Research report

Pension, Disability and Carers Service customer survey: Annual Report from 2010/11

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DWP Department for Work and Pensions

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Abbreviations and glossary of terms

Attendance Allowance (AA)	A tax-free benefit paid to customers, aged 65 and over, who need help with their personal care because of an illness or disability
Council Tax Benefit (CTB)	A means-tested benefit available to help cover the costs of Council Tax. It is available to both people renting and owner-occupiers
Disability Living Allowance (DLA)	A tax-free benefit for children and adults who need help with personal care or have walking difficulties because they are physically or mentally disabled
DCS	The Disability and Carers Service
DWP	The Department for Work and Pensions
Housing Benefit (HB)	A means-tested benefit paid to tenants or their landlords to help meet their rent
Local Service	Supports the work of Pension Centres primarily through providing home visits but also through Local Service Information points, by prearranged appointments and providing talks in locations accessible to pensioners. It works in partnership with a range of organisations accomplished in dealing with pensioners' needs. Local Service is aimed at raising pensioners' awareness of what is available to them and increasing take-up of benefits
PDCS	The Pension, Disability and Carers Service
Pension Credit	An entitlement for people aged 60 and over which was introduced in October 2003, replacing the Minimum Income Guarantee. It provides a guaranteed income for pensioners and rewards those who have saved for their retirement
Pension forecasts	Informs customers of: the amount of State Pension they have earned already; the amount of State Pension they can expect at State Pension age based on what they have earned already and what they might earn before reaching State Pension age
TPS	The Pension Service

Notes on terminology

A large number of tables and charts appear in this report. The following conventions have been used:

0 = a 'true zero' (i.e. no responses in the category);

* = less than 0.5 per cent, but more than zero responses.

Significance testing has been carried out at the five per cent level, unless otherwise stated. All comparative data described in the report is significant, unless otherwise stated.

Throughout the report percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number (figures are rounded up from .5, and rounded down below this).

Percentages in the tables do not always add to 100 per cent due to rounding, and where percentages in the text differ to the sum of percentages in the tables this too will be due to rounding. Also 'netted' (i.e. where a number of responses have been grouped together) responses may not always equal the sum of the individual responses, again due to rounding.

Summary

Background and objectives

The Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) was formed in April 2008 from the amalgamation of The Pension Service (TPS) and the Disability and Carers Service (DCS) and is responsible for delivering a range of age- and disability-related benefits. Following the formation of PDCS, a customer survey was developed to monitor satisfaction with the service and to ensure that the 'customer voice' could be heard when it comes to operational and policy planning. This report gives an overview of the findings from the customer survey in 2010/11.

The survey was designed to include only contacting customers. Customers who received benefit payments, but had no interactions with the service beyond this, are excluded. Interviews were conducted by telephone with customers who had contact with PDCS in the previous six months and fieldwork was completed in two sweeps between September 2010 and April 2011.

Overall performance

One of the key performance measures in the survey was overall satisfaction with the service and in 2010/11 91 per cent of customers were satisfied with PDCS as a whole. Overall satisfaction was higher for TPS customers than for DCS customers (94 per cent compared with 86 per cent).

When taken as a net score, dissatisfaction with PDCS stands at eight per cent which is an increase from the equivalent score in 2009/10 of six per cent. This has largely been driven by DCS where dissatisfaction has risen from ten per cent in 2009/10 to 12 per cent in 2010/11. The TPS score has remained constant.

While overall satisfaction is an important performance metric, other items can also be used as measures to evaluate the service as a whole. Customers were asked how much improvement the service needed to make. A no improvement response can be a good measure of differentiating high performance: as in 2009/10, 53 per cent of TPS customers and 42 per cent of DCS customers said the services needed no improvements at all.

In addition to this, it was possible to look at customers' expectations alongside their satisfaction with the service. This again helps to differentiate performance at the high end: 29 per cent of TPS customers and 23 per cent of DCS customers were 'delighted'. These scores are in-line with 2009/10, however at the PDCS level there has been a fall in the proportion of customers saying that the service they received was much better than expected (a fall from 33 per cent in 2009/10 to 30 per cent in 2010/11). However, this fall has not been matched by a significant increase in customers saying that the service has been worse than expected. Instead more customers are saying that the service is meeting expectations.

DWP has a Customer Charter which measures aspects of customer service. Four key drivers of satisfaction have been identified as important to customers against which the Department tracks its performance. Scores were highest for the 'right treatment' driver at 84 per cent. 'right result' scored 81 per cent with 'on time' and 'easy access' scoring lower at 74 per cent and 70 per cent respectively.

These scores are broadly in line with 2009/10, the only statistically significant difference is a drop for 'easy access' (from 74 per cent to 70 per cent). This difference is led mainly by a difference in responses to the component variables for DCS customers (see Section 2.4).

When customers were asked to say what they felt was the best thing about the service, staff were identified as the number one area for both services by some margin. The proportion of DCS customers mentioning this has increased from 41 to 44 per cent since the 2009/10 survey. For TPS the proportion mentioning staff as the best area remains stationary at 37 per cent.

Enquiry types

The PDCS customer survey identified the customer's most recent contact with the service and then looked at all the interactions they had over the course of that enquiry.

While claiming the State Pension remains the most common enquiry type for TPS customers (31 per cent), there has been a significant increase in the number of queries compared with the 2009/10 survey (18 per cent in 2009/10 to 30 per cent in 2010/11). Verbatim responses indicate that this increase seems to have been driven by customers responding to an initial communication from TPS. Other reasons for contacting TPS were claiming Pension Credit (15 per cent) and a notification of change of circumstances (18 per cent).

The profile of enquiry types remained similar for DCS across the two years, with 37 per cent claiming Disability Living Allowance (DLA), 18 per cent claiming Attendance Allowance (AA) 11 per cent Carers Allowance (CA), 15 per cent reporting a change of circumstance and 14 per cent with general queries.

Customers were asked what contact channels they had used as part of their enquiry and telephone was the most common for both TPS (77 per cent) and DCS customers (71 per cent). For TPS this was a decrease from 83 per cent in 2009/10 and for DCS an increase from 63 per cent in 2009/10.

DCS customers were, however, still much more likely to report having written to the service. For both services, the overwhelming majority of customers were happy with the contact channels they had used for their most recent enquiry. Further detailed questions were asked about their experiences with these channels over the course of their most recent enquiry.

Telephone communication

Around half of all customers said their most recent enquiry required two or more calls before it was resolved, although the average number of telephone contacts decreased from 2.4 to 2.1 calls for TPS customers while remaining constant at 2.3 calls for DCS customers. The number of calls varied by enquiry type with TPS customers claiming Pension Credit making an average of 3.2 calls and DCS customers claiming DLA making an average of 2.9 calls.

New in the 2010/11 survey, customers were asked how long they waited for the phone to be answered. Nine per cent of TPS customers and 15 per cent of DCS customers reported that it took over five minutes for their call to be answered.

Three-quarters of PDCS customers reported that the first person they spoke to over the telephone was able to answer their query. There has been an increase in the proportion of TPS customers who were transferred to someone else when the first person they spoke to was unable to answer their query (58 per cent in 2009/10 compared with 70 per cent in 2010/11). For those who had to speak to a new person, eight in ten customers found it necessary to repeat some information, with over half finding that they had to repeat all information.

Written communication

The average number of contacts for customers who had written to the service was lower than for telephone contacts at 1.6 for DCS customers and 1.9 for TPS customers, but was unchanged from 2009/10.

The majority of customers who wrote to PDCS were expecting a reply of some kind (83 per cent of TPS and 90 per cent DCS), and while nine in ten DCS customers then received one (92 per cent), only three-quarters of TPS customers did (74 per cent). When customers received a reply, most found them easy to understand (93 per cent of TPS and 90 per cent of DCS).

The proportion of PDCS customers who completed a form as part of their enquiry has decreased between the 2009/10 and 2010/11 surveys (from 57 per cent in 2009/10 to 49 per cent in 2010/11 for TPS customers and a smaller decrease of 74 per cent to 71 per cent for DCS customers).

Over half of DCS customers (54 per cent) and one-third (32 per cent) of TPS customers had received help when completing a form as part of their most recent enquiry. However, the proportion of TPS customers reporting that they had not required any help increased from 51 per cent in 2009/10 to 59 per cent in 2010/11. Related to this, the proportion reporting that they had received help from TPS directly decreased from 60 per cent to 48 per cent, while those getting help from family and friends increased from 25 per cent to 33 per cent.

Online and home visits

Twelve per cent of TPS customers and 17 per cent of DCS customers reported that they had searched online for information as part of their most recent enquiry, while three per cent of TPS customers and six per cent of DCS customers had attempted an online transaction.

Customers who searched online for information were asked whether they found the information they were looking for. Two-thirds (67 per cent) of PDCS customers reported that they found all the information they were looking for, while eight per cent of TPS and five per cent of DCS customers reported that they could not find any of the information they were looking for.

For both TPS and DCS customers the proportion of customers who reported that they had access to the internet at home has increased from 2009/10 to 2010/11 (from 63 per cent to 67 per cent for TPS and 62 per cent to 66 per cent for DCS). Over the same period of time all household access has increased by a similar amount (73 per cent to 77 per cent).

Eight per cent of TPS customers and 16 per cent of DCS customers had received a home visit as part of their most recent enquiry. Two-fifths (40 per cent) of TPS customers and almost half (48 per cent) of DCS customers who were visited at home said they were asked whether they had any other needs. Fifty-three per cent of these DCS customers and 30 per cent of these TPS customers actually received help.

Enquiry conclusion

Customers were asked whether their enquiry had taken longer than expected and around one in five (18 per cent) said that it had. However, DCS customers were less likely to be satisfied with the time taken for their enquiry to be concluded in 2010/11 than in 2009/10 (77 per cent compared with 82 per cent). This seems to be particularly notable for DLA customers where satisfaction with the length of their most recent enquiry has fallen ten percentage points from 75 per cent to 65 per cent.

As in 2009/10, 90 per cent of those who received a decision on their enquiry felt that it was clearly explained to them.

Customers were also asked how complex they had found the enquiry process and whether or not it was more or less complicated than they were expecting. The proportion of DCS customers who found the enquiry complicated has increased from 33 per cent in 2009/10 to 37 per cent in 2010/11, while for TPS this has remained stable at 18 per cent. In fact, for DCS, the proportion of 'relieved' customers (those who found the enquiry less complicated than expected) has fallen from 14 per cent to nine per cent, while the proportion 'resigned to complexity' increased from 19 per cent to 23 per cent.

Only 37 per cent of DCS customers had their problems resolved by the time of interview in 2010/11 compared with 50 per cent in 2009/10.

The Kano model of satisfaction

The use of statistical techniques when analysing customer surveys can serve to identify which factors above all others impact on how customers feel about the service. In analysing the data from the PDCS customer survey the Kano model has been used to look at how different service elements interact with satisfaction identifying them as either, 'hygiene' factors, 'performance' factors or 'attractive' factors.

The 'hygiene' factors are those elements which might be taken for granted as part of the service and when performed poorly led to dissatisfaction.

The 'performance' factors are the aspects of service where a poor performance results in dissatisfaction and good performance increases satisfaction.

The 'attractive' factors are those aspects that will increase satisfaction but their absence does not lead directly to dissatisfaction.

The Kano model is discussed in detail in Chapter 5, with a summary in Section 5.3.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) is an executive agency of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), formed in April 2008 from the amalgamation of The Pension Service (TPS) and the Disability and Carers Service (DCS). The agency is responsible for delivering a range of age- and disability-related benefits to around 15 million customers and pays out nearly £96 billion annually. With the creation of PDCS the opportunity was taken to create a customer survey which could provide an overview of performance at the overall level while still allowing for results to be analysed at the component service level.

This report presents the findings from the second year of the PDCS customer survey. The second year of the survey involved two waves of interviewing, the first beginning in September 2010 and the second in February 2011. This report brings together the findings from 2010/11 PDCS customer survey along with comparisons to the findings from 2009/10.

1.2 Research objectives

The main objective of the PDCS customer survey is to monitor satisfaction with the service. Beyond this the research also aims to provide the 'customer voice' when it comes to operational and policy planning.

In particular, the research aims to establish what the main customer priorities are for the individual services and, as a result, identify how to improve satisfaction and reduce problems.

The survey also looks to provide findings that can be used to measure performance against the DWP customer charter standards of:

- right treatment;
- right result;
- on time;
- easy access.

The research examines the views of customers from a range of demographic and social backgrounds who interact with PDCS through different service channels so future design of services can be targeted most appropriately to suit the customers' needs.

1.3 Sample

The sample for the survey was generated from the PDCS database of customers. The target population for the research was customers who had recently completed a transaction with PDCS. This transaction may involve making a claim for various benefits on their own behalf, or on behalf of someone else, or notifying a change in circumstance. A sample was drawn from each wave based on customers who had made contact with PDCS within the last three months (within the last six months for the most recent wave), it was felt the more recent the transaction the better the customer would be able to recall the experience. Customers may contact PDCS via the telephone, through Local Service, by letters and forms and by email. The survey included customers contacting via all these methods.

It should be noted that the approach described above means that the study is a survey of **contacting customers** rather than a survey of all customers receiving a benefit from one of the services. This approach was taken because the survey is intended to improve the service PDCS provides to its customers, therefore, only customers who have had recent contact with the service were included.

1.4   Questionnaire design

The survey has been designed to capture the overall experience of the customer's most recent enquiry. The questionnaire traces the enquiry looking at all of the contact channels they have used, and maps their experiences against their overall ratings of the service as a whole.

The overall structure of the questionnaire is as follows:

• reason for most recent contact with PDCS;

• contact channels used;

• forms;

• general enquiry experience;

• enquiry conclusion;

• non-enquiry contact;

• problems and complaints;

• overall satisfaction and statements;

• demographics.

1.5   Fieldwork

In each wave all respondents were sent an advance letter two weeks before the start of fieldwork, which explained the purpose of the study, reasons for their inclusion in the research and the form that the survey would take. Respondents were invited to call a freephone number if they wished to opt out of the survey or if they wished to enquire about further details of the research before deciding whether or not to participate. Contact details of those who opted out of the research were removed from the sample issued to interviewers.

There was a target of 1,500 interviews for the first wave and 3,500 interviews for the second wave. The following numbers were achieved per wave:

• 2010/11 Wave 1 = 1,500 interviews (772 TPS, 728 DCS);

• 2010/11 Wave 2 = 3,502 interviews (1,871 TPS, 1,631 DCS).

In total 5,002 interviews were achieved across 2010/11 with 2,643 TPS interviews and 2,359 DCS interviews.

The fieldwork for the first wave took place across a five-week period between Wednesday 15 September 2010 and Thursday 21 October 2010. The fieldwork for the second wave took place across an eight-week period between Monday 28 February and Tuesday 26 April.

The average interview length was 17 minutes, with all interviews conducted over the telephone using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). For respondents who were unable to complete the interview by telephone a postal option was available on request.

1.6   Report structure

The next chapter of this report looks at the survey findings for the PDCS as a whole and provides the topline figures for the organisation. Chapter 3 looks at the experiences of TPS customers and this is followed by Chapter 4 which focuses on DCS customers. Chapter 5 then presents the findings of the statistical analysis that has been carried out to understand the Kano model of key drivers of service performance from a customer's perspective for the two organisations. Chapter 6 then provides an overview of the customer characteristics of both DCS and TPS.

Throughout the report comparisons are made with the 2009/10 survey where appropriate. For ease of reference these comparisons are made in boxes towards the end of individual sections within each chapter.

2   The Pension, Disability and Carers Service

2.1   Enquiry types

The Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) customer survey initially identifies the subject of the respondent's most recent contact and then asks about all the interactions that they have had with the service over the course of that enquiry.

This chapter discusses the types of enquiry customers were contacting the service about and the contact channels they were using. In addition to this, it also looks at whether customers would have preferred to use different contact channels for their enquiry (Sections 3.1 and 4.1 discuss these findings in relation to TPS and DCS in more detail).

2.1.1   Main subject of enquiry

The target population for the PDCS customer survey is customers who have been in contact with the service in the last six months rather than all those in receipt of a PDCS administered benefit. The rationale for this is that these customers can provide specific feedback on issues relating to service performance which customers who may not have had any contact beyond receiving money in to their bank accounts cannot.

In order to target this population the sample for the PDCS customer survey is drawn from a list of contacts that have been made which resulted in a change to a customer's record. This will usually be either a change of circumstance or a claim. However, the survey itself focuses on the customer's most recent enquiry with the service and this may be a more recent incident. The survey also allows the customer to define the enquiry type in their own terms and this may also be slightly different to how they are classified on the records held by the PDCS.

Table 2.1 shows the main reason customers were contacting either TPS or DCS in their most recent contact with the service.

Table 2.1   Main reason contacted (PDCS)

	%
A query	24
Claim State Pension	19
Change of circumstance	17
Claim Disability Living Allowance (DLA)	15
Claim Pension Credit	9
Claim Attendance Allowance (AA)	8
Claim Carers Allowance (CA)	5
Claiming other benefit	3

Base: All respondents (PDCS: 5,002).

2.1.2   **Ease of first contact**

A new question was introduced in the 2010/11 survey which sought to identify if there were any types of enquiry which caused problems for customers when they first tried to make contact with the service. The results are shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1   Ease of making first contact by enquiry type

Base: All with an opinion: State Pension claim (909); Pension Credit claim (449); DLA claim (702); CA claim (228); AA claim (361); Change of circumstance (820); Query (1,042); Claiming other benefit (125).
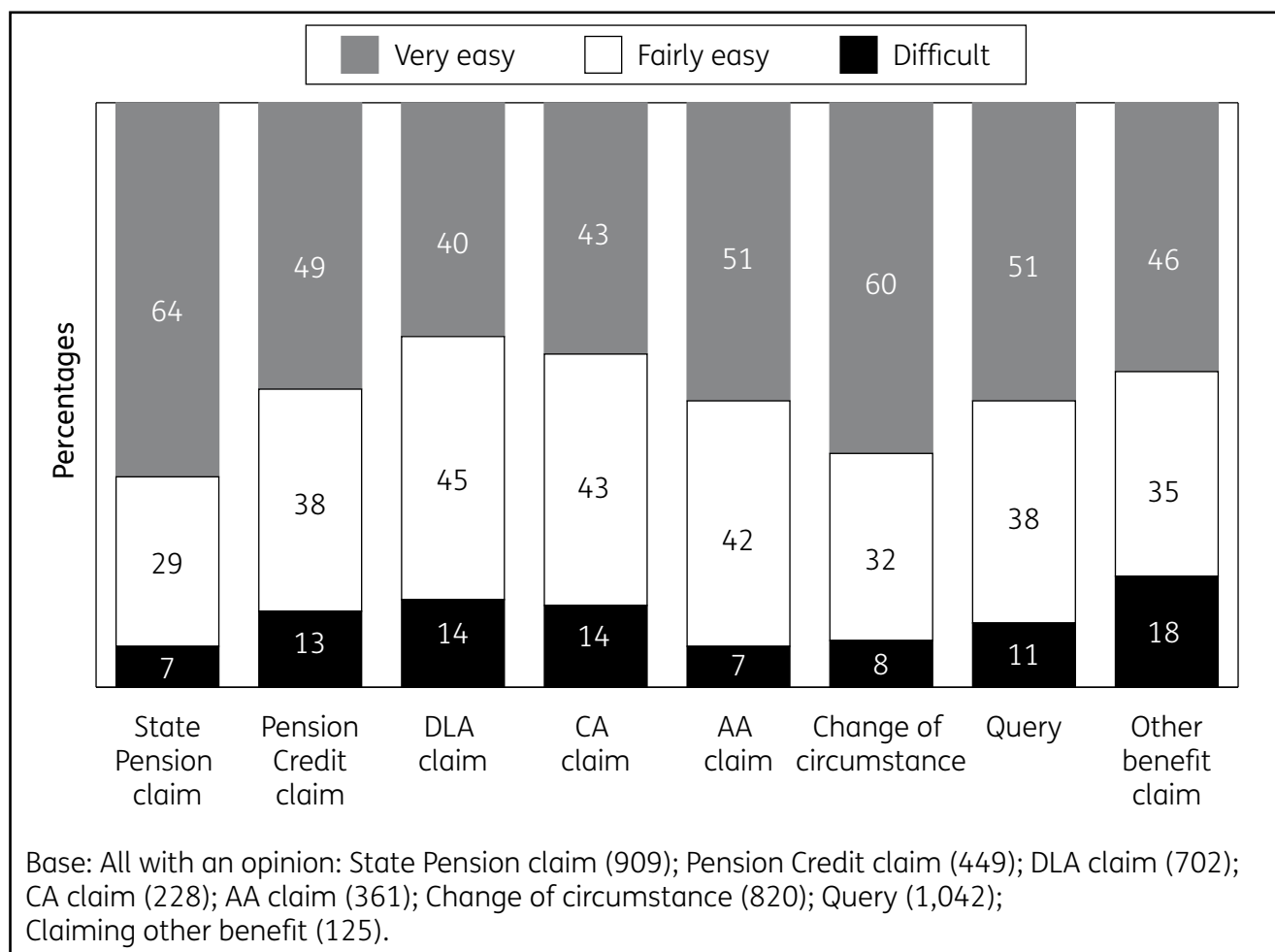
As Figure 2.1 makes clear there are certainly some types of enquiry for which customers experience more difficulties than others when making first contact (claims for Pension Credit, DLA and CA). However, it should be noted that for each of these benefits over 85 per cent of customers did still say they found making first contact very or fairly easy.

2.1.3   **Contact channels used**

All PDCS customers were asked which channels they had used during the course of their most recent enquiry; results are displayed in Table 2.2. It should be noted that customers could use more than one channel over the course of their enquiry so the figures in the table do add up to more than 100 per cent.

Table 2.2   Channels used in enquiry (PDCS)

	%
Telephone	75
Customer writing to PDCS	14
Searched for information online	14
In own home	11
Went online to make application/update details	4
At a government office	4
Email	1
Other	1

Base: All respondents (PDCS: 5,002).

In total 15 per cent of PDCS customers attempted to conduct at least part of their enquiry online; either searching for information, making an application or updating contact details. However, if we look at just those customers who have internet access at home the proportion of customers conducting at least part of their enquiry online increases to 22 per cent. If we then look at those customers who use the internet at least once a week the proportion increases further to 26 per cent. This is particularly important for TPS as increasingly their customer base will be regular internet users so the overall number of customers who will be using online channels will increase.

2.1.4   Preferred channels of contact

Once customers had detailed what contact channels they used as part of their most recent enquiry, they were asked if, given the choice, these were the channels they would have chosen. If these channels were not those they would have chosen, customers were asked how they would have preferred to make contact with PDCS.

Encouragingly, 93 per cent of PDCS customers said that the channels they had used were the ways they wanted to have contact with the service. For the small minority of customers who would have preferred to use other channels the most common alternative choices were: a home visit (32 per cent); by telephone (25 per cent); in person at an office (18 per cent) and via email (14 per cent).

2.2   Enquiry conclusion

Regarding the conclusion of their enquiry and expectations they held, customers were asked:

- whether their enquiry had concluded;

- whether a decision was required and if they agreed with this;

- the length of their enquiry, and whether their enquiry had taken less, more or about as long as expected;

- whether they were kept informed during the course of their enquiry;

- how easy it was to get in contact; and

- how complex they had found the enquiry process and whether this was anticipated.

2.2.1   Enquiry conclusion

Customers were asked whether their enquiry had concluded and just under nine in ten (87 per cent) reported that it had.

When asked how long their enquiry had taken (40 per cent) reported it had concluded within two weeks, and a further 40 per cent within three months. Nine per cent reported that it had taken more than three months. Figure 2.2 displays this in more detail.

Figure 2.2   Length of enquiry – PDCS

Base: All respondents (5,002).
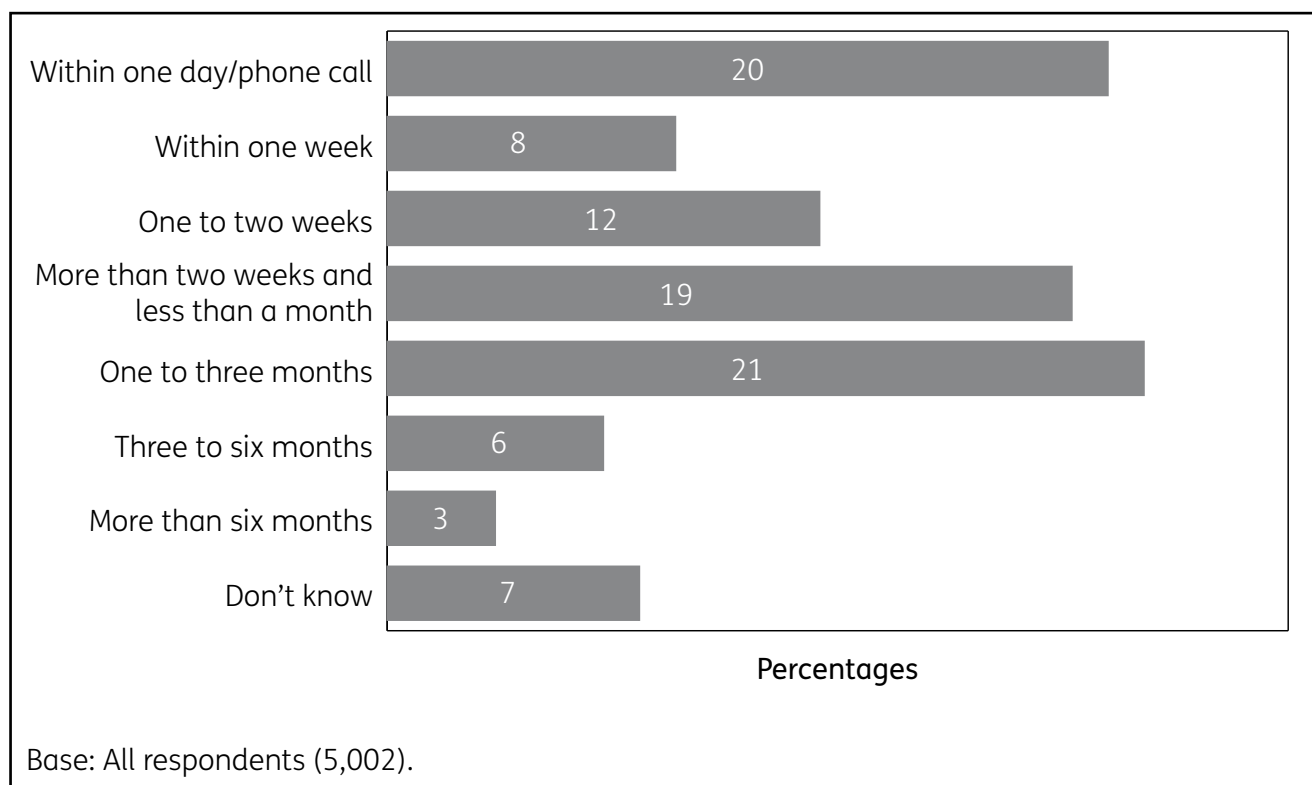
Customers were asked whether the length of their most recent enquiry had taken less time, more time or about as long as expected. Seventy-five per cent of customers felt that their enquiry had taken less time than expected or about as long as expected. However, 18 per cent of PDCS customers felt that their enquiry had taken/was taking longer than expected.

In regards to overall satisfaction, customers whose enquiry had concluded reported higher levels of overall satisfaction than customers whose enquiry was yet to conclude (93 per cent compared with 68 per cent). Customers who were satisfied with the time taken to deal with their enquiry were more likely to be satisfied overall than customers who were not satisfied (97 per cent compared with 50 per cent). Finally, customers who felt their enquiry took less time or about as long as expected reported higher levels of overall satisfaction than customers who felt their enquiry had taken longer than expected (97 per cent compared with 68 per cent).

2.2.2   Enquiry decision

All customers were asked whether their most recent enquiry required a decision being made based on their personal circumstances, to which two-thirds (64 per cent) of PDCS customers responded that it was. The majority (90 per cent) of PDCS customers whose enquiry required a decision being made agreed with this decision. Nine in ten (90 per cent) PDCS customers who received a decision felt that it was either very or fairly well explained.

Customers who felt that this decision was very or fairly well explained were more likely to be satisfied overall than customers who felt that the decision was not very well explained or not explained at all (96 per cent compared with 61 per cent).

An enquiry that required a decision from PDCS did not itself have an impact on levels of satisfaction with the overall service. However, whether a customer agreed with a decision did influence overall satisfaction. Customers who did not agree with the decision reported significantly lower levels of overall satisfaction (97 per cent compared with 58 per cent). This of course is only to be expected and is something that would be very hard for PDCS to influence.

2.2.3   Being kept informed

All customers were asked whether they were given clear timings during their enquiry and whether they were kept up to date with progress. Figure 2.3 displays the results for those who felt that it was applicable.

Figure 2.3   PDCS – Whether given clear timings and kept up to date
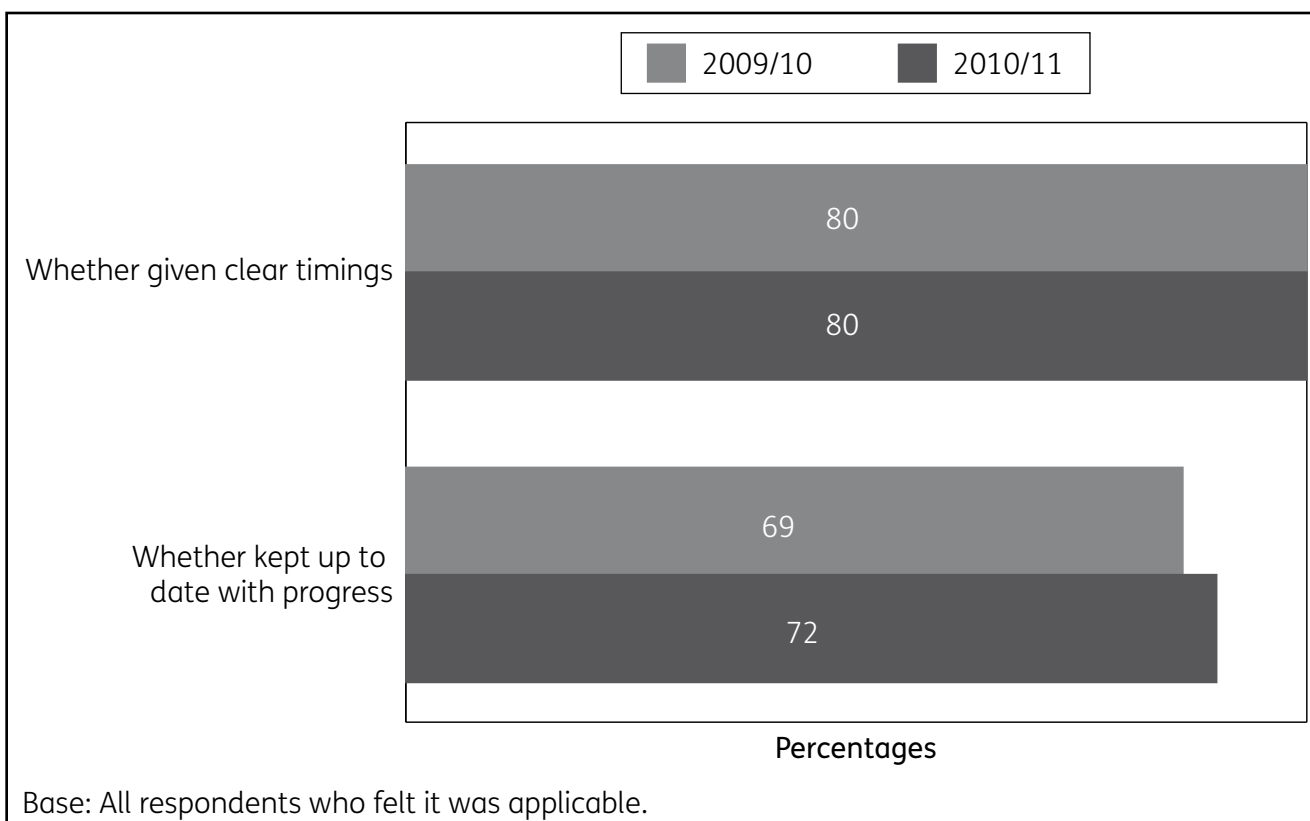
Base: All respondents who felt it was applicable.

Eighty per cent of customers reported that they were given clear timings during their most recent enquiry and 72 per cent were kept up to date with the progress of their enquiry.

2.2.4   Complexity of enquiry

In total, one-quarter (25 per cent) of customers found the enquiry process complicated (eight per cent very complicated and 17 per cent fairly complicated), while almost three-quarters (72 per cent) did not find it complicated (25 per cent reported that it was not very complicated and 46 per cent reported it was not at all complicated).

As well as being asked how complicated they had found the enquiry process, all customers were asked how this compared with their expectations. When exploring customers' expectations and experiences of complexity we combined their responses and it was then possible to identify four distinct groups:

- relieved – customers who were expecting a complex process, but it turned out to be simpler than expected;

- smooth enquiry – customers who experienced the simple process that was expected;

- resigned to complexity – customers who subsequently experienced the complex process they had expected;

- extra complexity – customers who experienced a more complex process than they had expected.

Figure 2.4 displays customers' expectations regarding complexity. Three-fifths of customers experienced a 'smooth enquiry' (61 per cent), but around one-quarter (26 per cent) of customers were either 'resigned to complexity' or experienced 'extra complexity' with their enquiry.

Figure 2.4   PDCS – Customers' expectations regarding complexity

Base: All respondents (excluding those with no expectations/opinions) (4,443).
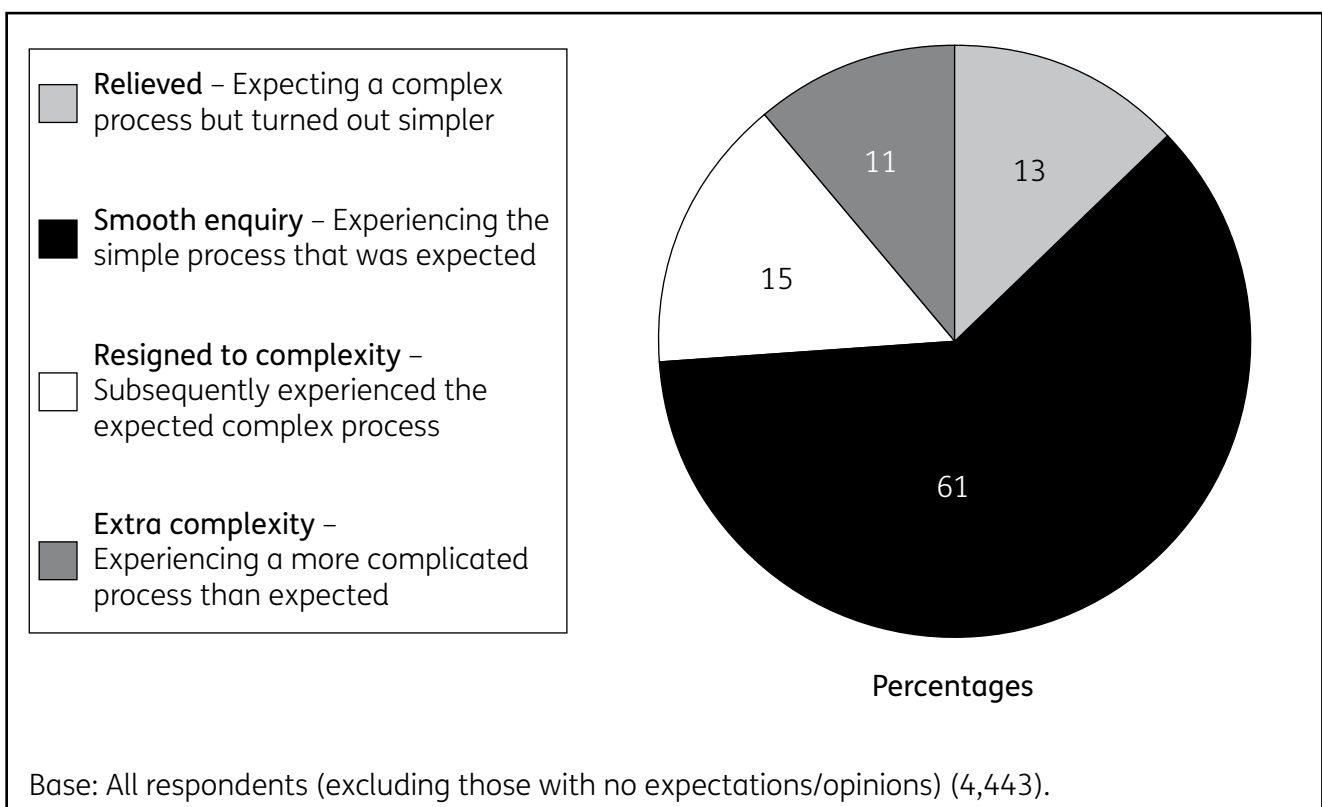
2.2.5   Problems encountered

All customers were asked whether they had experienced any difficulties or problems when dealing with PDCS in the six months prior to conducting the interview. If a customer had experienced difficulties or problems they were asked what they were and whether the issue had since been resolved.

Seven per cent of PDCS customers reported that they had experienced difficulties or problems in the six months prior to the interview being conducted. Across PDCS customers with a disability or illness were more likely to report that they had a problem (eight per cent of customers with an illness or disability compared with six per cent who did not have an illness or disability).

A range of difficulties or problems was given by respondents such as lack of communication or not being kept informed, delays in receiving benefit payments, staff were slow in dealing with requests or problems, staff lacked knowledge, and the service made too many mistakes. Of those who had experienced a problem or difficulty, 44 per cent reported that this had since been resolved.

Customers who reported having a difficulty or problem were less likely to be satisfied than customers who had not (51 per cent compared with 94 per cent). Chapter 5 on the Kano model goes on to show that having problems is one of the most powerful drivers of satisfaction. However, customers who reported that their problem had since been resolved were more satisfied than customers who were still awaiting the resolution of their problem at the time of interviewing (66 per cent compared with 38 per cent).

2.2.6   Complaints

All customers who had experienced a difficulty or problem were asked whether they had made a formal complaint, and if not, why they did not go on to make a formal complaint.

Twelve per cent of customers who experienced problems went on to make a complaint (this equates to less than one per cent of all PDCS customers). The most common reasons given by customers who had experienced a difficulty or problem when dealing with PDCS but did not make a formal complaint were that the issue was resolved, they thought nothing would happen as a result of the complaint, they did not know how to complain and they decided the matter was not serious enough.

2.2.7   Complaint handling

In total only 44 respondents mentioned that they made a complaint in the survey. As this is such a low base size analysis is severely restricted and percentages cannot be reported. Customers who made a complaint were asked which methods of communication they had used to make a complaint; roughly even proportions of customers complained via telephone and by letter, with almost no-one complaining by any other channel.

All customers who made a formal complaint were asked how long it took for them to receive an initial response to their complaint. The majority reported that it had taken longer than a week, with a sizable proportion also reporting that they never received a response.

When asked how satisfied customers were with the way their complaint was handled, the majority reported that they were very dissatisfied. Reasons given for dissatisfaction were that they take too long, no response or acknowledgement, staff attitude and staff not ringing back.

There is no discussion of complaint handling for TPS customers and DCS customers due to the low base.

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

• A smaller proportion of PDCS customers were 'relieved' in 2010/11 (18 per cent in 2009/10 compared with 13 per cent in 2010/11), while a larger proportion were 'resigned to complexity' (12 per cent in 2009/10 compared with 15 per cent in 2010/11).

• Other measures of enquiry conclusion were very similar across both years for PDCS as a whole. (However, there was some variation for DCS customers specifically – see Section 4.6)

• Customers with an illness or disability were more likely to report they experienced a problem (eight per cent compared with six per cent), but unlike 2009/10 there was no difference in the proportion reporting problems between genders.

2.3   Overall performance

Customers were presented with a series of questions towards the end of the survey which asked them to rate PDCS at an overall level on a number of measures. These included how satisfied they were with the service, whether the service they received was above or below what they expected and how much improvement they think the service needs to make. This section details the results of these overall performance measures. The results for each agency are displayed separately.

In addition, this section also reports the results from a series of performance statements that look at staff behaviour from the customer perspective. Finally, this section concludes with the findings from two fully open questions where respondents were asked firstly what the best thing about the PDCS was, and secondly what areas it most needed to improve.

2.3.1   Overall satisfaction

The main performance measure in the PDCS customer survey is a question asking how satisfied the customer is overall with the service they have received in the past six months and the results are shown in Figure 2.5. It should be noted that when customers are asked this question they are asked about the individual service they deal with, TPS or DCS, and that the PDCS score shown here is a composite of the scores for the individual agencies.

Figure 2.5   Overall satisfaction with PDCS

Don't know: PDCS: 1%; TPS: 1%; DCS: 2%

Base: PDCS (5,002); TPS (2,643); DCS (2,359).
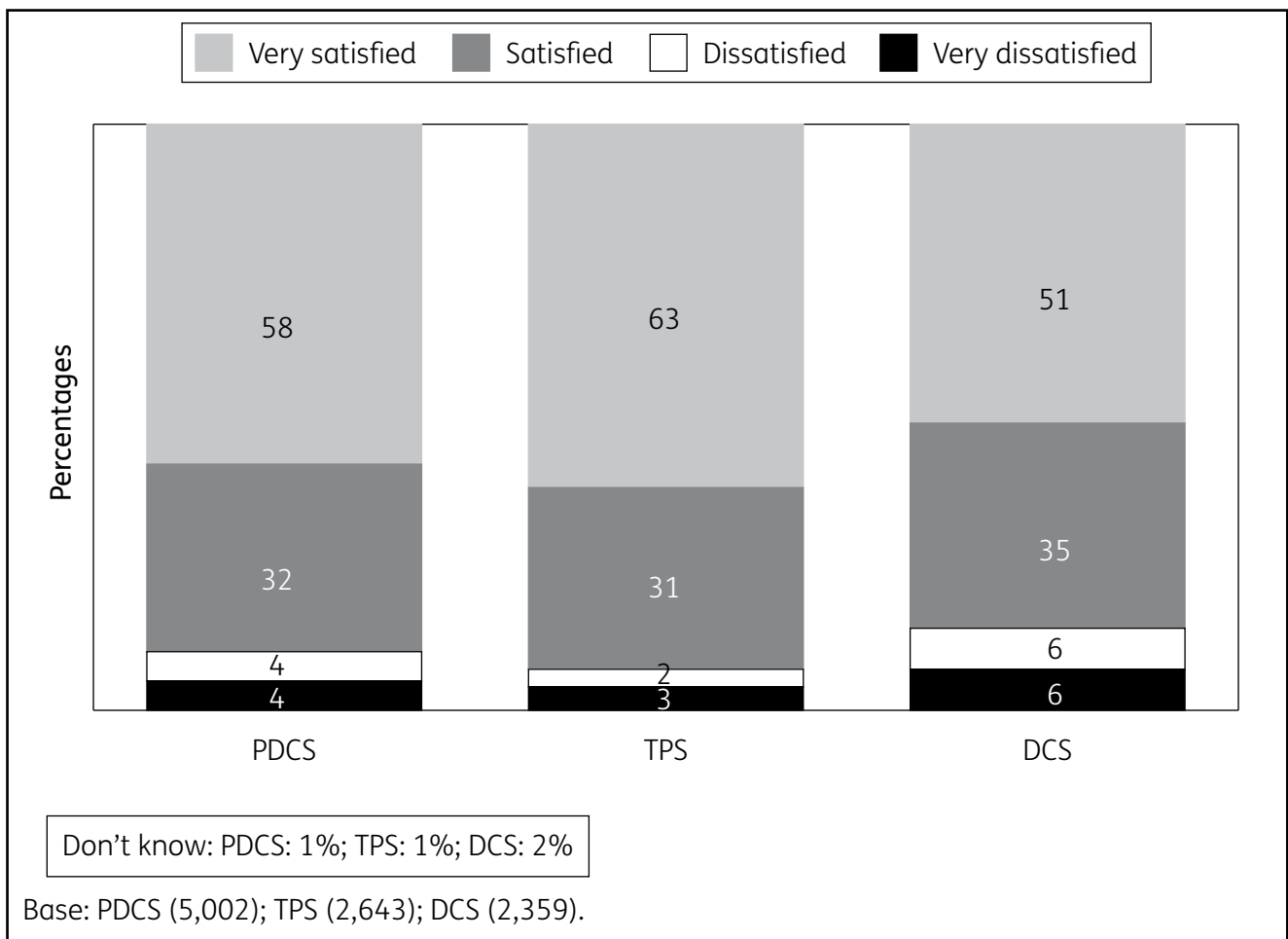
Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

- When taken as a net score dissatisfaction with PDCS is eight per cent which is an increase from the equivalent score in 2009/10 of six per cent. This has largely been driven by DCS where dissatisfaction has risen from ten per cent in 2009/10 to 12 per cent in 2010/11. The TPS score has remained constant at five per cent.

2.3.2   Expectations and improvements

In addition to asking about satisfaction with the service, the survey also included two other overall performance measures. These measures looked at whether the service they had received was better or worse than they had been expecting and how much improvement, if any, the service needs to make.

Performance against expectations

Expectations can help to give satisfaction scores in a customer survey some context. For example, if a customer is very satisfied, this might be because they had such low expectations it does not take much service performance to elicit a response of very satisfied.

Customers were asked if all their dealings with PDCS went better or worse than expected. Results for PDCS as a whole are shown in the first column of Figure 2.6, with TPS in the second column and DCS in the final column.

Figure 2.6   Performance against expectations

Don't know: PDCS: 3%; TPS: 4%; DCS: 3%

Base: PDCS (5,002); TPS (2,643); DCS (2,359).
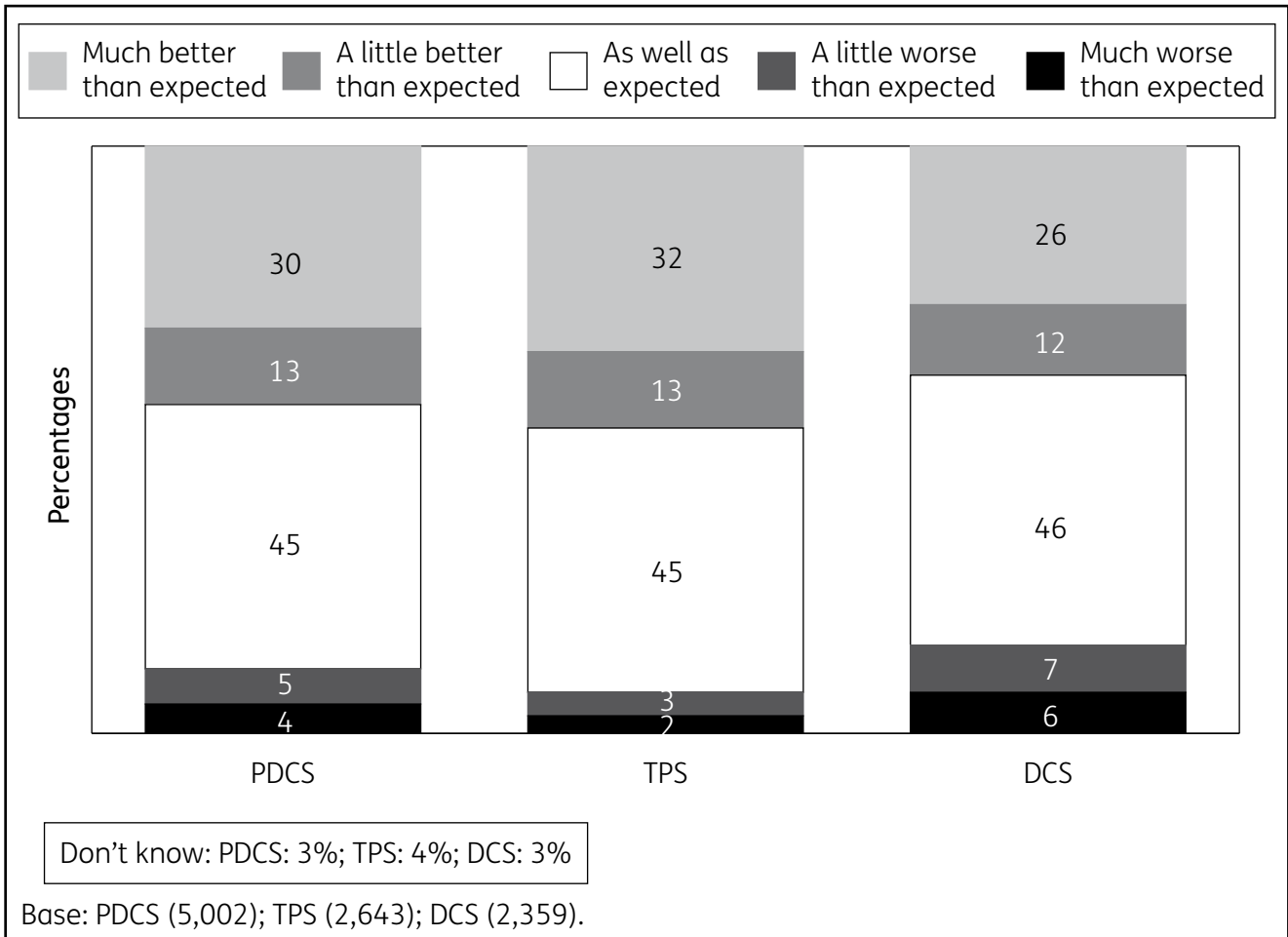
At the PDCS level more than four times as many customers felt their dealings with the service had gone better than expected as felt they had gone worse than expected (43 per cent compared with nine per cent). As with overall satisfaction the scores for TPS were higher than for DCS and this is most marked in a comparison of the proportion of customers who felt the dealings had gone worse than they had expected, just five per cent of TPS customers compared with 13 per cent of DCS customers.

It is possible to create an overview of how customers feel about the individual services by combining answers to the overall satisfaction and expectations questions.

Customers who were very satisfied with the service and whose expectations were exceeded can be categorised as 'delighted' with the service. A second group of 'happy' customers can be made up of those who were very satisfied with the service but for whom this is actually what they were expecting. Having customers in both of these categorisations is obviously very positive for the service.

Two further categories can be created which include customers who view the service as doing a reasonable job without significant concerns: Firstly, there are the customers who are 'pleasantly surprised'. These are customers who think that the service has performed ahead of their expectations but who are only **fairly**, rather than **very**, satisfied. In addition there are the 'content' customers who are fairly satisfied with the service and for whom the service has met rather than exceeded expectations.

The final categorisation that can be made is for those customers who have had a negative experience with the service. These customers are 'disappointed' as a result either of the service being below their expectation, or in simply being dissatisfied with the service overall.

Figure 2.7 shows the above overview for TPS and DCS from the 2010/11 customer survey.

Figure 2.7   Satisfaction and expectations – customers' feelings towards the service

Delighted – Very satisfied and service exceeding expectations

Happy – Very satisfied with service meeting expectations

Pleasantly surprised – Fairly satisfied with service ahead of expectations

Content – Fairly satisfied with service meeting expectations

Disappointed – Dissatisfied with service or below expectations

Base: TPS (2,643); DCS (2,359).
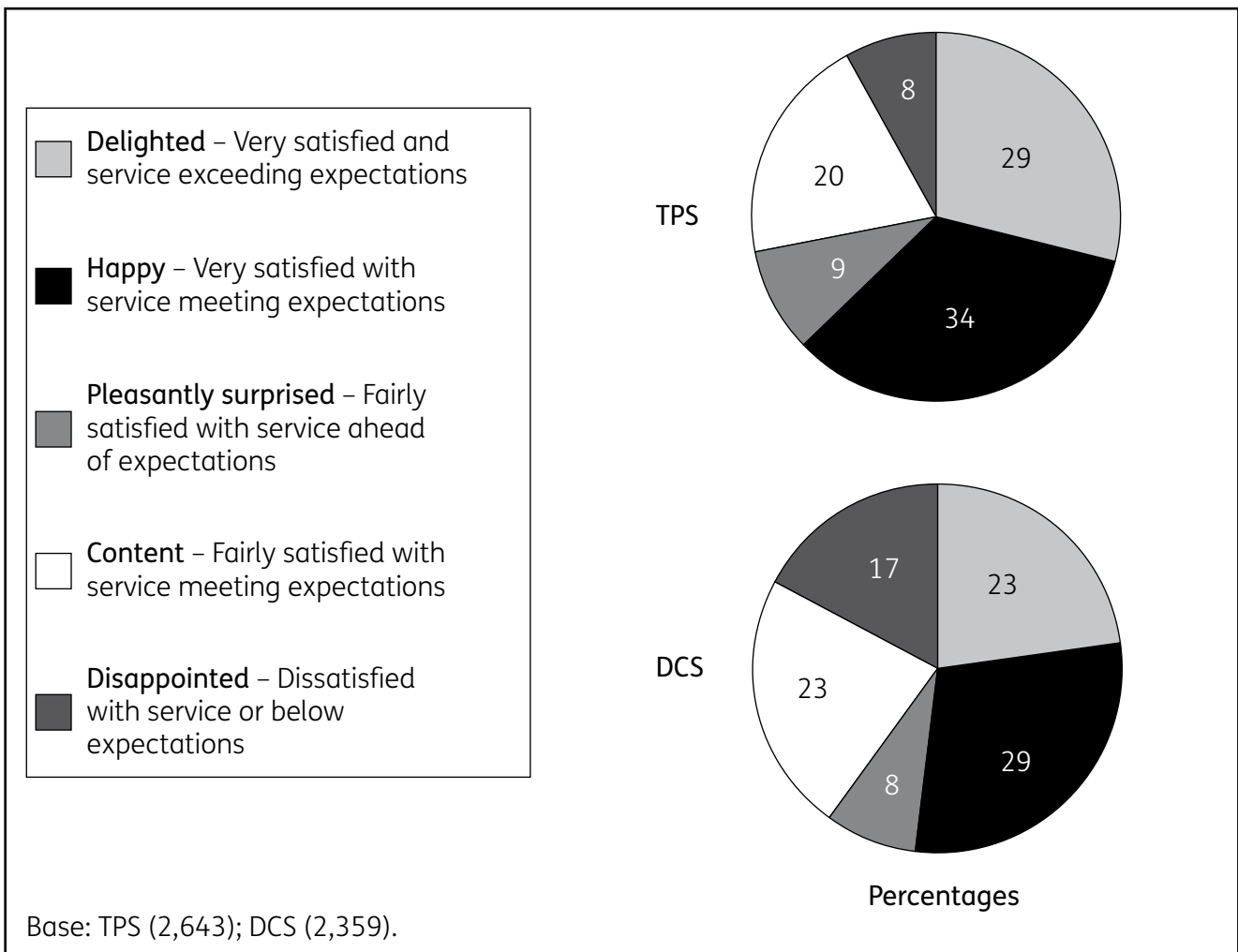
Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11
• There has been a fall in the proportion of customers saying that the service they had received was much better than expected, from 33 per cent in 2009/10 to 30 per cent in 2010/11. However, this fall has not been matched by a significant increase in customers saying that the service has been worse than expected. Instead, more customers are saying that the service is meeting expectations.

Level of improvement required

Asking customers how much improvement a service requires can help to provide greater gradation in customer views than that found in a satisfaction measure. This is because even customers who are satisfied with the service may still think further improvements are necessary, so it helps to identify the proportion of customers for whom the service is truly meeting all requirements.

Figure 2.8 shows how much improvement customers felt the service needed to make.

Figure 2.8   Performance against expectations
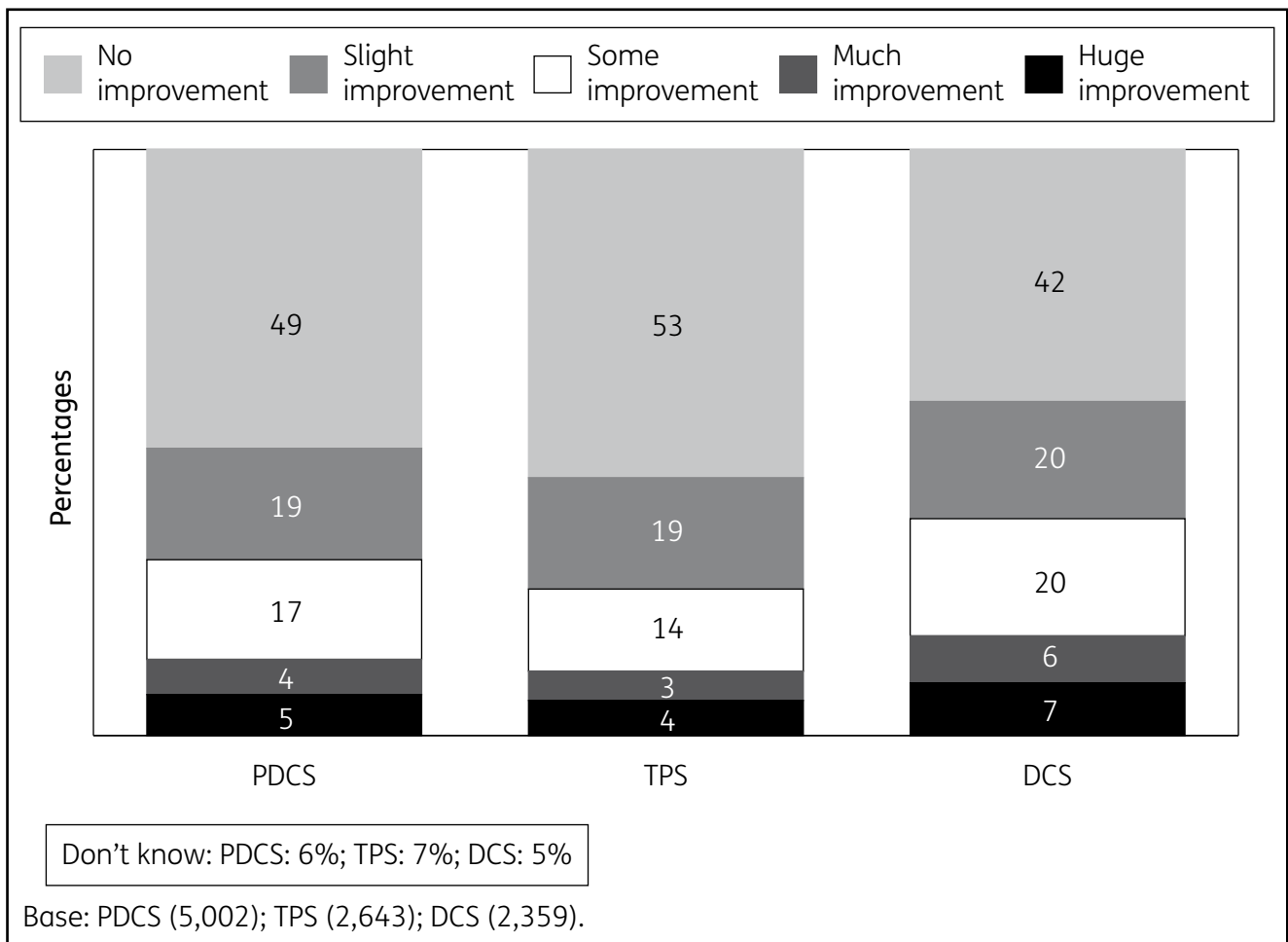
As Figure 2.8 shows, nearly half of all PDCS customers gave the service the highest accolade of saying that no improvements were necessary. While TPS customers were more likely to say this there was still a sizeable proportion of DCS customers who felt this as well.

2.3.3   Staff treatment

Customers were asked a series of statements about how they had been treated by staff over the previous six months. The statements covered a wide variety of behaviours and the results are summarised in Figure 2.9. Where customers did not have relevant experience they have been excluded from the base.

Figure 2.9   Staff behaviour

Base: All with an opinion.
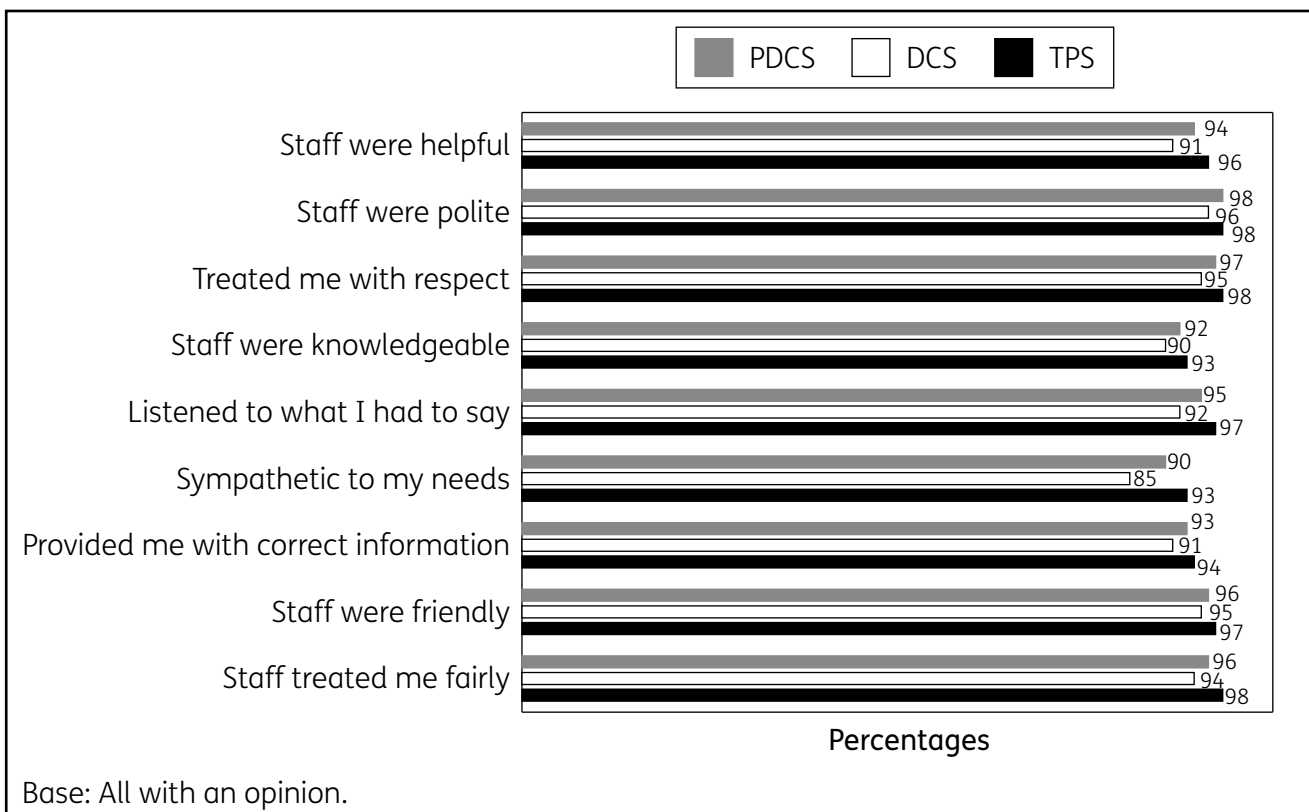
The first thing to note is that customers were very positive about the staff of both services and this is reflected in the overall scores for PDCS. DCS staff did score significantly lower than TPS staff for being sympathetic to needs but they were still rated positively by 85 per cent of customers. Further detail about these scores can be found in Sections 3.7.3 and 4.7.3.

2.3.4   Customer voice

Towards the end of the survey all respondents were given the chance to say what they felt the key improvements the services need to make were and also what they felt were the best things about the service in two open-ended questions. These verbatim responses were then grouped together under common threads to allow for analysis. Sections 3.7 and 4.7 provide a lot more detail about the individual services but the following sections provide a top level picture of what was important for PDCS customers as a whole.

Improvements to the service

The first thing to note is that nearly three-fifths of customers (57 per cent) did not have any suggestions to make about improvements to the service. While it cannot be said definitively that this means that these customers are completely delighted with the service, a lack of response may simply indicate that they cannot think of specific suggestions, these customers did have significantly higher levels of satisfaction (97 per cent compared with 82 per cent of those who did have a suggestion). This does seem to indicate that the lack of response reflects a positive feeling towards the service rather than, for example, a feeling that the service is so far beyond repair that nothing could be done to improve it. These customers who did not have any suggestions for improvement have been removed from the subsequent analysis of this question.

The biggest area raised by PDCS customers when asked to spontaneously identify improvements was in providing information (20 per cent). This was followed by suggestions of changes to the way the service operates (16 per cent) and improvements to forms (15 per cent). There were significant

variations between TPS and DCS customers as to what priorities were, so detailed analysis is more usefully conducted at the level of the individual services (see Sections 3.7.4 and 4.7.4).

Best thing about the service

As some customers were not able to think of any improvements to the service, so also some customers did not identify any strengths. In total, around one in five customers (19 per cent) did not have any positive comments to make about the service. Just under half of these (nine per cent) made an expressly negative comment about the service but the remainder simply did not give a response at the question. Respondents who did not provide an answer have been excluded from the subsequent analysis.

There was some variation between TPS and DCS in terms of what customers identified as being the best thing about the service, but both had staff as being the most commonly cited strength. Overall 40 per cent of PDCS customers with an opinion spontaneously identified the staff as being the best thing about the service and this reflects what can be seen for the services individually (37 per cent of TPS customers and 44 per cent of DCS customers). No other area had even half as many mentions as the staff for either service. Further analysis of the other areas raised is in Sections 3.7.5 and 4.7.5.

2.4   DWP Customer Charter

The Department has identified a number of drivers of customer satisfaction and these are incorporated within the DWP customer charter. The charter sets out four broad areas of customer service that it commits to delivering:

• right treatment;

• easy access;

• right result;

• on time.

Each of these areas gets a score based on the responses to a number of questions in the survey. For 'right treatment' this was: whether they were told what would happen next; if the staff were helpful, polite and knowledgeable; whether they were treated with respect; whether staff listened to what they had to say; and whether they were sympathetic to their needs.

The questions used to derive the 'easy access' measure were: whether the mode of contact was the channel the customer wanted to use; whether they had to repeat information when transferred; whether replies to letters were easy to understand; and the complexity of the enquiry process.

For 'right result' the questions were: whether the service did what they said they would; whether their enquiry had concluded; whether decisions were explained clearly; and whether they were provided with correct information.

The questions used to derive the 'on time' measure were: whether the amount of time they needed to wait for calls was reasonable; whether PDCS called back when they said they would; whether they replied to letters; whether they were given clear timings; whether they were kept up to date with progress; and satisfaction with the time taken to deal with the enquiry.

Figure 2.9 displays overall PDCS scores for each of the four areas outlined in the charter. Generally, these are quite high across the board, but scores for 'easy access' and 'on time' are lower than for 'right treatment' and 'right result' for both 2009/10 and 2010/11.

Figure 2.10 DWP Customer Charter – PDCS

Figures 2.10 and 2.11 display overall TPS and DCS scores for each of the four areas outlined in the charter. TPS score higher across all four areas than DCS in both 2009/10 and 2010/11.
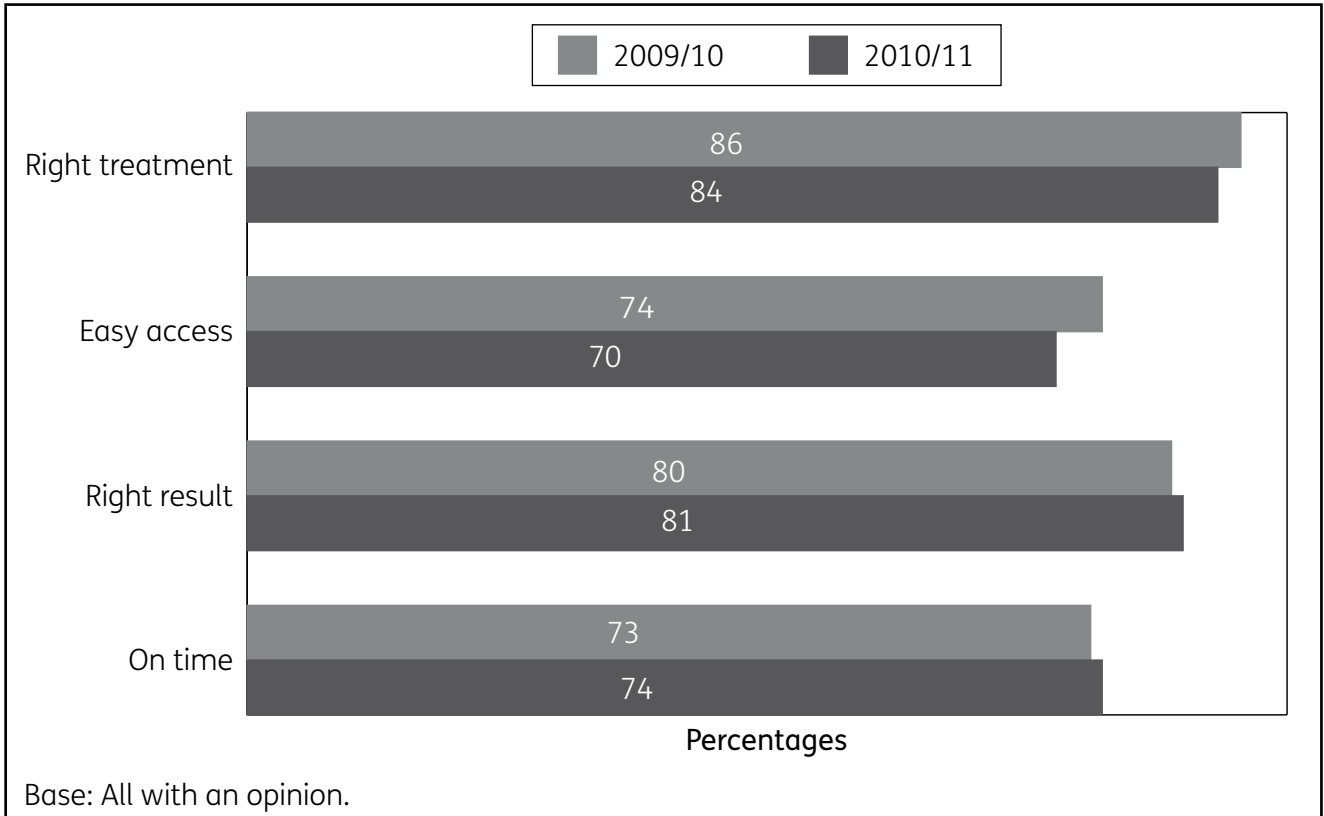
Figure 2.11 DWP Customer Charter – TPS
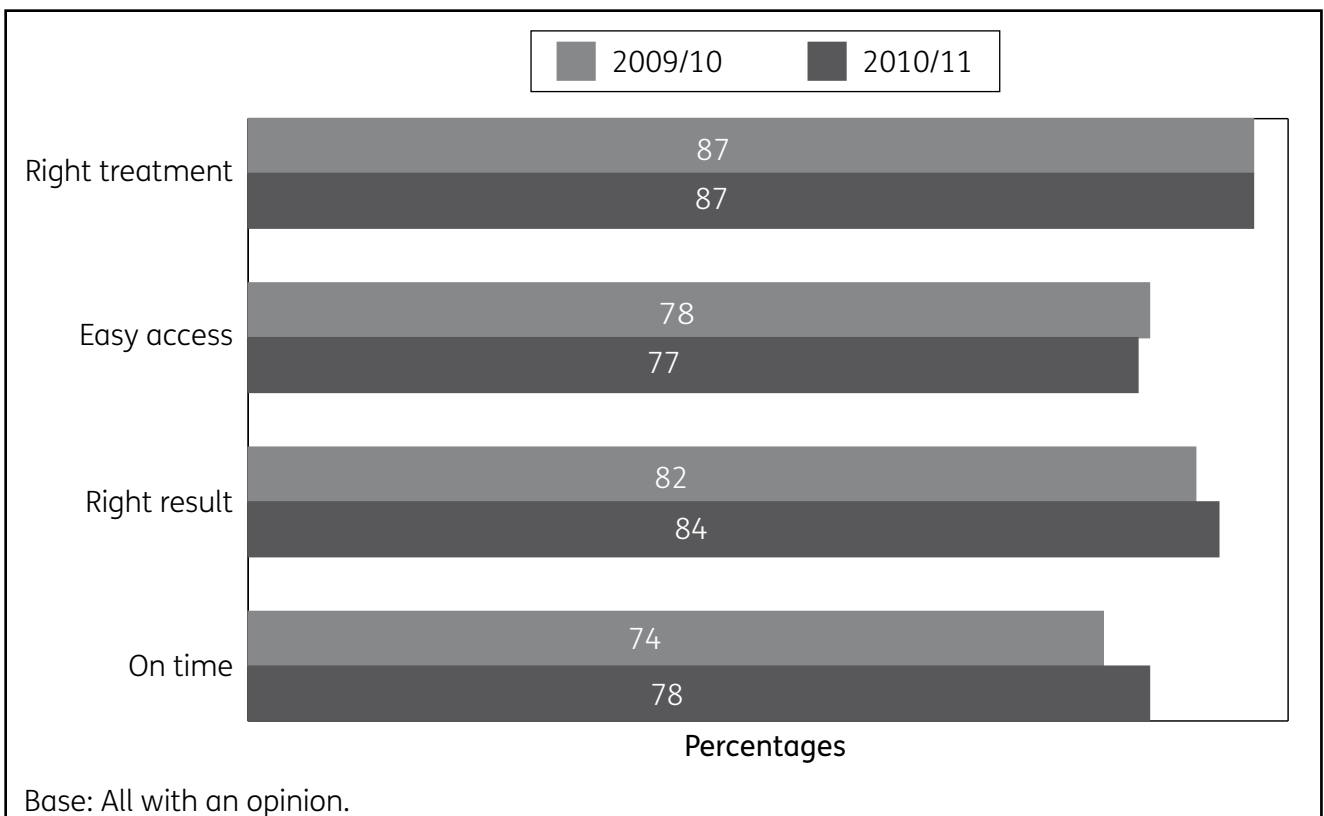
Figure 2.12 DWP Customer Charter – DCS

Base: All with an opinion.
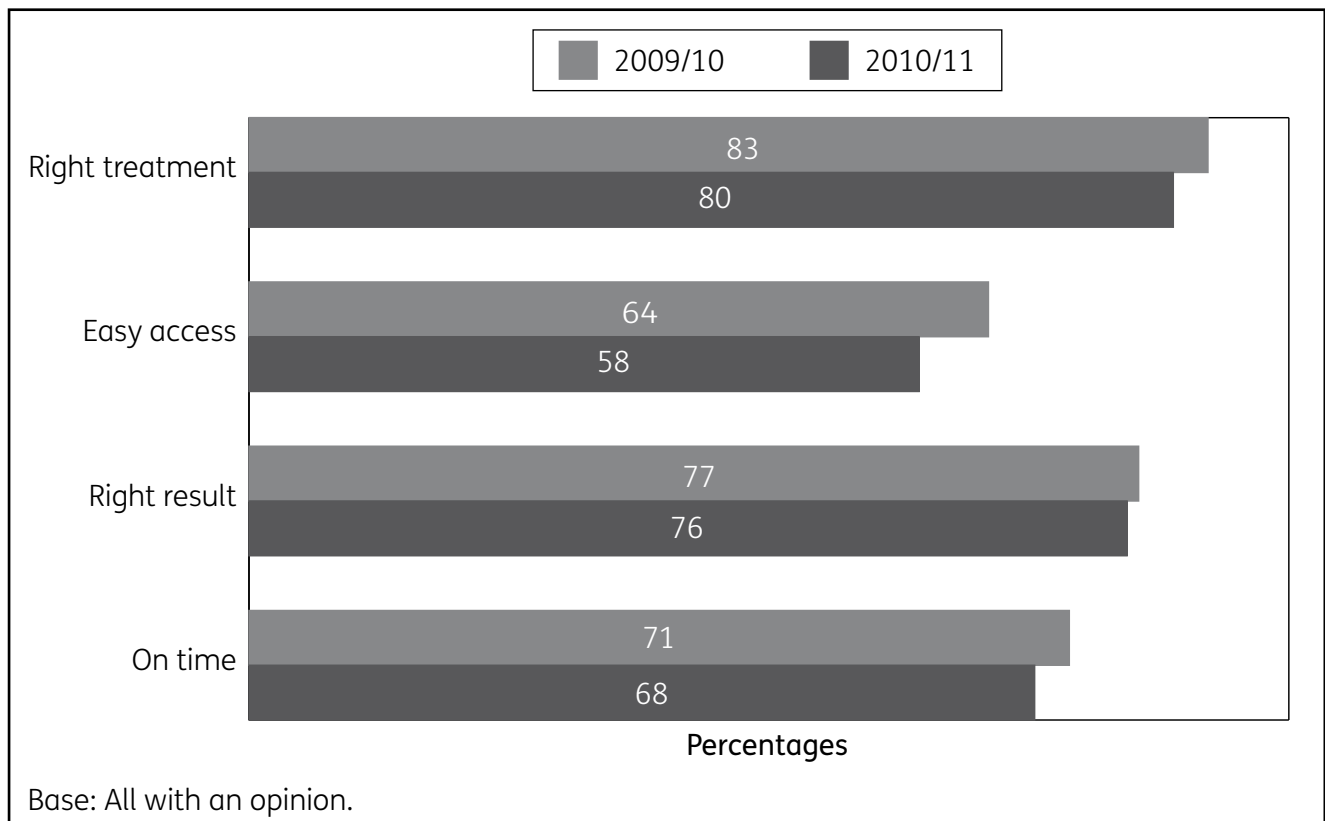
Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

• As shown in Figure 2.9, there has been limited variation in the DWP Customer Charter scores for key drivers of satisfaction.

• The most notable difference between 2009/10 to 2010/11 is for 'easy access' from 74 per cent to 70 per cent. This difference is led mainly by a difference in responses to the component variables for DCS customers as shown in the decrease in the proportion for 'easy access' in Figure 2.11.

3   The Pension Service

This chapter looks at the experience of The Pension Service (TPS) customers when contacting the service. It begins by focusing on a customer's most recent enquiry with the service before moving on to look at wider perceptions of the service including overall satisfaction. In addition, it looks at the areas customers think are the strengths of the organisation as well as issues that customers spontaneously identified as being major priorities for improvement.

3.1   Enquiry types

3.1.1   Main subject of enquiry

Customers contacted TPS with a wide variety of enquiry types but these can be grouped as follows: claims for State Pension, claims for Pension Credit, changes of circumstance, queries and contact regarding other benefits. Figure 3.1 shows the proportion of customers contacting for each of these enquiry types.

Figure 3.1   TPS enquiry type

Base: All TPS respondents (2,643).
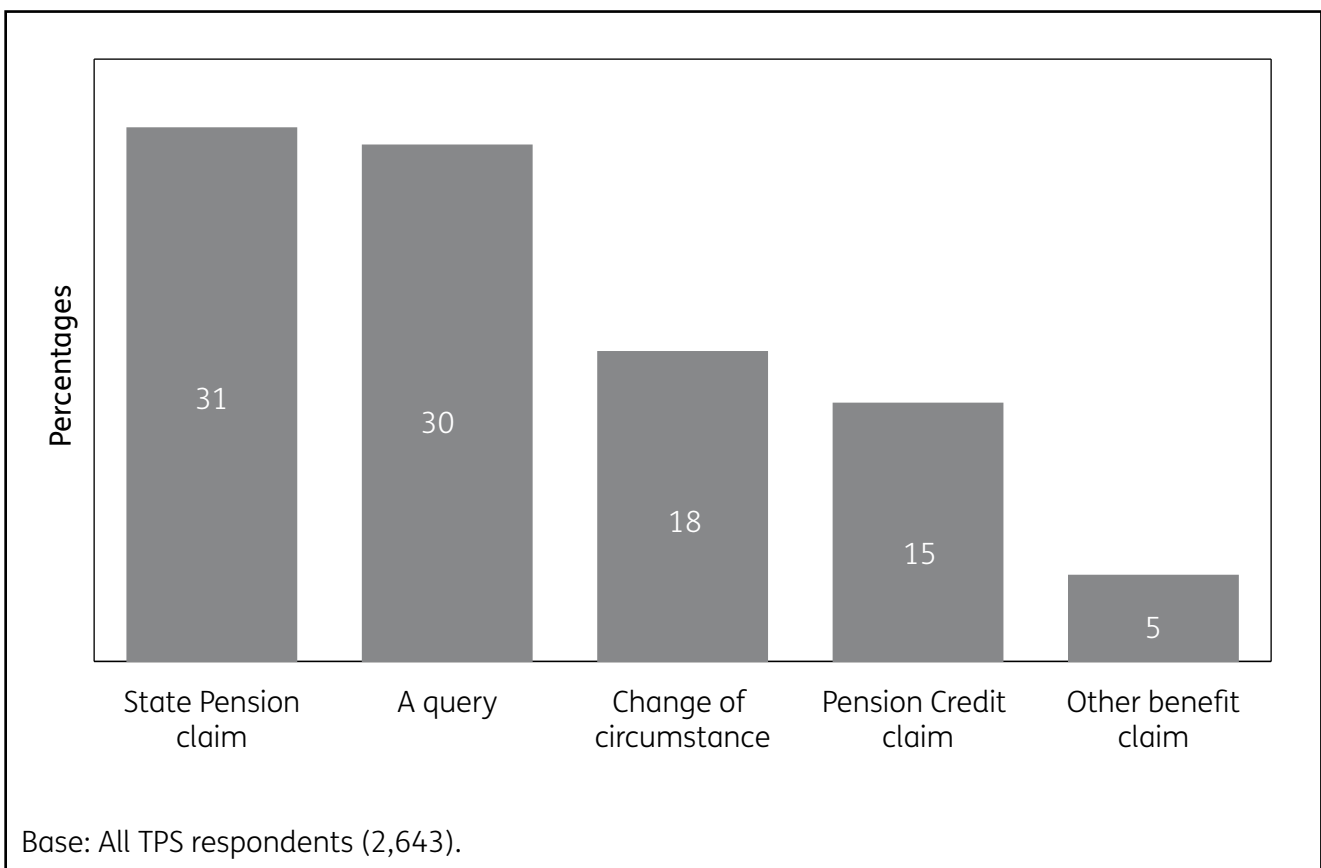
As Figure 3.1 shows, customers contacting with a query was the second most common enquiry type. Breaking this down further we can see that querying the amount they were paid (eight per cent) and responding to a TPS communication (seven per cent) were the most common types of query. Customers were also reporting a wide number of different changes of circumstance but the two biggest were changing bank details (seven per cent) and changing address (six per cent).

Only a small proportion of customers (five per cent) were contacting the service to claim a benefit other than the State Pension or Pension Credit. The Winter Fuel Payment and Attendance Allowance (AA) were the most common 'other' benefits customers were contacting about but the numbers were relatively small (two per cent and one per cent respectively). It should be noted that the Winter Fuel Payment is something that most eligible customers do not need to apply for as they simply receive it alongside the State Pension, but there are eligible recipients for whom this is not the case.

There was variation in the level of overall satisfaction by enquiry type. Encouragingly it was the most common enquiry types that typically had the highest levels of satisfaction. Nearly all customers contacting to make a claim for the State Pension were satisfied (97 per cent) as were most customers reporting a change of circumstance (95 per cent), or making a general query (93 per cent). By contrast customers contacting to claim a benefit other than the State Pension or Pension Credit had the lowest levels of satisfaction (85 per cent) but, as stated above, they made up only a very small proportion of all TPS customers (five per cent).

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

- The number of customers contacting the service with a query does seem quite high at 30 per cent, and it is a significant increase from what was seen in 2010 (18 per cent). Looking at verbatim responses it does appear that this increase seems to have been driven by customers responding to an initial communication from TPS. In particular a large number of customers made reference to a letter informing them of the amount their pension would be rising to from April 2011.

Signposting for the State Pension claim process

Customers contacting to claim the State Pension were asked how they found out about the steps they needed to take in order to do this. While the most common response was the letter received from TPS (57 per cent), there was still a significant proportion of claimants who found out from other sources.

Nine per cent found the information online with nearly all of these getting the information from Directgov (eight per cent) rather than other non-governmental websites or search engines (one per cent). Other sources of information included friends and family (ten per cent), employer/work colleagues (four per cent) and their own prior knowledge (four per cent). Only around one in 20 (four per cent) said that they proactively contacted the service itself to find out how they needed to apply. This is encouraging as this type of contact is something that could certainly be classified as unnecessary if other signposting functions were working effectively.

Signposting for Pension Credit

One of the main objectives for the Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) is to reduce pensioner poverty and increasing the take up of Pension Credit is one of the prime methods for achieving this. All customers who had contacted the service to claim Pension Credit were asked how they had first heard about Pension Credit. The results are shown in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2   How first heard about Pension Credit

Base: All contacting to claim Pension Credit (457).
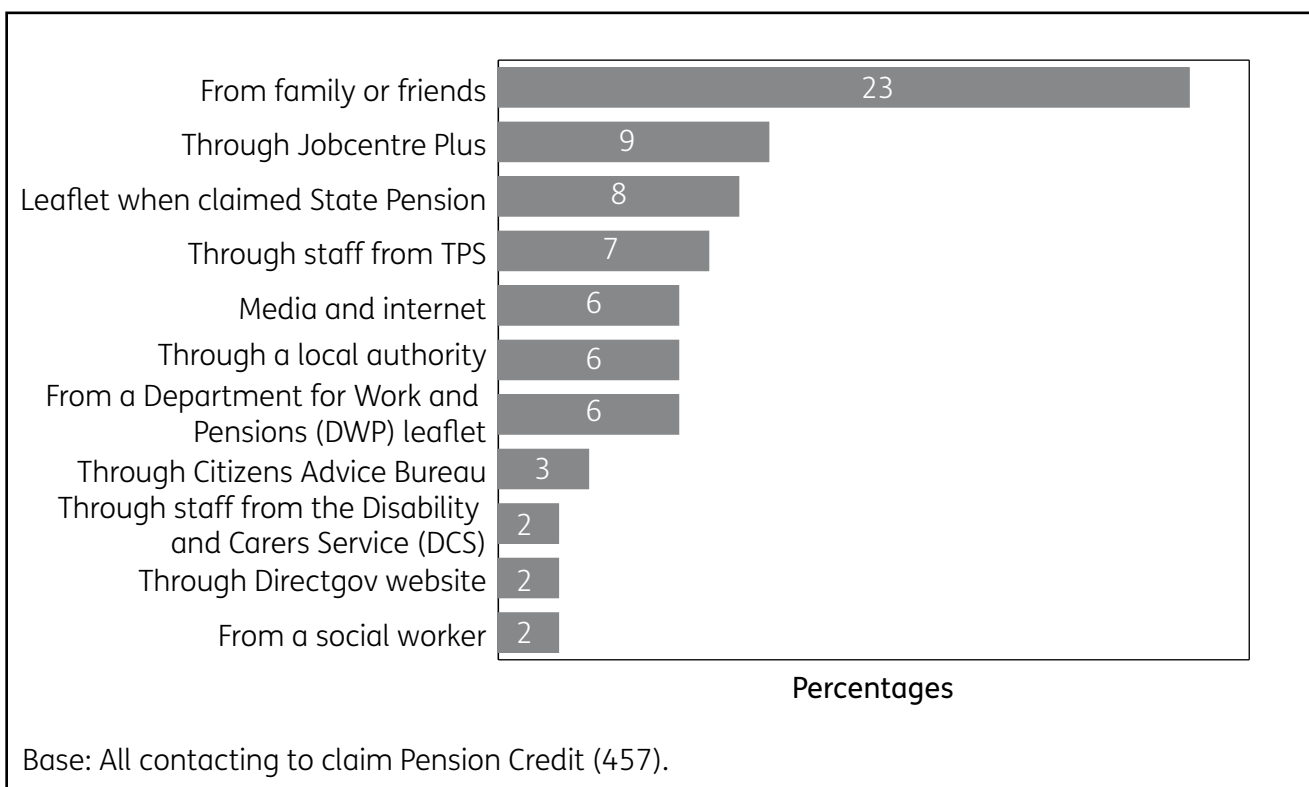
While informal contacts via family or friends were the single biggest source of awareness for Pension Credit, it is clear that official contacts directly from PDCS or partner organisations are also contributing significantly to awareness. A quarter of respondents (25 per cent) referred directly to information from PDCS, be it via staff, letters when claiming, leaflets or the Directgov website. In addition to this, one in ten customers stated that staff at Jobcentre Plus had informed them of the existence of the benefit and, presumably, their likely eligibility for it.

3.1.2   Ease of first contact

All customers were asked how easy it was to first make contact with TPS for their most recent enquiry. Nine per cent said that they found it very or fairly difficult to first make contact, this varied significantly by enquiry type. Twice as many customers contacting to claim Pension Credit said they found the first contact difficult as customers contacting to claim the State Pension (12 per cent compared with six per cent). A similar difference can be seen between customers contacting in regards to a change of circumstance (seven per cent) and those contacting with a query (11 per cent).

There was no significant variation by customer characteristics (sex, age, disability, etc.).

3.1.3   Contact channels used

The contact channels that customers used over the course of their enquiry are shown in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3   Contact channels used for enquiry

Base: All TPS respondents (2,643).
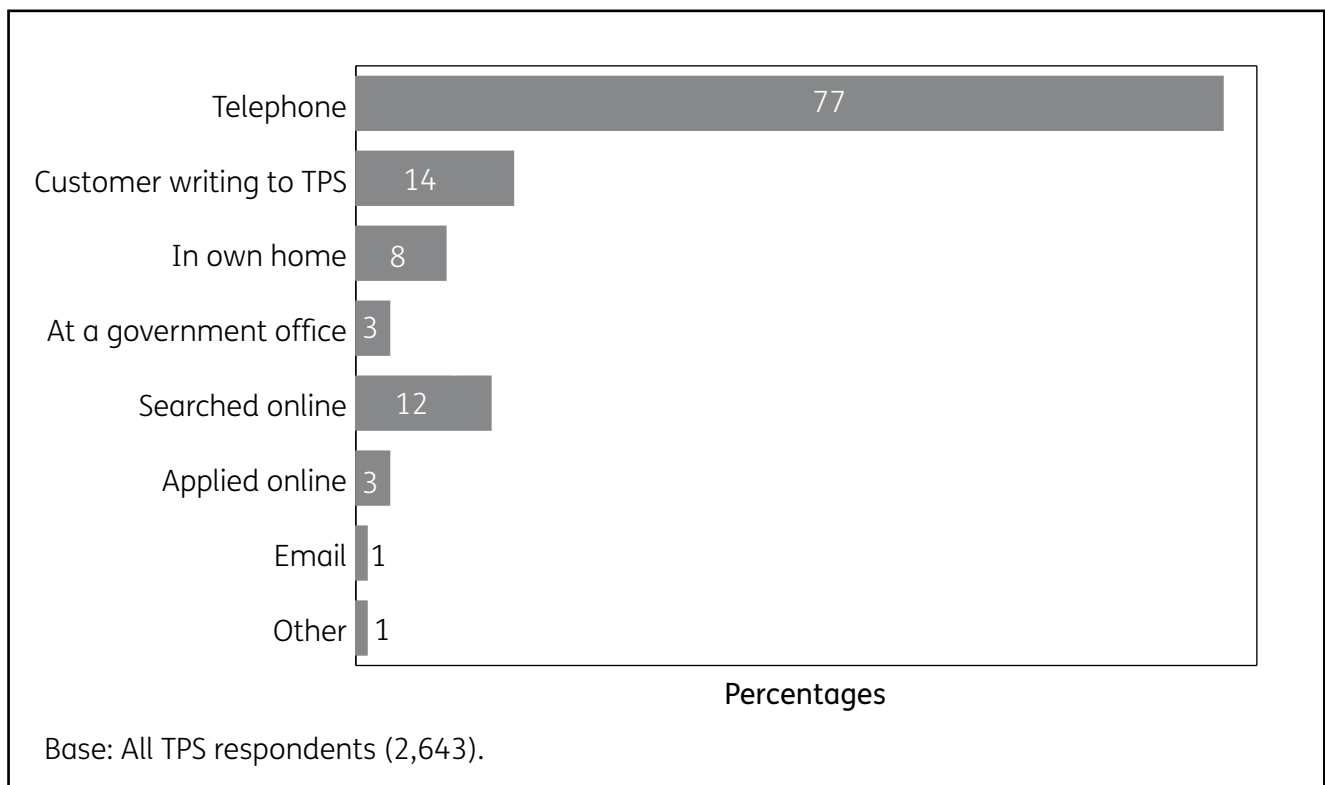
While the telephone was the most common contact channel for nearly all customers there was still variation by key customer characteristics. Sixty-seven per cent of customers aged over 65 used the telephone compared with 83 per cent of those aged 65 or under. (In addition to this, customers who did not speak English as their first language were also less likely to have used the telephone (65 per cent compared with 78 per cent), and so were those who had a disability or long-term health problem (73 per cent compared with 80 per cent).

Each of these customer groups are potentially more vulnerable and can, therefore, have different needs which meant that the telephone was not the best way for them to communicate with the service. Instead, older customers aged over 65 and those who had a long-term health problem were more likely to have received a home visit (12 per cent and 11 per cent respectively). However, the picture was less clear for customers who did not speak English as their first language. They were slightly more likely to have written to the service but this difference was not significant (14 per cent compared with ten per cent) and the other contact channels were broadly the same as for customers whose first language was English.

Overall, around one in eight customers (12 per cent) said that they searched online for information as part of their most recent enquiry. However, when we look just at those customers who had access to the internet at home this proportion rises to nearly one in five customers (18 per cent). Refining this further we can see that if we just look at customers who are regular internet users, going online most or every day, this rises to one in four customers (25 per cent). Over two-fifths of TPS customers fall in to this category of regular internet users and this will only increase in the future.

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

- There has been a slight fall in the proportion of customers contacting via the telephone since 2009/10 (77 per cent compared with 83 per cent). It should be noted that the form of the question for online contact was changed this year to help identify those customers who were searching for information online even if they did not then go on to make an online application. As a result of this results cannot be compared between the two surveys on this measure.

3.1.4   Preferred channels of contact

All customers were asked whether the channels they had used for their most recent enquiry were their preferred method of contact and the overwhelming majority (94 per cent) said that they were. Looking at the small number of customers who would have preferred to be able to use a different contact channel there was no clear preference as to what this would be, with around one in five choosing each of a home visit (22 per cent), the telephone (21 per cent) and a local office (19 per cent). In addition to this around one in seven (14 per cent) said that they wanted to be able to use email and one in ten (ten per cent) wanted to be able to conduct their enquiry online.

3.2   Telephone communication

3.2.1   Frequency of contact

Over three-quarters (77 per cent) of TPS customers had contact by telephone as part of their most recent enquiry. The mean number of calls made was 2.17.

The number of calls TPS customers made varied by enquiry type, with customers contacting to claim Pension Credit contacting a greater number of times (3.18) than those calling to claim State Pension (2.01) or those calling regarding a change of circumstance (1.64). Customers calling to claim another benefit did so a higher than average number of times (2.76), with customers contact regarding a query calling less than average (2.07).

Overall satisfaction varied by how many times a TPS customer called. Figure 3.4 displays the results.

Figure 3.4   How many times called and satisfaction (TPS)

Base: All TPS customers who had telephone contact (2,080).
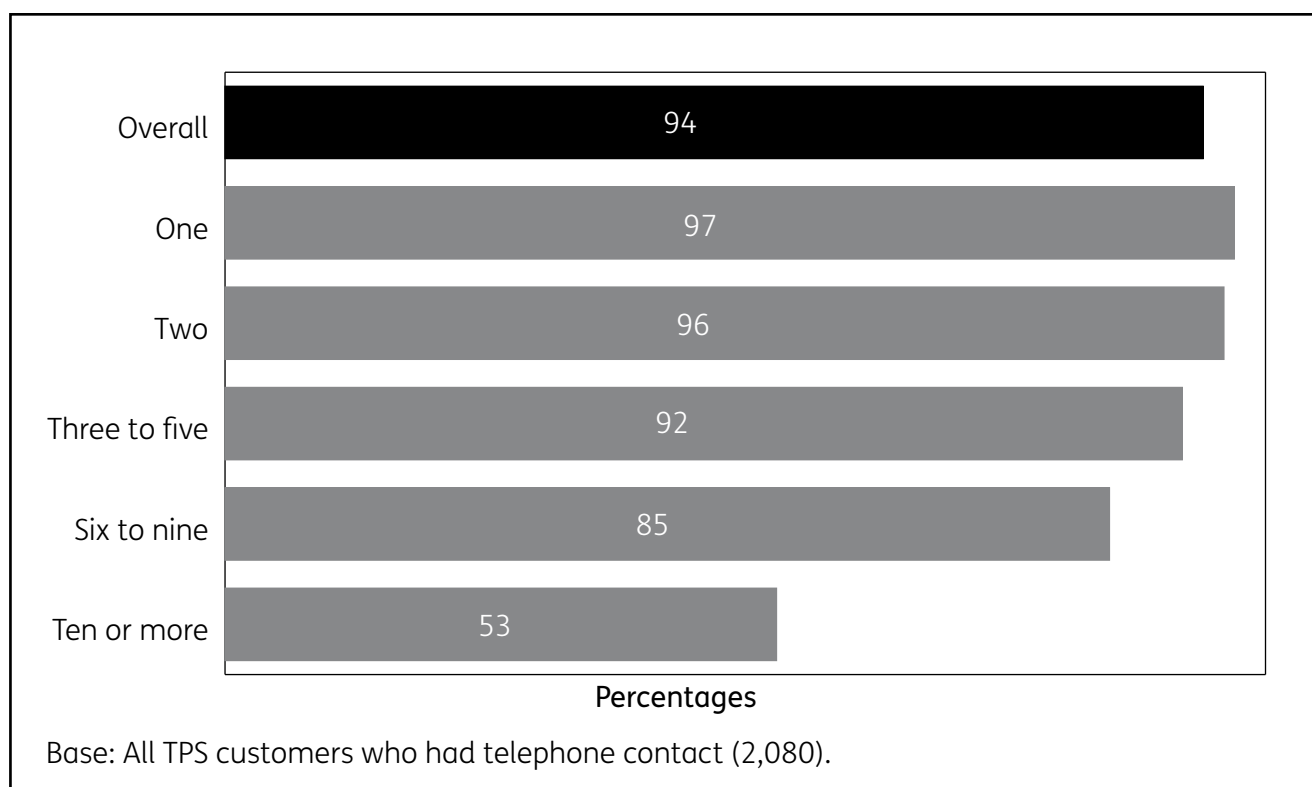
While overall satisfaction falls as customers have an increased number of contacts with the service. As shown in Figure 3.4, satisfaction drops most dramatically when customers find themselves having to call the service over five times in relation to their most recent enquiry.

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

• The mean number of calls TPS customers made decreased from 2.41 calls in 2009/10 to 2.17 calls in 2010/11. This difference was driven by the changes in the enquiry type profile from 2009/10 to 2010/11 as discussed in Section 3.1.1.

• The mean number of calls by enquiry type in 2010/11 was similar to those made in 2009/10.

3.2.2   Telephone number source

A new question was added to the 2010/11 survey that asked customers where they got the telephone number they had called, the top five answers for TPS customers are shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1   Telephone number source (TPS)

	%
A letter	63
Another organisation	9
Directgov	8
Family or friends	3
Leaflet/booklet	3

Base: All TPS customers who had telephone contact (2,080).

Customers were most likely have found the telephone number they called from a letter (63 per cent). There was little variation by enquiry type across the different telephone number sources, with the exception of customers who were contacting to claim Pension Credit. These customers were significantly more likely to say that they were given the number to call by another organisation (24 per cent compared with four per cent of those contacting with another enquiry).

3.2.3   Time waited for calls to be answered

Another new question that was added to the 2010/11 survey asked customers how long they waited for their calls to be answered, results are shown in Figure 3.5.

Figure 3.5   How long waited for calls to be answered (TPS)

Base: All TPS customers who had telephone contact (2,080).
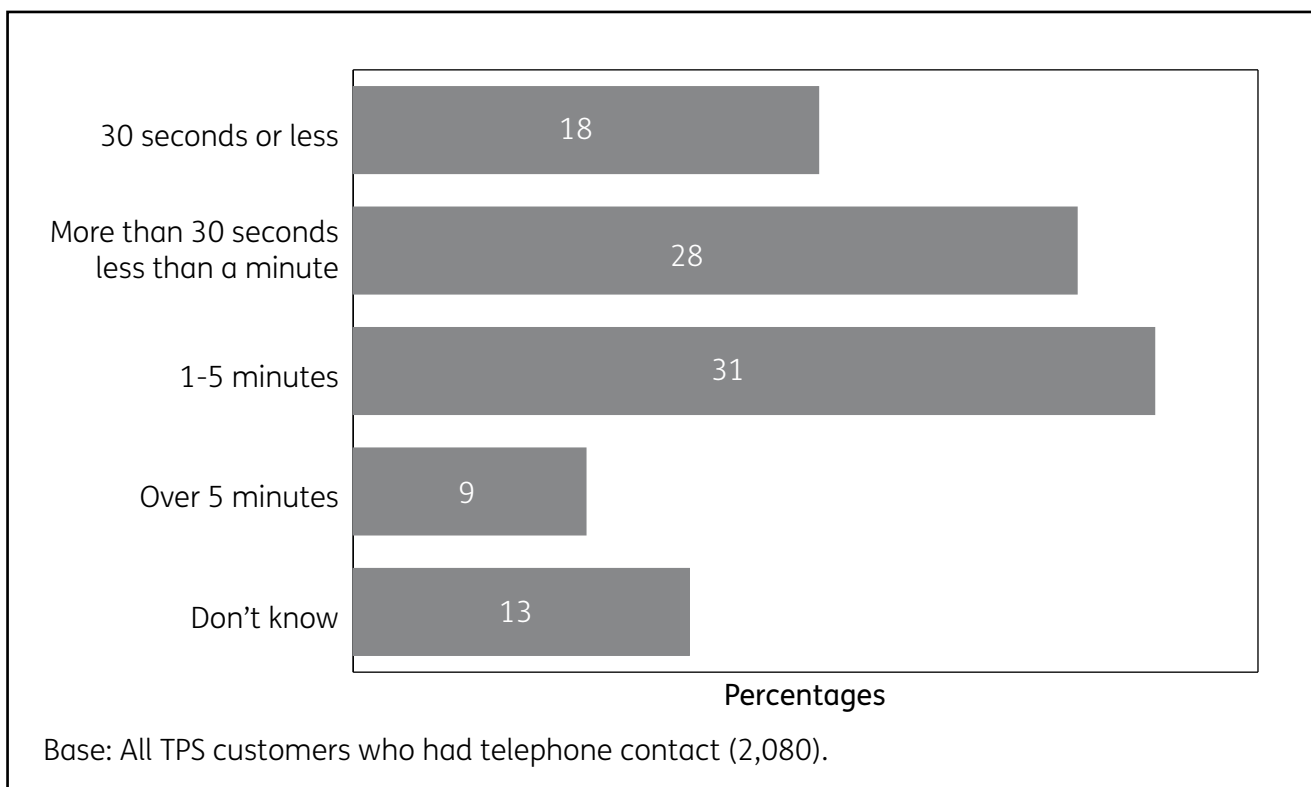
Four-fifths (78 per cent) of TPS customers reported that their call(s) were answered within five minutes or less, with one in ten (nine per cent) reporting that their call(s) took over five minutes to be answered.

The amount of time customers reported it took for their call(s) to be answered varied by enquiry type. Customers contacting regarding a change of circumstance or to claim State Pension were less likely to report they waited over five minutes (five per cent and eight per cent respectively) than customers contacting to claim Pension Credit (14 per cent).

Figure 3.6 displays overall satisfaction by how long customers reported that they waited for their call(s) to be answered.

Figure 3.6   How long waited for calls to be answered and satisfaction (TPS)

	Percentage
Overall	94
30 seconds or less	96
More than 30 seconds less than a minute	97
1-5 minutes	94
Over 5 minutes	83

Percentages

Base: All TPS customers who had telephone contact (2,080).
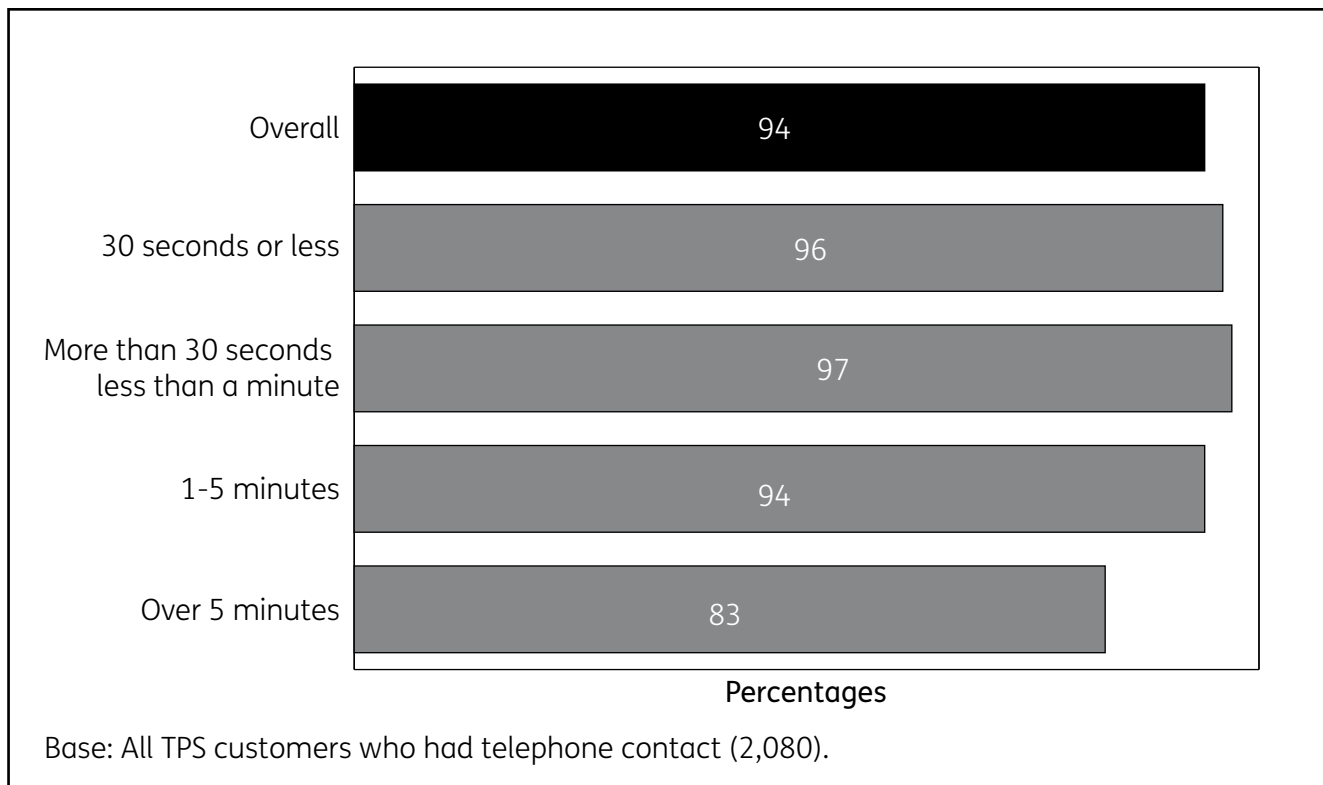
Perhaps unsurprisingly, the longer customers reported their call(s) took to be answered the less likely they were to be satisfied overall. However, as shown in Figure 3.6, overall satisfaction remains high for customers who wait for up to five minutes for their calls to be answered. The majority (94 per cent) of TPS customers who waited between one to five minutes reported that they were satisfied overall with the service. Overall satisfaction only declines significantly when customers reported that they waited over five minutes for their call(s) to be answered (83 per cent).

In addition to being asked how long they had waited for their call(s) to be answered, customers were also asked whether the amount of time they had to wait was reasonable and nine in ten said that it was (90 per cent).

As might be expected, customers who reported they waited over five minutes for their calls to be answered were significantly less likely than customers who reported a wait time of five minutes or less to state that the amount of time they waited for their call(s) to be answered was reasonable (55 per cent compared with 97 per cent). However, it is worth noting that this does mean that over half of all customers who had to wait over five minutes for their call to be answered still said this was reasonable.

3.2.4   Internal transfers

When asked whether the first person they had spoken to over the phone had been able to answer their query, three-quarters (75 per cent) of TPS customers said that they had.

Customers contacting to claim State Pension and those contacting regarding a change of circumstance were most likely to report that the first person they spoke to was able to answer their query (80 per cent for both). Whereas, customers calling to claim Pension Credit (72 per cent), those calling regarding a query (70 per cent) or those who had called to claim another benefit (60 per cent) were less likely to report this.

TPS customers whose enquiry was not answered by the first person they spoke to were asked what had happened next, results are shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2   When first person spoke was unable to answer query (TPS)

	%
Transferred to someone else	70
Told TPS would call back	10
Called back another time	8
Told to call someone else	6
Don't know	6

Base: All TPS customers who contacted by telephone and query was not answered by first person (393).

Most customers who were able to speak to a new person straight away (85 per cent) said that this new person was able to help them. Customers who were able to speak to a new person straight away were asked how much information they had to repeat and the results are displayed in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3   When spoke to a new person (TPS)

	%
Repeated all information	47
Repeated only basic details	36
Did not repeat any information	9

Base: All TPS customers who contacted by telephone and spoke to a new person (315).

Over four-fifths of customers (82 per cent) had to repeat some information to the new person they spoke to, with around half (47 per cent) finding that they had to repeat all information.

As might be expected, overall satisfaction was higher for customers when the first person they spoke to was able to answer their enquiry rather than having to be transferred (97 compared with 85 per cent). However, what happened to customers within the transferral process also affected satisfaction.

Customers who were directly transferred to someone else when the first person they spoke to was unable to help were more likely to be satisfied overall (88 per cent) than customers who experienced other methods of transfer (76 per cent)[1].

TPS customers who were able to speak to a new person straight away, and found that this person was able to help, were also more likely to be satisfied overall than customers who, when transferred, found that the new person they spoke to was not able to help (92 compared with 71 per cent).

When customers have to repeat information this can cause them added frustration. It was found that the amount of information customers repeated influenced overall satisfaction. Customers who repeated all information were significantly less likely to be satisfied overall (81 per cent) than those

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[1]   The base sizes in 2010/11 were too small (less than 50) to explore overall satisfaction for each transferral method so called back another time, told TPS would call them back and told to call someone else have been combined.

who repeated only basic details (95 per cent)[2]. In fact satisfaction levels for those customers who are transferred without having to repeat any information were almost the same as those who were not transferred at all.

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

• The proportion of customers who reported that the first person they spoke to was able to help was the same as in 2009/10 (75 per cent).

• There has been an increase from 2009/10 to 2010/11 in the proportion of TPS customers who were transferred to someone else when the first person they spoke to was unable to answer their query (58 per cent compared with 70 per cent). This increase in the proportion of customers who were transferred to someone else rather than another transferral method is positive as TPS customers who were transferred to someone else display higher levels of overall satisfaction than other transferral methods, this was also the case in 2009/10.

• As in 2009/10, the greater the level of information customers repeated when they spoke to a new person the less likely they were to be satisfied overall with the service.

3.2.5   Next steps

Around four-fifths (83 per cent) of customers who contacted TPS by telephone said that they were told what would happen next with their enquiry.

Customers who were contacting to claim State Pension were the most likely to be told what would happen next (94 per cent). Customers aged 75 and over were least likely to report they were told what would happen next (69 per cent). Customers who were told what would happen next reported higher levels of satisfaction overall than those who were not (96 per cent compared with 80 per cent).

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

• From 2009/10 to 2010/11, there has been a slight but statistically significant decrease in the proportion of customers who made contact by telephone and reported they were told what would happen next with their enquiry (86 per cent compared with 83 per cent).

• As in 2009/10, overall satisfaction was higher for customers who were told what would happen next compared with those who were not.

3.3   Postal communication

3.3.1   Frequency of postal contact

One in ten customers (ten per cent) wrote to the service as part of their most recent enquiry. The mean number of contacts for those customers who did write was 1.94. As shown in Table 3.4, this varied by enquiry type.

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[2]   The base size in 2010/11 was too small (less than 50) for customers who did not repeat any information at all to provide a comparative overall satisfaction score.

Table 3.4   Mean number of contacts and enquiry type (TPS)

	Mean
All enquiries	1.94
Claiming State Pension	2.39
Claiming other benefit	2.34
Query	2.04
Change of circumstance	1.72
Claiming Pension Credit	1.53

Base: All TPS customers who contacted by post (246).

Customers who were contacting to claim State Pension reportedly wrote to the service the greatest number of times at 2.39, whereas customers contacting to claim Pension credit generated relatively few written contacts on average, just 1.53 per enquiry.[3]

Overall satisfaction varied with the number of times a customer wrote to TPS. Figure 3.7 displays the results for how many times a TPS customer wrote to the service and overall satisfaction.

Figure 3.7   How many times wrote and satisfaction (TPS)

Base: All TPS customers who contacted by post (246).
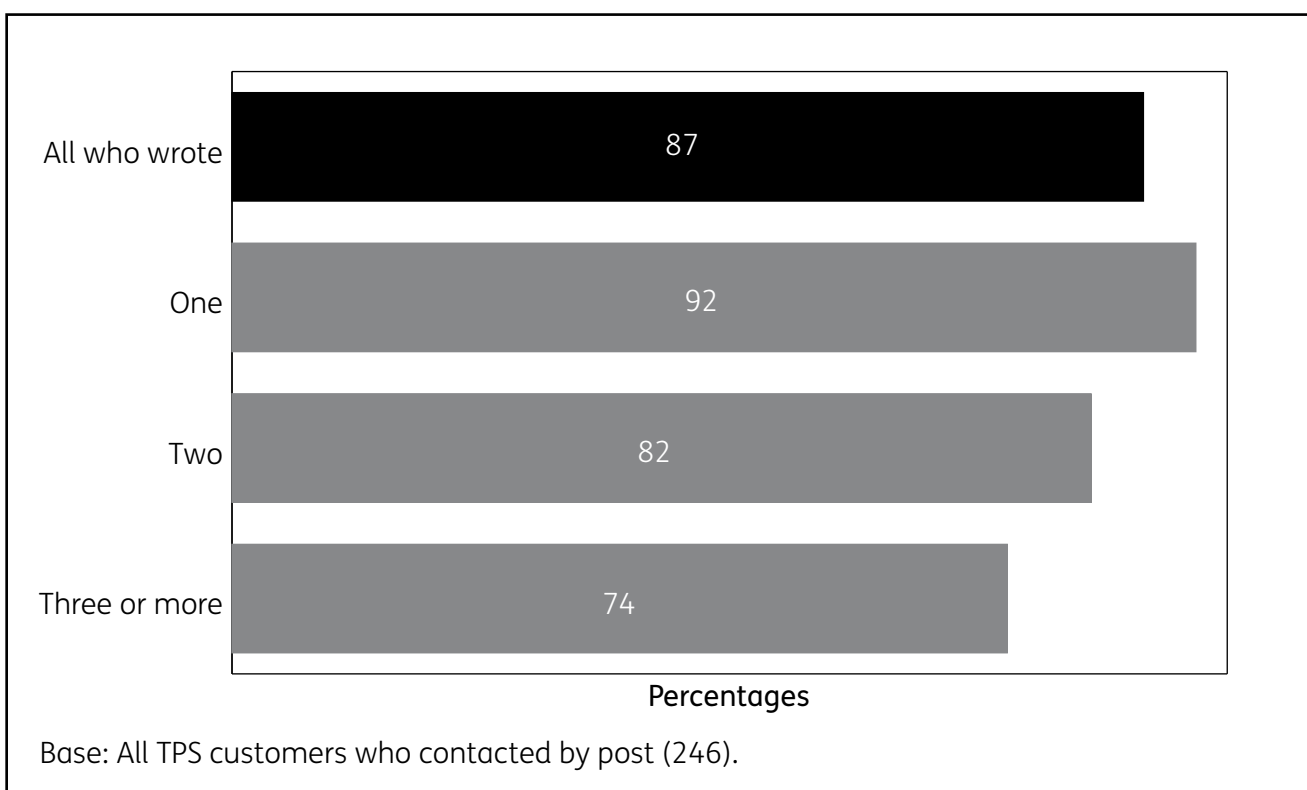
As shown in Figure 3.7, the greater the number of times a TPS customer wrote the less likely they were to be satisfied overall with the service. Three-quarters (74 per cent) of TPS customers who wrote to the service three or more times were satisfied overall.

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[3]   The bases sizes for customers who had contact by post by enquiry type for TPS were too small for any differences by enquiry type to be significant. It has also not been possible to make comparisons to the mean number of contacts in 2009/10.

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11
- The mean number of contacts made by post for TPS customers remains similar to that in 2009/10 (1.8 times).

3.3.2 Whether received a reply

Around four-fifths (83 per cent) of customers who wrote to TPS expected a reply. Among those customers who expected a reply, three-quarters (74 per cent) had received one.

In relation to enquiry type, customers whose most recent enquiry was to claim State Pension or to claim another benefit were most likely to have received a reply. In contrast to this, customers whose most recent enquiry was regarding a query were least likely to report that they had received a reply.[4]

Table 3.5 displays the proportions of TPS customers who had received a reply, the time this took and the ease of understanding replies.

Table 3.5 Reply received (TPS)

	%
Received a reply	74
Reply within two weeks	57
Reply more than two weeks	35
Replies easy to understand	93
Replies not easy to understand	4

Base: All TPS customers who received a reply (157).

Overall satisfaction with TPS was influenced by whether a reply was received when expected. Nine in ten (90 per cent) customers who expected and received a reply were satisfied overall compared with three-quarters (75 per cent) of customers who did not receive a reply when they had expected to.

For customers who received a reply, the amount of time the reply took did not affect their overall levels of satisfaction with the service. However, whether the replies received were easy to understand did. Customers who found the replies they received easy to understand were significantly more likely to be satisfied overall than those customers who did not (96 per cent compared with 71 per cent).

A new question that was added to the 2010/11 survey asked customers who reported that the replies they received were not easy to understand why this was. The answers given include 'terminology/jargon used difficult to understand', 'it was too complicated', 'difficult questions', 'explanation given unclear' and 'the figures/numbers did not make sense'.

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11
- In 2009/10 the amount of time a reply took to receive affected overall satisfaction levels for TPS customers, this was not the case in 2010/11.

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[4] As the base sizes are small (less than 50) percentages have not been reported for these findings.

3.3.3   Submitting forms

Around half (49 per cent) of TPS customers reported that they had completed a form as part of their most recent enquiry.

As might be expected, customers who were contacting to claim a benefit were more likely than average to have completed a form as part of their enquiry. TPS customers contacting to claim Pension Credit were most likely to have done so (78 per cent), followed by customers contacting to claim State Pension (70 per cent) and then those contacting to claim another benefit (70 per cent).

> **Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11**
> • There has been a significant decrease in 2010/11 in the proportion of TPS customers who completed a form as part of their enquiry. The proportion has decreased from 57 per cent in 2009/10 to 49 per cent in 2010/11.

3.3.4   Ease of completing forms

Of the customers who had completed a form as part of their most recent enquiry, almost nine in ten (87 per cent) found the forms they completed easy to complete, with 37 per cent reporting that they were very easy and 51 per cent fairly easy. One in eight customers (13 per cent) reported that the forms had been difficult to complete.

Focusing on customers contacting regarding a claim, and those who had found it difficult to complete the forms, there is a marked difference across the benefits that TPS customers were contacting to claim. Only five per cent of customers contacting to claim the State Pension who completed a form as part of their most recent enquiry had found it difficult to complete, compared with four times as many (21 per cent) of those claiming Pension Credit and five times as many (26 per cent) who were claiming another benefit.

3.3.5   Whether received help completing forms

Thirty-two per cent of TPS customers reported receiving help when completing a form as part of their most recent enquiry. Of the remaining TPS customers who had not received help, 58 per cent stated that they had not required any help, with nine per cent reporting they required help but did not ask for any.

As might be expected TPS customers who had not required any help were less likely to find the forms difficult to complete (four per cent) than customers who had received help completing the forms (23 per cent) or those who had required help but did not ask for any (29 per cent).

All TPS customers who had received help when completing forms as part of their most recent enquiry were asked who had given them the help. The most common sources of help were from TPS (48 per cent) and from family or friends (33 per cent). Other answers given included from a charity (eight per cent), a local authority (four per cent), from a carer/social worker/home-help (four per cent) or hospital/NHS/other medical staff (one per cent).

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

• The proportion of customers reporting that they had not required any help when completing forms as part of their most recent enquiry has increased from 2009/10 to 2010/11 (from 51 per cent to 59 per cent).

• There has been a decrease in the proportion of TPS customers from 2009/10 to 2010/11 who reported that they had received help from TPS when completing forms as part of their most recent enquiry (60 per cent to 48 per cent).

• There has been an increase in the proportion of customers who reported they received help completing forms from family or friends (from 25 per cent to 33 per cent), a charity (four per cent to eight per cent) and from a carer/social worker/home-help (one to four per cent).

3.4   Online communication

3.4.1   Online contact methods

New questions were added to the 2010/11 survey that asked customers about online contact methods as part of their most recent enquiry. Twelve per cent of TPS customers reported that they had searched online for information as part of their most recent enquiry and three per cent had attempted an online transaction.

Table 3.6 displays the proportion of TPS customers by enquiry type who had used online contact methods as part of their most recent enquiry.

Table 3.6   Online contact methods and enquiry type (TPS)

	Percentage who searched online	Percentage who attempted an online transaction
All enquiries	12	3
Claiming State Pension	22	6
Claiming other benefit	12	8
Claiming Pension Credit	9	3
Query	7	1
Change of circumstance	6	1

Base: All TPS customers (2,643).

As shown in Table 3.6, customers who were contacting to claim State Pension were most likely to report that they had searched online for information as part of their most recent enquiry (22 per cent), with customers who were contacting to claim another benefit most likely to have attempted an online transaction (eight per cent).

The older customers were, the less likely they were to report they had searched online for information or attempted a transaction online as part of their most recent enquiry. Four per cent of customers aged 66 and older had searched online for information and less than one per cent had attempted an online transaction. In comparison, 17 per cent of customers aged 65 and younger had searched online for information, and five per cent had attempted an online transaction.

All TPS customers who had searched online for information were asked which sites they had searched. Ninety-one per cent of TPS customers who had searched online as part of their most recent enquiry had used government websites such as Directgov, while just seven per cent used non-governmental websites.

Customers who had searched for information online were asked whether they had found the information they needed. The majority (89 per cent) had found all or some of the information they needed, with two-thirds (67 per cent) reporting they found all the information they needed and almost a quarter (23 per cent) some of the information they needed. Only eight per cent of TPS customers who had searched for information online reported that they had not found any of the information they needed.

TPS customers who had not been able to find all the information they needed when they searched online were asked what information was missing. The responses given included not being able to find information on what they were entitled to, the amount they were going to be paid, information on how to contact/claim, personal information/status and they found the website too complicated in general.

TPS customers who found some or all of the information they needed were more likely to be satisfied overall than TPS customers who reported they were unable to find the information they needed (95 per cent compared with 85 per cent).

The number of respondents who had attempted an online transaction as part of their most recent enquiry was relatively small (89 respondents), therefore, it is not possible to conduct detailed analysis of these respondents. However, all customers who had attempted a transaction online as part of their most recent enquiry were asked what this transaction was. A number of responses were given to this question including: to apply for State Pension; download an application form for a State Pension forecast; get a Pension Credit estimate; apply for AA, to download leaflets/forms; see what benefits entitled to; and find contact details/telephone numbers.

3.4.2   Internet access and usage

Two-thirds of TPS customers (67 per cent) had access to the internet at home which compares to three-quarters (77 per cent) of households in the population as a whole[5]. Older customers were less likely to report they had access to the internet, with a third (34 per cent) of TPS customers aged 75 and over reporting they had internet access at home compared with almost three-quarters (73 per cent) of customers aged 74 and under.

All customers with access to the internet were asked how often they used the internet; the responses given are shown in Table 3.7. The response 'never use the internet' was not read out and only coded when mentioned spontaneously by respondents.

Table 3.7   How often use the internet (TPS)

	%
Every day	42
Most days	24
About once a week	12
About once a fortnight	2
About once a month	2
About once every two to three months	1
About once every six months	*
Less often	3
Never use the internet	12
Don't know	1

Base: All TPS customers with internet access (1,749).

As Table 3.7 shows, TPS customers who have access to the internet could be classed as regular users with four-fifths (78 per cent) reporting they accessed the internet at least once a week.

> **Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11**
>
> • The proportion of customers who reported they had access to the internet at home has increased from 2009/10 to 2010/11 (from 63 per cent to 67 per cent). Over the same period of time all household access has increased by a similar amount (73 per cent to 77 per cent).
>
> • As was found in 2009/10, the proportion of TPS customers online was relatively high (67 per cent), and those customers with internet access were regular users of the internet.

3.4.3   Whether consider using internet for

In the 2010/11 survey questions were added to the survey in relation to finding information and completing transactions online.

All customers who had access to the internet and had not attempted an online transaction were asked whether they would consider using the internet for a number of online services, the results are shown in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8   Whether would consider using internet for (TPS)

	%
To find out if eligible or how to claim a benefit	62
To apply for a benefit	51
To change contact details	55
None of these	32
Don't know	1

Base: All TPS customers with internet access who had not attempted an online transaction (1,664).

Three-fifths (62 per cent) of customers with internet access who had not attempted an online transaction responded that they would use the internet to find out if eligible, or how to claim a benefit, and around half to apply for a benefit (51 per cent) or to change contact details (55 per cent).

Around a third (32 per cent) of TPS customers who had internet access and had not attempted an online transaction responded that they would not use the internet for any of these online services. These customers were asked why this was and the results are shown in Table 3.9.

Table 3.9   Why would not use the internet for these services (TPS)

	%
Unfamiliar with using computers/internet	40
Prefer direct interaction	33
Concerns about safety/security of the internet	13
Physical difficulties that prevent using computer	4
Do not need the service	4
Prefer written contact	1
Unaware of online availability of service	1

Base: All TPS customers who would not use internet for these online services (560).

The most common reason given for not considering using the internet for these online services was that they were unfamiliar with using computers/internet (40 per cent); this was followed by customers stating that they preferred direct interaction (33 per cent). There was a variety of reasons given for not wishing to access these services online and these fall broadly into two categories: customers who lack confidence and those customers with no desire to use online services.

Focusing on customers who said that they would not be willing to consider using the internet for any of these online services it was found that customers aged 75 and over were more likely than customers aged 74 and under to report this (51 per cent compared with 30 per cent). Customers who were widowed were most likely to report that they would not be willing to consider using the internet for any of these online services (44 per cent). TPS customers with an illness or disability were more likely to respond 'none of these' than customers without an illness or disability (40 per cent compared with 28 per cent).

3.5   Home visits

3.5.1   Frequency of home visits

Eight per cent of TPS customers had received a home visit as part of their most recent enquiry carried out by a member of Local Service. The mean number of home visits was 1.37.

In the 2010/11 survey new questions were asked of customers who had received a home visit as part of their most recent enquiry. Customers were asked if the person who had visited them at home had asked whether they had any other needs, if so whether they had received help with these other needs and if help was received, what difference this had made to them.

Two-fifths (40 per cent) of customers who were visited at home said they were asked whether they had any other needs. Customers aged 75 and over were more likely to have been asked whether they had other needs than customers aged 74 and under (55 per cent compared with 33 per cent)

Of those customers who were asked whether they had any other needs three in ten (30 per cent) had then received help. All customers who received help were asked what difference this help had made. The answers given were 'made things easier', 'made a lot of difference', 'given a security pendant to wear', 'made improvements to the house' and 'have been given more money.

Customers who were asked when visited at home whether they had any other needs displayed greater levels of overall satisfaction with the service than customers who were not asked (95 per cent compared with 82 per cent).

3.6   Enquiry conclusion

3.6.1   Enquiry conclusion

The vast majority (88 per cent) of customers reported that their enquiry had concluded at the time of the interview. Enquiry conclusion varied according to the type of enquiry the customer had. Table 3.10 displays the proportions of customers who had their enquiry concluded by the enquiry type.

Table 3.10 Enquiry conclusion and enquiry type (TPS)

	%
All enquiries	88
Claiming State Pension	95
Change of circumstance	92
Claiming Pension Credit	88
Query	82
Claiming other benefit	71

Base: All TPS respondents (2,643).

Customers were then asked how long it took for their most recent enquiry to be concluded, or if it was still ongoing, how long it had taken so far. When asked, 48 per cent reported it had been concluded within two weeks, and 33 per cent within three months. Seven per cent reported that it had taken more than three months. This is displayed in Figure 3.8.

Figure 3.8 Length of enquiry

Base: All TPS respondents (2,643).
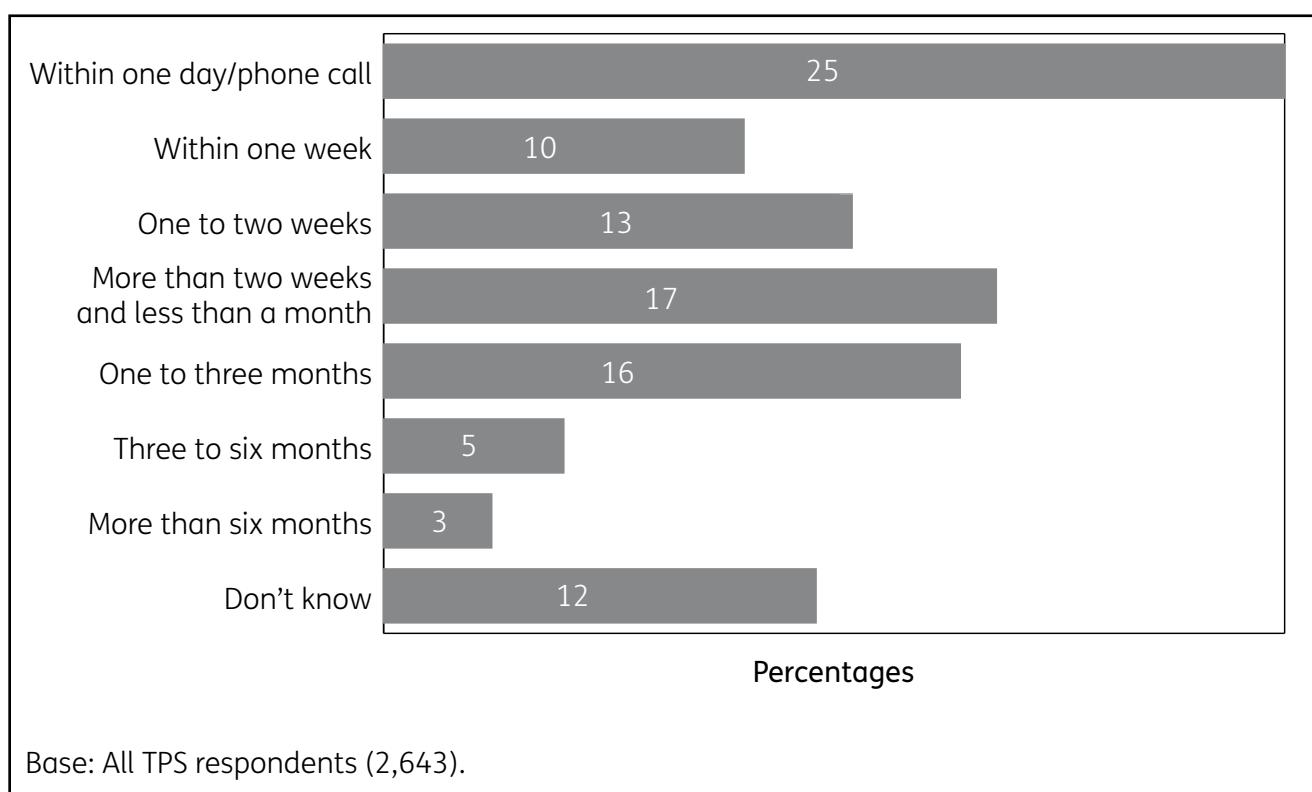
The length of the enquiry varied by the type of enquiry. Sixty-two per cent of customers contacting regarding a change of circumstance had their enquiry completed within one week, while only four per cent took over three months. In contrast to this, 19 per cent of Pension Credit claims were completed within one week, while 13 per cent took over three months. A full breakdown is provided in Figure 3.9.

Figure 3.9   Length of enquiry by enquiry type

Base: All TPS respondents (2,643).
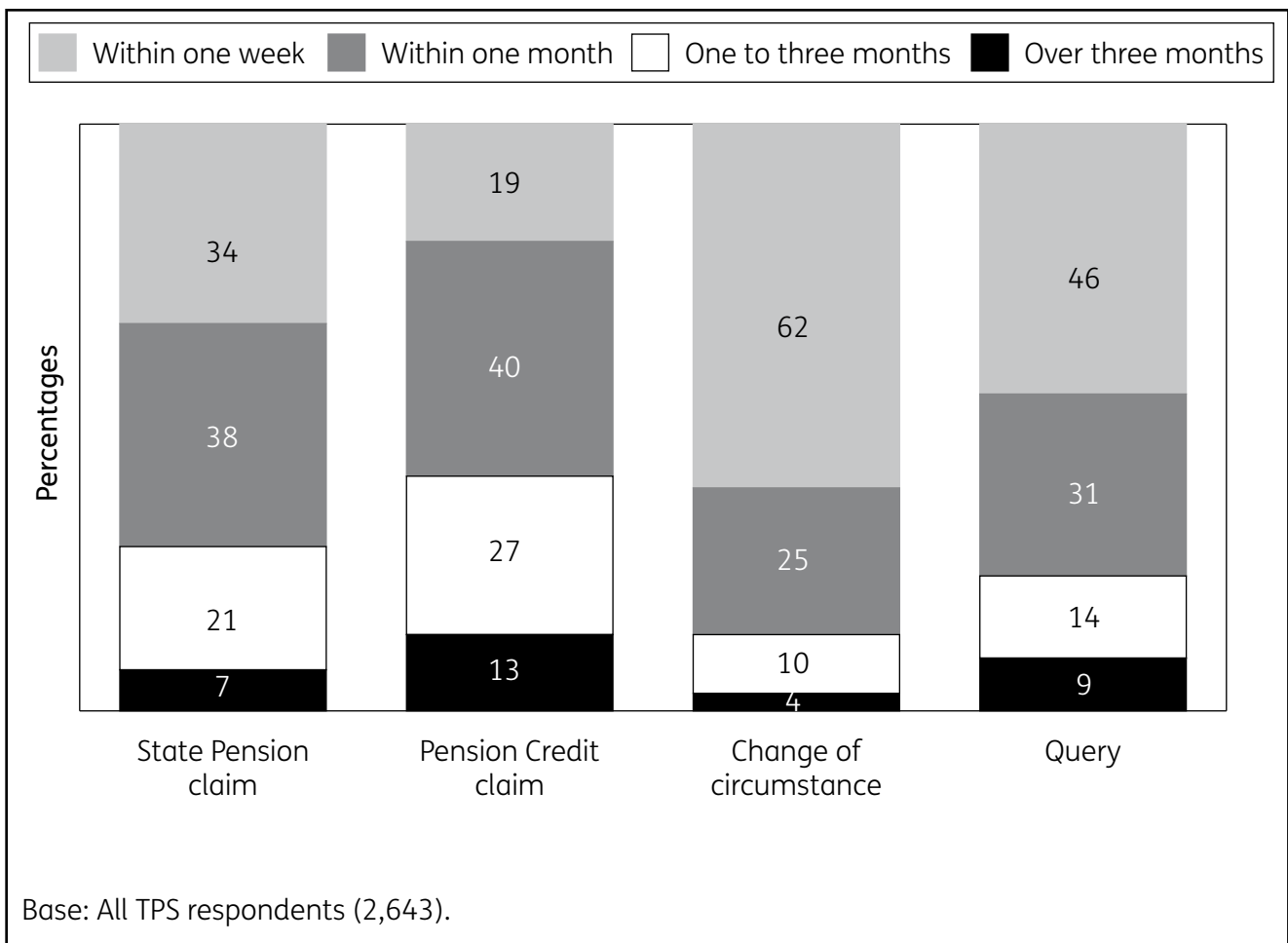
In addition to asking how long the enquiry took, customers were also asked whether this was more or less time than expected. Forty-nine per cent of customers felt that their enquiry took/was taking as long as expected, 27 per cent felt it took/was taking less time than expected and 15 per cent felt that it took/was taking longer than expected.

Customers who were still awaiting the conclusion of their enquiry at the time of the interview were more likely to report their enquiry was taking longer than expected than customers whose enquiry had already concluded (38 per cent compared with 12 per cent). Customers who were contacting to claim another benefit and those claiming Pension Credit were most likely to state they felt their enquiry had taken/was taking longer than expected (31 per cent and 24 per cent respectively).

To put customers' expectations into context, these answers were combined with their reported enquiry length. For those customers who reported it took longer than expected, only six per cent were referring to a timescale of less than one week, whereas one-third (34 per cent) were referring to an enquiry that took over three months. One in ten customers reported that their enquiry length of one to three months was less time than expected and one half (51 per cent) reported that between a week and three months was as long as expected.

Figure 3.10 Expectations and length of enquiry
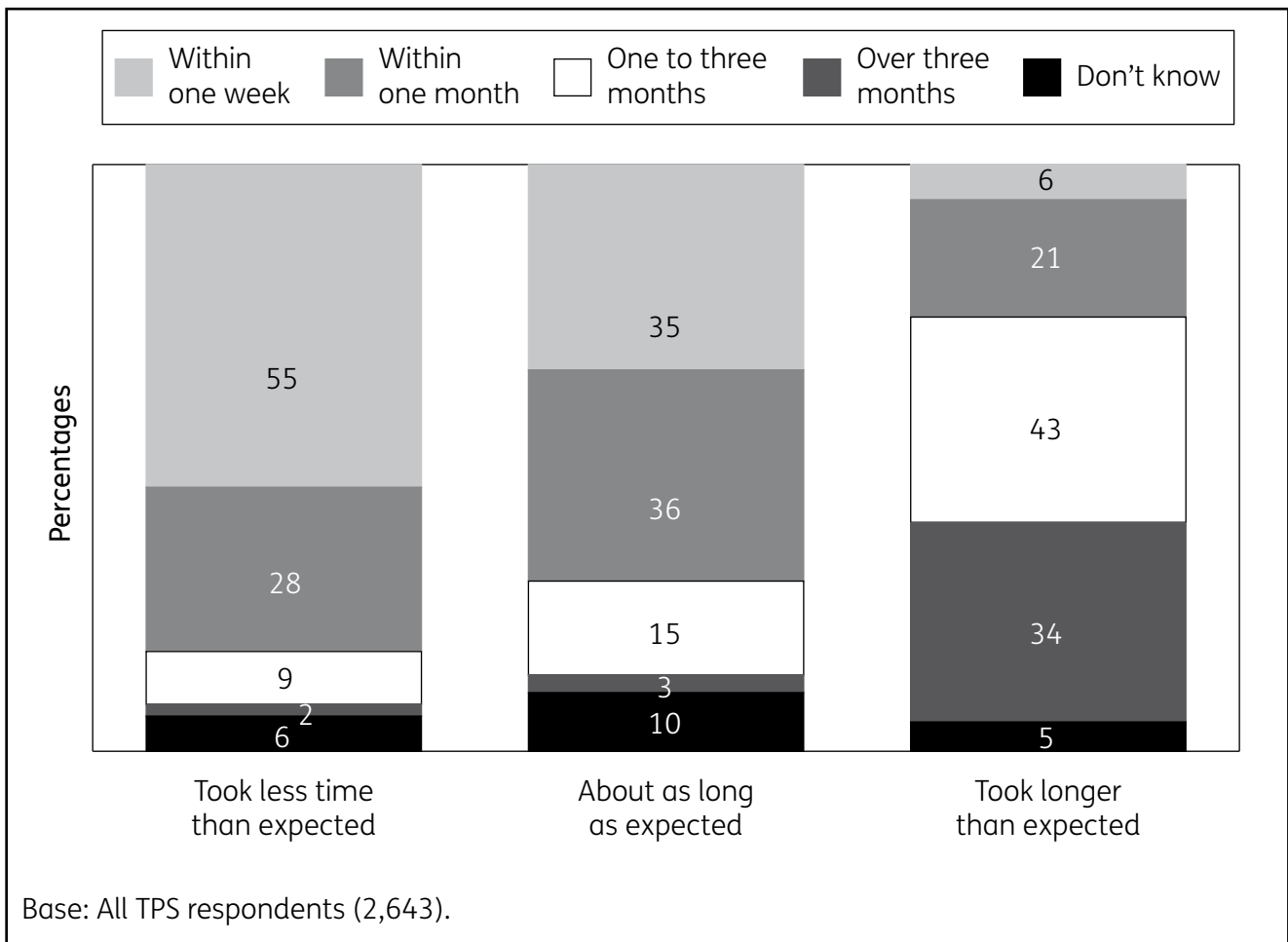
Customers were then asked how satisfied they were with the time it had taken, or was taking if it had not yet concluded. Overall, 83 per cent were satisfied and eight per cent were dissatisfied. Satisfaction with the time taken is broken down by enquiry type in Table 3.11.

Table 3.11   Satisfaction with time taken and enquiry type (TPS)

	%
All enquiries	83
Claiming State Pension	92
Change of circumstance	86
Claiming Pension Credit	83
Query	76
Claiming other benefit	67

Base: All TPS respondents (2,643).

There was a reasonable amount of variance in the satisfaction with the time taken according to the enquiry type. Just over nine in ten (92 per cent) customers claiming the State Pension were satisfied with the time taken compared with just over eight in ten (83 per cent) claiming Pension Credit and three-quarters (76 per cent) who had a query.

As might be expected, customers whose enquiry had concluded were more likely to be satisfied overall than customers who were still waiting for their enquiry to conclude at the time of interviewing (89 per cent compared with 46 per cent).

Enquiry length also had an effect on overall satisfaction. However, for enquiry lengths of up to three months the effect was fairly limited, with 93 per cent of TPS customers still being satisfied overall when their enquiry took between one and three months. Figure 3.11 displays the breakdown of satisfaction by enquiry length.

Figure 3.11 Length of enquiry on overall satisfaction

Length of enquiry	Percentage
Within one day/phone call	97
Within one week	98
One to two weeks	98
More than two weeks and less than a month	95
One to three months	93
Three to six months	76
More than six months	51

Percentages

Base: All TPS respondents (2,643).
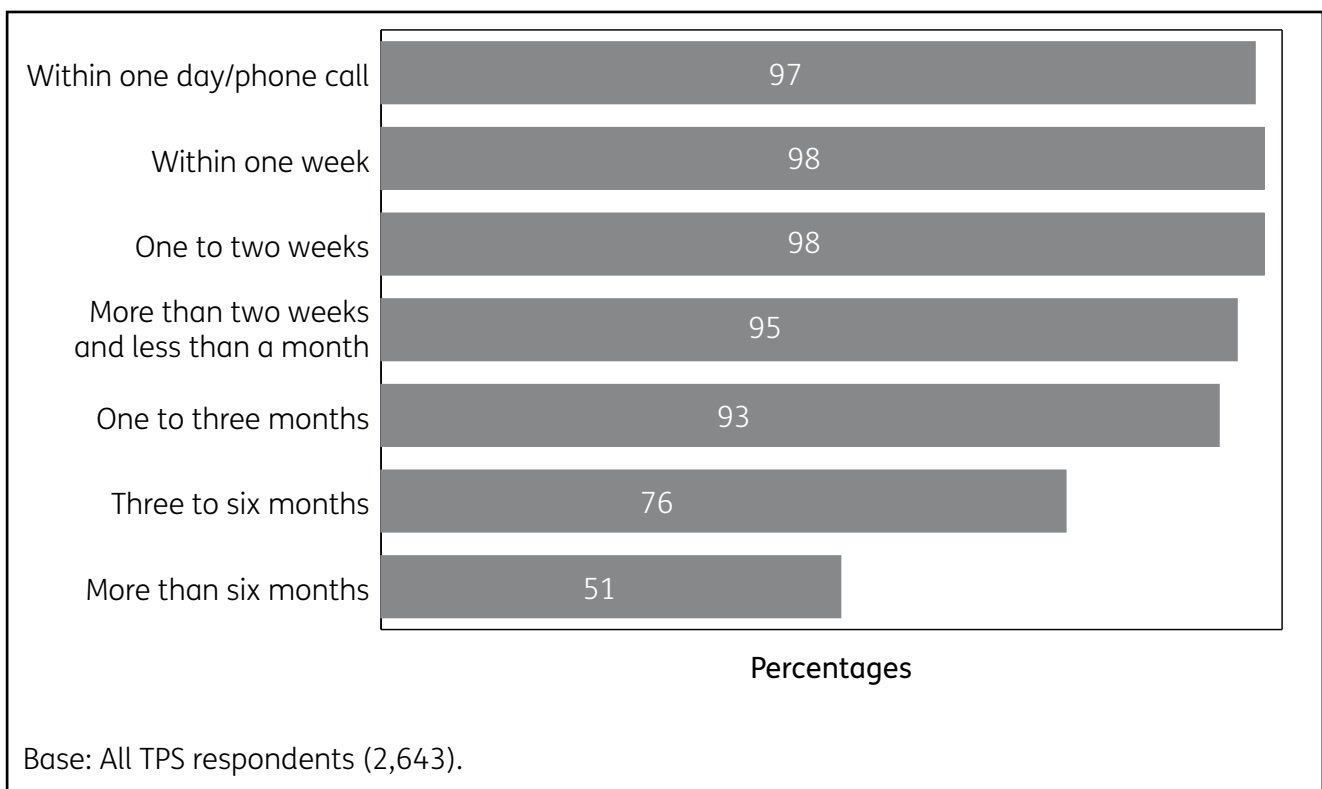
Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11
• There was very little variation in any scores between the two years of the survey for matters relating to the enquiry conclusion.

3.6.2   Enquiry decision

Fifty-seven per cent of TPS customers reported that their most recent enquiry required a decision being made. Nearly all (95 per cent) of these customers agreed with the decision. When asked how clearly the decision was explained, 59 per cent felt that the decision was very clearly explained, 33 per cent fairly clearly explained, four per cent not clearly explained and three per cent stated that the decision was not explained at all.

Whether an enquiry required a decision varied greatly by enquiry type. Nine in ten (89 per cent) customers contacting to claim Pension Credit reported that a decision was required while only a third (35 per cent) mentioned that a decision was required when reporting a change of circumstance. This is shown in Table 3.12.

Table 3.12   Enquiry required a decision and enquiry type (TPS)

	%
All enquiries	57
Claiming Pension Credit	89
Claiming other benefit	76
Claiming State Pension	63
Query	46
Change of circumstance	35

Base: All TPS customers (2,643).

As shown in Table 3.13 there was very little variation by enquiry type in the proportion of respondents who agreed with the decision.

Table 3.13   Agreed with decision and enquiry type (TPS)

	%
All enquiries	95
Claiming State Pension	98
Claiming Pension Credit	94
Query	93
Change of circumstance	93
Claiming other benefit	93

Base: All TPS customers who had received a decision (1,474).

As might be expected customers who agreed with the decision reported higher levels of overall satisfaction than customers who did not agree with the decision (98 per cent compared with 67 per cent).

TPS customers who felt that the decision had been very clearly explained or fairly clearly explained reported high levels of overall satisfaction with the service (99 per cent and 97 per cent respectively), compared with those who felt the decision was not clearly explained or not explained at all (69 per cent).

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

• In 2010/11 57 per cent of customers mentioned their enquiry required a decision, a score which was not statistically different from the 56 per cent in 2009/10. Similarly, 95 per cent agreeing with the decision was not statistically different from the 93 per cent in 2009/10.

3.6.3   Being kept informed

Eighty per cent of customers felt that they were given clear timings on what TPS would do, 69 per cent reported that they were kept up to date with the progress of their enquiry and 91 per cent felt that TPS did what they said they would do during the course of their enquiry.

Figure 3.12 Whether given clear timings and kept up to date – TPS

Base: All TPS respondents who felt it was applicable.
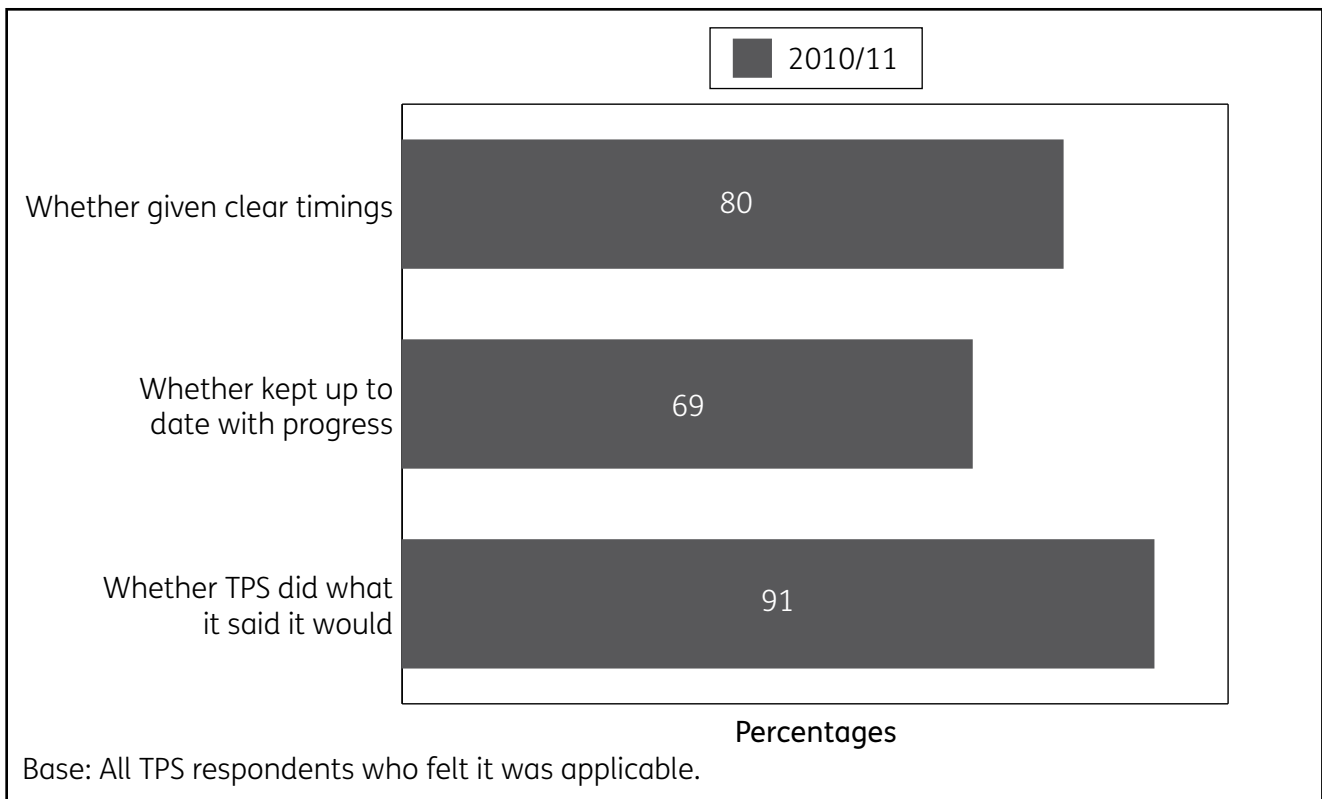
Customers who were contacting to claim the State Pension were more likely than all other enquiry types to report that they were given clear timings (90 per cent), kept up to date with the progress of their enquiry (82 per cent) and to feel that TPS did what they said they would do (95 per cent).

Table 3.14   Whether did what they said they would do, given clear timings and kept up to date – TPS

	% satisfied overall
TPS did what they said they would do	96
TPS did not do what they said they would do	66
Given clear timings	96
Not given clear timings	71
Kept up to date	98
Not kept up to date	77

Base: All TPS customers who felt it was applicable (2,643).

As shown in Table 3.14, these measures influenced overall satisfaction, this was most marked for customers who felt that TPS did what they said they would do compared with those who did not. Overall satisfaction was also higher for customers who were given clear timings than those who were not and for customers who were kept up to date compared with those who felt that they were not kept up to date.

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11
• Customers claiming the State Pension were now more likely to report that they were kept up to date with the progress of their enquiry (75 per cent in 2009/10 compared with 82 per cent in 2010/11).

3.6.4   Ease of contact and complexity of enquiry

Eighty-eight per cent of customers reported they had found it easy to get in contact with TPS during the course of their enquiry, with 49 per cent reporting it was very easy and 38 per cent fairly easy. Six per cent of customers stated that they had found it difficult to get in contact with TPS, four per cent reporting it was fairly difficult and two per cent very difficult.

There was very little variation in how easy it was to get in contact according to enquiry type, with those who had a query as an exception with only 79 per cent finding is easy.

Customers were then asked how complicated they found the enquiry process. Seventeen per cent of customers found the enquiry process complicated as shown in Figure 3.13

Figure 3.13 Complexity

Base: All TPS respondents (2,643).
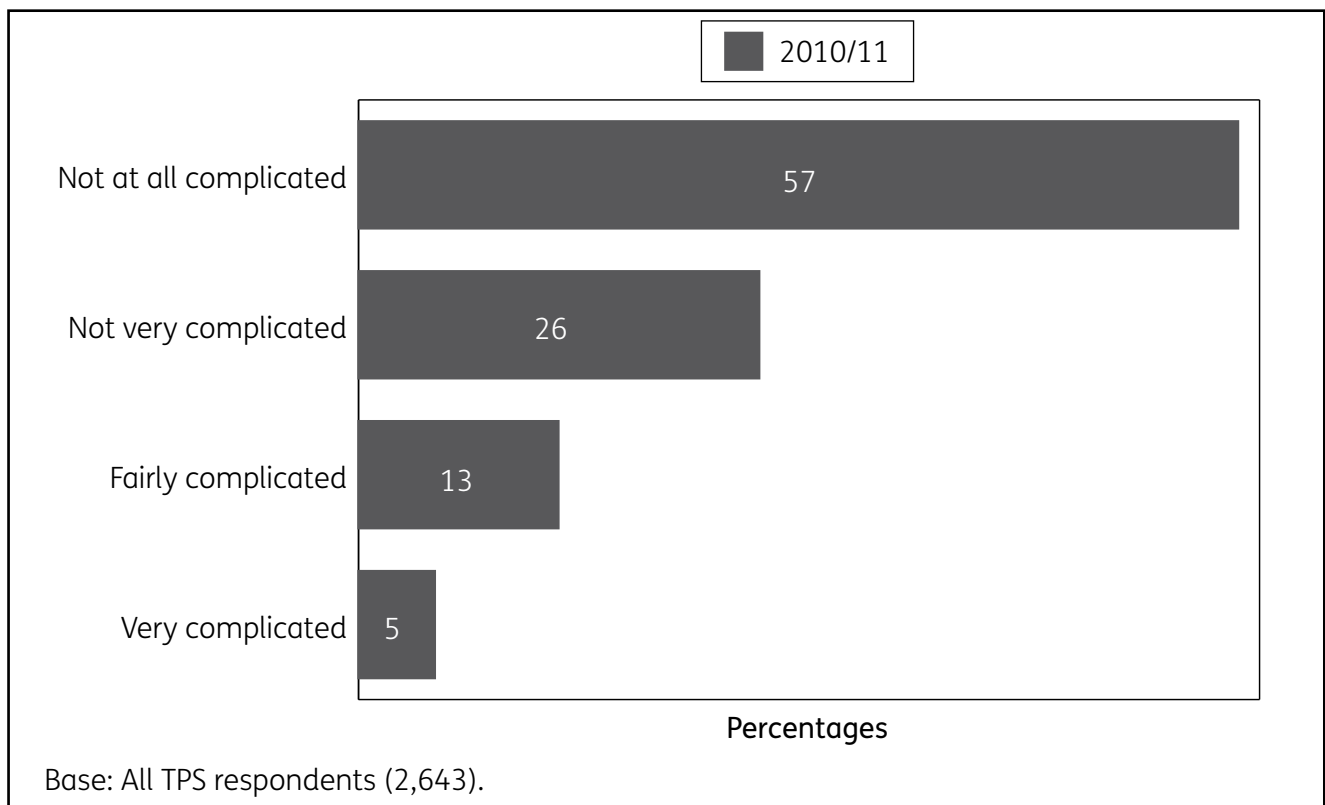
Figure 3.14, displays the results for complexity (very and fairly complicated) by enquiry type. Customers who were contacting to claim another benefit (41 per cent) and those claiming Pension Credit (26 per cent) were most likely to find the enquiry process complicated.

Figure 3.14 Complexity, by benefits
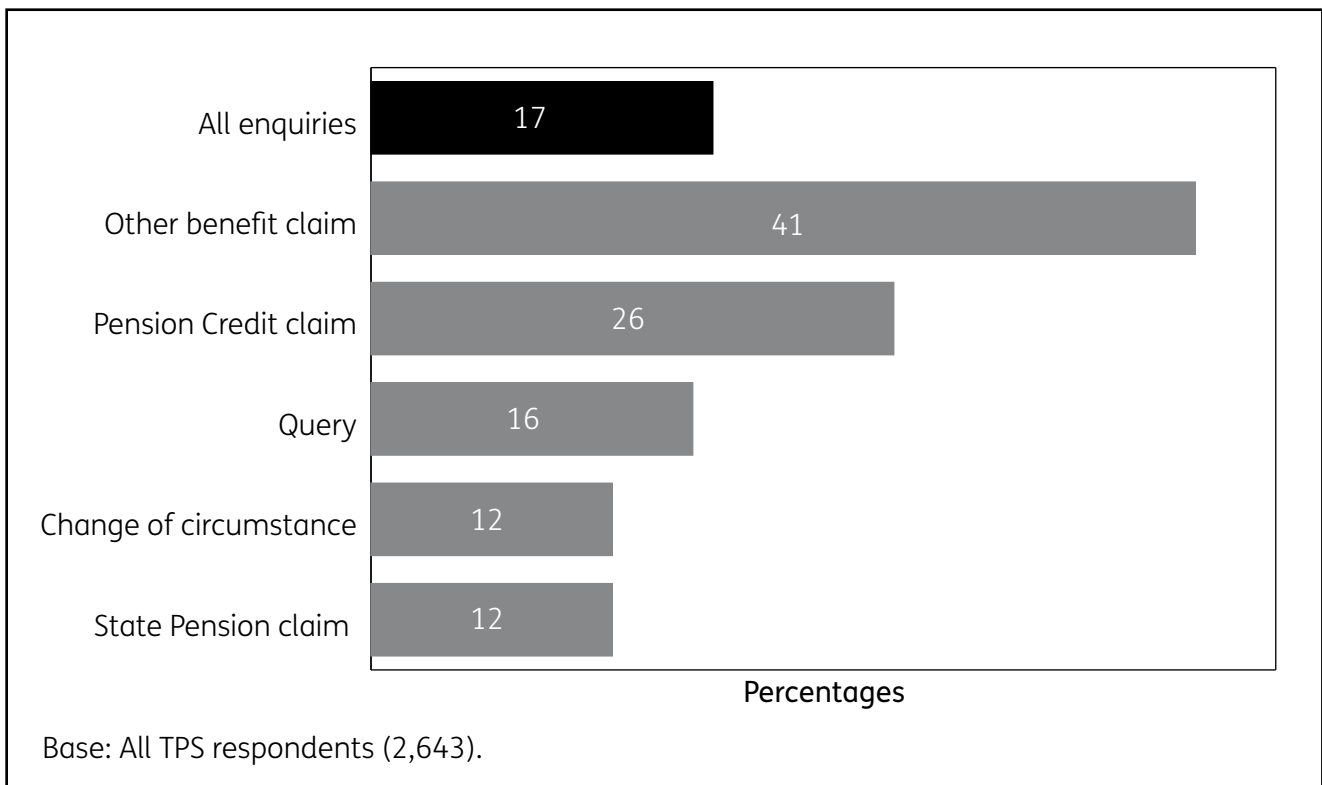
Base: All TPS respondents (2,643).

Customers who reported they had a long-term illness or disability were more likely to find the enquiry process complicated than those customers who did not have a long-term illness or disability (23 per cent compared with 14 per cent).

As well as being asked how complicated they had found the enquiry process customers were also asked whether they had found the enquiry more or less complicated than they had expected. Two-thirds (68 per cent) reported that it was as complicated as they had anticipated.

Combining customers' expectations and experiences of complexity it is possible to further categorise the customers' experience. Customers have been placed into the four groups as explained in Section 2.2.4.

Sixteen per cent of customers were 'relieved' – they had been expecting a complex process, which in reality proved to be relatively straightforward. However, ten per cent were 'resigned to complexity' in that they were expecting the process to be complicated and it was, while a further eight per cent experienced 'extra complexity' beyond anything they were anticipating.

In relation to enquiry type, customers contacting to claiming the State Pension were most likely to be 'relieved' (24 per cent), with customers contacting about a change of circumstance most likely to have had a 'smooth enquiry' (76 per cent). Customers claiming other benefits and Pension Credit were most likely to be 'resigned to complexity' (18 per cent and 14 per cent respectively) and experience 'extra complexity' (25 per cent and 14 per cent respectively).

Overall satisfaction was higher for customers who had found it easy to get in contact with TPS during the course of their enquiry (96 per cent) than for customers who had found it difficult (63 per cent).

As might be expected, customers who found the enquiry process complicated were less likely to be satisfied overall than customers who did not find the process complicated (80 per cent compared with 97 per cent). In fact customers who experienced 'extra complexity' above what they had expected reported the lowest levels of overall satisfaction (67 per cent).

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

• In both 2010/11 and 2009/10 customers with a disability were more likely to find the enquiry complicated (23 per cent of customers with a disability in 2010/11 and 21 per cent in 2009/10 compared with 14 per cent without disabilities both years).

3.6.5   Problems encountered

Six per cent of customers reported they had difficulties or problems when dealing with TPS in the previous six months. The difficulties or problems customers reported experiencing were (customers could report more than one problem or difficulty):

• the service made too many mistakes (16 per cent);

• delays in receiving benefit payments (14 per cent);

• lack of communication or not being kept informed (14 per cent);

• staff were slow in dealing with my request or problem (seven per cent);

• lost documents (six per cent);

• staff lacked knowledge or were not helpful (five per cent); and

• getting hold of the same person (five per cent).

Half of customers who had a difficulty or problem (51 per cent) reported this had since been resolved. Customers who reported having a difficulty or problem when dealing with TPS were less likely to be satisfied overall than customers who did not experience any difficulties (59 per cent compared with 96 per cent). However, overall satisfaction for customers whose problem was resolved was higher (72 per cent) than customers whose problem had not been resolved (46 per cent).

3.6.6   Complaints

All customers who experienced problems or difficulties were then asked if they went on to make a formal complaint, of which 13 per cent had. Customers who had experienced a difficulty or problem when dealing with TPS but did not make a formal complaint were asked why this was. The most common answers given were:

• thought nothing would happen as result of the complaint (11 per cent);

• the issue was resolved (nine per cent);

• other priorities (nine per cent);

• decided matter was not serious enough (eight per cent);

• give longer before complaining/waiting for the outcome (seven per cent);

• I never/don't complain (four per cent).

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

• In 2009/10 the most commonly cited problem was a lack of communication or not being kept informed (44 per cent), where as in 2010/11 it was the service making too many mistakes (16 per cent).

3.7   Overall performance

3.7.1   Overall satisfaction

All TPS customers were asked how satisfied they were overall with the service and the results are shown in Table 3.15.

Table 3.15   Overall satisfaction with TPS

	%
Very satisfied	63
Fairly satisfied	31
Satisfied – net	94
Fairly dissatisfied	2
Very dissatisfied	3
Dissatisfied – net	5
Don't know	1

Base: All TPS customers (2,643).

The overwhelming majority of TPS customers (94 per cent) said they were satisfied with the service overall. Even more encouraging is the fact that such a high proportion of these customers are selecting the 'top box' of being very satisfied with the service.

As the level of overall satisfaction for the service was so high there was limited variation by customer type. However, third parties who were contacting the service for somebody else did have significantly higher levels of dissatisfaction than customers who were contacting on their own behalf (nine per cent compared with four per cent). In addition to this there was also some variation by ethnicity. Although overall levels of satisfaction were not statistically different between white and non-white customers, a smaller proportion of the latter were very satisfied with the service (51 per cent compared with 64 per cent).

> **Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11**
> - There has been no significant change in customer satisfaction with TPS at the overall level, although there has been a slight drop in the proportion of customers saying that they were very satisfied (63 per cent from 67 per cent in 2009/10). However, it should be noted that the proportion of customers saying that they are very satisfied in 2010/11 is still very high and that the impressive overall satisfaction scores from 2009/10 have been maintained.
> - Third party customers in 2009/10 had very similar satisfaction scores to customers contacting on their own behalf but in 2010/11 dissatisfaction was twice that of those customers.

3.7.2   Expectations and improvements

As well as asking about overall satisfaction with TPS, the survey also included two additional measures which reflected the overall performance of the service – whether the service was better or worse than expected and how much improvement the service needs to make.

Performance against expectations

Only six per cent of customers said that the service they had received from TPS was worse than they had expected. In contrast to this 13 per cent of customers said that the service was actually a little better than expected and 32 per cent said that it was much better than expected. As with overall satisfaction, customers who were contacting as a third party had significantly higher levels of disappointment than those contacting on their own behalf (13 per cent compared with five per cent). This indicates that the lower satisfaction scores for third parties may, in part, be a result of higher expectations for this group.

Level of improvement required

Over half of customers said that TPS did not need to make any improvements to the service (53 per cent) and a further fifth said that it only needed to make a slight improvement (19 per cent). At the other end of the scale, four per cent of customers felt that the service needed to make a huge improvement and three per cent felt that it needed to make much improvement. Customers who were contacting to claim Pension Credit were significantly less likely to say that the service did not need to any improvements than those who were contacting to claim the State Pension (39 per cent compared with 62 per cent). This may reflect the additional complexity that is involved in an application for Pension Credit which may bring with it more areas where a customer could identify room for improvement.

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

- The proportion saying that service is worse than expected has gone down from seven per cent in 2009/10 to five per cent in 2010/11. While there has been a slight fall in the proportion of customers saying that service is better than expected this change is not statistically significant.

- There have been no significant changes in the proportion of customers who feel that the service needs to make improvements.

3.7.3   Staff treatment

The overwhelming majority of TPS customers said that staff displayed all of the positive behaviours that were asked about. The attributes with the lowest scores were staff being knowledgeable and being sympathetic to needs but even here 93 per cent of customers rated TPS staff positively. For three of the attributes measured (staff being polite, treating the customer with respect and staff treating them fairly) nearly all customers gave positive responses (98 per cent).

3.7.4   Improvements to the service

Towards the end of the interview respondents were asked what TPS could do in order to improve its service. This question was open ended but Figure 3.15 shows a top level breakdown of the types of responses customers were giving.

Figure 3.15 Improvements to the service – TPS
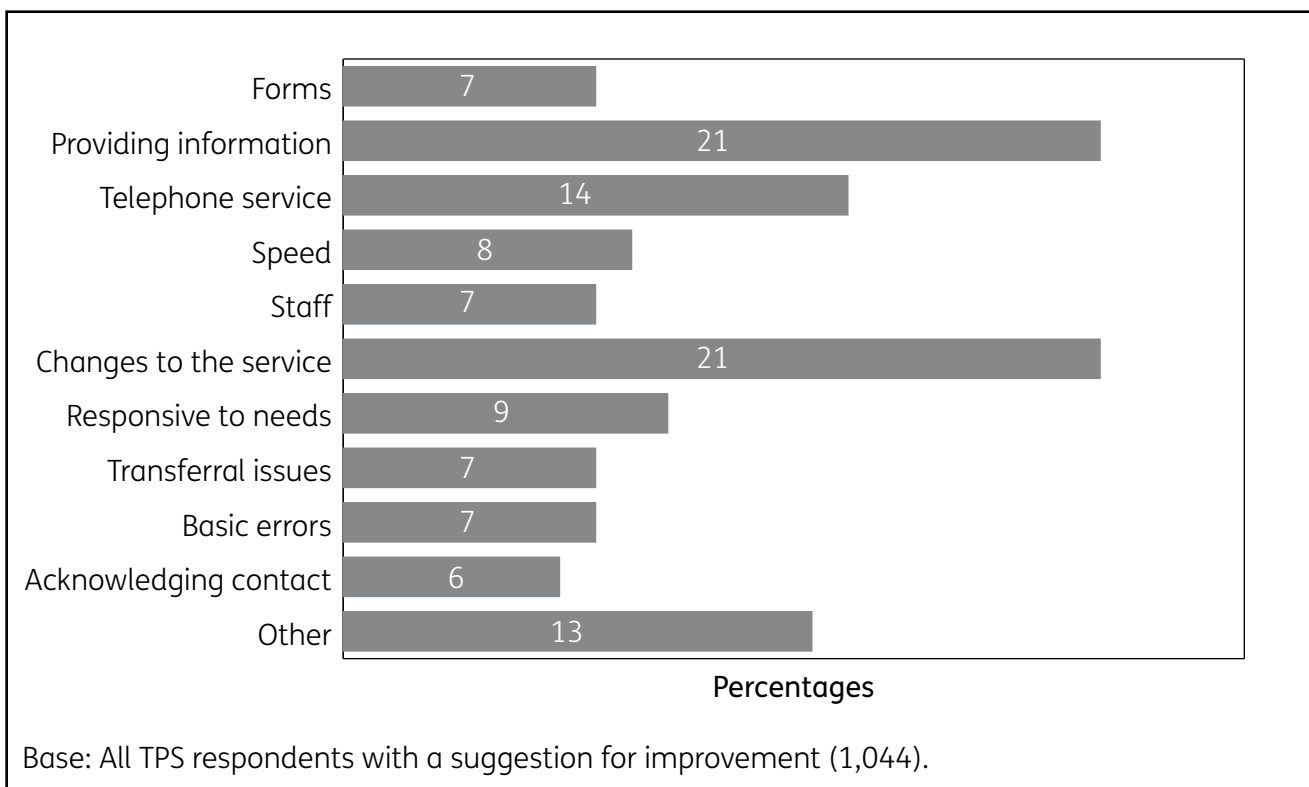
Base: All TPS respondents with a suggestion for improvement (1,044).

The subsequent sections provide more detail on what was covered within these codes and which customers in particular had them as priorities.

Providing information

Over a fifth of TPS customers (21 per cent) who made a suggestion for improving the service mentioned something related to the way that information is provided to customers. Customers who were making a joint enquiry were more likely to mention information than those contacting solely on their own behalf or as third parties (28 per cent compared with 20 per cent). This would seem to indicate that there may be an issue with accessing some information about TPS services that is specific to couples. In addition to this, women were also significantly more likely than men to spontaneously mention information provision (25 per cent compared with 17 per cent). It does not appear that this is particularly related to the joint enquiry issue as women who were just contacting on their own behalf were also more likely to mention information.

The biggest single element that customers identified for improving information was 'Providing simpler information that is clearer/easy to understand' (ten per cent). In addition to this the following individual elements were also mentioned: 'contact people more/be more proactive' (three per cent); 'better communication in letters' (three per cent); and 'making sure people know what they are entitled to' (three per cent). The following elements were also mentioned: 'improve website/make better use of technology' (two per cent); 'better advertising of services and benefits available' (two per cent); and 'notification of changes to or reduction of benefit' (one per cent).

> *'The Pension Service needs to be proactive in notifying people how to claim and when to claim for State Pension.'*

> (Female, 55-60, State Pension)

'Better communication and a little bit more information about what the process would be as I deferred my Pension and they did not seem to be aware of this at the outset.'

(Female, 60-65, State Pension)

Changes to the service

The joint most common group of suggestions for improvement from TPS customers involved changes to the service and benefit administration (21 per cent). Within this the single change that was mentioned by most customers was simply to increase the amount of money they receive (18 per cent) and this accounted for nearly all suggestions under this heading. Other changes that were mentioned included: 'increase face to face contact' (one per cent); 'provide a local office to visit' (one per cent); and 'provide more home visits' (one per cent). A very small number of customers also mentioned that they would like opening hours to be improved.

'Changes to the service' was a much higher priority for older customers. Three in ten of those aged over 65 wanted changes to the service (30 per cent), compared with just one in six of those aged 65 or under (17 per cent). For these older customers an increase in the amount of money they received was the key change they wanted to see.

'Give us a bigger pension.'

(Female, 55-60, State Pension)

'If we could actually go to a place and speak to someone face to face.'

(Female, 35-44, claiming AA on someone else's behalf)

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11
- There has been an increase in the proportion of customers mentioning changes to the service (21 per cent from 17 per cent in 2009/10) but this has been driven solely by an increase in customers saying they would like to receive more money (16 per cent from 12 per cent in 2009/10).

3.7.5   Best thing about the service

As well as asking about the things that the service most needs to improve, the survey also asked respondents what the best thing was about the service. The results are shown in Figure 3.16 for respondents who were able to give an answer.

Figure 3.16 Best thing about the service – TPS

Category	Percentage
Staff	37
Fast service	14
General positive comment	19
Quality of information	10
Straightforward	10
The money	14
Professional service	11
Extra advice	7
Availability	6
Paperwork/forms	1
Other	7

Percentages

Base: All TPS respondents with an opinion (2,815).
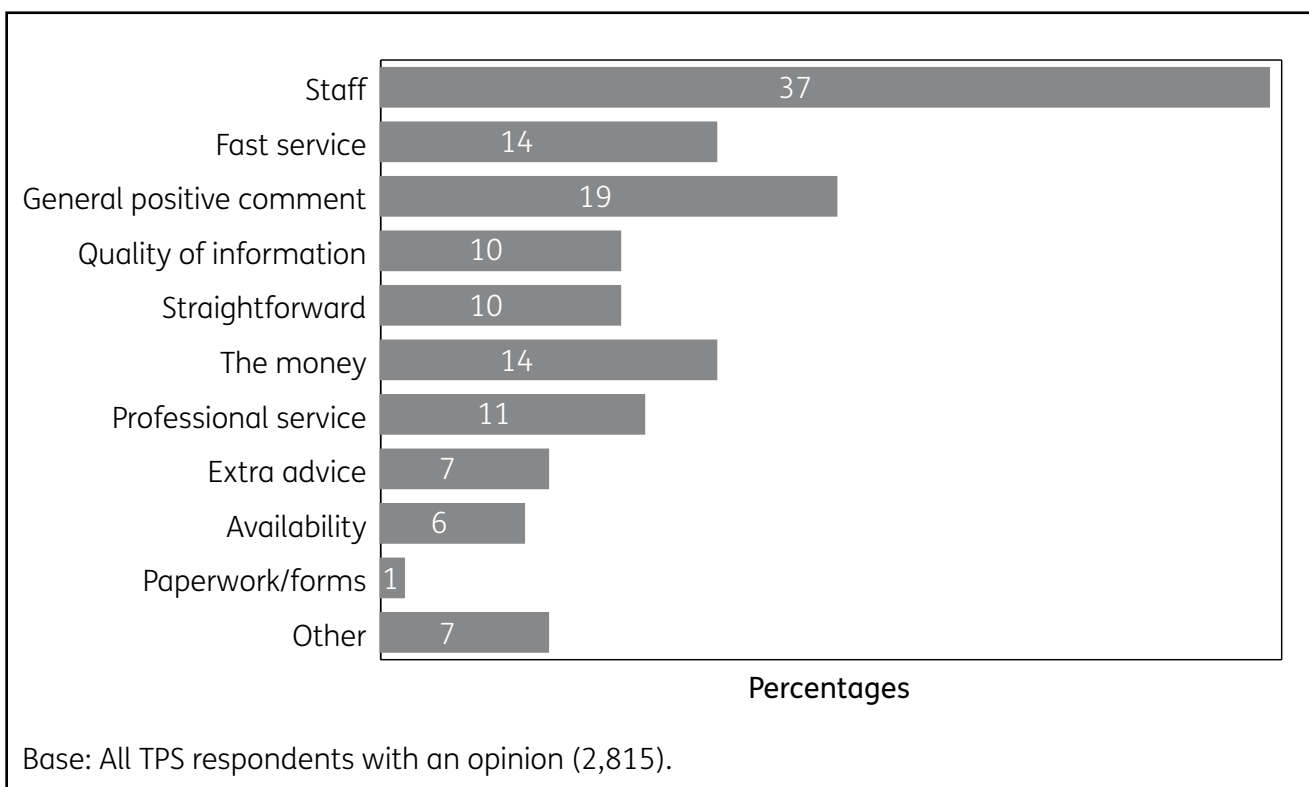
A further analysis of what individual elements are included within some of these codes are included in the following sections.

Staff

For TPS customers the quality of the staff was the area that had the highest number of spontaneous mentions (37 per cent). This reflects the high scores for the individual staff treatment items seen in Section 3.7.3. Women in particular were more likely to spontaneously mention the staff as being the best thing about TPS (42 per cent compared with 31 per cent of men).

The most common aspects of the staff behaviour that were singled out for praise were:

• being helpful (16 per cent);

• easy to talk to (ten per cent);

• polite (eight per cent);

• listen to queries and answer questions (six per cent).

In addition, customers also mentioned that staff were: 'knowledgeable' (four per cent); 'sympathetic/sensitive' (three per cent); 'mention of specific individuals/groups' (one per cent); 'fair' (one per cent); and 'treated people with respect' (one per cent).

> *'Their ability to understand when you ring, their sympathetic nature, very helpful, very knowledgeable.'*
>
> (Male, 61-65, query)

'The friendly way they dealt with you and the help they gave you. I think also the way they explained everything.'

(Female, 55-60, Pension Credit)

Fast service

One in seven customers (14 per cent) who gave a response said that the best thing about TPS was the speed with which things got done. It is interesting to note that nearly twice as many people spontaneously mention speed as a strength of the service as those who spontaneously mention it as a key area for improvement (14 per cent compared with eight per cent).

Customers who were contacting regarding a change of circumstance were more likely than other enquiry types to spontaneously mention speed (18 per cent) as the best thing about the service.

'They kept the clarity of explanation, had prompt and efficient way of taking information and a very friendly and knowledgeable gentleman on the phone, what they said would happen happened.'

(Male, 61-65, State Pension)

'The fact my phone call was answered promptly, letters were answered promptly and politely with almost an immediate answer. I was quite impressed.'

(Male, 66-74, Pension Credit)

Money

The fact that the service paid them money was quite high up the list of strengths for TPS customers at joint second (14 per cent). The money was particularly important for the oldest customers. Just over one in five customers aged 75 or older mentioned the money (22 per cent) compared with around one in eight customers under 75 (13 per cent).

The specific points that customers raised in relation to money were simply that 'I receive money from them' (12 per cent) and that 'the payment is regular and reliable' (four per cent).

'I'm just glad there is a pension service and that you get a pension at a certain age.'

(Female, 55-60, State Pension)

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

- There have been no significant changes in the areas that customers have spontaneously identified as being the best thing about TPS since 2009/10. As such the staff remain overwhelmingly the most commonly mentioned best thing about TPS.

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4   The Disability and Carers Service

This chapter looks at the experience of Disability and Carers Service (DCS) customers when contacting the service. It begins by focusing on the customer's most recent enquiry with the service before moving on to look at wider perceptions of the service including overall satisfaction. In addition to this it looks at those areas which customers think are strengths of the organisation, as well as the areas which customers spontaneously identified as being the major priorities for improvement.

4.1   Enquiry types

4.1.1   Main subject of enquiry

Figure 4.1 shows the enquiry types for DCS customers on their most recent contact with the service. This was the enquiry that the questionnaire then proceeded to focus on during the interview.

Figure 4.1   DCS enquiry type

Base: All DCS respondents (2,359).
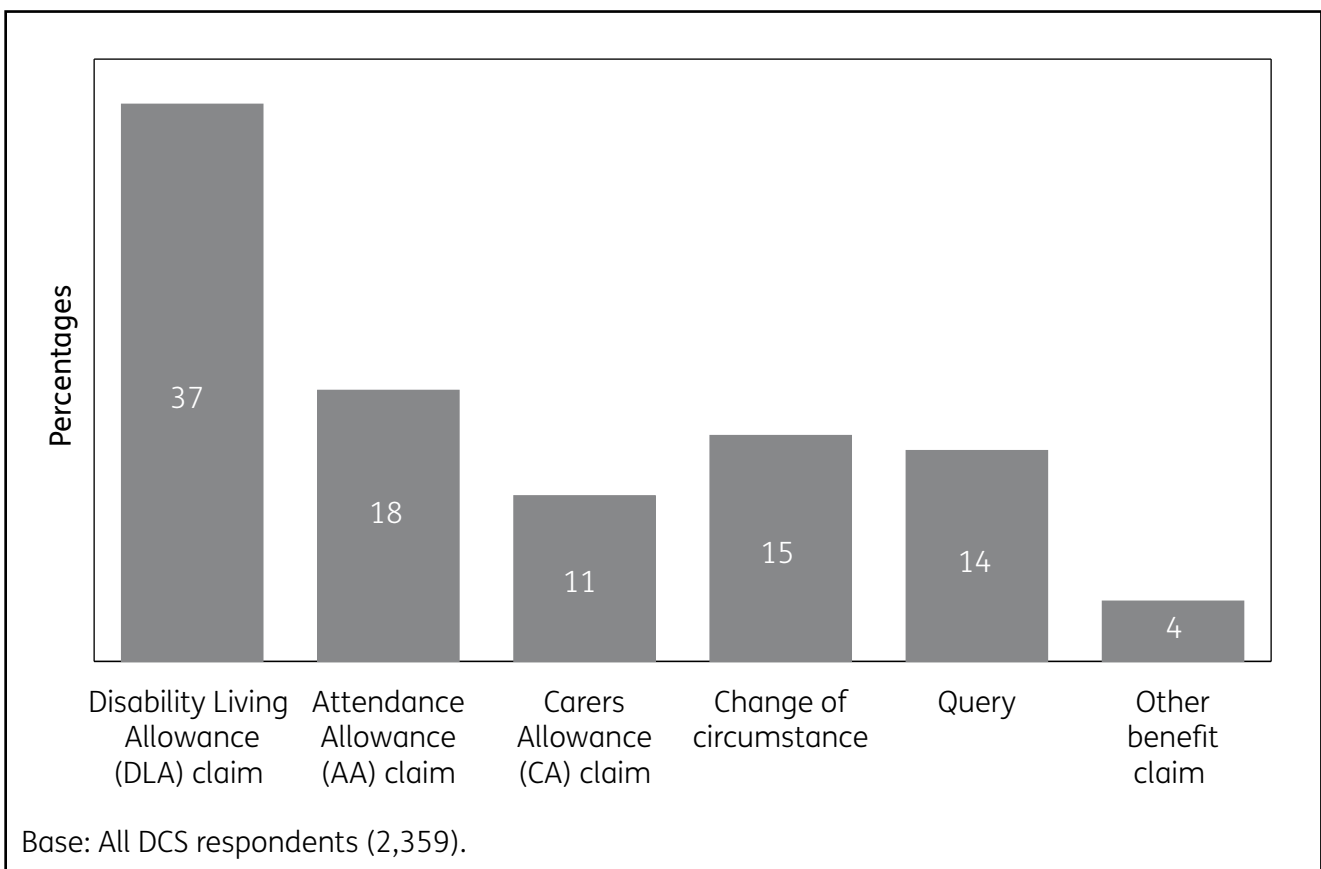
While the majority of customers contacting DCS were doing so in order to make a claim for a benefit, a significant proportion were also contacting with queries or to report a change of circumstance. In terms of the latter, the most common reasons for contact were changing address (eight per cent) and changing bank details (three per cent). The most common queries were in relation to the amount the customer was being paid (two per cent) and renewals or reassessments (two per cent).

Levels of satisfaction varied significantly by enquiry type. Around nine in ten customers who were contacting with a query (90 per cent), a change of circumstance (93 per cent) or to claim either AA (91 per cent) or CA (90 per cent) were satisfied. In contrast, only around eight in ten customers who were claiming DLA (78 per cent) or a non-DCS administered benefit (82 per cent) were satisfied. While fewer than one in 20 customers were contacting to claim a non-DCS benefit, making a claim for DLA was the single most common enquiry type, so it is concerning that it is associated with the lowest satisfaction scores.

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

- The mixture of enquiry types in 2010/11 was very similar to that seen in the 2009/10 survey and there were no significant differences.

- Customers contacting to claim DLA also had lower levels of satisfaction than those contacting with other enquiries in 2009/10 but the levels have dropped since then. In 2009/10 satisfaction levels for customers contacting to claim DLA was 83 per cent but this has fallen to 78 per cent in 2010/11.

Signposting

All customers whose most recent enquiry was either to claim AA or DLA were asked how they had first heard about the benefit. Family and friends was the most common source of information for both benefits, being mentioned by just under three in ten customers (28 per cent for both). The next most common source was a doctor or nurse but here the difference was more marked with around two in ten DLA claimants mentioning this (19 per cent) compared with one in ten AA claimants (ten per cent). Beyond this there were a wide number of sources each being cited by only a small number of claimants.

Ease of first contact

All customers were asked how easy it was to first get in contact with DCS for their most recent enquiry and just over one in ten customers (11 per cent) said that it was very or fairly difficult. Customers who did not speak English as their first language were nearly twice as likely to say they had problems (21 per cent compared with 11 per cent of those whose first language was English). There were no significant differences between most of the enquiry types apart from the fact that those applying for AA were less likely to have encountered problems (seven per cent compared with 12 per cent of those making any other type of enquiry).

4.1.2   Contact channels used

The contact channels that customers used over the course of their enquiry is shown in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2   Contact channels used for enquiry

Base: All DCS respondents (2,359).
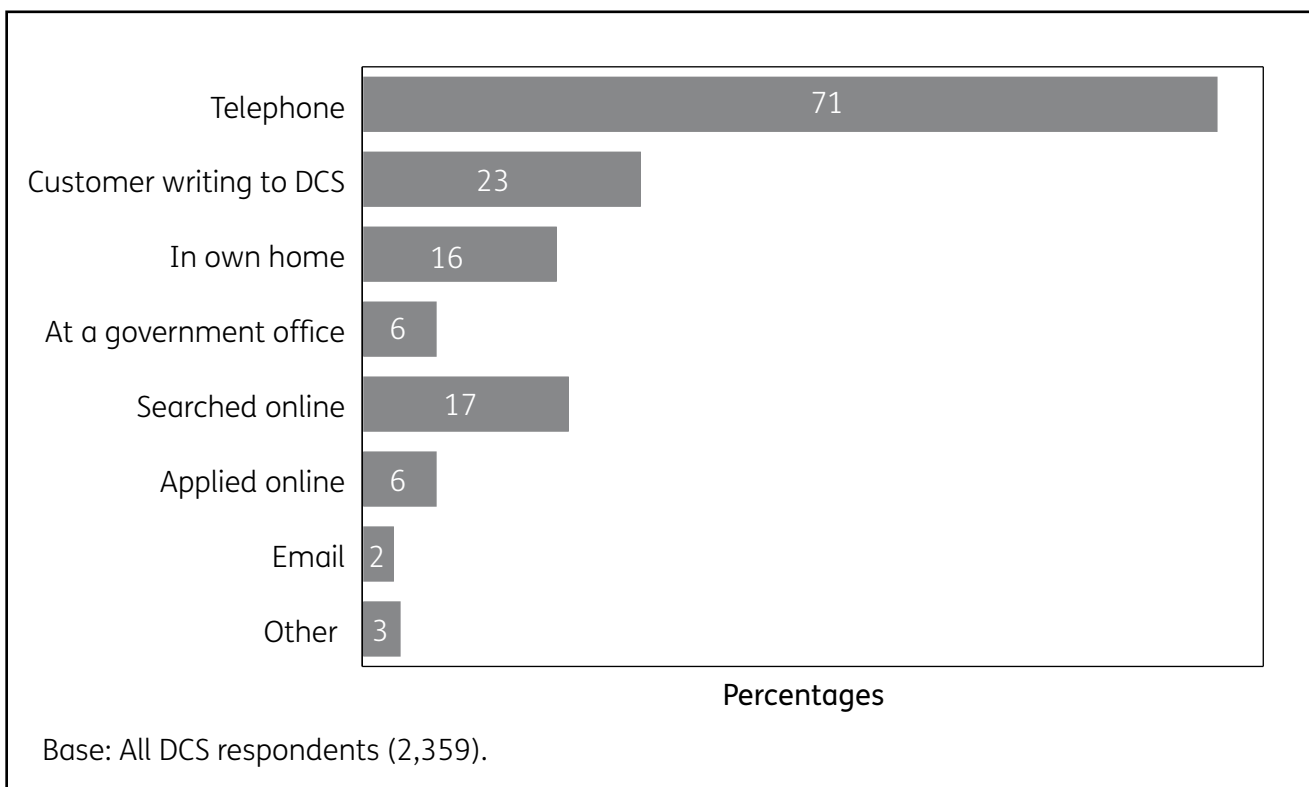
Older customers were significantly less likely to have used the telephone for their most recent enquiry. Only around half of all customers aged 75 or over had used the telephone (55 per cent) compared with three-quarters (74 per cent) of those aged under 75. Instead this group was significantly more likely to have received a home visit (31 per cent compared with 13 per cent of those aged under 75). These customers were significantly more likely to also be applying for AA and the visit itself may have been carried out by Local Service.

Around one in six DCS customers (17 per cent) had gone online to search for information as part of their enquiry but this did vary significantly by enquiry type. Nearly a quarter of all customers contacting to claim DLA (24 per cent) had gone online to search for information but this compares to fewer than one in ten customers who were contacting in regards to a general query (nine per cent). Of course it may simply be the case that this is a self-fulfilling prophecy and that more customers who had a query who did look online did not then need to make a further contact with the services and therefore, were not entered in to the survey.

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

• There has been a significant increase in the proportion of customers contacting via the telephone since 2009/10 (71 per cent compared with 63 per cent). It should be noted that the form of the question for online contact was changed this year to help identify those customers who were searching for information online even if they did not then go on to make an online application. As a result of this results cannot be compared between the two surveys on this measure.

4.1.3   Preferred channels of contact

The majority of customers said that they were happy with the contact channels they had used (91 per cent) for their most recent enquiry, with only a very small proportion saying they would have preferred to use another channel (six per cent). Among these customers the most preferred option was to have received a home visit (40 per cent) followed by contacting via telephone (28 per cent). Only 12 per cent would have preferred to be able to conduct their enquiry online.

4.2   Telephone communication

4.2.1   Frequency of contact

Seven in ten customers (71 per cent) had contact by telephone as part of their most recent enquiry. The mean number of calls made by DCS customers for their most recent enquiry was 2.39, however, there was variation by enquiry type. Customers who were calling to claim DLA reported a higher mean number of calls at 2.87, than customers calling to claim CA (2.48) and those contacting to claim AA (1.76). Customers calling to claim another benefit called a higher than average number of times (3.39) as did customers calling regarding a query (2.59) with customers contact regarding a change of circumstance calling less than average (1.73).

How many times a DCS customer called impacted overall satisfaction, the results are shown in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3   How many times called and satisfaction (DCS)

Base: All DCS customers who had telephone contact (1,652).
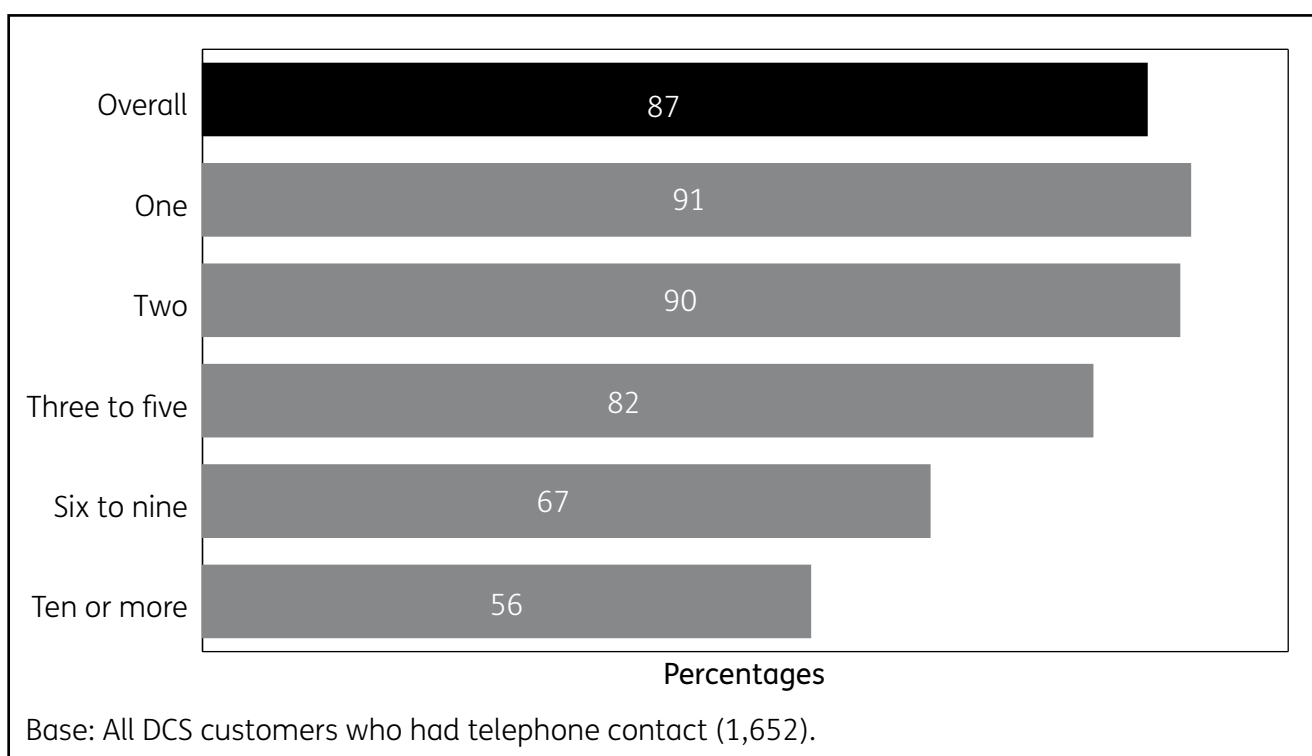
The greater the number of calls made, the less likely DCS customers were to be satisfied overall. Overall satisfaction with the service remains relatively high for DCS customers who call up to five times, a significant drop in overall satisfaction occurs when DCS customers report that they called the service six or more times.

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11
- The mean number of calls from DCS customers in 2010/11 was similar to that in 2009/10 (2.31 calls).

4.2.2   Telephone number source

An additional question was asked of customers who had contact by telephone in the 2010/11 survey. Customers were asked where they had got the telephone number from that they had called; Table 4.1 displays the top five responses given by DCS customers.

Table 4.1   Telephone number source (DCS)

	%
A letter	45
Another organisation	17
Directgov	13
Family or friends	4
Hospital/NHS	3

Base: All DCS customers who had telephone contact (1,652).

The most common answer given by DCS customers was from a letter (45 per cent), followed by another organisation (17 per cent) and Directgov (13 per cent). There was some variation by enquiry type across the different telephone number sources. Customers contacting regarding a change of circumstance were the most likely to respond they got the telephone number they called from a letter (72 per cent) with customers contacting to claim CA most likely to respond they got the telephone number from another organisation (29 per cent).

4.2.3   Time waited for calls to be answered

Another new question that was added to the 2010/11 survey asked customers how long they waited for their calls to be answered. Figure 4.4 displays the results.

Figure 4.4   How long waited for calls to be answered – DCS

Base: All DCS customers who had telephone contact (1,652).
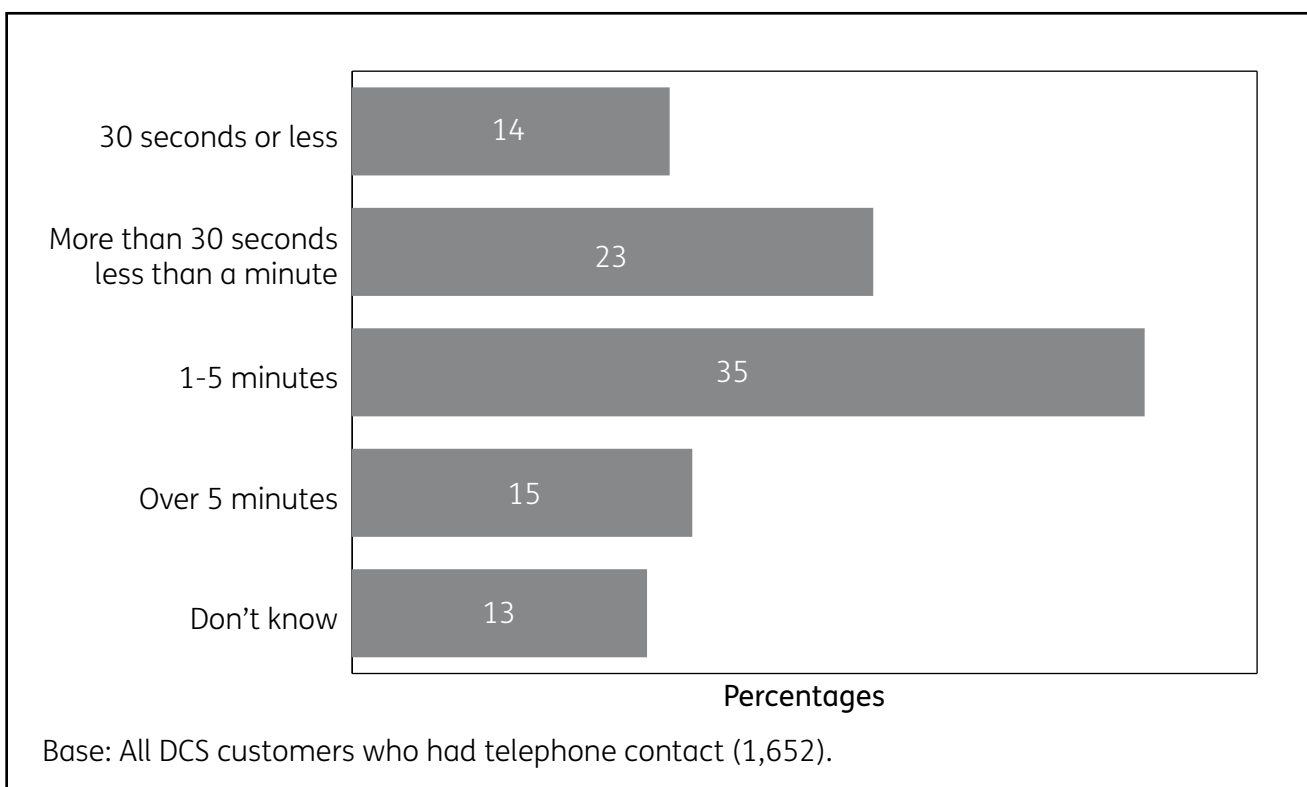
Seventy-two per cent reported that their call(s) was answered in five minutes or under, with 15 per cent reporting that their call(s) took over five minutes to be answered. DCS customers who were calling to claim another benefit or to claim DLA were most likely to respond that they waited over five minutes for their calls to be answered (22 per cent and 19 per cent respectively).

Overall satisfaction varied by how long customers reported that they waited for their call(s) to be answered, results are shown in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5   How long waited for calls to be answered and satisfaction (DCS)

Base: All DCS customers who had telephone contact (1,652).
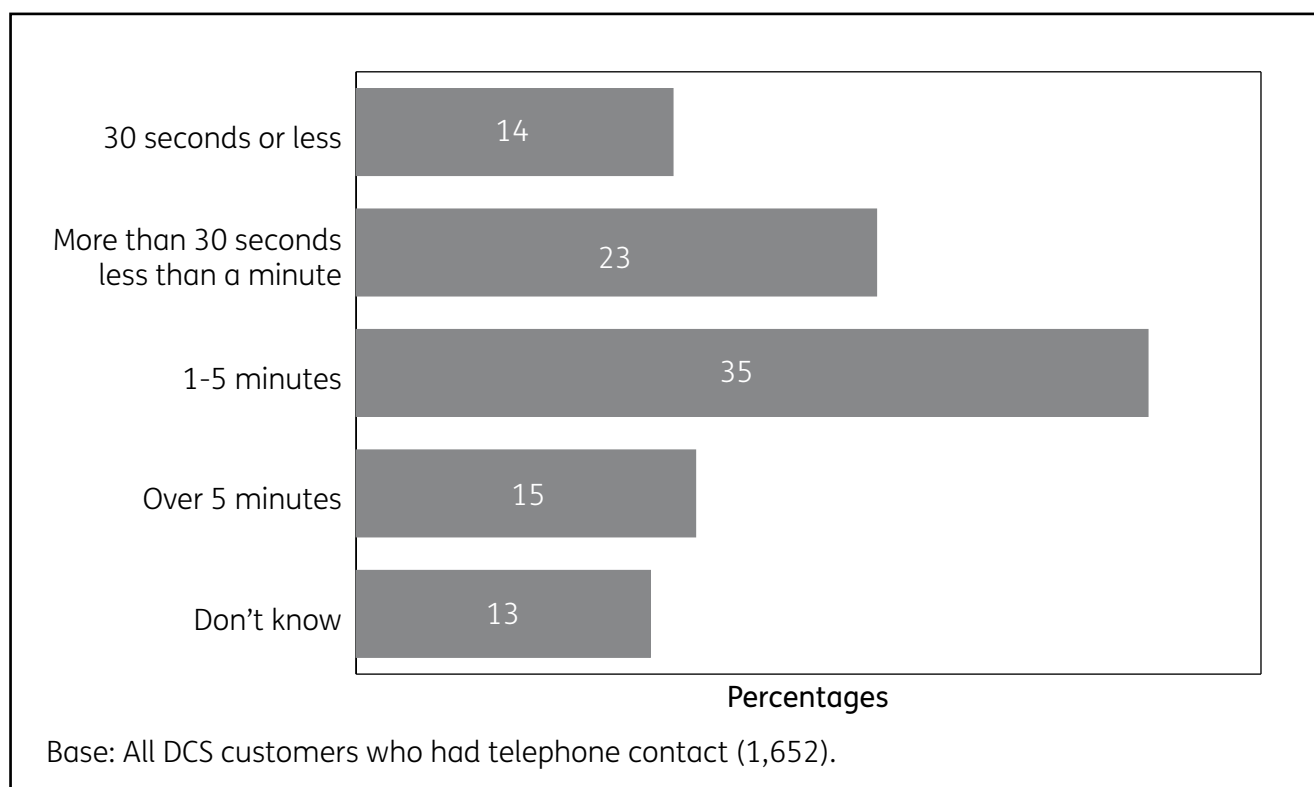
As might be expected, the greater the amount of time customers wait for their call(s) to be answered the less likely they are to be satisfied overall. Eighty-nine per cent of customers who reported that their calls took one to five minutes to answer were still satisfied overall with the service. Overall satisfaction only begins to drop significantly when customers reported that they waited over five minutes for their call(s) to be answered (69 per cent). In addition to this, there is no significant difference in satisfaction whether calls were answered within 30 seconds or within a minute.

Alongside being asked how long they waited for their call(s) to be answered customers were also asked whether the amount of time they had to wait was reasonable, 84 per cent of DCS customers responded that they felt the time they waited for their call(s) to be answered was reasonable.

DCS customers who reported wait times of over five minutes were significantly less likely to respond the amount of time they waited for their calls to be answered was reasonable than customers who reported a wait time of five minutes or less (49 per cent compared with 94 per cent). It is worth noting that the majority (94 per cent) of DCS customers who waited for up to five minutes for their calls to be answered felt that this wait time was reasonable.

4.2.4   Internal transfers

Four-fifths (79 per cent) of DCS customers stated that the first person they spoke to over the telephone had been able to answer their query. In terms of enquiry type, customers who were contacting to claim another benefit were least likely to find that the first person they spoke to was able to answer their query (68 per cent). DCS customers contacting regarding a change of circumstance were most likely to find that the first person they spoke to was able to answer their query (87 per cent).

Table 4.2 displays the results for what happened next when DCS customers found that the first person they spoke to was unable to answer their query.

Table 4.2   When first person spoke was unable to answer query (DCS)

	%
Transferred to someone else	59
Told DCS would call back	14
Called back another time	12
Told to call someone else	10
Don't know	5

Base: All DCS customers who contacted by telephone and query was not answered by first person (262).

All DCS customers who were able to speak to a new person straight away were asked if this new person could help, almost four-fifths (78 per cent) responded that this new person was able to help. DCS customers that were able to speak to someone new were also asked the amount of information it was necessary for them to repeat to this new person, results are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3   When spoke to a new person (DCS)

	%
Repeated all information	57
Repeated only basic details	32
Did not repeat any information	8

Base: All DCS customers who contacted by telephone and spoke to a new person (196).

Almost nine in ten (89 per cent) DCS customers found that they had to repeat some information, with almost six in ten (57 per cent) needing to repeat all information to the new person they spoke with.

DCS customers who found that the first person they spoke to was able to answer their query reported higher levels of overall satisfaction than customers who found that the first person they spoke to was unable to answer their query (91 compared with 68 per cent).

DCS customers who found that the new person they spoke to was able to help were more likely to be satisfied overall than customers who when transferred to a new person found that they were unable to help (84 compared with 38 per cent).

Overall satisfaction was affected by the level of information it was necessary for customers to repeat when they spoke to a new person. Customers who had to repeat all information displayed lower levels of overall satisfaction (65 per cent) than customers who had to repeat some (80 per cent) or no information.[6]

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[6]   The base size in 2010/11 was too small (less than 50) for customers who did not repeat any information at all to provide a comparative overall satisfaction score.

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11
• There were no significant changes in any elements of the transferral process.

4.2.5 Next steps

Four-fifths of customers (81 per cent) who contacted by telephone stated that they were told what would happen next with their enquiry.

DCS customers who were contacting to claim AA were most likely to report that they were told what would happen next with their enquiry (86 per cent), with customer contacting regarding a query least likely to report this (75 per cent). However, it is worth nothing that this is still a relatively high proportion.

Customers who were told what would happen next with their enquiry reported higher levels of overall satisfaction than those customers who were not told what would happen next (90 per cent compared with 72 per cent).

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11
• From 2009/10 to 2010/11, there has been a slight but statistically significant decrease in the proportion of customers who made contact by telephone and reported that they were told what would happen next with their enquiry (84 per cent compared with 81 per cent).

• As in 2009/10, overall satisfaction was higher for customers who were told what would happen next with their enquiry compared with those who were not told what would happen next (90 per cent of those told in 2010/11 and 91 per cent 2010/11 compared with 72 per cent of those not told in 2010/11 and 78 per cent in 2009/10).

4.3 Postal communication

4.3.1 Frequency of postal contact

Seventeen per cent of DCS customers wrote to the service as part of their most recent enquiry. For these customers the mean number of written contacts was 1.61. Table 4.4 displays the mean number of postal contacts by enquiry type.

Table 4.4 Mean number of contacts and enquiry type (DCS)

	Mean
All enquiries	1.61
Claiming other benefit	2.06
Claiming DLA	1.83
Query	1.59
Claiming AA	1.37
Claiming CA	1.32
Change of circumstance	1.2

Base: All DCS customers who contacted by post (438).

The number of times a DCS customer wrote to the service as part of their most recent enquiry influenced their level of overall satisfaction, the results for overall satisfaction by how many times a DCS customer wrote are shown in Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6   How many times wrote and satisfaction (DCS)

Percentages

Base: All DCS customers who contacted by post (438).
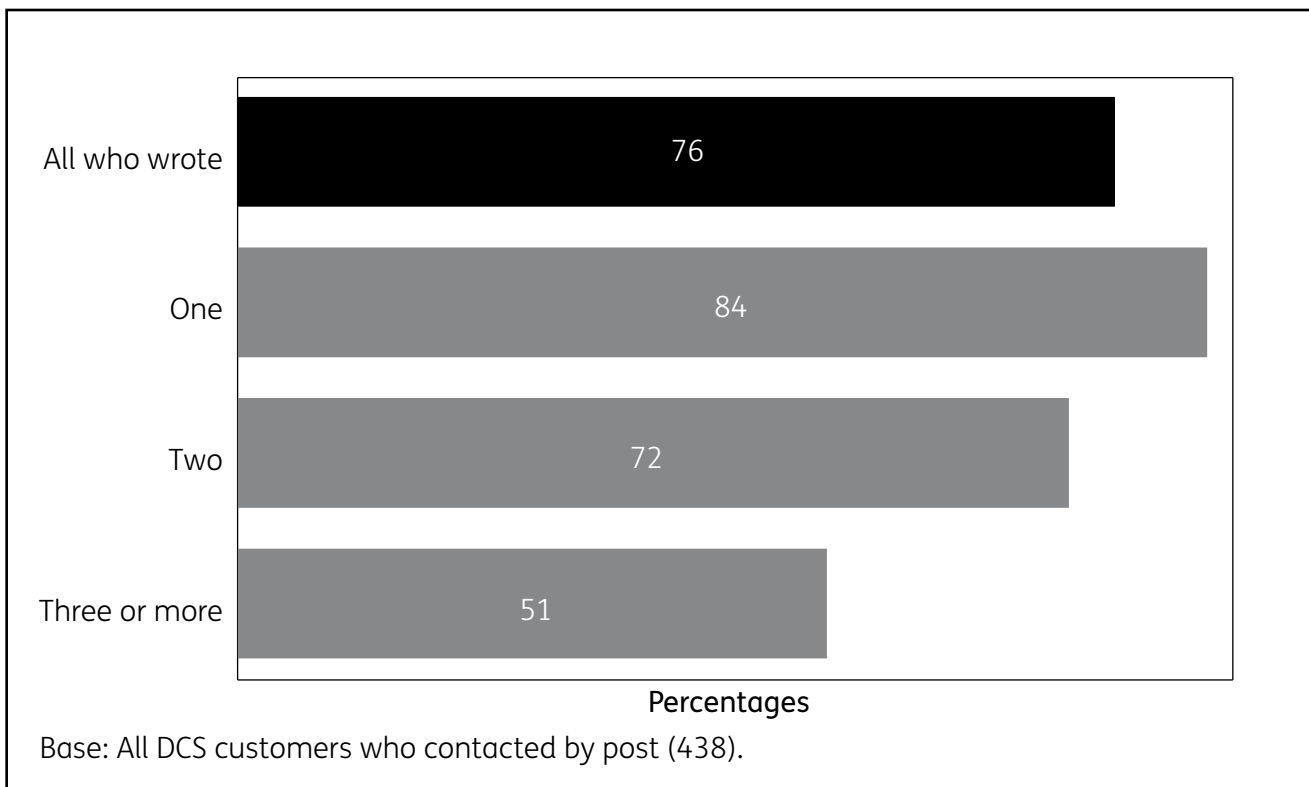
As the number of times a DCS customer wrote to the service increased the levels of overall satisfaction decline, with half (51 per cent) of customers who wrote to DCS three times or more reporting that they were satisfied with the service overall.

> **Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11**
> • The mean number of written contacts for DCS customers is the same as in 2009/10 (1.61 times).

4.3.2   Whether received a reply

The majority (90 per cent) of DCS customers who wrote to DCS expected a reply and of the customers who expected a reply around nine in ten (92 per cent) received one.

Customers whose most recent contact was to claim a benefit were most likely to have received a reply when they had written to DCS. The majority of customers who were contacting to claim AA (97 per cent), to claim CA (96 per cent) or to claim DLA (91 per cent) had received a reply. Nine in ten (90 per cent) DCS customers who were contacting regarding a change of circumstance received a reply, with eight in ten (78 per cent) customers who were contacting regarding a query also receiving a reply.

All DCS customers who received a reply were asked how long the reply they received had taken, and whether the replies received were easy to understand. Table 4.5 displays the results.

Table 4.5   Reply received (DCS)

	%
Received a reply	92
Reply within two weeks	48
Reply more than two weeks	44
Replies easy to understand	90
Replies not easy to understand	7

Base: All DCS customers who received a reply (361).

DCS customers who expected a reply and did not receive one reported lower levels of overall satisfaction with the service than customers who had expected and received a reply (39 per cent compared with 78 per cent).

Customers who received a reply within two weeks reported higher levels of overall satisfaction than customers whose reply took longer than two weeks (89 per cent compared with 67 per cent). As might be expected customers who had found the replies they received easy to understand were more likely to be satisfied overall with the service than customers who did not find the replies they received easy to understand (86 per cent compared with 65 per cent).

In the 2010/11 survey an additional question was asked of customers who reported that the replies they received were not easy to understand. These customers were asked why the replies had not been easy to understand. A number of responses were given including: 'terminology/jargon used difficult to understand'; 'it was too complicated'; 'it was too lengthy'; 'difficult questions; explanation given unclear'; 'repetition of the questions'; 'they didn't seem to take my circumstances into account'; and 'the figures/numbers did not make sense'.

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

- The proportion of DCS customers who expected a reply and received one are similar to those in 2009/10.

- As was found in 2009/10 a DCS customer's level of satisfaction was lower if they had expected a reply yet did not receive one, if the reply they received took over two weeks or if the reply they received was not easy to understand.

4.3.3   Submitting forms

Seven in ten customers (71 per cent) stated that they had completed a form as part of their most recent enquiry.

As might be expected, customers who were contacting to claim a benefit were most likely to have completed a form(s) as part of their most recent enquiry. Customers who were contacting to claim DLA were most likely to have completed a form(s) as part of their most recent enquiry (88 per cent), followed by customers contacting to claim AA (87 per cent), those contacting to claim CA (81 per cent) and customers contacting to claim another benefit (79 per cent).

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

- There has been a slight but statistically significant decrease in the proportion of customers stating that they had completed a form(s) as part of their most recent enquiry (from 74 per cent in 2009/10 to 71 per cent in 2010/11).

- As was found in 2009/10 customers who were contacting to claim a benefit were more likely to have completed a form as part of their most recent enquiry.

4.3.4   Ease of completing forms

Almost half of customers who completed a form(s) as part of their most recent enquiry had found the form(s) difficult to complete (47 per cent). The remaining half (53 per cent) had found the form(s) easy to complete, with 14 per cent reporting that they had been very easy.

The proportion of customers reporting difficulty with form(s) varied by enquiry type. DLA claimants were significantly most likely to have felt that the form(s) were difficult to complete (59 per cent compared with 40 per cent of AA claimants and 27 per cent of CA claimants).

DCS customers who found the forms difficult to complete were less likely than customers who had found the forms easy to complete to be satisfied with the service overall (76 per cent compared with 90 per cent).

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

- The proportion of customers who found the forms they completed as part of their enquiry difficult/easy to complete was similar to that found in 2009/10 (47 per cent in 2010/11 and 48 per cent in 2009/10).

- The proportion of customers reporting difficulties with the forms by enquiry type was similar to 2009/10.

4.3.5   Whether received help completing forms

Fifty-four per cent of DCS customers who had completed a form received help when doing so, a further 30 per cent reported that they did not need any help and 15 per cent that they had required help but did not ask for any.

As might be expected, DCS customers who had not required any help were less likely to find the forms difficult to complete (22 per cent) than customers who had received help completing the forms (54 per cent), or those who had required help but did not ask for any (65 per cent).

DCS customers who had required help completing the forms but did not ask for any were less likely to be satisfied with the service overall (72 per cent), than customers who had not required any help (85 per cent), or customers who had received help completing the forms (86 per cent).

When asked who had given them help, the most common sources were: family or friends (33 per cent); a charity (24 per cent); DCS (16 per cent); a carer/social worker/home-help (nine per cent); or hospital/NHS/other medical staff (seven per cent).

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

- The proportion of customers requiring and receiving help when completing forms was similar to 2009/10 as were the most common sources of help.

4.4   Online communication

4.4.1   Online contact methods

Questions were added to the 2010/11 survey that asked customers further details about their use of online contact methods as part of their most recent enquiry. Seventeen per cent of DCS customers reported that they had searched online for information as part of their most recent enquiry and six per cent had attempted an online transaction.

Table 4.6 displays the proportions of customers who had used online contact methods as part of their most recent enquiry by enquiry type.

Table 4.6   Online contact methods and enquiry type (DCS)

	Percentage who searched online	Percentage who attempted an online transaction
All enquiries	17	6
Claiming DLA	24	7
Claiming other benefit	21	6
Claiming CA	17	10
Claiming AA	13	7
Change of circumstance	12	3
Query	9	3

Base: All DCS customers (2,359).

As shown in Table 4.6, customers contacting to claim DLA were most likely to report that they had searched online for information as part of their most recent enquiry (24 per cent), while customers who were contacting to claim CA were most likely to have attempted an online transaction (ten per cent).

The older customers were the less likely they were to report they had searched online for information or attempted a transaction online as part of their most recent enquiry. Only five per cent of customers aged 75 and over searched online for information as part of their most recent enquiry, with only one per cent of this age group attempting an online transaction.

Customers who reported they had searched online for information as part of their most recent enquiry were asked which sites they had searched. Nine in ten (91 per cent) had used government websites such as Directgov, with 13 per cent using non-governmental websites.

All customers who had searched online for information were asked whether they had found all the information they needed. Sixty-seven per cent said they found all the information they needed and of the remainder 28 per cent found some of the information they needed and five per cent did not find any of the information they needed.

Customers who were unable to find all the information they needed when they searched online were asked what information was missing. DCS customers reported that they were not able to find information on what they were entitled to, the amount they were going to be paid, information on how to contact/claim, timelines, personal information/status and they found the website too complicated in general.

Those customers who had found all of the information they needed were more likely to be satisfied overall than those customers who had only been able to find some of the information they needed (89 per cent compared with 70 per cent). The base size for those customers who were unable to find any of the information they needed was too low for further analysis.

The number of DCS customers who had attempted an online transaction was small (139 respondents) and therefore it is not possible to conduct detailed analysis of these respondents. However, all DCS customers who had attempted a transaction online as part of their most recent enquiry were asked what this transaction was. A number of responses were given to this question including; apply for DLA, apply for CA, apply for AA, to download leaflets/forms, see what benefits entitled to and find contact details/telephone numbers.

4.4.2 Internet access and usage

All DCS customers were asked whether they had access to the internet at home and, if so, how often they used the internet. Two-thirds (66 per cent) of DCS customers had access to the internet at home. This is similar to the proportion of TPS customers who had access to the internet and around ten per cent lower than the national average (see Section 3.4.2). The older customers were, the less likely they were to have access to the internet. Two-fifths (39 per cent) of DCS customers aged 66 and over reported having access to the internet compared with more than twice as many customers aged 16 to 44 years old (86 per cent).

Table 4.7 displays how often DCS customers used the internet. The response 'never use the internet' was not read out and was only coded when spontaneously mentioned by respondents.

Table 4.7 How often use the internet (DCS)

	%
Every day	49
Most days	20
About once a week	12
About once a fortnight	2
About once a month	3
About once every two to three months	1
About once every six months	*
Less often	3
Never use the internet	9
Don't know	1

Base: All DCS customers with internet access (1,566).

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

• The proportion of customers who reported they had access to the internet at home has increased from 2009/10 (from 62 per cent to 66 per cent).

• As was found in 2009/10 the proportion of DCS customers online was relatively high, and customers with internet access were regular users of the internet.

4.4.3 Whether consider using internet for online services

In the 2010/11 survey additional questions were asked of customers who had access to the internet and had not attempted an online transaction. These customers were asked whether they would consider using the internet for a number of online services, results are shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Whether would consider using internet for online services (DCS)

	%
To find out if eligible or how to claim a benefit	65
To apply for a benefit	53
To change contact details	56
None of these	29
Don't know	1

Base: All DCS customers with internet access who had not attempted an online transaction (1,433).

Older customers were more likely to report that they would not be willing to consider using the internet for any of these online services with over half (53 per cent) of customers aged 75 and over who had access to the internet and had not attempted an online transaction responding 'none of these'. DCS customers who were widowed were most likely to report that they would not be willing to consider using the internet for any of these online services (46 per cent).

Table 4.9   Why would not use the internet for these services (DCS)

	%
Unfamiliar with using computers/internet	42
Prefer direct interaction	38
Concerns about safety/security of the internet	10
Physical difficulties that prevent using computer	4
Do not need the service	2
Prefer written contact	1
Unaware of online availability of service	1

Base: All DCS customers who would not use the internet for these online services (419).

The most common reason given by DCS customers who would not use the internet for these online services was that they were unfamiliar with using computers/internet (42 per cent). This was followed by preferring direct interaction (38 per cent) and concerns about security/safety of the internet (ten per cent).

4.5   Home visits

4.5.1   Frequency of home visits

Sixteen per cent of DCS customers had received a visit at home as part of their most recent enquiry. For customers who received a home visit, the mean number of visits was 1.48.

As might be expected, customers who were contacting to claim AA were the most likely to have received a home visit (34 per cent).

The 2010/11 survey asked customers who had received a home visit if the person who had visited them had asked whether they had any other needs. Almost half of those who were visited at home (48 per cent) were asked whether they had any other needs, and around half of these (53 per cent) then received help with these needs.

All DCS customers who received help with these other needs were asked what difference this help had made. The answers given were: 'made things easier', 'made a lot of difference', 'given a security pendant to wear' 'made improvements to the house' and 'have been given more money'.

DCS customers who were asked when visited at home whether they had any other needs displayed greater levels of overall satisfaction than customers who were not asked (92 per cent compared with 83 per cent).

The base sizes for customers who received help with these other needs when visited at home are too low to conduct further analysis.

## 4.6	Enquiry conclusion

### 4.6.1	Enquiry conclusion

All customers were asked whether their enquiry had concluded and the vast majority (85 per cent) reported that it had. However, certain types of enquiry were more likely to have concluded at the time of the interview. Table 4.10 shows how the proportions of customers whose enquiry had concluded varied by enquiry type.

**Table 4.10	Enquiry conclusion and enquiry type (DCS)**

	%
All enquiries	85
Claiming AA	92
Claiming CA	91
Change of circumstance	90
Claiming DLA	81
Query	77
Claiming other benefit	73

Base: All DCS respondents (2,359).

Customers were then asked how long it took for their most recent enquiry to be concluded, or if it was still ongoing, how long it had taken so far. When asked, 29 per cent reported it had been concluded within two weeks, and a further 51 per cent within three months. Thirteen per cent reported that it had taken more than three months. Figure 4.7 displays this in more detail.

**Figure 4.7	Length of enquiry**

Base: All DCS respondents (2,359).
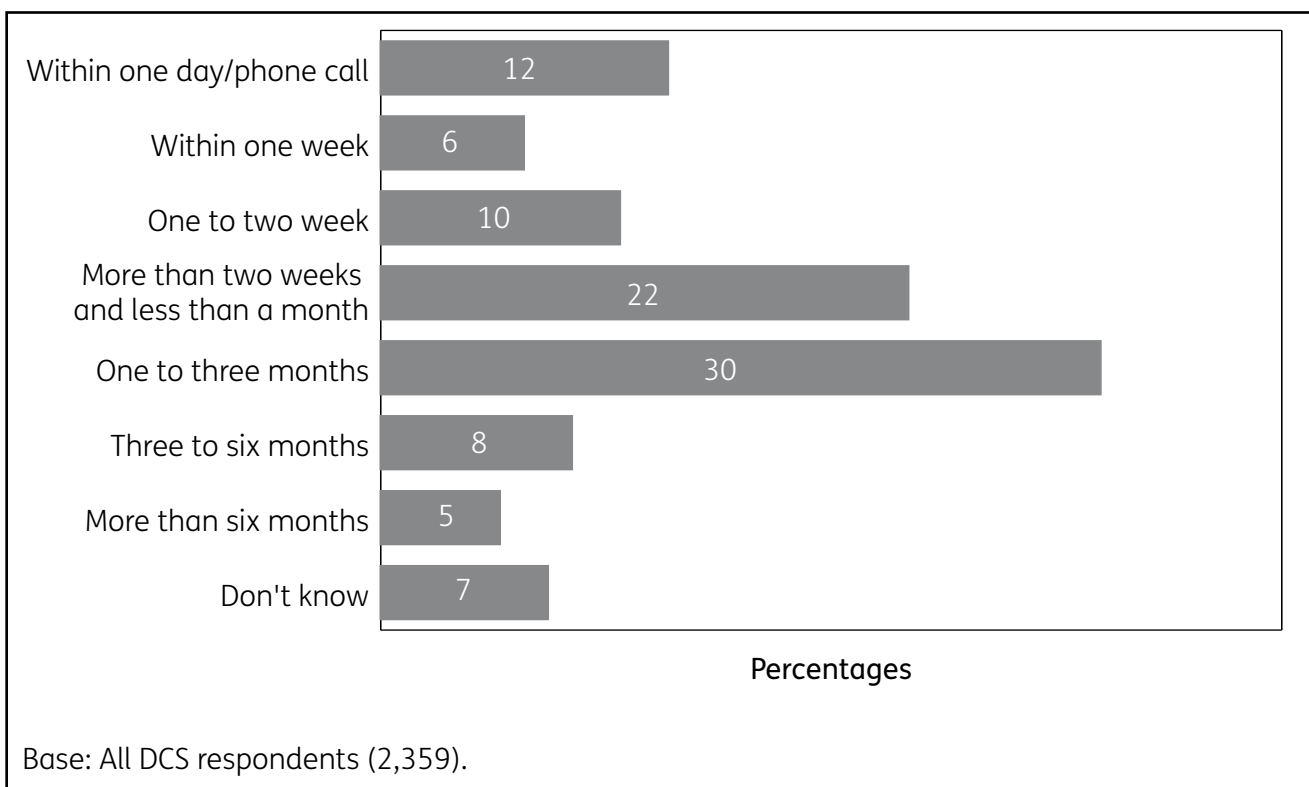
There was a significant amount of variation in the length of the enquiry according to the enquiry type. Sixty-seven per cent of customers contacting regarding a change of circumstance had their enquiry completed within one week, while only four per cent took over three months. On the other end of the scale, just four per cent of DLA claims were completed within one week, while 22 per cent took over three months. A full breakdown is provided in Figure 4.8.

Figure 4.8   Length of enquiry by enquiry type

Base: All DCS respondents (2,359).
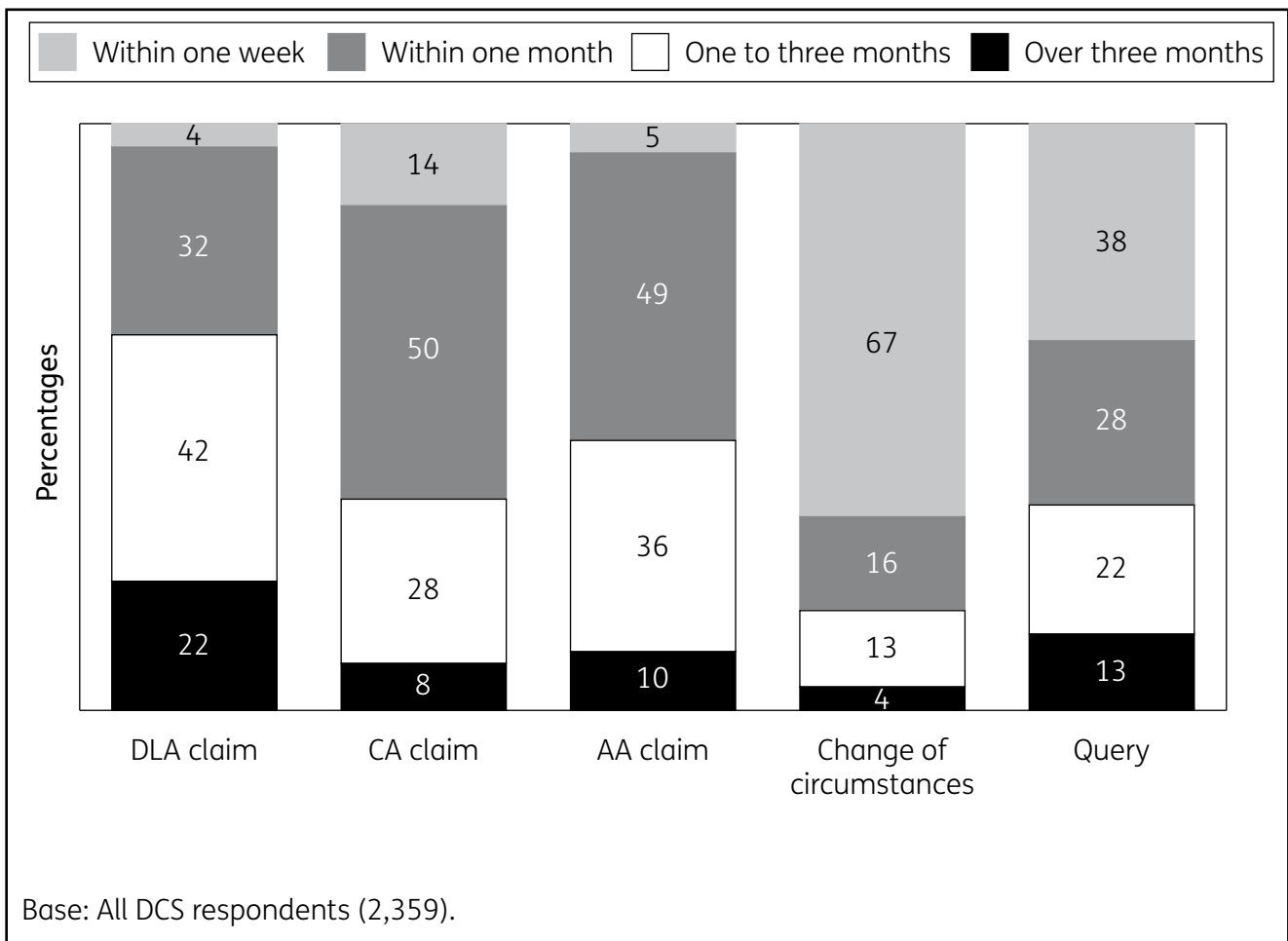
Customers were then asked how this compared with their expectations. Fifty per cent of customers felt that their enquiry took/was taking as long as expected, 22 per cent felt it took/was taking less time than expected and 23 per cent felt that it took/was taking longer than expected.

Customers who were still awaiting the conclusion of their enquiry at the time of the interview were more likely to report their enquiry was taking longer than expected than customers whose enquiry had already concluded (55 per cent compared with 17 per cent). Customers who were contacting to claim another benefit and those claiming DLA were most likely to state they felt their enquiry had taken/was taking longer than expected (35 and 33 per cent respectively).

To give customers' expectations more context, these answers were combined with their reported enquiry length. For those customers who reported it took longer than expected, only six per cent were referring to a timescale of less than one week, whereas 41 per cent were referring to an enquiry that took over three months. One in five customers reported that their enquiry length of one to three months was less time than expected and two-thirds (65 per cent) reported that between a week and three months was as long as expected.

Figure 4.9   Expectations and length of enquiry
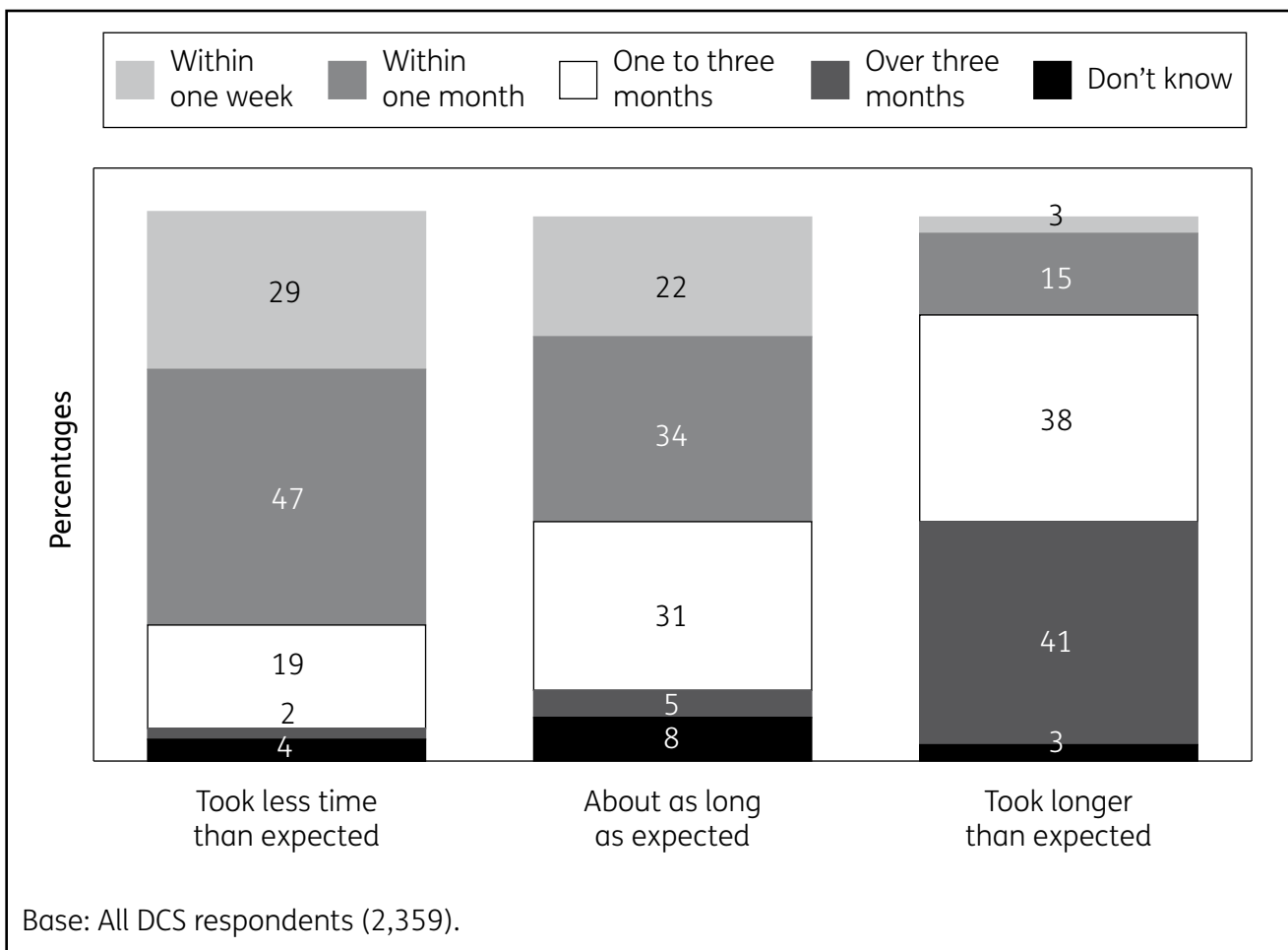
Base: All DCS respondents (2,359).

Customers were then asked how satisfied they were with the time it had taken, or was taking if it had not yet concluded. Overall, 77 per cent were satisfied and 15 per cent were dissatisfied. Satisfaction with the time taken is broken down by enquiry type in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11   Satisfaction with time taken and enquiry type (DCS)

	%
All enquiries	77
Claiming AA	89
Claiming CA	85
Change of circumstance	85
Query	78
Claiming other benefit	69
Claiming DLA	65

Base: All DCS respondents (2,359).

There was a reasonable amount of variance in the satisfaction with the time taken according to the enquiry type. Eighty-nine per cent of customers claiming AA were satisfied with the time taken compared with 65 per cent of those claiming DLA.

As might be expected, customers whose enquiry had concluded were more likely to be satisfied overall than customers who were still waiting for their enquiry to conclude at the time of interviewing (90 per cent compared with 62 per cent).

Enquiry length also had an effect on satisfaction. However, for enquiry lengths of up to three months the effect was fairly limited, with 86 per cent of DCS customers still being satisfied overall when their enquiry took between one and three months. Figure 4.10 displays the breakdown of satisfaction by enquiry length.

Figure 4.10 Length of enquiry on overall satisfaction

Within one day/phone call — 95
Within one week — 94
One to two weeks — 95
More than two weeks and less than a month — 90
One to three months — 86
Three to six months — 64
More than six months — 41

Percentages

Base: All DCS respondents (2,359).
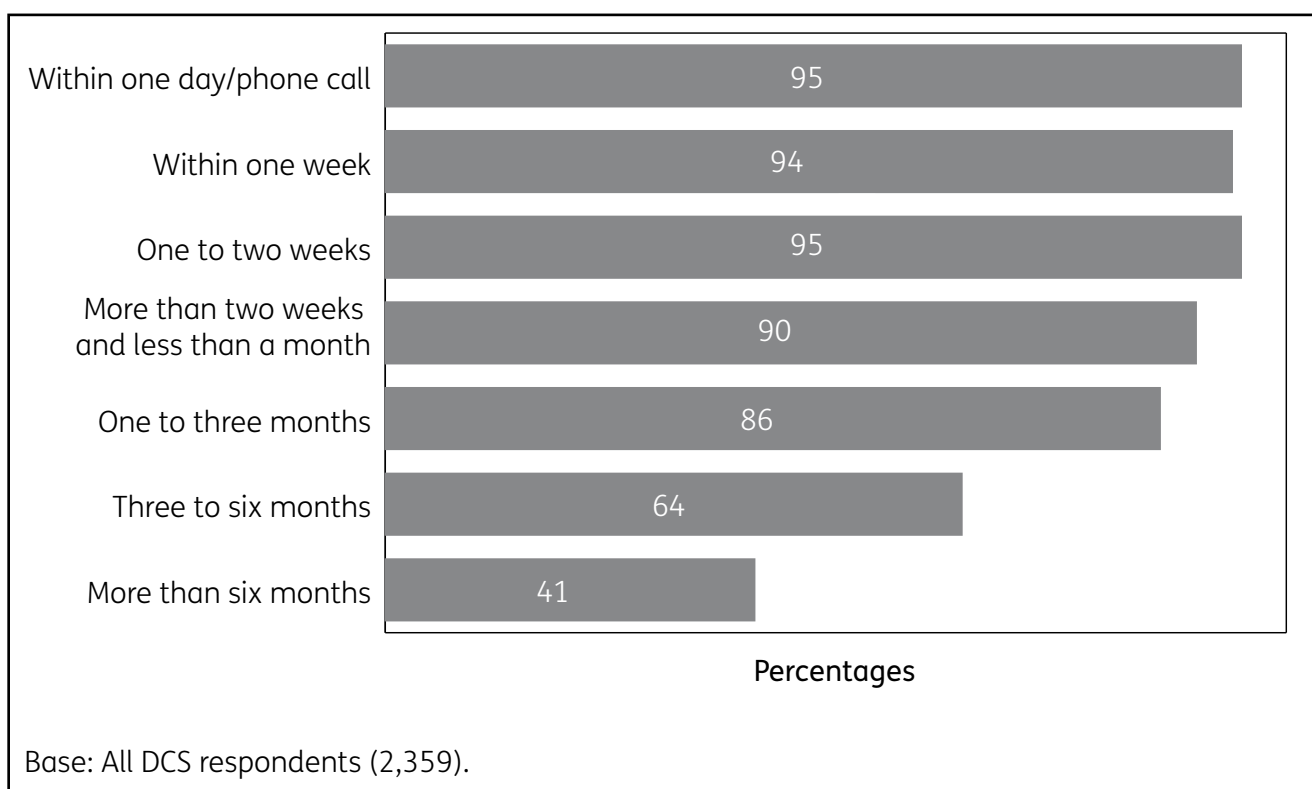
Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

• In general, DCS customers were less likely to be satisfied with the time taken for their enquiry to be concluded in 2010/11 than in 2009/10 (77 per cent compared with 82 per cent). This seems to be particularly notable for DLA customers where satisfaction with the length of their most recent enquiry has fallen ten percentage points from 75 per cent to 65 per cent.

• Satisfaction levels for customers whose enquiry had not yet concluded were lower in 2010/11 than in 2009/10 (37 per cent in 2009/10 compared with 29 per cent in 2010/11).

4.6.2   Enquiry decision

Three-quarters (75 per cent) of DCS customers reported that their most recent enquiry required a decision being made. Of these customers, over four-fifths (84 per cent) agreed with the decision that was made. In regards to the explanation of the decision: three-fifths (57 per cent) felt that the decision was very clearly explained; a third (32 per cent) fairly clearly explained; six per cent not clearly explained; and four per cent stated that the decision was not explained at all.

Table 4.12 displays whether customers' most recent enquiry required a decision by the different enquiry types. DCS customers contacting to make a claim for a benefit were most likely to report that their enquiry required a decision.

Table 4.12 Enquiry required a decision and enquiry type (DCS)

	%
All enquiries	75
Claiming CA	89
Claiming DLA	87
Claiming AA	87
Claiming other benefit	80
Query	59
Change of circumstance	38

Base: All DCS customers (2,359).

As shown in Table 4.13 there was variation by enquiry type in the proportion of respondents who agreed with the decision. Customers who were contacting to claim Disability Living Allowance were least likely to agree with the decision that was made.

Table 4.13 Agreed with decision and enquiry type (DCS)

	%
All enquiries	84
Claiming AA	92
Change of circumstance	92
Query	91
Claiming CA	86
Claiming other benefit	79
Claiming DLA	75

Base: All DCS customers who had received a decision (1,954).

Whether the customer's most recent enquiry required a decision or not did not influence overall satisfaction with the service, however, whether a customer agreed with the decision that was made did influence overall satisfaction. Customers who agreed with the decision reported higher levels of overall satisfaction than those who did not (96 per cent compared with 55 per cent).

DCS customers who felt that the decision had been very clearly or fairly clearly explained reported higher levels of overall satisfaction (96 and 88 per cent respectively) than customers who felt that the decision was not clearly explained (47 per cent) or not explained at all (65 per cent).

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

- There has been an increase in the proportion of DCS customers who felt the decision made on their enquiry was very clearly explained (from 53 per cent in 2009/10 to 57 per cent in 2010/11).

- There has been an increase in the proportion of DCS customers with a query who agreed with the decision made on their enquiry (from 82 per cent to 91 per cent).

4.6.3   Being kept informed

As shown in Figure 4.11, 76 per cent of DCS customers reported that they were given clear timings during their most recent enquiry, 73 per cent responded that they were kept up to date with the progress of their enquiry and 91 per cent of customers responded that DCS did what they said they would do during the course of their enquiry.

Figure 4.11 Whether given clear timings and kept up to date – DCS
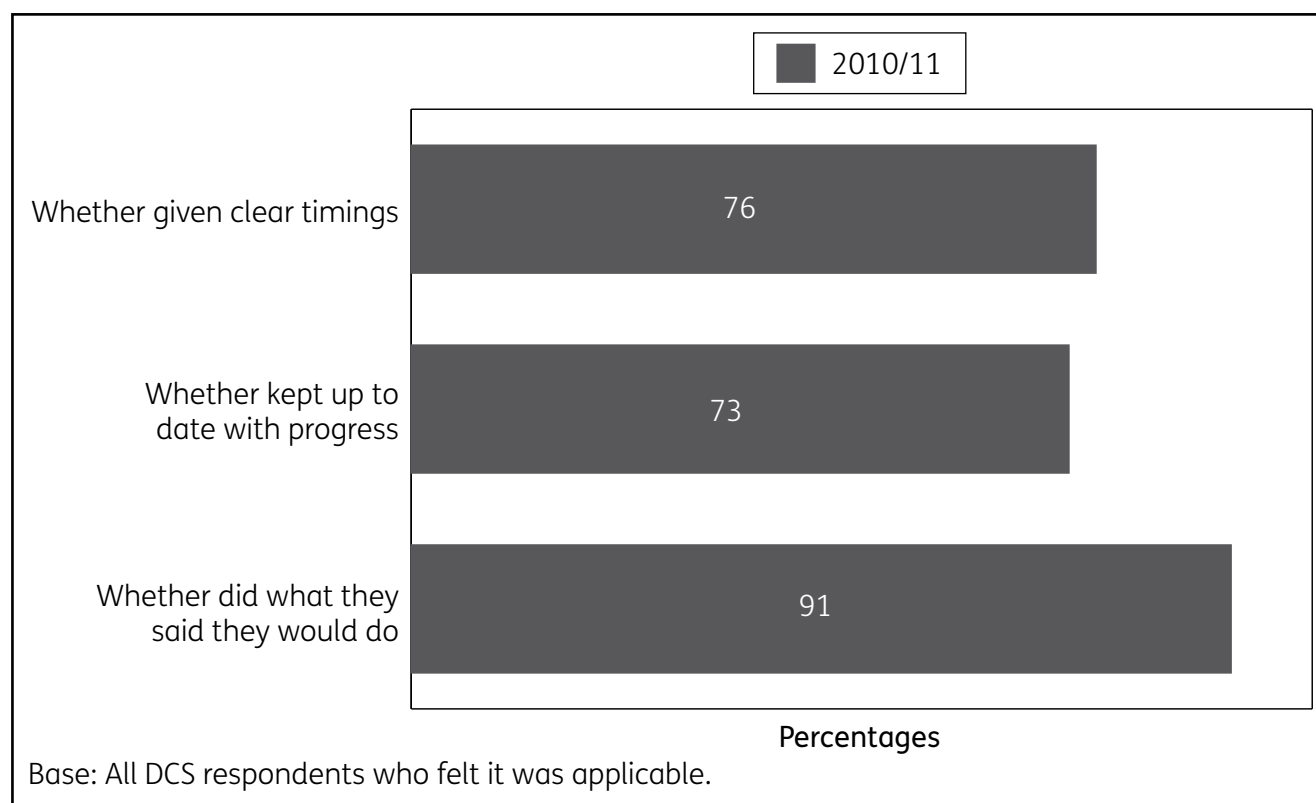
Base: All DCS respondents who felt it was applicable.

DCS customers contacting regarding a change of circumstance were most likely to report that they were given clear timings (85 per cent) with customers contacting to claim another benefit least likely to report they were given clear timings (68 per cent). The responses given for whether kept up to date and whether DCS did what they said they would do remained relatively consistent across the different enquiry types.

The most marked difference in levels of overall satisfaction was for customers who felt that DCS did what they said they would do and those who did not (90 per cent compared with 39 per cent). Overall satisfaction was also higher for customers who were given clear timings than those who were not (91 per cent compared with 64 per cent) and for customers who were kept up to date than those who felt that they were not (90 per cent compared with 63 per cent).

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

• In terms of being kept informed, scores for being given clear timings, being kept up to date and DCS doing what it said it would were all very similar to 2009/10.

4.6.4   Ease of contact and complexity of enquiry

When asked generally how easy customers found it to get in contact with DCS during the course of their enquiry, the majority (85 per cent) reported that they found it easy (39 per cent very easy and 46 per cent fairly easy). Nine per cent found it difficult (five per cent fairly difficult and four per cent very difficult).

There was a little variation in how easy it was to get in contact according to enquiry type, shown in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14 Ease of contact and enquiry type (DCS)

	%
All enquiries	85
Claiming AA	84
Claiming CA	85
Change of circumstance	91
Query	86
Claiming other benefit	88
Claiming DLA	81

Base: All DCS respondents (2,359).

Customers were asked how complicated they found the enquiry process. Figure 4.12 displays this information for DCS customers. Around four in ten (37 per cent) customers in 2010/11 found the enquiry process complicated.

Figure 4.12 Complexity

Percentages

Base: All DCS respondents (2,359).
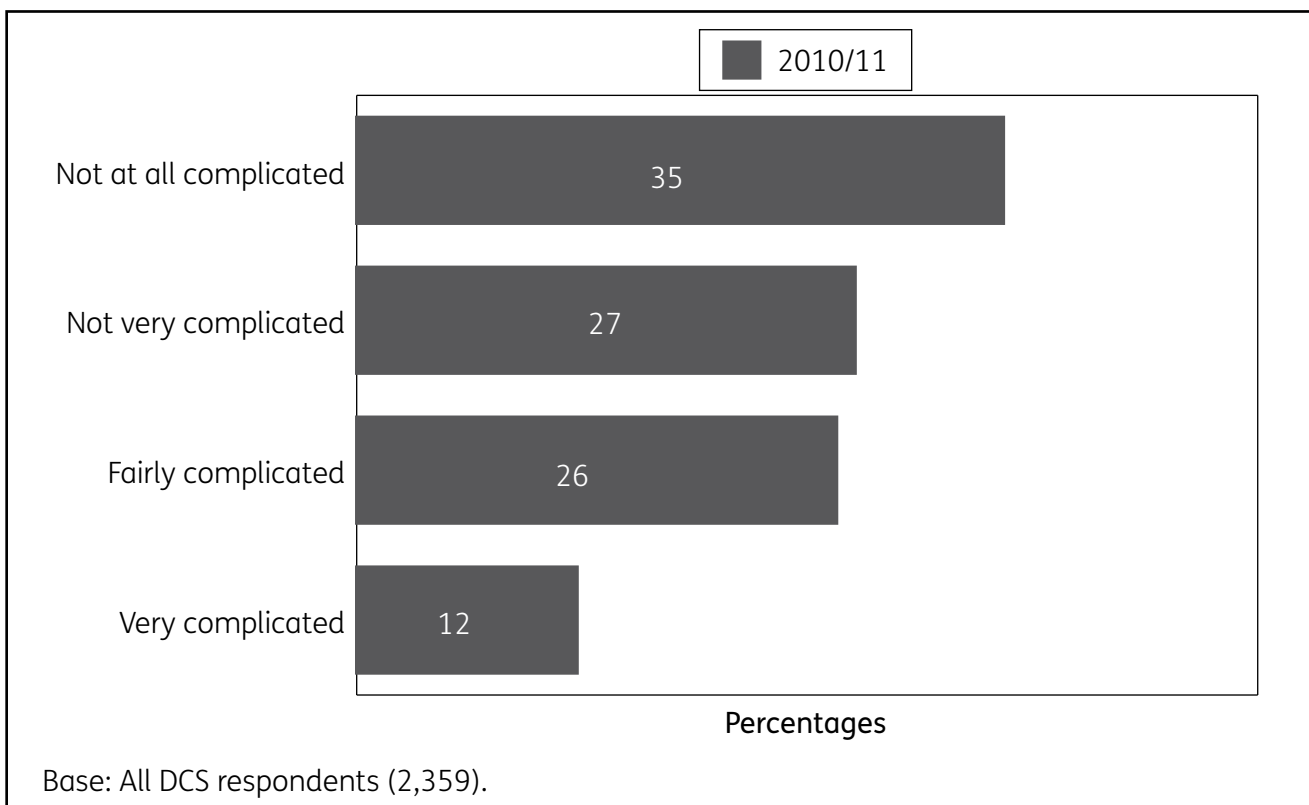
Figure 4.13 displays the proportion of customers by enquiry type that found the enquiry process complicated (very and fairly complicated). There was a significant amount of variation with customers contacting to claim Disability Living Allowance being the most likely to find the process complicated (52 per cent) and customers contacting regarding a change of circumstance the least likely to report that they found the enquiry process complicated (19 per cent).

Figure 4.13 Complexity, by benefits
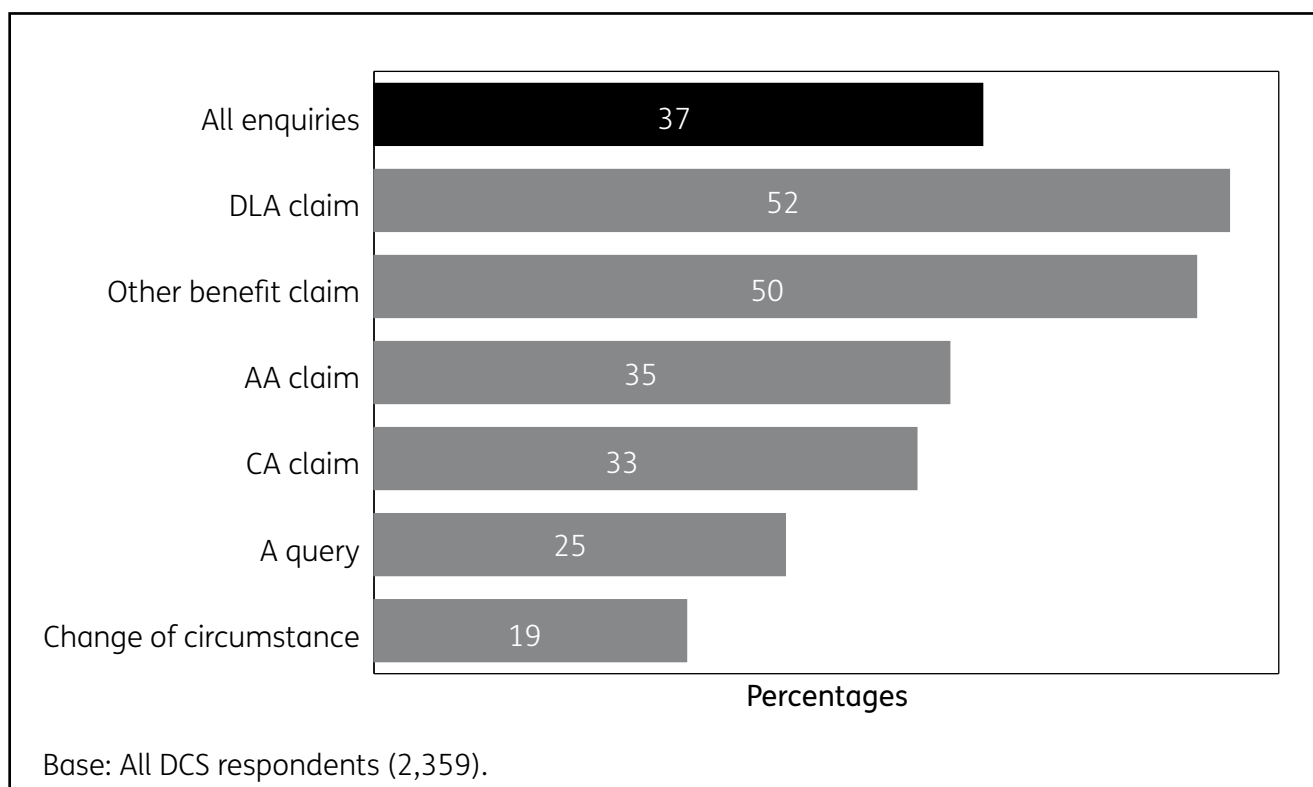
Base: All DCS respondents (2,359).

Customers who reported they had a long-term illness or disability were more likely to find the enquiry process complicated than those customers who did not have a long-term illness or disability (41 per cent compared with 30 per cent).

As well as being asked how complicated they had found the enquiry process, all customers were asked whether they had found the enquiry more or less complicated than they had expected. Two-thirds (67 per cent) said that it was as complicated as they had anticipated.

To put this into perspective, customers' expectations and experiences have been combined to create four groups as explained in Section 2.2.4.

Nine per cent of customers were 'relieved' – they had been expecting a complex process which in reality proved to be relatively straightforward. In contrast to this 23 per cent were 'resigned to complexity' in that they were expecting the process to be complicated and it was, while 16 per cent experienced 'extra complexity' beyond anything they were anticipating.

In relation to enquiry type, customers contacting to claim CA were most likely to be 'relieved' (14 per cent), customers contacting about a change of circumstance were most likely to have had a 'smooth enquiry' (75 per cent), customers claiming DLA were most likely to be 'resigned to complexity' (30 per cent) and experience 'extra complexity' (22 per cent) along with customers contacting to claim another benefit (27 per cent).

Customers who found it easy to get in contact with DCS during the course of their enquiry were more likely to be satisfied overall than customers who had found it difficult (90 per cent compared with 54 per cent).

As might be expected, customers who found the enquiry process complicated were less likely to be satisfied overall than customers who did not find the process complicated (72 per cent compared with 95 per cent). Customers who experienced 'extra complexity' above what they had expected reported lower levels of overall satisfaction (56 per cent) than customers who were 'resigned to complexity' (83 per cent), 'relieved' (90 per cent) or who experienced a 'smooth enquiry' (96 per cent).

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

• The proportion of DCS customers who found the enquiry complicated has increased from 33 per cent in 2009/10 to 37 per cent in 2010/11. There has been an increase among most enquiry types, but notably those who found claiming DLA complicated increased from 45 per cent to 52 per cent.

• The proportion of 'relieved' customers has fallen from 14 per cent to nine per cent, while the proportion 'resigned to complexity' has increased from 19 per cent to 23 per cent.

4.6.5   Problems encountered

All customers were asked whether they had experienced any difficulties or problems when dealing with DCS in the six months prior to conducting the interview, eight per cent of customers reported that they had. Customers with a disability and customers who did not speak English as their first language were more likely to report that they experienced a problem (14 per cent for whom English was not a first language and nine per cent for those who had a disability).

Customers who had experienced a problem were asked what difficulties or problems they had. The most common answers given were:

• lack of communication or not being kept informed (17 per cent);

• unknowledgeable staff (eight per cent);

• staff were slow in dealing with my request or problem (seven per cent);

• the service made too many mistakes (seven per cent);

• getting through on the phone (six per cent);

• delays in receiving benefit payments (six per cent); and

• challenging the decision on my claim (five per cent);

Customers who experienced a difficulty or problem when dealing with DCS were asked whether their problems were resolved. Under four in ten customers (37 per cent) reported their problems had been resolved.

Customers who experienced a problem when dealing with DCS reported lower levels of satisfaction overall (43 per cent) than customers who had not (90 per cent). Customers who experienced a problem that had since been resolved were significantly more likely to be satisfied overall (59 per cent) than customers whose problem was not resolved (32 per cent).

4.6.6 Complaints

Twelve per cent of customers who had experienced a difficulty or problem when dealing with DCS in the six months prior to interviewing went on to make a formal complaint.

Customers who did not make a formal complaint following difficulties or problems with the service were asked why this was. The reasons given were:

• thought nothing would happen as a result of complaint (15 per cent);

• decided matter was not serious enough (eight per cent);

• due to illness (seven per cent);

• other priorities (seven per cent);

• issue was resolved (five per cent);

• did not know how to complain (five per cent); and

• the process is too difficult (four per cent).

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

• In 2009/10 male DCS customers were more likely to have experienced problems, while in 2010/11 DCS customers with a disability and whose first language was not English were more likely to have experienced problems.

• Only 37 per cent of DCS customers had their problems resolved by the time of interview in 2010/11 compared with 50 per cent in 2009/10.

4.7 Overall performance

4.7.1 Overall satisfaction

All respondents were asked how satisfied they were overall with DCS and the results are shown in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15 Overall satisfaction with DCS

	%
Very satisfied	51
Fairly satisfied	35
Satisfied – net	86
Fairly dissatisfied	6
Very dissatisfied	6
Dissatisfied – net	12
Don't know	2

Base: All DCS customers (2,359).

As Table 4.15 shows, overall, around one in eight customers were dissatisfied with DCS (12 per cent) but this varied by age. Dissatisfaction for customers aged under 65 was twice the level of customers aged over 65 (15 per cent compared with seven per cent). In part this seems to be driven by customers who have claimed DLA and not been successful who are predominantly in the younger age groups. This group also contributes to higher levels of dissatisfaction for customers with a long-term health problem or disability (15 per cent compared with eight per cent). When analysed by whether or not someone was in receipt of DCS benefit or not, the difference is quite significant – nine per cent of disabled customers who are receiving a DCS benefit are dissatisfied compared with 37 per cent of disabled customers who are not.

4.7.2   Expectations and improvements

As well as asking about overall satisfaction with DCS, the survey also included two additional measures which reflected the overall performance of the service – whether the service was better or worse than expected and how much improvement the service needs to make.

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

• There has been a slight, but statistically significant, increase in the proportion of customers who are dissatisfied with the service, from ten per cent in 2009/10 to 12 per cent in 2010/11.

• In addition to this there has also been a decrease in the proportion of customers who said they were very satisfied, from 56 per cent in 2009/10 to 51 per cent in 2010/11.

Performance against expectations

Thirty-eight per cent of customers said that the service from DCS had exceeded their expectations, which was nearly three times the amount of those who said that it had been below what they had expected (13 per cent). Customers who had contacted the service to make a claim for AA were particularly likely to be pleased with the service they received. Just over half (51 per cent) said that the service they had received was better than they had expected and two-fifths (40 per cent) said that it was much better than expected. In contrast to this the enquiry type with the next highest proportion of customers feeling the service was much better than expected was making a claim for CA at just under a third (30 per cent).

Level of improvement required

Forty-two per cent of customers said that the service did not need to make any improvements and 20 per cent said that it only needed to make slight improvements. In contrast to this six per cent of customers said that the service had much improvement to make and seven per cent said the service needed to make huge improvements. Customers who had made a claim for DLA were significantly more likely to believe that the service needed to get better. One in five DLA claimants (20 per cent) said that the service needed much, or huge, improvement compared with less than one in ten customers (nine per cent) who contacted the service with a different enquiry type.

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

• The proportion of customers saying that the service was better than expected has decreased from 41 per cent in 2009/10 to 38 per cent in 2010/11.

• In addition to this the proportion of customers saying that the service needs much or huge improvement has increased from 11 per cent in 2009/10 to 13 per cent in 2010/11.

4.7.3   Staff treatment

Most DCS customers agreed that staff had displayed positive behaviours when dealing with them. In particular, nearly all customers felt that staff had been polite (96 per cent), that they had been treated with respect (95 per cent) and that staff had been friendly (94 per cent). One exception was staff being sympathetic to needs where only 82 per cent of customers said that this was the case and 12 per cent said that they were not, the remainder said that staff were sometimes sympathetic. This varied significantly by the type of benefit customers were attempting to claim. Over nine in ten customers claiming AA (91 per cent) felt that staff were sympathetic to their needs compared with less than three-quarters of customers claiming DLA (74 per cent).

4.7.4   Improvements to the service

Towards the end of the interview respondents were asked what DCS could do to improve its service. This question was open ended but Figure 4.14 shows a top level breakdown of the types of responses customers were giving.

Figure 4.14 Improvements to the service – DCS
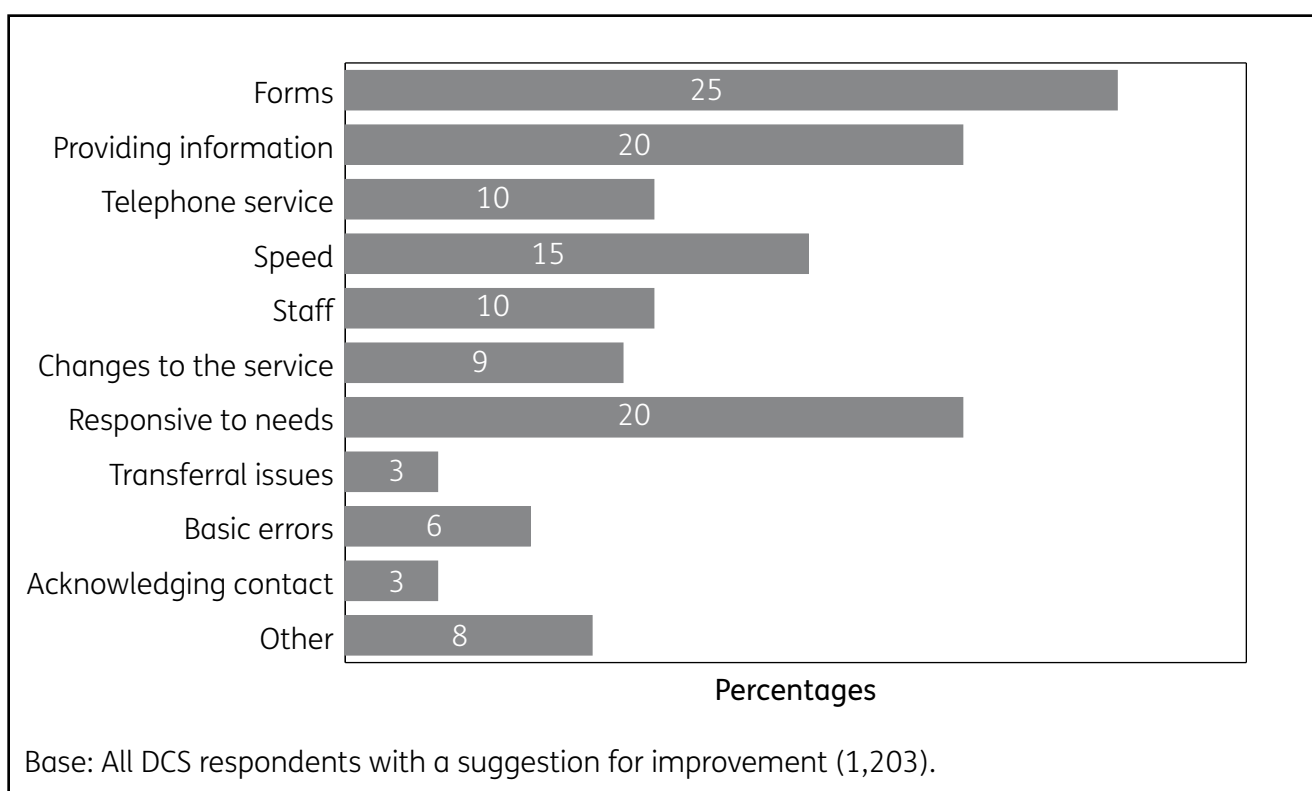
Base: All DCS respondents with a suggestion for improvement (1,203).

The subsequent sections provide more detail on what was covered within these codes and which customers in particular had them as priorities.

Forms

The forms that customers had to complete were the number one area for suggestions for improvement (25 per cent). Women were significantly more likely than men to identify forms as being the biggest area that needs improvement (30 per cent compared with 18 per cent). In addition to this, customers who were contacting as a third party or in a joint capacity were more likely to say that forms were the biggest area for improvement than customers who were contacting on their own behalf (30 per cent compared with 23 per cent). This may reflect the added complexity that customers have in completing information as a proxy.

Three elements were identified by customers as being specific improvements that could be made to forms. The largest single request was just that the forms be made simpler (22 per cent). Following on from this a small proportion of customers (five per cent) said that there was too much repetition or redundancy in the forms and questions they had to complete and some asked for help to be provided in completing the forms (two per cent).

'The form that's filled in for the Attendance Allowance is highly complex and my father of 87 would not have been able to complete it without assistance from somebody else.'

(Female, 55-60, claiming AA on behalf of someone else)

'The forms are too repetitive and not clear. They make it very complicated and the questions should be more open. It's not easy to follow. The form is a headache.'

(Female, 45-54, DLA)

Providing information

Twenty per cent of DCS customers with a suggestion for improvement cited information that the service does or could provide. There were no significant differences between different customer types in who was identifying information as being an area for improvement although there was an indication that it was a more important area for AA claimants than others.

The three main elements that customers identified for improving information were:

• providing simpler information that is clearer/easy to understand (ten per cent);

• making sure people know what they are entitled to (four per cent);

• contacting people more/being more proactive (three per cent).

In addition to this customers also mentioned: 'better advertising of services and benefits available' (two per cent); 'improve website/make better use of technology' (two per cent); 'better communication in letters' (two per cent); and 'notification of changes to or reduction of benefit' (one per cent).

'Explaining in letters what exactly they are doing and why they are not allowing things.'

(Female, 61-65, change of circumstance)

'I think they should just make it a little bit clearer as to what sort of criteria you need to meet to get Disability Allowance.'

(Female, 45-54, DLA)

Responsive to needs and understanding

One in five customers said that DCS needed to be more responsive to the customer's needs and understanding of their circumstances. There were no significant demographic differences on this measure but customers who were applying for DLA were more likely to raise this as an issue (24 per cent compared with 16 per cent).

The single most common response within this code was customers who simply felt that the service should be more responsive and understanding (16 per cent). More specific responses were: 'the service should listen more' (three per cent); 'be aware of claimants information' (one per cent); and 'should investigate more' (one per cent).

'They have to look at people's individual cases, not everybody as a whole because everybody's circumstances are different.'

(Male, 35-44, DLA)

'They could be a bit more personal.'

(Female, 55-60, DLA)

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

• The single area with the biggest increase in spontaneous mentions was being responsive to needs (20 per cent from 13 per cent in 2009/10). Within this the biggest increase was in generic comments about the need to understand customers more rather than specific needs relating to language or accessibility issues.

4.7.5   Best thing about the service

As well as asking about the things that the service most needs to improve the survey also asked respondents what the best thing was about the service. The results are shown in Figure 4.15 for respondents who were able to give an answer.

Figure 4.15 Best thing about the service – DCS

Base: All DCS respondents with an opinion (2,035).
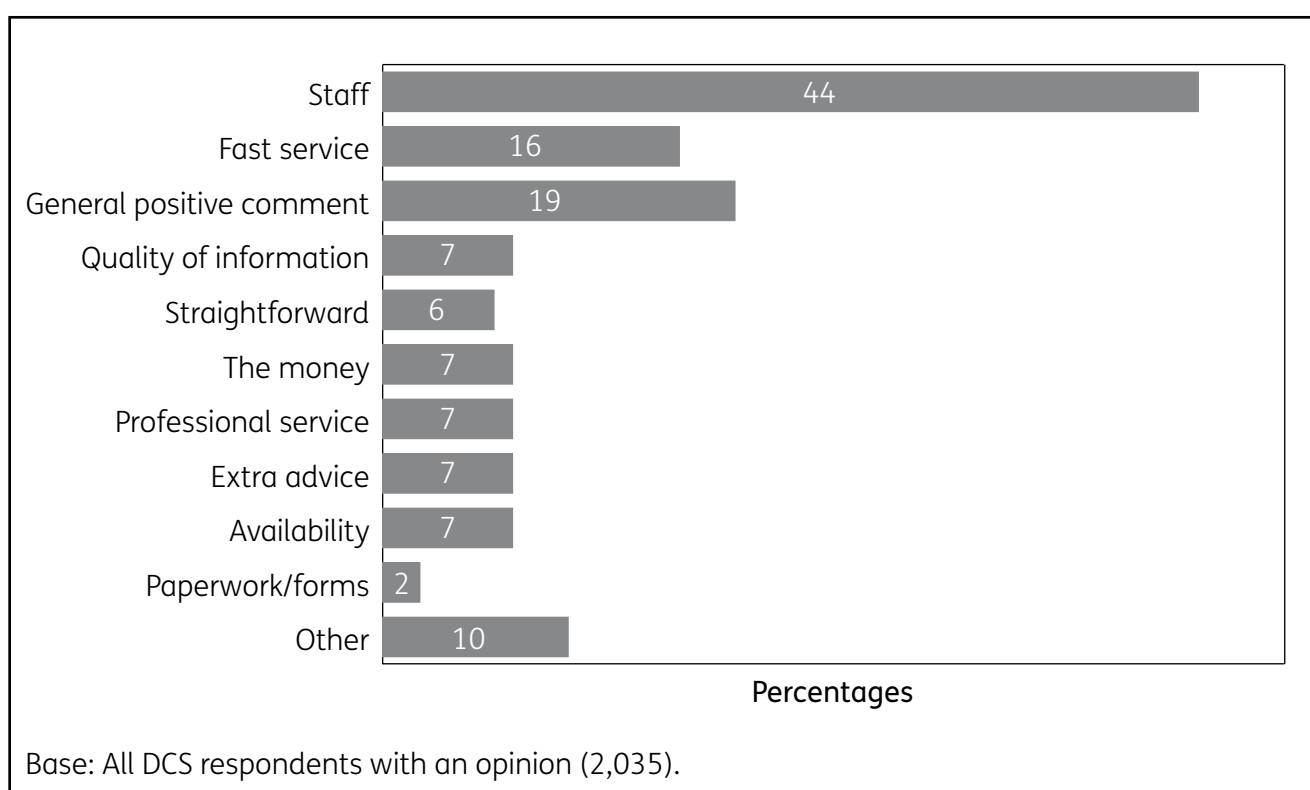
A further breakdown of what individual elements are included within some of these codes are included in the following sections.

Staff

The quality of the people was mentioned by the largest proportion of DCS customers (44 per cent) and this was more than twice as much as for any other area. There were no particular groups for whom the staff was a more common response than others and it was the primary area of strength for all customer types.

The most common aspects of the staff behaviour that were singled out for praise were:

• being helpful (22 per cent);

• easy to talk to (nine per cent);

• polite (eight per cent);

• sympathetic/sensitive (seven per cent);

• listen to queries and answer questions (seven per cent).

In addition to this customers also said that staff were: 'knowledgeable' (three per cent); 'fair' (one per cent) and 'treated people with respect' (one per cent).

> *'Every time I rang they were very understanding and spoke to me as a person and were caring and understanding.'*
>
> (Female, 45-54, DLA)

> *'She explained everything so I could understand. She was very friendly and understanding and did not make me feel like an idiot.'*
>
> (Female, 66-72, AA)

Fast service

One in six customers (16 per cent) spontaneously said that the best thing about DCS was the speed with which things got done. While there were no differences by demographic characteristics, the proportion of customers spontaneously mentioning the speed of the service did vary by enquiry type. Only 13 per cent of customers contacting to claim DLA spontaneously mentioned the speed of the service compared with 18 per cent of those contacting to claim either CA or AA.

> *'How quickly they got it sorted out because I expected to wait for weeks. I'm satisfied with everything.'*
>
> (Female, 66-74, DLA)

> *'The speed of response.'*
>
> (Male, 45-54, DLA)

Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

• The proportion of customers spontaneously mentioning the staff as being the best thing about DCS has increased from 41 per cent in 2009/10 to 44 per cent in 2010/11.

• There has also been an increase in the number of people mentioning the availability of the service from four per cent in 2009/10 to seven per cent in 2010/11.

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5   The Kano model of satisfaction

Throughout this report a multitude of factors and service elements are reported as having significant effects on satisfaction with the Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS). In order to better understand what factors had the most impact on satisfaction with PDCS and to disentangle the effects of various service elements, four logistic regression models were created; two for each agency.

Section 5.1 explains the different factors that arose from these models as key drivers of disappointment and satisfaction.

Section 5.2 combines these two models to create a Kano model, which categorises the different factors according to how they drive satisfaction.

5.1   The logistic regression models

Logistic regression is a widely used and well established technique for advanced statistical analysis, which comprehensively searches to identify relationships within the data. It works by examining the relationships between 'dependent variables' (key issues such as customer satisfaction) and 'independent variables' (factors that might influence the dependent variable, such as number of contacts made or the length of time it took to resolve an enquiry).

The first model looked at drivers of 'disappointment' with the service. 'Disappointed' customers were defined as those that were dissatisfied with the agency or the performance of the service was below their expectations (see Section 2.3.2 for details). The second model looked at those customers who were very satisfied with the service.

5.1.1   The Pension Service

The factors discussed in Section 3.7 and throughout the report were entered into a logistic regression model to see which continued to have a significant effect on dissatisfaction, while controlling for all other variables. Although the factors discussed in Chapter 3 and elsewhere in the report seem to have an effect on satisfaction when looking at each factor individually, it could be the case that other factors not accounted for are having a larger influence. The logistic regression model allows us to really determine what the underlying reasons for dissatisfaction/disappointment are.

Drivers of disappointment

The following variables were all found to have a significant impact on dissatisfaction, even when controlling for other factors:

- whether the customer had any problems or difficulties when dealing with
  The Pension Service (TPS);

- whether the customer felt the enquiry took longer than expected;

- how easy the customer found it to get in contact with TPS;

- how well the customer felt any decisions were explained by TPS;

- how easy forms were to complete;

- whether the customer was kept up to date with the progress of their enquiry;

- whether the customer agreed that TPS provided the customer with correct information;

- whether the customer agreed that TPS staff were helpful;

- whether the customer agreed that TPS did what it said it would;

- whether the customer found the enquiry complex.

The most powerful driver of disappointment was whether the customer had problems or difficulties with their enquiry. Customers who experienced problems were five times more likely to be disappointed than those who did not.

The length of time to resolve enquiries, when put into the context of customer expectations, was also a powerful driver of disappointment. When customers found the enquiry took longer than expected they were nearly four times more likely to be disappointed than those whose enquiry took less time or as long as expected.

Customers who found TPS difficult to get in contact with were also much more likely to be disappointed than those who found it easy (three times more likely). Customers who reported that any decision required was badly explained were also three times more likely to be disappointed than those who received a well explained decision, and customers who found the forms difficult to complete were also three times more likely to be disappointed than those who found forms easy to complete.

Customers who felt they were not kept up to date with the progress of their enquiry were more than two and a half times more likely to be disappointed, as were those who felt the staff did not provide them with correct information.

Whether the customer found their enquiry complicated, whether they felt TPS did what it said it would and whether they found the staff helpful, all had a weaker influence on the level of disappointment. Customers who found the enquiry complicated, felt TPS did not do what it said it would, and those who found staff unhelpful were around twice as likely to be disappointed.

Drivers of satisfaction

The second model looks at factors that were driving customers to be very satisfied. The usefulness of the approach of looking at drivers for both ends of the scale (very satisfied and disappointment) will become evident in the creation of the Kano model (see Section 5.2).

The following factors did have a significant effect on the likelihood of a customer being very satisfied with TPS:

- whether the customer had any problems or difficulties when dealing with TPS;

- whether the customer found the enquiry complex;

- whether the customer felt that the amount of time they had to wait for their telephone call to be answered was reasonable;

- how long the enquiry took;

- whether the customer felt the enquiry took less time than expected;

- whether the customer was kept up to date with the progress of their enquiry;

- whether the customer agreed that TPS was sympathetic to their needs;

- whether the customer agreed that TPS gave them clear timings for what it would do;

- whether the first person the customer spoke to on the phone was able to answer their query;

- whether the customer had to contact TPS fewer times than expected;

- how well the customer felt any decisions were explained by TPS.

The most powerful drivers of satisfaction revolved around a lack of problems and a simple enquiry process. Customers who did not have any problems with TPS were nearly five times more likely to be very satisfied than those who did have problems. Customers who did not find the enquiry complicated were three and a half times more likely to be very satisfied than those who found it complicated.

Both customers who reported their enquiry took less than two weeks and those who felt they were given enough time on the telephone were three times more likely to be very satisfied.

As well as the actual length of the enquiry, how this fared against expectations also drove satisfaction. Customers whose enquiry took less time than expected were two and a half times more likely to be very satisfied.

Customers who were given progress updates were twice as likely to be very satisfied as those who were not given progress updates.

There were a number of other factors that had a lesser, but still statistically significant, effect on customers being very satisfied. Customers who felt they were given clear timings or that staff were sympathetic to their needs were 70 per cent more likely to be very satisfied. Customers who reported that the first person they spoke to on the phone was able to help were 50 per cent more likely to be very satisfied, while both customers who needed less contacts than expected to resolve their enquiry and those who felt any decisions made were clearly explained were 40 per cent more likely to be very satisfied.

5.1.2 The Disability and Carers Service

The same two models were set up for the Disability and Carers Service (DCS); one examining drivers of disappointment and another examining the factors driving customers to be very satisfied. As well as similarities between the factors appearing in the models for both services there are also a number of differences, and these will be highlighted in the Kano model.

Drivers of disappointment

The following factors had a significant effect on the likelihood of a customer being disappointed with DCS:

- how well the customer felt any decisions were explained by DCS;

- whether the customer felt the enquiry took longer than expected;

- whether the customer agreed that DCS was sympathetic to their needs;

- whether the customer had any problems or difficulties when dealing with DCS;

- whether the customer agreed that DCS staff were helpful;

- how long the enquiry took;

- whether the customer agreed that DCS did what it said it would;

- whether the customer agreed that DCS staff were polite and treated them with respect;

- how quickly DCS replied to letters;

- whether the customer agreed that DCS provided the customer with correct information;

- whether the customer found the enquiry complex;

- the total number of times the customer contacted DCS about their most recent enquiry.

How well any decisions were explained had a powerful effect on customers' level of disappointment. Customers who reported that any decision required was badly explained were four and a half times more likely to be disappointed than those who received a well explained decision.

Customers whose enquiry took longer than expected were also around four times more likely to be disappointed than those whose enquiry took as long as expected or was quicker than expected.

Whether or not the customer felt that DCS was sympathetic to their needs also had a great deal of explanatory power in determining whether the customer was disappointed. Customers who felt that DCS was not sympathetic to their needs were three times more likely to be disappointed. Equally, customers who reported that they had a problem in the last six months were also three times more likely to be disappointed.

A number of factors made customers two and a half times as likely to be disappointed. Customers who did not find the staff helpful, polite and respectful, felt DCS did not do what it said it would and reported that the enquiry took more than two weeks were all about two and a half times more likely to be disappointed.

Not being provided with correct information, finding the enquiry complicated or waiting over two weeks for DCS to reply to letters all resulted in customers being twice as likely to be disappointed.

Drivers of satisfaction

The final model looked at factors that did have a significant effect on the likelihood of a customer being very satisfied with DCS. These were:

- whether the customer felt that the amount of time they had to wait for their telephone call to be answered was reasonable;

- whether the customer found the enquiry complex;

- how long the enquiry took;

- whether the customer felt that the staff listened to what they had to say;

- whether the customer had any problems or difficulties when dealing with DCS;

- whether the customer agreed that DCS was sympathetic to their needs;

- whether the customer was kept up to date with the progress of their enquiry;

- whether the customer agreed that DCS staff were helpful;

- how well the customer felt any decisions were explained by DCS;

- whether the customer felt the enquiry took less time than expected;

- whether the first person they spoke to was able to answer their query;

- whether the customer agreed that DCS gave them clear timings for what it would do;

- how easy forms were to complete.

The amount of time customers had to wait for their calls to be answered was the driver most likely to lead to very satisfied customers. Customers who reported that the amount of time they had to wait for calls to be answered was reasonable were five and a half times more likely to be very satisfied.

A further important driver revolved around the complexity of the enquiry. Customers who did not find the enquiry complicated were nearly three times more likely to be very satisfied.

Customers whose enquiry took less than two weeks, who felt that the staff listened to what they had to say and customers who did not experience any problems in the previous six months were each two and a half times more likely to be very satisfied.

A number of factors led to customers being twice as likely to be very satisfied. These were: if customers felt that the staff were helpful, sympathetic to their needs, gave them progress updates and felt that DCS explained any decisions well.

A number of factors had a more limited effect on satisfaction. Customers who felt that their enquiry took less time than expected were 70 per cent more likely to be satisfied than those who felt it took longer or just as long as expected. Customers who reported that the first person they spoke to was able to answer their query were 60 per cent more likely to be very satisfied, while those who felt DCS gave them clear timings were 50 per cent more likely to be very satisfied. Customers who felt forms were easy to complete were 40 per cent more likely to be very satisfied.

5.2   The Kano model

The Kano model was developed in the 1980s by Professor Noriaki Kano, as a way of categorising factors or elements of a service that effect customer satisfaction. One way of interpreting the drivers from the logistic regression in the previous section is to put them into the Kano model framework, but firstly a short explanation of how the Kano model works. The Kano model essentially splits the drivers into three distinct groups, the 'must-be' or 'hygiene' factors, 'performance' factors, and 'attractive' factors.

Figure 5.1   The Kano Model
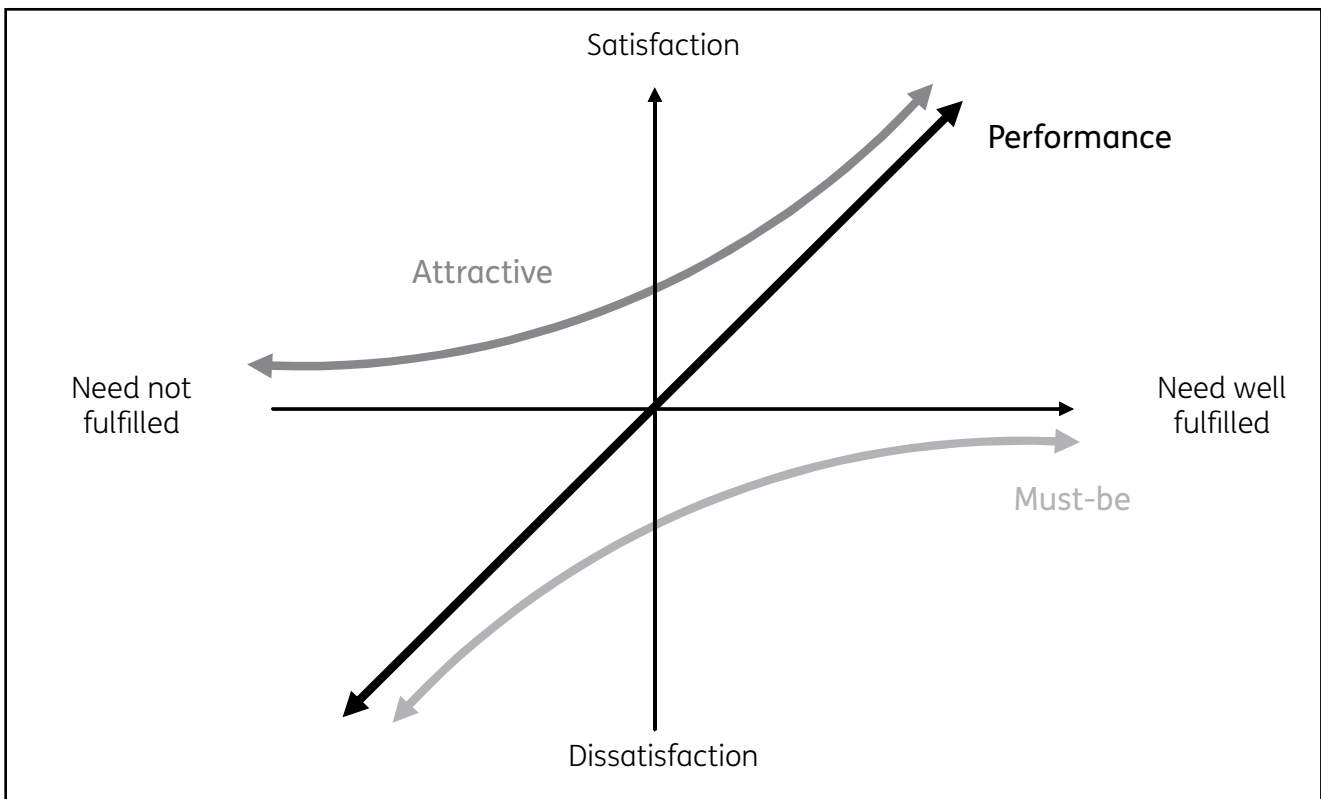
Must-be factors are those that are crucial to deliver or customers will be dissatisfied, but delivering them, or doing them well, will not increase satisfaction beyond a basic point. This is captured by the curved line nearest the bottom of Figure 5.1.

Performance factors are those that when delivered well increase satisfaction, and when delivered badly decrease satisfaction. These factors follow a pattern similar to the straight, sloping line in Figure 5.1.

Attractive factors are those that customers do not necessarily expect (so not having them would not lead to dissatisfaction), but when they are done/done well, increase customer satisfaction. This is represented by the curved line towards the top of Figure 5.1.

An example can be used to make the model clearer.

If you are going on a beach holiday in Greece, when you turn up at your hotel you would expect to have clean linen. If your linen was not clean you would probably be dissatisfied, but having clean linen is not something that would make you more satisfied. As such for a hotel, having clean linen would be a 'must-be' factor.

If, however, when you arrived you were given a free room upgrade, this would certainly increase satisfaction, but not being given a free room upgrade would not make you dissatisfied. As such, this factor could be considered an 'attractive' factor.

Lastly, distance from the beach is a likely performance factor. Many people will want to be as close to the beach as possible so being further from the beach decreases satisfaction, while being closer increases satisfaction, so the effect on satisfaction can move in both directions.

The Kano model can be applied to TPS and DCS by using the two logistic regression models described in Section 5.1. Must-be factors are established by looking at factors that enter the disappoint model, but not the very satisfied model, as these are drivers of disappointment, but not satisfaction.

Attractive factors are the opposite: those that enter the very satisfied model, but not the disappointed model. In this case, these will be factors that drive satisfaction but not disappointment. Finally, factors that fall into both models will make up the performance factors as they drive both satisfaction and disappointment. As such, all the factors from the logistic regression models can be placed into one of the three groupings.

5.2.1   The Pension Service

Firstly, looking at TPS.

Figure 5.2   TPS Kano model – 'Must-be' elements
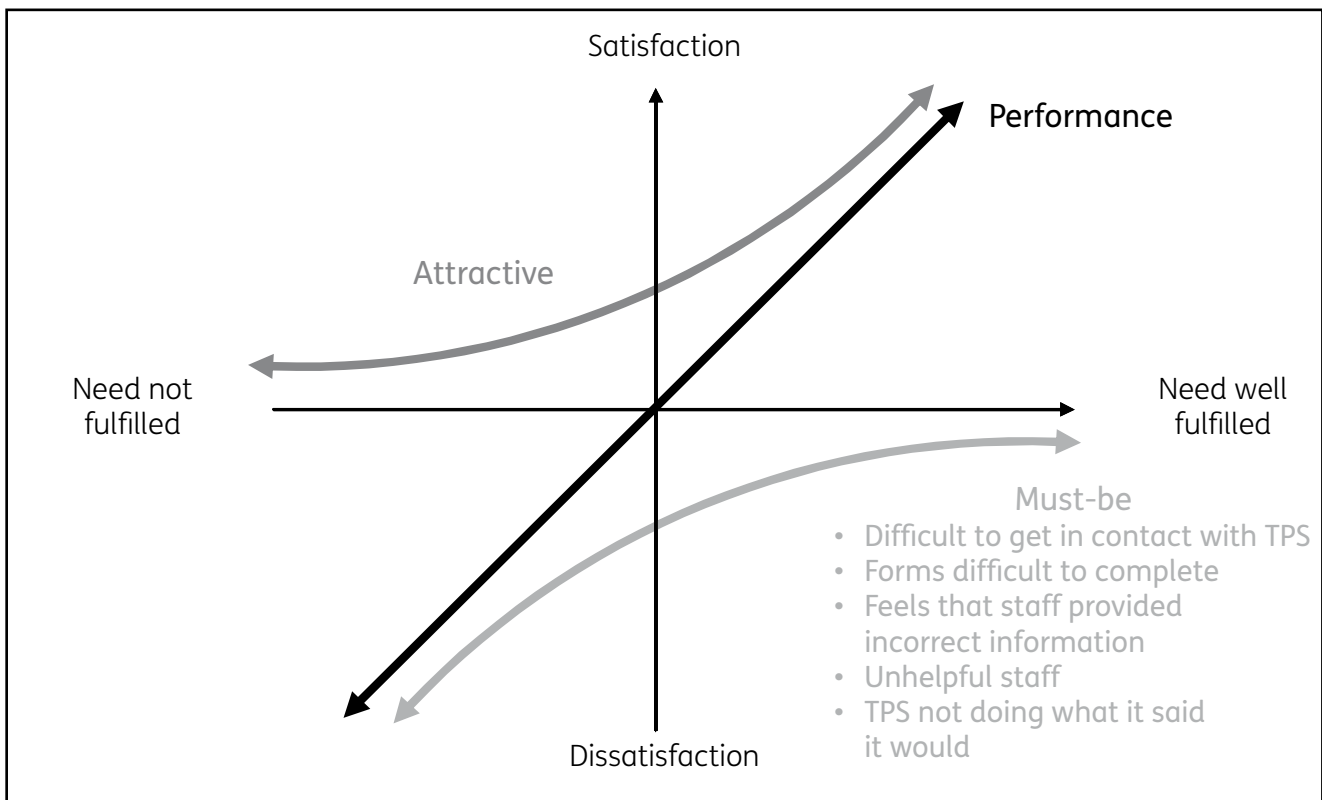
There were five must-be factors for TPS: ease of getting in contact, ease of completing forms; staff providing correct information; helpful staff; and TPS doing what it said it would. These are factors that might be taken for granted when fulfilled, but if TPS performs badly in any of these factors will result in dissatisfied customers.

Figure 5.3   TPS Kano model – 'Performance' elements
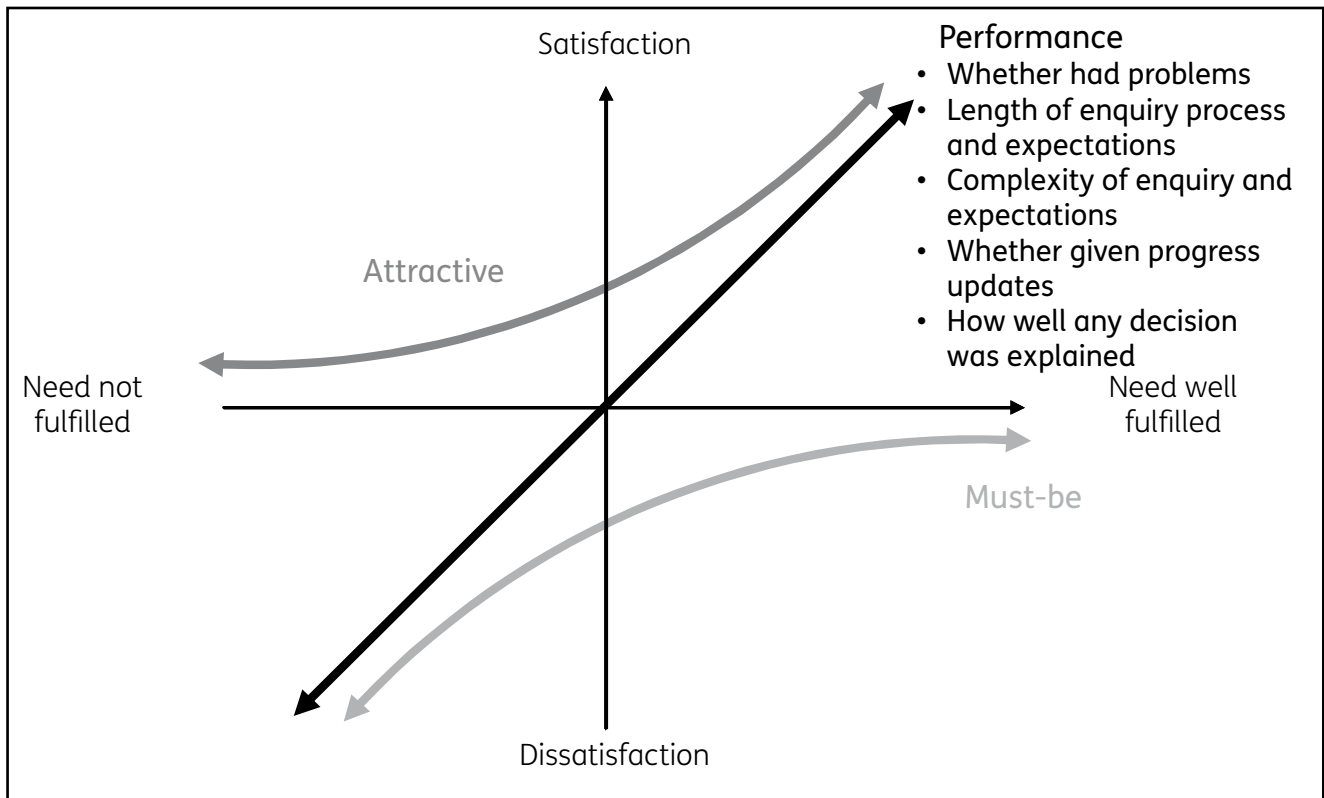
The 'strongest' performance factors were whether customers encountered any problems in the last six months, the length of enquiry process and how complicated the enquiry process was. All of these were strong drivers of both satisfaction and disappointment. The two remaining performance factors were whether they were given progress updates and how well any decision was explained. These two factors had less effect on satisfaction and disappointment.

It is perhaps slightly surprising to find some of these as performance factors when logic may lead to believe they should be must-be factors (as basic things that must be fulfilled). However, this could be an indication for instance, that customers are expecting problems, or that TPS would not always explain decisions well.

The attractive factors for TPS were the length of time it took for the telephone to be answered, the length of time it took for the enquiry to be resolved, whether staff were sympathetic to their needs, gave clear timings, were able to answer their query at the first call, and requiring less contacts overall than expected. These are all factors that do not lead to dissatisfaction when done badly, but do increase satisfaction when done well, and can be viewed as an extra bonus.

Figure 5.4   TPS Kano model – 'Attractive' elements

Attractive
- Telephone answered in a reasonable amount of time
- Enquiry resolved in less than two weeks
- Staff were sympathetic to needs
- Given clear timings
- First person was able to answer query
- Requiring less contacts than expected
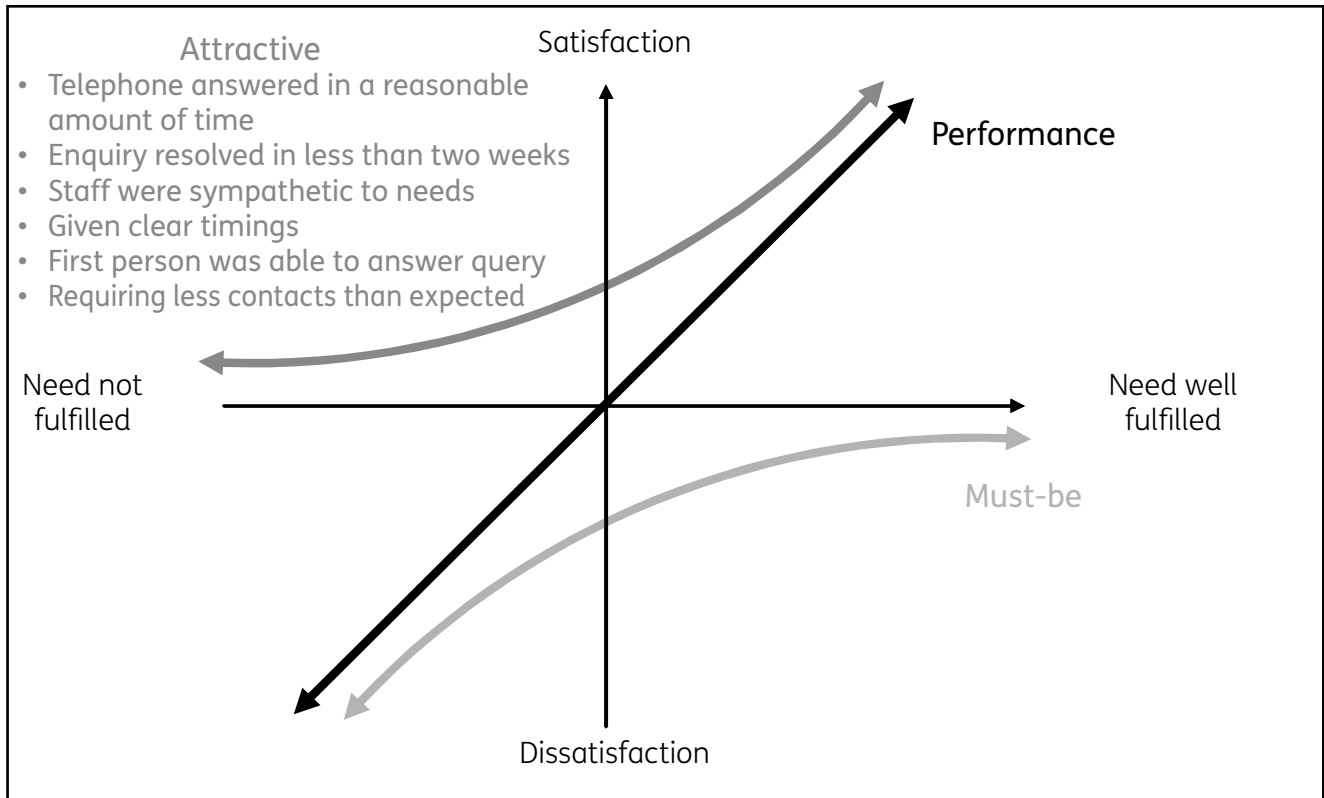
5.2.2   The Disability and Carers Service

Figure 5.5   DCS Kano model – 'Must-be' elements

Must-be
- DCS did not do what it said it would
- Feels that staff were not respectful or polite
- It took more than three weeks to reply to post
- If felt was not provided with correct information
- Enquiry required more than three contacts in total
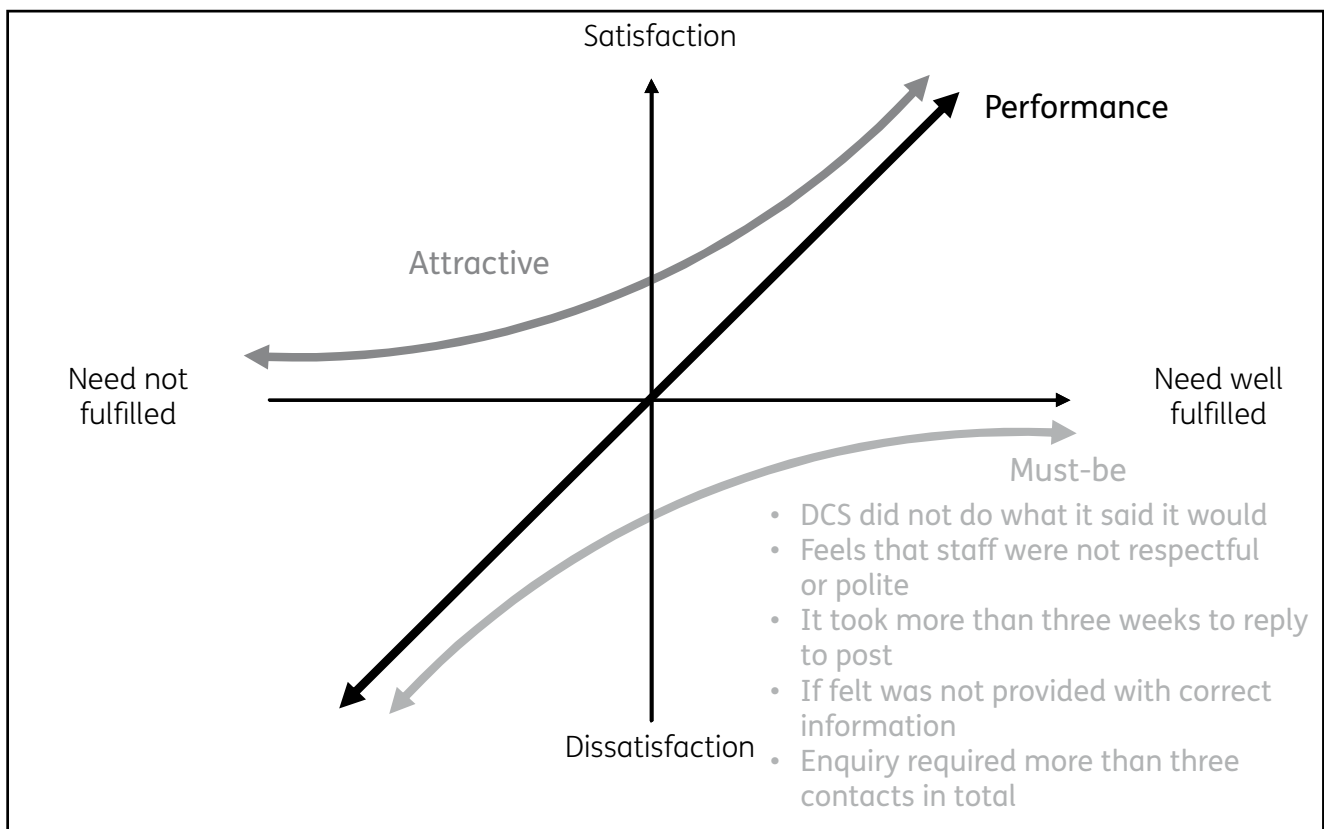
Not being provided with correct information and the service not doing what it said it would were common must-be factors to both agencies of PDCS. Staff not being respectful or polite was also an important must-be factor for DCS. The final two must-be factors revolved around the timings and quantities of contacts. The time it took for DCS to reply to letters and the total number of contacts required were both must-be factors for DCS.

Figure 5.6   DCS Kano model – 'Performance' elements
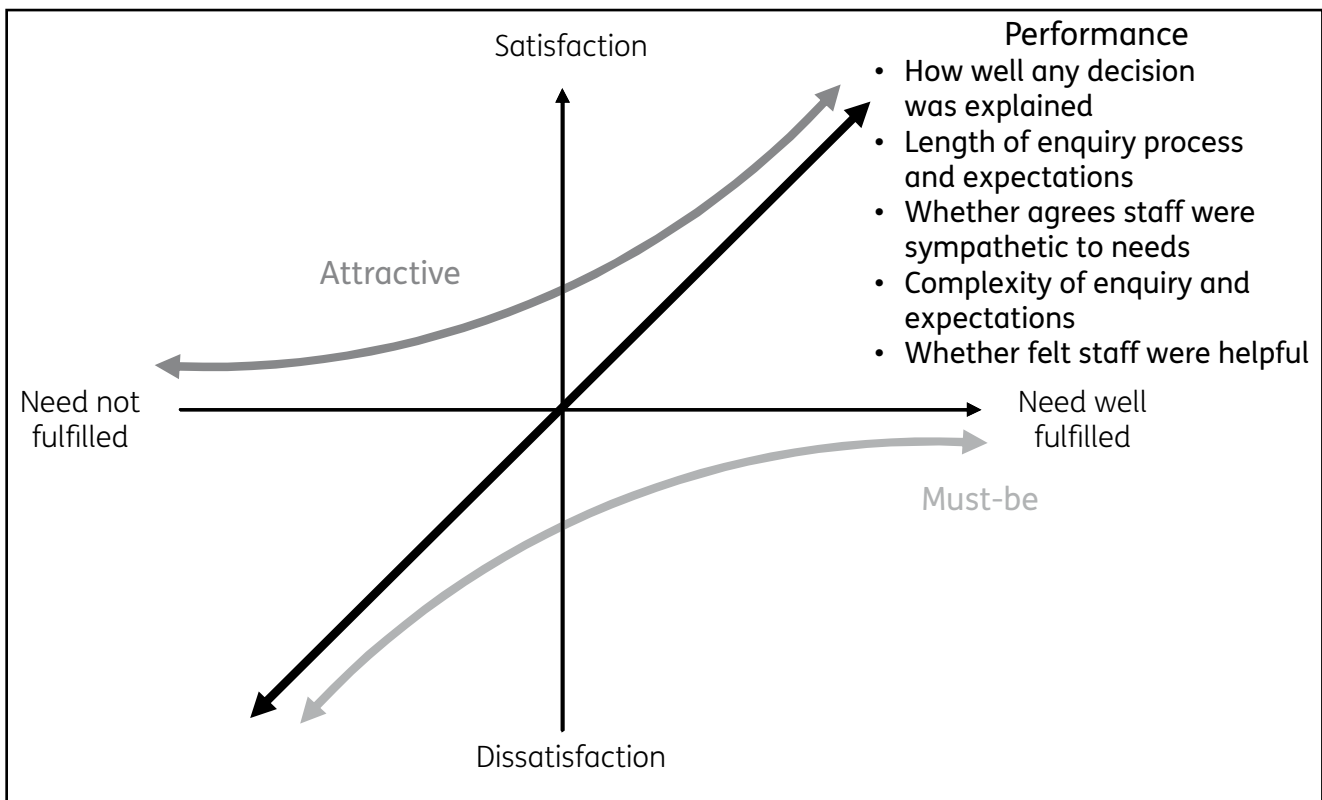
Many of the performance factors for DCS were similar to those factors identified for TPS. Whether the customer had any problems, the complexity of the enquiry, the length of the enquiry, and how well any decisions were explained were all performance factors affecting both agencies. For DCS there were two further staff-related performance factors. These were whether the staff were sympathetic to their needs and whether they were helpful.

There were a number of different attractive factors for DCS. There were certain telephone-specific factors such as whether the amount of time for telephone calls to be answered was reasonable, whether the first person they spoke to could answer their questions and whether they felt the staff listened to what they had to say. Further attractive factors were whether they were given progress updates and clear timings and how easy forms were to complete.

This may suggest that customers expect the forms to be difficult to complete, so an easy form is a pleasant surprise. Likewise customers may not expect progress updates, or to be given a clear set of timings for what would happen next.

Figure 5.7   DCS Kano model – 'Attractive' elements
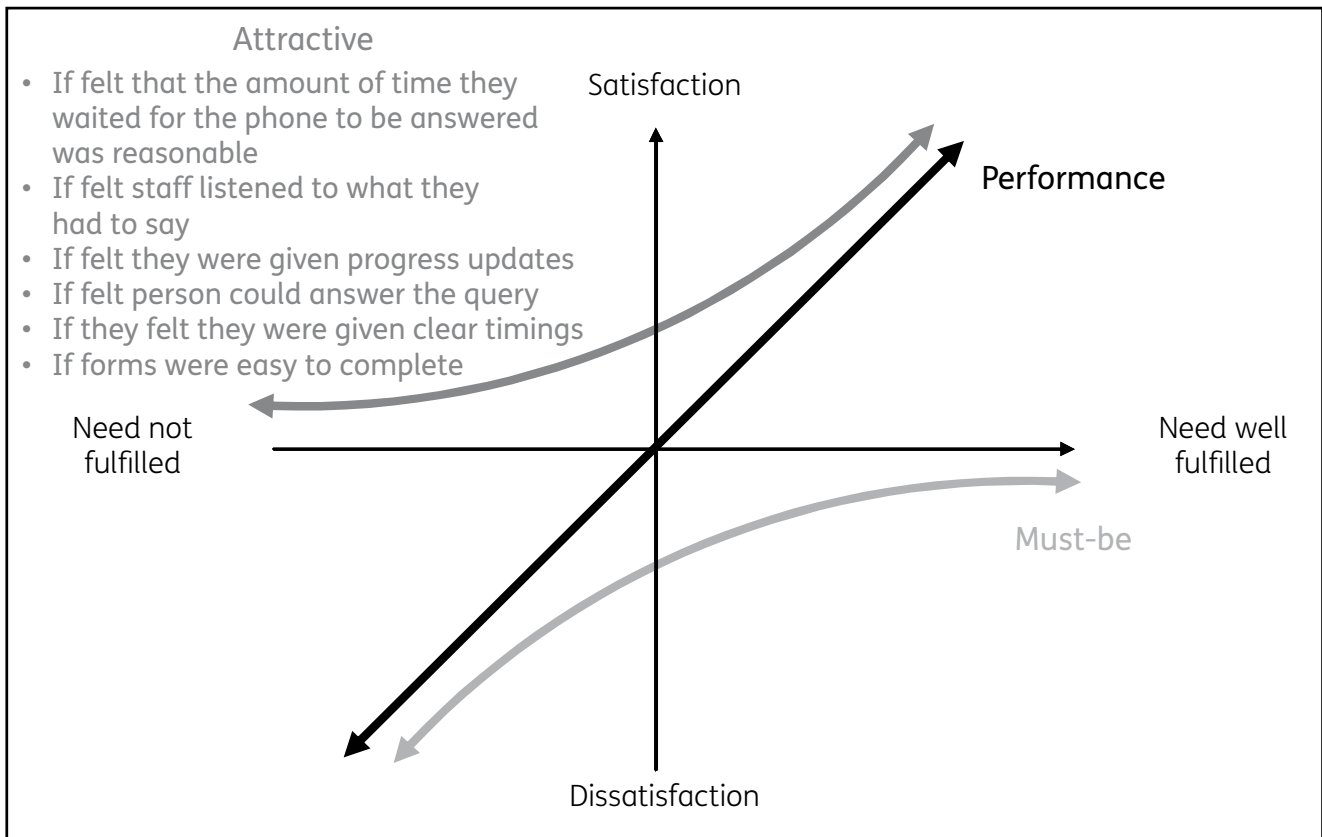
Changes from 2009/10 to 2010/11

- Having helpful staff remains an important must-be factor for TPS, while ease of completing forms becomes a new important factor.

- The length of the enquiry process, problems experienced and complexity of the enquiry are all important performance factors that affect both agencies across both years of the survey. However, TPS expectations around being given progress updates seem to have changed, it is now considered a performance factor rather than an attractive factor.

- Being given clear timings and having few contacts are continued attractive factors for TPS, however, there has been a reasonable amount of variation in the other attractive factors between 2009/10 and 2010/11.

- Expectations about DCS staff doing what they said they would seem to have changed, it is now considered a must-be factor rather than a performance factor. The other DCS must-be factors in the 2010/11 survey were also must-be factors in 2009/10.

- All DCS performance factors in 2010/11 were also performance factors in 2009/10, with the addition of how helpful staff were.

- Staff listening to what they had to say and whether the first person could answer the query were continued attractive factors for DCS. However, as with TPS, there has been a reasonable amount of variation in the other attractive factors between 2009/10 and 2010/11.

5.2.3   Summary

Throughout this report, various factors are expressed as having an affect on satisfaction. However, by using logistic regression models, key drivers of satisfaction and disappointment can be extracted and through the use of the Kano model framework, these can be categorised according to their influence on the satisfaction scale.

There were a variety of 'must-be' or 'hygiene' factors across PDCS. These are factors that might be taken for granted when fulfilled, but if PDCS performs badly in these factors dissatisfaction will result.

For TPS these comprised, in order of strength: ease of getting in contact; ease of completing forms; staff providing correct information; helpful staff; and TPS doing what it said it would.

For DCS these comprised: being provided with correct information, DCS not doing what it said it would, staff being respectful or polite, time taken for DCS to reply to letters and the total number of contacts required.

The 'performance' factors affected both satisfaction and disappointment and many of these were common to both agencies. The length of the enquiry process, how well decisions were explained, whether the customer had any problems and the complexity of the enquiry were all performance factors affecting both agencies.

Interestingly, the 'performance' factors such as whether they had any problems in the last six months, whether staff were helpful and clarity of decision explanations could all reasonably be expected to fall under 'must-do' factors. This could potentially indicate that customers are expecting problems with the service.

'Attractive' factors were those that do not lead to dissatisfaction when done badly, but increase satisfaction when done well and hence, could be viewed as an extra bonus.

Specifically for DCS these comprised: whether the amount of time for telephone calls to be answered was reasonable, whether the first person they spoke to could answer their questions, whether they felt the staff listened to what they had to say, whether they were given progress updates and clear timings and how easy forms were to complete.

The specific factors for TPS were the length of time it took for the telephone to be answered, the length of time it took for the enquiry to be resolved, whether staff were sympathetic to their needs, gave clear timings, were able to answer their query at the first call, and requiring less contacts overall than expected.

6   Customer profile

This chapter looks at the health/disability characteristics. A series of tables and figures showing the demographic profile of customers contacting the Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) is also included within this section. It is important to bear in mind that the survey is of customers contacting PDCS and therefore, may not representative of the whole PDCS customer base.

6.1   Disability and long-term health problems

All customers were asked whether they had any long-term illness, health problem or disability that limited their daily activities or the work they can do. If customers reported that they had, they were then asked what the long-term illness, health problem or disability was. These customers were asked whether their illness or disability had caused them any problems or difficulties when dealing with organisations like PDCS and if so whether they had required any help from PDCS and whether any help was received.

6.1.1   The Pension Service

Thirty-three per cent of Pension Service (TPS) customers stated that they had a long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits their daily activities or the work they do. When asked what their long-term illness or disability was, 56 per cent of customers reported they had problems with movement, 30 per cent cardio-respiratory problems, 20 per cent problems with well-being, eight per cent fatigue or stamina problems, seven per cent sensory problems and three per cent disorders relating to movement and the brain.

All customers who reported they had a long-term illness or disability were asked whether this caused them problems when dealing with organisations like TPS. Only 13 per cent of customers reported their illness or disability did cause them problems when dealing with organisations like TPS.

Of the customers who experienced problems when dealing with organisations like TPS, only a quarter (24 per cent) reported that they required help, of which seven in ten (69 per cent) customers received help directly from TPS. A significant proportion of customers who reported they experienced problems when dealing with organisations like TPS did not report that they required help (76 per cent), these customers are likely to have developed coping strategies to manage their dealings with the organisations like TPS.

In relation to channel of contact, customers who had an illness or disability were more likely to have received a home visit (11 per cent). The customers with an illness or disability who experienced problems or difficulties when dealing with organisations like TPS were even more likely to receive a home visit (19 per cent). An even larger proportion of those customers who had an illness or disability, experienced problems when dealing with organisations like TPS and reported that they required help and had received a home visit as part of their most recent enquiry (29 per cent).

Older customers (those aged 75 and over) were significantly more likely to report that they had a long-term illness or disability than younger customers (54 per cent compared with 29 per cent). In relation to gender, male customers were more likely than female customers to report they had an illness or disability (35 per cent compared with 30 per cent). However, female customers were more likely to report that their illness or disability caused them problems when dealing with organisations like TPS (15 per cent compared to 12 per cent).

TPS customers who were contacting to claim another benefit were more likely than other enquiry types to report they had an illness or disability (49 per cent) and state that their illness or disability caused them problems when dealing with organisations like TPS (30 per cent). Customers who were contacting to claim Pension Credit were more likely than average to report they had an illness or disability (43 per cent), with 16 per cent reporting that this caused them difficulties when dealing with organisations like TPS.

6.1.2   The Disability and Carers Service

When all Disability and Carers Service (DCS) customers were asked whether they had a long-term illness, health problem or disability which limited their daily activities or the work they can do, seven in ten (68 per cent) customers contacting DCS reported they had. Three-quarters (74 per cent) of customers in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) reported they had an illness or disability. The 26 per cent of customers who were in receipt of DLA and yet did not report having an illness or disability were disproportionately women (77 per cent) and nearly all were aged 25-59 years old (88 per cent). The age and gender of these respondents would suggest that they are more likely to be parents and could be contacting on behalf of their children.

Customers were asked what their long-term illness, health problem or disability was. Sixty per cent of customers reported having problems with movement, 23 per cent cardio-respiratory problems, 14 per cent problems with well-being, 11 per cent psychological or behavioural problems, ten per cent fatigue or stamina problems, five per cent sensory problems, five per cent disorders relating to movement and the brain and one per cent communication difficulties.

Just over a quarter (27 per cent) of customers with an illness or disability reported that it caused them problems or difficulties when dealing with an organisation like DCS. Twenty-eight per cent of customers who experienced problems or difficulties when dealing with organisations like DCS required help and of these customers 53 per cent received help from DCS. As discussed in Section 6.1.1 for TPS customers, DCS customers are likely to develop coping strategies to deal with any problems or difficulties that arise when dealing with organisations like DCS. Customers who reported having psychological or behavioural problems and disorders relating to movement and the brain were more likely than average to report that it caused them problems when dealing with organisations like DCS (63 per cent and 38 per cent respectively).

DCS customers were more likely to have received a home visit when they had a long-term illness or disability (ten per cent).

DCS customers aged 61 and over were more likely than customers aged 60 and under to state that they had a long-term illness or disability (81 per cent compared with 60 per cent). In relation to gender, male customers were more likely than female customers to report they had a long-term illness of disability (78 per cent compared with 63 per cent).

6.2   Basic demographics

6.2.1   Sex

Table 6.1 displays the sex of customers contacting PDCS.

Table 6.1   Profile of customers sex – PDCS

	TPS (%)	DCS (%)
Male	48	37
Female	52	63
Base: All customers	*2,643*	*2,359*

6.2.2   Age

Table 6.2 shows the age of customers contacting PDCS.

Table 6.2   Age (TPS and DCS)

	TPS (%)	DCS (%)
16-24	*	4
25-44	2	26
45-60	20	30
61-65	40	10
66-74	23	15
Over 75	15	14
Base: All customers	*2,643*	*2,359*

6.3   Ethnicity

Table 6.3 shows the ethnicity of TPS and DCS customers.

Table 6.3   Ethnicity (TPS and DCS)

	TPS (%)	DCS (%)
White	94	91
Asian	3	4
Black	1	2
Mixed	*	1
Other	1	1
Base: All customers	*2,643*	*2,359*

Throughout the majority of the report, ethnicity is discussed in terms of 'white' and 'non-white' customers. The low numbers of non-white customers means, in most cases, it is not possible to distinguish between the different ethnic minority groups.

6.4   English as a second language

Ninety-six per cent of PDCS customers reported that English was not their first language. These customers were asked what their first language was, results are shown in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4   English as a second language (PDCS)

	%
Welsh	13
Punjabi	11
Guajarati	9
Urdu	8
French	4
Somali	3
Arabic	3
Polish	3
Chinese	2
Bengali	1

Base: All customers for whom English was not their first language (207).

6.5   Marital status

All customers were asked to describe their current marital status. The results for TPS and DCS are shown in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5   Marital status (TPS and DCS)

	TPS (%)	DCS (%)
Married, civil partnership or living with long-term partner	61	53
Single or engaged	8	21
Widowed	15	10
Divorced	12	11
Separated	3	4
Refused	1	1
Base: All customers	*2,643*	*2,359*

6.6   Current living situation

All customers were asked which of the options shown in Table 6.6 best described their current living situation.

Table 6.6   Current living situation (TPS and DCS)

	TPS (%)	DCS (%)
Living in your own home	91	85
Living with family	3	7
Living in sheltered housing	3	3
Living in residential care	*	*
Living in a nursing home	*	*
Don't know	2	3
Refused	1	1
Base: All customers	*2,643*	*2,359*

6.7   Working status

All customers were read out the list in Table 6.7 and asked which best described their current employment status.

Table 6.7   Working status (TPS and DCS)

	TPS (%)	DCS (%)
Retired	76	40
Employed full-time	7	9
Employed part-time	9	8
Unemployed – waiting to take up a job already obtained	*	*
Unemployed – looking for work	1	3
Unemployed – intending to look for work but temporarily sick/injured	*	5
Permanently unable to work due to long-term sickness/illness	2	19
Self-employed	3	2
Full-time education	*	1
Not looking for work – looking after family/home	1	12
Don't know	*	1
Refused	1	1
Base: All customers	*2,643*	*2,359*

Appendix A
Technical report

During the second half of 2010 and first half of 2011 a survey of customers contacting the Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) was carried out to measure their experience of, attitudes towards and satisfaction with the service. This was the second year of the survey, with the first year consisting of a quarterly monitor during the second half of 2009 and first half of 2010.

Both years of the survey were designed to cover the population of contacts made by people who had first-hand contact with PDCS concerning a range of issues to do with their pension-related or disability-related benefits.

A.1   The sample

The survey was designed to cover the population of contacts made by people with PDCS who:

• had first hand contact with PDCS concerning a range of issues to do with their pension- or disability-related benefit claim;

• were either the claimant themselves or were people contacting on behalf of the customer including non-professional customer representatives; and

• were either claiming a benefit, had some change of circumstance or had a query.

The population of contacting customers comprised all contacts initiated by customers through any channel, including contacts made in writing (either through a letter or completing a form), by telephone, or by email. All 'professional' customer representatives were excluded from the research (e.g. Citizens' Advice Bureaux, solicitors making contact on behalf of a client, MPs making contact on behalf of a constituent). These parties were excluded because it was felt that they would make contact on behalf of a number of different people and their responses would be an 'average' of all their contact with The Pension Service (TPS), rather than thinking about a specific case.

The sample for each quarter came from operational management information (MI) held by PDCS over a three-month period, whereby a new claim, renewal or unsuccessful claim was made or there was a change in circumstance recorded on the system.

While PDCS' database could identify new claims, unsuccessful claims and renewals for all benefits, it was more difficult to identify changes of circumstance. This was done by comparing the customer's status at the beginning of the three-month sampling period to their status at the end of the three-month sampling period. If there were any changes flagged on the system then there was a high probability that the customer (or someone on their behalf) contacted PDCS to report this change of circumstance.

Queries were not directly sampled, as there was no simple way of extracting these customers. However, many customers who had previously been sampled as making a claim or having a change of circumstance may have later had a query. This would then be picked up during the interview when they were asked about their most recent enquiry with PDCS.

A.2   Sample selection

An equal proportion of the Disability and Carers Service (DCS) and TPS samples was selected each quarter to make sure each service could be analysed separately. There was slight disproportionate sampling of Pension Credit to State Pension; Pension Credit was oversampled to make sure there were enough interviews for subgroup analysis. This was then corrected during the weighting.

Within each benefit the sample was stratified by the following variables prior to selection (in the order specified); a '1 in n' selection was then made:

• customer transaction type (i.e. new claim, renewal, change of address, change of bank account etc);

• Government Office Region.

A.3   Response rates

Fieldwork was conducted at two separate periods across the year. The first period involved 1,500 interviews (just as a quarter in the 2009/2010 survey) and ran during September/October 2010. The second period was larger and ran during early spring 2011. In total 5,002 interviews were achieved across the year.

Table A.1 gives an overview of the interviews achieved in each period.

Table A.1   Interviews achieved

Period	Fieldwork dates	Total interviews	TPS interviews	DCS interviews
Period 1	15 September and 21 October 2010	1,500	772	728
Period 2	28 February and 26 April 2011	3,502	1,871	1,631

A full breakdown of response is shown in Table A.2 for both periods combined.

Table A.2   Response details

Main sample issued	14,870
Office opt-out before fieldwork	1,290
Sample issued to telephone unit	13,580
Invalid sample data	3,272
Invalid telephone number (e.g. incorrect and business numbers)	2,391
Unknown at number	881
Ineligible	2,065
Valid sample (in scope of fieldwork)	8,243
Refusals (including proxy refusals)	1,695
Abandoned interview	218
Unavailable during fieldwork	172
Respondent long-term ill/incapable of interview	480
10+ unsuccessful calls/no contact	676
Interview	5,002
Fieldwork response rate	61%
Overall response rate	34%

The fieldwork response rate (61 per cent) is calculated based on the productivity of valid and eligible sample. The definition of eligibility excludes: respondents who opted out; respondents who died; invalid or incorrect telephone numbers; unknown at number and customers who denied contacting PDCS. The overall response rate (34 per cent) calculates the response rate as being the number of interviews divided by the number of cases issued.

A.4 Weighting

Weights were applied to match the survey back to the population targets, taking into account the over-sampling of Pension Credit and any non response bias. Weights adjusted for gender, GOR, benefit, and additionally for TPS only, age.

Weights for DCS and TPS were calculated independently, matching back to their own populations. The overall PDCS weight was calculated by weighting each organisation back to the proportion each agency accounted for of the total volume of contacts according to MI held by PDCS.

Weights were created for each quarter separately to allow for independent reporting, but to create an overall annual weight each quarter was weighted back to the proportion of contacts according to records from the MI data for that quarter of the year.

A.5 Questionnaire design

The 2010/11 questionnaire remained very similar to the 2009/10 questionnaire. However, after a questionnaire review process at the end of the first year, some questions were dropped and new ones added as certain questions had limited value and business priorities changed. In particular, questions around online experiences and willingness to conduct online transactions, as well as a few questions on face-to-face contact where added. The 2010/11 questionnaire included the following topics:

- reason for contact with PDCS;

- methods used to contact and preferred method;

- internet and email usage;

- specific elements of the interaction with PDCS (in particular by telephone, postal, online and face-to-face);

- whether filled in forms;

- complaints;

- overall measures of satisfaction, improvements and the best thing about the service;

- demographics.

Fieldwork and data processing

All respondents were sent an advance letter on Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) headed paper before the start of fieldwork. This letter explained the purpose of the study, reasons for their inclusion in the research sample and the form the survey would take. These letters included a freepost address and freephone number for respondents to call if they did not wish to be contacted or if they required help or further information about the study. Contact details of everyone who opted out of the research were removed from the sample to be called.

Interviews were carried out using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). However, postal questionnaires were sent out to respondents who were unable to complete a telephone interview. Respondents who did not speak English were also offered an option to complete an interview in another language.

Appendix B
Fieldwork documents

Advance letter

<Title><Name><Surname>
<Address 1>
<Address 2>   DATE
<Address 3>   Reference No: < ID >
<Address 4>
<Postcode>

Dear <Title><Name><Surname>

I am writing to ask for your help. The Department for Work and Pensions has asked TNS-BMRB, an independent company, to carry out research among our customers to find out what they think of our service. For example, we'd like to know if you found it easy or difficult to contact us, and whether we treated you in a friendly and polite way. We will use the results to help us provide a high-quality service that meets our customers' needs.

How did we get your name?

You recently contacted us about the State Pension, Pension Credit or disability-related benefits. Your name has been randomly selected from a record of the people who contacted us around the same time.

What will happen next?

TNS-BMRB will be doing the interviews by phone over the next few weeks. If they contact you, we hope you will be able to spare 15 minutes to take part.

Everything you tell TNS-BMRB will be in complete confidence. TNS-BMRB will not pass any information that could identify you to the Department for Work and Pensions or anyone else unless you give your permission at the end of the survey.

I do hope you will feel able to take part in this important research. However, if you do not want to take part or would have difficulty completing the interview over the phone, either:

• telephone TNS-BMRB on freephone 0800 051 0886 (freephone textphone 18001 0800 051 0886) Monday to Friday 9am-5pm, or

• write to TNS-BMRB to tell them that you do not want to take part, or that completing the interview over the phone would cause you too much difficulty. Please include your name, postcode and reference number, which is on the top right-hand corner of this letter. Please write to
Sonia Peyron, Freepost RLTY-JCKX-BCLR, TNS-BMRB, Ealing Gateway, 26–30 Uxbridge Road, London W5 2BP.

Your details will then be taken off the list of people that TNS-BMRB may contact.

Whatever you decide, please be assured that taking part is completely voluntary and will not affect any benefit you receive, any claims you are making or any dealings you have with the Department for Work and Pensions, The Pension Service, the Disability and Carers Service or any other government department or agency in the future.

What to do if you want to know more

If you have any questions or want to discuss this research please contact me, Susan Kinghorn. I can be contacted using my voicemail box on 01132519114, please leave your name, reference number and telephone number and I will ring you back to answer your questions.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Yours sincerely

Susan Kinghorn

Pension, Disability and Carers Service

The Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) commissioned BMRB to conduct a customer satisfaction survey; the results from the second year of this survey are presented in this report. The fieldwork involved over 5,000 telephone interviews with customers who had been in recent contact with PDCS.

The report presents findings on overall PDCS performance as well as reporting on results for the two constituent agencies, The Pension Service (TPS) and the Disability and Carers Service (DCS).

The headline findings include overall levels of satisfaction, scores for the four key drivers of satisfaction (as defined in the Department for Work and Pensions' Customer Charter) as well as a variety of other information, including contact channel preferences. The report also includes regression analysis of these findings to produce a Kano model of satisfaction.

If you would like to know more about DWP research, please contact:
Carol Beattie, Central Analysis Division, Department for Work and Pensions,
Upper Ground Floor, Steel City House, West Street, Sheffield, S1 2GQ.
http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rrs-index.asp

DWP Department for
Work and Pensions