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Best Value Performance Indicators

Benefit Claimants Satisfaction Survey

Final Report

Prepared for: South Holland District Council
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Date: March 13th 2007

1. INTRODUCTION

Beacon Research has been commissioned by South Holland District Council to undertake one of several different user satisfaction surveys as part of the Government's Best Value Initiatives.

This particular document refers to a survey of Housing and Council Tax Benefit claimants, which was undertaken in two stages during August/ September 2006 and January/ February 2007.

The following document contains our final report, based upon the combined surveys of the two stage survey. You are already in receipt of our interim report issued in October 2006.

In addition, the report provides technical details relating to the conduct of the survey, a consideration of response rates and respondent profile, plus a guide to reading tables and interpreting the data.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The broad objective of the study (Stages I and II) is to establish benchmark levels of satisfaction, amongst Benefit Claimants, with the services they receive from the Council.

The objectives, content and style of the survey are in accordance with the Government guidelines published by the DCLG (formerly ODPM) entitled "*Best Value & Audit Commission Performance Indicators for 2006/2007*".

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Having considered the available guidelines, it was agreed with the Council that we should undertake a self completion postal survey of Benefit Claimants, based upon a sample of 650 respondents at each stage.

For both stages of the survey, a file of claimants was provided by the Council, which was initially de-duplicated before the names and addresses were prepared for use in the survey. At the same time, questionnaires and covering letters were prepared by the Council and then printed.

At each stage of the survey, respondents were initially sent a questionnaire and covering letter, explaining the purpose of the survey. A reminder letter and further questionnaire was sent to non-respondents after two weeks. The dates of the various mailings were as follows: -

	<u>Stage I</u>	<u>Stage II</u>
Initial mailing	August 15 th 2006	January 10 th 2007
First Reminder	September 6 th 2006	January 30 th 2007
Final reminder	September 19 th 2006	February 19 th 2007

At the time of writing, 724 completed questionnaires had been returned, between the two stages.

The total sample used, across the two stages was 1300, and the overall response rate was satisfactory at 55.7%.

The completed numbers of questionnaires received at each stage were as follows: -

	<u>Stage I</u>	<u>Stage II</u>	<u>Total</u>
Initial mailing	171	167	338
First reminder	117	128	245
Final Reminder	<u>76</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>141</u>
Total	364	360	724

The profile of claimants, who actually responded to the survey, shows that 51% were aged 55 or more, whilst only 19.1% were aged 34 or less. This may be a typical benefit claimant profile, but we suspect that older claimants were most likely to respond to the survey. Average age was similar in both stages.

<u>Age Profile</u>	<u>%</u>
18 - 34	19.1
35 - 54	30.2
55+	50.7
Average Age (years)	54.1

We would also note, at this stage that many older claimants believed that the survey was compulsory and this may have affected the differing response rates.

Note: For many of the key indicators, a satisfaction scale has been used which ranges from Very satisfied (5) to Very dissatisfied (1). In these cases, in addition to showing straight percentages we have also produced a “Mean Score” which is the average of these scores from 5 to 1 for the whole sample. As a broad rule of thumb a mean score of 4 or more should be regarded as good and anything below 3.5 is poor.

4. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In the following section of the report we summarise the main findings from this survey of Benefit claimants, beginning with the key indicators.

4.1 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

BV 80a – Overall I am satisfied with the ways in which I can contact the local Benefits office

80% say they **strongly agree** or **agree** that they are satisfied with the ways in which they can contact the local benefits office whilst 6.5% disagree.

The confidence limit for this question is 3.0

Therefore we can be 95% confident that **80%** ($\pm 3.0\%$) of all claimants are satisfied with the service provided. (The real figure amongst all claimants probably lies within the 77% to 83% range.) *Base: 681*

BV 80b – Overall I am satisfied with the experience of visiting the local Benefits office

80% say they **strongly agree** or **agree** that they are satisfied with the experience of visiting the local benefits office whilst 7.8% disagree.

The confidence limit for this question is 3.7.

Therefore we can be 95% confident that **80%** ($\pm 3.7\%$) of all claimants are satisfied with the service provided. (The real figure amongst all claimants probably lies within the 76.3% to 83.7% range.) *Base: 434*

BV 80c – Overall I am satisfied with the telephone service provided by my local Benefits office

76% say they **strongly agree** or **agree** that they are satisfied with the telephone service provided by their local benefits office whilst 7.7% disagree.

The confidence limit for this question is 4.9

Therefore we can be 95% confident that **76%** ($\pm 4.9\%$) of all claimants are satisfied with the service provided. (The real figure amongst all claimants probably lies within the 71.1% to 80.9% range.) *Base: 298*



BV 80d – Overall I am satisfied with the service provided by staff in my local Benefits office

83% say they **strongly agree** or **agree** that they are satisfied with the service provided by staff in my local benefits office whilst 6.1% disagree.

The confidence limit for this question is 2.9.

Therefore we can be 95% confident that **83%** ($\pm 2.9\%$) of all claimants are satisfied with the service provided. (The real figure amongst all claimants probably lies within the 80.1% to 85.9% range.) *Base: 641*

BV 80e – Overall I am satisfied with the Housing / Council Tax benefits form

66% say they **strongly agree** or **agree** that they are satisfied with the Housing / Council Tax benefits form whilst 11.3% disagree.

The confidence limit for this question is 3.6

Therefore we can be 95% confident that **66%** ($\pm 3.6\%$) of all claimants are satisfied with the service provided. (The real figure amongst all claimants probably lies within the 62.4% to 69.6% range.) *Base: 660*

BV 80f – how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the amount of time it took to tell you whether your claim for Housing / Council Tax Benefit was successful or not?

73% state they are **very** or **fairly satisfied** with the amount of time it took to tell them whether their claim for Housing / Council Tax Benefit was successful or not whilst 15.7% are dissatisfied.

The confidence limit for this question is 3.3

Therefore we can be 95% confident that **73%** ($\pm 3.3\%$) of all claimants are satisfied with the service provided. (The real figure amongst all claimants probably lies within the 69.7% to 76.3% range.) *Base: 691*

BV 80g– how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service you receive from your local benefits office?

79% state they are **very** or **fairly satisfied** with the service they receive from their local benefits office whilst 7.4% are dissatisfied.

The confidence limit for this question is 3.0.

Therefore we can be 95% confident that **79%** ($\pm 3.0\%$) of all claimants are satisfied with the service provided. (The real figure amongst all claimants probably lies within the 76% to 82% range.) *Base: 693*



4.2 SUMMARY OF OTHER FINDINGS

The other key findings from this Benefit claimants Survey may be summarised as follows: -

4.2.1 The overall response rate of 55.7%, producing 724 completed questionnaires is satisfactory, although we are a little concerned that the response may be biased towards older respondents.

4.2.2 80% of claimants agree that they are satisfied with the facilities for getting in touch with the local authority benefits office, whilst only 6.5% say they are dissatisfied.

4.2.3 Although the individual elements of access all seem to be quite satisfactory, almost 35% of claimants **agree** with the statement that *"The opening hours are inconvenient for me"* and 30.7% **disagree** that *"I was given a name of a person to contact about my claim"*.

4.2.4 Almost two thirds (62.1%) of claimants actually visited their local authority benefits office when they made their last claim.

Amongst this group, 80% agree that they are satisfied with the overall level of service provided at the office, whilst 7.8% disagreed.

When asked about office facilities and operational issues, 44.5% of claimants **agreed** that *"More seats are needed in my local benefits office"*, although this does not seem to affect their overall satisfaction.

4.2.5 Amongst the 43.7% of claimants who telephoned the office regarding their claim, 76% agree that they were satisfied with the overall telephone service, whilst 7.7% said they disagreed.

Just over 13% of claimants **disagree** that *"The telephone call I made was answered quickly"*, whilst almost 33% **agreed** that *"I was transferred between several different people"*. A further 22% **agreed** that it was difficult to speak to the right member of staff.

4.2.6 Overall, 83% of claimants agree that they are satisfied with the staff at the local authority benefits office, whilst 6.1% are dissatisfied.

The vast majority of claimants think that staff are friendly, and respectful, although 32.3% did **agree** that *"I wasn't always confident that what the staff said was correct."*

4.2.7 The forms and letters that claimants receive are, as usual, the least satisfactory elements of the benefits scheme.

For instance, 31% of claimants **agree** that the forms are difficult to fill in, whilst 35.8% think the letters sent out about the claim, are difficult to understand.

Overall, 66% agree that they are satisfied with the forms, leaflets and letters, whilst 11.3% disagree.

4.2.8 Almost three quarters (73%) of claimants agreed that they were satisfied with the amount of time taken to report on their claim, whilst 15.7% were dissatisfied.

4.2.9 A significant majority (79%) of claimants say that they are satisfied with the overall level of service they receive from the Council Benefits office, whilst 7.4% are dissatisfied. We find, not surprisingly, that claimants whose application for benefit was successful are more likely than unsuccessful claimants to be satisfied with the service.

4.2.10 Almost 80% of respondents said their claim had been successful, whilst 10.5% were still waiting to hear.

4.2.11 When asked about improvements, over 60% of all respondents were able to nominate at least one item on the list that they believed needed improving. The most notable improvements would be the time taken to tell people the results of their claim and the Housing / Council tax benefits claim form itself.

4.2.12 Over half (57.3%) of all claimants are female, the average age is 54.1 years and 50.7% of claimants are aged 55 or more.

Less than 26% of claimants are currently employed, whilst 34.5% are wholly retired and 14.9% are permanently ill / disabled.

Just under half (43.2%) of all claimants say they have a long-term illness or disability. This figure increases to 55.9% amongst claimants aged 45 or over. Amongst this group, the vast majority (86.2%) say that the illness/disability limits their activities.

4.2.13 In this particular survey 92.1% of claimants say that their ethnic background is White – British. A further 5.8% define themselves as White – Other and only 8 respondents come from other, non white ethnic backgrounds.

4.2.14 Few claimants volunteer any further comments about the benefits service in any significant numbers.

5. DETAILED FINDINGS

In this section of the report we provide a more detailed analysis of the results, together with extracts from the tabulations.

5.1 ACCESS / GETTING IN TOUCH

Claimants were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with a number of different statements regarding the convenience of their last benefit claim. The results may be summarised as follows: -

	% Saying Agree	% Saying Disagree	% Difference	Mean Score (+5 to +1)	% Saying Not applicable
My local Authority Benefits Office is somewhere that is easy for me to get to	75.0	10.8	64.2	3.80	6.5
The local Authority Benefits opening hours are inconvenient for me	34.6	47.3	-12.7	2.87	8.6
Staff tried to sort things out on the telephone, so that I did not have to go into the office	49.8	28.4	21.4	3.29	25.5
I was given a name of a person to contact about my claim	55.3	30.7	24.6	3.32	19.9
Overall I am satisfied with the ways in which I can contact the Local Authority Benefits Office (BV80a)	79.7	6.5	73.2	3.90	3.8

[Note: Excludes 'Not applicable' replies]

Over 79% of claimants agree that they are satisfied with the ways in which they can get in touch with their local authority benefits office and only 6.5% disagree.

Despite this high level of overall satisfaction, almost 35% of claimants **agreed** with the statement "*Opening hours are inconvenient for me*". Similarly, 30.7% **disagreed** with the statement "*I was given a name of a person to contact about my claim*".

Overall satisfaction with Access / Contacting the Benefits Office increases with the age of the claimant. Similarly, respondents whose claim was unsuccessful are likely to be less satisfied than successful claimants.



5.2 IN THE OFFICE

Almost two thirds of all claimants (62.1%) actually went to their local benefit office when they made their last claim. This figure is reasonably consistent for all age groups.

All claimants visiting the benefit office were then asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with a number of different statements about their local office visit.

	% Saying Agree	% Saying Disagree	% Difference	Mean Score (+5 to +1)	% Saying Not applicable
I had to wait a long time before I saw the person I needed to	32.0	49.4	-17.4	2.86	2.3
I could talk with this person in a private place if I wanted to	75.3	10.6	64.7	3.78	9.6
The local authority benefits office was clean & tidy	95.1	0.7	94.4	4.29	2.3
More seats are needed in my local authority benefits office	44.5	28.3	16.2	3.28	6.6
Overall I am satisfied with the experience of visiting the local authority benefits office (BV80b)	80.1	7.8	72.3	3.91	2.3

Overall, 80% of claimants who visited their local office agree that they are satisfied with their experience, whilst 7.9% disagreed.

However, 44.5% of this group **agree** that “*More seats are needed in my local benefits office*”, although this does not seem to affect their overall satisfaction. Overall satisfaction is, once again, highest amongst older claimants.

5.3 ON THE PHONE

A further 43.7% of claimants said that they telephoned their local authority benefits office when making their most recent claim.

This group of claimants were then asked how much they agreed or disagreed with a number of different statements about this telephone contact. The results are summarised as follows: -

	% Saying Agree	% Saying Disagree	% Difference	Mean Score (+5 to +1)	% Saying Not applicable
The telephone call I made to the local authority benefits office was answered quickly	78.2	13.1	65.1	3.78	4.5
When I made the call to the local authority benefits office I was transferred between several different people	32.4	50.7	-18.3	2.79	7.8
Once the call to the local authority benefits had been answered my query was dealt with swiftly	74.5	12.8	61.7	3.77	2.9
When I called to the local authority benefits office It was difficult to speak to the right member of staff	22.0	58.5	-36.5	2.54	7.8
Overall I am satisfied with the telephone service provided by my local authority benefits office(BV80c)	75.7	7.7	68.0	3.87	4.2

Almost 76% of claimants agreed that they were satisfied with the overall telephone service, whilst 7.7% disagreed. Almost 33% of claimants **agreed** that “I was transferred between several different people” and a further 22% **agreed** that it was difficult to contact the right member of staff.

5.4 THE STAFF

All claimants were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with various statements regarding Benefit Office Staff. These are summarised below.

	% Saying Agree	% Saying Disagree	% Difference	Mean Score (+5 to +1)	% Saying Not applicable
Staff in the local authority benefits office were friendly	90.3	2.4	87.9	4.14	9.1
I wasn't always confident that what the staff said was correct	32.3	43.1	-10.8	2.88	12.3
Things were explained in a way I could understand	77.1	9.1	68.0	3.81	9.7
I felt unable to ask the questions I wanted to	12.1	69.5	-57.4	2.33	13.4
Staff always were in a rush	9.8	74.0	-64.2	2.22	12.1
Staff treated me with respect	84.1	5.1	79.0	4.02	9.7
Overall I am satisfied with the service provided by the staff in my local authority benefits office (BV80d)	83.2	6.1	77.1	4.01	7.8

Over 83% of claimants agree that they are satisfied with service provided by the staff in their local authority benefits office whilst only 6.1% disagreed. They are seen as both friendly and respectful. Only a minority agree with the negative statements about the staff, although 32.3% did **agree** that "I wasn't always confident that what the staff said was correct".

5.5 FORMS

All respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements regarding the letters received and the forms they were required to complete.

	% Saying Agree	% Saying Disagree	% Difference	Mean Score (+5 to +1)	% Saying Not applicable
The Housing / Council Tax benefits claim form was difficult to fill in	30.6	45.7	-15.1	2.88	6.1
I could fill in the form quickly	45.8	28.8	17.0	3.18	6.8
The information that came with the form was helpful	65.6	10.1	55.5	3.60	7.2
The letters sent out about my claim are difficult to understand	35.8	43.3	-7.5	2.99	6.5
Overall I am satisfied with the Housing / Council Tax benefits claim form (BV80e)	65.5	11.3	54.2	3.62	5.6

This is as usual, the least satisfactory element of the claims process, although the levels of satisfaction are higher than most other authorities. Just over 65% of claimants agree that they are satisfied with the overall clarity of forms, letters and leaflets and 11.3% actually disagree. Overall satisfaction is actually stronger than most of the individual elements.

Almost 31% of claimants agree that “*The form was difficult to fill in*” and 28.8% disagree that the form can be filled in quickly. A further 35.8% agree that the letters they send out about the claims are difficult to understand.

5.6 SPEED OF SERVICE (BV80f)

Almost 73% of claimants agreed that they are satisfied with the amount of time taken to report on their claim, whilst 15.7% were dissatisfied.

The level of satisfaction increases directly with age and the differences are quite significant. The level of dissatisfaction was most marked (32.9%) amongst those whose claim was unsuccessful.

	Age			
	All	18 - 34	35 - 54	55 +
% Satisfied	72.4	60.3	64.4	81.8
% Dissatisfied	15.7	32.1	21.0	9.6
Mean score	3.81	3.39	3.55	4.09

5.7 OVERALL SATISFACTION (BV80g)

Overall, 78.9% are satisfied with the service they received from the Council Benefits Office, whilst 7.4% were dissatisfied.

	% All	% (Excludes The "Don't Knows")
Very satisfied	34.2	35.5
Quite satisfied	41.7	43.4
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	13.2	13.7
Quite dissatisfied	3.8	3.9
Very dissatisfied	3.3	3.5
Don't Know/ No reply	3.8	-
Mean Score (1 to 5)	4.04	4.04

Predictably, perhaps, successful applicants were much more likely (87.2%) to be satisfied than unsuccessful applicants (47.9%).

5.8 SUCCESSFUL CLAIM?

Overall, 79.4% of claimants said that their claim had been successful whilst 10.5% were waiting to hear.

5.9 IMPROVEMENTS

For the second time in these surveys, respondents were asked (from a suggested list) what needs most improving in the benefits service.

	%
The ways in which I can contact the local authority benefits office	4.5
The experience of visiting the local authority benefits office	4.1
The telephone service provided by the local authority benefits office	4.5
The staff service in the local authority benefits office	2.2
The Housing / Council tax benefits claim form	17.6
The time it takes to tell me whether my claim for Housing / Council tax benefit was successful	24.4
None of these	24.7
Don't Know	12.4
Other	5.6

Over 57% of all respondents mentioned at least one item on the list that they believed needed improving. As usual, the most notable improvements would be the time taken to tell people the results of their claim and the Housing / Council tax benefits claim form itself.

9% of respondents said that they would be willing to attend a focus group to discuss improvement areas with the Council.

5.10 SAMPLE PROFILE

Claimants were asked to provide various details about themselves. These are summarised as follows: -

Gender	%
Male	42.7
Female	57.3

Average Age **54.1 Years**

Employment Status	%
Employee in Full or Part-Time employment	23.0
Self Employed	2.7
Unemployed	10.3
Permanently Sick/ Disabled	14.9
Wholly retired from work	34.5
Looking after the home	9.6
Full time/ Part-time Education/ Training	0.9
Other	4.1



Over half of all claimants are female and the average age of all claimants is 54.1 years, with 50.7% aged 55 or more. Less than 26% of all claimants are currently in employment, whilst 34.5% are wholly retired and 14.9% are permanently ill / disabled.

	Length of time at present address %	Length of time in this area %
Under 1 year	29.0	9.6
1-2 years	11.4	7.0
3-5 years	15.0	9.6
6-10 years	12.8	10.3
11-20 years	14.8	13.0
Over 20 years	15.0	47.5
Don't Know / No reply	2.0	3.1

Type of Tenure	%
Owned outright	25.2
Buying on a mortgage	14.0
Rent from Council	29.8
Rent from Housing Association/ Trust	8.3
Rent from private landlord	21.2
Other	1.6

Just over 47% of all claimants have lived in the area for over 20 years, although only 15% have occupied their present accommodation for the same period of time.

Almost 60% of respondents are renting their accommodation including 29.8% from the Council.

Exactly 47% of claimants live in single person households, a relatively low figure.

5.11 DISABILITY

Just under half of all claimants (43.2%) and 57% of claimants aged 55+; say that they suffer from long - standing illness or disability.

Amongst this group, the vast majority (86.2%) say that this illness/disability limits their activities to some degree.

	All %	Age 55+ %
Long term illness or disability – YES	43.2	57.0
Limits activity - YES	86.2	85.4

Long - term illness and disability is concentrated amongst those claimants aged 55 and over, who account for 65 % of all such cases.

5.12 ETHNICITY

This question established that 92.1% of respondents say that they are White British and a further 5.8% are 'Other White'. Only 8 respondents in the sample replied that they were non-white.

5.13 FURTHER COMMENTS

Claimants were asked if they had any further comments to the Council, including suggestions to improve the Benefits Service.

It was our original intention to supply the verbatim responses to this question, but where claimants did reply, it became something of an open forum for writing a 'Letter to the Council' and some of the responses were both very long and not necessarily relevant.

We have therefore tried to code and group the responses appropriately and we can supply, separately, full copies of all the individual responses.

Overall, 93.4% of claimants were either happy with the service, or had no comment to make. Similarly no individual suggestion was mentioned by more than 1% of respondents.

	%
No/ Nothing/ Quite happy	2.5
No reply/ Can't think of anything	90.9
Make paperwork easier to understand	0.6
Quicker claim times	0.4
Too much paperwork/ Why fill in new forms when circumstances have not changed	0.3
Benefit office makes mistakes/ told to pay wrong amount	0.1
Other	7.2

The "Other" category of responses includes a large number of single responses and those responses that are not relevant to the survey.

5.14 INTERNET ACCESS

Finally, when asked about access to the Internet, 74.4% said that they did not have access, and of this group only 7.2% expect to gain access in the next 6 months.

	Access to Internet?	Likely to have access in the next 6 months
Yes	25.6	7.2
No	74.4	92.8

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

Target Population

The target population is the group of people from which the sample was drawn. In the case of the benefits survey the target population specified was all Individuals who pursued a new or renewal claim for Housing and / or Council Tax Benefit **and were notified of the decision on that claim** during the course of the two sampling windows.

Sampling Frame

The sampling frame specified was a list, compiled by the authority, of all Benefit claimants whose claims had been determined, within the sampling windows.

Sample Size / Confidence Interval

The sample size used for each of the target populations was chosen to ensure that, with a satisfactory response rate, the ODPM targets for completed interviews could be readily achieved. This also ensured that the estimated satisfaction for each of the indicators had a maximum error of $\pm 3\%$ around it at the 95% confidence level. The confidence intervals provided in this report are based on the total number of respondents who answered the specified headline indicator questions. The maximum confidence interval for each of the user satisfaction performance indicators is also specified in the report.

Data Protection

To meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act, a covering letter stating the purpose for which the data is being collected was sent with each questionnaire.

Postcodes

The full postcode of each respondent is supplied with the data file.

Response Rate / Reminder letters

Authorities and their agencies were required to take all reasonable steps possible to maximise their response rate. The success of the survey depends on a good response since the better the rate, the more representative the survey will be of the population. It is statistically more reliable to achieve a high response rate from a smaller initial sample, rather than taking a much larger sample and only achieving a relatively low response rate to produce the same number of respondents. In line with Government guidelines, two reminder letters and questionnaires were sent to each respondent. The covering letter sent with reminders was adjusted to reflect the fact that it was a reminder while still meeting data protection requirements. All correspondence included the authority logo.

Weighting

All survey results will be weighted by LRGRU. We were required to submit un-weighted data only to LRGRU.

Submission of data

The results of the survey and all data relating to the way the survey was undertaken will be submitted, by the agency, to LRGRU using the website www.survey.bvpi.gov.uk. Data will be submitted no later than 30th March 2007.

Calculating each BVPI

There are a series of nationally set indicators for each of the Best value surveys Each indicator is based on the total number of respondents who answered the question appropriately. For each question there may be people who did not answer or who gave an

Irrelevant answer such as ‘I don’t know’”. These have been treated as ‘missing values’ and were excluded from the calculation of the final indicator.

Weighted and Unweighted Totals

The tables generally show unweighted totals. The unweighted results are based on the ‘raw’ data. However, if there is some bias in the response – for example if some types of residents were more (or less) likely to respond than others, their views will be over (or under) represented. To correct for this, responses may, if required, be weighted. Weighting is the application of correction factors to the analysis of data to make it more representative of the target population as a whole. Where this has been undertaken the tables will show both weighted and unweighted results.

Bases

The ‘base’ is the number of respondents overall, and for each analysis break, the number that answered the question. The tables exclude missing values and other non applicable responses. Ideally, every subgroup base will be at least 100 to allow *apparent* differences between subgroups to be taken as *real*. Where the base number is very low (<50) it is not advisable to make any inferences about that sub-group.

Sampling Error / Confidence Intervals

The respondents who complete this survey are only a sample of the total ‘population’. We cannot therefore be certain that the figures obtained are exactly those we would have obtained if everybody had been interviewed (A Census). However, we can predict the variation between the sample results and the ‘true’ values from the size of the samples on which the results are based and the number of respondents who give a particular answer. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95% - that is, the chances are 19 in 20 that the ‘true’ value will fall within a given range. The table below illustrates the predicted ranges for different sample sizes and percentage results at the ‘95% confidence interval’, based on a random sample.

Sample Size	Confidence Limits		
	10% / 90%	30% / 70%	50%
	±	±	±
100	5.9%	9.0%	9.8%
200	4.2%	6.4%	6.9%
300	3.4%	5.2%	5.7%
500	2.6%	4.0%	4.4%
1000	1.9%	2.8%	3.0%
1500	1.5%	2.3%	2.5%

Thus, the confidence interval (or margin of error) is by how much the survey result could vary and still be considered to reflect the ‘true’ result that would have been recorded if everyone in the population had been surveyed.

This allows you to compare the results from the surveys undertaken in 2003 and 2006 to establish whether any changes in levels of satisfaction are “real” changes or whether they are merely a function of sampling error between the two surveys.

Similarly, results can be compared between separate sub-groups within the same survey sample, where different results may have been obtained. The difference may be “real,” or it may occur by chance (because not everyone in the population has been surveyed).

TABLES

BV80a Satisfaction with the Benefits Service

	Stage 1	Stage2
Base	339	342
Mean	3.9	3.89
Strongly Agree	64 18.9%	63 18.4%
Agree	202 59.6%	213 62.3%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	53 15.6%	42 12.3%
Disagree	14 4.1%	15 4.4%
Strongly Disagree	6 1.8%	9 2.6%

BV80b Service in the Office

	Stage 1	Stage2
Base	218	216
Mean	3.85	3.96
Strongly Agree	34 15.6%	53 24.5%
Agree	138 63.3%	123 56.9%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	29 13.3%	23 10.6%
Disagree	13 6.0%	13 6.0%
Strongly Disagree	4 1.8%	4 1.9%

BV80c Telephone Service
Stage 1 Stage2

Base	156	142
Mean	3.79	3.96
Strongly Agree	30 19.2%	35 24.6%
Agree	84 53.8%	77 54.2%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	26 16.7%	23 16.2%
Disagree	11 7.1%	3 2.1%
Strongly Disagree	5 3.2%	4 2.8%

BV80d Staff in the Office
Stage 1 Stage2

Base	319	322
Mean	3.99	4.02
Strongly Agree	78 24.5%	83 25.8%
Agree	181 56.7%	192 59.6%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	42 13.2%	26 8.1%
Disagree	15 4.7%	13 4.0%
Strongly Disagree	3 0.9%	8 2.5%

BV80e Forms
Stage 1 Stage2

Base	330	330
Mean	3.61	3.64
Strongly Agree	35 10.6%	42 12.7%
Agree	182 55.2%	174 52.7%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	72 21.8%	81 24.5%
Disagree	31 9.4%	20 6.1%
Strongly Disagree	10 3.0%	13 3.9%

BV80f Speed of Service
Stage 1 Stage2

Base	349	342
Mean	3.84	3.78
Strongly Agree	110 31.5%	100 29.2%
Agree	144 41.3%	147 43.0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	42 12.0%	40 11.7%
Disagree	35 10.0%	29 8.5%
Strongly Disagree	18 5.2%	26 7.6%

BV80g Overall satisfaction
Stage 1 Stage2

Base	349	344
Mean	4.03	4.04
Strongly Agree	122 35.0%	124 36.0%
Agree	153 43.8%	148 43.0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	47 13.5%	48 14.0%
Disagree	18 5.2%	9 2.6%
Strongly Disagree	9 2.6%	15 4.4%