

# 2018 Confined Feeding Operations Survey

## Final Report

April 2018

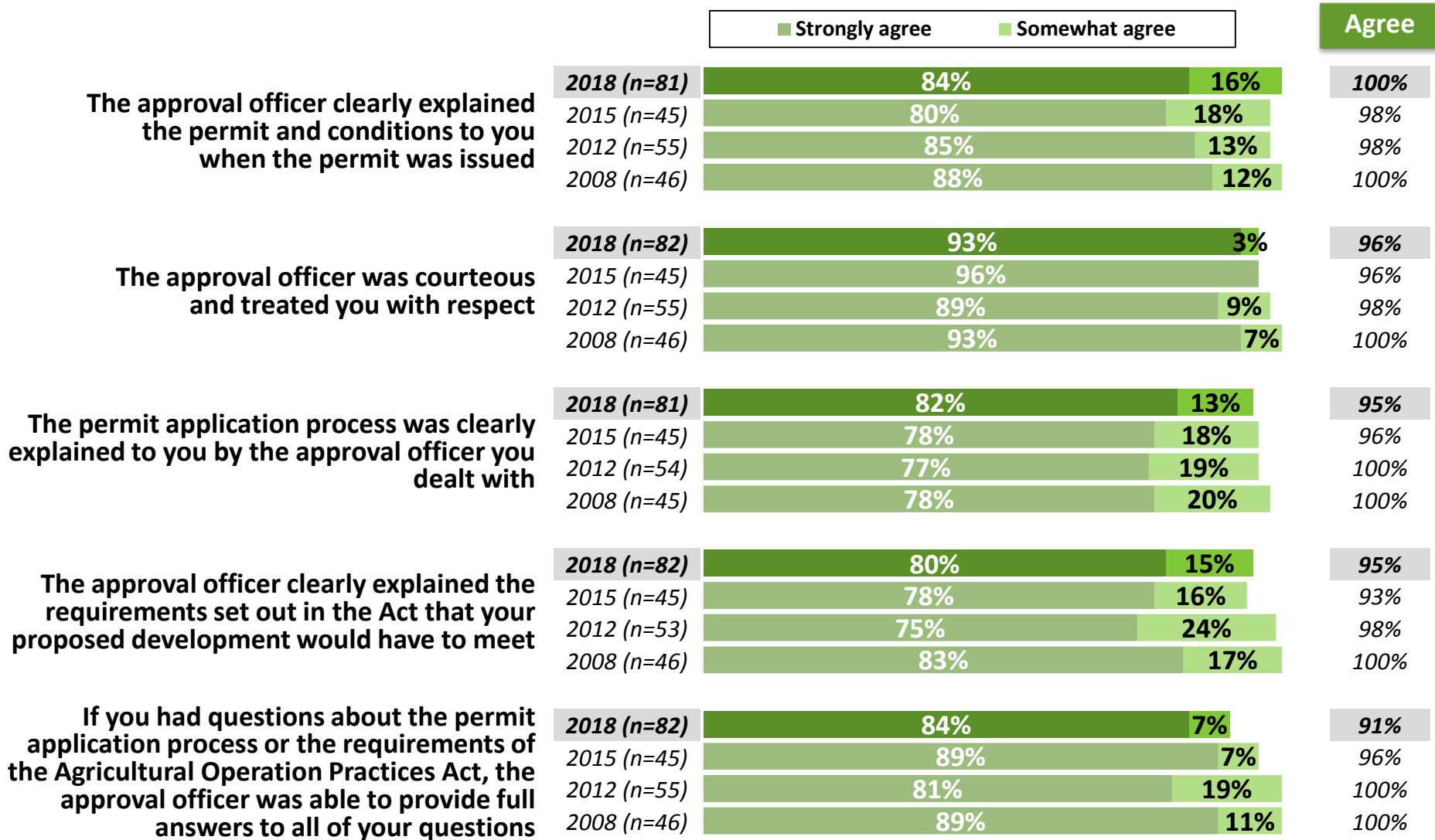


## Background and Methodology

- ❖ In 2008, 2012 and 2015, the Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) commissioned Ipsos Reid to conduct research to help determine how well it is dealing with its clients under the Agricultural Operation Practices Act.
- ❖ NRCB wished to replicate the research in 2018 in order to gain feedback from recent clients and track changes from the past surveys.
  - Ipsos Reid conducted telephone interviews with applicants, operators with a compliance issue and complainants involved with the NRCB in 2017, using lists provided by the NRCB.
- ❖ Interviews were conducted between January 30<sup>th</sup> and February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018.
  - The average interview was six minutes in length.
- ❖ The sample size per segment and associated margins of error (taking into account the finite populations) are as follows:
  - Applicants: n=82, ±7.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.
  - Operators involved in a complaint or compliance issue: n=58, ±10.3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.
  - Complainants: n=70, ±7.9 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

# NRCB Approval Process

# There is near unanimous consensus among applicants that NRCB approval officers provide a high level of service



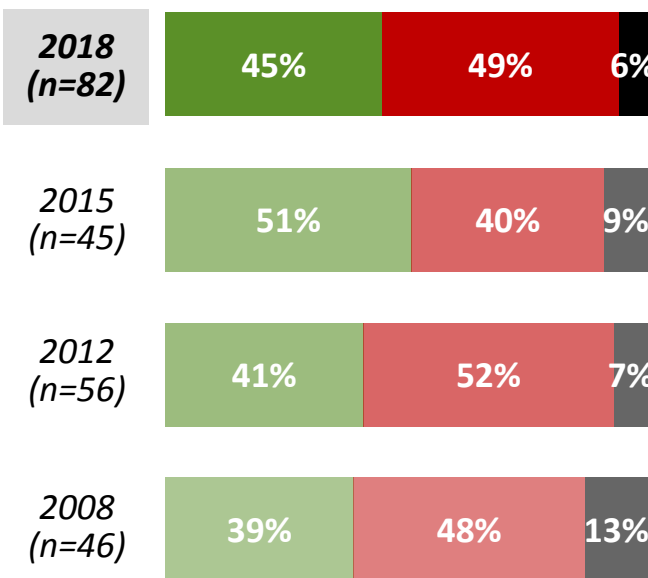
Base: Applicants (excluding Don't Know and Not Applicable)

Q1. Thinking about your most recent application for a permit, please indicate your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements. Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree?

# Approval officers also receive strong marks for their assistance when statements of concern were received

## Received Statements of Concern

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know



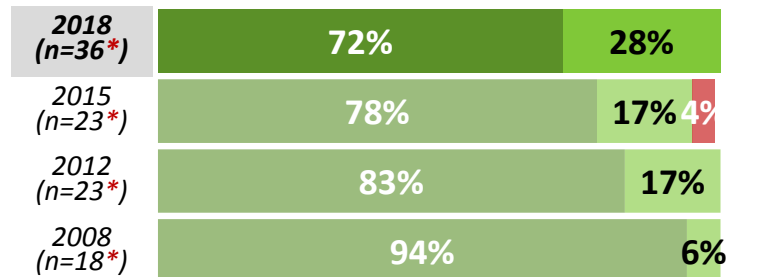
Base: Applicants

Q2. Were statements of concern – that is, letters of opposition – received when notice of your application was published?

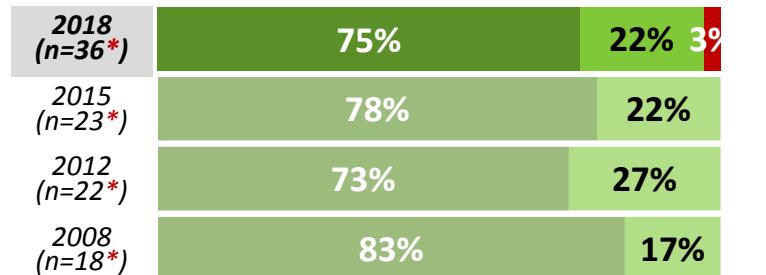
## Handling of Statements of Concern

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Disagree

The approval officer brought to your attention issues in the statements of concern that he or she felt you should be aware of



The approval officer clearly explained that you had the option of responding or not responding to the statements of concern

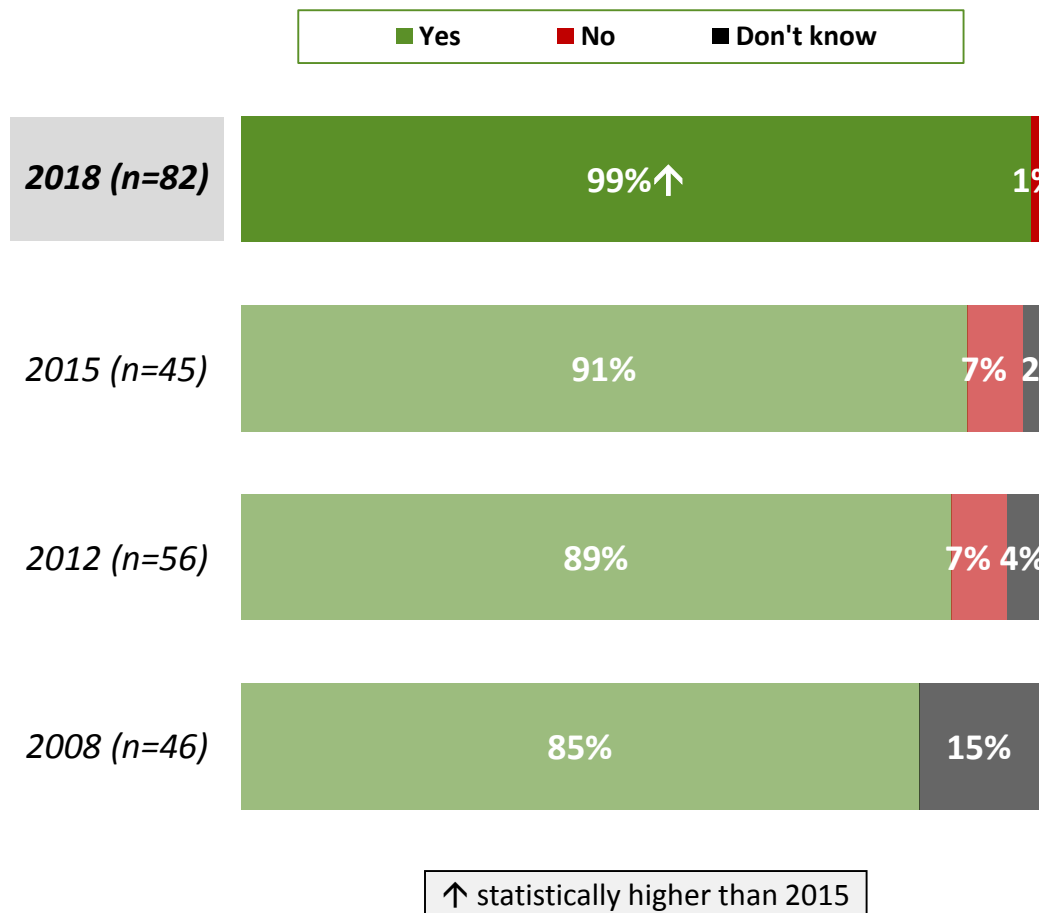


Base: Applicants who received a statement of concern (excluding Don't Know)

*\*Caution: Very small base size*

Q3. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements. Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree?

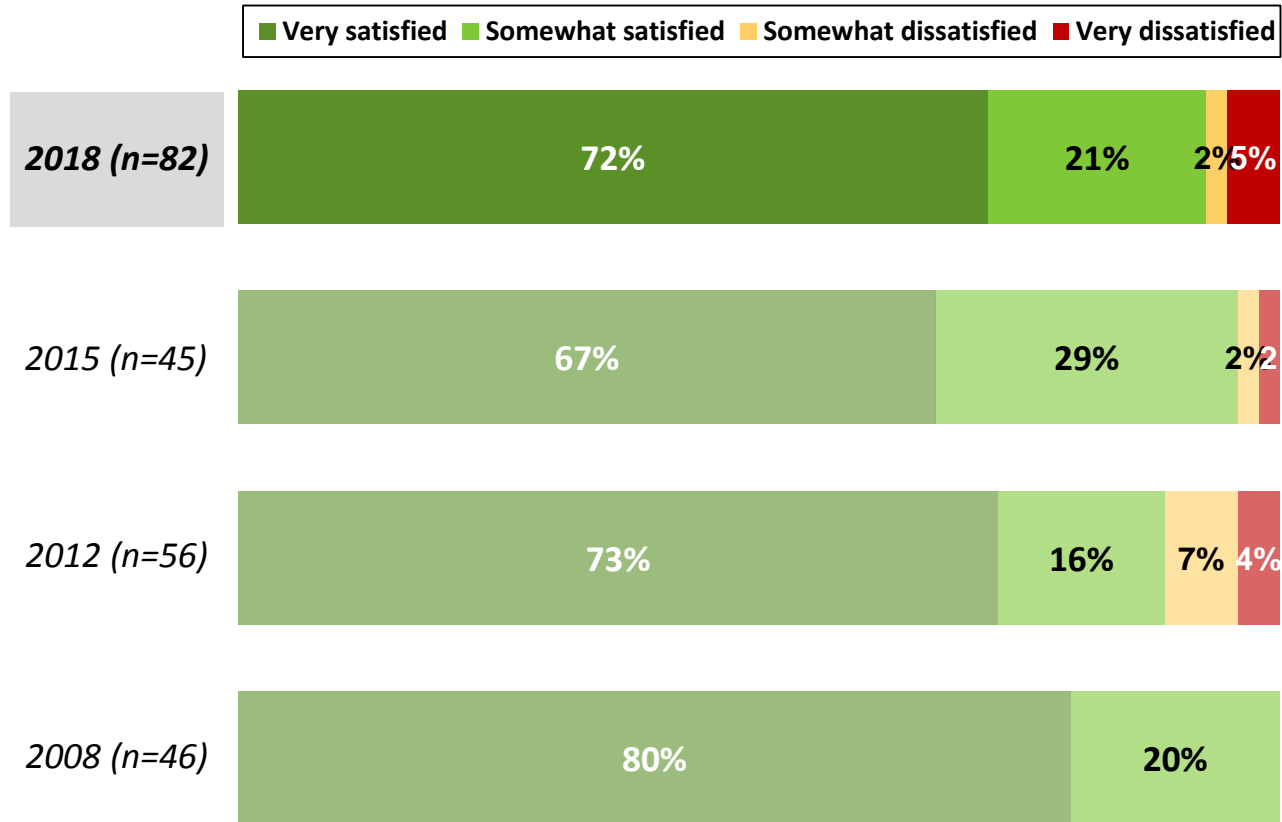
# There is now universal agreement that it was helpful to have all information related to their application in one binder



Base: Applicants

Q4. At the end of the process, you were provided with a binder that contained your permit, copies of your application, and other information. Did you find it helpful to have all of the information in one binder?

# The vast majority of applicants continue to be satisfied with their overall experience



Base: Applicants

Q5. Thinking about your overall experience with the NRCB during the approval process for your application, how satisfied were you, overall, with the service you received from the NRCB? Would you say very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied?

# A number of reasons for satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the approval process are cited

## Why do you say you were Very Satisfied with the approval process?

<b>It was good/ great/ no problem/ satisfied</b>	<b>n=29</b>
<b>Knowledgeable/ professional</b>	<b>n=22</b>
<b>Helpful</b>	<b>n=19</b>
<b>Clear communication</b>	<b>n=15</b>
<b>Simple/ straight forward process</b>	<b>n=13</b>
<b>Provided full assistance</b>	<b>n=10</b>
<b>On time/ according to the time frame</b>	<b>n=9</b>
<b>Easy to talk/ accessible</b>	<b>n=5</b>
<b>Honest/ open communication</b>	<b>n=5</b>
<b>Other positive mentions</b>	<b>n=6</b>

*They are very respectful.*

*Because it was efficient, courteous and business like.*

*I'm dealing with x who was more than happy to help me and showed the rules and regulations. I don't have no problems with the entire application it was well explained. They were out twice already and approved everything we did already. They will come out once it's totally complete. They will be sometime this year. I usually don't do anything without them and I follow the rules and regulations. If I have any more questions about the process, I usually phone them up and they are more than happy to help. I have a good relationship with NRCB and hopefully it's vice versa.*

*She was very friendly the officer that came out, explained everything to us.*

*Because they were efficient and courteous and fair with decisions.*

*Because our main permit was issued in 2002. In the meantime, we have experienced several incidents when NRCB has been there to prove we are following regulations when falsely accused by our neighbours.*

*The staff I dealt with, were courteous, professional, you know common sense. They just conducted themselves professionally and in a timely manner. You can add, it was a wonderful experience.*

*I was expecting it to be more difficult than what I perceived it to be. I never dealt with the NRCB, I was under the understanding that they were a bit difficult to deal with but, everything went smoothly and they were very helpful, yes, it was a very good experience.*

*Very timely, it was clear to me the approval officer was doing everything they could to process my application.*

## Why do you say you were Somewhat Satisfied with the approval process?

<b>Process took longer than expected</b>	<b>n=8</b>
<b>Don't agree with guidelines</b>	<b>n=2</b>
<b>Be more helpful</b>	<b>n=2</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>n=8</b>

## Why do you say you were Dissatisfied with the approval process?

<b>Slow process/takes too long (n=4)</b>
<b>Other (n=2)</b>



# A variety of barriers to, or challenges with, the application process were identified

## Slow process/takes too long (n=4)

### Other (n=22)

*It really depends on the person you're applying to; if the person in charge, or whatever you want to call it, is willing to work with the producer, then things will be done a lot quicker. When you talk to other people, they all understand that NRCB helps regulate the rules and stuff like that. It would have helped if they could have sent them in the right direction, instead of making them jump through hoops where you're not sure where you're going.*

*The other challenge is the fact that we had to go to a superior. He's superior to make this happen and this not our first permit and we have never been a problem feedlot. We have always followed the rules and when we went to do this expansion, it was costly on engineering because of the inexperienced officer doing the job.*

*My biggest challenge was I thought I should have met with my NRCB guy before I did my paperwork, he clarified more than the papers.*

*Just don't do anything that you do not have permission to do.*

*Yes. Most people I've talked to have found the process very difficult. It's partially through the process, it feels like NRCB in its power to make sure confined operations do not expand.*

*Yes. Not enough information for first users.*

*You need to follow what they tell you, like, let them cut a few more corners.*

*When applying for CFO, we deal with a lot of opposition from neighbours.*

*Understanding the municipality by-laws and how they interact with the NRCB.*

*I think that for larger operations employing modern agricultural techniques, the total land base and setback requirements are very high and seemed to have been designed more for smaller operations. However, to keep the public on side, it may not be feasible to adjust these downwards.*

*It's kind of confusing to know which kind of permits to fill in. They do help you good though once you can get ahold of them though.*

*I've heard other people that are complaining just go out and build, build a new expansion; I think that's good they should meet the requirements.*

*Explanation of municipal development plans and effects of permitting process.*

*There are somewhat; depends on your location or where you are at. Where the farm is located topographically. It varies from farm to farm. You can't go by what other people say. I heard positive and negative comments. I can't really say.*

*For the most part, I've heard pretty good things about the NRCB here in Alberta. The worst story I've heard is people dealing with their neighbours than dealing with the NRCB. I've heard good things about the NRCB for the most part.*

*Depends where you are and what you have; in our situation, everything was up to date. I think if you haven't got a permit down for a number of years, I think it makes it harder. For us, it was very easy because we didn't have issues with anybody. Everything fell within the rules. If anything is falling outside the rules, it becomes a different ballgame.*

*Well, originally the NRCB was put in place to override the counties. But, with the county bylaws in place to restrict certain applications from being approved, you have to get a lawyer to see if it is viable to build - to override the county bylaws so NRCB could issue the permit. It gets very expensive when you go down that road.*

## No response (n=56)

Base: Applicants (n=82)

**Q6A. Based on what you have experienced or heard from others, are there any barriers for operators to apply for a permit, or any particular challenges with the application process?**

# A number of applicants offered suggestions for improving the application process, with speeding it up being the most frequent request

**Q7. Do you have any suggestions for improving the permit application process itself – not the legislated requirements or the Agricultural Operation Practices Act?**

**Base: Applicants (n=82)**

***Speed up the permitting process (n=10)***

***Improve communication/ provide more information (n=3)***

***Involve the community/ have more community input (n=2)***

***Other (n=8)***

*They should reinstate the committee that has disbanded. Things will be political that will lead to politicians making decisions.*

*If the NRCB would have their guidelines in place that overrides and is acceptable to all the counties in Alberta, then with all the information that they get, they should be able to issue a permit.*

*Big ad in the newspaper but wasn't necessary and a bit of an overkill.*

*I just recommend to meet the approval officer to start with.*

*Basically eliminate the minimum distance.*

*Make the applicant aware what requirements are.*

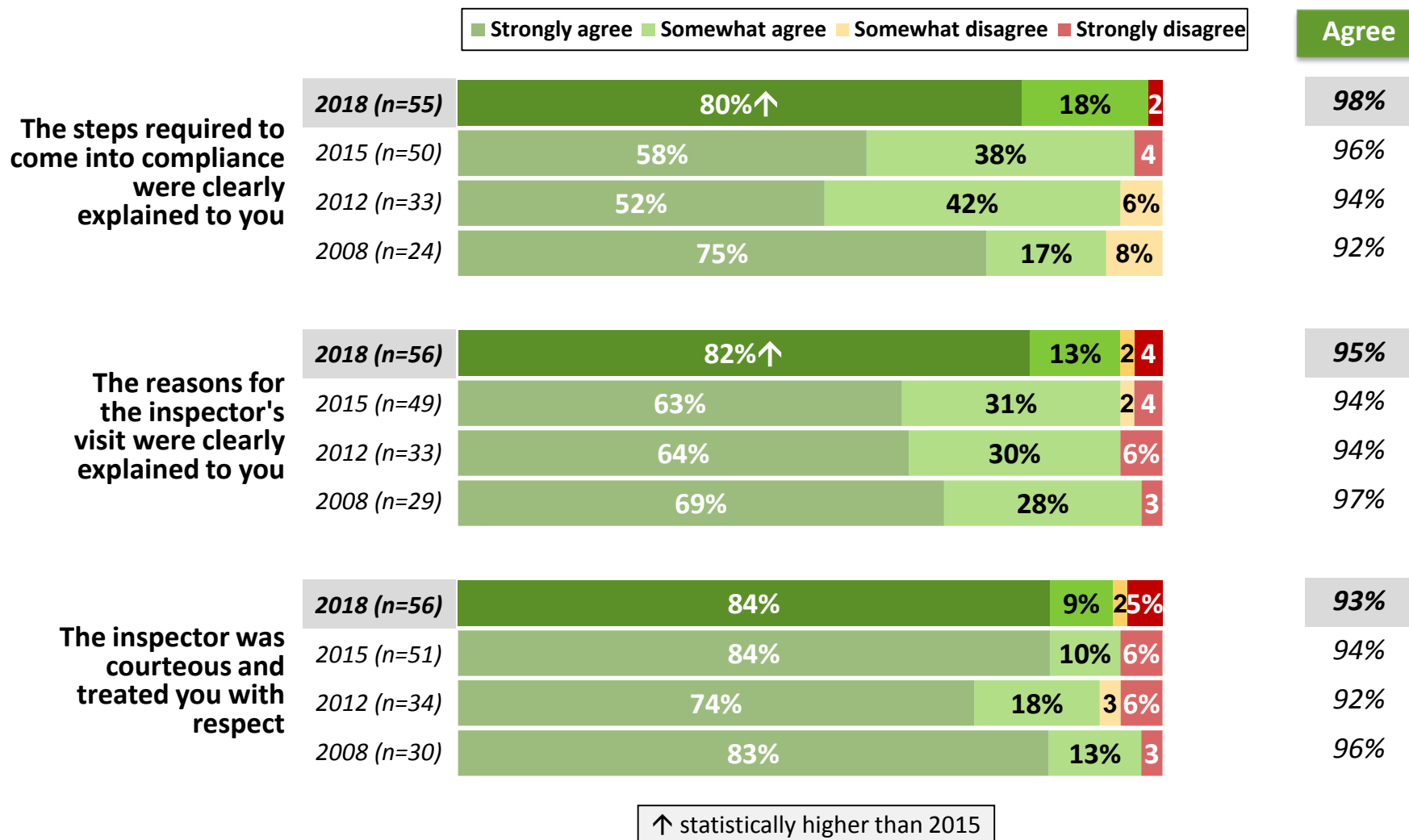
*Privatize it.*

*If someone wants to put a complaint in, they should pay a very small fee to put the complaint in because we hear a lot of people complaining; sometimes it is very easy to complain. I think if you had to pay five dollars you would have to think about it.*

***No suggestions (n=56)***

# NRCB Compliance Process

# Strength of agreement that the steps required to come into compliance and the reasons for the visit were clearly explained is up significantly from 2015



Base: Operators involved in a complaint or a compliance issue (excluding Don't Know and Not Applicable)

Q10. Thinking about your most recent dealings with an inspector from the NRCB, please indicate your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements. Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree?

# Operators provided a variety of suggestions for improving communications or the compliance process

**Q11. Keeping in mind the NRCB cannot change the regulations or legislation, do you have any suggestions for improving communications or the process when dealing with a compliance issue?**

**Base: Operators involved in a complaint or a compliance issue (n=58)**

## **Other (n=13)**

*If there is a way NRCB guidelines can be compared to the industry production levels.*

*Instead of a phone call they can stop by in person.*

*Less paperwork.*

*That we have an open discussion, an open meeting with one another.*

*For the farmers to expand or change their operations for the better they have to do it according to NRCB requirements but if they keep operating the way they are, the NRCB can't touch them. Also the more complicated and difficult they make it for farmers in the province of Alberta, or they get into compliance, then it gets less advantageous; that other provinces don't have restrictions or requirement because of the NRCB.*

*Just I know there are some very good industry groups that are representing our industries. Yeah, they've done lots of work on different things so I hope that the NRCB reaches out to them and takes the work they've done and the advice they give into consideration. Just, I mean I just liked if they made different legislations or looked at changing things, just that there's proper consultation done with the industry first.*

*It's always nice to have it done quicker and more timely.*

*The issue we had was we wanted to put down some lime and they did not agree; we did not have enough proof that it works so they made us put down concrete which is about four times the money.*

*Most of the inspectors don't have any agriculture background.*

*Less contradictory statements needed from the officer. Many times their opinions contradict the legislation.*

*Their approach and attitude, because when you're in the wrong, they could approach you and not be rude before you get started. Especially when I just explained to you what happened, he couldn't see the field, he came over, very rude. It's kind of like, 'ok well we're working on it, you just can't see us yet.' He didn't come into the field after that, but his approach was very rude. Since that time, I've been very put off to the NRCB. Whenever they're out on a complaint, it's like, 'well, if this is how you deal with people, you should find another job and not deal with people.'*

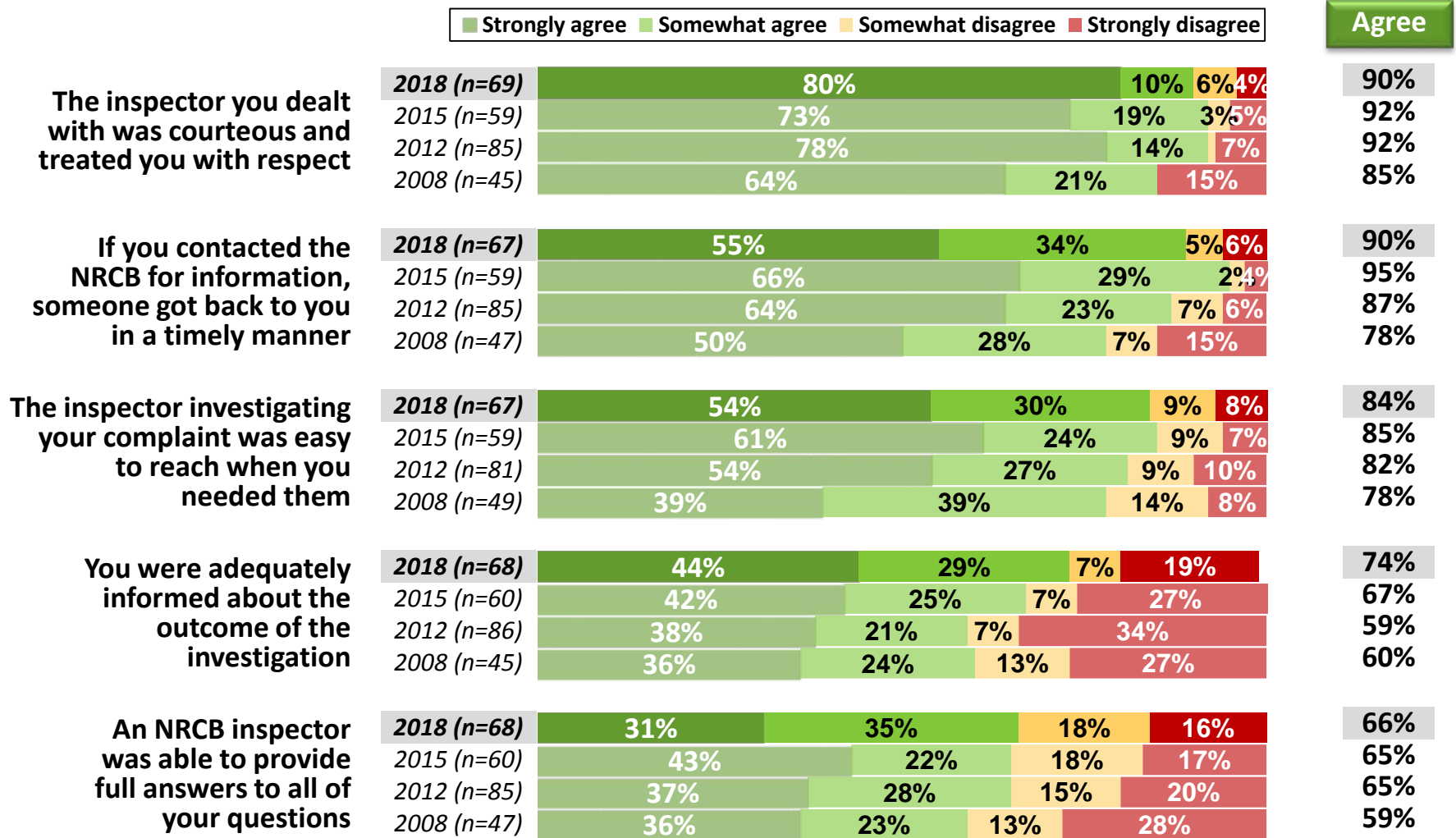
*They have to do more practical thinking. If they make rules, they should apply to everybody (also bee farms).*

*I don't know why the neighbors can't come and talk to us about the complaint. There was not a problem and it was within the guidelines and so they wasted NRCB time.*

## **No suggestions/no issues (n=45)**

# NRCB Complaint Process

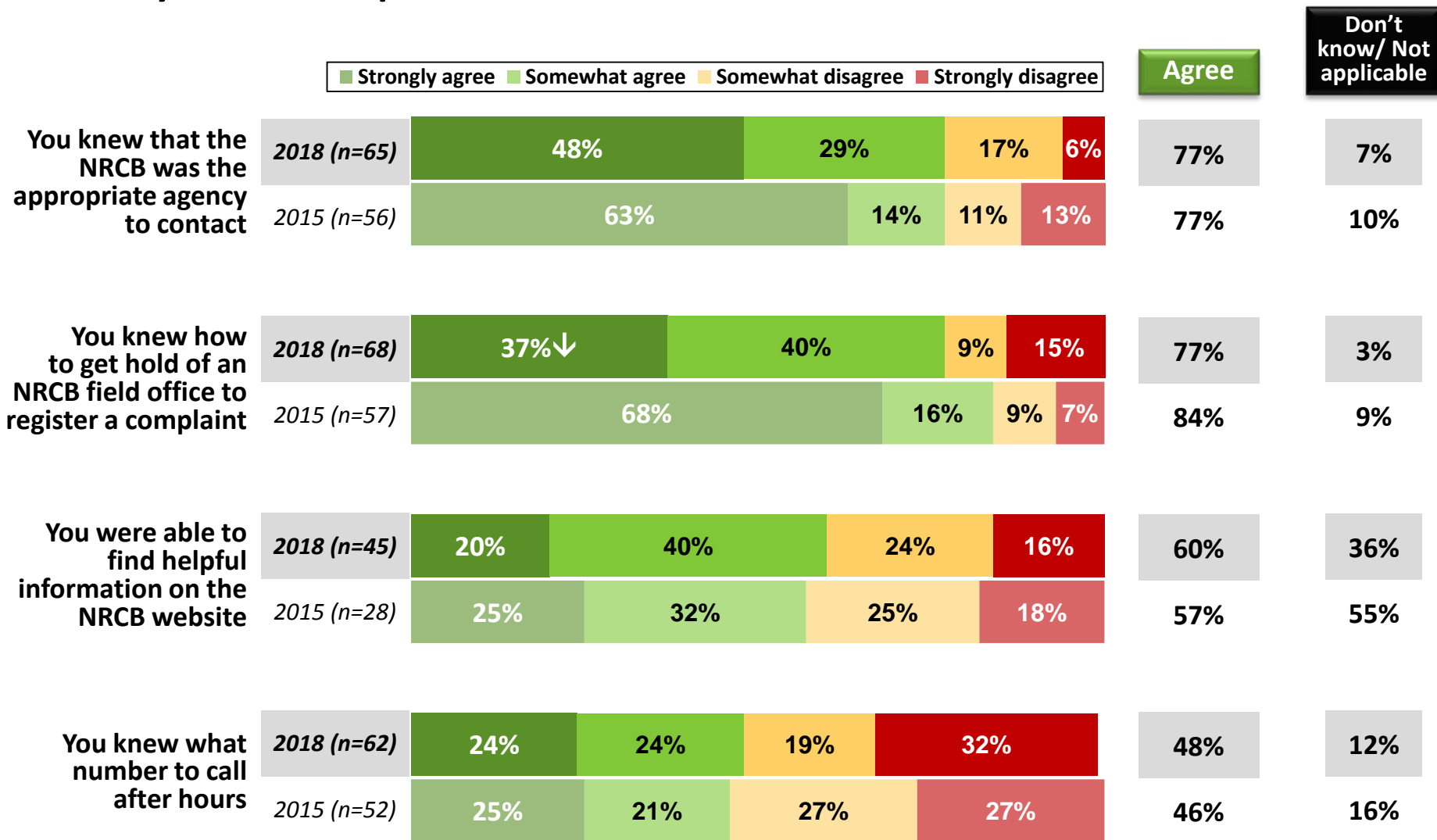
# Being treated with courtesy and respect as well as timeliness of response receive high marks, while the inspector's ability to provide full answers lags



Base: Complainants (excluding Don't Know and Not Applicable)

Q12. Thinking about the most recent time you registered a complaint, please indicate your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements. If the statement does not apply to you, please say so. Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree?

# Strength of agreement that they knew how to register a complaint has declined and only half of complainants knew what number to call after hours



↓statistically lower than 2015

Base: Complainants (excluding Don't Know and Not Applicable)

Q12. Thinking about the most recent time you registered a complaint, please indicate your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements. If the statement does not apply to you, please say so. Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree?



## A wide array of suggestions were given for improving communications or processes, though roughly half of complainants offered no comments

**Q13. Keeping in mind the NRCB cannot change the regulations or legislation, do you have any suggestions for improving communications or processes when dealing with a complaint?**

**Base: Complainants (n=70)**

*Improve monitoring/ inspections/ enforcement (n=9)*

*Improved follow-up/ didn't hear back after making a complaint (n=7)*

*Look after/ protect the environment/ pollution (smell) (n=7)*

*Use different resources to inform the public regarding the organization (n=5)*

*How to get in touch with them/ how to file a complaint (n=4)*

*Improve rules/ regulations (n=4)*

*NRCB is ineffective/ can't do anything about problems (n=4)*

*There should be more regulations/ tougher regulations (n=3)*

*Improve communication/ provide more information (n=3)*

*Improve consideration to others/ quality of life (n=2)*

*Protect animals (better treatment of animals, abuse) (n=2)*

*Investigate complaints quickly/ when the problem is occurring (n=2)*

*Involve community/ have community input (n=2)*

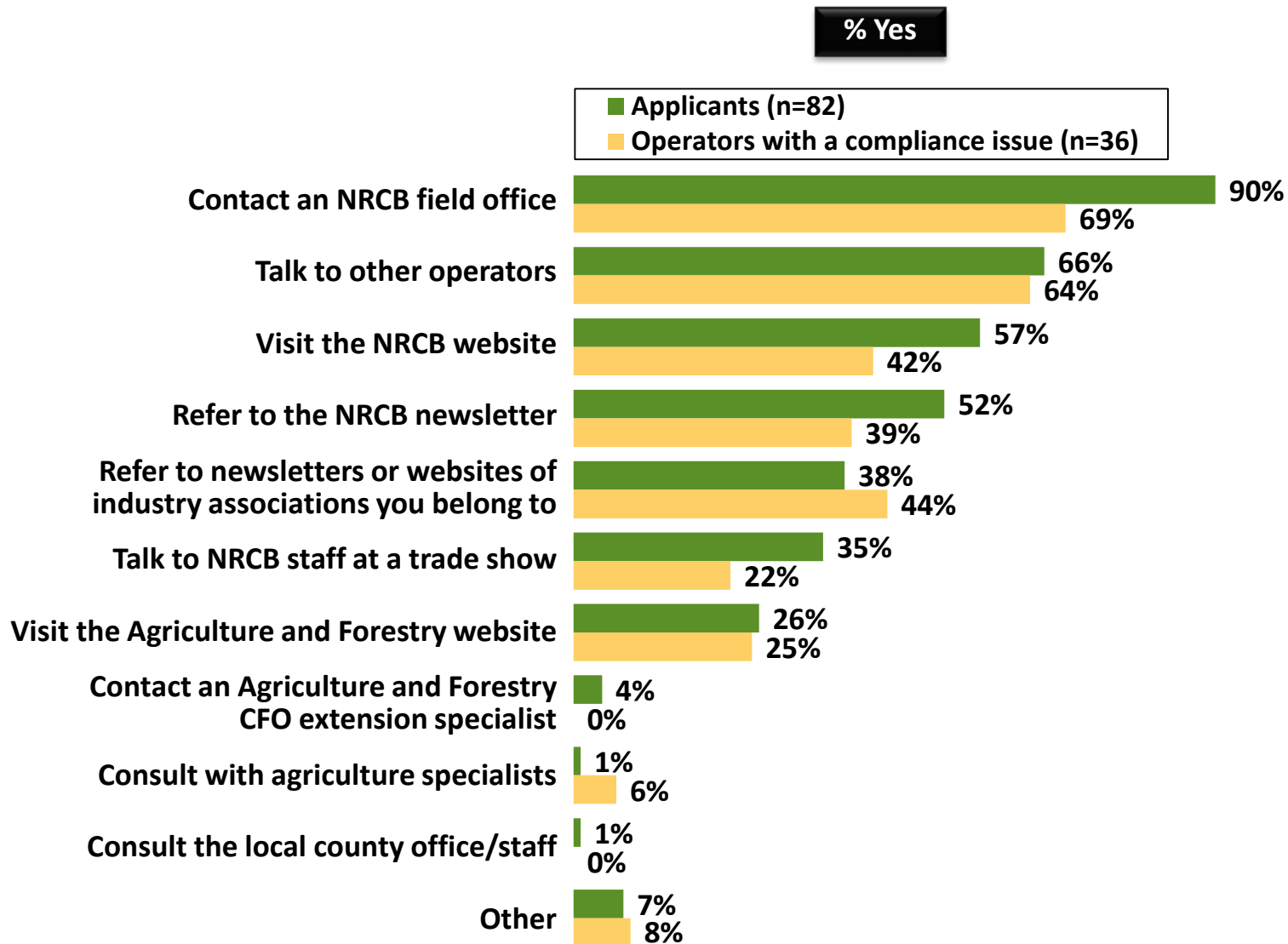
*They should follow the rules that they created (n=2)*

*Other (n=5)*

*No suggestions (n=32)*

# Information Sources

# Contacting an NRCB field office is by far the most frequently used source of information among applicants, while talking to other operators is equally common among operators with a compliance issue



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