C. Mancini
Istituto Superiore di Sanità – Library
Rome, Italy

Searching library Web site at the time of Web 2.0: Who does what? How FAQs can play a central role in retrieving basic information

12th EAHIL Conference, Lisbon, June 17, 2010

Background

Internet

:

- More information
- More informed users

BUT

Too much help = confusion, noise, waste of time
and as a result a kind of user
like or like

How to solve the problem?

FAQs

- Frequently Asked Questions

- Collections of questions and answers on a topic

- Originated in the early 1980s

FAQ features vs other information retrieval tools

- Basic relevant information
- Recurring information
- Based on user information request

Advantages for users

- Ease of use
- Built around them
- Can reduce:
  - noise
  - confusion
  - waste of time

2006 Survey Approach

About 300 Web sites analyzed in order to assess:

- FAQ list presence
- FAQ list location
- FAQ list labelling
- Information categorization and distribution

2006 Survey data

- Web sites providing FAQ list = 42%
- FAQ list location on the homepage = 55%
- Use of the specific "FAQ" label = 84%
- FAQ content distribution within 6 main categories (all Web sites analyzed):
  general, reference, circulation, document delivery, facilities, library computing
- FAQ average number = 47% of Web sites do not exceed 30 FAQs

2006 Survey results

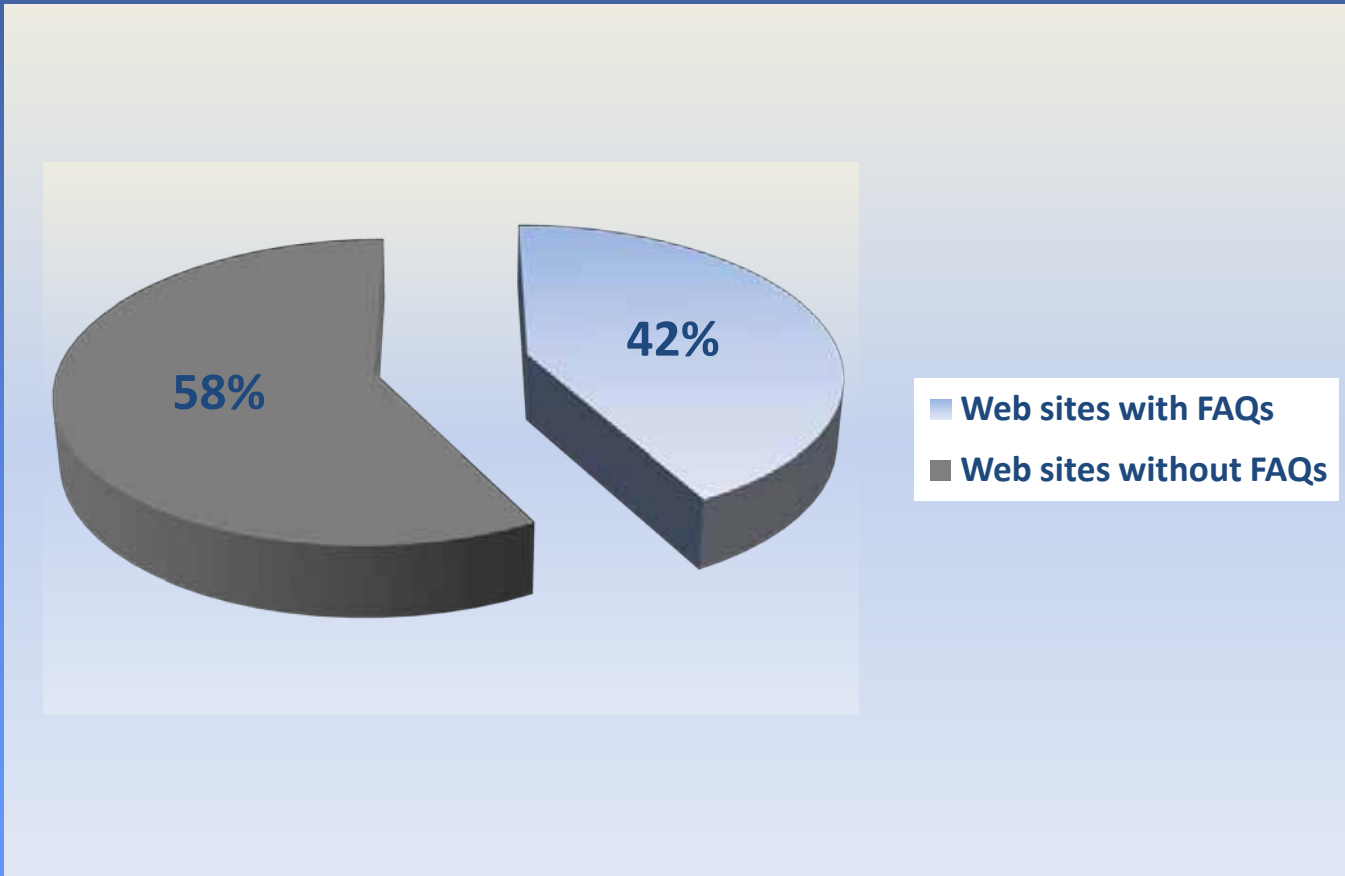
Rules taking into account in building FAQ sections:

- FAQs always on the homepage
- Use of "FAQ" label
- Content distribution: the identified categories
- FAQ average number: between 20 and 30

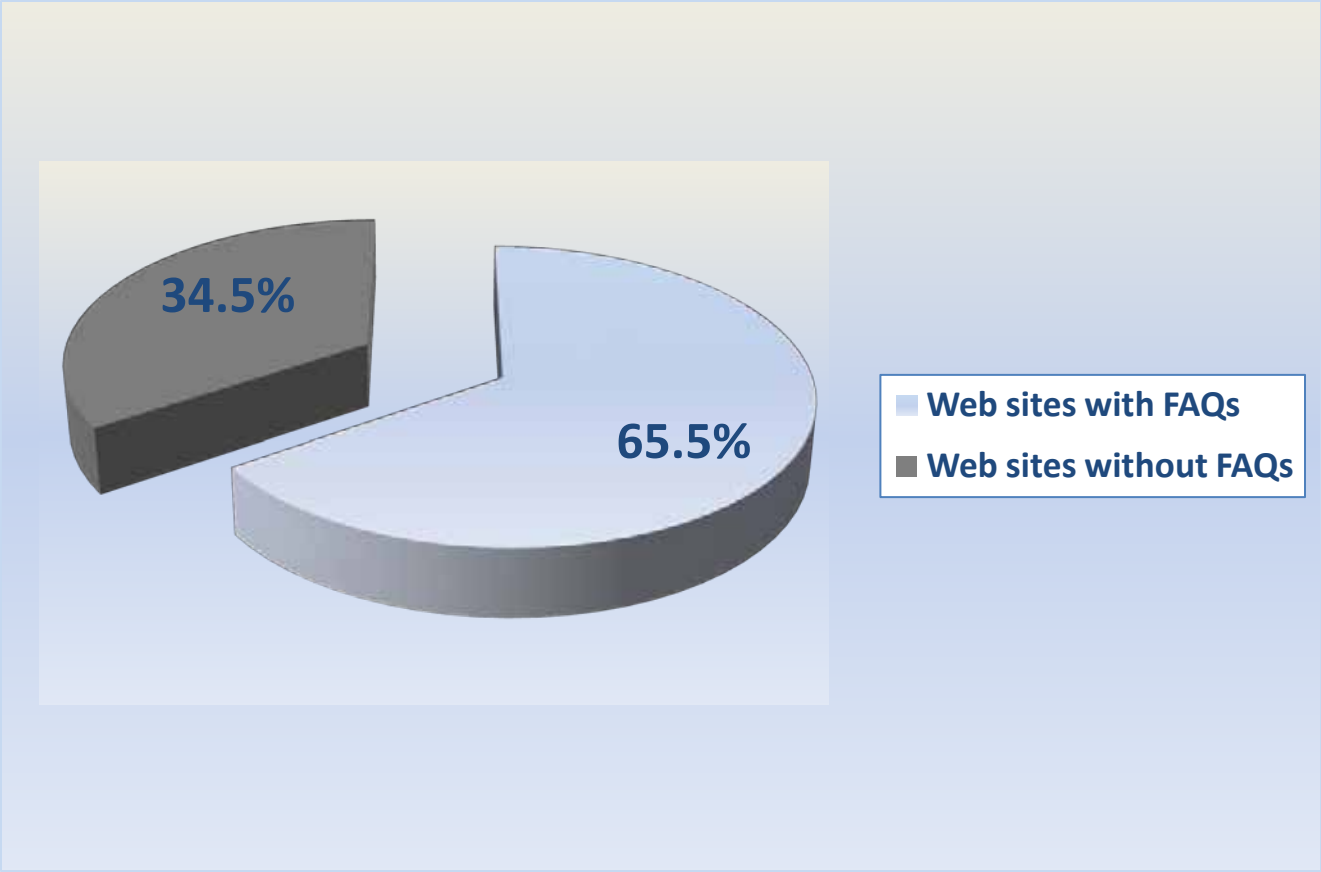
2010 Survey Approach

- Web sites analyzed in 2006 checked again in 2010
- Data collected compared with 2006 results
- Investigated changed undergone
- Evaluated trend in adding/removing/unchainging FAQ lists

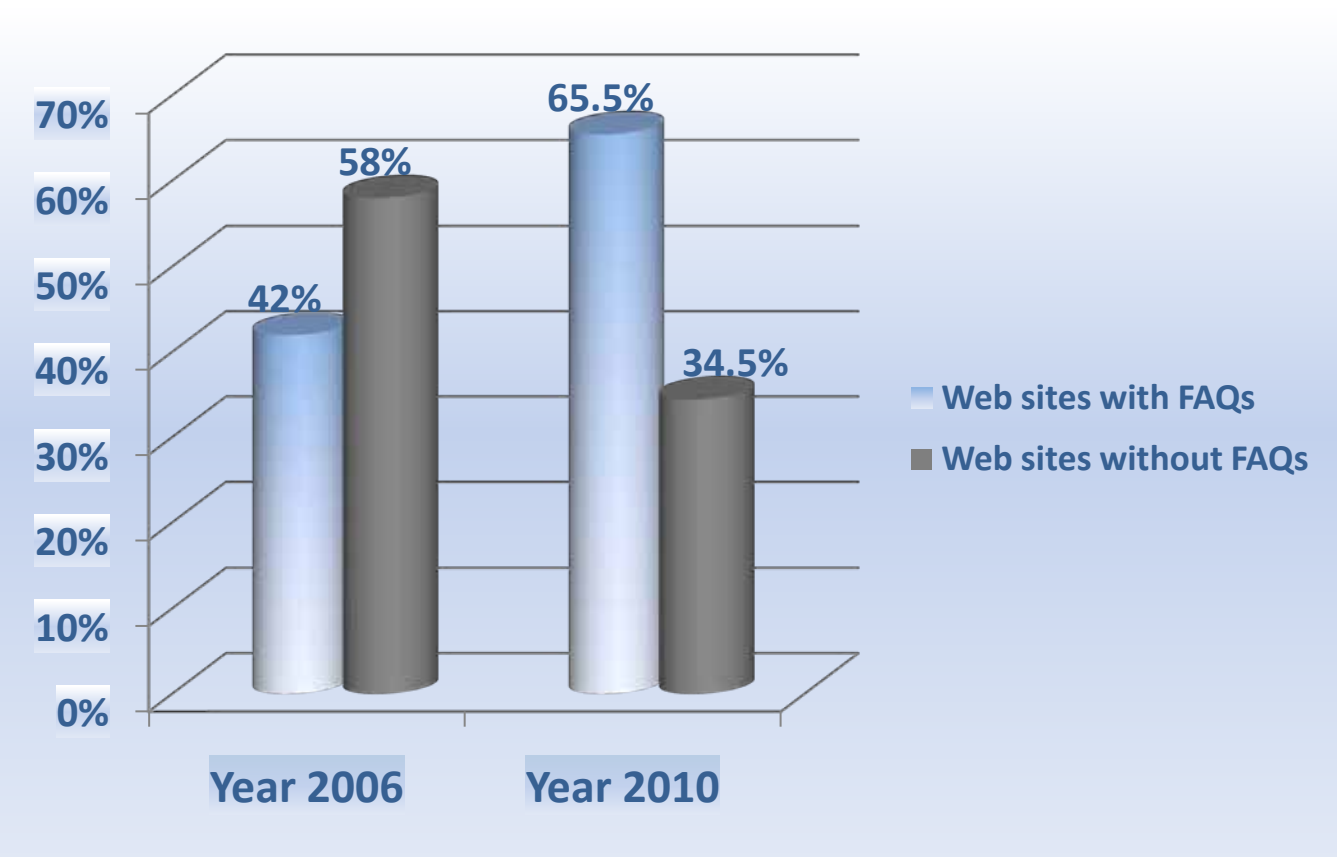
Web sites providing FAQ list: 2006 overall data analysis



Web sites providing FAQ list: 2010 overall data analysis



2006 vs 2010: Data comparison

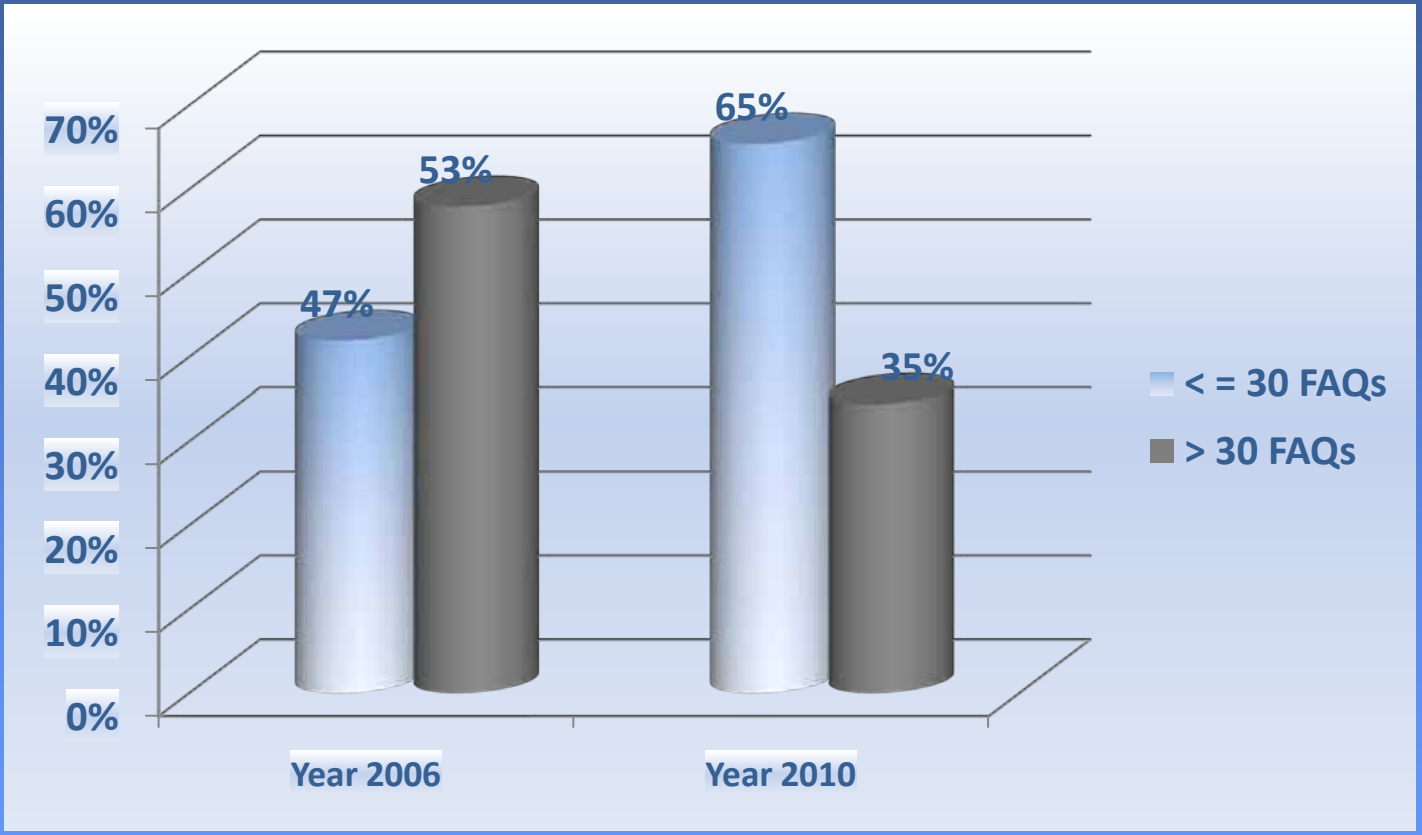


Percentage increase = 23.5%

Other 2006 data compared with 2010 results

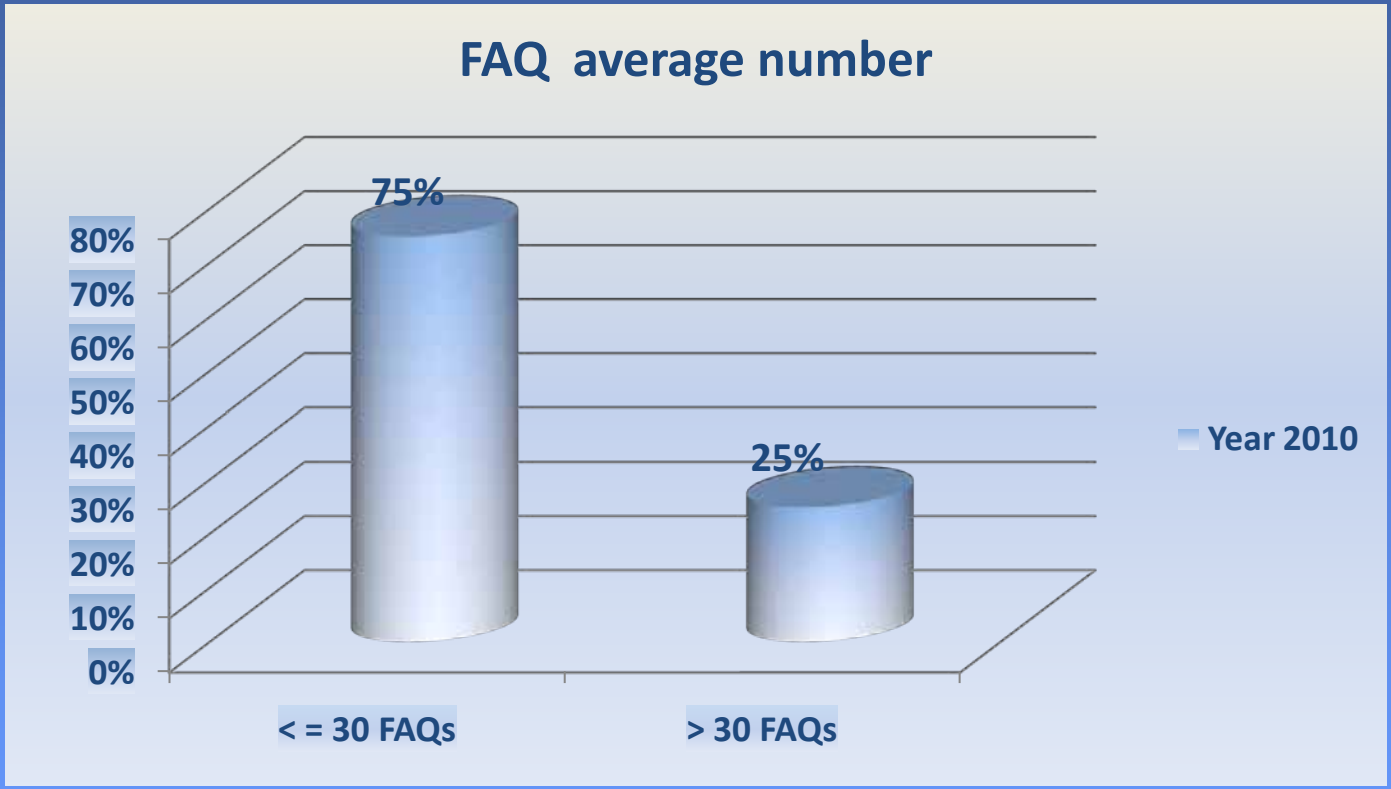
Web sites	year 2006	year 2010
Homepage FAQ list location	55%	60%
Specific "FAQ" label	84%	90%
FAQ content distribution within 6 main categories	100%	100%
FAQ average number <= 30	47%	65%

Faq average number: 2006 VS 2010 Data comparison



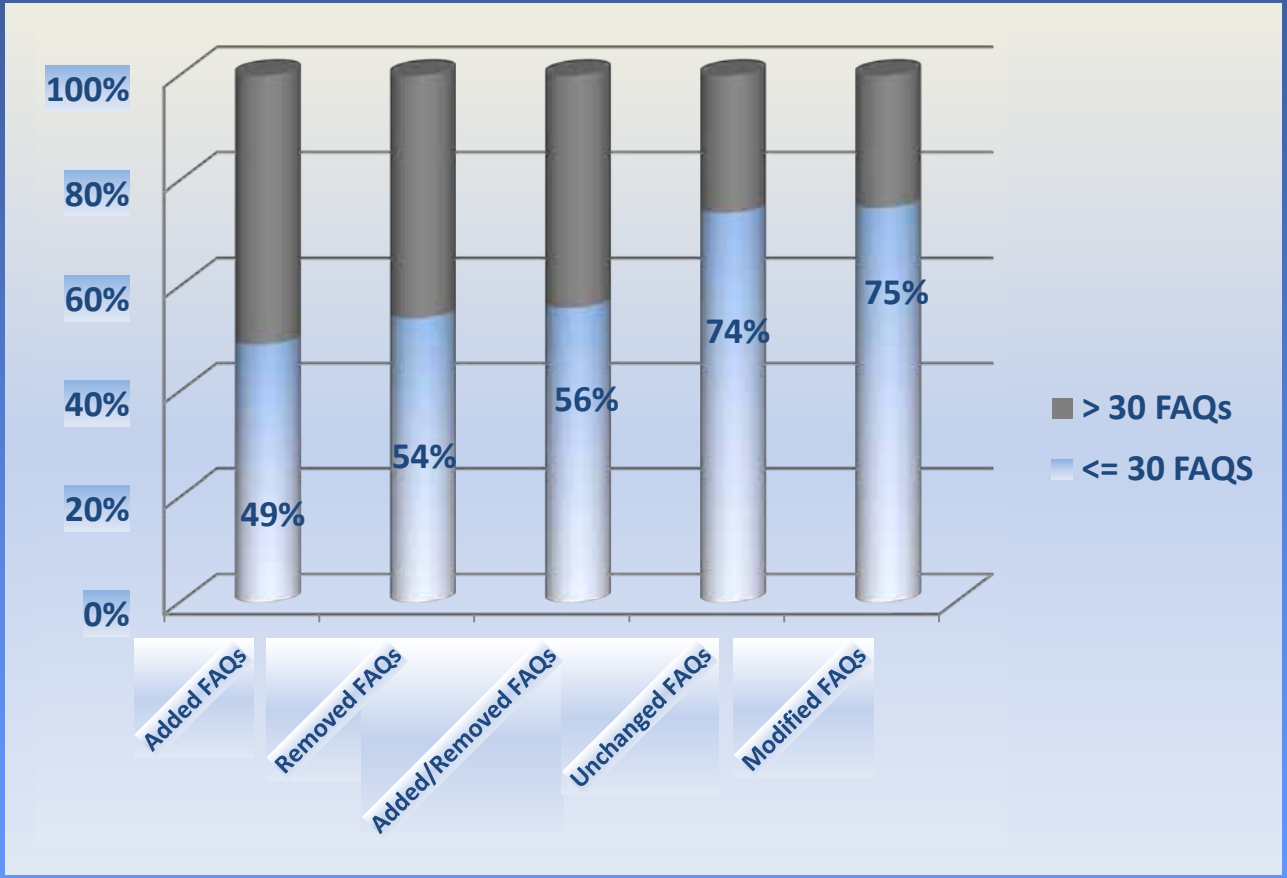
Percentage increase = 18%

Number of FAQs available: those Web sites first providing FAQ list in 2010



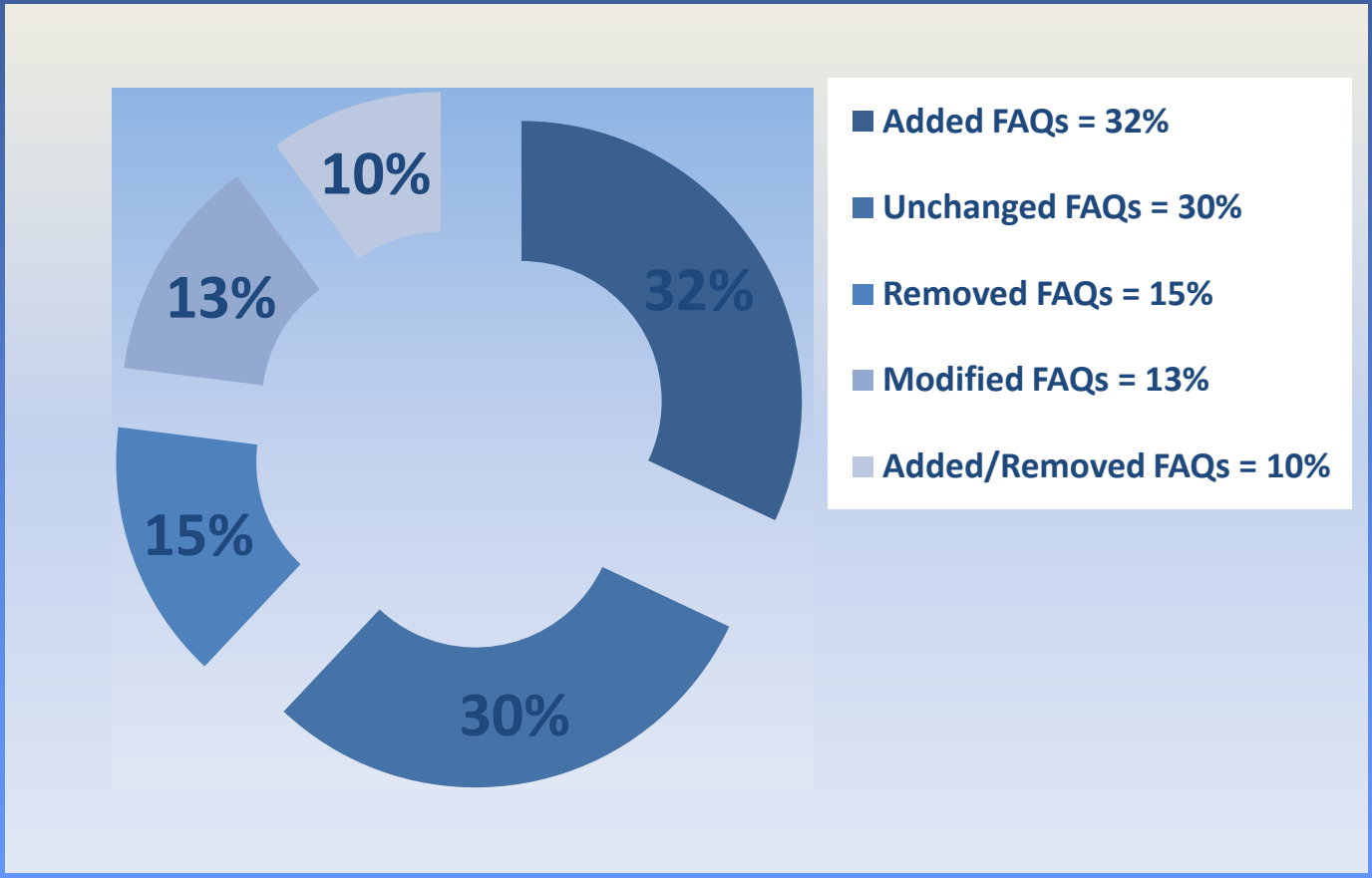
75% of them do not exceed 30 FAQs available

Number of FAQs available: Web sites first providing FAQ list in 2006



2010 disaggregate data analysis

Adding/Removing/Modified/Unchanging FAQs



Web sites first providing FAQ list in 2006 : changes undergone in 2010

FAQ structure

2006

- Recurring sentence formatting:

How can I ?
How do I ?

2010

- Recurring sentence formatting:

80% web sites

How do I ?

- Language = user feedback

FAQ standard model

General principles

- Immediate recognition
- Information content
- Content distribution
- Formal structure standardization
- Linguistic terms standardization