



**Housing**  
Executive

# Home Improvement Grants

Customer Satisfaction Survey 2023

## Acknowledgements

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*For more information about Home Improvement Grants,  
please see the [Housing Executive website](#).*

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## Executive Summary

### Survey response rate

- A total of 504 grant recipients participated in the 'Home Improvement Grants Survey' through telephone and online surveys, resulting in a response rate of 71%. The survey was conducted among 710 grants customers who received a home improvement grant from the Housing Executive in 2021-22. This report is based on the responses of 504 home improvement grant recipients.

### Grant type

- The majority of respondents (85%) received Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), while 9% received Renovation grants and 7% received Home Repair Assistance grants.

### Characteristics of respondents

- Among the respondents, 59% were female, and 41% were male. More than half (51%) of the respondents were aged over 65, while 35% were between 45 and 64 years old. A smaller proportion of respondents were aged between 18 and 44 (10%), and under 18 (3%).

- Sixty percent of respondents reported being permanently sick or disabled, while 15% were retired. Thirteen percent were employed, 12% were not working, and the remaining respondents had other employment statuses.

- Ninety percent of respondents stated that they or someone in their household had a long-term illness or disability affecting their daily activities.

- Nearly half (49%) of the respondents identified as Catholic and 25% identified as Protestant.

### Initial information about the Grants scheme (DFGs only)

- Almost three-fifths (59%) of respondents learned about the grant application process through an occupational therapist while 16% received information from family and friends.

- The majority (79%; 89% in 2020) found the provided information or advice easy to understand.

### Test of resources stage

- Overall, 64% of respondents found the Test of Resources forms easy to complete (76% in 2020).

- The majority (87%; 91% in 2020) of respondents were satisfied with their experience during the Test of Resources stage.

### **Inspection stage**

- High proportions of respondents reported being offered an appointment date (99%) and having their appointment kept (97%).
- Similarly, high proportions confirmed the following aspects of the grants process:
  - 91% stated that the grants officer showed their identification.
  - 93% stated that the grants officer explained the inspection process.
  - 93% stated that the grants officer explained the type of work that might be grant aided.
  - 93% stated that the grants officer explained the next steps in the grants process.
- The vast majority (94%; 91% in 2020) expressed satisfaction with the Inspection Stage of the process.

### **Formal application stage**

- Fifty-seven percent of respondents found the formal application forms easy to complete, while 35% considered them neither easy nor difficult, and 7% found them difficult to complete.
- Seventy-five percent of respondents received assistance in obtaining the required documents. The sources of help included advice agencies such as Radius or Gable (44%), Housing Executive staff members (28%), and friends or family members (26%).
- The majority of respondents (86%; 86% in 2020) expressed satisfaction with their experience during the schedule of works stage of the process.

### **Home Improvement Agencies**

- One-third (33%) of respondents utilised a Home Improvement Agency during the grants process, with 59% using Radius and 40% using GABLE.
- The agency provided details of the services they could offer at the initial visit (92%).
- Contact details for the agency caseworker (94%) and the service provider (92%) were provided.
- Eighty-five percent of respondents were satisfied with the completion of their application, and 86% were satisfied with the submission of their application and required documentation.

- The majority (83%) of respondents who used a Home Improvement Agency expressed satisfaction with the overall service provided throughout the process.

### **Approval Stage**

- Sixty-four percent of respondents expressed satisfaction with the length of time from the submission of documents to the approval of grant aid, while 18% were dissatisfied.
- Approximately half of the respondents found the approval documentation easy to understand regarding the responsibilities of the applicant (50%), required timeframes for work commencement (51%), required timeframes for work completion (51%), and correct employment of a contractor (51%).
- Seventy-five percent of respondents remained in contact with the Grants Office regarding the progress of works, with 14% contacting the Housing Executive six times or more.
- Forty-four percent stated that contact with the Grants staff was the main form of communication, while 34% stated that contact was initiated by the respondents themselves.
- Sixty-nine percent of respondents expressed satisfaction with the level of contact with the Grants Office regarding the progress of works following approval.

### **Payment stage**

- Eighty-one percent of respondents expressed satisfaction with the level of grant awarded to them.
- The majority (87%) stated that payment was made directly to the builder.
- Forty-four percent of respondents expressed satisfaction with the time taken by the Housing Executive to complete the payment of their grant. However, 46% were unable to answer this question as payment had been made directly to the builder, and they were unaware of the timing.

### **Builder/Contractor**

- More than three-fifths of respondents (62%) found it easy to find a builder to carry out the works.
- A high proportion (86%) expressed satisfaction with the quality of finished work.
- Similarly, a high proportion (85%) expressed satisfaction with the service provided by the builders during the work on their property, while 11% expressed dissatisfaction. Only a small number of dissatisfied respondents made contact with the Warranted Builders Scheme Management Company.

## **Overall satisfaction with the Grants Scheme**

- High levels of satisfaction (70%+) were reported across all aspects of the grants process. Respondents were most satisfied with "knowing who is dealing with your grant" (87%), while 73% of respondents were satisfied with the "length of time to process your application."
- The majority (92%; 97% in 2020) felt they were treated fairly during the grants process.
- Fifty-four percent of respondents found the letters and documentation received from the Housing Executive regarding their application easy to understand.
- Ninety-seven percent agreed that the work carried out had improved their quality of life and that of others in their household.
- Ninety-six percent agreed that the work carried out had improved their ability to live independently.
- Ninety-two percent agreed that the work carried out fully met their needs as grant applicants.
- The majority (87%; 94% in 2020) of respondents expressed satisfaction with the grants scheme overall.

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Background

The Home Improvement Grants Scheme implemented by the Housing Executive has undergone significant changes since its inception in 1992. Originally mandated by the Housing (NI) Order 1992, the scheme aimed to address issues of unfit housing in the private sector by providing grant aid for renovation or replacement, subject to feasibility and policy alignment.

However, with the introduction of the Housing (NI) Order 2003, the Grants Scheme has transitioned from being primarily mandatory to predominantly discretionary. This shift has brought about key changes in the eligibility criteria and application process for each type of grant. Renovation/Replacement Grants are no longer mandatory, as the decision to issue grants now rests with the Housing Executive's discretion. On the other hand, Disabled Facilities Grants continue to be mandatory and require a recommendation from an Occupational Therapist. Home Repair Assistance Grants are available to individuals receiving certain means-tested benefits, although the Housing Executive has the discretion to waive this requirement for respondents over 60 or with disabilities.

Furthermore, due to funding reductions since 2009, applications for Discretionary Renovation, Replacement, and Home Repair Assistance grants are now limited to exceptional circumstances. These circumstances are defined as situations where there is an imminent and significant risk to the occupier's well-being.

The previous evaluation of customer satisfaction with the Home Improvement Grants Scheme was conducted in 2020. In line with ongoing efforts to monitor and enhance the scheme's effectiveness, Private Sector Improvement Services has commissioned this research as a follow-up to the previous survey (Grants Satisfaction Survey 2020). The scope of this research was focused exclusively on the grants scheme operational during the financial year 2021/22, administered by five Grants Offices across Northern Ireland.

The purpose of this report is to provide an analysis of customer satisfaction with the Housing Executive's Home Improvement Grants Scheme, based on the results of the Home Improvement Grants Survey conducted among grant recipients. The report will delve into various stages of the grants process, assess customer experiences and perceptions, and identify areas of strength as well as areas that require improvement. The findings of this report will serve as valuable insights for the Housing Executive in their continuous efforts to optimise the grants scheme and enhance customer satisfaction.



## 1.2 Research objectives

The primary aim of this research was to evaluate customer satisfaction with the Home Improvement Grants Scheme. To achieve this, the following specific objectives were established:

1. Assessing each stage of the grants process: The study aimed to analyse and assess the different stages involved in the grants process, from initial information and application to inspection, approval, and payment stages. This assessment would provide insights into the strengths and weaknesses of each stage, identifying areas for improvement.
2. Examining aspects of the grants forms and associated literature: The research sought to evaluate the grants forms and associated literature provided to applicants. This examination aimed to gauge the clarity, comprehensibility, and user-friendliness of these materials, determining whether they effectively conveyed the necessary information and instructions to applicants.
3. Measuring satisfaction levels by individual grants offices: The study aimed to measure and compare customer satisfaction levels among the different grants offices operating throughout Northern Ireland. By examining variations in satisfaction across offices, the research sought to identify any discrepancies or areas requiring attention at specific locations.
4. Exploring sources of information on grants: This objective focused on understanding the various sources through which grant applicants obtained information about the grants scheme. By identifying the most common sources and assessing their effectiveness, the research aimed to highlight potential areas for improvement in information dissemination.
5. Assessing levels of understanding of the grants process: The research aimed to gauge the level of understanding among grant applicants regarding the grants process. By examining the clarity and comprehension of applicants' knowledge, the study aimed to identify areas where further clarification or support may be necessary.
6. Evaluating ease/difficulty in completion of grants forms: This objective aimed to assess the ease or difficulty experienced by grant applicants during the completion of grants forms. By identifying any challenges faced by applicants, the research aimed to pinpoint areas for improvement in the forms' design or instructions.
7. Investigating satisfaction with home improvement assistance agencies: The study aimed to measure customer satisfaction with the home improvement assistance agencies involved in the grants process. This survey sought to assess the quality of service provided by these agencies and identify any areas where improvements might be made to enhance customer satisfaction.
8. Profiling grant applicants: This objective focused on developing a comprehensive profile of grant applicants, including demographic information. By understanding the characteristics of grant applicants, the research aimed to identify any specific needs or requirements that should be considered in the grants process.

9. Evaluating overall satisfaction with the process: The research aimed to measure the overall satisfaction of grant applicants with the entire grants process. By capturing the overall satisfaction levels, the study sought to provide a comprehensive assessment of the grants scheme and identify any overarching areas for improvement.

These objectives were carefully formulated to address the research's overarching goal of identifying service issues and opportunities for improvement within the Home Improvement Grants Scheme.

### 1.3 Sample design

The sampling frame for this study consisted of all applicants to the Home Improvement Grant Scheme who had their grant works completed within the 12-month period of the financial year 2021/22. Readers should note that all cases were processed by the Housing Executive during a period when Covid-19 restrictions were still in place. As a result, some processes/procedures were amended to facilitate these restrictions and as such, respondents' perceptions and experiences of the grants process may have been influenced to some extent due to the potential impacts on staff availability and service delivery.

To carry out the telephone survey fieldwork, the Housing Executive commissioned the services of Perceptive Insight, a reputable market research company. Perceptive Insight played an active role in the finalisation of the questionnaire design. The Housing Executive provided Perceptive Insight with a comprehensive database containing the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of 794 grant applicants across the five Grants Office areas.

The objective of the survey was to reach out to all applicants in the sampling frame, with the goal of conducting interviews with a minimum of 100 applicants from each of the five Grant Offices. This approach aimed to ensure a representative sample and gather sufficient data from each office for analysis.

### 1.4 Participation in the study

In preparation for the telephone survey, an introductory letter was sent to all individuals in the sample two weeks prior to the study. The letter, printed on official Housing Executive headed paper, served as an introduction to the research. It clearly stated the purpose of the study, assured respondents about the confidentiality of their responses, extended an invitation to participate, offered the option to opt out if desired, and provided contact information for any inquiries or concerns. It is important to note that participation in this survey was voluntary.

### 1.5 Survey implementation

The survey was conducted from Perceptive Insight's Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) suite based in Belfast.

The specialised survey software is enabled with a VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) telephone system that allowed for the recording and monitoring of all calls. CATI handled routing by taking interviewers automatically to the next appropriate

question, avoiding the interviewer having to interpret complex routing instructions. Using this technology meant that the resultant dataset was cleaner and free from interviewer routing errors. As part of the piloting of the questionnaire, the CATI set-up was also tested.

The Perceptive Insight research team provided an annotated paper copy of the questionnaire, which is identical to the CATI version in terms of logic structure and variable labelling, for detailed checking and approval by the Housing Executive's Project Team before fieldwork commenced. The team also provided an online link to the CATI version, which was used to test the routing of the CATI set up. All telephone interviewing was conducted by Perceptive Insight's team of interviewers who are trained and experienced and work to the standards required by the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.

Telephone interviewers were briefed on the study and provided with a copy of the questionnaire, written briefing instructions and copies of the cover letter and contact sheets detailing the respondents they were to contact.

A number of steps were taken to maximise response to the survey, including:

- Sending an advance letter to potential respondents informing them of the study;
- Making at least three attempts to obtain an interview at each issued telephone number;
- Using a concise questionnaire to ensure the interview was of a suitable duration to prevent respondent fatigue and discontinuation of interview;
- Using trained and experienced telephone interviewers to work with respondents;
- Assuring potential respondents of the confidentiality and anonymity of their answers, in line with Perceptive Insight's IQCS-accredited standards;
- Ensuring convenience for respondents by offering flexibility in terms of when the interview is conducted and setting appointments to suit circumstances; and
- Offering information about what would happen to the findings.

Over the fieldwork period (i.e. February 2023 - March 2023) Perceptive Insight conducted 504 interviews with grant applicants or their nominees. Interviews lasted an average of 20-25 minutes. Respondents were assured that information given would be anonymous and confidential and that all data collected would be held in line with GDPR requirements.

## 1.6 Contact outcomes

The Housing Executive provided a database of 794 sample contacts for the survey. Every contact in the database was called, and a detailed record was maintained for each call. The outcomes of these calls are summarised in Table 1.1, revealing that nine contacts had incorrect numbers, 61 numbers were not in service, 10 grant applicants were deceased, and four indicated they had not received a grant.

Based on these figures, the number of eligible contacts was adjusted to 710. Out of these, 504 questionnaires were successfully completed, resulting in a response rate

of 71%. It is worth noting that the rate of refusals to participate in the survey was low at 9%, with a significant portion of refusals attributed to age limitations and health issues.

Table 1.1: Total number of contacts

<i>Grant office</i>	<i>Total No. of contacts</i>	<i>Wrong No.</i>	<i>Not in service</i>	<i>Deceased</i>	<i>Did not receive grant</i>	<i>Total eligible</i>	<i>Completed surveys</i>	<i>Refusal</i>	<i>No response</i>	<i>Response rate</i>
<i>Belfast</i>	150	0	16	2	0	132	91	18	23	69%
<i>Derry</i>	128	3	14	0	1	110	87	10	13	79%
<i>North East</i>	187	0	11	0	1	175	120	14	41	69%
<i>South</i>	151	2	7	6	0	136	104	0	32	76%
<i>West</i>	178	4	13	2	2	157	102	19	36	65%
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b>794</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>504</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>71%</b>

## 1.7 Data preparation

Upon completion of the survey, a comprehensive set of inter and intra variable logic checks was conducted to ensure the quality and accuracy of the data. These checks involved verifying correct bases, adherence to filter questions, confirming data within expected ranges, and scrutinising outlier data for precision. Skipped questions and responses marked as 'not applicable' underwent rigorous validation. Furthermore, inter-field consistency checks were performed to maintain data integrity. Any open-ended string questions were recoded into numeric values, while variables designed to capture 'other' responses were also recoded and included in the main dataset.

It was mutually agreed with the Housing Executive that weighting would not be applied in this study. The distribution of interviews achieved across the five Grant Office areas closely mirrored the proportions in the sample, eliminating the need for additional weighting adjustments. (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2: Distribution of all applicants and sample by Grants office

<i>Grant Office</i>	<i>% in population</i>	<i>% in sample</i>
<i>Belfast</i>	18%	19%
<i>Derry</i>	17%	15%
<i>North East</i>	24%	25%
<i>South Area</i>	21%	19%
<i>West Area</i>	20%	22%
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Secure encrypted electronic data files containing the documented and fully validated dataset were provided to the Housing Executive on project completion.

### 1.8 Note on reporting:

Among survey respondents, the applicant themselves constituted 68% of the cases. Partners accounted for 12% of the responses, while other individuals (mostly other family members) represented 26% of the respondents. To ensure clarity and consistency in reporting, this report will primarily refer to the term "respondent," except when discussing questions specifically related to benefits or income, which were directed at the Household Reference Person.

To maintain conciseness, this report presents an aggregated analysis of all grants offices. For detailed information by grant office, see the appendix tables in the separate Excel attachment provided.

## 2.0 Characteristics of respondents

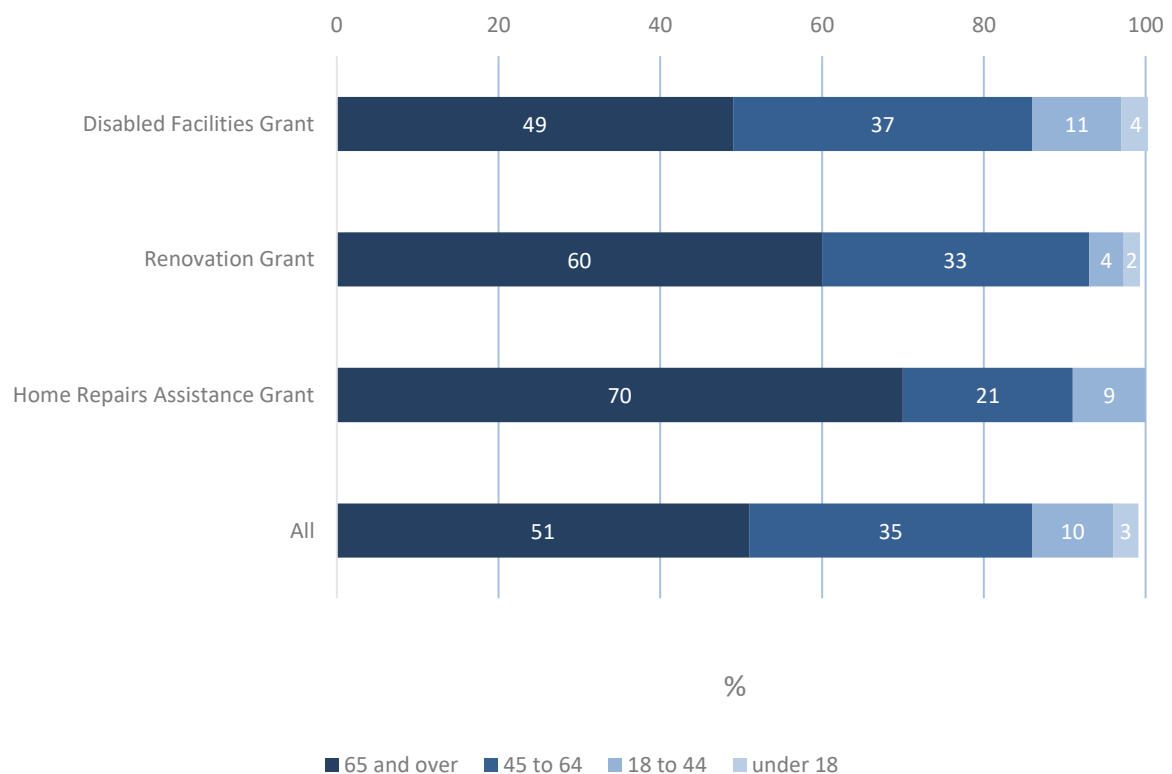
The survey collected information regarding various characteristics of the respondents' households, such as age, gender, employment status, religion, ethnic origin, and the presence of any disabilities among household members.

### 2.1 Grant type

The majority of respondents (85%) had received a Disabled Facilities Grant, while approximately 9% had received a Renovation Grant. A smaller proportion of respondents (7%) had received a Home Repair Assistance Grant (Appendix table 2.1).

Analysing the distribution of grant types by the age of respondents reveals that, across all grant types, more than half (51%) of the respondents were aged over 65 (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Grant type by age of respondent



### 2.2 Gender and age of respondents

The respondents in the survey were predominantly female, accounting for 59% of the total, while males constituted 41% (Figure 2.2). Among the respondents, the largest proportion (51%) fell into the age group of over 65, followed by 35% between the ages of 45 and 64. A smaller percentage of respondents (10%) were in the age range of 18 to 44, and only three percent were under 18 years old (Figure 2.3). For a detailed breakdown of age and gender by grants office, please refer to Appendix Table 2.2 and 2.3.

Figure 2.2: Gender of respondent by Grant Type

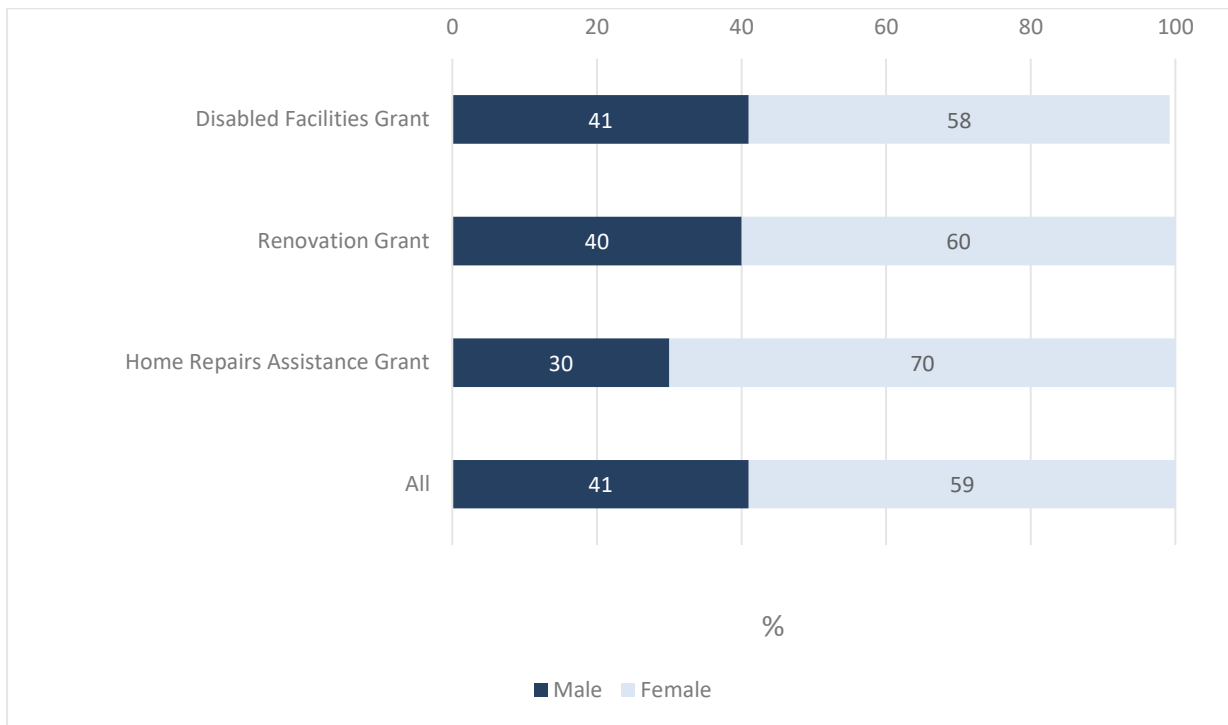
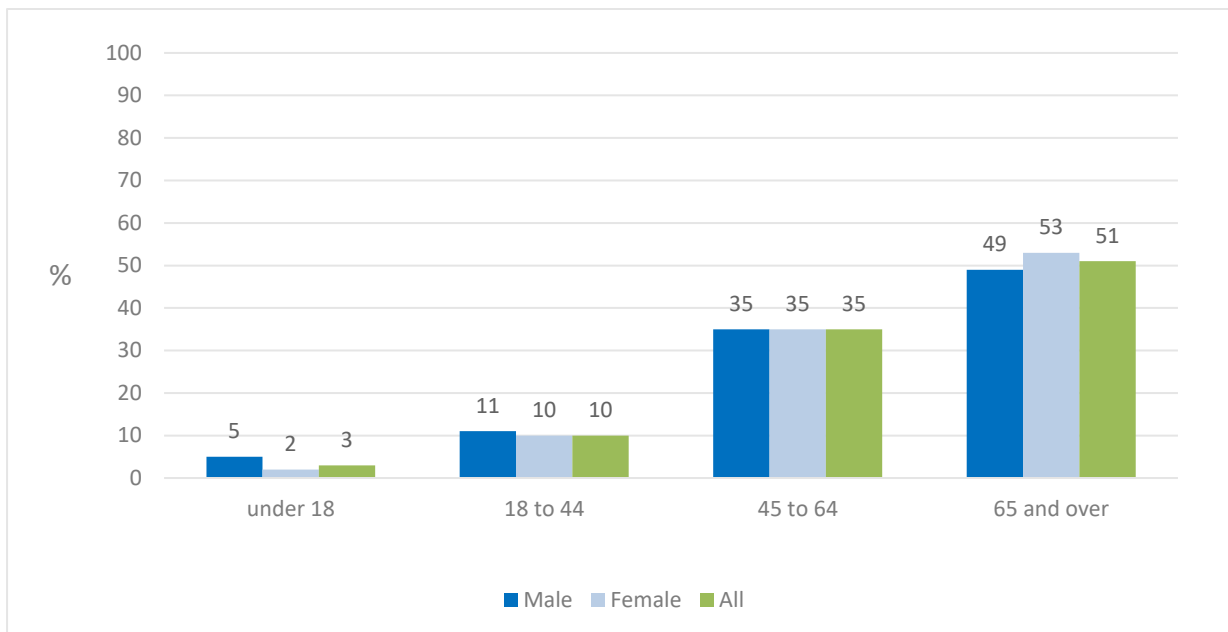


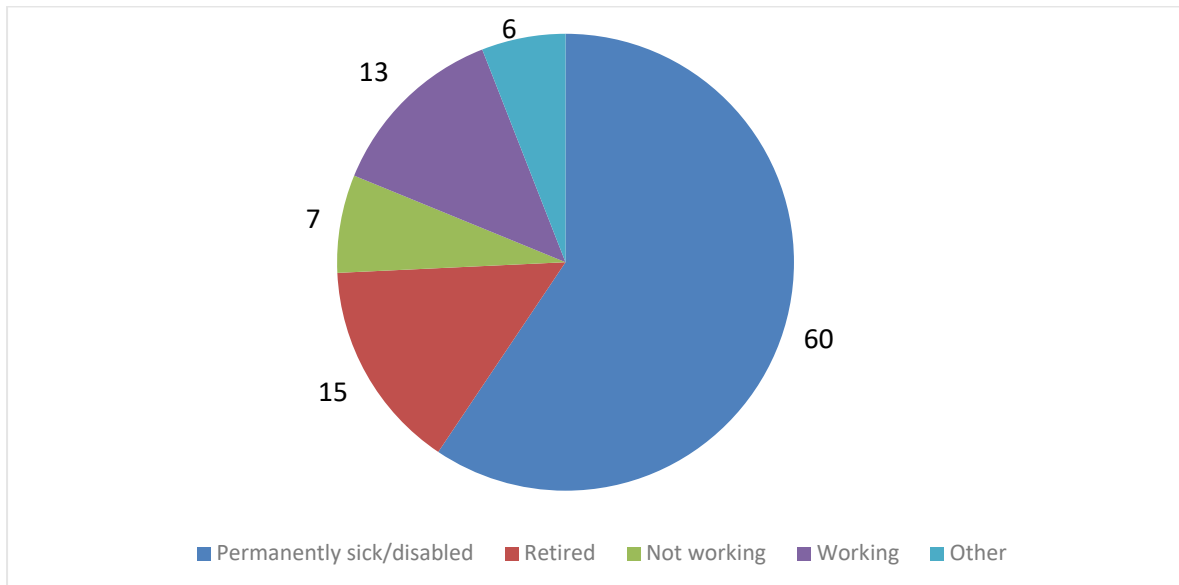
Figure 2.3: Age of respondent by gender



### 2.3 Employment status

The survey revealed that the largest proportion of respondents (60%) identified themselves as permanently sick or disabled. Additionally, 15% of respondents were retired from work. Thirteen percent of respondents said they were currently employed, while smaller proportions of respondents indicated that they were not working (7%) or had other employment statuses (6%) (Appendix table 2.4; Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4: Employment status (%)



### 2.4 Annual household income<sup>1</sup>

The survey used the definition of household income as the total annual income before tax, including all sources such as savings, employment, benefits, and other income for both the respondent and their partner (if applicable).

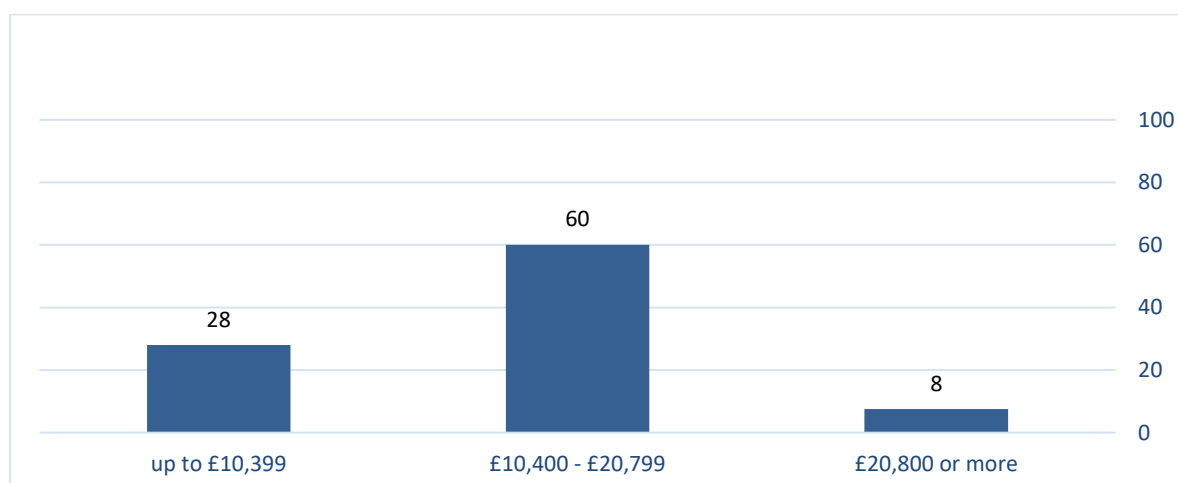
In this survey, only 20% of respondents provided information about their income. A majority of respondents (67%) indicated that they did not know their income, while 13% refused to provide income details. Among the respondents who did provide income information, the analysis reveals that over one-quarter (28%) reported an annual household income below £10,400, and three-fifths (60%) reported an income between £10,400 and £20,799. A further 12% reported an income of £20,800 or more (Figure 2.5; Appendix table 2.5).

These findings illustrate the limited knowledge about income among the respondents, but highlight that a significant portion of grant recipients who supplied income details had relatively low to moderate household incomes.

<sup>1</sup> 100 out of 504 respondents (20%) provided their income information. As income questions were asked of Household reference persons, in many cases the interviewee didn't know or couldn't remember these details.



Figure 2.5: Annual Household income (%)



## 2.5 Benefits

Benefits questions were asked of the Household Reference Person (HRP) and partners. More than three-quarters (78%) of respondents said the HRP was in receipt of at least one state benefit and 31% said the HRPs partner was in receipt of at least one state benefit. The main benefits received by the HRP were State Retirement Pension (55%), Housing Benefit (40%) and Personal Independence Payment (34%) (Table 2.1 – 2.2; Appendix tables 2.6 – 2.7).

Table 2.1: Benefits received by the Household Reference Person

	<i>Per cent</i>
<b>Out of work benefits:</b>	
Universal Credit	7
Jobseekers Allowance	<1
Employment and Support Allowance	17
Incapacity Benefit	1
Income Support	3
<b>Disability related benefits:</b>	
Disability Living Allowance	27
Personal Independence Payment	34
Attendance Allowance	10
Carer's Allowance	11
<b>Pension:</b>	
State (retirement) Pension	55
Pension Credit	29
<b>Other benefits:</b>	
Housing Benefit	40
Child Benefit	10
Child Tax Credits	7
Working Tax Credit	3

Table 2.2: Benefits received by the Household Reference Person's partner (where applicable)

	Per cent
<i>Out of work benefits:</i>	
Universal Credit	7
Employment and Support Allowance	10
Income Support	4
<i>Disability related benefits:</i>	
Disability Living Allowance	16
Personal Independence Payment	30
Attendance Allowance	7
Carer's Allowance	24
<i>Pension:</i>	
State (retirement) Pension	41
Pension Credit	12
<i>Other benefits:</i>	
Housing Benefit	5
Child Benefit	6
Child Tax Credit	1
Working Tax Credit	2

## 2.6 Long-term illness or disability

During the survey, nine out of ten (90%) respondents reported that either they or someone in their household had a disability that impacted their regular daily activities. Among these respondents, nearly four-fifths (79%) stated that their household had a single member with a disability. One-fifth (20%) reported having two disabled members while a small proportion (2%) mentioned having three or more disabled members within their household. These figures highlight the prevalence of disabilities within households among the surveyed population and the varying degrees of impact (Appendix tables 2.8 – 2.9).

## 2.7 Household religion

Nearly half of the respondents (49%) identified their household religion as Catholic, while 25% indicated it as Protestant. An additional 16% of respondents reported having a mixed religion household, no specific religious affiliation, adhering to another religion, or declined to disclose their household religion (Appendix table 2.10).

## 2.8 Ethnic group of respondents

Almost all (99%) respondents said they were white and one per cent said they were from other ethnic groups (Appendix table 2.11).

## 2.9 Internet access and future online survey methods

Less than two-thirds (64%) of respondents in this survey (compared to 71% in 2020) reported having internet access in their homes. Those with internet access were asked if they would have preferred to complete the grants satisfaction survey online, if given the option.

Interestingly, the majority of these respondents (81%) stated that they would not have chosen to complete the survey online, while 16% expressed openness to the idea. Table 2.3 highlights that the largest proportion (61%) of respondents who would not have preferred an online method cited a preference for speaking to someone directly rather than completing the survey online (Appendix tables 2.12 – 2.13).

Table 2.3: If it had been possible to complete the survey online, would you have done so?

	<i>Per cent</i>
<i>Yes</i>	5
<i>Maybe</i>	11
<i>No – prefer speaking to someone</i>	61
<i>No – not comfortable with online forms</i>	14
<i>No – other reasons</i>	10

### 3.0 Initial information about the Grants scheme<sup>2</sup>

In order to assess the initial information sources and the ease of understanding for applying to the Grants scheme, respondents who had received a Disabled Facilities Grant were asked specific questions.

#### 3.1 Finding out how to apply

Two-thirds (66%) of respondents stated that they had learned how to apply for a grant through an Occupational Therapist, while nearly one-fifth (18%) had received information from family and friends. These findings closely align with the results from the 2020 Grants Satisfaction Survey, where 65% had learned about the application process through Occupational Therapists, and 16% had received information from family and friends (Appendix Table 3.1).

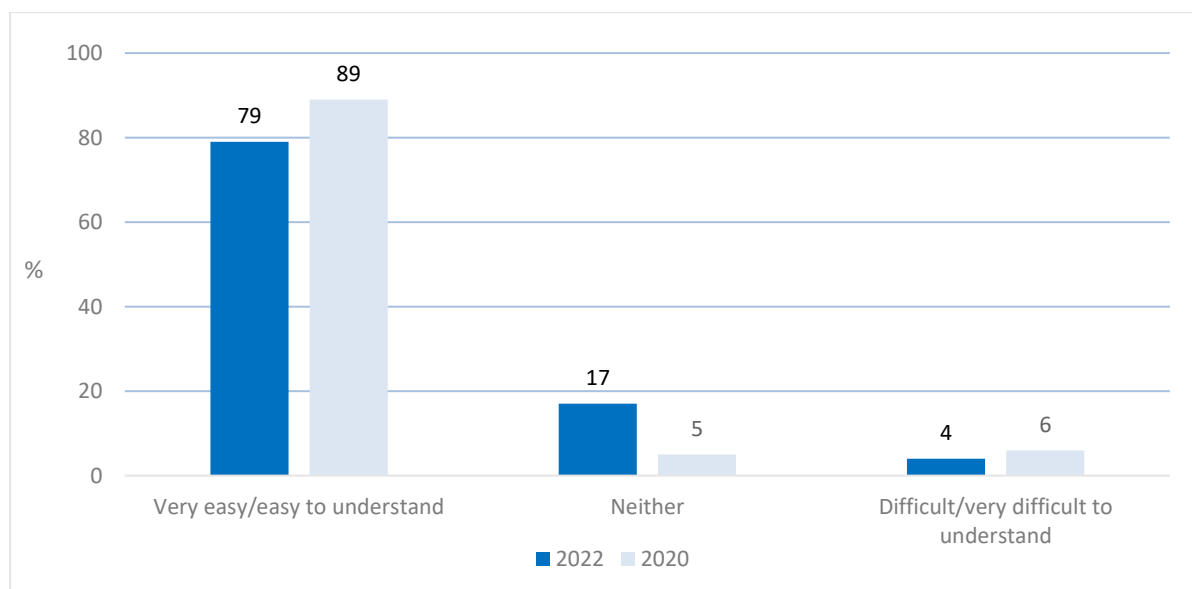
#### 3.2 Advice from occupational therapist

Among respondents who had received a disabled facilities grant, nearly three-quarters (73%) reported receiving information or advice from the Occupational Therapist regarding how the grant system operates (Appendix Table 3.2).

#### 3.3 Understanding of information or advice received

In terms of understanding the information or advice they had received, 79% of respondents assessed it as either very easy or easy to understand (compared to 89% in 2020). Only a small proportion (4%) of respondents found the advice or information to be difficult to understand (Figure 3.1; Appendix Tables 3.3 – 3.4).

Figure 3.1: Assessment of initial information received



<sup>2</sup> The Disabled Facilities Grant is aimed at helping people adapt their homes to meet the needs of someone within their household who has a disability. The award of a grant and the work carried out is based on the recommendation(s) of an Occupational Therapist. This section is only applicable to people who received this grant. More information about the Disabled Facilities Grant is available on the [Housing Executive website](#).

## 4.0 The Test of Resources Stage

The primary objective of the Home Improvement Grant Scheme is to allocate resources to individuals who have limited financial means to cover the costs of necessary welfare adaptations or home repairs. As part of this process, grant applicants undergo a means test to determine if they should contribute financially towards the "approved cost" of the work. This stage is referred to as the "Test of Resources."

In order to assess the respondents' experiences with the Test of Resources stage of the Grants process, those who had received a home improvement grant were asked specific questions.

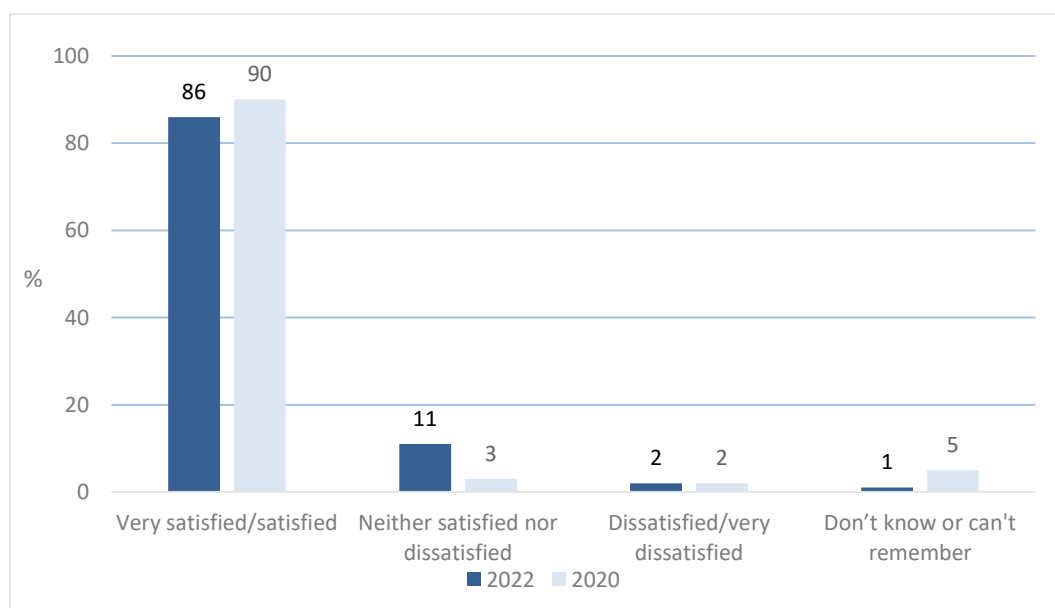
### 4.1 Completion of Test of Resources forms

Regarding the completion of Test of Resources forms, nearly two-thirds (63%; 76% in 2020) of respondents reported finding the forms easy to complete. Around one-third (29%) stated that they neither found the forms easy nor difficult, while 5% found them difficult. Among those who found the forms difficult, the main reasons cited were the use of complicated jargon and concerns about filling in the form incorrectly (Appendix Tables 4.1 – 4.2) .

### 4.2 Satisfaction with Test of Resources stage

The majority of respondents (86%; 90% in 2020) expressed satisfaction with their experience of the Test of Resources stage. Eleven percent stated they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and a very small proportion (2%) indicated dissatisfaction (Figure 4.1). The reasons for dissatisfaction varied, but the number of cases involved was too low to provide detailed reporting (Appendix Table 4.3-4.4).

Figure 4.1: Satisfaction with Test of Resources stage



## 5.0 Inspection Stage

Respondents were asked a series of questions regarding the inspection stage, which involves a visit from a Housing Executive Grants officer to assess the living conditions and determine the need for grant-funded work to fulfil the applicant's requirements.

### 5.1 Appointments

The vast majority (99%) of respondents said the grants officer had made an appointment for an inspection. Of these:

- 97% said their appointment had been kept; and
- More than one-quarter (26%) said they would have preferred an appointment outside normal office hours (Appendix Tables 5.1 - 5.3).

### 5.2 Aspects of the inspection stage

Respondents were asked a series of questions in relation to their inspection to ascertain if the grants officer/technical officer had explained the grants process and next steps. The vast majority of all respondents confirmed the following aspects of the grants process:

- 92% said a member of grants office staff had explained what the inspection was going to entail.
- 91% said a member of grants office staff had explained how long the preliminary inspection was likely to take.
- 91% said a member of grants office staff had explained what was involved in the preliminary inspection.

At the preliminary inspection stage:

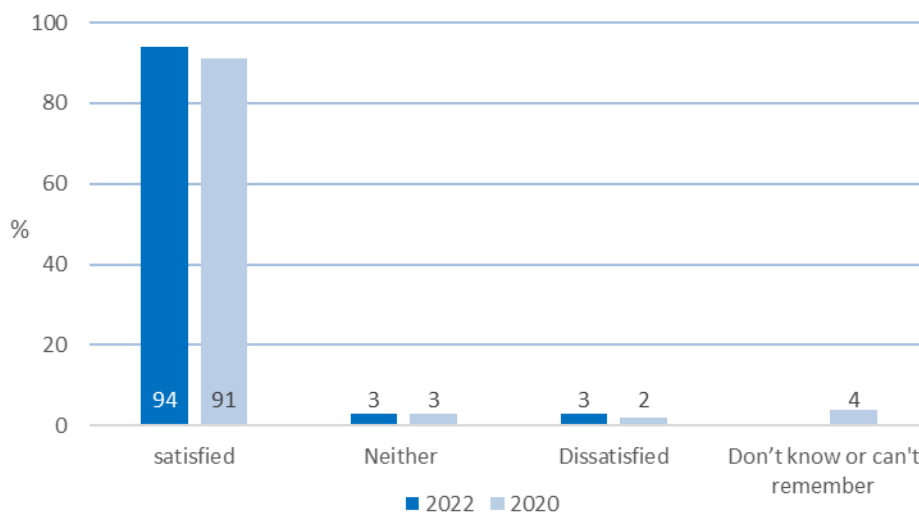
- 91% said the Technical officer had shown their identification.
- 94% said the Technical officer had advised what the preliminary inspection would involve.
- 91% said the Technical officer had advised how long the preliminary inspection would take.
- 93% said the Technical officer had explained the type of work that might be grant aided and;
- 93% said the Technical officer had explained the initial findings of the preliminary inspection and;

- 93% said the Technical officer had explained the next steps in the grants process (Appendix Tables 5.4 – 5.13).

### 5.3 Satisfaction with the inspection stage

Respondents were asked about their overall satisfaction with the Inspection Stage of the grants process. The results revealed that the vast majority of respondents (94%; 91% in 2020) expressed satisfaction with this stage. Only a small percentage (3%; 2% in 2020) expressed dissatisfaction (Figure 4.2; Appendix Table 5.14-5.15).

Figure 4.2: Satisfaction with inspection stage



## 6.0 Formal Application Stage

Following the initial inspection, the Grants Office supplies all applicants with a comprehensive Schedule of Works detailing the approved grant-aided work. At this stage, applicants are requested to submit various documents to the Housing Executive to facilitate the processing of their grant application. These documents may include proof of ownership, a builder's estimate, plans, and any required approvals. Respondents were asked about the work they had undertaken and the forms and documentation they had obtained during this stage.

### 6.1 Occupational Therapist recommendation for work

All respondents who received Disabled Facilities grants were asked whether the Occupational Therapist (OT) had recommended all the necessary work as per the applicant's assessment. The majority of respondents (90%) confirmed that the OT had recommended all the work they/the applicant considered necessary (Appendix Table 6.1).

### 6.2 Completion of formal application forms

More than half (57%) of respondents (76% in 2020) said they had found the formal application forms either easy or very easy to complete, 35% said the forms were neither easy nor difficult and 7% said they had found the forms difficult to complete. Among those who encountered difficulty, the most frequently cited reason was the perceived complexity of the forms (Appendix Tables 6.2 – 6.3).

### 6.3 Obtaining necessary proofs and approvals

Three-quarters (75%) of respondents (53% in 2020) said they had received help to obtain the necessary documents at this stage of the process (Appendix Table 6.4).

### 6.4 Proof of ownership

Most respondents (90%) had not found proof of ownership documentation difficult to obtain and 10% said it had been difficult (Appendix Table 6.5).

### 6.5 Builder's estimate

More than four-fifths (88%) of respondents had not experienced difficulty in obtaining a builder's estimate, while 13% said it had been difficult or very difficult (Appendix Table 6.6).

### 6.6 Building control approval

More than four-fifths (86%) of respondents had not experienced difficulty in obtaining building control approval and 12% said it had been either difficult or very difficult (Appendix Table 6.7).



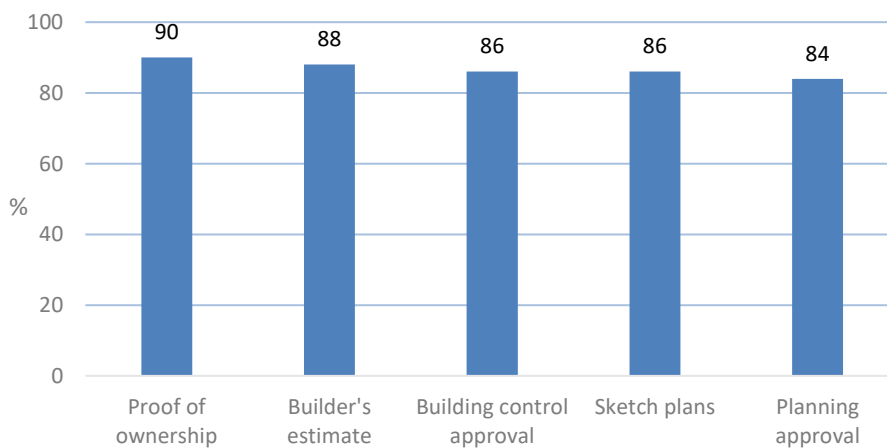
### 6.7 Sketch plans

More than four-fifths (86%) of respondents had not experienced difficulty in obtaining sketch plans and 13% said it had been either difficult or very difficult (Appendix Table 6.8).

### 6.8 Planning approval

More than four-fifths (84%) of respondents had not experienced difficulty in obtaining planning approval and 12% said it had been difficult (Appendix Table 6.9).

Figure 6.1: Percentage of respondents who had not experienced difficulty obtaining...



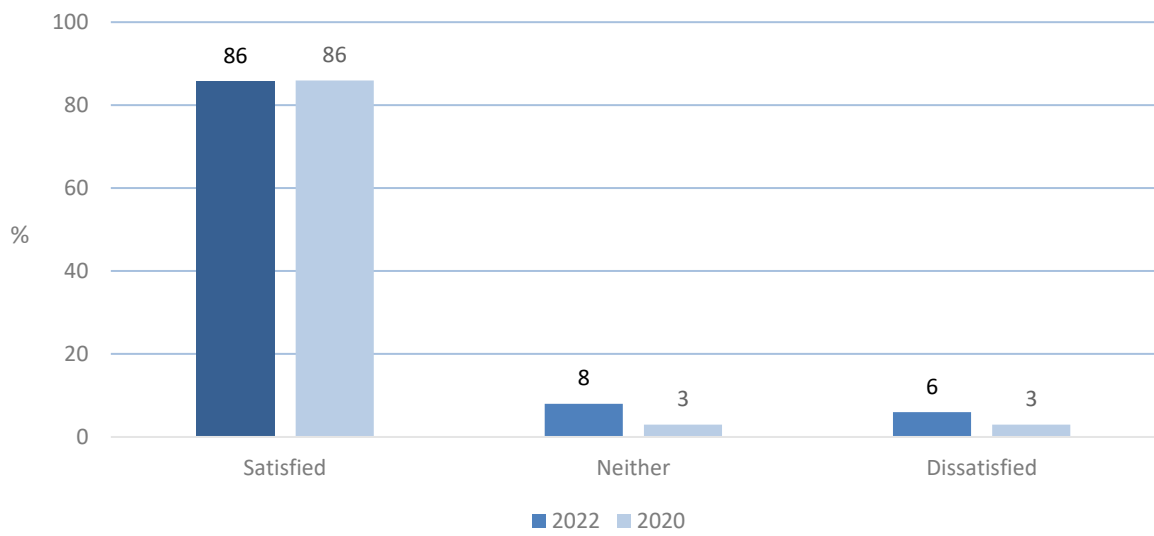
### 6.9 Sources of help completing forms

Three-quarters (75%) of respondents stated that they had received assistance in completing the required information at this stage of the process. The sources of assistance varied, with 44% receiving help from an advice agency such as Radius or Gable, 28% receiving assistance from a member of the Housing Executive, and 26% receiving help from a friend or family member (Appendix Tables 6.10-6.11).

### 6.11 Satisfaction with experience of the formal application stage

The majority of respondents (86%; consistent with 86% in 2020) expressed satisfaction with their experience of submitting the required information during the formal application stage of the process. A smaller proportion indicated they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (8%), while another minority expressed dissatisfaction (6%) (Figure 6.2). Among those who were dissatisfied, the most commonly cited reason was the perceived slowness of the process (Appendix Tables 6.12-6.13).

Figure 6.2: Satisfaction with the experience of submitting required information



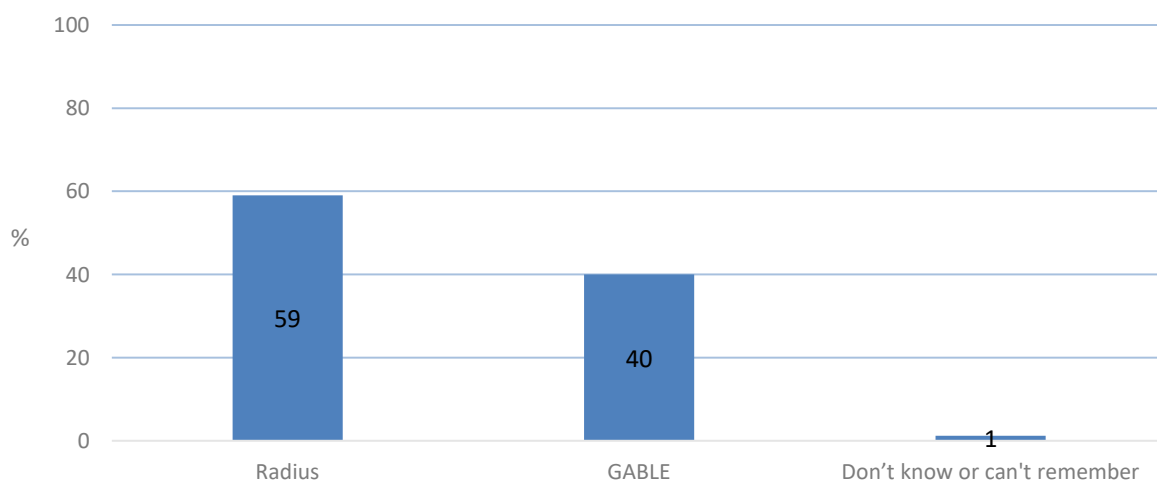
## 7.0 Home Improvement Agencies

In Northern Ireland, GABLE and Radius are organisations funded to assist customers throughout the application process, contractor selection, and completion of required works for adaptations, including Disabled Facilities Grants, in privately owned or privately rented properties. Respondents were asked a series of questions regarding the specific assistance they had received from these Home Improvement Agencies.

### 7.1 Agency used

One-third (33%) of respondents had used a Home Improvement Agency. Of these, 59% had used Radius and 40% had used GABLE (Figure 7.1; Appendix Table 7.1).

Figure 7.1: Home Improvement Agency involvement in application



### 7.4 Details of the service provided

The overwhelming majority (92%) of respondents had all the details of the service provided by the agency explained to them during the initial visit. Only a small percentage (four percent) did not have all the details explained to them during the initial meeting (Appendix Table 7.2).

### 7.5 Contact details provided

The overwhelming majority of respondents (94%) had agency caseworker contact details provided to them during the initial meeting. Only a small percentage (one percent) reported not receiving all the necessary contact information at that stage. Additionally, 92% of respondent also had details of the service provider provided (Appendix Tables 7.3-7.4).

### 7.6 Completion of the form

The satisfaction levels with the service provided by the Agency representative who completed their application were high, with over four-fifths (85%) of respondents expressing satisfaction. A smaller proportion of respondents (7%) indicated that they had been neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, while only 5% reported being dissatisfied with the service (Appendix Table 7.5).

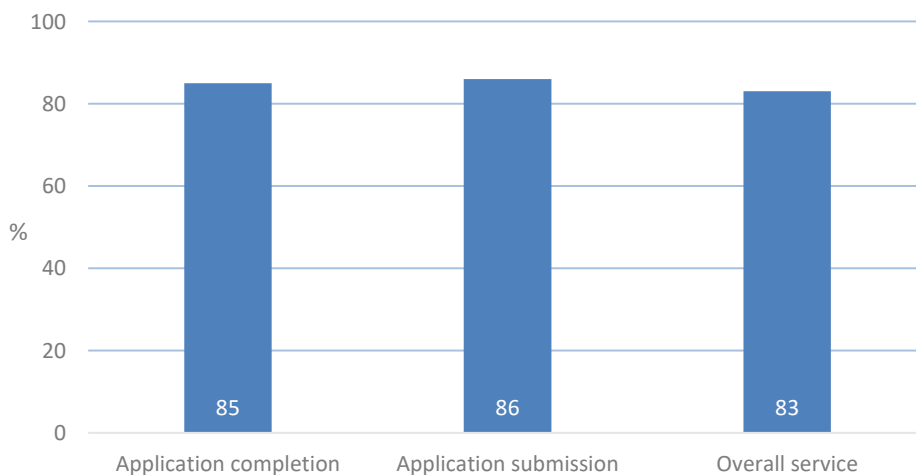
### 7.7 Submission of the form

More than four-fifths (86%) of respondents were satisfied with the service provided by the Agency representative who submitted their application. Smaller proportions were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (7%) or dissatisfied (5%) (Appendix Table 7.6).

### 7.9 Overall service throughout the process

More than four-fifths (83%) of respondents were satisfied with the overall service the Agency representative provided throughout the process. Smaller proportions were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (5%) or were dissatisfied (9%) (Figure 7.2; Appendix Table 7.9).

Figure 7.2: Satisfaction with aspects of the service provided by the Agency representative



## 8.0 Approval Stage

The applicant has the responsibility of providing the necessary documentation for the approval of grant aid. The Schedule of Works pack provides guidance on the required documentation for the approval process. This stage is referred to as the Approval stage. Respondents were asked a series of questions specifically related to the submission of documents for the approval of grant aid.

### 8.1 Satisfaction with the length of time from submission of documents to approval of grant aid

The majority of respondents (64%) expressed satisfaction with the length of time it took for their documents to be processed and their grant aid to be approved. However, nearly one-fifth (18%) expressed dissatisfaction while a similar proportion (17%) neither expressed satisfaction nor dissatisfaction (Appendix Table 8.1).

### 8.2 Responsibilities of applicant

Fifty percent of respondents found it easy to understand the responsibilities of the applicant when it came to providing the required documents for approval. On the other hand, less than one-tenth (7%) found this aspect difficult to understand. For more than two-fifths of respondents (43%), this aspect was considered neither easy nor difficult to understand (Appendix Table 8.2).

### 8.3 Timeframes for work commencement

More than half (51%) of respondents found it easy to understand the timeframes for work commencement as outlined in the approval documentation. In contrast, less than one-tenth (8%) found it difficult to comprehend the timeframes. For more than two-fifths (41%) of respondents, this aspect was considered neither easy nor difficult to understand (Appendix Table 8.3).

### 8.4 Timeframes for work completion

More than half (51%) of respondents found it easy to understand the timeframes for work completion set out in the approval documents; less than one-tenth (8%) found it difficult to understand the timeframes for work commencement. More than two-fifths (41%) said this aspect was neither easy nor difficult to understand (Appendix Table 8.4).

### 8.5 Correct employment of contractor

More than one-half (51%) of respondents found the approval documents relating to the correct employment of a contractor to be easy to understand and less than one-tenth (7%) found it difficult. More than two-fifths (41%) said this aspect was neither easy nor difficult to understand (Appendix Table 8.5).

### 8.6 Contact with the Grants Office

More than three-fifths (62%) of respondents were in contact with the Grants Office to enquire about the progress of their works. Among them, 27% reached out to the

Grants Office one to two times, 21% contacted them three to five times, and 14% had contacted the office six times or more. However, a notable portion (38%) either did not contact the Grants Office regarding the progress of works or could not recall making any contact (Appendix Table 8.6).

### 8.6 Satisfaction with level of contact regarding progress of works

More than two-thirds (69%) of respondents expressed satisfaction with the level of contact they had with the Grants office regarding the progress of work after Grant approval. Only six percent reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. One-fifth (20%) indicated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the level of contact (Appendix Table 8.7).

### 8.7 Sources of contact

More than two-fifths (44%) of respondents said contact regarding works had been initiated mainly by grants office staff while 34% said contact had mainly been initiated by the applicant. A further 22% of respondents could not remember who had made contact (Appendix Table 8.8).

## 9.0 Payment Stage

Respondents were asked about their experience of the Payment stage of the Grant process.

### 9.1 Satisfaction with level of grant awarded

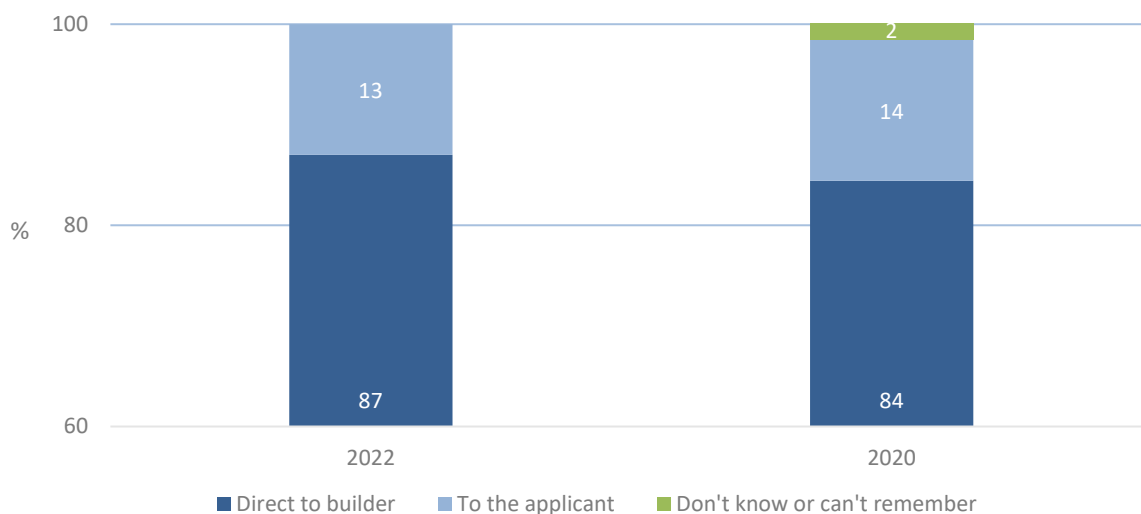
An overwhelming majority of respondents (81%; 84% in 2020) expressed satisfaction with the level of grant awarded to them. Twelve percent indicated they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, while 8% expressed some level of dissatisfaction. Among the dissatisfied respondents, the most common reason cited was that the grant amount was insufficient to cover the necessary works (Appendix Tables 9.1 – 9.2).

### 9.2 Grants payment by recipient

More than four-fifths (87%) of respondents said the Housing Executive had made payment directly to the builder/contractor and 13 per cent said it had been to the applicant (Appendix Table 9.3).

Figure 9.1 shows the breakdown of grants payment by recipient compared with 2020. This survey shows that most grants payments are directly to the builder or contractor.

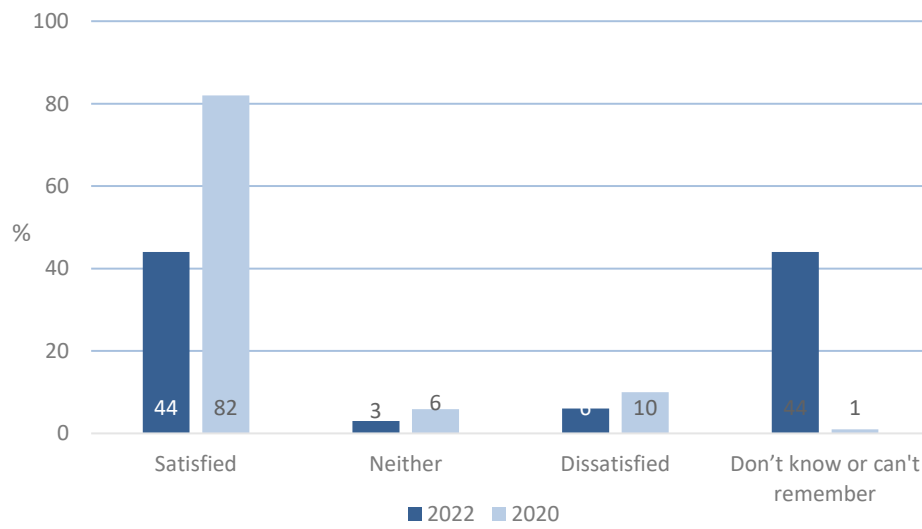
Figure 9.1: Grant payment by recipient



### 9.3 Satisfaction with time taken to complete payment

More than two-fifths (44%; 82% in 2020) of respondents expressed satisfaction with the time it took the Housing Executive to complete the payment of their grant. Only three percent expressed dissatisfaction while six percent remained neutral. Among those who were dissatisfied, the main reason cited was that payment had been delayed. Notably, more than two-fifths (44%) of respondents did not have knowledge or recollection of when payment was made and were thus unable to provide an opinion on this matter (Appendix Tables 9.4 – 9.5).

.Figure 9.2: Satisfaction with time taken to complete payment (compared with 2020)





## 10.0 Builder Satisfaction

Respondents were asked a series of questions to ascertain their experiences of the builder/contractor who had carried out the works.

### 10.1 Ease of finding a builder

More than three-fifths (62%; 76% in 2020) of respondents indicated that they found it easy to locate a builder to carry out the necessary works. However, a notable portion (22%) found this task to be difficult. Among those who found it difficult, the main reason cited by almost two-thirds (62%) was that it was 'hard to secure a contractor/contractors refused' (Appendix Tables 10.1-10.2).

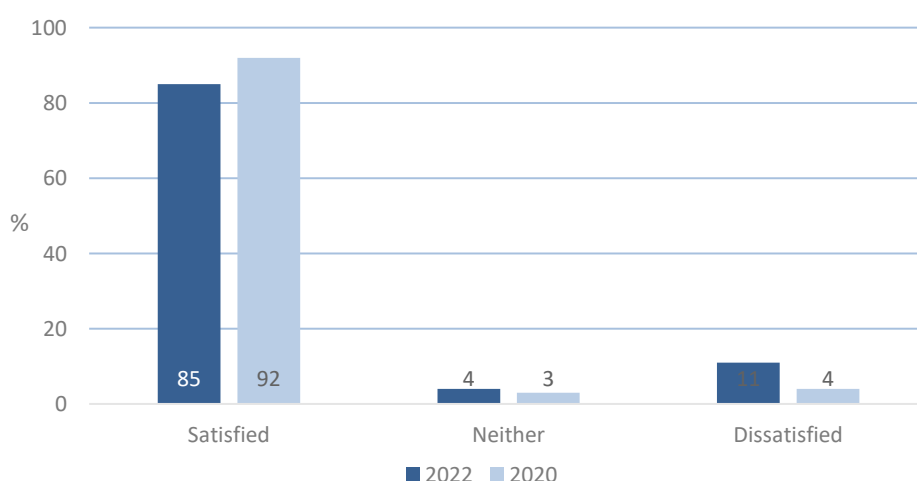
### 10.4 Satisfaction with quality of finished work

Respondents were also asked how satisfied they were with the quality of finished work. Overall, a high proportion (86%; 92% in 2020) said they were satisfied with the quality of finished work and ten per cent were dissatisfied. The main reason cited by dissatisfied respondents was that the standard of work was very poor (Appendix Tables 10.3 - 10.4).

### 10.5 Satisfaction with the overall service provided by the builder/contractor

An overwhelming majority of respondents (85%; 92% in 2020) expressed satisfaction with the service provided by the builders during the work conducted on their property. However, eleven percent reported being dissatisfied (Figure 10.1). The primary reason cited for dissatisfaction was the perceived poor standard of the workmanship (Appendix Tables 10.5 – 10.6).

Figure 10.1: Satisfaction with the service provided by the builder



### 10.6 The Warranted Builders Scheme Management Company

Less than five of the 54 respondents who were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the overall service provided by the Builder/contractor said they had made contact with the warranted builders' scheme management company (Appendix Tables 10.7-10.8).

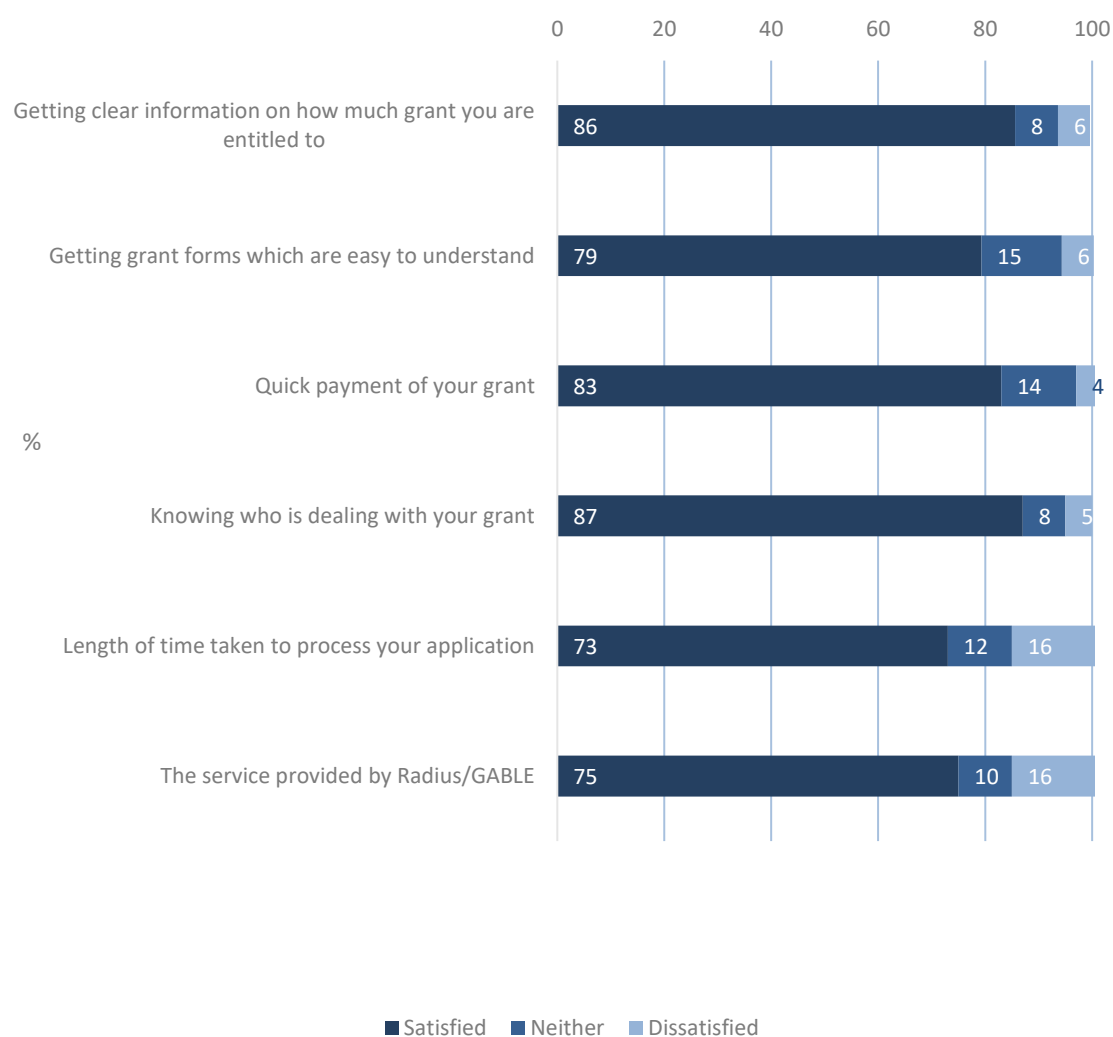
## 11.0 The Grants Scheme Overall

Respondents were provided with an opportunity to share their overall experiences with the Grants Scheme, including their interactions with letters and documentation received, as well as the adequacy of the assistance they received, if applicable. This section also included questions aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the reasons behind any dissatisfaction expressed towards the Grants scheme.

### 11.1 Satisfaction with aspects of the grant process

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with various aspects of the grants process. High levels of satisfaction were reported across all aspects of the grants process. Figure 11.1 shows that most respondents (87%) were satisfied with 'knowing who is dealing with your grant' compared to 73% satisfaction with the 'length of time taken to process your application' (Appendix Tables 11.1 - 11.6).

Figure 11.1: Satisfaction with aspects of the Grants process



## 11.2 Treatment during the Grants process

An overwhelming majority (92%; 97% in 2020) of respondents felt that they had been treated fairly throughout the Grants process. However, a small percentage (8%) did not share the same perception and felt that they had not been treated fairly (Appendix Table 11.7).

## 11.3 Understanding letters and documentation

More than half (54%; 86% in 2020) said that they found the letters and documentation they received from the Housing Executive regarding their application easy to understand. A significant proportion (39%) responded with 'neither easy nor difficult,' which is higher compared to 5% in 2020. However, a small proportion (7%) found the letters and documentation difficult to understand, slightly lower than the 9% reported in 2020. The most common reason among those respondents who had encountered some difficulty was that the wording of questions was too technical (Appendix Tables 11.8 – 11.9).

## 11.5 Impact of the grant-aided work

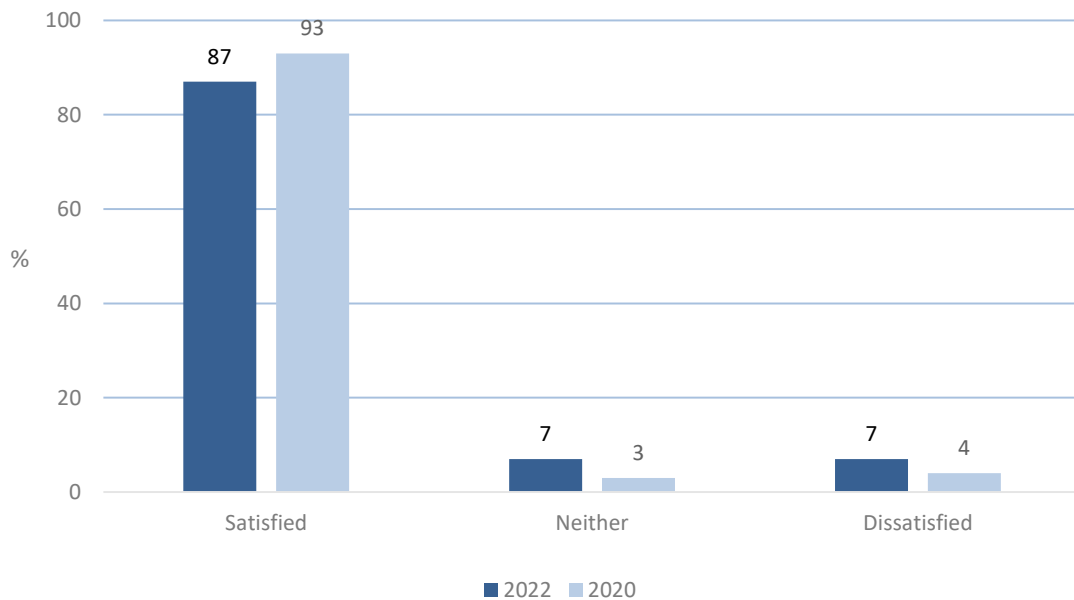
An overwhelming majority of respondents expressed agreement with the following statements regarding the grant-aided work:

- The work carried out significantly improved my quality of life and that of others in the household (97%).
- The work carried out fully met the needs of the grant applicant (92%).
- The work carried out has noticeably improved my ability to live independently (96%) (Appendix Tables 11.10 – 11.12).

### 11.6 Satisfaction with the Grants scheme overall

The majority (87%; 93% in 2020) of respondents said they were satisfied with the Grants scheme overall, while (7%) were dissatisfied and 7% expressed neither satisfaction nor dissatisfaction (Figure 2; Appendix Tables 11.13-11.14).

Figure 11.2: Overall satisfaction with the Grants scheme (compared to 2020)



### 11.7 Analysis by Grants office

For a more detailed tabular analysis by grants office, please see the accompanying appendix tables [here](#).

This report can be found on the Housing Executive website: [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk)

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