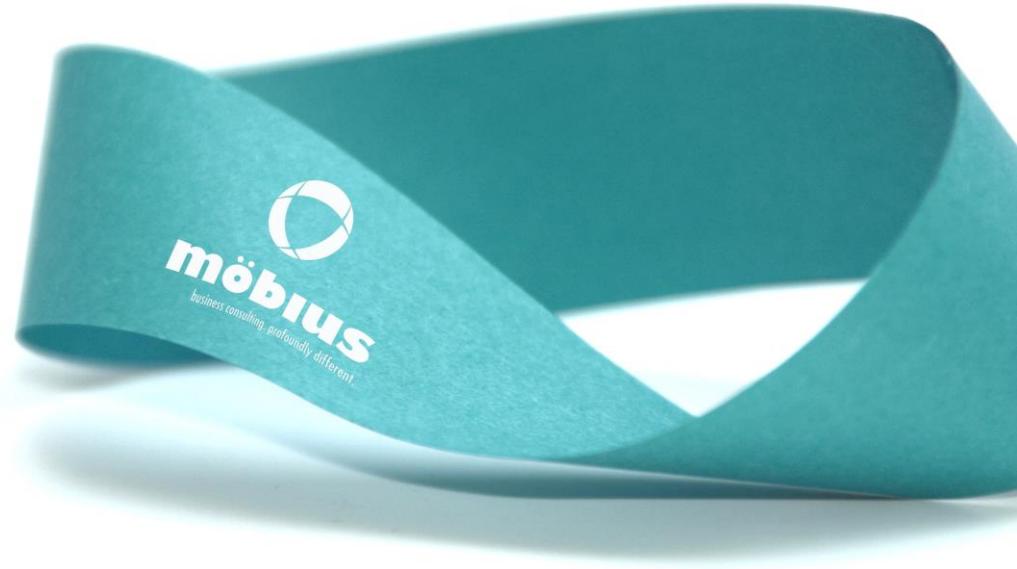
Customer Contact

Customer contact during & after COVID-19

May 2021



möbius

CUSTOMER CONTACT
Belgian Customer Contact Association

Results customer contact during & after COVID-19

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Methodology

Almost a year ago, in Q2 2020, Customer Contact, the Belgian customer contact association & Möbius investigated the impact of Corona on customer contacts.

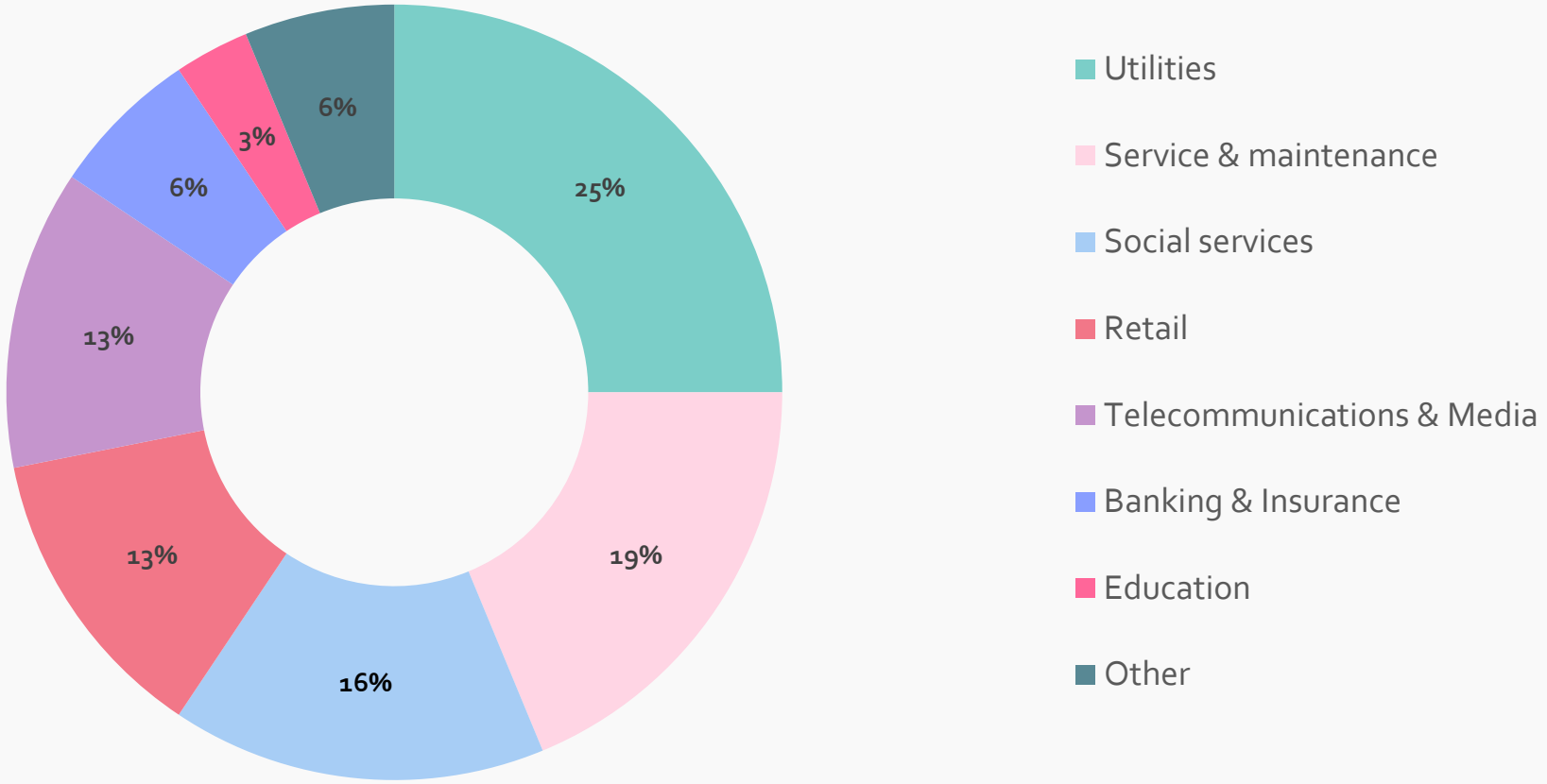
Goal: One year later we want to verify if the change in customer behavior is permanent and if the covid-19 measures still have an impact on contact volumes and handling times.

We want to know **which solutions** have been put in place **to react to the (possible) change in customer behavior**.

Data collection: An invitation was sent to the members of Customer Contact and a call for participation was launched via the newsletter and on social media channels. This resulted in n=44 of which **n=32 completes** among companies in the Customer Contact sector.

Sample composition | Sector

Many different sectors are included in the sample, representing a considerable amount of contact centers employees and interaction volumes.



Q: What sector does your organization operate in?| filter: none | n= 32

IMPACT ON CUSTOMER BEHAVIOR

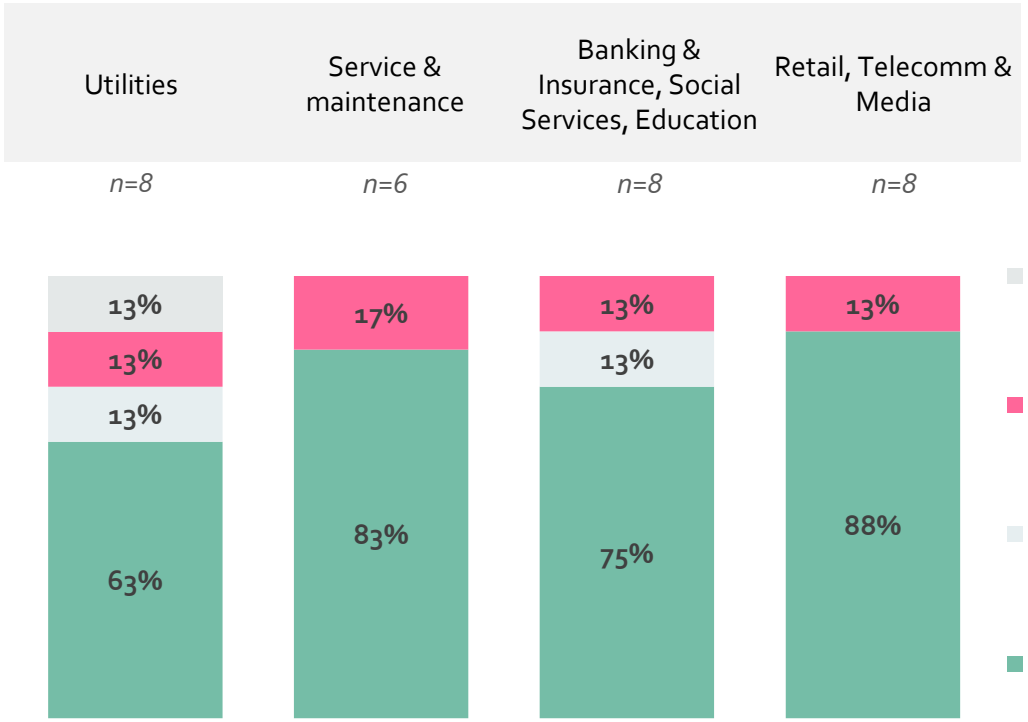
Changed customer behavior

Across sectors an **increase of inbound interactions** is noticed, especially in Retail, Telco & Media and Service & maintenance. **Outbound interactions also increased** in most sectors, but largely decreased for Retail, Telco & Media.

Volume change customer interactions

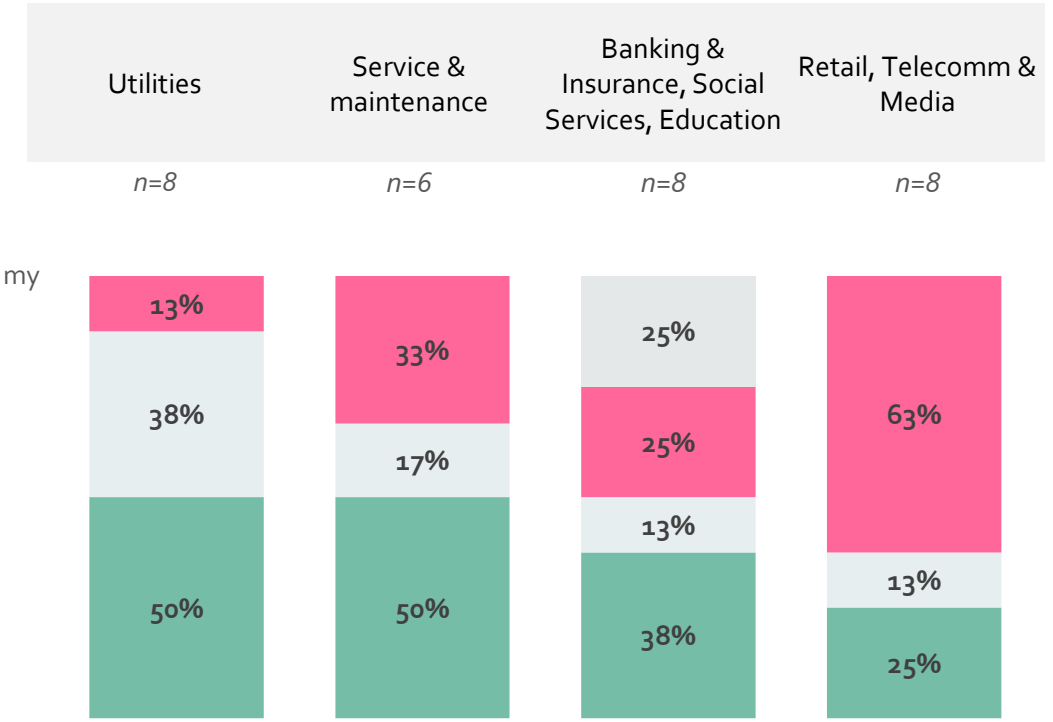
Total **INBOUND** customer interactions

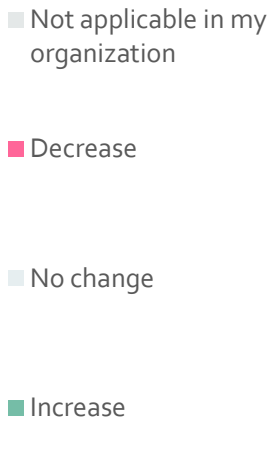
76% ↑ 16% ↓



Total **OUTBOUND** customer interactions

36% ↑ 40% ↓



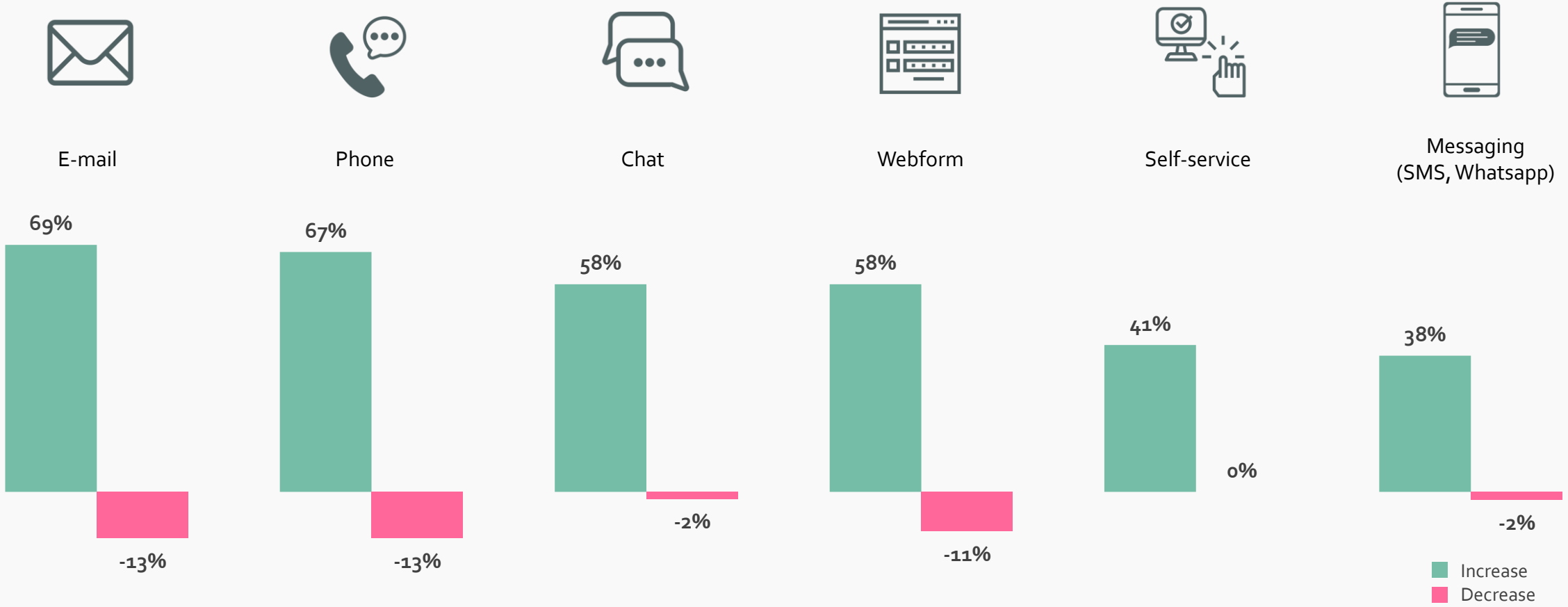


Q1: How did the volume of customer contacts and interactions change across different channels, since the Covid-pandemic?| filter: none | n= 45

Changed customer behavior

Volumes of customer **interactions increased across all channels**. Chat, self-service and messaging are only used more, never less. (between 34% and 44% of organizations does not offer these channels)

Volume change customer interactions

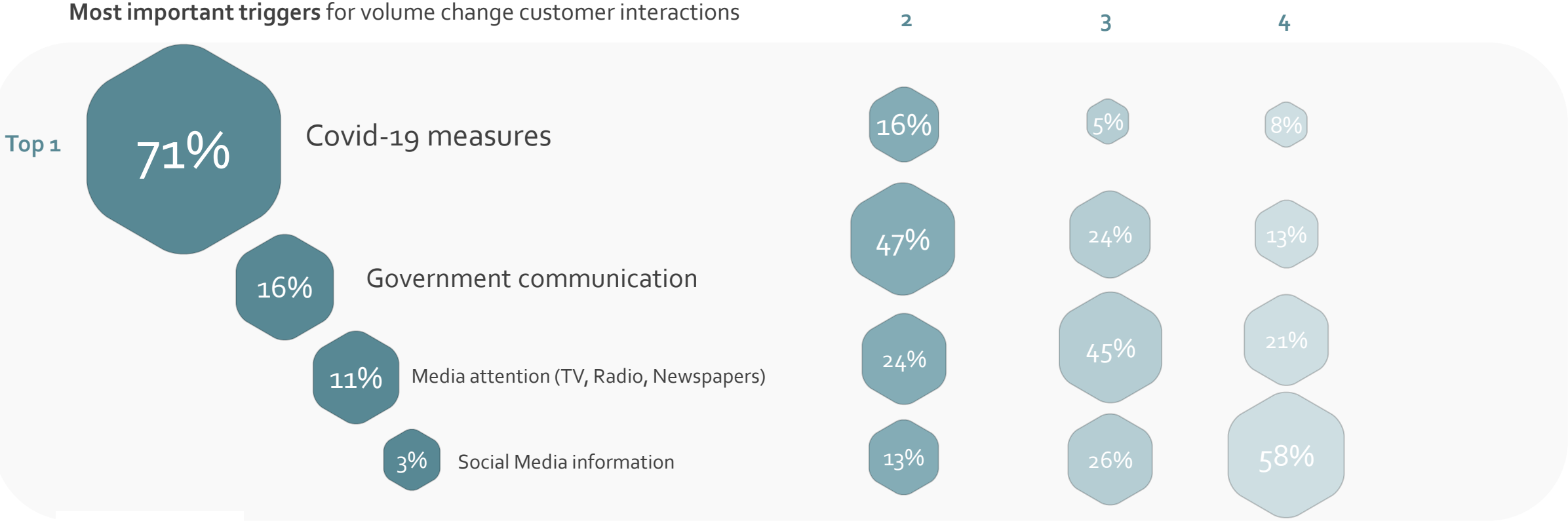


Q1: How did the volume of customer contacts and interactions change across different channels, since the Covid-pandemic? | filter: none | n= 45

Changed customer behavior

7 out of 10 agrees that **Covid-19 measures and the consequential restrictions** are the most **influential triggers** for **volume changes**. Government communication and the confusion around it also contributes to this.

Most important triggers for volume change customer interactions



Other triggers?

"Closure of shops, uncertainty about appointments, less contact"

"People working from home (change in behaviors)"

"The fact that face-to-face channels were closed most of the time due to the covid measures. People had no other way than to contact us through the media."

"Unclear information and press-impact customers have more time to call"

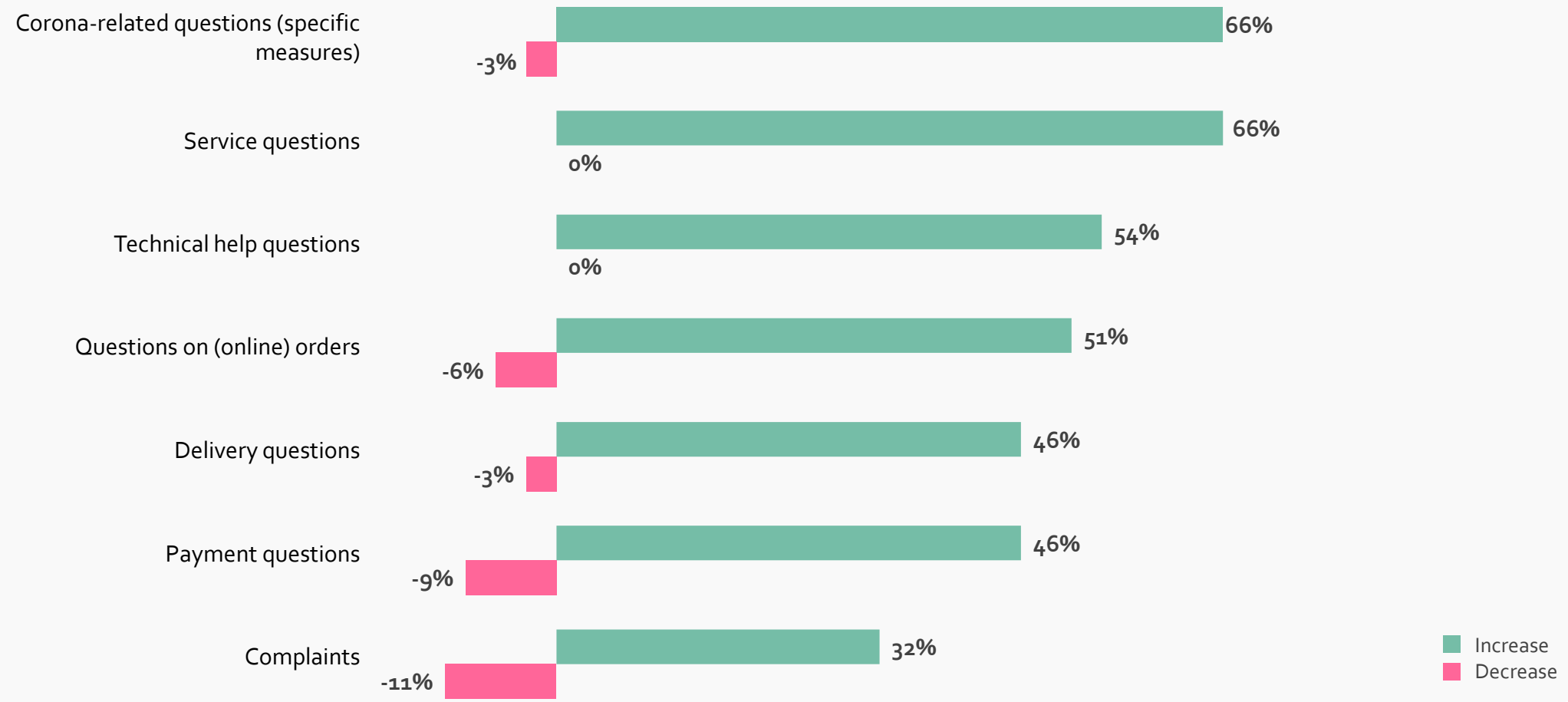
"Delay in delivery Waiting times"

Q2: :What are the most important triggers for changes in contact volumes for your organization? | filter: none | n= 38

Changed customer behavior

Corona-related and service questions have increased the most, but there is also a significant increase in questions throughout certain steps in the customer journey. 1 in 3 reports that complaints have increased, only 1 in 10 states they have diminished.

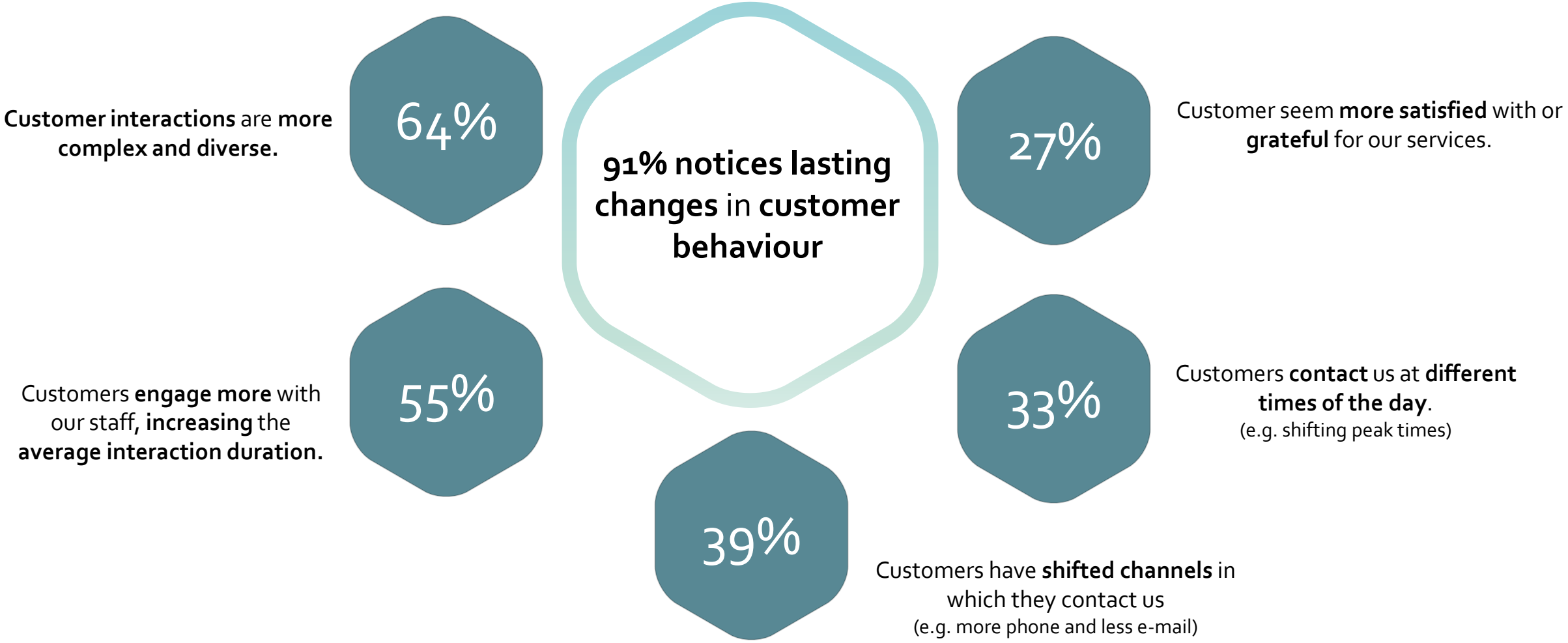
Change in nature of customer interactions



Q3: How did the nature of customer contacts and interactions change across different channels, since the Covid-pandemic? | filter: none | n= 35

Changed customer behavior

9 out of 10 sees lasting changes in customer behavior. Most commonly that **interactions have become more complex and diverse,** and **customers engage more,** thus increasing the average interaction duration. More than 1 in 3 finds that customer have shifted channels and peak times.



Q9: Which of the following changes in customer behavior because of Covid-19 do you still experience today? | filter: none | n= 32

Impact on customer behavior

3 out 4 organizations notices an **increase of inbound interactions**, across all channels. Mainly **triggered by Covid-19 measures**.

Questions arise on corona-related matters, as well as on service, technical help and several steps in the customer journey (order, delivery, payment)

9 out of 10 sees **lasting changes in customer behavior**.

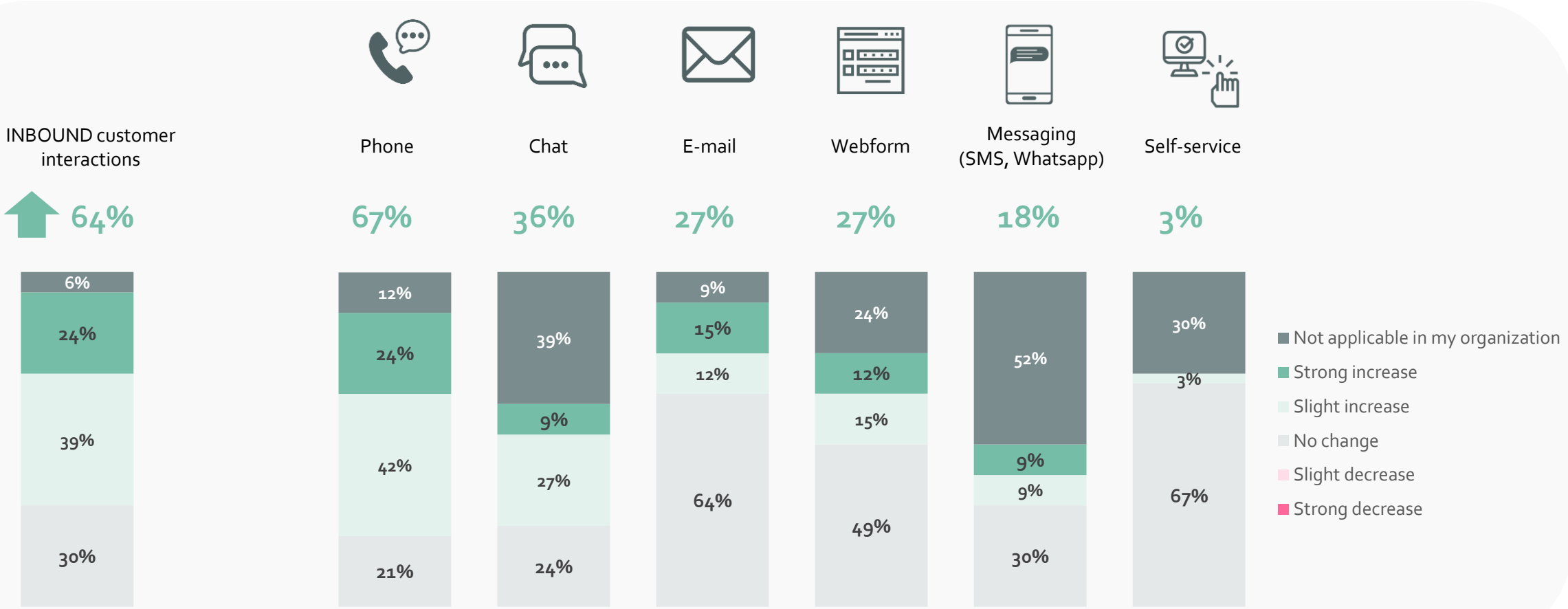
Not only are volumes increasing, **interactions** are becoming **more complex and diverse**. Customers also engage more, further **bumping up the average interaction duration**. Additionally, organizations notice a **shift in channels** customers use as well as **changing peak times**.

IMPACT ON ORGANIZATION

Organizational changes

6 out of 10 organizations states the **handling time of inbound interactions has increased**. This is most noticeably the case for phone interactions, but for some organizations also chat, e-mails and webform interactions are taking longer to handle.

Handling time of customer interactions

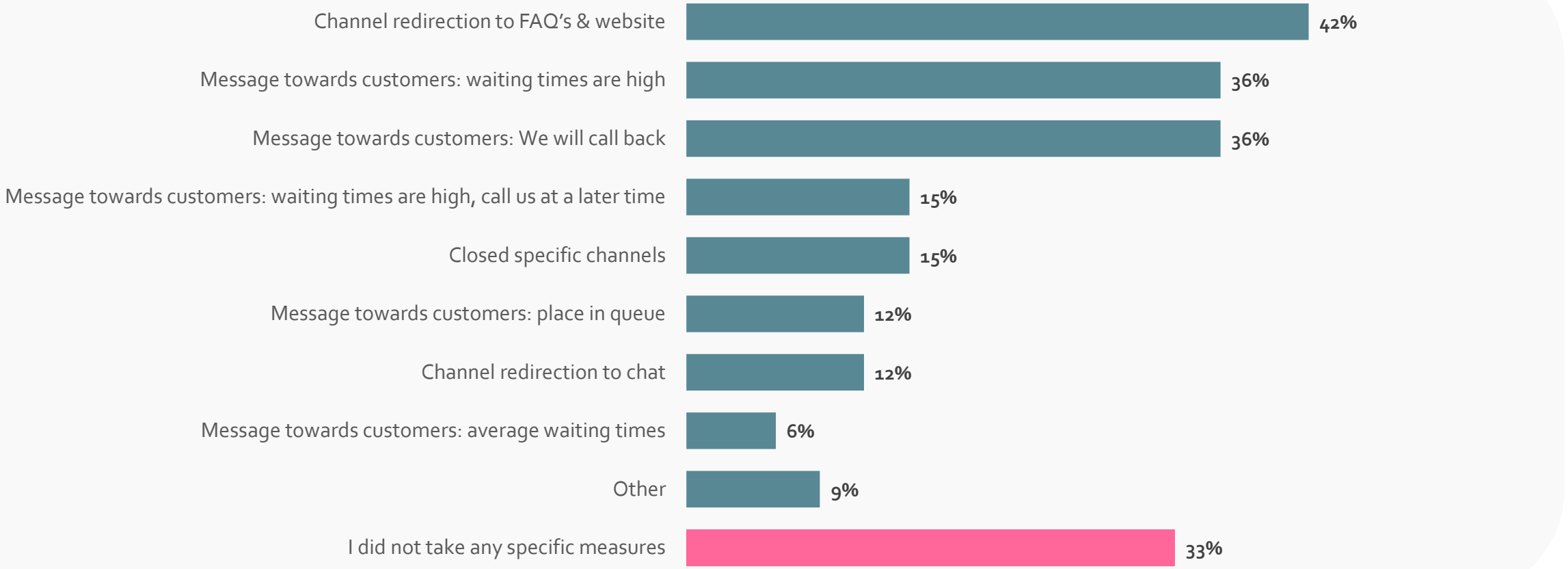


Q4: How did the handling time of customer contacts and interactions change across different channels, since the Covid-pandemic? | filter: none | n= 33

Organizational changes

The most popular solution to deal with longer handling times was to **direct customers to FAQ's and website**. Followed by **informing customers** waiting times are high or they will be **called back**. 1 in 3 organizations did not take any specific measures.

Specific measures for dealing with **longer handling times**

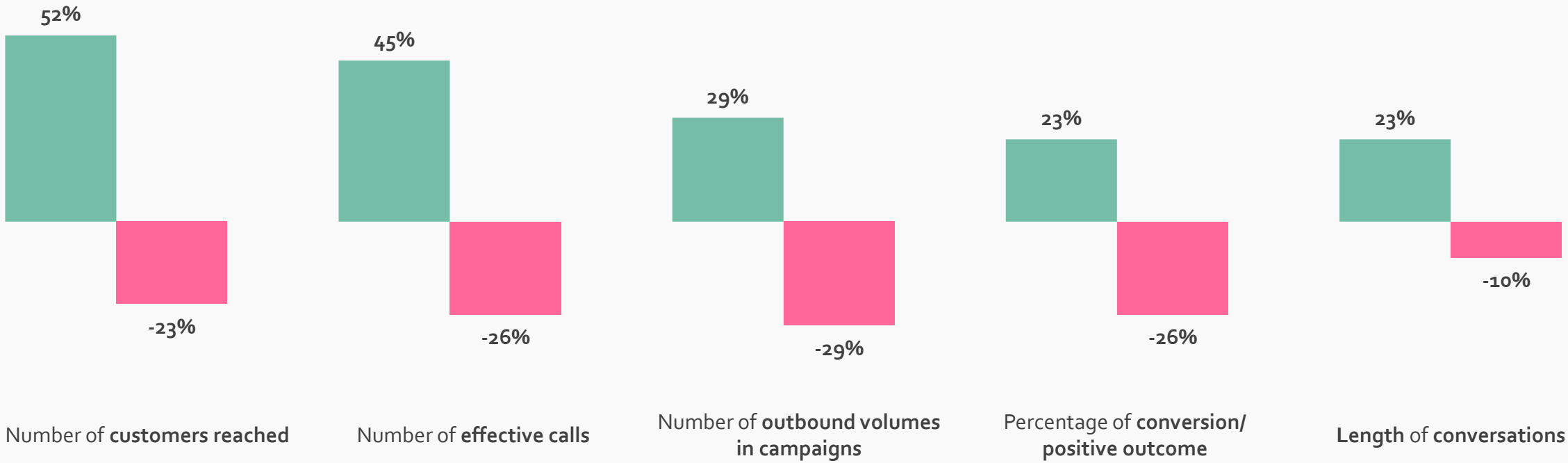


Q5: Did you take any of the following specific measures to deal with longer handling times in customer contacts? | filter: none | n= 32

Organizational changes

More organizations are seeing a positive impact on the **number of customers that they can reach,** the number of **effective calls** and the length of conversations, than organizations that experience a negative impact. For the number of outbound volumes in campaigns and conversion rate we see equal amount of positive and negative impact.

Results of outbound efforts

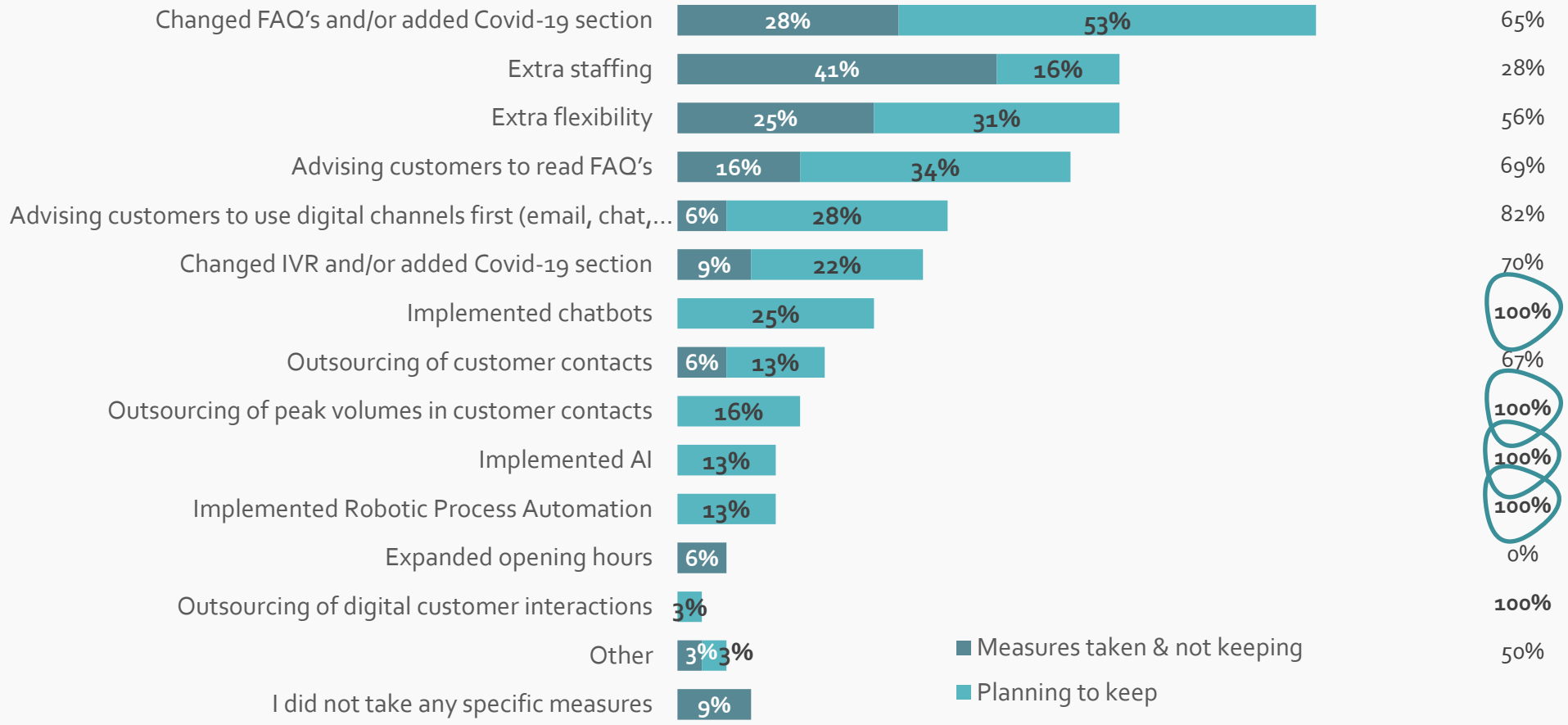


Q6: How did the results of outbound interactions change, since the Covid-pandemic? | filter: none | n= 31

Organizational changes

Most common solutions for Covid-questions: changing FAQ's, extra staffing, extra flexibility and urging customers to read the FAQ's or use digital channels. Some organization have used digital solutions (chatbots, AI, RPA) and all of them are planning to keep them. Also outsourcing of peak volumes has worked well for some and will stay in place.

Specific measures for dealing with **Covid-19 questions**



Q7: Did you take any of the following specific measures to help deal with Covid-related questions? | filter: none | n= 32
Q8: Which of these specific measures do you plan to keep, even after Covid-19? | filter: if not "I did not take any specific measures" in Q7 | n= 29

6 out of 10 organizations is **dealing with longer handling times**. Especially phone interactions, but also noticeable for chat, e-mail and webform.

2 out of 3 organizations took measures to deal with longer handling time, most of them tried to **direct customers to their FAQ** and **website** and **informed them** on **long waiting times** or that they **will call back.**

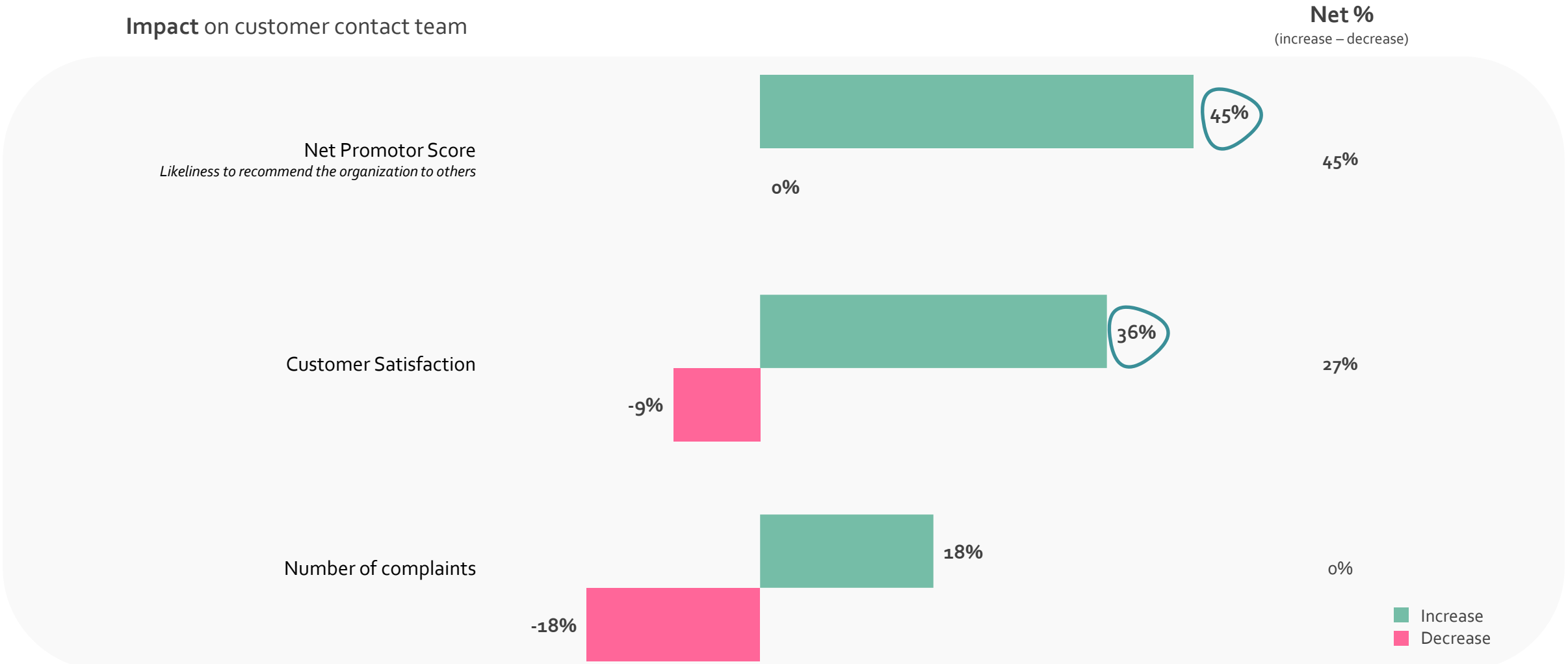
Some have used **digital solutions** (chatbots, AI, RPA) to deal with **Covid-questions**, and all of them are **planning to keep them in place**.

Impact on organization

IMPACT ON EMPLOYEES

Impact on customer & employee

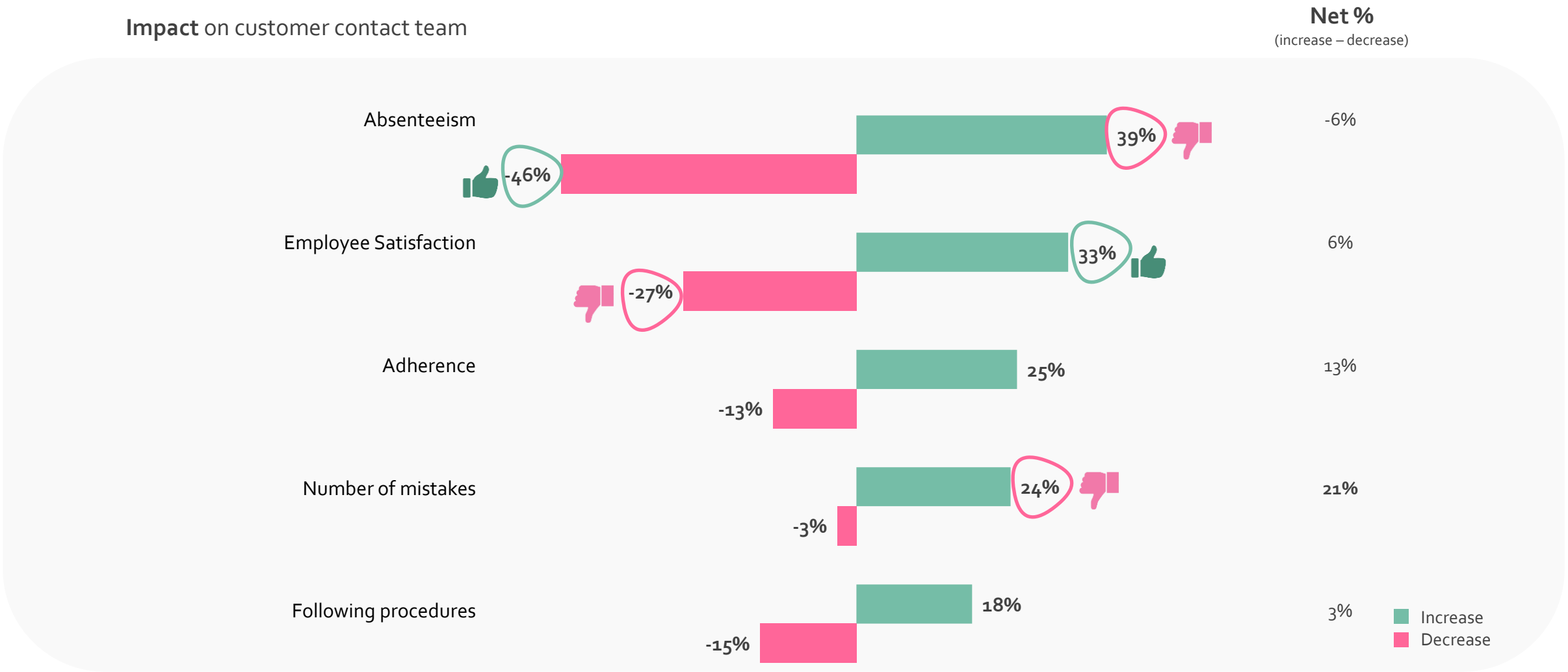
Covid-pandemic has largely **positively impacted the customer**: employees managed to increase the likeliness their company is recommended as well as improve overall customer satisfaction. Number of complaints has increased for as many organizations, as it has decreased for others.



Q10: How did the Covid-pandemic impact your customer contact team on each of the following aspects? | filter: none | n= 33

Impact on customer & employee

As for the employee, opinions are more divided: besides many reporting an overall positive impact, a significant number also claims that absenteeism has increased, Employee Satisfaction has decreased.



Q10: How did the Covid-pandemic impact your customer contact team on each of the following aspects? | filter: none | n= 33

Employee engagement

Online **1-on-1 coaching** was the most commonly used method through which employees were kept engaged this past year

Engaging the team

91% Frequent **online 1-on-1 coaching/chatsessions** with team members

63% Frequent **online calls** by **management** on the impact of COVID-19

59% **Daily online huddles** (check-in/moment of alignment with the team)

13% Other

"Virtual coffee corners (video meeting environment) where you could go to during a break and bump into a colleague (just like in real life). Works great!"

"Created Teams group for positive quotes, figures, compliments, …"

31% **Online lunch** sessions or **afterwork** sessions for informal group discussions

47% WhatsApp **group** for sharing fun updates, pictures, jokes,…

Q11: How did you engage your employees in the past 12 months? | filter: none | n= 32

Impact on employees

Customers have been **positively impacted** by the pandemic: organizations largely report **positive evolutions** on **NPS** and **Customer Satisfaction**.

As for the impact on employee, opinions are more divided. Although many report a positive impact, a significant number also claims that **absenteeism** has **increased**, and **Employee Satisfaction** has **decreased**.

FUTURE

Future

Majority still agrees on the future trends that were identified last year and are taking steps toward those.

In 2020 we asked you about the future of customer contacts based on your first covid-19 and lockdown experiences.
The outcome was: **Digital is the new normal, Tele-work is here to stay and the Employee Experience is key**.
Do you still agree with these statements? How do you see the future of customer contacts now?

Agreed and ready for them!

"Digital and tele-work are and will remain the "new" normal"

"The distance reduces the involvement of the employees; it is high time to increase the team feeling again by restarting physical contact with the team!"

"Yes, I still agree. Covid was/is a major disruptor. Digital is the new normal, face-to-face will be limited to appointments."

"I still agree, we need to invest in multi-channel contact possibilities (chat,….). More training and support for our employees"

"Fully agree with the three statements and this has been installed to the max."

Q11: How do you see the future of customer contact now? | filter: none | n= 32

THANK YOU

Möbius for Customer Contact

May 2021

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