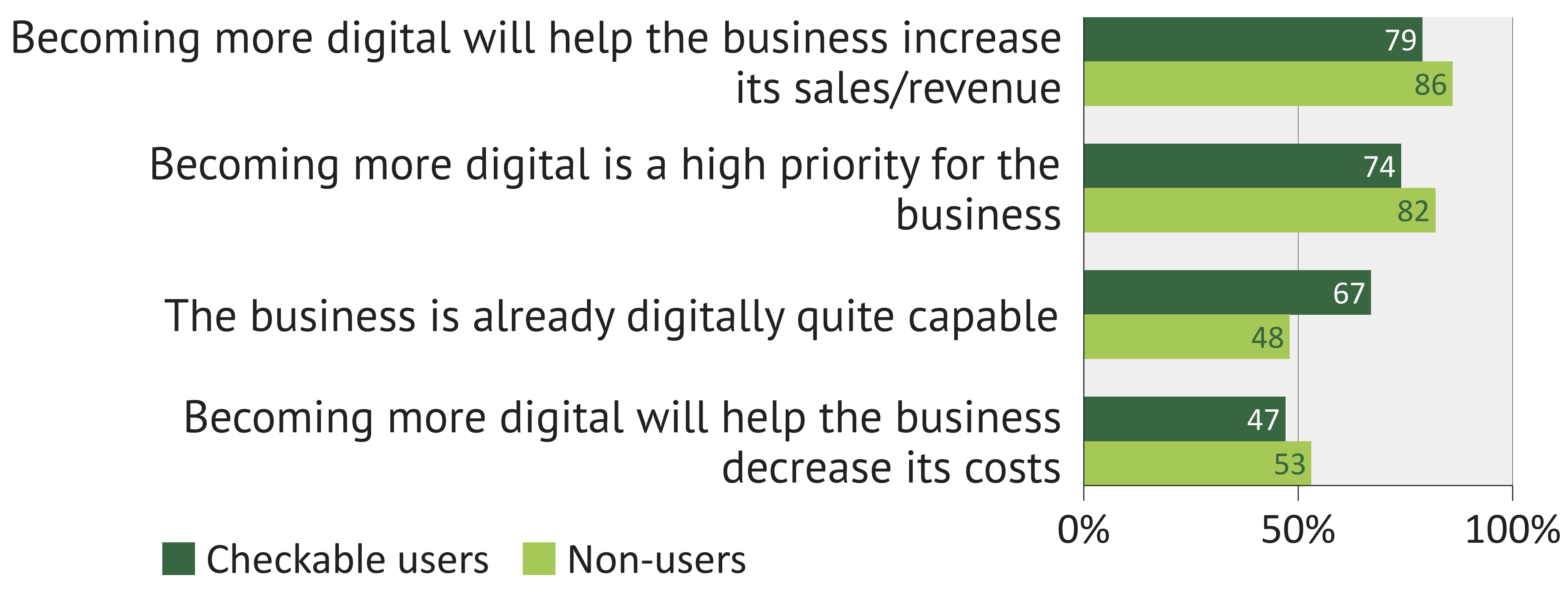
Respondents who completed both the Expectations and Impact Surveys. Checkable users (n=345), Non-users (n=266).

Although becoming more digital was a high priority for three-quarters of Checkable users, two-thirds reported their business was already digitally quite capable

Three months after registering with Digital Boost, the Checkable users were significantly more likely than the non-users to have agreed that their business was ‘already digitally quite capable’ (67% compared to 48%).

While over three-quarters did ‘agree’ that ‘becoming more digital will help the business increase its sales/revenue’, at 79%, fewer agreed compared to 86% of non-users. Similarly, fewer agreed that ‘becoming more digital is a high priority for the business’ (74% cf. 82% of non-users).

Figure 40: Impact Survey – attitudes towards becoming digital (% who agree)



Respondents who completed both the Expectations and Impact Surveys. Checkable users (n=345), Non-users (n=266).

Barriers to becoming more digital decreased significantly for Checkable users

After three months of Digital Boost, 29% fewer Checkable users agreed that lack of knowledge of available tools was a barrier to becoming more digital, and one fifth (21%) no longer thought it was difficult to choose the right tools. Notably, these changes were even larger for the non-user group with reductions of 35% and 27% respectively.

Overall, the levels of concern reported in the Impact Survey for each of the barriers shown in the Figure were very similar for Checkable users and non-users, except for concerns about information security/fraud which Checkable users viewed as less of a barrier at 36% compared to 45% of non-users.

However, Checkable users still face many barriers to becoming digital, as almost half still stated they found it ‘difficult to choose the right tools’ (46%), two-fifths reported they ‘don’t have time to learn’, and ‘staff skills’ were a barrier (both 41%), and one-third indicated they ‘can’t afford it’ (32%).

Figure 41: Factors that stop businesses from being more online and digital (% agree)

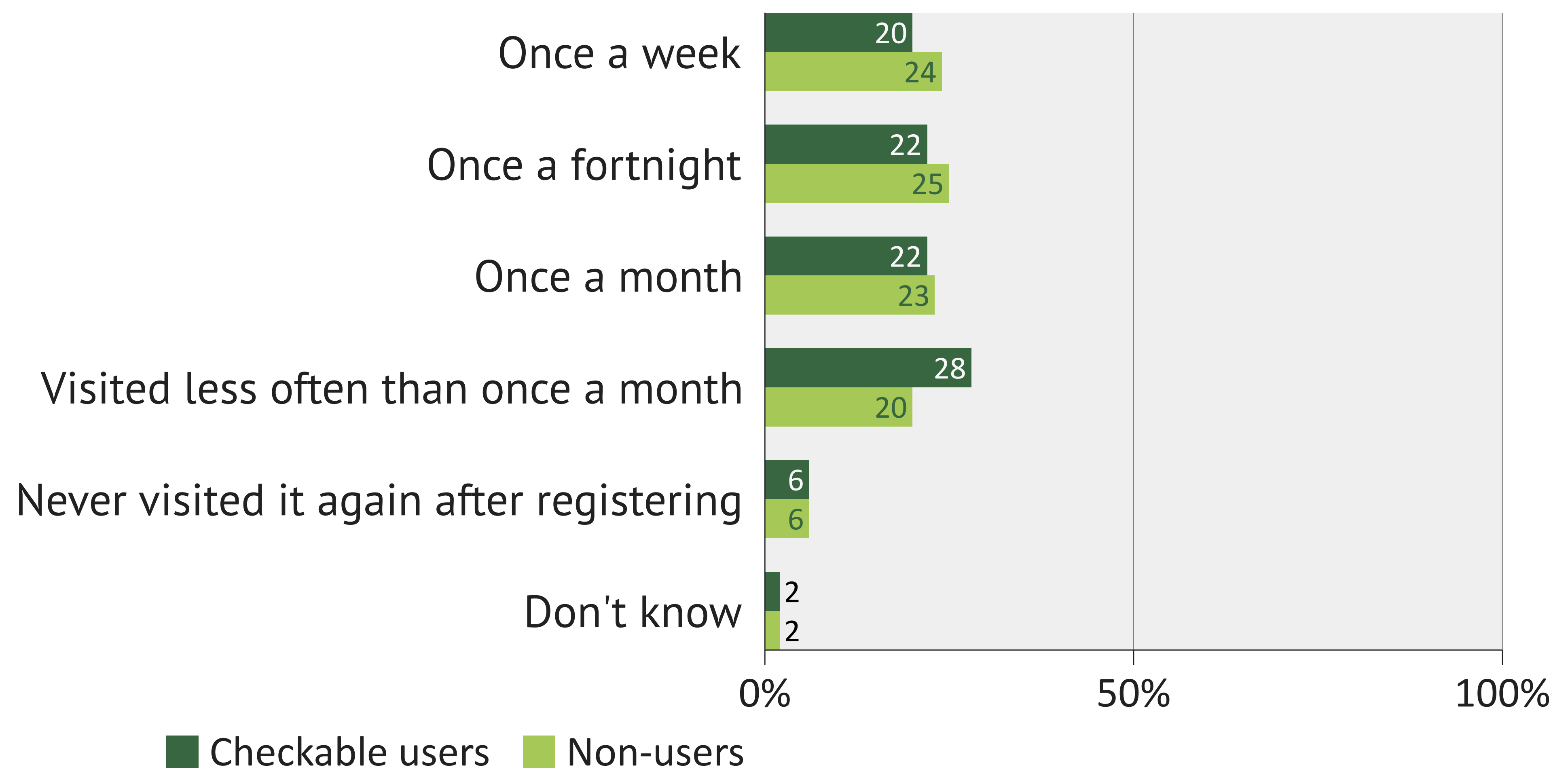
			% change between Expectations and Impact Surveys	
	Checkable users	Non-users	Checkable users	Non-users
I don't know what tools are available	19	24	-29	-35
It is difficult to choose the right tools	46	44	-21	-27
Staff skills/Lack of skills	41	42	-15	-17
We can't afford it now	32	35	-10	-8
Don't have time to learn	41	36	-7	-5
Poor connectivity/slow internet	13	18	-5	-4
Return not worth the cost	12	8	-3	-9
My/our customers or stakeholders are not digitally enabled	17	12	0	-2
Digital tools are not relevant	7	7	3	2
Concerns about information security/fraud	36	45	5	9

Respondents who completed both the Expectations and Impact Surveys. Checkable users (n=345), Non-users (n=266).

Checkable users visited Digital Boost less frequently

Almost two-thirds of Checkable users visited the Digital Boost website at least once a month (64%), which was less frequently than non-users (72%).

Figure 42: Frequency of visits to the Digital Boost website after registration (%)



Respondents who completed both the Expectations and Impact Surveys. Checkable users (n=345), Non-users (n=266).

Checkable users found Digital Boost easy to use, but were less impressed by the information

Checkable users were similar to non-users in that seven out of ten reported it was 'easy to navigate Digital Boost' (74% compared to 75%) and 'visits weren't too time consuming' (both 72%).

However, the Checkable 'users' were significantly **less likely** than the non-users to agree that Digital Boost had the information they were 'most interested in' (65% compared to 73%), or that it helped them understand what they should 'do next to make digital improvements' in their business.

Figure 43: Percentage of Digital Boost Impact respondents who agreed… (%)

	Checkable users	Non-users
It was easy to navigate the Digital Boost platform	74	75
Visits to Digital Boost weren't too time-consuming	72	72
Digital Boost had the information that I was most interested in	65	73
Digital Boost helped me understand what I should do next to make digital improvements in my business	62	70
Digital Boost provided good examples of how to be digital which were relevant to my business/industry	62	69
Digital Boost provided me with the level of help that I wanted	62	67

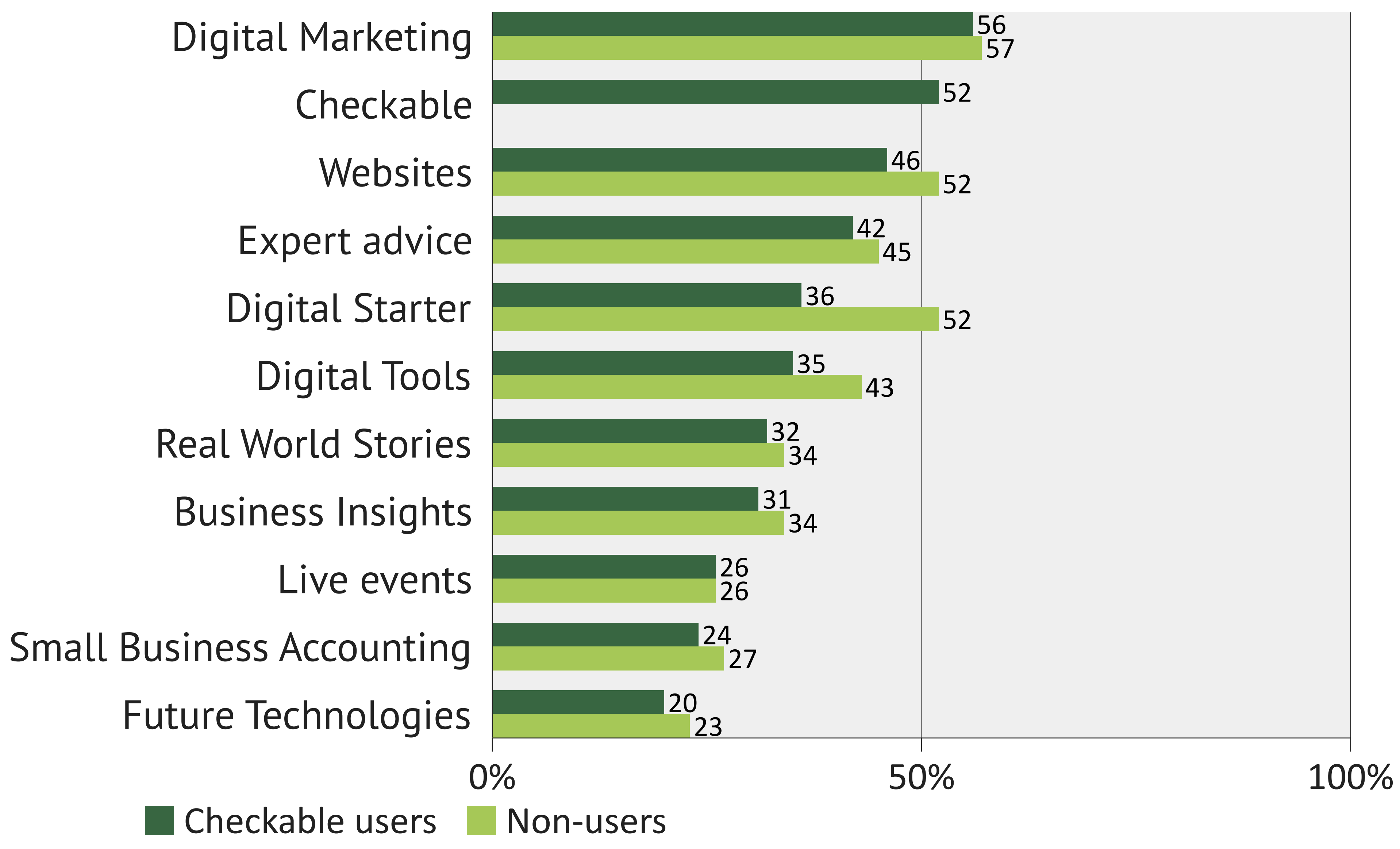
Respondents who completed both the Expectations and Impact Surveys. Checkable users (n=345), Non-users (n=266).

Checkable users were less likely to have rated Digital Starter and Digital Tools as very or most useful compared to non-users

One-half of Checkable users found Digital Marketing, Checkable, and Websites, the 'very' or 'most' useful parts of Digital Boost (at 56%, 52% and 46% respectively).

There were few differences between Checkable users and non-users except that significantly lower proportions of Checkable users rated the following sections very' or 'most' useful: 'Digital Starter' (36% compared to 52% of non-users) and 'Digital Tools' (35% compared to 43%).

Figure 44: Useful parts of Digital Boost (% who rated parts of Digital Boost as 'very' or 'most' useful)



Respondents who completed both the Expectations and Impact Surveys. Checkable users (n=345), Non-users (n=266).

Although most Checkable users had increased their digital knowledge, there was still uncertainty over what to do next

Three months after registering with Digital Boost, Checkable users and non-users had similar levels of confidence about their digital knowledge and capability, with around three-quarters of both groups feeling 'more confident that becoming more online/digital is the right step' for their business (77% compared to 79%) and they have a 'better understanding of where to go to get good advice' (75% cf. 74%).

However, significantly fewer of the Checkable user group (compared to the non-users) agreed they felt confident they 'knew what their business needed to do to become more online/digital' (69% compared to 77% of the non-users).

Figure 45: Opinions about progress after learning through Digital Boost (% who agree)

Impact Survey respondents who visited Digital Boost after registering: Checkable users (n=187), Non-users (n=388).
*Only asked of DFS users: Checkable users (n=89), Non-users (n=98).

Three-quarters of Checkable users were satisfied with Digital Boost

Checkable users and non-users had similar levels of satisfaction with Digital Boost overall (75% compared to 80%).

Figure 46: Overall satisfaction with Digital Boost (%)

	Checkable users	Non-users
Satisfied (7 to 10)	75	80
Neutral (4 to 6)	16	11
Dissatisfied (0 to 3)	5	5
Don't know/refused	4	3

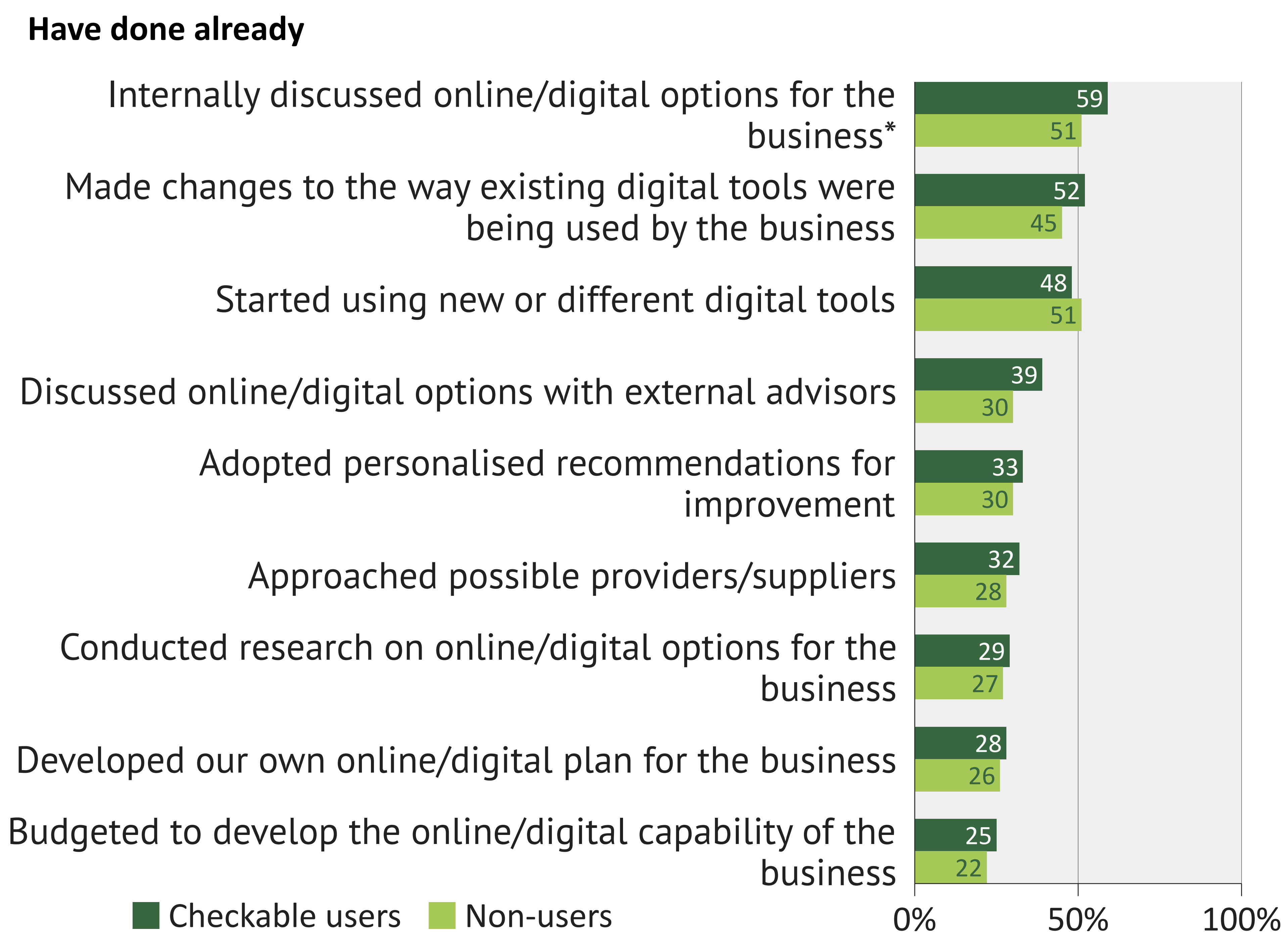
Impact Survey respondents who visited Digital Boost after registering: Checkable users (n=326), Non-users (n=249).

Half the Checkable users had made changes to digital tool use within their businesses, along with other positive changes after participating in Digital Boost

As a result of taking part in Digital Boost, around one-half of the Checkable users had 'started using new or different digital tools' (48%) and 'made changes to the way existing tools were used within their business' (52%); both results were similar to those of non-users (at 51% and 45% respectively).

However, Checkable users were significantly more likely than the non-users to have already 'discussed online/digital options with external advisors' like accountants (39% compared to 30% of non-users).

Figure 47: Impact Survey – changes businesses have already made as a result of Digital Boost (% already done)

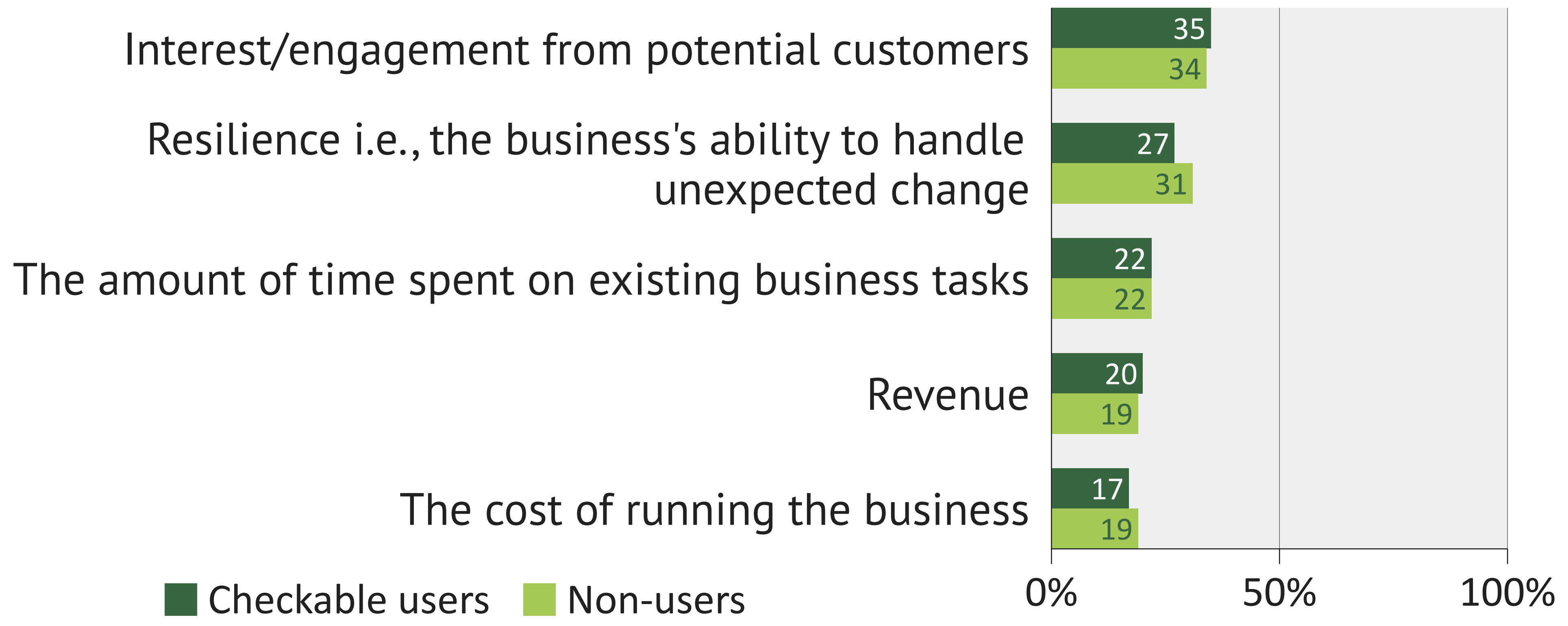


Impact Survey respondents who visited Digital Boost after registering: Checkable users (n=326), Non-users (n=249).
*Only asked of businesses with multiple staff: Checkable users (n=261), Non-users (n=174).

Participation in Digital Boost had positive impacts on Checkable users’ businesses, although there were also increased costs and time requirements

Three months after registering with Digital Boost, over one-third of Checkable users reported their business had experienced an **increase** in engagement from potential customers (35%). They also reported increases in business resilience (27%), and in revenue (20%). Alongside these were increases in the amount of time spent on business tasks (20%) and the costs of running the business (17%). These results were very similar for the non-users.

Figure 48: Digital Boost – Impacts on businesses by Checkable users vs. non-users (% who experienced an increase)



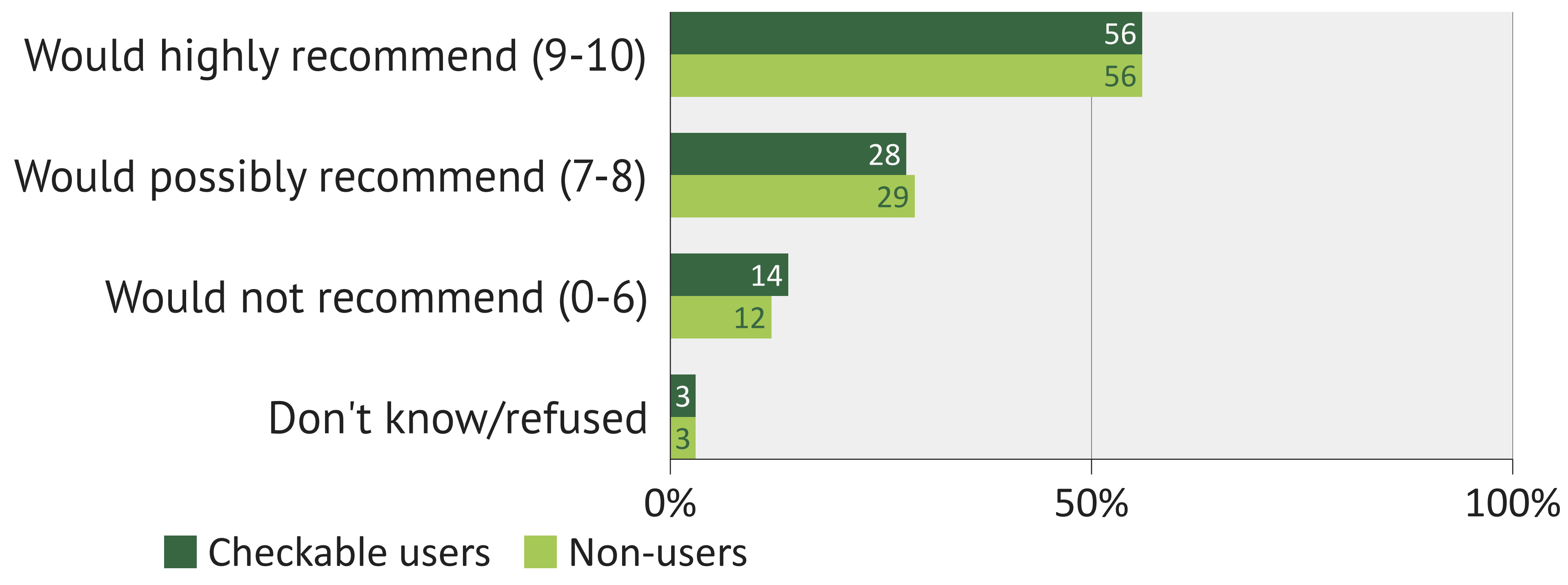
Impact Survey respondents who visited Digital Boost after registering: Checkable users (n=326), Non-users (n=249).

More than half of Checkable users would highly recommend Digital Boost

More than one-half of the Checkable users (who had visited the platform since they registered) reported they would 'highly recommend' Digital Boost (56%). This is the same as the level of recommendation amongst non-users (56%).

These percentages are based on those giving a rating of 9 or 10 when asked to what extent they 'would recommend Digital Boost to a business acquaintance who wanted their business to become more online/digital' using a 10-point scale, where 0 was 'would not recommend Digital Boost at all' and 10 was 'would highly recommend Digital Boost'.

Figure 49: Recommendation of Digital Boost (%)



Impact Survey respondents who visited Digital Boost after registering: Checkable users (n=326), Non-users (n=249).

Checkable users stated they were looking for specific support from Digital Boost that was both relevant and practical

When asked what Digital Boost needs to do to meet their business needs, the main themes Checkable users mentioned were:

1. **More personal support is needed:** Some Checkable users were interested in access to experts who could address specific needs and provide guidance relevant to their businesses.
2. **Practical, relevant, real-world information is needed:** Checkable users were looking for guidance that could directly apply to their businesses, and mentioned topics such as online course building, Google Analytics, SEO, and digital reporting tools.
3. **More diverse digital platforms could be recommended:** Some questioned an emphasis on Google products and requested a broader range of recommendations to suit different business needs and preferences.
4. **Increased support, resources, and funding are needed for small businesses:** Facing challenges such as limited resources, affordability of tools, and struggles to find suitable solutions, some suggested the Digital Boost team needs to better understand the issues faced by small businesses and provide practical assistance.
5. **The Digital Boost website needs to be better organised, so it's easier to use:** Suggestions included personalised pathways, quizzes to determine knowledge levels, certification programmes, and clearer access to help and experts.
6. **Digital Boost needs to use plain, basic language to be more accessible:** Some Checkable users wanted clear explanations of terms and step-by-step guidance for digital beginners, including consideration for different age groups and levels of digital literacy.
7. **Positive feedback and gratitude:** Other Checkable users commented that they appreciated the effort put into Digital Boost, and were grateful for the support, resources and information provided by Digital Boost, which had positive impacts on their businesses.

Checkable non-users needed more advanced content, hands-on learning, and more business advice would be useful

When the group who had not used Checkable were asked what Digital Boost needs to do to meet their business needs, the main themes mentioned were:

1. **More specialised and advanced content is needed:** Some need information that goes beyond the basics and covers topics such as social media marketing, paid advertising, industry-specific tools, and advanced digital skills.
2. **Hands-on learning and support would be useful:** Other non-users would welcome one-on-one mentoring or group sessions with businesses facing similar challenges. They suggested workshops, smaller group learning, longer sessions with time for questions, and opportunities to build websites or do digital tasks.
3. **Provide information on digital and non-digital aspects of business:** While digital advice is valued, others suggested Digital Boost should also provide guidance on non-digital aspects of business, including offering tools and options for setting up a business, and approaches to business management.
4. **Customised support is needed:** Some non-users suggested breaking down topics by experience level and providing access to mentors or experts who can offer affordable assistance.
5. **Continuous learning and updates are necessary:** Several emphasised the importance of continuous learning and staying up to date with new tools and changes in the digital landscape. They encouraged Digital Boost to keep providing new content, webinars, tutorial videos, and interviews/expert discussions to support ongoing learning.
6. **Make Digital Boost more user-friendly:** Some had difficulties with navigating the Digital Boost platform and suggested improvements including better organisation of content, easier access to previously viewed materials, and the ability to track progress and revisit specific videos or resources.
7. **Support for non-profits and charities is needed:** There was a call for more support and resources specifically tailored to non-profit organisations and charities to become more digitally active.
8. **Communication should be shorter and less frequent:** While the regular communication and updates were appreciated, some suggested improvements in terms of email frequency and content length to make it less overwhelming.
9. **Practical applications and examples are needed:** Some wanted to see practical examples and case studies that show how digital tools and strategies can be used in real-world scenarios, including industry-specific content and successful digital solutions.
10. **Collaboration and networking opportunities would be useful:** Others were looking for opportunities to connect with other businesses, share knowledge, and collaborate.

Section 6 summary

The impact of participating in Checkable

The key findings from this section are as follows:

- Three months after registering with Digital Boost, six out of ten Checkable users had visited the Digital Boost website at least once a month.
- Around one-half had made progress towards their business becoming more digital, including using new or different digital tools, and changing the way existing digital tools were being used by their business.
- Barriers to becoming more digital had reduced - more than one-quarter no longer thought ‘lack of knowledge of available tools’ was a barrier, and one fifth didn’t find it ‘difficult to choose the right tools’ anymore.
- Positive business outcomes from participating in Digital Boost were reported - over one-third of Checkable users stated their business had experienced an increase in engagement from potential customers, while one-quarter reported increased business resilience, and one-fifth had increased revenue.
- More than one-half of the Checkable users (who had visited the platform since they registered) reported they would ‘highly recommend’ Digital Boost.

Despite the progress that had been made, Checkable users varied in terms of their digital skill levels and needs. Perhaps because of this, they were less positive in some areas compared with non-users.

Three months on, Checkable users still faced many barriers to becoming digital, as almost one-half found it ‘difficult to choose the right tools’, two-fifths reported that ‘lack of time’ and ‘staff skills’ were barriers, and one-third indicated they ‘can’t afford it’.

Checkable users’ comments suggested some were looking for more industry-specific or advanced information from Digital Boost. Others needed more relevant, practical advice that they could apply to their specific business situations. Yet others needed more support, perhaps in terms of flexible, cost effective, learning options that time poor business owners could use like videos of workshops, or some face-to-face, hands-on learning.

Section 7

The recommenders of Digital Boost

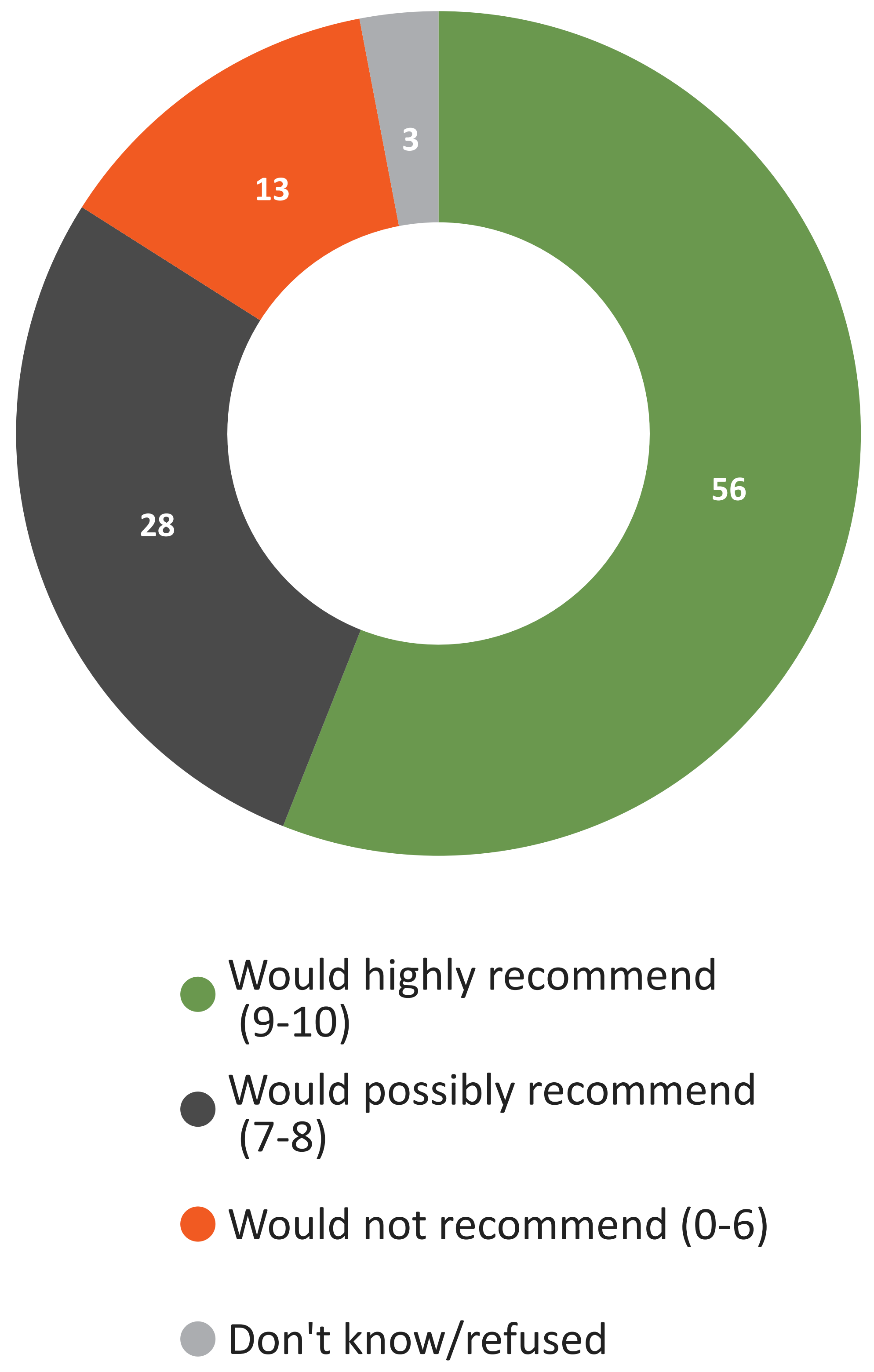
More than half of Digital Boost registrants would highly recommend the platform

Overall, just over one-half of the Digital Boost registrants (who had visited the platform since they registered) reported they would 'highly recommend' Digital Boost (56%). This section compares these 'recommenders' with the 13% who indicated they would not recommend Digital Boost.

The 'recommenders' are based on those registrants who gave a rating of 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale, when asked to what extent they 'would recommend Digital Boost to a business acquaintance who wanted their business to become more online/digital'. The scale runs from 0 for 'would not recommend Digital Boost at all', to 10 for 'would highly recommend Digital Boost'.

The 'non-recommenders' gave a rating from 0 to 6.

Figure 50: Recommendation of Digital Boost (%)



Recommenders tended to have smaller, newer businesses

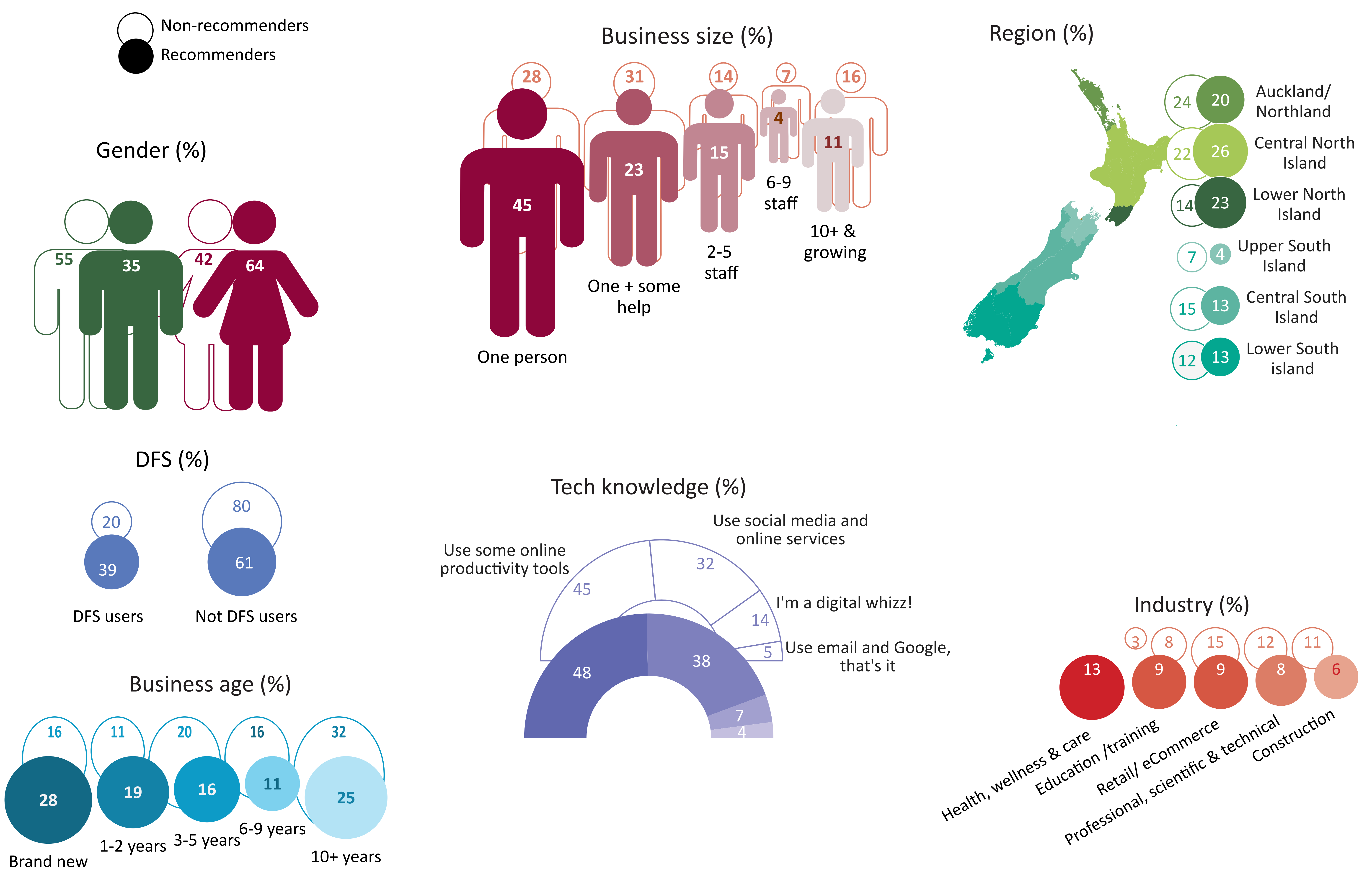
The Digital Boost recommenders (compared to the non-recommenders) were more likely to have been:

- Basically a one-person business (one person, plus some help) at their registration (68% compared to 59% of non-recommenders)
- Female (64% compared to 42%)
- Brand new businesses (28% cf. 16%)
- DFS users (39% cf. 20%)
- Working in Health, Wellness and Care industries (13% cf. 3%).

Recommenders were fairly evenly spread across New Zealand, with one-quarter (26%) in the Central North Island. The lower North Island had a higher proportion of recommenders than non-recommenders (23% cf. 14%).

When they registered, the recommenders were less likely to have reported that they were a ‘digital whizz’ (7 % compared to 14% of the non-recommenders).

Figure 51: Demographics of Recommenders versus Non-recommenders of Digital Boost



Impact Survey respondents who visited Digital Boost after registering. Recommenders (n=321), Non-recommenders (n=74).

Recommenders were very positive about Digital Boost and keen for more

When asked what **Digital Boost needs to do to** meet their business needs, the main themes **recommenders** mentioned were:

1. **Positive appreciation of what they've learnt from Digital Boost and concern for its continuity and availability:** Recommenders really valued the Digital Boost resources and information and had found the programme invaluable in developing their businesses. They emphasised the importance for themselves and others of maintaining Digital Boost and keeping the resources, website, and webinars available.
2. **They want more specific and advanced information:** There was interest in having more advanced or higher-level information available on topics like Google, Facebook or social media advertising, SEO, Google Analytics, and digital reporting tools.
3. **Learning options need to be flexible, as time constraints are an issue:** Finding time to engage with Digital Boost while running a business was often challenging, and some suggested that making previously recorded webinars or workshops available to view would provide the flexibility to learn at their own pace.
4. **Practical guidance and real-life examples were valued:** Recommenders wanted to learn from personal examples and to gain confidence from hearing local success stories. Specific topics of interest included outsourcing, choosing digital tools, and understanding the skill level required for success.
5. **There is a need for industry-specific advice:** Some were looking for more tailored advice, guidance and strategies specific to their industry, e.g. media and real estate.
6. **Mentoring and specialised support would be useful:** There was a need for mentoring, or access to specialists who could provide one-on-one guidance or address specific business needs, particularly in areas like social media, advertising, and website development.

Non-recommenders suggested improvements to communication, navigating the website and accessing relevant guidance

When the respondents who were **unlikely to recommend** Digital Boost were asked **what Digital Boost needs to do** to meet their business needs, the main themes mentioned were:

1. **It's not relevant or specific enough:** Digital Boost wasn't meeting some specific business or industry needs, with topics being too general and lacking depth. There was interest in more bespoke information and guidance, that directly addressed challenges such as small business needs, specific tools, and advanced capabilities.
2. **It can be hard to find what you want:** Some non-recommenders were frustrated with Digital Boost, as they found it difficult to navigate, locate relevant modules, or access information. They wanted it to be simpler to use, with plain language and a clear structure, an overview of modules, the ability to choose relevant topics, and more intuitive navigation.
3. **There is a need for more practicality and hands-on support:** Some businesses wanted more interactive opportunities, such as workshops or taster sessions, with guidance on implementing digital strategies, along with personalised help, one-on-one sessions, and examples of real-world experiences.
4. **It's hard to identify and access relevant experts:** There was interest in being able to contact professionals with in-depth specialised knowledge, who might be able to provide tailored business solutions for specific businesses. Perhaps a directory of local experts, their specialisations, and areas of focus would be useful?
5. **Digital Boost needs better communication and engagement:** Several wanted opportunities for feedback, introductory meetings, and individual support. The frequency and content of emails was also criticised, with suggestions for clearer and more concise communication.
6. **Include innovation:** Some non-recommenders wanted to see more innovative and cutting-edge solutions, rather than just focusing on existing tools or software.
7. **Needs a business focus and context:** Non-recommenders noted that Digital Boost should consider the specific context of different types of businesses. They mentioned the need for different levels or sections tailored to specific sectors, such as retail, professional services, or B2B businesses. Some also expressed concerns about the emphasis on going digital without addressing other important aspects of running a business.
8. **Needs to clarify the target audience:** There was a lack of clarity about Digital Boost's target audience. Some felt it was geared towards individuals with less digital knowledge, while others would prefer more advanced options.

Section 7 Summary

The recommenders of Digital Boost

The key findings from this section are as follows:

- Three months after registering with Digital Boost, just over one-half of the Digital Boost users (who had visited the platform since they registered) reported they would ‘highly recommend’ Digital Boost (56%).
- Over two-thirds of the recommenders were one-person businesses, and female business people, while over one-quarter were brand new businesses.
- As expected, the recommenders were extremely positive about what they have learnt from Digital Boost. They really valued the Digital Boost resources and information and had found the programme invaluable in developing their businesses.
- Recommenders were keen for Digital Boost to continue, and reported they needed more flexible learning options, real world examples, industry specific advice and mentoring.

Section 8

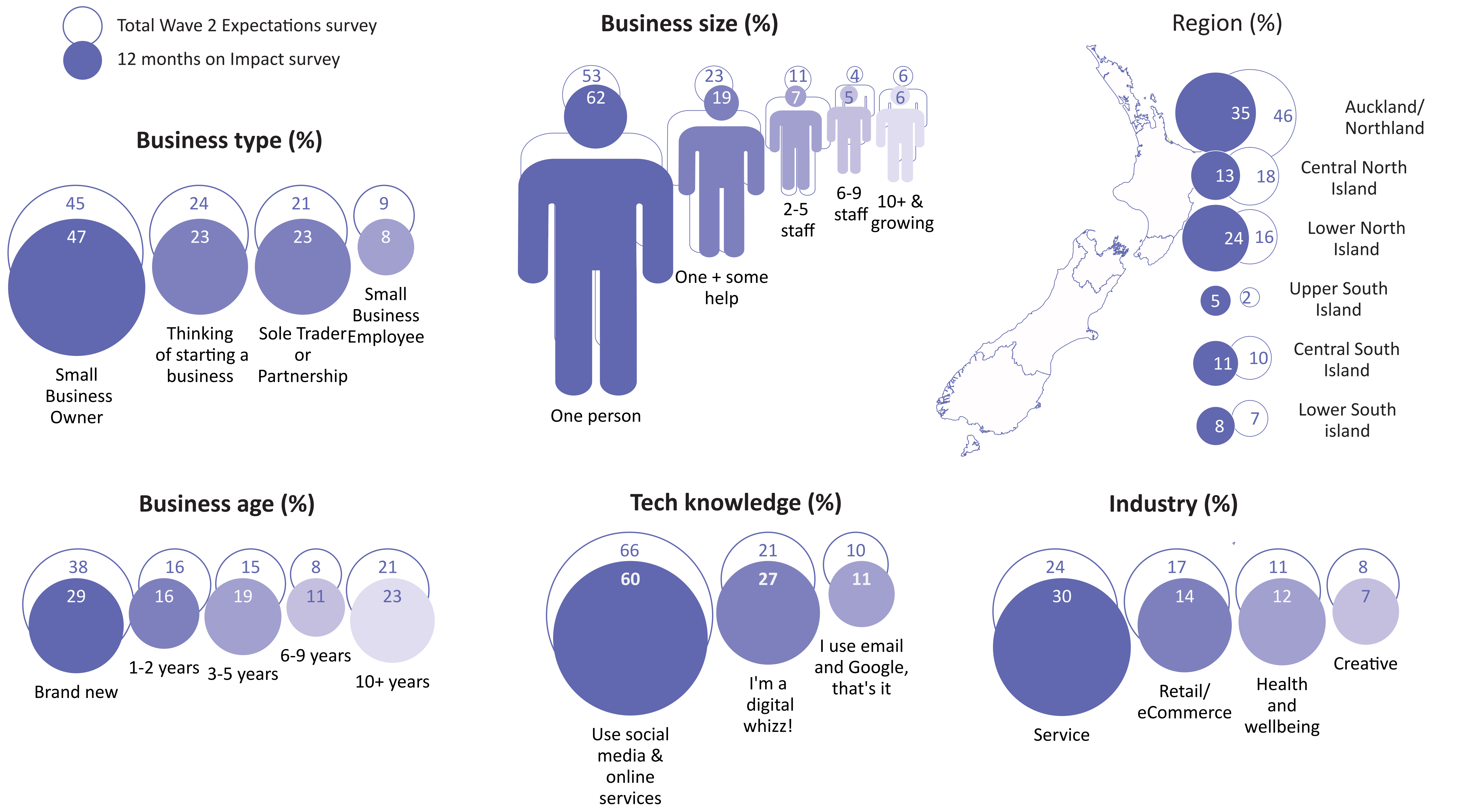
The impact of training - 15 months after registration

Most previously registered Digital Boost registrants recontacted for the 12 months on Impact Survey worked in sole person businesses

This section is based on results from n=118 registrants who have completed three Digital Boost surveys – their Expectations Survey after registering (in Wave 2), an Impact Survey three months later, plus the “12 months on Impact Survey” (15 months after their registration date).

The ‘12 months on’ cohort had a very similar profile when compared to the total Wave 2 Expectations Survey cohort (n=1,225). Most had reported they worked in basically sole person businesses (81% had ‘one-person’ or ‘me +help’ sized businesses) compared to 76% in the total Wave 2 Expectations Survey cohort.

Figure 52: Summary of previously registered Digital Boost users’ registration information



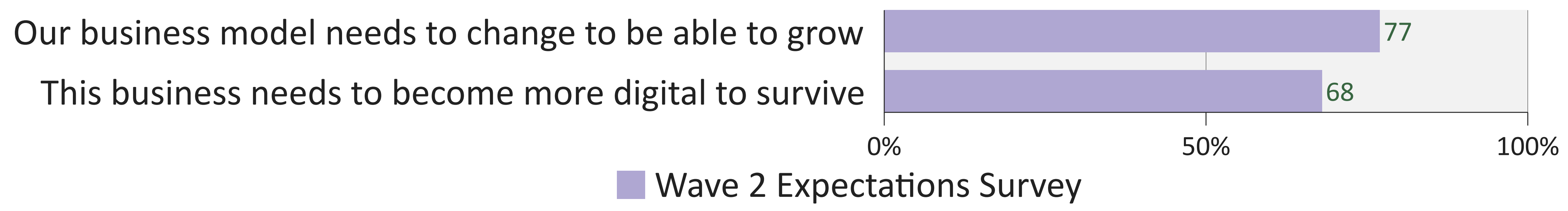
The ‘12 months on’ Impact Survey cohort is based on respondents who completed both Wave 2 Surveys and the 12 months on Impact Survey (n=118)
The Wave 2 cohort is based on n=1,225 Expectation Survey respondents.

Becoming more digital was a <u>high priority</u> for most of the 'previously registered' cohort and motivations have remained stable over time

Over 15 months, registrants' motivations for becoming more digital have remained fairly stable. Becoming 'more digital' remained a high priority for most, although it appeared to be trending down (from 77% to 61% over 15 months, but this is not significant due to the small sample size).

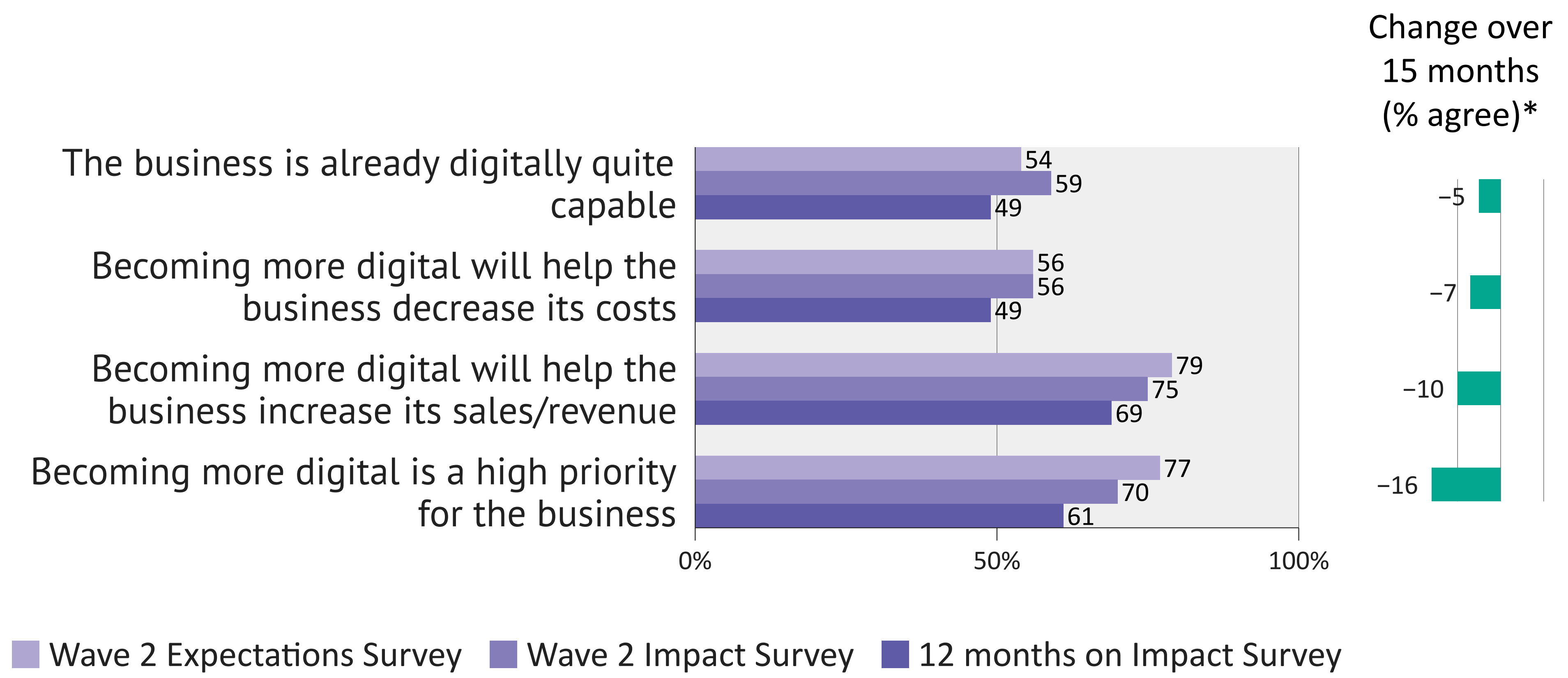
The 'previously registered' cohort had similar motivations for joining Digital Boost compared to the Wave 3 cohort (reported on in the previous sections). Most realised their business models required changes both to grow (77% compared to 79% respectively), and to become 'more digital to survive' (68% compared to 69%). Plus, the strongest driver to become more digital was also to help their business 'increase its sales/revenue' (79% compared to 85% for the Wave 3 cohort.)

Figure 53: Motivations for registering with Digital Boost (% who agree)



Based on respondents who completed both Wave 2 Surveys and the 12 months on Impact Survey (n=118)

Figure 54: Motivations for becoming more digital (% who agree)



Based on respondents who completed both Wave 2 Surveys and the 12 months on Impact Survey (n=118)

*NB: Changes are not significant due to the small sample size.

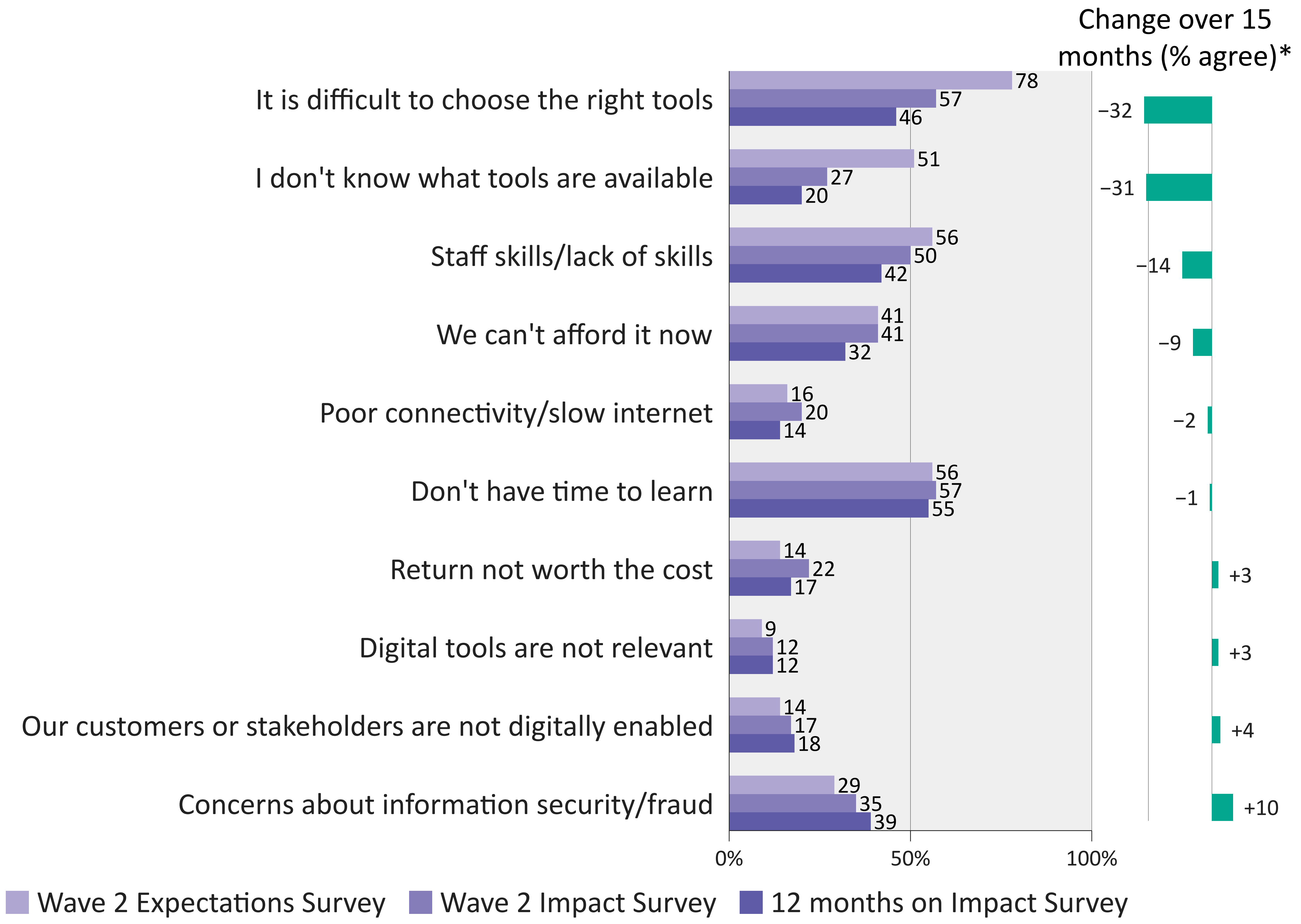
The biggest barriers to registrants becoming more digital (their lack of digital knowledge and skill) have reduced over time

One in three previously registered Digital Boost registrants reported that they **no longer** have difficulty choosing the right digital tools (this was a significant decline from 78% at registration - down 32% - to 46% 15 months later) or in knowing which tools are available (a significant decline of 31% - from 51% to 20%).

Registrants also reported an **improvement** in their own or their staff's digital skill level. Initially over one-half (56%) reported this was a barrier to their business becoming more online and digital, but after 15 months this had reduced to one in five (20%).

Perhaps reflecting the increased digital knowledge of registrants, the proportion concerned about information security and fraud had increased over the 15 months since registration (from 29% to 39%).

Figure 55: Attitude changes towards barriers that stop the business becoming more online and digital – over 15 months (% who agree)



Based on respondents who completed both Wave 2 Surveys and the 12 months on Impact Survey (n=118)

Digital confidence remained steady, but financial concerns may be impacting on ‘digital investment’ confidence

In the 12 months between the Wave 2 and ‘12 months on’ Impact Surveys, registrants’ confidence had remained fairly steady overall, with no significant changes.

However, financial factors may have been leading to slight downward trends in ‘digital investment’ confidence. While two out of three (67%) remained confident that they ‘know what their business needs to do to become more online/digital’, and ‘the questions to ask’ (62%), some were slightly less confident about ‘what to buy’ (reported as 55%, and then 44%), and whether ‘the investment is worth the cost’ (reported as 69% and then 58%).

Figure 56: Businesses’ changed attitudes towards becoming more digital – over 12 months (% who agree)

Based on respondents who reported they visited Digital Boost after registering: Wave 2 Impact Survey (n=109), 12 months on Impact Survey (n=105)
*NB: Changes are not significant due to the small sample size.

Use of external digital tools continued to increase over 15 months of participation in Digital Boost

Despite their financial concerns, the proportion of ‘Wave 2’ registrants whose business had used external digital tools has **gradually grown** over the 15 months since their initial Digital Boost registration.

The external digital tools which saw **significant lifts** in use were websites (including a payment facility) which lifted from 22% in the Expectations Survey - up 30% - to 52% by the Wave 3 Impact Survey, search engine optimisation (lifted from 19% - up 28% - to 47%), and websites (with no payment facility) (up from 50% to 72%, a lift of 22%).

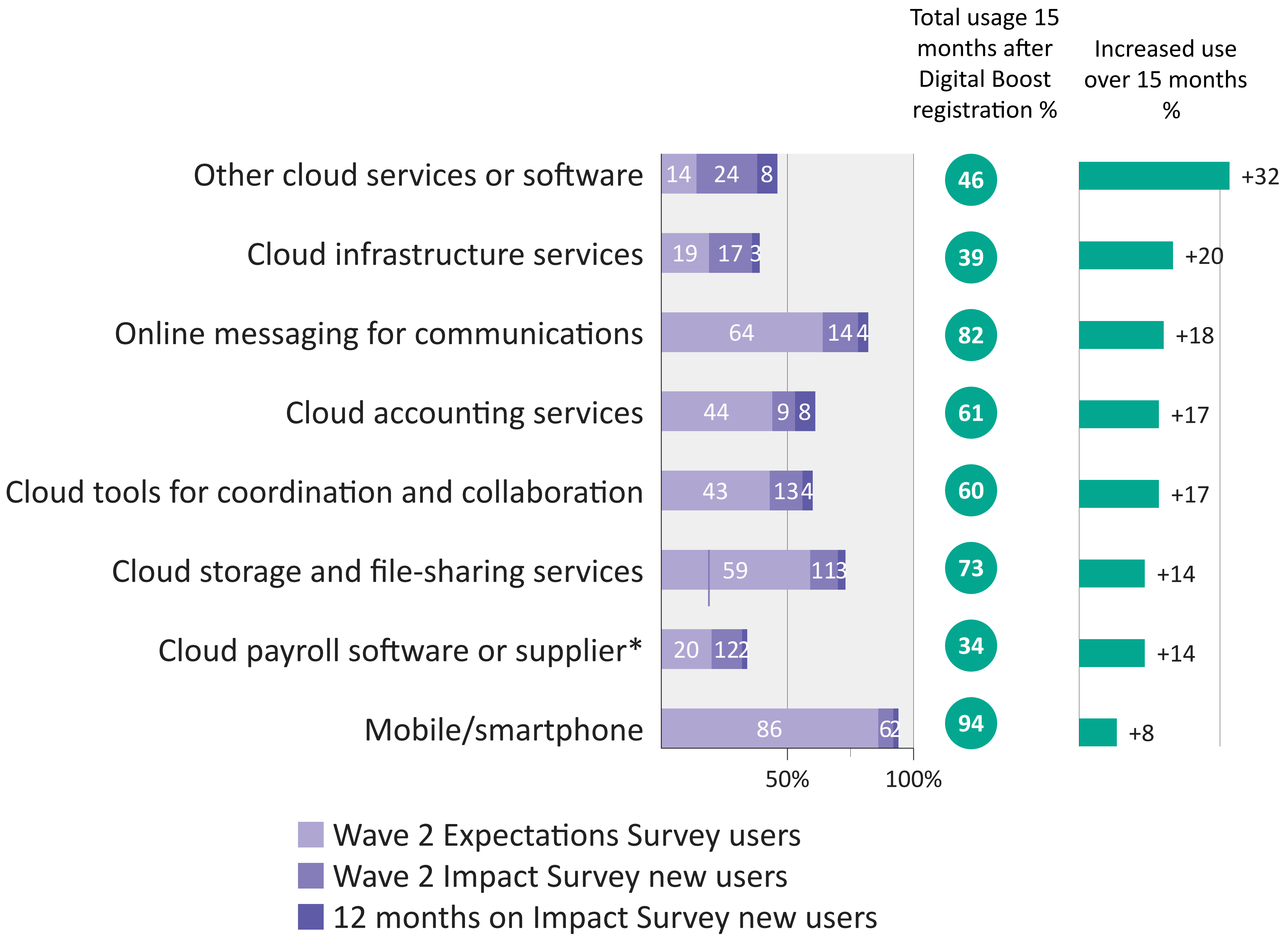
Figure 57: Previously registered businesses - changes in use of key external digital tools – over 15 months (% of users)

Based on respondents who completed both Wave 2 Surveys and the 12 months on Impact Survey (n=118)

The number of Digital Boost registrants using internal digital tools had also grown over 15 months

The internal digital tools which saw **significant lifts** in use over the 15 months since Digital Boost users' registration were 'other cloud services or software' which lifted from 14% in the Wave 2 Expectations Survey – up 32% - to 46% in the 12 months on Impact Survey, cloud infrastructure services (which lifted from 19% - up 20% - to 39%) and online messaging for communications (up 18% from 64% to 82%).

Figure 58: Previously registered businesses – changes in use of specific internal digital tools – over 15 months (% of users)

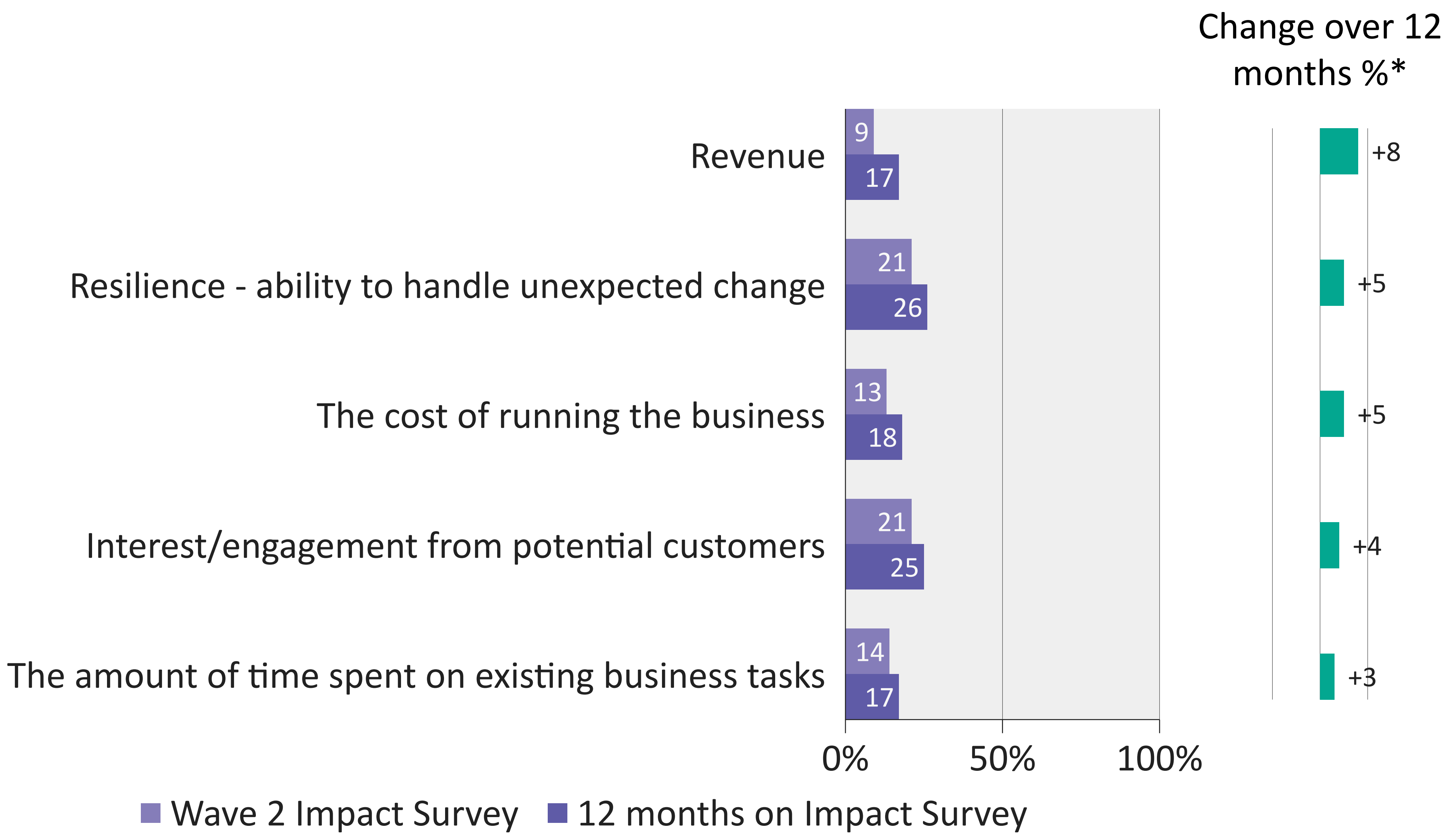


Based on respondents who completed both Wave 2 Surveys and the 12 months on Impact Survey (n=118)
*Subsample based on employers only (n=82)

Over 12 months the proportion of registrants who reported positive impacts on their business has shown a positive upwards trend

There appeared to have been incremental increases reported for increased revenue, business resilience and interest from customers, although these are not significant due to the small sample sizes.

Figure 59: Previously registered businesses – Digital Boost - Impacts on businesses – over 12 months (% who reported an increase)

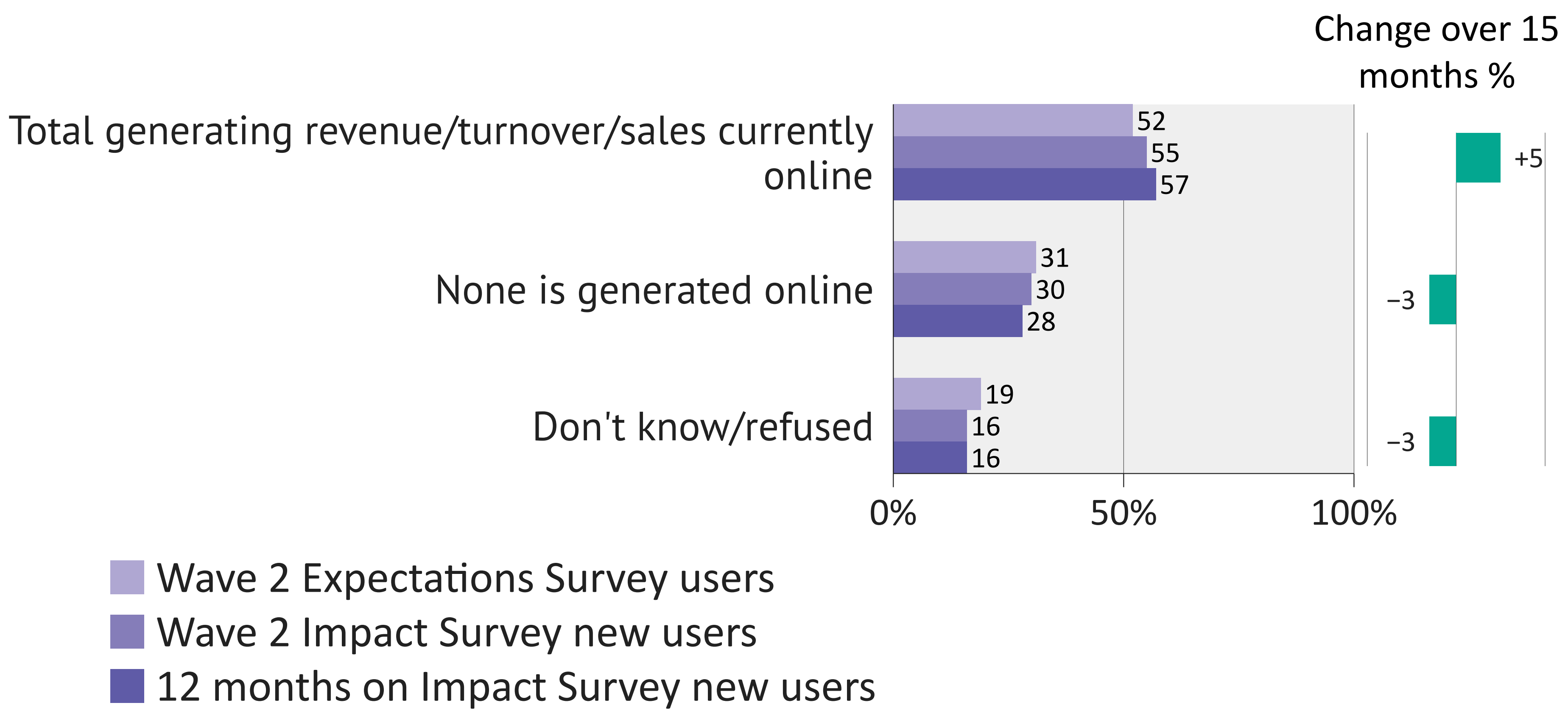


Based on respondents who completed both Wave 2 Surveys and the 12 months on Impact Survey (n=118)

*NB: Changes are not significant due to the small sample size.

There was also a positive trend in the proportion of registrants' businesses generating online revenue. Fifteen months after registering there had been a small lift of five percent more businesses now generating revenue online – starting from 52% in the Expectations Survey - up 5% - to 57% in the 12 months on Impact Survey.

Figure 60: Previously registered businesses – the percentage of businesses' revenue/ turnover/sales currently generated online – over 15 months



Based on respondents who completed both Wave 2 Surveys and the 12 months on Impact Survey (n=118)

*NB: Changes are not significant due to the small sample size.

Section 8 Summary

Impact of training after 15 months

The ‘previously registered’ Digital Boost cohort has shown **gradual growth** in their digital capabilities over the 15 months since their registration.

There have been significant **reductions in the barriers** stopping these businesses from becoming more digital and online, especially in the two biggest barriers – lack of knowledge and skill – both showed significant improvements over the 15 months since registration.

Both internal and external digital tool use had **grown** significantly, especially the use of websites - both those with, and without, a payment facility, and search engine optimisation. There have also been significant lifts in the use of ‘other’ cloud services or software, cloud infrastructure services and online messaging for communications.

Registrants’ motivations for becoming more digital have remained fairly stable and becoming ‘more digital’ remained a high priority for most. However, while digital confidence had remained fairly stable over the 15 months, financial concerns may be impacting some registrants’ ‘digital investment’ confidence.

There have been positive trends reported for increased revenue, business resilience and increased customer engagement, over the 15 months since Digital Boost registration.

Ngā Mihi

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