



FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR

Annual complaints report 2019/20

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Foreword

By Jenny Williams, Chair of the Complaints and Investigations Committee

Welcome to the Fundraising Regulator's Annual Complaints Report. For the past four years, we have published information on fundraising complaints reported by a sample of large charities and on the smaller number that were escalated to the Fundraising Regulator. Combined, this data gives a detailed picture of the types of complaints the public makes about fundraising. From this, we can identify the areas in which the sector needs to improve its fundraising practices and where we, as the regulator, need to focus our efforts.



In part one of this report we analyse complaints escalated to the Fundraising Regulator. These complaints total around 800 per year and concern charities of all sizes. The relatively small number of complaints that the Fundraising Regulator handles suggests that charities are rightly resolving most fundraising complaints without the need for our intervention. Nonetheless, this part of the report shows some of the reasons for continued dissatisfaction; the way charities handled complaints was a factor in over half of these cases in 2019/20.

Complaints to the Fundraising Regulator analysed in this report were received during the year 1 September 2019 to 31 August 2020, which includes the early stages of the Coronavirus pandemic and national lockdown. With many public fundraising activities paused in March 2020, we saw a decrease in the number of complaints made to us. However, numbers picked up later as charities began to adapt and resume activity. Much to their credit, charities continued to engage with our complaints process and respond to our recommendations positively despite the pandemic pressures. But the fact that over half of the complaints that we deal with are about smaller charities not registered with the Fundraising Regulator suggests more needs to be done to help these charities understand and comply with the Code of Fundraising Practice.

The 58 charities that have historically contributed their data to part two of this report are some of the largest charitable fundraising organisations in the UK. They deal with a large proportion of fundraising complaints, around 20,000 a year. Together these charities spend nearly £1bn on their fundraising activities annually, raising £4.2bn. The data from this sample of larger charities gives us a good feel for what was concerning most complainants.

The reporting period for part two is different to part one. The complaints to charities analysed in part two arose during the period 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020; very few occurred during the pandemic. All but two of the 58 charities that have historically contributed to this report managed to submit their data to us this year, despite lockdown and other pressures. We are most grateful to them for their vital contribution to this report at this challenging time.

We will continue to work with the sector to understand how we can make this report even more useful. In addition to the valuable feedback we have received from the charities contributing to this report, we intend to engage more fully with the wider sector. This work has been delayed by the pandemic; however, we hope to have implemented some of this feedback for next year's report and to produce a comprehensively revamped report in 2021/22.

I would like to thank the team at the Fundraising Regulator for their commitment to handling complaints and supporting the sector to fundraise ethically and sustainably despite all the challenges of working during the pandemic.

Key findings

This report is split into two parts - Part 1: Complaints received by the Fundraising Regulator between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020 and Part 2: Complaints reported by the charity sector between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020.



The data in part one includes complaints made during the early stages of the pandemic and national lockdown period, which began to impact fundraising from mid-March 2020. For part two, the different reporting period means this includes very few complaints impacted by the pandemic.

Part 1: Complaints received by the Fundraising Regulator

- We received a total of 836 complaints, which is a 13% increase on the total number received in the previous year.
- We received an increased number of complaints in July, which is likely to be a result of fundraising resuming after nationwide lockdown.
- We completed 21 investigations, fewer than in the previous year, which is partly due to a shift in our approach to complaints, and partly due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The most complained about methods of fundraising were: charity bags, online fundraising and face-to-face fundraising.
- We found 37 breaches of the Code of Fundraising Practice in relation to the Fundraising Preference Service (FPS); most of the charities responsible for these breaches have now complied by accessing their FPS suppressions.
- Some of the themes highlighted by these complaints were: providing misleading information, applying undue pressure to donate and poor complaints handling.

Part 2: Complaints reported by a sample of large charities

- The total number of complaints reported by the 56 charities was 18,569.
- The most complained about methods of fundraising were addressed mail, door-to-door fundraising and outdoor events, although complaints about door-to-door fundraising have fallen by 54% over the past three years.
- Although the number of charity bags distributed has increased by more than 300% over three years, complaints about charity bags have fallen by 92%.
- Volunteer fundraising, street fundraising and social activities were the most 'high risk' methods of fundraising, as they generated the most complaints proportionate to the volume of activity that is carried out.
- Direct marketing generated many more complaints than non-direct marketing – a trend we have seen over three years.
- Complaints about private site fundraising and cash collections have increased by 45% and 73% respectively since 2017.
- Complaints about social activities have risen by 205% over 3 years, while the number of organisations reporting these complaints has fallen slightly each year.
- Despite a 97% decrease in the level of street fundraising activity, the ratio of complaints to sign-ups is at a high, with one complaint for every 193 sign-ups.

Part one

Complaints received by the Fundraising Regulator between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020



This period includes complaints received during the nationwide lockdown and the early stages of the pandemic, which began to impact fundraising from mid-March 2020.

Introduction

In this part of the report, you will learn more about complaints from the public that are escalated to the Fundraising Regulator. We publish this information for transparency and to share learning with the sector, which can help fundraisers improve their practices. This information also identifies the methods of fundraising that might require more thought and planning before executing successfully.

We investigate complaints about fundraising where these have not been resolved by the organisations concerned themselves. We do so by considering whether the organisation has complied with the Code of Fundraising Practice (the code), which outlines the legal and regulatory requirements that all charitable fundraising organisations across the UK are expected to meet. If a complainant submits their complaint to us before the organisation has had the opportunity to resolve it, we usually consider the complaint 'premature'. To learn more about our complaints process, please [visit our website](#).

Some complaints that come to us may be better investigated by another regulator, such as the Charity Commission for England and Wales or the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland if the concerns are governance related; the Information Commissioner's Office if they are data privacy related; or the Advertising Standards Authority if related to advertising, among others. In such cases, we will signpost the complainant to the most appropriate regulator. If we do investigate a complaint that has relevance beyond our remit, we will notify the respective regulator of our findings. You can learn about [our remit here](#).

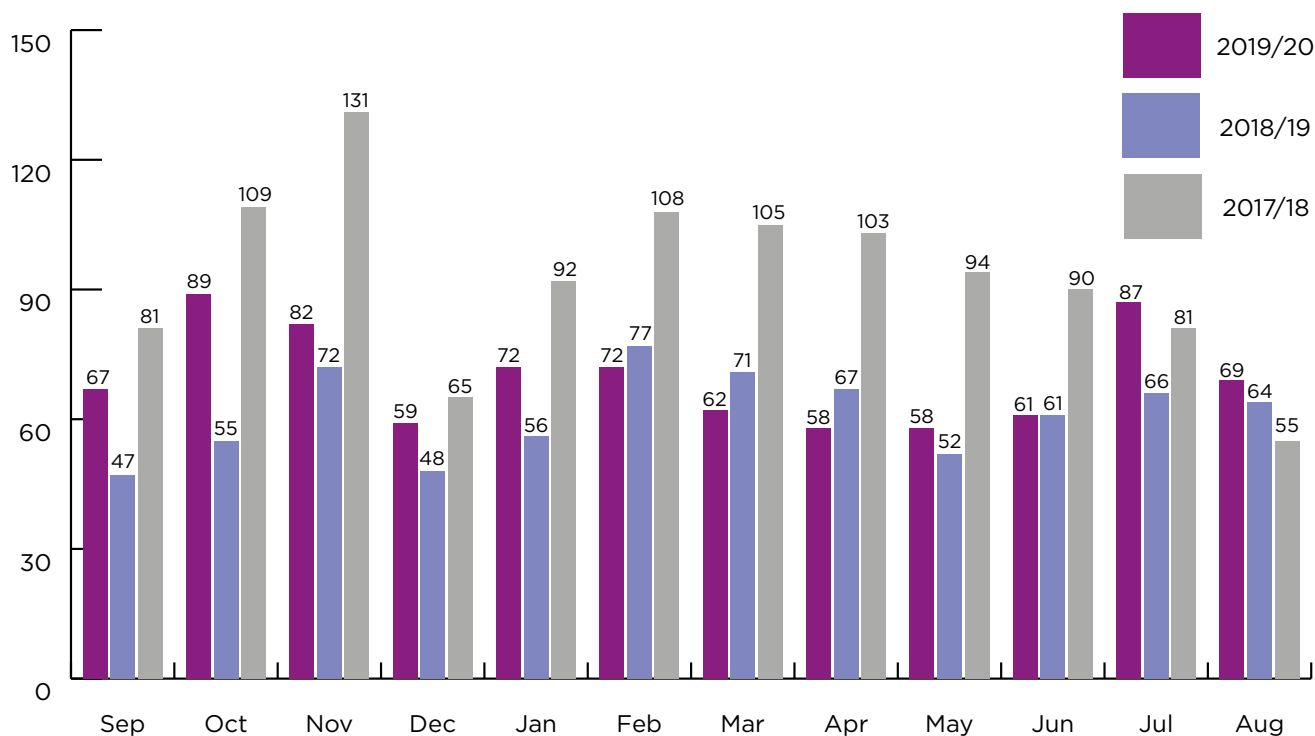
The Fundraising Regulator received 836 complaints in 2019/20, which is a 13% increase on the total number received in 2018/19. We completed 21 investigations. This is a lower number than previously; partly due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which changed the nature of the complaints we received in the second half of the year. In July 2020 complaints to us increased, which is likely due to some methods of public fundraising resuming after being paused during nationwide lockdown. Fig 1 overleaf shows the number of complaints we have received over the past three years.

Out of remit complaints

Half of all complaints we received in 2019/20 were assessed as out of our remit. Where possible, we signpost complainants to other organisations that may be better placed to help with their complaint. In 2019/20 these included the Charity Commission for England and Wales, Action Fraud and HM Revenue and Customs, among others. We signposted nearly 20% of our out of remit complaints to 'other' organisations, such as local authorities, the Housing Ombudsman and the Local Government Ombudsman.

We publish summaries of our investigations on our website, [click here](#) to read the latest.

Fig 1 (below): Complaints received year-on-year by the Fundraising Regulator



A third of all complaints we received in 2019/20 were ‘premature’ as they had not been put to the organisations complained about. In all but exceptional cases (for example, where there are serious public interest or safety implications) we ask complainants to raise their concern with the relevant fundraising organisation directly in the first instance, as they should have processes in place for complaints handling. This is often the quickest way to resolve a complaint and for organisations to identify learning.

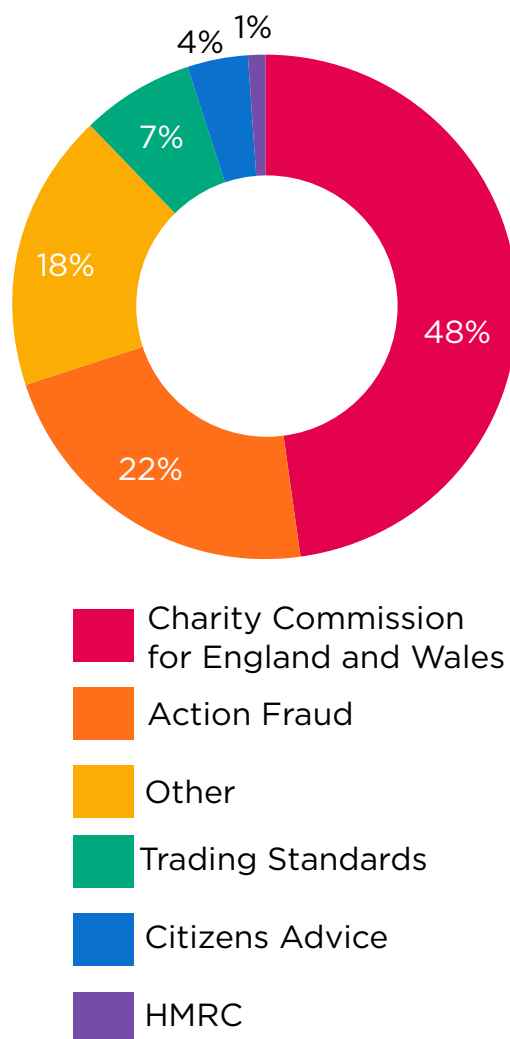
Fundraising Preference Service

We also run the Fundraising Preference Service (FPS), which is a free service that enables members of the public to manage the marketing contact they receive from charities registered in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Although we do not record suppressions made through the FPS as complaints made to the regulator, use of the service is an expression that people do not wish to receive some forms of direct marketing. The FPS is particularly useful to support those who are in vulnerable circumstances and may be unable to make informed choices about giving to charity. More than a third of FPS suppressions are made on behalf of a friend or relative.

Since the FPS was launched in 2017, 2,170 charities have set themselves up on the FPS secure portal so that they can ensure that they

Fig 2 (below): Signposting out of remit complaints to other organisations



do not send direct marketing communications to people who have made an FPS suppression request. However, some charities are breaching section 3.2.5 of the Code of Fundraising Practice (the code) by failing to access and action these requests to stop communication.

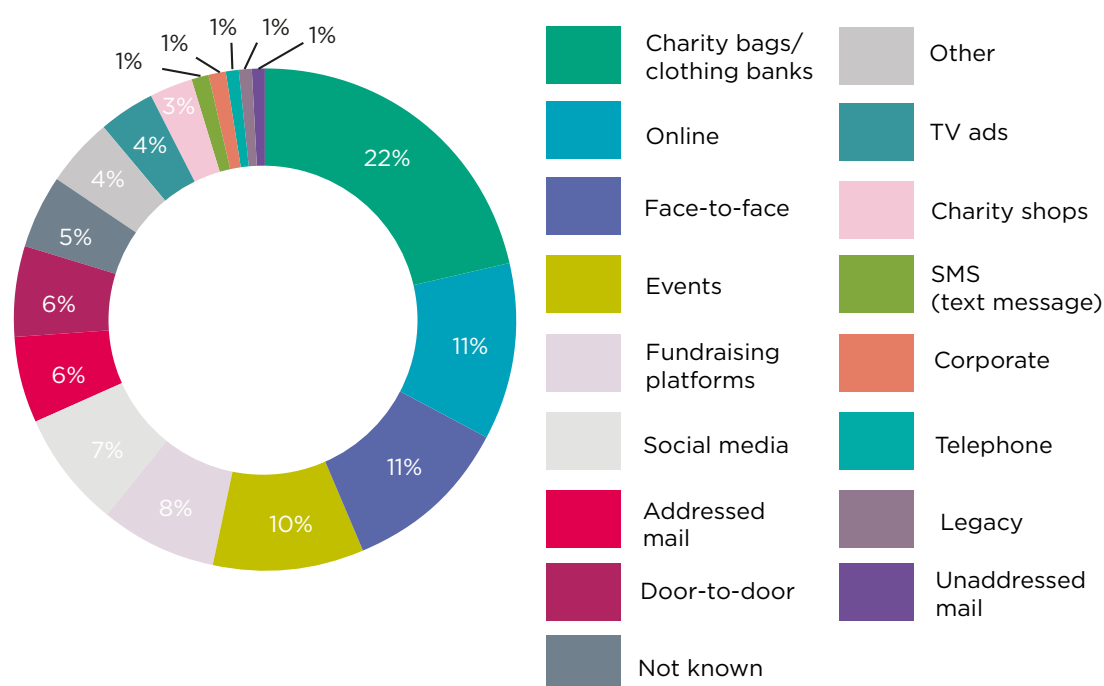
In 2019/20, we found 37 breaches of the code in relation to the FPS. We publish the names of the charities that do not comply with FPS suppressions on our website and as of 31 August 2020, there were 21 organisations on this list. Many of these charities' failure to comply is longstanding, and the majority of those who breached the code in 2019/20 have now complied by accessing their FPS suppressions. This shows that compliance with the direct marketing standards in the code is good, and our enforcement is largely working.

When we find a breach of the code in relation to the FPS, we may notify the Information Commissioner's Office of a potential breach of the Data Protection Act 2018 and notify the Charity Commission for England and Wales and/or Northern Ireland of a potentially serious governance issue, due to the charity's failure to respond to the request.

Most complained about fundraising methods

The most complained about methods of fundraising in 2019/20 were: charity bags*, online fundraising and face-to-face** fundraising. Both charity bags and face-to-face fundraising were the most complained about methods in the previous year. However, in 2019/20 we saw online fundraising complaints enter the top three ahead of addressed mail, which was previously one of the most complained about methods.

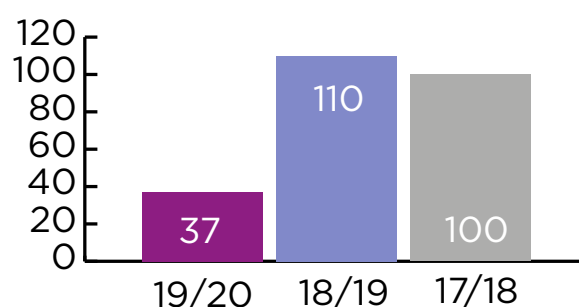
Fig 4 (below): Most complained about fundraising methods



*Where we refer to 'charity bags' throughout this report, we mean the delivery of a bag to an address for the purpose of collecting clothes. See 'clothing collections' in Part 2.

** Includes both street and private site fundraising but not door-to-door fundraising.

Fig 3 (below): Breaches of the code in relation to the FPS



Charity bags

The delivery of charity bags was the most complained about method of fundraising in 2019/20. In this year, we received 131 complaints about charity bags. Charity bags also featured as a top complaint in 2018/19 and 2017/18.

Every year, millions of charity bags are delivered across the UK by third parties on behalf of charities. They are an important source of income for many organisations, particularly smaller charities. Nevertheless, for some members of the public, receiving unwanted charity bags is a source of significant concern. We are working with the sector to promote awareness of the relevant standards to ensure that fundraising via charity bags is carried out in a compliant way.

To help charities improve their fundraising practices in this area, we have published new guidance on charity bags. We have also produced guidance for the public so that they know how to identify genuine bags, and what to expect when they receive a charity bag.

Read our charity bags guidance for the sector [here](#) and public [here](#).

Charity bag complaints – key themes

1. Delivering charity bags against the wishes of the householder

A charity bag being delivered against the wishes of the householder was by far the biggest cause of complaints from the public. Either the bag was delivered despite the presence of a ‘no charity bags’ sign on their front door or it was delivered despite having previously contacted the distribution company or charity to express that they did not wish to receive charity bags.

We opened a formal investigation in five complaints about charity bags in 2019/20, where we considered our criteria for investigation had been met. These complaints were all from householders who said they had received a charity bag against their express wishes.

We upheld the complaint against the company that delivered the bags in four of these cases, and in one case we were unable to reach a finding because we could not reconcile conflicting evidence about the delivery of the bag.

We upheld the complaint against the charity in four of these cases. In one case, although we found that the distribution company had breached the code because it had delivered a bag against the wishes of the householder, we considered that the charity had done everything it should to appropriately monitor the work of the company in order to try and prevent this happening.

Case study

An example of a charity getting its monitoring right

What happened

A complainant contacted us after they received a charity bag to their address, despite the complainant having previously made it clear to the charity and its third-party distribution company that they did not wish to receive any further bags or donate in this way. The complainant had been given assurances that their address had been removed from the company’s delivery route.



Case study

What we found

We found that as a result of human error, the distributor had incorrectly delivered the charity bag. This was a breach of the code on the part of the distribution company. We therefore upheld the complaint against the company, although we were encouraged to see that it had proactively taken steps to review its processes in response to the complaint.

We found this breach of the code was not the result of a failure by the charity to monitor its distribution company. In fact, the charity had appropriate arrangements in place at the time of the complaint to do so. This included requirements for the company to comply with the code; input from the charity to the company's staff training; and regular meetings scheduled to discuss complaints. As a result of its quality monitoring, the charity had decided to terminate its contract with the company. We therefore did not uphold the complaint against the charity.

We also found that both the charity and the distribution company had promptly and thoroughly investigated the concerns and responded appropriately to the complainant.

2. Public concern about the environmental impact of charity bags

Several individuals were concerned about the environmental impact of the distribution of unwanted single-use plastic bags. Although these cases did not progress to investigation as it does not constitute a breach of the code, this is a growing area of public concern.

However, the sector is beginning to respond to this challenge, and we have observed that some charities and companies are now distributing stickers instead of bags, that householders can attach to their own bags if they wish to donate. Despite these concerns, charity bags do contribute to the recycling of unwanted clothing, which has an environmental benefit.

Charity bag complaints - key learning

Clothing collections via the distribution of charity bags happens at large scale and this method of fundraising generates a significant amount of income for charities. We recognise that it is not possible to eliminate all breaches of the code that occur as a result of human error, even when staff are trained appropriately, and sufficient third-party monitoring is carried out. However, these breaches can cause significant frustration to members of the public and result in complaints. Therefore, it is important that when charities fundraise using charity bags, they ensure their activity is compliant with the fundraising standards. The section of the code that specifically applies to charity bags can be found [here](#). This is in addition to the [general standards](#) that apply to all types of fundraising.

If charities authorise third-party distribution companies to deliver charity bags on their behalf, they should check that their contracts include provisions to allow effective monitoring of the third-party, which ensures this activity is being carried out appropriately. Contracts should be revised if this is not the case.

Online fundraising

The second most complained about method of fundraising in 2019/20 was online fundraising, which we define as fundraising via websites, email and pop-up/banner adverts. We received 68 complaints about this method throughout the year. This is the first year that online fundraising has featured in the top three most complained about methods of fundraising in complaints received by the regulator.

In the latter half of 2019/20, we also saw a significant increase in the number of people accessing the online fundraising section of the code on our website. This suggests that more organisations were looking to fundraise online when some public fundraising methods were paused during nationwide lockdown.

Other online forms of fundraising, such as through fundraising platforms and on social media, also received a notable number of complaints throughout the year. This is likely a result of an increase in the volume of activity charities were conducting via digital channels; see Fig 4 on page 7.

Online fundraising complaints – key themes

1. Misleading information

The complaints we received about online fundraising covered several issues, including charity governance, customer service, handling of personal data, potential fraud, pressure to donate, and the wrong donation amount being taken. However, the main theme was concern that the information provided to potential donors was misleading. In some of these complaints, a negative personal experience led the complainant to have strong views about the messaging that a charity used in its fundraising campaign. On other occasions, complainants challenged the factual accuracy of the information being presented to donors as part of a fundraising ask. We did not uphold a breach of the code about misleading information in any of the cases we investigated this year.

2. Restricted donations

The second most common theme within online fundraising complaints related to restricted donations. Restricted donations are funds that are raised for a specific purpose, which must be spent in a specific way, rather than how the charity sees fit. This theme often arises for other fundraising methods too. We have found that donors are likely to be concerned about where and how their money has been spent if a restricted purpose motivated them to donate, particularly if they also stand to benefit as a member of the community the charity serves. Although we generally find that charities have acted in line with the relevant standards, a repeat issue is where charities are unclear about what would happen if funds raised either exceed or did not meet the target amount, which is a requirement of the code. These complaints might have been avoided had there been transparent information available at the time of the fundraising ask.

Online fundraising complaints – key learning

Fundraising online can be a helpful way to reach wide audiences of potential donors. However, for fundraising to be successful it is essential that potential donors are well informed about why a charity is seeking donations. This means charities need to be clear about how the money will be used so that donors can trust the information being provided to them as part of a fundraising ask.

Face-to-face fundraising

We received 67 complaints in 2019/20 about face-to-face fundraising, which includes both street and private site fundraising but not door-to-door fundraising.

Face-to-face fundraising complaints – key themes

Complaints we received about face-to-face fundraising covered a variety of themes. By far the two most complained about themes were fundraiser behaviour and undue pressure to donate. There were a smaller number of complaints about allegations of fraud in which we signposted the complainant to Action Fraud.

Case study

An example of undue pressure to donate

What happened

Two separate complainants approached us with concerns that a local community charity was applying undue pressure on parents to make donations when using the charity's car park during school drop off and collection times. They said that a member of the charity stood in the car park to collect donations from parents and named those who did not donate on social media.



What we found

We found that the actions of the charity member had been unreasonably persistent and placed people under undue pressure to donate, which is in breach of the code. We recommended that the charity implement a policy detailing the behaviour it expects of its trustees and volunteers when fundraising, paying particular attention to the fact that a donation must be given voluntarily.

Face-to-face fundraising complaints – key learning

The code defines a donation as 'A gift of money or other property that is voluntarily given and accepted without expecting or receiving something in return.' It is essential that fundraisers, no matter how motivated they might be, always remember that a donation must be voluntary, and they must not pressure people into giving against their wishes.

Complaints handling

The Fundraising Regulator asks that complaints are put to the charity or fundraising organisation concerned first, so that they have an opportunity to respond. People can bring their complaint to us if they remain unhappy with the response to their complaint from the organisation.

This process does not necessarily mean that the organisation handled the complaint poorly. Complainants can be motivated to escalate their complaints to us if they feel a strong sense of injustice or outrage. Good complaint handling will not always guarantee that it does not escalate.

In the cases we investigated this year we saw some examples of very good complaints handling. However, poor complaints handling featured in more than half of these investigations. In several cases we found that the charity complained about did not have a complaints policy, which provides the basic framework needed for staff to handle a complaint appropriately. Complaints may not be justified in every instance, but they are an invaluable source of feedback from the people your charity is engaging with.

Charity trustees have ultimate responsibility for addressing complaints and overseeing any improvements that are implemented, even if they delegate the day-to-day running of the charity to its staff. Similarly, if the charity delegates the day-to-day handling of complaints to a third-party which is carrying out fundraising on its behalf, retaining proper oversight of how this is done is essential.

Read the relevant standards in the code that relate to complaints handling [here](#) and our complaints handling guidance [here](#).

Case study

An example of where better complaints handling might have prevented escalation

What happened

We received a complaint from a member of the public about an interaction with a door-to-door fundraiser that took place in front of the complainant's house. The complainant alleged that the fundraiser responded with an inappropriate remark about their lifestyle choices when they said that they were on a reduced income and could not afford to donate.



The complainant telephoned the charity to complain. The charity said it would investigate and get back to them. After three weeks the complainant chased the charity as they had not received a response. The charity said it had tried to get hold of the complainant on the telephone and had not been provided with any alternative contact details. The charity said its third-party agency that the door-to-door fundraiser worked for had carried out an investigation which was inconclusive. The complainant remained unhappy with this response and said a representative from the charity they had spoken with refused to give their name or any information about how to escalate their complaint.

What we found

We were unable to reach a finding on the substantive point about the behaviour of the fundraiser due to the conflicting evidence. However, we found the charity in breach of the standards relating to good complaints handling. When we referred the complaint to the charity for a response (before our investigation) it provided helpful and prompt replies, addressing the concerns raised and advising the complainant how to escalate.

Unfortunately, these details had not been provided at the time of the complainant's original complaint to the charity. We also found that the charity had only tried to make telephone contact with the complainant on one day to update them on the outcomes of its investigation. The charity did not try again on a different day when it was unsuccessful, so the complainant had to chase. We recommended that the charity review the learning from this complaint to improve its complaints handling.

Legacy fundraising

Learning for this growing method

We receive very few complaints about legacy fundraising; however, this method of fundraising is important to an increasing number of charities. Our casework offers some useful learning on this topic.

Earlier this year we published an investigation decision in full regarding a complaint about legacy fundraising carried out on behalf of the charity JNF. We publish our investigation decisions in full where cases have been escalated to the Complaints and Investigations Committee and we believe there is learning to be shared with the sector by doing so.

The committee oversees our casework and where necessary, it considers a small number of individual cases. Cases can be referred to the committee for a number of reasons, including: multiple complaints about the same issue and/or charity; novel or contentious issues in the case; wider or systemic issues within the complaint; or where we consider there is a risk to public safety and trust in charity fundraising more generally. A brief summary of the key points from this decision is below, and the [full report can be read on our website](#).

Case study

The need for proper independence in legacy fundraising

What happened

The complainant raised concerns that KKL Executor and Trustee Company Ltd (KKL) wrongly influenced their late spouse to leave a legacy to its parent company, JNF Charitable Trust (JNF - the charity).

What we found

At the time of the complaint, KKL's website stated that it was a subsidiary of JNF. KKL promoted the work of JNF through its newsletters and website, as well as face-to-face with clients. It encouraged members of the public to leave legacies to JNF on its website, which stated: "Our expert advice is free of charge [...] when you leave a legacy to our parent charity JNF Charitable Trust." Even though KKL and JNF were separate legal entities, we found that they shared five directors and trustees in common.

We did not consider the available evidence supported all aspects of the complaint. However, we found breaches of the code in relation to the following:

- KKL was fundraising for the charity and therefore breached the code by being involved in the preparation and drafting of the testator's will.
- There was insufficient separation of function and personnel between the two organisations, given that KKL was a wholly owned subsidiary of JNF. This had the effect of the charity being directly involved in the drafting of the testator's will which benefitted it.
- KKL failed to consider the implications of agreeing to be the executor of a will that left a significant legacy to the charity that owned them.
- The way KKL positioned its offer had the effect of making it a condition that JNF was included in the testator's will.

The outcome

JNF confirmed that KKL had adapted its approach so that it is not a condition of its free will writing service that the testator remembers and benefits the charity in their will. It also advised that it had abandoned the model of KKL drafting wills. Instead, when a testator contacts KKL, it will take details from the testator and put together an instruction pack for an independent lawyer who will then provide independent legal advice to the testator and draft the will.

As our findings related to the governance of the charity, we shared our final decision with the Charity Commission for England and Wales.



Legacy fundraising - key learning

Key lessons from other investigations about legacy fundraising include:

- We have previously found charities in breach of the code because people representing them (whether trustees, staff, or volunteers) have agreed to help a friend draft their will or fulfil their last wishes, benefitting the charity they work for. It is natural to want to support people making end of life decisions, but it is essential to consider potential conflicts of interest or professional boundaries and think about how any interactions with a testator may be perceived.
- Complaints must be handled sensitively and openly. Legacy fundraising complaints can be complex, and the complainants are often emotionally invested in the outcome. Therefore, there can be a lot at stake reputationally for charities.

The impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on our complaints

The pandemic continues to have a huge impact on charitable fundraising. Many charities are seeing an increased demand for their services at the same time as experiencing a significant drop in fundraising income. When many methods of public fundraising were paused at the beginning of the first national lockdown in March 2020, there was a reduction in the number of incoming complaints to the Fundraising Regulator. However, throughout July and August complaint levels began to pick up and return to pre-pandemic levels. As might be expected, we received some complaints from members of the public expressing concern about whether it was safe for public fundraising to be taking place during the pandemic.

To support charities throughout the pandemic and beyond we have collaborated with other regulators and bodies, such as the Charity Commission for England and Wales and the Chartered Institute of Fundraising, to produce a series of [guidance](#). This is intended to help organisations continue fundraising safely, while not risking the health of the public, staff or volunteers. Additionally, we have worked with public facing bodies, such as National Trading Standards and Action Fraud, to make sure the public has the information they need to donate and fundraise safely. We are continuing to monitor the complaints we receive and work with our stakeholders to review what further guidance may be needed to support the sector in this time of uncertainty.

Despite some concerns raised about public fundraising during the pandemic, we saw positive early results when charities returned to public fundraising activity in line with regulatory and Government guidelines, with the public reacting well to fundraisers' presence. To maintain the confidence and support of the generous donating public, it is important for the sector to continue in this way as it faces the ongoing challenges and difficult decisions that the coming months are likely to present.

You can view our latest guidance on fundraising safely in our Coronavirus guidance hub [here](#).

Part two

Complaints received by a sample of large fundraising charities between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020*



Fundraising during this period was not affected by the pandemic and national lockdown until mid-March 2020.

Introduction

This is the third year that we have compiled data from 58 charities that spend more than £5 million per year on their fundraising activities. Together, these charities raise £4.2bn from donations and legacies annually. They represent a significant proportion of all fundraising complaints handled by the sector and their data gives us a good feel for what is concerning most complainants.

In the first and second year we produced this report, all 58 charities contributed their complaints data. However, due to unprecedented circumstances in 2020, we have received data from 56 charities. The data that the 56 charities provided to us is a record of the fundraising complaints they received from April 2019 to end of March 2020. This period only includes a very limited amount of time that fundraising was affected by the Coronavirus pandemic.

We collate this data to share learning among fundraising organisations and to provide charities with a benchmark for the volume of complaints received on specific fundraising methods. Due to the small sample size, data can fluctuate considerably year-on-year if one or two charities report unusual numbers of complaints.

Although this report highlights complaints about fundraising, the number of complaints the sector receives is low compared to the high volumes of fundraising activity undertaken by charities every year. Through our casework, we are pleased to find that good fundraising practice is being carried out by charities across the sector, who demonstrate commitment to fundraising regulation and compliance with the standards in the Code of Fundraising Practice.

In this report, you'll find commentary on some of the notable changes in the nature of fundraising complaints reported since 2017. Please see the Appendix for all complaints data submitted to us across the past three years.

The Fundraising Regulator is talking to the 58 charities that submit their complaints data to this report to gather their feedback, which will inform future reports. Our discussions have focused on their experiences of contributing their data, how the published report is used in their organisations and what additional content might be included in future reports.

Total complaints reported

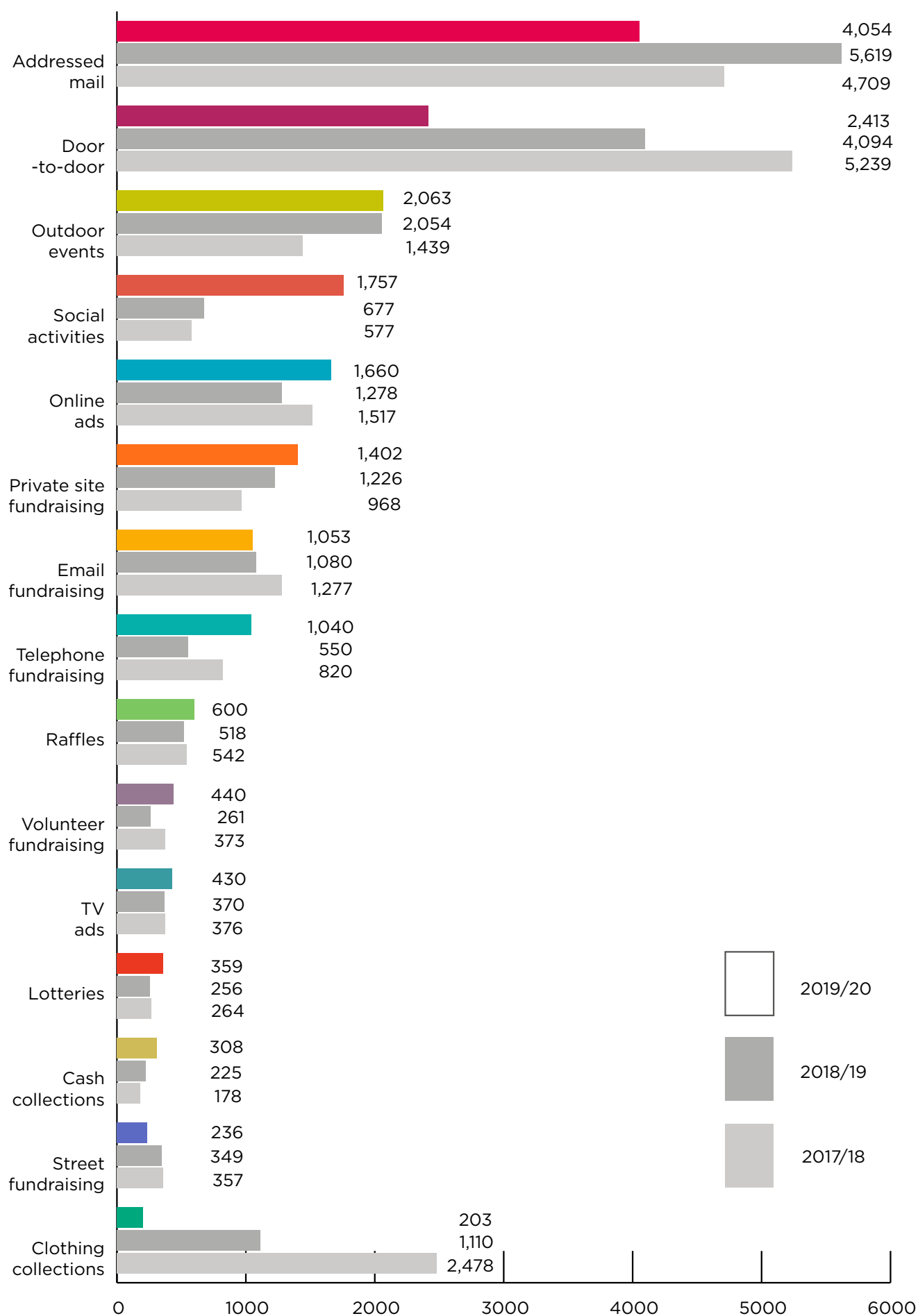
The total number of fundraising complaints reported by the 56 charities in 2019/20 was 18,569. Although the sample size for this year's report has decreased slightly, we can see that the volume of complaints received over three years has remained fairly stable. In 2019/20, the most complained about methods were addressed mail, door-to-door fundraising and outdoor events, which mirrors the previous year. Complaints about clothing collections have fallen sharply since 2017/18, while complaints about social activities and cash collections have increased dramatically.

*As the variance scales with $(1 \text{ over square root } n)$ the difference between sample sizes 56 [2019/20] and 58 [2017/18 and 2018/19] is negligible at less than 1%. Therefore we did not adjust the 2019/20 figures to account for this difference.

Table 1 (below): Total fundraising complaints reported and no of orgs reporting complaints

Method	Total fundraising complaints reported				No of orgs reporting complaints		
	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	% change (3 years)	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Addressed mail	4,054	5,619	4,709	-14	56	55	57
Door-to-door	2,413	4,094	5,239	-54	25	25	29
Outdoor events	2,063	2,054	1,439	43	31	32	30
Social activities	1,757	677	577	205	14	16	17
Online advertising	1,660	1,278	1,517	9	29	26	30
Private site fundraising	1,402	1,226	968	45	32	35	28
Email fundraising	1,053	1,080	1,277	-18	47	39	44
Telephone fundraising	1,040	550	820	27	36	41	36
Raffles	600	518	542	11	23	23	20
Volunteer fundraising	440	261	373	18	24	21	17
Television advertising	430	370	376	14	26	24	29
Lotteries	359	256	264	36	25	26	26
Cash collections	308	225	178	73	16	15	12
Street fundraising	236	349	357	-34	13	11	14
Clothing collections	203	1110	2,478	-92	8	6	9
SMS (text message)	130	185	166	-22	13	16	18
Fundraising from business	108	339	86	26	13	17	12
Unaddressed mail	94	136	229	-59	17	17	13
Other prize draws	72	118	60	20	5	5	4
Press advertising	62	1	95	-35	3	1	6
Outdoor advertising	27	10	17	59	6	6	6
Major donor fundraising	26	28	17	53	11	9	9
Radio advertising	17	14	14	21	6	6	6
Magazine & news inserts	8	36	36	-78	5	11	8
Trusts and foundations	7	7	17	-59	6	6	7

Fig 5 (below): Top 15 fundraising complaints reported by method 2019/20



Fundraising methods with the highest ratio of complaints

One way of seeing whether a method of fundraising is ‘high risk’ to a charity in terms of complaints, is to look at the ratio of total activity against total number of complaints reported for each fundraising method. The table below shows the top five fundraising methods that generate the most complaints proportionate to the volume of activity carried out. These ratios suggest that volunteer and street fundraising are the methods of fundraising that generate the most complaints compared to the volume of activity.

Table 2 (below): Fundraising methods with the highest ratio of complaints to volume of activity

Type of fundraising	Ratio
Volunteer fundraising	1:168
Street fundraising	1:193
Social activities	1:258
Private site fundraising	1:418
Cash collections	1:1,693

Direct and non-direct marketing

Since 2017, charities have reported receiving the most complaints about addressed mail. There was a 19% increase in the number of addressed mail complaints between 2017/18 and 2018/19, though this decreased by 28% in 2019/20. This large reduction in complaints might in part be due to the reduced sample size in 2019/20, when fewer charities reported carrying out this activity.

In 2019/20, complaints about online advertising (which we define as fundraising via websites and internet banners/pop-ups) and telephone fundraising significantly increased from the previous year. By contrast, the number of complaints about email fundraising has declined year-on-year. This could be a consequence of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which was introduced in 2018, when many charities moved to an ‘opt-in’ model for their marketing activity. Complaints for press advertising, outdoor advertising, radio advertising and magazine and news inserts remained very low over the three-year period. The number of organisations reporting complaints per method of fundraising for both direct and non-direct marketing has also remained relatively stable between 2017/18 and 2019/20.

Direct marketing methods of fundraising generate many more complaints than non-direct methods. Over the past two years, charities have received around 40 times more complaints for addressed mail, compared to unaddressed mail.

Fig 6: Direct and non-direct marketing - total complaints reported

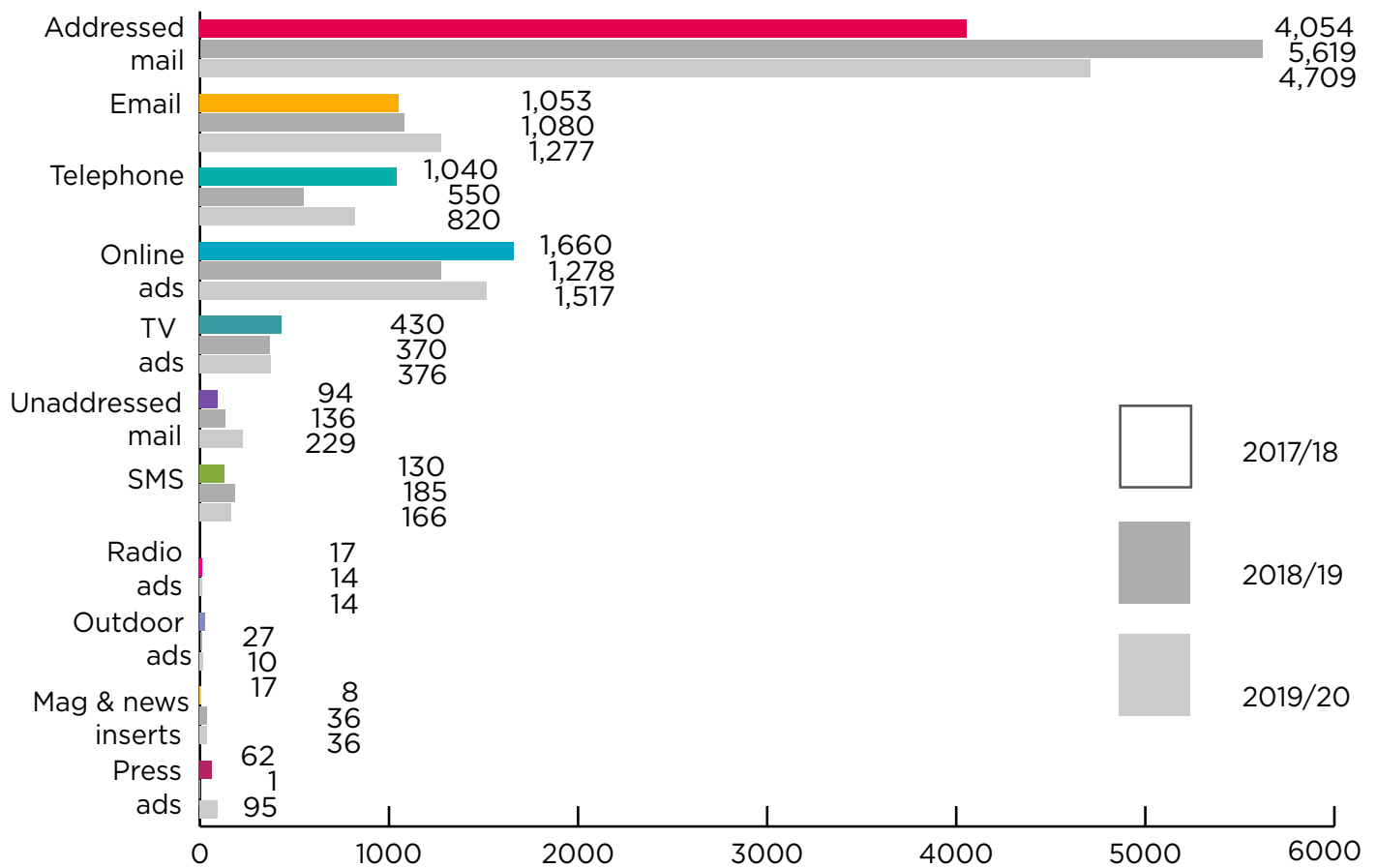
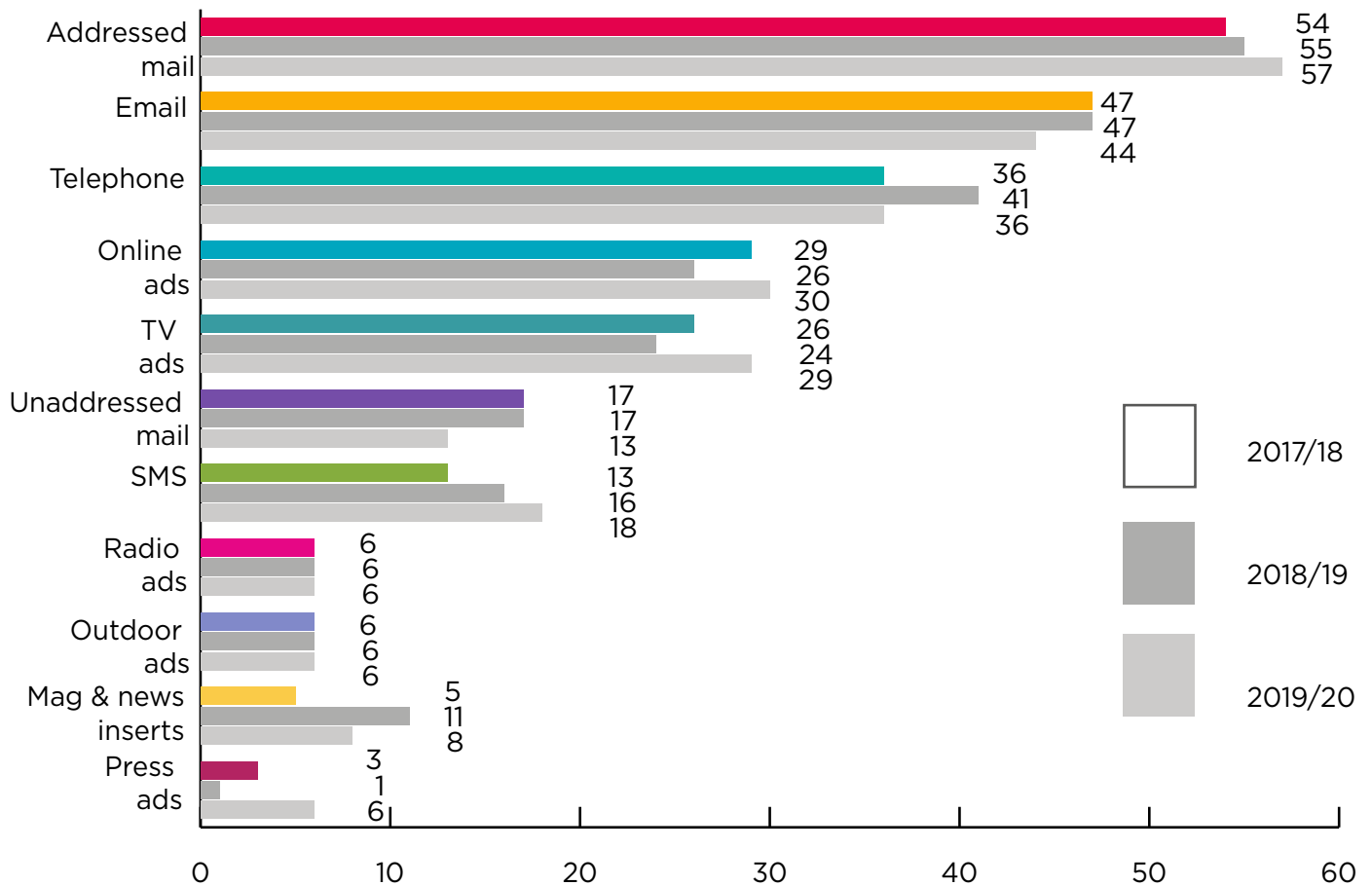


Fig 7: Direct and non-direct marketing - total organisations reporting complaints



Public collections

There has been a significant fall in the number of complaints reported about door-to-door fundraising (54%) and clothing collections (73%) from 2017/18 to 2019/20. Although complaints reported by charities about the delivery of charity bags for clothing collections have fallen dramatically since 2017/18, this continues to be the most frequently complained about method to the Fundraising Regulator. One explanation for this is that complaints made to the Fundraising Regulator are largely about other charities outside of the sample of this report.

Over the same period, there has been a consistent rise in the number of complaints about private site fundraising (45%) and cash collections (73%). However, the volumes of complaints received coincide with relative increases and decreases in the type of fundraising activity carried out.

Although the total number of reported complaints about public collections have fallen overall, the number of organisations reporting complaints per method of fundraising has remained relatively stable over three years.

Fig 8 (below): Public collections - total complaints reported

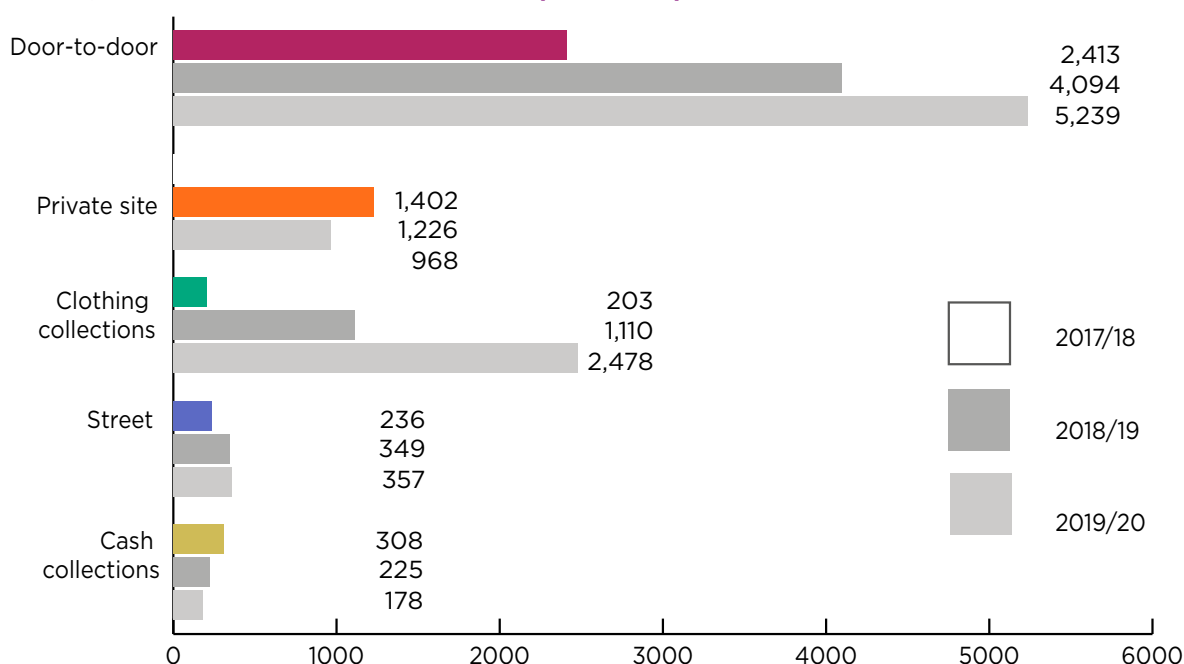
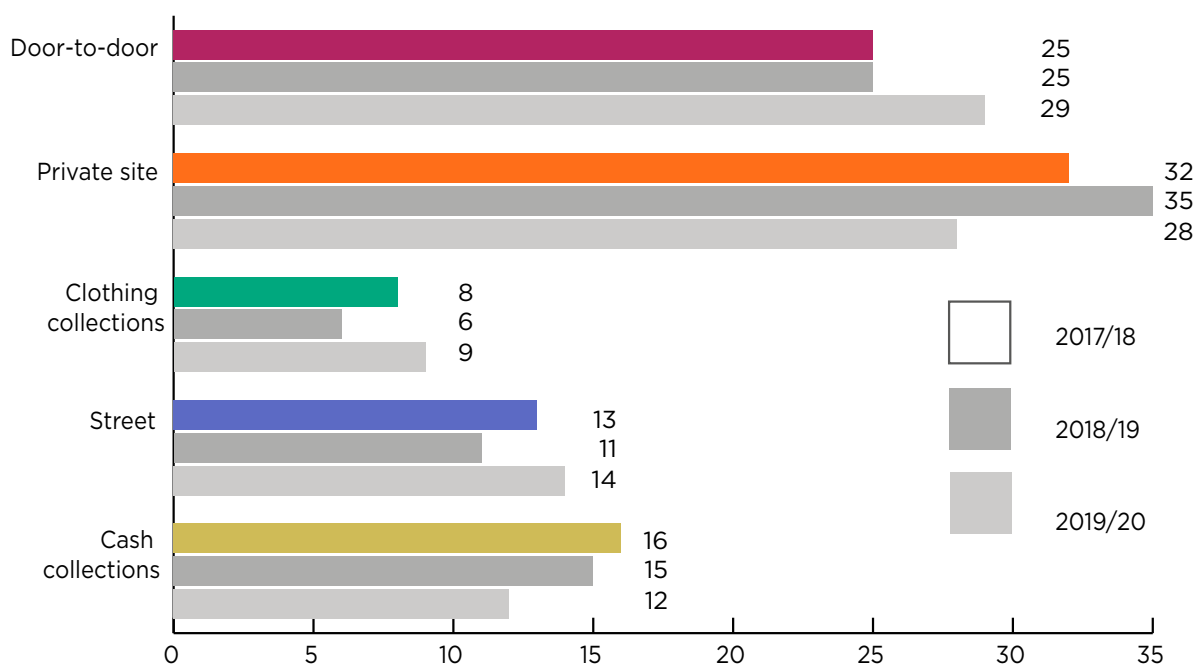


Fig 9 (below): Public collections - total organisations reporting complaints



Complaints by fundraising method

The following section provides information on the type of complaints reported for each fundraising method, comparing complaints data submitted to us over the past three years*.

Addressed mail

Although all charities surveyed reported using addressed mail as part of their fundraising campaigns, complaints reported about this method have fluctuated over three years. From 2018/19 to 2019/20, complaints about addressed mail decreased by 28% and it is positive that the ratio of complaints to activity has decreased in the past year.

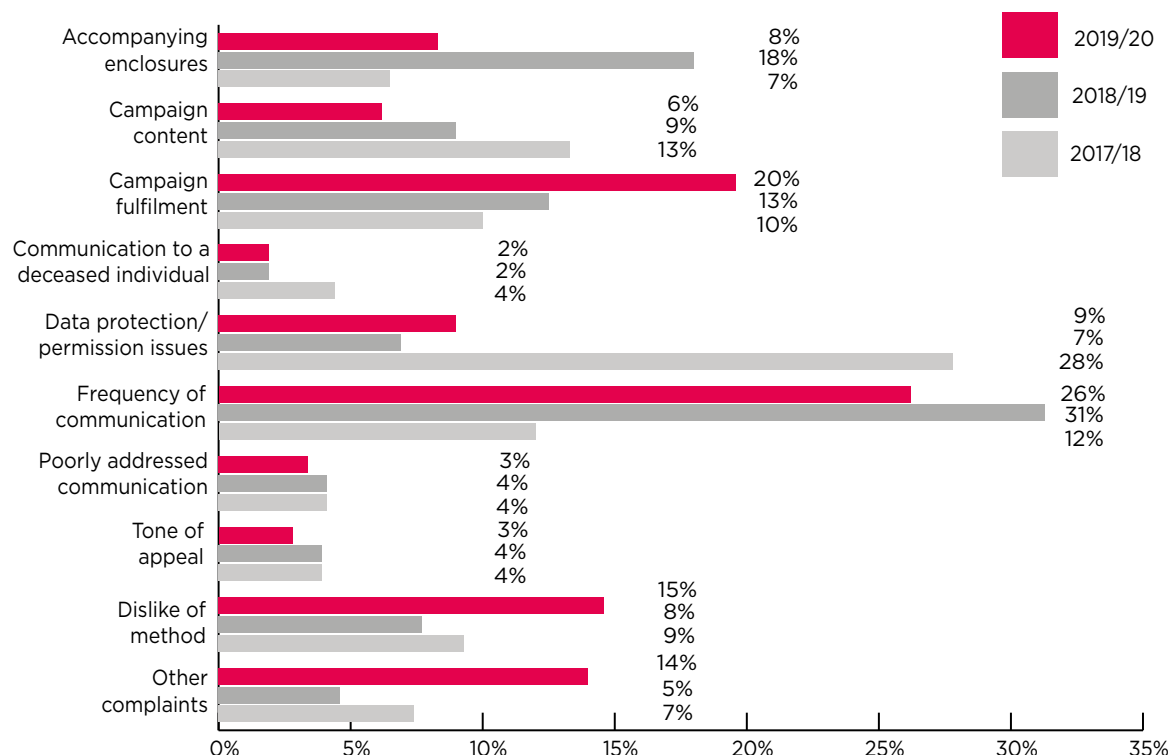


Frequency of communication remains the most reported reason for a complaint, with 26% of all complaints citing this in 2019/20. The proportion of addressed mail complaints relating to campaign fulfilment almost doubled in 2019/20 to 20%.

Since 2017, the number of complaints arising from data protection/permission concerns has decreased. This was once the most cited reason for complaints, and it now counts for less than 9% of all complaints about addressed mail. People are now more likely to complain about addressed mail because they dislike being contacted in this way.

Table 3 and fig 10: Overview of complaints reported about addressed mail

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
No of orgs using addressed mail	56	58	58
% of orgs using addressed mail	100%	100%	100%
Total contacts by orgs reporting complaints	70,834,507	78,624,313	29,750,644
No of orgs reporting complaints about addressed mail	54	55	57
% of orgs reporting complaints	93%	95%	98%
Total no of complaints	4,054	5,619	4,709
Complaint to contact ratio**	1:17,473	1:13,993	1:20,915



*In 2017/18 and 2018/19 we received data from 58 charities and in 2019/20 we received data from 56 charities.

**This is an approximate ratio using 1:x format for simplicity and consistency throughout the report.

Door-to-door fundraising

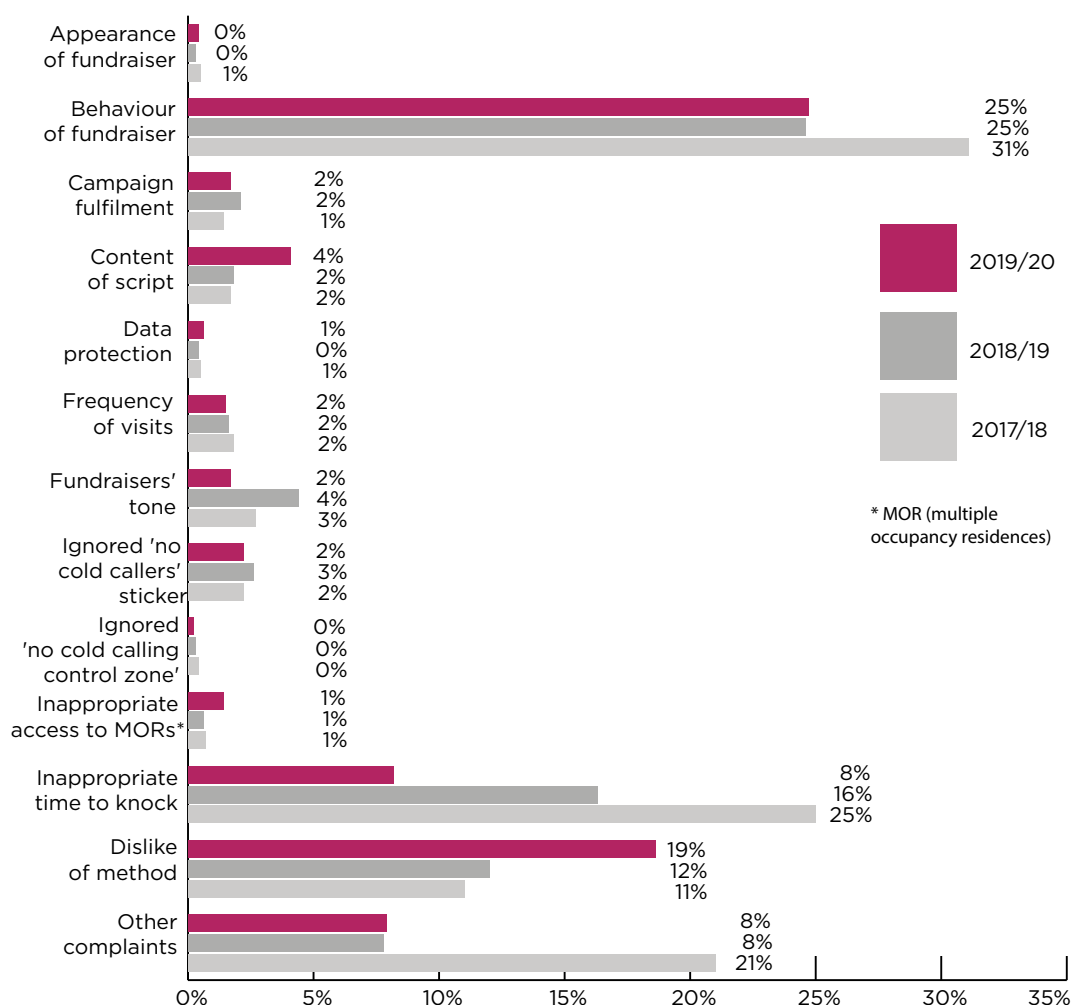


Reported complaints about door-to-door fundraising have fallen on average by 21% each year, which reflects the decrease in the amount of door-to-door activity being carried out. The most common reason for making a complaint about door-to-door fundraising was the behaviour of the fundraiser – this has remained the most frequent reason for the complaint over the three years.

Many door-to-door fundraising complaints arise because people don't like being contacted by this method, which accounted for nearly one in five complaints in the past year. However, it is encouraging to see a decrease in the number of complaints about the time fundraisers are knocking.

Table 4 and fig 11: Overview of complaints reported about door-to-door fundraising

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
No of orgs using door-to-door	25	25	28
% of orgs using door-to-door	45%	43%	48%
Total contacts by orgs reporting complaints	18,013,114	24,526,886	27,859,076
No of orgs reporting complaints about door-to-door	25	25	29
% of orgs reporting complaints	45%	43%	50%
Total no of complaints	2,413	4,094	5,239
Complaint to contact ratio	1:7,465	1:5,991	1:5,318



Social activities

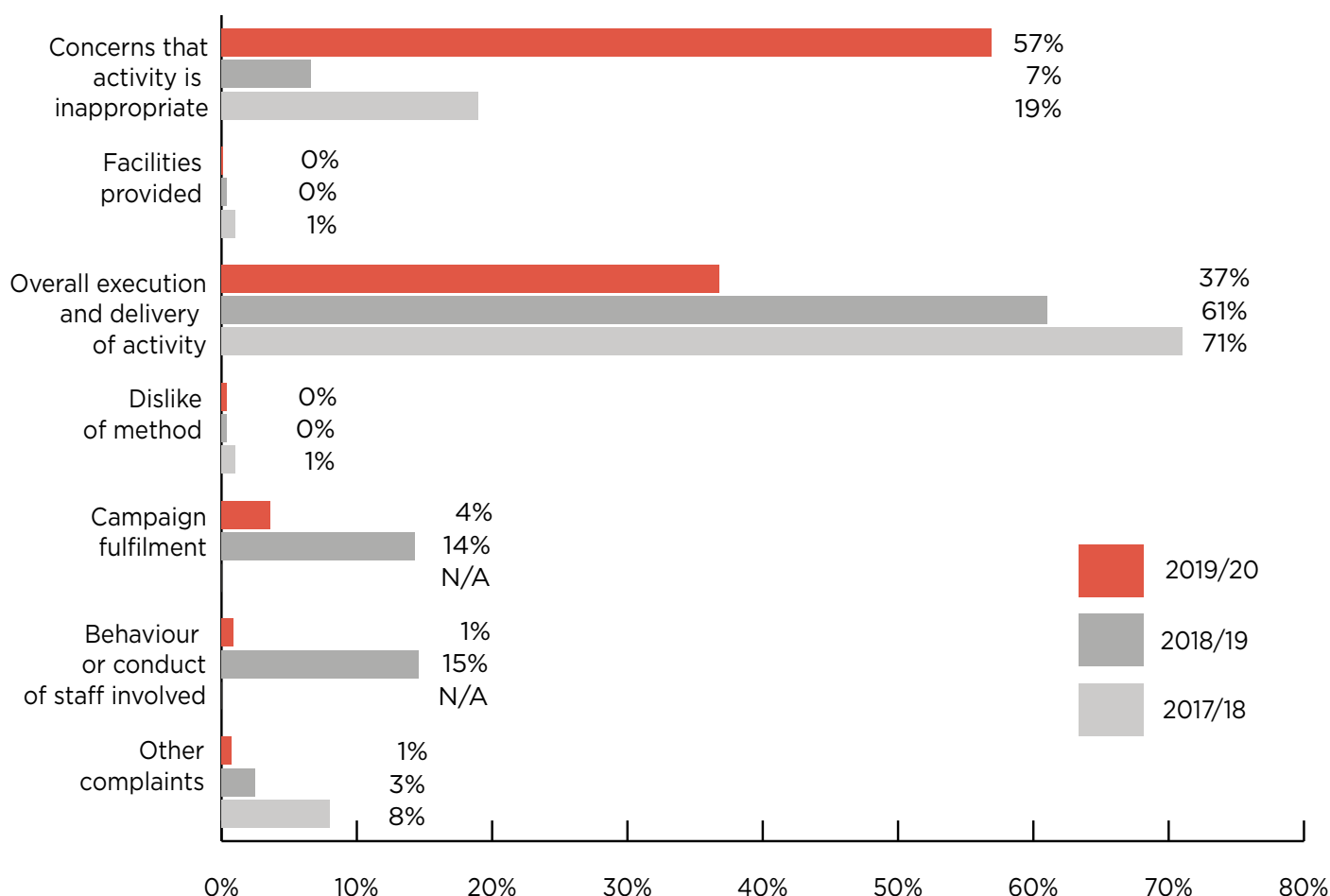


Reported complaints about social activities (which we define as fundraising activities that have a specific 'social' focus) have risen in the latest year by 160%, while the number of organisations reporting these complaints has fallen slightly each year. People mainly complained about fundraising via social activities in 2019/20 because they considered this activity inappropriate. The sharp rise in complaints in 2019/20 was due to one charity receiving many complaints due to misleading information on one of their social activities.

There was a notable decrease in complaints about the behaviour of staff, campaign delivery and execution in relation to social activities the latest year. See the Appendix for more information on complaints reported about other types of events.

Table 5 and fig 12: Overview of complaints reported about social activities

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
No of orgs using social activities	29	31	28
% of orgs using social activities	52%	53%	48%
Total tickets sold by orgs reporting complaints	453,210	470,119	421,710
No of orgs reporting complaints about social activities	14	16	17
% of orgs reporting complaints	25%	28%	29%
Total no of complaints	1,757	677	577
Complaint to tickets sold ratio	1:258	1:694	1:731





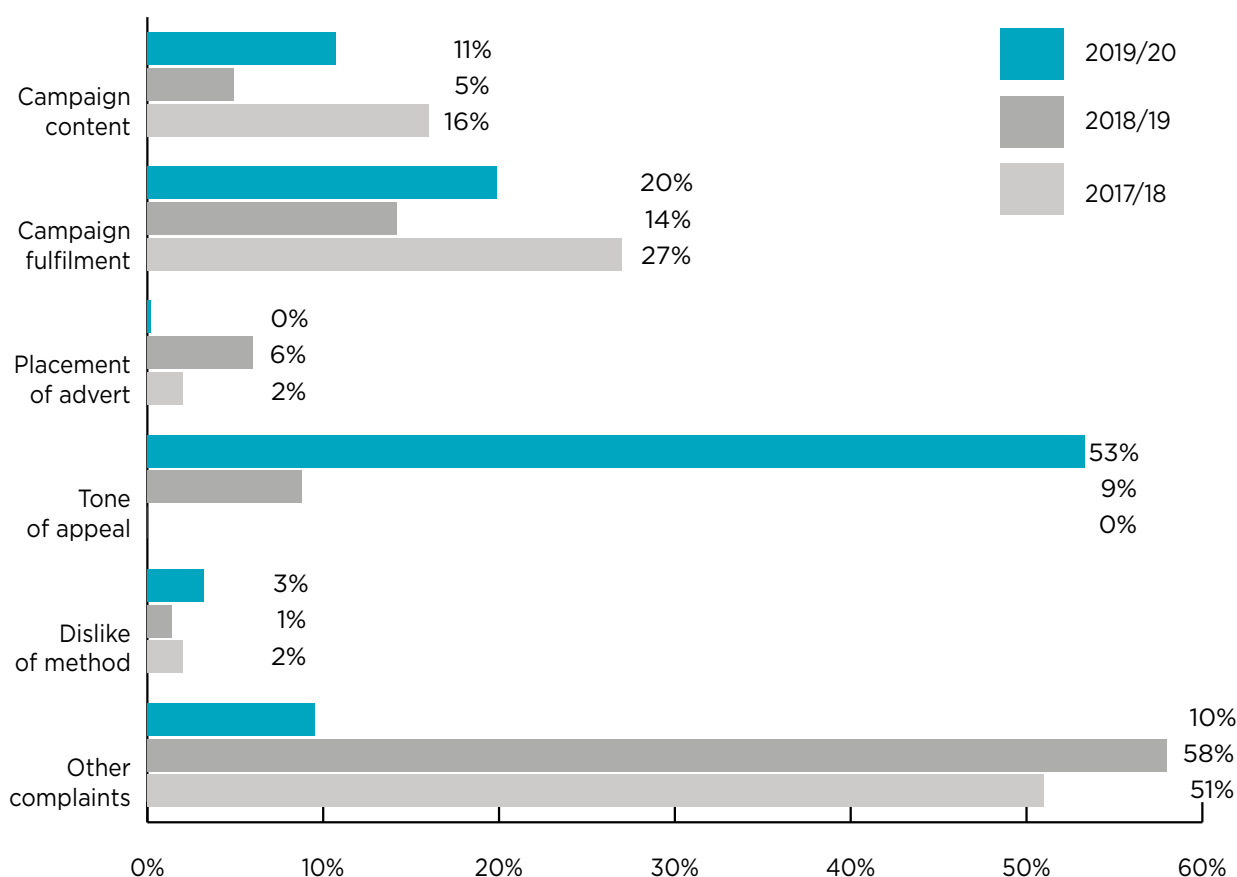
Although the number of online advertising complaints reported increased considerably in the past year, the volume of online advertising activity taking place has nearly doubled. It is encouraging to see the ratio of activity to complaints improving each year.

The tone of the appeal was the reason for more than half of all online advertising complaints reported in 2019/20, which is a huge shift from previous years, where this reason was cited in less than 10% of complaints or not at all.

Other commonly cited reasons across the three years include campaign content and fulfilment. It is interesting to see that each year very few complainants cite a dislike of the method as a key reason for their complaint, which is in stark contrast to the nature of complaints about more direct methods of fundraising (addressed mail, telephone and door-to-door fundraising).

Table 6 and fig 13: Overview of complaints reported about online advertising

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
No of orgs using online ads	54	58	55
% of orgs using online ads	96%	100%	95%
Total ads served by orgs reporting complaints	5,452,354,513	2,977,252,116	2,848,427,586
No of orgs reporting complaints about online ads	29	26	30
% of orgs reporting complaints	52%	45%	51%
Total no of complaints	1,660	1,278	1,571
Complaint to ads served ratio	1:3,284,551	1:2,329,618	1:1,813,130



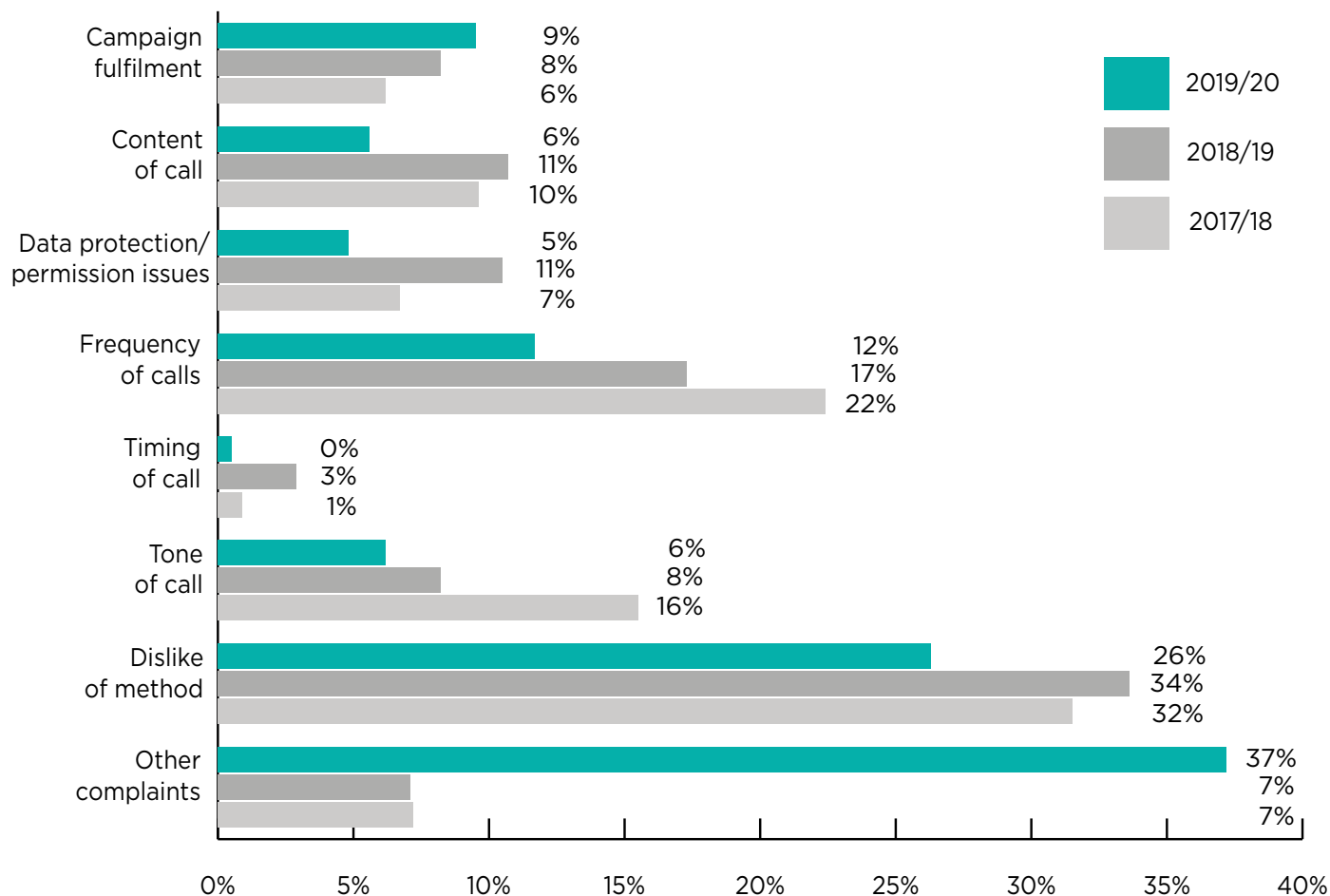


Similar to social activities, reported complaints about telephone fundraising also increased by a significant 89% in the past year. Although the reported volume of activity increased slightly year on year, it is clear from our ratio analysis that we are now seeing more complaints in relation to the amount of telephone fundraising carried out.

Consistent across all three years, around a third of all complaints were made because people disliked this method. Another notable reason for these complaints was the frequency of calls, however, complaints made for this reason have consistently fallen over three years.

Table 7 and fig 14: Overview of complaints reported about telephone fundraising

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
No of orgs using telephone fundraising	46	47	46
% of orgs using telephone fundraising	82%	81%	79%
Total people called by orgs reporting complaints	2,228,766	2,161,525	8,598,201
No of orgs reporting complaints about telephone fundraising	36	41	36
% of orgs reporting complaints	64%	71%	62%
Total no of complaints	1,040	550	820
Complaint to calls made ratio	1:2,143	1:3,930	1:10,486

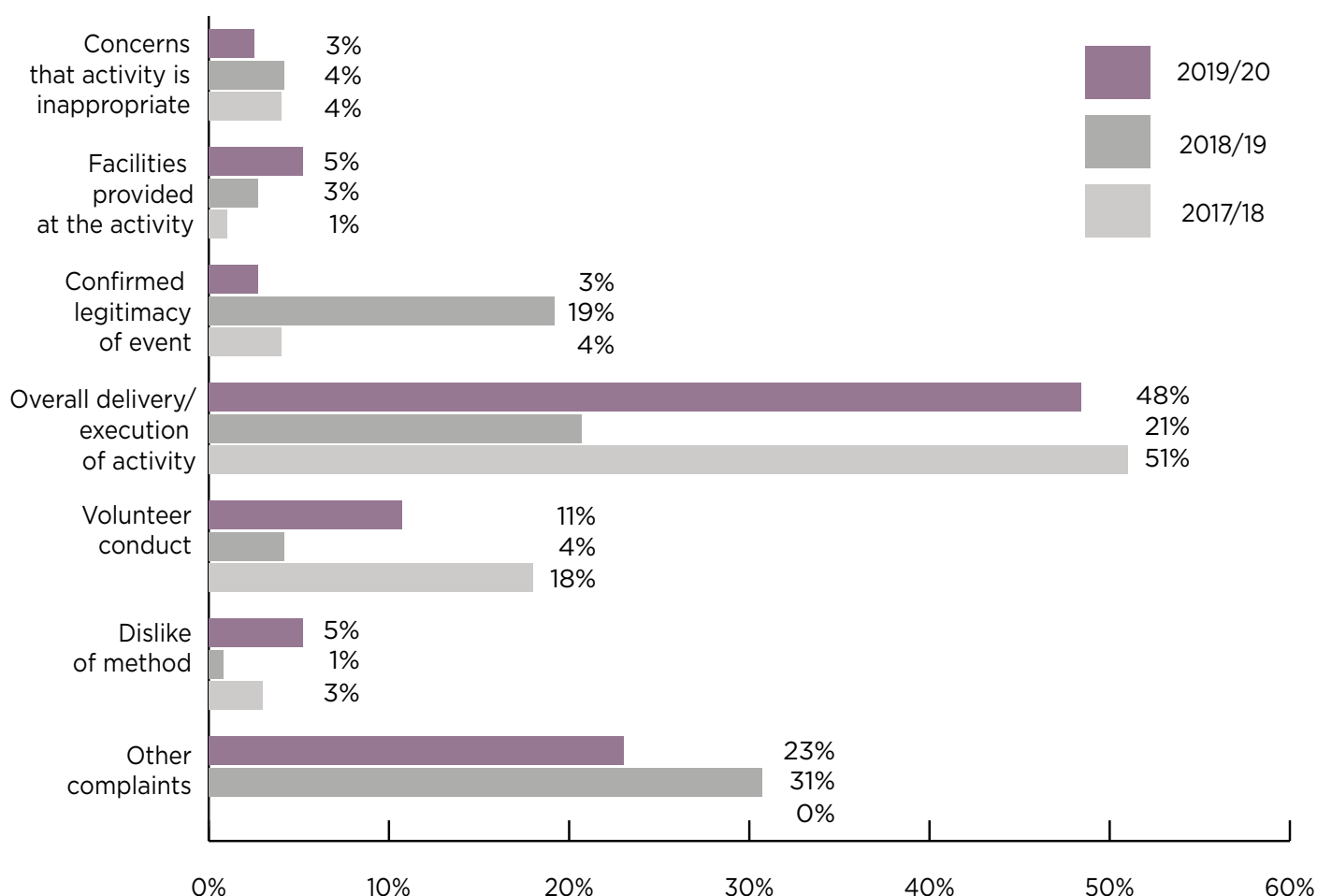


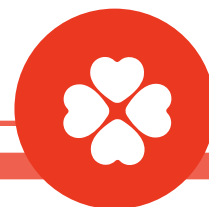


Despite a reduction in the reported total number of 'on behalf of' events in 2019/20, there has been an increase of 69% in the number of reported complaints from 2018/19 to 2019/20. There has also been a year-on-year increase in the number of organisations reporting a complaint about this method of fundraising. In 2018/19 there was decrease in complaints for the overall delivery/execution of activity (from 51% in 2017/18 to 21% in 2018/19), though in 2019/20 this increased again to 49%. There has been a significant decrease in the number of complaints about the confirmed legitimacy of event, down from 19% in 2018/19 to 3% in 2019/20.

Table 8 and fig 15: Overview of complaints reported about volunteer fundraising

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
No of orgs using volunteer fundraising	37	36	32
% of orgs using volunteer fundraising	66%	62%	55%
Total 'on behalf of' events by orgs reporting complaints	74,104	100,741	125,240
No of orgs reporting complaints about volunteer fundraising	24	21	17
% of orgs reporting complaints	43%	36%	29%
Total no of complaints	440	261	373
Complaint to 'on behalf of' event ratio	1:168	1:386	1:336

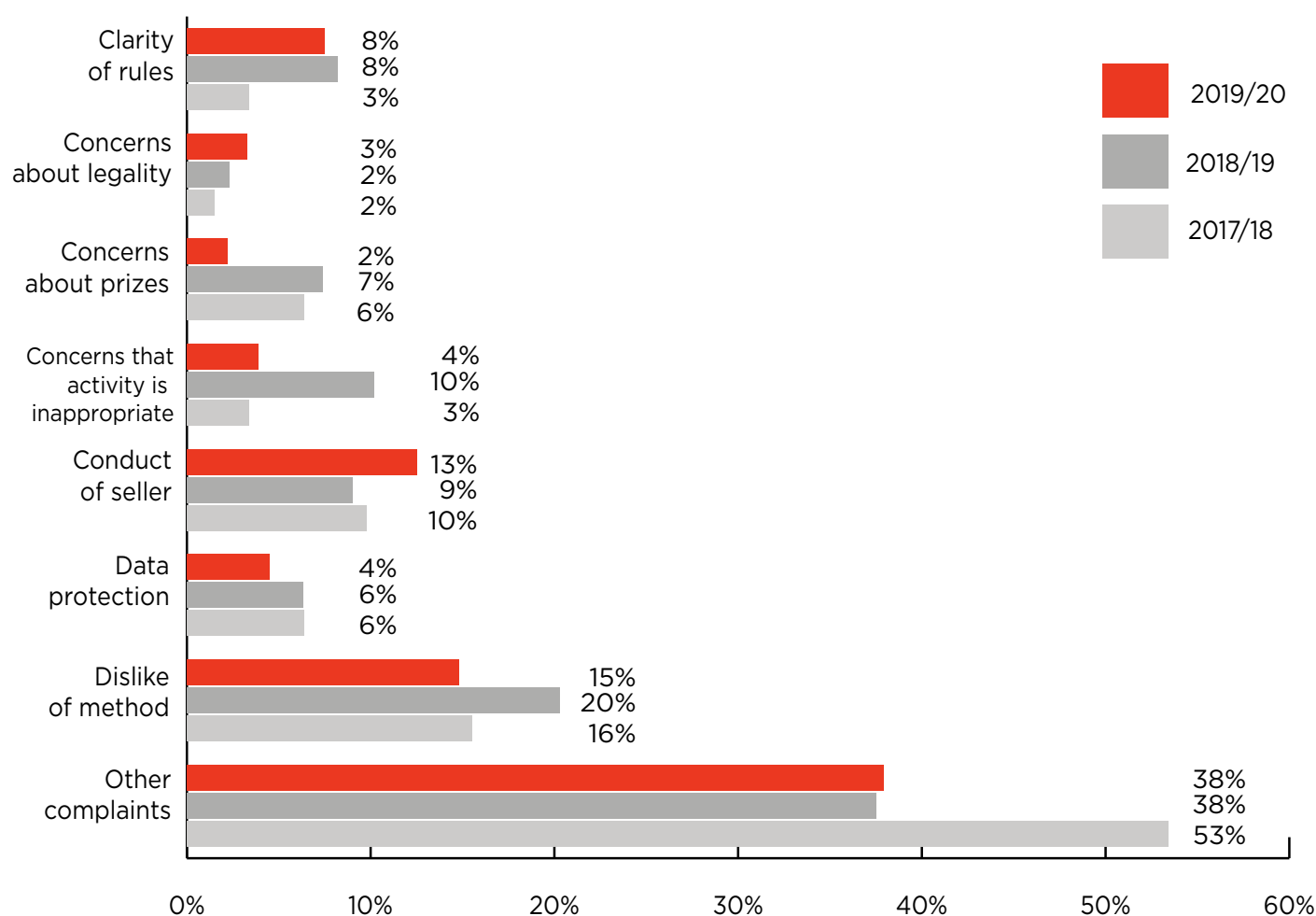




The number of reported complaints about lotteries has risen year on year and the level of activity has also increased by 33% from 2018/19 to 2019/20. This also mirrors a significant rise in the number of lottery tickets sold by the organisations that reported a complaint. The number of organisations reporting this complaint remains the same. In 2019/20 there was a rise in the number of complaints about the conduct of the seller and concerns about legality.

Table 9 and fig 16: Overview of complaints reported about lotteries

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
No of orgs using lotteries	32	28	27
% of orgs using lotteries	57%	48%	47%
Total tickets sold by orgs reporting complaints	77,839,364	41,506,397	29,162,691
No of orgs reporting complaints about lotteries	25	26	26
% of orgs reporting complaints	45%	45%	45%
Total no of complaints	359	256	264
Complaint to tickets sold ratio	1:216,823	1:162,134	1:110,465



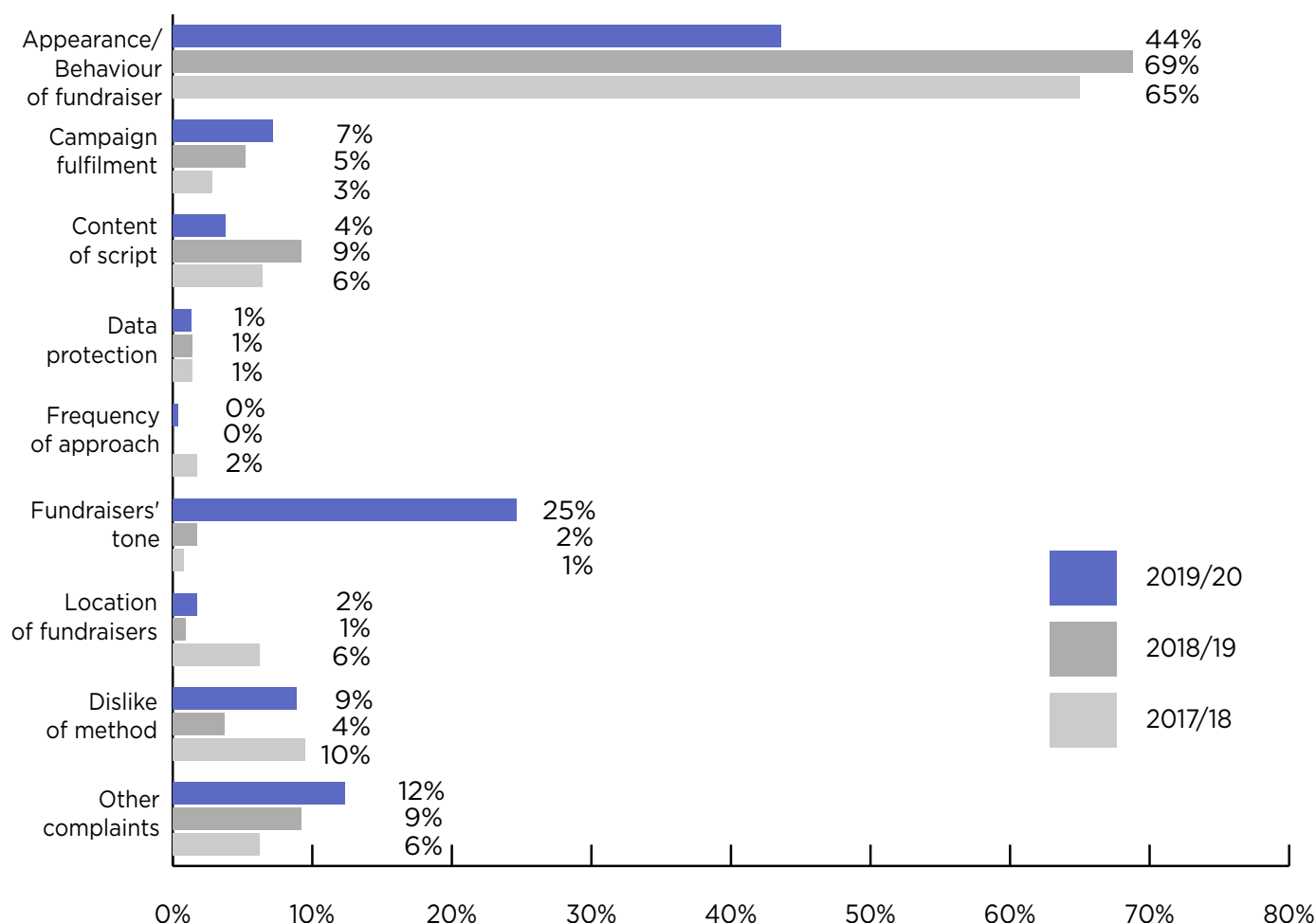


The number of reported complaints about street fundraising decreased by more than a third between 2018/19 and 2019/20. A dramatic decrease in the number of reported sign-ups suggests the amount of street fundraising taking place also decreased significantly. However, the relative number of complaints has gone up – the ratio analysis shows that many more complaints were made compared to the amount of activity taking place.

The appearance or behaviour of fundraisers remains the most reported reason for a complaint, though this has seen a considerable drop from 69% of complaints in 2018/19 to 44% of complaints in 2019/20. There has also been a sharp increase in the number of complaints because of a fundraiser's tone, from a low of >1% in 2017/18 to 25% of complaints in 2019/20.

Table 10 and fig 17: Overview of complaints reported about street fundraising

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
No of orgs using street fundraising	12	11	14
% of orgs using street fundraising	21%	19%	24%
Total sign ups by orgs reporting complaints	45,582	1,855,756	1,701,293
No of orgs reporting complaints about street fundraising	13	11	14
% of orgs reporting complaints	22%	20%	24%
Total no of complaints	236	349	357
Complaint to sign ups ratio	1 : 193	1:5,317	1:4,766



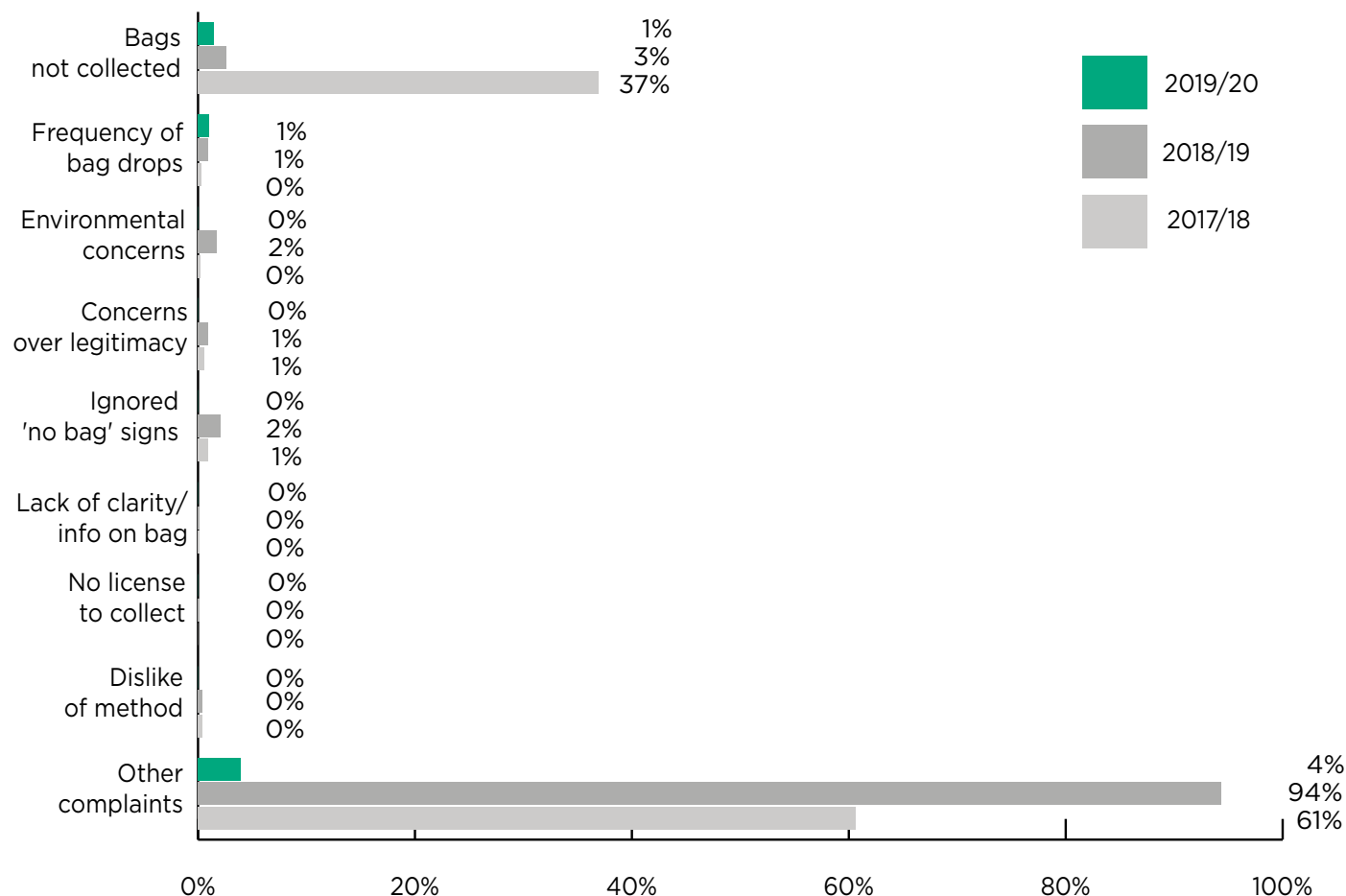
Clothing collections



Although the reported number of clothing bags distributed in 2019/20 increased by more than 300% since those recorded in 2017/18, complaints about clothing collections have fallen by 92%. We are pleased to report that although this method of fundraising remains the most complained about to the Fundraising Regulator, we are beginning to see charities handle significantly fewer complaints on this. It is not clear from the data reported to us why most complaints were made about clothing collections, however, we can see that 'bags not being collected' is no longer a key reason.

Table 11 and fig 18: Overview of complaints reported about clothing collections

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
No of orgs using clothing collections	7	10	13
% of orgs using clothing collections	13%	17%	22%
Total bags distributed by orgs reporting complaints	17,905,686	20,237,585	4,452,890
No of orgs reporting complaints about clothing collections	8	6	9
% of orgs reporting complaints	14%	10%	16%
Total no of complaints	203	1,110	2,478
Complaint to bags distributed ratio	1:88,205	1:18,232	1:1,797



Appendix

Additional breakdown of complaints reported by charities

This appendix contains data on all additional fundraising complaints reported by the charities that contributed to this report.

Lotteries, raffles and other prize draws

Reported complaints about lotteries and raffles have risen since 2017/18 by 36% and 11% respectively. The number of complaints about other prize draws (which includes tombolas, prize competitions and free-to-enter draws) increased by 97% between 2017/18 and 2018/19, though this declined by 39% in 2019/20. The number of organisations reporting complaints about these methods of fundraising has remained relatively stable year on year. See fig 19 and 20 on page 31.

Events

There has been a significant increase in complaints reported about social activities with an 205% increase from 2017/18 to 2019/20 – see page 23 the report for more information on social activities. Complaints about volunteer fundraising also increased by 18% from 2017/18 to 2019/20. The number of organisations reporting complaints about events has remained similar over the three-year period. See fig 21 and 22 on page 31.

Trust and foundations, major donor and corporate

Reported complaints about trust and foundation and major donor fundraising remained at similar levels between 2017/18 and 2019/20. Complaints about fundraising from businesses trebled in 2018/19 and then fell to a similar level to 2017/18 in 2019/20. There was an increase in the number of organisations reporting complaints about their major donor fundraising in 2019/20, while fewer organisations reported complaints about their fundraising from business in 2019/20. See fign 23 and 24 on page 31.

Fig 19: total complaints reported - lotteries, raffles and other prize draws

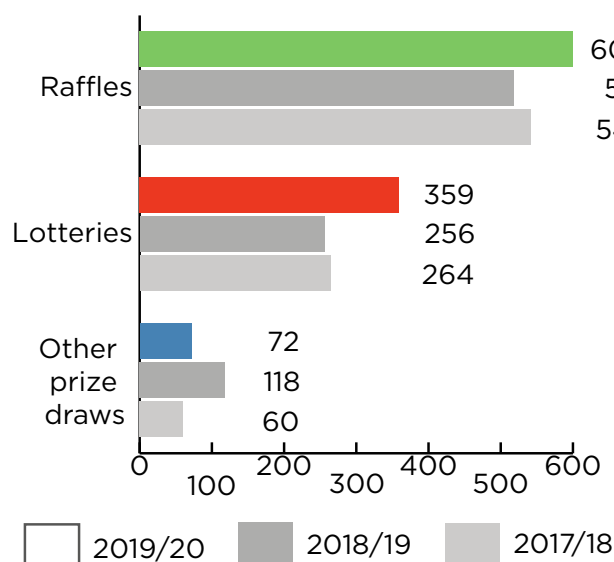


Fig 20: no of orgs reporting complaints - lotteries, raffles and other prize draws

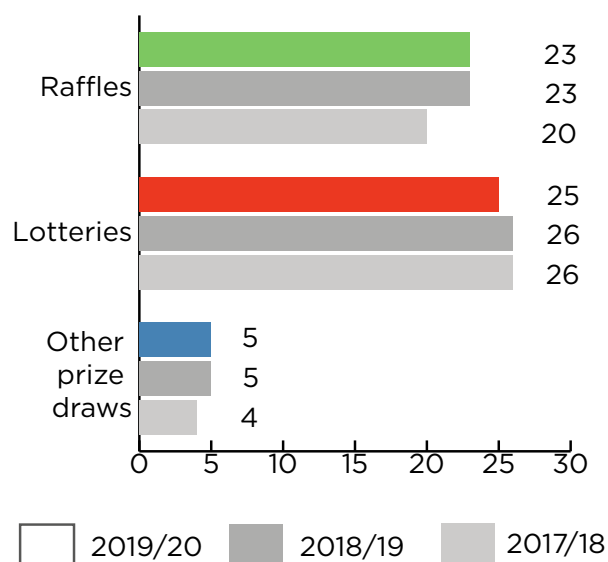


Fig 21: total complaints reported - events

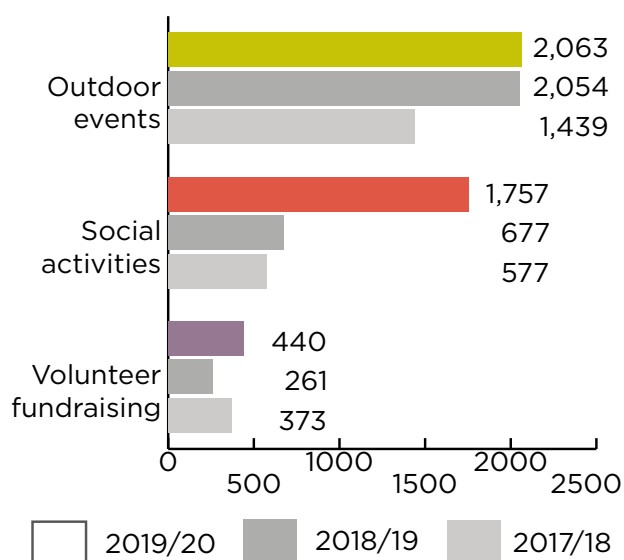


Fig 22: no of orgs reporting complaints - events

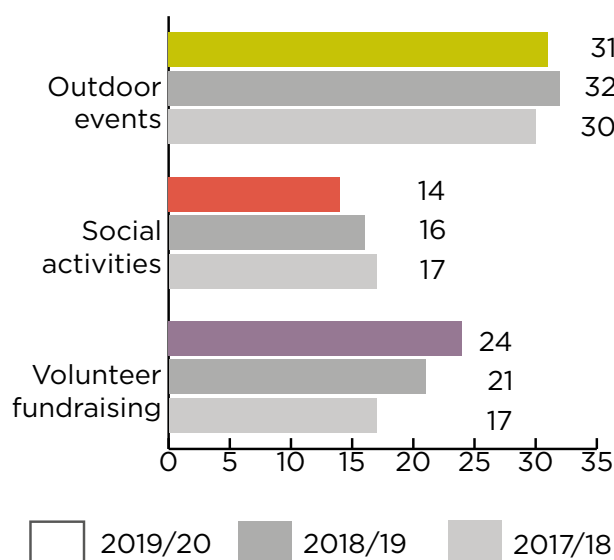


Fig 23: total complaints reported - trust and foundations, major donor and corporate

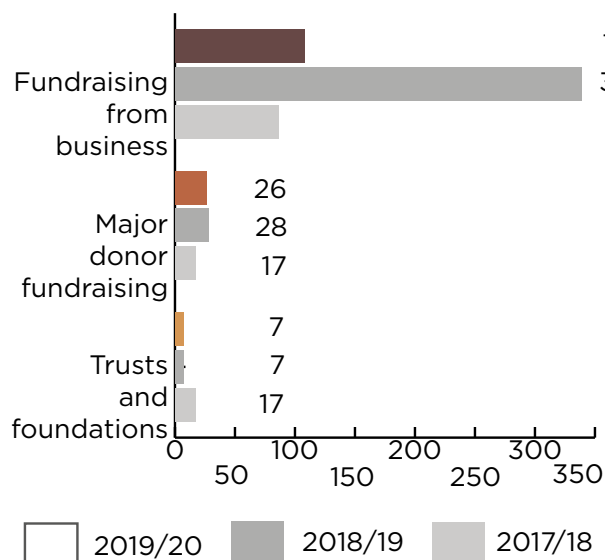
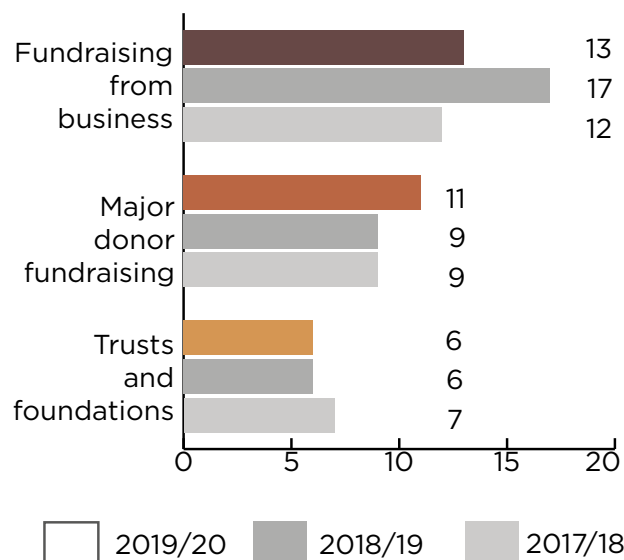
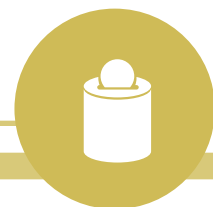


Fig 24: no of orgs reporting complaints - trust and foundations, major donor and corporate



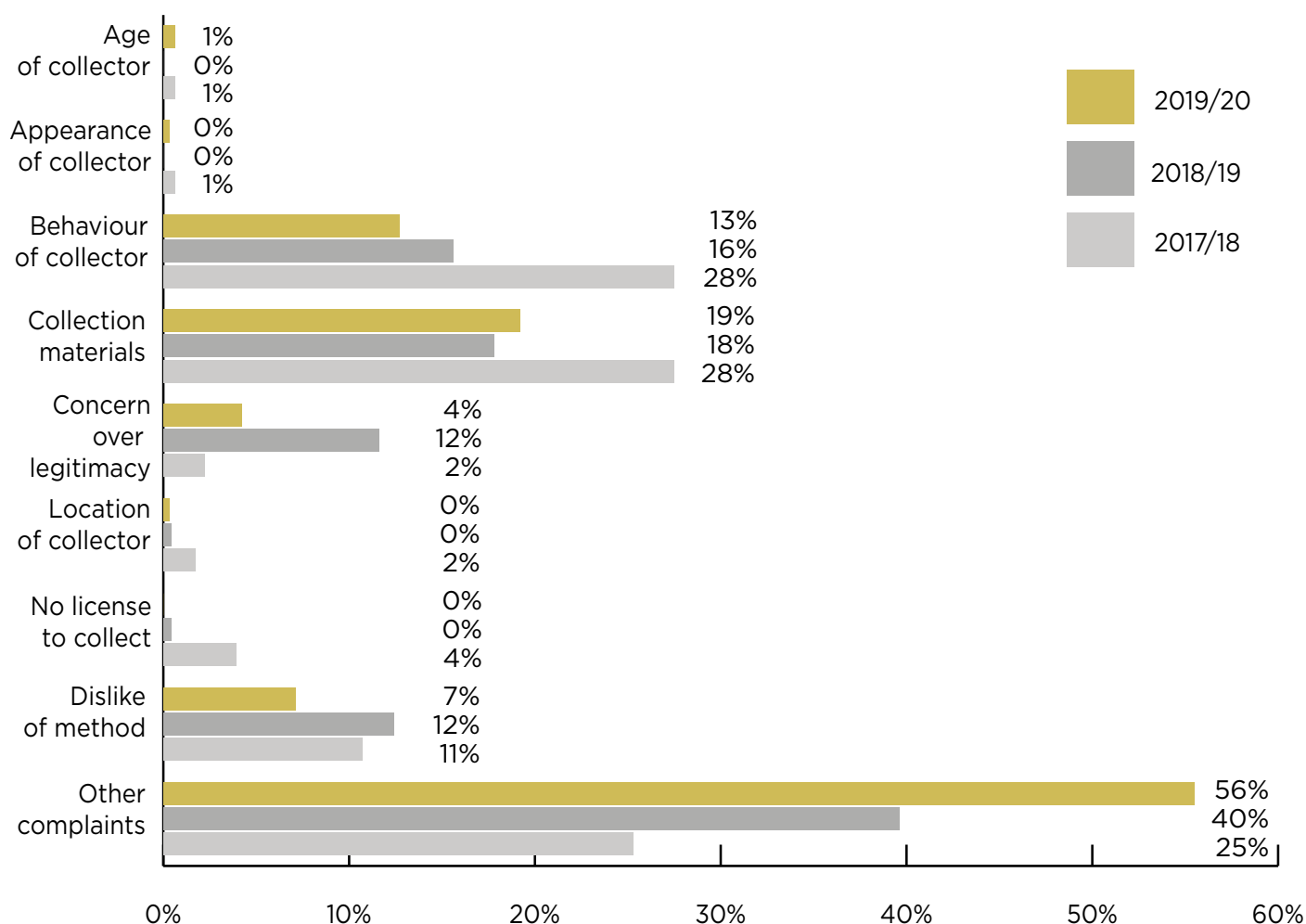
Cash collections



There was a 37% increase in the total number of reported complaints about cash collections between 2018/19 and 2019/20, combined with an increase in the amount of this activity taking place. There was a decrease in complaints about the legitimacy of collections, behaviour of collector and dislike of method.

Table 12 and fig 25: Overview of complaints reported about cash collections

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
No of orgs using cash collections	31	34	37
% of orgs using cash collections	55%	59%	64%
Total collections by orgs reporting complaints	521,490	491,934	410,044
No of orgs reporting complaints about cash collections	16	15	12
% of orgs reporting complaints	29%	26%	21%
Total no of complaints	308	225	178
Complaint to number of collections ratio*	1: 1,693	1:2,186	1:2,304



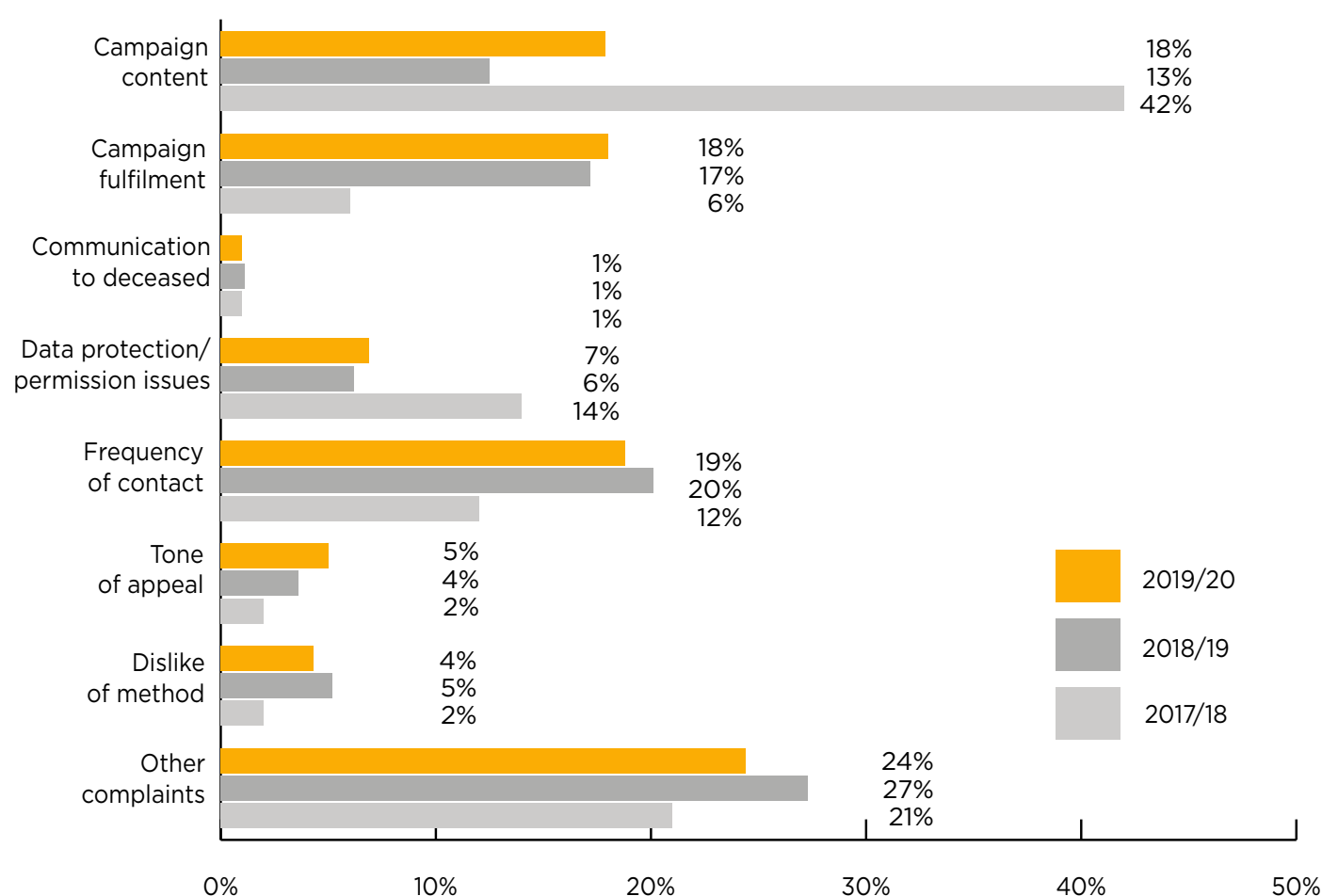


Reported complaints about fundraising by email have remained stable with an average decrease of 6% year-on-year from 2017/18 to 2019/20. This was despite an increase in the number of organisations reporting receiving complaints. The ratio of complaints to contacts remained low.

There was a significant reduction in the number of complaints about campaign content, from 42% in 2017/18 down to 18% in 2019/20. Complaints reported about frequency of contact and campaign fulfilment increased since 2017/18 and have remained at similar levels from 2018/19 to 2019/20.

Table 13 and fig 26: Overview of complaints reported about email fundraising

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
No of orgs using email fundraising	56	57	57
% of orgs using email fundraising	100%	98%	98%
Total emails sent by orgs reporting complaints	112,812,622	96,730,770	144,949,101
No of orgs reporting complaints about email fundraising	47	39	44
% of orgs reporting complaints	84%	67%	76%
Total no of complaints	1,053	1,080	1,277
Complaint to emails sent ratio	1:107,134	1:89,566	1:113,508



Outdoor events

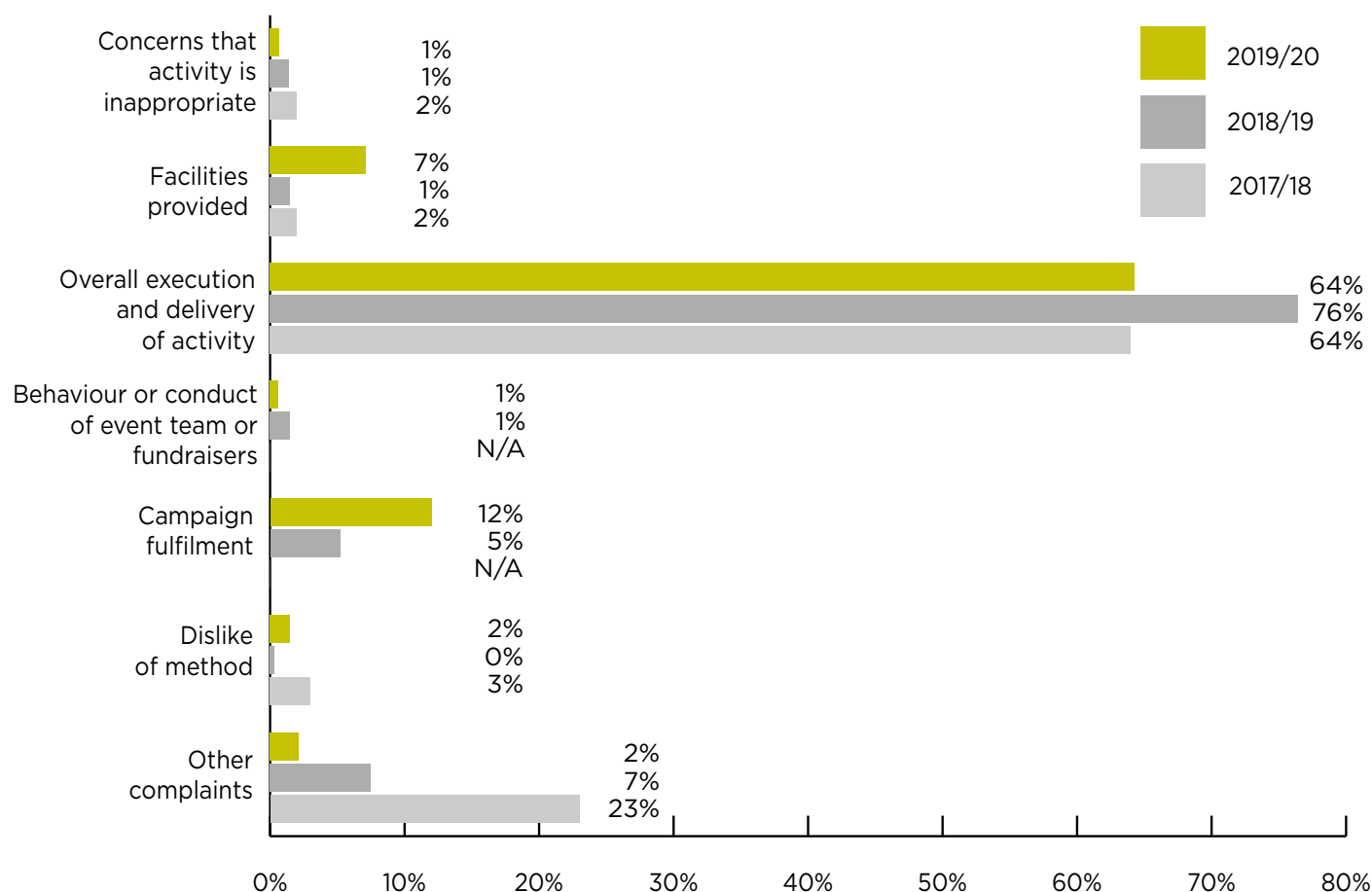


There has been little change in the number of reported complaints and organisations reporting complaints about outdoor events in 2019/20 compared to 2018/19. The ratio of complaints to activity has also remained relatively stable throughout the three years, despite the number of outdoor event participants increasing by 13% from 2017/18 to 2019/20.

Across all three years, the most frequently reported type of complaint was the execution and delivery of the outdoor event. In 2017/18, data about campaign fulfilment and behaviour or conduct of the event team or fundraisers was not asked for in our charity survey. However, since 2018/19 there has been an increase in the number of complaints about campaign fulfilment. The number of complaints about facilities provided has risen from 2% in 2017/18 to 7% in 2019/20.

Table 14 and fig 27: Overview of complaints reported about outdoor events

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
No of orgs using outdoor events	42	40	39
% of orgs using outdoor events	75%	69%	67%
Total outdoor event participants by orgs reporting complaints	6,110,249	6,111,257	5,426,827
No of orgs reporting complaints about outdoor events	31	32	30
% of orgs reporting complaints	55%	55%	52%
Total no of complaints	2,063	2,054	1,439
Complaint to number of participants ratio	1:2,962	1:2,975	1:3,771



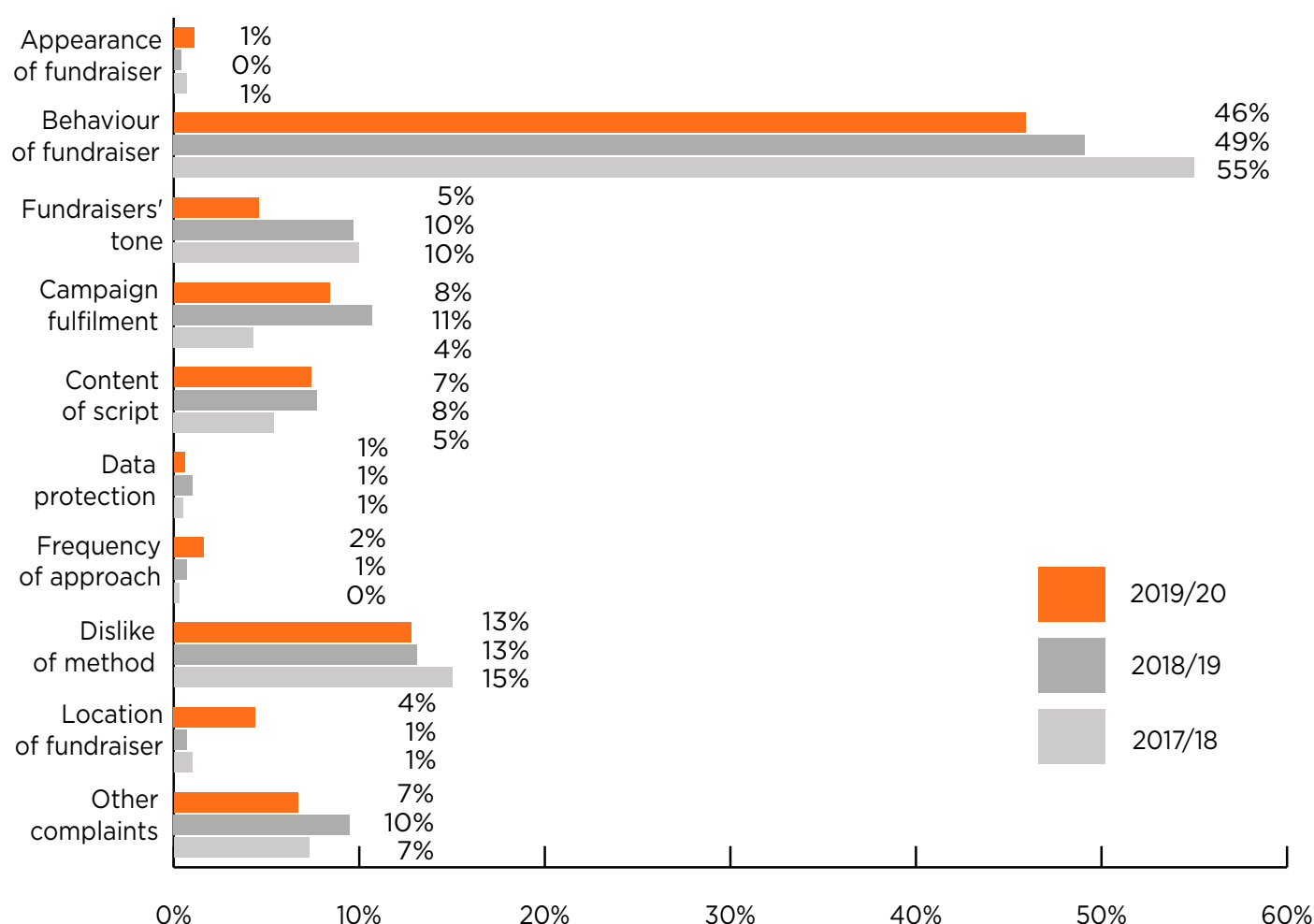
Private site fundraising



Reported complaints about fundraising on private sites increased by 14% from 2018/19 to 2019/20. The main reason for these complaints was the behaviour of the fundraiser, which was at a high of 55% in 2017/18, falling to 46% in 2019/20. Dislike of method and campaign fulfilment were common reasons for complaints, despite these areas decreasing from 2018/19 to 2019/20. There was an increase in the number of complaints for location of fundraiser, rising from 1% in 2017/18 to 4% of complaints in 2019/20.

Table 15 and fig 28: Overview of complaints reported about private site fundraising

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
No of orgs using private site	34	38	34
% of orgs using private site	61%	66%	59%
Total sign ups by orgs reporting complaints	586,397	525,319	584,557
No of orgs reporting complaints about private site	32	35	28
% of orgs reporting complaints	57%	60%	48%
Total no of complaints	1,402	1,226	968
Complaint to signup ratio	1:418	1:428	1:604

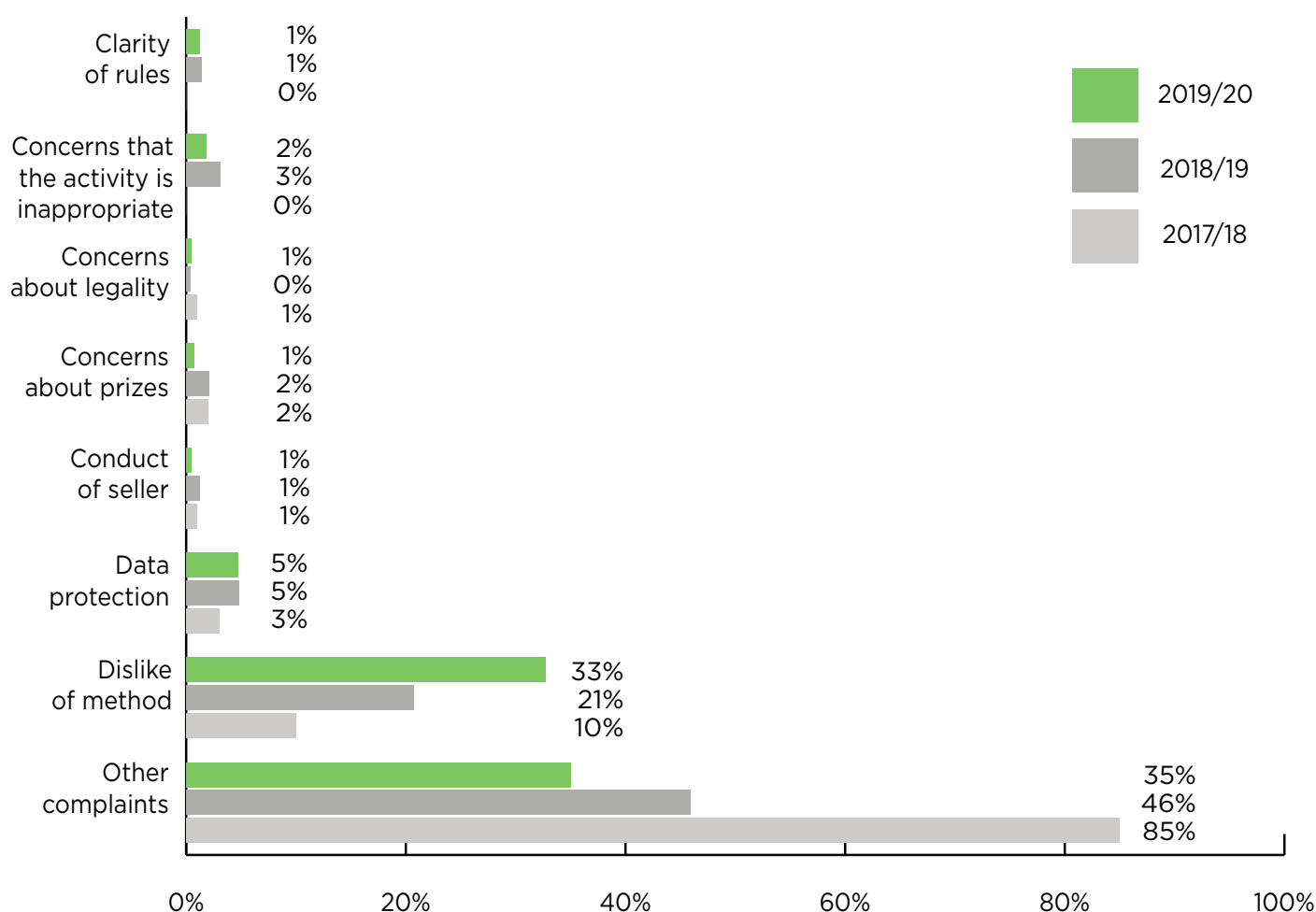




Reported complaints about raffles increased slightly (16%) between 2018/19 and 2019/20, despite a slight decrease in the number of tickets sold. There was a year-on-year increase in the number of complaints from people who dislike this method of fundraising, from 10% of fundraising in 2017/18 to 33% in 2019/20. There was a decrease in the category of 'other' complaints from a high of 85% in 2017/18 to 35% in 2019/20.

Table 16 and fig 29: Overview of complaints reported about raffles

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
No of orgs using raffles	26	25	24
% of orgs using raffles	46%	43%	41%
Total tickets sold by orgs reporting complaints	18,598,889	20,002,813	18,452,131
No of orgs reporting complaints about raffles	23	23	20
% of orgs reporting complaints	41%	40%	34%
Total no of complaints	600	518	542
Complaint to tickets sold ratio	1:30,998	1:38,615	1:34,045

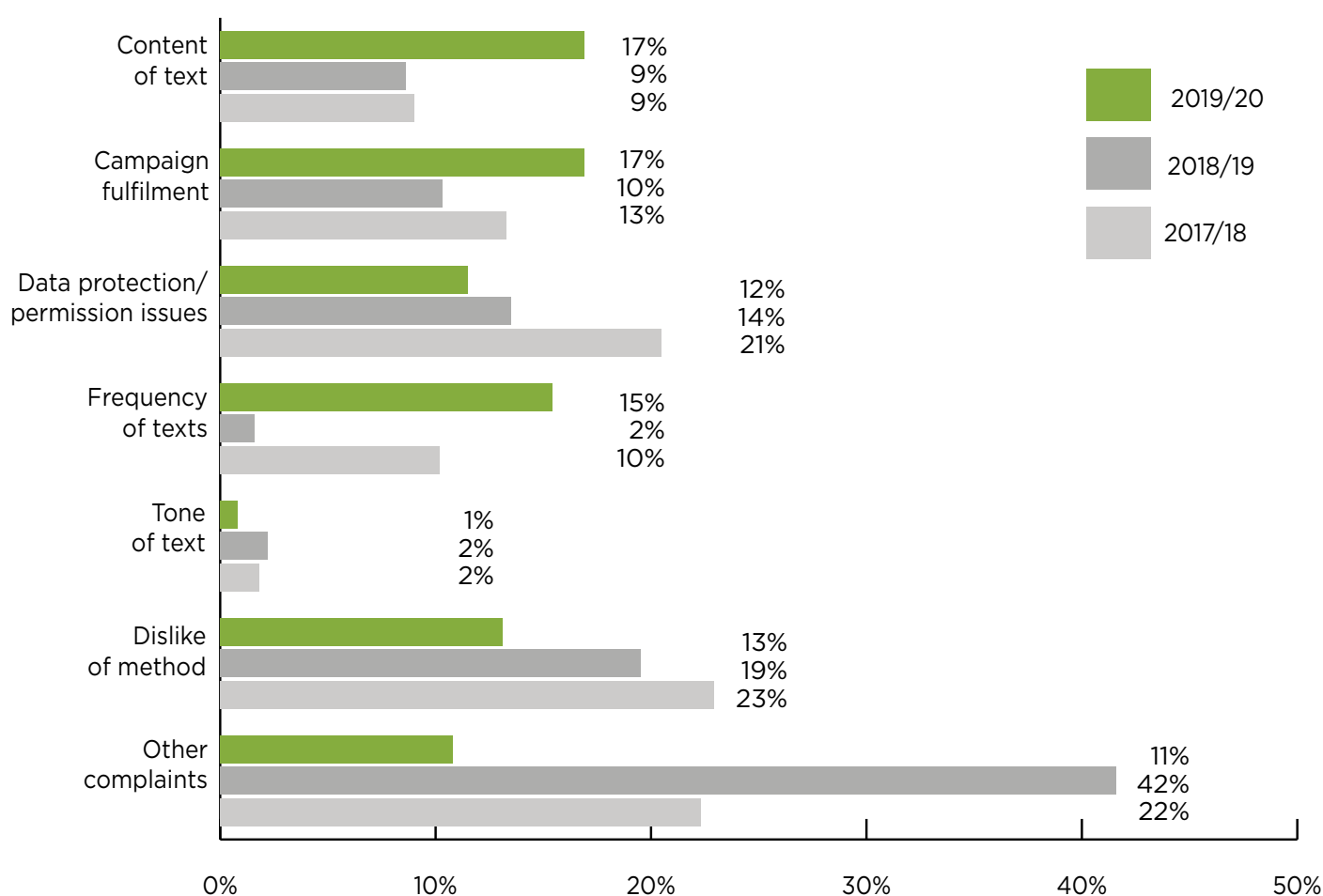


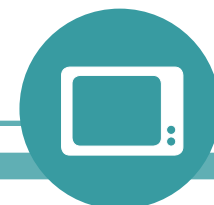


There was a decrease in the reported number of complaints, messages sent and the percentage of organisations reporting complaints about this method year-on-year. There has been a reduction in people making complaints because they dislike this method – down to 13% in 2019/20, and a decrease in complaints because of data protection/permissions issues. However, there were increases in the number of complaints about the frequency of texts, campaign fulfilment and content of the message.

Table 17 and fig 30: Overview of complaints reported about SMS fundraising

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
No of orgs using SMS	35	31	33
% of orgs using SMS	55%	53%	57%
Total texts sent by orgs reporting complaints	2,561,602	4,188,825	5,946,244
No of orgs reporting complaints about SMS	13	16	18
% of orgs reporting complaints	23%	28%	31%
Total no of complaints	130	185	166
Complaint to texts sent ratio	1:19,705	1:22,642	1:35,824

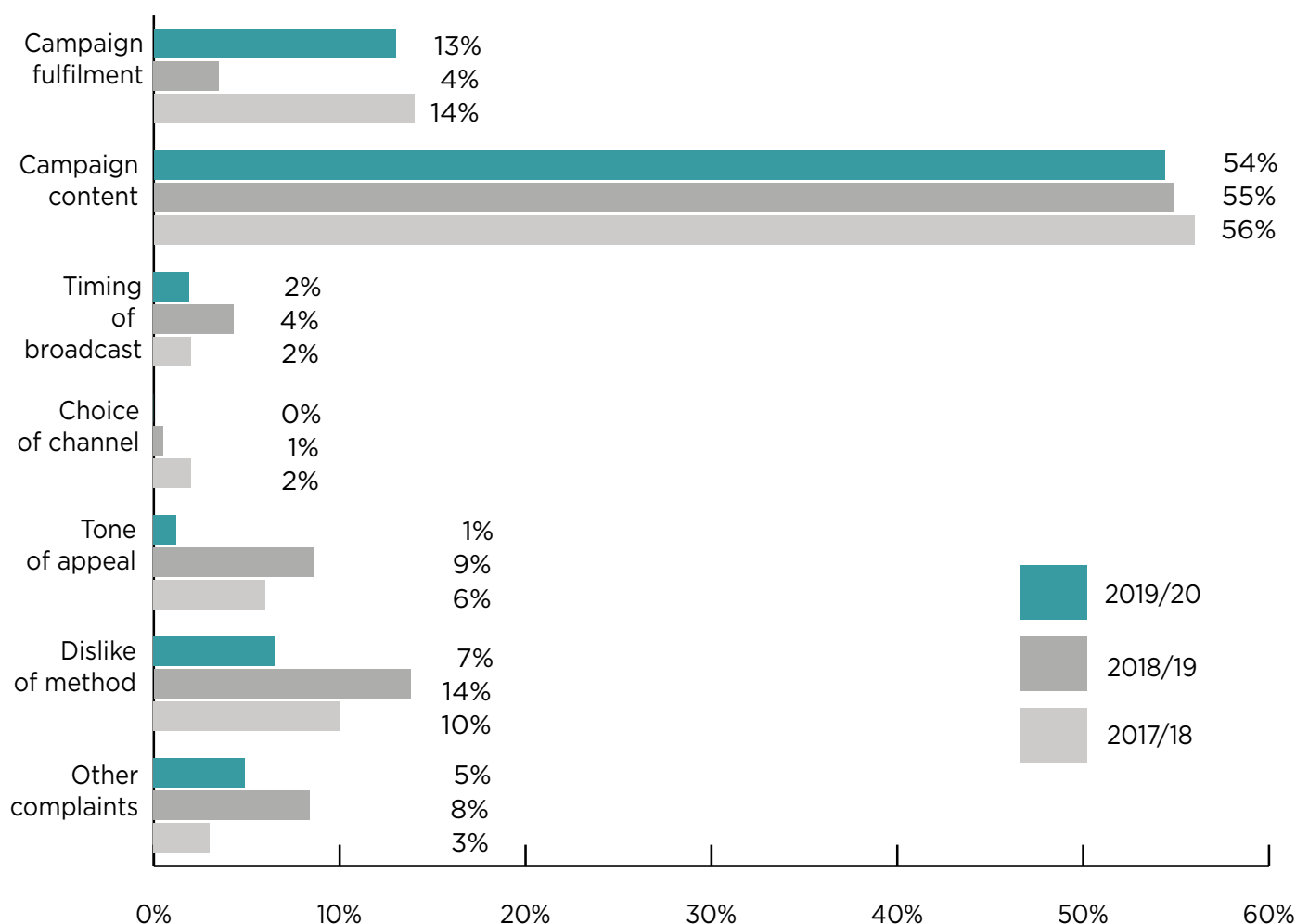




Reported complaints about television advertising increased from 370 in 2018/19 to 430 in 2019/20. The ratio of complaints to the total audience reach remains low at one complaint for 13,161,602 audience numbers. The number of complaints about campaign content has remained high over the three-year period, featuring in more than half of all complaints. There were similar levels of complaints because of campaign fulfilment in 2017/18 and 2019/20, but a notable decrease in 2018/19 to just 4%. The other reasons for television advertising complaints have fallen between 2018/19 to 2019/20.

Table 18 and fig 31: Overview of complaints reported about TV advertising

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
No of orgs using TV advertising	41	39	40
% of orgs using TV advertising	73%	67%	69%
Total audience reach by orgs reporting complaints	5,747,334,330	6,206,130,906	3,142,985,012
No of orgs reporting complaints about TV advertising	26	24	29
% of orgs reporting complaints	46%	41%	50%
Total no of complaints	430	370	376
Complaint to audience reach ratio	1:13,365,894	1:16,773,327	1:16,183,411



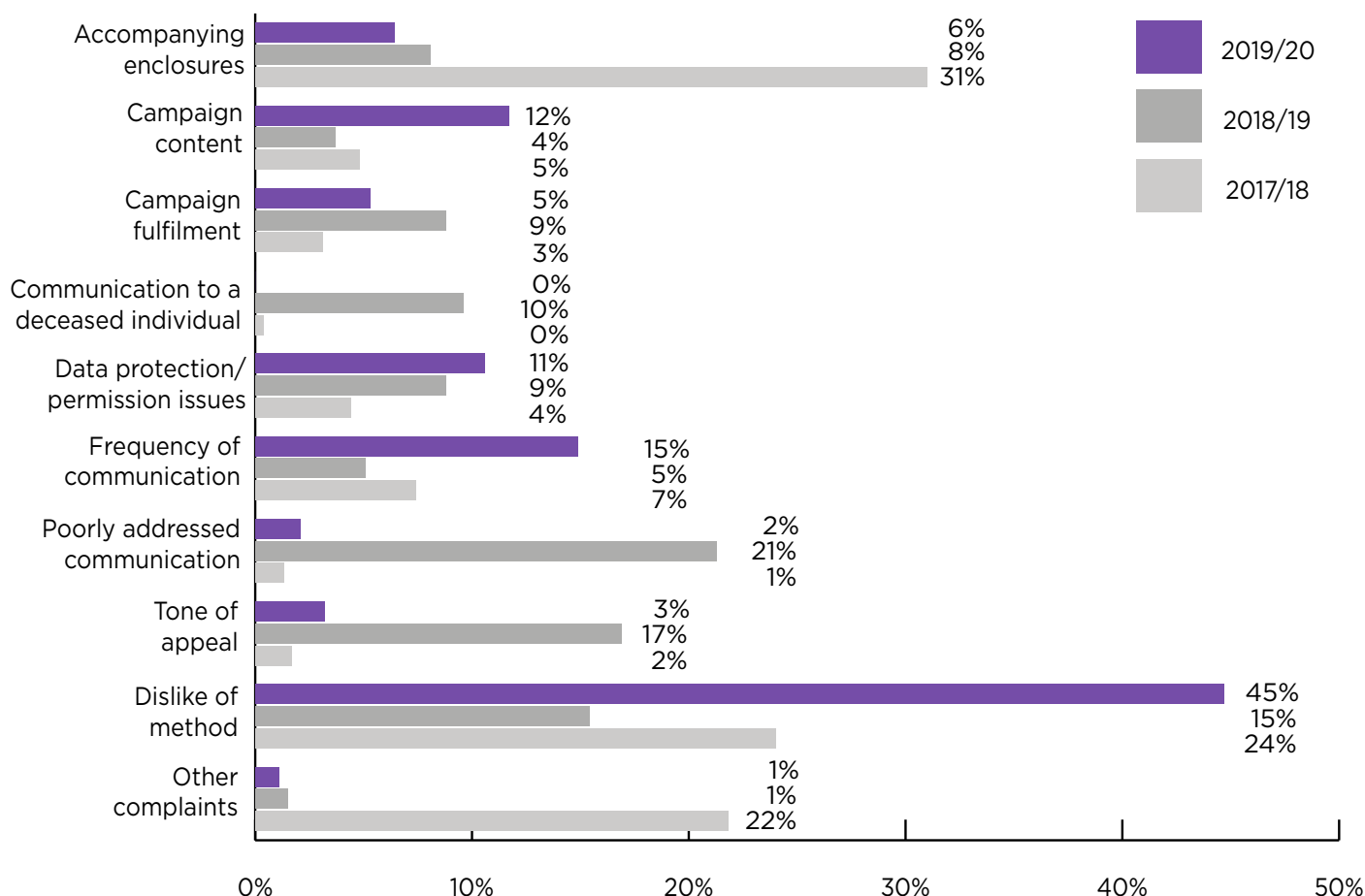
Unaddressed mail



The reported number of complaints about unaddressed mail fell by 31% in 2019/20. The amount of unaddressed mail sent also decreased in 2019/20 by 65% from the previous year. There was a marked rise in the number of complaints for dislike of method and frequency of communication, campaign content and data protection/permission issues. There was a decrease in the number of complaints for accompanying enclosures, down from a high of 31% in 2017/18 to 6% in 2019/20.

Table 19 and fig 32: Overview of complaints reported about unaddressed mail

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
No of orgs using unaddressed mail	26	23	25
% of orgs using unaddressed mail	46%	40%	43%
Total pieces sent by orgs reporting complaints	35,454,965	102,337,921	75,062,134
No of orgs reporting complaints about unaddressed mail	17	17	13
% of orgs reporting complaints	30%	29%	22%
Total no of complaints	94	136	229
Complaint to pieces sent ratio	1:377,180	1:752,485	1:327,782



Glossary

The definitions below were circulated to the organisations completing the Annual Complaints Return for 2019/20.

Addressed direct mail - a fundraising appeal sent through the post which has been specifically addressed to an individual residing at the property.

Cash collection - the collecting of donations from the public in the form of coins and banknotes in buckets and envelopes. This includes static collections, street collections and private site collections.

Clothing collections - a fundraising campaign which entails distributing collections bags to households with the purpose of obtaining clothes and other goods for resale and/or recycling.

Door-to-door fundraising - a 'face-to-face' campaign which entails fundraisers visiting residential addresses with the purpose of securing a regular Direct Debit donation.

Email fundraising - a fundraising appeal that has been sent to both existing and prospective supporters by email.

Fundraising activity - any activity which is specifically designed to raise income for a charity.

Fundraising from business - a fundraising campaign which has been run in conjunction with a commercial partner and/or participator. This includes campaigns in which a percentage of product sales have been agreed and 'charity of the year' activities.

Lotteries - a fundraising appeal which involves the distribution of 'tokens' resulting in the winning token (or tokens) being selected at random in an official draw. This usually involves a monetary prize.

Magazine/newspaper inserts - a fundraising campaign involving hard copies of flyers or leaflets being enclosed in the pages of newspapers and magazines.

Major donor fundraising - any fundraising activity which has involved interaction with either prospective or current high value givers.

Online advertising - a fundraising appeal that is specifically aimed at an online audience. This includes internet banners on third party websites and pop-ups asking for financial contribution and/or advertising an event.

Other prize draws - a 'gaming'-based fundraising campaign that either involves an element of skill (for example, a question) and/or has a free entry route.

Outdoor advertising - a fundraising appeal which has been displayed in prominent outdoor locations such as billboards, bus stops and advertisements on public transport.

Outdoor events - outdoor fundraising activities which involve an element of physical exertion. This includes fun runs, challenge events, golf days, tournaments and marathons. It does not include outdoor concerts, fetes, fairs or treasure hunts.

Press advertising - a fundraising appeal which has been included in printed media, such as magazines or newspapers.

Glossary

Private site fundraising - a 'face-to-face' campaign which entails fundraisers approaching members of the public on private property (for example, supermarkets or shopping centres) with the purpose of securing a regular Direct Debit donation.

Radio advertising - a fundraising appeal that has been broadcast on a local, national or digital radio station.

Raffles - a lottery in which the prizes are goods rather than money.

SMS fundraising - a fundraising appeal which has been sent to the public through mobile text message.

Social activities - fundraising activities that have a specific 'social' focus.

Street fundraising - a 'face-to-face' campaign which entails fundraisers approaching members of the public on the street with the purpose of securing a regular Direct Debit.

Telephone fundraising - a fundraising appeal which uses the telephone to approach both prospective and existing supporters.

Television advertising - a fundraising appeal that has been broadcast on television through 'paid for' advertising. This includes campaigns for regular gifts and one-off donations and event advertising.

Trusts and foundations - set up by companies and/or individuals for the purpose of using profit or private wealth for charitable purposes.

Unaddressed direct mail - a fundraising appeal sent through the post with a direct ask and has not been addressed to a specific individual but instead 'the occupier' of a property. These appeals may also be known as 'door drops'.

Volunteer fundraising - any fundraising activity led by volunteers which the charity concerned is aware of and is providing its support for.

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