



National Press Club Survey Results September 2011





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Index



-  Methodology & Sampling realisation
-  Engagement Summary
-  Results
-  Conclusions

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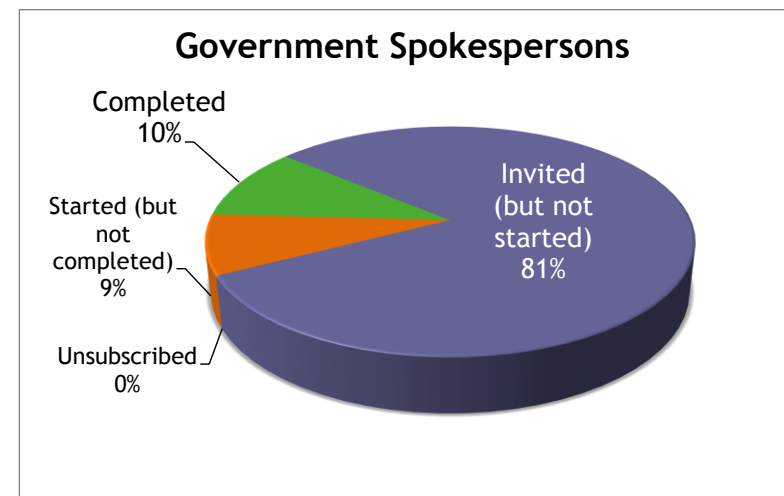
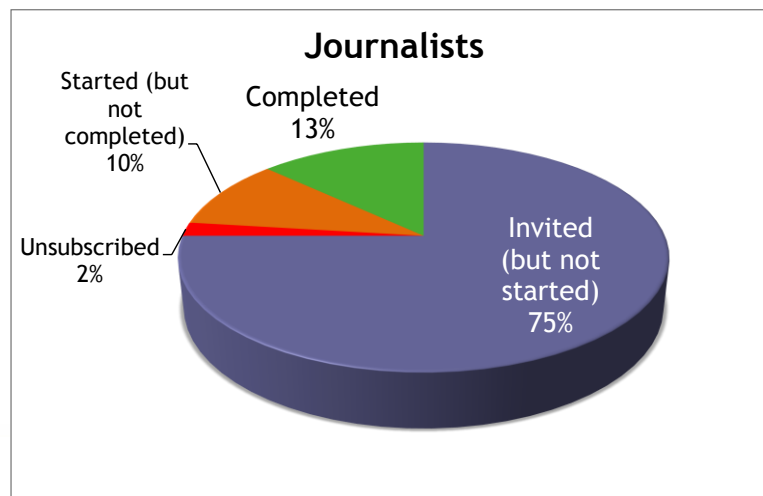
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Methodology

 Interviews were conducted electronically via web surveys.





 Sample completion: (n=69)

- ❖ Journalist surveys - 47
- ❖ Spokesperson surveys - 22



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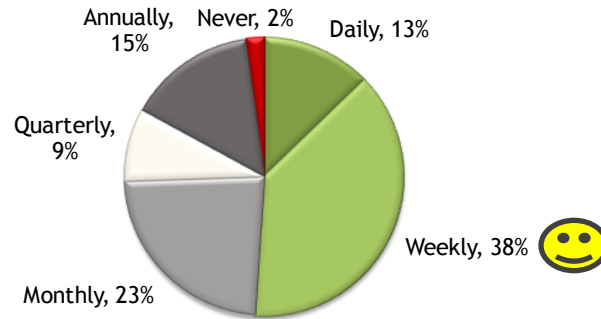
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Engagement Summary

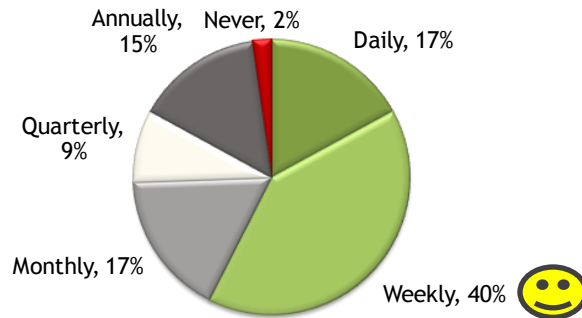


n=47

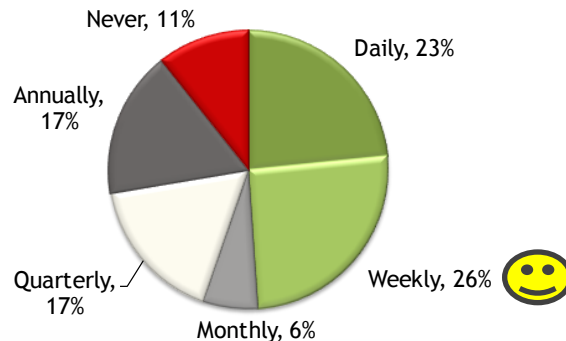
Journalists' engagement with *National* Government Spokespersons



Journalists' engagement with *Provincial* Government Spokespersons

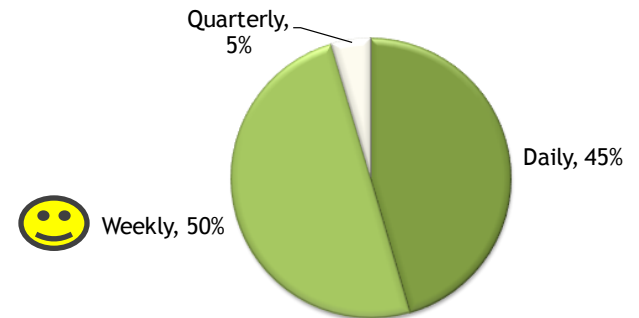


Journalists' engagement with *Local* Government Spokespersons



Government Spokespersons' engagement with Media/Journalists

n=22







Engagement Summary






- Engagement with Media/ Journalists and Government Spokespersons mostly occur on a weekly basis.
- Only a small percentage of respondents engage with either of the parties on a quarterly basis or don't engage with them at all.

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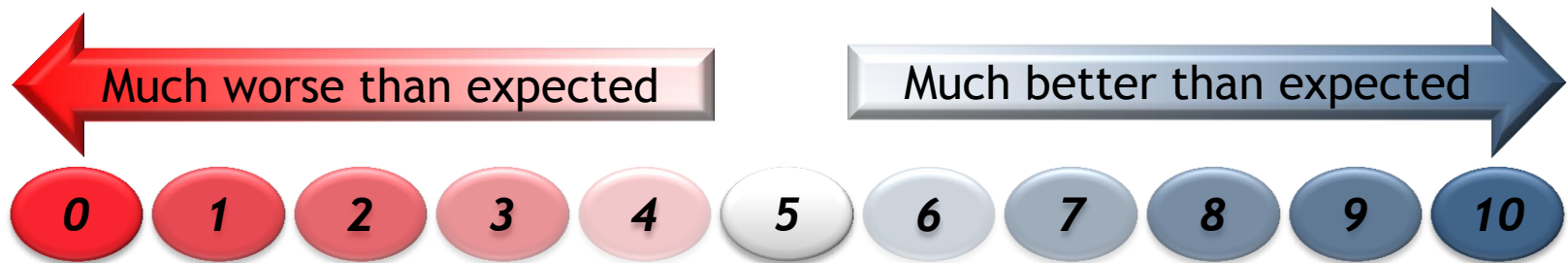
-  Methodology & Sampling realisation
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Colour Index

-  Grey headers with white text - Government Spokesperson's view
-  Green headers with white text - Journalists' view
-  Slides with a mix of 2 colours in the background - Comparative view

Results - Attribute Ratings

- The scale used to rate the attributes is an 11-point confirmation scale, incorporating both perception and customer expectation
- Voted as the current best psychometric scale available



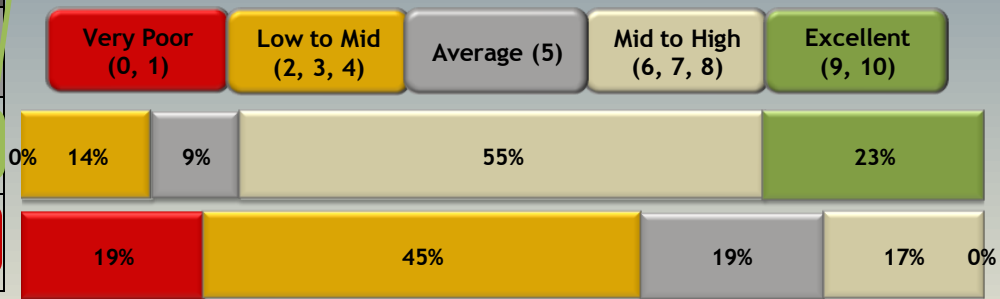
- A score above 5 (as expected) can be seen as performing as it should. A score above 7.5 indicates attribute is out performing the clients' expectations more often than not. A score above 9 indicates world class performance.

Relationship - Comparison

On a scale ranging from '0' (Much worse than expected) to '10' (Much better than expected), how would you rate the following? You may also choose any number in between, depending on how strongly you feel ...

Please rate the following statement:	Survey	Score
Your working relationship with journalists.	Government Spokesperson	7.1
Your working relationship with government spokespersons.	Journalist	3.5

Good working relationship with journalists, from a government spokesperson's point of view.



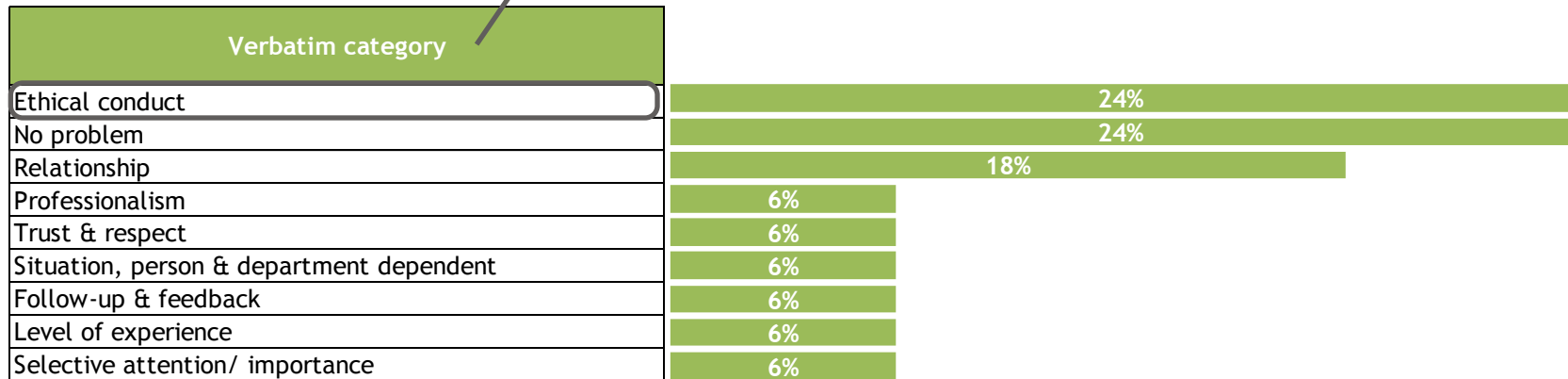
Relationship with government spokespersons, from a journalist's point of view, is very weak.



Relationship with Journalists

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Comments regarding the Government Spokespersons' working relationship with Journalists



“Sometimes despite efforts to explain programmes and policies, some journalists will still distort the story.”

“We are not friends but we can work together to get what each party requires from the other. I can also call them to ask for consideration of postponing the publication of stories...”

“Journalists I know personally are generally more open to working together.”

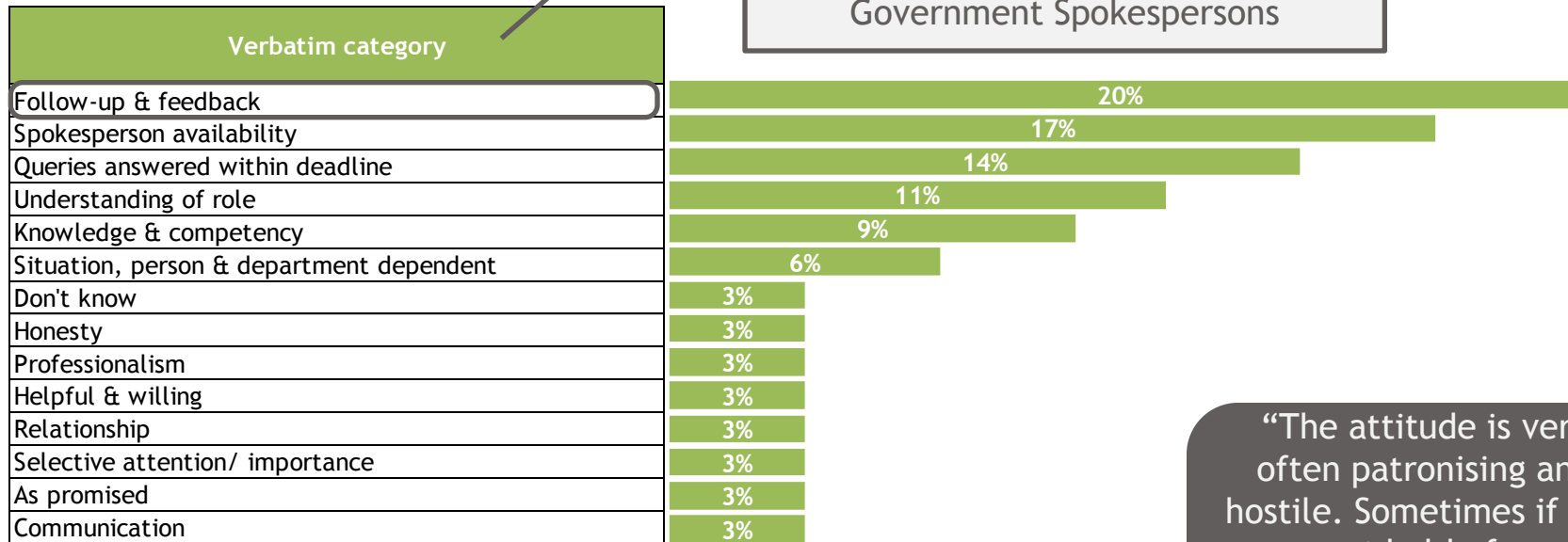
“With some it is better, but not with others mainly due to some unreasonable deadlines or by using dishonest means to gain information.”



Relationship with Government Spokespersons

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Comments regarding the Journalists' working relationship with Government Spokespersons



“If you don't press them it will take weeks for them to reply to your emails, if at all.”

“Takes too long to get back with comments and don't understand television comments need to be on camera.”

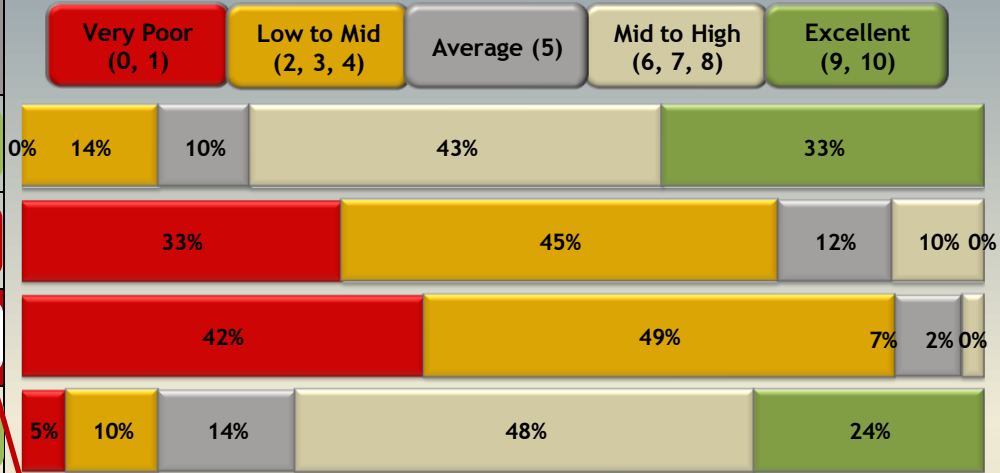
“The attitude is very often patronising and hostile. Sometimes if you get hold of a spokesperson they have no idea about a topical issue.”

“They seldom, if ever, answer their phones and then try to rather avoid answering questions than assisting...”

“Most of the time they respond to queries, but not by the given deadline, even if you give them two or more days' time.”

On a scale ranging from '0' (Much worse than expected) to '10' (Much better than expected), how would you rate the following? You may also choose any number in between, depending on how strongly you feel ...

Please rate the following statement:	Survey	Score
Your experience resulting from interactions with journalists.	Government Spokesperson	7.2
The availability of government spokespersons on contacting them to obtain information which you require.	Journalist	2.6
The turn-around time by government spokespersons on leaving a message(s) for them to return your call(s) and/or email(s).	Journalist	2.1
The extent you - as a government spokesperson - feel empowered to optimise your role as government spokesperson.	Government Spokesperson	7.0



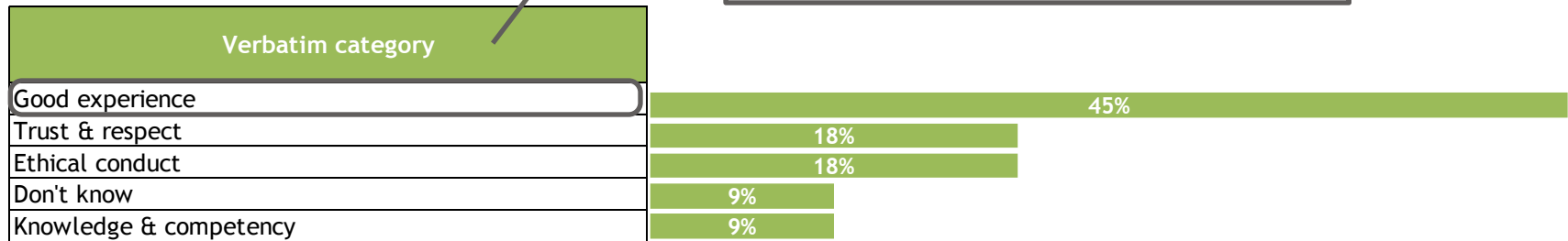
Lowest scoring statement.



Experience resulting from interactions with Journalists

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Comments regarding the experience resulting from interactions with Journalists



The majority of Government Spokespersons view their interaction with Journalists as a good experience, linking back to the high score regarding their relationship.

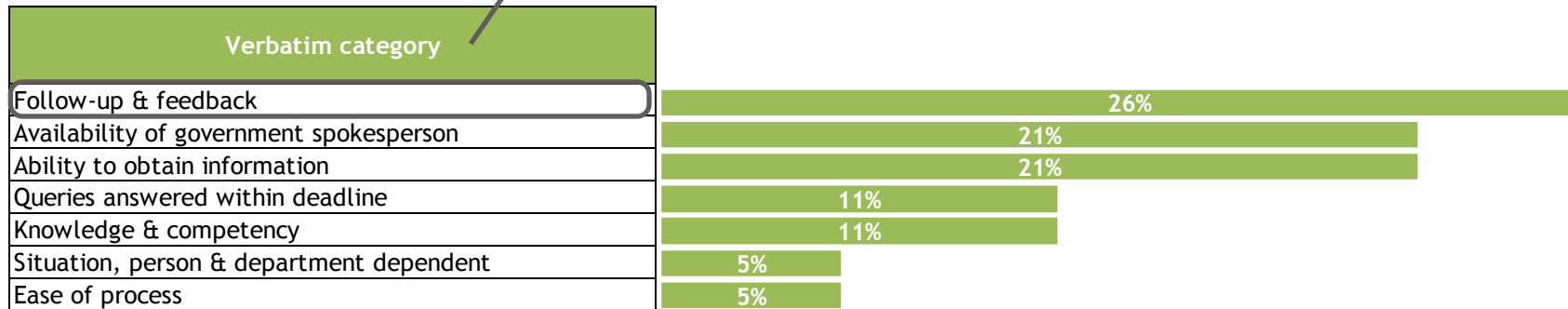
“Our Head of Communication has established a good relationship with media and he understands that they are doing their job and are not the enemy of the state, instead they are toll to disseminate government news.”

“Very good and I ensure that when selling the story, I provide as much information and am available to assist with any other enquiry.”

“Some journalists take a posture of being against government as if they live on another planet. I believe we all need each other in building a better country or society.”

Availability of Government Spokespersons

Comments regarding the availability of Government Spokespersons



“Emails and telephones are hardly ever answered, promises of forthcoming comment never transpires.”

“They are not seen as a conduit to the media by their own managers, especially regarding queries. I believe there is a culture in government departments that their communications people are there just to make announcements.”

“It depends on the department and person. Some departments operate efficiently with due regard to deadlines, others just don’t care.”

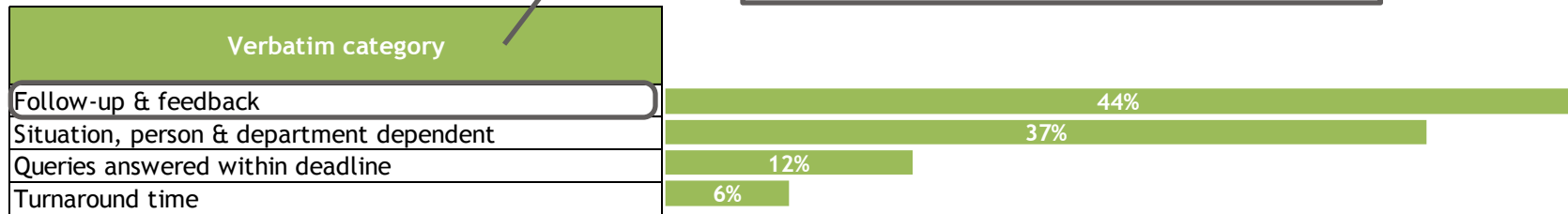
“When there are hot issues, spokespeople switch off their phones, e.g. after announcement of PWD moratorium. They never react to messages.”



Turn-around time by Government Spokespersons

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Comments regarding the turn-around time by Government Spokespersons



Follow-up & feedback is very important with regards to the availability and turn-around time by Government Spokespersons.

“It must be said there are a small number of truly excellent media liaison officials among the bigger mediocre collective. With those professional few, it is a pleasure to work with and the public interest is served.”

“As said previously, some never return calls, or they refer me to colleagues who in turn never return calls, or give one-liner responses, not actually answering the specific questions asked.”

Government Spokesperson Empowerment

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Comments regarding Government Spokespersons' feeling of empowerment

Verbatim category	
Relationship	20%
Involvement	20%
Reporting structures	20%
Don't know	10%
Trust & respect	10%
Not applicable	10%
Attitude towards media	10%

Relationship, involvement & reporting structures are the 3 most important factors regarding the empowerment of Government Spokespersons.

“While we certainly optimise our role on behalf of the department, it doesn't mean the media is interested in what we have to say.”

“The media in my province and I have relatively good relations. I enjoy a good relationship with my political principals, as well as my colleagues in the communications fraternity.”

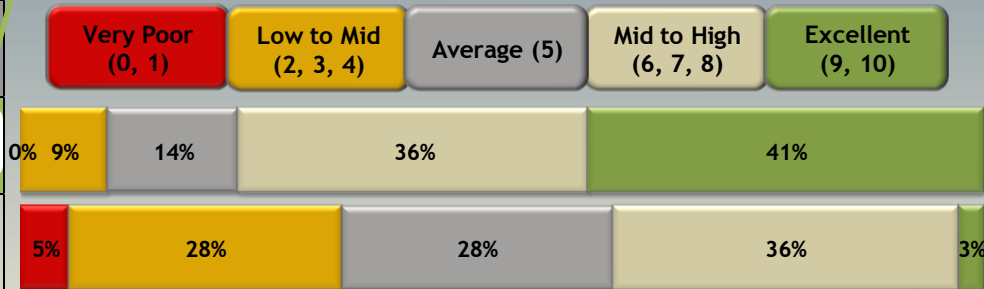
“There will always be constraints as in any big organisation. In this case, there are departmental and government policies and structures that have to be adhered to.”

Relationship - Comparison

On a scale ranging from '0' (Much worse than expected) to '10' (Much better than expected), how would you rate the following? You may also choose any number in between, depending on how strongly you feel ...

Please rate the following statement:	Survey	Score
Your understanding of the difficulties under which a journalist has to work.	Government Spokesperson	7.5
Your understanding of the difficulties under which a government spokesperson has to work.	Journalist	5.1

Highest scoring statement



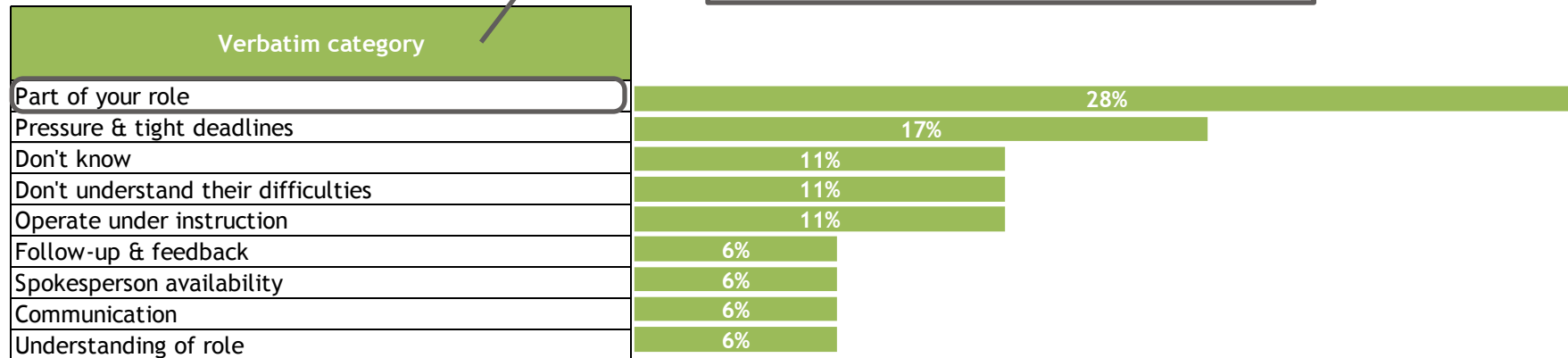
There is a much better understanding of the difficulties faced by Journalists, compared to those faced by Government Spokespersons, which could be as a result of their relationship.



Understanding Government Spokesperson difficulties faced

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Comments regarding the Journalists' understanding of the difficulties Government Spokespersons face



“What difficulties? Everyone has a difficult job. But if you get paid to do a job, just do it.”

“Understanding their difficulties is one thing, but their ability and that of their management to handle these difficulties is another...”

“Always sensitive to these challenges, but more often than not under pressure to get the story before it becomes ‘yesterday’s’ news.”

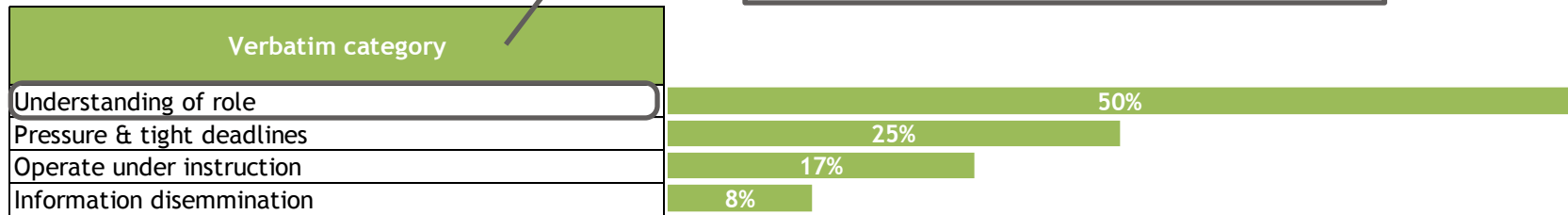
“I only understand that they rely on other people for information and have to get through red tape to dispatch the information.”



Understanding Journalist difficulties faced

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Comments regarding the Government Spokespersons' understanding of the difficulties Journalists face



Government Spokespersons have a good understanding of Journalists' role, including their pressures and deadlines, which again could be as a result of the good relationship.

"I fully understand the conditions under which journalists work, ranging from tight deadlines to poor resources in the newsroom and News Editors who have to please the "commercial or finance" bosses."

"I have worked as a journalist myself who had to adhere to set deadlines and the like."

"My career in Government Communications started off in Journalism, so I do appreciate the challenges and I often speak to them."



Nature of Relationship

Good Faith - Comparison

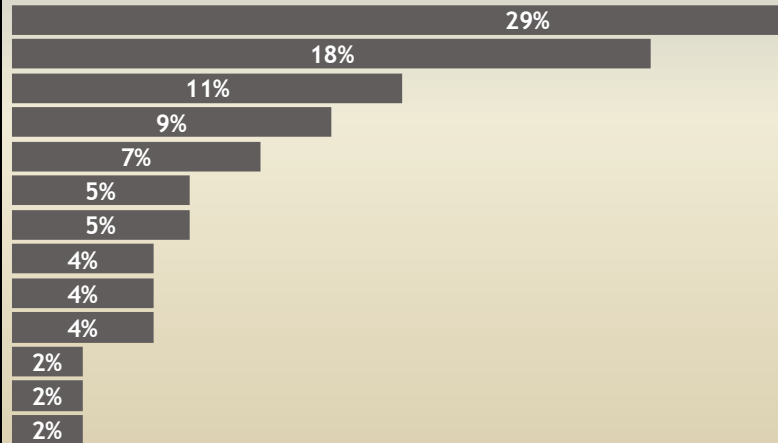
Government Spokespersons

Verbatim categories
Good faith relationship
Trust & respect
Understanding of role
Situation, person & department dependent
To some extent
Communication
Earned over time
Own interests at heart



Journalists

Verbatim categories
Good faith relationship
Understanding of role
To some extent
Trust & respect
Ethical conduct
Knowledge & competency
Situation, person & department dependent
Own interests at heart
Helpful & willing
Professionalism
Communication
Follow-up & feedback
Selective attention/ importance



Nature of Relationship

Good Faith - Comparison

- The working relationship between Government Spokespersons & Journalists is mostly built on good faith (bona fide) of each other's roles & functions, compared to a mere 29% of Journalists that think their relationship with Government Spokespersons is built on good faith.

“The spokespeople I work with fully understand the role I play versus the role he/she plays. It is built on good faith.”

“In most instances yes. My approach is always to build and maintain sound working relations with journalists, even in instances where there is disagreement on matters.”

“Yes definitely. We both understand each other's deadlines and responsibilities although some government spokespeople just could not care.”

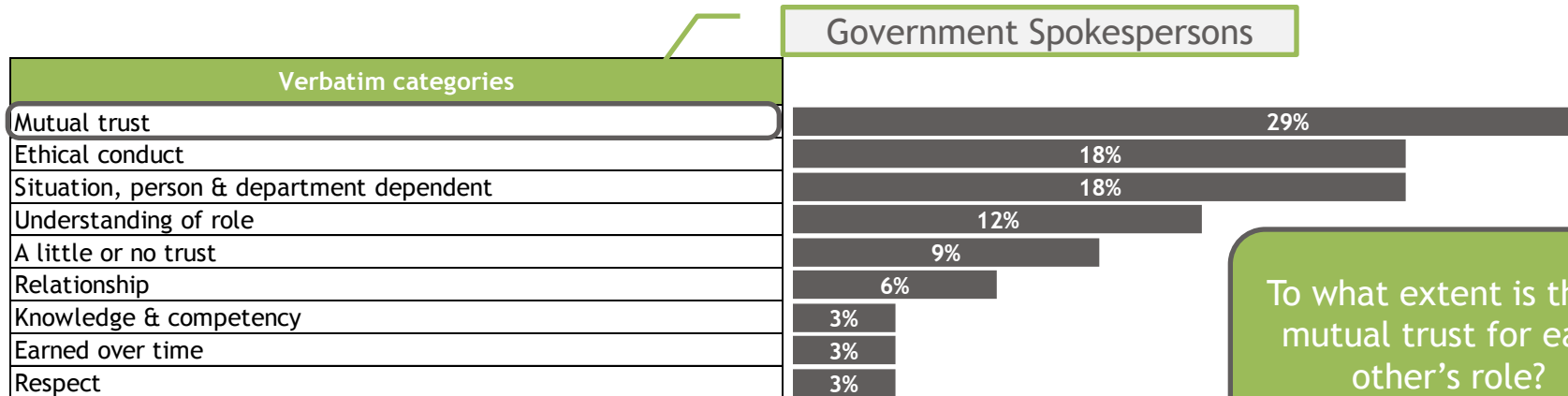
“Yes, as a former journalist myself I am able to understand what makes the story.. At no stage do I try to see a non-story to journalist and expect coverage...”



Nature of relationship

Mutual trust

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To what extent is there mutual trust for each other's role?

“Most of the spokespersons were previously journalists or studied journalism as a result. They know the importance of building & sustaining trust with journalists.”

“Remember there are issues that relating to journalists doing their own investigations and exposes without involving government and the like which really severs the mutual trust.”

“The level of trust differs from one journalist to another.”

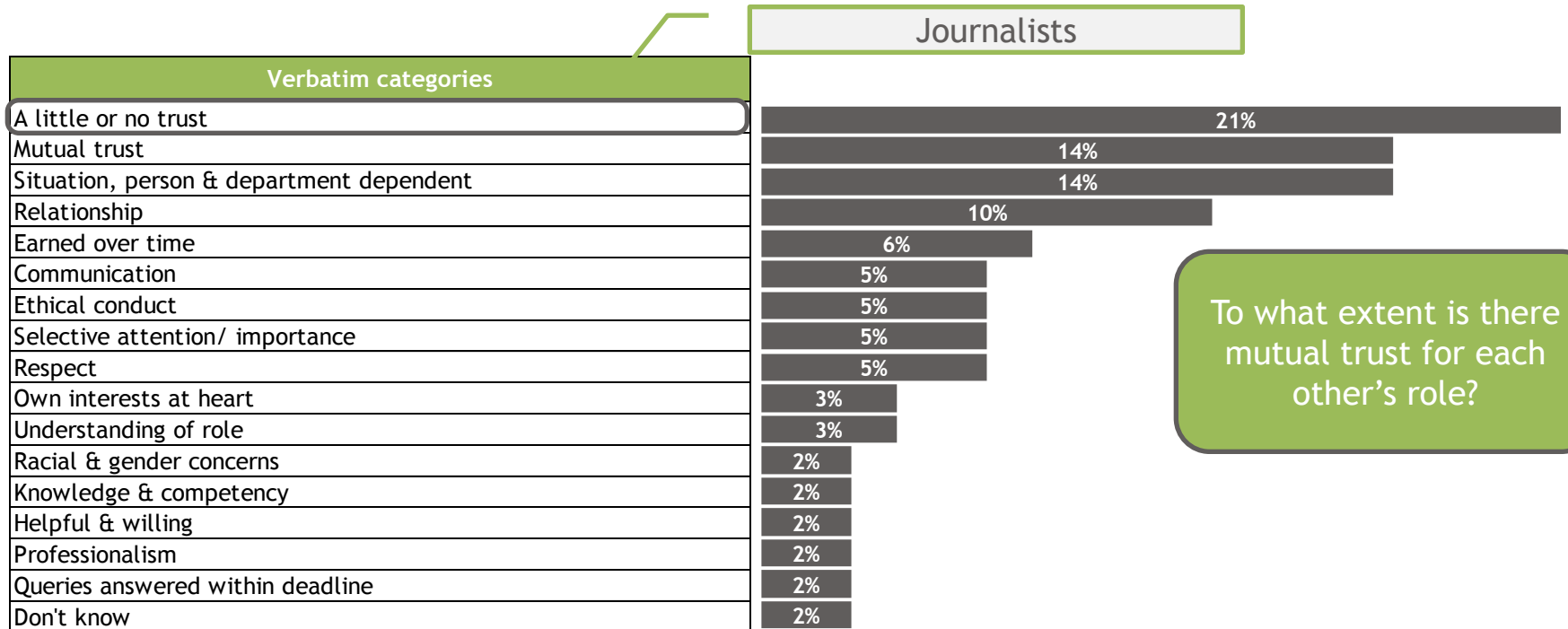
“Generally there is good trust but you do find those exceptional ones who really bring a bad name to journalism.”



Nature of relationship

Mutual trust

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To what extent is there mutual trust for each other's role?

“It is rare. Where it exists, it goes a long way to facilitate proper communication.”

“In my experience government spokespeople are wary of the press and prefer to sidestep enquiries or to pass it on until it just reaches a dead end.”

“A great deal of mutual trust exists between myself and those spokespersons that I know personally.”

Nature of Relationship Mutual Trust - Comparison

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- 29% of Government Spokespersons stated that there is mutual trust for each others' roles and for 9% of them there is little or no trust.
- From a Journalist point of view, 21% stated that there is little or no trust for each others roles compared to only 14% that said there is mutual trust.



Nature of relationship

Mutual respect

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Government Spokespersons

Verbatim categories	
Mutual respect	38%
Ethical conduct	14%
Understanding of role	14%
No or very little respect	8%
Situation, person & department dependent	8%
Relationship	5%
Earned over time	3%
Own interests at heart	3%
Professionalism	3%
Queries answered within deadline	3%
Don't know	3%

To what extent is there mutual respect for each other's role?

“There is respect amongst us as individuals and as professionals. I've had a situation where one journalist was impossible, but because of the way I engaged with her, she apologised.”

“There is a huge deal of mutual respect between myself and journalists who report on my sector. On my part I must ensure availability at all times (including Minister's availability).”

“Mutual respect is only occasional. It is there only in well established relationships where both have made an effort to make it work.”

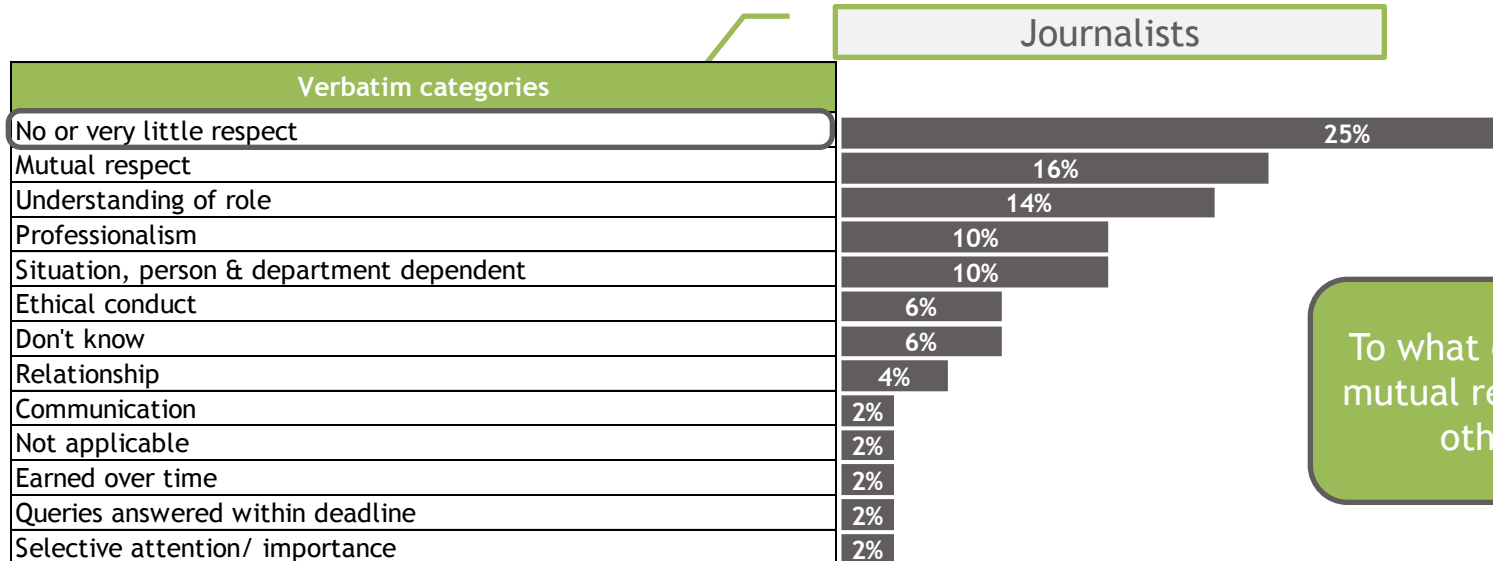
“The fact that we always do media briefings and one on one with the media; it assists in eliminating misconception.”



Nature of relationship

Mutual respect

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To what extent is there mutual respect for each other's role?

"It's fairly good - but it also depends on what kind of story is being researched. If it's a negative story, spokesmen aren't happy."

"I believe government spokespeople have a disregard for many journalists. At the same time, I believe journalists are unfair sometimes in their preconceived ideas about government spokespeople."

"In too many instances there is little or no respect for or understanding of the complexities of the other's role."

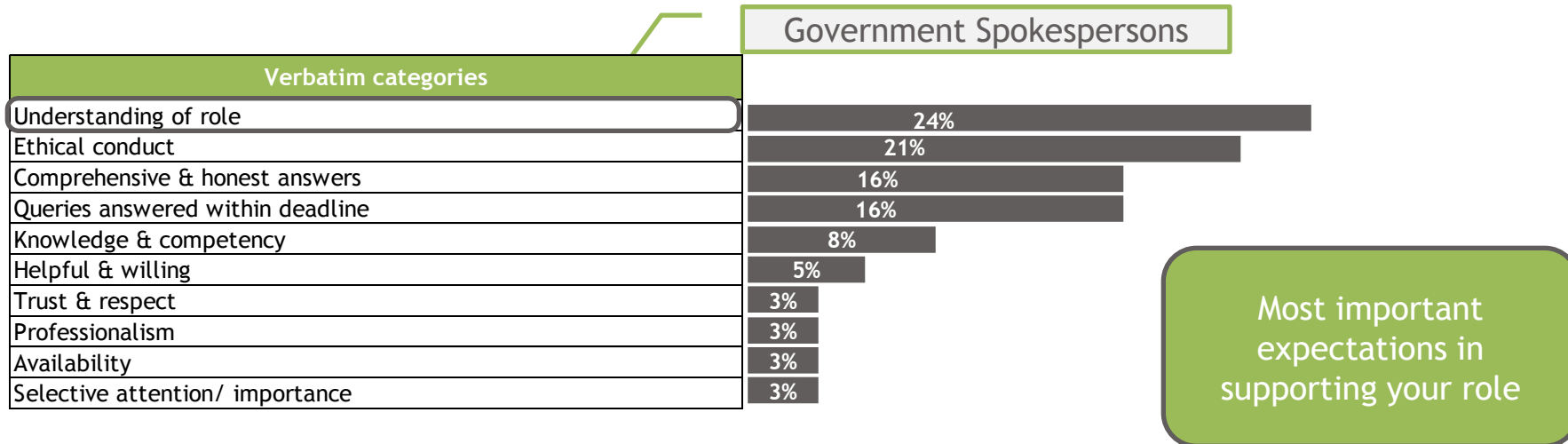
Nature of Relationship Mutual Respect - Comparison

- 38% of Government Spokespersons stated that there is mutual respect for each others' roles and for 8% of them there is no or very little respect.
- From a Journalist's point of view, 25% stated that there is no or very little respect for each others' roles compared to only 16% that said there is mutual respect.



Nature of relationship Expectations

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“I expect journalists not to use the trade of journalism to advance their own narrow, political and commercial/ economic interests.”

“To be patriotic, reliable, understand government and move away from vicious attacks and inaccurate and misleading reports.”

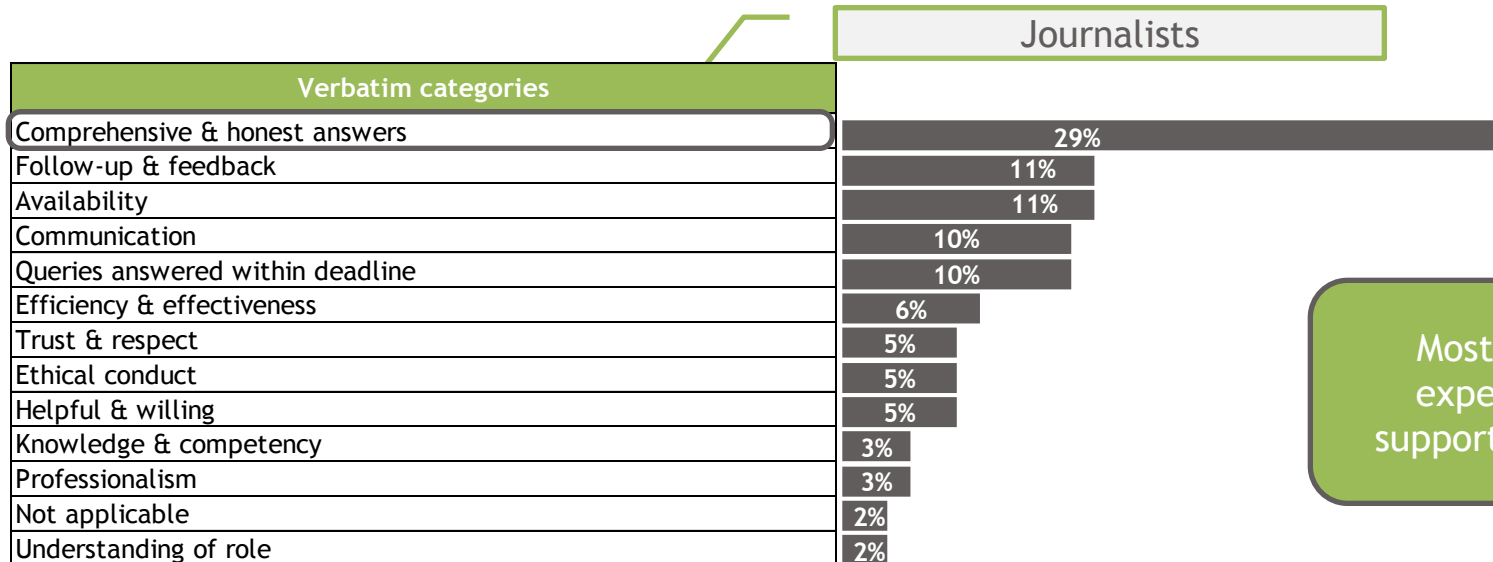
“Report fairly and where they need clarity, ask for it, don’t write damaging stories and request a response late.”

“An attempt to understand how government works, rather than subjecting everything to the newsroom’s priorities and possibility of a juicy story...”



Nature of relationship Expectations

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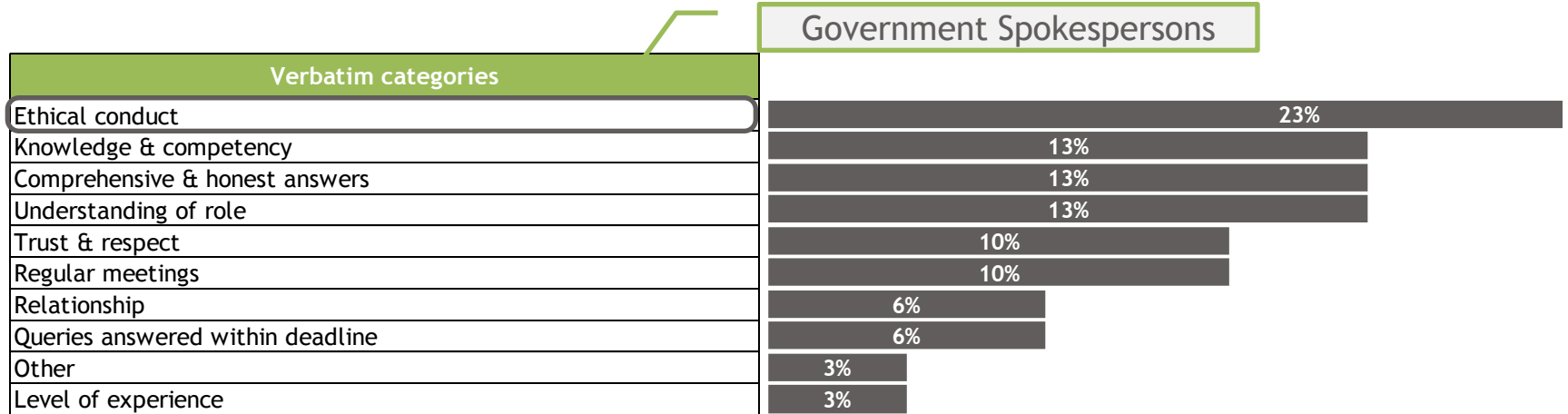
Most important
expectations in
supporting your role

Comprehensive & honest answers is one of the most important expectations for both Government Spokespersons & Journalists.



Nature of relationship Suggestions

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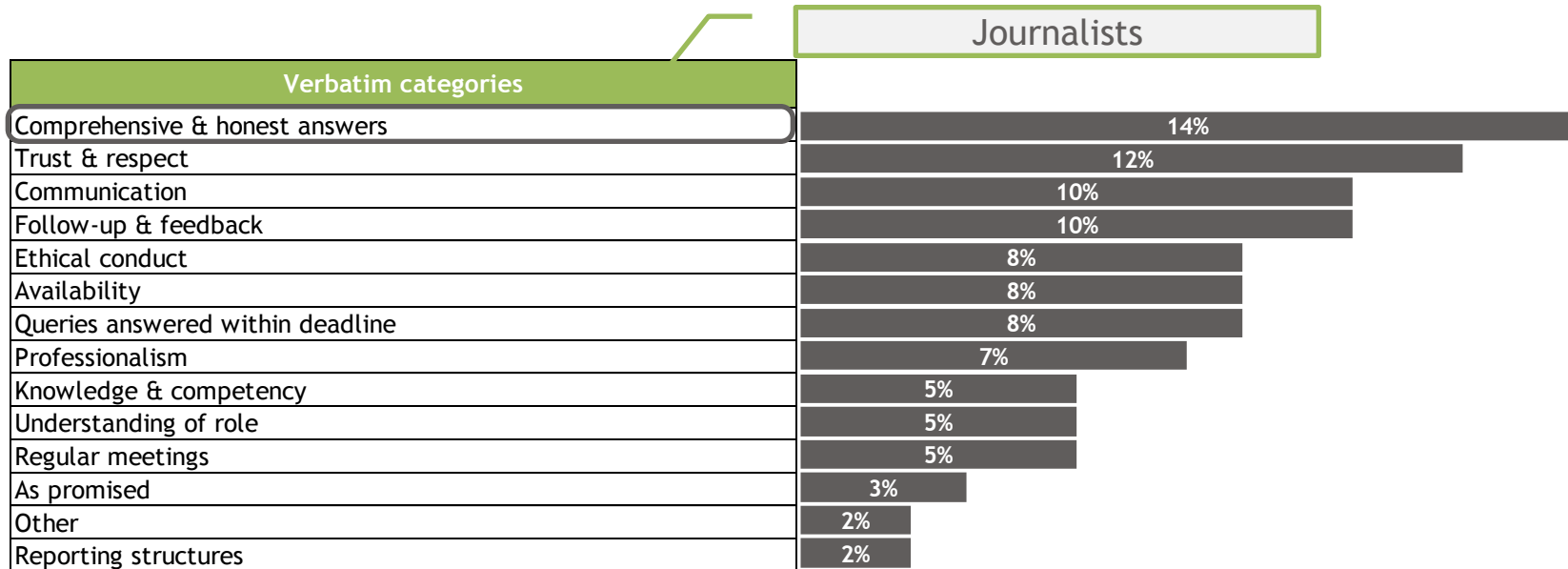
“Once again it is crucial to approach us with integrity and honesty rather than trying to be manipulative and playing with closed cards.”

“Journalists must have a better understanding of the environment a department operates under and know which SOEs resides where.”



Nature of relationship Suggestions

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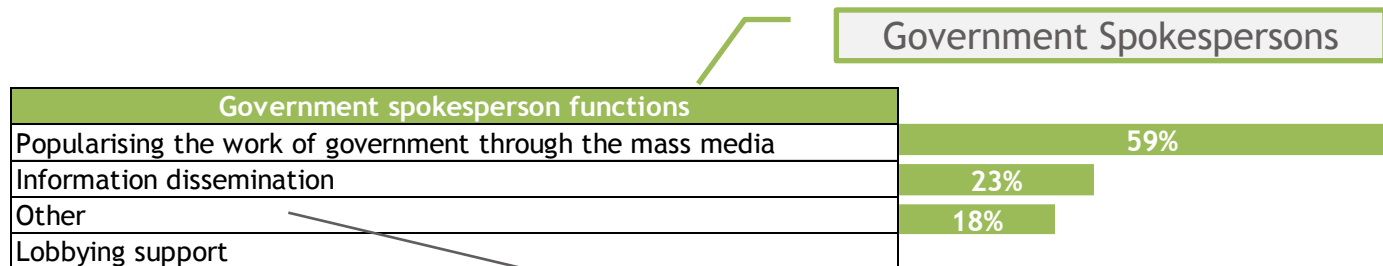


Comprehensive & honest answers is the most important suggestion for both Government Spokespersons & Journalists in support of improving their relationship.



Function as Government Spokesperson

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“We can work without mass media but due to limited resources, we need them to help disseminate information and popularise the programmes and activities of my department.”





Other Categories:

- Providing & facilitating strategic, departmental objectives and information to citizens and stakeholders.
- Regular interaction with the media and identifying platforms for the Minister and Deputy Minister.

“Manage communication - in particular media liaison - to push forward government programmes and projects aimed at improving service delivery.”

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Conclusion

- Engagements with Journalists and Government Spokespersons primarily occur on a weekly basis.
- From a Government Spokesperson's point of view, they have a good working relationship with Journalists. They have an understanding of Journalists' role, and the relationship is based on mutual trust & respect.

Conclusion

- Availability of and regular follow-up and feedback from Government Spokespersons is very important to Journalists.
- Journalists view the difficulties faced by Government Spokespersons as part of their role, whereas the Government Spokespersons have a good understanding of the role of Journalists and therefore a better idea of the difficulties they face.

Thank you!



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