



IFF Research

Trade Mark Renewal Research

Overall findings

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Executive Summary
3. Notifications and reminders
4. Understanding of the renewals process
5. Renewal status
6. Motivations and experiences: Completed first renewal
7. Motivations and experiences: Not completed first renewal
8. Recommendations
9. Technical annex



Introduction

Aims and Objectives

The IPO commissioned IFF to conduct research to improve their understanding of trade mark owners' perceptions and behaviours around their trade mark's first renewal date.

The specific research objectives were to:

- Understand awareness and recall of notifications and reminders
- Gauge trade mark owners' understanding of the renewal process
- Learn motivations for renewing or not renewing trade marks, including whether owners have ceased using trade marks and how long ago.
- Uncover trade mark owners experience of the renewal process, including use of third-party services and 'misleading invoice providers'.

The findings from this research will be used to inform improvements to the renewal process and help trade mark owners make more informed decisions around renewal.



Method

- IFF Research conducted a telephone survey with 250 trade mark owners whose first renewal date fell between August 2024 and January 2026. The sample data was provided by the IPO.
- Pilot fieldwork took place between 10 and 16 December 2024. Mainstage fieldwork took place between 6 January and 5 February 2025.
- Minimum targets within the key subgroups were agreed with the IPO prior to fieldwork starting, and all minimum targets were met (see table for interviews achieved by subgroup, based on sample information).
- More detail on the methodological approach used, the sample and survey response rates can be found in the Technical Annex (see slides 47-50).
- There was some churn between sampled renewal status and self-reported renewal status (see slide 26).

Subgroup	Minimum targets set	Interviews achieved
1. Renewal Status (sample)		
a. Completed first renewal	100	144
b. Not (or not yet) renewed	100	106
2. Representation		
a. Represented by agents	100	121
b. Unrepresented	100	129
3. Number of Trade Marks Owned		
a. Own a single trade mark	50	83
b. Own multiple trade marks	50	167
4. Type of Trade Mark		
a. UK trade mark	50	195
b. Comparable UK trade mark	50	55
5. Renewal Date		
a. Renewal date > 6 months but < 12 months	50	55
b. Renewal date within the next 6 months	50	70
c. Renewal date passed within the last 6 months	50	125
Total	250	250

Executive summary



Awareness and recall of notifications



- Three in ten (29%) respondents recalled receiving a notification of someone else applying for a trade mark similar to theirs; 2 in 3 (66%) did not recall and 5% were unsure whether they had received a notification.
- Of those who had received notice of a similar trade mark application, a third (32%) chose not to oppose. The most common reason for not doing so was a perceived lack of similarity between the trade marks (14/27).
- Recall of renewal reminders was strong, with 7 in 10 (69%) able to recall. However, only 42% of these recalled receiving a reminder specifically from the IPO, suggesting a majority had received contact from third party services using potentially misleading invoices.
- Of those who recalled receiving reminders from the IPO, a third (36%) were unsure of when they received them, suggesting IPO reminders are indistinguishable from third party reminders.
- There was consensus on the content of reminders (regardless of origin), with around 4 in 5 who recalled receiving them stating that they clearly explained renewal timelines, trade mark status, the renewal process and fees associated with renewal.



Understanding of the renewal process rights



- There is mixed knowledge surrounding aspects of the renewal process; eight in ten (81%) respondents are aware that trade marks need to be renewed every 10 years, but just over half (56%) were aware that the renewal process can begin 6 months prior to the renewal date.
- Similarly, three in four (73%) were aware that trade mark rights can be surrendered at any time, but only half (52%) knew they can be challenged for non-use of their trade mark, implying further education is needed around the renewal process.
- Those represented by an agent were significantly more likely than those unrepresented to be aware that trade mark owners can surrender their trade marks at any time (81% vs. 65%), suggesting representation enhances trade mark knowledge.



Motivations for renewing or not



- The most common driver for trade mark renewal among those who had renewed was to maintain the use of the trade mark in the business (64%). 3 in 10 (30%) were also keen to protect their intellectual property rights and 22% wanted to maintain their brand reputation and recognition through trade mark renewal.
- Disuse was cited as the most common reason for non-renewal (10/17 trade mark owners), followed by potential rebranding (3/17) and the relevant trade mark no longer aligning with the aims of the business (2/17).
- Among those no longer using a trade mark or not planning to renew, response was split as to whether IPO communication that trade marks rights can be surrendered at any time would have impacted trade mark owners' decision to do so (6/12 would surrender, 6/12 would not surrender).



Experience of the renewal process

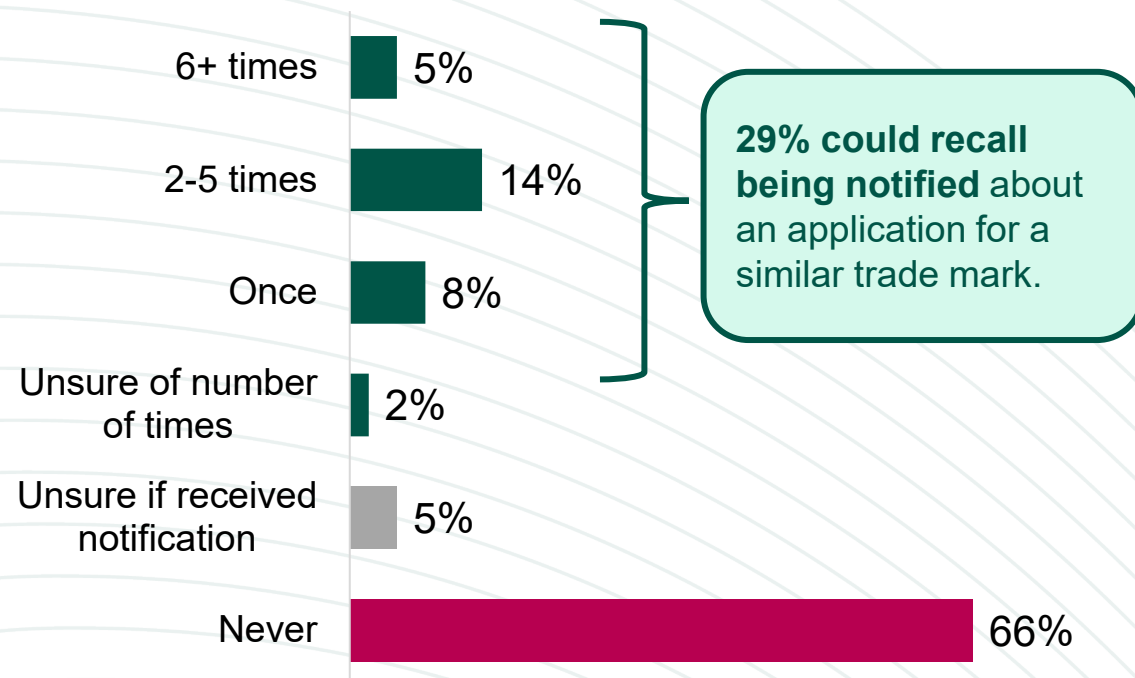


- Overall, experiences of the renewal process were largely positive. Four in five (82%) thought the time it took to renew was appropriate and 88% found the renewal process easy to complete. Of those intending to renew, 3 in 4 (75%) anticipate it to be an easy process.
- Ease of renewal is further evidenced by the fact that few of those who renewed (14%) their trade mark chose to access any support during the renewal process.
- The gov.uk website was the most used method for trade mark renewal at 63%. 3 in 10 owners (29%) chose to use a third party service, a move they justified due to a perception that third parties are more knowledgeable than them about the renewal process (38%) or by existing relationships with a trade mark representative (38%).
- Generally, those who had renewed their trade mark expressed concern about third party organisations and their misleading invoices, suggesting the IPO can do more to counter deceptive practices.

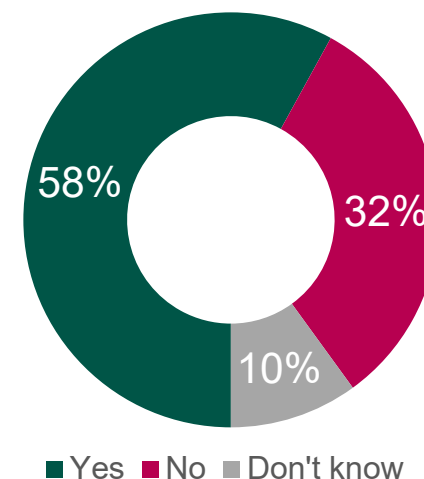
Notifications and reminders

Almost a third of owners had been notified about a trade mark application similar to theirs; most opposed the applications

Number of times notified of similar trade mark application



Whether opposed similar trade mark applications

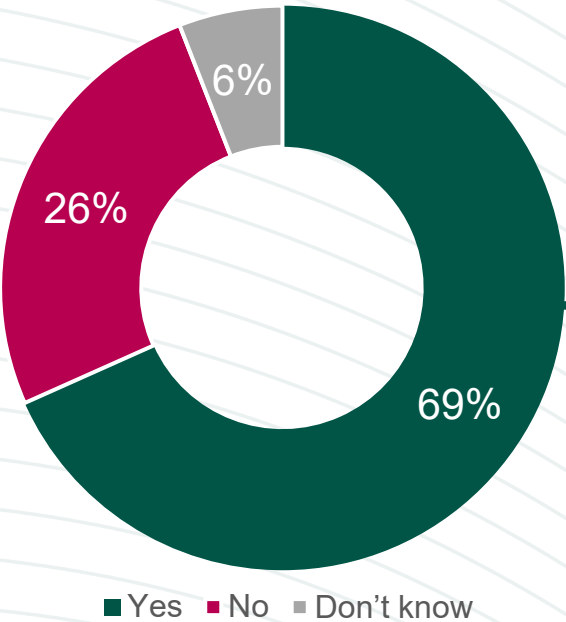


Top three reasons why trade mark owners did not oppose:

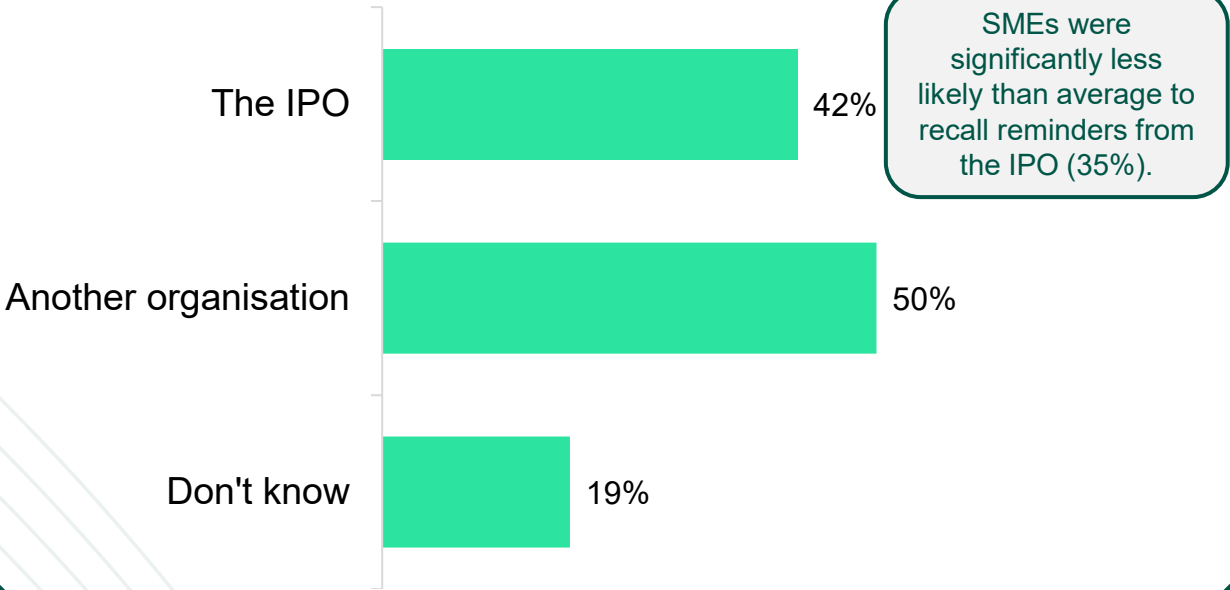
- They were perceived to not be similar (14/27)
- They were not interested in opposing (7/27)
- They worried the notification was a scam (4/27)

Seven in ten owners recalled receiving a reminder about renewing their trade mark; half of whom said the reminder came from an organisation other than the IPO

Recall of receiving reminders about renewal



Source of reminders

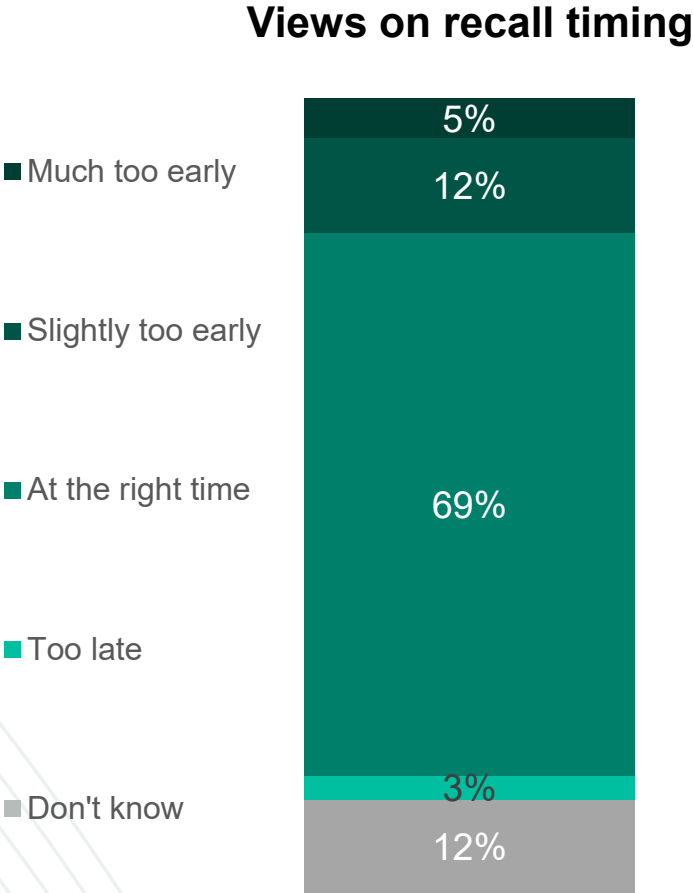
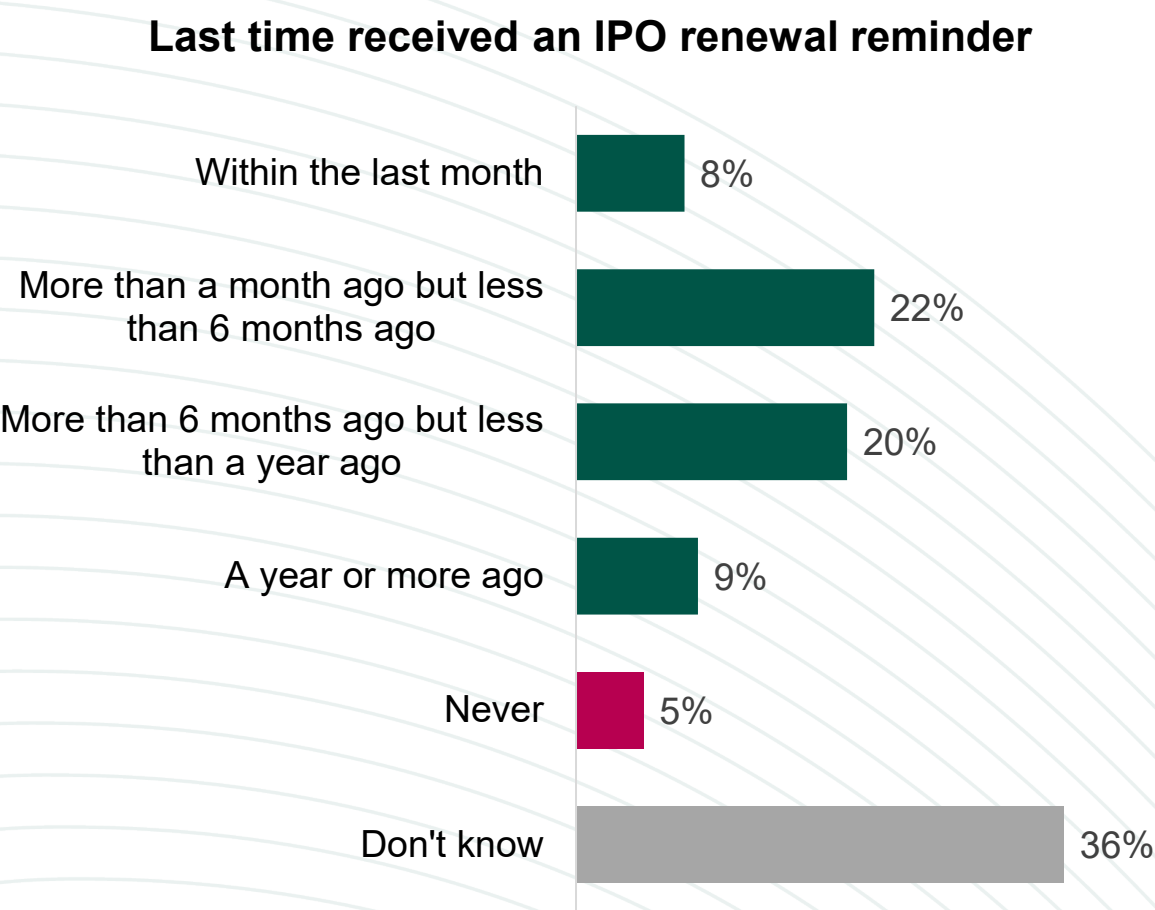


Format of reminders

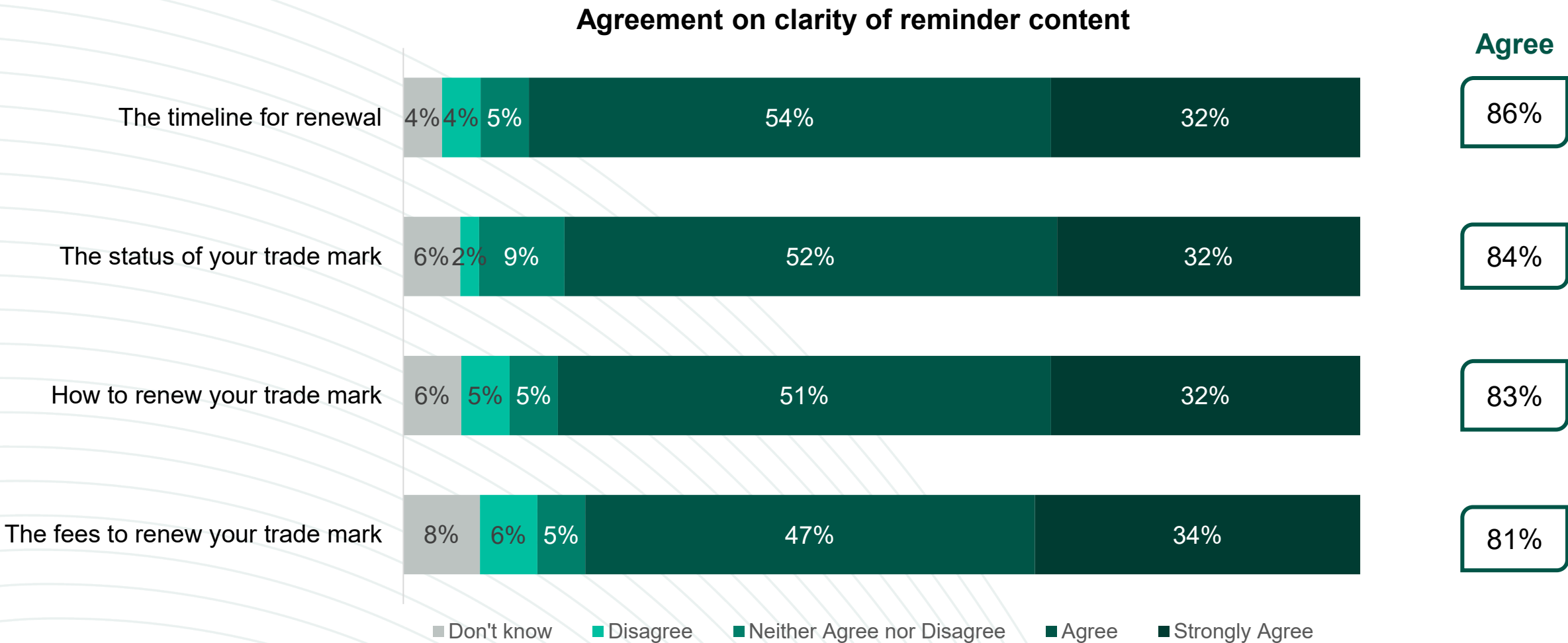


15 B4. Do you recall ever receiving reminders regarding the renewal of your trade mark? Base: All respondents (250) B4a. Who did you receive reminders from? Base: All who recall receiving reminders (172) B5. In what format have you received reminders? Base: All who recall receiving reminders (172)
Please note that some figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding or multi response questions

Most trade mark owners that recalled receiving reminders felt the timing was appropriate



There was widespread agreement that the content of renewal reminders was clear and easy to understand



B8. Do you agree or disagree that the content of renewal reminders clearly explained the... Base: All who recall receiving reminders (172)
Please note that some figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding or multi response questions

Understanding of the renewal process

More than seven in ten were aware of trade mark renewal timelines and the option to surrender trade marks

Awareness of trade mark renewal process



Those with **comparable trade marks** were **significantly more likely than UK trade mark owners** to be aware that:

- Trade marks have to be renewed every 10 years (93% to 77%)
- Classes can be removed when renewing (69% to 53%)
- Owners can be challenged for non-use (71% to 47%)

Those yet to renew expressed frustration at a lack of clear comms regarding renewals



Some owners who had yet to renew their trade mark expressed confusion about the renewal process. A few were unaware of the need to renew altogether, whilst others said the classification system was overly complex.

'When I bought a trade mark, there was no indication of it needing to be renewed. I thought I owned it.'

'I feel like the class part is quite complicated as there are too many classes that are identical...'



Some felt that communication regarding trade marks and the renewal process could be clearer and more comprehensive, with better guidance to navigate the requirements.

'Seems like the communication can be massively improved in relation to renewals. But applying for them is pretty efficient.'

'I feel gaslighted as I have not received notifications about other people trying to have trade marks similar to mine. However, when I try to renew, I am stopped as told there are trade marks similar. Feel like trademarks should be in place indefinitely as cost is high, if this was the case we would have more trademarks.'

Renewal status

Renewal status groups



**Completed first renewal
within 6 months before
the survey**

161 trade mark owners
(64% of achieved survey
sample)



**Not renewed, first
renewal date due within
12 months of survey**

68 trade mark owners
(27% of achieved survey
sample)

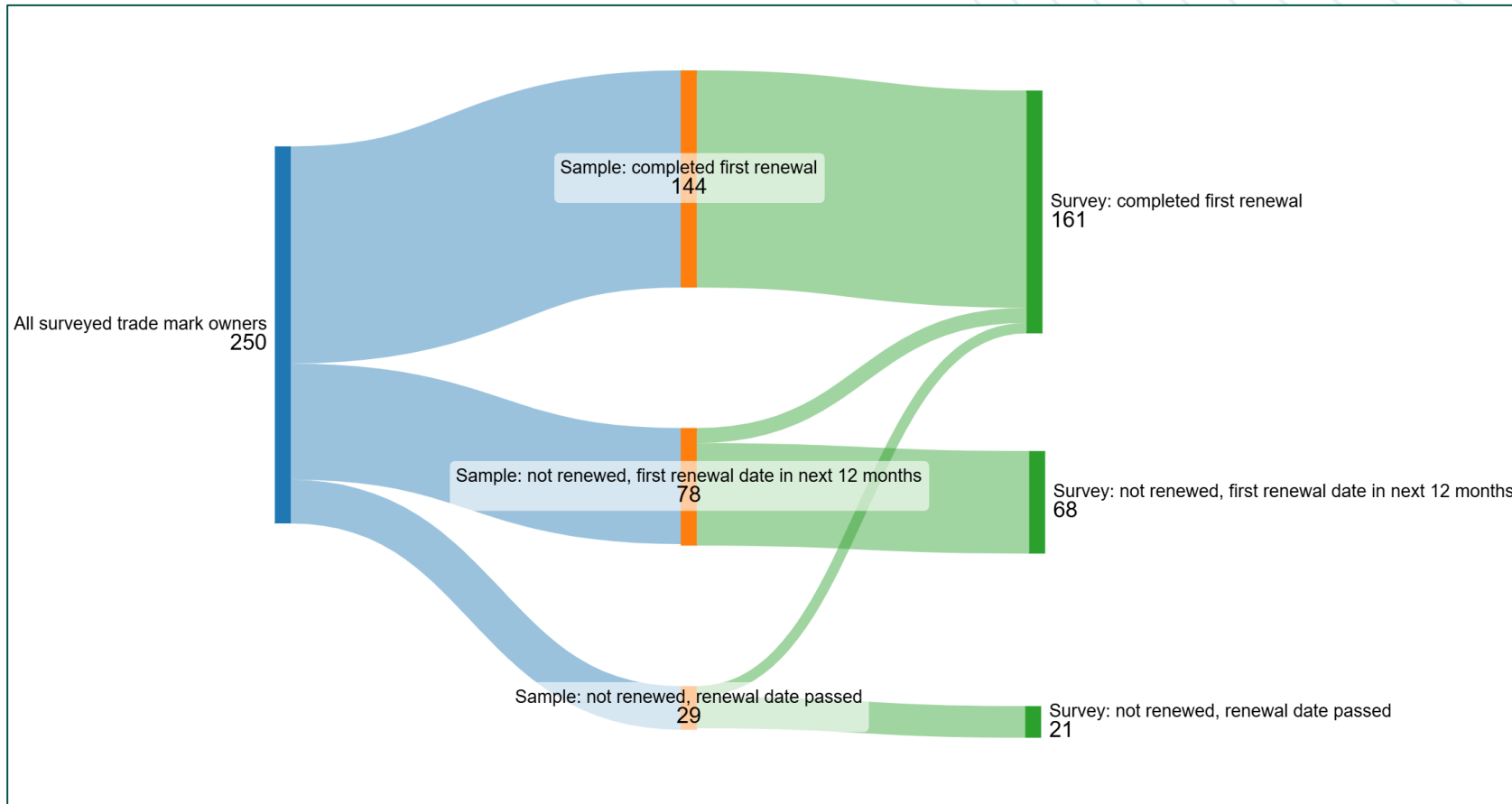


**Not renewed, renewal
date had passed in the 6
months prior to survey**

21 trade mark owners
(8% of achieved survey
sample)

89 trade mark owners that have not renewed (yet)
(36% of the achieved survey sample)

There was some churn between sampled renewal status and self-reported renewal status



250 trade mark owners completed the survey

In the sample file taken from the IPO database and shared with IFF Research in November 2024, this was the renewal status of each owner's trade mark

In the survey, each trade mark owner verified the status of their trade mark. This resulted in a change in renewal status:

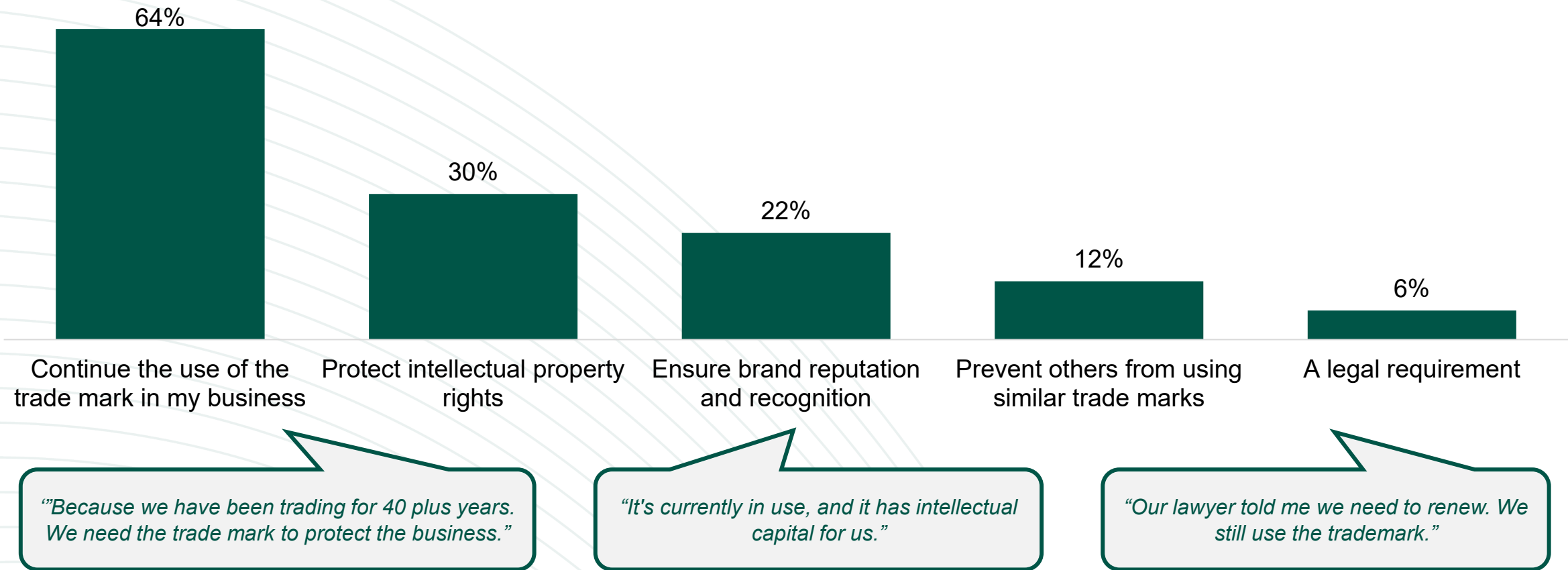
9 owners yet to renew whose **renewal date** was due in the **next 12 months** had **renewed by the time of their interview**.

8 owners yet to renew whose **renewal date** had **passed** had **renewed by the time of their interview**.

Motivations and experiences: Completed first renewal

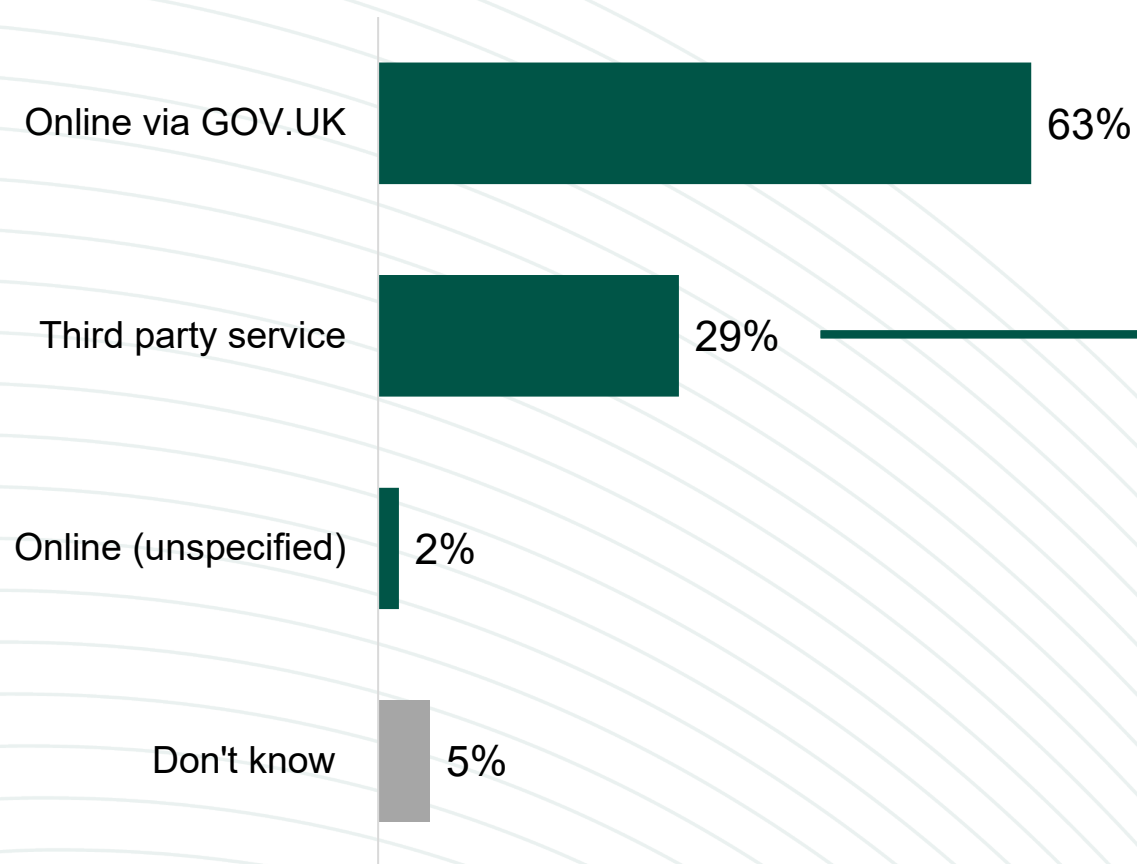
Owners were motivated to renew their trade marks primarily to protect intellectual property, maintain brand recognition and ensure business continuity

Motivations for renewing trade marks



Around two in three used GOV.UK to renew trade marks, while around one in three used third parties

Methods used to renew trade marks



Top reasons for renewing via a third party:

- They're **more knowledgeable** than the owner (38%)
- Already have an **established relationship** (38%)
- **Reduces burden** (22%)
- **Quicker and easier** (18%)

- **Represented** trade mark owners were **more likely to renew via third party** (62%) than online (32%)*. Only **2% of unrepresented** trade mark owners renewed via third party.

- SMEs were statistically more likely to use a third party than average (37% vs 29%) and statistically less likely to use GOV.UK than average (54% vs 63%).

- However, experiences with third parties differed.

"This gentleman has helped us with patents, and other trademarks. He is our intellectual property lawyer."

"Done through third party. Didn't know much about it. The letters received from the third party were adamant and demanding... thought it was a scam."

C2. How did you renew your trade mark? Base: All who renewed trade mark (161) C3. Why did you choose to use a third party? Base: All who renewed via third party service (45)

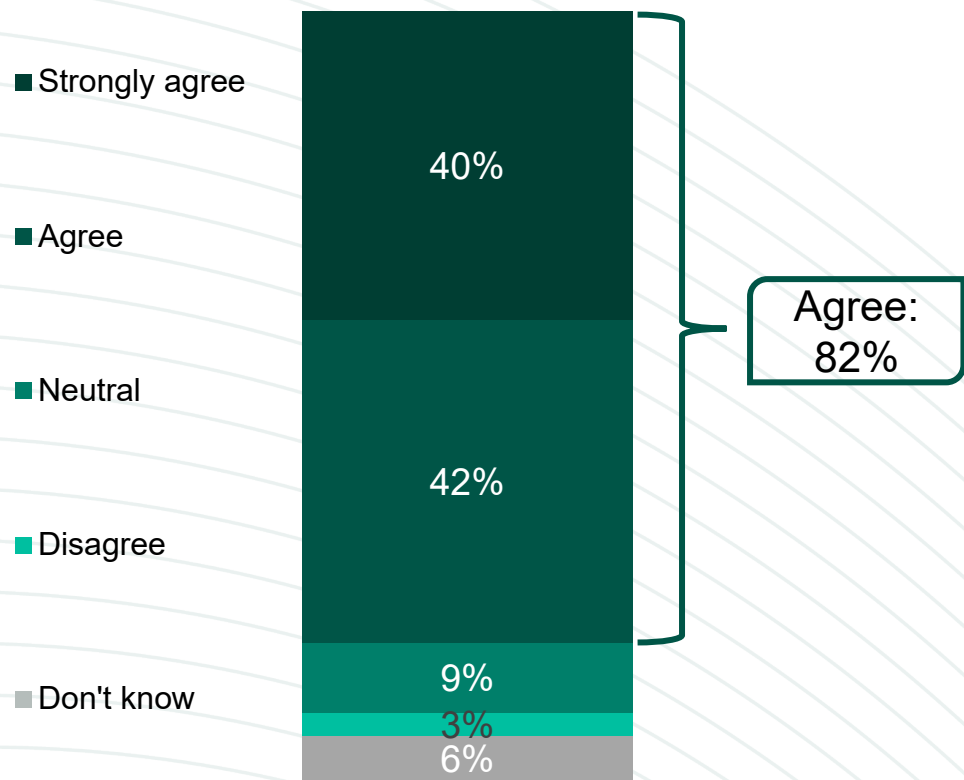
*7% were unsure of the method used for renewal

Please note that some figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding or multi response questions

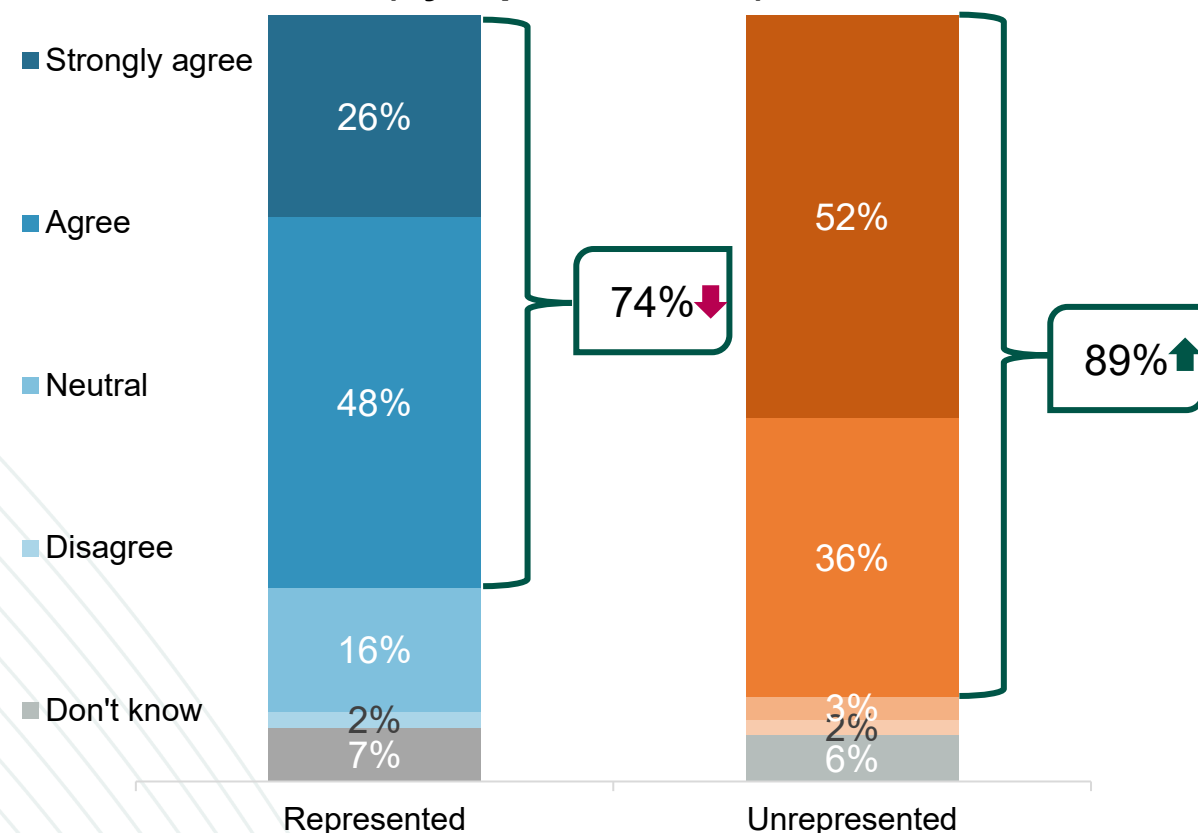
More than eight in ten owners agreed that the time it took to renew was reasonable.

Unrepresented owners were more likely to agree

Views on whether time for renewal was reasonable



Views on whether time for renewal was reasonable (by representation)

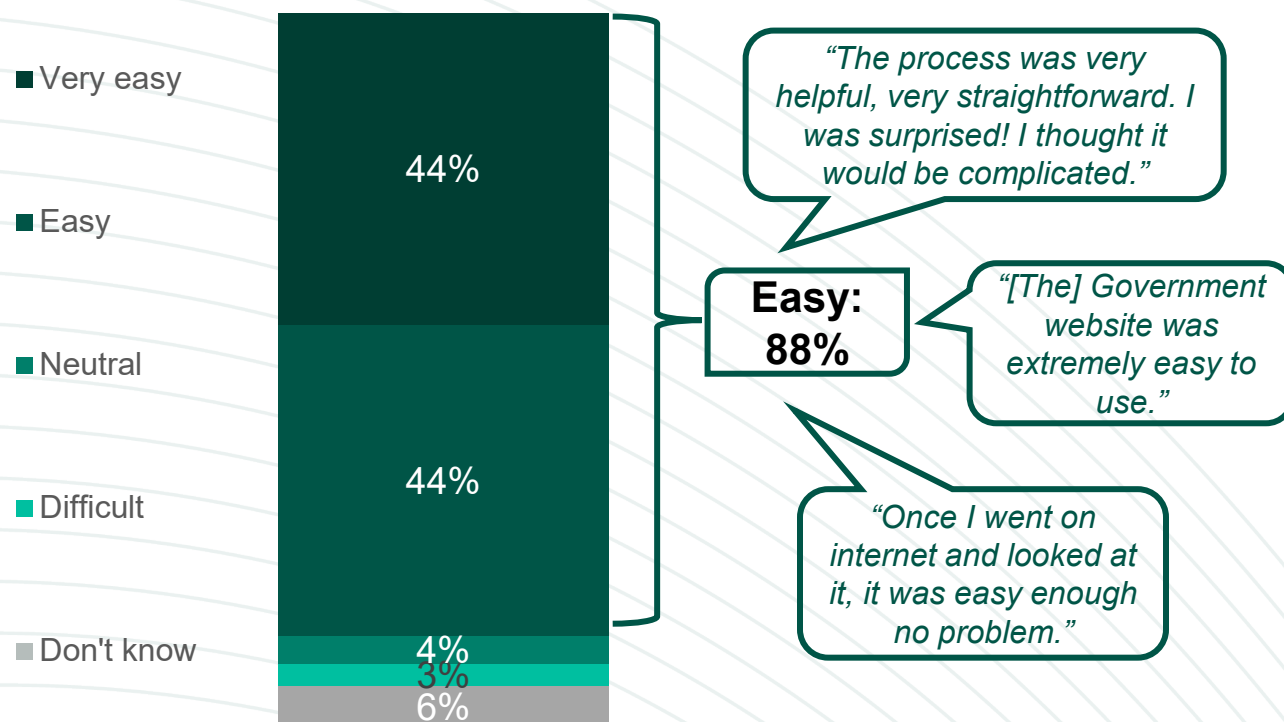


C5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the time it took to renew your trade mark was reasonable? Base: All who renewed trade mark (161) C6. Overall, how easy or difficult did you find the renewal process? Base: All who renewed trade mark (161)
Please note that some figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding or multi response questions

↑ Significantly higher than other audience
↓ Significantly lower than other audience

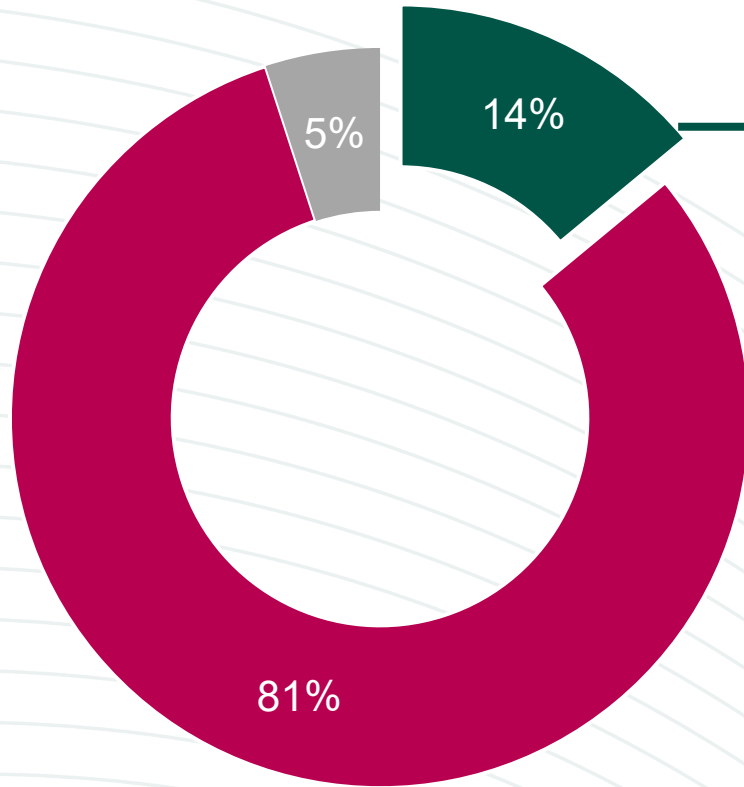
Almost nine in ten who renewed felt the overall experience was an easy one

Overall experience of renewal



- **Unrepresented** trade mark owners were **more likely to find the process easy** (92%) than represented owners (81%).
- **Owners with UK trade marks** were also **more likely to find the process easy** (90%) than owners with comparable trade marks (77%).

Few accessed support or guidance during their renewal



■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

Of those who did access support during the renewal process...

- 15/22 sought it from **third parties** (e.g. trade mark lawyers)
- 4/22 sought it directly from **the IPO** (through the website, telephone helpline or customer support email)
- 1/22 sought it from a **colleague/peer***

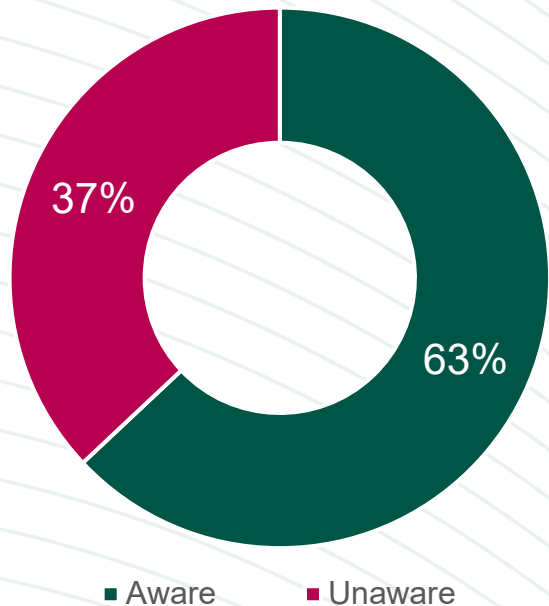
C8. Did you access any support or guidance during the renewal process? Base: All who renewed trade mark (161) C9. Where did you seek support and guidance about the renewal process from? Base: All who accessed support/guidance during renewal process (22)

* 1/22 reported getting advice from an 'other source', and 1/22 did not know.

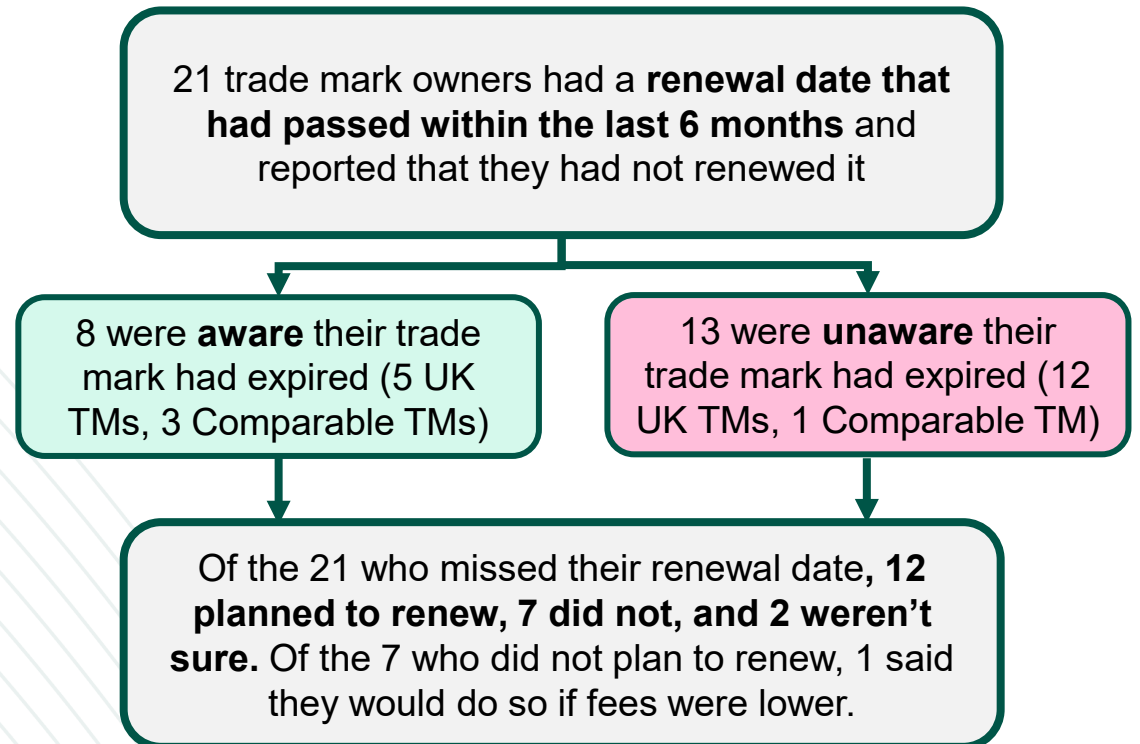
Motivations and experiences: Not completed first renewal

Most owners with an upcoming renewal date were aware of it, while awareness among those with a missed renewal was more varied

Awareness of upcoming renewal among those with a first renewal in next 12 months



Awareness of trade mark expiry among those whose first renewal had passed





**Not renewed, first
renewal date due within
12 months of survey**

68 trade mark owners
(27% of achieved survey
sample)



**Not renewed, renewal
date had passed in the 6
months prior to survey**

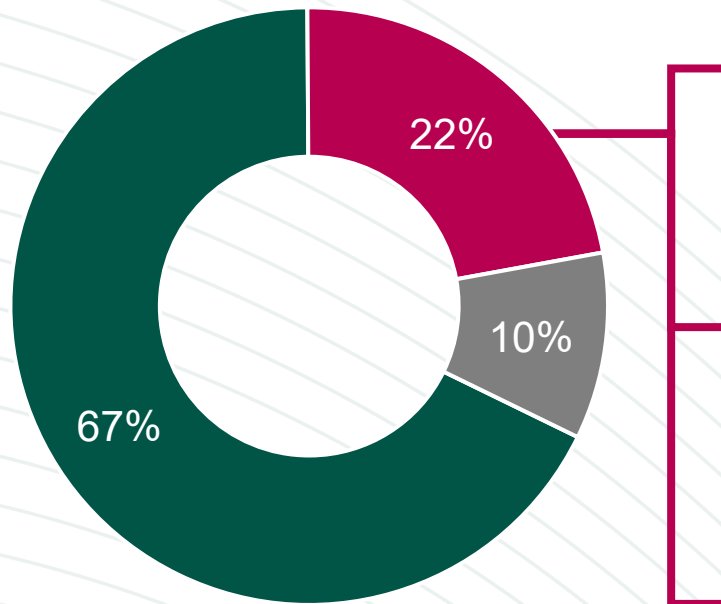
21 trade mark owners
(8% of achieved survey
sample)

89 trade mark owners that have not renewed (yet)
(36% of the achieved survey sample)

For the following slides,
**all who were yet to
renew their trade mark,**
whether their renewal
date had already passed
or was in the future,
have been combined
due to low base sizes

No longer using the trade mark was the most common reason for not choosing to renew

Plan to renew trade mark



■ Planning to renew ■ Not planning to renew ■ Don't know

Top three reasons for not planning to renew:

- No longer use trade mark (10/17)
- Considering rebranding (3/17)
- Trade mark no longer aligns with business (2/17)

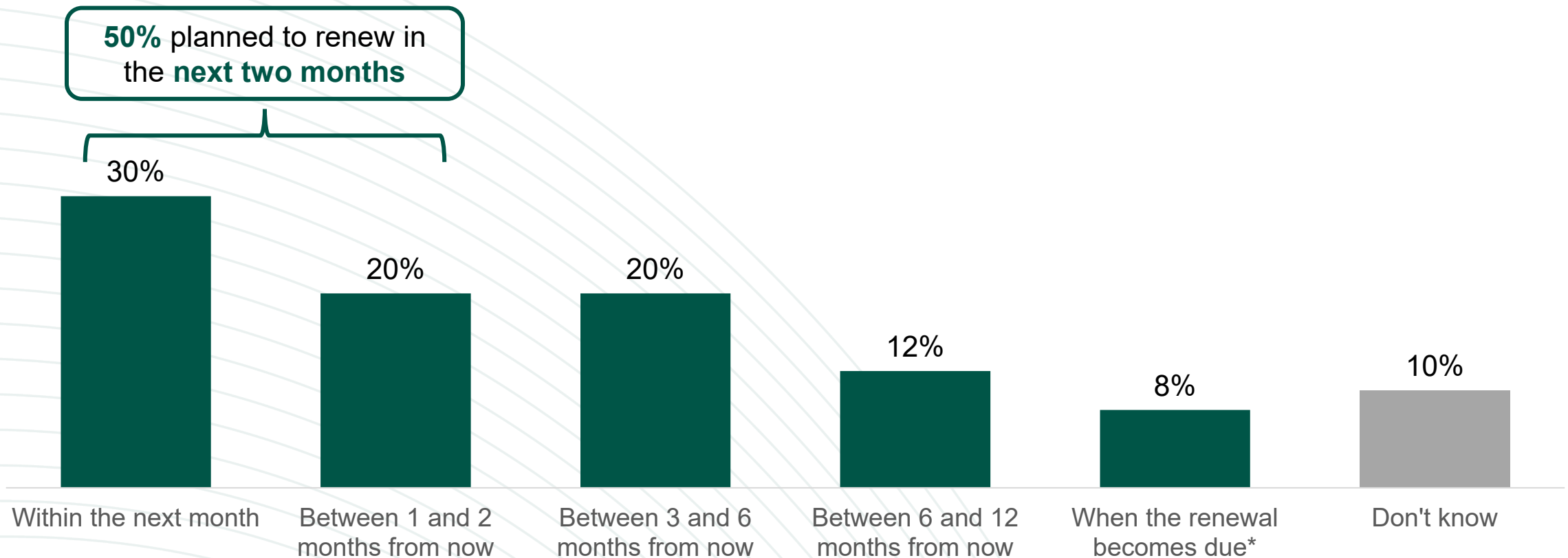
Those that were no longer using their trade mark had typically stopped using it more than three years ago (7/10).

Among those that were no longer using or not planning to renew their trade mark, there was a split response in terms of the impact of IPO communications about surrendering rights:

- Would surrender their trade mark (6/12)
- Would not surrender their trade mark (6/12)

Half of those planning to renew intended to do so within two months time

When planning to renew trade mark

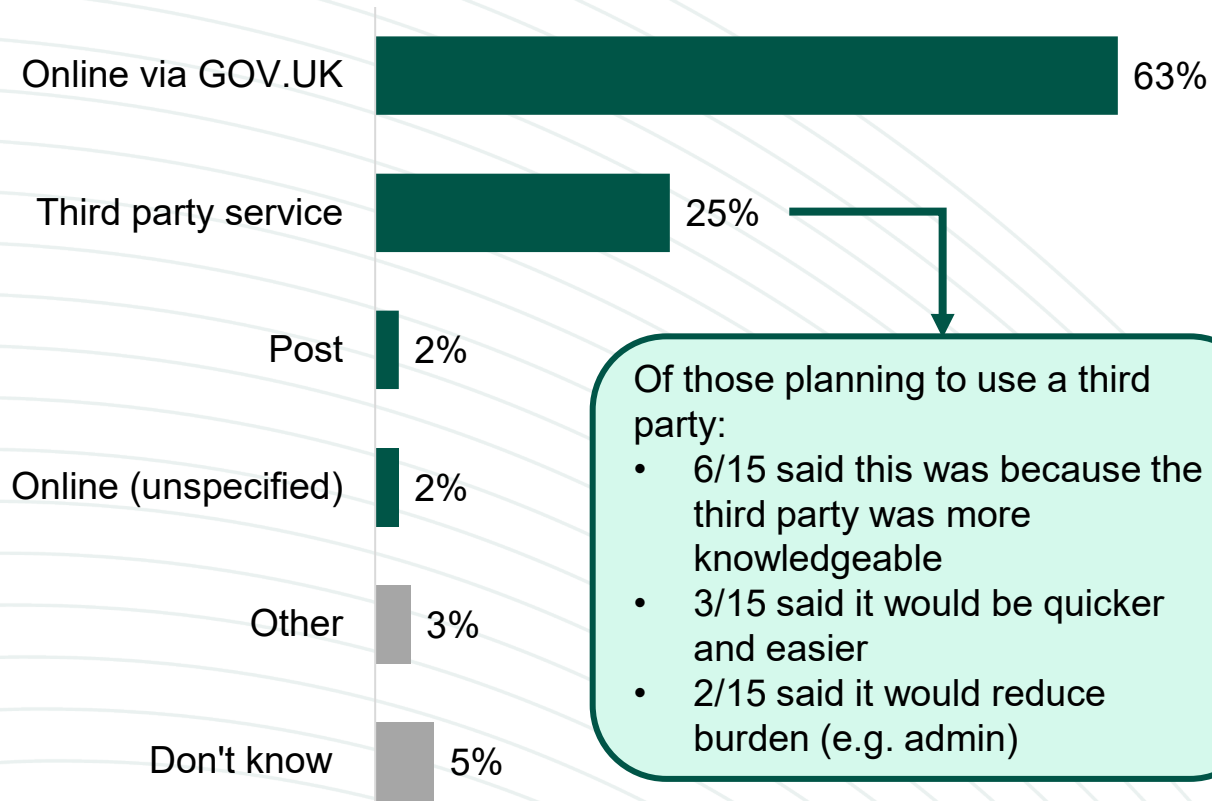


D8/E3. When do you intend to do this? Base: All who have not renewed but planning to do so (60).

*only asked to those whose renewal date is yet to pass

Around two in three planned to use GOV.UK to renew, while a quarter planned to use third parties

Method intending to use to renew trade mark

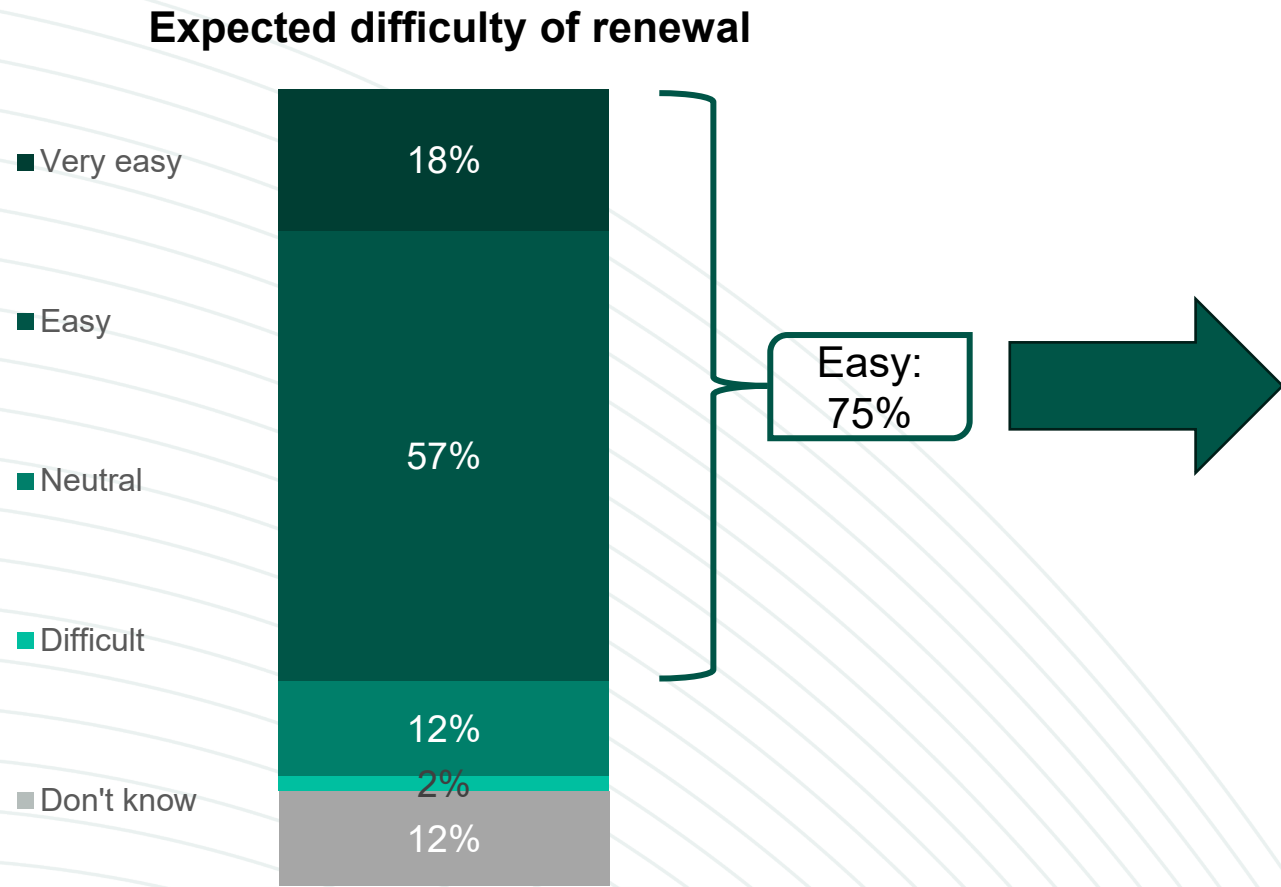


- **23/26** of **unrepresented** trade mark owners **planned to renew via GOV.UK**, compared with only **15/34** **represented** owners.
- **SMEs** were **significantly more likely than average** to plan on **renewing via third parties** (40% vs 25%).

D9/E5. How do you intend to renew your trade mark? Base: All who have not renewed but planning to do so (60). D11/E7. To what extent do you think the renewal process will be easy or difficult? Base: All who have not renewed but planning to do so (60)

Please note that some figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding or multi response questions

Three in four trade mark owners intending to renew expected the process to be easy



- **Represented** trade mark owners were **more likely to expect the process would be easy** (28 out of 34) compared to unrepresented trade mark owners (17/26).
- **SMEs were significantly more likely than average to expect the process to be easy** (70% vs. 57%).

Recommendations

Trade mark renewal education and highlighting the IPO's legitimacy are key

The renewal process generally functions well for most trade mark owners. However, key areas for improvement have been identified to enhance trade mark owners' decision making.



Educate trade mark owners about renewal process: there is some confusion regarding certain aspects of the renewal process, especially surrounding trade mark classes and challenge for non-use. Respondents are generally happy with the content featured in IPO renewal reminders and find them clear, so this is a good place to start.



Highlight the ease of renewing for those yet to do so: those who have renewed reported finding it easy to do and those intending to renew their trade mark in the future anticipated it being a simple process, so communications from the IPO within the six-month renewal period should emphasise this.



Continue to raise awareness of misleading invoices and suspicious third party services: Businesses are aware of these suspicious third parties and weary of the fact that they may be scams, the IPO should stress the fact that only communications from them or instructed agents regarding renewal are legitimate.

Increased periodic comms with trade mark owners could build understanding and trust



Periodic Email Newsletters: Regular newsletters can educate on managing intellectual property, highlight renewal ease, and warn against fraudulent third-party services.



Targeted Educational Webinars/Videos: Short videos or webinars can explain the renewal process and provide scam awareness tips, enhancing IPO communication strategies.



Enhanced Renewal Reminders: Improved IPO reminders can include concise tips for renewal, FAQs, and warnings about third-party scams, reinforcing the simplicity and security of the renewal process.



Tel: 020 7250 3035



info@iffresearch.com



IFF Research



www.iffresearch.com



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