

# Narrative Capture for the Competition Commission of Singapore (CCS) Final Report

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# There are five main points that emerge from this narrative research project into perspectives of Internal and External CCS stakeholders

- **There is a striking disconnect between views of Internal and External stakeholders**
  - The most striking pattern to emerge from this study is the disconnect between the Internal perspective of CCS past performance, and those perspectives contributed by External stakeholders
  - The Internal perspective is almost uniformly positive, made up of personal stories that the narrators will remember for months or years.
  - Internally, the perception is that CCS culture, openness to new ideas and stakeholder engagement is almost ideal; opinion is (slightly) more divided about Competition Law and CCS Efforts.
  - External stakeholders however more often perceive a CCS that is constrained by bureaucracy, closed to new ideas and (in particular) disengaged from stakeholders. These are also formed from personal stories that the narrators will remember for months or years.
  - Internal perspective is that intervention is optimal, sometimes overly cautious; External perspective is that intervention is never optimal, usually overly cautious and sometimes insufficiently rigorous.
- **The stories reveal consistent and obvious internal pride but also possible complacency about the need to improve**
  - The almost uniformly positive Internal perspectives suggest three possibilities:
    - The contributions were scripted and the participants advised in advance how to respond to the survey to present CCS in the best possible light (unlikely to succeed at such a large scale);
    - CCS is doing a terrific job and staff are justifiably proud of what they have achieved; and / or
    - The truth is more a mix of the External and the Internal perspectives, and CCS staff may be complacent about where they need to improve.
- **From the External stakeholder perspective, CCS's efforts at Stakeholder Engagement can be improved**
  - The External group clearly views CCS as being too disengaged, and the narratives they contribute suggest that this lack of engagement has contributed to poor target selection for investigation.
  - This opinion directly contrasts with that of the Internal group, who view Stakeholder Engagement as almost ideal.
- **CCS lacks a successful “identity story” that contributes to a positive brand image in the community**
  - When we have worked with organisations in the past, we regularly encounter an identity story (or stories), ie experiences or past actions that define an organisation and which are retold by all stakeholders, thus building a coherent brand image over time
  - Internal stakeholders were justifiably proud of some past actions; External stakeholders it seems are still seeking a CCS action that defines its identity and role
- **This is a difficult environment to capture narratives**
  - It needs to be noted that data sizes weren't ideal. We are basing these statements on a small data set and so they should be interpreted as indicative at best, rather than conclusive.



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# Project overview



# Slightly different prompting questions were used to trigger narrative contributions from Internal and External stakeholders in this project

Internal	Please share an experience where CCS had to enforce the Competition Act. What happened?	External	Please share an experience where CCS had to enforce the Competition Act. What happened?
	Share an experience where the investigations conducted by CCS were EITHER overly robust OR not thorough enough. What happened?		Share an experience where the investigations conducted by CCS were EITHER overly robust OR not thorough enough. What happened?
	Tell us about an incident which demonstrated CCS' understanding OR lack of understanding of what it takes to run a business in Singapore.		Tell us about an incident which demonstrated CCS' understanding OR lack of understanding of what it takes to run a business in Singapore.
	Tell us about the last significant decision made by CCS. What happened?		Tell us about the last significant decision made by CCS. What happened?
	Tell us about your experience when a CCS employee's conduct was EITHER professional OR unprofessional. What happened?		Tell us about your experience when a CCS employee's conduct was EITHER professional OR unprofessional. What happened?
	Please share an experience in which cartels / bid-rigging / anti-competitive practices turned out to be relatively common OR a rare incident.		Please share an experience in which cartels / bid-rigging / anti-competitive practices turned out to be relatively common OR a rare incident.
	Share an experience of yours where promotion of competition by CCS was effective or ineffective. What happened?		Tell us about an experience where seeking help from CCS / working with CCS turned out to be EITHER relatively easy OR very complicated.
	Please tell us about a previous case investigated by the CCS - what do you remember about it?		Share an experience of yours where promotion of competition by CCS was effective or ineffective. What happened?
			Please tell us about a previous case investigated by the CCS - what do you remember about it?



A signifier set constructed of seven triads and five polarities was used to index all fragments on entry

### [ Protection of Interest ]

Whose interest is being looked after in my story?



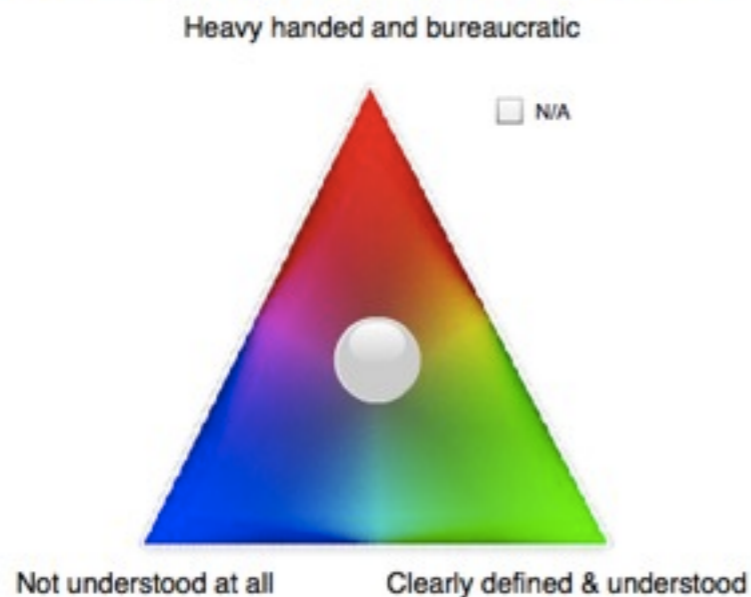
### [ Perception of CCS ]

The perception of CCS' actions in my story was that it was...



### [ Rules Guiding Competitive Behaviour ]

In my story, rules guiding competitive behaviour are...



### [ Balance of Skills ]

To resolve the issue in my story, the balance of skills required is...



A signifier set constructed of seven triads and five polarities was used to index all fragments on entry

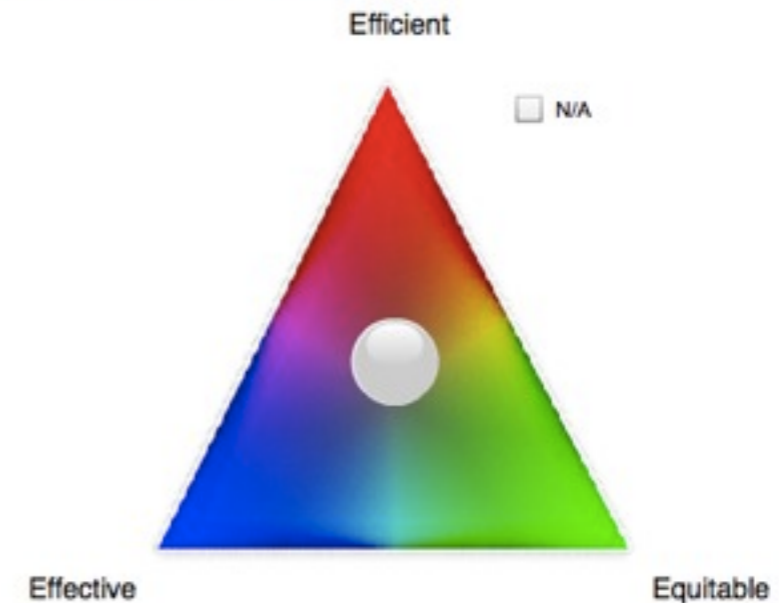
### [ CCS Actions (-) ]

CCS' actions in my story were...



### [ CCS Actions (+) ]

CCS' actions in my story were...



### [ Anti-Competitive Actions ]

Thinking about the anti-competitive action in my story, such actions seem to be...

One-off, a unique event



# A signifier set constructed of seven triads and five polarities was used to index all fragments on entry

[ Short form name ]

**CCS Culture**

**As shown in my story, when engaging stakeholders CCS...**

Is so constrained by bureaucracy that no real change can be made



N/A

Tries so hard to be "professional" that it comes across as pretentious

**Openness to New Ideas**

**As shown in my story, CCS is...**

Very closed to new influences, typical of a bureaucracy



N/A

Overly open to new ideas, without thinking carefully about their costs and benefits

**Stakeholder Engagement**

**The treatment of people by CCS as reflected in my story was...**

Too disengaged from stakeholders that there was no understanding of ground sentiment



N/A

Too engaged with stakeholders to remain above the fray

**Competition Law**

**People in my story ...**

Do not take competition law seriously



N/A

Find competition law too onerous to comply with

**Role of CCS**

**Overall, my story indicates that CCS...**

Doesn't seem to be making a difference on regulating competition no matter how hard it



N/A

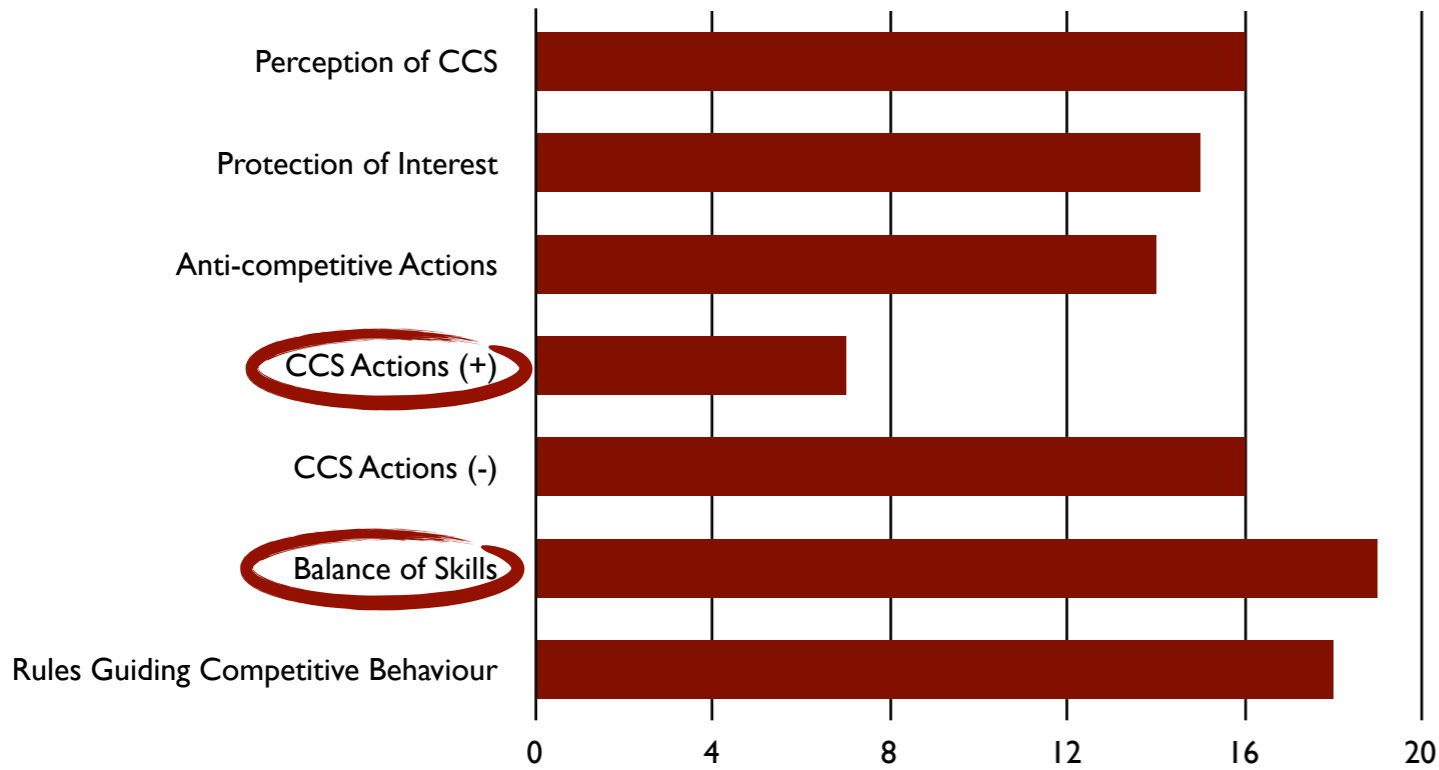
Should do much more to enhance competition than its current efforts



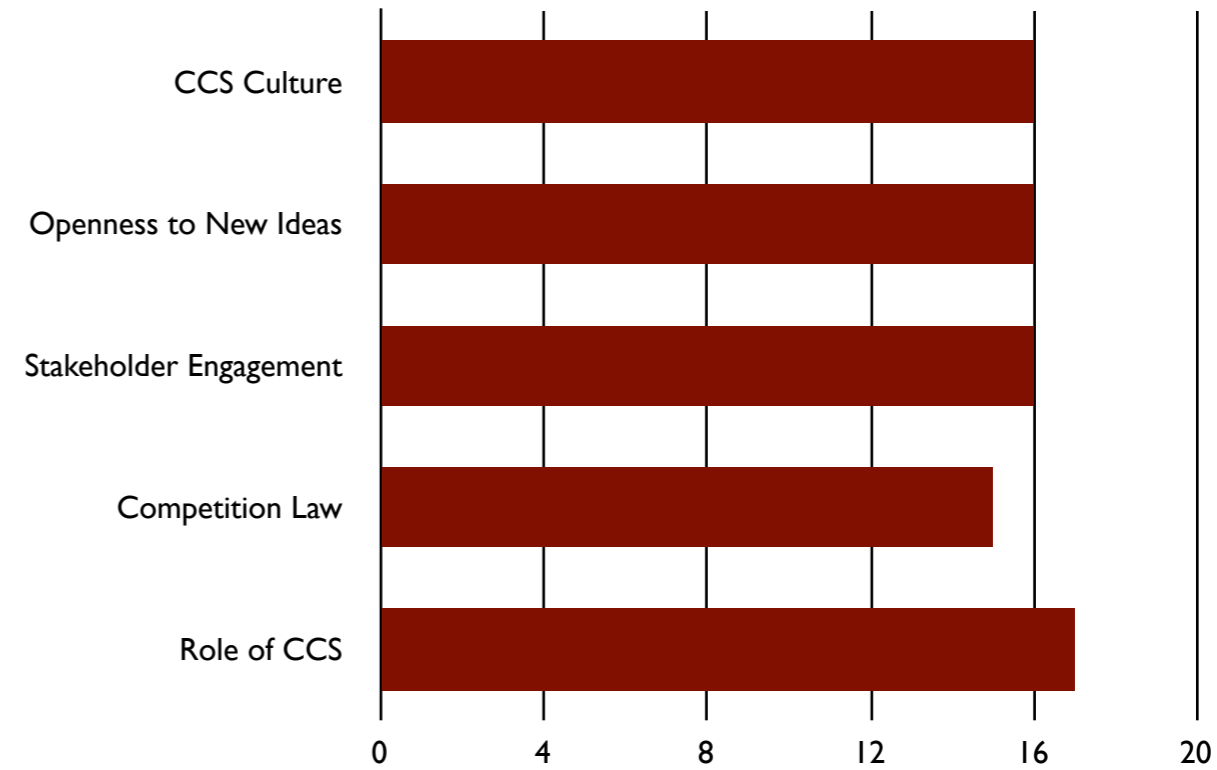


# An overview of **External** dataset – 26 stories in total

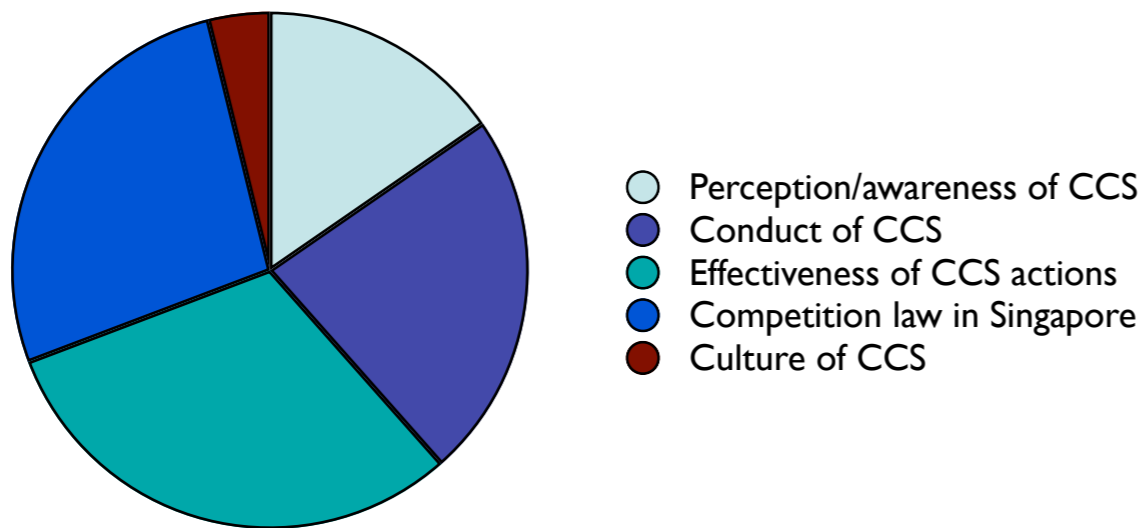
**Total story count by triad \***



**Total story count by polarity \***



**Theme of story**

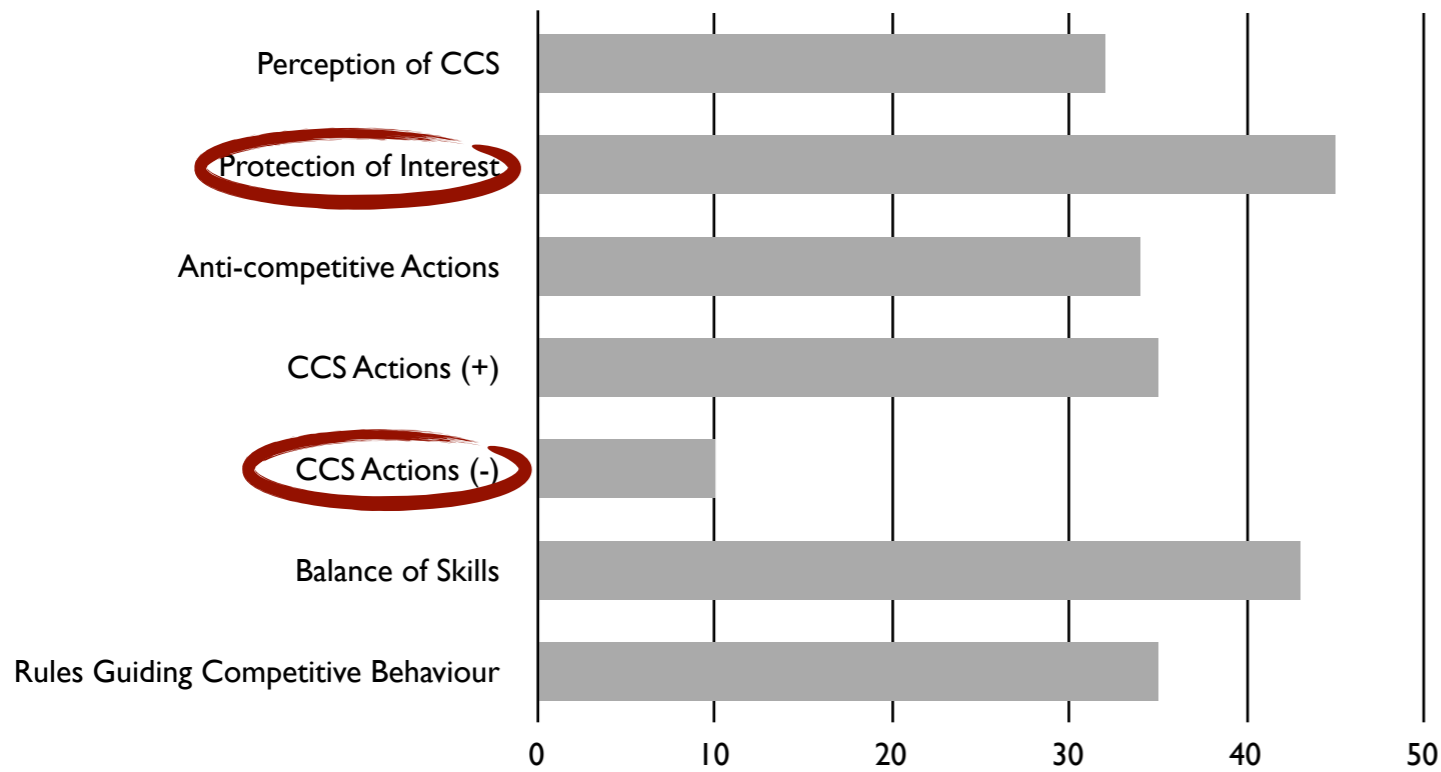


\* Where stories have been indicated as “Not Applicable”, they do not appear on the histograms

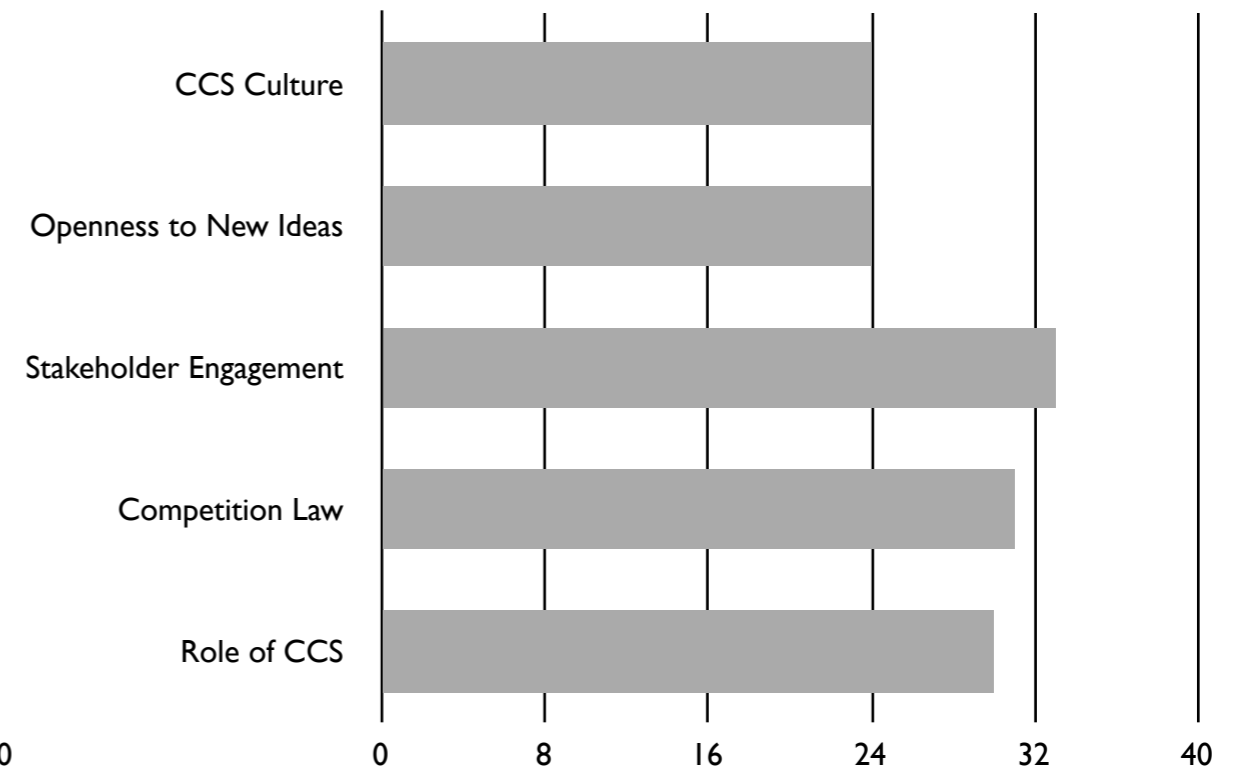


# An overview of Internal dataset – 54 stories in total

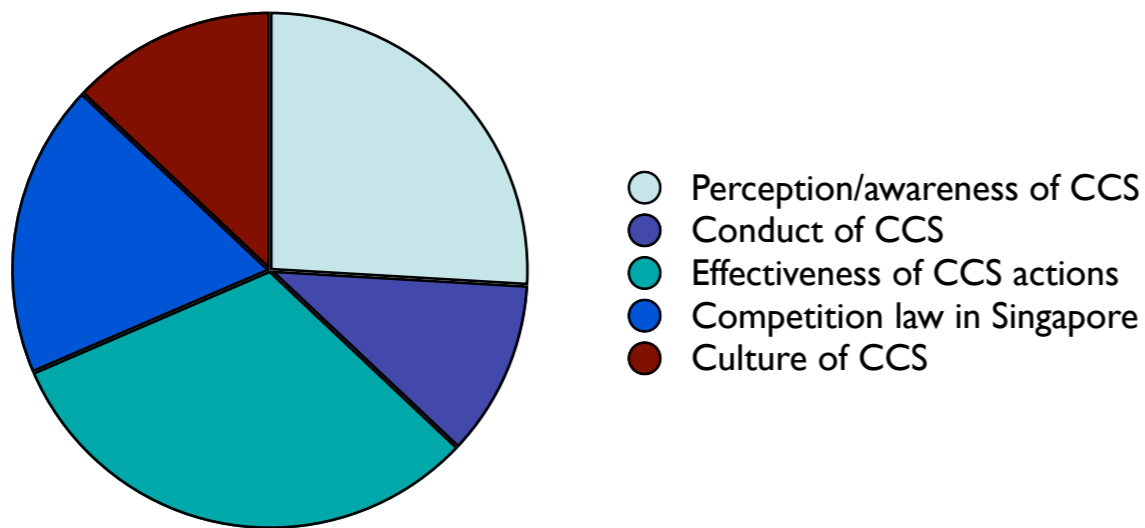
**Total story count by triad \***



**Total story count by polarity \***



**Theme of story**

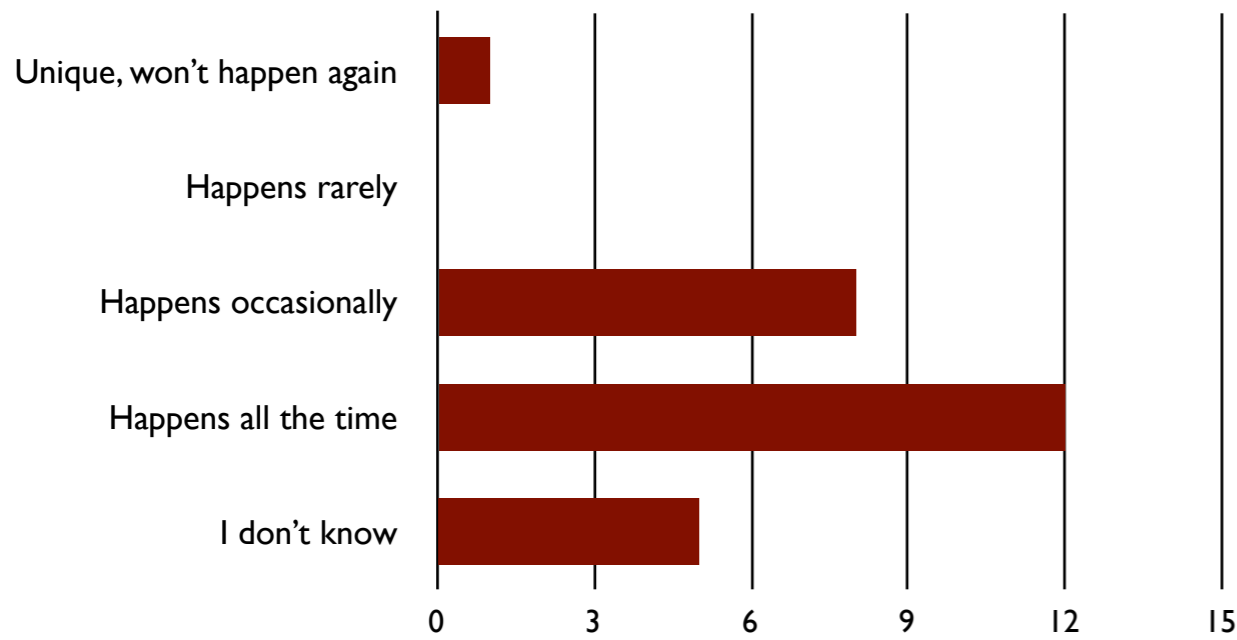


\* Where stories have been indicated as “Not Applicable”, they do not appear on the histograms



# An overview of **External** dataset – 26 stories in total

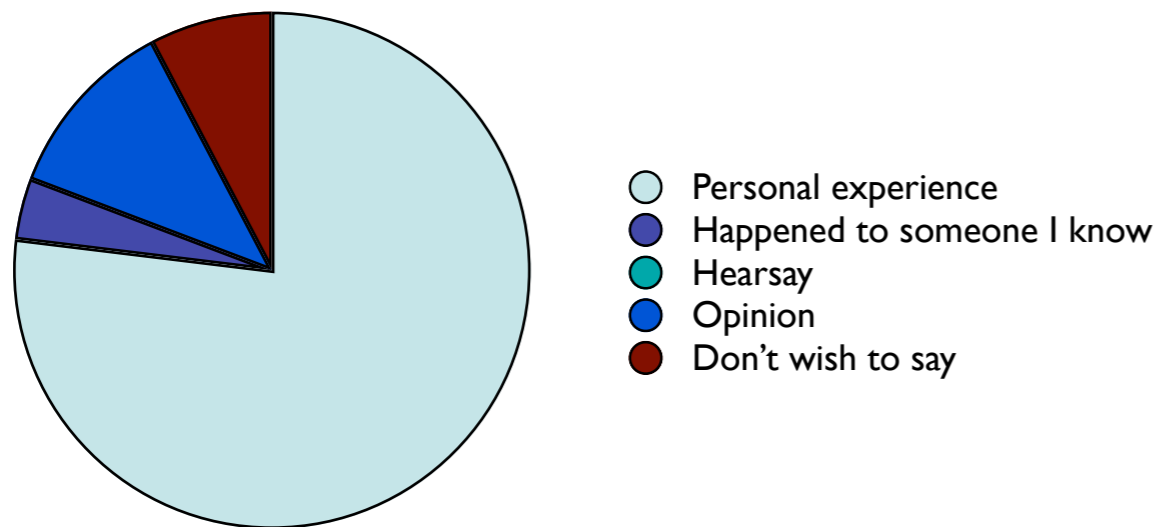
Frequency of story



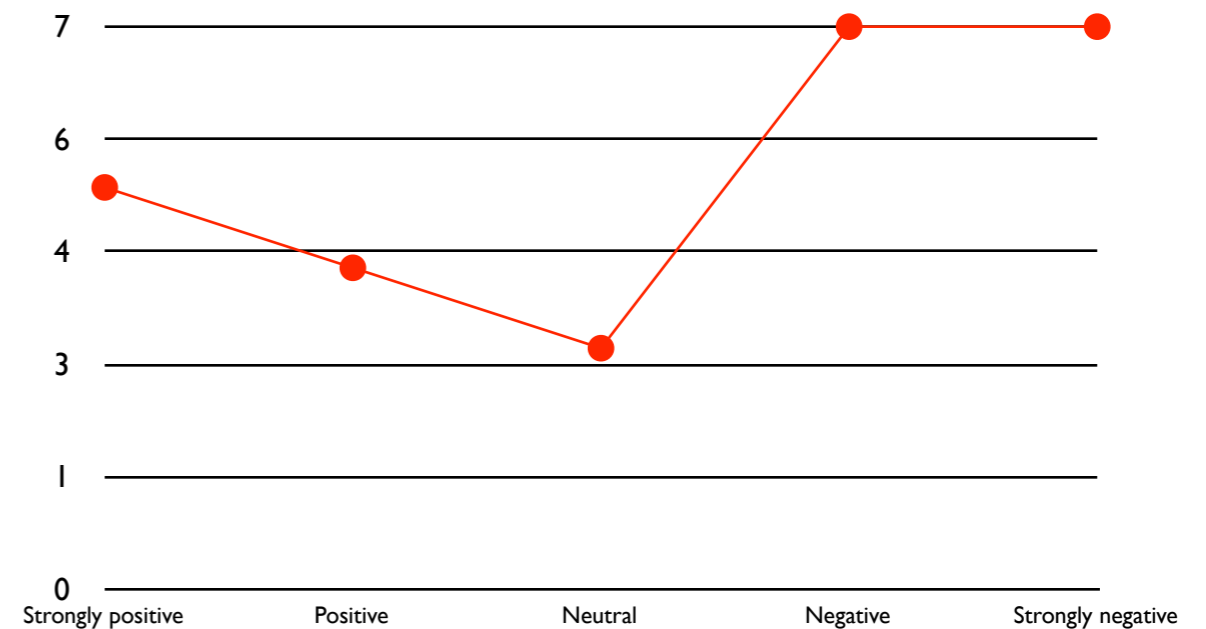
Seniority within organisation



Origin of story

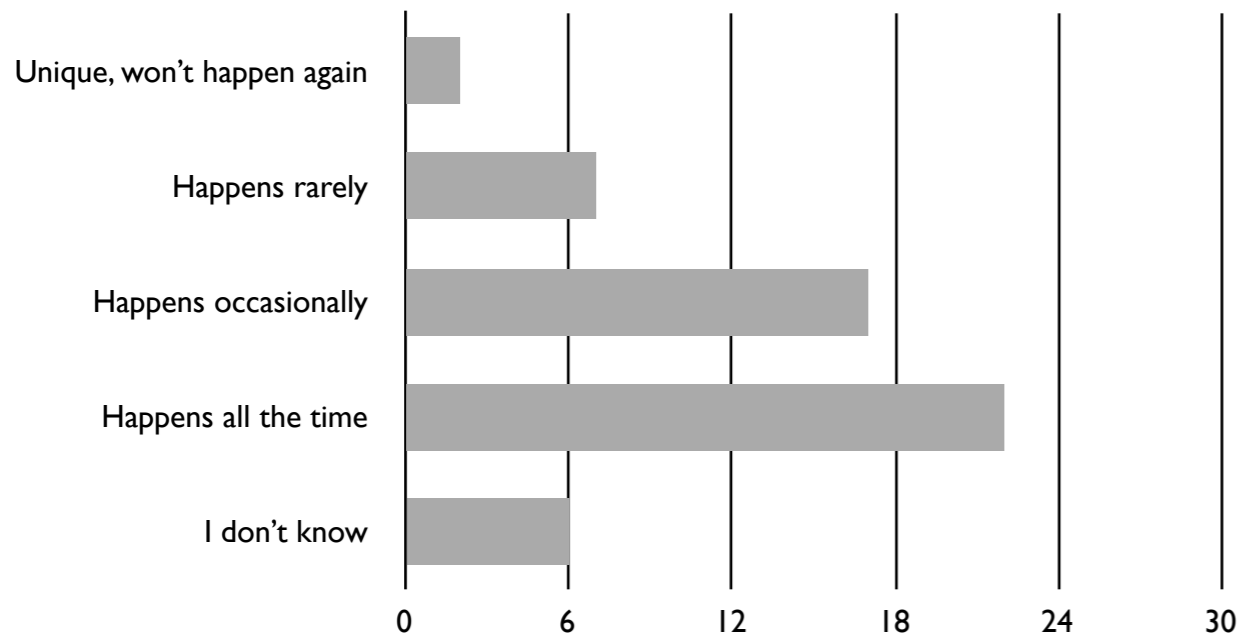


Emotional tone of story



# An overview of Internal dataset – 54 stories in total

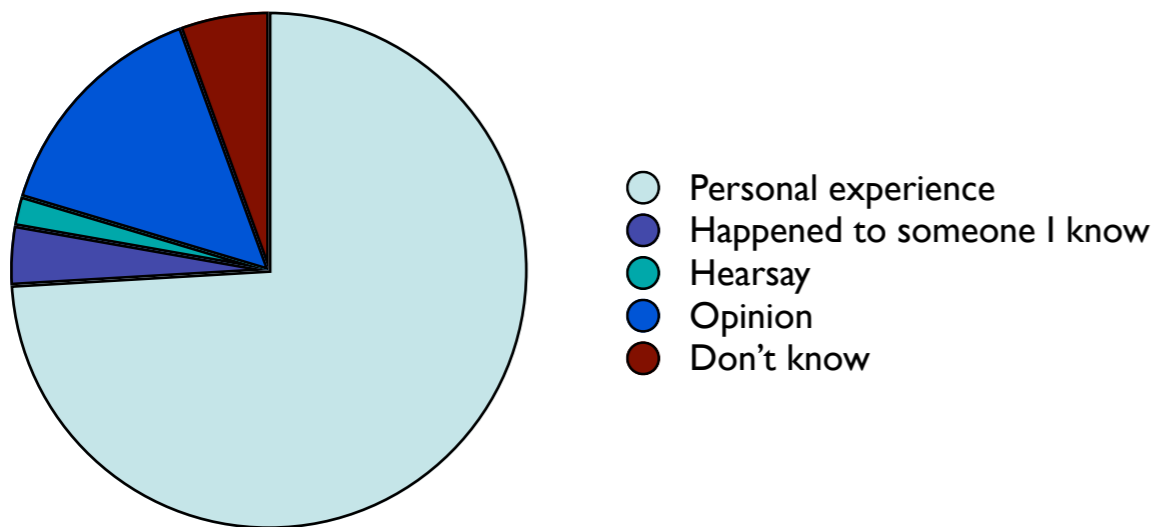
**Frequency of story**



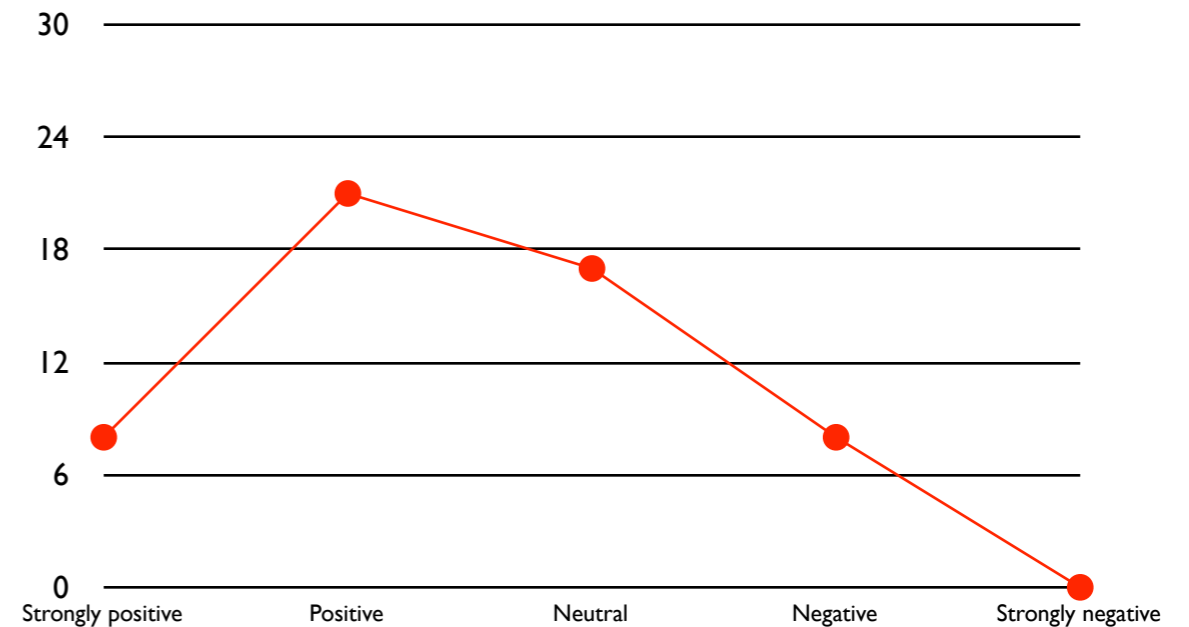
**Seniority within organisation**



**Origin of story**



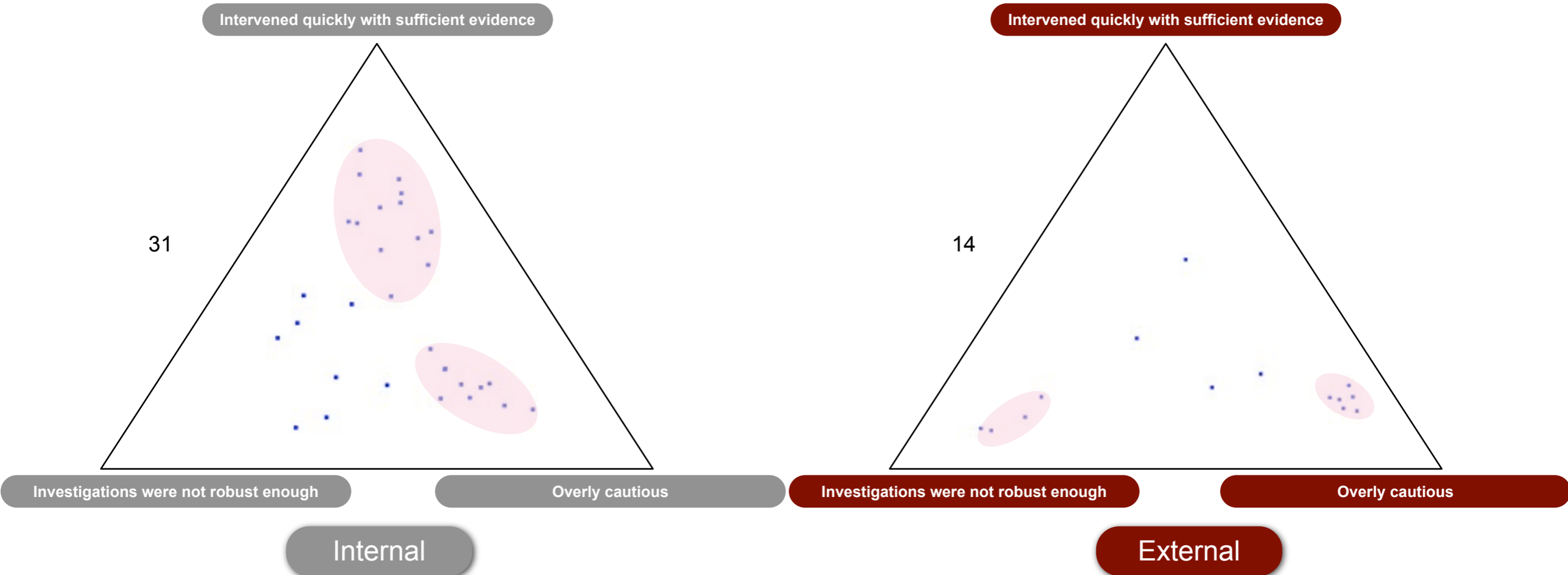
**Emotional tone of story**



# Triads



# The overall perception of CCS actions in my story was that it was...



**Observation:**

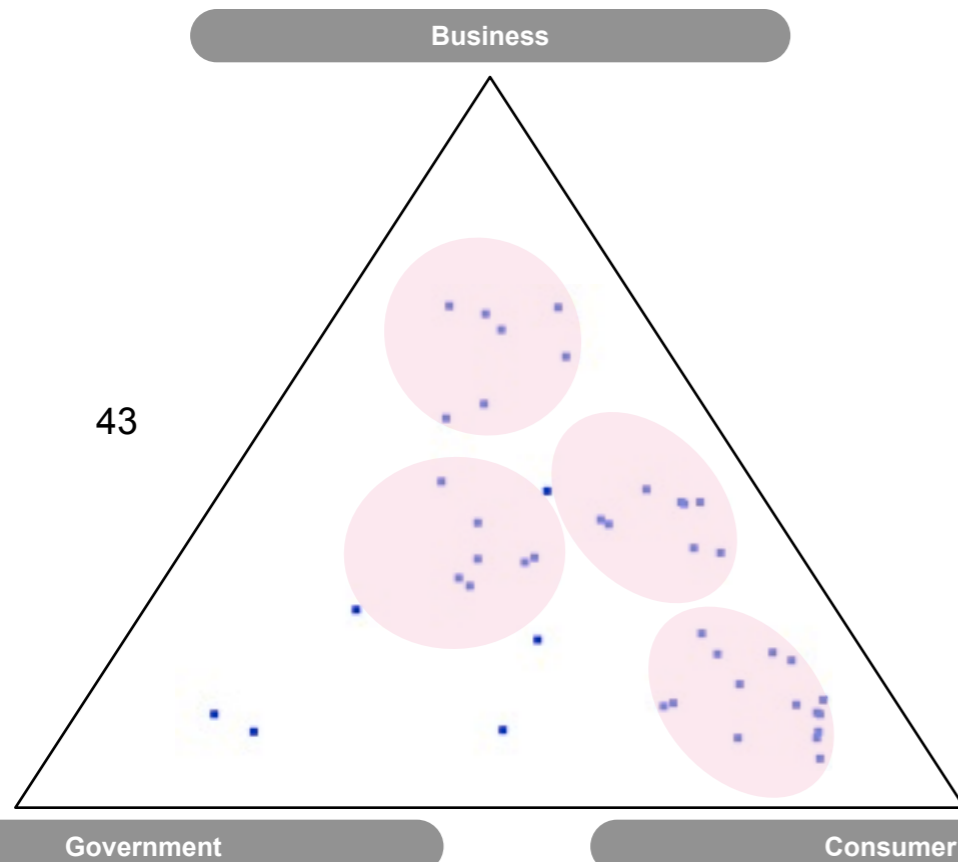
From the Internal triad, stories seemed clustered towards the rightward apices of “Intervening quickly with sufficient evidence” or “Overly cautious”. The External triad saw more stories placed towards the bottom two apices, towards “Not robust enough” or “Overly cautious”. Strikingly, the External group also did not place any stories towards the “ideal” top apex.

**Interpretation:**

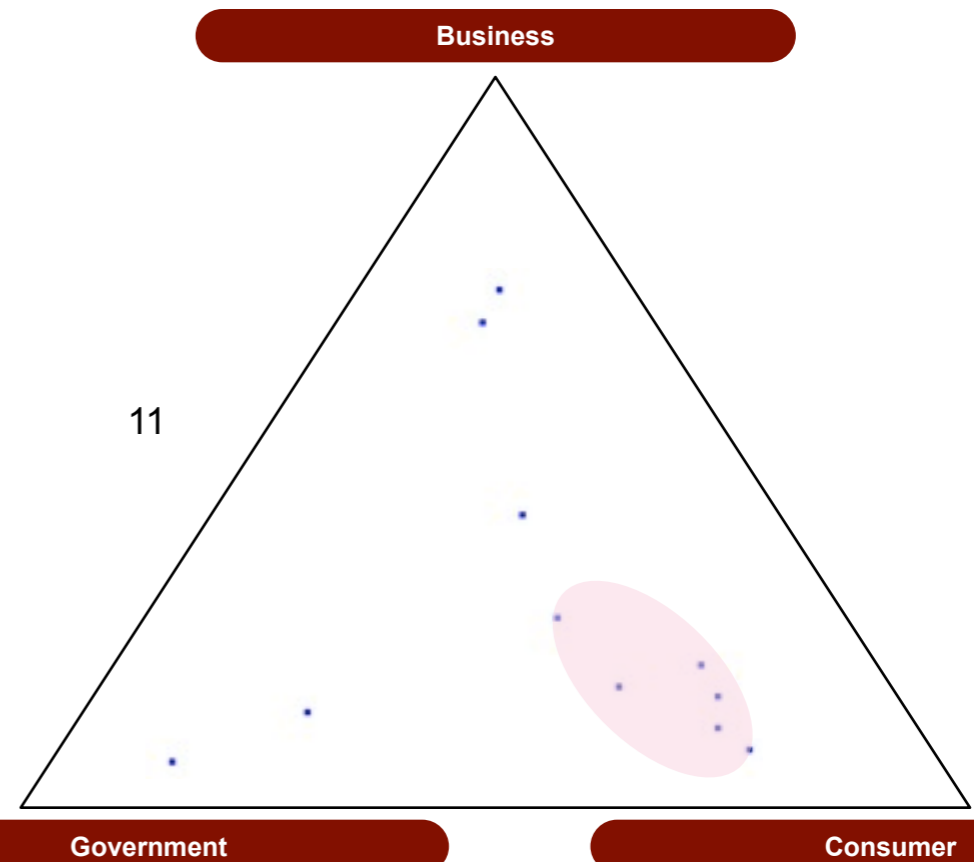
It was clear that Internal stakeholders viewed intervention as timely or occasionally overly cautious, while External stakeholders tended to hold a different opinion – note the stories located towards “Investigations were not robust enough” for the External group.



# Whose interest is being looked after in this story?



Internal



External

**Observations:**

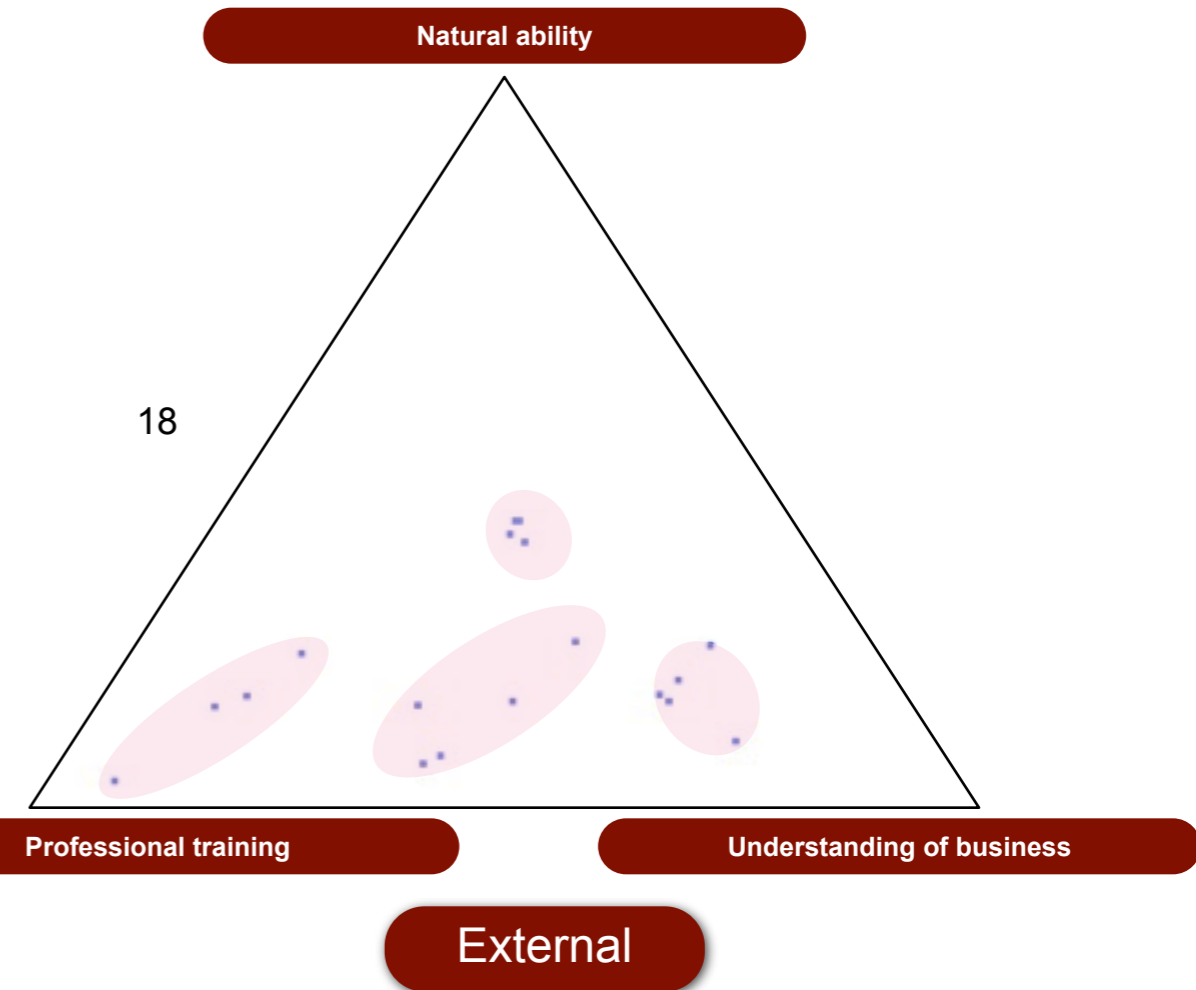
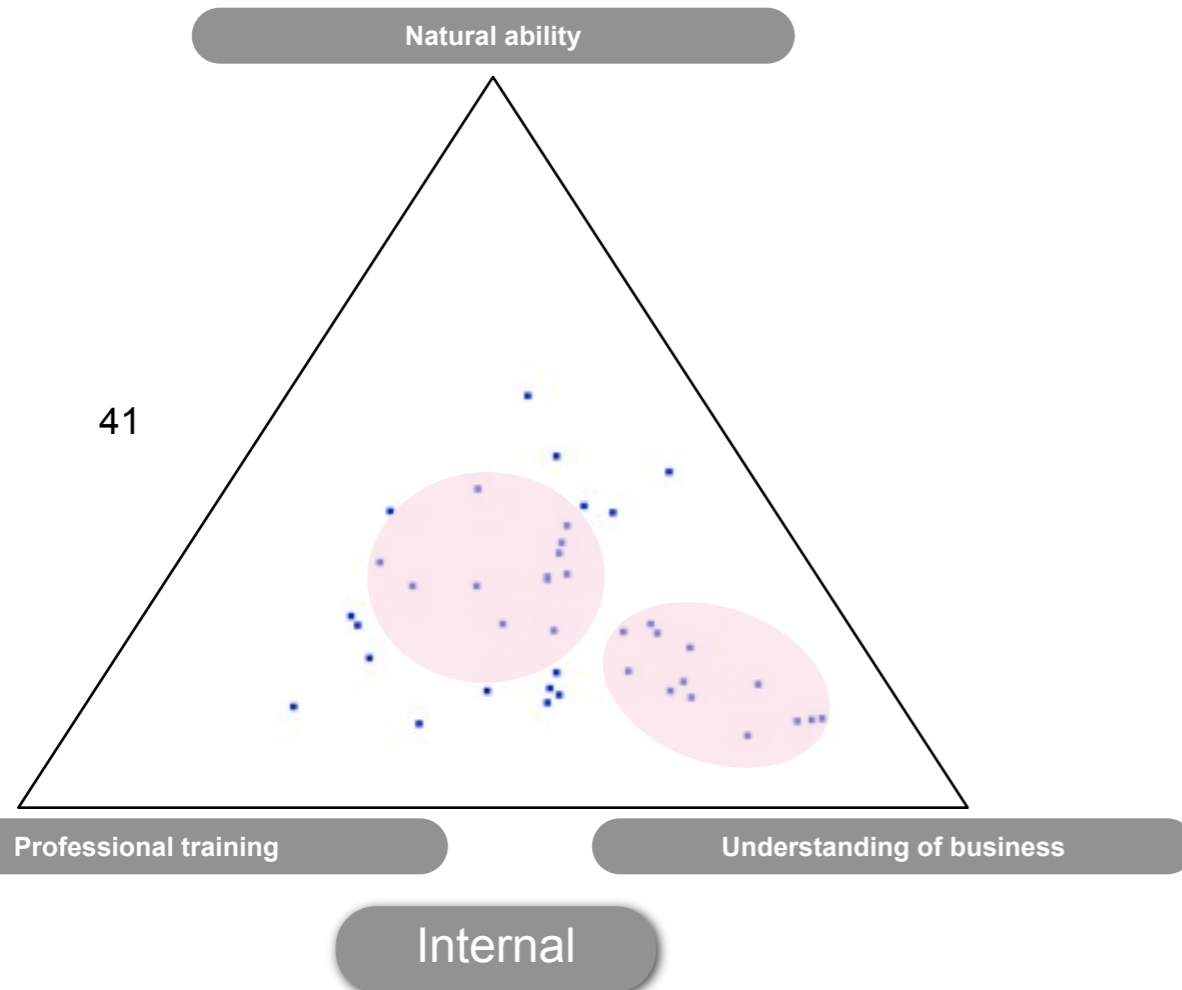
The Internal triad shows strong clusters of stories towards “Consumer”, “Consumer and Business”, “Business” and also a combination of all three. “Government” has a few stories. The External triad shows more diverse views but the strongest cluster seems to be at “Consumer”.

**Interpretation:**

External stakeholders perceive the mission of CCS in clear terms – its role is to look out for consumers. Internal stakeholders seem to take a more nuanced view – different stakeholders take priority at different points, and occasionally there is a need to balance all three.



# To resolve the issue in my story, the balance of skills required is...



**Observation:**

The Internal stories were clustered in two areas, the middle and towards the bottom right apex of “Understanding of business”. The External stories were mostly clustered towards the bottom half of the triad, away from “Natural ability”. Both Internal and External groups viewed “Understanding of business” as an essential skill and also saw “Professional training” as important. The External group did not see “Natural ability” as important as the Internal did.

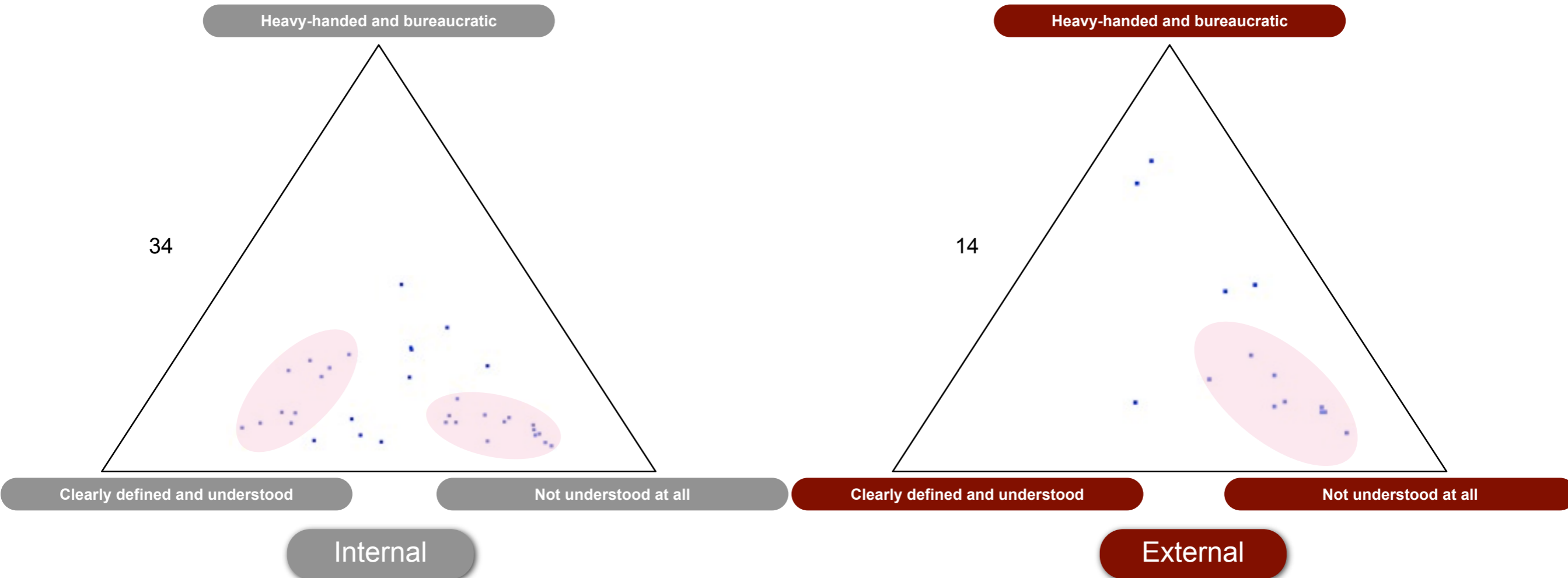
**Interpretation:**

Clearly professional training and understanding of business play important roles in the effectiveness of CCS staff. Internal staff also seem to think that natural ability plays a role, probably due to their familiarity with the situations they face.





# In my story, rules guiding competitive behaviour are...



**Observation:**

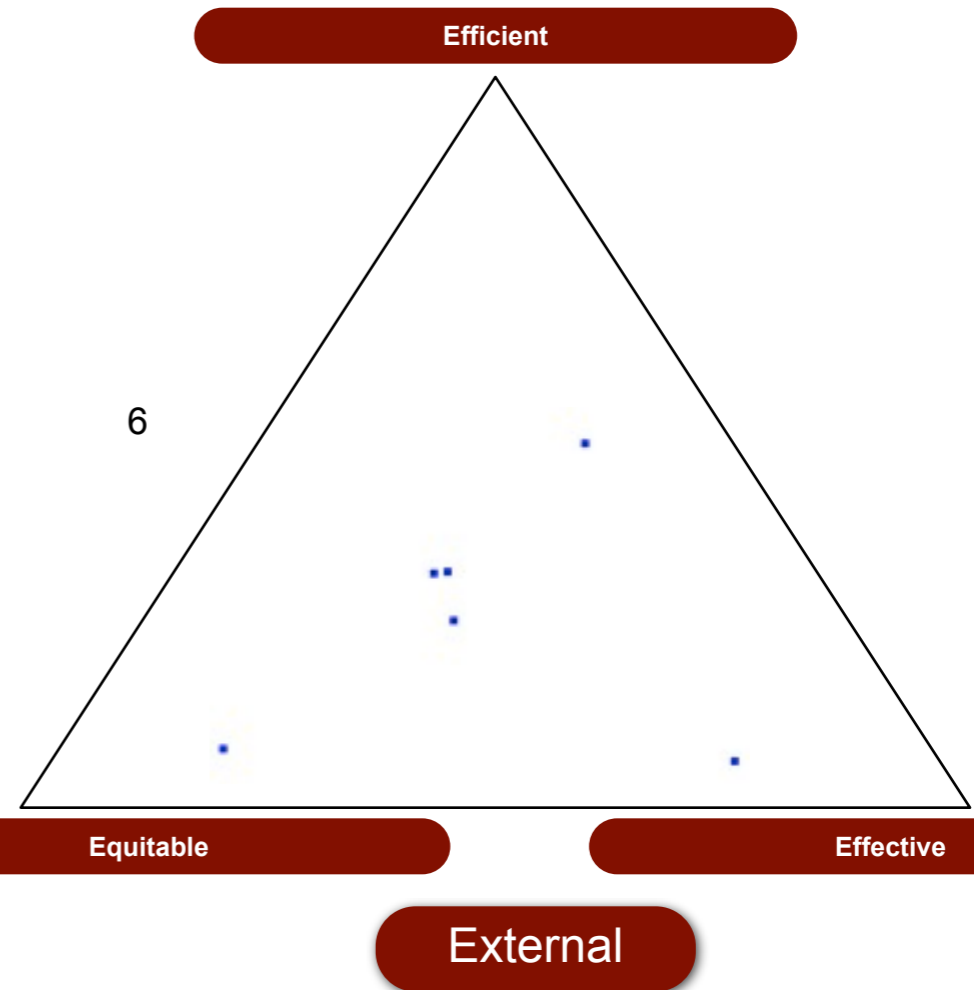
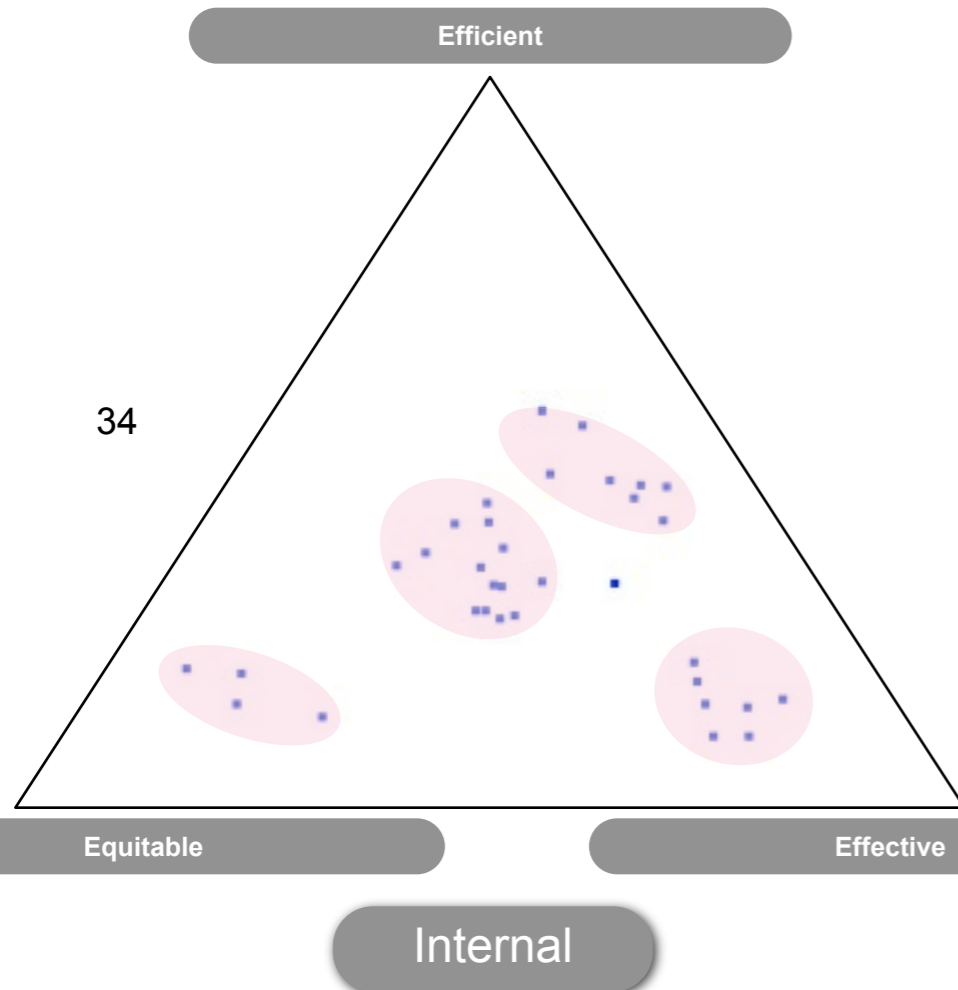
Internal stories were located nearer the bottom half of the triad towards “Clearly defined” and “Not understood”. The External stories were located towards the rightward region of the triad, towards “Not understood” with a few at “Heavy-handed”.

**Interpretation:**

For the External group, there were no stories located clearly at the bottom left apex, suggesting from their perspective that rules are *not very* clearly defined and understood by market participants. The Internal group had two distinct clusters. Stories in the bottom right focused on market participants who exhibited a poor understanding of competition laws. An equal number however appeared on the bottom left, indicating a perspective that rules are sufficient defined and understood.



# CCS actions in my story were (+) ...



**Observations:**

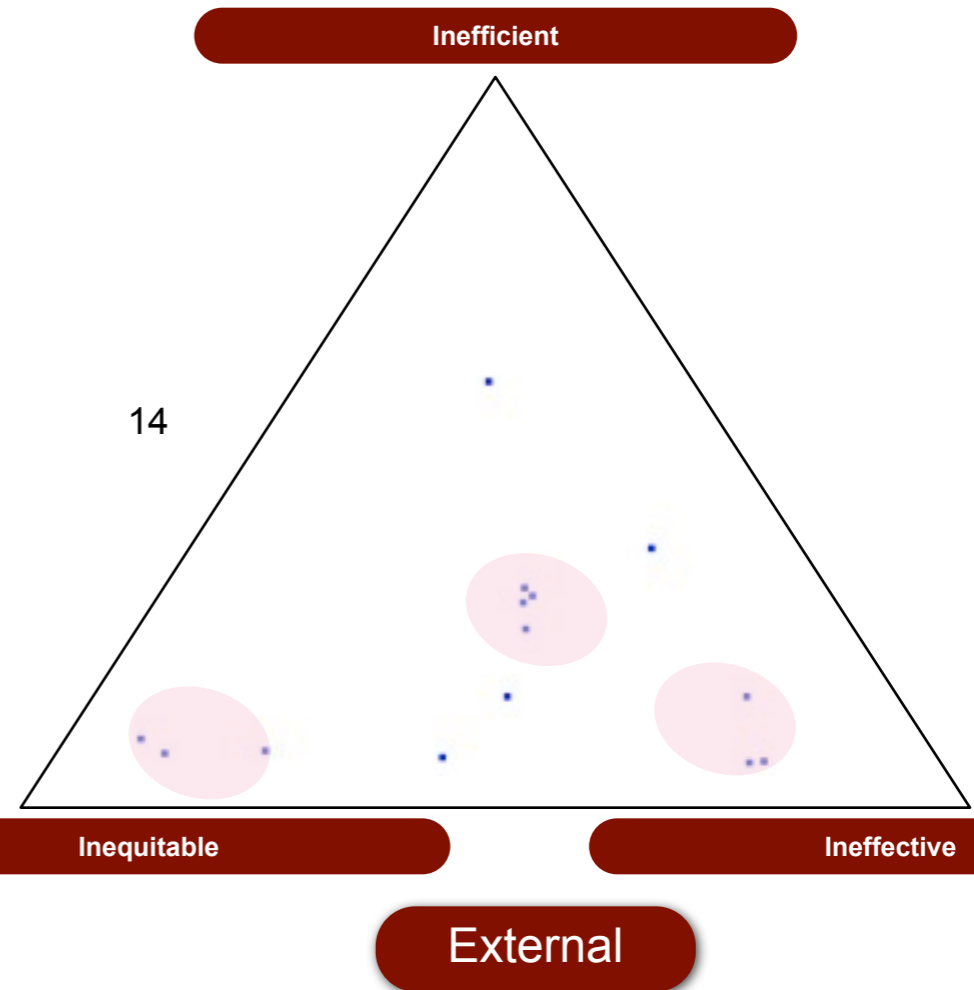
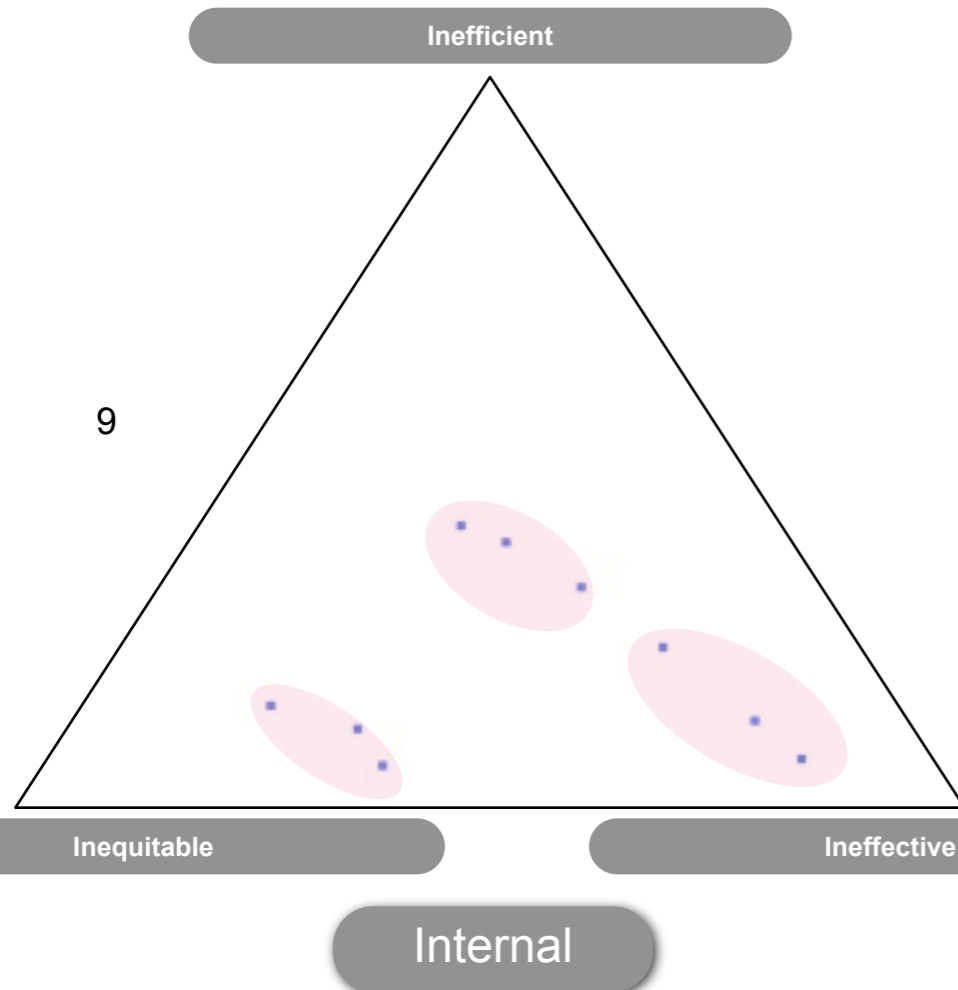
There were a large number of stories in the Internal triad, clustered in the middle as well as towards each apex. The External group did not have any discernible strong cluster but the distribution of stories appeared to mirror the Internal group.

**Interpretations:**

The Internal group tended to have a positive view of its performance. Both groups tend to think the balance of three elements are similar. This is a good result where both Internal and External stakeholders agree that CCS has achieved a balance.



# CCS actions in my story were (-) ...



**Observation:**

There were few Internal stories tagged for this triad; clusters were tagged towards “Ineffective”, all three elements or “Inequitable and Ineffective”. The External triad had double the number of stories, scattered all over the triad.

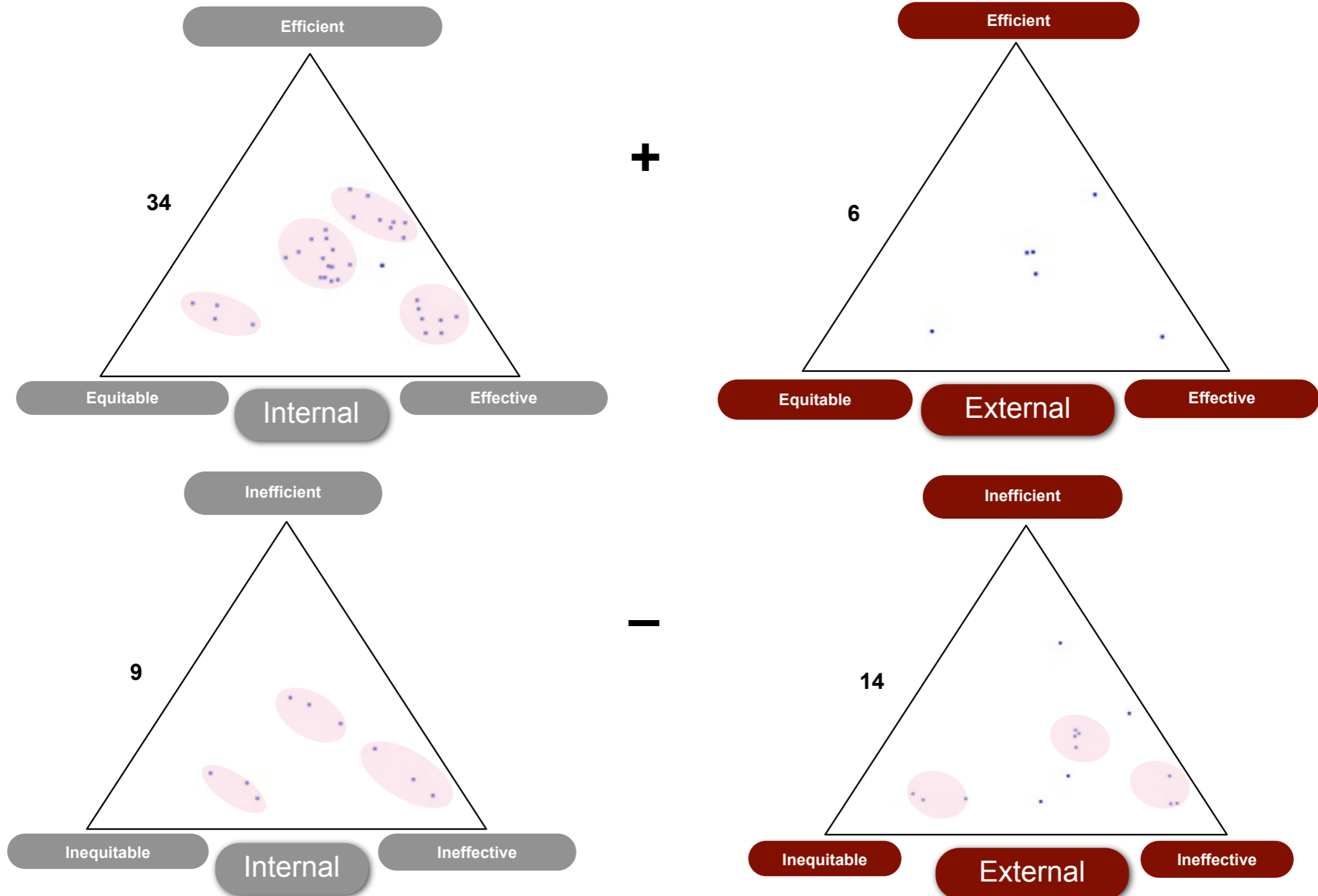
**Interpretation:**

The Internal stories that were present seemed to agree with the External stories that saw CCS actions as “Ineffective” and “Inequitable”. The lack of stories towards the “Inefficient” apex suggests that neither group saw inefficiency as an issue.



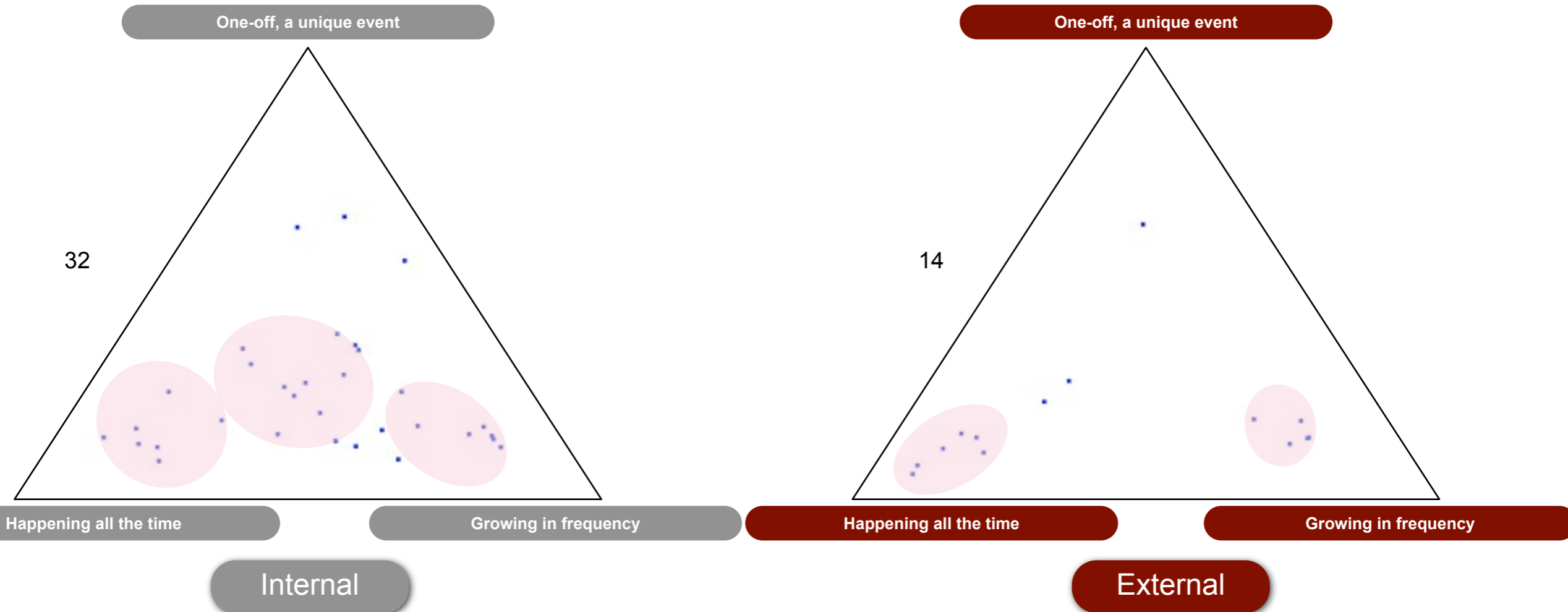
## [ Comparison of CCS Actions triads ]

Comparison of the CCS Action triads reveals the striking disconnect in perceptions of Internal and External stakeholders. Internal stakeholders view their past actions positively, while External stakeholders seem to hold different opinions



## [ Anti-competitive Actions ]

Thinking about the anti-competitive actions in my story, such actions seem to be...



### **Observation:**

Both Internal and External stories were located largely towards the bottom of the triad towards “Happening all the time” and “Growing in frequency”. A large cluster in the Internal group views all three elements as present.

### **Interpretation:**

There seems to be a congruence of views of both Internal and External stakeholders – anti-competitive actions are either “Happening all the time” and / or “Growing in frequency”.



# Polarities



The following charts present results at a high level, starting with histograms for each individual filter

**As shown in my story, when engaging stakeholders CCS...**

Is so constrained by bureaucracy that no real change can be made



Tries so hard to be "professional" that it comes across as pretentious

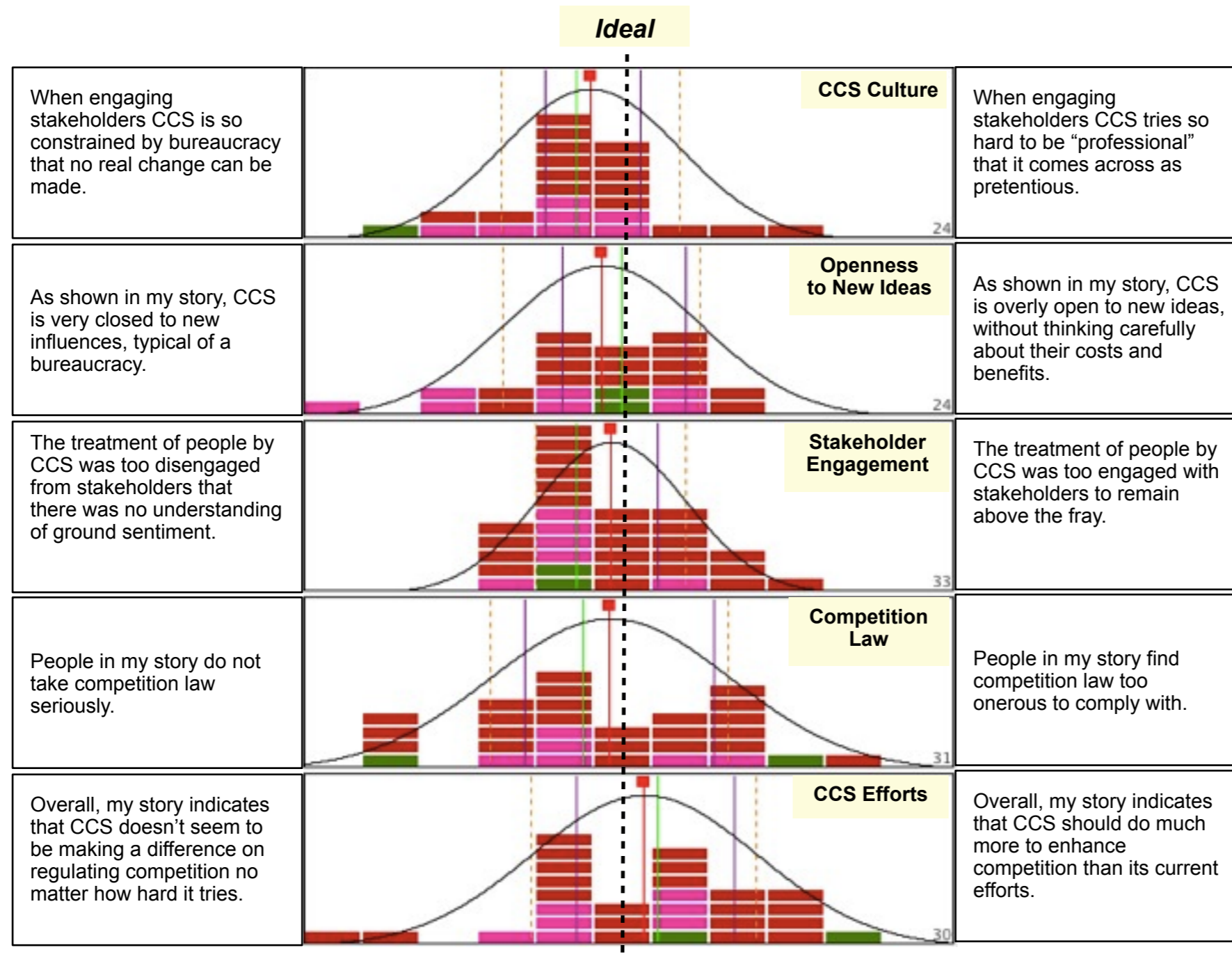


Number of stories tagged with this filter

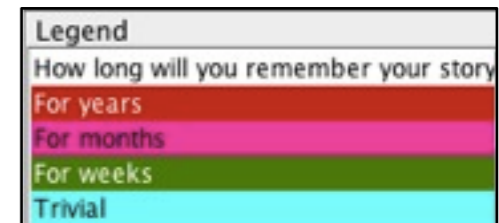
- Each blue bar on the histogram represents a story that has been tagged with the filter
- The location of the blue bar on the filter is indicated by the selected position of the bubble on the slider bar



The scores showed mostly ideal outcomes from the Internal group; signifiers to note would be **Competition Law** and **CCS Efforts** for their greater distribution (indicating more diverse perspectives)



Internal



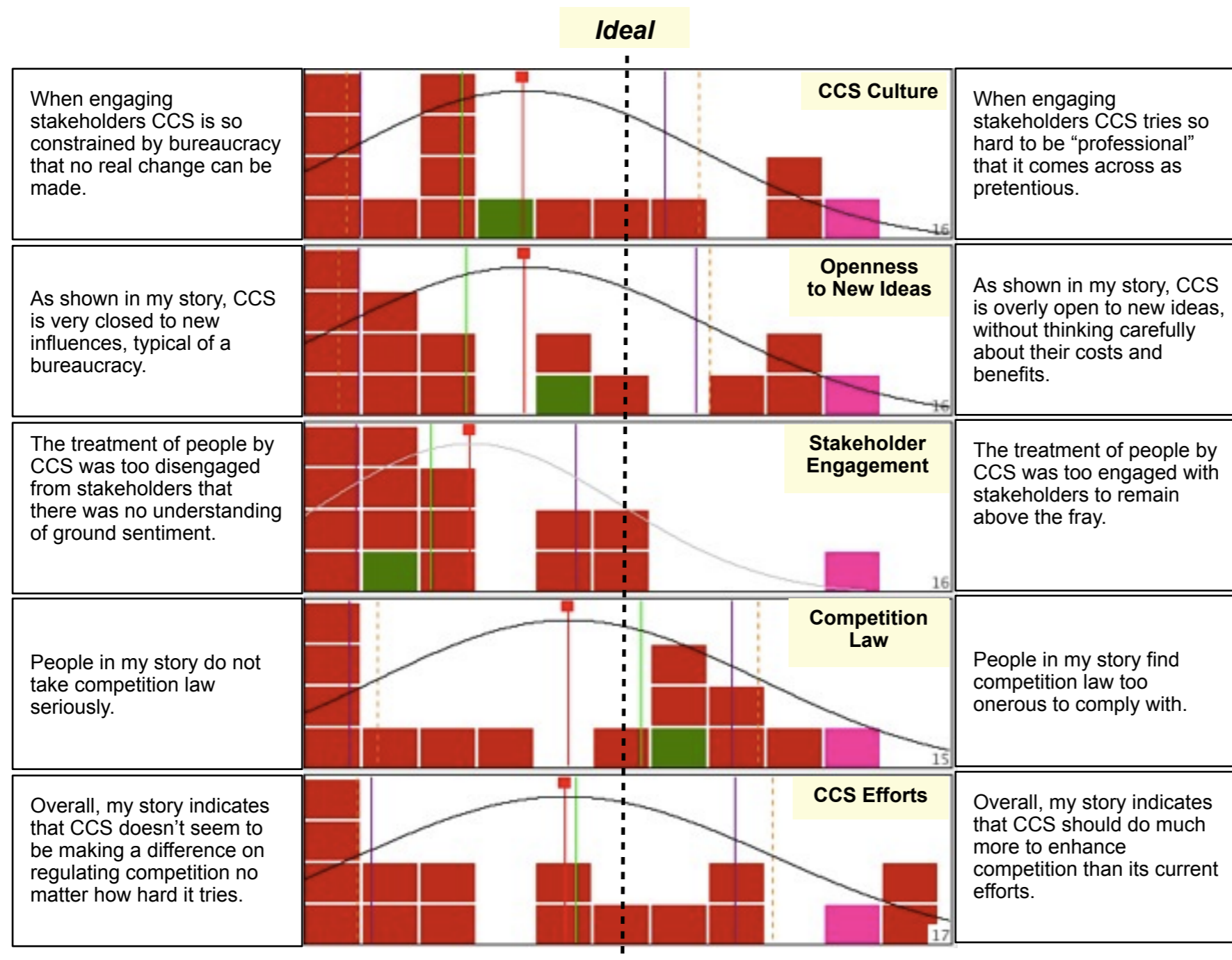
For **Competition Law**, the range of opinion is more diverse than the other filters, with stories present towards the left extreme

Some internal uncertainty about the effectiveness of **CCS Efforts** are evident from the distribution of stories here

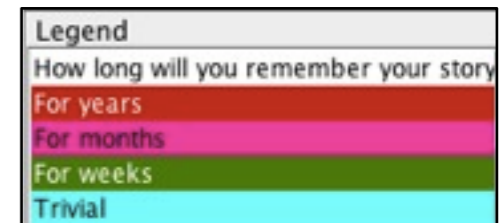




Unlike the mostly ideal outcomes seen in the Internal group, the External group has most of its stories clustered towards the extreme left polarities (but also greater distribution than the Internal group)



External



There is a clear difference here on **Stakeholder Engagement** – the External group clearly views CCS as being too disengaged. This opinion directly contrasts with the Internal group



# CCS Culture

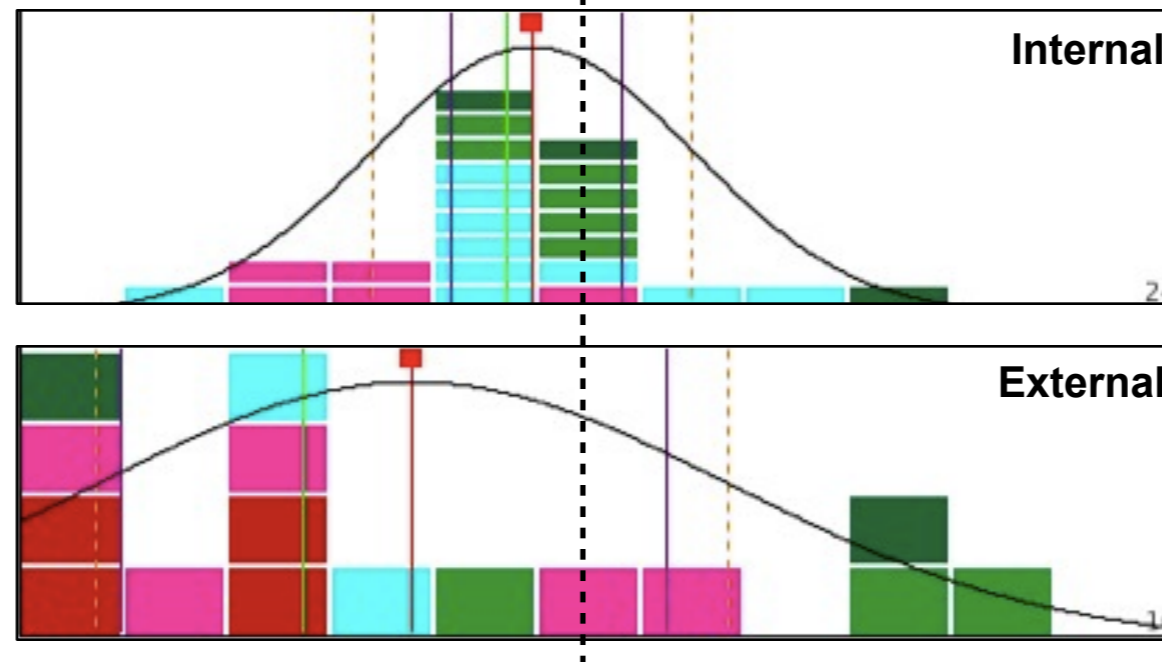
As shown in my story, when engaging stakeholders CCS...

Is so constrained by bureaucracy that no real change can be made



Tries so hard to be "professional" that it comes across as pretentious

Ideal



- Internal stakeholders see CCS as positioned close to the ideal between bureaucracy and professionalism
- External stakeholders, however, view there to be a greater level of bureaucracy; there is a peak of stories located at the extreme left when bureaucracy is seen as immense and most of the stories are negative



# Openness to New Ideas

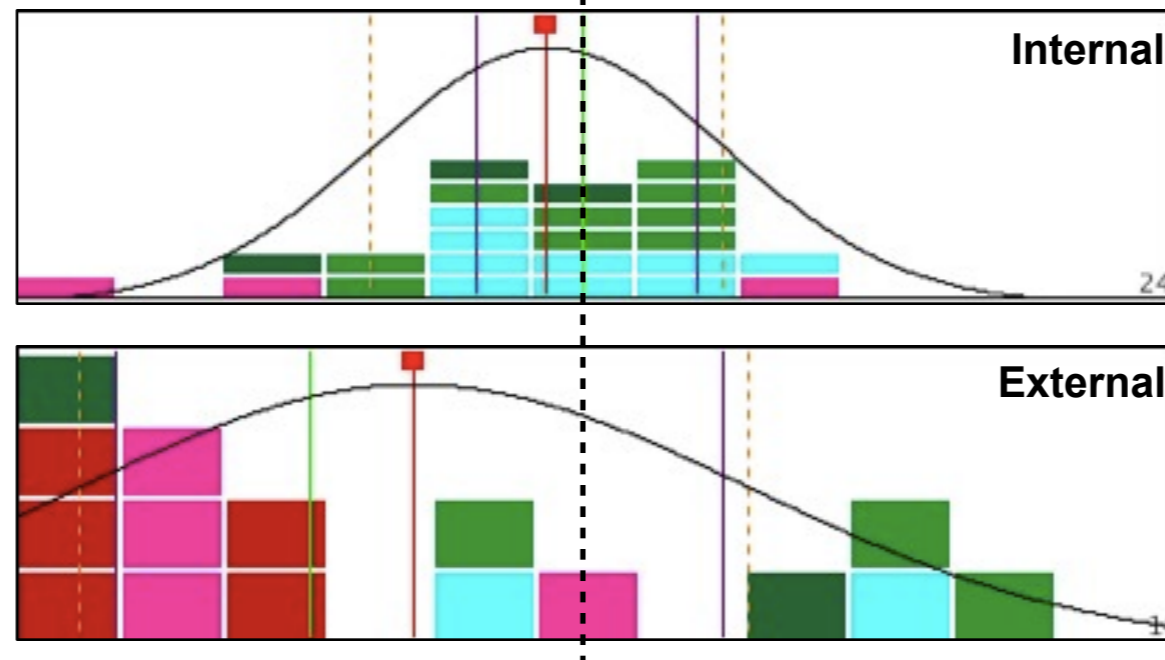
As shown in my story, CCS is...

Very closed to new influences,  
typical of a bureaucracy



Overly open to new ideas, without  
thinking carefully about their costs  
and benefits

Ideal



- Internally the view is that CCS is adequately open to new influences, with the mean near the ideal, with neutral and positive stories
- The External group tend to see CCS as possessing a greater degree of insularity – most of the stories are located in the extreme left region and are negative as well



# Stakeholder Engagement

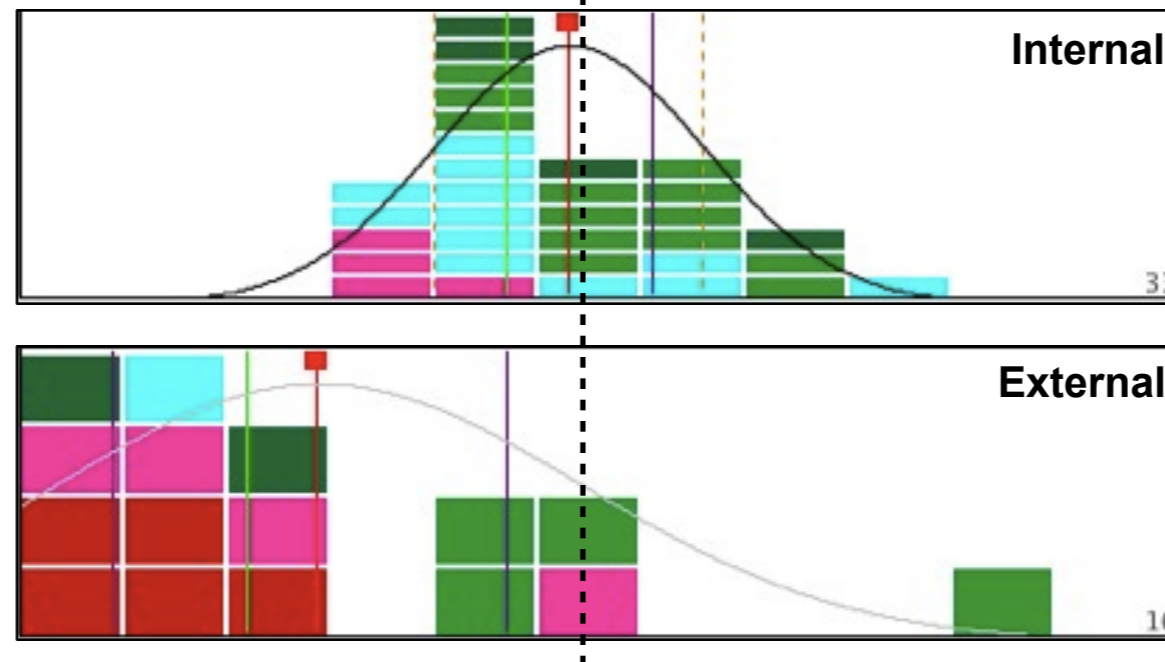
The treatment of people by CCS as reflected in my story was...

Too disengaged from stakeholders that there was no understanding of ground sentiment



Too engaged with stakeholders to remain above the fray

Ideal



Your feelings regarding your story are:  
 Strongly positive  
 Positive  
 Neutral  
 Negative  
 Strongly negative

- The Internal group view stakeholder engagement as adequately engaged, with stories clustered around the ideal
- The External group, on the other hand, tended to have stories located in the extreme left region towards strong disengagement from stakeholders, suggesting that stronger efforts at engagement by CCS would be needed



# Competition Law

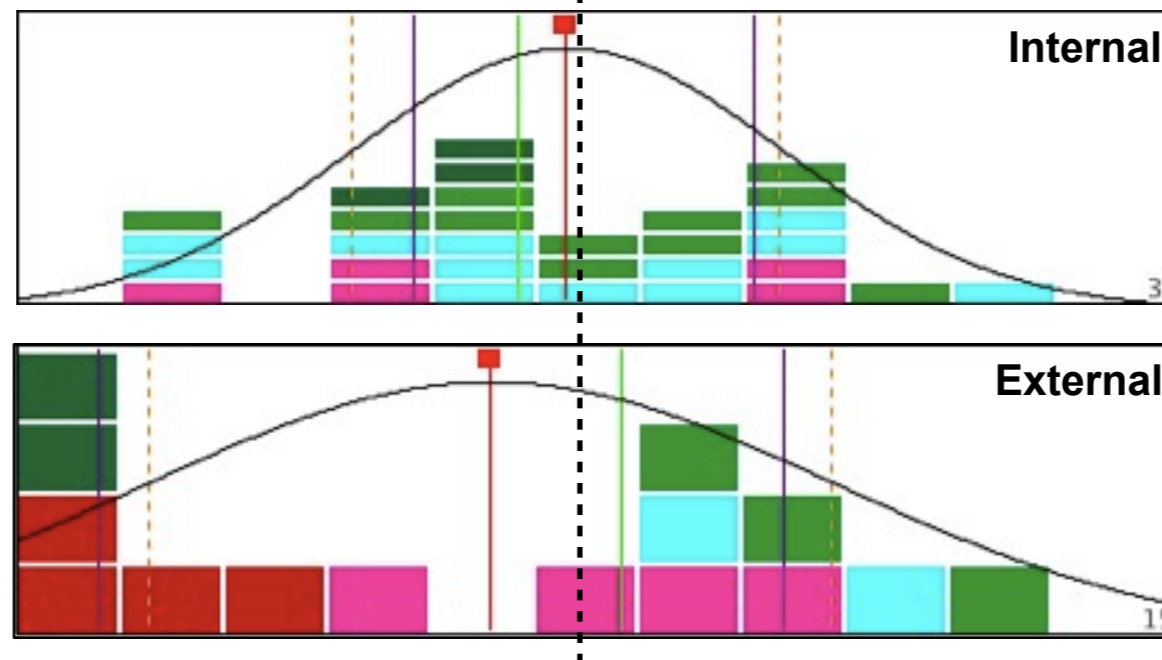
## People in my story ...

Do not take competition law seriously



Find competition law too onerous to comply with

Ideal



Your feelings regarding your story are:

- Strongly positive
- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative
- Strongly negative

- The Internal mean is located near the ideal, where competition law is seen as appropriately easy to comply with
- However, there was a diversity of views among External stakeholders, who had stories at both extremes – towards not taking competition law seriously as well as finding competition law more onerous



# CCS Efforts

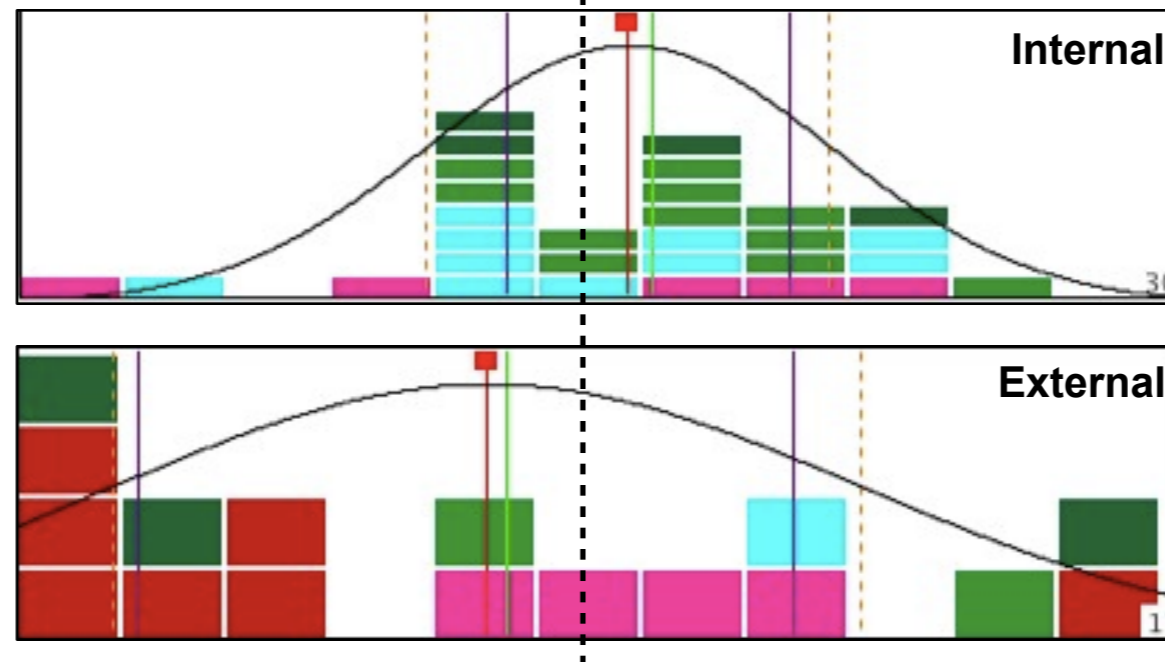
## Overall, my story indicates that CCS...

Doesn't seem to be making a difference on regulating competition no matter how hard it



Should do much more to enhance competition than its current efforts

Ideal



Your feelings regarding your story are:  
 Strongly positive  
 Positive  
 Neutral  
 Negative  
 Strongly negative

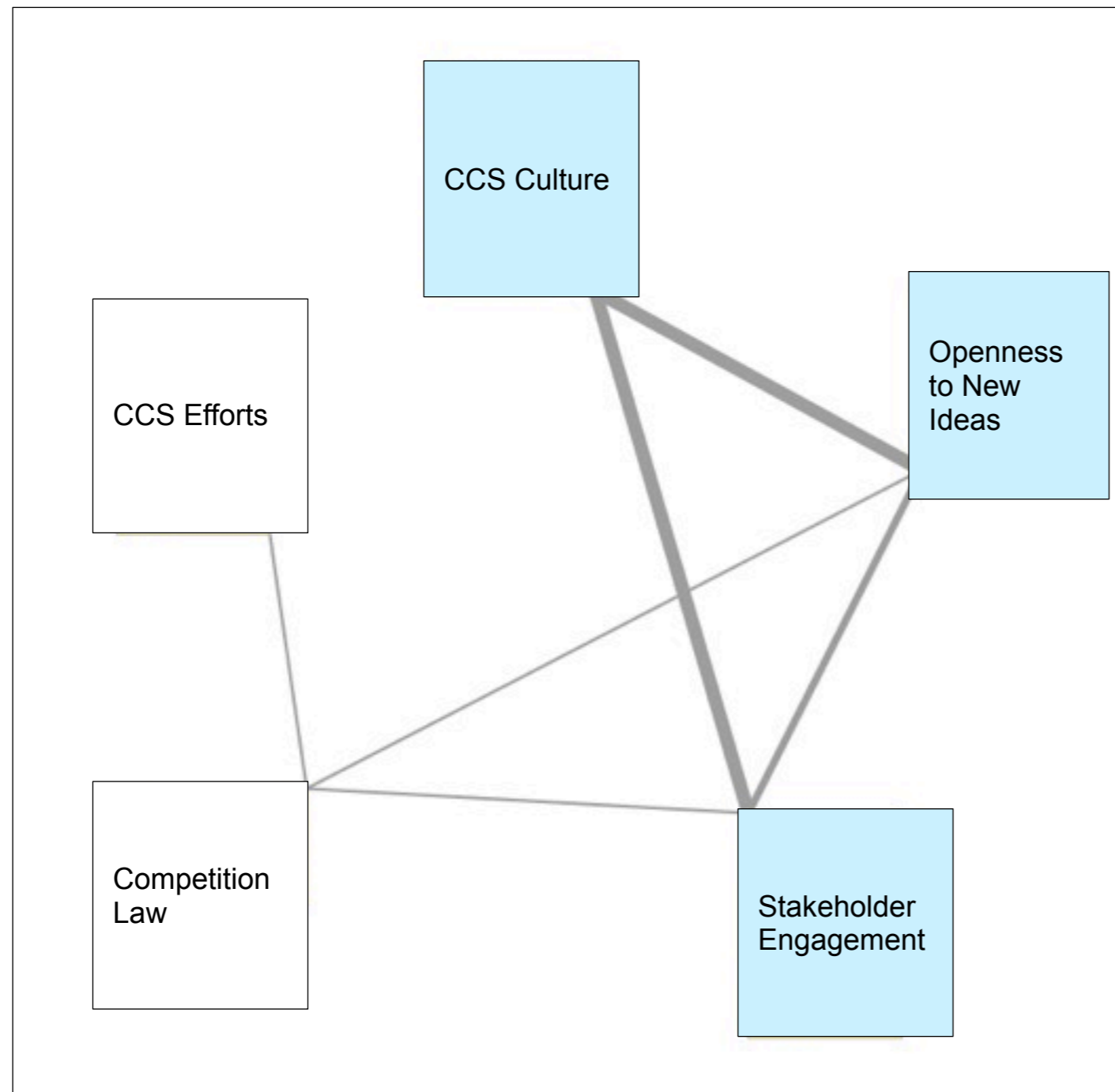
- The Internal perception is that CCS efforts are adequate, with stories located towards the rightward region where there is a consensus that CCS can do more
- The External group had a harsher view of CCS efforts, with many stories located towards the left where CCS is not seen to be making much of a difference – negative stories are located across the spectrum



# Relationships between filters

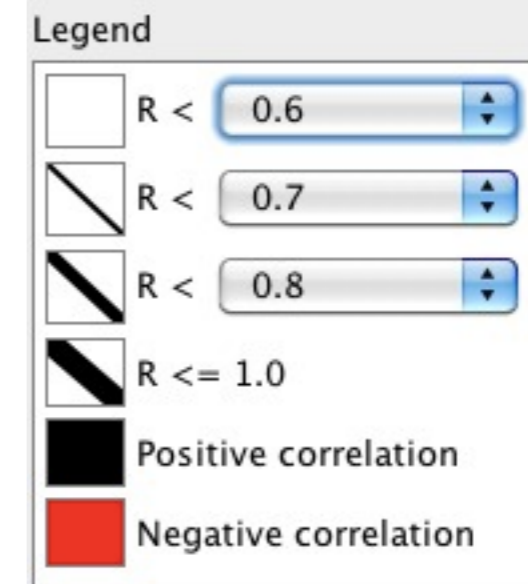


We can examine correlations amongst the filters for the data from the External dataset to seek insight into the relationships between the filters



R values

Lowest (absolute value): 0.62  
Highest: 0.83  
Mean: 0.74  
Standard deviation: 0.09



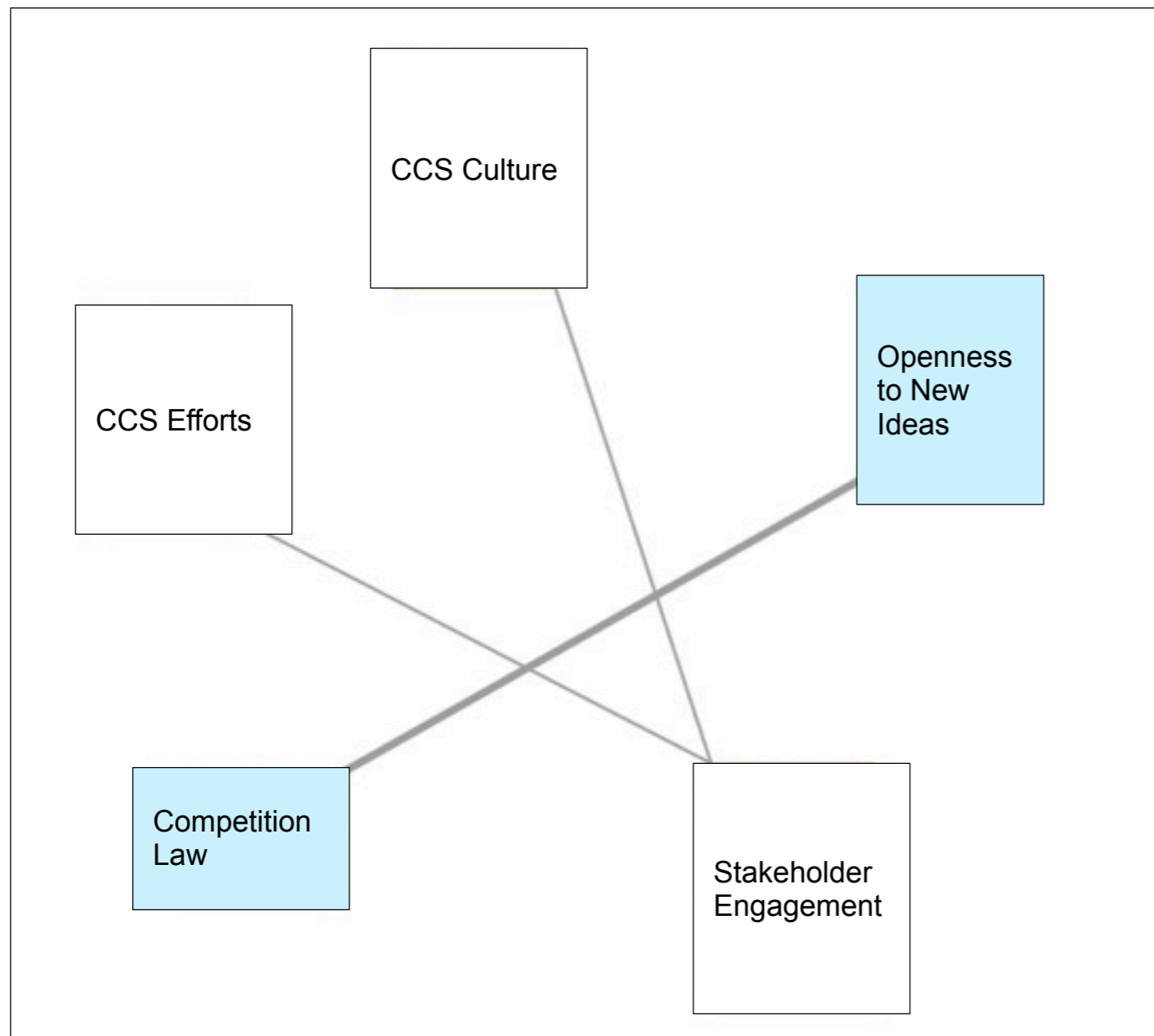
The strongest correlations (in blue) were seen between **Stakeholder Engagement, Openness to New Ideas** and **CCS Culture**

**CCS Efforts** were not strongly correlated to **Stakeholder Engagement**, which is surprising

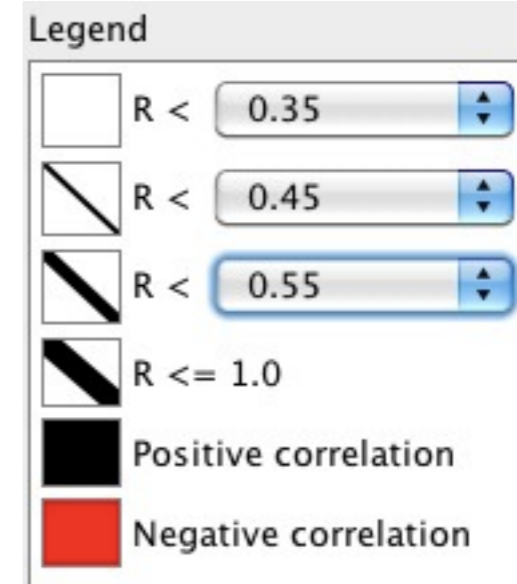




Similarly, we can examine correlations amongst the filters for the data from the Internal dataset to seek insight into the relationships between the filters



R values  
Lowest (absolute value): 0.43  
Highest: 0.46  
Mean: 0.45  
Standard deviation: 0.02



The strongest correlations (in blue) were seen between *Competition Law* and *Openness to New Ideas*



# Selected narrative fragments





# Challenges and next steps



# There were smaller than anticipated datasets due to difficulties of capturing narrative fragments in this environment

- **CCS staff seemed hesitant to share in the anecdote circles and online**
  - Despite our reassurances that permission had been given to collect their experiences, concerns were repeatedly raised in anecdote circles about confidentiality of information
  - This seemed to limit the amount of internal fragments collected
- **Many External stakeholders were lukewarm or indifferent to our calls and invitations to participate**
  - Calls (or attempts at calls) to all External stakeholders were made at least twice and three rounds of emails were sent to the people on the list provided
  - Some promised but didn't seem concerned enough to make the effort to contribute – this may be put down to survey fatigue
  - However most External stakeholders have had only a single interaction with CCS, and were reluctant to even consider sharing their experiences
  - It must be noted that we encountered some aggressive individuals who just wanted to vent their unhappiness at an interaction with CCS – we encouraged all of them to contribute but it is not clear how many made an effort
- **It is possible that greater contributions could have been obtained by using events such as the Outreach seminars or even *The Informant* viewing to trigger contributions**
  - If CCS was to continue this work, our recommendation is to ritualise capture on a regular basis by demonstrating commitment to the outcomes and to use all touchpoints with stakeholders to capture their perspectives (both Internal and External)



# With the datasets that have been collected, a couple of interventions are possible

- **We would suggest it is worthwhile to discuss these results with staff**
  - It is absolutely possible that the external perspectives captured here are from a particularly negative group
  - Do the staff hear similar concerns raised by external stakeholders?
  - Is the Internal perspective captured here an accurate portrayal of their current sense of accomplishment?
  - The apparent Internal uncertainty displayed over CCS current efforts suggests that buy-in of CCS efforts needs to be sought at a broader level / across levels; this is crucial especially due to the small size of the organisation
- **Consider continuous capture as a way to overcome natural resistance to narrative capture; also consider gathering other types of input to a sensing system**
  - Replace current feedback system with a narrative system to improve sensing – each contact by an external stakeholder is accompanied by tagging so patterns can be monitored
  - Obtain narratives at the end of each interaction with members of the public and parties to investigations (providing links to a system with ongoing capture)
- **Adopt some of the feedback which was provided in the capture**
  - Implementing suggestions on improving work processes
  - Working on the education of both Internal and External stakeholders on competition law



Thank you

